



Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Strategic Vision Plan - Implementation

Update: August 9, 2022

NEXT STAGE 

Strategic Vision Plan - Implementation

In late 2021, the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County engaged social impact firm Next Stage to facilitate a planning process to assist in the establishment of an organizational vision.

In December 2021, Next Stage produced a Current Conditions Assessment containing findings from the firm's two-month discovery process including material review, trend research, a survey taken by 146 individuals, interviews with key community leaders and focus groups with creatives, donors and volunteers.

The resulting assessment was the backdrop for a series of planning sessions with a Planning Task Force of board and staff leaders that met three times - once in November 2021 to inform the research, and later in December 2021 to react to the assessment and January 2022 to further shape ideas previously discussed. That led to a full-board retreat in February 2022 where board members engaged in a values and guiding principles exercise ahead of discussing concepts coming out of the Task Force's work.

The result of those was the development of a Visioning Roadmap published in March 2022 and affirmed by the organization's board in May 2022. With the plan in place, the Arts Council reengaged Next Stage to assist with the implementation process. This workbook will document this work and serve as a platform for collaboration between the Arts Council's leadership and Next Stage's team.

Our Values Compass

This visioning process began with an effort to formalize a set of values and guiding principles for the Arts Council. If mission is the 'what' of the organization, values define 'how' - how the mission is carried out and how decisions are made. As defining, touchstone ideals, values permeate everything the organization does, from its programming and community engagement to operations and staff/volunteer management.

At the leadership retreat on February 15, 2022, participants were asked to help shape the values into guiding principles that will help the organization make decisions. The resulting framework is outlined below.

The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County...

- Champions creativity as an essential community asset (**Creativity**)
- Engages authentically across the community (**Community**)
- Celebrates fresh perspectives and diverse voices (**Diversity**)
- Breaks down barriers to expand human connection (**Access**)
- Embraces risk-taking to advance collective goals (**Innovation**)
- Creates a culture of belonging for creatives and all residents (**Inclusivity**)
- Sets an ambition to outperform expectation (**Excellence**)



The Big Ideas

- As a **CONVENER**, the Arts Council will build an equitable approach to engagement, ensuring fresh and diverse voices are not just heard but provided a platform. The Arts Council aspires to be the framework upon which community builds its ambition, and this will only be possible if all are at the proverbial table. This will be accomplished through decentralized relationship-building toward formal efforts to bring people together.
- As a **CATALYST**, the Arts Council will aim to leverage its role as a convener to facilitate buy-in on a shared vision and set of goals. Rather than serve as umbrella for this activity, the Arts Council sees itself as the undergirding scaffolding that lifts up great ideas, identifies areas of intersection, and encourages working together to achieve big ideas. In this way, the Arts Council is less the owner of the process and more the steward of community ambition toward articulation and gameplan development.
- As a **CONDUIT**, the Arts Council will work to leverage its financial and facility resources to serve as a conduit of an even more precious resource - the 'people power' of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. With catalytic concepts as a blueprint, the Arts Council will work to activate human resources 'to put intention into practice.' The Arts Council endeavors to lead a movement of 'people who do,' turning its bias for action into an expression of community spirit.
- As a **COLLABORATOR**, the Arts Council performs the role it is uniquely and best-positioned to do, creating new systemic collaborations that cross-pollinate arts and culture into areas of tourism, education, economic development, and workforce pipeline creation, while working to solve the region's signature challenge of racial equity and inclusion.

Implementation

Next Stage was renewed into a second engagement to support the following activities:

- Trust-Building Outreach (Objective #1A) - Next Stage would support the design and launch of an effort for Arts Council leadership to engage in trust-building outreach in the creative and cultural sectors.
- Relationship-Building Convening (Objective #1B) - Next Stage would support the design and launch of networking events with an aim to bridge across difference.
- Grasstops Systems Outreach (Objectives #4A) - Next Stage will support the design and launch of relationship-building toward buy-in with individuals in the tourism, education, economic development and workforce pipeline generation sectors.

