

CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE ARTS
**STRATEGIC
PLAN**

2017 - 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Arts possesses a unique perspective and responsibility within the State of Connecticut. Our network connects across regions and cities allowing us to feel the pulse of artistic vitality throughout our state. Our ability to fund, convene, develop, and market empowers us to bolster Connecticut's already thriving creative economy and reinforce areas in need of growth. As a team, we are committed to making sure every facet of our office reaches its fullest potential for the people of Connecticut.

While our office has had great successes we know we have room to improve our process and our services. Budget cuts and hiring freezes have changed the way our office operates; but our goals remain the same, just with fewer resources. In order to proactively address this, we engaged in creating a new strategic plan for the Office of

With this plan, we will ensure that our office continues to cultivate and grow the arts and artistic experiences for all residents and visitors of Connecticut.

the Arts to implement over the next five years. With this plan, we will ensure that our office continues to cultivate and grow the arts and artistic experiences for all residents and visitors of Connecticut.

Art is often difficult to quantify with numbers and statistics; yet, it is frequently defined and planned for in that matter. Art delivers intangible stories, perspectives, and emotions and is too regularly improperly summarized using quantitative data. It is with this mind that our office engaged

in a human-centered design approach to researching the current state of the arts within Connecticut. Knowing that art is made by, for, and about people, we utilized a research methodology that puts people first and allows their voices to be heard.

Through this human-centered design methodology, we were able to refocus the Office of the Arts on the future of creativity in Connecticut. After listening to the voices of artists, arts organizations, government agencies, teaching artists, community leaders, and philanthropists, we wrote a new mission and vision, and aligned our office with goals of equity and inclusion. With new design principles in place, our office can begin to focus on the concerted action of collaboration and telling the story of the arts throughout Connecticut, while growing future audiences and strengthening our organization from within.

Please see <http://ct.gov/cct> for the full version of the strategic plan.

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the first World Cities Culture Report stated that culture is equally as important in crafting and shaping world cities as are finance and trade. The 2015 follow-up to this report (which is an international survey of opinion leaders about the value of culture and cities) says that, “cultural vibrancy and city success go hand in hand.”¹ Today, it’s a widely held belief among economists, planners, and designers that the arts are a critical driver of growth and prosperity for communities, and play a key role in stimulating long-term economic and social growth. By shaping a sense of place and social space, cultural richness increases a city’s attractiveness to an educated workforce, the businesses that employ those workers, and visitors seeking authentic experiences unique to the destination itself.

Cultural vibrancy
and city success
go hand in hand.

In Connecticut, the state agency charged with fostering the health of the creative economy is the Office of the Arts, which is located in the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The Office of the Arts develops and strengthens the arts in Connecticut and makes artistic experiences widely available to residents and visitors. Through our grant programs, the Office of the Arts invests in Connecticut artists and arts organizations and encourages the public’s participation as creators, learners, supporters, and audience members. Through our programs and services, the Office of the Arts connects people to the arts and helps to build vital communities across the state.

In addition, the Office of the Arts plays an ongoing convening role and provides an array of training and professional development opportunities. The Office of the Arts collects and disseminates state, regional, and national arts information resources via the communications, directories, publications, data-sharing, one-on-one consultations, and referrals.

In early 2016, the Office of the Arts undertook the creation of a five-year Cultural Strategy using a set of tools borrowed from the design and architecture worlds that focuses on human-centric information gathering and process design. The design company IDEO has been instrumental in advancing human-centered design, and says this about the process: “It’s a process that starts with the people you’re designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailor made to suit their needs. Human-centered design is all about building a deep empathy with the people you’re designing for; generating tons of ideas; building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you’ve made with the people you’re designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.”²

The goal of the process was to create a plan to review and assess our mission and vision, and to inform and guide the next five years of work for the Office of the Arts.

Given the alignment of values of our work with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Office of the Arts plan reinforces the NEA’s objectives, which include:

- CREATION:** to enhance opportunities for the creation of art that meet the highest standards of excellence across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
- ENGAGEMENT:** to foster public engagement with artistic excellence across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
- LEARNING:** to provide Americans of all ages with arts learning opportunities across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
- LIVABILITY:** to provide support for and otherwise encourage activities that incorporate the arts and design into strategies to improve the livability of communities.
- KNOWLEDGE:** to increase public knowledge and understanding of the various ways in which the arts contribute to positive outcomes for individuals and communities within a particular state or region.

We engaged the consulting firm Public City to lead the project and help guide the discussions and considerations. We believe that good strategy – like good design – is born from a genuine understanding of the humans who will live with the outcomes. Steeped in this human-centered design philosophy, our process was designed to leverage the people critical to project or place. The planners took a “train the facilitator” approach that allowed leaders in our area to head-up their own focus groups, or charrettes, across the state, and to extract trends, themes, and truths within their own communities. Synthesis of these insights serves as the foundation for the larger plan.

