

COA STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027

FORWARD

The Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) is a state office within the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and is recognized as a State Arts Agency (SAA) through our partnership with the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA). The formation of the NEA catalyzed the creation of state arts agencies throughout the nation. As such, COA is part of a greater network of national arts service organizations that work, within their states and territories, to enhance, support and empower the Arts for every resident. State Arts Agencies use their position to work strategically within the arts community, within and alongside state and local government, and through partnerships with businesses, foundations, artists, municipalities, schools, non-arts nonprofits and more. These partnerships nurture abiding relationships that ensure Connecticut's creative sector thrives in all its brilliant diversity and with its strong, abiding power. As a State Arts Agency, we guide and are also guided by the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#) (NASAA), which in addition to the NEA, further strengthens and supports the SAA network. NASAA serves as a strong connector and brings people and the work of state arts agencies together. Finally, COA is embedded in Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. This position is fortuitous as support and promotion of the arts is a basic tenet of the agency's strategy to ensure that our communities thrive. At this time when our nation is facing a divisive political climate, tapping into the resources of this network is critical to our success.

In the short time since COAs last strategic plan, our State and nation experienced a series of events that will forever live as part of our collective history. Events – such as August, 2017, protest at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation; June, 2018, family separations at the United States / Mexico border; August 2019, mass shooting at Walmart in El Paso, Texas, one of 394 mass shootings in the US in 2019; March, 2020, the killing of Breonna Taylor; March, 2020, COVID-19 becomes a pandemic in the United States; May, 2020, George Floyd is murdered; January, 2021, the United States Capitol building is attacked by a violent mob; and in November, 2021, Ahmaud Arbery is murdered – are only a few that rocked our nation and brought forth a long-overdue dialogue on systems change. The trauma is very real, experienced at the national level in these high-profile events, and felt at the local level in policy decisions and day-to-day interactions. At COA, we are committed to [standing in solidarity](#) and recognizing the critical role the Arts can play in responding to current events and in the process of healing, rejuvenation, resilience and renewal. This plan puts forth a framework designed to empower the Arts sector and to ensure that in our state, the arts are at the forefront of civic discourse, fueling both the economy and the soul.

MISSION & VISION

Mission

The Connecticut Office of the Arts animates a culture of creativity across Connecticut by supporting arts making and arts participation for all people.

Vision

Inspire. Empower. Educate. Transform. The arts are a human right. The Connecticut Office of the Arts envisions an equitable world where the arts, in all forms, are embedded in everyday life.

VALUES and GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- READI: Relevance, Equity, Access, Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to COA's work. Part of the work of READI is a commitment to working with partners and constituents to ensure that READI values are crafted with, and meet the needs of, marginalized communities. READI is the foundation to build and sustain a culture where creative voices are valued, empowered and amplified.
- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will embrace an accessible and inclusive view of art and the artistic process that amplifies authentic artistic voice, vision, and proficiency from a multitude of perspectives.

READI – RELEVANCE, EQUITY, ACCESS, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In 2016, the Office of the Arts embarked on a journey to build a better strategic, human-centered plan that confronted the realities and frustrations shared by our constituents. What made the 2017-2021 COA Strategic Plan so different from past plans is that values were placed at the heart of decision-making. **READI** was equal in importance to COAs mission and vision, an integral part of our strategy.

At the time, COA was one of the first – if not the first – state arts agency to center DEIA as a core practice. We had few resources to lean on and most DEIA work was occurring in the corporate sector. Fast forward to March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic closed our State and our world with a rapidity that stunned people across the globe, challenging all but proving especially debilitating to those from marginalized populations. Systemic and visible violence against black bodies by police gave voice to Black Lives Matter. As communities across the country demanded solutions to the systemic racism that has long defined policy in this country, government and businesses began to examine their own implicit bias. DEIA and IDEA statements were published. Letters in support of Black Lives Matter proliferated. The READI framework that expressed our values quickly became our actions.

