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An Academic Assessment of the National Performance Network and Visual Artists Network

An Internship Academic Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Arts Administration

By

Rachel Swan

B.S. University of Evansville, 2006

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"If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants"-Issac Newton

With respect, thanks, and love to all of the artists, educators, family, and friends I'm so grateful to know. Especially Dan.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	IV
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Overview of the Organization.....	2
I. Mission, Vision, and Values	2
II. History.....	4
III. Organizational Structure.....	13
A. Operations.....	14
B. Policy Research and Development	15
C. Programmatic Activities	15
D. Board of Directors.....	21
IV. Budget	22
Chapter Two: Internship.....	23
I. Overview	23
II. Operations for the New Facility	24
A. Renovations.....	24
B. Marketing.....	28
III. Operations-Internship Packet.....	30
IV. National Programs.....	31
Chapter Three: SWOT Analysis.....	37
I. Strengths	37
II. Weaknesses.....	42
III. Opportunities	45
IV. Threats	47
Chapter Four: Best Practices	49
I. Overview of Fractured Atlas.....	50
II. Arts and Culture Network Best Practices	52
III. Intermediary Best Practices	55
Chapter Five: Recommendations	60
Chapter Six: Conclusion	66
References	67
Vita.....	70
Appendices	
Appendix 1: NPN/VAN Staff as of November 2014	71
Appendix 2: NPN/VAN Board Members as of November 2014.....	73
Appendix 3: NPN/VAN Partners as of November 2014.....	76
Appendix 4: NPN/VAN Local Network as of November 2014.....	80
Appendix 5: Drafts of Arts Estuary 1024 Marketing Flyers	81

Abstract

This academic report was composed at the conclusion of a 480 hour internship with the National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN), summarized in Chapter Two. This report includes NPN/VAN's mission, history, and organizational structure within Chapter One. Chapter Three is a SWOT analysis, and Chapter Four includes a summary of best practices, highlighting NPN/VAN's intermediary and network structure. In conclusion, a series of suggestions are offered for further consideration.

Keywords: National Performance Network; NPN; Visual Artists Network; VAN; New Orleans; Internship Report; University of New Orleans; UNO; Arts Administration; Networks; Intermediary; Arts Estuary 1024; Arts Administration; 2014

Introduction

The National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network is a nationally and internationally recognized service organization focused on providing support for artists as well as the spaces and organizations that bring artists and their work into their communities. National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network's most direct work is through serving as an intermediary, re-granting funds through its network of Partners (venues and institutions that directly engage with artists and communities) while also providing research on and advocacy related to cultural policy. For nearly three decades, National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network has been a proponent of touring contemporary work and engaging in continual dialogue about elevating conditions for artists globally.

This report provides an organizational outline and academic assessment of National Performance Network and Visual Artists Network's current structure and operations as observed by the author during a 480-hour internship beginning in the Summer of 2014 and concluding that Fall. While various organizations serve as intermediaries and provide network support for arts and culture organizations, The National Performance Network and Visual Artists Network is a standard bearer, providing invaluable leadership in both of these realms, and this report aims to catalogue and analyze the organization, serving as a touchstone for other institutions.

It is important to note that the organization was solely referred to as the National Performance Network (NPN) until 2011 at which point the Visual Artists Network was integrated into the organization's name and abbreviation (NPN/VAN).

Chapter One: Overview of the Organization

I. Mission, Values, and Vision

The current mission statement of the National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN) is:

“The National Performance Network, including the Visual Artists Network, are a group of diverse cultural organizers and artists, working to create meaningful partnerships and to provide leadership that enables the practice and public experience of the arts in the United States.”¹

NPN/VAN achieves this mission through work with “artists, arts organizers, and a diverse range of audiences and communities across the country through activities such as artists’ commissions, residencies, community-engaged cultural projects, and convenings.”²

NPN/VAN administers several programs for organizations within its networks to facilitate the touring of work by both performing and visual artists, nationally and internationally. These programs include direct subsidy, gatherings, and professional development for partner organization staff. NPN/VAN also undertakes research to advocate for cultural policies that consider the needs of arts and artists within the United States. NPN/VAN expands upon its mission statement to articulate that it is:

“committed to fostering diversity and artistic experimentation through its support for artists and partners. As a visible leader and example of best practices in the field, NPN integrates the arts into public experience, furthers

¹ NPN/VAN, *Annual Report and Directory 2014-2015*, 10.

² “Vision.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

artistic pluralism and acts as an advocate for cultural equity and social justice by supporting artistic activities that demonstrate our values.”³

NPN/VAN’s work is unique and complex in its approach to addressing the creation of partnerships and establishment of leadership within the arts. The organization fosters collaboration between arts organizations, organizers, and artists to find means of integrating more artistic expression into daily life, furthering the general public’s interaction with the arts and artists. NPN/VAN believes in the importance of uninhibited personal expression and ongoing participation to the arts throughout life as a component of a healthy society. NPN/VAN supports critical discussions surrounding the arts, believing that such conversations deepen understanding of the process of creating “and the role of arts and culture in our society.”⁴ NPN/VAN places great value on diversity, as individuals, shaped by personal experience and development, create different interpretations and offer unique perspectives on the world. Additionally, NPN/VAN believes that “public funding support...recognizes the arts as integral to a healthy society.”⁵

Through “actively engag[ing] in cultural policy discussions and serv[ing] as an Intermediary,”⁶ NPN/VAN moves towards a world in which artists and the organizations that support their work are seen as important components of a fully healthy society. NPN/VAN encourages arts and cultural workers to expand their engagement across societal sectors, offering creative ways of approaching issues within all walks of life. Through a focus on touring, NPN/VAN works to bring a wide scope of exposure to every

³ “Values.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Vision.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

community, to build awareness of internal and external groups, ideas, needs, and societal sectors. In bringing attention to living, contemporary artists, NPN/VAN highlights the need for advocacy and support for this aspect of the arts to both funders and cultural activists.

II. History

A. Establishment of a Dynamic Force in the Field (1984-1995)

The National Performance Network (NPN) began in October 1984 as a two-year pilot program initiated by Dance Theatre Workshop's David R. White as a way of subsidizing arts organizations presenting the work of emerging dance artists from around the nation.

David R. White invited fourteen organizations to The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN, to hear his thoughts on a nationwide need for the creation of a national conversation on support for touring the work of newer artists in smaller arts spaces.⁷ White shared in *Culture and Community: A Documentation and Evaluation of The National Performance Network*, a 1995 reflective assessment of the network, that "the history of NPN charts the irresistible rise of a family of artist and public communities that, in the early 1980s, had no way to speak to one another, much less to discover and collaborate around common concerns."⁸ Mindy Levine, the report's author, continues with a summary of such concerns:

"Artists were isolated from potential audience because travel costs made it prohibitive to tour far beyond local borders. Presenters were isolated from one

⁷ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 12.

⁸ Levine, 8.

another, lacking access to a burgeoning information base that was beginning to emerge as arts organizations independently honed and developed their skills and knowledge. Potential audiences were isolated from a pool of talented artists who might engage and stimulate their communities--whether on the stage, in school classrooms, in community centers, or other locales.”⁹

From the meeting emerged a network geared towards two goals: “Invention (creating support mechanisms and structures) and connection (linking rich pockets of scattered cultural activity already flourishing).”¹⁰ These ideas spoke to funders on the national level. Ruth Layleas, a Program Officer with the Ford Foundation, shared their support, acknowledging “concern for a pluralistic cultural environment within which contemporary artists and art forms can be vigorously nurtured.”¹¹ With this support from the field and funders, NPN was able to initiate two main programs, the Annual Meeting and Residency Support, and appoint David R. White as Executive Director. The former was slated to be a yearly gathering of Primary Sponsors and other “members of the cultural community to share information, both practical and philosophical, relevant to the support of artists, the presentation of work, and the forging of connections with local communities.”¹²

Residency Support was a subsidy, from NPN to Primary Sponsors, to monetarily support the presentation of three to five non-local companies each year. The underwriting aimed to offset the Primary Sponsors’ financial risk in presenting an artist unknown to

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 12.

¹² Levine, 9.

their audiences, raising the number of touring opportunities for artists nationwide. Additionally, the Residency guidelines detailed standard contract fees and established week-long residencies in communities. Sponsoring these longer term stays allowed NPN to require non-performance activity, such as lectures, workshops, or classes, from the funded artists. NPN's idea was these activities would "enlarge the community's understanding of their [artist's] work and integrate the arts more fully into the social fabric of communities."¹³ Conversely, these same parameters empowered Primary Sponsors to choose the artists who would speak to and engage with their community. Simultaneously contract negotiations were removed from the conversations between artists and Primary Sponsors, shifting focus solely to the art. Also, checks and balances were put in place to assure NPN was nationally focused (ie only 50% of subsidized presentations could be with artists from New York). By mid-1986, nineteen organizations in fourteen cities were Primary Sponsors of the NPN and they hosted forty artists through fifty-five Performance Residencies.

Receiving additional funding from other nationwide funders and continued support from the Ford Foundation, NPN continued to grow, with additional geographic locations, creating more opportunities for artist/organization relationships, and formalizing the Annual Meeting structure. NPN also began to explore the "broader social and political context of artistic presentation."¹⁴ This exploration lead NPN to establish the Creation Fund (introduced in 1988), geared towards "addressing the needs of artists by providing co-commissioning fund that afforded artists time and resources to thoroughly explore their

¹³ Ibid, 10.

¹⁴ Ibid, 12.

ideas through creation of new work.”¹⁵ By removing the pressure to produce a final product, artists could more fully investigate the power of their creative efforts and hone their work.

In 1990, NPN launched the Special Underwriting, Research and Frontier Fund (SURFF) which provided artists with funding to continue relationships with Primary Sponsors, beyond the one-week residency, “from education projects, to media involvements, to diversification efforts.”¹⁶

An international arm of NPN was added in 1991 through initiatives with both Canada (suspended in 1993) and Mexico (which evolved into the broader named and geographically reaching Performing Americas Project in 2006).

After operating for a decade, NPN looked back to understand if its programs and efforts were still a needed presence in the field. Undertaken in 1995, the report analyzed NPN’s work with its fifty-four organizations in thirty-seven cities.¹⁷ An external evaluator found that

“Primary Sponsors voiced overwhelming endorsement of NPN programs. By linking a national forum for information exchange and relationship building with locally-based decision-making, the NPN has devised a system that is flexible enough to allow diverse arts organizations to pursue their respective missions while at the same time providing a national forum for leadership development, advocacy and information exchange.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 14.

¹⁸ Levine, 6.

B. Transition to an Independent Organization – Charting Rough Waters (1996-2000)

NPN's status as a program of Dance Theater Workshop became problematic in the late 1990's due to two factors. Firstly, Dance Theater Workshop was planning to undertake a capital campaign to build a new space. As a part of that renovation, NPN was going to lose its office space. Additionally, the time and energy of Dance Theater Workshop staff that supported NPN would need to become focused on the fundraising and planning necessary for a successful campaign. Secondly, NPN had truly outgrown being a project of another organization and the support scope possible as a program of Dance Theater Workshop was no longer sufficient.

A planning group began to "explore feasibility of independence"¹⁹ for NPN. In 1998, the planning group transitioned into a Steering Committee who crafted a new mission and values statement while writing a formalized vision for a distinct organization. This preparation proved beneficial when NPN separated from Dance Theater Workshop and the Steering Committee undertook a search for NPN's new Executive Director. The separation was reflective of NPN's growth and the need for its work to be the central focus of an independent organization and expand beyond being a program of another entity.

Offering a vote of confidence to the newly independently, incorporated organization, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation pledged "a major two-year commitment to plan an independent organization and continue programs."²⁰ In the following year, Doris Duke funded Dance Theater Workshop as a means of facilitating NPN's continuing separation

¹⁹ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 15.

²⁰ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 16.

and full independence. Within that same span, NPN engaged San San Wong as Executive Director and the national office relocated to San Francisco.

While NPN was restructuring, no Annual Meeting was held in fiscal year 1997-1998. To provide continued communication with the network, an Annual Report issued was in 1998. Importantly, this Annual Report included an introductory article recounting NPN's founding Roots and Routes by David R. White, who was recognized as NPN's Founding Director. White stated that

“NPN was meant to be an engine that would allow, not just the so-called emerging artist, but an ever-widening generation of peers to grow up within a stone’s throw of one another....[to ask] how do I bring to my own home community or home region other people who are doing this work in communities that I don’t go to visit?...And, we have reiterated the fact that artist-producers, producing artists and creators, can be engines for change through themselves and through their engagement of their peers, as well as those of us who have become more formally attached to organizations or institutions.”²¹

However, the transition was not over, for NPN or the arts and culture sector at large. In 1999, having successfully navigated the transition of NPN into its own independent organization, including the creation of a Board, by-laws, and an organizational structure, San San Wong resigned. Board President MK Wegmann stepped in to serve as interim director while a Transition Team facilitated operations. Within this stretch of instability,

²¹ White, 5.

