



San Francisco Arts Commission Strategic Plan 2014–2018

NOVEMBER 27, 2013

PREPARED BY
SFAC COMMISSION AND STAFF

WITH
MIG, INC. AND
MUSEUM MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, INC.

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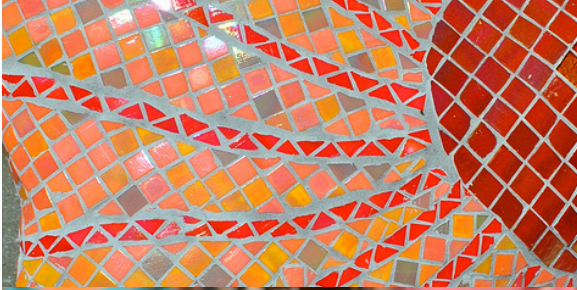
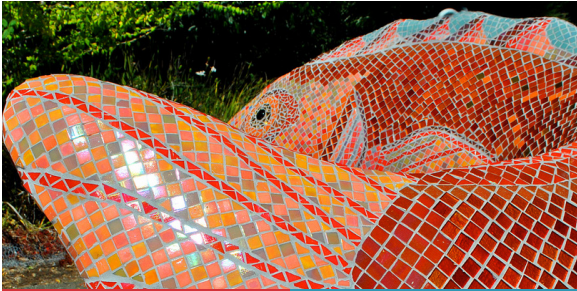
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introduction

ABOUT THE SFAC STRATEGIC PLAN

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Chapter One

ASSESSMENT KEY FINDINGS

The first phase of the SFAC strategic planning process was an in-depth assessment conducted by the MIG/MMC consulting team. This section of the Strategic Plan summarizes the key findings from the assessment, which in turn form the basis for the ideas laid out in the goals and objectives in the pages that follow.

METHODOLOGY

The MIG/MMC team commenced the assessment with a review of organizational documents, such as annual reports, previous strategic plans, legislative mandates, issue briefs, and consultant reports. In order to better understand the operations and programmatic offerings of other municipal arts agencies, the MIG/MMC team conducted a Benchmark Study of five local arts agencies. The Benchmark Study findings were presented to the Commission and SFAC staff in May 2013 and can be reviewed under separate cover.



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One-on-one interviews were conducted with 51 SFAC stakeholders, including Commissioners, senior staff, Board of Supervisors, City department representatives, peer grantmakers, arts organizations, and arts education partners. In addition, four focus groups were held with a total of 31 participants, including three focus groups with SFAC's Cultural Equity Grants recipients, and one focus group with leaders of the six neighborhood Cultural Centers that receive funding from the SFAC. The MIG/MMC team also conducted separate online surveys of the Commissioners and SFAC staff, in order to gather baseline information from those who are closest to the organization.

Topics discussed with interviewees and focus group participants included the strengths of the SFAC, areas in need of improvement, critical issues facing the agency, future vision, leadership, and community perceptions.

Stated Purpose of the SFAC Commission

As stated in Section 5.103 of the City's Charter, "The Arts Commission shall consist of fifteen members appointed by the

Mayor. Eleven members shall be practicing arts professionals and four members shall be lay members. The Commission shall appoint and may remove a director of the department. The Commission shall encourage artistic awareness, participation and expression; education in the arts; assist independent local groups with the development of their own programs; promote the employment of artists and those skilled in crafts, in the public and private sectors; provide liaison with state and federal agencies to ensure increased funding for the arts from these agencies as well as represent arts issues and policy in the respective governmental bodies; promote the continued availability of living and working space for artists within the City and County; and enlist the aid of all City and County governmental units in the task of ensuring the fullest expression of artistic potential by and among the residents of San Francisco. In addition the Arts Commission will: approve the designs for all public structures; approve the design and location of all works of art before they are acquired, transferred or sold by the City and County; promote a

neighborhood arts program to encourage and support an active interest in the arts on a local and neighborhood level; and supervise and control the expenditure of all appropriations made by the Board of Supervisors for the advancement of the visual, performing or literary arts.

FINDINGS

Strengths

The current SFAC leadership and staff were identified by the vast majority of interviewees as key strengths of the SFAC today. The Director of Cultural Affairs' leadership and communication skills were identified as a key strength. SFAC were described as being very knowledgeable on arts issues and were a valuable resource when sharing their expertise.

