

Artist Trust Racial Equity Framework

Background

Artist Trust is a nonprofit organization that helps Washington State artists of all disciplines thrive through direct support, connections, and advocacy. We believe a fair and just society ensures artists of all background and identities are included in its cultural narratives.

Artist Trust Racial Equity Statement

Artist Trust commits to addressing historical and structural barriers in access to artist funding, resources, and leadership opportunities for people of color (POC). By working towards racial equity within our organization, funding programs, and services, we are working against systems of racism, engaging in partnership with people of color, and truly fulfilling our mission to support ALL artists in Washington State.

Ongoing Commitments

To address systems of racism within the arts, we will continue to:

- Put into practice the values of forward-thought, openness, responsiveness, and transparency;
- Build cultural competency and fluency at all levels of the organization;
- Increase accessibility to our organization for under-recognized artists and communities through funding, hiring, partnership, and support services;
- Collaborate and share resources with other arts organizations committed to racial equity;
- Hold staff, board, and the organization as a whole accountable in our efforts towards racial equity;
- Build racial equity assessments of programs and operations into annual planning, budgeting, and review cycles;
- Participate in national conversations on racial equity among grantmaking organizations both formally (at conferences, summits, etc.) and informally;
- Experiment with programming models to increase accessibility;
- Leverage our visibility as statewide funder of individual artists to advocate on behalf of artists, particularly around issues that disproportionately impact artists of color;
- Cultivate diversity in our staff, board, contractors, interns, and donor base in order to balance decision-making power among people of all backgrounds.

2018 Goals

- Release an annual equity report as part of our annual report in an effort to be more transparent about our year-over-year progress towards racial equity, and to hold ourselves accountable to communities we serve;
- Continue to establish partnerships with POC-serving organizations for events;
- Center the stories of POC artists and donors in communications;
- Cultivate POC donors, members, and supporters;
- Prioritize communities of color when hiring staff, contractors, and vendors;

- Report demographic numbers on each grant award program;
- Increase tracking of demographic data of donors and program participants, and report back to show year over year progress;
- Make room for discussion about equity at quarterly board meetings and weekly staff meetings;
- Be intentional about recruiting POC on the board of directors and in leadership positions within the organization;
- Orient staff, board, interns, and volunteers with the racial equity framework and the organizational values as part of the onboarding process, and ensure all incoming staff and board participate in equity training.

2017 Efforts

- Developed a [racial equity FAQ](#) that explains how our organization-wide emphasis on equity will effect programming and decision-making;
- Held an equity training with [Moral Choice](#) for all Artist Trust board and staff;
- Created a section on our website with [equity resources and information](#);
- Provided 18 artists with grants of \$3,000 each through [Artists Up](#), a collaboration with [4Culture](#) and the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#);
- Presented two free workshops designed specifically for artists of color, and led by Leilani Lewis and [Rodrigo Valenzuela](#);
- Partnered with [Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas](#), [Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute](#), [Longhouse Education and Cultural Center](#) at Evergreen State College, and [Seattle People of Color Salon](#) to present free programs for artists in their communities;
- Made public the demographics of the artists we've funded over the last five years through our grantmaking programs;
- Increased our board from 26% POC in 2016 to 48% in 2017;
- Awarded 45% of our grants to artists of color, and five of our seven largest awards went to artists of color;
- Received 34% of applications from artists of color across all grantmaking programs;
- Continued to review our grantmaking guidelines, applications, and selection process through a lens of equity;
- Instituted racial equity conversations and evaluations at staff meetings and our annual staff retreat;
- Convened a focus group of Spokane-based Native artists, ambassadors, and stakeholders to inform programming and engagement strategies to Native artists and tribal communities in Eastern Washington;
- Organized "[Racial Equity in Grantmaking for Individual Artists](#)," a panel presented in partnership with [Americans for the Arts](#), [LA County Arts Commission](#), and [Sustainable Arts Foundation](#) at the [2017 Grantmakers in the Arts conference](#);
- Partnered with [Shunpike](#) to present the [Artists of Color Expo & Symposium \(ACES\)](#) held in Seattle.

2016 Efforts

- Established racial equity as a core tenet of the Artist Trust Board of Directors' Strategic Vision Committee;
- Released a [2016-2019 Strategic Plan and Equity Framework](#) publicly establishing our commitment to equity and communicating organizational strategies and action items;
- Continued our work in [Artists Up](#), an experimental grant program for artists of color presented in collaboration with [4Culture](#) and the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#);
- Participated in the [Racial Equity Cohort](#) and equity trainings through the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#);
- Created a tracking system for racial demographics of our board members;
- Awarded 53% of our grants to artists of color, and six of our seven largest awards went to artists of color;
- Received 24% of applications from artists of color across all grantmaking programs;
- Launched an [Annual Artist Survey](#) to hear from artists around the state about what they need most;
- Participated in ["Three Funding Agencies Walk Into a Bar: Partnership for Equity,"](#) a panel on [Artists Up](#), presented with [4Culture](#) and the [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#), at the [2016 Grantmakers in the Arts conference](#);
- Presented ["Weaving Native American Plateau Art into the Fabric of Spokane,"](#) a town hall event organized in partnership with Gonzaga University's [Department of Fine Art, Native American Studies Program](#), and [Center for Public Humanities](#).

2015 Efforts

- Participated in [Turning Commitment into Action](#) for Arts & Cultural Groups 2015, a learning cohort facilitated by the [Seattle Office for Civil Rights](#) and [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#). This training series provided guidance to 30 organizations on reviewing programs and processes through a lens of racial equity;
- Implemented [Final Report](#) findings from [Artists Up](#), a coalition between Artist Trust, [Seattle Office of Arts & Culture](#), and [4Culture](#), which held focus-group discussions with artists of color to gather recommendations on how to make funding more accessible. We are actively integrating these findings into our grant programs;
- Updated all grant- and program-related messaging with an emphasis on using accessible and inclusive language;
- Launched Office Hours, a free grantwriting support program for artists and began offering pre-application and post-panel feedback on grants, removing Artist Trust membership as a barrier to accessing feedback on grant applications;
- Balanced grant selection panels to more fully include people of color, and empowered their voices with a stronger institutional stance on equity throughout grant guidelines and selection processes;
- Prioritized hiring people of color as instructors and speakers in our artist support and business practices programs;
- Integrated racial equity questions in the hiring process;
- Established scholarship support for artists of color to increase financial accessibility to programs.



Since our commitment to racial equity is constantly evolving, our racial equity framework is a living document. We will review and evaluate it annually as we work towards these goals and establish new ones as we learn and grow in our understanding. Read our [racial equity FAQ](#) to learn more about our work towards equity.

If you have feedback or would like to discuss our racial equity work, please contact us at 206.467.8734.