



# STRATEGIC PLAN

TENNESSEE  
**CRAFT**

*FY2027 to FY2029*

Approved April 18, 2026







Attendees enjoy the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Tennessee Craft Fair in May 2026.  
All photos by Julie Turner.

# Table of Contents

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Mission, Vision & Values        | 04 |
| A History of Tennessee Craft    | 05 |
| Looking to the Future           | 06 |
| Summary of Strategic Priorities | 07 |
| Detailed Strategic Priorities   | 08 |
| Governing Board & Staff         | 11 |
| Special Thanks                  | 11 |

# Mission, Vision & Values

---

## MISSION

To encourage, develop, and promote the crafts and craftspeople of Tennessee.

---

## VISION

Tennessee Craft, a fiscally sound, high performing craft organization, will be the leading voice advancing Tennessee's rich tradition of handmade craft as a vital cultural and economic driver by elevating fine craft and craft artists, engaging diverse communities, and making craft accessible for all.

---

## VALUES

**Community** — Tennessee Craft connects makers to a community of appreciative patrons, potential buyers, and supportive partners to celebrate fine craft in Tennessee.

**High Quality** — Through juried events and exhibitions, we set a high bar, recognizing merit and encouraging makers and members of all skill levels to grow in their disciplines. Constantly surrounded by the best examples of Tennessee Craft, we strive to exemplify "high quality" in all that we do.

**Connection** — Tennessee Craft is the premiere statewide resource for artists, businesses, and the public to connect and form lasting relationships.

**Support** — Tennessee Craft leverages organizational resources and donations to invest in artists - elevating craftsmanship, developing professionalism, and increasing the visibility of handmade craft across the state.

**Inclusivity** — Tennessee Craft welcomes artists and audiences of all levels and of all backgrounds and diversity through accessible events, educational opportunities, and resources available in-person and online. Arts for all without discrimination, preference and circumstance.

**Tradition** — Tennessee Craft honors the people and practices, honed through generations, that inform today's craft marketplace and support contemporary craft artists who carry on those traditions in new and innovative ways.

# A History of Tennessee Craft

---

The history of craft in Tennessee began from necessity. Settlers created wooden bowls for food preparation, pottery crocks for canning, quilts for bedding, baskets for storage and more. Through trial and error, pioneers discovered the best local woods for constructing furniture, creating musical instruments and crafting toys; to keep warm, they harvested fibers to spin and weave into clothing; for storage, founders dug in the earth to find clay for pots, jugs and bowls. Eventually, the items transformed from purely functional pieces to decorative works of art, enriching the lives and homes of our ancestors.

These practices are by no means new or unique to Tennessee artists. When visiting museums today, we find common utensils on display from the earliest civilizations up through the Middle Ages. These finds, however, are regarded as treasures thanks to the time and care their creators invested in each piece. Over time, simple, everyday tools became beautiful works of fine craft.

In our New World, we lost this sentiment as the Industrial Revolution swept through our nation in the 1700 and 1800s. Efficient processes and low costs dictated our culture as manufactured goods and mail order catalogues found their way into our homes. Makers found themselves overshadowed by machines. Handmade traditions and one-of-a-kind products were in danger of being lost forever.

In response, an international trend known today as the Arts and Crafts Movement emerged. This philosophy sought to relate the moral and social health of a nation to the qualities of its architecture and design and believed that a healthy society depended on skilled and creative workers. Arts and Crafts artists tended to oppose the division of labor and prefer craft production, in which the whole item was made and assembled by an individual or small group; artists became concerned about the decrease of rural handicrafts.

In Tennessee, passionate individuals banded together to ensure important customs were not lost. In 1926, women like Olive Dame Campbell and Frances Goodrich began brainstorming about the importance of handmade goods at the Southern Mountain Workers Conference in Knoxville. From excited conversations that began in East Tennessee, these women formed what is now the Southern Highland Craft Guild.

