

CULTURESOURCE

THE ARTS & CULTURAL ALLIANCE

FIVE YEAR REPORT

Shortly after accepting the offer to become CultureSource's executive director, outgoing board chair Rich Homberg mailed me the book, *The First 90 Days* by Michael Watkins. As the first leadership tool I received as a first-time executive director, it shaped my early tenure around strategies for creating momentum toward the successes I envisioned, and being in an executive director role for the first time, it normalized the uncertainty about how we would get to those points of success.

Further inspiration for this new beginning came in my car during the 90 minutes (minimum) of my daily commute, where each morning and afternoon for a year, I would listen to episodes of the NPR podcast, *How I Built This*. Host Guy Raz's interviews of entrepreneurs revealed patterns in their accomplishments that began conditioning me to see innovation as a practice and challenges as navigable.

In my first five years at CultureSource, our team has realized more success than expected by many people, including those closest to our work. The likelihood of those victories was braced by our founding leadership's enduring conviction in the potential of coalitions and amplified by the present-day grit of our talented staff and loyal partners.

As we consider the milestones and relationships described in this five-year lookback, our pride in what has been is powering what we believe still can be.

OMARI

CULTURESOURCE LEADERSHIP

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FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Maud Lyon

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Dr. Tonya M. Matthews

Michael Morin

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Maury Okun

Brent Ott

Christian Øverland

Peter Robinson

Salvador Salort-Pons

Olga Stella

DeLashea Strawder

Patrick Willingham

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: 2017-2022

Omari Rush



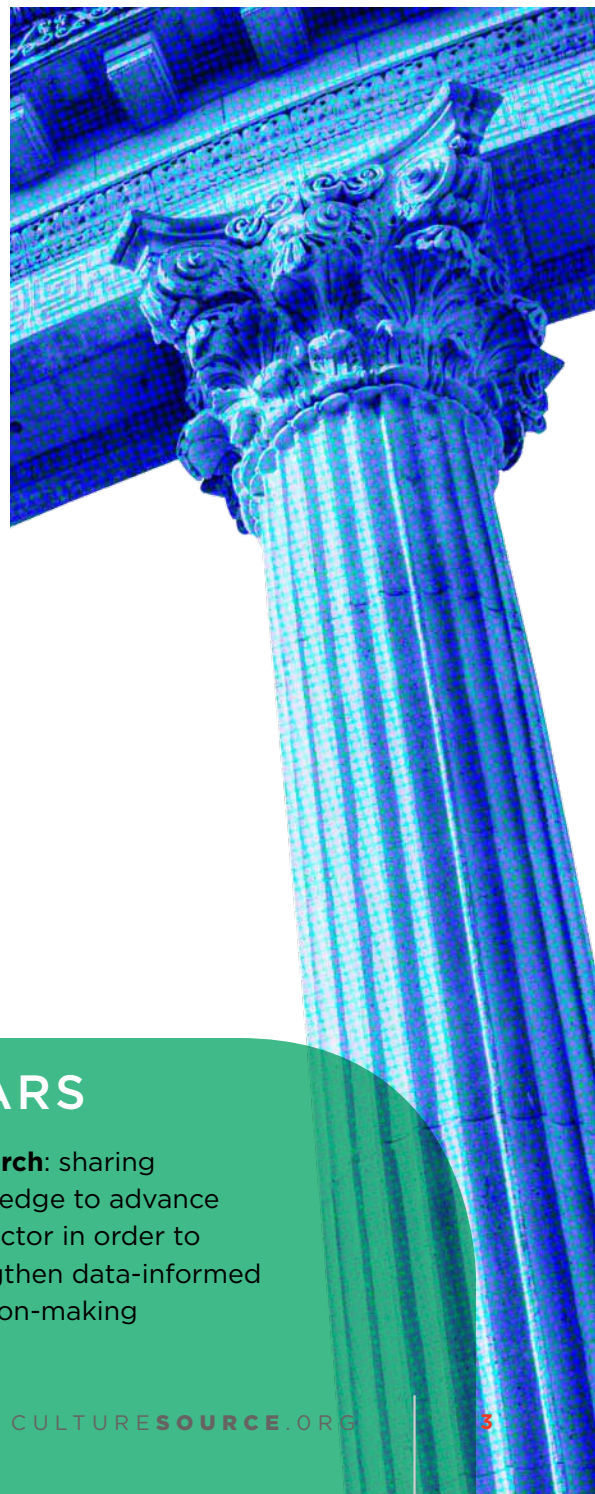
ABOUT CULTURESOURCE

CultureSource was founded in 2007 to serve as a vehicle for connection and capacity-building for arts and cultural organizations in Southeast Michigan. Fourteen organizations, representing the largest in the region, initially came together in 1996 to advocate for increased public funding for the arts. They soon realized that to succeed with this aim, their coalition needed to be broader and more diverse. A larger coalition of thirty organizations subsequently formed to create the organization that has evolved to become CultureSource.

