



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

"Parks Make Life Better!"

Norma E. García-González, Director

Alina Bokde, Chief Deputy Director

October 31, 2024

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisor Lindsey Horvath  
Supervisor Janice Hahn  
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Norma Edith García-González  
Director

SUBJECT: **OPERATING LEASE WITH THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ASSOCIATION FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE FORD THEATRES (ITEM NO. 10, AGENDA OF NOVEMBER 12, 2019)**

On November 12, 2019, your Board adopted a motion by Supervisor Kuehl, with a friendly amendment by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas to revise the Ford Theatres Operating Lease to include provisions to allow for community input and engagement related to programming, outreach, and audience development, with the goal to keep the Ford Theatres accessible to all communities in programming and in ticket prices and to specifically add the following language to the motion as directive 7 and to the revised Ford Theatres Operating Lease under 6.7, Programming Requirements: (a) On or before September 30 of each Season, LAPA, the Director and the Director of the County Department of Arts and Culture ("Arts and Culture") will meet to discuss such current Season in connection with planning the programming for the upcoming Season, with particular focus on the Programming Requirements. (b) "The LAPA shall hold community engagement session with local artists and interested stakeholders on or before January 31, 2022, and by September 30 of each subsequent season, to discuss outreach, program development and audience development, to include recommendations on maintaining accessible and affordable ticket prices; and in addition, the Chief Executive Officer and the Directors of Parks and Recreation, and Arts and Culture, or their designees, shall attend these engagement sessions and report back to the Board in writing on not more than 30 days after each subsequent season." Supervisor Kuehl accepted Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' friendly amendment.

#### **FORD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2024**

Pursuant to the Board's motion, one community engagement session was held by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association (LAPA) on September 25, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. virtually via Zoom. The Aspire Group was contracted by LAPA to provide facilitation services as part of a community forum to gain input from community members and sustainability of The Ford. LAPA has fulfilled the 2024 commitment, as outlined by the board motion amendment to the lease section 6.7 (b) of the lease and plans to have the 2024 community

engagement sessions before September 30, 2024, to discuss, outreach, program development, and audience development and accessibility.

Additionally, the required meeting to discuss season programming with the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Director of the Department of Arts and Culture occurred on October 28, 2024, as is reference as Directors Meeting Below. The attached document highlights the summary of the points represented in the Community Engagement Session.

### **Attendance Reception**

The 2024 Community Engagement Meeting had an overwhelming positive response from community attendees who remained engaged with the presented content, the open forum and Q&A portion. The group of attendees had insightful inquiries that were delivered via chat and moderated by the Aspire Group. The session, following last year's model, remained scheduled on a weekday during regular office hours, instead of a weekend, to allow more community members to join a virtual meeting during their lunch break, rather than dedicating a piece of their weekend. Our outreach efforts included strong social media, promotional partnerships with Arts for LA and LA County Department of Arts & Culture, and an increase in the frequency of emails to former and current artists, partners, collaborators, and community members. The LA Phil utilized a guest list management platform to collect and manage RSVP's. On the day of the engagement, of the 72 RSVP's, 51 people were present. Out of the participants that responded to the in-meeting survey, 41% were audience members and 14% were artists. The growth in audience members was a significant increase from 2023's meeting with only 14% audience members. During the session, selected questions from a survey created by LAPA and Aspire were used for electronic polling, with 37 respondents, while others contributed via Zoom chat. Verbal input and comments were also gathered through chat.

### **Outreach**

As part of the presentation, the report updates related to The Ford's different programs and initiatives that are related to access for young arts professionals, producers, and audiences. Included in these efforts are *Creative Pathways & Youth Professional Development*, *Engagement with Local Producers*, and *Access Programs*.

Related to *Creative Pathways & Youth Professional Development*, the Leni Boorstin Community Programming Fellow highlighted the new Community Residencies pilot partnership program with SAMO Youth and Artemisia Nursery, which focuses on environmental stewardship at The Ford. This initiative included professional development workshops on native plant identification and hands-on experiences installing over 200 native plants on the grounds, showcasing their significant contributions. Meanwhile, the ongoing partnership with Las Fotos Project's Creative Entrepreneurship Opportunities launched a photojournalistic pilot program at the Creative Career Center, allowing photographers to create photo essays documenting the behind-the-scenes journey of select FordLab partners to the stage.

Additionally, The Ford partnered with LA Commons to pilot an apprenticeship program for young professionals interested in live-event production, where they learned from on-site professionals about venue administration and event production. LAPA's Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles (YOLA) also collaborated with IATSE Local 33 to launch the Beckmen YOLA Center Workforce Development Program, a two-year initiative where fellows shadow and train with the LA Phil

production team and union stagehands. This program emphasizes mentorship and professional development, equipping WDP Fellows with practical experience in various equipment and music genres.

Related to *Engaging with Local Producers*, The Ford provided updates on the legacy FordLab program, which supports local artists and producers, celebrating and uplifting cultural diversity. The initiative remains committed to independent artists and producers, leveraging LA Phil resources. The program includes production, sales and marketing resources to help artists bring their work to the stage, meeting the needs of producers at various experience levels.

FordLab's recruitment efforts have become more structured, with staff conducting personalized outreach and workshops to guide applicants through the process. This year, they introduced two workshops to demystify the program and process and provide clear guidance for applicants. Professional development opportunities continue to grow, with both group and individual support tailored to participants' needs. Their recruiting efforts saw a 41% increase in letters of intent, and 55 individuals have been invited to submit full applications for the program.

Additionally, FordLab partnered with advertising professionals to explore digital and social media advertising, and piloted multi-night programs with producers. Group training sessions fostered connections among participants, and a full program evaluation is underway to identify areas for improvement, including communication, financial structures, and progress toward equity, diversity, and inclusion. As The Ford refines the program, FordLab continues to clarify partnership terms and expand its recruitment efforts to engage more community-based producers and artists.

As it related to *The Ford Access Program*, The Ford shared updates on its multi-faceted efforts to increase access. Complimentary tickets were offered for 67% of the 2024 season's performances with ongoing distribution for upcoming events. Ticket Access outreach followed a three-tiered approach: distributing tickets to local neighbors, through partnership with the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and via community outreach through internal contacts and collaboration with Supervisorial Districts. Over 93 organizations were provided with complimentary tickets, building on the 32 organizations that attended last year. This year, organizational outreach grew by 351%, largely due to stronger partnerships with supervisorial districts and daily efforts led by a designated team member.

