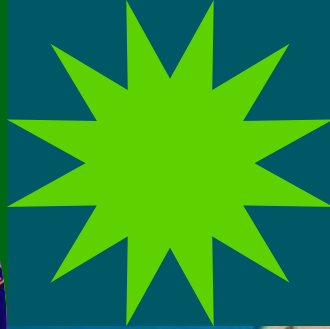


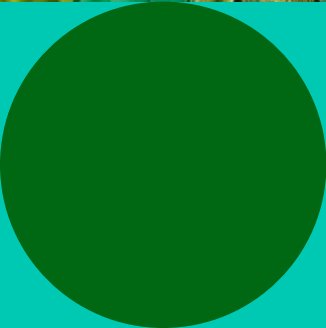
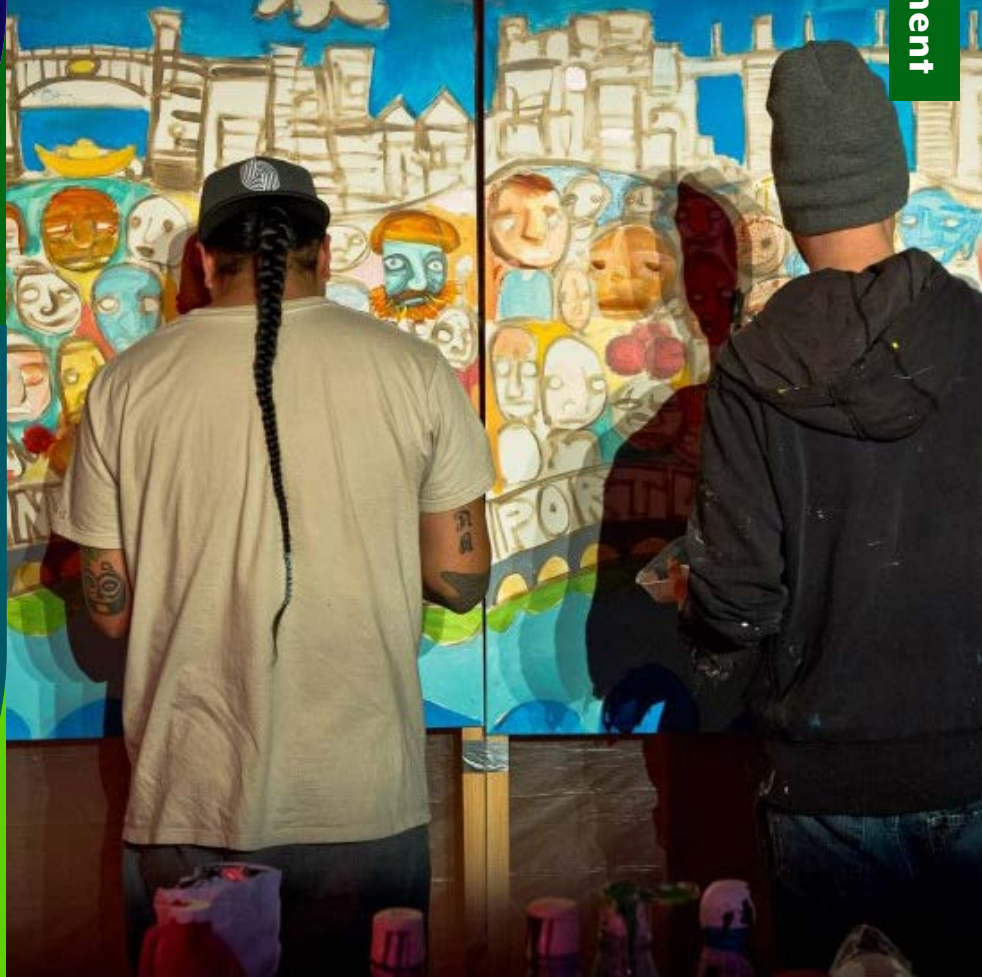
# OUR CREATIVE FUTURE

A regional framework to advance arts & culture for all

Portland Metro Region including Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties



Draft for Comment



A Cultural Plan for  
Portland's Tri-county Region

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Our Creative Future is a regional framework to advance arts and culture throughout the tri-county Portland area. There are seven local governments currently participating, and other cities, towns, communities, and individuals are invited to use the framework as a resource.**

## **Our Creative Future is a community-led arts and cultural vision for our region's future.**

The expression of arts and culture around us is vital to what makes our region great. It gathers us as a community, gives us a new perspective on our neighbors, and helps heal and address our region's most critical issues. What was true in 2009 when the last regional plan was created is even more evident fifteen years later. The arts are an integral part of our everyday lives.

This plan, Our Creative Future, is a regional framework that is positioned to realize the community's shared vision, and that every community may use to advance arts and culture for their residents.

From the murals that rose up during the social justice movement to the poetry and essays that were written to preserve this moment in history, we turned to art as an expression of beauty and pain. As our community navigated loneliness and isolation throughout the pandemic, the festivals and performances in our outdoor spaces brought us together safely. We are now turning to cultural events and creative businesses to revitalize our post-pandemic economy, and we are investing in arts-based programs to help individuals heal from the traumas of racism and homelessness.

All community members rely on our arts and culture system in big and small ways to make our home a joyful, vibrant, and resilient place to live. Our region's leaders partnered with community

members to answer a central question: "What do we want our future cultural life to look like for the people who live here?"

During the planning process, the steering committee served as the community voice. Together, we reached over 3,500 people across 50 listening sessions, 40+ interviews, and two regional surveys. We spoke with artists of all disciplines, culture bearers, creatives, arts and cultural nonprofits, creative businesses, donors, audience members, aspiring professionals, students, amateurs, and others who enjoy arts and culture in all forms.

What we heard was clear. Arts and culture are fundamental to the livability and health of each community. We see the work of artists, creatives, culture bearers, and cultural nonprofits as:

- Essential to the region's economic vitality
- Critical to promoting a sense of well-being and belonging
- Assisting with our most pressing community issues, such as homelessness, urban vitality, mental health, transportation, affordable housing, public safety, and more

It is clear artists and cultural nonprofits make a tangible difference in people's lives while supporting government priorities. The arts and cultural community are part of the solution to create impact!



The community-based steering committee reviewed the connections and conversations and created a shared vision for arts and culture:

**A tri-county region where every resident can access relevant and dynamic arts, culture, and creative experiences as an essential part of our lives.**

The foundation of that vision is a healthy arts and cultural community supported by our governments, community leaders, artists, creatives, culture bearers, and each of you.

We are working with community and government partners to fully resource this plan and advance the community's vision. As part of this work, the steering committee created a set of shared goals with strategies to be tailored to each jurisdiction. Our goals are to:

- Build towards an inclusive arts and cultural community that reflects, serves, and welcomes all

- Forge purposeful connection and coordination within the arts and cultural community
- Empower the arts and cultural community with sufficient, sustainable funding and other resources
- Drive economic growth through the arts and cultural community
- Utilize the arts and cultural community as a vital partner in the health and development of every community.

These goals and strategies will help us meet the needs of our local communities while providing powerful ways for us to partner as a region.

This work is a call to action for our local governments, community leaders, and the arts and cultural community to continue to work together to build a sustainable, vibrant future. Our Creative Future awaits!

**See and comment on the full plan [here](#).**

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY ACTION**

Ways to help implement this plan in addition to local government action:

**ADVOCATE**

- Participate in and support advocacy for funding, programs, and change in your community.
- Participate in and support advocacy for implementation of the recommendations of this plan.

**PARTICIPATE**

- Participate in directories, information sharing, networks, calendars, and joint marketing.
- Attend community convenings and stay connected.

**LEAD**

- Take a community leadership role—serving on a committee, board, commission, or advocacy group, or running for office.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES AND TOWNS**

Ways to advance arts and culture in your community:

- Choose among the plan's recommendations and take action on something important in your community.
- Reach out to the network of local arts agencies for information and assistance. Consider joining that network.

