



## 2014-2019 Strategic Planning

# Council Member Survey Executive Summary

September 2012

In August 2012, thirteen of fifteen members of the Montana Arts Council participated in an electronic survey to capture their thoughts on issues relevant to the agency's 2014-2019 strategic planning efforts. Half of the members have served up to four years on the council, and the other half have served five years or more.

### SWOT Analysis

Council members were asked to identify the agency's biggest strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). Common themes that arose:

#### *Strengths*

- *Staff was specifically mentioned by half the members*
- *Diversity of the makeup of council members and their opinions, as well as their cohesion as a group*
- *Arts education support*
- *Great communication*
- *Strong skills regarding strategic planning and great follow through on action plans*
- *Great vision and teamwork*
- *Great work expanding resources for individual artists*
- *National leadership and modeling*
- *Serving and promoting rural arts*
- *Flexibility in dealing with shifting political realities*

#### *Weaknesses*

- *Two-thirds of the council cited funding as the primary weakness*
- *Three other areas were mentioned separately: Promoting contemporary "urban" arts and artists; the council doesn't have much to do; making our case to the legislature and building recognition of the value of the arts to the Montana economy*

#### *Opportunities*

- *Expansion of arts and healthcare efforts in the future*
- *Continue to model programs like Innovation Awards and business-based programs*
- *Continued search for outside funding and partnerships*
- *To thoughtfully manage artist exposure to Montanans and provide financial aid*
- *Grass-works efforts with legislators*
- *Training for artists and the confluence with tourism*
- *Capitalizing on MAC's Artrepreneurship program and expanding it to educational institutions throughout the state*
- *Continued emphasis on how the arts enhance and strengthen our economy*

#### *Threats*

- *Virtually all of the responses had to do with funding and political challenges that threaten funding*

**If the Montana Arts Council was an animal, what kind of animal would it be and why?**

Here are the answers given by council members, with photos added as “data visualization.”



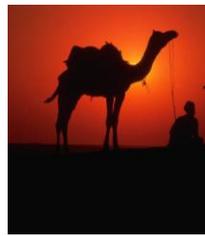
**Eagle**  
Strong.  
Survival.  
Safe.  
Protective.

**Elephant**  
Intelligent.  
Strong family ties.  
Socially complex.  
Strong memory.  
Protective.

**Terrier**  
Loveable.  
Energetic. Smart.  
Adventurous.  
Great hunter.

**Horse**  
Agile. Smart.  
Learns quickly.  
Trustworthy.  
Trudges through muddy waters.  
Kicks up its heels.

**Wolverine**  
Small in size but out-performs many and covers immense territory.



**Mother bird**  
Takes care of the eggs.

**Camel**  
Able to survive in the desert with very little and make the most of few resources.

**Crow**  
Highly social. Smart.  
Dominant. Versatile.  
Innovative.

**Beaver**  
Builders that enhance vital systems, but allow natural flow.

**Lioness**  
Works hard to keep the group well-fed and protected.



**War Horse**  
Went beyond duty.  
Endurance.  
Survived with ingenuity, strength and strong heart.

**Chameleon**  
Very adaptable!

# If the Montana Arts Council was a car, what kind of car would it be and why?

Here are the answers given by council members, with photos added as “data visualization.”

## Most Popular Answer: SUV



**Buick Convertible**  
Not too flashy, but people riding are having lots of fun!



**Low Maintenance: Camry**  
Reliable.



**SUV:**  
Large carrying capacity. Safe. Dependable.  
Won't get stuck. Full-size with On Star navigation.  
Can make its own trail or travel smooth and rugged roads.  
Safe. Reasonable comfort. Secure transport. Gets to destination.



**Flex-fuel Plug-in Hybrid**  
High-performance.



**Mercedes Benz:**  
Classy. Well-made. Runs forever and outlasts most competitors.

## What three short phrases or adjectives best characterize this organization?

Type size indicates prevalence of answers.

### Hard Working

**Agile/Nimble**  
**Committed**  
**Creative**  
**Diverse**  
**Efficient**  
**Energetic**  
**Optimistic**  
**Strong**  
**Visionary**

Adept  
Breaks the mold  
Care  
Connected  
Effective  
Focused  
Forward looking  
Great info resource  
Humble  
Idealistic

Perceptive  
Persuasive  
Politically savvy  
Rises to challenges  
Sets the bar  
Smart  
Stellar  
Thorough  
Who's Who in Montana arts

## **To what extent do you think you have succeeded as being a bridge to the political world?**

On a scale of one to ten, with one being “Missed by a Mile” and ten being “Bulls Eye,” the overall average score was 6.62. Eleven of 13 members scored themselves at a five or above. Of those 11 members, almost half ranked themselves 8 or higher. Two of thirteen members responded with a rating of less than 5.