NPN again took time to “explore its feasibility as an independent organization through a series of regional roundtables and field interviews.”²²

Summarized in “Reaffirming the Traditions of the New: A Report on the National Performance Network’s Regional Roundtables,” nationwide discussions led to a newly restructured and re-energized NPN. There was acknowledgment that NPN was now operating “a very different arts environment from which it developed in 1984,”²³ citing such events as the reconfiguration of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The restructuring of the federal government arts organization not only decreased funding, it removed other NEA benefits such as “points of intersection for the national arts community through site visits and the panel system.”²⁴ Yet the struggles NPN had been created around finding solutions for were still prevalent in the field, such as “the isolation of artists working outside of dominant cultural centers, the struggles of organizations and artists of color; those doing challenging work.”²⁵ Under a section titled “The Role of the NPN: Suggestions for Future Directions,”²⁶ the Roundtables suggested NPN continue:

“To play an important role in serving as a bridge among local organizations while also providing national presence” and “play a role in educating and enlightening funders on national and local levels to: understand artists’ impact on community and culture; remain aware of new work; develop a national perspective about artistic trends; appreciate the range of ways to

²² NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 16.

²³ Wegmann, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Callahan, 9.

stabilize arts organizations; and understand the impact of funding cuts on the arts field.”²⁷

At this time, MK Wegmann was hired as President and CEO and ushered NPN into a new era.

C. Modern Era-Expansion (2000-Present)

MK Wegmann rapidly instituted changes that still guide NPN today. As NPN was still a small staff and the offices had only been in San Francisco for one year, Wegmann relocated the National Office to New Orleans in 2000. As a native New Orleanian, Wegmann initiated a specific commitment to engaging the local community, in line with the ideas suggested from the Roundtable discussions. Primary Sponsors are now referred to as Partners.

Beginning in 2004, NPN began to host discussions of formalized support for the touring of work by visual artists. In 2006, NPN launched seven pilot sites of the Visual Artists Network (VAN) which “nurtures the creation of experimental artwork and supports the touring of contemporary visual artists and their work.”²⁸ VAN became a full program in 2008 with fifteen partners, some of whom are dual partners (with both NPN and VAN), and a dedicated staff member helming the project. As of 2011, NPN actively began to refer to itself as NPN/VAN.

Also in 2004, NPN also began actively examining engaging its New Orleans artistic community. NPN began serving as a fiscal sponsor and intermediary partner to locally

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kaufman, 4.

based arts and culture organizations and projects. This reinforced NPN's encouragement of its Partner organizations to engage with their local community of artists. This program formalized into the Local Network in 2011, mirroring the national network on a community engaging level and working to

“encourage these organizations to develop effective management and planning tools; become familiar and comfortable with standard fiscal controls; successfully seek grants and contributions; develop good governance structures; and be powerful advocates on their own behalf in local and state policy arenas. NPN has created a peer network among the sponsored projects, built on a framework that encourages collaboration and exchange, developing a learning community in New Orleans that works together to strengthen organizational practices.”²⁹

In 2006, NPN began a fund aimed towards Partner staff development, named the Mentorship and Leadership Initiative (MLI). MLI “gives artist centered organizations time and space for personal renewal, resources to support leadership development and succession in a planned and strategic way, and the ability to create a mechanism for quick and easy access to the intellectual capital inherent in artist centered organizations. Support is not for institutional infrastructure, but focused on individual leadership within the institution.”³⁰

In 2010, NPN piloted an extension of the Creation Fund entitled the Forth Fund, providing an additional period of support for the development of new work. The Forth

²⁹ “New Orleans Local Network” NPN/VAN Official Website.

³⁰ “Mentorship & Leadership Initiative.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

Fund “encourage[s] artists to identify what is needed to make their work stronger, reinforce the relationships between commissioners and artists, and improve the overall production quality of work touring in the United States and abroad.”³¹

The newest program is NPN/VAN’s management of a facility named Arts Estuary 1024, begun in 2014. NPN long held a dream to provide the arts and cultural sector of New Orleans with spaces that would combat the lack of physical space for their work and offer administrative infrastructure. Codified in a feasibility report on a prospective facility in 2008, the driving impetus for NPN’s goal was told as:

“There is a need for office and studio space that is stable yet flexible. Shared facilities could knit together a network of diverse organizations in such a way to maintain the independence of each while facilitating greater leveraging and efficiency of limited resources.”³²

NPN/VAN explored several locations before moving forward on the 7,000 square foot former office building and funeral home at 1024 Elysian Fields Avenue. Working with the architectural firm Wayne Troyer Associates, NPN/VAN undertook an expansion and major renovation to transform the space into two to five person offices upstairs for NPN/VAN staff and a large nonprofit anchor tenant (currently KIDsmART). The bottom floor makes available two flexible-use meeting rooms, a shared desk space for independent organizations, three offices for one to three person nonprofits (currently: Make Music NOLA and Junebug Productions), and a large kitchen.

³¹ “Forth Fund.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

³² Concordia, 1.

III. Organizational Structure

As is obvious from its history, the National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN) is a complex organization, providing vast resources to organizations and artists nationwide. Currently, the major aspects of the organization are Operations, Policy Research and Development and Programmatic Activity. These are overseen by a staff of ten full time staff, along with various numbers of contractors and an intern.³³ Regarding governance, as a nonprofit organization, NPN/VAN is overseen by a Board of Directors.

A. Operations

Operations focuses on administering the business side. Operations encapsulates Administration, managing the office in New Orleans; Resource Development, seeking grants and individual donations for the organization; Communications, managing NPN's web presence, electronic newsletters, and other publications; and the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors is comprised of 17 members, including MK Wegmann, President and CEO. Most members are leaders at NPN/VAN Partner organizations, but others are not affiliated with an arts or culture organization. The Board meets three times per year, in the spring, the fall, and at a session at the Annual Meeting.³⁴

Staff most closely aligned with Operations include Steve Bailey, Chief Executive Officer; Therese Wegmann, Senior Operations & Data Specialist; Steffani Clemons, Administrative Assistant; and Kathleen Welch, Facilities Manager. Additionally, various ongoing contract staff facilitate communication (namely Bryan Jeffery Graham, IT/Design;

³³ For a list of the NPN/VAN Staff as of November 2014, please see Appendix One.

³⁴ For a list of the NPN/VAN Board as of November 2014, please see Appendix Two.

and Kathy deNobriga, Publication Design). When warranted, through a grant or tied to a specific initiative, other contractors are engaged and fall into operations. Sage Crump, for example, served as the Multi-Tenant Arts Facility Project Manager during the 2014 renovations and she has been brought back on again as a project manager for a new grant.

B. Policy Research and Development

NPN/VAN has a strong focus on advocacy, working with many local and national organizations, and seeks to lend its voice towards implementation of cultural policy that support the arts. Also, NPN/VAN is continually developing its newer programs: the Local Network, Visual Artists Network, and Arts Estuary 1024 (its multi-tenant arts facility).

Much of the work of MK Wegmann, President and CEO, lies in policy research and development.

C. Programmatic Activity

The largest portion of NPN/VAN's programmatic activity is subsidy programs within its National Programs. National Programs also facilitates various convenings yearly for its Partners, artists, colleagues in the field, and Board. Additional umbrellas of concentration are International Programs, the Local Network, and Arts Estuary 1024.

National Programs-Subsidy Programs

National Programs work to connect the nationwide network of partner organizations and subsidize their presentation of national artists. The aim of the National Programs subsidies are to provide a standard operating procedure for touring, including a

set fee structure that allows artists and presenters to focus on the work, versus contract details. Specific current National Programs are the NPN Performance Residency, VAN Exhibition Residency, Freight Fund, Creation Fund, Forth Fund, Community Fund, and the Mentor and Leadership Initiative. At the end of each received subsidy, partners and artists (if applicable) is asked to complete a final report. National Program's Staff are led by Stanlyn Breve, Director of National Programs; with Alec de Leon serving as the Program Specialist for Visual Artists Network, and William Bowling as the Program Assistant for National Programs.

- NPN Performance Residency Program:

Directly fosters community engagement by subsidizing one-and-two week touring residency contracts for artists. NPN Partners apply to present artists from at least 100 miles away. Artists are in residence five to seven days for a one week residency, twelve to fourteen for a two week, and must complete at least one community engagement activity, one public performance, and interact with at least 100 members of the presenter's community/audience. Each NPN Partner is required to complete one Performance Residency per year.

- VAN Exhibition Residency Program:

Subsidizes five to seven day artist residencies to enrich community engagement between Partner organization's constituents and visiting artist. NPN Partners apply to present artists from at least 100 miles away. Artists are in residence five to seven days for a one week residency, twelve to fourteen for a two week, and must complete at least one community engagement activity, one public exhibition, and

interact with at least 100 members of the presenter's community/audience. Each VAN Partner is required to complete one Exhibition Residency per year.

- Freight Fund:

A \$500 subsidy available to NPN presenters to offset artists freight costs, equipment rental, excess baggage charges, shipment of sets, props, costumes, etc.

- Creation Fund:

A two part program that provides artists with a minimum of a \$10,000 commissioning award for the development of new work, and a minimum of a two site tour. NPN Partners apply on behalf of artists they would like to commission. Contracts must have at least one NPN Partner, and at least one other presenting commissioner (may be non-NPN) from at least 100 miles away. Each commissioner contributes \$2,000 to the project and, as of 2015, NPN matches \$9,000. When work is presented/toured, NPN Partners must use an NPN Performance Residency contract/subsidy. From the time of the award, the artist and partners have three years to work on the piece and offer some type of presentation.

- Forth Fund:

Providing an additional period of support for artist to address critical artistic, technical, or managerial needs, the Forth Fund aims to assure a work is fully ready to tour. Forth Fund support deepens and fosters relationships between presenters and artists. Available to all Creation Fund supported works, artists apply in conjunction with a Creation Fund commissioner that can help address the needs of the work. As of 2015, NPN awards \$5,000 to the artist, \$5,000 to the participating

commissioner, and requires the commissioner match \$5,000 to the artist, hard cash or in kind.

- Community Fund:

Deepens the impact and experience of either an NPN Creation Fund, or Performance Residency, by providing support towards time and space for the artist to delve deeper into community engagement activities that fosters stronger relationships among NPN Partners, artists and communities. As of 2015, funding for up to \$5,000 per project is available.

- Mentorship & Leadership Initiative:

Provides Partner's staff with funding to pursue leadership and professional development, mentoring, and succession planning opportunities. As of 2015, funding for up to \$5,000 per project is available.

National Programs-Convenings

Another aspect of National Programs are routine convenings, including the Annual Meeting, Mid Year Meetings, and Board Meetings. Convenings staff are Mimi Zarsky, Senior Program Specialist for Convenings, and Anna Henschel, Program Assistant – National Programs.

- Annual Meeting:

Once a year, typically in November or December, NPN/VAN hosts a gathering of Partners, colleagues, selected artists, and funders at a different Partner site. All attendees at the Annual Meeting are considered equally important and “come together to articulate issues, debate alternative models, and examine policies which

shape the local and national arts environment.”³⁵ Held over four days, some components of the meeting are: Presentations by Artists funded through NPN/VAN subsidies, Partner generated Idea Forums (discussion of specific topics introduced and moderated by a Partner), and a Media Slam (at which Partners can share the work of artists they have worked with and believe would be good for other Partners to present).

- Mid Year Meetings:

Hosted in each of NPN/VAN’s regions (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West), a two day gathering of area partners to discuss any of a wide variety of topics with other area members of the field (“artists, presenters, community representatives and funders”³⁶). Meetings are held in the Spring and hosted by a Partner from each region. Three meetings are held over one day with the fourth meeting having one day to serve as the national VAN Mid Year Meeting and the second day to be the regional NPN meeting.

- Board Meetings:

The full NPN/VAN Board of Directors meets three times per year, in the spring, fall, and winter. The spring meeting is habitually held in New Orleans, allowing for all staff to attend and report on their area of activity to the Board. The fall meeting is held in the hotel that is going to be used for the Annual Meeting, allowing staff and the Board to give the venue a test run in advance. The winter meeting is held the day following the Annual Meeting.

³⁵ “Convenings.” NPN/VAN Official Website.

³⁶ Ibid.

