

Creating a More Equitable Approach for Indiana's Arts Organization Support Grant Program



Indiana Arts Commission

FINAL REPORT

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Prepared by:

Anne Jin Soo Preston, Benjamin Alfaro, and Levon Williams



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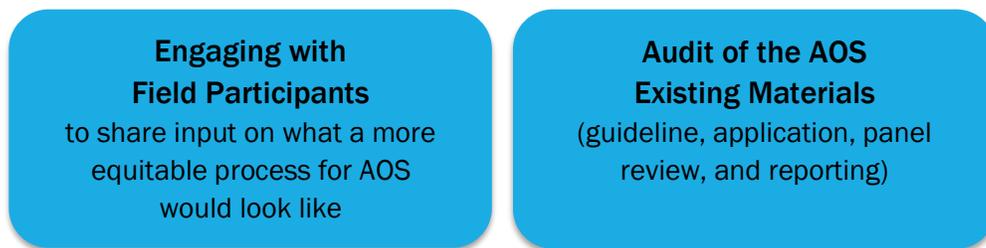
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Background

As the **Indiana Arts Commission** (IAC) continues to create a more equitable grantmaking process for the **Arts Organization Support** (AOS) grant program, as well as advances Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) throughout its grant programs more broadly, it is critical to engage organizations from across the state of Indiana for input and feedback.

Approach

Our approach to identifying a more equitable way to do grantmaking for the AOS program included:



How was the Information Gathered?

Constituents from across Indiana shared their experiences and reflections through a range of facilitated and independent engagement opportunities. In-person sessions were offered at different times during the day and evening. These activities helped define whether the amount of the award equaled the time and effort that goes into receiving AOS funding for their respective organizations.

- Two **Field Input Sessions** on June 22, 2022, and June 24, 2022
- Two **Interactive Public Engagement Forums** open from July 15 - 31, 2022
- One 90-minute **Focus Group** with organizations led by and serving People of Color from Region 7 (Boone, Hamilton, Hendricks, Marion, Hancock, Johnson, Shelby Counties) on August 5, 2022
- Five 30-minute **Interviews** with organizations serving rural constituents from July 25 - August 5, 2022
- A **Survey** of current and past grantees, open from July 15 - 31, 2022

Approximately 1,770 narrative data points were collected and organized by theme to understand emerging trends across the community engagement activities.

Who Participated?

More than 150 constituents were recruited on a volunteer basis, and all sessions were conducted virtually or through online interactive data collection tools. Participants represented:

- Current, past, and potential grantees
- A variety of art practices and disciplines
- Annual budgets ranging from small (under \$50K) to over \$1M and serving more than one region
- Other stakeholders from a range of individuals and organizational types (individual artists, arts supporters/advocates, educators, community or economic development professionals, regional arts partners, funders)
- Urban and rural areas of the state

What was Collected?

Participants provided input and critical feedback about the AOS program to clarify how well it is aligned with the IAC's IDEA values.

Seven key questions (see Figure 1) were used to frame the input gathered and determine specific feedback during the engagement with field participants.

Figure 1: Key Questions

- 1 Who should the Indiana Arts Commission be reaching in the Arts Organization Support program?
- 2 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access be included in the Arts Organization Support applications?
- 3 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access be included in the Arts Organization Support award implementation?
- 4 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access be included in the Arts Organization Support reporting and evaluation?
- 5 What support would help applicants during the Arts Organization Support grant process?
- 6 What meaningful information about underserved communities should the Indiana Arts Commission collect?
- 7 What impact should the Indiana Arts Commission have on the Arts in Indiana through the Arts Organization Support Program?

Limitations

The IAC offers multiple grant opportunities. Participants, in some instances, were unable to differentiate the details of the AOS grant program and other grant opportunities offered throughout the state. The recruitment process of field participants was not targeted specifically to reach any quota by any demographics (e.g., age, geography, region, etc.) except for the interview and focus group participants. Participants in those sessions were invited by the IAC directly or by partners of the IAC. Participants were recruited specifically to represent rural communities and organizations led by and serving People of Color.

FINDINGS

Priority Areas of Consideration from Field Input

Across all data collected, the following three major takeaways resonated the most with the consulting team and are recommended to prioritize in future AOS grant planning:

Targeted support is needed to increase organizational capacity in the sector.

[Key Questions 1, 5, 6]

- A gap in support was identified amongst prospective applicants, and smaller organizations with budgets under \$50K and organizations with limited staff. Organizations like this require increased resources to grow their operational infrastructure for the administrative workload of government grants. Comparatively, larger institutions often have the knowledge and capacity to navigate complex funding opportunities without additional resources of this nature.
- Specific skill-building, training, and workshops will address a significant gap in capacity most urgently experienced by smaller organizations.
- Opportunities to learn from and potentially partner with peers, identify local resources, and/or share revenue strategies could significantly impact smaller arts groups that do not currently have the capacity or aspiration to become a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Grant procedures place a significant burden on administrative operations.

[Key Questions 2, 3]

- Current AOS applications and reports require a considerable amount of resources and staff time to complete compared to other grant opportunities inside and outside of the state.

- Complex questions and language barriers make the process increasingly difficult for less experienced applicants to comprehend, and data collection requests exceed what organizations understand how to measure and manage.
- Streamlining the application processes by removing repetitive questions and automating some aspects of the process could both save time and staff capacity for applicants and the IAC staff.

AOS awards are not substantial enough to have meaningful effects on operating budgets of all sizes. [Key Questions 4, 7]

- Limited award amounts impact grantees' ability to realistically address operational expenses at their organizations, particularly long-term staff costs, and artist/volunteer stipends.
- For smaller organizations that need to hire contracted grant writers, the cost of services to submit and manage a grant application can often negate the revenue received from grant awards.
- The strategy of expanding AOS eligibility by lowering the budget threshold for organizations with budgets under \$50K would further limit the funding amounts each grantee receives. This would go against what 85% of field participants wanted from AOS funds, which was to, “provide meaningful impact to organizations.” However, the support needed for organizations with budgets under \$50K will need to be directly addressed to achieve the IAC’s IDEA goals.

Areas of Improvement to Grant Materials and Process

A review of the AOS guidelines, application, panel reviews, and reporting processes with the insights from the field participants revealed a few distinct areas for improvement. The most recent materials from FY2022 and FY2023 were used for this process.

GUIDELINES - FY23 ARTS ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

- **Streamline the guidelines into one document and add a section noting the regional differences in funding allocation.**
Applicants are frequently overwhelmed by the process and cannot always find the information they need in the grant guidelines. All processes and expectations should be included from application through reporting.
- **Provide relevant examples.**
Applicants want to see tangible examples referenced in the guidelines so they can model and understand what data collection processes are required throughout the duration of the grant cycle.

- **Expand information that is not fully explained or missing in the guidelines.**
Details not mentioned in current guidelines (or linked to external sources) include ADA compliance requirements before receiving the grant award; examples of application questions, financial documents needed, and letters to government officials; the role of the Regional Arts Partners in the IAC grantmaking process; and an explanation of reporting requirements for federal and state agencies.
- **Significant notice of changes between grant cycles and standardization of how changes are notated in materials.**
Widely circulating any significant changes to the application between grant cycles before they take effect is a priority for grantees. Also, consistent and clear notation of application changes will help grantees plan and develop compelling applications.

APPLICATION - FY 23 ARTS ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

- **Create a separate application for first-time applicants.**
One process that streamlines the eligibility questions and the application questions since there are several places where the information requested is duplicated.
- **Improve online portal navigation and add auto-populating features.**
Simplifying the applicant experience of online tools like the eligibility questionnaire and application form could improve efficiency for applicants and the IAC staff (e.g., auto-generating a Grant ID, determination/notification of eligibility, etc.).
- **The eligibility questionnaire should focus on items that directly correspond to what is listed on the IAC website.**
Currently, the eligibility questionnaire includes information that is not clearly identified as a condition of eligibility listed on the IAC's website or asks for information that is duplicated in the application.
- **Add evaluative panel scoring to the application sections.**
Evaluative panel scoring is not labeled near the application questions and therefore when applicants are listening to their panel review, they lack the understanding of what areas are weighted more than others.
- **Add an open field to describe community engagement and the progress of IDEA.**
The need for more narrative space to describe how organizations are addressing the components of IDEA and other community engagement through external programming is vital to explain organization-specific challenges and progress.

PANEL REVIEW - FY 23 ARTS ORGANIZATION SUPPORT EVALUATION FORM

- **Provide a transparent scoring rubric with clear scoring criteria.**
Creating a simple scoring rubric with a numeric scale and concise descriptions will

reduce panel biases and support the interpretation and analysis of information in the application.

- **Define and strengthen Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) assessment criteria.**

Developing a rubric for IDEA criteria will also help panelists understand what they need to look for in applicant proposals, especially if they are unfamiliar with IDEA concepts.

FINAL GRANT REPORT - FY 22 ARTS ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

- **Rationales are missing for why specific impact questions are being asked.**
The final report uses a variety of question types (e.g., multiple choice, narrative, and point scales) to assess the impact of AOS awards. Descriptions of why questions are being asked, especially those not required by federal agencies, would provide greater transparency for grantees to understand how their responses are being used by the IAC.
- **Additional narrative fields will help grantees describe how the grant affected their organizational work.**
Questions focused on audience engagement do not consistently include options to discuss responses in detail. Questions on topics like “Creative Aging,” “Relationship with Schools,” “Arts Integration,” and “Community Development” are presented as multiple choice without the opportunity to provide further context.
- **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) progress is not adequately measured.**
The primary question focused on IDEA in the final report asks which process documentations are active at grantee organizations (e.g., IDEA inclusion in strategic plans, candidate hiring procedures, staff training, and/or equity statements) but does not ask how the AOS grant influenced IDEA advancement.
- **Merit awards incentivize IDEA as criteria for additional funding.**
Aside from the question referenced above, goal setting related to IDEA is limited to the competitive merit award criteria, which may encourage “favorable” responses over authentic reflection. This reinforces a fear shared by field input that they may be penalized for less-developed IDEA progress.
- **Notification about specific expectations of data reporting when grants are awarded.**
Advance communication of final reporting data collection needs (e.g., audiences, artist involvement, population demographics, financial information, etc.) will help organizations track this information during the grant period.

What Will Happen with This Information?

The IAC will use these findings and subsequent research to inform future planning for the AOS grant program. A detailed summary of findings from the field participants in each of the project’s seven key questions is presented in the pages that follow.

Equitable Grantmaking Input from Field Participants for the Indiana Arts Commission's Arts Organization Support (AOS) Grant Program

Priority Areas of Consideration from Field Input

The following pages provide a detailed summary of the information collected from field participants during the field input sessions, interactive public engagement sessions, one-on-one interviews with organizations serving rural constituents, focus group with organizations led by and serving People of Color from Region 7, and the survey of current and past grantees.

1

Who should the Indiana Arts Commission be reaching in the Arts Organization Support (AOS) program?



Two major groups were identified by respondents as priority populations to reach through future AOS grantmaking:

- (1) organizations that operate in rural communities
- (2) small organizations with operating budgets below \$50,000.

- First-time applicants and emerging organizations were also identified as priority populations, specifically, those needing added capacity to reach the budget threshold or without a strong ability to do fundraising.
- Additional populations mentioned: veterans, seniors, communities of color, multilingual communities, folk arts, other discipline-specific communities, youth, and non-arts organizations that do arts programming.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Regional Arts Partners effectively expand recruitment efforts, resource sharing, and grant opportunity promotions in rural areas. Grantees that have a strong relationship with the Regional Arts Partners feel strongly connected to the IAC.
- During the pandemic, the IAC was particularly helpful with resource accommodations as well.
- The model used for the *On-Ramp* grant program could help incubate emerging organizations if implemented in the AOS grant program.