During the Great Depression and in the 1930s, the Guild cultivated commerce for craftspeople in the Appalachian region through educational programming. In the 1940s the Tennessee Valley Authority work led to the formation of the Southern Highlanders, a craft marketing organization which was government sponsored and had shops at the Norris Dam in Tennessee and Rockefeller Center in New York City. In 1948 the first Craftsman's Fair of the Southern Highlands was held. This fueled interest in handmade goods from area artists.

Though initial conversations for the Guild began in Tennessee, it found its home in North Carolina. To give Tennessee artists a connecting point and ensure our state's traditions were preserved, a group of passionate individuals worked to unite artists from Memphis to Johnson City. A dedicated core drove across the state, recruiting members and working to organize events for artists to show and sell their work.

The Tennessee Artists-Craftsmen Association (TACA) was founded in 1965 to encourage, develop and promote crafts and craftspeople in Tennessee. The organization carried out this mission first, by hosting The Best of Tennessee Craft Exhibition and later, in 1972, with the state's first Craft Fair. In 1978, a second juried craft fair—this time a national show—was established. Each of these events continues today. Now, our Craft Fairs are traditions of their own, attracting nearly 100,000 visitors annually.

In addition to these banner events, TACA – now the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists d/b/a Tennessee Craft, provides direct support to artists year-round through professional development workshops, regional programming, scholarships and mentor opportunities. We strive to embrace the passion of our state's first makers and our organization's founders by connecting today's emerging and experienced artists and the public with resources and opportunities to make their mark on our state's handmade legacy.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

### *The FY27–29 Strategic Planning Process*

In the fall of 2025, a strategic planning ad hoc committee was formed with four members: Sue Mulcahy, Richard Markus, Kelly Hider and Jonathan Harwell-Dye. The committee conducted research, including a SWOT analysis, a landscape analysis, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The committee also utilized financial statements and benchmarked environmental, policy, and technology trends relevant to the future of Tennessee Craft.

At its annual retreat, the board was presented with key findings and engaged in a facilitated process to define a shared vision for the future and set high-level, achievable goals for the next three fiscal years. The board reaffirmed its commitment to the organization's mission to encourage, develop, and promote the crafts and craftspeople of Tennessee.

In March 2026, Sandra Lee Chandler joined the ad hoc strategic planning committee. The strategic plan was unanimously approved by the Governing Board on April 18, 2026. Following approval, all committees develop annual work plans defining quarterly milestones for strategic initiatives. Progress is monitored via a standardized tracking system with regular check-ins to ensure effective execution of the three-year plan.

# Summary of Strategic Priorities

---

## Goal 1

Position Tennessee Craft as the leading advocate for fine craft, ensuring it is recognized as a significant economic and cultural driver.

**Objective 1.1:** Ensure Statewide Accessibility to Fine Craft

**Objective 1.2:** Expand Public Visibility and Social Reach.

**Objective 1.3:** Establish Policy & Advocacy Leadership

---

## Goal 2

Elevate fine craft and craft artists at every stage of their careers through education, promotion and networking.

**Objective 2.1:** Expand Exhibition & Sales Opportunities for Artists

**Objective 2.2:** Strengthen Professional Networks and Education

**Objective 2.3:** Accelerate Membership Growth & Data Utility

---

## Goal 3

Sustain future growth through fiscal health, high-performing chapters, and long-term infrastructure improvements.

**Objective 3.1:** Maximize Chapter Vitality and Connectivity

**Objective 3.2:** Diversify and Increase Revenue Streams

**Objective 3.3:** Plan for Infrastructure & Future Growth

# Goal 1

**Position Tennessee Craft as the leading advocate for fine craft, ensuring it is recognized as a significant economic and cultural driver.**

---

## **Objective 1.1: Ensure Statewide Accessibility to Fine Craft**

- **Strategy 1.1.1: Geographic & Demographic Outreach**
  - **Initiative 1.1.1.A:** Support local chapters in hosting exhibitions in rural/underserved counties, providing state-level guidelines and sponsorship budget templates.
  - **Initiative 1.1.1.B:** Formalize a statewide college outreach program through a structured continuity plan and designated committee liaisons to cultivate long-term institutional partnerships.
  - **Initiative 1.1.1.C:** Develop a comprehensive volunteer management and leadership development program to cultivate a diverse pipeline of future board members, committee leaders, and community advocates.