Ideas suggested by council members on other ways that MAC can help them succeed in being a bridge to the political world:

- Continue to:
  - Tell stories about how art makes a difference in people’s lives
  - Enlighten us as to trends, methods and viewpoints
  - Have well-defined, time-limited efforts to have council members reach out to political leaders
  - Conduct listening tour work with legislators
  - Provide facts to help tell the story
- Encourage:
  - Further participation
  - Attendance by council members at legislative hearings, especially the budget
- Nag more

## **Legacy issues**

### ***Progress toward legacy goals set by council members in 2007***

In 2007, when council members were asked what they believed constituents would consider the most important legacy of the board at that time, they answered:

- Outreach to all artists and to people in all walks of life and in every corner of the state
- School arts programs as their legacy
- A more financially viable and financially stable MAC
- The arts’ importance to economic development, social development, schools, and community creativity

On a scale of one to ten, with ten hitting a “Bulls Eye” on the target, and a score of one being “Missed by a Mile,” current council members in 2012 scored progress made toward this legacy goal as 8.13 overall on average. Nine of twelve respondents to this question scored progress between 8 and 10.

### ***What current council members would like their legacy to be by the end of their term***

When asked what you would like your legacy to be for this organization and for the state of the arts in Montana at the end of your council membership, here is how current council members answered:

- Multiple comments included:
  - Knowing that they made a difference in elevating the value and presence of the arts in Montana.
  - Increased recognition of the value of the arts in education, economic and community settings.
  - Continuing to strive for the betterment of arts education and that of the individual artists and non-profit organizations.

- Individual comments included:
  - The wish for expansion of the Montana Artrepreneurship and MCAM programs
  - Garnering respect from all visual artists
  - Playing fair and listening to all sides
  - Creation of more venues for arts performances and a whole legion of young people excited about becoming artists.
  - Good steward of state funds and better relations with state agencies

### ***How constituents will view the legacy of this council five years from now***

Five years from now in 2017, council members believe key constituents will consider the most important legacy of this board to be:

- One third of the council believed legacies outlined in 2007 were fine goals to which to aspire in the next five years, too:
  - Outreach to all artists and to people in all walks of life and in every corner of the state
  - School arts programs as their legacy
  - A more financially viable and financially stable MAC
  - The arts' importance to economic development, social development, schools, and community creativity
- In addition, several reinforced the vision for increased artistic economic vitality as well as increased resources for individual artists.
- Single answers included a continual striving to reach agency goals and effective outreach to elected officials.

### **What will be strikingly different in five years**

Five years ago in 2007, the council cast their eyes forward, stating that these things would be the most strikingly different about the agency in 2012. How well did the council predict the future?

(10= Bulls Eye; 1=Missed by a Mile)

- Technology will play a larger and more important part in the arts council's work. It will be used to conduct meetings and other outreach efforts, and improved information technology will be made available for the staff's use.
 

*Two-thirds of responding council members ranked this as an 8 or higher, with five hitting the Bulls Eye.*
- State and local recognition of MAC as a model arts agency.
 

*Ten out of twelve responding council members ranked this as an 8 or higher, with eight hitting the Bulls Eye.*
- More effective outreach in support of arts in schools, reinvigoration of individual arts, and new ways for artists to contribute to social developments in the state.
 

*Seven of twelve responding council members ranked this at 8 or higher, with four hitting the Bulls Eye.*

As to what council members think will be strikingly different about this state arts agency five years from now in 2017?

- Several members believed that MAC will be better funded.
- The agency's relevance to Montanans will continue on an incline.
- Even stronger relationships will be developed with our political authorizers.

- More technology for communicating to the council and the field will be used.
- We'll see more effective networking with local groups.
- Continued work in the economic development area will produce a view of the arts as being a viable part of the state's commerce system, while at the same time, recognizing its intrinsic value to the individual, community and state.
- Although not strikingly different, there will be continued recognition as one of the most effective arts agencies in the country. Several members stated their hope that MAC continues to be at the forefront of innovative thinking and programming, maintaining its current path, which is serving it well.

## Internal council operations and priorities

What does the council think that it's doing right as a council and should continue doing?

- Seven of twelve respondents conveyed the view that the agency is "hitting on all cylinders"
- Additional comments included:
  - Being out front, proactive in discovering unmet needs and providing support for these needs
  - Allowing uninhibited discussion...the free-flowing ideas
  - Willingness to flex as needs change
  - Always keeping the arts at the core of our endeavors
  - The staff makes the meetings seamless
  - Meetings are well-run and inviting
  - Clearly defined and valuable programs, and the council is committed to ensure they are of the highest quality
  - A great director who is visible and persuasive not only in our state government but also on the national scene
  - The staff is wonderful
  - Focus on the practical, the economic and rural outreach
  - Enjoying ourselves when we get together. Spread the work around the council members
  - Participation of the council at the national level is important
  - Listening tours, grant programs, public outreach

Do council members feel that their time spent on *MAC activities* is valuable and valued?

All council members with tenure of over a year answered "yes."

Do council members feel that their time spent at *MAC meetings* is valuable and valued?

Eleven of twelve council members answered "yes." One member thought there was too much time spent on routine business matters and not enough time or focus on strategic issues.

Do council members think they meet too often or not enough or just right?

Eleven of twelve council members answered "just right." One member thought it would be good to meeting more often and wished the December meeting could be in a month with less snow.

Council members were asked if there is anything on your mind about the council or its activities or staff that should be addressed. Staff was praised, and five suggestions were offered:

- Move forward with arts in healthcare initiative
- Creation of additional opportunities for visual artists
- More direction as to projects needing individual council member's help, with attendant goals set
- Ask individual staff members to briefly speak about their activities of the past year at council meetings
- Spread out board committee assignments broadly among all 15 board members.

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