ARTSCOUNCIL

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BIG Ideas Plan for 2025–2028

Rebecca Hoyer 2024

Executive Summary

The **Arts Council of Wichita's BIG IDEAS Plan 2025–2028** charts a dynamic, community-focused roadmap to build a stronger, more vibrant arts ecosystem for Greater Wichita. Anchored by five key focus areas — **Advocacy, Education, Engagement, Marketing, and Fundraising** — this plan sets forth clear goals and action steps designed to position the arts as a driver of economic vitality, community identity, and inclusive cultural growth. Through collaborative partnerships, grassroots engagement, and strategic messaging, the Council aims to elevate the visibility and value of the arts in Wichita, expand arts education, and unify diverse arts communities. Performance indicators ensure accountability and continuous progress, aligning the Council's efforts with community aspirations and ensuring that every voice in Wichita's arts landscape is empowered and celebrated.

This plan is both **ambitious** and **achievable**—especially if the Arts Council's Committees adopt a focused approach known as *chunking*. Chunking is a proven method of time and task management that groups similar actions into clear, manageable sets of actions that can be completed in seasonal or quarterly windows. By organizing work into focused chunks, each committee can reduce overwhelm, eliminate distraction, and move from discussion to measurable outcomes more efficiently. With facilitation support from the Executive Director, Committees will use this approach to deliver key performance indicators in defined phases throughout the next three and a half years—turning strategic goals into timely, tangible results.

Strategic Plan Chunking Timeline *(Sample View)*

Quarter	Focus Area(s)	Committee Actions (Chunked)	Sample Outcomes
Q3 2025	Advocacy + Education	• Launch *Cocktails & Candidates* • Develop Artist Registry framework • Plan Arts Mixer education themes	• Pilot engagement with young voters • Registry structure finalized • First education topics selected
Q3 2025	Fundraising + Engagement	• Identify Top 25 donor prospects	• One-on-one donor meetings begin
Q4 2025	Marketing	• Launch social campaign: 'The Arts Are Wichita's Landscape' • Rebuild website framework	• Increased visibility on social media • Core branding materials in use • Website redesign underway
Q1 2026	Education + Engagement	• Convene Brain Trust w/ Gen Z leaders • Pilot pop-up education	• Youth insight report created • First pop-up class delivered

The **BIG Ideas Strategic Plan** outlines a bold, yet achievable vision for the Arts Council of Wichita from 2025 to 2028. It is grounded in five Focus Areas—**Advocacy, Education, Engagement, Marketing, and Fundraising**—that reflect both our mission and the evolving needs of Wichita's arts and cultural community.

Each Focus Area contains clearly defined **Goals**, **Strategies**, and **Action Items** supported by **Performance Indicators** with target timelines. These indicators are not rigid mandates, but markers of progress designed to keep our work transparent, accountable, and paced for success.

Importantly, this plan is not designed to sit on a shelf. It is a *living, working framework*—one that invites participation, sparks collaboration, and allows for adaptation over time.

This plan was not created in isolation. It is shaped by broad community input, board insight, national best practices, and dozens of creative ideas submitted through surveys, interviews, and working groups. A full list of reference materials and sources follows.

Methodology & Sources of Input

The Arts Council of Wichita's 2025–2028 Strategic Plan was shaped through a robust and inclusive process that brought together a wide range of community perspectives, professional insights, and arts sector research. The strategies and performance indicators presented in this plan are grounded in the following sources of information and engagement:

Community & Professional Input

- **30 In-Depth Interviews** conducted by Executive Director Connie Bonfy with local mid-career artists and a dozen leaders from Wichita-based arts organizations funded in-part by Wichita's Cultural Funding (May–June 2025).
- **Public Surveys** initiated by the Arts Council in 2022 and again in 2025 to gather broad-based community perspectives via social media outreach and direct email.
- **Citywide Cultural Planning Survey (2023)** administered by the Public Policy and Management Center (PPMC) at Wichita State University as part of the Division of Arts & Cultural Services strategic planning process. The survey collected 695 responses from Wichita residents, artists, and service providers.
- **Targeted Surveys for Cultural Providers** embedded within the PPMC-administered tool to better understand the needs of organizations and individual artists (17.4% of total responses).

