

2017 – 2019 Strategic Plan



PREFACE AND CONTEXT

Every three years, the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) engages in a strategic planning process to create a dialogue with Nebraska's cultural community and align our efforts with the needs and priorities of the arts in our state.

Contained in these pages are the components of our 2017-19 Strategic Plan, which sets the NAC's direction for the next three years. Our planning process included input from a variety of sources, including a statewide constituent survey, two statewide conferences, a forum on creative communities and a survey of elected officials. We also held a series of public meetings across Nebraska to gather information and refine our plan.

This plan was developed with input from NAC constituents, council members and staff. We've included methods for monitoring and evaluating each goal and have provided indicators that will measure progress on the achievement of each program priority.

Six agency priorities serve as the heart of our three-year plan. We've created an agency Top Ten List to identify specific activities to implement the agency priorities and build on the strategies for the first year. These are measurable items, assigned to a specific team of staff members, with a timeline for completion. A similar list will be developed for years two and three of the plan. Staff will report periodically to the council and to constituents on accomplishments and outcomes related to this work plan.

We look to this plan over the upcoming three years to give direction and focus to our mission of promoting, cultivating and sustaining the arts for the people of Nebraska.

AGENCY PRIORITIES

- Model leadership and visibility
- Ensure access and inclusion
- Promote diversity and engagement
- Elevate artistry and creativity
- Build resources and capacity
- Expand education and understanding

USE OF THE PLAN

The NAC believes in strategic planning that is short-term, flexible, and easy for staff and board members to use on a continuing basis. The plan that follows is a summary, meant to guide our work over the next three years.

The NAC tracks progress in addressing our priorities in the following ways:

- The agency compiles an annual Top Ten List of projects that function as our annual work plan. These projects include measurable objectives and are presented to the NAC board at the beginning of the fiscal year.
- The previous year's Top Ten List is evaluated and reported on, with each project designated as completed, in progress, or not accomplished.
- Projects from the Top Ten List that are not accomplished in the previous year are analyzed, and a remedial or revised plan is identified for that project, or the goal is eliminated from the agency plan.
- Staff assignments are made and budgets are developed for each Top Ten List project as needed.
- The work of each staff member correlates to the six agency priorities and to the Top Ten List. Staff members also compile a quarterly report that lists their accomplishments according to this plan, including constituent contacts, project involvement and grant administration.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

DECEMBER 2015

- **Strategic Planning Retreat:** Staff meeting focused on analysis of our planning process, examination of external forces/issues, mission, core values, goals and objectives.

APRIL 2016

- **Strategic plan progress report to NAC Board:** An evaluation of the previous year's Top Ten List was presented. New action items were discussed, and resources were allocated with a timeline for completion.

MAY 2016

- **Reviewed previous data, including the Economic Impact Study:** Arts & Economic Prosperity IV was produced in partnership with Nebraskans for the Arts, in which economic data was collected about the impact of the arts on Nebraska and how it is applied to communities within our state. Data was also reviewed from the Creative Connection Roundtable for creative entrepreneurs in the arts, conducted in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts.
- **Online Constituent Survey:** Gathered info from NAC grantees, artists, arts organizations and arts educators regarding NAC grant programs and services.

SUMMER 2016

- **Constituent Listening Forums and Office-on-Wheels:** Meetings were held to gather input in Albion, Alliance, Bassett, Beatrice, Broken Bow, Dannebrog, Falls City, Fort Robinson, Gothenburg, Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney, Lincoln, McCook, Minden, Nebraska City, Norfolk, North Platte, Ogallala, Omaha, Ord, Red Cloud, Republican City, Scottsbluff, Sutton and Valentine.
- **Legislative Survey of Elected Officials:** Asked questions assessing the NAC's effectiveness in delivering services and solicited opinions as to which other state agencies the NAC should be collaborating with in promoting economic development through arts and culture.
- Staff convened to review and analyze results of data to develop new strategies for improving services to constituents and maximizing efficiencies.

SEPTEMBER 2016

- Final version of plan was presented to NAC board for approval.
- NAC began plan implementation.



