

Springfield Cultural Partnership 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan



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BREAKTHROUGHS IN NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE

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Introduction

In spring of 2018, the staff and board of Springfield Cultural Partnership (SCP) began the strategic planning process. The process began with a half-day retreat. A diverse group of stakeholders gathered for the retreat and clarified the mission, vision and guiding values for the organization. Together they identified general strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the organization, and determined three key issue areas on which to focus during the planning process. The goal of this plan is to guide the Partnership's efforts during the three-year period from 2019 through 2021.

The retreat resulted in three subcommittees – Programs & Projects, Community Engagement, and Resource Development & Sustainability - to review the current status of each area, do research, collect information and data, and generate strategic goals.

The Strategic Planning Committee included members of the Board of Directors, representatives from SCP member organizations, and key community stakeholders. After a summer hiatus during which Springfield Cultural Partnership hired a new executive director, the process resumed in fall 2018, and completed in March 2019.

This strategic plan includes input from the following individuals and groups:

- The SCP director, board, and 50 members and community stakeholders who participated in retreats, strategy sessions, and subcommittee meetings.
- Data and information were gathered from nearly one hundred people through
 - Review of SCP Member feedback surveys
 - Interviews with member organization executive directors, civic leaders and Springfield city government leadership, local artists and creatives
 - Online research, 1:1 interviews, and document review pertaining to the other Massachusetts Cultural Districts
 - Reading articles, reports, and online sources pertaining to the key issues

A corresponding 3-year timeline for the Strategic Plan accompanies this document to help keep the board on course and monitor progress toward goals. It assigns general timelines for each tactic, and indicates primary responsibility for accomplishing tasks.

Often organizations create a brilliant Strategic Plan but fail to use it to guide board and staff activities. Rainmaker strongly recommends that the SCP staff, board and committees hold themselves accountable for all strategic goals in this plan. This includes using the goals and tactics to focus committee work, and making brief reports on the progress toward achieving strategic goals at each board meeting.

Springfield Cultural Partnership

Mission

Springfield Cultural Partnership's Mission is to foster civic engagement and arts education in the City of Springfield by creating and sustaining a vibrant cultural environment, authentically engaging institutions, artists, and the community.

Vision

The Springfield Cultural Partnership's Vision is to succeed as a significant force in the region's creative community by contributing to economic vitality and cultural enrichment.

The Cultural Partnership fosters a synergy and alignment of cultural resources that create an enriching, welcoming experience for Springfield visitors and residents alike.

Guiding Values

Collaboration
Community
Diversity
Inclusion
Innovation
Respect

Strategic Considerations

The Strategic Planning Committee identified important questions to address while developing a plan. Subcommittees met to explore those issues, using data and input from SCP members and community stakeholders. To further inform their discussions, the subcommittees recruited community volunteers with relevant expertise. Strategic considerations overlap across key issue areas, providing broad reflection on fundamental questions for the organization.

Mission – Clarifying the Mission & Vision

- What is our overarching approach to cultural vibrancy?
- Whom do we serve (cultural institutions and organizations, Springfield visitors, artists and creatives, Springfield residents)?
- How are our organizational values reflected in our programs and activities?
- How do we succinctly and powerfully convey our mission, goals and impact?

Programs and Projects

- Who is our audience and how do we best reach them?
- How can we be most relevant to the Springfield arts and culture?
- What kinds of programs will maximize collaboration and partnerships?
- How can our programs meet the diverse needs of the City, arts & culture institutions, artists & creative, out-of-town visitors, and Springfield residents?
- What partnerships and member relationships will most amplify overall impact?

Community Engagement – the Springfield Community, Higher Ed, Public Schools

- How do we define “community”?
- Who is our audience?
- What engagement activities have worked best?
- How do we best reach new community members and build audiences?
- How will partnerships advance our mission, programs, and impact?
- Who can be our best spokespeople (the City, artists, partners, institutional leaders)?
- What are the best ways to use social media to promote SCP and its programs?

Resource Development and Sustainability

- Is our current funding model effective? Do we have the appropriate balance between earned and contributed income?
- What are the opportunities for increasing revenue from various sources?

