

# HOWARD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL STRATEGIC ROADMAP

FY24-FY29



## We ENRICH and UPLIFT our COMMUNITIES

by advancing the arts, artists, and  
arts organizations for the benefit of all.

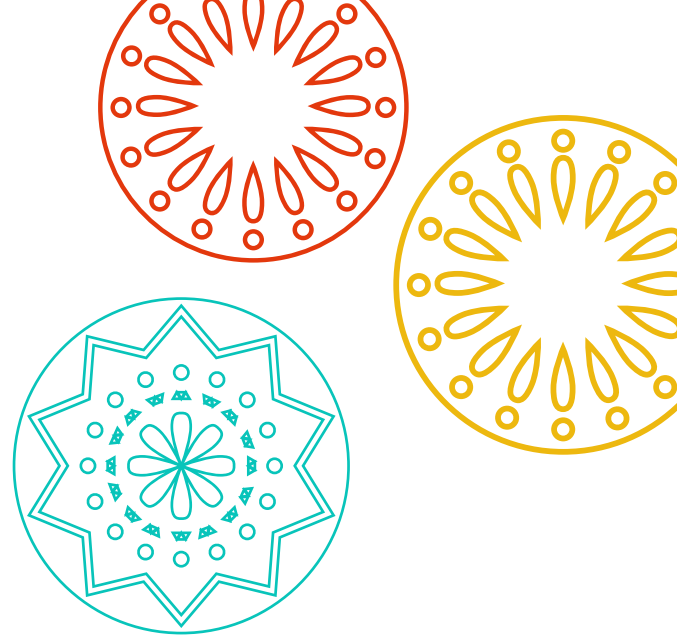


Daisha Graf, Celebration of the Arts 2021 (photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)

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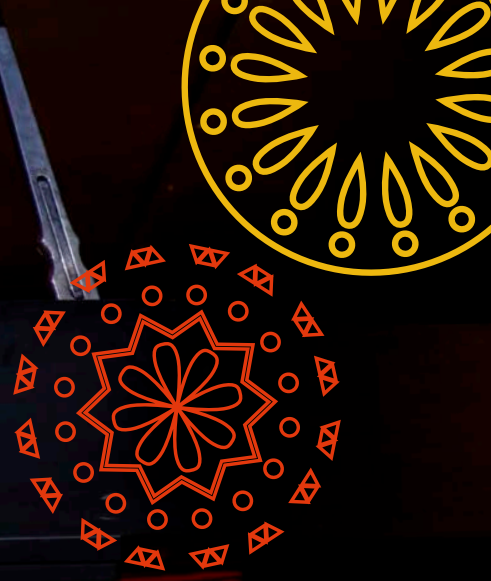
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We believe everyone should have access to the creative, intellectual, spiritual, and healing benefits the arts provide. The arts celebrate our diversity, connect our shared humanity, uplift individuals, and transform communities.





Junghoon Park, Celebration of the Arts 2022  
(photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)

## Executive Summary

As a community-focused arts organization, the Howard County Arts Council (HCAC) has three primary functions:

- 1** Funding the arts through annual operating and project grants
- 2** Advocating for and promoting the arts
- 3** Providing a home for the arts at the Howard County Center for the Arts

To ensure we understand and can meet the needs of the arts community today and continue to strengthen and grow organizationally, HCAC embarked on an 18-month strategic planning process to reflect on our current programs and activities and identify new priorities.

To prepare, the HCAC Board engaged arts leader, Joseph W. Ritsch, former Artistic Director of Rep Stage, who shared his experience leading the Rep Stage team through the process of defining what it means to be an anti-racist theatre and establishing how to incorporate the pillars of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) into daily practice.

Gaining this firsthand understanding and knowledge was incredibly valuable to the Board as we began the process of closely re-examining HCAC’s existing mission, vision, core values, and objectives with the goal of creating a strategic plan centered on equity.

In June 2022, HCAC hired The Sort Sol Group (SSG),

a national consulting firm, to support our strategic planning efforts. Our work with SSG was informed by the preliminary conversations with Joseph W. Ritsch and consisted of an exploratory Board road trip to two local art councils; individual interviews and focus groups; a constituent survey; a 2-day Board and staff retreat; and a stakeholder review of our draft strategic plan.

This intensive process was informed by nearly 350 community responses and helped us capture a deep understanding of HCAC’s work, and how to best support the changing needs of the arts community in the coming years.

