



**Strategic Plan
Starkville Area Arts Council
Updated FYE June 2020**

Approved by SAAC Board on:
April 21, 2020

SUMMARY of KEY GOALS in the Updated Strategic Plan

Note that there are several individual goals in each section of this Plan.

For the next 3-5 years

Org Capacity and Operations

- Permanent hire of VISTA into full-time communications & grant writing staff
- Fully migrate to a paperless office utilizing Gsuite for Nonprofits
- Regular staff training
- Creation of advisory board to supplement governing board
- Board Training (in addition to fundraising)
- Adopt updated bylaws to reflect changes in organization operations

Finances

- Increase gross revenue to \$200,000
- Increase # of individual donors within a fiscal year in tiers until we reach 1000
- Increase the % of sponsorships in tiers until reach 25% of gross revenue
- Secure Title Sponsor for CDAF
- Add one additional signature fundraising event (to a total of three)
- Implement fundraising training for all staff and board

Programming

- Secure long-term facility
- Consistent expansion into literary arts
- Expand current Art Education & Outreach Initiatives and funding to allow hire of program officer

Beyond 5 years

- Organize so SAAC can hold restricted funds for other arts organizations
- Implement a strong fundraising board
- Increase number of large (\$5K+) individual donors to 25 annually

Next anticipated Strategic Plan update will be scheduled for FYE 2025 unless the Board determines otherwise.

CONTEXT FOR THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

SAAC's most recent strategic plan is dated 2015. In 2017, SAAC hired its first Executive Director. In addition, most of the items in the 2015 plan have either been completed or rendered moot.

What is the process for creating this updated Strategic Plan?

In Summer 2018, the Executive Director updated the Board on the 2015 Strategic Plan, noting items that had been completed or mooted. This resulted in a priority focus for FYE June 2019. The creation of this updated Strategic Plan began with brainstorming at the November 2019 board meeting using guidelines from the Mississippi Arts Commission (Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan). Input was obtained from several sources, including a 20-question online public survey distributed by email, social media, and announced by the newspaper. Responses were accepted for nearly 2 months. Evaluation feedback from events in the previous year was also incorporated. Notes were compiled into an outline and shared with the Board for review and approval. This update is written with anticipation that annual review will be appropriate as we work toward our long term goals. We expect annual reviews to be a one-page summary of completed goals, revisions to goals, goals that have become irrelevant, or other pertinent information; which will be attached to this Strategic Plan. The next anticipated Strategic Plan complete update will be scheduled for FYE 2025 unless the Board determines otherwise.

ORGANIZATION CAPACITY OVERVIEW

[Most of this comes from Section IV of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

Current Status - What are we currently doing?

- **Mission**
 - SAAC's mission is to build a strong, creative, connected community through art.
 - SAAC currently falls under MAC's Arts-Based Community Development initiative. The goal for this program is "To improve the social, economic and cultural conditions of Mississippi communities through meaningful, quality arts programming."
 - SAAC fulfills both missions through a range of programs and events to ensure as wide of a reach and impact as possible.
- **Board**
 - Our bylaws require a minimum of 15 board members. Nominations may come from our Nominations Committee (which includes the E.D., a current board member, and past board member), which proactively seeks

individuals who represent communities that may not have sufficient representation on the current board. This has proven a valuable approach for maintaining and strengthening our diversity in race, age, and occupation over the past few years. Nominations are also taken from the community during our Annual Meeting in June.

- Our current board represents a wide cross-section of the community in age, race, employment, diversity of artistic discipline, retired vs working, disability, gender, orientation.
- Board Members must volunteer for some chair, attend meetings, and donate at any level.
- Current demographics:
 - 31% people of color: 69% white
 - 50% artists: 50% non artists
 - 87.5% working: 12.5% retired:
 - 12.5% currently enrolled students: 87% out of college
 - 87.5% non-disability : 12.5% disability
 - 37.5% male: 62.5% female: 0% other
 - 23.5% under 35 : 53% 35 - 55 : 23.5% above 55
- Current board participation (defined by volunteering, meeting attendance, or financial support) ranges from 95-100%.
- **Staff & Support**
 - SAAC currently has one Executive Director, an Operations Coordinator who is a member of the AmeriCorp VISTA program, and operates an unpaid internship program built with assistance from the MSU Department of Communication.
 - Committee CoChairs, who may or may not also be Board Members, volunteer in support of various events and programs.
 - Art Partners is supported by 1-2 Teaching Artists who are independent contractors paid to provide after-school art lessons at 4 locations.
- **Donor base**
 - Donors include individuals, grant funders, businesses, and sponsors.
 - Individual donor base includes about 250 individuals who give to us across about an 18-24 month cycle. Amounts range from \$5 to \$5,000.
 - We have about 12 grant funders, mostly government and corporate foundations. Amounts range from \$500 to \$15,000 (approx).
 - We have more than 20 business sponsors who contribute about 9% of our budget. Amounts range from \$250 to \$3,500 (approx)
 - Several restaurants provide **extensive** in-kind support through our annual Forks & Corks fundraiser.

