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Tennessee Arts Commission Strategic Plan 2020-2024

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Acknowledgments and Thanks

Dear Arts Supporters,

Thank you for your interest in the arts in Tennessee. This document, the 2020-2024 strategic plan of the Tennessee Arts Commission, reflects distilled thinking from more than a year of research and conversation with stakeholders and the public about next steps to cultivate the arts for the benefit of all Tennesseans and their communities.

We are energized by the agency's first ever vision statement—a Tennessee where the arts inspire, connect and enhance everyday lives—and we are recommitted to our mission, values and goals. The updated objectives and strategies aim to increase our impact and return on investments in the arts for Tennesseans.

We see the overall plan as a compass, not a watch. We continue to seek feedback to align the work of the Tennessee Arts Commission and its programs with our true north of benefiting Tennessee communities through the arts.

Over the next five years, we look forward to doing important work with artists, nonprofit and public agencies that generate arts, schools and community partners. As you see opportunities for improvement or increased impact, we welcome your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Anne B. Pope
Executive Director

Chair

The Tennessee Arts Commission

All 50 states have state arts agencies whose responsibility is to increase public access to the arts and work to ensure that every community in America enjoys the cultural, civic, economic and educational benefits of a thriving arts sector.

The Tennessee Arts Commission was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly with the special mandate to stimulate and encourage the presentation of the visual, literary, music and performing arts and to encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of Tennessee.

The mission of the Tennessee Arts Commission is to cultivate the arts for the benefit of all Tennesseans and their communities.

The Tennessee Arts Commission builds better communities by:

- Investing in Tennessee's nonprofit arts industry to enhance cultural life and community vibrancy
- Serving citizens, artists and arts and cultural organizations
- Supporting arts learning
- Undertaking initiatives that address public needs through the arts, with special focus on rural areas

Each year, the Commission helps fund the arts activities of more than 600 organizations and artists in Tennessee. Over the past five years, more than 6,450 grants totaling more than \$30 million have been invested in communities across Tennessee.

The Governor appoints the 15 volunteer members of the Tennessee Arts Commission for five-year terms, selecting from among citizens who have demonstrated a vital interest in the arts. The Executive Director is the lead administrative officer, responsible for engaging a professional staff to carry out the work of the agency.

STATE LAW

Tennessee Code Annotated 4-20-104 & 107 provide that the duties of the Tennessee Arts Commission are to:

- *stimulate and encourage throughout the state the study and presentation of the performing, visual and literary arts and public participation therein;*
- *encourage participation in, appreciation of, and education in the arts to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of persons in all parts of the state;*
- *encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of our state, to expand the state's cultural resources and to promote the use of art in the state government's activities and facilities;*
- *encourage excellence and assist freedom of artistic expression essential for the well-being of artists.*
 - *undertake to assure equitable participation by the traditionally underserved and underrepresented ethnic minority, people with a disability, elderly and rural artists and arts organizations.*

Our Foundations

MISSION STATEMENT

To cultivate the arts for the benefit of all Tennesseans and their communities

VISION STATEMENT

A Tennessee where the arts inspire, connect and enhance everyday lives

CORE VALUES

Principles that will govern our actions

- Excellence – We seek artistic and operational integrity in all that we do.
- Customer focus – We provide the best service at the lowest possible cost.
- Access – We are inclusive and fair.
- Innovation - We encourage creativity and initiative.

