



# The Giving Common

An Initiative of the Boston Foundation

[www.thegivingcommon.org](http://www.thegivingcommon.org)

VSA Massachusetts, Inc., an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation, Inc.



## General Information

The NonProfit Center

89 South Street, Suite 101

Boston, MA 02111

(617) 350-7713 102

**Website**

[www.vsamass.org](http://www.vsamass.org)

**Organization Contact**

Nicole Agois [nicole@vsamass.org](mailto:nicole@vsamass.org)

**Year of Incorporation**

1980

# Statements & Search Criteria

## **Mission Statement**

VSA Massachusetts promotes the involvement of people of all abilities in the cultural life of our communities. Our programs serve thousands of people of all ages and abilities through groundbreaking and effective statewide programs in three program areas: Education (COOL Schools), the Open Door Gallery, and Cultural Inclusion. We work with teachers and students, parents and school administrators. We also work with artists, cultural organizations and people advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.

## **Background Statement**

VSA Massachusetts (VSA MA) is a leader in an international network of VSA organizations serving the United States and over 50 other nations. VSA was founded at the time that the national center for the performing arts was dedicated to President John F. Kennedy and is affiliated with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Originally known as the National Committee Arts for the Handicapped and formerly named Very Special Arts, VSA changed its name in 1999, eliminating the use of the word "special" to honor the progress made by members of the disability community since the organization's inception. VSA MA was incorporated in 1980 and has been advancing access to arts, culture and learning by people with disabilities for over 30 years. Our early work in education focused on supporting learning in and through the arts by students in special education. As we grew and schools became more inclusive, our focus on advocacy and awareness turned to developing understanding and strategies to support inclusive school communities. For our contribution to education in Massachusetts we were awarded the Commonwealth Award in 1997. In the past five years our school programs have been featured in national publications including "The Contours of Inclusion" and "Universal Design for Learning in the Classroom", and highlighted at national and international conferences. In 2010, Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith recognized us for our outstanding work in professional development. Supporting access to cultural venues and developing the careers of artists with disabilities was the primary focus of our early work in cultural inclusion. In the late 1990's, with support from the US Department of Commerce, VSA MA led a national initiative to identify accessible cultural facilities, promote access improvements and cultivate new inclusive programming. In 1998, we developed an Inclusive by Design (IbD) concert with funding from the National Endowment of the Arts. In these programs a new type of ensemble is formed involving musicians, visual artists, both Deaf and hearing American Sign Language interpreters, audio describers and captioners. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) distributed a training video we created on the concept to arts councils throughout the country. In the past five years, we have partnered with major cultural institutions to enhance access and produced four IbD concerts. Through the Open Door Gallery, we have shared the work of over 50 artists with disabilities with approximately 5,000 gallery visitors.

## **Impact Statement**

### Accomplishments:

- Launched COOL Schools program to increase the sustainability and impact of our inclusive arts learning programs by training teachers to implement inclusive arts integration in their classrooms. Developed and piloted four workshops to train educators in arts-integrated inclusive strategies, which were fully enrolled.
- BPS Arts Expansion Fund awarded us \$80,000 (second largest award given to an arts organization this year) to implement COOL at six Boston partner schools.
- Publication of "Universal Design for Learning in the Classroom" (Guilford Press). VSA MA Education Program Manager Kati Blair Kotrc co-authored Chapter 8, "The Arts Option", which highlights our work at the Henderson Inclusion Elementary School.
- Significantly increased the quality and visibility of exhibits and related events at the Open Door Gallery.
- VSA MA will co-host the LEAD (Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability) Conference on August 21-24 in Boston.

### Goals:

- Increase professional development and coaching for teachers in partner schools
- Increase professional development for educators outside the schools by doubling professional development offerings and providing one-on-one follow-up coaching from teaching artists.
- Triple our individual giving revenue by the end of FY' 13 through implementation of new fundraising strategy.
- Sustain and increase participation of cultural organizations in Cultural Access New England (CANE) by offering professional development to staff at cultural organizations.
- Establish collaborative relationships with other community organizations to identify new artists with disabilities and promote their work through the Open Door Gallery and other venues.

## **Needs Statement**

### Capacity Needs:

- Recruit additional and diverse board members with interest and expertise in education, disability, marketing and social media.
- Recruit highly qualified and diverse teaching artists with significant experience in arts integration, collaboration with teachers, and supporting the needs of students of all abilities.

