



Image Credit: Vervy Sanchez

HouArts in Action



Town Hall

January 2025

PLAN FOR TODAY



GOALS

- Provide update on the HouArts in Action initiative.
- Participate in discussions to inform a shared platform and strategy – first around funding, and then more broadly.
- Identify collective priorities around partnerships and alliances outside of the arts and culture sector.

AGENDA

6:05 – 6:20 | Initiative Overview

6:20 – 6:45 | Long-Term Funding Strategy

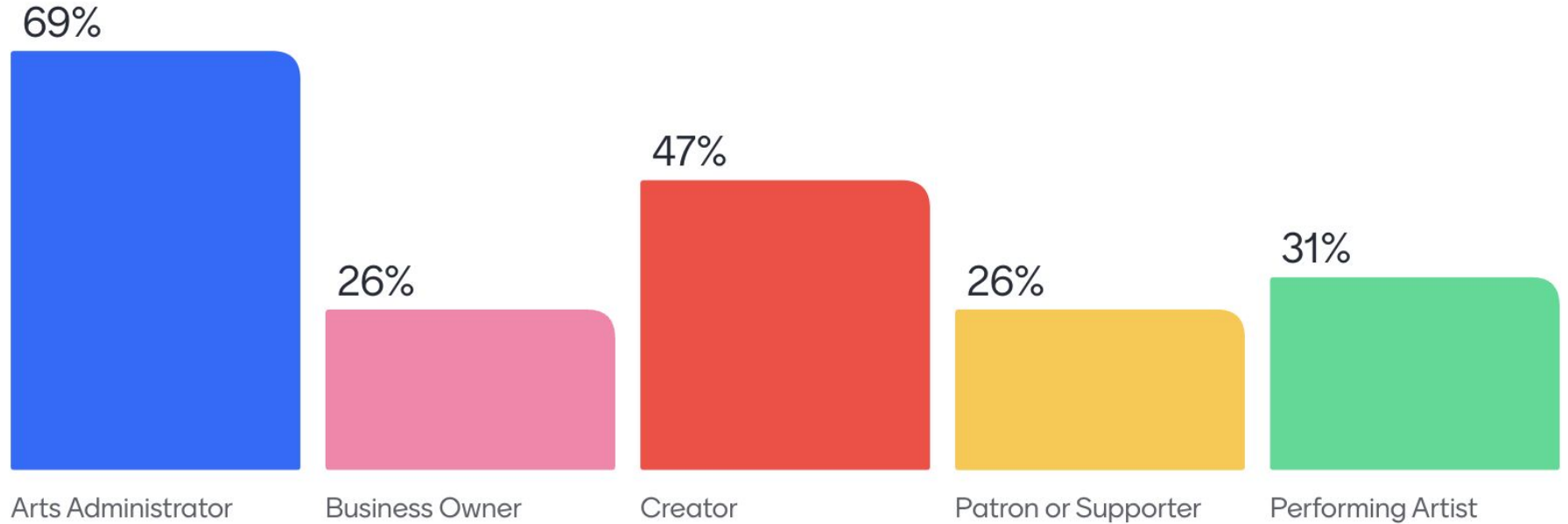
6:45 – 7:20 | Building Our Platform (Breakouts!)

7:20 – 7:45 | Partnerships & Storytelling

7:45 – 8:00 | Next Steps and Q&A



What parts of the arts ecosystem are present today? Select all identities that you represent.



LOGISTICS



- We will be programming for the full two hours, take personal breaks as you see fit!
 - We will share slides with those who registered.
- Please stay on mute in the main room. Use the chat to share feedback and questions (we may or may not get to them but will save the chat!)
- In your breakout rooms use the “raise hand” feature to share that you’d like to talk!
- Throughout this Town Hall we will be using a tool called “mentimeter” to capture your feedback and preferences. Please keep that window up on your computer or phone and advance with us!

WHY ARE WE HERE



*Logo design by Houston artist
Sebastian Gomez de la Torre*

Vision: Houston is recognized as a world-renowned center for cultural arts, where local artists, residents, and visitors uplift and benefit from the city's unique and diverse arts and cultural assets.

Strategy: Champion the Arts

Action Item: Create an actionable five-year plan that mobilizes the arts and culture sector around clear priorities and messaging.

