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Interagency Arts Collaboration in Maquoketa

Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness II

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Maquoketa Art Experience

December 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maquoketa community has experienced growth in arts and culture programming, activities and offerings over the past two to three decades, due in large part to the development and expansion of nonprofit arts organizations like Maquoketa Art Experience, Ohnward Fine Arts Center, Codfish Hollow Barnstromers. These arts organizations, working in partnership with local and regional economic development efforts, and coupled with new local artists moving to the community and surrounding areas, have built Maquoketa into a thriving eastern Iowa arts hub. Now, Maquoketa seeks to capitalize on this arts and culture growth by enhancing collaboration and partnership among arts organizations. This report provides an overview of collaboration and partnership opportunities for arts agencies in Maquoketa, based in primary and secondary research, and provides recommendations for possible collaborative structures moving forward. Ultimately, the team recommends that Maquoketa consider expanding informal partnership opportunities in the near term by creating an arts network and enhancing social media and online marketing collaboration and consider developing a formal Maquoketa Arts Council once additional capacity and collaboration has been achieved.

INTRODUCTION

This interagency arts collaboration report is a product of a partnership between the University of Iowa's Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC) and Jackson County Economic Development Authority. The project and report were developed by a team of five undergraduate and graduate students as part of the Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness II course, offered in the Tippie College of Business during the Fall 2021 semester. The purpose of the project and report was to examine opportunities for productive partnerships between arts

organizations in Maquoketa to advance and elevate the overall arts scene in the community and region. Collaboration and partnership within arts communities across the country has been growing in recent years, due in part to the opportunity to expand resources, services and impact, but also due to increasing requirements from arts funding agencies for enhanced collaboration.ⁱ Nonprofit organizations more broadly have also sought to expand partnerships and collaborations with one another in order to increase funding opportunities, share resources, improve efficiencies, and build stronger networks. In fact, a recent Bridgespan Nonprofit Management Tools and Trends survey reported partnerships and collaboration was the number one tool nonprofit managers use to support growth in their organizations.ⁱⁱ

Although this project's focus was on interagency collaboration among arts organizations and stakeholders in Maquoketa, the Maquoketa Art Experience (MAE) served as the primary community partner for this project. MAE provided significant guidance and support in developing the project scope, executing project objectives, and connecting with the community of Maquoketa. In total, the team engaged 12 different stakeholders, including community organizations and individuals within the arts community in Maquoketa throughout the course of the project.

This project developed in three phases: 1) a research phase, consisting of primary and secondary research, 2) an analysis and strategy development phase, 3) and a community presentation and written report. During the research phase, the team conducted primary research, including stakeholder interviews with nonprofit arts organizations in Maquoketa, individuals connected to the arts community, and community leaders. Secondary research focused on trends in collaboration and partnership within the nonprofit arts sector and best practices for moving forward as a community. Based on information gathered through this primary and secondary

research, the team identified options and strategies for Maquoketa to consider in enhancing interagency arts collaboration. These strategies and recommendations were unveiled in an online Zoom public presentation to Maquoketa community stakeholders in December 2021, and are included in this written report.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESEARCH

In order to understand opportunities for interagency arts collaboration in Maquoketa, the team conducted secondary research into collaboration and partnerships between arts organizations occurring in other communities across the United States, as well as overall nonprofit organization collaboration and best practices. This secondary research aided the team in developing questions for primary research into Maquoketa's art community and provided a basis for consider considering collaboration and partnership recommendations for Maquoketa. This section reviews the secondary research about nonprofit collaborations and partnerships, and then discusses primary research conducted by the team, namely stakeholder interviews.

Informal and Formal Collaboration Nonprofit Collaboration

Nonprofit collaboration and partnerships exist on a continuum. Informal methods of working together including building networks, sharing marketing and social media, and creating relationships around specific efforts or programs (e.g. a single arts concert or fundraising campaign). These informal collaborative approaches provide opportunities for organizations to connect with one another and build toward shared goals and objectives without significant administrative/personnel burden, formal agreements, or long-term commitments. Formal methods of collaboration can include partnership-specific nonprofit organizations (e.g. arts councils), shared administrative functions and services, and organizational mergers.ⁱⁱⁱ Formal collaboration requires greater commitments of time and personnel, consists of formal, often

legal, written agreements, but generally leads to longer-term sustained partnership and development. Often, informal methods of collaboration can lead to more formal methods of collaboration.

