The Arts Council of New Orleans: An Internship Report

Elise Richardson

University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uno.edu/aa_rpts

Part of the Arts Management Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uno.edu/aa_rpts/161

This Master's Report is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Master’s Report in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Master's Report has been accepted for inclusion in Arts Administration Master's Reports by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.
The Arts Council of New Orleans

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of New Orleans in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Arts Administration

by

Elise J.M. Richardson

B.A. Tulane University, 2006

May, 2014
# Table of Contents

List of Figures & Tables ............................................................................................................. v  

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... vi  

**Chapter One: The Arts Council ** ........................................................................................... 1  
  History ......................................................................................................................................... 1  
  Management Structure ............................................................................................................... 7  
  Marketing Department .............................................................................................................. 9  
  Fundraising & Budget ............................................................................................................... 11  

**Chapter Two: Programs & Services ** ..................................................................................... 15  
  Grant Administration .................................................................................................................. 15  
  Cultural Advocacy .................................................................................................................... 16  
  Public Art ..................................................................................................................................... 17  
  Arts Business Program .............................................................................................................. 18  
  Arts Market of New Orleans ..................................................................................................... 19  
  Community Arts Awards ......................................................................................................... 20  
  Dirty Linen Night ..................................................................................................................... 21  
  ArtsNewOrleans.org ................................................................................................................ 22  

**Chapter Three: The Internship ** .............................................................................................. 27  
  The Marketing Department ........................................................................................................ 27  
  The Color Run ........................................................................................................................... 30  
  The Grant Panel ....................................................................................................................... 31
Chapter Four: S/W/O/T Analysis

Strengths

New Leadership

Fundraising

Arts Business Program

ArtsNewOrleans.org

Weaknesses

Board Governance

Technology

Volunteer Management & Outreach

Membership Benefits

Opportunities

Prospect.3

Office of Cultural Economy

University Outreach

Hotel & Tourism Industry Partnerships

Threats

Image Problems

Funding

Chapter Five: Best Practices

Board Leadership & Development

Grant Funding Decisions by Peer-Review

Effective Web Design
Best Practices at the San Francisco Arts Commission.................................82

Chapter Six: Recommendations ....................................................................89

Upgrade Technology......................................................................................89

Improve Website Design & Maintenance.......................................................91

Improve Volunteer Recruitment & Management..........................................93

Increase Transparency & Accountability.......................................................95

Improve Membership Benefits ....................................................................98

Chapter Seven: Conclusion..........................................................................101

Bibliography .................................................................................................104

Vita ..............................................................................................................112
List of Figures & Tables

Figures

Figure 1 .........................................................................................................................8
Figure 2 .........................................................................................................................10
Figure 3 .........................................................................................................................77
Figure 4 .........................................................................................................................78
Figure 5 .........................................................................................................................79
Figure 6 .........................................................................................................................85
Figure 7 .........................................................................................................................85

Tables

Table 1 ..........................................................................................................................36
Abstract

The Arts Council of New Orleans is the official arts agency of New Orleans, located at 935 Gravier Street. The organization supports and develops the arts community through many different programming initiatives, including administering grants, managing a monthly Arts Market, and providing business training to artists. In this internship report, I discuss my role within the organization during my internship, which began in January 2013 and lasted through June 2013. I then analyze my observations of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and provide recommendations for improving the Arts Council’s operations based on best practices and expert literature in the field of nonprofit management. The Arts Council hired a new CEO in May of 2013, after a seven-year period of operating under interim management. With a permanent leader now in place, the organization is in a position to apply my recommendations so it can grow into a stronger arts agency, and better serve the New Orleans community.

Keywords:
Arts Administration, Arts Council of New Orleans, Marketing, SWOT, Best Practices, Nonprofit Management
Chapter One: The Arts Council

Officially established in 1981, the Arts Council of New Orleans plays a key role in the cultural economy of the city and surrounding parishes. The Arts Council’s mission, “to support and to expand the opportunities for diverse artistic expression and to bring the community together in celebration of... [its] rich multi-cultural heritage,”1 is achieved through arts and culture advocacy, grant making, public art projects, and marketing and business development for artists. In addition to these services, the Arts Council hosts events throughout the year, including its monthly Arts Market; its annual Community Arts Awards ceremony; and its art-centric block party, Dirty Linen Night. As the City’s official arts agency, the Arts Council also serves as a liaison between City Hall and the numerous arts organizations in the region; as well as local, state, and national organizations concerned with economic development through arts and culture initiatives.2

History

New Orleans did not have an organization resembling an arts council until 1970, when then-Mayor Moon Landrieu established the City of New Orleans Cultural Resources Committee. Headed by Thomas B. Lemann, the Cultural Resources Committee was granted $150,000 by the Zemurray Foundation in 1975 in order to establish a private, non-profit organization to serve as the City’s official arts agency. The new Arts Council of Greater New Orleans (ACGNO), lead by Executive Director Geoffrey Platt, Jr., managed state arts funding for the City of New Orleans, while also working to secure additional grants in support of expanding cultural programming for the city. In 1977, the ACGNO received its first National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant award for $12,000, which helped to fund a series of cultural programming initiatives.3 This early
programming included Arts Fest, an annual street festival held in downtown New Orleans; Brown Bag Concerts, a series of outdoor concerts held in Lafayette Square and Duncan Plaza during the spring and fall; Seldom Seen, a series of fundraising exhibitions that featured “artworks from private collections”; a weekly radio program called “Arts Report”; and the Mayor’s Arts Awards. Additional funding made available by President Carter’s expansion of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 was used to employ local artists for various projects around the city.

The election of New Orleans’ first African-American mayor, Ernest “Dutch” Morial, in 1978, ushered in an era of “democratizing” the City’s political and economic structures, which involved overhauling many of the City’s public sector organizations that were led by “primarily nonelected [sic] boards and commissions.” During this process of democratization, a number of task forces were appointed by the mayor to make policy recommendations, including a Task Force on Arts Policy appointed in 1979. The task force was asked to examine the ACGNO’s role of supporting and promoting arts and culture in New Orleans, and to determine to what extent the city government should become more involved in those activities. The thirty-six citizens appointed for the Task Force on Arts Policy were selected based on their involvement in the arts community, and represented a “broad range of interests.” By May of 1979, they had completed their analysis of the current state of arts and culture development in New Orleans, and their recommendations were submitted to the Mayor’s office for consideration. The city and the Arts Council have since based much of their activities upon these recommendations.

One of the first recommended actions taken by the Mayor’s office was the establishment of the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, which required a supplemental Committee for Arts and Cultural Development. Presumably, the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs was responsible
for administering state arts funding, while the ACGNO, as a private non-profit organization, continued to provide its programming through development and fundraising. After two years of operating as separate and distinct entities, the Committee for Arts and Cultural Development and the Arts Council of Greater New Orleans finally merged in 1981 to become the Arts Council of New Orleans. According to the Arts Council of New Orleans’ webpage describing the organization’s history, the Committee for Arts and Cultural Development quickly discovered that the City was unable to support the development and promotion of the arts in New Orleans on its own, and that partnering with the private sector would lead to more funding, better programming, and more sustainable growth for the cultural economy.

Sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham posits in his book *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy*, that the formation of the Arts Council of New Orleans in 1981 was a result of the City’s preparation for the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition. With such a large-scale event bringing an influx of tourism to the city, a number of “new organizations and new cultural institutions for building local awareness of culture” emerged, and the increased interest “in showcasing New Orleans to the world” resulted in the formation of the Arts Council of New Orleans as it is known today. In Gotham’s view, the City capitalized on the enthusiasm for and support of local arts and culture leading up to the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition by merging the City’s Committee for Arts and Culture Development with the community’s Arts Council of Greater New Orleans. The resulting organization, the Arts Council of New Orleans, would benefit from grassroots involvement in its programming and projects, and have the ability to raise funds through corporate sponsorships and private donations while still receiving government funding for the arts through grants.
Following the 1981 formation of the Arts Council of New Orleans, the mayor appointed a thirty-two member Board of Directors, with members selected from within the arts community as well as the larger community of civic-minded New Orleanians. Marion Andrus McCollam was hired as the new Executive Director in 1981, and during his tenure, the Arts Council established several of its programs that are still active today, such as grants administration, public art administration, and the Arts Business Program. In 1991, Shirley Trusty Corey replaced Mr. McCollam as Executive Director of the Arts Council. Within a year, plans for developing an artists’ studio complex and visitors’ center, that would later be called Louisiana ArtWorks, took shape. In an interview with Robert Preece, in the magazine Sculpture, Ms. Corey explains that idea for ArtWorks arose from “the Arts Council’s mission to serve creative communities and the public through the arts.” According to Ms. Corey, the Arts Council identified a need for well-equipped studio space in the region, after which the organization developed a master plan for the ArtWorks building. In 1995, the Arts Council created a separate nonprofit organization, named the Louisiana Artists Guild, to manage the fundraising and construction of Louisiana ArtWorks. Both organizations shared the same board of directors, and the Arts Council remained intimately involved in the ArtWorks project. Two years later, in 1997, the Arts Council announced the capital campaign to raise money for the building. After six years of fundraising, the Arts Council broke ground for the ArtWorks building in 2003.

Almost immediately, the ill-fated project met with its first setback. Historic preservationists prevented the Arts Council from tearing down the 1915 Bradford Furniture Co. building located at the proposed site of the ArtWorks building. The plans for the building had to be redesigned to fit within the existing structure, and the initial estimated construction costs of $15 million increased substantially as a result. Not to be discouraged by this setback, Ms. Corey
secured the additional funding necessary to cover the costs of construction, including $8.7 million from the state, $7.1 million in low interest federal loans, $750 thousand, and millions of dollars in private donations. There was a great deal of public support for the project at this early stage, but unfortunately, this support did not last.20

Louisiana ArtWorks was an ambitious project to begin with. Plans for the 93,000 square foot studio complex included expensive equipment like kilns, printmaking tables, and metal and glass foundries. Artists would be able to rent studio space and the equipment at ArtWorks, while visitors would pay seven dollars to tour the facility and watch these artists at work. In order to cover its projected annual operating costs of $2.8 million, ArtWorks needed to attract at least 200,000 visitors per year. Even during the height of the project’s popularity, many questioned the plausibility of attracting the estimated figure of 200,000 visitors per year. With great anticipation, and despite the early naysayers, the Arts Council announced that ArtWorks would open on September 24, 2004.21 On September 20, 2004, the Arts Council pushed the opening date back to October 23, 2004;22 then again the opening date was pushed back to November, but without a set date.23 On November 15, 2004, the Arts Council announced that ArtWorks would not be opening as scheduled due to a delay in receiving state funding for the project. Without this funding, the Arts Council was unable to pay $2 million owed to the contractor hired to build ArtWorks, and the project was put on hold until further notice.24

Louisiana ArtWorks remained shuttered while Ms. Corey and the board of directors worked towards raising the funds needed to finish the project. Although Hurricane Katrina, in August 2005, did not damage the ArtWorks building substantially, the loss of population in the city, as well as the dire need to rebuild basic infrastructure, contributed to the waning support for ArtWorks.25 In April of 2007, Ms. Corey announced her intention to resign from the Arts
Council in order to devote herself full-time to Louisiana ArtWorks, as CEO of the Louisiana Artists Guild. With Corey’s departure, a separate board of directors was established for the Louisiana Artists Guild, in an effort to distance the Arts Council from the ArtWorks project. Although the Arts Council and Louisiana Artists Guild were legally separate organizations, they had become “difficult to distinguish,” due to the high profile of the project and the prominence of the Arts Council’s role in its creation. Mary Len Costa, the Arts Council’s Director of Public Art, replaced Ms. Corey as Interim CEO until the board hired a permanent replacement.

Ms. Costa remained Interim CEO for the Arts Council for six years. During that time the Arts Council continued to add programs and initiatives to its offerings, including the Arts Market in 2007 and Dirty Linen Night in 2012. The Arts Council’s programs are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. In May 2013, Kim Cook was hired as the new President and CEO of the Arts Council. Coincidentally, Ms. Cook was first sent to New Orleans in 2009 and 2010 as a consultant for the Nonprofit Finance Fund tasked with assessing the financial structure of Louisiana ArtWorks. It was during this period that Ms. Cook became interested in pursuing the position as the chief executive of the Arts Council, but she had to apply twice before she was finally interviewed and offered the position. Ms Cook has stated that she would like to push the Arts Council beyond its identity as the city’s official arts agency tasked with distributing grants funding, by providing “added value.” To this end, a refocus of energy towards the art consumer is needed, through arts “experiences, education, and public events.” Ms. Cook also has ideas about improving public art in the city by making it more integrated and in some cases more functional. She also wants to improve collaboration and unity among the many arts organizations in New Orleans, making it easier for artists to make an income and easier for consumers to access the arts.
Management Structure

The management structure of the Arts Council of New Orleans is similar to many non-profit organizations. The Board of Directors, whose membership cannot exceed thirty-two members, governs the Arts Council. The Mayor appoints half of the board members, and the board itself elects the other half. Each board member serves for three years, unless the member is elected as an officer of the board, in which case the term length is extended. Most recently, in February 2014, the Arts Council’s board named E. Tiffany Adler as Chair, to replace Thomas F. Reese. Although the Arts Council does not provide details regarding the board’s committees and committee assignments, the names of the board’s officers and members are provided on the organization’s website. See Figure [1] for a list of board members and officers.

Upon her arrival in May 2013, Ms. Cook undertook a reevaluation of staff positions, which resulted in some shifting of responsibilities as well as title changes for some of the staff. Ms. Costa was given a new position as Major Gifts and Foundations Officer, a development position focused on securing large grants and donations. As an officer, Ms. Costa reports directly to the CEO. Ms. Cook hired Nick Stillman for the newly created position of deputy director. Mr. Stillman assists Ms. Cook in managing the staff and acts on the CEO’s behalf in her absence. Mr. Stillman also reports directly to Ms. Cook. Morgana King, formerly Director of Public Art, is now the Director [of] Special Projects, though her role has not changed significantly; she continues to manage the Visual Arts Registry as well as the Percent for Art Program, and other public art initiatives. Gene Meneray continues to manage the Arts Business program and the Arts Market of New Orleans, but his title changed from Director of [the] Arts Business Program to Director [of] Artist Services. With the departure of Karen Kern, one of the former grants managers, Mr. Meneray now assists with grants administration as well.
The Arts Council of New Orleans’ Board of Directors 2014

Officers

E. Tiffany Adler  
Chairman

Pamela Reynolds Ryan  
Vice Chairman

Thomas B. Lemann  
Secretary

Thomas P. Westervelt  
Treasurer

Thomas F. Reese  
Ex-officio, Past Chairman

Members

E. Tiffany Adler  
(Adler’s Jewelry)

Shawn M. Barney  
(CLB Porter, LLC, Managing Director)

Alex Beard  
(Alex Beard Studio, Artist/Gallery Owner)

Brandon Berger  
(The Berger Group)

Susan Brennan  
(Second Line Stages, Owner/Developer)

Meaghan Ryan Bonavita  
(Artis Activist)

Lucy Chun  
(RE/MAX, Commercial Real Estate Broker, Arts/Civic Activist)

William D. French  
(Film Production Capital, LLC, President)

Tara Carter Hernandez  
(JCH Development, President)

William H. Hines  
(Jones Walker, Attorney)

Juli Juneau  
(Artist/Civic Activist)

David Kerstein  
(Army)

Ouida Martin Laudumley  
(Civic Activist)

Thomas B. Lemann  
(Liskow & Lewis, Attorney)

Pamela Lupin  
(Civic Activist)

Dr. R. Ranney Mize  
(LSU Health Sciences Center, Educator/Researcher, Arts Activist)

Mark Preston  
(Capital One Bank, Vice President)

Thomas F. Reese  
(Tulane University, Executive Director, Stone Center for Latin American Studies)

Pamela Reynolds Ryan  
(Artis/Civic Activist)

Marci Schramm  
(French Quarter Festivals Inc., Director)

Leopold Z. Sher  
(Sher Garner Cahill Richter Klein & Hilbert, LLC, Attorney)

Joanna Sternberg  
(Civic Activist)

Hena Suquet  
(Artist/Civic Activist)

Paul J. Tines  
(Isidore Newman School, Dean of the Arts)

Kurt Weigle  
(Downtown Development District, Executive Director)

Thomas P. Westervelt  
(IberiaBank, Executive VP/Private Banking Group)

Tim Williamson  
(The Idea Village)

Amanda Mantle Winstead  
(Winstead Associates, Inc., President)
Lindsay Glatz continues in her role as the Director of Marketing and Communications, which will be described in more detail below. As Directors of their respective departments, Ms. King, Mr. Meneray, and Ms. Glatz report to Mr. Stillman or Ms. Cook.