The resulting 2024-2029 Strategy Roadmap defines HCAC’s commitment to equity, clarifies our purpose, mission, and values, and presents four priorities that focus on expanding resources, building capacity, increasing community engagement, and strategically evaluating our efforts through a DEIA lens.



Youth Art Month exhibit (photo: HCAC)



## BACKGROUND

Recognizing the important contributions the arts make to community life, in 1980 the Howard County Council adopted Section 12.804 (a) of the Howard County Code to establish, a private non-profit arts agency to foster the arts and distribute public funds designated by County government for the arts. This action by county leaders, along with provisions for public funding to support an arts council and its grant programs, gave weight to the importance of the arts in the then rapidly growing county. The Howard County Arts Council (HCAC) was selected to fulfill that role and the ensuing public-private partnership between Howard County and the Arts Council provided a strong foundation for the arts and has resulted in more than four remarkable decades of artistic programming and growth.

HCAC manages the Howard County Center for the Arts, a 32,000 square foot multi-disciplinary arts facility, where we present 10-12 exhibits each year, provide low-cost meeting and studio space for artists and arts organizations, and offer year-round classes in the visual arts, music, and dance for people of all ages. In FY23, 28,800 visitors browsed the galleries, took a class, or attended an event at the Center, which is 72% of our pre-Covid attendance.

HCAC also advocates for the arts on a state and local level to communicate the value of

the arts to county and state elected officials. And, through its partnership with Howard County Government, HCAC serves as the primary arts funder in the county. Each year, HCAC awards nearly \$400k in project and operating grant funds to local and regional arts organizations including Columbia Center for Theatrical Arts, Candlelight Concert Series, and Misako Ballet to name a few. Grants totaling more than \$200k are also provided to 11 Baltimore institutions that provide significant services to Howard County residents such as Baltimore Museum of Art,

**Each year, HCAC awards more than \$370k in project and operating grant funds to local and regional arts organizations.**

Baltimore Center Stage, and the National Aquarium. HCAC also supports Howard County PTAs through the Artist-in-Education (AiE) grant program for grades K-12. These grant programs reached audiences of more than 270k+.

Through our AiE grants, the HCAC funds projects that place visiting artists in local public schools to complement school curriculum, provide students with valuable hands-on experiences in a particular art form, and bring new ideas into the classroom that benefit students and teachers alike. These projects reach more than 6,000 students annually.

For college-bound seniors, HCAC awards 8-10 annual arts scholarships to help students pursue higher education in the arts.

With initiatives such as Head StART in ART, the Fabulous 50+ Players, and No Boundaries, HCAC reaches out to traditionally underserved audiences to provide

them with life-long learning opportunities in the arts. Head StART in ART is an artist-in-residence program designed for students from low-income families that are enrolled in the Ellicott City Head Start Preschool. The program provides developmentally appropriate arts activities that are designed to reinforce early childhood curriculum and enhance core life, social, and learning skills. The Fabulous 50+ Players is a musical theatre program open to anyone age 50 or older interested in participating on or off-stage in any of the program's elements. The program provides seniors with an age appropriate, wellness-building activity that emphasizes socialization, creativity, and service to the community. No Boundaries is an award-winning musical theatre program for adults with disabilities, produced in partnership with Recreation and Parks Department of Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion Services. The program was created in 1999 with the

belief that exposure to the arts encourages growth and new awareness in any individual regardless of their ability or disability. Each year, the program provides adults with disabilities with an opportunity to tap into their creative abilities and showcase their talents.

**HCAC works to build a strong foundation for community-based arts that provides people of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds with access to rewarding experiences in the arts with the goal of making the arts accessible to all community members and making their lives fuller and the communities we serve more vibrant.**



Regeneration exhibit (photo: HCAC)



# PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

## With the assistance of SSG, HCAC embarked on a “strategy development” process rather than traditional strategic planning.

The planning process used a variety of methods to capture a deep understanding of HCAC and its work. Methods included: background interviews, focus groups, community surveys and a Board retreat with action planning and refinement exercises. The goal was to create a set of responsive, short-term strategies to guide HCAC through the challenge and change of the current era. This Strategy Roadmap represents their best thinking on strategies for the upcoming strategy cycle (2024-2029).