International Programs

International Programs have arisen from specific fiscal and government support between the United States and foreign countries. International Programs currently are the Performing Americas Program and the Asia Exchange. Staff for International Programs are Elizabeth Doud, Program Coordinator, Performing Americas Program and Kyoko Yoshida, Consultant - U.S.-Japan Connection.

- Performing Americas Program:

The Performing Americas Program (PAP) is collaboration between NPN/VAN and La RED (Red de Promotores Culturales de Latinoamerica y el Caribe) to tour contemporary performing artists within the Western hemisphere. PAP furthers NPN/VAN's vision by emphasizing "reciprocity and mutual respect with knowledge building through peer and artist exchange"³⁷ across national borders.

- Asia Exchange:

Similar to PAP, the Asia Exchange moves projects between the United States, Korea, and Japan.

Local Network

NPN/VAN manages a community of New Orleans-based arts and culture projects and organizations that mirrors the national network, seeking to create an environment of collaboration and support. NPN/VAN specifically provides infrastructure support through fiscal sponsorship, payroll services, resource development assistance, mentoring, organizational development, and long range planning. The goals of the Local Network

³⁷ "Performing Americas Program." NPN/VAN Official Website.

mirror NPN/VAN's national efforts with a specific emphasis on building the stability of the administrative side "of community-based organization and artist-driven projects."³⁸

NPN/VAN works to connect the local community with aligned national Partners, funders, and artists to offer mentorship opportunities, connections with new funding sources, and broader exposure for local programs and projects.

At the end of 2014, seventeen organizations were Local Network partners.³⁹ Staff for the Local Network is Stephanie Atkins, Resource Development Specialist.

Arts Estuary 1024

NPN is the lead tenant and facility manager of a community-based arts center for smaller arts organizations and artist-driven projects that fosters both administrative and programmatic manageable growth in a collaborative structure. The facility, at 1024 Elysian Fields, is configured to house a variety of administrative office needs: offices, a cultural incubator space, workstations and community meeting and rehearsal rooms. It provides stable, affordable office and program-delivery space. Arts Estuary 1024's goal is to provide an opportunity to practice a collaborative approach to organizational sustainability and to deepen the value and reach of the arts across the city and through the physical proximity of administrative space encourage organic collaboration.

³⁸ NPN/VAN, *Annual Report and Directory 2014-2015*, 70.

³⁹ For a list of Local Network Partners as of November 2014, please see Appendix Four.

D. Board of Directors

As a 501(c)3, NPN/VAN is governed by a Board of Directors. The current Board is composed of 17 members, including Partner representatives, professionals working in the field, and NPN/VAN President and CEO, MK Wegmann. Reflective of NPN/VAN, the Board is diverse. With Board members from visual and performing arts organizations, the Board also is a representative cross section of NPN/VAN's geographic, age, gender, and time in the field wide range. Board Members serve three-year terms and are allowed to serve for two consecutive terms. In addition to attending at least two of the three yearly Board Meetings, Members must also be present at the Annual Meeting. Also, Board Members serve on a Board Committee. Current committees are Board Development, Partnership, Policy, and the Executive Committee.

IV. Budget

Per the 2014-15 Annual Report, "NPN/VAN continues to manage its finances in such a way as to provide maximum benefit to its constituents, Partner organizations and artists, and ultimately the communities that they serve."⁴⁰ This is an accurate analysis of its fiscal year 2014 explicitly as NPN/VAN spends over half (53%) of its budget on "expenditures [that] reach the field directly" and the next largest percentage (31%) on "convenings, cultural policy efforts and local program support."⁴¹ The expenses are rounded out by administrative costs, including operations (12%) and resource development (4%).

⁴⁰ NPN/VAN, *Annual Report and Directory 2014-2015*, 14.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

NPN/VAN has been combating a structural deficit since 2009 and has worked to both increase income and curb spending to fall under expenditure. The deficit has decreased from \$107,573 per its 2010 audited financials⁴² to \$83,931, unaudited, in 2014.⁴³

⁴² NPN/VAN, *Annual Report and Directory*, 2011-2012, 17.

⁴³ NPN/VAN, *Annual Report and Directory 2014-2015*, 15.

Chapter Two: Internship

I. Overview

The period addressed in this report covers 480 intern hours worked from May 27th to November 11th, 2014. Throughout this period, I worked closely with Chief Operating Officer, Steve Bailey, in preparation for NPN/VAN's relocation to Arts Estuary 1024 and marketing efforts for the new facility as well as to craft an internship guide. Additionally, I assisted Director of National Programs, Stanlyn Brevé, on day-to-day operations within the department, including end-of-year reporting, information facilitation, and final reports to grantors. Therefore, my report will discuss my duties and observation in two categories: Operations and National Programs.

I was only the fourth intern to work with NPN/VAN and there was no predefined role for the intern to fill. Rather, each intern starts with interviewing every staff member to understand the organization at large and their role within it. Having interned with a variety of other organizations, I found this approach incredibly refreshing. I enjoyed the freedom to explore the organization and ponder how I might best contribute. The idea that there was not a list of assigned, typically menial, tasks was very exciting.

With a relatively small staff organizing and executing a variety of programs, NPN/VAN is a complicated organization, and it takes a while to grasp all of the components. With the idea of intern/staff interviews, NPN/VAN aims to assure that new interns begin to comprehend the variety of activities available so they may focus their energies in a mutually beneficial way. From my staff conversations, Steve Bailey and I decided the focus of my internship to include:

- Facilities planning for the Ransom Building⁴⁴
- Updating applications and coordinating panels for Community Fund, MLI, and other national programs
- Assisting with directory planning
- Assisting with National Programs contract processing

To note, there is a slight downside to the self-directed intern integration as the intern is not fully aware of all aspects of the organization and how they might contribute. Additionally, staff tends to leave the intern alone, with time to begin to understand the complex organization and not always reach out with tasks that could more quickly integrate the intern into daily operations. This delay/seemingly mutual insecurity creates an extended period of little activity on the interns' part.

II. Operations for the New Facility

A. Renovations

Promptly upon starting with NPN/VAN, I began working with the team overseeing the renovation of NPN/VAN's new facility. Since 2007, NPN/VAN had been searching for a new location, with the idea it would serve more than just NPN/VAN and be a shared office space. In January 2014, NPN/VAN was approached by KIDsmART to co-rent 1024 Elysian Fields Avenue. The building had served various purposes over the years and was known by a variety of names, including being a funeral home, but NPN/VAN envisioned the facility

⁴⁴ The Ransom Building was the former name for the facility at 1024 Elysian Fields Avenue. While the project was under construction, NPN/VAN referred to the space as MTAF (Multi Tenant Arts Facility). During the course of my internship, the name Arts Estuary 1024 was decided upon. For clarity, I will refer to the space as Arts Estuary 1024 (AE 1024).

being expanded and used not only for their own offices, but also housing other local arts and culture organization's office space and several sizes of multipurpose spaces.

In February 2014, NPN/VAN secured a 20-year lease for and began renovating the 7,000 square foot building to house a variety of administrative office needs. Physically there are small offices, desk rentals and meeting spaces available, the idea being that small and emerging arts organizations can strengthen their infrastructure by having low cost, stable administrative office space to manage their daily operations. The space also incorporates several conference rooms that can be used for community gatherings, programming, rehearsals, and meetings. Organizations will be able to grow staff, engage in programmatic activities and host meetings in one central location. This exchange of ideas and flow of activity focused on the New Orleans arts and culture sector spurred NPN/VAN to call the building Arts Estuary 1024 (1024 being the physical address) or AE 1024 for short.

AE 1024 is envisioned as a being a home for NPN/VAN staff, serving its seventeen fiscally-sponsored Local Network Partners and projects while providing much needed administrative support for its anchor tenants (KidsmART - an established arts education program, Make Music NOLA - formally known as the Youth Orchestra of the 9th Ward, and Junebug Productions - a 40-year old African American theater company).

NPN/VAN has sole financial responsibility for the facility and has crafted a long-range budget and marketing campaign. Aiming to keep rental rates low, AE 1024 allows small and emerging nonprofits an opportunity to focus on growing their programming, shoring up their infrastructure and building their funding portfolio in a stable yet flexible administrative environment in close proximity with peers who are navigating similar

terrain. The anchor tenants, along with a small incubator space (work stations) for about six groups, will provide the core rental income. Additional earned revenue will come from short-term rentals of meeting/rehearsal space and parking fees (monthly and event parking) from a 30-space parking lot adjacent to the building.

This is a pivotal moment in NPN/VAN's organizational evolution. A consistent thought I had while working at NPN/VAN was that the organization strives to and succeeds in matching organizational capacity with activities. The organization carefully selects when to add programmatic activities, only doing so when there is sufficient funding and existing or the ability to add staff support. The management of a facility is venturing further out of a comfort zone than NPN/VAN typically operates. Through my internship I observed careful planning and preparation for the addition of a facility to NPN/VAN's activities, such as: engaging a Facility Manager to be responsible for maintenance, scheduling, and administration for AE 1024; weekly project meetings between key NPN/VAN staff and persons facilitating the renovations of the building; continual discussions at NPN/VAN staff meetings to assure all personnel were being kept up to date on timelines, etc. Moving forward, it will be important for NPN/VAN to assure it is continually evaluating the effectiveness of those plans and preparations and adjusts them as necessary. This will be discussed further in both Chapters Three and Five.

I, along with Steve Bailey and NPN/VAN's project manager Sage Crump, attended weekly meetings between the architect, Wayne Troyer, architecture project manager, Daniel Kautz, contractor, Sandra Tomasetti. We reviewed progress, discussed design and installation choices, and toured the building. From a meeting in mid-July, I was tasked with coordinating installation of an alarm system for AE1024. Based off of recommendations

received from Daniel and Sandra, I contacted three alarm companies to set up a walkthrough of the space and discussion of NPN/VAN's needs for the alarm system.

As the building would be functioning with short and long term tenants and operating in a non-traditional structure, a walk through was necessary to understand NPN/VAN's needs. Therefore, I coordinated three meetings with different alarm providers, myself, and Steve Bailey. Each walkthrough provided an opportunity for me to observe Bailey's refinement of the vocabulary of communicating of NPN/VAN's desired outcome. Always, he would begin with an explanation of the building's intent and purpose and articulating that he was not an expert in building construction matters. Throughout conversations, Bailey learned to share with contractors that there would not be a set facility staff to unlock and lock the building, nor would there be personnel monitoring the entryways. It was unique to have a facility needing a system that could permit various personnel throughout the building and working for different organizations to admit visitors. Walkthroughs would continue with pointing out entry points and Bailey developed a vocabulary to communicate that all three entry points would need the ability to connect with every phone in the building. Observing Steve Bailey's grasp of a new situation, flexibility, and personnability was invaluable. I truly feel that I learned about approaching unfamiliar conversations with directness and acknowledgement of one's own grasp of the situation.

As of the end of my internship, NPN/VAN had selected a company to work with, and they were beginning the installation. The system will allow for call boxes at the front gate, main entrance door (located at the side of the facility), and parking lot gate. It will be possible for a guest to dial any individual phone within the building, reaching the specific

person they are visiting. This will allow for each tenant organization to receive visitors without interrupting the work of another entity. Additionally, the alarm system will accept a variety of codes, allowing the tracking of which organization was the first to arrive and last to leave on a daily basis and for a code to be terminated when a tenant moves out of the facility.

I believe the combination of research and intentionality leading up to securing AE 1024 and the careful observation and considerations within the renovations hold NPN/VAN up as an example of network best practices, as will be expounded upon in Chapter Four. There was an incredible amount of thought going into each aspect of the building, truly showing that NPN/VAN is an organization interested in engaging its local arts and culture network responsibly.

B. Marketing

Due to my knowledge of the new building, Steve Bailey asked that I draft a flyer to begin advertising AE1024's office spaces. I utilized a template within Microsoft Word and began inputting information on AE1024. Crafting language to talk about the new facility was a bit challenging, but I was able to refer to grant applications for ideas and conversations with Steve Bailey and Sage Crump to make refinements.

Communication was an ongoing area of concern throughout my internship with NPN/VAN. The organization is many layered and works in so many arenas that succinct communication was almost an impossibility, as can be seen in the lengthy Organizational Structure description within Chapter One. Attempting to craft a simple brochure highlighted the ongoing struggle for NPN/VAN to have a simple "elevator pitch" (a brief

organizational introduction and articulation of purpose hypothetically able to be executed in a short elevator ride). The profound and well integrated programs NPN/VAN executes in the national arena and the full page of mission, vision, and values would not work in a brochure. However, the carefully crafted language used by the organization to describe itself in most materials was challenging to “boil down” into simplified and direct sentences. Additionally, I realized that I was creating the introduction of NPN/VAN to most of the local community and crafting the first language surrounding the goals of AE 1024.

