



IOWA ARTS COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Iowa Arts Council (IAC) operates as a unit of its parent agency, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA).

Established in 1967, the IAC serves as Iowa's designated state arts council. The IAC coordinates its efforts and works in collaboration with its federal agency partner, the National Endowment for the Arts, and regional arts partner, Arts Midwest, to carry out its mission to cultivate creativity, learning and participation in the arts in Iowa.

Planning Process

The IAC regularly seeks public input on its priorities and strategic goals and develops a new plan approximately every three years.

Between May and October 2021, the IAC participated in public listening sessions, facilitated by Wastyn & Associates, and took part in a public survey to determine current perceptions of, and future priorities for, the arts in Iowa. Altogether, the public input phase engaged more than 1,100 Iowans from the arts, culture, humanities, and creative sectors.

Staff and board input was sought at multiple points throughout this process. The IAC also organized a series of conversations with leaders in the arts and state arts agency field.



Elton Rock Tribute Dogs of Society performing at Lowe Park Amphitheatre, Marion

I. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Build an arts infrastructure that reaches every corner of our state.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

1. Promote accessibility of grant opportunities.

- Clearly communicate eligibility requirements and consider ways to streamline and simplify application and reporting requirements
- Develop user-friendly materials and improve navigation of resources
- Align grant funding opportunities with the greatest needs in the field
- Provide additional technical assistance to first time applicants and those who have not received funding in recent years to increase their competitiveness

2. Act as a statewide resource hub to connect and support the field.

- Build networks and develop tools that connect communities, schools, and organizations to artists, and vice versa
- Create more informal opportunities and virtual spaces for peer learning, sharing best practices and exchanging ideas
- Establish feedback loops and opportunities for co-creation of IAC programs with diverse stakeholders to continually evolve IAC work and best support Iowa's creative sector

3. Boost our outreach and service to under-resourced and under-represented communities.

- Develop and demonstrate inclusive models of working with diverse communities, organizations and leaders
- Bridge urban, rural and suburban parts of our state through shared resources and greater collaboration.

4. Promote access to the arts.

- Address barriers related to age, health, disabilities, and socioeconomic status
- Maintain virtual programming to promote accessibility and engage new arts participants
- Incorporate diverse representation so programs are inviting to the broader community
- Develop resources and training to help organizations address their barriers related to costs/admission fees, lack of staff/volunteers, technology and limited open hours
- Share best practices related to increasing accessibility for those with disabilities

5. Increase access to arts learning experiences for K-12 students.

- Work with arts education partners to address learning loss and social-emotional learning from the pandemic
- Connect teaching artists, schools and nonprofits

- Local arts agencies are better connected and knowledgeable about resources
- Communities, schools and organizations have more tools for finding and working with artists, and vice versa
- More K-12 students have access to meaningful arts learning opportunities and career and learning pathways in the arts
- Greater adoption of best practices around accessibility by arts organizations

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Arts leaders have more informal and ongoing opportunities to connect and learn

Goal 2: Grow a sustainable and thriving ecosystem for the arts in Iowa.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

1. Build the capacity and resilience of arts organizations.

- Share and encourage best practices to strengthen financial sustainability including resources and training related to revenue generation and raising capital
- Focus on all signals of organizational strength, including stable leadership, operating models and community relationships that build social capital
- Assist organizations with their challenge of attracting new and younger audience members, volunteers, staff, and board members

2. Focus on artist support systems.

- Promote infrastructure beneficial to sustaining an artistic practice and career in Iowa
- Connect artists to funding and career development opportunities
- Support career development opportunities for artists, including artist mentorship, peer to peer learning, and leadership trainings

3. Cultivate arts leadership.

- Focus on the leadership pipeline by developing paid internships, as well as opportunities for emerging and mid-career leaders

- Support arts leaders and artists in developing skills and competencies that will enable them to lead more effective organizations and practices [Aligns with NEA Objective 3.1]

4. Support arts businesses and creative entrepreneurs.

- Connect small and emerging creative businesses to entrepreneurship resources
- Promote culturally-diverse businesses that contribute to cultural and social vibrancy

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- A growing and thriving arts sector that is also financially resilient, sustainable and prepared for future crises
- Improved support systems and ecosystem for Iowa artists and arts workers
- All arts and cultural leaders have career development and leadership opportunities
- Improved resources for diverse arts and cultural businesses and creative entrepreneurs



Iowa filmmaker Antoinette Lavalley's film Peck, supported by a Greenlight Grant from Produce Iowa and the Iowa Arts Council, was filmed at multiple locations in Des Moines, including at the Salisbury House & Gardens.

Goal 3: Support and champion Iowa's creative economy.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

1. Communicate the public value and impact of the arts & creative industries.

- Collect and share stories and data that demonstrate how the arts strengthen communities
- Develop and share compelling messaging strategies developed with public input
- Work with partners to form a more cohesive network of Iowa arts and cultural leaders engaged in advocating for the arts
- Reinforce and elevate the essential role artists as citizens serve in their communities

2. Promote the economic impact of creative places.

- Emphasize the role of arts, culture, history and film in attracting and retaining talent
- Measure and promote the impact of Iowa's creative economy and previous investments made through IAC programs

3. Invest in creative projects that enhance the cultural identity of communities and districts.

- Develop strategies for the growth of our districts, neighborhoods and towns by showcasing their unique arts, historic and cultural assets
- Intentionally engage artists in community development initiatives
- Develop new tools, funding opportunities and resources for designated cultural districts

4. Promote career pathways in the arts and creative fields.

- Work with partners to promote new and emerging career pathways in creative industries that can be a growth industry for Iowa



Chalk the Walk Festival, Mount Vernon

5. Promote the ability of the arts to address real-world challenges and build social capital.

- Nurture and support cross-sector partnerships that include the arts and artists as a core partner to address community needs
- Foster arts programming that seeks to advance individual and community health and well-being



Kaitlyn Busbee and Kyle Niemer on the set of Molly's Girl, shot in Ottumwa, Iowa (Photo by Ben Easter)

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Greater recognition of the economic impact of the arts in Iowa and value to talent attraction and retention efforts
- Social benefits of the arts are better understood and communicated
- Arts community speaks with a more unified voice
- Increased awareness of career pathways in creative industries
- Arts and culture are recognized as core to successful community development work and a key driver in successful outcomes to a host of community needs and challenges.



Iowa artist Amanda Tate, Des Moines



Iowa artist River Breitbach, Dubuque

FRONT COVER

Image credits - Top Half (appearing clockwise, from upper left to lower left):

Iowa artist Susan Woodford, Pottawattamie Arts, Culture and Entertainment (PACE), Council Bluffs
ArtForce Iowa, StreetCred Studios at the Iowa Arts Summit, FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny
Iowa Film Lounge Student Challenge, Produce Iowa
Snake Alley Film Festival, Burlington, Iowa
School of Rock program
Iowa artist Ann Brughemke, Council Bluffs

Image credits - Bottom half (appearing clockwise, from upper left to lower left):

Iowa musician River Breitbach, Dubuque
Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, Dubuque
Iowa arts and cultural leaders touring the Student Innovation Center, Iowa State University
After School Arts Program, Des Moines
World Food and Music Festival, Des Moines
Iowa artist Catherine Reinhart, Collective Mending Sessions, Ames



Economic Development

IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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