CultureSource has developed and delivered a varied menu of programs over its history, responding to the changing contexts, opportunities, and needs of its member organizations and the communities they serve. By doing so, CultureSource has earned a place at the forefront of cultural development in Southeast Michigan, helping to articulate the sector's shared vision and values, and supporting organizations to develop the evolving capacities needed to thrive in a changing world.

CultureSource organizes its work under three pillars—convening, funding, and research—with robust offerings in each of the three. Its membership has grown to more than 170 organizations, and its budget has quadrupled over the past five years, to \$2.3 million annually. This report documents CultureSource's growth trajectory since 2017, the year Omari Rush was named executive director. These years have been marked by strategic growth that has brought CultureSource to national prominence among cultural development organizations in the United States.

Report details include CultureSource's five-year activities and investments, sharing how the organization has purposefully and consistently engaged with members, grantmakers, policy leaders, researchers, and audiences to bring its vision to life: flourishing Southeast Michigan communities that visibly benefit from a diverse and thriving arts and culture sector, which itself receives indispensable support from CultureSource.



CULTURESOURCE SERVICE PILLARS

Convening: connecting leaders, organizations, and ideas through trainings, workshops, and networking opportunities

Funding: supporting creative projects and people by managing grantmaking programs

Research: sharing knowledge to advance the sector in order to strengthen data-informed decision-making

FIVE YEARS OF STRATEGIC GROWTH

This report on the recent successes of CultureSource begins with intentions set forth by new executive director Omari Rush to assess the capacities of CultureSource ahead of imagining future success.

The three years preceding Omari's tenure were characterized by commonly recognized post-founder transition dynamics, which set up ideal conditions for an intensive reconsideration of CultureSource's core purposes.

The Hudson-Webber Foundation, led by Melanca Clark, provided a grant for CultureSource to engage 8 Bridges Workshop, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, to conduct an organizational assessment. The assessment began during CultureSource's 2017 executive director search and involved 8 Bridges ascertaining CultureSource's strengths and potential. Early in his tenure, Omari's own instincts and observations about best next steps were fully aligned with the 8 Bridges recommendations and together, the assessment and a new leader helped to set the stage for change.

Three CultureSource team members who were already working at CultureSource when Omari began, rounded out the guiding group that successfully made the major shifts that have since transformed the organization. Business manager Jane Linn stewarded the organization's operations and offered critical executive counsel. Kim Howard cultivated connections with stakeholders and proactively supported members and partners in navigating CultureSource experiences. Michelle de la Fuente focused on maintaining CultureSource's channels of connectivity and promotion and evolved her role constantly to adapt to the needs of the organization.

With the board and staff, Omari redefined foundational beliefs—from the vision to guiding principles—and devised an arc of activity that

would guide the organization over the next five years: *stabilize* the organization, *repair* aging systems and weakened relationships, invest in *coalition-building* to advance the work, and identify *bold moves* that would signal innovative and responsive change. These four activities would eventually comprise the CultureSource "strategy arc," a framework for decision-making and reflecting on outcomes.

Alongside development of the strategy arc, Omari drafted (and continually redrafted) a "strategic blueprint" for use as a discussion tool with constituents and allies (pictured opposite). Inspired by the arts ecosystem drawings of Kresge Foundation president Rip Rapson, Omari's sketch served to engage people in conversation about what CultureSource is and the value it creates, as well as elicit ideas of CultureSource's best use.

By the end of 2018, Omari was able to announce "CultureSource 2.0" with a refreshed outlook on the future of Southeast Michigan's cultural sector and CultureSource's caretaking capacity. The 2018 annual report opened with Omari saying, "My first 12 months as CultureSource's executive director have been wonderful. I inherited talented staff teammates and 15 new board member coaches—including new board chair Dr. Tonya Matthews—who I immediately began working with to manifest CultureSource 2.0. Thus far, our work has been characterized by steady progress and perpetual optimism, and moving forward we will continue nurturing creativity and community connection throughout Southeast Michigan."

