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COLORADO'S ARTS POLICY FRAMEWORK

IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN COLORADO



INTRODUCTION

Colorado's Arts Policy Framework is a compilation of creative worker perspectives on the power and potential of Colorado's creative industry. The Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) gathered these perspectives to galvanize change for arts, culture, and creative industries in Colorado and develop a coordinated, intentional, and inclusive advocacy voice.

Colorado's creative sector includes artists, creative entities, and cultural organizations from diverse disciplines, communities, and backgrounds. In developing this Policy Framework (2024), over 807 Colorado creative workers and advocates were consulted about their needs, dreams, and vision for the creative sector. This process intentionally engaged underrepresented groups including rural and racial minority voices.

Engagement included a survey, 10 key informant interviews, and 8 listening sessions titled "Creative Dialogues: Imagining the Future of Arts & Culture in Colorado." Information collected through these processes was qualitatively coded and themed to produce the Framework with support from a Working Group.

This report includes: [Mini-Framework](#), [Full Framework](#), [Methods](#), [Participant Demographics](#), and [Exploration of the Findings](#) (including Framework Definitions, Colorado Community Perspective and State-Level Approaches).

Colorado's Arts Policy Framework is intended to serve multiple uses:

1. **Catalyze Collective Advocacy:** This Policy Framework is intended to reflect the needs and priorities of Colorado's diverse arts and creative ecosystem to inspire and stimulate proactive state and local advocacy efforts in a coordinated, cohesive, and effective way. Advocacy is a "team sport" and this Framework can be a shared playbook.
2. **Inform CBCA's Legislative Agenda:** CBCA has stepped up as Colorado's arts advocacy organization. With an active Policy Committee, a contract lobbyist, and the grassroots Colorado Arts Action Network (CAAN), CBCA works to ensure that arts, culture, and the creative industry are valued and supported by policymakers and voters. This Framework and its findings will directly guide CBCA's near-term legislative agenda.
3. **Expand Advocacy Partners:** The scope of this Framework is vast, extending into many different policy arenas and areas of expertise. Findings will be utilized to identify new advocacy partners and foster collaborative, cross-sector advocacy efforts.
4. **Guide Local Advocates:** This Framework and detailed findings can be utilized by local-level leaders, cultural organizations, elected officials, and grassroots organizers as a checklist or roadmap to fostering and investing in a vibrant creative sector in their neighborhood, municipality, county, region or other community.



Glenwood Springs Creatives Dialogues Convening | July 23, 2024



This project was imagined and executed by the [Colorado Business Committee for the Arts](#) and [Empowered Consulting](#).

COLORADO'S ARTS POLICY FRAMEWORK

Colorado's creative sector includes artists, creative entities, and cultural organizations from diverse disciplines, communities, and backgrounds. In developing this Policy Framework (2024), over 807 Colorado creative workers and advocates were consulted about their needs, dreams, and vision for the creative sector. **Full framework on page 11.**

DESIRED IMPACT | This framework represents the state and local policy priorities Colorado's creative sector identified as necessary to foster a creatively engaged, inclusive, and thriving society where creatives flourish and the arts play a central role in community, education, economy, and well-being.

VALUES | Regardless of policy area, policies should be aligned with the following aims or processes.

LOCALLY & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE	FOSTER COLLABORATION	ALL ART FOR ALL PEOPLE	TRANSPARENCY
We support policies that recognize, engage, and adapt to the unique geographic needs and cultural identities of local communities.*	We support policies that foster collaboration and leverage shared resources among different art forms, organizations, private and public sectors, and advocacy groups.	We support policies that eliminate barriers to allow all people to experience, create, heal, and express through all art forms.	We support policies that transparently distribute programmatic, financial, and informational resources, based on individual and community needs.

**This includes: community size; community resources; geographic position; residential diversity; historic spaces; historic marginalization.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | To foster a creatively engaged society, the following strategic priorities shall be considered.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Thriving Arts Communities

<p>Arts Availability In Communities</p> <p>Root the arts in local communities to enhance availability, accessibility, and awareness of the arts.</p>	<p>Community and Individual Well-Being</p> <p>Cultivate community and individual well-being, belonging, and connection to local heritage.</p>
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Creative Economy

<p>Strategic Investment in the Creative Economy</p> <p>Financially invest in and develop infrastructure for creative workers, businesses, and organizations, and the communities where they are located.</p>	<p>Creative Sector as an Economic Driver</p> <p>Embed and elevate the creative sectors' role in economic development and vital impact on business and tourism.</p>
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Livability for Creative Workers

<p>Affordability for Creative Workers</p> <p>Mitigate the issues of affordability impacting all Coloradans through cross-coalition advocacy that addresses the specialized needs of creative workers.</p>	<p>Professional Support for Creatives</p> <p>Cater relevant professional development for creatives that enhances capacity, business vitality, arts leadership and support networks.</p>
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Sustaining Arts Learning

<p>PreK-12 Arts Learning</p> <p>Expand, improve, mandate, and fund PreK-12 public arts programs to support student success, creative experiences, and creative workforce development in all schools.</p>	<p>Lifelong Arts Learning</p> <p>Enable and encourage arts learning for people of all ages and the exchange of creative skills to sustain arts practices and careers across generations.</p>
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RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR ARTS & CULTURE

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This report was authored by Empowered Consulting and Celia Gottlieb, Project Lead and edited by Jesse Martinez and Meredith Badler.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado Arts Policy Framework, developed through the collaborative efforts of the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) and Empowered Consulting, outlines a comprehensive vision for advancing arts, culture, and creative industries across the state. Grounded in input from over 807 creative workers and advocates, this Framework aims to represent the collective vision of Colorado’s creative community.

It recognizes the profound role that arts and culture play in shaping the social fabric, economic vitality, and collective identity of communities. At its core, this framework is an affirmation that the arts are not merely an ornamental aspect of society but a fundamental driver of human expression, innovation, and connection.

We hope this framework can serve as a crucial vision for preserving and nurturing the unique cultural landscape of Colorado. It explores the vitality of the creative industry for economic thriving, community connection, and preserving diverse histories. Identifies the importance of teaching soft and hard creative skills both for wellbeing and craftsmanship. And advocates for the support necessary to realize this vision of investing in a creative workforce.

FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW | The full “[Arts Policy Framework](#)” can be viewed on page 11. Participants identified four key priorities to fostering a thriving creative sector in Colorado:



THRIVING ARTS COMMUNITIES

Investing in the availability and accessibility of arts within communities is crucial for fostering cultural vitality and connectedness. This includes supporting municipal-arts partnerships, protecting dedicated arts spaces, and ensuring that the arts are woven into the everyday lives of residents.



CREATIVE ECONOMY

Recognizing the arts as a key driver of economic innovation and resilience, the framework calls for strategic investments in the creative economy. This involves creating sustainable funding models, supporting infrastructure development, and positioning the creative sector as a central actor in economic and tourism strategies.



LIVABILITY FOR CREATIVE WORKERS

Underscores the importance of addressing the basic needs and professional support of creative workers. Ensuring that artists have access to affordable housing, fair compensation, and professional development opportunities is essential for sustaining a vibrant creative sector.



SUSTAINING ARTS LEARNING

Education is the foundation of cultural sustainability. The framework advocates for the expansion of arts education across all levels, from early childhood to lifelong learning, and the integration of arts into broader educational and career pathways.

These strategic priorities and the suggested strategies for achieving them demonstrate Colorado Creative sectors’ commitment to democratizing culture, an inclusive cultural landscape, sustainable art practices, and cross collaboration.

This commitment is not one that can be achieved alone. This document calls for a collective commitment to nurturing the arts as a vital public good that enhances the individual and community well-being. By embracing this framework, Colorado can achieve a future where the arts are recognized not only for their intrinsic value but also as essential drivers of societal transformation, economic prosperity, and the preservation of cultural heritage. We hope this report will prompt you to ask: “What does the creative industry mean to my community?” and act: “How can I act to preserve, expand, and embed that role?”

PROJECT METHODS

About the Project Team

This project was led by the [Colorado Business Committee for the Arts](#) (CBCA) and [Empowered Consulting Group](#). It was supported by CBCA's Policy Framework Working Group.

- ◆ **Celia Gottlieb**, Project Lead– *Empowered Consulting Group*
- ◆ **Meredith Badler**, Client Lead– *Colorado Business Committee for the Arts*
- ◆ **Jesse Martinez**, Engagement Facilitator– *Empowered Consulting Group*



CBCA's Policy Framework Working Group was integral to this project. We would like to recognize and thank the following people for their contributions, perspective, and support:

- ◆ **Betty Hart**– *Facilitator, Actor and Director*
- ◆ **Dagny McKinley**– *Writer and Executive Director of Undiscovered Earth*
- ◆ **Daisy Fodness-McGowan**– *Visual Artist, Educator, and Executive Director of Think360*
- ◆ **Gabriel Rodriguez**– *Adams County Dep. Director of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts; Former Marine Corps Infantry*
- ◆ **John Clark**– *Ridgway's Mac Doctor and Mayor, glass artist, photographer, cyclist, and music lover*
- ◆ **Kathryn Waggener**– *Executive Director of Durango Creative District, Adjunct Professor, and Visual Artist*
- ◆ **Kennedy Pugh**– *Grassroots Organizer with One Colorado, Vocalist, and Theatrical Performer*

To develop the arts policy framework, the Empowered research team, led by Celia Gottlieb and facilitated by Jesse Martinez, followed a structured process that involved multiple steps, each designed to gather and analyze input from the community and stakeholders. Overall these included: Community Input, Working Group Development, Key Interviews, Focus Groups, Qualitative Coding, and Framework Development.

Phase 1: Community Input Survey In 2023, CBCA launched the "Community Input Survey" to gather insights from a broad audience. The survey was open from June 1, 2023, to January 2, 2024. After the survey closed, [Corona Insights](#) analyzed the data to identify patterns, understand demographic and geographic response trends, simplify open-ended responses, and visualize the data. 677 creative workers across Colorado participated in the survey.

Phase 2: Working Group Development In May 2024, a Policy Framework Working Group assisted with interview and focus group recruitment, focus group design, perspective sharing, and framework articulation. The group met regularly to support the project's progress. Working Group members included Betty Hart, Dagny McKinley, Daisy McGowan, Gabe Rodriguez, John Clark, Kathryn Waggener, and Kennedy Pugh. Members were nominated by CBCA's Policy Committee and Empowered Consulting and selected to include diverse perspectives from career artists, Creative District directors, local government officials, and grassroots activists.

Phase 3: Key Interviews In April and May 2024, we conducted 11 interviews with questions based on survey findings, focusing on issues of importance and points for clarity. Questions were specialized for each participant. Interviewees were selected based on areas with low survey participation and desired equitable creative sector representation (i.e. race, medium, experience). A \$25 donation was made to organizations of Interviewees' choosing for providing feedback. The interviews were AI transcribed and manually coded using the main themes from the survey: Education, Affordability/Accessibility, Funding, Non-Urban Issues, and Other.

Phase 4: Focus Groups We conducted eight focus groups in various locations, including CCI Creative District, El Sistema Mini Session, BIPOC Front Range Voices, Greeley, Mancos, La Junta, Glenwood Springs, and Arts Educators of All. Three focus groups (CCI Creative Districts, BIPOC Front Range, and Arts Educators of All) were held virtually to increase participation and accessibility. The rest were in-person, with meals provided. Spanish-speaking translation services were available for

Glenwood Springs participants. The questions for these groups were designed based on interview findings, gaps in understanding, local perspectives, and recommendations from the working group ([Appendix A](#)).

These sessions, titled "**Creative Dialogues: Imagining the Future of Arts and Culture in Colorado**," included legislative updates, statewide resource sharing and focus group "listening." During "listening," participants responded to prepared questions collectively and on capture sheets, which were utilized for additional notes and optional demographic sharing. Participant recruitment included relational organizing, direct outreach, earned media, and general flyers ([Appendix B](#)).



Step 5: Qualitative Coding All interview and focus group transcripts were processed using AI and manually edited. They were then manually coded in Google Sheets. Over 790 individual quotes were coded during this process. These quotes were grouped by potential framework focus areas and assigned themes, summaries, and policy implications, as appropriate. Synthesis of the quote groups was done both manually and with AI, a process known as human-in-the-loop (HITL) qualitative coding.

Step 6: Framework Development Using the summaries, subtopics, and individual quotes, lead researcher Celia Gottlieb developed the framework's structure and content. The qualitative summaries and proposed framework content were presented to the Working Group in three drafting stages. The Working Group provided feedback on language and accessibility, and added their professional and experiential perspectives.

Step 7: Framework Finalization and Report Writing Based on feedback from the Working Group and final coding reviews, the framework was finalized. Policy research was conducted on the identified issues and solutions to make internal policy recommendations to CBCA and their lobbyist. Internal and external reports were authored to outline the process, articulate the findings, and share the framework.



PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **834 people contributed to the development of this community-informed Arts Policy Framework** through survey, interview, focus groups, and working group participation. Some survey respondents and focus group participants opted in to share their demographic data answering the questions in ([Appendix C](#)).

The engagement process was **intentionally designed to garner diverse participation** across region, race, artistic mediums, and under-resourced communities. This was pursued through the selection of listening session locations and themes, direct outreach, relational organizing, and event messaging.

The Colorado Business Committee for the Arts values individuals with different backgrounds, identities and experiences and believes that inclusive processes foster growth for everyone. They continue to improve their processes to be more inclusive and recognize there is always opportunity for more and better engagement with underrepresented groups, and that it takes continuous, genuine engagement to build those trusting relationships.

BY THE NUMBERS | Participation in survey and focus groups based on opt-in demographic sharing.

A total of 693 or 83% of survey and focus group participants answered some or all of the demographic questions.

- **72%** of participants identify as **Female**.
- **41%** of participants reside **outside of the Denver Metro Area**.
- **28%** of participants **do not identify as White**.
- **17%** of participants identify as **LGBTQIA+**.
- **14%** of participants identify as a **person with a disability**.
- **11%** of participants identify as **Latino/Hispanic or Spanish Origin**.