## Equity in Planning

Planning is rooted in defining, describing, and analyzing the world based on a history informed by the values and experiences of white, western culture. As a result, many of the policies, practices, and interventions seen as effective within the social sector were produced through an incomplete lens. This suggests a need to reframe existing planning goals and shift towards more equitable practices that value the knowledge and wisdom communities bring to the process to adapt, redesign, and reimagine policies, strategies, and ways to allocate resources, including voices that reflect the assets and needs of those experiencing the most disparate outcomes.

Inherent in the planning of the strategy development process, SSG facilitated conversations with HCAC to reflect on its institutional culture to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) and to evolve HCAC’s own internal capacity and practice so that its future work is grounded in DEIA, and as an organization, fosters a learning culture to support “all.” Specifically, SSG ensured there were good equity practices in the overall plan organization, equity orientation, and forms of public participation.

## Design Team

Solving complex challenges requires a team with a diverse set of skills and perspectives that reflect the full scope of the systems involved. To help shape and monitor the planning process, a HCAC “Design Team” was created to partner with SSG to ensure that effective stakeholder engagement was integrated throughout the process. Members of the Design Team included (in alphabetical order):

- Mary K. Baxter, Deputy Director
- Katrina Caldwell, Board Member
- Raul Duran, Facilities & Visitor Services Coordinator
- Jordana Guzman, Board Vice President
- Brian Liu, Board Member
- Muriel Mitchell, Board Secretary
- Stephanie Schuster, Development Director
- Adam Stull, Board President
- Sharonlee Vogel, Board Immediate Past President
- Miles Warren, Education & Programs Coordinator
- Coleen West, Executive Director

## Background Research

Interviews, focus groups, and a community survey were assembled to gain insight from stakeholders on their expectations and opinions of the work of HCAC. The purpose of the stakeholder engagement was to explore perceptions of HCAC’s identity, mission, and culture; hopes for its future; and current challenges and structures blocking progress. Conversations empowered participants to discuss their key issues and provide feedback on the work of HCAC.

SSG conducted eight (8) individual and confidential interviews with representatives of the Board, community leaders, and elected officials. They also facilitated six (6) focus groups with Center for the Arts Users, Grantees, Major Donors, Government Funders, and HCAC Management, staff, and Board. A report was drafted to summarize the key themes that emerged from background research. (See Appendix A: Organizational Assessment Report.)



# Strategy Development

Building on the organizational assessment, HCAC Board and staff participated in a strategy development retreat on January 19-20, 2023 in Columbia, MD. Participants identified the following objectives for these sessions:

- ✔ Affirm Design Team alliance
- ✔ Develop and/or refine organizational commitment statements
- ✔ Craft value proposition for key consumers
- ✔ Distinguish competitive advantages
- ✔ Ideate strategy screen criteria
- ✔ Identify a practical vision
- ✔ Report contradictions
- ✔ Chart strategic directions

Draft work from the retreat can be found in Appendix B: Strategy Retreat Raw Output.

# Testing

The result of several meetings of the Design Team was a “Strategy Statement” or a short summary of strategic targets (i.e., organizational commitment statement changes, draft value proposition, competitive advantages, and priority goal areas with draft strategies for each.) SSG conducted interviews, focus groups, and a survey to obtain critical insights specific to HCAC’s Strategy Statement.

Appendix C: External Testing Memorandum includes a summary of the themes that emerged from the testing, which served as topic for discussion in the action planning meetings.



## Action Plan Development

To efficiently move the work of synthesizing discussions of the larger Design Team into written text, Strike Teams for each respective priority area were formed. They met to further refine the priority areas and develop strategies, objectives, and success measures. The Design Team was assembled to review and provide feedback on the plan’s progression, and this Strategy Roadmap represents this continuous refinement and feedback loop amongst and between the Consultant, Design Team, and Strike Teams.

## Final Approval

The HCAC Board of Directors ratified this plan on July 14, 2023.



Linda Joy Burke, Outstanding Artist,  
Celebration of the Arts 2021  
(photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)

# ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT STATEMENTS

Strategy must always begin with an understanding of the organization's core identity, seeking to leverage its core strengths and competitive advantage in effecting the change it seeks to make in the world.

HCAC began its strategy development process by clarifying our purpose to augment our mission statement and articulate what we ultimately seek to achieve. Alongside a constructed purpose statement, HCAC updated our mission statement and crafted values and vision statements, defining our identity through the following organizational commitment statement.

