



AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FY 2021-2025

LAST UPDATED AUGUST 1, 2022

We view this as a living document to be regularly reviewed and updated as needed. Changes will not impact the mission, vision, values, and overall framework.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five-year strategic framework brings us to the organization's 50th anniversary in 2025. The largest shift outlined in this document is from that of a membership organization, focused primarily on the artists we serve, to being a leading advocate on their behalf. Our direct support of today's music creators will continue with an expanded "Artist Services" department and broader definition of "American" and "composer" as we seek to amplify those who have been historically excluded from participation. ACF's refreshed mission statement reflects this change:

ACF supports and advocates for individuals and groups creating music today by demonstrating the vitality and relevance of their art.

Our organization's foundational belief that music is a pathway for us to connect as humans informs our updated vision:

ACF envisions a world where living music creators are celebrated as essential to human culture. We are leading catalysts in an ecosystem that invites generations of composers, artists, advocates, and audiences to pursue this vision with us.

To accomplish this, four strategic goals are outlined in the plan:

- 1 Artist Support:**
Music creators have an equitable space to find resources, connections, and community that help them to pursue their creative work.
- 2 Artist Advocacy:**
Centering and amplifying the people creating music today encourage discovery and investment in them and their art.
- 3 Financial Viability:**
Strong and diverse artist-centric funding to ACF provides financial health and demonstrates industry credibility.
- 4 Internal Capacity:**
ACF models internal transformation to achieve organizational and equity goals.

Drawing from our core values of Leadership, Anti-Racism, Courage, Support, and Curiosity, our programs and actions reinforce the organization's commitment to racial equity (full statement inside plan). Through storytelling, publications, recordings, hosted gatherings, and industry leadership, we activate equitable opportunities for artists. As we transition away from a membership model and cultivate a broader ecosystem, we strive to create value in and for today's artists, demonstrate our impact, build our national presence and advocacy work, and attract investments from artists, partnering organizations, industry leaders, and supporters.

We hope you'll join us on this journey.



January 10, 2021

FROM THE LEADERSHIP

In January 2019, ACF welcomed Vanessa Rose as its new President & CEO. She follows the celebrated tenure of John Nuechterlein and, before him, the transformational leadership of Linda Hoeschler, under whom the Minnesota Composers Forum became a national organization. ACF’s past leaders and the legacy of its co-founders, composers Stephen Paulus and Libby Larsen, provided the new CEO with a highly reputable organization with both strong history and financial foundation plus an opportunity to re-envision who or what ACF could be in its next chapter.

Starting from a position of inquiry, ACF was fortunate to ask the question of what change looks like without the strain of financial need or urgency. Rather, we were able to undergo a comprehensive scan of our environment, analysis of our programs, and re-envisioning for our future before the pandemic and financial impact of 2020 took hold. This test of our ability to lead, be flexible to the needs of our community, and manage the uncertainty of the times has given us further confidence that this direction is the right one for this time in the world, for this time at our organization.

Our shift is reflected in our approach from a membership organization focused primarily on the artists we support, to increasing our advocacy efforts on their behalf, as illustrated below. Our plan includes discontinuing the membership program and opening up our resources for everyone.

Our human culture benefits when diverse music creators can thrive in an ecosystem that sees them as integral.





ACF's new direction is personally meaningful to us. For Nirmala, ACF has provided crucial support for her collaborative projects, which bring South Indian classical music into dialogue with jazz and other musical traditions. For Stephen, ACF's social commitment resonates with his own efforts to foster social awareness through participatory, experimental vocal compositions. Vanessa's experience in transformative organizational change draws from her musical background and cultural curiosity. Together, we work with the dynamic board, dedicated staff, diverse artists, and our broad ecosystem to achieve the ambitious goals of our strategic plan. If you are reading this, you are part of this great ecosystem.

HOW WE DETERMINED OUR NEW DIRECTION

In the summer of 2019, Board member Stephen Usery worked with board members, staff, and other leaders to compile a detailed environmental scan of organizations working with and/or supporting living composers (broadly defined) based in the U.S. We looked for similar missions and informative trends within the following categories: performers, presenters, audiences, funders, music conservatories/academic institutions, educators, distribution channels, and music service providers.

