



# *Strategic Plan*

2025 - 2030

A CREATIVE LIFE FOR ALL

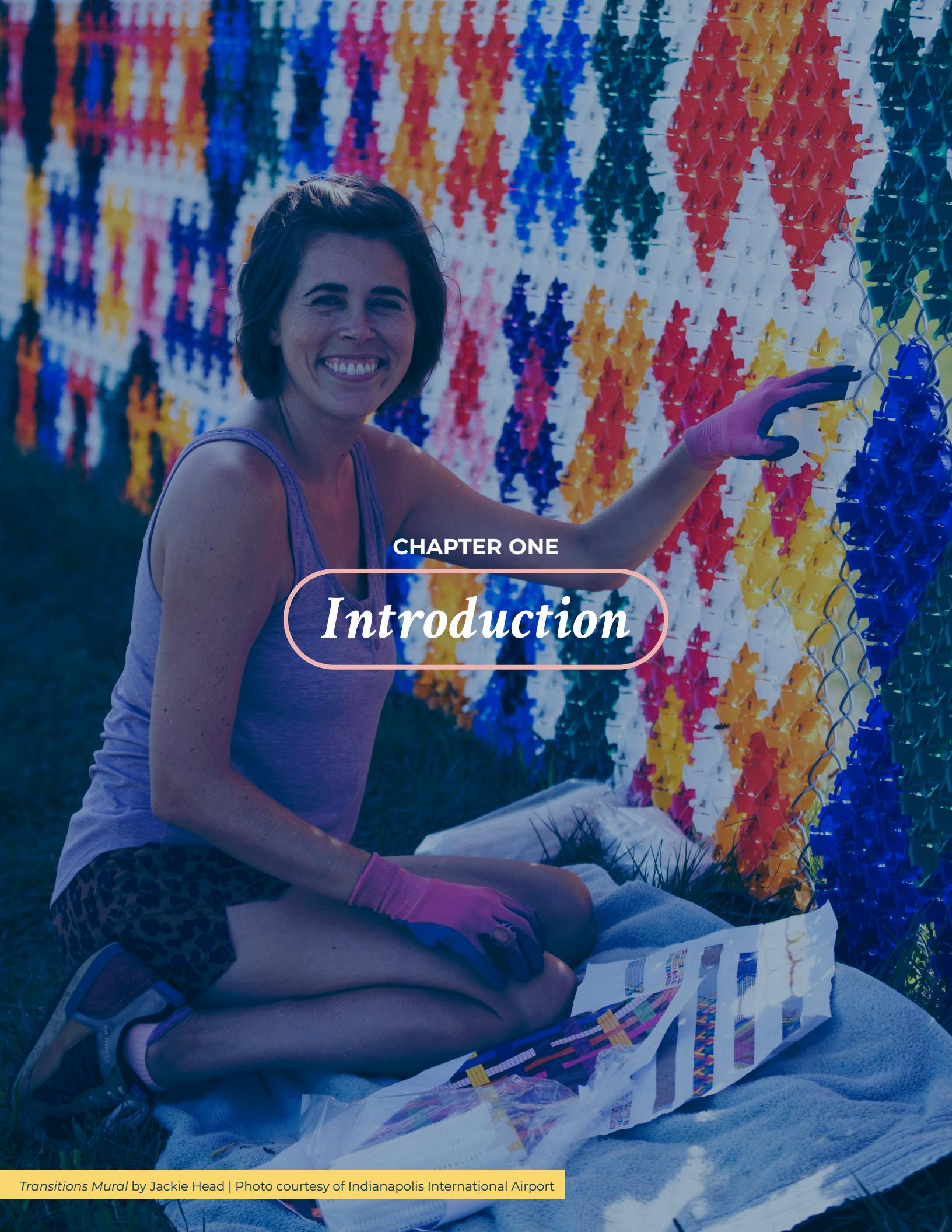




Madison Scouts Shining a Light | Photo courtesy of Drum Corps International

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A woman with short dark hair, wearing a purple tank top and patterned leggings, sits on a blue tarp in front of a large, colorful mosaic mural. She is smiling and holding a piece of the mural. The mural is made of many small, colorful tiles in shades of blue, red, yellow, and green. The woman is wearing pink gloves and a white apron. The background is a chain-link fence.

CHAPTER ONE

# *Introduction*

## 1.1 Letter from Leadership

**Dear friends and supporters of Indy Arts Council,**

We're proud and excited to bring you our new strategic plan, the culmination of a lot of conversations, community research, and our most inclusive input and planning process yet.

We approached this project with curiosity and humility—and frankly a lot of patience. We're eager to do more to champion arts and culture in Indianapolis and, in 2020, we began the process of discovering how to do so most effectively. Funding priorities took a turn when the pandemic hit, and we knew we could not undertake this project with anything less than a thoughtful, community-wide approach.

So we waited. And then we spent 2024 working to discover all we could about what our community wants and needs—and how we can better deliver it. It's a thrill to be able to share this plan with you.

Our hearty thanks go out to everyone who participated—nearly 3,000 Indianapolis artists, arts organizations, residents, funders, and civic partners. The result of that generous input is a plan that reflects where our community stands and addresses where it's growing, especially as a vibrant arts and culture scene.

Indy residents are highly engaged with the arts already, and you've told us you want even more. We couldn't be happier to support that, but it isn't without its challenges: Even though we're valued within the community, we're also underfunded. Out of 15 benchmark cities, we ranked last in per capita resources.

The arts and culture sector generates \$524 million in annual economic impact in Marion County alone, yet funding has been stagnant for decades. Indy Arts Council offers robust programs and services and does so with a smaller staff, less funding, and fewer board members than benchmark organizations. We're committed to developing new funding mechanisms to address these challenges and to sustainably support—and grow—our sector.

Read on to find out more about what's happening in central Indiana arts and culture, how we're meeting the needs of the community (and where we're falling short), and how we plan to do all we can to provide "a creative life for all".

Respectfully yours,



Brenda Horn  
Board Chair, Indy Arts Council



Art and Soul 2024 | Photo by KP's Photography

## 1.2 Who We Are

Indy Arts Council believes every resident should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. As central Indiana's leading arts advocacy and services agency, we exist to champion arts and culture and realize a creative life for all by supporting artists, arts organizations, and the community.

Founded in 1987, Indy Arts Council advocates for the community funding and support necessary for a thriving arts scene. We connect artists, audiences,

businesses, foundations, and organizations with opportunities to explore and expand central Indiana's creative vitality.

Indy Arts Council operates two performance and exhibition spaces, the Indianapolis Artsgarden and Gallery 924. Our free online initiative, Explore Indy Arts, features a comprehensive arts and culture calendar, a non-juried directory of central Indiana artists, public art database, and more.

## 1.3 Strategic Plan Project Process & Timeline

### PROCESS OVERVIEW

Prior to the pandemic, Indy Arts Council planned to update its strategic plan (spanning 2017-2020) in 2020. The board postponed the planning process twice due to the significant COVID-19-related relief and recovery support we provided in 2020-2022, resulting in the allocation and administration of more than \$16 million to central Indiana artists and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations.

The board and staff prioritized strategic plan development in 2023-2024 to generate a new roadmap to guide the Arts Council as it evolves its role, including centering, inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) in every aspect of mission delivery. We and our arts sector members, partners, and stakeholders were deeply engaged in the strategic planning process through surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. We invited input from artists, arts organizations, residents, funders, and civic/business partners to identify current and anticipated community and sector priorities and to evaluate our current programs and services. Together, we identified gaps, needs, and opportunities to adapt and grow to meet the needs of our sector, city, and region in innovative ways.

In addition to community and stakeholder engagement, our scope for this strategic plan included:

- National and regional benchmarking and best practices against peer and aspirational cities
- A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR) analysis of our current programs and services
- Staff and board visioning sessions, updating our mission, vision, and values
- Additional research

The Arts Council's previous strategic plans have been largely developed internally by staff with board input via a half-day retreat/workshop. These plans reflected informal sector input, but there has not been a comprehensive, inclusive strategic planning effort in over a decade. While those plans served their purpose, we believe it is a critically

important time to conduct a comprehensive, inclusive planning process facilitated by an external consultant who brings local and national perspectives. Through an RFI process, Indy Arts Council identified and partnered with consultants Next Practice Partners (NPP), led by Founder & CEO Neelay Bhatt, to facilitate the strategic planning process. NPP's experience leading the Indy Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, Indiana Sports Corp Vision 2050 Strategic Plan, and central Indiana Community Foundation's (CICF) current strategic planning process will help us make the most of the intersection of arts and culture with parks and sports as collective priorities in advancing Quality of Life and Quality of Place.

### TIMELINE

#### June to August 2023: Project Kickoff and Communications Plan

Together with the NPP team, we kicked off the planning process with a strategic communications plan and project website that was implemented to serve as a hub for transparent communication of our planning priorities and timelines that functioned as ongoing engagement with stakeholders: [www.CreativeLifeIndy.org](http://www.CreativeLifeIndy.org).

#### September to October 2023: Engagement Plan and Outreach Strategy

The Arts Council and NPP developed a stakeholder and community engagement plan and outreach strategy.

#### October 2023: SOAR Analysis

At a staff retreat in October 2023, NPP led the Arts Council team through a SOAR Analysis that looked at the strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results of the Arts Council's current portfolio of work.

#### November 2023 to March 2024: Key Leadership Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews

NPP conducted stakeholder input via focus groups and interviews in Q4 2023 and presented initial findings to the staff, board, and advisory board in Q1 2024. Stakeholder groups included artists, community leaders, funders, grantees, public/

# KEEPERS OF CULTURE



Keepers of the Culture Mural by Ashley Nora | Photo courtesy of GANGANG

private and non-profit partners, civic leaders, and other key partners. These stakeholders represented 90+ organizations from central Indiana and a wide variety of perspectives.

#### **April to May 2024: Onboarding/Orientation of Team to Strategic Planning**

In April and May 2024, the Arts Council onboarded four new team members to fill vacant positions. As part of their onboarding, all team members were oriented with strategic planning efforts to date, including previous strategic plans, initial stakeholder input findings, and timelines and goals for the remainder of the planning process.

#### **May to August 2024: Board and Staff Visioning Sessions**

NPP engaged staff and board members in multiple visioning sessions to unpack findings from stakeholder and partner interviews, focus groups, and survey feedback. These sessions included “blue sky” workshops, redevelopment of our mission, vision, and values, strategic plan framework and key pillars development, and the creation of an action

plan with key strategies for ensuring the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

#### **June to July 2024: Regional Statistically Valid Survey (English & Spanish):**

With the help of an independent firm, ETC Institute, NPP conducted a statistically valid community survey to identify participation in and perception of the local arts and culture scene, which includes gaps, barriers, needs, and opportunities for both the Arts Council and the entire central Indiana arts and culture sector. The survey was a combination of mail and online responses obtained through random sampling and reflects the demographics of the population in Marion County and the surrounding donut counties including Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Morgan, and Shelby.

#### **June to July 2024: Community-Wide Online Survey (English & Spanish)**

An online community survey that mirrors the statistically valid survey was created with SurveyMonkey and was distributed via the Arts

Council's communication channels, through arts and culture, civic, and other partners, as well as through the project website.

#### **June to July 2024: Sector-Wide Online Survey**

An online arts and culture sector survey was created with SurveyMonkey to measure the engagement, needs, priorities, gaps, and barriers specific to artists, creatives, and arts and culture workers. This included artist and arts administrators' experiences and engagement with the Arts Council. The sector survey was disseminated via the Arts Council's communication channels, including direct outreach to artists and arts and culture workers.

#### **July to August 2024: Benchmarking and Research**

NPP conducted an industry benchmark against 15+ comparable and aspirational agencies from peer cities across the nation to learn from their funding and service models. Additional research was conducted by the Arts Council team.

#### **June to August 2024: Focus Groups**

Focus groups specific to local artists, arts administrators, and other arts and culture workers were hosted by NPP to delve deeper into initial findings from the sector-wide survey. Internal focus groups related to specific Arts Council programs and services were also conducted by staff to assess strengths, opportunities, gaps, and barriers to better shape the future of the Arts Council's offerings to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

#### **June to July 2024: Internal Organizational Culture Assessment**

NPP conducted an organizational assessment survey to better understand the staff culture at the Arts Council. This survey, completed by all 15 staff members, provided insights into the staff's current perspectives and the existing organizational culture. It was presented to all Arts Council staff, and the consulting team then conducted a workshop with the team.

#### **August 2024: Preview New Mission**

A preview of strategic pillars and the revised mission, vision, and values was presented at Start with Art on August 22 and with arts funders on

August 29, along with highlights of key findings and themes from the sector feedback, resident input, and benchmarking research.

#### **August to September 2024: Action Plan Development**

All of the comprehensive community input and engagement led to the development of the final strategic plan, which includes a sustainable, evolving action plan that connects the mission, vision, and values to the goals, timelines, performance metrics, and funding strategies to achieve them.

#### **October to December 2024: Content, Design, and Approval of Final Plan**

Plan content was co-created by the community and sector and written by NPP and staff. The final report includes an outline of the planning process, all of the community and sector input findings, benchmarking results, recommendations, and the action plan. The final plan was presented to the Arts Council Board on October 24, 2024, for approval. An executive summary version and additional marketing assets were designed and created through the end of the year.

#### **Winter - Spring 2025: Implementation Plan Development**

Following approval of the strategic plan, we will develop an implementation plan that will include a series of sector, stakeholder, and partner events to present and communicate the results of the community/sector research and final plan; training and strategies for staff to help execute the outlined goals; and a system for tracking, measuring, and reporting progress and outcomes on the action plan.

#### **Summer 2025: Convenings and Presentations**

We are planning a full schedule of conversations and convenings to share this collection of new community data and discuss the implications in 2025.

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## Community Profile

# 1. Community Profile

## 1.4 Overview

A key component of the Indy Arts Council Strategic Plan is the development of a community profile. This analysis provides the Arts Council with valuable insight into the diverse community it serves, helping to identify and quantify the cultural market within the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The MSA consists of 11 counties: Marion, Hamilton, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Hancock, Morgan, Boone, Shelby, Brown, and Tipton. By focusing on this region, the community profile helps the Arts Council better understand the needs of both residents and the creative community, ensuring that programs and services are equitably designed to meet the needs of the entire area.

### 1.4.1 LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Indy Arts Council acknowledges that our offices, Gallery 924, and the Indianapolis Artsgarden are located on the traditional homelands of Native people who were removed unjustly and that we and those in our community are the beneficiaries of that removal. The land on which we operate and gather is the occupied and contested territory of the Miami, Potawatomi, Delaware, Shawnee, Peoria, and Kickapoo Nations.

We recognize that our privilege of working and serving communities on this land is only possible through the losses endured by these Indigenous tribes, many of whom still have a strong and enduring presence here in Indiana. We strive to honor the land they have stewarded for generations by cultivating “a creative life for all.”

We also recognize our responsibility to uplift Indigenous and all marginalized and underrepresented artists, voices, and communities to create a space where everyone’s histories and experiences are heard and respected.

## 1.5 Demographics

The demographic analysis examines the characteristics of the population in the market,

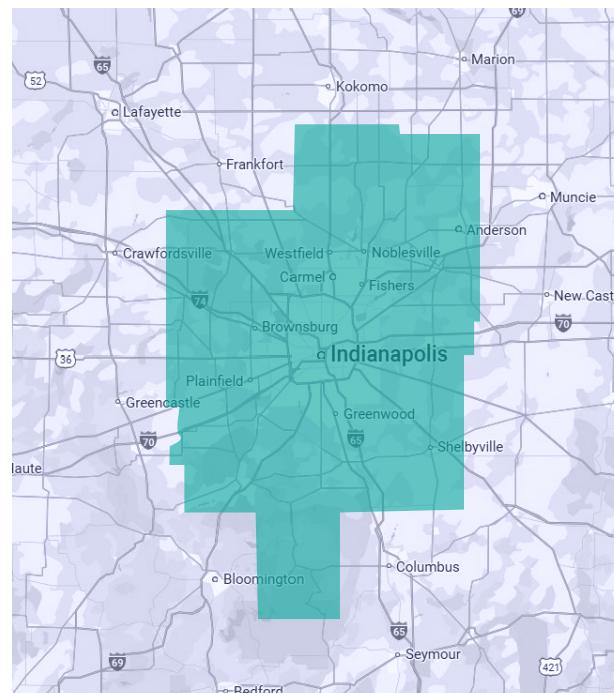
including age segments, race, ethnicity, and income levels. It covers the entire population of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area and uses historical patterns to make future projections. Unforeseen circumstances during or after the time of the analysis could impact the validity of these projections.

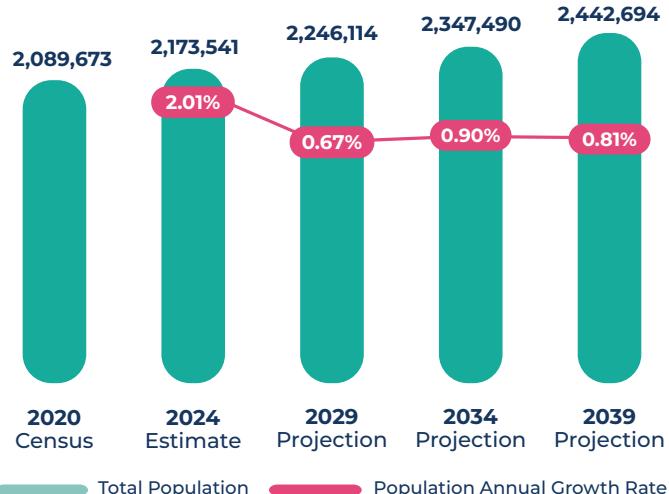
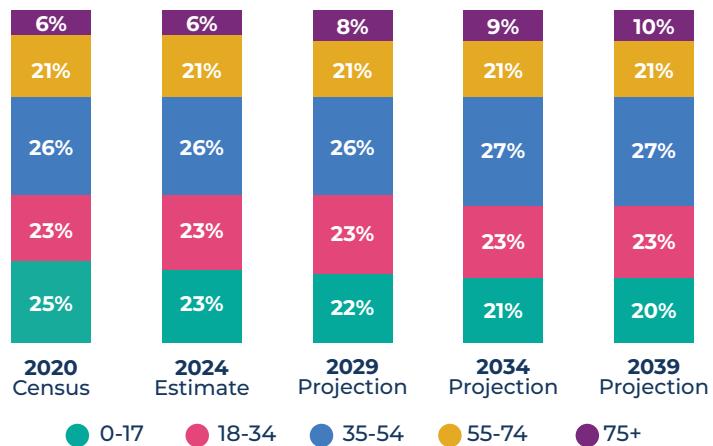
### 1.5.1 METHODOLOGY

The analysis used demographic data from two sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), a research and development organization specializing in geographical information systems and population projections. The data was obtained in October 2024 and reflects the actual numbers reported in the 2020 Census and information available as of October 2024. ESRI used this data to estimate the current population in 2023, as well as a 5-year projection for 2029. The consulting team used straight-line linear regression to forecast demographic characteristics for 10- and 15-year projections.

### Demographic Analysis Boundary

The census market boundaries shown below were used for the demographic analysis.



**Figure 1****POPULATION****Figure 2****POPULATION BY AGE SEGMENTS**

## 1.5.2 POPULACE

The population of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area is experiencing steady growth. As of 2024, the population is estimated at 2,173,541, reflecting an annual growth rate of 2.01% since 2020. Growth is projected to continue, though at a slower pace, with the population expected to reach 2,246,114 by 2029 (a 0.67% annual growth rate), 2,347,490 by 2034 (a 0.90% annual growth rate), and 2,442,694 by 2039 (with an annual growth rate of 0.81%). These trends indicate moderate but consistent population growth in the MSA over the next 15 years. **See figure 1.**

## 1.5.3 AGE

In 2020, the median age in the MSA was 37.0, and by 2024, it has increased to 37.6. This trend is expected to continue, with the median age projected to reach 38.7 by 2029.

Regarding age segments, 23% of the population in 2024 is under the age of 17, down from 25% in 2020, with a projected decline to 20% by 2039. The 18–34 age group remains stable at 23% in 2024 and is expected to hold steady in the future. The 35–54 age group, making up 26% of the population in 2024, will remain unchanged through 2029 but is projected to increase to 27% by 2034. The 55–74 group remains consistent at 21%, while the 75+ age group is experiencing significant growth, rising from 6% in both 2020 and 2024 to 10% by 2039. These patterns point to an aging population,

largely driven by increases in older age groups and a steadily rising median age. **See figure 2.**

### Race & Ethnicity Definitions

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below.

