

# IMAGINE NEXT



## STRATEGIC PLAN



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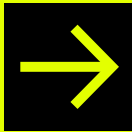
STRATEGIC PLAN

2025–  
2029

Baltimore, Maryland

# INTRODUCTION

**Imagine Next** is a five-year strategic plan that outlines Mid Atlantic Arts' vision for the future of our programming, services, and funding.



The plan responds to the many changes and challenges facing the arts and culture ecosystem today. It reaffirms our role as a regional partner and intermediary and creates a clear vision for providing long-term support for artists and arts organizations in our region and beyond.

We began this work with three shared commitments:

- To center the voices of the communities we serve
- To question and improve long-standing systems and practices
- To embrace organizational change and growth

As a Regional Arts Organization, we rely on strong partnerships, especially in times of change. We know that any shift in our work must reflect and respond to the distinct cultures, needs, and strengths of the people we serve across the region's counties, *municipios*, and Indigenous territories. We approached the strategic planning process with intention and care, listening closely to the diverse voices that shape our region.

After months of research, reflection, and collaboration, we are proud to share Imagine Next—a roadmap that will guide us into the future.





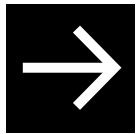
Image: The 2025 Staff Gathering (Baltimore MD, February 2025) was an opportunity to explore the first draft of Mission, Vision, and Values. Credit: Ram Martínez.

**Imagine Next** is our response to a moment of unprecedented change. One that centers local voices, promotes innovation, and reshapes the way we engage with the arts in our region.



# WHO WE ARE

Mid Atlantic Arts is a Regional Arts Organization (RAO) that has been serving artists, organizations, and audiences for nearly 50 years.



Founded in 1979, we serve a broad constituency that includes residents of Delaware, the

District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Virginia, and West Virginia.

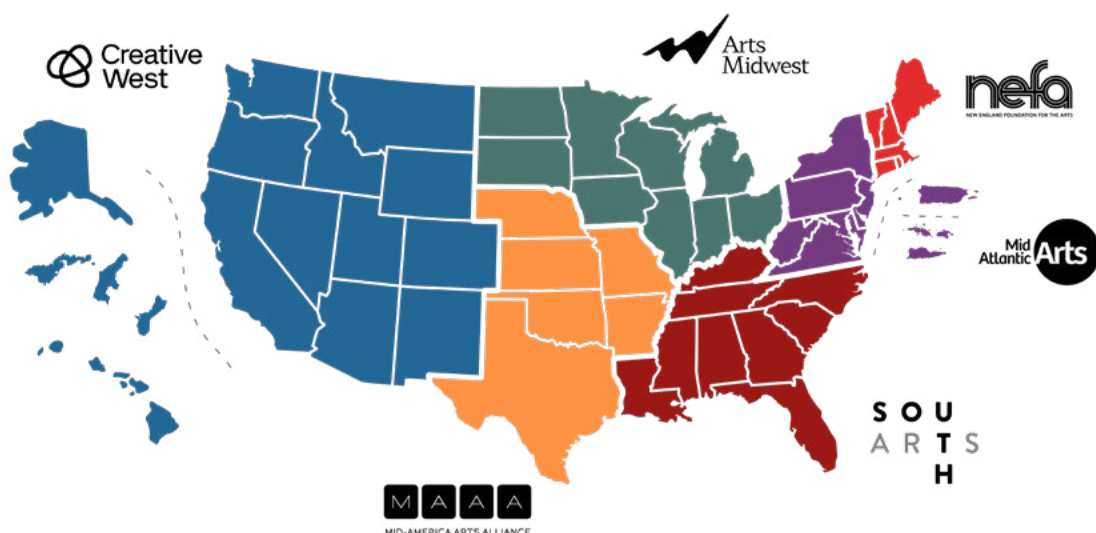
Each year, our organization works to combine public funding from the National

Endowment for the Arts, and State and Federal arts agencies, with private support from foundations, corporations, families and individuals committed to sustaining the arts.

Together with our partners, we provide millions of dollars in direct grant support annually to over 1,000 grantees across our diverse region — and beyond.



