

Ping Chong & Company Three-Year Strategic Transition Plan Analysis

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Arts and Cultural Management

Managerial Decision-Making

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1. Background

Ping Chong and Company (PCC) is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to socially engaged theater. Founded in New York City in 1975 by the visionary theatrical innovator Ping Chong, PCC has long served as a creative home and site of experimentation for multigenerational artists.

Mission & Values

PCC's mission is to create theater and art that reveal beauty, invention, precision, and a commitment to social justice. The organization is guided by core values of Artistic Creativity, Humanity, Equity, Community Building, and Education. Consistent with its 50-year history, PCC remains a creative home that holistically supports the needs of artists of color, prioritizing collaborative leadership and empowering artists to shape the institutional framework their creations inhabit.

Programs

PCC's work is organized into three main pillars: New Work, Engagement, and Archive:

- *New Work*: Large-scale commissioned productions by PCC's Artistic Leaders.
- *Engagement*: This encompasses Undesirable Elements, one of PCC's most enduring and far-reaching projects. It is an ever-expanding series of collaborative, interview-based theater works. Additionally, PCC's education programs, rooted in Undesirable Elements methodologies, offer tools for dialogue and connection, creating supportive spaces for artistic skill-building and joyful discovery through training programs and in universities and K-12 schools.
- *Archive*: This pillar preserves the extensive body of work generated by Founding Artistic Director Ping Chong over his prolific 50-year career.

2. Decision-Making Framework in PCC's Artistic and Organizational Strategy

Ping Chong and Company (PCC) employs a structured decision-making framework that connects its artistic vision, social impact, and operational strategies. This framework consists of three interconnected components:

- Core Themes – The foundational principles that guide PCC's artistic and organizational choices. These themes include **Interdisciplinary Arts, Exploring Social Issues, and Community & Collaboration**. They represent the key areas of focus in PCC's productions and engagements.
- Core Decision Factors – The strategic considerations that shape PCC's approach to creating and sustaining its work. These include **Artistic Mission/Vision, Social Impact, Narrative Strategy, Audience Engagement, and Resources & Funding**. Each decision factor ensures that PCC's work aligns with its values while remaining artistically and financially sustainable.
- Decision-Making Methods – The practical approaches PCC uses to execute its vision. These methods include **Theatrical Experimentation, Community-Based Art, Data & Feedback Adjustments, and Ethical Considerations**. By implementing these strategies, PCC ensures that its productions remain innovative, socially relevant, and financially viable.

Case Studies of Decision-Making in PCC Productions

Interdisciplinary Arts: The Case of Lazarus 1972–2022

As part of PCC's commitment to artistic innovation, *Lazarus 1972–2022* exemplifies the organization's Interdisciplinary Arts theme. This production revisits and reinterprets Ping Chong's early work, integrating historical materials with contemporary experimental techniques.

- Core Decision Factors:
 - Artistic Mission/Vision: PCC sought to honor its founder's artistic legacy while evolving toward a new theatrical language.
 - Narrative Strategy: By blending archival footage, movement, and experimental staging, *Lazarus 1972–2022* serves as a bridge between past and present.
 - Audience Engagement: The production attracted both longtime PCC audiences familiar with Ping Chong's work and new audiences drawn to innovative, interdisciplinary performance.
- Decision-Making Methods
 - Theatrical Experimentation: The production incorporated adaptive staging techniques, multimedia integration, and movement-based performance.
 - Data & Feedback Adjustments: The Artistic Leadership Team (ALT) utilized peer reviews and audience responses to refine the production, ensuring its relevance to contemporary viewers.

This approach demonstrates PCC's ability to preserve its artistic heritage while embracing new creative directions, reinforcing its commitment to interdisciplinary storytelling.

Exploring Social Issues: The Case of Undesirable Elements

A cornerstone of PCC's social impact initiatives, *Undesirable Elements* is a documentary theater series that elevates underrepresented narratives. This long-standing project embodies the

Exploring Social Issues theme by amplifying the voices of immigrants, disabled individuals, and marginalized communities through personal storytelling.

