



# METRO ARTS

Crafting a **CREATIVE** City  
Metro Arts' 5 Year Plan for Nashville



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## Introduction

The Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission is a department of the Metro Nashville Government. Metro Charter created Metro Arts in 1978 to provide leadership that stimulates and advances the arts to enrich the human experience for the Nashville community.

Metro Arts last undertook strategic planning in 2010, soon after securing new leadership and in the community context of both a recession and a flood. During that process, it was our intent to re-set a clear direction for the agency and re-assert Metro Arts' position as a leader in community conversations and policies related to arts and culture.

Since 2010 our efforts to ensure that all Nashville residents and visitors have access to its vibrant arts and culture offerings have been led by an agency strategic plan. In response to that plan, Metro Arts increased the public art collection by 700%, launched new efforts like *Artober Nashville* and THRIVE to broaden arts engagement and access, and restructured our grant making to align with stated community outcomes.

In the last five years, our city, our citizens and our national context for arts, culture and creative economy have changed dramatically. The country continues to grow stronger after the Great Recession and Nashville has emerged as an international cultural mecca. Our population has grown and continues to point towards a future that is multicultural and multifaceted. Nationally, long term stagnation in federal policies and leadership has opened the way for cities to lead and drive the next edge of cultural innovation.

This new plan integrates the current landscape, builds on what we have learned and on where we've succeeded and identifies areas of strategic action. Our hope is that it sparks conversation, questions and strategic action in our creative ecosystem over the next five years.



## Value and Importance of Arts and Culture

Art, culture and creativity reflect a city's spirit and values—they are its pulse. Since its founding, arts and cultural participation have been central to Nashville's history and economic livelihood. The music infrastructure has acted as what cultural scholar, Dr. Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, calls a "Warhol Economy"—an informal culture of sharing and collaboration between creative people that generates social capital, new ideas and community identity. Through this affect, the music industry has served as a magnet attracting visual artists, actors, fashion designers and cultural organizations to this "Athens of the South". Nashville's diverse creative ecosystem is one of the many reasons it has become a cultural "It City" and international tourist destination. This combination of cultural production and cultural tourism represent 28% of the workforce and contribute more than \$13 billion dollars to the regional economy. The National Center for

Arts Research recently cited Nashville as the second most vibrant creative city in the U.S.—beating out Los Angeles and New York. Arts and culture then, are Nashville’s unique competitive edge. Metro Arts is the designated driver and facilitator of programs, policies and practices that support our arts and cultural vibrancy.

## **NashvilleNext and Metro Arts**

Metro Arts initiated an agency planning process concurrent with the larger *NashvilleNext* General Plan. Information gathered in dozens of *NashvilleNext* sessions, online surveys and forums were folded both into the General Plan and our agency’s new strategic plan. As a General Plan, *NashvilleNext* articulates a broad cultural, economic and placemaking framework for Nashville and the region in the context of the regions’ growth over the next twenty-five years.

Recommendations in *NashvilleNext* include specific actions or policies for Metro Arts as well as dozens of other public and private community stakeholders. Our plan knits together recommendations from *NashvilleNext* and improvements to our existing programs based on feedback from our own focus groups and interviews.

This plan articulates a strategic roadmap for Metro Arts relative to crafting a more creative and dynamic city, and recognizes that many other organizations must also coordinate their work to actualize the full *NashvilleNext* reality.

## **Metro Arts and the Creative Ecosystem**

The work of Metro Arts is anchored in the idea that arts and culture are created and consumed within a dynamic ecosystem within the community. Nashville’s creative ecosystem is substantially more robust than comparable cities, with thousands of nonprofit cultural organizations, small and large arts-related businesses, music and publishing corporations, schools and universities, and individual artists and creative workers of all types. Supporting all of these formal and structured creative entities are the thousands of Nashvillians who attend and support arts activities throughout the city.

Metro Arts can fulfill its mission only if it works broadly and deeply with all elements of the ecosystem. Our work therefore is not just about grants or public art or special projects. Our work is about facilitating/cultivating/strengthening this ever-changing ecosystem in the community that ultimately creates and drives art, culture and creative economy.