Identified Needs:

- Coordinated effort to influence public policy = HouArts in Action
 - Clarify shared policy and funding priorities
 - Grow the network of arts and culture champions in Houston
 - Build capacity for advocacy
 - Develop partnerships beyond the arts & culture sector

Building power for the sector will allow our efforts to advance shared policy and funding priorities, resulting in a **well-funded arts and culture sector** that is involved in the everyday decisions that shape life in Houston.

PROJECT MILESTONES



Community Kickoff

December 13th



HouArts Town Hall

January 23rd | Today!



Advocacy Training Webinar

Wednesday, January 29th | 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM CT | Virtual



Texas Arts Advocacy Day

Wednesday, February 5th | 5:00 AM - 10:00 PM CT | Texas State Capitol



In-Person Gathering

TBD (Likely Late March 2025) | In Person



Houston Arts Advocacy Day with Strategy Launch

April 2025 | In Person



Register at
[HouArts.org!](https://HouArts.org)

PROJECT TEAM



CULTURAL LAUNCH

Project Coordinator



Marci Dallas, Founder

TREPWISE

Project Delivery & Strategy Development



Isaac MacDonald
Director of Planning & Impact



Polly Sawabini
Advisor



Khi Van Allen
Associate

FORD MOMENTUM!

Communications & Outreach



Maya Ford, Principal

CONDUIT GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Policy Analysis & Government Strategy



Scott Carter
President



Alex Rodriguez
CEO

TASK FORCE



Members of the HouArts in Action Task Force were selected from a pool of applicants via an open call process. They include artists, creatives, & large, medium and small arts organizations representatives from across the Greater Houston Region. Task force members were selected to share direct insight into the needs of the cultural sector and offer guidance as we work together with the community to build champions of arts & culture in the Greater Houston Area.

Janice Bond

Sharon Fletcher

Jack McBride

Michelle Bonton

Mark Folkes

Trisha Morales

Jessica Brown

Jorge Garza

Shareef Rabie

Leila Cartier

Amy Gibbs

Chandler Snipe

Gracie Chavez

Edgar Guajardo

Sarah Stauder

Sha Davis

Lindsey Hurst

Monica Villarreal

Claudia de Vasco

RUEROB Jackson

Charles Washington

HEAR FROM TASK FORCE MEMBERS



Sha Davis
Founder, SD Art
Arts Manager,
City of Sugar Land



Mark Folkes
President & CEO,
The Hobby Center

OUR APPROACH

While there are many potential areas of work to focus on within this sector, for the HouArts in Action initiative, we're focusing on building capacity for arts advocacy and developing partnerships beyond the arts and culture sector in order to advance shared policy and funding priorities.