### Financial Needs:

- Secure at least \$80,000 in additional funding to balance our budget and halt the decrease in net assets in FY '13. (VSA MA has been reliant on government support through the VSA Home Office, designated by Congress as agents to support Arts in Education at the US Department of Education. In 2011, this funding was reduced by more than half. Having a strong balance sheet, VSA MA has sustained the recent losses by making investments from working capital reserves and developed strategic and individual fundraising plans.)

### **CEO/Executive Director Statement**

Through the arts, we are breaking new ground. For people with disabilities, the arts represent a world of resources and opportunities. Artistic expression provides an outlet for the creative voice and unlimited possibilities for personal, academic, and professional success. By engaging in the arts, people with disabilities are able to contribute to our workplaces and communities, help extinguish old stereotypes regarding disabilities, and create a global culture truly representative of all people.

VSA MA reaches approximately 10,000 people annually through groundbreaking and effective statewide programs in Education, Cultural Inclusion, and through the Open Door Gallery.

### **Service Categories**

Alliances & Advocacy

Special Education

Elementary & Secondary Schools

### **Geographic Areas Served**

Our current COOL Schools programs serve students in Boston (East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Brighton and Mattapan), Chestnut Hill, Worcester and Gardner.

The Open Door Gallery is located in downtown Boston and serves artists based locally and in New England.

Our Cultural Inclusion programs serve communities and cultural organizations statewide.

Please review online profile for full list of selected areas served.

# Programs

## **COOL Schools**

### **Description**

The COOL (Creative Outlook on Learning) Schools model provides students with a variety of ways to experience academic content, express what they know, and engage in learning. COOL teaching artists collaborate with classroom teachers to introduce strategies inherent in the arts to include students of all abilities and support their learning in the arts as well as in other academic subjects. COOL teaching artists and classroom teachers co-create and co-teach instructional units, addressing Common Core Standards for both arts and academic content. COOL builds the arts integration capacity of educators through professional development. COOL teaching artists present workshops to introduce the entire school to the transformative power of the arts in instructional practice and inclusive school culture. Introductory workshops are also offered twice a year and are open to all educators.

### **Budget**

378000

### **Category**

Education, General/Other Special Education

### **Population Served**

Children and Youth (0 - 19 years), People/Families with of People with Disabilities, At-Risk Populations

### **Program Short Term Success**

- Partner teachers will report positive learning and social student outcomes
- New opportunities for inclusion of students with and without disabilities are provided at partner schools that are not already inclusive
- Teachers will increase their capacity to implement inclusive arts integration in their classrooms
- Through professional development and coaching, teaching artists will progress on competency scale from novice to coach
- Educators will learn inclusive arts integration strategies by attending COOL Professional Development workshops.

### **Program Long term Success**

- Students with disabilities across the state have opportunities to learn in and through the arts alongside their non-disabled peers.
- Teachers learn arts integration strategies to support learning and inclusion and implement them frequently and successfully in their classrooms.

- Program Success Monitored By**
- Teacher, principal and teaching artist surveys are collected at the end of each school program and analyzed for student, teacher and school community outcomes.
  - Student artwork and reflections are collected as evidence of learning
  - Curriculum maps and planning forms completed by teaching artists with partner teachers track learning goals and objectives of each partnership
  - Our “Closer Look at Learning” report followed 12 individual students in four programs to identify social and learning behaviors fostered by the program. Each session was videotaped, running records were taken and coded to identify behaviors.

**Examples of Program Success** Quotes from teachers and principals:

“The opportunity to engage in drama is so fascinating for me to see because there are students who do enjoy acting out different scenarios. Their personalities come out and shine in ways I wouldn't otherwise see in just a written response to literature.” - 2nd grade teacher

“I have never seen my students so engaged for a half an hour period.” - Kindergarten teacher

“Ideas were incorporated regularly into my curriculum. I do more group work and shared learning activities.” - 4th grade teacher.