On the cover of the tri-fold, to give a context of NPN/VAN’s choice of name for the building, I initially provided a reader with a definition of “estuary” as *found where fresh and salt water intermingle, providing a fertile environment for unique and rich growth*. Within the document, I began by attempting to explain the building’s purpose succinctly and accurately. My approach to layout of the first draft was to include spaces for photos, feeling high quality photos convey more information than most words can, and provide text on the spaces that were being advertised. Therefore, the text focused on the desks available for rent in the shared office space, the multi-use spaces, overall building amenities, and important information on rentals. I did not expound on NPN/VAN’s other programs or even its organizational purpose as it proved to be entirely too much information to convey in the space available and did not seem necessary within a marketing brochure.

Through revisions, the document evolved to include a ground plan of the first floor indicating where available rental spaces are located and sharing information on the space being available for both event and parking rental.⁴⁵ Additionally, through discussion with Bailey and Crump, it was thought important to clarify the intended meaning of “arts” to

⁴⁵ For versions of the flyer, please see Appendix 5.

assure the building's purpose was clear. "Arts" was defined as *creative activities that bring people together in their communities and gives them an opportunity to gain new insight, skills and relationships*. This language provides a broad scope for artistic practice and community engagement with a focus on shared learning and the exchange of ideas. I do believe the wording also diminishes the possibility of persons believing that AE 1024 is a place of artistic instruction (ie a school).

III. Operations-Internship Packet

Towards the end my internship, Steve Bailey asked that I prepare guidelines for future interns. I crafted a timeline for the process of engaging an intern with notes on the focus of each step, from the job posting to the first day. I revised the internship job posting and prepared two packets of information to share with the intern prior to their start at NPN/VAN. One packet, entitled NPN/VAN Structure Information consisted of:

- A brief history.
- NPN/VAN's Mission Statement, Vision, and Values.
- Organizational Chart of staff (divided into Administration and National Programs), board, and partners.
- Programs Structure (including Operations of the National Office, National Programs, International Programs, Local Network, and Research & Development/Policy).
- Informational sheets on each program.
- A list of current NPN/VAN Partners.

The second packet contains sample documents relating to activities of each program, including the NPN Partnership Agreement Template, VAN Partnership Agreement Template, an information sheet on the most recent annual meeting, and a grant application. The goal of both packets is to provide the incoming intern resources to learn the language of NPN/VAN, begin to grasp its programs, and ponder the focus of their internship.

Additionally, the internship packets were my attempt to expedite the integration of interns within NPN/VAN as I found myself a bit at loose ends when my internship started and wanted to encourage future interns to begin activities more quickly. As I found my time at NPN/VAN to be very interesting and truly an exposure to a new side of the arts administration field. Uniquely, as the only national arts organization in Louisiana, working with NPN/VAN offers specific opportunities for interns to be exposed to different aspects of the arts field than is possible at any other institution. NPN/VAN plays a mentorship role to so many organizations nationally and locally, it is important it carries through on that role with its interns. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, it is important that NPN/VAN “develop and promulgate performance standards for nonprofit governance and management...[that] codify the level of competence necessary to succeed at the organization’s declared endeavor.”⁴⁶

IV. National Programs

In conjunction with my Operations work, I also assisted the National Programs staff with a variety of tasks. In each task, I faced the same hurdle: how to collect comprehensive,

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 24.

accurate data. As was reported in Chapter 1, NPN/VAN administers a number of programs, each intricate and unique. Tracking all the various components of each program is complicated and requires appropriate options for cataloguing all program data, dedicated updating, and an understandable means of exporting said data for different reporting requirements. This ability to communicate clearly and dependably is imperative for the organization's accurate external communication with funders, Partners, and persons interested in fully understanding NPN/VAN's role in the arts and culture landscape.

Unfortunately, NPN/VAN's organizational structure and activities do not closely align with any other major organization, so there is no readymade software or organizational guidebook. Therefore, in 2002, NPN/VAN designed its own database, a FileMaker Pro customized platform known as the ORB that attempted to meet its data tracking needs. However, the ORB is not intuitive, requires connection to the NPN/VAN server, and has not been consistently used. By that, I mean that different data appears in the same titled field across different entries making data across years or programs hard to analyze for comparison or comprehensive reporting on programmatic impact.

In 2011, Per the advice of Design/IT consultant Bryan Jeffrey Graham, NPN/VAN began utilizing Salesforce, a cloud based customer relationship manager software in which organizations can track various aspects of their organizations - from development leads (grants, individuals, etc.) to meeting attendance. However, Salesforce does not automatically align with all of NPN/VAN's needs, and Bryan Jeffrey Graham has been customizing it to fit. Thus far, he has been able to link the completion of Residency contracts through integrating the Partner Portal, where Partner's log in, and adding a module for signatures, named EchoSign, to Salesforce. The entire contracting and final

reporting process is fully automated as Partner organizations log into the portal and complete an information page on the Residency Agreement. Salesforce inputs the information into the contract template and routes the document into EchoSign for signatures. Additionally, when the Residency activities are completed, Partners can log into the Portal to complete their final reports, which are then stored within Salesforce. To note, as only the Residency programs are linked, that means all contracts, reports, and data related to Freight Fund, Creation Fund, Forth Fund, Community Fund, and Mentor and Leadership Initiative are still stored in the ORB.

A major project facing the National Programs staff each summer is the end of the fiscal year (June 30), at which time all Partners must renew their agreements, submit dues, complete an annual survey, and are reminded to submit final reports for all completed subsidies they have received. All of this was tracked in a Google Drive Sheet, which I updated bi-weekly. The process of Partner renewals felt burdensome and overly complicated as it involved analyzing information within the ORB and Salesforce, some of which could be inaccurate or incomplete. I believe it could be made easier by focusing on creating fields within Salesforce to track end of year related data, resulting in easier exporting.

All Partners are emailed blank partnership agreements for both NPN and VAN. Then the partner prints two copies of the correct network agreement (or two copies of both if they are a dual partner), signs both, and returns them to NPN/VAN for countersignature. I catalogued when agreements were received, submitted them to Stanlyn Breve for signature, mailed Partners a fully executed copy, and filed NPN/VAN's copy. If this process

could be executed within EchoSign, Partners would not need to print and sign anything and the Agreement completion could be quickly completed within the simple online platform.

For dues, I would routinely receive deposit statements from Steffani Clemons and input which partners had paid their dues. Frustratingly, I was unaware of some Partner's official names. This resulted in my adding a row for King's Majestic as I was unaware that Partner was more commonly referred to as King Arts Complex.

The annual survey was administered through SurveyMonkey, which I logged into to note who had fully completed the survey. Unfortunately, there is not a way for a Partner to save a partially completed survey, so there would be multiple entries from a single partner if that Partner had navigated away from the survey before completion. Additionally, within the survey, Partners are asked to check that their organizational description, posted on NPN/VAN's website, is accurate. If it was not, they were requested to submit a corrected version within the survey. A few partners noted their organization's description needed updating, but failed to provide corrected content and I would need to follow up. It would be more expedient to require new content to be provided if the Partner had indicated changes were necessary.

For the Partners who did share new language, I would update the NPN/VAN website to reflect the newer, accurate information. I later learned that staff members had requested to be given permission to update the website, but not yet received it. While I understand not wanting many chefs in the website kitchen, it struck me as strange not to orient a full time staff member to website update procedures and to train a short term intern, especially as NPN/VAN uses the rather intuitive and user friendly WordPress to manage its website.

The tracking of final reports was the most complicated portion of the end of year activities. As not all subsidy programs are within Salesforce, to report to a Partner what reports NPN/VAN had not received, one has to run a report from Salesforce and the ORB. Salesforce has searches saved that are both easily sortable and editable, so gathering report information on Residency subsidies was easy. The ORB requires crafting search parameters for every other type of subsidy and outputs the information from every field. It is not easily understood or readable and, due to lack of vigilant and thorough updating, the exporting of data often proved not to be useful and I would have to find the original subsidy application to find all needed information. Additionally, as the Creation Fund spans across multiple fiscal years and required additional reports being run to assure its full picture was captured.

All of this information (dues, Partner Agreements, Final Reports, and the Annual Survey) was input into a Partner Report Cards which were issued to each organization. These Report Cards proved effective at serving as a reminder to organizations to submit outstanding paperwork. However, certain Partners would respond with documentation showing their paperwork was up-to-date and their report card was inaccurate. This occurrence was expected and commonly accepted in the offices, but I do not believe such mistakes are the best reflection on a national organization to have internal reporting mistakes.

I felt that time could be dedicated to assisting in the transition of all data to Salesforce, which would significantly ease reporting, both to Partners and, as I later realized, funders and the field at large.

Later in the summer, I again assisted National Programs to gather information for their Annual Directory. Annually, NPN/VAN distributes a summary report on their activities for the prior fiscal year at the Annual Meeting. The report begins by sharing financial information for NPN/VAN, including a balance sheet and profit and loss, funders, and donors. The next section, where most of my efforts went, details the impact of NPN/VAN programs. This area shares:

- The number of people (community members and artists/artist companies) impacted.
- Funding directly supplied (through subsidies) to Partners and the amounts they were directly leveraged.
- Demographic information on artists supported.
- Number of events (community, etc.) related to NPN/VAN activities.

Similar to the struggle to pull together the information for the Partner Report Card, compiling all the figures related to the impact of each subsidy program was quite tedious. Additionally, as the Annual Report serves as a large final report to all partners and is publicly available on NPN/VAN's website, there is an added need to assure all reporting is accurate and comprehensive.

However, despite the currently inefficient means of gathering the data, NPN/VAN's dedication to annually providing an open look at its activities and financial impact are a unique way in which it provides invaluable leadership in both intermediary and arts and culture network best practices.

Chapter Three: SWOT Analysis

SWOT is an acronym for an analysis of issues internal strengths (S), weaknesses (W), external opportunities (O), and threats (T) to the organization. SWOTs are used by an organization's management to get a grasp on its health and gather insight for its future. Detailed in this chapter are several core competencies and select issues I observed throughout the course of my internship and have since considered in detail. As NPN/VAN provides invaluable leadership in intermediary and arts and culture network best practices, the goal of sharing these thoughts is to highlight successful, perhaps replicable, aspects of the organization for others and to note areas of concern. To note, recommendations addressing many of the points within can be found in Chapter Five of this report.

I. Strengths

A. Dedicated, Educated Staff

NPN/VAN's core strength is its staff, who are all experts at their jobs. Each staff member is well versed in the intricacies and inner workings of the organization as a whole, while being especially versed in their particular area. Staff members, each with professionalism and their own personality, embody NPN/VAN's goals of partnership, freedom of expression, critical dialogue, lifelong learning, diversity, and public funding support.

- Partnership:

Rarely does one staff member complete an entire task alone and, more often than not, will need the input and knowledge of other staff to fully address an issue. Staff

respect each other's time through small means such as being prepared for meetings and larger conversations of changing the responsible person for a task if the original staff member needs to shift their attention.

- Freedom of Expression:

Within all conversations and meetings, I witnessed all personnel conversing on equal footing. Each staff member felt comfortable and confident sharing their thoughts, while respecting the insights of others.

- Critical Dialogue:

NPN/VAN staff members are always reviewing their approach to tasks and their work execution to assure they are working efficiently and clearly. They are all open to ideas and thoughts from other staff or doing a test run of adopting the practices of another department.

- Life Long Learning:

Staff are always sharing articles and reports they encounter in their lives that they believe might be of value to other staff members. Additionally, there is a strong encouragement for all staff to explore professional development opportunities.

- Diversity

NPN/VAN staff strive to assure all aspects of their programs are engaging with as diverse an audience and artists as possible. I observed NPN/VAN staff taking on extra work or revisiting processes, aiming to reach new and different peoples.

- Public Funding Support:

An interesting aspect of NPN/VAN's staffing structure is that there is not a centralized Development staff person. Rather, Resource Development, as NPN/VAN

refers to fundraising, is a group of staff. This provides multiple insights into funding opportunities and translates to many eyes pursuing funding. With these many ways of approaching funders, various aspects of NPN/VAN's programs can be highlighted, specific to a funder's requirements or interests.

Overall, the office is a positive work environment, filled with respect, both between staff and their duties and staff to staff. The office is infused with an air of comradery as everyone values the work they do while being respected for their energies. While small in size, with only ten full time members, the staff accomplishes a wide variety of tasks annually. It is always impressive how well NPN/VAN staff know Partner organizations. I was struck from my first day with a unique embodiment of NPN/VAN's commitment to balancing work with capacity – all staff typically eats lunch together. This shows that staff are not generally overburdened and are able to truly take a break from their work.

