



# Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

#### Statutory Compliance

This process was undertaken in accordance with Title 62 Okla. Stat. § 45.3 which requires each state agency to draft a strategic plan covering five fiscal years and to provide updated plans periodically.

As required, copies of this plan have been submitted to: 1) The Governor; 2) The President Pro Tempore of the State Senate; 3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives; 4) The Legislative Oversight Committee on State Budget Performance; 5) The Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Accountability in Government; 6) The Director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services; and 7) The State Auditor and Inspector. Additional copies are available upon request.



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## Letter from the Director

On behalf of the Governor-appointed board and our staff of the Oklahoma Arts Council, I want to thank the thousands of Oklahomans representing communities in every corner of our state whose input has been integral to the creation of the 2021-2025 Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Plan. Our agency exists to empower Oklahomans far and wide to serve their communities and schools using the transformative power of the arts. It would be impossible for our team to know how to best serve Oklahomans without your enthusiastic response to our surveys and community listening sessions.

In 1965, when Governor Henry Bellmon and the Oklahoma State Legislature established the Oklahoma Arts Council, they saw a need to ensure that all Oklahomans could benefit from having access to the arts. Over 55 years, our agency's work has evolved from primarily seeding and nurturing a wide array of arts activities across our state through our grant funding, to advancing our state's cultural infrastructure by offering professional and community development programs. A more recent focus has involved leveraging the power of the arts to augment needs in other sectors such as health, transportation, and veterans services. Arts education, the connective tissue for the sector, has been a focus since the early days of our agency.

As we move forward in this plan, having confronted recent challenges such as compounding budget cuts and the pandemic, we remain steadfast in our vision to exemplify in our work how the arts can meet new and evolving needs in Oklahoma.

As you review the 2021-2025 Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Plan, I invite you to partner with us in the journey ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber Sharples". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amber Sharples  
Executive Director







# Introduction

Oklahomans are at the center of all we do at the Oklahoma Arts Council, and because our state and its people have grown and changed in the five years since we launched our previous strategic plan, the mission, focus, and response of our agency in service to Oklahomans must change accordingly. Building on past successes, the 2021-2025 Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Plan sets the stage for our agency to be further driven in its actions to showcase our state's many voices and varied communities, cultivating our people's art in all forms, and continuing to support arts and arts education.

In the past five years, through the support of our community of organizations, artists, ambassadors, educators, and elected officials, we have been able to help achieve great things for our state. We have leveraged our funding from the Oklahoma State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts to generate a \$241 million economic impact that supports 8,106 jobs. For every \$1 in Oklahoma Arts Council funding invested by the agency across Oklahoma, \$6 in tax revenue was generated for state and local governments. Along with our agency's successes, challenges are often a part of our work, and over the past five years, regardless of the shape these challenges have taken, our focus as an agency has remained on how to best meet the needs of Oklahomans through our resources.

As with all organizations, we recognize the need to invest in a new strategy to guide us. Having spent the past 18 months contemplating and creating that strategy, we are excited to share in this document our new plan. We invite you to join in as we continue our work to enrich Oklahomans.

In alignment with our mission, guiding principles, and core values, this framework will be the Oklahoma Arts Council's roadmap for the next five years as we preserve and protect our cultural heritage, expand accessibility to arts and arts education for all, provide robust public support, and promote the arts and their link to a strong state economy.

We have worked, together with many others, to create a useful plan, building from what we know works, incorporating authentic aspirations and new ideas, and setting a framework for inspiration, accountability, and more creative collaboration in Oklahoma. We are pleased to share it here.