- Core Decision Factors:
 - Social Impact: Each iteration of *Undesirable Elements* is created in collaboration with community members, ensuring authentic representation of lived experiences.
 - Audience Engagement: The project's interview-based approach fosters a direct connection between performers and audiences, making it a powerful tool for social awareness and change.
 - Resources & Funding: PCC strategically aligns *Undesirable Elements* with grant-based funding models, securing support from institutions like the Mellon Foundation and Howard Gilman Foundation.
- Decision-Making Methods:
 - Community-Based Art: The project is co-created with local participants, embedding their personal narratives into the performance.
 - Ethical Considerations: Given the sensitive nature of the stories, PCC employs trauma-informed storytelling techniques and strict consent protocols to ensure ethical representation.

Through *Undesirable Elements*, PCC continues its mission of using theater as a platform for social dialogue, fostering community engagement through storytelling.

Community & Collaboration: Senior Program & K-12 School Education

Beyond its stage productions, PCC actively fosters community engagement through long-term educational and participatory initiatives. These programs reflect the Community &

Collaboration theme, ensuring that PCC's work extends beyond performances and into real-world impact through intergenerational learning and artistic mentorship.

Creative Aging Program

PCC's Creative Aging Program engages older adults in storytelling workshops and theater-based activities that encourage creative self-expression and connection. This initiative aligns with PCC's broader commitment to lifelong learning and community-based artistic experiences.

- Core Decision Factors:
 - Social Impact: The program provides a platform for seniors to share their life experiences, fostering intergenerational connections and reducing social isolation.
 - Resources & Funding: PCC secures grant funding from cultural institutions and aging-focused organizations to sustain the program.
- Decision-Making Methods:
 - Community-Based Art: Sessions are co-designed with participants, ensuring that the narratives and creative outputs are meaningful to the seniors involved.
 - Ethical Considerations: The program is developed using trauma-informed storytelling approaches, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for participants sharing personal memories.

By engaging older adults in theatrical storytelling and creative expression, PCC's Senior Program reinforces the idea that artistic participation is lifelong, fostering community-building through shared narratives.

K-12 School Education & Artist Residencies

PCC's education initiatives bring socially engaged theater to K-12 schools, providing students with tools for self-expression, storytelling, and social awareness. The program is rooted in the Undesirable Elements methodology, allowing students to explore personal identity, cultural heritage, and social justice issues through theater.

- Core Decision Factors:
 - Narrative Strategy: The program integrates personal storytelling with theatrical techniques, helping students develop confidence and communication skills.
 - Audience Engagement: By working directly with students, educators, and artists, PCC cultivates long-term partnerships with schools and community organizations.
- Decision-Making Methods:
 - Community-Based Art: Students participate in interview-based theater, sharing their own stories while engaging with the narratives of their peers.
 - Data & Feedback Adjustments: PCC collects teacher and student feedback to refine the curriculum, ensuring the program remains relevant and impactful.

Through its K-12 residencies, PCC empowers young people to use theater as a medium for self-expression and advocacy, strengthening its legacy of community-centered storytelling.

3. Three-Year Strategic Transition Plan

Description

Ping Chong and Company (PCC) embarked on a three-year strategic transition plan starting in 2022, following the retirement of its founder, Ping Chong, and longtime executive director, Bruce Allardice. This transition aims to redefine PCC's leadership, operations, and artistic vision while preserving its legacy and evolving into a more collaborative, sustainable

organization. The transition focuses on integrating a five-person Artistic Leadership Team (ALT) and fostering a non-hierarchical, artist-centered management model.

PCC partnered with P.S. 314, a social change consulting agency known for its tailored approach to organizational development. The consulting team facilitated a rigorous assessment, engaging PCC staff, board members, and external experts in a series of visioning sessions, focus groups, and strategic discussions. The primary goal was to establish a foundation for PCC's future by addressing key organizational challenges and opportunities.

Throughout this process, five core values and five strategic pillars were defined to guide the strategic direction and frame its long-term sustainability:

Five Core Values

- **Artistic Creativity** – Ensuring innovation and artistic excellence remain at the core of PCC's work.
- **Equity** – Embodying social justice in both internal policies and external artistic practices.
- **Humanity** – Centering diverse voices and lived experiences in storytelling and organizational development.
- **Community-Building** – Strengthening meaningful connections through artistic and educational programming.
- **Education** – Sustaining a culture of learning, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing within the organization.