B. Great National Reputation

NPN/VAN is held in high regard nationwide by its Partners, funders, and experts in the field. A unique barometer of NPN/VAN's reputation is its very survival. As a field generated and supported network, the organization would be in dire straits if it was not well respected. NPN/VAN recognizes this fact by routinely hosting roundtables and undertaking organizational assessments to understand if it is succeeding in meeting goals and is matching its energies with what is necessary in the field. The diversity of organizations involved in the network and range of funders consistently involved with NPN/VAN speak to its national regard. Regarding the former, organizations within NPN/VAN span the United States and have a wide range of programming. For funders,

NPN/VAN's 2016 Annual Report lists major national foundations including the "Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation, and Robert Sterling Clark Foundation."⁴⁷

Many network Partners cite opportunities provided to them through NPN/VAN funding as allowing them to become better members of their home community, such as was highlighted in a 2011 Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grant related review and assessment, which read that "the network has considerable influence in catalyzing regional communities to create local and regional partnerships."⁴⁸ Within the same assessment, evidence is offered that Artists value NPN/VAN as "particularly important because it encourages extended, multiple, sequential, and multi-faceted relationships between artists and presenters, giving artists 'room for growth over time.'"⁴⁹

Many of NPN/VAN's funders are longtime supporters, continually pledging support over multiple years and investing in new programs. A striking example is the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's numerous grant reports, detailing NPN/VAN's impact through many multi-year grants. It is often cited as an example of a well-functioning network by other organizations and is held up as a standard bearer. Additionally, NPN/VAN staff routinely serve as panelists in national conversations and advise multiple arts organizations.

⁴⁷ 2016, 14

⁴⁸ Maciariello, 26

⁴⁹ Ibid, 25

C. Continually Seeking Broader Diversity Across All Aspects of its Work

NPN/VAN not only lists diversity as one of its core values, it integrates an emphasis on diversity into all aspects of its programs. It is truly striking how much diversity plays into NPN/VAN's decision making, from Partners to Annual Meeting attendees. It is obvious that Partners, the most direct beneficiaries of NPN/VAN's network and intermediary work, are diverse in terms of geography, size, communities served, and programmatic activities. I was impressed to be privy to discussions of invitees to the Annual Meeting in which the composition of participants was cross referenced for their age, sexual orientation, geography, time in the field, and a variety of other factors. NPN/VAN actively values and engages diversity of persons and opinions in all its aspects.

D. Automatic Partner Subsidies

NPN/VAN provides guaranteed subsidies to its Partners. Other networks allow for members to apply for financial sponsorship, but NPN/VAN Partners automatically receive subsidy for at least one Performance Residency and/or one Exhibition Residency annually. They are encouraged to apply for other subsidy programs, but this is not required. This assurance to Partners allows the organizations themselves to structure their programming and budgets in a confident manner. Also, Partners receive free admission to the Annual Meeting, as well as travel subsidies for both the Annual and Mid Year Meetings.

Importantly, organizations within the network are referred to as Partners, not Members. I believe this conveys the great respect the NPN/VAN has for the institutions "on the ground," actively involved in bringing art and artists to their communities.

II. Weaknesses

A. Lack of Coherent Internal and External Communication

As there are many different components to NPN/VAN's programs, it is often complicated to assure that every staff member understands exactly what other staff are engaged in or where they are in the process. This can have a negative outward effect as internal unawareness can ripple outward into the Partnership. For example, one staff might send an email to the Partnership, reminding them to submit materials related to the Annual Meeting and, a day later, another will convey to the same group that information for the Annual Report is now past due and cannot be edited. It is understandable that a Partner organization might confuse the contents and take no action regarding the former. In other situations, Partners will receive a survey with a requested completion in a very short amount of time and the next week receive a survey with a much longer lead time.

These examples highlight how an individual staff members can reach out to the Partnership regarding their specific program's needs without knowing that another staff member has sent a similar email or survey for their program. This can lead to confusion within the Partnership as to what actions are still outstanding, from required paperwork to understanding supplemental funding opportunities. This confusion, if continual, could frustrate Partners and lead to questioning the organization of the national office and staff.

Within this same issue is a need for a cohesive way to express NPN/VAN's actions in relation to its mission and goals to an external audience, be that potential funders or New Orleans community members learning of NPN/VAN through an event at AE 1024. NPN/VAN is a complex organization and to boil its work into a succinct message encapsulating its energies is challenging. I believe NPN/VAN needs to develop an

approachable synopsis with both a focus on why its work is important and how it achieves its goal. This will allow easier engagement across the board, from prospective funders to potential new fiscal sponsors.

A striking example of how communication is a true weakness for NPN/VAN is its lack of a communication plan. It is interesting in an organization that so carefully assess its actions and relies on external funding does not have a set way to discuss itself, its plans, or its programs. Within the time spent creating a communications plan, many of the internal and external communication issues would be addressed, for the benefit of the organization, its Partners, and beyond.

B. Divided Technology (Salesforce versus Orb)

As articulated in Chapter 2 of this report, NPN/VAN's documentation of its programs are divided between Salesforce, an online platform, and the Orb, a self-constructed database. While NPN does have an ongoing contract with Bryan Jeffrey Graham for IT/Design, work is often held up as Graham has other focuses/contracts to attend to. The process of transitioning Programs from being documented in the ORB into Salesforce has been ongoing, even dragging. It is imperative that energies be directed at finalizing the switch as the divided collection of data increases the time necessary to create accurate final reports internally and externally. It might be beneficial for NPN/VAN to engage additional contractors to expedite this process. Additionally, when the conversion is complete, all program contracts can be automated through SalesForce, decreasing the chance for human error and assuring consistency in language and timelines across programmatic activity.

C. Fully Utilizing Interns

There is a huge learning curve in grasping the inner workings of NPN/VAN and while it is beneficial to incoming staff members to have time to process the organization, everyone could benefit from a more rapid integration of new personnel. The most routine new staff member is a semester intern, each of whom are given a long educational period of one to two weeks. During this discovery time, interns interview each current staff member, review Annual Reports, and are given space to understand where they might want to spend their time at the organization. While it is unique to allow this discovery time and refreshing for an intern to be able to chart their own course, it is not the best allocation of NPN/VAN resources to engage personnel who are not actively integrated into operations promptly. NPN/VAN staff could list several initial tasks in anticipation of a new intern. While these jobs might seem menial or not overly engaging, involving the intern more immediately in staff activities and routine office life can provide a shortening of the learning time and give the intern a sense of belonging and contributing to NPN/VAN.

Additionally, interns seem to inadvertently default to reporting to Steve Bailey with no other direct supervisor. Bailey was out of the country for an extended period of time at the start of my internship and there was a general lack of clarity on who else was to assign me tasks. Having a second mentor for an intern could eliminate this issue in the future and allow for more staff to engage with interns, benefiting both parties.

D. Deficit

NPN/VAN is an economically reliant organization, as it has no product by which to bring in income. NPN/VAN is dependent upon the financial viability of other organizations,

including funders and Partners, to support its work. This is a precarious position for NPN/VAN, especially since the 2008 economic recession. Beginning in 2009, NPN/VAN's expenses began outpacing income and a structural deficit was created. The deficit caused the organization to reassess funding cycles, to assure specific monies are secured in advance of each subsidy and not offer funding solely out of habit. To note, no programs have been cancelled or decreased in amount of funding. Additionally, it is important to understand that the organization practices proper financial management and has undertaken strict measures to curb spending and bring its balance back into the black. However, as a leader in the field, NPN/VAN is often under a stricter scrutiny, especially from Funders. And in today's all the more competitive funding landscape, it is imperative that NPN/VAN be as strong a candidate as possible, including exhibiting balanced books.

III. Opportunities

A. New Space

Having a new facility provides NPN/VAN with a wide array of new opportunities from engaging new local arts and culture organizations to adding new revenue streams, which will include long-term tenant rentals, short-term desk usage, and events. The facility is unique in the New Orleans landscape, as it is a multi-purpose building providing both work space and event locations. As this is a new arena for NPN/VAN, it will require staff time and energy to bring AE 1024 to its full potential, having both meeting spaces in consistent use and all rental desks occupied. While much planning has gone into the facility, NPN/VAN must actively implement those plans and continually review their successes, making adjustments to budgets, plans, and expectations when necessary.

NPN/VAN has engaged a facility manager who is tasked with maintenance, scheduling, and administration of AE 1024. This is a large variety of areas of responsibility, with everything from assuring lightbulbs are in working order to marketing of available spaces. However, as the position is new to NPN/VAN and the building, continued additional input will be needed to assure AE 1024's oversight and appearance align with NPN/VAN's vision of the space and monetary expectations.

B. Technology

More and more companies are developing technology to utilize the internet at its full potential and, as a geographically diverse network, NPN/VAN can continue to explore options for technologically supported activities as newer technologies develop. From hosting some degree of convenings online or moving more forms from paper documents to electronically signed documents, the utilization of more electronic modes of communication and completion of documents removes a degree of human error and expedites processes. Much of this opportunity will depend on NPN/VAN's full commitment and integration of Salesforce to manage its data and utilizing technologies that align with Salesforce. To note, NPN/VAN has begun using EchoSign to electronically sign off on the Performance Residency subsidy contract and can expand on this opportunity further as more programs are integrated with Salesforce.

C. Expansion of Local Network

As one of NPN/VAN's newer programs, the Local Network is an invaluable resource for the city of New Orleans. Other organizations offer fiscal sponsorship, but the

mentorship and planning offered by NPN/VAN are unique for local arts and culture organizations. This can appeal to funders interested in engaging a new aspect of local cultural activity and, should support be secured, NPN/VAN can examine methods of offering current or new resources to the New Orleans community or expand to offer its services to additional organizations. Through simply being able to expand the roster of Local Network Partners, NPN/VAN will actively increase its contribution to the local arts and culture community. Alternatively, NPN/VAN could offer a new program, such as peer-to-peer mentorship or workshops centered around building organizational capacity or best accounting practices.

Also, it might be possible to raise awareness of the Local Network by inviting more Local Network members to engage with the national network through attending the Annual Meeting, Mid Year Meetings, or participating in other NPN/VAN activities.

IV. Threats

A. The Economy

With the economic recession of 2008, many organizations globally were negatively impacted, and NPN/VAN was no exception. Externally, its funders have often had cause to restructure or reduce their granting programs. This poses a continuing threat to NPN/VAN's financial stability as the majority of its funding is through grants from national funders. This instability moves into the Network as NPN/VAN's ability to provide funding is consistently in flux.

The economic recession caused many Partner organizations to suffer financially as well. Integral to NPN/VAN's subsidy programs is a Partner's ability to raise the balance of

required funds. The only required annual activity for each Partner is a residency, either for a performing or visual artist. Therefore, if an organization is in financial turmoil for its own operations, it becomes unable to leverage funds to complete the required NPN/VAN residency programs and thus will be in violation of its Partnership agreement with NPN/VAN. In turn, the goals of NPN/VAN become threatened and the organization itself weakens. In 2009, NPN/VAN attempted to provide economic resources to its Partnership, which resulted in a deficit on NPN/VAN's own books. NPN/VAN has taken strong measures to bring its financials into the black, but overall the financials of arts and culture organizations are still struggling and NPN/VAN must remain vigilant to assure a strong financial future.

B. Proliferation of Similar Organizations

Since NPN/VAN was founded, many other organizations have come into existence that presume to provide similar services, especially networks. There is a seemingly a network for every component of business, sorted by geography, issue focus, or profession. There are quiet a few arts and culture networks that provide subsidy and collective organization for institutions and artists, each with its own specific focus. Networks like the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture serves Latino organizations and artists, whereas the National New Play Network strives to tour new plays around the country. NPN/VAN must continually strive to differentiate itself from other arts and culture networks, distinguishing itself by not only its longevity but continued striving for best business practices.