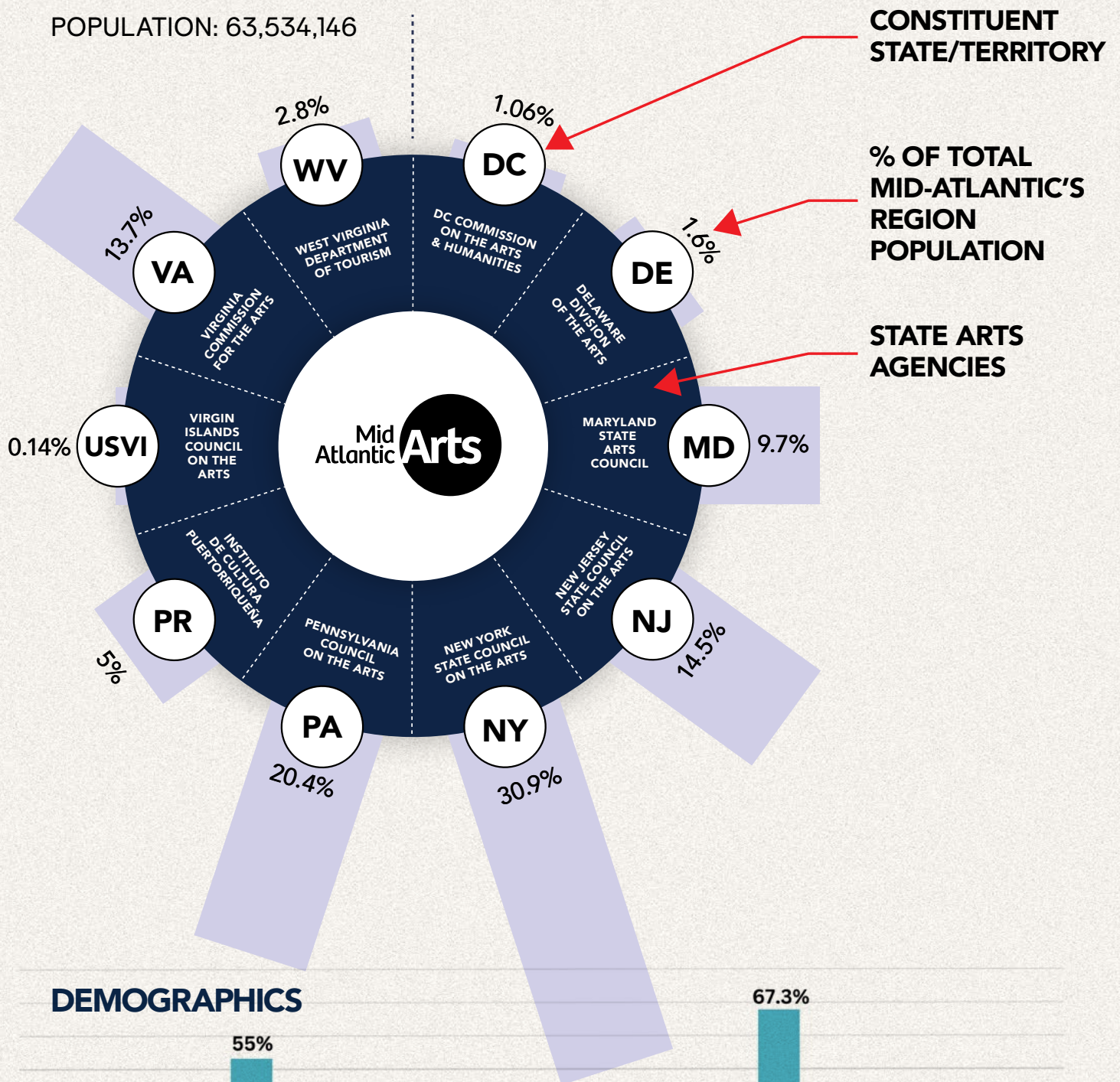
US RAO  
Regional Arts Organizations



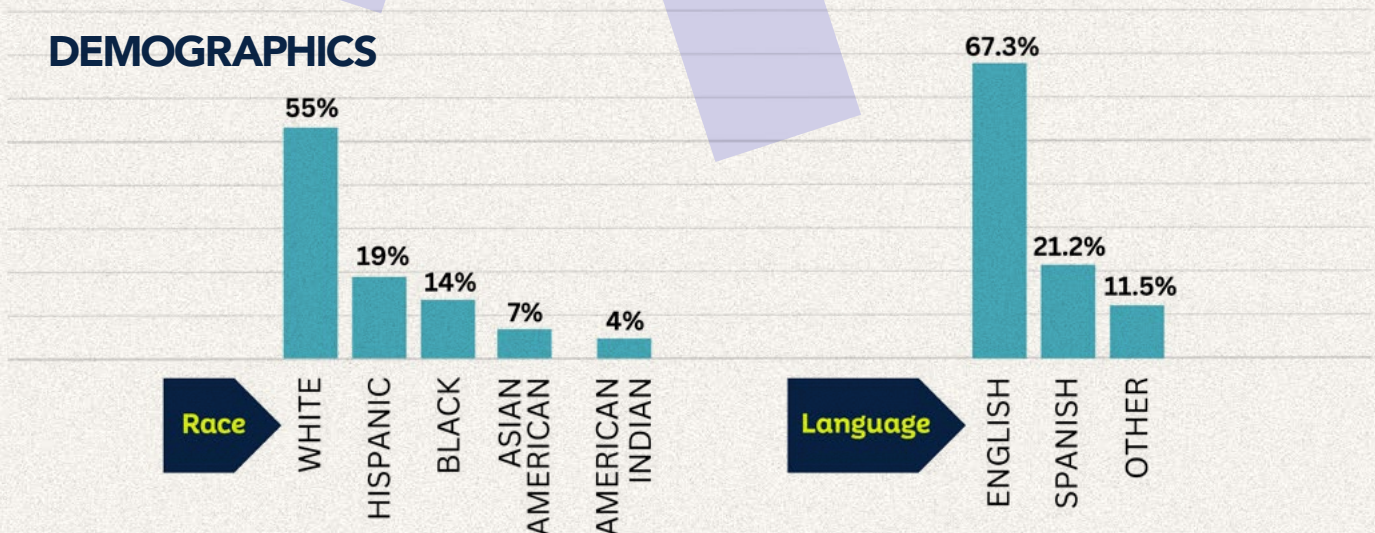
Together, the US RAOs across the United States work to activate and operate national arts initiatives, encourage and support collaboration across regions, states, and communities, and maximize the coordination of public and private resources invested in arts programs.