**Regional Cultural Plan Framework**



## Land Acknowledgment

The tri-county Portland area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

We recognize that the tri-county region today is a community of many diverse Native peoples who continue to live, work, and contribute to the dynamic fabric of our shared world. We respectfully acknowledge and honor all Indigenous communities—past, present, future—and are grateful for their ongoing and vibrant presence.

We also acknowledge that the reverberations of systemic policies of genocide, relocation, and assimilation still impact Native American families today. Recognizing that acknowledgment without action is meaningless, contributors to this plan endeavored to include Indigenous input and perspectives in its development, and to root our recommendations in principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion aimed at arresting and remedying the legacy of exclusion and oppression.

We respect the work of Indigenous leaders and families, and pledge to make ongoing efforts to recognize, include, and uplift their knowledge, creativity, and resilience.

## Vision Statement

We envision a tri-county region where all of us have access to relevant and dynamic arts, culture, and creative experiences as an essential part of our lives.

**In support of this vision, we commit to:**

**Diversity in arts, culture, and creativity**

**Financial and resource investment**

**Access for all communities**

**Strong and supportive relationships**

**Resilient communities**

## Planning Commitment

We will center our thinking of transformation around meaningful community engagement and exploration.

We commit to work that serves the diverse needs of BIPOC and underrecognized communities.

We will listen for community voices and stories.

Our approach is rooted in respect and driven by equitable principles.



# THE PLANNING PROCESS

## Goals for Engagement

1. Engage with members of diverse communities in the region
2. Co-create an inclusive approach to engagement that serves the needs of the region and that is flexible and responsive
3. Create and disseminate compelling communications that spur interest, involvement, and transparency

## What We Asked

1. Where are the opportunities for this plan to help your community thrive?
2. In thinking about the future of this region, what do you want to be different from today? What is working? What is not working?
3. What are the top 2–3 priorities you would want the plan to address/accomplish?
4. What is the definition of success for this plan?

## Engagement Sessions



*“Art isn’t just a tool to help us cope; it’s a way to tell the stories of our lives and what we understand.”*

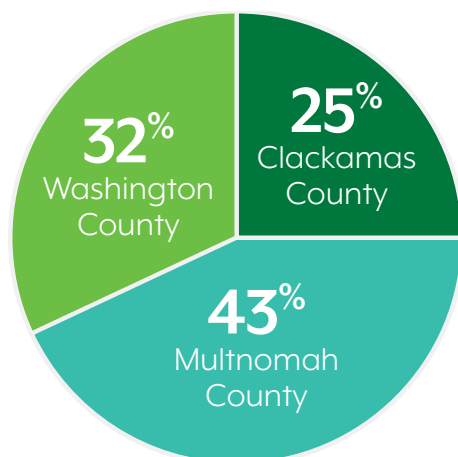
— Houseless Youth Discussion Participant

## Research

See all research reports [here](#).

## Statistically Valid Public Opinion Survey

705 completed



Open Call Community Survey

Arts Grantmaking Review

Arts Funding Model Review

Arts Demand Study

Creative Economy Portrait



# WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Throughout the region, residents highly value arts and culture for themselves and their communities. About two-thirds participate actively. They prioritize equity, accessibility, inclusion and funding for arts and culture.

Note: all survey figures cited are from the statistically valid survey.

