



Theatre Bay Area

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015

“The power of theatre is not being felt in the Bay Area in ways we believe it could. Far too many people and communities in our region are being left out. In this strategic plan, we describe how we intend to change that.”

theatre
BAY AREA

*Our first
theory of change*

*A set of **bold**
business decisions*

*Metrics to gauge
our progress*

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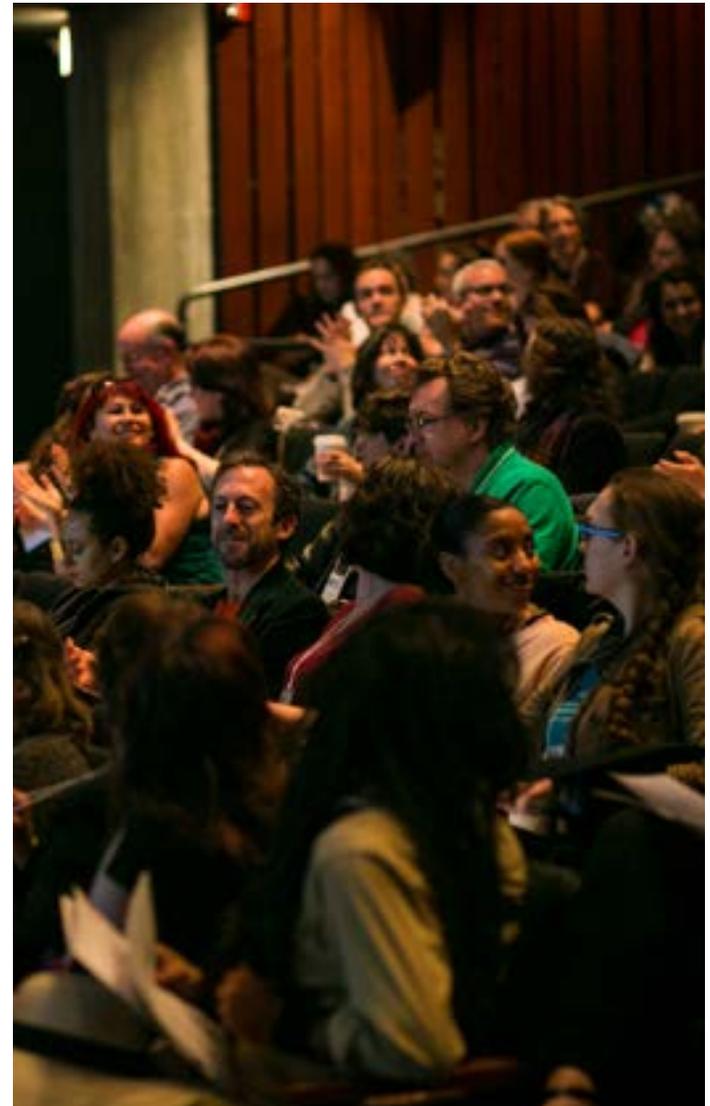
WELCOME

Welcome to Theatre Bay Area's strategic plan and a look at the organization and the Bay Area we intend—with your help—to build.

Behind this document and the whole of our work lies a firm conviction that theatre and all the arts are an essential public good, critical to a truly prosperous and democratic society, and an unparalleled source of personal enrichment and growth.

Through this planning process, we came to articulate a belief in what we call “the particular power of theatre.” This is not to say that theatre is better than the other arts, but that it moves individuals and communities in distinct and impactful ways. Theatre, with its focus on human beings, demonstrably inspires tolerance and understanding. It creates, as one of our company members calls it, an “empathy gym.” Theatre opens us up to the world, creating a link to those around us, and builds a bridge to unknown or forgotten parts of ourselves. All the while, it prompts us to laugh, cry or leap up to change our world.

This plan has as its foundation a theory of change which itself is based upon a problem statement, the big thing we want our work to help change in the world: that the power of theatre is not being felt in the Bay Area in ways we believe it could. Far too many people and communities in



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 Annual Conference. Photo: Cheshire Isaacs

our region are being left out. In this strategic plan, we describe how we intend to change that.

We knew that to make the change we wanted, we would have to change ourselves. Throughout the strategic planning process, we learned a great deal about ourselves as an organization, our artistic community and the larger region around us.

We closely analyzed our programs and our way of working. We fully engaged board members and staff in this process of self-examination and envisioning the future. We consulted with our standing advisory groups made up of representatives from our membership, the Theatre Services and Individual Services Committees. We set out on an extensive “listening tour” that took us to theatre-makers all over the region, and we followed these conversations with surveys sent to literally tens of thousands of makers and goers all around the Bay Area. What we heard is at the heart of this plan.