# MID ATLANTIC ARTS' ECOSYSTEM

POPULATION: 63,534,146



## DEMOGRAPHICS

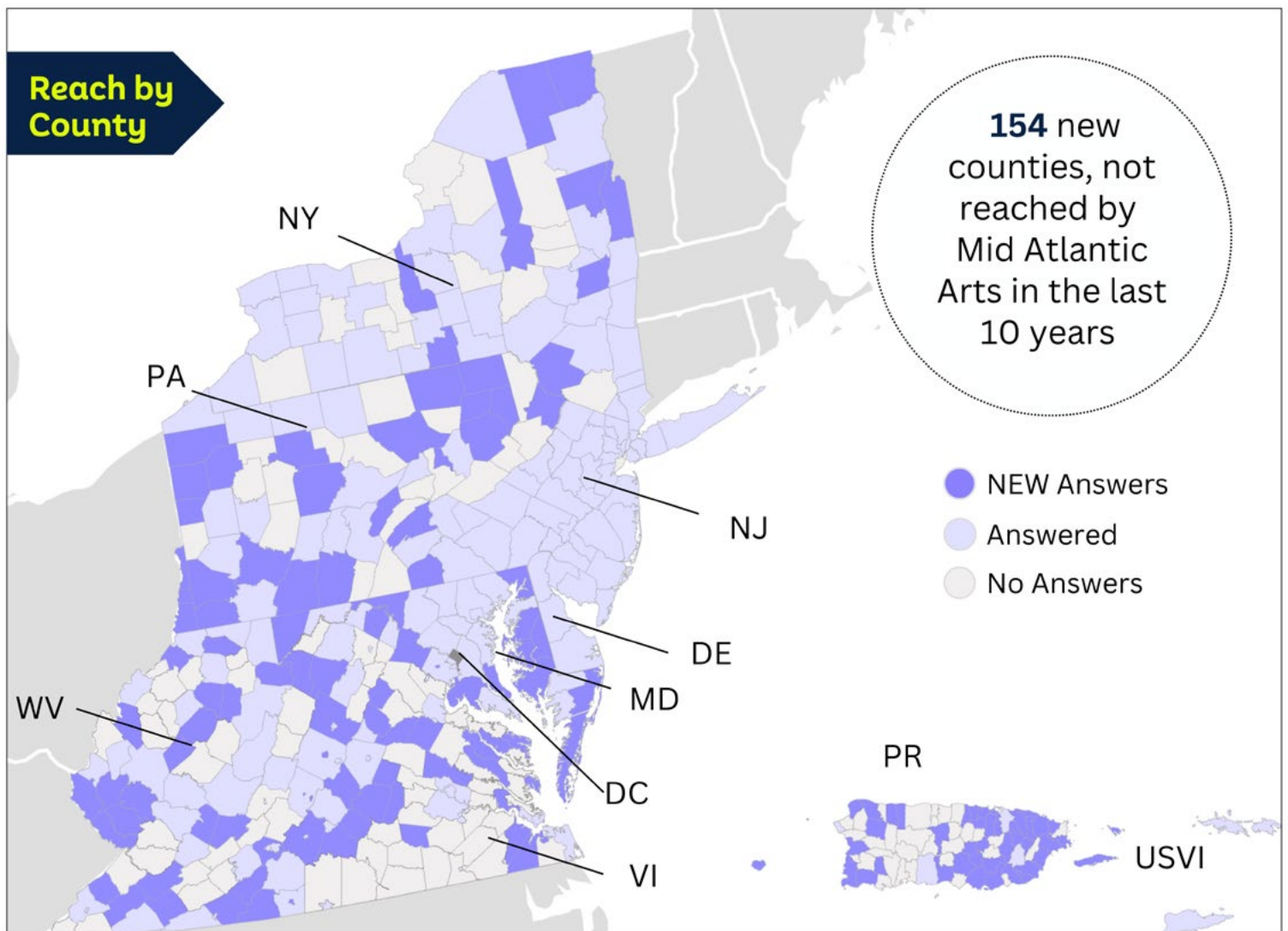


Source: For U.S. states, Pew Research Center tabulations of 2022 American Community Survey; for Puerto Rico, Pew Research Center tabulations of 2022 Puerto Rico Community Survey; for US Virgin Islands, 2020 decennial tabulations published by U.S. Census Bureau.



# BUILDING IMAGINE NEXT

**Imagine Next** was shaped by a multi-year listening effort to understand the needs, challenges, insights, and big ideas of the communities we serve. The process combined field engagement, data analysis, and internal reflection to ensure that our new strategic plan is grounded in evidence, collaboration, and care.



Over 1,500 respondents participated in the survey, leading to the creation of Imagine Next. Respondents spanned 318 counties across the region (75% of the total number of counties). 154 of these counties had no interaction with Mid Atlantic Arts in the past, according to organizational data.

