INTRODUCTION
MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES
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During a time when the arts sector faces new opportunities and challenges, we believe the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC) is ideally positioned to advocate; support, sustain, and advance; engage; and embrace our diverse community. We were honored to facilitate the strategic planning process to elevate GCAC as a convener of the arts and a driver of the cultural economy.

The strategic plan is based on ten months of studying, analyzing, collaborating, and coaching. The goal was to challenge the past and chart a path for the future.

We acknowledge the leadership of Tom Katzenmeyer, President and CEO, and Michael Bongiorno, Board Chair, throughout this process. Additionally, the following board members served on the strategic planning board working group: Christie Angel, Barbara Brandt, Catherine Lang-Cline, and Yohannan Terrell.

Peter Drucker’s “Five Questions” created the framework for planning.

1. What is our mission?
2. Who is our customer?
3. What does our customer value?
4. What are our results?
5. What is our plan?

We believe that mission drives everything in an organization. In January 2019, new mission, vision, and values statements were created and the primary customer was identified, all of which were used as a lens in creating the strategic plan.

Building upon our partnership that started in 2019, our strategic planning work began with a clarity phase — time spent getting to know your “what” and your “why” through interviews, surveys, document review, board meetings, and a strategic planning retreat. In the spring of 2020, we shared what we learned with the board working group and staff.

We then entered a period of strategy development — getting to “next.” Through discussions with the team, we articulated four strategic pillars (advocate; support, sustain, and advance; engage; and embrace); goals; and short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, which all culminate in the logic model. We also collaborated to create short-term objectives to pair with the short-term outcomes.

The staff then formulated tactics for each short-term objective. Intermediate objectives and corresponding tactics are not yet created, however, due to the world’s current state of flux. Our goal is to gather in one year to review the plan and establish intermediate objectives and tactics.

The final strategy outlined in this report was developed through reflection and discussion with the staff and board working group.

We remain your partners as you work to implement the plan and would be honored to be your thought partner when the time comes for succession planning and other strategic activities.

— Mollard Consulting
MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Strategic planning is underpinned by the mission, vision, and inherent values of the Greater Columbus Arts Council.

MISSION
To support and advance the arts and cultural fabric of Columbus.

VISION
A thriving Columbus where the arts matter to all of us.

VALUES

Cultural Equity
Our transparent grantmaking elevates and supports a broad representation of artforms and artists.

Cultural Capital
We are diligent stewards of the public and private support that drives our work.

Sustaining Excellence
We encourage excellence in the fields of the artists and arts organizations that we support, and in their fiscal and governance responsibilities.

Building Community
Our investments connect the people and places of Columbus.

Welcome All
We promote art experiences for those living, working, visiting, and learning in our city.

Inspired Advocacy
Communicating the impact of the arts is fundamental to the health and vitality of the creative community.
GCAC — AN ARTS CONVENOR AND CULTURAL ECONOMIC ENGINE

GCAC is a trusted voice. The organization’s value proposition is to be an arts convenor and a driver of the cultural economy.

To fulfill the promise of its value proposition, GCAC leaders and stakeholders articulated the following strategic pillars, which serve as the foundation for the work ahead. These pillars will guide GCAC’s planned movements toward outcomes, impact, and vision, which are illustrated in the logic model and described in more detail on the following pages.

**STRATEGIC PILLARS**

**No. 1 ADVOCATE**
Goal: To influence access to, and communicate the importance of, the arts and the organization.

**No. 2 SUPPORT, SUSTAIN, AND ADVANCE**
Goal: To elevate philanthropy and financial stewardship to support recovery and further the mission.

**No. 3 ENGAGE**
Goal: To connect grantees, artists, audiences, and communities to resources.

**No. 4 EMBRACE**
Goal: To celebrate common humanity, and embed diversity, equity, and inclusion, into all that we do.
Strategic Pillar No. 1
ADVOCATE

GOAL
To influence access to, and communicate the importance of, the arts and the organization.

GCAC is a champion for arts and cultural organizations and artists. With the public sector’s increased confidence and funding, GCAC can continue to grow resources and services for the arts, ensuring broader access for all members of the community.

Even though bed tax and ticket fee dollars have declined during the pandemic, GCAC continues to be a leading voice of engagement with elected officials. Advocating for arts and cultural organizations to ensure they are not left out of the public reinvestment dollars designed to stimulate growth will be fundamental to the economic recovery of the arts.

A key component of this work requires making the case for the arts to the public and continuing to build, cultivate, and steward relationships with members of the arts community and other stakeholders. The goal of these efforts is to secure the resources and other support necessary to sustain Columbus’ arts ecosystem.

GCAC is uniquely positioned to be an influential voice in expanding access to the arts. While arts and cultural organizations focus on daily operations and how to fulfill their missions during this uncertain time, GCAC can be the collective voice working to elevate the arts. GCAC has the ability to spearhead an organized effort to ensure that the arts are recognized, celebrated, and supported by communicating directly with members of the public and civic leaders.