Throughout this process, we have been led and inspired by an outstanding team of consultants from our nonprofit colleagues at CompassPoint. We have been supported in this work through the generosity of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

We have come out of this process with a profound sense of clarity and purpose that has reinvigorated the organization's staff, board and volunteers. We hope our excitement over the possibility and importance of the work ahead will inspire you—theatre-makers, goers and supporters—to join us in creating a Bay Area where every individual and every community experiences fully “the particular power of theatre.”

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Erickson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Erickson

Executive Director

on behalf of the board, staff and membership of Theatre Bay Area

OUR PROCESS

Over a yearlong process, the staff and board worked with the CompassPoint consulting team on an iterative set of strategic explorations and decision-making efforts. These included:

- CompassPoint's matrix map tool for assessing the impact and financial result of each core program line
- An eight-session listening tour to the field across the Bay Area
- Survey results from 500 theatre-makers
- Survey results from more than 400 theatre-goers
- A deep-dive review of our communications program and membership structure
- Development of a theory of change*
- Development of metrics to gauge our progress

*What is a theory of change?

A theory of change is a conceptual linkage between:

- The problem an organization exists to help solve
- The people and systems on whom it will focus its efforts
- The changes (or outcomes) it anticipates if it executes its strategies well
- The strategies—or distinctive, cross-cutting approaches it takes to its work—to contribute to the anticipated changes
- The values intrinsic to the organization that manifest in all of its work

The theory of change is a one-page strategic framework that commits an organization not to specific programs, which should come and go over time to remain relevant, but to specific impacts. Every word has been selected with intention to convey what matters most to the staff, board and community stakeholders of Theatre Bay Area.

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY

Our planning process was informed by extensive listening efforts. Through both in-person sessions and e-surveys, we asked current and lapsed Theatre Bay Area members, theatre-makers generally, and theatre-goers for their perspectives on early versions of our theory of change, as well as on their preferences and behaviors—information that is essential to our business modeling efforts.

We learned an enormous amount through these listening efforts; below are data highlights that directly informed our final theory of change and the related programmatic and structural shifts that are underway as a result of this planning process.

Some key findings include:

From Member Listening Tour (100 participants), Theatre Bay Area members are looking for the organization to:

- Serve as a platform for members' collaboration with one another: sharing resources like sets and costumes, space availability, problem-solving and mentorship opportunities. Look to “sharing economy” ideals.
- Create a more robust, real-time calendar and database functionality for actors, auditions, performances, openings a year in advance, etc.
- Connect individuals and companies to donors, investors and patrons, and broker these matches.
- Foster a new audience “love affair” with the theatre. Consider a Theatre Bay Area membership level for audiences.
- Serve as the “trend Czar”—providing research on theatre business trends, market analysis and our economic contribution.
- Conduct political advocacy for the arts.
- Remove the “pay wall” to membership and resources to meet today's expectations about what people pay for.

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY *continued*

From Theatre-Makers Survey (499 responses):

- Theatre Bay Area is the most important source of audition information among Bay Area actors.
- Theatre Bay Area is the most frequently used audition and job posting site for Bay Area theatre directors.
- 83% of theatre-makers read journalism about theatre on a regular basis.
- 88% of theatre-makers use social media on a regular basis, especially Facebook, to stay in touch with the theatre community.
- Only 32% of theatre-makers say there is a theatre-related website that they “really love,” with Theatre Bay Area, HowlRound, Playbill, and Bitter Gertrude the four most commonly named.
- 52% of theatre-makers have attended a theatre-related class, seminar or conference in the last 12 months.
- 70% of theatre-makers say they need help in advancing their theatre careers.
- Financial support and mentorship are the two most frequently named kinds of support theatre-makers say they need.
- The five most frequently read elements of Theatre Bay Area Magazine are: Features, Auditions, Season Preview, Job Bank, and “The Business of Show Biz.”