The 2020 Census data on race is not directly comparable with data from earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the U.S. population over time. Our analysis relies on the government's latest definitions and nomenclature:

- **American Indian** includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and maintaining tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian** includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Black or African American** includes a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** includes a person having origins in any of the

original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

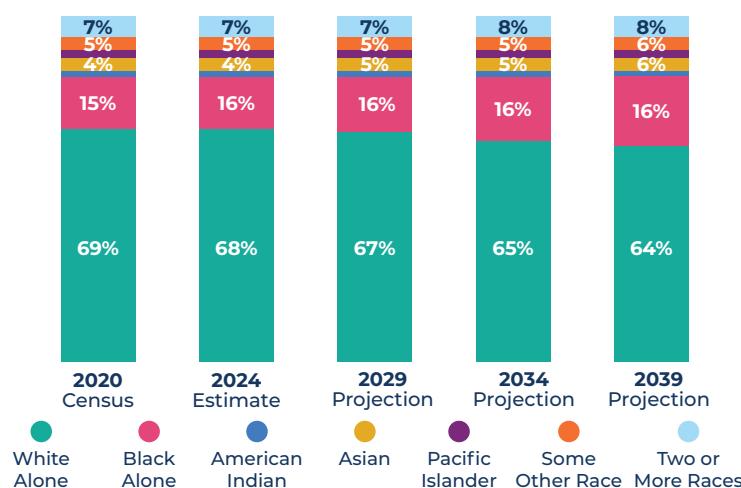
- **White** includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **Hispanic or Latino** is an ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the federal government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

The Census Bureau states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the United States and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins and sociocultural groups.

*Please Note: The Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more of the following social groups: White, Black, or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or a combination of these. While ethnicity is defined as whether a person is of Hispanic/Latino origin or not. For this reason, the Hispanic / Latino ethnicity is viewed as separate from race throughout this demographic analysis.*

Figure 3

## RACE



## 1.5.4 RACE

The racial composition of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is projected to become more diverse over time. In 2020, 69% of the population identified as White Alone, and this share is gradually declining. In 2024, 68% of the population identifies as White Alone, with projections indicating further declines to 67% by 2029, 65% by 2034, and 64% by 2039.

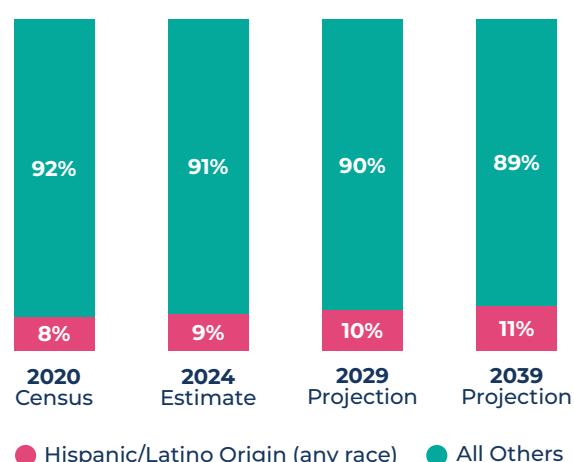
The Black Alone population, which made up 15% in 2020, has risen to 16% in 2024, and it is projected to maintain this share through 2039. The Asian population is expected to grow, rising from 4% in 2020 and 2024 to 5% by 2029 and 2034, and reaching 6% by 2039.

Other racial categories show smaller changes. The Some Other Race category remains at 5% in 2024 but is expected to increase to 6% by 2039. Meanwhile, the proportion of people identifying as Two or More Races is 7% in 2024 and is projected to rise slightly to 8% by 2034 and remain stable through 2039.

These trends highlight a slow but steady increase in racial diversity in the Indianapolis area over the coming years. **See figure 3.**

Figure 4

## HISPANIC POPULATION



## 1.5.5 ETHNICITY

The MSA's population was also evaluated based on Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, which the Census Bureau views as separate from race. It is worth noting that individuals who identify as Hispanic/Latino may also belong to any of the racial categories mentioned earlier.

The Hispanic/Latino population in the MSA is projected to steadily grow over the coming years. In 2020, 8% of the population identified as Hispanic or Latino, and by 2024, this group has increased to 9%. Projections show continued growth, reaching 10% by 2029 and 2034, and further increasing to 11% by 2039.

This highlights the growing presence of the Hispanic/Latino community within the region, contributing to the overall increasing diversity of the population. **See figure 4.**

## 1.5.6 INCOME

The MSA has higher income levels compared to both Indiana and national averages. The per capita income in the MSA is \$42,972, which exceeds Indiana's per capita income of \$37,705 and the U.S. average of \$40,363.

Similarly, the median household income in the MSA is \$79,790, higher than Indiana's median household income of \$70,604 and the U.S. median of \$72,414. These figures indicate that the MSA enjoys relatively higher income levels compared to the broader state and national figures. **See figure 5.**

## 1.5.7 HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

In 2024, the MSA exhibits unique demographic characteristics when compared to both Indiana and the United States, particularly among historically underserved populations. For example, 10.2% of the MSA's population is foreign-born, a figure that is higher than Indiana's 5.6% but lower than the national average of 13.7%. Additionally, 14.7% of MSA residents speak a language other than English at home, which is more than Indiana's 9.2%, though still below the U.S. average of 21.7%.

Homeownership rates in the MSA are notably lower than both state and national figures, with 55.5% of homes being owner-occupied, compared to 70.1% in Indiana and 64.8% nationwide.

Furthermore, 10.3% of the population in the MSA has a disability, slightly above Indiana's 9.9% and higher than the national average of 8.9%.

In terms of health coverage and poverty, the MSA faces additional challenges. Approximately 9.8% of the population lacks health insurance, which is higher than Indiana's rate of 8.2% but similar to the U.S. average of 9.5%. Moreover, 15.7% of the MSA's population lives in poverty, surpassing both Indiana's poverty rate of 12.3% and the national average of 11.1%. These figures highlight socioeconomic challenges within the MSA, particularly related to poverty, housing, and access to health care. **See figure 6.**

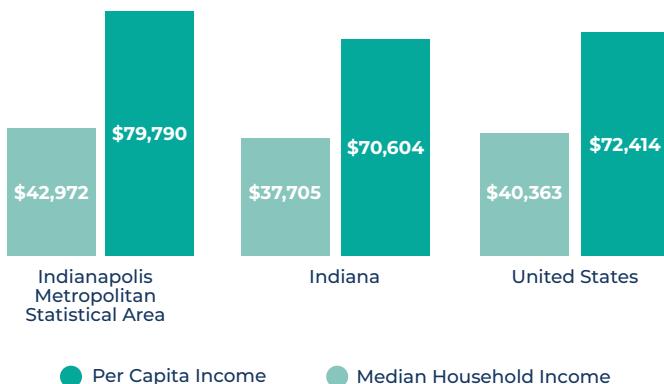
## 1.5.8 COMPARISON TO MARION COUNTY

While the Indy Arts Council strives to engage and serve the surrounding "donut" counties within the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Marion County is its home base and represents the critical mass of arts organizations and artists serving the region.

Marion County accounts for approximately 45% of the MSA's total population but plays a significant role in representing diverse racial and ethnic groups. Notably, Marion County comprises 82% of the MSA's Black population and 71% of its Hispanic/Latino population, making it a vital hub for serving these communities.

When comparing the demographic characteristics of Marion County to the broader MSA, a few key differences emerge. Marion County has a lower annual population growth rate of 0.54% (2020-2024) compared to the MSA's growth rate of 2.01%, and the projected growth rate for 2024-2039 shows a similar trend, with Marion County at 0.21% versus the MSA's 0.83%. Despite this slower growth, Marion County remains the cultural and demographic center for many underserved populations.

Figure 5 INCOME COMPARISON



● Per Capita Income

● Median Household Income

Figure 6

Historically Underserved Population Characteristics	2024 Demographic Comparison	Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area	Indiana	United States
Foreign Born	10.2%	5.6%	13.7%	
Language Other Than English Spoken at Home	14.7%	9.2%	21.7%	
Owner Occupied Housing Rate	55.5%	70.1%	64.8%	
With a Disability	10.3%	9.9%	8.9%	
No Health Insurance	9.8%	8.2%	9.5%	
Persons in Poverty	15.7%	12.3%	11.1%	

Figure 7

2024 Demographic Comparison		Marion County	Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area
Population	Annual Growth Rate (2020-2024)	0.54%	2.01%
	Projected Annual Growth Rate (2024-2039)	0.21%	0.83%
Households	Annual Growth Rate (2020-2024)	0.58%	2.16%
	Average Household Size	2.41	2.50
Age	Ages 0-17	23%	23%
	Ages 18-34	27%	23%
Race	Ages 35-54	25%	26%
	Ages 55-74	20%	21%
Hispanic/ Latino	Ages 75+	5%	6%
	Median Age	35.3%	37.6%
Income Characteristics	White Alone	50.6%	67.9%
	Black Alone	28.0%	15.5%
	American Indian	0.5%	0.4%
	Asian	4.5%	4.4%
	Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
	Some Other Race	8.4%	4.8%
	Two or More Races	8.0%	7.0%
	Hispanic/Latino Origin (any races)	14.3%	9.2%
	All Others	85.7%	90.8%

In terms of racial composition, 50.6% of Marion County's population identifies as White Alone, which is significantly lower than the MSA's 67.9%. Conversely, Marion County has a much higher proportion of Black Alone residents, at 28.0%, compared to the MSA's 15.5%. The Hispanic/Latino population in Marion County is also notably larger at 14.3%, compared to 9.2% in the broader MSA. Marion County also has a slightly larger proportion of residents identifying as Two or More Races and Some Other Race compared to the MSA.

Age distribution reveals that Marion County has a younger population, with a median age of 35.3 years, compared to 37.6 in the MSA. The 18–34 age group is larger in Marion County (27%) than in the broader Market (23%), which could indicate a more dynamic and youthful demographic in the heart of the city.

Economic indicators show that while Marion County's per capita income is \$37,062, which is lower than the MSA average of \$42,972, its population still represents a diverse and economically significant group. Similarly, the median household income in Marion County is \$64,653, which is also lower than the MSA's \$79,790.

In summary, while Marion County represents a smaller portion of the overall population within the MSA, it holds the majority of the region's Black and Hispanic/Latino residents. This highlights the importance of focusing on equity and access to the arts within Marion County, where the needs of these diverse communities are most concentrated. Serving the surrounding counties is also important, but Marion County remains the cultural and demographic center for many of the MSA's underserved populations. **See figure 7.**

## 1.6 Local Recreational Trends

### 1.6.1 LOCAL TRENDS

ESRI provided the following chart, which shows market potential data for MSA residents. The Market Potential Index (MPI) measures the likelihood that residents will participate in a

particular activity if they have access to it, rather than indicating actual participation. MPI scores reflect the probability of participation compared to the national U.S. average. Activities included in the data may occur outside the MSA's boundaries.

With the national average set at 100, MPI scores below 100 suggest a lower likelihood of participation, while scores above 100 indicate a higher likelihood. The service area is compared to the national average to identify potential trends.

It's important to note that MPI metrics represent just one data point for understanding community trends, and programmatic decisions should not be based solely on these scores. The chart below compares MPI scores for five arts-based activities that are popular with MSA residents. The activities are listed in descending order based on their MPI scores. The MPI data for the MSA shows that residents are slightly more likely than the national average to engage in certain arts-related activities. Attending live theater (MPI of 102), visiting museums (MPI of 101), and participating in painting, drawing, or sculpting (MPI of 101) all show higher-than-average likelihoods of participation compared to the U.S. average. Playing a musical instrument aligns exactly with the national average (MPI of 100).

However, residents are slightly less likely to engage in photography, with an MPI of 98, indicating lower-than-average participation in this activity. Overall, the data suggests that arts-related activities are generally well-supported in the MSA, with theater and visual arts showing particular strength. **See figure 8.**

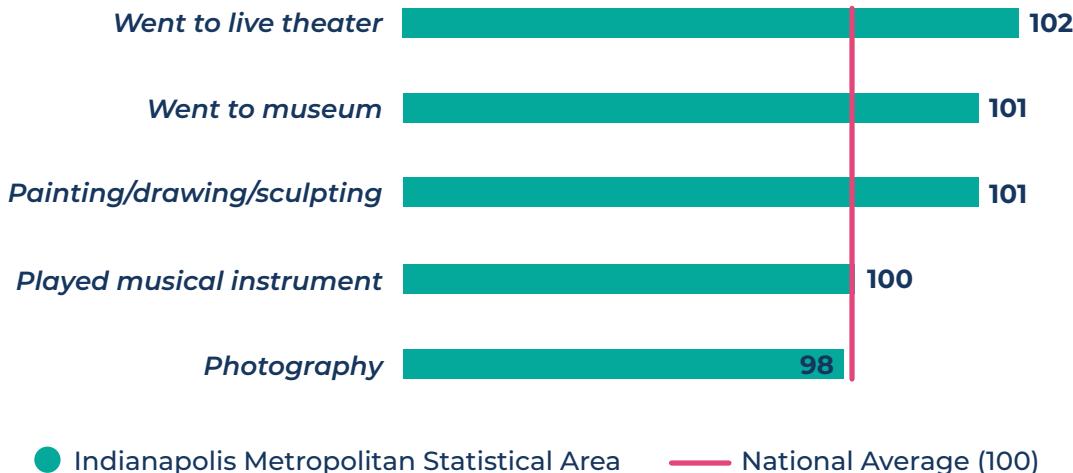
## 1.7 Key Takeaways

- **Steady Population Growth:** The MSA's population is steadily growing, with projections showing an increase from 2,173,541 in 2024 to 2,442,694 by 2039. Although the growth rate is expected to slow over time, the MSA remains on a consistent upward trajectory.
- **Aging Population:** The population is gradually aging, with the median age rising from 37.0 in 2020 to a projected 38.7 by 2029. The older

Figure 8

## COMMERCIAL RECREATION MPI

(last 12 months)



age groups, particularly those over 75, are seeing notable increases, while younger age groups, such as those under 17, are expected to decrease.

- **Increasing Diversity:** The racial and ethnic composition of the MSA is becoming more diverse. The Hispanic/Latino population is projected to increase from 9% in 2024 to 11% by 2039. Other minority groups, including Black and Asian populations, are also expected to grow, contributing to greater diversity.
- **Higher Income Levels:** Income levels in the MSA are higher than state and national averages. The per capita income is \$42,972, and the median household income is \$79,790, both surpassing Indiana and U.S. figures, indicating a relatively affluent community.
- **Challenges for Underserved Populations:** Certain underserved groups face challenges in the MSA. Foreign-born residents make up 10.2% of the population, and 15.7% live in poverty, a rate higher than both state and national averages. Homeownership rates are lower, and 9.8% of the population lacks health insurance.
- **Arts and Culture Engagement:** The MSA shows strong potential for arts and culture participation, with higher-than-average engagement in activities such as attending

live theater and museums, as indicated by the Market Potential Index (MPI). However, participation in photography is slightly below average.

## 1.8 Conclusion

The community profile reveals that the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is a growing and increasingly diverse community with higher-than-average income levels. However, it also faces challenges, particularly in relation to underserved populations and socioeconomic disparities.

As the population ages and diversifies, it will be important to ensure that arts and cultural programs remain accessible and equitable for all residents. The strong engagement in arts-related activities suggests that there is an opportunity to build on the community's enthusiasm for arts and culture, and careful attention must be paid to addressing the needs of underserved groups to fulfill the Arts Council's mission of fostering "a creative life for all."

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## CHAPTER TWO

# *Learning & Recommendations*

## 2.1 Public Input Survey

<b>1,575</b> household surveys	<b>2,800+</b> participants
<b>806</b> community surveys	<b>50+</b> stakeholder interviews
<b>323</b> sector interviews	<b>125+</b> arts + culture orgs

The Arts Council's plan is rooted in the voices of our diverse arts and culture community, ensuring that our future direction aligns with the needs and aspirations of Indianapolis residents and arts organizations alike. The public input summary consolidates valuable feedback gathered through a variety of engagement methods, providing a comprehensive understanding of public sentiment and sector perspectives.

This input was collected from over 2,800 participants, including representatives from more than 125 arts and culture organizations, and utilized multiple outreach strategies. These included a nine-county statistically valid survey conducted by the ETC Institute, a community-wide survey, an arts sector survey, key leader interviews, and staff and community stakeholder focus groups.

**This summary is not just a collection of data points but a reflection of the community's collective vision for the arts in Indianapolis.**

It highlights the voices of artists, cultural leaders, and residents and serves as the foundation for a strategic plan that prioritizes inclusivity, innovation, and growth for the Indy arts scene. Through this process, the Arts Council reaffirms its commitment to building a vibrant, accessible, and representative cultural landscape that benefits all.

### 2.1.1 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY

#### Purpose

ETC Institute administered a community survey for the Arts Council in the spring of 2024. The

purpose of the survey was to gather input from residents of Marion County and all donut counties to help the Arts Council determine the needs and priorities for the region.

#### Methodology

A four-page survey, cover letter, and postage-paid return envelope were mailed to a random sample of households in nine counties within the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical area. (For the purposes of this survey, Brown and Tipton Counties were not included.) The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and encouraged residents to either return their survey by mail or complete the survey online.

ETC Institute followed up with residents who received the mailed survey and promoted awareness of the survey using social media ads on Facebook and Instagram to encourage participation. All respondents who completed the survey online were required to provide their home address before submitting their responses. ETC Institute then matched the address provided by respondents who completed the survey with the addresses that were selected for the sample to ensure the participant is part of the sample. If a respondent did not provide an address or the address was not part of the sample, it was held separate from the random sample.

The goal for the random sample was to attain a total of 1,500 completed surveys from households in nine counties in the Indianapolis metro area. This goal was exceeded, with 1,570 completed surveys received. The results for the random sample of 1,570 residents have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 2.5%.

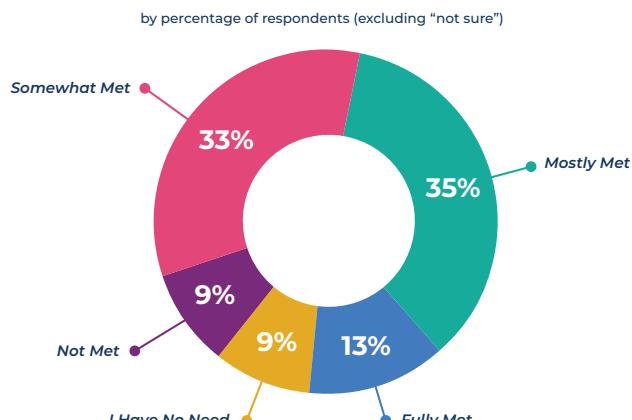
The goals were also exceeded for each of the nine counties. The table to the right shows the goal, and the actual number of completed surveys in each county.

**Figure 9**

County	Goal	#Surveys
Marion	700	701
Hamilton	300	302
Hendricks	100	113
Johnson	100	103
Madison	100	102
Hancock	50	70
Boone	50	70
Morgan	50	59
Shelby	50	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,570</b>

**Figure 10**

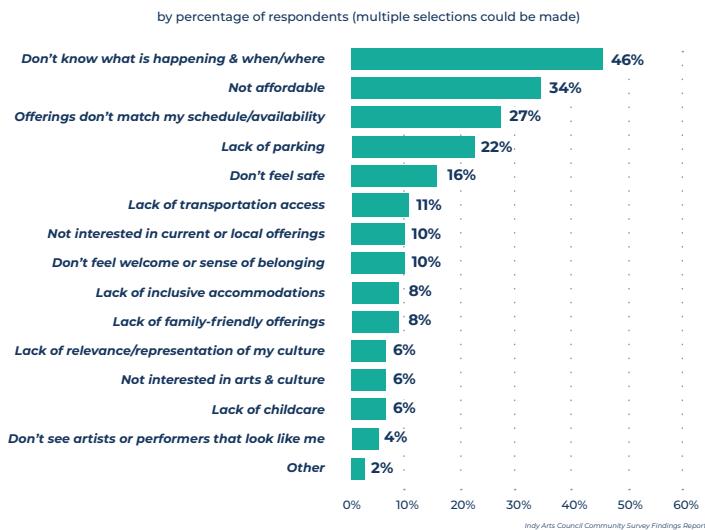
**HOW WELL DO LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES MEET YOUR NEEDS TODAY?**



Indy Arts Council Community Survey Findings Report

**Figure 11**

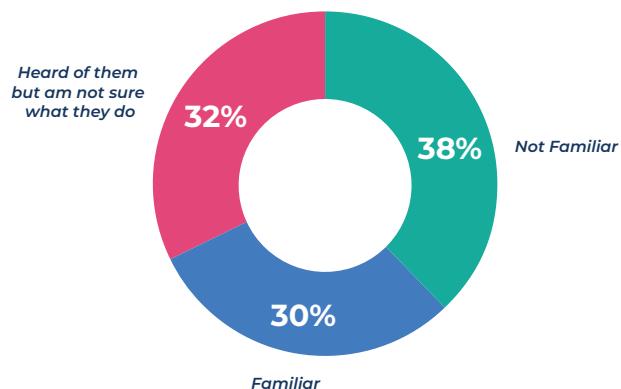
**WHAT PREVENTS YOU OR MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD FROM ENGAGING IN LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES MORE OFTEN?**



**Figure 12**

**HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH THE INDY ARTS COUNCIL?**

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not sure")



Indy Arts Council Community Survey Findings Report

**Figure 13**



**Statistically Valid Survey**

1,570 households (Goal of 1,500) Precision rate of at least +/-2.5% at the 95% level of confidence

Residents were able to return the survey by mail, by phone, or by completing it online

Only scientific & defensible method to understand community needs

Translation services available in multiple languages including Spanish



**Online Community Survey**

806 responses

No precision rate or level of confidence due to there being no selection criteria for respondents

Questionnaire identical to the Statistically Valid Survey

Provides further insight on community expectations

Administered in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Russian

Key survey findings are summarized **in figure 9**. Full survey findings can be found in **Appendix A**.