What is not working?

- The eligibility and the funding formula used to calculate award amounts do not factor in organizations with less operational capacity.
- Organizations new to government grant system requirements face barriers due to the accessibility of materials (e.g., website, guidelines, etc.), preventing them from even starting the application process.
- Organization eligibility is currently restricted to either AOS or *Arts Project Support* applications in the same fiscal year, regardless of award status. This impacts small organizations/groups where operating and program funding have the same function.



What changes should be considered?

- Increase intentional relationship-building efforts to reach emerging organizations, those led by and serving people of color, and those based in rural areas. The IAC should be more visible in these communities through local media outreach, such as community radio.



Priorities

- Regional Arts Partners should continue to be accountable to their assigned region and ensure communities are informed throughout the grant cycle.
- Many arts organizations lack the capacity needed to access government grants and complete the technical processes required through all stages of the grant cycle (application through reporting).
- Community engagement feedback from identified priority populations should consistently inform strategy development for future grant decisions.

2 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) be included in AOS applications?

Key Field Findings

The time and resources required to complete AOS applications by organizations that are less experienced with government grants or need to hire a grant writer do not equal the value they receive in grant funding.

- The cost to hire a grant writer for organizations/groups that do not have experience with government grants, or for whom English is not their first language, negates their grant award.
- The language used in AOS applications (including acronyms) is a barrier. Some participants shared that questions felt redundant, confusing, or difficult to understand instructions even with definitions provided.
- Responses to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) questions would benefit from opportunities to share examples of how IDEA progress is unique to their organization and programs.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Grant modifications like multi-year awards and/or providing previous information from past applications lessen the administrative burden on applicants. This was especially valuable during the pandemic.
- Submission timelines and deadline reminders ensure applicants have ample time to access and solicit compelling grant proposals.



What is not working?

- Generalized language intended to group multiple demographic populations, like “cultural communities,” should be eliminated.
- For people without government grant experience, the process for obtaining System for Award Management (SAM) registration is difficult to secure without guidance.
- While continuous process improvement is appreciated, significant changes to application questions between grant cycles are not announced before application materials are released.



What changes should be considered?

- The IAC should clearly communicate all supplemental needs for applicants to avoid confusion or administrative backlogs (e.g., SAM/UEI registration and post-award “next steps”).
- A simplified set of application questions related to core evaluative criteria should be prioritized to increase participation in the grant process.
- Formal grant communications lack the warm and approachable language commonly experienced by grantees during IAC staff interactions.
- A reliance on the written word to describe activities is undesirable for organizations/groups with less grant experience or for whom English is not their first language. An option to include alternative formats in addition to the regular application materials would address this challenge.
- Application tools like “grant checklists” should be provided to ensure a clear and shared understanding of process expectations. The grant portal is not user-friendly and document navigation can be confusing.
- IAC should add gender identity to the the IAC’s definition of diversity to consider how intersectionality impacts demographic populations.



Priorities

- Only essential information should be collected during the application process, especially for organizations with limited administrative resources.
- Organizations/groups want the ability to self-define what Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) looks like for their specific community, especially in rural areas.
- IDEA should be prioritized as its own narrative question instead of as an “add-on” to other application sections with limited writing space. Ask what limitations to IDEA an organization may struggle with or anticipate.
- Provide more transparency with the funding amount and the number of awards available in each tier through the AOS program during each grant cycle.

3 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) be included in AOS award implementation?



Once awarded, grantees struggle with the amount of unexpected and often confusing “next steps” required to receive grant allocations—a key difference from other funder processes common in the arts sector.

- The time required to write, manage, and report on AOS grants leaves little remaining funds to support organizational activities meaningfully.
- Multi-year funding for some or all applicant types is desired to reduce the administrative effort of the grant process and provide greater stability for organizations.
- Some constituents are concerned about the same individuals (specifically those of color) being selected to serve on grant panels. The applicant pool needs to expand to ensure various perspectives, subject matter expertise, and lived experiences are reflected, and the same people are not overburdened.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Work towards a more transparent review process that ensures positive experiences and clear rationales for grant awards.



What is not working?

- The process of securing panelists for grant review should be more rigorous, including training on how to confront biases and recognize the values of IDEA in proposal assessments.
- Site visits should be part of the award determination process for the IAC to learn more about applicants and experience their work in action.
- Applicants should receive grant communications promptly, thoughtfully, and in a personalized manner.
- The 75%/25% award distribution schedule limits how organizations can implement funds, especially for small organizations/groups with time-based considerations related to their proposal.



What changes should be considered?

- As there is not a commissioner representing all the IAC funding regions, the IAC needs to better inform the existing commissioners of arts activities on behalf of all regional communities.
- The funding match requirement prevents many smaller organizations from participating in the AOS grant process.



Priorities

- Each application section should be clear in how it is weighted and scored during panel reviews to reduce confusion within the application.
- Grantee selection should consider IDEA alignment based on which proposals are most likely to increase access, address barriers, and increase the diversity of participants within the context of the organization’s work and capacity.

4 How should Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) be included in AOS reporting and evaluation?

Key Field Findings

Greater transparency is desired regarding how information collected from AOS grantee reports is used to inform future decisions for the grant program.

- Despite being a federal requirement, the current model of demographic data collection can be difficult for grantees to track. The use of checkboxes with ranges (e.g., “25% or more”) was viewed as a convenient but one-dimensional approach, whereas adding narrative sections was suggested to allow for impact stories that better illustrate IDEA within the context of the organization and its audiences.
- The final report for AOS is intensive and time-consuming, often taking more administrative resources to complete than the application.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Being adaptive and flexible to reporting structures and requirements during the COVID pandemic.
- Being able to include numbers and examples/stories to demonstrate how IDEA is being addressed and advanced.



What is not working?

- IDEA progress is not measured in the reporting process.



What changes should be considered?

- Celebratory stories from grantee experiences should be collected and shared to amplify their work and demonstrate examples of the AOS program’s impact.
- The written report requirements should be supplemented with conversations and/or site visits to experience how the grant practically affected the organization, its staff, and its audience.
- Grantees whose work serves regional or national audiences have expressed concerns about their data collection methods due to the requirement that organizations must primarily serve and engage Indiana audiences and participants.



Priorities

- IDEA evaluation should be approached as criteria for strengthening the overall ability to integrate IDEA into their grantees’ work rather than as a data-focused measuring tool for demographic information.

5

What support would help applicants during the AOS grant process?

Key Field Findings

Offering year-round training and workshop opportunities to grow peer sector learning could decrease capacity needs for grant management and nonprofit development skill-building from underserved populations.

- Accommodations that clearly set grantee expectations are desired throughout the application process, such as example sharing, resource links, and translation services.
- Adaptive approaches to the grant process like those utilized during the pandemic were deeply appreciated and serve as a model for ongoing opportunities to shift based on the sector's needs.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Prompt and helpful technical assistance is recognized as a significant asset and should continue to be provided when working directly with applicants and grantees.
- Clarifying notes and online documents are effectively used to ensure applicants have adequate access to the information needed throughout the grant process.



What is not working?

- Language and application content should be tested with various organizations to collect feedback on readability, inclusivity, and tone prior to materials going live.
- The “save” functionality of in-progress applications should be improved so applicants do not lose content, especially for those working with limited time and resources.
- Convening space for small organizations, particularly those under the \$50,000 threshold, should be hosted to incubate ideas and develop strategies for operational growth.
- “How-to” tutorials and/or “decision trees” should be offered in the AOS program to articulate the step-by-step process used throughout the grant cycle.



What changes should be considered?

- Technical assistance should be proactive and resist the assumption that individuals who need help during the grant process will seek support rather than abandon the process.
- Balance being transparent with information sharing and oversaturating the website with complex documentation (“info-dumping”).



Priorities

- A combination of recorded instructional or tutorials would allow for more ways to receive the information than just mandatory in-person or written models.
- The values of IDEA should be modeled through clear example sharing and narrative suggestions that set expectations for applicants to begin the process.
- IDEA questions should be more intentionally discussed in the pre-application informational sessions to communicate expectations and anticipated best practices.
- The capacity of the arts nonprofit sector should be further cultivated by offering targeted training and workshops unrelated to specific grant programs.
- More examples or opportunities to learn from peers and share what they are doing as part of the grants process (application, evaluation, reporting).

6 What meaningful information about underserved communities should the Indiana Arts Commission collect?

Key Field Findings

Underserved communities face an extreme urgency to secure funding amidst a philanthropic landscape that has become more competitive and less resourced in recent years. The exhaustive requirements of the AOS program compound the skills needed to apply and receive small award funding.

- Emerging organizations are challenged with describing and articulating their needs (capacity, infrastructure, etc.) using formal grant language.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- Community engagement input in the grant strategy process should continue to be included through listening sessions and feedback opportunities within the grant itself (i.e., “what did we miss?”).



What is not working?

- The size of grantee organizations will impact the capacity they have for fielding data requests, which currently is often greater than their capacity allows. This should be reflected in reporting expectations.
- The data that is collected from grantees need to serve a purpose for the IAC and should be included in the public reporting.



What changes should be considered?

- More opportunities for open-ended questions should be offered for grantees to discuss IDEA in the reporting process, including feedback questions that prompt responses for aspects of the experience the report may have missed.
- Feedback should continue to be collected from organizations and communities that are not active AOS grantees to understand what gaps in knowledge, assumptions, or missing information may exist for that subset of the constituency.



Priorities

- IDEA should be approached as an iterative and collaborative process rather than a rigid concept. Some organizations cannot move as fast toward their IDEA objectives as they may have assumed.



7

What impact should the Indiana Arts Commission have on the Arts in Indiana through the AOS program?

Of those who responded, “meaningful impact to organizations” (85%) and “increased access to under-resourced areas and groups” (66%) were identified as the top two desired outcomes for the AOS program.

- Grantees seek adequate funding that addresses the extent of operational expenses (i.e., enough to cover greater staffing costs or adequate volunteer stipends).
- As a key player in Indiana’s arts funding landscape, the agency could serve a greater role in leveraging introductions between grantees and other philanthropic leaders.
- Arts organizations seek out IAC as a thought leader and resource hub for data sharing and networking that can directly lead to artist employment and organizational development opportunities.
- The limited funds made available through federal allocations have reinforced many organizations' reliance on individual giving and less administratively demanding grant makers than government funders.

WHAT WE HEARD



What is working?

- The statewide model of Regional Arts Partners continues to be viewed as a positive model of decision-making that provides a sense of trust in grantees to steward awards in responsible and ethical ways.
- The *Individual Advancement Program* provided a successful model for how the AOS program can further bridge connections between artists and the public, which was identified as a key outcome.



What is not working?

- Many arts organizations, particularly those led by and serving communities of color, seek additional capacity support to retain talent from leaving the state and to sustain a livable wage workforce.
- Arts organizations that are ineligible for AOS grants struggle to gain traction in capacity and connection to new audiences and support from other funders.



What changes should be considered?

- Public research reports (e.g., Creative Economy Report/Creative Vitality Index) are valuable assets to the sector but need a focus on organizations led by or serving communities of color.



Priorities

- The IAC should continue to evaluate the relationship between the grant-related workload and actual award amount to determine if it's truly functioning as intended.
- Transparency from the IAC about the challenges and experiences along their journey to advance IDEA values will reinforce commitments and demonstrate how constituents can wrestle with similar complex ideas.
- Defining the IAC’s role in coalition-building and advocacy work on behalf of its constituency, as major changes to state funding appropriations to the arts are recognized as a systemic issue that will require formal organizing leadership.

