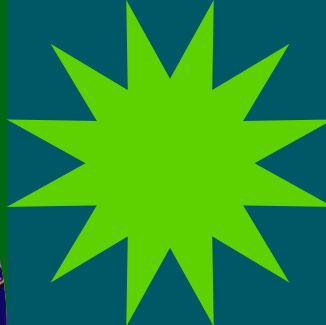


OUR CREATIVE FUTURE

A regional framework to advance arts & culture for all

Portland Metro Region including Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties



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 creating action plans based on the regional framework. 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 15 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!

View 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.

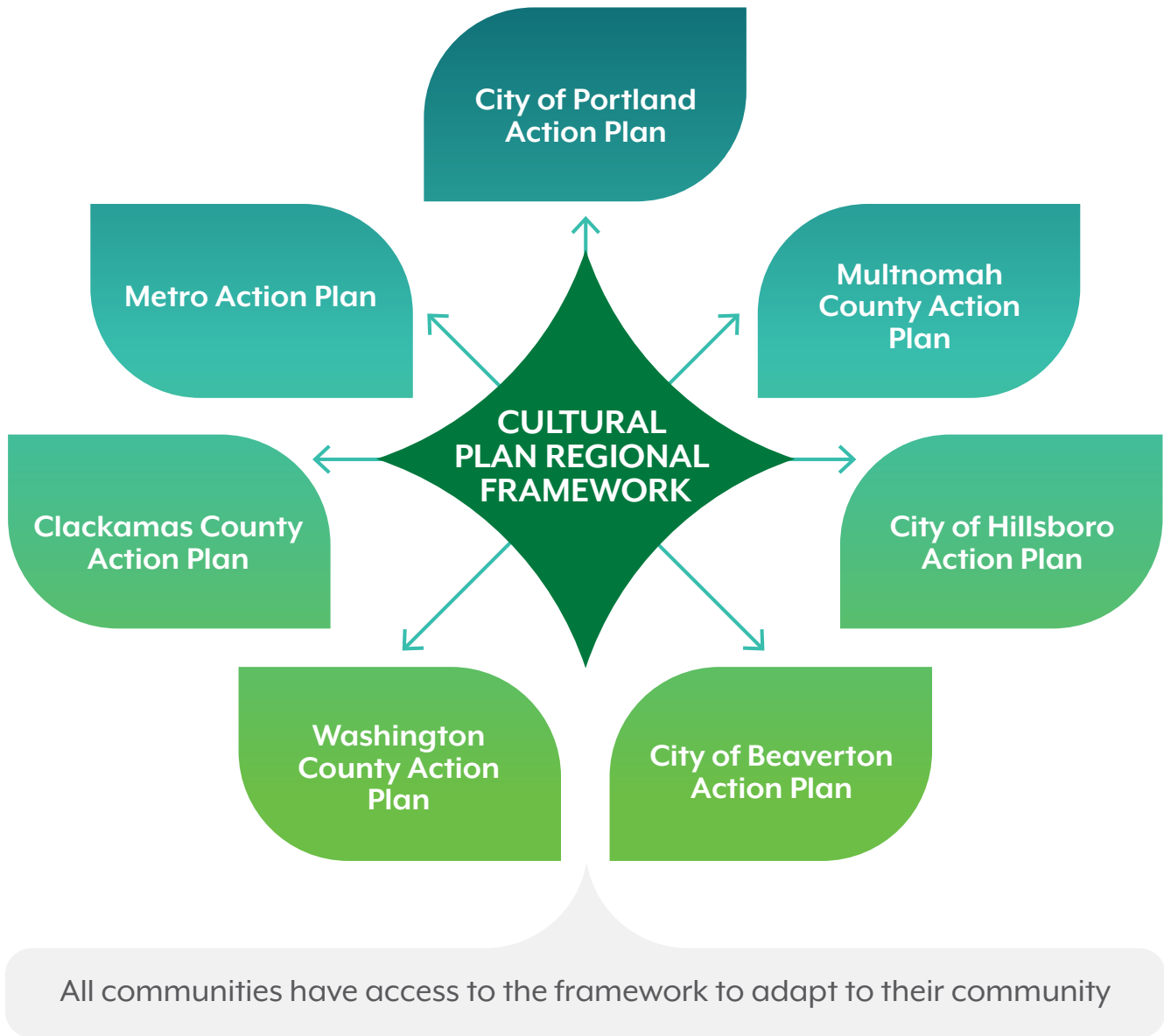
OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES AND TOWNS

