



Arts Alive 2024-2027 Strategic Plan

Approved by the Board of Directors February 19, 2024

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If you would like to take a deep dive into the actions, deliverables and evaluations that can show HOW we are accomplishing this plan, visit our workplan document!

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Introduction

Arts Alive, a dynamic nonprofit, charts a strategic course guided by its commitment to enhancing wellbeing of the community through advancing arts and culture. This is done by resourcing and nurturing leaders in the creative practices - igniting their creativity and sparking connections. In order to accomplish this, Arts Alive will

- **Develop the resource of SPACE for the greater arts community's use**
- **Ensure sustainable organizational leadership and financial stability of the organization**
- **Expand and Deepen Arts Alive's outreach and community engagement**
- **Nurture a broad spectrum of creative community members and leaders through existing programs and systems**

These strategies were identified after the Keene Arts Core planning process, a survey of artists seeking professional development, fiscal sponsor feedback in their annual year-end reports, and a survey of key partners and advisors in the summer of 2023. Feedback has also been continually collected from program participants through regularly collected program evaluations. The organization has also learned about anecdotal needs through coaching sessions. This plan is a response to that ongoing input collected over the past three years.

Program, resource, and service provision are at the forefront of our service to the region's arts community. An essential component of this plan is securing space that can be utilized by under-resourced artists in our community. Another important component is building a process for programs to be equitably designed, so that the organization can stay responsive to the needs of the most under-resourced artists and arts leaders in the Monadnock region.

Leadership, internal capacity, visibility, and community relationships are what the remainder of the plan focuses on. Development of DEIA policies and practices and ways to measure and evaluate our forward motion on this will be core to serving a diverse population. A well-resourced organization with steady leadership that is well-regarded within its community will be able to serve the mission into the future, ensuring thriving and accessible arts continue to support the wellbeing of our community.

As we embark on this transformative journey, we envision a future where creativity flourishes, artists are revered, and communities are bound together through the transformative power of the arts. We are here to ignite creativity and spark connections because access to arts and culture is a human right.

What if local and emerging artists felt recognized, supported, and celebrated by society? What if we could do more of or more with the most impactful programs we do? What if local artists could say "this is what I need" and we could provide it? What if that made them deeply invested in Arts Alive as co-leaders, innovators, and stewards of our mission? What if the board had more diverse expertise and experience? What if every board member could hit the ground running? What if the structure of the organization and the benefits and compensation offered to staff directly supported the mission and function of the organization? What if there were a financial model that would ensure our values were upheld and we could bring in sustainable programmatic income? What if Arts Alive was a nationally recognized program innovating at the forefront of arts service? What if our systems could support the funding of arts initiatives and businesses more directly through closer partnerships and collaborations? What if collaborations could secure funding from national sources? What if we had the capacity to appropriately market our programs and resources and fully promote arts in our region to locals and tourists? Who would show up if there were zero barriers to accessing our services or arts programming in our community generally? What if we considered everyone involved a "valued volunteer" who could make our mission happen?

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission:

Arts Alive exists to ignite creativity and spark connections. We are driven by the idea that access to art, culture, and creativity is a human right.

Vision:

The Monadnock region is a healthy and thriving community because everyone has access to cultural engagement, artistic outlets, and to their own human creativity. Picture a Monadnock region where we can all attend arts and cultural events that interest us without barriers; where we all can imagine ourselves as creators or artists; and where we have the resources, materials, time, and space we need to create. We are each inspired by creative vision that uplifts our spirits daily. We each spark creativity in others by sharing our originality, knowledge, curiosity, processes, culture, inspirations, and the things that we create. We value each other's creative works and strive to live life surrounded by and filled with them.

Our Values:

These values are woven into everything we do

Human creativity – Any framework for accessing immeasurable human experiences, because the arts and culture are expansive

Community – Diverse individuals coming together for shared experiences, because community is built by being and doing together

Connection – Giving and receiving authentically, because connection is a two-way street

Feeling – Activation of one's hope and one's heart in worthwhile ways, because empathy and expression are key elements of creation

Thinking – Deepening discovery and exploration of complexity, because the arts can open doors into new understanding

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Goal 1: Space

Develop the resource of SPACE for the greater arts community's use:

Reflects our dedication to cultivating a vibrant supportive environment where both seasoned and emerging creatives and makers can thrive. Arts Alive seeks to provide the resource of SPACE, which the creative community needs to create, thrive, engage and inspire others.