Pulling from this scan, we identified themes, duplicative work, and gaps in the ecosystem. Applying these findings to our existing programs (nearly 40!), we analyzed each one through a matrix of high/low impact, high/low resource requirements, and funding implications. These revealed legacy programs that no longer filled the need evident when they were created as well as ongoing partnerships that had potential to activate deeper impact for both parties. We also identified short-term and long-term opportunities based on funding opportunities and the emerging new direction for the organization.

In addition, starting in March 2019, the staff and board worked with consultant Justin Laing on how our historically majority white music organization could center racial equity internally, throughout our programs, and as an external advocate in our field. We hosted our pilot Racial Equity and Inclusion Forum in September 2019 at Twin Cities PBS, with funding support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to invite our colleagues to join us in this transformative work. With the platform ACF provides across music genres or approaches, presenting organizations, performing groups, media, schools, and community centers, we discovered an interest and need for us to be a convener for this music creator-centered engagement. Alongside the public forum, we hosted a group of diverse artists and leaders to interrogate our own internal statement and commitment to racial equity. These group and one-on-one conversations continued throughout 2019-20, as did the refining of our racial equity commitment and how it informed our strategic direction.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Our Ecosystem

- Music is being created, experienced, and listened to through rapidly growing and changing channels. Many large institutions and traditional structures supporting living artists are struggling to evolve with these consumer changes, as well as funding shifts, and taking fewer risks. The pandemic has shown how digital media can be a powerful tool for connection and audience development. How traditional live music-focused organizations will reimagine their content after the pandemic remains unknown at this time.
- Programming at these larger spaces are often determined by the perception of a conservative donor audience, and artistic leaders in this environment believe they can better establish themselves through classic repertoire. In order to realize the value of cultivating curious listeners and programming repertoire relevant to the community (and mission), these groups need more connections to diverse composers, examples of effective, equitable collaboration, and assurance of donor interest.
- Systemic racism and sexism are not well understood in the field. We saw many Black Lives Matter statements



and 19th Amendment celebrations over 2020. There is great public pressure on many visible institutions to fulfill their commitments with action. How comprehensively will organizations invest in this systemic change? What does this mean for BIPOC artists and white women, trans, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming composers/artists?

- While technology enables the “long tail” with new opportunities to experience music as well as a community for like-minded folks, the need for more human connection is ever greater (and overtly desired). This was evident even before the pandemic.

The Artist Experience

- Artists are responding to the industry and political environment in various ways, both through their artmaking and as entrepreneurs, community leaders, and social media influencers. Opportunities are often self-generated and on a shoestring budget. Commissions are usually one-time events. Rather than adding to this cycle, ACF could be working to generate more meaningful opportunities in the ecosystem.
- Artists are creating Twitter communities, artist collectives, and online platforms. Whereas there are national and international trade, professional, or union associations for our colleagues (music performers, ensembles, conductors/directors, educators, and presenters), a central space and advocate for U.S.-based music creators is not present. There is a need for greater leadership and connection on the national level - across industry silos and in partnership with the artists’ grassroots movements. ACF is in the best position to do this.

WHAT WE DIDN'T EXPECT

Shortly after our board meeting in Detroit, Michigan, the day after the Sphinx conference ended, the pandemic threw a wrench in our energized board and staff’s strategic work. We presented a pay-what-you-can membership model, reached out to hundreds of artists to check in and ask what they needed, hosted webinars and meet-ups, and sought to test our strategies and demonstrate our ability to pivot in order to fulfill our commitment to support and advocate for composers/artists in such uncertain times.

Then George Floyd was murdered in our own community. All the work we had done to be a racially equitable organization was called to task. We had to step up, to declare that Black Lives Matter and engage in our Twin Cities neighborhoods. Five days after George Floyd’s death we had a board meeting to approve our organization’s new direction. Not only was our shift to advocacy and expanded support a need increasingly evident in the pandemic, but also, and most importantly, anti-racism had to be a core value throughout the organization. We came together as sirens and helicopters whirred around our homes and pronounced that music was our civic engagement, social impact, and mechanism for the transformation our fellow citizens needed.