In 2021, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies published [Equity Choice Points, A Grant-making Reflection Tool for State Arts Agencies](#). This paper challenged state arts agencies to address the gap between the aspiration and the actuality of equitable arts funding, based on gaps in data on state arts agency investments for [rural areas](#), [economically disadvantaged](#)

communities and people of color. The goal of this guide was “to illustrate the types of policy and procedural decisions that undergird grant making that may be reservoirs of unintended structural bias. It illustrates the factors that can hinder equitable funding for the arts, noting some origins and effects of problematic practices.”

Recently revised strategy documents from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies center Equity as a strategy for systems change. Both organizations, a federal agency and a private nonprofit membership organization, updated their strategic plans in 2022. As a State Arts Agency, the COA supports and aligns with the National Endowment for the Arts mission and objectives in the NEA Strategic Plan [2022-2026](#) and their recently published [Equity Action Plan](#). The new plans from both organizations have provided COA with inspiration and framework for portions of this plan.

READI values are a throughline in the tenets, objectives and actions articulated in our new plan. They must be continually reviewed and reevaluated with creatives from marginalized communities to meet the needs of our constituents. Today, we acknowledge that the events and subsequent learnings of the past three years have shifted our understanding and the resulting implementation of our READI values. To ensure accountability to the process of undoing systems, this plan calls for creating a READI Advisory Council and that work has already begun.

The Connecticut Office of the Arts will insist upon using the lenses of relevance, equity, access, diversity, and inclusion to guide programmatic and investment decisions.

The synopses of the 2022 strategic initiatives of our supporting agencies are below.

<u>National Endowment for the Arts 2022-2026 Strategic Plan</u>	<u>National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Strategic Plan Draft for Public Review June 2022</u>
<p>Mission: The arts strengthen and promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the National Endowment for the Arts fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.</p> <p>NEA Strategic Goals, 2022-2026 (External)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal 1: Support opportunities for all people to participate in the arts and arts education.• Goal 2: Integrate the arts with strategies that promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities.• Goal 3: Build capacity and infrastructure within the arts sector through knowledge-sharing, tools, resources, and evidence-based practices. <p>Cross-Cutting Objective: The NEA will model diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the arts through all of its activities and operations.</p>	<p>Mission: Strengthen Arts Agencies. NASAA amplified the expertise, influence, funding and vision that state arts agencies employ on behalf of every American. Through NASAA, state arts agencies achieve more together than they can alone.</p> <p>Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access for All• Service• Credibility• Nonpartisanship• Excellence• Transparency• Collaboration <p>Throughline: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are bedrock values as well as action commitments for NASAA.</p> <p>Goals (External)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for State Arts Agencies• Hone the knowledge and skills of State Art Agencies• Connect State Art Agencies

STAYING CURRENT

COA's plan is designed to be an "evergreen" statement of COA values and service priorities that will guide our work in the future. The substance of this plan provides a strategy screen for planning and implementing yearly action plans designed to be nimble, responsive, and reflective of our constituents' changing circumstances and needs while working within budgetary and staffing constraints. COA commits to communicating changes to our programs to partners, colleagues and constituents in a transparent and timely way. Although this strategic plan has no expiration date, it is regularly assessed for relevance. The standard review cycle is five years but may be initiated sooner if needed.

The last three years have demonstrated that no matter how well prepared we think we are for what is to come, foreseeing the future is an impossibility and government is at the forefront of responding to both anticipated and unimagined needs. Therefore, an evergreen strategic plan for the Connecticut Office of the Arts is an absolute criterion for success. Our goals speak to the identified needs of our constituents. The ways we accomplish them speak to currently unfolding local, State and global challenges and opportunities. This is a new approach for COA, and as such, this new plan presents a hybrid combining an "evergreen" structure of values and goals for our work and examples of the strategies and actions that have been identified ***at present*** to meet our goals.

