Community Arts Advisory Committee

Presentation to the County Manager

November 12, 2019
Overarching Question

How best does Arlington County efficiently, effectively and equitably deliver services to its arts and culture community, which in return provides value to the larger Arlington community?
Charge

• Catalogue public and private arts services in Arlington and the region;
• Develop and analyze alternative management and service delivery proposals, funding sources and a proposed transition for future operations;
• Evaluate and propose public-private partnerships;
• Develop a new scheduling process for joint-use theater space.
Members

Chair: Anika Kwinana, Arlington Commission for the Arts

Direct Stakeholders:
- Sara Duke, Encore Stage & Studio [Scenic Studio, CostumeLab]
- Tom Prewitt, WSC/Avant Bard [Scenic Studio, CostumeLab]
- Matthew Randall, Dominion Stage [Scenic Studio, Costume Lab]
- Steven Yates, The Arlington Players [Scenic Studio, CostumeLab]
- Jane Franklin, Jane Franklin Dance [Scenic Studio]
- Pryalal Karmakar, Prio Bangla [Mobile Stage]
- Kat Williams, Animal Welfare League [Mobile Stage]
- Maggie Boland, Signature Theatre [CostumeLab]
- Amy McWilliams, CPRO [Mobile Stage]

Others:
- Pam Farrell, Supervisor of Arts Education, Arlington Public Schools
- Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Management Services, Arlington Public Schools
- Carol Cadby, Yorktown HS drama teacher, Arlington Public Schools
- Janet Kopenhaver, Embracing Arlington Arts Board
- Yasmina Mansour and Ava Boston, Teen Network Board
arlington arts is...
Agreements create a safe space for dialogue, critical conversation and decision-making, while aiming to create equity of voice for this work.

Ground rules & working agreements:

- Listen to each other
- Participate fully
- Respect and share air time
- Be brief – share air time
- Assume positive intent
- One person talks at a time – signal intent to speak (using name tents)
- Think creatively
- Remain positive and forward looking
- Speak for yourself, not on behalf of others
- Differences of opinion are natural and useful

Expectations & responsibilities:

- The process is explicit, rational, and fair.
- I was treated well and my inputs were heard.
- I can live with and commit to the outcome.

From consensus prime – decision making
Work Processes

Tightly structured sequence of steps:

- Review background information
- For each service:
  - Define the service
  - Describe the overarching goal
  - Develop criteria and how to measure these indicators
  - Generate ideas/scenarios
  - Evaluate the ideas/scenarios
- Discuss & agree on the scenarios that answered the overarching question
- Produce a draft
- Review & amend the draft
- Transmit final form to the County Manager
Subcommittees

- Scenic Studio & CostumeLab
- Mobile Stage
- Joint Use Scheduling
Iterative Process

Three iterative cycles were required prior to finalizing the options and draft report.
Several strategies under the five goals within *Enriching Lives* were relevant to the Advisory Committee’s work.

- Equity and inclusion
- Venues and infrastructure
- Partnership and collaboration


The confluence of arts and creative activities and business could potentially grow into an arts and industry district. The Advisory Committee saw this as an opportunity.
Survey & Interviews

In reviewing the results of this market research and relating them to the experiences and situations of performing arts groups in Arlington, the Advisory Committee identified these conclusions to take into account in its thinking about future scenarios:

Set Construction Spaces
- A significant majority of the groups outside Arlington have their sets constructed in-house.
- There is not a well-defined market in scene shop services for nonprofit groups, with clearly identified vendors and a price structure. The main reason for this seems to be that most of the groups cannot afford the full cost of scene shop services. The only commercial services available are remote and expensive.
- Unlike these groups outside the County, most Arlington performing arts organizations do not own or have access to spaces in which they can build.
- In the absence of a scene shop market, this explains why, for theater groups in the County, the Scenic Studio is of such importance.

Costume Acquisition
- For securing costumes, the situation is different: Arlington groups, like groups across the region, obtain and build costumes through improvising and using a variety of sources.

Mobile Stages
- There is a genuine open market for mobile stages, which exists alongside some subsidized local government provision. The range of prices is fairly wide.

Joint Use Agreements
- There is no equivalent arrangement with the schools in other jurisdictions to the joint use agreement, which is seen as an ingenious approach.
Criteria

- Efficiency
- Equity of access
- Quality of facility/service
- Overall effectiveness
- Community impact
- Risk
- Program sustainability
- Financial sustainability
- Affordability
- County staffing
- County net tax support
Options Generated

18 options: generated, discussed, evaluated and whittled down to:

4 specific recommendations
Recommendation: Scenic Studio

- The County commits to the long-term goal of moving the Scenic Studio to the South Four Mile Run Drive area as part of an Arts and Industry District.
- Pilot the first steps to establishing the service as “a community resource...” These first steps would be taken at the Gunston location.
- In the interim, retain the Scenic Studio at Gunston and ensure the provision of a moderately enhanced service.
Rationale: Scenic Studio

- Achieves, especially in the medium- and long-term, a significant increase in the use of the Scenic Studio service.
- Supports the second goal of *Enriching Lives*, which is “to invest in a vibrant, equitable, sustainable and evolving arts and culture ecosystem,” and the first strategy to achieve that goal - to “build essential and purposeful venues and other infrastructure that support high-quality arts activity and provide the Arlington community with opportunities to participate in a variety of artistic and cultural options.”
- Provides a significant return on this investment in the form of the community impact and benefits.
- Furthers important County plans and policies.
Transition: Scenic Studio