The most successful outreach efforts with DPR involved providing transportation and meals. The Ford's Ticket Access Community Outreach focused on organizations serving vulnerable or under-resourced populations, including those connected to social justice, the elderly, youth, Black-led, and AAPI organizations. Tickets were offered for a variety of events, such as music, dance, and film, across different days and times, allowing for greater alignment with the interests of participating organizations. Through the DPR partnership, The Ford increased multi-generational engagements, with many guests being first-time visitors.

A special mention regarding the outreach efforts for *The Just and the Blind* aimed to broaden ticket access through community contacts and collaborations, distributing tickets to various organizations and encouraging them to share the information with their members. Collaborations with Supervisorial Districts streamlined the process, while DPR reached out to impacted youth and support organizations, and Arts and Culture supported these initiatives through its Arts Intern Program and Arts Education for Impacted Youth. Overall, 49

organizations were approached, resulting in 18 requests received, as the strategy sought to ensure diverse community representation for a performance exploring themes of fatherhood and the impact of mass incarceration on families.

The Ford leadership team presented updates on their work, focusing on their commitment to leveraging the arts for community development. Cynthia Fuentes, Director of The Ford, highlighted the ongoing reassessment of The Ford's role within the LA arts ecosystem, aiming to align their programs with the county's goals of fostering social inclusion. They continuously evaluate their efforts, asking how the community engages with local artists and how they can improve, reinforcing their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals through their cultural inclusion plan.

### **Program Development**

This season, The Ford hosted 40 shows over sixteen (16) weeks, with five weeks remaining after the Community Engagement Session. The presentation was highlighting a diverse array of genres and cultural performances that captured the vibrant spirit of Los Angeles.

The season also celebrated African American artistry, exemplified by powerful programs like *DILLA JAZZ*, produced in partnership with Just Jazz and Fusicology, which honored the legacy of J Dilla with DJ Battlecat, Bilal, and J. Rocc. Jazz is Dead brought a genre-bending jazz experience to enthusiasts, reimagining jazz classics with a modern twist including looking at Soul, Brazilian and African Jazz legends, while family-friendly Studio Ghibli film screenings enchanted audiences under the stars. The LA Phil also uplifted that they continue to present a few underplays to bring more visibility to mainstream audience like Shawn Mendes, Willow and Finneas and reaching younger audiences. *The Just and the Blind* spotlighted issues of social justice, engaging foster youth and communities impacted by incarceration through moving storytelling and dance. This year's lineup also featured performances from the 2024 FordLab Cohort and local producers, celebrating authentic cultural expression across communities. Highlights included *100 Años de Libertad* with Grandeza Mexicana Folk Ballet Company, *Noche de Cumbia* by Cumbiatón LA, *Blue13: 100 Seconds to Midnight* from Blue13 Dance Company, *Island Woman Rise* which explored an all-evening Hip Hop program featuring Filipina rappers.

As it related to Family programming, the LA Phil continue to present a diverse range of dance, music, and theatre programs free and accessible to children, young families and multi-generational audiences. Related to addressing *Sensory Inclusion*, for adults and children, The Ford recognizing that one in four individuals have sensory need or invisible disabilities, The Ford introduced a new program focused on sensory inclusion. Due to neurodivergent individuals processing information differently, The Ford aimed to make its programs and facilities more accessible. They designed activations to engage multiple senses and incorporated sensory-focused activities involving touch, sight, hearing, and proprioception. The goal is to expand these strategies to evening programs for a broader audience.

In addition to these programs, The Ford is working to provide training for front-of-house staff, providing guidance on how to assist neurodivergent guests as they experience the venue through partnership with KultureCity, a leading nonprofit dedicated to sensory accessibility and inclusion for people with invisible disabilities and highlighting the need for effective strategies to

manage sensory overload. To address this, The Ford shared its plan to provide sensory bags with tools like headphones, light-reducing glasses, fidget devices, and other items to help individuals manage sensory overload as a piece of the KultureCity partnership.

### **Audience Development**

The Ford shared analyses of audience data, highlighting a reflection of LA County's diverse population, and anticipating a slight increase in BIPOC and younger audience members this season. They monitor audience crossover with other venues and focus on fostering a unique audience that supports their mission. The LA Phil discussed diverse marketing efforts for The Ford, including online and broadcast advertising, email campaigns, social media, print brochures, and outdoor ads consisting mainly of street pole banners. The LA Phil also shared about The Ford's prioritization of authentic connections with cultural organizations, small businesses, and influencers through community partnerships. The LA Phil also shared about its efforts to engage audiences via email campaigns and social media at LA Phil venues, investing in photography and video to capture the concert experiences at The Ford. LA Phil's social media, especially Instagram has seen an increase of 22.8%, they have also seen increase across all other social platforms.

The Ford also emphasized audience interactions, highlighting fan interviews on their website and sharing performance footage, artist interviews, and staff insights across social platforms and local channels. The Ford shared on expansions in its public relations efforts to secure coverage in prominent outlets like TimeOut LA, We Like LA, LAist, KNBC, Los Angeles Magazine, and KCRW over the past four years. They strategically target niche audiences through local press to further promote their story and values, with outlets praising The Ford's intimate yet expansive venue experience.

### **Facility and Operation Updates/Repairs**

The Ford has submitted Facility Fund request to DPR that focus on security, in theatre upgrades, and landscape upgrades to make the venue more California Native Plant friendly. Please note, yearly meeting that includes the Director of Parks and Recreation, Director of the County Department of Arts and Culture and Director of The Ford, was held on October 28, 2024.

DPR will report back to the Board again no more than 30 days after the completion of the 2024 season, scheduled to end on October 31, 2024. If you have any questions, please contact Mark L. Ladd, Superintendent, at [mladd@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:mladd@parks.lacounty.gov) or 323.850.2060.

NEGG:ee

c: Board of Supervisors, Executive Office (E. Yen)  
Parks Deputies (G. Duran-Medina, F. Lopez, L. Muraida, R. Fox, J.Orozco, D. Gonzalez,  
S. Nemer)  
Los Angeles Philharmonic  
Department of Arts and Culture

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24

# Community Engagement Session



### **Background and Introduction (Slides 1 – 2, 8)**

The leadership at the Los Angeles Philharmonic (LA Phil) at the John Anson Ford Theatres (The Ford), conducted an annual public community engagement session.