- **Community Input & Support**

- A pool of roughly 150 volunteers helps us with one or more events. Of these, roughly 40 are repeat volunteers for multiple events.
- Regular, informal external meetings are conducted between the Executive Director with the Mayor, staff at the Partnership, and individual artists in the area, along with quarterly meetings with other arts organizations.
- Other ways we engage community support include an extensive communications strategy (discussed below); periodic surveys; letters to past & current patrons; meetings with various donors; cross-tagging arts organizations in social media posts.
- SAAC also is an active member of the Mississippi Presenters' Network which provides necessary support and input from other peer organizations, particularly Yoknapatawpha Arts Council in Oxford.

Long Term Goals (3-5 years)

[This section relates to MAC question: What are your key objectives in terms of leadership for the next three to five years?]

- **Mission:**

- No anticipated change: only the methods in which we seek to fulfill it.

- **Board:**

- Continue to bring board membership closer to the demographic breakdown of Oktibbeha County, including more diversity in race, veteran, and disability status. This requires active recruitment of those who represent different aspects of Oktibbeha County, whether for immediate board placement or future consideration.
- Revise board structure (possible advisory vs governing board) so that we have a larger pool of potential officers and committee chairs without sacrificing the efficiency of decision making.
- Formalized, shared fundraising responsibility.
- Consistent 100% Board Participation.
- Timely reviews of Board activity.

- **Staff & Support:**

- Organize the turnover of Committee Chairs so that we have no unexpected gaps.
- Semi-annual Volunteer Appreciation Happy Hours.
- Permanent hire of current VISTA member as full-time staff
- Timely reviews of all Staff & Interns.

- **Training:**

- Board & Staff on 1) fundraising, 2) networking, and/or 3) grant writing (as appropriate to interest and skill level).
- Implement Volunteer Training on a regular basis, starting with CDAF and then expanding to other events.
- **Donor Base:**
 - Increase # of annual donors in tiers: 300, 500, and 1000
 - Expand # of small, individual annual donors (\$10) to 1,000
 - Expand # of active patrons (\$1,000/annually) to 50
 - Expand # of large, individual annual donors (\$5,000) to 10
- **Community Support:**
 - Stronger attendance by other organizations at quarterly arts meetings.
 - Seats on the board / advisory committee.
- **Misc:**
 - Compensation and benefits that help reduce risk of turnover.

OPERATIONS

Current Status - What are we currently doing?

- **Communications**
 - A semi-monthly newsletter from the E.D. that highlights key upcoming area events. Roughly 2,000 contacts with a 30% open rate.
 - A monthly newsletter from SAAC that highlights upcoming volunteer needs and opportunities. Roughly 575 contacts with a 54% open rate.
 - Quarterly Patrons letter mailed to past and current patrons (currently 55)
 - Public Arts Calendar on our website that posts any area and selected regional and statewide arts events for free. Updated weekly by staff and support.
 - Active social media on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram that promotes various events and news both on and off the Public Arts Calendar.
 - Press Releases to 15+ media contacts (print, radio, TV) with follow up phone calls to the 2 local papers.
 - Selective advertisements for key events in Mississippi Magazine, Starkville Daily News, Starkville & Columbus Dispatch, area radio stations, which cover most of Mississippi and Western Alabama.
 - Occasional television spots, as budget permits, for WCBI (Columbus) and WTVB (Tupelo). Both have broadcast reach into Western Alabama.
 - Posters for key events distributed primarily in the Starkville area.
 - Selected, quarterly mailing of Starkville arts events to “current” donors.

- Annual report available on the website, with a limited number of copies printed for funders, donors, and board members. Usually created using Blurb/Bookwright.
- The E.D. also accepts periodic speaking engagements to share the mission and programs of SAAC.
- **IT**
 - Use of Google Drive and Google Calendar to allow for flexible working demands and sharing of information.
 - All software, online accounts are under an email associated with @starkvillearts.org domain.
 - Software platforms that make online and remote access much easier and efficient, including grant applications, bookkeeping, document sharing.
 - Laptop for E.D. that allows for flexibility when attending meetings.

