



Creative Sonoma Business Plan 2022

Facilitated by Third Plateau

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For the complete plan, including Operations, Management, Financials and Implementation Plans, please contact Creative Sonoma.



Executive Summary

The creative community of Sonoma County took a brutal hit in 2020: programs were (and remain) disrupted by COVID-19 restrictions, revenues plummeted, and multiple fires devastated the community (and threaten to again). Creative Sonoma responded to the challenge by conducting a rapid needs assessment and working to provide support and stability to the region. While those efforts helped in the moment, the ongoing pandemic and economic uncertainty make it abundantly clear that the region's hard days are far from over, and there is a lot of difficult work ahead. At the same time, arts and creativity continue to contribute to the economic output for the county and has grown meaningfully as a sector over the past five years. The Arts and Culture sector accounts for approximately 1.8% of Sonoma County's Gross Regional Product (GRP). At this percentage, of the total \$29 billion GRP, Arts and Culture exceeds \$500 million.¹ Ensuring that the creative community has the support and resources required to continue to grow and thrive contributes to the economic vitality of the region.

As a recipient of an Adaptation Grant from the Hewlett Foundation, we found ourselves with a unique opportunity to take a big step back, reassess who the community is, what the community needs, and reimagine how we can be of service. Developing a new business plan that has organizational adaptability at its core should prepare us for the inevitable outside forces that will impact our own sustainability and that of our community. A new Creative Sonoma can be a more visible and trusted partner with other County departments, can more effectively meet organizations and artists where they are, and can more substantively drive efforts around sustainability and more intentionally refocus our lens of equity.

Creative Sonoma embarked on a business planning process to grow our impact and influence as the primary organization supporting Sonoma County's creative sector.

Grounded in **our vision that creativity become a defining economic driver for Sonoma County**, our programming is organized across two categories: 1) programming that drives demand for creative services; and 2) programming that increases the quantity and quality of the supply of creative services. By simultaneously driving demand and increasing supply, we can fulfill **our mission to support and advance the creative community** and build a more robust, vibrant, equitable, and more sustainable creative economy in Sonoma County.

Demand-Focused Programming

We will drive demand for creative services among business, nonprofits, and County government by offering a range of programs and offerings:

- An **online resource bank**, which includes a diverse and inclusive directory of local artists and arts organizations and information about relevant local policies and ordinances;
- **Thought leadership** to support the County to integrate arts and creativity into its Strategic and Departmental Plans;
- Customized support through **consultancy for local businesses and government clients** working on projects related to the arts or creativity; and,
- **Development of policy and procedure recommendations** for the County related to the arts.

¹ 2019 Economic Modeling Specialists' Int'l Reporting.

Supply-Focused Programming

We will increase the quantity and expertise of the supply of creative services both by 1) supporting arts organizations and local creatives of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to more fully reach their potential, and 2) inspiring and developing new local creative talent. Our supply-focused programs are designed to:

- Connect the community to one another and to creative opportunities through **networking and opportunities for visibility**;
- Provide one-off and short series **workshops on a wide-range of in-demand topics**;
- Uplift local artists and creatives from underrepresented communities through the **Arts and Equity Fellowship** specifically and across all offerings generally;
- Build a more connected community of creative leaders through the **Creative Engineers leadership development program**;
- Advocate for and ensure **equitable access to culturally relevant arts education, arts experiences, and creative resources** for students and young talent in the county; and
- Provide critical funding for creative projects that enliven our community through our **grant making program**.

Fundamental to the design of Creative Sonoma's programs and services is an ability to expand or contract the scale or range of offerings to respond to both the needs of the community and external pressures in real-time. The embedded flexibility in our programs contributes to our adaptability and allows Creative Sonoma to provide enduring support to advance the creative community, ultimately shaping creativity as a defining economic driver for Sonoma County.

Introduction

Creative Sonoma was established in 2014 to support and advance the creative community of Sonoma County. Creative Sonoma produces programs and services to meet the needs of individual artists and arts and culture organizations throughout the county. These have included: professional development through capacity building workshops and trainings; arts education initiatives to ensure that all students have access to creative education and resources; grants and funding to support the work of the creative community; recovery and response grants to provide support following local disasters and crises; and other convenings and programs.

In 2017 the Northern California wildfires significantly impacted the county and creative community. Creative Sonoma initiated multiple recovery and response grants to support artists, creative organizations, and businesses through the local disaster. Most recently, the 2020 wildfires and COVID-19 pandemic again required Creative Sonoma to obtain and distribute relief and recovery funding to creatives to support the community through another challenging period.

While the role Creative Sonoma has played in response to local disasters, movements for racial justice, and the global pandemic has been critical to meet the needs of the creative community during challenging periods, persistent crises have created challenges for us, such as:

- *Inconsistent revenue streams*: Creative Sonoma's revenue streams and sources have varied considerably as we have responded to opportunities that have arisen from crises.
- *Long-term focus*: Our ability to gain traction on longer-term objectives is challenged by crisis level disruption.
- *Staff capacity*: Each new crisis affects staff capacity as it takes significant time to assess our ability to respond and implement new actions. As County employees, we may also be called upon to serve in County Emergency Operations Centers during emergencies.
- *Developing relationships and cultivating our community online*: During the pandemic, building new community relationships to advance our equity aspirations has been challenging and has required a new approach and additional time.

Additionally, while Sonoma County residents consistently vocalize pride in being from a community rich in arts and culture, there is a disconnect when it comes to what people will pay individually - or as a community - for all genres of art and an underestimation of what it takes to produce art.

Given these challenges and our ongoing aspiration to cultivate creativity as a defining economic driver for Sonoma County, we will reshape our organization to make *adaptability* one of our defining characteristics.

Creative Sonoma will launch a range of new program and service offerings that more deeply embed arts and culture in County Government, attract new partners and consumers of creative services who can help support the arts and culture community, and expand the skills and capacities of creatives from all backgrounds.

The following plan outlines a new business model and approach that promotes long-term adaptability for Creative Sonoma and supports the sustainability of the creative community we serve.

Our Purpose

Vision

Creativity is a defining economic driver for Sonoma County.

Mission

Creative Sonoma's mission is to support and advance the creative community of Sonoma County.

Guiding Principles

Art is essential. The arts make everything more interesting. Whether holding up a mirror to help us see our innermost selves or opening a window to envision the future, creatives change our perspective. Art shapes a community's social fabric, drives its economic vitality, and defines its identity and ethos.

