



2022 STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Arts Orange County (ArtsOC)'s next strategic planning effort is slated to begin late 2022. This follows the significant expansion of its Board of Directors begun in 2020 (addressing a key goal of the 2019 Strategic Planning Retreat described below), and will ensure that the new Board members have served long enough to gain in-depth knowledge of the organization and enable them to engage confidently and productively in the strategic planning process.

Perhaps the most important reason for the timing is that it will take place following an anticipated decision in Spring 2022 by the Orange County Board of Supervisors (OCBOS) whether to put into place for the first-time ongoing County funding for the arts community. This is something which ArtsOC has long aimed to achieve. When its emergency advocacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the OCBOS allocating \$6.8 million in CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in relief funding for Orange County's arts community, this prompted a heightened awareness by the County Supervisors of its importance. The newly-elected Chair of the OCBOS has expressed a desire to establish ongoing County arts funding, and ArtsOC has been invited to provide a position paper, including a case statement, comparative data from other communities, and recommendations for its administration.

Among the recommendations will be the possible role of ArtsOC, as the County's designated Local Arts Agency, in directing and administering such a program. This has also been a longtime goal of our organization. During the County's pandemic arts relief distribution, ArtsOC guided the County's District 3 CARES Act Arts Relief grantmaking program, advised the programs in the County's Districts 1, 2, 4 and 5, and was later contracted directly by the County of Orange to manage the County's District 2 ARPA Arts Relief program, while continuing to advise the other districts. There is a distinct possibility that ArtsOC will be called upon to manage all or part of the proposed ongoing countywide arts funding program, and that would be a significant factor in determining ArtsOC's strategic goals moving forward. Timing for the next strategic planning retreat must pause until then.

Meanwhile, ArtsOC's most recent strategic planning efforts (in 2019) led it to this point in time, and consisted of three distinct activities: an independent organizational capacity assessment, a Board & Staff Visioning Retreat, and an independent evaluation of one of its flagship programs, the annual Imagination Celebration festival, now in its 37th year. Below are summaries of the results.

Organizational Capacity Assessment, completed in June 2019

ArtsOC conducted an organizational assessment using Algorhythm's Impact Capacity Assessment Tool (iCAT) through OneOC, a leading local nonprofit service organization. iCAT measures organizational capacity as a prelude to determining its future goals and resource needs. An organization's capacities are the engine that allows it to effectively implement its programs and achieve its mission. Understanding the extent to which an organization is effectively leading, planning, managing, overseeing, learning and generating resources is the key to achieving sustainable and scalable positive impact.

ArtsOC received high scores for 5 of the 6 capacity assessment categories: Leading, Learning, Managing, Overseeing, and Planning.

In the category of Resource Generating, the score was considered only above average. While we regarded this as endemic to the built-in challenges of attracting donor support (especially individuals) for service organizations like an arts council, it also suggested that increasing the capacity of ArtsOC to engage staff and Board in fundraising should be addressed. Action steps included devoting more time and effort to fundraising and creating better tools to fundraise successfully. This is one of the topics addressed later during our Board retreat (see below).

Visioning Retreat, August 7, 2019

During this half-day session, ArtsOC's Board and Staff gathered for an overview of the organizational mission and current programs and services. Attendees then engaged in a facilitated visioning process that produced the following Three-Year Visioning "Dream" List and some immediate action steps for Board implementation. The facilitator was Tim Shaw of Tim Shaw & Associates, a highly regarded Orange County-based specialist in nonprofit organizational management.

The consensus was to achieve the following goals within the next three years:

Branding

- ArtsOC spearheads a comprehensive PR plan to clarify its brand, heighten brand awareness and elevate its influence
- ArtsOC owns the "Arts" brand and is seen as THE voice for the arts
- ArtsOC has name recognition throughout Orange County
- ArtsOC is known as an arts incubator
- ArtsOC is known as a model for access to the arts for everyone
- ArtsOC is building the next generation of arts leaders
- ArtsOC is a catalyst for engaging new and younger arts audiences

Technology and Social Media

- New, contemporary and comprehensive website that is a central hub for the arts in Orange County
- Revamped online events calendar that is the go-to place for arts and culture events in OC.
- Create greater social media cohesion among OC arts organizations
- Greater understanding and connection of technology and the arts

