



DENVER CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-28



The cast of Rattlesnake Kate • Photo by AK Photography

“ THE WORDS. THERE’S LIGHT IN THEM. THERE’S *LIFE* IN THEM.

- Lauren Gunderson, *The Book of Will*



The cast of *Book of Will* • Photo by Adams VisCom

Dear Community:

In 2019, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts set out to develop a five-year strategic plan to take our then-41-year-old organization into the future. We gratefully collected input from our Trustees, team members, partners, and community advocates throughout the seven-county metro Denver region.

In March 2020, we were forced to pause as we turned our focus to the impact of COVID-19 on our programming and our people. The turmoil we felt was shared by our peers in Colorado and throughout the country. Will we survive? Will audiences come back?

The answer was a resounding “yes.” We not only survived, but we emerged from the pandemic with a renewed focus and energy that was bolstered by the tremendous outpouring of support from our community. From sold-out shows and healthy class enrollment to generous donations and renovated facilities, the DCPA was resilient and is ready to move forward.

As we look toward our 50th anniversary in 2028/29, the Denver Center has recommitted itself to a five-year strategic plan that will build on our momentum, embrace our community, and foster creativity. This plan is grounded in our unequivocal commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access. We strive to build an organization where every team member, artist, student, audience member, and community member feels welcomed, respected, and affirmed. A place where we all belong. That commitment has inspired our vision and is woven throughout the guiding statements, goals, and strategies in this document. This plan will unite our organization around shared values and goals, leading us toward a sustainable future where we can amplify our artistry and deepen our impact for years to come.

We are committed to sharing stories that draw people together, elicit empathy, and illuminate the human spirit. As Lauren Gunderson wrote in *The Book of Will*, “The words. There’s light in them. There’s *life* in them.”

We invite you to be part of our story — one that engages, transforms, and always, *always* celebrates life through the power of live theatre.

Warm regards,



Hassan Salem
Chair of the Board



Ruth Krebs
DCPA Trustee, Strategic
Planning Committee
Chair



Janice Sinden
President & CEO

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ABOUT THE DCPA

HISTORY

Founded in 1972, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts (DCPA) grew out of the dreams of philanthropist Helen G. Bonfils and attorney Donald R. Seawell, successful Broadway producers who envisioned a professional acting company with Denver roots and a permanent home in the city. In 1979, that dream became a reality when the DCPA was officially established at the Arts Complex in the heart of downtown Denver.

Today, the DCPA includes the Tony Award-winning **Theatre Company**, producing an annual mainstage season of eight classic, contemporary, and world premiere plays handcrafted by our talented team; **Broadway**, presenting the latest national touring productions on Denver's biggest stages; **Off-Center**, creating unexpected theatrical experiences that put the audience at the center of the story; **Cabaret**, presenting intimate and entertaining musicals, comedy, improv and more; **Event Services**, hosting unforgettable events in our dramatic venues; and **Education & Community Engagement**, nurturing a love of theatre through programs and community connections across the state.

Together, the DCPA's six programming lines contribute to the rich cultural life of our region and advance the DCPA's mission to engage and inspire through the transformative power of live theatre. The DCPA is one of the largest nonprofit theatre organizations in the country, annually offering more than 1,000 performances of over 40 different productions, along with hundreds of classes and community events, creating more than 700,000 engagements each year with an economic impact of over \$200 million.

BUDGET PHILOSOPHY

The DCPA is a nonprofit organization. In support of financial sustainability, our budget is guided by a financial philosophy and Board-approved budget policy.

In our nonprofit theatre business model, ticket revenue across the organization only covers a portion of our expenses; the gap between expenses and earned revenue is covered by local sales tax dollars through the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and generous donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

The three pillars of our financial philosophy are equity, stewardship, and impact. The budget process is designed to provide a means for allocating resources to organizational priorities. Spending boundaries are set based on expected net revenue levels, and actual financial results are compared to budgeted amounts and analyzed quarterly.

The DCPA budget policy ensures that the budget aligns with our mission, goals, and strategies, incorporates a generally acceptable level of foresight, and avoids unnecessary fiscal risk taking.