Critical Issues

Interviewees expressed consensus about the key issues facing the SFAC. Those issues include the lack of a unifying vision to guide the agency's work; the need for more resources to support the breadth of programs at the SFAC; the relevancy of the agency's programs, which have expanded over time in response to legislative

mandates; a lack of clear goals and related accountability in the programs provided; proper care for the Civic Art Collection; and low visibility and awareness of the SFAC with the general public. These issues were touched upon by the majority of interviewees, across all stakeholder groups. In addition, there were issues particular to each stakeholder group; those issues are detailed below.

Commissioners

Based on the online survey of Commissioners and in-person interviews, the Commissioners' comments coalesced around three core issues specific to their work. First, they noted a lack of clarity about their roles and responsibilities as members of the SFAC's governing body. Second, the Commissioners said they work effectively in committees, but the full meetings of the Commission are procedural and serve as a "rubber stamp" on the work done in committee. And third, the majority of Commissioners voiced frustration that full Commission meetings focus too heavily on operational issues and expressed a desire to spend more time focusing on the

SFAC's vision and mission, as well as policy and legislative issues that are responsive to community need.

Staff

By surveying all SFAC staff and conducting one-on-one interviews with senior staff, the MIG/MMC team was able to glean a breadth of information from staff about the perceived areas of strength and challenge. In addition to the strengths identified by all interviewees, the staff pointed to strengths in the diversity and breadth of SFAC programming, the agency's ability to bridge sectors and partner effectively, the ability to direct grants and funding, the agency's support of artists through grants and programs, the expertise and dedication of Commissioners, and the role the agency's legislative mandates have played in initiating programs.

Staff identified several challenges beyond those mentioned across all interviewees. Those issues include the lack of data-driven decision-making within the SFAC, the agency's tendency to be reactive to opportunities and political decisions, a lack of strong communication across programs,

limited visibility of the SFAC within City government, and a lack of SFAC champions.

External Stakeholders

External stakeholders interviewed included leaders within San Francisco arts organizations, peer grantmakers, Supervisors and City Department representatives. Key issues identified by this group of interviewees focused on perceived “mission creep” at SFAC, meaning that the agency had strayed from its mission with the addition of myriad programs over time. At the same time, this group pointed to the changing demographics of San Francisco and the need to constantly evaluate program relevancy. Within the SFAC, they felt that programs were siloed, operating much like individual nonprofit entities, instead of one organization with an overarching vision and mission. They also pointed to a fundamental tension between the SFAC’s dual roles as programmer and funder, which often puts the agency in direct competition with its grantees. Finally, a number of City department representatives

voiced frustration with the Civic Design review process, which is sometimes seen as causing time delays and budget overruns rather than improving the quality of public infrastructure design as it is intended.

Cultural Equity & Cultural Center Grantees

The MIG/MMC team spoke with SFAC grantees in focus groups that revealed a high level of respect for the Cultural Equity Grants (CEG) program as a national model with an effective panel review process and grants to individual artists, which are a rarity in grantmaking today. Key issues identified by the focus group participants included tensions between the SFAC’s conflicting roles as funder and landlord (in the case of the Cultural Centers), and funder and program provider. A number of grantees noted their experiences applying for funding outside of the SFAC, only to find they were in competition for the grant with the SFAC itself. Representatives of the Cultural Centers said the lack of long-term leases for their facilities, which are owned by the City, poses challenges for their organizations as they try to fundraise for capital improvements from

other entities. CEG grantees spoke of an overly complex application process for the size of grants awarded, while the Cultural Centers spoke of overly complex and often changing reporting requirements for their grants. Some CEG grantees worried that grant opportunities are not widely promoted, resulting in a small pool of applicants relative to the need within the arts community. Participants in all of the groups raised concerns about changing demographics and rises in the cost of living in San Francisco that see artists being pushed out of the City. Finally, a number of interviewees outside of the focus groups said a key issue in the SFAC’s grantmaking process is that grants to the Cultural Centers are non-competitive and lack an appropriate accountability structure.