Introduction

Mission: *To cultivate arts and culture in Greater Wichita by igniting creativity, fostering connection, and driving economic vitality through advocacy and education.*

The Arts Council of Wichita stands at a historic turning point. For decades, it has served as a champion of the arts in our community — but now, we are launching a bold new era of growth, visibility, and leadership. This plan outlines a three-year strategy to transform public understanding of the **purpose and power of the arts**, significantly grow support for the arts sector, and position Wichita as a leading creative capital in the Midwest. A brief **plan summary** is provided below.

Focus Area	Goal	Key Strategies & Action Steps	Performance Indicators
Advocacy	Champion the Role of the Arts in Wichita's Identity & Economy	Develop partnerships with civic organizations, reimagine candidate engagement, and foster artist leadership on boards.	Strengthened city partnerships; consistent arts messaging; new artist representation on boards by 2026–2028.
Education	Integrate Arts Education into the Community	Increase public art in civic venues, launch an Artist Registry, expand Arts Mixer education, and deepen K-12 school partnerships.	Artist Registry live by 2026; annual Arts Mixer education; partnerships with schools; community art initiatives in underserved areas.
Engagement	Create a Regional Arts Council Presence	Grassroots partnerships in underserved areas; reinvigorate Arts Awards, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and pop-up showcases.	3 underserved neighborhood partnerships; expanded pop-ups; annual community-wide arts events launched by 2028.
Marketing	Position the Arts Council as a Brand-Booster	Unified city-wide arts marketing campaign, new digital platforms, strong social media, and collaborative branding.	10% increased engagement across marketing channels by 2028; new website; quarterly seasonal campaigns.
Fundraising	Engage Businesses & Donors to Sustain Growth	Major donor outreach, sponsorships, CRM optimization, Culture Creators Collective, and explore Arts Consultant role.	Major donor plan by Fall 2025; CRM updated; Culture Creators Collective launched by 2027; sustainable fundraising rhythm.

Comparative & Sector Research

- **Review of Peer Arts Councils** across the U.S., with a narrowed focus on cities of similar size and population density, conducted in spring 2025. This review helped identify common goals, innovative practices, and benchmarking for Wichita's future growth.

Collaborative Strategy Sessions

- **Board Planning Retreat (May 29, 2025)** where community input, survey data, and strategic themes were synthesized through breakout group collaboration and dot-voting consensus to establish priorities in Advocacy, Education, and Engagement.
- **All Board Members** who were unable to attend were given the planning retreat tallies; one for each focus area - Advocacy, Education and Engagement, and invited to participate by follow up email. Eighteen of 22 Board and Ex-Officio Board members or 82% actively participated in the process. Two government elected officials, and one City Arts and Cultural Division representative participated in a more limited capacity due to their official roles.
- **Executive Committee Review** meetings in June 2025 provided oversight and refinement, serving as a steering committee to guide the development of goals, strategies, and measurable indicators.

This process was facilitated by Executive Director Connie Bonfy, who also developed the framework, action structure, and methodology for the plan.

