

# VOICES OF OMAHA

Charting Impact Report \* Prepared 07.02.2013

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This report represents VOICES OF OMAHA's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of [BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#), [GuideStar USA Inc](#), and [Independent Sector](#). Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

## VOICES OF OMAHA

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[www.voicesofomaha.org](http://www.voicesofomaha.org)

### Mission:

Voices of Omaha (VOO) is a chorus of volunteer singers who present Handel's oratorio Messiah each fall in a performance that is open to the public as a free gift to the community.

- CEO Reviewed
- Board Chair Reviewed
- Not yet stakeholder reviewed

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## 1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

Voices of Omaha (VOO), a 155-voice volunteer community chorus, is growing its capacity to accomplish gala performances of Handel's "Messiah" in fall 2018, the organization's 50th anniversary. The performances with full symphony orchestra, soloists, and chorus of more than 300 will be presented without admission charge as a gift to the community.

VOO is committed to increasing the ethnic diversity and lowering the median age of its chorus and audiences by maintaining relevance in the present, and nurturing young musicians to assure a chorus and audience in the future. Strategic community alliances and realistic age and diversity goals using national averages as a baseline for measurement are moving the organization toward its 2018 diversity, age, and budgetary goals.

With the current dedicated and ethnically diverse Board of Directors and artistic leadership experienced in non-profit arts management, the 50th anniversary project goal is attainable and will leave the organization with the capacity to carry forward with annual, admission-free "Messiah" performances for another 50 years.

## 2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

Community support for the 2018 gala concert project goal is being cultivated through the following strategies:

- (1) **IMAGE** - new logo, website, social media, organizational memberships (Chorus America, Nebraskans for the Arts, Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce), all communicating a credible and upwardly mobile organization;
- (2) **ETHNIC DIVERSITY** increase – in partnership with target community leaders, increasing the ethnic diversity mix of chorus and audiences through target community advertising and involvement, specifically targeting African-American and Latino ethnicities in 2013;
- (3) **AGE** distribution – nurturing high school age youth and adult chorus membership with educational activities at each rehearsal, targeting 20 area high schools and two home school networks, impacting both chorus and audience age distribution metrics; and,
- (4) **MARKETING** – mix of print, electronic, and broadcast advertising targeting specific age and ethnic demographics within the Omaha MSA. Campaign takes place in two waves – first wave: inviting chorus participation; second wave: advertising for the Messiah performance itself.

Each of the strategies is measured against annual goals to determine success or if adjustment is needed. Diversity and age goals are based on national averages identified by National Endowment for the Arts. Data is collected via chorus registrations and audience surveys.

2012 saw African-American community participation response greater than Omaha MSA demographics and student participation doubled over the previous year. 2013 diversity goals are expanded to include outreach to the Latino community and another 100% increase in student participation over 2012.

Beyond simply presenting free annual performances of Handel's "Messiah," the ethnic diversity and age reduction/educational outreach activities are building bridges of understanding between community segments and

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inspiring a new generation of performers in a nurturing atmosphere which models acceptance, cooperation, and inclusivity.

## 3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

### Core Assets – Internal

- 1.) Large chorus membership with influential reach into the community
- 2.) Dedicated Board of Directors (10, including one high school age rep.)
- 3.) Expert and experienced artistic staff
- 4.) Solid non-profit best practices structure in place
- 5.) Revitalized public image in place (logo, website, organizational memberships, financial transparency, etc.)
- 6.) 45 years of momentum
- 7.) Positive movement toward ethnic diversity and age distribution goals

### Core Assets - External

- 1.) Reputation for excellent service to the community
- 2.) Diversity: community leader partnerships - African-American and Latino
- 3.) Youth/Education: strong connections to public school and two home school networks
- 4.) Solid marketing mix: print, electronic, social
- 5.) Substantial in-kind support from venue and marketing partners
- 6.) Financial support from state and private sources is growing

### Future Resources

- 1.) Substantial foundation and community support during the 2018 year
- 2.) Increased chorus size will strengthen reach and support opportunities
- 3.) Establishment of a virtual office to support current growth and facilitate intense communication and marketing activity leading up to the 50th Anniversary Gala activities - hardware and software

## 4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Voices of Omaha's four growth strategies – Image, Ethnic Diversity, Age Distribution, Marketing – are evaluated against measurable goals. Image and Marketing success are evaluated against overall participation figures: chorus membership and audience attendance. Ethnic Diversity and Age Distribution strategies are evaluated against goals adapted figures available in the National Endowment for the Arts' "Survey of Public Participation in the Arts" (for "Classical Music" choruses and audiences). The various factors below each impact the overall growth picture for the organization. In each case, the 2018 goals represent the national average for each category found in the NEA report.

Assessment is made using data from precise audience counts, audience surveys, and chorus registration information. Annual goals for the next season are set during the month following the Messiah performance and data collection. VOO is seeing steady progress toward its 2018 goals.