Informal Collaboration

The growth of social media channels like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, along with interactive web platforms, have opened up new opportunities for nonprofit arts organizations to informally collaborate through enhanced networking, marketing and communication.^{iv} This method of collaboration allows organizations to connect with one another and expand audiences and community engagement without significant cost or time commitment.^v Sharing photos and videos, cross-promoting organizations and activities, and creating a unified social media theme using hashtags can elevate the overall arts in the community. Creating shared marketing and social media campaigns is also an important method for arts organizations to informally collaborate around specific goals, like fundraising for new capital projects or producing a new arts program.

An example of informal collaboration among arts organizations where shared marketing and social media is leveraged to advance arts in the community is the Strengthen.Grow.Evolve campaign in Iowa City. A partnership between the nonprofit cinema organization FilmScene and nonprofit theatre company The Englert Theatre, Strengthen.Grow.Evolve, with the tagline “The Greatest Small City for the Arts,” this collaborative marketing and fundraising effort was created to raise money for capital improvement projects.^{vi} Together, this partnership, based partially on shared marketing, social media and promotion has raised over \$5 million for these two nonprofit organizations.^{vii}

Nationally, a review of social media marketing reveals significant collaboration between nonprofit sectors across multiple platforms. Large-scale nonprofit organizations, like Charity Water, a nonprofit whose goal is to provide safe and clean drinking water to all, rely heavily on social media for informal collaboration and partnership.^{viii} Charity Water leverages their social media, through the use of hashtags, partnership photos, and direct re-posts of other nonprofit partners, to broadly lift up the message of the need to provide safe drinking water around the globe. Specific posts highlight particular nonprofit partnerships with attractive visuals coupled with details about the partnership in the captions. This is a great way for their followers to read a quick overview of the work that their partners are doing and why they chose to partner with them. They also tag their partners, both in the post and in the caption, so that their followers can click on the tag and learn more about the collaborations that are of interest to them.

Collaborative partnership networks are also an important way for nonprofit organizations to work together without formally committing to a structure like an Arts Council. Art networks are loosely organized collaborations between arts organizations and individuals where participants can share information about their work, learn from other community partners, and discuss opportunities for future partnership and connections.^{ix} These networks are typically organized by staff or volunteers of participating network organizations and may include regular gatherings (once a week or once a month) and events at a local business or arts organization. Networks are common within the arts and entrepreneurial communities, and although they are informal, they still require some leadership from individuals in the network who are willing to coordinate connecting opportunities.

Formal Collaboration

Although informal collaboration among arts organizations is strong, a decades-long national movement to develop and create more formal methods of collaboration within the arts community has led to significant growth in the number of arts councils across the United States.^x Art councils are formal organizations “whose primary purpose is to stimulate and promote the arts, increasing access to the arts through services, programs, and/or funding within a specific geographic area...”^{xi} Art councils provide big picture vision for arts in the community, which includes understanding and responding to the community’s needs, developing long-term strategies, defining goals and objectives, and building a strong support network to identify resources and funding for the arts.

Commonly, art councils are developed as independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, although these organizations may also decide to join already existing nonprofit organizations as a separate arm of their work. Many benefits come to creating a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, including eligibility for state and federal tax exemptions, tax-deductible donations, eligibility for government and foundation grants, and protection from personal liability. Perhaps one of the great benefits to creating a formal Art council nonprofit organization is that it forces an arts community to organize and establish a clear purpose and vision for what the arts will look like in the community.

Nonprofit art councils also have burdens and responsibilities that are significantly greater than informal networks or collaborative marketing and social media practices. Nonprofit organizations have legal requirements, reporting requirements, disclosure requirements, and restrictions on political activities, campaigns and lobbying. A formal arts council requirements significant time commitment from arts leaders in the community, and a willingness to work

toward a shared mission and vision.^{xii} Despite these responsibilities, there thousands of arts councils across the country today, in every state and every major city.

