

SAMPLE APPLICATION - STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategy

What are your organization's current strategic priorities?

Founded in 1960 as the Arts Council of Erie, Erie Arts & Culture (EAC) is the regional arts agency for Northwestern Pennsylvania. EAC is committed to improving the lives of our region's residents. EAC does this by leveraging the power of the arts and humanities to address the vital needs and interests of Erie and NWPA.

In 2019, EAC entered into a 5-year strategic plan, which identified the following strategic priorities:

- Increase the capacity and impact of creative and cultural sector in the NWPA region
- Fund opportunities for the arts in lifelong learning
- Preserve, enhance and promote diverse cultures
- Facilitate placemaking initiatives

How and when did you define and determine your current strategic priorities?

In the fall of 2018, EAC worked closely with Strategy Solutions, an Erie-based non-profit strategic consulting firm, to strategize its approach to the next 5 years of operation. Strategy Solutions identified the needs of NWPA's arts and cultural sector, reviewed EAC's programmatic offerings and assessed each program's impact, then, working within EAC's capacity, created the aforementioned strategic priorities to strengthen EAC's mission. In the years since, EAC has implemented several new programs that support these priorities by building community, providing opportunities for continuing education, and growing financial support for arts organizations and artists.

In what ways did the Board, staff, and community contribute to shaping your strategic priorities?

EAC continually seeks to identify and address community needs that are not being met. In 2019, EAC held a roundtable discussion between staff and 200 community stakeholders at Big Conference Hall. Attendees included stakeholders from EAC's service region and communities who previously didn't benefit from the agency's programs and services. The roundtable discussion allowed participants to gather in a collaborative environment, give feedback, and state their needs. Through this effort, EAC staff gathered information directly from the community, built a foundation of accountability, and realigned the agency's approach to its work.

Action

How do your daily operations and programs support your strategic priorities?

EAC serves a 6 county service region: Erie, Crawford, Warren, Mercer, Venango, and Lawrence Counties. EAC acts as a capacity builder for NWPA's individuals and organizations by providing access 1:1 mentoring, connecting stakeholders to resources, programming free educational webinars to address community knowledge gaps, and administering multiple grant programs throughout the calendar year.

From 2020-2022, EAC staff dedicated over 1,000 hours to mentoring, coaching, and guiding individuals, groups, and organizations in its 6 county service region. Through the Erie Arts Endowment, EAC administered over \$100,000 in grant funding to 65+ Erie County non-profit organizations.

In 2021, the agency launched Creative Crowd, a free monthly social event for artists, creatives, and culture bearers. Creative Crowd builds community, is a catalyst for creative collaborations, and offers a casual space for networking within the NWPA arts and culture sector. The event regularly hosts 50+ attendees.

In 2022, EAC launched a large-scale, multi-year public art initiative in collaboration with the United Way of Erie County that is focused on improving the conditions of routes that students use when walking to and from school. To date, 13 of 50 total murals have been completed. As experts in community placemaking, EAC offers fee-for-service consultations for public art projects, and worked with clients such as the Erie Downtown Development Corporation, Erie Downtown Partnership, UPMC Hamot, the Erie County Redevelopment Authority, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network.

EAC is one of 14 statewide Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts organizations, which re-grant state funds from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts to support a wide variety of local and community arts activities. EAC is the only trifecta Partner of the PCA, and administers all three statewide programs on behalf of the state arts council. From 2020-2022, as a Pennsylvania Partner in the Arts, EAC:

- Administered 29 Arts in Education residencies, serving approximately 1,071 direct beneficiaries and 2,630 secondary beneficiaries.
- Administered \$130,000 in grant funds through the Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts grant program to 53 grant recipients.
- Conducted 39 field interviews with folk and traditional artists.

What is your organization's defined timeline for achieving its current strategic objectives?

The current strategic plan is on track to be completed in 2023.

Resources

How do your development efforts support your strategic priorities?