OMARI'S STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

Members = Alliance → Vitality

Tactics + Focuses

Creativity, Visibility, Thrivability, Goodness

DEI

Partners

Board + Staff

Capacity Sparks Foundation Reflection

STRATEGY ARC

A FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURESOURCE

The CultureSource strategic framework for 2017–2022 is represented by an arc with four overlapping, sometimes interwoven elements. As in other areas of CultureSource strategy, the visual image is critical, providing a clear, simple communications device that is memorable for staff, board, and constituents.

Stabilize

Ensure a strong foundation

Organizational Assessment: “Stabilize” began with an organizational assessment by external consultants at 8 Bridges Workshop in 2017.

Financial Analysis: Financial partners at Apparatus Solutions and the board finance committee analyzed the net cost of programs and shifting revenue patterns. As part of the effort to shore up the organization’s financial health, a major decision was made to terminate IXITI, which had provided a shared digital calendar for the arts in Southeast Michigan, but was prohibitively expensive to maintain and was not widely used.

Management Software Upgrade: CultureSource discontinued use of an open source filing system and launched a new customer relationship management platform (CRM) and re-built its databases.

Strategy Visualization: The visual roadmap for CultureSource that Omari iteratively developed served as a creative vehicle for rekindling and establishing relationships with stakeholders who would see their discussion points influence roadmap design.

Repair

Rebuild the organization’s core documents and key services

Foundational Documents: Board and staff collaboratively refreshed CultureSource’s guiding statements, even stretching its network to engage young artists and culture workers in formulating its working definition of “culture.” With consultant support, the CultureSource team also built a rubric that allows the organization to track and evaluate its outcomes against its ambitious aspirations.

Brand and Image: CultureSource rebranded itself to harmonize and clarify organization values, messaging, and imagery.

Programs and Services: CultureSource redefined its key pillars of activity as convening, funding, and research, and within these, focused on six programmatic areas (business building, adaptive capacities, tech and arts, creative space, arts education, and representational justice) whose acronym spelled “BATCAR.” This codification reflected services most wanted and needed by constituents.



Coalition-building

Connect frequently with more people in order to build movements

National Engagement: Omari's external engagement increased CultureSource's visibility regionally and nationally: he chaired the State of Michigan Arts and Culture Council and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, remained on the board of Arts Midwest, joined national networks of local arts agencies and arts grantmakers, and invested time in advisory committees for arts research and community development.

Local Network Investment: CultureSource initiated recurring job-alike roundtables for its membership, engaging executives in conversation about field trends, ideas, and opportunities. The efforts CultureSource invested in building relationships among arts philanthropists and sector CEOs are often cited as having been critical to organizations navigating pandemic challenges.

Relationship Reorientation: A strategic restructuring of staff comprised a broad organizational plan to enhance capacity for relationship building—with other plan elements relating to injecting socializing into program design, re-prioritization of board member recruitment, and investing in maturing communications systems.

