

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute Action Committee

Recommendations to the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, August 2, 2013

In response to the City Council's Statement of Legislative Intent

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BACKGROUND

As part of the transfer of the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute (LHPAI) into the Office of Arts and Culture, the Mayor's budget called for staff *'to develop a long-term, self-sustaining financial strategy for the center.'* The Seattle City Council added a Statement of Legislative Intent on November 7, 2012, requesting *'that the Office of Arts and Culture, in concert with the Seattle Arts Commission, create a stakeholder group in developing this plan, comprised of LHPAI's audiences, its patrons, and the arts and culture community.'*

That request, in turn, led to the creation of the LHPAI Action Committee. The Committee's charge was to offer recommendations to OAC *'...concerning long-term operations of Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center (LHPAC). The plan should focus on maintaining LHPAC's existing programming for the African American community while 1) enhancing other types of programming and events at LHPAC, and 2) establishing a long-term mechanism for financial support and stability for LHPAC.'* The Statement of Legislative Intent also stated that *'OAC should consider, and then recommend, whether LHPAC should: 1) continue to be operated by the City; 2) be leased or transferred to a group or organization to carry forward LHPAC programming; or 3) be managed by a third-party organization for the City.'*

The Committee met six times between February and July 2013. The first few meetings provided the Committee members with an overview summary of LHPAI's mission, history, programming, operations, and finances. Two subsequent meetings examined national models and local transitions of arts programs that have shifted from government support to non-profit status.

During its last few meetings the Committee developed a series of recommendations based on the information it reviewed in the earlier meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to sustain the mission and programs of LHPAI, the Action Committee offers the following recommendations to the City Office of Arts and Culture.

1. The building in which LHPAI is currently housed should remain City owned.
2. **LHPAI should transition to an independent non-profit arts organization** under the conditions and through the process described below.
3. To succeed as an independent non-profit arts organization, LHPAI needs several **essential capabilities**:
 - a. A strong governing board
 - b. Robust fundraising capacity
 - c. A broad mix of funding, including:
 - i. Earned income
 - ii. Donations
 - iii. Grants
 - iv. Sponsorships
 - d. The embrace of both LHPAI's historic and current community, including an expanded pool of stake holders.
4. To develop the essential capabilities listed above, the Office of Arts and Culture (OAC) should undertake a series of **transition steps**:
 - a. Between October and December 2013, present plans for the LHPAI transition process.
 - b. Sometime between January and March 2014, appoint a **Transition Team Leader** for a term of up to 18 months; this person should:
 - i. Be an arts professional with experience leading organizational transitions
 - ii. Possess passion and vision that aligns with the LHPAI mission.
 - c. Charge the Transition Team Leader to lead a process that transitions the organization to becoming an independent non-profit between approximately March 2014 and October 2015 (depending on the date of the Team Leader's hiring). This process should assess opportunities and design an organizational strategy, and should include:

- i. Community outreach, engagement, and participation
 - ii. A market analysis
 - iii. A program audit to identify and preserve valued existing programming
 - iv. Development of an organizational vision and structure
 - v. Building the governing board for the new nonprofit organization
 - vi. Securing 501(c)(3) status for the new nonprofit
 - vii. A three-year **strategy Roadmap** or plan for developing governance and fundraising capacities, and implementing the organizational structure, programming, and marketing ideas.
5. Sometime between January and December 2015, depending on the pace of the transition, the Transition Team should wind down its work, and the **new LHPAI nonprofit Board** should begin to implement the Roadmap by:
 - a. Hiring a permanent Executive Director (ED) and possibly additional staff
 - b. Community outreach, engagement, and participation
 - c. Designing new program ideas
 - d. Sustaining the vision, passion, and relationships to continue engaging LHPAI's stake holders in the ongoing implementation of the Roadmap.
6. Between January 2016 and December 2017:
 - a. The new LHPAI Board and ED should:
 - i. Build additional capacity for fundraising, programming, and staffing
 - ii. Sustain community, outreach engagement, and participation.
 - b. OAC should:
 - i. Assist the board and staff as necessary
 - ii. Conduct regular assessments of the progress being made on the transition steps
 - iii. Report those assessments quarterly to the City Council.
7. Pending the assessments of progress, after FY 2017 the City will continue to own the building and take financial responsibility for major maintenance, while the new LHPAI non-profit will be financially responsible for staffing, programming, and building operations.

The Committee developed the attached timeline graphic as an Appendix to illustrate the key steps in Recommendations 4 - 7 above, and recommends that OAC include such a timeline in their SLI report to the City Council.

**Appendix: Timeline of
Key Transition Steps in Recommendations 4 - 7**

