

Arts  
Alliance<sup>LL</sup>

2024

Impact Report

# Arts Alliance<sup>IL</sup>

**Arts Alliance Illinois builds the creative sector's power through advocacy and connection to resources to improve the quality of life in communities statewide.**

We advocate with and behind the creative sector for public investment. Our programs, research, and resources also equip creatives and cultural organizations to advocate for themselves, navigate critical funding opportunities, and advance equity in their own work and across the broader field.

Learn more at [artsalliance.org](https://artsalliance.org).

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Since 1982, Arts Alliance Illinois has been the leading voice supporting creativity in Illinois. This year, we're proud to have helped secure the largest-ever increase in public funding for the arts at the state level, a 75% increase in the grantmaking budget for our state arts agency. As our sector faces the end of one-time government COVID relief funding, new and sustained public funding can provide accessible and equitable support for our vibrant statewide cultural landscape.

Also in 2024 through our public funding navigator and help desk programs, we've connected creatives and cultural organizations with access to new grant opportunities, including capital funds, tourism grants, and small business support programs. We've charted new territory in creative workforce development, researching and finding opportunity pipelines for creative workers to not just survive, but thrive. We've connected artists to underutilized spaces on the south and west sides of Chicago. We're also a proud partner with Cook County, helping implement its historic \$5 million investment in the arts. The new Cook County Arts Initiative, which we championed, awarded 100 grants to arts nonprofits in suburban Cook County in 2024.

We can't do all this work alone! We need creative voices and arts supporters at the table to address our state's most critical challenges. We need you to be part of our Alliance. The stronger our voice, the more we'll get done together.

In community,

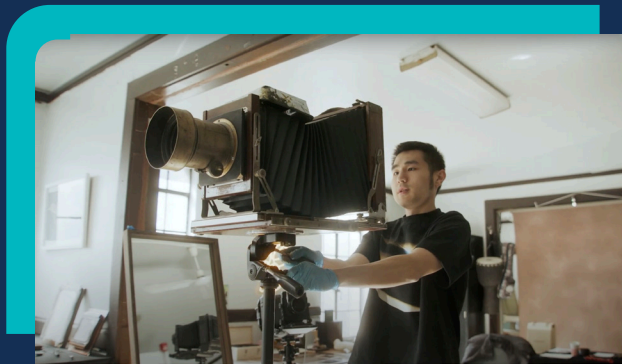


Claire Rice  
Executive Director, Arts Alliance Illinois



*From left to right: Illinois First Lady MK Pritzker, Illinois Arts Council Board Chair and Revel24 Citizen Advocate Award recipient Nora Daley, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, Arts Alliance Board Chair Vickie Lakes-Battle, and Executive Director Claire Rice.*

# Our Impact in Action



Scan me!

**Don't just take it from us.** Use the QR code to hear from artists and cultural leaders across Illinois about the impact of our work.

# 25,000+

in our network, including 350 members who form the core of the largest statewide grassroots coalition of arts advocates in Illinois

# 20,000

advocacy actions taken by our network since 2020

# 1,100

individual artists and creative organizations who have learned about or applied for public funding through our help desk

# \$278M

in state and local funding we've helped generate for arts and culture in Illinois



ALC Member and Advocacy Captain Camille Wilson-White speaks to Rep. Camille Y Lilly during Capital Day.

# policy & advocacy



Played an instrumental role in increasing public funding for the arts in Illinois, with the FY25 State budget including a 75% increase to Illinois Arts Council grantmaking.



Passed the Creative Economy Task Force Bill (HB4959) to create a strategic plan to improve the creative economy in the state.



Hosted a Capital Day in Springfield that integrated educational programming for captains and advocacy leaders, building direct connections with legislators.

**Arts Alliance advocates with and behind creative workers, organizations, and businesses to advance the causes most critical to arts and culture. We also equip the creative sector to advocate for itself.**

We do this by organizing statewide coalitions and direct action campaigns; convening arts advocates across the state to discuss the issues that matter most and co-create our statewide policy agenda; supporting local community-led advocacy efforts; and educating the creative sector through advocacy workshops and informative policy updates.



connecting  
**artists** with  
**needed space**

Chicago artist Kahari Rastafari works in his studio at First Presbyterian Church in Woodlawn.

