

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 a 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.

Since our commitment to racial equity is actively evolving, our racial equity framework is a living document. We continually review and evaluate our progress toward racial equity, and establish new goals annually as we learn and grow in our understanding. Read our [racial equity FAQ](#) to learn more about our work toward advancing racial equity and social justice.

In 2019, Artist Trust's racial equity goals are to:

1. **Be an Active Ally in Racial Equity**
2. **Engage in Dialogue about Racial Equity**
3. **Build Artist Trust's Racial Equity Competency**

To be an active ally in racial equity we will:

- Deepen relationships and invest in partner organizations run by and/or for POC, especially POC organizations outside of King County;

- Engage POC artists who are leaders and experts in the field through workshops, panels, events, and other programs;
- Explore the expansion of our Washington State grantmaking policies to acknowledge native ancestral boundaries.

To engage in dialogue about racial equity we will:

- Participate in the national conversation on racial equity;
- Create learning relationships with other organizations working in racial equity, especially organizations outside of the arts sector, to further our racial equity learning and sharing;
- Amplify more POC artists, donor, and volunteer stories;
- Include racial equity studies, stories, and readings regularly in Artist Trust's internal and external communications.

To build Artist Trust's racial equity competency we will:

- Explore and adopt best practices for attracting and retaining POC talent in Artist Trust's Board and staff team; create pipelines for POC leadership;
- Create space for learning and conversation with staff and board together;
- Research and report best practices for racial equity in fundraising to cultivate more donor support from the POC community:
 - Cultivate and acknowledge all forms and every level of giving;
 - Remove barriers for fundraising events and special opportunities;
 - Learn best practices for donor demographic data collection to understand the racial make-up of our donor pool;
- Examine the effect of Artist Trust's racial equity efforts to date and create better methodology and reporting metrics for year-over-year tracking toward racial equity efforts;
- Articulate long-range goals for Artist Trust's racial equity work and create a long-term (three-to-five-year) strategy for this work;
- Establish language that integrates racial equity and its essential place within Artist Trust into how we talk about who we are and what we do, and develop language to honor native lands at Artist Trust events.

Throughout all of our racial equity efforts in 2019, we will work to:

- *Examine our own internal biases;*
- *Create common racial equity vocabulary;*
- *Acknowledge varying levels of knowledge/comfort about racial equity;*
- *Make time and space for deeper conversations about racial equity;*
- *Share our own personal stories;*
- *Learn how to navigate challenging conversations about race.*

Actions Focused On in the Past

2018 Efforts

- Released 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;
- Partnered with [Northwest African American Museum](#), [Rainier Arts Center](#), [The Station Coffee Shop](#), [Seattle Public Library](#) branches, and [Artspace](#) developments in POC neighborhoods;
- Centered the stories of POC artists and donors on our website, social media, blog, and auction and fundraising communications;

- Served 830+ artists of color through our professional development programs, not including grants;
- Provided scholarships to five artists through Latino/a/x and Filipino/a/x scholarship fund;
- Received 36% of applications from artists of color across all grantmaking programs and awarded 64% of our grants to artists of color;
- Contracted with 20 artists and arts professionals of color to serve as selection panelists in our grantmaking programs;
- Hired POC-owned businesses to cater all 13 of our grant panels;
- Contracted with POC-identifying freelancers for communications and design work;
- Developed a tracking system for demographic data of professional development program participants to understand who we serve and track year over year progress;
- Met with learning partners and participated in racial equity round tables to discuss best practices for collecting donor demographic data;
- Built the foundation for a tiered donor cultivation plan that includes donors at all giving levels;
- Assessed and shifted our event strategies to an invitation model that brings people together based on common and/or community interests instead of solely by gift size;
- Contributed to the regional and national conversation on racial equity through presentations at the [2018 Grantmakers in the Arts Conference](#) (“[Open, Closed, or All of the Above: Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion in Artist Award Selection Process.](#)” presented in partnership with [3Arts](#), [City of Oakland](#), and [Sustainable Arts Foundation](#)), [Cultural Congress](#) (featuring artists [Michelle de la Vega](#), [Tessa Hulls](#), [James Miles](#), and [Dani Tirrell](#)), and the [2018 National Arts Marketing Project Conference](#) (“[Crossing the Intersection of Race, Equity, and Advocacy in the Arts](#)” panel);
- Incorporated racial equity discussions into bi-monthly staff meetings and annual staff retreat;
- Prioritized race in Board recruitment and continued to track Board demographics. In 2018, 43% of our Board members self-identified as POC;
- Created curriculum for a racial equity training as part of the on-boarding orientation for new staff and interns.

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.

We Want To Hear From You

If you have feedback or would like to discuss our racial equity work, please contact us at (206) 467-8734.