Our constituents, staff, and peers have identified these actions and objectives across the public and private sectors. They are of extreme importance in the present moment. They will, and should be, subject to revision or reprioritization based on the needs of our sector.

WHAT WE DO/WHY/WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

We are a Community that Thrives Best When Others Thrive

The Connecticut Office of the Arts has a state-level focus informed by participation in national movements that promote the health and well-being of artists, creative entrepreneurs and arts organizations. COA also maintains close relations with local and regional partners and constituents for the on-the-ground perspective that supports our ability to see and appreciate the unique individuals and communities across the State. As a result of the macro and micro viewpoints, COA is positioned to take actions that embed the arts into the fabric of community life, touching all people and promoting artistic and cultural health and vibrancy, recognizing that the Arts ecosystem thrives most effectively as part of a robust cultural infrastructure that works in partnership with private organizations, government agencies and municipalities to support creatives, communities and the creative economy.

As a State Arts Agency, the Connecticut Office of the Arts, powered by the NEA, NASAA, a network of in-state partnerships and YOU, empowers significant return on investment.

STRONG ECONOMIES.

Arts and creativity are economic engines, putting people to work in many industries. They stimulate commerce and offer opportunities for young people, rural areas and creative entrepreneurs to prosper.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES.

The arts promote connection by providing shared experiences, celebrating local culture and encouraging civic discourse. They tell our stories, helping us preserve and pass on cherished traditions and empathize with others. The arts also enliven our communities, creating desirable places for people to live, work, play and raise their families.

GOOD HEALTH.

The arts reduce isolation and contribute to physical and psychological well-being. They facilitate healthy aging and provide effective therapies for injured military personnel, trauma survivors and people struggling with depression, anxiety or addiction.

ESSENTIAL EDUCATION.

The arts boost achievement in academic fundamentals, setting young people up for success. Education that includes the arts teaches lateral thinking as well as the value of practice and persistence—essential skills for school, work and life.

INSPIRING INNOVATION.

A creative workforce gives businesses a competitive edge by helping them engage customers, originate new ideas and find fresh solutions to problems. The arts exercise our creative muscles throughout our life span, igniting our imaginations when we're young and facilitating meaningful learning and community engagement as we grow older.

RESILIENT SPIRITS.

Intrinsic to the arts is the power to uplift us and help us perceive things in new ways. In the face of hardship and adversity, the arts are a force for recovery, understanding and healing. Through the arts, we express who we are as a nation today, and who we aspire to become tomorrow.

Excerpted from NASAA Strategic Plan, adopted 2017, revised 2022

GOALS and Strategy Screen

- **Center** People at the Heart of the Arts
- **Support** Equity in Action
- **Nurture** Creative Communities
- **Share** our Stories
- **To Build** Wrap-Around Services for Artists and Arts Organizations that support a solid Cultural Infrastructure

The Connecticut Office of the Arts uses the following five tenets as the central guiding focus of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. All office actions will be grounded in the READI values of Relevance, Equity, Access, Diversity and Inclusion. In addition, COA commits to continuing to advance power-sharing through active listening, yearly feedback/accountability sessions, shared decision-making, and creating a READI Advisory Council.

I. Center people at the heart of the Arts

COA will use a person-centered lens when evaluating programs and support for artists and arts organizations. This means the Office of the Arts serves all people in the State and envisions a world where the arts touch every person. We must be intentional in our efforts, collecting constructive feedback, advancing opportunities for conversation, understanding that there are multiple roles for people within the greater creative ecosystem and that often, our constituents hold more than one role at any time. People may only be centered when all voices are equally able to be present in the discussion.

