



Arts Engine Strategic Framework

MISSION

Arts Engine, Inc. supports, produces, and distributes independent media of consequence and promotes the use of independent media by advocates, educators and the general public.

HISTORY & PROGRAMS

The current organization known as Arts Engine was co-founded by Katy Chevigny and Julia Pimsleur in 1997 when they formed a partnership to create social-issue documentaries. Eight feature-length documentaries by Arts Engine's production arm, **Big Mouth**, have been created since 1997, winning prestigious awards, and gaining national recognition. In 2000, during the height of the Internet boom, Chevigny and Pimsleur were among the first to realize that social issue filmmaking was taking a dramatic turn. Committed to breaking down traditional hierarchies and status-markers, Arts Engine launched one of the only online commons for filmmakers and activists, called **MediaRights.org**, and created what is now the most comprehensive database of social issue documentaries in the nation, and possibly the world, with over 7,000 films registered and nearly 20,000 members. The success of this site led to the creation of the Youth Media Distribution Initiative (now called **Launchpad**). They also developed and launched the **Media That Matters Film Festival**, one of the first online film festivals, and realized the incredible potential for online showcasing and distribution. Now in its eighth year, the festival reaches hundreds of thousands of people annually and hosts hundreds of internet pages of information with "Take Action Links" on everything from AIDS in Africa, to water rights in Michigan, to the youth vote, LGBT issues, peace and sustainability. **DocuClub**, Arts Engine's most recent addition, is a monthly screening series of works-in-progress documentaries. Arts Engine also serves as a **fiscal sponsor** for independent filmmakers.

CORE VALUES *include...*

- **Creating a More Just World**
- **Empowerment**
- **Creativity and Innovation**
- **Diversity of Voice**
- **Community Building**
- **Collaborative Relationships**

INFLUENTIAL TRENDS in Arts Engine's Operating Environment *include...*

- **Continuous technological change** with multiple media platforms, more people online, and growth of high speed internet

- **The rise of social media** including using social media to influence public policy
- **Documentaries are more popular than ever**; explosion of short-form works
- With affordable tools and accessible technology, **the number of media makers is growing, with more self-distribution**
- Politics is sexy again; the **environment is empowering** for young people
- **Global democracy struggles**: people want their voices heard
- Growing **demand for meaningful experiences** and involvement
- **Partnerships and collaboration** across disciplines and fields
- **Social responsibility** is on the rise, including for profits entering nonprofit marketplace
- **Dynamic vs. static media**: engagement of “the group previously known as the audience”
- Death of the newspaper, **emergence of citizen journalism** movement, and **blurring of boundaries** between journalists, videomakers and filmmakers
- **Information overload**

VALUE PROPOSITION

A value proposition sums up an organization’s distinctive value to its constituents in relation to its competitors within the operating environment/market.

Arts Engine is distinctive as: a trusted source for media makers and online media users; a field leader and innovator with the Media That Matters Film Festival; a boundary spanner of media formats, distribution platforms and social justice movements; and a filmmaker-based organization, known for “walking the talk” based on deep appreciation for the role of media makers in catalyzing social change.

The Arts Engine staff drafted the following proposed value proposition:

Arts Engine: A trusted source for media that matters. We drive change by connecting film, technology and community.

SHARED VISION

The Arts Engine staff and board identified the following as vision elements they would like to see in place in 3 to 5 years...

- **Global Impact and Recognition**: expanded external role for AE as a thought leader in the field with greater recognition of AE as a public media brand
- **Engaged Community**: robust online community, embedded partners, and strategic collaborations with nonprofit, government and private sectors
- **Nurturing Next Generation Media Makers**: amplified focus on educators and activists, including a youth “Media Corps”

- **Enhanced Leadership Culture and Cross-Pollination at the Hive:** staff development, competitive salaries, and greater internal collaboration and integration across AE programs
- **Solid Finances:** a sustainable base and less pressure to move outside AE's focus areas, a thriving online store, and micro-donor finances.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:

The Arts Engine staff and board identified the following as major actions they will take to move toward the vision...

- **Fostering Leadership:** externally w/ expanded roles as field advocates and incubators of grassroots innovation; internally w/ ongoing professional development of staff and a supportive workplace
- **Innovating Through Collaborating:** externally with partnerships that are strategic; internally with inter-department committees aligned with AE's goals,
- **Building our Horn and Touting It!** Clarifying our messages and growing our profile
- **Mastering the Task:** clear articulation of priorities and goals with ongoing attention to planning / re-evaluating
- **Underwriting the Work,** including higher profile partnerships, amplified fundraising and attention to earned income