EQUITY

STEWARDSHIP

IMPACT

6 PROGRAMMING LINES

THEATRE COMPANY

Bringing handcrafted classics, world premieres, and modern masterpieces to life on stage

BROADWAY

Presenting Broadway's national touring productions on Denver's biggest stages

EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nurturing a love of theatre through programs and community connections across the region

OFF-CENTER

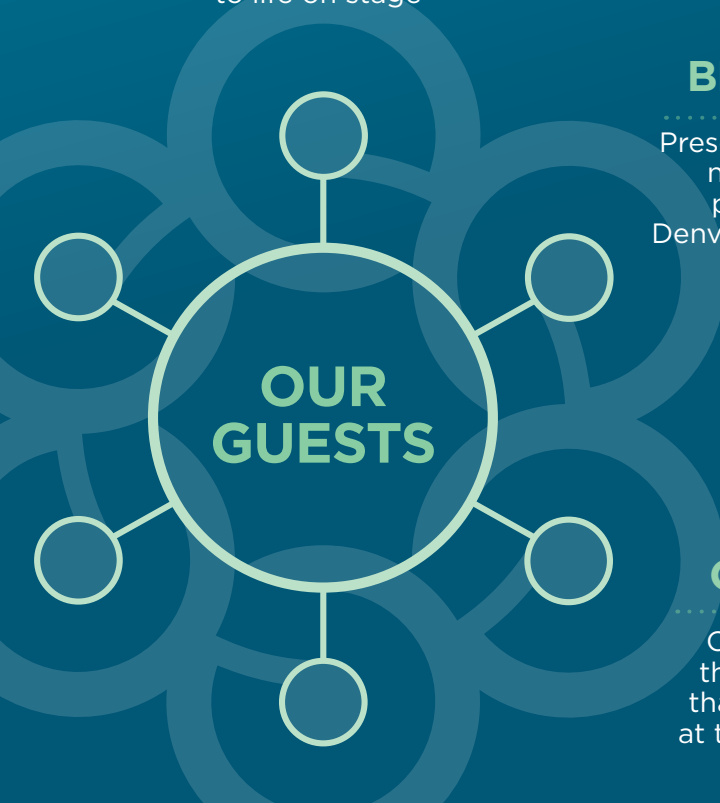
Creating unexpected theatrical experiences that place the audience at the center of the story

EVENT SERVICES

Producing awe-inspiring events in dramatic venues

CABARET

Entertaining audiences with comedy, improv, musicals, and more



ABOUT THIS PLAN

PURPOSE

This strategic plan is the culmination of years of questions, conversations, and collaborations between DCPA Trustees, team members, and our stakeholders in the community. It lays out a roadmap for the organization over the next five years, ensuring that we are thriving in our 50th anniversary season and for decades to come. The plan articulates our guiding statements, organizational priorities, top goals, and the strategies we'll implement to achieve them. It is rooted in our mission and values, builds on our current momentum, and is aspirational but attainable. This plan will unify our large and complex organization, help us focus us on what matters, and lead us in actionable steps toward our collective vision for the future.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The DCPA first began this strategic planning process in 2019 with support from AMS Planning & Research. We embarked on a seven-county listening tour, hosted focus groups with subscribers and community stakeholders from across the metro Denver area, and collected meaningful feedback that laid the foundation for this work.

Our strategic planning efforts were put on hold in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and our focus shifted to survival and then to recovery. In 2021, we created a two-year recovery plan that centered on three priority areas: resuming core lines of programming, elevating the guest experience, and implementing institutional recovery (people, culture, and financial management). The recovery plan included restarting the strategic planning process with the aim of adopting a final strategic plan at the end of fiscal year 2023, the culmination of the two-year recovery period.

We kicked off a nine-month intensive strategic planning process in September 2022 and began with three key areas of focus: programming, engagement, and sustainability. Our Strategic Planning Committee was formed with a mix of Trustees and executives and adopted a scope of work and timeline. Over the ensuing months, we maintained our initial timeline and successfully engaged all our key stakeholders throughout the process to deliver the final plan for Board adoption in June 2023.

3 KEY AREAS OF FOCUS





PROGRAMMING



ENGAGEMENT



SUSTAINABILITY

TIMELINE

2022

2023

OCTOBER	Four facilitated working sessions with DCPA employees to discuss the three areas of focus and core values. 200 team members participated.	Annual Board of Trustees retreat featured several strategic plan working sessions and a follow-up survey.	
NOVEMBER	Executive Team reviewed staff and Board input, conceptualized the five-year goals, and developed new core values.	Strategic Planning Committee provided feedback on proposed five-year goals and core values.	Proposed goals were shared and input on core values was collected at the quarterly all-team meeting.
DECEMBER	The recommended core values were unanimously adopted at the quarterly Board of Trustees meeting. The proposed five-year goals were also shared and discussed with the full Board.		
JANUARY	Full day all-team meeting to discuss how to make our core values actionable and receive feedback on updating our vision statement.	Executive Team drafted a new vision statement incorporating team member feedback.	
FEBRUARY	Strategic Planning Committee reviewed proposed vision statement, purpose statement, and five-year goals summary document.		
MARCH	The Board of Trustees adopted the new vision statement at its quarterly meeting and reviewed the five-year goals summary document.	Sponsors for each goal convened working groups, began to draft key strategies, tactics, and year one milestones.	
APRIL	Full first drafts of the strategic plan and the internal strategy, tactics, and milestones document were finished and shared with key collaborators for edits and feedback.	Executive Team insured that the final FY24 budget aligned with strategic plan priorities.	
MAY	The Strategic Planning Committee shared edits and input on the second draft of the plan.	The Information Technology team built the tools to track progress toward our plan milestones.	Final draft of the plan shared with PACE (Peer Advocacy Coalition for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion) and the Board of Trustees for input.
JUNE	Final plan officially adopted by the Board of Trustees at its quarterly meeting.	Final, approved plan shared with employees at the quarterly all-team meeting.	Final, public version of the plan went live online.