## Survey Universe



**29.9%**  
**ORGANIZATIONS**  
452 respondents



**70.1%**  
**INDIVIDUALS**  
1,053 respondents

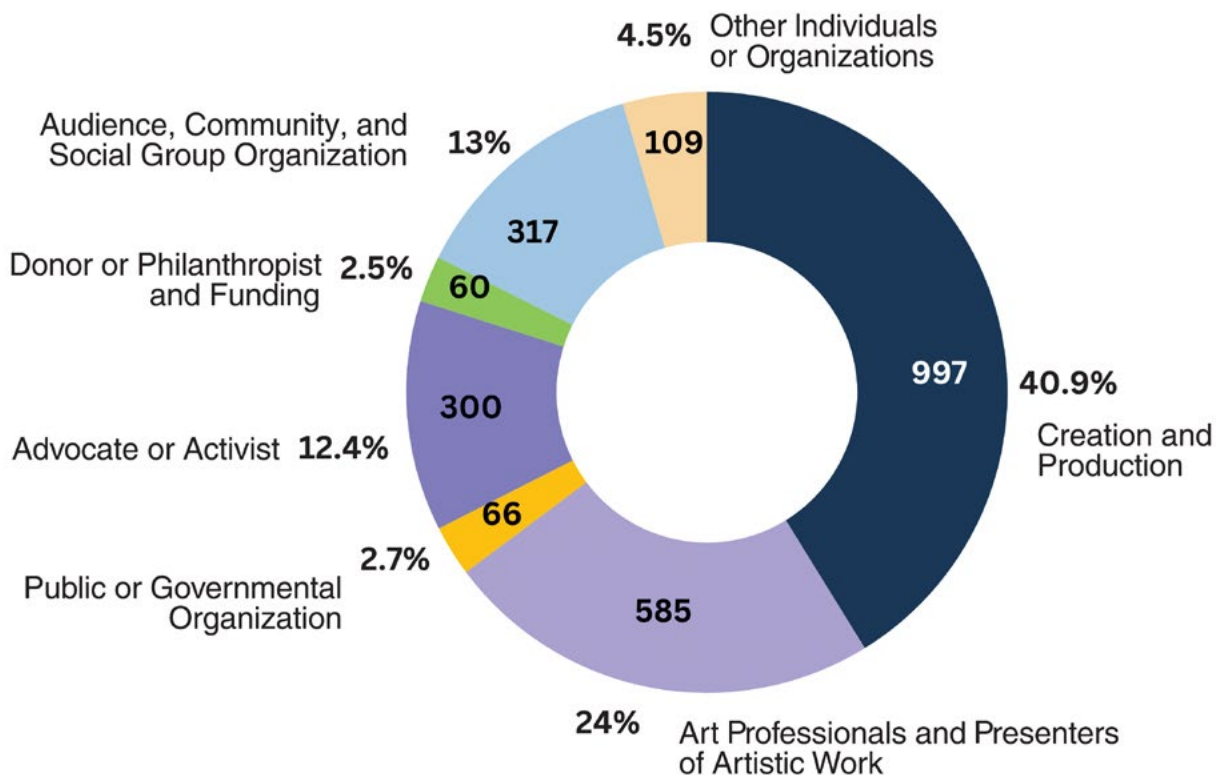
## Reach by State

State	Population	Counties	Responses	% per thousand
DC	678,972	1	31	4.566%
Delaware	1,052,000	3	27	2.567%
Maryland	6,263,000	23	114	1.804%
New Jersey	9,500,000	21	210	2.211%
New York	19,800,000	62	231	1.081%
Pennsylvania	12,950,000	67	196	1.506%
Puerto Rico	3,280,000	78	148	3.293%
US Virgin Islands	84000	3	15	17.857%
Virginia	8,811,000	113	151	1.430%
West Virginia	1,770,000	55	168	9.492%
Caribbean Diaspora			28	
International			87	
OTHER USA States			99	
TOTAL		426	1.505	

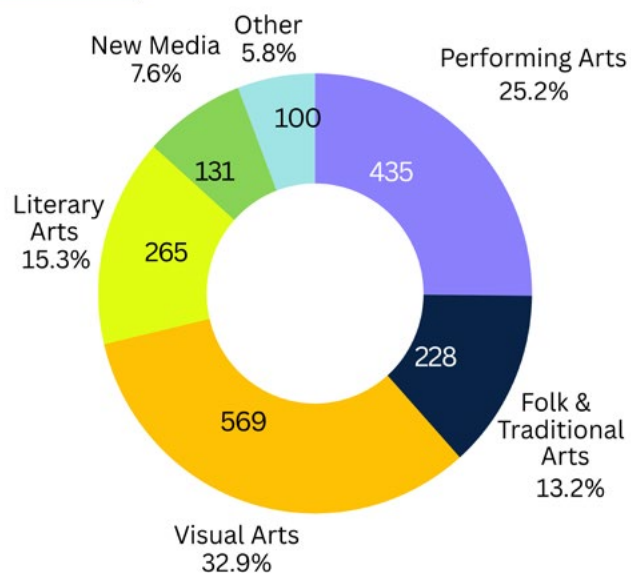


## Participant's Role in the Arts Ecosystem

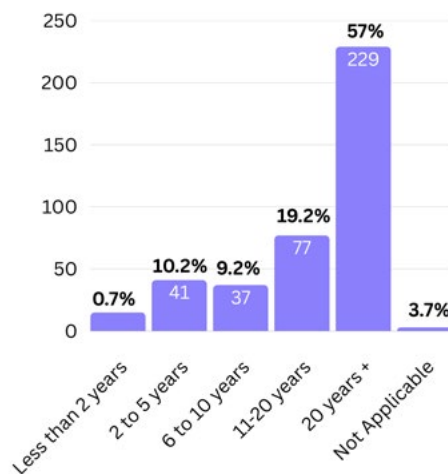
53.21% (777 respondents) declared in more than one category.