## Our Purpose

The value and impact of the arts are not fully recognized and that must change. Communities that cultivate and nurture their connection to, participation in, and aspiration for the arts as vital to their lives create vibrant, diverse places to live, work, learn, and grow.

## OUR MISSION

We **ENRICH** and **UPLIFT** our **COMMUNITIES** by **ADVANCING** the arts, artists and arts organization for the benefit of **ALL**



Misei Daimaru-Smith, Celebration of the Arts 2021 (photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)



## Our Vision

A diverse and vibrant community where the arts are central to our lives.

## Our Values

We believe diverse voices ensure our efforts to support artmaking, nurture creative expression, develop programs, and set policy that reflects and meets the needs of our community.



### Creativity

Support freedom of expression and encourage innovation in traditional, emerging, and underrepresented art forms.



### Inclusion

Nurture the social fabric of our community by providing essential resources, opportunities, and access.



### Education

Promote participation and life-long learning in the arts.



### Integrity

Cultivate trust through respect, honesty, and transparency.



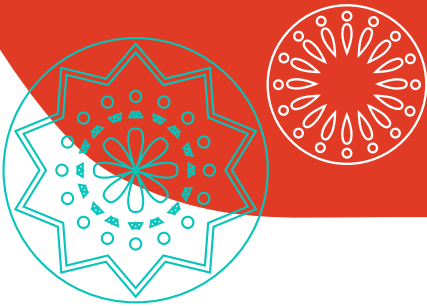
### Equity

Actively learn to identify and dismantle barriers to successful arts-making and engagement.



### Sustainability

Manage resources to ensure the viability and growth of the arts.



## Advancement

Expand public awareness, financial resources, and advocacy to advance the arts in Howard County.

**Expand Public Awareness:** Develop and launch a new website and branding campaign to expand access, increase staff efficiency, and build brand awareness; Evaluate marketing and communication strategies through DEIA.

**Expand Financial Resources:** Identify financial resources needed to support FY24-29 strategic goals and DEIA; Allocate funding in annual operating budgets for strategic initiatives and equity efforts; Develop & deploy a short-term resource development plan; Develop and implement a 5-year resource and fund development plan, including benchmarks and targets, to increase contributed and earned income; Evaluate contributed and earned income strategies through DEIA.

**Expand Advocacy:** Define advocacy and its desired impact; Expand advocacy through cultural planning process; Advocate for funding, policies, and practices that remove barriers and advance equitable access to the arts.

## Organizational Capacity

Build organizational capacity to strengthen HCAC's impact in our community.

**Build Organization Capacity:** Develop and deploy a plan to address HCAC space needs; Develop and deploy a technology plan to ensure safe, sustainable operations; Evaluate and revise policies and organizational systems through DEIA to resolve any structural inequities.

**Build Board Capacity:** Conduct Board self-assessment & create DEIA asset map; Create Board ambassadorship program and capitalize on Board connections to build a leadership pipeline and identify prospective donors.

**Build Staff Capacity:** Create tool and space to capture and assess staff culture and communication; Evaluate personnel handbook, staffing model, and policies through DEIA to optimize engagement and improve staff retention; Assess & align staff capacity and salaries annually.



Curtis Bannister, Rising All-Star, Celebration of the Arts 2022 (photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)

# Community Engagement

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Increase and deepen community engagement to strengthen the arts ecosystem.

**Expand HCAC grants program to include merit-based awards for individual artists:** Secure funding from MSAC and Howard County; Develop and deploy individual artist grant program.

**Develop a cultural plan for Howard County centered in equity:** Secure funding from local, state, and national funders; Identify and convene cultural plan task force; Develop, test, and adopt a cultural plan to guide future policy & funding decisions; Develop and deploy annual evaluation and assessment practices to facilitate ongoing learning; Build bridge from the cultural plan to resource development.

**Expand professional development opportunities in arts administration:** Create and deploy paid BIPOC arts administration internship program.

## Evaluation

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Evaluate HCAC programs and services to better serve artists and audiences.

**Develop and deploy modular evaluation tools to assess programs and services through DEIA:** Deploy existing program evaluation tool through DEIA; Design modular evaluation tool through DEIA; Evaluate all core programs and services.



# COMMITMENT TO DEIA

We believe everyone should have access to the creative, intellectual, spiritual, and healing benefits the arts provide. The arts celebrate our diversity, connect our shared humanity, uplift individuals, and transform communities.

