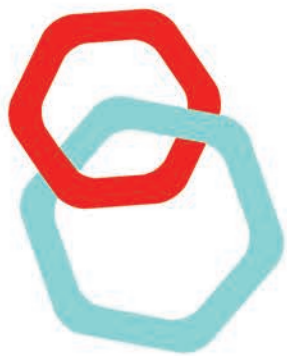


STRATEGIC PLAN

2023- 2025



ArtsConnection

LINKING LEARNING AND THE ARTS



artsconnection.org

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of ArtsConnection, we are proud to share this 3-year strategic plan looking forward to 2025 and the organization's 45th anniversary, a milestone celebration of our leadership and innovation in the arts education field.

The uncertainties of the last two years that made generations of inequities more visible, the need to be more human-centered and equitable, and the rapid shifts in technological needs are all driving factors that informed this process. The pages that follow represent more than documentation of our strategic planning process. Over the 2021-2022 school year, we challenged ourselves to reimagine and put into action a culture shift that taps into our creativity, is more inclusive, transparent, and collaborative, and puts artists and young people at the decision-making table so that we can ensure deep and long-standing impact in our communities.

For many years we have prided ourselves in being one of the oldest and largest arts education organizations in New York City. While that has enabled us to provide quality arts experiences to over four million young people over the years, the level of impact of those experiences has been varied.

The arts have been a lifeline in so many ways over the last two years. We must push further to listen to and be guided by young people, artists, and educators to design the best ways to keep that lifeline accessible, relevant, and impactful for the future to come. We must shift our model to be more consistently in-depth. We must draw from our years of experience to become a resource to others in the field. We must continue to work towards having a staff and board that has the training and tools to implement our goals and that is representative of the young people and communities with whom we work. We must leverage technology to increase accessibility and impact in New York City and beyond. We must focus our marketing strategies to bring greater visibility to the excellence of our work. We must diversify our income to sustain our financial viability in the future.

This plan lays the groundwork for these goals. We are grateful to all those who gave their time and expertise to help us envision an ArtsConnection in 2025 and beyond.

Rachel Watts, Executive Director

R. W. H.



OUR MISSION

To address the educational challenges of the 21st-century, ArtsConnection's research-based arts programs create socially just learning environments. Our programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. ArtsConnection's partnerships include and strengthen the diverse voices of NYC's children and youth, cultivating their arts and academic skills for success in a changing world.



OUR HISTORY AND OUR WORK

Quality arts education offers significant opportunities for students to build expressive and imaginative abilities—extraordinarily important tools for students. ArtsConnection provides arts education that taps into students' individuality and creativity to help them forge new pathways to navigate their education and future while building critical thinking, creative problem solving, heightened self-esteem, literacy, and strong communicative abilities. Programs are led by 140 racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse teaching artists whose distinctive and varied artistic perspectives inspire, guide, and support students. Each year, AC partners with NYC public schools in grades pre-K through 12 across the five boroughs, providing artist residencies, professional development for teachers and artists, and family arts events. Out-of-school-time (OST) Teen Programs link the city's cultural resources to the developmental and educational needs of teens while

providing space for artistic expression, experiential learning, and leadership development. The students we reach are representative of the larger NYC public school population (85% are students of color and 73% are economically disadvantaged).

In the aftermath of New York City's fiscal crisis of the late '70s, ArtsConnection was founded in 1979 through a collaboration between the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Youth Bureau, and the New York City Board of Education. This founding partnership, along with the commitment to creativity and excellence from our teaching artists and schools, has been integral to our success. Over the years, we have evolved from service provider to a full educational partner — working in-depth to create new ways of teaching and learning in and through the arts while earning national and local recognition for our work.

OUR COMMUNITY CARE, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS VALUES (C-IDEA)

ArtsConnection believes its community of artists, staff and board play a unique role in modeling the humanity in all of us. Because we value the arts as a universal language, we strive to create socially just learning environments that are reflective of the city's demographics and that affirm and practice the values of equity, diversity, inclusion and access through the various roles and responsibilities we

have in all our work. We respect all communities with which we work and strive for ongoing reflection on patterns of racism, sexism, heterosexism, cis-sexism, classism, ableism, nativism, ageism, religious, body type and other forms of discrimination and oppression that can negatively affect the young people in our programs.