## **Mission Vision and Values**

We believe that a strong arts and cultural ecosystem contributes to a creatively healthy, innovative, connected and vibrant Nashville. While the vision remains the same, Metro Arts has updated its agency mission and values to better articulate a focus on community.



## A Word About Words: Arts, Culture and Creative Economy

Throughout the plan three key terms *arts*, *culture* and *creative economy* are used to broadly define our work.

The term *arts* refers here to the nonprofit and artist-driven elements of our community spanning music, visual arts, performance, theater, film, craft and design.

*Culture* describes wide-ranging forces that may include ethno-specific rituals, programs and/or practices that define a community or neighborhood. For example, the practices of Chinese New Year or the African-Street Festival are a combination of the arts and culture intersecting in community through an event. Whereas, the Tomato Art Festival is not anchored in an ethnic tradition, but rather a series of cultural practices that have informed the identity of a neighborhood (in this case East Nashville). Arts and culture are terms with many, many variations but are used in this plan to frame how Nashville and Nashvillians experience creativity and produce creatively in our city.

*Creative economy* refers to activities, policies and programs that are specific to those individuals and businesses that create art and arts activities within the community. They can include graphic designers, fashion designers, galleries, music venues, photography and print shops, instrument dealers and artisan businesses that exist by the thousands in our city. It also envelops the more than 100 arts nonprofits including museums, historic homes, theatre and dance companies large and small.

## The Strategic Planning Process and Community Engagement

The strategic planning process included a series of community focus groups led by Metro Arts' strategic planning consultant Victoria Plettner-Saunders of the arts research and planning firm *v.p.s. cartographie*. During the month of December she and Kia Jarmon of the Nashville public relations firm MEPR Agency conducted six focus groups with Metro Arts' grantees, public artists, creative entrepreneurs and its community and business partners. Participants were asked to share their ideas, concerns, vision and knowledge about the role of arts and culture in Nashville and how it could be supported over the next five years through the work of Metro Arts.

Several of the key themes in this plan are in part a direct result of what we heard in those focus groups. In fact, this community feedback led to changes in Metro Arts' vision, mission and values to ensure that the work we do reflects the community's desire to support inclusivity, accessibility and the important role neighborhoods play in the Nashville ecosystem.

In addition, we heard about concerns for new resources, greater collaboration with the business community and more focus on building our collective creative infrastructure. You will see these addressed in the plan through new strategies, activities, and outcomes its Theory of Change.



Created from community focus group notes

## Assumptions that Inform Planning

Nashville has changed significantly in the last decade. Its population has grown steadily more diverse. Cultural factors such as independent arts businesses, grassroots arts organizations and individual artists have increased their reach and relevance.

Many of our established major cultural groups have grown in budgets and programs to respond to the community demand for cultural content. Simultaneously, many of our smaller organizations have focused

on outreach to key groups like seniors, youth and our growing ethnic populations to serve their growing and divergent cultural needs.

Nashville has thrived economically, but its investments in grants, professional training for artists and policies that support them has been stagnant for over a decade. Quite simply, Metro Arts and the ecosystem it supports have been asked to do more for more people with less money and limited policy support.

*NashvilleNext* and Metro Arts planning processes have uncovered some core conditions that must be addressed to continue on a path of cultural vibrancy.

## Community Challenges

Stagnant funding for Metro Arts grants, programs as well as for Metro Parks and Libraries cultural and arts programs.

Stagnant funding for visual arts, dance, and theater in MNPS.

Increased demand for diverse cultural programming to align with population demographic shifts.

Affordable artist production space and housing.

Weak facility infrastructure for cultural activation in neighborhoods.

Staff capacity – inability to increase staffing as needed for increased programs and services.

Changing community demographics.

Lack of coordinated post-graduate professional development for artists and creative entrepreneurs

## Community Opportunities

*NashvilleNext* momentum and focus on arts/culture/creative economy as a differentiating factor for the city/region.

Public engagement around neighborhood infrastructure and affordability issues.

Positive and arts-focused city brand.

Strong community, university and business partnerships with Metro Arts and cultural programming.