# Oklahoma Arts Council's Strategic Context



## Opportunities for growth and promise:

- Arts as a magnet in rural communities
- Changing demographics
- Council members as ambassadors
- Elections
- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Long term relationships with constituents
- New communities
- Staff



## Threats, struggles, and obstacles:

- Lack of economic diversity
- Polarized ideologies
- Private and corporate funding declines
- Public funding
- Relevance to all
- Relevance to Gen Y & Z
- Term limits



## UFOs (wild cards, unknowns):

- Changing demographics
- Digital divide
- Economy
- Educational system
- Policymaking



## Themes:

- Changing demographics/new communities
- Education
- Environment/natural resources
- Funding
- Leadership
- Making the case for the arts
- Program opportunities
- Reaching out to new generation
- Rural/urban divide
- Technology

# Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

## Mission

The Oklahoma Arts Council leads, cultivates, and amplifies the transformative power of the arts for all Oklahomans and their communities.

## Vision

The Oklahoma Arts Council envisions a future where:

- All communities are celebrated and enriched through creative expression
- Artists, arts organizations, and arts education thrive through robust public support
- The arts are recognized as essential to education and economic vitality

## Goal 1: Cultivate and Support the Arts in Oklahoma

Oklahoma Arts Council encourages the arts in Oklahoma, working through a variety of programs to champion local and statewide initiatives.

## Goal 2: Advance Arts Education

Oklahoma Arts Council supports and advocates for abundant arts education at all stages of life.

## Goal 3: Strengthen Agency Services and Capacity

Oklahoma Arts Council operates effectively, transparently, and efficiently, always seeking to improve through collaboration and learning.



## Guiding Principles

- All Oklahomans and communities deserve and benefit from access to the arts
- Every child should have access to a well-rounded education that includes the arts
- Artists link us to past traditions, capture contemporary life, and inspire future creativity
- The arts support the development of an innovative workforce and a vibrant economy
- The arts are a catalyst for promoting understanding of cultures
- Lifelong engagement in the arts enriches quality of life and improves health and wellbeing

## Values

- Accountability
- Creativity
- Excellence
- Inclusion
- Partnership







## Definition of Terms

**Goal:** What the agency will accomplish to support its mission and vision

**Rationale:** Why this work is important for Oklahomans now, and how it aligns with State priorities

**Focus Areas:** Where the agency will invest its resources

**Strategies:** Priority steps along the way

**Outcomes:** What success looks like





*Roams the Earth, Oklahoma Arts Conference, Stillwater*

## **Goal 1: Cultivate and Support the Arts in Oklahoma**

### **Rationale**

As the official state arts agency and as the state partner of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Oklahoma Arts Council has fulfilled a unique position within the state arts ecosystem since its establishment in 1965. The agency is the only statewide entity created to ensure that all Oklahomans have access to the arts. Cultivating and supporting the arts is the essence of the agency.

Six **focus areas** will empower the agency to accomplish this work:

1. Invest in Oklahoma's Arts and Cultural Assets
2. Elevate Artistry and Catalyze Creative Community Development
3. Promote and Equip Oklahoma Artists and Programs
4. Engage in Cross-Sector Partnerships to Facilitate Creative Initiatives
5. Encourage Arts-Friendly Policy and the Public Value of the Arts
6. Ensure Accessibility in the Arts



## **Invest in Oklahoma's Arts and Cultural Assets**

- Provide financial support and technical assistance to support Oklahoma's cultural infrastructure
- Leverage investments in operating support for eligible arts organizations to increase opportunities for Oklahomans
- Enhance the quality of state-owned art collections by establishing an endowment for the acquisition, cataloging, and long-term care of artworks
- Reactivate the rotating Oklahoma State Capitol art galleries, using art from across Oklahoma
- Archive, preserve, and promote folk and traditional art
- Expand the Cultural District Initiative

## **Elevate Artistry and Catalyze Creative Community Development**

- Expand arts and cultural opportunities in rural communities
- Explore options to increase support for emerging arts organizations
- Forge partnerships with funders to expand community initiatives
- Strengthen the collective statewide arts and cultural network
- Develop and facilitate professional development programs, including the Oklahoma Arts Conference and Leadership Arts, for artists, arts leaders, and community developers