Matthew Broderick, President

Connie Bonfy, Executive Director

BIG Ideas Plan 2025–2028

Goal I. Champion the Role of the Arts in Wichita's Identity & Economy

Focus Area	Strategies + Action Items	Performance Indicators
Advocacy (Advocacy Committee, Executive Director provides facilitation support))	1.1 The arts are a defining feature of Wichita's identity and a **key driver of tourism, workforce retention, and placemaking. "The Arts are Wichita's landscape."** • Partner with Visit Wichita, Downtown Wichita, and the Chamber to **amplify arts-driven economic narratives.** • Identify pathways for artists (especially BIPOC/diverse creatives) to serve on **civic/nonprofit boards or city commissions – pair with an arts internship or mentorship pilot for emerging leaders** *See Education Action 2.2.b.* 1.2 **Reimagine candidate forums** and civic engagement efforts through creative formats. • Partner with W (Young Professionals), WSU, Friends, Newman, and local bars/eateries for "Cocktails & Candidates" casual meet-up to educate candidates and officials on arts data and funding impacts. • Launch **"Adopt-a-Council Member"** initiative (Board or **Ambassadors attend city-wide openings and build rapport**). • Ongoing education of candidates and officials on positive impacts of community arts funding.	1.1.a. The AC will develop and institute a **clear ongoing messaging** and partnership structure for the Wichita Chamber, Downtown Wichita, and Visit Wichita to **emphasize arts-driven economic narratives by 2027.** 1.1.b The AC will develop consistent messaging for the board and public that **encourages artist civic engagement for 2026-28.** 1.2.a. The AC will develop and **launch "Cocktails with Candidates"** type event for the city council in partnership with W and Colleges before the August 5 primary Modify and re-launch in 2026 for Sedgwick County elections. 1.2.b. AC will **launch "Adopt-a-Council Member"** for the County Commission in 2025 and for City Council in 2026. Each elected official will have at least one coffee and/or lunch date with AC members every 6 months. 1.2.c. AC will develop and launch educational materials for city leaders by June 2026.

Goal II. Integrate Arts Education into Community

Focus Area	Strategies + Action Items	Performance Indicators
Education (Education Committee, Executive Director provides facilitation support)	2.1 **Tangible visibility + community engagement = win.** • Support **increasing public art** in libraries, schools, and other civic venues to embed art in new construction and neighborhood renewal beyond Percent for Art. • Create an **online Artist Registry** that sorts artists by name and by creative discipline. 2.2 **Micro-education** fosters a culture shift and promotes consistent engagement in artist and community education. • Offer quick regular **"pop-up" education at ARTS MIXRs** such as brief panels or how-to chats (e.g., taxes, branding, funding). • Collaborate with community pop-up presenters and others to **create single-issue professional development events**. • Engage with **underserved neighborhoods** (Empower North End, the Neighboring Movement, and McConnell Military Base) and **build cross-discipline relationships**. • Partner with **mental and physical health specialists** to share the benefits of making and participating in the arts. 2.3 Partner with **K-12 Schools and Colleges** to build belonging + next-gen supporters. • Encourage arts orgs to co-**create projects with local schools that are more public facing** (murals, events). • Facilitate two-way learning: **students engage the community and vice versa**.	2.1.a. Develop language to **advocate for increased public art** beyond Percent for Art by 2026. 2.1.b. Work with City marketing staff to **embed a searchable Artist Registry** into the AC website redesign by 2026. 2.2.a. By 2026, Design and launch an **annual ARTS MIXR education plan** featuring 15-20-minute presentations for arts messaging and/or artist development. 2.2.b. Work with Harvester Arts and Art House 310 to **create and launch stand-alone professional development** presentations and arts leadership training in 2026-2028. 2.2.c. Collaborate with **underserved neighborhood associations** in 2027 to support **ideas for co-created public art and performance projects** with AC arts partners. *Example: Support grassroots mural efforts and creative placemaking that signals "this is a cool place."* 2.2.d. Seek out and **develop relationships with major mental and physical health providers** by 2027 to mutually message benefits of making/participating in the arts.

	• Conduct Listening Sessions on **Young Adult Engagement** Targeted insight for long-term audience growth. • Hold a roundtable or informal "brain trust" with educators to **engage with Gen Z leaders, and youth orgs to inform future outreach** and collectors.	2.3.a. Develop and launch in 2026 messaging to arts organizations to **encourage more public engagement with local schools and b. vice versa** messaging with the schools' fine arts division outreach to the community. 2.3.c. Work with the Ulrich Museum and schools to create and **launch an annual "Engage to Listen" session for young adults. Develop "brain trust"** targeted communication and insight for long-term art collecting and audience development by 2026.