The arts are additive. Creative voices increase the value of everything they touch. The arts and arts workers are contributors in their communities.

Equity drives creativity. The more diverse the voices in the conversation, the more rich the outcomes.

Artists are left AND right brained. The myth of the one-dimensional artist has been laid to rest. Artists manage small businesses and contribute creativity and innovation to enterprises of all sizes in all sectors of our economy.

Creativity is a muscle. Everyone can be creative. Some people just exercise their muscle in different and more powerful ways. All of us can appreciate and cultivate creativity in ourselves and support it in others. There is no age too young nor too old to start.

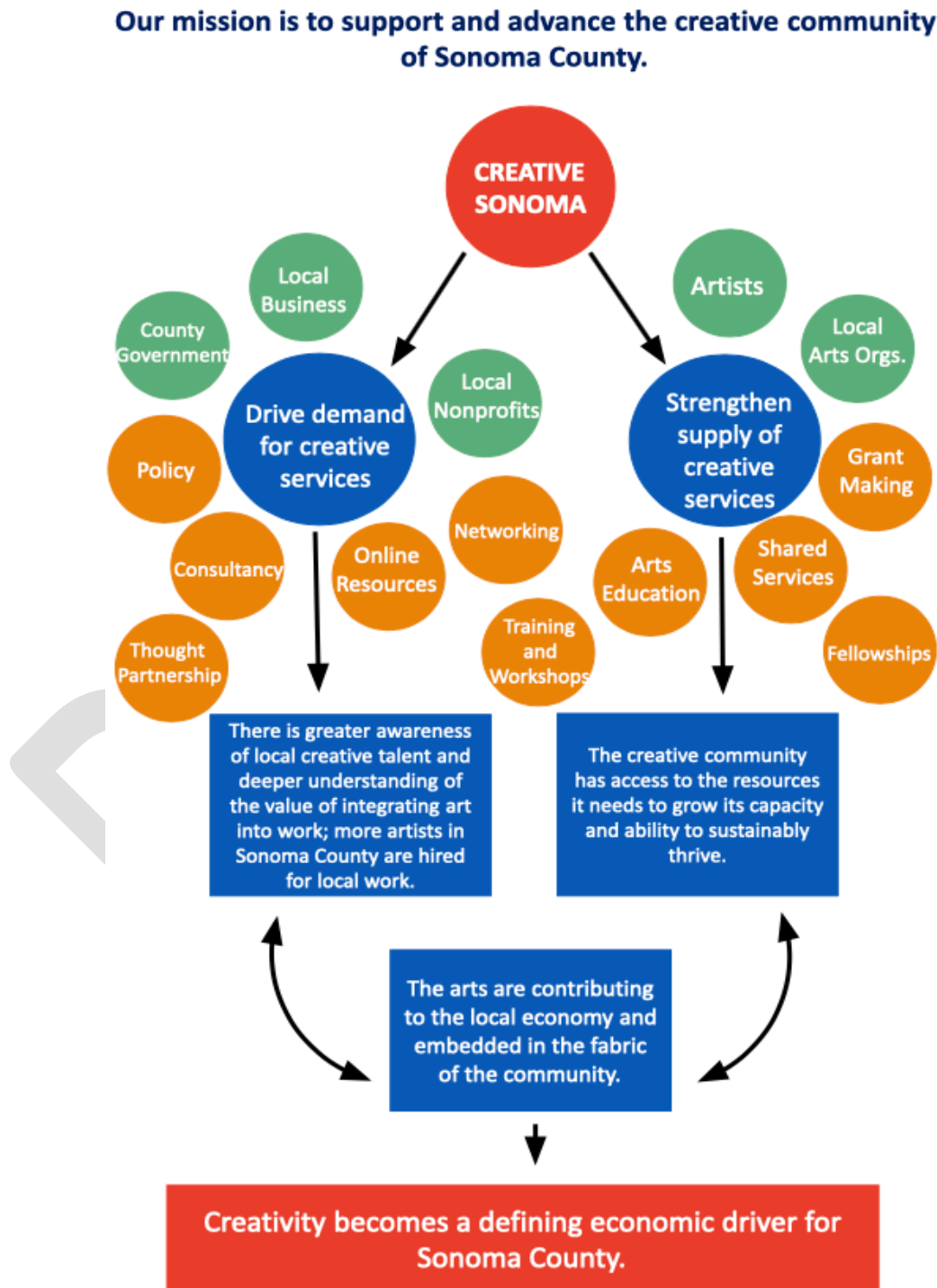
Culture workers must be paid. Artists and creatives deserve to be paid for their work. Access to quality arts and arts education is critical, but the costs for that accessibility cannot be borne on the backs of the creators.

Adaptability fuels impact. Just as the community is ever-evolving, so too are the needs and interests of creatives and artists. Our individual and collective ability to adapt to changing landscapes will keep us relevant, innovative, and valuable.

Theory of Change

Creative Sonoma's theory of change connects our mission to our vision. It outlines the logic behind how our mission and core activities will produce outputs and outcomes that will bring us closer to our envisioned future. Please see Figure 1 below for a visual representation.

Figure 1. Creative Sonoma's Theory of Change



Program and Service Offerings

To make progress toward a future where creativity is a driving economic force in Sonoma County, we will offer two types of programming:

- Programming that drives **demand** for creative services; and
- Programming that increases the quantity and quality of the **supply** of creative services.

By simultaneously driving demand and increasing supply, we can build a more robust, more vibrant, and more sustainable creative economy. All of these offerings are adaptable in their design; they are able to be scaled up or scaled down to meet changes in our external environment or shifts in demand.

Demand-Focused Programming

We will drive demand for creative services among businesses, nonprofits, and County government by offering a range of B2B programs and offerings, listed below in ascending order of staff and resource capacity required:

Online resource bank

We will curate and maintain online resources on our website, giving businesses and County government employees on-demand access to basic- but important- information, such as a directory of local artists and creatives, and relevant local policies and ordinances. Over time we will develop and curate additional resources for non-artists such as best-practices guides and information around how to best partner with the creative community.

Thought leadership

We will be an active thought partner to the County to help integrate arts and creativity into its strategic and departmental plans. For example, as the County initiates community education concerning water scarcity and conservation, we can identify how to leverage artists in the PR campaign to help get the message out more effectively. We can also engage with individual County departments to advise them on incorporating arts engagements into their own strategic plans.