Cynthia Fuentes, Director, The Ford opened the meeting, providing information about the initial impetus for this annual meeting and context for why the community's engagement is valuable to the ongoing success of The Ford. She spoke about The Ford's stewardship, including programming insights, the multiple avenues for access The Ford provides, its outreach and efforts to engage audiences, and responding to feedback from previous community engagement sessions. The Ford leadership and staff was introduced:

- Jackeline Rodriguez, Leni Boorstin Community Engagement Fellow, YOLA Alumnus
- Gaby Hernandez, Coordinator, The Ford
- Gina Leoni, Associate Director of Operations & Logistics
- Sergio Paez, Artist Venue Assistant
- Nora Brady Chief Marketing & Communication Officer, LA Phil

Diane Burbie of the ASPIRE Group facilitated this session.

Diane Burbie of The Aspire Group was contracted by The Ford to provide consulting and facilitation services.

### **Opening Comments from Partner Leaders (Slide 3)**

**Norma Edith García-González, Director of Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.** As a recreation and performance venue, the department financially supports summer-long programming. Norma shared how Parks and Recreation meets monthly with The Ford staff to discuss the interests of their stakeholders. They engage eleven months of the year in what comes out of this meeting, partnering monthly to hear about user and performer experiences, and making this facility as welcoming and inclusive as possible, including investing in capital projects and maintenance.

**Kristin Sakoda, Director of Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture** Kristin described the Cultural Policy as a roadmap for advancing arts, culture, and creativity, vital to civic life. The Department funds over 600 nonprofits and partners with various sectors to ensure equity and access, including in arts education, justice systems, and underserved communities. This summer, they collaborated with groups like the Department of Youth Gang Intervention and tribal communities, focusing on making performances like "The Just and the Blind" accessible to a broader audience.

### **Meeting Process/Structure (Slide 4)**

The meeting was structured to cover a wide range of information while allowing space for community engagement. Key objectives included providing updates on The Ford's vision, programming, and operations, sharing approaches to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and gathering feedback from community members. Topics for the meeting:

- Engagement Methods for Forum Participants
- The Work, The Season, The Evolution
- Sensory inclusion
- Creative Pathways & Youth Development
- Focus on Local Creatives
- Access to The Ford
- Who & How We Are Reaching/Marketing Overview

### **Engagement Methods for Forum Participants (Slide 5 and 7)**

Before the forum, The Ford leadership and Aspire consultants designed a survey for feedback from invited participants, with select questions asked via electronic polling during the meeting. While 51 participants attended, 37 responded to the polls, and others used Zoom chat due to poll access issues. Verbal input and commentary were also gathered through facilitation, and the first poll asked attendees to identify across multiple categories. Results in the report reflect responses from the electronic polling conducted during the forum.

#### Poll questions

*How do you primarily engage with The Ford? (Select all that apply) (Will not equal 100% as it is a multi-select)*

- Artist – 14%
- Audience Member – 41%
- Community Stakeholder – 22%
- Arts Advocate & Culture Worker – 46%
- Government Representative - - 24%
- LAPA/Ford Staff – 27%
- Other – 11%

*Have you attended a performance at The Ford since 2019?*

- Yes – 84%
- No – 16%

*Have you attended a Community Engagement Session before?*

- Yes – 57%
- No – 43%

*How likely are you to attend a performance of an artist you are unfamiliar with?*

- Very likely – 11%
- Somewhat likely – 49%
- Neither likely nor unlikely – 34%
- Very unlikely – 6%

Attendee comments regarding recent performances they particularly enjoyed:

- *“I love to see dance at the Ford. Recently I saw Michelle Dorrance, and I went to the tap event the year before.”*
- *“Recently I went to an incredible bespoke performance for the stage. (Just and the Blind) One of my favorite parts was seeing how many of my friends and community members who support dance were in the house. I reconnected with my people, and I appreciate having a place that feels like that.”*
- *“The Ford is such a beautiful venue, and the multi-media performance used the entire stage area with video, music, and spoken word. The images illuminated what was being said, so the words almost came alive”*

The Ford provides access opportunities for artists to gain visibility and reach larger audiences, making insights from audience members crucial for developing effective strategies to achieve equity goals. Team members highlighted that social media efforts aim to demystify the performance experience and showcase the beauty of diverse cultural presentations. Many participants expressed appreciation for social media content that shares information about the artists, their stories, and the genres of their performances, fostering greater engagement with new artists.

- *“Media outreach is a huge factor in accessibility”*
- *“The description of the artist/performance if they have something relatable in their backstory, or compelling in their drive/mission – basically some element of their story!”*
- *“I like to explore and learn about new artists. What would make me attend would be seeing snippets of their work and learn more about their performance.”*
- *“Most of the shows I've been to at the Ford, I didn't know the artist beforehand and left liking a new artist! I think that's what makes the Ford special-- the ability to discover new talent.”*
- *“I attend for the experience if the artist is someone I am not familiar with. An invitation and recommendation have more impact with me. So knowing ABOUT the performance is key, no matter who it is.”*
- *“I attended Gabriels performance at the Ford, who was amazing! I appreciated knowing a bit about his story (he was from Compton) and had limited performance opportunities in Los Angeles County.”*
- *“Getting to know more about the artist and the genre they exist in, the background of the artist, where they come from also influences”*
- *“Recommendations from friends/family as well as the genre of the artist and descriptions and bio provided by the venue would influence likelihood of attending a show by an artist I don't know.”*
- *“Outdoor live performances are my self-care and good for my soul!”*

To assess the attendees' familiarity with The Ford's goals, participants were asked: What do you want to know to feel more connected to the on-stage initiatives? (Select all that apply)

- Demographic data of artists (16/36) 44%
- Genres and styles presented (27/36) 75%
- Overview of the entire season (24/36) 67%
- Opportunity to attend a live performance (18/36) 50%
- Successful ticket sales and attendance data (7/36) 19%
- Media and social media coverage (16/36) 44%

**Clarity of The Ford's Mission and a Stage for Stories (Slide 6, 9 – 11)** *Cynthia Fuentes, Director, The Ford*

Cynthia shared updates on their ongoing efforts to use the arts for community development. They regularly reassess their role in the LA arts ecosystem, aligning programs with the County's goals for social inclusion, and are proud of their cultural inclusion plan that helps achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) goals. Community engagement is key to understanding priorities, with annual meetings fostering a sense of shared pride in The Ford's work.