FUTURE VISION

With this understanding of the key issues facing the SFAC, interviewees were asked to articulate their vision for the future of the agency. Common themes included making the SFAC more of a “player” in the City’s education sector, economy, and government. Many envisioned a future in

which the SFAC breaks its programmatic silos by creating an overarching focus on its roles as a grantmaker, capacity builder, and resource within San Francisco's arts ecosystem. In that role as resource and convener, many interviewees saw an opportunity for the SFAC to reach out to demographic groups who are new to the City and do not currently have ties to the arts community. In order to be effective in this new role, interviewees noted the SFAC must strengthen its relationships with City departments, policymakers, and other community stakeholders to build its political capital. Interviewees also pointed to a desire to be more efficient in carrying out the work of the SFAC, bringing a greater sense of focus to their work, securing a funding base, enhancing awareness of the SFAC through marketing and public relations efforts, and highlighting the work of grantees and local artists.

Barriers to achieving this future vision include bureaucracy, resource constraints, a lack of a cohesive vision and clear goals, political realities, and the challenges associated with creative risk-taking within the government context.

Ultimately, interviewees felt that the right leadership is in place and the timing is right to embrace an ambitious vision for the future that will bring greater clarity to the work of the SFAC. The goals and objectives detailed in this Strategic Plan articulate the SFAC's vision for the next five years as derived from these assessment findings and discussed with stakeholders through the strategic planning process.



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Chapter Two

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

The San Francisco Arts Commission envisions a San Francisco where the transformative power of art is critical to strengthening neighborhoods, building infrastructure and fostering positive social change. We believe the arts create inspiring personal experiences, illuminate the human condition, and offer meaningful ways to engage with each other and the world around us. We imagine a vibrant San Francisco where creativity, prosperity and progress go hand in hand. We elevate artists' ideas to improve the quality of life for everyone through a united cultural sector whose contributions are vital and valued.

Mission

The San Francisco Arts Commission is the City agency that champions the arts as essential to daily life by investing in a vibrant arts community, creating an enhanced urban environment, and shaping innovative cultural policy.

Values

We value:

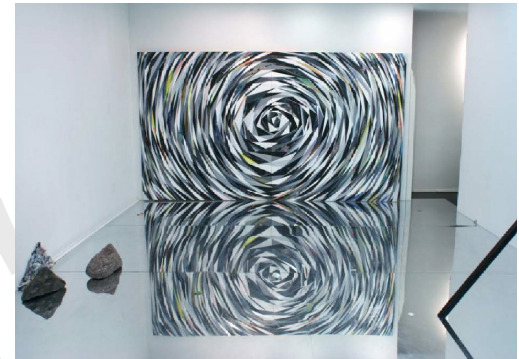
- The arts as a vehicle for positive social change and prosperity
- Access to high quality arts experiences
- Cultural equity
- Accountability and data-driven decision-making
- Responsiveness to community needs
- The arts as critical to a healthy democracy and innovative government
- Collaboration and partnerships



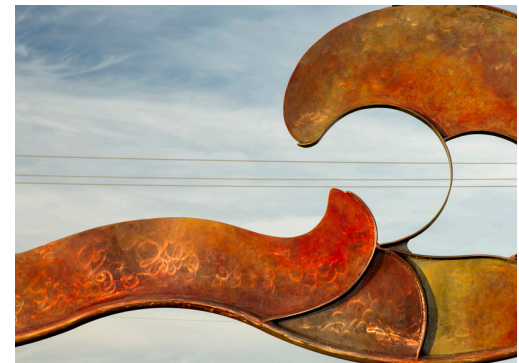
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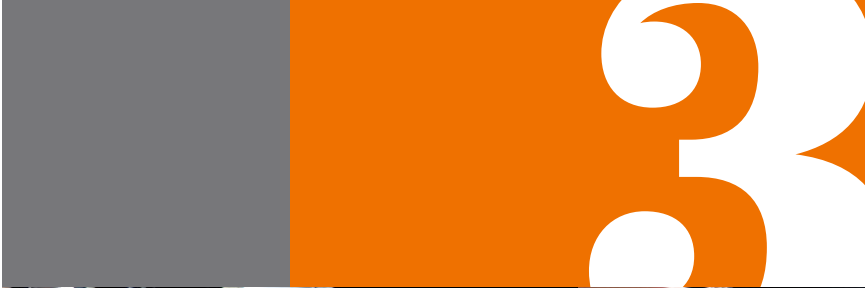
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Chapter Three

