



Strategic Plan | 2019-2021

We are very pleased to present The League of Chicago Theatres' first strategic plan in more than ten years. The mission of the League and what motivates and guides us has always been service to the field. Responsiveness to the changing needs of the field and good stewardship of our resources has been what has driven us these past ten years.

As the needs of our industry continue to evolve and expand we knew that we needed to re-prioritize our work so that we can continue to be responsive and robust. Our inspiration continues to come from our members, some 240 theatres making the most interesting, thrilling, moving theatre in the world. Our aspiration is to enhance that artistry with programs and services that are exciting and innovative.

We have developed 5 priorities to guide us through the next three years of our development. Those priorities were developed after extensive conversations with our members and the larger field. We are thrilled to be able to present those priorities and some of our goals in this document.

We would not have been able to complete this plan without the input of our members. Their vigorous participation challenged and encouraged us through the process. We are grateful to our consultants at Open Door Advisors for leading us through the process, and to the Arts Work Fund for their generous support. Our board and staff and our strategic planning committee all worked throughout the development of the plan, deliberating, envisioning and reflecting on our past, our present and our future work.

Sincerely yours,

John Collins

Board Chair

Allison Cain

Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Deb Clapp

Executive Director

The League's Vision and Mission

- Theatre is essential to the life of a great city and to its citizens. The League of Chicago Theatres is an alliance of theatres, which leverages its collective strength to support, promote and advocate for Chicago's theatre industry. Through our work, we ensure that theatre continues to thrive in our city.

New Strategic Priorities

Build Audiences	Assure that audiences have access to theatre and theatres have access to audiences.
Advance Equity and Inclusion	Advance equity and inclusion to facilitate progress in our community and educate our constituents.
Expand Resource Sharing	Expand resource-sharing to extend our capabilities, our scope of knowledge and our way of thinking.
Accelerate Advocacy	Advocate with funders and policymakers to improve financial and policy support for theatre.
Enhance & Sustain Capacity	Enhance and sustain our capacity to successfully support the League and its mission into the future.

Priority 1: Build Audiences

Assure that audiences have access to theatre and theatres have access to audiences.

Priority 1: Build Audiences

The League's Assets and Current Programs

- ChicagoPlays.com
- Chicago Theatre Week
- Cooperative Advertising
- Hot Tix
- Marketing Workshops
- Outreach at festivals
- SmarTix
- Theatre Guides
- Theatre Thursdays

Priority 1: Build Audiences

Goal 1: Increase theatre ticket sales

New Areas for Growth

- Measure sales on an ongoing basis
- Create new Chicagoplays.com to expand ticket sales
- Engage the public through improved branding and messaging
- Create new marketing campaign to increase theatre going
- Create new Hot Tix campaign to boost sales

Measurable Change and Impact

- Percentage growth in Hot Tix ticket sales
- Percentage growth in Chicago theater ticket sales
- Growth in traffic to ChicagoPlays.com

Priority 1: Build Audiences

Goal 2: Increase awareness of theatre in Chicago

New Areas for Growth

- Conduct targeted and actionable research to guide marketing investments
- Explore alternative methods, platforms and resources for theatre-goer voice and critique

Measurable Change and Impact

- Presentation of research findings to League leaders and members
- Communicate findings and recommended actions through white papers, guides and training and technical support

Priority 2:

Advance Equity and Inclusion

Chicago theatre will be at the forefront of equity and inclusion. The League will provide resources, guidance and leadership to educate our constituents and facilitate progress in our community on these issues. The League's board and staff will create an equitable and inclusive environment for the organization.

