



CASE STUDY: Best Practices  
**CINCINNATI "LAUNCHES" NATIONAL ARTS MARKETING  
PROJECT (NAMP)**

By [Christy Harp](#)

## **I. Background**

Organization Name/Location: Arts Services Office (ASO) of the Cincinnati  
Institute of Fine Arts

Web site URL: <http://www.artserv.org/vlntr.html>

Founded: 1996

**Purpose:** *To support and to sustain Greater Cincinnati's smaller arts organizations through programs, people and resources. ASO programs include Business Volunteers for the Arts (BVA), the Community Arts Fund, and the American Express National Arts Marketing Project (NAMP).*

## **II. Description of Project**

The National Arts Marketing Project is a marketing and audience development project focusing in the arts sponsored in 12 U.S. cities by American Express. It was originally launched in 1998 in eight cities, and then expanded to four more cities in 2001. In order to celebrate the launch of the new sites, American Express hosted launch parties at all 12 locations.

On June 18, 2001, Cincinnati was launched into the National Arts Marketing Project (NAMP). In order to celebrate the new adventure, a cocktail reception was held from 5-7pm in the courtyard of the Cincinnati Art Museum Sculpture Garden. A Cincinnati-based steel drum band provided the background music for the evening. The event featured many speakers from around the Cincinnati area including: NAMP co-chairs Mark Serrienne, president and Chief Executive Officer of Northlich and Andrea Dixon, Assistant Professor of Marketing, University of Cincinnati College of Business Administration; Julie Peeler, Director of NAMP; and local American Express representative Phenecia Allen. Michael Fisher, president of the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce read a mayoral proclamation declaring June 18<sup>th</sup> American Express Day in Greater Cincinnati. Guests signed an oversized copy of the proclamation, which was forwarded on to the AMEX corporate offices in New York.

### III. Strategy and Implementation

The party **launched** Cincinnati into the National Arts Marketing Project; the **promotion strategy** played off of a rocket launch theme. Rocket “launch” –related words and images were used to support the message: the “launch” of the innovative NAMP program in Cincinnati, presenting new opportunities for connections between the arts and business communities.

**Clever Graphic Design:** The ASO designed festive invitations decorated with a moon and star motif, in order to illustrate the “launch” theme. Wording on the invitation, such as “It’ll be a blast” helped to demonstrate the excitement surrounding the event. The envelopes referred to the theme with an illustration of a numbered countdown, (“5, 4, 3, 2, 1...” to the event.

**A highly targeted mailing list:** Three hundred invitations were sent out to many prominent individuals from the Tri-state area: city and state government officials, top board executives, executive and artistic directors of area arts organizations and their marketing staff, top media executives and arts reporters, major donors and arts patrons from throughout the community, and marketing “thought- leaders” from area business. In addition to the mailed invitations, NAMP committee members made follow-up calls to ensure everyone received his/her invitations.

**Publicity:** The main goal for this launch party was to gain long-term media support and coverage of the NAMP program and establish a relationship with VIP/high level media executives. The planning committee focused on introducing NAMP to other arts audiences and the business community. Inclusion of marketing “thought- leaders” on the invitation list generated awareness of NAMP and created potential access to the expertise and connections of these individuals as speakers at future workshop presentations.

**An article entitled *Projects Mean Hope for Struggling Arts Community* written by Cincinnati Enquirer reporter Jackie Demaline aided the publicity for the NAMP “launch” party.** The article appeared in the paper the Sunday before the party and presented the NAMP program in a positive light, giving the readers a detailed explanation of the focus of NAMP and the projected impact of the program on the Cincinnati arts community. Quoted in the article, NAMP co-chair Andrea Dixon articulated a major goal of NAMP: “to have business people fall in love with folks in the arts.”

**Engaging Giveaway items and activities:**

Each attendee at the party received a commemorative edition of the **Greater Cincinnati Arts Reference Directory**. The directory complemented the launch motif with a celestial theme on the cover. On the back of the directory, a brief overview of the NAMP program provided guests with information about the new venture. The reference directory was not the only party favor for the evening.

