



EMPOWERING COMMUNITY THROUGH ART

FY22 ANNUAL REPORT



MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE

This is an exciting time to be Chair of America's first regional arts organization. Mid-America Arts Alliance is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Founded in 1972 in Lincoln, Nebraska, M-AAA was formed by the thought that more could be accomplished through collaborative partnerships than through individual efforts. This concept of togetherness is as relevant today as it was fifty years ago.

As you already know, we have "new" sponsors and more funding for the artists and creative organizations we serve. This funding includes the historic and generous donation from MacKenzie Scott. The Scott gift has the ability to solidify the foundation of service that lies at the core of M-AAA. It also permits for more transformative and future thinking, and allows the organization to find ways to empower artists and communities across our six-state region and beyond.

Mid-America's model of coming together and supporting the arts in our communities at a local but also regional level was replicated in Colorado Springs with all the Regional Arts Organizations. Now all the Regional Arts Organizations work harmoniously with one another, prioritizing artists, celebrating various cultures, and boosting art experiences in communities across the United States.

The M-AAA team, deftly led by President and CEO Todd Stein, is moving forward with exciting opportunities, partnerships, and growth funding. I continue to marvel at what has been accomplished and the positive trajectory of M-AAA.

With kind regards,
Dr. Holbrook C. Lawson
Chair of the Board of Directors
Mid-America Arts Alliance





Just as it was at its founding in 1972, Mid-America Arts Alliance continues to develop and nourish collaborative relationships to increase access to creativity for all Americans. It is my honor to lead M-AAA as the organization hits the milestone of its first fifty years. It's a time to celebrate, reflect, and focus on the next fifty years.

In FY22, M-AAA continued to provide support and guidance to organizations and creatives as the pandemic stretched into its third year. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, M-AAA awarded more than \$1.1 million through American Rescue Plan grants to fifty arts organizations with budgets of less than \$500,000, assisting a segment of the cultural infrastructure especially hard hit by the pandemic.

Through an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veteran Affairs, M-AAA launched the new national program, Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants. These grants seek to connect active members of the military, veterans, family members, and caregivers with nonclinical art experiences, designed to cultivate creative expression,

increase social connectedness, strengthen resilience, and support successful adaptation to civilian life. We look forward to learning more about the healing and connection these projects bring to a population often exposed to trauma through injury, isolation, and more.

In this annual report we are proud to share the powerful impact of ten years of organizational learning and coaching of small to midsize arts and culture organizations in Houston through the Engage program. You can learn more about some of the new ExhibitsUSA exhibitions on the road as well as the dynamic peer learning opportunities offered through our Artist Services programs—Artist INC, Artists 360, and Interchange. Our hope is that these stories illustrate M-AAA's transformative work in serving the arts organizations and creatives in our region.

I am frequently in awe of the creativity and commitment demonstrated by my colleagues in empowering, activating, and supporting the arts and artists across the country. With the support and guidance of M-AAA's Board of Directors, I stand beside my colleagues as we imagine the next fifty years of Mid-America Arts Alliance.

Sincerely yours,
Todd Stein
President and CEO
Mid-America Arts Alliance

The Passing of Two Stewards

Marian Andersen and Don Munro

The past year brought the passing of two extraordinary people, Marian Andersen and Don Munro, within a day of one another. Both were longtime members of M-AAA's Board of Directors, serving most recently in the emeritus capacity.

Our last founding board member, Marian Andersen, Omaha, Nebraska, passed away at the age of 93 on April 28, 2022. Andersen attended M-AAA's first board meeting in 1973, and to express her dedication, she continued to regularly attend board meetings and was proud of her role as a founding member of the nation's oldest Regional Arts Organization.

Don Munro, Hot Springs, Arkansas, passed away at the age of 94 on April 27, 2022. Munro had recently been added to the Arkansas Walk of Fame in Hot Springs in 2021. He worked tirelessly on increasing access to the performing arts in rural Arkansas, fostering the arts and artists of Arkansas, and was busily raising contributions for a performing arts center to serve the needs of small communities.

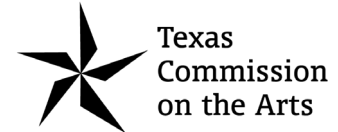
According to Todd Stein, M-AAA's President and CEO, "They were truly remarkable people whose lives were devoted to volunteerism, in support of the arts, but not exclusively. What's more, they were the most caring, selfless, and gentle people you would ever hope to know. The organization we all work to support is much better off having had their attention and stewardship over the years."



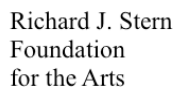
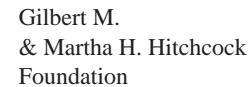
M-AAA President and CEO Todd Stein with Board Directors Marian Andersen and Don Munro in Kansas City, 2018

FY22 Giving

National, Regional, State Arts Agency, and Local Partners



Funders



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Programs of Mid-America Arts Alliance

The stories on the following pages are meant to convey the important work empowered by M-AAA's programs and grants in communities across its region and the United States.

Artist Services



ARTISTS 3 60

**INTER
CHANGE**

Arts and Humanities Grant Programs

artistic**INNOVATIONS**



REGIONAL
TOURING PROGRAM

**SPECIAL
PROJECTS**

Arts and Humanities Programming

ExhibitsUSA

Organizational Development

ARt connect





Images from left: Installation view of *Daruma of Resilience* by Kristine Aono, 2019–21; Installation view of *Detained Alien Enemy Glass Kimono* by Reiko Fujii, 2009 with *Deconstructed Kimono I, II, V* by Na Omi Judy Shintani, 2010–12.

ExhibitsUSA lifts up stories and cultures

As visitors exit *Resilience—A Sansei Sense of Legacy*, one of the newest curations in ExhibitsUSA’s catalog, they are asked to write their own wishes and hopes of resilience on a yellow sticky note and place it on a giant sculpture of Daruma, a Buddhist monk from Japanese legend.

The exhibition, which tells the story of the devastation wrought by Executive Order 9066, the 1942 law that imprisoned Japanese Americans during World War II, features the works of eight Sansei or third-generation Japanese American artists. Their paintings, sculptures and photographs depict the devastation caused by the incarceration camps and the trauma that remains even generations after those camps closed.

The sticky notes bring visitors into the story, mixing their words into Kristine Aono’s five-foot-by-four sculpture, *Daruma of Resilience*. Daruma is covered with copies of letters and testimonials of imprisoned Japanese Americans. Visitors’ sticky notes, layered on top, become part of the art.

Resilience, which began its five-year tour in March 2022 at the Alice Sabatini Gallery in Topeka, Kansas, is one of five exhibits launched last year through ExhibitsUSA, Mid-America Arts Alliance’s collection of traveling museum shows.

Resilience and its often unspoken stories of Japanese Americans join FY22 exhibitions about Black Americans’ struggle for civil rights, a walk through the endangered Antarctic

wilderness, a study of how biology is reflected in art and design, and celebration of the landscape, culture, and traditions that gave birth to tequila, Mexico's national drink.

ExhibitsUSA is a traveling exhibition program managed by M-AAA that takes arts and humanities experiences to museums, libraries, and other institutions throughout the country. Through support from the National Endowment for the Arts and private funders, ExhibitsUSA produces turn-key, high-quality exhibitions at reduced rates. The program, founded in 1988, has a catalog of twenty-five exhibitions available each year.

Jerry Takigawa and Gail Enns, curators of the *Resilience* exhibition, selected artists with personal connections to the incarceration camps. In addition to Aono's impressive Daruma sculpture, the exhibition includes Roger Shimomura's paintings, which fuse Japanese iconography with American comic art; Wendy Maruyama's sculptures, made of paper incarceration tags like the ones issued to the men, women, and children detained during World War II; and Reiko Fuji's *Detained Enemy Alien Glass Kimono*, made of 224 glass squares featuring pictures of family members touched by Order 9066.

Taken together, the art tells the stories of families forced to abruptly abandon lives and careers, stories that often were never discussed after the war.

Japanese culture dictated that the injustice of the camps be put aside, a sentiment conveyed through the phrase "Shikata ga nai" – "It cannot be helped," and the word "gaman" – "to persevere and stay silent."