To accomplish these goals, COA will consider the following strategies and actions:

- Recognize that artists and creatives provide the foundation of the creative infrastructure and we will view artist support as support of the artist as a whole person.
- Dive deeply into data to analyze current funding to identify who is included and who is left out. Involve community experts in the development of new programs and services.
- Review the current COA approach to arts education support and make changes as identified through meaningful collaboration with teaching artists, art educators and representative associations, schools, arts education organizations and art administrators. Include the State Education Department in the development of these programs.
- Research, partner, implement, fund, support and sustain initiatives that are driven by the needs of artists, including but not limited to professional development opportunities, responsive funding, support for artist collaborations and artists showcases.
- Collaborate with the Connecticut Arts Council, Connecticut Arts Foundation and others who can leverage state investment in the arts, particularly for artists.

II. Support Equity in Action

In our 2017-2021 strategic plan, the Connecticut Office of the Arts committed to using a lens of equity, relevance, access, diversity and inclusion to guide all programmatic and investment decisions within a framework of artistic excellence*. Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed our world and that those structural inequities deeply embedded in the history of our country can no longer be ignored, the Office of the Arts will implement actions that support arts organizations and creative workers in our communal work to ensure that the arts in all spaces – access, practice, learning, presentation, adjudication, and more – are open to all without barriers. DEIA work is not only a value but an action.

To accomplish these goals, COA will consider the following strategies and actions:

- Listen to, learn from and respond to the needs of marginalized or otherwise underrepresented artists and creatives.
- Implement a paid READI Advisory Council that meets at least quarterly (or as needed).
- Conduct internal and external reviews of COA's READI values. Revise collaboratively with READI Advisory Council and constituents.
- Consistently review COA grants and programs to support the most innovative practices in equitable funding and services.
- Review historical data to illuminate funding disparities and consider pathways to reparative support in partnership with affected populations.
- Fill the need for best-practice resources on READI and the arts and create a feedback loop to update and share resources continually.
- Commit to external grant panels consisting of diverse arts community members for grant application review.
- Actively solicit qualified grant reviewers and pay them for their work.

III. Nurture Creative Communities

The COA believes that the arts are at the core of strong, resilient communities and are a central determinant of thriving cultures and economies. We will use our position as a Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development division to grow municipal and cross-sector partnerships that integrate the arts in strategies for municipal and community success.

* artistic excellence as defined and guided by our partners at the National Endowment for the Arts. COA embraces an accessible and inclusive view of artistic excellence that amplifies authentic artistic voice, vision, and proficiency from a multitude of perspectives.

To accomplish these goals, COA will consider the following strategies and actions:

- Grow the connection between DECDs business services and the community of artists, teaching artists, creative businesses and arts and culture entrepreneurs.
 - Embed artists and creative businesses in DECD business services.
- Use new and existing agency partnerships to support the growth and centralization of the creative sector in municipalities and school districts.
 - Partners may include (but not limited to) Connecticut Small Business Development Center, CT Next, Connecticut Innovations, Council of Governments, Sustainable CT, Connecticut Main Street, Designated Regional Service Organizations (DRSOs), nonprofit support organizations, etc.
- Amplify and empower the voices of artists, teaching artists and arts professionals that serve as respected community leaders.
 - Provide tools that result in tangible, measurable outcomes to embed the arts in municipal and educational planning
 - Continue to support AIR Program
 - Promote the State's Cultural District program
 - Arts and Economic Prosperity – provide access to data, talking points, and calculator and work collaboratively with Connecticut Arts Alliance to share information that will support the arts and culture ecosystem
- Deepen strategic partnerships that benefit artists, teaching artists, educators, arts organizations and the communities they serve.
- Review and strategically plan for Arts education grants and services that position teachers and students as leaders in creative problem-solving.

IV. Share Our Stories 2.0

COA is committed to sharing and celebrating the impact of the arts, the stories of our grantees, and the value of COA support. In our 2017-2021 strategic plan, COA noted that the arts create a product that attracts tourists and residents alike to explore the State and, in turn, invest dollars into local economies. We have made progress, but there is more work to be done. The goal of strategic and intentional storytelling – using words, pictures and numbers – is to increase the profile of the arts in the State and to help attract funding and audiences. Heightened awareness will aid in solidifying the importance of the arts with governmental and legislative bodies and the public.