To learn more about participant demographics, please view [Appendix D](#).

Focus group locations, themes, and outreach partners were selected to account for gaps and inequities in survey participation. This included:

1. A BIPOC Front Range and El Sistema listening session due to BIPOC Metro underrepresentation in the survey.
2. Selecting Greeley as a site to engage with a Front Range community with proximity to Metro hubs but a prominent agriculture community– also underrepresented in the survey.
3. Mancos was selected with the goal of engaging more indigenous voices and Creative District representatives. The project team was not successful in soliciting engagement of the Mountain Ute indicating a need for continuous engagement and relationship building with this community.
4. Glenwood Springs was selected because despite CBCA's strong relationships in the area there is a lack of connection with the prominent Latino community.
5. La Junta was selected because of survey participation gaps in the Eastern Plains and because it is a small town without a large tourism economy.
6. The Educators of All group was hosted online to garner participation across the state. While over 45 individuals across the state registered, mostly Denver Metro individuals participated. Future scheduling should aim to host educator engagement outside of summer break.

“We need to make arts a priority in the hearts and minds of people. There needs to be a mental shift of seeing it as valuable and worthwhile to pursue– even if it’s a hobby. Shifting the conversation of the importance and benefits of arts professionally, economically, intrinsically is really important.”

– Interview Participant

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COLORADO'S ARTS POLICY FRAMEWORK

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DESIRED IMPACT | This framework represents the state and local policy priorities Colorado's creative sector identified as necessary to foster a creatively engaged, inclusive, and thriving society where creatives flourish and the arts play a central role in community, education, economy, and well-being.

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*This includes: community size; community resources; geographic position; residential diversity; historic spaces; historic marginalization.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | To foster a creatively engaged society, the following strategic priorities shall be considered.

PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Thriving Arts Communities	Creative Economy	Livability for Creative Workers	Sustaining Arts Learning

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Thriving Arts Communities

Arts Availability in Communities

Root the arts in local communities to enhance availability, accessibility, and awareness of the arts.

Municipal-Arts Partnerships: *Mutually beneficial relationships between local government and artists/cultural organizations are cultivated through promising practices for artist procurement, government roles/commissions for arts and culture, and local level programs to share funding and public art projects.*

Dedicated Arts Spaces: *Independent and co-use spaces for arts creation, engagement, and purchasing are developed, protected, and affordable.*

Creative Information Hub: *Information access for patrons and creative workers is improved through a centralized hub with an event calendar, resource directory, and a database of artists, as well as investment in community journalism.*

Reduced Barriers for Events: *Local event costs are mitigated through reduced government fees, permit streamlining, and increased flexibility (i.e. CDOT fees, liquor licenses, zoning).*

Address Basic Needs for Arts Access: *The arts will not be accessible to individuals who live and work in communities so long as their basic human needs are not met (i.e. cost of living, transportation, healthcare, food insecurity, digital access, workers rights). These issues should be identified by localities and addressed through cross-coalition advocacy.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Thriving Arts Communities (Cont.)

Community and Individual Well-Being

Cultivate community and individual well-being, belonging, and connection to local heritage.

Quality of Life and Mental Health: *The arts are leveraged as a tool to support mental health including mitigating social issues, stress, and social isolation.*

Community Building: *The arts build stronger networks and connections that cultivate belonging and collaboration across differences in communities.*

Community-Relevant Experiences: *Creative endeavors are guided by local residents and prioritize the expression of locally underrepresented artists.*

Cultural Heritage Preservation: *Buildings, land, and traditional arts practices representative of Colorado history are understood through long-term relationship building and preserved through funding and skill sharing.**

**Cultures may include but are not limited to: Indigenous, Latino, Chicano, Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+ Rural, Ranching, Mining, and Railroad.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Creative Economy

Strategic Investment in the Creative Economy

Financially invest in and develop infrastructure for creative workers, businesses, and organizations, and the communities where they are located.

Sustainable Funding and Grants: *Funding for the ongoing work of artists, local arts initiatives, co-use spaces, maintenance costs, arts learning, creative workforce and infrastructure development, staffing costs, and more.*

Infrastructure Investment: *Co-use and independent infrastructure development and preservation for arts creation, display, performance, and engagement.*

Economic Development and Planning: *State and local entities are incentivized and trained to incorporate the arts into regional planning and economic development projects.*

Creative Sector as an Economic Driver

Embed and elevate the creative sectors' role in economic development and vital impact on business and tourism.

Business and Tourism: *Creative economy actors are at the table in decisions about and strategy for tourism, business, state/local development, and rural economy.*

Cross-Sector Collaboration: *The creative sector is embedded into policy areas, sectors, and practices on the state and local level (i.e. science, technology, education, business, health, community development, transportation).*

Visibility and Promotion: *The arts are publicly recognized as valuable and impactful through marketing campaigns, road signage, and coordinated financial support for marketing initiatives by localities and arts organizations.*

Creative Project Incentives: *Creative industry incentives are long-term and stabilized and permitting processes are simplified to attract and retain creative sector projects (i.e. tax credits, intellectual property protection, streamlined permitting, creative enterprise guarantees, sales tax incentives).*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: **Livability for Creative Workers**

Affordability for Creative Workers

Mitigate the issues of affordability impacting all Coloradans through cross-coalition advocacy that addresses the specialized needs of creative workers.

Housing for Creatives: *Creative workers are included in affordable housing plans to ensure they can live in the communities in which they work and meet basic needs.*

Creative Resources and Space: *Publicly owned, low-cost, or resource sharing options for studio space, storage facilities, and medium diverse materials are accessible to creatives.*

Fair and Transparent Compensation: *Fair and competitive salaried, hourly and contractual work is enabled through salary eligible grants, pay transparency policies, and artist fair pay guidelines.*

AI and Creative Rights: *Artists' livelihoods and skills are prioritized with protections for human-made work (i.e. ownership or attribution policies, transparent labeling, royalty systems, compensation funds).*

Professional Support for Creatives

Cater relevant professional development for creatives that enhances capacity, business vitality, arts leadership and support networks.

Individual Capacity Building: *Artists have the skills and resources to manage finances, build a business, charge for services, and market themselves.*

Operational Skills: *Creative industry leaders run organizations effectively with long-term financial strategies, community engagement, and strategic management.*

Cultivating Arts Leaders: *New leaders in the arts are cultivated and receive equitable access to professional development resources, mentorships and sustainable positions.*

Networks of Support: *Creative workers are connected and collaborate through collaborative grants, guilds, and communication networks.*

Equitable and Sustainable Arts Ecosystem: *Arts organizations of varying sizes have the financial, spacial, and administrative resources necessary to ensure a sustainable ecosystem rich with opportunities for entering the field, skillbuilding, and growth.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: **Sustaining Arts Learning**

PreK-12 Arts Learning

Expand, improve, mandate, and fund PreK-12 public arts programs to support student success, creative experiences, and creative workforce development in all schools.

Requirements, Standards and Curriculum: *Arts learning is required in education statutes, evaluated on performance frameworks, and incorporated cross-curricularly in Colorado public schools.*

Dedicated Funding: *State-level dedicated funding for arts learning works to equalize arts access, address teacher wages, account for materials access, and expand CDE arts staff.*

Access and Impact Data Collection: *Data from every school district is collected by the state to understand statewide availability, equity and impact of the arts.*

Teacher and Admin Training and Awareness: *Diverse educators with specialized arts learning licensure are available to fulfill arts learning requirements and administrators are trained to understand how to scale and evaluate arts learning programs.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Sustaining Arts Learning (Cont.)

Lifelong Arts Learning

Enable and encourage arts learning for people of all ages and the exchange of creative skills to sustain arts practices and careers across generations.

Out-of-School Learning: *Out of school learning opportunities are available at low-no cost and include multilingual experiences that are culturally relevant and expand access to arts materials.*

Early Childhood, Adult, and Older Adult Learning: *Programs for early childhood, adults, and older adults are more widely available and promote community cultural knowledge, connection to place, and skills sharing.*

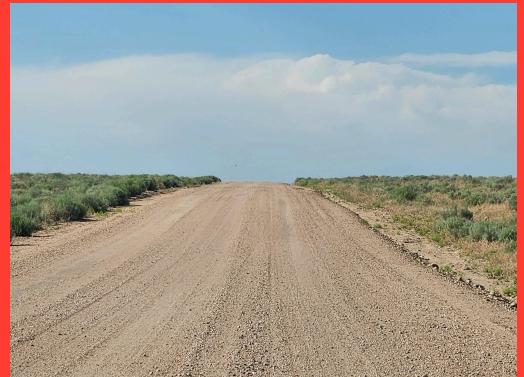
Higher Education and Career Pathways: *Career pathways for young professionals, training for future arts educators and teaching artists, and interdisciplinary learning across vocations.*

Apprenticeships and Cultural Preservation: *Creative and cultural skills are preserved and shared through funded apprenticeship programs and workforce development in fine, cultural, and technical arts.*



Become an arts advocate with the **Colorado Arts Action Network** 

Click [here](#) to join the Colorado Arts Action Network



EXPLORE THE FINDINGS

To understand how the “Strategic Priorities” were identified and defined, you can explore the findings below. This section includes: (1) **Definitions of Values and Strategic Priorities**; (2) **Colorado Community Perspective**– State and local issues and solutions identified by survey, interview, focus group, and working group participants; (3) **State-Level Approaches**– Recommendations from the research team on how to address these issues on the state-level.

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PART I: EXPLORE THE VALUES

These “Values” were selected because they were top themes in the data. While they were not tangible issues or solutions, they were identified as necessary elements in devising state and local solutions.

VALUES | Regardless of policy area, policies should be aligned with the following aims or processes.

LOCALLY & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE	FOSTER COLLABORATION	ALL ART FOR ALL PEOPLE	TRANSPARENCY
We support policies that recognize, engage, and adapt to the unique geographic needs and cultural identities of local communities.*	We support policies that foster collaboration and leverage shared resources among different art forms, organizations, private and public sectors, and advocacy groups.	We support policies that eliminate barriers to allow all people to experience, create, heal, and express through all art forms.	We support policies that transparently distribute programmatic, financial, and informational resources, based on individual and community needs.

**This includes: community size; community resources; geographic position; residential diversity; historic spaces; historic marginalization.*

Summary of “Locally and Culturally Responsive” Findings

*We support policies that recognize, engage, and adapt to the unique geographic needs and cultural identities of local communities.**

**This includes: community size; community resources; geographic position; residential diversity; historic spaces; historic marginalization.*

This value is based on the following:

- ◆ Regional differences of size, demographics, culture, and resources require adaptable policies and funding opportunities. Regional challenges may include: small economy, seasonal economy, isolation, small population, gentrification, lack of space, transportation, etc.
- ◆ Funding disparities often reflect the resources and prioritization of certain communities. Limited local political capital, geographic isolation, and lack of economy for tax initiatives were identified as drivers of these disparities.
- ◆ Empowerment of local entities builds buy-in and more authentic initiatives. Municipalities should be trained in the importance of investment in the arts and resourced to act in support.
- ◆ Equity was defined by participants as addressing the lived experiences and needs of different communities. They identified that rigid procedures do not satisfy these goals, advocating for intuitive and flexible approaches.



“Colorado is huge. The San Luis Valley where I live is a space larger than the state of Connecticut. When local communities are empowered to make decisions about what is happening in the community—whether it is arts related or education or otherwise—you get more buy-in and more genuine projects.”

Summary of “Foster Collaboration” Findings

We support policies that foster collaboration and leverage shared resources among different art forms, organizations, private and public sectors and advocacy groups.

This value is based on the following:

- ◆ Reduction of silos and need for staff or funding focused on collaborative conversations, events, and planning.
- ◆ Bridge venues, arts organizations, and grassroots groups to diversify the arts scene, produce new opportunities, and create intersectional work through cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- ◆ Shared spaces where artists can gather, work, interact, and collaborate should be preserved and developed through designated leases, protected development, and dedicated staffing.
- ◆ Advocacy should be approached collaboratively with coalitions focused on issues impacting all Coloradans, including artists such as affordability, housing, and transportation

"My ideal state of the arts industry in Colorado is collaborative. We need to see more intersectionality between different art forms. Collaboration especially needs to be pursued with high profile organizations and smaller organizations without the idea of competition for scarce funds and resources."

Summary of “All Art for all People” Findings

We support policies that eliminate barriers to allow all people to experience, create, heal and express through all art forms.

This value is based on the following:

- ◆ Accessibility requires affordability, representation, welcoming spaces, and meaningful engagement for all, especially historically underrepresented and low-income families.
- ◆ Support and celebrate diversity of art forms, including folk, heritage, and traditional arts, and mediums.
- ◆ Welcoming spaces inclusive of people and art forms build understanding and collaboration.
- ◆ Affordable programs, venues, and tickets are necessary for attendance of the local community and building local buy-in of arts infrastructure and development, which is often seen as a tourist attraction.
- ◆ Accessibility means enabling people to create the art they are already creating, engaging with, or historically connected to. It should not be about bringing lower resourced or isolated individuals to existing arts spaces dominated by Western definitions of excellence.
- ◆ Perceptions that art is only for elites, not career serving, or inaccessible must be mitigated through expanding opportunities, intentional communication with people of all walks of life, and developing career pathways.

"There is complete accessibility to the arts currently as long as you know where it is, as long as you can afford to go there, as long as you have the means to get there, as long as you feel accepted once you get there. We need to work on those areas to make all art for all people."

Summary of “Transparency” Findings

We support policies that distribute programmatic, financial, and informational resources with transparency and based on individual and community needs.

This value is based on the following:

- ◆ Across the state, creatives struggle with information access including knowing about funding opportunities, development support, policy decisions, and grants decision making processes. Make these processes transparent.
- ◆ Policies should be community-informed and therefore driven by the publics’ definition of excellence and local insight.
- ◆ Recognize the broad spectrum of people within communities. People of many skill sets, socioeconomics, and understandings of the creative sector should be engaged in policy development.
- ◆ Resources should be distributed based on economic barriers, professional support gaps, and program scarcity.
- ◆ Arts are a necessary force of individual and collective becoming, awareness, and justice.