Omaha Symphony's 2015 Link Up recorder concert, photo courtesy St. Pius X/St. Leo School



A Midsummer's Mural's
Lithuanian mural project
Sieninis Paveikslas

MODEL LEADERSHIP & VISIBILITY

WHAT WE LEARNED

In our constituent survey, 95 percent of respondents believe the NAC is effectively fulfilling its mission to promote, cultivate and sustain the arts for the people of Nebraska. As part of this mission, a high majority of our constituents believe NAC is successfully communicating through a variety of methods. Of the 125 arts and cultural organizations surveyed, 85 percent have received a grant and 72 percent receive NAC information on a regular basis. In addition, 92 percent of constituents are satisfied with NACs programs and services.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Provide relevant content in communications.
- Promote the importance of the arts as a driver of economic development.
- Identify and foster new leaders in the arts community.
- Support and embrace our role as a convener.
- Create interagency programs that promote cultural communities.
- Empower artists and arts organizations to communicate with each other.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The NAC will be recognized as a statewide leader in the arts.
- The NAC will be known as a source for connecting Nebraska's creative community.
- The NAC will be a partner with other agencies and organizations to develop Nebraska's cultural communities.
- The arts sector will become an integral part of a community's asset base and contribute to economic development.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Collect and analyze data regarding participation in the arts in the NAC's grants management database.
- Monitor distribution of grant funds to encourage participation across Nebraska's three Congressional districts, 49 state legislative districts and 93 counties.
- Continue to add emerging arts professionals to NAC grant review panels and advisory committees.
- Track the number of visits to NAC social media sites and the website to monitor the extent of our visibility.
- In collaboration with Nebraskans for the Arts, continue to conduct economic impact studies and analyze results.

ENSURE ACCESS & INCLUSION

WHAT WE LEARNED

Reaching Nebraska's rural populations remains one of our biggest opportunities for growth. These areas often lack resources, from volunteers to monetary support. 92 percent of the organizations in Nebraska's highly rural and sparsely populated 3rd Congressional District believe NAC support and funding is critical to their survival. The NAC recognizes its responsibility to help all Nebraskans – regardless of ability, income or location – experience the arts, especially those with disabilities. Access to arts facilities and events is vital for all, whether as visitors, patrons, artists, educators, performers, employees or volunteers.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Make accessibility practices relevant and important in presenting the arts in Nebraska.
- Emphasize geographic diversity in grant distribution.
- Actively seek out communities that have not used NAC programs and services.
- Empower under-resourced and isolated arts organizations.
- Ensure that aging populations are not forgotten in arts programming.
- Promote and fund activities that ensure people with disabilities have greater access to the arts.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- Barriers to active participation in the arts will be eliminated.
- The arts will be celebrated and supported throughout the state.
- Connections to new audiences, including aging populations and veterans, will be developed.
- Isolated arts organizations will be connected to a larger statewide network.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Develop targeted technical assistance during annual statewide Office-on-Wheels visits based on funding patterns and communications with constituents.
- Track arts participation and grant distribution across Nebraska's 93 counties via our database.
- Distribute data-rich reports to elected officials that demonstrate NAC's outreach and statewide impact.
- Make access to NAC-funded programs by persons with disabilities a required component of the NAC online grant system, thus ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Compile reports to track trends and emerging issues during annual statewide Office-on-Wheels visits to communities.

Many Moccasins dance troupe performing at Neihardt Festival, Bancroft.





