



**Appel Farm**  
Arts & Music Center



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Appel Farm Arts & Music Center (Appel Farm)** co-creates experiences in and through the arts. Whether the extended experiences of our camp and long-term residencies; sequential experiences of our arts, arts integration, and professional development classes; or stand-alone experiences of our individual programs and festivals, Appel Farm's approach to co-creation brings together the following key elements:

- **People** - cultivating relationships rooted in recognition and acceptance of self and others as we embrace and explore the forms of human creation and expression we call the arts
- **Practice** - guided by skilled artists, the practices in the arts that help us discover, grow, and apply our natural and learned talents
- **Supportive Space** - a welcoming environment of refuge and sanctuary dedicated to artmaking, discovery, and authenticity that is rooted in the values of Appel Farm and moves with us beyond our campus
- **Community** - connecting to those around us and bringing value through capabilities and experiences we help co-create to meet identified needs
- **Accountability** – strong institutional oversight, positive work culture, and financial stability essential to the long-term viability and ongoing health of Appel Farm

In FY23, Appel Farm engaged in a strategic planning process, facilitated by Allison Trimarco and Kristin Patton of Creative Capacity. Following a challenging few years that included the start up and partnership of the Creative CoLaboratory Charter School (C3), pandemic operations, and leadership transitions, the planning process was approached as an opportunity to come together out of all the internal and external change and emerge with renewed clarity around Appel Farm's core purpose, strategic direction, and path to action. The key question the process aimed to address was "What needs to change?" in order for us to:

- Work from Appel Farm's tremendous strengths to grow our impact
- Increase community engagement, particularly in terms of equity and access, and in step with changing needs
- Address our longstanding infrastructure issues
- Build long-term organizational capacity and sustainability.

The process began in early fall 2022 with twelve staff, eleven board members, and three representatives from partner school C3, thoughtfully and generously sharing their perspectives on Appel Farm's core purpose, values, vision, challenges, and opportunities through an online Individual Insights Tool. Board and staff members came together for an afternoon in November to explore the findings and lay the foundation for planning. A Core Team of five staff and two board members was formed in December and met bi-weekly to build on the work of the retreat and develop Appel Farm's Strategic Plan. The Board reviewed and provided feedback to the plan in April and May, and it was finalized by the Core Team and approved by the Board in summer 2023.

The plan positions Appel Farm to stay rooted in its founding core values and purpose, while adapting in ways that will support increased impact and changing community needs.

This is an *adaptive strategic plan*, designed to help Appel Farm strengthen organizationally and respond to dynamic and changing conditions over the next five years. The plan's overarching goals and strategies will guide decision making. Each goal is followed by specific objectives and the strategies through which to realize the plan. These initial strategies may or may not prove the best way to carry out the plan as circumstances change. Annual planning will determine the best options for continuing to pursue Appel Farm's overarching goals over time.



# HISTORY

Professional musicians and music educators as well as farmers, Clare and Albert Appel recognized that the arts play a crucial role in developing learning skills, encouraging personal growth, and instilling a sense of community. In 1960, guided by a sense of curiosity and hard work, they dedicated themselves and their land to promoting a supportive environment in which the individual child can learn, experience, and grow in a wide variety of artistic media. Their 176-acre farm was turned into a thriving and transformational summer arts camp, which became the genesis of Appel Farm Arts & Music Center. More than six decades later, we celebrate our founders and our history by continuing to draw on the Appels' wisdom, values, and example in how we cultivate the arts on campus and in our communities today.

# MISSION

**Appel Farm strives to co-create experiences that inspire people to unleash their inherent creativity, leading to self-discovery, personal growth, community building, and joy.**

# VISION

**Appel Farm envisions a world in which the arts are recognized and valued as central to the human experience.**

# CORE BELIEFS

At Appel Farm, we believe that:

- The arts are for everyone.
- Arts learning, making, experiences, and exploration are essential to our individual and collective development and to creating positive change.
- Everyone is creative and all human creativity is inherently valuable.
- An inclusive culture, supportive environment, and shared brave space must be co-created by all of us together.
- Arts and arts education experiences have value throughout our lives.
- Appel Farm is building on its important history of encouraging everyone to experience and embrace the value of the arts.