LEADERSHIP TOOLS

- **Grant making** that strategically responds to constituent needs and maximizes public benefit
- **Technical assistance** to build organizational knowledge and skills by sharing best practices
- **Convening, facilitating and network building** to make connections for mutual benefit, advance the field and enhance public value
- **Partnerships** to expand capacity and leverage resources
- **Technological** solutions to increase efficiency and accessibility
- **Research and data collection** to inform effective decision making, operations and advocacy
- **Communications** to magnify understanding and impact
- **Public recognition** for artists, arts leaders and organizations
- **Best practice modeling** to lead by example

GOALS

1. **Thriving Tennessee Arts and Culture**
2. **Arts as Engines of Growth and Vitality**
3. **Arts Essential to Learning**
4. **A Champion for the Arts**
5. **Effective and Accountable Agency**

Extensive, Inclusive Planning Process

The 2020-2024 strategic plan builds on foundations laid in the 2014-2019 plan. Fresh feedback confirmed the mission, values, tools and five major goals for a long-range future. The new plan draws on extensive input from stakeholders and the public as well as newly developed data. The plan includes a new vision statement. Strategies reflect a more immediate timeframe and will be updated over the years as conditions change and new opportunities emerge. The official period for the plan is November 1, 2019 through September 30, 2024.

Planning Methods

- Survey of grantees included in 933 final evaluations Spring 2018
- Public opinion survey of 305 Tennesseans by Ipsos Public Affairs (± 6.5) May 2018
- Stakeholder conversations with key state elected officials and appointees
- Nine focus groups with educators, nonprofit leaders, folk artists, development directors, local arts agencies, individual artists, emerging leaders, communicators and centers of arts learning leaders in June 2018
- Online survey of leaders of arts organizations with focus on underserved audiences
- Thirteen regional public meetings across the state in fall 2018, engaging 230 participants from 41 counties
- Alignment review with mission and goals of key partners and funders
- Tennessee Arts Commission board discussions and review
- Review of prior strategic plan goals, objectives and outcomes
- Gap and opportunities analysis related to each objective October 2018
- Review of goals and priorities of new Governor
- Review of trends, research and data
 - Arts & Economic Prosperity 5
 - Arts Education Data Project – Tennessee
 - 2019 Economic Report – State of Tennessee
 - Survey of Public Participation in the Arts
- Multiple internal meetings to assimilate feedback and draft goals, objectives and strategies
- Commission review and feedback on draft plan
- Public review and comments on the 2020-2024 draft plan
- Public meeting data and survey results

Our Realities

Great Arts Assets. Tennessee's artistic heritage and cultural assets are among the richest in the nation. Tennessee's artists--representing performing arts, music, visual arts, literary arts and folk arts--help define who we are as a state. The nonprofit creative sector is an important part of Tennessee's economy, generating \$1.7 billion in economic impact annually. Tennessee is a hub of creative innovation, technology and performing arts, a state where classic meets cutting edge. Tennessee's specialty license plate program in support of the arts is an important factor because it currently funds the majority of the Commission's arts investments and programming for schools and communities.

Music is an area of special strength. Tennessee lays claim to the birthplace of country music and rock'n'roll, the home of the blues, the starting point of soul and the first broadcast stage for bluegrass at the Grand Ole Opry. Tennessee boasts nearly two dozen legendary [National Heritage Fellowship Awardees](#) from Bill Monroe to the Fairfield Four and Earl Scruggs. National Medal of Arts music winners from Tennessee include the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Dolly Parton, George Jones, Johnny Cash, Minnie Pearl, B.B. King and Roy Acuff. Tennessee is the only state to choose "Musical Heritage" as its U.S. Mint icon. The state tourism department always includes music in its promotions one way or another.

Arts Benefit Tennessee. Arts benefit individuals, communities, neighborhoods, and the economic development of cities and regions. Arts play a role in improved student attendance, academic achievement and 21st century skills, in the development of individual self-expression and self-confidence, and in the overall quality of life for people of all ages. At the local level, the arts enhance community pride, identity and connectedness while contributing to real estate development, increased sales and property tax revenues and improved public facilities. The arts build tolerance and understanding among diverse groups of people. On a larger scale, the arts have a major impact on cities and their regions in Tennessee. The arts help attract retirees, recruit employees and grow and retain talented people for the long term.

