Ohio Sunset Review Committee
Agency Questionnaire

Agency Name ART - Ohio Arts Council (OAC)

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Agency's primary purpose and its various goals and objectives

The Ohio Arts Council's (OAC) mission is to fund and support quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically. Its vision is to provide leadership and voice for the arts to transform people and communities.

Our current strategic plan, *The Essentials Plan*, outlines the agency's current goals and objectives. It was developed by utilizing feedback and data from a survey of Ohioans with responses from all 88 counties, OAC board and staff members, constituents, panelists, grantees, and applicants. The plan guides and enhances Ohio's arts and cultural sector. Four interrelated goals (Invest, Engage, Innovate, and Lead) form the basis of the work the agency, its partners, and its grantees will undertake. Within each goal, mission-aligned objectives are outlined to guide investment and innovation activities, policy development, program prioritization, and resource deployment.

Each goal and its broad objective follows:

INVEST: Make bold, smart investments to sustain and advance Ohio arts and culture
ENGAGE: Spark authentic dialogue among constituents and the public about the unique strength and value of the arts
INNOVATE: Drive Ohio's arts community toward forward-looking and adaptable creative evolution.
LEAD: Play an active leadership role in ensuring equity and resilience in Ohio's arts and cultural sector.

Agency’s past and anticipated workload, number of staff required to complete workload, and total number of staff

The OAC's primary function is investing directly in arts organizations, artists, schools, and nonprofits -- thereby reaching children, seniors, and all ages in between -- in every county. Our grantmaking workload has doubled over the last decade, now issuing almost 2,500 grants each biennium. This level of activity is anticipated to continue to remain high and potentially grow, thanks to increases to the agency's grantmaking budget supported by Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly in its FY 2024-2025 operating budget. Additionally, more Ohioans and Ohio organizations are aware of the agency's resources thanks to our improved visibility and presence throughout Ohio, particularly through the agency's Fund Every County initiative.

In addition to its investment activity, the agency has also undertaken a number of critical projects -- such as improving agency communications, modernizing its online grantmaking system and shortening its grant guidelines, bolstering its online presence and media engagement, and enhancing resources available to constituents for capacity building and sharing of best practices.

The agency currently employs 19 mission-critical full-time equivalents (FTEs), which OAC board and staff leadership view as the minimum number necessary to carry out the agency's duties and meet the public's expectations. As perspective, in the 1990s, the agency had more than 50 staff, while today's staff count remains near its all-time low. The OAC has reduced the portion of its budget allocated to payroll by 4-6% over the last 8 years, while remaining within the state's overall labor contract obligations.

Agency's past and anticipated budgets and its sources of funding

The OAC has traditionally received funding through four funding sources: 1) the General Revenue Fund, 2) revenue received in the Arts Council Program Support Fund (also known as the Gifts and Donations fund), 3) fees to administer Percent for Art projects provided in state law, and 4) federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. The agency anticipates continuing to receive revenue and to budget expenses from these four sources. A brief elaboration on each fund follows:

1) The General Revenue Fund supports grants to arts organizations, artists, schools, and nonprofits engaged in arts and cultural activities. A separate GRF line item is utilized for administrative costs. In terms of recent history, the OAC's total GRF appropriation reached a previous high of $32.3 million in FY 2000-01, then dipped to a 30-year low in FY 2010-11 during the Great Recession. In the 2020s, the agency's budget finally fully recovered and has routinely eclipsed its previous peak in each of this decade's biennia, standing at a new historic high of nearly $51.1 million for FY 2024-25.

2) The agency's Arts Council Program Support Fund primarily receives revenue from various state and external partnerships for services performed, irregular gifts and donations, and special purpose grant funds. The fund mainly defrays costs related to administrative expenses, planned events, and other projects.

3) Fees to administer Percent for Art projects stem from state law requiring state agencies to expend 1% of construction or renovation project costs on purchasing, commissioning, and/or installing public art for qualifying capital projects that exceed $4 million. Of the project costs, the OAC retains a fee of up to 5% for the process of procuring an artist, executing contracts, and installing artwork, and an additional minimal fee to facilitate site visits and proposal costs.

4) Federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) are received through a competitive grant process in which all states participate. For 15 consecutive years, the OAC has earned one of the top three largest grants from the NEA for state arts agencies in the nation. NEA grants typically total around $2.6 million biennially, and 100% of the agency's federal funding is re-invested via grants in Ohio.

