Arts for Delaware's Future Consortium

Final Project Recommendations

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sloverlinett STRATEGIES

Audience research and planning for the mission-driven world.

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These recommendations conclude the three-phase research initiative on behalf of AFDF audience development

Project Plan:

1. Situation Assessment

- A. Existing research review
- B. Patron data aggregation & mapping
- C. Stakeholder interviews
- D. Market assessment

2. Audience Research

- A. Community survey
- B. Current Audience survey

3. Strategy Development

- A. Creative ideation session
- B. Focus groups with growth segments
- C. Final strategic recommendations
- D. Guidance in agency selection

Presented in this report

Final recommendations to expand and strengthen the Wilmington arts audience

Six overarching strategies to achieve success:

1. Work to increase awareness of Wilmington arts organizations among the region's culturally-active non-attenders
2. Encourage greater "crossover" attendance between Wilmington-area arts organizations
3. Make arts experiences more well-rounded and enticing to better engage (existing and potential) patrons
4. Rebrand the identity and position of the Wilmington arts landscape
5. Develop targeted messaging strategies, using geography as the primary segmentation
6. Expand the scope of collaboration beyond the five AFDF organizations

Strategy #1: Work to increase awareness of Wilmington arts organizations among culturally-active non-attenders

- **Rationale:** There is a sizeable population of culturally-active people in the greater Wilmington region who do not attend AFDF institutions – and have low awareness of them.
  - The barrier of lack of awareness and familiarity is the most substantial – and immediate – obstacle that arts organizations must first contend with to draw in new audiences.
- **Recommended Tactics:**
  - Partner with Longwood and Winterthur, institutions with the highest awareness and attendance among the region's culture-goers
    - → Promote arts organizations through joint marketing with Longwood and Winterthur (on-site or mailed)
    - → Collaborate on programming, such as by producing performances, exhibits, or events at the gardens/houses
  - Joint arts festivals and events
    - → Such as open houses at the institutions, community days, a trolley that brings people from institution-to-institution all day for special events, etc.
  - Create new rituals for arts-going
    - → Taps into special occasion-related motivations for attendance
    - → Often family-oriented and surrounding a holiday (Christmas, Halloween, Mother's Day, etc.)
    - → Can generate more buzz than frequent events
  - Establish a centralized event listing – one that can be utilized both immediately (for last-minute planning) as well as ahead of time; as well as actively (a website that one can go to) and passively (emails sent to patrons so they don't have to go to it)
    - → Incorporate sources of information that are already being used – particularly 55 Hours – so that a new resources doesn't exacerbate the "too many sources" problem

Strategy #1: Work to increase awareness of Wilmington arts organizations among culturally-active non-attenders (cont.)

- **Recommended Tactics (cont.):**
  - Band together to bring in "marquee" events – big names that will attract attention of lighter cultural consumers
  - Create collaborative family programming
    - → Create a set of go-to events or options for families looking for enriching experiences
  - Connect to teachers and school groups – reach parents through educators and their children
  - Share and/or acquire broader, non-arts-related lists such as magazine lists, etc.
  - Develop coordinated social networking activity to inform area arts-goers what's happening in the area's cultural scene
    - → Such as arts blogs, arts groups on Facebook, Yelp, Twitter, etc.

Strategy #2: Encourage greater "crossover" attendance between Wilmington-area arts organizations