Priority 2: Advance Equity and Inclusion

The League's Assets and Current Programs

- Access Calendar
- ComEd Grant Program
- Intern Networking Events
- Member Network of 200+ theatres
- Anti-Racism Training
- August Wilson Monologue Competition
- Support for and collaboration with leading advocacy and service organizations such as Chicago Accessibility Consortium, Chicago Inclusion Project and Alliance of Latinx Theatre Artists

Priority 2: Advance Equity and Inclusion

Goal 1: Create a more inclusive League membership

New Areas for Growth

- Recognize and address the barriers to League membership
- Engage in focused bi-directional conversations with theatre organizations not currently members of the League that operate on Chicago's South and West Sides
- Determine how the League can better serve those organizations as well as others wishing to create theatre in neighborhoods currently unserved or underserved by theatres

Measurable Change and Impact

- Number of theatre organizations engaged
- Presentation of engagement recommendations to League leadership
- Number of new initiatives undertaken

Priority 2: Advance Equity and Inclusion

Goal 2: Build and provide resources to support a more equitable and inclusive field

New Areas for Growth

- Promote and support strong involvement and commitment from member theatres for League-driven equity and inclusion initiatives (broad community effort)
- Train League staff and board in equitable and inclusive practices on an ongoing basis
- Actively recruit people of color for all positions including League staff, board and vendors
- Determine next set of actions to most directly advance equity

Measurable Change and Impact

- Number of theaters actively involved in League-driven equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Post training and engagement advancement and change reported by members
- Number of people of color on the board and staff
- Be known in the community as an equitable and inclusive place to be
- All partnerships are truly equitable
- More inclusive leadership

Priority 3:

Expand Resource Sharing

We foster collaboration and knowledge sharing. We serve as a conduit and a platform for sharing critical information and resources that expand our capabilities, our scope of knowledge and our way of thinking.

Priority 3: Expand Resource Sharing

The League's Assets and Current Programs

- Annual E-Waste and Textile Drive
- Chicago Green Theatre Alliance
- Chicago Theatre Retreat Cottage
- Cooperative Advertising
- League of Chicago Theatres.org Job and Audition Listings
- Marketing Workshops
- Opening Night Calendar
- Performing Arts Venue Grant Fund
- Professional Development Programs

Priority 3: Expand Resource Sharing

Goal 1: Investigate, create and nurture new revenue for theatres

New Areas for Growth

- Conduct feasibility study for a united fund for theatre in Chicago

Measurable Change and Impact

- Presentation of study recommendations to League leadership
- Number of new initiatives undertaken

Priority 3: Expand Resource Sharing

Goal 2: Create a new League of Chicago Theatres.org website

New Areas for Growth

- Design a new website to more effectively engage and support the industry and community

Measurable Change and Impact

- Site is live and attracting visitors

Priority 3: Expand Resource Sharing

Goal 3: Develop new shared (space and) resource options

New Areas for Growth

- Prioritize shared (space and) resource needs and options for member theatres based on existing member surveys and data
- Develop business plans to guide new initiatives

Measurable Change and Impact

- Number of member theatres participating in new initiatives
- Resulting cost savings and benefits

Priority 4: Accelerate Advocacy

Advocate with funders and policymakers to improve financial and policy support for theatre.

Priority 4: Accelerate Advocacy

The League's Assets and Current Programs

- Capacity to Aggregate Industry Data
- Established Relationships with Policymakers and Funders
- Engaged Network of Advocates for Theatre and Ability to Mobilize Them

Priority 4: Accelerate Advocacy

Goal 1: Demonstrate collective impact of Chicago's theatre industry to funders, policy makers and elected officials

New Areas for Growth

- Design and conduct a collective impact study of Chicago's theatre industry and communicate findings
- Develop shared language around industry modes
- Identify types of data most valuable to each constituency

Measurable Change and Impact

- Presentation of study findings to League leadership, funders, policy makers and elected officials
- Number of news stories and media impressions generated

Priority 4: Accelerate Advocacy

Goal 2: Increase investment in theatre by the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, Other Government Agencies, Corporations and Foundations

New Areas for Growth

- Advance the theatre industry's agenda through consistent engagement with public officials, policy makers and corporate and foundation leaders
- Advocate for increased funding for theatre

Measurable Change and Impact

- Presentation of collective impact study findings to public officials
- Amount of new funding committed for theater

Priority 5:

Enhance and Sustain Capacity

Enhance and sustain our capacity to successfully support the League and its mission into the future.