## RESIDENTS' PRIORITIES

for Arts and Culture



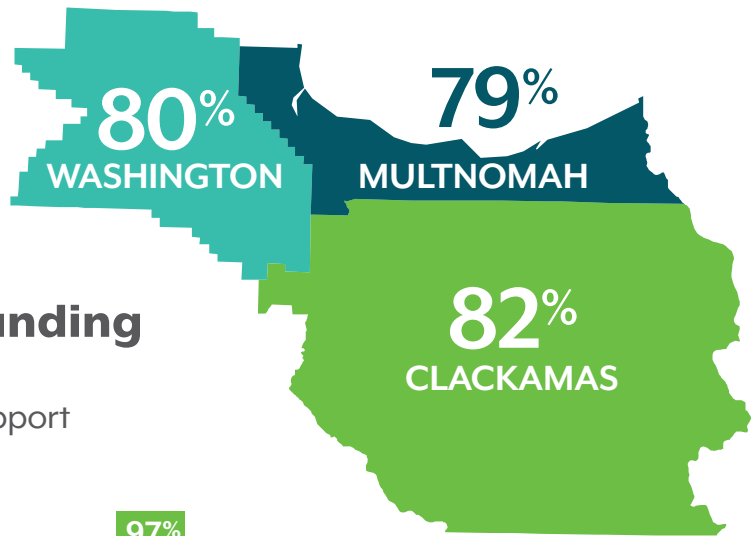
Q17. The tri-county arts and cultural plan is intended to enhance the quality of life for residents. Thinking about long-term priorities the plan should focus on, please rate the following.

***“We want to integrate and infuse all cultures in arts opportunities across our county and beyond. We want to share and build on our experiences.”***

