

Access and Participation

The Access and Participation Working Group met five times following the meeting at Drumthwacket in July 2004. Those who participated in the two face-to-face and three Spiderphone meetings felt that the objectives and strategies for increasing access and participation in the arts identified several years ago still hold true. They therefore focused their efforts on adding new strategies, fleshing out others, and determining which were essential to achieve the objectives.

Members of the working group included staff and board members of arts organizations as well as partners outside of the arts community. The Working Group believes it would be good to continue communication with all members of their original “theme team” as work progresses. While some did not understand their role relative to Arts Plan NJ, there is clearly a role they can play at the Governor’s Conference and in other aspects of the planning process, and as partners who use the plan as a practical guide and resource in the workplace. Those who *did* participate found the process extremely rewarding and enlightening, and believe the continued involvement of the full team will further enrich it.

In reviewing goals and strategies for an updated Arts Plan NJ, the Working Group used the following value statement as a foundation and guide:

We believe the arts define us as a culture, and that participation in the arts is vital to an individual’s growth, and should be accessible to all New Jersey residents. To this end, it is essential for those in government to take a leadership role in the arts; to broaden people’s definition of the arts; to provide full access to, and participation in, the arts; and to encourage acknowledgment of the arts’ value by recognizing and celebrating diverse forms of expression, tradition and culture. In addition, it is vital to promote appreciation for the many ways the arts are practiced and artists create/work in a variety of community settings.

The Goal: *To increase access to, and participation in, arts activity throughout New Jersey.*

The Top Five Objectives

- 1. Ensure that the arts and artists are integral to lifelong learning.**

Essential Strategies

- Promote understanding of the arts’ educational benefits and their impact not only on the quality of individual life, learning, and work skills, but also on the quality of community life, including community productivity and creative capacity.
- Share the goals and objectives of Arts Plan NJ with the Governor, members of the legislature, and cabinet members.

Share the goals and objectives of the Arts Plan NJ with the Department of Education, HeadStart and other lifelong learning programs to further the agenda of arts education overall and as an essential foundation for learning in preK-12.

Additional Strategies

- Identify resources to assess, monitor and fund programs that bring artists and arts organizations to all levels of education, as well as community settings.
- Identify key organizations and leaders in lifelong learning education (i.e. senior citizen centers, county colleges, churches, nursery schools, organizations serving young adults, libraries, and the like).
- Build partnerships in the area of recreation to incorporate the arts into their offerings, and to heighten their awareness about the importance of utilizing professional artists in the arts activities they offer.
- Share model arts education programs with New Jersey’s arts community through a vehicle developed and implemented by the ArtPRIDE Foundation and other service organizations (which highlights a wide range of programs within and outside the state).
- Convene a meeting of arts education leaders to determine what they need, and how the arts community, the state arts council, and the state government can help.

2. Explore the impact of location, affordability, time constraints, perceptions, technology, and physical limitations on how people access and utilize the arts.

Essential Strategies

- Develop and expand partnerships and artist residencies with non-traditional venues and sectors from within and outside the arts community to expand participation in the arts and remove physical, linguistic, cultural, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers.

- Continue to work with the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force to assist arts organizations in developing and implementing programs, services, and technology that serve people with disabilities.
- Partner with New Jersey’s healthcare community to ensure that arts-in-healing is on the agenda of both the healthcare and arts communities.

Additional Strategies

- Encourage arts organizations to present their work at a variety of venues and geographic locations.
- Provide guidance to arts organizations in developing programs for the homebound and other individuals who cannot attend activities in cultural venues.
- Enlist transportation authorities to provide routes and schedules that coincide with cultural activities in New Jersey’s communities.
- Publish results of the START projects so that their outcomes can inform future projects.

3. Promote local arts development, community support, and financing for the arts.

Essential Strategies

- Share Arts Plan NJ with state and local policy leaders to educate them on the benefits the arts can provide to their communities.
- Promote greater investment in local and county arts agencies, and full understanding of how local arts development enriches community life and economic growth.
- Form effective alliances with a broad base of community partners, identifying public interests and goals where the arts can make significant contributions to a range of sectors.

Additional Strategies

- Invest in the construction and/or improvement of structures and spaces, as well as the adaptive re-use of structures, to provide artists and the public more convenient access to quality arts experiences.
- Involve arts representatives and artists in establishing local arts councils, in developing arts alliances, in designing community cultural plans and districts, in redevelopment planning, in commissioning public art, and in civic activities that include the arts.
- Develop a public relations and branding campaign to educate communities on the important role artists and arts organizations play in enhancing their economies and quality of life.

- Encourage greater investment in the regional folk arts centers.
- Identify as national models towns and cities that have been revitalized by the arts.

4. Design marketing and communications strategies that are based on current research and technology.

Essential Strategies

- Brand the arts as a valuable resource to individual and community life by continuing the statewide arts marketing initiative, and ensuring its use at the local level.
- Use Jersey Arts E-News and other communication vehicles to share research and model programs (including outcomes of New Jersey's START projects) with policy makers and the arts community, assisting them with interpretation and the practical application of data to improve marketing strategies.
- Engage the Transportation Authority as a marketing partner.

