

4CULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN:

**KING
COUNTY'S
CULTURAL
PLAN**

SPRING 2020



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A LETTER FROM 4CULTURE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

Over the past few years, 4Culture has experienced many changes. We developed a new vision, mission, and values, welcomed new leadership on our Board and in our staff, and collaborated with King County Executive Dow Constantine and the King County Council to build pathways toward more accessible and racially equitable funding across our program areas.

With these successes underway, in 2019 we began a strategic planning process to guide cultural development in King County for the next three years. Then, in early 2020, as 4Culture staff reviewed the draft plan, life as we knew it changed. King County became the epicenter of the novel Coronavirus outbreak and within days, the economic impacts to the cultural sector were swift and deep.

Our strategic plan is the product of many perspectives. It was built to be a living document – capable of flexing in the most unpredictable of times – to help us best live out our mission and make progress toward our goals, even as we adapt to a new social and economic reality. In fact, as COVID-19 prevention measures closed galleries, theaters, museums and gathering spaces throughout the county, we looked to our mission and this plan to help guide our response. After closing our office and public gallery, we realigned funding to provide emergency relief to cultural organizations and cultural workers; adjusted timelines so grant awardees could invoice immediately; and revised contracts to account for cancelled events. [For more detail on 4Culture's COVID-19 response strategy, see the Appendix.](#)

We remain committed to our plan and its four fundamental goals:

1. Evolve and improve 4Culture's operations, funding programs, and commissions to fulfill our mission.
2. Increase racially equitable access to cultural space and a culturally rich built environment that is resilient to economic forces.
3. Foster racial equity, agency, and collaboration for cultural practitioners to build a stronger cultural sector.
4. Understand and demonstrate the impact of culture on the people of King County.

Our community's ability and willingness to take care of each other in crisis underscores the unifying role culture can play. Creativity and cultural expression not only bring us together but keep us together. Whether it is a stirring performance, an untold history, or a beloved place, culture is the story we share. The tactics by which we live out the goals of this strategic plan will assuredly change to meet the short-term and long-term needs of the cultural sector during these trying times. Yet, we remain confident that the values and foundational elements of this plan provide a roadmap for the current moment and future recovery efforts.

Thank you to our community, policymakers, Board of Directors, staff, and everyone who participated in the development of this plan. We look forward to delivering on our commitment to the county and to you.



Brian J. Carter

Executive Director, 4Culture



Heather Trescases

Board President, 4Culture

INTRODUCTION

4Culture, chartered by King County in 2003, is a Public Development Authority (PDA). Funded by King County Lodging Tax revenue and King County’s 1% for Art Ordinance, 4Culture staff, board, volunteer Advisory Committee members, and peer review panelists support a diverse array of cultural endeavors. 4Culture’s four program areas – arts, heritage, historic preservation, and public art – put public resources to use all over King County, to ensure access to cultural experiences for all, from museum collections to theater productions to the 4Culture public art gallery.

This plan was developed to support 4Culture’s operations and in response to King County Ordinance 18788. Section E states, “It is the intent of the council to request the executive develop a countywide strategic arts, heritage, historic preservation, and culture plan for the allocation of the lodging tax revenues described in subsections 4.1. and B.1. of this section.”

BACKGROUND

Since 2016, 4Culture has critically examined its operations and impact in the community, while maintaining critical programs for the cultural ecosystem. The organization conducted limited-scope evaluation and analytic efforts including an evaluation of the new Community 4Culture¹ grant program and an evaluation study ahead of the strategic planning process. 4Culture worked with King County and a nationally recognized consultant to convene a Task Force to review the organization’s operations, practices, and processes through an equity lens, gain community stakeholder input, compare 4Culture with other similar organizations, and provide insights and recommendations for the future. Finally, the organization has continued to collect and reflect on community information through the King County Cultural Health Study. 4Culture dedicated staff to examine and document the state of cultural health in the region, including funding, and conducted listening sessions and additional research to describe the cultural health of King County’s 39 cities and seven unincorporated areas.

As a result, 4Culture has made significant organizational changes to maintain its reputation for supporting high quality programming and to pivot to focus on racial and geographic equity. The most significant of these changes has been to integrate social justice and equity practices into a new 4Culture mission, vision, and values statements. This new framework, in addition to the information gathered throughout these other initiatives, is the imperative for this plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH

4Culture’s 2020-2023 Strategic Plan process employed the David La Piana approach, which, in addition to an orientation toward identifying the big question the organization faces, includes a focus on creativity, ongoing implementation, and a belief that the process is as important as the product (La Piana, 2018). This approach fit well with 4Culture’s desire to build on existing data and research and increase capacity to strategize across the four

¹ Community 4Culture (2016-2019) aimed to connect with those not currently reached by 4Culture to better sustain a cultural ecosystem reflective of King County’s diverse population. The program had an ongoing deadline and more flexible application process.

program areas. Vessel Strategy & Consulting provided facilitation and coordination, in collaboration with 4Culture’s leadership and a Strategic Planning Working Group. The process resulted in a plan with four organizational goals with multiple strategies for each goal; these goals and strategies will serve as a guide for King County’s cultural planning, sharing a clear path forward for a wide variety of audiences from policymakers to community groups. The workgroup:

- Reviewed focus group data and themes
- Facilitated overall staff and other stakeholder engagement in the process
- Developed the final organizational goals and strategies, based on staff and board guidance, and community stakeholder input
- Developed a workflow for implementation, to include the development of tactics and support for measurement of progress
- Developed key terms and definitions
- Crafted a 4Culture strategy screen for the plan and future use

As part of 4Culture’s strategic planning process, the organization integrated existing knowledge with an extensive engagement process, gathering new information from key stakeholders, including 4Culture’s staff and board members, Advisory Committee members, artists and cultural practitioners, and many community partners. In total, more than 75 people engaged in the process, through individual comment and ten focus groups held during October and November 2019 (see Appendix for dates and focus group details and all plan engagement efforts). Data was collected at each group, compiled by question, and analyzed to identify key themes for use at the December 2019 retreat. This feedback was integrated with additional assessments and research to directly inform the goals and strategies in the plan. 4Culture staff members contributed significantly to the collection of data in order to increase engagement, transparency, and equity within the planning process.

This report is organized in the following sections:

King County Cultural Assessments and Related Research describes the significant body of knowledge that 4Culture continues to develop to understand both the external cultural landscape as well as its own internal performance in serving the region and implementing key programs and projects.

King County’s Key Cultural Strengths and Challenges/Opportunities outlines the synthesis of findings across existing research and the focus group findings.

4Culture Mission, Vision, and Values provides important context around the role these foundational guideposts provide for 4Culture and this plan.

Organizational Goals and Strategies are the direct result of analysis and interpretation of challenges and opportunities in the environment and are listed in the final section with context around their origins and development in alignment with existing knowledge.

KING COUNTY CULTURAL ASSESSMENTS AND RELATED RESEARCH

As the cultural development authority of King County, 4Culture is tasked with supporting an existing arts, heritage, public art, and preservation environment, while simultaneously working to build up and evolve the infrastructure of that cultural ecosystem. In order to assess and respond to this ecosystem, 4Culture has gathered significant data on the external environment in King County as well as conducted numerous evaluation efforts.

The following assessments and research were included in the process:

- 1. King County Task Force Briefing Book:** This document was created in 2019 to support the 27-member King County 4Culture Task Force, charged with assessing and evaluating 4Culture’s governance structure, processes, and practices through an equity and social justice lens. The Briefing Book encompasses a comprehensive overview of 4Culture operations overall and within arts, heritage, public art, and historic preservation program areas.
- 2. King County Task Force Report:** Authored by Janet Brown, former President of Grantmakers in the Arts and a nationally facilitator and consultant, the Task Force Report included detail on the community meetings and listening sessions conducted by the Task Force, an overview of 4Culture operations, and recommendations for 4Culture moving forward. The document also includes a comparison of 4Culture with organizations across the United States focused on People of Color/Native organizations, small-mid-sized organizations, and communities outside urban centers.
- 3. Internal 4Culture racial equity efforts:** 4Culture has examined practices and engaged in change to increase racial equity across the organization. 4Culture conducted an internal examination of equity practices as part of the 4Culture Task Force project and centered racial equity in its revised mission, vision, and values. In addition, 4Culture conducted racial equity training work over the past few years, including training for all staff, board, and Advisory Committee members in collaboration with consultants. 4Culture also created an internal racial equity team. Current work includes beginning a racial equity toolkit to use throughout the organization and collecting racial demographic data. In addition, 4Culture has developed several programs and collaborative efforts to address racial inequities in cultural funding, including Beyond Integrity, Building for Equity, Community 4Culture, and the incubation of Creative Justice.
- 4. Community 4Culture Evaluation:** This program evaluation was completed in 2017 after the first year of the program’s operation. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the program, designed to connect with those not currently reached by 4Culture to better sustain a cultural ecosystem reflective of King County’s diverse population, met its goals. The authors recommended continued funding for the effort, expansion of some key practices across 4Culture funding programs, as well as ongoing evaluation of impact as additional data was collected. In addition, the report included a comparison of regional grant programs for organizations and artists from underserved communities and examples of studies and equity statements from national organizations focusing on perspectives for funding arts organizations and artists in underserved communities.

- 5. King County Cultural Planning Evaluation:** This report, produced in collaboration with the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance Graduate Student Consultant Lab, was a countywide analysis of government cultural plans and reports. The report provided 4Culture with an understanding of trends, strengths, and gaps in cultural planning throughout King County. The project included analysis of 179 government planning documents and resulted in 49 profiles for each of King County's cities, unincorporated areas, and tribes, as well as King County and Puget Sound Regional Council. The project produced a comprehensive overview of cultural planning at the city and regional level and included the development of analytic frameworks for comparing cultural planning rationales, strategies, and comprehensiveness across jurisdictions.
- 6. King County Cultural Health Study:** In order to more effectively serve as King County's cultural funding agency, 4Culture undertook a two-year journey to study the cultural health of the region. 4Culture staff visited every corner of King County, conducting community outreach, data collection, and self-reflection in order to analyze King County's cultural health through six themes: funding, policy and planning, visibility and connectivity, physical space, networks, and access, equity, and inclusion. The report includes findings and recommendations for next steps in developing collective strategies to address identified cultural health challenges. Data produced for this study also include profiles for each of the communities.
- 7. 4Culture Program Evaluation Report:** 4Culture commissioned Vessel Strategy and Consulting to conduct an evaluation study ahead of this strategic planning process. The study was conducted in September and October 2019 and included qualitative and quantitative methods. The objectives of the study were to generate key information for 4Culture's planning process, assess evaluation readiness at 4Culture, and develop ongoing evaluation resources for 4Culture aligned with its mission and focus on racial equity. The report found a coherent theory of work, shared values, and key practices across programs and departments as well as opportunities to increase evaluation readiness across the organization.