We are committed to creating opportunities for artists and arts organizations and to fostering an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible arts culture in Howard County. To that end, HCAC utilizes a horizontal structure where governance and program policies are made by committees. We intentionally include diverse voices on these committees to ensure our efforts to support artmaking, nurture creative expression, develop programs, and set policy are reflective of and meet the needs of our community.



## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Definitions



### Diversity

The active and engaged presence of people from a range of backgrounds including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, or religion.

In addition, within the arts and culture, we define diversity as the presence of a range of traditional, contemporary, and underrepresented art forms, disciplines, genres, and media.



### Equity

The practice of being fair and impartial. We acknowledge that not all individuals and groups have the same advantages and are committed to an ongoing process of evaluating and adjusting policies, procedures, and practices in order to ensure the fair distribution of resources and opportunities in the arts.



### Inclusion

The practice of intentionally welcoming, including, and empowering individuals to bring their authentic selves to their participation in arts and culture – whether it is making art, nurturing artists and creative expression, developing arts and cultural programs, or being involved in the decision-making processes of an organization or group. In addition, it is the practice of welcoming and including traditional, contemporary, and underrepresented art forms, disciplines, genres, and media in arts and cultural organizations and programming.



### Accessibility

The practice of intentionally making arts and cultural information, activities, and places – as well as traditional, contemporary, and underrepresented art forms, disciplines, genres, and media – accessible and usable for all.



Visual & Performing Summer Arts Camp (photo: HCAC)

# VALUE PROPOSITION





An organization's business model describes the rationale for how it creates, delivers, and captures value. Value is created by understanding customer segments, customer relationships, channels, and value proposition and delivered through key partnerships and key activities. Value is captured through cost structure and revenue streams.

HCAC explored key stakeholder groups, prioritized the principal ones, and grew understanding of each through a guided activity regarding:

The stakeholders' stories (who are they, what are they trying to accomplish, what are their aspirations, hopes, and goals, and what obstacles/challenges or barriers they must overcome)

The stakeholders' value proposition (what value HCAC delivers to them, which problems HCAC is solving for them, what products and services HCAC offers, what needs HCAC is solving for them)

Remaining questions (what goals or challenges remain unmet, what risks or concerns exist, what opportunities are left).

Stakeholders	Value Proposition
 <p>Artists</p>	We support artists by providing affordable space, resources, advocacy, and opportunities to present their work, build awareness, and strengthen their creative practices.
 <p>Arts Organizations &amp; Presenters</p>	We support arts organizations and presenters by providing leadership, funding, advocacy, technical assistance, affordable space, and opportunities to gather and connect to increase community engagement.
 <p>Community</p>	We serve our communities by fostering the arts and ensuring public access to engage in and appreciate the arts.
 <p>Youth and Families</p>	We enrich families' lives by providing arts experiences and programming to support lifelong learning in the arts.



# COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

A key component of strategy development is the identification of an organization’s unique strengths, or its “competitive advantage.” The term “competitive” highlights the reality that any organization must compete for resources in order to advance its mission; however, this does not override the need for, and value of, collaboration with other organizations.

Competitive advantage is the ability to produce social value (have an impact, make a difference) by either using a unique asset and/or having outstanding abilities and execution. Through a combination of internal and external data collection, HCAC examined our strengths relative to other organizations and tested them through external review; below are the advantages we leverage to make a greater community impact:

## Competitive Advantage

### ASSET ADVANTAGES

- ✓ Arts facility and affordable space for artists and arts groups.
- ✓ Engaged and talented Board, committees, and staff.
- ✓ Designation as the County Arts Council to award public funding for the arts.

### ABILITIES ADVANTAGES

- ✓ Space – Provide affordable space for artists and organizations to create and present the arts.
- ✓ Funding – Serve as the primary arts funder in Howard County.
- ✓ Advocacy – Advocate on a local and state level to communicate the value, secure funding, and promote policy that supports the arts.



Paint It! Ellicott City 2022 (photo: Ray Ureña)





Paint It! Ellicott City 2022 (photo: Ray Urena)

## STRATEGY SCREEN

Through this process, HCAC developed a Strategy Screen. A Strategy Screen is a list of criteria to use when making decisions that can be applied to questions around current organizational direction (balancing impact and opportunity against organizational capacity). The greatest benefit to a Strategy Screen is that it makes decision-making explicit.

