THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY TO OUR MISSION

The mission of the Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City is to advance and support the arts for the benefit of the Kansas City region.

The Kansas City metropolitan area benefits greatly from the existence of a thriving and growing arts community that has enormous intrinsic value, but its value can also be linked with a number of significant benefits that directly relate to the economic, social, educational and civic development of individuals and our society. One of the many well-recognized benefits to the region is the power of the arts to bring together people of diverse cultures, backgrounds, ethnicities and socio-economic circumstances. We have heard consistently from a number of our key stakeholders and funders that they greatly appreciate and value the important role played by non-profit arts organizations in this realm.

As our society and civilization change and become more and more diverse, the members of the Board of Directors of the Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City believe that a commitment to increased diversity is an important, evolving strategy to ensure both organizational survival and relevance in the 21st century.

On January 19, 2013, the board of the Arts Council voted to adopt the following diversity statement:

“The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City is committed to inclusivity and accessibility. The Arts Council seeks to achieve diversity and cultural equity in its leadership, partnerships, grant making and programs. The Arts Council seeks to be a supporter and model for all arts organizations in the region, particularly in areas of board make-up, staffing, training and communications practices.

The Arts Council carries out its region-wide mission with proactive efforts to embrace differences of culture, ethnicity, race, religion, international origin, sexual orientation, physical abilities, socio-economic status, age and gender. Its goals will be achieved when:

- All individuals and organizations that make up our region have fair access to the information, financial resources and opportunities vital to full cultural expression;
- All share the opportunity to be represented in the development of arts policy and the distribution of arts resources;
- All cultures are expressed in thriving, visible arts organizations of all sizes; and,
- Programming reflects the experiences of all cultures, communities, age groups and abilities.
- All counties, municipalities and arts genres have a proportional voice in region-wide arts planning and resource allocation.”

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This statement reflects our ambitious hopes for the future for a Kansas City region that will only be achieved by concerted and sustained efforts from a broad number of people. We approach this task with humility, knowing that we do not have all the answers to this complex challenge, and well aware of the need to enlist many partners and supporters in order both to define and to make a meaningful impact upon our community. This policy represents our aspirations and our commitment to helping our constituent organizations meet these challenges.

DIVERSITY IN OUR GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

Diversity is already one of many factors considered thoughtfully by our panelists as they deliberate on their recommendations to the board for funding decisions for ArtsKC grants. When the ArtsKC Fund first began in 2006, diversity was not even mentioned as one of the expected outcomes of its grantmaking activities, nor was any information about diversity requested from grant seekers as part of the application process. Yet over time, through the responses, questions and concerns of the individuals serving on our grant panels, it became clear that diversity is an important community value that they were already considering. Diversity became increasingly a topic of discussion. Since our panelists had been evaluating organizations in part on their diversity, a question on the subject was added to the application, thereby providing organizations the opportunity to present information about their approaches to achieving diversity.

We are keenly aware that there are no single approaches to incorporating diversity into an organization. There are no set formulas or characteristics regarding diversity that can be applied uniformly and consistently across all organizations to measure their progress, in part because arts organizations themselves are so diverse.

However, it can be said that organizations exist that have successfully incorporated diversity by embracing it as a core value, best practice and a way of achieving their mission. These model organizations set a course where diversity is both defined and measureable within their operations. Each organization must continue to define for itself in what ways it will seek to improve its diversity. There are multiple dimensions to an arts organization’s structure and activities that can yield meaningful information, including the composition of its board, staff, supporters, audiences and program offerings. It is possible to demonstrate positive change in any one of these dimensions, so arts organizations have freedom in choosing how to evaluate and report on their own progress.

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DIVERSITY RESOURCES

The Arts Council is committed to providing arts organizations with tools and resources that will help them take action towards increased diversification and access to their programs. Current offerings include:

**Board Diversity Matchmaking Workshop**
- The Arts Council and the Heartland Women’s Leadership Council partner together for an annual Diversity Board Matchmaking Event. Arts organizations from the region set up booths with information about their organization and individuals from diverse backgrounds with the skill-sets needed as potential candidates for board seats are invited to attend. The evening includes both open networking and the opportunity for scheduled 15 minute interviews with prospective arts organizations.

