

Memo

To: Patricia Bravo, Chief Operations Officer

From: Ana Ortiz-Rivera, Student

Subject: “Mi Vida, Mi Voz” Program Proposal

Date: October 18, 2015

CC: Rebecca Holden, Professor; Allison Vilchinsky, Teaching Assistant

The purpose of this memo is to describe the needs for a community engagement art program, and to propose the program “Mi Vida, Mi Voz,” (My Life, My Story.) This program aims to guide participants to use art to express and illustrate their stories through narratives. The target audience are students ages 11-18, who are in middle and high school. The program will recruit 5-10 participants for the pilot program, and also recruit college students as mentors to work with youth throughout the six sessions. This program is composed of six sessions, one each week, that guides participants through the different stages of preparing their narratives with their medium of choice. After the six sessions, the completed projects will be showcased in an LAYC hosted art exhibitions.

NEEDS ASSESMENT

Currently, LAYC has various programs in DC and MD that serve the needs of youth in the areas of advocacy, community wellness, education, social services, workforce investment, and healthy recreation. The current Teen Center in D.C. provides youth with a safe space to have access to homework assistance, recreation facilities, but also gives resources to teens to be creative with art. Art is a powerful mechanism through which teens have the potential to express their stories and narratives.

LAYC, through the Teen center, does not currently offer a structured program that guides participants through the process of writing and expressing narratives. The main audience that LAYC serves are those who come from immigrant families. Teens in middle school and high school often struggle with expressing their emotions of the struggles of being first generation, 1.5 generation, or second generation immigrants. These challenges include negotiating and balancing identities. Youth who are born in another country but grew up in America, for example, may not identify as neither American nor Mexican. These feelings of mixed identity and culture can be exacerbated during anti-immigrant times that are influenced by the political climate.

The young adults need to be guided to express their narratives through art. These narratives can cover a wide variety of issues that immigrant youth face today. As this generation of young adults are growing up with exposure to media and technology, they need to be shown how to use those resources positively through art.

BEST PRACTICES

The idea of using art as a means of expressing stories and narratives has been used in programs such as “HeART and Stories” by the organization Art and Remembrance in Washington D.C. The goal of HeART and Stories is to “foster compassion and to give voice to those who might yet tell their own stories through art.” Their program is open to advantaged and at-risk youth, immigrant families, and English-language learners. Their program is organized in 3-4 workshops that break down the process of telling a story, and then expressing it through art. The HeART program also works with local partners whom also felt that there was a need for their audience to express their stories and narratives.

Another similar project can be found by CultureStrike, called “Visions from the Inside.” This program was created last year and first aimed to “the story of mothers trapped inside Karnes Detention Center in Texas, and their struggles to raise their children in an oppressive environment.” From the success of the first program, they came back this year and incorporated a wide audience. Mothers who come from different backgrounds and experiences illustrate their struggles in dealing with immigration and stigmas. The art work produced by the mothers are showcased online, and has drawn attention nationwide.

STATE OF EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES

The LYAC Teen Center already contains various materials and resources that can be used for the proposed program “Mi Vida, Mi Voz,” (My life, My Story).

- Computers that are used for computer literacy classes can be used for editing photos and videos using free programs such as Windows Movie Maker and Gimp.
- Art supplies are already in stock in the Teen Center, as it advertises youth express their interest in art. Art supplies in stock can be used, and additional supplies can also be purchased.
- The Teen Center is an open space that can be used as the location for the program, where participants can meet and work on their projects. Also, the Teen Center can be used as the location for the final exhibit at the end of the program.
- Participants can be recruited from LAYC’s current members.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The Program “Mi Vida, Mi Voz,” will be broken down into six sessions that will occur once a week for a two hours, for six weeks. The hours of the program will occur from 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM, when students are out of school.

A. SESSIONS

The sessions will be broken down as followed:

- The first session, participants will examine previous works by other artists in order to draw on inspiration. A professional story teller or artist will be invited to showcase his/her work to exemplify to students how narratives are expressed through art.
- The second session, participants will work on writing down their stories and narratives that they would like to explore, along with their medium of choice (painting, drawing, photography, video, or mix-media).
- The third and fourth session, participants can work on obtaining materials they need (taking pictures or videos) and put their materials together.
- The fifth session, participants will have a peer review workshop, in which they receive feedback and comments to improve their work.
- The sixth session, participants will work on final details and edits.

B. FINAL EXHIBIT

At the end of the six sessions, participants will display with work in an exhibition, in with their families and locals are invited. This event can also serve as a fundraiser to collect funds for purchasing materials for the next cohort of students.

C. VOLUNTEERS

Instructors that guide the participants in the program will be volunteers, who will be recruited from universities such as the University of Maryland. College credit or internship hours can be offered to college students as incentives for their participation.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The six week sessions can start at the beginning of the spring 2017 semester, around January 23, 2017. College students can be recruited during the winter semester of 2016. This is also an ideal time for middle and high school students because they are returning from winter break. The six sessions will occur over the span of six weeks, and end on the first week of March. The final art exhibit can occur mid-march.

After the first round of participants have completed the program, another session can be conducted in the summer, and following fall. In the first year of imitation, there will be three cohorts of students who will have completed, and exhibited their art.

INITIAL BUDGET

The initial budget for one round of the program is as followed:

Category	Cost	Quantity	Total
Art supplies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint • Construction Paper • Pencils/pen, crayons, markers, etc. 	\$10	X 10 students	\$100
Professional Story teller	\$100		\$100
Snacks	\$50	X 6 weeks	\$300
Final exhibit event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food for guests • Decorations • Staff 	\$300	x1 event	\$300
Printing/Matting for final projects	\$ 10	x1 per student	\$100
Advertisement	\$100		\$100
Total			\$1000

METHODS/OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVALUATION

In order to evaluate the success of the program, surveys will be given out to participants at the end of the six sessions. The surveys will be conducted online using a free site such as SurveyMonkey.com. The survey will ask a range of questions that ask about their satisfaction with the program, and suggestions for improvements. Also, at the end of the final exhibition event, surveys will be handed out to guests to ask about their impressions of the art.

CONCLUSION

The program “Mi Vida,Mi Voz,” gives students the tool they need to raise their voices through expressing their stories and narrative with art. Participants will be guided on how to use technology such as photography or video, and mediums such as paint or drawing to develop their projects.