- **Rationale:** There is low existing crossover among arts organizations' current patrons; within the aggregated pool of audience members, there is a substantial number of potential patrons that each institution can tap into.
- **Recommended Tactics:**
  - Cross-marketing and list-sharing between organizations
  - Cross-institution subscriptions, marketed as an "arts passport"
    - → Providing ticket packages, discounts, events, and information from a group of arts organizations
  - Ticket-buying incentives across organizations, including discount offers
    - → Such as "Buy two tickets to DSO, receive one free (or discounted) ticket from The Grand" and vice versa
  - Loyal Wilmington arts-goer program
    - → The more tickets a patron purchases among the Wilmington arts consortium, the more discounts and "rewards" s/he will receive (e.g., a "coffee card")
  - Ticket giveaways between institutions to create awareness, buzz, and trial
    - → Such as an entering to win DTC tickets on-site at DAM, two-ticket giveaway for a DSO concert at an OD performance, etc.
  - Greater programmatic collaboration between the institutions, such as:
    - → An "open house" at The Grand along with DSO and OD
    - → DTC presenting a "preview" of an upcoming performance at The Grand
    - → DAM featuring music by the DSO during an exhibition opening
  - Combined Playbill for use at all of the area's performing arts, including promotions and listings for all
  - Design a point-of-sale kit or listing that all collaborating organizations can post on-site, promoting and informing its patrons of the other cultural events in the area

Strategy #3: Make arts experiences more well-rounded and enticing to better engage (existing and potential) patrons

- **Rationale:** Arts patrons are eager for more of the cultural experiences that they enjoy; they'd appreciate opportunities for experiences that complement the "main event." Further, many lighter cultural consumers don't feel enough of a draw right now, urging them to seek out cultural events that are new to them.
- **Recommended Tactics:**
  - Incorporate pre- and post-activity social elements into the programming
  - Offer social event series – such as a wine tasting series or a singles' night series – that combine the opportunity to attend performances or events with the opportunity to socialize with fellow arts-goers
    - → Can also be implemented by a group of organizations that offer a multi-organization subscription that includes a social element
  - Coordinate start times for performances so that patrons can easily do dinner beforehand and/or drinks afterward (given local restaurant timing)
  - Behind-the-scenes experiences and tours, to give audience members a fuller, richer experience

Strategy #4: Rebrand the identity and position of the Wilmington arts landscape

- **Rationale:** The Wilmington arts landscape does not currently have a distinct, cohesive identity. Further, what the audience *does* think about Wilmington's cultural "scene" is heavily influenced by their perceptions of Wilmington as a city – an image that is ripe for revitalization.
- **Recommended Tactics:** This can be achieved through three avenues:
  1. A joint marketing campaign to rebrand the Wilmington arts landscape
     - → Hire an advertising agency to create an identity around an appealing and motivational Wilmington arts brand *[see following page for a model of the Wilmington arts brand]*
       - > Can be funded/directed by a consortium of arts institutions and/or by the city, donors, foundations, etc.
     - → Individual organizations can also utilize these principles in their own marketing strategies
       - > By showcasing how the organization also embodies the same positive attributes of the Wilmington arts scene on an individual level
  2. More actively differentiating Wilmington's arts by crafting a new, cohesive set of characteristics to set Wilmington culture apart from other cities – "arts, the Wilmington way"
     - → Versus pitting Wilmington arts against the arts in nearby (big) cities like Philadelphia in terms of quality alone
     - → Provides audiences with *new* motivations to attend arts in Wilmington by doing arts differently than how they're done elsewhere (such as more participatory arts, more progressive, more "backstage," etc.)
     - → This will be crucial in generating excitement for the Wilmington arts brand
  3. Integrating consortium efforts with broader downtown revitalization efforts
     - → Contribute to community outreach and "betterment" projects to show that the arts are an active force in revitalization efforts (patrons, donors, and board members, staff, etc.)
     - → Increase work with state & local officials to advocate for arts support
     - → Cultivate "social norms" about Wilmingtonians' support for the arts
     - → Create an audience advisory board of local patrons, creatives, citizen journalists, activists, etc., with the goal of helping identify ways in which the arts can contribute to Wilmington's economic engine

Strategy #4: Rebrand the identity and position of the Wilmington arts landscape (cont.)