Five Strategic Pillars

- **Artistry** – Ensuring artistic excellence, innovation, and the evolution of PCC's creative vision.

- Organizational Development – Establishing leadership structures and processes that support sustainability.
- Equity – Embedding equitable practices across all aspects of PCC’s work.
- Resource Development & Communication – Strengthening financial sustainability and external engagement.
- Board Development – Expanding and refining board roles to support long-term growth.

Besides, to ensure the effective implementation of this strategic plan, PCC established key support structures to provide guidance, expertise, and accountability.

Strategic Plan Recommendation

- **Advisory Committee:** A group of experienced stakeholders tasked with providing strategic oversight and ensuring the sustainability of PCC’s mission.
- **Artistic Chair:** A leadership position dedicated to guiding the artistic vision of PCC in collaboration with staff and external partners.
- **Consulting Expertise:** Ongoing engagement with professional consultants to support leadership development, organizational restructuring, and equity-driven strategic initiatives.

Objectives

The transition period is structured into three phases, each with specific goals:

Year 1 (2022-2023) – Foundation & Experimentation

- Transition from a singular Artistic Chair model to a five-person Artistic Leadership Team (ALT).
- Establish leadership structures that support collective decision-making.

- Celebrate Ping Chong's 50-year legacy while initiating the next phase of artistic direction.
- Expand PCC's Undesirable Elements program and strengthen education initiatives.
- Begin the process of archiving and preserving Ping Chong's body of work.

Year 2 (2023-2024) – Integration & Learning

- Fully integrate ALT into both artistic and administrative functions.
- Develop a cohesive artistic vision that honors PCC's legacy while fostering new creative directions.
- Implement experimental programming models to assess PCC's future producing capacity.
- Deepen equity-centered practices and refine governance structures.
- Strengthen resource development, including fundraising and financial sustainability planning.
- Advance PCC's archival strategy in partnership with the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Year 3 (2024-2025) – Execution & Future Vision

- Finalize and implement PCC's long-term artistic leadership model.
- Establish a sustainable organizational framework supporting multigenerational artists.
- Solidify PCC's programming direction, incorporating new commissions and evolving the Undesirable Elements series.
- Develop a financial sustainability model ensuring long-term viability.
- Transition PCC's archives to a digital and institutional repository.
- Complete the transition roadmap and fully integrate PCC's restructured board and leadership model.

4. Three-Year Transition Decision-Making Process (Chronological)

Year One Transition Timeline (March 2022 - July 2023)

Phase 1: Transition Planning & Initial Implementation (March - August 2022)

To support the transition, PCC secured a \$900,000 Mellon Foundation grant, which required a \$300,000 matching commitment. By May 2022, initial transition planning had begun with incoming leadership Jane Jung and Sara Zatz receiving executive coaching.

In June 2022, PCC formed the Strategic Planning Task Force, comprising staff and board members, to oversee the implementation of the transition plan. Monthly task force meetings were initiated to monitor progress and address emerging challenges. By July 2022, the official Year One Transition Period commenced, initially envisioning a singular Artistic Chair model for leadership succession. To facilitate this transition, PCC engaged external consultants in August 2022, including:

- Leading ChangeMakers (Organizational Development)
- Mission Driven Consulting (Fundraising)
- Boo Froebel (Strategic Plan Implementation)

Phase 2: Major Leadership Restructuring & Funding (September 2022 - January 2023)

By September 2022, early discussions revealed that the initial plan for a single Artistic Chair would not adequately support the organization's long-term artistic growth. Instead, PCC made a pivotal decision to adopt a five-person Artistic Leadership Team (ALT) to foster multigenerational collaboration and diverse artistic perspectives. In October 2022, as part of the transition, PCC premiered *Lazarus 1972–2022* at La MaMa, marking Ping Chong's final production as Artistic Director. Financial planning efforts advanced in November 2022, when

PCC secured an additional \$100,000 grant from the Howard Gilman Foundation to support leadership transition implementation. On December 31, 2022, Ping Chong and Bruce Allardice officially retired, completing PCC's shift from a founder-led to a team-led organization.