Our Pathways for Building Power

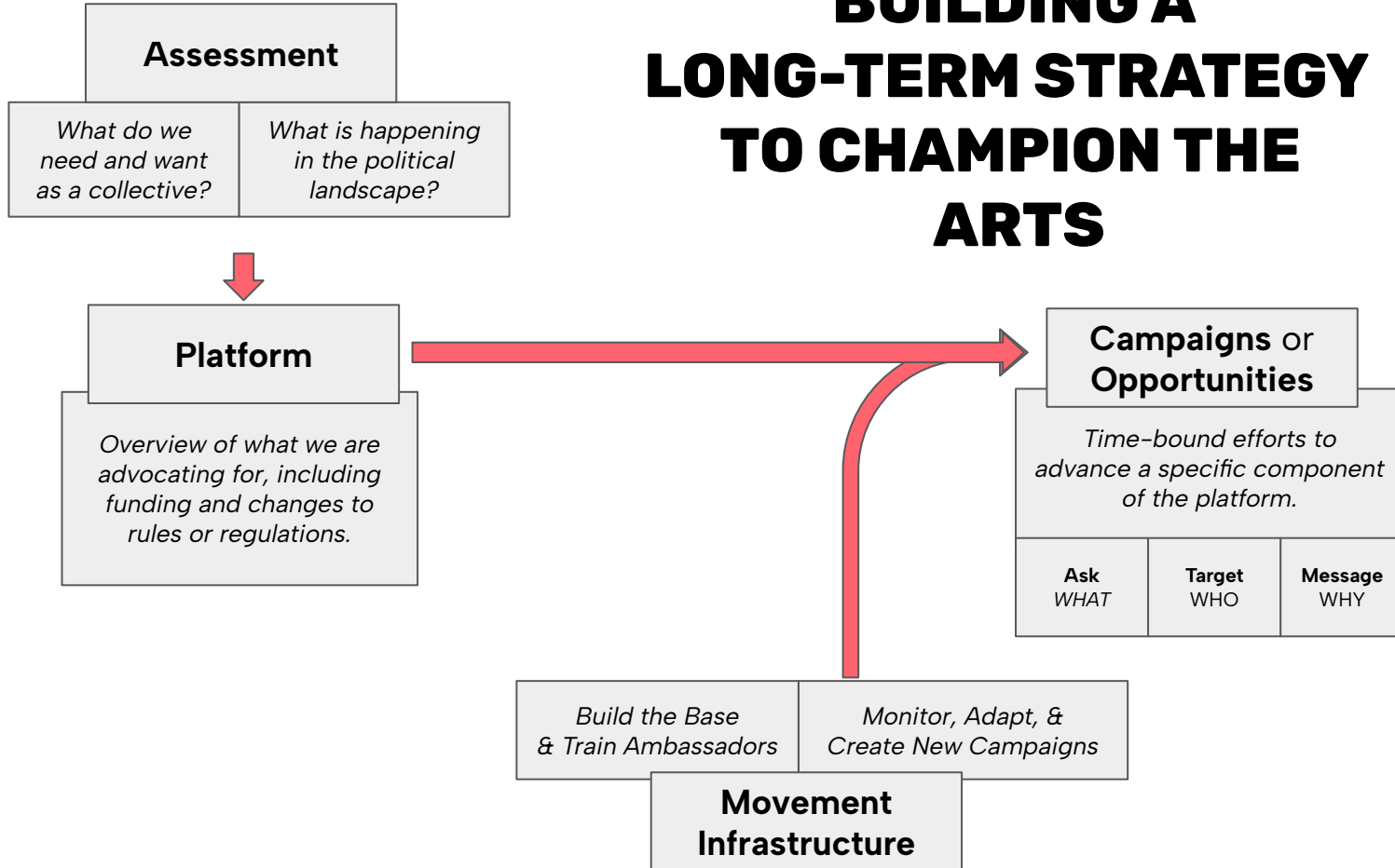
- ★ **Seeding and training network of ambassadors**
- ★ **Securing sustained public and private investment**
- ★ **Creating aligned policies to protect and grow the arts sector**
- ★ **Expanding the arts' role in civic decision-making including non-governmental bodies (e.g. Greater Houston Partnership, Houston First)**

Not Included in this Initiative

- Creating or revising specific arts programs
- Supporting individual arts events or organizations
- Expanding audience awareness through direct PR or advertising