These seven research and assessment efforts informed 4Culture's development of the forthcoming challenges and opportunities section, which in turn, informed the strategic planning design and retreats.

KING COUNTY'S KEY CULTURAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

This section integrates key learning and findings from recent reports and evaluations conducted for 4Culture with insights from strategic plan-related focus groups held with staff, board, advisory groups, and key community groups. Throughout the planning process, 4Culture built on the extensive work already completed in order to develop comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the most important factors influencing the King County cultural landscape.

STRENGTHS

Local Cultural Planning

The King County Cultural Health Study findings indicate there is a strong tradition of integrated cultural planning throughout King County. However, comprehensive cultural planning across arts, heritage, historic preservation, and public art varies across King County cities and towns, with the most comprehensive cultural planning occurring in designated metropolitan cities: Bellevue and Seattle.

The Importance of Public Funding

Findings from the King County Cultural Health Study show that 4Culture is a large cultural funder in the Puget Sound region with a countywide reach. Investments are critical for cities and towns throughout King County. Based on the King County Cultural Health Study, in 2018, 4Culture was the largest cultural funding source for six cities in King County, and the only known source of cultural funding for nine cities, many of them suburban or rural. Both Washington State and the City of Seattle are key funders in the County as well.

Within 4Culture, there is substantial organizational strength, as well. 4Culture manages a complex web of funding and commissioning programs, including over 25 funding programs with unique and overlapping criteria and processes across Arts, Heritage and Preservation departments, a Public Art collection, Public Art commissioning and production for King County capital projects, virtual and physical galleries, many special projects and programs including an arts program for incarcerated youth, and more.

Responsiveness

The recent King County 4Culture Task Force Report, which included an in-depth exploration of the organization's procedures and operations from both arts funding experts and local stakeholders and partners, emphasized the following positive foundational elements within 4Culture today:

- **4Culture has an underlying philosophy of accessibility**, through staff action and board and Advisory Committee directions, in serving the complex diversity of King County.
- **4Culture follows best practices in grantmaking** (i.e. peer panels aligned with best practices espoused by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Grantmakers in the Arts).
- **4Culture is amongst a handful of public agencies that supports a path towards racial equity** both internally

and externally.

- **4Culture’s board and staff are committed to providing wide support throughout King County** and are extremely cognizant of the cultural ecosystem of King County and their role as a public funder in that ecosystem.

Other 4Culture Organizational Strengths

These strengths are aligned with the following themes that emerged from the strategic plan-related focus groups, in which participants identified what makes 4Culture stand out:

- Authentic, proactive engagement, putting artists and makers first and changing based on feedback. Artist voice and work are honored and protected.
- Identifying multiple disciplines and broadening definition of culture over time, including the four main program areas: Arts, Heritage, Preservation, and Public Arts.
- 4Culture’s unique operating structure as a Public Development Authority (PDA) offers greater flexibility to respond to the cultural ecosystem than as a King County division.
- 4Culture staff are deeply appreciated for their authentic engagement, sense of humor, and knowledge as practitioners. Focus group participants expressed appreciation that 4Culture is working to diversify its staff and board and is led by an Executive Director of color.

CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

Coordinated Local Cultural Planning

4Culture has engaged deeply with King County’s cultural communities through varied efforts including the recent 4Culture Task Force and conducting the King County Cultural Health Study. The Cultural Health Study uncovered opportunities around the role of local cultural planning efforts. The purpose of cultural planning at the local level is to integrate culture into community and economic strategies. Specifically, the most common reasons for culture planning are to advance local branding and identity, social cohesion, economic growth, and heritage and preservation. Opportunities around local cultural planning could be leveraged by greater coordination of cultural planning at the city-level, leading to great coordination at the county level.

Adapting to Growing Diversity

King County is a physically large region with a diverse population.² King County is home to just over two million residents and spans over 2,000 square miles. It is the largest county in terms of population, number of cities, and employment in Washington State. King County includes 39 cities, as well as over 1,700 square miles of unincorporated area. Overall, King County has seen a population increase of 36% from 1990 through 2015, with about half of that growth from residents born outside the US.

The demographic composition of King County has changed as well; nearly 30% of King County residents identify as people of color. Fully one-quarter (25%) of King County residents speak a language other than English at home and

² Data in this section compiled from the King County Executive’s Office Council presentation regarding King County Demographics. <https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/Demographics/May%202017%20Updates/KingCountyDemographics2016.ashx?la=en>, retrieved 10/16/2019

there are over 170 languages spoken by residents. Spanish and Chinese languages are the most common languages spoken by these residents, followed by Vietnamese and African languages.

Keeping Up with Growth

Rapid growth, gentrification, and transformation in King County put economic pressures on artists, cultural practitioners, and cultural organizations, especially within communities of color. Participants in focus groups frequently mentioned the challenges of affordability and gentrification; these issues surfaced in individual staff interviews about strategic challenges and barriers as well. Artists and practitioners face rising rents, home prices, and cost of living expenses. This can create housing insecurity, and displacement of individuals from their home community. Many organizations struggle with issues of space procurement and retention, and the booming economy has driven up construction costs for building/facility repairs and renovations. Once space is lost, it is hard for an organization to continue. In addition, it is hard to maintain cultural organizations without access to physical spaces. These challenges disproportionately impact artists of color and those with low incomes. Communities of color face cultural displacement and a sense of erasure as a result of gentrification, which forces historical residents out and brings in new residents.