### Participation in Local Arts and Culture

- Over three-fourths (79%) of households have engaged in some type of local arts and culture events and experiences in the past year.
- Of those households who have engaged in local arts and culture events and experiences in the past year, 51% participated with their spouse/partner, and 46% participated with friends.
- The types of arts and culture events and experiences most engaged in include visual arts (75%), performing arts (66%), and cultural/heritage and educational events (56%).
- Nearly half (47%) of households engage in local arts and culture events and experiences at least once a month.
- Less than half (48%) of the households indicate that their needs for arts and culture events and experiences are somewhat or fully met.
- The locations where the highest percentage of households engage in local arts and culture events (outside of their home) are: parks, libraries, community centers, and public spaces (64%), venues in downtown Indianapolis (50%), and venues in counties surrounding Marion County (47%). **See figure 10.**

### Barriers to Participating in Local Arts and Culture

- The most frequently mentioned reasons that prevent households from engaging in local arts and culture events and experiences more often are: “don’t know what is happening and when/where” (46%), “not affordable” (34%), “offerings don’t match my schedule/availability” (27%), and “lack of parking” (22%).

**See figure 11.**

### Benefits of Arts and Culture

- 80% of households feel that arts and culture contribute to improved quality of life and quality of place.
- 80% of households feel that arts and culture contribute to improved learning outcomes for youth and adults.

- 80% of households feel that arts and culture contribute to the beauty and connectivity of their city and neighborhoods.
- 79% of households feel that arts and culture contribute to the overall health and well-being of them, their family, and the community.
- 71% of households feel that arts and culture enhance the reputation of Indianapolis and central Indiana both nationally and internationally.
- 68% of households feel that arts and culture are important to attracting and retaining workforce talent.

### Learning About Arts and Culture

The most frequently mentioned way that households learn about local arts and culture events and experiences is through social media (70%). The other most frequently mentioned ways that households learn about local arts and culture include word of mouth (47%), local TV (40%), and local events calendars (34%).

### Indy Arts Council

- 30% of households are familiar with the Indy Arts Council, 32% have heard of the Arts Council but aren't sure what they do, and 38% are not familiar with the Arts Council.
- The Arts Council programs and services that the highest percentage of households have engaged in are the Indianapolis Artsgarden (31%), arts and sports partnerships (28%), and the Arts Council website, newsletters, and social media (19%).
- 79% of households are “very supportive” or “supportive” of private funding for Indy arts and culture by businesses and corporations; 69% are “very supportive” or “supportive” of public funding for Indy arts and culture by local government. **See figure 12.**

### 2.1.2 SURVEY COMPARISON

The comparison between the ETC Statistically Valid Survey and the Online Community Survey (**see figure 13**) provides a multifaceted understanding of community sentiment



Artist FITZ at Color Theory exhibition at Gallery 924 | Photo by Emily Persic

regarding arts and culture in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Area. Both surveys offer valuable insights, yet their distinct methodologies and sample bases reveal key nuances in the data that are essential for shaping the strategic direction of the Indy Arts Council.

Full results of the online community survey can be found in **Appendix B**.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Strong Community Engagement with Arts and Culture: Both surveys reflect high levels of engagement in arts and culture events, demonstrating a robust foundation for arts programming in Indianapolis. However, there is an opportunity to further grow participation

by addressing barriers such as affordability and lack of awareness.

- Importance of Diverse Programming: The community values diverse and inclusive arts programming. The increasing diversity of the city, reflected in both surveys, requires the Arts Council to continue prioritizing equity in access, representation, and cultural inclusivity in its offerings.
- Affordability and Accessibility: The cost of participation remains a significant barrier across both surveys, highlighting the need for more affordable programs, tickets, and events. Additionally, marketing and awareness efforts need improvement to ensure residents are informed of available opportunities.

- **Deeper Insights from the Arts Community:** The online survey provided valuable qualitative data from stakeholders deeply embedded in the arts ecosystem, offering suggestions for enhanced funding, better outreach, and operational improvements. These insights, while not statistically representative, offer important perspectives for refining and improving the support provided to artists and arts organizations.
- **Actionable Data for Strategic Planning:** By integrating findings from both surveys, the Arts Council can ensure that its strategic decisions are data-driven, accounting for both statistically reliable feedback and the broader, more specific concerns of key stakeholders. This allows the Arts Council to create more targeted and inclusive programming that meets the needs of the entire community, while also fostering deeper engagement with Indianapolis' diverse populations.

## CONCLUSION:

The comparison of the ETC Statistically Valid Survey and the Online Community Survey offers a comprehensive view of community engagement with arts and culture in Indianapolis. While the ETC survey provides statistically reliable data on general participation trends, the online survey offers a more detailed look into the needs and challenges of key stakeholders within the arts community. Together, the findings present a clear opportunity for the Indy Arts Council to enhance its outreach, improve access to the arts, and create a more inclusive and vibrant cultural landscape for all residents.

### 2.1.3 INDY ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR SURVEY

#### Methodology

The Indy Arts & Culture Sector Survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey, targeting a diverse group of individuals involved in the arts and creative community in Indianapolis. Invitations were sent to artists, arts administrators, and other members of the creative sector. The survey aimed to gather insights into the current

state of the arts community, identify service gaps, and understand the needs and priorities of local arts participants. A total of 323 respondents participated in the survey.

Key survey findings are summarized below. Full survey findings can be found in **Appendix C**.

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Diverse Engagement

The survey reveals a diverse local arts community in Indianapolis, with significant survey participation from full-time (38%) and part-time (37%) artists, arts administrators (34%), and educators (23%). Board members (14%), volunteers (11%), and individuals in creative services (11%) also play vital roles. Emerging artists (7%), art students (1%), and others (8%) round out the community, demonstrating a broad spectrum of survey engagement across various roles.

##### Familiarity with Programs

Respondents are most familiar with the Arts Council's digital presence, with 87% having engaged with the website, newsletters, and social media. Artist services are recognized by 69%, and grants and fellowships by 61%. The Indianapolis Artsgarden and Gallery 924 are known to 53% and 48% of respondents, respectively. While only 24% of respondents have participated in the arts and sports partnerships, another 59% are familiar with but have not participated in these partnerships.

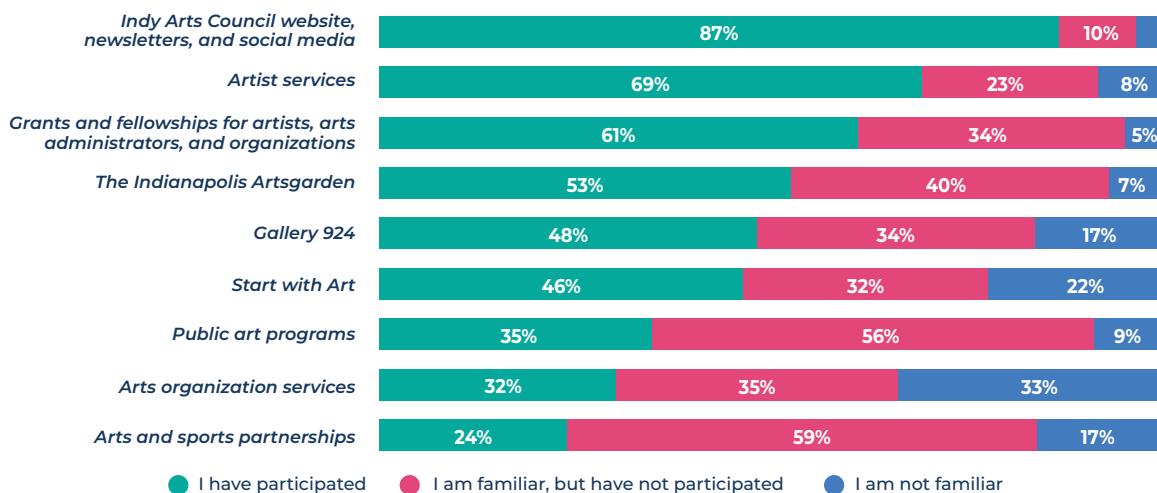
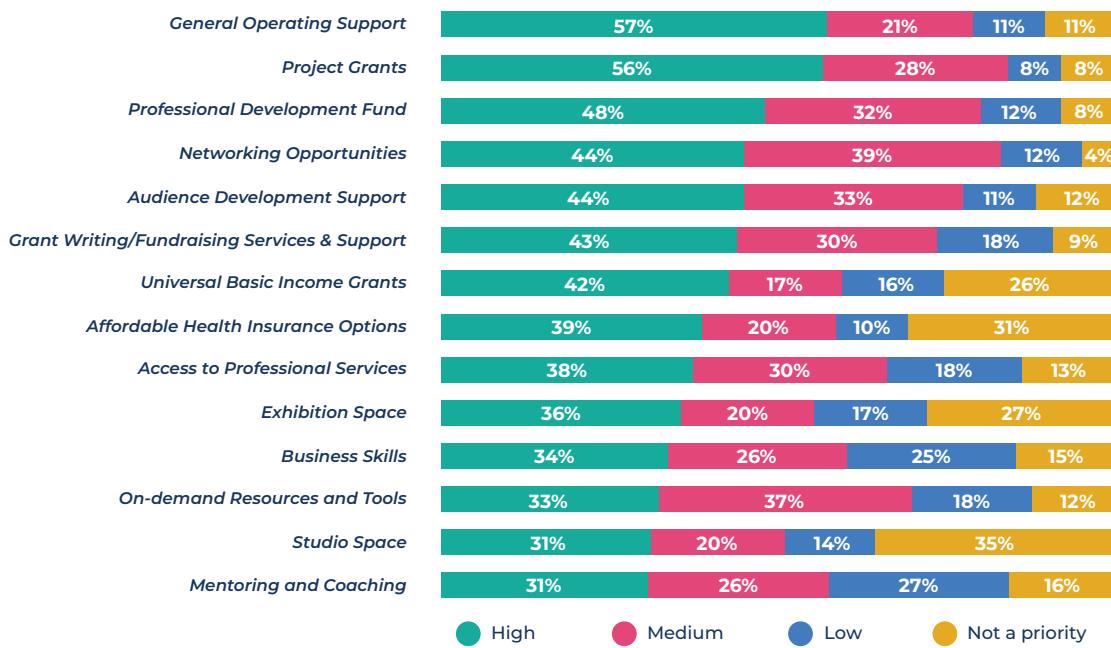
**See figure 14.**

##### Duration of Engagement

Respondents have a range of engagement durations with the Arts Council. The largest group, 27%, has been involved for 6-10 years, followed by those engaged for 3-5 years (23%) and 10-20 years (23%). A smaller percentage, 14%, have been engaged for 0-2 years, while 13% have been involved for over 20 years.

##### Positive Perception and Satisfaction

The survey results show strong positive feedback for the Arts Council. 93% of respondents are likely to engage with the Arts Council in the

**Figure 14****PLEASE INDICATE YOUR FAMILIARITY WITH THESE INDY ARTS COUNCIL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:****Figure 15****PLEASE RESPOND WITH YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT WITH THESE STATEMENTS REGARDING INDY ARTS COUNCIL'S STAFF, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:****Figure 16****WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITY NEEDS IN THE NEXT 1-5 YEARS?**

future, and 91% would recommend it to others. A majority agree that the Arts Council advocates effectively for the arts sector (82%) and delivers on its mission (73%). Additionally, 73% feel it has positively impacted their careers or organizations. Satisfaction with service is high at 71%, and 69% recognize the Arts Council's leadership in inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA). **See figure 15.**

### Specific Programs and Services

Satisfaction with specific Arts Council programs and services varies. The artist opportunities newsletter meets the needs of 76% of respondents, making it the most well-received service. The artist directory meets the needs of 64% of respondents. However, services like Artist Industry Nights (49%) and individual coaching and advising (25%) have lower satisfaction rates.

### Priority Needs

The top priority needs for the next 1-5 years include general operating support (57%), project grants (56%), and professional development funds (48%). Other significant needs are networking opportunities (44%), audience development support (44%), and grant writing/fundraising support (43%). Universal basic income grants (42%) and affordable health insurance options (39%) are also important, while lower priorities include rehearsal space (21%), recording space (18%), and coworking space (14%). **See figure 16.**

### Willingness to Pay

There is a willingness among respondents to pay for certain potential programs or services. 53% are willing to pay for training, professional development, and conferences, while 49% are willing to pay for shared sector benefits like group health insurance and studio space. However, a membership program with tiered levels of benefits has less support, with 30% willing to pay, 24% opposed, and 46% unsure.

### Local Arts and Culture Scene

Respondents generally have a positive perception of Indy's arts and culture scene. 71% agree that local arts and culture events are vibrant,

equitable, and accessible. Additionally, 63% would recommend Indy based on its arts and culture scene. Downtown Indianapolis is recognized for its high-quality arts and entertainment venues by 61% of respondents. However, fewer respondents (58%) feel that central Indiana beyond downtown has high-quality arts and entertainment venues. Lastly, 55% agree that Indy supports a culture where artists and arts organizations can thrive.

### Additional Suggestions

Respondents provided valuable suggestions for the Arts Council. The five most common themes are:

- Greater Inclusivity and Diversity: More inclusive representation for minority, senior, and underrepresented artists.
- Improved Communication and Marketing: Better marketing strategies and communication channels beyond email.
- Support for both Experienced and Emerging Artists: Programs for experienced artists and accessible resources for emerging artists.
- Collaboration and Community Engagement: More collaboration among arts organizations and increased public engagement.
- Financial and Resource Support: Increased financial support, more grants, and better access to professional services.

### CONCLUSION:

The Indy Arts & Culture Sector Survey offers valuable insights into the diverse and dynamic arts community in Indianapolis. With participation from 323 respondents, the survey highlights significant engagement across various roles, including full-time and part-time artists, arts administrators, and educators. The data reveals a strong familiarity with the Arts Council's digital presence and artist services, though there is a clear need for improved outreach and support for lesser-known programs as well as meeting certain areas of need currently unmet.

Respondents have shown a broad range of engagement durations with the Arts Council, indicating both a longstanding relationship and a continual influx of new participants.



The positive perception of the Arts Council is evident, with high levels of satisfaction and a strong likelihood of future engagement and recommendation. The Arts Council's effectiveness in advocating for the arts sector and delivering on its mission is well recognized, along with its leadership in IDEA.

However, **areas for improvement** have been identified. Respondents call for better communication, particularly regarding grant rejections and program opportunities, and a more balanced support system across various art forms. Concerns about accessibility and inclusivity, as well as perceptions of favoritism and exclusivity, highlight the need for ongoing review of transparency and equity in the processes.

**Satisfaction with specific programs and services** varies, with some offerings like the artist opportunities newsletter and the artist directory meeting needs effectively, while others such as Artist Industry Nights and individual coaching and advising require increased awareness and engagement.

Additional suggestions from respondents emphasize the need for greater inclusivity and diversity, improved communication and marketing strategies, more support for senior and emerging artists, enhanced collaboration and community engagement, and increased financial and resource support.

Looking forward, the **top priority needs** for the next 1-5 years include general operating support, project grants, and professional development funds. Networking opportunities, audience development support, and grant writing/fundraising support are also significant. Respondents are willing to pay for training, professional development, and shared sector benefits, though less so for a membership program with tiered benefits.

The **overall perception** of Indy's arts and culture scene is positive, with respondents recognizing

the vibrancy, equity, and accessibility of local events. Downtown Indianapolis is noted for its high-quality arts and entertainment venues, though there is room for improvement in central Indiana beyond downtown.

The insights gathered from this survey provide a roadmap for the Arts Council to address current challenges, capitalize on strengths, and continue fostering a thriving arts community in Indianapolis. By implementing the feedback and suggestions from respondents, the Arts Council can enhance its impact and support the diverse needs of the local arts sector.

#### 2.1.4 KEY LEADER & STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The key leader and stakeholder interviews provided valuable insights into the strengths, opportunities, and top priorities for the future of the Indianapolis arts community. More than 50 organizations were interviewed and included influential voices across various sectors, including leaders from arts organizations, cultural institutions, and community partners. These one-on-one conversations provided a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities facing the arts and the strategic priorities that will guide the Arts Council's future efforts.

In addition to identifying key strengths and areas for growth, the interviews offered a platform for stakeholders to share their perspectives on the evolving needs of the community and the role of the arts in shaping the city's cultural landscape. This input is essential in shaping a strategic plan that not only addresses current challenges but also leverages opportunities for innovation and growth in the arts sector.

#### STRENGTHS

##### Advocacy and Representation:

- The Arts Council is widely respected as a voice for the arts, advocating for both individual artists and organizations, navigating political situations, and ensuring that the arts have a seat at the table in important discussions.

- They play a critical role in advocating for funding and policies that benefit the arts community, speaking to legislators and leaders about the importance of the arts.

#### **Connector and Collaborator:**

- The Arts Council excels at convening and connecting various stakeholders in the arts community. They bring together arts and culture organizations, individual artists, and partners, fostering collaborations across different sectors.
- They are seen as a unifying force, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, where they were instrumental in supporting the community.

#### **Leadership and Expertise:**

- Leaders, especially the CEO and president, are highly valued for their thoughtfulness and ability to guide the organization through challenging times, such as the pandemic and the IDEA reckoning.
- The Arts Council's staff is also praised for being accessible, professional, and responsive, providing support and guidance to artists and organizations alike.

#### **Support for Artists and the Community:**

- The Arts Council is recognized for its practical support to the arts community through grants, fellowships, and educational offerings. Programs like Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship and Beckmann Emerging Artist Fellowship are highly regarded.
- Their streamlined granting process is noted for being accessible and less burdensome, which is especially beneficial to smaller organizations and individual artists.
- The Arts Council's commitment to IDEA is a significant strength. They have championed IDEA initiatives despite challenges and have made meaningful efforts to support marginalized communities through advocacy and funding.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Funding Diversification:**

- There is a significant need for diversified revenue streams beyond city funding, including state or corporate support. Suggestions include seeking dedicated funding sources, advocating for an increase in city budget allocations, and expanding corporate partnerships.
- The Arts Council also needs to make a stronger case to funders for why staffing capacity and organizational health need more support.

#### **Visibility and Awareness:**

- Many comments indicate a lack of public awareness of the Arts Council's work. There is an opportunity to increase the visibility of the Arts Council and its impact, both within the arts sector and the broader community. This includes better storytelling about the organization's role, increased social media presence, and more visibility from board members and staff at arts events.

#### **Artist and Organizational Support:**

- The Arts Council could expand its role in providing more direct support to artists, especially in areas like affordable studio spaces, professional development, business skills, and marketing. There is also an opportunity to improve the grant process, making it less tedious and more accessible, while ensuring more outreach to underrepresented artists.

#### **Leadership and Advocacy:**

- There is a call for the Arts Council to define its direction more clearly, especially around its advocacy role. Some suggestions include hiring a full-time lobbyist to advocate for arts funding and being more proactive in advocating for the arts at the city and state levels.
- The Arts Council also has an opportunity to improve board engagement and grow its capacity for leadership development within the arts community.

## Strategic Focus and Capacity:

- There is a need for the Arts Council to better define its strategic focus and role within the arts community. Comments suggest that the Arts Council is spread too thin and could benefit from prioritizing a few core areas for deeper impact.
- Additionally, staffing capacity needs to be addressed to handle the growing demands on the organization and ensure long-term sustainability.

## 3 WORDS - WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE INDY ARTS COUNCIL?

The following is a word cloud showing participants' perception of the Indy Arts Council:



## LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT SHOULD THEY NOT BE DOING?

## Managing and Programming the Artsgarden:

- The role of the Artsgarden has been questioned, with comments suggesting it is underutilized and may no longer be worth the time and effort. Some respondents suggested stepping back from managing this space while others suggested looking into ways to increase utilization and maximizing offerings and revenue generation.

## **Direct Programming and Competing with Other Organizations:**

- The Arts Council should limit direct programming and focus more on advocacy, convening, and funding. By stepping away from producing art and managing events, the Arts Council can empower other arts organizations to fulfill those roles while it focuses on broader strategic goals.