Additional Strategies

- Engage current and new audiences by sharing best practices in arts marketing that have measurable outcomes (as developed through the Jersey Arts Marketers/Jersey Arts Communicators).
- Educate policy makers through continued use of Jersey Arts E-News (which promotes the varied ways the arts are incorporated into community life), and through the collective advocacy of individual arts groups.
- Foster arts stewardship by encouraging the networking, training and cultivation of arts trustees and arts patrons.
- Formalize a speaker's bureau of leaders from a variety of sectors to serve as ambassadors and spokespeople – individuals who can enlighten colleagues on the importance of the arts to community life.
- Reinstate an Annual Arts Award to heighten awareness of, and celebrate, the contributions community leaders make to the arts.
- Develop and support programs that capture a better understanding of peoples' perceptions of the arts, and at the same time encourage participation of people of all ages and regions in the state.
- Design websites that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Provide incentives to media outlets to support the arts through publicity, sponsorships, and reduced advertising rates.
- Promote Discover Jersey Arts through public service announcements.
- Utilize local cable news and town e-mails to promote the arts.

5. Enlighten arts professionals about the importance of research and technological advancements.

Essential Strategies

- Create a series of forums and conferences that bring together arts leaders, artists, and key decision makers from a variety of sectors to share ideas and trends in participation, and to discuss how best to use technology for program and organizational development.
- Share model programs, research, resource outlets and elements of technology to assist arts organizations in marketing and developing programs that serve people with disabilities.
- Design and execute a vehicle that can spotlight model programs and partnerships throughout the state, and categorize research to help arts organizations in their strategic planning.

Additional Strategies

- Share via the websites of state arts service organizations the current research and information on cultural participation, gleaned from local, state and national sources.
- Educate and engage established and emerging artists to become involved in policymaking, and in efforts to brand and advocate for the arts in the state's communities.
- Invite community leaders to join the boards of the state's arts service organizations.
- Partner with colleges and universities to develop and encourage emerging leaders in the arts, both as professionals and volunteers.
- Support the training and contributions of underrepresented groups.

Resources Needed to Achieve Objectives

The Access and Participation Working Group generated a comprehensive list of resources that will be necessary to achieve these objectives, and potential partners who might be expected to provide the financial support, space, training, expertise, and cooperative efforts they envision.

Contributions. They noted, for example, the need for new financial resources – increased local and county government support and private investment, both in capital funds and program and general operating support – and the need for space where groups can convene, suggesting leaders in state government and other sectors as possible sources.

Training. They cited the need for training – both of artists, so they can work in educational and community settings and residencies, and with special populations – and of potential stewards and trustees. They urged that representatives of higher education be encouraged to develop arts management programs as well.

Communications and research vehicles. To achieve objectives, they noted that new or improved vehicles will be needed so that up-to-date information can be shared within the arts community, especially research, best practices, model programs, the results of projects like those of START, tools that can influence the policies of NJDOE and school districts, and surveys that can identify barriers to cultural participation (like lack of transportation, limited knowledge of arts activities, and prohibitive cost). Materials circulated via such vehicles would lay the groundwork for face-to-face communications – for example, a meeting of state and local transportation officials to discuss ways they might help alleviate barriers that impede participation in cultural events and activities.

Expertise. Individuals with expertise in many areas, including human resources, marketing and communications, research and evaluation, and facilitation to host meetings and focus groups, will have to be engaged. (Such meetings could, for example, bring philanthropists together to discuss the importance of the arts to communities as well as ways to develop meaningful partnerships between the arts and funders.) Artists should also be viewed as indispensable experts.

Partners. The Working Group also described a full range of partners that might provide access not only to non-arts sectors, but also to various geographic regions and levels of activity. Among *community partners* they cited were offices of mayors, freeholders, township officials, state and local chambers of commerce, realtors, architectural firms, restaurateurs (possibly through the New Jersey Restaurant Association), local planning officials, organizations like Partnership and Leadership NJ, and state departments and divisions (e.g., MVC, EDA).

Educational partners they mentioned are similarly broad in scope, encompassing state and local boards of education, The Principal Center, PTA's, YMCA's, JCC's, the Speech and Theatre Association, Adult Learning Schools, community colleges and universities, senior citizen centers, public, private, and parochial schools, the NJ Library Association, libraries, AARP, the NJ After 3 Program, Headstart, NJEA, and other teacher associations.

Central to activities that increase participation, they suggested, will be *partners who can provide entrée to special populations*, like correctional facilities, nursing

homes, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, UMDNJ, the pharmaceutical industry, and mental health associations. To identify more accessible venues, a number of *non-traditional partners* could be helpful, including park service departments, First Night Organizations, transportation authorities, corporate parks, community development organizations, the NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, parents of deaf children, the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Spinal Cord Association of America, county offices serving people with disabilities, and places of worship. Those who can facilitate transportation would include NJ Transit, the Port Authority, private bus companies, and taxi drivers.