Joycelyn Reynolds, a former Grants Manager, is now Associate Director [of] Artist Services, but her role is still primarily to administer the Louisiana Decentralized Arts Fund grants and the Community Arts Grants. Ms. Reynolds now reports to Mr. Meneray. Morgan Sasser was hired in early 2013 to help manage the Arts Market of New Orleans, but her title changed from Arts Market Manager to Manager [of] People & Community Practice. Her position now encompasses the management of both the monthly Arts Market and the annual Dirty Linen Night event. Dolita Brown’s title changed from the Development Coordinator to Membership Manager, but her duties have not changed significantly. Ms. Brown is responsible for office administration as well as managing memberships, donations, and the Community Arts Awards. Both Ms. Sasser and Ms. Brown report to Mr. Stillman. As with most non-profits with a small staff, everyone is expected to assist with whatever is needed at any given time, but with their new roles and responsibilities clearly defined, the staff can better balance their own workflow with that of the organization as a whole. During my internship, the staff of the Arts Council did not operate within a strict hierarchy. The designation of new staff titles creates a clearer picture of the management structure now in place at the Arts Council. See Figure [2].

**The Marketing Department**

During my internship at the ACNO, I worked primarily with Lindsay Glatz in the Marketing Department. Her duties include designing and implementing print and online marketing materials; managing social media; issuing press releases; attending press conferences; curating and managing ArtsNewOrleans.org and the ArtSavers newsletter; and teaching the
marketing courses for the Artist as Entrepreneur program. Before the new staff titles and responsibilities were put into place, Ms. Glatz’s position involved other activities that were not strictly related to her department. She helped coordinate events like Dirty Linen Night and the Community Arts Awards, and she managed two Color Run marathons in New Orleans that benefited the Arts Council.

In the past, Ms. Glatz had at least one Marketing Assistant to help with ArtsNewOrleans.org and ArtSavers, both of which take a great deal of time to manage. ArtsNewOrleans requires daily maintenance, and the ArtSavers newsletter can take hours to create. Once the grant funding that paid for the marketing assistant position was exhausted, there was no longer any money in the budget for the position. Now, interns perform much of the work.
on ArtsNewOrleans and the ArtSavers newsletter. The daily maintenance of ArtsNewOrleans involves approving event submissions and updating the featured events on the homepage. Event submissions often do not contain all the information required for approval, and duplicate events are also an issue. Featured events that have already taken place must be replaced with upcoming events in the same arts category, which often results in three or four changes to featured events each week. Posting featured events and creating the ArtSavers newsletter involve event curation, photo editing, and copywriting, all of which are time-consuming.

**Fundraising & Budget**

The Arts Council receives most of its funding from government and non-government grants, and private donations. According to the organization’s Form 990 from 2011, the largest source of revenue for the Arts Council was non-government grants and contributions, totaling $869,416. Ms. Costa, who managed development for the Arts Council during her time as Interim Director, will now be able to focus on securing additional funding through non-government grants and large donations in her role as Major Gifts and Foundations Officer. Government grants were the second largest source of revenue in 2011, totaling $805,525. The Arts Council disbursed almost all the money it received through government grants to the arts community, and this represents the Arts Council’s largest expense; in 2011, grants expenses totaled $632,353. Unfortunately, the amount of funding the Arts Council receives through government grants continues to decrease as federal, state, and local governments cut appropriations for the arts in their budgets.\(^{38}\)

The Arts Council is able to offset some of these decreases through increased revenue from other fundraising initiatives, including the Arts Market of New Orleans, the Community Arts Awards, and Dirty Linen Night. Income from the Arts Market contributed a significant
amount to the Arts Council’s revenue in 2011, totaling $146,117. Membership dues contributed $48,079 to the organization’s income, and the organization’s fundraising events contributed $43,511 in net income. The Arts Council also has some investment income and rental income that contributed $11,173 and $6,564 to the organization’s revenue, respectively.

The ACNO’s total revenue went up slightly from $1,826,471 in 2010 to $1,931,155 in 2011. The organization had an operating surplus of $164,015 that year, which was much improved from its 2010 operating deficit of $8,147. Expenses for the Arts Council went down slightly from $1,834,618 in 2010 to $1,767,140 in 2011. Aside from grants awarded, salaries represented the largest expense for the Arts Council in 2011, totaling $449,961. Other significant expenses included Artist Fees and Service, totaling $161,057, executive compensation totaling $91,283, and Employee Benefits totaling $65,485.

End Notes


2 Ibid.


4 Ibid.


9 “Arts Council Historical Note.”
10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.


14 Ibid.

15 “Arts Council Historical Note.”


17 Ibid.


20 Ibid.


27 Ibid.

28 MacCash, “ArtWorks Update.”

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.


Chapter Two: Programs & Services

The Arts Council provides a variety of services in its effort to support working artists and enhance the community through increased access to the arts. Some of the Arts Council’s programs arose from the organization’s role as the City’s official arts agency, while others were created to address community needs or to help raise funds for the organization. Several of the Arts Council’s initiatives fulfill more than one purpose, demonstrating the organization’s ability to achieve its goals creatively with the resources at hand.

Grant Administration

The Arts Council began disbursing grants in New Orleans shortly after its incorporation in 1981. The organization’s first pool of grant funding came from the Municipal Endowment Grants for the Arts program (MEG/Arts), intended to provide funding to local arts organizations for their operational and project-specific needs.¹ The Louisiana Division of the Arts’ Decentralized Arts Funding (LDAF) program and the Community Arts Grants program replaced the MEG/Arts program in 1995.²,³

The Community Arts Grants represent the largest pool of grant funding now administered by the Arts Council. This funding is provided by the City of New Orleans as part of its annual budget offer for the Arts Council.⁴ For Fiscal Year 2013, the City allocated $427,108 to the Arts Council and the Community Arts Grants program,⁵ and the Arts Council awarded $357,245 to fifty-three arts organizations in Orleans Parish for both operating support and project assistance.⁶ The LDAF program, which is funded by the state, uses the Arts Council as a Regional Development Agency (RDA) to award grant funds to Orleans, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes.⁷ The amount of funding that the Louisiana Division of the Arts receives each year is based on appropriations granted by the state legislature.⁸ Most of this funding is then allocated to
each parish based on its population size, a number that is determined by current U.S. Census
Bureau data. For Fiscal Year 2013, the Arts Council received $52,901 for Orleans Parish, $66,551 for Jefferson Parish, and $3,545 for Plaquemines Parish. The Arts Council awarded these funds to twenty-one arts organizations in Orleans Parish and fourteen arts organizations in Jefferson Parish. The Plaquemines Parish Library received all the grant funds for its parish.

**Cultural Advocacy**

After its incorporation as the Arts Council of New Orleans in 1981, the Arts Council partnered with the Louisiana Division of the Arts as well as with seven other arts councils representing the rest of Louisiana, and together formed the Louisiana Partnership for the Arts (LPA). The LPA continues to operate today as an umbrella organization representing individuals and organizations involved in the cultural economy of Louisiana. The LPA participates in establishing “statewide arts policies that advance the growth and development of the arts field.” To further these beneficial policies, the LPA collaborates with its various members, both individuals and organizations, to implement its goals. It also provides professional development opportunities for artists and arts professionals as well as community outreach and advocacy to foster “public support for the arts.”

The LPA’s sister organization, Louisiana Citizens for the Arts (LCA), dedicates itself to arts and culture advocacy within the state legislature. A full-time lobbyist for the LCA serves as a representative for the LCA’s and LPA’s interests in Baton Rouge and Washington, D.C. in order to protect appropriations for arts funding in the state and federal budgets. The Arts Council maintains a strong relationship with both the LPA and the LCA in order to assist in those activities that strengthen the cultural economy of the state. The Arts Council communicates the needs of the parishes it represents to the LCA in order to inform the LCA’s lobbying efforts.
in Baton Rouge. The LCA in turn provides valuable information to the Arts Council regarding arts policy and funding decisions within the state legislature that will affect the region. The Arts Council also acts as an arts advocate at the local level, working closely with City Hall to maintain arts funding and develop policies affecting the state of the arts in New Orleans.¹⁵

**Public Art**

The first major public art project undertaken by the Arts Council was unveiled in 1976, when the organization was still operating as the Arts Council of Greater New Orleans. The project, entitled “Supersculpture,” featured an outdoor exhibit of seven “monumental” sculptures,¹⁶ which generated great interest in public art from the New Orleans’ community. Clement Meadmore’s piece, “Out of There,” was acquired after the exhibit ended, for installation at the Hale Boggs Federal Complex.¹⁷ In 1983, two years after the incorporation of the Arts Council of New Orleans, the organization proposed the Percent for Art Ordinance to City Hall, which sought to establish a public art program funded through the allocation of “1% of eligible municipal capital bonds.”¹⁸ The ordinance was adopted in 1986. The mayor appointed a six member Percent for Art Committee to provide oversight for the program’s progress. The program aimed to acquire works for display throughout the city, commission new works for site-specific projects, and implement “community outreach and education initiatives” to create a dialogue with the public about Percent for Art’s projects.¹⁹ Fifty-seven site-specific commissions have been placed throughout the city by the Percent for Art program over the past twenty-five years, and 219 artworks have been purchased for placement in New Orleans’ libraries, municipal buildings and recreation centers.²⁰

Outside of the Percent for Art program, the Arts Council has continued to facilitate new and interesting public art projects in the city. In 2012, the Arts Council partnered with Broad
Community Connections, a community development corporation, to create neon signs for small businesses located on the Broad Street corridor. Considered an economic development initiative, and funded by a $25,000 NEA grant,\textsuperscript{21} the Iconic Signage project was a great success. In 2013, the project was selected as a Year in Review honoree by the Americans for the Arts Public Art Network because of the project’s sincere dedication to revitalizing and venerating the community where it is located.\textsuperscript{22} 2013 also marked the unveiling of Evacuspots, a collaborative project between the non-profit organization Evacuteer, the Arts Council, and the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.\textsuperscript{23} Evacuspots are City Assisted Evacuation points placed around the city and marked by “visually striking”\textsuperscript{24} fourteen-foot metal sculptures. With the success of the Iconic Signage project and the Evacuspots project, the Arts Council will continue to look for collaborative opportunities that produce more public art for the city.

**Arts Business Program**

The Arts Council’s Arts Business Program was first founded in 1991. By 1992, the Arts Council had established the Entergy Arts Business Center to provide practical business training to artists and arts organizations.\textsuperscript{25} The Center soon gained the recognition of Forbes Magazine and the Business Committee for the Arts as a superior arts incubator.\textsuperscript{26} In 1999, it received the National Business Incubation Association’s “Business Incubator of the Year” award and has since been used as a national model for similar programs.\textsuperscript{27} Today, the Entergy Arts Business Center operates as a department of the Arts Council.

The Artist as Entrepreneur workshop series is one of the Arts Business Program’s most successful initiatives, and has expanded beyond New Orleans to Shreveport. The Arts Council expects it will continue to expand the program to other arts councils in the region as demand for the program increases. The Artist as Entrepreneur program presents a series of workshops and
lectures that take place over a six-week period, and involve approximately thirty hours of training. Individual artists receive instruction on developing business plans and marketing plans, utilizing social media and traditional marketing outlets, website development, career development and networking. Through a similar program, arts organizations receive instruction on developing and implementing their mission and vision statements, fundraising, board development, and marketing using social media and traditional media.28

In addition to training, the Arts Business Program offers group health insurance for full-time staff at arts organizations, and access to credit union services through Riverland Credit Union for individuals. Full Arts Council membership is included with the program as well. Individual members can also receive legal assistance through the Louisiana Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts program, assistance with identifying grant opportunities, and assistance with registering slides of their artwork in the local visual arts registry maintained by the Arts Council.29 For more details on Arts Council membership, see Chapter Four.

**Arts Market of New Orleans**

In June of 2007, the Arts Council took over the operation of the Mid City Arts Market in City Park, renaming it the Arts Market of New Orleans and relocating it to Uptown’s Palmer Park.30 The Arts Market is held on the last Saturday of each month, although the date is occasionally moved due to inclement weather or other events occurring in the city that may result in a low turnout of both artists and consumers. During the holiday season, the market is held on both Saturday and Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend, and the weekend before Christmas.31 The market features arts and crafts in a wide variety of media, and between seventy-five and 125 artists sell their work there each month.32 New artists must apply to become vendors at the Arts Market. Both Arts Council staff and veteran Arts Market vendors review the
applications. In order to avoid a disproportionate amount of any one type of art or craft, each potential new artists must display originality of content and medium to be approved for the Arts Market.

Arts Market vendors pay seventy-five dollars per month for a ten-foot by ten-foot booth, and they are expected to provide their own tents and tables. Artists may share a booth for forty-five dollars per person, though both artists must apply and be accepted to the Arts Market beforehand. In addition to art vendors, food and beverage vendors also participate in the Arts Market. Live music is performed by a variety of local musicians throughout the day, and a children’s art activity tent offers creative entertainment for all ages. The Arts Market of New Orleans offers the opportunity for artists to sell their work outside of the traditional gallery model. Many artists in New Orleans are able to support themselves through sales at this and other arts markets throughout the city. The Arts Market of New Orleans, in concert with the Arts Business Program, allows local artists to become working artists, and it is one of the biggest benefits the Arts Council provides to the arts community and the larger New Orleans community in general.

Community Arts Awards

In 1977, the Arts Council began recognizing the individuals and organizations that have made “outstanding contributions to the arts [community] in New Orleans,” through an annual Mayor’s Arts Awards ceremony. In 2007, the Arts Council changed the name of the awards to the Community Arts Awards, but the premise remains the same. The awards are open to all those who demonstrate “a deep commitment to the arts and... cultural community,” including artists, non-profit arts and cultural organizations, community volunteers, and both individual and corporate art patrons. Past recipients include author Anne Rice, actor/musician Wendell Pierce,
art patron Sydney Besthoff, III, and organizations such as the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and KIDsmART.\textsuperscript{35}

The awards ceremony has traditionally been held as a luncheon event at area hotels, with individual tickets available to the public at a cost of about thirty dollars per ticket. Event sponsorship levels range from $150, which includes two patron party tickets and the sponsor’s name in the event program, up to $5,000, which includes reserved seating, twenty tickets, and the sponsor’s name on all printed materials for the event.\textsuperscript{36} The funds raised through ticket sales and sponsorships are used to provide unrestricted support for the Arts Council’s ongoing programming and services for the local arts community.\textsuperscript{37} Adding to the prestige of recognition is the award itself, an art object that is specially designed by a different local artist each year.

2013 marked a change in the format of the ceremony, which was held as an “early evening cocktail affair” at the Contemporary Arts Center.\textsuperscript{38} The 2013 honorees included actor and activist Bryan Batt, choreographer and dance instructor Mary Munro, and the Preservation Hall non-profit organization, among others. In addition to the change in format and venue, the 2013 ceremony featured screenings of documentary bio-shorts of each honoree, created by local filmmakers.\textsuperscript{39} Although the Community Arts Awards is a fundraising event for the Arts Council, it is also an opportunity for the organization to recognize those individuals and organizations that endeavor to support the arts in New Orleans as much as the Arts Council itself.

**Dirty Linen Night**

Conceived in 2001, the first Dirty Linen Night was held at the Dutch Alley Co-Op gallery on Royal Street as a way to generate foot traffic during the historically slow month of August.\textsuperscript{40} Tracy Thompson, the artist-member credited for the idea, was inspired by the success of Julia Street’s White Linen Night, an upscale block party hosted by New Orleans Arts District that
takes place the first weekend of August in and among the galleries of the Arts District. Both as a “tongue-in-cheek” reference to that event, and as way to distinguish itself as a more relaxed and plebeian affair, the Dutch Alley Co-Op named their subsequent party on Royal Street Dirty Linen Night.

