



PSRC Arts and Culture Economic Recovery Strategy

Economic recovery and resiliency for the arts and culture sector in the central Puget Sound region.



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Puget Sound Regional Council



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Introduction

The Puget Sound Arts and Culture Sector

The Puget Sound region is the epicenter of arts and culture in the Pacific Northwest. The concentration of arts, culture, and entertainment activities and offerings attracts millions of visitors every year and supports a unique social infrastructure that makes this region a great place to work and live. The region is one in which visitors can experience the thrill of a theater production against a backdrop of evergreen forest, take in a touring performance or exhibition at a world class venue, and engage directly with artists and art in vibrant public spaces and artisan markets, perhaps all in one weekend.

The sector is comprised of creative and economic engines in the form of artists and performers who create and share their work in this place. Beyond this core, the arts and cultural sector employs a vast array of professionals and working-class Puget Sound residents, including administrative staff, facilities maintenance professionals, ticketing agents, educators, designers, lighting specialists, and stagehands. Beyond that, numerous adjacent businesses and employees in restaurants and bars, hotels, retail shops, insurance, marketing, and financial services depend on the strength of the arts and cultural sector to generate spending in their establishments.

Pandemic Impacts

The economic devastation of the sector and the ripple effects on adjacent economies due to the pandemic are well documented. [The ArtsFund COVID Cultural Impact Study \(CCIS\)](#) conducted in 2021 used data from cultural organizations and Washington residents to document and analyze the pandemic's impacts on Washington's cultural community. Our analysis picks up where the CCIS left off, corroborating its findings with

2021 Workers Directly Employed by Arts and Culture:

15,850

2021 Average Annual Compensation (included estimated benefits) in the Arts and Culture Sector:

\$52,400 or

52.8%

less than the regional average

2019-21 Loss of Arts and Culture Employment:

-27.2%

compared to **-4.5%** for all nonfarm employment

Workers in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation who are Independent Contractors (gig workers):

>6%



The Paramount Theatre During Pandemic, Getty Images

additional data from public sources and a survey of cultural workers. We find that the sector contracted by more than a quarter between 2019 and 2020, shedding 26% of jobs. As other sectors began to recover, arts and culture lost another 1% of jobs between 2020 and 2021. At the time of the cultural worker survey in the spring of 2022, 31% of surveyed workers were considering leaving the sector in the next one to three years, primarily for better wages and benefits or for increased predictability and job security.

The pandemic exposed the inequitable and unsustainable funding structures that the arts and cultural scene has been built on, nationally and in our region. Arts and cultural creators and performers provide incredible and ample public goods that combat social isolation, promote health and well-being, support academic integration and creative and critical thought in young minds, anchor local economies and vibrant communities, and help attract and retain talented workers to our region's major employers. For details on some of these interlinkages, see the [ArtsFund Social Impact of the Arts Study](#). The arts and culture sector is an important driver of regional tourism and restaurant spending that is largely comprised of thousands of workers paid wages that are not commensurate with their contributions to society and the greater economy. The average compensation for arts and culture workers is significantly below the regional average.

See the Appendix for further details on the arts and culture economy and specific occupations.

The Vision for Arts and Culture in Economic Recovery

This Arts and Culture Economic Recovery Strategy is a guiding document for regional partners to align efforts in support of organizations and workers in arts and culture. This strategy guides our region toward a vision for arts and culture that is transformed, equitable, and sustainable. It includes arts and cultural infrastructure that create access to the arts for audiences of all ages, abilities, and walks of life. It includes meaningful investment in cultural workers to recognize their unique and irreplaceable contributions to our society and economy and placemaking. The vision also emphasizes the need for a new business model for the arts, a sustainable one that enables collaboration for the greater good.

Recovery Planning Process

PSRC is a regional planning and convening body. Following on the ArtsFund COVID Cultural Impact Study and in recognition of the importance of the arts and cultural sector to economic development, PSRC allocated Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funds to develop a strategy for economic recovery. PSRC engaged a team at BERK Consulting in partnership with High Peak Strategy to conduct research and data analysis and to develop the strategy under the guidance of an Advisory Committee from February to June 2022. The work consisted of interviews with cities, counties, employers, cultural sector partners, guilds, and unions; secondary workforce data analysis; a cultural workforce survey and focus groups; and online research of national and global strategies. The detailed workforce data analysis, survey results, and interview summary are available in the Appendix.