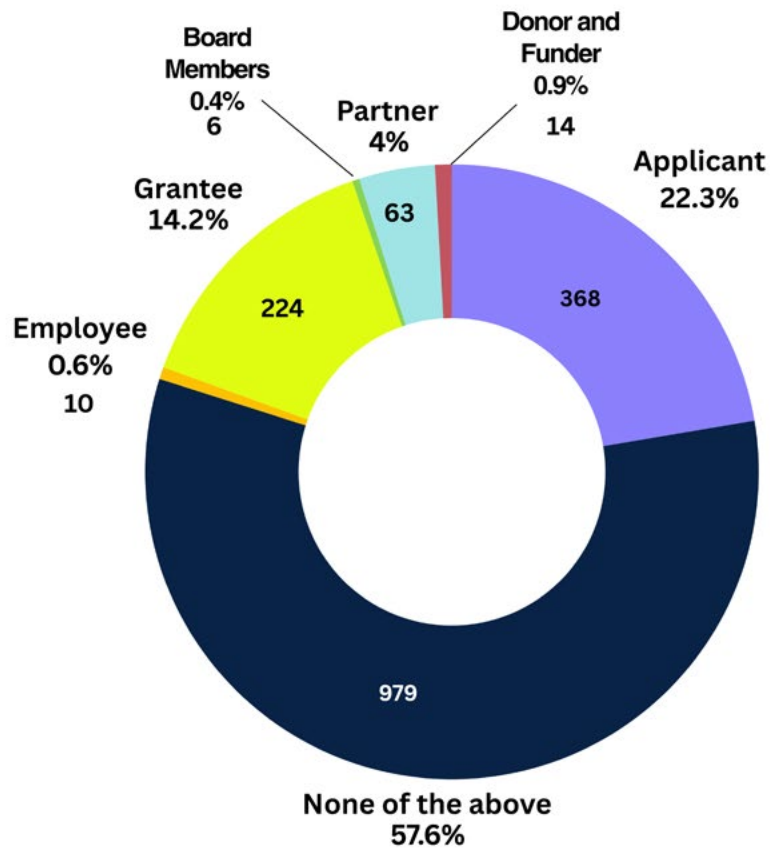
## Artistic Discipline



## Organization Longevity



## Relation with MAA



Most respondents, **57.6%** have no current connection with MAA  
**108** people said they fit into more than one category

## Opportunities for Intersections

with their current work

Participants were asked, **Which of these fields would you consider areas of opportunity for intersection with your current work?** They could select from eight options or describe their own area of opportunity.

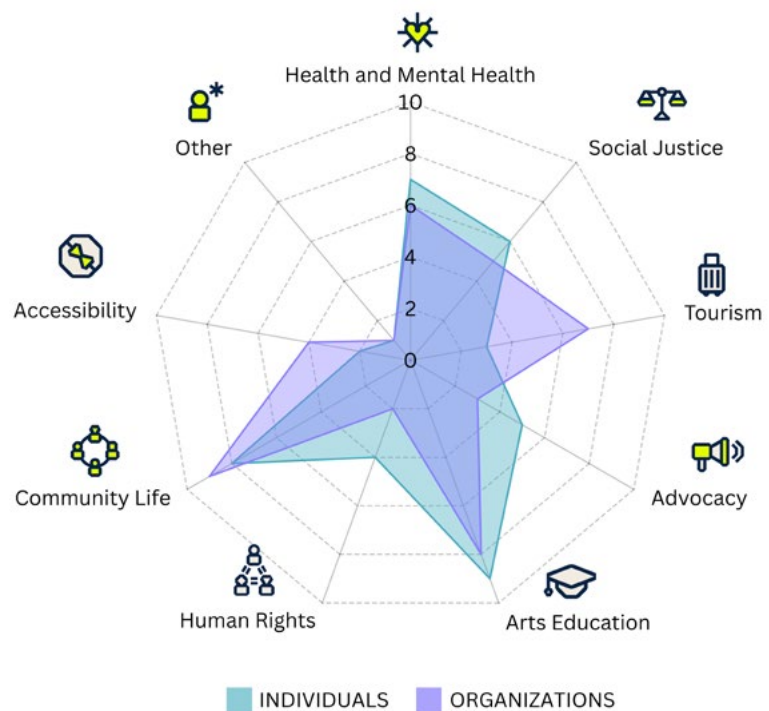






Image: Saxophonist Brian LeNair performs with the Philadelphia Heritage Chorale under the direction of Dr. J. Donald Dumpson. Credit: Garrett Thomas.

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IMAGINE NEXT MODEL





## MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen and serve the arts and culture ecosystem in the mid-Atlantic region by elevating local voices through accessible resources, programs, and partnerships.



## VISION

A thriving and self-sustaining creative economy in the mid-Atlantic region where investment is amplified, creativity and civic life are bridged, and art is a catalyst for community prosperity and well-being.