During their 16-week season, with five weeks remaining, The Ford will host 40 shows, including performances by Michelle Dorrance, Grandeza Mexicana, Prateek Kuhad, and others. Family programming such as TAIKOPROJECT, attracted multigenerational audiences, while special invitations were extended to organizations supporting foster youth and youth incarceration to attend "The Just and the Blind" performance.

Family programs provide relaxed, multigenerational audience experiences, with audiences showing their support for performers. Cynthia reflected on the emotional impact of the performances, saying audience responses reaffirmed that the shows resonated deeply. "I watch every performance, and see audiences respond. Their responses reaffirm that our performances resonate."

- *"I am privileged to have seen The Marias alongside members and friends of the YOLA orchestra!"*
- *"This is Nicole Calhoun from Artemisia Nursery, one of The Ford's community partners. I've only seen one performance at The Ford so far, and this list is getting me excited to see more performances!"*
- *"Most recently: Inner Wave! Great crowd and music."*

**Sensory Inclusion (Slide 12 – 13)** *Gina Leoni, Associate Director of Operations & Logistics*

Gina Leoni introduced a new sensory inclusion program at The Ford, recognizing that one in four young people have sensory or invisible disabilities. The program aims to make their facilities more accessible by developing a Sensory Zone with sensory-forward activities focused on tactile,

visual, auditory, and proprioception senses. They provided tools like sensory bags containing headphones, light-reducing glasses, and fidget toys to help cope with sensory overload. They are providing marketing support and, while offering training for staff to support neurodivergent individuals. The Ford also plans to implement these strategies in evening programs and pursue certification through KultureCity, a leader in sensory accessibility.

**Creative Pathways & Youth Development (Slide 13 – 17)** *Jackeline Rodriguez, Leni Boorstin Community Engagement Fellow*

In 2024, The Ford continued partnerships with LA Commons and Las Fotos Project, while piloting a new program with SAMO Youth. She also introduced YOLA alumnus and Leni Boorstin fellow, Jackeline Rodriguez, who provided updates on youth development initiatives.

The pilot partnership with SAMO Youth and Artemisia Nursery focused on environmental stewardship through horticultural training, offering workshops on native plant propagation and hands-on experiences installing over 200 native plants at The Ford. This program engages neighboring communities while emphasizing the environmental benefits of native plants.

The Ford expanded its collaboration with the Las Fotos Project Creative Entrepreneurship Opportunities, allowing participants to showcase their work in professional portfolios, on The Ford's platforms, and through a backstage gallery for touring artists. In 2024, they launched a photojournalistic pilot program documenting FordLab partners' behind-the-scenes journeys, with Las Fotos capturing 42 performances over four years.

Through a partnership with LA Commons, The Ford piloted an apprenticeship program for young professionals interested in live-event production, offering hands-on training in music venue administration and event production. Meanwhile, the YOLA Workforce Development Program, in partnership with IATSE Local 33, provided fellows with paid training and professional development, equipping them with skills in lighting, equipment, and show production, with the goal of expanding future opportunities at The Ford.

**Focus on Local Creatives (Slide 18 – 20)** *Gaby Hernandez, Coordinator*

Cynthia and Gaby provided updates on the legacy FordLab program, which aims to elevate local artists and promote cultural diversity through its partnership with the LA Phil. This year, the program expanded its support for artists and community-based initiatives, offering a competitive six-month program focused on production, sales, and marketing to showcase new work during the summer season. They implemented a structured recruitment approach, including workshops to demystify the application process, and have seen a 41% increase in the submission of letters of intent, inviting 55 applicants to apply.

To enhance participants' skills, FordLab partnered with advertising professionals to educate them on digital social media advertising and piloted multiple-night programs with various producers. The program management is conducting a comprehensive evaluation to identify gaps in communication, financial structures, and progress towards equity, diversity, and

inclusion goals. By clarifying partnership terms, they aim to ensure that the legacy program continues to meet the needs of producing partners and artists, fostering connections through group training and ongoing professional development. A FordLab producing partner commented:

- *“Even though I've been on producing teams for many years, as a first-time, fully independent producer I'm learning a new landscape in terms of details and process that producers like me aren't usually exposed to. I'm grateful to The Ford and Phil for understanding this and seeing the importance of my growth and more importantly, the importance of seeing more of my community”*

Other questions and comments included:

- *“I'm offering that there is a new organization, now a county grantee, called Black Image Center. I'd like to recommend them as a potential partner for other photography-based opportunities.”*
- *Q: “Does the Ford consider recruiting from the groups and organizations that receive grants from the L.A. Dept of Arts and Culture?”*
  - *A: “The cohort has included grantees; we also share any opportunities that are posted with our cohort. Would love to continue to expand recruitment and awareness of the program!”*
- *Q: “Is there a link to see any upcoming shows of the community producers you mentioned that are still left to take place?”*
  - *A: <https://www.theford.com/community/perform-at-the-ford#2024-cohort>*

**Access to the Ford (Slides 21–24)** *Gina Leoni, Associate Director, and Sergio Paez, Artist Venue Assistant*

Gina Leoni and Sergio Paez updated attendees on The Ford’s initiatives to enhance access, revealing that 67% of performances in the 2024 season included complimentary tickets, totaling over 90 organizations reached. Their three-tiered approach involves distributing tickets to local neighbors, collaborating with the Department of Parks & Recreation, and engaging with supervisorial districts, resulting in a 351% increase in outreach compared to last year, thanks in part to Sergio's dedicated role in direct engagement.

The outreach has been particularly successful through the Parks and Recreation partnership, which offers transportation and meals, aiming to reduce attrition and bring more vulnerable populations to The Ford. They provide complimentary tickets to a diverse range of performances and programs, targeting organizations that support social justice, youth, and other under-resourced communities. Overall, targeted community outreach and support from Supervisorial Districts account for 70% of ticket distribution, with Parks and Recreation contributing nearly 20%, fostering multi-generational attendance and cultural vibrancy.

