

STATE ARTS PLAN

The arts are a beacon, a magnet to draw the creativity-fueled industries of the 21st century to the mountains of West Virginia. With leadership, nurturing, convening and funding provided by the West Virginia Commission on the Arts and the Arts Section of the Division of Culture and History, the state can be branded and aligned with the central theme of 21st century life: creativity as the prime natural resource. In so doing, West Virginia can burst forth in this new century with renewed vigor, leaving behind the decline of natural-resource based industries and their company towns and halting the migration of youth away from the state they love for jobs elsewhere.

The goals outlined below are a beginning point. Over the next five years, they will be fleshed out, provided incentives and implemented in pilot projects, new initiatives and continued efforts. The results will be examined, harvested and spread from a single organization, region or handful of towns to the length and breadth of the state.

For more than three years data has been collected through meetings big and small, through conversations formal and informal, through shared observations and lessons learned to lay out the path to this future that positions West Virginia in the center of the creative economy.

At its core is the understanding that the arts add value to life. Communities rich in artistic endeavor, where artists are valued as part of the economy and fully participate in daily life, are communities that are rich in all other ways. Their downtowns thrive. Their schools are filled with the arts and students seek out the arts as prestigious exercises and potential careers. Participation in the arts is commonplace and readily available. Such communities have a tourism industry that lures culture-seekers, and their traditional economic sectors are transformed through the application of creative technology. Their children return and bring their friends. Their futures are assured.

This is the understanding that the plan outlined here proposes to bring into reality by branding and marketing; by entrepreneurial training for artists and arts organizations; by including both the underserved and the not-served; and by infiltrating all arenas of public life through productive collaborations. West Virginia, Arts Magnet will be not a bumper sticker but a reality lived by all its citizens.

The MISSION of the West Virginia Commission on the Arts and the Arts Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History is to establish a central position for the arts and through that accomplishment foster a fertile environment for cultural, educational and economic development of the state.

GOALS FOR FY2008-2010

1. Guarantee sufficient funding to assure stability for established arts organizations, develop new initiatives and encourage worthy returns for individual artists by:

- training in business, marketing and entrepreneurial skills
- leveraging new funding sources
- communicating to state and local decision makers the value of investing in the arts
- developing incentives for audience building and evaluation.

2. Invest in and maintain a technology-based communication network that provides all necessary information to the arts community, links them to each other and the world, and improves cultural literacy through:

- a usable data base and specialized directories of arts organizations and artists that includes cultural asset mapping and inventory, and a complete artists registry
- user-friendly, comprehensive and timely Website and Web-based communications as well as traditional media
- long distance learning and training both live and online
- supporting continually updated postings of research, information and best practices on Arts in Education to the arts section Website
- comprehensive and up-to-date mailing lists of individuals, organizations and businesses related to arts and culture
- establishing an eGrant process and training users.

3. Assure that the arts are treated equally with other subjects in schools and available in after-school programs for all children; and that arts education activities are available for lifelong learning in all communities by:

- expanding professional development opportunities for teaching artists and educators to increase curriculum based learning and hands-on instruction in the arts
- supporting artists, sponsors and schools in designing effective artist residency programs
- supporting and promoting sustainable apprenticeship programs
- encouraging opportunities to showcase youth arts talent including participation in national programs like Poetry Out Loud
- improving the access of educational institutions to West Virginia artists working in schools through useful and accessible information
- developing information about what arts programs are available in West Virginia colleges for career path students and the requirements of those programs to be distributed to school guidance counselors
- strategizing on how local schools and arts organizations can access No Child Left Behind funds for arts education.

4. Require that arts activity in every county meets accepted standards of excellence, accountability, effectiveness and participation through accessibility by:

- training in the use of evaluation tools
- establishing specific initiatives for the not-served to encourage cultural inventorying, planning and sustainability
- initiating a program to encourage innovative model programs with research components and distribute results
- expanding Peer Advisor Network in number of advisers, areas of expertise and eligible applicants to the program
- increasing arts section staff and increasing professional development for existing staff.

5. Establish West Virginia as an arts magnet for creative industries, working artists and cultural tourists by:

- recognizing and promoting the excellence and accomplishments of West Virginia artists
- encouraging establishment and promotion of certified arts communities and cultural districts
- exerting leadership in developing cultural tourism tools including maps of arts studios and galleries, calendars of arts events, and arts itineraries
- establishing a public art initiative
- developing a funding strategy for arts incubators.

6. Extend the resources and effectiveness of the state arts office through productive, targeted and formalized collaborations:

- with the Tourism Division and local convention and visitors bureaus in developing an inventory of cultural assets and promoting them for cultural tourism
- with the Economic Development Office to assemble and collect relevant information on the economic impact of the arts
- with the Small Business Development Center and Workforce Development in training programs for artists and arts organizations
- with the Department of Education for establishing and implementing comprehensive arts plans and standards in all West Virginia schools
- with other arts-related state groups in accomplishing joint missions including the Industry of Culture; Arts Advocacy of West Virginia; Appalachian Education Initiative; Tamarack Foundation; Augusta Heritage Center and others
- with the Municipal League and Association of Counties to illustrate the value of the arts as a local development tool and asset for community revitalization

- with various organizations serving those 55 and better including AARP and Elderhostel to provide lifelong learning, enrichment activities and community involvement in the arts
- with the Library Commission and local libraries on programs including the Big Read and Poetry Out Loud
- with contiguous states and nearby states including Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky
- by defining a unified message about the value of the arts and recruiting messengers through collaborations
- with all designated partners on Web based resources for events
- with facilities and artists, as well as to convene appropriate statewide and regional meetings;
- with the West Virginia Universities Center for Excellence in Disabilities and Statewide Centers for Independent Living to provide leadership and resources for accessible arts venues and experiences
- with other organizations and agencies to employ West Virginia artists in various activities.