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 Annual Conference. Photo: Cheshire Isaacs

LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITY *continued*

From Theatre-Goers Survey (410 responses):

- Subscribers to the Theatregoer (a weekly audience-targeted Theatre Bay Area newsletter featuring discount offers) are very active and passionate theatre audience members:
 - o 66% say theatre is their favorite art form
 - o 54% see more than eight shows a year
 - o 38% see more than 12 shows a year
- Subscribers have seen theatre at an incredibly wide range of Bay Area venues and companies. In addition to the eight we asked about, people listed more than 150 other companies and presenters.
 - Subscribers are very price-sensitive: 72% say the greatest barrier to seeing more theatre is the cost of tickets.
 - Despite being very engaged theatre-goers, 30% say that a major barrier to their attendance at more theatre—and for inviting other people to attend with them—is “awareness of what’s playing that they and their friends/family will like.”
 - 97% describe themselves as interested or very interested in receiving a weekly offering that includes listings, access to free tickets and interviews with theatre-makers.
 - Only 8% said they would be willing to pay a small fee for the product above; 39% said they would “possibly” pay.



Naatak's Amavasya. Photo: Ashima Yadav

FOCUS OF CHANGE

Theatre makers and theatre goers—both current and potential.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Bay Area is home to a theatre community of extraordinary breadth, depth and vibrancy, and yet, theatre is largely invisible for most people of our region; this deprives theatre makers of resources and recognition, and deprives communities and individuals of the particular power of theatre to enrich lives and create new opportunities for compassion and understanding.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

Serving as a platform for collaboration and mutual support among theatre makers.

Closing critical information and resource gaps for makers and goers.

Informing and furthering the local and national conversation about theatre.

Investing in the success of individual theatre makers and companies.

Promoting achievement in theatre making.

Forging partnerships to magnify impact.

Acting for the good of the entire Bay Area theatre ecosystem.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

More people, both makers and goers, more closely reflecting the full diversity of the Bay Area, experience the particular power of theatre.

Bay Area theatre makers are better equipped for and have better access to a full range of artistic and organizational opportunities.

The Bay Area theatre community has a high profile locally and nationally.

Bay Area theatre makers, artists, companies, and the region's theatre community as a whole, are recognized for artistic achievement.

Public and private funders direct more resources to the Bay Area theatre community.

Theatre makers continue to benefit from a collegial and vibrant theatre community.

META CHANGE

Theatre plays an integral role in bettering individual lives and every community in the Bay Area.

Values

Passion for theatre and theatre making

Communitarianism—the link between us as individuals and our community

Collaborative problem solving

Responsiveness to our community

SEVEN CORE STRATEGIES

We define organizational strategies as the distinctive, cross-cutting approaches that an organization takes to its work. Every program activates one or more core strategies. When strategies are activated well, they enable Theatre Bay Area to make meaningful contributions to the anticipated changes and meta change outlined on the theory of change. Consistently well-activated strategies also foster Theatre Bay Area's brand; stakeholders can expect Theatre Bay Area to show up in these seven ways on a consistent basis.

1. Serving as a platform for collaboration and mutual support among theatre-makers.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship building Our membership Standing advisory groups Successful in-person convenings Communications channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved digital platform Facilitating online resource sharing Drawing more voices into our communications channels

2. Closing critical information and resource gaps for theatre-makers and goers.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are “in the know” 40-year journalism history Audition and Job listings and Talent Bank What's Playing show listings Regranting and training resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitioning fully from print to online journalism and communications Active scanning for critical gaps to close; nonredundancy with other sources Better internal collaboration across programs Defining the audience information gap

SEVEN CORE STRATEGIES *continued*

3. Informing and furthering the local and national conversations about theatre.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Capacity to investigate/journalism · Our seat at the table nationally · Intrinsic Impact research · Triple Play program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Balancing our efforts · Strategic selection of issues and projects · Bringing the national conversation “home” · Strengthening conferences and convenings

4. Investing in the success of individual theatre-makers and companies.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Responsiveness and “handholding” · ATLAS · Regranting · TBA Awards Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focused, proactive support, e.g., to young artists of color · Sharing deep work back with the larger field · Storybanking and evaluation of results

5. Promoting achievement in theatre making.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · TBA Awards Program · ATLAS/Titan Awards · Communications/Artist Profiles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fostering peer review and discussion · Supporting the field in candid discussion of excellence

SEVEN CORE STRATEGIES *continued*

6. Forging partnerships to magnify impact.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Fundamental to who we are· Membership network· Advocacy across the arts· Bay Area Performing Arts Spaces (BAPAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Developing for-profit partnerships for innovation and technology· New partnerships around audience engagement, e.g., SF Travel and Tourism

7. Acting for the good of the entire Bay Area theatre ecosystem.

EXISTING STRENGTHS	LEARNING EDGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· The ethos of our membership over many years· Advocacy capacity and track record· Diversity of our constituency: theatre-makers, companies of all kinds, goers, funders, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Increasing efforts for audiences· Responding to our geographic diversity· Managing our bandwidth and saying “no”· Sharing toolkits and best practices so that our constituents aren't reinventing the wheel

A SET OF BOLD BUSINESS DECISIONS

With the theory of change as our roadmap, Theatre Bay Area leadership has made a set of bold decisions to strengthen the organization's impact and financial health. At their core, these decisions are about better aligning Theatre Bay Area's human and financial resources to the impacts to which it publicly commits in the theory of change.