# CORE VALUES

- Inherent Creativity (Exploration, Experiencing, Expression, Arts Expansively Defined)
- Inclusivity (Collaborative, Radically Supportive, Anti-Racist, Gender Inclusive, Accessible, Intergenerational, and Honest About Our Capacity)
- Brave Space to Support Physical, Emotional, and Psychological Safety (Failure is Ok, Trust, Opportunity, and Accountability)
- Kindness and Empathy (Patience and Understanding, Giving Space and Respect for Other Perspectives, Celebrate Differences)
- Personal Growth and Empowerment (Healthy Challenge, Discovery, Curiosity, Progressive, Change)
- Joy (Strive for Contentment; Embrace the Journey, Revel in the Moment, Make Time for Gratitude)
- Sustainability (Stewardship, Actively Seek and Incorporate Various Organizational Perspectives, Manage Expectations, Inspire Key Supporters and Donors)

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## *Creating and Supporting the “Appel Farm Experience”*

**The Appel Farm Experience is delivered through three types of experiences...**

<b><u>Extended Experiences</u></b>	<b><u>Sequential Experiences</u></b>	<b><u>Stand Alone Experiences</u></b>
In-depth arts experiences and learning that are transformative for participants, such as camp and long-term classroom residencies	In-depth arts experiences and learning that build on each other over time, such as our partnership with C3 school, multi-year residencies or professional development partnerships	Performances, events, workshops, and individual offerings that give people the chance to experience the arts

**And three approaches to location ranging from “come to us” to “we come to you.”**

<b><u>Our Location</u></b> Welcoming the Community to Us	<b><u>Public Locations</u></b> Meeting the Community in the Middle	<b><u>Partner Locations</u></b> Going to Specific Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Onsite Classes</li><li>• Onsite Performances, Events, and Retreats</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public Classes</li><li>• Public Performances and Events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner Classes</li><li>• Partner Performances and Events</li></ul>



**Strategies are developed with short-, medium-, and/or longer-term results in mind.**

<p><b><u>Optimization</u></b> Make the Most of What We Have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and resolving financial and facilities challenges</li> <li>• Removing obstacles</li> <li>• Making readily actionable improvements</li> </ul> <p>Strategic filter to identify, prioritize and focus on things that open the most capacity and increase ROI</p>	<p><b><u>Enhanced Options</u></b> Create options for higher impact/higher ROI</p> <p>Concerted internal effort to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess work in progress</li> <li>• Develop ideas based on data</li> <li>• Vet new ideas and test the most promising</li> </ul> <p>Strategic filter to assess current/potential programs, infrastructure improvements</p>	<p><b><u>Strategic Partner Cultivation &amp; Resource Development</u></b> Build community relationships that inform the work and generate resources</p> <p>Sustained effort to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build mutually beneficial relationships</li> <li>• Demonstrate the value of Appel Farm to many different communities</li> </ul> <p>Strategic filter to assess strategic partnership fit, ROI, and ideas that come from current or potential partners</p>
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# OVERARCHING GOALS:

**Goal #1: Demonstrate how arts experiences support individual growth and community wellness and connection.**

**Goal #2: Illustrate the power of the arts and arts integration to improve learning and the school experience.**

**Goal #3: Diversify sources of income to increase overall revenue to levels that will sustain Appel Farm going forward.**

**Goal # 4: Develop organizational infrastructure that effectively supports Appel Farm's mission.**

# OVERARCHING STRATEGIES:

**Strategy #1: “Embody and Express Our Values!”** Consistently apply and continue to develop our equity lens.

**Strategy #2: “Build from the Past to Create the Future!”** Keep Appel Farm's values and culture at the center as we build the programs that resonate with people today.

**Strategy #3: “Get Out There!”** Strengthen connections that allow us to bring the Appel Farm experience out into the community, and bring the community to Appel Farm.

