

<b>AGENCY NAME:</b>	<b>Arts Commission</b>		
<b>AGENCY CODE:</b>	<b>H910</b>	<b>SECTION:</b>	<b>28</b>

## **AGENCY’S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

The [South Carolina Arts Commission](#) was created in 1967 “to insure that the arts... will continue to grow and play an ever more significant part in the welfare and educational experiences of our citizens.” The act creating the agency outlined four priorities:

1. To stimulate and encourage throughout the State the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation therein;
2. To make such studies as may be deemed advisable of public and private institutions engaged within the State in artistic and cultural activities, including but not limited to music, theater, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture and allied arts and crafts, and to make recommendations concerning appropriate methods to encourage participation in and appreciation of the arts to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of persons in all parts of the State;
3. To take such steps as may be necessary and appropriate to encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of the State of South Carolina and to expand the State's cultural resources; and
4. **To do such other things as may be necessary to carry out** the provisions of this chapter *(SC Code of Laws, Section 60-15-60)*.

The Arts Commission’s mission is to expand access to the arts and foster creativity for all South Carolinians. The agency works to accomplish its mission by focusing resources in three areas:

- **Arts Learning**, to establish the arts as an integral part of South Carolina’s educational systems and the lifelong learning process of our citizens,
- **Arts Industry**, to stimulate the development of South Carolina’s arts resources and organizations and promote creative partnerships to improve the quality of lives, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance economic growth, and
- **Artist Development**, to encourage, nurture, and support the artistic growth and economic well-being of South Carolina’s artists.

The Arts Commission accomplishes its goals through four main strategies:

- **Staff Assistance** – The Arts Commission’s staff of experienced arts professionals consult with and assist local organizations, governments, schools, artists, and citizens. These services are delivered via direct interaction between staff and constituents.
- **Direct Programs** – Programs, conferences, awards, and other events wholly produced and presented by the Arts Commission, usually targeted to a statewide audience.
- **Partnerships** – Building strong programmatic and financial relationships with strategically aligned organizations to maximize productivity, cost effectiveness, statewide reach, and capacity for a variety of statewide programs.
- **Grants** – Cash awards with matching and reporting requirements, designed to support and advance the state’s long-range and strategic goals for the arts and delivered through an accountable and transparent application and review process.

The South Carolina Arts Commission (SCAC) is located at 1026 Sumter Street, Suite 200, in Columbia. As of June 30, 2025, the SCAC employed 28 full-time employees.

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**Strategic Planning Process**

- Canvass of the People, the agency’s strategic planning process, wrapped up in the first quarter of FY2025, and the updated [strategic plan](#) was approved by the Board of Commissioners in April 2025 to take effect July 1, 2025. The planning process offered numerous opportunities for public input, including an online survey, several virtual meetings, and six in-person forums held in these communities: Belton, Fort Lawn, Hampton, Hartsville, Aiken, and Summerton. Strategic plan outcomes remained largely unchanged from the previous plan, but several new objectives reflect the public’s expressed priorities and interests around access to the arts, including cultural districts, public art, creative career opportunities, arts therapy in schools, and arts for older adults.

**Arts Hub Regions**

- A key component of the updated strategic plan is developing six Arts Hub Regions to expand the agency’s capacity to deliver on identified priorities, including sustainability of Arts Grow SC achievements (see page 6). An SCAC satellite office will be established in each of the six Hub regions: Upstate, Western Piedmont, Olde English, Midlands, Pee Dee/Grand Strand, and Lowcountry, with the location depending on space availability and ease of travel from other parts of the region. The Midlands region will be housed in the agency’s current offices, with the Spearman Center for Arts Innovation serving as the location for activities. SCAC will rent office space and establish MOUs with partners to provide grant-supported services. Six FTEs were approved during the budget process to support hiring one coordinator for each region. (Figure 1)

Primary activities to be supported by Arts Hub Regions:

- Collective networks - groups of individuals and organizations that share information, ideas, and resources.
- Shared resources - similar to a library system that loans physical resources such as technology, space, tools, services, etc.
- Professional learning opportunities for artists, educators, nonprofits, and community members.
- Increased opportunities to host in-person programs and activities.
- Programs and arts activities hosted by grantees and partners.
- Grants that can be targeted to a Hub region’s needs based on analysis of current funding.

