

Recommendations and Findings
from
Community Assessment for the Arts
in Macon County

Submitted by the Steering Committee

working in Collaboration with

The North Carolina Arts Council and Leslie Anderson Consulting, Inc.



**North
Carolina
Arts
Council**

*Fifty years
of leadership*

“The Arts are the heart and soul of this region. The arts speak to our heritage, our can-do attitude, the resiliency of our people –from Native Americans to early settlers. The arts bring a sense of community and bring people together.”

-- Interview participant

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Background

In the fall of 2016, The North Carolina Arts Council, in partnership with the Macon County Arts Council, began a community assessment process to understand the arts infrastructure of Macon County and engage citizens in visioning how the arts can support the growth and development of the county. Guided by a steering committee of local citizens, the assessment process included interviews, listening sessions and an online survey that involved more than 150 Macon County residents.

While the Macon County Arts Council has benefitted from stable leadership, the organization has not engaged in strategic planning or renewing their programs in many years. During this time, there were significant demographic and economic shifts in the county, and a striking increase in the amount of high quality arts opportunities for residents and visitors. The Smokey Mountain Arts Center attracts audiences from across the region, and the Cowee School's growing visual arts and performing arts programs are popular among residents and visitors alike.

Macon County's proximity to Atlanta makes it a popular destination for second home buyers, retirees and tourists. In 2015, Tourism accounted for \$154.2 million in revenue for Macon County. Many of the tourists and "new" residents of Macon County are accustomed to supporting cultural activities and creative learning opportunities for themselves and their families. Among local listening session and survey participants, "Enhancing our county's image as a vibrant place to live, work and visit," was consistently rated as a primary function of the arts council.

Many of the participants involved in the assessment expressed an urgency in shifting the focus of the Macon County Arts Council to be relevant to more citizens and be an active partner in the development and growth of the county. With a nonprofit arts and culture industry that generates \$2.12 billion in economic activity in North Carolina, the numbers support the importance of the arts in both cultural and economic development.

The North Carolina Arts Council convened meetings of the steering committee and hired Leslie Anderson Consulting to assist with stakeholder interviews and conducting focus groups in both Franklin and Highlands. Twenty-seven interviews were conducted; four focus groups with visual artists, literary artists, and business and community leaders were held. An online survey gathered feedback from more than 100 citizens. The steering committee crafted a series of recommendations -- reflective of the feedback, thoughts and aspirations expressed by the participants during this process. It is the steering committee's hope that these recommendations will assist the Macon County Arts Council in becoming a collaborative, innovative arts champion for artists, arts organizations and citizens of Macon County.

Recommendations

1. Be the catalyst for connection, collaboration and communication for Macon County's arts organizations, artists and creative sector. Build audience engagement across town borders.

The interviews and survey results revealed that while there are a variety of valuable arts resources (organizations, local artists, festivals) in Macon County, there is not much coordination, collaboration or communication among the county's arts organizations, artists and creative workers. Focus group participants shared the need for the arts to be the primary connector between Franklin and Highlands. "Bridging the Gorge" they called it. Many felt the arts could connect the two communities through promotion, partnerships, and a shared vision. The listening session for artists in Highlands included much discussion about ways to bridge the dichotomies, distance, and differences in arts resources and assets between Highlands and Franklin.

Quotes:

"We need a more strategic approach. The arts organizations should coordinate more and work together better. We're not tapping the potential as to what the arts could do." - *Interview participant*

"People community hop... Now is when we need to expand and differentiate. We have a lot of work to do to improve our community and live up to our potential. The arts can bring the next level of community. When a community does well, it lifts all boats. Business people should be passionate about the arts and community." -*Interview participant*

"A Macon County Destination Arts Festival, *anything* that would provide a bridge between our communities... special invitations, buses for the use of the arts community, classes, etc." - *Public survey respondent*

"Perception of Franklin and Highlands by each community could change. We assume Franklin's perception is: Highlands should do their own thing --not expect help from other parts of county and contribute to Franklin's needs." - *Listening session participant*

"The Arts help bridge the gap between cultures and age groups while bringing to light the creativity within us all as humans. I love to see our community members shine and the pride upon the realization that they are valued for their creativity." - *Public survey respondent*

2. Create a compelling brand and market the rich arts resources of Macon County to residents and visitors.

When leaders interviewed for this assessment were asked to share what they knew about the Macon County Arts Council, 18 of the 27 participants indicated they knew nothing or next to nothing about the Council. A few could name one or two activities by the Council over many years such as music programs, events in the park, or programs for children, but this lack of recognition was supported throughout the process. There was great confusion among participants as to distinctions among various arts groups, such as the Arts Council, Macon County Arts Association and owners of the gallery downtown. Most participants in the assessment expressed an inclusive understanding and attitude about the benefits that the arts, culture, and heritage could yield if the County was known for them, and a palpable frustration that Highlands is often considered the “artful” destination in Macon County, while Franklin is home to the arts council.

Quotes:

“Develop a brand that features the arts, events, amenities of the county. We need a cohesive corralling of information about the arts, coalescing one another. Use a digital approach, a search engine, and Facebook page.” - *Interview participant*

“When people think arts in Western NC, they think Highlands, Cashiers, Waynesville. Not Franklin. The challenge is to put Franklin on the map with arts, and not just gems. This needs to change by more festivals concentrating on local artists.” - *Public survey respondent*

“I think towns that become known as art communities really draw in business and tourists...” - *Public survey respondent*

“Franklin needs to get on the ball with promoting the arts. More festivals are needed to capitalize on the summer visitors. Highlands is blowing Franklin way in this department. Even Dillsboro (Jackson County) is blowing Franklin away with regards to festivals. The only “artsy” festival Franklin has is the Pumpkinfest. There needs to be a few more throughout the summer that do not compete on the same weekends as Highlands, Dillsboro, Cashiers, etc. We need more people to see Franklin as an arts community with the rest of Macon and the surrounding counties, and not just about gems and Scottish festivals.” -- *Public survey respondent*

3. Expand the range of arts programming to engage current residents, new residents and the diverse cultures of Macon County.

Across the board, participants in this process expressed pride, appreciation and reverence for the traditional crafts of the County, including weaving, clogging and music. But many participants in focus groups, interviews and the public survey commented on the need for higher quality and greater variety of arts offerings, particularly by the Macon County Arts Council. Many participants were interested in exposure and access to arts that are non-traditional, contemporary, experimental, and cutting-edge. Several participants suggested a pairing of the traditional arts and crafts with more contemporary work. There was significant feedback on creating opportunities to honor the cultural contributions of the Cherokee tribe, and further, to embrace the traditions of the growing Latino population in Macon County. Many shared the belief that the arts could enhance social cohesion between the diverse cultures of the county. Finally, there was also an overwhelming interest in using public art for wayfinding and to enliven downtown Franklin, the River trail and other sites.

Quotes:

“...I want to see our mountain art forms survive, while introducing and keeping our young people aware of artworks in other regions and counties” - *Public survey respondent*

“Acknowledge Cherokee history and respect it with programming, wayfinding, interpretation, place names, trails/interpretations, and school programs. Pay Cherokee artists to create this presence. Prioritize authenticity of the Cherokee culture/history when dealing with or incorporating Cherokee into the arts, the community, etc.” – *Interview participant*

“The arts can help build a community that supports people with diverse backgrounds by offering programming that engages African-Americans, Cherokees, Hispanic/Latinos, and Caucasians.” - *Interview participant*

“We have a large variety of talented people in the arts. I don’t think the Arts Council has tapped into resources of people who have moved in here.” - *Interview participant*

“True Talent” is important. Make the distinction between hobbyist/amateurs and those people with merit, talents and authenticity... Quality is important. - *Listening session participant*

“Greenspace art and sculpture in parks and street corners...” - *Public survey respondent*

4. Cultivate partnerships with business and government leaders and advocate for inclusion in economic development plans.

A successful arts council, like a film commission or a chamber of commerce, is an economic driver for the county. It maximizes the use of the county's arts assets as an essential component of sustainable economic development. Arts Councils also assist with business and industrial recruitment through community revitalization and creating events and projects that attract creative professionals. Most of the participants in this assessment expressed a readiness for putting a much higher collective priority on arts, heritage and culture and building public value among the county's citizens. There was great interest and consistent feedback in connecting the arts with current development projects in the county, including the Little Tennessee River Trails and the Nikwasi Mound Initiative to create a new gateway for Franklin.

There was also a collective call to action from the survey and interview participants that the arts need a vigorous advocate in the county to help educate government and business leaders on the importance of investing the arts. Several participants shared their feeling that the arts should be a community and economic development strategy for the County, but they are not currently "at the table." Many participants cited Macon County's reputation as an "outdoor destination," but believed the arts could expand the dimensions of Macon County's tourism brand, as well as its economic and civic future.

Quotes:

"Build our economy on arts, heritage, and tourism. We need to preserve and honor our local, indigenous assets. If we don't, who are we? If someone is driving into Franklin will they know it's Franklin and not just any town? - *Interview participant*

"The arts should be built into the long-term plans of the town and county. In 2010 Franklin did a long-term plan. The #1 economic development idea was to incorporate and use the river more. We followed up on that. Fifty percent of land in Macon County is owned by the federal government and used by the U.S. Forest Service. We have to not be trapped in an image of 'slow pace rural'. Residents want certain local amenities related to the arts that we don't have." - *Interview participant*

"Our Town Square could be better utilized to attract people downtown. Anytime there is programming happening in the Square it helps all the local business owners. We need more diversity and more art downtown. We need public art or murals. If the Town Council concentrated on programming downtown, I know it would bring people out. People are hungry for culture here" - *Interview participant*

“Our county leaders don’t get it that local arts and heritage amenities are economic development. We have the lowest property tax rate in the state. Residents would support a higher tax rate if investments were made in creating a sense of place and a wonderful place to live.” - *Interview participant*

5. Expand Arts in Education programming to engage students and life-long learners in Macon County.

When participants were asked about how the arts could benefit the youth of Macon County, there was an unexpected response. All the participants supported expanding opportunities for youth to engage in the arts through school programs and artist residencies, after school experiences, summer camps and programming for families and children. The unexpected response was the number of participants who were interested in the expansion of arts learning and engagement opportunities for *ALL* ages. Many, many participants expressed the need for expanding engagement opportunities in the arts. The arts create cohesion in the community and many new residents are looking to connect and learn the folk and heritage traditions of the area.

Quotes:

“Feed and fuel the imagination, teach respect for diversity and inclusivity, strengthen local roots and understanding with an eye for larger global involvement and participation and leadership in their lifetimes.” - *Public survey respondent*

“**STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) is the future – young people need general technology skills, computer drawing, writing, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and photography skills. They need encouragement to go with their creativity. There’s a future in art.” - *Interview participant*

“The arts foster critical and creative thinking. We need much more of that. It opens a young person to the idea that may allow a rural student to be able to soar out of their region’s *status quo*.” - *Public survey respondent*

“Up our game. More places for artists to exhibit and sell their art. More venues for various types of art to be experienced, such as smaller performances, dinner theatre, poetry readings, theatre by young people, concerts...” - *Interview participant*

“More opportunities to learn authentic music and traditional dance. Create a pool of desire for this among young people, surrounding counties, and local people. We must offer authentic local, traditional programming – recreation programs, classes, etc. using qualified teachers/staff/artists.” - *Interview participant*

“More opportunities to do things – demonstrations, classes about indigenous topics, such as Cherokee, and what’s unique to the mountains here. One woman told us Cowee School and the programs were the reason she bought a home here.” - *Listening session participant*

6. Recruit an engaged board, new leadership and build the Arts Council’s capacity through training and strategic planning.

Participants in the community assessment expressed the need for the Macon County Arts Council to develop a clear vision, better organizational infrastructure, and greater leadership capacity. Many comments were expressed about the visibility, efficacy, and effectiveness of the Macon County Arts Council. Highlands’ interviewees were especially uninformed about the Arts Council. For the participants who were aware of the Macon County Arts Council, many offered suggestions for improvement including broader participation and engagement across the county; the need for more resources including funding, volunteers, and leadership talent; more pervasive marketing and visibility and relevancy across the county.

Quotes:

“To have an organization that is the leader of collaboration and conversation for the arts, culture, heritage, and with a variety of partners such as local government, elected officials, merchants, economic development.” - *Interview participant*

“...Time to start looking forward. That doesn’t mean discard the past, but focus more energy and resources on new ideas” - *Public survey respondent*

“I feel we could truly use new people to help promote our art community. We, in Macon County, are surrounded by some of the most beautiful and interesting places in our country and by having a strong group leading the way to ‘sell’ this could be one of our most beneficial qualities. Therefore, we could bring in more revenue.” - *Public survey respondent*

“...There seem to be many artists, including myself, that would like to see a more cohesive arts council.” - *Public survey respondent*

“We’re in a transitional period. We’ve been a retirement community these last decades. People are moving here from where there are more active lifestyles and more awareness of benefits from the arts. We need more arts-related opportunities for students. This is an opportune time to revitalize the Arts Council.” - *Listening session participant*

Process and Methodology

Data for this report was gathered through 27 interviews, four focus groups and an online survey. Interviews were conducted by Leslie Anderson, of Leslie Anderson Consulting, assisted by Leigh Ann Wilder of the North Carolina Arts Council. Focus groups were facilitated by Leslie Anderson in both Franklin and Highlands. An online survey attracted another 100 citizens to provide their thoughts and feedback. The findings for each of these methods and aggregated data begin on page 14. Overall, data generated by the interviews, listening sessions and public survey correlated closely and informed the major themes that are reflected in the report recommendations. However, several important suggestions and ideas are also captured in the following summary statements.