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



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



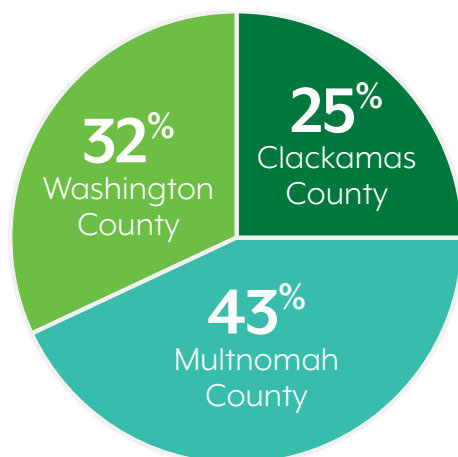
“Art isn’t just a tool to help us cope; it’s a way to tell the stories of our lives and what we understand.”

— Houseless Youth Discussion Participant

Research

Statistically Valid Public Opinion Survey

705 completed



See all research reports [here](#), including:

Open Call Community Survey

Arts Grantmaking Review

Arts Funding Model Review

Arts Demand Study

Creative Economy Portrait

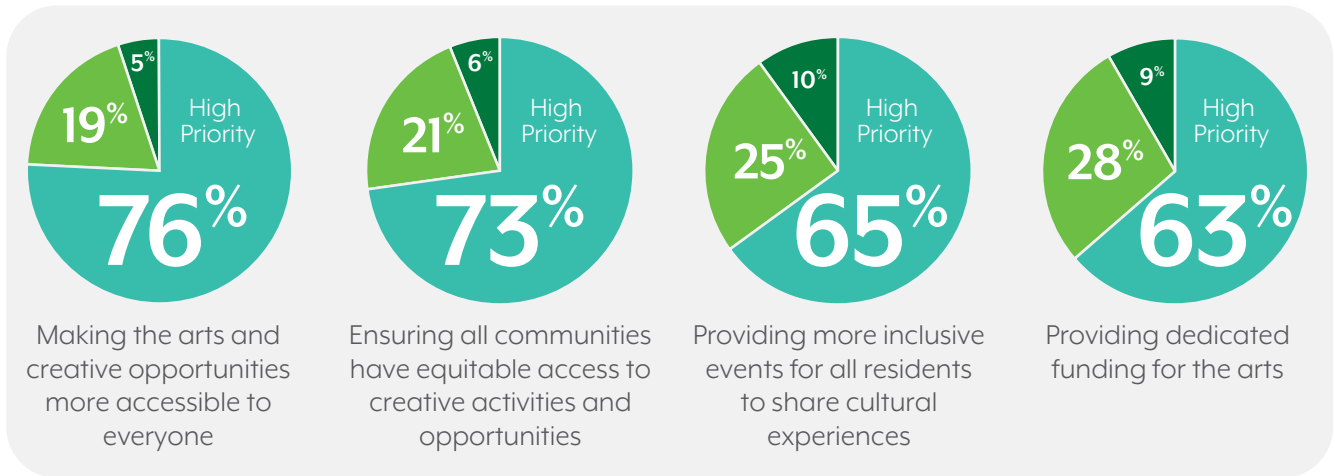
WHAT WE LEARNED

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.

