

Wide Angle Youth Media

Overview

Wide Angle Youth Media (Wide Angle) is a nonprofit organization in Baltimore, Md., that provides Baltimore youth with opportunities to use video technology and critical-thinking and public-speaking skills to tell their stories and become critical consumers and skilled producers of media. By working in collaboration with community groups, education institutions, and organizations, Wide Angle has sought to use media as a tool to give youth a larger audience for the issues that matter to them. Although Wide Angle is a relatively new organization, its leaders' ability to establish significant partnerships in the community has both increased its capacity to work with large numbers of youth and helped generate important financial and in-kind support for the organization.

Getting Started

Wide Angle's current executive director co-founded the organization in 2000 to provide ongoing media education resources to young people in Baltimore communities. Since its inception, Wide Angle has trained more than 750 youth and community members in media literacy and production and community-based distribution. These grassroots producers have created more than 50 videos, including public service announcements, documentaries, and narrative videos. This work has been screened in neighborhood screenings, at citywide events, at national media festivals, and on PBS and cable channels nationwide.

Wide Angle trains more than 130 youth yearly through workshops for young people and advanced training for high school students. In partnership with Enoch Pratt Free Library, Wide Angle staff members conduct workshops to teach video education, critical thinking, team building, and public speaking to youth ages 11 to 15. The organization's Mentoring Video Project (MVP) is an advanced, internship-based program that enables a small group of high school students in Baltimore City, ages 14 to 19, to produce episodes of issue-oriented shows that are aired on public access television. Young people are responsible for researching issues of interest to them and their peers, creating the shows, reviewing submissions from other youth and youth programs, producing media segments, editing the program, and conducting community outreach to get the word out and generate dialogue in the community. Youth also have the opportunity to engage in peer education and community outreach projects; they make presentations to school groups, assist with introductory workshops, and serve as mentors to younger youth.

In addition to its youth training activities, Wide Angle hosts the annual Who Are You? Youth Media Festival that gives all Baltimore youth the opportunity to tell their stories through photography, poetry performances, videos, and other media. To support the field of youth media, Wide Angle also provides specialized training in media literacy, technical training, and youth media facilitation to educators and youth workers.

Operation/Organizational Structure

Wide Angle's executive director, with support from a program director, directs the work of the organization. In addition, six other staff members work approximately 10 to 12 hours per week in different capacities. Several of these individuals are former students who benefited from their participation in the organization and have returned to support the organization and their peers.

Financing

Initial funding for Wide Angle came from a grant from the Open Society Institute–Baltimore's Community Fellowship Program. The money enables fellowship recipients to implement innovative projects that seek to improve the circumstances and capacity of a marginalized or disadvantaged community in Baltimore City. Wide Angle received \$48,000 in grant funding, which it used to provide film education for youth and to give honorarium payments to volunteers. The grant was also used to access technical assistance and support, including participation in meetings and conferences with other grantees to share information and lessons learned. To supplement these resources, Wide Angle's leaders sought and received in-kind donations of workshop meeting space and cameras and equipment that were available to young people.

Wide Angle's 2006 budget totaled \$167,500 (see program expenses on page 67). From 2001 to 2006, the organization received support from the Open Society Institute, from both the Community Fellows Program in Baltimore and the national Youth Media Communication funding strategy. Other local foundations and government (both city and state) grants as well as individual donations, fees for service, and corporate sponsorships round out Wide Angle's funding

sources. In 2006, approximately 43 percent of the organization's funds came from foundation grants, 31 percent from government grants, 15 percent from fees for service, about 9 percent from donations, and less than 2 percent from corporate sponsorships. Wide Angle also receives significant in-kind support and relies on an extensive volunteer base.

Financing and Sustainability: Keys to Success

Wide Angle's leaders have sought to diversify the organization's funding portfolio to prevent reliance on any single funding source. In addition to foundation and government grants, the organization's leaders have engaged in strategies to raise funds that it can use flexibly. Sponsorships play a key role in Wide Angle's support for the annual Youth Media Festival, a program focused on presentations of youth-made media that requires flexible funding. Individual giving is also a key support, especially for programs for older youth who have more associated costs, such as stipends and travel. In 2006, Wide Angle invested in a donations database, which has made it easier to keep track of donations and donors, ensuring communication is appropriate and timely. This has resulted in a 30 percent increase in small gifts from the prior year. Most of Wide Angle's individual giving comes from targeted mailings, though the organization's leaders plan to begin holding annual fundraising events this year.

Fee-for-service projects give Wide Angle new partnerships and additional support for its programs. The organization is under contract to teach workshops for afterschool programs and provide training to young people in media literacy, video production, and public speaking.

Recent partnerships include a 20-week program for Southeast Youth Academy and a 22-week workshop series for Carrera East. These workshops train middle and high school youth, employ Wide Angle staff and students, and result in the production of community media and often the creation of media clubs that remain in the afterschool site once the workshop has concluded.

Costs depend on the program; they have ranged from \$11,000 to \$20,000, depending on hours, equipment, curriculum, and number of youth served. Short-term workshops of two to three days are also offered, focusing on specific projects or techniques, including poetry and public speaking, media literacy through collage, and introductions to camera work. These “micro-workshops” cost between \$300 and \$750 to conduct.

Community partnerships have been critical to the organization’s sustainability. Because of its partnership with Goucher College, Wide Angle is able to sublet, at a reduced rate, a portion of the college’s office space. Similarly, the partnership with Enoch Pratt Free Library provides Wide Angle with staff support for programming, in-kind donations for space, snacks, promotion, and security and financial support. Wide Angle receives approximately \$6,000 annually from the library. In addition, Wide Angle staff members have built relationships with the media industry to learn from the successes of the corporate community. These relationships have greatly increased the organization’s visibility in the community and have resulted in new funding and in-kind support. For example, through the Girls Speak Out! Workshop, an offshoot of Wide Angle’s introductory workshops, staff partner with local production stu-

Wide Angle Media Fiscal 2006 Program Expenses	
<i>Program Staff</i>	
Executive Director (75%)	\$27,000.00
Program Director (85%)	\$28,475.00
MVP Coordinator (100%).....	\$6,000.00
Workshop Instructor (100%)..	\$23,000.00
Youth Media Festival	
Coordinator (100%)	\$1,600.00
Program Staff Benefits (15%)..	\$12,920.00
Contract Specialist	\$1,500.00
<i>Staff Development</i>	
(training and conferences).....	\$2,700.00
Stipends.....	\$1,450.00
Travel	\$4,100.00
Equipment	\$10,500.00
Supplies	\$6,500.00
Distribution and Promotion	
Costs	\$3,500.00
Printing and Reproduction	\$3,200.00
Payroll Services	\$2,000.00
Background Checks	\$210.00
Postage and Delivery	\$2,000.00
Administration/Overhead.....	\$30,845.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$167,500.00

dios and women in the media to provide girls with knowledge of the media field and access to role models. These partnerships have resulted in donations of meeting space, equipment, and volunteer time.

Next Steps and Future Challenges

As Wide Angle continues to develop, its leaders would like to focus their efforts on developing better marketing and community outreach strategies. However, these strategies are difficult to implement given limited administrative capacity and flexible funding sources to invest in infrastructure development. A related challenge for the organization's leaders is being able to hire and retain competent staff with the skills and knowledge to teach media education who are also grounded in youth development and able to

work with and meet the needs of young people. Finally, as it plans for the organization's sustainability, Wide Angle's leaders want to ensure they can cover their costs and sustain their work while keeping their mission of teaching and developing young people intact.

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