Strength of Music Makes Us Model & opportunity to scale within MNPS.

Major alignment with our Theory of Change and federal and national arts funders and policies.

Demand for cultural programming and public art in neighborhoods.

Strong partnerships with universities, Chamber, tourism and philanthropy leaders in community.

Increased development countywide.



## The Strategic Plan Explained

### Theory of Change

In 2010 Metro Arts adopted a Theory of Change and a logic model as a way to articulate and measure success towards achieving its mission. It describes how we believe our work leads to change. The logic model includes strategies, tactics and outcomes, which are influenced by Metro Arts' values and aimed towards achieving its vision.

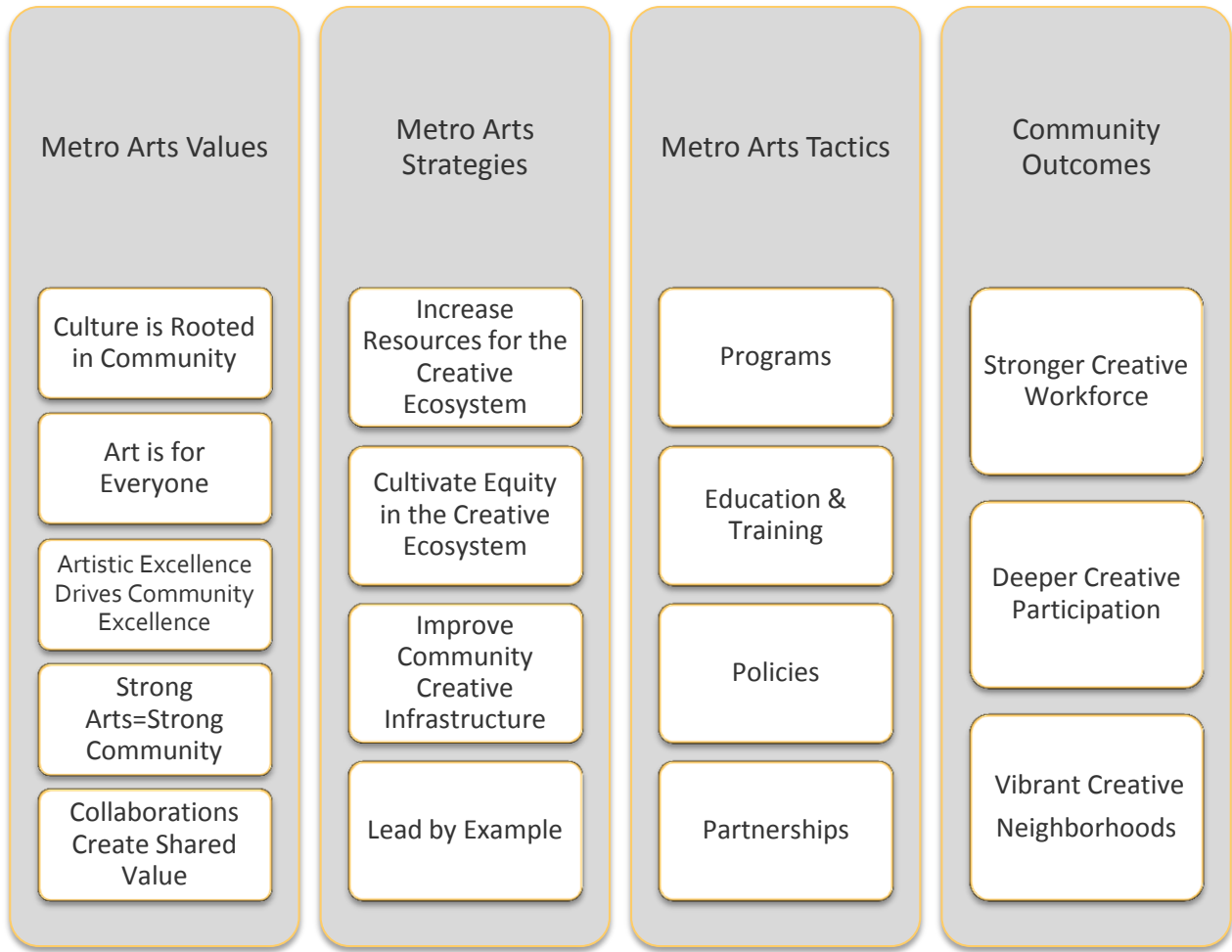
In the new plan, the fundamentals of the Theory of Change are the same, but we have updated it along with our long-term strategies to reflect our new mission and focus on community vibrancy.