To accomplish these goals, COA will consider the following strategies and actions:

- Approach data sharing transparently and work with DECD and external partners to identify, collect and regularly analyze data metrics.
- Use data to build a deeper and holistic understanding of arts funding in Connecticut and the creative economy's impact on people's lives.

- Ensure that data plays a role in determining funding decisions and evaluating new grants and programs that are values-driven and centered on equity.
- Reevaluate metrics to ensure we are collecting effective data points.
- Work with partners from Connecticut Humanities (CTH), Connecticut Arts Alliance, Designated Regional Service Organizations, the Connecticut Arts Council, Connecticut Arts Foundation, Connecticut Arts Administrators Association, and others to share the story of the CT arts and creative sector in words, pictures and numbers.
- Work strategically and collaboratively with the Office of Tourism to amplify Connecticut's creative sector and cultural tourism.
- Use social media (both our own and partner platforms) to amplify the work of COA-funded artists and arts organizations.
- Participate fully in the Americans for the Arts "Arts and Economic Prosperity 6" study.

V. To Build Wrap-Around Services for Artists, Teaching Artists and Arts Organizations that support a solid Creative Infrastructure

As a state entity, COA is uniquely positioned to strengthen and solidify the State's cultural infrastructure via partnerships, funding, expertise and more. COA will continually advance multiple pathways of services and support for artists and arts organizations – directly and indirectly – to ensure that artists, teaching artists, and arts organizations feel sustained and empowered throughout their entire lifecycle of needs and are well equipped to meet future challenges with resiliency.

To accomplish these goals, COA will consider the following strategies and actions:

- Map a clear path of laddered services for arts organizations and artists, including direct and indirect resources and services. Identify gaps in critical needs (via constituent feedback, assessment, etc.) and develop programs – directly presented by COA or indirectly via external partnerships – to meet the knowledge, funding and other sector requirements. Partner with DECD to include for-profit creative sector services.
- Review artist support with an eye towards support of the artist as a whole person.
- Consistently assess grants and programs to ensure they are relevant, responsive and effective in meeting the needs of our constituents.
- Together with teaching artists, evaluate current COA support for their work and create short and long-term goals that will meet the needs of teaching artists.
- Align grants, funding priorities, and applications with CTH and other funding partners.
- Identify and share avenues to non-governmental support for Connecticut artists and arts organizations.

- Work with Designated Regional Service Organizations to build and strengthen Local Arts Agencies and leverage DECD partnerships to connect DRSOs to municipalities.
- Partner internally (divisions within DECD) and externally to actively understand arts workforce development needs. Take action as needs are identified.
- Identify audiences that have been under-resourced through COA grants and evaluate how our programs and/or partnerships can better reach them.
- Build long-term, sustainable partnerships with organizations within Connecticut and across the country that specialize in support services for the arts (Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, Assets for Artists, Artists Thrive, etc.).

OUR ECOSYSTEM

Below is a non-comprehensive list of public and private organizations and agencies that work in alignment with the Connecticut Office of the Arts to accomplish our goals.

[National Endowment for the Arts](#) is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#) is the professional association of the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies. NASAA is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that champions public support for the arts in America. NASAA's mission is to strengthen state arts agencies.

[New England Foundation for the Arts](#) (NEFA) invests in artists and communities and fosters equitable access to the arts, enriching the cultural landscape in New England and the nation. Created to strengthen the national arts infrastructure by cultivating the arts on a regional level, today, NEFA's programs are regional, national, and international in scope and support artists and communities through grants and other opportunities in dance, music, theater, and public art.