“We need better transparency when it comes to decision making and leadership on the state level. There have been a lot of shifts in leadership and decisions made without a lot of clarity. Access to resources and decisions about funding– information in general needs to be shared clearly. Why did you decide that was equitable? What is your desired funding distribution? Where are you hoping these funds go?”

PART 2: EXPLORE THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

These “Strategic Priorities” were identified by participants as areas key to building a thriving creative industry: (1) Thriving Arts Communities; (2) Creative Economy; (3) Livability for Creative Workers; (4) Sustaining Arts Learning. Each Strategic Priority is broken down into two sub-priorities with suggested strategies for achieving the goal outlined in the Priority Statement. This section is structured as follows:

[EXAMPLE]

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: **Area Key to Thriving Creative Industry**

Sub-Priority	Suggested Strategies:
Priority statement structured as the ideal state identified by participants	Strategy 1
	Strategy 2
	Strategy 3

Summary of “Sub Priority”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Strategy 1: *Ideal state that would be achieved or opportunities that would be produced by successfully implementing this strategy.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ A description of what participants shared in defining this issue and potential solutions.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ Based on the Community Perspective, this section suggests state-level policy, departmental, and other strategies for approaching this work identified by the research team.
- ◆ State-level approaches do not represent CBCA’s legislative agenda but may help to inform future priorities.
- ◆ Some of these approaches may already be in process or practice in Colorado but participants’ lack of awareness may demonstrate a need to increase community awareness or adjust state-level approach.

“Quote here from a participant exemplifying the section. Some quotes may be edited for clarity.”

STRATEGIC PRIORITY I: Thriving Arts Communities

<p>Arts Availability in Communities</p> <p>Root the arts in local communities to enhance availability, accessibility, and awareness of the arts.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Municipal-Arts Partnerships
	Dedicated Arts Spaces
	Creative Information Hub
	Reduced Barriers for Events
	Address Basic Needs for Arts Access

Summary of “Arts Availability in Communities”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Municipal-Arts Partnerships: *Mutually beneficial relationships between local government and artists/cultural organizations are cultivated through promising practices for artist procurement, government roles/commissions for arts and culture, and local level programs to share funding and public art projects.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Paid roles for arts and culture or local arts commission should be incorporated into local government.
- ◆ Municipalities often do not understand proper procurement and contracting processes with artists, including consistent compensation and support for artists.
- ◆ Locality-specific funding for arts and culture means that there are often large funding inequities, even within a single county. Creating processes for sharing funds between localities or raising capital on the county level could ensure a more equitable distribution of public art and programming.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **State Arts Grants for Municipalities:** Matching fund grants for municipalities that partner with local artists and cultural organizations for public art projects, arts commissions, or cultural programming.
- ◆ **Cultural Liaison Roles:** Establish a state-funded, locally managed cultural liaison program where individuals are embedded in local governments to bridge the government and arts community. These positions could be tasked with managing public art projects, coordinating with local artists and/or guilds, and developing cultural programming that reflects the community's needs.
- ◆ **Statewide Guidelines for Artist Procurement and Contracting:** Develop and distribute guidelines on promising practices for artist procurement and contracting. These guidelines may include standardized contract templates, fair pay scales, and tips for supporting artists through the procurement process.
- ◆ **Training Programs for Municipal Staff:** Offer training programs for municipal staff on the procurement of artists and the management of arts projects. This could include workshops on best practices, legal considerations, and how to effectively engage and support local artists.
- ◆ **County-Level Arts Funding Pools:** Establish or encourage the creation of county-level arts funding pools that distribute funds equitably across municipalities. This could be supported by state incentives for counties that adopt equitable funding practices, ensuring that smaller or less wealthy communities receive arts funding.

*"Connect public art across the valley, even where there is less money and donors.
The locals deserve that investment. For example, reflective murals in Aspen and in Rifle."*

Dedicated Arts Spaces: *Independent and co-use spaces for arts creation, engagement, and purchasing are developed, protected and affordable.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Space for art creation helps build a community appreciation and value-perception of the arts.
- ◆ Shared spaces should be designed to meet the specific needs of various art forms, including studios, rehearsal spaces, galleries, and performance venues.
- ◆ Dedicated arts spaces must be protected from displacement due to property values or redevelopment.
- ◆ These spaces must be affordable.
- ◆ There is a high need to support and develop venues where people can engage with and purchase art (i.e. markets, pop-up galleries, community arts centers).

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Designated Arts Spaces:** Establish long-term leases, community land trusts, or designate arts spaces as protected cultural assets.
- ◆ **Space Affordability:** Provide subsidies, offer sliding-scale rental rates, or secure funding to keep costs low.
- ◆ **Expand Cultural Facilities Funding:** Provide grants for the acquisition, design, repair, and construction of cultural facilities (i.e. [Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund](#))
- ◆ **State-Owned Venues:** Invest in the construction or renovation of cultural venues, such as theaters, galleries, studios, and community arts centers that are state-owned. These venues should be strategically located in underserved areas, including rural and BIPOC communities, where access to such facilities is limited.

"If we were to invest in preserving art spaces, for example through a 100-year dedicated lease or designated Community Land Trust, we could have long-term studios and space that are dedicated to artists, learning, and performance. Then we wouldn't always be in fear and need to protect that space."

Creative Information Hub: *Information access for patrons and creative workers is improved through a centralized hub with an event calendar, resource directory, and a database of artists, as well as investment in community journalism.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ A user-friendly, centralized platform (i.e. website, app) that aggregates all relevant information related to arts and culture within the state and across communities would support creative workers and patrons.
- ◆ Include a calendar of events that can be leveraged by patrons and organizers, to reduce simultaneous events competing for similar patrons and enhance awareness of events among patrons.
- ◆ Include a searchable database of local artists, arts organizations, and resources to facilitate connection for collaborations and commissions.
- ◆ The artist database could include self-designations of race, ethnicity, additional identities, skills and/or artistic approach to ease searchability for specific project needs.
- ◆ Utilize information hub to centralize resources (i.e. grants, workshops, and spaces).
- ◆ Community journalism was also identified as vital for equitable information sharing and equity.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Community Journalism:** Partnerships between the state and local media outlets to ensure consistent and thorough coverage of arts and culture. This should include state-supported funding for dedicated arts reporters or collaborations with public radio and television stations to highlight cultural events and stories.

- ◆ **Cultural Tourism Integration:** Collaborate with the state’s tourism office to integrate the Creative Information Hub with existing tourism platforms to promote cultural events and attractions.
- ◆ **Legislation for Public Information Access:** Pass legislation that mandates the inclusion of arts and cultural information in public access platforms. This would ensure that the Creative Information Hub is recognized as an essential public service, similar to state tourism or economic development platforms.
- ◆ **Cultural Access Fund:** Establish a dedicated Cultural Access Fund to ensure the sustainability of the hub. This fund could be supported by a combination of state appropriations, user fees, and private donations. It would cover the costs of platform development, content generation, technology integration, and marketing.
- ◆ **Resources for Artists:** Creative Information Hub shall include comprehensive business resources for artists including templates for contracts, guides on setting up an LLC, pricing calculators, and access to a directory of legal and financial advisors who specialize in the arts (i.e. [Massachusetts Cultural Council Resources](#)).

State examples of Information Hubs include: New York (NYCulture); California (California Arts Network); Vermont (Arts Calendar and Directory); Ohio (Event Finder); Connecticut (Culture Connect). These programs are funded through: state appropriations; NEA grants matched by state funds; public-private partnerships; sin and income tax revenue; regional foundations; in-kind contributions from tech companies (consider Liberty Global CO HQ).

"We need a central area or website you can go to in order to see what's going on. People do want to stay in their small community but then they don't know what's happening due to poor advertisement and lack of capacity."

Reduced Barriers for Events: Local event costs are mitigated through reduced government fees, permit streamlining, and increased flexibility (i.e. CDOT fees, liquor licenses, zoning).

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Complex or expensive permitting processes inhibit creative projects. Permits mentioned included CDOT road closures, public art, temporary installations, zoning requirements, inspections, noise permits, and film.
- ◆ Event permits can require multiple applications that are uncoordinated. A unified permitting process could include noise, street closure, and alcohol sales.
- ◆ Explore cost waivers or sliding scale for these fees based on event size, nature, or non-profit sponsors.
- ◆ Work with state and local governments to reduce or subsidize the fees charged by CDOT for road closures associated with local events (i.e. special grants or funds to cover these costs for community events).
- ◆ Flexible, affordable, or temporary liquor licensing options for small events were advocated for.
- ◆ Designated zones where events are pre-approved and establish a streamlined process for obtaining zoning variances for cultural and artistic zones should be created.
- ◆ Infrastructure that supports local events (i.e. designated loading zones, parking, accessible spaces) is needed.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Designated Cultural District Zoning:** Integrate arts and culture into zoning and land use planning, especially in municipalities that are designated Cultural Districts. These ‘Cultural Event Zones’ could operate similarly to [New Jersey’s Urban Enterprise Zones](#) where businesses, including arts organizations, benefit from reduced fees and streamlined processes.
- ◆ **Statewide Event Coordination and Management:** Develop an office or committee that coordinates all application processes for event permits across various state/city agencies.
- ◆ **Unified Permitting System:** Implement a unified, statewide permitting system that consolidates all necessary approvals into a single application process (i.e. [Minnesota Arts Project Permitting](#)). This would reduce the administrative burden on creative projects and encourage more public art and performances.
- ◆ **Sliding Scale Permits:** Offer sliding scale fees for some event permits depending on the size and nature of the event (i.e. [Washington State Special Events Office](#)).

- ◆ **Grants for Event Fees:** Grants shall include coverage or reduction of public event fees for non-profit arts organizations (i.e. [Cultural Community Partnership \(CCP\) Grants in Minnesota](#)).
- ◆ **Temporary Liquor Licensing:** Policies for festivals and events that allow for flexible or temporary terms and reduced fees (i.e. [Oregon's Special Event Liquor License](#)).

"We have lost 4 major events because all of the grant money ends up just going back into the government. Same with the Liquor Licensing Board. Their fee has gotten up to at least \$75. It's \$1,500 to close the road."

Address Basic Needs for Arts Access: *The arts will not be accessible to individuals who live and work in communities so long as their basic human needs are not met (i.e. cost of living, transportation, healthcare, food insecurity, digital access, workers rights). These issues should be identified by localities and addressed through cross-coalition advocacy.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Addressing affordability for artists and patrons of the arts requires cross-coalitional advocacy that identifies and spans issues beyond those directly connected to arts and culture to lower general costs of living.
- ◆ Arts access includes access to patroning the arts and creating the arts, for pleasure or professionally.
- ◆ Arts programs must be affordable to individuals who live and work in communities. This may include reduced ticket prices, scholarships for arts learning, and discounts for locals.
- ◆ Policies that make housing more affordable such as rent control, affordable housing initiatives, and subsidies for basic utilities will enable individuals to live in thriving arts communities.
- ◆ Expanding and improving public transportation options makes it easier for people to attend events, engage with the arts, and access essential services.
- ◆ Digital access enables more engagement with digital art and creativity. Broadband access should be continually expanded alongside programs to improve digital health and training for artists.
- ◆ Stronger labor rights, including fair wages, paid leave, and shorter work weeks enable people to create and engage more in the arts.
- ◆ Other social issues may include food security and affordable healthcare access, which cultivate healthy communities which are better able to engage in the arts.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Work Week Reductions:** States, such as California, New York, Washington, continue to explore 4-day work weeks to open up time for creative pursuits, cultural engagement, and community participation.
- ◆ **Living Wage Initiatives:** New York State has implemented living wage policies that help ensure all workers, including artists, can afford basic living expenses. This policy would improve financial stability allowing individuals to engage in the creative sector.
- ◆ **“Right to Disconnect” Bill:** Although primarily a [city initiative in NYC](#), this policy ensures that employees are not required to respond to work communications outside of work hours. This would allow workers to have clearer boundaries between work and personal time, enabling them to engage in arts and cultural activities.
- ◆ **Arts Pass:** Develop an “Arts Pass” that residents can purchase at a low cost, granting them access to a variety of arts events throughout the year. This could be available to non-benefit eligible but lower-income families. Other options may include: grants or matching private donations to subsidize ticket price; grants to enable sliding scale pricing; funding for libraries to purchase and distribute tickets.
- ◆ **State-Level Digital Literacy:** Leverage federal funding, such as the [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) program](#), to enhance digital literacy. Focus on rural areas where artists can benefit from online platforms for showcasing their work and engaging with broader audiences.

***"Affordability should be a conversation about socioeconomic status—not art.
When it comes to these issues the solutions need to be coalition-based. I'm not for affordable housing for artists. I'm for affordable housing that artists are eligible for."***



STRATEGIC PRIORITY I: Thriving Arts Communities

Community and Individual Well-Being Cultivate community and individual well-being, belonging, and connection to local heritage.	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Quality of Life and Mental Health
	Community Building
	Cultural Heritage Preservation
	Community-Relevant Experiences

Summary of “Community and Individual Well-Being”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Quality of Life and Mental Health: *The arts are leveraged as a tool to support mental health including mitigating social issues, stress, and social isolation.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ The arts should be utilized as an alternative mental health treatment to encourage individuals to express emotions, process trauma, and manage stress. For example: art, music, and drama therapy.
- ◆ Social isolation can be addressed through community arts projects, group performances, and collaborative art-making proven to reduce loneliness and increase supportive networks.
- ◆ Amplify the arts for mental health awareness and stigma reduction through installations, performances, and campaigns that foster open mental health dialogues.
- ◆ Local health programs partnership to enact Prescription for Arts policies and programs are favorable.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Prescription for Arts:** Collaborate with healthcare providers to implement programs where doctors can prescribe participation in arts activities as part of mental health treatment. This should include vouchers for participation and designated programs with trauma informed teaching artists.
- ◆ **Mental Health Integration:** Allocate state funds for the integration of the arts into mental health services. This would establish grants for mental health providers to partner with local artists and arts organizations to create programs that use art therapy and creative expression as part of mental health treatment plans (i.e. [California’s Mental Health Services Act \(MHSA\)](#)). This must include funding for art therapists, community-based arts projects, and public art installations that address mental health issues.
- ◆ **Public Health Campaigns:** Fund and promote statewide campaigns that use the arts to raise awareness about mental health related issues and encourage open conversations. This could include public art installations, performances, and exhibitions that focus on mental health themes. Funding must include partnerships with mental health professionals, artists fees, cultural organization facilitation, community outreach, and marketing.
- ◆ **Rural Communities:** Enabling these programs in rural communities may include mobile art therapy units, arts-based health education programs, and the inclusion of artists in public health outreach teams.