## Curating as an Earned Revenue Source:

- There is concern about whether the Arts Council should be curating events as a revenue source or leave this to other organizations better suited for it. Curating may divert focus from core functions like advocacy and supporting the arts ecosystem.

## Running Too Many Programs:

- The Arts Council is at risk of being spread too thin by managing too many programs, which could lead to inefficiencies. Prioritizing their core programs and focusing less on non-central activities would allow them to maximize impact and avoid burnout.

## Subsidized Work and Overextending Capacity:

- The Arts Council should avoid taking on unpaid or underpaid projects that drain resources without proper compensation.

## WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE THE ARTS COUNCIL PLAYING IN ADVANCING THE ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITY AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY?

## Advocate for the Arts Sector:

- The Arts Council should be a strong voice advocating for greater funding and support for arts and culture at local, state, and national levels. This includes being involved in lobbying for public funding, advocating for living wages for artists, and ensuring that arts are seen as an economic driver and integral to the city's and the region's future.

## Connector and Convenor:

- The Arts Council is in a key position to connect different arts organizations, businesses, political leaders, and the community. It should take the lead in convening the sector, facilitating collaboration among organizations, and creating connections between artists and buyers, particularly in underserved and outlying communities.

## Champion for Inclusivity and Equity:

- The Arts Council should continue to champion IDEA across the arts community. This includes



Mike Epps at Madam Walker Legacy Center | Photo by G. Marie

ensuring that historically and intentionally excluded artists and organizations have access to resources and opportunities, and advocating for equitable impact across the arts ecosystem.

#### Promote and Showcase the Arts:

- As the central arts organization, the Arts Council should lead in promoting the arts, including storytelling, data sharing, and showcasing the value of arts and culture at large events and conventions. This would help increase awareness and appreciation of

the arts in the community while also driving tourism and economic growth, as well as growth of the arts sector.

#### Professional Development and Mentorship:

- The Arts Council can play a critical role in fostering the development of individual artists and arts organizations by providing mentorship and professional development opportunities. This could include leadership training, business skills development, and helping artists and arts organizations maximize their potential in the creative economy.

## TOP PRIORITY OUTCOMES FROM THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

### Sustainable and Increased Funding:

- Securing long-term, sustainable funding for both the Arts Council and the broader arts sector is a critical priority.
- This includes exploring dedicated tax revenue sources, increased government funding, and expanded philanthropy, as well as ensuring more resources are directed to artists of all backgrounds.

### Clear Vision, Mission, and Leadership:

- The Arts Council needs to define and communicate a clear and focused vision for its future, with strong leadership guiding the way. This includes providing clarity on their strategic role, defining their core priorities, and ensuring alignment with the city's broader creative and cultural strategies.

### Advocacy and Public Awareness:

- Enhancing advocacy efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of arts and culture is vital. This includes advocating for the arts to be seen as an essential component of the city's success and driving home the message that arts and culture are critical to the economy, education, and quality of life.

### Equity and Access for Marginalized Communities:

- Increasing access to resources and opportunities for historically disinvested communities remains a key goal. This includes providing support to smaller arts organizations, ensuring equitable access to arts education, and amplifying IDEA initiatives within the arts sector.

### Creative Economy Growth and Impact:

- The Arts Council should focus on fostering a thriving creative economy by providing more tangible career opportunities for artists, supporting creative businesses, and connecting local arts organizations to larger economic opportunities. This involves expanding mentorship, professional development, and

creating stronger pathways for artists and creatives to succeed in the region.

## 2.1.5 FOCUS GROUPS

The focus group discussions played a crucial role in gathering in-depth insights from key stakeholders within the Indianapolis arts community. Facilitated by both the consultant team and Arts Council staff, these focus groups provided an intimate setting for participants to openly share their perspectives on the future of the local arts sector.

Two distinct types of focus groups were conducted:

- Consultant-team led, which included artists and arts administration professionals
- Staff-led focus groups, which engaged various program groups

These discussions allowed for a deeper exploration of the opportunities, challenges, and aspirations within the arts community, fostering collaborative dialogue and uncovering critical themes that will help shape the strategic plan.

By listening directly to those actively involved in creating, managing, and supporting the arts in the region, the focus groups ensured that the voices of those at the heart of the sector are central to the strategic planning process.

### Artists and Art Administration Focus Groups

Several common themes emerged from the consultant-led focus groups, which are organized by sector needs and priorities.

## SECTOR NEEDS

### Increased and Equitable Funding:

- There is a clear need for more robust and equitable funding opportunities for artists and organizations. Artists, especially those not in visual arts disciplines (such as literary and performing arts), feel underserved by current funding structures. There is also a call for better access to long-term funding, health insurance, mental health support, and grants that don't solely depend on artists' ability to write high-quality applications.

### **Community Engagement and Outreach:**

- Artists and administrators have emphasized the need for more outreach and engagement across different parts of the city (e.g., far east, north, west, and south sides), as well as to emerging artists. They also highlighted the importance of promoting local artists to the broader business community and providing more community-building and networking events for artists across all disciplines.

### **Shared Services and Support for Artists:**

- The sector desired shared services, including health benefits, HR support, grant writing assistance, accounting services, and mental health support. These collective resources would reduce administrative burdens on individual artists and smaller organizations, helping them thrive in a challenging environment.

### **Access to Affordable Space and Resources:**

- The availability of affordable studio spaces, gathering spaces, and performance venues is a concern for nearly one in four artists in Indianapolis. The lack of accessible spaces for creating and showcasing art limits opportunities for artists, especially those outside the visual arts. Artists expressed a desire for expanded support in marketing and promoting their work.

### **More Visibility and Awareness of the Arts Council's Role:**

- Many in the arts community feel disconnected from the Arts Council, citing a lack of awareness about the services and opportunities it offers. There is a strong desire for the Arts Council to increase its visibility, particularly in promoting the diversity of artists and organizations in the city and being more transparent about how it serves different disciplines equitably.

### **PRIORITIES**

#### **Fostering Collaboration and Reducing Silos:**

- There is a call for reducing silos in the arts community and encouraging greater collaboration among organizations. This includes creating more networking and mentorship opportunities, connecting large and small organizations, and fostering partnerships across various arts entities to work as a unified team rather than competing for resources.

#### **Building Indianapolis as an Arts and Culture Destination:**

- A significant priority is raising the profile of Indianapolis as a destination for arts and culture, as sports initiatives have. This includes bringing more arts headquarters to the city, hosting more conferences, and attracting national arts competitions. There is also a desire for the Arts Council to help grow the city's arts economy by engaging more with corporate leaders and integrating arts into broader community initiatives like sports.

#### **Increased Support for Artists and Arts Organizations:**

- Providing more professional development, business education, and shared sector benefits (such as health insurance, bookkeeping, marketing, and payroll services) is a critical need. There is also a strong focus on helping artists navigate the business side of the arts and ensuring equitable access to resources, especially for emerging and marginalized artists.

#### **Greater Inclusivity and Engagement with Diverse Communities:**

- The sector prioritizes broader engagement with culturally diverse communities, including the Burmese, Jewish, Muslim, Asian, and African communities. This includes ensuring the arts are accessible and inclusive, in terms of programming and leadership opportunities,

and fostering deeper connections between these communities and the arts sector.

#### **Clarifying the Role of the Indy Arts Council:**

- There is a need for the Arts Council to clearly define its role within the community and the arts ecosystem. The Arts Council should focus on a few core outcomes rather than trying to be everything to everyone. This clarity will help strengthen its support for both individual artists and arts organizations, allowing it to be a more effective partner and advocate for the arts in Indianapolis.

#### **STAFF-LED FOCUS GROUPS**

From the staff-led workshops held by the Arts Council, several themes have emerged:

#### **Artistic Development and Career Growth:**

- Many artists noted that they had benefited financially from programs that identified individual artists for career growth and professional opportunities but expressed the desire to continue the relationship with the Arts Council at a similar intensity beyond the program year.
- Artists appreciate and want continued notification of paid opportunities with community organizations, local businesses, parks and other public properties, sports teams, national brands, etc.
- Awardees of the Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship (CRAF) treasured the rest and reflection offered by way of the grant program, and were thankful for the opportunity to return to creative practices with innovative ideas, the confidence to make bold career moves, and newly forged partnerships for collaborative efforts.
- Artists expressed a need for individualized mentorship and professional development from the Arts Council, particularly around grant writing, branding, marketing/sales, and how to curate their work.
- There's a strong desire for career development support in areas like creating artist resumes,

networking, applying for grants confidently, and financial literacy (e.g., handling taxes).

#### **Continued Support Beyond the Program:**

- Several artists noted that after receiving support from career development programs, they felt unsure of how to maintain the momentum. They expressed the need for continued guidance on advancing their careers.
- Artists called for ongoing promotional support for their projects not tied to Arts Council programs and services, and asked for more opportunities to be involved in curated collaborations between the Arts Council and other arts organizations.
- Artists noted interest in learning about personal business and finance insights from industry sources and those knowledgeable so as to better leverage momentum following grant awards.
- Artists emphasized that continuing to highlight participating artists beyond the context and timeframe of any one specific Arts Council program is an important way to help them gain recognition individually.
- Artists and administrators welcome a stronger advocacy partnership with artists and community members to secure a sustainable future for the industry.

#### **Networking and Exposure:**

- Artists expressed a desire for greater networking support with fellow artists.
- Sector workers see value in an artist directory and artists see an added value in any messaging or networking opportunities available through such a platform, to foster shared community support, exposure, and collaboration.
- Artists appreciate connection and learning from one another — as demonstrated by creative participation in the NBA All-Star, Olympic Swim Trials, and Indy 500 activations — and welcome future opportunities that bring artists together.



Major Taylor Mural by Shawn Michael Warren | Photo by Joe Vondersaar

- Artists desire consistent opportunities in large and prestigious performance spaces.
- Performances in popular venues like The Cabaret and Jazz Kitchen provided artists with new audience connections, though some felt these were more focused on highlighting the specific Arts Council program than on showcasing them as individuals.

### Community Engagement and Visibility:

- Artists value the exposure that large commissions and partnerships (e.g., NBA, Indy 500) bring, allowing them to connect with the brand partners and new audiences and to secure commissions. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with lack of consistent social media support from some partners.
- There is a desire for more civic, business, sports, and other partnerships that are underutilized or do not exist, naming organizations like the Colts and Indy Eleven as opportunities to connect.
- Artists noted the importance of being featured in projects that highlight local history and are visible to a wider, often national audience, which helps bolster their reputation.
- Visual and performance artists expressed interest in learning of unconventional or nontraditional gallery or exhibition spaces.
- Artists and administrators alike asked for a stronger advocacy partnership with the Arts Council and the community at large in order to secure a sustainable future for the industry.

### Support for Artists in Various Career Stages:

- Mentorship, both from established artists and from arts organizations, was a common request, with artists suggesting a structured buddy system for ongoing guidance.
- There is a noticeable gap in support for early-career artists, particularly in navigating the art world and securing commissions, now that the Beckmann Emerging Artist Fellowship program has sunsetted due to the funding being spent down.
- Training and support for grant funding and related competition applications was loudly

desired by early and mid-career professional artists.

- Established and late-career artists voiced their desire for programming and relationships with the Arts Council that supported them as they sought highly visible, major-venue exhibition and performing opportunities.

### Challenges and Barriers:

- Insurance and administrative hurdles, particularly for projects involving larger events and publicly funded institutions were significant barriers. Artists noted difficulties in securing affordable insurance and managing other administrative tasks.
- Artists expressed frustration with the lack of consistency in tagging on social media by partner organizations, which limited their exposure and ability to grow their follower base.

### Recommendations for Improvement:

- Artists suggested more thought into ongoing marketing support and greater artist involvement in curating their work during collaborations with venues and sponsors.
- More cross-promotion and collaboration between artists, art forms, and community members was suggested to foster stronger networks and partnerships.
- Workshops and mixers for artists to share experiences, connect to resources, and build community were proposed to combat a perceived atmosphere of competition and encourage more collaboration.

These themes reflect a need for expanded professional development, greater support in navigating administrative hurdles, and more ongoing exposure and collaboration opportunities beyond specific program years.

## 2.2 Benchmarking

In collaboration with Next Practice Partners, the Indy Arts Council conducted a comprehensive national benchmark study of arts agencies across the United States. This effort aimed to gather data and insights from peer organizations to better understand the landscape of arts administration and service delivery. The benchmark, targeting agencies selected by the Arts Council, provided a detailed comparative analysis of key operational factors such as organizational models, demographics, budget sizes, staffing structures, board governance, funding sources, and program offerings.

Of the agencies invited, 14 responded to the survey, offering a strong sample for comparison. While many of these agencies serve regions beyond the cities in which they are based, for the purposes of the benchmark, all population and per capita metrics were calculated using city populations to ensure an “apples to apples” comparison. This benchmark not only highlights commonalities and differences among agencies but also serves as a critical tool for the Arts Council to strategically position itself within the broader arts ecosystem, enhancing its ability to serve the community and achieve its long-term goals.

**Figure 17** is a list of the participating agencies and the cities they represent in the benchmark.

### 2.2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

The Arts Council is represented under the category of “local arts agency” (LAA).

In the survey, 33.33% of the respondents identified themselves as local arts agencies, matching Indy Arts Council’s model.

The majority of organizations fall into either “government agency/department” or “local arts agency” categories, with a smaller portion falling into the “united arts fund” or “other” categories.

### Independent Agency vs. City Office

The survey indicates that 66.67% of respondents who identified as independent agencies stated that their cities do not have a separate Office of Arts and Culture (or similar). The Indy Arts Council, which is an independent local arts agency, is in the majority since the City of Indianapolis does not have a separate Office of Arts and Culture.

### 2.2.2 BUDGET OVERVIEW

When comparing the Arts Council to other arts agencies across the country based on the 2024 annual budget data from the benchmarking survey, several key differences and similarities emerge ([see figure 18](#)):

#### Arts Council Budget Overview:

- Operating Revenue (General Operations): \$2.12 million
- Total Revenue (Including Restricted Revenue): \$4.99 million
- Operating Expenses (General Operations): \$2.12 million
- Total Expenses (Including Restricted/Grant Expenses): \$4.99 million
- Population Served: 879,293
- Budget Per Capita: \$5.68

#### COMPARISON TO OTHER AGENCIES:

##### Revenue and Expenses:

- Compared to other agencies, the Indy Arts Council’s total revenue and expenses are on the lower end. For example:
  - Denver reports a significantly higher total revenue of \$96.83 million, with expenses totaling \$74.27 million. This translates to a much higher per capita budget of \$103.64.
  - Columbus has total expenses of \$23.7 million, more than quadrupling Indy’s, despite serving a similar-sized population. Its per capita budget is \$25.95, which is over four times that of Indy Arts Council.
- Cincinnati has a total expense budget of \$17.6 million with a per capita budget of \$56.58, showing that cities with similar population sizes often have substantially larger budgets.

Figure 17

## NATIONAL BENCHMARK AGENCIES

Indy Arts Council (Indianapolis, IN)	Arts & Science Council (Charlotte, NC)	Arts Wave (Cincinnati, OH)
Bravo Greater Des Moines (Des Moines, IA)	City and County of Denver (Denver, CO)	City of San Antonio's Department of Arts & Culture (San Antonio, TX)
CultureSource (Detroit, MI)	Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (Cleveland, OH)	Arts and Culture Affairs (Minneapolis, MN)
Fund for the Arts (Louisville, KY)	Greater Columbus Arts (Columbus, OH)	Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council (Pittsburgh, PA)
Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (St. Louis, MO)	Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (Seattle, WA)	United Arts of Central Florida (Orlando, FL)

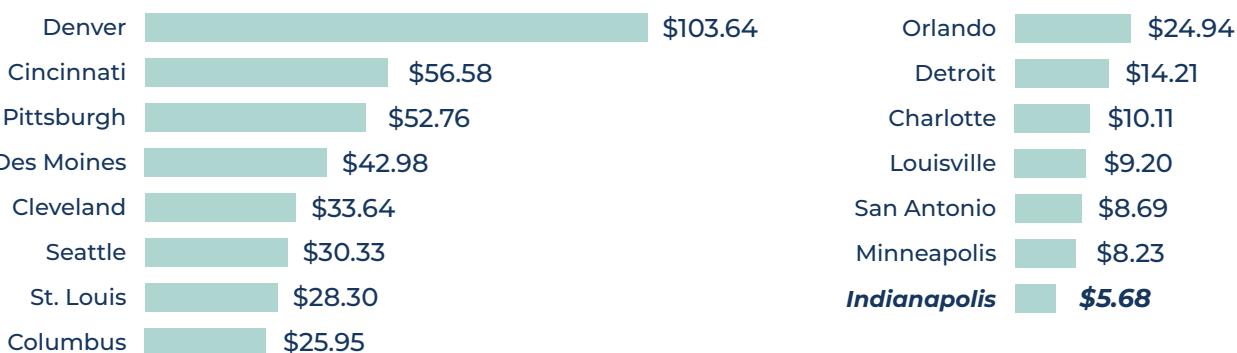
Figure 18

## BUDGET OVERVIEW

City	Population	Budget (total expenses, including restricted/regranted expenses):	Budget Per Capita:	City	Population	Budget (total expenses, including restricted/regranted expenses):	Budget Per Capita:
Denver	716,577	\$74,265,282	\$103.64	Orlando	320,742	\$8,000,000	\$24.94
Cincinnati	311,097	\$17,603,139	\$56.58	Detroit	633,218	\$9,000,000	\$14.21
Pittsburgh	303,255	\$16,000,000	\$52.76	Charlotte	911,311	\$9,210,621	\$10.11
Des Moines	210,381	\$9,043,227	\$42.98	Louisville	622,981	\$5,732,733	\$9.20
Cleveland	362,656	\$12,200,000	\$33.64	San Antonio	1,495,295	\$13,000,000	\$8.69
Seattle	755,078	\$22,903,564	\$30.33	Minneapolis	425,115	\$3,500,000	\$8.23
St. Louis	281,754	\$7,973,500	\$28.30	Indianapolis	879,293	\$4,995,770	\$5.68
Columbus	913,175	\$23,700,000	\$25.95				

Figure 19

## BUDGET PER CAPITA





Bicentennial Unity Plaza Mural by Anna Murphy | Photo by Matt Kryger

#### Per Capita Budget:

Indy Arts Council's per capita budget of \$5.68 is significantly lower than that of other agencies.

Seattle has a per capita budget of \$30.33. Detroit, though serving a slightly smaller population, has a per capita budget of \$14.21.

Even mid-sized cities like Pittsburgh report a much higher per capita budget of \$52.76, indicating that the Arts Council operates with relatively fewer financial resources per resident compared to many of its peers. **See figure 19.**

#### Population Served and Budget Size:

Despite having one of the largest populations served in the benchmark, Indy's total budget is considerably lower. For instance, San Antonio serves a population nearly twice as large but operates with a budget of \$13 million, resulting in a per capita budget of \$8.69, still higher than Indy's.

Charlotte, with a population of 911,311 (slightly larger than Indy), reports total expenses of \$9.21 million, nearly double Indy's budget, and a per capita of \$10.11.

#### Key Takeaways:

- The Indy Arts Council operates with relatively fewer financial resources compared to many of its peer agencies, both in terms of total revenue and per capita budget.
- While other cities with similar or smaller populations have significantly higher budgets (e.g., Pittsburgh and Cincinnati), Indy's financial resources appear constrained by comparison, impacting its overall budget per resident.
- Despite this, the Arts Council demonstrates efficiency by maintaining operations with a lower financial footprint relative to the population it serves, but the comparison suggests there may be opportunities to explore additional funding sources or alternative financial models to increase its per capita impact.

### 2.2.3 STAFFING

#### Indy Arts Council Staffing Overview:

- Full-time Staff: 15
- Part-time Staff: 0
- Departments:
  - 3 - Indianapolis Artsgarden (venue)
  - 2 - Mission/Program Strategy & Evaluation

- 2 - Grants & Fellowships
- 2 - Public Art & Artist Services
- 2 - Marketing Communications
- 4 - Executive Leadership, Finance, Administration & Development

### COMPARISON TO OTHER AGENCIES:

#### Staffing Levels:

- Denver has a significantly larger staff with 93 full-time and 20 part-time employees, reflected in its focus on larger departments such as arenas and an arts complex.
- Seattle similarly reports 37 full-time and 8 part-time employees, which is more than double Indy's staffing levels. Their focus spans across areas like public art, partnerships, education and grants, and facilities.
- Cincinnati, with a population size comparable to Indianapolis, has 25 full-time and 2 part-time employees, offering a balance across multiple departments like finance, impact, and planned giving.
- Columbus has 14 full-time and 2 part-time employees, a structure that is closer to Indy Arts Council's scale but still slightly larger.