Consultancy

In situations that require 1:1 or fully customized support regarding artists, creatives, or the creative community we will function as a consultant. Though we will meet our business and government clients where they are, likely projects include: helping a business leverage arts or creative thinking for a discrete event or ongoing business practice; identifying opportunities for artists to enliven work facilities - private and public facing; supporting a company to become more effective in attracting and recruiting creative talent; and helping an organization or department explore ways to better tap into the existing creative talent within its employee base. For businesses or government agencies that want to better leverage arts or creativity to meet a stated outcome, we will be their ideal partner.

Policy Development

Creative Sonoma will support the County by evaluating and recommending policy and procedures related to the arts. For example, Creative Sonoma may recommend and support the implementation of a public art/percent-for-art program that requires a percent for art set aside in new construction projects across the unincorporated areas of the county.

Supply-Focused Programming

In order to build long-term sustainability in the creative community in Sonoma County, we need to ensure we have a critical mass of high-quality creative talent across a wide variety of disciplines and representing a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives. To that end, we will increase the quantity and expertise of the supply of creative services both by helping area creatives and arts organizations more fully reach their potential, and by inspiring and developing new local creative talent. We will deliver on this value proposition through a set of focused programs and offerings, again listed within each category in ascending order of intensity:

Capacity Building for Artists and Arts Organizations

Networking

We will serve as a connection point to other creatives, creative opportunities, and businesses, helping local creative professionals fully engage in the community. We will consistently expand our own network of creatives - including long-time residents and newcomers to the community - and promote them through our social channels, local media, and other opportunities for visibility.

One-off and short-series workshops

We will offer 10-14 issue-specific workshops per year (either one-off or as part of short series) on a wide range of topics, including fundraising and grant writing, government funding, marketing, budgeting and accounting, communications, community engagement, strategic use of data, talent recruitment and management, board development and more.

Arts and Equity Fellowship

We will operate a mentorship program for creative professionals that specifically strives to uplift local artists and creatives working in historically marginalized and under-represented communities. Fellows will receive grant funds to support their creative work, small group training to enhance their skills, and stipends to compensate for lost wages and/or child care costs incurred to attend the trainings.

Creative Engineers

Modeled after Leadership Santa Rosa, this 6-9 month leadership development program will bring together artists and creative professionals who are new to the county to help them integrate, and therefore contribute, to the community. The program will foster strong relationships within each annual cohort (~20 participants per cohort), connect them to key decision makers and influencers across Sonoma County's creative economy, and support their creative and leadership journeys. This program will help build a more connected creative community and more meaningfully celebrate and support the amazing creative talent within the County.

Inspiring and Developing Local Talent

TK-12 arts education

We will advocate for integrating the arts into the TK-12 curriculum throughout the County, and support teaching artists, arts, and school administrators to design and deliver engaging and culturally relevant arts education and arts experiences for Sonoma County students. Through this work, students and young talent across the county will deepen their learning and gain exposure to creative career options and understand various pathways to building a career in the sector.

Equitable access to arts education

We will make clear to students, parents, educators, and administrators what arts education resources and experiences are available and how to access them. We will serve as a matchmaker between education providers and artists, focusing our energy on students and communities that have been historically marginalized or under-resourced. Additionally, we will engage in advocacy at the district and parent level to ensure arts education is rightfully seen as a non-negotiable and critical component to a quality education.

Grant Making

We will provide critical funding for creative projects that enliven our community. We will work to secure funds from government and private sources to regrant and contract with creative leaders and organizations to help them sustain their own careers while bringing vitality and meaning to our county.

Marketing Plan

The marketing plan clarifies our approach to building our client base for Creative Sonoma programs and services that drives demand for arts and creativity and increases the supply and expertise of creative talent in Sonoma County.

Target Clients

The Target Clients listed below will be prioritized for new services; they do not reflect the full range of Creative Sonoma's constituents and service users.

County Government (Demand-Focused Programming)

- **Department-level engagement:** In order to maximize the scale of our efforts, we aim to partner with County Government at the department level and therefore will target department heads, as well as other key decision makers (e.g., County Administrative Officer and Supervisors). Preliminary targets include General Services, Department of Transportation and Public Works, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

Client Profile - Government

Gerry manages the Department of Transportation for Sonoma County. His responsibilities include graffiti abatement at bus stops across the county. He has seen examples of how artists have created community engagement projects to re-imagine public areas, using local youth, and discourage further graffiti. But Gerry doesn't know how a project like that works or who to connect with to begin the conversation.

Local Businesses (Demand-Focused Programming)

- **Key regional industries:** In order to maximize our impact, we seek to work with businesses across industries that are critical to the economic growth for the region, *and* that have clear points of intersection with the arts. We will focus on wine, hospitality, tourism, and construction/development, with preference for partners headquartered in Sonoma County.
- **Capacity to invest in creativity:** We seek to engage with businesses with the capacity (time, money, and interest) to make meaningful investments in the arts and creativity. Gross revenue above \$1MM, staff size, and years in operation are among the criteria we will use to evaluate capacity.
- **Commitment to community:** We want to partner with businesses and business leaders who have demonstrated interest and commitment to engaging with their communities. Further, we seek to work with businesses and leaders who share our values, namely, our commitment to equity.

Client profile - Local Business

Lorna oversees the Business Loan Services team at Sonoma Federal Credit Union. While the bank does not have a formalized corporate-social-responsibility program, in addition to her main responsibilities, she has been tasked with overseeing community projects and local sponsorships. Her role has allowed her to get to know many businesses in the area and members of the community and the bank often sponsors events, local little league teams, and the development of public spaces. They have recently been approached to be a key sponsor for a beautification project in their city's downtown area, which involves renovating several bus stops, public benches, and installing signage highlighting things to do and see in the area. Lorna would love to bring together a team, including creatives, to brainstorm ideas and hire local artists to participate in the project, but she isn't sure where to start and her colleagues at the bank aren't sure either.

Schools (Demand-Focused Programming)

- **TK-12 Schools:** To ensure that every student in the county has access to quality arts education we will continue our work to the adoption by schools and districts of our Arts Education Framework.