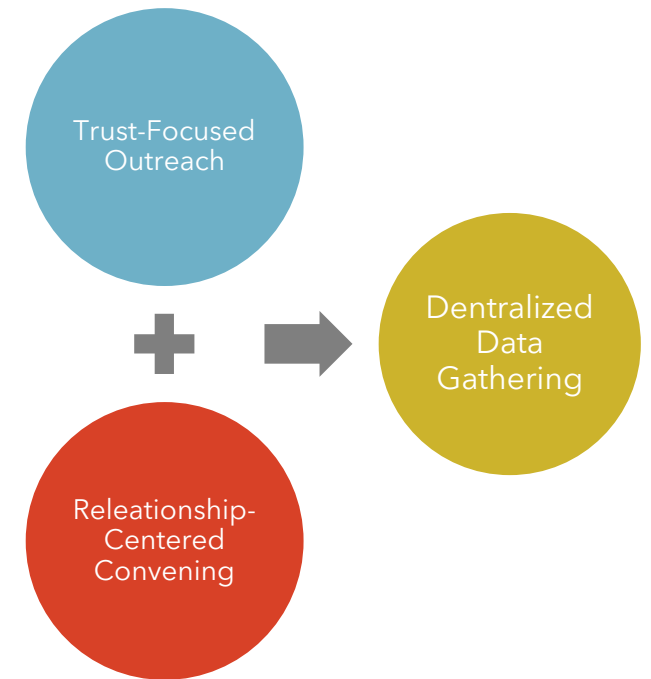
Each of these objectives will have an associated set of activities to be completed by the end of August 2022.



Trust-Building Outreach

Goal #1: Build an equitable approach to engagement, ensuring fresh and diverse voices are not just heard but provided a platform.

Trust-Focused Outreach - Creating engagement and buy-in on collaborative efforts will require a basis of trust. To achieve this, the Arts Council's leadership volunteers and staff will need to demonstrate a willingness to 'go to' the community, getting proximate to those the organization aims to convene and serve, and focus on listening. Demonstrating a commitment to community voice is essential to developing a basis of trust.



Implementation Concept

As the lead manager of space for creatives in Winston-Salem, the Arts Council has traditionally been a destination where constituents served by the organization go - for workshops, gatherings and events. One way the organization can demonstrate a desire to be of service - not the umbrella but the supportive platform undergirding the sector.

Over the next year, the Arts Council's CEO will demonstrate the Council's commitment to being in-community by actually being *in community* - going on-site of local constituents to share the aims of the Visioning Roadmap and continue gathering insights and reflections. Key activities include:

- Visit 10-12 artists/creatives/members each month (average of 2-3 per week)
- Document the discussion, take photographs/video, post reflection to the Arts Council's Facebook page
- Invite participants to monthly cross-sector convenings beginning in November 2022

Trust-Building Outreach

Develop Comprehensive List of Stakeholders

Next Stage has developed [a simple google sheet](#) to help the Arts Council create a large list of individuals for outreach. Ideally a much larger list would be developed than is needed in the near-term, prioritizing 12-15 per month to net 10-12 actual interviews.

Goal: 80-100 individuals identified
Milestone: By August 12, 2022

Narrow to Q3 Targets & Set Initial Meetings

Beginning in July, the Arts Council's CEO would begin conducting outreach to set on-site meetings with creative constituents. The goal would be to kick-off this effort in mid-July, ramping up in August and moving forward. Next Stage will suggest language for outreach.

Goal: 25-30 people identified
Milestone: By September 16, 2022

Create a Brief Pitch Deck

In these early months of outreach, the presenting concept is the Arts Council's CEO is seeking feedback on the recently-developed Vision Roadmap. Next Stage is developing a brief, five-slide deck that can be sent ahead, printed and brought to these outreach meetings.