Goal III. Create a regional Arts Council presence to engage opportunities for all

Focus Area	Strategies + Action Items	Performance Indicators
Engagement (Engagement Committee – formerly Special Events, Executive Director provides facilitation support))	3.1. **Grassroots Partnerships in Underserved Areas** create arts growth and empower communication. a. See 2.2.c. under Education Focus Area to engage underserved neighborhoods. b. See 2.1.a. and 2.2.c. under Education Focus Area to **increase funding and visibility for outdoor installations**, and art in parks, and encourage the development of unusual activations like kite installations or sky-based spectacles. Make cultural arts feel exciting, playful, and part of everyday public life. 3.2 Make the Arts Council More Visible & Present - **Empower board members and ambassadors** to attend and represent the Council at events. a. Offer materials, talking points, and **branded items** to make the Arts Council visible at community functions, exhibitions, festivals, and performances. b. Create **Ambassadors** to attend Rotary, Leadership Classes, Chamber of Commerce, etc. events to represent Arts Council goals and work. c. Reinvigorate the **Arts Awards** by starting with small and growing financial support for artist winners. d. **Explore community initiatives**, such as Community Museum Night or City-wide Open Studios Weekend, to build bridges across arts disciplines and reduce organizational and arts discipline silos, providing engagement opportunities for emerging Artists. e. Collaborate with community partners such as Harvester to **develop showcase events, pop-ups, and public spaces for artists** who are underrepresented in traditional galleries. Prioritize inclusivity and visibility.	3.1.a. See Education Focus Area 2.2.c. and 2.2.c. for performance indicators. Quantitative measures: at **least three underserved urban neighborhoods will partner with the Arts Council** to utilize and share and develop our Branding - arts Integrated Core Purposes of Art and Art Messaging Pillars by 2028. 3.2.a. Materials and talking points are developed, modified as needed, and are in full use in 2026-2028 3.2.b. Arts Council **Ambassadors wear branded items to engage** with other members at Rotary, Leadership Classes, Chamber of Commerce, etc., and report engagement metrics monthly beginning 2026. 3.2.c. Special Events committee **creates award policy -** starting cash award levels for individuals winning Arts Awards 2025. Review and modify in 2026-2028. 3.2.d -e. **Engagement initiatives** will be developed in collaboration with community partners in 2026 and launched by the Special Events Committee by 2028. e. Showcase and pop-up activities for underserved and emerging artists will be launched by 2028.

Goal IV. Position the Arts Council as a brand booster and economic driver for Wichita's creative and commercial future

Focus Area	Strategies + Action Items	Performance Indicators
Marketing (Executive Director with Marketing Committee Recommendations & Support)	4.1 Position the arts as a brand booster and economic driver for Wichita's creative and commercial future with emphasis on authentic mobile-first, and visual-first content. a. Develop persuasive collective arts messaging: **"The Arts are Wichita's landscape." Tagline: "Creating. Connecting. Transforming. Together"** & seasonal campaigns. b. Create a citywide campaign showing **"why arts matter" in every district.** Amplify why the arts are important to local businesses, and boomerang families c. **Educate about what is available** – it doesn't have to be hard to enter an arts practice or participate in an audience. d. Create a city-wide arts awareness campaign **featuring B-roll footage from local orgs, shared branding, and unified messaging.** Include artist storytelling, podcasting, social media, free event promotion, and **collaborations** with Visit Wichita, SHOUT, Wichita Media, and The Evolve Guide. e. **Partner to expand Arts Calendar & Communications** Hub Work with local partners (SHOUT, Landon, Visit Wichita) to support and maintain a unified calendar and guide that highlights all arts events, showcases free/affordable opportunities, and connects new residents, young professionals, and military families with the arts.	4.1.a – e. Strategic Planning and Mission Renewal will be completed by July 2025. Upon completion, the Arts Council ED will work with City marketing and local sponsors to refresh consistent brand standards marketing materials with a brand identity guide to build out and **position the 5 identified messaging pillars, vitality and purposes, availability of art into the city-wide public eye** during 2025 and will continue to modify and build on the marketing plan through 2028 featuring **brand standards, seasonal themes, artists, arts organization, and donor spotlights**, through the following channels: • Social Media 4-5 weekly on Meta & LinkedIn • Website (to be rebuilt in 2025) with new homepage, updated event, and other pages with a storytelling focus and SEO-optimized blog articles tied to campaign themes • E-blasts with segmented audiences – donors, artists, general, etc. and monthly mission-driven e-blasts + special campaigns/events • Advocacy Alerts, TV/Radio & Print as needed • Billboards quarterly campaigns 2025 • Arts Calendar community collaboration 2025 • Press Releases for major milestones and campaigns by 2026 4.1. Metrics – 10% increased engagement above the 2025 baseline with all marketing channels - measured and reported at least 4 times a year 2025-2028.

