

**The Cultural & Heritage Commission at
Rowan College at Gloucester County
Strategic Plan
2016-2019**

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Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission Organizational Profile: 2015

History:

The Board of Chosen Freeholders established the Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission in 1975 to form a designated agency for the administration of any state arts or history funding within the county. Since that time, the Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission has administered the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Local Arts Program, a state/county partnership grant program so small and emerging arts and other non-profit organizations can apply for funding for Special Arts Projects or General Operating Support. Through this grant program, we continue to pursue greater outreach to establish and educate a wide variety of organizations and individuals to further develop arts, historic and cultural programs and activities within all areas of the community and region.

The Commission continually strives to enhance the image and visibility of the arts and diverse cultures throughout the county and region. We encourage the preservation of our history through partnerships with historic organizations, sites and municipalities.

As the designated county arts agency to receive funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) for the Local Arts Program State/County Block grant, the commission must comply with council's mandates and guidelines. As a partner of the National Endowment for the Arts, the council's guidelines and priorities are based on current research on trends and demographics in the field. For the Commission, this information provides a strong base in the development of programs and initiatives, even when seeking funds from other sources.

One of the fastest growing counties in the state, Gloucester County is faced with challenges that include employment, education, transportation systems and preservation of open space. Future economic trends are centered on Rowan University's major expansion that is based on forecasted job demands in technology, engineering and the health care industry.

Traditionally, our close proximity to Philadelphia encourages the majority of residents to travel to the city for their cultural experiences. As a part of a larger metropolis, the county is faced with suburban sprawl and economically depressed downtowns all lacking a sense of community. Ultimately, the local arts and cultural organizations continue to face challenges that include lack of support and visibility with a poor perception of quality experiences.

Arts patrons in Gloucester County do more and spend more per person on arts experiences including live theater and visits to museums than residents in the surrounding SNJ counties. Interestingly, they do not have these experiences in Gloucester County. Arts development and historic preservation in Gloucester County have been slow to develop because of limited public transportation, weak government support, and the lack of a strong corporate presence that could support the arts within the county.

County administration is beginning to address these challenges with the development of a new countywide master plan to be completed in June of 2016 highlighting land use and infrastructure.

Under the auspices of Rowan College at Gloucester County (RCGC) since 2011, the GCC&H now manages college sponsored humanities enrichment programs. The anticipated goal is to build a bridge by engaging the diverse mix of students and the larger community to the college by developing innovative programs and projects that will enhance the core values of the RCGC strategic plan. It has become increasingly clear, with this opportunity and the development of the Gloucester County master plan, that this is the time for the Commission to play a vital role in building and sustaining a vibrant arts community that will highlight our diverse cultures and preserve our heritage.

Core Values:

The Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission believes in the power of the arts and how it can connect, inspire, heal and engage all individuals, regardless of background or ability. We believe that our art and cultural heritage are the factors that define the human experience. In support of this belief, our core values are:

- To encourage and promote the appreciation of individual creativity and expression;
- Provide opportunities for artists through services, programs and presentation of their work;
- The support of art education and life-long learning through multigenerational participation in new non-traditional programs and settings;
- Supporting the inclusion of the arts, cultural heritage and history as key components of downtown revitalization to enhance the economic vitality, place-making and quality of life for all citizens of the community;
- To cultivate visionary leadership, collaborations and community partnerships;
- A strong commitment to provide public access and inclusiveness to all segments of the population.

These core values are the base by which the GCC&H's develops its goals that serve the greater community through our programs and services.

Through the state/county block grant program, the commission works primarily as a service organization offering technical assistance to re-grantees and other non-profits on board development, grant writing, ADA Compliance, and fundraising so they can sustain and strengthen their organizations. The administrator also assists in the development of new and emerging organizations.

The re-granting process begins each year in June with a request for proposals. A grant-writing workshop is offered for all interested in submitting an application and one-on-one technical

assistance is offered until the September deadline. All grants are sent to a panel of arts professionals to review and evaluate. The evaluations and recommendations are then presented to the Commission, who make the final funding decisions. On the average, 15 arts organizations are awarded funding annually. All organizations who receive funding sign grant agreements and are monitored throughout the year for compliance through interim and final reports and site visits.

Along with financial support through NJSCA sponsored grant, RCGC funded partnerships provide financial and non-monetary support by fostering working relationships among artists, educational institutions, and other service providers, encouraging collaborations within county departments, art/history organizations and municipalities. These relationships ultimately impact county residents through the creation of auxiliary programming with the focus to increase sustainable, varied, and quality fine and performing arts experiences for county residents through direct educational experiences as well as participation as an audience member.