Goal: Pitch deck developed
Milestone: By September 16, 2022

Design Cadence of Follow-Up

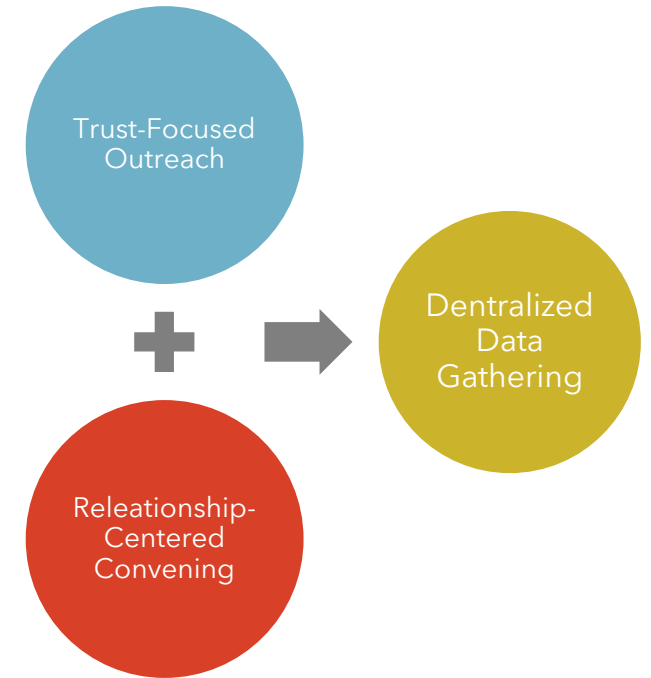
This process is meant to be transparent, with the Arts Council's CEO sharing her journey via social media and bringing her voice to a reflection on the significant creative assets in the Winston-Salem community. Next Stage is developing a communication plan to support follow-ups.

Goal: Communication plan developed
Milestone: By September 30, 2022

Trust-Building Outreach

Goal #1: Build an equitable approach to engagement, ensuring fresh and diverse voices are not just heard but provided a platform.

Relationship-Centered Convening - Regular efforts to convene should be focused on building familiarity and trust across members of the arts and culture sector. A regular calendar of engagement is needed that centers that convening in community, exposing participants to areas of the community they may not be familiar with and encouraging a spirit of exploration through relationship-building.



Implementation Concept

The outreach from the Arts Council's CEO will create an opportunity to begin convening leaders to start advancing the concepts outlined in the Vision Roadmap. Goal #2 of that plan calls for "facilitating buy-in on a shared vision and set of goals," sourcing those collaborative concepts from the creative community is serves. The Arts Council aims to "lift up ideas, identify areas of intersection, and encourage collaboration."

Next Stage believes human-centered design workshops focused on building relationships and sourcing ideas will be a logical next steps following on-site, in-community engagement by the CEO. The firm wants to develop a workshop concept for deployment in September in partnership with both the Arts Council's staff and, importantly, the creatives who will be convened to it.

We see opportunities to create prototypes of ideas that come out of each session, with a modest budget set aside to implement quickly. We want to "move past talk and get to action."

Trust-Building Outreach

Develop Workshop Design Task Team

Next Stage wants to put together a workshop design team to come together at the end of July to create a framework for convening that is creative, hands-on and trust-building. This would include members of the Arts Council and creatives from throughout the community

Goal: 15-20 individuals identified
Milestone: By August 12, 2022

Facilitate Design Sprint

In late July, Next Stage aims to be on-site of the Arts Council to facilitate a workshop design session in partnership with Arts Council staff and invited creatives.

Goal: Design sprint conducted
Milestone: By September 1, 2022

Develop Initial Workshop for Deployment

Next Stage is IDEO trained to create human-centered workshops that channel "the wisdom of the crowd." The first workshop in September 2022 would be a platform to engage individuals the CEO has met with over the course of Q3, creating a next step following outreach.