Strategic Priorities

We used the lenses of Equity and Transformation and Innovation to filter and tailor investment and opportunities in the action areas. We encourage regional partners to apply these lenses when adopting and adapting the strategies in this document. Without attention to these lenses, we are in danger of stepping back toward the pre-pandemic status quo and missing out on the vision for arts and culture.

Equity

Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) residents have faced historical and structural inequities in our region, including in income and access to economic capital. These inequities manifest in the arts and cultural sector in the distribution of funding and resources at the organizational level, and compensation inequities at the individual artist and worker level. While the murder of George Floyd and associated Black Lives Matter movement precipitated much larger amounts of giving to BIPOC-led and centered arts and cultural resources, that increased interest already shows signs of ebbing. It is clear a structural change is needed in how the cultural contributions of BIPOC community members are valued and supported to ensure they remain a focus.

The equity lens also refers to geographic equity within the Puget Sound region. The concentration of arts and cultural resources in the Seattle metropolitan area creates inequity for outlying areas. The affordability crisis in Seattle and the impacts of the pandemic have accelerated the movement of workers, including cultural workers, to smaller cities. These places have far less public funding for arts and culture and limited infrastructure to fully welcome new artistic residents, many of whom may commute back to Seattle for employment opportunities. The future vision includes more equitable geographic distribution of cultural infrastructure, employment opportunities, and resources, so more people can create and experience arts where they live.

Though race and geography were the primary lenses in this discussion, other forms of equity along lines of disability, neurodiversity, and sexual orientation will be relevant when adopting or adapting the following strategies. For example, the pandemic and pivot to virtual programming has elevated potential directions around accessibility in the arts.



Performance at the Seattle Rep, Allegra Calder

We need to provide more livable wages in our sector to encourage BIPOC candidates to work with us. The arts continue to be a place where privileged, white, cis-gendered people can afford to work/intern for free and as such they make up the majority of our workforce. Equity starts with better wages/benefits to encourage diversity which promotes inclusion.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Transformation and Innovation

The strategies contained in this document were curated with an eye toward transformation and innovation. There is widespread recognition that recovery for arts and culture means moving through the current crisis into a new future, rather than efforts to recreate the “pre-pandemic” conditions. While the pandemic has been devastating, we recognize that it also precipitated a much-needed wake-up call about the unsustainable and fragile business model for arts and culture, and our dependence on cultural workers who are compensated at rates far below the regional income average and the true value of their contributions to the community. Most of the selected strategies are innovative and have small scale models, pilots, or evidence currently building, while some are existing efforts that we know work. The lens of transformation and innovation guides us to the vision for a Puget Sound arts and cultural economy by thinking about how these examples could be deployed at a regional scale.



Paint Cans, Allegra Calder

Strategic Action Areas

Outlining clear and practical avenues for action is a critical task of the recovery planning process. Specifically, we detail three strategic action areas of potential strategies: enhancing recruitment and retention of cultural workers, strengthening regional infrastructure, and developing a sustainable business model for arts and culture.

Action items outlined in these strategic areas will successfully support regional recovery because they are contextualized within the cultural sector. Each strategy is informed by interviews, surveys, and discussions with local arts and culture organizations, government, corporations, artists, and workers, all with varying perspectives and concerns. Furthermore, the strategic actions leverage opportunities for growth in the sector

and exist within a feasible scope for regional stakeholders.

Although cities and counties within the region have arts commissions and a few have offices of arts and culture, there is no “minister of culture” for the four-county Puget Sound region. Without a central coordinating body, the stewardship and health of the regional arts and cultural economy is a group effort across public and private entities, individual workers and artists, nonprofit arts organizations, and philanthropy. This strategy document is presented as a menu of options to help focus contributions from across the sector and the region. No one entity is expected to take on all of the strategies detailed herein, but the intent is for all concerned actors to be able to find at least one strategy that fits their position and capacity.