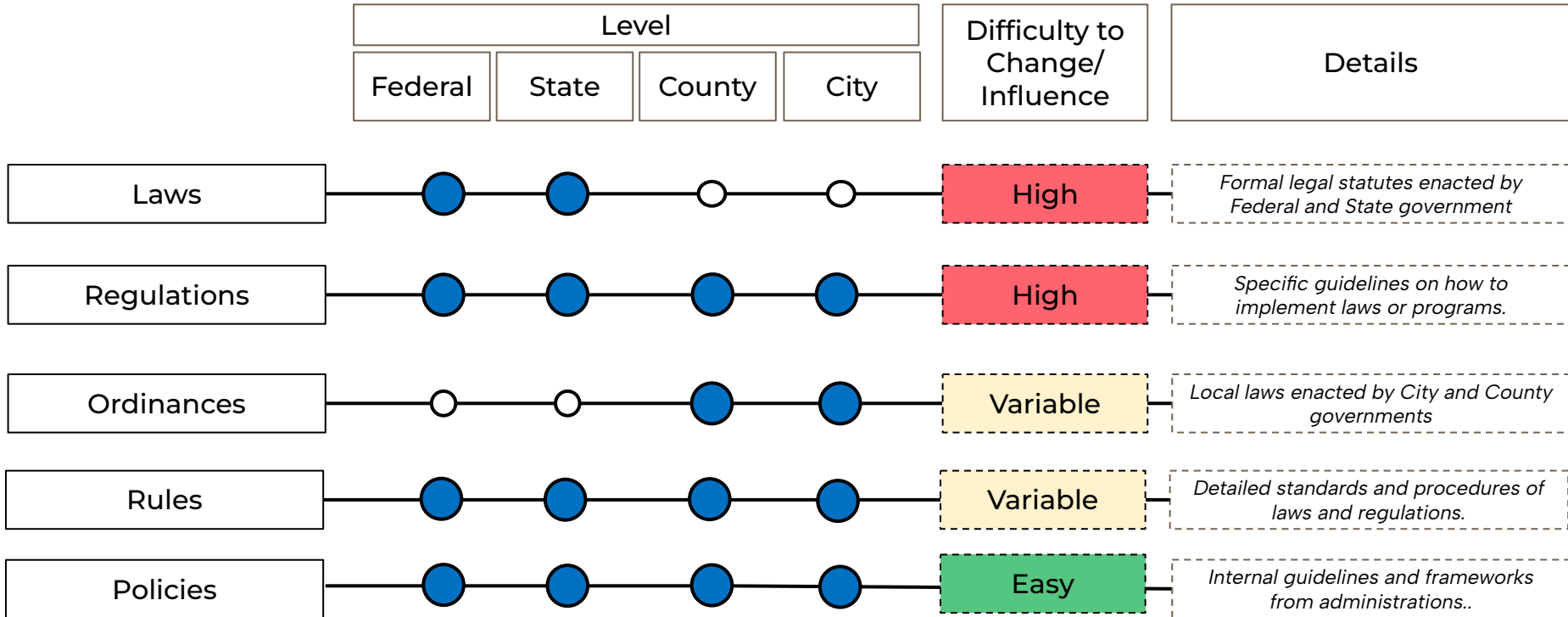


BUILDING A LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO CHAMPION THE ARTS



VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEM

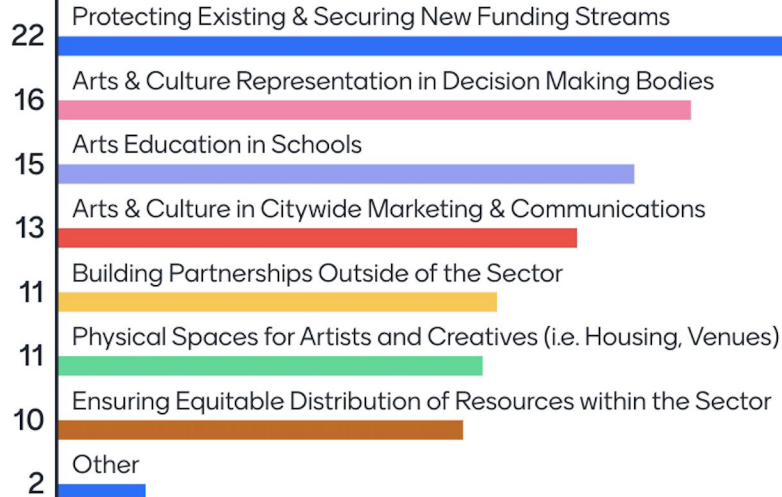
Understanding the mechanisms that structure how government works allows us to design **effective and targeted campaigns**, and to be knowledgeable when talking to elected officials.



FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY LAUNCH



*What would you like to see the HouArts platform focus on?
(Assign 100 points)*



Participants at the kickoff in December had a variety of platform interests, but were aligned that the most important thing was

Protecting existing & securing new funding streams.