Chapter Four: Best Practices

NPN/VAN is nationally recognized as a leader in many areas of its work and routinely receives repeat funding from funders nationwide, who recognize the organization's value and impact. The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has stated that it views its ongoing grants to NPN/VAN to be an investment in "supporting the progression of artistic work and artistic careers – from the emerging to the most mature artists, and from the initial stages of creation to production and touring of fully realized work."⁵⁰ Artists habitually cite their time working with an NPN/VAN Partner via a subsidized project as a seminal moment in their career, and many can tie one or more works' growth trajectory to their continued linkage with NPN/VAN subsidies. Art Bridgman and Myrna Packer, of Bridgman/Packer Dance, shared that, "NPN has become a major catalyst in the exponential increase of support for our work."⁵¹ Partner organizations share annually how much NPN/VAN activities allow them to connect with their constituents in new ways. For example, Jeremy Alliger, a charter member, reflected that, "NPN immediately gave me a national connection, peers I could talk to, look to and trust, and the access and ability to see work around the country and internationally."⁵² Other organizations, nationally and internationally, call on NPN/VAN for contributions towards best artist policy advocacy efforts.

The major aspects of NPN/VAN's impact are through its structural support of artists via its network of Partner organizations and monetary support through its intermediary role. Therefore, this chapter examines recognized best practices for arts and culture

⁵⁰ Sidford, 3.

⁵¹ NPN *Annual Report and Directory 25th Anniversary 2010-2011*, 43.

⁵² Levine, 9.

centered networks and intermediaries, highlighting NPN/VAN's practices in comparison with a similarly driven organization, Fractured Atlas. Many of NPN/VAN's functions fall into this web, as do many networks working in the arts and culture sector. It is valuable to relate NPN/VAN's practices against another network organization and against suggested intermediary best practices.

I. Overview of Fractured Atlas

A comparable organization to NPN/VAN is Fractured Atlas, an organization that “empowers artists, arts organizations, and other cultural sector stakeholders by eliminating practical barriers to artistic expression, so as to foster a more agile and resilient cultural ecosystem.”⁵³ In practice, Fractured Atlas runs a number of programs that facilitate member artists and arts and culture organizations access to resources typically out of reach of the individual or sole organization. Specifically, their programs are fiscals sponsorship, insurance, software for donor management and space rental, and continuing education.

Fiscal sponsors, per the National Network of Fiscal Sponsors, are “nonprofits that advance the public benefit by facilitating the development and growth of charitable, mission-driven activities.”⁵⁴ In practice this means an organization recognized by the IRS as non-profit, granted a 501(c)3 status, agrees to assume some degree of financial responsibility for “the activities of groups or individuals engaged in work that relates to the fiscal sponsor’s mission.”⁵⁵ Fractured Atlas offers the service to “to artists and arts

⁵³ “About.” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

⁵⁴ “Home.” *National Network of Fiscal Sponsors* Official Website.

⁵⁵ “About Fiscal Sponsorship.” *National Network of Fiscal Sponsors* Official Website.

organizations nationwide and in every artistic discipline.”⁵⁶ Additionally, Fractured Atlas provides educational resources and their staff will give feedback on potential fundraising materials. As Fractured Atlas serves on the Steering Committee of the National Network of Fiscal Sponsors, they are continually in national dialogue about executing fiscal sponsorship best practices.

Fractured Atlas also provides member organizations with access to various types of insurance, specified by artistic practice. As their website explains, membership totals within Fractured Atlas combine to create a much larger “purchasing power” than one individual or organization can achieve. Additionally, Fractured Atlas has “worked with some of the world's leading insurance companies to design a number of proprietary insurance programs that are specially tailored to meet [member’s] specific needs.”⁵⁷ This aspect of the network is a powerful resource as the time and expertise involved in detailing insurance plans to meet the varied needs of artists and arts organizations.

Fractured Atlas has also designed an online donor relations software, named Artful.ly. Access is free, including synchronization with other free online platforms, such as MailChimp, and incorporation with Fractured Atlas’s fiscal sponsorship. Users can opt to customize their account with additional features and adapt the platform to their specific program or organization for moderate costs.

Space is a premium resource for artists and Fractured Atlas has created, and is continually revising, SpaceFinder. SpaceFinder is a means of “increasing [the] visibility of rental options, helping artists find the space they need, and helping venues promote and

⁵⁶ “Fiscal Sponsorship.” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

⁵⁷ “Insurance.” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

rent their spaces.”⁵⁸ The most recent incarnation of SpaceFinder (entitled SpaceFinder 2.0) adds components easing the way for venues to more directly manage rentals, further driving business into SpaceFinder and increasing its dual impact on artists and space owners. SpaceFinder is live in ten cities and two states and is navigable by anyone, but posting a space requires membership within Fractured Atlas.

Fractured U. is an online continuing education program that Fractured Atlas notes as sharing a “collection of online resources we have produced and assembled to help educate and inspire artists and arts managers on issues related to the business, social, and economic context of art and culture.”⁵⁹ Interestingly, much of Fractured U. is available to the general public and is not restricted to access only by Fractured Atlas members.

Fractured Atlas offers a number of other resources to the field, from working to ease the international visa process for artists and a unique listing of special offers and discounts for its membership. Fractured Atlas also provides recognition through its Arts Entrepreneurship Awards to arts and culture workers who have “experiment[ed] and challeng[ed] conventional wisdom...develop[ing] new approaches to age-old challenges in the arts field that can serve as models and inspiration for artists everywhere.”⁶⁰

II. Arts and Culture Network Best Practices

Networks have long been understood to be a directly important component of artist’s careers. In their 2003 *Investing in Creativity* report, the Culture, Creativity and Communities Program at the Urban Institute shared, “[Networks] facilitate access to

⁵⁸ “SpaceFinder.” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

⁵⁹ “Professional Development” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

⁶⁰ “2015 Arts Entrepreneurship Awards Honorees.” *Fractured Atlas* Official Website.

sources of validation, material resources, training and professional development, and dissemination of artists' work."⁶¹ Expanding upon these ideas leads to a fuller grasp of a network's parameters.

Networks, as a collective community gathered by a central idea, are uniquely available to artists as sources of validation. Additionally, they are very necessary to artists' viability because artists are habitually marginalized. Research has shown that works of art are valued at an inextricably higher level than artists themselves.⁶² Therefore, a network provides a means to continually bring more attention to the artists themselves, versus solely their work. In action, this means awards and recognition through grants and other such funding as well as awareness through Network publicity or communication channels.

Material resources literally refers to the necessary tools for an artist to render their work. Often artists require large amounts of space, hazardous materials, or expensive equipment that are beyond the reach of an individual. Meeting others with common goals and aspirations can provide an opportunity for collaboration, not only creatively, but also with tangible tools for their craft. In action, networks can bring together persons seeking common goals.

Training and professional development are opportunities for one-time or continual education and growth. In a singularity, choosing to seek further formal education can often be cost prohibitive. Collectively, costs for formal training or, more importantly, access to knowledgeable persons can be more possible. A network can provide a common ground for persons with common interests to come together and capitalize on their leveragable

⁶¹ Jackson, 65.

⁶² Sidford, 16.

resources.

A struggle in any artist's career is dissemination of their work beyond their immediate community. Networks are modes of spreading an artist's work through awareness shared within a connected community or the physical touring of work.

Because NPN/VAN engages artists through its Partners, one can see how NPN/VAN doubles its impact of each network component listed. NPN/VAN direct subsidies, tied to an artist and their work, provides both artists and presenting organizations with validation through national recognition. With NPN/VAN subsidy taking care of a portion of artist's fees, a Partner organization can redirect funds towards material resources to create better working spaces for artists. NPN/VAN artists and Partner organizations receive unique opportunities for further education. Artists can continue the development of their work with Partners and seek additional subsidies, just as staff at Partners can seek funding for their own continued training. With its explicit emphasis on touring, NPN/VAN's network facilitates artists in the dissemination of their work.

Fractured Atlas provides validation to workers in the arts and culture sector through their annual awards. Unlike NPN/VAN, these awards go solely to individuals and not to both artists and organizations or administrators. However, Fractured Atlas provides artists more direct access to material resources, through their programs SpaceFinder and Artful.ly. Fractured Atlas also provides the field more immediate access to continuing education through Fractured U., not just its membership. Though Fractured Atlas does not specifically provide any means of disseminating an artist's work.

While it is hard to compare an organization with as vast an impact as NPN/VAN, it is interesting to note similarities, and differences, between it and similarly focused

organizations. From this analysis, one can observe areas in which NPN/VAN is exceeding Fractured Atlas as a network, and vice-versa. NPN/VAN has a stricter focus on directly connecting its subsidy efforts with artists and organizations that support their work, whereas Fractured Atlas aims to serve as a more universal resource for arts and culture workers.

III. Intermediary Best Practices

In investigating intermediaries, two ideas became very clear. Firstly, the term intermediary refers to a wide range of organizations and, despite their important role in the arts and culture funding landscape, there is very little research on these organizations. To the former, in a report for Grantmakers in the Arts examining *The Funder and the Intermediary, in Support of the Artist: A Look at Rationales, Roles, and Relationships*, Claudia Bach wrote:

“Intermediary organizations come in many shapes and sizes, reflecting the variety of organizations, structures, and services that connect to individual artists...Services provided to artists by intermediaries take many forms, from the regranting of funds to providing career development assistance or space to work. Some intermediaries provide artists with an integrated blend of monetary support and nonmonetary services. A common thread of intermediary organizations is that they connect directly to the artist...The role of the intermediary has been described as being fundamentally liminal — occupying a position on both sides of a boundary or threshold, a place

where relationships with both funders and artists must be continuously navigated with balance and grace.”⁶³

In a report for the Foundation Center’s Practice Matters series on improving philanthropy, entitled *Toward More Effective Use of Intermediaries*, Peter L. Szanton articulates the lack of official reporting on the impact of intermediaries in the arts and culture field. Per Szanton, intermediary usage has risen with “the increasing philanthropic concern with strengthening whole fields of interest...rather than only individual institutions.”⁶⁴ Also, “the tendency of newer and especially larger...foundations to staff themselves thinly and to make only large grants directly, delegating to regranteeing institutions the selection and support of smaller nonprofit,”⁶⁵ has strongly linked foundation support with a need for intermediaries.

Research directly tied to intermediary best practices can be found in the broadest scope of such organization’s function, funneling government monies further into communities such as suggested in a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives entitled *Breakthrough Performance: Ten Emerging Practices of Leading Intermediaries*. This report provides a broad scope of information on the range of social service intermediaries that work with various government organizations, but highlights the structure of all intermediaries to be “positioned between a funding entity and a beneficiary organization.”⁶⁶ It continues that intermediaries provide a variety of services “to help fulfill the strategic goals of the

⁶³ Bach, 2.

⁶⁴ Szanton, 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 5.

funder....frequently – but not always – the regranting of funds.”⁶⁷ The broad context of intermediaries from a government agency perspective is not always applicable specifically to arts and culture organizations. However, Breakthrough Performance’s points of “Designing Replicable Programs... Developing Standards....[and] Aligning an Organization”⁶⁸ are comparable aspects of both NPN/VAN and Fractured Atlas.

A. Designing Replicable Programs

Per Breakthrough Performance, “the effective intermediary can develop replicable systems and repeatable practices that enable it to assist beneficiary organizations in achieving programmatic outcomes.”⁶⁹ In the case of NPN/VAN, their programs have been repeated across their own efforts, as can be seen within their own institution of support programs for visual artists within VAN. Additionally, many newer organizations facilitate residency programs that use NPN standards as an inspiration, such as AlternateRoots. Per the AlternateRoots website, the Presenting Subsidies Program provides “fee subsidies to enable presenters in the ROOTS Region to bring ROOTS Members on the Current Artists Roster into their communities.”⁷⁰ This program has been in place for over twenty years and was inspired by NPN’s original residency subsidies. Differently, the program through AlternateROOTS is limited geographically and is tied to a roster of curated artists.

Fractured Atlas does not share direct information related to its program’s being replicated.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 15.

⁷⁰ “Presenting Subsidies Program” *AlternateROOTS* Official Website.

B. Developing Standards

Breakthrough Performance suggests that intermediaries can serve a mentoring role to the organizations they engage with fiscally. “To help nonprofit organizations improve performance and withstand scrutiny, intermediaries can develop and promulgate performance standards for nonprofit governance and management in a particular social service sector or geographic area. Standards for nonprofit performance codify the level of competence necessary to succeed at the organization’s declared endeavor.”⁷¹ NPN/VAN leads by example in continually completing organizational assessments, providing complete financial snapshots to its membership (yearly within the Annual Report and Directory), and offering mentorship services to the Local Network. Additionally, in line with the thought that “[t]he practice of Developing Standards for Nonprofit Organizations involves research, documentation, and dissemination, as well as some means of certifying that an organization adheres to the standards to complete the process,”⁷² NPN/VAN provides the same information, updated annually, in each year’s Annual Report and Directory.

Fractured Atlas replicates this idea in its own network through its Fractured U. service. This online training spreads both suggested performance standards and management ideals through continually updated resources. Also, they share their financial data directly on their website, truly offering an open book to assure they are certifiably staying on course.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 24.