## **Promote and Equip Oklahoma Artists and Programs**

- Promote the professional development of artists
- Fund arts project grants that enliven communities through a wide range of engagement opportunities for all Oklahomans

## **Engage in Cross-Sector Partnerships to Facilitate Creative Initiatives**

- Build partnerships with tribal nations and Indigenous communities
- Collaborate and partner to sustain the Oklahoma Arts and the Military Initiative
- Develop and enhance partnerships in support of Creative Aging and Arts in Incarceration programs

## **Encourage Arts-Friendly Policy and Public Value of the Arts**

- Engage elected officials and community leaders
- Protect, strengthen, and incorporate the arts into public policy
- Conduct and collaborate with others on arts-related research
- Establish, promote, and execute an annual tour of the artwork of the Oklahoma State Capitol for legislators and other state officials
- Pursue increased resources from federal, regional, and state partners

## **Ensure Accessibility in the Arts**

- Support arts activities for the benefit of individuals and communities in all 77 Oklahoma counties
- Recognize demographic shifts in arts participation and adjust programs accordingly
- Maintain consistency and objectivity across grant review panels to assure applicants of a fair, impartial, and transparent process
- Expand reach to communities that have not been served through Oklahoma Arts Council programming
- Cultivate new arts leadership in strategic communities
- Provide greater opportunities for artists from tribal nations and communities of color to express or depict the narratives and individual stories of those communities through the art commissioning process

## **Outcomes**

- Oklahoma Arts Council will be:
  - Recognized as a statewide leader in the arts
  - Considered a key source for connecting Oklahoma's creative community
  - Partnered with other agencies and organizations in the development of Oklahoma's cultural infrastructure
  - Viewed as a valuable source for networking and professional development
- Oklahoma's arts sector will be an integral and representative part of community asset bases and a contributor to state economic development
- Oklahoma cultural traditions will be honored and preserved



Oklahoma Youth Orchestra, Oklahoma City

## Goal 2: Advance Arts Education

### Rationale

Giving Oklahomans of all ages and abilities opportunities in arts education cultivates an appreciation of the arts as a valuable part of our communities and increases opportunities for individuals to reach their potential in creative expression and critical thinking. Advancing arts education, a foundational element and connective thread for the arts, is an effective means for investing in the short and long-term vitality of the sector.

Four **focus areas** will empower the agency to accomplish this work:

1. Invest in Quality Arts Education and Lifelong Learning
2. Build and Empower Partnerships to Ensure Access Statewide
3. Provide Professional Development and Networking for Arts Educators and Teaching Artists
4. Ensure Accessibility in Arts Education



## **Invest in Quality Arts Education and Lifelong Learning**

- Leverage investments to increase access and improve the quality of arts education and arts learning for all Oklahomans
- Evaluate current and past arts education and arts learning grant programs
- Develop, pilot, and assess new grant programs to increase relevance
- Build a robust inventory of public art educational resources, offering opportunities to Oklahoma teaching artists
- Design, produce, and implement new educational programming and curriculum support for the Oklahoma State Capitol art collections

## **Build and Empower Partnerships to Ensure Access Statewide**

- Collaborate with state government leaders and arts and education professionals to advance arts education policy in Oklahoma
- Develop and maintain strategic partnerships to address gaps
- Cultivate partnerships in support of Creative Aging, Arts and the Military, Arts and Juvenile Justice, and Arts in Incarceration programs
- Work with the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department to produce and provide docent training for the Oklahoma State Capitol art collections

## **Provide Professional Development and Networking for Arts Educators and Teaching Artists**

- Increase the scope of professional development opportunities
- Develop and implement trainings and convenings for the Oklahoma Teaching Artist Roster
- Develop and launch incentives for recruitment and retention of artists on the Oklahoma Teaching Artist Roster
- Promote professional development opportunities in creative ways