The logistical issues of producing Dirty Linen Night grew along with its popularity, and in 2012, Thomson was ready relinquish her role as the event’s organizer. The Arts Council expressed interest in taking over as producer, and Thomson soon transferred the Dirty Linen Night trademark, as well as “other proprietary rights,” to the Arts Council. The event was rebranded as “Dirty Linen: One Hot Night!” with Iberia Bank as the presenting sponsor. Since 2012, Arts Council staff and volunteers have organized and run Dirty Linen Night, which now serves as a fundraising event for the organization.

Because the event is free, alcohol sales provide the bulk of funds raised during Dirty Linen Night. Ticket sales for the official after-party also account for a portion of the event’s income. Dirty Linen Night 2013 was the largest yet, spanning from the 200 block to the 1000 block of Royal Street, including several side streets. Sixty galleries and shops participated, as well as several food vendors. The free art walk and block party lasted from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; the after party, held at Latrobe’s Lux Lounge on Royal Street, started at 9:00 pm and lasted until midnight. Tickets for the after party cost thirty dollars, and guests received free hors d’oeuvres, cocktails, music and entertainment. Ideally, Dirty Linen Night will continue to grow and provide a reliable fundraising source for the Arts Council in the future.

ArtsNewOrleans.org

The Arts Council’s events calendar website started out as a Blogspot site maintained by the marketing department, called NolaFunGuide. It featured listings of prominent or interesting
events happening around the city, and visitors to the site could submit events to be listed as well. In addition to event listings, NolaFunGuide offered half-price tickets to events through its newsletter, FunSavers. In the summer of 2010, NolaFunGuide was rebranded as ArtsNewOrleans.org, and redeveloped to “build community, [empower] artists and attract new audiences to the arts.” The Canary Collective, a local web development firm, donated its time to rebuild the website using their “Events Framed” platform. The rebranding created a significantly more professional and visually pleasing website than NolaFunGuide.

The new site allows artists and venues to create profiles to promote themselves. Links to these profiles can be added to event listings for cross-promotion. This allows users to search for events featuring their favorite artists, or taking place at their favorite venues. Visitors to the site can upload their own events, or in some cases, email the marketing staff to request their events be uploaded. Events have to be approved by a member of the marketing staff before they are published to the site, and only arts and culture events will be published. Events that qualify for publication include Visual Arts, Film, Theater, Music, Dance, Literature, Architecture, and Culinary events. If an event is uploaded but does not fall into one of these categories, it is published to a partner site, Humid Beings, which features news, events, and blog posts centered around New Orleans. The ArtsNewOrleans events calendar is one of the most comprehensive arts and culture calendars in the city, and the website won the 2011 Best of the Web Awards for “Best Non-Profit Website,” as voted on by readers of the weekly newspaper, the Gambit.

The FunSavers newsletter was rebranded as the ArtSavers newsletter in 2010, and served the same function of offering half-price tickets on events going on around the city. The ArtSavers newsletter utilizes the email marketing website MyEmma, which allows the marketing staff to create and manage professional-quality newsletters. Organizations interested in offering
discount tickets to their events can use the event upload feature to indicate the number of half-price tickets they have to offer and methods for redeeming the offer. The ArtSavers newsletter also includes listings for other free and paid arts and culture events taking place over the course of the following week. The newsletter currently has over 17,000 subscribers, making ArtSavers a valuable outlet for free promotion for the artists and events that are selected for inclusion each week.

End Note


5 Ibid.


10 Arts Council, Grant Guidelines, 13.

11 “Arts Council Historical Note.”


13 Ibid.


17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 “25 for 25.”


24 Ibid.

25 “Arts Council Historical Note.”


28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.


34 Ibid.

37 “About the Community Arts Awards.”


39 Ibid.


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.


Chapter Three: The Internship

I began my internship with the Arts Council of New Orleans in January 2013. I spent the majority of my time with the Arts Council under Ms. Glatz in the Marketing Department. Although I was occasionally helped with small projects, my day to day activities usually involved managing and updating ArtsNewOrleans.org, as well as planning and creating the weekly ArtSavers newsletter. I also helped coordinate the Color Run event, a five kilometer race that partially benefited the Arts Council. Perhaps the most valuable day of my internship was the day I spent as the notetaker during a grant panel. As the notetaker, I was able to witness first-hand how funding decisions are made by various members of the arts community that volunteer to participate. By the time I finished my internship in June 2013, I had nearly full discretion over the content featured on the ArtsNewOrleans website and in the ArtSavers newsletter, and I spent my final weeks at the Arts Council training and managing the new interns who would eventually succeed me.

The Marketing Department

Soon after starting my internship, Ms. Glatz trained two other interns and me on how to use the ArtsNewOrleans.org administrative panel, and how to properly format images for the featured events on the ArtsNewOrleans homepage. Managing the content on ArtsNewOrleans required continuous effort; every day new event submissions had to be reviewed and approved. Every week the featured events that had expired had to be replaced with new, upcoming events. Often, I would check the pending event submissions as my first task upon arriving to the office. The interns reviewed the events submitted by users in order to determine if events were arts-related, and to confirm that the submissions included all the necessary information. Very often,
these submissions lacked the level of detail required for posting to the calendar, and I would conduct research on the event in order to gather additional information. I also worked with the graphics for these postings; sometimes submitted images required reformatting, and other times I would have to locate images for submissions that did not include images. Users often uploaded the same event multiple times if they did not see their event appear on the calendar immediately, despite the fact that ArtsNewOrleans displays a message after events are uploaded stating that any submitted event will post pending approval. In these cases, I would review each of the multiple submissions to identify which submission provided the greatest level of detail. Depending on the number of pending events in queue, and the number of interns in the office on a given day, this process could take several hours.

In addition to managing the calendar, I also bore responsibility for updating the featured events on the ArtsNewOrleans homepage. For the first several weeks after I began my internship, Ms. Glatz would tell us which events to include as features, but as I became familiar with the process, Ms. Glatz let me decide on the features with minimal supervision. Selecting feature events required a certain amount of curatorial skill; features needed to be noteworthy and interesting, and in some cases not well-publicized elsewhere. Because the featured events were on the homepage, I had to take extra care to ensure the correct formatting of the event images in order to eliminate warping or pixelation. Featured events also required a short description. Writing concise descriptions of these events often fell to me as well. Selecting an event to feature, formatting the feature image, and writing copy for the event description could take several hours per event, and because the features needed to be changed once an event was expired, I spent a good deal of my time managing this aspect of ArtsNewOrleans. After about six weeks working at the Arts Council, I suggested finding features scheduled for a week to ten days
in the future in order to give the featured event adequate exposure on the front page, and to reduce the number of featured events that needed updating each week. Ms. Glatz liked this idea, and I continued to implement it through the rest of my internship.

The other major responsibility I held during my internship with the Arts Council was managing the ArtSavers newsletter. When I first started my internship, the ArtSavers newsletter consisted of a featured event, five free events, five paid events, and any events that were offering an ArtSavers deal of at least fifty percent off their ticket price. The event information was formatted in HTML, then uploaded to the Arts Council website’s content management system. The content management system then further formatted the information into a custom template that could be uploaded to MyEmma, an email marketing program used by the Arts Council. From there, the ArtSavers newsletter could be sent out to subscribers. Two months into my internship, the Arts Council website developed some technical issues, and we were unable to use the custom template for the ArtSavers newsletter. Instead, Ms. Glatz chose a template provided by MyEmma, but this template only allowed for eight entries, and required images to be included with each entry. We originally planned to use this template temporarily until we could access the Arts Council website’s content management system again, but we received so much positive feedback from subscribers that Ms. Glatz decided to use the MyEmma template going forward. Using the MyEmma template cut down on the number of events included in the ArtSavers newsletter, but the events that were included now required an image and a short description, much like the featured events on ArtsNewOrleans. Finding events for the newsletter, writing the copy for their descriptions, and formatting their images took several days to complete. The newsletter had a hard Thursday afternoon deadline in order for us to send it out on schedule.
Because of this deadline, the newsletter often took precedence over other tasks, like managing ArtsNewOrleans.org.

**The Color Run**

Another task I assumed early in my internship was to research potential volunteer groups in New Orleans that could help staff the Color Run, a five-kilometer race where runners are showered with colorful paint powder at each kilometer checkpoint. The Color Run organizers partner with non-profit organizations in their host cities, and donate a portion of each registration sold to this charity partner.¹ In return, the non-profit supplies as many volunteers as possible to staff the Color Run event. Because the Arts Council does not regularly recruit volunteers, or keep a volunteer database, we struggled to find enough people to help with the event. Additionally, the Color Run was scheduled for the Saturday before Mardi Gras, in Mid City, on the day of Endymion, one of the largest parades of the Carnival season and the only one that runs through that particular neighborhood. This made it particularly difficult to find volunteers for this event. Logistically, the event was far from ideal, and I spent several days in January researching schools, churches, and civic groups in an attempt to find volunteers for the Color Run. Another intern spent a day calling and emailing the contacts I had discovered in my research, and Ms. Glatz contacted friends and members of the Arts Council to ask for their assistance with the Color Run.

For two days before the race, the Arts Council staff and interns met for several hours at the event location to check in registered runners and to pass out gear and participant numbers. The morning of the race, we were all on site at seven a.m. to continue checking in the runners and hand them their gear and numbers. Fortunately, we had a handful of volunteers arrive to help us, but check-in still took more than two hours. The race started while dozens of runners were
still waiting check in. We spent the remainder of the morning packing up gear and cleaning the event site. Even with the small number of volunteers and staff on hand to help, the Color Run was a success. Approximately 8,000 runners participated in the event, and the Arts Council received roughly $3,500 as the event’s non-profit partner.

During the frenzy leading up to the Color Run, I came to realize that Ms. Glatz was often assigned responsibilities that were not part of her job description. Ms. Glatz was almost solely responsible for organizing the event with the Color Run organizers, even though volunteer management and event coordination do not fall under the purview of the Marketing Department. I realize that in every small non-profit organization individuals are expected to help wherever they are needed. However, in my observations, Ms. Glatz was given any and all projects that did clearly fall into the job description of other staff members. This is not to say that other staff members did not work hard, but I was discouraged that these additional tasks and projects that arose were not more evenly distributed amongst the staff. Once Ms. Cook took office as CEO of the Arts Council, she quickly noticed that Ms. Glatz performed duties above and beyond her job description. Part of Ms. Cook’s restructuring of the organization involved more strictly defining the staff’s job roles and responsibilities to clarify who should handle various projects as they arose. I completed my internship soon after Ms. Cook’s arrival, so I did not observe the extent of the changes the new CEO made.

**The Grant Panel**

Although I learned a great deal about content management and photo editing working in the Marketing Department, acting as notetaker during a grant panel was the most interesting and exciting task I was assigned during my internship at the Arts Council. The Arts Council holds grant panels to determine which grant applications will receive funding. Each panel is composed
of volunteers from the arts community with expertise in the field. Panelists receive the grant applications they will be scoring several days before the panel meeting so they can read each one thoroughly. On the day of the grant panel, the panelists and the grant managers at the Arts Council meet at nine a.m. The grant managers go over the scoring criteria. Then the discussion begins. Each application is allotted fifteen minutes for discussion, and between twenty to thirty applications are reviewed during each panel. The panels usually last the entire day, at the end of which the scores for each application are tallied, and highest-scoring applications are awarded funding. The number of applications that are awarded grants depends on the amount of funding available.

The notetaker’s job is to write down everything said by panelists while discussing each application. These notes provide explanations as to why certain applications receive funding and others do not, if an applicant later makes inquiry. As a notetaker, I served as a “fly on the wall,” so I did not contribute to the discussion. Even so, I gained incredible insight into the grant funding process. I observed that community impact and diversity were two factors that weighed heavily in the decision of whom to fund. Grant applications that did not adequately explain how their projects would benefit the community were not well-received by the panelists. In general, the applications that lacked information, or provided inaccurate information, were more easily dismissed; an incomplete budget or missing resumés for key project participants caused the panelists to call into question the organization’s ability to manage its grant funding.

Although I already knew that following grant application instructions closely and providing all requested information is incredibly important when applying for a grant, it was not until I sat in on the grant panel that I truly understood why. First, an incomplete or inadequate application leaves too many questions unanswered for the panelists. A grant panel is taking a
greater risk funding an application that does not provide important information such as budget, staff, and means of measuring outcomes. Without knowing those factors that contribute to the strength and solvency of an organization, and the impact of its initiatives, the grant panel cannot make an informed funding decision. If an application is not completed thoroughly, the applicant appears unreliable. Second, with so many applications to consider, an incomplete or inadequate application cannot compete with more thorough applications. When compared side by side, the thorough application will almost always impress a grant panel more than an incomplete application, even if the latter proposes a more interesting project.

I made several other useful observations while taking notes during the grant panel. Supplemental materials, such as videos or photographs, greatly enhanced any grant applications that included them. These materials allowed the panelists to gain a better understanding of the applicant and the project that the grant would fund. In addition, these supplemental materials often demonstrated the past successes of an applicant. The inclusion of such materials gave applicants yet another way to thoroughly and meaningfully demonstrate their competitiveness in the grant process. I also observed that the panel held an apparent preference for multicultural projects or projects diverse in expression. I am not aware if this factor was included in the formal scoring matrix, but the panelists seemed especially impressed by grant applications for culturally diverse projects. I also noticed was that the panelists seemed more averse to projects that were assumed already to have a reliable funding source. Ms. Reynolds, the Arts Council’s grant manager who moderated the panel, reminded the panelists several times that this should not be taken into account when deciding which applications to fund, and that only the criteria outlined in the scoring matrix should be considered. Still, I believe there was a bias towards smaller, less well-established applicants, because the issue continued to arise throughout the day.
After each application was discussed, panelists spent a few minutes scoring, then submitted their scores to the grant managers. At the end of the day, the scores were tallied, and the top ten highest scoring applications were awarded funding. This was perhaps my only qualm with the grant panel process that is, scoring each application after it is discussed instead of at the end of the day. I think it would be more fair to take notes and give preliminary scores to each application after discussing it, and then once all the applications have been discussed, deciding then what each application’s final score will be. A panelist may give an application a higher score at the beginning of the day because he or she is feeling more energetic and enthusiastic, but by the end of the day, he or she may be more inclined towards lower scores because of fatigue or frustration. Alternately, a panelist may give an application a lower score in the beginning of the day because he or she is expecting more exceptional applications as the day goes on, only to find that the earlier application deserved a higher score relative to subsequent applications. I assume that applications are scored after each discussion so the panelists’ impressions are fresh in their minds. But when one considers that applications are batched together to be reviewed by a grant panel, and that only the top ten or fifteen applications per batch will be funded, it is important to consider each application in relation to the others in the batch. Perhaps there is a downside to this type of relative scoring that I am not aware of, having so little experience with grant funding. At any rate, whether or not I agree with the method, it is the one currently used by the Arts Council, and I assume other grant funding organizations as well.

The day I took notes for the grant panel was a full one, with final scores being tallied and funding decisions agreed upon around five p.m. After the panelists left, I went through the notes I had taken on the computer during the panel, organizing them and correcting spelling and grammar mistakes. Once I finished, I provided the document to Mrs. Reynolds, who thanked me
for being so thorough. That day also happened to be my last as an intern for the Arts Council, so I was pleased that my internship ended on such a high note.

Although I would have liked to have spent more time working in other departments at the Arts Council, by working almost exclusively in the Marketing Department I learned enough to become an essential member of the team. After just a short time working there, I was entrusted with managing ArtsNewOrleans.org and the ArtSavers newsletter with very little oversight, and I was even given a leadership role when other interns arrived at the end of my tenure. My experience in the Marketing Department, and the insights I gained as a notetaker for a grant panel, allowed me to leave my internship feeling more enriched than when I arrived.