Wilmington arts landscape: current brand platform model

(place greatest emphasis on the top-most qualities)

quality
(high-quality arts, both in the absolute and given its size)

intimacy
(small-scale, accessible, comfortable)

convenience
(easy to get around, low-hassle)

affordability
(reasonable prices, great value)

enrichment | **enjoyment** | **inspiration** | **relaxation**

The stronger the motivators, the greater the draw to attendance

Motivators:
attributes that encourage attendance

Reduced barriers:
attributes that lower the barriers to attendance

Basic draws:
benefits that any arts experience provides

Strategy #5: Develop targeted messaging strategies, using geography as the primary segmentation

- **Rationale:** There are three areas that contain the greatest potential to strengthen AFDF audiences: New Castle County, downstate Delaware, and nearby counties within Pennsylvania. However, the strategies and messages used for each region must be distinct.
- **Recommended Tactics:**
  - Targeted messaging strategies should reflect the distinct characteristics, perceptions, and benefits of Wilmington arts for each region
    - → For **New Castle County residents**, messaging needs to remind them how easy and affordable Wilmington's offerings are and how much quality they'll get
      - > Messages need to hit on affordability, convenience & accessibility, and quality in equal measure
    - → For **Pennsylvania residents**, messaging should convince them that Wilmington is a better value – high quality for lower prices – than their alternatives in Philadelphia
      - > Messages should focus more on affordability and quality
      - > Convenience is less important for this group, as there are barriers (real and perceived) to traveling to and in Wilmington
    - → For **downstate Delaware residents**, messaging should stress that Wilmington is more convenient than they might think, and that it's a good value
      - > As for Pennsylvania residents, the focus should be on affordability and quality
      - > Messaging also needs to articulate convenience & accessibility – but in a different way than for New Castle County residents
        - This group has high perceptual barriers (around safety and ease of navigation) to traveling to Wilmington, so messaging needs to convince them that those barriers are lower than they think

Strategy #5: Develop targeted messaging strategies, using geography as the primary segmentation (cont.)

- **Recommended Tactics (cont.):**
  - Messages can also be targeted based on level of cultural activity
    - → For **lighter cultural consumers and non-arts goers**, messaging needs to sell them on participating in the arts in the first place and on attending a particular event
      - > Messaging for this group should hit harder on the Basic Draws, focusing on the benefits of arts attendance
      - > Barriers are high for this group, so messaging should also articulate the attributes of Wilmington's arts scene that mitigate barriers around convenience, cost, and accessibility
    - → For **heavier cultural consumers**, participation is a given so messaging needs to sell them on the particular event
      - > The focus for this group should be on motivating them to attend *this* performance or exhibit, so quality should be the emphasis
  - Packages with other non-arts-and-culture activities and partners in the area to create a special day or event
    - → Such as tax-free shopping, movie theaters, sporting events, etc.
  - Transportation conveniences and incentives
    - → Try out Wilmington, and we'll pay for your gas
    - → Coordination with Amtrak train schedules, partnership with Amtrak for discounts, arts organizations facilitate transportation from Amtrak stop
  - Shuttles from areas outside of Wilmington, associated with particular event day (e.g., "Dover Day")
  - Packages and discounts through hotels and tourism bureaus

Strategy #6: Expand the scope of collaboration beyond the five AFDF organizations

- **Rationale:** The benefit and success that can come from collaboration between arts organizations is not restricted to the existing AFDF consortium.
  - From an attendance standpoint, the pool of culturally-active patrons who are only attending a select few Wilmington institutions will only grow if collaboration expands beyond the current AFDF five.
- **Recommended Tactics:**
  - Identify a comprehensive list of potential arts organizations to include in the partnership
    - → There are other institutions in Wilmington, elsewhere in New Castle County, the Brandywine Valley and perhaps downstate Delaware that can contribute publicity and resources towards the area's cultural vitality
  - Create a plan for working together
    - → Communications
    - → Subgroups for specific projects
    - → Engage a neutral project manager
  - Undertake activities to build trust between the organizations
    - → Facilitated team building
    - → Shared goal setting

Thank you!