



Support Grants

Equity & Accessibility: Example Responses

Please note: The prompts and responses below are from previous Support grant applications (January 2024 Awards). The Equity & Accessibility prompts have since been pared down a bit.

Example 1 - Arte del Corazón:

Equity & Accessibility Part 1 - Strategies*

Please describe your organization's approach to equity & accessibility, including:

1. What "equity" means to you as an organization.
2. How your organization provides accessible opportunities for diverse community participation by audience, participants, collaborators, and/or supporters.
3. Some steps your organization has taken in the recent past to be more equitable.
4. One or two future goals related to equity and how you are working on those goals in the coming year.

1. As an organization from Watsonville, we take a very personal approach to how we center and define equity. Serving underrepresented artists and amplifying the voice of the marginalized has been the root of our mission because the “historically underserved” has been us and our community. That does not go without saying that after 4 years of operation ADC holds an incredible amount of privilege and influence, and when used wisely can make a lasting impression on our audience. For Arte del Corazon, equity means continuously working to advocate and amplify the voices of those most marginalized in our community. This includes at-risk youth, LGBTQIA+, the houseless, undocumented, and people with disabilities. Similar to our definition of Artistic Excellence, equity within our organization can only be achieved when all people are seen and represented within the local art economy.

2. Arte del Corazon provides accessible opportunities for diverse community participation by making sure all venues utilized are ADA compliant and contain approved bathrooms with a minimum of 3 ft walkways for wheelchair accessibility and access to ramps/elevators. Within all of our programming we always have Spanish interpreters available. Our website is accessible by all interpreting software and our print

materials are available in all translatable forms. Since we acquired the new art venue, we've made the space more accessible by providing easy grip paint brushes for people with grasping disabilities or arthritis and continue looking for other modified tools to increase accessibility.

3. Some recent steps we have taken to be more equitable are providing paid opportunities for LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC performers and entertainers. We recently hosted a markets with the Cabrillo College Chicano club within Watsonville, amplifying indigenous voices and providing funds for displaced residents of Pajaro. This year centering equity meant taking time off of art to focus on critical immediate needs of our community by volunteering with Raíces y Cariño in the distribution of goods to those displaced by the flooding. Another example this year, was an opinion piece published by The Good Times spreading misinformation and inciting violence towards the LGBTQIA+ community and local organization, Raíces y Cariño. As an organization that works directly with Raíces y Cariño, held an emergency team meeting to draft a response and publicly denounce the hate speech within the article. Building trust also means using the platform we have built to make public statements to support or denounce injustices we notice locally. While some organizations can try to take an impartial approach, we find that does not fit with our mission of serving underrepresented artists. While this could cause a loss on potential donors, we strive to have an honest relationship with our future donors and stand behind our actions of amplifying the voice of local artists especially those most marginalized whether that be undocumented, LGBTQIA+, or the house less. In order for us to succeed as a community we need to look to each other for support and keep each other held accountable in uplifting the most affected in the area we call home.

4. In this coming year, we are looking to expand our equitable practices to be more accessible for members of our community who have physical and mental disabilities. We recognize ADA accommodations are sometimes not enough and their need to be additional steps taken to ensure we remain an inclusive environment. Some accommodations we are looking into include art tables that are adjustable for people in wheelchairs, and having sensory-play activities at events for children with speech impairment. Another goal is to ensure we offer more opportunities for members of our community that do not speak Spanish or English, this includes Mixteco, Zapotec and other languages.

Equity & Accessibility Part 2 - Communities*

1. Which marginalized / underrepresented communities will have improved access to your programming through the strategies described above?
2. Share a description of your staff, board, artists, and key collaborators, focusing on representation from marginalized / underrepresented communities.

Examples of marginalized communities include but are not limited to: people of color, LGBTQIA+, those with disabilities or neurodiversity, low socio-economic classes, residents of different geographic locations, unhoused community members, immigrants, etc.

1. BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, at-risk youth, low socio-economic class, immigrants, and the undocumented have improved access to our programming through the strategies described above. It is our goal to improve access to people with disabilities or neurodiversity, as well as non-Spanish speaking communities within Watsonville.

2. All members of our staff are multi-cultural, BIPOC woman with college degrees in Art and Youth Education. We do not operate in a hierarchal manner and value each individual's perspective on issues that arise within the organization. Some key collaborators are Raíces y Cariño, Esperanza Farms, Pajaro Valley Pride, and the County Office of Education working directly with alt-education high school students. This shift towards more programming with youth revolves around teaching youth skills for roles we have once been excluded from, sharing our experiences, and motivating them to build their own platform to amplify their voice.

