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Provancher: Reengage corporations, individuals to solve Charlotte arts funding shortfalls

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PUBLISHED IN: ARTS ALIVE

Former Arts & Science Council president Scott Provancher on Monday encouraged a task force studying arts funding problems to challenge traditional notions of what makes successful giving campaigns.

Provancher, who recently left the ASC to form provancher + associates consulting firm, offered two solutions for Charlotte:

- A private fundraising campaign that encourages corporate reengagement and individual giving directly to cultural organizations.
- A workplace strategy that rallies the entire community behind giving to arts, culture, health and education programs.

“We need to reengage the generosity of the workforce in this community that I know is there,” he said.

Donors in ASC workplace giving campaigns dropped more than 41 percent from 2007 to 2011, Provancher told the Cultural Life Task Force.

“We need to more effectively use social media and other available tools create to greater opportunities of engagement for both workplace and today’s individual donors,” said Provancher. “People in our community are more inclined to support causes and solve problems as opposed to build buildings. We need to develop new ways to ask for support.”

The task force is studying the arts and cultural sector in the Charlotte region and in early 2014 is to recommend how to address shortfalls in current and future program funding.

The group’s co-chair, Pat Riley of Allen Tate Co., cautioned the group when they last met that fact finding would be an important component of their mission. He said the group should keep in check their “immediate bias for action” and hold off proposing potential courses of action until they have assessed the factors that have led to the challenges being faced.

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Riley noted with some irony that it wasn't that many years ago that Charlotte's model of unified campaigns in the workplace was heralded. Allied campaigns are where large charitable institutions such as United Way and ASC coordinate their giving campaigns with companies. "Many came to Charlotte to see how we did it and learn from our many years of success," said Riley who acknowledged new models would indeed be necessary going forward.

Provancher said that both corporate and individual giving to the arts sector declined from \$61 million in 2007 to \$36 million in 2012.

"Global platforms for giving need to be part of effective workplace campaigns as more and more of our employers have employees outside of Charlotte," noted Provancher. "We need also to reframe the conversation to meet donors where they live and use available social media tools to enthuse and generate excitement and passion around particular campaigns. At the end of the day we have to remember to ask."

Staff writer Michael Weinstein contributed



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