In 2020, when this strategic plan was written, arts and cultural organizations faced great financial challenges due to the global pandemic, especially performing arts entities. This plan will impact and elevate these arts and cultural organizations throughout the next five years and beyond.
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Civic leader involvement and the organization’s role as a critical voice in arts policy and community planning are secured and leveraged.
- Brand and marketing needs are prioritized.
- Art in the public realm is elevated.
- Access is measured.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- The organization’s role as a leader in the arts is valued.
- A brand and marketing plan is solidified and integrated.
- A public art master plan is created.
- Access growth is demonstrated.
Strategic Pillar No. 2
SUPPORT, SUSTAIN, AND ADVANCE

GOAL
To elevate philanthropy and financial stewardship to support recovery and further the mission.

As GCAC looks to the future, this pillar will be critical to carrying out the strategic plan. When the public sector passed the ticket fee, GCAC was tasked with stewarding public support and leveraging private investment.

Transparent financial management paired with stewardship of civic leaders, stakeholders, and the general public will be critical. As the amount of public funding available remains uncertain, understanding the organization’s financial gaps will be crucial to prioritizing private funding needs.

Arts organizations hold some of the largest events in the city, such as the Columbus Arts Festival and other live performances, and risk management of these events should not be overlooked. Risk management protocols exist to minimize vulnerability, suspicion, errors, mismanagement, and fraud within the organization — they act as deterrent and detection mechanisms. GCAC is committed to reviewing internal risk management protocols to act as a good steward of public and private funds. In turn, GCAC will share best practices with the arts organizations they serve.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES
• Public funding is sustained.
• Public funding is managed and stewarded.
• Risk management framework is established.
• Private funding needs are prioritized.
• Risk management framework is established.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
• Funding is designated for public art.
• Public trust is elevated.
• Private fundraising is expanded and endowment is realized.
• Risk management plans are implemented.
Strategic Pillar No. 3

ENGAGE

GOAL
To connect grantees, artists, audiences, and communities to resources.

GCAC is positioned as a convener of community engagement practices that connect artists and audiences. Recent momentum, generated first by the ticket fee then the coronavirus fundraising response, furthers the organization’s ability to focus on impactful engagement efforts. Moreover, the political will exists to support access and increase engagement of new and underserved audiences, which will also propel GCAC’s efforts forward.

Grantmaking is the bedrock of the organization and a major source of support for grantees. GCAC’s commitment to grantees — whether that be organizations or individual artists — supports public access to the arts, lifelong arts education, and Central Ohio’s cultural infrastructure.

The capacity building project was a new level of engagement with grantees outside of a grantmaking cycle. The process deepened understanding and generated new insights for all parties involved. Furthering the recommendations from that work, and expanding the work to project support grantees, will be key to fulfilling this strategic pillar.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Grantees’ needs are prioritized.
- A community engagement plan is developed.
- A board engagement model is created for arts organizations.
- The artist and audience connection is understood.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Grantees’ needs are addressed.
- A community engagement plan is implemented.
- Art organizations’ boards are engaged and effective.
- The artist and audience connection is strengthened.
Strategic Pillar No. 4
EMBRACE

GOAL
To celebrate common humanity, and embed diversity, equity, and inclusion, into all that we do.

The arts are a voice for unrest and a vehicle for unity. Historically, the arts have played a crucial role as an outlet for expression on issues ranging from racial injustice to equal rights for women. As our communities continue to experience inequity, now is the time to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion is at the forefront of this work.

“As stewards of the public good, all social sector organizations, regardless of mission, are called on to embrace and celebrate our common humanity, and the inherent worth of all people. In doing so, we must also acknowledge that a climate of growing intolerance and inequity is a challenge to our democratic values and ideals. Divisions along economic, racial, religious, and political lines have created an increasingly polarized society in need of healing. And the complex issues and dynamics at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality call for deeper thinking as we seek to understand each other.” — BoardSource

Growing the knowledge of GCAC staff and board members and turning it into action by embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion practices into all aspects of the organization — from hiring to funding disbursement — will ensure GCAC is acknowledged as a future leader in DEI best practices.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

• Knowledge is expanded across the organization.
• Diversity, equity, and inclusion is embedded into current policies and practices.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

• Knowledge is expanded across grantees.
• The organization is widely recognized as a leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices.
OPERATIONAL PLANNING

GCAC’s strategic plan is complete and ready to launch. However, the strategic plan will not be relevant if the organization neglects to set aside time for operational planning.

Operational planning translates strategy into everyday execution and tactics to guide the organization, which ultimately leads to achievement of the outcomes defined by the strategic pillars. Assigning cross-functional teams that include staff and board members (in an advisory role), articulating milestones and timelines, and monitoring progress are all keys to success. The organization must have a way to connect day-to-day operations to the strategic plan, or the plan may sit on a shelf.

Operational planning must be done if the high-level strategy is to be accomplished, because the organization is an ecosystem. Not only will a change in one area almost always affect other areas — each cross-functional team must align their work with the mission, vision, values, value proposition, and strategic pillars. The strategic plan will be applied differently to each area of the organization.

GCAC is a dynamic and responsive organization. The opportunity exists to translate programmatic and policy skills into plan execution. Staff and board have been engaged in the planning process and in articulating the tactics to fulfill the objectives. Together we will accomplish this strategic plan and strengthen our cultural community.