Areas of Improvement to Grant Materials and Process

The following pages provide a detailed summary of the review of Arts Organization Support (AOS) grant materials and process with considerations from field participant input.

FY23 Arts Organization Support

Applicant Guidelines

The considerations below are based on field input regarding the experience of grantees when reviewing the Arts Organization Support (AOS) guidelines. Key recommendations for future iterations of the guideline documentation process include:

1 Regional guidelines should be consolidated into a single, streamlined document.

What isn't working:

- Applicants are visually overwhelmed by the volume of documents to navigate on the website. The perceived differences between regionally specific guidelines create unnecessary complexity for applicants when information is nearly identical between the regions. Currently, the only difference between the documents is the specific funding allocations in 2 regions (Region 1 and Region 7), which can be addressed independently.

What changes should be considered:

- A single document would make online navigation more efficient. Using a uniform approach to presenting the required grant guidelines addresses the perception of a complex system and helps mitigate concerns about perceived regional bias.
- Add a section to the guidelines document specifically for the regional funding allocation differences. Because the bulk of grant information is consistent from region to region, the two areas requiring regionally specific processes should be referenced in a “Funding Allocation” section outlining the differences. A clarifying note about why these changes exist would also be beneficial.

2 Applicant expectations should be clearly identified to avoid confusion prior to applying and after receiving awards.

✘ What isn't working:

- Applicants seek greater transparency in the requirements for AOS applications and final reporting needs. Unique requirements exist for government grants that might be new to first-time applicants. One example from field input was the System for Award Management (SAM)/Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number requirement. Currently it is the 12th item listed in the eligibility requirements but requires significant time, guidance, and understanding by the applicant to secure.
- Links are useful but should not replace full definitions to accommodate offline use. All requirements should be defined in the PDF/printable guidelines document for those accessing materials as hard copies. Links to website resources (e.g., Funding Imperatives) should be paired with complete descriptions.

⊕ What changes should be considered:

- Relevant online resources and examples should be included in the guidelines document. Applicants seek examples that they can model to understand what information and data will actually look like throughout the grant process. To simplify the applicant experience, the guidelines should be viewed as a single source for all expectations during the application process and grant cycle.
- Examples of information missing from the guidelines include:
 - ADA compliance requirements that grantees must address prior to receiving their grant award
 - A sample of application questions and financial document uploads that will be needed once in the online grant portal
 - Deliverables required of grantees throughout the grant cycle like letters to government officials
 - The functional role of Regional Arts Partners beyond contact information
 - A list of reporting requirements that are mandated by federal agencies and a list of those being collected by the IAC for program development purposes

Additional Considerations:

- Significant notice of changes between grant cycles should be given to prospective applicants. Field input suggested that though grantees appreciate the efforts to improve and streamline the information, they want to hear about changes as far in advance as possible. While changes are effectively highlighted in the guidelines document, improved external communications and a “New This Year” section near the beginning of the document would address this need.
- Consistent formatting for new changes from year to year. The IAC does a good job of identifying specific changes in the guidelines for each new cycle, however, these changes are not consistently formatted. The use of red, bold text is the most effective, but some areas only use one of these formats or replace the formatting with a parenthetical note (e.g., “(updated)”).
- Add a section for Regional Arts Partners. Scaling down to a single document would require a new section detailing the Regional Art Partners. Included in this section should be the regionally specific contact information and clarity on the function of each partnership as it relates to applicant needs.

FY23 Arts Organization Support (AOS I) Application

The recommendations below are based on findings from participants in the field and presented in the order of the application sections. Additional considerations related to content areas are included at the culmination of each section.

Section 1: Before You Begin

Field Input suggested that greater instructional clarity is needed in the application experience. It was noted that interpersonal relationships with the IAC staff led to improved ability in navigating grant materials.

DRAFT REVIEW

Draft Reviews:

Draft reviews are offered for first time applicants. Reviews are for completeness, clarity, and feedback on the overall application (not copy editing). The feedback in no way guarantees funding as feedback can only be provided to help you be as competitive as possible based on the application.

- To request a review, complete all of the fields, but do not hit submit.
- **Email your regional partner no later than February 23, 2022, 4:30 pm ET to request a draft review.**

- Returning applicants with relatively limited experience writing grants would benefit from more equitable access to draft reviews by Regional Arts Partners. Currently, this service is only offered to first-time applicants.
- Instructions to “not hit submit” should be emphasized with **red text**.

Questions?

- **About the Program:** Refer to the http://www.in.gov/arts/files/FY19-APS_Region1.pdf **AOS Program Guidelines** or contact your **Regional Arts Partner**
- **About the Online System:** Contact Chapin Schnick at cschnick@iac.in.gov.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- Field participants requested a dedicated staff person be identified for applicant questions regarding the Online System. Currently, general questions about the program link back to the guidelines document and instruct applicants to contact their Regional Arts Partner to answer questions.

Section 2: General Information

Field Input suggests that simplified application processes, clarity in eligibility assessment, and more transparency about the ADA-related costs associated with AOS grants inform positive applicant experiences.

CREATING A GRANT ID

General Information

Grant ID*

Create a grant ID using the following format: FY23AOS-organization's name

Example: FY23AOS-IndianaCeramicSupply

Character Limit: 150

- A Grant ID must be created to begin the application; having this auto-generated as part of the application once the proposal is submitted improves efficiency and ease.

PREVIOUS ARTS ORGANIZATION SUPPORT (AOS) FUNDING SUPPORT

Has the organization previously received Arts Organization Support funding from the IAC?*

Not sure, contact your <https://www.in.gov/arts/2482.htm> Regional Arts Partner.

Choices

- Yes
- No

- Field participants shared that returning grantees would benefit from the previous year's application responses auto-populating, where possible. This would reduce the administrative burden and help applicants track changes from year to year.

ADA COMPLIANCE

Are the organization's facilities*, programs, and activities accessible?*

*anywhere activities, programs or services take place whether owned, leased, or donated to the applicant.

Why are we asking about accessibility? As a federally supported government agency, Indiana Arts Commission grant recipients must comply with all ADA and Section 504 requirements. We're here to help:

- If you need help checking your accessibility, start with the Self-Assessment Checklist on the IAC website.*
- Questions about accessibility? Contact Stephanie Haines at shaines@iac.in.gov or 317-450-9973.*

Choices

- Yes
- No, but will make accommodations as requested.
- No, unable to make accommodations.

- A lack of funding to cover the costs of facility accessibility accommodations disqualifies organizations from applying for an AOS grant and often creates a perception of “hidden” or unexpected additional expense.

1. Is the entry way accessible to people with mobility impairments (patrons who use wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers or who are unsteady)? Yes No

	YES	NO	N/A
Ramps/Lifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand Railing on Ramps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand Railings on Steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doors Open Easily/Automatically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- The ‘Self-Assessment Checklist’ questions ask an overarching accessibility question and if facility accommodations are present. If applicants answer “No” or “N/A” for any of the facility accommodations listed (e.g., ramps/lifts), but “Yes” for the overarching accessibility question, it is unclear if the organization meets the eligibility criteria.

We don't have a budget for braille and ASL and all the things listed on your self-checklist, how can we do what is required?

We recommend putting a small line-item in your budget every year for ‘accessibility.’ You won't know what kind of accommodations might be requested for your programming/events, so it's impossible to know exactly what the budget should be, but you should know the approximate costs of possible accommodations so you can plan ahead. Many accommodations are free or inexpensive. By planning ahead for some likely costs, you may be able find a sponsor specifically for accommodation expenses. We also recommend reaching out to disability advocacy groups in your area who may have information on programs that help subsidize costs.

- The linked FAQ list suggests that an accessibility line item be added to budgets to plan for prospective needs in the future. While accommodation services (e.g., interpreters) are presented with price quotes, the suggestions to “find a sponsor” or reach out to local “disability advocacy groups” leave little time for organizations to secure the resources they need prior to the application.

Additional Considerations:

- In the *General Information* section, accessibility is primarily framed as a requisite for ADA compliance, but the connection with other IDEA-specific questions feels disconnected.

Section 3: Eligibility Questionnaire

Field Input suggested that duplication occurred in several places in the application process (generally) and the following findings highlight examples of where this takes place.

Eligibility Questionnaire

Eligibility Questionnaire

By January 18, 2022 4:30pmET complete this section and notify IAC staff that this section is ready for review.

- IAC staff to notify: Paige Sharp psharp@iac.in.gov
- Organizations must complete the following questions to determine eligibility if the organization has not previously received Arts Organization Support (AOS) funding.
- **Applicants must receive a Notice of Eligibility via email to continue on in applying to this grant program.**
- If you have any questions, contact Paige Sharp psharp@iac.in.gov or 317-416-8536.

- The required Notice of Eligibility can only be secured after alerting the IAC via email. This process would benefit from an auto-generated determination that can screen yes/no answers and minimize the time for review.

Does the organization engage in arts advocacy activities?*

Choices

Yes

No

Does the organization belong to arts-related organizations? Check all that apply.*

Choices

Local arts council

Local/statewide arts advocacy organization

Statewide arts organization (e.g. Indiana Community Theatre Association)

National arts organization (e.g. Americans for the Arts)

No, not applicable

- Questions that are not directly related to eligibility requirements (e.g., fiscal year dates, organizational affiliations, etc.) would be better situated in the application rather than the questionnaire.

(OPTIONAL) Tell us about your organization if it's not clear from the linked information.

Your online presence may say it all, but if not, use the following structure to provide information about your organization:

1. What is the organization's history, mission, and purpose?
2. What programs and services does the organization provide? (e.g. year-round exhibitions, performances, etc.)
 - 2.a. Include information about educational programs and opportunities.

Character Limit: 3000

- Narrative questions asked in the eligibility questionnaire are reiterated in the application (e.g., what is your organization's history, mission, and purpose, etc.). The eligibility questionnaire would be more effective as an objective screening tool that only collected yes/no responses.

Additional considerations:

- The eligibility questionnaire asks about criteria that is not identified as a condition of grantee requirements and should focus on items that correspond to the eligibility listing on the IAC website.
- Information that is answered in the eligibility that appear in the application should auto-populate in later sections where it is asked a second time.

Section 4: Organizational Excellence

Field Input suggested that repetitive content and rigid language in the application take more time and are not relevant.

REPETITIVE APPLICATION CONTENT

Financial Status

What is the organization's fiscal year start date?*
Character Limit: 10

Income/Expense Upload*
Upload a PDF of the organization's most recently completed Income and Expense Statement (aka Profit and Loss or P&L).
Example [Income and Expense Statement](#)
File Size Limit: 2 MB

- If an applicant has already completed the eligibility questionnaire, the requirement to upload an Income/Expense Statement is redundant. [Note: the example link included in the application leads to a broken website.]

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

Is your organization operated by all volunteers?*
Note: Volunteer is defined as someone who is not paid by the organization for their time or services.

Choices
Yes
No

- Field participants shared that organizations that may have one or more paid staff might still consider themselves primarily volunteer-driven. The question may benefit from changing “all” to an option that includes organizational structures like this in the field.

Section 5: Artistic Quality

Field Input suggested that greater clarity in how the evaluative criteria is connected to proposal scoring would strengthen applicants' capacity to grow their fundraising expertise from year to year.

EVALUATIVE SCORING

Artistic Quality

Panelist will use the following criteria to evaluate this section:

Relative to the size of the organization, the extent to which the applicant demonstrates a committed effort to providing quality and/or authentic artistic experience(s) overall.

- Marketing includes up-to-date tools
- Activities of artistic, educational, and cultural value are offered

- The evaluation criteria for artistic quality would benefit from a clear point system or scoring rubric or mechanism to strengthen organizations' understanding of what aspects of their application were stronger than others.
- “Marketing” as a criteria seems disconnected to Artistic Quality.