- Participants in this assessment noted a variety of arts resources that were of value to them. Assets related to traditional heritage and local culture and history yielded the strongest voices and most consistent responses. Mentioned frequently were Cowee School and the surrounding historic area/corridor; traditional folk arts; Cherokee Indian mounds, history, and heritage; and indigenous music. Also noted with high-frequency were The Bascom and the three performing arts venues in the county: Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, Highlands Performing Arts Center, and Highlands Playhouse.
- Most participants expressed an inclusive understanding and attitude about the benefits that the arts, culture, and heritage could yield if the County was known for them. They said the arts bring positive quality-of-life enhancements; engagement of all ages, social strata, cultures and races/ethnicities; enrichment and academic advancement for children and youth; and authentic development that expands the economy in ways that preserve and honor indigenous assets for residents and visitors alike.
- To grow the arts, culture, and heritage sector of the economy through development of more and better arts-related products, participants suggested the following: development of specific new amenities and venues; regional promotions; more public events and offerings in public spaces; enhanced public and private investment in existing arts organizations; more public art; tie-ins with the “buy local” campaign; and promoting the advantages of enhanced quality-of-life through the arts. While a few informants were not overly excited about using the arts for economic development, most participants felt this sector held great promise for lower impact, economic expansion while simultaneously generating quality amenities for both residents and visitors. Most informants felt the arts would support growth that is based on local history, traditions, culture, people, architecture, and story, and therefore, differentiate the county and its communities in the competitive regional market.

Aggregated Data from One-on-One Interviews

January – July 2017

27 Participants

1. Please tell me what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.

Limited or no knowledge about the Macon Country Arts Council

- I don't know anything about the Macon County Arts Council. 9
- Do not attend their programs. 4
- I know very little about them. 7
- Not much. The arts tell you something about the heritage and the people of a place.
- What Arts Council? They put on events in Franklin. Donors in Highlands drive the arts there; it's different in Franklin.
- They are active, but they stay on one track. They need to think outside the box.

Perception of programs/activities of Arts Council

- I've heard some good things about a few events and know they have a shop downtown for quilters/weavers, but don't know anything they do.
- Is the gallery on Main Street theirs?
- The Executive Director brings me a schedule of their programs. I think they partner with the high school some.
- They may have helped our teachers and our art show in past.
- They have events at the Gazebo.
- They are a narrow interest group and don't offer a wide range of programming.
- They did a poetry reading at my business and they work some in the high school.
- They offer music programs and have participated in a few programs at Cowee School.
- They don't do much except music. They do not promote what others are doing, only their programs.
- They're not a strong force; they haven't embraced the visual arts; they do no outreach and are not proactive at all; very little presence, if any, in Highlands.
- They have not included native peoples in their activities or been a part of the big things that have happened in the arts in the region or with the Cherokee. They don't play in the traditional folk art space and don't attract visitors with their programs.

- They do events in the park and music events. They did a pretty cool youth art project.
- My children attended an art program and had a great experience.

Grant programming/offerings

- Got one grant four years ago for \$250. More trouble than it was worth.
- Partner on some events (Cowee Christmas). They give some money for music events at Cowee School.

2. What do you personally value most about the arts in the County?

Arts are an integral part of the community and families

- Arts are the heart and soul of this region. The arts speak to our heritage, our can-do attitude, the resiliency of our people – from Native Americans to the early settlers. The arts bring a sense of community and bring people together.
- Arts in education and support for the arts in schools. The arts are important for brain development and improving critical thinking skills in children, especially math. Art is a way to connect schools with the community.
- The involvement of my family members in various types of art forms as well as my own involvement too.

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- History and authenticity.
- Traditional folk arts. Cowee School and the historic district/corridor. Cherokee Indian mounds. Folk festival.
- Cowee School historic area – pottery, music, dance, Cherokee history exhibits, tours of local history. Folk festival.
- There's a movement now to keep the traditions alive. Our traditional culture is getting more and more respect now: This too is art.
- Our Cherokee heritage, but there's a disconnect with the Cherokee people and the Tribe. We need to continue to build that relationship and work closely with them. Cherokee heritage should be incorporated in the long-term vision for the arts here. Bring arts into heritage. We must be distinctive in order to differentiate from our competitors.
- Architecture. History and heritage of the Southern Appalachians. Music.
- Indigenous music. Cherokee history and heritage. Preservation of the Cherokee mounds. The corridor along the Little Tennessee River from Cherokee, past Franklin, and on to Georgia.
- We have exquisite mountain crafts people. They are homegrown.
- Heritage, interest in local history and arts, preservation of buildings. Heritage = arts.

- The Bascom, and plays at Highlands Playhouse, Highlands Performing Arts Center, Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.

Increase musical offerings

- Music shows.
- Incredible musicians. The interest and life they bring to our town.
- We have the best bluegrass musicians around here. Cowee School. Folk Festival.
- In Highlands the performing arts, live music. Fusion of food and music. Tourism is exploding and it's partly due to the many arts offerings. Tourists come here for the sense of place. People who live in beautiful mountains find inspiration.

Arts in education

- Arts in education. Exposure to the arts I received in the schools here. Musical offerings at the Cowee School.

Arts here are robust and plentiful

- Arts in Highlands are busy all year and we have lots of variety.
- Lots of assets for arts in Highlands. The Bascom's audience is regional. The geographic location of Highlands makes it hard to connect and link.
- Cowee School, Performing Arts Center in Highlands. Highlands Civic Center.
- The Smoky Mountain Performing Arts Center, their broad offerings and the exposure they bring to the community.

Arts here are fractured

- The arts groups are fractured. How much do they work together?

Adherence to excellence

- "True talent" is important. Make the distinction between hobbyist/amateurs and those people with merit, talents, and authenticity. The Bascom. Cowee School. Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts. Quality is important.
- Except for The Bascom, we don't have much diversity or higher-end arts offerings.

3. What do you think are the strongest arts assets and traditions in Macon County?

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- Cherokee.
- The history and culture of the Cherokee in this region. We need more public art, interpretation, and/or wayfinding that highlight Cherokee history.
- Heritage crafts. Wedgewood pottery started in Macon County.
- Gem & Mineral Museum.
- Scottish Tartans Museum.
- Old buildings such as one-room school houses.

- Southern Appalachian culture – it's unique.
- Heritage and local culture. If you let heritage and culture die, you let part of the future die.
- People – talent passed from generation to generation. Respect for people = respect for the arts. In the past, the arts were about function, daily life, and self-sufficiency.

Dance

- Clogging.
- Through their families many residents are connected to the arts. Cartoogechaye School was known for its clogging.

Music

- Music.

Many venues for performance and visual arts

- Cowee School.
- The Bascom. They see themselves as regional player. They do outreach and partnerships. Wonderful asset.
- Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.
- Highlands Playhouse.
- Highlands Performing Arts Center and Youth Theatre.
- Highlands Playhouse and the Performing Arts Center, but they aren't linked together or cohesive.
- Festivals.
- Programs in the public schools.

Confluence of natural and man-made beauty

- Give visitors more opportunities, such as by the river and with the Nikwasi Heritage Corridor.
- Little Tennessee River corridor – conservation, presentation, and programming of assets.

Under-recognized artists/residents

- We have a large variety of talented people in the arts. I don't think the Arts Council has tapped into resources of people who have moved in here.
- Unbelievable plethora of amazing artists who live here but don't necessarily present here. They are aging out.

Variety of arts offerings in Highlands

- Storytelling.
- Crafts.
- There is a very fine private collection of cut glass in Highlands.
- Free classes for youth in theater.

- Strong base of traditional crafts and talent in photography. There are lotsof hobbyist-type artists.

Lack of cohesiveness between county communities

- Highlands and Franklin people don't come to each other's events.

Government/tax funding

- Occupancy (hotel/motel) tax for Macon County is distributed *pro rata* back to communities/districts.

4. Many Western North Carolina counties have had great success in arts-driven economic development, or leveraging their arts resources to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. What do you think the arts could do to help with development and investment in Macon County?

Increase regional promotion and advertising of products and performances

- The Franklin Chamber of Commerce hasn't done a lot to promote the arts. In their new space, they will be able to do more with local artists and crafters. Artists attract new residents and visitors and this is a big part of business recruitment.
- Develop a brand that features that arts, events, amenities of the county. We need a cohesive corralling of information about the arts, coalescing one another. Use a digital approach, a search engine, and Facebook page. The Old Edwards Inn had 76,000 guests last year and they do arts programming, too.
- We need a more strategic approach. The arts organizations should coordinate more and work together better. We're not tapping the potential as to what the arts could do. However, Highlands WAS chosen as one of the top 12 SmallTown Arts & Culture Communities in the United States. ("ArtPlace Announces America's Top 12 Small-Town Art Places, 2014")
- Promotional material in counties and towns could emphasize the arts more. Traditional arts and crafts have merged into general arts and crafts. The Bascom could evolve into something more like J. C. Campbell Folk School, if they developed housing. Their ceramics program is first rate. Franklin could focus on developing spaces for artists to work and live. In Highlands high quality arts offerings are expected. Yet it's expensive to live and work in Highlands.

Increase arts offerings for the public in public spaces

- Our Town Square could be better utilized to attract people downtown. Anytime there is programming happening in the Square it helps all the local business owners. We need more diversity of offerings and more art downtown. We need public art or murals. If the Town Council concentrated on programming downtown, I know it would bring people out. People are hungry for culture here.

- There is land owned by the town that is a possible public arts center or amphitheater. Would love to see that developed so we could have more arts programs in Franklin. We need a variety of opportunities for young people and local performers.
- Art in public places. Convene meetings with all the arts groups – we must start talking. Is there resistance to the arts?
- More opportunities to do things – demonstrations, classes about indigenous topics, such as Cherokee, and what’s unique to the mountains here. One woman told us Cowee School and the programs were the reason she bought a home here.
- Cowee School should continue to be developed. I believe there are eight arts-based businesses anchored there now. They do classes and have a music series. It could grow.
- Support Scottish Tartans Museum.
- Support Cowee School.

Include arts in county long-term and economic development planning

- The arts should be built into the long-term plans of the town and county. In 2010 Franklin did a long-term plan. The #1 economic development idea was to incorporate and use the river more. We followed up on that. Fifty percent of land in Macon County is owned by the federal government and used by the U.S. Forest Service. We have to not be trapped in an image of “slow pace rural”. Residents want certain local amenities related to the arts that we don’t have.
- The arts are only nominally in the county’s economic development plans. We haven’t had a champion for it. *Laissez-faire* approach. The main arts emphasis by the County is at Cowee School by paying the Executive Director’s salary and building maintenance. The Corridor project is very important, and includes the Cherokee, African-Americans, an Indian mound, Wedgewood clay, and more but needs more support from the County. The Town of Franklin owns the Nikwasi Mound. It was bought with pennies contributed by children. There are/were issues with the local leadership and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian.
- Decision-makers in the community don’t get the connection between economic benefits and the arts, heritage, and culture. They only give lip service to it. Not much money is spent on supporting culture and heritage. Our Cherokee history and heritage is so important that we must honor, respect, preserve, and conserve it. The Corridor along the Little Tennessee River is an amazing project.
- The arts could attract tourists.
- Our county leaders don’t get it that local arts and heritage amenities are economic development. We have the lowest property tax rate in the state.

Residents would support a higher tax rate if investments were made in creating a sense of place and a wonderful place to live.

- The arts provide identity and reputation for a community or county. Communities with this persona are irresistible and attract better educated people to live and work here.
- The arts should be an economic development strategy for us and they aren't.
- There is a direct connection between certain businesses and the arts, *i.e.*, restaurants, hotels, museums, galleries, and working artisans.
- We must realize we will never have industrial "plants" in our county in the future.
- Highlands had real success over the decades using the arts for economic success and it created a great brand for them.

Promote an enhanced quality-of-life

- Connect with the land conservation movement.
- The arts play a role in attracting new residents and promote the livability of Franklin. We need the arts and intellectualism in our country and county.
- The arts can help build a community that supports people with diverse backgrounds by offering programming that engages African-Americans, Cherokees, Hispanic/Latinos, and Caucasians.
- The strong weaving tradition as well as dance and music. People who move here have no idea about this strong weaving connection. And these traditions are what attracts them here.
- The arts are transformative – of a life, of a town. The unfiltered and free responses that children have with and to the arts is an example of this.

5. What arts opportunities would you like to see created, improved, or expanded in Macon County? (for employees, youth, citizens)

- More artist studios in the region. Work spaces will attract artists to stay here.
- More arts downtown. J. C. Jacobs Building could be used as an arts center. It would be great for visitors if we had more artists and visual arts downtown. Public art and perhaps murals could enliven downtown.
- An exhibit of local photography. Murals or public art downtown.
- We need a variety of arts offered downtown and across the county. If there was a mix of the arts downtown, more families would stay here or move here. Highlands is known for the arts and many of those people would drive to Franklin to enjoy music or a program.
- There seems to be an audience for theater here. I would like to see more public art and developing the narrative of the town through history and art.