Individual Artists (Supply-Focused Programming)

- **Aged 25 - 45 across all backgrounds and art forms:** In order to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the creative economy in Sonoma County and build the capacity of arts professionals, we will target early- and mid-career artists from all backgrounds and across all genres and creative mediums.
- **Live or work in Sonoma County:** Creative Sonoma is positioned to contribute to building a vibrant, engaged, and sustainable community of creatives and will focus on artists who are living and/or working in the county, whether they are recent arrivals or long-standing residents.
- **Artists who identify as Black, Indigenous, or other Person of Color:** Reflecting our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will prioritize ensuring that artists who identify as BIPOC/from BIPOC communities have access to and participate in our programs and services. We believe that engaging diverse voices in our work produces the best outcomes for individuals and communities.
- **Arts and creative collectives:** Local collectives of artists, arts organizations, and other members of the creative community.
- **Teaching Artists:** Artists who have the capacity and interest to use their skills in youth and arts education settings, including working to integrate arts into school curriculum.

Client Profile - Artist

Anna is a 33 year old ceramicist living in Santa Rosa. She has participated in arts fairs and shows a few times and has started to build a modest base of customers and followers of her work. Until recently, she also held a full-time job at a winery, but she resigned to officially launch her own ceramics business. Anna has a website and Instagram account, but she isn't sure how to register her business or promote her work. She also gets the sense that she is undercharging for her work, but she's worried about raising her prices too high. Anna has met a few other artists attending events in town and those

relationships have been really meaningful to build her sense of belonging and confidence that there is a pathway to earning a living from her art.

Value Proposition

County Government - We are a division of County government with well-established relationships and shared goals related to economic vitality for the county and its residents, and have built meaningful partnerships and credibility across the creative community. Creative Sonoma is positioned as an ideal partner to support the County to integrate arts into its Strategic Plan and leverage the arts and creativity to mobilize residents around critical County-wide initiatives.

Local Businesses - Through our work with artists and the creative community, we have access to a breadth of creative talent and are skilled at leveraging creativity and creative thinking to improve outcomes. As a division of County Government we are able to navigate County policies and ordinances related to the arts and public art that affect local businesses. We are the go-to experts on integrating creativity and the arts in business. As our impact grows, we gain credibility with other social sector peers (environment, education, health, etc.) and can leverage partnerships with them to expand opportunities for culture workers.

Arts Community - Creative Sonoma is positioned to build the skills, develop the connections, and provide the resources that artists and arts organizations need to thrive.

Promotion

Promotion of our program and service offerings will be focused across two pillars: 1) growing and leveraging existing relationships; and 2) positioning ourselves as the go-to-experts on the arts and programs and resources for the creative and general community.

Grow and Leverage Existing Relationships

Government and Business

Creative Sonoma currently operates as a division of the Economic Development Board, which is an agency of the Sonoma County Government. We have built working relationships and engaged in collaborative projects and initiatives with many leaders and departments across County Government. As we support the County to integrate the arts into its Strategic Plan and adopt policies that contribute to the creative economy, we will continue to focus on cultivating relationships across County departments and develop “stories of impact” that illustrate how partnership with Creative Sonoma has benefits across communities. We will focus our efforts on department heads, the County Administrative Officer, Supervisors and other municipal agencies across the county.

In order to grow our client base, particularly on the business side, we will cultivate our network by both leveraging our current relationships and positioning ourselves in spaces where businesses and business leaders are to forge new relationships.

- Advisory Board - leverage our board members as two-way advocates of both Creative Sonoma and local businesses and business leaders in their networks

- Local Business Groups - engage with local groups where businesses convene, such as the Chambers of Commerce, to understand their needs and motivations; engage with economic development department initiatives, tourism convenings, Sonoma County Hospitality Association events, and other association events
- Community organizations that support the business, social, and creative sectors – participate in community coalitions to assess opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

Artists and Arts Organizations

Creative Sonoma will continue to cultivate relationships with current and former grantees and applicants, workshop and professional development participants, and other partners. Additionally, we will proactively reach out to artists and arts organizations who are new to the county and long-established residents who have not previously engaged.

- Continue to serve as a point of connection between creatives, both newcomers and long-term residents, and creative opportunities in the region
- Community nonprofits that serve artists, creatives and culture bearers who are not currently using our programs and services, and seek points of intersection with those who work “adjacent to” creatives and their audiences

Schools

Creative Sonoma will strengthen its relationship with the Sonoma County Office of Education, the 40 school districts in the county, school administrators and teachers, parent groups, and arts education providers in order to advocate for support for arts education.

- Continue to provide leadership and staff support to the Arts Education Alliance and all of its programs
- Provide funding for consultations and technical assistance to schools and districts to adopt the Arts Education Framework
- Increase awareness among parents and the community on issues that prevent students from accessing arts education

Position as Go-To Experts for the Arts

Building on more than six years of investment in creativity and the arts in Sonoma County, Creative Sonoma is well positioned to build on our reputation as a credible source of information, professional development opportunities, and resources to continue to support artists and arts organizations to increase their capacities and sustain their work over the long-term. Our track record of effectively supporting the creative community and County Government positions Creative Sonoma with expertise and access to arts and culture resources that are valuable to local business.

We will leverage our website, social media channels, and local publications to promote our work and engage prospective clients. Additionally, we will continue to build our presence in the community by engaging in and attending meetings and events that are frequented by artists, arts organizations, and local businesses in the county. We will draw upon the key messages outlined in the following section to communicate our value proposition. A summary of our communication mediums is included in the table below and key messages for our target audiences follow.²

² See Appendix F, Tables 15 & 16 for more information on Promotion Channels.

Statement of Needs

To successfully implement our business plan and realize our mission to support and advance the creative community of Sonoma County, and do so in ways that are adaptive and sustaining, Creative Sonoma will focus on the following activities, listed in order of priority.

Hire contracted staff to support new programs

In order to build the capacity needed to launch and manage our programs and services, an immediate priority is to hire a contracted Program Coordinator. This hire will begin in a part-time capacity and growing over time as we implement additional programs. Key bodies of work that will be enabled through this contract position include:

- Development and marketing of online resources and enhancements to Creative Sonoma's website
- Building of a prospective client base for business and government consulting
- Planning for the launch of the Creative Engineers program and consulting services

Secure consultant for Public Art initiative

We will source and contract a consultant to develop a recommended public art/ percent-for-art program and ordinance that requires a percent for art set aside in new construction projects across the unincorporated areas of the county. With a goal of passing the ordinance in December 2022, we will prioritize the hire of a consultant immediately.