**Overall Grantmaking**

- The agency placed grants in all 46 counties in FY2025, awarding \$12,544,219 through 676 grants to support community arts activities, artists, and arts learning programs. (Figure 2)
- The first public [Tableau dashboard](#) of grants data was posted on the website in August 2024. The dashboard is a user-friendly illustration of statewide impact beyond the county where a grant was originally awarded. A website visitor can view all areas in the state where a particular grant had an impact. Viewers can choose filters – such as county, specific grantee, or area of focus – to view the number of grants and dollars awarded. Using Tableau data visualization allows SCAC to clearly illustrate the impact of grantmaking statewide by mapping activity location zip codes. This data is required by the National Endowment for the Arts and collected from grantee final reports. (Note: FY2025 dashboard to be posted in late October.)

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# SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION

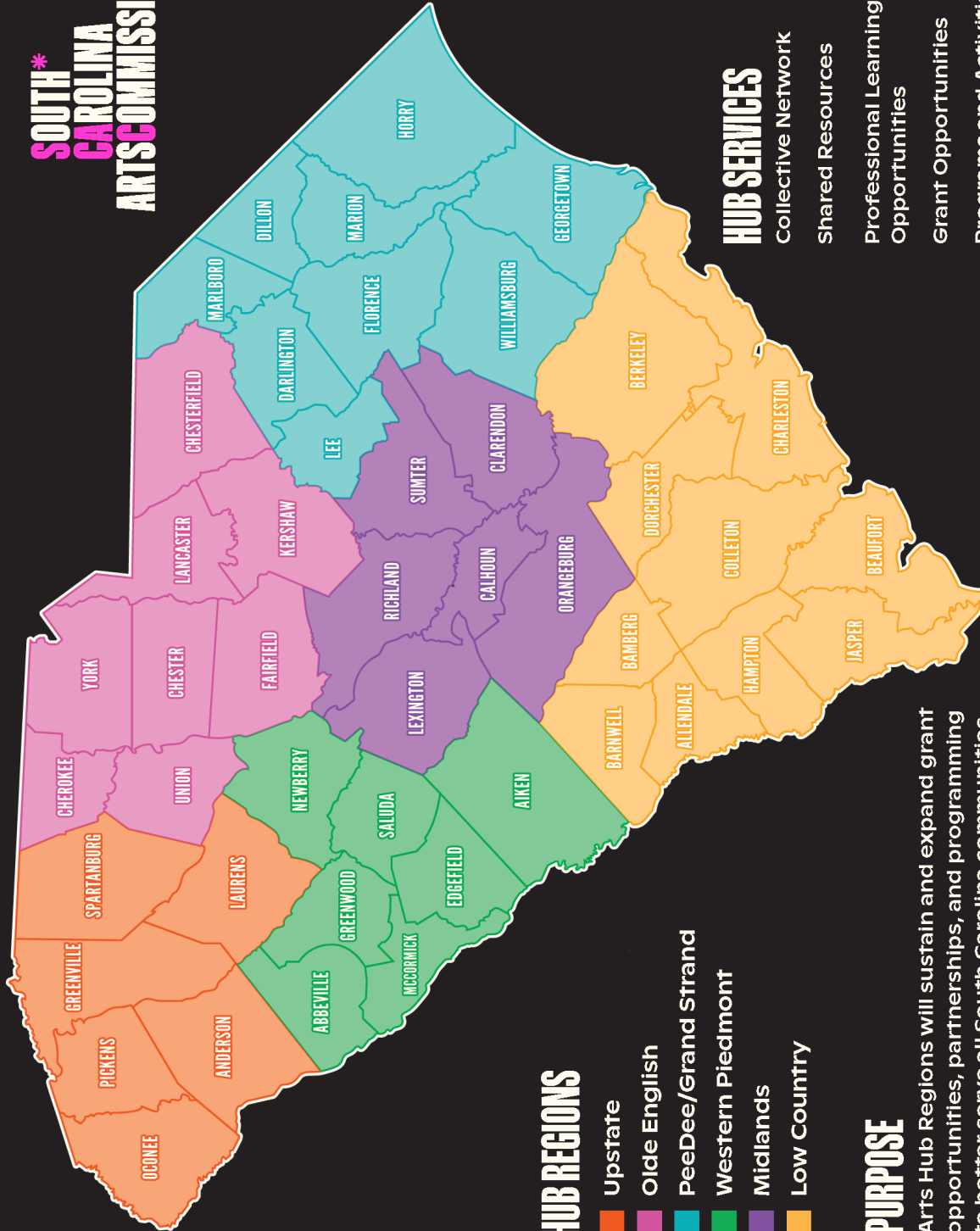


Figure 1



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**Overall Grantmaking, cont.**

- SCAC monitors the three-year rolling average of grants to all 46 counties. Tier One counties average less than one grant over three years; Tier Two counties average less than two grants per year. At the end of FY2025, no counties remained on Tier One, evidence of the purposeful strategy to work with these counties to award grants. Five counties were in Tier 2 – an improvement from six at the end of FY24. Staff initiated outreach about grant opportunities to organizations and artists in these counties, resulting in 14 Horizon Opportunity grants in nine counties. Horizon Opportunity grants include extra technical assistance and staff support to remove barriers related to applying for and managing a grant. Previously, only first-time grantees were eligible for these grants. Eligibility was expanded to allow organizations in Tier One and Tier Two counties to receive Horizon funding for a second year if they had not already received funding in the current fiscal year.
- Through grantmaking, SCAC supported 3,833,935 in-person arts experiences for South Carolina residents and visitors, including artists, students, and adults, an increase from the previous total of 3,380,200. Remote and asynchronous arts experiences totaled 3,574,394. Grantees annually report the number of in-person and remote/asynchronous arts experiences for youth and for adults, plus the number of artists directly involved in each grant program or activity.