Adapting to Change

The King County Cultural Health Study findings suggest organizations are challenged with the pace of changing demographics and rapid population growth. This is prompting the cultural ecosystem to acknowledge and recalibrate work toward the creation of cultural offerings that are more representational, inclusive, accessible, and equitable. A primary theme of the Cultural Health Study Listening Sessions is that communities and cultural organizations alike need resources and technical assistance to adapt. Specific areas highlighted in the study include cultural space and cultural networks. There is a role for the public sector and cultural philanthropy in developing cultural space as well as understanding how cultural networks form, operate, and define success in order to support their role in a culturally healthy community.

Available Funding for Culture

The cultural funding landscape is not deep enough to meet the needs of the sector. According to Philanthropy Northwest's latest report on trends in giving, grants to cultural organizations represented just 4% of \$1 billion dollars granted in 2014 in Washington, with health and education spending accounting for 65% of all giving that year and human services accounting for 11% of funding.³

Nationally, federal funding for arts and culture has remained static, which is a challenge in areas like King County with a booming economy and rapid population growth, where increasing costs challenge cultural organizations and artists.

³ Data from Philanthropy Northwest's 2017 Trend Report, <https://philanthropynw.org/sites/default/files/files/news/Trends%20in%20Northwest%20Giving%202017.pdf>, accessed 10/16/2019

Increases in Local Lodging Taxes

New funding will bring opportunity. Beginning in 2021, by state statute, King County will transfer 37.5 percent of lodging tax revenue – anticipated to be roughly \$14.4 million in the first year and expected to rise over time – to 4Culture to support art and heritage facilities, including the performing arts. From 2021-2045, the lodging tax is expected to generate approximately \$559 million for arts and heritage.⁴ Focus group participants, as well as other staff, identified new funding as a key external opportunity.

Missed Opportunities

Lack of funding results in current challenges for 4Culture programs and impacts awardees and commissioned artists. 4Culture staff identified challenges for the organization related to the cultural funding landscape during staff program evaluation interviews:

- Low proportion of applications funded in each funding cycle. 4Culture cannot award qualified applicants because it does not have the funds to meet requests.
- 4Culture cannot make substantial awards relative to the overall project/organizational cost or increase award amounts over time to respond to increasing costs
- Lack of funds to increase artist honoraria, which is a barrier to participation for artists with low incomes
- Costs of operating in greater Seattle may become prohibitive for organizations and artists
- Many organizations look to 4Culture for financial support for capacity building

Funding Inequities

Existing inequities may be exacerbated by current funding trends and require an explicit focus on equity to address. A 2017 report by Helicon Collaborative entitled, Not Just Money: Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy found that, “despite important efforts by many leading foundations, funding overall has gotten less equitable (between 2011 and 2017).” The authors describe the current state of funding in this way: “As a result of the cultural sector’s origins as a vehicle for preserving Western European high culture, as well as disparities in how wealth is distributed in our society, arts funding goes disproportionately to certain types of art forms, artists, and institutions and fails to meaningfully capitalize others.”⁵

⁴ Data retrieved from King County’s website: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/about/Lodging%20Tax.aspx>, accessed 11/20/2019

⁵ Report accessed online from <https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/not-just-money-equity-issues-cultural-philanthropy.pdf>, accessed 10/16/2019

4CULTURE'S MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

The vitality and creativity of the cultural ecosystem means that it is fluid, constantly unfolding, and frequently realigns based on need and circumstance. The recently developed 4Culture mission, vision, and values strongly position 4Culture to continue to support the existing cultural environment, while simultaneously working to effect change based on internal and external strengths as well as challenges and opportunities. In both the mission and vision, the term “culture” was used purposefully to embrace the intersections between 4Culture’s four program areas – Public Art, Preservation, Heritage and Arts.

These institutional guideposts represent the organization’s core beliefs about its work and underpin its responsibilities toward King County’s cultural ecosystem. The new mission, vision, and values were adopted in April 2019 after staff, board, and Advisory Committee members and community stakeholders spent six months critically examining the organization’s identity and purpose through racial equity training and brainstorming sessions.

It was essential that the mission, vision, and values recognize the complex web of systems that have historically privileged particular communities over others. This understanding of privilege demands a reckoning with the forces of oppression – racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, ageism, regionalism, classism, and more. The mission statement deliberately focuses on racial equity to affirm this understanding and provides 4Culture with the tools necessary to dismantle all oppressions. It prompts continual review and refinement of internal policies, operations, and efforts toward the removal of entrenched barriers to inclusion.

Mission

With a focus on racial equity, we fund, support, and advocate for culture to enhance the quality of life in King County.

Vision

We envision a vibrant county where culture is essential and accessible to all.

Values

Culture is a right for all

The right to express and experience culture lies at the core of who we are individually and as a community. We protect and advance this right for everyone.

Culture is multifaceted

We focus our efforts on Public Art, Preservation, Heritage, and Arts to support the intersecting and evolving disciplines, forms, and places where culture is expressed and experienced.