The Commission develops its aesthetic standards by engaging arts professionals to assist in:

- 1) Establishing guidelines of artistic excellence for re-grantee organizations to include core curriculum standards developed by the NJ Department of Education for all children's programming.
- 2) Acting on arts committees for public art projects and programs in artist selection of all media.

The ability of the administrator to create broad based community arts and cultural programming through partnerships and collaborations is the strength of the Commission and distinguishes it from other state arts agencies. These partnerships with municipal economic development committees, non-profit and social service organizations, business and other county departments, connect artists and arts organizations of all mediums to create programs and initiatives in arts education and downtown redevelopment throughout the county.

Range of Programing:

Throughout the years, the Commission has partnered with different types of communities to develop on-going sustainable programs and non-profit arts organizations such as:

- The **“Olde Kings Jazz Festival”**, an annual music festival in the historic downtown of Swedesboro, NJ, is a collaboration with local business and restaurants and brings a regional audience.
- Though our relationship with the **Youth Services Commission and the Restorative Justice Program**, a county wide mural arts program has been established bringing professional artists to work with district schools and child development centers.

- **The RCGC Art Gallery** hosts six exhibitions a year. For one exhibit each year, the gallery director and administrator will collaborate with other organizations to offer more artist opportunities for exhibition and expand audience participation. Partners have included:
 - 1) Arts Educators of SNJ for a regional Youth Arts Month Exhibit,
 - 2) The **“YEA Exhibit”** a partnership with regional art galleries to give young and emerging artists from the region an opportunity to exhibit their work in multiple locations throughout the region,
 - 3) And most recently, **“War & Peace”** art created by Military Veterans with a corresponding Warrior Writers workshop for combat veterans.

- **Artist in Residency Programs:** bring the individual artist into the community to create art such as **“The Eyes Are the Windows of the Soul”** with artist Karen Stone and senior citizens. Culminating exhibit was in the Woodbury Antique Center.

- **Whitall Project:** The administrator developed a multi-year project with playwright, Joe Salvatore a professor of educational theater at NYU and three graduate students to create an immersive theater experience at the James & Ann Whitall House at Red Bank Battlefield in National Park. The process has included extensive research, focus groups with the community and educators, and two community script readings. The pilot performance was held in June of 2015 with two performances for 4th grade and middle school students and two performances the next day for the public. Teaching artists facilitated post performance workshops. This program was evaluated and recommendations were developed for presentation with the potential of an educational model.

Introduction to the Planning Document:

Mission:

The Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission (GCC&HC) will serve as a strong advocate and resource in providing cultural and arts education, support for community based cultural and artistic organizations and promoting the values and benefits derived from cultural and artistic experience. We will provide public access, educate and expose all segments of the population to the arts and cultural activities, and foster growth and enhancement of local arts programming.

The Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission strives to enrich our communities through the arts, culture, and history by supporting emerging arts organizations through re-grant funding, and collaborations with community. Our re-grantees, comprised mainly of volunteers, bring arts and cultural programming deep into all aspects of our communities at little or no charge, enriching the lives of our children, young adults, and senior citizens. These programs are reaching many who have never had the opportunity of arts experiences, inspiring and teaching people of all ages new ways of seeing and relating to our world. Through artist in residency programs, professional artists work with youth at risk and senior citizens on projects that examine issues such as preserving our heritage through land conservation, civil rights and the issues of personnel and cultural identity as they relate to the natural, social and physical environments. The commission responds to the need to preserve our history and heritage. We recognize that arts and cultural activities can teach and inspire people of all ages and ethnicities new ways of understanding that can transform the world around us.

Overarching Goals:

Now entering into its 40th year as the county arts agency, the Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission has an opportunity to become a driving force in cultivating strong and visible arts and cultural heritage development within the county than ever before. Along with this opportunity, new challenges will need to be addressed in this planning process in order to take the agency to its next level of development. Our goals will continue to reflect our core values and expand the vision of broadening, deepening and diversifying our audience, our artists and community support.

Building communities through the Arts, Cultural & Heritage through arts education, access, artist opportunities and collaborations are the core values of the GCC&H. The goals below can be achieved through GCC&H initiatives and programs and as well as through the re-grantee organizations.

Goal I: Participation and appreciation for the Arts, Cultural & Heritage through education and life-long learning experiences:

Strategies:

Artistic Programs:

- **NJSCA Local Arts Development Program:** Through community programs, the re-grantees will support art education and lifelong-learning through multigenerational participation. Using standards for artistic excellence established by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, re-grantee organizations provide opportunities for artists through their programming and presentation of their work.
- **Drama:** Using the Whitall Project as a model, develop an educational theater program that would include students and members of the community to perform at site-specific venues using applied theater techniques.
- **Music Society at RCGC:** This program will develop over the next two years. Programming and initiatives will be based on the feedback from student focus groups to include but not limited to artist in residency projects, a student choir or orchestra, and a world music festival.
- **Youth Arts Council:** The GCC&H Commission will form a committee to establish criteria for appointment to the Youth Arts Council. Students will be recruited through RCGC student focus groups and humanities professors. The Youth Arts Council Committee will reach out to high school teachers in all artistic mediums. Once a core group is established, committee members will meet regularly with the Youth Arts Council to discuss and implement programs and initiatives. Visionary leadership skills will be cultivated through these programs and initiatives.