- More summer programs for kids, like arts camps and the Overlook Players – they often have auditions for kids. Many kids don't have arts activity options due to lack of transportation. Anything to support young families would be great.
- Anything we could do to involve kids would be great. There are many benefits to arts education and how it prepares kids for 21st century work skills and life.
- Increase art in public places. This enhances sense of place. Fund the capacity and technology for branding and spreading the word about arts-related events. Coordinate calendaring of arts-related events so the offerings/events maximize and diversify audiences.
- Up our game. More places for artists to exhibit and sell their art. More venues for various types of art to be experienced, such as smaller performances, dinner theatre, poetry readings, theatre by young people, concerts. We need more variety in our type of music offerings.

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- Acknowledge Cherokee history and respect it with programming, wayfinding, interpretation, place names, trails/interpretations, and school programs. Pay Cherokee artists to create this presence. Prioritize authenticity of the Cherokee culture/history when dealing with or incorporating Cherokee into the arts, the community, etc. It's not the place or responsibility of the Cherokee people to educate the world about them.
- More opportunities to learn authentic music and traditional dance. Create a pool of desire for this among young people, surrounding counties, and local people. We must offer authentic local, traditional programming – recreation programs, classes, etc. using qualified teachers/ staff/artists.
- Build on history. Local heritage is unifying. Cowee School is unique; these types of amenities and assets should be supported. A lack of support for Cowee School is perceived by some as a Democratic party thing because Democrats have supported it. Enhance what we have here as assets. My business uses the arts successfully – singers, songwriters, bluegrass bands, old style bands, buskers from Asheville, etc. The arts pull so many things together.
- Focus on making plans for the Little Tennessee River Heritage Corridor come into being.

Increase visibility and activities of the Arts Council

- To have an organization that is the leader of collaboration and conversation for the arts, culture, heritage, and with a variety of partners such as local government, elected officials, merchants, economic development. Conduct an inventory of arts-related assets in the county.

- Do a strategic plan process with various stakeholders. Our Chamber should have an Events Committee but not an Arts & Culture Committee.
- A revision of the role and work of the Arts Council that includes heritage and professional public art. More music at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts. Highlands may not need it, but Franklin does.
- The Arts Council should be more encouraging of free thinking.
- Use the arts to develop strong ties in the community, among and between neighborhoods and towns.

Provide economic incentives and financial support

- Financial support for the arts from local government. Expansion of theater arts for students. Do/continue the calendaring meeting of all arts groups.
- Work spaces and affordable housing for emerging artists. There isn't much affordable housing in Highlands. The average sales price in Highlands is \$600,000.

Increase arts opportunities for youth/students

- More arts in our schools – artists-in-residence or experiences in the schools with the help of the Arts Council. Teachers would welcome it. Our School Board is very pro-arts as well.
- We're in a transitional period. We've been a retirement community these last decades. People are moving here from where there are more active lifestyles and more awareness of benefits from the arts. We need more arts-related opportunities for students. This is an opportune time to revitalize the Arts Council.
- For students in our schools: expose them to arts professionals – their creativity, their excellence, their courage, etc. Give students the sense of potential that they, too, can become professionals.
- There needs to be more exposure for young people to learn skills, stories, and the value of Southern Appalachian culture and Macon County's heritage in particular.

Increase visibility and marketing for arts offerings

- Advertise, market, and support arts offerings in the county. Do joint promotions.

6. How do you think the arts could benefit the children and youth of Macon County?

Exposure to arts and cultural experiences as youth enrichment

- The arts are incredibly important as a deterrent for drugs, building social skills, and helping children and young people make connections across cultures, races, and ethnic groups. (There are about 100 tribal members who live in Macon County.) The Arts Council could play a huge role in making connections between people in the county from preschool and middle school to retirees.
- Young people benefit from exposure to traditional, contemporary, and *avant-garde* art. Their personal creativity should be unleashed. They should learn about Macon County citizens who went on to successful careers in the arts.
- Our schools have very good music programs.
- Begin exposure to the arts in the earliest years – beginning with infants, through age 5, and continuing to grade 12. Exposure and engagement in the youngest years can have the biggest impact due to rapid brain development during early childhood. Music, stories, dance, visual arts, drama, etc. are all essential to young minds and will influence them over their life time.
- More offerings and exposure to the arts for children and youth is needed in Franklin. In Highlands we have a lot of options. Often families in Highlands enroll their children in Rabun Gap School due to their strong arts programs.

Support for increased opportunities for youth to engage in arts and culture activities

- Our youth need to be exposed to more art. They may not even realize they have an interest in the arts or the traditions that are from here. The school system is doing a great job, but they can only do so much.
- We need things kids and families can do, such as family movie series projected outside on one of the buildings. “Picking in the Square” could be adapted to attract more families or include programming for kids so more people would come downtown. Do programming to help bridge the gap of younger kids losing the connection with our older generation.
- Explore the possibility of having arts and education programs at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts. Take advantage of a grant program that’s available to bring high-quality artists to Macon, Clay, and Cherokee County youth for arts-in-education programs.
- The artists we book often do outreach with young people. They teach master classes. The youth in Highlands respond very well.
- Internships. In-school mentors. Outreach to children and youth who are involved with social service agencies, such as foster children, children with disabilities, children for whom English is a second language. STEAM. We should use the North Carolina educational standards to the advantage of the students

and arts organizations. Arts organizations should be thinking of ways to partner with organizations who serve young people.

- Youth could benefit from being involved with The Bascom and all the theatre groups.
- Arts opportunities for children and youth here are not what they should be. Appreciation and understanding of the arts and the window they are is really important. The library (10 years old) is wonderful. Unfortunately, it's not located in town.
- Our youth need much more exposure to and opportunities in drama and the visual arts. Now the visual arts include technology and digitally produced art, such as games, multi-media, music, graphics, etc.
- STEAM is the future – young people need general technology skills, computer drawing, writing, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and photography skills. They need encouragement to go with their creativity. There's a future in art.
- It's not always easy to get children and youth interested in mountain arts and heritage. Figure this out.
- Do partnerships between the schools and Arts Council and provide opportunities for children and youth to bring out their talents.

7. What do you believe are the challenges for having a strong Arts Council in Macon County?

Reinvigorate the arts organizations and infrastructure in Macon County

- Work with the Macon County Arts Association.
- Need a young promoter at the Arts Council who is more involved with the community.
- Younger volunteers at Arts Council.
- Strong leadership, both Board and staff.
- Clear vision needed. Figure out how to be relevant.
- Better organized in their operations. Better, more organized infrastructure.
- Strategic Plan, including mission re-examination.
- Support strong partnerships and merger of groups where it makes sense.
- Getting support from local and state governments.
- More resources/fundraising. Diversify funding.
- More awareness and marketing, especially to visitors and new residents.
- Actually doing the work of reforming the council. Being ready for change.
- There's no reason we can't have a great Arts Council here. The Council must overcome its reputation. They must have the attitude, "we're serious."
- Find a good leader. One who is a communicator.

Recruit local businesses and residents to be active supporters of the arts

- Connect Highlands and Franklin. The divide is dying off.
- Education of the community about the importance of the arts and that they are for THEM.
- Gaining supporters, audiences, and members, especially year-round locals and native born people. "It can't be just a bunch of Florida people."
- Get more businesses involved. The Shop Local, support local movement, is huge here.
- More involvement/visibility in the community and the different sections of it.
- Be more participatory. Facilitate groups coming together and working on common goals. We don't talk to each other.

Add/enhance venues/facilities; utilize what we have

- Need a facility.
- Good venues.
- Utilization of the river. It's a forgotten and under-utilized asset. Three rivers come together in Franklin.

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- Do programming and tell the story of the indigenous arts of the region.
- Support big important projects related to local heritage and culture, such as parks and development around Nikwasi Mound and the new park by Mainspring's offices.

Welcome newcomers

- Make newcomers and visitors feel welcome.

Increase advocacy to gain more governmental support

- More advocacy for the arts, especially with the NC General Assembly.
- More engagement of people to push for improvements, and more support from local governments.

8. How do you think Macon County would benefit if it was known for the arts?

Positive enhancement to County and its quality-of-life

- People look for the arts in a community. It would be a game changer.
- The arts should better serve the families here.
- Being known for arts is good for any county.
- If we showcase and promote arts/heritage/culture that is authentic, well done, and differentiated, Macon County will be known for the same things. Promoting Macon County is hard and should be done either as the region or the two towns – Franklin and Highlands. Blending the two into one destination (Macon County) for promotion is hard. Is thinking of promoting Macon County the best strategy?

- We could benefit from more education on the importance of the arts.
- Use arts/culture to describe the towns and county.
- A feather in our cap.
- The arts bring joy and social engagement.
- We would be seen as moving forward.

Expansion of economic development and vitality

- Attract visitors.
- Our Chamber of Commerce needs to help more with building the arts here.
- The arts aren't contributing now to the economy. Franklin is still looking for sustainable industry as their main strategy. We should use tourism to attract business. (Last year a promotion was done with focus on quality-of-life and tourism. A video was posted onto the branding website.)
- Build our economy on arts, heritage, and tourism. We need to preserve and honor our local, indigenous assets. If we don't, who are we? If someone is driving into Franklin will they know it's Franklin and not just any town?
- If Macon County were known for the arts, county government would see fit to invest in this strategy as well as locally important assets and programs.
- It would be a way to be known in addition to being an outdoor destination.
- The economic benefit will come after the investment of arts resources in children/young people. That drives the build-up of a positive reputation.
- Expansion of the arts is going on with private funds in Highlands. \$10,000,000 campaign is over half-way there for extension of the Playhouse. More focus is needed in Franklin and Nantahala.

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- We could engage all age levels; engage all cultures; engage with tourists; and with authentic portrayal, we could engage Cherokee culture.

Tie-in for arts and nature

- Promote the intimate culture of the county. We shouldn't be known only for the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.
- Let's connect the greenway, river, and the arts: a farmer's market-type place along the river greenway. Removal of the dam on the river. An outdoor amphitheater at the river greenway. (The town didn't adopt FEMA flood plain maps, so businesses and the Tribe can't get flood insurance. Therefore, people build low-value structures in these areas.)

9. How could the Arts Council do a better job of telling people about the wonderful traditions and offerings in Macon County?

Increase visibility for the arts through advocacy, marketing, and branding

- Advertising/marketing/promotion.
- Stronger arts advocacy.
- A coordinated calendar of arts, culture, heritage-related offerings for the whole county.
- Website/social media.
- The Economic Development Commission should lead an all-out effort to brand the county for the arts, heritage, culture. Build a presence in the cultural/heritage niche.
- More visibility/presence in community.
- More partnerships.
- Explain why the arts are important.

More vigorous and better leadership in the Arts Council

- Arts Council and art gallery do not work together. They have same goals but don't work together. The gallery is better known than the Arts Council.
- The Arts Council has gotten sleepy. It needs a breath of fresh air.
- Better leadership.
- To have a strong Arts Council we need a clean slate with a committed, enthusiastic core group.

Volunteer opportunities

- Portal for volunteering.

Increase arts-related events

- Have get-togethers and establish links to other organizations.
- More arts-related product would be developed.

Create an unforgettable experience

- The wonderful history and qualities of Highlands as a destination for writers, artists, and musicians would be explained and remembered. This place is different. It's inspirational; a spiritual experience. There are many appreciators of the arts here. Use primary research that's already been done to make plans.
- We have one chance to impress a visitor. How will we be remembered? Be the flair. The arts are the flair.

10. Is there a question you wished we would have asked? Something you want to say we haven't discussed?

Increase Arts Council presence

- The Arts Council should work with all the Chambers.
- The NC Arts Council isn't known here. People don't understand why the arts are important.
- We should ask what we have now that brings people here and do more of that.

Increase arts-related events

- Macon County could do a mega-arts fair, like the Farrington Festival. A town/place can become known for it.
- We should do gallery crawls, give away maps of galleries. There are assets we should understand and exploit. Pair traditional arts and crafts with more contemporary work. Do social events in the two towns on the two Main Streets.

Become advocates for the arts

- We look forward to being a player in this.
- The big question – unanswered – is how do we bring awareness, care, and action to the “red counties” so they address and invest in arts, heritage, and culture and use them as leverage for other community improvements?

Recognizing and honoring history and traditional heritage and culture

- The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian is a tremendous asset and many people don't understand that. The Museum of the Cherokee Indian is ready to help. ALL people in the County should be included.
- Don't separate indigenous art forms from other types – they should be on equal footing. Cowee School is a resource and we are always open to new opportunities.

Honor our differences

- We don't want a cookie cutter Arts Council.

Tie together Macon County communities through the arts

- The main thing: People community hop. We do have some moving parts going. Now is when we need to expand and differentiate. We have a lot of work to do to improve our community and live up to our potential. The arts can bring the next level of community. When a community does well, it lifts all boats. Business people should be passionate about the arts and community. Innovation Brewery in Sylva is a great example of a business that supports the arts. You can't replicate this and so it becomes what is unique and special about a community. For a viable community, the arts are key.

- Keep the corridor from Cherokee through Franklin, along the Little Tennessee River, a focus. Make revitalizing downtown Franklin a priority. If downtown is looking successful, others key from it. The Main Street program in Franklin died about two years ago. Killed by old community leadership. It must be revived.
- Be more inclusive of people and work through community partnerships.

Potential and constrictions

- We've got a lot of potential and important projects that folks want to do – Nikwasi – Cherokee Cultural & Heritage Corridor, Women's History Trail, public art, the Cowee historic corridor, and more. There's competition between the County and the Town of Franklin and this affects our ability to complete projects. We must look at the big picture, get things done, and use a more sophisticated approach for economic development.