## Partnership & Access

### Outreach by Supervisorial District:

- Undisclosed 11%
- District 1 19%
- District 2 19%
- District 3 9%
- District 4 22%
- District 5 20%

### Distribution By District

- Undisclosed 4%
- District 1 18%
- District 2 17%
- District 3 10%
- District 4 19%
- District 5 32%

The Ford's ability to offer transportation may have led to increases in attendance from SD4 and SD5.

### **Evaluating Program Offerings and Expanding Reach (Slides 25 – 29)** *Nora Brady, Chief Marketing & Communication Officer, LA Phil*

The staff at The Ford analyzes data to better understand their audience demographics and reflect the diversity of LA County residents. They anticipate ending the season with a slightly higher percentage of BIPOC audience members and younger attendees compared to previous years, prompting ongoing adjustments to marketing strategies and program offerings. Additionally, they monitor the percentage of unique audience members at The Ford versus crossover from other venues, aiming to cultivate a distinct audience that aligns with their mission while benefiting from the broader network of over one million potential attendees across the county. Currently, approximately 70% of this year's audience is new, with a strong concentration from nearby areas as well as a draw from all districts and unincorporated regions.

### **Marketing Overview (Slides 30 – 32)**

Nora outlined The Ford's marketing strategies aimed at diverse local audiences, which encompass online and broadcast advertising, email campaigns, social media, print brochures, and outdoor advertising like street pole banners. Additionally, they focus on outreach and collaborations with small businesses and cultural organizations, emphasizing authentic connections. The Ford also engages ticket buyers at LA Phil venues through various channels to enhance visibility and participation.

To convey The Ford's story and values, the organization invests in photography and video that capture the vibrant concert experiences, utilizing performance content, engaging b-roll, and artist interviews. Their social media, including Instagram Stories, shares real-time experiences, from pre-concert activities to the performances themselves, while audience interviews are featured on their website and social platforms. This content fosters social engagement, which has increased by 30%, with overall engagement rising by 15% this season. Over the past four years, The Ford has also strengthened its public relations presence by reaching out strategically to local press and niche outlets, showcasing its values and securing coverage from various media

sources.

- TimeOut LA
- We Like LA
- LAist AirTalk with Larry Mantle
- KNBC
- Los Angeles Magazine's Best of LA 2024: Best Outdoor Venues
- "Morning Becomes Eclectic," KCRW
- LA Times, De Los showcased our Noche de CumbiaWe Like LA
  - *"The Ford has the ideal ratio of intimacy to expanse, so we're already guessing at how special these shows will be - but the only way to really know is to be there."* - KCRW

### **What we did differently (Slides 33 – 35)**

Expanding their efforts based on feedback from last year's community engagement session, The Ford enhanced its marketing strategies, including online advertising in LA Times Essential Arts newsletters focused on dance, and increased radio advertising by 11% to boost interest and awareness. They also expanded outdoor signage, particularly pole banners, from May to October, with strategic placements across all five districts within a fifteen-mile radius. By aligning these efforts with digital campaigns, they strengthened relationships with community partners, actively participating in events like LA Pride Festivals and CicLAvia and setting up a FordLab booth at Hollywood Bowl jazz shows. Additionally, they built influencer partnerships for concert giveaways at specialty stores and community hubs and collaborated with a dance communication consultant to connect with diverse dance audiences, including families and children. This comprehensive branding approach has fostered visibility and encouraged individuals to see themselves reflected and feel a sense of ownership in The Ford.

### **Showcasing our artists (Slides 36)**

The Ford produced various content pieces highlighting their artists and community, including the *Noche de Cumbia* documentary, photo essays from the Las Fotos Project, and listening guides for Vibe Check and Black History Month. The programming team launched a new video series that spotlights each concert, sharing the team's excitement and insights. Additionally, the digital team developed "Find it at The Ford" online and print quizzes to help audiences discover their next concert. They also created an Enhanced Venue Guide containing essential information, such as tips for getting to the venue, dining and picnicking options, and details on family-friendly concerts.

### **Accessibility and Access (Slide 37)**

The Ford actively monitors its progress in supporting audiences, enhancing accessibility, and ensuring that all Angelenos can enjoy its offerings. To help audiences discover interesting content, they have improved language accessibility, providing media assets in preferred languages and multilingual support at the venue. The Ford's website adheres to WCAG 2.0 level AA standards while integrating new Google features for enhanced accessibility.

Additionally, they developed content highlighting transportation options, such as shuttle services and parking details, to showcase The Ford's accessibility across Los Angeles. They launched the 2024 season with complete fee transparency, well ahead of required legislation, including suggestions for low-cost engagement. This year will also see a redesign of their foundational website for all LA Phil venues, with participants raising questions about how ticket pricing affects accessibility and expressing interest in learning more about low-cost options for attending events. Gina Leoni pointed to the link for connecting us with organizations for Ticket Access: <https://laphil.tfaforms.net/5057108>

- *“Maria from Grandeza Mexicana, we presented this past Aug and we would like to Thank the Ford and all the Staff for making our experience at The Ford an amazing experience.”*
- *Q: “Ticket affordability has always important aspect for participation. are there pay-what- you-can tickets or other similar ticket access programs?”*
  - *A: “In addition to Ticket Access efforts for complimentary tickets, we have offered many groups (many schools in particular) with various discount codes, often 50% off! Pay- what-you-can tickets are definitely something we can look into!”*
  - *A: “Thank you for your question, we have tickets as low as \$10 as well as free for children 12 and under.”*

### Overall Sentiments *Facilitated by Diane Burbie*

Diane Burbie brought the meeting to a close asking participants to reflect on these questions:

- To what degree are you aware of these being The Ford’s core values?
- To what degree do you see these goals reflected in the work being done at The Ford?
- Is there something missing that they have yet to consider?

The following comments were shared verbally or via chat:

- *“Increasing people’s interest in that range of programs at [The Ford], a number of which are beyond what their previous experience has included. Concerts feature songs in languages other than English. (Happens at the Bowl too.) Help those of us who may not be familiar with the intent or emotion of at least some of the songs, have them shared in some form or other, in English?”*
- *“Bravo to family access!”*
- *“Love the new program videos!”*
- *“Phenomenal outreach!”*
- *“Relationship with LA County Parks has deepened over time for this initiative and others.”*
- *Q: “I notice the strong participation from arts stakeholders, and wondered if there were another forum for neighbors.”*
  - *A: “Neighbors can offer feedback directly through Stratiscope. We held a well- attended neighborhood Happy Hour. This session has been publicized through emails, social media and Stories, and the Ford website.”*

### Closing polls

A series of closing poll questions were asked to help design the session for next year.

