Diversity Analysis of San Diego Botanic Garden

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Original Description:

We will build on recent efforts to better understand the diversity of our current stakeholders and key audiences to develop a more complete picture of the diversity of our stakeholders. Specifically, we will utilize recent new data streams as well as new surveying tools to reach out to the following key communities within our Garden, collect demographic data and analyze the results in light of IDEA goals: the Board, Staff, Visitors and Volunteers. With this data in hand, we will develop an action plan for each key community to enhance access and diversity of the groups (benchmarked against diversity of our region) as well as improve inclusion across the Garden. We have recently begun several programs aimed to increase access for visitors. This analysis will provide a baseline to measure against moving forward so that we can quantify change in accessibility and visitor demographics to determine how successful these programs are.

Project Goals:

1. Collect and analyze high quality data for the following groups according to current BMPs so that we have an objective picture of our institution's diversity: Board, Staff, Visitors, Volunteers.
2. Share the resultant data summaries with each group and other Garden stakeholders and solicit feedback from all so that we have maximum knowledge and engagement around IDEA.
3. Utilize resulting data and analyses to develop IDEA action plans for each key community so that we meet goals to more fully represent the distinct communities throughout our region as well as improve accessibility across target audiences.
4. Create the data reports and action plans so that they become guiding documents that can be revisited on a recurring basis with new rounds of data collection and updated action plans to quantitatively track Garden diversity, access and inclusion over time.

The ultimate goal of this project was to create a better understanding of the people who are a part of the San Diego Botanic Garden community. We want to recognize and benchmark the diversity present in our visitors, staff, volunteers and board members. Having a better understanding of who is present at the garden will help us determine in which direction(s) we want to explore to improve inclusion, diversity, equity and access throughout our garden's programs and position in the community.

At the beginning of this cohort, not only did we not have a good way to gather that information, we did not really understand what information we wanted. We ultimately decided to try two avenues, the first would be a series of demographic surveys which would be sent to the board, staff and volunteers. The second would be an analysis of data received through TruTrade, a location intelligence and demographic analysis application purchased by SDBG.

Our first survey was sent to the board. The survey consisted of 16 questions asking general demographic related topics such as year of birth, gender, race/ethnicity, family structure, income and more. Once our group was satisfied with our questions it was sent to the board. The idea was that the survey will be the first "trial" survey. If it performed well, it would be adapted to staff and volunteers. Unfortunately, it was not received as well as initially hoped. Roughly half of our board members answered the questions. We are unsure as to why we didn't have better uptake. The survey was administered as a Google Form and that technology may have been a barrier. In addition, we made the survey anonymous so we were unable to identify the specific people who didn't participate and consequently couldn't follow up with them individually to remind them to complete the survey or to ask why they didn't want to participate.

The lack of response to our first survey made us regroup and think more critically on our project and our intentions. We originally planned to have these surveys made, completed, analyzed and have an action plan ready by the end of the cohort. We realized that was not a realistic plan for a variety of reasons. We realized the Google Form approach likely wouldn't have allowed for a high degree of uptake and limited ability to reach everyone. We also realized we may be unprepared to analyze any resulting data (especially if we have to extrapolate with a low degree of survey response) as we are still unsure what our specific goals for the survey are beyond getting basic demographic snapshots of our various stakeholder groups. Nonetheless, we feel that moving forward to more robust data gathering will help us understand our current

stakeholder makeups (at least for certain axes of diversity) and will help us better frame next steps and goals.

In the last half year, our internal IDEA council was reformed. In the past year the group fizzled for a variety of reasons including lack of direction and focus. After undergoing some restructuring of the council, it is now a broader group representing multiple departments with staff dedicated to improving garden culture through IDEA work.

Due to the above mentioned challenges, we decided to simplify our cohort project. We are still gathering data in two ways: surveying the board and via the TruTrade data. The SDBG IDEA council will be charged to receive the data and leverage it to propose potential next steps. While we are not moving forward with the stand alone surveys for the volunteers and staff at this time, it remains a future priority. Our HR department has arranged for the Garden staff to participate in a regional employee surveying instrument aimed at understanding employee satisfaction in the region. While this survey is not specifically tailored to IDEA components, it will still provide an entry point in staff surveying that can be built on in future years. As with our Board, we plan to conduct an employee satisfaction survey annually and we hope to be able to add in more IDEA components as we move forward.

A second survey for the Board has been created and presented to the Board's Governance Committee. The Committee was enthusiastic but suggested that the survey questions be added to the annual Board self-assessment process. That process should move forward in the next 2 months and will have a mechanism in place (likely through the use of a consultant) that will allow us to preserve board anonymity while getting to 100% participation.

We have been able to conduct a robust analysis of visitor data through our TruTrade platform. This platform uses anonymized cell phone data to report on a variety of demographic features of our visitors. For our pilot analysis, we pulled data from the last 13 months. Unsurprisingly, our visitorship skews whiter, older, female and wealthier than San Diego County averages. We know these are trends that are common at public gardens throughout the US. We did find nuances in the data that are interesting, including which zip codes are further away from the Garden (and in some cases from areas representing more diverse audiences) that are already coming to the Garden. We hope that by further analyzing these areas in greater detail, we might find ways to repeat these successes in additional geographies within our region. We are also learning that

how we analyze a power dataset like TruTrade is critically important. This last year was the first that we did a higher end holiday lightshow. We believe we are seeing a different demographic attend that show, when compared to other visitation throughout the year. We plan to grow in sophistication in terms of our ability to analyze this kind of data so that we can better understand how our programming choices influence the audiences we attract, with a goal of examining how we can continue to diversify our audiences and become a valued cultural resource for more San Diego county residents and communities. One of our employees has already begun training with TruTrade to increase our ability to leverage this continuously updating dataset.

We were unable to review the data collected and create an action plan by the end of the cohort. However, with help from our IDEA council, we plan to begin reviewing the data in hand and emerging in the next few months and use the data to help create forward thinking programs and action plans for the garden.

When we first conceived of this project within the APGA IDEA cohort, we naively thought it would be a pretty straightforward exercise in survey design, execution and data analysis. However, during the process we learned that we had made assumptions (ie, that the Board would easily uptake a Google Form survey) that had massive implications. We also learned that data collection without a clear understanding of analysis goals is challenging. We feel we have a "chicken or the egg" challenge. We know we need data to inform our baseline, which is useful in goal setting. We also know that the data collection and analysis is less than ideal when we don't have clear goals already established. Nonetheless, we believe that by simply continuing to put one foot in front of the other (by gathering data, considering next steps, and then moving forward), we will steadily make progress.

Perhaps, most excitingly, this project helped us reinvigorate our staff-led IDEA Council. We have attempted to relaunch the Council so that it represents a diverse cross section of the Garden and is relatively light on senior managers. While this configuration purposely creates more autonomy for the Council, it also results in less upfront direction and clarity of goals. In essence, we have challenged the Council to deliberate on and develop their own direction within, while getting to know the many processes around the Garden that determine resource allocation and prioritization. It is still too early to determine if this strategy will be successful, but we see early signs of encouragement in the way the IDEA Council has engaged with our APGA Cohort project. We are excited to "stay the course" with our strategy, knowing that we have a process in

place that integrates IDEA thinking into several critical garden programmatic areas and that we will evolve our strategy together as we achieve successes and acknowledge challenges. IDEA work is clearly difficult, but it is certainly a worthwhile struggle that our Garden is better positioned to leverage as we continue to evolve as an organization.