Partnerships, Community Involvement and Outreach

- ArtsOC encourages arts leadership throughout the community that better reflects its diversity
- ArtsOC facilitates more connection to indigenous communities and Orange County's heritage communities
- ArtsOC expands its non-traditional partnerships
- More business community involvement in the arts
- More corporate board representatives
- Establish city by city citizen arts advocates
- Arts OC positively impacts all 34 OC cities
- ArtsOC is taking the lead in multicultural efforts
- ArtsOC owns building as a hub for the arts countywide
- ArtsOC is an advocate for artist housing
- Orange County champions great contemporary architecture
- ArtsOC is catalyst for capacity building in arts organizations

Education

- Parents no longer view their kids' involvement in the arts as an "extra" or "either/or" commodity
- Arts education adds value independently of STEM (not blended as STEAM)
- ArtsOC undertakes a comprehensive assessment of local arts education programs
- ArtsOC promotes universal arts opportunities for kids from an early age
- ArtsOC advocates that every school district have a VAPA Coordinator
- ArtsOC encourages cross district collaboration in programming
- Every Orange County child has tools to embody their creative beings

Funding

- The perceived "competition" for funds between the arts and social services no longer exists

- ArtsOC has become a \$50M annual arts grantmaker in OC
- Development dollars are going to the arts
- Tax dollars are funding ArtsOC and other arts orgs
- ArtsOC has cracked the code on how to fund advocacy
- ArtsOC leads collective fundraising among arts organizations and between arts, social services, and education

ArtsOC Board

- ArtsOC's board has a balance of individual, corporate and arts leader members
- ArtsOC's board is tightly-knit
- ArtsOC has active, engaged committees of board and community members

Next 90 Days – Action Items

1. Implement a communications planning initiative
2. Undertake an assessment of impacts and the state of arts nonprofit sector
3. ArtsOC begins plan to develop leadership in the education community
4. ArtsOC strengthens its Board of Directors

Assessment of ArtsOC's IMAGINATION CELEBRATION – Completed September 30, 2019

In July, ArtsOC engaged Charitable Ventures (formerly The Olin Group), a leader in nonprofit programmatic evaluation, to assess its longtime flagship program, the annual six-week long, countywide Imagination Celebration (IC) festival produced in collaboration with the Orange County Department of Education. The assessment included key stakeholder interviews, an online survey of various constituencies served by or participating in the festival, and background research about its history and evolution.

The stated conclusion in the 91-page report was as follows:

“The research carried out for this evaluation confirmed that ArtsOC is looked to as the preeminent arts organization in the county, and that organizations and families value the arts and the opportunity for all to be exposed to arts through IC. The evaluation also revealed that this is an excellent opportunity for strengthening the brand and the goals of the Imagination Celebration going forward. This is an exciting time for ArtsOC to renew its strategic plan for the IC, including the renewal or development of a strategic communications plan.

“The IC clearly reaches families through schools and teachers. The OCDE/ArtsOC partnership does seem to be a powerful partnership that could be leveraged even further to achieve ArtsOC’s IC goals. Although the IC is reaching families and the OCDE/ArtsOC partnership is strong, the IC likely reaches families who are already involved in or seeking opportunities to involve their children in art exhibitions and highlighting their artistic talents. If the goal of IC is to reach families who might not otherwise be reached, it can continue exploring how to hone its outreach to do so in partnership with the OCDE.

“Organizations that were surveyed and interviewed about their experience with the IC revealed room for growth and leveraging, maybe in particular, to boost family and community-level engagement and familiarity with IC events outside of the flagship events and those that are cross-promoted by OCDE. These organizations are faithful believers in the value of the IC, but their motivation is largely intrinsic, and is being underutilized. There is an opportunity to catalyze deeper engagement with many organizations around the IC, whether through planning/organizing activities and/or cross-promotion and evaluation.

“Organizations and families are largely supportive and grateful for the IC, but its impact could be stronger. The next step is for ArtsOC to identify what it would most want to achieve for itself and the community through the IC, and lay the framework for achieving those goals.”