  Board member candidate groups include the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Group, the Heartland Women’s Leadership Council, the Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Urban League Young Professionals Group.

**Cultural Competency Workshops:**
- The Arts Council offers Cultural Competency workshops throughout the year for the purpose of increasing cultural competency for Kansas City area artists, arts organizations, staff and board members. Dr. Doris Carroll, Associate Professor at Kansas State University is the workshop facilitator. Participants discuss diversity within the arts and how it relates to their organization’s mission statement, core values, and cultural strengths. The workshops provide an opportunity for arts groups to network and form new partnerships in their community to further strengthen neighborhood arts development.

  **Upcoming Workshops:**
  - Park University, April 11, 2013, 8:30AM-12:30PM
  - The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, May 30, 2013, 8:30AM-12:30PM

The Arts Council is committed to providing additional resources as they are identified and can be funded. In addition to the Diversity Statement we have developed, we have included the Americans for the Arts Diversity Statement for your reference and possible guidance further in this document. **We encourage you to develop your own organizational diversity statement as a starting point for examining this critical issue.**

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A POSITIVE VISION OF THE FUTURE

Even before we began the ArtsKC Fund, it was clear that access to the arts is not evenly distributed throughout the metro area. Our ability as an arts sector to demonstrate progress in more equitable access to civic leadership and the community at large could result in additional opportunities to make the arts a more vital and regular part of the lives of all Kansas City residents.

While many not-for-profit arts organizations offer worthy outreach programs designed to provide services for a broad range of constituents throughout the region, it can be observed that:

- These benefits are experienced to a lesser degree by the residents of neighborhoods where access to arts programs and activities is limited;

- The majority of formally organized and presented arts activities take place outside of the geographic boundaries of neighborhoods located deep within the urban core.

Our vision for the future of Kansas City is that increased access to the arts will result in a stronger, healthier and better funded arts sector, which will benefit the entire community. We embrace diversity as an integral part of the arts equation for creating a thriving arts community that is accessible, vibrant and reflective of the range of individuals that the Arts Council serves. It is our intent to both lead and learn with you as our shared partners in this important and valuable endeavor.

We look forward to working towards that goal with all of our partners and constituents.
THE AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The arts uniquely empower the creative vitality of every identity. Americans for the Arts understands that America's cultural vibrancy is due to its diversity. As such, Americans for the Arts acknowledges that all cultures are vital to the arts and the promotion of a culturally democratic world.

Therefore, Americans for the Arts supports the development, expression, and preservation of art and culture of all communities, groups and individuals. We work to ensure that diverse populations throughout the U.S. have opportunities to appreciate and value the arts and to participate.

Recognizing that cultural diversity goes beyond language, ethnicity, race, and religion, to include crosscutting characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and range of ability and age, Americans for the Arts seeks to build an appreciation for the qualities brought to bear by each individual and cultural group with whom we share communities and the nation as a whole.

In order to provide informed, authentic leadership for the advancement of the arts, arts education, and arts access in America, Americans for the Arts is conscious of the need to promote diversity within the staff, board of directors, programs, audiences and written policies of our organization and those we serve.

Americans for the Arts will create and adhere to policies that increase and support diversity within the organization and enhance staff understanding of diversity issues in order to achieve its mission effectively and provide leadership for the field. Americans for the Arts will develop and evaluate strategic plans that include specific objectives for promoting diversity internally and in the field.

Americans for the Arts will commit time and resources to promote involvement and expand leadership opportunity. Recognizing that historical and present day inequities must be acknowledged and addressed to promote the realization of the full power of each community's cultural assets, Americans for the Arts works to advance policies and practices that support diversity, equity, and pluralism in the arts and culture sector.

**Approved by the Americans for the Arts Board of Directors on October 16, 2006.**
http://www.americansforthearts.org/about_us/diversity_statement.asp