**Strategy #4: “Say It Out Loud!”** Develop materials that make who we are, what we do, and how we do it more visible and readily shareable across all of our programs.

**Strategy #5: “Learn As We Go!”** Develop the data gathering and feedback loops needed to inform our decision making.



# GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## **Goal #1: Demonstrate how arts experiences support individual growth and community wellness and connection.**

### **Key Objectives:**

- The overnight summer camp program will be fully enrolled with a diverse group of campers.
  - The annual retention rate for self-pay campers will be 85%, indicating the value that the Appel Farm experience holds for those participants.
  - 90% of all campers will report that they would recommend that their arts-loving friends attend Appel Farm.
  - Strategic partnerships will integrate arts experiences that support community goals.
  - An increased number of people will participate in Appel Farm arts experiences both on campus and in community locations.
  - An increased number of people who participate in “standalone” experiences will become involved with Appel Farm in another way (program participation, donation, volunteering, etc.).
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### **Key Strategies:**

- Strategy #1: Redesign the overnight camp model to provide the experiences that today's campers want. (earlier data gathering, bunk restructuring, staff able to teach multiple disciplines, housing solutions)
- Strategy #2: Develop new ways to meet the demand for camp scholarships. (pilot group attendance, new fundraising strategies)
- Strategy #3: Strengthen our process for gathering feedback from campers, their families, and camp staff to inform refinements to the camp model each year.
- Strategy #4: Build partnerships that support young people's access to the arts during the summer, especially for those who do not have strong access to arts education at school. (more groups attend Appel Farm camp, Appel Farm teaching artists provide programs at day camps in the region)

- Strategy #5: Collaborate with community organizations, using arts experiences to help them meet their goals. (health and wellness, developing arts experiences that support partner goals)
- Strategy #6: Invest in ArtsLab and other programs that encourage people to explore their own creativity. (on campus and/or off as will maximize participation)
- Strategy #7: Seek new long-term partner(s) who can bring mission-aligned programs to campus. (complement to Appel Farm and C3, land use, upgraded theater would bring new set of possibilities)
- Strategy #8: Build a cohesive marketing strategy that raises the visibility of all of Appel Farm's programs and encourages people to participate.

## **Goal #2: Illustrate the power of the arts and arts integration to improve learning and the school experience.**

### **Key Objectives:**

- Using C3 as a model, Appel Farm will expand its school residency programs into 20 schools by 2028.
  - Professional development programs will include cohorts from at least 20 schools or education professional organizations per year, with future growth planned.
  - Appel Farm is driving instructional shifts towards arts-based models that emphasize creativity and curiosity in the schools where we work.
  - Appel Farm is acknowledged as a leader in arts integration and arts education advocacy in New Jersey and beyond.
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### **Key Strategies:**

- Strategy #1: Support the completion of C3's arts integrated curriculum.
- Strategy #2: Build a model arts integration team at C3 that supports arts integration activities, strengthens the partnership between Appel Farm and C3, connects the school community to the arts, and demonstrates how arts integration can drive progress in a school.
- Strategy #3: Build capacity for academic partnerships by training new multidisciplinary artist educators.
- Strategy #4: Formalize curriculums for professional development.
- Strategy #5: Expand school partnerships that include residencies and professional development for faculty and staff.
- Strategy #6: Invest in longitudinal evaluations that assess the impact that different programs have on learning, teaching, and school environments.
- Strategy #7: Build an online center for teacher professional development resources.
- Strategy #8: Develop a marketing and advocacy strategy to promote our school-based programs.
- Strategy #9: Work with Arts Ed NJ, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and other arts education advocacy groups to raise awareness of our methods and their impact.



