

September 20, 2021

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Heller An Shapiro  
**RE:** Staff Organizational Review Report

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**Background:**

ArtStream received a four month, no-cost staffing consultation from three students in the Organizational Consulting and Change Leadership program at Georgetown University's School for Continuing Studies.

**Summary:**

The consultants interviewed each staff member and identified six themes. Themes were rated according to the following scale:

Most = 6-7 people mention it by name

Many = 4-5 people mention it by name

Some = 3-4 people mention it by name

- Most staff members are dedicated to and driven by the mission of ArtStream and the positive impact it has on the community.
- Many ArtStream staff mention feeling supported by their colleagues and the Executive Director.
- Many people express being overwhelmed and/or overworked.
- Many staff express a desire for more teambuilding and relationship building.
- Many staff state a need for clarity for processes, policies, and norms.
- Some people have established work/life boundaries.

Two recommendations require Board support:

1. The Executive Director should take the lead in reviewing, updating, and publishing ArtStream's Employee Handbook and the individual position manuals as soon as she is able with the support of the staff and Governing Board.
  - a. Each employee (except the Executive Director) has a position manual. The individual employees are keeping them current.
2. To reach the desired working culture at ArtStream, the Governing Board and staff must commit to prioritizing appropriate staffing needs and resources to meet the growth in programming and new ways of working as a result of the pandemic.

Enc.: Staff Organizational Review Report

# ArtStream ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW REPORT



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# Contents

<b>Summary of Contracting Agreement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Process for Data Collection</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary of the Feedback Meeting</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>6</b>
Bright Spots and Strengths to Build On	6
OCCL Team's Recommendations for ArtStream	7
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>9</b>
Theme Prioritization Vote	9
Padlet Exercise	10

## Summary of Contracting Agreement

This consultancy was aimed at establishing a more robust understanding of ArtStream's culture and developing possible ways to narrow the gap between current and desired future states. Our focus was to create awareness of work and interaction patterns among the seven ArtStream staff members, to elicit recommendations from them on possible paths forward, and to make recommendations based on data collected throughout the consultancy process to help ArtStream further their efforts in reaching their desired culture as an organization.

## Process for Data Collection

The Organizational Consulting and Change Leadership (OCCL) Team from Georgetown University's School for Continuing Studies developed interview questions based on the information gathered in the discovery phase of the consultancy. The interview questions were standardized, meaning the same questions were asked of each interviewee. Each interview was conducted via remote video conferencing and lasted approximately one hour. Information gathered from the interviews was kept confidential, and all quotes used in the analysis were anonymized.

After conducting all interviews, the OCCL Team analyzed the results to identify emergent themes and areas for further discussion. In preparation for ArtStream's team feedback session and discussion, the OCCL Team reviewed the emergent themes with the Executive Director and solicited feedback on the proposed approach for the session.

## Emergent Themes

1. Most staff members are dedicated to and driven by the mission of ArtStream and the positive impact it has on the community.
2. Many ArtStream staff mention feeling supported by their colleagues and the Executive Director.
3. Many staff express a desire for more teambuilding and relationship building.
4. Many staff state a need for clarity for processes, policies, and norms.
5. Some people have established work/life boundaries.
6. Many people express being overwhelmed and/or overworked.

## Summary of the Feedback Meeting

On June 14, 2021, the OCCL Team conducted a feedback meeting with the ArtStream staff members. After stating the objective, the participants engaged in an icebreaker which involved participating in a circle exercise, where participants took turns responding to a prompt in a specific order. Next, the OCCL team presented the emergent themes that were synthesized from document review and interviews.

The group voted on the top themes to focus the remainder of the discussion around. Each participant was awarded three votes and the following themes emerged as the top three items for discussion:

1. Many people express being overwhelmed and/or overworked.
2. Many staff state a need for clarity for processes, policies, and norms.
3. Most staff members are dedicated to and driven by the mission of ArtStream and the positive impact it has on the community.

The full outcome of the vote can be found in the Appendix of this report.

The first two themes generated a lot of energy and discussion. Participants stated a lack of clarity around processes, policies, and norms that exacerbate the sense of being overwhelmed. Lack of clarity and information flow lead to inefficiencies, such as having to ask other people for information and/or having to recreate policies and procedures that may already exist. At the same time, people expressed feeling overworked and overwhelmed by their workload, which in turn leaves no time to document policies and procedures, creating a continuous cycle.

