

# AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

## 2018 - 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

### WASHINGTON, DC

1000 Vermont Avenue, NW  
6th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
T 202.371.2830

### NEW YORK CITY

One East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street  
2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10022  
T 212.223.2787

[WWW.AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG](http://WWW.AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG)  
Follow Us @AMERICANS4ARTS



Janet Echelman, *1.8 London*, London, United Kingdom

# AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

## 2018 - 2020 Strategic Plan

---

Today's community leaders face a growing list of complicated challenges, heightened by deep divides in our country.

---

**B**ut the transformative power of the arts inspires us and give us hope for positive change —the arts are uniquely equipped to solve many of our community's toughest problems, and also bridge our nation's cultural, political, and economic divides. Over the next three years, Americans for the Arts will continue our critical work with members, partners, and stakeholders to build stronger leaders, communicate the value of the arts, and increase resources for the arts. It is by working toward these three goals that we will create more healthy, equitable and vibrant communities across the country.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

---

**W**e can't do this alone — it is only by shared influence and learning that Americans for the Arts can affect greater change and build recognition for the power of the arts. While we work with many arts and non-arts decision makers, our primary stakeholders include:

- Local arts service organizations, including Local Arts Agencies, Arts Councils, Departments of Cultural Affairs, Arts & Business Councils, Business Committees for the Arts, and United Arts Funds as well as the State Arts Advocacy Organizations and state-based arts organizations that serve them;
- Nexus organizations that play the role of bringing a community together but are not official local arts agencies;
- Private Sector Leaders from businesses and foundations;
- For profit arts and creative industries;
- Public Sector Leaders/Elected Officials including Mayors, Lt. Governors, Senators, Representatives, City/County Managers, and many others at the federal, state and local levels;
- Education leaders including superintendents of schools, school boards, and teachers;
- Arts Advocates including national arts service organizations and individuals who participate in the Arts Action Fund; and
- Individuals of power and influence including accomplished artists, philanthropists and patrons, civic leaders, volunteers, and arts board members.

### VISION

Our vision is that the arts are recognized as integral to the lives of all people and essential to healthy, vibrant and equitable communities across the nation.

### MISSION

Our mission is to build recognition and support for the extraordinary and dynamic value of the arts and to lead, serve, and advance the diverse networks of organizations and individuals who cultivate the arts in America.

# GOAL ONE

---

**L**ead and develop individuals and organizations to strengthen their capacity to serve communities through the arts and to help build environments in which the arts and arts education thrive.

---

**We believe that information and transformation go hand-in-hand. For communities to thrive, it is essential that local, state, and national leaders understand the enormous opportunities the arts offer in economic development, job creation, education, and civic engagement. Americans for the Arts will continue to nurture informed leadership through information sharing, in-person and online learning, and showcasing the best examples of how the arts build bridges in communities.**

---

As part of our effort to build healthy, equitable, and vibrant communities through the arts, over the next three years we will:

1. Utilize the results of our National Community Vision Initiative to create convenings, dialogue, and educational programming on the skills our local arts and community leaders need to successfully build stronger communities through the arts.
2. Use the ArtsU platform to deliver innovative year-round online training on key issues.
3. Provide in-person professional development opportunities for our nation's 4,500 local arts agency leaders who work to strengthen the arts in their communities through programs including our annual convention taking place in Denver in 2018, Minneapolis in 2019 and Washington, DC in 2020; Executive Leadership Forum Series at Sundance and in localities; Arts Advocacy Day; and the continued gathering of our field networks.
4. Promote our learning from the implementation of the organization's Cultural Equity Statement, to help local arts leaders develop strategies to serve, fund and promote their diverse communities.
5. Continue to build the pipeline of diverse leadership in the arts through programming that grows our emerging, mid, and advanced career professionals.
6. Help innovative arts marketing professionals to reach audiences and grow earned income through the National Arts Marketing Project. Offer in-person training at annual conferences in Seattle in 2018 and Miami in 2019 and regional training workshops; provide online training through ArtsU; and connect the arts marketing community through [artsmarketing.org](http://artsmarketing.org).
7. Utilize the Local Arts Agency Census as a method for tracking best practices throughout the locals field including equitable grantmaking, diversity policies and practices, funding, partnerships, and more.
8. Assist the network of effective state arts service organizations and state arts agency leaders in their efforts to advocate for positive arts policies through State Arts Action Network programming, convenings and information.
9. Increase the literacy of individuals working to promote education policy and craft local campaigns. Grow state and local networks of individuals engaged in arts education and public policy sectors.

