

Flagstaff Arts Council 2020-2025 Draft Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

We are proud to introduce *Creative Opportunity* after nearly two years of collaborative reflection.

The work of Flagstaff Arts Council began in 1999 as the culmination of several visionary pursuits, the historic Art Barn, Coconino Center for the Arts, and a collaborative partnership to form a local arts agency. For the past 20+ years, Flagstaff Arts Council has served as Flagstaff's art, science, and culture agency, investing in our community through strategic partnerships, disbursing more than \$6 million in grants, incubating new programs, helping organizations spring to life, showcasing hundreds of artists at Coconino Center for the Arts, and advocating for supportive policies in local and state government. Our work is not possible nor meaningful without the many creative professionals, artists, nonprofits, and businesses that call Flagstaff home.

The art, science, and cultural sector in Flagstaff is what gives Flagstaff its life, its understanding, its diversity, its diversity of not only people but also thought and how we express ourselves. It is the heart of Flagstaff.

– Mayor Coral Evans

This strategic plan is the culmination of a deep community process which began before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two community meetings, one which had more than 100 in attendance, 3 board retreats, and hundreds of surveys informed every aspect of this plan. It reflects on cultural equity, the creative economy, and the role of art and creativity in building a strong and resilient community – now even more important because of the pandemic.

Mission-Led, Outcomes-Driven, & Strategy-Focused

The first outcome of this strategic plan was the adoption of a new mission statement, to *foster creative opportunity*. Those three words embody so much about what we understand and hope for our community. They also guide us on how we can collectively work together to make lasting change.

We arrived at our new mission and vision after asking ourselves and the community challenging questions. Like, what does it mean to value the arts? Why does Flagstaff pride itself on science and discovery? What does science have to do with art? How does creativity build community? And, how are we responding to the needs of all citizens?

These questions then led to bigger questions such as: How can Flagstaff be known as one of the Southwest's most creative cities? How do we expand philanthropy by more than \$1 million per year for creative nonprofits? And, how do we foster a more equitable future for artists, creators, citizens, and organizations?

As stakeholder-stewards of Flagstaff's \$90 million non-profit creative economy, the range of activities and programs we could invest in are virtually endless. Three strategies, known as creative opportunity, arts and ideas, and catalytic initiatives, guide how we approach our mission. Our mission, vision, values, and strategies are detailed on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Flagstaff is Inspired to Create

Early on, our board watched author Simon Sinek's Ted Talk, *Start with Why*. The premise is that most organizations can articulate what it is they do and how. Few can say why. Fortunately, most mission-driven organizations like ours have a sense of purpose. But it caused us to reflect. Why does an arts council exist? It serves to advance the arts, but why? We also serve science and culture. How does that fit?

Our conclusion was that arts councils exist because their stakeholders are inspired to create art and that the key difference between arts councils around the world are the places and people that define them – Flagstaff is inspired to create art. Art, science, and culture are all born or made better because of creative inspiration. Therefore, the idea of creativity as a guide for how we understand art, science, and culture was born.

3-5 Year Goals

Our 20-year foundation supports goals over the next 3-5 years.

1. *An effective and resilient leadership agency.*

What we are building on:

- 20-year partnership with City of Flagstaff as art, science, and culture agency; relationship with County through Coconino Center for the Arts.
- Experience in advocacy, marketing, outreach, forming partnerships, and grantmaking.
- A dedicated professional staff team.

What we want to do:

- Strengthen and **diversify our funding** by hiring a development director.
- **Empower and train** staff and volunteer teams.
- **Increase engagement** through networking and stakeholder-oriented programming.
- Form and strengthen **strategic partnerships**.
- **Diversify our leaderships'** creative talents and cultural representation.
- Strengthen our **core competencies**.

2. *Strong and resilient art, science, and culture nonprofits.*

What we are building on:

- Over \$6 million in BBB tax-supported grants given to Flagstaff nonprofits since 2002; \$460,000 in 2020.
- A dedicated nonprofit community representing nearly 2,000 volunteers and 250 board members.

What we want to do:

- **Strengthen baseline general operating support** by creating a collaborative fundraising program and promoting a culture of philanthropy.
- Create or fund **training programs** that support quality programming and administrative capacity.
- Expand and **diversify audiences** through outreach and building awareness for the sector.
- Develop a sustainable **facilities strategy**.

3. *A shared community experience.*

What we are building on:

- Global outcry for racial and cultural equity and justice.
- A diverse community with prominent indigenous and Hispanic populations.
- A rapidly growing and dynamic population fueled by tourism, Northern Arizona University, and second homes.
- A small tight knit creative community.