⁷² *Ibid.*

C. Aligning an Organization

Breakthrough Performance articulates organizational alignment as a way of integrating an organization's high level thinking, found within its strategic plan or other long range documents, into the daily work of its departments and employees. "An organization is in alignment when each staff member has a stake in the organization's strategic goals, and knows his or her role in achieving strategic objectives."⁷³ NPN/VAN not only has weekly staff meetings, but smaller sections of staff routinely meet to discuss specific tasks and goals. This communication allows the whole organization to be integrated into conversations, keeping everyone abreast of relevant issues. Also, items such as the 990 and Board Meeting Minutes are routinely distributed throughout the staff. Fractured Atlas does not directly share if they provide their staff with such direct integration into strategic planning, but one can surmise that personnel are directly linked with one or more programmatic activity and presumably have a level of engagement and expertise with the planning of program execution.

⁷³ Ibid, 27.

Chapter Five: Recommendations

While the National Performance Network and Visual Artists Network provides invaluable leadership in intermediary and arts and culture network best practices, there are several areas that could benefit from specific attention.

I. Assuring Best Practices within AE 1024

As noted in Chapter Two of this report, NPN/VAN is at an interesting juncture in its organizational development. Taking over responsibility for a physical space is a bold move, no matter how well planned, for any organization, especially a nonprofit. Therefore, to assure NPN/VAN continues to provide leadership and serve as a best practices, it is important the NPN/VAN proceed carefully.

A. Business Practices

As NPN/VAN is aiming to utilize AE 1024 to further both its mission and expand its revenue sources, following the structure of a “mission-informed business model”⁷⁴ suggested by the Nonprofit Centers Network (NCN) could be beneficial. This model incorporates subsidized rental rates, noting free rent for individuals and organizations whose activities relate to a host organization’s mission, to the charging of market rate rents to for-profit or non-aligning organizations. NPN/VAN can structure a range of rental rates, per room and per time period, addressing various potential renter’s organizational ideals. It is interesting to note that NCN notes co-working spaces as a new source of revenue for

⁷⁴ NCN, 10

shared work spaces, so, in a way, NPN/VAN is ahead of the curve in its planning for AE 1024.

NCN touts the managing of expenses as of primary importance to a successful shared space. Specifically they share the following as key factors to track, “cost allocations [and] covering staff costs,”⁷⁵ as well as highlighting the following common mistakes: “not covering common space, not fully allocating shared services, not communicating increases, starting in the red, [and] not tracking costs.”⁷⁶ As NPN/VAN already has a practice of good accounting, integrating new budgetary aspects related to AE 1024 will not be too challenging. However, consistent monitoring related to costs of staff, shared services, and common spaces will be necessary to assure that projected budgets are aligning with actual costs. Additionally, assuring staff capacity is still matched with NPN/VAN’s programming.

B. Marketing

An aspect of AE 1024 that NPN/VAN needs to carefully consider is the ways and presentation of AE 1024 marketing materials. It is important to continually clarify and reinforce that AE 1024 is a new program of NPN/VAN, a new extension, not a continuation of an existing program. This will allow a small but important separation between NPN/VAN activities and events that occur at AE 1024. The success, or not, of an event at AE 1024 will not reflect on NPN/VAN overall, but rather on the building, space, and/or event itself.

⁷⁵ NCN, 15

⁷⁶ Ibid

II. Continued Integration of Interns

NPN/VAN strives to match capacity with its activities, maximizing its resources without overburdening itself. It seems counter to this careful organization to automatically link interns with Steve Bailey, who has served as the intern supervisor since the launch of NPN/VAN's internship program. Rather, I would recommend that other staff be selected to match the individual intern's interests within the organization. This will allow for more specified supervision, greater success in maximizing the intern's potential impact on the organization, and more immediate integration into daily activities.

Additionally, NPN/VAN could solely engage interns on a project basis. When an intern position is posted, it could share specific needs of the organization for the time period the intern will be working with NPN/VAN. Some of these projects could be annual, routine activities, such as gathering data for the Annual Report and Directory, or completing end of year reporting. Or projects could be more one time, such as crafting a marketing plan or marketing materials for AE 1024.

III. Communications

As discussed in the SWOT Analysis, NPN/VAN struggles with clear communications, both internally and externally.

A. Internal

It is important that an organization have a cohesive and organized presence in its community. This is achieved through many routes, but must start by the inner structure of the organization working together on all outward communications. Therefore, NPN/VAN

must work to assure every staff member is aware of messages distributed to and information requested from Partners. NPN/VAN could craft a communication calendar, plotting out when Partners will be reached out to down to the language used within emails. This level of awareness and internal clarity will prevent an overtaxing of Partners and confusion arising from similarly titled information.

B. External

Due to the proliferation of networks and service organizations within the arts and culture field, it is imperative that NPN/VAN continue to distinguish itself and its service programs from others. This will assure that both funders and Partners are aware of the specific issues NPN/VAN addresses and that NPN/VAN makes an impact in the field. Integral is specificity of communication regarding the issues NPN/VAN's work seeks to address and how its methods of addressing said problems are unique and effective. This includes succinct means of sharing about NPN/VAN's programs and its impact on the various communities it serves. Specifically, NPN/VAN should work to find a way to simply relay its mission and vision and values, perhaps while partnering aspects of that language with specific programs. Such as example might be: *NPN/VAN believes in partnerships that support both individual artists and companies and supports these partnerships through its Community Fund, which links artists with organization's communities, for mutual enrichment.*

III. Technology

A. Database

As a requirement of many grants and as a part of best business practices, NPN/VAN needs to routinely report the flow of received funds and their full impact, both instrumental and intrinsic. To properly and efficiently complete such reporting, NPN/VAN needs a single, comprehensive database that has the means for easy input and extraction. As was shared previously, NPN/VAN's data is currently divided between two databases (Salesforce and Orb) and the conversion of data into Salesforce is being completed slowly by a contract employee. It is imperative that NPN/VAN promptly finalize the input of all data into Salesforce. As Salesforce can be linked with other communication platforms, NPN/VAN will be able to more efficiently analyze data, modify findings by specific funders or subsidy programs. I suggest that NPN/VAN treat the conversion of all tracking to Salesforce as a top priority. Additionally, it might prove beneficial to send one or more staff members to some advanced Salesforce training to assure NPN/VAN is maximizing resources.

B. Growth

NPN/VAN is at an exciting juncture, profoundly expanding its commitment to the local New Orleans arts and culture community and engaging in a whole new arena, property management. While this growth has been a long, thoughtful process, it raises an interesting thought. Should NPN/VAN continue to grow?

The idea of expanding impact is something that all organizations routinely ponder. Yet, with such a prestigious national reputation and functioning as an economically

dependent organization, NPN/VAN must more carefully consider how, when, and even if it should expand. As there is an ever growing pressure to continually exhibit engagement and impact, NPN/VAN could easily turn to expansion of programmatic activities to respond to these ideas. However, my experiences have lead me to believe that NPN/VAN is currently quite balanced between activity and capacity. Further growth, in any arena, could easily tip scales and lead to insufficient energies directed towards sustaining ongoing efforts, possibly tarnishing NPN/VAN's reputation.

As a portion of planning, NPN/VAN should habitually look forward three to five years to allow thoughts of any expansion to be slowly and steadily integrated into operations. This could be the addition of another country to the International Program or for a separate National Program. This timeline will allow for evolutions in budgets, staffing, expectations, and the organization at large to be smooth and not solely reactive.

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Chapter Six: Conclusion

For nearly three decades, NPN/VAN has provided unwavering support to artists and the organizations that integrate the arts into their communities. Nationally and internationally recognized as an arts and culture leader, NPN/VAN continually strives to provide the maximum amount of resources to all areas of the field. From policy research and advocacy at a federal level to mentoring emerging arts organizations in New Orleans, NPN/VAN's commitment to meaningful engagement in arts practices can be seen at every level.

A highly complex organization, NPN/VAN is not instantly understood. However, even a cursory interaction with any passionate staff member or conversation with a profoundly positively impacted artist or organization will share the organization's incredible reach and level of integration with the current arts and culture world.

At the conclusion of my internship, NPN/VAN was at an interesting juncture, expanding its Local Programming in a truly profound way and adding to its organizational responsibilities through the opening of a self-managed facility. As I observed the careful planning and preparation that led up to the move into Arts Estuary 1024, I am confident that NPN/VAN will succeed in this new endeavor in the long term. This will come through refinement and revision of plans and ideas, aspects of new initiatives with which NPN/VAN is very familiar.

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Vita

The author is a native New Orleanian who obtained her B.S. in Theater Studies with concentrations in History and Religion from the University of Evansville. After working in professional theater administration for eight years in New York (with Manhattan Theater Club and Signature Theater) and Washington DC (including five seasons as the Company Manager at Arena Stage), she returned home to obtain her Masters in Arts Administration from the University of New Orleans. During her studies, she served as a graduate assistant in the University of New Orleans Arts Administration Program offices from 2013 to 2015 and worked with various local arts organizations, including French Quarter Festivals, Inc., the New Orleans Opera Association, and NPN/VAN.

Appendix One
NPN/VAN Staff as of November 2014

Operations/Administration Staff

MK Wegmann, President & CEO
mkw@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 205

Steve Bailey, Chief Operating Officer
steve@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 207

Stephanie Atkins, Resource Development Specialist
stephanie@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 202

Thérèse Wegmann, Senior Operations & Data Specialist
therese@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 208

Steffani Clemons, Administrative Assistant
sclemons@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 213

Program Staff

Stanlyn Brevé, Director of National Programs
stanlyn@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 204

Mimi Zarsky, Senior Program Specialist – Convenings
mzarsky@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 203

Alec De León, Program Specialist – Visual Artists Network & National Programs
alec@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 209

Will Bowling, Program Assistant – National Programs
will@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 212

Anna Henschel, Program Assistant – National Programs
anna@npnweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 214

Non-resident Staff

Elizabeth Doud, Program Coordinator, Performing Americas Program
edoud@nnpweb.org
305-519-6877

Kyoko Yoshida, Consultant – U.S. Japan Connection
kyoko@nnpweb.org or kyoko@usjapanctn.net
415-867-7080

Bryan Jeffery Graham, IT/Design
bryan@nnpweb.org
504-595-8008 ext 310

Arts Estuary 1024

Kathleen Welch, Facility Manager, Arts Estuary 1024
kathleen@nnpweb.org
504-595-8008

Appendix Two
NPN/VAN Board of Directors Directory as of November 2014

CHAIR: Abe Rybeck
Executive Artistic Director
The Theater Offensive
29 Elm Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
abe@theateroffensive.org
tel: 617.661.1600 fax: 617.661.1610

PRESIDENT & CEO: MK Wegmann
National Performance Network
PO Box 56698
New Orleans, LA 70156-6698
mkw@nnpweb.org
tel: 504.595.8008 fax: 504.595.8006

VICE CHAIR: Yolanda Cesta Cursach
Associate Director of Performance
Programs
Museum of Contemporary Art
220 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611
ycursach@mcachicago.org
tel: 312.397.3843 fax: 312.397.4095

TREASURER: Shannon Daut
Executive Director – Alaska State Council
on the Arts
161 Klevin Street, Suite 102
Anchorage, AK 99508
shannon.daut@gmail.com
tel: 907.269.6604 fax: 907.269.6601

SECRETARY: Meena Natarajan
Executive/Literary Director
Pangea World Theater
711 West Lake Street, Suite 102
Minneapolis, MN 55408
meena@pangeaworldtheater.org
tel: 612.822.0015 fax: 612.821.1070

AT-LARGE: Rosie Gordon-Wallace
Executive Director
Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator
3938 North Miami Avenue
Miami, FL 33127-2918
rogwall3@yahoo.com
tel: 305.573.4046 fax: 305.572.7675

Leticia Bajuyo
Associate Professor of Art
Hanover College
310 Broadway Street
Madison, TN 47250
bajuyo@me.com
tel: 812.866.7338

Vallejo Gantner
Artistic Director
Performance Space 122
150 First Avenue
New York, NY 10009
vallejo@ps122.org
tel: 212.477.5829 fax: 212.353.1315

Olga Garay-English
Principal
OMGArtsplus
600 West Avenue #46
Los Angeles, CA 90065
omgartsplus@gmail.com

Abel Lopez
Associate Producing Director
GALA Hispanic Theatre
PO Box 43209
Washington, DC 20010
abel@galatheatre.org
tel: 202.234-7174 fax: 202.332.1247

