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IDAHO COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

Beadwork by Philomena Nomee

Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Welcome From Arts Idaho Leadership

Dear Idahoans,

It's with great optimism that we share the 2025–2029 Strategic Plan for the Idaho Commission on the Arts. This plan reflects the vibrant and evolving artistic landscape of Idaho—shaped by the voices, talents, and dreams of artists, educators, cultural organizations, and communities across our entire state.

The years ahead present both challenges and possibilities. Shifting funding landscapes, growing demand for arts education, and an ever-evolving creative economy call for thoughtful leadership and bold vision. Idaho is uniquely positioned to meet these changes with strength rooted in artistic excellence, community pride, and enduring commitment to cultural heritage.

In 2024, our team traveled thousands of miles, visiting towns large and small to meet with artists, arts leaders, students, teachers, and civic partners. The priorities we heard expressed during our travels shaped this plan. From the need for broader access to arts education and support for creative aging, to the call for more equitable grantmaking and stronger statewide connections, these community voices became the foundation for our next chapter. This plan centers around three strategic intentions that will guide our work through 2029:

ENGAGE: *We connect people and resources to support Idaho arts networks*

INVEST: *We provide resources to expand statewide access to the arts*

INFORM: *We gather and share knowledge to deepen public engagement and strengthen statewide support for the arts.*

At its core, this plan reaffirms our belief that the arts are essential to Idaho's quality of life, economic vitality, and cultural identity. With your continued partnership, we look forward to listening, adapting, investing wisely—and celebrating the arts.

With deep appreciation for the role you play in Idaho's arts ecosystem,

Laura Curry

Laura Curry, Executive Director

Marshall Garrett

Marshall Garrett, Chair

Caldwell Fine Arts, Meet the Makers

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Meet Arts Idaho

"The arts help Idahoans celebrate and honor their sense of identity and pride, encouraging vibrant communities for generations to come."

-Governor Brad Little

The Idaho Commission on the Arts (Arts Idaho) works to ensure that all Idahoans have access to the arts, arts education, and their cultural and artistic heritage. Established as a state agency by the Legislature in 1966, Arts Idaho is charged by state law to "stimulate and encourage throughout the state the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation therein..."

We envision an Idaho:

- alive with creativity
- where the arts are a basic part of every child's formal education
- where the arts are central to the lives of children and adults on a daily basis
- that values its traditions and reveres its tradition-bearers
- that values its artists and the role they play in the quality of life in every community

Governor Brad Little and First Lady Teresa Little congratulate 2024 Governor's Awards in the Arts recipient Dr. Kirby Orme

We celebrate excellence in the arts

We honor and elevate Idaho's arts professionals through the Governor's Awards in the Arts and our Fellowship programs, recognizing individuals whose work enriches communities and reflects the cultural vitality of our state.

We forge arts networks

We cultivate statewide networks of arts champions by convening artists, educators, organizations, and community leaders to exchange ideas, foster partnerships, and envision a vibrant creative future for Idaho.

We invest in the resilience of arts organizations

We provide grants, training, and assistance designed to strengthen financial stability and organizational capacity.

We prioritize arts education

Recognizing that arts education contributes to higher academic achievement and student engagement, we support partnerships and programs that expand access to the arts for Idaho students.

photo by Arlie Sommer: Native weaver Jenny Williams makes a flat bag

Building This Plan

Our goal during the planning process was to give all Idahoans the opportunity to share their thoughts about the priorities for the future of the arts in our state. We offered several ways for constituents to participate.

Facilitated Listening Sessions

We traveled 5,643 miles across Idaho to talk with folks as far north as Sandpoint and as far southeast as Montpelier. Our team visited 15 communities and welcomed 255 Idahoans to share their ideas. Along the way, we enjoyed meaningful visits with those unable to attend larger sessions.

Surveys delivered in English and Spanish

608 people responded to our survey, which we offered through our website, social media, and in person.

Putting it all together

Once we had completed our planning tour, the Idaho Policy Institute assisted in analyzing our data. At a facilitated planning retreat in February of 2025, our commissioners reviewed and discussed the results of the planning efforts.

External Factors

The greatest external challenge to achieving our agency's goals is funding uncertainty.

INTENTIONS

Three clear priorities emerged during our planning efforts to become the foundational intentions guiding this Strategic Plan:

Engage

Members of the arts community are eager to connect and share resources with their peers but cite Idaho's vast geography as a barrier to engagement. They see Arts Idaho as a natural connector for artists and arts organizations.

Invest

At each Listening Session, grants settled at the top of the priority list for attendees. Surveys yielded similar results. The arts community appreciates the funding they receive from Arts Idaho, with some stating that higher grant amounts would be helpful. Many expressed, though, that the agency's grant application process is cumbersome and time-consuming, especially for smaller grants. Some also expressed frustration with the agency's online grant portal, which can be hard to navigate.

Inform

Idaho artists and arts leaders are eager to advocate for the arts, but they are uncertain about where to find data and how to craft compelling messages. They are also seeking data that could support their grant writing and fundraising efforts, and they believe Arts Idaho is well-situated to provide these resources.

