

Project Title

To support a research project toward alleviating overwhelming administrative burdens faced by jazz musicians and presenters nationwide.

Project Progress and Successes

Chamber Music America utilized the full 18-month grant period (October 1, 2013 -- March 31, 2015) to conduct research on possible mechanisms to help alleviate the overwhelming administrative burdens faced by jazz musicians and presenters nationwide.

As of our interim report (August 1, 2014), the following activities had taken place:

- CMA engaged Catherine Maciariello of HieroResources as the facilitator of the project;
- Focus Group Cities were selected and the Timeline for Completion was established;
- Focus Group Protocol was established;
- Survey questions had begun to be formulated;
- Five Focus Groups were held in New York City, and two were held in San Francisco;
- Chicago and Atlanta Focus Groups were slated for Spring 2015;
- Discussions with Thought Leaders had begun.

Over the past seven months, the following activities have led to the completion of the project:

- Three additional Focus Groups were held (two in Chicago, one in Atlanta), bringing the number of Focus Groups to 10 for the duration of the project. In all, 95 musicians were interviewed in person on the topic of administrative tasks. Their responses are documented in the report issued by HieroResources, which is attached.
- The survey was finalized and distributed to 765 jazz musicians from CMA's database, as well as the databases of Jazz Connect, Jazz Institute of Chicago, and the personal lists of numerous musicians who offered to help with distribution. A survey link was posted on CMA's Facebook page and was reposted by many musicians. As a result--and taking into account duplicate names on various lists--we estimate that the survey reached a minimum of 1,400 distinct names. A total of 282 responded, indicating approximately a 20 percent response rate.
- The survey results were compiled and reviewed by HieroResources and presented to CMA for explanation and discussion.
- Twenty-five cultural workers from various segments of the arts were contacted to lend their perspective to the problems we are trying to solve, as well as for their ideas on potential solutions. A list is included with this report. Several provided additional names to explore. Although this grant period has ended, discussions with these Thought Leaders are continuing to take place.
- Meetings were held between HieroResources and Chamber Music America to discuss the report and its recommendations. The final report was submitted to CMA April 28, 2015.

In addition to its intended benefit of gathering information in preparation for problem-solving, this project had unintended consequences that will have long-term impact on CMA and the jazz field.

Convening musicians, while arduous because of their schedules, is enormously gratifying for them as well as for CMA. Ironically, we were asking people to take time from all their administrative tasks to talk to us about their lack of time. We were reminded of this when we distributed the survey, and several people responded that they did not have time to fill it out because they were busy doing all the things we were asking them about. Many of these messages were followed by happy-face icons.

But when musicians have the opportunity to be together, their candor, generosity, and willingness to be part of a solution come through. They were all appreciative of the chance to be with each other. This has happened repeatedly with other CMA convenings: artists in the same city do not get together unless they are performing together. They simply do not have the time, and coordinating schedules is difficult. After each focus group, the participants stayed to talk informally, trade phone numbers or cards, and were very grateful to CMA for having brought them together. For the 95 musicians who participated in person, this became not only an information-sharing experience, but a networking and relationship-building one as well.

Although some musicians indicated that they did not have time to complete the survey, others took extra time to write about particular issues that they found challenging and gave their names and contact information for further follow-up. While there were no surprise elements in the tasks that overburden musicians, it was enlightening to learn about the depth of the problem and its consequences to their careers. Hearing actual stories firsthand gave CMA tangible examples of the types of information resources it can provide to the field as an expansion of its current services.

A second benefit has been the ability to reach out to cultural Thought Leaders and others in the field who were generous in their offer to help think through this issue. We began with our closest circle of contacts, but it soon expanded as people thought about others who are working through similar problems, or have attempted to address portions of the issue. The discussions were extensive and as of this writing, all the names that were suggested have not yet been contacted or have had problematic schedules. However, appointments continue to be made and through this project, CMA has begun to develop a larger network of potential partners.

HieroResources' final report has made numerous recommendations, which CMA will examine for further action.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project

The issue of being overburdened with administrative tasks is one that is embedded in all of contemporary society. People from all walks of life are bemoaning the fact that technology, which was foreseen as a way to create more time for workers, has begun instead to consume our time with multiple platforms, 24-hour communications, and virtually endless amounts of information at our fingertips. It is

not just a problem for artists, but it affects artists in unique ways.

When CMA began this project, technology loomed as "the" possible answer. We imagined that technology would provide the answer by streamlining administrative activities in some way, or offering mechanisms that would speed up certain processes. "Administrative tasks" appeared to be one overall problem that technology--an overall solution--could fix.

It did not take long for the musicians to educate us and dispel that misconception. As the various administrative tasks were categorized, it quickly became clear that there would not be one overall solution. In fact, it isn't clear whether there are any solutions that will be viable over the long term.

While I wouldn't characterize that as a failure, it is disappointing. One has only to hear of the burdens that artists bear in their pursuit of a life in music to recognize how crucial it is to identify avenues of relief on their behalf. Categorizing the problems has certainly been a start, but we had hoped that plausible solutions would have emerged through the many discussions that were held and the many notes that were taken.

While we did not expect that we would have created any problem-solving mechanisms by the end of this grant period, we had hoped that there would be a number of clear paths to pursue. Instead, we have identified several areas in need of additional information and research, which might lead to more definitive actions. Additional research requires additional funds, but even more important, it requires more time during which musicians will continue to struggle with the problems they have so eloquently articulated to us.

We believe our research has been thorough and sound, and that additional examination can be conducted based on this work. But it would have been more gratifying--and felt more successful--if a significant solution had presented itself.

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

This entire research process has been a learning opportunity, and has provided incredible insight into the lives of the people that CMA seeks to serve. Hearing how discouraging it is for musicians to repeatedly call presenters and not receive responses, or to learn that a contact has left his booking position at a club--and now they must establish a new relationship in the hope of securing a gig--is eye-opening. And listening to how much the music means to them, despite the obstacles they must overcome, puts a certain urgency into our work as administrators and service-providers.

Knowing that we have not yet identified a workable solution to any one problem is discouraging, but realizing that something has to be done to alleviate some of the administrative pressures that musicians face has compelled us to continue to work on this problem.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

HieroResources' report: /globalassets/arts/grantee-self-reports/hieroresources-report-4-28-15.pdf.

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Please contact Margaret M. Lioi, CEO, Chamber Music America at mlioi@chamber-music.org or 212.242.2022, ext. 115