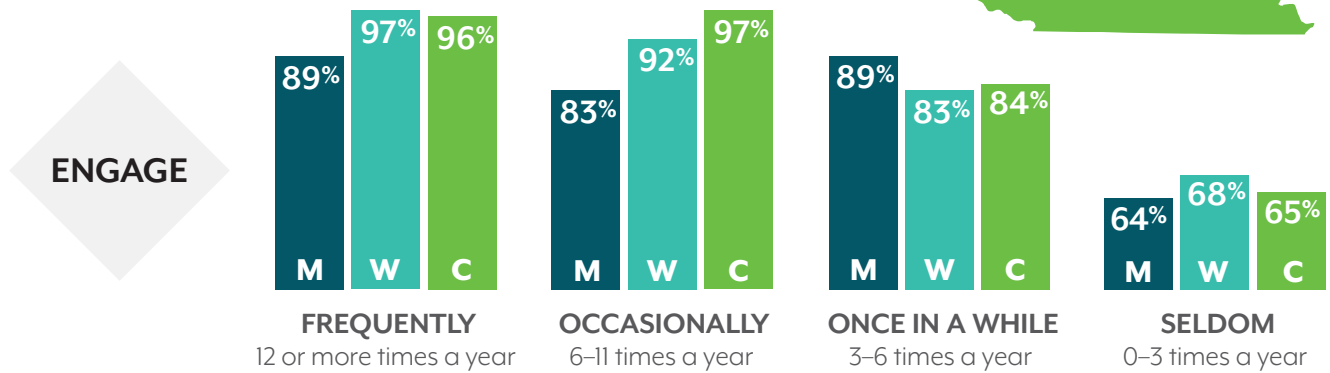
— Community Survey Respondent

Across the region,  
**80%**

of tri-county residents  
**support dedicated arts funding**



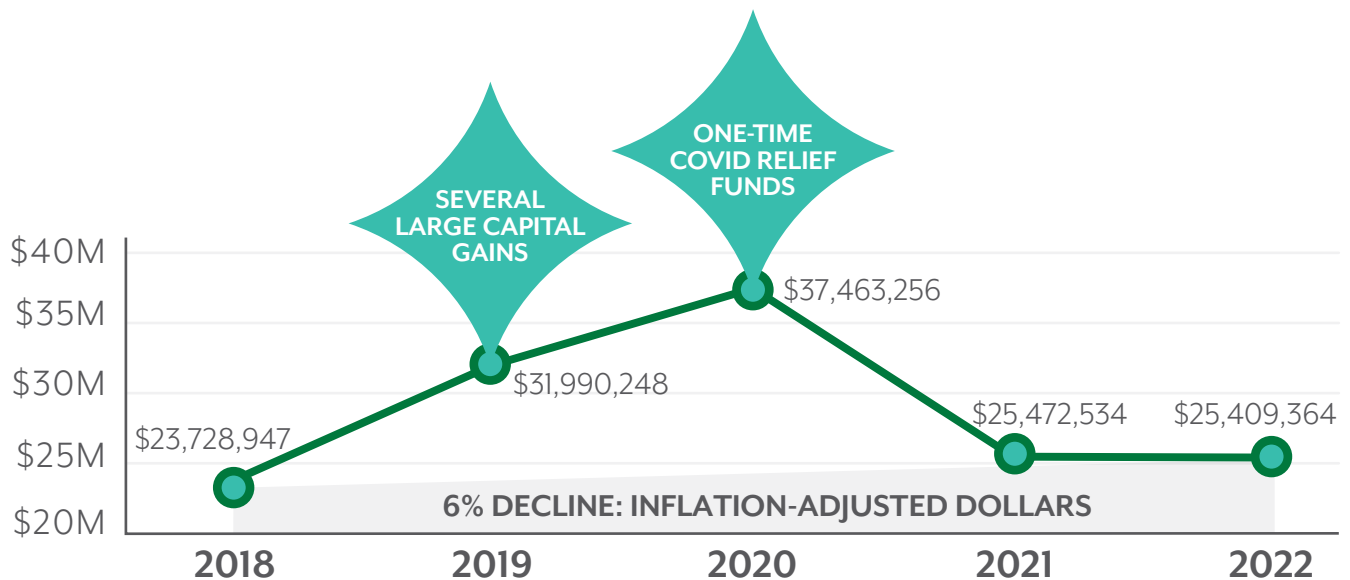
Of those who Strongly or Somewhat Support increased dedicated arts funding:



**2. The arts and cultural community faces multiple and worsening challenges, and the reputation of our tri-county region as a creative hub and desirable place to live has diminished.**

**FIVE-YEAR OVERVIEW—TOTAL ARTS AND CULTURE GRANTS**

From the Nine Largest Public and Private Arts Funders in the Portland Tri-county Region





### 3. Arts and culture play multiple roles benefiting our communities.

#### PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

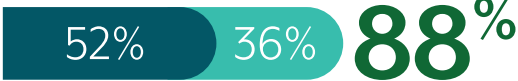
##### Level of Agreement

Most residents agree that artistic, cultural, and creative communities are beneficial to themselves, their families, and their local communities.

##### TRI-COUNTY RESIDENTS:

-  Strongly Agree
-  Somewhat Agree

*“Our arts, cultural, and creative communities help fuel creativity and innovation crucial for our economy.”*



*“Having opportunities to enjoy the arts and creative learning is essential to me and my family.”*



**74%** of tri-county residents have participated in at least one arts/cultural event in the past six months.

**64%** participate at least three times a year.





**4. Arts and culture drive growth in the region's economy and generate a high rate of return on public investment. There are multiple opportunities for targeted investment and further growth.**

**IN 2022, OUR NONPROFIT ARTS AND CULTURE GENERATED:**

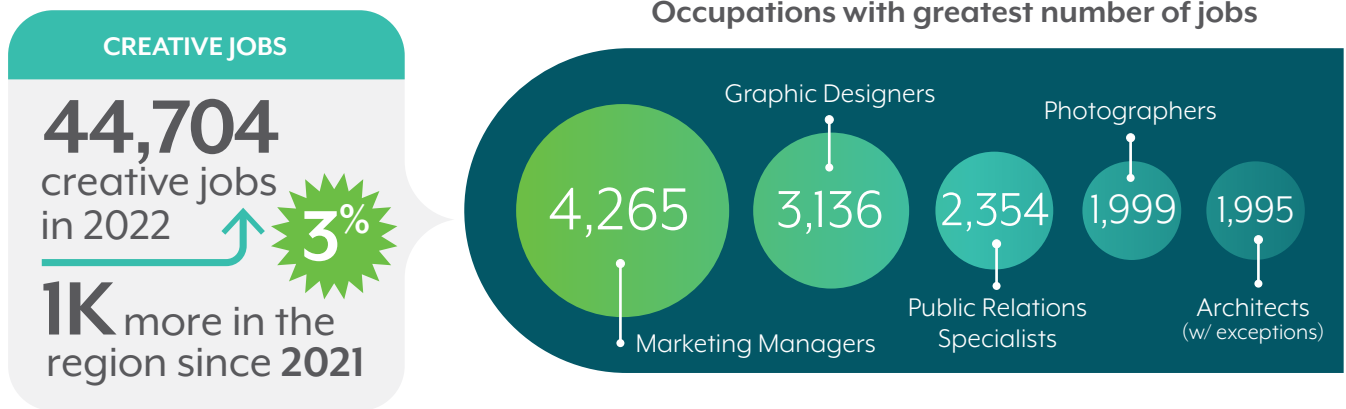


and served a total audience of **~5.2M** people

Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6)