End Notes

Chapter Four: S/W/O/T Analysis

Despite being a well-established organization, the Arts Council of New Orleans continues to face challenges to its on-going operations. Some of these challenges are a result of the lingering effects of the failure of Louisiana ArtWorks, others are the result of funding or budget issues, and still others are the kinds of challenges that all small non-profit organizations face. Fortunately, the Arts Council is prepared to overcome many of these challenges, and is poised to become the region’s primary supporter of the cultural economy. In the following chapter, I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses that I observed during my internship with the organization, as well as the opportunities and threats that will effect the Arts Council’s success in the future.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• New Leadership</td>
<td>• Prospect.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fundraising</td>
<td>• Office of Cultural Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arts Business Program</td>
<td>• University Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ArtsNewOrleans.org</td>
<td>• Hotel &amp; Tourism Industry Partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Board Governance</td>
<td>• Image Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technology</td>
<td>• Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volunteer Management &amp; Outreach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Membership Benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths

New Leadership

In May of 2013, Kim Cook was hired as the new CEO of the Arts Council, replacing Interim CEO Mary Len Costa. Following the resignation of former CEO Shirley Trusty Corey in 2007, Ms. Costa led the organization during a tumultuous period as the Arts Council slowly disassociated itself from Louisiana ArtWorks. Unfortunately, as Interim CEO, Ms. Costa lacked the full agency needed to make significant changes to the organization’s operations. With a permanent CEO in place, the Arts Council will be able to grow and evolve as is necessary for a healthy organization.

Having a permanent leader after many years operating under an interim director is a strength in and of itself. But Ms. Cook’s background and expertise will especially benefit the Arts Council in its mission to provide support and resources to the arts community in New Orleans. Prior to her position with the Arts Council, Ms. Cook was Associate Director for the Nonprofit Finance Fund for the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions.\(^1\) The Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) advises organizations on making strategic financial decisions in order to “connect money to mission effectively.”\(^2\) In addition to its role as an advisor, the NFF also provides loans and access to other financing for nonprofit organizations. During her time with the NFF, Ms. Cook assisted more than eighty organizations in “re-design[ing] established arts business models [in order] to encourage a more in-depth connection of arts and culture in... [their] communities.”\(^3\) It was her position at the NFF that first brought her to New Orleans in 2009 and 2010, when she was asked to provide a financial assessment of Louisiana ArtWorks.\(^4\) Ms. Cook’s insight into the successful financial structures of nonprofit organizations, as well as her understanding of the failings of Louisiana ArtWorks, will greatly benefit the Arts Council’s own financial health.
In addition to her background and expertise, Ms. Cook also brings a strategic vision to the organization that will strengthen its role in the arts community. As one of earliest proponents of the theory of cultural economy, Ms. Cook already understands the importance of the Arts Council of New Orleans for the arts community, but she believes its impact must be expanded. In an interview with Sharon Litwin, president of NolaVie, Ms. Cook explains, “The traditional purview of the Arts Council has been in professional development and technical assistance.... I think that’s important; I also think that teaching people professional skills in a marketplace that doesn’t provide opportunity is only half the equation.” Beyond helping artists professionally, Ms. Cook would like to expand opportunities for artists in the local economy, as well as create more opportunities for the community to be exposed to local art. She also believes that the Arts Council can move beyond simply impacting the cultural economy, and actually invest in the cultural economy as well. Ms. Cook’s goals and vision for the Arts Council are all laudable, but it is her belief in the importance of technology that I believe will have the most immediate impact. As Ms. Cook states in her interview with Ms. Litwin, “I have... a very up-to-date understanding of new technology and its intersection in the arts.” Hopefully this understanding will result in a technology upgrade for the Arts Council’s computer equipment and its websites. As I describe in detail below, the Arts Council’s technology was seriously lacking during my internship, and an upgrade would greatly improve the efficiency of the staff, especially in the marketing department.

**Fundraising**

Since its inception, the core of the Arts Council’s fundraising initiatives included soliciting memberships, selling tickets for its annual Community Arts Awards gala, and applying for grants from local and national foundations and nonprofits. But over the past seven years, the
organization has expanded and diversified its fundraising capabilities. It added several additional sources of recurring revenue through its monthly Arts Market and its annual Dirty Linen Night event. The Arts Council has also taken part in smaller fundraising events, like the Color Run in 2012 and 2013. Its increased capacity for fundraising through multiple channels is one of the Arts Council’s greatest strengths, yet its traditional methods for fundraising have also been improved since Ms. Cook’s arrival in May of 2013.

No longer acting as Interim CEO, Ms. Costa has been appointed as Major Gifts and Foundations Officer. For the first time since 2007, the Arts Council has a full-time executive overseeing major fundraising activities involving large donations and grants. Considering the fact that the organization was able to secure these types of funds without executive oversight in the past, it can be assumed that the Arts Council will greatly increase the impact of its fundraising with Ms. Costa directing these initiatives.

In addition, Dolita Brown has been given more fundraising responsibilities under the direction of Ms. Cook. In the past, Ms. Brown assisted with membership renewals and the Community Arts Awards, but her new role as Membership Manager grants her additional responsibilities involving small donations and other tasks centered around the Arts Council’s traditional fundraising methods. Having a member of staff who is dedicated to increasing and improving upon these types of activities adds value to its already effective fundraising capabilities.

**Arts Business Program**

The Arts Council’s Arts Business Program has long been one of its greatest strengths. Through workshops and one-on-one consultations, the Arts Council teaches artists to approach their practice in a business-like manner, which provides these artists with the necessary
knowledge to support themselves with their art. Through its Arts Business Program, the Arts Council seeks to replace the concept of the “starving artist” with the belief that being an artist is a legitimate career, and it that should be treated as such. Artists that complete the program gain valuable skills in business planning, marketing, and community outreach, and they gain confidence in the worth of their occupation and the art they produce. As more artists in New Orleans receive training in the Arts Business Program, a professional class of artists emerges, and the community’s access to original artwork becomes more easily obtainable. In this way, the Arts Business Program is one of the best examples of how the Arts Council is achieving its mission to “support and... expand the opportunities for diverse artistic expression.”

The Arts Business Program also offers workshops and consultations for other arts organizations in the city. The staff of these budding organizations learn skills that are critical to the success of non-profits, such as fundraising and board development. In addition to business training, these arts organizations are given access to group health insurance for their full-time staff, and are made aware of upcoming grant opportunities through the Arts Council. Because many non-profit arts organizations are focused on underserved populations, providing these organizations with the expertise they need to be successful results in expanded access to the arts for underserved communities in New Orleans. Here again, the achievement of the Arts Council’s mission to support and expand the arts in New Orleans is especially evident.

The success of the Arts Business Program has led to its expansion to other cities. Lindsay Glatz and Gene Meneray, who lead the Artist as Entrepreneur workshops, have visited Shreveport, Louisiana multiple times over the past two years to provide training to artists and arts organizations there, and will soon turn over administration of the Arts Business Program in that city to the Shreveport Arts Council. The program may soon expand to other cities in the
region as well; the Arts Council recently announced on its website that it will host its Arts Business Development workshops in other cities as requested, provided these cities are willing to pay the associated fees and travel expenses for the staff. Although its potential for expansion is exciting, the impact of the Arts Business Program on the local arts community is more important. Considering the value that it provides to artists and arts organizations in New Orleans, the Arts Business Program is one of the Arts Council’s most prominent strengths.

**ArtsNewOrleans.org**

The Arts Council’s event listings website, ArtsNewOrleans.org, continues to grow into a strong asset for the organization. Although there exist several other local websites that offer a broad assortment of events, these sites can be difficult to navigate. Additionally, these sites often lack detail about the event that a consumer may like to know. ArtsNewOrleans is specifically focused on art-related events in the city, and it often provides details and pictures related to the event, as well as a map of the venue’s location. It also provides links to artist and venue profiles from the event listing itself, so a consumer can learn more about a particular event before deciding to attend. This kind of information is valuable in a community like New Orleans that is rich in attractions because it allows consumers to make informed decisions about how and where they spend their time and money. The depth of information provided on ArtsNewOrleans allows consumers to assess all aspects of an art event before attending, which encourages consumers to explore arts events they may not otherwise be willing to attend. It also reduces the risk of disappointment for consumers and increases the likelihood that they will be satisfied with their experience.

ArtsNewOrleans not only provides the community with a resource for finding art events in the city, it also provides artists and venues with an outlet for free publicity. Using
ArtsNewOrleans, artists and venues can promote themselves to the community by creating a profile and uploading events to the website. Those that are willing to spend time providing details and high-resolution images for their profiles and event listings are able to stand out from their competition, a feature that is lacking in the other event listing websites for New Orleans. Despite the fact that the Arts Council is most often associated with the visual arts, ArtsNewOrleans gives equal exposure to the various art forms found in the city, including culinary arts, theater, dance, literature, film, and music. This is a subtle indication of the Arts Council’s desire to grow beyond its role as the city’s official arts agency into an organization that is involved in all aspects of the arts community. Although ArtsNewOrleans is in need of some improvement, it is still a valuable tool the Arts Council uses to achieve its mission of supporting artists, and expanding access to the arts in New Orleans.

**Weaknesses**

**Board Governance**

When I first began my internship with the Arts Council in January of 2013, Ms. Costa was acting as the Interim Executive Director, and the search for a permanent CEO was still underway. In April of 2013, the staff was notified that Ms. Cook had been hired for the position and would start the first of May. From what I observed, the Board of Directors did not keep the staff well-informed about its hiring process for the new CEO. The board was not forthcoming about the qualifications and experience it expected potential candidates to possess, nor was the staff given a time-table for when to expect a new CEO to be hired. While some level of confidentiality is to be expected from the board, its lack of communication with the staff regarding such an important decision is problematic. Keeping the staff uninformed and
uninvolved fosters distrust towards the board, and more importantly, it marginalizes the people that have kept the organization running during a tumultuous and uncertain time.

What is more disconcerting than its lack of communication with the staff is the amount of time it took for board to hire a new CEO. The former CEO of the Arts Council, Shirley Trusty Corey, officially resigned from the position on May 16, 2007.11 Ms. Cook was officially hired as CEO on the first of May, 2013. It took the board just short of six years to hire a replacement CEO. Even assuming that the board was caught unprepared when Ms. Corey resigned, it should not have taken more than eighteen months to hire a replacement. To illustrate this point, consider the following examples. After the sudden and untimely death of its CEO Derek Gordon in September of 2012,12 the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge hired its new CEO, Eric Holowacz, within nine months.13 In March of 2013, Milton Rhodes announced his intention to resign as CEO of the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, in North Carolina. At the time of his announcement, Mr. Rhodes designated the thirtieth of September as his last day in office. His replacement, Jim Sparrow, was hired within six months of Mr. Rhodes’ announcement, and Mr. Sparrow took over as CEO on the first of October, 2013.14 The Greater Hartford Arts Council in Connecticut took just three months to hire its new CEO, Cathy Mallow, following former CEO Kate Bolduc’s July 2011 announcement that she would resign once her replacement was found.15 Even the board of a multi-billion dollar company like Microsoft, which is beholden to its shareholders, hired its new CEO, Satya Nadella, within six months of announcing the retirement of former CEO Steve Ballmer.16,17

The fact that the Board of Directors for the Arts Council of New Orleans was unable to hire a new CEO in a more timely manner points to some serious issues with its internal governance. Ms. Cook had to apply for the position twice before being asked in for an interview,
which indicates that the board was unable to even agree on which applicants to consider for the position.\textsuperscript{18} Because the board’s minutes are not public record, there is no way of knowing exactly why these issues exist within the board. It may be due to board members’ disinterest, as many of them serve on multiple boards around the city.\textsuperscript{19} It may also be due to personality conflicts and power struggles between the elected and non-elected board members, most of who are influential and well-established New Orleanians. Whatever the reasons, board governance remains a significant weakness for the Arts Council, and one that is particularly difficult to address.

\textbf{Technology}

Because a large part of my responsibilities at the Arts Council involved using a computers to manage the ArtsNewOrleans website, I quickly became aware of the Arts Council’s need for new computers, updated software, and a reliable web designer that will fix the many bugs that affect ArtsNewOrleans’ functionality. The computer that I used initially during my internship was an Apple Power Mac G4 MDD, which Apple discontinued after 2004.\textsuperscript{20} The monitor for this computer was no longer attached to its stand, so it leaned against a heavy Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) placed behind it for the purpose of keeping it erect. This arrangement was precarious, and the monitor often slid down to fall heavily upon the desk while I was working. The USB connector for the keyboard, which was plugged into the back of the monitor, was eventually crushed from the weight the falling monitor. Even with a mangled USB connector, this keyboard was still in use when I finished my internship in June of 2013.

The operating system for this Power Mac G4 was Mac OS X version 10.5, also known as Mac OS X Leopard, which was released in 2007. The hardware in the computer is so outdated that it cannot support an operating system any more recent than OS X Leopard, which limits the kinds of software that can be installed and used on the computer. This is especially apparent
when using the Internet. Safari, Apple’s proprietary web browser that was installed on the computer, often crashed during use because it was unable to process and render the more modern programming code that is used to make websites today. These crashes resulted in hours of wasted effort and loss of work while managing the ArtsNewOrleans website and creating the ArtSavers newsletter. When I was the only intern at the office, I was able to use a Dell laptop that had an updated web browser that did not crash, but I still found it necessary to use the Power Mac for Photoshop. I found myself editing images on the Power Mac, emailing them to myself, then opening my email on the Dell in order download the images so that I could upload them to the website. This arrangement was clearly inefficient, but prevented the loss of work I experienced while using the Power Mac to manage the website and newsletter.

In addition to an outdated and slow computer with outdated and slow software, and a monitor that fell heavily upon the desk while I worked, the ArtsNewOrleans website often failed to work as expected. Sometimes just loading the homepage resulted in an error message reading “Unable to Access Server,” or “Site Down for Maintenance.” Other times, certain pages on the site would not render correctly, making them impossible to navigate. Every day, there were issues of this sort while using ArtsNewOrleans. I brought these issues to Ms. Glatz’s attention fairly early in my tenure with the Arts Council, and she acknowledged the problems. She explained that the site was built by the Canary Collective, a local web development firm that donated its time to design and implement ArtsNewOrleans. Soon after the website was deployed, Ms. Glatz relayed the problems the site was experiencing to the developers at the Canary Collective, but they have been slow to respond. As a pro bono client, Ms. Glatz does not have the leverage to insist the problems be fixed quickly, and so these bugs remain.
Similarly, the e-newsletter program that the Arts Council uses, MyEmma, is either donated or a free version, so there is a limited assortment of layouts and templates to use for the ArtSavers newsletter. This did not become an issue until a bug in the Arts Council’s website prevented us from using the custom format that Ms. Glatz had originally designed. Without access to the Arts Council’s content management system, Ms. Glatz had to choose a MyEmma template that reduced the number of event listings that could be included in the newsletter. Fortunately, many subscribers preferred the new ArtSavers format, so we continued to use the MyEmma template for the remainder of my internship. Although I believe that MyEmma is a great program for email marketing, I mention this to illustrate the point that because it is donated or a free version, the Arts Council is unable to to use the program to its fullest extent. What is more, the Arts Council was forced to choose from a limited selection of MyEmma templates in the first place because its website was not working. Because the Arts Council relies on discounted or donated time from its web designers to fix the website when it is not working, these issues are addressed at the web designer’s leisure. Furthermore, the Arts Council’s website is in need of modernization to improve its overall functionality and appearance; it is difficult to navigate, and the homepage is cluttered with text.

As an intern, I was relegated to the oldest and least useful computer, but the other staff experienced their own issues with technology. Ms. Glatz used a PC laptop as her main computer, and aside from the fact it was not as powerful as a desktop computer, it stopped working altogether several times, and required a visit from an IT technician in order to fix it. The printer in the back of the office often went offline or would not print. The projector in the conference room was unreliable, and it was difficult to predict when it would work and when it would not. Any one of these technological issues taken alone would not be a weakness. But taken together,
this outdated technology leads to extreme inefficiencies, at least for the marketing department. Unreliable technology also leads to missed deadlines and missed opportunities that the Arts Council cannot afford.