- The agency annually surveys grantees on measures such as staff assistance, ease of access to programs and services, relevance of programs, and the usefulness of agency communications. In FY2025, the agency’s overall satisfaction score was 4.76 on a 5-point scale (5 being the highest score.)
- The agency expended 80.76% of its state appropriation in grants, exceeding its legislative mandate of 70%.

**Accessibility**

- The Barrier Free Arts SC grant was created to empower arts organizations to prioritize accessibility for constituents and artists with disabilities. The predecessor to this grant is Arts 4 All, which was created two years ago. Barrier Free Arts SC will cover a three-year cycle and include a cohort that will support grantees in creating an accessibility plan and through professional development. The first year of funding is up to \$3,500 per grant and will underwrite grantee attendance at the national LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disabilities) conference. The second and third years of funding will be up to \$5,000 annually. After three years, organizations will be eligible to become Barrier-Free Designated by SCAC.
- FY2025 marked the third year of partnering with MUSC on its Creative Arts Therapy Initiative. Grant support from SCAC has allowed MUSC to hire two full-time arts therapists to work in two Arts Hub regions – the Pee Dee/Grand Strand and the Lowcountry. SCAC requested and was awarded \$75,000 as part of a new arts and health pilot launched by the National Endowment for the Arts. The funds are being used to support MUSC’s hiring of a third regionally based arts therapist in an Arts Hub Region.
- Disability and Arts Webinars continued for a second year in partnership with Able South Carolina. Eight webinars featured topics such as digital accessibility, assistive technology, and engaging with the disability community. A total of 249 individuals and organizational representatives attended, and all webinars were recorded and uploaded to the agency’s [YouTube channel](#). Thirteen webinars have been

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uploaded since the series began in 2024, culminating in approximately 20 hours of professional development available to anyone.

- An Accessibility Toolkit and an Access Monthly newsletter were created to provide practical assistance to SCAC staff as they work to ensure that grants, programs, and communications can be accessed by all constituents. The tool kit is a collection of resources with a focus on state and local government. The newsletter includes arts and accessibility news, general topics, and best practices.

