



South Arts Strategic Plan Update 2014

Preamble

As a regional arts organization, South Arts occupies a unique space in the communities and the arts sector of the South, while also responding to national needs and opportunities. Working in partnership with its member state arts agencies and other state, regional and local partners, South Arts will be a key source for current perspective and knowledge about the arts of the region. South Arts will provide professional support and recognition for excellence in the arts of the South, both individual artists, and the work of arts organizations and communities. South Arts will emphasize Southern culture and arts in its programs when appropriate. South Arts will work to connect people, resources, opportunities and information to strengthen the arts sector's capacity to serve the people of the South. South Arts is seeking to focus its resources on activities where we can have the most significant and durable impact. While there are many constituencies with whom South Arts would like to connect, our present capacity will allow us to work primarily within the nonprofit arts community.

This plan update continues current programs and directions, and moves South Arts into support to individual artists, and expansion of our roles in connecting/convening and promoting the arts of the South. It lays the groundwork for South Arts to identify and respond to major issue(s) for the region.

Research and needs assessment will continue, to allow us to design and refine programming that is relevant and impactful.

Timeframe

South Arts' existing Strategic Plan covered 2010 – 2016. This mid-point update, when approved by the Board of Directors in 2014, will remain in effect through 2018. A new planning/update process will be launched in FY17.

Mission

South Arts strengthens the South through advancing excellence in the arts, connecting the arts to key state and national policies and nurturing a vibrant quality of life.

Vision

The South is a thriving region in the U.S. with the arts integral to its vitality.

Identity:

Building a better South through the arts

Goal 1: Impact the careers of artists from our region

South Arts will support and recognize excellent artists in the South in ways that will be career-changing. A range of support mechanisms will impact artists who are at varied points in their career development. Providing artists with resources to build and improve their artistic practice, their networks, their visibility and their community connections both in-region and nationally/internationally will allow them to work and remain in the South and serve Southern communities.

Strategic actions: Recognition; Opportunity Grants, Professional Development; Touring; Convenor/Connector; others as identified

Goal 2: Provide leadership to build relationships and networks benefiting artists and arts professionals within and beyond our region

South Arts will be a catalyst for convening and connecting people and ideas at three levels. One, we will continue to produce existing convenings (Performing Arts Exchange, Folklorists in the South), and continue/expand our convening of peer groups in the region (SAA staff, presenter network leadership, arts education interest group, state arts advocacy organizations). Two, we will capitalize on our existing gatherings to convene others in order to accomplish more with each event. Three, we will identify opportunities for South Arts to lead conversations on trends, emerging issues and policy issues through convenings which may involve non-arts sectors.

Strategic actions: Advocate and Broker of Opportunities; Convenings; others as identified

Goal 3: Accelerate and deliver excellent programs across state borders

As South Arts identifies regional or multi-state needs, we will leverage resources, upscale successful statewide programs, efficiently deliver programs to multiple states, and support activities that have, or have the potential for, regional impact. This may include working with member SAAs in “pay to play” initiatives, and resource development for projects on behalf of the region or a sub-set of the region. Leading the development of valuable partnerships, and developing efficiencies of scale, are regional-level actions South Arts will take.

Strategic actions under this goal include Touring, ArtsReady, Influential Grantmaking, Arts Education, and others as identified

Goal 4: Promote awareness of, and visibility for, the arts community of the South

South Arts celebrates and shares the diverse array of art and arts experiences that have existed, and those that are now bubbling up, in the region. We will identify audiences – presenters, jurors, curators, arts leaders, influencers, arts consumers, community leaders, funders – and keep them informed about the excellent work of Southern artists and arts organizations with the goal of expanding the market for Southern arts. We will partner with and build on existing platforms and models. We will tell the story of the arts in the South in myriad ways.

Strategic actions: Promote Southern Successes; Spotlight/Market Artists’ Work; Advocate and Broker of Opportunities; Communications; others as identified

Key Strategies

Advocate and Broker of Opportunities is a role where South Arts is a voice for the region. With funders, thought leaders and policymakers across the nation, we share information about Southern successes and needs, nominate qualified Southern artists and arts organizations for recognition and opportunities, and work to increase the number and quality of funding and award applications by Southern artists and organizations. We provide guidance and information about the arts in the region when requested from national funders and service organizations; and actively identify opportunities (for funding, visibility, recognition, professional development or other resources) and connect them with particular beneficiaries in the region. We work on behalf of the region to benefit from national opportunities such as the Cultural Data Project, and to ensure that the arts and arts education are part of public policy discussions.

Convening/Connecting individuals and networks to each other, and to resources and information, is a key strategy in which South Arts can exercise leadership. We have a variety of methods available to us – continuing and creating our own convenings, providing virtual opportunities for groups to have learning experiences and dialogue, supporting new and existing networks through technical assistance and financial support, and taking advantage of existing convenings where additional meetings and conversations can be held. South Arts will both facilitate convenings where the goals and agenda are driven by the participants (peer groups, Folklorists in the South/FITS, Performing Arts Exchange/PAE, etc.) as well as leading the development of content and participation based on trends, opportunities and needs that we identify.

Influential Grantmaking will invest South Arts' funding resources in ways that have impact and lasting value in communities. As a regional arts organization, we should not duplicate our member state arts agencies. This type of grantmaking may consist of both South Arts-driven grantmaking, responding to regional issues and Southern culture as identified in our convening/connecting work, and also applicant-driven funding that responds to needs identified by applicants. Projects must have meaning for the South, or move a critical regional issue forward. Influential grants will be in the range of \$30-50,000 over a two- to three-year project period, and must demonstrate innovation. Risk is an inherent dynamic for these projects and failure is recognized as a possibility.

Recognition for artists at a regional level has been identified as a priority need, whether it be fellowships, highlighting an artist in each South Arts newsletter, creation of a Southern Prize, or other means of raising the visibility and stature of artists in the region.

Touring includes the movement of art and/or artists across state borders, and generally includes audience interaction or educational activities in addition to the presentation of the artwork. South Arts also addresses the support of networks that facilitate and collaborate on touring.