Long Term Goals (3-5 years)

- **Communications**
 - Newsletter to 4,000+ contacts.
 - Active sharing of the Public Arts Calendar by other arts organizations.
 - Decal or other insignia for donors to display publicly.
 - Identify and use a new platform for the creation of the annual report
 - Searchable/sortable Calendar feature (access? communications?)
- **IT**
 - Migration to GSuite for Nonprofits
 - Full, fluid remote work capacity, which allows any staff member to work from outside the office (during office hours) as needed.

FINANCES

Current Status - What are we currently doing?

[Pertains to C&D of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- **Bookkeeping**
 - A bookkeeper helps code transactions in Quickbooks Online monthly. Codes are reviewed with the Executive Director, and bookkeeper advises on best practices.
 - Codes are reviewed at least semi-annually for accuracy.
- **Oversight/Compliance**
 - The bookkeeper has read-only access to bank accounts and inputs all transactions. Monthly, draft reports are provided to Board Treasurer and E.D., who review together as needed. Following this review, monthly

reports are provided to each board member and presented for discussion and vote at the monthly board meeting.

- President & Treasurer & Executive Director are authorized signers on bank accounts, with full access, although the Executive Director has the only debit/credit card.
- Accountant meets with the board at/near fiscal year-end to present tax return and financial statements.
- Payroll is processed by the accountant, with copies of correspondence provided to the Treasurer and bookkeeper.
- No petty cash is maintained: all expenses paid by debit/credit card. Bank accounts feed into the bookkeeping system. Checks are used only for permits and other extenuating circumstances. Receipts kept in file by vendor (or program folder if necessary). As a result: all transactions are potentially viewed by multiple individuals.
- Investment Policy Statement outlines how reserve funds are managed.
- **Fundraising**
 - *Annual Campaign*
 - We now recruit donors based upon a formal annual campaign aligned with our fiscal year. In FYE2020, this launched with #GivingTuesday 2019 and included pushes in January, May, and June.
 - Designed to bring all current individual donors into a regular pattern of giving within a 12-month cycle instead of across 18 or more months.
 - *Grant writing*
 - Applications researched and written by VISTA and Executive Director. Drafts generally shared with at least one board member.
 - Existing grant relationships maintained on a calendar. Potential grant relationships are also calendared and submitted as found. The goal is to apply for new, different funders each year to expand the sweep and scope of applications.
 - *Events*
 - Two signature events: Forks & Corks and CDAF. An Annual Meeting and Drive is also used, but it is not a “signature” event.
 - Forks & Corks celebrates the culinary arts and generates ~\$10,000 each year in net revenue.
 - CDAF celebrates all arts and generates a wide range in revenue, which is reflective of the variable nature of in-kind donations. In

recent years, CDAF has generated anywhere from ~\$8,000-20,000 each year in net revenue.

Long Term Goals (3-5 years)

- Endowment - build a modest endowment (\$500,000) invested such that a prudent percentage may help reduce swings in income.
- Building Campaign - whether rent or own, raise funding that will help secure a long-term home that will expand programming and revenue generation.
 - This will also allow for SAAC to share administrative office space and basic expenses with other area arts organizations, thereby reducing costs for all parties involved.
- Expand capacity to hold donor-advised or restricted funds for other arts organizations, operating like a community foundation for the arts.
- Hire professional fundraiser - ongoing - to help with board and staff training.
- Utilize a fundraising committee.
- Strengthen revenue sources:
 - Increase gross revenue to \$200,000
 - Individual donors within FY to 300, then 500, then 1000.
 - Business Sponsors to 25% of gross annual revenue.
 - Secure Title Sponsor for CDAF.
 - Add ticket + donation option with Forks & Corks.
 - Increase art sales from Exhibit Series.
 - Add one new signature fundraising event.

PROGRAMS

Current Status - What are we currently doing?

Current Programs:

- **Program Vision**

[This relates to Section II.D Artistic Excellence of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

Our programs fall under the umbrella mission of building a community through art. The vision of our current programs was built across several years with a common goal of finding different ways to create and provide access to art and art education enrichment. Whether through free public events, like Art in the Park, or after-school programs like Art Partners, or Summer Scholarships, or Grants that help fund different projects outside our traditional programming, every program & event is designed to create access and opportunity for exposure to creative-skill building.

