

Strategic Plan | 2021–2023



**Artist  
Communities  
Alliance**



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I.

# Guiding Principles

- 4 Living the Aspiration
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- 7 Our Core Values

## Living the Aspiration

For 30 years, Artist Communities Alliance has held the belief that cultivation of new art and ideas is essential to human progress. The practice of artists and culture bearers holds the power to transform, uplift, and sustain the world. Today, artist communities have never been a more essential or challenged component of the arts and culture ecosystem.

Artist Communities set out to develop a multi-year strategic plan built on visionary leadership with the input of membership and leaders in the field. A global pandemic, economic crisis, and civil unrest caused disruption to the strategic planning process; both affirming and liberating Artist Communities from its past. Our vision, mission, values, and strategies (still in draft form) were tested as Artist Communities took steps to start living out the values to which it aspires despite and because of these unprecedented times.

Artist Communities is a continuous work in progress; no one conversation, document, or plan will determine all aspects of the future. Striving to develop our collective capacity to be in a constant state of dialogue and interrogation, Artist Communities is an assemblage of many different voices.

We are artists—people who believe failure and triumph realized together reveal transformation. We are communities—places where diverse approaches invite innovation and conflict and achieve a creative greater good. We are champions of historically excluded and underrepresented voices, including but not limited to: Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicanx, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color; people with disabilities; and people who are LGBTQI2A+. **We now call ourselves the Artist Communities Alliance (ACA).**

## Living the Aspiration, continued

We aspire to an artist residency field that shapes a world where people have the freedom to unleash their creative potential and prosper in inclusive, just, joyful, and accessible environments. Realizing this vision depends on pursuit of the four goals of this strategic plan:

- **Equitable, Well-resourced and Valued Field**  
Ensuring the field's survival by equipping current and emerging leadership with the knowledge, resources, and perspective to create and enact equitable policies, processes, and practices.
- **Generative and Healthy Residency Climates**  
Centering artists and residency staff, their mobility, fair compensation, and their pursuit of residency opportunities that support their restoration and growth.

- **Relevance and Responsiveness to Members**  
Meeting member demand for more opportunities for connectivity and knowledge sharing in an affordable context that is accessible and minimizes environmental impact.

- **Aspirational Practice, Execution and Sustainability**  
Strengthening ACA's infrastructure across domains—people (board, staff), technology, process, and identity (communication).

# How can ACA unite the people who power residencies and inspire a field?

# We center artists

We believe power  
lies in the people

We respect and  
celebrate differences  
and commonalities

We thrive on inquiry  
and thoughtful debate

We are unequivocal in our stance on fair and just treatment for all

We acknowledge privilege and historic inequities and we work vigorously for broad access to resources, properties, information and opportunities

We believe that  
experimentation  
yields transformation

We share reciprocity with the earth attending to the impact of our actions on it and all that it contains

We listen, we learn  
and we share; we follow  
and we lead

## Our Core Values

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# II.

# Our Goals

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## Goal 1

# Equitable, Well-resourced and Valued Field

Field-building is essential for artists' residencies not only to survive but also to thrive. Through this strategic plan, Artist Communities elevates its support of residencies in creating environments where artists and staff have the resources, knowledge, and perspective to do their best work. Artist Communities strives to lead co-construction of a shared identity for the field—one that is clearly understood by funders and cultural partners and calls for a shared celebration of each program's uniqueness.

Field building for residencies encompasses research, advocacy and education, convening, professional development and communication services. At the core of these activities must be fair and just practice, honoring the people who power residencies. Those who are consistently underrepresented can identify what is needed to create the field they envision. Artist Communities supports and challenges current and emerging leaders to upend biases, assumptions, and legacies of inequity. Creating and enacting equitable policies, processes, and practices will revolutionize the field, ensuring its future potency.

## Goal 1

# Equitable, Well-resourced and Valued Field

## Objectives

- 1.1 To implement field-strengthening research on equitable practices across several domains, including tools for measuring efficacy
- 1.2 To build the field's equitable capacity by providing broad access to resources and information on effective approaches from peers, adjacent fields, and proven leaders in the work
- 1.3 To deepen the sustainability of the field by facilitating flexible and supportive funding
- 1.4 To increase awareness and understanding of the residency field to cultural partners and funders by illustrating the essential role of residencies' support of individual artists
- 1.5 To lead the field in engaging challenging conversations and concrete actions around social, environmental, and political issues
- 1.6 To mobilize meta-residency networks based on identity, geography, or discipline

## Conditions of Satisfaction

- Cohesive understanding of residency field priorities
- Research across global networks
- Artist Communities is top of mind in every residency conversation
- A Black-founded and designed residency network

# Generative and Healthy Residency Climates

Artists and staff members power residencies. Unfortunately, incidents of exclusion, racism, and discrimination persist. It is critical for every residency to create a climate where residency staff and any artist can connect, learn together, experiment, grow, and ignite change.

