

MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN

FY21-FY25



MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE

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STRATEGIC PLANS & GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Between the time this plan was completed in early 2020, and the time the board of Mid-America Arts Alliance adopted the plan in June, 2020, the COVID19 pandemic brought massive disruption to life as we know it. As the people of the world grappled with immediate health threats, economic dislocation, and shared uncertainty about how to best function, the Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) pivoted to work remotely, adjust programs and policies, and identify opportunities to respond.

At first glance, the pandemic would appear to change everything. However, as we reviewed the mission, vision, values, goals and objectives developed based on the extensive research and conversations in the planning process, it became clear that our core work remains the same.

COVID19 has had, and will have, significant impact on the tasks we undertake to achieve our goals and objectives. We expect that those tasks will continue to change in a dynamic environment - our internal and external work will adapt to closely monitor

conditions and make adjustments as needed. However, we will continue to be guided by the central truths and priorities identified in this document. While the pandemic and economic collapse demand our immediate focus to assist with disaster relief for organizations and artists and then beyond to our role in recovery of the arts ecosystem, this five-year strategic plan envisions the "next normal" of life after the pandemic. Agility, responsiveness, adaptation, and collaboration will be the key descriptors guiding us through the unknowns of the months and years to come.

As we reflect and learn from our history and approach the celebration of the 50th anniversary of our founding, this strategic plan envisions the ongoing evolution of Mid-America Arts Alliance as the nation's first Regional Arts Organization and our continuing journey to serve the needs of the region.



A visitor interacts with *Dream Tomorrow, Today*, an exhibition from artist Calder Kamin at the DoSeum in San Antonio, TX

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This five-year strategic plan was developed through an inclusive process that engaged over 1,100 individuals during the eleven-month period from April, 2019-March, 2020. The Mid-America Arts Alliance's (M-AAA) board formally adopted the plan in June, 2020.

A strategic planning committee comprised of board members led the process, with guidance from the arts management consulting firm, Maren Brown Associates. Survey research related to the plan was conducted by independent consultant, Surale Phillips.

The planning process began with a thorough **review of background materials**, such as current programs, plans, evaluations, financial data, recent research studies, and other relevant materials.

Concurrent with this process, staff conducted on-site meetings with board members in each of Mid-America Arts Alliance's partner states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. These conversations focused on assessment of Mid-America's current programs and services, as well as needs and opportunities for the organization to consider, relevant to the needs within each state, as part of the strategic planning process.

In June, 2019, a **retreat** with the board and senior staff members surfaced key planning questions, identified research participants who could inform the plan, and gathered concepts that could be integrated into a new mission, vision, and values statement for the organization.

Following the retreat, the consultants worked with Mid-America Arts Alliance's staff to finalize the research design for **thirty in-depth phone interviews**. In addition, Maren Brown Associates advised on the design of **an online survey** of artists and organization representatives developed by consultant, Surale Phillips.

One-on-one confidential phone interviews engaged experts in a wide range of fields, including representatives of the Mid-America Arts Alliance board of directors, state arts agencies, arts service organizations, arts organizations, artist groups and ensembles, foundations, artist managers, and related fields.



Artist Ruthie Foster performs at Sheldon Arts Foundation in St. Louis, MO

Interviewees were provided with a list of questions that probed previous connections with Mid-America Arts Alliance, thoughts about challenges and opportunities facing the arts sector, trends in their respective fields, examples of exemplary programs, and any additional suggestions for potential partners and strategic planning priorities.

Surale Phillips' customized online survey collected input from 959 individuals, including artists and organization representatives, to inform Mid-America Arts Alliance's strategic plan. Most respondents had some previous affiliation with Mid-America Arts Alliance. The survey provided Mid-America Arts Alliance with critical information about the needs and priorities of respondents, gathered stakeholder input into M-AAA's strategic priorities, and assessed the impact of M-AAA's work with these key stakeholders.

