



# STATE ARTS PLAN

2015-2017

A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ohio Arts Council's *STATE ARTS PLAN: 2015-2017* continues to serve as a sector-wide strategic plan to guide the development of Ohio's arts and cultural sector, including the work of the Council. Four interrelated foundational principles – or *action areas* – underpin the plan, forming the basis of the work the agency and its partners, grantees, and collaborators will undertake over three years: INVEST, ENGAGE, INNOVATE, and LEAD.

Within each action area, key objectives are outlined to guide investment and innovation activities, policy development, program prioritization, and resource deployment. This plan anchors the agency's work toward successfully realizing a vision for strengthening the arts in Ohio.

# INVEST

## Make bold, smart investments in the arts and culture

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

#### **A. Secure adequate state, federal, and other resources to support Ohio’s arts and culture sector**

##### objectives

1. Funding opportunities are researched and leveraged for the benefit of the agency and its constituents.
2. Successful state-level funding allows the agency to invest in a higher overall percentage of applicant requests.
3. Agency work and outcomes continue to be recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts as among the best in the nation.
4. Mission-driven partnerships with other funding entities lead to increased resources.

#### **B. Commit public resources to invest in and support the work of Ohio artists and organizations in an equitable, transparent, and accessible manner**

##### objectives

1. Consistent and flexible funding is provided to support the operating activities of nonprofit creative sector organizations.
2. A modernized online grant application and adjudication process results in an improved user experience, more robust reporting and communication capability, enhanced data security, and reduced costs for review and assessment.
3. Agency funding increases in diversity to better represent underserved communities and constituent groups in grant-making.
4. Individual creative expression and entrepreneurship are supported through funding and resources.
5. Constituent participation in the Cultural Data Project is evaluated to maximize the use of resulting data and right-size reporting burdens.

#### **C. Assess and improve all aspects of agency funding, services, and processes on an ongoing basis to better reflect constituent needs, goals, and outcomes**

##### objectives

1. Program efficiency and vitality are informed by grant-making trend analysis and examination of relevant models from all sectors.
2. Constituent and stakeholder feedback informs the design of grant programs, services, processes, and resources, resulting in improved applicant satisfaction.
3. Individual artist grant-making is evaluated to improve efficiency and long-term impact.
4. Deliberate reflection is integrated into ongoing agency work, resulting in continually revitalized strategic planning processes, program adaptation, and responsiveness to constituents.

# ENGAGE

**Spark authentic arts dialogue and idea-sharing among the general public and the agency's constituents and stakeholders**

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

### **A. Discover, develop, and share clear, compelling, and timely messages about the positive impact of the arts and creativity**

#### objectives

1. Messaging and branding are refocused agency-wide to deliver consistent and compelling tone and voice in all media formats.
2. A strategic and comprehensive plan guides agency communications, including all digital, social, and print media content.
3. Agency communications feature constituent success stories and best practices, increasing the visibility of the impact of the arts and creativity.
4. Dynamic messaging tools are available for use by constituents, board, and staff.

### **B. Coordinate, provide, and promote capacity building and professional development opportunities for individuals and organizations**

#### objectives

1. Professional learning opportunities are designed to align with constituent needs at various points of career development and in many organizational roles.
2. Agency approach to constituent capacity building is reassessed, with redevelopment focused on topical and up-to-date resources, needs assessment, and sharing best practices.
3. Online affinity groups, peer networks, and other learning pathways between and among organizations and their staff members are established.
4. Internal staff professional development will be intentional, systematic, and designed to improve service delivery and constituent interaction.

### **C. Convene a wide variety of constituents on an ongoing basis to identify and discuss arts-related trends, needs, research, and other topics**

#### objectives

1. Agency staff and board members regularly visit Ohio communities to meet with local artists and administrators, share information, gather feedback, and highlight local successes.
2. Peer groups of arts colleagues are convened regularly to share best practices, exchange ideas, and discuss other relevant topics.
3. A re-invigorated statewide conference is designed and hosted by the agency on a regular basis.

### **D. Provide the highest level of accessible customer service to constituents and all members of the public**

#### objectives

1. Staff cross-training is implemented to improve communication, responsiveness to constituents, and product fluency.
2. Staff members provide timely, accurate, and accessible service to the public.
3. New and more instructive metrics are developed to more accurately measure customer satisfaction with OAC programs, services, processes, and resources.

# INNOVATE

## Drive Ohio's arts community toward forward-looking creative evolution

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

#### **A. Encourage experimentation and risk-taking designed to improve the accessibility, affordability, and diversity of arts experiences**

##### objectives

1. Grant programs reward applicants' creative problem-solving in improving program design, accessibility, and affordability.
2. Creative economic development projects are supported via a flexible review process tailored to attract projects of varying sizes, genres, and anticipated outcomes.
3. Dedicated funding is provided for pilot projects designed to present arts experiences in unexpected ways or in non-traditional venues.
4. Collaborative projects are supported resulting in the creation of new works across all artistic genres.

#### **B. Support the design of new models and exploratory approaches to engage new arts audiences**

##### objectives

1. Evaluation criteria in all grant programs consider the sophistication and appropriateness of applicants' audience engagement strategies, including minimizing barriers to participation.
2. A central, agency-wide artist roster is created to consolidate current listings across all genres into a single resource that links creative talent with entities interested in engaging and hiring artists.
3. Resources culled from local, state, and national data are compiled to provide arts organizations' staff and boards with exploratory new approaches to audience engagement.
4. Agency research is conducted to adapt strategies used in other sectors, including customer experience design, for use in the arts and cultural sector.