For the purposes of this strategic plan, we focused on the aspects of culture directly relating to the arts. We acknowledge that culture is much broader, and can include the “arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.”³ We feel strongly that future work with a more broad and inclusive definition of culture is appropriate; however, the limited scope of this plan was focused on the artistic health and vibrancy of the state.

This has not been a traditional strategic planning process, and it did not yield a traditional strategic plan. We’ve invested our time during the planning process to working on the relationships we have internally and with our constituents. We have developed a living document that creates a framework for decisions but also acknowledges that today’s world is incredibly fluid. This plan gives us the tools to tie all of our work – all of our decisions – back to our guiding principles regardless of what the fiscal and economic reality is over the next five years.

As we conclude the planning process, the Connecticut Office of the Arts has identified priorities as they relate to arts programs and services through an inclusive and intentional planning process to improve the livability of Connecticut citizens, meeting the highest standards of excellence and access across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines, constituent needs, and geographic locations.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

We were very clear from the onset of the project that one of the top priorities was to create a cultural strategy that emerged not from inside our offices, but from the field and constituents we serve across the state. To accomplish this, the Public City team used a human-centered design approach to develop tools for a series of charrettes (community-based events designed to elicit information from key stakeholders) that were then conducted around the state. Points of view from these events directly impacted the way that we shaped this strategic plan.

Key to this entire undertaking was developing a methodology that enabled the Office of the Arts staff and the charrette facilitators to continue to engage the audience in a human-centered design process even beyond the creation of the final strategy document, and to offer a facilitation tool that the charrette leaders could use again and again in their day-to-day work. It's worth noting that the human-centered design process is heavily skewed toward eliciting sentiment on an individual basis. Far from quantitative-driven surveys and information-gathering tools, the process we engaged in was intentionally designed to gather perspectives from the constituents who are impacted on a day-to-day basis by the decisions this office makes, and the way we operate.

Addendum F of the full report has additional detailed information about the planning process.



GATHERING INPUT: THE CHARRETTES



Over the spring, we hosted – in partnership and through our relationships with our Regional Service Organizations (Regionals)* – 11 charrettes around the state in addition to conducting one-on-one interviews, secondary research, and engaging the larger community through social media. Each charrette host and facilitator had the freedom to invite individuals from that region who represented key perspectives: artists, arts organizations, government, teaching artists, community leaders, and philanthropists.

At each charrette, the facilitator took participants through a series of four exercises designed to extract sentiment and qualitative data about the work of the Office of the Arts and the state of the arts across Connecticut. The exercises were†:

GENIE IN A BOTTLE: This exercise was designed to capture the hopes and wishes for each participant’s organizations (or own practice if the participant is an artist) in this moment. Participants were asked to consider the ultimate impact of his/her organization if all cylinders are firing. What would be the best possible thing that this organization could cause in its community?

What would be the best possible thing that this organization could cause in its community?

Once participants did that, we asked them to consider three wishes they would make for the organization to achieve that impact in the next year or so (with the exception of money: we asked respondents to instead imagine what they would spend the money on versus wishing specifically for money).

* See Addendum A in the full report for more information about the Regionals.

† The exercise worksheets are included in Addendum G of the full report.



**LET ME
COUNT
THE WAYS:**

The next exercise in the series was intended to help us diagnose what is keeping organizations from fulfilling certain ideas. This is where participants were invited to talk about how money might play into their constraints.

We asked guests to rewrite each of their wishes from Genie in a Bottle and then provide details on what was standing in the way of achieving those wishes (from a list that included money, time, skills, connections, or other).

**IMAGE
CARD
SELECTION:**

With this exercise, we wanted to ascertain how our constituents and their organizations relate to the Office of the Arts (or, equally important: how the organizations do not relate to our office).

We placed a set of image cards on each table (with images of stock photography – largely nature scenes) and asked each participant to choose an image that represented his/her current relationship to the office. None of the images were intended to be literal; the purpose was to create a metaphor for attendees' reactions as a way of surfacing things that might be difficult to articulate directly. This exercise helped us understand the existing sentiment.