Camp Culture 2016, photo courtesy Asian Community & Cultural Center, Lincoln

PROMOTE DIVERSITY & ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE LEARNED

NAC constituents are highly aware of the state's shifting demographics. In fact, 96 percent of survey respondents believe that presenting arts from diverse cultures is of value. This presents the NAC with more opportunities as 67 percent of respondents believe their communities need assistance in presenting arts from Asian, Latin American, African American and Native American (ALAANA) cultures.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Actively seek out emerging ALAANA organizations and provide them with support and encouragement.
- Develop organizational capacity for culturally-specific communities and organizations through targeted technical assistance.
- Offer grant programs that identify, reach and actively engage underserved audiences.
- Provide financial support and assistance to folk and traditional arts artists and organizations.
- Cultivate arts leadership in diverse communities.
- Be proactive in outreach to immigrant communities.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- NAC grant review panels, committees and artist rosters will reflect the state's diversity.
- Distinctive cultural traditions will be honored and preserved.
- ALAANA organizations and artists will be well represented in cultural leadership positions in the state.
- Barriers to completing successful grant applications from emerging organizations will be removed.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Ensure service to diverse audiences and underserved communities is part of the evaluation criteria for all grant programs.
- Set and evaluate annual goals for increasing the diversity of artists in the NAC's Artist Directory.
- Track attendance at professional development opportunities to gauge participation by ethnic-specific arts organizations.
- Monitor inclusion of ALAANA arts professionals and artists in grant review panels and committees.

ELEVATE ARTISTRY & CREATIVITY

WHAT WE LEARNED

Individual artists continue to seek out support for their work in Nebraska. NAC's artist roster continues to be a well-known outlet for artists, however artists are still unaware of other programs NAC provides. Areas of opportunity for the NAC to assist artists include educating the public on the value of art from different cultures and creating networking and professional development opportunities. NAC also has the opportunity to engage more artists in the areas of theatre, literature and interdisciplinary arts.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Be a voice in support of the intrinsic value of the arts.
- Provide support for professional artists through fellowships and professional development opportunities.
- Increase visibility for artists and writers through the NAC website, exhibition venues and readings.
- Create employment opportunities for artists through the Artists in Schools/Communities and Touring programs.
- Promote the concept of arts education as integral to the development of creative industries.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The arts will be a recognized economic force in community development.
- Artists will have access to resources that will enhance their creative practices.
- Artists and their creative work will be recognized and celebrated.
- Communities will benefit from efforts to embrace and foster creativity.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Set targets for providing training, marketing, exhibition and performance opportunities for artists.
- Track participation of artists in NAC programs to determine the range and scope of artists reached.
- Promote and analyze an online public art database.
- Promote and analyze attendance of NAC workshops and webinars designed for artists.

2016 Good Living Tour performance by Mesonjinxx in O'Neill, Nebraska, photo courtesy Hear Nebraska





River at Dawn by Daniel Goldstein, 1% for Art commission, University of Nebraska at Kearney, under assembly. Photo by Corbey R. Dorsey/ UNK Communications.

EXPAND EDUCATION & UNDERSTANDING

WHAT WE LEARNED

Of the survey respondents, 98 percent believe that it is important for Nebraska schools to offer classes in visual and performing arts. However, arts educators continue to face obstacles such as lack of professional development, little administrative support, inadequate facilities and lack of instruction time. 89 percent of arts educators surveyed report that enrollment in arts classes has increased or stayed the same, although integrating Nebraska's Fine Arts Standards has remained a challenge in many classrooms.