Though more easily read on a simple graph, current progress benchmarks toward the 2018 goals are as follows.

### Chorus membership:

2011 - 114

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2012 (current) – 135

2013 goal – 155

2018 goal – 300

## Chorus diversity:

2011 – 6.5% Diverse ethnicity, 93.5% Caucasian

2012 (current) – 12.04% Diverse, 87.96% Caucasian

2013 goal – 16% Diverse, 84% Caucasian

2018 goal – 20.7% Diverse, 79.3% Caucasian

## Chorus age distribution:

2012 (current): 12% (14-24), 10% (25-34), 8% (35-44), 23% (45-54), 25% (55-65), 14% (65-74), 8% (75+)

2013 goal: 18% (14-24), 16% (25-34), 13% (35-44), 19% (45-54), 18% (55-65), 10% (65-74), 4% (75+)

2018 goal: 24.5% (14-24), 21.4% (25-34), 18% (35-44), 15.9% (45-54), 11.6% (55-65), 5.1% (65-74), 3.6% (75+)

## Audience attendance:

2011 – 1,660

\*2012 (current) – 1,143

2013 goal – 1,428

2018 goal – 3,950 (two performances)

## Audience diversity:

2011 – 6.3% Diverse ethnicity, 93.7% Caucasian

2012 (current) – 7.3 Diverse, 92.7% Caucasian

2013 goal – 10% Diverse, 90% Caucasian

2018 goal – 12.6% Diverse, 87.4% Caucasian

## Audience age distribution:

2012 (current): 3.5% (14-24), 11.9% (25-34), 8.4% (35-44), 18.4% (45-54), 27.9% (55-65), 17.9% (65-74), 11.9% (75+)

2013 goal: 5% (14-24), 12% (25-34), 12% (35-44), 20% (45-54), 25% (55-65), 15% (65-74), 11% (75+)

2018 goal: 7.3% (14-24), 13% (25-34), 15.8% (35-44), 22% (45-54), 20.7% (55-65), 12.3% (65-74), 3.6% (75+)

\*A major adjustment was made in the 2013 print advertising plans after the surprisingly low 2012 audience attendance, 1,143 – 500 persons less than the year before. 2012 advertising tested the assumption that if resources were diverted from MSA advertising to reach communities outside the MSA, the audience would grow. This assumption was false and 2013 will see a renewed emphasis on print advertising to Omaha and its adjacent suburbs.

## 5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

In 2011, the Board began planning gala celebrations of the organization's 50th anniversary 2018 performances. Knowing large-scale community involvement was needed to support a project budget four times the usual annual size, they embarked upon the current plan to address age and diversity imbalances in Voices of Omaha audiences and chorus. Educational outreach to youth was a logical addition to the plan. Funding opportunities are presenting themselves; progress is being made toward all measurable goals. Accomplishments since 2011 include:

### Image/Marketing

1.) New logo

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- 2.) New website managed and kept current by Board webmaster
- 3.) Organization memberships: Chorus America, Nebraskans for the Arts, Omaha Chamber of Commerce
- 4.) Media partnerships, in-kind support
- 5.) Communication with membership, educational networks, and public: html eblasts via ConstantContact
- 6.) Pre-registration online for 2013 chorus participation via ConstantContact
- 7.) Social media reach, 254 Facebook “likes” currently

## Diversity Outreach

- 1.) Partnership with key community leaders
- 2.) 2012 activities resulted in African-American chorus participation greater than the Omaha MSA!
- 3.) 2013 diversity outreach expanding to include Latino community.

## Age Distribution

- 1.) Educational outreach results: 400% increase in chorus youth
- 2.) Multimedia (Prezi, PowerPoint, audio) lectures a part of every rehearsal
- 3.) Chorus America online education resources available to entire membership

## Additional

- 1.) Board members accessing working documents via “Google Docs” – a step toward a Virtual Office
- 2.) GuideStar Exchange Seal; governance documents available on VOO website
- 3.) State and foundation grant funding: 600% increase!
- 4.) Pride for and interest in VOO as never before among Board, membership, and community

## Still to be accomplished

- 1.) Funding organization relationships to support a \$100,000 budget
- 2.) Chorus growth to 300+
- 3.) Establishment of a Virtual Office (hardware and software)

**Obstacle:** To the public, VOO is only visible for its annual Messiah performance – one day each year. For the chorus, VOO is active for rehearsals and performance – seven weeks. Social media and membership communications via email newsletters, timed educational outreach announcements, and press releases regarding funding awards keeps year-round activity present in the minds of its membership, the media, and the public.

**Learning:** Surveys indicate 50% of VOO chorus and audience participation is the result of “word of mouth” advertising. Of all marketing strategies to increase chorus membership and audience attendance, the personal invitation of a relative, friend or acquaintance is the way new people are most frequently involved. The Board joined the Chamber of Commerce, established personal relationships with community leaders, utilizes personal home school connections, and works diligently via social media to make personal contact with new people.