“In Mesa County, we experience a suicide rate twice the national average. This is true across our rural communities in Colorado. In addition to this massive mental health epidemic, there’s a massive drug use epidemic. If we had more arts programming and venues, I think we would see this positively affected.”

Community Building: *The arts build stronger networks and connections that cultivate belonging and collaboration across differences in communities.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Shared spaces enable individuals to come together and engage in creative activities. These hubs for interaction help to build and strengthen networks within the community.
- ◆ The arts can serve as a neutral ground in which individuals from different social, economic, or cultural backgrounds converge. Through collaborative art projects, performances, and cultural events, the arts encourage dialogue and understanding, helping to bridge divides and reduce tensions.
- ◆ Intentional efforts must be made to engage underrepresented groups in the arts if you want to enrich the community's cultural landscape and ensure equitable access.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Cultural Equity Plan:** Develop a state Cultural Equity Plan that prioritizes funding for arts initiatives in underrepresented communities, ensuring that these groups have the resources to participate in and contribute to the state's cultural landscape. This would include data collection on gaps in arts availability, arts accessibility evaluation from diverse perspectives, a coordinated plan to address these gaps, cultivation of local skills to develop programs, and a funding pool to fill these gaps.
- ◆ **Community Impact Projects:** While Colorado already funds arts projects for community impact, these should be expanded. Create a state-level funding initiative similar to [Arizona's Art Tank](#), designed to support collaborative arts projects that aim to build bridges between different community groups based on socioeconomic, race, identity, or age. This funding could be used for cross-cultural festivals, joint art exhibitions, and other community-driven projects that foster understanding and collaboration.
- ◆ **Engagement Technical Assistance:** Develop state-sponsored workshops and training programs for arts organizations to learn how to engage underrepresented communities effectively. These programs could provide tools and strategies for inclusive outreach and programming, ensuring that the arts serve as a bridge between different social, economic, and cultural groups.
- ◆ **Funding for Engagement:** While training is vital, so too is funding. [California's Creative Corps](#) provides funding for artists and organizations to create work that directly engages communities.

"If we were to invest in space for artists to work and convene, we would be investing in those very networks that would enhance collaboration and community."

Community-Relevant Experience: *Creative endeavors are guided by local residents and prioritize the expression of locally underrepresented artists.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Creative initiatives should prioritize engagement with the voices and stories of locally underrepresented creatives (i.e. specific calls for submissions, offering workshops, hosting artist residencies).
- ◆ Art experiences that share and support the art forms that historically marginalized groups are already creating enhances equity and community relevance.
- ◆ Developing and maintaining accessible platforms (i.e. public art projects, community theaters, local galleries) for underrepresented artists to showcase their work is a community priority.
- ◆ Storytelling was identified by participants as a function of creativity and inclusion of underrepresented locals.
- ◆ Creative endeavors that are deeply rooted in the local context and reflect the unique identity, history, and culture of the community require involving local residents in planning, execution and celebration.

- ◆ Engage with local community members, including elders, cultural leaders, and grassroots organizations, to inform and guide community-relevance of projects.
- ◆ Programs that continuously support and uplift underrepresented artists are more impactful than one-off projects. (i.e. ongoing exhibitions, recurring storytelling events, annual festival)

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Minority Artist Funding:** Create a state-funded grant program specifically for underrepresented artists and creatives, providing financial support for projects that elevate the voices and stories of marginalized communities. This could include special grants for public art projects, residencies, and exhibitions that highlight the work of these artists.
- ◆ **Culturally Relevant Programs:** Establish a state fund to support ongoing cultural festivals, storytelling events, and other creative initiatives that highlight the traditions and contemporary expressions of underrepresented communities. This fund could provide multi-year grants to ensure the sustainability of these events.
- ◆ **Public Art Engagement:** Implement a policy that requires state-funded public art projects to include a component of community collaboration, ensuring that local voices are integrated into the creation process. This could involve workshops, town halls, or other forms of community engagement to guide the artistic process. There should be a set example process for this engagement.

“In terms of equity, so often the question is asked ‘how do we get young people to engage with art?’ ‘People of color to engage with art?’ ‘Insert these different communities to engage with art?’ ‘How do we get them to the symphony?’ And my response is: why don't you go to the art form that they're already creating instead of bussing them to ‘good’ art defined by eurocentric, westernized, inequitable standards?”

Cultural Heritage Preservation: *Buildings, land, and traditional arts practices representative of Colorado history are understood through long-term relationship building and preserved through funding and skill sharing.*

Cultures may include but are not limited to: Indigenous, Latino, Chicano, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+ Rural, Ranching, Mining, and Railroad.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Communities key to Colorado’s history include but are not limited to: Indigenous, Latino, Chicano, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, Rural, Ranching, Mining, Railroad. Building proactive relationships with these communities is vital to identifying the sites, cultural practices, and traditional arts that should be invested in for long-term cultural preservation.
- ◆ Funding for the preservation of cultural heritage sites, traditional arts, and historical practices is vital.
- ◆ Financial support to cultural institutions, organizations, and individual artists who are working to preserve and promote the heritage of key communities shall be provided.
- ◆ Programs that focus on teaching and passing down traditional skills and arts (i.e. apprenticeships, community workshops, school programs) should be formally developed. See [“Apprenticeships and Cultural Preservation.”](#)
- ◆ Document and archive traditional arts and cultural practices (i.e. digital archives, recording oral histories, research that preserves the knowledge and skills).
- ◆ Identifying and designating significant cultural sites (i.e. historical landmarks, traditional gathering places) will help to prevent displacement.
- ◆ Local communities should be empowered through tools and resources to take the lead in preserving their cultural spaces and heritage. Trust local designations of histories of significance.
- ◆ Collaboration between different cultural groups to share resources, knowledge, and practices such as joint cultural festivals, collaborative art projects, and shared use of cultural spaces is desired.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Site Preservation:** Prioritize state heritage preservation funds for projects to preserve and promote Colorado's diverse cultural heritage. This could include grants for the restoration of historic buildings, conservation of

traditional arts, and support for cultural festivals that celebrate Indigenous, Latino, Chicano, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, and other key communities in Colorado's history. A state-led community-informed inventory of local histories could help develop a rubric of priority groups for preservation.

- ◆ **Formal State-Level Cultural Heritage Programs:** Develop a more formalized state program or initiative dedicated specifically to cultural heritage preservation, ensuring that the preservation of intangible cultural practices (like traditional arts and crafts) is included alongside the preservation of physical sites.
- ◆ **Digital Archiving and Oral Histories:** Document and archive more intangible cultural heritage through digital archives, oral histories, and research that captures and preserves knowledge and skills. While this work is already pursued in the state, it should be made more sustainable and equitable by supporting partnerships of library archivists, community groups, and language access professionals.
- ◆ **Enable Local Leadership:** Provide tools, resources, and funding to local communities in Colorado to lead their own cultural preservation efforts. This could involve training programs on how to document and preserve cultural heritage, as well as grants for community-led preservation projects or partnerships with state-level professionals. Trusting local designations of histories of significance is key to this approach (i.e. [South Carolina's Art of Community: Rural SC](#)).

“There is a lot of isolation of the folk and heritage arts. They are working independently. There is no communal place for people to come together. Be seen together across race, ethnicity, and art practice. We need community performances that are multi-group and cross heritage”



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Creative Economy

<p>Strategic Investment in the Creative Economy</p> <p>Financially invest in and develop infrastructure for creative workers, businesses, and organizations, and the communities where they are located.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Sustainable Funding and Grants
	Infrastructure Investment
	Economic Development and Planning

Summary of “Strategic Investment in the Creative Economy”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Sustainable Funding and Grants: *Funding for the ongoing work of artists, local arts initiatives, co-use spaces, maintenance costs, arts learning, creative workforce and infrastructure development, staffing costs, and more.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Funding often precludes salaries for arts nonprofits and artists, creating challenges in staff and in supporting the ongoing work of artists.
- ◆ Securing funding for preservation and maintenance of co-use spaces is difficult due to non-ownership.
- ◆ Local arts initiatives are often dependent on municipal funding and can vary greatly within a single county. County and state-level initiatives were identified as more equalizing.
- ◆ Sustainable funding sources such as SCFD should be expanded regionally and also support nonprofit orgs.
- ◆ Longer-term grants enable more continuous programs, job security, and community engagement.
- ◆ Severance, impact and/or royalty taxes should be updated to include green/renewable energy sites which often benefit from rural community resources without providing significant economic benefit to those communities. Taxes collected should benefit local development and explicitly site arts and creative industry investment.
- ◆ Funding for creative workforce development including professional development and apprenticeships.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Green Energy Tax Investment:** Implement a policy that channels a portion of severance, impact, or royalty taxes from green/renewable energy projects directly into arts and culture. This approach would ensure that rural communities benefit from renewable energy projects via industry and infrastructure investments.
- ◆ **Multi-Year Grants:** Grow multi-year grant programs to support arts nonprofits and local arts initiatives, allowing for program continuity and sustainability. These grants would focus on operational costs, including salaries and benefits for staff, reducing reliance on short-term funding cycles.
- ◆ **SCFD Expansion:** Expand the SCFD model statewide, establishing regional opt-in funds. This would ensure that arts funding is more evenly distributed across the state. [South Carolina’s Cultural District](#) program provides a similar regional approach to arts funding, which could be adapted for Colorado’s needs.
- ◆ **Tax Incentives:** Provide tax incentives for businesses and developers that invest in public art and community cultural initiatives. This could include deductions or credits for funding local arts projects, maintaining co-use spaces, or commissioning public art.
- ◆ **Salary Funding:** Grants that support the salaries of artists, performers, and other cultural workers must be grown to make this work more sustainable.
- ◆ **State Appropriations:** Use state appropriation to directly fund arts organizations and activities in all counties, ensuring statewide arts support (i.e. [Ohio state appropriations](#)).

“Very few grants for paying artists exist. If there were more grants and funding to pay for actors, stage managers, and directors you would be able to better support peoples’ livelihood.”

Infrastructure Investment: *Co-use and independent infrastructure development and preservation for arts creation, display, performance, and engagement.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Infrastructure is seen as vital to growing programs, availability, and addressing perceptions of community access. Without access to space, it is difficult to grow programs to meet community needs.
- ◆ Studio space is not widely available in rural areas. Across all regions, it is prohibitively expensive and often focused on developer profits.
- ◆ Studio spaces, namely the Evan's School, were identified as not protected and often at risk of being dedicated to different use. Participants urged for dedicated leases or land trusts to preserve these spaces.
- ◆ Gallery showing is inaccessible to many due to the cost of showing work, elite clientele, or availability of spaces. Subsidized shared studio and gallery spaces were identified as desirable.
- ◆ Publicly owned, general co-use and independently owned spaces for performance are necessary to support a balanced, sustainable, and equitable arts ecosystem with scaffolded opportunities.
- ◆ A lack of publicly owned theaters and spaces to create is harming arts access.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Cultural Facilities Fund:** Establish a state-level Cultural Facilities Fund similar to those in [Massachusetts](#) and [Maryland](#). This fund would provide grants for the acquisition, design, repair, and construction of cultural facilities, ensuring that co-use spaces and arts venues have the necessary infrastructure to thrive.
- ◆ **Co-Use Space Preservation:** Facilitate the preservation of co-use spaces by updating infrastructure grant applications to suit co-use building applications or isolated updates in shared buildings. These applications could be collaborative between organizations using the space or municipally sponsored.
- ◆ **Tax Credits for Theater and Performing Spaces:** Provide tax credits for theater and performing arts venues to support their financial sustainability.
- ◆ **Regional Arts Councils:** Minnesota has a network of [Regional Arts Councils](#) that help distribute state funds for arts projects, including infrastructure. Colorado could consider a state-level initiative that establishes Regional Arts Councils to lead on repurposing state-owned buildings as venues and performance spaces and allocating general funds, ensuring they are accessible to local artists and communities. Public theaters, spaces to create, galleries, and co-use spaces should be prioritized.
- ◆ **Land Trust for Arts and Culture:** As seen in [Canada](#), this would allow communities to secure long-term leases or ownership of vital arts spaces, preventing displacement due to rising property values or redevelopment pressures.
- ◆ **Incentives for Studio Space:** Provide expedited processes or tax breaks for developers who include studio or programming space for the arts in Creative Districts with a high-need for arts space. These must include guarantees for low-rent and usage costs.

"Having strong infrastructure really builds a stronger community for growing programming and outreach. It's a ripple effect. We can grow opportunities for people of all ages when we have actual space to flourish. Right now, we can't grow with the size of our community."

Economic Development and Planning: *State and local entities are incentivized and trained to incorporate the arts into town planning and economic development projects.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Local government skills in creative industry incorporation across the public sector and development (i.e. transportation, parks, downtown development) must be cultivated (i.e. workshops, peer learning).