Appendix

A. Creative Sonoma Working Group

Kristen Madsen, Creative Sonoma, Director
Samantha Kimpel, Creative Sonoma, Program Officer
Chris Denny, Creative Sonoma, Board Chair
O'Meara Cover, Creative Sonoma, Board Member
Veronica Vences, Creative Sonoma, Board Member
Lorez Bailey, Chop's Teen Club
Raissa De La Rosa, City of Santa Rosa, Economic Development
Johannes Hoevertsz, Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works
Nikki Myers, California Indian Museum and Cultural Center

B. Creative Sonoma Advisory Board

Chris Denny, Chair, The Engine is Red
O'Meara Cover, Vice Chair, Foundry Wharf Properties
Erik Castro, Photojournalist
Amy Critchett, AC Eclectic Creative Services Worldwide
Jennifer Edwards, The Passdoor
Elisa Stancil, Stancil Studios, Decorative Artist
Gia Baiocchi, The Nectary
Alejandro Salazar, Artist and Graphic Designer
Veronica Vences, La Luz Center

C. Community Participants

The following individuals participated in one-on-one interview conversations to support and inform the business plan.

Pauline Block, Cornerstone Properties
Maggie Curry, Kendall-Jackson
Lisa Carreno, United Way of Wine Country
Zack Darling, CannaCraft
Bethany Facendini, SoCo Regional Parks
Sean Hayes, Musician
Chris Hunsberger, Makr Hospitality
Eric Jackson, Actor, Sonoma Community Theater
Surani Kwan, Office of Patient Experience at Sutter Health
Forrest Lesch-Middleton, Ceramics and Pottery
Alma Magallon, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Stephanie Manieri, Latino Service Providers

Rick Nowlin, Luther Burbank Center for the Arts
 Rebecca Saylor, Oodle Badoodle, SF Etsy
 Joe Szuets, Chimera Arts, Maker Music Festival
 Michael Volpatt, Culinary Entrepreneur
 Nicole Zimmerman, Writer

D. Methodology

This plan is the result of a business planning process facilitated in Summer 2021 by Third Plateau, a social impact strategy firm. This plan reflects the collective thinking of representatives across Creative Sonoma’s ecosystem, guided by Creative Sonoma’s Strategy Committee and its Director and Program Officer and supported by a working group, which included individual artists, leaders of local arts organizations, members of County government, and members of Creative Sonoma’s Advisory Board.

In partnership with Creative Sonoma and the working group, Third Plateau engaged in a three-phase planning process. The “Learning” phase focused on conducting market research to understand 1) what shared services our potential users want and need, and 2) the needs of the community more broadly. To explore these issues, we conducted primary research through a community survey and stakeholder outreach. A description of each research method is outlined below.

Table 11. Research Methods Overview

Community Survey What services does our community want?	Stakeholder Outreach What needs does the rest of our community have?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted with a broad cross-section of the community • Evaluated Shared Services and Board Leadership Institute concepts to test specific aspects of each idea • Explored potential services, delivery models, and cost • 51 artists and staff of arts organizations participated in the survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated 1:1 open-ended conversations with individual artists, members of the maker and Burning Man communities, and local business leaders • Uncovered community needs and brainstormed possible new ideas for programs and services • 17 individuals participated in 1:1 conversations

The second phase, “Concept Formation,” focused on identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing the strategic options available to Creative Sonoma. Third Plateau facilitated a series of planning sessions with the working group to leverage research findings from the Learning phase to refine Creative Sonoma’s vision, mission, and theory of change and to begin to outline new programs and services to support the creative community.

The third and final phase, “Iterative Design,” focused on drafting and refining the business plan through weekly working sessions with our team as well as planning for the implementation of the plan. Key considerations included: financial implications, a feasible implementation timeline

and staffing plan, and program and service milestones. Throughout the process concepts and sections of the business plan were shared with select stakeholders for feedback.

E. Creative Sonoma Market Analysis

Introduction

As part of Creative Sonoma's business planning process, Third Plateau conducted a market analysis into service needs and opportunities to support the arts ecosystem in Sonoma County. In particular, Third Plateau looked into the following questions:

1. What services does our community want?
 1. What do potential users of the shared services need/want?
 2. How does this vary by cultural community?
 3. What do potential users of the Board Leadership Initiative need/want?
 4. How does this vary by cultural community?
2. What needs does the rest of our community have?
 1. What do individual artists, members of the business community, or members of the maker/Burning Man community need right now?

To assess the answers to the above questions, Third Plateau used two methods: a community survey and stakeholder interviews.

Third Plateau developed a survey for members of the Sonoma County arts community that Creative Sonoma then disseminated. Third Plateau received 52 responses to the survey, representing a mixture of arts organizations and individual artists. The survey assessed interest and opinions on various models for sharing core services between artists and arts organizations in the County, as well as how these services are currently accessed.

Third Plateau also conducted 17 qualitative interviews with individual artists, representatives of the maker/Burning Man community, business or community leaders, and government representatives, asking about their needs and how the arts might better serve the broader community.

Key Takeaways

- Implementing a shared services model seems to have the potential to address key needs in the community. However, choosing the correct services and making sure the implementation of those services properly meets stakeholders where they are in terms of customization and cost may be challenging.
- Social media marketing is a high-demand service sought out by many stakeholders in the community. This may be especially valuable for older artists who do not have prior experience using these platforms. Grant writing is also in high demand, though this needs to be tailored to the particular needs of applicants rather than conveyed through generic workshops.
- Affordability, for both arts space as well as housing, seems to be a major deterrent in the development of the arts sector in Sonoma County. If Creative Sonoma can address this, potentially through advocacy, it has the potential to have lasting impact on the sector.
- Business leaders would be well-served by greater awareness of and access to local artists (e.g., through an improved directory), as well as more opportunities to partner with Creative Sonoma or the County to install art within or in front of their businesses.

- The upcoming master planning process for regional parks provides an opportunity for Creative Sonoma to integrate the arts into a process with wide-ranging impacts on the community, the implementation of which will go on for years.
- The top two competencies identified by respondents as missing in their boards were fundraising and strategic planning. This is unsurprising, given the focus on and need for money among local arts organizations. However, there are often many other topics that boards need support on that they do not realize.