### **Goal #3: Diversify sources of income to increase overall revenue to levels that will sustain Appel Farm going forward.**

#### **Key Objectives:**

- Increase unrestricted contributed funds by 40%.
  - Increase funds to support summer camp scholarships to \$90,000.
  - Net tuition income from the overnight summer camp program will be \$1,250,000.
  - Non-camp earned program revenue will be \$600,000.
  - Grow the number of individual donors by 50%.
  - Increase donations from the board to a minimum of \$50,000 annually.
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#### **Key Strategies:**

- Strategy #1: Increase earned revenue through camp enrollment, expanded school residencies and professional development programs, and partnerships.
- Strategy #2: Increase contributed revenue through new platforms for funding camp scholarships, increased individual donors, and new/increased foundation grants.
- Strategy #3: Secure dedicated capital funding to renovate key campus facilities essential to our mission, such as the theatre, in order to explore potential new revenue streams of facility partnerships and/or possible rentals.
- Strategy #4: Invest in training and support for board members and other ambassadors so they can successfully participate in fundraising for Appel Farm.
- Strategy #5: Elevate visibility of Appel Farm's brand and impact to support fundraising.

## **Goal #4: Develop the organizational infrastructure that effectively supports Appel Farm's mission.**

### **Key Objectives:**

- Near-term facilities challenges have been solved and a mission-driven longer-term facilities plan is in place.
  - Staff structure has sufficient capacity to meet operational needs while developing future opportunities.
  - Board development has kept pace with evolving organizational and community needs, and the board is engaged, energized, and providing substantive support, particularly in resource development and as community ambassadors.
  - Appel Farm is highly visible and highly-valued as an essential community resource throughout the region.
  - Appel Farm's staff and board will better reflect the demographics of the campers and students we serve.
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### **Key Strategies:**

- Strategy #1: Develop a comprehensive facilities plan that resolves near-term challenges and develops a long-term financial strategy for maintaining campus effectively.
- Strategy #2: Align the staff structure to strategic priorities.
- Strategy #3: Create and implement a board development plan focused on strategic recruitment of new members, refining governance processes, and enhancing board ambassadorship in the community.
- Strategy #4: Invest in regional marketing and building relationships that position Appel Farm as a valuable member of the community and essential to arts education statewide.
- Strategy #5: Make routine investments in technology, professional development, and other areas that allow us to keep up with changing trends and maintain efficiency.

# STRATEGY SCREEN

While this plan identifies likely strategies, changing conditions and unexpected opportunities will influence plan implementation. This strategy screen can help to assess how well a given program, partnership, opportunity, or action aligns with our strategic direction.

The questions in the strategy screen are drawn from the planning process and can be adjusted over time as we learn about which factors are most critical to our success.

Strategy screens are not absolute – an idea that scores poorly on the screen might still be pursued, and an idea that scores well might be dismissed. The screening process is meant to inform discussion around decisions. Each participant in the discussion should score the opportunity individually. Then the group can compare scores, discuss their reasoning, and make a decision about how to proceed.

## Scoring:

- 3 = Yes, absolutely
- 2 = Somewhat
- 1 = Not very well
- 0 = Not at all/actively works against the priority

## Overall Scoring:

- 26-30 = This is a great idea, we should do it
- 22-25 = This is a good idea. Can we make it better?
- 18-21 = This idea has some challenges to overcome before we decide.
- 15-17 = This idea has significant challenges to overcome.
- 0-14 = Why are we talking about this?



Strategy Alignment Questions	Score
1. Does this idea optimize our existing work in a way that will increase its impact and/or financial efficiency?	
2. Does this idea open opportunities for people to have a meaningful arts experience?	
3. Does this idea demonstrate how the arts can improve learning and the school experience?	
4. Does this idea support an inclusive, authentic environment for participants?	
5. Does this idea raise Appel Farm's visibility as an arts, education, and/or community resource?	
6. Does this idea build or strengthen a valuable partnership?	
7. Does this idea help us to maintain or improve our campus?	
8. Does this idea have capacity for growth/greater impact in the future if it is successful?	
9. Do we have (or can we create) the staff expertise and capacity to carry out this work? Consider especially how this idea would fit into existing program commitments/calendar.	
10a. For programs that are funded by contributions: Looking at all sources of earned and contributed revenue and all expenses (including staff time), is it likely that this idea will generate a profit (3), break even (2), lose some money (1), lose a lot of money (0)?	
10b. For programs that are designed to generate profitable revenue for Appel Farm: Looking at all sources of earned and contributed revenue and all expenses (including staff time), is it likely that this idea will generate a profit (3), break even (2), lose some money (1), lose a lot of money (0)?	