The diagram below shows Metro Arts' reframed values, strategies, tactics, and desired community outcomes. Together they form the logic model that will guide the agency's work through 2020.

During the planning process all of the agency's current activities were reviewed within this new context for community outcomes. Over the next five-years, as staff and Commissioners work the plan, many current activities (e.g. programs, partnerships, services etc.) will be continued and likely strengthened; while other new activities will be developed and implemented.



## Metro Arts Logic Model



**Metro Arts Vision**  
**Every Nashvillian Participates in a Creative Life.**

## Strategies

**Strategies are a means to focus the work over a long period of time.**

Metro Arts' strategies articulate core conditions that we seek to strengthen and/or change within our larger creative ecosystem over the next five years. We believe that if we can make a positive, measurable difference in these key areas, we will see a stronger, more vibrant and creative Nashville.

The following updated **strategies** are highly reflective of input gleaned through stakeholder focus groups, staff and Steering Committee meetings in addition to *NashvilleNext* data and research.

### Increase Resources for the Creative Ecosystem

Nashville's population is slated to swell by more than a quarter of a million residents in the next two decades. Our relative lack of corporate headquarters and small number of major individual arts patrons means the private sector funding base for the city is not as stable as peer cities. Additionally, our public investments in the arts have been frozen at \$4.12 per capita for more than a decade.

**Metro Arts must focus on right sizing public investments in grants, programs and public art that drive access and innovation.**

If Nashville is to remain red hot and make needed investments in arts access and cultural equity, we must grow the current state of resources available to artists and cultural nonprofits from all sectors. Specifically, Metro Arts must focus on right sizing public investments in grants, programs and public art that drive access and innovation.

### Cultivate Equity within the Creative Ecosystem

Cities are microcosms of the larger U.S. population. Nashville is home to a growing Hispanic population and dozens of deep immigrant and refugee populations from Hmong to Somali. Additionally, our city is both aging and growing younger—poised to have most of our population on polar ends of the age spectrum over the next few decades. As a major urban area we will continue to deal with the ripple effects of poverty as more than 20% of our population continues to live below the national poverty line.

Metro Arts must work to ensure that artists and cultural providers are reflective of the community we serve. This means dedicated attention to access to the arts from our largest institutions to our smallest, training around cultural equity, and supporting art and artists from communities that are not always well represented in exhibits, performances, museums or at the decision-making table in cultural policy.

### Improve Neighborhood-Based Creative Infrastructure

Neighborhoods are our city's most dynamic creative delivery system. New songs are written in neighborhood coffee shops, new plays drafted at dive bars and everywhere communities love to support their "local made" artisan products. Nashville's downtown core has a strong base of anchor institutions and arts businesses.

Over the next decade, Metro Arts must support and facilitate increased cultural infrastructure, programs and citizen engagement within neighborhoods throughout the county while supporting the energy of anchor institutions in the city core. This work will include scaling public art, expanding neighborhood based Metro and nonprofit cultural programs and working on policies that strengthen the cultural and economic vibrancy of neighborhoods from Buena Vista to Smith Springs Road.

## Lead By Example

Metro Arts cannot be a catalyst for community change unless our internal operations are world-class. We hope to drive partnerships and design model programs that serve as guideposts for Local Arts

**We hope to drive partnerships and design model programs that serve as guideposts for Local Arts Agencies around the country**

Agencies around the country. Overwhelmingly, focus groups pointed to the need to freshen and align the Metro Art brand with our vision and leadership role. We must address the public identity issue with resources and staff training. We must continue to invest in new technology tools that

make our programs relevant and accessible. Above all, we must address staff capacity, staff development and leadership succession in senior staff and the board. We will do this by remaining nimble, flexible, responsive and focused on innovative risk-taking that fuels our mission.