What we want to do:

- Foster **accessible creative experiences** through grantmaking and alignment of FAC programs such as ArtWalk FLG, Viola Awards, Coconino Center for the Arts, and the proposed Dark Sky Arts & Ideas Festival.
- Advocate for **creative placemaking** and the integration of the **arts in public policymaking**.
- **Promote cultural equity** through grantmaking, training, and support of a city-wide cultural equity plan.
- Increase **opportunities to interact** for the public, artists, creative professionals, and funders at all arts council programming and at dedicated networking events.

4. *An emerging identity as one of the Southwest's most creative cities.*

What we are building on:

- A shared vision developed through the strategic plan process.
- Decades-long commitment to science and discovery through Lowell Observatory, NAU, US Geological Service, Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff Festival of Science and others; America's first STEM City.
- Nearly 6 million annual visitors, 70% from out of state.
- A unique sense of place compared to other prominent southwest destinations.
- An interdisciplinary creative spirit.
- A destination community.

What we want to do:

- Gain **buy-in from government and other partners** to promote arts and culture as a primary driver of tourism and for the creative sector as a key economic development focus.
- Foster **interdisciplinary collaborations** through grantmaking, the proposed arts & ideas festival, and through advocacy and marketing. Arts must intersect with our institutions, government, science, and everyday life.
- Promote **design and creative placemaking**.
- Cultivate **recognition and earned media** by establishing a dedicated staff position and leveraging partners such as tourism.

5. *A thriving center for the arts.*

What we are building on:

- Coconino Center for the Arts' nearly 40-year history serving Coconino County; operated rent-free by Flagstaff Arts Council for 20+ years.
- 2019 upgrades to Coconino Center for the Arts including state of the art audio/visual systems in the auditorium, carpet removal, and reconfigured support spaces.
- 2018 facility feasibility study that highlighted the sector's facility needs and opportunities.
- Multiple master plans that call for arts and culture facilities including Lowell's Section 17, Downtown Master Plan, Museum of Northern Arizona, and the Southside Community Plan.
- COVID-related impacts that severely restricted Coconino Center for the Arts and programming partner operations.

What we want to do:

- **Maximize the use of Coconino Center for the Arts**, Coconino County's only public arts facility, demonstrating the viability for future facility investments.
- Develop an **independent aligned mission/vision for CCA** supported by robust volunteer leadership through a new dedicated Advisory Board. Board guides programming and use of the facility.
- Develop a **sustainable operations and financing plan** by expanding earned revenue and creating dedicated fundraisers.
- Expand the use of the facility by outside partners by introducing a **resident company program**.
- Create a **long-term facility strategy** that builds on the work of the 2018 feasibility study.

Primary Program Areas

To accomplish the above goals, our efforts are focused on the following comprehensive program areas detailed on page **Error!**

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1. Collaborative Arts Fund
2. Arts and ideas festival and regular events
3. Sector awards and recognition
4. Coconino Center for the Arts
5. Advocacy and outreach
6. Resiliency Fund
7. FAC board and organizational development
8. Stakeholder training
9. Sector facility plan
10. Sector-wide evaluation and assessment

A Living Document Created in the Midst of a Pandemic

This plan started with great optimism, a belief that our community has a bright future. It still does. A lot has changed. The pandemic has taught us to be persistent yet adaptable – focused on the mission. This plan is a living document. Its timing, progress, and emphasis is based on continual evaluation and assessment and available resources.

Beyond This Plan

Our outreach unearthed hundreds of ideas, community needs, and opportunities. The context section of this document, which begins on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, outlines much of what we learned. It also addresses how we approach supporting the opportunity of the many stakeholders that make up Flagstaff's creative sector.

For example, historically FAC has only directly supported artists through Coconino Center for the Arts and ArtWalk and many of our programs have not been tailored to youth. The next 3-5 years are important capacity building years for our organization, nonprofits, and identified catalytic projects such as Dark Sky Arts & Ideas Festival. In all of our programs we prioritize the wellbeing of artists, the opportunity of youth, and advocate for for-profit creative businesses. In the future, we may tailor specific initiatives for these and other stakeholder groups.

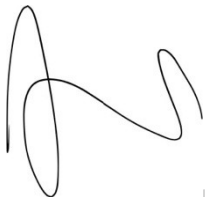
Each year, we will evaluate our progress on this plan and report back to you, our stakeholders, on the metrics and goals defined in this plan.

Your Participation

This is a stakeholder-driven plan. Many aspects of this plan require your input and participation as we continue to work together to foster creative opportunity on our journey to becoming known as one of the Southwest's most creative cities!

Feedback on this plan can be provided at creativeopportunity@flagartscouncil.org.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Stone
Executive Director



Kimberly Batty-Herbert, Ed.D.
President, Flagstaff Arts Council

Draft table of contents is provided so that the City Council can see the breadth and depth of the document that is currently being reviewed by several stakeholder round tables. If a City Council or City staff member would like to provide feedback on the latest draft document, please contact Jonathan Stone at jstone@flagartscouncil.org or 928-779-7019.

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