# OPTIMIZATION FILTER

Use these questions to help determine how to optimize current work for better results, especially in the first 18 months of plan implementation.

Optimization Questions
1. First – why is this task/project even on our radar screen? Why do we do this? If the answer is not obvious, consider whether this task/project can be eliminated.
2. Assuming that we need the task/project: What is our goal for “optimizing” this area? What are we trying to accomplish?
3. If this was a brand new opportunity for us, how would we structure it? a. Don’t think about how this area is set up now. Just consider how you would set it up for today’s situation. b. Take a minute to think about <i>why</i> you would set it up that way. Why does that seem like the best choice for today?
4. How could we lower expenses in this area while maintaining our program quality? a. What would we change, and how much would we save? b. If we can’t lower expenses, why not?
5. Can we adjust something in this area that will increase potential revenue? a. What could we adjust, and how much potential revenue might that yield? b. Would we have to make an investment of money or staff to make this happen? How much?

6. How much staff capacity are we investing in doing this work right now?  
a. Is the amount of staff capacity required appropriate for the value we get out of the work for our mission, program quality, and/or finances?  
b. Is there a way to reduce how much time we spend on this? What would that require?

7. Is there anything we could stop doing that would make space for optimizing this area?  
a. And/or: would optimizing this area allow us to stop doing a task or process that is not providing enough value for the time spent?

8. Are there barriers or challenges that make it hard to make changes in this area?  
a. Are those barriers a “fence” (something that can be moved with some effort) or a “wall” (something that’s much harder to move)?

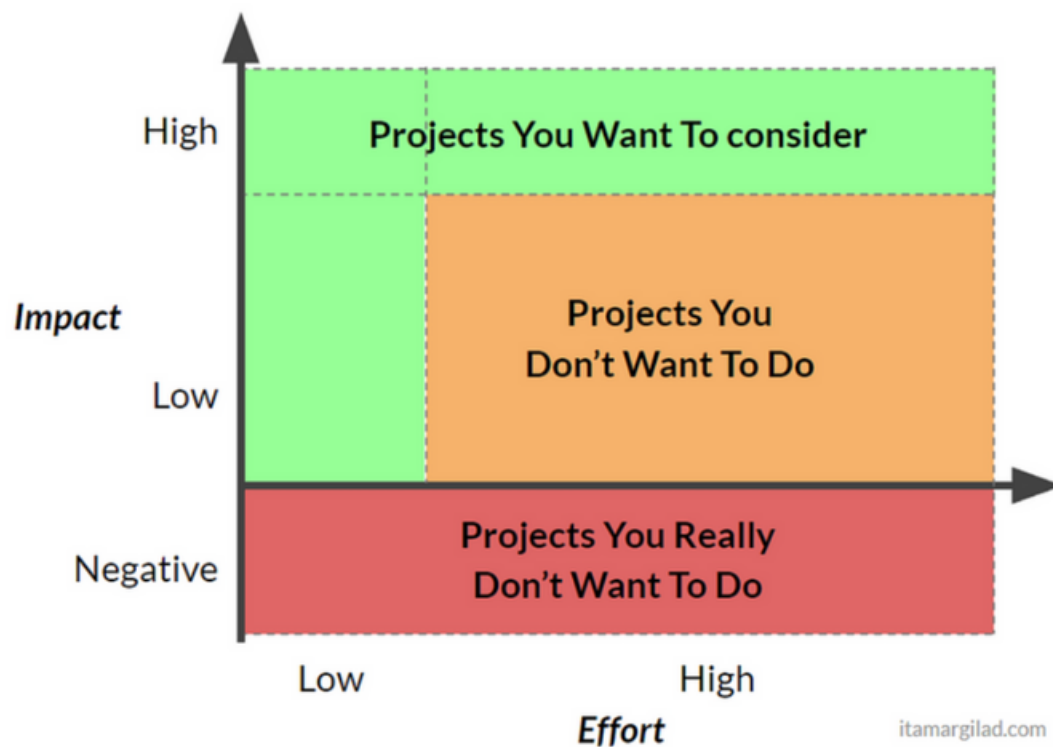
9. What steps/changes would help us to optimize our results in this area?