**Volunteer Management & Outreach**

Early in my internship, I supported the coordination and management of the Color Run, a casual, five-kilometer race during which runners are doused with paint powder at various points along the route. The Color Run organizers partnered with the Arts Council during a previous race in 2012, and the arrangement for their 2013 race remained the same: the Arts Council received between eight cents and one dollar for every participant paying the registration fee, and the Arts Council provides volunteers to staff the event. Recruiting volunteers for the 2012 race had been relatively easy, but the 2013 race took place on Saturday, February ninth, the weekend before Mardi Gras. To make matters more difficult, the race was held at seven a.m., in City Park, on the Saturday when one of the largest parades of the season, Endymion, rolls through the Mid City neighborhood where City Park is located. Finding volunteers to help with the Color Run on that day at that time in that section of the city was almost impossible. I was tasked with researching church youth groups, Key Clubs, and Scout Troops in an effort to find at least one group of young people willing to volunteer with the Arts Council to staff the Color Run. The other intern working with me called at least twenty organizations trying to secure volunteers. On the day of the race, we had about ten volunteers show up to help, in addition to the Arts Council and Color Run staff. Fortunately, this was an adequate number, and the race was a success. But I was surprised to learn, as we prepared for this event, that the Arts Council has no volunteer management system in place, and no defined method for volunteer outreach.
The Arts Council participated in a Color Run in November of 2012, only a few months before the 2013 race, yet the names and contact information of the volunteers from the 2012 race had not been saved for future reference. Only a few paying members of the Arts Council were contacted and asked to volunteer. No board members volunteered. Because the Arts Council had not saved the volunteer information from its last event, it was unable to reach out to people that may have been willing to volunteer with the organization again. In the absence of a volunteer management system, we used the highly ineffective approach of cold-calling churches and schools to recruit volunteers. The amount of effort that we expended in locating and contacting these groups was not proportionate to the number of volunteers that showed up on the day of the event.

Not having any volunteer management system or volunteer outreach process represents a considerable weakness for the Arts Council. It is vital that small non-profit organizations maintain databases of volunteer contact information and develop consistent volunteer outreach processes in order to supplement a small staff when the need arises. Even organizations that do not hold events that require manpower should have a list of volunteers that can help with small projects around the office. Until the Arts Council creates a system for capturing volunteer data and for reaching out to potential volunteers, it will continue to find itself short-handed during its events, and it will continue to receive only a lukewarm response when reaching out to potential volunteer groups in the community.

Membership Benefits

Sustaining membership and increasing membership are important goals for non-profit organizations. Membership dues can account for a significant percentage of a non-profit’s annual revenue, and loyal members become outspoken advocates for the organizations they support. In
the Arts Council’s case, membership dues accounted for around $48,000 of its annual budget in 2011. Although that is a laudable amount of revenue for a non-profit, it represents a small fraction of what it could be when one considers the number of people that benefit from the Arts Council’s services. The organization’s membership numbers remain low due to the structure of its membership benefits. The lowest level of membership with the Arts Council is the Arts Entrepreneur level, which costs seventy-five dollars per year. At this level, members are given access to a few services they may not otherwise have access to, such as group health insurance (for full-time staff of arts organization members), credit union services, and some legal services. In addition, members at this level receive reduced rates for Arts Business Program workshops, and can receive one-on-one assistance from staff members in developing an arts business plan, marketing plan, or in finding resources to help their arts business grow. Arts Entrepreneur members also receive invitations to members-only events, though the details of these events are not provided.

While these are all great benefits for artists and arts organizations, they do not benefit the average arts consumer. The next highest level of membership at the Arts Council is Arts Enthusiast, which costs $150 per year. This level includes the benefits listed above, as well as use of the Arts Council conference room once per year, and one patron ticket to the Community Arts Awards. The Arts Enthusiast’s benefits are better, but still lack appeal; without an additional ticket for a guest, a member at that level may not want to attend the Community Arts Awards, and access to the Arts Council’s conference room once per year is a benefit that the average consumer is unlikely to utilize. The next level of membership is the Arts Patron, which costs $250 annually. This level includes the previously listed benefits, as well as two patron tickets to the Community Arts Awards, an entry into a quarterly gift basket drawing, and twenty-five Arts
Market dollars. The Arts Patron’s benefits are appealing, but the cost is prohibitive to most consumers in New Orleans. There are even higher levels of membership that come with additional perks, like an increased number of tickets to the Community Arts Awards, and more Arts Market dollars. These higher levels of membership are meant to appeal arts patrons in the community, and the annual costs range from $500 to $20,000.

By not including more appealing and tangible benefits with the affordable membership levels, the Arts Council is limiting the number of people in the region that would be interested in becoming members. Part of the issue is determining what exactly the Arts Council could offer in the way of membership benefits for the lower tiers. A museum organization can offer free admission to its exhibits and events, as well as discounts at its gift shop, as enticing reasons to become a member. Orchestras and theaters can offer its members advance tickets to popular shows, or discounted tickets, or even reserved seating. The Arts Council simply does not have comparable offerings for its members, and many of the offerings it does have are given away for free already.

**Opportunities**

**Prospect.3**

Prospect New Orleans is an international art biennial that held its first exhibit in the city in 2008 and 2009. It was conceived by Dan Cameron, a long-time curator of international biennials in Taipei and Istanbul, who regularly visited New Orleans to attend Jazz Fest. At the invitation of friends in the New Orleans’ art community, Cameron visited the city in 2006 to attend a public meeting focused on how the arts could be used as a tool in rebuilding the city after Hurricane Katrina. Cameron was aware of the “social and financial benefits” of international biennials for their host cities, and he believed that this type of event could revitalize
New Orleans in ways traditional routes to recovery could not. Cameron received seed money from a philanthropist named Toby Devan Lewis, and used these funds to launch the first Prospect New Orleans exhibit. Artists from around the world exhibited their works at major arts venues as well as non-art venues, which provided access to the event to underserved portions of the population. The first Prospect exhibition, called Prospect.1, was a financial success, and was well received by the community. Since its inception, Prospect New Orleans has held two additional exhibitions; one smaller-scale, regional exhibition in late 2010, early 2011, and one international exhibition like Prospect.1 in late 2011, early 2012.26

Prospect.3 is set to open in the fall of 2014, and the event offers an opportunity to the Arts Council of New Orleans to further establish itself as the city’s primary arts supporting organization. Not only could the Arts Council sponsor events and exhibits during the biennial, it could also foster a stronger partnership with Prospect New Orleans, which would be mutually beneficial to both organizations. As a cornerstone in the arts community, the Arts Council can lend its reputation and professional network to Prospect New Orleans and its staff. The Arts Council could also help Prospect New Orleans navigate the bureaucracy of City Hall, as well as the sensitivities of the various communities where Prospect events may take place. Prospect New Orleans could in turn increase the prominence of the Arts Council in the region through its involvement with the exhibition. As an international biennial, Prospect New Orleans has a certain amount of clout in the national arts community, and the more involved the Arts Council is in Prospect’s events, the more the Arts Council will be recognized as an important arts institution in the region. This national exposure increases the ability of the Arts Council to secure grants funding from foundations, as well as donations from local and regional philanthropists. With a higher profile, the Arts Council will also be able to keep and perhaps increase the
operational support it receives in the City’s annual budget. With increased involvement in Prospect.3, the Arts Council would also be able to pique community interest in the organization’s other events, such as Dirty Linen Night and the Community Arts Awards.

In the past, the Arts Council has been partially involved with Prospect New Orleans exhibitions. The Arts Council provided financial support through a small grant in 2012\textsuperscript{27}, and prior to that, in 2009, honored Dan Cameron with the Chairman’s Award at the Arts Council’s Community Arts Awards.\textsuperscript{28} The Arts Council has also successfully capitalized on Prospect’s exhibitions in the past; during Prospect.1, the Arts Council commissioned twenty public art projects to be installed, coinciding with the exhibition.\textsuperscript{29} But with Prospect.3, the Arts Council has the opportunity to be at the forefront as one of Prospect New Orleans’ biggest supporters. In 2013, the Arts Council literally opened its doors to Prospect New Orleans by allowing them to share their office space on Gravier Street.\textsuperscript{30} Building up the association between the Arts Council and Prospect New Orleans would be mutually beneficial to both organizations; Prospect New Orleans gains credibility and acceptance locally, while the Arts Council gains credibility and acceptance regionally and nationally.

**Office of Cultural Economy**

Following his election in 2010, Mayor Mitch Landrieu established the Office of Cultural Economy, a department within the Mayor’s Office\textsuperscript{31} tasked with quantifying the impact of arts and culture on New Orleans’ economy, and advising the Mayor on how to strengthen and increase this impact.\textsuperscript{32} To this end, the Office of Cultural Economy releases an annual report entitled “New Orleans Cultural Economy Snapshot,” which neatly summarizes the economic impact of the various cultural sectors in the city.\textsuperscript{33} Aside from its role in measuring the economics of arts and culture in New Orleans, the Office of Cultural Economy is well-known for
its involvement with the film industry, and much of its effort has been put towards attracting movie and television productions to the city.\textsuperscript{34} This department also manages the Cultural Products Districts for the city, areas that are considered cultural hubs where sales of original artwork are exempt from local and state sales tax. In addition, the Office of Cultural Economy manages zoning and permitting for cultural businesses in New Orleans.\textsuperscript{35}

Establishing a department in the Mayor’s office specifically tasked with cultural economic development was a recommendation made by the Arts Council in a 2010 memo to the City entitled “To Preserve the City’s Culture with Government as a Partner.”\textsuperscript{36} The Office of Cultural Economy functions in much the same way as originally suggested in this memo. By establishing the Office of Cultural Economy, Mayor Mitch Landrieu has indicated that he respects the Arts Council’s input on questions of how to improve the state of arts and culture in New Orleans. In turn, the Arts Council respects the role and function of the Office of Cultural Economy because its establishment was an idea conceived by the organization itself. With this sense of mutual respect, an opportunity exists for collaboration that would strengthen both the Arts Council and the Office of Cultural Economy. Establishing a stronger partnership through information sharing and direct communication would benefit the Office of Cultural Economy and the Arts Council. The Arts Council is in a unique position to contribute valuable information to the Office of Cultural Economy’s annual Cultural Economy Snapshot, because of its relationship with artists in the city, and its knowledge of the many arts organizations in the city that apply for grants. The Arts Council could also relay important information to the public regarding Cultural Products Districts and other Office of Cultural Economy initiatives, which it has already done in the past to some extent.\textsuperscript{37} Increasing the association between the Office of Cultural Economy and the Arts Council would give the Arts Council a higher profile within City
government, making it more indispensable, and helping to justify its operating costs in the City budget. The Arts Council would also benefit from an increased association with the Office of Cultural Economy because it would demonstrate that the organization is expanding its presence in the arts community beyond grant administration and the visual arts. As a relatively new department in the City government, the Office of Cultural Economy is still growing into whatever its final role will be. The Arts Council should capitalize on the current plasticity of the Office of Cultural Economy by establishing a closer relationship with it. Not only would they both benefit individually, but the entire community would benefit from increased access to important information about the opportunities available in the local cultural economy.

**University Outreach**

New Orleans is home to several public and private universities full of young and enthusiastic students. Although the Arts Council has approached New Orleans universities in the past in search of volunteers and interns, its efforts at establishing long-term partnerships with these universities has been inconsistent. All the local universities have Fine Arts departments, and by reaching out to the instructors and leaders in these department, the Arts Council could potentially reach thousands of budding artists who would be interested in becoming members of the organization. These art departments may also be interested in hosting Arts Business Program workshops for their students. Additionally, many universities have administrative departments that organize volunteer opportunities for students, or have clubs that focus on community service. Sororities and fraternities also seek out volunteer activities for their members. With such a wealth of willing and able students available, there is no reason there should ever be a volunteer shortage at any Arts Council events.
By establishing a more consistent and thoughtful relationship with local universities and the various departments and student organizations within them, the Arts Council could boost membership and support for its programs. It could also ensure that it is never lacking in volunteers or interns. In addition, there is great potential for marketing ArtsNewOrleans.org on campus, either through simple flyers on community bulletin boards, or through small ads in school newspapers. With enough students using the ArtsNewOrleans website as a source of finding entertainment, the website could truly establish itself as the premier events calendar for New Orleans. Increased membership, an increased volunteer base, and increased web traffic to ArtsNewOrleans are all benefits that the Arts Council could reap through developing stronger relationships with local universities.

**Hotel & Tourism Industry Partnerships**

Tourism is one of New Orleans’ biggest industries, employing around 78,000 people and generating roughly $5 billion per year in new visitor spending. In 2012, the visitor count for New Orleans was 9.01 million people, one of the highest figures ever achieved by the city. According to a survey conducted by the University of New Orleans’ Hospitality Research Center, people visiting New Orleans are interested in more than dining and nightlife, the traditional mainstays of tourism in the city. Increasingly, visitors to New Orleans are citing cultural attractions as the reason for their visit. This shift in tourism is an opportunity for the Arts Council to expand its audience for both ArtsNewOrleans.org and for the many public art works around the city.

The Arts Council could easily provide hotel concierges with business cards displaying the ArtsNewOrleans.org URL, which could then be passed on the tourists who are looking for a more cultural experience while visiting New Orleans. Tourists are typically interested in having
an authentic, local experience, but they generally do not know where to access information about cultural events outside of what a travel book or hotel brochure can tell them. Directing these visitors to the ArtsNewOrleans website allows them to access the most current information about arts events taking place during their visit, and offers them a chance to see a side of New Orleans that they may otherwise have missed. Having access to this information is not only invaluable to a tourist that wants to experience the “real” New Orleans, it also gives him or her a sense of having esoteric knowledge of the city that only the locals have. “Traveling like a local” is a common desire for tourists, and a source of pride if it can be achieved. Using ArtsNewOrleans as a guide to arts and culture events instead of a site like NewOrleansOnline.com, evokes the feeling of “traveling like a local” for tourists. At the same time, less well-known artists, musicians, and venues would gain much larger exposure for themselves and their events if even a small portion of the visitors to the city used ArtsNewOrleans while visiting.

In addition to providing information to tourists about ArtsNewOrleans.org, the Arts Council could also provide hotel concierges with maps and information about the many public art works in the city. Although public art may not garner as much enthusiasm as other tourist attractions in New Orleans, these works would at least provide points of interest for tourists while they are out exploring the city. The broad distribution of a map of public art works to tourists would demonstrate how prolific public art is in New Orleans. Reaching out to tourists in these ways would help the Arts Council to expand audiences for itself and the local art community. Increased traffic to ArtsNewOrleans would lead to an increase in event submissions and artist and venue profiles, which would improve the website overall, as well as raise the profile of the Arts Council locally. Increased traffic to public art sites could lead to increased
funding for public art projects and maintenance, something that remains an elusive goal for the Arts Council.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Threats}

\textbf{Image Problems}

It is unfortunate that the Arts Council is not unanimously viewed as having a positive impact on New Orleans. This is partly due to its close association with local government, as the City’s official arts agency. Government in Louisiana, and New Orleans especially, has long been viewed as corrupt and dynastic, and this view is well-founded in facts. Louisiana ranked third in the nation for corruption convictions between 1987 and 2007.\textsuperscript{41} Former Mayor Ray Nagin, who left office in 2010, was found guilty in February 2014 of corruption charges related to bribery and kickbacks during his eight years as mayor of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{42} The current Mayor Mitch Landrieu is a prime example of the presence of political dynasties in Louisiana: Mayor Landrieu is the son of former Mayor Moon Landrieu, and the sister of U.S. Senator for Louisiana Mary Landrieu.\textsuperscript{43} As a result of the Arts Council’s role as the city’s arts agency, it is often viewed with similar suspicion, especially after the grand failure of Louisiana Art Works.

In a 2011 op-ed written by The Times-Picayune’s James Gill, the perception of the Arts Council following the slow collapse of the Louisiana ArtWorks project is stated quite bluntly by the columnist. Gill wastes no time mincing words, and begins his piece by stating: “Think of the crooked politician who makes you the maddest... and you probably still won’t be looking at a $25 million rip-off. Making that kind of money disappear requires true artistry. They’re all pikers compared with the Arts Council of New Orleans.”\textsuperscript{44} The opinion piece continues in the same tone, referring to the “squandered millions” spent on “the fiasco known as Louisiana ArtWorks,” and reminding readers that “the taxpayer picked up most of the tab.”\textsuperscript{45} As Gill recounts the
beleaguered history of the project, he makes it clear that he considers Louisiana ArtWorks to be a costly failure, and that responsibility for this failure lies squarely at the feet of the Arts Council. The comments by readers on the piece itself appeared to be largely in agreement with Gill’s sentiments; twenty-one comments agreed with Gill that Louisiana ArtWorks was badly mismanaged, and resulted in wasteful spending of taxpayer money. Only two comments defended former CEO Shirley Trusty Corey and the Arts Council, and their role in the failed project. Despite the Arts Council’s efforts to separate itself from the Louisiana ArtWorks brand, it is clear that the stigma associated with it has been difficult for the Arts Council to shed. Until the ArtWorks building is off the City’s books and turned into something useful, this will continue to be a blemish on the Arts Council’s image, threatening to undermine the many positive initiatives the organization is responsible for.