## **Objective 1.2: Expand Public Visibility and Social Reach**

- **Strategy 1.2.1: Narrative-Driven Digital Content with Cultural Authority**
  - **Initiative 1.2.1.A:** Launch a statewide “Craft Economy” digital campaign demonstrating the economic impact of craft artists on local Tennessee communities.
  - **Initiative 1.2.1.B:** Relaunch Digital Demonstrations featuring craft artists showcasing traditional and contemporary techniques to expand public engagement and education.
  - **Initiative 1.2.1.C:** Conduct a comprehensive analysis of functionality needs and modernize Tennessee Craft's website to align with modern web standards for necessary functionality
  - **Initiative 1.2.1.D:** Develop a modern, searchable Digital Artist Directory to connect craft artists with collectors, buyers, curators, and the public
  - **Initiative 1.2.1.E:** Form partnerships with arts, nonprofit, civic organizations and businesses (such as hotels, banks, corporations) to expand membership reach, audience development, and cross-promotion opportunities.

## **Objective 1.3: Establish Policy & Advocacy Leadership**

- **Strategy 1.3.1: Strategic Coalitions for Advocacy**
  - **Initiative 1.3.1.A:** Collaborate with regional and national arts advocacy organizations to support public investment in the arts and craft sector.
  - **Initiative 1.3.1.B:** Update current advocacy toolkit including messaging, data, and talking points to equip staff, board members, and partners to communicate the cultural and economic impact of craft.



# Goal 2

**Elevate fine craft and craft artists at every stage of their careers through education, promotion and networking.**

---

## **Objective 2.1: Expand Exhibition & Sales Opportunities**

- **Strategy 2.1.1: Strengthen Exhibitions and Fairs**
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.A:** Develop and execute major juried statewide exhibitions, including Best of Tennessee Craft and the Members exhibition, with broader geographic representation and chapter involvement.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.B:** Expand exhibitions with an additional statewide exhibition each year using an alternative format to major exhibitions.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.C:** Create a subcommittee to research the transition of the Spring Fair to a more sustainable, weather resistant model.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.D:** Implement a new Chapter Tent Program beginning at 2026 Fall Fair.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.E:** Overhaul Emerging Makers' Tent to shift focus entirely to mentorship.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.F:** Develop curriculum and support materials for mentors and mentees in the Emerging Makers program.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.G:** Initiative 2.1.1.G: Revive the Volunteer Housing Program to lower barriers for out-of-town fair participants of the Emerging Maker's Tent and Chapter Tent Programs.
  - **Initiative 2.1.1.H:** Create a system to track sales data across all sales opportunities.

## **Objective: 2.2: Strengthen Professional Networks and Education**

- **Strategy 2.2.1: High-Value Educational Programming**
  - **Initiative 2.2.1.A:** Increase statewide attendance to the Lunch & Learn Series as a benefit to members and an accessible (such as a "Pay What You Can" for non-members) professional development opportunity for artists.
  - **Initiative 2.2.1.B:** Standardize Summer Study Scholarship program to include an optional "pay-it-forward" opportunity for recipients to give a talk or presentation (in-person or online) on the workshop they attended to their local chapter.
  - **Initiative 2.2.1.C:** Expand "Professional Development" offerings (e.g. pricing strategies, sourcing) via online, on demand content library.

## **Objective 2.3: Accelerate Membership Growth & Data Utility**

- **Strategy 2.3.1: Retention and Recruitment Synergy**
  - **Initiative 2.3.1.A:** Conduct a structured analysis to understand membership attrition and value perception, informing future improvements.
  - **Initiative 2.3.1.B:** Implement a cross-chapter networking framework to strengthen communication and collaboration statewide.
  - **Initiative 2.3.1.C:** Train staff in advanced database management and analytics to track trends, improve retention, and identify donor opportunities.