Some of the inefficiencies reported stem from many staff members not having a clear picture of the seasonal and annual cycle of the performing arts programs, as well as not fully understanding all the nuances of the programming side of their work. For example, not all staff members understand what “tech week” entails. Lack of understanding of the annual cycle leads to challenges in efficient planning for workload. Additionally, staff frequently need to switch tasks and shuffle priorities, which negatively affects workflow and leads to frustration for some of the team members.

There is also an opportunity for clarity around roles and responsibilities, especially when it includes new employees and/or redefined responsibilities. This is compounded by the fact that more than half of the team began working at ArtStream remotely since March

2020 when the Covid-19 Pandemic impacted the operations of ArtStream's programming. The newer staff members have not yet developed the institutional knowledge and sense of the annual cycle for programming. These facts contribute to the feeling of unpredictability, frequent priority shifting, and new tasks being added to workloads.

Staff consensus reveals that ArtStream has significantly grown in program offerings, especially during the pandemic, and that the operations have not yet caught up to the changes in customer-facing programming. Several staff members remarked that adding positions, such as an Accounts Receivable staff member and additional program support, will give some relief to the system. It may also provide opportunities to shuffle some responsibilities among staff members.

The staff is waiting to hear if ArtStream's Governing Board will approve these positions. People are eager to refine job descriptions to ensure all positions call for a realistic set of skills and workload. There is a sense that having these new positions filled will allow for tasks that are not currently undertaken, or are not undertaken in a timely manner, to be completed, thus improving the functioning of the organization.

There is a sense of anticipation, excitement, and some anxiety about the impending changes. The expected changes are about the new positions and also about returning to in-person programming post-pandemic. Some staff members acknowledge the toll that the pandemic and the lack of in-person connection have taken on the system, while also recognizing the opportunities that the pandemic created for ArtStream. Some of the programmatic innovations of the last year made ArtStream available to additional demographics that were not part of the system before and it seems that there is funding to continue to support outreach to these communities. The livestreaming of the performances allowed ArtStream to reach a larger and diversified audience of family members who could not have accessed the performances before. These opportunities are both exciting yet challenging, as creating/sustaining hybrid programming may also overextend the human resource capital of ArtStream to further perpetuate the feelings around being overwhelmed.

The dialogue concluded with the staff sharing their personal connection with ArtStream's Mission. These sentiments were echoed in another major theme that arose from the one-on-one interviews:

*Most staff members are dedicated to and driven by the mission of ArtStream and the positive impact it has on the community.*

## Recommendations

### Bright Spots and Strengths to Build On

During the feedback meeting, the staff generated several recommendations based on processes already in place and others that can be created with minimum effort, that will serve as a springboard for more significant and sustained change:

1. **Staff meetings** – The consensus is that staff meetings are helpful and that they can be used for several purposes that address some of the themes raised:
  - a. Educating each other in the roles and responsibilities of the respective positions staff members hold. One option is to dedicate a few minutes in each meeting to highlight a position and do a brief presentation on it, bringing to life the work of each team member.
  - b. Learning more about each person’s “day-in-the-life” may open the door for synergies and collaboration opportunities, as well as mutual support among team members.
  - c. Use a portion of the meeting for a “looking ahead” dashboard. For example, what is happening in the next six-four-two weeks periods to allow people to plan and control their workflow to a larger extent?
2. **Handbooks** - For some positions, handbooks already exist, detailing some policies and procedures, written and maintained by prior staff members. Use some of the slower seasons to update the existing manuals and create new ones, using the existing ones as models.
3. **Calendars** - Annual cycle calendars can be created and updated.
4. **Contacts List** - The “Who-to-Call-for-What” list also exists already and can be updated and disseminated as soon as possible.
5. **Mission Driven** - The staff’s motivation to serve the ArtStream mission and community is a major strength, as it is the engine for the work. Keep the mission at the forefront of decision making.