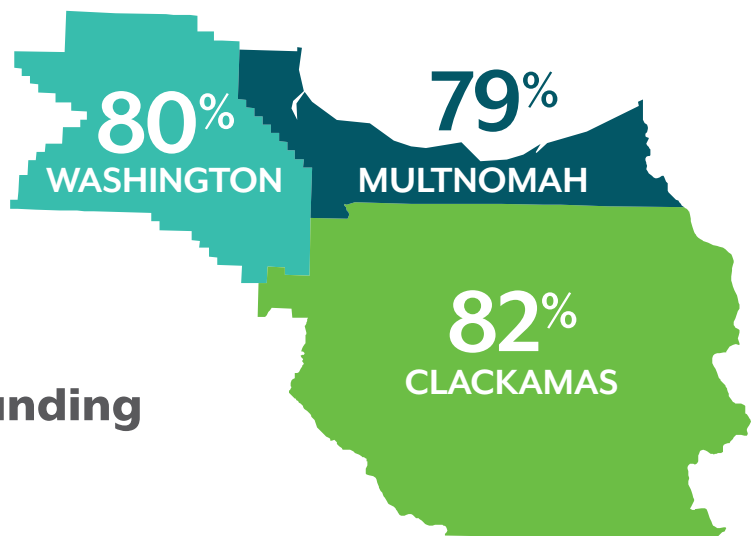
RESIDENTS' PRIORITIES for Arts and Culture

High Priority Lower Priority Not a Priority



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.

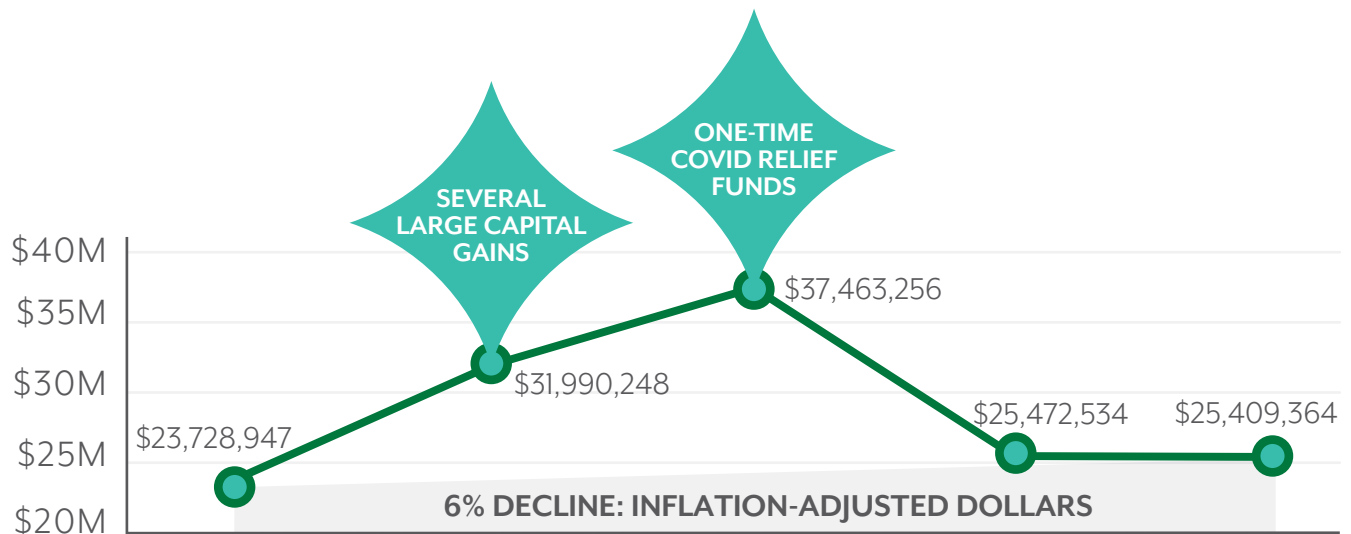
Across the region,
80%
 of tri-county residents
support dedicated arts funding



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

Covers grants to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists by the nine largest public and private arts funders in the Portland tri-county region.

