

Cultural Sustainability: People, Finances, Fundraising, Innovation, and Reflection

for

Master of Arts

Arts and Culture Marketing

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Introduction

This paper is a continuation of a course-long project analyzing the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, California. The goal of this analysis is to find the traits of this successful cultural and be able to apply them to other similar organizations. This part of the analysis will give a brief overview of the Bowers Museum, discuss the people involved in the organization, and review its financial information. These subjects will help assess whether or not an organization is sustainable. There are multiple sources within this paper, but the bulk of the information is cited from the Bowers Museum website and Charity Navigator.

Overview of Cultural

The Bowers Museum, located in Santa Ana, is a venue for multiple art forms. Their mission statement states, "The Bowers Museum enriches lives through the world's finest arts and cultures," (Bowers Museum 2020). Due to COVID-19, they have cancelled their music, theatre, and film events, but have kept their art galleries open at a limited capacity. They currently have ten open exhibitions, including *Miao: Masters of Silver* and *Inside the Walt Disney Archives: 50 Years of Preserving the Magic*.

When it was founded in 1936, the Bowers Museum was dedicated to preserving the history of Orange County, but as Southern California became more and more diverse, they changed their mission to display art from around the world. The Bowers museum has made a conscious effort to host exhibitions and events that represent the cultures of all their patrons. The diverse exhibition and program offerings allow anyone to find something they are

interested in. According to the Culture Track 2017 study, “People of color... are 82% more likely than non-Hispanic Caucasians to say that a reason for not participating in cultural activities in the past year is that these activities don’t ‘reflect people of all backgrounds,’” (Culture Track 2017).

People

Every organization needs people for it to operate, including volunteers, staff, and board members. This analysis focuses on the Bowers Museum’s Board of Governors. According to *Fundamentals of Arts Management*, the responsibilities of the board include “articulating mission, planning strategy, setting policy, and ensuring the organization has adequate resources to fulfill its mission” (Dreeszen 2016, 169). The Bowers Museum has a relatively large Board of Governors, including the president, the chairwoman, and twenty-eight governors (Bowers Museum 2020). They also have the chair emeritus and multiple governors emeritus listed on their website. The emeritus title “implies a continuing relationship with an organization,” so having many governors emeritus suggests that their experience on the board is positive enough that they continue to engage with the museum after they retire (Hickey 2020).

The Bowers Museum website does not have any information about the board members or their individual roles, which would make this section seem more transparent and trustworthy to the public. However, there is information about the board members available from outside sources. Chairwoman Anne Shih has been on the Board of Governors at the Bowers Museum since 1996, and in her current position since 2010 (Asia Society 2020). As a Chinese woman, she has advocated for and organized culturally diverse exhibitions for the museum.

Peter Keller has been President of the Bowers Museum since 1992, but has also worked in other famous museums such as the Smithsonian Institution, Gemological Institute of America, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (Smith 2018). This is such an impressive resume that it could be beneficial to include this information on the Bowers Museum website to give Keller credibility. The other board members come from diverse backgrounds, which allows them to represent their patrons as accurately as possible.

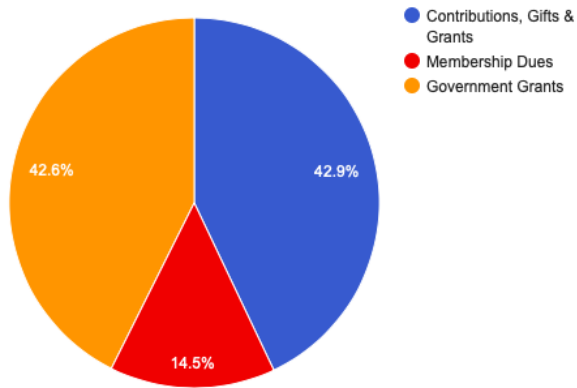
Finances

The most recent available financial information is from the 2018 fiscal year. According to Charity Navigator, the Bowers Museum's total revenue was just over 6.2 million dollars (Charity Navigator 2020). Most of this revenue comes from donations and grants, while only 14.5% comes from membership dues. The report does not mention any revenue from single ticket sales, events, or gift shop purchases, so it may not be complete information.