# Goal 3

**Sustain future growth through fiscal health, high-performing chapters, and long-term infrastructure improvements.**

---

## **Objective 3.1: Maximize Chapter Vitality and Connectivity**

- **Strategy 3.1.1: Standardize Chapter Operations & Leadership Support**
  - **Initiative 3.1.1.A:** Update and expand the chapter leadership toolkit.
  - **Initiative 3.1.1.B:** Conduct a formal review and proposal for updating chapter bylaws and manuals to clarify roles, responsibilities, and alignment between the chapters and the statewide organization.
  - **Initiative 3.1.1.C:** Expand Chapter Chats into regular leadership huddles to facilitate best-practice sharing and collaboration.

## **Objective 3.2: Diversify and Increase Revenue Streams**

- **Strategy 3.2.1: Expand Earned Revenue & Giving**
  - **Initiative 3.2.1.A:** Raise awareness of "Sustainers" monthly giving opportunities to create predictable revenue and deepen donor engagement.
  - **Initiative 3.2.1.B:** Reestablish a donor-focused advisory board to strengthen relationships with major supporters.
  - **Initiative 3.2.1.C:** Create and launch new corporate sponsorship packages that clearly link donor investment to specific strategic outcomes (e.g., Youth Outreach, Exhibitions, etc.).

## **Objective 3.3: Plan for Infrastructure & Future Growth**

- **Strategy 3.3.1: Operational Efficiency & Staff Support**
  - **Initiative 3.3.1.A:** Evaluate internal procedures to improve communication, reporting, and organizational efficiency.
  - **Initiative 3.3.1.B:** Implement a staff capacity and compensation plan to support growth and prevent burnout.
  - **Initiative 3.3.1.C:** Assess committee structure to determine needs and make adjustments to maximize effectiveness.
- **Strategy 3.3.2: Pursue Evidence-Based Expansion**
  - **Initiative 3.3.2.A:** Develop three-year "stress test" scenarios (e.g., revenue dip or inflation spike) to accompany the annual budget.
  - **Initiative 3.3.2.B:** Secure funding and engage a consultant to conduct a Center of Craft feasibility study.
  - **Initiative 3.3.2.C:** Generate specific events designed to solicit donor engagement and giving.

# Governing Board & Staff

AS OF APRIL 18, 2026

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Susan Mulcahy, President  
Dick Markus, Vice-President  
Paige Ward Moore, Secretary  
Louise Nuttle, Treasurer  
Patrick Green, Plateau Chapter Representative  
Sherri Warner Hunter, Member-at-Large

## CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES

Ashley Lusietto, Member-at-Large  
Audry Deal-McEver, Member-at-Large  
Ben Paty, Midstate Chapter Representative  
Chelsea Barranger, Member-at-Large  
Denise Miller, South Chapter Representative  
Donna Glassford, Member-at-Large  
Henry Walker, Member-at-Large  
James "Keith" Biggs, Member-at-Large  
James McKissic, Member-at-Large  
Jennifer Gagliardi, Member-at-Large  
Julie Boisseau-Craig, East Chapter Representative  
Kathryn Jenkins, Northeast Chapter Representative  
Micha Hannemann, Member-at-Large  
Nadine Shillingford, Member-at-Large  
Sandra Lee Chandler, Member-at-Large  
Steve Griffin, Southeast Chapter Representative  
Vacant (as of April 18, 2026), Southwest Chapter Representative

## STAFF

Jonathan Harwell-Dye, Executive Director  
Trish Tallon-Blanchard, Director of Programs & Community Engagement  
Kim McCurdy Waag, Technical & Fair Director  
Mary Grissim, Marketing Manager  
Jennifer Folsom, Marketing Design Specialist  
Christa Schoenbrodt, Marketing Fair Design Specialist

## SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS

Annie LaVoie, Arianella Meyers, Ben Paty, Courtney "CK" Stone, Dr. Megan Jordan, Erin Anfinson, Gabrielle Terry, Jane Ann McCullough, John Tumminello, Julie Boisseau-Craig, Kathryn Dettwiller, Kathryn Jenkins, Kelly Hider, Lisa Ritenour, Nick Freeman, Pat Moody, Patricia Schwarz, Patrick Green, Reneau Dubberley, Steve Griffin, Susan Thornton, Terrie Ponder Watch

