

ARTS INCUBATOR OF THE ROCKIES

Executive Summary

DECEMBER 15, 2011

Creativity helps humanity thrive.

This is our belief.

Building a vibrant and enterprising
Arts community throughout the West.

This is our vision.

Providing the education, resources, and support
to elevate artistic careers and organizations.

This is our mission.

Because your success is everyone's gain.

The sky's our limit.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We live in a complicated and challenging world. Art and creativity provide a bridge between differences, a platform for sharing experiences, emotions and ideas, and new ways of solving problems. Art provides solace and healing, inspiration and hope. Through music, writing, visual and performing arts, we express pain and sorrow, celebrate beauty and love, and explore spirituality, life and death. We laugh and cry together without bias. Creativity helps humanity thrive.

The Arts Incubator of the Rockies

The Arts Incubator of the Rockies (AIR) is a revolutionary partnership between Beet Street, the City of Fort Collins Cultural Services Department, and the Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Advocacy, and Performance Institute for the Arts (LEAP) at Colorado State University (CSU). There are thousands of extraordinary artists, arts organizations, and creative business people in the Intermountain West region (Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

AIR is designed to bring benefits to individuals, organizations, communities, and states throughout the Intermountain West. Many creatives choose to live and work in the west for the quality of life, the ready connection to nature, and the inspiration that thoughtful, quiet contemplation can bring. Many of the same qualities that make the west a great place to live can make it hard to make a living. Isolation, lack of access to professional development opportunities and experts, and limited markets for work holds careers back. Artists are not making living wages and certain arts organizations are on the verge of closing their doors.

In 2010, Beet Street, an arts non-profit, the City of Fort Collins Cultural Services Department, and LEAP joined together to find solutions to the problems facing the arts community in our small city in Northern Colorado. We researched professional development programs, arts and business incubators across the country, and explored new distance learning and social networking technologies. We also reviewed the challenges facing the arts communities in other states in the Intermountain West region and discovered that we had common problems to solve.

We also realized that Fort Collins has some incredible assets – strong local political and community support for the arts, creative financing from our Downtown Development Authority, a City-owned Carnegie Library Building, progressive university administrators at LEAP, and talented staff and passion. In the spirit of shared prosperity, we realized that our local assets could be leveraged to cultivate the arts in a much larger area. Economies of scale and technological advancements could enable our local investment in curriculum, distance learning classrooms, expert speakers, and networking opportunities to serve the entire region.

AIR will provide education, resources, and support to elevate our region's artists and arts organizations. AIR will also offer administrative services, professional resources, and gallery and performance spaces to students and professionals to assist them in creating, redefining, and sustaining their creative careers in the new economy.

AIR is the only full-service arts incubator in the Intermountain West and the only one in the nation associated with a major land grant university. LEAP has made an important philosophical shift in the way they plan to teach their students. LEAP students will be introduced to business skills, nonprofit arts organization practices, and career paths in the arts. AIR will provide an innovative internship program that will connect LEAP students with working professionals.

Most importantly, AIR intends to utilize new technologies and distance learning opportunities that will provide rural communities with professional development training and regional networking opportunities to strengthen the arts throughout the Intermountain West. This will give artists the skills, mentors and community connections necessary to succeed.

The Educational Programs

AIR will use new and emerging technologies to provide high-quality professional development classes, entrepreneurial and business training, and coaching opportunities to artists in Northern Colorado and rural communities in the Intermountain West. In addition, AIR will provide social networking opportunities that will strengthen the arts throughout the region.

Core programs will include:

- Workshops and classes offered on-site at the Carnegie Library Building in distance-learning classrooms, so content can be streamed throughout the Intermountain West.
- A website portal for access to educational resources including distance learning classes, collaborative projects, and social networking.
- Networking opportunities both on-line and in person.
- Coaching and mentoring opportunities for artists to learn and grow from experts.
- Regional outreach opportunities, providing facilitators throughout the region to complement on-line content.
- A comprehensive internship program that will create connections between students and working professional artists.

Additional programs will include:

- Shared professional services (accounting, legal, marketing, fundraising)
- Shared office equipment
- Access to investment capital and revolving loan funds
- Annual arts conference
- Celebrity events and master classes



The Market

The Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) produces an annual Creative Vitality Index (CVITM) and other economic data for the regional creative industry. Information provided by WESTAF about the creative economy in the states targeted by AIR clearly shows the size of the potential market that this sector occupies throughout the Intermountain West. The ten state region served by AIR has more than 280,000 active professionals in creative sectors. Nearly 93,000 of these jobs are located in Colorado (see Market Analysis, page 15).