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Image Credit: Verny Sanchez

FUNDING

FUNDING MAP

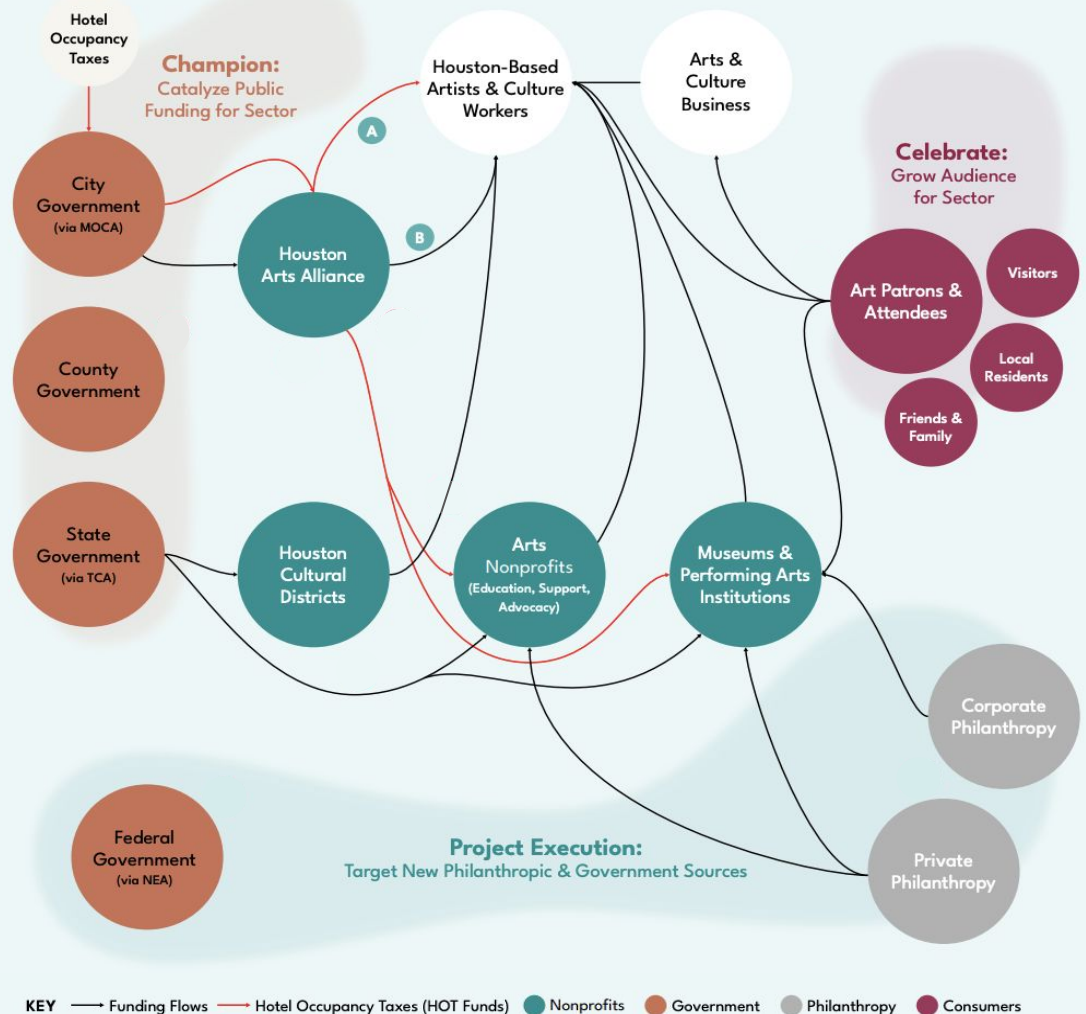
During the last project we created a funding map, trying to understand the flow of resources.

Things to consider:

- Source & Purpose
- Volume (Amount)
- Eligibility & Allocation

Notes on the Current State

- A. The individual artist HOT (Hotel Occupancy Tax) Funding from Houston ARTS Alliance is typically limited only for artists within incorporated Houston City limits.
- B. The Civic Art Program directs 1.75% of the budget for eligible City-funded construction projects be spent to integrate artwork and the ideas of artists in public spaces, and to conserve the City Art Collection.



PROPOSED STRATEGY TO PROTECT & GROW FUNDING

Near-Term

Launching ASAP

Protect & Direct Existing Funding

Protect HOT Tax from Re-Allocation
Participate in restructuring Civic Art Ordinance to make more effective – attempt to expand eligibility while avoiding significant reductions or exemptions.

Medium Term

2026 - 2027

Identify Regional Partnership Opportunities

Explore project-based opportunities to catalyze arts funding with existing well-funded entities at the County or regional level.

(Example: HCTRA – Harris County Toll Road Authority)

Long Term

2027 +

Establish New Dedicated Funding Stream

Build a public campaign to establish a permanent allocation for arts and culture, supplementing existing.

PROPOSED STRATEGY TO PROTECT & GROW FUNDING

Near-Term *Launching ASAP*

Protect & Direct Existing Funding

Protect HOT Tax from Re-Allocation

Participate in restructuring Civic Art Ordinance to make more effective – attempt to expand eligibility while avoiding significant reductions or exemptions.

HOT Funds

Hotel and Occupancy Taxes (HOT) Funds are collected for the purpose of promoting tourism and the convention and hotel industry. Locally, they are distributed to HAA to manage arts grants and Houston First to promote tourism.

One of the top concerns listed in conversations and survey responses to date has been fear that the HOT Tax allocation going to HAA could be reduced or re-allocated to other purposes.

Protecting HOT Funds and maintaining them as a dedicated funding stream has been requested as key initial campaign for HouArts in Action.