Uneven Spread. With Tennessee's sprawling geography, urban/rural differences and regional distinctions within the three grand divisions, the arts organizational infrastructure is spread unevenly across the state and across communities. In 2019, fifteen (15) rural counties rank among the nation's 10% most distressed. Many Tennesseans have fewer arts opportunities because of where they live, their socio-economic or disability status, ethnicity or age. Local and area arts networks also vary in capacity and reach.

Population Shifts. Tennessee's population is both growing and diversifying. By 2050, seniors (22%) are projected to outnumber children (21%). By 2060, nearly half of all Tennessee children will be children of color.

Public Environment and Economy. Tennessee's state leaders value low taxes and a business-friendly environment to foster continued job growth. Tennessee has record low unemployment with stronger job growth in urban areas. Tennessee communities, especially in many rural communities, face compelling needs related to jobs, education, health and public safety. These are the overall priorities of state government.

New leaders began service in 2019, including a governor and cabinet, state House speaker, about a third of TN's 132 state legislators, three of nine Congressmen and one U.S. Senator.

Education Environment. Tennessee's high school graduation rate is the highest on record at 89.1% in 2018. However, Tennessee remains below the national average for adults with a college degree or postsecondary certificate. Education priorities of Governor Bill Lee include: vocational, technical and agricultural education; career counseling; reducing test burden; and early childhood.

Arts Education. Arts learning in schools and community settings statewide occurs for Tennesseans of all ages. In recent years, state policy for K-12 arts education has advanced through strengthened assessments of fine arts teachers and new higher standards for student learning in the arts. The Tennessee Department of Education established the agency's first statewide music education grant program to expand access to the arts in Tennessee school districts. This program is managed by a newly appointed Fine Arts Coordinator also serving as a state leader for arts education in schools. Further, the TN Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan explicitly includes arts and music education as eligible for funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and provides flexibility under Title IV to invest in arts and music as part of a well-rounded education. Tennessee education policy continues to require visual art and music instruction in elementary, middle and high school as well as one full credit of fine arts to graduate and encourages full implementation of art and music curriculum and integration into other subject areas.

Arts Environment. The public opinion poll for Tennessee (margin of error ± 6.5) found that:

- 74% reported attending an arts or cultural event in the previous year
- 72% believe the arts unify communities regardless of age, race and ethnicity
- 70% say they enjoyed the arts in a non-traditional venue (park, hospital, airport, mall)
- 54% are personally involved in arts activities such as painting, singing in a choir, making crafts, writing poetry, or playing music

While participation and interest in the arts is on the rise, the financial environment for most artists and arts organizations continues to be challenging, especially for smaller and newer organizations. Fundraising, advocacy and audience development are the biggest challenges for arts organizations. Many local leaders still consider the arts

separate from the economic, business and civic life of their communities. The arts are often an underutilized public strategy to meet critical community needs.

Trends for consideration that emerged in the planning process included art on demand, resurgence of musicals, the maker movement, artist live-work space, the sharing economy, augmented reality, audience friendly tactics, including trigger warnings.

State Arts Agency. The Tennessee Arts Commission has an engaged volunteer governing board, a professional staff and an approach that includes brokering partner relationships and strategic leveraging of assets, including technology. The agency has seen significant efficiency gains through the online grants management system instituted in 2016. While staff levels have been unchanged for a decade, the increased efficiencies have increased capacity for new public-private and cross-sector partnerships. The Commission is proud to be the first arts agency to be awarded a Nursing Home Civil Monetary Penalty fund grant to improve health outcomes in nursing homes through the arts. The one million dollar grant for Music & Memory Tennessee is also the largest awarded to date to any initiative by the Tennessee Department of Health. Our overall aim is to continue to position the arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission as highly valued partners for strong Tennessee communities. The following goals, objectives and strategies were developed toward that end.