Section 6: Community Engagement and IDEA

Field Input suggested that applicants are at various points in their journey toward more equitable operations yet feel restricted in how they can describe their progress on the organization's IDEA journey.

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCE CONTEXTS

What does the organization do to increase access, address barriers, and diversify participants?*

Note: Diversity goes beyond racial diversity. The IAC defines diversity as all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

Character Limit: 1500

- In addition to asking what organizations do to increase access, address barriers, and diversify audiences, a supplemental question about specific challenges for community engagement (e.g., geography, population, community) should be considered.

FY23 Arts Organization Support

Panel Review and Evaluation Criteria

The considerations below are based on field input regarding organization’s experiences with grantees during the panel review process. Key recommendations for future iterations of the panel review process include:

1 Provide a transparent scoring rubric to provide panelists with clear scoring criteria.

✖ What isn’t working:

- Criteria are not clear for panelists. The current panel review process assesses proposals based on whether they meet criteria standards and whether they should or should not be recommended for funding. Panelists have the option to include narrative explanations of their decisions, however, there is not a clear system of numerical scoring that allows for more robust evaluation (like in previous years which had a 25-point scale for each of the four major criteria sections).

⊕ What changes should be considered:

- Using a scoring system instead of the current “yes/no/maybe” model would benefit both the IAC and grantees alike. By establishing a clear measurement that weighs different sections of the application, the IAC would have a greater capacity to be more selective in award decisions while grantees would have concise data to understand their grant decision status.
- Rubrics allow transparency for grantees in assessing strengths and weaknesses in their applications. A simple tool that ranges from non-competitive responses (zero points) to highly competitive responses (five points) would create greater transparency in the process.

HIGHLY COMPETITIVE 5 Points	VERY COMPETITIVE 4 Points	COMPETITIVE 3 Points	SOMEWHAT COMPETITIVE 2 Points	MINIMALLY COMPETITIVE 1 Point	NON- COMPETITIVE 0 Points
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The point system could be overlaid with the existing evaluation criteria to increase the depth with which panelists analyze proposals. The addition of concise rubric descriptions for how each point should be interpreted (e.g., what a response may look like...) allows for a deeper understanding of what limitations a proposal may have had.

HIGHLY COMPETITIVE 5 Points	VERY COMPETITIVE 4 Points	COMPETITIVE 3 Points	SOMEWHAT COMPETITIVE 2 Points	MINIMALLY COMPETITIVE 1 Point	NON-COMPETITIVE 0 Points
Criteria descriptions that clearly show what constitutes the above criteria		Criteria descriptions that meets the criteria		Criteria descriptions that lacks specificity or does not align with the criteria	

2 Develop, define, and strengthen the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) criteria for panelists to assess.

✖ What isn't working:

- The emphasis on IDEA throughout the application process does not match the rigor with which it is assessed during panel reviews. Input from the field suggests that grantees are concerned with panelist biases and the lack of opportunities to define IDEA from a regionally/organizationally specific vantage point.

⊕ What changes should be considered:

- Greater training and resources should be provided to panelists for IDEA evaluation. Currently, a 'Resources' section is provided to panelists which links to existing documentation on the IAC website, however, formal instructions and/or training on addressing personal bias are minimal (e.g., a directive to "however challenging, please attempt to review information submitted in the application *individually*, and do not compare applications.")

Further defining for panelists of how IDEA may appear in an applied sense for applicants (see the point system referenced above) would help panelists during their review. In addition, guidance on how IDEA exists beyond a concern of ADA compliance is needed for panelists to authentically assess applications.

3 A closer examination of what motivates assessment criteria is needed for the AOS program to equitably evaluate applicant proposals.

✘ What isn't working:

- Emerging organizations and those with relatively small budgets have expressed the need for greater opportunities to advance their operational capacity. The Arts Organization Support (AOS) grants are often viewed as the primary program at the IAC to achieve these objectives, however, some of the criteria used to assess proposals inherently favor large, more established institutions.

⊕ What changes should be considered:

- Evaluation of financial information is not required. The evaluation of financial information for applicants can instead include a checklist of positive indicators that are not required but demonstrate “good signs of organizational commitments.”
- Evaluation criteria does not universally apply to all sized organizations. One indicator prioritizes operating history of 10+ years, which disadvantages organizations that have been in operation since 2012. Consider lowering this threshold. Additionally, indicators such as “strong pandemic planning” and being a CARES funding recipient suggest substantial administrative and scenario planning capacities not common in smaller organizations.

Additional Considerations:

- Future considerations of merit awards should derive from the required application content only. Merit award determinations during previous year grant cycles were attributed to optional narrative questions. While these supplemental awards are viewed as a helpful resource for providing support to organizations strongly aligned with the AOS program’s objectives, the process should strive to be equitable for all applicants. Revising the review process and rubric as noted above would support this goal.

FY23 Arts Organization Support

Final Report

The recommendations below are based on findings from field input. They are presented in order of reporting sections in the grants portal and include questions provided by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for federal reporting purposes in addition to questions the IAC collects independently for program development.

Section 1: Narrative and Assessment

Field input suggests the desire from grantees to provide greater context for their work from both regional and cultural viewpoints. Providing opportunities to add narratives for existing questions will address the gap in how the information provided by grantees reflects the unique nature of their work.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Narrative and Assessment

Share your story*

If you could share a story or message with the governor, about your organization and its work this past year, what would it be?

Character Limit: 2000

- Framing storytelling exclusively through the lens of what government officials may value can feel disconnected from the impact organizations have on their specific communities.

Select all that apply:*

A. This grant enabled my organization to reach financial and organizational development goals (for example, reached new audiences, gained new donors, received additional grants or awards)

B. This grant enabled my organization to reach artistic goals.

C. This grant enabled me or my organization to support inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, as core principles in my or our work.

- Adding an “Other” option in the list allows grantees to identify areas not reflected in the existing choices. While there is a space that provides an opportunity to share more about the choices selected, the inclusion of a fourth option would help categorize areas of impact beyond what’s currently provided.

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS (IDEA)

Select all that apply:*

- A. Inclusion, diversity, equity, and/or access (IDEA) principles are included in our organization's strategic plan.
- B. Our organization intentionally considers, selects, and supports diverse candidates for board and staff.
- C. Our organization provides training for staff and/or board on cultural competency (e.g. bias training, perceptions of disabilities).
- D. Our organization has an inclusion, diversity, or cultural equity statement.
- E. All of the above.

- Progress toward the IAC's IDEA goals is currently addressed in a single question about the procedures used at grantee organizations. It does not assess how the grant influenced the advancement of IDEA with the organization or its audience. Adding an optional narrative question to expand on the multiple-choice question would allow the grantee to share how they are working towards IDEA.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Creative Aging Interest*

To what extent does your organization have interest in increasing the number of arts programs specifically for people in your community age 65 and older?

Choices

- A. Very high interest
- B. Some interest
- C. Little interest
- D. No interest

- Questions on topics like "Creative Aging," "Relationship with Schools," "Arts Integration," and "Community Development" are presented as multiple choice without the opportunity to provide further context. Adding optional narrative fields will allow grantees to describe how the grant affected their work in such areas.

Section 2: National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Questions

Field input suggests that grantees are unclear on why certain reporting data is requested and how it will be used in the future. As a significant portion of the report consists of federal reporting needs, there is an opportunity to further define how and why federal reporting is embedded in the report and which questions are central to the AOS program's further development.

NEA Questions

Grant ID
Character Limit: 150

Where did your activities occur?*
 Select all counties in **which you hosted or provided** an IAC funded arts activity.

Frequently Asked Question:
Q: What do we mean by an arts activity?
A: A workshop, exhibition, in-school program, artist residency, mural unveiling, etc. Meetings and focus groups are not considered arts activities.

- The section title indicates reporting areas that are mandated by federal agencies and provides FAQs for context for specific questions. However, a short description or rationale that differentiates which questions are used for federal reporting and which are used for program development is needed.

Section 3: Second Year Updates

Field input suggests that organizations are experiencing an acute need for capacity resources but often struggle in identifying which specific tools, training, and approaches are available to them. While questions related to capacity needs are included, guidance on what workshops and resources are currently provided by the IAC, in addition to sharing the areas for capacity-building that grantees may be unaware of, would also be beneficial.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Second Year Update

CAPACITY BUILDING: In what area(s) does your organization need to strengthen?*
 Can be current challenges and/or current areas the organization wants to develop like how to do "x".

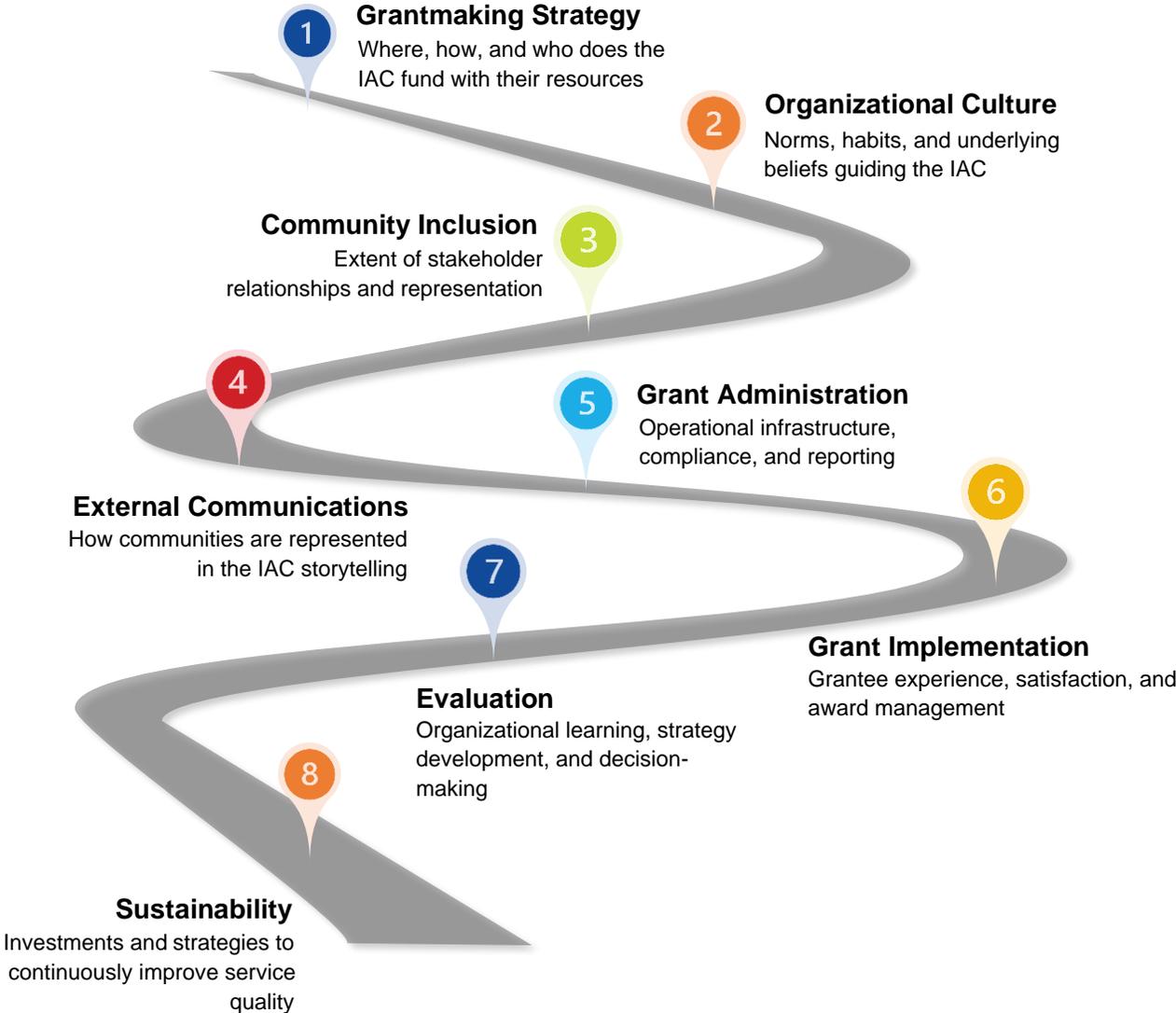
Character Limit: 3500

- Directly asking about grantees' organizational capacity is encouraged. However, adding suggestions of specific topic examples (e.g., naming types of capacity support in the question description) could help guide grantees in thinking about which areas are priorities. In addition to the narrative question, adding a checkbox list with topics for prospective workshop themes could also help determine where the highest needs and largest gaps are in the field.