## **Ensure Accessibility in Arts Education**

- Evaluate current and past arts education and arts learning grant programs through the lens of accessibility
- Cultivate partnerships in support of accessibility goals to raise awareness of grant funding opportunities
- Implement weighted scoring to ensure appropriate distribution of grant funding
- Revive Capitol Art Travel Subsidies to provide funding for schools to bring students from across the state to the Oklahoma State Capitol

## **Outcomes**

- 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 essential to the development of workforce skills
- Oklahoma's next generation will deeply appreciate the arts, having had the benefit of arts education
- All Oklahoma schools will have a complete faculty of arts education specialists



*Bartlesville Civic Ballet, Bartlesville  
Photo by Andrea Mann*

## **Goal 3: Strengthen Oklahoma Arts Council Services and Capacity**

### **Rationale**

Oklahoma Arts Council staff members are dedicated public servants who are committed to leveraging the arts as assets for the growth of the state. An investment in the development of its staff is an investment in Oklahoma. Committed to being conscientious stewards of state resources, the agency's staff believes that a mindset of continual improvement and innovation is the most efficient way to strengthen its service to the sector.

Five **focus areas** will empower the agency to accomplish this work:

1. Enhance Efficiency, Transparency, and Constituent Focus
2. Expand National, Regional, Statewide, and State Agency Partnerships
3. Elevate Staff Capacity through Professional Development and Collaboration
4. Ensure Agency Preparedness and Resiliency
5. Ensure Accessibility Within Agency Practices



## **Enhance Efficiency, Transparency, and Constituent Focus**

- Reduce the cost of doing business, including continued streamlining of the agency's grant process
- Use data to assess return on investment and to improve strategy and procedures
- Continue to develop and implement a comprehensive communications and marketing plan
- Redesign agency website with a focus on constituent needs
- Participate in research that demonstrates the arts' importance to education, quality of life, and economic development
- Streamline the Oklahoma Art in Public Places artist submission and selection process

## **Expand National, Regional, Statewide, and State Agency Partnerships**

- Review current national, regional, and statewide partnerships
- Identify additional partnerships to fill voids in the agency's community engagement

## **Elevate Staff Capacity through Professional Development and Collaboration**

- Recruit and retain a dedicated and motivated workforce
- Support staff professional development and increase opportunities for individual and collective trainings

## **Ensure Agency Preparedness and Resiliency**

- Maximize return on public investment
- Develop and maintain an organizational culture that promotes health and wellness
- Update Continuity of Operations Plan and provide an annual emergency preparedness training program for members of agency board and staff
- Revise safety and security policies and procedures annually
- Strengthen telework capabilities