## Tactics and Activities

Metro Arts delivers on these long-range strategies through organized **tactics**. Within these tactical areas there are **activities** that are carried out on a day-to-day, short-term and/or long-term basis. The activities are incorporated into an agency work-plan that guides workflow and assists with monitoring accountability. They are organized around four themes:

### Programs

Programs are ongoing core projects that Metro Arts directly manages and delivers to the community. These include the design and installation of new public art, *Artober Nashville*, Poetry in Motion®, our operational and program grants and key one-time special projects we may undertake.

### Education & Training

Education & Training refers to workshops, classes and online content developed and delivered by Metro Arts, or in partnership with community collaborators such as the Arts & Business Council or Vanderbilt University. The intent is to build the capacity of teachers, artists or cultural agencies around key skills such as evaluation, access/equity or public art practice.

### Policies & Plans

One of the key activities in which Metro Arts engages is serving as a subject matter expert on public planning processes from neighborhood or parks master plans to creative workforce development task

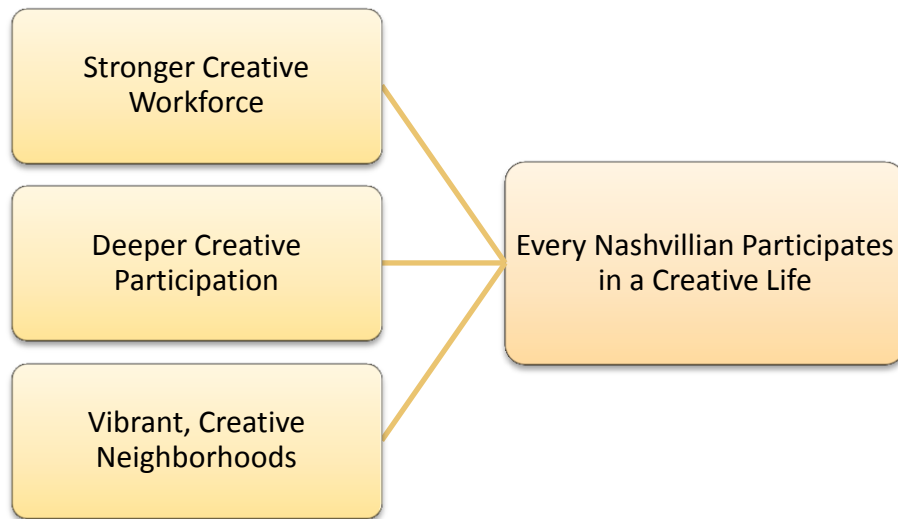
forces. Our leadership on these community and private sector planning collaborations often uncovers areas for policy action where Metro Arts may act as a leader or part of a collective on policies that improve the cultural landscape in Nashville. For example, this may mean work on artist affordable housing, artisan manufacturing land use zoning changes or reauthorization of federal arts education bills in Congress.

## Partnerships

Most of our work is communitywide and is far more effective in concert with universities, nonprofits and businesses. Metro Arts must create time and staff capacity to work on task forces, special projects, advisory councils and other collaborative efforts that advance our mission and key strategies.

## Community Outcomes

The results, or outcomes, that we would like to achieve in the community through implementation of the plan are an extension of those that guided the previous strategic plan. Moreover, they respond to our recent community engagement efforts, the assumptions that informed our efforts, and a desire to align our work with *NashvilleNext*. They are also in keeping with our agency values.