Goal: Workshop model developed
Milestone: By September 16, 2022

Facilitate Initial Workshop

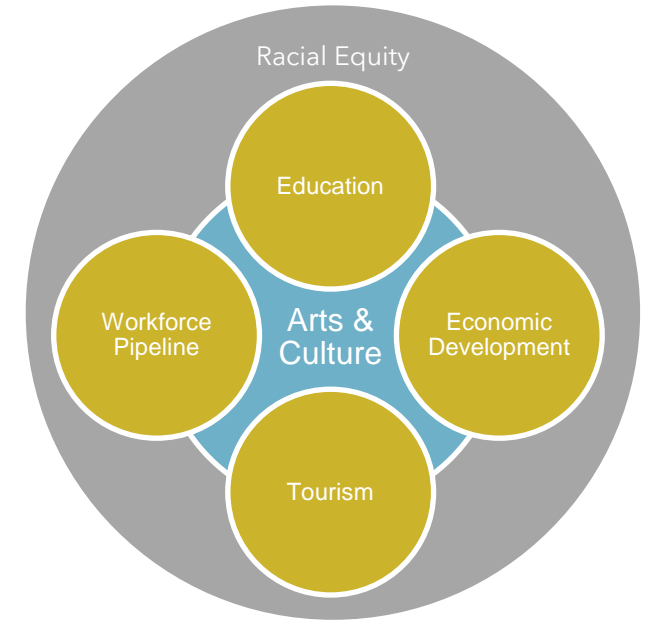
Next Stage can be retained to support the facilitation of workshops, assisting in the sourcing and development of prototypes that move from talk to action. Like the CEO's outreach, these prototypes will be used to market the Arts Council's progress.

Goal: First workshop facilitated
Milestone: By November 30, 2022

Trust-Building Outreach

Goal #4: Create new, systemic collaborations that cross-pollinate arts and culture into areas of tourism, education, economic development, and workforce pipeline creation, while working to solve the region's signature challenge of racial equity and inclusion.

Systemic Outreach - The arts and culture sector can be a part of the solution for addressing the needs of other sectors, but it will require a solution-minded approach that makes the needs of partners a priority. Building familiarity and trust across systems is an important place to start while gathering insights for how the arts and cultural sector can make a difference.



Implementation Concept

One of the big opportunities for the Arts Council given the recent ARPA funding is to reframe the role arts and culture plays in advancing the larger narrative of Winston-Salem. The Arts Council now has the budget to attract potential collaboration with other sector leaders in the areas of education, economic development, tourism and workforce pipeline. These can also be centered in the work of the engagement and convening in Goal #1 - finding creative ways to advance cross-sector impact.

The Arts Council's CEO will serve as lead on demand-generation in this space:

- Visit 4-6 cross-sector social and business leaders (average of 1-2 per week)
- Present the strategic plan and concepts germane to each domain
- Identify collaborative projects and initiatives that leverage the Arts Council's funding

Trust-Building Outreach

Develop Comprehensive List of Stakeholders

Next Stage has developed [a simple google sheet](#) to help the Arts Council create a large list of sector leaders for outreach. Ideally a much larger list would be developed than is needed in the near-term, prioritizing 6-8 per month to net 4-6 actual meetings.

Goal: 50-75 individuals identified
Milestone: By August 26, 2022

Narrow to Q3 Targets & Set Initial Meetings

Beginning in July, the Arts Council's CEO would begin conducting outreach to set meetings with cross-sector leaders. The goal would be to kick-off this effort in mid-July, ramping up in August and moving forward. Next Stage will suggest language for outreach.

Goal: 18-20 people identified
Milestone: By September 30, 2022

Create an In-Depth Pitch Deck

The presenting concept for this outreach is for Arts Council's CEO to reintroduce the organization through the lens of its Vision Roadmap. Next Stage is developing an in-depth, ten-slide deck that can be sent ahead, printed and brought to these outreach meetings.

Goal: Pitch deck developed
Milestone: By September 30, 2022

Design Cadence of Follow-Up

Initial outreach will ideally lead to follow-up meetings to clarify opportunities to build projects and initiatives, with creative sector input. Next Stage is developing a communication plan to support follow-ups.

Goal: Communication plan developed
Milestone: By September 30, 2022