"The Sansei generation is perhaps the last generation of Japanese American artists that can be directly connected to the WWII American concentration camp experience—making their expression particularly significant in clarity of emotion," Takigawa and Enns write in materials about their exhibition.

Resilience is booked at institutions nationwide, from Oregon to Pennsylvania, and will be available through 2027.

More ExhibitsUSA shows launched in FY22



Unknown, *U.S. National Guard troops block off Beale Street as Civil Rights marchers wearing placards reading I AM A MAN pass by on March 29, 1968, Memphis, TN, March 29, 1968*; photograph, 12 x 18 inches; Courtesy Getty Images

I AM A MAN: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1970

The exhibition displays a wide range of photographs taken by amateurs, local photojournalists, and internationally known photographers. Images include depictions of key events like James Meredith's admission to the University of Mississippi, the Selma–Montgomery March in Alabama, the sanitation workers' strike in Memphis, Martin Luther King's funeral, and the Poor People's Campaign. Combined, they offer a vivid visual story of the evolution of the civil rights movement and shed light on the movement's integration in daily living in the American South.

I AM A MAN began its five-year run in January at the Irving Archives and Museum in Irving, Texas.



Helen Glazer, *Cloudburst, Erebus Ice Tongue Cave, Antarctica, 2015/2017*; photograph, 26 3/4 x 40 inches (image), 36 x 49 inches (frame); Courtesy of the artist

Walking in Antarctica

In this exhibition, artist Helen Glazer shares photographs, sculpture, and audio narrative from her inspiring travels in the Antarctic wilderness. In 2015, Glazer traveled to the region as a grantee of the National Science Foundation's Antarctic Artists and Writers Program. Glazer worked out of remote scientific field camps and explored protected areas that are only accessible with government permits or under the guidance of skilled mountaineers. The exhibition is organized in "walks" over frozen lakes, around towering glaciers and baroque sea ice formations, into a magnificent frozen ice cave, across fields of surreal-looking boulders, and through a lively colony of nesting Adélie penguins.

Walking in Antarctica started its tour in June 2022 at the Altharetta Yeargin Art Museum in Houston, Texas, and will be available through May 2027.



Joel Salcido, *Don Julio: Jimador*, 2012; archival pigment ink photograph printed on German Hahnemühle 100% rag paper; 16 x 24 inches, Courtesy of the artist

Aliento a Tequila

The exhibition features the photographs of Joel Salcido, who traveled across the Mexican state of Jalisco capturing images of distilleries and artisanal tequileras. The photographs, in full-color or duotone, not only tell the story of the tequila-making process but also reveal the region's traditions of culture and religion.

Aliento a Tequila began its tour in September 2021 at El Museo Latino in Omaha, Nebraska, and will be available through August 2026.



Alan Bur Johnson, *Progeny Fig. 2*, 2011; photographic transparencies and insect pins, 15 x 18 x 3 inches framed; Courtesy of the artist and Lisa Sette Gallery

Nature's Blueprints: Biomimicry in Art and Design

The exhibition looks at how the forms, patterns, and processes found in the natural world can inspire design. Studying bird wings, bee hives, and porcupine quills, for example, can lead to faster travel, safer buildings, and more precise medical equipment. The exhibition is an adaptation of the *Innovation Lab: Design by Nature* at the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon.

Nature's Blueprints: Biomimicry in Art and Design was first exhibited in September 2021 at the Putnam Museum and Science Center in Davenport, Iowa. It will be available through August 2026.



Artist INC advances artists' careers

Last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to wane and the world began to reopen, many artists understood better than ever the importance of having a professional network and a business plan with more than one revenue stream. They had survived the nightmare of canceled art shows, shuttered performance venues, and business options dwindling to next to nothing.

As a result, Artist INC, the professional development program of Mid-America Arts Alliance, gained new significance. Artists wanted to find ways to keep money coming in even when the unexpected came along.

Offered in FY22 in four communities throughout the M-AAA region, Artist INC Live is an eight-week course at the core of Artist INC's programming. Each seminar includes a cohort

of twenty-five artists from an array of disciplines who are selected through a competitive process.

During the pandemic, Artist INC Live courses migrated online. But last year, those meetings began to return to in-person gatherings. Over the session's weeks, participants work with a mentor, participate in small-group activities, and join in large-group discussions and multimedia lectures. They learn business skills—for example, how to create a strategic plan, define their audience and market, develop their brand, and write a budget—as they explore career options.

By the end of the program, participants learn to analyze their art as an entrepreneur might, examining all opportunities and learning how to take advantage of the ones with the most potential to expand their business and their art.

“Many artists struggled during the pandemic,” says Sarah Fizell, Executive Director of Arts Connect, which administers Artist INC in Topeka. “But the ones who had a solid business plan with more than one potential revenue stream were most likely to survive.”



Artist INC, which began in Kansas City in 2009, also connects artists with a network of peers, another important element of the program to help artists expand their art and their careers.

Bringing artists together became especially important during COVID, Fizell says. “They need to meet each other.”

Artist INC also continued to offer:

- Artist INC Express, an intensive workshop taught outside major metropolitan areas including a smaller number of professional artists. The program focuses on teaching artists of all disciplines the most essential skills in the shortest amount of time.
- Artist INC Advance, a twelve-month program for Artist INC Live fellows, provides direct network support and professional development in project management and planning, communications, and financial management.
- What Works, a workshop based on sharing the common behaviors of successful artist entrepreneurs.

Artists 360 program expands its creative impact

In FY22, Artists 360, a program of Mid-America Arts Alliance, expanded to include a \$25,000 Creative Impact Award, five \$15,000 Community Activator grants, in addition to the program's grants of \$7,500 for practicing artists and \$1,500 grants for student artists. Artists 360, which provides grants and peer learning for artists in Northwest Arkansas, is made possible through philanthropic support from Steuart Walton and Tom Walton through the Walton Family Foundation.

Sharon Killian, whose colorful, abstract landscapes reflect the beauty of her home in Northwest Arkansas, accepted the inaugural Creative Impact Award in November 2021.

The \$25,000 award honors an exceptional artist who has contributed to and nurtured the region's cultural ecosystem. A panel of Northwest Arkansas arts and culture leaders selected Killian, an artist, advocate, educator, and arts leader, for this first-time honor.

Martin Miller, Executive Director of TheatreSquared, said the panel selected Killian for her leadership in the community, her mentorship of students, and her own trailblazing work. "Sharon is a passionate advocate for artists and an inspiration to our community," Miller said.

In addition to teaching art at the University of Arkansas and other community leadership roles, Killian serves as president of the board of Art Ventures, a nonprofit organization that espouses the guiding principle, "art for everyone." Art Ventures, formerly known as Fayetteville Underground, emphasizes inclusiveness, cross-cultural communication, creative learning practices, shared stories from micro-communities, and developing young artists.

When accepting the award Killian said that diversity, community, and education were foundational to work as an artist and a culture leader.

"The space I create is one where you are not left alone," she said at the time. "I just want to help push the needle, to help artists not in the mainstream, and to create space for marginalized people."



Above: Photo of Sharon Killian; Sharon Killian, *Daughter*, 2014; Courtesy of the artist

Killian said she saw progress in her creative community. "I found my home," she said. "I feel like I'm part of the fabric of this place. I just keep trying to do what I believe will make a huge difference in our community."

In addition to honoring Killian, Artists 360 awarded five \$15,000 Community Activator grants. Those included:

James Benham, an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe, for an installation of Ledger Art, which comes from a time when Plains Indians used accounting ledger books as a source of paper. The installation features dancers and actors telling the story of government boarding schools and missing murdered indigenous women.

Amos Cochran, an Emmy-nominated composer, musician, and sound artist, for ArcadeNow, a series that included music, dance, film, and visual art outside traditional presentation spaces. The performances, in a historic building in Fort Smith, encouraged community dialogue about the importance of space in the art experience.

Airic Hughes, an entrepreneur, artist, philanthropist and graduate history student at the University of Arkansas, for the Micheaux Award Film Lab, a collaborative initiative to build a community of resources for filmmakers of color in Arkansas.

Araceli Lopez, founder of the Latin Art Organization of Arkansas (formerly the Ballet Folklorico Mi Herencia de Mexico), for a dance residency to create and showcase a pre-hispanic dance of Mexico, Danza Azteca or de los Concheros.