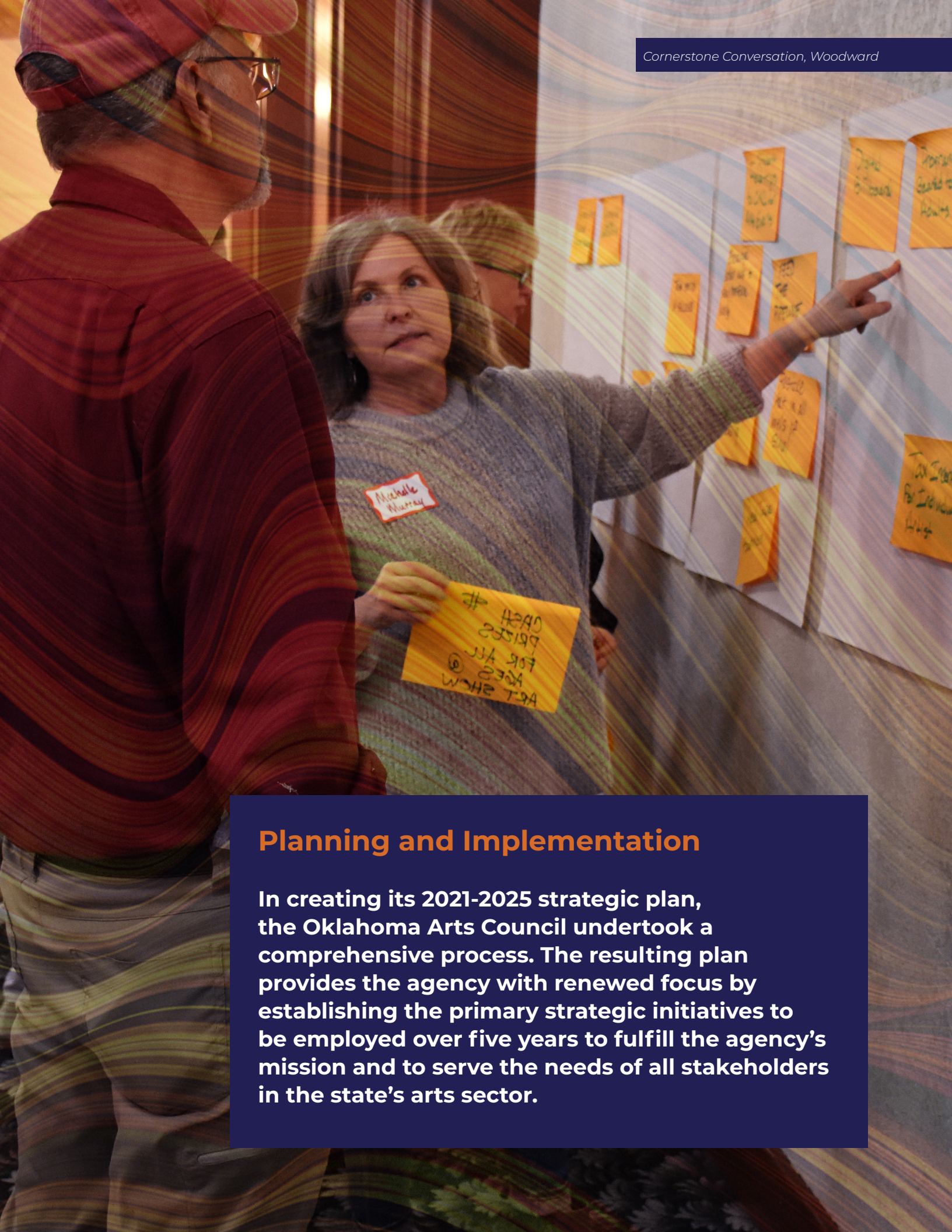
## **Ensure Accessibility Within Agency Practices**

- Create a proactive culture that supports thoughtful examination of access as a critical ideal that underpins all programs and services
- Train, equip, and mobilize staff to develop new strategic relationships with individuals representing communities not currently served by the agency
- Improve and apply performance metrics for grants, programs, and services
- Make website accessible to all
- Optimize grants management system

## **Outcomes**

- Oklahoma Arts Council will be seen as a full service public agency
- Oklahoma Arts Council grantmaking process will remove barriers to access
- Oklahoma Arts Council board and staff will have increased knowledge of how communication influences services
- Oklahoma Arts Council staff will be fully equipped to navigate dynamic conditions and evolving environments
- Oklahoma Arts Council staff will demonstrate greater productivity and resiliency through adversity
- Oklahoma Arts Council programs and services will represent Oklahoma's people, communities, and traditions
- All Oklahomans will have greater access to the arts





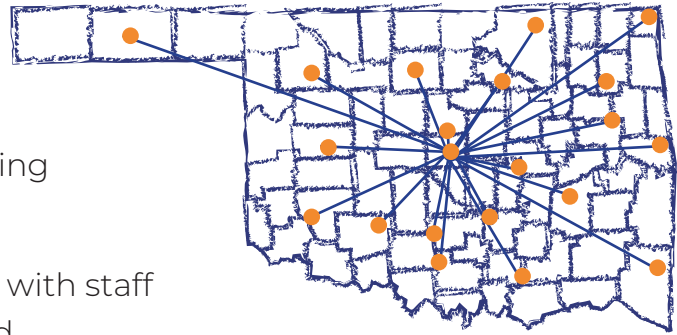
## Planning and Implementation

In creating its 2021-2025 strategic plan, the Oklahoma Arts Council undertook a comprehensive process. The resulting plan provides the agency with renewed focus by establishing the primary strategic initiatives to be employed over five years to fulfill the agency's mission and to serve the needs of all stakeholders in the state's arts sector.