Enhance Recruitment and Retention of Cultural Workers

Arts and cultural workers face many barriers to entry, participation, and retention. Low wages in a region with rapidly escalating costs of living is prime among them, but cultural workers are also concerned with access to benefits, student debt, and childcare. Over half of cultural worker survey respondents lost income and one in six lost a full-time or part-time job during the pandemic. Nearly one-third of respondents are considering leaving the arts and culture sector in the next year, primarily due to a desire for improved wages, benefits, predictability, and/or job security. Independent artists, gig workers, and freelancers were among the most impacted by the pandemic, as many also relied on hospitality to supplement their artistic incomes and did not have access to most social safety nets, such as unemployment insurance.

Meaningful economic support for these workers could be transformative. It would inject more stability into the arts and cultural landscape so that taking part in this work is more attainable. It would also aid in the transformation to a more diverse and democratic arts ecosystem, where workers from all socio-economic backgrounds can participate and thrive. The following strategies are examples of avenues to support cultural workers, many of which will require case-making and associated investments in advocacy.

Enhance income and employment opportunities

Income and the ability to save and/or pay down debt are common concerns in the lives of cultural workers and were reported as a top priority for recovery planning. When survey respondents were asked to identify strategies to help the region recruit and retain the arts and culture workforce, the four most frequently selected strategies all centered on affordability and finances, including higher wages, more access to affordable housing, more access to affordable benefits, and student loan forgiveness.

Pilot and measure guaranteed income for creative workers. Enhancing income can be a difficult strategy to materialize, but some jurisdictions are implementing guaranteed artist income programs. In October 2021, San Francisco launched a basic income program (SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists, or SF-GIPA) for \$1,000 monthly stipends for up to 130 artists and cultural workers, for 18 months. The funding comes from the San Francisco hotel tax designated for underserved communities, coupled with private philanthropic funding from the Start Small Foundation.

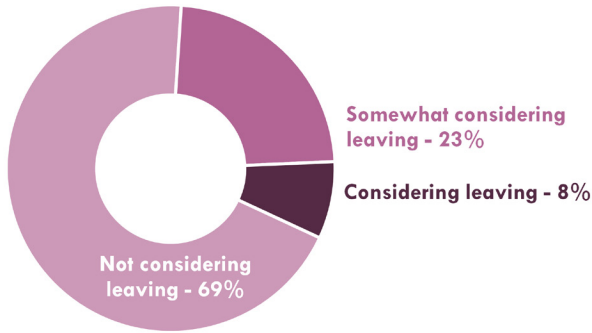
Create demand for cultural work. Expanding employment opportunities can support cultural workers, while stimulating local spending, activating public spaces, and creating a sense of community. The Seattle Office of Arts and Culture (ARTS) Hope Corps program, for example, connects artists with employment opportunities and provides \$15,000 to \$300,000 grants to under- and unemployed workers in creative industries to create public art with social aims and civic needs. An initiative called “Creatives Rebuild New York” provides guaranteed income for 2,400 artists and a program to fund employment for 300 artists working in collaboration with community-based organizations across New York State. This initiative is funded by private foundations.

The regional technology sector and the greater creative economy also require creative skills and play a role in creating demand. These roles can be attractive for a portion of the local cultural workforce offering higher wages and more stability. Private companies have hired visual artists in the development of office space and products, as well as creative consultants for new media and digital efforts.

Engage workforce development

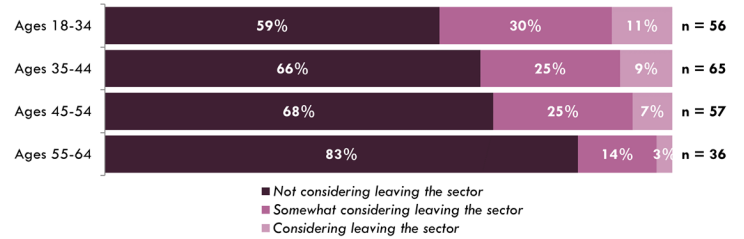
Support arts and cultural organizations in their professional career training role. Workforce development agencies and networks can be a vital asset to supporting cultural workers. Historically, due in part to the low-wages, arts and cultural agencies have served as training grounds for new entrants to the fields of development and

Exhibit 1 Cultural Worker Survey Repspondents Considering Leaving the Arts and Culture Sector in the Next Year (n=249)



Sources: BERK, 2022.