Typically, Strategy Screen criteria depend on organizational mission, identity, and current market position, while reinforcing an organization's competitive advantage. The criteria are different for each organization and most likely need to change over time as organizations adapt to changes in the environment.

Six overarching questions were identified by HCAC to guide future decision-making:

- ? How will this benefit our mission?
- ? How does this expand our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility?
- ? What does success look like? Do we know the audience?
- ? What added value would this opportunity or partnership provide?
- ? What capacity is needed to successfully deliver this opportunity: time, talent, technology, treasure?
- ? Have we done our due diligence to evaluate the benefits and risks of this opportunity?



# STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT



Strategy is built upon an organization's business model, market awareness, and competitive advantage. A strategy can be enduring but needs to change when it is no longer the best way to advance the mission. Therefore, it is important to constantly monitor the environment and the strategy's effectiveness.

With HCAC, SSG used a blend of research-tested methodologies, including, Real-Time Strategic Planning (RTSP) and the Technology of Participation Strategic Planning (TSP).

TSP is a structured method to: recognize and honor the contributions of all participants; pool individual contributions into larger, more informative, and inclusive patterns; and use diversity as an asset, while minimizing polarization and conflict.

SSG facilitated a strategy retreat with HCAC Board and staff on January 19-20, 2023 in Columbia, MD to:

- ✓ Engage board and staff
- ✓ Address contradictions facing the organization
- ✓ Identify a practical vision
- ✓ Chart strategic directions, and
- ✓ Create an atmosphere where ongoing strategic thinking and action can flourish beyond the strategy development process.

The results from the retreat created three work products that informed the eventual priority areas, including HCAC's practical vision, contradictions to such, and initial strategic directions.

## Strategy Retreat Results or Work Products

### Practical Vision:

What do we want to see in place in 3-5 years as a result of our work together?

- Expandable, accessible spaces for the arts
- Modern & fit for purpose arts venues
- Top resources in Howard County cultivated through strategic partnerships
- Diverse, innovative programming for all ages
- Expanded & diverse audiences
- Increased community awareness
- Increase & diversified revenue streams
- Increased operation capacity
- Data-supported programs
- Art recognized as a wellness benefit

### Contradictions:

What is blocking us from moving toward our vision?

- Inadequate space
- The arts are not perceived to add value
- Inability to differentiate in the market
- Missing data-centric practices
- Unorganized voice of arts community
- Inadequate staff support
- Inadequate partnership development
- Inadequate communication strategies
- Fear of change
- Lack of funding

## Strategic Directions:

What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the underlying contradictions and move us toward our vision?

- Expand resource development
- Create a marketing plan
- Increase staffing/organizational capacity
- Strengthen board relations
- Lead sustained arts advocacy campaign
- Connect with community
- Cultivate relationships
- Collect & analyze data for decision making
- Evaluate arts programs

Orange Twist by Richard Pitts  
(photo: HCAC)



## RSTP MODEL

SSG facilitated HCAC's strategy development using a hybrid of the RTSP model. RTSP identifies three levels of strategy for which organizations must consider and plan: organizational, programmatic, and operational.

In addition to the RTSP levels, SSG adds a fourth, critical level to consider: governance. Governance is the board's legal authority to exercise power over an organization on behalf of the community it serves; it is where the proverbial 'buck' stops. Without high-impact governance, the best planned strategies often struggle to be fully realized.

In order to build a sound overall strategy, social impact organizations must work from the top down. Organizational strategy comes first – it helps the organization clarify its core identity and articulate the change that it seeks to make in the world. With this capstone in place to set the organization's direction, it can then create strategies to ensure that its programs, resources, and governance are aligned to support its defining goals.



Artreach 2022  
(photo: Dan Goodrich)

# HCAC Priorities Organized by RSTP Model

## Organizational Strategies

Organizational strategy is the means a social impact organization uses to determine how it will advance its mission, realize its vision, and deliver real value to the community or cause it serves, through successfully navigating competitive, collaborative, and other market dynamics.

- Expand HCAC financial resources
- Expand arts advocacy
- Develop a cultural plan for Howard County centered in equity

## Programmatic Strategies

Programmatic strategy is how a social impact organization's program activity will meet real needs in the most effective way.