Lia Uribe, associate chair and associate professor of music at the University of Arkansas and leader of RefleXions Music Series, for a Tertulia/Gathering featuring regional, nationally, and internationally recognized citizen-artists who will share music, perspectives, and knowledge.

Artists 360 also honored the following artists:

\$7,500 for practicing artists

Jane Blunschi (Fayetteville), Connor Brogan (Fayetteville), Robin Bruce (Fayetteville), Willi Carlisle (Prairie Grove), Renata Cassiano Alvarez (Springdale), Kinya Christian (Springdale), Michael Day (Rogers), Sean Fitzgibbon (Fayetteville), Jasper Logan (Fayetteville), Nikola Radan (Fayetteville), Megha Rao (Bentonville), Michael Schultz (West Fork), Victor Alexander Verlage (Bentonville), and Blake Worthey (Bentonville)

\$1,500 for student artists

James Eaton IV (Fort Smith), Brenda Hernandez (Lowell), Karstin Johnson (Fayetteville), Sarah Loucks (Fayetteville), Junli Song (Fayetteville), and Markeith Woods (Fayetteville)

Artists 360 combines grantmaking and professional development to strengthen the careers of individual artists of all disciplines in Northwest Arkansas.



Artists 360's Full Circle event showcases talent

As he wrapped up his musical performance last June at the inaugural Full Circle Showcase event at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, artist and rapper Jeremiah Pickett told the audience he had been about to give up on music as a career when he was told about Artists 360.

The program of Mid-America Arts Alliance changed his life, said Pickett, who goes by **BAANG**, an acronym for Believe Aspire Achieve Now Go.

“I finally took one step,” BAANG said. “I took one step. I filled out the application. I did the program. And it’s changed my life.”

BAANG's performance was one of four by Artist 360 alumni featured at the Full Circle event. He introduced his first song, "Friday 117," saying it was about his childhood in Arkansas, watching his single mother take care of three children on her own, and about social justice and his desire, as a Black man, to be treated with equity.

"I believe in creating work that challenges thought and challenges ourselves to not only connect deeply with self but to connect deeply with each other," he said.

Old-time fiddler **Roy Pilgrim**; composer, musician, and sound artist **Amos Cochran**; and songwriter **Kalyn Fay Barnoski** also performed at the Full Circle Showcase, a free public event that celebrated the artist alumni of Artists 360.

In its first four years, the program awarded a total of \$556,000 to eighty-six artists.



In addition to musical performances, the event featured short talks by artists about their work and their artistic practices.

Presenting Artists included:

Lynette Thrower, a poet and short story writer.

Danielle Hatch, a multidisciplinary artist whose work explores the female body's relationship to the built environment, notions of artificiality, and power structures, through site-specific installations, sculptures, and performances.

Loring Taoka, a visual artist who uses a variety of approaches and techniques to explore notions of vagueness and authenticity.

Kalyn Fay Barnoski, a songwriter and musician who explores the relationship of her indigenous experience with the physical space she inhabits.

Brody Parrish Craig, a writer and poet whose literary anthology *TWANG* celebrates and elevates transgender and gender non-conforming writers living throughout Mid-America.

Karen Castleman, a dancer, choreographer, and educator.

Craig Colorusso, an artist who creates outdoor interactive sound sculpture.

Crescent Dragonwagon, a writer whose works include cookbooks, children's books and plays.

Hiba Tahir, a former journalist and first-generation immigrant, whose literary work includes novels and poetry.

Heidi Carlsen-Rogers, a photographer and artist whose work merges visual impressions with concepts that explore connectedness, well-being, inclusiveness, and preservation of beauty.

All Full Circle photography by Ironside Photography.



Engage coaching empowers small and midsize arts organizations

The Altharetta Yeargin Art Museum (AYAM) in Houston, Texas, boasts a collection of art and artifacts from around the world valued at more than \$2 million. Its inviting space, designed in consultation with the Smithsonian Institution, encourages learning and exploration.

But until recently, the museum, which is part of the Spring Branch Independent School District, was little more than the small gallery second graders visited each year. It was “a place that hosted the same field trip every year, along with a few crafting Saturdays,” says Leanne Newton, the museum’s former co-director and curator.

But soon after Newton started working at the museum, she got a call from the Mid-America Arts Alliance that set the stage for this hidden gem of a museum to evolve into something more.

AYAM was invited to join Engage Houston, an organizational development program operated by M-AAA and funded by the Houston Endowment, that for ten years helped small and midsize arts and culture organizations grow and evolve.

Between 2011 and 2021, Engage Houston worked with seventy different organizations, helping them create solid organizational structures, explore ways to deeply engage with their communities, enrich the audience experience they were offering, and establish the credibility needed to attract sustaining funding.

Organizations that went through Engage Houston—in one of three different cycles—connected with peer organizations, learned practical organizational skills, and gained access to coaches who helped them look at their organization in new ways and understand how it could evolve.

“The goal was to help them better execute on their mission and to engage their communities,” says Carla Patterson, M-AAA’s Director of Organizational Development.

Connections Multiply

This celebratory report chronicles the impact of ten years of the Engage program working with seventy arts and culture organizations in Houston, Texas.

The report shares statistics, key learnings, and a few unexpected outcomes.

Click to download the Engage Houston report [Engagehoustonsummaryreport.org](https://engagehoustonsummaryreport.org)

“M-AAA gave us a framework and a plan that didn’t exist before,” Newton says. “M-AAA helped us learn what board structure was supposed to be, gave us the courage to think bigger and to be bold in how we wanted AYAM to be viewed.”



Judy Walker with the late Lucille Bridges, Ruby Bridges’ mother, stand in the exhibition *Power of Children: Making a Difference*, photo courtesy of Leanne Newton

For AYAM that meant stepping beyond the annual second-grade field trips and occasional craft days to become a regionally recognized museum presenting national exhibitions.

By succeeding for an entire decade and consistently helping so many organizations, Engage Houston will stand as a pioneering example for other communities.

In its final report, “Connections Multiply,” Engage Houston said that many of the organizations that participated in the program improved their financial strength, increased their understanding of their audiences, increased attendance, and established new partnerships.

Organizers say the program was so successful because it was focused on connecting with each participant and meeting their individual needs and objectives.

“It wasn’t a drive-by workshop or a one-size-fits-all curriculum,” Patterson explains. “We moved and walked with the organizations where they were.”

In addition to Houston, M-AAA has also offered iterations of its Engage program in Kansas City between 2018 and 2020 and in Northwest Arkansas (called ARts Connect) between 2020 and 2022. Based on the success of Engage Houston and these other programs, M-AAA will continue its work in this space.



Puddin' & the Grumble, BLIXT Locally Grown, photo courtesy of Becky Boesen

American Rescue Plan Grants offer vital support

For many small arts organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic marked a devastating turning point.

By the start of 2022—months after the pandemic had darkened stages and canceled almost every event that connected artists to audiences—acting companies, dance troupes, and art studios weren't just asking how they would survive, but whether they would survive at all.

"It felt like, 'Should we panic?'" recalls Ali Duffy, artistic director of the Flatland Dance Theatre (FDT) in Lubbock, Texas. "It was sort of a Plan B,

Plan C, Plan D situation." As one pandemic year stretched into another, FDT was not alone in hoping for a miracle.

For fifty arts and culture organizations, that miracle came in January when Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) awarded grants of between \$10,000 and \$40,000 to small organizations in its region. The grants, from funds allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), totaled \$1,104,600 and came to M-AAA through the National Endowment for the Arts. They went to organizations with annual budgets of no more than \$500,000 as infusions of cash.

American Rescue Plan: Flatland Dance Theatre

The \$10,000 grant FDT received, Duffy says, “felt like a lifeline.”

The twelve-year-old dance company, made up of part-time artists, used the funds to create and stage *Pandemic Mama* for three performances in May. The interdisciplinary dance production featured a film that highlighted the inequities inherent with being a parent during COVID-19, and invited audience members to share their own stories.

In its grant report, FDT recounts that mothers cried during post-show discussions. “They did not believe their experiences and challenges of motherhood during a pandemic were valid until they witnessed our production.”

