

ARLINGTON COMMISSION FOR ARTS & CULTURE (ACAC)

Mission

The Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture cultivates a sustainable and supportive environment for the arts and enlivens public space with accessible creative experiences to strengthen and enrich our community, create opportunities for artists, and invigorate the local economy.



Hardy School students with their dolphin puppets at the Fox Festival Parade; Photo credit: Greg Cook

Operations

ACAC is an umbrella organization including a:

- Grants Committee (formerly the Arlington Cultural Council)

- Community Engagement Committee

- Cultural District Managing Partnership (CDMP)

- Representative of non-profit arts community from Arlington Center for the Arts

- Representative of business community from the Chamber of Commerce

- Representative of the local community of working artists, elected by ArtLinks

- Representative appointed by the School Committee

- Liaison from the Department of Planning and Community Development

- And 3 at-large members

In fiscal year 2019, ACAC leveraged a \$40,000 allocation from the Town to raise an additional \$25,790 toward local arts and culture programming and infrastructure. Funds were raised via the Mass Cultural Council (MCC), programming grants, beloved annual events like Chairful Where You Sit, and donations from local businesses and individuals.

In 2019 ACAC updated its mission and vision statements and adopted three-year strategic and operations plans. The strategic plan can be found at artsarlington.org in the "About Us" section. ACAC works closely with the Department of Planning and Community Development and employs two part-time contractors, a marketing coordinator who promotes Arlington-based arts and culture activities, and a public art curator focused on community engagement.

While the focus of this report is ACAC's work, it's important to note that ACAC is one part of a diverse community of arts and culture non-profits, for-profits and individual artists striving to help Arlington thrive.



Freedom Baird and a volunteer in Freedom's piece *Room to Grow*; Photo credit: Johnny Lapham

Cultivating the Arts and Culture Environment

ACAC maintains artsarlington.org, an invaluable resource for audience members discovering, and artists and arts organizations promoting, cultural activities. The site features a cultural calendar powered by Arts Boston, and a comprehensive listing of Arlington's arts and culture assets. The Arts Arlington monthly newsletter is sent to **over 1,000 subscribers**. From Jan 1 – Dec 1 2019, artsarlington.org had **7,472 users**, 11,195 Sessions and 48,171 Page views, **more than quadrupling the numbers from 2018**.

In 2019, ACAC launched a major effort on destination marketing which resulted in a **13.28% increase** in regional, MA traffic from outside of town. **Statewide traffic now constitutes 54.78% of artsarlington.org users**. ACAC programming was featured in The Boston Globe, on WBUR's *Artery* blog, regularly on ACMi and in YourArlington.com, and in a variety of regional arts and news media and statewide inbound tourism media. ACAC is committed to building on these efforts in 2020.

The Grants Committee, a local council of the MCC, a state agency, received 30 applications and funded 16 projects, distributing over \$15,000 in state funds to local arts organizations and artists. In 2019 **174 artists and over 15,000 audience members participated in programs funded by the Grants Committee**.

Using funds from a 2019 MCC grant to Cultural Districts, the CDMP hired a coordinator for the Feast of the East festival and created a brochure to draw traffic to the Cultural District, featuring cultural assets and local businesses throughout the district. The brochure has been distributed to local hotels, libraries, banks, local businesses and in Chamber of Commerce "Welcome to Arlington" totes.



Brochure for Arlington's Cultural District



Garage Band at the Arlington Service Station; Photo credit: Johnny Lapham

Enlivening Public Space to Strengthen and Enrich our Community

In 2019 ACAC continued its longstanding Public Art (APA) programming and piloted Live Arts Arlington, a new initiative bringing performance to public spaces, especially in commercial areas. Through its programming, **the ACAC reached hundreds of thousands of Arlington residents and visitors to town; activated 15 public spaces**, including Spy Pond Park, Uncle Sam Plaza, the lawn of Jason Russell House, and the Minuteman Bikeway; and collaborated with **over 400 participant artists and more than 30 town organizations and local businesses**.

Volunteers for Live Arts Arlington documented numerous audience members who came out specifically because of the cultural activity, some coming from as far away as Reading, Concord and New Hampshire. Live Arts audience members and local business owners reported that patrons spent more time and more money locally because of the cultural programming.

Please see short program descriptions below, and visit artsarlington.org for more detail.

Program Name	Description	Collaborators and Funders
ARTIST in RESIDENCE	Launched in December 2019, ACAC's first Artist-in-Residence is Michelle Lougee, who began using plastic bags as material over 10 years ago to draw attention to plastic pollution in our oceans. Through this residency Michelle is working for the first time with volunteer craftivists to create public art. Over a dozen participatory workshops will be held from January through June. The work will be installed in Summer 2020 along the Minuteman Bikeway.	Arlington's Libraries, ACMi, Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee, Arlington Center for the Arts, Arlington Council on Aging, Arlington Department of Public Works, Arlington Knitting Brigade, APS Green Teams, Arlington Recycles, Arlington Scouts, Sustainable Arlington, 13Forest Gallery, Fox Library, Zero Waste Committee, Roasted Granola Café, MCC, the ACAC Grants Committee and Friends of the Fox Library
FOX FESTIVAL WORKSHOPS AND PARADE	Afterschool art making workshops held at Thompson and Hardy schools; family workshops at the Fox Library; parade kicking off the Feast of the East with brass band.	Over 200 students and their families; visual artists Sara Peattie and Kari Percival, Friends of Spy Pond Park, Fox Library, Friends of the Fox Library, Hardy School PTO
GARAGE BAND	2 pop-up outdoor dance parties following ACA's Porchfest and Town Day	Over 100 performers, Arlington Center for the Arts, Arlington Service Station and Column Health
LESLIE WILCOX INSTALLATION	Installation on the Jason Russell House Lawn for one year Fall 2019 – Fall 2020.	Arlington Historical Society
LIVE ARTS	10 diverse street performance events in Arlington Center. Program will expand town-wide in 2020.	50 artists including musicians, visual artists, a dancer and a puppeteer, and Morningside Music Studio
PAINTED TRANSFORMER BOXES	Five more transformer boxes throughout town were painted this year, sponsored by local businesses	5 artists and Kickstand Cafe, Zhen Ren Chuan Martial Arts, Arlington Center for the Arts, Ellenhorn, and Custom Contracting
PATHWAYS	Public Art projects on the Bike Path included <i>Colony</i> by Christopher Frost <i>Room to Grow</i> by Freedom Baird, <i>Dots and Dashes</i> by Johnny Lapham, <i>ExtraOrdinary Birds</i> by Resa Blatman, and <i>Bikeway Haiku</i>	Over 100 artists, musicians and poets, MCC, ACAC Grants Committee, and National Park Service
POET LAUREATE	Steven Ratiner was appointed Arlington's Poet Laureate in August 2019. He is developing programs to expand the ways audiences experience poetry and the arts and promoting educational partnerships between schools and artists.	Poet Laureate Committee and Arlington's Libraries
YOUTH BANNER PROJECT	95 young people – the most ever! - in grades 6-12 submitted designs. 20 designs have been chosen to be printed on banners hung in Arlington Center in the Spring and Summer 2020.	The Arlington Public Schools and the Gracie James Foundation

