



ARTSFAIRFAX STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2030

Envisioning a thriving arts and
culture community accessible
to all of Fairfax County



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Pictured right: Ava Price, Senior Ballerina (c) Alchemy Ballet/Artists in Motion.

Cover: Clockwise from bottom left, photos courtesy of 1st Stage, American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, Greater Washington Chinese Dance, Fairfax County Poet Laureate Angelique Palmer, NextStop Theatre Company, and Alchemy Ballet.



▲ Clockwise from top left, photos courtesy of Traveling Players Ensemble, BalletNova Adult Students, Fall for the Book, Music for Life, and National Concert Band of America.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND PRESIDENT & CEO

ArtsFairfax is proud to share our 2026–2030 Strategic Plan—a bold vision for strengthening a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient arts community across Fairfax County.

The arts are essential to the vitality of our region. They bring people together, reflect the diversity of our communities, and contribute to the social and economic well-being that makes Fairfax County such an extraordinary place to live, work, play, and visit. ArtsFairfax ensures that the arts continue to thrive and remain accessible to all.

This plan was shaped through a thoughtful and collaborative process that engaged many voices from across our community, including our County leadership, representatives from local arts organizations, artists across a wide range of disciplines, and the Countywide Strategic Plan and One Fairfax Policy. These perspectives, knowledge, and voices helped us understand where we are today and envision the opportunities ahead.

At a time of growth, change, and increasing demands on the arts sector, this plan establishes a clear direction and shared accountability. It also embraces our opportunity to bring creativity and artistic expression across the different neighborhoods and communities throughout the County.

Our refined **MISSION**, **VISION**, and **VALUES** are at the heart of this work:

MISSION

ArtsFairfax invests in and amplifies the arts for all in Fairfax County.

VISION

A vibrant and thriving arts community for all.

VALUES

The arts are essential to our lives.

The arts build community and drive social and economic vitality.

The arts are strengthened by inclusion and diversity—of perspectives, experiences, and audiences.

The plan's priorities will guide our work to invest in arts organizations and individual artists; strengthen partnerships; and expand the impact of the arts across our region. Our hope is that Fairfax County will continue to grow as a dynamic cultural destination, attracting and retaining artistic talent, and generating new audiences from within and beyond.



We are deeply grateful to the many individuals who contributed their time, expertise, and passion to this effort, especially the Strategic Planning Committee, the ArtsFairfax Board of Directors, and our dedicated staff.

We look forward to working with our community to ensure the arts continue to inspire, connect, and enrich Fairfax County's people for years to come.

Michael Liberman
Chair
Board of Directors

Stuart Holt
President & CEO
ArtsFairfax

▲ L-R: Michael Liberman and Stuart Holt (c) Du Col Portraits.

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT ARTSFAIRFAX AND THIS PLAN

WHAT ARTSFAIRFAX IS

ArtsFairfax is the designated local arts agency for Fairfax County, Virginia. We invest in, advocate for, and amplify the arts by supporting artists, nonprofit arts organizations, and creative initiatives that enrich the quality of life for all who live, work, and visit the County.

Through public and private funding, technical assistance, partnerships, and community leadership, ArtsFairfax serves as a connector across the arts ecosystem—linking artists, organizations, residents, businesses, and government partners. Our work helps ensure that the arts remain accessible, inclusive, and integral to the civic, cultural, and economic vitality of Fairfax County.

WHAT THIS PLAN COVERS (2026-2030)

The ArtsFairfax Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 establishes a four-year roadmap to guide the organization’s priorities, investments, and decision-making. The plan responds to a period of organizational momentum, evolving community needs, and reflects both where ArtsFairfax is today and where it aspires to be over the next four years.