#### Staffing Departments:

- Indy's department structure is diverse, covering public art, grants, program strategy, and marketing, which are common areas among peer agencies.
- Larger cities like Denver and Seattle have much more specialized departments, with Denver managing an arts complex, arenas, and cultural affairs, while Seattle emphasizes public art and education/grants more heavily.
- Cincinnati has a structure similar to Indy's, but it also focuses on new technologies and planned giving, indicating a broader scope in fundraising and innovation compared to Indy.

#### Part-time Staff Presence:

- Many agencies (e.g., Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Seattle) report having part-time staff, whereas Indy Arts Council operates without any part-time employees. This could suggest the Arts Council has a more streamlined full-

time structure or could potentially expand its capacity by adding part-time staff in key areas.

#### Organizational Focus:

- The Arts Council's focus on public art, artist services, and grants is a common theme across agencies, though cities like San Antonio and Seattle place heavier emphasis on public art with 7 and 12 staff members, respectively, in those areas.
- Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, among other agencies, are also exploring additional areas such as new technologies, IT/data, and research and evaluation. Indy may find opportunities to further expand into these areas.

#### Key Takeaways:

- The Arts Council's staff size is in the mid-range, along with other agencies like Columbus and Pittsburgh. Cities like Denver, Seattle, and Cincinnati operate with significantly larger teams, potentially providing more capacity for expanded programming and services.
- The Arts Council lacks part-time staff, unlike many of its peers. This could be a strategic area for growth, particularly in expanding administrative or specialized roles.
- In terms of departmental focus, the Arts Council is aligned with many peers in key areas such as public art and grants, but cities with larger arts ecosystems have additional departments focused on arenas, technological innovation, and long-term development strategies.

The Arts Council appears to be operating efficiently with its current structure, but there is potential to explore areas like part-time staffing and technological roles for expanded capacity.

### 2.2.4 BOARD/GOVERNANCE/COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

#### Number of Board Members:

- The Arts Council has 17 board members, which is fewer than comparable agencies Columbus (29 members), Cincinnati (40 members), and Louisville (60 members).
- Some organizations, like Denver and

Minneapolis, do not have a traditional board and instead operate through commissions or advisory committees appointed by city officials.

#### **Board Service Term:**

- The standard board service term at the Arts Council is 9 years, which is one of the longest among the surveyed agencies.
- Other agencies, such as Columbus and Des Moines, have a more typical board service term of 3 years, while Orlando allows board members to serve for up to 8 years.
- A few agencies, such as St. Louis and San Antonio, operate without a defined term limit for board members.

#### **Artists and Arts Organization Representatives:**

- Interestingly, the Arts Council does not have artists or arts organization representatives on its board, in contrast with the majority of surveyed agencies, 73.33% of which indicated they do have such representation.
- Cities like Seattle, Cincinnati, and Louisville reported participation from artists or arts organization representatives on their boards, reflecting broader community involvement in governance.

#### **Governance Structures:**

- The Arts Council maintains an advisory board composed of former board members and chairs, providing ongoing engagement for experienced leaders.
- The Arts Council also has other governance structures in place, such as community advisory boards or committees (e.g., young professionals or sector-specific trustees), which aligns with 66.67% of respondents.
- This approach is in line with cities like Charlotte, which oversees three geographic advisory councils managed by staff, or Seattle, which incorporates advisory boards focused on specific community needs and initiatives.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- The 17-member board at the Arts Council is smaller than some peers but maintains a longer service term.

- The absence of artists or arts organization representatives on the board stands out compared to most agencies in the survey, which could present an opportunity for greater inclusivity and community representation.
- The presence of advisory boards and other governance structures ensures that IAC remains connected to community leadership, similar to many other arts agencies across the country.

The Arts Council gains continuity in leadership from this governance structure, but it may benefit from further diversification by including artists and arts organizations on the board, as seen with a majority of other agencies.

## **2.2.5 FUNDING, ENDOWMENT, AND RESERVES**

#### **Funding Overview:**

The Arts Council received:

- \$3,620,156 from foundations
- \$1,836,621 from city government
- \$731,480 from corporate contributions
- \$28,070 from state government
- \$16,023 from individual contributions (non-board)
- \$755,187 from other sources

In total, the organization is receiving funding from a wide variety of sources, although no contributions were reported from regional LAAs or state advocacy agencies.

#### **Endowment and Operating Reserve:**

- The Arts Council does not have an endowment, which is true for 60% of respondents.
- The organization has an operating reserve of \$2,584,139, which represents 51.73% of its total operating budget—the highest percentage among peer agencies. For comparison, although Denver's operating reserve is significantly larger at \$11.9 million, it accounts for only 16.02% of their operating budget. **See figure 20.**

#### **Facility and Venue Operation:**

- The Arts Council operates a facility (the Indianapolis Artsgarden) that generates around \$400,000 in annual revenue, which positions it similarly to Seattle (with

approximately \$55,000 in facility revenue). This contrasts sharply with Denver, which reported \$33.9 million in facility-generated revenue.

#### Key Comparisons:

- While the Arts Council does not have an endowment, its operating reserve is higher than some agencies, though it falls behind major players like Denver and Columbus.
- Funding sources are diverse, with city government, corporate contributions, and foundations providing substantial support. The lack of NEA or regional support could be an area to explore for further funding diversification.

This places the Arts Council in a relatively strong financial position, though increasing endowment opportunities and further exploring regional and national funding may help to solidify long-term sustainability.

#### 2.2.6 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Programs and Services Offered by the Arts Council (% of respondents that offer the same program or service shown in parenthesis):

- Grants to Organizations (86.67%)
- Grants to Individual Artists (80.00%)
- Public Art Projects (Permanent or Temporary) (73.33%)
- Convenings for Organizations (66.67%)
- Field Research (66.67%)
- Grants to Neighborhoods or Communities for Arts Programming (66.67%)
- Convenings for Artists (60.00%)
- Public Programs (Events, Concerts, Festivals, etc.) (53.33%)
- Sector Events Calendar (53.33%)
- Services for Organizations (53.33%)
- Internships, Apprenticeships, or Talent Pipeline Programs (46.67%)
- Sector-Wide Marketing and Advocacy Campaigns (40.00%)

Figure 20

#### ENDOWMENT AND OPERATING RESERVE

City	Operating Reserve	Budget (total expenses, including restricted/regranted expenses):	Operating Reserve % to Budget
Indianapolis	\$2,584,139	\$4,995,770	51.73%
Cincinnati	\$8,000,000	\$17,603,139	45.45%
Orlando	\$2,400,000	\$8,000,000	30.00%
Columbus	\$6,600,00	\$23,700,000	27.85%
St. Louis	\$2,000,000	\$7,973,500	25.08%
Des Moines	\$2,000,000	\$9,043,227	22.12%
Denver	\$11,900,000	\$74,265,282	16.02%
Cleveland	\$1,500,000	\$12,200,000	12.30%
Detroit	\$700,000	\$9,000,000	7.78%
Pittsburgh	\$150,000	\$16,000,000	0.94%
Louisville	\$46,691	\$5,732,733	0.76%

Charlotte, Minneapolis, San Antonio, and Seattle do not have any operating reserve.



Art of the Game Mural by Koda Witsken | Photo by Haley Dicks

- Services for Artists (40.00%)
- Artist Fellowships or Residencies (46.67%)
- Mentor/Networking Programs (46.67%)
- Gallery (40.00%)
- Performance Space (33.33%)

#### **The Arts Council does not offer:**

- Leadership Development Programs (46.67%)
- Artist Studios (6.67%)
- Membership Programs (6.67%)
- Universal Basic Income Program for Artists (0%)

The Arts Council offers a robust selection of programs and services, many of which align with the majority of other organizations surveyed. Particularly, the Arts Council excels in grants, convenings, and public art projects, matching or exceeding what is typical in the sector. However, the Arts Council does not offer a few services that are available elsewhere, such as artist studios and leadership development programs.

#### **Memberships and Charging Models:**

- Memberships are not a part of Indy Arts Council's model, aligning with 86.67% of respondents.
- Most Indy Arts Council programs and services are free, consistent with 71.43% of other respondents.

This reflects a focus on accessible, community-driven initiatives without a membership or high-cost service structure. Their model is similar to many of their peer organizations that prioritize grants, public programs, and advocacy, providing key support to the arts community.

#### **2.2.7 KEY TAKEAWAYS**

##### **Organizational Model:**

- The Arts Council aligns with 33.33% of respondents as a local arts agency (LAA).
- Most organizations are either government agencies/departments (33.33%) or local arts agencies (33.33%), with smaller representations from united arts funds (6.67%) and others (26.67%).
- 66.67% of independent agencies, including Indy Arts Council, operate in cities without a separate Office of Arts and Culture.

##### **Budget Overview:**

- The Arts Council operates with a total budget of \$4.99 million, resulting in a per capita budget of \$5.68—one of the lowest among peers.
- Cities like Denver and Columbus report significantly higher budgets and per capita expenditures (\$103.64 and \$25.95, respectively).

- Despite serving a relatively large population, Indy's financial resources are limited compared to similar-sized cities, indicating opportunities to explore alternative funding mechanisms or strategies to increase budget capacity.

#### **Staffing:**

- The Arts Council employs 15 full-time staff members and no part-time employees, while many peer agencies like Denver and Seattle have larger teams (93 and 37 full-time employees, respectively).
- The staffing focus includes key areas such as public art, grants, and communications, common across peer organizations.
- Adding part-time staff may present a growth opportunity, particularly in expanding operational capacity.

#### **Board Governance:**

- The Arts Council has 17 board members with a 9-year service term, one of the longest among peer agencies.
- The Arts Council doesn't include artists or arts organization representatives on its board, which stands out compared to 73.33% of respondents who do include such representation.
- Governance structures, such as advisory boards, provide continuity but could be diversified to reflect broader community participation.

#### **Funding, Endowment, and Reserves:**

- The Arts Council secures funding from various sources, including city government, corporate contributions, and foundations, but only sporadically seeks and receives grants from the NEA and does not receive funding from regional LAAs.
- The Arts Council does not have an endowment but maintains a healthy operating reserve of \$2.58 million, comparable to some peers.
- Facility-generated revenue is moderate at \$400,000 in annual revenue, with much larger figures reported by agencies like Denver (\$33.9 million).

#### **Programs and Services:**

- The Arts Council offers a comprehensive array of programs and services, with strong representation in grants (to both individuals and organizations), public art projects, and convenings for artists and organizations.
- The Arts Council does not offer services such as artist studios, internships, or leadership development programs, which are available at other agencies.
- Memberships are not part of the Arts Council model, consistent with most peer agencies (86.67%), and most programs are offered without charge, promoting accessibility.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The National Benchmark of Arts Agencies provides valuable insights into Indy Arts Council's position within the broader arts ecosystem. The data reveals that Indy operates efficiently within its financial constraints, serving a large population with fewer financial resources compared to peer organizations. However, opportunities for growth exist in areas such as board diversification (and including artist representation), expanding part-time staffing, and increasing financial support through new funding sources like NEA or regional arts agencies.

While the Arts Council offers a robust suite of programs, the absence of some service areas (such as artist studios and leadership development) highlights potential avenues for further development.

By leveraging this data, the Arts Council can strategically plan to enhance its organizational impact, increase financial sustainability, and continue to serve its community effectively.



Young Exceptional Singers program | Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Children's Choir

## 2.3 Recommendations

The comprehensive feedback gathered through benchmarking surveys, interviews, and focus groups offers a clear roadmap for advancing the Indianapolis arts and culture sector. The following recommendations are grounded in the key insights and findings from the community, arts professionals, arts organizations, and key stakeholders.

### **Increase Public Awareness and Visibility**

There is a significant opportunity to enhance the visibility of the Indy Arts Council and its programs. Many respondents, especially in the artist and arts administration focus groups, expressed a need for increased awareness of available opportunities and the Arts Council's role in supporting the arts community. Improved outreach strategies,

including better use of social media, expanded storytelling efforts, and board and staff presence at arts events, will ensure a more connected and informed arts ecosystem.

### **Expand and Diversify Funding Opportunities**

A recurrent theme across surveys and interviews was the need for more equitable and diversified funding opportunities, especially for underserved artists and organizations. The Arts Council should explore dedicated funding sources beyond city support, such as state and corporate partnerships, while advocating for increased city budget allocations. Additionally, creating more accessible grant processes and introducing new funding categories—such as project grants, operating support, and basic income grants—would help foster greater financial sustainability for the arts community.

### Improve Communication and Inclusivity in Programming

While satisfaction with Indy Arts Council's services is generally high, respondents highlighted the need for clearer communication, particularly around grant decisions and program opportunities. Addressing perceptions of favoritism and improving outreach to underrepresented communities will foster greater inclusivity. Ensuring that services and resources are equitably distributed across all art forms, including literary and performing arts, will create a more inclusive and accessible arts environment.

### Increase Professional Development and Shared Resources

A major need identified by the arts sector is for expanded professional development opportunities, including business skills, grant writing, marketing, and financial management. Additionally, offering shared services—such as health benefits, HR support, and mental health resources—would alleviate administrative burdens on individual artists and smaller organizations. The Arts Council could explore partnerships with corporate and civic organizations to provide these services at reduced costs, benefiting the entire arts community.

### Support Affordable Space and Resource Access

The lack of affordable studio, performance, and exhibition spaces is a critical barrier for many artists. The Arts Council should consider creating more access to low-cost or subsidized spaces for artistic creation and performance, particularly for artists outside the visual arts. This can include partnerships with local businesses, government agencies, or developers to repurpose underutilized spaces for artistic use.

### Clarify the Role of the Arts Council

There is a need for the Arts Council to clearly define its role within the arts ecosystem. The Arts Council should focus on its core strengths—advocacy, convening, and funding—while reducing efforts in areas such as direct programming that could be handled by other organizations. A clearly

articulated strategic vision will guide the Arts Council's activities and help align its resources with the most impactful priorities.

### Foster Greater Collaboration and Reduce Silos

Building a more collaborative and unified arts sector is a key priority for the Indianapolis region. The Arts Council should take an active role in convening stakeholders across different art forms and sectors, creating opportunities for networking, mentorship, and partnership. By encouraging collaboration and reducing competition for resources, the Arts Council can help build a stronger, more resilient arts community.

### Expand IDEA Initiatives

The Arts Council's leadership in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (IDEA) is widely recognized, but there is room for growth.

Expanding IDEA initiatives to ensure greater support for marginalized communities and emerging artists will help create a more inclusive and representative arts sector. Prioritizing outreach to underserved communities, such as ethnic and cultural minorities, will strengthen the Arts Council's commitment to equitable access to resources and opportunities.

By implementing these recommendations, the Arts Council can address current challenges, capitalize on its strengths, and ensure a sustainable and vibrant future for the Indianapolis arts and culture sector. These actions will enhance the Arts Council's impact, foster a more inclusive and collaborative arts community, and support the diverse needs of artists and organizations across the city.

[go back to top](#)



## CHAPTER THREE

# *New Framework*

## 3.1 Mission, Vision, Values, Equity Statement

### 3.1.1 MISSION

Our new mission statement is:



#### *To champion arts and culture*

We're working to help our local arts scene thrive, which means we advocate for community funding and support—and we connect artists to audiences in hopes that everyone in central Indiana who wants to can experience the arts.

---

### 3.1.2 VISION

Our new vision statement is:



#### *A creative life for all*

We believe everyone should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. Our vision of a creative life for all drives the work we do to support artists, arts organizations, and the community. When people can connect with the arts, they live more fulfilling, healthy lives—and their neighborhoods thrive.

---

### 3.1.3 VALUES

Our values are:



#### *Care, Community, Creativity*

Being a true champion of arts and culture means acting in the best interests of the people we serve, and our core values—care, community, and creativity—guide everything we do. We're here to offer support to all artists and arts administrators, build and nurture community, and inspire creativity in the lives of everyone in central Indiana.

## CARE

We put people first and respectfully serve our communities with empathy and compassion.

### We:

- Seek, welcome, and value every voice.
- Embrace and encourage our diverse community.
- Recognize our own limitations and strive to improve.
- Serve our community with compassion and empathy.

## COMMUNITY

Our community is our highest priority, and we work to uplift artists and the arts by building connections and holding ourselves accountable to a high standard of transparency and trust.

### We:

- Advocate for the needs and rights of the creative community.
- Create a sense of belonging and ensure all communities are represented.
- Inspire connection through mutual support and collaboration.
- Encourage unity and collective growth.

## CREATIVITY

We work toward the greater well-being of central Indiana by sustainably developing and advancing our arts and culture community. We're committed to uncovering new opportunities and avenues for fostering creativity.

### We:

- Celebrate self-expression and innovation.
- Elevate all voices to contribute and thrive.
- Lead with imagination and intentionality.
- Nurture the arts for future generations.

### 3.1.4 EQUITY STATEMENT

The Indy Arts Council collaborates with the arts and culture community to serve, celebrate, and value every resident of Indianapolis through the arts. We envision a city where socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability don't prohibit anyone from participating in the arts.



*We believe a robust, successful arts and culture community sustains “a creative life for all” by:*

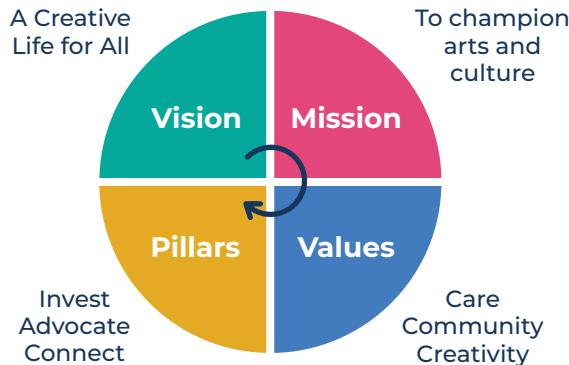
Ensuring all artists, creative workers, audiences, and students have full access to the creative arts resources of our community and honoring their varied histories, voices, and life experiences.

Creating an environment where all artists and arts organizations have equitable access to arts funding and programs.

Uniting artists and arts organizations with diverse populations to nurture a community where every resident feels welcome in the arts sector.

## 3.2 The Action Plan

### 3.2.1 PILLARS & PRIORITIES



#### Pillars

Invest, Advocate, Connect

#### Invest

Develop greater resources for building and nurturing arts and culture in central Indiana.

#### Advocate

Work to provide funding, opportunity, and awareness to support the creative community.

#### Connect

Bring together artists, audiences, and supporters across diverse communities.

We spent 2024 researching what our community wants and how it's growing so that we can build and nourish a thriving arts sector in central Indiana. We're confident that Indy Arts Council can best serve local artists and audiences by focusing our efforts on ways to further invest, advocate, and connect. In the years ahead, you'll see us developing greater resources to invest in the arts, advocating for the needs and rights of artists and organizations, and connecting them to audiences and supporters. And we think you'll also see the benefits of those actions: a healthier, more vibrant community that sustains a creative life for all.

**Audiences:** The Indy Arts Council serves central Indiana artists in all arts disciplines; arts and culture organizations; residents; and civic, community, neighborhood, sports, and other partner organizations.

#### Top Five Priorities

*Indy Arts Council's commitment to advancing diverse, equitable, and inclusive representation and access to resources across the local arts ecosystem is embedded across all priorities, strategies, and actions.*

#### 1. Sustainable Funding

**Focus:** Expand and diversify sustainable funding for artists and arts organizations.

**Goal:** Be a top five annual funding source for artists and organizations in Indianapolis.

#### 2. Everyday Arts Access

**Focus:** Ensure that arts, culture, and creativity are accessible to all regional residents, every day.

**Goal:** More art, for more people, in more places.

#### 3. Increased Awareness

**Focus:** Remove lack of awareness as a barrier to engagement.

**Goal:** Be the go-to information source on the regional arts and culture sector.

#### 4. Professional Development & Shared Resources

**Focus:** Increase professional development and services for regional artists and arts organizations.

**Goals:** Make central Indiana a magnet for artists and creative businesses.

#### 5. Arts & Culture Destination

**Focus:** Catalyze investments for an arts and culture hub and festival.

**Goal:** To become a top 10 arts and culture destination nationally.



Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library KIND exhibition | Photo by Kelly Lynn Photography

### 1.1.1 KEY STRATEGIES, RECOMMENDED ACTIONS, TIMELINE

The strategies, recommended actions, and suggested timelines that follow are the result of our staff's internal analysis, reflection, and discussion. The strategies and actions listed are meant to guide the next steps of this strategic plan; however, the plan is a living, ever-evolving process that is designed to adapt and be modified to remain effective and relevant in a changing environment. Additionally, new strategies and actions will emerge as new challenges and opportunities arise.

Timelines differ for each strategy and action. The timeline definitions are listed below:

- Short-term: Up to 2 years
- Mid-term: 3-5 years
- Long-term: Beyond 5 years
- Ongoing: No definitive timeline; expectation of periodic analysis and adaptation

## 1 | Sustainable Funding

**Strategy 1:** Establish a privately funded Arts and Culture Champion Fund (to function as an endowment) for Indy Arts Council.