10. Is the new approach we are proposing still in line with our commitment to providing an inclusive and authentic environment for all our participants?



# POTENTIAL PROJECT EVALUATION AND PRIORITIZATION GUIDE

*Adapted from veteran tech project manager, Itamar Gilad*



Once ideas for new projects or initiatives have made it through the Strategy Screen and/or Optimization Filter, having a process in place to flesh out the anticipated effort (costs) and impact (returns) of the prospective project and compare it with other options will support better decisions and improved outcomes over time.

## Steps to Include in Evaluating and Prioritizing Potential Projects

1. Start with back-of-the-envelope calculations of financial and non-financial project costs and expected returns. You can improve the accuracy of initial estimates by breaking out component parts and placing guestimates on each subpart.

2. Use available and new data Identify data you are already collecting that can help with the evaluation of project effort and impact. Identify any new data you will need to start collecting to evaluate project results.

3. Think of low-cost ways to validate your assumptions. For bigger opportunities it's often worthwhile to do some preliminary research via surveys or interviews.

4. To compare potential projects, score anticipated Impact (Returns) and Effort (Costs). Human psychology is to greatly underestimate future effort and overestimate future impact. To mitigate this, add a score for Confidence. For example, very low confidence could be 0.1 and high confidence 0.8. A prioritization formula could be  $\text{Impact}/\text{Effort} \times \text{Confidence}$ .

5. Consider opportunity costs. If you don't invest in this opportunity, what would you do instead? If you do invest, what other opportunities might you need to pass up or defer? What other activities would be positively impacted? Negatively impacted?

6. Should you decide to move ahead, what are the measurable goals and benchmarks by which you'll evaluate success? Get specific. Consider identifying metrics for validation tests and go/no go continuation or scaling decisions in advance.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

## Consultants

- Allison Trimarco, [Creative Capacity](#)
- Kristin Patton, [Ensemble Consulting](#)

## Core Team

- Jessica Doheny, Executive Director
- Heather Yelle, Director of Operations
- Craig Getting, Development Director
- Kristina Hill, Director of Curriculum
- Ellamarie Quimby, Camp Director
- Bob Cimprich, President
- Lourdes Starr Demers, Board Member

## Individual Insights Contributors and Strategic Planning Retreat Participants

### Board

- Toby Appel
- Bob Cimprich
- Marcy Bliss
- Ronnie Cimprich
- Lourdes Starr Demers
- Emma Frost
- Denise Hayman-Loa
- Karen Kramer
- Danielle Shylit
- Pam Vanecek

### Staff

- Katharine Baer
- Jessica Doheny
- Craig Getting
- Kristina Hill
- Fayge Horseh
- Donald Nees
- Ellamarie Quimby
- Tanner Rushing
- Bobby Salter
- Curtis Williams
- Heather Yelle
- Amanda Kaley-Fromm (former staff, C3 Lead Teacher)

## Individual Insights Contributors

- Maury Peiperl, Appel Farm Board
- Daniel Rowan, C3 Board President
- Dr. George Farmer, C3 Superintendent/Principal
- Kati Brandt, Programs Administrator
- Leslie Saia, Senior Bookkeeper



## **Appel Farm Board of Trustees – Fiscal Year 2023**

Bob Cimprich, *President\**

Danielle Shylit, *Acting Vice President*

Craig Getting, *Secretary – Ex Officio*

Denise Hayman-Loa\*, *Acting Treasurer*

Toby Appel

Marcy Bliss

Ronnie Cimprich, VMD

Lourdes Starr Demers

Karen Kramer

Maury Peiperl

Kelli Randle

Pam Vanecek

Emma Frost

Jessica Doheny, *Ex Officio*