Thank you

- We are so glad you are looking at our arts profile. Thank you.
- We appreciate the NCAC's attention, due diligence, and support. Kudos to you.

The Listening Sessions

The assessment included listening sessions, or focus groups, organized by interests to include more voices and perspectives and to profit from group interaction and dialogue. Four listening sessions were conducted from April 18 through April 25, 2017. A total of 25 people participated (including the hosts who helped with each of the sessions). Leslie Anderson facilitated each session using the same format and questions.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u># of Participants</u>
Literary Artists	Franklin	April 18	5
Visual Artists	Franklin	April 18	8
Performing Artists	Franklin	April 19	2
Artists	Highlands	April 25	9

Questions used in the listening sessions are as follows:

1. Please list the three (3) strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County.
2. Tell us what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.
3. Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with "1" being the highest priority function.
4. How do you think Macon County could benefit if it was known for its arts, heritage, and culture?
5. What art, heritage, and cultural opportunities would you like to see improved, expanded, or created in Macon County?
6. What do you believe are the challenges for a strong Arts Council in Macon County?
7. Is there something else you like to say that you haven't had a chance to yet?

Unlike the interviews, the listening sessions included the question: *Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with “1” being the highest priority function.* Participants were given a form to rank seven functions of an Arts Council. The aggregated findings are as follows



- Interestingly, all four groups ranked “Attract Tourists” as the lowest choice by far of the seven choices.

Aggregated Data from Four Listening Sessions

April 18-25, 2017

25 Participants

Group Name: Literary Artists, Franklin	Date: April 18, 2017
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N = 6

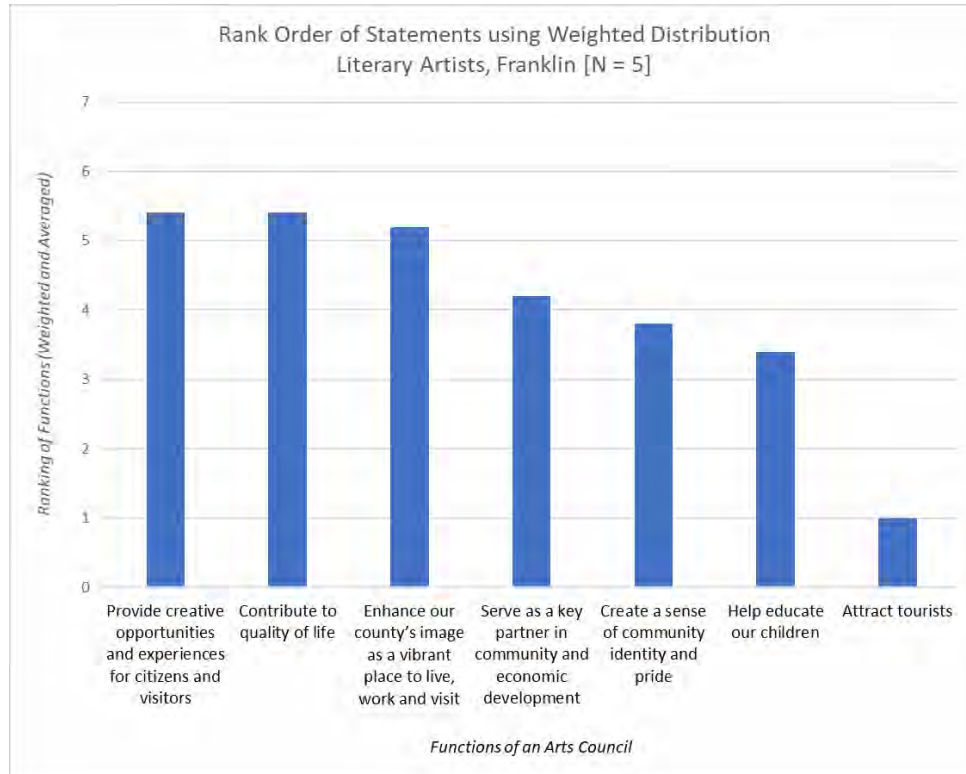
1. *Please list the three (3) strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County.*

- Cowee School – Heritage School
- Macon County Historical Society
- Scottish Tartans Museum
- The Bascom
- Macon County Public Library
- Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts
- Arts Gallery in town
- The Mountains – biological diversity
- Natural beauty (streams, forests, farmland)
- Widely ranging “individual” artists, e.g. Jonathan Williams, Justin Moe, Potters
- Agricultural heritage
- Cultural History (Cherokee, William Bartram, Cowee National Historic District)

2. *Tell us what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.*

- Next to nothing.
- No one seems to care.
- Jackson and Lenior County Councils are much more active.
- No literary focus now.
- Previously they produced a publication, *Wayah Review* that was excellent.
- Grassroots arts grants.

3. Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with "1" being the highest priority function.



Additional functions provided:

- Promote community artists
 - Promote local artists
 - Building a creative community
 - Promote local artists when possible
 - Well-being of artists *ala Nuci's* Space in Athens
 - Promote artists and create arts community
4. How do you think Macon County could benefit if it was known for its arts, heritage, and culture?
- It's better than other attractions or some industries. It isn't a pollutant.
 - Attracts tourists with money.
 - Brings a different demographic.
 - Hiker versus arts visitors. Arts visitors spend more.
 - Are potters benefiting from pubs and beer?
 - They attract residents.
 - Gives joy, feelings of vibrancy. It's transformative, uplifting.
 - If we were known for the arts it would bring professional staffing and give backbone to the arts.

5. *What art, heritage, and cultural opportunities would you like to see improved, expanded, or created in Macon County?*

- More and better venues for arts, music, drama, etc.
- To keep it brief, I'll focus on one aspect: the creation and fostering of an arts/greenway/cultural district in the heart of town and extending into the county. Arts studios, open to the public, rented to artists along the greenway in downtown, subsidy for affordability like our incubator in Industrial Park. The studios could be mixed in with emphasis on historical sites for the Cherokee near the river in downtown and extend into Macon County.
- Create a venue alternative for performers, artists, writers (Rickman Store, etc.) – not Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.
- Open air exhibits for artist.
- Incubator for artists.
- Have local artists promoted in local businesses and at festivals.
- Create an artist-in-residence program at Cowee School or Rickman Store.
- Have Macon County Arts Council hold monthly meetings and promote local artists, with local programs. Become more visible.
- Arts Council coordinates with local businesses to hang temporary art shows.
- Host exhibitions, performances.
- Opportunities for poets to create and perform.
- More settings for connecting varied music/artists throughout the year; especially winter when local folk need joy.
- Help for funding a market for artists' works.
- Public art.
- An effort to have more public art all over town.
- Commissioners and town create visual arts space downtown with art installations and murals.
- A literary journal similar to old *Wayah Review*.
- Writers' roundtables and workshops.
- More exchanges of artists from other areas with our county.
- A better support group for writers where learning would be a priority.
- Creation of Women's History Trail now in its infancy.
- Carry Nikwasi-Cowee corridor through with county and town investments. Install more interpretive kiosks along Hwy 28.
- Someone had the idea we could have a "queer" trail counterpoint with "quilt".
- Recognition of artists past and present.
- Endow the projects of local artists.
- Bring national/international artists to Macon County, perhaps exchange program?
- Collaborate with land conservation organizations.
- Integrate arts with racial/ethnic diversity!
- We need more gay people; we need to attract more artists!!!
- Replace all of our county commissioners with artists and writers.

6. *What do you believe are the challenges for a strong Arts Council in Macon County?*
 - Money, money, money will come if potential donors think a plan will be worked successfully and their money spent wisely.
 - Attracting leadership – artists who can lead or leaders/professionals who also have deep appreciation for the arts.
 - Time – willingness from lots of folks to contribute.

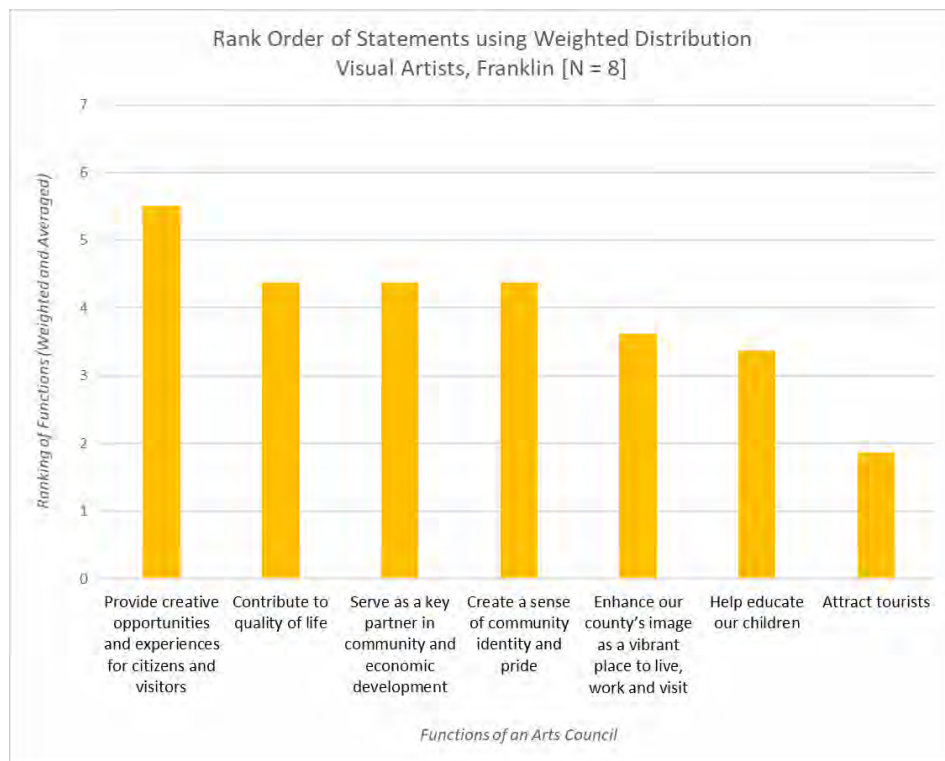
7. *Is there something else you like to say that you haven't had a chance to yet?*
 - Please let the future Arts Council provide for nontraditional (as well as traditional, heritage arts).
 - Enough freaking bluegrass.
 - Foster originality.
 - We have at present a totally nonfunctioning Arts Council that has been wasting taxpayer money for years.
 - I would like to see a new rejuvenated Arts Council that serves Macon artists in a satisfactory way.
 - We have an Arts Council? Interesting. Want to see a literary component, please.

Group Name: Visual Artists, Franklin	Date: April 18, 2017
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N = 8

1. *Please list the three (3) strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County.*
 - Heritage Day.
 - Airing of the Quilts.
 - Cowee School.
 - Picking on the Square.
 - Macon County Art Association.
 - I honestly do not know what the three strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County are.
 - Pumpkin Fest.
 - A preponderance of disconnected artists.
 - Visual arts including: graphics; painting; sculpture.
 - Performing arts: local Arts Council musicals, etc.; Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.
 - Cherokee Tribal heritage and early settlers.

2. *Tell us what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.*
- I'm not familiar.
 - They only focus on music.
 - They have a strong bias for the performing arts and music. Bobbie has been in leadership position for 17± years.
 - They put on some nice shows - especially of late – music and sculpture, for example.
 - No artist directory.
 - Seem focused on past and not open to new ideas and concepts – need a broader spectrum.
 - Incestuous Board; new blood needed.
 - They don't operate in the sunshine: The board does not meet in public place. Folk who are not on the Board are not welcome at meetings.
3. *Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with "1" being the highest priority function.*



4. *How do you think Macon County could benefit if it was known for its arts, heritage, and culture?*

- It would bring in more revenue and resources: Quilting is an example (Heritage Arts).
- More tax revenue.
- More restaurants, better hours.
- More jobs and industry.
- Would draw more and younger people.
- It would give more reasons for people to come to Macon County.
- Attracting more arts and more diverse artists.
- Increased sense of pride and support for new ideas and venues for them.
- Building of respect for cultural resources, *i.e.*, sacred mounds.
- Would improve community appearance, architecture, and visual impression.
- Help to preserve historical assets.

5. *What arts, heritage, and cultural opportunities would you like to see improved, expanded, or created in Macon County?*

- More support for visual arts.
- Artist grants.
- Get the Town and County to work better together on how they spend money for programs in the area.
- More opportunities for new ideas.
- Follow-up on open forums (in the past ideas were shared; then little done to implement).
- Business incubators.
- That artists be encouraged to experiment with mediums that are not usual or familiar.
- Consistent appreciation/support for our cultural heritage.
- Town and county working together to create/promote art/cultural/heritage opportunities.
- More studies on early years (settlement, Cherokee, etc.).
- Heritage – not sure. It seems to be covered here.
- More programs on history of the area.
- Welcome support for young artists.
- More visual arts programs for children.
- More educational opportunities in the visual arts for all ages.
- Attract young artists.
- Let school kids attend the fair and programs that will improve their education.
- Public art.
- More public art → murals, sculpture, installations, etc.
- A visual arts venue.