Duffy says the grant paid artists and writers who worked on the original production, which is now being expanded through budding partnerships with a PBS affiliate, the Texas Tech School of Theatre and Dance, the Lubbock Health Department, and the City of Lubbock. Company members also are working on a book related to the project, as well as additional stagings that organizers hope will eventually reach a national audience.

In addition, the grant from M-AAA freed other funds in Flatland’s budget for a second dance production last year, which simply wouldn’t have been possible without the grant, Duffy says. “This grant bolstered our company, so we know we will survive this and even thrive,” she says.



Above: Video stills, *Pandemic Mama*, courtesy of Flatland Dance Theatre

American Rescue Plan: Arts Asylum

When Arts Asylum, a Kansas City-based theater company, received a \$10,000 grant, it had just made the difficult decision to sell the large space it had always called home in order to cut costs.

The organization had lost revenue during the pandemic and made the call that to survive it needed to relocate to a smaller rented space and train its focus mainly to staging its own theater productions.

Getting the grant from M-AAA, says Evie Craig, Arts Asylum Executive Director, was an important boost. "I cannot tell you what a difference it makes to list M-AAA among our funders," Craig says. "It puts us at a level where our supporters want to see us. It says, 'We're there. We're legit. And we're worth investing in.'"

Arts Asylum used funds from the grant to offset unavoidable expenses associated with its new location, including installing braille signage, and other operational costs not allowed under many grants that are designated for specific purposes.

Without the funding coming at a time when normal sources of revenue, like ticket sales, were unavailable, Arts Asylum would likely have gone deeper into debt, creating an even bigger hurdle to moving beyond the pandemic.

“ It felt very big lift during a very dark time for us,” Craig says.

American Rescue Plan: BLIXT Locally Grown

BLIXT Locally Grown, an organization in Lincoln, Nebraska, that works to develop art and arts organizations around the state, used the \$20,000 grant it received to offset payroll expenses so other funds in its budget could be invested in projects that will produce ongoing revenue to sustain the organization in the future.

"We realized that we couldn't move forward in the pandemic with dreams for the future post-pandemic unless we were able to somehow build capacity within our organization," says Becky Boesen, co-founder and BLIXT's part-time executive director.

BLIXT invested freed-up budget funds in Nebraska artists and arts programs, including new works and two touring productions.

One of those, *Puddin' & the Grumble*, a play about childhood hunger, has been touring throughout the state, and is expected to continue its run, possibly moving outside Nebraska. Boesen says the production is now producing revenue that will continue to sustain BLIXT.

Before BLIXT learned it had been awarded the grant, Boesen says, the organization was wondering if it was time to throw in the towel.

"That grant was like a sign from the universe that we can keep going," Boesen says. "We can put this together. To us it was an injection of hope. ... Not only did this help save our organization during the pandemic, it actually helped us grow."

American Rescue Plan: Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance



The Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance (HSACA) in Arkansas put the \$10,000 it received through the ARPA grant program directly into the hands of local artists.

“They were devastated by the impact of the pandemic,” says Mary Zunick, the organization’s executive director. As part of the organization’s annual Arts & The Park festival, HSACA paid fifteen artists to design Adirondack chairs to reflect either the state’s heritage or the artist’s personal heritage. Artists from across the state transformed the chairs, made of native Arkansas cypress, into a panoply of colorful designs that told a diverse story about the state, Zunick says.



In days leading up to the festival, HSACA displayed the chairs in art galleries around downtown Hot Springs to help draw patrons back inside to shop. Eventually, the chairs were auctioned off as a fundraiser to support HSACA.

“This is not a project we could do every year,” Zunick says. “But this was a way to help artists stay on their feet as many couldn’t sell art through normal venues. ... If you remove all the festivals for a year-and-a-half – they all came to a screeching halt – that was very harmful to those artists.”

HSACA also used a portion of its grant to continue an annual tradition associated with its summer festival. Artists created artwork, which was reproduced on large metal sheets and installed along an outdoor walking trail. Those displays, which remain in place for one year, promote the artists who created them and will later be sold to raise funds to support HSACA.

Above: Artist Longhua Xu with his grandchildren and his work *Year of the Tiger*, photo courtesy of Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance; Kimiara Johnson stands beside her work *New Orleans Matrimony En Arkansas*

American Rescue Plan Grant Recipients by State

Arkansas

Arkansans for the Arts, Little Rock: \$11,150
Calico Rock Museum & Visitors Center, Calico Rock: \$40,000
Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance, Hot Springs: \$10,000
Open Mouth Reading Series, Fayetteville: \$10,000
Ra-Ve Cultural Foundation, Bentonville: \$20,000
Voice of Arkansas Minority Advocacy Council, Jonesboro: \$20,000

Kansas

Arts Council of Johnson County, Overland Park: \$40,000
Harvester Arts, Wichita: \$20,000
Kansas Alliance for the Arts in Education, Salina: \$10,000
Lawrence Children's Choir, Lawrence: \$20,000
Manhattan Arts Center, Manhattan: \$20,000

Missouri

Arts Asylum, Kansas City: \$10,000
Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City: \$40,000
Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City, Kansas City: \$20,000
Bootheel Youth Museum, Malden: \$40,000
Dances of India, St. Louis: \$10,000
Intercultural Music Initiative, St. Louis: \$40,000
Missouri Alliance for Arts Education, Maryland Heights: \$21,150
No Divide KC, Kansas City: \$20,000

Nebraska

Benson First Friday, Omaha: \$40,000
BLIXT Locally Grown, Lincoln: \$20,000
Blue River Arts Council, Crete: \$10,000
Circle Theatre, Omaha: \$20,000
El Museo Latino, Omaha: \$40,000

Nebraskans for the Arts, Omaha: \$11,150
Nebraska Writers Collective, Omaha: \$40,000
Prairie Arts Center/Creativity Unlimited Arts Council, North Platte: \$20,000
West Nebraska Arts Center, Scottsbluff: \$10,000
Why Arts, Omaha: \$20,000

Oklahoma

Black Liberated Arts Center, Oklahoma City: \$40,000
Choregus Productions, Tulsa: \$40,000
David-Waldorf Performing Arts Series at the University of Science & Arts of Oklahoma, Chickasha: \$20,000
Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art, Shawnee: \$20,000
Oklahomans for the Arts, Oklahoma City: \$40,000
Osage Ballet, Skiatook: \$10,000

Texas

Capitol View Arts, Austin: \$20,000
Community Artists Collective, Houston: \$20,000
Community Music Center of Houston, Houston: \$40,000
East Lubbock Art House, Lubbock: \$10,000
Flatlands Dance Theater, Lubbock: \$10,000
Harris County Cultural Arts Council, Houston: \$20,000
India Fine Arts, Austin: \$20,000
Make Art with Purpose, Dallas: \$10,000
Museum of Human Achievement, Austin: \$40,000
Pegasus Media Project, Dallas: \$20,000
Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance, Austin: \$20,000
Texans for the Arts, Austin: \$11,150
TILT, Austin: \$10,000
Trucha, McAllen: \$20,000
USA Film Festival, Dallas: \$10,000



Images from left: Cast of *Casta*, Courtesy of Salvage Vanguard Theater; *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea*, by Nathan Alan Davis and performed at the Nebraska Rep and the St. Louis Black Rep

Artistic Innovations Grants support creation of new work

In FY22 Mid-America Arts Alliance awarded \$211,500 for fifteen art projects across its region. Individual artists and art organizations in M-AAA's region received up to \$15,000 for the creation or production of new artwork. The year's projects ranged from an exhibition in Oklahoma of works by two First American artists to an immersive performance combining lucha libre wrestling with Aztec mythology. These grants are made possible with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

108 Contemporary, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Grant: \$10,000 for *The Space Between: Anita Fields and Molly Murphy Adams*

Helped present an exhibition of works by Anita Fields (Osage) and Molly Murphy Adams (Oglala Lakota), whose work intersects in terms of cultural perspective and its exploration of traditional Native American regalia

James Ewald, Edmond, Oklahoma

Grant: \$10,000 for *Flat Land: The History of Oklahoma Skateboarding*

Created a limited-edition book and prints about skateboarding in Oklahoma

InterUrban ArtHouse, Overland Park, Kansas

Grant: \$15,000 for *Artists as Activists: Social Justice and Community Dialogs*

Presented artwork and programming by Kansas City area artists who delve into issues of social justice