### Recommended Actions

- Complete feasibility study with community partners to determine need (short-term)
- Establish desired amount for seed gift (short-term)
- Establish endowment campaign (mid-term)
- Establish long-term endowment dollar amount goal (long-term)

**Strategy 2:** Establish ongoing Indy Arts Council fundraising campaigns and strategies (philanthropic, corporate, and individual).

### Recommended Actions

- Define development and fundraising roles and responsibilities (short-term)
- Establish an annual fundraising schedule/calendar for isolated campaigns (short-term)

- Build an execution plan and timeline (short-term)
- Create an awareness campaign for available funding and sponsorship opportunities (short-term)

**Strategy 3:** Increase current City of Indianapolis sector funding through greater annual allocation.

#### Recommended Actions

- Build an advocacy campaign with sector partners and leaders (short-term)
- Continue cultivating relationships with City-County Councilors and City representatives (short-term)
- Seek project funding for artists, arts and culture organizations, and community organizations to implement arts programming in parks and public spaces (short-term)

**Strategy 4:** Establish a joint public funding strategy in collaboration with civic partners.

#### Recommended Actions

- Establish a collaborative group of organizations (short-term)
- Lead the effort to amend the Public Art for Neighborhoods Ordinance to yield more funds for neighborhood arts activity (short-term)
- Define goals and approaches (mid-term)

**Strategy 5:** Maximize the use of existing assets to generate revenue.

#### Recommended Actions

- Develop a feasibility study of the sustainability of the Artsgarden as a revenue-generating model (short-term)
- Explore potential of revenue-generating programs and services for Gallery 924 that align with artist priorities (mid-term)

**Strategy 6:** Be a leading source in fundraising industry analytics and information.

#### Recommended Actions

- Develop annual data collection tools to measure the economic impact of the various

funding programs offered to Annual Grants Program grantees (short-term)

- Develop a comprehensive research agenda to include impact measurements, applicant and grantee data, equity trends, and other data collection and analyses as needed (ongoing)
- Annually measure the impact of sector-wide marketing efforts to ensure effectiveness of campaigns and audience reach (ongoing)

**Strategy 7:** Establish transformative public art funding.

#### Recommended Actions

- Improve both developer-based public art and neighborhood-focused public art by amending the Public Art for Neighborhoods (PAFN) ordinance to increase funding from developers for PAFN Grants and add a true percentage-for-art ordinance on civic construction projects (mid-term)
- Fund and manage a Public Art Maintenance Fund shared among partnering communities (long-term)
- Inspire a funder group to come together and create a public art projects endowment of \$100M (long-term)

## 2 | Everyday Arts Access

**Strategy 1:** Conduct a sector-wide venue assessment.

#### Recommended Actions

- Establish a local planning committee (short-term)
- Identify research and assessment scope with contracted research firm (short-term)
- Assess venues sector-wide, including rehearsal, performance, and gallery spaces, office spaces, and shared co-working spaces (short-term)
- Generate and distribute research findings and recommendations (short-term)

**Strategy 2:** Review and refocus Indy Arts Council's program offerings toward an audience-centered approach.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Convene and survey arts organizations, artists, and partners around needs and priorities (short-term)
- Evaluate and restructure current programs and services (short-term)
- Develop plan for program staffing and department restructuring (short-term)
- Develop a new portfolio of services and programs for artists, arts organizations, and partners (mid-term)

**Strategy 3:** Remove barriers to access, such as language and accessibility.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Establish translation and accessibility support for Indy Arts Council and the sector (short-term)
- Identify an appropriate vendor(s) with community partners (short-term)
- Create multilingual materials and information for distribution (ongoing)
- Provide shared resources to the arts sector (ongoing)

**Strategy 4:** Establish a membership-based arts pass for local residents and visitors.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Evaluate public and industry interest (short-term)
- Assemble a feasibility and planning committee (short-term)
- Establish a funding model in collaboration with stakeholders (mid-term)

**Strategy 5:** Create broader access to public art.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Populate, update, and maintain the Public Art Directory (ongoing)
- Ensure the benefits of public art also engage neighborhoods outside of downtown by expanding programs to neighborhoods (Legends Mural Series, Sidewalk Galleries, etc.) (mid-term)
- Lead a comprehensive Public Art Master Plan update for Indianapolis/Marion County (long-term)

## **3 | Increased Awareness**

**Strategy 1:** Co-create with community partners additional strategies to elevate the local arts sector.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Connect with civic partners on overlapping resident and visitor priorities (short-term)
- Reintroduce arts marketers convenings and cooperatively explore ongoing support and shared resources (ongoing)

**Strategy 2:** Maintain and promote a robust Explore Indy Arts digital experience.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Expand event calendar functionality (filters, categories, etc.) (short-term)
- Develop curated content (events, neighborhood guides, news articles, etc.) (ongoing)
- Promote content through the Explore Indy Arts newsletter, social media, and paid media channels (ongoing)

**Strategy 3:** Create and launch a sector-wide advertising campaign.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Provide PR support to uplift the sector (press releases, media pitching, media monitoring, flyer distribution) (ongoing)
- Engage influencers to boost awareness and create a grassroots arts and culture following (ongoing)
- Generate sector representation at neighborhood festivals, meetings, and events (ongoing)
- Utilize paid promotion including digital/social ads, printed and digital billboards, radio and broadcast features, and partnerships with leading digital media hubs (ongoing)

**Strategy 4:** Inspire a collaborative advocacy approach, cooperatively designed with creatives, industry leaders, and community members to collectively champion the arts and advocate for greater public and private support.

**Recommended Actions**

- Design and convene a collaborative, sector-led advocacy program (short-term)
- Develop grassroots outreach coalition with neighborhood partners (mid-term)
- Develop and stage an annual region-wide convening/conference around arts advocacy (long-term)
- Support the creation of a region-wide creative economy leadership council to explore and promote ways to preserve and enrich our creative economy for economic growth and community-building (long-term)

**Strategy 5:** Be a leading source in industry analytics and information.

**Recommended Actions**

- Collect and share sector-wide storytelling/ marketing for sector analytics and reporting to make adjustments for future content and campaigns (ongoing)
- Develop a comprehensive research agenda to include impact measurements, applicant and grantee data, equity trends, and other data collection and analyses as needed (ongoing)

## 4 | Professional Development & Shared Services

**Strategy 1:** Establish and launch increased programs and services for artists at all stages of their careers.

**Recommended Actions**

- Assess current programs and services as they align with artist career stages to develop a workforce/career development pipeline (short-term)
- Review and assess programs and curricula from emerging artist and artist development programs locally and elsewhere (short-term)
- Engage local artists at various levels in their careers through focus groups, surveys, interviews, etc., regarding their needs and barriers to growth (short-term)
- Hold discussions with university departments regarding transitioning students from

- academics to independent practice (to expand services and avoid duplication) (short-term)
- Establish a youth employment and talent development public art program (short-term)
- Build out robust, on-demand online resources for artists at all levels of their career (mid-term)

**Strategy 2:** Assess current professional development and networking needs to more effectively meet artists' and arts administrators' professional goals.

**Recommended Actions**

- Develop a program of purely social/networking gatherings without a formal program for artists (short-term)
- Assess and rebrand Artist Industry Nights as professional development learning and dialogue opportunities (short-term)
- Assess arts administrators' and leaders' professional development needs such as leadership development, marketing, arts education, and others (short-term)
- Seek opportunities to develop and advance IDEA training opportunities for artists and administrators (short-term)
- Seek a funder to support professional development opportunities (mid-term)
- Create and secure funding for a sector-wide internship/apprenticeship programs and fellowships with mentorship/coaching (mid-term)

**Strategy 3:** Establish and launch wraparound services and resources for arts administrators and leaders.

**Recommended Actions**

- Convene and engage arts administrators in different roles through focus groups, surveys, interviews, etc., regarding their organizational needs (short-term)
- Research and assess organizational services from comparable agencies across the nation (short-term)
- Establish an ongoing organizational newsletter to share sector-wide updates and opportunities (short-term)



Renaissance at Swift City Sessions | Photo by Mike Lee Productions

- Establish and build organizational services in response to needs based on size, scope, and specific challenges (mid-term)
- Create on-demand online resources and tools for arts organizations (mid-term)

**Strategy 4:** Create pathways for ongoing feedback and evaluation from artists, arts leaders, and administrators.

#### Recommended Actions

- Routinely administer community surveys (mid-term)
- Establish arts leaders forums for feedback and evaluation (mid-term)

**Strategy 5:** Shift to a creatives-centered governance and operations philosophy for Indy Arts Council programs, services, and platforms.

#### Recommended Actions

- Establish advisory committees for existing programs and services (short-term)
- Engage creatives in co-creating new programs and services through beta-testing concepts, surveys, focus groups, etc. (mid-term)
- Recruit creatives and sector representatives to hold seats on the Arts Council board of directors (ongoing)

## 5 | Arts & Culture Destination

**Strategy 1:** Catalyze city revitalization by developing inclusive creative spaces and cultural activities that engage an increased resident base.

#### Recommended Actions

- Lead and coordinate a citywide First Fridays strategy (short-term)
- Create a membership-based arts pass program for residents and visitors with free and reduced-price admissions to central Indiana area arts and culture organizations. (mid-term)
- Develop a downtown street performer program to energize the streets with engaging performances (mid-term)
- Continue to partner with civic partners to co-lead their arts-based activations (ongoing)

**Strategy 2:** Create an arts and culture hub with exhibition spaces, performance space(s), a new office for the Arts Council, offices for smaller arts organizations with shared services, and an artist co-working space.

#### Recommended Actions

- Assess local buy-in and feasibility for an arts and culture hub (short-term)
- Establish a local feasibility and planning committee (short-term)
- Assess cost/benefit of arts and culture hub (mid-term)
- Identify organizational partners to assess and consider the shared benefit of a hub (mid-term)
- Develop location and approach to implementation with a dedicated planning committee (mid-term)
- Explore/assess potential funding mechanisms associated with the district and its location (mid-term)
- Establish dedicated staff and community partner team for planning and execution (mid-term)
- Co-create additional strategies to elevate the local arts sector through the arts and culture hub (long-term)

**Strategy 3:** Start a downtown-focused, high-visibility arts and culture festival.

#### Recommended Actions

- Assess local buy-in and feasibility for arts festival (short-term)
- Establish a local feasibility and planning committee (short-term)
- Beta test arts festival components (short-term)
- Assess cost/benefit of proposed arts festival (mid-term)
- Explore comparable experiences in benchmark cities for inspiration (mid-term)
- Establish dedicated staff and community partner team for planning and execution (mid-term)
- Raise awareness for funding and sponsorship opportunities (mid-term)

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CHAPTER FOUR

# *Conclusion*

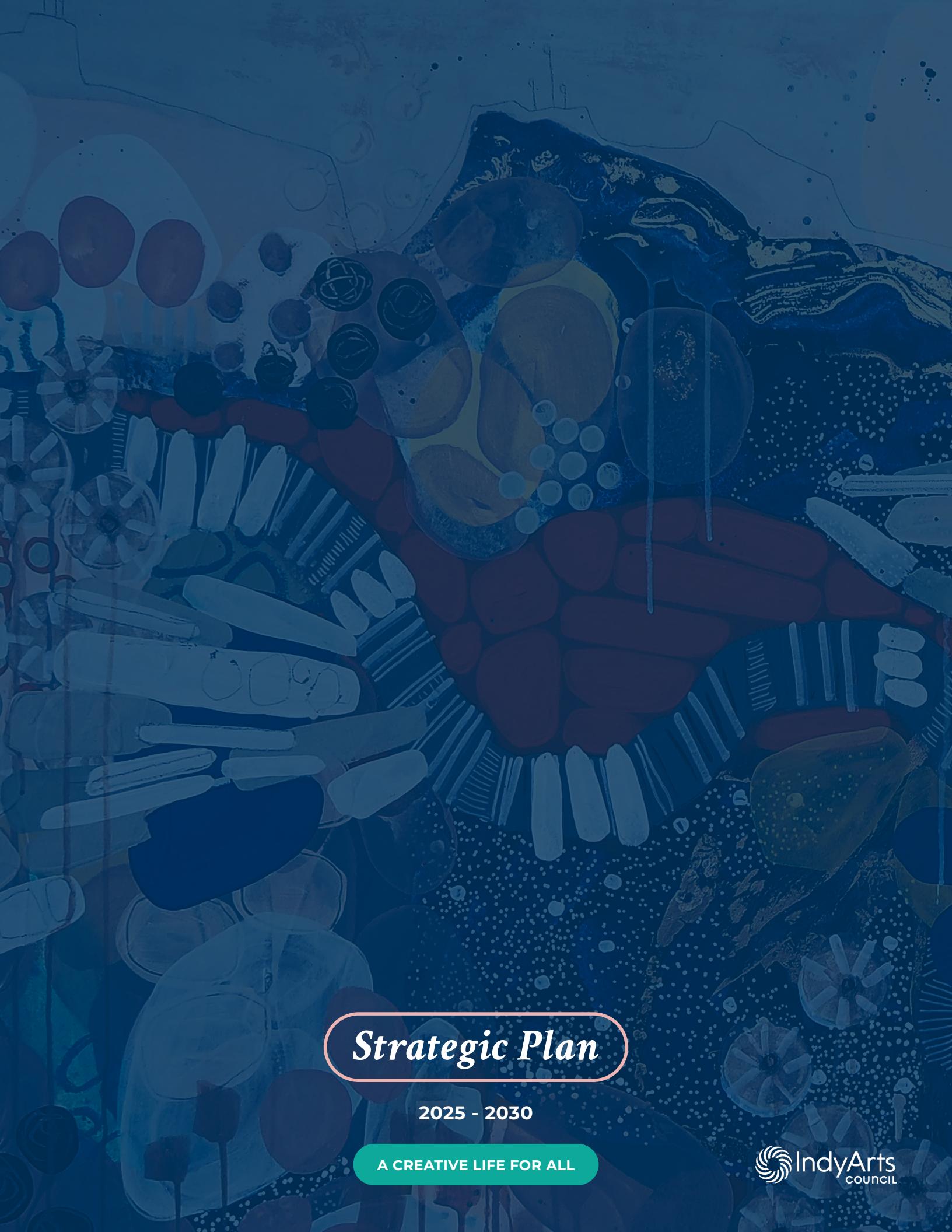


**Indy Arts Council** exists to champion arts and culture, and we're excited about what's to come as we put our strategic plan into action. Researching and crafting this plan has been a journey that shined a light on accomplishments we can be proud of, showed us some tough truths, and provided insight into the incredible potential that exists for arts and culture in central Indiana.

The gift of feedback from our community has been invaluable, and we're ready to rise to the opportunities our artists, neighbors, and supporters have highlighted. To help the central Indiana arts scene thrive, we've shaped that feedback into transformative goals we can't wait to execute in collaboration with our partners.

We believe that opportunities to connect with the arts nourish our community, its visitors, and the economy. This plan represents a way forward to a creative life for all in central Indiana, and it's just one step of many to come.

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# Strategic Plan

2025 - 2030

A CREATIVE LIFE FOR ALL

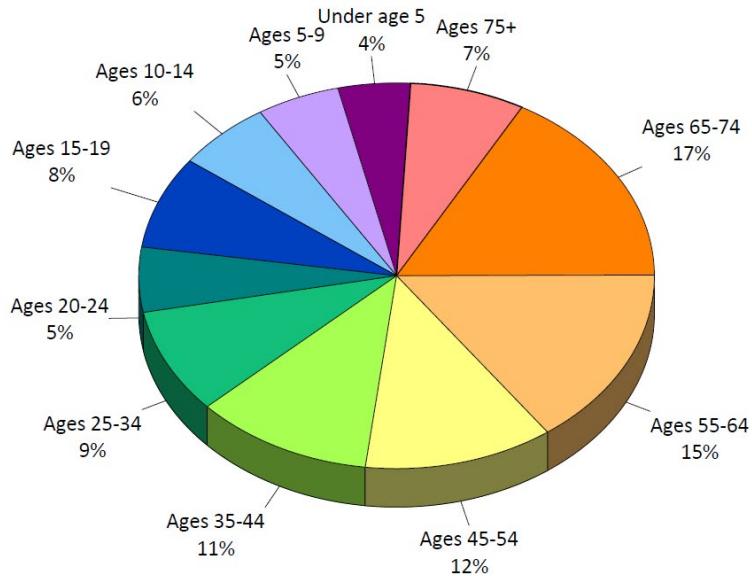


## APPENDIX A: STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY RESULTS

Indy Art Council Community Survey Findings Report

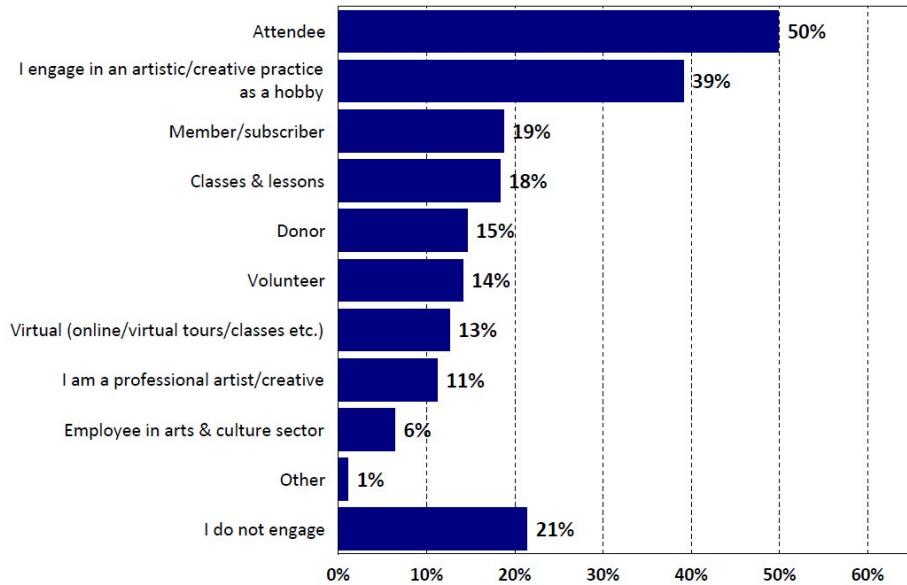
### Q1. Including yourself, how many people in your household are...

by percentage of persons in household



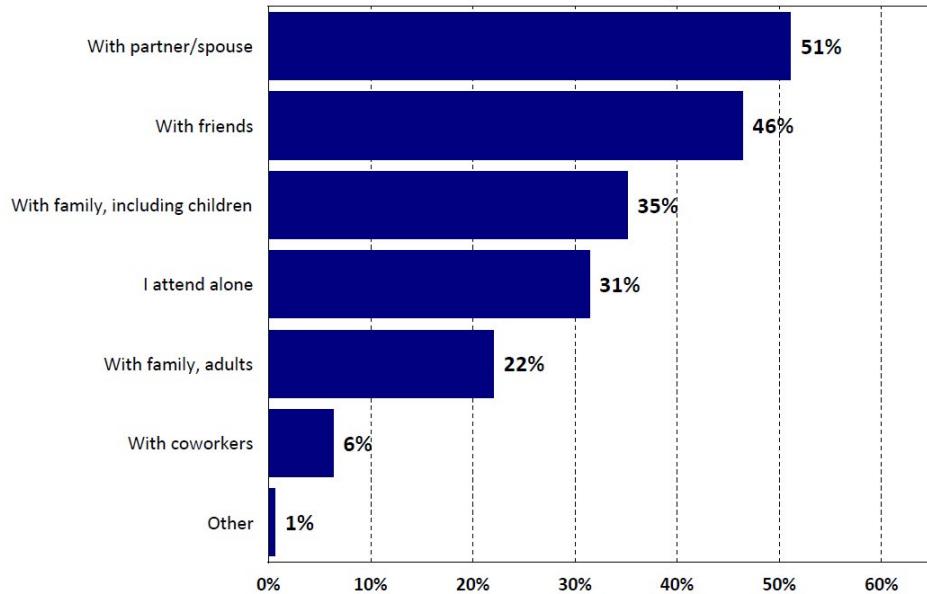
## Q2. In the last year, how have you or members of your household engaged in local arts and culture events and experiences?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