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 Annual Conference. Photo: Cheshire Isaacs

1. DISCONTINUE PRINTED *THEATRE BAY AREA* MAGAZINE

This planning process included much honest reflection on the role of communications in our work, the distinctions between communications and journalism and the realities of online content. The expense and collective energy needed to produce a printed, bimonthly magazine had become untenable and, we believe, unnecessary to achieving our intended impacts.

NOTE: For a long time, a Theatre Bay Area membership has been associated with receiving a printed magazine, so this decision ties to our decisions about the membership program as well.



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 Annual Conference. Photo: Cheshire Isaacs

2. A SMALLER, HIGHER-PAID PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Through both attrition and separations initiated during this planning process, Theatre Bay Area has cut FTE and plans to improve compensation over the next several years to ensure that it can attract the talent needed to serve theatre-makers and goers effectively.

3. REVISE OUR MEMBERSHIP MODEL

Like all membership organizations, Theatre Bay Area has had to consider the evolving value proposition of membership. With the democratization of content, in particular, we heard during our listening efforts that what people expect to pay for is changing. Moreover, given our new theory of change, we had to consider the relationship between membership and audience engagement. Company memberships are as strong as ever and have a clearer value proposition, including the willingness of larger companies to pay in for the benefit of all.

With respect to individual membership, the emergent thinking is:

	Free Membership	Basic Membership	Enhanced Membership/ Theatre-Lover
Theatre-Makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive <i>The Insider</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talent Bank General Auditions Awards adjudication Pushed audition/job notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comp tickets Discount on theatre tickets Monthly “What’s Playing” listing
Theatre-Goers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive <i>The Theatregoer</i> 		

4. PURSUE AN EARNED-INCOME AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT PRODUCT

Our theory of change places a new emphasis on engaging audiences. We recognize that what we are currently doing on this front is good, but not game-changing. We are exploring a truly paradigm-changing, technology-based platform that will be the Uber or Airbnb of the performing arts. To this end, we have recruited new board members based on their technology networks and expertise and created a board committee dedicated to this effort. Our current thinking is that this may be a partnership with a for-profit entity, perhaps even one we own. This is a huge vision, but we are, in fact, already moving on it.



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 fundraiser. Photo: Jim Norrena

BUSINESS MODEL ASSUMPTIONS

We define the nonprofit business model as the particular set of programs and revenue strategies employed to achieve an organization's theory of change in a financially viable way.

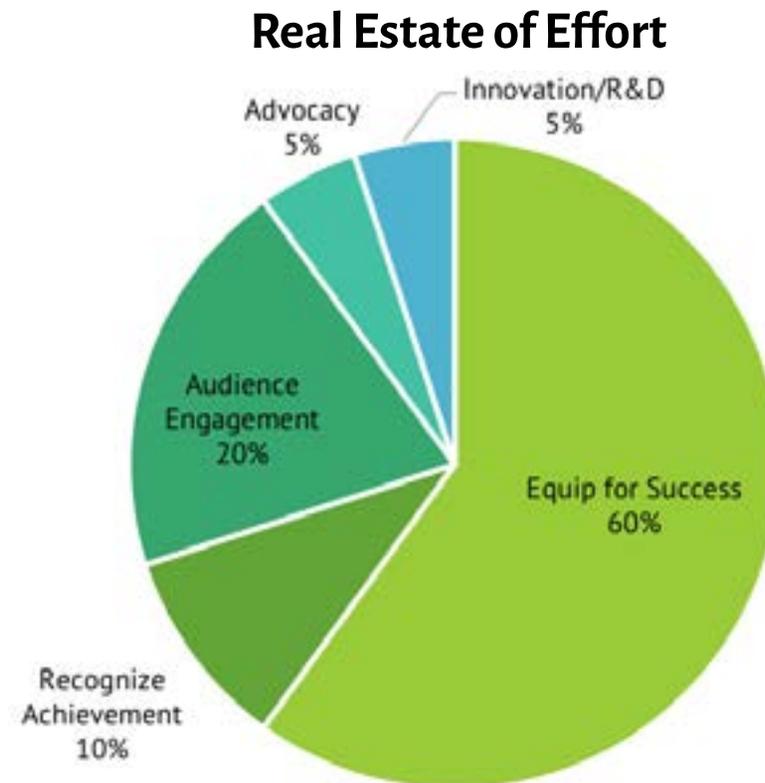
A key shift in Theatre Bay Area's business model thinking is to organize our cost structure around five impact clusters, rather than around a myriad of individual projects, as had been the case coming into this process. We used the notion of our “real estate of effort” to rethink how we deploy resources more optimally in service of our anticipated changes and meta change.