Road Map for Further Equity Considerations

Efforts to fulfill the IAC’s vision of “arts everywhere, every day, for everyone in Indiana” will require modeling actions that empower creative communities throughout the state. Below are framed considerations toward more sustainable equity efforts, taken from input from the field. This section is intended to be a strategic approach to assess greater progress toward IDEA rather than a finite solution for equity alignment.

The considerations below¹ assess areas for further equitable development for the AOS program based on field input and organized by the following topics:



¹ The numbering is not intended to direct an order of action or priority.

	Short-Term Consideration	Long-Term Consideration
 1 Grantmaking Strategy	<p>Social and cultural identity groups should be consistently specified by name and/or preferred title in all correspondences and documentation.</p>	<p>Connections to arts communities should be mindful of the differences in organizations' self-defined successes, challenges, and solutions.</p>
 2 Organizational Culture	<p>Available grant allocations and other quantitative details about the capacity and parameters of the AOS program should be transparently disclosed as part of the application process.</p>	<p>Applicant organizations of all types, sizes, and disciplines should be encouraged to pursue grant opportunities and be viewed as experts of their own experience.</p>
 3 Community Inclusion	<p>Applicants should have the option to include narrative responses for questions that have been traditionally statistical demographic questions. and the Applicants should also have the opportunity to share information in other mediums (e.g., video, audio, etc.).</p>	<p>Grant materials should be offered in languages other than English and include ways for applicants to describe their work in alternative formats to allow non-grant writers the ability to describe what they do without a reliance that is not dependent on using formal grant language when applying for a grant.</p>
 4 External Communications	<p>The overall tone of external communications and documents should be as free of jargon as possible and easily navigable for general audiences.</p>	<p>Storytelling should center on grantees' experiences and their artistic communities and be shared statewide to illustrate how the funding supports organizations.</p>

	Short-Term Consideration	Long-Term Consideration
 5 Grant Administration	Panelists should receive anti-bias training and training to support an understanding of the many ways that IDEA can show up in applications.	Panelists with various knowledge, wisdom, and lived experience representing different populations (e.g., People of Color, rural residents, older adults, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities) should be actively recruited to serve as panelists. Individuals from these communities who are familiar with nonprofit or grantmaking experience more broadly are a plus.
 6 Grant Implementation	Expectations of grantees should be clear, easy to understand, and navigate throughout the grant cycle.	Comprehensive technical assistance should be available to all applicants using online tools throughout the grant cycle.
 7 Evaluation	The IAC should present a clear statement of how evaluative findings will be used in grant materials.	Consistent and ongoing feedback from grantees to the IAC should be used to leverage deeper awareness of the impact of the arts.
 8 Sustainability	Grant awards should be offered in multi-year terms when possible.	To support greater capacity-building throughout the field, technical resources and findings from agency learning should continue to be shared with emerging organizations.

1 Grantmaking Strategy

 **Short-Term Consideration:** *Social and cultural identity groups should be consistently specified by name and/or preferred title in all correspondences and documentation.*

Field input suggests that generalized language intended to group multiple demographic populations, like “cultural communities,” should be eliminated. Using broad terminology to describe unique populations works against efforts to be inclusive and recognize differences.

 **Long-Term Consideration:** *Connections to arts communities should be mindful of the differences in organizations’ self-defined successes, challenges, and solutions.*

Field input suggests that intentional relationship-building efforts with emerging organizations, especially those led by and serving People of Color and those based in rural areas, would support the IAC’s vision and goals for the AOS grant program. Deepened partnerships and connections between the IAC and arts organizations across the state will inform how the function and potential impact of AOS grants will occur and identify additional areas based on the needs of emerging organizations.

2 Organizational Culture

 **Short-Term Consideration:** *Available grant allocations and other quantitative details about the capacity and parameters of the AOS program should be transparently disclosed as part of the application process.*

Field input suggests that the IAC should be more transparent about the funding amount and the number of awards available for each tier through the AOS program during each grant cycle. Many arts organizations are unaware of how much funding is available and how funding determinations are made.

 **Long-Term Consideration:** *Applicant organizations of all types, sizes, and disciplines should be encouraged to pursue grant opportunities and be viewed as experts of their own experience.*

Field input suggests that arts organizations desire the ability to self-define what IDEA looks like for their specific community, especially in rural areas. An equitable grant process should balance the wide promotion of grant opportunities to the public with

recognizing that applicants will bring unique and varied interpretations of how their work aligns with giving priorities.

3 Community Inclusion

 **Short-Term Consideration:** *Applicants should have the option to include narrative responses for questions that have been traditionally statistical demographic questions. and the Applicants should also have the opportunity to share information in other mediums (e.g., video, audio, etc.).*

Relying on numerical data to show demographic diversity can often limit an arts organization's ability to provide detailed information about its audiences. Field input suggests that supplemental narrative sections for demographic data collection would allow for impact stories that better illustrate IDEA within the context of the organization and its audiences.

 **Long-Term Consideration:** *Grant materials should be offered in languages other than English and include ways for applicants to describe their work in alternative formats to allow non-grant writers the ability to describe what they do without a reliance on formal grant language when applying for a grant.*

Government grants are traditionally restricted to written applications prioritizing the English language. This limits accessibility for many arts communities in Indiana. Field input suggests that offering language other than English to describe activities is desirable for organizations and groups with less grant experience or for whom English is not their first language.

4 External Communications

 **Short-Term Consideration:** *The overall tone of external communications and documents should be as free of jargon as possible and easily navigable for general audiences.*

Field input suggests that formal grant communications lack the warm and approachable language commonly experienced by grantees during the IAC staff interactions. The language used in AOS applications (including acronyms) is viewed as a barrier and some participants shared that questions felt redundant, confusing,

or difficult to understand even with additional resources provided. The complexity of government procedures can often present obstacles for applicants to feel informed about the grant process.



Long-Term Consideration: *Storytelling should center on grantees' experiences and their artistic communities and be shared statewide to illustrate how the funding supports organizations.*

The growth of arts vitality in Indiana is strengthened by the diverse community narratives that demonstrate positive outcomes. Field input suggests that the IAC should continue to collect and share celebratory stories from grantee experiences to amplify their work across the state and show the impact of the AOS program on other arts communities, the commissioners, and statewide decision-makers.



Grant Administration



Short-Term Consideration: *Panelists should receive anti-bias training and training to support an understanding of the many ways that IDEA can show up in applications.*

Determining the alignment of arts organizations with the IAC's IDEA values is primarily overseen by volunteer grant panelists; however, there is inconsistency in how panelists are oriented to interpret and assess IDEA application content. Field input suggests that the process of training panelists on how to confront biases and recognize the values of IDEA in proposal assessments for grant review should be more rigorous.



Long-Term Consideration: *Panelists with various knowledge, wisdom, and lived experience representing different populations (e.g., People of Color, rural residents, older adults, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities) should be actively recruited to serve as panelists. Individuals from these communities who are familiar with nonprofit or grantmaking experience more broadly are a plus.*

Field input suggests that the pool of prospective review panelists needs to expand for various perspectives, subject matter expertise, and lived experiences to be reflected. Broadening the representation, knowledge, and background of panelists will be an advantage in reviewing applicants' ideas and opinions.

6 Grant Implementation



Short-Term Consideration: *Expectations of grantees should be clear, easy to understand, and navigate throughout the grant cycle.*

Field input suggests that grantees struggle with the amount of unexpected and often confusing “next steps” required to receive grant allocations. Ambiguity about what is needed to fulfill grant obligations can cause frustration for grantees, and likely contributes to the sentiment that the process feels inequitable.



Long-Term Consideration: *Comprehensive technical assistance should be available to all applicants using online tools throughout the grant cycle.*

Many arts organizations, especially those without a strong history of grants management, require additional support to confidently approach all phases of the grant process. Field input suggests that technical assistance should be proactive and resist the assumption that individuals who need help during the grant process will seek out the support they need.

7 Evaluation



Short-Term Consideration: *The IAC should present a clear statement of how evaluative findings will be used in grant materials.*

Field input suggests that greater transparency is desired concerning how information collected from grantee reports is used to inform future decisions for the grant program. Applicants will feel more informed and incentivized to provide feedback during the reporting process when there is a clear rationale for why particular data is being requested and how it will be used.



Long-Term Consideration: *Consistent and ongoing feedback from grantees to the IAC should be used to leverage deeper awareness of the impact of the arts.*

Grant recipients are a vital part of the arts ecosystem in Indiana and serve as a valuable asset in advancing the level of awareness for the arts. Field input suggests that the IAC’s role in coalition-building on behalf of its constituency should be more defined. Major changes to existing state funding appropriations are a systemic issue that requires formal organizing leadership.

8 Sustainability

 **Short-Term Consideration:** *Grant awards should be offered in multi-year terms when possible.*

The decision to simplify AOS processes and offer a multi-year award timeline during the pandemic provided critical relief to grantees that were stretched beyond their organizational capacity. Field input suggests that multi-year funding for some or all applicant types is desired in the future to reduce the administrative effort of the grant process and provide greater stability for organizations and for the IAC to organize the review process and administer the funding.

 **Long-Term Consideration:** *To support greater capacity-building throughout the field, technical resources and findings from agency learning should continue to be shared with emerging organizations.*

Beyond direct grantmaking, the IAC has a distinct opportunity to share the specialized skills and resources needed to strengthen organizations in the sector and redirect energy to other priority areas. Field input suggests that offering year-round training and workshop opportunities to grow peer sector learning could decrease capacity needs for grant management and nonprofit development skill-building for underserved populations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the numerous field participants from across the state of Indiana Arts' ecosystem that provided input and contributed to the discussions during the various sessions throughout the duration of this project.

We want to express our gratitude to all the IAC staff, especially Miah Michaelson and Paige Sharp, for their leadership and support, Connie Brahm, who provided support with communications for invitations, tracking registrations and presentations, André Zhang Sonera for content feedback, and Stephanie Pfendler for help with scheduling.

Appendix

Appendix A: Definitions

Appendix B: Equity Mapping Summary

Appendix C: Demographic Data from Field Input Participation

Appendix D: Demographic Data from Interview and Focus Group Participants

Appendix E: Survey Demographics and Summary

Appendix A: Definitions for IDEA and Equity Statement

The following definitions were adopted by the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC) to support its values and funding imperatives:

Inclusion – The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, represented, supported, and valued to fully participate.

Diversity – All of the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

Equity – The policies and practices used to ensure the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time trying to identify and eliminate barriers that have historically prevented the full participation of some individuals or groups.

Access – The commitment for everyone to be included in all programs and activities.