[Americans for the Arts](#) works to build recognition and support for the extraordinary and dynamic value of the arts and to lead, serve, and advance the diverse networks of organizations and individuals who cultivate the arts in America. They connect the best ideas and leaders from the arts, communities, and businesses. Together, we can work to ensure that every American has access to the transformative power of the arts.

[Connecticut Arts Council](#) was established within the Department of Economic and Community Development by Public Act 13-247. The Council members are appointed by the Governor and legislative leaders for a maximum of two three-year or four-year terms. The Council consists of thirteen members, with the Department of Economic and Community Development commissioner serving in an ex officio voting capacity; and one member, a designated DECD staff person serving in an ex officio, non-voting capacity. The Council relies on staff support from the Connecticut Office of the Arts.

[Connecticut Arts Council Foundation](#) was established by legislative mandate in 2013 as an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing a vibrant and sustainable environment for the arts in Connecticut. The mission of the Connecticut Arts Council

Foundation, adopted by the Arts Council, is “to promote the value of private philanthropy for the arts in Connecticut and to foster increased giving to statewide arts organizations and initiatives among individuals, corporations and foundations.” The Board of the Foundation works with the state Office of the Arts to identify projects, award grants and monitor outcomes. [Connecticut Arts Alliance](#) (CAA) is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to build political, financial, and grassroots support to ensure that arts are a vital part of life for everyone in Connecticut. CAA engages artists of all kinds, arts leaders, and community members with regular advocacy updates and signature programs like Create the Vote and Arts Day at the Capitol.

[Designated Regional Service Organizations](#) serve as local field offices to constituents and citizens. This statewide network of designated service agencies plays a vital role that is mutually beneficial to the State’s citizens and creative economy, the regional arts and cultural infrastructure, and COA’s goals, programs and services.

- [Arts Council of Greater New Haven](#)
- [Arts & Culture Collaborative, Waterbury Region](#)
- [Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County](#)
- [Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut](#)
- [Cultural Coalition](#) (serving southeastern & northeastern CT)
- [Greater Hartford Arts Council](#)
- [Northwest Connecticut Arts Council](#)
- [Shoreline Arts Alliance](#)

[Connecticut Humanities](#) was founded in 1974 as an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#). CTH champions the enduring value of public humanities in our lives and civil society. Through grant funding and capacity building, CTH strives to ensure the public humanities will continue to inspire storytelling, lifelong learning, informed public dialogue and civic engagement to strengthen communities and enhance the quality of life for all Connecticut’s residents.

[Connecticut State Legislature](#) is the Connecticut General Assembly. It is a bicameral body composed of the 151-member House of Representatives and the 36-member Senate. It meets in the state capital, Hartford. There are no term limits for either chamber.

[Connecticut Arts Administrators Association](#) (CAAA) assists those responsible for local arts education programs to ensure that all students have access to quality education in all of the Arts. CAAA collaborates with national, State, and local organizations to achieve world-class State and national standards in Arts education and provide professional growth opportunities for leaders of arts education programs.

[Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program](#) encourages and promotes traditional artists and their communities through an active process of documentation, technical assistance, and public presentation to bring their work and the history of their communities to new audiences. The fieldwork-based program is unique in Connecticut, employing original research in partnership with artists and communities to strengthen community-based resources.

[State of CT](#) – COA collaborates with other agencies and offices of the State.

- [Department of Economic and Community Development](#)
- [Department of Aging and Disability Services](#)

- [Department of Education](#)
- [Office of the Governor](#)

HOW WE WILL DO THIS WORK/ YEARLY WORK PLANS

The Connecticut Office of the Arts planning process is designed to be nimble and responsive. This strategic plan will be combined with yearly action plans that address the needs of our constituents, guided by the values and goals of this plan, to the best of our ability. Our action plan is time-bound and itemizes the steps we need to take to achieve our long-term goals.