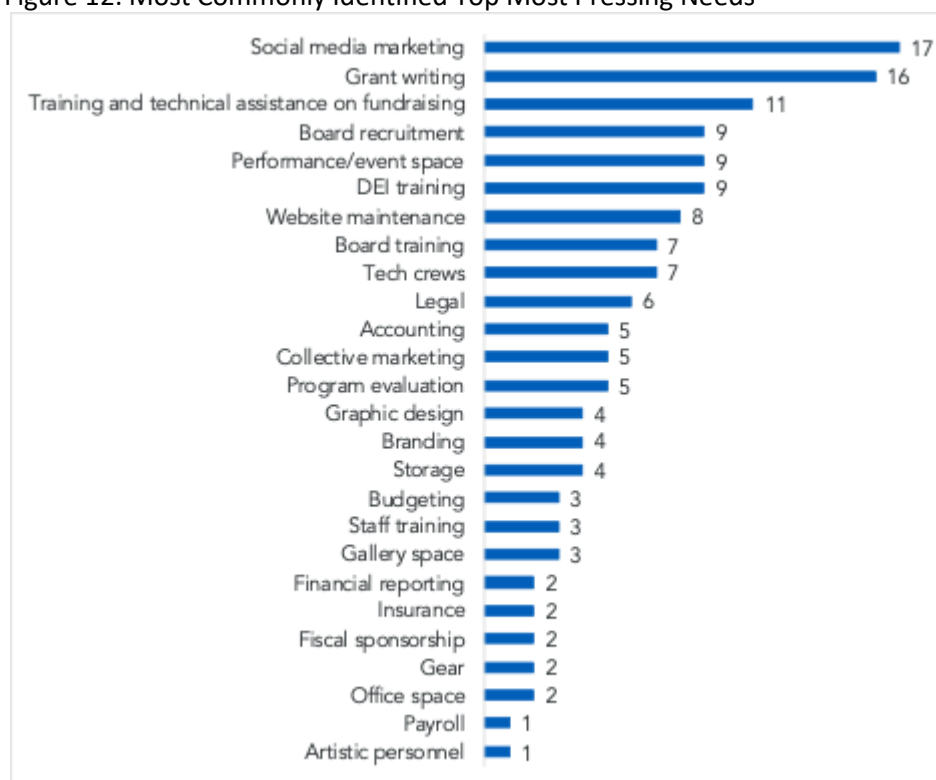
Findings

Shared Services

Sharing services appears to be an uncommon approach for arts organizations and artists in the community; only five survey respondents indicated they shared services with other nonprofits. Services shared included office/performance space, accounting, and equipment. Given the interest displayed in the survey in shared services, alongside interest shown in qualitative interviews and previous research from Creative Sonoma, there seems to be a strong case for the value of shared services for the arts community

In terms of which services community members would most value, the survey asked respondents to choose their top most pressing needs for their organizations.[1] Respondents most commonly identified social media marketing and grant writing, followed by training and technical assistance on fundraising. See Figure 1 for full answer choices.

Figure 12. Most Commonly Identified Top Most Pressing Needs³



Source: Creative Sonoma Survey

Third Plateau assembled profiles of the top six services in the list, which can be found in Table 13 on the following page or in an [interactive format online](#).

Overall, respondents largely wanted to access top services on an as-needed or monthly basis. Prices for various services typically varied widely, and often reflected whether the service was replacing a hired staff member's time or a contracted service.

³ Respondents were allowed to select up to four options from the answer choices

Table 13. Top Six Services⁴

Service Name	How organizations address this now	Preferred payment frequency[2]	Preferred rate
Social media marketing	Current staff, many of whom are part-time	Monthly	Respondents who use part-timers offered higher monthly price points (\$800 - \$3,000), while those who currently have people do this 1-5 times per month suggested \$50 - \$500 per month
Grant writing	Current staff as needed, or 1-5 times per month	As needed	Suggestions included \$50 and \$80/hour One respondent suggested using a sliding scale
Training and technical assistance on fundraising	Current staff as needed, or not at all	As needed	Suggestions varied widely from \$75 to \$500
Board recruitment	Current staff, infrequently or as needed	As needed	Suggestions varied widely from \$500 to \$5,000, though one person said that anything over \$500 would be problematic

⁴ Cost estimates for “as needed” services should be interpreted loosely, as many respondents did not indicate whether rates were per hour, per month, or total. One stakeholder stated that “reasonably priced” studio space would need to be less than \$1 per square foot, potentially as low as \$0.50 per square foot. Current commercial rate in the County is \$2.50.

Service Name	How organizations address this now	Preferred payment frequency[2]	Preferred rate
Performance / event space	Organizations vary here - some do this, some contract it, and some lack access to it	As needed	Respondents were unsure what to pay for this, as it depends on going rates and event size This might require a sliding scale
DEI Training	Organizations vary here - some do this, some contract it, and some lack access to it	Monthly	Respondents suggested larger sums, between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per month, with one suggesting they would pay \$5,000 on an as needed basis

Source: Creative Sonoma Survey

Respondents also suggested other unique ideas, including:

- Cleaning and landscaping;
- Database;
- General HR - hiring & reporting, tax compliance, EDD, etc.;
- Guest performers;
- Shared buying power for equipment;
- Shared shop/build space for shows;
- Sharing current trends and trainings in Integrated Arts Education;
- Shopping for and setting up retirement accounts;
- Think tanks or data sharing meetings;
- Warehousing for set pieces and costumes;
- Volunteer training;
- Website accessibility support; and
- Website translation.

Individual artists and arts organizations largely shared the same top preferences, with a couple of exceptions.

- Program/event space was articulated more by individual artists than by arts organizations; and
- Board recruitment and DEI training were clearly organizational, rather than individual, needs.

When asked about factors that might make them less likely to access their top services, respondents indicated a few standard themes:

- **Cost** – if the cost did not match the value of the services to the organization (one person also mentioned they would prefer to pay monthly rather than a lump sum);

- **Inability to customize** – if the services cannot be sufficiently tailored to meet organizational needs;
- **Low quality** – if the services are not professional, or are ineffective, implemented by bad personnel, or not done in a timely manner;
- **Scheduling conflicts** – if there were challenges with availability to access the services or attend trainings for time or travel reasons;
- **Unclear goals and outcomes** – if the services were misaligned with organizational vision or values.

