



COLUMBIA ARTS ***NEW BEGINNINGS***

Five-Year Strategic Plan
Fiscal Years 2023-28

Columbia Arts
215 Cascade Avenue
Hood River, OR 97031
columbiaarts.org

COLUMBIA ARTS New Beginnings

Five-Year Strategic Plan : Fiscal Years 2023-28

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Hannalies Bosman, Operations Manager



Cynthia Yoshida



Jenny Harris

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*Many thanks to the hundreds of people the participated in this process.
Everything we do is intended to support our ability to keep the building open and available for community arts programming.*

INTRODUCTION

Columbia Arts has a wonderfully rich history in the Columbia River Gorge. What started out in 2004 as simply finding a new home for the CAST community theater group and the Columbia Art Gallery cooperative evolved into an opportunity to create a new cultural destination as well as an exciting way to promote and showcase the arts in the region. Nineteen years later, Columbia Arts is still dedicated to nurturing and supporting the artistic expression of all people living in the Gorge and to providing a space to connect and experience the arts for residents and visitors alike.

This arts organization continues to exist because of the strong foundations upon which it was built. First, the generosity of multitudes of donors and supporters that began with the three individuals that first purchased the building in 2004. This purchase was the first step to realizing the dream of a community-centered arts facility that could serve both visual and performing artists and audiences. Second, a dedication to collaboration and partnership which has, in so many ways over the years, resulted in new educational opportunities, exhibitions, performances and events that have enriched our community in meaningful and lasting ways. Third, thousands of hours of hands-on labor by members of the arts community to transform the space into the beautiful and usable space it is today.

In the summer of 2022, Columbia Arts found itself at a crossroads. For over two years, the coronavirus pandemic caused in person activities to be curtailed and eventually completely shut down. With operational reserve funds nearly totally depleted in April of 2020, the organization was forced to lay off all but one part time administrative employee and cancel planned shows in the gallery and the theater. Since that time, the arts center facility has been closed, except for events and shows produced by other organizations and artists renting the gallery space for solo exhibits. The pandemic's impact on the organization's financial resources was very serious, but by far the toughest hit was the loss of volunteers, staff, and regular visitors and activity happening in the building – the "life" of Columbia Arts depends on people.

But it wasn't only the effects of the pandemic that had broken important bonds with the people in the community that were dedicated to the mission and success of Columbia Arts. Two major business model shifts that occurred just prior to the pandemic had already caused the organization to lose long-time volunteers and supporters. Prior efforts to change the operational model of the gallery resulted in long-time resident artists feeling unwelcome in the arts center they'd helped to build. Subsequent attempts to correct that situation resulted in further frustration from new and emerging artists and curators who felt that the new model was not given the full investment and time it needed to fulfill its promise.



So, by the summer of 2022, the Columbia Arts board knew that saving the Center would require a real effort to address not only the effects of the pandemic, but the remaining discontent – and disagreement – among the art community in the region about how the Center should be run and what its role really should be. A robust public outreach program was needed, as well as focused efforts to heal relationships, listen to constituents, and build a new strategic business plan that was community informed and community powered.

The board then sought and received grant funding from four important sources to begin the recovery process. First, a large grant from the Oregon Arts Commission's distribution of federal coronavirus recovery funds for live venues helped to retain the part-time employee as well as five important contract workers: the Center's bookkeeper, grant writer, and theater A/V technician, graphic designer, and janitorial services. A second grant from the Kinsman Foundation enabled the Center to keep the lights on and keep administrative staff and contract support going to be able to continue to host live events like the [Sense of Place](#) lecture series and the [Oregon Historical Society's](#) production of a multi-disciplinary event focused on the Japanese experience in Hood River during WWII through the experience of the Yasui family, as well as a high school theater production of student directed one-act plays. Two artists mounted solo shows in the gallery, and local businesses and nonprofit groups rented the theater space for events and performances.