BUILD RESOURCES & CAPACITY

WHAT WE LEARNED

Financial support for the arts remains a priority for Nebraska's arts and cultural communities. The majority of those surveyed believe attendance and participation in their organizations has increased or remained the same and 86 percent believe that NAC funding and services are critical to this success. NAC has the opportunity to help these organizations build their own capacity by offering education in technology, professional development and staffing. In addition, communities have demonstrated readiness to work with the NAC in building creative community strategies that recognize the arts as an economic driver.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Provide financial support and technical assistance to Nebraska's cultural infrastructure.
- Assist the Nebraska Cultural Endowment in the cultivation of donors and resources to increase funds.
- Forge partnerships with funders to expand community initiatives.
- Assist in the development of the next generation of philanthropists.
- Advocate for increased resources from federal and state partners.
- Recognize the generational shift in the demographics of arts participation and adjust programs accordingly.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- Organizations will have increased opportunities for growth.
- The NAC will be recognized as a source for providing networking and professional development.
- Financial resources will be responsive to demand and sensitive to changing economic conditions.
- Federal and state partners will provide consistent, reliable funding.
- Young arts professionals, philanthropists, and volunteers will be engaged, recognized and encouraged.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Track disbursement of funds across legislative districts to ensure underserved areas receive an equitable share of NAC resources.
- In partnership with Nebraskans for the Arts, document arts success stories in each district.
- Work in tandem with the Nebraska Cultural Endowment in raising private donations that leverage public funds.
- Require evidence of grantee communication with elected officials in all final reports.
- Set targets for providing a variety of training including marketing, strategic planning and organizational development to arts organizations statewide.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Partner with national and statewide leadership in support of Fine Arts Standards and other arts education initiatives.
- Increase the scope of professional development opportunities for educators and teaching artists.
- Expand arts learning opportunities in community settings.
- Challenge arts organizations to contribute expertise and resources toward educational programming.
- Advocate for including the arts in national educational initiatives.
- Gather up-to-date and comprehensive data about the status of arts educators, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education, to promote hiring in districts that lack specialists.

THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The arts will be a core component of every child's education.
- Arts learning opportunities will be widely available to all citizens in a variety of settings.
- Arts education will be recognized as an essential workforce skill.
- The next generation of Nebraskans will hold a deep appreciation for the arts, having had the benefit of arts education.
- All Nebraska schools will have a complete faculty of arts education specialists.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

- Monitor artist residencies for effectiveness through site visits, final reports, artist evaluations and participation numbers.
- Evaluate organizations that receive general operational support based on their demonstrated commitment to arts education.
- Evaluate school-based project grants based on their understanding and use of Nebraska fine arts curriculum standards.
- Monitor arts education grant recipients to ensure broad geographic reach and in-depth educational programming. Set targets for providing a variety of professional development opportunities for teachers and teaching artists.
- Include the number of available arts specialists and fine arts course requirements in Nebraska Education Directory data.

Broadway star Kristin Chenoweth with students from Omaha Performing Arts' Nebraska High School Theatre Awards Program



MISSION STATEMENT

The Nebraska Arts Council promotes, cultivates and sustains the arts for the people of Nebraska.

CORE BELIEFS

- All Nebraskans deserve access to the arts.
- The arts are a catalyst for promoting understanding among cultures.
- Arts education is basic to lifelong learning.
- The arts are essential to imagination, creativity and innovation.
- The arts drive creativity in its purest form.
- Engagement in the arts enriches quality of life.
- The arts are an integral part of a vital economy.
- Human, financial and technological resources sustain creative communities.

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

In our attempt to create a plan that is authentic and useful, the NAC staff used a strategic planning model that emerges from a set of cascading inter-related questions. These questions flow from six program priorities that stem logically from our mission and core beliefs.

This model was adapted from the work of O'Donovan and Flower and taken from an article published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review (Jan 10, 2013) entitled, "The Strategic Plan is Dead. Long Live Strategy." The article challenges traditional strategic planning in favor of an adaptive strategy that asks "...what vision you want to pursue, how you will make a difference, how you will succeed, and what capabilities it will take to get there."



NAC Teaching Artist Kristin Pluhacek with part of the mural painting team at Completely Kids, Omaha.

"The skills and mindset for today's strategic planning will come from continuously asking ourselves these questions about our organizations, programs, and initiatives. Once we accept Dwight D. Eisenhower's sage advice that 'plans are useless, but planning is everything,' we will be ready to adapt to whatever curveballs the twenty-first century sees fit to throw."

O'Donovan and Flower
ssireview.org/blog/entry/the_strategic_plan_is_dead_long_live_strategy

RESEARCH: What we learned.

What are the needs, trends, challenges and opportunities we see in pursuit of our priorities?

ACTION: What we need to do.

How will we structure our work and where will we focus our effort to address our findings?

OUTCOMES: The results we want.

What is the end-of-the-day vision of the consequences of our work and of our effort?

ASSESSMENT: How we monitor and evaluate progress.

What indicators and measurements will we use to keep us on track?