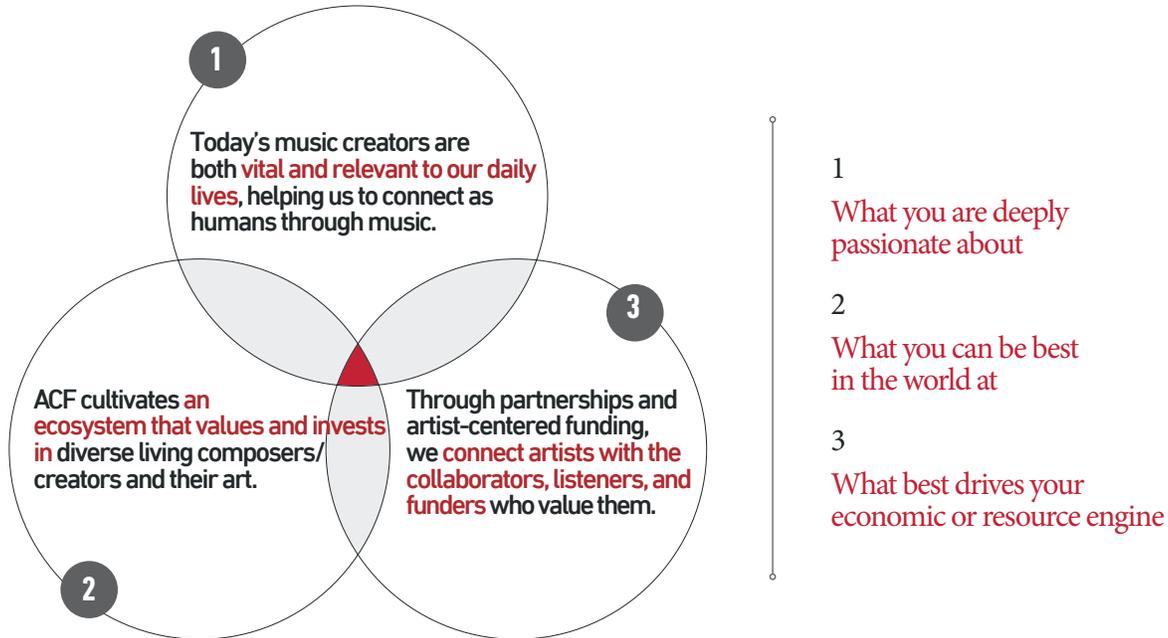
FIVE YEARS AHEAD

We are encouraged by the collective action our ecosystem has undertaken to invoke transformative change and include historically underrepresented people in the creation, performance, and experience of music. Our commitment as advocates is to reinforce how essential today’s music creators are to human culture. For artists, we will continue to provide important funding, mentorship, resources, and a go-to space to belong to (see page 10) as they pursue their artistic journey. We will make connections, provide platforms for storytelling, and share music through recordings and other media (see page 11) to directly connect artists with their collaborators and audiences. As a convenor, we will lead dialogue and share information on equitable best practices (such as payments and contracts, programming and relationships, see page 12), and advocate for the vitality and relevancy of music being created today (see page 12).



OUR PLAN'S DESIGN

Since many of us are passionate readers of books and research by Jim Collins, we followed his Hedgehog Concept and Flywheel method to capture our priorities and drive our process. As described in his book, *Good to Great*, the successful companies were able to drive their business decisions by applying and executing the overlap of three concentric areas identifying:



The driver for this Hedgehog Concept is Collins' "Flywheel Effect." Our plans will be possible if we can successfully create value, demonstrate results, build our reputation, and attract support for our work. To do this, it is essential that ACF invest in its role as connector and convenor - not only for the artists and our ecosystem but also to inform our own work. Advocating effectively will require us to be clear, consistent, and informed in our case statements; investment in our own capacity and infrastructure is needed to ensure this happens. Attracting investments from funders will require mature strategies and alignment of our Board, staff, and artist partners in order to foster sustainable growth for years to come. Most importantly, we realize that the very artists we are committed to supporting and advocating for must be involved in our process - the relevancy of our work will drive our progress.

Thank you to the Strategic Planning Committee for their leadership of this process: Stephen Userly and Nirmala Rajasekar (Co-Chairs), Anne LeBaron (Past Board Chair), Kathrine Handford, Sarah Lutman, Garrett McQueen, Fred Moore, Vanessa Rose (CEO), Stanford Thompson, and Mateusz Troicki. We are grateful for the collective curiosity, time, and dedication from the entire Board and staff over the past two years and the numerous artists, supporters, and colleagues who offered their time and contributions to this process.

We invite you to join us in shaping a world where living music creators are celebrated as essential to human culture.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Rose
President & CEO

Stephen Miles
Board Co-Chair

Nirmala Rajasekar
Board Co-Chair



MISSION

ACF supports and advocates for individuals and groups creating music today by demonstrating the vitality and relevance of their art.

