

**A NEW TAKE ON CULTURE:  
A CULTURAL MASTER PLAN FOR EL DORADO COUNTY**

April 2017

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**BACKGROUND:** Founded in 1989, El Dorado Arts Council, like many local arts agencies, began as an all-volunteer group of citizens passionate about the arts, and continued as such for a number of years. The Arts Council currently serves as the County-designated agency in California Arts Council's State-Local Partnership Program. In July 2015, a change in leadership occurred at El Dorado Arts Council, and the incoming Executive Director wished to have a broad understanding of El Dorado County in order to develop greater connectivity in this largely rural region through arts and culture. A cultural master planning process was determined to be the best method to gather the information necessary to make the decisions for the future. The Joan Madison Collaborative was engaged to design and implement a master-planning process.

**PROCESS:**

- Interviews of key stakeholders, including elected officials and government staff, community leaders from nonprofit and business sectors, artists and artisans, staff, board members and donors of cultural organizations, and others. This group of interviewees represented all five El Dorado County supervisorial districts as well as key sectors which drive the local economy: agriculture; recreation, transportation and tourism; and commercial development.
- Research of reports, plans, articles, and other documents relevant to the region and/or to cultural planning in a rural setting.
- Research and listings of visual artists; theatres; music groups; dance groups, companies and organizations; cultural destinations; points of interest; historical groups and societies; galleries; events; venues; Apple Hill destinations; and wineries and breweries.
- At the conclusion of the research and interview process, a planning report was issued. This report documents the challenges facing the arts in El Dorado County, the findings which substantiate these challenges, and 22 recommendations and proposed partnerships to create a path forward. The planning report also contains maps, spreadsheets, and other supporting material as appendices.

**SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES:**

El Dorado County does not contain a broad range of classical art forms; those arts organizations and companies that do exist operate primarily in siloes. Sustainability for cultural organizations is rare.

Economic activity is polarized to the eastern and western edges of the County, and limited transportation corridors impact access to cultural activities.

The arts do not appear as an integral component of the County's goals and objectives.

**PRIMARY FINDING:** The culture of El Dorado County is more than the four classical art forms of visual art, theatre, dance, and music; it includes literary arts, history and heritage, preservation and architecture, orchards, wineries, and forestry.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Cultural Master Plan is now complete, and is available on El Dorado Arts Council's website. A cultural plan relevant to its community, geography, and cultural assets will ultimately have a positive, lasting impact. The plan suggests effective partnerships among cultural entities and also between arts and culture and the business community, other social service nonprofits, recreation, agriculture, the food and wine industry, and others partnership which will enliven and mutually support one another.

This plan for El Dorado County leverages community assets, supports arts and culture as an engine for a creative economy, positions arts and culture as an integral element in local decision-making, and nurtures future leaders, artists, audiences, and an informed citizenry.