

AACT Strategic Planning Update

05/15/2026

Process yielded a shared definition of “Community Theatre”

| Identity | Public-facing | Structural |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Community theatre is theatre created by and for a specific community, rooted in local participation and shared ownership.</p> | <p>Community theatre brings people together to create and experience live theatre in their own communities — often providing the most accessible and locally rooted form of theatre available.</p> | <p>An organization may be considered a community theatre if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Operates to serve a defined community rather than a commercial market,– Engages local volunteers in artistic and production roles,– Invites broad community access for participation or engagement. |

Professional theatre says, “We produce shows.” Community theatre says, “We gather to make theatre.”

Activities focused AACT's core offerings



Membership & Community Engagement

Access to resources, peer support, discounts on events and services, insurance advantages, and the quarterly *Spotlight* magazine that highlights trends, tips, and member stories



Events & Professional Development

Webinars, roundtables, workshops, presentations, meetings, conferences, specialized sessions



Resources & Knowledge Support

Practical tools and guidance, documents and references, toolkits and best practices



Advocacy & Industry Support

Data analysis and reporting, news releases, publications, social media influences, policy analysis

Built a solid framework for progress



PHILOSOPHICAL
FOUNDATION



2026-2035
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Philosophical Foundation

American Association of Community Theatre

Philosophical Framework elements

Purpose

- Why the organization exists; what matters to it and those who are members

Commitments

- what we believe as the basis for our work; what people can expect

Work

- guiding principles for how the work gets done and the commitments upheld

Promise

- commitment to the community & to members; outcomes for which it is accountable

Credo

- the spirit that guides how we show up in the work

Our Purpose

- The American Association of Community Theatre connects, strengthens, supports, and champions community theatre nationwide.
- It does so by offering educational resources, peer learning, national convenings, collaborative programs, advocacy, and representation.
- AACT welcomes all who are interested in celebrating and championing one of the most accessible and locally rooted forms of theatre available.

Our Commitments

- We share knowledge to support theatre makers in practical ways.
- We champion access, equity, safety, and belonging in theatre.
- We elevate community theatre as essential civic infrastructure.
- We evolve with purpose to assure resilience for theatre makers and relevance of our work.

Our Work

- We are a Capacity Accelerator and a Movement Builder for community theatre.
- We meet community theatres where they are and help them be the best they want to be.
- We bring light to the value of community theatre and amplify voices that demonstrate it.

Our Promise

- As one of the nation's largest and most inclusive theatre networks, AACT welcomes people and organizations to share experiences, exchange ideas, and grow through learning.
- As a result of their engagement, local theatres can thrive on their own terms, serve their communities with greater confidence, and be recognized for their civic and artistic contributions.

Our Credo

- We shall go forth boldly with love in our hearts, confidence in our steps, and members on our mind to focus our work and position the association to thrive in the years ahead.

The 2026-2035 Strategic Framework

American Association of Community Theatre

Strategic Framework Elements

Strategic Outcomes

- what the organization seeks to accomplish to uphold its philosophical foundation

Strategic Priorities

- where the organization will focus resources to fulfill its promise

Strategic Outcomes

- **Strengthen Local Theatres on Their Own Terms**
 - Theatres of varying capacity levels access scalable, practical tools.
 - Participation expands among DIY and under-resourced groups.
 - Festivals celebrate and honor community-defined standards of excellence.
- **Elevate Community Theatre as Essential Civic Infrastructure**
 - Policymakers and funders recognize the economic and civic impact of community theatre.
 - AACT is the go-to resource for credible data and operational insight.
 - Community theatre is publicly positioned as a public good.
- **Build a Networked Movement with Sustainable Capacity**
 - Members actively serve as aligned ambassadors.
 - A revitalized regional/chapter structure increases meaningful local connection.
 - Participation grows through welcoming, accessible, and scalable entry points.
- **Modernize Structure and Governance for Focus and Durability**
 - Governance is streamlined with clear roles and decision rights.
 - Volunteer pipelines are sustainable.
 - Revenue is diversified to stabilize and expand access.