Indiana Arts Commissions' Equity Statement:

“To create equitable access to the arts for all Indiana residents, the Indiana Arts Commission is committed to intentional and ongoing engagement with all communities in our state. We will listen, engage, and incorporate diverse people and perspectives into all policies, programs, and services. Being consistently mindful and inclusive of the needs, ideas, and cultural history of the people who call Indiana home, we value and embrace their artistic expression and support them as they advance the arts that reflect their values and traditions.”

Field Response to the IAC's IDEA and Equity Statements

As a component of the project, field participants reflected on the interpretation of these definitions and shared differing views on the potential limitations of their use. For example, some felt the definitions were too general for the IAC's transformational goals to be realized, while others felt the centering of these terms was too narrow for the scope of arts activities taking place throughout the state.

Field input also suggested that accessibility is broadly defined by the IAC, yet is primarily operationalized in grant materials as a means to verify ADA compliance. Access, in this sense, is primarily limited to structural and facility accommodations, which understates the need for accessible information and experiences for grantees and their audiences.

Appendix B: Equity Mapping Summary



BACKGROUND

Crucial to a more equitable grantmaking structure, it is vital for the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC) to understand the role and relationships held between the IAC and its constituencies. Included are the multitude of artists; arts, education, and civic organizations; creative communities; funders; and partners who make up the greater Indiana Arts ecosystem.

Equity mapping provided:

1. Understanding and identification of how equity/inequity shows up in the arts ecosystem in Indiana
2. Understanding of how power/resources are flowing between different stakeholders in the system and the inequitable structures and practices, intentionally or unintentionally, concentrate power and resources (e.g., influence, money, data, etc.).

“Power is a part of Equity” and for participants, the **framing of power is a relational concept**. Inequitable structures and practices have traditionally contributed to specific groups concentrating resources (i.e., money, data, etc.) and influencing broader decisions and attitudes across the ecosystem. Participants were also asked to think about power from the perspective of Cyndi Suarez’s *The Power Manual*², “Power is, first of all, relational. It operates in relationships of inequality where we seek advantage and so is intentional. [...] Power is not about the rule of law, institutions, society, or the state. These are simply [...] artifacts, that result from past power-laden interactions, or confrontations.”

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Three community engagement sessions took place on **June 14, 16, and 20, 2022**.

59

A total of 59 individuals participated from across Indiana.

Cumulatively, most participants identified themselves as representative of

- **46%** arts organizations or providers
- **17%** individual artists
- **14%** arts supporters/advocates

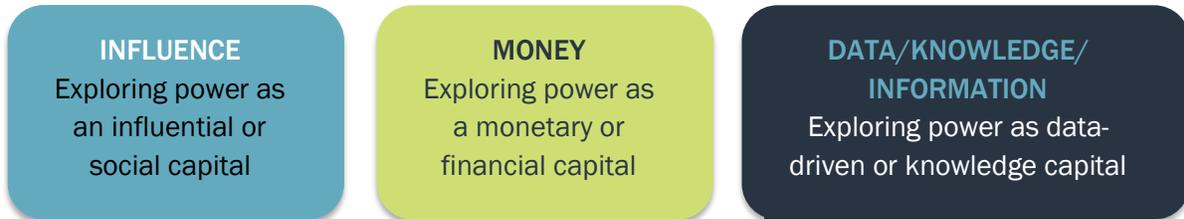
76.3% of participants were past grantees of the IAC

² Suarez, C. (2018). *The Power Manual: How to Master Complex Power Dynamics*. New Society Publishers.

EQUITY MAPPING SESSIONS

Participants participated in facilitated small group conversations to generate ideas and reflections for the maps. Facilitators captured the relational flows of power between various stakeholders, starting with some initial stakeholder groups, which were supplemented by participant suggestions. Participants identified the relationships and power dynamics that are most resonant for those present, rather than to be an exhaustive attempt at defining the arts ecosystem.

Participants chose one of three key areas to expand upon in their breakout conversations:



The equity maps created through this community input process captured existing opinions and attitudes regarding the distribution of power in the state at a point in time by those who voluntarily participated in the sessions.

From the discussions, a multitude of findings emerged to help discern critical questions like:

- How do power dynamics inform the production of arts activities in Indiana?
- What stakeholder relationships are more or less resourced than others?
- How do the IAC constituents interpret systems of power and resource allocation?
- What sentiments and opinions frame the context of collaborative relationships?

LEARNINGS TO POSSIBILITIES – NEXT STEPS FOR THE IAC

Overall, the power mapping exercise revealed important insights and assumptions from participants in attendance that will inform further work with the IAC. These considerations are crucial as the IAC continues to consider the diversity and additional nuance embedded in its service population, with particular importance on naming (and specializing responses toward) critical social and cultural groups in the state.

Participants wrestled with the rigidity of boundaries and being able to separate intersectional relationships with the stakeholder groups in the equity maps.

Several participants identified that the stakeholders identified in the equity maps felt rigid and that, in their experience, boundaries often overlap or shift. Others shared that the unique experiences of cultural, racial, ethnic, and social groups did not adequately express the terminology included on the maps, such as “cultural communities.” Facilitators found it was difficult for participants to separate the power differential between money, influence, and data/information. However, the examination of specific relationships and personal experiences helped define key power-related differences.

A critical finding was the importance and value of recognizing and communicating the relational aspects of power dynamics to support addressing how inequities manifest in the Indiana Arts ecosystem.

EQUITY MAPPING LEARNINGS

Below are key reflections that address the range of discussions, opinions, and personal experiences shared during the three community power mapping sessions.

INFLUENCE

Participants explored the idea that “influence is power” and discussed how power shows up in the flow of influence between individuals and organizations. Conversations focused on thought leadership, influential relationships, and priority-setting strategies.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- **Traditional flows of influence are shifting toward more significant equity in the digital landscape.** The power historically held by large arts institutions and organizational venues has leveled in recent years, primarily due to the impact of the pandemic moving workplaces and a significant amount of the arts ecosystem online. Participants reflected on how digital marketing and online branding are establishing a new precedent for how the public interacts with the art ecosystem, which is divergent from past models.
- **Influential stakeholders often possess significant financial assets and implicit authority.** When stakeholders leverage their power on art projects, their reputation and monetary investments often determine their influence.
- **Accessible public spaces deeply influence project planning and capacity, especially in rural areas.** Participants recognized arts activities in public spaces as a beneficial resource that stakeholders can leverage. Participants discussed how free or low-cost public spaces, like parks and community areas, serve as an efficient workaround for holding high-quality events that attract large audiences. Though it does not address accessibility needs, many remarked on the importance of this public asset.

INFLUENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- **Entrepreneurship and tourism are driving forward new resources in the arts economy.** As innovation labs and entrepreneurship centers become more prominent in their support of arts development and creative enterprise, they encourage new forms of collaboration and partnership. Participants also noted the stakeholders' role in driving tourism and new capital into the arts ecosystem.
- **Local government and artists serve a complementary relationship of influence that benefits the ecosystem.** By awarding and publicizing grant activities, local governments communicate the intrinsic value of arts organizations to the public while reinforcing the importance of arts and culture through budgetary inclusion. Participants also acknowledged how external communications and marketing are valuable tools in amplifying awareness of funding opportunities for stakeholders who may not have access.
- **Influence can show up in problematic ways that fail to center community input.** Inconspicuous mandates found in grant language, predetermined outcomes, or staff-led

strategies targeting external groups often neglect authentic community investment. Participants shared an example of a community mural project that included last-minute creative stipulations authorized by the funder, which contributed to an untenable working relationship for the artists involved.

- **The educational system's influence creates frustration and innovation for stakeholders that stems from limited opportunities and service gaps.** K-12 schools and local colleges have served as sites for production and employment in the state's art ecosystem. Participants reflected on how broad government disinvestment in arts education has limited opportunities for stakeholders to cultivate long-term partnerships within schools. Despite these service gaps, stakeholders are mitigating the challenge by deploying new approaches for work in classrooms that creatively address student needs.

PRIORITY-SETTING STRATEGIES

- **Powerful relationships between stakeholders foster interdependent influences.** As influence can reflect systems of power, the authenticity of interpersonal and organizational relationships was the most robust approach to fostering reciprocal relationships of influence and learning. Participants reiterated this by noting the arts ecosystem's positive influences, such as collaborative partnerships, in-kind arrangements, and shared learning models.
- **The social and political influence can make stakeholder accountability more pervasive as influence is more challenging to define, and understanding relational flows are more difficult to track.** Participants identified cooperative and shared learning between stakeholders over time as a critical indicator of what sustains healthy and effective influences in the Indiana arts ecosystem.
- **Arts organizations expressed concern about their ability to convey the value of their sector to elected officials, instead prioritizing opportunities for direct engagement between artists and government.** Thus, finding ways to engage with local government officials continues to be challenging. Participants mentioned an example to mitigate this challenge was holding "low stakes" events like mixers or informal gatherings where elected officials could interact with constituents.
- **Stakeholder decision-making may not always reflect the target service population.** Some stakeholders have faced challenges in navigating the complexity of equitable representation, which reflects the demographics of specific communities served, particularly concerning age discrimination. Participants focused on two conversations; the first explored how young people are often absent in decision-making despite holding considerable influence in the marketplace. The second focused on viewing older adults as dispensable or under-valued in leadership roles.

MONEY

Participants explored the idea that “money is power” and discussed how power shows up in the flow of money between individuals and organizations. Conversations focused on grantmaking, economic relationships, and growing financial assets.

GRANTMAKING

- **Grant-seeking processes can be a disproportionate burden for smaller organizations.**
The resources needed to solicit competitive grants are viewed as an extreme drain on organizational capacity, mainly when intensive grants can produce a finite impact in terms of total dollars raised. Participants noted the burden on administrative personnel, especially for stakeholders with limited or volunteer staff structures.
- **Rural stakeholders have been resilient amidst an inequitable funding landscape.**
Stakeholders operating in rural areas struggle to cultivate long-term investments (i.e., beyond a single fiscal year) from funders of all types despite their resourcefulness. Robust outreach to individual donors, local government, and emerging tourist economies will be essential to mitigate a lack of access to institutional funders.
- **Restrictive funding guidelines can prioritize the needs of funders over applicants.**
Specific grant guideline criteria can be restrictive to emerging arts organizations without substantial resources to accommodate them. Some participants described criteria like requiring a set number of years operating in the state as an arbitrary measure to determine eligibility and an example of valuing funder aspirations over applicant capacity.
- **The financial burden of unsuccessful grant-seeking efforts is unsustainable.**
With a limited amount of funding opportunities available, the expenses absorbed by organizations for unawarded proposals can create an exponential drain of resources in the long term. Participants acknowledged how grant planning and awarding timelines are significant obstacles to budgetary forecasting which often positions applicants as financial risk-bearers with no guarantee of recovering costs.

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS

- **The private sector undervalues the impact of Indiana's Arts ecosystem as an economic catalyst.** Art activities led by local and touring artists/organizations often function as small business operations in the economic landscape, creating auxiliary markets and attracting tourist dollars to local municipalities. Participants described the arts ecosystem as an "economic engine" for Indiana, reflecting the cross-sector impact on the state's financial outlook and emergent position on the national stage.
- **Local government and K-12 systems are integral in sustaining economic opportunities for the creative economy.** Stakeholders often contract with municipal entities or schools and subcontract directly with artists, which nurtures a cyclical employment relationship. Participants described how these relationships could often be site-specific based on how intensely arts education activities are funded, creating an imbalance across the state regarding career opportunities for artists.

- **Pass-through funders alleviate challenges in navigating federal grant opportunities.** Intermediaries are a critical resource for smaller organizations and those without experience soliciting highly competitive grants to secure operational support. Participants share that beyond direct financial support, funders that provide pathways of funding were as beneficial in providing technical resources that help improve administrative burdens for stakeholders in the grant-seeking process.
- **Conventional economic relationships for artists from organic audience development have a natural separation from institutional funding models.** Through institutional fundraising, individual artists typically cultivate investment through patronage, not competition. Without accessible technical support opportunities, stakeholders may have trouble in navigating administrative grant-seeking processes.