How has Arts Alive provided resources to the arts community:

- Co-hosts the Ewing Arts Awards annually to share stories of a new cohort of 12-14 local creatives or organizations since 2015
- Developed the Discover Monadnock brand and platform, which includes website, social media, printed materials and cooperative advertising, which has a digital reach of 30-40,000, e-newsletter reach of 5000, and printed reach of 10,000
- Has built a membership of over 123 individuals and organizations
- Currently provides fiscal sponsorship to 8 active groups, and is proud of projects like Monadnock International Film Festival, MAXT Makerspace, and Ashuelot Concerts, which are new businesses that were created from this program
- Supports Keene ArtWalk with technical services - hosting their URL and program information on the Arts Alive website and activating their social media
- Gives minigrants to 10-12 artists every other year so that they can address personal barriers to engaging in making and leading arts and cultural work and activity.
- Offers individual coaching for over 75 artists and creative leaders per year
- Provides the arts community with local data, research, and letters of support to secure grants and other support
- Worked with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Housing Assistance Council to develop a design plan for the Keene Arts Core, to be located on Gilbo Ave in downtown Keene. Over 45 artists and arts organizations, 118 community members and 39 non arts businesses and organizations participated in the planning process.
- Established and hosts the annual Elevate the Arts Fest to highlight emerging artists and provide a platform for community members to try their hand at the arts
- Hosts Field Trips, Ambassador Meetups, Radically Rural Arts Track Sessions, and the Arts Leadership Summit to connect and inspire the local cultural community that have over 100 participants each year

Our next strategies:

1. Create a committee to contribute volunteer hours and expertise to this vision

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2. Understand feasibility of providing space - conduct a market study, develop a business plan, conduct a site selection analysis, create a design plan, create a building/renovation costs estimate
3. Secure partnerships with collaborators and anchor tenants who will participate in fundraising
4. Raise funds to increase organizational capacity, purchase and renovate space, and market the resource

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Goal 2: Sustainability

Ensure sustainable organizational leadership and financial stability of the organization:

This goal focuses the organization on sustainable practices. By cultivating a robust leadership pipeline and fostering a culture of continuous development, Arts Alive aims to secure the longevity of its impactful initiatives, culture and values. Outwardly, continuity and growth form the heart of our second goal, but a key to this goal's success is connection - connecting stakeholders to community, to the mission, to each other, and to their own artistic selves. By putting Arts Alive on visible platforms locally and nationally, deepening relationships with committed staff and volunteers, and fostering inclusive leadership orientation in a way that honors stakeholders' artistic passions, ignites their creativity, and sparks connection, Arts Alive aims to fortify its foundation for sustained impact.

What has already been accomplished:

- Conducted two board assessments in the last four years which identified significant improvement in board member engagement and board functioning and improvement in onboarding and training. Part of this was recruiting members with expertise in communications and marketing
- Restructured the committee system into a "Teams" system with clear goals, projects, and objectives to better leverage board members' skills and interests and keep them engaged
- Made board meetings more accessible by hosting 75% of meetings virtually
- Hired a firm to lead training in DEI and to work with the Executive Director and Team Big Stuff on DEI policy for the organization
- Increased direct programmatic income and sponsorships from \$10,000 to \$30,000, the donor base from 92 to 175, and philanthropic income from \$75,000 to \$105,000
- Received an ARP grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Citizens Institute on Rural Design technical assistance grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Housing Assistance Council
- Executive Director received two fellowships in the past four years from National Arts Strategies to pursue research in arts access and its health impacts in the Monadnock region, the ED also served on a national panel of arts leaders to develop evaluations for community impact assessments of arts events and festivals with Americans for the Arts and the Center for Democracy, a national panel to determine Our Town grant recipients from the National Endowment for the Arts
- Systemized volunteer recruitment by keeping a list and providing a survey for volunteers to share their interests

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Our Next Strategies:

1. Build Equity-centered culture from recruitment to board/staff education. Equip members with confidence in the gap areas identified in recent and ongoing assessments, and consciously orient board members, new recruits, and volunteers to the organization, its goals, and its equity-centered values
2. Establish goals for sustainable organizational structure and staff and contractor compensation policy
3. Engage volunteers in Arts Alive's activities and outreach
4. Be a more visible nonprofit locally, regionally, and nationally - making connections across the country to share our programs. Arts Alive aims to position itself as a sustainable, nationally recognized arts innovator, capable of direct and impactful support for creative leaders

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Goal 3: Relationships

Expand and Deepen Arts Alive's outreach and community engagement:

Affirms Arts Alive's aspiration to extend the reach of our initiatives, engage others in the mission, and make our mission visible. Understanding the transformative power of the arts, we endeavor to engage new audiences, and forge meaningful connections within and beyond our community with individuals who want to take action on behalf of the arts. By improving marketing, showing up with the arts for underserved communities, and mobilizing a diverse network, we seek to build relationships that will increase individuals' likelihood of accessing our services, engaging in our mission, and mobilizing community members to co-lead the organization into the future.