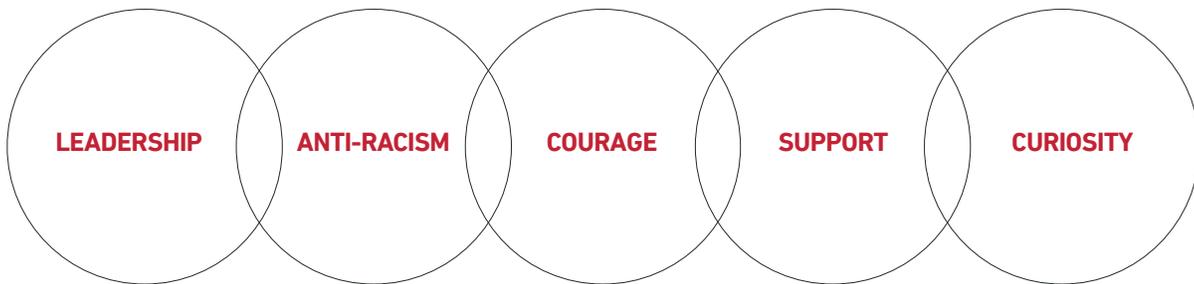
We connect artists with collaborators, organizations, audiences, and resources. Through storytelling, publications, recordings, hosted gatherings, and industry leadership, **we activate equitable opportunities** for artists. **We provide direct funding and mentorship** to a broad and diverse field of music creators, highlighting those who have been historically excluded from participation.



VISION

ACF envisions a world where living music creators are celebrated as essential to human culture. We are leading catalysts in an ecosystem that invites generations of composers, artists, advocates, and audiences to pursue this vision with us.

VALUES





COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

(Last Updated January 15, 2021)

Introduction

ACF envisions a world where living music creators are celebrated as essential to human culture. To do this, we support and advocate for individual artists/groups who are creating music today that demonstrates the vitality and relevance of their art. We connect artists with collaborators, organizations, audiences, and resources both fiscal and otherwise. Through storytelling, publications, recordings, hosted gatherings, and industry leadership, we activate equitable opportunities for artists, highlighting those who have been historically excluded.

We identify as a go-to space for artists who create music throughout the U.S. and its territories. However, we realize we have failed to include and recognize many artists as being a part of our community because of our own biases, exclusive practices, and historic focus on Western European classical* music created by artists who are majority white. This has made us less effective in being that go-to space. It means that we have missed out on building relationships with many music creators, too.

Our Commitment

ACF's commitment to being a racially equitable organization guides us and our work. We are committed to centering the BIPOC* narrative and, as such, have outlined goals for achieving a majority BIPOC – or at least 60% - representation throughout the organization by our 50th anniversary in 2025. These goals are integrated into our current Five-Year Strategic Framework and are reflective of the demographic shift, and trajectory, in our country.

We seek to include within the racial equity frame additional inequities such as diverse gender identities, musical approaches and perspectives, ages, (dis)abilities, cultures, religions, backgrounds, sexual orientations, and broad definitions of being “American.” Our work succeeds with trust and participation from the artists we support and connection to the ecosystem that presents, performs, and hears their music. When space is created for more people to belong, it benefits not only the artists and our networks, but also the world.

Organizational History

The Minnesota Composers Forum was founded in 1973 to provide a platform and an audience for the creation and performance of new music composed by Minnesota composers. In co-founder Libby Larsen's words: “the artists who put their stamp on the vision of MCF believed passionately that composers had something deeply truthful, authentic, and important to contribute to our culture through the music they wrote and the performance of that music.” In the decades since then, our organization has grown to serve composers around the country – changing our name to the American Composers Forum (ACF) and expanding opportunities beyond our early origins in Western European classical traditions. Our language has sought to be expansive in an effort to make equal opportunities available to a variety of artists who identify as composers.

We see an urgent need for more equitable opportunities in the ecosystem as we look at the overrepresentation

*See GLOSSARY of terms in the Addendum.



of Whiteness*. That means recognizing and reducing the barriers that have historically excluded people of color from participation and intentionally including those individuals in our programs and decisions.

Our systems have clearly benefited certain groups over others, and we haven't fulfilled our promise to support the diverse individuals who identify as American composers. How can ACF cultivate an environment that will foster greater equity for all creators? By pursuing this question, and determining clear next steps for the organization, we intend to cultivate new directions while strengthening our vision and embracing ways to welcome, support, and represent a more comprehensive community of artists.