Resource Centers:

- The GCC&H staff will oversee all programs to ensure participation and sustainability through budget management and funding opportunities. Staff and commission members will seek possible partners to collaborate on programs and initiatives.
- The GCC&H Commission members will be appointed as chairs to lead the Educational Theater and Youth Arts Council committees and will assist in the implementation of programming and audience development. Committee and council members will act as “ambassadors” promoting programs through their social media sites and networks.
- Working with the College Public Relations Department, the marketing of programs and services will be accomplished through traditional methods such as press releases, posters, etc. as well as the GCC&H web site and social media.

Impact/Measures of success:

- **NJSCA Local Arts Program:** Re-grantees will be monitored for artistic excellence and broad audience participation through board site visits. ALL re-grantees are required to submit a final report with quantitative measures of success as well as antidotal quotes from program participants.
- The GCC&H staff will measure quantitative success through surveys to audiences, artists and re-grantees organizations. Qualitative success will be measured through annual focus groups, personal interviews.
- Evaluative information and suggestions could be obtained through an open forum such as tacking suggestions to a wall at an event or through photography.
- Using data, photos and video documentation create a three-minute year in review on the arts in Gloucester County for the GCC&H web site. This video could be presented to the RCGC Board of Trustees and potential sponsors.

Goal II: Access to the arts and cultural participation for people of all ages and abilities and backgrounds.***Strategies:*****Artistic Programs & Initiatives:**

- All re-grantees will be required to submit a board certified ADA Compliance Plan with their grant applications. The re-grant application will be revised to include a more description narrative as to how the organization intends to broaden, deepen and diversify their audiences.
- Implement diverse programming in non-traditional venues such as site-specific theater, pop-up exhibits and world music festivals to promote inclusiveness.
- Offer ADA “sensitivity” training to staff, volunteers and re-grantee organizations.
- Identify Artist in Residency Project in public art to engage all members of the community.

Resources Centers:

- The GCC&H will form an ADA Compliance Committee to evaluate and update the current agency ADA Plan. This committee will also review and evaluate all re-grantee ADA Compliance Plans submitted with their grant applications.
- Staff will reach out to county planning department to research current demographics.
- Staff will work with RCGC Web Designer to create a more visible and informative web site. Along with programming announcements this web site will include a “tool box” of information for non-profit organizations.

Impact/Measures of Success:

- Re-grantee support for underserved areas of the county and their reporting on specialized programming and opportunities for underserved, particularly those with disabilities.
- Demographic questions will be included in quantitative audience and artist surveys for GCC&H programming to ensure there is broad access to participation.
- ADA Compliance Committee evaluation of benchmarks and suggestions for agency ADA Plan.

Goal III: Build and strengthen communities through arts partnerships to include economic development, place-making, education, health and social services.

Strategies:

Artistic Programs & Initiatives:

- Partner with other county arts agencies to offer a multi-county networking event for re-grantees, artists and other non-profit organizations.
- Develop and implement a community driven public art project on the campus of RCGC by first identifying partners, location and funding sources.
- Identify the potential to create “third spaces” in an underutilized space within a downtown, such as Glassboro, Pitman or Woodbury for pop-up exhibits, installations and site-specific theater. Connect students and emerging artists with professional artists and art organizations for creative problem solving for the use of these spaces.
- The GCC&H will offer a mini-grant to municipalities for projects that will engage the community through the arts with the potential to spur economic development.

Resource Centers:

- Staff will identify partnerships that can broaden and diversify artist and community participation as well as develop new patrons to support the arts in business and the community. The more arts partnerships created with education, health, housing, transportation, tourism, business and industry the deeper and expansive the impact will be.
- The administrator will serve on the Glassboro Creative Place-making Committee to seek funding for a Creative Place-making Plan for Glassboro. This plan will be used as a model in the creative place-making efforts for the downtowns along the proposed light rail line within the county.
- The staff will identify funding sources through grants and collaborations.

- The GCC&H will establish a Fundraising Committee to seek corporate sponsorships and private donors to support the public art project, artist in residencies and the third space initiatives.