- What other funding might be available for current and proposed programs (foundation, corporate sponsors, individual philanthropists)?
- What is our greatest vulnerability in relation to funding?
- What is our value proposition?

Components of the Plan

Springfield Cultural Partnership's Strategic Plan has been organized into the following interrelated components:

- **Strategic Directions** represent the primary areas the SCP will be focusing on in the next three years. This plan identifies three Strategic Directions:
 - Programs and Projects
 - Community Engagement
 - Funding and Organizational Sustainability
- **Strategic Goals** are the action-oriented statements that follow each strategic Direction and that answer the question "Where are we going?" Strategic Goals serve to focus the organization's work to advance the Strategic Directions.
- **Tactics** are the numbered statements following each Strategic Goal. These actions provide a blueprint for how SCP will accomplish its plan in the next three years.

Together, the Strategic Directions and Goals form the core of the Strategic Plan. While the Tactics are likely to evolve and change over the next three years in response to new opportunities or information, and outcome assessment, the Strategic Plan (Directions and Goals) will remain essentially constant – serving as a "North Star," a fixed guide around which SCP will develop programs, initiatives, and activities through 2021.

A separate Action Timeline provides essential information to support progress toward completion of the strategic goals and tactics that follow. The Action Timeline is a tool for the SCP board of directors, staff, and committee members to use as a guide for accountability and success.

An Appendix, in a separate document, includes all the meeting notes from the half-day retreat, all subcommittee meetings, and the large group strategy session. This is a useful tool for discussing goals and tactics in greater detail, and for the group to avoid duplicating work or thinking that has already been done.

The Strategic Plan

March 2019 – June 2022

Program and Projects

Convene, Collaborate, Connect

Subcommittee Members: Scott Hanson – Chair; James Woolsey, Amy Glowacki, Molly Fogarty, Chris Russell, Evan Plotkin, Bob McCarroll, John Spear, Karen Finn, Eileen McCaffery, Beth Spong

SCP enjoys a good reputation and respect in the community for creating programs that strengthen, inspire, and engage the community. Its current challenges are very common to young nonprofits – namely, how to best implement and document effective programs resource development, and the need to put systems and infrastructure in place to support growth and ongoing success. Program highlights this far include:

Painted Pianos – pianos donated by the Community Music School of Springfield are placed in high traffic public spaces, painted and decorated by local artists, and then feature lively lunchtime concerts. This program brightens the streetscape and increases comfort and walkability downtown, providing exposure for local artists and musicians.

Art Stop encourages walking downtown by creating a fresh artistic environment. Installations by emerging artists grace the streets as these galleries delight and provide respite from the “hustle and bustle” of city life and work.

Utility Box Murals – launched in 2015, this project honors art as a vital part of economic development in downtown Springfield. Local artists beautify our streets by painting utility boxes in ways that create unique, interesting sights for pedestrians.

Fresh Paint Springfield - celebrate community and creativity in Springfield from June 2 - 8, 2019, when nationally recognized mural artists will transform downtown building walls into permanent works of art. All murals will be in easy walking distance from one another, creating a dynamic outdoor art gallery open to all.

This wide range of successful collaborations engages businesses, artists, musicians, cultural institutions, and community organizations.

The staff and board leadership will need to keep investing in partnership opportunities. They will also want to monitor program outcomes relative to participation, best use of the physical space and locations, and planning thoughtfully for emerging needs. Success will depend upon creativity, responsiveness, and consistently assuming a leadership role as a key convener, collaborator, and connector downtown.

GOAL 1: Leverage connectedness and effective partnerships with other arts and culture organizations on events in downtown Springfield.

1. Create, support, or sponsor thematic programming across the downtown area
 - a. Look for ways to engage both large and small arts and culture partners
 - b. As often as possible, co-locate events, programs, and projects to maximize exposure, audience reach, and community participation
2. Create and support collaboration among arts and culture institutions, organizations, and individuals
 - a. Actively connect artists and creatives with local institutions
 - b. Work with partners to orient Loop Bus, Uber, and Lyft drivers to the vitality and diversity of Springfield arts, culture, history, and restaurants, and periodically update them
3. Support the success of the Business Improvement District's (BID) citywide online arts and culture calendar and App.
 - a. Encourage all SCP member organizations to consistently utilize and submit event information to the BID calendar
 - b. Help ensure that Springfield has a unified digital footprint by coordinating information across organizations' websites, social media, and the BID Calendar/App