## OCCL Team's Recommendations for ArtStream

After careful analysis of the discussion, interviews, and documents, the OCCL Team has generated recommendations that can lead to significant and sustained change. Many of the OCCL Team recommendations overlap with the recommendations generated by the ArtStream staff:

1. [The Executive Director should take the lead in reviewing, updating, and publishing ArtStream's Employee Handbook and the individual position manuals as soon as she is able with the support of the staff and Governing Board.](#)  
Creating better access to information and making sure every employee knows how to find the relevant information should improve efficiency. It is important to note that the information needs to be correct and updated regularly. Team members should hold each other accountable for maintaining and using these resources. The current culture of asking other people for information may be hard to break.
2. Follow up as soon as possible on creating, updating, and disseminating seasonal and annual calendars.
3. Revise and publish the updated "Who-to-Call-for-What" every time a new employee/position is added or when a significant shuffling of responsibilities occurs.
4. Add the "looking ahead" portion of the staff meeting to the weekly agenda. Consider creating an extended quarterly staff meeting to evaluate the last quarter and plan for goals and tasks for the next quarter.
5. Present a summary of the themes, discussion, and requests from the staff to the Governing Board to inform their decisions and convey the sense of urgency on the approval of new staff positions.
6. Consider spending significant time (in person, if possible) discussing and making decisions about the aspirations of the team and the organization for post-pandemic work and programming. Does a hybrid model allow for the delivery of the mission of ArtStream? What needs to be true of future programming for the mission to be achieved? What resources exist and will be needed to realize the organization's aspirations and achieve results? What are the potential barriers and on-ramps to achieve the goals? Consider using a long-term planning model, such as the SOAR model (<https://www.groupmap.com/portfolio/soar-analysis/>) to frame the discussion and create a living planning document for the next phase of



ArtStream. Collaboratively agree on a decision-making process at the start of the planning meeting/retreat.

7. Enthusiasm and belief in the mission and the story of ArtStream and its uniqueness in the industry is a unifying factor for the staff. It is one of the reasons that people are able to overcome their feelings of being overworked and overwhelmed to continue the work. While it is critical to listen carefully to the needs expressed by the staff in terms of easing workloads, creating clarity, and improving the information flow, keeping the ArtStream Mission in the forefront and creating opportunities to see the realization of the mission is critical.

## Conclusions

The seven full-time staff members are committed to the ArtStream Mission and Vision, and they are driven to support the continued innovation and outreach the organization has experienced since March 2020. [To reach the desired working culture at ArtStream, the Governing Board and staff must commit to prioritizing appropriate staffing needs and resources to meet the growth in programming and new ways of working as a result of the pandemic.](#) Furthermore, the ArtStream staff should continue to communicate and plan how they can establish internal processes and documents (handbooks, reference materials, etc) that will streamline the team's efforts.

## Acknowledgements

The OCCL Team would like to thank Heller An Shapiro and the ArtStream staff for engaging in this consulting process. The time dedicated to this work was extremely valuable to the OCCL Team and helped move organizational development theory into practice. The OCCL Team appreciated the openness and candor of the ArtStream staff and look forward to hearing of their many future successes.

## Appendix

### Theme Prioritization Vote

Theme	Tally (X)	Total
Most staff members are dedicated to and driven by the mission of ArtStream and the positive impact it has on the community.	xXXX	4
Many ArtStream staff mention feeling supported by their colleagues and the Executive Director.	xxX	3
Many staff express a desire for more teambuilding and relationship building.	x	1
Many staff state a need for clarity for processes, policies, and norms.	XXXXx	5
Some people have established work/life boundaries.	X	1
Many people express being overwhelmed and/or overworked.	XXXXXXx	8

## Padlet Exercise

Participants were invited to share thoughts electronically to the question: “What [themes] resonate with you?”

### **Padlet Responses:**

- It's clear that everyone is passionate about ArtStream's mission.
- Being overwhelmed with the workload.
- It's good to see people feel supported by their colleagues.
- We need more defined processes and additional staff members to assist with the heightened workload as ArtStream programs increase
- I like that we're all here for the same reason
- Possibly needing clearer work/life boundaries.
- The weekly full staff meetings are really helpful
- Policies and processes have not been structured.
- good to see people feel supported by their colleagues
- I'm glad everyone wants to hang out :)
- agree about staff mtgs!
- I need to stop sending emails at night and on weekends