“Our students with autism are exposed to several art forms and have been able to perform to their parents and school community. These performances have helped boost their self-confidence and their willingness to try new, challenging activities. The staff in turn, has been able to see that our students with autism could perform and learn a new art form just like our non disabled students can.” - Principal

## Cultural Inclusion

<b>Description</b>	<p>VSA MA's Cultural Inclusion programs support access by people of all abilities to cultural events and facilities in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Audience Development: We connect cultural organizations with accessible programs to audience members with access needs.</li><li>- Universal Design: We support cultural organizations to design programmatic, architectural, physical, communication, attitudinal and other forms of access.</li><li>- Career Support: We support people of all abilities to gain skills and employment in the creative economy and participate in cultural institutions.</li><li>- Inclusive by Design: A team of musicians, visual artists, American Sign Language interpreters, audio describers and captioners produce inclusive performances.</li></ul>
<b>Budget</b>	80000
<b>Category</b>	Arts, Culture & Humanities, General/Other Artists' Services
<b>Population Served</b>	People/Families with of People with Disabilities, Elderly and/or Disabled, Adults
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Cultural organizations progress on competency scale to create/provide inclusive programming</li><li>- Increased interest from cultural organizations to provide inclusive programming</li></ul>
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	Cultural organizations throughout Massachusetts are fully committed and capable to meet the programmatic and physical access needs of all their visitors, regardless of ability.
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Track numbers of inquiries for technical assistance, number organizations receiving support for audience development and number of organizations using Universal Design for program design</li><li>- Survey cultural organization participants</li></ul>
<b>Examples of Program Success</b>	VSA MA supported the presentation of GIMP, a dance performance by artists with missing limbs and other disabilities at the ICA two years ago. The ICA program manager asked the audience to raise their hands if it was the first time they attended a performance at the ICA. Approximately 70% of the audience raised their hands. This doesn't only highlight the success of our work connecting people with access needs to accessible cultural facilities and events, but also the wide interest in performances by artists with disabilities.

## Open Door Gallery

<b>Description</b>	The Open Door Gallery supports and promotes the careers of approximately 35 visual artists with disabilities each year through exhibitions and events that share profound stories and dispel myths of ability. Located in downtown Boston, the Open Door Gallery is visited by over 1500 community members annually.
<b>Budget</b>	48500
<b>Category</b>	Arts, Culture & Humanities, General/Other Artists' Services
<b>Population Served</b>	People/Families with of People with Disabilities, Elderly and/or Disabled, Families
<b>Program Short Term Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Exhibiting artists will meet or exceed their sales expectations</li><li>- Additional exhibition opportunities for artists as a result of exhibiting at ODG</li></ul>
<b>Program Long term Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The work of artists with disabilities is appreciated and valued by the community.</li><li>- Artists with disabilities have equal opportunities to create and exhibit their artwork as those without disabilities.</li></ul>
<b>Program Success Monitored By</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Track sales for each exhibit</li><li>- Surveys from exhibiting artists</li><li>- Tracking additional exhibit opportunities as a result of exhibiting at ODG</li></ul>
<b>Examples of Program Success</b>	<p>During the opening reception of Marguerite MacDonald's show "Snow on the Brain", which reflects her experience finding beauty in Multiple Sclerosis (MS), an audience member with MS was captivated by a painting called "Trying to Walk". It was a painting of a naked woman with a blurred-out face. The audience member stood up and said, "Every person who is involved in my care should come and see this show. That painting, 'Trying to Walk' expresses exactly how I feel in a way that words cannot".</p> <p>In addition, after exhibiting his artwork at the VSA MA Open Door Gallery and being featured on The Boston Globe this past January, artist Jon Sarkin made a connection to exhibit his work at another gallery.</p>

# Management

## CEO/Executive Director

**Executive Director**

Ms. Nicole Agois

**Term Start**

Sept 2017

**Email**

nicole@vsamass.org

**Experience**

Nicole Agois is a musician, educator, arts administrator and disability advocate who works at the intersection of arts, education and disability. As the Managing Director of VSA Massachusetts, the State Organization on Art and Disability, she oversees programs that provide inclusive arts-integrated instruction to 1500+ students, supports educators with inclusive arts teaching practices, and creates opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in the cultural life of their communities. For the past 12 years, she directed VSA MA's COOL Schools program, where she closely examined and contributed to research on the application of Universal Design for Learning in the Arts. She co-authored a case study on UDL in "The Contours of Inclusion: Inclusive Arts Teaching and Learning", and developed numerous professional development initiatives, professional learning communities and conferences on the subject. She served as a UDL curriculum reviewer for SchoolTalk in Washington, D.C., and as National Institute Faculty for VSA International.