A smaller controversy surrounds the Arts Council and its recent acquisition of the Dirty Linen Night event. In a 2012 article written by The Times-Picayune’s Doug McCash, the columnist discusses how the event has “taken an authoritative turn” now that it is managed by the Arts Council. In the past, many gallery owners on Royal Street would entice event-goers with free alcohol to increase traffic to their galleries during Dirty Linen Night. When the Arts Council took control of the event in 2012, some of these gallery owners took issue with the fact that the Arts Council all but forbade them to serve their own alcohol to visitors during the event, instead insisting visitors buy their beverages from the bar tents set up in the street. In an email sent to Dirty Linen Night participants, the Arts Council reminds them that beverage sales raise funds for the organization to help cover the costs associated with holding the event. The email also warns of the possibility of receiving a fine from the City should any galleries serve alcohol without a proper permit. Although most gallery owners complied with the Arts Council’s request, a few
chose not to participate at all as a result. Others understood the reasoning behind the changes imposed by the Arts Council, but were not pleased with the “change in tone” of the event.49

While the article itself tends to reserve judgment regarding the controversy, the readers who commented on the article revealed that people felt anger towards the Arts Council for turning the free event into a money-making venture. In fairness, the event itself is still free, but alcohol is not. One commenter believes the new alcohol policy is “about ‘greed’ by the Arts Council,”50 while another simply states, “Pure Money Grab!”51 Other comments refer to the organization as “a power-hungry, proprietary [sic] committee,”52 and “just another annoyingly political organization.”53 Still others take issue with what they believe is a “manipulation of the language of the existing laws,”54 insisting that serving free alcohol on private property does not require a permit from the City. In fact, there is a requirement that businesses serving alcohol during an event that is open to the public obtain a Temporary Alcohol Permit, the details of which can be found in the “Zoning, Permits, and Licenses for Cultural Businesses” guide issued by the Office of Cultural Economy.55 The Arts Council’s insistence that galleries not serve alcohol is at least partially due to this permitting requirement. While fundraising through beverage sales during Dirty Linen Night is important to the Arts Council, it also makes sense logistically for the Arts Council to responsible for serving alcohol. Temporary Alcohol Permits are costly, and in would be burdensome for each participating gallery to acquire its own permit. Instead, the galleries can benefit from the event’s foot traffic and leave expensive and tedious requirements like permits and insurance for the Arts Council to manage. Even though Dirty Linen Night is still proving successful as an Arts Council event, the reaction towards the changes it implemented in 2012 demonstrates how negatively many people view the organization.
Without a permanent CEO in place, the Arts Council was unable to address the issues that led to its current image problems. Ms. Costa, the Arts Council’s Interim CEO, lacked the agency necessary to communicate with authority to outside stakeholders, particularly about the failure of Louisiana ArtWorks. As a result, the Arts Council lost part of its identity share in New Orleans’ crowded nonprofit art space. With a new CEO in place, the Arts Council can finally begin repairing its image problems and rebuild its reputation in the city.

**Funding**

The Arts Council receives almost all its funding from government and foundation grants, and from private donations. The most recent IRS Form 990 available for the Arts Council shows a total revenue of $1,931,155 in 2010, $805,525 of which came from government grants, and another $869,416 of which came from other grants and donations. With almost 87% of its funding coming from grants and donations, the Arts Council, like many non-profits, is constantly faced with the threat of decreased funding affecting its programming. The recession that began in 2008, from which the United States is still recovering, affected non-profit organizations across all sectors, and especially those that receive significant funding from government grants.

According to a 2009 survey conducted by the Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF), non-profits in the United States were “strained to the breaking point” by the recession, with only 16% of non-profits anticipating enough funding to cover their operating expenses. The NFF’s 2010 survey revealed equally grim expectations, with 90% of non-profits expecting similar if not worse difficulties in 2010. In 2011, the NFF survey revealed “some signs of hope” for the non-profit sector, but many of these organizations still faced increased demand for services and a decreased ability to provide them. The NFF notes that non-profits may have felt the impact of the recession...
earlier than other sectors, and it predicts that non-profits face a longer recovery period, “due to foundations’ 3-year rolling averages, depressed giving rates, [and] state budget timing.”

The NFF’s findings can be corroborated with funding data from the National Association of State Arts Agencies, Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA), and historical state and local budget information. According to the GIA’s 2009 Arts Funding Snapshot, overall giving by foundations declined by 14.2% between 2008 and 2009, but giving for arts funding in particular experienced a 21% decline during that same time period. By 2011, giving by foundations had almost returned to pre-2009 levels, yet arts funding only increased marginally; in 2011, giving for arts and culture represented 10% of total grant dollars, down from 13% in 2008. Government funding for the arts has also been on the decline since the 2008 recession. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which awards grants to state and regional arts agencies, received $155 million in federal appropriations in 2009, and aside from an 8.1% increase in appropriations in 2010, this amount has continued to decrease. In 2011 the amount of appropriations for the NEA dropped to $154.7 million, then to $146 million in 2012, and to $139 million in 2013. This decrease in NEA funding has led to decreased funding for state arts agencies like Louisiana’s Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

As federal funding for the arts declines, state appropriations for arts agencies have also declined, according to research from the National Association of State Arts Agencies. Between 2008 and 2012, state arts agency legislative appropriations declined steadily, falling from $354.1 million to $260.2 million. In 2013, these appropriations finally began increasing, and are projected to continue to increase in 2014. Although the national trend for state arts agency legislative appropriations is increasing, appropriations for Louisiana’s Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism has continued to decline since 2010. The Department’s Office of
Cultural Development, which manages the Division of the Arts for the state, has experienced a 58.6% reduction in appropriations for its budget since 2009, by far the largest budget cut to any Office within the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. In Fiscal Year 2010-2011, appropriations for the Office of Cultural Development were reduced from $15,570,745 to $9,809,368. These decreases have continued every year since 2010, and the latest budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014 reveal the Office of Cultural Development’s current appropriations are $6,447,495. The portion of the budget appropriated for Decentralized Arts Grants and other state arts grants that are managed by the Division of the Arts have also decreased from $2 million to $1.5 million between Fiscal Year 2011-12, and Fiscal Year 2012-13.

The annual budgets for the City of New Orleans reveal similar reductions in direct funding for the Arts Council. In 2011, the Arts Council was given $500,000 by the city, most of which was re-granted to other organizations through Community Arts Grants. In 2012, this amount fell to $427,108, then fell again in 2013 to $405,753. Although at the time of this writing the 2014 City budget has yet to be officially adopted, the proposed funding amount for the Arts Council is only $344,890. As arts funding from both public and private sources continues to contract or stagnate, the Arts Council is faced with difficult budgeting decisions that may threaten its ability to fully achieve its mission. Although the Arts Council’s will remain a viable organization despite decreased funding, its desire to expand its reach and profile within the community becomes harder to realize without enough funding. The threat of shrinking funding sources to the Arts Council can be mitigated with additional revenue sources, which the organization has already been establishing over the past several years. Hopefully, as the economy grows, access to public and private arts funding will grow as well, leaving the Arts Council in a better position than it was even before recession began.
End Notes


3 Esenwein, “Arts Council Hires New President.”


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


18 MacCash, “Meet Kim Cook.”


22 “The Arts Business Program.”


25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.


33 Ibid.


“Arts Council Releases Platform.”


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


“Arts Council 2011 Form 990.”


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Chapter Five: Best Practices

Arts councils in the United States and around the world serve similar functions, but often operate according to the unique circumstances of the communities they serve. For this reason, it is difficult to establish best practices that are applicable to all arts councils. The International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), which exists to “improve the capacity and effectiveness of government arts funding agencies… through networking, advocacy and research,”1 does offer some good practice guidelines on their website. These guidelines have been collected from various sources around the globe, but the problem of universal applicability still applies. After concluding that it would be necessary to take a broader approach in my research, I examined resources that offered best practices for all nonprofit organizations, and selected best practice guidelines that would most benefit the Arts Council of New Orleans.

Board Leadership & Development

As the governing body of a nonprofit organization, the board of directors has both a fiscal and legal responsibility to fulfill. BoardSource, a national organization that promotes effective board governance policies, describes these responsibilities in its publication entitled, “101 Board Basics: Board Responsibilities and Structures.” According to BoardSource, a board’s fiscal responsibility includes securing the resources necessary to achieve the organization’s mission, and providing financial oversight through budget development. A board’s legal responsibility is to ensure that board members and staff abide by all applicable laws, and that the organization operates according to ethical standards.2

The Arts Council’s board consistently upholds its legal responsibilities, as the organization has never faced any civil or criminal charges. Furthermore, because the Arts Council receives funding from the State, the organization is audited annually by independent
Certified Public Accountants appointed by the Legislative Auditor. The Arts Council has always been found in compliance with state laws regarding use of public funds. The board fumbled with its fiscal responsibility in the past, not only with ArtWorks, but also with the organization’s marketing budget. The Marketing Department employed two staff members in addition to Ms. Glatz until 2011, when the grant that funded their salaries ended. The board failed to develop a budget that anticipated the end of that grant period, and as a result, the Arts Council was forced to lay off the marketing assistants. Ms. Glatz was then left with a workload meant for three people.

Although fiscal and legal responsibilities are of primary importance to any board, additional competencies should be considered to ensure efficient and effective governance. In the second edition of *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, contributor Nancy R. Axelrod discusses these competencies in her chapter on board leadership and development. The author begins by acknowledging that the significant differences between nonprofit organizations makes it difficult to prescribe a template for board governance. Axelrod suggests that nonprofit boards take the time to determine the practices that most align with the mission and values of their respective organization and then seek to improve these practices through continual self-evaluation. The first step of this task is to determine how the board is making a difference and how it can add value to the organization in the most effective way. Axelrod insists that these decisions must be strategic to the achievement of the organization’s mission, otherwise it risks making important policy and budget decisions based on stale practices, biased perceptions, or the current political environment.

Axelrod explains that, although rigid guidelines of best practices for board governance are not ideal for every organization, there are six core competencies that distinguish highly
effective boards from those that are ineffective. The first three competencies are Contextual, Educational, and Interpersonal, and these competencies relate to the inner workings of the board. Contextual competency focuses on communicating the culture and values of the organization to new board members; educational competence focuses on the continually education of board members on effective governance and member responsibilities; and interpersonal competency focuses on strengthening the ability of the board to work as a team.\(^5\) Because the confidentiality of the Arts Council’s board meetings, it is difficult to conclude with any certainty which of the above-reference competencies it may possess. But there are competencies in Axelrod’s essay that are easier to assess from an outside perspective.

The fourth competency that Axelrod lists is Analytical, wherein “[t]he board recognizes complexities and subtleties in the issues it faces and draws on multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems and to synthesize appropriate responses.”\(^6\) Practices related to analytical competency include:

- Analyzing issues and events taking into account multiple potential outcomes and points of view.
- Seeking concrete and even contradictory information on ambiguous matters.
- Asking a few members to be critical evaluators or ‘devil’s advocates,’ exploring the downside of recommendations.
- Developing contingency and crisis plans.
- Asking members to assume the perspective of key constituencies by roleplaying.
- Brainstorming alternative views of issues.
- Consulting outsiders and seeking different viewpoints.\(^7\)

Based upon my previous assertions regarding the board (see Chapter Four), the board of the Arts Council lacks analytical competency. The failure of Louisiana ArtWorks and the resignation of former CEO Shirly Trusty Corey in 2007 are examples of complex issues that were not well addressed by the board. Further, the six-year delay in hiring a new CEO for the Arts Council indicates that the board had not developed a contingency or crisis plan. Such a plan would be
sure to include how to proceed given a sudden loss of leadership within the organization, and would have established a timeline with milestones for hiring a new leader. Had there been a plan in place, or if a sustained effort was made to critically analyze ArtWork’s failings, then the Arts Council may have emerged from that crisis quickly and without loss of stature. Going forward, it would be wise for the board of the Arts Council to strengthen its analytical competency in order to appropriately address the complex issues that face the organization.

Another important competency of effective boards, according to Axelrod, is Political competency, wherein, “[t]he board accepts as one of its primary responsibilities the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships among all key constituencies.” Practices related to political competency include:

- Broadening channels of communication by distributing profiles of board members and annual board reports, inviting staff and consumers to serve on board committees, inviting outside leaders to address the board, visiting with staff, and establishing multiconstituency [sic] task forces.
- Working closely with the chief executive to develop and maintain processes that enable board members to communicate directly with stakeholders.
- Monitoring the health of relationships and morale in the organization.
- Keeping options open and avoiding win-lose polarizations.
- Being sensitive to the legitimate roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Political competency is the most obvious competency in which the board is lacking. The Arts Council’s board does not attempt to develop any sort of relationship with its constituencies, including the staff and the general public. The board meetings are closed, and very little information about the board members or board activities are available to the public. During the CEO hiring process, the staff did not receive relevant information regarding the board’s progress even though they were directly affected by it. Interim CEO Mary Len Costa lacked the agency to communicate with the staff and the public regarding the decisions made by the board during its meetings. Open communication with the community and the staff is a key component of political
competency for an effective board, but the board of Arts Council does not currently operate with the transparency necessary to engage in a dialogue with its constituencies.

The final competency that Axelrod includes in her essay is Strategic competency, which focuses on the planning and structure of board meetings using tools such as consent agendas, and the prioritization of the “strategic issues” the organization is facing. I cannot say with certainty that the board of the Arts Council lacks strategic competency. But if there is a strategic plan that guides the Arts Council’s operations, I never heard it mentioned in my presence, nor have I found it referenced in any of my research materials. The inability to determine the strategic competency of the Arts Council’s board, or its contextual, educational, and interpersonal competencies, is directly related to the board’s lack of political competency. It is impossible for anyone outside the boardroom to know how the board interacts or how its meetings are managed because it does not communicate with its constituencies.

**Grant Funding Decisions by Peer-Review**

Grant administration is one of the primary functions of the Arts Council, and adhering to best practices in this area is especially important; a grant-making organization has a fiduciary duty to the public and to private donors when administering grant funds. Although there is a wealth of information on grant administration best practices, I chose to focus specifically on the peer-review process because of my experience taking notes during a grant panel. The Louisiana Division of the Arts (LDA) provides guidelines for selecting qualified panelists for its grant panels, and for conducting an effective peer review of grant applications. The LDA considers peer review panels to be the best method to ensure fair and knowledgeable decisions are made in the evaluation of grant applications. Potential panelists should meet more than one of the following qualifications:
1. Professional experience as an artist or nonprofit arts administrator, in an arts-based commercial business, or in arts and cultural policy or cultural economy development.
2. Knowledge of standards and best practices in management, governance and operations.
3. Knowledge in an artistic discipline or field.

Once qualified panelists are identified, the LDA decides on a roster of panelists that meet additional criteria deemed necessary for effective peer review. These criteria include expertise in relation to the grant applications to be reviewed; diversity of race, gender, and culture; and equitable representation of different communities.

As a Regional Development Agency (RDA) for the LDA’s Decentralized Arts Funding, the Arts Council closely follows these guidelines when selecting the panelists for the Decentralized Arts Funding grants, as well as for the Community Arts Grants funded through the City of New Orleans. For confidentiality reasons, I cannot disclose the names of the panelists that served as peer reviewers on the grant panel for which I took notes, but they were all professional artists or arts administrators at various organizations in the city, and they represented a variety of artistic fields. The panelists were mostly women, and at least half the panelists were African-American. The panelists well represented the interests of the community, and their candid discussions about the grant applications reflected their desire to do so. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, grant proposals in support of underrepresented arts disciplines, and those that benefited underserved communities were particularly favored, which demonstrated the panel’s desire to ensure that a diverse range of projects would be funded.

