



## LowellArts Strategic Plan (2022–2026)

**VISION** Our community will be a vibrant hub for the arts, bringing audiences and artists together in quality environments

**MISSION** LowellArts connects artists and audiences through the visual and performing arts

### OBJECTIVE #1 Programming – Visual Arts

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Support **visual artists** by providing opportunities for them to exhibit and promote their art. Provide audiences with opportunities to engage with and support visual artists.

**Strategy:** Provide opportunities for visual artists to exhibit their artwork in juried and curated exhibitions in the gallery

- Inspire artists to create new and thought-provoking art through a variety of exhibition opportunities including calls for entries for themed shows and a bi-annual call for exhibition proposals
- Ensure exhibitions maintain a high level of quality by providing a quality setting and maintaining standards of excellence in visual art

**Strategy:** Provide educational and monetary support to artists to advance their careers

- Provide training through workshops, individual coaching, and on-line resources to help artists become self-sufficient and successful in presenting, promoting, and selling their work
- Provide opportunities for artists to earn income from their artwork including offering prize money for juried shows, promoting their work for sale in the gallery and on-line, and providing opportunities to teach workshops

**Strategy:** Increase audience engagement with visual art exhibitions

- Promote exhibitions, artists, and their artwork in innovative ways through the website and social media, and use digital resources to expand audiences and make exhibitions accessible to those who are unable to visit the gallery in person
- Provide interpretive materials for gallery exhibitions and utilize artist's personal stories / artist statements to allow audiences to understand and connect in more significant ways with the art on display

### OBJECTIVE #2 Programming – Music

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Support **musicians** by providing opportunities for them to perform and promote their music. Provide audiences with opportunities to engage with and support musicians.

**Strategy:** Provide performance opportunities for musicians to showcase their music and gain exposure

- Maintain the successful Lowell Showboat Sizzlin' Summer Concert Series by continuing to present professional-quality performances and attracting high-profile acts that appeal to diverse audiences
- Increase the popularity of the Gallery Concert Series, a series that gives musicians a quality and unique setting in which to perform
- Promote musicians to new audiences by seeking out new, innovative performance opportunities during other LowellArts events

**Strategy:** Provide opportunities, other than performing, for musicians to showcase their talent, gain exposure, cultivate new professional relationships, and earn income with their music

- Continue to offer the on-line Featured Artist of the Month Series, increasing audience engagement through innovative use of on-line platforms and media partnerships
- Play music during gallery hours by musicians who perform at or are featured by LowellArts, highlighting these musicians so that visitors can further engage with the music
- Provide opportunities for musicians to offer individual lessons and to teach group workshops
- Provide musicians with training and the opportunity to check-out audio/visual equipment from LowellArts to use in projects that will further their music careers

**Strategy:** Provide educational opportunities for musicians to expand their skill set and develop their craft

- Provide a weekend camp-like experience where musicians can collaborate and create together culminating in a concert consisting of the new material generated during the camp

### **OBJECTIVE #3 Programming – Theatre**

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Support **theatre artists** by providing opportunities for them to perform and promote their craft. Provide audiences with opportunities to engage with and support theatre artists.

**Strategy:** Produce stage plays so that theatre artists can participate in and showcase their theatrical talents through being part of the production team or as an actor

- Provide opportunities for individuals of various experience levels to be part of the process of putting on stage plays with specific roles such as actors, directors, stage managers, and tech designers
- Ensure theatre productions maintain a high-level of quality by providing a quality setting and maintaining standards of excellence in the production that is presented
- Maintain an education-friendly, supportive environment where theatre participants can strive to expand their theatre skills
- Foster continual growth for the theatre program by evaluating successes and areas of improvement after each production

**Strategy:** Provide opportunities for theatre artists to explore new directions and hone their craft

- Provide an opportunity for theatre artists to participate in and experience a wide range of plays – different genres, playwrights, and theatrical eras – to encourage diversity and cultivate fresh perspectives
- Provide educational workshops in acting, directing, and theatre production to encourage artistic growth

**Strategy:** Increase attendance to theatre programs

- Continue to strive for excellence in all areas of production to ensure a high-level of audience appreciation
- Offer ways for audiences to engage with actors, directors, playwrights so they can connect more deeply with the productions and artistic process

## **OBJECTIVE #4 Programming – Festival**

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Produce an annual **festival** that features high-caliber visual artists, regional musicians, and provides a high-quality arts experience for attendees