- ◆ 1% for Art programs could be expanded to include broader development or increase budget percentages.
- ◆ Practical resources and processes for integrating arts into community development including community planning and economic development should be shared to key actors.
- ◆ Need for funding to implement arts-integrated projects that enhance community identity and economic growth.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Long-Term Economic Development Strategies:** Integrate the arts into long-term economic development strategies in all communities via state-funded programs and technical assistance that demonstrate incorporating the arts into planning, transportation, and downtown revitalization (i.e. [South Carolina's Art of Community](#), [Indiana Arts Commission's Creative Placemaking Toolkit](#))
- ◆ **Artists as Eligible Expenses:** Development planning resources should specifically name artists as an eligible expense category. This is especially true where these funds are focused solely on capital costs with limited overhead for planning, engagement, or other pre-development activities.
- ◆ **1% for Art Expansion:** Expanding Colorado's 1% for Art program to include a broader range of development projects—such as transportation, parks, and downtown redevelopment—could ensure that public art is integrated into more aspects of community infrastructure.
- ◆ **Training Guide for Communities:** Develop a guide to help local communities integrate arts into their development strategies with key strategies for incorporation into specific development processes and highlights of Colorado success stories.
- ◆ **State Project Artist Design Guidance:** State-led development should commission artists to contribute to the design and planning of public spaces, ensuring that these projects reflect and enhance community identity.

“Creating creative districts is a lot of work. It's consensus building and it's only really successful when you have a grassroots effort. I love that the industry is customized to our communities and our community's needs. It's a heavy lift though. It requires sector partnership, thorough investment, retention through involvement, planning, because it is just like any sector of our economy, and it should be respected that way.”

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Creative Economy

<p>Creative Sector as an Economic Driver</p> <p>Embed and elevate the creative sectors' role in economic development and vital impact on business and tourism.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Business and Tourism
	Cross-Sector Collaboration
	Visibility and Promotion
	Creative Project Incentives

Summary of “Creative Sector as an Economic Driver”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Business and Tourism: *Creative economy actors are at the table in decisions about and strategy for tourism, business, state/local development, and rural economy.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ In recognizing that arts and culture accounts for 4% of Colorado’s economy, the creative industry should be included in business development and economic vitality conversations and decisions.
- ◆ The Creative District program should be expanded, continually legitimized through consistent funding, and seen as critical for economic development.
- ◆ Communities report that public art and availability of arts and culture is a main attractant for growing local population and workforce recruitment. Not only does arts and culture investment make jobs, it attracts applicants and contributes to local economic vitality.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Creative District Program:** Increased funding for and capacity of Colorado Creative Industries should be utilized to grow the number of Creative Districts and the amount of state-level funding available.
- ◆ **Tax Credits for Private Contributions:** Grow tax credits to incentivise private contributions to cultural organizations.
- ◆ **Arts Sales Tax:** Reduce sales taxes on works of arts or utilize sales taxes generated from art sales to grow professional support for artists and investment in cultural organizations.
- ◆ **Artists at the Table:** Embed artists into planning, development, tourism, and recovery processes on the state and local level through incorporation into strategic plans, task forces, and recommended promising practices (i.e. [Tennessee's Rural Task](#) force includes creative economy actors). This will prioritize the process over the product and generate artfully imagined spaces.
- ◆ **Public-Private Partnership Grants:** Offer matching grants to incentivize public-private partnerships.

"Our Creative District is a component of workforce recruitment. We partner with our chamber EDC around this. Policymakers need to realize that the quality of life that is supported by our arts and culture is why people are moving here, it's why real estate prices and the economy have grown here."

Cross-Sector Collaboration: *The creative sector is embedded into policy areas, sectors, and practices on the state and local level (i.e. science, technology, education, business, health, community development, transportation).*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ The arts are valuable across sectors and initiatives. Participants encouraged that policymaking from science to education to transportation include creative workers' perspective and potential.
- ◆ Most sectors utilize creative workers (i.e. marketing, photography, design) and rely on their presence and preservation in communities.
- ◆ Science: STEAM Projects and incorporating arts into environmental conservation efforts
- ◆ Technology: Creative Tech Grants, digital murals, and partnership with tech companies
- ◆ Business: Incentives to businesses that collaborate with creative sectors, integration with Corporate Social Responsibility programs, and attracting business to Creative Districts
- ◆ Health: Artists in healthcare settings, access to art therapy for mental health, public health campaigns, facility design, and prescription for the arts
- ◆ Transportation: Public art in transit, creative placemaking in transportation corridors, artists on planning teams, cultural trails, crosswalks, bus shelters, and bike racks

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Environmental Art Programs:** Create state-supported initiatives that fund artists to collaborate with environmental scientists on projects such as digital murals, conservation art installations, and eco-friendly public art (i.e. [Oregon's Creative Heights Arts and Cultural Strategies](#)).
- ◆ **Innovation and Digital Arts Grants:** Launch a grant program for projects that merge technology with the arts, supporting digital art installations, tech-art incubators, and collaborations between artists and tech companies.
- ◆ **Public Art in Transit Programs:** Require or incentivize the inclusion of public art in transportation projects, such as bus shelters, bike racks, crosswalks, and transit corridors (i.e. [Maryland's Public Art Across Maryland](#)).
- ◆ **Policy Fellowships for Artists:** Develop a program where artists are embedded in state agencies as policy fellows, contributing creative solutions to public policy challenges. These positions could inspire civic-artist partnerships for community engagement.
- ◆ **Joint-Project Initiatives:** Encourage cross-sector collaboration through state-funded initiatives that bring together artists, businesses, and other stakeholders to work on joint projects (i.e. [California's Santa Cruz Design + Innovation Center](#)). This may be a good role for state university partnerships.

"Localities need to understand that arts and culture integration creates jobs. I see so many warehouses popping up in our county because they create jobs, but that is such a limited view. So many different things need to be considered with job creation. Art and culture creates jobs when it is integrated into everything we do as localities."

Visibility and Promotion: *The arts are publicly recognized as valuable and impactful through marketing campaigns, road signage, and coordinated financial support for marketing initiatives by localities and arts organizations.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Participants noted a lack of public recognition of the creative sectors' impact on Colorado economics, tourism and community building.
- ◆ They desired statewide and local marketing campaigns to highlight the creative sectors' value, impact, and professional character.

- ◆ A campaign that features success stories of local artists, creative projects, and the broader impact of Creative Districts would highlight the potential of the arts.
- ◆ Coordinated signage that directs people to cultural and artistic landmarks, Creative Districts, and arts venues (i.e. highway signs, local wayfinding signs, artist-designed signage that serves as public art itself) is needed.
- ◆ Grant programs specifically aimed at funding marketing initiatives (i.e. advertising, PR, event promotion) for local arts organizations and Creative Districts.
- ◆ Public-private partnerships between state and local governments, arts organizations, and private businesses would help pool resources for more impactful marketing. Colorado sports teams and the outdoor economy dominate marketing channels due to private funding while arts do not have the same investment.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Arts-Driven Economic Impact Reports:** Following the example of [Louisiana's State Cultural Economy Plan](#), Colorado could produce and widely disseminate reports on the economic impact of the arts.
- ◆ **Statewide Creative Economy Campaign:** Launch a statewide campaign that highlights the importance of the creative economy in attracting tourism, enhancing quality of life, and driving economic growth (i.e. [Heart NY](#); [Iowa's Creative Places](#)). The campaign should include paid and earned media, and partnerships with tourism boards. It would both enhance understanding of the arts' impact on tourism and attract additional tourism.
- ◆ **Creative District Signage:** Establish coordinated signage throughout the state that not only directs visitors to Creative Districts and cultural landmarks but also integrates artist-designed elements into the signage making it part of the public art experience.
- ◆ **Targeted Marketing Grants:** Grant program specifically aimed at funding marketing initiatives for local arts organizations, Creative Districts, and cultural events (i.e. [West Virginia's Cultural Facilities and Capital Resources Grant Program](#); [Alaska Native Artist Resource Workbook and ARTShop Program](#)). This would include support for advertising, public relations, and event promotion.

"In Denver Metro, getting the word out is difficult. We have tons of programs but there is so much going on. We are competing with the mountains and winning sports teams. It's hard to get the word out when they spend so much money on marketing."

Creative Project Incentives: *Creative industry incentives are long-term and stabilized and permitting processes are simplified to attract and retain creative sector projects (i.e. tax credits, intellectual property protection, streamlined permitting, creative enterprise guarantees, sales tax incentives).*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Tax reductions for film and theater projects were noted as important for attracting or enabling these projects, making them cost effective, and ensuring benefit to communities. These must be stabilized for the long-term to enable multi-year projects.
- ◆ Complex or expensive permitting processes inhibit creative projects in addition to events explored above.
- ◆ Small project public shooting permitting for independent filmmakers.
- ◆ Financial guarantees or loans for creative enterprises would help them secure necessary resources like space and equipment would reduce risks for startups.
- ◆ State-level intellectual property safeguards must be up to date and evolve with technological progress.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Film and Theater Production Tax Credits:** Expand and stabilize Colorado's existing incentives for film and theater projects. This could include a base tax credit for all productions, with additional incentives for projects that hire locally, shoot in rural areas, or focus on underrepresented communities (i.e. [New York's Film Production Tax Credit](#); [Louisiana's Motion Picture Production Tax Credit](#)).

- ◆ **Local Incentives for Creative Projects:** Colorado could offer additional local incentives, such as a 2% tax credit for projects shot in specific zip codes or Creative Districts, encouraging economic development in targeted areas (i.e. [California's regional film incentives](#)).
- ◆ **Creative Enterprise Loan Fund:** Establish a Creative Enterprise Loan Fund or Guarantees, providing low-interest loans or financial guarantees to local creative enterprises (i.e. [Maryland's Enterprise Zone](#)). This fund would help cover startup costs, equipment purchases, and facility leases, reducing financial risks for new and existing creative businesses.

"Incentives for film production allow projects to become profitable quicker. A 20% incentive can save a film millions of dollars which really impacts a project's ability to succeed fiscally. Think the same with the theater."



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: **Livability for Creative Workers**

<p>Affordability for Creative Workers</p> <p>Mitigate the issues of affordability impacting all Coloradans through cross-coalition advocacy that addresses the specialized needs of creative workers.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Housing for Creatives
	Creative Resources and Space
	Fair and Transparent Compensation
	AI and Creative Rights

Summary of “Affordability for Creative Workers”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Housing for Creatives: *Creative workers are included in affordable housing plans to ensure they can live in the communities in which they work and meet basic needs.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Recognize that creative workers’ housing needs intersect with those of other low- and middle-income workers (i.e. teachers, service workers, healthcare providers) and therefore should be explicitly eligible for affordable housing initiatives. This may involve setting aside a percentage of affordable housing units for creative workers.
- ◆ Partner with housing authorities, city planners, and community organizations to ensure that the specific needs of creative workers are considered in affordable housing plans.
- ◆ Mixed-use spaces that combine affordable housing with creative workspaces are of interest to creatives.
- ◆ Rent-controlled units within affordable housing developments specifically designated for creative workers would help to reduce displacement.
- ◆ Basic utility subsidization and public service eligibility can be a challenge for contract workers.
- ◆ Communicate the importance of affordable housing for creative workers by emphasizing the importance of preserving the unique cultural identity of communities and the negative impact of creative brain drain.
- ◆ Housing affordability is tied to broader economic challenges (i.e. low wages, job insecurity, food access) and cannot be addressed solely through housing availability. See “[Ensuring Basic Needs for Arts Access](#).” practices.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Set-Aside Affordable Housing Policies:** Require a certain percentage of affordable housing units within new developments be set aside specifically for creative workers (i.e. [New York’s Housing Trust Fund Corporation](#)). These units would be available at subsidized rates to ensure that artists and other creative professionals can afford to live in the communities where they work.
- ◆ **Creative Worker Housing Grants:** Offer state-funded grants to support the development of affordable housing units for creative workers. These grants could be used to offset construction costs, making it financially viable for developers to include these units in their projects.
- ◆ **Space to Create Initiative Expansion:** Building on Space to Create Colorado, the state could further incentivize the development of mixed-use spaces that combine affordable housing with studios, rehearsal spaces, and galleries. This could involve offering additional tax credits or grants to developers who incorporate these mixed-use spaces into their projects or other benefits like zoning variances, expedited permitting processes, or property tax abatements.
- ◆ **Rent Control Legislation:** Explore rent control policies similar to those in New York City, where specific rent-controlled units are reserved for artists and creative workers. These policies would help stabilize housing

costs for creative professionals and prevent displacement due to rising rents in rapidly gentrifying areas.

- ◆ **Subsidies and Benefit Eligibility:** Ensure creative workers can access government supports (i.e. SNAP, Utility Subsidies) which can be difficult for contract-based workers to earn eligibility for. Engage contract-based workers to develop a process to make these benefits more accessible or provide specific subsidies for self-employed creative workers (i.e. [Massachusetts Health Connector for the Creative Community](#)).
- ◆ **Artists Food Security Initiative:** In collaboration with nonprofits, provide food assistance to low-income artists, ensuring they have access to nutritious food while they continue their creative work.

“Space for artists includes not only studio space but housing in general. A lot of the bigger policy issues of this time that are human focused, human right-focused, humanity focused and include pay and housing. These greatly impact artists. If we advocate for more housing at large, it will help creative workers.”

