



GUIDELINES FOR DISTRIBUTING OREGON CULTURAL TRUST FUNDS IN POLK COUNTY

2004-2009

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Polk County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee (PCCCPC) convened on February 4, 2003, to fulfill the Oregon Cultural Trust's mandate to assess the state of cultural assets in Polk County and plan for the use of funds flowing from the trust. The committee began as a group of 22 volunteers and ended the year with 16 interested members, nine or ten of whom attended each monthly meeting held at Western Oregon University's Hamersly Library in Monmouth. The membership represents a broad cross section of Polk County cultural activities. Please see the list of the members and their affiliations attached hereto as Appendix A.

The committee was charged with three tasks: To find out what cultural assets exist in Polk County; to ascertain the public's desires with respect to future cultural activity in order to create a plan, and to determine how the committee's successor body would be organized and function.

THE CULTURAL INVENTORY

To begin the first task, the group borrowed heavily from the work of other county planning committees and then invested significant thoughtful time in designing a cultural inventory form and "pick" list. (A copy of the document is attached as Appendix B.) At that time, the committee had not yet received its planning money, so we decided to distribute the form via public libraries in the county and also on our website. We also decided to publish the results using an information database that already existed through the county's public libraries. Alas, we have received only a handful of responses to date. One of the first projects of the Polk County Cultural Coalition (the permanent body that will succeed the planning committee) will be to distribute the inventory form via direct mail to likely interested parties (artists, art galleries, theater groups, etc.) and make the resulting list widely available.

THE SURVEY

Our approach to the second task was to distribute and tally a survey, with a follow-up public meeting to see if we were interpreting correctly what the survey reflected. Again, we made use of the good work of other planning committees in creating a survey. We also spent many hours considering what we hoped to learn and how the questions might be received by the public. In particular, we decided not to ask for personal information unless there was a clear use for the data. We distributed a total of 16,500 surveys as inserts in the Dallas Itemizer-Observer newspaper and the Polk County subscribers to the Statesman Journal newspaper. The results gave us the priorities that form the core of this plan. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix C, and the tallied responses can be found in Appendix D.

In designing the survey we thought about the elements of the plan suggested by Cultural Trust guidelines. An effective plan needs three components: Priorities, strategies and benchmarks.

THE MEETING

On November 19, 2003, we held a meeting at Polk County Fairgrounds to give the public an opportunity to express their opinions and tell us whether we were interpreting the survey results correctly. We publicized the meeting on our survey document, through the local newspapers and via flyers in shop windows in downtown Dallas. That evening was a dark and stormy night and our turnout was sparse. Those in attendance, however, participated in a lively facilitated discussion. We felt that the priorities we gleaned from the survey were reinforced by the concerns of the attendees. The meeting agenda handout is attached as Appendix E.

PRIORITIES

The survey results revealed these priorities, and we have adopted them as the backbone of our plan. They are broad based and all support the vision of building cultural participation in Polk County:

- ◆ Protect existing cultural assets
- ◆ Focus on young people
- ◆ Help overcome barriers to participation in cultural events and activities

We will discuss each of these priorities in turn.

◆ PROTECT EXISTING CULTURAL ASSETS

“Protect the investment in existing cultural resources” was the number one goal cited by survey respondents. They indicated particular interest in music, theater, fairs and festivals, and museums and galleries. Asked to rank various assets under the heritage category, those surveyed cited two as most important: Historic sites and buildings, and museums and libraries. In looking to the future, respondents asked us to strengthen music, history and heritage.

◆ FOCUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The goals cited next most frequently by survey respondents centered on young people: Give them opportunities to experience the arts, heritage and culture; and provide programs to further their cultural development.

The committee identifies outreach to under-served populations as an important component of the plan, and will tend to favor projects that involve schools and youth groups with low-income, Latino, and other minority students.

◆ HELP OVERCOME BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Barriers cited most often by survey respondents include timing, lack of publicity, price, and location. At the public meeting, participants clarified the timing issues as being time of day and day of the week. Given that we cannot do much about timing, the committee identified the areas it might affect. We can support local marketing efforts. We could also help underwrite the cost of tickets. Supporting a “cultural ferry” that would address transportation issues has merit.

STRATEGIES

We found that common strategies supported all the priorities.

◆ CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE INVENTORY PROCESS AND ITS ACCESSIBILITY

In order to protect existing cultural assets, we need to know what and where they are. Inventory forms will continue to be available at selected locations throughout the county, and we will solicit submissions via a direct mailing to culture-related individuals, groups and businesses.

We will develop an inventory form in Spanish and distribute it in the Latino community.

The inventory will be included in a database that is accessible online and supported by Polk County's public libraries.

◆ **IMPROVE MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF CULTURAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

We will cooperate with and support existing cultural calendars and events listings (Mid Valley Arts Council, newspapers, radio stations, bulletin boards, poster distribution, etc.). We will support efforts to target promotion to young people and those in charge of young people (teachers, community centers, PTAs, YMCA, Scouts, 4-H, youth groups, churches, libraries, bowling alleys, movie theaters, video stores, etc.)