The Financial Plan

The AIR financial plan is visionary, but is balanced throughout with assumptions that are reasonable, pragmatic, and conservative. The levels of expenditures, anticipated income, and growth are informed by other successful arts and business incubators across the country. AIR has start-up funds to begin implementing this business plan. Beet Street has approximately \$500,000 in liquid cash assets. The City of Fort Collins owns and will continue to maintain the Carnegie Library Building. In 2011, Beet Street and the City of Fort Collins received a \$100,000 Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to plan and develop a regional arts incubator.

The development cycle of AIR is structured so that only required and critical work is done up front while other work is done as funding becomes available as earned income is generated. For example, the website portal and curriculum development will be completed first. Building renovations will be completed when grants are secured and memberships and class revenues increase. This approach is designed to minimize the risk to Beet Street while ensuring that development moves briskly to ensure full program implementation in 2013.

Our forecasting shows that AIR programs are financially sustainable for the long term. While some initial cash and staffing investments will be required from Beet Street, within three years, AIR and Beet Street will be financially stable.

There is regional and national interest in AIR. Five State Arts Agencies have already committed their support: Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. The five states investing in AIR have a combined total of 175,000 professional artists and creatives actively employed. Additionally, the NEA Our Town grant has sparked interest for the program from several large national foundations and companies.

The Carnegie Library Building

The City of Fort Collins owns the Carnegie Library Building (1903) which has served the Fort Collins community as a center for culture and arts for over a century. Serving as a library until 1974, and then as a museum, the landmark building is centrally located in downtown Fort Collins. It is a registered local landmark but is not listed on the National Register of Historic

Places. The Carnegie Library Building provides extraordinary opportunities as the home of AIR: The building requires little retrofitting to house incubator activities. The building will include:

- Distance learning classrooms
- Black box theatre
- Gallery spaces
- Workshop and event spaces
- Administrative offices
- Limited menu cafe with free wi-fi service

The Regional Impact

AIR will have a direct and positive impact on the economy of the Intermountain West. The purpose of AIR is to give artists and creatives the professional business skills and personal connections that will increase their revenues and expand our western markets. AIR will build a vibrant and enterprising arts community throughout the Intermountain West by collaborating with artists, arts administrators, students, State Arts Councils, and their constituents.

AIR will play a strategic role in building arts and culture as an economic engine and help to develop the Intermountain West into a vibrant arts and culture region by:

- Increasing the capacity, growth, and professionalism of our existing arts and culture industry
- Attracting artists, arts and entertainment businesses, and arts students by offering unique educational programs attached to real-world career paths, internship opportunities, and a strong creative workforce
- Creating a regional identity that draws artists, visitors, arts funders, and patrons
- Fostering local pride that encourages participation in arts and culture programming.

AIR is committed to providing support that will increase the long-term success and sustainability of talented artists, their businesses, and organizations. This means:

- Increasing incomes at higher than average rates
- Creating jobs
- Stimulating community involvement and volunteerism in activities assisting artists
- Promoting the regions' creative economy as a key piece of any economic development strategy and an important factor in a healthy, vibrant economy

Even small increases in the number of creative jobs, average income, and money spent by arts organizations (estimated by WESTAF to be in excess of \$1 billion in 2008) will have a significant economic impact in communities throughout the Intermountain West.

In Fort Collins, AIR will help meet our City's common vision of becoming known nationally as a leader in the arts. Thousands of artists and arts supporters from across the United States will engage with AIR every year. They will take classes at the Carnegie Library Building in Fort

Collins and engage with our instructors on-line. They will attend celebrity concerts and spend weekends enjoying the local art scene, including Beet Street's Streetmosphere. The physical location of the Carnegie Library Building will inspire investment in surrounding under-utilized properties, and creative businesses and individuals will locate to Fort Collins because of the quality of life encouraged and fostered by AIR.

Most importantly, AIR will touch communities throughout the west, making our small towns and cities vibrant and livable, increasing quality of life, and providing inspiration to our next generations.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

2012

- Website Development - Winter/Spring
- Curriculum Development - Winter/Spring
- Website Launch - Summer
- Building Renovations - Summer/Fall
- Membership Launch - Fall
- 2 classes offered - Fall
- Internship Launch - Fall
- 1 Celebrity Event - Fall
- Move into Carnegie Library Building – Fall

2013

- Continued Curriculum Development
- Full year of classes offered – in person and streaming options
- 4 Internship Classes
- Regional Outreach Program Launched
- 1st Annual Arts Conference
- Evaluation of Events, Classes, and Pilot Organizer Program

2014

- Continued Curriculum Development and Modification
- Coaching Expanded
- Continued Website Modification
- Capital and Loans Launched
- Regional Outreach Program Expanded, Modified, or Cancelled
- Annual Arts Conference