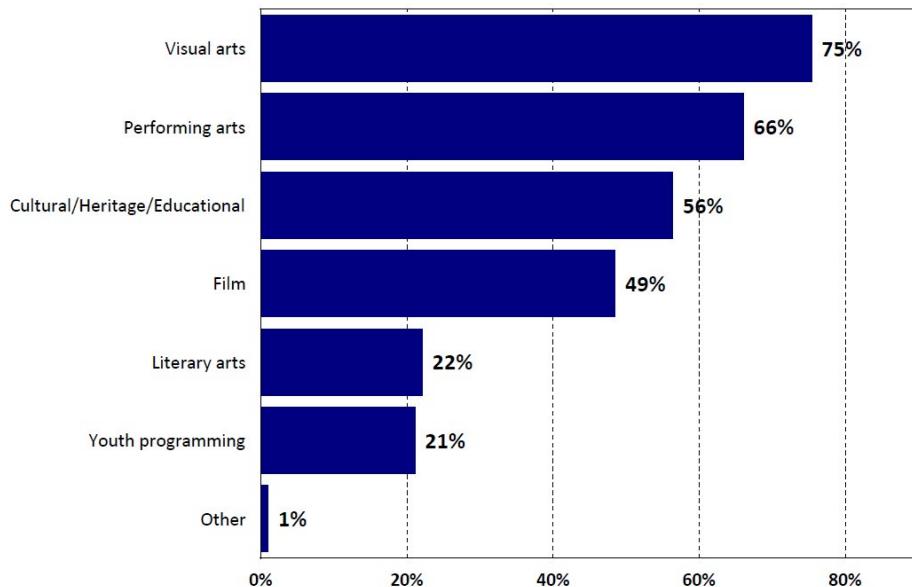
## Q3. With whom do you or members of your household engage in local arts and culture experiences?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



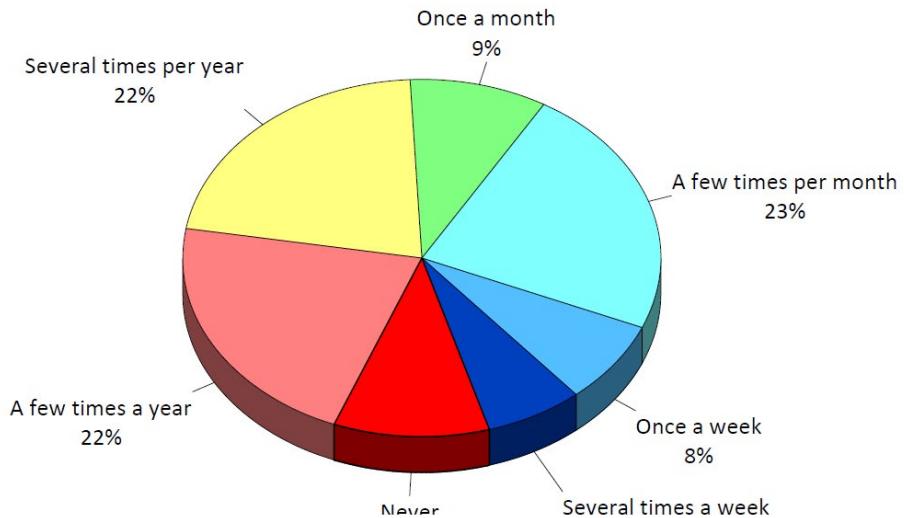
## Q4. What types of local arts and culture events and experiences do you or members of your household engage in?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



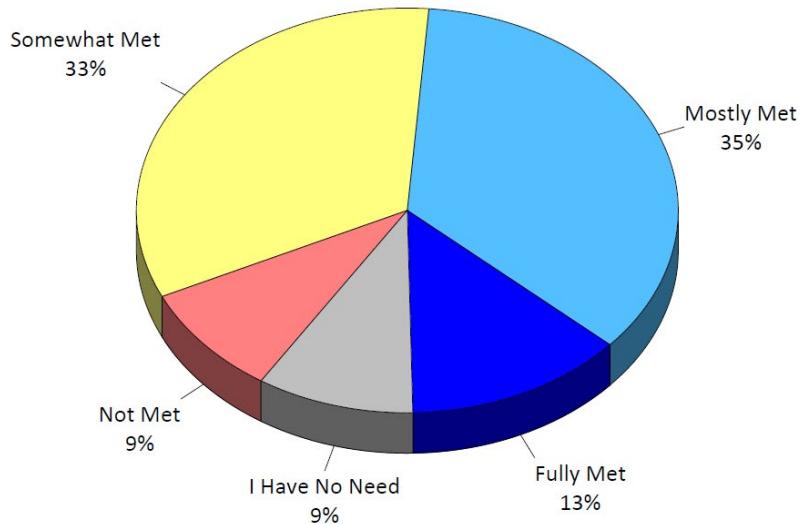
## Q5. How frequently do you (or members of your household) engage in local arts and culture events and experiences?

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not sure")



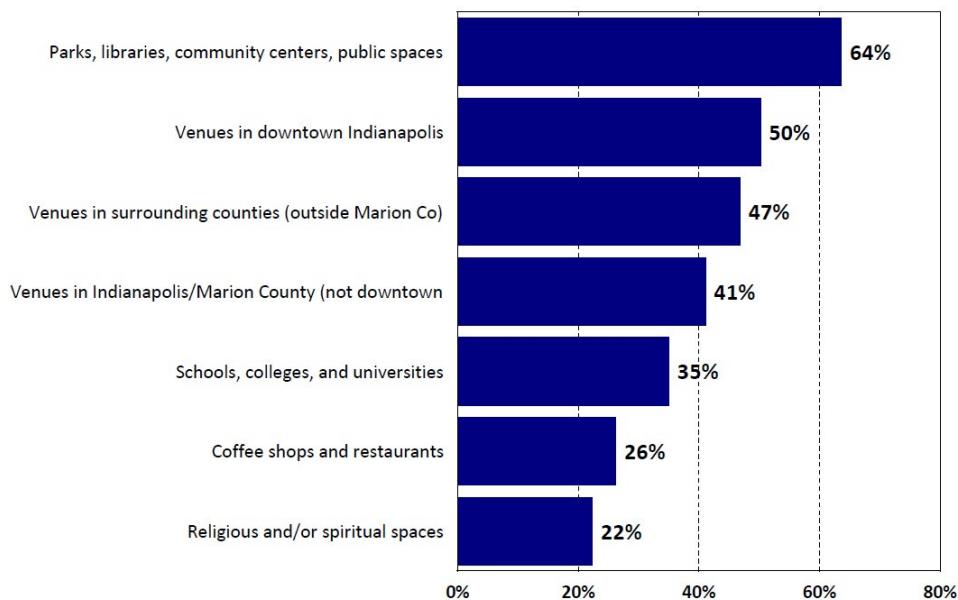
## Q6. How well do local arts and cultural events and experiences meet your needs today?

by percentage of respondents (excluding “not sure”)



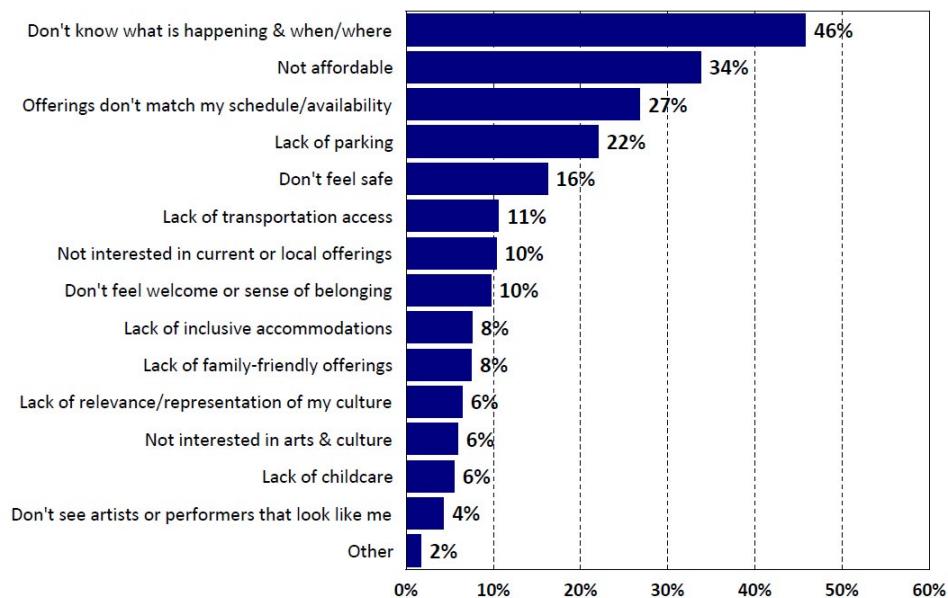
## Q7. Where do you or members of your household engage in local arts and culture events and experiences outside of your home?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



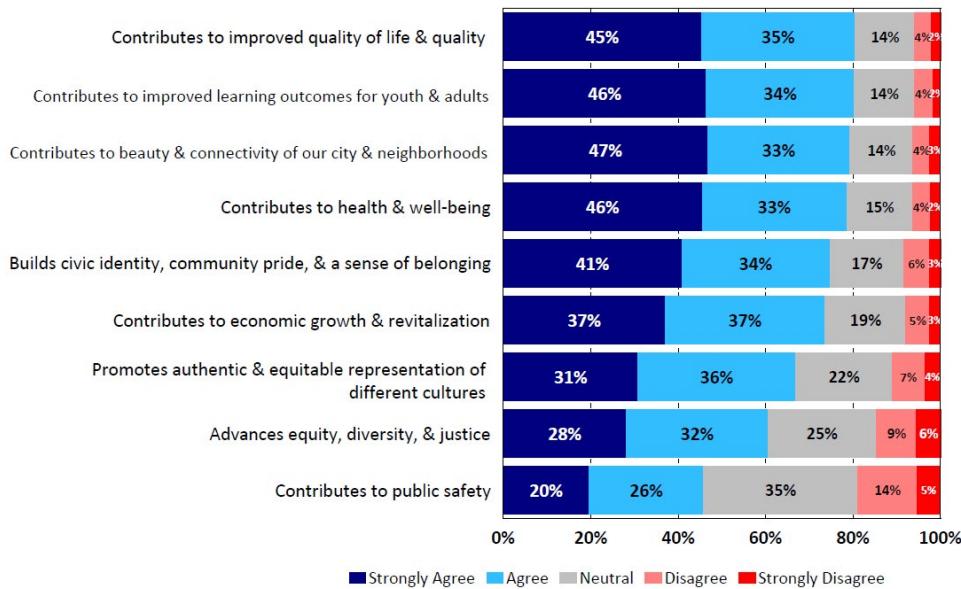
## Q8. What prevents you or members of your household from engaging in local arts and culture events and experiences more often?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



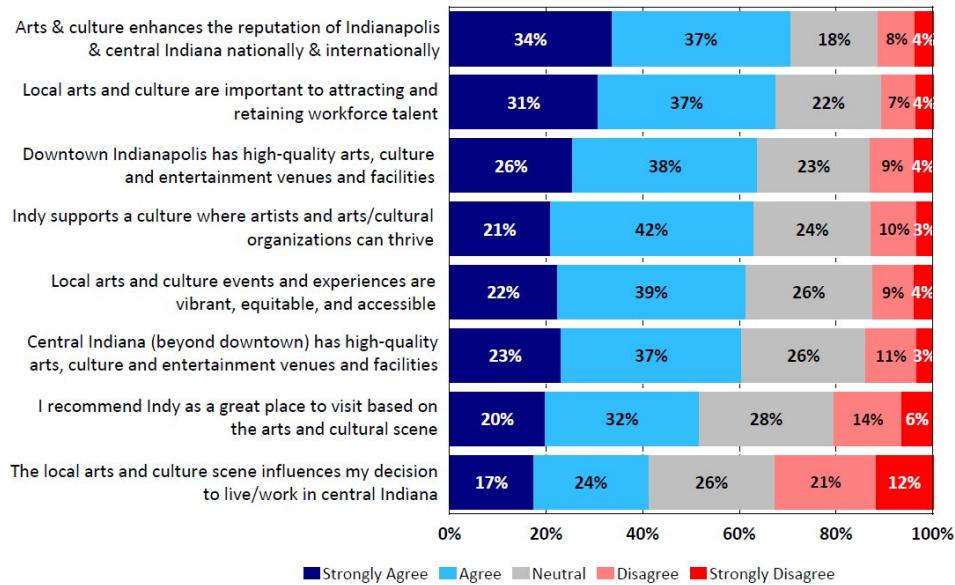
## Q9. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. In general, I believe arts and culture....

by percentage of respondents (excluding don't knows)



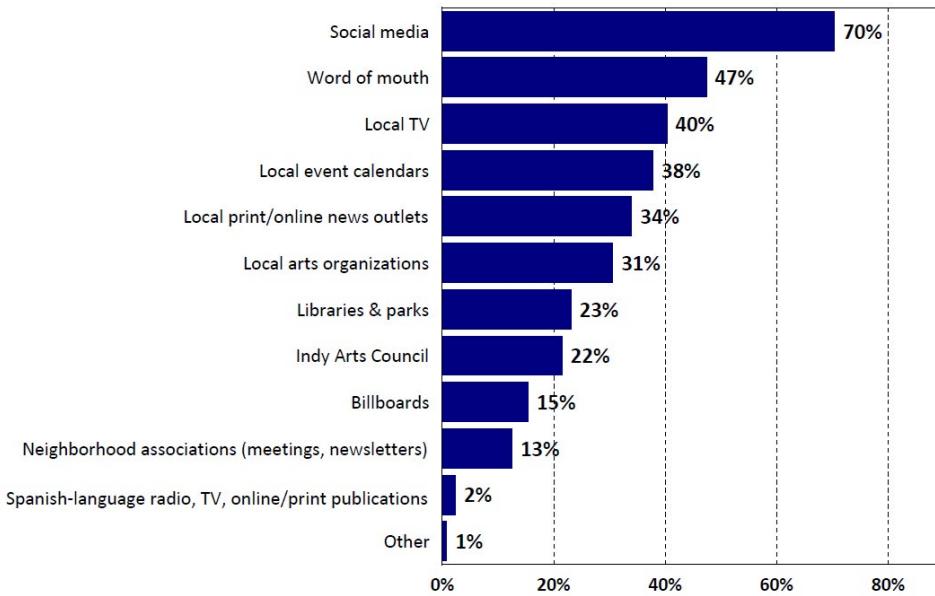
## Q10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

by percentage of respondents (excluding don't knows)



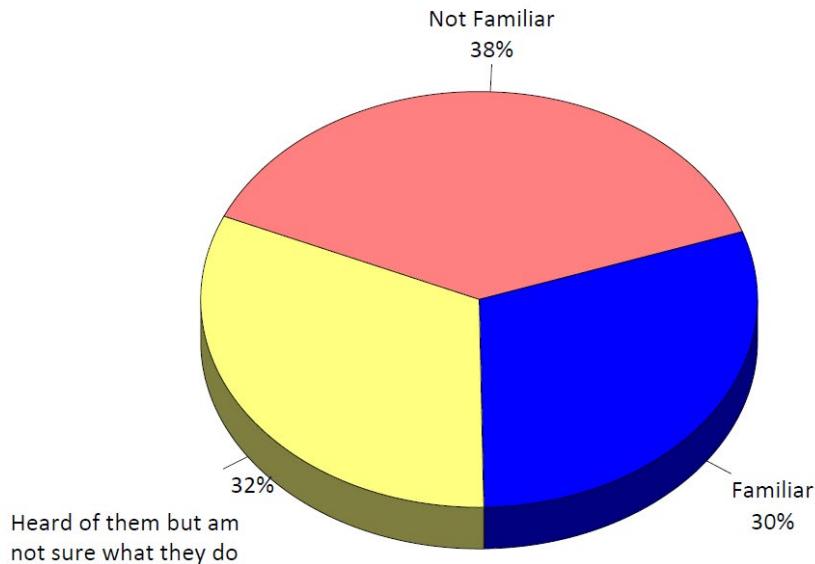
## Q11. How do you find out about local arts and culture events and experiences?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



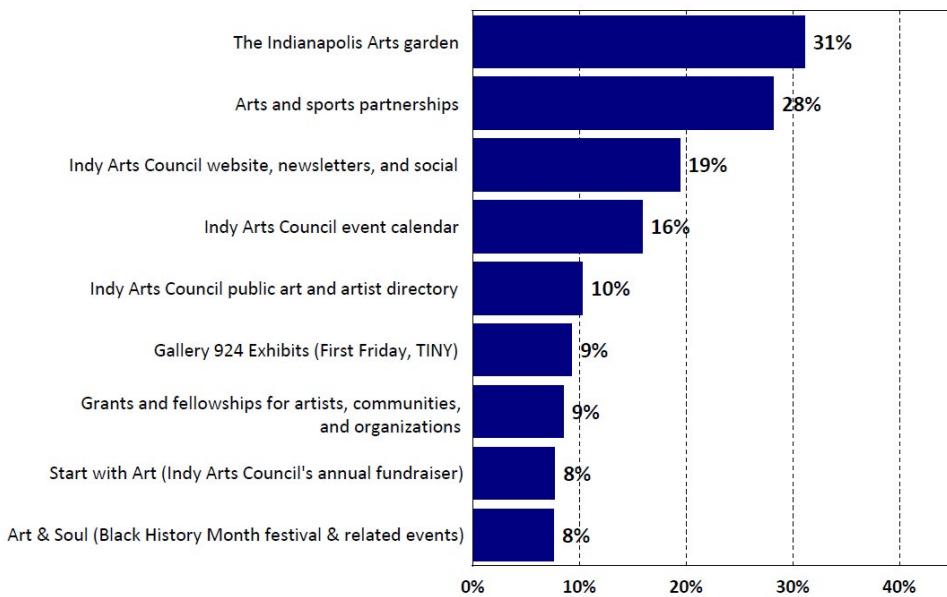
## Q12. How familiar are you with the Indy Arts Council?

by percentage of respondents



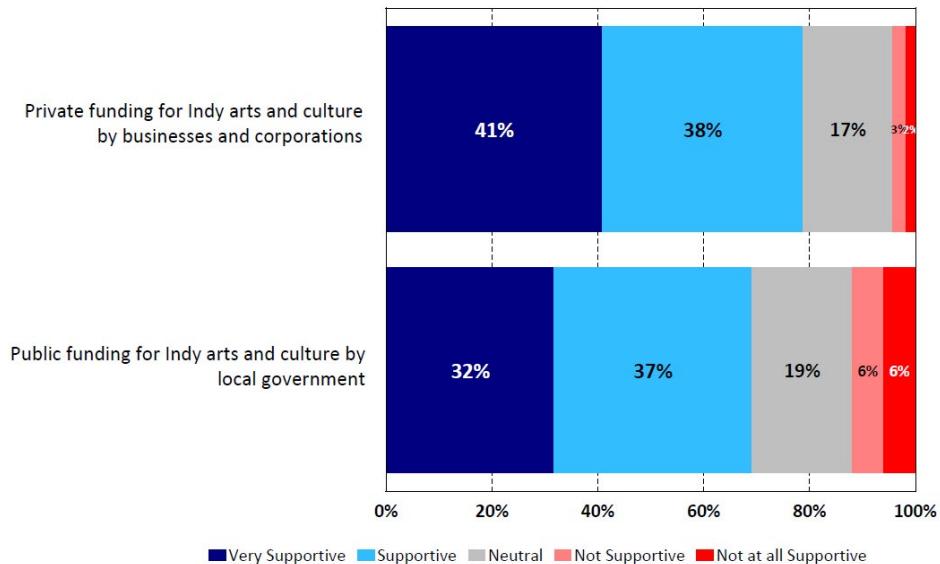
## Q13. Which of the following Indy Arts Council programs and services have you engaged with?