We strive to achieve Socially Just Learning Environments through ongoing practice, reflection, and assessment in the following areas:



CONTEXT AND PROCESS

Our Expertise and Position as Leaders in the Field Offers New Opportunities in a Changing Landscape

In developing our strategic vision for the next three years, we identified key factors affecting the landscape in which our work takes place which serve as opportunities for our growth and development.

1 STEADILY INCREASING COMPETITION IN THE FIELD

Own our history, expertise, and track record of excellence to stand out while expanding our work in professional development and career-based programs for teens

2 A DIFFERENT WORLD IN THE ERA OF COVID

Invest in technology and communications to support programs, strengthen our hybrid work model, and cultivate new communities

3 CUSTOMIZED PROGRAM MODELS IN SCHOOLS RESULTING IN VARIED IMPACTS

Design program models with clear, research-informed impacts



OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

With guidance from consultants Laurel Molloy (Innovations Quantified) and Joseph Barretto (Barretto Consulting LLC), our 10-month process included participation from artists, program participants and alumni, staff, board members, institutional funders, and community stakeholders, all of whom provided invaluable input that shaped our goals and vision. Together, we asked questions, challenged assumptions, developed bold ideas, refined language, and dreamed about possibilities. Rooted in our values and history while reaching toward the future, implementing our strategic plan will continue to be an inclusive and reflective process.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Preparation and Launch

Discovery

Strategy Development

Implementation Preparation

Adoption and Integration

PREPARATION AND LAUNCH August 2021

- Small group of alumni, artists, and staff met to identify key strategic questions

DISCOVERY September 2021-October 2021

- Community Visioning meeting with a group of 30 young people, artists, staff, board members, and community stakeholders of the organization
- Focus group with current teen programs participants and alumni
- Focus group with current artists on the roster

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT November 2021 - January 2022

- Creation of a strategic planning committee that included alumni, artists, staff, and board members. The group met several times to identify themes and priority areas emerging from the visioning session and focus groups.
- Emerging themes/priority areas were shared with the board for feedback in December
- The themes/priority areas were shared with the Community Care, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (C-IDEA) committee for feedback and editing in January

IMPLEMENTATION/PREPARATION February 2022 - April 2022

- Updated presentation to the board in February focusing on revised priority areas
- Staff and members of the Teaching Artist Advisory Board met multiple times in small groups to define 3-year action plan and budget implications for each priority area
- Continued exploration of each priority area, refined priorities and action steps were shared with the board in February

ADOPTION/INTEGRATION May 2022- September 2022

- Board of Directors approved the plan with detailed timeline and budget implications in May
- An all-staff retreat, including young people and artists, in June to share final approved plan and begin to move toward implementation
- Year 1 rollout began in September 2022

OUR VISION FOR 2025

Establish ArtsConnection as the standard for comprehensive arts education with transformational impact

- **Increase depth of programming** in schools and streamline administration
- **Implement robust data collection and assessment practices** using a consistent set of outcomes to drive program improvement and clearly communicate a compelling narrative of our impact
- **Intentionally connect schools** with Teen and Community Engagement programs
- **Increase alumni engagement**
- **Focus on specific neighborhoods** in the city

Achieving our vision involves several key shifts in infrastructure, staffing, administration, and budget over the next three years.

- **Invest in expanding** revenue-generating professional development work (in person and online – synchronous and asynchronous) and grow Student Art Program to 10 exhibitions per year
- **Refocus Teen Programs** on pathways to careers in the creative industries
- Develop capacity to focus on **growing individual giving** through donor engagement and relationship building
- **Expand marketing resources** to support program growth and revenue-generating professional development initiatives while increasing overall public awareness
- **Acquire the necessary space/physical resources** and technological infrastructure to effectively implement programming, support staff and community, and promote equity and access
- **Increase initiatives to support, retain, and include Teaching Artists** in decision-making at the organization