The LDA also provides best practices for conducting the peer review, listing what it considers to be the panelists’ responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

1. Be familiar with… [the organization’s] priorities and the grant program and category purpose, goals and criteria.
2. Read and become familiar with all grant proposals, support materials, and samples of work.
3. Review the application at face value... [and] do not assume or presume information not found in the grant application.
4. Record comments according to the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals in light of the grant category and evaluation criteria. Comments or opinions not relevant to the specific application or to the evaluation criteria are discouraged.
5. Score each application, as presented, according to the grant program purpose, goals and criteria.
6. Keep applicant information and panel proceedings confidential.
7. Disclose any direct, indirect or apparent conflict of interest.
8. Any outside knowledge or information deemed important to an application, but not related to the evaluation criteria should be discussed with... [organization] staff prior to the panel.¹⁵

Panelists are also asked to be respectful of other panelists’ opinions and remarks, despite disagreements that may arise.¹⁶ From what I observed during the Arts Council’s grant panel, all the panelists reviewed the grant proposals they would be discussing prior to the grant panel. During the review of each application, the panelists clearly understood the purpose of the grant funds they would be awarding, and the discussions focused on how well the grant applications conformed to the scoring criteria. Several panelists recused themselves during discussions of certain applications due to potential conflicts of interest. The only issue I observed during the panel was a general bias against projects that panelists perceived to be already well funded. But when the question of whether the project could succeed without a grant from the Arts Council, the panelists were reminded that they could not consider such criteria when scoring an application. After the scores were tallied and agreement reached on the applications to receive funding, the panelists were instructed that the details they discussed as well as the funding outcomes must remain confidential, and must not be shared with anyone. The panelists understood the need to keep this information private, especially funding decisions, until all interested parties had received notifications.
In addition to the LDA’s best practice guidelines, an article by Robert S. Turner entitled, “Best Practices in Peer Review Assure Quality, Value, Objectivity,” identifies five best practices for designing and conducting peer reviews of grant applications. These best practices include designing and planning the review in accordance with program needs; identifying and recruiting experts to review grant proposals; conducting the review by providing clear instructions to the reviewers and “well-defined criteria” for scoring applications; and managing the information collected during the peer review so that sensitive information is protected, and the relevant data is easily interpreted by those outside of the panel. These best practices for the most part align with those outlined by the LDA, and which the Arts Council follows.

However, Turner’s final best practice guideline is one that the Arts Council could benefit from, but does not currently follow; that is, to document the process and implement improvements based on management’s observations and panelist feedback. Even though the grant panel process that the Arts Council uses is in line with best practices, there is always room for improvement and ways in which the process could be altered that would not conflict with best practices. Without documenting the process and determining what may need adjusting, it is difficult to identify problems that could be preventing the best funding outcomes for the community. Getting feedback from the reviewers on their experience would provide the best insight into potential problem areas. If a panelist is new to the grant review process, then he or she will provide a fresh perspective; if a panelist has participated in grant panels before, then he or she will provide knowledgeable insight based on comparable experiences. In either case, panelist feedback is invaluable to documenting and improving the grant panel process.
Effective Website Design

Having spent so much time on the ArtsNewOrleans website, and due to my experience collaborating with web designers professionally, I am particularly familiar with the issue of effective website design. In The Nonprofit Handbook [on] Management, Marlene Fox-McIntyre, principal at Athene, Inc., addresses the best practices for website design in her essay entitled, “Internet Strategy for Nonprofits.” Fox-McIntyre begins her essay with the basics, like acquiring an appropriate domain name, and then touches on every imaginable use a nonprofit may have for its website. Below I consider the best practices from her essay that are most appropriate for the Arts Council’s needs.

Fox-McIntyre describes ideal site layout early in her essay, explaining that a website should clearly communicate an organization’s purpose or product while highlighting what makes it unique. She goes on to explain: “The front page of the Web site should be clean and crisply presented, with plenty of white space for easier viewing…. Text should be limited to key ideas and top-level information. Major departments or organization functions should be grouped into… links directly accessible from the front page and from other secondary pages as well.”

The Arts Council’s main webpage does not closely follow these guidelines, as shown in Figure [3]. There is too much information and text being provided on one page, and making it difficult to focus one’s attention. Because of this clutter, viewers struggle to discern the Arts Council’s identity and uniqueness. The Arts Council’s various programs and services are grouped together on the left side of the page, and this menu is accessible from all areas of the website, but each item is not a link in itself. One must hover over the item in order to activate a popup menu, from which the user can select one of several links related to that particular program. See Figure [4] for an example. This menu setup is frustrating and difficult to navigate and, combined with the

76
clutter on the homepage, creates an unsatisfying user experience. Additionally, there is another menu of links running across the top of the page, and this provides too many options for the user at one time. The two menus should be consolidated into one area either at top of the page or the side of the page for easier navigation.

Comparatively, ArtsNewOrleans demonstrates the best practices in site layout prescribed by Fox-McIntyre, as shown in Figure [5]. The ArtsNewOrleans homepage communicates its purpose and uniqueness visually, and provides adequate white space to improve viewing. The links at the top of the page lead to the most relevant pages of the website, and making the site
easier to navigate. The ArtsNewOrleans homepage is still somewhat cluttered, but the design is much crisper than the Arts Council’s main website.

Websites serve many purposes, but their use as a marketing tool is of particular importance to nonprofit organizations that often lack adequate resources to utilize traditional marketing media. According to Fox-McIntyre, a website is vital to communicating an organization’s value to its audience, especially when the website is an organization’s primary
marketing outlet. She goes on to recommend a set of marketing elements to include on a website in order to highlight an organization’s value. These elements include:

1. “Current news and information,” wherein news and content on the website is regularly updated, and older news is archived once it is replaced so users can continue to access it as needed. According to Fox-McIntyre, “Stale news is a sure sign of sloppy management.”

2. “Targeted e-mail,” wherein clients are regularly sent emails that include the organization’s latest news and pressing topics, as well as other relevant information clients may find useful.
3. “Accountability,” wherein the organization shares its accomplishments on its website, as well as the ways in which donations are used.25

4. “Recognizing outstanding work,” wherein the organization announces on its website any awards and special recognition it has given to its members and patrons.26

5. “Keeping track of clients,” wherein the website provides users a way to update their contact information with the organization.27

6. “Feedback form,” wherein the website provides users a way to offer feedback to the organization.28

The Arts Council does regularly update the content on its homepage with current news and announcements. Most of these posts are archived, and can be searched using an internal search engine accessible from the homepage. The Arts Council also provides a link on its homepage for users to sign up for its mailing list, and it periodically sends out e-newsletters containing recent news and announcements. The frequency of these mailings is based on the volume of news the Arts Council has to share.

As part of its frequent news updates on its website, the Arts Council will occasionally post about its successes, though it could improve in this area. As I mentioned in my SWOT analysis, the Arts Council suffers from an image problem, and more frequent posts regarding its achievements would help it regain a positive image in New Orleans. The Arts Council does hold an annual Community Arts Awards ceremony, where artists, arts administrators, and arts patrons in the city are honored for their contributions to the community. Unfortunately, posts regarding the recipients of these awards are unavailable on the website, and the list of past recipients only includes names without any details of their achievements. Providing this information on its website would be another positive public relations opportunity for the Arts Council.
The Arts Council’s website does not have an explicit way for members to keep the organization updated with their current contact information, though there are several links provided on the homepage where a member can contact the Arts Council through email. Using the “Contact Us” link leads users to a page listing the staff members and their email addresses, as well as a general email address. This method for contacting the Arts Council could also be used as an unofficial feedback form, but adding a dedicated feedback form would be useful for improving public perception of the Arts Council. Asking for the public’s feedback would demonstrate the organization’s desire to better serve the community.

The poor design of the Arts Council’s website is indicative of the larger problem of outdated technology in use at the organization (see Chapter Four). The Arts Council currently lacks a cohesive approach to acquiring and utilizing technology, and as a result, the organization is forced to use whatever technology is at hand. In The Nonprofit Handbook [on] Management, technology consultant Marc Osten discusses developing and implementing a strategic technology plan as a best practice for the nonprofit organizations. In his essay entitled, “Technology and Strategy for Organizational Effectiveness,” Osten explains that a strategic technology plan guides the organization’s technology decisions by defining what an organization needs from its technology, and by determining the appropriate technology to use in order to “meet programmatic goals and improve operational efficiency.” A strategic technology plan allows the organization to fulfill its current needs while also considering its possible needs in the future. By developing a strategic technology plan, an organization is better able to estimate costs and prepare for upgrades as needed. As a result, the organization is always equipped with the technology it needs to best achieve goals.
**Best Practices at the San Francisco Arts Commission**

The San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) is the official arts agency of San Francisco. The organization performs many of the same functions as the Arts Council of New Orleans, such as managing the city’s public art collection, administering grants for artists and arts organizations, providing support for local artists, and advocating for the arts through a large number of programming initiatives. The SFAC was founded in 1932, and is governed by a commission composed of sixteen members representing a broad range of expertise and artistic disciplines. The SFAC has a large staff of thirty-two people, many of whom are program directors, managers, and associates. The organization receives funding from the city and the state, from multiple foundations, and from corporate and private donations. The SFAC is more closely tied to city government than the Arts Council of New Orleans, though it is worth noting that the mayor of New Orleans appoints half of the board members for the Arts Council. Although the SFAC is an older, larger organization than the Arts Council, serving a larger population than New Orleans, it provides a good model for how well a city’s arts agency can be governed and managed.

The commission that governs the SFAC is a smaller group than the board of the Arts Council, making it easier to strengthen contextual, educational, and interpersonal board competencies that focus on how well the board works together. The commission especially excels in political competency by allowing a great deal of transparency and open communication with the public. Detailed bios for each commissioner are provided on the SFAC website, as well as the various committees that the commissioners participate in. All the commission’s meetings are open to the public, and community feedback is welcomed. Meeting agendas and minutes are also available online, and are archived from 2003 onward. In addition to strong political
competency, the commission demonstrates strategic competency as well. The meeting minutes reveal a tight structure that focuses attention on high-priority issues in the beginning of the meeting, and the use of agreed upon consent agendas make the best use of the commissioners’ time and energy.\textsuperscript{37}

Since the beginning of 2013, the SFAC commission and staff have been working with outside consultants to develop a strategic plan in order to “articulate a vision for the agency for the next five years.”\textsuperscript{38} This strategic plan aims to realign the agency’s mission statement and values, and improve its processes so that the organization can better serve the community in San Francisco.\textsuperscript{39} A survey is available on the SFAC’s website inviting the public to contribute its input for the strategic plan.\textsuperscript{40} The SFAC also held focus groups in 2013 to determine the community’s perception on how to improve the SFAC. The entire process for developing and implementing the strategic plan, including the project schedule, key findings of the agency’s needs assessment, the benchmark study which examined how the SFAC compares with arts agencies in other major cities, and the strategic plan itself, are all available on the organization’s website.\textsuperscript{41}

The SFAC’s grant review process is very similar to the Arts Council’s in that they use peer review panels to review grant applications. The agency clearly articulates the grant review process on its website as well, and most panel reviews are open to the public. The SFAC chooses panelists are chosen for their diversity, expertise in the various artistic disciplines and their experience in the field.\textsuperscript{42} The Commission reviews conflicts of interest during commission meetings and with SFAC attorneys to assure panelist involvement will not threaten the integrity of the panel reviews.\textsuperscript{43} As with the Arts Council’s panel review meetings, notes are taken on panel comments and these notes are made available to grant applicants upon request. Funding
recommendations by the panel are reviewed by the Community Arts, Education & Grants Committee, then by the full commission, where the final funding decisions are voted upon. With such a transparent process for selecting panelists and conducting reviews of applications, funding decisions are clearly well thought out and easily justifiable, leaving little room for dispute or controversy.

Finally, the SFAC’s website is a model of good design. It utilizes white space for easier viewing, and the homepage features a prominent slideshow of visuals that communicate the agency’s identity and purpose without explicitly stating it (see Figure [6]). The SFAC website groups together the most important links in a menu on the left side of the page, and users can access these important areas by clicking one of the links. Pop up menus appear when a user hovers over a link, allowing the user to select a subarea and navigate directly to it (see Figure [7]). A search engine on the homepage allows users to find archived posts as well as areas of information they may have trouble finding. The website’s content also aligns with Fox-McIntyre’s recommendations. The homepage includes the organization’s latest news and accomplishments, as well as the accomplishments of artists and arts patrons in the community. Links for signing up for the agency’s e-news letter and for making donations are easily accessible on the homepage, and a Contact link allows users to easily provide feedback and communicate with the SFAC’s staff. Additionally, the “Strategic Plan” link allows users to take a survey that provides feedback to the SFAC regarding how well the organization is fulfilling its mission, and how it can improve.

Any comparison of the San Francisco Arts Commission with the Arts Council of New Orleans must recognize important organizational differences as well as differences in state law and local culture. The SFAC functions more as its city’s arts agency than as an independent non-
Figure 6

Figure 7
profit, and so the SFAC is beholden to San Francisco’s Sunshine Ordinance that guarantees public access to its proceedings. But even though the Arts Council is not beholden to similar laws in New Orleans, it does function as the city’s arts agency, and it receives funding from the city and the state. Its primary constituency then is the public, therefor it should consider making its board proceedings more transparent. This transparency would ideally lead to the strengthening of the board’s competencies, thus improving the governance of the organization. Grant panelist selections and the way in which grant panels are conducted should also be discussed more openly by the Arts Council to dispel perceptions of favoritism or conflicts of interest that could potentially arise when the public is ignorant of these processes.

Finally, the San Francisco area is home to many of the country’s large tech companies, like Google and Facebook. In order to appeal to such a technologically savvy community as San Francisco, the SFAC must have a well designed web presence. The SFAC unsurprisingly pays close attention to the design and functionality of its website. New Orleans’ technology sector has grown in the past several years, but is still underdeveloped compared to many other metro areas; a website that is poorly designed and difficult to navigate may reflect fewer web design resources and/or a less savvy user base. Although it would be difficult for the Arts Council to emulate everything that the SFAC does well given the differences between the organizations, it would still be wise for the Arts Council to use the SFAC as a loose model for improvement.

End Notes


5 Ibid., 139.

6 Ibid., 139-140.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 140.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.


18 Ibid., 47.


20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 208.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 209.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.


“Commissioners.”


Ibid.


“Strategic Plan.”


“February 3, 2014: Meeting of the Full Arts Commission.”

“Application Review & Approval Process.”


Chapter Six: Recommendations

The Arts Council of New Orleans has a long history of serving the arts community in the city, and the organization continues to evolve and learn from past mistakes. Nevertheless, there are several areas of operation that the Arts Council needs to improve in order to become a stronger, better-functioning organization. My recommendations for improvement address many of the weaknesses and threats I discussed in Chapter Four. These recommendations will take time to implement, and the benefits may not be recognized immediately. But in order to grow and evolve alongside the community’s needs, the Arts Council should consider implementing some, if not all, of the following recommendations.

**Upgrade Technology**

During a time of shrinking funding for the arts and for non-profits in general, organizations must obtain and utilize modern technology in order to remain competitive. An organization like the Arts Council, relying on a small staff to accomplish its many objectives, must have functioning and reliable technology in order to maximize productivity and efficiency. Although purchasing new computers is the easiest way to improve the technology used at the Arts Council, this solution lacks forward thinking. The best solution would entail developing and implementing a strategic technology plan that addresses the organization’s needs in the short- and long-term, and that integrates the organization’s mission with its use of technology. The following recommendations for developing a strategic technology plan are adapted for the Arts Council from Marc

1. Secure a commitment from the board and from management that financial and human resources will be dedicated to the acquisition and utilization of appropriate technology to meet the organization’s needs.

2. Hire an outside consultant knowledgeable in both technology and the nonprofit sector who will guide the process of developing a strategic technology plan. At the same time, designate a staff member to lead the development of the plan with other staff members.

3. Gather information internal to the organization. Ask staff members to identify how technology affects the way they do their job. Analyze the organization’s mission and program goals by considering what kinds of technology would help to achieve those goals.

