

Deb Polich

President/CEO

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Deb Polich champions the arts + creative industries in her professional, volunteer and personal life. She has 30+ years of professional nonprofit arts administration experience.

Since 1993 Polich has served as the president/CEO of **Artrain**, recipient of the National Medal for Museum Service. Founded in 1971 and originally delivering its programs on a museum-on-a-train that used America's rail system, Artrain has helped start or strengthen hundreds of cultural organizations. It has shared [*award-winning exhibitions, art education programs and the world's finest artists*](#) with millions of people in hundreds of communities across the United States and, more recently, Canada. Countless individuals – from schoolchildren to grandparents – have experienced Artrain programs. Many have become art and creative practitioners, consumers, supporters, advocates and/or volunteers.

In 2008, as the rail industry restricted access to its railways, Artrain retired and sold its museum-on-a-train. Though the train was gone, Artrain's mission, experience, commitment to and success of strengthening the field of arts and creativity was not. Artrain's board adapted. It kept its award winning community building program at its core and continued to define community broadly: geographically or as people connected by common interests as it transformed Artrain into a project management, administrative and fiscal sponsorship service business. Today, Artrain's clients include artists and/or arts and cultural institutions intent on producing and delivering art-infused outreach programs of all types – art, culture, history, science, environment and more – to people in villages, towns and cities and continue to expand personal horizons and strengthen local cultural infrastructure.

[**Creative Washtenaw \(formerly The Arts Alliance\)**](#) is one of Artrain's clients and since 2013, Polich has served as its president/CEO. A regional agency, Creative Washtenaw's mission is to provide services, support and advocate for artists, creative workers, organizations, businesses, educational and government entities to ensure that Washtenaw County, Michigan – the greater Ann Arbor area – remains a great place for all to create, live, work, learn, play and visit. Creative Washtenaw serves professionals, amateurs, students and industry experts leading the sector locally, nationally and internationally. They have creative practices, own creative businesses and hold creative jobs in profit, nonprofit, educational and government entities and produce creative goods, services and programs for county residents and visitors.

Polich is the co-host of the [**creative:impact**](#) on NPR affiliate WEMU 89.1 FM, a show that focuses on the breadth and depth of the creative industries through the creative people, from students to industry experts leading the sector locally, nationally and internationally, with deep connections to Washtenaw County who make the greater Ann Arbor area one of Michigan's strongest and most vibrant arts + creative industry hubs.

Polich earned a B.S. in arts administration with a business minor from Eastern Michigan University (EMU). She began her career at the historic Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor beginning as the box office manager and leaving seven years later as the managing director. She serves/has served on the boards of numerous nonprofit arts and community organizations. She serves on the Michigan Works! Southeast and EMU's Masters of Public Administration boards, is the Michigan arts advocacy state captain for Americans for the Arts and on the National Small Business Association leadership council. She is a frequent guest lecturer at the University of Michigan and EMU.