ENGAGE

We connect people and resources to support Idaho arts networks

Objective1

Build and foster strategic partnerships to expand access to the arts for distinct communities across Idaho.

1. Identify and map distinct communities and potential partners
   COMPLETE BY JUNE 2026
2. Number of partnerships established/maintained
   TWO PARTNERSHIPS PER YEAR
3. Number of community-based programs and gatherings co-developed and hosted with partners
   ONE EVENT PER YEAR

Objective 2

Facilitate professional development opportunities that strengthen the financial stability of artists and arts organizations by building core business skills and fostering peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

1. Conduct statewide needs assessment
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2027
2. Develop systems for program delivery and evaluation
   COMPLETE BY DECEMBER 2027
3. Percentage of participants reporting increased knowledge, skills or capacity in post-programmatic evaluation
   TARGET: 80%
4. Increased geographic distribution of services and professional development opportunities
   TARGET: 25% INCREASE

Objective 3

Expand arts education opportunities and strengthen arts learning infrastructure across the state.

1. Establish and maintain a statewide teaching artist roster to facilitate connections between teaching artists and school-based opportunities to enhance arts education
   CRITERIA COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2026
2. Increase collaborative programming to expand Idaho's Creative Aging Network
   PILOT THREE NEW PROGRAMS, ADD PARTNERS
3. Provide leadership and support to strengthen the capacity and impact of teacher arts organizations
   SUPPORT FOUR ORGANIZATIONS
4. Develop partnership with State Department of Education
   FINALIZE PARTNERSHIP SCOPE: JUNE 2027

INVEST

We provide resources to expand statewide access to the arts

Objective 1

Explore alternate funding models, strategic partnerships and revenue strategies to strengthen and diversify agency's funding streams.

1. Map and analyze potential funding partners
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2026
2. Explore models used by other organizations
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2026
3. Assess and standardize fee structure for existing programs
   COMPLETE DECEMBER 2026
4. If deemed feasible, create Funding Diversification Plan
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2027

Objective 2

Advance a modernized Grant Program to promote transparency and equitable distribution of public funds.

1. Committee sets "North Star" for Grant Program
   COMPLETE BY DECEMBER 2025
2. Staff researches grant offerings from other organizations
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2026
3. Staff identifies grant programs that align with North Star
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2026
4. Staff delivers report with recommended program revisions
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2026
5. Commission adopts grant structure, staff creates rollout plan
   COMPLETE BY NOVEMBER 2026
6. Multi-platform rollout communication strategy developed
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2027

Objective 3

Document and standardize core process to strengthen the efficiency, consistency, and resilience of the agency operations.

1. Assess internal processes and identify agency needs
   JULY 2026
2. Establish process objectives and monitor implementation for effectiveness
   JANUARY 2027
3. Create an Operations Plan that outlines actions and processes
   JANUARY 2028

INFORM

We gather and share knowledge to deepen public engagement and strengthen statewide support for the arts

Objective 1

Develop and execute a comprehensive communication strategy to enhance internal alignment, deepen stakeholder engagement, and elevate visibility.

1. Conduct a communications audit
   COMPLETE BY OCTOBER 2026
2. Identify, document key audiences, tailor messaging strategies
   COMPLETE BY DECEMBER 2026
3. Develop Communications Plan for internal and external stakeholders
   COMPLETE BY JULY 2027
4. Update branding, messaging, materials, website
   COMPLETE BY DECEMBER 2027

Objective 2

Develop and implement a Data Plan to guide the collection, analysis, and use of data to support organizational decision making, improve performance, and support knowledge exchange across the state.

1. Complete data needs assessment
   COMPLETE BY JUNE 2026
2. Develop and adopt Data Plan
   COMPLETE BY DECEMBER 2026
3. Identify methods and systems to share data with the field
   COMPLETE BY JUNE 2027

Objective 3

Promote Idaho's cultural and artistic heritage through outreach, engagement, and preservation strategies

1. Create a Folk and Traditional Arts Archival Plan
   COMPLETE BY JUNE 2026
2. Create and distribute accessible educational content highlighting Folk and Traditional Arts
   TWO FILMS, FIVE RADIO SPOTS PER YEAR
3. Support the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and skills through community workshops
   TWO GATHERINGS PER YEAR

Many Thanks

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each person who contributed time, insights, and energy to our work. Whether by completing a survey, hosting a listening session, sharing your dreams, or diving into the details, your generosity and vision made this plan a reality. Our Listening Session hosts and participants included :

- **Art Source Gallery**
- **Art Spirit Gallery**
- **Historic Wilson Theater**
- **Idaho Art Lab**
- **Lewiston City Library**
- **Meridian Arts Commission**
- **Moscow Arts Commission**
- **Mountain Home Arts Council**
- **Oregon Trail Center**
- **Pend Oreille Arts Council**
- **Rexburg Cultural Arts**
- **Treasure Valley Artists Alliance**
- **West Central Mountains Creative District**
- **2024 Rawhide Rendezvous**

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The Moving Orchestra, Jessica Harned