GUIDING STATEMENTS

Our updated vision, mission, purpose, and values will unify the DCPA under a shared strategic direction and guide us toward a bold and meaningful future.

VISION

Our vision is to create a more connected and inclusive community lifted up and drawn together by theatrical storytelling and shared experiences.

MISSION

We engage and inspire through the transformative power of live theatre.

PURPOSE

We passionately believe that the art of theatrical storytelling unites us across our differences, illuminates our shared past to understand our collective present, and empowers us to create a just, equitable, and loving future—for everyone. To learn more, read our full [Equity Statement](#).

DEFINITIONS

Vision – where we're headed

Mission – what we do

Purpose – why we do it

Values – our guiding principles

Goals – the top six organizational priorities for the next five years

Strategies – the key actions or activities necessary to achieve the goals

Programming – any performance, class, event, or gathering that we have created or curated as an offering for the community

Audience – the people who attend our programming

Community – all the people with whom we could potentially engage, including our audience. We intentionally define community in the broadest sense and name specific groups when we are not referring to the community at large.

Engagement – an intentional interaction between the DCPA and a community member. Each audience member at every performance, class, event, or gathering represents one engagement; an individual attending multiple programs is counted each time.

VALUES

COLLABORATION

We produce our best possible work together by engaging people with diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and talents around our shared goals.

BELONGING

We build a respectful and empathetic culture through our active commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

COMMUNITY

We cultivate open, responsive, affirming relationships and partnerships for a greater collective impact.



SUSTAINABILITY

We prioritize the well-being of our team, our patrons, our finances, and the environment to ensure our thriving future.

CREATIVITY

We embrace innovation and imagination in our daily work to advance our mission.

INTEGRITY

We act responsibly, with honesty, accountability, and transparency.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS

Six ambitious five-year goals are the centerpiece of our strategic plan. These goals represent the top strategic priorities that will drive achievable outcomes, inform our budget, and guide our work across the organization. We have identified an executive leader, key collaborators, and stakeholders and have created working groups for each goal. A robust internal document outlines the tactics we will undertake to achieve our strategies, along with milestones that we will track to measure progress as we implement the plan. Pursuing these goals will advance the DCPA's mission, transforming our organization and our relationship to the community along the way.



Steven J. Burge and Britany Mendoza-Peña • Photo by Michael Eneminger

GOAL 1

Create 1 million engagements annually

The excitement and energy of a full house creates a fulfilling theatrical experience for artists and audiences alike. By maximizing participation in all our programming, responding to the needs of our diverse community, and strategically growing engagement opportunities, we will advance our mission, sustain our organization, and deepen our impact in our community.

STRATEGY 1

Standardize engagement tracking across the organization

STRATEGY 2

Standardize a process to account for tickets and engagements across our programming lines

STRATEGY 3

Maximize unused inventory for every program

STRATEGY 4

Discover new ways to increase engagements with existing programs and resources

STRATEGY 5

Explore and implement new programming that can strategically increase engagement opportunities when possible



GOAL 2

Implement a collaborative artistic programming process to advance the mission and goals of the DCPA

The wide variety of programming offered by the DCPA is a unique strength of the organization. By focusing on a more collaborative, holistic approach to programmatic decision-making, we can further our strategic goals, deliver our mission, engage the community, and contribute to the future of the artform.

GOAL 3

Expand our SCFD presence and partnerships to support the SCFD mission

The DCPA is one of over 300 local cultural organizations supported by the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Because taxpayers have invested so much in our organization, we have a responsibility to support a thriving arts and culture sector. We will increase our efforts to build and sustain relationships with communities across the seven-county metro Denver region and collaborate with our cultural partners to further the mission of SCFD.

STRATEGY 1

Program a variety of stories that reflect the SCFD community

STRATEGY 2

Balance artistic ambition with organizational and staff capacity

STRATEGY 3

Advance collaborative calendaring and resource planning between programming lines



STRATEGY 1

Advance our regional outreach and engagement

STRATEGY 2

Collaborate with other SCFD-funded organizations

STRATEGY 3

Raise awareness about the impact and importance of SCFD through education and communications



GOAL 4

Maximize the use of our spaces internally and by our community

Since opening in 1979, the DCPA, the Helen G. Bonfils Foundation, the City of Denver, and our philanthropic partners have invested significant resources in a vast portfolio of facilities and venues. We will expand the utilization of these spaces to advance our mission, deepen local partnerships, and provide more opportunities for the community to convene and enjoy shared cultural experiences.