Underlying this vision is the firm belief that art education and creative skill development is an important core competency that benefits every young mind because it builds more well-rounded, creative thinkers. It is not about teaching future artists or art teachers, but building a better individual. This skill development will assist anyone, regardless of their future career choice.

Ultimately, the vision is for more and diversified low to no-cost arts programs.

- **Services Provided to Artists**

[Relates to Section II.D - Artistic Excellence in MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

Our programming includes more than volunteer opportunities. Specifically, our exhibit series and CDAF offer opportunities for artists to sell works to the public. In Art Partners, we contract with 1-2 artists as Teaching Artist for our Art Partners program. We've explored a skills-based educational series with Business Skills Workshops, but maintaining that series requires additional organizational capacity.

How do we ensure the quality of programs?

[This relates to Section II.4 of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- We currently evaluate each event afterward with an Evaluation Form (discussed below, template attached). In addition, we seek input from public surveys and through discussions with the City, the Partnership, other organizations, and donors. We are not afraid to suspend programs that do not generate enough interest so that we can focus limited resources on those programs that do work.
- To the extent possible, we assign board members to events and programs based upon their experience, skillset, and interest. Each event has cochairs, to reduce unexpected turnover.
- Jurors for various events now come from outside of the immediate artist community. For CDAF, we have moved to professional jurors by connecting with museums in the region. For our Art Partners program, we contract with a working artist to serve as our Teaching Artist. For summer scholarships, applications are scored by jurors outside of the community (as of 2019, these two jurors are former Starkville residents: one a working artist and the other a social worker).
- We have explored collaboration with other arts organizations, which benefits programs in numerous ways, from pure efficiency to additional perspectives to the incorporation of multiple disciplines.
- We have initiated quarterly "all arts organization" meetings to bring all disciplines together at least once each quarter to share schedules, programs, and identify opportunities to work together.

How are artists included in programming?

[This relates Section II.D.2 - from MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- Artists are engaged in several ways, depending upon the need/event: open calls for submissions, invitation, informal conversations, and public survey/feedback. Sometimes, artists are invited based upon 1) previous relationship, 2) recipient of an award, or 3) diversity of medium.
- For Art in Public Places (our exhibits series), half of the shows are of solo artists (some of which have been curated by invitation) and half of the shows of multiple artists who are curated through open submission.
- For CDAF, all submissions are open. The Artisan Village is selected internally by a volunteer chair who is an artist, with the guiding requirement that no two artists sell the same product. For the Juried Arts Show, artists are selected by an external juror (preferably a curator or otherwise associated with an area museum). There is no guiding requirement other than artistic merit.
- For Summer Scholarships, young creatives are scored by an external committee (currently consisting of a working theatre artist and a social worker, both former Starkville residents familiar with the community). Amounts are allocated based upon budget and scores and reviewed by the external committee.
- For feedback, artists are engaged based upon 1) involvement in SAAC events, 2) general reputation for engagement with the community, and 3) professionalism.
- When available, artists are also engaged as volunteers both on the board AND to assist in various events (particularly Art in the Park).

How do we ensure access to programs by the community at large?

[This relates to Section III- Broad Access to the Arts in MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- SAAC has changed to provide programming in a way that meets the community where it is located. Rather than expecting the community to find us, we've worked to place programs where the greatest need is located. This builds on existing relationships and organizations and is a guiding principle in various initiatives. Flexibility may be required in some instances, such as allowing a summer camp to complete summer scholarship applications on behalf of attendees who do not have access to email or a computer.
- Posters, newsletters, and social media help reach a different community than print media. We alternate ads between 2 papers (one of which is free), to reach different audiences.
- Venues are also selected based upon factors that include 1) proximity to public transportation and 2) ADA accessibility.

- SAAC has also started rotating park venues for Art in the Park as a way to reach different communities. Two other organizations wish to join us in this regard.
- No programs are limited to donors. We anticipate that some fundraising efforts will need to cater to larger donors in different ways than smaller donors.
- Goal is for as many programs to be low to no-cost.
- Diversity of the board helps ensure that we represent more community interests, which also helps us consider access.