- Studio tours.
- Public venues.
- Cultural – performance space for music, film, dance, plays, etc.
- Create studio space.
- Art residency support.
- Advertising.
- Artist directory.
- Macon County Arts Council should better utilize its website and social media to reach out, inform, and engage.
- Expand the visual arts to include all types of art, from realism to pure abstract. Artists should let his/her inner spirit drive the art (not photos).
- Integrated arts – all art for all people.
- Partnership with Macon County Art Association.
- Arts Council needs to be “consortia of consortia”.
- Stop paving and damage to historical sites.
- Artists donate their talents for community improvement projects.
- Creating an atmosphere and opportunities include those who cannot afford to take lessons, buy supplies.

6. *What do you believe are the challenges for a strong Arts Council in Macon County?*

- Stronger support from towns, county, and state.
- Providing enough diverse programming to inspire caring and interest in the arts.
- Getting and keeping donors, especially compared to other Arts Councils.
- Of the funds from the Grassroots Arts grant, they spend only 10% on grants to others; they use balance for their programs.
- Move out the current Board; change leadership; and then have a high performing Board; change governance practices.
- Problem with term limits of Board members. They stay on the Board too long.

7. *Is there something else you like to say that you haven't had a chance to yet?*

N/A

N = 2

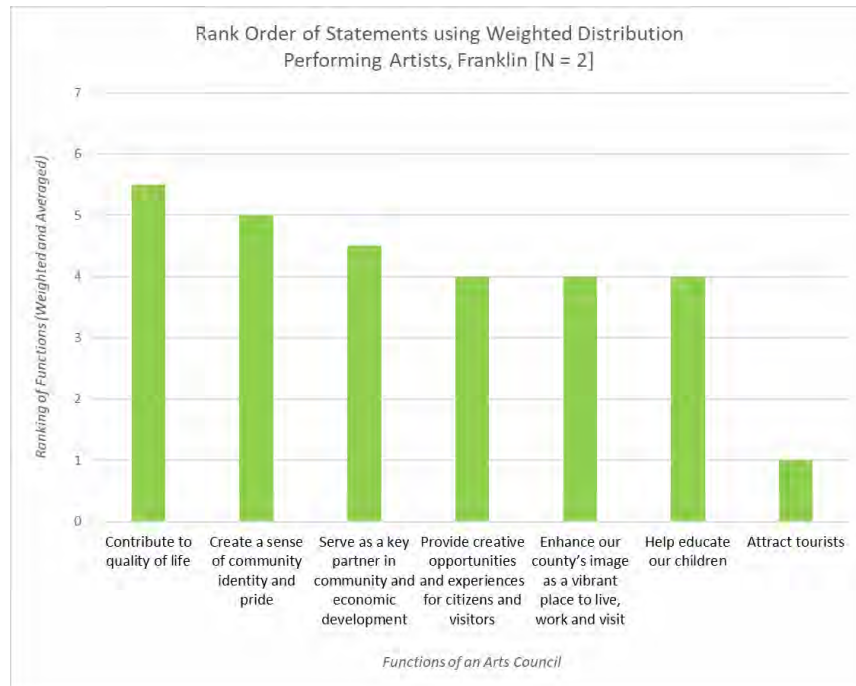
1. *Please list the three (3) strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County.*

- Community pride.
- Inspiring natural beauty.
- Landscape.
- Genuine desire for an “arts community”.
- Appalachian culture: traditional arts.
- Native American culture.
- Music.

2. *Tell us what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.*

- I know nothing.
- It would never occur to me to go to Highlands for arts offerings.
- Visiting artists.
- Head Start – sent 12 artists in schools.
- Arts Saturdays for kids.
- Regranting of Grassroots Arts Funds.
- Awarding of one \$1,000 scholarship each year for a high school student going into the arts.

3. Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with “1” being the highest priority function.



4. How do you think Macon County could benefit if it was known for its arts, heritage, and culture?

- I believe it has that reputation.
- Expose residents to artists who are excellent in their field/medium/reputation.
- Provide opportunities for families to have arts experiences together.

5. What arts, heritage, and cultural opportunities would you like to see improved, expanded, or created in Macon County?

- Consolidation of resources.
- Guidance in securing funding, grants, revenue sources.
- Board leadership/guidance/development.

6. What do you believe are the challenges for a strong Arts Council in Macon County?

- Not everyone values art – convincing people that art matters.

7. Is there something else you like to say that you haven't had a chance to yet?

- I would like resources to help my organization develop sustainable programming and finances.

N = 9

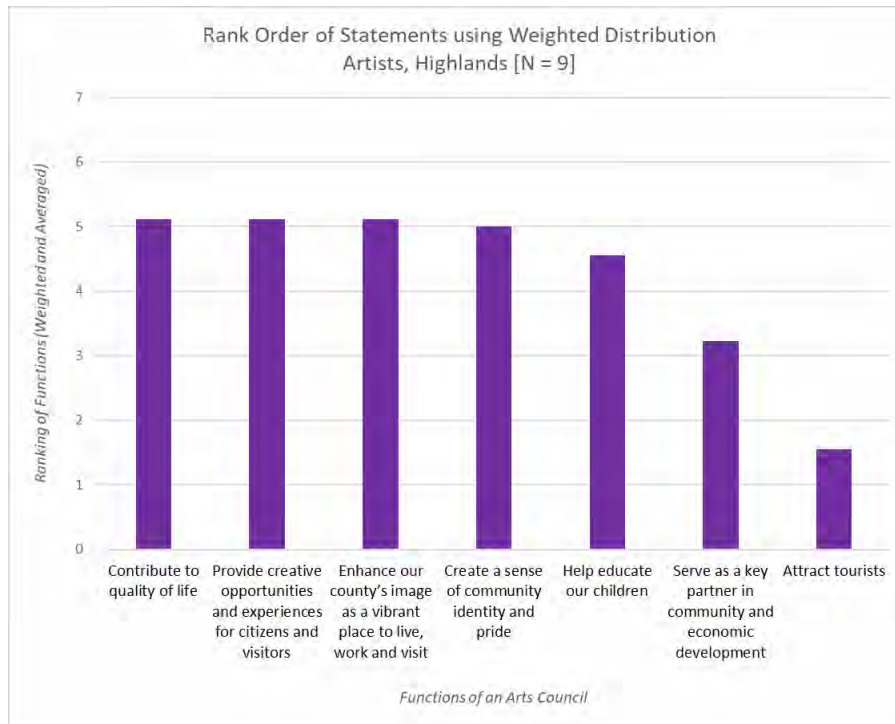
1. *Please list on a sticky note, the three (3) strongest arts, heritage, and cultural assets in Macon County.*

- Bascom. (And visual arts.)
- Western Carolina University.
- Highlands Performing Arts Center. (And music.)
- Cherokee Indian Heritage.
- Multicultural heritage.
- Mainspring – Franklin.
- Highlands Biological Station.
- Biological Station – Environmental and natural heritage.
- Log homes – authentic and old buildings and homes.
- Local music.
- The chamber music series.
- Art visually, music, theater.
- Nature – inspirational.
- Historical heritage.
- Unique influx of people moving here with experience from other areas.

2. *Tell us what you know about the Macon County Arts Council and its current programs.*

- I don't know anything.
- Adults and children with visual arts.
- Summer camp arts program.
- Veteran portraits.
- Confusion as to identity and role with Macon County Arts Association.
- Grants made from contribution from Highlands Arts league.
- Cullowhee Mountain Arts – grants to teachers and Jackson County (?) visual arts.

3. *Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with "1" being the highest priority function.*



Additional functions provided:

- Develop awareness of challenges to artistic and cultural venues and assist to resolve those challenges – and issues.

4. *How do you think Macon County could benefit if it was known for its arts, heritage, and culture?*

- Culturally rich clientele and environment.
- Might bring younger demographic as residents.
- Political realities – county commission districts.
- Tourism and economy.
- Artists attract other artists.
- Highlands base and recognition is place from which to build.
- Natural beauty is an attraction and brings artists.
- If Franklin and Highlands could attract audiences and artists to one another's events, it could bridge the Gorge Road.
- Perception of Franklin and Highlands by each community could change. We assume Franklin's perception is: Highlands should do their own thing, not expect help from other parts of county and contribute to Franklin's needs.

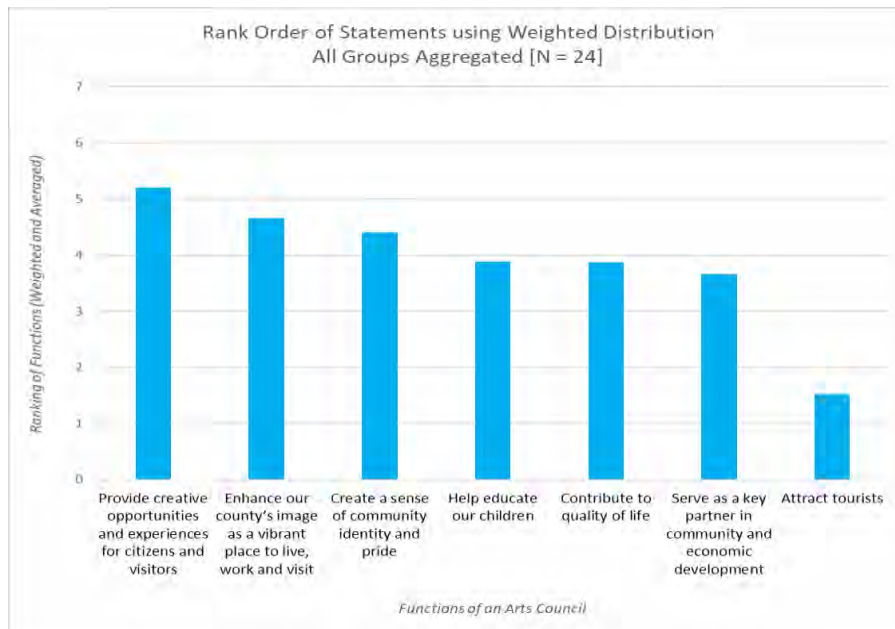
5. *What arts, heritage, and cultural opportunities would you like to see improved, expanded, or created in Macon County?*

- All in Highlands:
 - Open gallery for artists in Macon County.
 - Street artists OK.
 - Murals on buildings OK.
 - Music festival for singer/songwriters in Highlands and Franklin (same week).
 - Artist co-ops for marketing for nonprofessional artists.
 - Beyond outdoor seasonal shows.
- More local artist support by holding: exhibitions, art walks, workshops for young artists.
- Interactive artworks/workshops.
- Exhibitions at the local café.
- More opportunities for visual artists to exhibit and become a viable part of the county's economy.
- Exchange artists, musicians, dancers from other parts of the country and world.
- Offering opportunities for an exchange student-type situation.
- Grants for "importing" artists (artists' residencies with community engagement).
- Busses or several busses to transport people from one town to the other for productions.
- More exposure of our beautiful landscape and people through social media to bring young artists and visitors to us.
- Promote arts as quality-of-life issue by connecting the arts with the Macon County Economic Development Commission.
- Solidify and promote all the county's arts assets:
 - Organizations.
 - Education opportunities.
 - Artists.
- Get teachers of arts together for program planning, staffing.
- Arts and outdoors educational initiatives.
- Art outreach to struggling public schools (STEAM).
- Perhaps a festival of the arts for Macon County. Reference – other counties or towns, Spoleto in Charleston in a small way.
- A countywide emphasis on the arts.
- Public art initiatives (outdoor/indoor).
- Beautification projects countywide.
- Scholarship funds for participation in visual/performance arts (classes, concerts, theater).
- Grants for local artists.

6. *What do you believe are the challenges for a strong Arts Council in Macon County?*
- Bridging the Gorge – socio-economic, geographical.
 - Transportation to arts offerings – building audiences.
 - Hold some of their Council meetings and events in Highlands and vice versa.
 - Having representation on the Arts Council Board from across county.
 - Communication across the county for artists.
 - Sharing resources and support with arts organizations.
 - Pull folk together to have a countywide festival.
 - Highlands has ordinances against some types of arts’ expression.
 - Could move into vacant buildings – use space for different kinds of art, studios, “pop-up” art.
 - Raising funds (should benefit all organizations).
 - Being a welcoming and engaged umbrella-type organization for all types of people and organizations interested in or related to arts, culture, and heritage.
 - Some people do not value prioritizing the arts in education.
7. *Is there something else you like to say that you haven’t had a chance to yet?*
N/A

Rank Order of All Groups Combined
N = 24

Many communities have had great success using arts, heritage, and culture to attract visitors and recruit talent and investment to their county. Do you think Arts Councils can assist in building this type of economy? Rank order ALL the following statements, 1 through 7, with “1” being the highest priority function.



Public Survey

A public survey was launched in April 2017 to gather information from the wider community about the arts. The steering committee connected with a wide variety of local partners to promote participation in the survey, including the Cowee School, Mainspring Conservation Trust, The Bascom Center for Visual Art, Macon County Economic Development, the Franklin Chamber of Commerce, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Macon County Art Association and the Macon County Library. Overall 102 people participated in the survey. Forty five percent of respondents identified themselves as artists, and an additional 41 percent identified themselves as arts appreciators – donors, collectors or participants in arts events. The demographic breakdown of respondents matches that of Macon County, with 91 percent of the respondents identifying themselves as Caucasian. The largest percentage of participants in the survey were females in the 56 and older age range. Most the respondents, 87 percent, were full-time residents of the County as opposed to seasonal residents. Sixty eight percent were from Franklin, but Highlands was also represented with 11 percent of the participants. The remaining 21 percent were from other locations in the County.

