

# INCREASING CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

In Maryo Ewell's words, based on *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts*

1. Shift your thinking from “audience” to “participants”
2. Know who is currently participating with you, and who isn't
3. Be clear about whether, for a given event or season, you are trying to:
  - Engage your old friends
  - Attract more people like the ones currently participating
  - Attract demographic groups who are not currently participating
4. With these three types of people in mind, consider the following:
  - Your **old loyal friends** have a lot of choices these days! You want to keep them coming to you again and again. A key for this seems to be providing

## **experience and meaning**

This can be a deeper aesthetic experience (being able to comment on a play-in-progress, learning from a choreographer how she thinks about making a dance, taking a backstage tour) or a deeper organizational experience (meeting annually to offer comments on the organization's plans to work with the community in a new way, etc). In the “Increasing Cultural Participation” lingo, this is

## **deepening**

- Currently there are probably types of people who come to your events, and you want to attract more people like them – people who are probably **“inclined” to come**, but don't, for some reason. They often say, “I'd come, if only....” and these things are typically tangible, practical things like time of day, cost, need child care, placement of advertising. You want to identify, and then

## **remove the practical barriers**

In the Increasing Cultural Participation lingo, this is

## **broadening**

- Then there may be **demographic groups who currently don't participate**. These groups may be certain age groups, new immigrants to your community, economic/social groups, ranchers, etc. You want to start to

### **gradually change attitudes**

This is a long, slow process and can't be one-shot. Important things to consider are location (is the venue one where they are comfortable?), invitation (a personal invitation from a trusted friend works where posters and press releases won't), and most important, planning the event **“with”** them instead of “for” them. Consider forming an advisory committee or co-sponsoring with an organization that they already participate in. This is referred to as

### **diversifying**

5. Design an appropriate strategy. “Strategy” could include many things, including the choice of people you plan the project with, the choice of art, choice of venue, enhancements to an event (for example a conversation with the conductor), or practical modifications (adding child care to one performance in a run), and the right “marketing” technique for the people you’re trying to reach.