

CULTURAL COALITION

serving southeastern & northeastern CT

Take Aways from February 13th Funding Booster Program Drop-In

Suggestions for how to engage authentically with BIPOC artists:

- Don't come into the conversation with all the answers. Be a catalyst for a conversation. Leave ego at the door and think in a more expansive or "reimagined" way.
- Artists want autonomy. They want to be able to create freely, or at least not be expected to fit into the mold you already created. Allow time for co-creation and organizations need to share control.
- All artists want to feel valued. BIPOC artists want to feel valued not just for their race and/or ethnicity but for the art they create. They want their identities as BIPOC people and as artists to be celebrated.
- Artists want the opportunity to connect with the land, the water, the environments in their rural and urban areas and to improve their surroundings.

Question: How does an organization include more diverse voices without BIPOC artists/community members feeling like they're tokens?

- Board members and staff need to get outside their own buildings/locations and meet BIPOC folks where THEY are gathering, showing their art, celebrating, etc... Engage them where they are. That is authentic. Don't just invite them to your space.
- Authenticity takes time...you have to invest the time to build trust and ongoing relationships if you want permanent change.
- When you're looking for a BIPOC artist/partner - Make a list about what you value about them as people/artists/organizations. Highlight that.
- Don't prescribe for the artists what you need as an organization. Allow them to have a voice and impact. Give space for them to speak, participate, and value their contributions.
- Artists need space (facilities/venues)! If you have a gallery, theater, and want BIPOC groups to utilize your spaces, invite them! Reach-out to BIPOC artist groups and organizations, offer to partner, provide them with the infrastructure they need to showcase their work.

Positive Examples:

Chestnut Street Playhouse: Through Chestnut Street's partnership with the Hispanic Alliance, putting on successful bi-lingual shows with youth during the past two summers, they have built the reputation as a trusted partner. Their outreach is intentional, consistent, and wide-spreading. Their message to the community is..."artists bring your ideas, we want to give you the space to create and let you tell your stories." This has snowballed into more partnerships with BIPOC artists/groups.

Lyman Allyn Art Museum: Similar situation as Chestnut Street. They started the outreach by intentionally showcasing BIPOC artists and leading conversations that directly impacted the BIPOC community. The message spread that the Museum is an inclusive and open environment. Diverse programming is a part of their mission now, and achieved by outreach that is consistent and very intentional.