Junior Players Guild, Dallas, Texas

Grant: \$13,000 for *Amplify*

Helped develop original dances exploring themes of social justice and racial equity by BIPOC choreographers for high-school dancers

Mount Sequoyah Center, Fayetteville, Arkansas

Grant: \$15,000 for Chamber Music on the Mountain

Funded part of a year-round concert series of classical chamber music, including casual outdoor performance in Northwest Arkansas

Steve Parker, Austin, Texas

Grant: \$15,000 for *FIGHT SONG*

Parker supported *FIGHT SONG*, an exhibition and public performance that used the marching band to examine themes of labor, spectacle, and traumatic injury in college football

Prism Movement Theater, Dallas, Texas

Grant: \$15,000 for *Lucha Teotl*

Assisted in presenting an immersive bilingual experience combining elements of Aztec gods with lucha libre wrestling

Sav Rodgers, Olathe, Kansas

Grant: \$15,000 for *Chasing Chasing Amy*

Funded production of a documentary film, based on the influence of 1997's *Chasing Amy* on the artist and the broader LGBTQ+ community

Salvage Vanguard Theater, Austin, Texas

Grant: \$15,000 for *Casta*

Produced the world premiere of *Casta*, a multilingual play written by Afro-Latina playwright Adrienne Dawes, and performed at Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas

Society for the Performing Arts, Houston, Texas

Grant: \$15,000 for New/Now: Houston Artist Commissioning Project

Commissioned a diverse group of six Houston artist for live dance, spoken-word, and music performances and community engagement programs

St. Louis Black Repertory Company, University City, Missouri

Grant: \$15,000 for #realchange: A main stage co-production between the Nebraska Rep and St. Louis Black Repertory Company

Funded the co-production and programming for *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea*, a play by Nathan Alan Davis and performed at the Nebraska Rep (Lincoln) and the St. Louis Black Rep (St. Louis)

Rodney Thompson, Kansas City, Missouri

Grant: \$15,000 for *The Marble Rebellion*

Funded production of a short film about the battle of wills between a grandfather and his grandsons

Tru Born (Anthony Michael Peterson), Jennings, Missouri

Grant: \$15,000 for *The Rivers Run Through Me*

Assisted in producing a blues-themed, one-man play

Candace Wiley, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Grant: \$15,000 for What If—Tulsa

Created a historically based "Choose Your Own Adventure" story gaming app, based on the 1921 Tulsa Massacre

Mark Wittig, Little Rock, Arkansas

Grant: \$13,500 for Structures that Transformed Education

Supported creation of an exhibition of large-format images and architectural sculptures of historic schools, including Little Rock's Central High School

Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants:

A new initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts

The Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants program, launched last year by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance, is helping fund art classes, dance productions, writing seminars, and an entire repertoire of arts programs geared toward military service members, veterans, and their caregivers.

The grants—open to organizations across the country—are expanding the reach of Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Network, an initiative of the NEA in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Creative Forces recognizes

the important part art can play in healing mental and physical injuries.

Creative Forces seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military service members and veterans exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers, by increasing knowledge of and access to clinical creative arts therapies and community arts engagement. The projects seek to engage military-connected individuals through experiences of art or art-making in creative expression, social connectedness, resilience, independence, and successful adaptation to civilian life.

Below: Photo courtesy of Frontline Arts in Branchburg, New Jersey. Frontline Arts is a FY22 Creative Forces grant recipient. Photography by James Teichman.





Over the next several years, M-AAA will award approximately thirty-five matching grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for arts-based community engagement projects serving targeted military-connected communities. These Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants are intended to support emerging and established non-clinical arts engagement programs taking place in healthcare, community, or virtual settings. The grants will be awarded in two tiers, emerging and advanced.

Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network began in 2012 as an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and is managed in partnership with Americans for the Arts, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, and Mid-America Arts Alliance. The new Community Engagement Grant program is an expansion of the pilot Community Connections Project, which funded non-clinical arts engagement between 2018 and 2020.



After announcing Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants in FY22, nearly 140 organizations applied for the first round of funding for FY23 projects. Applicants—fifty-seven for emerging projects and ninety-six for advanced projects—spanned arts disciplines from opera to multidisciplinary projects.

At the end of FY22, twenty-six organizations were awarded more than \$750,000 for the inaugural Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants in FY23.



About the grants, Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veteran Affairs said, "I am pleased to see that through the Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants, there will be more opportunities for arts engagement available to more veterans and their families and caregivers, and in more places across America. It is vital that we care for and support those who have served and the arts can play an invaluable role in contributing to their health and well-being."

Left: Photo courtesy of Frontline Arts; Photo courtesy of Caregivers on the Homefront; Photo courtesy of Art for the Journey



Photo courtesy of Hot Club of Cowtown, 2022

Regional Touring Program improves access to regional artists

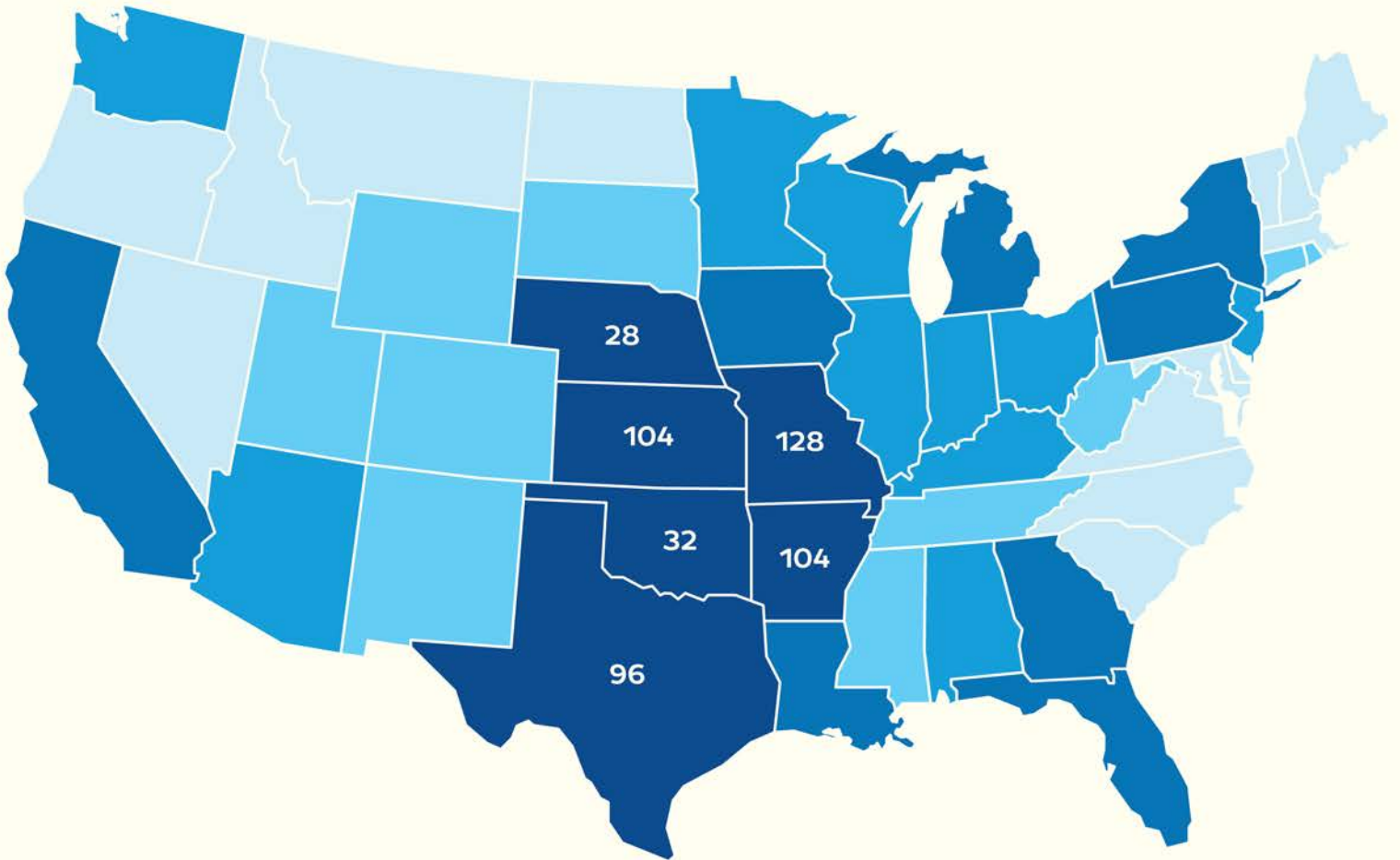
M-AAA's long-running Regional Touring Program grants funds to presenting organizations and venues to help cover artists fees, up to 50 percent. This regional approach expands the reach of artists of all disciplines past their home state and allows our presenters to access more performers for their venues. The Regional Touring Program, supported by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, is utilized by venues large and small, urban and rural.