*To what extent did this meeting provide the information and insights you desired? (Single choice)*

- Greatly – 80%
- Adequately – 20%
- Somewhat – 0%
- Not enough – 0%

*What factors contribute to your feeling of connection to The Ford's work? (Select all that apply)*

- Attending performances – 68%
- Data on who is performing and attending performances – 64%
- Reports from staff about accomplishments and challenges – 50%
- Learning about the values that drive decision-making – 50%
- Hearing from others about their experiences with The Ford – 59%
- Receiving updates and information from The Ford – 45%
- Media coverage and social media presence – 36%

This year, leadership and consultants extended the meeting from 1.5 hours to 2 hours based on topics and questions raised at previous meetings. Some participants noted that they were not able to clear two hours in their schedules, while others were able to remain for the full session.

How do you feel about the length of this meeting?

- Too long – 64%
- Just right – 36%
- Too short – 0%



# Community Engagement Session

SEPTEMBER 2024



1

# Kawé'nga Cahuennga

A PLACE OF MOUNTAINS

We acknowledge the Gabrielino Tongva, Gabrielino Kizh, and Fernandeño Tataviam Nations as the traditional stewards of the land now called The Ford. We honor and respect the many indigenous peoples connected to this land and express our admiration for their resilient and important cultural leaders in our region—past, present, and future.

The Ford is a County of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation performance venue operated by LA Phil.



2




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# Opening Dialogue

Your Current Relationship with The Ford

Provide Clarity Around Our Mission

Familiarity with Our Goals



4

# Your Relationship with The Ford:

Understanding what makes participants feel engaged allows us to serve the community better.



5

# Approach



## Cultural Equity & Inclusion

The Ford's role in LA County's larger arts ecosystem reflects its commitment to cultural equity, community engagement.

## Creative Pathways & Youth Development

Strategies like creative career pathways for youth resonate with The Ford's apprenticeship programs.

## Focus on Local Creatives

Expanding support for artists and community-based programming mirrors FordLab's mission to elevate local artists

## Community Identity & Audiences

Expanding support for artists in civic spaces and community-based programming mirrors FordLab's mission to elevate local artists



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# What to Expect Today

2024 Season

Sensory Inclusion & KultureCity

Community Residencies Youth & Adult Professional Training

FordLab & Programming Partnerships

Ticket Access: Partnerships & Outreach

Audiences Outreach & Engagement



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Jackeline Rodriguez  
LENI BOORSTIN COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT FELLOW



Gaby Hernandez  
COORDINATOR, THE FORD



Gina Leoni  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF  
OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS



Nora Brady  
CHIEF MARKETING &  
COMMUNICATION OFFICER



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# Clarity of The Ford's Mission:

Community Engagement feedback  
is crucial in helping us understand  
community priorities



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## 2024 Season

ONLY IN LA.  
ONLY AT THE FORD.



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# A Stage For Stories



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# Sensory Zone



1 in 4  
individuals have a  
sensory need or an  
invisible disability

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# Sensory Zone

Opportunities for Neurodivergent Youth Engagement In family programing

Implementation of sensory forward activities around Tactile, Visual, Auditory and Proprioception dedicated Zone.

Work towards implement for a broader age target during evening programs

KultureCity Engagement and Venue Certification



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# Community Residencies: Youth /Adult Professional Training



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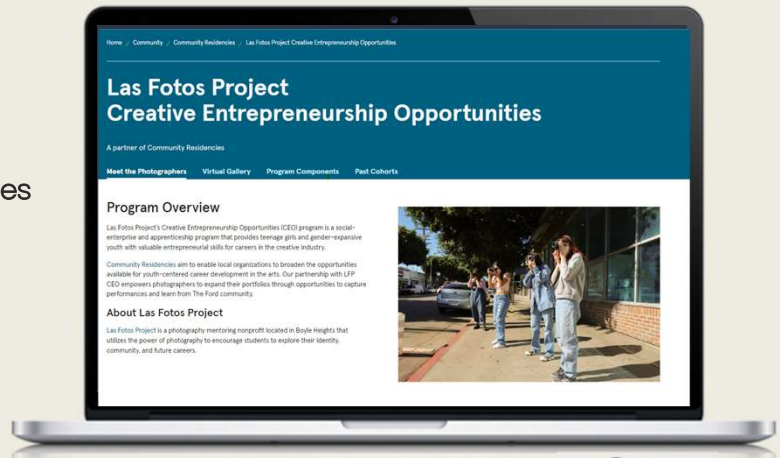
# Building a Portfolio:

## Creative Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Our social-enterprise and apprenticeship program  
Where our young photographers can see their work on socials, website, brochures and on a rotating backstage gallery at The Ford.

## Creative Career Center

Piloting Photojournalist collaboration with photographers/writers and FordLab Partners to detail their behind-the-scenes journey to the stage.



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# IATSE Local 33 The Beckmen YOLA Center Workforce Development Program

- Job shadowing and training from LA Phil Production Team and IATSE stagehands
- Paid training hours
- 401k contributions, Pension Plan contribution and Health and Welfare Benefits through IATSE



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## FordLab & Community Producers



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# FordLab & Community Producers



Recruitment & Cross County Outreach

Fostering Connection

Values and Priorities Alignment

Professional Development

Evaluation and Feedback



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# FordLab & Community Producers

“Even though I’ve been on producing teams for many years, as a first-time, fully independent producer I’m learning a new landscape in terms of details and process that producers like me aren’t usually exposed to. I’m grateful to the Ford and Phil for understanding this and seeing the importance of my growth and more importantly, the importance of seeing more of my community on stage and in the seats.”

Kat Carrido Bonds  
Island Woman Rise, AKB Media



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# Ticket Access: Partnerships & Outreach



The Ford offered tickets to 26 out of 40 (67%) performances in the 2024 Season.

