

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# ARTS AND EDUCATION COUNCIL ANNOUNCES CYNTHIA PROST'S SUCCESSION PLAN FOR PRESIDENT AND CEO

**ST. LOUIS – January 31, 2022** – Today the [Arts and Education Council](http://Arts and Education Council) (A&E) announced Cynthia Prost plans to step away from her role as President and CEO effective July 2022. After 14 years in this position, Prost energized the Arts and Education Council with a unique vision driving community impact, access, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. She led the shift to an impact-driven organization, with a new focus from “How can the community support the arts” to “How can the arts best serve this community.”

In her time at the Arts and Education Council, Prost successfully completed the purchase of the Centene Center for the Arts, the Arts and Education Council's arts incubator located in the Grand Center Arts District. She focused the organization on a singular mission – to support, elevate, and celebrate the nationally renowned institutions and grassroots organizations that provide our community with world-class arts and culture, and deliver unprecedented community impact. Prost expanded A&E's funding to include new funding partnerships focused on Arts and Healing, Arts Education Program Grants for Teachers and Equity in the Arts. Prost broadened the reach of Arts and Education Council by conceiving an annual Start-up Creative Competition, identifying, incubating and launching the next generation of arts organizations. She created and launched Leadership Roundtables, a professionally led program to support arts leaders with peer exchanges and resource sharing. Prost and her team raised more than \$40 million over the last fourteen years to ensure that more art could be experienced by more people in more places.

Under her leadership, the organization has been nationally and locally recognized with a Missouri Arts Award for Philanthropy, the David Rockefeller Partnership Award from Americans for the Arts, a MindsEye IDEA Award for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility and the Spirit of Philanthropy Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Prost said, “It has been an honor to lead an amazing and thoughtful team as we transformed A&E by centering community in all that we do. I am proud of the work the Arts and Education Council has accomplished and am thankful for our generous donors and the power of our cross-sector partnerships that ensures that the arts and culture sector remains strong and vibrant. Together, we continue to embrace the role of the arts to inspire and connect our community. A&E will celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023 and is ready for the next generation of leadership.”

With a strong board and talented team, the Arts and Education Council is well-positioned for this transition. For the next six months, Prost will focus on evolving the Arts and Education Council's strategic vision, advancing equity in the Arts and Education Council's funding programs, finalizing a staff reorganization and setting up a new CEO for success.

“On behalf of the board, I want to thank Cynthia for her leadership of this important and unique organization in St. Louis. Her legacy is that she led A&E through a transformative change that will shape our work and this community for decades to

come. She has determined the time is right, for this organization and for her, and will be leading a thoughtful transition to new executive leadership. We are grateful she has given us six months to ensure time to identify the best leader and a strong transition,” said Curtis Cassel, Arts and Education Council board chair.

A&E will now launch a search for her successor, led by current board chair Curtis Cassel and chair-elect Debbie Marshall, Senior Vice President, Client & Community Relations Director, Office of the Regional President, PNC Bank. A&E has retained EMD Consulting Group to manage the search process. Prost will maintain President and CEO responsibilities and ensure a smooth leadership transition. After transitioning out of her role at the Arts and Education Council, Prost will leverage her years of experience and work as a strategic consultant, selectively offering services that are customized to the varying needs of nonprofit organizations.

For more information about the position or to apply please contact Pat Rich, Partner, EMD Consulting Group at [prich@emdconsulting.com](mailto:prich@emdconsulting.com).

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**About the Arts and Education Council: Keep Art Happening.** – The Arts and Education Council ensures the 16-county, bi-state region is rich with arts and cultural experiences for all through programs and services that support more than 70 organizations each year, including: general operating grants, arts incubation at the Centene Center for the Arts, PNC Program Grants, the Arts and Education Fund for Teachers, Bayer Fund Rural Community Arts Program grants, Arts and Healing Initiative, the Art Education Fund, the Catalyst Innovation Lab, Leadership Roundtables, Arts Marketers, the St. Louis Suburban Music Educators Association, the Keep Art Happening Scholarship and the St. Louis Arts Awards.

The Arts and Education Council is entirely funded by individual donors, corporations and foundations in the St. Louis region. Since its inception in 1963 as the region's only privately-supported united arts fund, the Arts and Education Council has raised and distributed more than \$100 million in private funding for the arts – a significant contribution that directly impacts the quality of life in our region. The Arts and Education Council meets all 20 Better Business Bureau Charity Standards and has earned the Wise Giving Seal of Approval, a three-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Guidestar Exchange Gold Participant rating.

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