Maren Brown Associates then facilitated a **two-day full staff retreat** at M-AAA's headquarters in Kansas City, MO in July, 2019. The sessions included: a review of the planning process; a discussion about M-AAA's perceived organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; articulation of organization values; and individual departmental conversations about opportunities and barriers staff experience in their work.

Staff provided additional input through one-on-one phone consultations with Maren Brown Associates.

Throughout the research phase, M-AAA's strategic planning committee convened to further shape the **draft mission, vision, and values statements** for the organization.

Interview and survey research results were shared with Mid-America Arts Alliance's staff and board in **written reports** by the consultants. The research results were reviewed and discussed at a **final planning retreat** with board and staff in November, 2019, along with **draft mission, vision, and values statements** created by the strategic planning committee. This retreat helped to identify key goals, objectives, and tasks for the plan.

The consultants then **drafted the plan** in close consultation with Mid-America Arts Alliance's strategic planning committee. The plan was then finalized by the committee and presented to the full board for formal adoption.



The second Artists360 cohort gathers in Bentonville, AR

MISSION

Mid-America Arts Alliance strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout the region and beyond.

VISION

More art for more people.

VALUES

Mid-America affirms the following values, and commits to embracing and holding ourselves accountable to these principles in all of our work:

- Freedom of cultural and creative expression is fundamental to humanity.
- The arts and humanities encourage empathy and further the understanding of diverse cultures and traditions.
- Collaborations and partnerships leverage creativity, resources, and experience to expand possibilities.
- Thriving arts communities contribute to prosperous, successful societies.
- Service to the arts ecosystem of the region is infused with innate curiosity and a creative approach to innovation, within an environment that allows for risk taking and ongoing learning.
- Commitment to equitable policies, inclusive practices, and celebration of the rich diversity of our region permeate our organizational structure and our service to the region.

GOAL 1

ENSURE A THRIVING ARTS SECTOR

Strengthen artists and organizations in their ability to create and serve their constituents



OBJECTIVE 1.1

Build the capacity of small and mid-sized arts and humanities organizations to better fulfill their missions and deepen their service to communities.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Equip artists to build sustainable careers through programs and services that improve business practices, build resilience, strengthen peer networks, and offer targeted financial support.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Leverage M-AAA's unique role as a regional arts agency to respond to regional and national needs through innovative programs and services.

GOAL 2

CELEBRATE THE REGION'S
CREATIVE ASSETS



Elevate and support
the vibrancy of the arts in
the Mid-America region



OBJECTIVE 2.1

Collaborate with Mid-America's state arts agency partners to address region-wide needs and opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Cultivate strategic partnerships with local, state, regional, and national entities on the funding and delivery of programs and services to amplify M-AAA's capacity and reach.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Support Mid-America's rural regions in their efforts to develop creative communities.

GOAL 3

PRIORITIZE INCLUSION



Demonstrate our commitment to diversity and equity through policies, practices, programs, and services



OBJECTIVE 3.1

Diversify the composition of M-AAA's staff and board to ensure that M-AAA benefits from a broad range of perspectives that are reflective of the communities it serves.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Analyze and remove barriers to M-AAA's programs and funding to ensure equitable access and accessibility.

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Foster cultural equity throughout M-AAA's programs and services.

GOAL 4

STRENGTHEN M-AAA'S
INTERNAL CAPACITY

A stylized lightbulb icon with a teal glow and radiating lines, symbolizing an idea or innovation.

Strengthen Mid-America's
internal capacity to
effectively deliver its
programs and services



OBJECTIVE 4.1

Strengthen Mid-America Arts Alliance's financial, staff, and board capacity to respond to strategic planning needs and requirements.

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Foster an organizational culture and implement policies and practices that support innovation, collaboration, equity, and professional development.

OBJECTIVE 4.3

Raise the visibility of M-AAA through improved communications and use of technology.