- Appointment of a manager with the experience and skills to lead and manage the service – including marketing & new aspects with new audiences.
  - Preparation of a job description, recruitment and selection
  - Orientation/settling-in process
  - Develop a plan for the development of the recommended service, including enhanced marketing and the pilots
Recommendation: CostumeLab

- Trial, in FY 2021, a ‘Maker Space,’ centered on the sewing machines, dye vat and other equipment currently sitting idle in the CostumeLab.
- Contract with Signature Theatre (subject to a proper RFP or sole source agreement, in accordance with the County’s purchasing policies) to develop and manage a combined costume inventory.
- The contract would:
  - guarantee access for eligible Arlington arts organizations;
  - specify the protocols and rules that will apply to this access; and
  - specify pricing policies - charges would be increased to a ‘reasonable’ level — within a range suggested by both current users and the experience and economics of other organizations in the region.
Rationale: 
CostumeLab

- Split approach takes advantage of Signature's strengths and preferences and the opportunity presented at 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive
- Provides continuity to existing users of the Costume Lab
- Attract other groups that have improvised their costume arrangements
- Leverages the best quality items within the CostumeLab's stock
- Makes fullest possible use of County-funded equipment through a Maker Space
Transition: CostumeLab

- Establish a group of arts groups to manage the CostumeLab for the remainder of FY 2020
- Maintain the current level and means of access for the remainder of FY 2020
- Initiate a professional evaluation of the CostumeLab inventory to establish its value and relevance to likely users and curate the inventory appropriately
- Initiate an appropriate contracting process, in discussion with Signature.
- Once agreed, in consultation with the performing arts groups, the County and the third party discuss and agree the general terms of the contract.
- Finalize the contract
Recommendation: Mobile Stage

- Sell or otherwise dispose of the current Mobile Stage and contract with a vendor.
  - Prior to developing an RFP, establish a fair and transparent fee structure for the user groups
  - Terms of the contract, for a state-of-the-art mobile stage; technical services; and delivery, set up and removal, should provide for:
    - Discounted rates (based on standard market rates) due to the proposed number of uses (12 - 13 per year).
    - Access for County departments and any group in the County.
  - The County will ensure subsidy, in a grant or other format, to the existing users to bridge any gap between the contracted cost and the updated fee structure.
Rationale:
Mobile Stage

- Removes the responsibility of ownership, including ongoing maintenance, storage, logistics, etc. of a mobile stage
- Reduces the need for certified technical staff
- Establishes a more equitable and transparent approach to a pricing structure for the current and potential future users of the stage.
- Creates the opportunity for more organizations to access a mobile stage and, therefore, opens possibilities for greater community bridge-building with high-quality events - effectively advancing two strategies found within *Enriching Lives*. 
Transition: Mobile Stage

- Retain the Mobile Stage and continue the current arrangement with the existing users.
- Update the pricing structure.
- Continue market research to develop an appropriate RFP to solicit to potential vendors.
- Upon successful negotiation and finalization of a contract for mobile stage services, surplus or otherwise dispose of the stage.
Recommendation: Joint-Use Scheduling

- A collaborative approach of an arts organization-only performance and rehearsal planning calendar to identify and work out potential scheduling conflicts before proposing space and time allocations to APS.
- An APS/ACG/Performing Arts operations and coordination group to oversee coordination and liaison of scheduling and make decisions on any changes of operational policy.
  - EMS fully accessible for viewing by participating
  - Practical way of enabling performing groups to be allocated their times and spaces earlier than April.
  - Explore a novel solution to the one recurring scheduling conflict.
  - A conflict resolution/liaison/advocacy role for group interests and creating and monitoring the schedule
  - Ensure that protocols provide for HVAC, lights etc. to be checked and working for performances.
  - Planning two years ahead.
Rationale: Joint-Use Scheduling

- Making creative use of what are already “essential and purposeful venues” aligns well with *Enriching Lives*.
- Ensuring that this scheduling process works well can also contribute toward “encouraging partnership and collaboration across...sectors, and the community to grow...the arts and culture ecosystem.”
- Potential for higher quality productions and larger audiences.
- Increased transparency and is likely to reduce the frustration of groups.
- Although there remains a need for at least a part-time staff person, overall, the County will save on staff costs.
Transition:
Joint-Use Scheduling

• Outstanding matters:
  o Engage the interest and support of Gunston Middle School Facilities Manager.
  o Coordinate performance with rehearsal scheduling.
  o Work with CAD staff to explore how best to integrate the APS calendar with the arts organizations-only performance and rehearsal space at 3700.

• Form the operations and coordination group:
  o Secure APS’ blessing.
  o Formally ‘recruit’ members.
  o Agree on the group’s charter.
  o Decide on its leadership and its roles and responsibilities.
  o Develop rules, protocols and standard operating procedures.

• Ask the operations and coordination group to refine the approach during this coming season and plan to test this fully.
Holistic Consideration

• Connected each aspect of the charge with an understanding that the County has competing priorities
• Focused on how the arts contribute to the larger community
• Grounded recommendations in the efficient, effective and equitable delivery of services
• Aligned with the adopted document, *Enriching Lives: Arlington Arts and Culture Strategy (2017)*

The recommendations advance the *Enriching Lives* goals and provide greater opportunities to make use of the rich cultural environment that Arlington County residents deserve.
THANK YOU