Exhibit 2 Age and Consideration of Leaving the Arts and Culture Sector (n=240)



Sources: BERK, 2022.

Exhibit 3 Top Strategies to Recruit and Retain Cultural Workers Reported in the Survey (n=242)



Sources: BERK, 2022.

fundraising, finance, operations, and more. Arts organizations invest in training these staff and provide access to opportunity and suffer great turnover in these positions when development staff with transferrable skills move on to higher paying sectors. Partnerships with workforce development could more formally recognize and compensate arts organizations in this training role as well as provide support to individual trainees.

The people in my industry who have worked through the pandemic are completely burned out, and now handling a higher workload due to others who have left for various reasons. People will continue to leave for other industries, making the situation worse, until full staffing is restored or workload is drastically altered. We need help.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Develop on-ramps to understaffed positions.

There are certain occupations in the arts and cultural sector that tend to be chronically undersupplied and understaffed such as stagehands, customer service, and essential operational roles. Engaging with workforce actors and local colleges and universities to train workers and build on-ramps for specific understaffed roles can support a strong workforce, including potentially expanding apprenticeships, while bringing public resources to meet arts organizations' needs. For example, the Department of Cultural Affairs in Los Angeles has developed a partnership with workforce development to strengthen their teaching artist workforce and a Creative Career Pathways for Transitional Age Foster Youth to create exposure and on-ramps with supports to entry-level jobs in the arts for young people who have been involved in the foster care system.

Workforce agencies could also help make job seekers and those looking to retrain aware of the

various opportunities available in the arts and culture sector.

Expand access to affordable housing

Inform cultural workers about affordable housing opportunities. Access to affordable housing for workers in the cultural sector should also be expanded. At a base level, government agencies can support this strategy by ensuring that artists are equitably and explicitly included in workforce housing and made aware of available affordable housing such as units in multi-family tax exemption (MFTE) or subsidized properties.

Invest in artist-specific developments. Artist-specific housing can be developed by organizations like ArtSpace, a national nonprofit real estate developer that fosters living, working, and business spaces for artists, usually supported by federal subsidies to maintain affordability. The Tashiro Kaplan Building, Hiawatha Lofts, and Mt. Baker Lofts are three successful Seattle projects. They also developed the ArtSpace Everett Lofts which houses the Schack Arts Center on the ground floor. The Roost, also in Seattle, is an arts-oriented micro-housing development designed with double height live-work units. The project includes market rate units and nine units subsidized by the MFTE program, with an art-oriented anchor tenant on the ground floor.

Increase awareness of affordable home loans and homebuying programs. Housing affordability can also be supported via home loan programs. For instance, first-time home buyers can receive low-interest loans from HomeSight, a Seattle-based nonprofit serving the region, through its Purchase Assistance program. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission supports down payment assistance and homeownership education programs, and other payment assistance programs are available in cities like Seattle, Bellingham, and Tacoma. Many organizations additionally offer support in awareness of and navigation for housing opportunities through workshops and classes.

Review and assess zoning and policies related to artist-oriented development and activities.

Certain land uses and building forms are more favorable and attractive to artists communities. These policies also affect development costs and the ultimate affordability of space. In response to a need for more artist live-work spaces in its urban core, the City of Nashville adopted an Artisan Manufacturing Zoning Amendment that created clearer categories for arts and culture-related uses and removed some barriers for artisan businesses.

Currently I work on a seasonal basis; I am supported in the arts until August, but after that it is back to freelancing in an arts industry where there are limited funds and insanely high rent/cost of living demands. It makes predicting being able to support myself almost impossible, especially as a disabled artist.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Support affordable access to education and training

Easing educational debt burden for cultural workers can help to support financial stability. For example, programs like Seattle Promise and the Washington Student Achievement Council's Washington College Grant, should ensure that arts-related professions are included and eligible for funding. Concurrently, efforts should be made to raise awareness of such programs for aspiring arts workers.