Questions asked in the survey were:

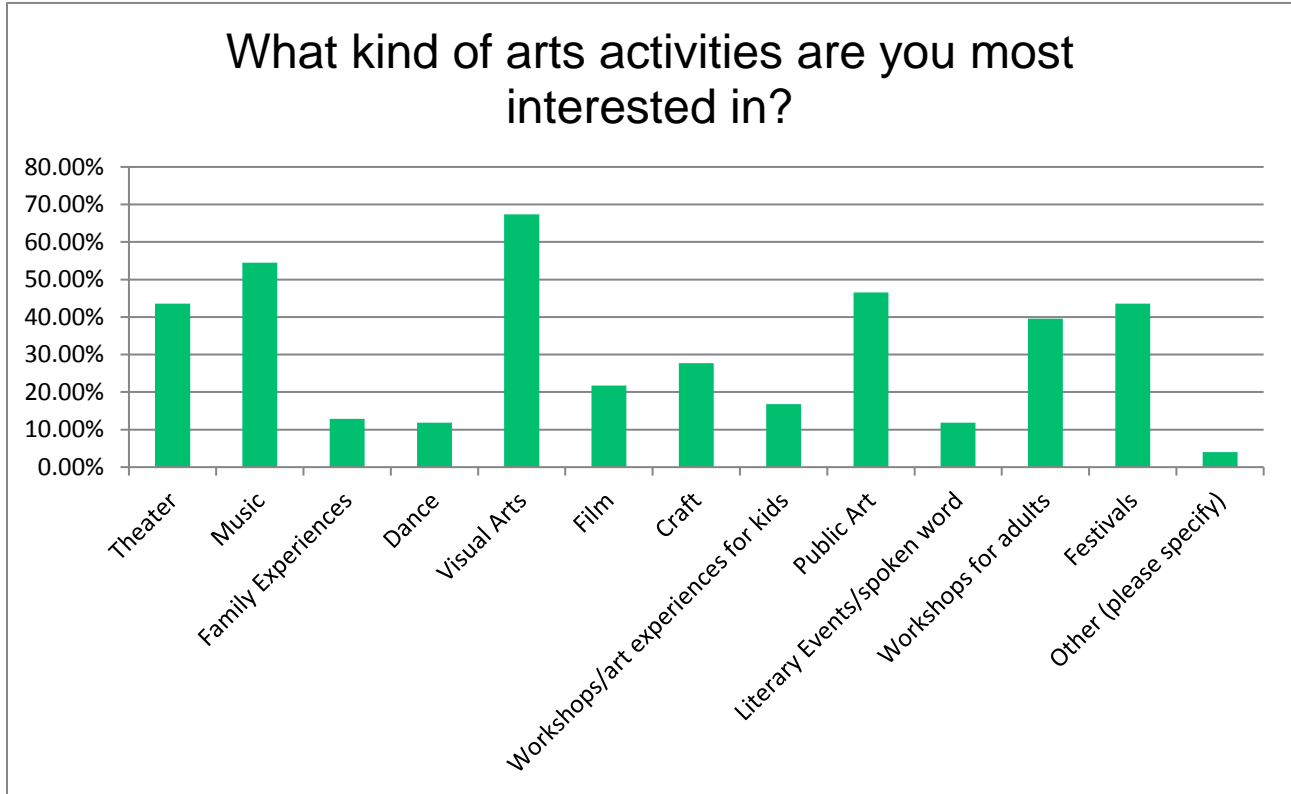
1. Which of the following identify you?
2. What kind of arts activities are you most interested in?
3. What do you personally value the most about arts in Macon County?
4. How do you believe the arts can benefit Macon County? Rank from 1-7 with “1” being the highest and “7” being lowest.
5. What do you think are the strongest arts assets and traditions in Macon County?
6. What arts opportunities would you like to see created or expanded in Macon County?
7. How do you think the arts could benefit the youth of Macon County?
8. What do you believe the challenges are for having a strong arts council in Macon County?
9. Prioritize the functions of an arts council for Macon County from 1-5 with “1” being highest and “5” being lowest.

Five demographic questions were also included:

10. Are you a seasonal visitor or full-time resident of Macon County?
11. Where in Macon County do you reside?
12. What is your age?
13. Are you male or female?
14. Please specify your race/ethnicity.

Aggregated Data from the Survey

Question 2: What kind of arts activities are you most interested in?



Other (please specify)

- Art that doesn't depend on tax dollars
- Heritage events
- Visiting Artists in the Schools
- Photography

Question 3: What do you personally value most about the arts in Macon County?

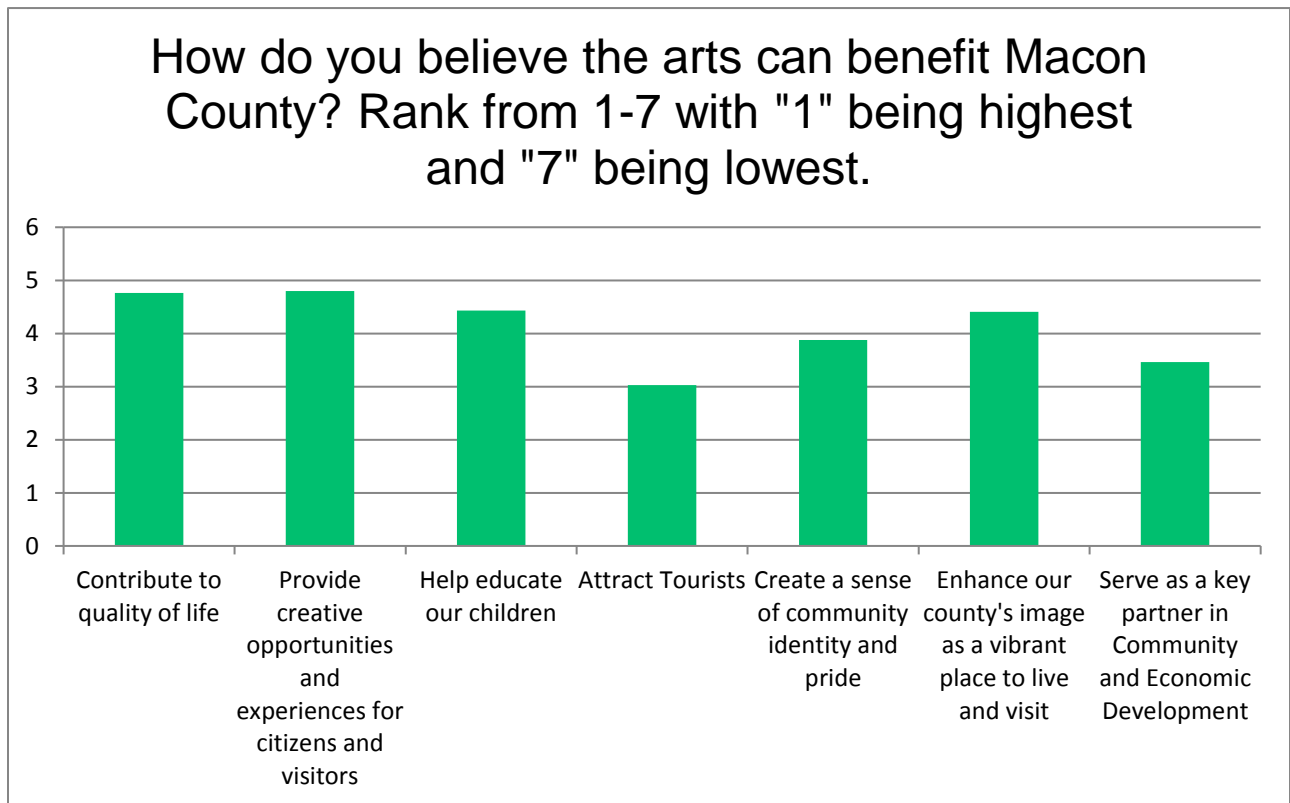
- Getting to meet all the talented people in our community and the fact that we don't have to travel distances to be involved in the arts!
- Accessibility
- The availability
- The expression and beauty of individual interpretation of music and art.
- I enjoy the opportunity to appreciate the many expressions that the "Macon County" arts offer!
- Local value
- I don't see it anywhere
- Creativity
- I feel we could truly use new people to help promote our art community. We, in Macon County, are surrounded by some of the most beautiful and interesting places in our country and by having a strong group leading the way to "sell," this could be one of our most beneficial qualities. Therefore, we could bring in more revenue.
- We have a performing arts center.
- It brings opportunities not usually found in our small town.
- A growing community of artists.
- Growing interest and opportunities! Crucial to tourism.
- Having a presence in our town
- The diversity of programs and galleries that we have. Plus, the availability of classes and opportunities to attend performances of all genres.
- Diverse mediums reprinting all forms of arts.
- This survey might be the greatest step toward having arts appreciation in Macon. Thanks for starting the much-needed dialogue.
- Constant activity for someone.
- I enjoy the promotion of heritage arts and bringing artists into the area that provide some diversity (especially different kinds of music) I love bluegrass but enjoy hearing different music, too
- I'm still waiting to see original art and not just crafts/derivative arts/crafts/music get a turn. When the council sponsors music events, they are either Classical (safe) in nature, or outright karaoke cover band types of performances. They love the quilts and pottery too. The organization seems very backwards looking, which doesn't make sense in a town who's culture up until very recently had been based in utility. Just look at the architecture and you'll see evidence of that. Time to start looking forward. That doesn't mean discard the past, but focus more energy and resources on new ideas.
- The diversity
- It's commitment to the children and young people of our community. I appreciate how the Arts Council participate in events that teach people the arts of our past.
- The arts in Macon County round out our lives. They also highlight our culture. It is important to have opportunities to view and share art.
- The ability to have local events

- We have been working hard on the Founders Park in Highlands to make it visually pleasing
- That it's there!
- Historical museum
- Untapped potential
- I feel like there is little to value. Need more public art along corridors and in downtowns.
- Diversity
- Bringing cultural experiences to children in Macon County to enrich their lives forever.
- As a parent, I appreciate the opportunity the arts in Macon County provide my daughter to experience a wide range of activities.
- Sorely lacking in public art.
- Burgeoning local music scene but a long way to go
- Highlands is diverse and features many different types of Artistic talent. I find Franklin to focus only in Christian-oriented Arts. Kinda weak and lacks diversity. All in all Macon County has a lot to offer.
- Our geographic area has dictated some art forms that are particular to this region. These arts began as necessary day to day living needs. I want to see our mountain art forms survive, while introducing and keeping our young people aware of artworks in other regions and countries.
- Variety of artist they bring into the community.
- We still have art teachers in our schools to provide quality programs for our children.
- The county seems to admire and support all aspects of the arts more so than most counties in the area
- The Arts help bridge the gap between cultures and age groups while bringing to light the creativity within us all as humans. I love to see our community members shine and the pride upon the realization that they are valued for their creativity.
- Well, that's difficult as the ability to exhibit indoors vs outdoors is non-existent and getting the traffic needed for sales is very difficult.
- Having the local Art Association and the local theater - Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts.
- The opportunity offered artists by the Macon County Art Association and the Uptown Gallery
- I enjoy the diversity of activities, the keeping of the mountain culture while accepting new ideas allowing artists to create all types of work.
- We have a wonderful community of artists of all types.
- Not much - there is very little.
- We have a large number of artists in our area who are benefitted classes, workshops and other opportunities to participate in the arts.
- Have not lived here long. There seems to be many artists, including myself, that would like to see a more cohesive arts council.
- Absolutely nothing! The Macon County Arts Council has done nothing of substance for the community.
- The diversity of the many talented artists, both visual and performing.

- Places to go things to do
- The Arts Council should bring diverse arts opportunities to our area. It seems the most they do is to have face painting, hula hooping, on a Saturday morning for children. Then unusual music is performed by the leader! Even though it is free, the event is poorly attended. It's amazing how often golden opportunities are ignored. We have talented people in Macon County who are willing to promote, work for our county. Many folks - young and old - have few art outlets and our council should not forget the people who need the arts the most. We shouldn't forget the population who cannot afford theater tickets.
- Support for visual arts by the art association.
- I'm not sure we have much in the way of arts in Macon County. It's mostly crafts, bluegrass, and folk type festivals. I do value the other types of artists I know here, who think beyond tradition.
- The ability to bring the arts and crafts to the community through performances, galleries, and festivals
- Love the art festivals and all the exhibits at the Bascom!
- I think it's nice that there is an association working to help promote the arts here more.
- Opportunities for students to participate in enrichment.
- The diversity. Seeing Macon County work together as a unified, culturally rich part of the state.
- Sense of community
- Create a much needed and diverse environment
- Opportunities offered by The Bascom, Smoky Mountain Theater, Cowee School, Macon County Public Library
- It is still in the needy stage.
- The Highlands/Cashiers Art League which offers opportunity to show to both Adults and children. The Highlands/Cashiers Art League offers opportunity to show to Artists and works with the children in the summer to enjoy art.
- Not much
- The number of talented artists in our community and the many non-artists that appreciate art and contribute to the arts.
- It's different than what I experience in palm beach Florida
- Abundant organizations and opportunities
- Having the Uptown Gallery that supports my art and has made visual art and art classes possible in Franklin for over 50 years.
- I love every community event that showcases the arts be they paintings, music, dance, parks and beautification projects.
- The art scene.
- A venue for artists of all skill levels.
- The talent that is available locally.
- Uptown Gallery

- Opportunities to learn new art skills
- Opportunities to participate in classes and exhibits.
- It is growing.
- The opportunity to make people aware of all the local talent in Macon County.