Through this strategic plan, Artist Communities focuses on supporting residency staff and artists in ways that acknowledge and correct for historic and embedded inequities. This includes refining the residency information made available to artists and encouraging reflection, candid self-assessment, and concrete organizational change.

Many resources are required as well as the commitment of strong and informed leadership. Residency leaders must facilitate a participatory experience of community, lead with consideration of the larger context, prioritize staff and artists, execute innovative responses, and reimagine plans that are just and compassionate toward everyone.

## Goal 2

# Generative and Healthy Residency Climates

## Objectives

- 2.1** To work collaboratively within the field to build a universal practice of reflection, evaluation, and transparent sharing of residencies' climate for artists and staff
- 2.2** To foster artist and staff mobility and prosperity by encouraging fair compensation practices and the removal of financial barriers to participation
- 2.3** To improve and increase the transparency of and access to residency profiles and referral information to assist artists in making timely and informed decisions

- 2.4** To cultivate greater support of the creative work of the full spectrum of artist practice and needs: social, economic, ecological, and historic
- 2.5** To encourage residencies to be overt in land acknowledgement, stewardship of natural resources, and resolving the implications of environmental changes on people

## Conditions of Satisfaction

- Residencies share the DEIA—diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility—qualities of their residency climate
- More artists and staff (especially BIPOC—Black, Indigenous, people of color—and Deaf and disabled artists) relating positive experiences at residencies

## Goal 3

# Relevance and Responsiveness to Members

The needs and interests of emerging and established residency programs diverge and converge as dynamically as the field evolves. Through this strategic plan, Artist Communities heightens its commitment to being relevant and responsive to its varied and growing membership. This includes embracing members' demands for more of every aspect of Artist Communities work.

With enthusiasm, Artist Communities will increase opportunities for intense connections and inspired exchange with colleagues and affinity programs. It is intent on providing resources to deepen learning around better practices and lessons acquired by on-the-ground failures and successes. Programming will address key realities for many—affordability of membership and participation in Alliance activities as well as desires to lessen environmental impact.

With responsiveness comes a responsibility to lead. Artist Communities will challenge members to pursue greater organizational effectiveness, continuous innovation, and to build their equitable capacity across all domains.

## Goal 3

# Relevance and Responsiveness to Members

## Objectives

- 3.1** To spark learning, collaboration, and innovation through year-round and peer-to-peer connectivity, exchange, and mentorships
- 3.2** To advance artist-centered solutions to common issues in the field through expanded digital content, knowledge sharing, and relating first-person stories (residencies and artists)
- 3.3** To support refinement of organizational processes, policies, and practices for sustainability
- 3.4** To encourage ongoing professional development and translatable skills, transfer of wisdom, and building leadership pathways for residency staff
- 3.5** To illuminate and celebrate the varied diversity, typology, and context in which artist support programs exist

## Conditions of Satisfaction

- New people participating in learning
- More sharing of resources and learning journeys

# Aspirational Practice, Execution and Sustainability

Positioning Artist Communities to live to its full potential requires a multivalent approach that is grounded in a culture of interrogation—deep thinking, questioning, pushing well beyond the norm. Scholarship, logic, and intellect are only valuable in concert with humility, compassion, and love. Through this strategic plan Artist Communities will, in practice, live out the creation of sustainable infrastructure change that supports people and planet.

To be true stewards, thought partners, and field ambassadors the Board will grow its talent and leadership to be reflective of the people that power the field: artists, policy makers, funders, residency staff, and members from underrepresented groups. Staff will have access to the professional development, area support, and information needed to find purpose and pride in their individual and collective work. As a technology-driven organization, Artist Communities will bolster its capacity to support its operations and external face with a seamless platform that is efficient and scalable.