Impact/measures of success:

- The focus of this goal is partnerships in the community and with business. The first indicator of success would be committed partnerships along with the amount of financial support obtained through the GCC&H Fundraising Committee.
- Measures of success will be developed for each project such as the amount of community engagement. A successful incubator project would be the quality and number of partnerships, artist engagement and business development.
- The success of the GCC&H mini-grants will be measured by the amount of arts programming and venues created to spur downtown redevelopment.

New Initiatives:

1. **Arts Incubator Projects:** The two main factors responsible for the slow growth of arts and cultural development in Gloucester County is the lack of affordable venues and financial support from the public and private sectors. The Performing Arts Center on the campus of RCGC is a little used space that is not fully ADA compliant. The possibility of creating incubator projects in buildings in the downtowns along the proposed river-line will be addressed. This initiative would involve strong support from RCGC, the county department of economic development and planning, municipal governments, the business community and possibly NJ Transit. Rowan University and RCGC business students could also be engaged in developing and managing business plans. These partnerships could initiate:

- Internship Programs to create connections between students/emerging artists and professional artists & arts organizations. Artist residency programs for all art forms including **public art** and literary arts could be utilized.
- Sourcing and facilitation of the use of underutilized spaces for artists/organizations as venues as well as shared services. ***The use of old spaces in new ways.***
- A designated space could be created for an Emerging Artists Creativity Hub that would address problem solving such as downtown redevelopment, open space, technology and sustainability through arts engagement.

Source: Chicago University of the Arts: Re-inventing Public Space; the Arts and Public Life.

2. **Youth Arts Council:** Develop a youth arts council comprised of high school and college students appointed by the GCC&H. Initially, high school students would be selected

from three targeted high schools along with RCGC students with two-three students from each school representing each discipline: music, visual arts drama and literary arts. Rowan University students and working artists would serve as mentors.

- The group could be the youth voice of the commission to help plan events such as youth arts & music festivals and opportunities like Saturday art lessons and other initiatives. They could inform the GCC&H how to reach their demographic. Ideally, it could grow to include each high school in the county and create inter-school exhibits, workshops and programs.

Resource Center:

1. Human Resources:

Staff - Aside from the full time administrator, the ability to create a more functional commission must include additional paid support staff. This process will begin with a three-year staffing initiative grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Through this award, the council will fund a professional position for three years with the expectation that RCGC will continue support for the position. In the third year, the GCC&H can apply again to the council to award support for another professional position. With the staffing initiative, the administrator can begin to build the staff of the organization.

The funding to maintain a flexible staffing structure that supports the strategic objectives of the plan and embraces technology by increasing the use of consultants for short term targeted assistance & coaching.

Commission & Volunteers: The Gloucester County Cultural & Heritage Commission is restructuring. The newly formed Executive Committee will review and re-vise the current by-laws that will:

- Create board committees with relevance, strong leadership and an annual work plan.
- Develop board training and orientation for new members to ensure they are knowledgeable about their responsibilities as stewards and ambassadors.
- Create a nominating committee to identify and define desired board expertise.

2. Development:

Funding for the GCC&H's programs, services and initiatives are from the following sources:

Grants and Foundations: The GCC&H receives the bulk of its funding through the NJ State Council for the Arts Local Arts Development Grant. Depending on the program or initiative, the council also offers grants in programming and operating support that the GCC&H apply for.

RCGC Operational Budget: The GCC&H receives an annual operating budget from the Rowan College at Gloucester County Board of Trustees for the commission and the humanities enrichment programs.

Sponsorships/fundraising: The commission will form a development committee comprised of board members with expertise in sponsorship development and fundraising.

In coordination with the RCGC Foundation, the GCC&H will create a development plan focusing on soliciting major gifts from individuals, as well as seeking support from local businesses, corporations and foundations for specific programming. According to 2013 statistics on charitable giving, seventy-two percent of all charitable gifts were made through individual donations. Thus, a fundraising plan focused on identifying individuals with the inclination and capacity to make major gifts to the GCC&H should be a priority. Conversely, recognizing the time-intensive nature of special events and the usually low return on investment, the GCC&H will limit its reliance on events for fundraising.

3. Technology, Visibility and Support:

The GCC&H is under the umbrella of the RCGC website and is not connected with social media. To serve our constituents, the GCC&H must develop and maintain social media sites, develop its own website, and explore other forms of marketing.

The development of an autonomous website, will enable the GCC&H to expand services such as:

- Strengthen and grow the re-grantee pool by offering a “non-profit tool box” with information such as board development and non-profit filing along with templates for ADA and Strategic Planning;
- Build and maintain lists of individual artists creating a network of artists from all mediums. This artist network would serve as a source for artist opportunities in public art and exhibition, artist in residencies, performance and technical assistance;
- Become a source for the community for information on arts and cultural activities within the county.
- A virtual gallery can be created highlighting the RCGC Art Collection used to educate students and provide broad, public access.

