

## Illinois Creative Sector State Policy Agenda (2023–2025)

A vibrant creative sector is vital to the civic, social, and economic strength of Illinois. Gathered through extensive, statewide engagement with the field, the set of policy priorities below reflects the breadth and diversity of Illinois' creative sector—individual artists, creative businesses, nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and arts educators—and serves as a roadmap for the sector's short- and long-term health.

- **Increase the state's support for IACA to \$30 million in FY2024**

Increase the annual state reappropriation to the Illinois Arts Council Agency to \$30 million, enabling the expansion of equitable access to the arts, especially in BIPOC and rural communities, and awarding more grants through local arts agencies.

- **Reappropriate Illinois Creative Recovery Grant funding for FY2024**

Enacted last session, the \$50 million ICR program will provide vital COVID recovery grants to the creative sector. The program is well underway (application portal closes May 10, 2023), but DCEO will need additional time, into FY2024, in order to disburse the funds.

- **Empower artists through workforce development**

Implement and fully fund Illinois Creative Workforce Activation (ICWA) and other workforce development initiatives focused on empowering individual artists. ICWA will help artists apply their creative skills also to other industries.

- **Ensure the creative sector has access to quality, affordable benefits**

Ensure that artists, creative small businesses, and arts nonprofits have access to quality, affordable benefits, such as health insurance, retirement, and dependent care. Reform existing public systems to account for the creative sector's unique needs and/or establish new programs that pool, coordinate, and subsidize benefits tailored to sector stakeholders.

- **Make more space available for the work of sector stakeholders**

To address the shortfall of affordable rehearsal, program, and performance space, provide tax incentives to landlords who rent to arts nonprofits. Facilitate partnerships with land banks / municipalities to help sector stakeholders obtain and use vacant properties.

- **Invest in the creative sector's physical infrastructure**

Develop and fund an arts capital program—state grants, favorable-term loans, and technical assistance—to support construction / renovation projects related to arts and culture.

- **Support artists in their innovative work to address societal challenges**

Create a statewide Illinois Artists Corps, funded and/or coordinated by the state, that employs artists and small arts nonprofits to (1) develop and implement innovative solutions to local community challenges and/or (2) help meet the needs of other small nonprofits.

- **Strengthen and expand Illinois' creative industries**

Provide state funding for new and/or expanded creative industries incubation centers across the state, as well as support creative entrepreneurs and businesses through new / expanded technical assistance specific to the creative industries.

- **Partner with the sector to bring audiences back**

Provide state funding for a coordinated, statewide marketing campaign that moves audiences to return to pre-COVID levels, bringing back much needed earned revenue.

- **Enact protections for freelance workers**

Assist the creative sector's many freelancers by enacting state legislation that guarantees them basic protections, such as timely payments, the use of written contracts, and anti-retaliation provisions. New York City's Freelance Isn't Free Act can serve as a model.

- **Lower the threshold for the State's audit requirement**

To alleviate a costly administrative burden on small arts nonprofit organizations, enact state legislation (e.g., SB72 / HB1197) that raises the amount of charitable contributions a nonprofit must receive before being required to submit a full audit to the State.

- **Ensure quality arts learning is part of every student's education**

Arts learning is essential for all Illinois students. Through the arts, students learn to think critically, solve problems creatively, and work collaboratively. Require all high school students to complete a minimum number of arts courses to graduate, as well as require a minimum number of minutes of arts instruction for all elementary school students.

- **Advance the implementation of the ESSA arts indicator**

Continue implementing Illinois' Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) arts indicator, which has been temporarily paused due to the pandemic. Starting as early as School Year 2024-25, ISBE will consider arts education in its evaluation of all K-12 schools.

- **Update and strengthen the AFL grant program**

Update the statute authorizing the Illinois Arts and Foreign Language (AFL) grant program, so that current arts education opportunities and challenges are addressed. Significantly increase AFL funding.

For more information on these policy priorities, contact **Jonathan VanderBrug, Deputy Director-Civic Engagement, Arts Alliance Illinois**, at [vanderbrug@artsalliance.org](mailto:vanderbrug@artsalliance.org) or visit [artsalliance.org](https://artsalliance.org).



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