Priority 5: Enhance and Sustain Capacity

The League's Assets and Current Programs

- Community of Members
- Dedicated Board and Staff
- Earned Revenue Platforms
 - ChicagoPlays.com
 - Cooperative Advertising
 - Hot Tix
 - Varied time-limited projects

Priority 5: Enhance and Sustain Capacity

Goal 1: Investigate and create new earned and contributed revenue streams for the League

New Areas for Growth

- Set targets for revenue growth from Hot Tix and Cooperative Advertising
- Refine business model to maximize earned revenue
- Investigate feasibility of space rentals
- Research new grant opportunities
- Research individual donor strategies, such as a national council model

Measurable Change and Impact

- Presentation of study findings to League leadership and funders
- Growth from new earned revenue initiatives and amounts
- Number of new donors engaged and amount contributed

Priority 5: Enhance and Sustain Capacity

Goal 2: Identify and promote Board stewardship goals that support strategic plan implementation

New Areas for Growth

- Create opportunities for deeper engagement in achieving plan goals

Measurable Change and Impact

- Percentage of Board members reporting strong to very strong engagement in plan implementation
- Opportunities for board development to continuously improve capacity
- Opportunities to deepen Board members' service and stewardship

Priority 5: Enhance and Sustain Capacity

Goal 3: Develop staff strengths and talents to advance our mission

New Areas for Growth

- Create individualized talent development plans for staff to maximize alignment with strategic priorities and professional goals
- Develop new ways to recognize performance

Measurable Change and Impact

- Progress toward strategic plan goal attainment
- Opportunities to develop staff members' skills and satisfaction
- Planned recognition activities or events

The Process that Led to the Plan

The Strategic Plan results from a yearlong process that has engaged a broad set of members, supporters, and industry experts, incorporated national research, and utilized participatory strategic planning methods. An extensive process that incorporated information and insights from the following activities informed the outcome:

- A Strategic Planning Committee was formed that included 7 members of the League's Board of Directors, the Executive Director and Director of Member Services. The Committee met regularly throughout the process. It redrafted the League's mission and vision and designed strategic priorities and commensurate goals and actions.
- A survey of League's members that was completed by 131 respondents and provided extensive background information about the member theatres and their assessment and use of the League's programs.
- Two member engagement sessions that attracted over 80 League members and engaged them in lively conversations about the theatre community, the audience, equity, funding for the arts, advocacy, marketing, League member services, and other topics.
- Eighteen in-depth interviews with local and national peers, funders (including both those that support the League and those that do not), national thought leaders, and Chicago organizations that have not joined the League.
- Field research that identified and reviewed nine important national studies covering: (1) funding/revenue shifts/business models/sustainability, (2) audience behavior/demographics, (3) advocacy/community building and (4) equity, diversity & inclusion. Each of these studies brought information and analysis to the process.
- A Board member retreat that engaged the full League Board in a conversation about the strategic planning process, the role of the Board, the changing landscape for the League and Arts Service Organizations, and the vision, values, mission, and goals for the League going forward.
- An earned revenue analysis that included additional focused research on several peer organizations.
- Reports by the consultant to the League's full Board of Directors on the progress of the Strategic Planning process.
- Work with the League staff to operationalize the plan on a year-by-year basis.

Strategic Planning Committee

- Allison Cain, Committee Chair & Board Member
- Deb Clapp, Executive Director
- John Collins, Board Chair
- Erica Daniels, Board Member
- Kate Lipuma, Foundation Board Member
- Lisa Naparstek Green, Board Member
- Doreen Sayegh, Board Member
- David Schmitz, Board Member
- Ben Thiem, Director of Member Services





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