

FY2025-27 Strategic Plan



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INTRODUCTION

Mission

Springboard for the Arts' mission is to support artists with the tools to make a living and a life, and to build just and equitable communities full of meaning, joy and connection.

Who is an artist?

An artist is anyone who thinks creatively about the world and their dynamic place in it. Our definition of artist is broad and includes visual artists, performers, writers, music creators, culture bearers, makers, artisans, storytellers, social conveners, idea purveyors, imaginaries, visionaries, students, teachers, organizers and nurturers – anyone who has an intentional creative practice. We recognize artists for their ability to produce and create, and also for their ability to use creative processes to engage community, ask hard questions, and to contribute to community challenges. Artists are a powerful resource in every place and community. Springboard helps artists define success for themselves – economic success, recognition, a supportive community, respect, social change, and more. Our work illuminates the value and possibility of a more full and complex conception of artists and their roles.

Equity is the foundation for all our work

Springboard's scope is to advocate for and support artists and communities by developing and tending to local infrastructure and ecosystems across Minnesota, the Upper Midwest and the nation. Springboard is for everyone. We know that to be *truly* "for everyone" means we need to address the recurring inequities that exist in the arts, nonprofit sector and broader economic systems that have prevented "everyone" from equitable access and opportunities.

Across all our programs we start with our intention to increase accessibility and to prioritize communities that are under-represented, under-resourced and in many cases have had resources and culture extracted from them for someone else's benefit. As a *baseline* all our programs prioritize:

- People who are Native, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
- People who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit
- People in rural places and underinvested urban neighborhoods
- People with disabilities

We acknowledge that there are additional communities that experience systemic extraction, including because of gender, age, religious belief, geography, national origin and economics. While these identities may not be defined in our prioritized groups, we always ask “What is the context of this place?,” “Who usually benefits and who is left out?,” “Are we the right people to be doing this?,” and “Who do we need to be in relationship with?”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

How we work is as important as what we do.

Start with collaboration

We collaborate with and within existing resources and systems, especially outside of the traditional arts sector, both because there is abundant potential in those relationships, and because systems will be improved by engaging artists. We build bridges and mechanisms to connect artists as partners in system change. The goal of our work is not a product, but rather the relationships that are sparked and fed through working together. Beyond our own work, we help artists and organizations collaborate with each other and others in their communities. We seek mutual respect, trust, commitment, and reciprocity with all our partners.

By artists for artists

We incorporate the expertise and experience of artists into creating effective, responsive and relevant programs and tools to support the interests and needs of artists and communities. We use the broadest definition of who an artist is and build our work through an intentional and creative process using collaboration, communication, iteration and play.

Think big, start small

Our work is characterized by optimism that change is possible, and belief that the boldness and creativity of artists can address the challenges facing our communities. We try new things and learn by doing. We respond to big issues by piloting work that makes a material difference in our own neighborhoods and communities, and to contribute where we are. This approach allows us to be useful in times of great need in a way that can inform and sustain system change and movement building.

Abundance over scarcity

The tools we make are intentionally designed to be widely usable, shareable and replicable. We strive to create an ecosystem of support for creative people. We reduce barriers and competition for access to resources as much as possible. We create welcoming, generous, joyful environments, both in person and virtual.

GEOGRAPHY AND CARE FOR PLACE

Springboard works nationally, regionally and locally. In our two homes, Fergus Falls and Saint Paul, we are "doers." In other places, we connect people, catalyze, advocate, and advise.

In our two homes, neighborhoods and towns we are practitioners, creative small businesses, local experts and members of our communities. We have physical spaces to share, animate and contribute, and we have a long-term commitment to be a collaborator, supporter, partner and steward. In these places we provide direct programming and services – we DO things.