**Arts Learning – Arts Grow SC Sustainability**

- With the end of the three-year, \$20 million ESSER-funded partnership with the S.C. Dept. of Education, SCAC’s Arts Grow SC initiative moved to a sustainability model for grants previously focused on learning loss. For example, instead of awarding one large partnership grant to Engaging Creative Minds (ECM) to fund their summer STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) camps, smaller grants were awarded directly to schools that had previously served as camp sites. In FY2025, four schools accepted the funding to continue as summer STEAM camps, serving 423 students in Allendale, Calhoun, Clarendon, and Colleton counties. ECM’s revised partnership grant supported a fifth summer STEAM camp as a pilot in Greenwood County in the Western Piedmont Arts Hub Region – the first step in expanding access to future camps in Arts Hub Regions.
- The School Arts Support Grant was revamped to shift focus from learning loss to meeting student outcomes through arts-enhanced curriculum or arts integration. Teachers can now use the grant to support creative arts therapy experiences. In FY2025, 54 schools in 21 counties received grants of up to \$2,500 per request.
- The Summer Arts Education Project and Term Arts Education Project (AEP) grants were restructured for post-ESSER sustainability. Award amounts and grant periods were adjusted, and both grants were expanded to include programs for 3K through 4K students. Traditional (arts organizations) and non-traditional (social service, health, community, education, etc.) providers are eligible for both grants.

The Summer AEP application opened in November 2024 to allow organizations to plan earlier. The grant supports arts education programs for K-12 students between school years. Forty-five grants of up to \$22,500 were awarded in 18 counties.

The Term AEP application opened in January 2025 to support quality arts education programs for K-12 students during the school term, including beyond the school day. Fifty-six grants of up to \$15,000 were awarded in 15 counties.

- In FY2025, the District Arts Support (DAS) grant had the largest number of applications since the category was established. Eleven districts submitted Letters of Intent, with nine completing the full application and receiving the grant. The increase in applications is partly due to the success of the District Arts Coordinator (DAC) cohort. The first DAC cohort completed their third year in FY2025 and were eligible to apply for the DAS grant. Each DAC has implemented a board-approved arts education strategic plan for their school district, and their district is continuing to fund their position even though SCAC has ended cohort funding.

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**Creative Careers Studio**

- After many years of hearing from students, parents, and guidance counselors who could not easily find information about arts careers, SCAC worked to fill that gap with [Creative Careers Studio](#), a website for high school and college students who want to explore a career in the arts. Although high school students are the primary audience, the site can also be used by teachers, school administrators and counselors, parents, college students, and young professionals planning to switch careers. The site is also useful for workforce development partners. A companion YouTube channel includes a video series featuring creative professionals working in fields such as the auto industry and product development. These videos were produced in partnership with S.C. Future Makers (a K-12 initiative of the S.C. Manufacturer’s Alliance) to show students how creativity and the arts play a vital role in advanced manufacturing and technology careers. Creative Careers Studio includes a partnership with Coastal Carolina University’s Athenaeum Press, with CCU students playing a key role in interviewing creative professionals.

**Arts Directory**

- The [S.C. Arts Directory](#) is an extensive directory of artists, arts organizations, creative arts therapists, and teaching artists across many disciplines who work throughout the state. Once accepted, members may submit an additional application to be recognized as a Verified Teaching Artist, a designation for those primarily working with students in a classroom environment. The directory is used by educators to connect to artists who are certified to teach in the classroom and by organizations and individuals who want to hire artists for exhibitions, festivals, and other activities. Forty-eight members were re-certified and 20 new members were added to the Arts Directory for a total of 228 artists as of June 30, 2025. Twelve artists retained or reached Verified Teaching Artist status.
- An in-person Teaching Artist’s Forum was sponsored in September 2024 in partnership with the USC School of Music. This professional learning conference for teaching artists attracted 40 attendees and was supported by 13 presenters and 10 SCAC/USC staff and students. The keynote presentation was recorded and posted on the Teaching Artist Symposium for those unable to attend. The Teaching Artist Symposium is a virtual, on-demand conference of recorded sessions on SCAC’s YouTube channel.