Connectivity with communities

Communities hold past knowledge, current-day experience, and future vision. We work authentically with communities where they are to address issues they prioritize most.

Responsiveness

We prioritize innovation and experimentation that meets the changing needs and unexpected opportunities within communities.

Good stewardship

We make fiscally responsible decisions through a transparent process involving the voices of peers from each discipline we serve.

Racial equity

We acknowledge that systemic inequity takes many forms – racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, heterosexism, and more. Our focus on racial equity provides us with the tools we use to dismantle all oppressions.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1 Goal: Evolve and improve 4Culture’s operations, funding programs, and commissions to fulfill our mission.

Rationale: The King County Cultural Health Study uncovered key next steps for collective cultural development across King County. This organizational goal provides 4Culture with specific steps to address King County Cultural Health Study recommendations to extend funding reach, support cultural networks, and increase access, inclusion, and equity. Focus group participants identified key themes around historical marginalization and disadvantage of racial and geographic groups, as well as ongoing displacement, which inform this goal and set of strategies. Finally, the King County Task Force, initial program evaluation efforts, and the strategic planning-related focus groups included recommendations and strong support for considering new funding models and opportunities, centering racial equity across operations, and continuing to standardize and define the organization’s approach to racial equity.

Implementation of this goal will be influenced by COVID-19 impacts in King County.

Strategies:

- A. Develop and implement Future Funding Model: 2021 to redress historical disadvantages of BIPOC communities and geographic access in cultural funding.
- B. Center and engage historically excluded and underrepresented communities in 4Culture decision making and processes, including on the Board, Advisory Committees, staff and panels.
- C. Implement a racial equity toolkit to evaluate 4Culture’s commissioning and funding practices, resulting in changes that center racial equity. This tool-kit will clearly outline process for staff to follow when adapting and evolving their programs.

2 Goal: Increase racially equitable access to cultural space and a culturally rich built environment that is resilient to economic forces.

Rationale: Rapid population growth and gentrification in King County put economic pressures on artists, cultural practitioners, and cultural organizations, especially communities of color and for smaller communities and in rural areas. 4Culture’s significant research and analysis into these forces surfaced common findings. Many organizations struggle with issues of space procurement and retention, and the booming economy has driven up construction costs for building/facility repairs and renovations. Once space is lost, it is hard for an organization to continue, and it is hard to maintain cultural organizations without access to physical spaces. Furthermore, 4Culture’s long-held criteria for ‘cultural facility’ have excluded the structures and spaces that communities of colors have historically considered cultural, which only exacerbates funding inequities. These challenges disproportionately impact practitioners of color and those with low incomes. Communities of color face cultural displacement and a sense of erasure as a result of gentrification, which forces historical residents out and brings in new residents. Constituents engaged through the King County Cultural Health Study listening sessions and strategic planning-related focus groups are clear in their need for and support of investment in racially equitable space and built environment and in support of increased geographic access.

Strategies:

- A. Implement Building for Equity to redress historical disadvantages of BIPOC communities and provide geographic access to cultural space and the built environment.
- B. Invest in communities of color by expanding the definition of public cultural facilities and spaces to receive 4Culture support and develop the financial tools needed to support them.
- C. Partner with public and private entities to anchor culture in communities.

3 Goal: Foster racial equity, agency, and collaboration among cultural practitioners to build a stronger cultural sector.

Rationale: The King County Task Force Report included recommendations to support cultural practitioners in new ways. Engagement through the King County Cultural Health Study listening sessions and strategic planning-related focus groups echoed the need for 4Culture to serve as a convener, thought leader, and supporter of cultural networks. Recommended next steps in the King County Cultural Health Study include supporting cultural funding, particularly for racial equity initiatives within and between cultural organizations. 4Culture can leverage strengths as the largest cultural funder in the Puget Sound region with a countywide reach and an organization that is known for intentionally doing work that supports a path towards racial equity to collaborate with others to build a stronger cultural ecosystem.

Implementation of this goal will be influenced by COVID-19 impacts in King County.

Strategies:

- A. Identify regional gaps in cultural support systems and offer capacity building and targeted leadership development.
- B. Support racial equity initiatives within and between cultural organizations.

4 Goal: Understand and demonstrate the impact of culture on the people of King County.

Rationale: As the cultural development authority of King County, 4Culture is tasked with supporting an existing arts, heritage, public art, and preservation environment, while simultaneously working to build up and evolve the infrastructure of that cultural ecosystem. In order to assess and respond to this ecosystem, 4Culture has gathered a significant amount of data on the external environment in King County through the King County Task Force, the King County Cultural Health Study, and through the strategic planning process. 4Culture is poised to improve understanding of the ways culture improves the quality of life of King County residents and advocate for responsive cultural resources.

Strategies:

- A.** Create a simple and clear definition of public benefit that allows fund recipients to increase their understanding of their obligations under 4Culture contracts and to standardize their reporting of quantifiable activities to fulfill those public benefit obligations.
- B.** Develop a cultural assessment tool that makes it easy for every King County resident – regardless of their language or educational background – to voice their wants, needs, and concerns about their quality of life and cultural resources in King County
- C.** Assume a greater leadership role in advocacy at the regional and national levels.