Creative Resources and Space: Publicly owned, low-cost, or resource sharing options for studio space, storage facilities, and medium diverse materials are accessible to creatives.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Establishing and maintaining studio spaces that are either publicly owned or subsidized may help keep rental costs low for local artists. These spaces could be part of larger cultural centers or standalone facilities.
- ◆ Spaces should be adapted for multi-use, including visual arts, music, dance, and theater. Spaces should be available at low cost and encourage the sharing of resources, tools, and workspace.
- ◆ Cooperative approaches to space ownership wherein creative workers contribute to the maintenance and operation of the facility in exchange for low-cost access may improve access.
- ◆ Affordable or free storage facilities for creative workers and large scale projects to store their various materials are needed, especially for large scale projects film and theater.
- ◆ Material libraries or resource centers with essential materials (e.g., paint, canvases, wood, fabric) and equipment (e.g., cameras, lighting, tools) at low or no cost would improve sustainable access. This could operate on a lending model through the Public Library or Recycle Center.
- ◆ Sustainable resource sharing should be enabled through partnerships with businesses and manufacturers that donate or sell surplus materials to artists and cultural organizations. Local resource reallocation by the municipality (i.e. lumber, paper, recycling) can also support circular economy practices.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Publicly Owned Studio Space:** State-funded program that offers grants or low-interest loans to municipalities for the development of publicly owned or subsidized studio spaces. These could be integrated into larger cultural centers or serve as standalone facilities (i.e. [Maine Arts Commission's Creative Communities = Economic Development \(CCED\) Grant Program](#)).
- ◆ **Resources for Cooperative Ownership:** Encourage the creation of cooperative ownership models by providing legal and financial resources through state-run programs. Make sure that all capital improvement and maintenance funds are cooperative eligible. These models could enable artists to maintain low-cost access to facilities in exchange for contributions to maintenance and operation.
- ◆ **Storage Facilities Provisions:** Include provisions in state arts grants to cover the cost of establishing and maintaining storage facilities for artists.
- ◆ **Resource Sharing Write Offs:** Encourage municipalities to partner with businesses to donate surplus materials, with incentives like tax deductions or public recognition programs. This could be facilitated through recycle centers, landfills, and libraries.
- ◆ **Material Libraries:** Establish a state-funded grant program specifically aimed at creating and maintaining

material libraries for arts equipment (i.e. cameras, lighting, tools). The state could provide funding or logistical support for public libraries to expand their services to include art materials and tools.

“Reality is, it’s really hard to be an artist. A lot of us are bleeding financially because it costs a lot to be an artist. Supplies and space are only becoming more expensive.”

Fair and Transparent Compensation: Fair and competitive salaried, hourly and contractual work is enabled through salary eligible grants, pay transparency policies, and artist fair pay guidelines.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ A lack of understanding of proper compensation and needs of artists, paired with non-transparent pay practices produce gross inequities in artist treatment.
- ◆ The local government often does not understand proper procurement and contracting processes with artists, including consistent compensation and support for artists. Establishing a standard contract template and requirements would support equitable pay, treatment, and ensure artists are not burdened with additional roles.
- ◆ Organizations and employers should publicize their pay scales and compensation packages for creative work to address pay disparities and ensure all creative workers are compensated fairly.
- ◆ Pay guidelines identified by professionals, industry standard, and local costs and set mechanisms for periodic review of them, would support more equitable compensation.
- ◆ Too often, artists receive late or incomplete pay. Artists working on a contractual basis must have clear and enforceable contracts that specify fair pay, scope of services, payment timelines, and late payment protection.
- ◆ Continue to support and collectively bargain for competitive wages in the creative industry that recognize the value and professional nature of creative work.
- ◆ Grant programs that fund salaried positions for creative workers ensure that artists, performers, and other creatives can secure stable, longer-term employment.
- ◆ Creative project grants should include provisions for fair compensation of all artists involved, including full-time and part-time salaries.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Multi-Year Salary Grants:** State-funded grants to support salaried positions within arts organizations and for other creative workers. These grants could cover a percentage of the salary costs for creative workers, ensuring that organizations can offer stable, long-term employment.
- ◆ **Artist Procurement and Contracting:** Mandate the use of standardized contract templates and procurement guidelines for artists working with state-funded projects. These templates would include clear provisions for fair pay, scope of services, payment timelines, and late payment protection, ensuring consistency and fairness.
- ◆ **Pay Transparency:** Require organizations receiving state funding publicize their pay scales and compensation packages for all creative work. Fair pay guidelines would help to further standardize these practices.
- ◆ **Compliance Monitoring:** Empower the state arts commission to oversee and enforce fair pay standards within the creative industry. The commission would monitor compliance with state guidelines, provide dispute resolution services, and offer resources for both artists and employers.
- ◆ **Payment Protections:** Protect freelance workers from non-payment and timely compensation (i.e. [New York’s Freelance Isn’t Free Act](#)) by establishing a fund or insurance program to cover late payments, ensuring that artists are not financially burdened due to delays.
- ◆ **Protections for Gig Workers:** Freelance workers should receive the same labor protections as traditional employees, such as minimum wage, health benefits, and paid leave (i.e. [California AB5](#)).

“Access to resources and consistency of payment is a huge need for artists. People often go unpaid for months for projects that they completed and rely on to pay their housing costs. And this is with major companies not respecting our time or craft. There seem to always be extra hoops for artists to get paid the bare minimum.”

AI and Creative Rights: Artists’ livelihoods and skills are prioritized with protections for human-made work (i.e. ownership or attribution policies, transparent labeling, royalty systems, compensation funds).

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Participants expressed the importance of being proactive about evolving AI technology and its potential infringement on creative work.
- ◆ Label art transparently, including whether a piece is an original, a reproduction, or a digital print. This helps protect artists and consumers from deceptive practices.
- ◆ Compensation for artists who are exploited by AI and remedies for art alterations or infringements are needed.
- ◆ Federal changes that benefit artists, such as stronger protections for digital art or updated copyright laws addressing new technology should be advocated for. Policies that distinguish between human-made and AI-generated art would ensure that copyright protections apply exclusively to human created work.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **AI Disclosure for Digital Art:** Require that all creative works involving AI disclose the extent of AI usage in their creation (i.e. [California’s Digital Art Act](#)).
- ◆ **Ethical Labeling Certification:** Establish a certification program for galleries and dealers that comply with ethical labeling and sales practices.
- ◆ **Expand VARA:** Expand on federal moral rights protections under the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) with additional rights for artists regarding the attribution and integrity of their works. For example, protections for digital art, applied art, and works made for hire; attribution for all public displays, sales, and reproductions of the work; protections against modifications, distortions, or destructions of art.
- ◆ **Resale Royalties for Digital Art:** Expand existing resale royalty (droit de suite) policies in Colorado’s Artist Bill of Rights to include digital art, ensuring artists are compensated for any use of their work in digital formats, including NFTs, streaming, and online exhibitions.
- ◆ **Intellectual Property Legal Services:** Provide grants or subsidies for artists and creative businesses to access legal services related to intellectual property protection, ensuring that creators are equipped to navigate complex IP issues.
- ◆ **Blockchain Art Registry:** Pilot a state-run digital art registry that certifies and tracks the provenance of digital artworks. This registry would help establish the authenticity of digital artworks to ensure that artists receive proper attribution and compensation for their work (i.e. [Vermont Blockchain Land Registry](#)).
- ◆ **AI Fair Use Review Board:** Oversee disputes related to the fair use of AI in creative works with a board focused on resolving conflicts between AI developers and artists, ensuring that AI tools do not unfairly exploit artists’ works (i.e. [New York State Dispute Resolution Association](#)).

“If you aren’t talking about AI right now in arts in culture then you are so far behind. It has a place in the creative landscape— especially when we open up ourselves to a definition of art and culture that centers itself on the creative act.”

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: **Livability for Creative Workers**

<p>Professional Support for Creatives</p> <p>Cater relevant professional development for creatives that enhances capacity, business vitality, arts leadership and support networks.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Individual Capacity Building
	Operational Skills
	Cultivating Arts Leaders
	Networks of Support
Equitable and Sustainable Arts Ecosystem	

Summary of “Professional Support for Creatives”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Individual Capacity Building: *Artists have the skills and resources to manage finances, build a business, charge for services, and market themselves.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Artists express a need for more resources to manage finances, such as understanding taxes and running an LLC. They feel that the existing resources, like the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), are not tailored to their needs, indicating a gap in accessible financial training specifically for artists.
- ◆ The data highlights the lack of training for arts professionals, especially in non-profit and organizational management. Developing artist networks may help with sharing sustainable business approaches.
- ◆ Art valuation was identified as an ongoing challenge. Identifying how to price services, develop contracts, and avoid undercharging could be another benefit of artist guilds or networks.
- ◆ Participants noted that artists tend to struggle to market themselves. Targeted training, resources, or a platform (i.e. Creative Information Hub) from the state could help address that challenge.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Business Development Savings and Microloans:** Provide matched savings, micro-loans, and business development training for artists, especially in rural and underserved areas (i.e. [ArtsGrow SC CommunityWorks](#)).
- ◆ **Artist Relevant Small Business Development:** State-funded program developed for artists to support businesses development. These should be co-developed with successful artists and arts organizations (i.e. [Kentucky Arts Council’s Kentucky Crafted Program](#)). When possible, one-on-one guidance on managing their finances, pricing their work, and developing sustainable business practices should be provided.
- ◆ **Micro Grants for Financial Literacy:** Introduce grants that fund or tax incentives that offset costs of financial literacy resources and management tools including workshops or hiring financial consultants.
- ◆ **Marketing and Branding Support:** State-funded initiative for artists to build their brand and market their work effectively including access to professional marketing services, branding workshops, and online platforms that connect artists with broader markets (i.e. [Kentucky Crafted Program](#)).
- ◆ **Residency and Apprenticeship Cohorts:** Establish artist residency and apprenticeship programs that include cohorts that complete professional development components, such as business training and financial planning.

“More resources for artists around managing your finances, doing your taxes, running an LLC would be really helpful. Being your own accountant when you are a hodgepodge artist and part-time self-marketer is very challenging. I know there is the Small Business Development Center, but it doesn’t feel accessible or tailored to artists.”

Operational Skills: Creative industry leaders run organizations effectively with long-term financial strategies, community engagement, and strategic management.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Arts leaders need capacity to engage with the community to understand local needs and build trust. Building tools to share and support this work would be beneficial, but ultimately requires additional staff and time.
- ◆ Limited skills in or time for financial management in arts organizations results in sustainability challenges. Training on managing funds (i.e. budgeting, financial planning, securing consistent funding) was recommended.
- ◆ Leadership development opportunities are scarce. To address burnout and evolve skills, leaders should attend programs focused on strategic planning, managing staff, and effectively running their organizations.
- ◆ Networks, such as those provided by CCI's Creative District, and local guilds were seen as beneficial to evolving ideas, getting support, maximizing resources, and transforming impact, but lacking in availability.
- ◆ Reduction of silos, sharing of information, and development of tools to enhance administrative skills were seen as desirable. See "[Networks of Support](#)."

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Leadership Development Program Expansion:** Fund existing leadership development programs tailored to creative industry leaders including workshops, mentorship opportunities, and retreats focused on strategic planning, financial management, and staff management (i.e. [Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability](#)).
- ◆ **Grants for Administrative Capacity:** Funding for administrative capacity building within arts organizations including hiring administrative staff/consultants, training in financial management, and implementing strategic management systems.
- ◆ **Subsidized Consulting Services:** Facilitate subsidized consulting services to arts organizations for financial management, budgeting, and long-term financial planning. These services could be delivered through partnerships with local universities, business schools, or consulting firms.
- ◆ **Influence Collaboration:** Enable collaborative initiatives among arts organizations, such as joint fundraising campaigns, shared administrative staff, or co-hosted events. This may include matching grants, tax credits, or additional funding for collaborative projects and building systems that enable collaboration.
- ◆ **Operational Loans:** State-backed loan program that offers low-interest loans to arts organizations for operational expenses, including administrative salaries, software for financial management, and strategic planning initiatives to build administrative capacity without the immediate financial strain.

"Executive Directors need reprieve, time for thought partnership, and strategic alignment. An opportunity that brings together art executives to rethink and incubate ideas would be fantastic. We also need to support them in professional development so that they can keep growing their organizations."

Cultivating Arts Leaders: New leaders in the arts are cultivated and receive equitable access to professional development resources, mentorships and sustainable positions.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Emerging leaders need access to high-quality professional development opportunities tailored to the arts sector, including workshops, courses, and certifications. These programs should be available at a sliding scale and include scholarships to ensure accessibility.
- ◆ Mentorship programs where seasoned arts leaders guide new leaders, offering advice, support, and networking opportunities support organizational longevity. Mentorship initiatives need clear goals and outcomes, focusing on leadership skills, strategic planning, and organizational management.
- ◆ Pathways to sustainable and well-compensated leadership positions, ensure that new leaders can build

long-term careers. This is especially important in underserved communities (i.e. rural, redlined, immigrant).

- ◆ Sustainable leadership positions include housing for leaders to live and work in the communities they serve, competitive salary, benefits, and professional development.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Arts Leader Professional Development:** State-funded professional development programs tailored specifically to the arts sector including workshops, courses, and certifications in leadership, strategic planning, and organizational management. Leadership development in underserved communities, such as rural areas, redlined neighborhoods, and immigrant communities, should be available for no or low-cost.
- ◆ **Leadership Housing:** Ensure leadership housing in Creative Districts and rural communities by embedding Space to Create Colorado into arts sector development initiatives. This will help build more longevity of these positions and attract young leaders to rural communities.
- ◆ **Paid Fellowships:** Establish state-backed fellowships that provide emerging arts leaders with competitive salaries, benefits, and professional development opportunities as well as placement in high-need communities (i.e. [Alaska Native Artist Resource Workbook and ARTShop Program](#)). These should include mentorships with seasoned arts leaders (i.e. [Washington Arts Leadership Initiative](#))
- ◆ **Career Pathways:** Fellowship and leadership programs should include long-term career pathways for emerging arts leaders with guaranteed positions or training pay-back guarantees.
- ◆ **Fund Leadership Positions:** Leadership positions must be funded, especially in Creative Districts, and could be made possible through match-funding, long-term grants, or public-private partnerships.

"We need personnel! A lot of us are getting old. We need to attract people to live here and run the buildings and programs. We need to share knowledge with them to keep it alive. We need new leaders to step in, but it's hard when positions are not sustainable. We need to focus on creating stable, long-term roles for leaders."