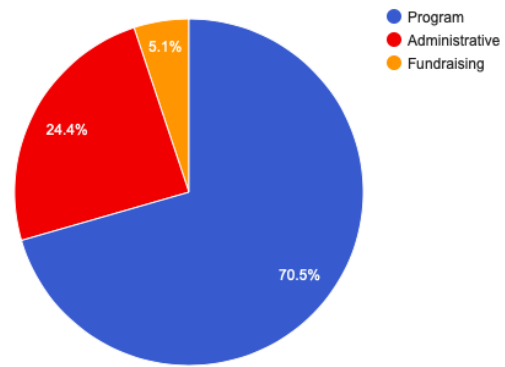
The expenses are impressive, as 70.5% of their funds go towards their programs rather than administration or fundraising. The fundraising revenue is unclear based on the Charity Navigator report. The report says that 0% of revenue comes from fundraising events, yet 5.1% of the museum's expenses are for fundraising. There must be revenue coming from the fundraisers, otherwise there would be no reason to spend money on it. To make their report as legitimate as possible, the Bowers Museum should release more information regarding their fundraisers.

Below are graphs and charts from Charity Navigator.

Contributions Breakdown (FYE 06/2018)



Expenses Breakdown (FYE 06/2018)



Income Statement

(FYE 06/2018)

REVENUE

Contributions

Contributions, Gifts & Grants	\$1,467,607
Federated Campaigns	\$0
Membership Dues	\$494,316
Fundraising Events	\$0
Related Organizations	\$0
Government Grants	\$1,456,630

Total Contributions

\$3,418,553

Program Service Revenue

\$931,617

Total Primary Revenue

\$4,350,170

Other Revenue

\$1,872,683

TOTAL REVENUE

\$6,222,853

EXPENSES

Program Expenses	\$3,976,150
Administrative Expenses	\$1,374,945
Fundraising Expenses	\$287,916

TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

\$5,639,011

Payments to Affiliates

\$0

Excess (or Deficit) for the year

\$583,842

Net Assets

\$20,390,724

Fundraising

Even though there is no clear data to be found on how much is made by fundraising, there is some information available for individual events. In the Bowers Museum summer newsletter, it states that over \$40,000 was made at the 2020 Spring Appeal (Bowers Museum 2020). The Bowers Museum also hosts an annual benefit gala, but there is no official information on how much they spend to host the gala each year or how much money it brings into the organization. It is obvious that fundraising is happening within the Bowers Museum, but they should be more open about the events and publish their financial information on their website.

Innovation

The Bowers Museum has a very traditional product, but they have been particularly innovative in finding ways to keep their audience engaged with them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since they are unable to host large events like they used to, the Bowers museum has put all their programs online, even the children's programs. Their "Kidseum Art Kits" can be picked up during scheduled times, and then families can follow along with the live instructions from a Bowers Museum art instructor. They have also launched virtual tours and virtual field trips. For holiday festivals, they are livestreaming the events on Facebook. Even though it is not the traditional museum experience, it will be interesting to see which of these new options will stay once the pandemic is over.

Conclusion

Based on all the information in this report, it is safe to say that the Bowers Museum is a sustainable organization. Even though the mission has changed slightly since its opening in 1936, the Bowers Museum has so far stood the test of time. Its board members stay involved with the organization for decades, which proves their dedication and loyalty. There is a consistent number of individual and corporate donors that have not abandoned the museum even during this year's financial hardships due to COVID-19. There are a few small changes that they could make to improve their communication with the public, but this cultural is successful and should expect to stay open for years to come.

Reflection

This assignment took a lot more research than I expected. Even though financial records are public, they were really hard for me to find and interpret. I now realize that I am very comfortable with the marketing and organization needed for cultural, but I have a lot to learn when it comes to financial information. I was assuming that they would have a nice annual report like we looked at for discussion last week, but I guess not all organizations do that. I also learned more about how boards of directors work while researching some of the members. I didn't know that boards could have so many people on them, but it makes sense now that I have a better understanding of all the tasks they are responsible for.

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