## Five-Year Work Plan

### Strategy One: Increase Resources for the Creative Ecosystem

Tactic	Ongoing Activities	Short-Term Activities (2015 - 2017)	Long-Term Activities (2017 - 2020)
<b>Programs</b>	Metro Arts Grants TAC/ABC Subgrants Artober Nashville THRIVE Artist Directory ArtsBuzz Poetry In Motion®	Align grant categories and funding philosophy to new Outcomes Expand THRIVE Program	Create new grant categories and funding sources related to community innovation
<b>Training &amp; Education</b>	Grantee training workshops THRIVE Online Tutorials Support Periscope Program	Update the Grant Outcomes Measurement Create Grantee Measurement Toolkit Create THRIVE Project Toolkit	
<b>Policies &amp; Plans</b>	Participate in Creative Edge Coalition	Establish a Task Force to Study and Recommend Sustainable Cultural Revenue Model (SCRM), including grant funding, and a Public Art Maintenance Fund	Implement the SCRM recommendations Dedicated cultural grant pool Establish incentives for integrating public art in private development Establish Public Art Maintenance Fund
<b>Partnerships</b>	Expand Music Makes Us Hub Support Nashville Arts Coalition, Tennesseans for the Arts and Americans for the Arts advocacy platforms NowPlayingNashville.com Events Calendar, Artist Directory & Artober Nashville website	Create Access in a Creative City series and program with Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy	

## Strategy Two: Drive Equity within the Creative Ecosystem

Tactic	Ongoing Activities	Short-Term Activities (2015 - 2017)	Long-Term Activities (2017 - 2020)
<b>Programs</b>	Arts Access and After-School Art Grants THRIVE Program	Expand funding for Arts Access Projects	
<b>Training &amp; Education</b>	Metro Arts Office Hours Develop curriculum units around public art, conduct teacher training Explore a Board Diversity Project with Arts & Business Council	Initiate Access in a Creative City Series with Curb Center for Art Enterprise & Public Policy. Create the Public Art Public Programs and Community Engagement Plan to connect and educate the public about the Public Art Program and the City's collection	Secure funding for long-term cultural equity programs and research (e.g. San Diego, Pittsburgh) Implement Public Art Public Programs and Community Engagement Plan. This initiative may include tours, additional teacher training, a docent-type volunteer program, and speakers bureau or scout troop programs.
<b>Policies &amp; Plans</b>		Establish Metro Arts Community Equity Advisory Committee	
<b>Partnerships</b>	ECON Club Cultural Access Project (CAP) Support MNPS and Music Makes Us with advocacy around funding arts within public schools	Explore Expansion of CAP Pilot with ECON Club of Nashville Develop Long Term Partnership Activation Plans with NAZA, Oasis, Music Makes Us on equity/access/inclusion with young people	

### Strategy Three: Improve Community-Based Creative Infrastructure

Tactic	Ongoing Activities	Short-Term Activities (2015 - 2017)	Long-Term Activities (2017 - 2020)
<b>Programs</b>	<p>Manage ExploreNashvilleArt.com</p> <p>Manage Public Art commissions</p> <p>Manage Metro Arts Grants Program</p>	<p>Establish Public Art Maintenance Program and Asset Management System.</p>	<p>Establish Temporary Public Art Project Fund and Program</p>
<b>Training &amp; Education</b>		<p>Establish THRIVE Learning Lab: Public Artist Development and Training Program</p>	
<b>Policies &amp; Plans</b>	<p>Integrate a public art and cultural placemaking practice into Community Design Studio Protocols</p>	<p>Initiate Public Art Master Plan process</p> <p>Identify funds for a city-wide Cultural and Creative Economy Plan</p> <p>Support the integration of Public Art within MTA, MPO, and MDHA-RAD long range plans</p> <p>Update the Municipal Zoning Code to support artisan manufacturing practices and business models</p> <p>Explore feasibility of city wide arts festival (e.g. South X Southwest)</p>	<p>Initiate Regional Cultural &amp; Creative Economy Plan process</p> <p>Establish Artist Studio Affordability and Preservation Incentives with private developers</p> <p>Conduct feasibility research for Studio Preservation Trust Fund</p> <p>Establish multi-year funding plan for Basic Operating Support grantees</p> <p>Establish dedicated source of funding for Grants Program</p>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<p>Establish <i>Culture Here</i> Infrastructure Portal with Nashville Chamber</p>	<p>Support Make Your Mark Artist Affordable Loan Program with The Housing Fund</p> <p>Expand Culture Here regionally</p>	