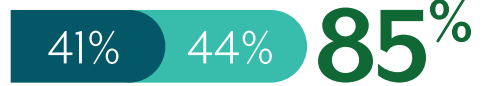


3. Arts and culture play multiple roles benefiting our communities.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

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

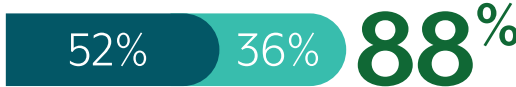
“Having opportunities to enjoy the arts and creative learning is essential to me and my family.”



TRI-COUNTY RESIDENTS:

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree

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



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

“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



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.

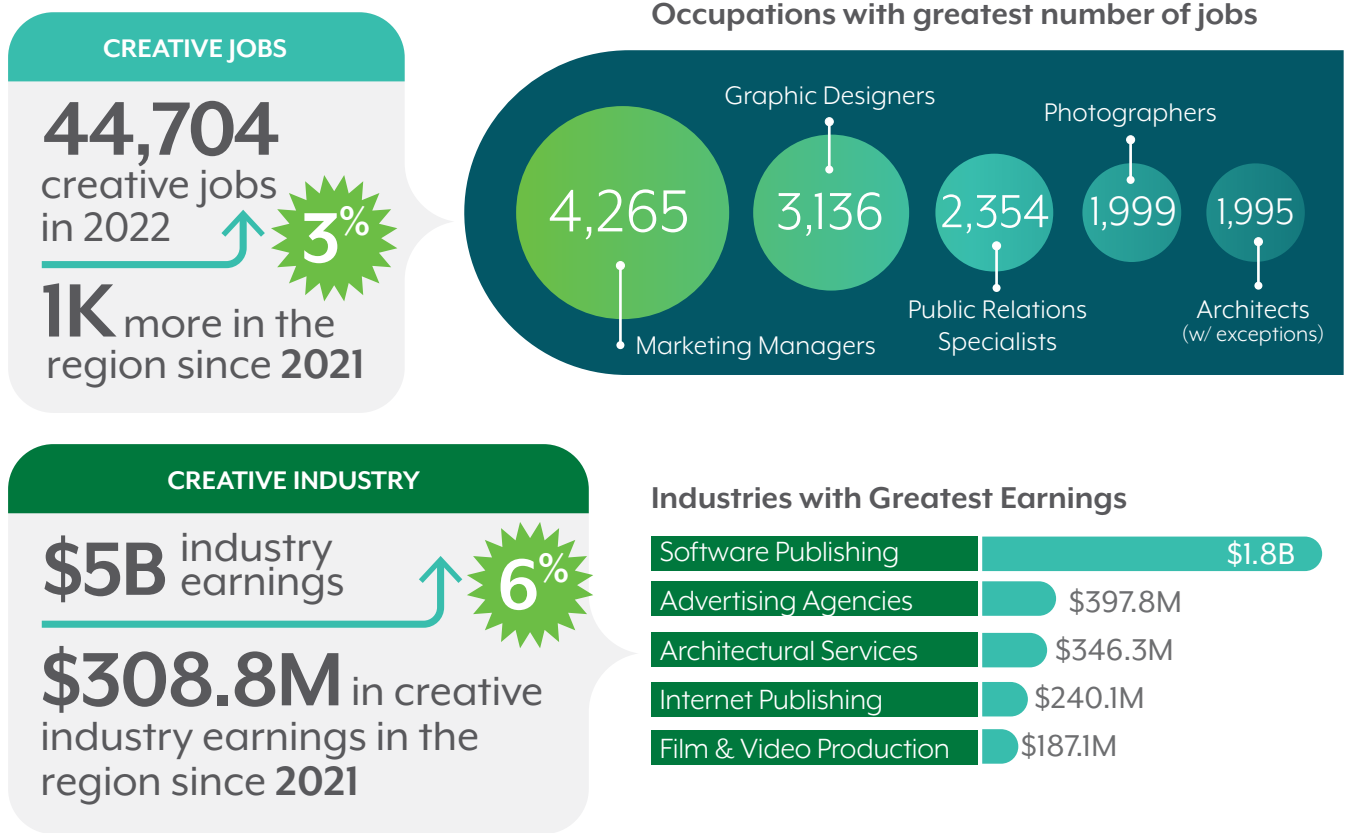
IN 2022, OUR NONPROFIT ARTS AND CULTURE GENERATED:



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

Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6)

IN 2022, OUR FULL CREATIVE ECONOMY, INCLUDING BOTH NON-PROFIT AND FOR-PROFIT CREATIVE BUSINESSES, GENERATED:



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

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.