In FY22, M-AAA helped to send dozens of performing artists and groups across the region, including Kansas' Kelley Hunt to the Lark in Hastings, Nebraska, and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra to Nebraska's Lied Center in Lincoln.

The Marshall County Arts Cooperative in Kansas used funds to bring Texas's Hot Club of Cowtown to perform in Blue Rapids, Kansas (population: 1,247) as part of the city's sesquicentennial celebration. The event brought together two community organizations to present a deeply engaging concert and a community jam session to an audience of 900, including roughly 30 percent new audience members. According to the Marshall County Arts Cooperative, "bringing the Hot Club of Cowtown to Marshall County helped us unite the county because it brought people together to experience a top-notch musical ensemble playing music that appealed to all ages."

FY22 Programming Map

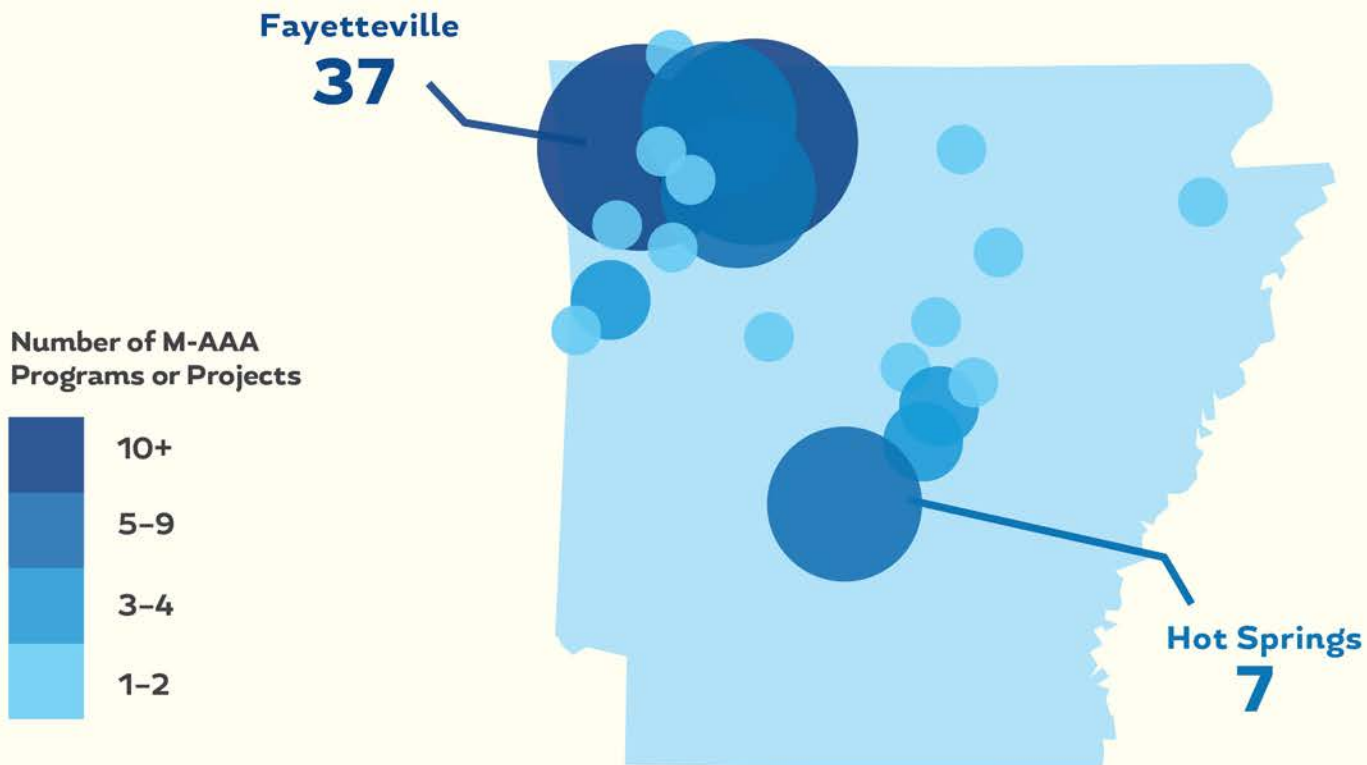
Mid-America Arts Alliance's programs serve communities across the country



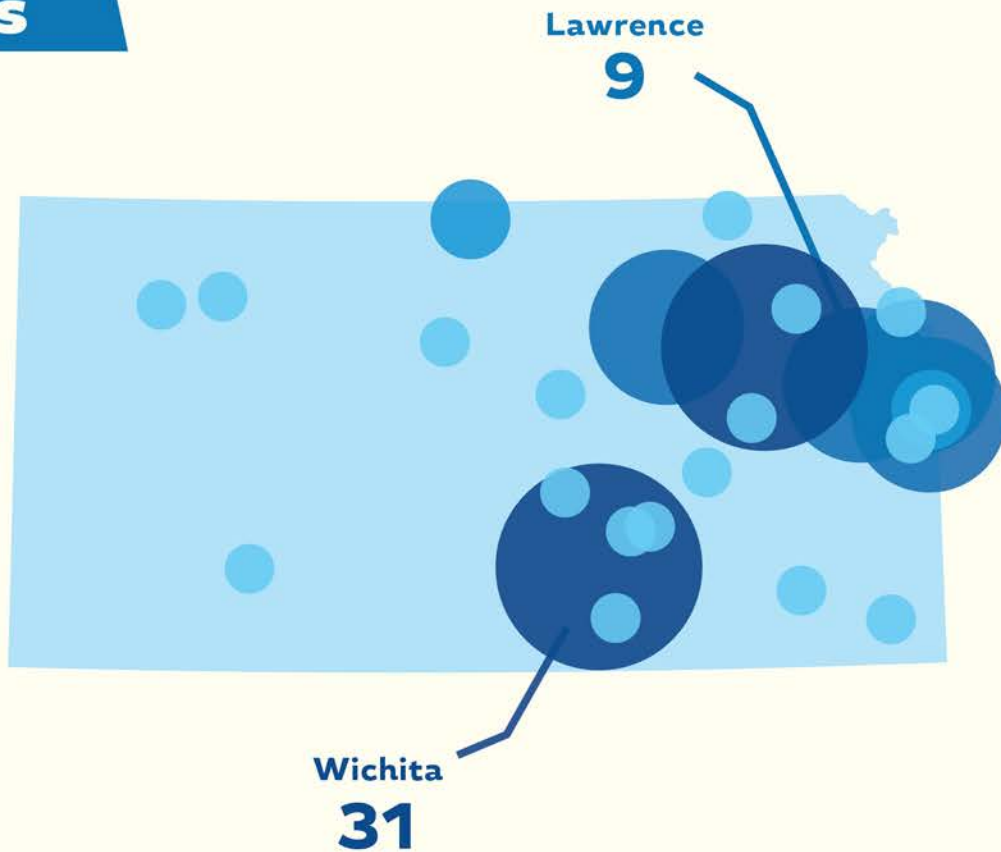
Number of M-AAA Programs or Projects per state