Following this, in January 2023, PCC publicly announced the first four members of the ALT:

- Nile Harris (Performer/Director)
- Talvin Wilks (Playwright/Dramaturg)
- Jane Jung (Managing Director)
- Sara Zatz (Associate Director)

This announcement coincided with the All Islands Connect Underwater event, a large-scale celebration of Ping and Bruce's careers, marking the official beginning of the new artistic leadership era.

Phase 3: ALT Expansion & Artistic Experiments (February - May 2023)

By February 2023, the ALT began operating as a collective leadership body, setting roles, priorities, and collaborative processes. Additionally, PCC hosted the Undesirable Elements 30th Anniversary Symposium at The New School, further cementing its commitment to legacy preservation.

In May 2023, the ALT reached full capacity with the addition of Mei Ann Teo, a filmmaker, theater director, and dramaturg with deep ties to PCC's artistic legacy. This finalized the five-person leadership team, ensuring a collective artistic vision moving forward.

Phase 4: Artistic and Financial Growth (June 2023 - End of Year 1)

By June 2023, the ALT launched its first publicly curated event, An Extra Ordinary Afternoon, hosted at La MaMa. This event showcased the collective artistic approach of the ALT and reinforced PCC's evolving artistic identity.

Concurrently, PCC initiated a Strategic Communication & Branding Project, securing a \$150,000 grant from the New York Community Trust to fund strategic rebranding efforts.

As Year One concluded in July 2023, PCC had successfully secured \$450,000 of its \$600,000 transition budget goal, leaving a remaining fundraising target of \$150,000. The first year underscored critical learnings about the complexities of transitioning from a singular artistic leader to a collaborative artistic governance model.

Year Two Transition Timeline (July 2023 – June 2024)

Phase 1: Leadership Integration & Organizational Refinement (July – September 2023)

- **Leadership Structure Refinement:** The ALT (Artistic Leadership Team) continued to refine its roles and responsibilities, moving toward a **5-3-1 Decision Model**:
 - **5:** All ALT members guide artistic vision and provide input on financial and operational matters.
 - **3:** Key administrators (Jane Jung, Sara Zatz, and Mei Ann Teo) handle strategic oversight and management accountability.
 - **1:** Managing Director (Jane Jung) leads fiscal stewardship and final decision-making on key financial matters.