Closer to home, a great example of a local nonprofit arts council is the Bellevue Arts Council in Bellevue, Iowa.^{xiii} The Council’s vision is to “recognize all of the arts and their importance in our region. We envision Bellevue as a region where the arts inspire our innovative spirit, celebrate our rich cultural diversity, recognize our valuable history and encourage our individual and community involvement.”^{xiv} The Council operates a website and social media, provides an online gallery of local artist’s work, runs an arts festival called Fishtival, which celebrates the heritage of Bellevue as a Mississippi river community, and generally promotes art and artists in the Bellevue area. Other nonprofit art councils include the Art Guild of Burlington, the Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance (Cedar Rapids), and the Central Iowa Art Association in Marshalltown.^{xv}

Primary Research – Stakeholder Interviews

Best practice for evaluating partnership and collaboration opportunities includes completing an environmental scan and assessment of existing organizations, relationships and activities within the art community. In order to better understand the Maquoketa arts community, existing collaborations and partnerships, and to obtain feedback about future collaborative opportunities, the team identified stakeholder interviews as an important primary research method.^{xvi} Working in collaboration with Nancy Kilburg and Maquoketa Art Experience, stakeholders in the arts community were identified, consisting of several different types of stakeholders: board members of local arts nonprofit organizations, staff, volunteers, local artists and community members. These groups were considered critical to additional collaboration and partnership and held significant knowledge of current arts activities in Maquoketa.

In developing questions for the stakeholder interviews, the team followed public participation best practices by developing both open-ended questions as well as issue-specific questions. Questions were developed that focused on the stakeholder's involvement in the Maquoketa arts community, the extent to which they were currently involved in collaborations or partnerships in Maquoketa, their openness to future enhanced collaborative opportunities, and recommendations they had about future partnerships. The team also asked stakeholders for recommendations of additional resources and opportunities for further research. Three of the five team members were each assigned 3-4 stakeholders to contact and interview. A majority of interviews were conducted over the phone, although two interviews were conducted via Zoom. Interviews were recorded and responses were discussed as a team and combined into overall themes and key takeaways.

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH

The team's primary research through stakeholder interviews revealed several themes that reflect the overall arts community in Maquoketa today. First, it is clear that the work of local arts organizations like Maquoketa Art Experience, Ohnward Fine Arts Center, and others, is making a significant impact on the community. Over half of the interviewees mentioned that they believe Maquoketa is unique among smaller communities in Iowa in its commitment and support for arts, in large part to these nonprofit organizations. Interviewees also mentioned that interagency collaboration between arts organizations and other community and economic development organizations, the local government, and local artists, is positively impacting arts growth in Maquoketa.

A second key theme among interviewees was the importance of increasing collaboration among existing organizations and artists in the community.

Specifically, at least three individuals mentioned that they had experienced situations where ideas were generated by artists or volunteers, but the conversation turned immediately to forming a new entity or organization, rather than incorporating these ideas into existing organizations. There is a strong belief among stakeholders that the arts in Maquoketa will only grow with increased collaboration, but that there needs to be a focus on supporting existing efforts underway in the community.

A third theme the team identified after interviewing key stakeholders is the concern that adding additional work onto already overstretched volunteers and artists will potential hinder efforts to grow the Maquoketa arts community. Several interviewees mentioned feeling overwhelmed with the amount of volunteering, time commitment and energy currently required of them, and reported that they hoped to see new community members and individuals brought into the Maquoketa arts community. Two individuals specifically mentioned they hoped to see a more diverse group of people involved in these efforts.