**START,
STOP,
CONTINUE:**

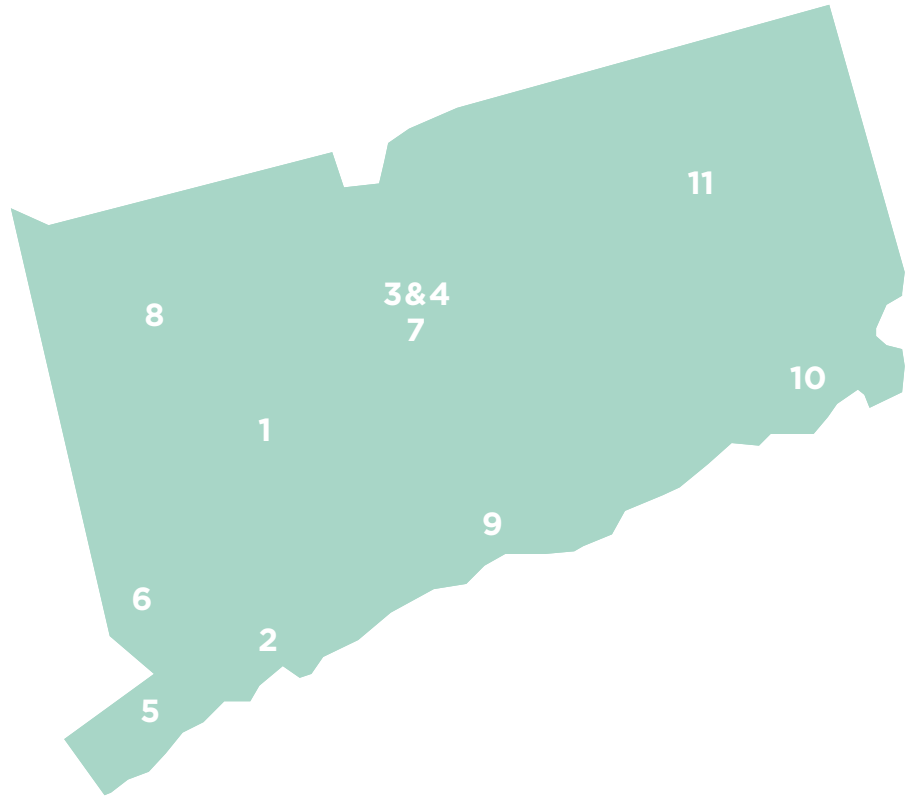
With this exercise, we asked attendees to get a little bit more specific on ideas about what the Office of the Arts might prioritize moving forward.

Attendees generated three mini-brainstorms about what they thought the Office of the Arts should START doing, STOP doing, and CONTINUE doing. They then shared their ideas at their tables and worked together to prioritize the best ideas from each category. Tables had discretion to do this through a vote or whatever way that table deemed most appropriate.

We did encourage tables to consider that the ideas feel doable based on gut intuition, that the ideas would have impact on the arts environment across the state, or that the table just like the particular idea.

HOSTS & LOCATIONS:

- 1 Arts and Culture Collaborative Waterbury Region
- 2 Arts Council of Greater New Haven
- 3 Connecticut Office of the Arts (Charrette 1)
- 4 Connecticut Office of the Arts (Charrette 2)
- 5 Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County
- 6 Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut
- 7 Greater Hartford Arts Council
- 8 Northwest CT Arts Council
- 9 Shoreline Arts Alliance
- 10 Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition
- 11 Windham Arts



ATTENDEES:

- Artists: 21%
- Arts Administrators & Arts Organization Representatives: 38%
- Community/Business & Philanthropy Leaders: 25%
- Government Officials & Employees: 5%
- Other: 4%
- Teachers & Teaching Artists: 7%

WHAT WE LEARNED

The data we collected through all the different means of communicating with constituencies was highly qualitative, and intended to give us a human-centric view into the state of the arts across Connecticut. The following synthesis comes from parsing through all of the data from the people across the state. The synthesis represents trends and reflects sentiments that we heard time and again over the months of data collection.

TRUTHS ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE ARTS:

We're emerging from a recent history that has presented significant hurdles. Frequent leadership turnover, funding cut after funding cut, and hiring freezes that impact our ability to fill open positions are three of the realities that have historically tied our hands. The field – Connecticut artists, arts organizations, and teaching artists – have excelled and produced outstanding work in spite of our limitations, but both our own team and our constituents want – and demand – that we chart a course through this plan and in our actions that lives in a new day and in our current reality. We must find a way to use the resources we have (both talent and dollars) to achieve great impact. For the first time in over a decade, our office is being led by a Director with a background in the arts. The Office of the Arts and its constituents must move beyond our past, and a big win would go a long way toward helping us do that.

TENSIONS AND JUXTAPOSITIONS IN THE DATA:

- Can the Connecticut Office of the Arts be consistent in the face of political and financial instability?
- How does the Office of the Arts handle legislatively directed funding in the state?
- Constituents who receive legislatively directed funds are in favor of preserving the funding; those who don't, would prefer to see it go away.*
- What is the future of the relationship between the Regionals and the Connecticut Office of the Arts?
- How does the Office of the Arts grow the Connecticut Arts Council Foundation in a way that supports and enhances the entire arts ecosystem across the state (i.e. does not cannibalize funding to other arts organizations and initiatives)?
- Should the Office of the Arts continue to do everything it has done historically on a smaller staff and with shrinking budgets?
- Should the Office of the Arts focus its support on established cultural anchors or new arts organizations and artists?

*More information about line item funding in Connecticut is in Addendum D of the full report.