#### **C. Recognize the impact and interaction of creative economic development and creative expression**

##### objectives

1. Locally driven, authentic creative place-making activities are supported in Ohio communities.
2. Creative economy research, trends, and impact stories are collected and promoted.
3. Public and private sector partners collaborate on programming including an "Innovation Works" campaign that highlights the value of creative expression and creative economic development.
4. Local arts councils and centers develop programs connecting local artists and arts organizations with businesses.

#### **D. Modernize the agency's development and use of technology**

##### objectives

1. The agency's website is redesigned to be interactive, user-friendly, and up-to-date.
2. Accessible online interactive mapping describes grantees, supported activities, and agency programs.
3. Technology is used to promote festivals, showcase constituent events, and provide real-time data on arts events.
4. A collaboration with state and national partners is launched to design web-based tools that measure the quantity and quality of arts education in Ohio's schools.
5. Strategic IT planning guides staff skill-building and equipment purchasing, positioning the agency for sustainable technological proficiency.

# LEAD

## Play an active leadership role in the ongoing development of Ohio's arts and cultural sector.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

#### A. Cultivate valuable relationships among leaders at all levels in the public, private, and nonprofit arts and cultural sectors

##### objectives

1. Successful models in advancing local leadership development are adapted to build capacity in emerging – as well as established – community leaders.
2. State and national agency directors engage with OAC board and staff leadership to explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

#### B. Develop and leverage mission-driven strategic partnerships and collaborations

##### objectives

1. Statewide arts and cultural service organizations are supported in their key role within the state's arts and cultural ecosystem.
2. Partnerships are formed with state and regional organizations to improve the efficiency, reach, and impact of agency arts education programs.
3. Cross-promotional efforts position the arts at the center of Ohio tourism and development efforts.

#### C. Work to shape arts, education, and cultural policy

##### objectives

1. State and federal policy and legislation affecting the arts will be monitored and, when appropriate, the OAC will provide counsel to improve its development.
2. The agency will be a responsive and reliable resource for policymakers and citizen advocates looking for information on the arts and their impact.
3. The agency's *Guidelines* policy document is streamlined to focus on applicants' intended outcomes.

#### D. Improve the ability of individuals and organizations to measure and communicate their value and impact

##### objectives

1. Arts participation data is collected, analyzed, and disseminated for the purpose of informing future practice, programming, and policy.
2. Training and tools enable artists and organizations to better share their impact and value.
3. Individual artist and organizational grantees provide details of their impact for use in enhancing existing – or creating new – resources.

#### E. Enhance and invigorate agency visibility, vitality, and assets

##### objectives

1. Flagship agency events are evaluated to maximize effectiveness, vitality, and relevance.
2. Students and other emerging leaders pursuing careers in arts education, arts administration, or public policy engage with the agency through internship and administrative fellowship opportunities.
3. Public meeting practices and protocols, including signage, technology, and presentation resources, are upgraded to reflect the professionalism associated with agency branding and messaging.

The 2014 development that preceded the launch of the **STATE ARTS PLAN: 2015-2017** included board and staff prioritization exercises, guided reflection, statewide surveys, focus groups, facilitated planning sessions, and strategic research into public and constituent opinion.

## METHODOLOGY

- ▷ **Online survey** completed by **5,782** individuals from **all 88 Ohio counties**, including more than 1,600 current or former grantees or their representatives
- ▷ **Engagement Tour visits** made to **23 organizations** in **five Ohio communities**
- ▷ **Engagement Tour conversations** held with more than **500 people** to celebrate the arts in their communities and share ideas about the future
- ▷ **In-depth focus groups and one-on-one interviews** conducted with **42 arts leaders** from **16 Ohio communities** all over the state

## FINDINGS

- ▷ Ohioans **overwhelmingly support public funding** of the arts and arts education, including both arts organizations and individuals.
- ▷ Ohioans derive **personal, educational, and community benefits** from participating in the arts and engaging in creative expression.
- ▷ Ohioans want **high-quality, affordable arts experiences** that provide educational value and take place close to home.
- ▷ Agency constituents want **visibility, clear messaging, and credible research** to guide state and local policy development, as well as targeted professional development and technological innovation.

## GET INVOLVED

Join us in improving Ohio through the arts and culture!

- ▷ **Host** an Ohio Arts Council professional development session, community cultural planning session, or networking event in your community.
- ▷ **Nominate** a Governor's Awards winner, Ohio Poet Laureate, or Ohio Heritage Fellow.
- ▷ **Learn** how to host an artist in residence in your community, what arts events are coming up nearby, or what current research says about the impact of the arts and culture.
- ▷ **Serve** as an OAC panelist, or nominate a colleague.
- ▷ **Join** the conversation online at our ArtsOhio blog, social media feeds, or next webinar.
- ▷ **Contact us** for more information about upcoming funding opportunities, Riffe Gallery exhibitions, professional development opportunities, panel meeting dates, or to learn more about any of the goals or objectives outlined in the State Arts Plan.