

North Carolina Arts Council Strategic Plan Summary

2025 – 2029



North
Carolina
Arts
Council



Planning process and methodologies

It has been a year of information gathering. Early in 2024, each staff member provided a written summary of their work priorities (either internal or external), the current condition of their fields, and the issues that needed to be addressed in the plan. The staff document was shared with our Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of North Carolina Arts Council board leadership. From this early analysis, three lines of inquiry were identified, each with a different method to gather relevant information and data in order to proceed with planning. An ambitious fourth track about support for individual artists was also identified, but we were not able to complete the research prior to the plan's publication so the data collection became a specific strategy within the plan. In response to the devastation of Hurricane Helene, we added a fifth goal specific to recovery in western North Carolina.

I. Grassroots Arts Program

- a. Hired Sara Peterson Consulting to lead the Grassroots evaluation focusing on:
 - Understanding the needs of local county funding partners in managing increased funding.
 - Aligning the purpose and function of Grassroots with the goals and programs of N.C. Arts Council to maximize the impact of these combined resources for the future 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 for local arts council directors; collected 74 survey results.
- d. Administered a comprehensive survey for subgrantees who had benefited from Grassroots funds at the local level; collected 264 surveys from 49 counties.
- e. Conducted 17 interviews with key stakeholders.

II. Community engagement

- a. Hired the Vonsson Group to lead a series of 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. Hired marketing firm Elephant in 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. Utilized current student achievement and school climate data provided by the Friday Center for Innovation in Education at NC State University.

The planning document, honed into five overarching goals, will be used to create policies, funding strategies, and activities that will cultivate and support a thriving and sustainable arts and culture community that benefits all North Carolinians.



North Carolina Arts Council Strategic Plan summary

The following is a summary of the N.C. Arts Council’s goals and key strategies to guide the future growth and 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, re-imagine the Grassroots Arts Program and create new procedures and guidelines based on the results of a year-long evaluation. Provide professional development to build 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 needs of arts leaders.
- Build a comprehensive support structure for individual artists that includes grant funding, career growth opportunities, and mentorship programs.

- Research models for addressing the state’s arts facilities needs 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 NC network and provide additional funding for special projects in recognition of the program’s 30th anniversary year.
- With the North Carolina Arts Foundation, expand private funding sources to minimize the financial burden on network schools.
- Build a menu of offerings available to schools and teachers throughout the state, focusing on arts integrated curriculum training, leadership and collaboration, and enriched assessment as ways to utilize the arts in the classroom.
- Increase the number of Traditional Arts Programs for Students to 35 with an emphasis on programs in the east 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 the group, 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 engaging web site, publication of annual reports, a new agency brochure and companion video, and multi-media stories highlighting examples of the arts’ public benefit and diverse voices.

- Create collaborative projects with DNCR peer agencies including but not limited to the Music Office, African American Heritage Commission, and the North Carolina Museum of Art.
- Approach the Department of Commerce and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to develop a shared vision for statewide creative placemaking and promote the vital economic and social impact of N.C.'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, veterans, and their families.

GOAL IV. Grow the internal capacity of North Carolina Arts Council to strengthen 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 meeting to ensure common 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 topic-specific focus groups to encourage a collective vision and collaboration across teams. Train new arts

leaders through DNCR's HBCU/MIHE Summer Internship Program, and the 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 NC's artists and arts organizations impacted 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 WPA-style artist employment opportunities for public works.
- Invest in arts programs designed to address the wide-spread mental health needs of the region that has experienced so much loss and change because of the storm.