Finally, the team asked a specific question of all interviewees that sought to determine whether there was a preferred method of collaboration (informal or formal). Although there was no consensus among the stakeholders in terms of a specific type of collaboration, there was a general response that it may be preferred to begin with more informal collaboration and consider formal collaboration as capacity develops. At least three interviewees, including one individual who is prominently involved in a Maquoketa arts organization, stated that they did not believe it was the right time for Maquoketa to create a formal arts council. These interviews referenced the already existing burdens of volunteers and arts leaders in the community and suggested more informal methods of collaboration would be preferred.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The stakeholder interviews, paired with research of other nonprofit and arts organization collaboration, led the team to consider a stepped approach to enhanced collaboration and partnership for Maquoketa arts organizations. Based on research, informal collaboration can lead to formal collaboration, and this is the path the team is recommending for Maquoketa. Initial conversations with community partners centered on the concept of an art council. While the team believes that a formal art council can provide a solid structural foundation for expanding and enhancing growth of the arts in Maquoketa, it is recommended that collaborative growth occurs before this council is created. That said, art council formation best practices are included as an addendum to this report for future reference.

The team recommends that Maquoketa consider forming an informal Maquoketa Arts Network. As discussed earlier in this report, art networks are a more loosely organized collaborative group, where the main objectives are to share ideas, learn from other art organizations and artists, and to continue building relationships. Art networks can be creative in the type of programming offered, but one of the most common activities of art networks is to provide regularly scheduled gatherings where individual organizations, artists or initiatives can be featured. A rotating schedule of speakers and presenters can highlight the breadth and depth of the arts community in Maquoketa and allow new ideas to be incorporated into the broader arts community. “Coffee and conversation” gatherings within the arts network can also provide a more informal way for individuals and organizations to share their ideas, where no formal presentations are given, but everyone is provided a space to connect over coffee.

Maquoketa Arts Network gatherings can also address a key issue that was raised in stakeholder interviews about the desire to diversify and include a wider variety of artists into the

arts community of Maquoketa. Mini-workshops that allow artists to feature their work, even if it's a craft brewery that teaches the community how to brew their own beer, encourages a broader audience to engage with the arts in Maquoketa. The team recommends taking advantage of local venues in Maquoketa, including the local Maquoketa Brewing brewery, for these featured gatherings. Through these Maquoketa Arts Network gatherings, organizations like Maquoketa Art Experience and Ohnward Fine Art Center, as well as individual artists and initiatives, can share their work and ideas with the broader arts community and engage in discussion and dialogue around further collaboration and partnership opportunities.

Although art networks are informal, some structure and leadership is required to coordinate network gatherings and other activities. The team recommends that an art network in Maquoketa could be led by staff or key volunteers with the Maquoketa Art Experience, Ohnward Fine Art Center, Codfish Hollow Barnstormers, and include local artists, representatives from other community organizations like Jackson County Economic Alliance and the City of Maquoketa.

The team also recommends that Maquoketa arts organizations leverage social media as a tool for collaborating and communicating, and this could be a goal of the newly formed Maquoketa Arts Network. Specifically, social media can help craft shared messaging and narratives for the arts in Maquoketa, expand community engagement, and enhance communication among artists, arts organizations, and the broader community. Social media best practices for collaborative art groups, including an arts network, suggests that the creation of a single hashtag for a Maquoketa arts network would be important to building the arts community. Hashtags are an important way for people and organizations not currently connected to Maquoketa to find out about the arts activities occurring in the community, but they also help

build a brand for arts in Maquoketa. Hashtags can be used across all social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

An example hashtag that Maquoketa could consider adopting is *#Maquoketacreates*. This hashtag represents the creative spirit of the arts organizations, individual artists and broader community, and reflects the understanding that the arts community in Maquoketa is diverse and includes a variety of types of art and creative expression. This hashtag also taps into broader conversations around the creative class and the importance of creative communities in community and economic development. Members of the Maquoketa arts network could adopt this hashtag anytime they post to social media about their activities and initiatives, and this hashtag could even be included as part of marketing materials and signage connected to art activities in Maquoketa.

Not all social media is considered equal when trying to enhance collaboration and partnership. Facebook is primary used by individuals over the age of 30, with the largest demographic group for Facebook being ages 30-35. That said, the baby boomer generation is the fastest growing demographic for Facebook, doubling in size from 2012-2019.^{xvii} Teenagers and young professionals in their 20s tend to utilize Instagram and Twitter. Facebook groups can be created to enhance online community, and the team suggests leveraging this tool as part of the Maquoketa arts network.