Bold Moves

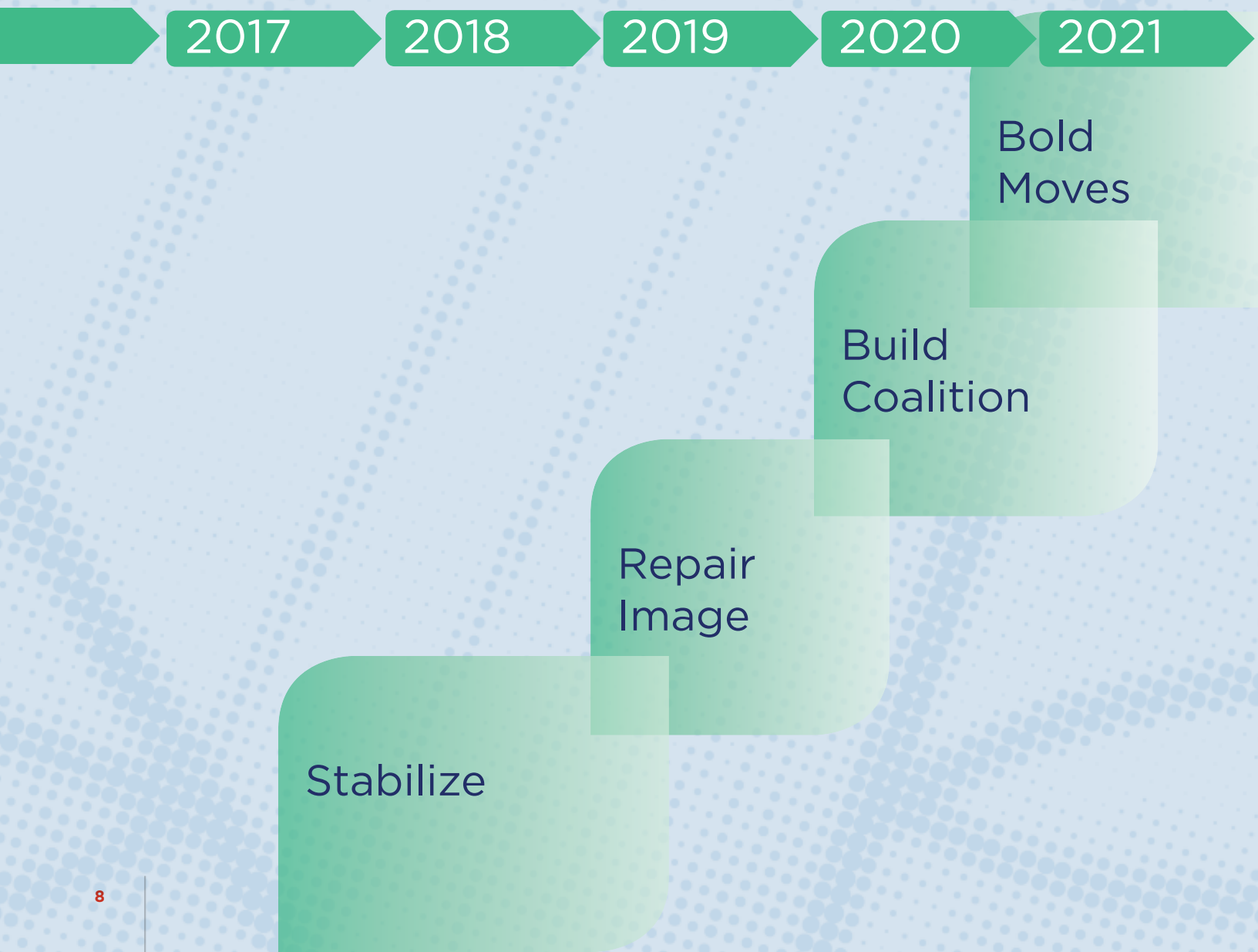
Courageously imagine new roles for CultureSource

EmcArts Acquisition: A national arts consulting firm that trains arts leaders in change management and innovation, EmcArts became integrated into CultureSource through an acquisition initiative begun in June 2021 that exponentially increased CultureSource's potential to serve its members and the broader arts and culture sector.

Alignment Monitoring: Wanting to prepare for future growth, CultureSource staff centralized its mission-related belief, philosophies, strategies, and metrics into a single guidebook as a tool for having its future advancements, incremental or bold, be in alignment with stable core purpose.

STRATEGY ARC

PHASE 1: *Completed*



Build
Coalition

Re-
intro-
duce

Re-define

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

Bold
Moves

PHASE 2: *In Progress*

MILE- STONES & MOMENTUM

CultureSource intentionally sought quick programmatic and relationship wins early in Omari's tenure to generate momentum for progressively greater change and to broaden awareness of the ability of CultureSource to be a resource.



2017

Joining the **'Rust Belt' Arts Group**—a consortium of peer executives in Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and Toledo—offers fundamental calibration to local arts agency work.

Selection as one of three national partners of **Mural Arts Philadelphia** (and early win) stretches how we worked and who we worked with.

2018

Meeting **Springboard for the Arts** in St. Paul, Minn., ignites motivating admiration that endures as an inspiration source today.

Our first new regrantee initiative post transition, **CulturePop** (with the Gilbert Family Foundation) emphasizes creativity in public space as well as reminds members of our value.

CultureSource's arts leadership acumen surges after Omari is tapped to be a lead with the **Association of Performing Arts Professionals** Leadership Fellows Program.

Newly enhanced program management responsibilities in **Detroit Arts Support**, a \$12 million funding program, spark for us important relationship building with philanthropists and leaders.

2019

Our profile and credentials vault as we partner with the **National Endowment for the Arts** to first host a regional roundtable in Detroit exploring the intersection of art and digital tech, and later to host a Detroit meeting of the **National Council on the Arts** rarely held outside of Washington, DC.

Sunsetting **IXITI**, a legacy bold move with deficiencies that became burdens, garners new trust and confidence as a demonstration of responsiveness and prudence.



2020

Quick and robust **Covid relief** efforts mobilized by CultureSource illuminate the essential nature of our work in the Southeast Michigan ecosystem.

