

ARTS NORTH CAROLINA, INC.

A Short History

Throughout its history, ARTS North Carolina has been a strong membership network for individuals and arts organizations across North Carolina. Founded in 1974 as the North Carolina Association of Arts Councils, the organization was instrumental in developing and advocating for the Grassroots Arts Program, a nationally recognized program of decentralized, per capita funding for the arts through the North Carolina Arts Council and local arts councils.

Early on, the organization dedicated itself to providing services to its members. Fund-raising tool kits, board development workshops, solicitation license coverage, and an executive director retreat soon became key services. Soon, more workshops were offered, a quarterly newsletter and an awards program were produced. An annual trade show of performing artists, now ArtsMarket produced by the North Carolina Presenters Consortium and the North Carolina Arts Council, was begun at the 1984 annual conference.

ARTS North Carolina hired its first full-time executive director and established its first permanent office in 1986 after being staffed through an association management firm for three years. In the late 1970's staff was provided and funded through CETA, a federal program.

ARTS North Carolina has worked closely on a number of programs with the North Carolina Arts Council throughout its history. Additionally, partnerships have been formed and nurtured among statewide arts organizations and nonprofit service organizations. In 1991 ARTS North Carolina established, in partnership with the NCAC, the Peer Advisory Network (PAN), a nationally recognized program of trained peer professionals who were available to work one-on-one with arts organizations for short-term management/technical assistance.

The organization entered into a strategic planning process in the spring of 1992 whereby it created a new mission, focus areas, and changed its name from the North Carolina Association of Arts Councils to ARTS North Carolina in April 1993, setting a new course for leadership and service to the arts in our state. The strategic planning and resulting name change were driven by the need to address issues of racial inclusion within the organization governing body and its membership and to provide an organization that reflected the growing maturity and diversity of the arts industry in North Carolina.

In early 1996 ARTS North Carolina entered into discussions with Arts Advocates of North Carolina (a 501 c4 organization) to plan for consolidation of the two organizations. By November 1996 the consolidation was successfully completed and a new strategic plan and mission was adopted in the spring of 1997 that included advocacy, networking, and services as key components of the organization's work.

In 2000, ARTS North Carolina entered a challenging and potentially devastating period in its twenty-six year history. Projected deficits and fund raising short-falls dictated the elimination of two full time staff and a period of "holding" that was enabled through the generosity of the North Carolina Theatre Conference. In 2001, Georgann Eubanks was contracted to lead a strategic planning process to determine the organization's viability and what mission it should adopt to ensure a continuing service to the arts industry in North Carolina. Advocacy, Communications, and Member Services were identified as

three key areas of focus, and in April, May, and June of 2002, focus groups were held throughout the state to seek input and reflection about ARTS North Carolina's future.

ARTS North Carolina regained its footing and began an energized and renewed program of strategies as recommended by the 2001 Strategic Plan:

- Create and implement an advocacy plan that systematically connects people from the arts field with key legislative officials.
- Create and enhance awareness of the arts as key to economic development, community health and sustainability, bridging diverse populations, and the development of our youth
- Renew the vitality of ARTS North Carolina as an essential partner, information source, and skills-building resource to arts organizations of all sizes and disciplines across the state.

In 2007, the Board of Directors determined that ARTS North Carolina should fully become an independent voice for all the arts in the state, and to that end, determined not to seek state funding for programmatic support. ARTS North Carolina began focused efforts to create a "culture of philanthropy" that would secure the financial foundation for the organization in lieu of state funding, and the Charter Leadership Council of ARTS North Carolina was formed through gifts of \$1,000+ (see attached list). Organizations of every size and disciplines, from all regions of the state, joined in ever-increasing numbers to ensure a strong advocacy organization reflective of their needs and vision for the arts in North Carolina.

In the years 2002-2008, ARTS North Carolina found its new voice and purpose. Unprecedented increases in public funding (81%) reflected the industry's growing acceptance of advocacy as a responsibility and an opportunity to effect change in public value and support. Remarkable videos and materials became essential communication tools. ARTS Day became a successful legislative day drawing 200+ advocates to Raleigh. The 3% gross receipts tax on certain non-profit organizations was eliminated, and ARTS North Carolina took on the charge of arts education in the public schools, resulting in the 2008 legislative appointment of the Joint Sub-committee on Arts Education.

In 2007, the Board of Directors of ARTS North Carolina began to discuss the need to adopt an ambitious, transformative legislative agenda that would transform public support for the arts in North Carolina. The process continues in 2008 with intended launch of the new agenda at ARTS Day 2009.