Create access to affordable health benefits

Preserving health and well-being is essential to recruiting and retaining cultural workers. Health insurance is expensive for cultural workers who cannot access large group health plans. Increasing access to affordable health benefits, including

physical and occupational therapy, given that some arts and cultural work is physically demanding, would have an impact on overall cost of living and well-being.

To create access to affordable benefits, a regional administrator of associated arts and cultural workers could pool and negotiate benefits. Similarly, organizations like Shunpike, which provide administrative resources for cultural workers, could expand their services to include managing health benefits to ease the process for cultural employers.

Affordable access can also come through nonprofit intermediaries that can fundraise and negotiate with health services providers and insurance providers. For example, SMASH (Seattle Musicians Access to Sustainable Healthcare) is a nonprofit organization that provides access to free and low-cost medical, dental, and mental health services to income qualified musicians in the Seattle area. It is worth exploring whether this model could be expanded to other artists and workers.

Benefit access can also receive support by encouraging corporations to provide flexible employment. By doing so, artists can pursue their creative work while also working in a role with access to corporate benefits.

Alleviate childcare expenses for parenting artists

Childcare is prohibitively expensive to cultural workers with typical wages. Many cultural workers also work non-traditional or unpredictable hours, making more affordable group care unavailable. Employer-based childcare and venues and programming with a specific multi-generational focus can alleviate this pressure, as well as make arts and cultural more accessible to audiences. The Sustainable Arts Foundation provides funding directly to organizations to make their residencies more accessible and family-friendly to artists with children, as well as direct cash awards to artists and writers with children, at least half of whom are applicants of color.

Because of the odd hours often involved with arts sector work, access to childcare for working parents is essential to retaining them in the workforce. [...] If I have to pay a babysitter, it cuts my hourly wage down to below minimum wage so it is not worth it for me to work.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Strengthen Regional Infrastructure for Arts and Culture

Infrastructure, including resources and platforms for the cultural community as well as the physical spaces, structure, and buildings in which arts and culture are performed, is critical to the sector. Stakeholders working within this strategy area should be intentional to ensure that they prioritize physical spaces and resources in areas that have been historically underinvested in, including supports for BIPOC artists and BIPOC-led and serving organizations. With attention to how the benefits and costs of new and improved infrastructure are distributed across social groups, the transformation of the sector can be shared equitably and accessibly. Similarly, we must recognize that municipalities within our region have very different levels of resources available to them. Operationalizing equity in cultural infrastructure means considering the impacts of programs and decision making regionally rather than at the individual jurisdiction level. See also Coordinate the arts sector on strategic advocacy and communications.

Create and retain access to affordable performance and rehearsal space

One key infrastructure need in the cultural sector recovery process is physical space. Physical space provides a platform for artists to work, for people to engage with artists, and for artists to meet

and connect with one another. The region needs strategies to both create affordable performance and rehearsal spaces, and to retain and expand access to existing spaces.

Create access to vacant and underutilized spaces.

Vacant or underutilized spaces such as ground floor retail, warehouses, parking lots, green space, malls, libraries, and churches can all be transformed into viable arts and culture resources temporarily or permanently. In Kitsap County, library and mall windows are used to display local artwork and serve as a venue for sharing arts and cultural information. From 2015 to 2020, Dozer's Warehouse, a site slated for demolition development, provided Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood with a temporary space to create art, particularly murals, music, and dance. Shunpike's storefront programs is another example that provides opportunities for artists to create works that activate the built environment in Bellevue and Seattle.

Cities and counties can further contribute to space infrastructure by identifying public spaces and city or county properties that could be used for arts programming, even temporarily. For example, the City of Renton is working to support its creative economy by providing City-owned facilities for arts and cultural use, both to create art and engage with the community. Jurisdictions can also support cultural spaces through planning and zoning, by adding arts and cultural activities as an allowable use for ground floor commercial space.

