

# STRATEGIC *Pillars* 2018-2022

Building Support for  
the Future of the Arts  
in Mississippi



**mac**

mississippi arts commission  
support inspire enrich



*our*  
**MISSION**

To be a catalyst  
for the arts and  
creativity in  
Mississippi



*our*  
**VISION**

To support and  
celebrate  
Mississippi's  
creative and  
innovative spirit



*our*  
**CORE  
VALUES**

Public funding  
for the arts  
Objectivity  
and clarity  
Transparency  
Collaboration  
Professionalism



# PLANNING *with* PURPOSE

*“I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail.”*

*William Faulkner*

Why do we plan, when we know the best laid plans are often just dreams and wishes? We plan because we care. We plan in an effort to find a common, agreed-upon direction for the road ahead. In the case of the Mississippi Arts Commission, we do this work because we are required to submit a plan to justify our government funding, but more importantly, we plan because the process and the product help us to build consensus and a shared voice.

We begin with the commitment to public funding of the arts in America and in Mississippi. The United States formalized the proposition of public funding for the arts in 1965 with the Arts & Humanities Act of 1965 because, “The arts and the humanities belong to all the people of the United States.” This commitment is a core value, a principle of our democracy.



Through a half century of partnering with the NEA, the Mississippi Legislature and our private and corporate funders, Mississippi has exemplified and shared our story through the processes of funding and servicing the arts in Mississippi.

We have never been bashful about proselytizing the value of the arts in our culture, our education or in community development. In fact, we have proclaimed many times that Mississippi's greatest asset is our story, which includes our art, our history and our culture.

Perhaps our greatest challenge ahead is the nation's and Mississippi's commitment to the foundational concept of public support of the arts at a sustainable level.

Hundreds of people have assisted and collaborated with MAC to make this document come alive and take shape as an artful, American proposition and the guiding declaration of intent for MAC in the years 2018-2022. We plan because we are optimistic, and we hold strong to what William Faulkner, one of Mississippi's most profound voices, imparted upon us. We plan in order to not simply endure, but prevail.

# BACKGROUND *and* SUMMARY

In October 2016 MAC began an exciting journey toward the creation of a new agency strategic plan. We talked with our industry association colleagues at the National Association of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) and contracted with consultant Morrie Warshawski (who worked with us on our last two plans) to devise an inclusive, professional and transparent process resulting in MAC's Strategic Plan that will guide the agency from 2018 through 2022.

To ensure our new plan takes root in the voices and concerns of our constituents, we cast a wide net to gather information. We commissioned NASAA to conduct an extensive online survey sent to nearly 4,000 recipients. More than 750 people from across the state responded, resulting in an impressive response rate of 19%.

Our consultant interviewed agency staff, conducted in-person, phone or e-mail interviews with individual artists and arts administrators and facilitated artists roundtables and a MAC Board retreat. MAC's executive director and staff members arranged interviews with members of the Mississippi Legislature, canvassed arts organization representatives, led community town hall meetings, initiated artists' roundtables and promoted the plan through the agency's statewide radio show "Mississippi Arts Hour." In addition, the staff launched a statewide questionnaire via social media to make sure we captured the opinions and concerns of the broadest possible group of people. In all, we received feedback from more than 900 Mississippians.



*Along the way we learned many things that informed the creation of our new plan. Some of those gleanings include:*

- ⑥ 74% of the NASAA survey respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the programs and services of MAC.
- ⑥ Pockets of artists and citizens are still unaware of what MAC does for them.
- ⑥ Arts education remains a primary concern: citizens want to make sure all Mississippi youth – especially the underserved – have access to the arts.
- ⑥ Concerns about funding the arts remain at the top of everyone's list.
- ⑥ 93% of respondents said preserving and promoting Mississippi's cultural traditions and heritage is important.
- ⑥ Many call for efforts to increase awareness of the importance of the arts among Mississippians and their legislators.
- ⑥ A strong desire exists for MAC to be more involved in convening, professional development, networking and promotion of the arts.