During the team's public presentation to Maquoketa, a question was raised about potential downsides to social media, including negative comments, bullying, and other disruptive online engagement. Managing social media for the Maquoketa art network could be included as part of the job of the volunteers coordinating art network activities, although hiring a student intern, paid or unpaid, would also be appropriate. Local college or even high school students

looking for opportunities to engage with the arts community while also obtaining experience in social media marketing would be mutually beneficial for the Maquoketa arts network as well as the student themselves. Most importantly, setting expectations up front about how the network expects members to use social media can establish clear standards and ensure hashtags are used appropriately.

As Maquoketa launches the Maquoketa Arts Network, bolstered by enhanced social media marketing and collaboration, the community can consider whether a shared vision and mission for arts in Maquoketa can eventually lead to the creation of a formal, 501(c)(3) Maquoketa Arts Council nonprofit organization. At the end of this report, a four step outline walks through the process for creating a formal Art Council. This outline is based on the Georgia Council for the Arts' Art Council Development Handbook, and the team encourages the Maquoketa arts community to review this handbook in full when the time comes for fully launching an arts council. The team believes that the enhanced informal collaboration and partnership through the network and social media can help lead the community to this formal organizational structure.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this project, the team has continually been impressed at the commitment of the Maquoketa arts community, and the community in general, to collaboration and partnership. Maquoketa values the arts and creative expression, and that organizations like Maquoketa Art Experience, Ohnward Fine Arts Center and others are leading the way to developing an even stronger arts community in Maquoketa. Through primary and secondary research, this team sought to evaluate how Maquoketa could expand the arts community through even greater collaboration and partnership. Initially, the formation of a formal Arts Council was considered an appropriate approach to interagency collaboration in Maquoketa. However, through stakeholder

interviews and secondary research of other arts organization collaboration, the team is recommending a more stepped approach building partnership and collaboration among arts organizations in Maquoketa. Informal collaboration, including an arts network and enhanced social media coordination, can build a stronger foundation to launch a formal Art Council in the future.

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ADDENDUM: ARTS COUNCIL FORMATION BEST PRACTICES

**From “Arts Council Development Handbook,” Georgia Council for the Arts. For full explanations and a greater detailed outline, visit <https://www.artsgeorgia.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Arts-Council-Development-Handbook.pdf>*

FOUR STEP PROCESS TO DEVELOPING AN ARTS COUNCIL

1. Understanding Your Community
 - a. Conduct an environmental scan: Asset-Based Community Development
 - b. Information to Collect
 - i. Information about Individuals: community demographics (population, age, race, ethnicity, household income) and psychographics (values, attitudes, opinions)
 - ii. Information about Community: currently operating arts-related entities; business, government, other potential resources
 - iii. Collection methods:
 1. Research existing information sources
 2. Create and distribute surveys
 3. Talk to people directly
 - c. Analyzing Information: SWOT Analysis
2. Building a Strong Organizational Foundation
 - a. Grow the vision and foundational support for an Arts Council
 - b. Create a Mission statement: What is the purpose of the Arts Council?
 - c. Team Building: Establish Broad Support
 - i. Public meetings
 - ii. Key players

3. Establish the Arts Council as a Nonprofit Organization
 - a. Process and Paperwork
 - b. Incorporating your Arts Council as a nonprofit
 - c. Conducting your first corporate meeting
 - d. Applying for tax exempt status
4. Operating a Successful Arts Council
 - a. Year One and Beyond
 - i. Planning
 - ii. Programming
 - iii. Fundraising
 - iv. Marketing and Communicating
 - b. Draft a First Year Road Map
 - i. Short and long-term objectives
 - c. Programming: Choose activities that most interest your community
 - d. Fundraising: Develop a mix specific to your community
 - e. Communicating: Reach out using a variety of media and tools

Conclusion: Long-term strategies for success

1. Strategic planning
2. Succession planning

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