Expand tools to connect artists to spaces. There is value in connecting artists to existing spaces, as many may not know where or how to find the venue they need to create or display their work. Existing tools for space networking within the region include Spacefinder Seattle, which catalogues all known rental spaces in the region, and Spaceworks Tacoma, which provides space, training, and resources for coworking, commissions, special projects, and incubators.

Identify at-risk cultural infrastructure and preserve existing spaces. The region would benefit from an inventory of existing cultural and arts space, including studios, performance and rehearsal halls, and commercial kitchens along with an assessment

of the risk of loss, strategies for preservation, and organizations that can support preservation efforts. Several organizations currently operate in the region to support cultural spaces, such as the Cultural Space Agency, which acts in response to the need for better cultural space advocacy, and Vanishing Seattle, which draws attention to at-risk and closed-down venues and spaces.

For example, in a former Immigration and Naturalization Service building, the Inscape Arts and Cultural Center acts as an enclave for artists, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations to create and display their work. The site has recently come under development pressure and the threat of sale that could eliminate working space in Seattle for over 125 artists and organizations.

The City of Bellevue adopted a plan that identifies core strategies and action items to “support the continued establishment of the BelRed Arts District.” BelRed has the highest concentration of arts and cultural businesses in Bellevue. One strategic area of focus is ensuring that new creative spaces are built, and existing ones remain available and affordable.

We have lost so many galleries and small stores, as well as places for music and theatre. We need a place for the Arts in our communities.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Facilitate access to creative financing. Individual organizations and jurisdictions are often limited in what funding and financing they can access. There are promising examples of cross-sector partnerships creating new ways to bring affordable arts spaces to life. For example, the Seattle ARTS backed Cultural Space Agency, a new public development authority dedicated to real-estate development which creates, preserves, and activates arts and cultural spaces. Recently the Cultural Space Agency facilitated the purchase of the of the shuttered Columbia City Theater in partnership with Rainier Avenue Radio with plans to create a digital media learning lab for students in addition to a performance space. In New York City, LISC and

Upstart Co-Lab are facilitating connections between impact investors and creative spaces, like the Greenpoint Manufacturing & Design Center, through the NYC Inclusive Creative Economy loan fund.

Facilitate cross-programming between organizations and individual artists

Facilitate partnerships between artists and organizations of various sizes. Artist stakeholders can advance regionally shared resources by supporting cross-programming between organizations of various sizes, as well as individual artists. Partnerships in the region are already becoming more prevalent, particularly since the beginning of the pandemic, and the region would benefit from expanding this practice. Sharing programming between organizations can be especially successful, as all parties benefit from new perspectives, networking, and exposure to new audiences. For example, the Nepantla Cultural Arts Gallery in Seattle’s Delridge neighborhood has partnered with the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) to symbiotically share programming resources. This allows Nepantla to access space, marketing, and audiences it generally would not reach, and provides SAM with new content and cultural capital.

Partnerships between arts and other mission-driven organizations, such as education, environment, mental health, and human services can also be valuable. For example, Red Eagle Soaring Native youth theatre provides free programming for Native youth in partnership with A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) for space and resources. These partnerships can help create access to arts experiences, deliver policy or program messages in new formats, and affirm the social impacts of the arts. However, these impactful partnerships have been limited in scale and largely dependent on personal and professional networks. The region currently lacks the informational infrastructure and underwriting to make more of these partnerships a reality.



Bellevue Arts Museum, Getty Images

Strengthen professional networks and resources

Strengthen professional resources. Developing regionally shared resources and platforms may also manifest as strengthening professional networks and resources for cultural workers and organizations. Economic development agencies may create small business-style administration and technical assistance services such as webpages and workshops to assist artists and arts organizations with operational knowledge and support. Organizations that currently provide similar services include 4Culture, Artist Trust, the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance, and Shunpike. Artist Trust offers professional development, grant support programs, and a library of opportunities for artists of all disciplines across the state. The Seattle Public Library additionally operates a program for artists to receive business support services.