STRATEGY 1

Assess internal space usage and identify community needs

STRATEGY 2

Create a comprehensive framework for how our spaces are utilized

STRATEGY 3

Implement a plan to activate our spaces guided by the framework



GOAL 5

Modernize our use of technology to advance audience and donor relations

Our systems and technology are the backbone of our operations. By going digital whenever possible and increasing our investment in and utilization of smart technology, we will create efficiencies, personalize our interactions with patrons and donors, and give our team members the tools they need to do their best work.

STRATEGY 1

Improve the DCPA's ability to capture and leverage data about our patrons, donors, and spaces through the implementation of our new customer relationship management system

STRATEGY 2

Implement a new financial management system

STRATEGY 3

Implement technology to support the increasing use of digital materials across the organization

STRATEGY 4

Improve the quality and the use of data in support of the DCPA's mission and programming



GOAL 6

Prioritize long-term sustainability to deliver our mission

As an anchor institution in our community, we have a responsibility to invest in strategies that support the long-term viability of our workforce, finances, facilities, and the environment. The collective impact of prioritizing sustainability in these four areas will strengthen our organization and benefit our community for decades to come.

WORKFORCE

STRATEGY 1

Increase employee engagement and develop a total rewards strategy so that everyone feels valued and connected to our mission and to each other

STRATEGY 2

Create a retention and recruiting strategy that attracts, retains, and inspires team members throughout their employee lifecycle

STRATEGY 3

Develop a comprehensive onboarding program that generates excitement on day one and sets newly hired employees up for success



FINANCE

STRATEGY 1

Adapt our business and budget model to support long-term financial sustainability

STRATEGY 2

Manage the DCPA operating reserves

STRATEGY 3

Strengthen and grow donor relationships locally and regionally

ENVIRONMENT

STRATEGY 1

Move to three-stream waste solution (waste/recycle/composting) in all DCPA spaces

STRATEGY 2

Implement production practices that reduce our impact on the environment

STRATEGY 3

Increase our use of digital materials

FACILITIES & VENUES

STRATEGY 1

Reduce overall DCPA energy consumption

STRATEGY 2

Deliver on five-year and 10-year capital improvement plans

STRATEGY 3

Maintain an efficient and effective footprint of DCPA facilities



IMPLEMENTATION

In developing this strategic plan, we have simultaneously laid the groundwork for its implementation over the next five years. Working groups have formed around each of the six goals and formalized processes for advancing the plan. We have created an internal document that details our strategies, tactics, milestones, and timelines; we intend to update this document continually as the work evolves so we remain nimble and responsive as we go. We embrace the dynamic nature of this work and commit ourselves to continuous learning, incremental improvement, and ongoing community input as we progress toward our goals.

Our Information Technology team has created customized tracking tools with accompanying reports and dashboards that will allow us to measure our progress toward each milestone and share the results with the Board of Trustees, staff, and the community. Progress reports on each goal will be shared internally at Board meetings and all-team meetings, and our annual Community Impact Report will be redesigned to highlight our achievements toward our strategic plan objectives.

The Board of Trustees will play a crucial role in monitoring progress and holding the organization accountable through quarterly reviews and ongoing involvement with DCPA executive staff. Additionally, the Board will perform regular assessments as a new practice to ensure full Trustee engagement, alignment, and continuous improvement in support of the organization's strategic priorities.

Finally, we will apply the DCPA's vision, mission, purpose, values, and goals as an anchor for developing our organizational culture and practices. Central to this is our budget, which will reflect our priorities and allocate resources accordingly. Each department will focus on objectives that are aligned with the six organization-wide goals and will take ownership for implementation. Ongoing, deliberate efforts will be made across the organization to bring our vision, mission, purpose, and values to life in the daily work of every team member.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are proud of the collaborative efforts over the past few years that have culminated in this plan, and we are deeply grateful to the many people who contributed to its creation. Our dedicated stakeholders asked thoughtful questions, engaged in meaningful dialogue, provided invaluable feedback, and brought it all together into this cohesive plan.

This work would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of the full DCPA staff, who participated in many meetings, conversations, and surveys to share feedback and help shape every aspect of the plan. We appreciate the hundreds of DCPA subscribers who joined us for our 2019 seven-county listening tour; the input received during those meetings laid the foundation for this effort. And we are grateful to Brianna Firestone, Laura Morales, and Steven A. Wolff and Lynette Turner from AMS Planning & Research who all contributed to this work early in our process.

Finally, we acknowledge and thank SCFD and our generous donors, audience members, and the community for supporting and sustaining the DCPA to this point and into the future.

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The Cast of SIX • Photo by Joan Marcus



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