Shared services were suggested by a number of stakeholders during the qualitative interviews as well. The most common ideas were around social media and marketing, echoing sentiments from survey respondents. One stakeholder suggested this was especially the case for older artists, who may not have the same familiarity with the tools as younger artists.

“I understand why social media is important and I do it, but it is at the expense of spending time on my art. It would be great to have support there. My soul suffers when I don’t make art and have to manage all of the back-end stuff.”

Suggested shared services include:

- A vetted list of experts to learn from with respect to social media marketing;
- Graphic design services;
- Training on Instagram or Etsy;
- Legal and financial services;
- Accounting or bookkeeping;
- Business planning; and
- Tailored advice about which grants to pursue, what materials are necessary or helpful to submit, and how to best position an organization to receive them. One survey respondent suggested that paying someone to support them for an hour or two on a particular grant for which they are applying would be more useful than attending a generic grant writing workshop.

Finally, survey respondents were also asked about the effects AB5 has had on their organizations in terms of their capacity to implement services that Creative Sonoma might offer. The vast majority of respondents to this question (20 of 27) indicated they were unaffected or had already resolved the changes made by AB5. The other seven indicated they had either hired additional staff or were losing access to the services.

Integration into County Government

During the interviews, various stakeholders spoke of how Creative Sonoma might encourage the arts to be more integrated into County Government. Options for this include:

- Including Creative Sonoma within the master planning process for regional parks to ensure the arts are part of implementing the plan;
- Tapping into Transient Occupancy Tax funds to support other work, potentially involving connecting the arts with tourism;
- Including arts in public works, such as roads, bridges, light fixtures, signage, or rehabilitation of blighted areas;

- Creating a policy whereby a certain percentage of new construction projects have to incorporate local arts, at least in public sector construction (see Sonoma County Public Art Benchmarking Study 2021, completed on a parallel track with this Business Plan);
- Incorporating arts into funding allocations from Measure O, the newly passed mental health and homelessness measure;
- Partnering with artists to develop public information campaigns, such as those run during COVID;
- Integrating art into county social services, either for employees or recipients;
- Integrating art into the criminal justice system.

“In [the] next five years it would be really great to have Creative Sonoma within the Master Planning process for regional parks to integrate and infuse art as a main concept in the Master Plan.”

Stakeholders also mentioned the value of Creative Sonoma’s position as an advocacy body, suggesting the organization might work toward policies such as business incentives for businesses that contribute to community development.

Events

Hosting events was another common theme that came up during interviews, both internally-facing for the arts community and public-facing. Specific ideas included:

- Hosting networking events that rotate between different local artist studios and/or businesses;
- Public-facing artist showcases where participants can join in art-making or watch artists make art in real-time;
- Leveraging the celebrity of famous local artists (e.g., Ned Kahn, Patrick Amiot, Amy Critchett) to fill up local events, such as speaker series and/or fundraisers for local venues.

As became clear during interviews, networking events pose a challenge to implement well. While they are likely to be helpful, artists are busy, especially those with other jobs or families. The rural nature of the County also means people are more disconnected than they would be in an urban hub, especially if they are not on social media. Hosting events at artists’ studios or venues is one way to help mitigate this.

Other Ideas

Affordability

Affordable studio or arts space and affordable housing were big themes that emerged from the conversations. The lack of these stymies artists’ ability to make a living, reside in county, and meet one another. Creative Sonoma’s role here could either be in finding ways to directly provide affordable shared space, or advocating for better housing policy at the County level.^[3] Shared arts space would also need to be accessible to different parts of the county.

“Affordable housing, affordable everything. It’s ridiculous how expensive everything is here.”

Sourcing Artists

Business leaders talked about the difficulty of finding good local artists, and that they normally do it through word of mouth. Having a searchable, vetted, reliable directory of local artists and their portfolios would be valuable. Regarding the existing directory on Creative Sonoma’s website, stakeholders suggested that it could be improved by having clearer categories (including noting who is

open or not open to work) and ensuring it is up to date. One stakeholder suggested that Creative Sonoma launch a concierge service where businesses could call Creative Sonoma and have a local artist suggested to them to meet their particular needs.

Potential Local Partners

Stakeholders suggested a variety of potential local partners for Creative Sonoma to work with in order to develop new services or offer opportunities to local artists. These fell into three categories:

- **Businesses and public sector venues** – Various business and public sector venues such as wineries, ice cream shops, and hospitals that already integrate the arts were frequently mentioned and praised. Stakeholders suggested finding ways to do this more, such as having rotating exhibits in residential building lobbies, providing grants to artists to create storefront or window art, or advocating for a policy that allows businesses to get a tax write-off for using local artists.
- **Community-based organizations** – Various community groups (e.g., Community Building Initiative, Sonoma Community Center) already have as their mission to support community development. Partnering with these local groups even at a neighborhood level may offer Creative Sonoma the chance to connect local artists with opportunities.
- **Schools** – Creating school-based programs for students is an area of growing interest, both as a means of bridging an equity gap between schools with more and fewer resources, and as a way to train the next generation of local artists. These could include creating arts tracks at schools that do not already have such programs.

“There’s an ice cream shop open to local artists to do art shows. It’s an amazing collaboration. You could take kids to have a treat but also enjoy art and learn more about the artists in a safe environment.”

Miscellaneous

Other interesting ideas from the community for services for Creative Sonoma to offer included:

- Arranging mentoring between experienced artists and newer artists, especially since current training programs are not geared towards young people;
- Finding ways to diversify the pool of professional arts administrators, such as by training people of color who want to stay in the arts or offering classes for new or prospective administrators;
- Partnering with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to support young artists in developing business plans;
- Supporting the creation of artist-in-residence programs in the County;
- Supporting cross-disciplinary collaborations between artists in different media (e.g., writing, visual arts) or from different backgrounds; and
- Training board members of arts organizations on the basics of being a nonprofit board member, as Creative Sonoma is already considering.

Other Findings

Community Involvement

Stakeholders frequently talked about the value of community involvement in the arts. Multiple stakeholders talked about the role of arts in responding to COVID, such as organizations working with the Raizes Collective to educate Latino and Indigenous communities about vaccines and vaccine safety. Arts and artists are trusted by communities and speak to their experiences. Murals stood out to stakeholders in particular, given their visibility in the community, ability to communicate a sense of

place, potential to provide a constructive outlet for street art and tagging, and frequent co-design in partnership with community members.