# VALUES

## Curiosity

Learning, exploring, and  
working with empathy

## Collaboration

Building and nurturing  
purposeful human  
connections

## Equity

Acknowledging and  
addressing disparities  
within the arts

## Trust

Fostering reliability, open  
communication, and  
transparency in operations

## Accessibility

Expanding opportunities  
for participation  
in the arts

## Adaptability

Being open to change  
and committing  
to innovation







# OUR SERVICE AREA

At the heart of our efforts to reimagine Mid Atlantic Arts is a desire to reduce barriers to access and better reflect the communities we serve.

Historically, Mid Atlantic Arts distributed resources broadly, with limited targeted outreach to specific communities.



With **Imagine Next**, we envision looking at our region through four distinct geographic corridors to more effectively serve Mid Atlantic Arts' diverse and expansive constituency. These corridors were created to give our team better understanding of the differing needs of the local communities and improve our model for service.

This new way of looking at the region we serve is not designed to label or limit our constituents. Rather, this new approach allows us to tailor our support, partnerships, and outreach strategies to the needs, challenges, and unique artistic ecosystems of each corridor, ensuring more meaningful and equitable engagement across our region.



### NORTHERN CORRIDOR

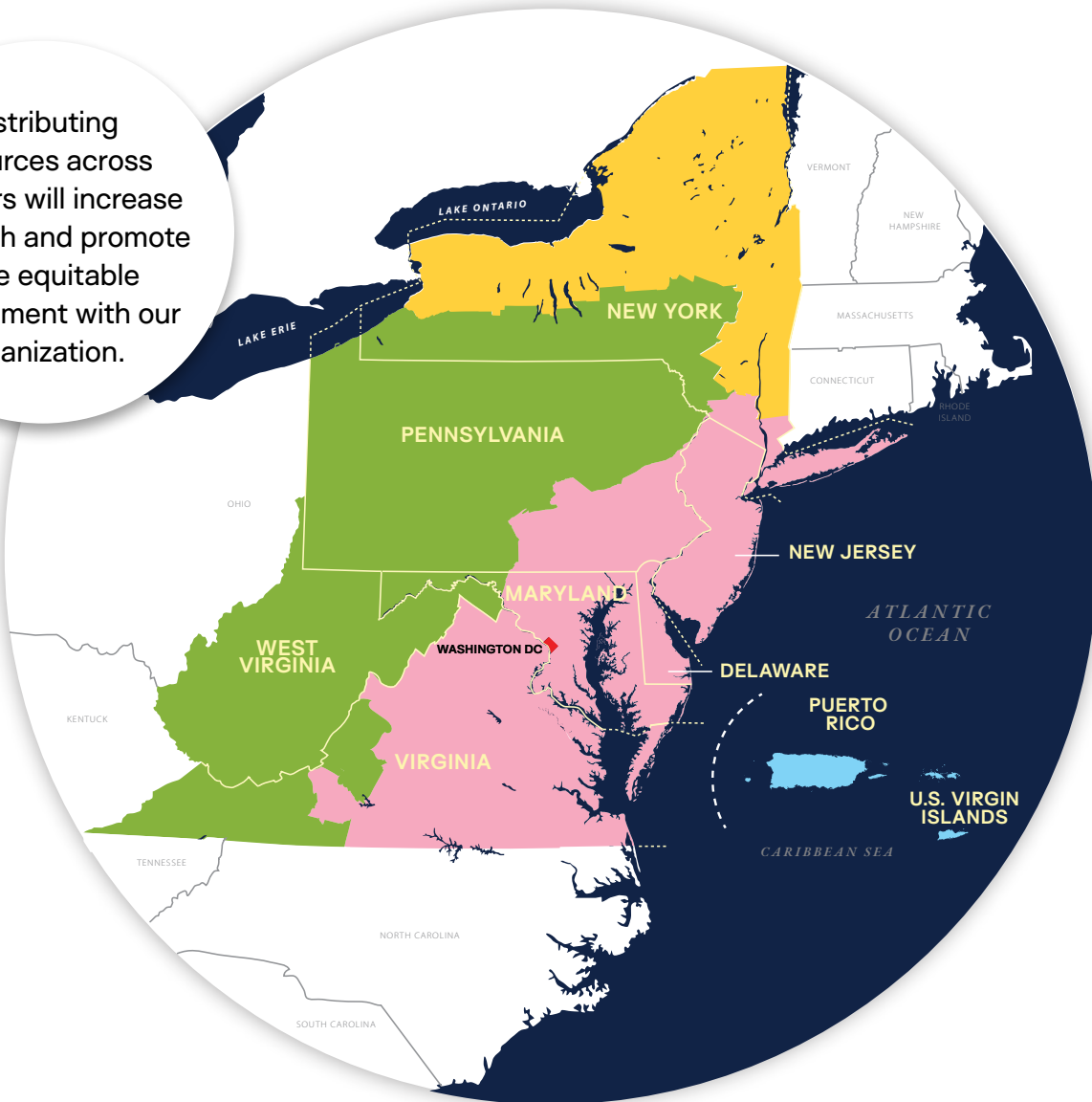
Population: 4,784,078 (8% of Region)  
Coverage: New York (Upstate)



### APPALACHIAN CORRIDOR

Population: 9,042,979 (15% of Region)  
Coverage: New York (Southwest), Pennsylvania (Western), Virginia (Western), West Virginia

Distributing resources across corridors will increase our reach and promote more equitable engagement with our organization.