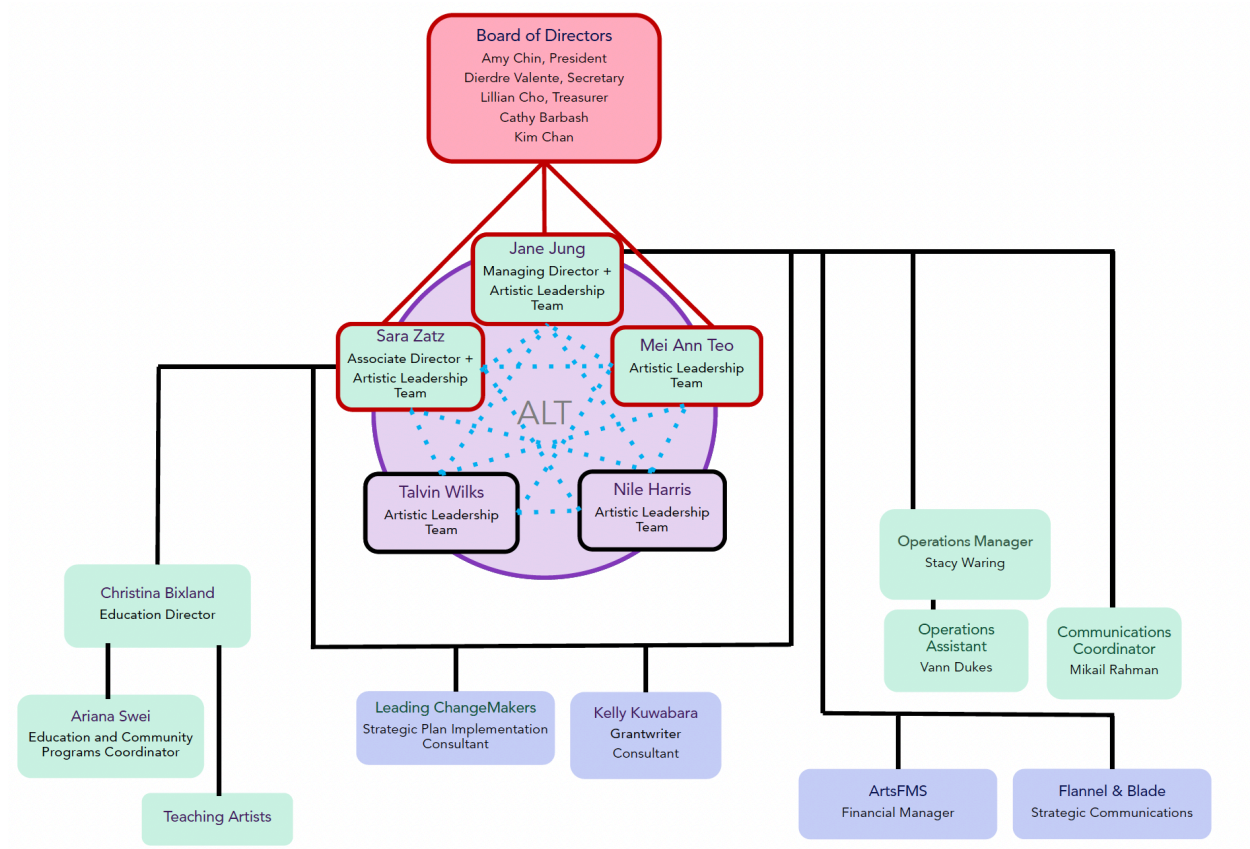


Figure 1. 5-3-1 Decision Model

Additional Structural Components

- **Board of Directors:** Focused on governance, fiscal sustainability, and supporting PCC's long-term vision.
- **Advisory Committee:** Engages key stakeholders, artistic collaborators, and industry experts to provide strategic input.
- **Consulting Experts:** External advisors specializing in organizational development, equity, fundraising, and strategic communications.

This evolving model emphasizes flexibility, inclusivity, and sustainability, ensuring that PCC continues to thrive beyond its transition period while maintaining its legacy of artistic excellence and social impact.

- **New Staff Hires:** PCC hired a part-time Education and Community Programs Coordinator to expand its education initiatives and a part-time Communications Coordinator to support strategic communications and branding efforts.
- **Strategic Communications & Branding:** PCC released an RFP(Request for Proposal) for a strategic communications firm and selected Flannel & Blade to guide the rebranding process, including a new mission, identity, and website.
- **Archival Assessment:** PCC contracted the Winthrop Group to conduct a baseline inventory of Ping Chong's archives and provide recommendations for their transfer to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Phase 2: Artistic Experiments & Community Engagement (October – December 2023)

- **ALT Visioning Retreat:** The ALT held a 3-day off-site retreat to reflect on PCC's mission, assess programming models, and document roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structures. This retreat helped clarify the ALT's collective vision and raised important questions about equitable divisions of labor and long-term sustainability.
- **New Artistic Projects:** PCC supported several new artistic initiatives, including:
 - This house is not a home: A new work by Nile Harris, co-produced with Abrons Arts Center, which had two sold-out runs and received significant press coverage.
 - Beyond Punishment: A justice reform project in collaboration with Kirya Traber and the Justice Beyond Punishment Collaborative, expanding the *Undesirable Elements* model to address issues of incarceration and healing.
- **Equity-Centered Practices:** PCC continued to integrate equity principles into its organizational practices, including staff training, production budgets, and education

programs. The company also began developing a comprehensive HR manual, though this work was delayed to Year 3 due to staffing changes.

- **Fundraising Progress:** PCC raised 285,000 *of the required* 300,000 Mellon Foundation matching funds, including 250,000 foundation support and 35,000 in individual donations.

Phase 3: Operational Strengthening & Board Development (January – March 2024)

- **Operations Manager Hire:** PCC hired Stacy Waring as the new **Operations Manager** in April 2024, providing critical administrative and operational support to the ALT and streamlining day-to-day operations.
- **Board Development:** The Board and ALT engaged in facilitated sessions with Leading ChangeMakers (LCM) to clarify roles, values, and shared governance structures. The Board articulated core values, including Commitment to Mission, Supportiveness, Fiscal Stewardship, and Experimentation, which informed their aspirations for PCC's future.
- **Peer Review Process:** The ALT established a peer-to-peer review process using a modified version of Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process, allowing for feedback and reflection on roles and responsibilities within the team.
- **Archival Progress:** The Winthrop Group completed its archival assessment, and PCC began discussions with the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts about the future transfer of Ping Chong's archives.

