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4CULTURE.ORG

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Landscape Analysis of Science & Technology Organizations in King County

Background

With the passage of the Doors Open ordinance, 4Culture is expanding the breadth of its funding programs to support organizations that provide education and programming to advance science and technology. This landscape analysis aims to assess the current state of science and technology organizations and identify funding needs and opportunities so that this funding may help foster a thriving community accessible to all King County residents and visitors.

Key Findings: Field Inventory

Caroline Burney Consulting conducted a two-phase analysis in the early winter and spring of 2024. Phase 1 compiled a field inventory identifying science and technology organizations in King County. The majority of these groups in the inventory are potentially eligible for funding based on requirements established by the ordinance, including 501(c)(3) status, location, focus on advancing science and technology, and other factors.

The Phase 1 Field Inventory summarizes all science and technology organizations in King County's mission, primary location, financial information for 2022 and 2019, and organization staff and board size. Key findings from the Phase 1 Field Inventory include:

- **Small to medium-sized organizations** (annual revenue of less than \$1M) constitute 51% of potentially eligible organizations. This suggests that 4Culture funding could have a significant impact on the field as small and medium-sized organizations frequently lack the resources they need to sustain and expand their public programs.
- **Focus Areas:** Organizations whose mission is to advance an array of botanical, horticultural, and environmental priorities are the most numerous among potentially eligible organizations.

In Phase 2, Caroline refined the inventory by compiling and analyzing data on organizations' financial portfolios, including what proportion of their annual revenue comes from individual donors, grants, contracts with governmental agencies, or other fundraising strategies.

The intention of the Phase 2 Field Inventory is to understand how 4Culture grants may complement other forms of support that organizations receive and identify challenges that organizations face in their financial sustainability.

Key findings include:

- **Funding Portfolio:** Small organizations rely more on contributions than their larger counterparts, which often secure a higher proportion of their revenue from governmental grants. One explanation is that small organizations have less development staff capacity to apply for and manage governmental grants that can come with time intensive application and reporting requirements.
- **Expenses:** Small organizations tend to spend a higher percentage of their expenses on their programs than larger ones and allocate less resources to fundraising.

Key Findings: Feedback from Stakeholders

Caroline gathered qualitative feedback from potentially eligible organizations via six in-depth interviews and a survey (17 responses) to assess the following:

- What are the areas of greatest funding needs for potentially eligible organizations?
- Where are there gaps in the field that 4Culture funding could have a significant impact, especially communities who are currently not being served by science and technology programming?

The qualitative data underscored key community needs and funding challenges:

- **Strength:** Strong partnerships and community-centered programming.
- **Strength:** Region's value on innovation and technological advancement.
- **Challenge:** Limited access to general operating support, hindering sustainability and maintenance or growth of existing programs.
- **Challenge:** Lack of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in STEM fields, which creates gaps in representation and mentorship opportunities.

Recommendations

1. **General Operating Support:** Prioritize flexible, multi-year funding to bolster organizational stability and equity initiatives. While there are other funding types that organizations identified as high priority (capital, programming, etc.), the following strategies are intended to guide 4Culture as they develop new grant programs:
 - a. Connect general operating support to existing organization priorities.
 - b. Review the effectiveness of general operating support on the entire science and technology field.
2. **Audience Expansion:** Seek opportunities to prioritize partnerships and programming to engage underserved communities.
 - a. Fund partnerships with BIPOC-led and small organizations.
 - b. Support organizations in developing culturally responsive programs.
 - c. Prioritize community representation within volunteers, staff, and boards.

Conclusion

Doors Open funding presents a pivotal opportunity to support King County's science and technology sector. By prioritizing operational stability and inclusivity, 4Culture can help foster a thriving, accessible community benefiting all.