Example 2 - Cabrillo Stage:

Equity & Accessibility Part 1 - Strategies*

Please describe your organization's approach to equity & accessibility, including:

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Equity at Cabrillo Stage means that everyone has the resources they need to participate at the same level. (If childcare is a barrier to you participating, can we offer that? If you need an ASL interpreter at rehearsals, can we provide that?) Equity means you feel you are in a place that allows you to do your best possible work, free from encumbrances or hindrances, both physical, mental, or spiritual. If microaggressions are causing you to feel guarded or unsafe, you can't do your best work. If you are constantly worrying about missing work, you also can't do your best work. And it is the same if you're having trouble seeing, hearing, or moving around the space.

Providing consistent accessible features for our audiences and participants is an area of growth for us. I am working on making the following changes in the coming year:

- ASL interpretation for at least one performance of each show.
- Childcare options at our weekend rehearsals.
- Spanish translation of our program materials and lobby displays

We already can/do provide:

- ASL interpretation during rehearsals when needed.
- Wheelchair accessible audience seating and rehearsal/performance spaces.
- Materials to assist performers and audience members with visual or hearing impairment. (Large-print scripts, digital programs, audio-assistant listening devices for performances.)
- Low- or no-cost tickets to low-income audience members.
- Information on Title IX reporting for anyone who feels they've been treated in a way that infringes on their ability to participate equitably or safely.
- We also have access to the resources of Cabrillo College's Accessibility Support Center where we can refer participants who need support as well as reach out to access support on behalf of participants.

Steps we have taken in the recent past to be more equitable:

- Increased budget for performer/technician stipends.
- Free tickets to Recovery Café, Santa Cruz.
- Increased advertising of student-rush ticket opportunities.
- Outreach to specifically BIPOC artists and professionals for creative team opportunities.
- Participation in career fairs to attract a wider range of applicants for job opportunities.

Future Goals:

1: ASL interpretation and Spanish translations:

I am reaching out to local interpreters for price quotes so that we can add this to our budget. Also ensuring our social media posts have both captions and Spanish translations.

2: Large-scale feedback and data collection:

We will send an anonymous survey to all participants so they can not only offer feedback on our process but also include their demographic identifiers so that we can more accurately track our success with increasing equity and access to historically marginalized communities.

3: Diversity amongst creative team:

By programming a Latinx show (“In the Heights”), I will work to make the creative team (director, musical director, choreographer, and designers) majority Latinx. I have been reaching out to potential candidates.

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Through the strategies we are focusing on this year, the following communities will have improved access to our program:

- Performers who have full-time jobs and/or family commitments.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired community.
- Spanish-speaking community.
- Low-income community.

Accurate reporting around the demographics of our community continues to be an area of growth for Cabrillo Stage. In my second year as Artistic Director, I am continuing to develop systems around increasing diversity and tracking demographics. The bulk of our staff turns over each year, so our demographics change with each year. Since we did not gather specific data on individuals’ personal representations, this information is based on personal conversations and knowledge of the team's demographics:

Administration (4 people) 25% queer, 25% BIPOC

Directing team (4 people): 75% queer, 50% BIPOC, 50% over age 60

Run Crew and Stage Management (8 people): 30% BIPOC, 30% queer

Cast (41 people): 24% BIPOC

Example 3 - The Puppetry Institute

Equity & Accessibility Part 1 - Strategies*

Please describe your organization’s approach to equity & accessibility, including:

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4. One or two future goals related to equity and how you are working on those goals in the coming year.

1. The Puppetry Institute is founded on the principle that puppetry arts are for everyone, making equity one of the founding principles of our organization. Our message of diversity and equity is reflected in our students, our staff, and the work we take on. Puppetry is an art that spans many mediums and technical skills that can open up many opportunities for employment, and an artistic application of engineering that is not taught commonly in public schools. We are proud to be the only studio in the Santa Cruz area providing space to create puppets and teach technical skills such as mold making, fabrication, and cosplay; and to be providing that practice on an economically-accessible sliding scale. Through our definition of equity, we make the future of the arts more diverse by supporting young artists who are low-income, disabled, and otherwise disenfranchised.

2. The Puppetry Institute provides opportunities for everyone as employees, volunteers, performers, audiences, and students. Due to the variety of disciplines of our staff, we are able to support students who want to work in less accessible (digital arts), unpopular (stop-motion), or widely different (traditional painting and sculpting) mediums. Because our staff is on various parts of the neurodivergent and LGBT spectrum, we can also provide a safe place for learning for students falling under these identities. Our scholarship program and street shows allow us to engage a wider demographic of audiences because we can forgo ticket and class prices. Another aspect of equity is including multiple cultures in our exploration of mythology. Our recent puppets include Mexican mythology and art such as the chupacabra, la Catrina, el alebrije, and the Quetzalcoatl.