Question 4: How do you believe the arts can benefit Macon County? Rank from 1-7 with "1" being highest and "7" being lowest.



Question 5: What do you think are the strongest arts assets and traditions in Macon County?

- Music and folk traditions
- Bobbi Contino
- Natural (nature) beauty that help inspire the expression of artistic talents.
- The opportunity for local artisans to share their work.
- Gems
- The outdoors
- Uptown Gallery and other creative businesses
- Our community. The place we leave. It is art in its self!
- Heritage arts and crafts
- Folk Festival and Scottish Festival. Also the Arts Council and their programs.
- The Macon Count Art Association, the Cowee Pottery School, and The Bascom
- All of the answers to question 4 above deserve a 1. Strongest assets: Performing Arts Center, Bascom, water activities, greenway.
- Great tradition of handicrafts in the Appalachian region
- Art Council and the Smoky mountain performing arts center
- Galleries, programs, community involvement
- Franklin Area Folk Festival, Arts programs in the schools, theater and music, Cowee Arts and Heritage Center offerings
- Theatre. Not much else. Graffiti under the bridge at industrial park
- Pickin on the Square -
- Cowee school and heritage center
- Smoky mountain performing arts
- I see mainly craft promoted, not art.
- Expose all Maconions to varied and different art forms
- Folk festival Christmas activities downtown Pumpkin fest Cowee Christmas Cowee School heritage center
- Festivals, student art shows, County Fair, Pickin' on the Green, Smokey Mountain Center
- Crafts
- The Bascom
- The many artists and crafters living and working in the area.
- Mountain crafts
- Traditional preservation of historic and cultural arts
- The Nikwasi mound
- Appalachian arts and crafts enhanced by cultural diversity, often unrecognized, all in the beautiful mountains and valleys of western North Carolina.
- Scotty Corbin's productions, the presence of Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center, the presence of many local resident artists.
- Good question
- The events and programs at Cowee School.
- Local music talent and artists.

- Appalachian community SHOULD be featured more often. Cherokee participation would also be nice
- As I stated before our physical geography has contributed to many art forms not found other places.
- The Educators.
- The ability to bring in artist for stage performances AS WELL AS having them in the classroom with the students. They Love this!
- Heritage Arts/Festival, Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, Cowee Cultural Center
- The Smoky Mountain Performing Arts Center
- The local fairs and events.
- Not many!!!
- Cowee School, as well as the Heritage events...pottery, quilting, painting
- Macon County Art Assoc, Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center, Cowee Pottery School, Macon County Arts Council
- The festivals - although that is a weak foundation
- Festivals and art activities
- I can only refer to Franklin. This town could use a first-rate gallery and creative workshops for all ages.
- The County is loaded with artistic talent but the Arts Council is too insular to recognize. The local arts council doesn't seem to know anything about art.
- Quilting and pickin on the green
- Strongest assets I see is the incorporation of Appalachian crafts and history when community art festivals are held especially the seasonal events.
- Heritage festivals
- Festivals
- Our county isn't that large but we have a diverse talented population. Even though the Arts Council contributes very little to our community, we do have a creative town with wonderful happenings. Our town festivals are outstanding. Traditions - old and new - are amazing. Our Folk Festival is another reason to visit our town.
- Uptown Gallery Outlook Theater Company
- Natural beauty, cultural and natural history
- Supporting the culture of the Appalachians, bringing new art and ideas to the area.
- Numerous lectures, exhibits and events at the Bascom.
- I think there are a lot of great painters and potters and photographers in the area.
- performing arts
- Pottery
- The Bascom, The Macon County Arts Association, The Drake Center, The Highlands Theater, PAC, The Chamber Music Festival, The Art League of Highlands-Cashiers, Macon County Schools and Preschools Art, Art Camp at Rec Park, Art Shows
- The programs at the Bascom

- New resident so unsure how many public traditions relate directly to the arts; many are craft related. Many seem to be craft related.
- Literary heritage, craft traditions, traditional mountain music
- Traditions? Arts assets?
- The Highlands/Cashiers Art League, The Bascom, The Macon County Art Association
- I think they are sadly behind the times - the art council does almost nothing to reach out and locate ways to help artists except with what has been done over and over
- The Bascom and its members
- The Bascom
- The Art League of Highlands-Cashiers
- The Macon County Arts Association
- Macon County Art Association and Uptown Gallery
- The Uptown Art Gallery operated by the Macon County Art Association
- Music on the square is well done.
- Inspiration from the environment.
- Uptown Gallery, Festivals displaying arts and crafts. Library supporting the arts.
- Our combined Art Talents
- Macon County Art Association & Overlook Theatre Company
- Festivals

Question 6: What arts opportunities would you like to see created or expanded in Macon County?

- Public art on buildings
- Affordable classes and seminars and having these things advertised well.
- Film festival
- A visit-able venue where artists create - and sell - and visitors can watch/participate and learn
- Formal "art festivals" that include all mediums, music and areas where students school art is displayed.
- Additional opportunities for citizens and visitors to participate in the arts via workshops and classes.
- Not sure
- None
- Art exhibits, sculptures in green spaces
- Unsure
- Bring the Folk Festival back to downtown.
- The Macon County Arts council
- Earlier events at Performing Arts center.
- Theater
- Not sure
- Public art spaces

- More art exhibits, more programs
- Play about Franklin performed throughout the summer, renewal of clogging
- Greenspace art and sculpture in parks and street corners. Designated graffiti walls in hip locations.
- Art in the Garden
- Expand outdoor music entertainment at Cowee school
- More diverse music summer art program for children at Cowee school
- An Arts Council that is open to promoting and funding new ideas.
- Visual Arts that are not just to make money
- Summer workshops designed for children and young adults
- Not sure.
- More Street events
- More art shows and handmade craft events
- Traditional heritage crafts (similar to Maco)
- Sculptures and murals
- More dance and art in schools
- A younger more active visitor could be attracted to the area with more current and popular music concerts.
- More theatre. Some classical music venues.
- I would love to see more theatre (specifically more high-end theatre such as opera).
- Public Art. More art in public education. Expansion and funding of our public library. More attention to art from the county with funding.
- More emphasis on local singer/songwriters beyond the ubiquitous blue grass and gospel (which certainly play important roles)
- More diversity of Arts in Franklin.
- Many of our art forms are being lost. I would like to see more historical research brought back.
- More theater artist come into the schools to work with students.
- More in school classroom involvement
- Arts Programs for children (all ages), Visiting Artists in the Schools on a rotating basis (music, theater, visual), Public Art, more collaboration within existing agencies
- Would like to see an indoor Show for artists that belong to local Art groups. I can think of 2-3 groups that should be included. For example the Macon County Recreation Center. Would also like to see it advertised, banners, signs, etc. Other groups in the area have Shows that are advertised well and have good turnouts.
- Encouraging parents to bring their children to some of the local opportunities.
- Support to expand help in the arts to young adults as well to retirees new to the community
- More public space art such as sculpture or murals, possible art trail or tour(<http://www.lexingtonrockbridgestudiotour.com/>)
- More support for advertising and teaching arts

- Secular performing arts and theater - too much religion in the artists brought in by the Smokey Mountain Performing Arts Center
- Music of a classical origin
- I'd like to see artists groups and local businesses working together. To promote each other.
- Toe River Arts, Winston-Salem, and the Lincoln County Arts Councils could be good models for Macon County.
- Art education in schools
- Visual arts festival, Public art
- I would like to see the Cowee Heritage Arts Center expanded to include more working artist studios and events that showcase the local artists not only in crafts but fine art also. Another beneficial program would be a county wide mural program or to join the Appalachian Mural Trail. The Appalachian Mural Trail Group, located in Jackson County, plans to place and locate historical outdoor murals celebrating our Appalachian heritage within driving distance of the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- More art for children and more emphasis on visual arts
- We should have more musical, theater, etc. events. The Arts Council puts their name on pamphlets advertising a concert, show, library evening and does little to support, work for the event. It is a sad situation!
- Public art in the town e.g. Waynesville Redesign Pickin' on the Square
- Macon County does a good job now, but bringing in new ideas should be encouraged. WCU could probably offer some ideas for new art.
- More varied hands on workshops in rug Hooking.
- Franklin needs to get on the ball with promoting the arts. More festivals are needed to capitalize on the summer visitors. Highlands is blowing Franklin away in this department. Even Dillsboro (Jackson County) is blowing Franklin away with regards to festivals. The only "artsy" festival Franklin has is Pumpkinfest. There needs to be a few more throughout the summer that do not compete on the same weekends as Highlands, Dillsboro, Cashiers, etc. We need to get more people to see Franklin as an arts community with the rest of Macon and the surrounding counties, and not just about gems and Scottish festivals.
- Visual arts
- More afterschool/summer opportunities
- A Macon County Destination Arts Festival, Anything that would provide a bridge between our communities...special invitations, busses for the use of the arts community, classes, etc.
- More programs in more locations
- Increased partnership with visual arts and other organizations
- Classical music performances, visual arts exhibitions, public art
- More opportunity for local artists to show and sell their work in art centers.

- Reach out and locate artists in Macon County - Create a registry that is on line. Link websites of local artists to the Macon County Arts Council. Invite artists who are doing things beyond Macon County to be part of the board of directors. Bring in Fresh ideas. Offer the RAP-G grant in Macon County. Get artists engaged with the Arts Council and send out e-news and opportunities. Invite regional artists to an annual Arts Council board meeting where artists can get to know one another and the board know them. Many of us aren't even interested in being connected because of the lack of vibrancy of the Macon County Arts Council and the seeming disinterest in contemporary art and programs.
- The Bascom
- More exhibitions for local artists
- More Visual art involvement and opportunities for artists to show and sell work. More involvement of businesses in supporting visual arts.
- The Visual Arts, quality theatre, and a musical venue other than bible thumping bias
- I know the downtown gallery struggles for support and needs more members and financial support for rent.
- Festivals/art/music.
- Visual arts
- Interactive opportunities between artists, festivals, events, and education.
- More combined Art Experiences among the different arts in the county. For example, perhaps local Visual Arts displayed at the Cultural Arts Center.
- More variety in music events - add rock-n-roll, classical, reggae, and other types of music instead of all gospel & country.
- More art in public spaces.
- Art/craft classes
- More emphasis on visual arts.

Question 7: How do you think the arts could benefit the youth of Macon County?

- Absolutely. It seems that our schools are lacking things to do with the arts now. I'd love for traditional and non-traditional things to be show to our children. Keeps history alive and allows for children to grown and wonder about traditions elsewhere. Also...you never know what future artist will be inspired.
- Give them a lifelong skill or creative outlet they may not otherwise have an opportunity to develop
- Gives them an outlet for self-expression and ways to develop talents outside of their careers.
- All it takes is one spark for a young person to become a creative genius!
- Education, confidence, belonging.
- It doesn't
- More art exhibits and events

- By teaching our young folks the beauty and value of art we are helping grow the future of our culture. We live in a community that is art, therefore our young people need to know and value these assets they are surrounded by.
- Broaden their horizons and encourage them to develop a hobby and or skill that will last a lifetime.
- The arts help develop creativity and self-confidence and an appreciation of differences.
- Enhance their quality of life, education and personal enrichment.
- Involvement
- Foster creativity
- Creativity and confidence. Collaboration.
- Teach them appreciation for art. Educate them about art. Instill love of art at early age. May be only outlet for them to learn about art.
- Encourage appreciation and understanding of various art mediums, i.e. Music, performance, dance(clogging) Help preserve heritage through education.
- Teach that it is ok to be on the fringe and be non-normal. Sports aren't for everyone. Art gives voice and acceptance to those who need an alternative outlet.
- Give them a self-image of accomplishment
- Teaches them about mountain heritage
- Appreciation for culture
- Stimulates creativity and problem solving
- It will only benefit them if they are exposed to a wide variety of arts and have a say in what they are exposed to first. So far, the Arts Council in Macon County has fallen short in this area.
- Will help kids discover and expand their creative abilities?
- I believe they do benefit our youth but do not have the continuous man power to sustain.
- The arts open the creative outlets for students. They help form thought patterns. They teach students how to think!
- AS we keep losing in school act for the student this might generate a reason for students to do solo projects
- Get them off their cell phones with active participation.
- Give them a sense of pride in their community, and help them to understand how the arts benefits the community and its citizens.
- Expose them to arts that they would normally not experience
- enhancement of creativity
- Education and history
- Can create a hands-on experience to understand the history and cultures of the area, while providing a healthy, creative outlet that opens the doors to opportunity for our youth, whereas at this time the focus is centered on primarily athletics. Not All children and youth are athletic, thus leaving them out.
- The arts provide a tool for young people's expression and build self-confidence which encourages better choices.