Networks of Support: *Creative workers are connected and collaborate through collaborative grants, guilds, and communication networks.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Networks to support ideation, sharing, and moving through complex issues were identified as transformative but not always easily available or effectively managed.
- ◆ Local artist guilds or collectives that provide a shared platform for resources, advocacy, and professional development help artists thrive. Localized groups could help to activate future state-level advocacy.
- ◆ As explored above, formal mentorship opportunities would help emerging leaders. Informal mentorship through collaboration would also help ignite new ideas in seasoned leaders.
- ◆ Funding collaborative projects among artists and arts organizations encourages cross-disciplinary work, shared resources, and more sustainable organizations.
- ◆ Positions dedicated to collaborative processes such as sharing traveling artists, marketing, and strategic planning would help reduce duplicitous processes. Often, existing positions do not have the capacity to facilitate these relationships leading to missed opportunities to reduce costs and collaborate.
- ◆ See additional details about sustainable resource sharing under "[Creative Resources and Space](#)."

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Artist Guild Funding:** Prioritize funding for arts organizations and creative workers that build regional artists guilds to guide creatives with mentorship, workshops, and connected networks.
- ◆ **Dedicated Collaborative Positions:** Create state-funded positions dedicated to facilitating collaborative processes among arts organizations and government offices, such as traveling artist coordinators, marketing

strategists, strategic planners, and departmental liaisons. These roles would ensure that collaborative opportunities are maximized and that creative projects can thrive without unnecessary duplication of efforts.

- ◆ **Mentorship Networks:** Establish formal and informal mentorship networks supported by state funding, allowing emerging and seasoned creative workers to connect and collaborate. Mentors should be compensated or given access to special opportunities.
- ◆ **Enable Program Sharing:** Builds grant eligibility in a way that enables organizations across communities to share traveling artists, develop joint programs, and share costs.

"Fort Collins lacks connectivity. Being able to create an artists guild where artists can focus in one place. I am a member of Boulders and Denvers but Fort Collins doesn't have one. Resources to start an artists guild would help a lot."

Equitable and Sustainable Arts Ecosystem: Arts organizations of varying sizes have the financial, spacial, and administrative resources necessary to ensure a sustainable ecosystem rich with opportunities for entering the field, skillbuilding, and growth.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Funding opportunities (i.e. grants, sponsorships, government support) should be distributed equitably across arts organizations of different sizes.
- ◆ Organizations need support in developing sustainable revenue models and diversifying income streams (i.e. ticket sales, memberships, donations, merchandising).
- ◆ Emergency funds and micro-grants to support small and mid-sized arts organization operations during financial and other crises will protect industry diversity.
- ◆ The opportunities supported by small and mid-sized organizations for creative worker growth and workforce development should be actively communicated and included in funding application evaluation.
- ◆ The preservation of venues that enable small and mid-sized creative work must be a priority.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Grants Equity Distribution Model:** Implement a state-wide grant distribution model to track and ensure the equitable distribution of funds across arts organizations of different sizes in Colorado's regions. Criteria should also prioritize access in historically underserved communities. This criteria should be public and utilized throughout grant application and review processes.
- ◆ **Emergency Funds and Microgrants:** Preserve small and mid-sized organizations through emergency funds and micro-grants to help weather financial and other crises.
- ◆ **Small and Mid-Sized Organizational Grants:** Develop grant programs specifically for the preservation and maintenance of venues and organizations that support small and mid-sized creative work.
- ◆ **Workforce Development Partnerships:** Partner with small and mid-sized arts organizations to incorporate workforce development programs in their operations including paid internships, apprenticeships, and leadership development programs that help these organizations grow and sustain creative talent. Organizations that include these programs should be eligible for additional funding, tax incentives, or shared funding with larger organizations that benefit from this workforce development.
- ◆ **Note:** Publicly owned venues, as explored above, often benefit small and mid-sized arts operations.

"We are seeing a huge threat to Colorado's theater ecosystem because of the lack of midsize theaters. Our most prominent midsize, nonprofit theater is on the brink right now, and the other one is for profit. If the nonprofit theater fails, we will have no midsize nonprofit theaters in the state."

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Sustaining Arts Learning

<p>PreK-12 Arts Learning</p> <p>Expand, improve, mandate, and fund PreK-12 public arts programs to support student success, creative experiences, and creative workforce development in all schools.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Requirements, Standards and Curriculum
	Dedicated Funding
	Access and Impact Data Collection
	Teacher and Admin Training and Awareness

Summary of “PreK-12 Arts Learning”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Requirements, Standards and Curriculum: *Arts learning is required in education statutes, evaluated on performance frameworks, and incorporated cross-curricularly in Colorado public schools.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Arts education needs to be a required part of school curriculum, whereas it is currently only encouraged.
- ◆ Requirements should be scaled, starting with larger schools, so as to not burden schools with limited capacity.
- ◆ In order for schools to meet requirements, there must be an increase of licensed art teachers in the state. Proactive workforce pipeline investment may include scholarships for pursuing specialized licensure, expanding programs in the state, or other incentives.
- ◆ Steps to enable flexibility for low resourced schools in meeting requirements should be taken such as allowing for collaborations with teaching artists or incorporating arts into other subjects. Preference will always be for full-time, licenced art teachers in all schools but policy should anticipate potential challenges filling positions.
- ◆ Standards for arts facilities should also be established to ensure spaces for specific arts programs (i.e. visual arts, music, theater, dance) can meet program requirements in the spaces they are held.
- ◆ Culturally responsive approaches to arts learning should be included in the standards including creative youth development, place-based arts learning, multilingual approaches to art education, non-classical arts, etc.
- ◆ Embracing technology was seen as culturally responsive, as it often allows youth without foundational art knowledge to engage in arts programs (i.e. music mixing) or current learning (i.e. media literacy)
- ◆ Participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing creativity and art for art's sake, cautioning that over-academicizing the arts may discourage creative brain breaks.
- ◆ The shift to CTE education supports career pathways in the arts but can limit the softer skills of arts learning and shrink the availability of learning for all students. Technical and non-technical arts must be available.
- ◆ Apprenticeships and experiential learning approaches in PreK-12 and CTE programs are vital to developing early-career pathways in the arts.
- ◆ Recognition for school districts, schools and graduating students for their dedication to the arts would incentivise arts participation. This would include developing criteria, passing a policy to award HS graduate recognition certificates and certify schools as arts champions.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Require Arts Education:** Move arts requirements into Title 22 to transition arts education from “encouraged” to “required.” Requirements should be scaled based on district size and funding. They should allow for collaborations with teaching artists as the teaching workforce grows to meet requirements.
- ◆ **Facility Standards:** Implement state-level standards for arts facilities in schools, ensuring that spaces

dedicated to visual arts, music, theater, and dance are equipped to meet program requirements.

- ◆ **School Performance Evaluation:** Include arts education in school performance evaluations and accountability frameworks, ensuring that schools are assessed on their ability to provide quality arts education (i.e. [Turnaround Arts Evaluation](#)). A state-level recognition program should accompany performance evaluation for school districts, schools, and graduating students.
- ◆ **Culturally Responsive Arts Learning:** Implement culturally responsive arts education standards that include creative youth development, place-based arts learning, multilingual approaches, and non-classical art forms (i.e. [New Mexico's Bilingual Multicultural Education Act](#)).
- ◆ **Media Arts:** Introduce state-funded initiatives that incorporate technology into arts education, such as digital media, music mixing, and media literacy programs (i.e. [California's Digital Media Arts and Technology Pathway](#)).
- ◆ **CTE Alignment with Career Pathways:** Align CTE with Apprenticeship Colorado to expand arts career aligned pathways and ensure opportunities for work-based learning and early career development.

"Until we advocate for the arts to be required to be taught-- they will always be the first thing to be cut in Education. Our school size really does not support having some type of arts education to graduate so we need to build policies that enable schools like ours."

Dedicated Funding: State-level dedicated funding for arts learning works to equalize arts access, address teacher wages, account for materials access, and expand CDE arts staff.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Dedicated state-level funding is necessary to enable the adoption of arts education requirements in all schools.
- ◆ Dedicated and matched funding should be used to provide low-resourced schools with the necessary materials and resources for arts programs (i.e. general materials, space, teaching artist collaboration).
- ◆ Funding should be allocated to ensure competitive salaries for arts teachers, which helps to attract and retain qualified educators in the arts. As identified above, funding to develop the art teacher pipeline will ensure a workforce is available to fill arts learning requirements.
- ◆ Current capacity in the Colorado Department of Education is limited due to part-time work and a small team. In order to enable requirements and build arts learning capacity across the state, CDE must grow its specialist team in Arts Standards and Instructional Support.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Arts Education Budget:** Develop a dedicated funding model for arts education at the state level (i.e. [California's Prop 28](#)). This would allocate a fixed percentage of the state's education budget for arts education. Increased taxes could be maximized with an arts education endowment (i.e. [Minnesota's Legacy Amendment](#)).
- ◆ **Matched Funding:** Alternatively, Colorado could offer matched funding for arts education wherein the state provides additional funds to match local investments in arts education.
- ◆ **Teacher Salaries:** Allocate state funds for increasing art educator salaries to attract and retain qualified educators. This could be implemented through a grant program that schools can apply for to supplement teacher wages (i.e. [New Jersey's School Funding Reform Act](#)).
- ◆ **CDE Staffing Levels:** Increase funding to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to expand its team of specialists in Arts Standards and Instructional Support to ensure that schools have access to expert guidance in implementing and maintaining high-quality arts education programs. Increased capacity could lend itself to developing a state-managed fund specifically for purchasing arts materials for schools.

"Unless the state prioritizes allocating permanent funds for schools to provide arts programming, rural communities like my own do not have opportunities to provide these opportunities municipally."

Access and Impact Data Collection: Data from every school district is collected by the state to understand statewide availability, equity and impact of the arts.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ A highly collaborative approach should be taken to identify the data that would be most helpful for the following goals: identifying (1) state and local access levels to the arts (2) arts impact on in-school performance (3) arts impact on long-term performance. School data experts, principals, superintendents, arts learning researchers, and in-classroom teachers should be included in decision making.
- ◆ Overall, data should be longitudinal to track changes over time and disaggregated to understand equity. The collection process should include technical assistance and report back to districts.
- ◆ Participants recommended the following be considered for data collection on Access: FTE roles filled; FTE roles budgeted; arts disciplines available; participation; attendance rate of students in art classes; student demand for alternative arts learning; school capacity for new offerings.
- ◆ Participants recommended the following be considered for data collection on Impact: graduation rates; social emotional learning scores; behavioral intervention rates; performance in other classes; mental health intervention rates; future career placement or trajectory.
- ◆ At a minimum, participants advocated for the collection of FTE dance and theater teachers.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Mandate Data Collection:** Implement a statewide mandate that requires all school districts to report detailed data on arts education. This could include FTE roles for various arts disciplines (i.e. visual arts, music, dance, theater), participation rates, and school capacity for arts offerings. Data should be disaggregated to analyze equity including race, socioeconomic status, school size, geographic location, and special education status.
- ◆ **Self-Report Data Dashboard:** Data portal managed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) that collects and analyzes data from school districts on arts education access and impact. This portal would be used to track progress over time and ensure transparency in how arts education is delivered across the state (i.e. [New Jersey Arts Education Census](#)).
- ◆ **Collaboration with External Research Organizations:** Partner with external research organizations or universities to conduct longitudinal studies on the impact of arts education on student outcomes, including social-emotional learning, academic performance, and long-term career trajectories.
- ◆ **Arts Career Pathways in Workforce Development Data:** Include arts education data in analysis of workforce development for technical and creative careers when tracking the success of programs from early childhood education through college to career placement.

"One of the biggest challenges for us in Colorado is actually knowing what the existing gaps are. Colorado does not require its school districts to report arts education. We need to know how many arts teachers there are, in what disciplines they teach...and then we need course level data."

Teacher and Admin Training and Awareness: Diverse educators with specialized arts learning licensure are available to fulfill arts learning requirements and administrators are trained to understand how to scale and evaluate arts learning programs.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ In order for schools to meet requirements, there must be an increase of licensed art teachers in the state. Proactive workforce pipeline investment may include scholarships for pursuing specialized licensure, expanding program availability in the state, or other incentives.
- ◆ Without low to no-cost options for teacher licensure, Colorado will continue to have a teaching force that does

not reflect the diversity of public school students. The availability and resources to attend alternative licensure programs specialized for arts disciplines must be included in workforce growth and development.

- ◆ Concurrent enrollment programs were identified as helping develop a teacher workforce that is more diverse. Participants suggested including early childhood and arts teacher concurrent enrollment that is paired with scholarships or guaranteed college placements.
- ◆ Low-cost pathways for teaching artists to get certified to support arts learning in schools and eventually become fully licensed arts educators will help build the workforce.
- ◆ The need for qualified arts educators and professionals in specialized fields like theater and music with alternative licensure was emphasized.
- ◆ Teaching artists should be recognized as assets in providing new perspectives in classrooms, lessening burden on educators, and supplementing arts learning in low-resourced schools. Promising practices for building, maintaining, and supporting relationships between teaching artists and schools should be established.
- ◆ Training for arts educators and administrators to improve education delivery, scaling successful programs, and evaluating their success is needed (i.e. scholarships for the [Institute for Creative Teaching](#)).
- ◆ Administrator training or support could include success models for arts program scaling such as a performance framework, guide, and pre-set metrics of success for admin to follow across the state.
- ◆ Evaluation guidelines and practices for arts learning should better reflect the approach and course goals. Teachers noted a lack of administrative capacity to properly evaluate arts programs. Potential metrics may include mental health impact, critical or creative thinking, social isolation impacts, joy, connection with others.
- ◆ Administrators and teachers identified challenges communicating the value and impact of arts education. In addition to initiating data collection to demonstrate those claims, they asked for guidance on talking points to encourage grassroots efforts and demonstration of impact to community members.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Scholarships for Teacher Licensure:** Create state-funded scholarships and incentives to encourage individuals to pursue specialized licensure in arts education. Additionally, expand existing teacher preparation programs to include arts-specific tracks.
- ◆ **Concurrent Enrollment:** Fund and incentivize concurrent enrollment programs that allow high school students, especially in underserved schools, to begin coursework in arts education while earning college credit. Pair these programs with scholarships and/or guaranteed college placements to pursue a career in arts education.
- ◆ **Teaching Artist Licensure Pathways:** Develop and fund low-cost or free alternative licensure pathways for teaching artists who wish to become fully certified arts educators. This could include fast-track programs, online courses, community college partnerships, and credit for classroom experience. A first step would be a state-level certification for teaching artists followed by in-classroom experience, additional professional development, and eventual acquisition of full licensure.
- ◆ **State-Level Teacher Organizations:** Build capacity for state-level arts teachers and student organizations (i.e. CoDEO, Colorado Thespians) through offering .5 FTE for organization leaders.
- ◆ **Ongoing Professional Development:** Allocate state funding to provide ongoing professional development for arts educators and administrators, focusing on innovative teaching methods, program scaling, and arts-specific evaluation metrics (i.e. [New Jersey state-supported professional development](#)).
- ◆ **Art Program Scaling and Success Models:** Develop success frameworks for scaling arts programs in schools.
- ◆ **Arts Evaluation:** Recognize that the arts must be evaluated in different ways than traditional education. Establish state-supported evaluation guidelines and tools specifically for arts programs, ensuring that the unique outcomes of arts education are accurately measured.

