

North Carolina Arts Council Strategic Plan: An Overview

2025 – 2029



North
Carolina
Arts
Council



Planning Process and Methods

This has been a year of information gathering. Early in 2024, each staff member wrote a summary of their work priorities (internal, external, or both), the current condition of their fields, and the issues that the plan needed to address. We shared a compilation of those summaries with our board's strategic planning committee. From this early analysis, we identified three lines of inquiry, each with a different method of gathering relevant information and data. Later, we added an ambitious fourth track investigating support for individual artists, but because we could not complete the research prior to the plan's publication, we made data collection for that track a strategy within the plan. In response to the devastation of Hurricane Helene, we added one more track specific to recovery in western North Carolina.

I. Grassroots Arts Program

- a. Hired Sara Peterson Consulting to evaluate the program, focusing on:
 - Understanding the needs of local county funding partners as they manage increased funding
 - Aligning the purpose and function of Grassroots with the goals and programs of the N.C. Arts Council, to maximize the contributions of these combined resources to the growth and development of the arts in North Carolina
- b. Met twice with an advisory committee of seven highly successful local arts council directors, representing small and large organizations throughout the state
- c. Administered a comprehensive survey of local arts council directors; collected 74 survey results
- d. Administered a comprehensive survey of subgrantees who had benefited from Grassroots funds at the local level; collected 264 surveys from 49 counties
- e. Conducted 17 interviews with major stakeholders

II. Community Engagement

- a. Hired the Vonsson Group to lead community conversations focusing on the collective experience and aspirational vision of arts leaders of color
- b. Held four in-person and one virtual community meeting, with prompts to gather information about assets, opportunities, and current relationships and networks

III. Arts in Education

- a. Worked with marketing firm Elephant in the Room to facilitate two retreats for staff responsible for the many arts in education products offered across several teams at the N.C. Arts Council

- b. Used current student achievement and school climate data provided by the Friday Center for Innovation in Education, at N.C. State University

We'll use the planning document, honed into five overarching goals, to create policies, funding strategies, and activities that will cultivate and support North Carolina's arts and culture so that they continue to thrive, for the benefit of all North Carolinians. We give special thanks to Nancy Trovillion, former N.C. Arts Council deputy director, who assisted in our strategic planning process.



Summary of the Strategic plan

The following is a summary of the N.C. Arts Council's goals and strategies to guide the growth and secure the sustainability of the state's arts industry.

GOAL I: Bolster North Carolina's Arts and Cultural Sector

- With a newly legislated \$6.3 million budget, reimagine the Grassroots Arts Program and create new procedures and guidelines based on the results of a year-long evaluation. Provide professional development to build the capacity of Grassroots partners and strengthen the local arts council network.
- Increase and expand access to operating and project support grant funding for arts organizations and expand professional development offerings to address the needs of arts leaders.
- Build a comprehensive support structure for individual artists that encompasses grant funding, career growth opportunities, and mentorship programs.
- Research models for addressing the needs of arts facilities in the state, including capital building and renovation funds and local studio rental subsidy programs.

GOAL II: Champion the Arts as Essential to Learning and Student Success

- Continue to build and strengthen the A+ Schools of North Carolina network and provide additional funding for special projects to celebrate the program's thirtieth anniversary year.
- With the North Carolina Arts Foundation, expand private funding sources to minimize the financial burden on A+ Schools participants.
- Build a menu of offerings available to schools and teachers throughout the state that focuses on training to develop and teach arts-integrated curricula, leadership and collaboration, and enriched assessment, as ways to use the arts in classrooms.
- Increase the number of Traditional Arts Programs for Students from 25 to 35 locations, with an emphasis on programs in eastern North Carolina and on diverse cultural traditions.
- Reimagine cARTwheels to be a roster of skilled teaching artists and arts groups hired directly by the Arts Council to provide curriculum-based arts programs in schools in underserved areas.
- Bring together leaders of arts-based youth development organizations to document the collective impact of those organizations, conduct a needs assessment, and seek private foundation support for operations and research.

GOAL III: Promote the Arts through Partnerships and Marketing

- Develop a marketing plan that includes an updated and more engaging website, publication of annual reports, a new agency brochure and companion video, and multimedia stories highlighting examples of the arts' public benefit and diverse voices.

- Expand partnership with NC Department of Public Instruction to strengthen arts in education opportunities.
- Create collaborative projects with peer agencies in the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, including but not limited to the Music Office, the African American Heritage Commission, and the North Carolina Museum of Art. Identify ways to highlight and promote the arts by participating in America 250 NC.
- Approach the Department of Commerce and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to develop a shared vision for statewide creative placemaking and promote the vital economic and social impact of the state's arts industry.
- Expand private-sector funding for agency priorities through partnerships with the Kenan Institute for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Foundation, and other foundations.
- Develop the Military and Veterans Healing Arts Network and increase funding and resources for arts programs for military service members and veterans and their families. Coordinate with NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to expand impact and capacity.

GOAL IV: Grow the Internal Capacity of the North Carolina Arts Council, to Strengthen the Agency's Impact

- Launch a new combined grants management and database tool to improve and streamline user experience, and capture and aggregate important arts industry data.
- Establish internal evaluation protocols for all agency policies, procedures, and programs annually. Review findings and recommendations for changes at full staff meetings to ensure understanding and promote consensus.
- Continue to host statewide Community Conversations, to build relationships between constituents and agency staff and support local networks and collaborations.

- Prioritize professional staff development by creating individual growth plans and providing quarterly training opportunities. Hold internal, topic-specific focus groups, to encourage a collective vision and collaboration across teams.
- Train new arts leaders through the Historically Black Colleges/Universities and Minority Institutions of Higher Education Summer Internship Program offered by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the Arts Council's Folklife and Arts Administration Internship.
- Create clear expectations, learning opportunities, and points of engagement for North Carolina Arts Council board members. In addition to the standing schedule of in-person meetings, host quarterly virtual meetings with updates from the executive director.

GOAL V: Rebuild Western North Carolina's Creative Sector after Hurricane Helene

- Provide urgent disaster relief funding from private and public sources to western North Carolina's artists and arts organizations affected by Hurricane Helene.
- With local, state, and federal partners, develop a long-term plan to rebuild the region's arts infrastructure, focusing on elements of the creative economy such as creative manufacturing hubs and maker spaces, cultural tourism, and Works Project Administration-style artist employment opportunities for public works.
- Invest in arts programs designed to address the widespread mental health needs of the region's people, who have experienced great loss and change because of the storm.