The Arts Center of the Capital Region formed as the Rensselaer County Center for the Arts in 1962, and by invitation from the New York State Council on the Arts, became the Decentralization Regrant Site, now the Statewide Community Regrant program, for Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady Counties in 1978. The Arts Center is proud to be the region’s preeminent proponent of the arts, creative education and expression and works to nurture and facilitate artistic diversity, outreach and impact through the Capital Region.

A 2013 study from the Regional Alliance for a Creative Economy - ‘Leveraging Regional Assets for a Vibrant Creative Economy’ - shows that “the Capital Region has the second highest concentration of creative jobs amongst metropolitan regions of similar size.” The study also found that urban centers in the region are under a period of revitalization and are creating communities specifically appealing to young artists. This creative growth provides the impetus for The Arts Center to solidify its place in the region as a hub of artistic activity and a resource to artists and arts organizations in the community.

The Arts Center strives to embrace and engage with the significant diversity of environment and demographics found within our region. From dense, urban settings to rural farm land, from traditional folk arts to street-art, the SCR program serves and supports a wide variety of expression.

We strive to foster growth in the artistic community by increasing the quality and quantity of grant applications. We garner an average of 67 applications a year, an award an average of 32 a year, which has created a drive towards excellence in programming.

In 2021, during the pandemic, we maintained our application average, and successfully balanced funding between all three represented counties through our grant programs with a 6% differential between most- and least- funded regions.

COVID 19 has dramatically impacted the creative field. Moving forward, the Arts Center, in its role as an SCR, will implement a one-year plan that will enact new methodologies to reignite pre COVID engagement and enrich our artistic community. Paramount to our success is our commitment to understanding the needs of our community. Throughout the year we will consistently survey the needs of the community so that we can identify their greatest short- and long-term needs and deliver the most effective program we can.

The following are the goals set forth by The Arts Center to strengthen the Capital Region by increasing impact and exposure to the community through the Statewide Community Regrants program and other initiatives.
GOAL #1: Foster the appreciation of and engagement with artists and arts organizations in our region.

Tasks In Progress

- Advertise SCR events/programs through our social media platforms and online newsletter as well as promoting funded activities through a calendar of events posted on our website.
- Coordinate with SCR events/program organizers to obtain updates in three segments throughout the grant cycle. This consists of pre-project planning updates, project execution updates, and post project updates. This visual/written information is then promoted through the Arts Center online outlets to share with the local community.
- Lending public spaces to artists for exhibitions for free for public events
  - Faculty/Student Gallery for 1-month short-run exhibits
  - Utilization of Black Box Theater for productions during Troy Night Out 11 nights/year
  - Utilization of Dance Studio for performance rehearsal space
  - Work to find other organizations that offer their space to artists at little or no cost
- Public Art
  - Continuation of projects in Troy

FY 22-23 Goals

- Re-launch in-person community “State of the Arts” forums for community members, artists and arts administrators to provide feedback about the field within Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady Counties.

GOAL #2: Connect with emerging under-resourced, under-represented artists and arts agencies.

Tasks In Progress

- ACCR building board- and community- based committees to help us engage with the community, including under-resourced, under represented, and diverse communities. The committees consist of ACCR board members, partner organizations, and community members. In the past year, ACCR has formed the Community Access Committee and the Public Art Committee. SCR is guided by both committees to expand its reach, and:
  - Connect to diverse artists and art agencies who are near or under NYS poverty levels as determined by the 2020 Census.
  - Connect to diverse artists and arts agencies comprised of the BIPOC population.
  - Continue to learn more and listen better through the launch of the Fish Market Project: A Community Engagement Project.
    - ACCR has engaged two BIPOC artists to be “in residence” in a satellite space where artists, ACCR staff and committee members and the community can gather, to help us learn about our community’s needs, visions and hopes for their future, and form long-range plans.
    - Collaborative partners include The Boys and Girls Club, Troy Prep, and Team HERO.
● Connect with rural artists and agencies through interacting with ACCR’s far-reaching faculty, and the Sand Lake Center of the Arts and Arts, Letters, and Numbers.
● Give priority funding to new and emerging artists
  ○ Implemented through grant and panel guidelines
  ○ Implemented a 1-year grace period after 3 sequential cycles of approved applications to allow for new programs

**FY 22-23 Goals**

● Reignite programming to serve individuals with disabilities
● Reignite in-person the State of the Arts forums to focus on topics such as diversity within the arts.
  ○ Implemented by our Community Access Committee and in conjunction with our ongoing programs with a focus on inclusion.

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**GOAL #3: Ensure art and artists’ impact on our community**

**Tasks In Progress**

● Prioritizing funding to programs and artists that involve the community in the creative process
  ○ Highlighted in grant and panel guidelines
● Provide training/resources to teach artists how to achieve/measure impact, utilize project surveys, host talkbacks and use interactive approaches
  ○ Implemented in Artist Initiative Workshops and Critical Forum Program

**FY 22-23 Goals**

● Provide the Arts Center facility as an active physical resource for grantees to impact the community
  ○ Access to 13 studios, black box theater, gallery, and event space
● Create offsite artist collaborations with the Fish Market Project: A Community Engagement Project
● Develop and distribute region-wide impact statement of SRC programming and audience engagement.
GOAL #4: Encourage creative integration of art projects within area school systems

Tasks In Progress

- Foster a hybrid of online/in-person programs with local artists.
- Connect artists with local school districts to continue enrichment through the arts through community engagement events.
- Increase outreach and education of the program to school administration, teachers and PTA/booster organizations.
  - Communicate through programs lead by artists already in place on premises including Troy School District’s 21st Century, CEO Programs, Boys and Girls Club etc.
  - Contact school administration during the summer to educate them regarding artist collaborations through Arts in Education grants.
    - Utilize artists currently involved in SCR programs to speak first-hand on challenges and successes
    - Utilize Arts Center Teaching artists currently working in the school systems
  - Facilitate a meeting with Q&A for successful Arts Education artists to roundtable difficulties and roadblocks within the process
    - Dovetail with Art of Teaching program

FY 22-23 Goals

- Host new afterschool programming initiatives lead by artists with local school districts at the Fish Market Project: A Community Engagement Project.

GOAL #5: Strengthen Artist Stability

Tasks In Progress

- Increase marketing/presence of funding opportunities in cooperatives/work-live spaces and build mailing lists - be sure to keep in touch and up to date
- Find funding to continue free professional development programs for artists and organizations
  - Offer free training in area’s only comprehensive training program for artists.
  - Identify civic initiatives in which the arts and artists can participate, such as public art projects, community animation projects, etc as a way to enhance the artist’s income.
- Participate in area chambers of commerce, BID’s etc, to represent and advance the arts.

FY 22-23 Goals

- Develop SCR grantee mentorship program to function as resources for new and emerging artists.