The South Side Artists in Sacred Spaces program, a collaborative project of Partners for Sacred Places, Arts Alliance Illinois, and Bustling Spaces, LLC, connects congregations with available space and a need for additional ongoing revenue to artists and arts organizations needing affordable, accessible space for rehearsals, performances, classes, administrative needs, and other programming.



Awarded six congregations grants of up to \$35,000 each to enhance their facilities through capital improvements and equipment purchases.



Connected 26 artists with affordable, accessible space to conduct their work.

*The South Side Artists in Sacred Spaces program (SSASS) has been one of the most forward-thinking funding initiatives I have seen... With the help of this program, we have quickly transformed our aging, 40,000 square foot cathedral into a bustling community hub for hundreds of artists, makers, and neighbors in the South Side of Chicago.*

**- Rev. David Black, First Presbyterian Church of Chicago**





Senior Director of Programs Kacie Smith speaks at a workforce development conference.

moving creative workers from  
**surviving**  
to **thriving**



Developed a Creatives @ Work pilot program for Chicagoland creatives.



Contributed to Chicago citywide creative worker protection advocacy as an advisory committee member and organizational partner for DCASE's campaign, Art is Labor.



Cultivated relationships with key workforce development ecosystem stakeholders.

**The “starving artist” is not a romantic notion but too often an unfortunate reality for artists, arts administrators, and creative workers.**

In 2024, Arts Alliance pursued a combination of research, resource navigation, innovative workforce pilot program development, and policy intervention to support the creative workforce in Illinois.

*“Most of us have to work in multiple sectors just to be able to have an opportunity to do anything in our fields, even if we are experts and highly trained... We should be afforded the same basic professional opportunities as all other sectors.”*

**- Creatives @ Work Focus Group Participant**



connecting  
**creatives** with  
**public funding**

**Government programs can be confusing, hard to identify, and unnecessarily complicated for individual artists, arts nonprofits, and arts-based businesses.** Starting in 2023, Arts Alliance began identifying funding opportunities across multiple government agencies that can be leveraged for creatives, cultural organizations, and companies and connecting the sector with affordable financial literacy and business development resources.

Our funding navigator program lives at the juncture of advocacy and service, with the Alliance uniquely positioned to both educate the public and advocate for the removal of barriers within government programs.

*Public Funding Navigator Megan Lewis shares information about the Help Desk at an event.*



Hosted 25 webinars addressing key topics like government grants and loans, financial literacy, and business development.




Engaged over 800 creatives through our Help Desk, workshops, and events.



Supported key government funding programs, including the Cook County Arts Nonprofit Relief Grant and B2B New Business.



Revamped our help desk to collect data that directly informs our advocacy and better equips our team to assess the needs of the field.



“

Thanks to the relentless support of the Help Desk, I was able to navigate the grant process successfully—something I couldn't have achieved on my own. They fought for my funding for months on end before it was finally approved, showing incredible tenacity every step of the way.

Services like the Help Desk are crucial for creatives in Illinois, providing not only technical support but also the encouragement needed to turn our goals into reality.

- **Luke O'Neill, Union Street Arts**





Arts Alliance's Liberation Learning cohort together in Peoria in summer 2024.

## building connections across the sector



Forged lasting statewide connections among arts leaders from various disciplines, organizational positions, and backgrounds within the Illinois arts community.



Brought together the statewide cohort for an in-person retreat in Peoria.



Built a repository of liberation learning resources to be launched in 2025, expanding our cohort's impact.

Arts Alliance's Liberation Learning Group offers a space for cultural sector nonprofit workers to develop a shared analysis of power, racism, and community-driven work in Illinois and build relationships grounded in solidarity and mutual empowerment.

*"AAI's Liberation Learning Group has been the most transformational and informative experience I have had as a professional within the art space in years... I forged new friendships and professional contacts that I truly cherish."*

**- Liberation Learning Group Cohort Member**



Cook County Arts Nonprofit Relief grantee, Art Encounter, hosts a workshop.

empowering the  
**suburban  
arts community**

In 2022, Arts Alliance successfully advocated for Cook County's new \$5 million investment in the arts and culture sector, including recovery funding for suburban organizations and individual artists.

The resulting Cook County Arts initiative, launched in January 2024, is pursuing an ambitious agenda of distributing needed relief funds to the suburban arts community in Cook County and advancing core programs that holistically assess and support the suburban arts community.



Supported Cook County's launch of the Cook County Arts Initiative and the Nonprofit Relief Grant program, which provided relief funds to 100 creative nonprofits in Suburban Cook County.