To engage in this work, we acknowledge that we ourselves are a historically white-centric organization. While we have led programs that support artists writing in a variety of styles and genres from the First Nations Composers Initiative to the nationwide Continental Harmony, our framework continues to be informed by Western European classical traditions, which is still the framework for the majority of artists on the ACF Board and staff.

Recognizing the strategies that ACF sees as most impactful, we will continually amplify BIPOC artists and leaders, commit to decentering whiteness, and give power to BIPOC individuals in every level of decision making in the organization. We view our musical language as a lexicon that is inclusive of many cultures and perspectives and proves that "excellence" is subjective.

Today, we intentionally learn and practice anti-racism, and we support an ecosystem that is equitable as well as inclusive. We support generations of artists through connection, community, and resources, and we invite music lovers of all backgrounds and interests to be curious listeners. We can each discover new perspectives, be courageous, and connect as humans through our shared love of music.

We recognize the identity of each person can only be defined by them. Their identity as a "composer," a Black artist, or as a non-binary sound creator, for example, is a deeply personal experience.

The circle that we draw no longer keeps people out, but rather brings more people in.



FY 2021-2025 STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1 Artist Support:**
Music creators have an equitable space to find resources, connections, and community that help them to pursue their creative work.
- 2 Artist Advocacy:**
Centering and amplifying the people creating music today encourage discovery and investment in them and their art.
- 3 Financial Viability:**
Strong and diverse artist-centric funding to ACF provides financial health and demonstrates industry credibility.
- 4 Internal Capacity:**
ACF models internal transformation to achieve organizational and equity goals.

1. Artist Support: Music creators have an equitable space to find resources, connections, and community that help them to pursue their creative work.

a. Goal: Music creators have access to services and resources that enable them to advance their artistic projects

Actions:

- Transition from a membership model to a space available for all artists without a pay requirement (FY21)
- Create and curate “Artist Services” department to provide current and vital resources and support for free: “help desk,” digital media guidance, mentor connections, global contacts, webinars, commission/award opportunities, examples of equitable collaboration
- Provide/promote fiscal sponsorship for mission-aligned artist projects
- Develop a national ‘affiliate network’ of venues, studios, designers, engineers, producers, presenters, and other partners committed to racial equity and supporting underrepresented artists

Outcomes:

Increased number of artists are engaging in ACF services (10-20% annually)

Artists report the topics are timely and relevant to them (90% of survey responses)

Artists report resources being useful, referring to others (85%)

Artists report that an interaction with ACF staff/resources helped their project to move forward (75%)

b. Goal: Artists receive recording and digital content production, distribution, and promotion support

Actions:

- Broaden innova to a Recordings & Digital Content department
- Pilot a new recording label model that offers more opportunities for underrepresented artists to work with the innova recordings team, leverage digital assets, and share their music through more cost-effective options; Artists are selected by a diverse and BIPOC majority group of curators to avoid gate-keeping tendencies (FY21 Pilot; FY22 National Call)
- Promote option for all artists to approach recordings team with questions through help desk



Outcomes:

- Lead artists receive their first recording on a third-party label (at least 50% of each cohort by 2025)*
- Options for digital releases encourage more artists to apply (50% projects for single track etc. by 2025)*
- Applicants are 60% BIPOC-identifying by 2025*
- Artists on label reflect a diversity of musical approaches and demographics (majority BIPOC/ underrepresented genders)*
- Artists report receiving new opportunities because of recording promotion (75% from catalogue survey)*

c. Goal: Through gatherings and anti-racist practices, ACF cultivates an inclusive community for diverse artists

Actions:

- Host or co-host events and other activities to encourage connections between composers/artists/ collaborators (New Music Gathering; Sphinx Conference; Virtual Town Halls)
- Survey artists to ensure language, experiences, and follow-through encourage a sense of belonging for racially diverse community; capture self-identified attributes + interests
- Prioritize relationship building with historically-marginalized communities
- Provide accessibility for hearing/seeing/neurological/physically impaired and offer translation support

Outcomes:

- Participants reflect a racially diverse community (60% BIPOC majority by 2025)*
- Participants agree they feel a sense of "belonging" when engaging with ACF activities (70%)*
- Increased number of participants utilizing ASL support, translations, etc. (10% increase by 2025)*

d. Goal: Funding and partnerships enable artists to develop and present their music

Actions:

- Provide meaningful financial and organizational support to music creators through ACF Create and McKnight Composer Fellowships; seek to expand support for other geographic locations
- Refresh/review our grantmaking process based on feedback and external review to ensure equitable opportunities including: recruitment, application criteria and language, timeline, and selection of panel curators to ensure BIPOC majority
- Catalyze new partnerships, new organizational growth, and/or new investments in composers (ACF I connect) with partners demonstrating shared commitment to racial equity
- Seek presenter partnerships as an additional platform for awardees

Outcomes:

- All funding programs attract 60% BIPOC-identifying applicants by 2025*
- Funding programs attract new applicants (10% increase each year)*
- Awardees report ACF support was pivotal to creating more opportunities (commission, concert, partner)*
- Award funds an opportunity otherwise unattainable at the time (as reported by artist)*

2. Artist Advocacy: Centering and amplifying the people creating music today encourage discovery and investment in them and their art.

a. Goal: Provide stories about and by diverse artists to compel interest in them and their art

Actions:

- Acquire and fund I CARE IF YOU LISTEN media hub with paid staff and contributors
- Present thematic essay series that invite readers to engage in topical issues through the lens of today's artists (UNEVEN MEASURES and CASTING LIGHT)
- Host interactive media features (panels, listening groups) to humanize and connect with BIPOC creators



- Share interviews, essays, and other stories about artists and their impact on human culture, providing examples of fair ways to partner/engage with BIPOC artists (5 Questions, Critical Reviews)

Outcomes:

ICIYL contributors are 60% BIPOC by 2025, reflecting same diversity of art maker subjects

ICIYL readers report visiting site to learn more about artists (70%)

Artists featured on ICIYL report new interest in them stemming from article

ICIYL articles referenced in other media and educational institutions

- b. Goal: Seek partnerships that invest in and elevate the work of composers to a larger audience

Actions:

- Initiate partnerships that enable multiple generations and communities to demonstrate the impact of collaboration with living composers, highlighting those historically marginalized (Composing Inclusion)
- Foster media partnerships and distribution networks (Naxos) to enable listeners to explore and discover music by living artists (like playlists, recording release events, and icareifyoulisten.tv)

Outcomes:

Participants report desire to continue to collaborate with composers

Partners continue program alone or create a new one based on initial experience with ACF

Audience engagement and surveys report new/increased appreciation for contemporary music

Composers are invited to return engagements

ACF and ACF-supported artists receive media placement, build reputation

- c. Goal: Lead conversations, gatherings, and advocacy efforts that demonstrate equitable collaboration and make the case for investing in music creators

Actions:

- Host Artist Equity Summits: high-profile public gatherings center music creators and invite an ecosystem of artists, teachers, funders, and listeners to examine themes related to equity and the arts; Extend to multiple cities
- Engage in/lead panels, essays, conversations, and research to lift up the vitality and relevance of today's music creators and intervene with systemic exclusion; center anti-racist approaches
- Participate in federal and local government advocacy through the Performing Arts Alliance and Minnesota Citizens for the Arts

Outcomes:

Participants in ACF programs make new connections

Audiences report new learning, connection, and/or follow-up step

Industry leaders shift approach/increase equitable opportunities for living composers

Elected officials support policies and funding that help independent artists

3. Financial Viability: Strong and diverse artist-centric funding to ACF provides financial health and demonstrates industry credibility.

- a. Goal: Increase funding from national foundations and focus regions outside of Minnesota

Actions:

- Leverage funder support through high-profile programming and access to artists
- Demonstrate impact of program models in both a national landscape and scalable community focus

Outcomes:

ACF secures new/increased multi-year and six-figure grants from foundations (3-4 by 2025)



National and scalable activities attract funding from new foundations (4 new grants each FY)

b. Goal: Increase individual giving by showing all gift levels contributing towards ACF's work

Actions:

- Integrate community-centric fundraising ideals throughout fundraising program; value significance of gift over amount
- Transition composer members to donors and cultivate other industry peers to participate in making our work possible: their support validates our impact
- Grow capacity for major gift fundraising; Expand individual giving through board activation, moves management, and clear opportunities for giving impact
- Celebrate innova recordings' 40th anniversary with fundraising campaign (FY22-23)
- Increase giving from "curious listeners" and audience members

Outcomes:

Former members sustain giving to ACF (80%)

Donors reflect diversity of ecosystem (artists/audience, race, age)