### ATLANTIC CORRIDOR

Population: 44,124,483 (73% of Region)  
Coverage: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York (Metro), Pennsylvania (Eastern), Virginia (Eastern)



### CARIBBEAN CORRIDOR

Population: 2,924,457 (5% of Region)  
Coverage: Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands









# FOCUS AREAS

WHAT WE DO



## 1. Elevating Local Voices

Our ongoing support for local artists and organizers is rooted in the belief that the cultures and perspectives of the Mid Atlantic region are worth celebrating and preserving.

We will continue to invest in and develop programs that showcase the diversity of our region and create flexible opportunities for artists and organizations to thrive. Success in these efforts will result in a Regional Arts Organization that is more dynamic and more reflective of the communities we serve.

It is essential that we elevate and amplify the voices of our constituents by ensuring local representation and expanding opportunities for engagement in every decision.









## 2. Learning, Connecting, and Convening

We envision a world where Mid Atlantic Arts serves as a vital convener of dialogue and a catalyst for meaningful connection.

We will create spaces where the arts and culture ecosystem thrives and resources flow. We will develop new opportunities for learning that enable artists to refine their craft, experiment with new techniques, and increase the impact of their work. We will build networking and mentorship infrastructure that breaks down silos, fosters collaboration, and drives growth.

By combining new technology with genuine community engagement, we can fulfill our promise of connection more consistently and efficiently. Balancing online and in-person models of engagement will expand opportunities for collaboration and learning, while fostering the growth of artists and arts organizations across our region. Ultimately, this will help expand our reach and create more opportunities for knowledge sharing, mutual learning, and exponential impact.







### 3. Working Towards a Sustainable Ecosystem

Today, systemic societal and economic changes threaten the viability of our arts and culture ecosystem.

Historic funding cuts have upended the way resources flow to critical arts programs. Rising costs of living have made thriving as a working artist even more challenging. A more remote and online culture has fundamentally changed arts patronage and challenged traditional mediums for exhibition.

The impact of these changes aren't merely economic or structural. They

have a direct impact on the human beings who bring our region's art to life. We must carefully consider the ways in which we can make changes that allow our artists and organizers to thrive. By working together to prioritize the financial independence of our organizations, support the livelihood of our artists, and deepen engagement with our audiences, we can create stronger, more resilient frameworks that shape the future.





# OPERATIONAL PILLARS HOW WE DO IT



## Simplified Access

We will make engaging with Mid Atlantic Arts easier and more streamlined.

By reviewing internal and external processes for efficiency, using plain language, and clarifying rules and requirements, we can improve community engagement and provide more accessible experiences.

- Making arts accessible for all
- Using plain language to communicate
- Reducing paperwork and complexity
- Eliminating unnecessary requirements and restrictions



## Innovation and Collaboration

We will embrace innovative ways of working and leverage new technologies.

By strategically integrating technology, expanding opportunities for co-creation, and taking new approaches, we can build a stronger, more dynamic ecosystem that both sustains traditional art forms and supports the next generation of artists.

- Openness to new approaches
- Embracing new technology
- Promoting innovation
- Inviting collaboration

## Culture of Care

We will center the well-being of artists, organizations, and staff in everything we do.

By carefully considering the needs and realities of the people we serve with every decision, we can craft more effective and more intentional programming and processes.

- Inclusive leadership
- Operating with empathy
- Centering human needs in decision making
- Providing more holistic support to constituents

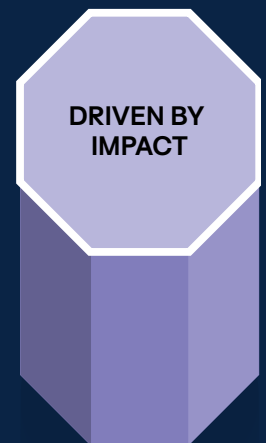


## Driven by Impact

We will prioritize clear and measurable impact in the design of our programs and strategies.

Without clear metrics for performance, it can be challenging to understand what worked or didn't work and why. By focusing on measurable results in our operations, we can increase and better communicate the impact of our work in the region.

- Developing clear success metrics
- Collecting, tracking, and reporting data
- Insight-driven development
- Iterative process and program improvement









## A. From Hyper Local to Global

While Mid Atlantic Arts has always strived to create international impact, there is considerably more we can do to ensure our region plays a larger role on the world stage. We want to create more opportunities for artists and organizations who have traditionally lacked access to find new audiences and ensure our region can participate in the global dialogue about the future of the arts.

### Areas of Exploration

- Breakthrough and visibility
- Capacity building
- Export readiness
- New market development
- Residencies and co-creation
- Touring and promotion

## B. Art and Technology

The rapid advancement of technology is creating exciting new tools and mediums for artistic expression. While the current application of some of these tools raises valid concerns, these tools also offer tremendous promise for creative expression when applied in ethical ways. We want to take a balanced approach to embracing new technologies, ensuring artists and organizers in our community have the tools and education to explore new possibilities.