Civic Art Ordinance

The Civic Art Program directs 1.75% of the budget for eligible City-funded construction projects be spent to integrate artwork and the ideas of artists in public spaces, and to conserve the City Art Collection.

There have been requests from the City Council to review and revise the Civic Art Program ordinance.

Our recommendation is to use this as an opportunity to partner with the new Arts and Culture Subcommittee and improve and strengthen the Ordinance to expand eligibility for types of art and address inefficiencies in how program funding operates.

PROPOSED STRATEGY TO PROTECT & GROW FUNDING

Harris County



Medium Term
2025 - 2027

**Identify Regional
Partnership Opportunities**

Explore project-based opportunities to catalyze arts funding with existing well-funded entities at the County or regional level.

Regional



PROPOSED STRATEGY TO PROTECT & GROW FUNDING

**We Fund
Culture.**

**THE BIG
PICTURE**



In the long run, there is a desire to identify and secure a new dedicated funding stream.

Other places in the US – including the **Science & Cultural Facilities District in Colorado** and the **Cuyahoga County Arts and Culture in Ohio** each have direct arts and culture funding mechanisms based on taxes approved by voters.

This type of effort has a **long** time horizon, and rules against referendums in Texas at the state and county level may complicate things. But there are a few potential pathways, and this is an area of continued research and focus for HouArts.

Long Term
2027 +

**Establish New Dedicated
Funding Stream**

Build a public campaign to establish a permanent allocation for arts and culture, supplementing existing.

Pulse Check: Funding Strategy

I think the funding strategy is headed in the right direction and I am excited to support it.

4.0

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree



BUILDING OUR PLATFORM OUTSIDE OF FUNDING REQUESTS

Image Credit: Verny Sanchez

BUILDING OUR PLATFORM

Now that we've discussed our funding roadmap, it's time to turn our discussion away from funding and focus on the other components we want to include in a collective platform.

	Near-Term <i>Launching ASAP</i>	Medium Term <i>2026 - 2027</i>	Long Term <i>2027 +</i>
Funding	Protect & Direct Existing Funding	Identify Regional Partnership Opportunities	Establish New Dedicated Funding Stream
Everything Else	?	?	?

Note: Listing an idea today does not guarantee it will be in the platform, and putting something in a platform does not guarantee it will happen!

BUILDING OUR PLATFORM

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Potential areas of focus we've heard in our community survey and conversations...

Create and preserve
affordable arts spaces to live
and work

Ensure arts and culture
instruction in public schools

Effective regional cultural
tourism campaign

Address barriers to
making art downtown
(parking, noise
ordinances, etc.)

Provide support for
small arts
organizations

Support artists as
leaders in disaster
recovery efforts

Provide local
business incentives
to integrate arts and
culture

HEADING TO BREAKOUTS!

Group Discussion:

1. What are the **fundamental needs of artists and arts workers** in the Greater Houston Area?
2. What's **working** right now? (What do we want to protect?)
3. What's **not working** right now? (What parts aren't working? How can they be addressed?)
4. What **solutions or "asks"** would you like to see included in our strategy?



PARTNERSHIPS & STORYTELLING

ALLIANCES & PARTNERS



How should we allocate our collective time and energy towards relationship building and partnership across various audiences?



STORYTELLING & MESSAGING



One of the things that we've been hearing in our conversations is that we need to **speak in terms that matter** to our audiences.

Often we tend to start with our **own desires**.



My Values & Concerns

When in fact we need to start **with our audience desires**.

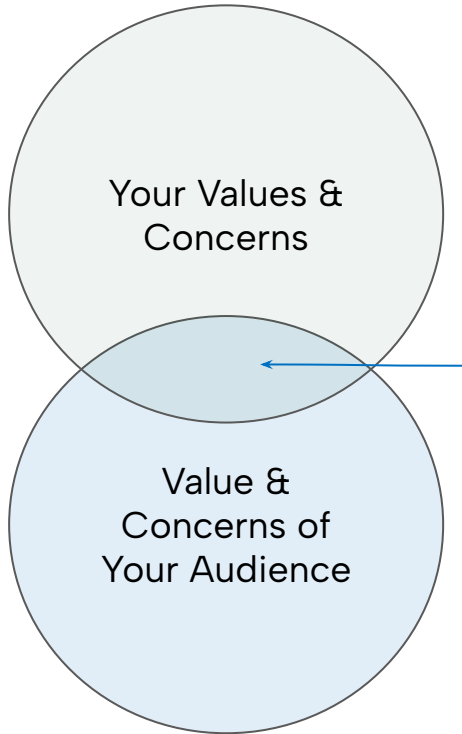


Values & Concerns of My Audience



In order to find a message that feels **authentic, aligned** and overcomes **barriers to action**.