Community-centric program attracts increase in number of donors at all levels (15% annually)

c. Goal: Diversify and increase revenue outside of annual fund

Actions:

- Implement planned giving program, Creative Futures Circle (FY23)
- Develop and initiate a 50th Anniversary endowment campaign to reduce dependency on annual gifts.
- Develop and implement earned income opportunities in publication sales, licensing fees, subscriptions, advertising, and commissions

Outcomes:

Income from non-annual fund sources accounts for X% of operating budget by 2025

New donors, increased gifts cultivated through special campaigns

4. Internal Capacity: ACF models internal transformation to achieve organizational and equity goals.

a. Goal: Staff structure and policies facilitate an effective and adaptable work environment

Actions:

- Hire HR support and additional expertise to ensure legal compliance, equitable policies, and staff support, and to help to acknowledge and dismantle inequitable policies, practices, and cultural norms that perpetuate racist behavior and/or white privilege
- Initiate a three-year bridgelifund campaign to hire additional staff to elevate and expand ACF's work in strategic implementation and measurable outcomes (Managing Director) and digital media (Director of Digital Media) (FY22)
- Design IT/infrastructure that supports hybrid work and is inclusive of cultural/personal preferences

Outcomes:

Staff report policies and practices reflect equity goals

Added capacity enables ACF to successfully implement new/larger programs and strategies

b. Goal: Board and Staff equity training/accountability guide ongoing learning and achievement of goals



Actions:

- Model cultural change through ongoing anti-racism training and practices for the staff and Board; be accountable to BIPOC and historically marginalized artists (with routine feedback from focus groups, town halls, surveys)
- Expend resources, time, and money to recruit board members, artists, community members, vendors, consultants, and volunteers who identify as a member of the BIPOC community
- Recruit staff prospects so each finalist pool represents equity goals

Outcomes:

Vendors, consultants, volunteers reflect 60% BIPOC majority by 2025

Decision-making groups - panels, committees, board - reflect 60% BIPOC by 2025

All members of organization's board and staff report an understanding of systemic racism and how they help to achieve greater racial equity

- c. Goal: Engaged board understands role and contributes to organization's success

Actions:

- Equip board members with non-profit and governance training and orientation
- Establish a standing equity board committee to ensure each ACF Board and staff member is invested in and understands anti-racism work and the organization's commitments to achieve racial equity

Outcomes:

Board participation and attendance at board and committee meetings is high (90%)

Board members report positive experience and ability to contribute (annual survey)

Organization is able to work together to achieve a BIPOC majority representation by 2025



Addendum A

GLOSSARY

(Subject to change)

American: For purposes of the current scope of ACF's work we prioritize artists and collaborators based in the United States and its territories, inclusive of the sovereign Native nations, immigrants, short-term and long-term residents, and U.S. residents living abroad.

Anti-Racism: The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, People of Color – we recognize no umbrella term will include everyone that has been excluded on the basis of race. We will strive to evolve our language with the most inclusive terminology

Composer: (from Latin word “compono”: one who puts together) an individual or group that creates and/or organizes original sound and listening experiences.

Courage: Demonstrate intrinsic strength through authenticity and vulnerability.

Curiosity: Approach diverse perspectives with eagerness to learn.

Diversity: Individuals from a variety of backgrounds, with specific focus on representation of a plurality of races and ethnicities and including the intersections of identities such as gender identity, generation, sexual orientation, national status, socio-economic status, veteran status, and disabilities, among others.

Equity: The promotion of justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the context and underlying or root causes of outcome disparities within our society. Equity ensures that every individual has what they need to be able to fully participate.

Inclusion: The degree to which diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes within an organization or group.

Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw's term to describe the complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect for women and non-binary people of color. Treating race and gender as mutually exclusive categories invisibilizes those that intersect both, such as Black women.

Leadership: Active commitment to and vigorous pursuit of clear and compelling goals, with humility and empathy.

LGBTQAI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Asexual, Intersexual

Music Creator: an individual or group that creates and/or organizes original sound and listening experiences.

Support: Cultivate a space for individuals to feel welcome, find connections, and be part of an ecosystem.

Underrepresented Genders: includes women, non-binary, and men and women of the trans community.

Western European classical: We recognize that in American music, “classical” is a default term referring to Western European-based musical traditions; we will clarify our intentions by using the term Western European classical to describe a style versus Indian classical, for example.

Whiteness/White: According to The National Museum of African American History and Culture, Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.