GROWING FINANCIAL ASSETS

- **Many monetary relationships do not ultimately translate into large amounts of funding received.** Participants acknowledged that the ecosystem is deeply interconnected, but the “transformational” contributions only occur in limited and highly regulated capacities. Participants identified artists as one of the most common recipients of monetary relationships across the ecosystem. Still, in reality, artists receive small award amounts or include indirect/in-kind services. Participants acknowledged that the ecosystem is deeply interconnected, but the “transformational” contributions only occur in limited and highly regulated capacities.
- **The financial ecosystem concentrates on fund redistribution and only includes a few entry points for major funds.** Despite ample flows of monetary, in-kind, and investment support to stakeholders on the equity map, there are limited places where 6- and 7-figure contributions originate in the ecosystem and often have the broadest reach and impact by size. Participants described how major funds come from large institutions (i.e., government, corporations, foundations, etc.), are then redistributed to medium- and small-sized stakeholders and called out the hierarchical nature of this model.
- **Conventional models of earned income are still the primary method for funding art activities.** The money that flows to arts entities supplements the cost of operational expenses, which are traditionally through revenue models separate from grantmaking like sales and individual giving. Participants shared the need to coordinate one-off annual events like festivals or other significant productions to achieve operating revenue goals that do not reach through grant allocation alone.
- **In-kind support and organizational discounts are undervalued resources in the state ecosystem.** The reciprocal relationships between artists and the nonprofit sector were a vital feature of the state’s ecosystem that can stimulate new partnerships and avenues for investment. However, many participants expressed that offering opportunities like nonprofit and school discounts increases cultural vitality for Indiana but often decreases the financial return for services rendered.

DATA/KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION

Participants explored the idea that “knowledge is power” and discussed how power shows up in the flow of information and data between individuals and organizations. Conversations focused on topics of knowledge-building, data access, and community narratives.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

- **Artists develop knowledge through various individual and collective practices, which may operate in isolation from institutional data-sharing practices.** From emerging to established, marginalized to well-resourced, and hobby to professional, arts communities and artists are effective at cultivating internal learning networks best suited to their needs. From a systems level, participants recognized how stakeholders inherently possess different approaches, tools, and capacities, for receiving, interpreting, and using available data across the arts ecosystem.
- **The intersection of sector learning and data collection can present challenges when working with vulnerable populations.** Participants expressed that some stakeholders opt out of data collection for demographic information to respect user privacy. In contrast, others are beholden to mandates for statistical detail, creating an inconsistent baseline for available data. While participants recognized the nuance of these conditions, they also acknowledged how incongruous data reporting could make long-term learning difficult for the ecosystem at large.
- **Data circulates and is used across many stakeholders, making it difficult to validate or control.** Information can move quickly from one source to secondary stakeholder groups and beyond. Tracking the reciprocal nature and potential leveraging of power can be difficult. Participants acknowledged that data and information are often repurposed for educational, proprietary, or political uses that the original authors may not be able to anticipate. As a result, participants reflected on the role of source and credibility in data sharing as a critical indicator of its inherent value.

DATA ACCESS

- **Knowledge sharing is inconsistent among regional state partners, especially under-resourced groups.** A “competitive advantage” that favors better-resourced communities in grant seeking occurs when access to the information and resources distribution is not equal. Participants noted that these are especially true for communities of color and rural communities.
- **Organizations without nonprofit status cause restrictions from traditional information channels.** The number of resources directed at 501(c)(3) organizations creates a disparity in data access for entities operating outside of the nonprofit designation (e.g., a for-profit business or with other legal designations). While participants acknowledged the governing stipulations for grantmaking toward such entities, participants identified a desire for broadening access to organizational learning and additional essential information outside the nonprofit sector.

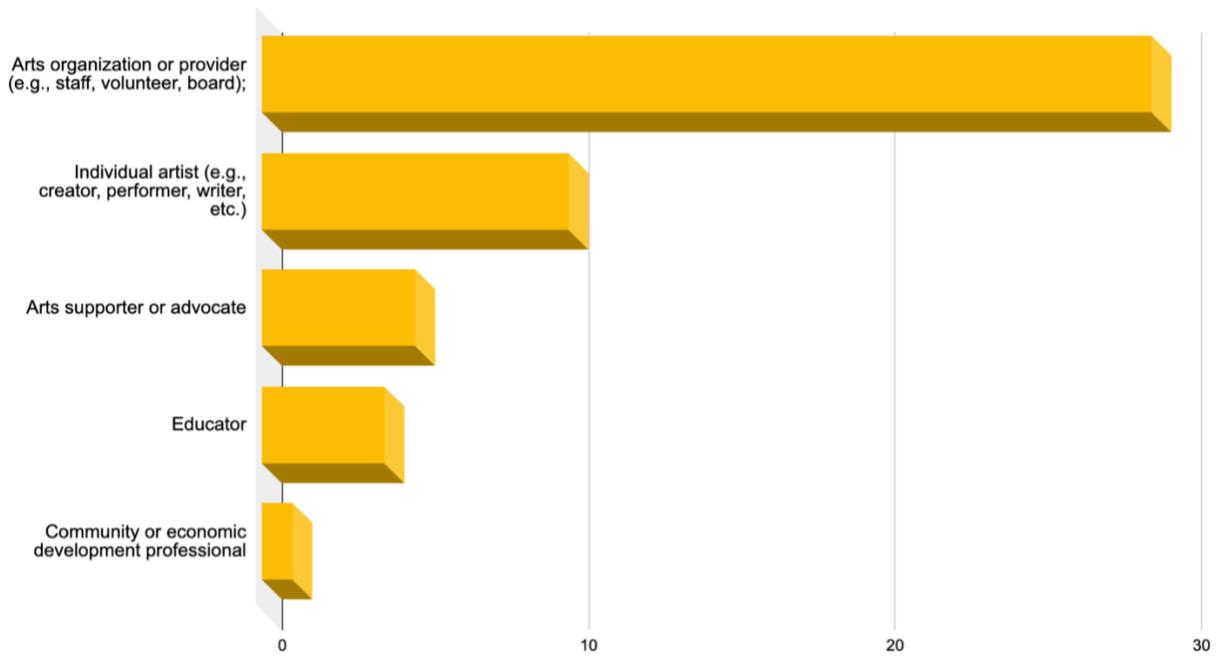
COMMUNITY NARRATIVES

- **Stakeholder groups with multifaceted roles in the community can skew the reception of data and knowledge flows based on their audience.** For stakeholders who occupy multiple classifications or whose work spans across sectors, the public understanding and valuation of informational reporting can be impacted positively or negatively by those affiliations. Participants identified legacy arts organizations” like major art museums as a stakeholder class whose data dissemination may be skewed based on the targeted audience (e.g., political leaders, major donors, educators, taxpayers, etc.).
- **Data can be biased depending on who is part of the data collection process.** The lack of representative inclusion in gathering and disseminating data can lead to skewed or unreliable information that is not accurately reflective of service populations’ experiences or opinions. Participants referred to practices like bias training for staff and diligent community research before outreach as essential methods to reduce bias.

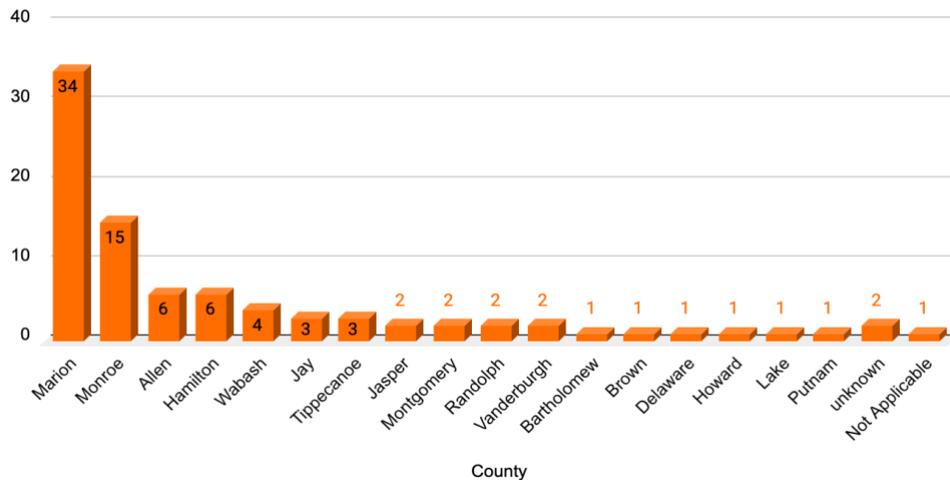
Appendix C: Demographic Data from Field Participation

A total of 63 field participants attended the facilitated input sessions and the feedback on the equitable grantmaking framework sessions. All data reported was collected on a voluntary basis and some participants attended multiple session so there are potential overlap in reporting.

Participant Constituent Type (Participants could select more than 1)³

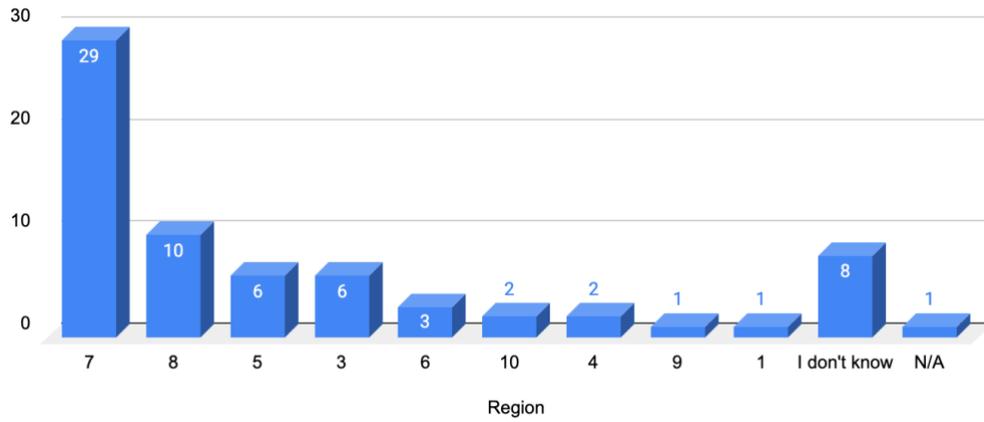


Participants by County

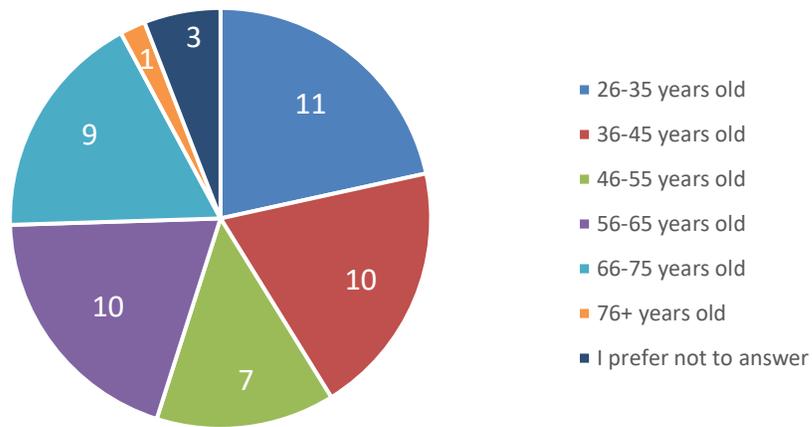


³ Does not include numbers from feedback on the equitable grantmaking framework session