Phase 4: Artistic & Financial Growth (April – June 2024)

- **Spring Event: A Communion:** The ALT curated and produced its second annual event, Spring Event: A Communion, at Judson Church. The event celebrated PCC's past,

present, and future through a collective meal ritual and artistic presentations, showcasing the ALT's collaborative approach to leadership.

- **Fundraising Success:** PCC raised the remaining *15,000 needed to meet the Mellon Foundation matching requirement, securing the release of 210,000* in transition grant funds.
- **Strategic Communications:** PCC updated its website to reflect the interim leadership and highlight ongoing artistic and programmatic activity. The company also launched a social media series, *#From the desk of the ALT*, sharing updates from each ALT member about their projects within and outside of PCC.

Year Three Transition Timeline(July 2024 – June 2025)

Phase 1: Leadership Model Finalization & Board Evolution (July – September 2024)

- **Artistic Leadership Model:** The ALT will finalize the long-term artistic leadership model, evaluating the sustainability of the 5-person collective structure and determining how it can support future leaders. Key questions include:
 - How can the ALT model be adapted to support future leaders?
 - What are the non-negotiable values and structures that must be preserved in the post-transition leadership model?
- **Board Development:** The Board will focus on finalizing its Board Book, which documents roles, responsibilities, and best practices. The Board will also begin recruiting new members who align with PCC's vision and bring expertise in key areas such as fundraising, strategic planning, and entrepreneurship.
- **Equity & Organizational Policies:** PCC will finalize its HR manual, codifying equity-centered policies and practices. The organization will also continue to integrate

equity principles into all aspects of its work, from artistic programming to staff development.

Phase 2: Archival Transition & Educational Programming (October – December 2024)

- **Archival Transfer:** PCC will complete the transfer of Ping Chong’s archives to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, ensuring the preservation and activation of his artistic legacy.
- **Educational Programming:** PCC will explore opportunities to use the archives for educational programming, furthering its mission to engage with diverse communities and audiences.
- **Fundraising & Sustainability Planning:** PCC will develop a comprehensive fundraising plan that balances earned and contributed income, ensuring the organization’s financial stability beyond the transition period. Key priorities include cultivating individual donors and exploring earned revenue opportunities through contracted services and ticket sales.

Phase 3: Strategic Communications & Branding Launch (January – March 2025)

- **New Mission & Identity:** PCC will launch its new mission, identity, and website in 2025, marking the culmination of its strategic communications and rebranding efforts with Flannel & Blade.
- **Messaging & Storytelling:** The organization will refine its messaging and storytelling to ensure that its transition story resonates with stakeholders and audiences, highlighting PCC’s evolution from a founder-led to a team-led organization.

Phase 4: Post-Transition Vision & Sustainability (April – June 2025)