Create and strengthen access to affordable administrative services. The current state of the arts and cultural economy poses a large administrative burden for human resources, finance and accounting, and legal needs, and development and fundraising. This disproportionately impacts smaller organizations and individual artists. Access to affordable administrative services can be essential to ensure equitable access to resources in our region. Services could be organized in a shared marketplace, or through a directory of independent service providers. Regional partners could also directly support organizations currently providing administrative services and fiscal sponsorship such as Shunpike and Washington Lawyers for the Arts (WLA) to expand their services. WLA provides legal services to artists in Washington through clinics, workshops, and attorney referral services.

Facilitate artist networks. Cities and organizations can contribute to strengthening professional resources by supporting regional artist and cultural

worker networks and directories, both through online resources and in-person convening. The City of Everett uses this strategy to support artists, particularly those who are new to the area, by supporting a network among artists to connect and promote events and opportunities. The City of Tacoma's TacomaArt listserv connects 1,100+ artists, arts organizations, and art supporters with information regarding upcoming events, calls to artists, grant opportunities, live/work space info, and jobs in the arts. Organizations like Artists Up work to improve capacity and networks, as well as raise awareness about artists' needs, particularly for historically marginalized or underrepresented artists.



Painted canoes in Tacoma, Getty Images

Develop a Sustainable Business Model for Arts and Culture

The arts can help us to process events and make sense of the world, expose us to people and ideas that are unfamiliar and alter our perspective, or reaffirm our culture and the importance of its stories, to name only a few ways that the arts are essential to humanity. The current business model requires artists and arts organizations to expend resources chasing markets and funders, compromising their ability to focus on core strengths – the delivery of arts and cultural experiences. It also creates disproportionate barriers to entry and persistence for BIPOC cultural

workers. In this way, the vision of a sustainable business model for arts and culture is equivalent to the vision of a Puget Sound region where arts and culture are an accessible part of everyday life for residents of all incomes, abilities, races, and backgrounds.

Develop sustained public funding for the arts

Cultural Access measures are an exciting opportunity for cities and counties in the Puget Sound region hoping to support and build organizational capacity to support the influx of artists leaving more expensive parts of the region. Cultural Access Washington was passed in 2015, granting local governments the authority to create a Cultural Access Program funded through a tax on sales or property (the property option is not available in King County). To date, the cities of Tacoma and Olympia are the only jurisdictions to successfully pass a Cultural Access program under this authority. However, its dependence on local funding and voter approval creates the potential to replicate existing geographic inequities in access to the arts. The program is also limited to funding 501(c)(3) or state-designated nonprofits organizations and preservation and development authorities formed before January 2011. From a scale and equity perspective, meaningful state funding is key.

Regional partners should continue to support their advocacy efforts and organize Puget Sound arts and culture champions for sustained state funding for the arts, in tandem with Inspire Washington, a statewide advocacy organization for the arts and culture sector. Washington State historically provides a low level of support for the arts. In terms of per capita spending on state arts agencies, Washington is 46th in the nation. In 2022, the State Legislature appropriated \$45 million for grants to businesses and organizations in the arts, heritage, and science sectors, including those that operate live entertainment venues. While this support will help many organizations as they recover, it is one-time funding and not an ongoing financial commitment from the State.

Find a way to ensure that artists and writers can live and work in our city is critical to the culture and vibrancy that makes ... people want to move here. It is impossible for arts organizations to compete with the high wages and housing costs to compensate either their employees or artists working for them to afford to live in the city. This is a critical moment in the life of many local arts organizations who have been holding on by a thread for the past two years, when nothing was ever guaranteed before that anyway. There needs to be major, sustained public support of artists and arts organizations.

- Cultural Worker Survey

Coordinate the arts sector on strategic advocacy and communications

Non- and for-profit stakeholders must align their strategic advocacy and communications. It is imperative that the entire arts and cultural industry work together to communicate the importance of their work, specifically how the arts are a vital public good, support human well-being, and significantly bolster our economic ecosystem. In essence, the image of arts and culture needs to be transformed from a luxury good focused on excellence to a public good focused on economic and community well-being, which may require education around the broad definition of arts and culture and what is included. Doing so could generate regional external support, and support cultural worker retention by illustrating the significance of their work. Strong advocacy and communications require coordination, data collection and alignment, and strategic focus.