- Expand HCAC grants program to include merit-based awards for individual artists
- Expand professional development opportunities in arts administration

## Operational Strategies

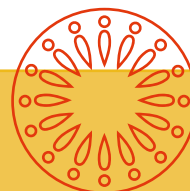
Operational strategy is concerned with how a nonprofit organization is run on a daily basis.

- Expand HCAC's public awareness
- Build HCAC's organizational capacity
- Build HCAC's staff capacity
- Develop and deploy modular evaluation tools to assess HCAC's programs and services through DEIA

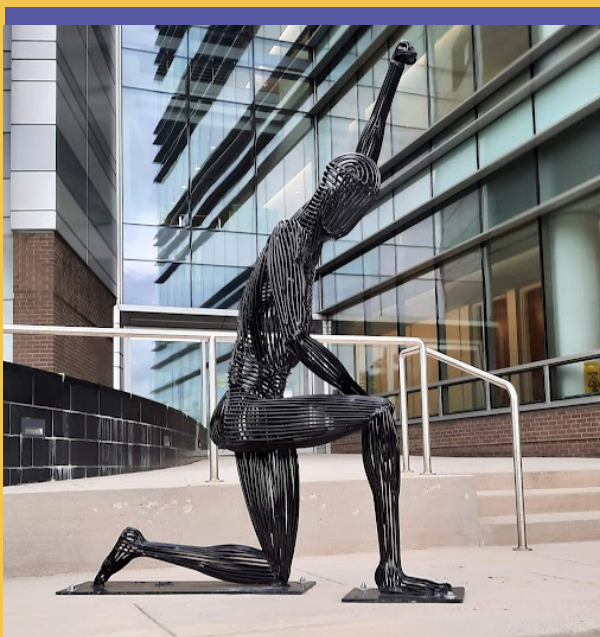
## Governance Strategies

Governance strategy ensures that the proper structure of management, systems, and people is in place to achieve organizational goals.

- Build HCAC's Board Capacity



## ACTION & IMPLEMENTATION



After the strategy retreat, the Design Team, in addition to several community members, broke into Strike Teams by each priority area. The Strike Teams explored a number of possible models, structures, programs, and initiatives to achieve the priority, and identified the highest priority actions for the coming years.

SSG worked alongside the Strike Teams to develop clear, step-by-step action plans for the most immediate initiatives, to identify success indicators and measures, to build a timeline for the first phase of implementation, and to identify roles, responsibilities, and resources needed.

The Design Team took on responsibility for continuing to consolidate and refine the final action planning, in partnership with SSG, for final presentation to the Board.



Visual & Performing Summer Arts Camp (photo: HCAC)

## FUTURE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The focus of traditional strategic “planning” is to produce a formal written document, within a preset time frame, that will “endure” for a predetermined length of time (usually three years) and cover a predetermined list of areas with very specific (and often distant) goals and objectives. This focus is just not compatible with the formation of effective strategy in a social impact organization functioning in the rapid-response real world of today.

In the RTSP approach, strategy “development” is a continuous cycle that contrasts with the episodic three-to-five-year cycle used in traditional strategic planning. The nature and timing of strategy development efforts is unique to each organization and its situation; however, the process steps in the ongoing cycle are fairly predictable, tying organizational, programmatic, operational, and governance strategies into a cohesive package.

In the dynamic landscape of the social impact sector, it is critical that HCAC continues to pay close attention to the competitive situation in the market to understand how it can best advance its goals. This strategy development process flows naturally and is needed periodically when any part of the current understanding becomes dated or appears out of alignment with the current or anticipated future direction. HCAC should maintain this plan as a “living document,” reviewing it every three months to revisit trends, factors, and events in the external environment that may impact – or call for alterations to – the organization’s strategy going forward.

## External Scanning

HCAC should continuously scan the external environment in a formal manner for changes that can influence both short and long-term organizational, programmatic, and funding decisions at the staff and Board levels. These forces include economic forces, changing technology, changes in government policy, political-legal, and cultural forces. SSG recommends that HCAC scan the changing external environment using adopted tools developed in this process.

