The Diversity Alliance Endowment Fund – Funding (Non-Budget) Request Example

The Diversity Alliance Endowment Fund provides grants that support and strengthen projects or programs that address issues affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Program/Project Name
A Participatory-History of Queer, Reading, PA.

Describe the purpose of your program/project in one sentence.
To complete, publish and distribute a multi-media history of the lgbt/queer community within the wider history of Reading, PA that mixes professional research and production with non-professional, diverse citizen participation in order to increase both holistic, deeper coverage of this topic and civic engagement.

Will this program or project benefit the residents of Berks County, PA?
Yes. While Reading, PA is known for its high poverty rates, the city also has demonstrated low civic engagement. In 2015 the city was rated by the STAR Community Rating System and out of the overall category of Equity and Empowerment (which received 15.9 points/100) the sub-category of Civic Engagement got zero/100 possible points. Recommendations from the study included increasing the percentage of residents who "believe they are able to have a positive impact on their community…"

Here In My City is working to use the perceived-authority and publication-process of our community 'zine to increase civic engagement in community media and overall; to increase the amount of community members who believe they have the right and responsibility to participate civically, to value their participation and to provide technical assistance to complete this participation.

Partnering with county-wide organizations and events for this project will increase participation beyond the city-proper.

How does your organization's program/project address issues affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender community in Berks County?

Considering the queer community as part of the wider community, see above. Additionally, this project will provide deeper historical multi-media, professional coverage of the queer community -- within context of Reading's wider history. Its production will also directly include the participation of members of the queer community with a focus on providing non-professionals of diverse identities, abilities and backgrounds technical assistance in order to participate in this community project, with the goal to not only produce valuable historical coverage of an often oppressed and often silenced community, but also to increase civic engagement and feelings of self-determination of that population. We simultaneously believe in the personal and community transformative power of telling our own stories in our own words, and, in the power of mixing citizen-participation with professional, higher-level work in order to increase perceived value of content and participation.

What is your schedule/timetable for implementing your project/program?
Phase 1: June-Nov: Research, Citizen-Participation
        (Pride-Month/Pride-Festival Citizen-Involvement happens – Summer, 2019)
        Research
        Writing Booths at identified partner organization/events
Phase 2: Dec, Jan: Production
Phase 3: Jan-Mar 2020: Distribution
        Final production is published and distributed over 3 print & digital issues

Is this program/project expected to be a one-time offering or will it continue each year?
The overall activities of Here In My City 'zine publishing and civic engagement activities continue ongoing; this themed-production and writing-booths activity will, as of now, be a one-time project.

Will your program/project have any partners (other organizations that will contribute to or be necessary for its success)? If so, describe the relationship with those partners.
We have identified and secured fiscal, in-kind and operational partners.
We will partner with Oberlin College and their Honors College, who is providing funding to support a full-time writer/researcher for the majority of the summer break. We are working to leverage that partnership in order to support the other aspects of the project's overall operations and implementation and expand its impact. We will partner with the LGBT Center of Greater Reading and the Reading Pride Festival organizations in order to connect with and involve members of the queer community. We will partner with Reading Magazine who will contribute equipment and software to assist with the multi-media production aspect of this project. Additionally, we will utilize other various community resources, like the Berks History Center.

What specific program/project outcomes do you expect to achieve?
We work to provide a relevant platform, and technical assistance, to both experienced writers and non-professionals in order to build a more diverse pool of voices discussing community challenges and successes in quality local community media, whose traditional presence (and arguably relevance and deep-level coverage) is declining both nationally and locally.

Greater/Reading, PA's other local outlets, besides Here In My City, are either run and owned by, and/or their content created by, people who often do not represent the city's diversity not only in racial identity but also in income, education, work, and other life experience, and therefore, tend to feature content through that framework as a consequence. Non life-style type of coverage often swings widely between negative, often coded or outright racist commentary on Reading's poverty, written by people who do not live in the city, or, to, overly-optimistic and individual-success stories completely out of context of the reality of systems-level barriers to certain populations and Reading's poverty and ongoing operational dysfunction.

By providing a platform and technical assistance to both professionals and non-professionals who more accurately represent the population, we work to produce content that explores the gray in between those swings, leading to increased comprehensive education about city development topics, increased feelings of dignity and pride in one's community, increased levels of self-determination in order to support a population playing a more active role in identifying

and solving its own problems, and, increased feelings of authority to move forward with action based on both this coverage and having participated in creating it.

We work to feature a more diverse pool of community leaders and community members not being featured in other local platforms, specifically, non-professionals of lower-education and lower-income backgrounds, with a variety of other life experiences, in order to change the prevailing narrative that only community members in paid, professional-leadership roles can participate meaningfully in community development.

Our best case scenario is to host a platform featuring deeper-dive content about, and whose production involves the participation of, a wider variety of diverse community members, in this instance community members of Reading's queer community, and to increase the percentage of residents who feel that they have the right, responsibility and ability to submit and participate in the production of thoughtful, critical & provocative writing and content that instigates change, thought or growth at the individual and community level. We operate "writing booths" and workshops and provide behind-the-scenes editorial assistance in order to achieve these outcomes of civic involvement, in addition to traditional publishing activities.

How will you know if you achieved the expected outcomes listed above?
We will measure success both quantitatively and qualitatively. We will count the number of participants in this project, to demonstrate an increased percentage of community members participating both with community media and civically. We will demonstrate increased feelings of the value of civic engagement and 'ability to make a difference in the community,' we will conduct a brief survey of participants.

How will you track progress?
We will track progress according to a production schedule and using an online database organizing research, participants' contributions and number and responses of participants.

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