

THE CULTURAL EQUITY GUIDEBOOK:

Recommendations from Rhode Island's cultural communities on how to support culturally specific and multicultural initiatives in the state.

HISTORY OF THE CULTURAL EQUITY GUIDEBOOK:

Since September of 2015 PCEI and AS220 have been convening cultural practitioners from cultural communities throughout Rhode Island to examine the needs and challenges of leaders who have been working with culturally-specific and multicultural groups in the state.

The goal was to establish concrete strategies to ensure proper and respectful representation of cultural communities and ensure the impact of cultural work is recognized and supported by funders who invest in the arts.

This conversation sets the stage for a guidebook that will inform the practice of larger institutions and groups who wish to engage cultural groups in urban planning, community development, culture, music and art festivals and other relevant initiatives.

QUOTES FROM CONVENERS

"Cultural practitioners help broaden people's horizons."

"It is not a melting pot, it is a salad; all of the distinct elements are important."

"... we must define ourselves so that others don't define us; taking control of our own narratives."

"While working to maintain viability we struggle with staying true to ourselves and not 'losing our souls'"

"Often times cultural work is watered down so that it can be legible to western audiences"

THEMES, GOALS & CHALLENGES

THEMES:

- Culture is the foundation for art; it influences how one presents themselves and what they create.
- Art is a skill and a talent; culture is what informs what art one creates.
- Art is a way for one to stay in touch with their culture when they move to other lands.
- Cultural art can be very structured and specific.
- One's work can be influenced by their culture without defining their work as solely cultural.
- Culture is not static; it morphs, evolves, interacts and creates new forms of contemporary cultural expression.
- All cultural work is art.

GOALS:

- Identify ways to draw funding to authentic cultural arts initiatives in our area.
- Create language that can inform criteria for funding public initiatives claiming to support cultural art.
- More access to support and funding for authentic cultural practitioners.
- Arm cultural practitioners with the proper language and tools to support and advocate for their work.
- Reinforce the importance of cultural sensitivity and respect for multicultural expression in the field of arts & culture in the state.

CHALLENGES:

- Dealing with a hierarchy that devalues non-Eurocentric culturally rooted artistic expression.
- Lack of understanding, lack of traditional education, and language barriers that disadvantage cultural practitioners from accessing funding, resources and supports.
- Mitigating against cultural appropriation and profiteering off of the authentic traditions of others
- Misjudging cultural work as offensive due to ignorance
- Inequitable support for cultural practitioners and communities due to lack of knowledge and ignorance on the part of sponsoring and funding organizations



AS220

CULTURAL TERMINOLOGY

Culture - The cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (Hofstede, 1997)

Cultural Practitioner - An individual whose artistic expressions are tied to, directed and informed by their own personal traditional cultural norms and values.

Cultural Supporter - An individual, organization or institution that provides resources and supports to and for cultural communities and cultural practitioners.

Cultural Enthusiast - An individual, organization or institution that enjoys the expressions of cultural communities and cultural practitioners.

Cultural Equity - Ensuring that the diverse expressions of cultural communities and cultural practitioners are protected, promoted and supported in a fair and equitable manner.

Cultural Development - Ongoing efforts to support the progression of cultural communities and cultural practitioners, and to cultivate the cultural economy and sector.

BEST PRACTICES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on being a leader in cultivating economic development through culture in order to stimulate economic development within and for the creative sector as a whole
- Foster sustainable cultural organizations and support cultural communities & cultural practitioners.
- Have an explicit goal of engaging with cultural communities
- Highlight the financial impact and benefit of culture and cultural practices
- Art, Culture & Tourism Departments should partner with other city departments (Neighborhood Services, Department of Planning and Development, Public Safety, ect...) and community organizations, to identify, convene, and cultivate a network of community and cultural leaders.
- Conduct Asset mapping of cultural work currently being done in neighborhoods.
- Encourage support and increased funding opportunities specifically for cultural practitioners
- Work with creative sector service providers and foundations to encourage mainstream cultural organizations to diversify their human resources and programs, to develop partnerships between organizations, and to build and/or strengthen organizational relationships with cultural communities.

CULTURAL DOs AND DONTs

CULTURAL AWARENESS

- DO acknowledge and identify the differences between the unique characteristics that comprise cultural expressions versus artistic expressions
- DO identify and seek to better understand the role that culture specifically, currently and potentially plays in connecting with, supporting and improving the community overall
 - Economic stimulant
 - Social cohesive
 - Source of community pride
 - Tourism attractant
 - Educational tool
 - Others?
- DON'T assume that your personal cultural norms and values are representative of the norms and values of other cultures

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- DO identify the unique cultural resources and attractants that comprise your community
- DO identify the specific cultural communities and practitioners that comprise your community
- DO seek to understand the unique challenges that your community's specific cultural communities and practitioners face
- DO seek to raise awareness about and support for the interests and challenges that are specifically expressed by cultural communities and practitioners
- DON'T assume that you are aware of and/or have relationships with all of the cultural communities comprising your community
- DON'T assume that you can identify or task one individual to represent an entire cultural community
- DON'T assume that you are able to speak on behalf of a cultural community if you are not a member of that particular cultural community
- DON'T add to, borrow from or attempt to enhance the expressions of cultural communities and practitioners without their specific approval

SUPPORT & INVESTMENT

- DO view and value the cultural sector and economy as separate and distinct elements from the arts sector and economy
- DO proactively seek out opportunities to engage with, support and cultivate the initiatives, programs and projects that cultural communities and practitioners are currently implementing or developing
- DO seek direct advisement and direction from cultural communities and practitioners themselves on how to most appropriately support their efforts and address their concerns
- DO support cultural communities and practitioners in the specific manners that they suggest and require
- DO proactively seek opportunities to involve cultural practitioners and communities in current community based events, programs and initiatives
- DO compensate Cultural practitioners at a pay rate commensurate with Artists
- DO proactively seek to employ representatives from cultural communities in gate-keeper positions to ensure more and better access to support and funding opportunities for cultural communities and practitioners
- DON'T assume that current resources and support strategies for Arts & Culture adequately address or support the unique and specific needs or goals of the cultural sector and economy.



ABOUT PCEI:

The Providence Cultural Equity Initiative (PCEI) is a Cultural Consultancy Firm based in Providence, Rhode Island that promotes & cultivates Cultural Equity in the sectors of **Education**, the Arts, Tourism and Food & Beverage through the means of Advocacy, Awareness, Cultural Development and Consultation. The **Mission** of PCEI is "to lead the development of Rhode Island's Cultural Sector & Economy". The **Vision** of PCEI is "to be the premier Clearinghouse for authentic cultural expression, experience, and investment in the northeast United States".

www.ProvCEI.org

AS220

ABOUT AS220:

AS220 is an artist-run organization committed to providing an unjuried and uncensored forum for the arts. AS220's facilities and services are available to any artist who needs a place to exhibit, perform or create original work and its classes and public-access studios are among the most affordable in the nation. AS220 was founded on the principle that freedom of expression is crucial for the development of strong communities and individual spirits. AS220 is credited as a national model for urban revitalization recognized nationally for its catalytic role in the revitalization of downtown Providence.

www.AS220.org

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THE CULTURAL EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

**Best practices for promoting and
supporting sustainable
Cultural Equity & Engagement**