The **Warhol Foundation**, selecting CultureSource as its regional regranting partner, adds new resources to Southeast Michigan and boosts our burgeoning artist services portfolio.

Our **digital arts infrastructure partnership** with the Gilbert Family Foundation situates us at the crossroads of contemporary culture and responsive service, locally and nationally.

2021

The Kresge and Ford foundations provide \$1.5 million in multi-year support for our **racial equity initiatives**—an historic investment in CultureSource.

Our strategic aims to build a bigger coalition are galvanized when the State of Michigan expands our **arts regranting region** to three counties.

2022

A leading consultancy in change management and adaptive leadership, **EmcArts** is integrated into CultureSource: a paradigm shift in our sustainability and service capabilities.

Our potential to advocate for and spur radical change exponentially increases with the Knight Foundation's million-dollar commitment to our **tech and arts** program.

WHAT'S NEXT?

CultureSource has launched a refreshed strategic framework through 2027, drawn again as an arc and aiming to build on organizational accomplishments and respond to emerging societal contexts. Key elements: invest in **bold moves**, **re-define** CultureSource's purpose and trajectory given new opportunities and circumstances, **re-introduce** CultureSource and its higher-capacity modes, and **build the coalition** for collaboration and action. The year 2027 is CultureSource's 20th anniversary, offering an impetus for reflection and celebration.

CultureSource's current work will address *emergent trends* that front-line experience in the sector foretell. Key among these:

- **Technology:** The disruptive influence of tech on the cultural landscape and the opportunity for artists and cultural organizations to embrace its expressive capabilities to create new works that reach and engage audiences in new ways
- **Business and platform models:** The sense that ways of working in previous generations will not serve tomorrow's institutions, and that new business models, "product" offerings, and revenue schemes can only flourish if the field tests, measures, and shares experiences with new business forms
- **Role and identity of artists:** Artists are redefining their roles as storytellers, vision makers, catalysts, activists, and entrepreneurs, and traditional artistic disciplines rooted in European training methods and canons are being perceived and documented as only a small percent of the cultural expression that US artists embrace and practice
- **Systems change:** Reckonings with discrimination and oppression are rapidly remaking systems—from boards of directors and research practices to office culture and marketplaces—and few people in the cultural sector can be as sure of what they know and what comes next
- **The rise of local:** The realization that opportunities to explore, address, and build models for problem-solving are more readily available and achievable at the local level than through the spread of national models and top-down approaches

With confidence gained from our recent successes and learnings, CultureSource is ready to move forward being a leader in the region and nation, helping manifest more opportunities for artistic and cultural expression to generate prosperity throughout society.



OUR TEAM

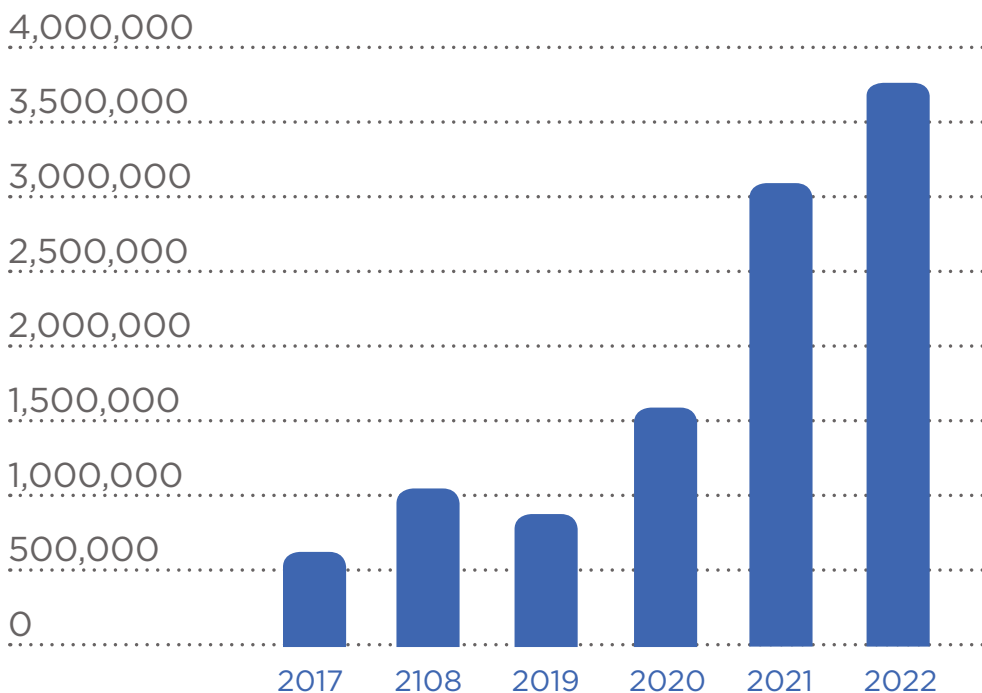
CultureSource staff members cultivate and prudently deploy knowledge, social, and financial resources in service of our mission work. We are proud of CultureSource, proud of our region's creative community, and proud of each other.