### Partners & Process

- Neighborhood Distribution
- Department of Parks & Recreation Partnership
- Internal Efforts and Partnership with Supervisorial Districts

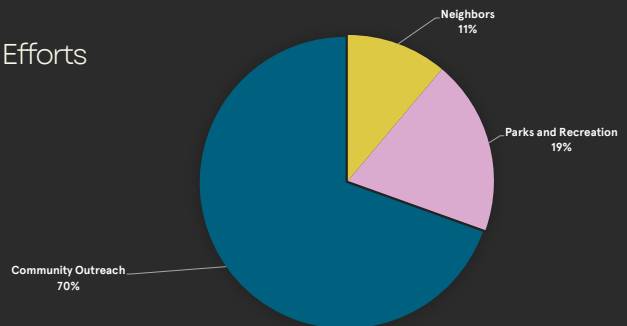
### Goal Alignment:

- In 2024, organizational outreach increased by 351% , largely due to the engagement of County

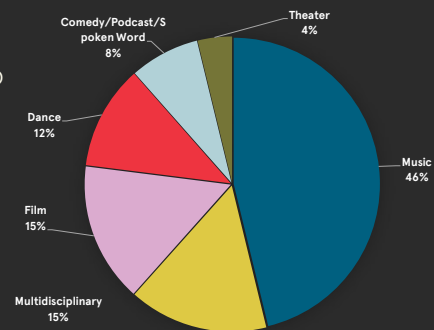


# Ticket Access: Partnerships & Outreach

### Outreach Efforts



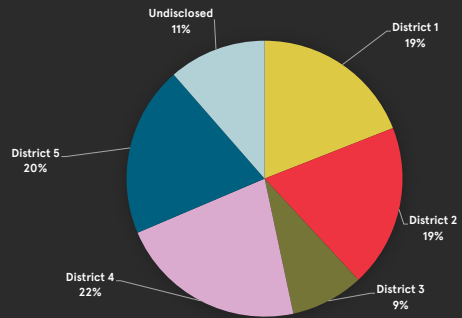
### What They Came to



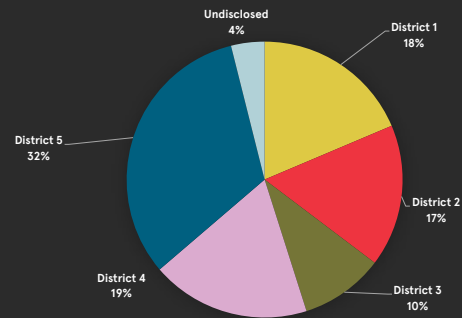
# Ticket Access: Partnerships & Outreach



Outreach by District



Distribution by District



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# Ticket Access: Partnerships & Outreach

"I can't thank you both enough for providing those tickets to my team and my youth, for last weeks show the just and the blind. It was phenomenal and so inspiring in many ways. After the show we couldn't stop talking about how amazing it was and how the youth felt so connected to it."

Melanie Buttarazzi  
Fostering Dreams Project



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# Who Are We Reaching



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## Audience Demographics

	FD24 (to date)	FD23	FD22	FD21	LA COUNTY
Gender	49% Female 51% Male	48% Female 52% Male	50% Female 50% Male	50% Female 50% Male	51% Female 49% Male
Average Age	50	53	51	52	37*
Marital Status	50% Married	54% Married	44% Married	43% Married	42% Married
Ethnicity	42% Caucasian 8% Asian 38% Hispanic / Latinx 7% African American	47% Caucasian 6% Asian 36% Hispanic / Latinx 6% African American	42% Caucasian 5% Asian 40% Hispanic / Latinx 6% African American	48% Caucasian 7% Asian 32% Hispanic / Latinx 7% African American	26% Caucasian 16% Asian 49% Hispanic / Latinx 8% African American
Education	51% College degree	54% College degree	57% College degree+	57% College degree+	35% College degree+
Income	77% \$100K+	78% \$100K+	77% \$100K+	77% \$100K+	\$83K*



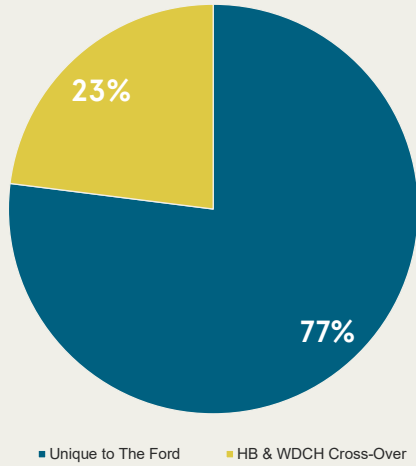
\* Median

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# Audience by Venue and Districts

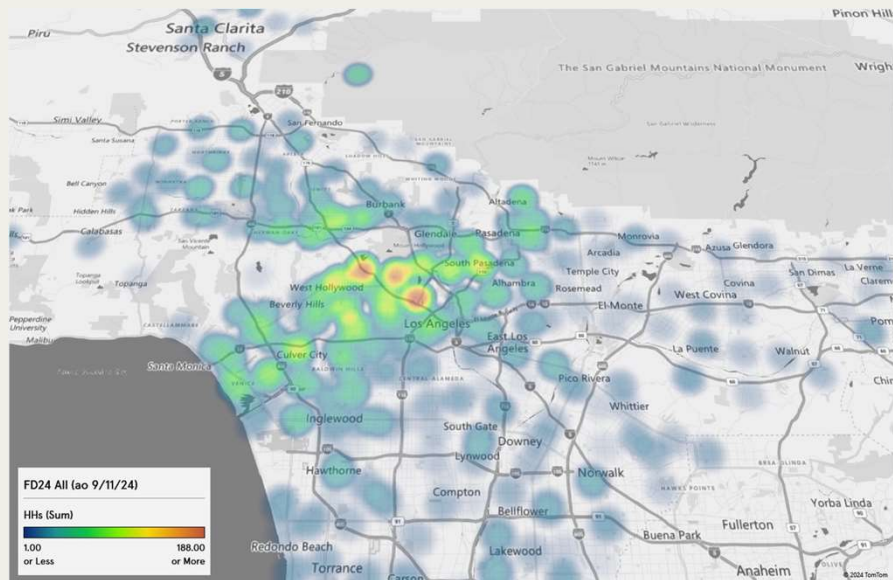
FD24 Total HH (to date)



FORD AUDIENCE	
District 1	21%
District 2	18%
District 3	26%
District 4	10%
District 5	25%