**Strategy:** Continue to attract high-quality, qualified visual artists to the festival

- Equip volunteers who frequent other arts festivals with a handout about the festival to share with potential artists
- Increase and improve the amenities provided to artists who participate in the festival
- Utilize the LowellArts website and other on-line platforms to promote the festival to potential artists and audiences continually during the “off-season”

**Strategy:** Attract art buyers to the festival

- Invest in an advertising campaign targeting potential art buyers in areas outside of West Michigan

**Strategy:** Maintain the aspects of the festival that keep it unique and keep people returning year after year while continuing to evaluate the festival and make changes as needed to enhance the visitor experience

- Improve the quality and variety of food options available
- Solicit new artists to create the festival quilt
- Solicit new musicians to perform at the festival

**Strategy:** Promote downtown Lowell and the Fallasburg Village as an extension of the festival

- Promote parking options in downtown Lowell and provide a shuttle option into the festival
- Promote Lowell businesses through advertisements in the festival program, feature a map of Lowell with locations highlighted in the program, and promote downtown Lowell through verbal announcements by the MC
- Promote the Fallasburg Historical Society and the nearby Fallasburg Village

**Strategy:** Continue the yearly process of documenting the steps for planning and organizing the festival, with the goal of making the process easier and smoother each year

- Maintain documentation of all aspects of planning of the festival, capturing knowledge for the future
- Purposefully recruit and train volunteers who have the capacity to transition to key leadership roles for the festival in the future
- Transition planning documentation over to a more robust, on-line event management tool

## **OBJECTIVE #5 Programming – Education**

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Engage the public by offering **educational opportunities** that help individuals learn new skills, discover different forms of artistic expression, and/or experience art by participating in the creative process.

**Strategy:** Develop class offerings based on feedback from current and future class participants

- Periodically conduct surveys to pinpoint what types of classes people are interested in, including: class content, what day/time is preferable, class length, and cost of class
- Conduct end-of-class surveys with questions about instructor, class content, class cost, and future class interest.

**Strategy: Develop a more structured approach to class schedule and offerings**

- Begin a quarterly schedule for classes, and schedule classes far enough ahead to create a printed piece that includes instructor info and images
- Develop class progressions in some areas (beginner to intermediate) and develop a set of more advanced classes designed specifically for artist development (in visual art, theatre, and music)
- Develop standardized timeslots for classes to help with scheduling and facility use
- Formalize an Instructor Handbook to outline expectations for teaching and use of the facility
- Formalize safety protocols for youth classes

**Strategy: Recruit a larger pool of instructors**

- Create a call for instructors with a link to a form with a due date for quarterly class proposals, seek out potential instructors
- Recruit potential instructors who are involved in upcoming exhibitions or performances at LowellArts.

**Strategy: Expand the types of classes offered**

- Offer classes in more disciplines, such as writing and movement (if the survey results indicate there is an interest), explore the possibility of offering music classes and workshops for youth, teens, and adults
- Offer visual art classes that are related in theme or medium to art exhibitions

**Strategy: Engage new audiences**

- Build class options that target specific populations such as seniors or homeschool students
- Collaborate with local organizations to develop classes that do not overlap with what is already being offered, and determine what types of classes fit the needs of the populations that they serve

**OBJECTIVE #6 Programming – Accessible Experiences**

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Create **art experiences that are accessible** and meaningful to persons with disabilities or special needs.

**Strategy: Utilize partnerships with other organizations who serve these populations**

- Collaborate with regional organizations to develop meaningful art experiences that fit the needs of the populations that they serve
- Build partnerships with other organizations in the region

**Strategy: Identify accessible experiences that can be built into existing programs**

- Host special theatre and music performances during the daytime that are only for invited groups or for seniors
- Offer private gallery viewing hours that can be scheduled on Mondays when LowellArts is closed to the public and offer docent-led tours upon request
- Continue to expand on-line library of LowellArts programs, such as video tours of art exhibitions, which can be shared with groups at off-site locations
- Research how other organizations around the country are serving these populations and making programming more accessible

## **OBJECTIVE #7 Programming – Other Artistic Genres**

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Reach new artists and audiences by creating programs that combine more than one artistic genre, highlight **other artistic genres** (writing, spoken word, film, digital media), or engage the public through a collective process of creating art.