EXAMPLES OF SHIFTS

A PROGRAM SHIFTS: MOVING FROM BREADTH TO DEPTH

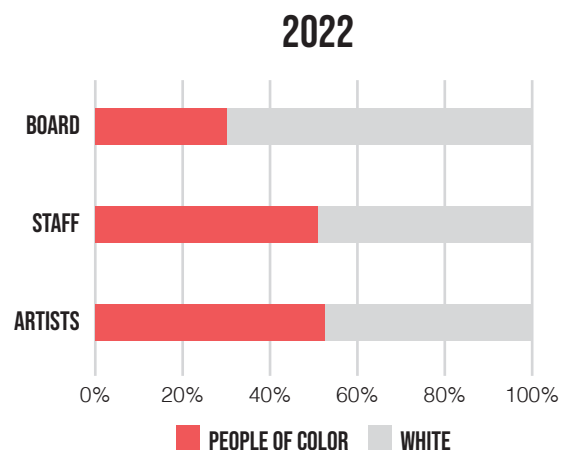
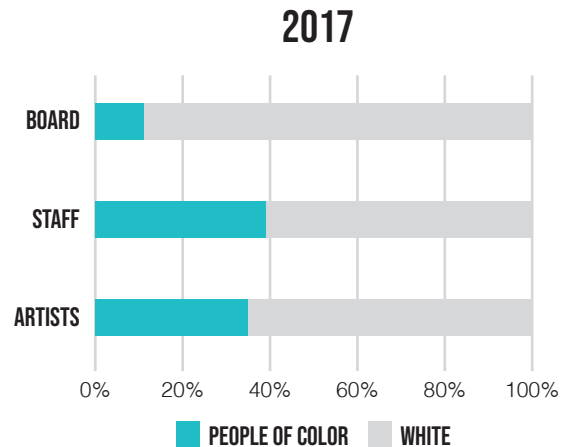
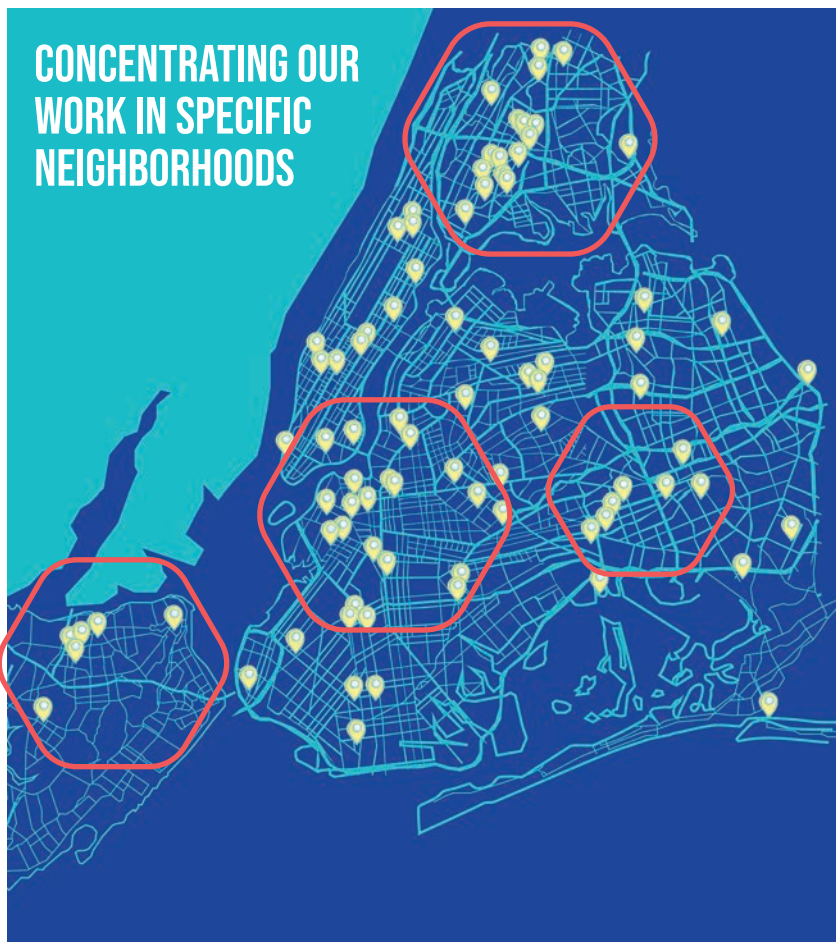
- Deepening impact on students and teachers through robust evaluation using consistent outcomes
- Streamlining administration and program management
- Concentrating our work in specific neighborhoods
- Strengthening intentional linkages between school programs and teen programs

B PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING CAPACITY AND GROWING REVENUE

- Creating content rooted in our unique areas of expertise
- In-person, virtual, and hybrid models
- Serving schools and school districts in NYC and beyond

C C-IDEA WORK: EXPANDING OUR EFFORTS AND FOCUSING ON NEW PRIORITIES

- Staff increasingly reflects the communities we serve with regard to demographics such as race, gender, and disability
- Expand practices for intentionally building classroom community in collaboration with young people
- Provide training for staff on topics related to gender, sexual orientation, and disability as informed by our FY22 Equity Audit
- Year 1 rollout began in September 2022



OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: FIVE PRIORITIES

1

IMPLEMENT A NEW AC PROGRAM MODEL

Shift the AC model towards more in-depth programming, both in-school and out-of-school, becoming the standard for comprehensive arts education in NYC and beyond

- **Clarify curriculum framework** for transforming learning spaces into liberatory experiences for young people
- **Expand mentorship, career exploration and alumni engagement offerings** to build pathways into and diversify creative industries
- **Establish student-centered measurements** to assess the impact of all programming

2

INCREASE TEACHING ARTIST SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIP

Further support and partner with Teaching Artists as both artists and educators

- **Develop/strengthen mechanisms to regularly invite TA ideas, skills and experiences,** compensating them for their time
- **Explore and identify ways to invest in their financial well-being,** alone and/or in collaboration with other organizations

3

EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY FUNDING STREAMS

Expand and diversify funding streams by increasing individual donations/major gifts and building new earned income streams to support growth and long-term sustainability

- **Increase individual giving efforts,** emphasizing donor engagement and relationship building
- **Increase and diversify institutional giving efforts,** taking advantage of current and new opportunities

4

STRENGTHEN OPERATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure AC has the necessary space/physical resources and technological infrastructure to effectively implement programming, support staff and community, and promote equity and access

- **Determine space, website, and other resource needs** based on programmatic and operational priorities
- **Expand use of technology to support programming and community connection** while prioritizing equitable access

5

INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY WORK

Promote AC model and value of comprehensive arts education

- Use our story, history, experience, and data to **make a case for why arts education is needed** and how it benefits students, young people, schools and communities
- **Work in coalition to advocate** for funding, promote mission-relevant issues, and create systems change related to comprehensive arts education on all levels of government

KEY BUDGET SHIFTS AND FUNDING NEEDS

To successfully realize our plan, we are cultivating support for specific aspects of our five priority areas and the required organizational shifts.

- Sponsorships for specific in-depth school and teen programs: \$15,000-\$45,000 each
- Sponsorships for development of online programming (professional development and direct service to youth): \$10,000-\$30,000 each
- Investment in youth and artist-led research and evaluation: \$300,000 by 2025
- Investment in technological infrastructure and space for teens, staff, and teaching artists \$500,000 by 2025
- Investment in marketing and fundraising efforts: \$300,000 by 2025



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Joseph J. Barretto, Principal, Barretto Consulting LLC
Theodore S. Berger, Secretary, Board of Directors
Kelly Donovan, Former Director of In-School Programs
Tavia Huggins, Deputy Director for Finance
Laurel Molloy, Founder and Chief Consultant, Innovations Quantified
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Tibisay Salerno, Board of Directors
Jasmine Unay, Teen Programs Alumnus
Fran Van Horn, Former Deputy Director for Development
Kerry Warren, Teaching Artist
Rachel Watts, Executive Director

Special thanks to the artists, young people, and community supporters whose valuable input was captured in the visioning sessions and focus groups.



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NYC Department of Education
NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
The New York Community Trust
New York State Council on the Arts
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Invest in young people today, help them
navigate their futures tomorrow