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

The plan is organized around **four Strategic Priority Areas**, each addressing a critical dimension of ArtsFairfax’s role in the community and the arts sector:

- INVESTMENT & INNOVATION
- ADVOCACY & AMPLIFICATION
- PARTNERSHIPS & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING
- OPERATIONS & INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Each **priority** area includes:

- **OBJECTIVES** that define success within each priority, and
- **OUTCOMES** that will be used to measure progress and impact.

HOW THIS PLAN WILL BE USED

This strategic plan is both a public statement of direction and an internal tool for accountability and alignment. It will guide ArtsFairfax’s work in several key ways:

GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors will use this plan to set policy direction, monitor organizational performance, and ensure that ArtsFairfax’s activities remain aligned with its mission and values.

FUNDING ADVOCACY

The plan serves as a foundation for communicating ArtsFairfax’s impact and priorities to County leaders, funders, business partners, and donors—demonstrating how public and private investment strengthens the arts and the broader community.

STAFF ALIGNMENT

ArtsFairfax staff will use the plan to inform annual work plans, budgeting, program development, and partnerships, ensuring that day-to-day activities support long-term goals.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

Achieving the goals outlined in this plan requires shared responsibility and collaboration.

- **The Board** provides governance, leadership, and advocacy.
- **Staff** lead implementation, partnerships, and evaluation.
- **Funders and public partners** support investment, infrastructure, and policy alignment.
- **Artists, arts organizations, and community partners** contribute creativity, expertise, and engagement.

By working together, ArtsFairfax and its partners advance a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving arts community that benefits all of Fairfax County.



▲ Top left, photo courtesy of Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Left to right, photos courtesy of Next Stop Theatre Company and Virginia Winds Academy.

INVESTMENT & INNOVATION

Develop a compelling and concise value proposition that increases both regranting funds and operational support.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase regranting funds to the equivalent of \$1 per Fairfax County resident over the next four years.

Outcomes:

- Increase available grant funds and support more grantees, both through new funding streams and by continually assessing and refining the granting process.
- Create a grant program that provides opportunities for currently unserved arts organizations that is responsive to the diversity, size, and needs of those groups.
- Develop a new granting program to support individual artists.

- Maintain and enhance long-term financial sustainability.

Outcomes:

- Strengthen engagement and stewardship of existing funders; and identify and cultivate new funding prospects.
- Create a comprehensive development plan that identifies funding sources to sustain specific operating needs, special projects and sustained organizational reserves.
- Diversify opportunities to broaden the support base through current and new events.

- Leverage technology and new tools to improve efficiency and innovation.

Outcomes:

- Improve online resources for the arts sector and the general public, including the events calendar, arts directory, job board, artist calls listing, and Public Art Locator.
- Develop and expand internal databases of donors, arts organizations, ArtsFairfax board members, County and State leadership, and other constituents to ensure consistency and accuracy.



▲ Photos courtesy of ArtsFairfax (clockwise from top): ArtsFairfax Networking Social at McLean Art Gallery, Sopranessence at the 2025 ArtsFairfax Awards, and ArtsFairfax board and staff at a local festival.

ADVOCACY & AMPLIFICATION

Elevate the recognition of the arts as an essential component of our civic infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES:

- Raise the profile of ArtsFairfax and its resources among County leadership, arts partners, and the general public.

Outcomes:

- Reinforce the reputation of ArtsFairfax as a responsible steward of public and private funds.
- Promote ArtsFairfax as the trusted source for informed knowledge of all County arts activities, needs, and opportunities.
- Increase financial support from the County and other government sources, corporations, small businesses, foundations, and individual donors.

- Promote the needs and activities of artists, arts organizations, presenters, and individual artists.

Outcomes:

- Grow ArtsFairfax web traffic, social media engagement, and event audiences.
- Encourage active and robust engagement with the ArtsFairfax arts directory, events calendar, Public Art Locator, artist calls, and job listings.

- Raise public awareness of the economic and social impacts of arts and culture in communities.