MESSAGING: EXAMPLE



Coalition Value: The Chesapeake Club cares about protecting Chesapeake Bay habitats and wildlife.

Issue: Runoff from fertilizers impacting aquatic life in the Bay.

Audiences: The public using fertilizers on lawns; Elected officials.

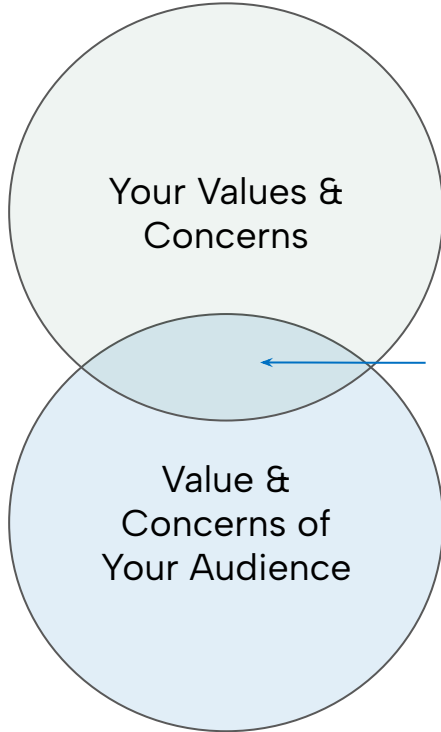
Barriers to Action:

"This doesn't affect me"

"How much could my one lawn really matter?"

"I don't think my constituents care about this"

MESSAGING: EXAMPLE



Shared Value: The joy and pride of the Maryland Blue Crab.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY (MENTI)



Pick a potential campaign

Protect the current funding stream of HOT funds from being re-allocated away from arts & culture.

Grow funding for arts & culture from the County and regional levels.

Create and preserve affordable art spaces to live and work.

Pick an audience

Elected Officials

Local Residents

Business Community

Tourism Entities

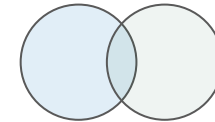
Reflect

What are the **values and desires** you and your audience share?

What do you think **would be the biggest barrier** to their support?

What is a **specific message** that you think would resonate with that audience & address those barriers?

Who do you think should **deliver** that message? Who is the right storyteller?



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April 2025



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NEXT STEPS

→ **Sign Up for Events!**
Visit HouArts.org

→ **Get On Our List!**
If you are not on our mailing list, go sign up! (HouArts.org)

→ **Spread the Word!**
Forward the website to a friend or colleague, and tell them to take the community perspectives survey and get on our mailing list!

APPENDIX

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION WITHIN THE SYSTEM



Laws	Regulations	Rules
<p>Laws are formal legal statutes established by Congress or state legislatures.</p> <p>They are usually the most challenging to change.</p>	<p>Regulations are created by the Executive Branch to implement and enforce laws, and programs created by law. They provide specific guidelines to states and local governments on how to implement the law or program.</p> <p>Regulations can take a long time to develop and implement, and involve public comment, making them difficult to change, but are critical to an advocacy strategy.</p>	<p>Rules are detailed standards or procedures derived from laws or regulations, and are more specific to day-to-day operations of programs.</p> <p>They can be difficult to change and can be subject to public comment as well.</p>
Policies	Ordinances	Referendum
<p>Policies are guidelines on operations and activities internally to achieve specific outcomes. Unlike laws, policies do not have the force of law, and unlike regulations, there is no need for public comment or formal methods to change.</p> <p>New Administrations usually change policies to those that will serve as frameworks for how they want their Administration to operate.</p>	<p>Ordinances are local laws or regulations enacted by municipal or county governments to address issues within their geographic jurisdictions.</p> <p>These can be done independently or enacted to follow State or Federal changes. These can vary in challenge to change, but are critical to day-to-day activities.</p>	<p>A referendum is a direct vote in which the electorate is invited to either accept or reject a specific proposal.</p> <p>The State of Texas does NOT allow for a State level referendum, and Counties must follow the State. However, municipalities that have an official charter, can allow referendums, therefore, the City of Houston does have rules to get a referendum on the ballot.</p>