Two other important grant awards focused on the development of the community informed, strategic business plan – and address all of the needs the organization had to fill to be able to emerge out of this temporary closure status and return to full operations. The [Union Pacific Railroad Community Spaces](#) grant program and the [Oregon Cultural Trust](#) provided the funding necessary to launch the public input process to develop the new strategic business plan. From the start, it was clear that listening to the community –



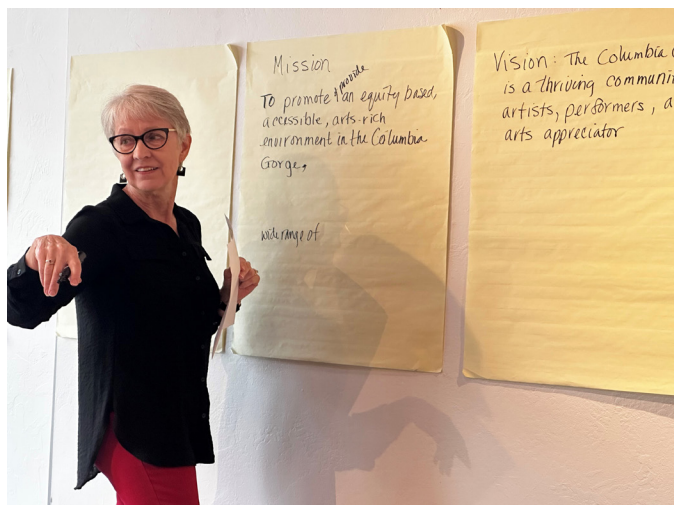
collecting their ideas and input and involving them directly in the important decisions that had to be made to chart the pathway forward would be the most important first step.

The board was dedicated to the idea that this effort would be a true "New Beginning," a real blank slate, starting over completely with the attitude that, as ideas came in from the community, nothing was "off the table" - including the option of closing completely, selling the building and using the proceeds to support the arts in the Columbia Gorge in some other way.



Almost immediately after the launch of the public input process it became obvious that the community wants to see the building retained and reopened to full, year-round operations. 140 individuals expressed interest in volunteering at the Center, including 16 individuals who have expressed interest in joining the board of directors or a committee of the board to help implement the plan and reopen the Center. Through direct outreach to community stakeholders, artists, and supporters, many of the broken relationships that the organization had suffered before the pandemic have been mended, and a true new beginning is possible.

The public input received throughout the process provided valuable insights into the need for diverse opportunities for art education, expression, and experience throughout the entire community. Over-arching themes of agreement among stakeholders have prompted the board to take a fresh look at the facility itself, how all the spaces could best meet these needs, and what Columbia Arts role as an organization should be both in terms of producing arts programming in house, and partnering with other community organizations who are working with aligned missions and goals. The good news is this shift is not only possible, but it promises to deliver back to the community a uniquely valuable asset: a full-service arts facility, open and welcoming to all, fostering the experience of a life lived with meaningful connections to the arts - throughout all stages of life.



This five-year strategic plan is the culmination of gathering input, identifying existing resources and developing direction.

It includes three main goal areas with objectives outlined to guide board decision-making going forward to implement the activities needed to reach those goals.

Everything we do is intended to support our ability to keep the building open and available for community arts programming.



ABOUT THE FACILITY

Columbia Center for the Arts, located at 215 Cascade Street in downtown Hood River, Oregon, houses a wonderful, open and brightly lit gallery space, a well-equipped black box theatre, and a large arts classroom/workshop space equipped with sinks, drying racks, easels and tables. The facility is owned outright by Columbia Arts, a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization, which launched a successful capital campaign in 2006.

Specifications:

- Black box theatre with 37' x 28' stage, 136 fixed seats, 39 movable chairs, green room, 2 dressing rooms, sound, and light booth, and 16' movie screen with projector with HDMI connection to computer in the booth.
- 800-square-foot lobby with kitchen access and a bar.
- Catering kitchen with oven, microwave, and full-size refrigerator.
- Open and bright 1,700-square-foot art gallery with capacity for 100 people.
- 700-square-foot studio/classroom with a capacity for 50 standing, 35 seated, and 25 seated at tables, large digital smart tv with HDMI connections.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- 13' ceiling throughout the facility



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Columbia Arts secured funding for the process through two different grants, from Union Pacific Railroad and the Oregon Cultural Trust. Once the grants were awarded, the board contracted with Barbara Briggs, a long-time non-profit consultant, to help design and facilitate the process. A contract was also secured with the [Mid-Columbia Economic Development District](#) to provide a variety of outreach activities as well as with [The Next Door](#) for Spanish-speaking focus group facilitation.

The next step in the strategic planning process was to identify community members who would be interested, willing and able to support the effort through participation in the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC). The SPAC met initially to discuss the process, advise on specific methods and questions to ask during the community input process, and continued to meet throughout the process to review input and provide advice to the board on next steps.