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: **Invest in a vibrant arts community**

With an annual grantmaking budget of over \$4 million, the SFAC makes substantial resource investments in the arts community through grant funding and technical expertise to local artists and arts organizations. SFAC's Cultural Equity Grants program awards \$1.8 million each year to artists and arts organizations working within the City and County of San Francisco. The SFAC also provides \$2.2 million in non-competitive operating grants to the City's six Cultural Centers, two of which are virtual, and provides support to an array of programs within

the Community Arts and Education program. SFAC resources are distributed in a manner that achieves both depth and breadth of support to the arts sector. The total grant dollars and staff hours do not tell the full story of the impact of SFAC investments in San Francisco, and while studies have quantified the economic impact of the arts in San Francisco, staff, stakeholders, and Commissioners agree that more work needs to be done to communicate the impact and benefits of these community investments to policymakers and the general public.

The SFAC's capital assets include the four City-owned facilities operated by nonprofit Cultural Centers. Each of the Cultural Centers receives an annual dollar lease for their facility in addition to the non-competitive general operating grant from the SFAC. A key priority for the Cultural Centers will include ongoing facility improvements and securing the related funding, as well as creating a separation between facility management and grant management. This change would reflect a similar trend within the City of San Francisco, which finds itself playing a larger role in managing physical assets that were once under operating agreements that required nonprofits to manage renewals and maintenance entirely on their own.

In 2015, the SFAC is slated to move into the Veterans War Memorial building, greatly enhancing the agency's visibility and accessibility. Given the decreasing availability of affordable space for nonprofit arts organizations in the City, the larger space will provide the SFAC with a new resource with which to respond to

the growing affordability crisis the arts community faces. A key priority over the next year will be to determine the future role for the Galleries program to ensure the SFAC's expanded programming space is utilized in full alignment with the goals and priorities of a municipal City department and in partnership with San Francisco's visual arts community.

In addition to its grant making and capital facility investments, the SFAC has an opportunity to re-envision its investment in the community through arts education. Today, the SFAC focuses on its role as a resource for the arts education community through partnerships with the San Francisco Unified School District, the Arts Providers Alliance of San Francisco, and the Department of Public Works, including management of the Department of Public Works-funded StreetSmARTS and Where Art Lives programs. In addition, the SFAC manages the WritersCorps program, one of its only direct service programs. With changes in SFAC leadership, the upcoming renewal of the Public Education and

Enrichment Fund, the near completion of the existing Arts Education Master Plan and new opportunities on the horizon, there is a strong commitment to continue supporting arts education. The next five years provides the right timing to reassess and redefine the SFAC's role in arts education.

Key priorities will include aligning the Cultural Equity and Community Arts and Education program activities; establishing a consistent, ongoing evaluation program to monitor SFAC grantmaking to ensure its flexibility and relevancy; working with private philanthropic partners, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development and Grants for the Arts to continually re-evaluate SFAC's place within the funding ecosystem; revising funding strategies over time to remain accountable to shifting needs in the arts sector; investing in opportunities for artists to make a living in San Francisco through Individual Artist Commissions and Street Artist licensing; and establishing arts education policy leadership as a priority within the agency to better invest in the future.

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
<p>1.1 Review and evaluate SFAC grantmaking strategy on an annual basis to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with SFAC vision and mission • Efficiency and effectiveness of application, selection, and reporting processes • Technical assistance needs and best mechanisms for offering technical assistance • Achievement of grant outcomes and appropriate accountability • Demographic profile of artists and organizations reached • Impact of general operating support compared to capacity building or project/program support 	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
1.2 Facilitate improved interactions between other City agencies (e.g., Grants for the Arts, Office of Economic Workforce Development, etc.), private philanthropy and corporate sponsors to ensure coordination of investments within the arts community	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
1.3 Continue to build strategic partnerships with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and arts providers to identify gaps in arts education service delivery, renew the Public Education and Enrichment Fund, support development of the next phase of an SFUSD Arts Education Master Plan and connect arts education resources	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
1.4 Provide leadership to develop projects and initiatives that are competitive for large-scale grants from state and national funders for high-impact projects that benefit the San Francisco arts community	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
1.5 Work with Cultural Centers to identify indicators of quality (e.g., quality of life benefits, economic impact, community building outcomes, youth development) to better convey the impact of the Centers to the public, policymakers and sub-tenants	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
1.6 Review lease structure for Cultural Centers and explore possibilities for separating SFAC's grantmaking and landlord functions; determine staffing needs for managing facilities	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
1.7 Maximize potential for the new expanded programming and exhibition space in the Veterans War Memorial building to meet community need	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Goal 2: **Enhance the urban environment**