THEMES AND PATTERNS:

- Arts organizations across the state feel understaffed, particularly in the areas of marketing, public relations, and fundraising.
- Artists and arts organizations are struggling to find affordable, workable facilities and spaces for exhibits, performances, and events.
- There is a moment in time right now where public sentiment is strongly in favor of the Office of the Arts staff. Under new leadership and with empathy for staff in light of budget uncertainty, there seems to be a window for our team to make some major moves and shifts with the support of its constituents. On the flip side, we believe this is time-limited and not an infinite state of being. The field and our constituents are looking to the Office of the Arts for leadership, and we need to rise to the challenge.

MOST FREQUENTLY APPEARING WISHES:

These wishes reflect the charrette participants’ desires for their organizations or own practice (if the participant is an artist):

- Opportunities to collaborate between artists and arts organizations.
- Opportunities to collaborate across sectors.
- Marketing and PR resources for artists and arts organizations.
- Grant-writing resources.
- Space to perform, to produce, to work, to exhibit.
- Professional development for artists and organizational leadership.
- Opportunities to present art that addresses social justice or humanitarian issues.
- Developing younger audiences: arts learning and engaging young patrons.

MOST FREQUENTLY APPEARING NEEDS:

The needs represent the things that participants felt would move the needle for helping them realize their wishes above:



MONEY



MANPOWER



TIME



CONNECTIONS
(but hard to articulate exactly what connections respondents needed)

MOST FREQUENTLY APPEARING SENTIMENT:

The sentiments below reflect the feelings participants expressed about their relationship to the Office of the Arts:

- Office of the Arts constituents feel disconnected from the mission and work of the Office; it feels obscure and, further, constituents are unclear of how to partner with the Office of the Arts.
- The Office of the Arts is not realizing its full potential, but there is tremendous opportunity for the Office of the Arts.
- The stature and prestige of the Office of the Arts is disintegrating due to its diminishing role and influence.
- Individual artists appear to feel less connected than organizations to the Office of the Arts.
- Despite feeling disconnected from the Office of the Arts as an entity, Individuals (both those representing arts organizations and artists) feel like they have good personal relationships with the staff.
- There is a high degree of hope and optimism about the future for the Office of the Arts.
- There were an equal number of responses about feeling stuck with how to strengthen relationships with the Office, getting lost in the complexity of a governmental office, and feeling like an outsider.

There is a high degree of hope and optimism about the future for the Office of the Arts.





MOST FREQUENTLY APPEARING DESIRES:

The desires highlight wishes from the participants about the future of the Office of the Arts:

- The Office of the Arts should build awareness of the arts in Connecticut—both within the sector and to new and broader audiences.
- We should simplify the application and reporting processes.
- We need to develop and advocate for cross-sector relationships.
- The Office of the Arts should create platforms for Connecticut artists and arts organizations to connect, share resources, and exchange ideas.
- We should continue supporting the field through operating grants and public art commissions/installations.
- We must continue to develop the relationships at a regional/local level (outside of Hartford).
- Our programs need to be refreshed and reevaluated to make sure they are operationally excellent and delivering impact.
- We should continue Arts Day.
- We must insist on diversity at the table, including young artists.
- We should stop legislatively directed funding.
- We should develop programs for broad arts education (both at the school level and for arts consumers).
- We must continue the Artist Fellows program, HOT Schools, and the PAN program.
- We should continue recognizing artistic excellence.
- We should explore inequities in funding priorities, specifically relating to potential geographic inequities.
- We must be consistent and dependable.
- We need to move on from the past.

THE VISION AND MISSION

Based on what we learned from our constituents and the feedback we received from the field, we challenged ourselves to look critically at our existing vision and mission and make sure they both still represented the value proposition of this Office. We also felt compelled to create – beyond just mission and vision statements – value statements about our work in the form of a cultural equity and inclusion statement and design principles. The following words in each of these statements reflect our promise to you: the artists, arts organizations, teaching artists, and people of Connecticut. Out of all of the work we have done in the process of building this plan, these statements are the most important to us, and they are a direct result of what we heard at the charrettes and from analyzing the data. It’s worth noting that these statements come from the Office of the Arts team; they were crafted word-by-word by our staff and will serve as our guideposts to making decisions about how to best serve our constituents.



VISION:

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

MISSION:

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

EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS STATEMENT:

Equity, inclusion and access involving all populations are critical to the vitality of our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We acknowledge that there is much work to do in this area. We are committed to supporting and fully engaging diverse members of our communities in arts policy, practice, and decision making. Continually changing demographics invite opportunity for responsible and responsive social change by attracting new perspectives that connect minds to a vision and hands to a purpose through the arts.

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 within a framework of artistic excellence.* Here are our definitions of what that means to us:

RELEVANCE: Meaningful or purposeful connection to one’s aspirations, interests, or experiences in relation to current society or culture.