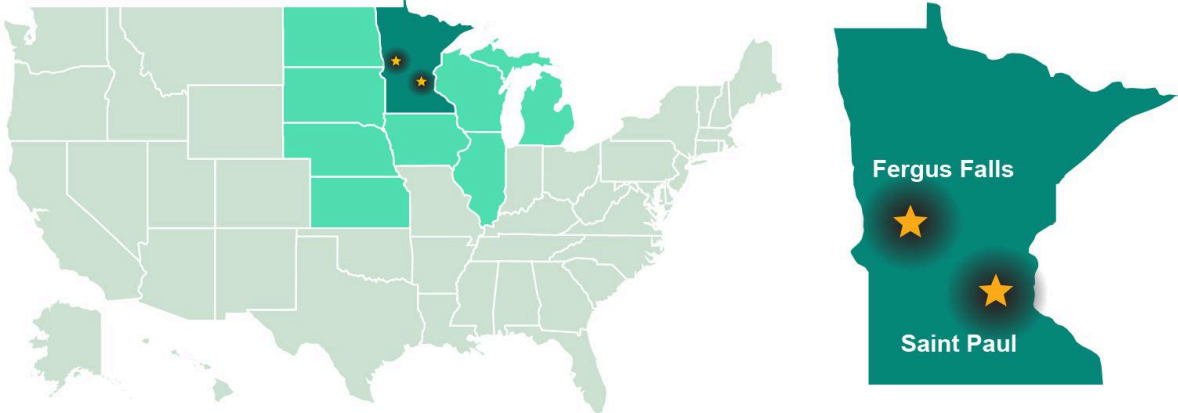
In these places and regions, we provide Springboard's ongoing programs and develop new ideas, partnerships and programs in service of community needs and opportunities. In these places we also strive to be responsive to the specific needs of our neighbors and collaborators. Sometimes this means we do things with less process or beyond the typical boundaries of our programs, in service of relationships and community support.

Beyond our home communities, Springboard's goal is to strengthen and support local ecosystems. We do this by convening networks, building collaborative projects, sharing models, resources and tools and advocating for local work.

Springboard's work is rooted in these ideas about geography and place:

1. **Local context matters** and local people are best positioned to know what their communities need and to be able to deliver it in a relevant and accessible way. We value and prioritize locally grown systems and solutions.
2. **Many communities do not currently have robust or sustainable ecosystems of support for artists, culture makers and creative entrepreneurs.** We have a responsibility to share our practices and the resources we have and to catalyze and support the growth of these local ecosystems.
3. **Place-based work must be grounded in repair and stewardship,** in response to the histories of human and environmental extraction.

Where we work:



- ★ **Offices** – Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods of Saint Paul
– Fergus Falls
- **Local** – Twin Cities metro
– Otter Tail County
- **State** – Minnesota
- **Regional** – Upper Midwest (ND, SD, MN, WI, IA, MI, NE, IL, KS & Native Nations)
- **National** – United States

IDEAS THAT ANIMATE OUR WORK

Creativity is a human right

The existence and access to wonder, connection, imagination and story is foundational to our individual and collective health and justice of our systems.

Rural-urban solidarity

Our lives are more intertwined than most national media narratives or politicians want us to believe. There is powerful potential if we take the time to discover and affirm the ways in which urban and rural people share a future together.

Economic justice is necessary

For artists to truly thrive, we need an economy that works better for everyone. Artists should be both beneficiaries and allies to movements for economic change.

Art is labor

Pay artists for their work, ideas, and process.

VISION PRIORITIES

Artists are essential

We support, celebrate and develop individual creative practice, cultural traditions and the broader field of artists as meaning-makers, storytellers, creative thinkers and change agents, so that they are recognized and valued as key contributors to healthy, equitable communities.

Artists use their creative process and creative power to make meaning, share ideas, bring people together, shift conversations, challenge assumptions and envision new futures. Whether creating moments of joy, objects from local materials, preserving cultural traditions, or challenging society's toughest questions, artists as culture bearers, creative workers, and break-the-box thinkers are key to making communities places where people want to live, participate, and contribute to social change.

We believe that the act of creating art and meaning making individually and collectively is a fundamental human right and a critical source of power and agency.

