



## Chicago Cultural Alliance Executive Summary

### Who we are

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** is a membership organization comprised of two types of members: **core members** are community-based ethnic museums and cultural centers; and **partner institutions** include large museums, universities, libraries, public schools and governmental agencies. The Alliance also has **associates**, non-member organizations and individuals who may participate in an Alliance program or project.

Together, the twenty **core members** that co-founded the Alliance have an annual budget of about \$5 million and represent cultural and ethnic communities whose populations range from 3,000 to 3 million in the Chicago area. Core members provide leadership in their communities by offering cultural and educational programs, assistance to immigrants and youth, advocacy and gathering space. In addition, they facilitate unity and communication both within and between communities.

### Our Vision

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** uses the strength of its constituents' *first voice* to make a regional and national impact on cultural and civic policy in order to effect social change. The Alliance promotes cultural understanding and provides invaluable resources for government, museums, libraries, universities, businesses and other educational and cultural institutions.

### Our Mission

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** is a consortium of Chicago-area ethnic museums and cultural centers whose mission is to effect social change and public understanding of cultural diversity through first voice perspectives. The Alliance increases the visibility and impact of Chicago's ethnic assets by leveraging partnerships between member organizations and major institutions. The Alliance assures the long-term efficacy of its public education, marketing, preservation and social service programs by providing organizational development assistance to its core members.

## What we do

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** addresses the barriers to forming and maintaining partnership between core members and large institutions. As a sustainable vehicle for collaboration the Alliance maintains ongoing relationships with core members and partner institutions and provides valuable services, programs and partnerships that strengthen the core members' infrastructure. Through the Alliance, partner institutions can readily access Chicago's diverse communities.

The Alliance helps to build healthier and stronger ethnic museums and cultural centers and increases their capacity to fulfill their unique missions and effect social change. The Alliance lowers the cost of doing business for partners and core members alike, and increases access to diverse cultural perspectives.

Individually, core member organizations may have limited capacity- but together they can make a significant impact on regional and national policy, create a citywide resource for cultural tourism, leverage collective assets and resources, and assert their first voice perspectives in shaping cultural and civic policy.

## What we learned

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** conducted a needs/assets survey of core members to inform the development process. We learned that core members hope to fulfill the following needs by participating in the Alliance:

- Expanding audiences, visibility, and access to funding
- Gaining access to technical support, professional development, and networking opportunities
- Taking advantage of economies of scale in purchasing commodities and services
- Forming partnerships with Chicago Public Schools to impact curriculum

Core members provide partner institutions and one another with the following assets:

- Commitment
- Program content and pedagogy
- Access to audiences
- Access to a diverse array of organizations and institutions
- Experience (including technical knowledge)
- Community-based space

## What we plan to do

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance's** business plan provides a structure and framework to move the Alliance forward, and to build sustainable and reciprocal partnerships.

At the heart of the business plan are the programs and projects the Alliance will undertake, and the management structure that will be put in place to sustain the collaborative partnerships. In this plan, we address the program and management objectives in separate sections. For each objective we first describe the program area and its rationale, followed by three-year goals to give the reader a window into where we are headed with our planning. Then we prioritized within those three year goals to highlight what we will tackle first, setting these as one year objectives. Finally, we described desirable outcomes (quantifiable indicators that goals and objectives are being achieved in the one-year time frame).

**Programs and Projects** define what the Alliance does. Over the next few years, the Alliance will work to develop programs and projects in fulfillment of its mission:

**1. Building Capacity** – to develop the Alliance as a sustainable organization and build the capacity of core member organizations to participate in collaborative programs and projects.

- Core Members' Organizational Development – training, leveraging resources, fundraising
- Administrative/Centrally Coordinated Services – insurance, web services
- Marketing, Visibility, and PR – joint marketing, events calendar, website, and PR capacity building

**2. Collaborating on Programs and Projects** – to match needs with assets and create opportunities to impact social change. In this area, the Alliance has chosen to begin with public education and then develop its advocacy and public policy and other collaborative program opportunities.

- Public Education
  - a. Youth Program – modeled after the “Mix in' it Up” presentation, this arts-based program will help youth from core member communities to address identity issues. Performances and exhibits will facilitate broader public dialogue about race, ethnicity and identity and open discussions to deepen cultural understanding.
  - b. *Cultural Connections* Program – Building and expanding upon the successful program between core members and The Field Museum. This partnership is the origin of the Alliance.
- Advocacy and Public Policy
- Other Collaborative Programs

- a. **Alliance Sponsored Initiatives** –collaborative programs that the Alliance initiates and funds such as the proposed youth program
- b. **Partner Sponsored Initiatives** –collaborative projects and programs are initiated by partner institutions and involve collaboration with two or more core members.

**Management Priorities** serve to guide the development and growth of the Alliance in the following management categories:

- a. Board governance
- b. Income generation
- c. Financial management
- d. Staffing and structure
- e. Marketing and communications
- f. Future planning

These categories are borrowed from the SmartScope management assessment tool developed by the Arts & Business Council of Chicago, as is the “goals, objectives, outcomes” framework. Organizing our business plan according to this framework allows it to serve as an ongoing planning tool and reference for evaluation.

## **How we got here**

The **Chicago Cultural Alliance** was born out of the partnerships developed through the *Cultural Connections* (CC) Program of The Field Museum’s Center for Cultural Understanding and Change. The partners recognized the significance of their relationships and the infrastructure developed by The Field Museum, and the value that they create together in the marketplace. With a planning grant from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and additional support from Chase Bank, the CC partners embarked on the development of the Alliance.

The first step in the development of the Alliance was to interview stakeholders in the city of Chicago to determine the feasibility of this endeavor. This phase was guided by Thinkinc between November 2005 and June 2006.

In June 2006, the Alliance Steering Committee hired Amdur Spitz & Associates, Inc. to guide them through phases II and III, which include governance development, business and program planning, marketing and positioning, board development and fundraising.

From the beginning, the Alliance has recognized the demands and complexities of collaboration and the challenges it faces in working to transform power dynamics related to organizational size

and resources, without the risk of falling into an adversarial approach. The Alliance has addressed this issue using three strategies: a carefully inclusive planning process; a firm foundation of data gathered through assessment; and a commitment to distributed leadership.

An eight-member Steering Committee—representing six core member organizations and two partner institutions—met with Amdur Spitz twice a month for a full year. The evolving plan was presented to the core members every few months, to keep stakeholders informed and solicit their input. Finally, the Alliance developed strategies, from joint decision-making to collaborative dialogue, in order to ensure distributed leadership among stakeholders.