In 2016 Nicole was selected as a member of the Leadership Council for Boston Creates, the cultural planning process for the city of Boston, where she contributed to conversations about equity and inclusion that were critical to the development of the plan. She currently serves on the Advisory Boards of the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs, and the Adaptive Music Institute in Springfield, MA. Born and raised in Lima, Peru, Nicole received her Master of Education in Arts in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the Boston Conservatory.

## Former CEOs

**Name****Term**

Maida S. Abrams

Mar 1980 - Sept 2000

Charles J Washburn

Oct 2000 - Sept 2017

## Senior Staff

**Jon Ezrin****Title**

Business Manager

**Experience/Biography****Nicole Agois Hurel****Title**

Director of COOL Schools

**Experience/Biography**

**Aysha Upchurch****Title** Associate Director of COOL Schools**Experience/Biography****Mia Branco****Title** COOL Schools Program Manager**Experience/Biography**Staff Information

<b>Full Time Staff</b>	3
<b>Part Time Staff</b>	17
<b>Volunteers</b>	20
<b>Contractors</b>	1
<b>Retention Rate</b>	67%

Staff Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	1
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	2
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	1
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0 0

Staff Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	2
<b>Female</b>	2
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

Formal Evaluations

<b>CEO Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>CEO/Executive Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation</b>	N/A
<b>Senior Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	N/A
<b>NonManagement Formal Evaluation</b>	Yes
<b>Non Management Formal Evaluation Frequency</b>	Annually

## Plans & Policies

<b>Organization has a Fundraising Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Organization has a Strategic Plan?</b>	Under Development
<b>Years Strategic Plan Considers</b>	3
<b>Date Strategic Plan Adopted</b>	Jan 2012
<b>Does your organization have a Business Continuity of Operations Plan?</b>	No
<b>Management Succession Plan?</b>	No
<b>Organization Policy and Procedures</b>	Yes
<b>Nondiscrimination Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Whistleblower Policy</b>	No
<b>Document Destruction Policy</b>	No
<b>Directors and Officers Insurance Policy</b>	Yes
<b>Is your organization licensed by the Government?</b>	No
<b>Registration</b>	No
<b>Permit?</b>	Yes

## Collaborations

Wheelock Family Theater  
Boston Children's Museum  
Visual Communications Clearinghouse  
Cultural Access New England (CANE)  
MFA Boston  
WGBH  
Museum of Science  
John F. Kennedy Library and Museum  
Boston Public Schools  
Worcester Public Schools  
Massachusetts Cultural Council  
Lesley University  
Boston Arts Consortium for Health (BACH)

## Awards

### **Awards**

<b>Award/Recognition</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Year</b>
COMMONWEALTH AWARD	Massachusetts Cultural Council	1997
Champions of Arts Education Award (for partnership with Patrick O'Hearn School in Dorchester)	Massachusetts Alliance for Arts Education	2007
Outstanding Professional Development Services	VSA (Home Office)	2010

# Board & Governance

## Board Chair

<b>Board Chair</b>	Mr. John Altomare Esq.
<b>Company Affiliation</b>	Seven Hills Foundation
<b>Term</b>	Dec 2016 to Dec 2019
<b>Email</b>	jaltomare@faelaw.com

## Board Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Status</b>
John N. Altomare	FA & E Law Offices	Voting
Jeanne Antonucci	Retired	Voting
Charles Austin	Retired	Voting
Maureen F. Binienda	Sout High	Voting
Charles P. Conroy	Charles P. Conroy Colsulting, LLC	
Brian R. Forts	Bennett & Forts	Voting
Melvin P. Gordon	Gordon Realty Corp.	Voting
Dr. Mark Hasso	Wentworth Institute of Technology	Voting
John Healy	Manufacturing Advancement Center	Voting
David A. Jordan	Seven Hills Foundation	Voting
Robert L. Mahar	Retired	Voting
Deborah Needleman	Newton-Wellesley Hospital	Voting
David Paydarfar	UMass Memorial Healthcare and UMass Medical Shool	Voting
Frances Polito	Retired	Voting
John M. Prosser	G.F. Wright Investment Co.	Voting
Marianne E. Rogers	Roggers Insurance Agency Inc.	Voting
Claire M. Swan	Retired	Voting