## Planning Methods

- Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Planning Committee and staff assessed the status of the agency, including its mission, values, and guiding principles.
- Strategy sessions continued internally with staff while data was collected from the field.
- *Cornerstone Conversations* allowed Oklahoma Arts Council staff to listen, learn, and dream with Oklahomans representing all communities for what is possible for our state through the arts. These community engagement sessions involved more than 200 constituents from Guymon, Woodward, Enid, Shawnee, Tulsa, Weatherford, Idabel, Ardmore, Miami, and surrounding communities.
- Nearly 600 survey responses were submitted by Oklahomans statewide through the Oklahoma Arts Council's effort to solicit candid feedback related to constituent satisfaction with agency programs and services.
- A review of existing data and research guided the development of a strategic framework consisting of a new mission, vision, guiding principles, and values for the Oklahoma Arts Council.
- Staff provided strategies and outcomes to shape the goals and focus areas of the plan, while an independent consultant offered guidance and revisions to the draft plan.
- The strategic plan was released for public comment and a publicly accessible strategic planning webpage was created to maintain transparency and to invite ongoing input.



Upon approval by the Governor-appointed Oklahoma Arts Council board, and the distribution of the plan to State of Oklahoma officials, in compliance with state statute, the Oklahoma Arts Council announced the plan via agency communication channels. Staff aligns the annual departmental work plans and activities with the updated plan and builds recommendations for the next planning process.

## Evaluation

To ensure accountability, this plan provides intended outcomes for each goal. Staff work plans, which will incorporate operational steps, include key performance measures. As a performance-driven agency, staff will track and evaluate progress toward achieving strategic goals.

Measures may be refined as the plan is implemented.

In addition, the Oklahoma Arts Council will use the following methods to evaluate progress:

- Compile an annual strategic roadmap to prioritize agency projects
- Present progress reports, including an annual impact report, to the Oklahoma Arts Council board
- Employ general and targeted surveys to obtain data on agency programs and to assess constituent needs
- Conduct community engagement efforts and listening sessions across the state to collect qualitative and quantitative data
- Make the plan accessible to agency staff and to the public
- Solicit ongoing feedback to measure performance and ensure goal achievement

The qualitative and quantitative data obtained through the evaluation methods outlined in this plan will be crucial for crafting the next strategic plan.

The Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and all details describing goals, objectives, and strategies within this plan are subject to change depending on annual appropriations.







## Acknowledgments

The Oklahoma Arts Council offers its sincerest thanks to all whom have had a hand in bringing this plan to fruition. Without the support of partners across the state, the development of this new plan would not have been possible. Among our partners, the leadership of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies were instrumental in the strategic planning process. Finally, the devotion of Oklahoma Arts Council board members and, specifically, the Strategic Planning Committee, in supporting the development of this plan, was essential. Significant gratitude is owed to the members of our board for voluntarily dedicating their time to provide meaningful oversight of the agency on behalf of the people of Oklahoma.

Support for the agency by elected leaders is strong across the spectrum – state and local, rural and urban. The Oklahoma Arts Council is grateful to those in leadership positions who recognize the need to invest in the arts. This plan is written to reflect their needs as leaders as well as the needs of their constituents.

### Oklahoma Arts Council Strategic Planning Committee

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Shawnee, Tulsa, Weatherford, and  
Woodward



Tulsa Opera, Tulsa  
Photo by Shane Bevel







**OKLAHOMA**