APPENDIX

WORKING DEFINITIONS OF 4CULTURE TERMS

4Culture’s Strategic Plan Working Group created definitions for use during the strategic planning process. The definitions were not intended to construct a lasting universal definition of each term. Rather, the definitions are intended as inclusive and overarching terms for use specifically in the construction of this strategic plan.

Culture

Defining culture is difficult when understanding, interpretation, and use of the word vary widely. For the purposes of the Plan, we define culture as that which falls within our programmatic areas: Arts, Preservation, Heritage, and Public Art. In alignment with our values, we acknowledge the intersecting and evolving disciplines, forms, and places where culture is expressed and experienced within these four focus areas.

Cultural Ecosystem

Those connected to the cultural community are always contributing to a larger whole that provides benefit to the public of King County. Going forward 4Culture will lead the effort to grow the cultural community in an inclusionary way, in tandem with cultural practitioners of the region so there is support and balance in the region’s cultural community.

Cultural Practitioners

For the purposes of the Plan, we define cultural practitioners broadly and inclusively as the collection of artists; cultural workers including administrators, professionals, and volunteers; owners/stewards of historic buildings and landscapes; culture bearers; and creative professionals working, volunteering, and participating in the cultural ecosystem.

Cultural Space & the Built Environment

Cultural spaces are specialized spaces, shared or dedicated, that house and facilitate cultural work and experiences in King County. These spaces are used by individuals, groups, non-profit organizations, and local governments who provide benefit to the public and are typically open for the public. The built environment refers to our experience of culture manifested in public spaces and the public realm, including historically and culturally significant buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes, and public art.

Economic Forces

A myriad of interconnected social and economic systems shape our region and determine the ability of cultural organizations and practitioners to work, live, and thrive. For the purposes of the Plan, we will use the term Economic Forces to refer to the forces of gentrification; affordability; displacement; growth; increased cost of living; vacancy; disinvestment; underdevelopment; and depopulation that impact the cultural ecosystem.

Funding Programs & Commissions

There are many ways and methods by which 4Culture spends revenue. For the purposes of the Plan, we agree to use “Funding Programs & Commissions” to describe the overwhelming majority of expenditures including lodging tax grant programs; initiatives; technical assistance programs; and 1% for Art public art commissions.

Racial Equity

This definition of racial equity was chosen by the 4Culture Racial Equity Team and is included in this group’s charter: We define equity as a system in which everyone has access to what they need to be successful. It recognizes and celebrates our differences. While 4Culture acknowledges the importance of recognizing and addressing all forms of oppression and inequity, the organization has strategically chosen to adopt a racial equity lens to focus its efforts toward achieving greater social justice* and equity for all.

**We define social justice as a movement that seeks to build safe, supportive communities where all people can be recognized as fully human.*

4CULTURE STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX: 4CULTURE COVID-19 RESPONSE STRATEGY

4Culture’s Strategic Plan Working Group created definitions for use during the strategic planning process. The definitions were not intended to construct a lasting universal definition of each term. Rather, the definitions are intended as inclusive and overarching terms for use specifically in the construction of this strategic plan.

INTRODUCTION

A vibrant county is the goal of 4Culture’s work. The Novel Corona Virus, which is the cause of the 2020 COVID 19 Disease Pandemic, is a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of the people of King County. This public health crisis also presents unique challenges to King County’s cultural sector.

Cultural organizations and practitioners are pillars of social cohesion. Cultural events, experiences, and places provide the reason for people to gather, confer identity, and build community. In turn, the social and economic participation of our community sustains the cultural sector. Financial gifts and earned income – from art and book sales, auctions and galas, museum memberships, paid subscriptions, season tickets, etc. – keep the doors open and cultural practitioners living and working in our community.

Enacting a policy of social distancing – whether voluntary or mandatory – disrupts the very foundation of our identity and livelihood. As King County’s Cultural Development Authority, we believe it is our role to develop an effective and equitable response that advances both community vitality and the essential role of culture in our community at this time. This strategy aims to bridge the gap between the mutually exclusive but necessary conditions of social cohesion and distance during this public health crisis.

PURPOSE

This strategy provides a framework for the continued operations of essential 4Culture programs and services during the COVID 19 Outbreak in King County as well as leadership opportunities to respond to the timely and varied needs of King County’s cultural community. It provides a strategy and process to make informed decisions as the outbreak evolves.

GOALS

- Identify 4Culture’s role in this public health crisis and exert leadership.
- Provide high quality, timely, and uninterrupted service.
- Reduce the potential exposure to the general public, staff, and volunteers.
- Foster community cohesion during this period of social distancing and containment.
- Keep our cultural ecosystem intact – minimize permanent closures of cultural organizations and the exit of cultural practitioners in King County.

STRATEGIES

1. Create low-barrier pathways for remote participation for essential business meetings. Cancel or postpone nonessential public meetings and programs until Summer 2020.
2. Minimize the barriers of 4Culture and the cultural community to be responsive partners in the public health policies of social distancing and containment.
3. Strengthen existing structures of cultural supports for information gathering and dissemination and response rather than create new ones if possible.
4. Respond to the emergent and unique needs of the cultural community in a timely way.
5. Collaborate on building a comprehensive and equitable apparatus of recovery for the cultural sector in the post-outbreak period or an extended outbreak scenario.

RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

4Culture understands the need to help the cultural sector make a full recovery, and that the COVID-19 pandemic presents distinct objectives and challenges at each phase of the recovery process. We anticipate the full process to include four phases of recovery: relief, reopen, recovery, and resiliency. From providing emergency relief to cultural organizations and practitioners at the onset of the pandemic to encouraging resiliency planning within the cultural sector upon full recovery, 4Culture is committed to responding as needed and where appropriate.

4Culture will use the following framework in our response to the public health crisis and integrate our response into the larger Strategic Plan:

Relief

Mitigate the harm to cultural organizations and practitioners stemming from mandatory closures and layoffs.

Reopen

Offset the financial risks of reopening in an uncertain environment and help cultural organizations and practitioners survive and thrive under social distancing guidelines.

Recover

Prevent the loss of cultural resources and strengthen the cultural sector's infrastructure. Rebuild organizations and livelihoods by securing cultural assets, supporting new business models, providing professional development, and facilitating shared resources and asset transfers.

Resiliency

Collaborate with other funders to encourage capitalization and emergency planning within the sector to protect cultural organizations and practitioners from future risks that are both predictable and unpredictable.

As of this publication, the State of Washington has issued a mandatory stay-at-home order called Stay Home, Stay Healthy and has temporarily closed all non-essential businesses including cultural organizations. In response, 4Culture launched a Cultural Relief Fund on April 1, 2020 to provide \$1 million of emergency relief grant funding to cultural organizations and practitioners. 4Culture is developing plans for future responses using this lens as the pandemic evolves and new information is made available.

RACIAL EQUITY

This strategy is consistent with the 4Culture mission, vision, and values. Specifically, 4Culture plans to Implement the Future Funding Model Equity Bonus for the Cultural Relief Fund. The equity bonuses will allocate additional funding to organizations and individual practitioners located in King County designated Communities of Opportunity (COO). COOs are geographic areas identified because of their populations have historically had inequitable access to resources, opportunities, and pathways available to King County residents. These applicants will most likely have inequitable access to COVID-19 relief efforts, and we will be centering them in the funding process for this relief fund.

4CULTURE STRATEGY SCREEN

An essential component of the strategic planning process, the strategy screen is a simple, powerful tool for decision making and can be used for future decisions beyond the strategic plan itself. The strategy screen makes explicit the criteria that an organization will use to make decisions. The process of working through the criteria is just as important as the resulting decision because it challenges thinking and increases engagement with and support for new strategic decisions (La Piana, 2018). This strategy screen was created by 4Culture’s Strategic Planning Work Group and used by that group and in additional retreats and working sessions to assess and flesh out each strategy in this plan.

4CULTURE STRATEGY SCREEN

What is the problem being addressed by the proposed strategy?

What is the proposed strategy?

Step 1: Mission Screen

How does this proposed strategy fulfill the two main components of 4Culture’s mission?

- With a focus on racial equity, we fund, support, and advocate for culture to enhance the quality of life in King County.

How does this strategy center racial equity? Does this strategy replicate, create, or exacerbate racial disparities (unintended consequences)?

- How does this strategy enhance the quality of life in King County? How will you measure this?

Is this this strategy permissible under the King County ordinance governing 4Culture and 4Culture’s charter?

Step 2: Values Screen

How does this proposed strategy reflect 4Culture’s values?

Culture is a right for all

How does this strategy allow people to exercise their right to express and experience culture?

Culture is multifaceted

Does this strategy address or approach culture or your specific cultural discipline differently from how ‘the field’ has historically viewed cultural work? If so, how?

Connectivity with communities

Are other departments or organizations solving for a similar problem? What is the ecosystem in which this strategy functions?

Responsiveness

How does this strategy respond to a community need? Why implement this strategy now?

Good Stewardship

What resources, personnel, financial and time, do you need to execute this strategy?

Racial Equity

How could this strategy's approach to achieving racial equity help in dismantling other forms of systemic oppressions.

Step 3: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

Without this change, what does 4Culture stand to lose?

4CULTURE PLAN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4Culture Task Force Community Input Sessions and Meetings

The 27-member 4Culture Task Force representing arts, heritage, public art and historic preservation communities worked with Janet Brown, Janet Brown and Associates, LLC and in close cooperation with the County Executive Office and 4Culture leadership. The Task Force functioned as a focus group of organizations, individuals and groups familiar with 4Culture and provided recommendations and assessment. Representing a variety of geographic areas within King County as well as organizational sizes and purposes, the Task Force also functioned as a learning community for one another in understanding racial and geographic equity challenges and opportunities faced by King County and most Task Force members were present to hear comments from the public at community events.

Task Force Meeting #1: November 6, 2018, Seattle, Chinook Building

Task Force Meeting #2: November 26, 2018, Seattle, Chinook Building

Task Force Meeting #3: January 10, 2019, Seattle, Chinook Building

Task Force Meeting #4: Saturday, January 26, 2019, Kent, Kent Senior Activity Center

Task Force Meeting #5: Saturday, March 9, 2019, Lake Forest Park, Third Place Commons Park

Task Force Meeting #6: Tuesday, March 12, 2019, Snoqualmie, Snoqualmie City Council Chambers

Task Force Meeting #7: Thursday, March 14, 2019, Seattle, Chinook Building

Cultural Health Study Listening Sessions

4Culture's Cultural Health Study started by asking cultural ecosystem members themselves, what is special about your city's culture? What does a culturally healthy community look like to you? Listening sessions were held in the following locations through 2018 and 2019 in order to collect responses through conversations in every corner of King County. Data from listening sessions was combined with additional data collection and outreach and reflection, culminating in the 2020 King County Cultural Health Study.

