

Sustaining ImagineARTS at South Shore Conservatory

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the needs of a music education program in relation to an institution's mission and resources.
- Recognize the structure and growth model of an endowment fund.
- Identify the benefits and drawbacks associated with establishing an endowment fund as a means to create sustainability.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of seeking foundation funding as a means to create sustainability.
- Develop a recommendation for sustaining operations of an arts program based on an institution's structure, resources, and needs.

Topics For Discussion

This case centers on options to sustain the operations of South Shore Conservatory's successful music education program ImagineARTS, in an effort to address its long-term financial health. On one hand, the organization is considering an endowment campaign that would secure funding for annual expenses of its program servicing Brockton, Massachusetts. On the other hand, the development team could devote new personnel to grant writing to achieve a similar end through foundations. The conservatory leadership looks to allocate its resources most effectively to keep ImagineARTS funded and to allow for other programmatic growth. Several key issues are raised in the case that merit discussion. The reader is tasked with analyzing two scenarios and making a recommendation, with rationale, to President Czerny.

Endowment

- The endowment campaign is a viable way to fund ImagineARTS in perpetuity, but concerns outlined in the case surround restricting such large amounts of funding. Non-profits, especially large universities, are sometimes criticized for locking up too much funding in endowments and not providing more direct and immediate support to its constituents. Given that SSC is only servicing 45% of kindergarten classes in Brockton, is it more important for the organization to increase their penetration to 100% or to create an endowment fund that services the current roster of schools? How can the organization prioritize the future when they can only attend to the needs of the

enlisted Brockton schools at present? How can SSC balance programmatic growth with the prospect of an endowment campaign?

- In 2013, SSC launched a 5K road-race fundraising event, the “Rhythm Run.” In its first year, the race was launched to raise money for a new playground at the SSC Hingham campus. Held at the Hingham campus itself, the event was an overwhelming success and exceeded the fundraising goal. A second “Rhythm Run” was organized at the SSC Hingham campus in 2015. This time, the conservatory shined a light on the ImagineARTS program to benefit from the proceeds. In this case, the conservatory struggled to meet its fundraising goal for its nascent program. Specifically, there was limited investment from race sponsors, which provide the bulk of funding for the event. Whereas the playground allowed donors to support something that would have an immediate and tangible impact on the conservatory, ImagineARTS seems to have kept donors on the sidelines, perhaps because the target program didn’t occur at the conservatory or serve the Hingham community directly. The Rhythm Run experience is still fresh in many development team members’ minds, which makes them hesitant to commit to an endowment campaign for the ImagineARTS program.
 - How can SSC create buy-in from donors and get them excited about supporting the ImagineARTS cause?
 - What is the narrative that SSC should use to create investment and interest from potential endowment supporters?
 - In an endowment campaign for ImagineARTS, the development team would contact SSC’s annual fund donors for support. What other groups outside of annual fund donors could be contacted to contribute to ImagineARTS program?

Foundations

The funding success for ImagineARTS that SSC has found through foundations suggests that there is untapped potential to secure larger grants and even transformational awards. The underlying question associated with this scenario concerns the likelihood of grants providing a steady stream of viable operational support for ImagineARTS. How could the development team or the new grant writer approach the grant process, knowing that the goal is to obtain multiple grants on a sustained basis? What can SSC do to mitigate the potential uncertainty surrounding foundation support? What funding priorities should SSC seek in grantmaking organizations? What benefits does foundation support have on an institution as a whole? In what ways could securing additional grant funding strengthen SSC? What impact could the pursuit of grant funding have on the programmatic direction and future of ImagineARTS?

Alternatives to the Models

While this case asks the reader to evaluate two discrete funding models that South Shore Conservatory is considering and to recommend one to the leadership team, students should consider alternative models or a hybrid of the models.

- Could an endowment be created to fund the administrative costs of the program and foundations engaged to fund program expenses and artist-specialist salaries? At what point is an endowment campaign too small or too unattractive of an ask?
- Should the conservatory consider franchising the ImagineARTS curriculum to other community music schools across the country and use the revenue to fund the program in Brockton? What risks are associated with this model?
- Should SSC create a fee-for-service model of ImagineARTS and make it available to other school districts in the region? What are the implications, risks, and benefits of using the revenue from a fee-for-service ImagineARTS in certain communities to fund the tuition-free version in Brockton?