## Strategy Four: Lead by Example

Tactic	Ongoing Activities	Short-Term Activities (2015 - 2017)	Long-Term Activities (2017 - 2020)
<b>Programs</b>	Update and implement agency outcomes evaluation strategy	Develop and implement a branding and visibility strategy Add staff positions in media/social media and community programs Establish earned revenue stream for direct Metro Arts programs like Artober, Poetry In Motion and ExploreNashvilleArt.com Issue a graphic design contract Develop an Agency Annual Report	Launch an Annual State of the Arts Report based on the Agency Annual Report
<b>Training &amp; Education</b>	Manage ArtsNashville.gov Increase staff training and capacity and procure tools needed to develop multi-platform content—video, and other online content Manage Metro Arts Cultural Equity Advisory Group	Initiate Leadership Succession Plan process for senior staff and board committees Train all staff on existing Metro Arts Communications Plan.	
<b>Policies &amp; Plans</b>			Staff represents community diversity
<b>Partnerships</b>	Serve on a wide network of boards, councils, task forces	Serve on a wide network of boards, councils, task forces	Serve on a wide network of boards, councils, task forces



## Metro Arts Commission, Staff and Planning Participants

### Metro Arts Commissioners

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Dr. Ruth Edmonds  
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Matt Fischer  
Don Hardin  
Clay Haynes  
Larry Keeton  
Meg MacFadyen

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Hope Stringer  
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### Metro Arts Staff

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Kana Gaines, *Community Arts Coordinator*  
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Judy Miller, *Office Coordinator*

Ian Myers, *Finance Manager*  
Anne-Leslie Owens, *Public Art Coordinator*  
Leigh Patton, *Community Arts Manager*  
Caroline Vincent, *Public Art Manager*

### Community Engagement and Focus Group Participants

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Angie Adams, *Nashville Ballet*  
Elyse Adler, *Nashville Public Library*  
Teri Alea, *Tennessee Craft*  
Jerry Atnip, *Photographer*  
Greg Bailey, *Bailey & Associates*  
Jeanette Barker, *Nashville Ballet*  
Jane Baxter, *Healing Arts Project*  
Pete Bird, *Frist Foundation*  
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Dr. Anne Brown, *The Arts Company*  
Dane Carder, *Painter and Gallery Director, David Lusk Gallery*  
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Mel Fowler-Green, *Circle Players*

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Holly Noble, Tennessee Performing Arts Center  
Kathleen O'Brien, Tennessee Performing Arts Center  
Adrienne Outlaw, Seed Space  
Tim Ozgener, OZ Nashville  
Chris Parham, Mayor's Office of Economic Development  
Jason Parker, Nashville Symphony  
Paul Polycarpou, Nashville Arts Magazine  
Stephanie Pruitt, Poet  
Jonah Rabinowitz, W.O. Smith Music School  
Amanda Roche, Choreographer/Dancer/Social Practice  
Andee Rudloff, Artist/Sculpture  
Laurie T. Schell, Metro Nashville Public Schools  
Tim Sears, AdventureScience Center  
Stephanie Silverman, Belcourt Theater  
Benjamin Smith, Southern Word  
Debra Smith, Nashville Convention and Visitor's Corp  
Roger Spencer, Nashville Jazz Workshop  
Bo Spessard, Emma, Inc.  
Noah Spiegel, Nashville Opera  
Brenda Stein, Wood/Craft/Public Artist  
Ronnie Steine, At-Large Council Member  
Derell Stinson, Entertainment & Information Technology Strategist  
Cathy Street, Street Theatre Company

Casey Summar, Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville  
Massood Taj, Musician/Social Practice  
Justin Tam, Musicians Corner  
Bennett Tarleton, Retired Director, Tennessee Arts Commission  
Tasneem Tewogbola, Casa Azafran  
Jackie Tidwell, Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville  
Ali Tonn, Country Music Hall of Fame  
Alan Valentine, Nashville Symphony  
Paul Vasterling, Nashville Ballet  
Benjamin Vitualla, Social Practice Artist/Community  
Cindy Wall, Belcourt Theatre  
Abby Whisenant, Community Artist/Teacher/Social Practice  
Lain York, Painter/Gallery Director/Zeitgeist Gallery  
Anna Zeitlin, Milliner/Gallery Manager