Invest in a coordinating body. To achieve this, regional actors may create a coordinating body, potentially through a similar model to A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), which is a local coalition that works to preserve and increase the supply of housing. Such a body would require trust and engagement from regional arts organizations to succeed. Another model would be to co-invest in an existing organization to facilitate this role.

Convene a cross-sector forum. Similarly, the region could convene a forum between staff in the arts and culture, economic development, and tourism industries, to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and ensure that arts and culture are embedded in the regional economy. Messaging coordination could also be supported through social media toolkits, which would help cultural organizations to navigate social media and promote messages that align with regional goals.

Engage the larger business community in support of arts and culture

The larger business community in the region has historically served as a significant partner in supporting arts and culture, but corporate interest and investment has waned in recent years. There is a concern that the greater business community does not see the arts' role in creating attractive workplaces and regional quality of life. There is opportunity and need for regional partners to re-engage with the business community to activate more significant support on a large scale, and update expectations of the funding relationship between corporations and the arts and cultural sector. In practice, this may manifest at business roundtables, or groups like Challenge Seattle, which convenes CEOs from the largest regional employers to plan for local excellence. Updated business action for arts and culture may include models for employee engagement and benefits, corporate giving and support for the arts as community infrastructure, and flexible employment for artists to sustain benefits while participating in their craft.



Maritime Gig Festival, Getty Images

Activate public spaces and retail corridors

Public spaces and retail corridors can be a critical venue for arts and culture and a visible and measurable way that arts contribute to local economic life. By infusing these spaces with arts and cultural programming, the public can better access and experience the sector in ways that communicate its importance.

Develop activation programs for focus spaces.

Many organizations are looking for new ways to outreach and engage with communities in venues outside the typical concert hall or gallery. Public spaces and streetscapes, as well as underutilized spaces like vacant malls and parking lots, may be used for activities like artisan markets, which feature local talent and bring arts and culture into the homes of individuals. Arts can also be leveraged in public spaces to bolster safety by improving quality of place through perception changes, and by promoting civic engagement. Cities can identify focus areas with an equity lens and work with local artists and businesses on plans for activation or re-activation.

Review policy barriers to arts and cultural programming.

City stakeholders may also support arts and culture in public spaces by reviewing and revising policy guidance that act as barriers to arts and cultural programming, like noise ordinances, building codes, and zoning. For example, a city might adjust time-based noise ordinances to allow musicians to play after 5 p.m. Partnerships with private firms, nightlife, and dining may also be a practical tool for infusing arts and culture into retail corridors and supporting cross-sectoral economic impacts.

Appendix

- Implementation Table
- Labor Force Dynamics
- Cultural Workforce Survey Results
- Stakeholder Interview and Focus Group Summary

Implementation Table

Recognizing that equitable and transformative arts and cultural recovery requires action from partners across the public, private, non-profit, and for-profit spheres, this Implementation Table is a quick reference to potentially relevant strategies depending on the actors involved.

	City and County Governments	Arts Service Orgs	Arts and Cultural Orgs	Individual Artists	Business Champions	Philanthropy
ENHANCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF CULTURAL WORKERS						
Enhance income and employment opportunities	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Engage workforce development	✓					✓
Expand access to affordable housing	✓		✓		✓	
Support affordable access to education and training	✓		✓			
Create access to affordable health benefits		✓	✓		✓	✓
Alleviate childcare expenses for parenting artists	✓	✓	✓			✓
STRENGTHEN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE						
Create and retain access to affordable performance and rehearsal space	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Facilitate cross-programming between organizations and individual artists		✓	✓	✓		✓
Strengthen professional networks and resources	✓	✓		✓		✓
DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE						
Develop sustained public funding for the arts	✓			✓	✓	✓
Coordinate the arts sector on strategic advocacy and communications		✓	✓	✓		✓
Engage the larger business community in support of arts and culture		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activate public spaces and retail corridors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	