# The Ford 2024 (to date)



## How We Are Reaching



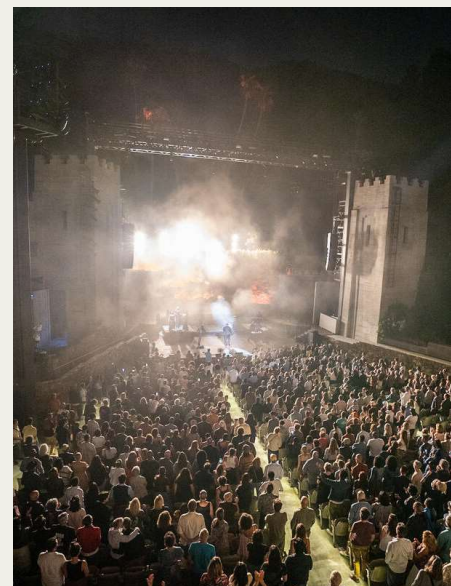
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## Marketing Overview

- We've used a multi-channel strategy to reach a diverse local audience, including **online ads, radio, TV, email campaigns, social media, cultural partnerships, and community engagement.**
- To build season awareness, we've utilized **printed brochures, out-of-home advertising, and high-energy videos** featuring season highlights
- Our community partnerships emphasize **authentic connections with cultural organizations, small businesses, influencers, and diverse programming across LA County.**
- We're targeting past Hollywood Bowl, WDCH, and Ford ticket buyers with consistent **email campaigns, social media, and on-site screens**

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## Audience & Artist Content

- Featured the energy and **diversity of artists** through **video** and **photography** captures, bringing the concert experience to life through **performance content, engaging b-roll, and artist interviews.**
- Showcased the **audience experience** in real time through social media channels, including **Instagram Stories**, capturing everything from **pre-concert activities** and picnicking to the **energy of the concert** itself.
- Celebrated our fans with **audience interviews** featured online and across social channels, showcasing that **The Ford is a place for everyone.**



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## PR to Boost Ford Visibility

- Strategic outreach to **local press** and niche outlets to **target audiences based on interest.**
- Secured coverage from outlets including:
  - [TimeOut LA](#)
  - [We Like L.A.](#)
  - [LAist AirTalk with Larry Mantle](#)
  - [KNBC](#)
  - [Los Angeles Magazine's Best of LA 2024: Best Outdoor Venues](#)
  - ["Morning Becomes Eclectic," KCRW](#)



*"The Ford has the ideal ratio of intimacy to expanse, so we're already guessing at how special these shows will be - but the only way to really know is to be there."*

- KCRW

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## What We Did Differently



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## Expanded Awareness

- Online advertising expanded to include **LA Times Essential Arts newsletters** in support of key programs, i.e. dance.
- **Increased radio advertising** spend by 11% over last season to pique interest and drive awareness.
- **Increased Banners**
  - **Timeline: May through October** covering the pre-season period
  - **Coverage:** Strategic placement **across all 5 districts**, covering a 15-mile radius around The Ford.
  - **Digital Presence: Screens at the at the Hollywood Bowl** complementing physical banners
  - **Integrated Approach:** Pole banners were aligned with our digital efforts, ensuring a cohesive campaign across multiple channels.



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# Partnerships & Community Outreach

- Major community events: expanded presence at **LA Pride Festivals, CicLAvia, Smorgasburg**, HB concerts (Ford Lab partner booth at HB Jazz shows)
- Expanded **influencer partnerships** to amplify our outreach efforts.
- New Retail outlet collaborations: **partnering with local businesses** in key communities to ensure a broader and more diverse reach.
- Enhanced Dance outreach initiatives: a newly formed partnership to help us **connect with the dance community** in Los Angeles.

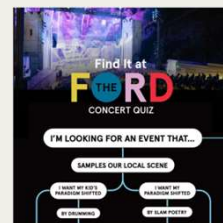


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# Showcasing Artists and Experience

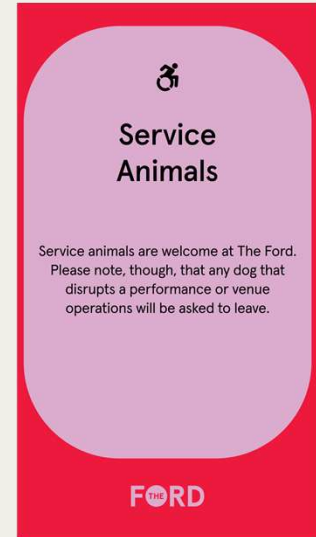
- Created multiple content pieces that **showcase our artists and community** including [Noche de Cumbia documentary](#), [Photo Essays from Las Fotos Project](#), [Vibe Check Listening Guide](#), and [Black History Month Listening Guide](#).
- Developed a **new video series** where Programming team members spotlight every concert and event, and explain why they're excited about it.
- Created "[Find it at The Ford](#)" **online and print quizzes** to **help audiences** find their next concert.
- Enhanced **Venue Guide** with need-to-know information like getting to the venue, dining and picnicking, family-friendly concerts and more.



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## Accessibility & Access

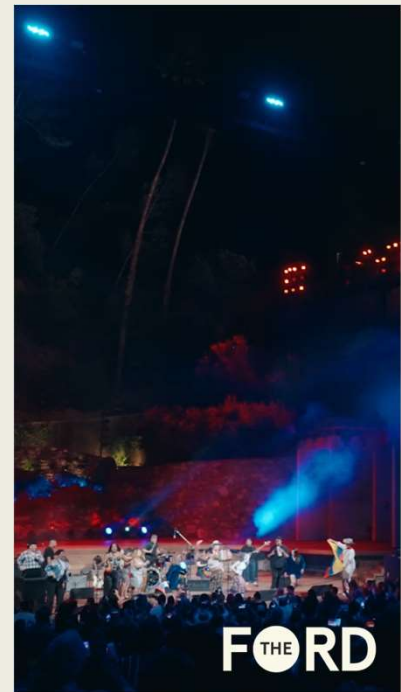
- **Improved language accessibility** with bilingual assets for media and creators to share in preferred languages, plus expanded bilingual Audience Services.
- **Online accessibility:** Continued to uphold WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards on the website while introducing new accessible features, such as the Accessible Design framework—utilized by Google—for enhanced accessibility.
- **Transportation:** Developed content highlighting transportation options, including shuttle services and parking details, to demonstrate that The Ford is easily accessible in Los Angeles.
- **Fee transparency:** Launched the 2024 season with complete fee transparency (months ahead of required legislation).



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## Familiarity with Our Values and Goals

Understanding the level of awareness our values and principals



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