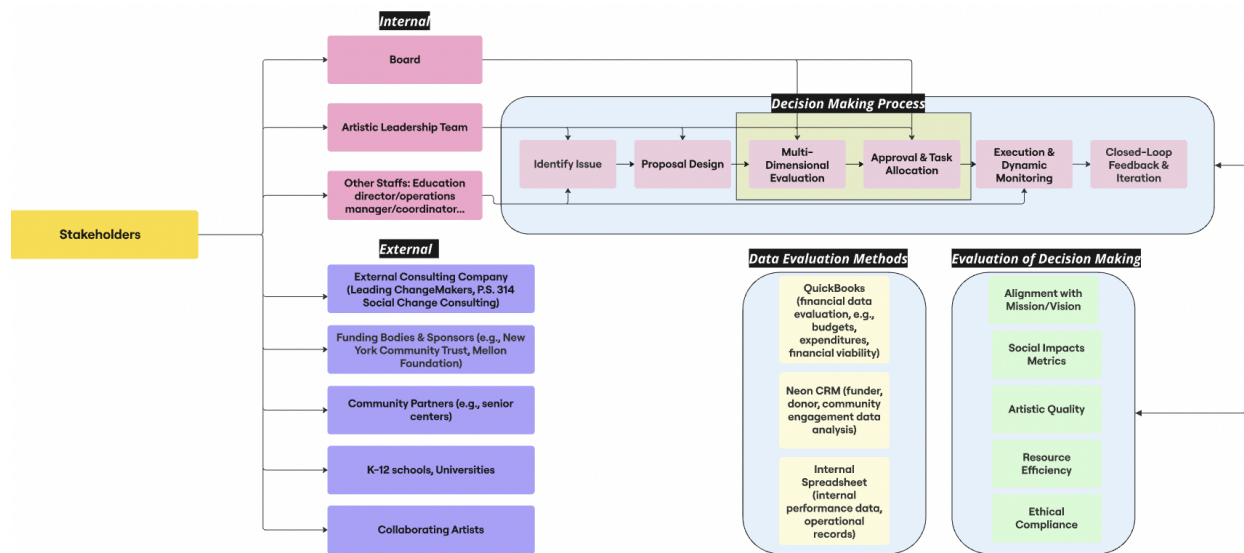
- **Post-Transition Vision:** PCC will articulate a clear vision for its future, honoring Ping Chong's legacy while embracing new voices, forms, and collaborations. This vision will guide PCC's programming and artistic direction beyond the transition period.
- **Sustainability Planning:** PCC will finalize its long-term sustainability plan, ensuring that the organization has the financial and operational resources needed to thrive in its new era. Key initiatives include:
 - Cultivating a robust base of individual donors.
 - Exploring opportunities for earned income through contracted services, ticket sales, and archive-based programming.
 - Finalizing the Board's role in supporting PCC's long-term sustainability through fundraising and strategic oversight.

5. Conclusion

PCC successfully addressed key challenges in leadership succession, organizational development, and financial sustainability through a structured and phased approach. By creating a five-person ALT, PCC strengthened its commitment to equity, artistic excellence, and community engagement. As seen in the case study, the transition process demonstrated the organization's ability to balance legacy with innovation. Additionally, PCC's investments in educational programs, community arts, and interdisciplinary storytelling highlighted its role as a catalyst for social change. As the transition enters its final phase, PCC is well-positioned to sustain its mission through strategic fundraising, board development, and the completion of the archive transfer. Its transition provides an effective example of both creative and social impact work for other arts organizations undergoing leadership transitions.

Appendix

Decision-Making Process Flow Chart



The decision-making framework consists of six key stages:

1. Identifying an Issue – Internal stakeholders, including the Board, Artistic Leadership Team, and operational staff, recognize challenges or opportunities requiring action.
2. Proposal Design – Potential solutions are formulated and structured into actionable plans.
3. Multi-Dimensional Evaluation – The feasibility, impact, and alignment of the proposal with organizational goals are assessed. This step is enhanced by incorporating data evaluation methods to provide objective insights.
4. Approval & Task Allocation – Once evaluated, proposals are approved, and responsibilities are assigned to relevant teams.
5. Execution & Dynamic Monitoring – Projects are implemented with ongoing oversight to ensure adaptability to emerging challenges.

6. Closed-Loop Feedback & Iteration – A continuous improvement cycle incorporates stakeholder insights and project outcomes to refine decision-making and operational processes.

Integration of Data Evaluation Methods

To enhance decision-making effectiveness, the organization employs data evaluation methods to track financial performance, stakeholder engagement, and internal operations. These tools include:

- QuickBooks – Used for financial data evaluation, including budget management, expenditure tracking, and financial viability analysis.
- Neon CRM – A key resource for managing funder and donor data, tracking community engagement, and assessing outreach effectiveness.
- Internal Spreadsheets – Utilized for monitoring internal performance metrics and maintaining operational records.

By leveraging these tools, the organization ensures that decisions are informed by quantitative and qualitative data, increasing transparency and accountability.

Evaluation of Decision-Making Effectiveness

To assess the quality and impact of its decisions, PCC employs a set of evaluation criteria:

- Alignment with Mission/Vision – Ensuring that all decisions contribute to the organization's core objectives.
- Social Impact Metrics – Measuring the broader community and societal impact of initiatives.
- Artistic Quality – Evaluating the creative and cultural contributions of projects.

- Resource Efficiency – Assessing the optimal use of financial, human, and technological resources.
- Ethical Compliance – Ensuring that all decision-making adheres to ethical and legal standards.

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