Vicki Meek (Immediate Past Chair)
Manager
South Dallas Cultural Center
3400 South Fitzhugh Avenue
Dallas, TX 75210
msart55@yahoo.com
tel: 214.939.2787 fax: 214.670.8118

Ed Noonan
Executive Director
Myrna Loy Center / Helena Presents
15 N. Ewing
Helena, MT 59601
noonaned@aol.com
tel: 406.443.0287 fax: 406.443.6620

Daveda Russell
Founder
Nyawela Consulting
3703 Edmunds Street, #217
Seattle, WA 98118
daveda@nyawela.com
tel: 253.709.6706

Michèle Steinwald
Community Engagement Consultant
The Cowles Center
528 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403
michele.steinwald@walkerart.org

Samuel Valdez
Independent Artist
1033 51st Street
San Diego, CA 92114
saamul2003@yahoo.com
tel: 619.892.3179

Shay Wafer
Executive Director
651 Arts
651 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217
swafer@651arts.org
tel: 718.636.4181 fax: 718.636.4166

John B. White, Esq.
General Counsel
Sader Power
234 Harbor Circle
New Orleans, LA 70126
John.brian.white@gmail.com
tel: 504.388.0643

Will K. Wilkins
Executive Director
Real Art Ways
56 Arbor Street
Hartford, CT 06106
wwilkins@realartways.org
tel: 860.232.1006 fax: 860.233.6691

Appendix Three
NPN/VAN Partnership Directory as of November 2014

NPN Partners

651 ARTS
651 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217

7 Stages
1105 Euclid Avenue, NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

Alverno Presents
P.O. Box 343922
Milwaukee, WI 53234

Bates Dance Festival
Pettigrew Hall
305 College St.
Lewiston, ME, 04240

Carpetbag Theatre Inc.
PO Box 3184
Knoxville, TN 37972

Carver Community Cultural Center
226 North Hackberry Street
San Antonio, TX 78202

Center for Community Arts Partnerships
at Columbia College Chicago
600 S. Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60605

Central District Forum For Arts & Ideas
PO Box 22824
Seattle, WA 98122

Contemporary Arts Center,
900 Camp Street
New Orleans, LA 70130

Contemporary Dance Theater, Inc.
1805 Larch Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45224

Cultural Odyssey
P.O. Box 156680
San Francisco, CA 94115

Dance Place
3225 8th Street NE
Washington DC 20017

Florida Dance Association
PO Box 9045
Tampa, FL 33674

Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
153 Main Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Fusebox Festival
2023 East Cesar Chavez
Austin, TX 78702

GALA Hispanic Theatre
P.O. Box 43209
Washington DC 20010

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
1300 Guadalupe Street
San Antonio, TX 78207

Hayti Heritage Center/St. Joseph's
Historic Foundation
804 Old Fayetteville Street
Durham, NC 27701

Highways, Inc.
1651 18th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90404

Intermedia Arts
2822 Lyndale Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408

John Michael Kohler Arts Center
608 New York Ave.
Sheboygan, WI 53081

Jump Start Performance Co.
108 Blue Star
San Antonio, TX 78204

Junebug Productions
P.O. Box 2331
New Orleans, LA 70176

King Arts Complex
867 Mount Vernon Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203

La Peña Cultural Center
3105 Shattuck Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94705

Links Hall
3111 North Western Avenue
Chicago, IL 60618

Living Arts of Tulsa
307 E Brady Street
Tulsa, OK 74120

Maui Arts & Cultural Center
One Cameron Way
Kahului, Maui, HI 96732

MDC Live Arts/Miami Dad College
Freedom Tower
600 Biscayne Blvd.
Sixth Floor
Miami, FL 33132

MECA/Multicultural Education and
Counseling Through the Arts
1900 Kane Street
Houston, TX 77007

Miami Light Project
PO BOX 1048
Miami, FL 33137

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
220 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Myrna Loy Center/Helena Presents
15 N. Ewing
Helena, MT 59601

New York Live Arts
219 West 19th Street
New York, NY 10011

On the Boards
100 West Roy Street
Seattle, WA 98119

Outpost Productions, Inc
PO Box 4543
Albuquerque, NM 87196

Painted Bride Art Center
230 Vine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Pangea World Theater
711 West Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Performance Space 122
67 West Street, #315
Brooklyn, NY 11222

Portland Ovations
50 Monument Sq.
2nd Floor
Portland, ME 04101

Pregones Theater
571-575 Walton Avenue
Bronx, NY 10451

REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts
Theater)
631 W. 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sandglass Theater
Box 970
Putney, VT 05346

Tigertail Productions, Inc.
842 NW 9th Court
Miami, FL 33136

Skirball Cultural Center
2701 North Sepulveda Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90049-6833

Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

South Dallas Cultural Center
3400 South Fitzhugh
Dallas, TX 75210

Wexner Center for the Arts
1871 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43210

Straz Center for the Performing Arts
1010 North W.C. MacInnes Place
Tampa, FL 33602

The Yard, Inc.
PO Box 405
Chilmark, MA 02535

Su Teatro (formerly El Centro Su Teatro)
721 Santa Fe Drive
Denver, CO 80204

Youth Speaks, Inc.
1663 Mission Street
Suite 604
San Francisco, CA 94103

The Theater Offensive
565 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

VAN Partners

516 ARTS
516 Central Ave SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Project Row Houses
P. O. Box 1011
Houston, TX 77251

Coleman Center
630 Avenue A
York, AL 36925

Real Art Ways, Inc.
56 Arbor Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator Inc.
686 NE 56 Street
Miami, FL 33137

RedLine
2350 Arapahoe Street
Denver, CO 80205

Hammonds House Museum
503 Peeples St. SW
Atlanta, GA 30310

Space One Eleven
2409 2nd Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

LACE/Los Angeles Contemporary
Exhibitions
6522 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90028

Dual Partners

Ashé Cultural Arts Center/Efforts of
Grace, Inc.
1712 O.C. Haley Blvd. #208
New Orleans, LA 70113

Asian Arts Initiative
1219 Vine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

DiverseWorks
4102 Fannin St.
Suite 200
Houston, TX 77004

Legion Arts
1103 Third St SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura
Latino Americana
510 South First Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art
(PICA)
415 SW 10th Avenue
Suite 300
Portland, OR 97205

Women & Their Work
1710 Lavaca St.
Austin, TX 78701

Appendix Four
NPN/VAN Local Network as of November 2014

The Adeline Edwards Foundation
AfricaNOLA
The Cocoon: Empowerment Youth Project
Dawn DeDeaux's Projects: Goddess Fortuna and Projects Mutants
The Distillery Artist Residency
The Front
Make Music NOLA
Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame
Mel Chin's Operation Paydirt / Fundred Dollar Bill Project
Music Inside Out with Gwen Thompkins
New Orleans Airlift
New Orleans Black Indian Alliance (NOBIA)
New Orleans Community Printshop
NOLA Mix
Pelican Bomb
Sally Heller's LINKED Project
Skin Horse Theater

Appendix Five

Drafts of Arts Estuary 1024 Marketing Flyers



What is it?

AE 1024 is a newly renovated property on Elysian Fields where community members and enterprising people, or organizations, can rent space to fit various needs. From community gatherings, programming, rehearsals, or meetings, the grounds house multiple spaces available at affordable rates, on a hourly, daily or monthly basis.

There are small offices, desk rentals and meeting space available. Growing organizations can expand by having stable administrative office space and access to meeting space to connect with constituents.

Parking

Adjacent to Arts Estuary, 10 secured parking spots are available for lease on a monthly basis. Keypad entry provides safe, 24 hour access off of Frenchman Street. Please contact rentals@nnpweb.org for availability and rates.

Events

All spaces within Arts Estuary 1024 are available for event rental, including access to parking. Please contact rentals@nnpweb.org to

discuss your event needs!

AE1024

AE1024 is a program of the National Performance Network. To learn more about NPN and our work, please visit nnpweb.org.

NPN/IVAN
1024 Elysian Fields Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70117
nnpweb.org/rentals

arts estuary 1024

A Multi Tenant Arts Facility
1024 Elysian Fields Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70117

An estuary is found where fresh and salt water intermingle, providing a fertile environment for unique and rich growth.

Draft One:
Exterior of trifold

Individual desks available

In a multi-tenant space, furnished individual desks are available for monthly use. The all inclusive rate provides 24-hour access to your personalizable space (desk, chair, lamp, lockable file cabinet) with wireless internet, phone, and printing. Additionally, one has access to a fully equipped break-room and small meeting space-added levels of comfort and professionalism that take your organization beyond your home or local coffee shop!



Two multi-use spaces



Large room

612 square feet, available seating for up to 50



Medium room

306 square feet, available seating for up to 30

These spaces are available for rental an on hourly, daily or weekly basis and are ideal for:

- Meetings
- Rehearsals
- Performances
- Other events

Seating and tables are included options and additional technical support (ex projector, screen) can be easily added.

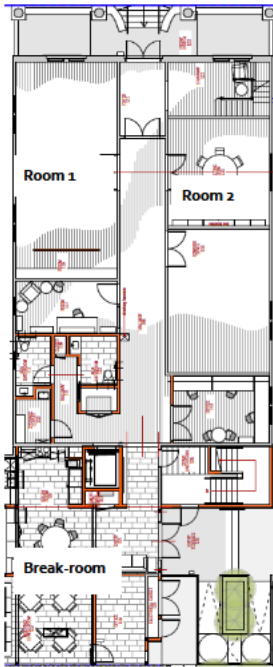
Building Amenities

- There is wireless access throughout the building and grounds.
- All rentals come with access to an extensive break room
- Various landscaped outdoor spaces are available
- Fees are inclusive of utilities and back office support (printing, paper, etc)
- The building is secure 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

Important Rental Notes

- Desks are only available on a monthly basis
- Both the large and medium rooms require a minimum of two hour rental
- There are discounts available for long term or multiple uses of the rooms.
- Renting a desk space guarantees a lower rate for room rental.

Draft One:
Interior of trifold



Parking

A secured parking lot is adjacent to Arts Estuary 1024 with spots available for lease on a monthly basis with 24 hour private entry access off of Frenchman Street. Please contact [EMAIL?](#) for availability and rates.

Events

All spaces within Arts Estuary 1024 are available for community, family or organizational events. A staff member will be on site to provide management support. Access to parking as needed. Please contact [EMAIL?](#) To discuss your event needs!

Arts Estuary 1024

1024 Elysian Fields Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70117
npnweb.org/rentals

arts estuary 1024

A Multi Tenant Arts Facility
1024 Elysian Fields Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70117

Arts

Creative activities that bring people together in their communities and gives them an opportunity to gain new insight, skills and relationships.

Estuary

A unique location, where fresh and salt waters intermingle, providing a fertile environment for rich growth.

AE1024

AE1024 is a program of the National Performance Network. To learn more about NPN and our work, please visit npnweb.org.

Final Draft:
Exterior of trifold

What is it?

With 7000 freshly renovated square feet, AE 1024 is designed to support New Orleans' arts and cultural life. Open for community members and enterprising organizations, AE 1024 provides stability and shared resources like small offices, shared desk space and multipurpose rooms. Access to these spaces allows growing organizations to increase visibility and network with like-minded individuals in a collaborative atmosphere.

A hub for creative activity, AE 1024 is a multi-space tenant facility ideal for community gatherings, programming, rehearsals, or meetings and is available at affordable rates, on an hourly, daily or monthly basis.

AE 1024 is perfect if...

Your nonprofit needs a venue for a board meeting

A community organization wants a place for ongoing or one time activities

An entrepreneur who wants one place to work in a creative, vibrant place with various organizations

Meeting Rooms

The building contains two rooms are available for rental on an hourly, daily or weekly basis and are ideal for:

- Meetings
- Rehearsals
- Programming
- Other events

Seating and tables are included. Technical support (ie projector, screen) can be easily added for an additional fee. Two hour rental minimum.

Room 1

612 square feet, available seating for up to 50

Insert Photo of room

Room 2

306 square feet, available seating for up to 30

Insert Photo of room

Shared working space

In a multi-tenant space, furnished individual desks are available for monthly use. The all-inclusive rate provides 24-hour access to your personalizable space (desk, chair, lamp, lockable file cabinet) with wireless internet, phone, and access to a printer.

For \$275/month, you can also utilize a fully equipped break-room and small meeting space. These added levels of comfort and professionalism will take your organization beyond your home or local coffee shop!

Amenities & Notes

- Wireless internet available
- Access to extensive break room
- Includes use of outdoor space
- Fees include utilities
- 24 hour/day secure access
- Discounts available for long-term rentals of spaces.
- Access to printing
- Discounts for frequent renters

Final Draft:
Interior of trifold