Collaborations with other organizations and partners

[This relates to Section II- Collaborations of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- Two ongoing events historically have included collaboration with artists and arts organizations and government agencies, including Art in the Park and CDAF. SAAC has also explored collaboration as programs, venues, and circumstances lend themselves to such partnerships. These include things like:
 - Scrambled Art Egg Bowl with Yoknapatawpha Arts Council
 - Mississippi Presenters' Network Touring Exhibit with 3 other arts orgs
 - Meet MAC & SAAC's Business Skills Workshop hosted with Starkville Community Theatre and Mississippi Arts Commission
- Current partners in collaborative work include:
 - MSU Department of Art (CDAF Juried Art Exhibit)
 - The City of Starkville (CDAF and public art)
 - The Partnership (CDAF, art exhibits, publicity)
 - YAC (Scrambled Art Bowl)
 - MS Presenter's Network (Touring Art Exhibit, general strategy)

Long Term Goals (3-5 years)

[This relates to Section II.4 of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

- Conduct formal annual public surveys - both online and in paper form
- **Collaborations:**
 - Regularly scheduled program collaborations between SAAC and other arts organizations
 - Increased collaboration with events like Art in the Park (for example, Symphony Concert & SCT in connection with Art in the Park)
 - Promote regularly scheduled program collaborations between **other** arts organizations (without SAAC)
 - Secure collaborative shared space that allows for greater programming flexibility AND can help reduce basic common expenses (IT, power, etc)
 - Collaborative fundraising (see below) (i.e., with Starkville Symphony)

- Secure ongoing participation with non-Starkville External orgs (for example, touring art exhibit, YAC, etc)
- For maintaining artistic excellence:
 - Formal feedback conversation with City and County
 - Formal feedback conversation with art educators
 - Create bandwidth for sustained Business Skills Workshops
 - Increased submissions to increase competitiveness
 - Increased visibility with the CDAF Juried Arts Competition
 - Secure a juried show's temporary exhibit at a museum
- Award point system for ticket sales
 - Use a "point system" to help incentivize board members to sell more tickets for fundraising events.
- Access:
 - Increased participation in surveys - public, volunteers
 - Collaborations that engage different communities (i.e., Student Affairs)
 - Explore an On-Campus affiliate, a faculty advisor/Service Dawgs
 - Advocate and pair with teachers who offer extra credit for attendance/service/participation
 - Continued recruitment of volunteers, board members, interns from different communities
 - More rotating venues (Plaza)
- Grantmaking program
 - Explore using as a single pool of Discretionary Funds that anyone - teacher, artist, or organization can still submit applications for - but that gives SAAC more discretion to identify and fund significant opportunities, such as more public art, fellowships that brings in renowned artists, help arts organizations or schools with large projects, etc.

EVALUATIONS

[This comes from Section C of MAC's Key Components of a Long Range Strategic Plan]

Current Status - What are we currently doing?

- **Staff**
 - The Executive Director is formally reviewed once each year.
 - Interns are given a closing interview.
 - ED conducts weekly meetings with our VISTA.
- **Board**
 - There is no current formal evaluation of Board Members.
- **Operations**

- Monthly, the E.D. sends a report on all activities (Finance, Operations, Program, etc) to the Current Board President and either the President-Elect or Past President.
- ED conducts weekly meetings with our VISTA.
- **Finances**
 - At the close of each month, the E.D. reviews coding in QuickBooks with the bookkeeper. Draft reports are provided to the Treasurer. When reconciled a Profit & Loss statement and Balance Sheet are circulated to the full board, who approves the financial reports at the next board meeting.
 - The E.D. and Treasurer discuss finances regularly as part of ongoing communications.
- **Programs**
 - At the close of each event, the E.D. and CoChairs complete our one-page evaluation form. These are provided to the Board. Often accompanied by an in-person wrap-up meeting.
 - Some events allow for short paper surveys of that event (i.e., Art in the Park; CDAF)
- **General**
 - Input is requested from the City and the County by annual attendance and public appearance at least one board meeting.
 - At the mid-year mark (after December 31), SAAC closes its office to the public and conducts a mid-year review of organizational issues: bookkeeping, budget, donor contact, board participation, etc.
 - Annual review of progress against goals and objectives is also incorporated into the annual grant application to the Mississippi Arts Commission.

How do we make corrections?

- Corrections are made at the appropriate time under the circumstances: before the next event, ongoing basis. We have not yet encountered corrections that need board approval - those may be limited to financial oversight, serious publicity issues, or significant (substantive) changes to program operation.
- Our Evaluation Form provides us with a way to document ideas and changes so that we do not have to rely on institutional memory.

Long Term Goals (3-5 years)

- Board review or some form of “Trustee audit” to gauge participation and duties.
- Stronger participation (at least 100 individuals) in public surveys.
- Implement a formal paper survey.

- Conduct a regular, public “Town Hall” with at least one other arts organization.
- Find a reliable way to gather and collect data on attendance, volunteers, hours.
- Mid Year reviews for all staff.