To ensure that everyone who had an interest in Columbia Arts would be able to share their ideas, a series of six public input sessions were planned, three in person and three virtual meetings. Eighty people attended the sessions. Each was asked to complete the online survey, which was well publicized through radio, newspaper, and outreach to community organization. A total of 223 survey responses were received. The questions on the survey were prepared through a joint effort of the board and SPAC. Shelley Toon Lindberg of [Arts in Education of the Gorge](#) sponsored an input session with local arts educators to gather their input as well.

The focus group that was planned and held in Spanish through a contract with The Next Door, Inc., followed up on a prior survey of Hispanic and Latino members of the community, also facilitated by The Next Door that took place in 2020. Input from that session was shared with the board and SPAC. The online survey was available in Spanish as well. Information from a series of interviews with leaders in the Hispanic and Latino community in Hood River County that was completed in 2020 by former Executive Director Leith Gaines and Nubia Contreras was also considered in the public input used while drafting the plan.

The survey produced a wide range of ideas and suggestions for ongoing operations and arts programming. It asked questions around governance, programming, and community involvement. The results clearly identified the desire of the respondents that Columbia Center for the Arts (CCA), the building, continue to exist and be open and welcoming to all. The board took this loud and clear message as their marching orders to determine how to make that work, both financially and in program delivery.

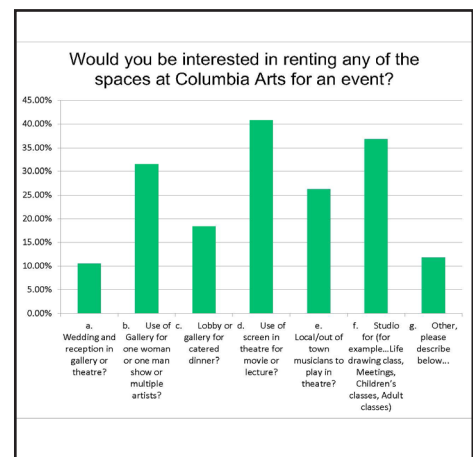
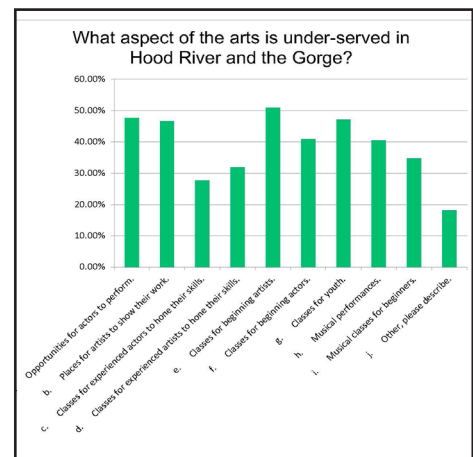
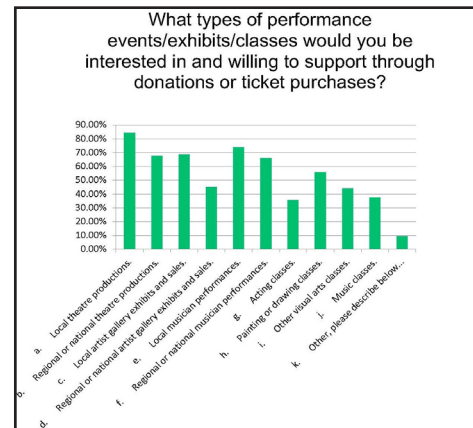


Throughout the process, communication was key. People were encouraged to sign up for regular updates and over 100 did so. Those people received a total of 13 project update emails, providing details on the process and inviting more participation. In addition to the periodic update emails to those on the “Keep Me Informed” list, brief updates were also sent to the larger Columbia Arts subscriber e-mail list, posted on Columbia Arts social media feeds on Instagram ([@columbiaarts](#)) and Facebook ([/ColumbiaArtsCenter](#) and [/Columbia.Arts](#)), and provided to radio and newspaper outlets in the area. Two live radio interviews, one on the [KIHR Mid-Columbia Today](#) show and one on the Spanish language [Radio Tierra](#) community news program, promoted the public input process.

After the public input was gathered, the SPAC and Board reviewed quantifiable responses in aggregate as well as each written comment from the online survey. Armed with the responses and ideas from the survey, as well as input from the SPAC, the Board began drafting the five-year strategic plan through a series of facilitated, in-person and virtual meetings.