**Strategy:** Incorporate other artistic genres into current program areas (visual art, music, theatre)

- Evaluate programs being planned in effort to see how they can potentially be multi-disciplinary
- Consider combining spoken word or open mic performances with other programs (i.e., prior to a theatre production or music concert)
- Collaborate with other organizations to offer programs in other genres

**Strategy:** Utilize Public Art and community arts projects to introduce new people to LowellArts

- Offer interactive art “happenings” at events where the public can participate in artmaking
- Consider undertaking an art project that is visible in the community, such as a site-specific installation or an art project that requires public participation

## **OBJECTIVE #8 Organizational – Evaluation**

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Develop a matrix to **evaluate programs**, defining who the program serves, how best to promote the program, how individuals are engaged in the program, and how well the program was received.

**Strategy:** Create a pre-program assessment tool noting the goals of all major exhibitions, performances, and events

- Create an assessment template that can be used across disciplines, being sure stated goals are quantifiable so success can be measured
- Determine who the program will serve and engage (both artists and audiences), how the program will be promoted, how quality will be determined, and what tools will be used to evaluate how well the program was received

**Strategy:** Conduct a post-program evaluation of all major exhibitions, performances, and events

- Create an evaluation template that can be used across disciplines
- Track program participation numbers for both artists and audiences
- Identify a variety of survey tools that can be used to capture feedback from audiences, volunteers, and artists
- Use evaluations and surveys of past programs to shape future programs, building upon success and identifying areas of improvement

**Strategy:** Conduct annual assessment of the Strategic Plan to prioritize strategies and monitor progress

- For each program area, evaluate priorities and progress alongside the realities of available resources (financial, time, staff / volunteer support), document how quality is defined and how success is measured

## **OBJECTIVE #9 Organizational – Marketing**

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Produce an annual **marketing** plan that defines how to expand our reach to new audiences and increase the visibility and impact of LowellArts.

**Strategy:** Clearly define target audiences and target cities / communities

- Identify the different types of LowellArts constituents (volunteers, members, artists, patrons, donors, businesses, schools...) and how communications will differ based on who the audience is
- Track zip codes of LowellArts visitors and event attendees through surveys and registrations
- Identify targeted zip codes and audiences for each program

**Strategy:** Craft key messages that encompass what is important to know about LowellArts

- Develop consistent messaging to ensure that the same thing is being said and promoted, to simplify marketing and to help organize messaging to different audiences

**Strategy:** Identify marketing strategies and tools available for all program areas

- Keep all marketing communications updated regularly and provide program committees with a marketing timeline
- Utilize the existing marketing network of the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants
- Develop a tool kit that program committees can reference to identify what marketing efforts to focus on and determine which efforts to spend money on
- Develop a simplified tool kit that participating artists and performers can use to help promote the program they are part of, with specific guidelines on how to adhere to the brand standards of LowellArts
- Continue to expand and utilize social media to reach target audiences

**Strategy:** Analyze marketing performance

- Track the success of marketing strategies through performance indicators (i.e., email opens, ticket sales, video views, page views)
- Conduct a marketing audit to review all communications and assess their impact
- Develop a brand standards manual for graphics and written communications

## **OBJECTIVE #10 Organizational – Governance**

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Maintain a clear structure of **governance** for the organization, led by the board of directors

**Strategy:** Maintain and document key governance practices and processes of the board of directors

- Maintain a Board Manual with job descriptions and introductory documents for new board members
- Highlight board roles and the importance of a board member's engagement with the community
- Review the organization bylaws and make amendments to better reflect the current structure
- Examine different types of board models to identify which type most closely aligns with the current structure
- Review the board structure and roles, and define how that structure aligns with program committees and staff

**Strategy:** Review policies and procedures related to risk management for the organization

- Maintain a list of all risk management policies and procedures, especially highlighting policies and procedures in relation to youth protection

## **OBJECTIVE #11 Organizational – Employees**

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Recruit and retain talented **employees** by maintaining a positive and productive workplace

**Strategy:** Ensure expectations and policies are documented and invest in the professional growth of employees

- Maintain a current employee manual
- Annually update job descriptions for employees, clearly documenting responsibilities
- Create a method for employees to document how they perform the tasks of their job, as a tool for employee transition
- Invest time and resources into professional development opportunities for employees

## **OBJECTIVE #12 Organizational – Volunteers**

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Maintain the importance of **volunteerism** within the organization to connect, engage, and cultivate long-term, mutually beneficial relationships