Goal V: Engage local businesses and donors to sponsor events, exhibitions, or artist recognition opportunities

Focus Area	Strategies + Action Items	Performance Indicators
Development (Executive Director with Development Committee Recommendations & Support)	5.1 Business and Industry sponsors aren't just financial supporters — they can also be educators, connectors, and storytellers within our mission areas. Major Donors from all sectors can be change leaders. a. Establish Trust & Clarity by prioritizing face-to-face meetings to engage the board Work with the board president and development-minded board members to: • Identify the top 10–15 **high-capacity current or lapsed donors**. • Schedule and prepare for **personal visits, small group gatherings, or lunches** within the first 90 days. • Provide **updated case for support, Culture Creators overview, and personal vision** to the board. b. Reconnect & Expand Partnerships • Meet with the **City of Wichita arts, economic development, and tourism leaders** to re-establish presence and explore shared goals. • Work with the Board to **develop tax/finance /legal mini sessions at the ARTS MIXRs** with a variety of sponsor options such as venue space or co-sponsor student/youth initiatives and collaborators across Arts Council's mission	5.1.a. Review the current budget, outstanding obligations, revenue breakdown (earned, individual, grants), and any funding gaps or urgent needs by fall 2025. • In 2025, Clarify **board vs. staff responsibilities** in development (e.g., who solicits, who stewards, who strategizes). • Draft and share a **"Focus & Listening Plan"** with the board to set tone and priorities. • Identify, schedule, and hold **one-on-one meetings** with each current or potential major donor to learn their motivations, history with the org, and future by August 2025. • Compile a **Top 25 list** of lapsed or high potential funders, community allies, and potential partners to reengage by Aug 2025 • Draft donor **introduction and re/introduction email templates**; follow up with coffee invites or short meetings. • Build a **starter donor/ sponsorship deck**: 3–5 partnership tiers, impact language, visibility benefits. 5.1.b. Work with the board to create sponsor matches with local business & corporate leaders. Develop sponsorship relationships with them for 2025 (see major donor indicators a. above).

	5.2. Evaluate & Organize Fundraising Systems - Conduct a development audit: donors (past 5 years), grants, lapsed funders, sponsorships, and event history. a. Set a Sustainable Fundraising Rhythm • Block **2–3 "deep work" sessions per week** for strategy, writing, and planning (no meetings). • Establish a **biweekly or monthly reporting cadence** to the board with key wins, questions, and metrics. • Build out an **annual calendar** of: ◦ Fundraising campaigns ◦ Grant deadlines ◦ Appeals and renewals ◦ Events and community activations b. Develop a Long-term Strategy for a **"Culture Creators Collective" major donors group**. c. Thoughtfully consider and evaluate the long-term role of the **Arts Council becoming an Arts Consultant** to keep community public art project artist's management local both within and outside the percent for art. (paid work requiring additional specific skilled staff to accomplish and launch).	5.2. Select, review, or optimize a **donor tracking system/ CRM** (e.g., Little Green Light, Bloomerang, etc.) by 8/1/2025. Fundraising has a sustainable rhythm by 6/26. 5.2.a. In 2025, Create or update: Standard **thank-you letter** template, **Tax receipt** template, **Gift acknowledgment flowchart** (who does what, when); Set **3 fundraising sprint goals** (e.g., grant deadline, Culture Creators soft asks, first matching campaign). 5.2.b. Finalize name, brand language, and visual identity for the "Culture Creators Collective" type group for launch in late 2026/early 2027. • Outline member benefits (e.g., exclusive events, public recognition, behind-the-scenes invites). • Draft elevator pitch and create visual onepager for board and ambassador use. 5.2.c. Staff review and chart the role and fees of Arts Consultant by Dec 2026. Review funding and hiring options with the Board by March 2027 to consider, adopt and hire an Arts Consultant Role by the end of 2027.