The SFAC enhances San Francisco's public spaces and integrates artwork into the fabric of daily life through its visual arts and design programs, including Civic Design Review, Public Art, and Civic Art Collection. A key priority in the years ahead will be to better integrate and align these three programs so they work more seamlessly with one another and with other City departments. It will also be important that the SFAC illuminate the value that these programs add to ensuring a high-quality, innovative built environment that balances quality and user experience with cost-effectiveness and timeliness.

The SFAC is charged with preservation of the Civic Art Collection, although no dedicated funding stream is identified in the City Charter for this purpose. Toward that end, the Public Art ordinance was

amended to provide 5% for maintenance funds, and more recently, the Public Art Trust enacted in 2012 will provide some funds for maintenance, but these changes will not cover the conservation needs of historical monuments and gifts to the City obtained prior to the 2% for Art Ordinance. The SFAC is allocated maintenance funding in its annual budget, but the Civic Art Collection and the four facilities housing the Cultural Centers compete for the same pool of capital funds, leaving too little funding to adequately pay for the maintenance. It will be essential to determine a plan for the proper care and maintenance of the Collection in a way that does not compete with the nonprofit organizations the SFAC serves.

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
2.1 Implement process improvements for the Civic Design Review, Public Art Program and Civic Art Collection programs that address structural challenges, promote alignment and provide improved service to City agencies	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.2 Create an interdepartmental working group to promote coordination between public art, civic design, and capital planning	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.3 Explore partnership agreements with City departments to maintain the Civic Art Collection	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.4 Complete Civic Art Collection inventory, evaluate significance and condition of Collection, and de-accession works according to established collections policy	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
2.5 Complete a five-year plan for the care of the Civic Art Collection, including projected cost estimates and potential revenue sources	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.6 Seek stronger enforcement of existing laws for public art vandalism abatement	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.7 Raise awareness of the historic significance and quality of the Civic Art Collection through exhibits, programs, and educational resources that make the work accessible to the public	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
2.8 Ensure safe and secure storage space of the Civic Art Collection in the Veterans War Memorial Building	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Goal 3: **Shape innovative cultural policy**

The value and benefits of the arts and their positive impact on community and economic development is understood and well-documented within the arts community. Along with the tangible, measurable impacts they provide (e.g., tourism dollars that support the City's general fund, arts education programs for school children, employment for artists and indirect spending at restaurants, parking garages, etc.), the intrinsic value of the arts is critical to the human experience (e.g., compassion, cross-cultural understanding and appreciation), yet these qualities are less understood and valued outside the arts sector.

At the same time, San Francisco's rich and diverse arts resources are essential to the City's identity and economy, but are often taken for granted or undervalued for their problem-solving potential. It is important

that policymakers and the public understand the critical role the arts play in creating an engaged, informed, and creative democracy—that the arts are just as critical as our libraries and parks to the high quality of life and culture that San Franciscans value. SFAC can provide leadership and serve in the role of convener on topics such as: maintaining affordable space and housing for artists, the role of the arts in education, and the contribution of the arts to our economy to make the agency a contributor to better City government.