- Programs such as the classes the Bascom sponsors are providing needed exposure to the arts.
- Expand horizons
- Art programs are on the chopping blocks in schools every year and will eventually get cut. It will be up to nonprofits to provide education opportunities.
- How could it not benefit our youth? Art is an investment in our youth. Makes them better and all rounded citizens.
- Feed and fuel the imagination, teach respect for diversity and inclusivity, strengthen local roots and understanding with any eye for larger global involvement and participation and leadership in their lifetimes
- Inspires children
- The arts have always been a place where everyone could find a place to find some self-esteem.
- Helping to allow more students the opportunity to participate in the arts, support of current programs
- More arts = more expression and their ability to think and interpret ideas for themselves
- Emphasis on the arts with our youth would bring a lot more pride, value and appreciation for the Arts in our community at large. Helping our teens to see the Arts as a viable economic source within our community would be a major accomplishment.
- Encourage the youth to be expressive, creative, therefore offering a constructive outlet for them.
- Every child should be exposed to the arts
- Through music and art programs not offered by the schools
- Would love to see students bringing art to local restaurants and venues, being submitted to contests, etc. Art, music, science is linked and expand the brain of developing children!
- The arts are the purest form of creativity and creativity is the purest form of growth.
- Arts opportunities enhance a child appreciation for the beauty in the world, its animals, and flowers, changes in the earth through the seasons.
- Give them opportunities to learn more about the arts in school and after school.
- All young people deserve and need creativity in their lives. It leads to a better understanding of our differences.
- A business incubator for young artists.
- Get a better quality of life.
- An activity for all to create and be engaged
- With art programs being cut, arts camps and family programs during schools breaks and the summer would be very beneficial.
- Develop the finer and more sensitive side of our youth. Cultural growth
- We could promote art shows for the students. Whether it is a student exhibition, traveling event or an excellent film about artists, musicians, photographers, art in nature, many opportunities are missed. Nature walks, sketching birds, trees, etc. could be creative, eye-opening event. This shouldn't cost much except for the cost of open,

pencils and paper which I would gladly pay. John Sill, a local bird artist would be a wonderful source.

- Encourage creativity, experimentation, observation, coordination and collaboration.
- give them a reason to stay, help think creatively about their future, help make the world a better place
- Art is creativity. Creativity is required in all walks of life and art lets students know that it is okay to question and go outside of the box.
- Children exposed to the arts at an early age are better learners in all areas.
- Get the arts into schools and it will help to curb the delinquents who have nothing better to do. Give them a purpose in life, show them, and all the kids to utilize their creative talents through art instead of their destructive ones through crime.
- A place where they can experience new arts at a reasonable cost
- Outlet for learning
- By enriching the lives of the students and teaching them lifetime skills; by expanding their creative ability. By opening a new and magical world.
- Education, recreation, community
- Education and participation in the arts that schools no longer provide
- By expanding their imaginations, giving them a stronger aesthetic sense, teaching them new ways to understand the world
- It helps them to have creativity and the thrill of fulfilling the finish of a piece they made. This would apply later to any area of life.
- The arts foster critical and creative thinking. We need much more of that. It opens a young person to idea that may allow a rural student to be able to soar out of their region's status quo.
- The arts benefit every age group. Your education is never complete without exposure to all the arts.
- Get them interested in the arts
- Quality of diversified education. Visual arts are very important in seeing how to do things. Art visually teaches history, math and other disciplines.
- It could help youth develop a sense of pride in their culture
- Send real artists into the schools. I know the gallery has programs for kids, but the public school kids are not able to attend during the day, only those kids that are home schooled.
- Inspiring individual thoughts/actions/ideas.
- Uptown gallery offers classes to youth who are the future. School budgets tend to cut the arts first.
- More classes and shows directed specifically at students to encourage young artists to pursue their talents.
- Art education as part of school curriculum at all levels is essential. Expanded creative thinking benefits us in all fields of endeavor.
- well rounding support and discovery
- Encourage them to pursue a career in the arts.

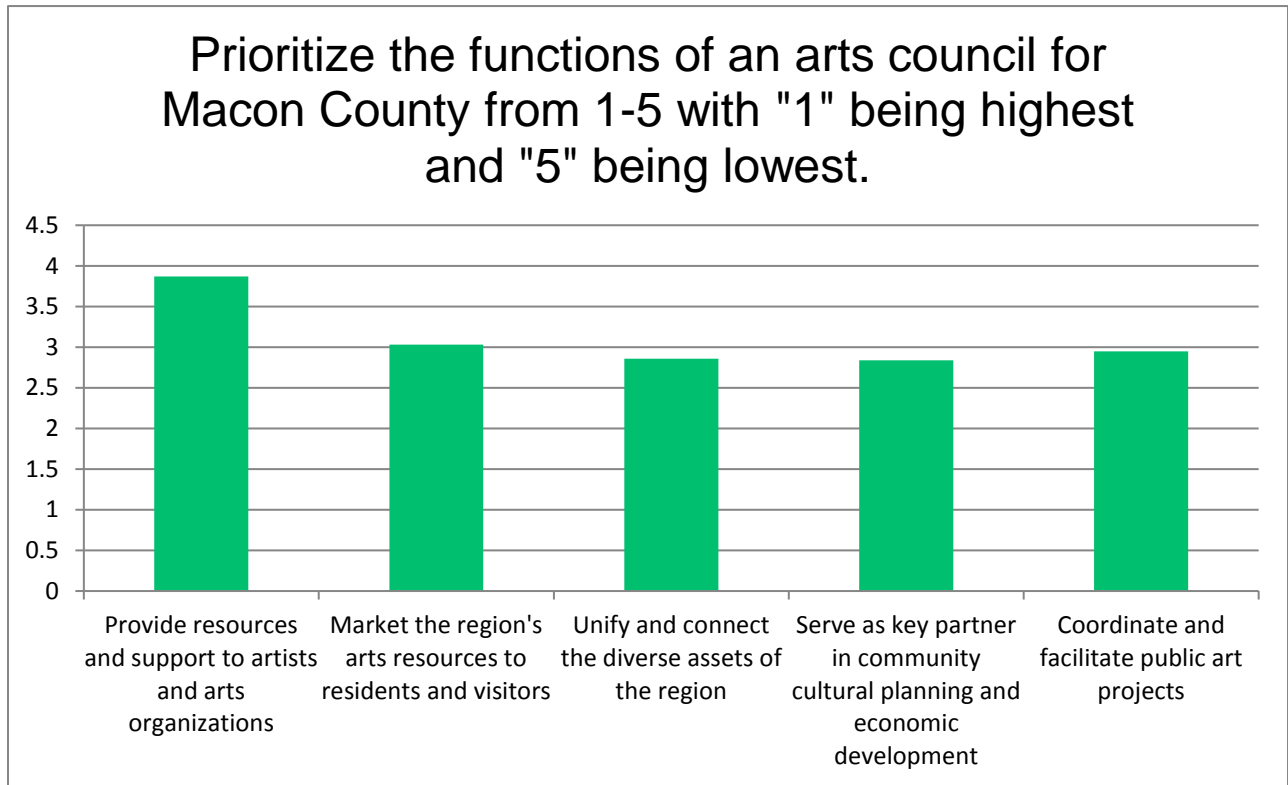
Question 8: What do you believe the challenges are for having a strong arts council in Macon County?

- Money and people.
- Funding Participation
- A meeting of all minds to forge ahead
- Financial support that is needed.
- The ability to be diverse and relative.
- Time, cost and perceived value.
- Must not be a challenge. I didn't even know the county had an arts council until someone posted about it on Facebook
- Financially
- Lack of art education and appreciation.
- Public support.
- Lack of appreciation by public officials.
- A board who is interested in listening to the community and meeting the articulated needs.
- Politics. Need for more positive promotion in the media.
- Participation
- Funding
- Funding.
- Keeping volunteers involved/interested PR for events Funding for events
- Continued monetary support for programs.
- Arts are not an acceptable creative outlet in many of the community member's eyes. Macon county is filled with conformists and folks who push "weird" under the rug.
- Support with a broader base
- Funding and backing from some of the town's officials
- Money
- Volunteers to help with the events
- Money is one challenge. Another challenge is finding folks to take the lead.
- More staff to generate and monitor projects
- Too many part time residents...
- Need good leadership and an interest in having an arts council by community leaders
- Financing
- Monetary budget
- The art council needs to get out in the public more. Needs to try to reach the non-supporters.
- Civil discourse open to all citizens, parents, grandparents, and our youth themselves on deciding direction of the arts council and programs to be developed.
- Unsure.

- Funding for the arts is not a high priority among the general population.
- Local culture
- Finding the proper funding and volunteers that are both capable and willing to give their time.
- Lack of funding. We spend far more on recreation.
- Limited vision, plus, the Arts Council needs new input and leadership from top to bottom -- put on the same style programs.
- OVERLY Athletic concerns of most Parents.
- Participation.
- Volunteers, time
- Funding---as always
- Creating a more up to date structure and focus is a big challenge.
- There is no co-op for artisans that would bring a better place for tourists and art appreciators to shop.
- Getting more people involved.
- Economic
- Inclusion of different groups and individuals with strengths not currently being utilized. Lots of places have a town or county staff member working in the arts, greenspace and athletics areas, with volunteer committees in each area. Groups would have a designated member of the respective committee (such as each arts group and venue such as Cowee School for Arts; athletics little league coaches and refs for Athletics; greenway, Mainspring, etc. for Greenspace; - Everything gets coordinated and included.
- Expansion into the support of visual arts.
- Lack of unity and poor funding, poor community support
- Money to create art activities
- Having a local government that is willing and able to support an arts council.
- Education and value of the arts
- This area is rich with a diversity of talented professional artists in all the arts. The difficulty is being able to form a data base so they could be contacted and used as a resource for the entire community through the Arts Council.
- cooperation among different groups
- Funding and participation
- FRESH IDEAS! PROFESSIONAL HARD WORKING EMPLOYEES! I am surprised our money allocation wasn't cut years ago! Our art- loving community is an example of why some folks in Washington want to cut money for the Arts Council! Believe me, I'm not one who wants to see our council eliminated but if something isn't changed soon, it sadly should be!
- Structure of Board. Limited understanding of function of arts councils in NC. Limited vision. Not very well known in community. Not supported by industry and business.

- Getting past the conservative stodgy nature of the community, and opening it up to all kinds of artists and people.
- There is never enough money to go around. The money needs to be distributed where it can do the best good. Fund raisers and where to make contributions could be advertised. Money for advertising is always difficult to obtain.
- So many of us are seasonal residents.
- When people think arts in Western NC, they think Highlands, Cashiers, Waynesville. Not Franklin. The challenge is to put Franklin on the map with arts, and not just gems. This needs to change by more festivals concentrating on local artists.
- Financial
- Funding
- Geographical and societal division
- Financial
- limited interest in the arts, seasonal or part time residents who do not participate, lack of community support
- Poor leadership, lack of vision as to what an arts council can/should do
- Historically people in Franklin don't like Highlands enough to cooperate with them in such an endeavor
- Finances
- Finding ways to discover the artists living in the County
- Did not know there was an arts council in Macon County
- Arts council should set up and promote visual art shows. With financial help and working with artists and galleries to bring people to enjoy shows. e.g. Toe River festival that is paid for primarily by their arts councils. The Macon County Arts Council gives zero support to Visual arts in Macon County. It is not dynamic and needs new direction.
- I think towns that become known as art communities draw in business and tourists. The city needs to bring in hanging baskets of flowers and show off the downtown area. Maybe the arts council needs to become more creative and adventurous in its approach to pushing the arts in Franklin.
- Recognition for visual arts.
- Monies from city, county and state grants/funds.
- Deciding who to support.
- Figuring out ways for the cultural arts and visual arts to better join forces to present a more rounded art experience to the public.
- Trying new things instead of just the things that have always been done. Hendersonville, for example, has Friday music events that are rock and roll and bring a younger crowd.
- Financial support and advertising
- Trying to get residents interested and involved.

Question 9: Prioritize the functions of an arts council for Macon County from 1-5 with "1" being highest and "5" being lowest.



Participants in Interviews and Listening Sessions

Adam Kimsey, Town of Franklin

Amanda Sullivan, Old Edwards Inn

Angela Faye Martin, Artist

Anna Norton, Old Edwards Inn

Anne Hyder, Macon County Folk Heritage Association

Barbara Duncan, Museum of the Cherokee Indian

Barbara McRae, Town of Franklin

Ben Laseter, Mainspring Conservation Trust

Bob Kieltyka, Highlands Chamber of Commerce

Bob Scott, Mayor, Town of Franklin

Brent Martin, Alarka Expeditions

Byron Tenesaca, The Bascom, Chulla-Vida.com

Chris Baldwin, Superintendent of Schools

Chris Eichner

Corbin Tucker, The Bascom

Corey McCall, Outdoor 76

Derek Roland, County Manager

George Andrews, Artist

Jann Ramsey, Macon County Arts Council

Jean Blackmer

Jim Tate, County Commissioner

Josh Ward, Manager, Town of Highlands

Justin Moe, Artist

Lance Matzke, Highlands Playhouse

Linda Harbuck, Franklin Chamber of Commerce

Mary Adair Trembley, Performing Arts Center
Mary Ellen Tully, Franklin Garden Club
Monica Collier, Red Press Co., Inc.
Morgan James
Nelson Nichols
Pat Taylor, Mayor, Town of Highlands
Patti Abel, Town of Franklin
Patty Calderone, Art League of Highlands Cashiers
Phil Drake, Drake Enterprises
Richard Delaney, Old Edwards Inn
Ronnie Beale, County Commissioner
Rosemary Stiefel
Sharon Taylor, Mainspring Conservation Trust
Stacy Guffey, Cowee School
Summer Woodward, Town of Franklin
Susan Bauknight, Art League of Highlands Cashiers, The Bascom
Susan Morgan Leveille, The Oaks Gallery
Susan Nastogsic, Susan Elizabeth Interiors
Susan Parrott, Franklin Garden Club
Teresa Bouchonnet, Cowee Textiles
Teresa Osborn, The Bascom