◆ **SUPPORT "CULTURAL FERRY" PROJECTS, WHICH OFFER GROUP EXCURSIONS TO OUT-OF-AREA CULTURAL EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

We will foster group activities through the schools and other organizations. Along with calendar entries, we will work to provide links to online or physical bulletin boards where interested parties can coordinate attendance with others.

BENCHMARKS

◆ **INVENTORY**

An expanded inventory distribution and listings
Latino cultural entries will be increased
Increased number of youth-oriented assets included
Measure increased number of website/database hits

◆ **MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

Increased attendance (including that of young people) is measured at cultural events, activities and locations
Measure increase in avenues and frequency of media coverage
Second public survey generates larger response and shows increased awareness of cultural opportunities

◆ **CULTURAL FERRY**

Provide for at least one out-of-area trip for students per school year
Public survey shows that people are taking advantage of excursions and bulletin boards

◆ GRANTEES' REPORTS

Grantees report back to the coalition increased qualitative and quantitative measures of public participation in cultural activities

CONCLUSION

In designing this document, the committee deliberately sought to make the plan a framework for future decision-making, not a limiting vision of how the coalition's work should be conducted. In that vein, we have kept the priorities simple and broad based, and the strategies flexible. We also considered that in addition to entertaining grant proposals received from community members, the coalition might envision projects that it wants to pursue and issue a request for proposals to execute them. We think the plan should be reviewed annually and modified as the coalition's board determines. We hope that the Polk County Cultural Coalition finds this document to be helpful but not restricting.



STRUCTURE OF POLK COUNTY CULTURAL COALITION

OVERVIEW

Polk County's Cultural Coalition Planning Committee took up the issue of its successor group's structure as its last order of business. The committee has used Polk County Community Development's department, under the helpful direction of Gene Clemens, to be its fiscal agent, but feels that it is important to continue its work as a body independent of any appearance of connection to county government. The group has authorized the formation of an Oregon non-profit corporation and has done much to guide the writing of bylaws that will govern the organization's activities. Here again, however, the planning committee wants to leave the coalition with the flexibility to adapt to changing environments during its life. The legal formation of the cultural coalition will take place after this plan is approved by the Oregon Cultural Trust.

LEGAL ENTITY

The Polk County Cultural Coalition will incorporate with that name as an Oregon non-profit, non-member corporation. One of its first tasks will be to seek federal exemption from taxation under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), followed by registration with the Oregon Department of Justice, Charitable Activities Section. The primary purpose of the corporation will be to support Oregon Cultural Trust activities and funding in Polk County, but it will also be allowed to engage in any activity that promotes and/or preserves culture.

GOVERNANCE

A board of no fewer than seven and no more than 11 members shall govern Polk County Cultural Coalition (PCCC). The planning committee has appointed the initial board; their names are included as Appendix E. Board members must be either residents of or employed in Polk County. Board membership should be representative of arts, heritage and humanities. Directors' terms will be three years, staggered at the beginning so that the entire board doesn't turn over all at once. The board will elect its own members; candidates do not vote. A new member must be approved by 2/3 of those holding board seats. Board vacancies will be filled by election (rather than by appointment), and new members may be solicited by advertisement or invitation of seated board

members. The board will elect officers for one-year terms. Officers will include President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. For voting purposes other than the election of a new board member, a quorum will be a simple majority of those holding seats. The board may convene advisory committees to further its work. Such committees will have no voting power.

GRANT MAKING

Rather than including grant-making procedures in the by-laws, the board will adopt operating guidelines by resolution. The planning committee thinks it's important to leave the grant making flexible, as the board will no doubt learn as it goes. Here are the planning committee's recommendations:

- ☆ For the first year (2004) wait until the amount of funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust is known before calling for proposals. This way, applicants will be able to judge whether they want to apply.
- ☆ Aim for a once-a-year grant-awarding cycle, but allow for a second round if the first doesn't stimulate sufficient interest.
- ☆ Develop an application form for interested parties to use.
- ☆ Convene an advisory committee to help review and evaluate grant requests. This committee will advise the board on grants to be awarded, but the decision of the board will be final.
- ☆ Develop an evaluation form that relates to the priorities and strategies contained in the cultural plan.
- ☆ Favor many small grants over a few big ones. Think in terms of providing seed money for new endeavors. Be sure to ask applicants if partial funding is of interest if we can't provide the full amount requested.
- ☆ Require grantees to report back to the coalition on the qualitative and quantitative measures used to assess whether their activities have enhanced the public's access to and enjoyment of culture in Polk County.
- ☆ Over the long term, make sure that grants support the three Cultural Trust elements: arts, heritage and humanities.
- ☆ Out of the remaining planning funds, set aside enough to cover three or four years administrative expenses, and make the remainder available for grants.