What has already been accomplished:

- Newsletters are published on a semi-regular schedule on an eye-catching template with actionable content with 2,300 subscribers and a 43% open rate
- Created a "Support Arts Alive" fundraising website with videos about impact stories
- Doubled the monthly traffic to the Arts Alive website from 600 to over 1,200
- Worked with students at Keene State College to develop new organizational branding and design templates that are dynamic and energetic
- Activated social media with regular posts about programs and resources (2,100+ followers on Facebook with an average of 300 monthly post engagements; and 1,200+ followers on Instagram with ~100 monthly post engagements)
- Utilized a publicity checklist to promote programs and events
- Updated media contacts list for press releases and news
- Purchased supplies and initiated a tabling program at local festivals
- Engaged via personal emails with artists, ambassadors, arts leaders, and community members to increase program participation
- Conducted personal outreach to past Ewing Arts Awards winners to recruit award nominations from a diverse set of artists and organizations - [view winners here](#).

Our Next Strategies:

1. Develop authentic relationships with groups and individuals that face barriers to accessing Arts Alive's services
2. Have meaningful, mission focused, and action-oriented conversations with volunteers, creative leaders, donors, municipal leaders, businesses, and family foundations
3. Be visible in physical public spaces - from physical presence at events, to signage, to material distribution

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Goal 4: Nurturing creative leaders

Arts Alive will apply our core values to both programming and operations. From the Ewing Awards to Field Trips and Ambassador Meetups, our programs resonate with the pulse of the community. This commitment extends beyond programming to the very fabric of our operations, where streamlining procedures and cultivating meaningful connections are intrinsic to our approach. Arts Alive stands at the intersection of vision and action, aligning values with initiatives, to create a vibrant, inclusive, and artistically rich community for generations to come.

Our Next Strategies:

1. Nurture a broad spectrum of creative community leaders through existing programs and systems. This includes four programmatic elements.
 - a. Build community through artful learning and collective planning and action
 - b. Celebrate artists and organizations
 - c. Promote local creative work
 - d. Resource under-resourced creatives
2. Tell the story of Arts Alive to more people with a focus on our impact
3. Maintain healthy operations: Keep the Administrative Machine well oiled

Incorporating more community-led design and being responsive to the needs of those involved. Arts Alive will **Build community** through artful learning and collective planning and action, **Celebrate** artists and organizations, **Promote** local creative work, and **Resource** under-resourced creatives.

We will continue community-led program design, ensuring responsiveness to the diverse needs of emerging and working professional creatives. This approach encompasses a wide array of programs, including but not limited to the Ewing Awards, Arts Spotlight Blogs, Social Media Member and Blog Feature Spotlights, Discover Monadnock Calendar + Newsletter, Minigrants, Fiscal Sponsorship, Coaching, Funding Support, Field Trips, Ambassador Meetups, Radically Rural, Arts Leadership Summit, Elevate the Arts Fest, Communication with members, and Discover Monadnock Printed materials.

Arts Alive will also increase involvement of volunteers in programming. This involves identifying specific projects and tasks suitable for volunteer engagement, providing clear project plans to ensure volunteers understand their roles, and subsequently creating a structured onboarding plan for volunteer signups. The organization will actively recruit and orient volunteers to these projects and plans, fostering a cohesive and well-coordinated collaboration that maximizes the impact of volunteers in supporting Arts Alive's initiatives.

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OPERATIONS, CAPACITY, and DEVELOPMENT

Arts Alive will expand its reach and impact by enhancing the narrative surrounding its diverse programs with personal stories. This includes refining the marketing plan for key programs to include personal testimonials from program participants and data-centered impact.

The personal touch is a priority and so in the coming years Arts Alive's board and staff will be focused on building relationships through in person meetings, phone calls, and Zoom calls, and will improve consistency of communications.

Elevating the Arts Fest is a strategic fundraiser that celebrates our values and our core belief that EVERYONE should have access to the arts. It also involves the engagement of volunteers as co-leaders, an increase in partnerships and income generation, and a targeted effort to boost participation through effective marketing strategies.

Arts Alive is dedicated to maintaining a well-oiled administrative machine, particularly in developing recruitment plans, accessible documents, and work plans for the working Board of Directors and its Teams. These efforts collectively contribute to the efficient functioning of Arts Alive's administrative processes, ensuring a cohesive and strategic approach in achieving its mission and goals.

In the realm of operations, capacity building, and development, Arts Alive stands poised to elevate its impact. By streamlining operations, engaging the community in program design, and fostering meaningful connections, we embark on a journey that not only sustains but propels our mission. As we cultivate partnerships, engage volunteers, and amplify our narrative, we extend an invitation to all stakeholders to join us in creating a vibrant, inclusive, and artistically rich community that will endure for generations to come. Arts Alive's commitment is unwavering – to ignite creativity, spark connections, and affirm that access to arts and culture is a fundamental human right.

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