Outcomes:

- Participate in local, regional, and national data collection and research projects, and leverage the outcomes through ArtsFairfax media channels.
- Develop marketing materials to communicate how ArtsFairfax leverages County-appropriated funding for arts organizations to attract more external financial support.
- Promote deeper knowledge of the Fairfax County arts sector, its resilience, and its economic value through external communication tools.



▲ Photos courtesy of ArtsFairfax (clockwise from top): Congressman James Walkinshaw, 2025 County Arts Advocacy Day, and ArtsFairfax board and staff with Dranesville District Supervisor Jimmy Bierman, Jr., at center.

PARTNERSHIPS & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Increase opportunities for artists and arts organizations.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase interdisciplinary and cross-County collaboration within the arts sector.
Outcomes:
 - Identify new funding streams and sponsorships.
 - Amplify grantee visibility and partner value to increase exposure for arts organizations.
 - Offer inclusive, professional development and networking opportunities through workshops and events that represent our local arts sector and respond to their needs.
- Secure additional investment from the County and public sources to launch a public art program.
Outcomes:
 - Establish staff to support the public art program.
 - Provide financial support to selected artists for final presentations of public artworks funded by Fairfax County or sited on County-owned property.
 - Provide support services to Fairfax County and private sector entities involved with public art projects.
- Increase creative placemaking opportunities.
Outcomes:
 - Support the activation of new and underutilized visual and performing arts spaces for groups and individuals.
 - Encourage art installations and arts engagement experiences as part of the civic infrastructure throughout the County.
 - Continue to actively advocate for and support the implementation of the Fairfax County Master Arts Plan for Facilities and Public Art Master Plan.



▲ Photos courtesy of ArtsFairfax (clockwise from top): "ArtsFairfax Presents" at Springfield Town Center with Franconia District Supervisor Rodney Lusk far left; Blossom Bash at Tysons Corner Center; and "Poetry &" with Fairfax County Poet Laureate Angelique Palmer at Fava Pot.

OPERATIONS & INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Prepare ArtsFairfax for the next level of organizational growth.

OBJECTIVES:

- Cultivate an active Board of Directors that reflects the communities and diversity of Fairfax County.
Outcomes:
 - Improve Board members' ability to communicate knowledgeably about ArtsFairfax, its mission, and current activities.
 - Increase Board accountability and effectiveness through measurable expectations including attendance, committee participation, and personal giving/fundraising.
 - Maintain appropriate Board governance to include regular policy and by-law review, succession planning, and broad recruitment efforts.
- Support and invest in ArtsFairfax staff.
Outcomes:
 - Ensure that salaries and benefits align with appropriate nonprofit market benchmarks.
 - Invest in and retain staff members through professional development opportunities.
- Assess organizational structure to ensure it is sufficient to meet these goals.
Outcomes:
 - Review and optimize staffing levels to meet current and future needs.
 - Align Board and staff competencies with organizational needs.
 - Conduct regular organizational assessments to examine progress and address areas needing improvement.



▲ Photos courtesy of ArtsFairfax (clockwise from top): ArtsFairfax board meeting; ArtsFairfax staff attend a show; ArtsFairfax board attend a social hour.

ArtsFairfax thanks the many civic partners who shared their feedback with us, as well as the thousands of artists and arts workers who participated in our District Arts Roundtables, Fairfax Regional Artist Survey, and networking socials. Together, these community voices helped us articulate what ArtsFairfax can do for the residents of Fairfax County.

ARTSFAIRFAX BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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County Executive

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Colleen Dugan Messick

Executive Director

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Region 4 Commissioner



▲ Clockwise from top left, photos courtesy of Cappies National Capital Area, 1st Stage, Vienna Jammers, Little City Concerts, and ArtsFairfax for "Poetry &" at Workhouse Arts Center.

▲ Clockwise from top left, photos courtesy of NextStop Theatre Company, Tephra ICA, Fairfax Jubil-Aires, Gin Dance Company, and BalletNova.



ArtsFairfax.org



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