**Folklife and Traditional Arts**

- SCAC partner Atheneum Press at Coastal Carolina University expanded the Communal Pen community-based storytelling project and hosted 18 in-person or virtual workshops, with 84 participants across 30 zip codes, including from outside the state. Atheneum Press managed the Museum on Main Street Communal Pen workshop series in collaboration with the Smithsonian’s traveling exhibition program and digitized 102 stories. More than 40 CCU students participated, either through course credit, paid internships or as volunteers.
- Seven organizations in five counties were awarded up to \$6,000 for Traditional Arts Project Grants for Organizations. The grant ensures that South Carolina’s living traditions remain vibrant, visible parts of community life in the form of traditional arts practiced across the state. Grants supported activities featuring Gullah Sweetgrass baskets, Native American drumming, and traditional weaving.
- Seven Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grants were awarded in five counties. The grant supports mentors who seek to pass their artistic and cultural knowledge to qualified apprentices. Pairs of mentors and

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apprenticeships worked together on Irish traditional flute music, old time fiddling, and Filipino traditional music.

### Arts Industry

- In partnership with the S.C. Arts Alliance, SCAC hosted the first S.C. Arts Leadership Institute in December at Clemson University’s Madren Center. The institute was geared toward arts sector leaders and featured keynote speakers and breakout sessions on leadership, accessibility, coaching and hiring processes, plus teambuilding and networking activities.
- The Festivals Program grant was awarded to 23 organizations in 13 counties. Grants of up to \$7,500 supported a range of arts activities and increased opportunities for public engagement and participation in arts and culture.
- The Art of Community: Rural SC grant was awarded to 10 organizations (up to \$7,500 each) in nine counties. The grant supports arts-based projects in rural S.C. that use the arts to address issues and challenges in rural communities. This grant can also support partnerships between libraries and artists or arts organizations.
- Operating support grants provide a stable base for S.C. arts providers who contribute to the \$14.1 billion generated annually by the creative economy. Both categories of operating support grants continued to attract additional applicants. For General Operating Support (GOS), 146 grants were awarded in 28 counties; for Operating for Small Organizations (OSS), 54 grants were awarded in 22 counties. This is an increase from FY2024 of 141 GOS grant awards and 47 OSS grant awards.

### Artist Development

- Each year, Individual Artist Fellowships of \$10,000 are awarded to artists in rotating disciplines. For FY2025, one Fellowship each was awarded in performance, poetry, choreography/directing, and folklife and traditional arts. This was the first year folklife and traditional arts Fellowships were offered.
- The Artist Entrepreneur Incubator (AEI) is a virtual program that teaches artists practical skills to level-up their businesses. In FY2025, participating artists were coached by other artists, consultants, and educators through three multi-day offerings: Creating Comprehensive Marketing Plans, Financial Management for Artists, and Submitting Winning Grant Proposals. Each program was repeated once for a total of six sessions. Across the year, AEI engaged 91 individual artists, with several artists attending more than one session, for a total of 119 registrants.
- The Artists’ Business Initiative (ABI) is a grant and program that offers professional caliber working artists financial support for arts-based entrepreneurial initiatives and professional training. Grants can support start-up costs, revising a business, or a temporary initiative that will improve sustainability. A one-time purchase may be awarded up to \$3,500, and an ongoing business initiative may be awarded up to \$5,000. Three artists received ABI grants in FY2025.
- Emerging Artist grants of up to \$1,800 were awarded to 13 artists in seven counties. In addition to the grant, artists benefit from mentorship and professional support. The grant is intended to deepen artistic

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practice and foster artistic excellence, encourage career growth and sustainability, and provide professional development and collaboration opportunities. Emerging artists are defined as being at an early stage in their artistic career development (active from one to five years) with no basis in age.

**State Art Collection**

- The State Art Collection policy was updated in October 2024 to increase accessibility to the collection and highlight additional artistic disciplines and artists. To ensure the collection remains a relevant and contemporary footprint of South Carolina’s cultural heritage, up to five works of art from each year’s cohort of Fellows will be inducted into the collection, beginning in FY2027. This recognition award will bring work by contemporary artists into the collection as a part of its digital archive. SCAC will not own or physically house these works.
- After an extensive inventory and condition evaluation, the State Art Collection loan program re-opened and a virtual gallery returned to the agency’s website in January. The new virtual gallery provides 24/7 access to the collection and includes images and information about the 466 works and the artists who created them.

