

# Knight Foundation

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NEWSLETTER

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## ARTS MARKETING PROJECTS BLOSSOM ACROSS KNIGHT CITIES

Theater producers, orchestra managers and museum directors all agree: Great artistry doesn't always mean box office success. Even the highest levels of talent and creativity often fail to attract wide audiences.

In response, cultural organizations nationwide are investing significant resources in innovative efforts to attract new audiences and persuade

traditional art lovers to visit galleries and attend performances more often.

There's also a growing trend toward collaboration in arts marketing. Over the past eight years, a series of Knight Foundation grants has helped establish and develop coalitions of cultural institutions aimed at building capacity to market

the visual and performing arts.

From a 1994 planning grant in Charlotte to the newest marketing ventures in Detroit and Grand Forks, Knight support is enabling groups of cultural institutions to design and implement cooperative marketing strategies based on their specific organizational and community needs. *(Continued on Page 10)*

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## ARTS MARKETING PROJECTS FEATURE A VARIETY OF APPROACHES

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Unlike several Knight-initiated grant programs, the concept of arts marketing coalitions emerged on a community level, said Gary Burger, co-director of the Foundation's Community Partners Program.

"We're seeing a wide variety of approaches in different places, based on the size and experience of the participating arts organizations and the character of each community," said Burger. "There's no single formula for arts marketing that works in every situation. We've encountered a wonderful range of creative ideas."

A three-year, \$800,000 grant to the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan represents one of the broadest regional approaches to cultural marketing. Based on five years of planning, pilot efforts and in-depth assessment of needs and resources, community leaders have established the Metro



Photo by Van Miller, courtesy MSO

*Charlotte's Marketing Services Organization now has 11 clients and 17 staff members.*

In South Florida, the Broward County Cultural Affairs Council this year launched a planning effort to develop a marketing program for cultural, arts and science organizations located within the Riverwalk Arts and Entertainment

District, a 22-block area that contains cultural facilities, four government agencies and 100 small businesses. All consider cultural tourism a top priority. Broward, like Long Beach, is addressing the issue of cultural "branding" as a way of promoting the area's identity among resident and tourist audiences.

Meanwhile, Charlotte's Marketing Services Organization (MSO), the oldest of the arts marketing collaboratives, has grown to 11 clients, including its original four performing arts organizations. While many of the newer marketing partnerships are structured on a programmatic

Detroit Cultural Marketing Network, a coalition including some of the region's largest arts institutions as well as many small and midsize groups.

Larry C. Coppard, Community Foundation senior consultant, says Detroit's leaders drew upon experiences in Charlotte and Long Beach, two other Knight communities involved in arts marketing partnerships, but crafted a program based on the operations of Detroit area cultural organizations. Balancing the needs of large and small groups, the Marketing Network this fall will launch three programs: a customer database cooperative that helps participating arts groups to share mailing lists; e-marketing technology and support; and market research and audience development.

Two other large-scale ventures are under way in California. In Long Beach, MaxMarketing is completing its second year as a collaborative agency serving nonprofit arts clients, while in Silicon Valley, a cooperative

cultural development plan has attracted significant support from other private and public funders and has contributed to a stronger environment for the arts in a technology-based community. Knight grants have supported the planning process in both communities and implementation efforts in Long Beach.

In contrast to these urban efforts is Grand Forks, where the North Dakota Museum of Art is heading a planning initiative that will serve a large geographic region with a population hub of 60,000 surrounded by sparsely settled farms and widely scattered small towns. A recent Knight grant will help local leaders determine the feasibility and design of a cooperative arts marketing program to benefit small cultural organizations in a rural area.

Another planning initiative focusing on audience development is taking place in Columbus, Ga., following a unified capital campaign to raise money for eight cultural institutions.

basis, the Charlotte venture continues to function as a more traditional, fee-based marketing agency, with 17 staff members.

"What works in Charlotte doesn't necessarily work in other communities," according to Carol May, former MSO director and now a consultant with Audience Insight, an affiliate of the Connecticut-based AMS Planning & Research Corp.

"The key for a community is to take the time to examine its particular needs and identify the right partners for the collaborative," May said. "Different partners bring a mix of strategic strengths."

Alan Brown, Audience Insight president, has been involved in most of the partnerships since 1994.

"As the concept has evolved, we have learned a great deal from each of these efforts," he said. "While the first partnerships started with the perspective of creating a self-

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## REGIONAL DETROIT MARKETING COLLABORATIVE IS INITIATIVE'S NEWEST ARTS PARTNERSHIP

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sufficient marketing agency, some of the newer approaches are based more on the idea of pursuing specific shared programs and services."

Whatever the format, Brown and May both emphasize the importance of leadership in launching and sustaining an effective arts marketing coalition. "In every case, you need to have the individual, the champion, to keep moving things forward," May said.

Leadership is also among the core components highlighted by researcher Thomas E. Backer of Human Interaction Research Institute, who has studied many arts marketing partnerships to

identify contributors and barriers to success. In addition to strong leadership, Backer pointed to strategic planning, pilot projects, and the need to determine the appropriate organization to start and host the marketing coalition. Approaches vary; partnerships have been established by a performing arts center in Charlotte, a community foundation in Detroit, a museum in Grand Forks and cultural affairs agencies in Long Beach, Silicon Valley and South Florida. Selecting the right organization and defining its role are critical factors of success.

Backer also urged community planners to address the issue of a partnership's sustainability – its

"legs" – and to use research and evaluation to make sure collaborative efforts stay on track.

"Arts marketing is part of the broader issue of cultural participation, the way arts become part of people's lives," Backer said. "We now have a group of communities that are sharing experiences and helping each other deal with the process of change."

*A 1999 Knight Foundation publication, Marketing the Arts, provides an in-depth look at the Charlotte partnership experience. You can view this document in the News@Knight section of our web site, [www.knightfdn.org](http://www.knightfdn.org)*

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