GOAL 2: Increase the availability of current, compelling information that promotes Springfield's arts and cultural events in high traffic public spaces

1. Ensure information is user-focused and user-friendly providing various formats for diverse audiences – older, younger, and tech-savvy visitors
2. Uplift – displays in elevators of downtown public spaces
3. Kiosks with current information in office buildings, parks, and public places

4. Fresh Paint Springfield
5. Leverage Massachusetts Cultural Council Cultural Compact
6. Create an event to recognize artists Springfield Cultural Council grantees

GOAL 3: Increase visibility and powerfully communicate the Cultural Partnership's value proposition for Springfield

1. Clarify and clearly articulate SCP's value proposition
2. Maximize our ability to convene diverse stakeholders and partners in ways that elevate arts and culture in Springfield
3. Consider re-branding – does our name clarify or confuse our mission and role in Springfield? Springfield Cultural Partnership vs. Springfield Central Cultural District (SCCD)
4. Expand our reach beyond the SCCD through partnerships to authentically engage more of Springfield and build audiences for all arts and culture
5. Engage with MGM more in Springfield arts and culture

Community Engagement

Build Audiences by Mastering Messaging & Authentic Outreach

Subcommittee Members: Laura Masulis and Martin Miller – Co-chairs; Ron Molina-Brantley, Maria Luisa Arroyo, Daisy Pereira-Tosado, Anthony Hayes, Andrew Cade, Tracy Woods, Charlie Knight, Karen Finn, Eileen McCaffery, Beth Spong

Strong cohesion and high levels of trust within a nonprofit and with its stakeholders contribute to greater organizational capacity and social impact. A cohesive organization – where the internal identity, external image, and mission are all aligned – makes better use of existing resources, attracts additional talent, stakeholders, and funding, and establishes ongoing credibility.

Because SCP is a relatively new organization and has undertaken several public projects in recent years, some members, City leaders, and community stakeholders are more aware of specific initiatives but tend to be less clear about the role of SCP as a

whole. This subcommittee identified the need to integrate SCP's identity (mission, goals, and messaging) across the wider community.

The most successful partnerships thrive and are sustained by the support of diverse community members, City and State agencies, local businesses and nonprofits with shared goals. Throughout the planning process, the Community Engagement subcommittee affirmed a strong commitment to inclusion, authentic engagement of diverse stakeholders, and removing barriers to accessing arts and culture in Springfield. The subcommittee defines diversity in terms of age, race, ethnicity, gender, class, family background, and sexual orientation.

How do we define Springfield Cultural Partnership's Community?

To inform their discussions about how to be effective in "community engagement," this subcommittee articulated a shared definition of "Community":

- A group with shared values
- All socioeconomic classes, races, ethnicities, ages, orientations, genders
- Producers of art and culture and the audiences they seek to serve and reach
- Meaningful, active engagement, not passive promotion of events or programs
- Community members not currently part of the arts and culture audience
- Springfield, but also the western Massachusetts region as a whole
- People engaged in the creative economy – makers, creative entrepreneurs, tech
- Not just those who are artistically inclined
- Higher Education as a source of volunteers, producers of art/culture, audiences
- Language matters – "Springfield Cultural Partnership" is more inclusive, dynamic, and welcoming than "Springfield Central Cultural District"

GOAL 1: Build and diversify the audiences for existing arts and culture events

1. Create a new SCP membership agreement that includes a commitment to collaboration and cross-promoting events
2. Support the expansion of SCP member/partner organizations' audiences by cross-promoting and utilizing the BID's shared calendar
3. Help bring SCP member arts and cultural programming to non-traditional venues in Springfield neighborhoods. Start with libraries, health centers, or churches, etc.
4. Elevate grassroots arts and culture by featuring local talent prominently in events or programs at our larger institutions

5. Build audiences by featuring artists, musicians, poets, performers, authors, and historians known by and/or who reflect the diversity of the Springfield community
6. Create a “Cultural Passport” that incentivizes attending multiple arts and culture events at various venues over a specific timeframe (holiday, weekend, school vacation week)
7. Create or support/sponsor one themed event series per year that organizations of all sizes participate in and that encourage collaboration and cross-pollination among agencies. (e.g., The Museums’ “Women at Work”)

GOAL 2: Strengthen diverse leadership in the arts and culture sector to include more women, people of color, immigrants, and different socioeconomic classes.