**IN 2022, OUR FULL CREATIVE ECONOMY GENERATED:**

2022 Creative Vitality Index - includes nonprofit sector from above



# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

See full list of strategies and actions [here](#).

## Goal one: Build towards an inclusive arts and cultural community that reflects, serves, and welcomes all.

All communities and people are valued members of the region's arts and culture community and share in its cultural richness. BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, and people in every town and every city across the three counties, are supported as contributors to our collective regional culture.

### Select Strategies

- 1.1 Provide funding and other resources for the arts and culture of people who are BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, the unhoused, neurodiverse, seniors, opportunity youth (young people aged 16-24 who are disconnected from education and work), and their community-based organizations.
- 1.2 Provide increased support for programs in libraries, parks, and other community settings for underrecognized populations and communities.
- 1.3 Provide support services for cities throughout the region to develop their local arts and culture.
- 1.4 Provide support services for programs, artists, groups, and venues in smaller cities and unincorporated areas throughout the counties.
- 1.6 Create a racial and cultural equity fund for BIPOC organizations and other organizations serving underrecognized populations through arts and culture (e.g., houseless, opportunity youth, people with disabilities), creating a pathway to organizational growth and sustainability.
- 1.9 Continue and expand support for K–12 arts education and creative youth development.
- 1.10 Continue and expand support for public art programs in cities and counties in the region.



## Goal two: Forge purposeful connection and coordination within the arts and cultural community.

Arts and cultural community members are well-connected and working together as appropriate. They also recognize and express their interconnections, as both independent and interdependent (relying on one another) pieces of a regional arts and cultural community.

### Select Strategies

- 2.1 View the arts and cultural community as inclusive and mutually supportive, with intentional efforts to include artists, culture bearers, artisans, nonprofits, commercial arts, and others.
- 2.2 Broaden the efforts of funding, support services, and advocacy to include individual creatives and small businesses working in the commercial or quasi-commercial arts.
- 2.3 Advocate for effective public policy and action in support of the work of the arts and cultural community.
- 2.5 Develop a network of local arts agencies (e.g., Portland's City Arts Program, county arts programs, city arts programs, county Cultural Coalitions, RACC) to replace the Intergovernmental Agreement and strengthen regional arts leadership.
- 2.6 Promote information and resource sharing and networking within the arts and culture community.

## Goal three: Empower the arts and cultural community with sufficient, sustainable funding and other resources.

The arts and cultural community is robustly supported through significantly increased levels of funding, affordable space, arts-friendly policies, and more, sufficient to enable the full power of arts and culture in communities throughout the region.

### Select Strategies

- 3.1 Significantly increase funding across the region for nonprofit organizations, individual artists/creatives, and small commercial arts enterprises. This can include updating the Portland Arts Tax, creating a regional Metro revenue source, creating new local county and city tax initiatives, and/or increased county/city allocations. Prioritize funding for artists and arts and cultural organizations and programs.
- 3.2 Provide support services for artists and their networks, such as funding, networking, professional development/training, and mentoring.
- 3.3 Develop a comprehensive affordable space program, including elements such as a directory, rent subsidy, facilitation of space projects, technical assistance, matching capital grants, identification of opportunities, and support for increased accessibility. Identify opportunities to use empty commercial spaces.
- 3.4 Align arts funding policies with best practices in equity and accessibility.
- 3.5 Convene an active cohort of foundation arts funders and corporate arts funders to encourage increased support and collaboration.