As a Pennsylvania Partner in the Arts, EAC receives an annual award for programming and grant distribution, the amount of which varies from year to year, according to the state budget. The agency also utilizes private funds that reside in the Erie Arts Endowment, support from Erie Gives Day, corporate gifts, foundation grants, and individual donors.

Does your current organizational budget support the scope of work required to achieve your strategic objectives?

Yes, EAC's budget grew 10% over the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Does your current staff size support the scope of work required to achieve your strategic objectives?

Yes, EAC's team is composed of 4 full time staff members and 3 part time administrators.

Preparedness

In what ways does your organizational culture need to evolve or change in order to accommodate and support any next steps?

The agency has seen regular staff turnover in the past 3 years. In 2022, staff positions were restructured to maximize time, energy, and financial resources. Multiple part time positions were combined to create two full time program officer roles: *Capacity Building* and *Arts and Learning*. The current iteration of EAC's team is community-minded, researches and implements national best practices, and champions the principles of IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) in its processes and procedures. The team looks to the strategic plan as a governing document, and all tasks, projects, and responsibilities support the strategic priorities outlined in the plan.

In 2022, EAC's Board of Trustees contracted Strategy Solutions to provide training related to Board governance and engagement. The Board and staff worked very closely with Deb Thompson of Strategy Solutions over a period of time extending more than 10-months. This process resulted in a comprehensive better understanding of Board work vs. staff work, simplifying and better defining the Committees of the Board, and identifying recruitment strategies for future Trustees. EAC seeks to recruit volunteers to its Board whose identities and lived experiences reflect those of the community it serves.

Opportunity Present

Describe the strategic opportunity that is present for your organization.

With the current strategic plan coming to a conclusion in July, EAC is poised to implement the next plan within the calendar year. Given the positive outcomes from the 2019-2023 strategic plan, EAC will begin a new contract with Strategy Solutions to conduct the next strategic planning process.

The strategic plan will take into account EAC's mission; vision; long term goals; and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). With this as the foundation, EAC can then create and implement an action plan.

How does this opportunity tie into your strategic priorities and objectives?

EAC will continue to progress in each of the aforementioned areas, and the new strategic plan will inform what the agency does, how, when, and with whom. Reassessing EAC's position within the greater arts environment will help gauge the agency's impact over the past 5 years, and prepare it to be impactful from 2024-2028.

In what ways is this opportunity time sensitive?

The timing of this initiative works in tandem with the arrival of EAC's new Executive Director. Their unique background, vision, and strategy will help inform the agency's approach to the pursuit of its mission.

Describe three outcomes you hope to achieve as a result of this opportunity, and describe how you will measure your success.

- Erie Arts & Culture is seen as a thought leader in the regional (NW PA, NE OH, and SW NY) arts and culture sector
 - # of regional speaking engagements
 - # of regional programs
- Erie Arts & Culture is a financial, creative, and educational capacity builder for artists and arts organizations in NWPA
 - The following will be tracked quarterly:
 - # hours spent in 1:1 consultations with community stakeholders
 - % increase in annual revenues and endowment balance
 - # of grants administered, amount of grants administered
 - # of educational programs offered, # of attendees
 - The following will be assessed annually:
 - Impact management system to track programmatic impact and stakeholder engagement over time
- Strategic plan positions the arts and culture sector as a driving force of economic growth in Erie County

- Using the Erie County Data Center, the following will be tracked annually:
 - # of full- and part-time arts and culture jobs
 - Gross output
 - Amount of state and federal funds supporting arts and culture in Erie County

Proposed Budget

Include short descriptions for major expenses associated with this opportunity.

If your budget expenses total more than \$5,000, list the sources of additional funding you will draw upon to pursue this opportunity.

Strategy Solutions gave a quote of \$7,800 for the entire strategic planning process. This includes but is not limited to, compensation for time spent conducting research, attending meetings with staff, and facilitating community engagement sessions.

If awarded, EAC will dedicate \$5,000 from the Lydia McCain Next Steps Grant to this expense. The remaining \$2,800 will come from EAC's endowment reserves.