Michelle de la Fuente
Kim Howard
Omari Rush
Adam DesJardins
Robert Swetlic
Ida Mwai
Kaleigh Wilder
Mori Richner
Njeri Rutherford

OUR FINANCES

	2021 (audited)	2022 (audited)
Revenue	\$ 3,046,703	\$ 3,714,612
Expense	\$ 1,737,627	\$ 2,855,065
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 1,309,076	\$ 859,547
Net Assets	\$ 2,933,724	\$ 3,793,271

FINANCIAL HISTORY (REVENUE)



PARTNERS

While we can proudly articulate direct impacts of *all* of our funding and program partners, the ten below were catalytic.

Being introduced to the CultureSource community at the annual member meeting a week after he started, the first person Omari saw when he arrived was **Anne Parsons**, a presence emblematic of the critical and compassionate support CultureSource has always receive from **member CEOs**.

The scale and consistency of **The Kresge Foundation**'s financial partnership is unmatched by other partners and offered stabilizing reliability when so much of CultureSource's future was uncertain.

The **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan** sparked CultureSource's formation and immediately after Omari was hired began making financial investments in our new initiatives and credentialing introductions to other prospective partners—it all felt like a leap of faith.

Though the **Masco Corporation Foundation** paused support of CultureSource during our executive transitions, as soon as Omari was in place, they renewed significant support for our work, even as their own foundation was sunseting. Their leadership funding was a critical, budget-saving bridge to new pathways of sustainability.

Feeling out of sync with contemporary issues in Metro Detroit's cultural sector, **Erb Family Foundation** team members provided critical counsel that accelerated the re-orientation of our programs and that was paired with financial resources.

A five-year general operating grant from the **Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation** in 2017 annually functioned as an extremely flexible, year-ending, budget-balancing financial prop across CultureSource's strategy arc at a time of precarity and rebuilding for our finances.

Over five years, the **Gilbert Family Foundation** routinely funded untested and arguably our boldest ideas whose successes have been building long-term sustainability into our work.

When CultureSource's relationships experienced atrophy due to transition, the **State of Michigan** remained one of our most accessible allies in helping Michigan communities thrive.

Increase Branding & Design collaborated with Omari in 2019 on a brisk two-month rebranding process to bring the visual and programmatic identities of CultureSource into alignment. The resulting brand attracted new attention and elegantly conveyed our values.

In times of limited, abundant, and ambiguous financial options during the turnaround of CultureSource, the expert financial counsel provided by **Apparatus Solutions** (now renamed Quattro) made possible the attainment of most of our aspirations for service.



A LETTER FROM 8BRIDGES WORKSHOP

When Omari Rush invited us to collaborate on a five-year review of his organization, we jumped at the opportunity. Why? Not only has CultureSource become a valued partner of 8 Bridges Workshop over the past five years, but also, CultureSource's approach to strategy and strategic planning is something we all can learn from.

CultureSource has rejected the traditional strategic planning model in favor of an adaptive approach. Goals that will take years to implement are lifted up as exciting visions for the future, and opportunities and operations are assessed—directionally—as they unfold. Programs evolve naturally in light of continuous assessment and reflection.

This nimble approach to planning won't be a fit for every organization. Many cultural institutions must set their programs and schedules months or years in advance, requiring careful budgeting and artistic planning. These processes do not easily lend themselves to shifts and course corrections, or to dynamic responses to changing circumstances and contexts.

Those difference aside, stopping daily to ask ourselves, “to what end?” is a discipline we *can* learn from CultureSource. Or, as Stephen Covey reminds us, “Begin with the end in mind.” We can pause to consider, to question, to ensure that our dailyness leads to the vision we hold when we see our work not from the ground, but “from the balcony.”

CultureSource embodies adaptive leadership principles, by seeing patterns, identifying complex challenges, and maintaining disciplined attention. We encourage you to follow their work, and to learn from it.

SARAH & GRETA
8 BRIDGES WORKSHOP



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