To be successful, this community-informed Plan will require community support including financial, collaborative, and volunteer efforts for implementation. Important changes to Columbia Arts’ governance and board structure; paid staff job descriptions, roles, and responsibilities; core volunteer job descriptions and work shift schedules; and inter-organizational agreements with partner organizations and groups are key components of the Plan and, we believe, integral to the long-term success and resiliency of this important community organization.

In the following pages, a new mission, vision, and value statement serve as the core guide for all that follows.



Everything we do is intended to support our ability to keep the building open and available for community arts programming.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Columbia Arts is to promote and provide an equity based, accessible, arts rich environment in the Columbia Gorge.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision the Columbia Gorge as a thriving community for artists, performers, and audiences, where everyone can be engaged in a diverse range of creative opportunities.

STATEMENT OF VALUES

Columbia Arts Values:

- Artists, performers, and arts appreciators
- Supporters of the arts, both donors and volunteers
- Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion
- Partnership with other organizations and individuals
- Mutual respect and trust
- Thoughtful decision making
- Good stewardship of our resources: building, financial and human.
- Truth, transparency, and open communication
- Opportunities for artists and performers to become more skilled
- Readily available, quality space for arts exploration, expression, and practice
- Access to the arts for all ages and all families
- Board, staff, and volunteers being representative of the local community.
- Advocacy, action, and engagement



GOALS

This five-year strategic plan includes three main goal areas with objectives outlined to guide board decision-making going forward to implement the activities needed to reach those goals.

The Plan will guide the decision-making process of Columbia Arts for the next five years (Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29). Looking at the highest priority work that must be done in the next five years to return the Center to full operations, and in response to general consensus of community stakeholders that participated in the public input process, the board has identified these three major goals:

GOAL 1: GOVERNANCE

Ensure Columbia Arts is fiscally healthy, sustainable, and community-informed.

GOAL 2: BUILDING

Ensure the building is well maintained, accessible and open.

GOAL 3: PROGRAMMING

Develop a wide range of community inspired arts programming both internally and through active partnerships.

GOAL: GOVERNANCE

Ensure Columbia Arts is fiscally healthy, sustainable, and community informed.

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish a diverse, engaged, and effective board of directors that is representative of the community. Create the new board structure, fill positions, and provide training in year one.
- Develop and implement a plan for long term financial stability with diverse funding streams including space rental, fundraisers, donations, grants, earned revenue from CCA produced programs and partnership produced programs. Develop and begin implementing in year one. Continue to refine and implement years two through five.
- Restore operational reserve fund to \$250,000 by the end of the five-year plan period.
- Actively engage the community through transparency of board actions and ongoing soliciting of community input to help inform board decisions.
- Develop a staffing plan to ensure proper, consistent, and sufficient human resources to support operations. Identify other staffing or contract needs around fundraising, contract development, volunteer development, etc. in year one. Develop a budget and funding to support those needs.
- The board will have a complete budget developed by the end of each fiscal year and share that with the public.

ACTIVITIES:

Year 1: Expand board to thirteen members with diverse skills, interests, arts and nonprofit expertise, as well as representation of the varied communities and cultures of the Gorge by utilizing a board matrix approach and active solicitation from the public to fill the membership.

Year 1: Review and revise bylaws to assure they meet our new direction.

Year 1 or 2: Create detailed board workplan which will include standing committees or responsibility assignments in at least the following: building maintenance, financial and Diversity/Equity/Inclusion. Committees may include members from the public with expertise in an area. There may be additional committees if needed either as standing or ad hoc.

Year 1 through 5: Continue to engage the public as has been done during the planning process by providing regular updates to the community via social media and other outreach activities which will include periodic short surveys.

Year 1 through 5: Launch fundraising campaign to support the operational budget.

Year 1 through 3: Redesign the website to make it user friendly, progressive, and easy to manage.

Year 1 through 5: Continue current $\frac{3}{4}$ time Operations Manager position to support the board, manage social media and provide other administrative work.

GOAL: BUILDING

Ensure the building is well maintained, accessible and open.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure the building is well maintained and open in year one.
- Establish a maintenance plan with a schedule of improvement and maintenance projects.
- Provide staffing and volunteers to keep the doors open and the building available for use.
- Actively encourage community involvement with the building, including marketing space for rentals or cooperative use agreements to arts and humanities organizations.

ACTIVITIES:

Year 1: Reestablish a volunteer Building Committee to identify maintenance needs and make recommendations to the board.

Year 1: Have a professional inspection of the building in year one to help inform the board about immediate and potential future repairs needed.