We commit to a culture that supports curiosity, action and awareness in, about, and through the arts.

EQUITY: Policy and practice that is fair and just. Our processes and systems are designed to insure that we distribute resources without bias.

We commit to a level playing field for constituents to access the resources in our control and the systems we can influence.

* We acknowledge that artistic excellence and merit are very hard to define, so in lieu of having a static definition below, we are leaning on resources from the field to guide our interpretation of what artistic excellence means. Here are two of the articles we go back to when grappling with what artistic excellence means: “Divining ‘Artistic Excellence’” (<http://www.artsjournal.com/wetheaudience/2014/05/deviningartisticexcellence.html>) and the NEA’s Art Works grant review guidelines (<https://www.arts.gov/grantsorganizations/artworks/applicationreview>).

ACCESS: We will create pathways that invite participation and communication and that provide opportunities for constituents from all populations.

We commit to cultivating channels for engagement on all levels for all people.

DIVERSITY: A mosaic of individuals offering unique perspectives and experiences influenced by their ethnic, cultural, social, economic and ability backgrounds. As Malcolm Forbes says, “Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.”

We commit to enhancing creativity through diversity.

INCLUSION: Active participation by constituents who represent and reflect the communities we are all a part of.

We commit to building a community that is respectful and responsive to the diverse talents, skills and abilities of all people.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

Borrowed from a user-experience or design construct, design principles are the guideposts for programmatic decision-making. The Office of the Arts’ design principles should be timeless frameworks that serve to “gut check” the validity of any program the organization operates or investment it makes.

These guiding principles “define and communicate the key characteristics of the [organization] to a wide variety of stakeholders including clients, colleagues, and team members. Design principles articulate the fundamental goals that all decisions can be measured against and thereby keep the pieces of a project moving toward an integrated whole.”⁴

Our design principles are:

- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will insist upon using the lenses of equity, relevance, access, diversity, and inclusion to guide all programmatic and investment decisions within a framework of artistic excellence.
- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will keep a state-level focus and support a statewide ecosystem that fosters and promotes artistic and cultural health and vibrancy.
- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will celebrate artistic excellence and innovation across a broad spectrum of artistic disciplines and elevate the profile of arts organizations and artists across the state.



OUR FOCUS 2017-2021

Building on the creation of our mission and vision, we have looked to the charrette data to help us forge our strategic focus areas for the 2017-2021 time frame. The feedback and our planning led us to focus on four areas:

**STRENGTHEN
FROM WITHIN:**

Some of the most valued feedback from the field was about this office. We acknowledge and own we have room to grow, and we commit to doing that.

CONCERTED ACTION:

Collaboration is more and more important in our world. Whether inter-agency or cross-sector, we see a bright future built on learning how to better work together to drive the arts into everything we do.

TELL THE STORY:

We have brand issues on multiple fronts, starting with our own office. We need a refresh on spreading the word on what we do, and we need to help think more broadly about sharing the story of the arts in our state.

**GROW [FUTURE]
AUDIENCES:**

All of our work is for naught if we aren't cultivating the next generation of artists and arts consumers.

Each of the focus areas is described in greater detail in the following sections, and each has affiliated tactics that we will employ to drive toward realizing our vision of a world where the arts, in all forms, are embedded in everyday life. On each tactic, we have assigned a date by which we commit to taking action around that particular tactic.

Note: any of the following tactics that do not have explicit time lines will commence work immediately.

STRENGTHEN FROM WITHIN

The Office of the Arts is committed to working on stabilizing from within. We are committed to evaluating our own programs to make sure we are using our limited resources (financial, time, and talent) in the best way possible to drive impact for the state as a whole. We must lead by example – strengthening our internal infrastructure will allow us to better support the state’s creative sector.

TACTIC 1

Invest in the team with right-size roles and responsibilities. In the wake of several years of systemic cuts and hiring freezes, this team is still doing the work of a fully staffed office but with fewer resources. The operations and staffing assignments must be revisited to ensure that the programs have the support they need and the staff is in the right position to be a powerful steward for the state’s efforts.

TACTIC 2

Continue to improve communication with Connecticut legislators to ensure they are well informed about our programs and services and their statewide impact. We will also invite legislators to participate in our grant-review process so they have a greater appreciation and understanding about our competitive funding strategy.

TACTIC 3

Develop a mechanism to systematically review our grants, programs, and services to make sure they are hitting on all of our design principles, and continue to be responsive to the needs of our diverse communities.

TACTIC 4

Engage with our governance bodies (the Culture and Tourism Advisory Committee and Connecticut Arts Council) in a robust conversation about their roles with regards to advancing this plan and advocating for the Office of the Arts.