# GOAL ONE (CONTINUED)

---

- 10.** Inform business, civic, philanthropic and volunteer community leaders about the value of partnering with the arts in their efforts to build stronger communities in which they live and work. Convene National Arts Policy Roundtables, Patrons events, community forums and other dialogue and action opportunities throughout the year.
- 11.** Continue to track our nation's Creative Industries and establish new relationships so that we are working together to develop vibrant communities and inspired workers.
- 12.** Keep strengthening non-arts strategic partnerships with national organizations representing public and private resource decision maker sectors including but not limited to: Independent Sector, US Conference of Mayors, Grantmakers in the Arts, The Conference Board, CECF, NAMM, National PTA, National Association of Counties, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Lieutenant Governors Association, Urban League, National Hispanic Caucus Institute, and many others to grow awareness and encourage action in support of the arts.
- 13.** Continue to partner with national arts service organizations including: the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, National Association of Latino Arts & Culture, Association of Performing Arts Professionals, Theatre Communications Group, Chorus America, Arts Education Partnership, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Humanities Alliance, National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Response, CERF+, and more than 100 others to drive a long-term policy agenda to advance the arts in America.
- 14.** Continue to partner with national military and healing organizations including but not limited to: Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, American Legion Auxiliary, National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and the VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.
- 15.** Continue to grow the Americans for the Arts Action Fund as a tool to galvanize members for action in support of the arts and arts education through local and state briefings, advocacy tools like VoterVoice and more.

# GOAL TWO

---

**E**xpand individual awareness and recognition of the value of the arts and arts education as central elements to a vibrant and equitable nation.

---

**For our work to have an impact, decision makers and influencers must understand the critical role the arts play in addressing our communities' most pressing concerns. Americans for the Arts communicates to these leaders through strategic messaging that demonstrates the undeniable social, economic, and inherent value of the arts. Effective communication relies on targeting key stakeholder groups, identifying the strongest delivery channels, and crafting stories that resonate through bold examples and data.**

---

As part of our effort to build healthy, equitable, and vibrant communities through the arts, over the next three years we will:

1. Conduct ongoing public opinion polling to gain a deeper understanding of how the public participates in and views support for the arts.
2. Continue to develop and test messages that resonate with decision makers about the inherent, economic, and social impacts of the arts.
3. Increase case-making and storytelling strategies to enable new ways for Americans for the Arts and arts and community leaders to effectively share the power of the arts.
4. Leverage print and online media, social media, and targeted industry communications to reach people with the message about the importance of the arts in our lives and the funding of the arts.
5. Better articulate the tangible impact of the arts on communities by making targeted ad buys in print, radio, online, and other media that reach across stakeholder groups to include elected officials, arts advocates, and the general public.
6. Augment our website with additional case-making research and stories to better prepare stakeholders to advocate for the arts.
7. Continue to highlight the positive impact that an arts education has on students of all ages and backgrounds to demonstrate that the arts lead to a creative workforce and well-rounded and engaged individuals.

# GOAL THREE

---

**G**enerate equitable and effective public and private sector policies and resources to anchor the arts and arts education as core elements of American quality of life and civic health.

---

**Funding for the arts continues to be challenged. We work every day to strengthen the efforts of our nation's arts advocates by helping them be nimbler—proactive in identifying challenges, quick to address opposition, and bipartisan in their approach. We must continue to demonstrate the transformative power of the arts to decision makers who have the authority to advance, adopt, or maintain positive arts policies and provide equitable funding sources, so that they will adopt positive arts policies.**

---

As part of our effort to build healthy, equitable, and vibrant communities through the arts, over the next three years we will:

1. Continue to support efforts to increase public sector investment at the local, state and federal levels for arts and arts education in the United States by working to increase appropriations to the National Endowment for the Arts, Department of Education, other federal agencies by delivering sound arguments in support of the arts to elected officials and training strong advocates in the field.
2. Develop strong arguments in support of the social impact the arts to influence decision-makers by working with a cohort of researchers, communications and advocacy specialists.
3. Create and share strong statements regarding critical issues that impact the arts and make them available in a timely manner through our Arts Mobilization Center.
4. Continue to organize Arts Advocacy Day and the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy to inform our members about key arts policies and provide them with advocacy training while encouraging elected leaders to support the arts.
5. Work with partners to maintain and improve favorable treatment of the arts in tax law at the national, state and local levels.
6. Utilize the pARTnership Movement campaign to gain support from business leaders for the arts by demonstrating ways in which the arts can help them achieve their business goals. We will pilot a test campaign in specific communities and see the impact on creative and engaged workforces, vibrant communities in which businesses are based and enhancing brand and marketing.
7. Continue to recognize and encourage the extraordinary partnerships and support by businesses across the country through the annual BCA10 awards event, the Business Committee for the Arts Executive Board, and new research, convenings and supporting the Private Sector Network of Arts & Business Councils, Business Committees for the Arts, United Arts Funds and other local arts agencies focused on growing relationships with businesses.
8. Continue to reinforce the Arts & Business Council of New York and its employee engagement strategies.
9. Educate foundation leaders about the importance of supporting the arts as solutions to many societal challenges by partnering with Independent Sector, Grantmakers in the Arts and the Council on Foundations.

## GOAL THREE (CONTINUED)

---

10. Continue to help local arts agencies partner with and build the capacity of arts organizations and artists across all disciplines to contribute to social change through creative, effective and responsive civic engagement and dialogue through Animating Democracy and other local initiatives.
11. Continue to analyze federal arts education opportunities and increase our emphasis on state and local level education policy.
12. Continue to advance our National Initiative on Arts & Health in the Military Initiative and manage the National Endowment for the Arts' Creative Forces efforts in order to advance the policy, practice and quality use of arts and creativity as tools for health in the military and veterans communities.
13. Continue to strengthen the over 500 public art programs in communities across the country and advocate for more communities to invest in public art through our Public Art Resource Center, online directory, Year in Review program and convenings.
14. Work with arts organizations to educate them on how and why to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion policies, practices, programs and leadership into their work in order to serve their constituencies.
15. Be responsive to international organizations that request our assistance and information on public and private sector funding models and policies for the arts and arts education.

# GOAL FOUR

---

**A**dvance the operational stability of the organization and its ability to be nimble and innovative when responding to opportunities and challenges.

---

**Americans for the Arts is the only national organization working to promote all of the arts to all of the people. We understand that to build healthy, vibrant and equitable communities through the arts we must connect to our members, partners, funders and leadership in powerful ways. We commit to supporting the strongest board and staff to help us lead that effort through creative and effective strategies.**

---

As part of our effort to build healthy, equitable, and vibrant communities through the arts, over the next three years we will:

1. As a result of our Cultural Equity Statement and internal cultural assessment, continue to implement the staff-driven AFTA Learning Lab which provides year-round training on leadership and diversity, equity and inclusion skills.
2. Conduct demographics research on our board, staff, leadership councils and networks, membership and program participants to ensure we are including and appreciating diverse perspectives in our work.
3. Engage our Artists Committee members to strategically deliver messaging about the importance of the arts in social media, mass media and partner activities and ensure that their efforts dovetail with the organization.
4. Maintain a long-term investment growth policy while establishing strategically and programmatically aggressive annual budgets.
5. Cultivate and inform the strongest diverse volunteer leadership for Americans for the Arts that provides guidance in advancing the organization and its mission and represents the diversity of the communities we serve. Our leadership groups include a bold Board of Directors, Business Committee for the Arts Executive Board, Artist Committee, Field Leadership Council Members, and Patrons Council.
6. Conduct the operations of Americans for the Arts in an entrepreneurial and focused approach that is the result of an inventive, resourceful and motivated staff and innovative business practices and uses of technology.
7. Continue to build recognition of Americans for the Arts as an influential arts organization working to advance all of the arts in America through clearer messaging, branding and storytelling in order to encourage deeper and expanded partnerships.

# CONCLUSION

---

**W**hile our nation faces deep divides that may seem insurmountable, the arts have a key role to play in bridging these gaps. For nearly 60 years, this is the space where our organization has focused our efforts, attention, and work. Over the next three years, Americans for the Arts' members, stakeholders, partners, board, and staff, will work toward the goals laid out in this strategic plan to educate our field, communicate the power of the arts to decision makers, advocate for more resources, and innovate in ensuring the sustainability of the organization.