Year 1 through 5: Designate specific funding to support the building in the budget (utilities, cleaning, normal maintenance, minor and major repairs).

Year 1: Secure funding for and hire a Building and Volunteer Coordinator to coordinate schedules for use and maintenance of the building and volunteers in year one. Reassess viability of the position at the end of the first year and adjust if needed.

Year 2: Develop a marketing plan for space rentals for a wide range of potential arts related activities through social media and other outreach efforts.

Year 1: Set a regular open schedule for the building to be staffed in the lobby area by the Building and Volunteer Coordinator and/or trained volunteers.



GOAL: PROGRAMMING

Develop a wide range of arts programing both internally and through active partnerships.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure programming and educational opportunities are welcoming and accessible to our demographically diverse community.
- Partner with other organizations, groups, and individuals to develop opportunities for a wide variety of arts programming based on input from the community.
- Partner with other organizations to develop diverse arts education opportunities.
- Make space available to local performers and artists for practice through rental, membership, or other means.
- Create an annual plan for CCA produced programming to include two productions in the Theatre and three gallery shows per calendar year, utilizing project-specific staffing. Each production/show will generate enough revenue to cover all costs plus help support CCA's long-term goals. Reassess at the end of year one and adjust as needed.
- Open the "Lobby for Local Arts" in the lobby area where local artists will be able to show and sell their work, staffed by the Building and Volunteer Coordinator or trained volunteers.

ACTIVITIES:

Year 1-2: Develop criteria to establish how decisions are made regarding shows, events, practice, and general space rental making sure no use of the space is contrary to Columbia Arts stated Mission and Values and encourage uses that support the Mission.

Year 1-2: Develop criteria to establish how decisions are made regarding showing local art in the lobby, including diversity and accessibility considerations.

Year 1-2: Develop criteria to establish how decisions are made regarding educational opportunities held at CCA, to assure consideration is given to diversity, accessibility, all ages, and all families.

Year 1-5: Establish partnership relationships with other nonprofit arts and human services organizations to provide varied and engaging arts programming to all members of the Columbia River Gorge's diverse community.

Year 1-5: Establish new and renewed relationships with artists, performers, and arts educators to collaboratively realize the full potential of the nonprofit community arts center.



FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 BUDGET

The following is our best guess estimate of year one expenses to meet our goals as laid out in the five-year strategic plan. It includes maintaining the current Operations Manager position and adding a Building/Volunteer Coordinator to be hired within a few months. Each at 30 hours per week. We will review our income and expenses quarterly and adjust as needed.

INCOME:

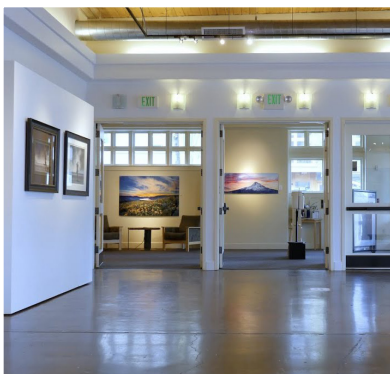
Contributed Support	Individual/major/sponsors	\$ 58,000
Foundation Grants		\$ 50,000
Fundraising Events		\$ 10,000
Earned Revenue Programs/Gallery/tickets/workshops		\$ 30,000
Earned Income Other	Concessions/rents	\$ 20,000
Cost Of Goods Sold		(\$18,000)

TOTAL NET INCOME	\$160,000
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EXPENSES:

Payroll	Wages/other payroll expense	\$ 89,250
Contract Fees	Accounting/grants/professional	\$ 12,000
Non-Personnel Expenses-	Supplies/communication/marketing/etc.	\$ 15,850
Facility Expenses	Maintenance/supplies/utilities/insurance	\$ 28,775
Other Expenses	Development/board/corporation/etc.	\$ 10,475
Program Expenses	AV & Tech/Theatre/misc.	\$ 3,650

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 160,000
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"Connection of Hearts through the Arts."

HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCEEDING?

Throughout the Plan term (July 2023 – June 2028) Columbia Arts will evaluate its progress toward fulfillment of its mission, vision, values, and goals by conducting the following reviews at least annually:

1. Annual review of the progress being made toward achieving our three goals.
2. Evaluation of the organization's performance in offering diverse programming and solid revenue stream.
3. Frequent and transparent requests for ongoing input from community members.
4. Continuous check-in to ensure all activities are aligned with Columbia Arts mission, vision, and values.

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