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
3.1 Work with elected officials and their staff to better understand the needs of each district and how the SFAC can play a role in meeting those needs	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.2 Establish an annual Commission policy agenda and dedicate meeting time to address topics of relevance to the arts community	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.3 Provide the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors with information on issues facing the arts community, and with policy proposals to address those issues	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.4 Act as a liaison between the arts community and policymakers, in order to forge an understanding of, and appreciation for, the way in which artists can contribute to creative problem solving and new ways of thinking	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
3.5 Partner with thought leaders to strengthen SFAC's ability to educate decision makers and the public about the significant contribution the arts make to San Francisco	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.6 Improve SFAC's ability to capture, analyze and use data to effectively inform policy development	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.7 Establish a shared arts and culture policy agenda with other City arts agencies to strengthen and align the City's investment in the arts	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Goal 4: Build public awareness of the value and benefits of the arts

The SFAC is well positioned to lead the effort to increase awareness of the importance of the arts by gathering, interpreting, and communicating information about the significance of the arts. These efforts will also raise the visibility of SFAC activities, attracting new audiences and helping San Francisco residents and visitors access and enjoy resources that are readily available throughout the City.

While enhancing the SFAC's role in communicating the value of the arts to the public, it is equally important to effectively communicate with the public about the SFAC as an agency instead of focusing on program-specific messaging. Considering these challenges, key priorities will include implementing a five-year marketing and communications plan to coordinate SFAC

messaging; identifying partnerships to advance the arts in City activities, policy and legislation; and maximizing extant efforts to map arts and cultural assets in San Francisco to better demonstrate the presence of the arts in our city.

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
<p>4.1 Define decision making framework and guidelines for assessing strategic partnerships with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City agencies and organizations • Arts funders • Community groups (e.g., Merchants Associations, Artist Collectives, CBDs and other neighborhood interest groups) • Cultural and social services organizations that serve historically underserved communities • Local universities and non-profit organizations 	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
<p>4.2 Increase awareness of SFAC programs and activities through marketing and communications activities that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cohesive communications and media strategy to increase the public's general awareness of SFAC • Annual convening of grantees, arts funders, and other members of the arts community • Overhauling the SFAC website to service as a portal for information about SFAC programs • Increased engagement with the arts community including: artists, arts organizations and funders, and the general public 	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<p>4.3 Use evaluation findings and artist case studies to communicate the value and impact of SFAC grant investments to policymakers and the general public</p>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Goal 5: **Improve operations to better serve the San Francisco arts ecosystem**

This Strategic Plan articulates a new focus around the SFAC's roles as resource and convener and presents an updated mission and goals and vision for the future. Through the strategic planning process, SFAC has received valuable input regarding ways to provide leadership and be more responsive to the needs of the arts community, its peer agencies and the general public. SFAC has already begun assessing its programs and is committed to improving its internal operations. To accomplish the goals in this Strategic Plan, some reorganization of the SFAC infrastructure will be required to reflect these changes.

In addition, the SFAC Commissioners are eager to improve their ability to be engaged and govern effectively to achieve the goals in this plan. It should be noted the Commission's role is unique amongst

arts commissions in large urban centers (e.g., Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle), whose boards serve in an advisory capacity only. Each Commissioner sits on at least one committee each year and Commissioners have expressed a desire to increase discussions around policy issues and solutions to City challenges in full Commission meetings.

Since the appointment of a new Director of Cultural Affairs in 2012, the SFAC has made substantial improvements in its financial operations and brought improved accuracy and accountability to its financial management. Through this Strategic Plan, the SFAC now seeks to improve work practices and better align its programs and operations to achieve plan goals and advance a clear, long-term vision for the arts in San Francisco.

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
5.1 Assess programs to determine alignment with SFAC vision, mission and goals	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.2 Establish performance measures for all SFAC programs to better determine relevancy and impact	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.3 Align organizational chart with Strategic Plan goals and priorities	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.4 Establish the Commission's oversight of the Strategic Plan and related benchmarks	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.5 Revisit Commission committee structure to ensure it aligns with Strategic Plan	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.6 Strengthen Commissioners' orientation to include a meeting with the chair(s) of each member's assigned committee(s)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES	ACCOUNTABIL-	START	FINISH	STATUS
5.7 Provide Commissioners with support and messaging that enhances their ability to serve as ambassadors for the SFAC with the public and City government	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
5.8 Set the Commission's annual policy agenda in partnership with the Director of Cultural Affairs and in alignment with the Strategic Plan and integrate policy agenda into the work of committees	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

appendices

Still to come.

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