Vibrant and just local economies

We seek to create vibrant and just local economies where artists can make a living and a life. We broadly define local economies as arenas of exchange and connection, from goods and services to ideas and relationships.

The capital of this economy is not only financial, but equally the human, social, cultural and physical. These local economies engage the people connected to a place, and pay particular attention to making reparations to communities that have been and continue to be displaced and disadvantaged, and to identifying alternatives to extractive industries and development. People are able to make a living, create and produce what is self-fulfilling, live where they choose, enjoy a clean environment, and be part of a thriving, regenerative community.

Human-centered systems

Through engaging artists, we aim to change policies and structures so that they are informed by and created to support the needs, assets and health of the people who hold the least amount of power within those systems.

To do this we must acknowledge the truth of our existing structures: that the dominant systems in which most communities operate are built by a historically exclusive and exclusionary group of people, intentionally creating ever expanding disparities, where too many people, generations, communities and places bear the trauma and costs. Worth, value, and wealth have been defined primarily within white supremacist, capitalist patriarchies.

By working with artists as creative thinkers, leaders and organizers, we imagine new futures, honor community knowledge and build the systems that will support truly healthy, equitable, and just communities to flourish. We value individual and community needs not only for safety, security and health but also for love, connection, community and meaning.

Durable, responsive, innovative organization

The durability of Springboard as a component of the larger ecosystem is also our work. Both as a driver to support artists, communities and human-centered systems, and also as a model for the non-profit sector and all civic-focused sectors. We strive for a durable, stable structure that specifically enables responsiveness and innovation.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Artists are essential

We support, celebrate and develop individual creative practice, cultural traditions and the broader field of artists as meaning-makers, storytellers, creative thinkers and change agents, so that they are recognized and valued as key contributors to healthy, equitable communities.

Goal 1 Capacity building for artists to make living and life

- **Strategy 1.1** Provide Career Development & Professional Practice skills (Ex: WoA, Resource Labs, career consultations, job & opportunities board, RRF, Artists Working in Community training/handbook, Incubator)
- **Strategy 1.2** Provide Artist Resources and Referrals (Ex: Jobs and Opportunities board, MNLA, Healthcare, Resource Fair AV closet)

Goal 2 Capacity building & leadership development for artists to collaborate and work cross-sector

- **Strategy 2.1** Provide leadership development (Ex: Art-Train, cohort/fellow programs, Rural Futures Summit)
- **Strategy 2.2** Provide opportunities to practice collaborative projects (Ex: Artists Respond, Guaranteed Income Narrative Change, Falls Arts Exchange)

Goal 3 Capacity building for other sectors to engage artists to meet mission

- **Strategy 3.1** Provide trainings and tools (Ex: Art-Train, Creative Change Coalition, custom workshops, toolkits, Ready Go)
- **Strategy 3.2** Develop and implement cross-sector programs (Ex: Artists on Main Street, Artists Working in Community with partners, Guaranteed Income Narrative Change)

Goal 4 Lift the visibility and broaden understanding of value of artists as contributors to community health

- **Strategy 4.1** Storytelling (Ex: presentations, Creative Change Coalition, Rural Futures Summit, narrative change projects, research and impact reports)

How will we know?

- % of financial resources allocated to artists
- # of participants and service users

- # of new and promising pilots for new ways of working, new mechanisms, etc.
- # of non- arts partners
- # of toolkits used
- # media mentions

Vibrant and just local economies

We seek to create vibrant and just local economies where artists can make a living and a life.

Goal 1 Distribute or disseminate more resources to more artists more equitably

- **Strategy 1.1** Increase access to capital (Ex: Guaranteed Income, Incubator, Ready Go, Growth Fund)

Goal 2 Increase local systems of exchange

- **Strategy 2.1** Build creative economies (Ex: Maker to Mkt, Community Supported Arts, Falls Arts Exchange, Opportunities board)

How will we know?