Value of Creative Sonoma

Stakeholders really appreciate Creative Sonoma. They discussed the staff's dynamism and the careful way the organization partners with the community. Stakeholders also highlighted the organization's good communication and useful workshops, including those on applying for grants.

Other stakeholders indicated that they themselves or other artists in the community are not yet aware of Creative Sonoma, nor of the services it already provides.

"I love the resource list they have on the website. I don't know why it isn't disseminated out... a lot of artists don't know Creative Sonoma exists."

Barriers to Success

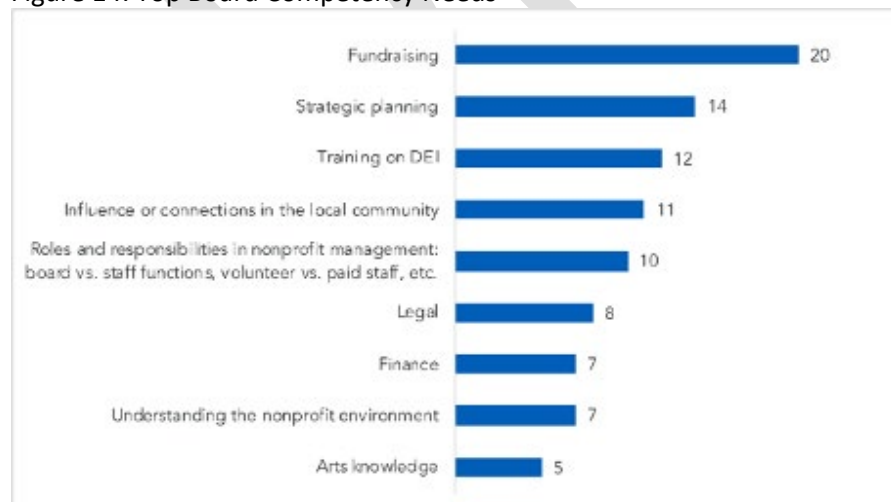
Beyond the difficulty of generally securing funds for the arts, stakeholders also referred to two kinds of barriers that artists face in their work.

- **Donor fragmentation** – Excepting wineries, donors in Sonoma County are more often individuals than businesses, even if those are business owners giving through their business. Arts organizations do not often have the risk capital to take on new programs, and so are dependent on earned revenue or finding individuals to support their work.
- **Geographic spread** – The rural nature of the community poses a barrier to access to all sorts of services. It both keeps artists apart from one another, and prevents geographically isolated communities from interacting with arts that are happening in other parts of the county.

Board Competencies

In order to inform the development of potential board trainings, the survey also asked respondents what skills their boards need. The top two competencies identified by respondents were fundraising and strategic planning, as shown in Figure 2. This is unsurprising, given the focus on and need for money among local arts organizations.

Figure 14. Top Board Competency Needs



Source: Creative Sonoma Survey

F. Promotion Channels

Table 15. Promotion Channels, Individual Artists and Arts Organizations

Communication Channel	Individual Artists	Arts Organizations
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online directory and resources • List of program and service offerings; includes testimonials and case examples • Templates, Best Practices, and How-To's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online directory and resources • List of program and service offerings; includes testimonials and case examples • Templates, Best Practices, and How-To's
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook
Email and Digital Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sonoma Newsletter • Targeted email outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sonoma Newsletter • Targeted email outreach
Local Media Coverage (Digital and Traditional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Rosa Press Democrat • Sonoma Media outlets • KRCB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Rosa Press Democrat • Sonoma Media outlets • KRCB
Events and Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Department Meetings • County Board of Supervisor Meetings • Creative Sonoma programs: Workshops, Creative Engine, Arts and Equity Fellowship, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sonoma programs: Workshops, Creative Engine, Arts and Equity Fellowship, etc. • Chamber of Commerce Meetings/ Events • Community Nonprofit events

Table 16. Promotion Channels, County Government and Local Businesses

Communication Channel	County Government	Local Businesses
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online directory and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online directory and resources • List of program and service offerings;

Communication Channel	County Government	Local Businesses
		includes testimonials and case examples
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook
Email and Digital Newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sonoma Newsletter • Targeted email outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Sonoma Newsletter • Targeted email outreach
Local Media Coverage (Digital and Traditional)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Rosa Press Democrat • Sonoma Media outlets • KRCB
Events and Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Board of Supervisor Meetings • County Department Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce Meetings/ Events • [add other industry-specific events as identified - see above] • Community nonprofits

G. Budget Narrative

The programs and services that are revenue generating, or have the potential to generate revenue include consultancy for government and business, a Public Art program such as Percent for Art, and the Creative Engineers program. As noted, the revenue generated will not fully cover the costs of programming, which will be supplemented by philanthropic investment. The main program expenses are staffing costs for contracted positions to support the programs outlined in the business plan. Creative Sonoma has secured funding to cover the first two years of the business plan through an Adaptation Grant from the Hewlett Foundation.

Outlined below are key financial assumptions and revenue and expense drivers for the five-year projected budget.

Revenue

- The Public Art program will generate revenue by implementing a 1% “percent for art” ordinance for real-estate and development projects in Sonoma County. Annual project expenditure in the county is estimated between \$5MM - \$25MM per year. Creative Sonoma will propose a 20% administrative fee to offset program management costs.

- Business consultancy clients will be charged at a rate of \$125/ hour. We anticipate taking on between 3 and 8 projects per year (5 - 10 hours each) beginning in FY2022-23.
- Government consultancy projects will be charged at a rate of \$40/ hour, with a complimentary project planning phase of 3-5 hours. We anticipate about 5 projects per year (~35 hours/ project).
- Creative Engineers will generate \$500 per participant in program fees. We anticipate a cohort size of ~20. Scholarship pricing will be available.

Expense

- We anticipate that the full-time staff role for Arts Education will become a permanent County position and therefore will not require additional funding beyond FY2022-23 (beginning in FY2023-24).
- The hourly wage for the new contracted positions (Program Coordinator and Public Art Program Manager) is benchmarked to the County “Department Analyst” hourly rate at \$35 – 49/ hour.
- The estimated hourly rate to contract an external business consultant is ~\$200/ hour. We anticipate we will contract a business consultant for about a third of engagements with local businesses.