Strategic Priorities

- Institute decision filters to consistently evaluate all activities and evaluate new ideas for their return on investment in terms of time, talent, treasure, and mission advancement
- Transform the festivals into a curated experience that celebrates all things community theatre in ways that connect, inspire, and educate with multiple pathways for participation and recognition
- Redefine representation in governance and create new ways to assure diverse perspectives and divergent voices inform our work
- Begin building an infrastructure to advance advocacy efforts by the association and its members

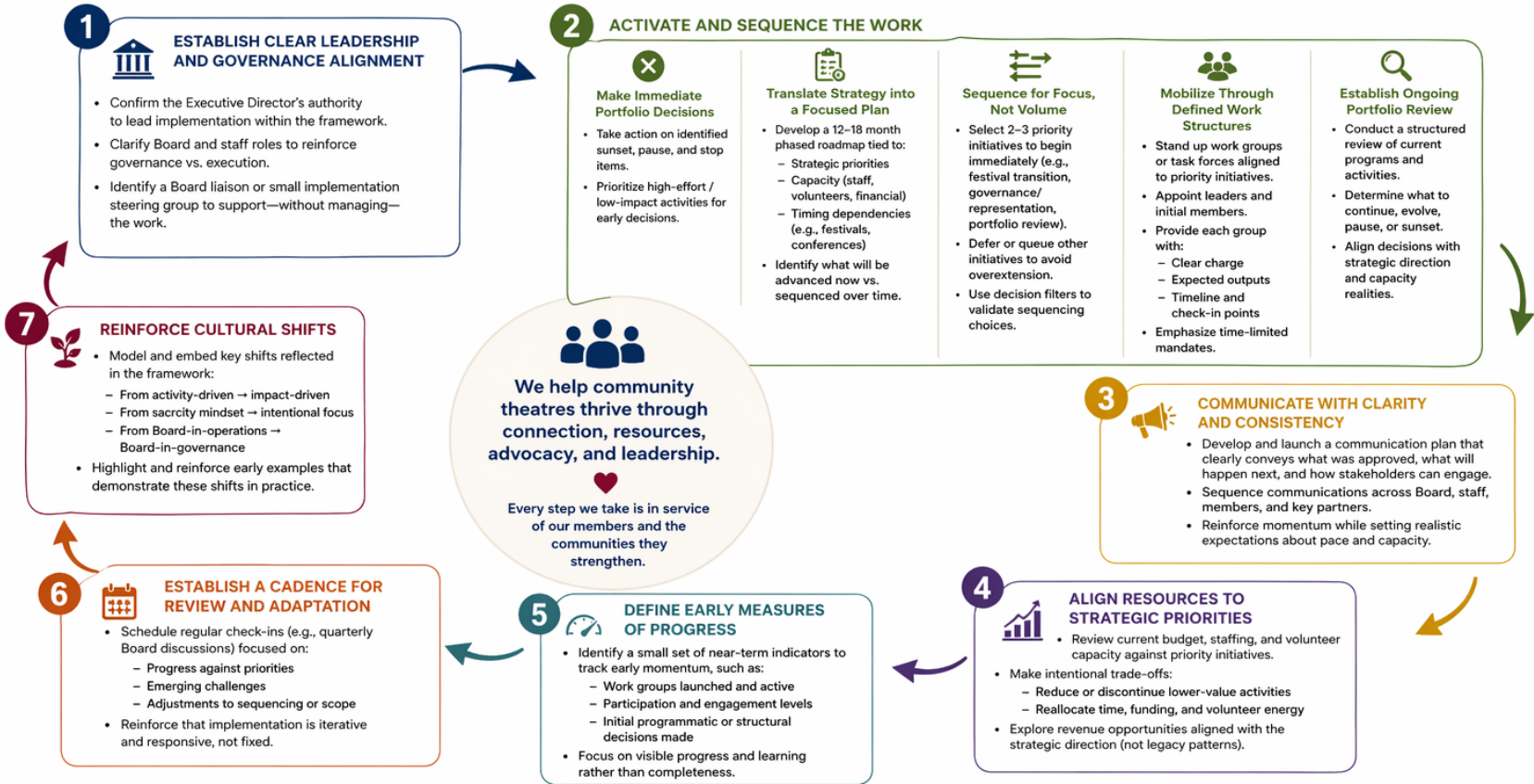
AACT Next Steps: From Direction to Impact

A Disciplined Sequence for Focused, Sustainable Action (Next 3–6 Months)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Members at the center of our thinking
- Impact over activity
- Focus over volume
- Collaboration and inclusion
- Love and joy in the work

Pathway for bringing the framework to life



SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- Strong engagement from members
- Focused execution of priorities
- Stronger, more sustainable community theatres
- AACT's growth, relevance, and impact

OUR NORTH STAR ★ Thriving community theatres. Stronger communities.

Building forward momentum

Board consideration for action in June

Alignment on roles and responsibilities

Sequencing of the work and activities

Continued communication among members and with partners

Coordination of resources and implementation

Monitoring, evaluating, and adapting for progress

Celebrating achievements