## Board Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	1
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	16
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	0
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0 0

## Board Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	11
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<b>Female</b>	6
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

### Board Information

<b>Board Term Lengths</b>	3
<b>Board Term Limits</b>	2
<b>Number of Full Board Meetings Annually</b>	12
<b>Board Meeting Attendance %</b>	80%
<b>Written Board Selection Criteria?</b>	No
<b>Written Conflict of Interest Policy?</b>	Yes
<b>Percentage Making Monetary Contributions</b>	100%
<b>Percentage Making In-Kind Contributions</b>	100%
<b>Constituency Includes Client Representation</b>	Yes

### Standing Committees

Executive  
 Education  
 Finance  
 Development / Fund Development / Fund Raising / Grant Writing / Major Gifts  
 Nominating

### Additional Board Members and Affiliations

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jeremy Alliger	Alliger Arts
Elaine Fallon	Quinsigamond College (retired)
Robin Foley	Seven Hills Foundation
James Hurley	Cape Cod Collaborative Arts Network
Joseph Ingram	Two Ten Footwear Foundation
Thomas Keane	Concord Carlisle High School
Martha McKenna	Lesley University
Carl Richardson	MA State House
John Voci	New England Public Radio

# Financials

## Fiscal Year

<b>Fiscal Year Start</b>	July 01, 2017
<b>Fiscal Year End</b>	June 30, 2018
<b>Projected Revenue</b>	\$620,150.00
<b>Projected Expenses</b>	\$665,859.00
<b>Endowment?</b>	No
<b>Spending Policy</b>	N/A
<b>Credit Line?</b>	No
<b>Reserve Fund?</b>	Yes
<b>Months Reserve Fund Covers</b>	4

## Detailed Financials

### Revenue and Expenses

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$622,832	\$525,996	\$358,598
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$642,902	\$652,228	\$453,621

### Revenue Sources

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Foundation and Corporation Contributions</b>	\$184,250	\$150,635	\$41,000
<b>Government Contributions</b>	\$243,194	\$180,000	\$179,900
<b>Federal</b>	\$15,000	--	--
<b>State</b>	\$225,194	\$177,000	\$176,900
<b>Local</b>	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
<b>Unspecified</b>	--	--	--
<b>Individual Contributions</b>	\$22,786	\$27,282	\$26,561
<b>Indirect Public Support</b>	--	--	--
<b>Earned Revenue</b>	\$147,544	\$162,610	\$105,408
<b>Investment Income, Net of Losses</b>	\$25,058	\$5,469	\$5,729
<b>Membership Dues</b>	--	--	--
<b>Special Events</b>	--	--	--
<b>Revenue In-Kind</b>	--	--	--
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--

### Expense Allocation

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Program Expense	\$522,930	\$537,963	\$363,621
Administration Expense	\$94,322	\$87,665	\$70,000
Fundraising Expense	\$25,650	\$26,600	\$20,000
Payments to Affiliates	--	--	--
Total Revenue/Total Expenses	0.97	0.81	0.79
Program Expense/Total Expenses	81%	82%	80%
Fundraising Expense/Contributed Revenue	6%	7%	8%

### Assets and Liabilities

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Total Assets	\$603,084	\$514,042	\$506,835
Current Assets	\$600,289	\$512,763	\$505,559
Long-Term Liabilities	--	--	--
Current Liabilities	\$505,292	\$396,180	\$262,742
Total Net Assets	\$97,792	\$117,862	\$244,093

### Short Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Current Ratio: Current Assets/Current Liabilities	1.19	1.29	1.92

### Long Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Long-Term Liabilities/Total Assets	0%	0%	0%

### Top Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Top Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Second Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--
Third Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	--	--	--

## Capital Campaign

Currently in a Capital Campaign?	No
Capital Campaign Anticipated in Next 5 Years?	No

## Comments

### Foundation Staff Comments

VSA Massachusetts Inc. (VSA MA) became an Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation Inc. in November 2014. As such, the most recent 990s and audits posted above are that of Seven Hills Foundation Inc. and data about VSA MA is included in those files. Financial summary data in the charts and graphs is per VSA Massachusetts Inc.'s records. Please note the 2015 data above reflects an eight month period, highlighting VSA's transition to becoming an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation Inc.