3. We have increased our scholarship programs to not only be for low-income members. We have added an additional program based on merit to provide more opportunities for those who cannot afford a materials fee. Our scholarship programs are top priority and we have been welcoming new students into said program.

4. We are aiming to take our performances to the streets of Santa Cruz in order to show people the opportunities we have available. More paid classes means more funds for the scholarship program, and funds to stay open.

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1. We support the neurodiverse community, low-income individuals, and families through our scholarship programs. Puppetry's unique expression of identity supports the diverse cultures of Santa Cruz county and our LGBT+ communities.
2. Our staff is made of Latine, South Asian, indigenous, two-spirit, learning-disabled, autistic, femme, transgender, and non-binary individuals. All the teachers at this time are board directors as well, and double as performers. Currently, our only performer who is not a staff member is a scholarship student and a black community member. Highlighting the success of our artists and students in performances consistently inspires diverse kids to pursue arts.

Example 4 - Santa Cruz Opera Project:

Equity & Accessibility Part 1 - Strategies*

Please describe your organization's approach to equity & accessibility, including:

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4. One or two future goals related to equity and how you are working on those goals in the coming year.

1.) Equity signifies a commitment to fairness and inclusivity. It means creating a level playing field where every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, has an equal opportunity to engage with and benefit from the transformative power of opera. This includes both the artists and audience members. We strive to eliminate systemic barriers, ensuring that all members of our community have the same access to our programs and the arts.

2.) Accessibility is at the core of our mission, and we approach it in two fundamental ways. Firstly, we prioritize financial accessibility by setting our ticket prices on the lower end of classical music events. For "La Boheme" our general seating was \$25, and we also offered \$10 standing room tickets. Additionally we had a "pay what you can" preview night, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to experiencing opera.

Secondly, we champion accessibility through our performance practice. This includes adapting operas into English, modernizing productions, performing in somewhat

unusual but very comfortable venues, and embracing untraditional casting choices. By presenting opera in a more relatable and contemporary manner, we break down the traditional language and cultural barriers often associated with the art form, making it more inclusive and engaging for diverse audiences.

3.) We have taken deliberate steps in the recent past to challenge traditional norms within the opera industry. Recognizing that opera has historically been male-dominant both in terms of leadership and casting, we sought to address this disparity.

For our production of "La Bohème," the traditional casting typically comprises six male roles and two female roles. However, we deviated from this tradition, casting five women and two men. This choice served two essential purposes. Firstly, it provided more opportunities for the abundantly talented female singers in Santa Cruz County, rectifying the gender imbalance prevalent in opera.

Secondly, our untraditional casting transformed one of the love stories within the narrative into a lesbian love story. This adaptation not only broadened the representation of love and relationships but also made a powerful statement of inclusivity, resonating deeply with our LGBTQIA+ audience members. It showcased our commitment to reflecting the diverse stories and experiences within our community through opera, demonstrating our dedication to equity and relevance.

4.) Future goals related to equity and ongoing efforts:

Expanded Educational Outreach: In the upcoming year, we are working on developing an educational outreach program. This program will encompass school assemblies and/or family-friendly concerts, aimed at introducing young people to the world of opera and nurturing an early appreciation for the arts.

Financial Accessibility Enhancement: Our "pay what you can" preview night, along with our low-priced general ticket offerings, proved highly popular, with swift sell-outs. To meet the demand, we plan to offer additional performances of our production(s) next year. We are actively pursuing opportunities to enhance financial accessibility by securing grants and forming partnerships to further reduce ticket costs and expand our free ticket programs. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that no one is excluded from experiencing the joy of opera due to financial constraints, maintaining our commitment to making opera accessible to all, and not just for the Elite.

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1.) Our strategies, such as hosting events in multiple venues and offering free and low-cost options, improve access for marginalized and underrepresented communities, including those with lower socio-economic backgrounds. Our active search for bilingual or Spanish language productions broadens our audience base, reaching non-English speakers and promoting diversity in our community.

2.) Our organization, led by women, is proud to have a board of directors comprising 83% women, 16% BIPOC, and 33% LGBTQIA+. Collaborating with the best local artists remains a key focus as well to ensure the highest artistic quality in our programming. Our use of untraditional casting practices breaks down barriers from the "types" traditionally associated with specific roles, enabling us to cast performers based on talent and merit rather than preconceived notions, promoting diversity in our productions.
