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.

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 with over $250,000 in grant requests and are able to fund an average of 32 a year with previous grant amounts of $98,000.

In 2021-2022, 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. ACCR, in its role as an SCR site, has an opportunity to significantly increase the amount of grants it can distribute, and views this opportunity as its responsibility: to distribute funding to the artists and into the community. In recognition of this opportunity, ACCR will implement a one-year plan that will enact new methodologies to engage the field, reach deep into the community, double our application rate and provide meaningful technical and training support for our applicants and recipients. 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 ACCR to strengthen the Capital Region by increasing impact and exposure to the community through the Statewide Community Regrants program and other initiatives.

**GOALS**

- Foster the appreciation of and engagement with artists and arts organizations in our region
- Connect with emerging BIPOC artists and arts agencies.
- Ensure art and artists’ impact on our community
- Enhance grant programs to be more accessible to artists and organizations
- Strengthen Artist Stability

**GOAL #1:** Foster the appreciation of and engagement with artists and arts organizations in our region.
Tasks in Progress

- Coordinate with SCR events/program organizers to obtain updates throughout the grant cycle. The update criteria consist of pre-project planning, project execution, and post project reporting. This visual/written information is then promoted through the Arts Center online outlets to share with the local community.
- Deliver comprehensive SCR highlights in ACCR newsletter to enhance awareness.
- Provide ACCR facility 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
- Produce Public Art Projects that put the arts in the community, fostering awareness, appreciation and understanding.
  - Launch Troy Glo, a state of the art lighting festival.
  - Produce murals and other projects.

FY 23-24 Goals

- Increase applications from an average of 67 to 125.
- Expand resources for SCR applicants and grantees through increased tech and marketing support, training and internet based tools.
- Develop new performing arts training model for SCR grantees (priority) and area performing artists.
- Provide public art and performance based free equipment rentals via the Arts Center Arts Closet.
- Develop, conduct, and execute cultural mapping of Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady counties to establish a full understanding and baseline of the state of the arts in our territory.

Action Steps

- Launch dedicated advertisement campaign to increase awareness of SCR program and cultural mapping activities.
- Create “how to” guides for applying to SCR, targeting key growth groups like libraries, schools, etc.
● Launch a newly created SCR Ambassador Program consisting of 5 ambassadors per county, who will promote the SCR program, encourage applications, assist in mapping program, lead focus groups, and create connections among arts organizations within each county.
● Partner with Overit Media located in Albany NY to provide website support and marketing tools for grantees.
● Develop performing arts training model based on the success of our visual arts training programs.
● Expand access and marketing of Arts Closet and add performing arts equipment to Closet.

GOAL #2: Connect with emerging BIPOC artists and arts agencies.

Tasks in Progress

● 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.
● Utilize gallery and public art program to hire and nurture BIPOC artists, as seen through Uniting Line and gallery exhibition schedule.
● Continue to develop relationships with the BIPOC artist community through 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 Team HERO, Mission Accomplished Transition Services.

- Give priority funding to new and emerging BIPOC artists

**FY 23-24 Goals**

- Recruit SCR Ambassadors within Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady counties who are significant leaders within the BIPOC creative communities
- Re-tool, re-focus, and elevate another full year at the Fish Market Community Engagement Project. Programming will be focused on arts education for local under-resourced communities lead by two previous BIPOC artists in residence

**Action Steps**

- Expand ambassador program by also connecting with 1-2 arts organizations such as Electric City Barn or Hamilton Hill Arts Center in each county to serve as organization ambassadors to lead the Arts Center in serving new emerging BIPOC artists and collectives
- Hire, train and deploy ambassadors to reach into their respective communities.

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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
- 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
- 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 23-24 Goals

- Implement Cultural Mapping program to establish a baseline of the health and breadth of our creative community.
- Develop artist feedback sessions to more formally learn their needs and how we can address them.
- Provide extensive technical assistance to new and current grantees via the hire of a contract-based grant coordinator assistant
- Re-purpose underutilized studio classrooms for artists to use as studio space during project creation and development
- Develop a new, highly accessible rolling mini-grant program to artists and artist collectives.

Action Steps

- Deploy a 1-page Google Form to simplify the mini-grant application process for new grantees
- Develop visual, written, video, and audio “how-to” guides to increase accessibility to new and returning grantees
- Provide an online schedule of space availability for SCR grantees to access studio spaces throughout the grant cycle.
GOAL #4: Enhance grant programs to be more accessible to artists and organizations

Tasks in Progress

- Simplify application process down to a one-page application for mini-grants. Focus on project impact and funds required to complete
- Simplify Community Arts, Individual Artist, and Arts Education grant application sections.
- Eliminate word counts in applications.

FY 23-24 Goals

- Provide new grantees with SCR mentors to support new project ideas via the Ambassador Program
- Host more extensive in-person “how-to” workshops at ambassador organization locations
- Expand office hours for inquiries and technical assistance.
- Develop and create user friendly PDF, video, and audio “how-to” documents for grantees
- Remove Intent to Apply portion of application and simply application language
- Purchase and provide laptops for offsite training sessions

Action Steps

- Connect with SCR ambassadors with new grantees via in-person and digital platforms
- Provide workshop based “how-to” sessions focused on grant writing and budget creation
GOAL #5: Strengthen Artist Stability

Tasks in Progress

- 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 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 23-24 Goals
• The SCR Coordinator will hire and oversee a new contracted position for SCR support to conduct workshops, provide office hours, and focus on technical application assistance for current and new grantees
• Provide two-rounds of grants and enable artists and organizations to apply to both round with separate projects
• Provide mini-grants for artists and organizations who require smaller amount of funding or were unable to apply to our two previous rounds of grant opportunities

Action Steps

• Hire support staff to assist SCR Coordinator
• Partner with Overit Media located in Albany NY to provide website support and marketing tools for grantees. This program is modeled on NYCON’s legal support program which provides targeted support to NYSCA grantees. Here, ACCR will provide targeted web support or marketing tools to SCR grantees through negotiating a bulk contract with a marketing firm that would otherwise not be accessible to artists.
• Share results of artist feedback sessions with area organizations for potential collaborative response.
• Share results of mapping project for the benefit of the field.