CONCERTED ACTION

There is significant power in collaboration. Coordinated efforts, whether within the arts or across industry sectors, can yield tremendous results and rewards. Consider the arts in healthcare contexts: both in terms of creating physical spaces that encourage healing and using the arts as therapeutic supplements to traditional medicine, the impact of the arts is widely recognized and valued. Another case study is the impact the arts have made on the hospitality industry. Take, for example, the 21C Museum Hotels: hotels that lead with their art collections and become destinations in and of themselves.

Great collaborations take intentional coordination, and the Office of the Arts is poised – both as a funder and as a conduit to other parts of the Connecticut government – to support the forward momentum of concerted action. In essence, we are poised to be the conductor. The Office of the Arts is in a unique position to advance collaborations with both governmental entities (especially those housed in DECD) and private-sector organizations that use art and creativity to advance change or elevate awareness around an issue. The Office of the Arts will facilitate connections and collaboration, both within the arts and across other industries and sectors based on that understanding.

TACTIC 1

Advance a minimum of one significant artist-engaged cross-sector project each year. Building on existing energy between healthcare and the arts, invest in an arts-driven project that will encourage and push for positive public health changes in Connecticut communities.

PHASE ONE: In Progress, continuing through Summer 2017 – Identify key collaborators. Build network. Develop funding strategies. Apply for funding.

PHASE TWO: Fall 2017-Spring 2018 – Implement pilot program.

PHASE THREE: Summer 2018 – Assess pilot program and plan for continuation of work.

TACTIC 2

Begin benchmarking other industries beyond healthcare where the arts have strengthened positive social change. Look specifically for opportunities that would showcase historically under-resourced or under-served populations. Start by looking for opportunities in sectors that also fall under the Department of Economic and Community Development umbrella. Create a project road map for projects to pursue in future years.

PHASE ONE: Summer 2018 – Design process to engage artists and arts organizations.

PHASE TWO: Winter 2018-2019 – Create the network and artist task force to help lead this initiative.

PHASE THREE: Spring 2019-Beyond – Launch first year of annual roadmap initiative with a particular focus on identifying artists and arts organizations to participate in workshops at non-arts industry conventions.

TACTIC 3

Connect the Office of the Arts in a meaningful way to artists, arts organizations, arts learning communities, and municipalities in order to be on the ground with the cultural producers across the state and help advance collaboration.

Host periodic meetings or town halls around the state in partnership with the Regionals in order to strengthen the relationships among the Office of the Arts, municipalities, and Regionals and local artists, arts organizations, and teaching artists. This will allow organizations to share best practices and resources locally, and set the stage for conversations about how best to position and incubate artists to tackle the most pressing and urgent community needs (planning, health, public space, transportation, safety, sustainability).

- Spring 2017 – Launch town hall gatherings in the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018 that will continue annually.

TACTIC 4

Create an annual State Arts Summit (building on the success of the HOT Schools Summer Institute) to bring together members of the Connecticut arts community to look at how the creative economy can impact the biggest issues facing our state (e.g. literacy, housing, transportation). As an outcome of the Summit, develop programs that chart a path for artists around the state to tackle the most pressing and urgent community needs.

PHASE ONE: Summer 2017 – Identify partners and potential funders. Develop the framework for the Summit.

PHASE TWO: Spring 2018 – Finalize structure and agenda of the Summit. Develop and deploy marketing and messaging materials.

PHASE THREE: Summer 2019 – Host the first Summit and plan for additional Summits every other year going forward.

TACTIC 5

Leveraging the statewide network, create an ad hoc committee to evaluate the existing asset and cultural map resources and directories around the state. Facilitate a conversation among our partners to determine if additional work in this area would strengthen the resources for artists and those seeking connections within the creative sector.

PHASE ONE: Spring 2019 – Establish the ad hoc committee and conduct the review.

PHASE TWO: Fall 2019 – Evaluate the findings and determine next steps, if needed.