Program/Impact Clusters:

- Equipping for success
- Recognizing achievement
- Increasing audience engagement
- Building sector resources (advocacy)
- Experimenting for the future (R&D)

Fundraising Programs:

- Institutional fundraising remains central
- Individual fundraising is event-focused
- Board giving increases



BUSINESS MODEL ASSUMPTIONS *continued*

Income and Expense Assumptions

Theatre Bay Area will continue to have a strong mix of earned and contributed income, while 80% of its expenses will be directed to personnel, direct program expenses and innovation. The annual budget assumption is \$1.2 million for year one.

Contributed Income Types:

- Institutions
- Corporate sponsorship
- Individual and board giving
- In-kind donations

Earned Income Types:

- Memberships
- Fees-for-service
- Events
- Publications
- Royalties

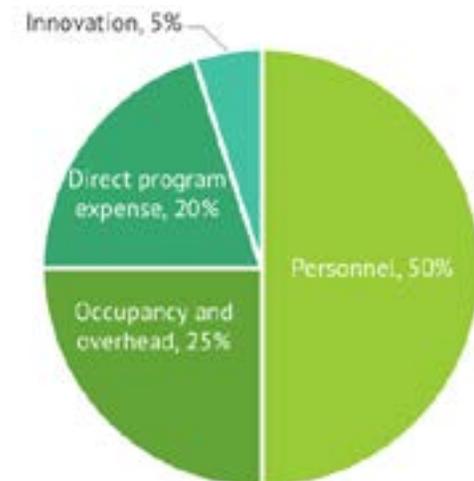
Expense Types:

- Personnel
- Direct program expenses
- Occupancy and overhead
- Innovation

Income Assumptions



Expense Assumptions



METRICS TO GAUGE OUR PROGRESS

Part of the intent of creating our first theory of change is to establish meaningful outcomes against which we can gauge our progress. We recognize that some of our aspirations are bigger than any one organization can achieve, and therefore we not only will be using our own program results to measure progress, but also looking to indicators of progress from other sources including the Cultural Database, SF Travel, and Theatre Facts. We look forward to sharing these results with our community on an annual basis.

Equipping for Success:

- Total annual participation in Theatre Bay Area educational and network-building programs
- Fill rate of educational programs, e.g., ATLAS and Theatre Bay Area Conference
- Racial, ethnic, gender and geographic diversity of program participants
- Utilization of our platform by actors and directors
- Use rates of the audience database

Recognizing Achievement:

- Theatre Bay Area alums and members recognized for excellence
- Bay Area work covered in national press
- Number of eligible shows participating in the TBA Awards program
- Press coverage of the TBA Awards program



Theatre Bay Area's 2015 fundraiser. Photo: Jim Norrena

METRICS TO GAUGE OUR PROGRESS *continued*

Increasing Audience Engagement:

- Total annual Bay Area audience size
- Number of Theatre Bay Area audience memberships
- Number of What's Playing click-throughs
- SF Travel data on tourists' theatregoing intent

Advocacy:

- Total public dollars directed to arts/theatre
- Total private dollars directed to arts/theatre

Our sustainability:

- Ratio of earned to contributed income
- Comparison to market for compensation of key leadership roles

OUR ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

"The new normal for annual general fund spending on arts grants became about \$1.1 million, the minimum needed to draw a matching amount from the feds. That was down from a peak of about \$30 million in the early 2000s. The lingering cuts have left California chronically at or near the bottom in per-capita state arts grant funding, spending just a fraction of the national average of \$1.09 cited by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies."

"Perhaps the best news for California's arts advocates is that \$8.2 million will become a new floor for annual arts spending from the general fund—more than five times the previous base funding of \$1.1 million."

-L.A. Times, June 17, 2015.