## Goal 4

# Aspirational Practice, Execution and Sustainability

## Objectives

- 4.1 To build a diverse and inclusive Board and amplify its active leadership as stewards, thought partners, and ambassadors to and from the field
- 4.2 To support each staff person's capacity to find fulfillment and purpose in their Alliance work regardless of position
- 4.3 To sustain a culture of generosity and care through transparency in reporting and governance and careful documentation of policies and processes
- 4.4 To attract more financial resources to support Artist Communities growth and ability to support a global membership
- 4.5 To build the infrastructure of systems and digital capabilities to support internal and external communications, productivity, and interactivity
- 4.6 To heighten Artist Communities visibility within the arts and culture ecosystem as well as clarify its identity as a connector, knowledge sharer, and advocate in service to programs which in turn provide time and space for artists' creative practice
- 4.7 To strengthen long-term fiscal health through multi-year planning, financial modeling and the application of investment strategies

## Conditions of Satisfaction

- Board waiting list
- Board maintains a composition of 50% or greater BIPOC
- Alliance enlarges and improves its operational capacity so that staff can rest

# III.

# Strategic Implementation

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# A Transparent + Flexible Tool

This strategic plan will be made public in order to invite widespread engagement in advancing the plan.

As the Alliance moves forward, this document is an important anchor and flexible tool for focusing and refocusing energies when needed, either to shift direction or to capitalize on new-found opportunities. Some initiatives are contingent upon having the financial and human resources in place for planning and execution.

An annual review of the plan in light of internal and external landscapes will aid assessment of progress and inform refreshed priorities as warranted. When the third year of the plan nears, the Alliance will determine if it's best to refine the existing plan or embark upon a new planning process.

# Evaluation + Accountability

The Alliance is intent on advancing its mission significantly by the end of this strategic plan. “Conditions of Satisfaction” have been determined for each goal in order to identify and recognize when the Alliance board and staff can claim the ability to pause around a particular theme, reinterrogate, and set new priorities. These conditions acknowledge the importance of both qualitative and quantitative measures.

Strategic objectives will guide the nature and scope of full Board and committee meetings. Board members are called upon to activate their networks and serve as field ambassadors and advocates on behalf of the Alliance.

At the management level, Staff also will maintain a dashboard as a tool for monitoring empirical progress toward intended outcomes.

# Interrogation + Generosity

This strategic plan was developed and documented in a spirit of generosity. Even the mission statement is an invitation. Similarly, strategic implementation of the plan is grounded in a continuous cycle of learning, action, assessment, adjustment, and reflection.

# IV.

# Resources

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# Glossary of Terms

**Accessibility:** This strategic plan will be made public in order to invite widespread engagement in advancing the plan.

**Conditions of Satisfaction:** ACA metrics of success.

**Core Values:** A statement of the organization's beliefs, a shared sense of what the organization holds dear.

**Diversity:** Diversity of people and ideas represents, among other things: differences in ethnicity, race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, abilities, religious and spiritual values, political viewpoints, veteran status, and gender identity and expression.

**Equitable Capacity:** The ability of an individual or organization to be equitable in their work and begin to dismantle white-body supremacy.

**Equitable Practices:** Practices that acknowledge historically under-served and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist the equitable provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

**Equity:** Fair and just treatment, fairness in the access of information and the right to thrive, prosper, and experience joy.

**Goals:** The broad, desired end states that the organization is imagining for its future.

**Inclusiveness:** The involvement of a diversity of individuals, the incorporation of a diversity of perspectives, needs, contributions, and viewpoints, and a culture where all members feel that they belong.

**Initiatives:** The programs/tactics/activities planned in order to meet the objectives and make progress toward the goal.

**Mission:** A statement of the organization's purpose, outlining the reason that the organization exists.

**Residency:** An organization or program that provides artists and other creative professionals with time, space and resources to work, individually or collectively, on areas of their practice that reward heightened reflection or focus.

**Vision:** The nature of the field three to five years from now.

**White-body Supremacy:** The white body being the ostensibly supreme standard against which other bodies' humanity is measured \*Resmaa Menakhem.

# About the Artist Communities Alliance

The Artist Communities Alliance (ACA) is an international association of artist residencies. ACA supports the people who power the artist residency field—administrators, artists, creatives, culture bearers, neighbors, and volunteers.

Our work is always in progress. ACA remains curious as to how we can build community, promote learning, direct resources, and advocate for the causes most relevant to the residency field. We can only explore the possibilities together, so instead of a mission statement we have a mission question:

How can ACA unite the people who power artist residencies and inspire the field? ACA supports the field through various modes, and we are dedicated to continuously returning to our mission question and core values in all facets of our work.

## Community

ACA builds connections among people who work in the artist residency field and the arts sector at-large through programming, convenings, and our membership program.

## Learning

ACA promotes knowledge-sharing and exchange through research, evaluation, and information.

## Grantmaking

ACA administers funds to individual artists and artist residency programs in partnership with foundations and arts agencies.

## Advocacy

ACA leverages its ongoing research to champion the issues most relevant to the artist residency field.

[ArtistCommunities.org](https://ArtistCommunities.org)

# Thank you.



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