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.
- 1.5 Address barriers to facility and space use, such as fees, transportation, parking, and availability of food. See also 3.3, affordable space program, below.
- 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.
- 1.7 Provide support and best practices for cities and counties to develop local arts agencies and cultural equity offices.
- 1.8 Improve and fund accessibility to arts and culture programs, venues, and opportunities for people with disabilities in a comprehensive manner.
- 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.
- 1.11 Develop enhanced and inclusive leadership in the arts and culture community.



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.

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.
- 2.4 Build comprehensive public awareness and understanding of arts and culture in the region.
- 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.

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 Education and Access Fund, 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.
- 3.6 Explore rebuilding the existing United Arts Fund (an annual United Way-style fundraising campaign), reinvigorating the workplace giving program and providing recognition and support for individual donors. Restore corporate and foundation support for the fund.
- 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 (OMPA), Portland Events and Film Office, 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 Centers for the Arts 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.

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.
- 4.6 Expand documentation of economic impact and return on investment for arts and culture.
- 4.7 Research and develop a creative economy strategic growth plan.



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.

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 above. Build on the successful experience of public art programs in the region.



PLAN LEADERSHIP

Our Creative Future Steering Committee

Committee members were nominated by officials from participating jurisdictions, including Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties; the cities of Beaverton, Hillsboro and Portland; the Metro regional government; and the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC). They represent diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, cultural practices, and ways of knowing (e.g., disability; Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific, Islander and People of Color; LGBTQIA+ identities; and veteran communities). They also represent multiple sectors of the community, including arts, culture, creative economy, education, business, social justice, “unlikely allies,” and others.

Trieste Andrews, *Oregon City Arts Commission*

Nicole Bradin, *Explore Tualatin Valley*

Julie Bunker, *Milestone Initiatives*

Joe Cantrell, *Artist*

Gus Castaneda, *Aloft Hotels*

Corinn deTorres, *Chapel Theatre*

Jerry Foster, *PassinArt*

Subashini Ganesan-Forbes, *New Expressive Works*

John Goodwin, *Portland Art Museum*

Kimberly Howard Wade, *Caldera Arts*

Joaquin Lopez, *Creative Laureate of Portland*

Jaimie Lorenzini, *City of Happy Valley*

Barbara Mason, *Artist*

Jeremy Okai Davis, *Artist*

Sushmita Poddar, *Small Business Owner*

Sankar Raman, *The Immigrant Story*

Barbara Steinfeld, *Consultant*

Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, *MERC Commission*

Toni Tabora-Roberts, *Consultant*

Tonisha Toler, *Collins Foundation*

Tammy Jo Wilson, *Art in Oregon*



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Jeff Hawthorne, Arts Program Manager, City of Portland

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Michele McCall-Wallace, Cultural Arts Manager, City of Hillsboro

Mario Mesquita, Manager of Advocacy and Engagement, RACC

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

Nancy Nye, Senior Manager for Arts, Culture and Events, City of Hillsboro

Raziah Roushan, Executive Director, Tualatin Valley Creates, Washington County

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

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Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District

Tualatin Valley Creates

Washington County

Cover Image Credits

- **Upper left:** Joe Kye soundcheck at the Walters
- **Upper right:** Bootycandy—The OUTwright Theatre Festival 2019
- **Lower left:** RACC Garden Party, Dodge & Burn Studios
- **Lower right:** Dodge & Burn Studios

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ourcreativefuture.org