1. Thriving Tennessee Arts and Culture

Tennesseans make art. That art helps us understand who we are, how we experience our lives and what we want to pass along to generations to come. The arts inspire, connect and enhance our lives. Thriving Tennessee arts and culture means diverse arts and cultural activities, widespread participation, and ongoing sustained support for arts and culture infrastructures, as well as preservation of our unique heritage and traditions. Flourishing communities include a variety of opportunities for citizens of all ages and walks of life to take part in arts and cultural activities.

Invest in arts and cultural assets to enhance everyday life for all Tennesseans.

- Support arts activities for community benefit in all 95 Tennessee counties.
- Leverage investments in operating support for eligible arts organizations to increase opportunities for Tennesseans.
- Promote the professional development of artists.
- Expand arts and cultural opportunities in rural communities, with special focus on distressed counties.
- Explore options to increase support for small arts organizations.
- Recognize the importance of community-driven amateur and informal arts-making for community vitality.

Preserve and promote Tennessee's folklife, cultural diversity and cultural heritage.

- Identify, document and promote Tennessee folk artists, folklife practices and community traditions.
- Cultivate the preservation and passing on of traditional art forms within Tennessee communities and between generations.
- Increase public awareness of and access to Tennessee folklife fieldwork documentation and archival records.

Expand accessibility, participation and inclusion in the arts for all Tennesseans.

- Define opportunities and target support for underserved communities.
- Identify, share and promote best practices for inclusion of underserved communities in the arts.
- Increase arts participation and accessibility opportunities for all.

Foster innovation and excellence.

- Share and propel best practices that strengthen the arts and artists in Tennessee.
- Encourage and incentivize resilience and adaptability to change.

2. Arts as Engines of Growth and Vitality

Tennessee's creative people, institutions and businesses help define our communities as vibrant places to live and work. Definitions of the creative economy vary, but together, our creative enterprises and workforce add significant value to the state's economy and Tennessee communities. The Tennessee Arts Commission has a unique relationship with nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that make up a \$1.7 billion sector of Tennessee's creative economy.

The National Governors Association report *Rural Prosperity Through the Arts & Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States* released in 2019 outlines a systems change framework for rural America based on the creative sector. Tennessee aims to explore the recommended five key roles and variety of suggested actions states can take to facilitate rural growth through the arts. Those roles include:

- Provide leadership for the state's creative sector to benefit rural communities
- Capitalize on existing regional cultural assets
- Build the state's cultural and creative partnership infrastructure
- Develop local talent and human capital with creative skills
- Create an environment that is friendly to investment and innovation

Creative placemaking is an area of special opportunity for Tennessee communities. In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to build shared understanding of culture and community.

Advance the arts as a driver of the creative economy and creative placemaking.

- Document the impact of Tennessee's creative economy.
- Be a catalyst for creative placemaking initiatives, with special focus on rural communities.

- Invest in arts and cultural assets to enhance distinctive Tennessee places.

Accelerate transformation of rural areas through the nonprofit arts and creative sector.

- Prioritize initiatives for rural communities, building on existing arts and cultural assets such as festivals, stages, local traditions and cultural heritage.
- Refine targeted outreach and grant programs to strengthen impact for rural communities and Tennessee's distressed counties through the arts.

Strengthen community vibrancy through cross-sector and public-private partnerships with the arts.

- Develop and invest in initiatives that improve health and quality of life for Tennesseans through the arts.
- Incentivize collaboration and community vibrancy through the arts.

3. Arts Essential to Learning

The Tennessee Arts Commission works in alignment with the Tennessee Department of Education to leverage the power of the arts for K-12 and lifelong learning in all Tennessee communities. The Commission has a history of focus on arts education and arts integration, having implemented two, four-year arts integration initiatives and aligning resources, professional development and guidelines with arts education and arts integration goals. The agency facilitates a network of artists and educators offering high quality arts learning programs in schools and community settings, including more than 500 grantees and over 150 providers on the Teaching Artist Roster. With the release of the Tennessee Arts Education Data Project, the state's first-ever online searchable database on PK-12 student access to and participation in arts education, it is possible to assess the condition of arts education statewide by identifying gaps. The Commission intends to highlight opportunities to address gaps by building upon recent investments and leveraging Tennessee's arts and cultural assets that will increase access and quality of arts learning for all students, prepare students for success in school, career and life, and cultivate arts education in communities for all Tennesseans.