### Areas of Exploration

- Augmented reality
- Digital distribution
- Digitization of physical art
- Ethical AI education
- Immersive arts experiences
- Virtual reality

## C. Cross-Sector Development

By building new partnerships with local communities, inspiring individuals, and non-traditional public and private institutions across our region, we can embed the arts into areas of civic and everyday life. These partnerships have the potential to be deeply and mutually beneficial by providing new projects for artists, creating new funding streams for organizations, and unlocking powerful new ways of communication and connection for our emerging sector partners.

### Areas of Exploration

- Climate and the environment
- Healthcare and mental health
- Social justice
- State and local tourism







# IMAGINE NEXT MODEL



## FOCUS AREAS

Focus Areas are the lenses through which we view our opportunity for impact. Derived directly from insights uncovered in the research phase, these three focus areas are where our organization can provide the maximum value to artists, arts organizations, and our communities.

### WHAT WE DO

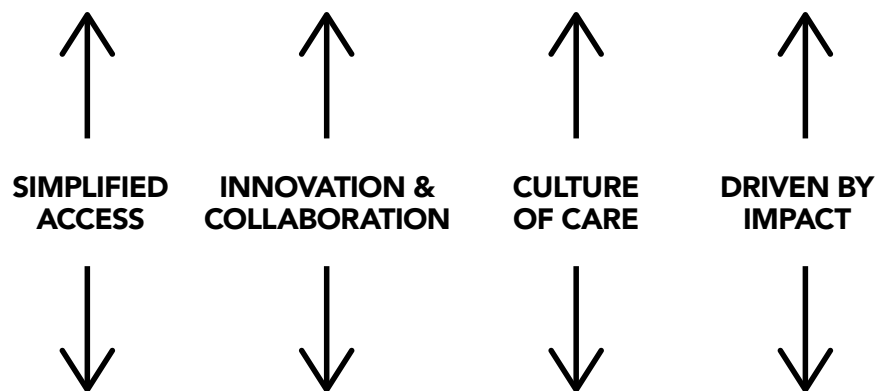
1. Elevating Local Voices
2. Learning, Connecting, and Convening
3. Working Towards a Sustainable Ecosystem



## OPERATIONAL PILLARS

Operational Pillars are how we do the work of our organization. Rooted in the needs of our arts communities and today's new and changing demands, these principles apply to everything we do.

### HOW WE DO IT



## NEW HORIZONS

New Horizons are new areas for development and partnership. We look at New Horizons as a consolidated list of areas worth exploring, informed by the input of our partners, each area's potential for impact, and the unique characteristics of our region.

### WHAT COMES NEXT

- A. From Hyper Local to Global
- B. Art and Technology
- C. Cross-Sector Development







# THANKS AND APPRECIATION

## THE BOARD

### OFFICERS

Chair, Donna Walker-Kuhne, NY  
Vice Chair, James Lemons, NY  
Secretary, John McEwen, NJ  
Treasurer, Nicholas Hawkins, NY

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Jessica Ball, DE  
Romona Riscoe Benson, PA  
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Kim Chan, NJ  
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Valerie Gay, PA  
Anita Gonzalez, DC  
Juanita Hardy, MD  
Geoffrey Kershner, VA  
Mara Manus, NY  
Aaron Myers, DC  
Kevin O'Brien, NJ  
John Strickland, WV

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## STAFF

### OPERATIONS

Juan Souki  
*Executive Director*

Ezekiel Christopoulos  
*Director of People & Culture*

Cedrick Farmer  
*Grants Operations Coordinator*

Chels Fryer  
*Grants Operations Associate*

Namra Inam  
*Junior Staff Accountant*

Jamie Melius  
*Director of Grantmaking Operations*

Jaclyn Miller-Barbarow  
***Vendor and Procurement Coordinator***

Jeanette Pacheco  
*Executive Assistant*

Janessa Schuster  
*Interim Director of Finance*

### DEVELOPMENT AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Nei Halmoguera  
*Creative Coordinator*

Brittney Huff  
*Director of Development*

Mackenzie Kwok  
*Communications and Social Media Manager*

Karen Newell  
*Director, External Affairs*

Jacinto Salcedo  
*Marketing Strategy and Design Lead*

Fern Zaky  
*Development Associate*

### PROGRAMS

Sarah Branch  
*Program Director, Creativity in Community*

Ana Chapman  
*Interim Director of Programs*

Joel Chapman  
*Program Associate, Folk and Traditional Arts*

Jackie Domenus  
*Program Director, Fellowships*

Ellie Dassler  
*Program Director, Folk and Traditional Arts*

Sarah Lewitus  
*Program Director, Performing Arts and Accessibility Coordinator*

Andrew Alness Olson  
*Program Director, International*

Ernest Stuart  
*Program Director, Jazz*

Sarah Theune  
*Program Associate, Performing Arts and Creativity in Community*

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## STATE ARTS AGENCIES

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities  
Delaware Division of the Arts  
Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña  
Maryland State Arts Council  
New Jersey State Council on the Arts

New York State Council on the Arts  
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts  
Virgin Islands Council on the Arts  
Virginia Commission for the Arts  
West Virginia Department of Tourism



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**midatlanticarts.org**  
201 N. Charles Street, Suite 401  
Baltimore, MD 21201