**Strategy:** Ensure volunteer expectations and policies are documented

- Create a general volunteer orientation handbook so that volunteers are familiar with basic policies and procedures, highlight the best practices for interacting with the public
- Develop a template to outline specific volunteer job descriptions for volunteers in all program areas
- Develop a program committee handbook outlining the extra responsibility that the position entails, include the requirement of being an active member of LowellArts
- Establish a system for tracking volunteer hours in all program areas
- Maintain of current set of documents/brochures about LowellArts that volunteers and staff can use as tools when interacting with the public (business cards, about LowellArts brochure, membership brochure)
- Provide specific talking points for volunteers who are speaking with the public to use while they are volunteering and need to interact with the public

**Strategy:** Invest in training and recognition of volunteers

- Send a monthly email to active volunteers and share upcoming volunteer opportunities
- Periodically highlight and thank specific volunteers publicly (such as on website or in emails)
- Thank volunteers with thank you get-togethers and special volunteer-only perks (such as free tickets to events)
- Develop volunteer positions that are attractive resume building opportunities

**Strategy:** Develop more intentional means of recruiting and volunteers

- Include more thorough description of volunteer positions on the website, along with the form for indicating interest
- Create a handout that lists the volunteer positions and descriptions that can be given out, along with a form that can be filled out indicating interest
- Build up the volunteer base

## **OBJECTIVE #13 Organizational – Membership**

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Promote the value of **membership** to support the important work of LowellArts

### **Strategy: Develop a strong base of supporters through a members-as-donors model**

- Encourage existing members to give an additional gift, or “round up” their annual membership as a donation
- Count the first portion of a general donation as a “membership” so that all donors are considered members (and all members are considered donors)
- Investigate how many “Moving to Main” donors have become annual donors and follow-up with the ones who are not
- Review the process of connecting with “drop-out” members and if the current process is effective in bringing them back

### **Strategy: Review and evolve the membership program**

- Evaluate and revise membership benefits
- Create a new membership brochure, consider it to be a “Ways to Give” piece that covers more than membership
- Provide specific talking points about membership to staff and volunteers, so there is consistent messaging about LowellArts and the value of membership
- Create marketing campaign tools around membership
- Specifically promote the monthly, auto-pay option for annual membership
- Develop a level of annual membership that is specifically designed to be gifted and is complimentary

## **OBJECTIVE #14 Organizational – Fundraising**

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Document a **fundraising** plan that meets the needs of the annual budget, outlining income streams including earned revenue from programming and events, donations from individuals, business sponsorships, and grants.

### **Strategy: Engage the board of directors in developing an annual fundraising plan**

- Plan the year-end annual campaign, including how to ask for a second gift from LowellArts members
- Develop more ways to promote the planned giving program (Legacy Giving Program)
- Outline information for a new “Ways to Give” brochure that highlights all donation options and includes membership
- Review a list that describes grants that are applied for annually
- Annually review earned revenue streams for each program area
- Review the benefits of hosting an annual fundraising event as a fun and engaging way to highlight what LowellArts does for the community

### **Strategy: Connect with Lowell businesses about annual sponsorship opportunities**

- Create a menu of benefits that can be provided to potential business sponsors, create annual sponsorship packages that meet their specific needs (free tickets, private event at LowellArts, facility use for meetings, recognition)
- Share information with businesses describing the economic impact LowellArts offers area businesses and the quality of life for residents



## **OBJECTIVE #15 Organizational – Assets**

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Document all building and technology **assets** and develop a plan for maintenance and expansion.

**Strategy: Maintain building, equipment, protection, and security**

- Maintain an inventory of existing assets, identify what areas need improvement or repair
- Document, schedule, and track preventative maintenance and weekly/seasonal upkeep for building and equipment
- Document job responsibilities for contract service providers
- Create a database that contains information on set-up, procedures, and how to operate and maintain all aspects of the building, equipment, and related technology
- Continue to document and track access controls

**Strategy: Grow the Building Fund for upcoming building repairs and upgrades**

- Designate a percentage of programming revenue and facility rentals to go into the Building Fund

**Strategy: Maintain the facility rental program as a revenue source without compromising programming**

- Evaluate the risk / benefits of facility rental
- Improve procedures for planning and supervising facility rentals
- Create tools to easily communicate facility use policies and ensure follow-through