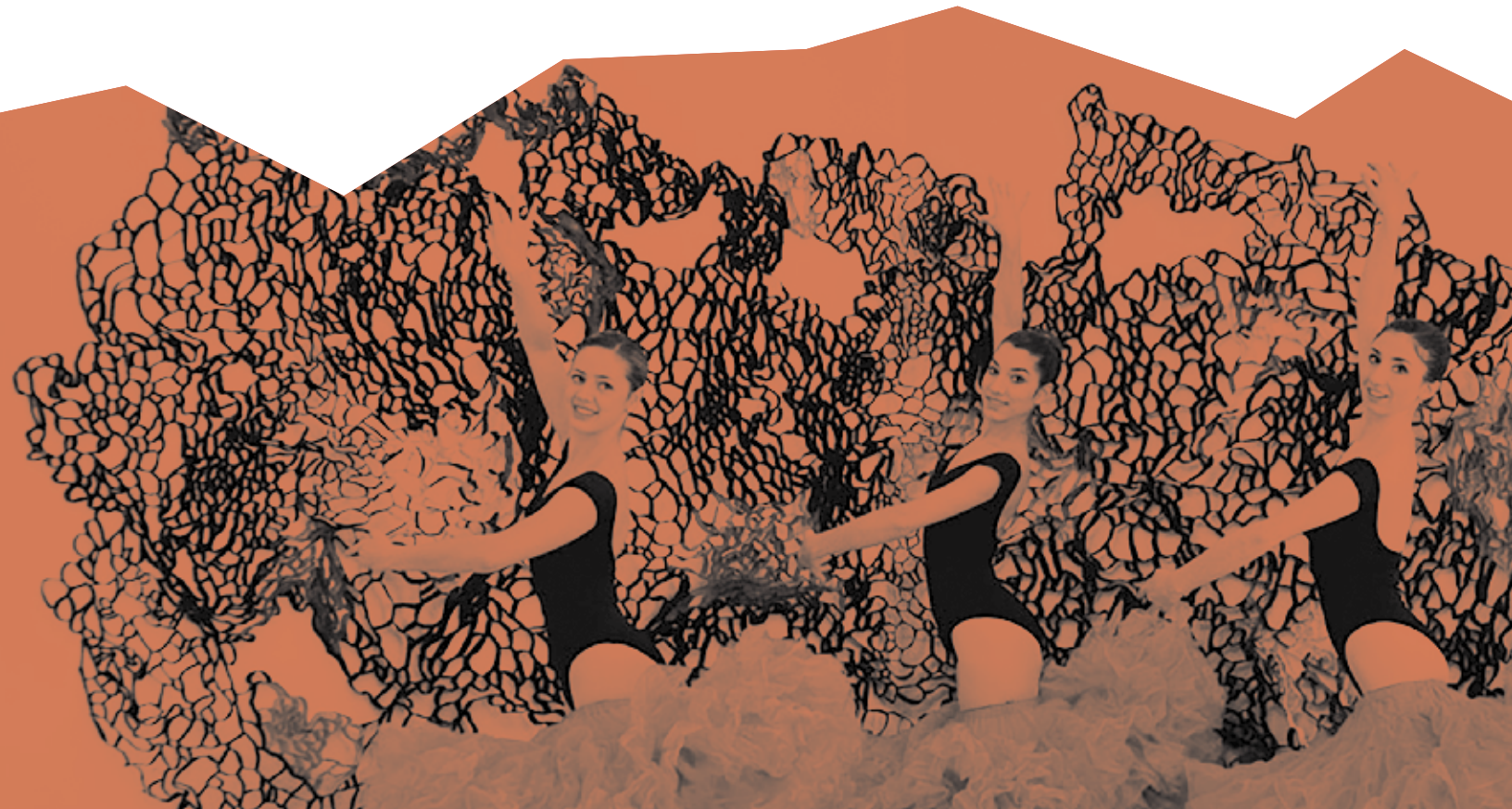
TACTIC 6

Evaluate the existing grant programs and criteria and align them with the Office of the Arts' current goals and objectives, including how we identify and support under-served communities.

Develop strategy to better celebrate grant recipients whose work represents innovative approaches that benefit and inspire Connecticut communities.

PHASE ONE: In Progress – Evaluate, redesign, streamline, and relaunch the grant programs and processes in response to information gathered throughout our strategic planning process.

PHASE TWO: Spring 2017 – Partner with key stakeholders across the state to develop new celebration strategies for our grantees.



TELL THE STORY

Arts create a product that attracts tourists and residents alike to explore the state and, in turn, invest dollars into local economies. The Office of the Arts is in a unique position to have a statewide perspective into what’s happening in the arts across Connecticut, and we commit to sharing those stories through our own marketing platforms, partner organizations like the Office of Tourism, and events. The goal of strategic and intentional story telling is to increase the profile of the arts in the state, and to help attract funding and audiences. The awareness will aid in solidifying the importance of the arts with governmental and legislative bodies across the state.

Based on the feedback from the charrettes, the arts agencies and organizations across the state are in need of marketing support to drive audience generation for their existing efforts. The Office of the Arts can play a key role in providing organizations with access to additional marketing resources and tools. The office will host workshops and gather existing resources to support audience development.

TACTIC 1

Continue building and developing the annual Arts Day. Release an annual State of the Arts report as part of the showcase and day of promoting the arts across the state. This report will demonstrate the impact (both economic and intangible) of the arts and share selected stories of individual artists, arts collectives, and arts organizations across Connecticut (see Goal 1, Tactic 6). Work with the Regionals to source the stories, with a focus on artistic excellence, innovative works, cultural equity and inclusion, and geographic diversity.

PHASE ONE: In Progress – Investigate existing Connecticut campaigns that showcase makers, innovators, and creators from across the state, and create opportunity to better highlight artistic voices.

PHASE TWO: Spring 2018 – Produce first report in alignment with our Connecticut Arts Day and annually thereafter.