Arkansas

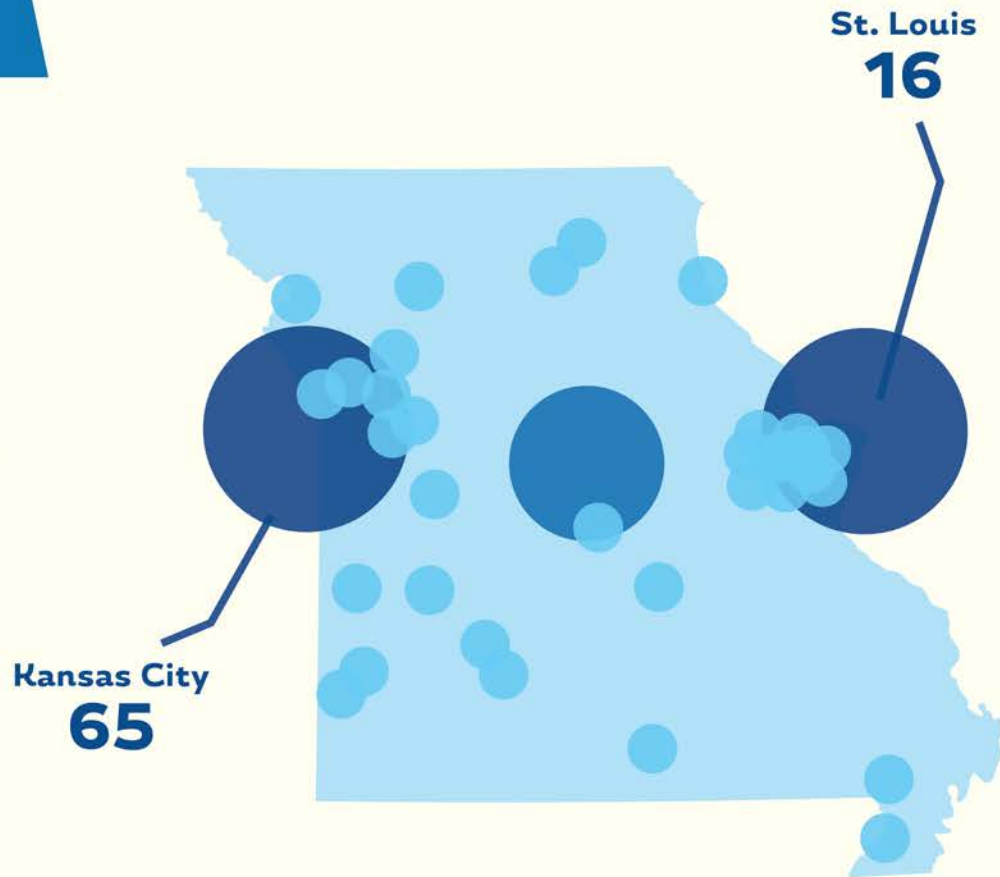
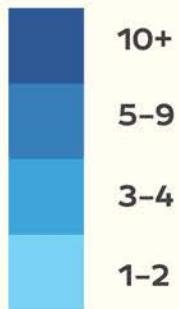


Kansas

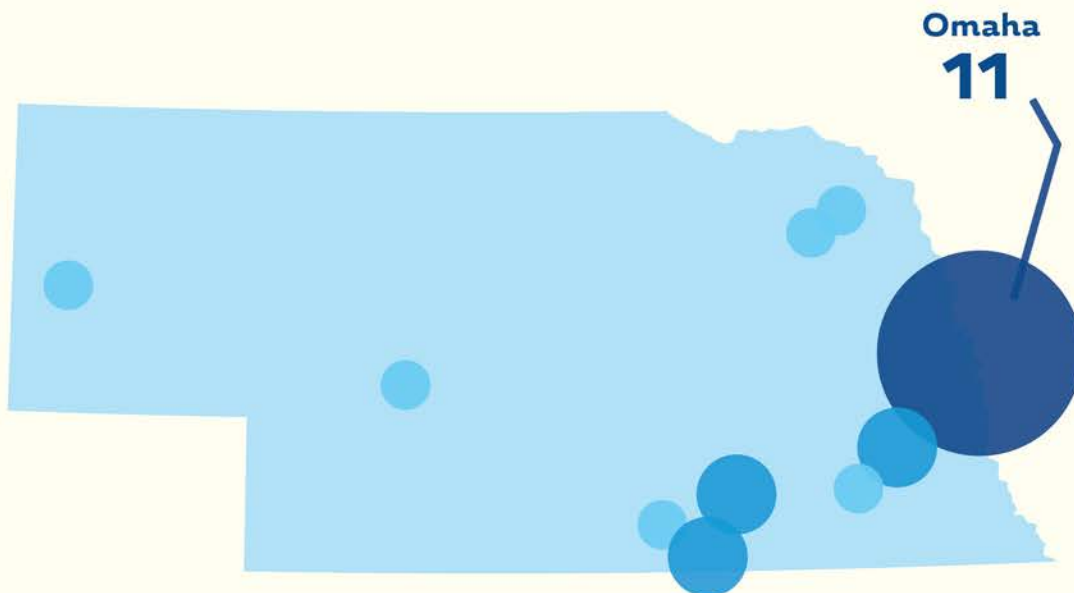


Missouri

Number of M-AAA Programs or Projects

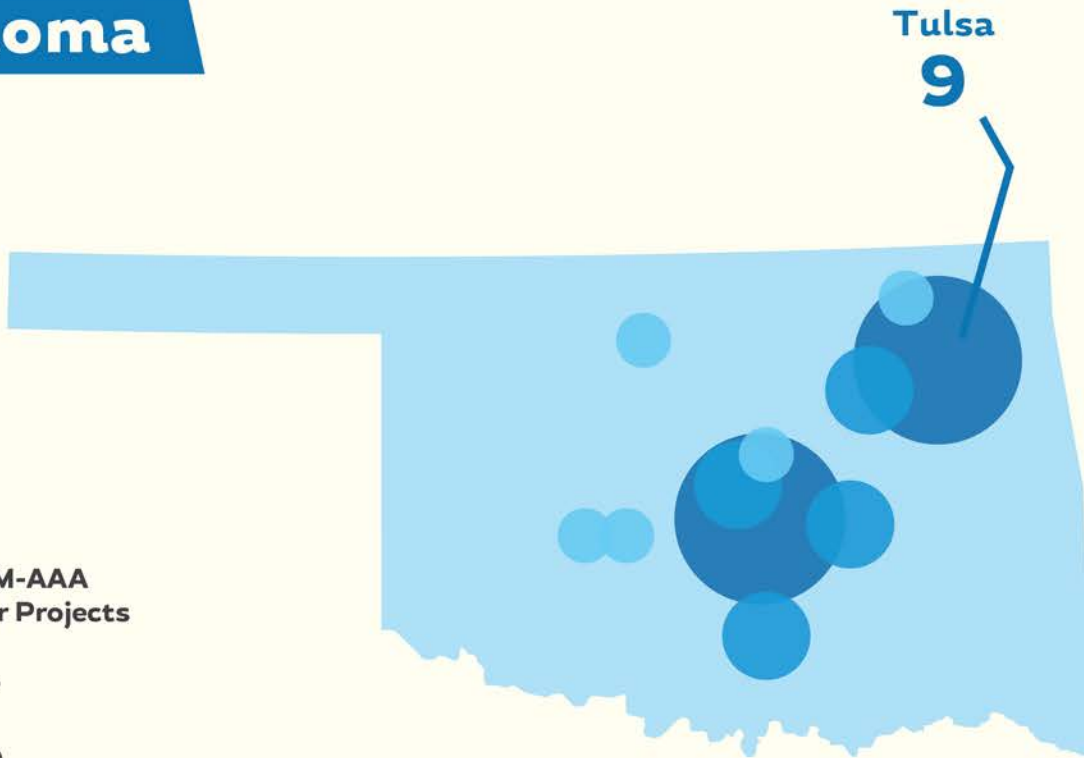
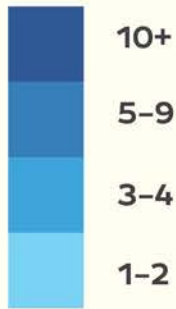