Along with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, developed and launched a 15-month plan for researching and assessing the arts and culture landscape in suburban Cook County in order to strengthen artists and arts organizations and businesses.



# advancing critical research

Team members Claire Rice and Bindu Poroori strategize statewide outreach.

Advocacy, case-making, and building public support for arts and culture are not possible without a strong awareness of our sector's present-day social and economic landscape.

*“Arts Alliance is an advocacy powerhouse. A hallmark of that success is an evidence-based approach toward advancing the needs of our creative community.”*

**- Rebecca Rugg**  
**Dean of the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, University of Illinois, Chicago**



Created useful and applicable research briefs on creative workforce, arts funding, and impact of the creative economy through a new collaboration with the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, University of Illinois-Chicago, and Discovery Partners Institute.



Released the State of the Sector report, featuring takeaways from over a dozen statewide listening sessions the Alliance hosted in late 2022 and early 2023 and serving as a compilation of the concerns, ideas, and calls to action of creative professionals across Illinois.



organizational  
**growth & stability**

The Arts Alliance team at Revel24, our annual benefit that took place in May at the Ramova Theatre in Chicago.



Hosted a successful Annual Benefit, Revel24, celebrating the achievements of Nora Daley and Amanda Williams.



Expanded staffing to support program growth, including a Public Funding Navigator, Senior Director of Development, Public Funding Communications Manager, Development Manager, Executive Assistant, Director of Creative Workers, Project Manager, and Data Coordinator.



Built a new strategic plan focused on the creative community's needs as shared in our 2022-2023 listening sessions.

Arts Alliance continues to make sure the organization is appropriately staffed to strategically support the creative sector.

We work every day to have a culture that is supportive of staff, retains talent, and fights burnout.

# Looking Forward

As we close out 2024, we face yet another unprecedented period in history. We are reminded that the work to amplify, celebrate, and encourage investment in arts, culture, and creativity continues. We will redouble our efforts to ensure that Illinois is a place where our vibrant, creative community can not just survive but thrive. Arts Alliance continues to center BIPOC and rural voices as we advocate for a strong creative sector across Illinois. Reach out to see how you can be a part of our mission!



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newsletter



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Senior Director of Programs &  
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*As of November 14, 2024*

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Northern Illinois University

**Sam Thousand**  
Musician, Curator, Director

**Taila Howe**  
Chicago Underground  
Film Festival

*As of November 14, 2024*

# Acknowledgments

In addition to our Board, Arts Leadership Council, partners, and the thousands of creative advocates in Illinois, we'd like to thank the following groups and individuals for playing a key role in advancing the needs of our creative community in 2024.

## Corporate, Foundation, Government, and Individual Supporters and Revel24 Sponsors

### \$100,000 and above

Builders Initiative  
Cook County Bureau of Economic Development  
Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)  
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)  
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation  
Walder Foundation

### \$25,000 - \$99,999

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The Crown Family  
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GCM Grosvenor  
Illinois Arts Council (IAC)  
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National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)  
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PNC  
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Linda Johnson Rice  
Steppenwolf Theatre Company  
University of Chicago  
Danny and Anne Wirtz

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The Chicago Community Trust  
Chicago Shakespeare Theater  
Clayco  
Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln  
First Eagle Bank  
Brooke Flanagan  
Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts  
Dedrea and Paul Gray  
Fay Hartog-Levin and Daniel Levin  
Michael J. Hernandez  
Leslie Hindman  
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Ingenuity  
Joffrey Ballet

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Sylvia Neil  
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Old Town School of Folk Music  
Pritzker Traubert Foundation  
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Writers Theatre

### \$1,000 - \$2,499

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## Corporate, Foundation, Government, and Individual Supporters and Revel24 Sponsors *(continued)*

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West Point School of Music  
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### **\$100 - \$499**

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# Arts Alliance Members

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40 North | 88 West  
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Hyde Park Jazz Festival  
Illinois Art Education Association  
Illinois Art Station  
Illinois Humanities  
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra  
Illinois Rock & Roll Museum on Route 66  
in c/o: Black women  
Ingenuity  
Instituto Cervantes of Chicago  
International Latino Cultural Center  
Intonation Music  
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Water Street Studios  
Waukegan Arts Council  
The West Side Show Room  
Winifred Haun & Dancers  
Writers Theatre  
WTTW Communications

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