- % of financial resources allocated to priority communities
- # of participants (artists and audience/consumer/participant)
- # of toolkits used

Human-centered systems

Through engaging artists, we aim to change policies and structures so that they are informed by and created to support the needs, assets and health of the people who hold the least amount of power within those systems.

Goal 1 Strengthen policy advocacy to change inequitable systems and practices that impact artists and communities

- **Strategy 1.1** Support artists to engage in policy and structures (Ex: Artist Organizer, policy work, Guaranteed Income Narrative Change)
- **Strategy 1.2** Advocate for policy and policy implementation change (Ex: work with Small Business Administration, Springboard policy screen, etc.)

Goal 2 Build research and framing useful to others and to the field

- **Strategy 2.1** Produce information in credible and legible formats (Ex: Creative Change Coalition, Guaranteed Income research, impact reports)

Goal 3 Lift the visibility of artists as innovators in system and structure change

- **Strategy 3.1** Showcase artists by featuring their projects, work and as presenters (Ex: Artists Respond, Creative Change Coalition, Falls Arts Exchange)

Goal 4 Strengthen and connect local ecosystems

- **Strategy 4.1** Offer programming (Ex: Creative Change Coalition, - Connection Sparks, Rural Futures Summit)
- **Strategy 4.2** Share and model Springboard practices and models (Ex: Art-Train, Creative Change Coalition, Artists Working in Community)

How will we know?

- Invited to participate in policy changes
- # of policy engagements
- # artists engaged
- # of media mentions
- Research generated and number of users
- # of Coalition members and participants
- Representation and engagement of Coalition members
- Springboard models/processes shared as toolkits, resources

Durable, responsive, innovative organization

The durability of Springboard as a component of the larger ecosystem is also our work. Both as a driver to support artists, communities and human-centered systems, and also as a model for the nonprofit sector and all civic-focused sectors. We strive for a durable, stable structure that specifically enables responsiveness and innovation.

Goal 1 Ensure that our growth and values are supported by strong and stable financial resources and systems

- **Strategy 1.1** Planning for long term health.
- **Strategy 1.2** Streamline and strengthen internal checks and balances between fundraising and accounting
- **Strategy 1.3** Model and share organizational practices in addition to program models (Ex: Incubator, fundraising)

Goal 2 Supported and engaged people (board, staff, contractors, etc)

- **Strategy 2.1** Deepen infrastructure for board to engage
- **Strategy 2.2** Create more economic opportunities for people we work with (ie Artist Career Consultants, fellows, project artists)
- **Strategy 2.3** Create more robust, values-aligned, transparent HR systems

Goal 3 Environmentally healthy, accessible and welcoming community spaces

- **Strategy 3.1** Create mechanisms for community to use our spaces (Ex: Resource labs, meeting/event space)
- **Strategy 3.2** Ongoing learning and improvement of accessibility in our spaces.
- **Strategy 3.3** Ongoing learning and improvement of sustainability of our spaces.
- **Strategy 3.4** Plan for climate and land stewardship (Ex: conservation easement, voluntary land tax)
- **Strategy 3.5** Host intentional invitations and convenings to expand our relationships

Goal 4 Organizational culture of abundance, health, joy and accountability

- **Strategy 4.1** Establish organizational processes and procedures that meet the evolving needs of our sites and programs (Ex: baseline standards for venues & vendors and project management)
- **Strategy 4.2** Build organizational capacity for evaluation/impact measurement
- **Strategy 4.3** Continue to build innovative HR practices and systems that contribute to healthy communication, professional development, and human centered benefits.

How will we know?

- Annual income goals met
- Long term financial plan in place
- Development of fundraising ethics and practices
- Increased support from a diverse, generous, and engaged donor base, valuing community participation at all giving levels
- Environmental reports from our spaces
- Financial systems updated
- HR systems revised to ensure greater equity, clarity and ease
- Set guidelines for environmental practices/considerations
- Research and decision made on conservation easement and land tax
- Annual Staffing KPI report

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