2018

Bellevue: Tuesday, September 25, Crossroads Community Center, Community Room

Bothell: Wednesday, November 7, Bothell City Hall

Burien: Monday, August 13, Moshier Arts Center

Enumclaw: Thursday, November 8, Enumclaw Library

Federal Way: Thursday, August 16, Federal Way Community Center, Senior Lounge

Kent: Tuesday, July 31, Kent Commons, Mt. Rainier Room

Kirkland: Tuesday, October 30, Kirkland Arts Center

Maple Valley: Thursday, August 9, Maple Valley Creative Arts Center

Normandy Park: Wednesday, November 14, Normandy Park Recreation Center

Redmond: Thursday, November 15, Redmond City Hall

Renton: Tuesday, November 27, Renton Civic Theatre

Sammamish: Tuesday, August 7, Sammamish City Hall

Seattle, King County District 2: Wednesday, August 15, El Centro de la Raza, Room 309

Seattle, King County District 4: Wednesday, August 8, Seattle Center Armory Loft

Shoreline: Tuesday, August 7, Shoreline Chamber of Commerce

Skyway/West Hill Unincorporated: Thursday, December 6, King County Fire District 20 Administration Building

2019

Algona: Friday, June 28, Filipino American Community of Puget Sound

Beaux Art Village: September 30, Resident home

Black Diamond: Thursday, March 21, Black Diamond History Museum

Carnation: Wednesday, June 19, Carnation Library
Clyde Hill, Yarrow Point: Monday, September 9, Chinook Middle School Library

Covington: Wednesday, June 5, Covington City Hall, Council Chambers

Des Moines: Monday, February 25, Des Moines Activity Center

Duvall: Duvall Visitor Center, March 26

Fall City: Wednesday, June 19, Fall City Library

Issaquah: Tuesday, May 21, Issaquah City Hall, Eagle Room

Kenmore: Monday, September 23, Kenmore City Hall

Lake Forest Park: Tuesday, June 4, Lake Forest Park Civic Club

Mercer Island: Wednesday, February 27, Stroum Jewish Community Center

Milton: Thursday, September 12, Milton Activity Center

Newcastle: Thursday, September 19, Newcastle Library Meeting Room

North Bend: Thursday, February 21, Meadowbrook Farm Interpretive Center

Pacific: Thursday, September 5, Pacific Community Center

SeaTac: Monday, March 4, SeaTac Community Center

Seattle, King County District 1: Thursday, May 30, Lake City Library, Lake City Meeting Room

Skykomish: Monday, September 16, Great Northern & Cascade Railway Passenger Depot

Snoqualmie Valley: Wednesday, September 18, King County Fire District 27 Station Meeting Room

Snoqualmie: Monday, June 24, Snoqualmie City Hall, 1st Floor Council Chambers

Tukwila: Thursday, June 20, Tukwila Community Center

Vashon Island: Monday, March 25, 2019 Vashon Center for the Arts

West/Central Seattle (King County District 8): Monday, Jun 10, Gay City

Woodinville: Tuesday, February 19, Woodinville Heritage Museum

4Culture Strategic Plan Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement included focus group conversations with over 75 individuals, all important 4Culture stakeholders, from individual artists to elected officials. Feedback gathered during the 4Culture Cultural Health Assessment was also included in the strategic planning process. 4Culture staff members contributed significantly to the collection of data in order to increase engagement, transparency, and equity within the strategic planning process.

Focus Group Questions

1. What makes 4Culture stand out from other organizations?
2. What are the two most important issues in culture in King County that 4Culture should respond to?
3. How does or could 4Culture's funding and commissioning processes center racial equity?
4. How could 4Culture have more impact?

Focus Groups

- Board of Directors, October 13, 2019
- Public Art Advisory Committee (staff led), October 17, 2019
- Heritage Advisory Committee (staff led), October 17, 2019
- 4Culture Staff, November 6, 2019
- Building for Equity, November 13, 2019
- Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (staff led), November 14, 2019
- Individual Artists (staff led), November 18, 2019; additional feedback from individual responses included as well
- Arts Advisory Committee (staff led), November 19, 2019
- 4Culture Task Force, November 20, 2019
- King County Local Arts Agencies, November 21, 2019

Strategic Plan Retreats

In addition to focus groups, the strategic plan process included two retreats.

- **Retreat #1:** All board, staff, and Advisory Committee members, December 4, 2019
- **Retreat #2:** All staff, February 27, 2020

Strategic Planning Workgroup Members

Kate Becker (King County)

Bart J. Cannon (Staff)

Brian J. Carter (Staff)

Christina DePaolo (Staff)

Joshua Heim (Staff)

Noy Kitnikone (Staff)

Claire Miccio (Staff)

Kelly Pajek (Staff)

Dana Phelan (Staff)

Chieko Phillips (Staff)

Charlie Rathbun (Staff)

Heather Trescases (Board president)

Deb Twersky (staff, through Sept 30)

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La Piana, D. with Melissa Mendes Campos. (2018). *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution, Second Edition*. Fieldstone Alliance.

More information about the La Piana strategic planning method can be found at: <https://www.lapiana.org/insights-for-the-sector/insights/strategic-planning>