A full review of this strategic plan will take place every five years. Every year, COA staff will initiate a mini strategic planning process to review and evaluate what we have accomplished and where we need to go. This process will take place in the early spring as COA approaches the end of the fiscal year. At that time, we will have the hindsight to see what has been accomplished, a sense of the present opportunities and challenges, and foresight that comes from listening to the needs of our partners and constituents.

COA staff will propose yearly work plans and budget needs based on that evaluation process. Those will be compiled into a work plan for the office. That work plan will translate into a yearly budget that codifies our strategies into actions.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

COA measure impact in multiple ways:

- Keeping an open dialogue with partners and constituents
 - Conduct monthly and sometimes weekly meetings with our closest partners, the Designated Regional Service Organizations, Connecticut Humanities and the Connecticut Arts Alliance, to share information and to hear about constituent and partner needs.
 - Staff have formal and informal conversations daily and share what we hear in our weekly staff meetings.
- Review of Final Reports
 - Use final grant reports to understand more about the granting process from the applicant's point of view and to get feedback on the needs of our community.
- Setting Performance Metrics
 - Unique performance metrics are set for all grant programs. These are based on data we collect from applicants in prior years, the changing environment in which we operate, and the needs expressed by our audience. The soon-to-be-formed READI Advisory Council will provide additional guidance on performance metrics.
- Data Tracking

- Share information about individuals and organizations funded through our programs on data maps available on our website.
- Have an ongoing data exchange program with Connecticut Humanities that supports and augments the data that COA collects.
- Use data shared by NASAA, Americans for the Arts and others to inform our policies and practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The COA staff is small but mighty. We will look to our partners and our constituents to hold us to our values and the actions that support them through informal and formal means. COA will take the following actions to ensure accountability.

- Yearly check-in meetings with the Designated Regional Service Organizations and the Connecticut Arts Alliance specifically designed to address the COA strategic goals.
- Open meetings with our constituents (both in-person and virtual) to listen to and learn from constituents.
- Staff will always be available to meet virtually with any constituent or constituent group that would like to share ideas and/or offer feedback or insight.
- In FY 2022-2023, COA will create a READI Advisory Council that will work with staff to ensure that READI goals are centered in our work.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Public input was collected to inform our strategic planning process.

Online Survey

Between April 12 and April 30, COA collected responses to an online survey requesting feedback from constituents on the Office of the Arts in various categories, including service, programs, grantmaking and more. Results from the survey are included in Appendix B. 313 individual survey responses were collected.

Virtual Public Input Sessions

Four public input sessions were held between June 8 and 22, 2022. These sessions were hosted by the office's Designated Regional Service Organizations; each session lasted approximately two hours and created a space for organizational leaders, artists and interested members of the public to give feedback and reflect on their art experience in the state. Questions were designed to encourage discussion and feedback. Key takeaways were identified by an external reviewer who attended each session and compiled a report provided in Appendix A.

Additional Input

Specific feedback and input sessions were held with the leaders of the eight Designated Regional Service Organizations, the staff and board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, and the members of the Connecticut Arts Council. In addition, the draft plan was circulated to key staff within the DECD.

It is important to note that over the course of the pandemic, regular virtual conversations were held with many segments of the arts community. More than half of the DRSOs had regular virtual meetings with constituents which COA staff attended to listen, answer questions, and help problem-solve. Virtual meetings were held with local and regional foundation leaders, Connecticut Humanities, Preservation organizations, CT Main Street, the Connecticut League of History Organizations, young artists and creative entrepreneurs, and sub-segments of the arts and culture community, including theaters and performing arts, museums, and others. In essence, insight into the needs of our constituents occurred throughout the pandemic in formal and informal gatherings. COA staff became problem-solvers and coalition builders in an organic and intentional way. All of that information has informed the goals and actions outlined in this plan.

APPENDIX Links

- A: Strategic Planning Public Sessions Info Compilation, July 4, 2022
- B: Summary Results to Online Public Survey
- [2016-2021 Office of the Arts Strategic Plan](#)