Leverage arts and cultural assets to increase access and improve quality of arts learning for all Tennessee children and youth.

- Support arts specialists and teaching artists as integral to arts learning through professional development and resources.
- Empower wide network of stakeholders with tools, convening and data to address planning, policy and practice for arts learning.
- Enhance exposure-based and in-depth arts learning across Tennessee schools and communities.

Prepare students for success in school, career and life through the arts.

- Advance arts education and arts integration initiatives that develop 21st century learning and literacy skills.
- Nurture initiatives that build skills to prepare students for jobs in the creative sector.
- Encourage positive youth development through the arts.

Facilitate community arts learning for all Tennesseans.

- Cultivate high quality arts education in Tennessee's arts and cultural organizations for children and lifelong learners.
- Integrate arts education with community cultural heritage for increased understanding and authentic arts engagement.
- Align arts learning efforts with education and community goals for lasting outcomes, including in rural areas.

4. A Champion for the Arts

In a 2018 public opinion survey of Tennesseans, whether people engage with the arts or not, 90 percent believe cultural facilities (theaters, museums, sculpture parks, neighborhood arts centers) improve quality of life, and 86 percent believe cultural facilities are important to local business and the economy. Even so, only 33% of Tennessee artists and arts organizations perceive that the arts “have a seat at the table” for major community initiatives.

The focus of this goal is to increase understanding so that state and local leaders routinely engage the arts to address priority issues and arts organizations and artists across Tennessee become highly valued partners for building strong communities.

Build engagement with stakeholders and the public about the contributions of arts activities and artists in communities across Tennessee.

- Communicate about the diverse range of Tennessee’s arts activities and artists to build arts audiences and highlight the state’s rich cultural heritage.
- Inform constituents of arts activities and opportunities.
- Collect, document, distribute and archive data and stories of Tennessee’s arts and culture.
- Support agency programs with outreach, media support and toolkits.

Build knowledge and understanding about the state’s specialty license plate program.

- Inform and promote the value of Specialty License Plates to all Tennesseans.
- Encourage grantees and other stakeholders to promote the program to their audiences.
- Enhance the program with new strategic tools.

Work to ensure the arts play a significant role in community solutions.

- Increase understanding of the value and impact the arts play in building sustainable communities.
- Support Tennesseans for the Arts and other arts service organizations
- Strengthen Tennessee local arts agencies’ capacities to serve communities through the arts

5. Effective and Accountable Agency

In step with other Tennessee state agencies, the Tennessee Arts Commission shares a commitment to Customer Focused Government and transparency. The objective is to provide the best service at the lowest possible cost.

The Tennessee Arts Commission, governed by a body of 15 members, operates within the complex environment of state and federal laws, rules, policies and procedures. The Commission seeks to fulfill its responsibilities and enhance systems for empowering arts and cultural organizations to implement both Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Accomplishing tasks properly and on time, no matter how big or small, requires well-designed systems, organizational agility and skilled staff. An effective agency must attract, develop and retain qualified professionals to lead the field.

Enhance customer focus, efficiency and transparency.

- Reduce the cost of doing business, including continued streamlining of the grants process.
- Identify opportunities to enhance open government practices.

Maximize return on public investment.

- Develop and maintain partnerships to leverage resources, including with other state agencies.
- Use data to demonstrate benefit of investments and make strategic and process improvements.
- Support good stewardship of agency resources.

Strengthen the agency as a leader for innovation and excellence.

- Help staff excel by supporting professional development opportunities.
- Develop innovative programs and practices informed by research and emerging trends.