1. Proactively recruit diverse constituencies for SCP staff, board, programs, projects
2. Co-host capacity building training opportunities in Springfield provided by regional partners, such as Arts Extension, Small Business Development Center, Community Foundation, etc.
3. Find meaningful ways to support “Emerging Artists” program development with Art for the Soul, STCC, and other arts and culture organizations
4. Identify how to leverage paid community advisors and capacity building experts that the Community Foundation has engaged for their 3-year grant program, Valley Creates.
5. Elevate diverse members of the Springfield arts and culture community through multi-media marketing campaigns for events and programs, such as storytelling, artist profiles, ethnic food and culture events, etc.

Resource Development and Sustainability

Communicate Value and Forecast Finances

Subcommittee members: Kay Simpson – Chair, Molly Fogarty, Jim Puhala, Dan Montagna, Rus Peotter, Chris Russell, Eileen McCaffery, Karen Finn, Beth Spong

NOTE: This subcommittee started out in Spring 2018 with a focus on determining the correct organizational structure for SCP. Should it replace the executive director?

Should that position be full-time or part-time? What organization in the City should house SCP? Once these questions were answered in May the focus shifted to seeking the best ways to support funding and sustainability.

SCP is outgrowing its start-up fundraising model, which has been a mix of membership fees and program grants. The current case for support is a hybrid appeal to nonprofit organizations seeking to serve the public interest, the City of Springfield, Mass Cultural Council, and businesses seeking to grow the artistic and cultural vitality downtown.

The Resource Development and Sustainability Subcommittee recommends that SCP take two steps to strengthen its fund development planning. First, it should highlight shared goals and provide members with individual and collective benefits. Aligning a diversity of SCP members with private, non-profit, business, and public-sector institutions is key to a robust and sustainable future.

SCP's key stakeholders – member organizations, staff, board of directors, artists and creatives, and other community members - can exercise their shared responsibility for shaping a robust future for the organization. Together, they can decide how best to achieve SCP's goals, learn from past experience, build on successes, and improve effectiveness.

An agency is most effective when annual program and resource development plans evolve from the long-range strategic plan. Robust resource development depends on powerfully communicating SCP's mission and value proposition to the public. A 3-year plan consists of more than writing grants, asking members for ongoing or increased investment; it involves networking, building partnerships, demonstrating value and commitment to collaboration, as well as cultivating new funding prospects.

This strategic plan provides the framework and foundation for SCP's program and resource development planning. It guides the work of securing funding to support the program plan and leads toward sustainability for the Springfield Cultural Partnership.

GOAL 1: Establish Springfield Cultural Partnership as a key partner supporting Springfield as a safe and walkable city through creative place making.

1. Finalize a clear, compelling Value Proposition describing SCP's role in Springfield. An initial draft of the Value Proposition includes:
 - a. Convening power
 - b. Linking work of all organizations
 - c. Defining the City's cultural assets
 - d. Collaboration – ability to integrate, amplify, and expand existing resources

- e. Ability to enhance the perception of downtown safety and vibrancy
 - f. Bringing more people downtown leads to safety and brings cultural vitality
 - g. The role of robust, integrated arts & culture in making Springfield a better place to live and work
2. Enroll other Springfield arts and culture organizations in this shared goal, and in collaborating to shift the perception of downtown Springfield to one of safety, vibrancy, and accessibility for all.
 3. Leverage resources to have more impact through collaboration. Work with partners to track data – numbers of people attending events, participation in programs, artists, etc.
 4. Cross-promote programs and projects through strategic partnerships with local and regional media – Focus Springfield, MassLive, WGBY, NEPR, The Republican, El Pueblo Latino, African American Point of View, Business West
 5. Launch a collaborative media/social media campaign about arts and culture in downtown Springfield
 6. Create a SCP Arts and Culture Ambassadors Program

GOAL 2: Develop and implement an ambitious, attainable 3-year revenue plan

1. Develop a comprehensive 3-year business plan with revenue and expense projections
2. Continue to evolve Membership structure, fees, expectations, and agreements to support growth and sustainability
 - a. Increase value to members, and number of members
 - b. Increase member engagement and collaboration
3. Cultivate relationships with, and financial investment from, City leaders and State legislators to grow funding that supports SCP's mission, vision, and programs
4. Aggressively seek funding from foundation funders for programs and capacity building

Next Steps

Through the strategic planning process, SCP's Board has developed a shared understanding of the agency's current situation; a shared vision for SCP's future; and a shared commitment to SCP's Strategic goals.