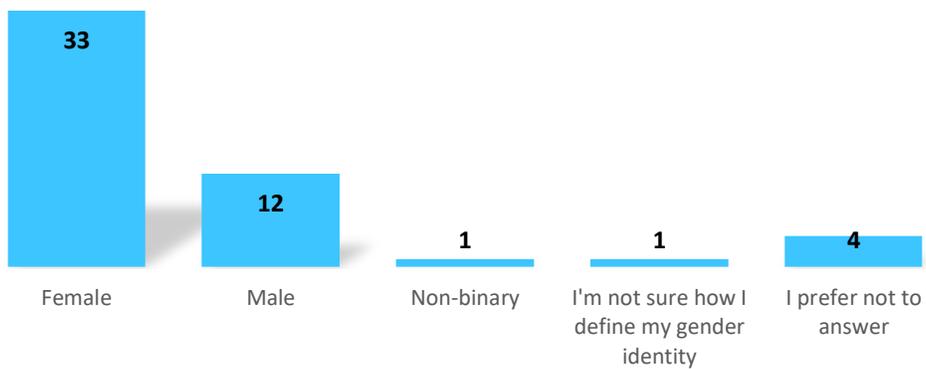
Participants by Region



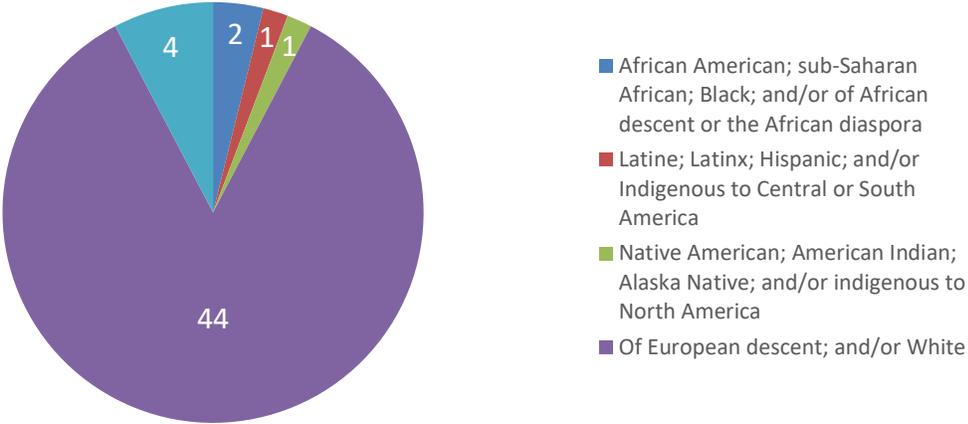
Participants by Age



Participants by Gender



Participant by Race/Ethnicity



Appendix D: Demographics from Interviews and Focus Group Participants

Interview Participants

- Interview participants (blue circles) were identified and invited by the IAC and came from three rural regions (1, 3, and 10) and one urban region (7).
- Interview participants included leaders of small organizations working in the performing arts (dance and theater), visual arts, and museums.
- Interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom and lasted approximately 30-minutes.
- Participants received a \$75 honorarium in appreciation for their time.



Focus Group Participants

- Focus group participants (green circle) were invited and hosted by the Indy Arts Council and were from region 7.
- Focus group participants included staff at the Indy Arts Council and individuals working in the performing arts (music, theater, dance), fashion industry, community arts, museums, and community foundations.
- The focus group was conducted virtually over Zoom and lasted for 90-minutes.
- Participants received a \$75 honorarium in appreciation for their time.

Appendix E: Interview Participant Questions

The following questions were asked during the interviews with rural and urban organizations led by and serving People of Color.

Interview Participant Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself and the organization that you are affiliated with.
2. Have you applied for an Indiana Arts Commission's Art Organization Support grant before? What was that experience like for you? What parts were challenging?
3. What, if anything would you have wanted/needed from the IAC to help you be successful in applying for this grant?
4. If you have been successful at receiving a grant, was there anything after you were awarded the funding that you really appreciated or found challenging?
5. What organizations/groups do you think should be a priority for the IAC to be supporting with the Arts Organization Support grant?
6. What would you like the impact of the Arts Organization Support Grant (AOS) to be?
 - Provides meaningful impact to organizations;
 - Increases access to under-resourced areas and groups;
 - Provides paid opportunities to artists;
 - Advances inclusion, diversity, equity and access in operations and programs;
 - Provides support and capacity building to emerging organizations (budgets under \$50,000)
7. Is there anything else that you think is important to this process?

Appendix F: Focus Group Questions

The following questions were asked during the focus group with organizations led by and serving People of Color from Region 7.

Focus Group Participant Questions

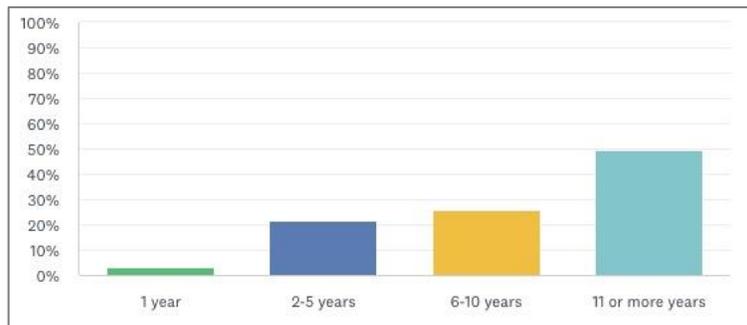
1. How many have applied for the Art Operating Support Grant? If you haven't, please share why.
2. What was your experience like for those who have applied? What seemed easy or what was challenging?
3. What, if anything, would you have wanted/needed from the IAC to help you successfully apply for this grant?
4. If you have been successful at receiving a grant, was there anything after you were awarded the funding that you appreciated or found challenging?
5. If you considered what kind of organizations/groups you think should be a priority for the IAC to support with the Arts Organization Support grant, who would that be and why?
6. Do you think there are any barriers to reaching those organizations or groups for the IAC? If so, what would make it possible?
7. What would you like the impact of the Arts Operating Support Grant (AOS) to be?
 - Provides meaningful impact to organizations;
 - Increases access to under-resourced areas and groups;
 - Provides paid opportunities to artists;
 - Advances inclusion, diversity, equity and access in operations and programs;
 - Provides support and capacity building to emerging organizations (budgets under \$50,000)
8. Is there anything else that you think is important for the IAC to hear that we haven't covered that you would want to be considered?

Appendix G: Survey Demographics and Summary

An online survey was shared with current and past recipients of AOS grants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and inform the creation of an equitable grantmaking framework for the IAC. The findings are summarized below.

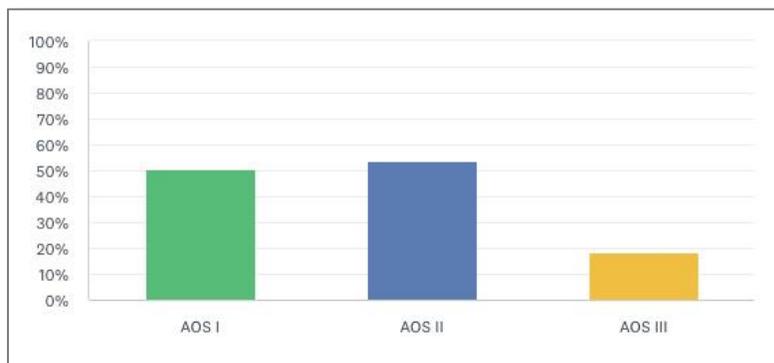
Survey Respondent Composition

YEARS OF SUPPORT



Of the 97 respondents who participated in the survey, roughly half had received AOS support for 11 years or longer. This demonstrates a sustaining impact on the field of arts organizations in the state while also suggesting that a majority of survey respondents possess the administrative capacity to successfully solicit annual applications.

LEVELS OF SUPPORT



More than half of all respondents were recipients of either AOS I or AOS II grants, while roughly 14% received awards in both tiers. Roughly 7% of respondents received awards in all three tiers in the recent past, emphasizing the progression of operational capacity for those particular organizations.

Capacity Building

ADVANCING IDEA

More than 40% of respondents felt the AOS program helped their organization advance work in IDEA, grow community engagement with target audiences, and improve organizational operations, financial management processes, programming, and evaluation approaches.

Impact of AOS Funding

56

AOS VALUE INCLUDES PRIDE AND VISIBILITY IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND AMONGST PARTNERS AND MORE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Two-thirds of all respondents identified AOS support as a source of pride for their organization. Nearly half of all respondents felt the award provided greater visibility to their organization's service population, developed new and existing partnerships, and reinforced the value of the arts in their community. In addition, approximately 40% agreed that AOS funding enabled their organization to seek further philanthropic support in their communities.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPACT

Respondents from each of the three AOS tiers provided insight into what effect they wanted the grant program to have. A majority (91-100%)^{4*} of respondents wanted the program to provide a "meaningful impact" on their organizations. Other results respondents identified include increased access to under-resourced areas and groups (63-86%)*, greater prospects for paid opportunities to artists (61-86%)*, advancement of IDEA in operations and programs (60-86%)*, and capacity building for emerging organizations under \$50,000 (52-73%)*.

Those surveyed represent arts organizations with greater administrative capacity than most emerging organizations. Additional comments reinforce this notion, as one anonymous respondent shared, "*The current process limits the impact the funding can have because it is spread out so far. We only receive around \$5000 a year, which does not make a huge impact.*" Similarly, another respondent shared, "*The amount of funding we receive has steadily decreased to the point of having less and less impact.*"

BARRIERS OF IMPACT

Other barriers to positive impacts were identified through an invitation for open ended comments. One respondent shared, "*We are having a negative impact from the hold up due to waiting for a SAM number to be issued. Our director has not been paid for over a month. It is a hardship.*" Another respondent suggested that the AOS program would be better

^{2*} Each percentage range in this paragraph includes the lowest to highest responses from all three levels of AOS.

focused on, “additional support outside of money, such as consulting, technology, and other resources.”

Grantee Experience

To avoid duplication of responses across the various ways to engage, survey participants opted out of the questions focused on grantee experience if they participated in a field input session. A total of 44 respondents offered feedback regarding their familiarity and comfort navigating AOS grant materials in the survey.

VALUE OF FUNDING VS. EFFORT IT TAKES TO APPLY

A significant majority (84%) believe the time and resources needed to prepare and receive an AOS award is worth the funding received. Again, the prevalence of this sort of feedback indicates substantial experience working with grant funders and the ability to address challenges that other field inputs identified as complex or unclear.

CHALLENGES FOR SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS

The challenges for some smaller organizations were focused on capacity building. One respondent shared, “*The timeline to turn around financial statements from the end of our fiscal year to the deadline with such a small staff is a real challenge.*” This further reflects the range of capacity needs present in the constituency of arts organizations.

GUIDELINES

Roughly half of the respondents felt the grant guidelines were difficult to find on the IAC website and were too complicated to comprehend. Similarly, roughly half of respondents felt the guidelines contained too much jargon or unfamiliar terms. At the same time, 70% indicated having the ability to effectively understand and follow the guidelines despite the lack of clarity.

APPLYING FOR AOS FUNDS

Respondents also reviewed the application and provided similar results as the guideline inquiries. For example, half of the respondents felt the application contains too much jargon or unfamiliar words, and less than half found website navigation and comprehension of application instructions difficult. Alternately, several anonymous comments emphasized the disproportionate relationship between the amount of time it takes to complete the application and how much money is awarded.

FINAL REPORTING

The final report for AOS grants was largely well received by respondents. Roughly 75% agreed that the directions were understandable and easy to follow. Roughly half however, felt the report asked about information that was difficult to answer.