"If I had a magic wand, I would want an audience of admin or activities directors to speak with them and give them the information about how to grow an arts program. From a financial, scheduling, and growth perspective."

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Sustaining Arts Learning

<p>Lifelong Arts Learning</p> <p>Enable and encourage arts learning for people of all ages and the exchange of creative skills to sustain arts practices and careers across generations.</p>	<i>Suggested Strategies:</i>
	Out-of-School Learning
	Early Childhood, Adult, and Older Adult Learning
	Higher Education and Career Pathways
	Apprenticeships and Cultural Preservation

Summary of “Lifelong Arts Learning”

This strategic priority is based on the following:

Out-of-School Learning: *Out of school learning opportunities are available at low-no cost and include multilingual experiences that are culturally relevant and expand access to arts materials.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ After School programs invite youth to engage with the arts through collaborations with arts organizations and teaching artists.
- ◆ Youth from all socioeconomic backgrounds are able to access after school or out of school arts learning programs through guaranteed funding or family tax credits.
- ◆ Summer camps include multilingual options and sliding scale pricing.
- ◆ Out-of-school learning programs incentivise and pay teaching artists.
- ◆ Opportunities for sustained, long-term engagement in the arts, rather than one-off or short-term activities fosters deeper skill development and connection.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Tax Credits for Afterschool Learning:** A state tax credit for families that enroll their children in afterschool programs, including and beyond the arts. This credit would apply to the costs associated with enrolling in qualified arts programs, such as music lessons, visual arts classes, dance, theater, or other creative activities. Typically these credits include eligibility criteria and annual caps. Examples may include private school tax credits utilized in [Virginia](#) and [Georgia](#).
- ◆ **Expand Afterschool Funding:** State-funded grant programs to support after-school and out-of-school arts learning opportunities, particularly targeting underserved communities must be expanded (i.e. [New York’s Empire State After-School Program](#)).
- ◆ **Free and Subsidized Summer Camps:** Ensure the maintenance and expansion of summer camps, with sliding scale pricing to ensure that all children can participate, regardless of their family’s income. These camps should offer multilingual and culturally relevant programming to reflect the diversity of Colorado’s youth.
- ◆ **Incentives for Educators and Teaching Artists:** Provide state-funded stipends or bonuses for teaching artists and arts educators who support out-of-school learning programs, particularly in underserved or rural areas.
- ◆ **Network of Out-of-School Programs:** Establish a statewide network for out-of-school arts programs that connects teaching artists, community organizations, and schools, enabling them to share resources, best practices, and opportunities for collaboration.

- ◆ **Program Tracking:** The Out-of-School Networks and Creative Districts should track the availability and participation of these programs. This would require a state-supported evaluation framework for arts programs to track their impact on youth development, academic performance, and community engagement.

“I want to see more language classes incorporated with the arts. And summer camps that aren’t a high cost to participants. Out of school learning should be affordable and multilingual.”

Early Childhood, Adult, and Older Adult Learning: Programs for early childhood, adults, and older adults are more widely available and promote community cultural knowledge, connection to place, and skills sharing.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Early Childhood, Adult, and Older Adult programs were identified as necessary but often overlooked.
- ◆ Workforce training for teaching artists, early childhood educators, and arts organizations on approaches to arts learning with these populations is vital.
- ◆ Additional localized training on incorporating local cultural approaches to arts learning were requested.
- ◆ For **Early Childhood**, participants highlighted the importance of early exposure to the arts, which can aid in cognitive, social, and emotional development. They also noted the false notion that early childhood educators naturally have the tools and confidence to integrate arts into their teaching.
- ◆ Gaps in programs for infants through toddlers and their caregivers were identified.
- ◆ For **Adult Education**, participants highlighted the importance of education for personal enrichment, community engagement, and lifelong learning. They noted that while technical skill sharing is important, informal arts education invites more engagement across communities.
- ◆ Creative Districts were identified as supporting community learning and suggestions for storytelling festivals, cultural heritage exhibitions, and studio visits were made.
- ◆ Sharing teaching and traveling artists between communities to bring workshops and programs to smaller communities was identified as a potential way to save funds and collaborate.
- ◆ For **Older Adults**, participants emphasized the importance of programs for fostering creativity, mental health, and social connection. Ensuring that programs are available in lower-income older adult living environments through partnerships with local government, public health, and arts organizations was advised.
- ◆ They also advocated for opportunities for true artistic expression for Older Adults rather than just simple crafts.
- ◆ A need for consistent funding sources, especially for Older Adult Learning, was identified.
- ◆ Participants cautioned against exclusively separating learning by age group, noting that intergenerational programming, especially between Older Adults and Young Adults, combats ageism and disconnection.
- ◆ Collaborative networks among local governments, public health agencies, arts organizations, and educational institutions could be formed to ensure sustainable funding and support for these programs.
- ◆ Data on the number of local programs and attendance of these programs was advocated for in order to demonstrate demand and track availability.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **State Funding for Early Childhood Programs:** State fund dedicated to integrating arts into early childhood education (i.e. [First 5 California initiatives](#)). This could include grants for arts-focused early childhood education centers and training for early childhood educators to incorporate arts into their teaching.
- ◆ **Teaching Artist Capacity for Early Childhood, Adult, and Older Adult:** Create grants to certify teaching artists in working with early childhood, adult, and older adult populations.
- ◆ **Older Adult Tax Credits:** Incentivise organizations to work with underserved older adult populations through tax credits for individuals and organizations that sponsor or create arts programs for older adults. Direct funds

to senior living facilities could also be developed to build relationships with teaching artists (i.e. [Ohio Arts Partnership Program](#)).

- ◆ **Community Education Programs in Creative Districts:** Increased or matched funding for Creative Districts to facilitate community education through studio tours, skills exchanges, classes, and events (i.e. storytelling festivals, cultural heritage exhibitions, art shows).
- ◆ **Program Tracking:** The Creative Districts and local guilds should be required to track the availability of, participation in, and reported impact of these programs. This information should be collected on the state-level to understand gaps in availability and to develop a story of impact of the arts.

“For older adults, many have not been invited to do self-reflection their whole lives. This is another challenge that when mitigated has beautiful and impactful results.”

Higher Education and Career Pathways: Career development in the arts includes career pathways for young professionals, training for future arts educators and teaching artists, and interdisciplinary learning across vocations.

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Participants shared concerns about pigeonholed degree pathways that limit holistic learning. State school learning requirements should include interdisciplinary learning to foster critical thinking.
- ◆ The emphasis on sports in rural schools was identified as a challenge for not only growing art programs but also legitimizing the arts as having career potential. Increased scholarships in the arts, improved messaging about the promise of career pathways, and the fostering of those pathways were identified as solutions.
- ◆ Arts education needs to include career development such as self-marketing and career pathway exploration.
- ◆ Foster awareness of teaching artist programs, certifications and how they can enable income stabilization.
- ◆ Low-no cost options for teaching artist certification are needed. In building the arts educator pipeline, certification processes and scholarships that combine teaching artist certification, experience in classrooms, and licensure programming should be explored.
- ◆ Intensive arts programs that provide in-depth training for youth and adults must be maintained to enable arts career pathways and the sharing of skills.
- ◆ Technological advancements should be incorporated into arts education, acknowledging the role of digital content and media as key areas for career growth.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Interdisciplinary State Education:** Develop state-level education requirements that mandate interdisciplinary learning within all degrees at state universities. This would encourage holistic education in arts learning through integrating courses in business, technology, and other relevant fields with arts programs and vice versa.
- ◆ **Scholarships for Arts Higher Education:** State scholarship fund specifically for students pursuing careers in the arts, including both traditional and digital media arts.
- ◆ **Creative Workforce Development Fund:** Dedicated state fund for creative workforce development. This fund could support professional development, apprenticeships, and ongoing education for artists and arts administrators, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of creative talent.
- ◆ **Career Pathway Support:** Encourage public-private partnerships to fund and develop career pathways in the arts. This could include collaboration with local businesses, tech companies, and arts organizations to create internships, apprenticeships, and job placement programs for students and emerging artists. These relationships could be incentivized with tax benefits, state recognition, and resource sharing.

- ◆ See “[Teacher and Admin Training and Awareness](#)” above, for state-level approaches to arts educator and teaching artist higher education pathways.

“In our rural communities, we have a learning curve in making the arts seen as a career pathway... it’s booming with career pathways, if communities are prompted to see them.”

Apprenticeships and Cultural Preservation: *Creative and cultural skills are preserved and shared through funded apprenticeship programs and workforce development in fine, cultural, and technical arts.*

Colorado Community Perspective

- ◆ Mentorship for young artists and arts leaders is necessary to prepare the next generation and maintain cultural and artistic practices.
- ◆ Thriving apprenticeship and cultural preservation programs include funding for materials, mentorship, and mentees.
- ◆ Apprenticeships should be for both cultural arts and technical arts.
- ◆ Apprenticeship programs must be actively communicated to high school and college students, as well as vocational workers as paid opportunities to pursue careers in the arts.
- ◆ Cultural heritage and practices, as defined by local and cultural communities, should be invested in to preserve traditional art practices, crafts, foods, and histories. Investment may include funding for wages for artists and cultural preservation workers. It should also connect underrepresented artists with preservation grant writers and makers to enable diverse preservation programs.

State-Level Approaches

- ◆ **Apprenticeship Program:** Establish a state-funded apprenticeship program for creative and cultural arts. This program would provide paid apprenticeships for artists and arts leaders, focusing on both traditional cultural arts and technical arts. The program should include funding for materials, mentorship stipends, and participant wages (i.e. [California Creative Corps](#); [Kentucky’s Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program](#)).
- ◆ **Promotion of Apprenticeships:** Partner with other apprenticeship programs to launch a state-level initiative to actively promote apprenticeship programs (i.e. Dept. of Agriculture). This initiative could include paid and earned media, partnerships, and experiential field trips.
- ◆ **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Pair existing building preservation programs with accompanying artistic practice preservation including art, crafts, food, storytelling, etc. These grants would support wages for artists and cultural preservation workers, as well as provide resources for the preservation of cultural sites and practices. The program should prioritize underrepresented artists and communities, providing them with access to grant writing assistance and preservation resources.
- ◆ **Creative District Cultural History Requirements:** Evaluation requirements for Creative Districts include diverse cultural history preservation. Meeting these requirements should enable additional funding eligibility and partnership facilitation.
- ◆ **Collaboration to Address Talent-Short Pipelines:** Grants to business and education groups that partner to create new training programs and two- and five-year goals to fill talent-short pipelines. Pilot partnerships between CTE, community college, vocational programs, and local business could be utilized to create a model for this program.
- ◆ **Tax Credits for Employers in Emerging Industries:** Reserve tax credits for creatively aligned apprenticeships in new and emerging industries who establish apprenticeship programs.

“Knowledge for the arts has always been passed down through apprenticeship programs. We need to continue to invest in those both through apprentice programs and for hire lessons that emphasize intensive technique. The artists should be paid to demonstrate the medium, how to market it, and how to make this art.”

CONCLUSION

The Colorado Arts Policy Framework is not just a vision; it is a roadmap for action. As we look ahead, it is crucial that we move beyond dialogue and into deliberate, collective action. **This framework provides the strategies necessary to advance arts and culture across the state, but its realization will require the commitment and collaboration of many actors—artists, creatives, cultural organizations, advocacy groups, local and state governments, educators, and community members.**

Now is the time to invest in our creative workforce, to ensure the arts can be accessible in the long term, and to preserve the dynamic cultural heritages that define Colorado. The need to collectively advocate for the policies outlined in this framework, champion arts in public life, and work together to create sustainable arts funding models is resounding. The Colorado Business Committee for the Arts and our Policy Committee look forward to utilizing this Framework to identify our near-term legislative agenda, advocacy partners, and strategic approach. We hope that it will be leveraged beyond that, to cultivate grassroots conversations, catalyze local change, and identify creative solutions to wicked problems.

This is a call to action for everyone who believes in the transformative power of the arts.

By embracing this framework, we can build a future where Colorado's cultural landscape is not only preserved but also enriched and expanded. **Together, we can make the arts and creative sector a central pillar of Colorado, driving social connection, economic prosperity, and creatively imagined communities.**

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS

Colorado Arts Action Network is a grassroots mobilization platform that makes it easy for you to advocate for arts, culture and creative industries in Colorado.

Colorado Arts
Action Network



Learn more about CBCA's unfolding advocacy by joining the [Colorado Arts Action Network \(CAAN\)](#)!

Thank you to the team at Empowered Consulting Group, Policy Framework Working Group, interviewees, listening session participants, and survey respondents for sharing your insights, challenges, and vision which made this project possible!



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