- 3.7 Acknowledge and support the strategic role of service organizations in achieving the goals of this plan, such as MusicPortland, Oregon Media Production Association, Portland Film Office, Office of Events, Arts Concierge, etc.
- 3.8 Promote creativity and the arts through a communitywide marketing and audience development program.
- 3.9 Develop a systemic solution to sustainability of Portland's and its users.

## Goal four: Drive economic growth through the arts and cultural community.

**The arts and cultural community amplifies its role as a force for economic prosperity, job growth, entrepreneurship, revitalization, and quality of life for everyone.**

### Select Strategies

- 4.1 Provide economic development supports for the commercial arts sector, such as music, film, media, fashion, and design. Consult and partner with service organizations to identify and provide high-priority supports.
- 4.2 Build markets for commercial arts sectors. Consult and partner with service organizations to identify specific opportunities to build markets.
- 4.3 Invest in arts and culture as a tool to revitalize downtown Portland, city centers, town centers, Main Streets, cultural districts, and corridors.
- 4.4 Strengthen cooperation and coordination with tourism organizations to enhance cultural tourism.
- 4.5 Integrate arts and culture into workforce development. Create pathways for employment in the arts and culture community.

## Goal five: Utilize the arts and cultural community as a vital partner in the health and development of every community.

**Arts and culture are recognized, valued, and supported as a partner in social services, health, healing, transportation, public safety, education, and other sectors.**

### Select Strategies

- 5.1 Local governments invest in arts and culture as a tool of their social service missions and other functions, such as health, transportation, housing, community engagement, public safety, etc. Consider arts and culture as part of solutions. Build on best practices of successful programs in other places.
- 5.2 Develop metrics and evaluations to demonstrate success in using arts and culture in municipal functions and to improve those efforts.
- 5.3 Develop programs celebrating and supporting inclusive, amateur, community-based creativity throughout the region.
- 5.4 Explore and develop policies to require or incentivize public art within private real estate development. See 1.3. Build on the successful experience of public art programs in the region.

# PLAN LEADERSHIP

## Our Creative Future Steering Committee

Name	Affiliation	Geography
Trieste Andrews	Oregon City Arts Commission	Clackamas
Nicole Bradin	Explore Tualatin Valley	Washington
Julie Bunker	Milestone Initiatives	Washington, Multnomah
Joe Cantrell	Artist	Washington
Gus Castaneda	Aloft Hotels	Multnomah
Corinn deTorres	Chapel Theatre	Clackamas
Jerry Foster	PassinArt	Multnomah
Subashini Ganesan-Forbes	New Expressive Works	Multnomah, Washington
John Goodwin	Portland Art Museum	Multnomah
Kimberly Howard Wade	Caldera Arts	Multnomah
Joaquin Lopez	Creative Laureate of Portland	Washington
Jaimie Lorenzini	City of Happy Valley	Clackamas
Barbara Mason	Artist	Washington
Jeremy Okai Davis	Artist	Clackamas
Sushmita Poddar	Small business Owner	Washington
Sankar Raman	The Immigrant Story	Multnomah, Washington
Barbara Steinfeld	Consultant	Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington
Karis Stoudamire-Phillips	MERC Commission	Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington
Toni Tabora-Roberts	Consultant	Multnomah
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Tammy Jo Wilson	Art in Oregon	Clackamas

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City of Hillsboro

Mario Mesquita, Manager of Advocacy and Engagement, RACC

Cristina Nieves, Policy Director, Commissioner Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County

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Robyn Williams, Executive Director, Portland's 5 Centers for the Arts, Metro

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Metro

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Multnomah County

Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District

Tualatin Valley Creates

Washington County

## Cover Image Credits

- **Upper left:** Joe Kye soundcheck at the Walters, City of Hillsboro
- **Upper right:** St. Johns Music, Multnomah County
- **Lower left:** RACC Garden Party, Dodge & Burn Studios, Multnomah County
- **Lower right:** Dodge & Burn Studios, Multnomah County

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[ourcreativefuture.org](http://ourcreativefuture.org)