*As always, the needs are many and resources (time, money, personnel) are limited. That's the purpose of strategic planning – to compile the information gathered and develop a constructive set of priorities in the form of strategic pillars and major goals, taking into consideration current needs and capabilities to fashion a powerful roadmap toward an improved future. We are convinced this plan does just that, and we invite you to come with us on this journey.*

# agency Overview



*“The practice of art and the study of the humanities require constant dedication and devotion. While no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the Federal Government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent.”*

National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965

The Mississippi Arts Commission was established in 1968 by the Mississippi Legislature as the official grants-making and service agency for the arts in the state. MAC provides financial and technical assistance for arts programming to arts organizations and educational institutions throughout Mississippi. Funded annually by the Mississippi Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts and private funds, MAC uses this support to carry forth its mission and continues to act as a core and essential function of government.

In the current economic climate, MAC is focused on spending time, resources and energy on professional

development workshops, community engagement and partnerships. During the next five years, we predict continued funding challenges. In response, MAC anticipates growing its service orientation to the constituency.

As public funding remains level or reduced, the agency will strategically expand private funding sources and the state's network of community foundations. While state arts agencies are being down-sized, re-envisioned and reorganized, MAC's strategic plan will continue to seek conversations with those who are currently served as well as those who are underserved.

# OUR *Strategic* PILLARS | 2018-2022

1

## Communicate the Story of the Arts in Mississippi

Expand MAC's role as a catalyst and public supporter of the arts with increased focus on marketing and digital platforms highlighting the arts and MAC's story to the general public, policy makers and our partners.

- ⑥ Improve MAC's capacity to serve as the information hub for the arts community and the general public.
- ⑥ Advocate for the value of the arts in Mississippi with the general public and legislators.
- ⑥ Increase awareness of Mississippi's cultural legacy as well as existing and emerging artistic talent, activities and resources.
- ⑥ Leverage partnerships.

2

## Convene, Network and Offer Professional Development Opportunities

The state's artists and staff from cultural institutions are eager to gather and share their experiences with each other. MAC will collaborate with these constituencies to create opportunities that strengthen connections among them.

- ⑥ Work with partners to offer more learning-and-sharing convenings statewide.
- ⑥ Maximize the availability of MAC staff to interact in-person with both current and potential stake-holders, especially to provide professional development offerings.
- ⑥ Encourage like-minded individuals and organizations to gather and network outside of MAC-sanctioned events.

3

## Invigorate and Expand Lifelong Learning through the Arts

MAC will continue our commitment to arts education and arts integration through grants and services to schools, communities and arts partners across the state with the goal of reaching children and families wherever they are in their daily lives.

- ⑥ Continue to evolve and expand the Whole Schools Initiative.
- ⑥ Research, design and implement an approach to community learning that reaches both inside and outside the classroom.
- ⑥ Provide arts education-based professional development opportunities for staff, partners and grantees.

4

## Expand and Diversify Fiscal Resources

MAC's establishing legislation allows for three sources of funding: "...a state appropriation, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and contributions from private sources." This strategic pillar supports expanding our resources capacity beyond annual appropriations from the Mississippi Legislature and the NEA.

- ⑥ Significantly grow MAC's Endowment for the Arts Fund through tax-deductible donations.
- ⑥ Identify and pursue grant opportunities for MAC and our statewide grantees.
- ⑥ Increase income from ancillary activities.

# Our *Guiding* PRINCIPLES

- ①②  
③④ Champion the unique Mississippi story
- ①②  
③④ Advocate for the value of the arts, creativity and innovation
- ①②  
③④ Include education and lifelong learning as a component of all grants and services
- ①②  
③④ Ensure a constant vigilance regarding emergency preparedness and maintaining the value of business continuity planning
- ①②  
③④ Pursue access, inclusion and equity in all work
- ①②  
③④ Support Mississippi's individual artists

The Mississippi Arts Commission's work is shaped by a set of principles that guides the agency in all circumstances, irrespective of changes in goals, strategies, type of work or management. Each of these principles is tied to a corresponding strategic pillar.

- ①②  
③④ Employ entrepreneurial thinking
- ①②  
③④ Seek and develop extensive partnerships
- ①②  
③④ Engage in creative funding and maintain resource management
- ①②  
③④ Safeguard public trust through accountability and transparency
- ①②  
③④ Communicate with and educate policymakers and the public about the value of MAC's contribution to arts and culture
- ①②  
③④ Optimize our connections by increasing direct service
- ①②  
③④ Incorporate professional performance measures to evaluate impact
- ①②  
③④ Develop and integrate a new direction for information technology





[arts.ms.gov](http://arts.ms.gov)

The columns featured in this report can be found at these iconic landmarks:  
The Mississippi State Capitol | The Old Capitol Museum | Jackson City Hall