4. Gather information external to the organization. Survey the organization’s members and its constituencies by asking what kinds of technology would improve their interactions with the organization. Compare the organization’s existing technology with technology used by similar organizations.

5. Synthesize the information gathered internally and externally. Use this information to set technology priorities that include a plan for educating and training staff, and a plan that provides for technology support. When setting technology priorities, “adhere to the 70 percent to 30 percent rule,”¹ wherein seventy percent of the financial investment for technology is earmarked for consultants, staff training, and support, and thirty percent is earmarked for hardware and software upgrades.
6. Write a first draft of the organization’s strategic technology plan that incorporates technology priorities, the education and training plan, the technology support plan, and any additional technology policies that may be necessary. Include a proposed budget with the plan that aligns with the seventy percent to thirty percent rule, keeping in mind that hardware and software should be upgraded every two to three years.

7. Gather feedback from the board and from staff on the first draft of the strategic technology plan. Identify how much the organization currently spends on technology, and how much of the proposed technology budget can be feasibly appropriated.

8. Write the final draft of the plan that incorporates feedback and the revised budget. The final plan should assign to a staff member or consultant the responsibility of managing technology for the organization, and should detail the methods for implementing the plan over time. The plan should also include a periodic review of the implementation’s progress.

Because technology evolves so rapidly, the Arts Council’s strategic technology plan should be flexible enough to integrate new technology if it is appropriate for achieving the organization’s goals. The Arts Council should continually review and adjust its strategic technology plan as the organization’s needs change.

**Improve Website Design & Maintenance**

An organization’s website represents one of its best opportunities to market itself to the public. When someone wants to learn more about an organization, he or she will most often visit the organization’s website first. If the website appears outdated, or is difficult to navigate, then the organization loses the opportunity to make a positive first impression. In order to better serve the Arts Council as a marketing tool, the organization’s must redesign and update its website.
The following recommendations are based partly on Marlene Fox-McIntyre’s essay discussed in Chapter Five, and partly on my observations of the Arts Council’s needs.

1. Incorporate website design and maintenance costs into the organization’s strategic technology plan. A well designed website costs money, and websites need to be updated as Internet programming languages and browsers evolve.

2. Hire a website developer who is responsive to the organization’s needs, and is available to make changes or fix bugs as needed. By relying on pro bono web design services, an organization risks that its web developer will deprioritize maintenance relative to paying clients.

3. Develop a style guide for the website. The style guide will define the website’s color scheme, visual style, logos and graphics, and multimedia elements.\(^3\)

4. Redesign the website based on the style guide, with a focus on implementing best practices for design. Best practices include adequate white space, strong visuals, a consolidated menu of links, and eliminating unnecessary text.\(^4\)

5. Include a feedback form on the homepage to learn if users have trouble finding the information they need, or have trouble navigating the website in other ways.\(^5\)

6. Hire a part-time employee to manage the content on ArtsNewOrleans.org and the ArtSavers newsletter. Maintaining consistency and quality without a dedicated employee managing these tasks has proven difficult. The cost of paying a part-time employee for this purpose should be included in the strategic technology plan.

An effective web presence is essential to an organization’s marketing strategy. Ms. Glatz, the Arts Council’s Director of Marketing, is more than capable of improving the organization’s website, but she currently lacks the resources to do so. With the appropriate budget, the Arts
Council could redesign and effectively maintain its main website, and ArtsNewOrleans.org could receive the attention necessary to keep its content updated and fresh.

**Improve Volunteer Recruitment & Management**

The Arts Council has several events throughout the year that require volunteer labor. But the organization does not have a reliable method for recruiting volunteers or for managing volunteer contact information. Developing volunteer management and outreach strategies not only bolsters the manpower of an organization, it fosters a sense of involvement in the community by allowing people to participate in the organization’s operations. In *The Jossy-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, Stephen McCurley discusses various methods for volunteer recruitment in his essay entitled, “Keeping the Community Involved: Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers.” McCurley explains that his process for volunteer recruitment applies to medium- and large-sized organizations, but that the process can be modified to better suit smaller organizations, such as the Arts Council. The following recommendations are based on the process described in McCurley’s essay, but have been adapted for the particular needs of the Arts Council.

1. Assess when volunteers are needed. Before recruitment begins, the organization should examine when they are likely to need volunteers, and whether the benefits of utilizing volunteer labor outweigh the potential problems. Benefits include increased manpower and community engagement, while potential problems include “lack of control and reliability of volunteers.”

2. Determine the job descriptions and responsibilities of volunteers. Once the organization decides to utilize volunteers, it must clearly define the scope of the volunteers’
participation. If volunteers will fill different types of jobs, the duties of each job should be defined, as well as the minimum time commitment expected.  

3. Recruit volunteers using a method that is most appropriate for the number of volunteers needed and the type of work the volunteers will be participating in.
   
   a. If an event requires many volunteers, and the work to be completed does not require special skills, the organization should employ “warm body recruitment.” This method involves disseminating information about the organization and its need for volunteers throughout the community using all available marketing channels.
   
   b. Establish relationships with local universities, high schools, churches and other organizations whose members perform community service regularly. Volunteer groups like these are ideal for volunteer opportunities that require close interaction and teamwork.
   
   c. Internet recruitment through sites like HandsOn New Orleans (handsonneworleans.org), Crescent City Connections (crescentcityconnections.org), and VolunteerMatch.org works best for reaching volunteers who have demonstrated motivation to seek opportunities to be involved in their community. Internet recruitment can also be used as part of a warm body recruitment strategy.
   
   d. Event recruitment is useful for gathering contact information from potential volunteers who demonstrate an interest in volunteering for the organization. Whenever the organization holds a public event, visitors should be given the
opportunity to sign up to volunteer at future events. This method works best for building up “volunteer reserves” that can be called upon as needed.\textsuperscript{13}

4. Show appreciation for the volunteers. The Arts Council showed its appreciation for the volunteers who helped during Dirty Linen Night 2013 by giving them free admission to the after-party, which normally costs thirty dollars. Other options for showing appreciation include giving out free tee shirts to volunteers or offering volunteers free food while they are volunteering. Volunteers that regularly participate in the organization’s events should receive some sort of formal recognition for their efforts, like an award or a special dinner.

5. Keep track of volunteer contact information using a data management tool. A client management program is the best way to manage volunteer data, but even an Excel spreadsheet will suffice. The type of data management system matters only insofar as the data remains easily accessible to the organization’s staff.

In addition to improving volunteer recruitment and management, the Arts Council should also seek to improve the culture of volunteerism within the organization. The staff already demonstrates a willingness to assist with Arts Council events whenever they are needed, but staff members should recruit volunteers from their own networks whenever possible. The board should also be asked to volunteer at Arts Council events, and the expectation that board members will volunteer at least once a year should be part of a board member’s responsibilities.

**Increase Transparency & Accountability**

Increased transparency and accountability would vastly improve the Arts Council’s public image problem. In order to leave the failure of Louisiana ArtWorks behind and forge a more positive identity in New Orleans, the Arts Council needs to improve its overall
communication with the public. This would allow the Arts Council’s constituents the opportunity to better understand how the organization operates, and to experience more directly what the organization does for the community. The following recommendations are taken from a variety of sources discussed in Chapter Five, including Nancy R. Axelrod’s essay on board governance, and the San Francisco Arts Commission’s strategic planning process.

1. Provide information about board members through profiles or bios made available on the organization’s website.\textsuperscript{14} Bios or profiles give constituents insight into the qualifications and experience that make board members fit to govern an organization. Without this insight, constituents may assume board membership is based on cronyism or wealth, instead of merit.

2. Provide annual board reports that cover the strategic issues the board is addressing, and the successful resolutions of past issues.\textsuperscript{15} When stakeholders understand the challenges that face the organization, as well as the challenges that were overcome, they become more comfortable with the board’s ability to make decisions that are best for the organization.

3. Invite staff and community members to serve on board committees where appropriate.\textsuperscript{16} Involving stakeholders in board activities opens up communication between the board and the public, allowing stakeholders the opportunity to be heard. Because of the fiduciary duty and liability associated with board membership, staff and community members should not serve on committees that manage financial or legal issues.

4. Ask for feedback from the community through online surveys, comment cards (available during events), or through focus groups.\textsuperscript{17} Community feedback offers insight into what the organization can improve upon as well as what it is doing well. In addition, soliciting
feedback indicates to the public that the organization is committed to serving the community.

5. Add information to the grants section of the website explaining how grant panels operate and how panelists are selected. Grant panel information is provided within the grant application packet, but most people who are curious about how the Arts Council makes funding decisions do not know where to find this information. An explanation like the one provided on the Louisiana Division of the Arts website would be easy to add to the Arts Council’s website, and would make funding decisions more transparent to the public.

6. Publicly address the failure of Louisiana ArtWorks and the lessons learned from the organization’s mistakes while managing that project. In order to improve its image and move beyond its association with Louisiana ArtWorks, the Arts Council needs to own its mistakes and explain what it has learned from those mistakes. Now that the ArtWorks building is sold, the time is appropriate for initiating dialogue with the community about this issue.

Increasing transparency and accountability is not an easy task for an organization like the Arts Council, which functions as the City’s official arts agency. The desire to maintain the status quo and “business as usual” has long been a part New Orleans’ politics and culture. But the recent appointment of E. Tiffany Adler as Chair of the Arts Council’s board marks an important “change in generational leadership”18 at the organization. With a new CEO in place as well, this period of transition presents an opportune moment for the Arts Council to adopt new policies that embrace transparency and accountability as part of the organization’s culture.
**Improve Membership Benefits**

Although the Arts Council added several revenue generating projects to its fundraising plan over the past seven years, the organization still needs to increase its membership base. The Arts Council’s lowest level of membership, Arts Entrepreneur, offers benefits that appeal to artists or arts organizations, but not the average arts consumer. Higher levels of membership, which offer benefits that an arts consumer would find appealing, are unaffordable. Improving the membership structure so it is affordable and appeals to non-artists will increase the Arts Council’s membership numbers and the revenue generated from membership dues. The following are recommendations for improving the Arts Council’s membership structure and benefits using resources the organization already has at its disposal.

1. Create a new membership package, the Arts Admirer, priced at $100 and targeted towards arts consumers instead of artists. Members at this level receive the same benefits as Arts Entrepreneur members, like invitations to members-only events, as well as the additional benefits listed below.

2. Arts Admirer members receive the ArtSavers newsletter before its release to the entire mailing list, giving members early access to ArtSavers offers which include limited quantities of free or discounted tickets for arts events around the city.

3. Arts Admirer members receive two discounted tickets to the Community Arts Awards or two free tickets Dirty Linen Night after-party. This benefit encourages members to attend the Arts Council’s events, thereby improving the members’ relationship with the organization.
4. Arts Admirer members receive a ten percent discount with vendors at the Arts Market. This benefit encourages member attendance at the Arts Market and bolsters artists’ sales as well.

5. Arts Entrepreneur members receive expanded profiles and promotional tools on ArtsNewOrleans.org. For example, an expanded profile allows members to upload multimedia, or gives them the ability to upload more content. A data cap limits nonmember profiles, which incentivizes membership. Promotional tools may include ads on the website or a “sponsored event” on the calendar that is shown as a top-level item on the event listings page.

6. Arts Enthusiast members receive the same benefits as Arts Admirers, with some improvements.
   a. Arts Enthusiast members receive two patron tickets to the Community Arts Awards and two tickets to the Dirty Linen night after-party.
   b. Arts Enthusiast members receive ten Arts Market Dollars as well as a ten percent discount at the Arts Market. The Arts Market Dollars and the discount may not be used in conjunction.

By adding a membership level that appeals to, and is affordable for, the average arts consumer in New Orleans, the Arts Council would be able to expand its membership base. Incorporating these new benefits into the organization’s current membership structure may also increase the number of higher-level memberships sold. The value associated with being a member of an organization has a direct relationship to the benefits offered with membership. Improving membership benefits increases the value of membership for consumers, which leads to more membership sales. But increasing revenue from membership dues is not the only
impetus for improving membership benefits; an organization’s membership base is its most reliable source of grassroots advocacy, and memberships that provide value create members that are loyal and supportive.

End Notes


2 Ibid., 328–341.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 209.


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 591.

10 Ibid., 595.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 599-600.

13 Ibid., 597.


15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.


Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The Arts Council of New Orleans is at an important turning point in its history. With a new CEO in place, the organization can finally move forward and take decisive action towards achieving its mission. The recent appointment of E. Tiffany Adler as Chair of the Board marks an important “change in generational leadership”\(^1\) at the organization as well, and this change has the potential to transform the Arts Council into a thriving, twenty-first century arts institution.

Transparency and accountability should be integrated into the Arts Council’s new identity, not only for the sake of the organization’s image, but also for the sake of the community. The Arts Council needs to open itself up in order to learn what the community needs from its arts agency. A give and take of information between the Arts Council and the community strengthens both. Transparency and accountability should also pertain to the Arts Council’s board; I am hopeful that, under the direction of the new chair, the board will improve its political competency, as well as those competencies that focus on creating a cohesive team of board members.

My contributions to the Arts Council of New Orleans were short-term in nature. I relieved Ms. Glatz of the management of ArtsNewOrleans and the ArtSavers newsletter, an unmanageable workload in combination with her more pressing responsibilities as Director of Marketing. The Arts Council has not updated featured content on ArtsNewOrleans since October 2013. This neglect undermines the viability of the ArtsNewOrleans website, one of the Arts Council’s strengths. A part-time employee, tasked with the management of ArtsNewOrleans and the ArtSavers newsletter, could easily resolve the problem of unmanageable workload faced by
the Marketing Department. The Arts Council could generate revenue for this part-time position by improving membership benefits and increasing revenue from membership dues.

My long-term contributions to the Arts Council are hard to determine with any certainty. I spent much of my time during my internship managing ArtsNewOrleans, which, sadly, is no longer updated. After the arrival of Ms. Cook, I was no longer invited to staff meetings, so I cannot say if the organization implemented any of my recommendations, or plans to implement them in the future, apart from what Ms. Cook stated publicly. Ms. Cook’s interviews with local media outlets imply that she understands the importance of technology, so I am hopeful that the Arts Council will adopt a strategic technology plan. Ms. Cook also states that she wants to expand the focus of the Arts Council beyond artists to include the community at large, through better-integrated public art, and by increasing opportunities for experiencing art. My recommendations regarding properly managing ArtsNewOrleans, and asking for community feedback, are both well suited to achieving the goals Ms. Cook set for the Arts Council. If the organization can embrace the changes that are necessary for growth, then the Arts Council is poised to become the arts agency New Orleans always needed.

Although the destruction of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was devastating, it also allowed New Orleans to reinvent itself. Young professionals flocked to the city in 2006 and 2007 because New Orleans presented an opportunity to truly make a difference by helping to rebuild one of America’s greatest cities. This influx of young, enthusiastic professionals reinvigorated the city, and since 2006, New Orleans has grown into a tech startup hub, known to some as Silicon Bayou. New Orleans is embracing the new economy of the twenty-first century, despite the city’s reputation for clinging to its long-held traditions. As a result, arts organizations in New Orleans must also embrace the city’s changing industries and population demographics. Even a
well-established organization like the Arts Council cannot thrive in New Orleans without realigning its goals to better serve the community. Utilizing appropriate technology, engaging with the community in order to understand its needs, and demonstrating value are necessary for the Arts Council to define itself as New Orleans’ principal arts organization.

The importance of the Arts Council’s role in the community cannot be understated. As New Orleans blossoms into an innovation hub, the need for a strong organization to champion the arts in the city becomes even more imperative. The Arts Council must be capable of supporting and developing arts and culture in New Orleans to keep pace the city’s desire for economic development. In order for the Arts Council to be effective in its capacity to advance the arts in New Orleans, the organization should be ready and willing to adapt with the changing needs of the community.

End Notes


Bibliography


Vita

Elise Richardson was born and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She moved to New Orleans in 2002 to attend Tulane University, and graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in French in 2006. In 2011, she joined the University of New Orleans to pursue her Master’s degree in Arts Administration. Ms. Richardson is a recipient of the University of New Orleans Master’s Award Scholarship.