Number of members of its governing board or other governing entity and their compensation, if any

In sum, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 3379.02, the OAC is governed by a board composed of 15 voting members appointed by the governor, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, as well as four non-voting legislative members (i.e., two from the House and two from the Senate, from differing political parties within each chamber). Members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses connected to OAC business. The current chair is Ginger Warner.

Voting members' terms are five years (although mid-term appointments are possible), and legislative terms are two years. Gubernatorial appointees must have broad knowledge and experience in the arts, and a majority of the board must constitute individuals who are not professional artists.

For more detail, please see ORC section 3379.02 in its totality, replicated below:

"There is hereby created the Ohio arts council, which shall foster and encourage the development of the arts in this state and the preservation of Ohio's cultural heritage. The council shall consist of fifteen voting members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate, two nonvoting members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker, and two nonvoting members of the senate appointed by the president. The members appointed from each house of the general assembly shall not be from the same political party. Terms of office for members appointed by the governor shall be for five years, commencing on the second day of July and ending on the first day of July. The legislative members shall be appointed within forty-five days of the convening of the first regular session of each general assembly and shall serve through the thirty-first day of December of the following year. Each member shall hold office from the date of his appointment until the end of the term for which he was appointed. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the term for which his predecessor was appointed shall hold office for the remainder of such term. Any member appointed by the governor shall continue in office subsequent to the expiration date of his term until his successor takes office, or until a period of sixty days has elapsed, whichever occurs first. The governor shall name the chairman and vice-chairman of the council, and they shall serve in such positions at his pleasure. Members of the council shall serve without compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in connection with official business of the council. Persons appointed to the council by the governor shall have broad knowledge and experience in the arts. At least a majority of the members of the council shall be persons other than professional artists. In making appointments to the council, the governor may appoint such professional artists as are necessary, in his judgment, to ensure that the council is broadly representative of all the arts."

Additional notes

The state's investment in Ohio's arts infrastructure generates great economic benefits. The arts are a proven economic driver and one of our state's greatest selling points. They attract new business and a talented workforce, support tourism, create and retain jobs, and produce tax revenue. In turn, OAC grants are an investment in creative capital that flows throughout Ohio's communities. Artistic professionals come in all stripes -- architects, graphic designers, craftsmen and craftswomen, and marketing and branding teams. Artists themselves are often entrepreneurs, running businesses or galleries. They buy from local businesses and make communities better places to live, work, play, and raise families. To this point, prior to the pandemic, research by Bowling Green State University showed that Ohio's creative industries supported nearly 290,000 jobs, contributed almost $41 billion to the state's economy, and generated approximately $4.6 billion in annual tax revenues (federal, state, and local combined). Through public investment, the OAC leverages a high match ratio from its grantees. $43 in local and private funding matches every one OAC dollar. With the OAC's budget only constituting about 0.06% of total GRF appropriations, the state's funding for the arts yields a tremendous return on investment.

Ohioans know their tax dollars are invested in the arts and strongly support their continued investment. According to a recent OAC statewide public survey, 94% of Ohioans believe public funds should be invested in the arts, which has grown from 70% in 1992. Meanwhile, 83% know that public funds support the arts in Ohio. In an era of increasing accountability and transparency in government spending, our agency is humbled that Ohioans continue to authorize and support its mission and purpose.

In addition, the arts strengthen education, aiding success inside and outside the classroom. The arts prepare students to succeed in an economy driven by innovation and creativity. Ongoing research confirms a positive relationship between arts education and improved academics -- from better math and reading skills, to higher standardized test scores and graduation rates. An education that includes the arts helps to train our workforce and produce creative, critical thinkers and problem-solvers that are attractive to employers.

To better accomplish its mission, the OAC has incorporated lasting cost-saving measures into its operations through lengthening grant cycles, streamlining procedures, reducing administrative burdens on the agency and its grantees, and decreasing grant review expenses. The agency has also emphasized developing strategic partnerships in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to save state dollars on program, administrative, and technology costs.

The OAC appreciates the opportunity to present information before the Sunset Review Committee and thanks members of the General Assembly for their past and present support. 2025 will marks 60 years of public support for the arts and culture in Ohio through the OAC. If reauthorized, the board and staff of the OAC will continue to work effectively and efficiently to advance and strengthen the arts in Ohio.