Nebraska

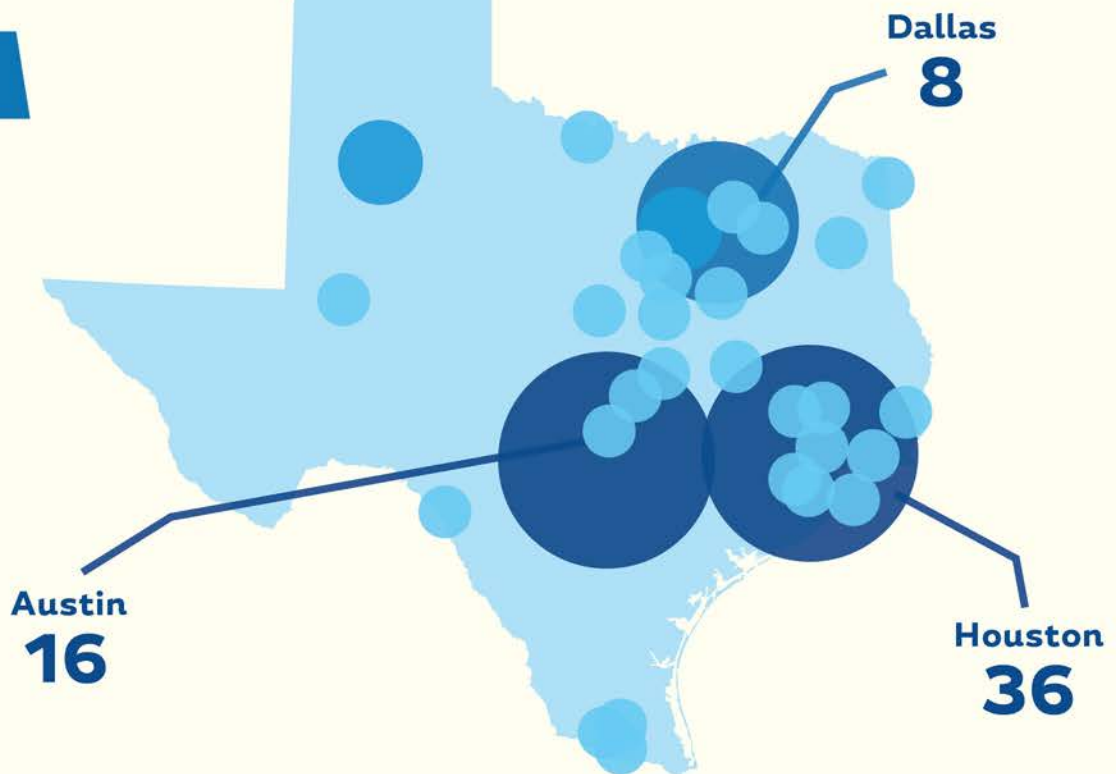


Oklahoma

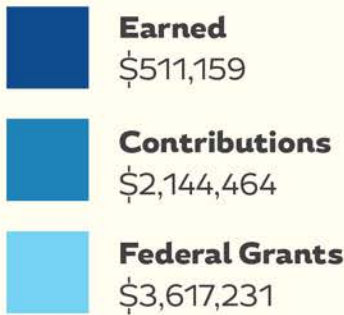
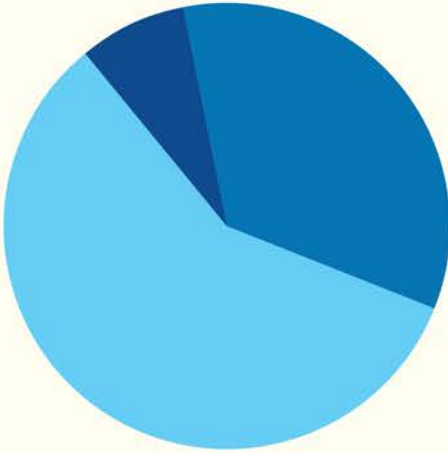
Number of M-AAA Programs or Projects



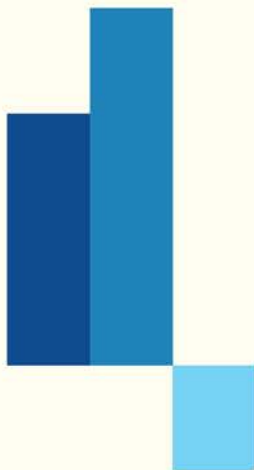
Texas



FY22 INCOME



Investment Loss: -\$1,267,498



\$2,801,456
total grants and subsidies



3,685
artists served
directly through
programming
and/or grants

Total number of people served: 471,773

353,525
adults served



118,248
children served

M-AAA'S REACH

35

states +
District
of Columbia

**Farthest
Participant**

2,756
MILES AWAY



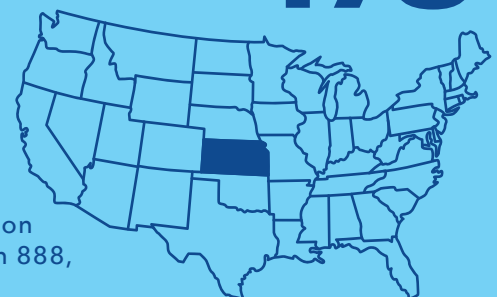
ExhibitsUSA
supports
venues, including
Alaska's Wasilla
Museum and Visitors
Center, across the
United States

WE BOOST SMALL!

Lebanon, KS

Lebanon, KS, received **Regional Touring Program grants** to bring in musicians Kody West and Dylan Wheeler and StoneLion Puppet Theater to perform at its annual Lebanon Bash.

Population **178**



Runners up: Lucas, KS: population 332, Calico Rock, AR: population 888, Red Cloud, NE: population 962

MISSION

Mid-America Arts Alliance strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout the region and beyond.

VISION

More art for more people.

VALUES

M-AAA affirms the following values, and commits to embracing and holding ourselves accountable to these principles in all of our work:

- Freedom of cultural and creative expression is fundamental to humanity.
- The arts and humanities encourage empathy and further the understanding of diverse cultures and traditions.
- Collaborations and partnerships leverage creativity, resources, and experience to expand possibilities.
- Thriving arts communities contribute to prosperous, successful societies.
- Service to the arts ecosystem of the region is infused with innate curiosity and a creative approach to innovation, within an environment that allows for risk taking and ongoing learning.
- Commitment to equitable policies, inclusive practices, and celebration of the rich diversity of our region permeates our organizational structure and our service to the region.



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 Antzee Magruder, West
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 Don Munro, Hot Springs, AR+
 Betty Price, Oklahoma City, OK
 Judith Sabatini, Topeka, KS
 Art Thompson, Lincoln, NE
 James R. Tolbert III, Oklahoma
 City, OK

+ deceased

Top photos from left: Patrick Ralston and Antzee Magruder, both from Arkansas; Johnita and Charles Moore from Oklahoma with Robert and Karen Duncan of Nebraska



Our FY22 Staff

Todd Stein, President and Chief Executive Officer

Carris Adams, Professional Development Specialist

Matt Aelmore, Grant Programs Coordinator

Christine Dotterweich Bial, Director of Arts
and Humanities Grant Programs

Summer Brooks, Artist Services Program Intern

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Steve Crays, Executive Assistant

Drea DiCarlo, Digital Content Coordinator

Kathy Dowell, Director of Arts and Humanities
Programming

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Puce Felling, Artist Services Program Coordinator

Sarah Garten, Audience Engagement Specialist

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Jessica Heikes, Chief Preparator

Majesty Ivory, Artist Services Communications
Intern

Margaret A. Keough, Director of Marketing
and Communications

Luther Kroman, Preparator

Mary LaRoche, Exhibition Designer

Kathy Liao, Program Officer (Artist INC)

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Art McSweeney, Fabrication and Preparation
Manager

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Salesforce, M-AAA Accessibility Coordinator

Regina Schneider, Facilities and Office Manager

Diane Scott, Director of Artist Services

Erin Thornton, Evaluation Specialist

Dr. Kheli Willetts, Director of Professional
Development

Amanda Wiltse, Exhibition Tours Manager

Michelle Wolfe, Registrar

Top photos from left: Todd Stein, Kyle Mullins, Erinn Roos-Brown, David Wayne Reed, Kathy Liao, Diane Scott, Matt Aelmore, Catherina Mueller, Drea DiCarlo, Steve Crays

CELEBRATING



MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE



MID-AMERICA ARTS ALLIANCE

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