As for those who might assist in finding *investment partners*, the Working Group suggested the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers, the Partnership in Philanthropy, the Association of Fund Raising Professionals, the Center for Non-Profits, the New Jersey Business Association, and funders themselves, both in the corporate and foundation communities, and among community foundations.

Among the potential *partners for public relations and marketing* were The Star-Ledger, Gannett Publications, NJ Monthly, New Jersey Life, The Home News, Trenton Times, Worrall Publications, the New York Times, WNJN, and NJ 101.5. The Rutgers School of Research, the Eagelton Institute, AMS Research and Planning, NASAA, Americans for the Arts, The Wallace Fund, and START Partners were thought to be likely candidates for *research partnerships*.

Service organizations could serve as partners for a variety of efforts, they suggested. Among those they named: ArtPRIDE, county cultural and heritage offices, the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, the South Jersey Cultural Alliance, the Newark Arts Council, Dance NJ, the New Jersey Arts Access Task Force, Very Special Arts, municipal arts councils, and those who deal with *travel and tourism* – the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism, the Bed and Breakfast Association, and the New Jersey Hotel Association. Those who might assist with *technology* include AOL, Verizon, Sound Associates, INTIX, cultural web developers, Enertex, and e-mail page developers.

Readiness to Address Objectives

As it seeks to increase access and participation, the arts community should be mindful of how the arts are viewed by those *outside* the community. Seeing themselves, as individuals or organizations, in context – as one facet in a multi-faceted, layered community – will help them come to a broader definition of the arts, see more clearly how they connect (or might connect) to other sectors, envision how they can help move the Arts Plan NJ forward and ultimately benefit from it, and articulate why the Plan’s goals and strategies are important to the future of the arts in our communities and the state as a whole.

The Access and Participation Working Group sees expanding the number and diversity of partnerships as perhaps *the* central strategy that can issue from the consideration of context. Partnerships can simultaneously engage the public as participants, even as they connect the arts to other sectors. Some of the following “action” ideas have been alluded to previously, but they bear repeating because they describe steps in the plan’s implementation:

- Collect a list of model programs in New Jersey that are finding innovative and creative ways to connect the arts to various sectors (like an audio-described theatre production being broadcast through a radio reading service to the homebound).
- Distribute these stories through a wide range of vehicles – i.e., descriptions on savedbythearts.com or [Americans for the arts.org](http://Americansforthearts.org), and in e-news, press releases, and the like.
- Identify public meetings/conferences of other sectors and strategize ways in which the arts could be included on their agendas.
- Provide a summary of the studies done on the impact of the arts and share it with arts community and key decision makers from a wide range of sectors (The Wallace Foundation is about to bring out a study that might be useful in this regard).
- After the release of Arts Plan NJ, create a series of twice-yearly town meetings, bringing in leaders from the arts and other sectors to highlight the development of successful partnerships, assess progress on the strategies, and continue dialogue on how to improve and expand access and participation to the arts
- Develop an Annual Arts Award celebration that showcases successful partnerships, highlighting the impact that the arts are having in our state and in local communities.
- Establish a series of benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of the strategies and their impact.

- Identify effective and efficient ways to document the process of creating the Arts Plan NJ, the Governor’s Conference on the Arts, subsequent gatherings of the arts community, and activities of the arts community and other sectors after the release of Arts Plan NJ.

Some resources, already mentioned, will be needed to jump-start implementation of the Arts Plan NJ. Among the tools that stakeholders will need:

- NJSCA E-News, extended to a broader base of participants.
- NJSCA, ArtPRIDE and others, set up to serve as portals to varied links
- A speaker’s bureau of individuals from other sectors who can speak about the public value of the arts and its connection to their sectors.
- The completed Arts Plan NJ.
- Talking points on the benefits of the arts and the rationale of the Arts Plan NJ
- A summary of research on arts participation.
- A schedule of conferences, working groups and other events, already planned, wherein there will be further discussion of issues relating to the arts and our communities.
- Economic impact studies and model programs.
- An articulation of clear and concise expectations.

Promoting the Plan

The Access and Participation Working Group recommends that a Leadership Committee be developed to promote the new Arts Plan NJ at the highest levels. It should be recognized by the Governor, and charged with meeting twice a year to address one or more issues highlighted by the Plan. In this way, the Plan can serve as a practical guide, even as it is kept “fresh” by the infusion of new information and the perspectives of other sectors.

Members of such a Committee should be sought from all the suggested partner groups, as well as members of the arts community and arts advocates from other sectors. A new working group should be named to guide the Committee’s development. This group would review possible candidates and solicit their involvement, articulating the benefits of serving and their specific roles and responsibilities.

The Access and Participation Working Group suggests that emphasis in promoting the Plan should be placed on the *difference* the arts make in our lives and communities, and how they make that difference – how, when they are

involved in health programs, healing is faster; how better planned and designed communities attract businesses and an enhanced quality of life for their citizens; and how the arts can leverage richer participation in other sectors, as when those not interested in sports may nevertheless be drawn to recreation centers by arts activities, or public transportation may enjoy greater use by showcasing compelling destinations.