**Communications and Recognition**

- The annual Governor’s Awards for the Arts recognized two individuals and three organizations for outstanding achievements and contributions to the arts in S.C. The awards ceremony aired May 18 on the agency’s YouTube channel. In June, the Board of Commissioners approved two category changes: 1) dividing the Arts Education category into one category for individuals and one for institutions 2) adding an Accessibility category to recognize organizations doing exceptional work in making the arts more accessible to all.
- Communications staff posted 200 articles on the Hub, the agency’s news website, issued 15 news releases, and posted 955 arts events on Arts Daily, the online arts events calendar. On Instagram, all metrics improved over FY24, with engagement doubling, and reach nearly tripling. On Facebook, engagement and reach increased over last year, but visits were down 5.7%. Followers increased slightly. SCAC also posts content on LinkedIn and Twitter, but those platforms do not provide detailed metrics.

**Investment in Staff and Resources**

- Several “test run” events and meetings were held in the new Spearman Center for Arts Innovation while final sound proofing and upfitting are completed. The Spearman Center is a 1,300 square foot space named in honor of former S.C. Department of Education Secretary Molly Spearman, whose leadership in arts education helped pave the way for many of SCAC’s arts learning initiatives. The Spearman Center is used by SCAC and partner organizations and is available to state agencies. The space will be used for Midlands Arts Hub Region activities and available for rentals.
- The agency added four new positions -- an Instructional Specialist to provide arts integration leadership and training for educators; an Artist Development Coordinator and an Arts Industry Coordinator to increase capacity to serve artists and arts organizations, respectively; and a Multimedia Manager to create videos to increase awareness of opportunities and highlight the work of grantees. The Arts Learning

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Director was promoted to Deputy Director to oversee Arts Hub Regions, and the Arts and Education Accessibility Director was promoted to Arts Learning and Accessibility Director.

- Staff conducted an internal information technology audit to develop a cost-savings plan, projected to save the agency approximately \$40,000. Software contracts and annual subscriptions were evaluated to identify more cost-efficient options, either through a reduced number of licenses or negotiation of reduced rates with vendors.

**Looking forward – FY2026 priorities**

- Opening the first of six Arts Hub Region Offices to sustain and expand grant opportunities, partnerships, and programming.
- Hiring the first Hub Coordinator to work in an Arts Hub Region outside of the Midlands.
- Conducting Spotlight Tours (in-person presentations) in Arts Hub Regions.
- Activating Year One of the first Barrier-Free Arts SC cohort to provide accessibility training, tools, and funding to participants.
- Developing infrastructure for a Public Art grant category for community-based public art.
- Implementing Creative Careers Studio at college and career fairs.
- Relaunching a revised grants program for General Operating Support and Operating Support for Small Organizations.
- Developing infrastructure for a Cultural District grant category that supports S.C. Cultural District strategic plans.
- Convening the second S.C. Arts Leadership Institute, a professional development retreat for arts organization executive directors, artistic directors, and/or board presidents.

**Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies**

*Identify the most negative impact on the public as a result of the agency’s failure in accomplishing its goals and objectives.*

Negative impact #1: The educational, economic, and social benefits of the arts are only accessible to those who can afford them and largely inaccessible to rural and high-poverty citizens.

Negative impact #2: With fewer arts opportunities for children, citizens and visitors, South Carolina is less competitive for tourists, new residents, and businesses.

Negative impact #3: South Carolina’s rich heritage of traditional cultural and artistic practices are lost and forgotten.

Negative Impact #4: South Carolina’s children do not have access to high quality education that includes a comprehensive, sequential education in the arts.

To avoid or mitigate the negative impact, the state will need to:

- Maintain and increase the capacity of the S.C. Arts Commission to accomplish its goals – the only agency or organization in South Carolina focused on these issues statewide
- Maximize funding and other resources offered by local, state, regional, and national partner organizations
- Include the arts explicitly in the development of economic, educational, quality-of-life, and governmental strategies.