

SEABA Strategic Plan 2024 – 2026

Introduction

The South End Arts + Business Association (SEABA) was founded in 1986, under the title Greater Pine Street Business Association, with an intent to serve the community by acting as a spokesperson and provider of resources for uplifting area businesses. Utilizing early guidance and economic development strategies from CEDO and the City of Burlington, SEABA was created to serve as an independent organization that could represent the interests specific to this burgeoning enterprise zone in the ‘South End’ of town.

The original SEABA ‘Statement of Purpose’ reads, “the association will act as a force uniting the positive energies, and emphasizing and addressing the problems concerning Pine Street businesses. Thus enabling Pine Street to mature toward being a more attractive and economically recognized area to conduct a diverse mix of businesses providing products and services.”

The South End has blossomed, accommodating what is now the largest concentration of incubator businesses per square mile in the entire state of Vermont. As a means to celebrate the growing creative sector and connect the arts with business, SEABA launched the South End Art Hop in 1992. The weekend festival has continued each September, growing to attract tens of thousands of visitors to engage with local artists, businesses, restaurants, and breweries. With the high volume of artists and entrepreneurs in its backyard, SEABA successfully petitioned the Vermont State House to officially declare the area the ‘South End Arts District’ in 2011.

As the South End has become increasingly more diverse and continues to grow and develop, SEABA works to maintain value and relevance to the community it serves. In continuing to evolve the vision and goals, SEABA ensures that the creative community will be represented by celebrating the economic vitality, and the entrepreneurial spirit that characterizes the South End of today.

Background & Context

SEABA has evolved and established itself in the South End of the Burlington Community, often with limited resources and staff. Through leadership and dedication, with support from the Board, members, and the broader community, much has been achieved throughout the years.

SEABA developed its first three year strategic plan for the 2018 – 2020 years to outline clear goals for the future of the organization. Its development was guided by referencing SEABA’s history and achievements, a survey of member views, the Plan BTV’s South End plans, and insights into how other art associations were thriving in towns across the country.

SEABA’s Executive Director and Board of Directors tracks the goals and strategies for each strategic plan and reports the results to the Membership at large each annual meeting as well as internally at the end and beginning of each calendar year. In the last quarter of 2023, the Board of Directors and Executive Director met to identify specific areas for improvement on the previous goals, gather feedback from Membership and other South End stakeholders, and devised a new Strategic Plan for the next three years, commencing in 2024 and ending in 2026. The hope is that through continuous refinement and adaptability there would be an optimization of strategic outcomes for the organization and its mission in the South End and for its Membership.

Vision

The South End Arts District is where artists, entrepreneurs, businesses and communities thrive, supported by programs and services that enhance opportunity for all.

Mission

SEABA promotes the interdependence between art and business to enhance the vibrant, creative and diverse community of the South End Arts District.

Who We Are

SEABA is a small non-profit arts organization with a Board of Directors of up to 12 members nominated and voted in to serve a maximum of two, three year terms. The non-profit has an Executive Director, a part-time Art Curator, supplemental staff and consultants, along with special event volunteers. Committees feature members of the SEABA Board of Directors and the South End community. SEABA Membership is open to everyone, regardless of where they live and has tiers to represent businesses, artists, and supporters.

What We Do

SEABA represents the creative artistic and business community by promoting the economic vitality of the South End Arts District in Burlington, Vermont to attract commerce and tourism. Hosting and marketing Vermont's largest arts festival, the South End Art Hop brings tens of thousands of visitors to the area over three days each September. SEABA's Strut Fashion Show highlights local clothing designers' work in an annual runway event. SEABA Art Curation services promotes and sells artists' work year-round featuring thousands of pieces of art for viewing online and in-person at a variety of South End locations. The SEABA Artist Residency Programs offer one large industrial artist studio to one member, free of charge for one year at The Vaults, along with two artist residencies quarterly at Generator Maker Space. SEABA partners with local businesses and organizations to promote and serve the South End as well as SEABA's mission and vision. SEABA provides daily services to the membership based on current needs. Looking towards the next three years, SEABA plans to increase marketing of our organization and growing fundraising efforts to grow staff and programming.

The SEABA Board of Directors uses a generative governance model of thinking as part of the Board Meetings. Generative governance in a nonprofit board context involves fostering a culture of exploration and strategic thinking. The Board actively engages in open discussions with community stakeholders, encourages diverse perspectives, and collaboratively generates innovative ideas to guide SEABA.

Overarching Goals:

Goal 1: Create a cohesive “brand” for the South End Arts District to promote, expand, and support the South End Arts District’s artists, entrepreneurs, and businesses.

Strategies

- Hire or work with marketing professionals to create and implement a marketing plan
- Enhance the visibility of the South End Arts District
- Connect with other Arts Districts, local and national, that are more seasoned and established to learn about marketing and fundraising tactics that have been successful in their Arts Districts.
- Build Marketing Committee made up of board members and community members experienced in this area

Outcomes

- Create a visually appealing environment that highlights the artistic presence in the South End Arts District.
- Foster a sense of safety, comfort and creativity within the evolving, developing, and growing South End district and neighborhoods, inspiring a vibrant and thriving community.
- Branding packages are available to members, along with a version to welcome new businesses to the South End
- Create a new SEABA Logo

Goal 2: Boost financial resources through effective fundraising initiatives, aiming to increase revenue to support, enhance and expand SEABA’s mission and projects.

Strategies

- Create a Development Committee of board and community members
- Hire professional fundraising staff focused on grant writing and special events by 2026
- Capitalize on the growth of the South End to attract more philanthropy from individuals, corporate sponsors, and the community at large to diversify revenue streams
- Work with fundraising staff and development committee to form meaningful fundraising goals/objectives and fundraising plan

Outcomes

- Analyze current donor data and increase fundraising efforts
- Increase sponsorships with Art Hop
- Bring back Strut Fashion Show, creating a spring event
- Implement Fundraising plan

Goal 3: Facilitate organizational expansion and growth by strategically increasing and strengthening SEABA's staff, ensuring a well-qualified and diverse team capable of effectively supporting SEABA's mission and objectives.

Strategies

- Develop a comprehensive plan using resources from goal two for recruiting top-tier talent, including creating clear job descriptions, competitive compensation packages, and effective outreach strategies
- Implement programs to promote diversity and inclusion in hiring, fostering a workplace that reflects a broad range of perspectives and experiences
- Invest in training and development programs to upskill existing staff members
- Invest in software to support staff development and expedite processes
- Establish an internship initiative with local colleges
- Review and enhance employee benefits to remain competitive in the job market and attract, and retain, top talent

Outcomes

- Increase full time staff by 2026 (if not sooner)
- Implement an Executive Director compensation plan/package with clearly identified goals, bonus options, and benefits packages
- Implement a staff member compensation plan/package with clearly identified goals, bonus options, and benefits packages

Evaluation & Measurements

The Board and Executive Director have established the three year strategic plan, recognizing the critical importance of measuring and discussing performance and progress against the goals, strategies, and outcomes outlined in the plan on a consistent basis. All budgets will be taken into consideration and aligned with what is outlined in the strategic plan. The scorecard tracking system will be used to measure the organization's performance and progress against each of the three goals and their respective strategies and outcomes on a quarterly basis at Board meetings. The strategic plan will also be reviewed overall on an annual basis each January to discuss whether any of the goals, strategies and/or outcomes would need to be adjusted and re-evaluated for the remaining period of the strategic plan. In addition to organization wide evaluation methods, there will be annual membership surveys to bring in supplemental feedback.