Midway through the reception the speakers delivered their remarks. Mark Serrienne of Northlich summed up the enthusiasm for the Cincinnati arts community saying, “One of the *shining spots*, no—let me correct that—one of the *jewels* of our city is the arts community.”

**Brightly colored blue, red, and yellow NAMP Frisbees with the launch theme “Helping the Arts in Cincinnati Soar to New Heights”,** were presented to the

guests. After the speakers concluded, co-chair Andrea Dixon led the ceremonial countdown and Frisbee toss to make the NAMP launch complete. The Frisbee toss also resulted in a colorful photo opportunity.

The activities were interspersed with **raffle announcements of donated AMEX gift cheques** and **tickets to arts events**, which served to keep the audience attentive.

#### IV. Results

300 invitations were sent out. The final turnout for the event was 100 attendees. This response was considered successful because members of both the arts and business communities were represented. While there was no television coverage, the presence of some local media was very encouraging to all involved.

Other media representatives at the event included: Chris Sehring, general manager, Channel 12; Mona Morrow, community affairs, Channel 9; Kitty Morgan, Editor, *Cincinnati* Magazine; Rick Pender, Assistant Editor, *CityBeat* Magazine; Chris Phelps, marketing director, WGUC FM; and Cathy Springfield, host of "Backstage" on WVXU FM. All media representatives left with a press kit. ASO's serious follow-up efforts ensured that all VIP media are aware of NAMP even if they did not attend the party.

#### V. Conclusion

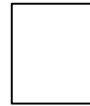
Cincinnati's NAMP launch serves as an example of the importance of planning—all the elements of the launch worked together to make the promotion a success. By bringing awareness of the arts community to other sectors in the city, the launch event was an effective stepping-stone for NAMP in Cincinnati. As a result of the NAMP launch and the continuing promotion of NAMP programs, each of the subsequent marketing workshops held by ASO in June, October and November 2001 were filled to capacity. The organizations that have taken part in ASO's workshops are a representative sampling of the city's arts community, including Enjoy the Arts/START, Cincinnati Opera, Ensemble Theatre, and Cincinnati Art Museum. Many of the Cincinnati arts organizations see the NAMP program as a wonderful way to expand their audience turnout as well as learn and share ideas with their peers.

ABOUT THE WRITER: **Christy Harp** is currently an intern at ASO and is a junior Public Relations major at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has participated in many on-campus events such as: PRSSA, Club Day, STYUKA (musical charity festival), and College Friends.

#### VII. References and Resources

Demaline, Jackie. "Projects Mean Hope for Struggling Arts Community." *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

Ingram, Holly. NAMP Cincinnati Launch Media/PR Recap



5.... 4.... 3.... 2.... 1....

## VIII. Relevant Attachments

### a. Envelope and Invitation

(not to scale): ASO used the themes related to a launch (including a rocket launch/countdown motif) on the Cincinnati NAMP Launch invitation. (The invitations were sent to a targeted list of local VIPs in the arts and business communities)

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Experience Cincinnati's *Launch* of

National  
Arts  
Marketing  
Project

Sponsored by



Monday, June 18

5:30 - 7 PM

with remarks at 6 PM

**Cincinnati Art Museum**

Sculpture Garden

Eden Park

Rain or Shine

It'll be a blast!!

**RSVP by June 13**

Arts Services Office

Cincinnati Institute of Fine Arts

(513) 871-2787 ext. 28

NAMP offers a blue chip educational experience for arts organizations to improve marketing skills, expand audiences and increase financial performance. Following a series of local workshops, four organizations will be selected to attend an eight day "arts marketing boot camp" held in Chicago and compete for \$25,000 marketing implementation grants. Cincinnati is one of twelve major cities nationwide, including New York, Chicago and San Francisco, participating in the program.

b. Promotional Give-away Item:

Continuing to play off the "launch" theme, ASO printed this design in black ink onto plastic 9.25"

Frisbee discs. The Frisbees (in the colors of red, yellow and periwinkle) were "ceremoniously" tossed in the air to symbolize the NAMP Launch in Cincinnati.