TACTIC 2

Set up quarterly meetings with Tourism to make sure information is being shared across platforms, and the Tourism staff has the materials it needs to incorporate into out-of-state marketing efforts.

- In Progress – On an annual basis, we will establish a quarterly meeting schedule with our Tourism and marketing partners.

TACTIC 3

Update the language about the Office of the Arts and its work, and overhaul the marketing materials (website, pamphlets, etc.) for all of our programs. Create consistency in the messaging across our different platforms: social media, newsletters, websites, brochures, etc.

PHASE ONE: Spring 2017 – Build into the 2018 budget dedicated money to support this initiative and open a search for a marketing consultant to oversee the process.

PHASE TWO: Spring 2018 – Publish new brand identity to align with Connecticut Arts Day and the 40th anniversary of the One Percent for Art program.



GROW [FUTURE] AUDIENCES

Investing in arts education is a pivotal piece of providing a runway for future artists, but it also ensures future audiences who will support and invest in the arts in the coming decades.

TACTIC 1

Consider how to grow the reach and impact of HOT Schools and explore ways that the HOT Schools model (or an offshoot) could potentially reach more students across the state and grow a diverse roster of teaching artists and educators who embrace arts learning.

- In Progress-Winter 2018 – Identify arts learning programs across the state outside of our program. Investigate which regions in the state have access to arts learning opportunities and those that don't. Consider opportunities to reach all nine regions of the state. Present findings and propose a new plan for arts learning engagement.

TACTIC 2

Promote STEM to STEAM strategies to encourage the integration of the arts into science, technology, engineering, and math.

TACTIC 3

Over the coming year, the Office will evaluate and redesign our professional development services in response to feedback from our strategic planning process. This will result in a more holistic approach and will inform our offerings at our Summit, our town hall meetings, and our state-wide, cross-sector initiatives to better serve the needs of our diverse community of artists and arts organizations. There will be a particular focus on professional development services to strengthen cross-sector opportunities. Expanded professional development services will also help us to address the state's need to retain and attract creative talent.

TACTIC 4

Capitalize on the success of our 25-year-old Connecticut Cultural Heritage Arts Program, which encourages and promotes traditional artists and their communities through research and program development. We will expand our collaborations with immigrant and refugee organizations to better support, preserve, and showcase artistic talent from Connecticut's burgeoning immigrant population. This tactic celebrates the diversity of arts producers and art appetites across our state, and creates more doors to engage across cultural boundaries.

CLOSING

The Office of the Arts is at a distinct crossroads to define the future of its role in the artistic ecosystem of our state. By engaging in a human-centered design approach, we have developed a road map that will ensure the highest quality of all of our programmatic and investment decisions. Listening and responding to our constituents, we will continue to foster and promote artistic and cultural health and vibrancy and ensure relevance, equity, access, diversity, and inclusion for all in the arts throughout Connecticut.

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This is not a copycat strategy from another state or a one-size-fits-all approach. It is a sustainable, well-designed, people-first program. It is a strategy that celebrates our already established artistic excellence and elevates the profile of arts organizations and artists across the state. It is a plan we are excited to implement, and one that we know will create more meaningful opportunities for artists and audiences over the next five years.

Approved and Adopted by the Connecticut Arts Council, September 19, 2016

ENDNOTES

¹ World Cities Culture Reports, 2013 and 2015. www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/news/worldcitiesculturereport2015nowpublished

² "What is Human Centered Design?" <http://www.designkit.org/humancentereddesign>

³ Google definition of "culture." www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chromeinstant&ion=1&andespv=2&andie=UTF8#q=culture%20definition

⁴ Definition of "Experience / Design Principles." uxthink.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/experienceanddesignprinciples/

⁵ Office of the Arts Line Item Funding Overview 1.13.16

⁶ Bureau of Economic Analysis, United States Department of Commerce

⁷ Americans for the Arts Creative Industries Report. www.americansforthearts.org/byprogram/reportsanddata/researchstudiespublications/creativeindustries

⁸ Americans for the Arts: Arts and Economic Prosperity IV Report. www.americansforthearts.org/byprogram/reportsanddata/researchstudiespublications/artseconomic-prosperityiv

⁹ A Position Paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism in the United States. Developed by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities for the 2005 U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Summit.

¹⁰ Americans for the Arts: Arts and Economic Prosperity IV Report. www.americansforthearts.org/byprogram/reportsanddata/researchstudiespublications/artseconomic-prosperityiv

¹¹ Americans for the Arts: Arts and Economic Prosperity IV Report. www.americansforthearts.org/byprogram/reportsanddata/researchstudiespublications/artseconomic-prosperityiv

¹² SMU National Center on Arts Research Arts Vibrancy White Paper. <http://mcs.smu.edu/artsresearch2014/artsvibrancyindex2016> and <https://sites.smu.edu/meadows/near/NCARWhitePaperArtsVibrancyIndexII.pdf>