## Reviewing

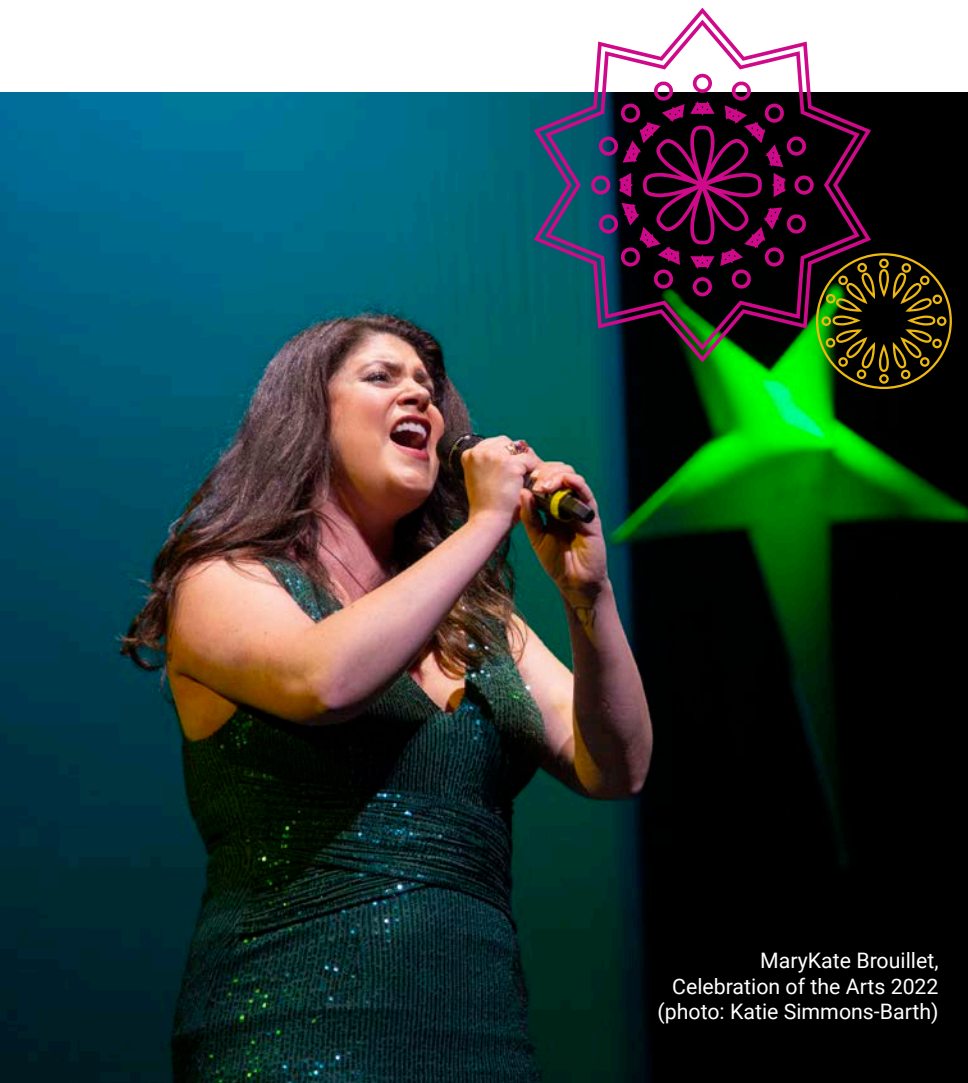
SSG recommends that both internal and external environment scan reviews occur every year at regular intervals. Scanners should include both staff and Board members, and reviews should occur quarterly at staff and Board meetings. This review should include a check of the strategy screen for relevance, the strategic and operational plans for achievement, and the program reviews for immediate business decisions.

## Internal Scanning

Internal environmental scanning includes conducting regular reviews of the employee work environment, employee satisfaction, engagement and relationships, organizational mission, vision and culture, technological resources, facility, and financial resources. The operational strategies for HCAC focus on developing and supporting the actions, processes, and systems that connect the internal environment.

## Revising

When needed, revisions will occur as a result of external and internal scanning and review. New strategies should be subject to analysis through the use of the strategy screen. HCAC has highly effective community leaders that can incorporate an annual review of internal and external trends. Leveraging these leaders' capacities to review the strategies along with the programs and external environment will enable HCAC to remain agile.



MaryKate Brouillet,  
Celebration of the Arts 2022  
(photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)



Delta Theta Sigma volunteers, Celebration of the Arts 2022  
(photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)



Musicians from The Columbia Orchestra Jazz Band,  
Celebration of the Arts 2022 (photo: Katie Simmons-Barth)