Of course, developing the strategic plan is only the first step toward achieving impact year after year. This document is valuable to Springfield Cultural Partnership only in so far as SCP's members move forward to bring this plan from the page into the day-to-day life of the organization. The Following "next steps" will be key to "living the strategic plan" in the months and years to come.

Step 1: Confirm the Program Plan

The program plan is a schedule of events and responsibilities that details the actions To be taken in order to accomplish the objectives outlined in the strategic plan. This Work is critical – without it, the strategic plan is doomed to sit on a shelf and gather dust. Thus, completing the SCP "Program Plan Development Guide," is the next step in the organization's planning process after the strategic plan is finalized. This tool will be used by SCP members to outline specific tasks, people responsible for overseeing the completion of those tasks, and timeline for completing each task. The Guide is organized in relation to each objective set forth in the strategic plan. SCP's planning committee and other members will be engaged to add necessary Detail to ensure that everyone understands what is expected from whom and by when. This tool also provides space for outlining evaluation methods in order to track progress made towards achieving the strategic goals over time.

Step 2: Adopt a Decision Filter

There is never a shortage of good ideas. In order to ensure the best use of staff, board, and committee members' time and energy, it is essential to adopt an agreed upon decision filter for determining priorities and investment of resources. Staff morale and retention require awareness of their workload and available time. The decision filter should be used on a regular basis when discussing options. Filter criteria may include:

1. Is it doable?
2. Is it aligned with our mission and strategic goals?
3. Is it a good use of our resources – time, staff, money, and political capital?
4. How will we ensure diversity and inclusion? Who would our partners be?
5. Will this amplify SCP's impact in the community?
6. If we prioritize this, what are we going to let go of that may already be in the works?

Step 3: Mobilize the SCP Community

Share the plan within and outside of SCP. Use multiple formats, adapted to SCP's audience, including community meetings, one-on-one engagement, written materials, discussions of key priorities during SCP meetings, written briefs, and overviews on the website, social media, and Internet.

Implementing strategies is a lot of work – it's implementing change. Engaging more people will make it possible to spread the workload. Those people engaged in the implementation will feel more ownership for the plan and the changes that result.

Also be sure to set priorities. All of the goals and strategies in the plan cannot be implemented and accomplished at the same time. Spread activities out over the three-year life of the strategic plan. Review the strategies and determine the best places to start. This may be influenced by opportunities for quick successes, by a logical ordering of strategies that depend on actions completed in earlier strategies, or by an annual cycle of organizational activities.

Step 4: Ensure the Plan Has Impact

The board of directors' use of and respect for the plan will influence the plan's success. There is no reason for community members and staff to refer to established goals if board members do not. SCP's board should take steps to:

- Actively use the plan as a management tool.
- Actively use the plan for short-term guidance and decision-making.
- Formalize the usage of the plan into the day-to-day activities of the organization. This can be done by requiring that all suggestions for program changes or expansion directly address how they relate to the organization's strategic goals, or by reading the mission statement at the opening of all board and membership meetings to remind people of SCP's focus and purpose.
- Organize the work of the organization in the context of the plan. For example, include goals and objectives in individual and program evaluations or have program directors refer to the plan to provide guidance in decision-making.

Step 5: Monitor Progress Toward Goals

Regularly (quarterly) use part of a board meeting to systematically review progress towards achieving the strategic plan goals and the tactics outlined in the program plan. Ensure there are mechanisms in place (e.g., clear metrics and progress reports) to inform the board on progress and challenges being encountered. Revisit the plan annually, viewing the strategies as anchors, not constraints, to what can be achieved.