



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CHICAGO

BREAKFAST SPEAKER SERIES

Beyond the Box Office: Exploring new ways of supporting arts and culture March 2023

The arts and culture sector is inextricably tied to the economic success of Chicago, generating more than \$4 billion in economic activity across the state. Our world-famous performance venues, museums, and public art drive tourism and beautify spaces; invite our diverse communities to connect with their history, to document their lived experience, and remember their past; and provide accessible employment, opportunities to learn new skills, and advocacy for community-specific social issues. This vibrant sector is fueled throughout Chicago's 77 neighborhoods by a unique ecosystem of earned income, foundation support, government programs, and corporate sponsorship—but covid has impacted many of the traditional ways we champion and interact with the arts. Join us to explore the crucial role the arts and culture sector plays in growing and sustaining a more thriving, vibrant Chicago, and to hear more about new ways of partnering for greater impact.

TAKEAWAYS

Artists are Essential

Arts and culture is a \$4.3 billion industry in Chicago and touches all 77 of Chicago's neighborhoods. Not only do they support tourism, but also create jobs, provide social/emotional supports, and connectivity to each other. It's not always about becoming an artist – the Arts helps us as individuals solve problems and think differently about how we view the world.

The Arts are a Business

Nonprofits have the same roles that any other company does and require the same amount of strategic thinking and skills to maintain. Opportunities to grow the skills of leaders, such as the Arts and Culture Loan Fund and Smart Growth programs, are essential. Understanding the business needs of the organization is also a key role for Board members, funders, and other supporters to play.

Return of Audiences

The Arts sector still relies on ticket-buying audiences, especially performance-based arts like dance, theatre, and music. During the pandemic arts philanthropy provided many opportunities to update theater and gallery spaces. Now arts organizations eagerly await the return of audiences. Staff outings to arts spaces help build teams and introduce new patrons to the arts.

Investing in the Arts is Investing in Impact

Arts organizations are in need of capital investment – not just grants, but loans, lines of credit and other financial supports. Creating meaningful investments in the arts will mean adjusting the expectations of arts-based businesses. Zero sum budgeting, debt and deficit free operations, no overhead – these are accepted as common among small businesses, and are also true for arts and culture organizations. Investing in the arts means trusting organizations to responsibly manage credit, pay back loans, and reinvest in communities. Also diversifying the investment into areas outside of programming, including staffing, technology, buildings, and other infrastructure supports.

Get Creative

There are many niche ways to support arts organizations. For example, DCASE is looking for support reviewing applications to the Chicago Recovery grants. Ask the organizations what they need, or what they want you to know about them to inform funding opportunities. Where possible, simplify processes to make it easier for arts organizations to apply. Offering professional skills in a volunteer capacity is also a great way to get to know arts organizations.



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PANELIST QUOTES, RESOURCES & LINKS

"How do we think about dancers as athletes, which is what they are. And what does an athlete need? An athlete needs physical therapy, an athlete needs medical insurance, and athlete needs a retirement plan. These are all the things that a dancer needs as well."

- Vershawn Sanders Ward
Red Clay Dance Company

"Across philanthropy and across nonprofit sector there is a lot of focus on program support, project support.

Less often there is support for infrastructure for facilities, general operating support which is one of the main ways we've invested in infrastructure for nonprofits. ... We did a series of convenings, info sessions, surveys. Through that process learned that general operating support was the greatest need identified in regards to the type of grantmaking people wanted to see us doing. In the surveys, 42% of respondents said that was the type of support they wanted to see. It was two times more than the second highest type of support. That really affirmed and allowed us to make that commitment to invest in general operating support."

- Kalena Chevalier
Dept of Cultural Affairs and Special Events
City of Chicago

"Organizations are businesses. The idea of investing is to trust that an organization can use the resources responsibly and repay them so that ultimately they can get bigger amounts of capital from other places to do their work. The idea is to see organizations as a business and say I trust that you can use this capital to smooth out cash flow challenges you have as an organization between grants, between ticket sales, between grants from city or state or whoever. That is really critical."

- Allison Clark
MacArthur Foundation

"During COVID we knew that a lot of institutions needed something to hold them over during that time to allow them to use the money however they needed at the time, so we did shift to general operating support. As we've started to recover we've started to transition back to programming specifically, but we do look at the programming that arts and culture offers and that it's touching so many other areas that we focus on, whether its mental health, diversity and inclusion, social justice. So for us it's really does make sense that out of all of our giving areas, arts and culture touches on almost all of them in one. We see that as a benefit."

- Vanessa Hall
Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas

To learn more about the work of our panelists, please visit:

[Chicago Arts Recovery Program](#)

[Smart Growth Program for Neighborhood Arts Nonprofits](#)

[Arts and Culture Loan Fund](#)

[2016 Evaluating the Arts and Culture Loan Fund Program](#)

[2017 Arts & Economic Prosperity report](#)

[Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Cultural Grants Program](#)

[Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Grant Panelist Application 2023](#)

[Chicago's Cultural Treasures](#)