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



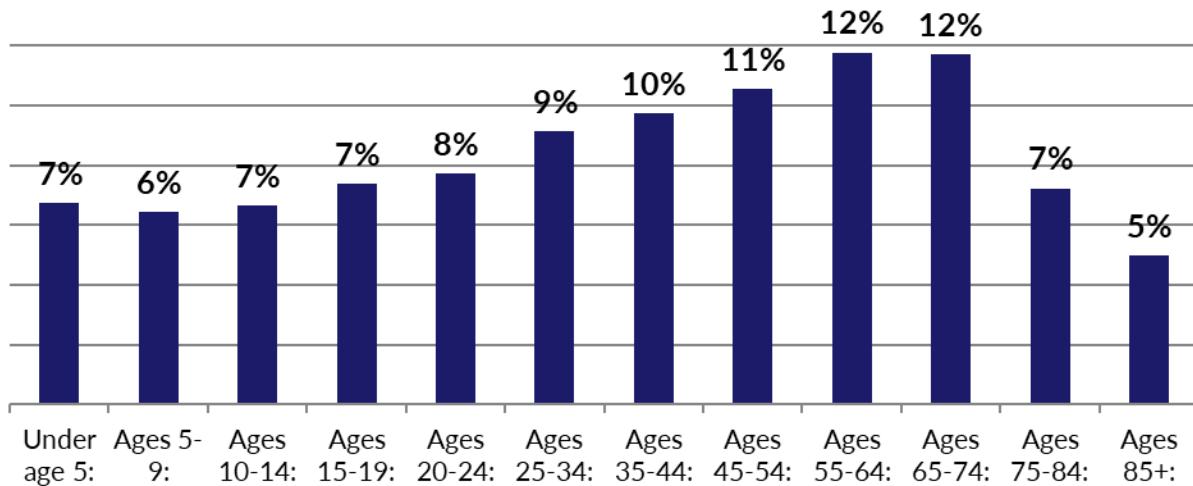
## Q14. Please rate your level of support for each of the following.

by percentage of respondents

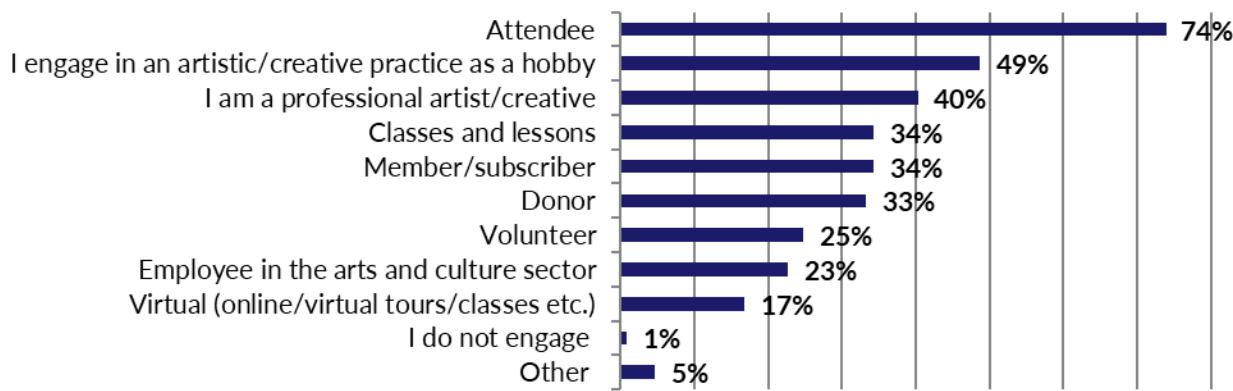


## ○ APPENDIX B: ONLINE COMMUNITY SURVEY

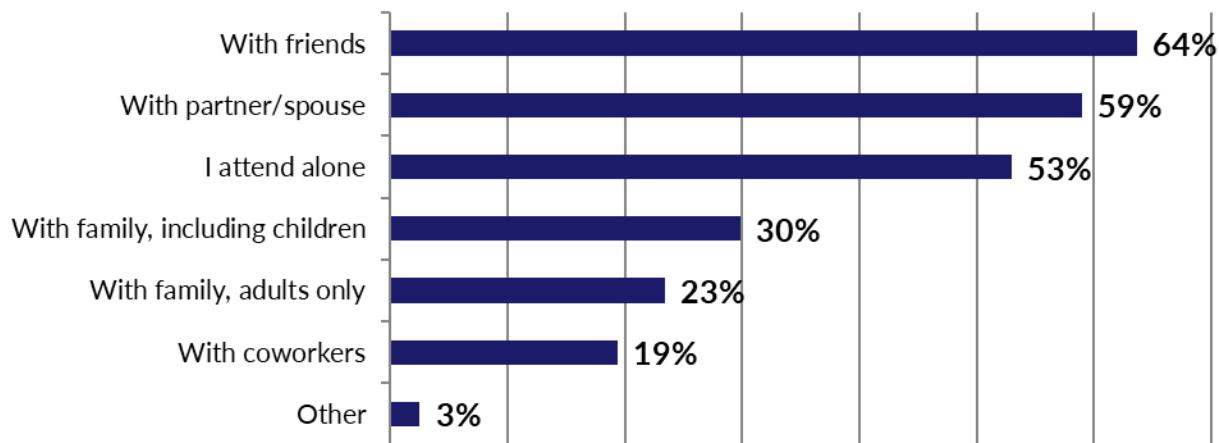
Including yourself, how many people in your household are...



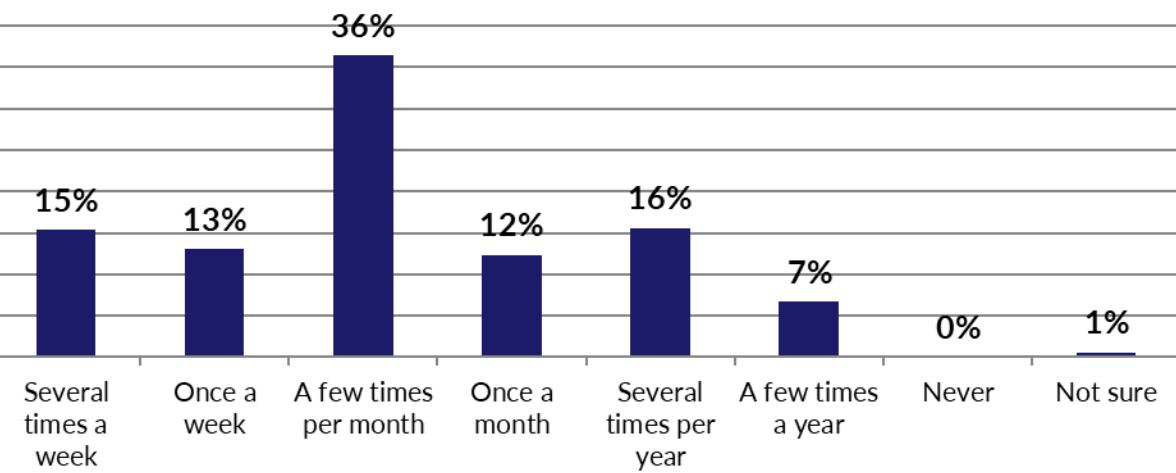
In the last year, how have you (or members of your household) engaged in any of the following local arts and culture events and experiences? (Check all that apply.)



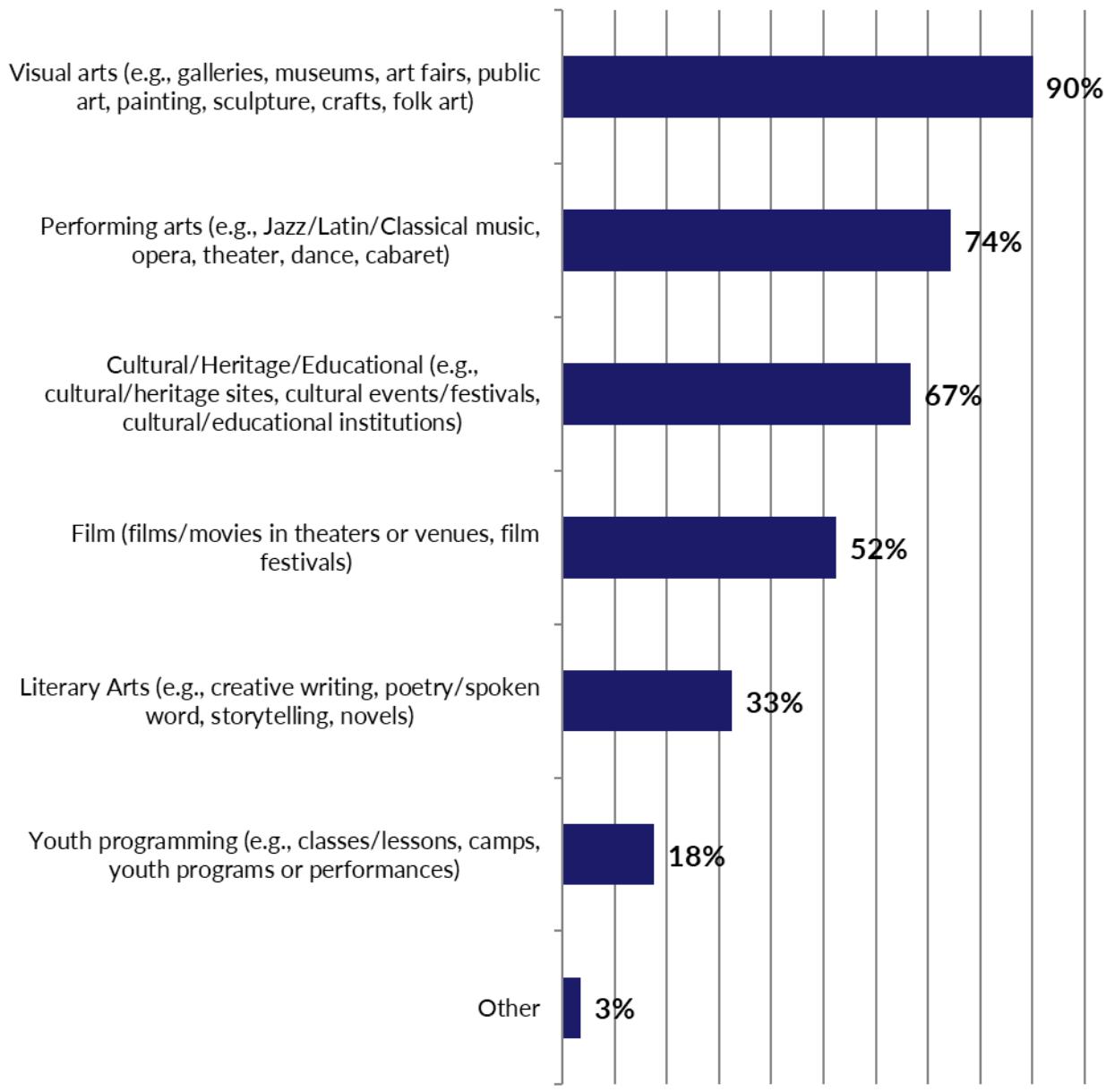
With whom do you (or members of your household) engage in local arts and culture experiences? (Check all that apply.)



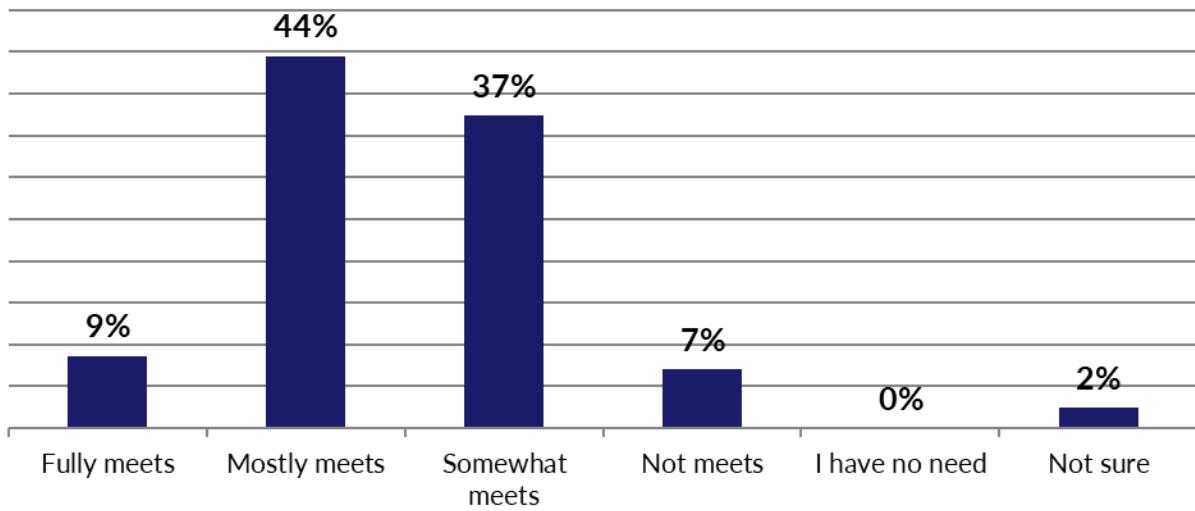
How frequently do you (or members of your household) engage in local arts and culture events and experiences?



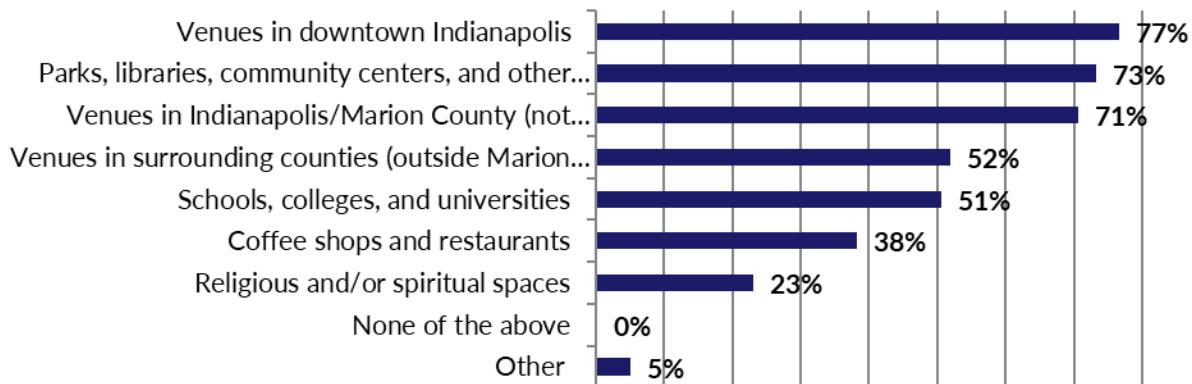
What types of local arts and culture events and experiences do you (or members of your household) engage in? (Check all that apply.)



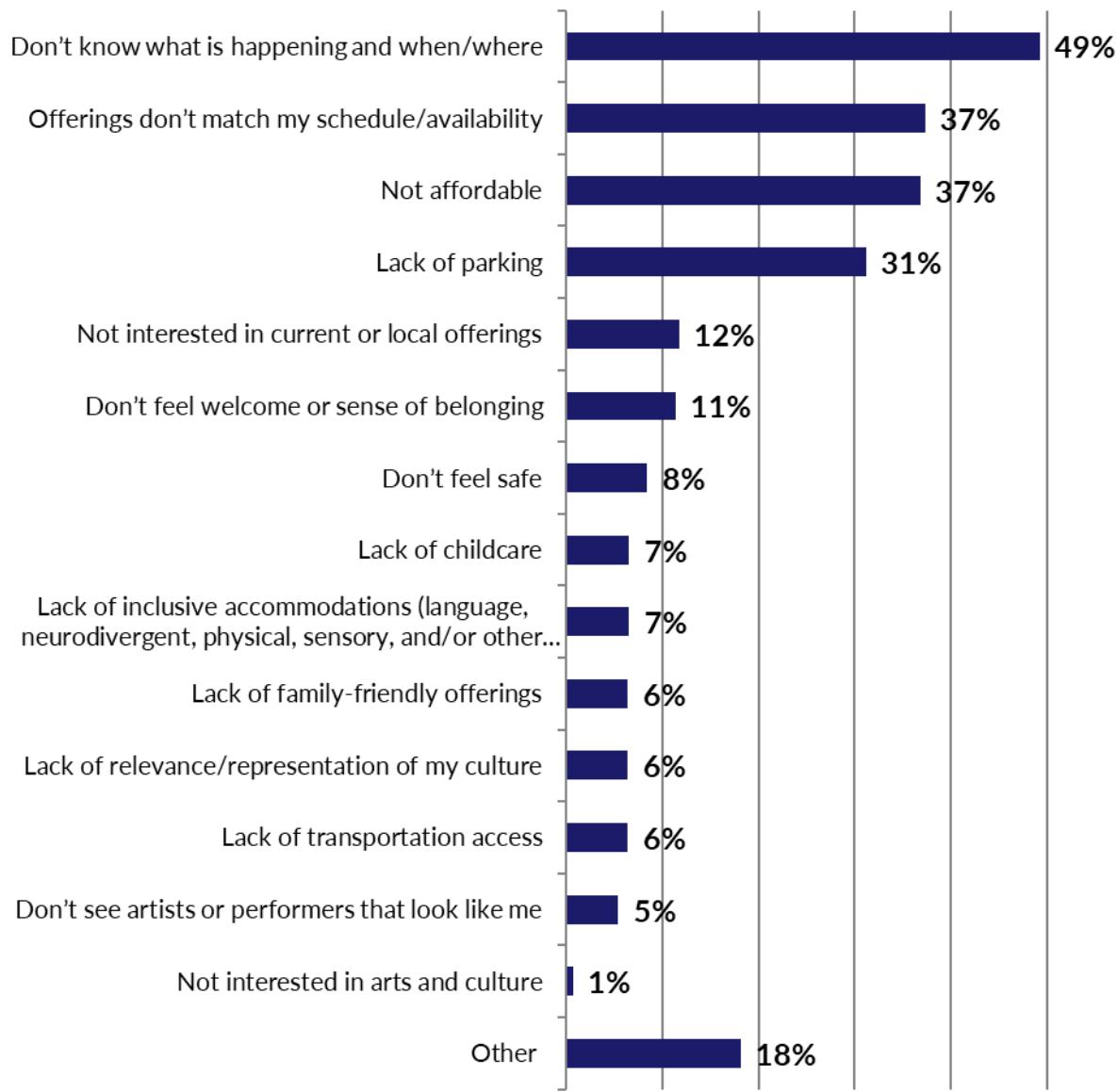
## How well do local arts and cultural events and experiences meet your needs today?



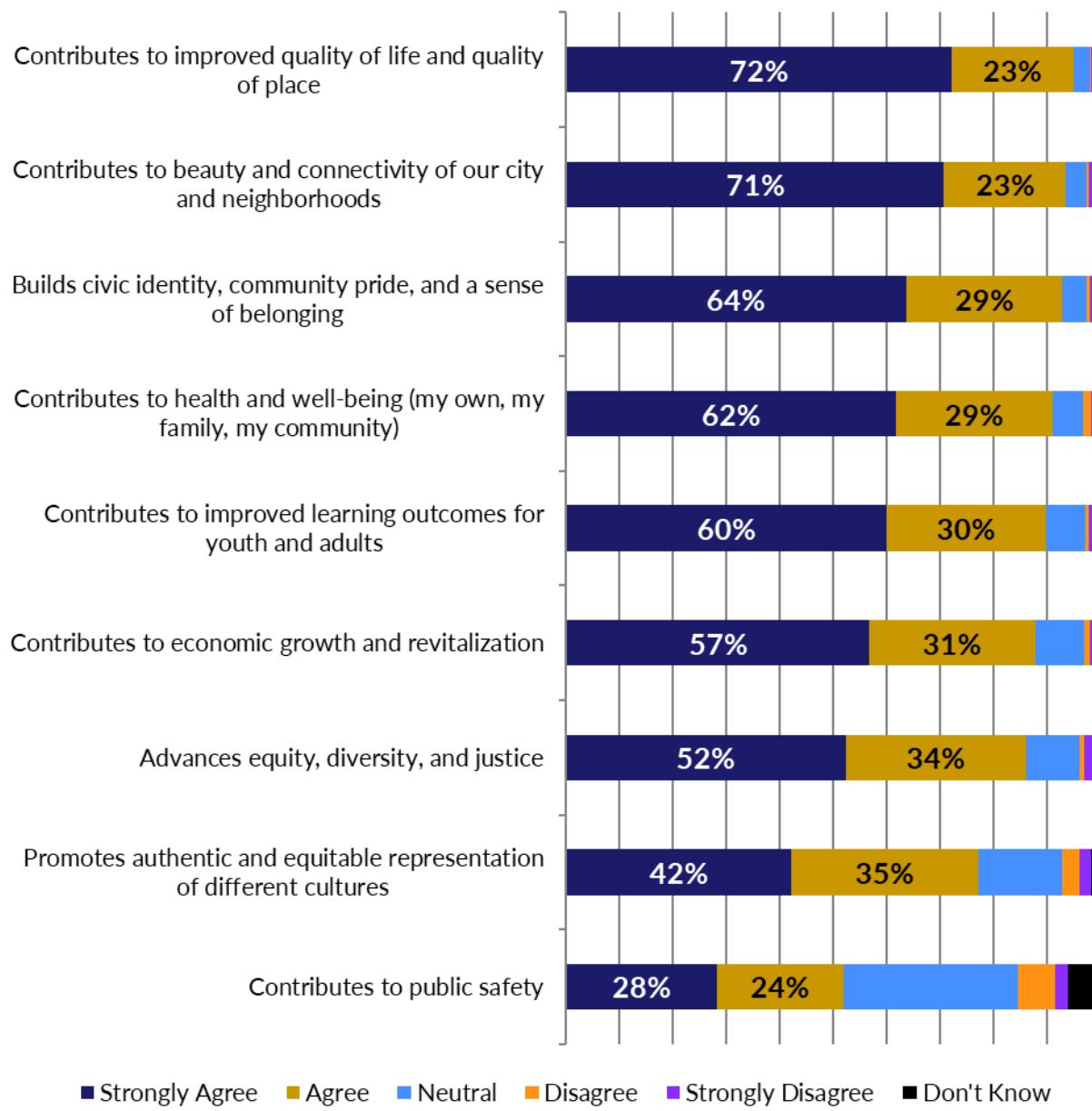
## Where do you (or members of your household) engage in local arts and culture events and experiences outside of your home? (Check all that apply.)



What prevents you (or members of your household) from engaging in local arts and culture events and experiences more often?  
(Check all that apply.)

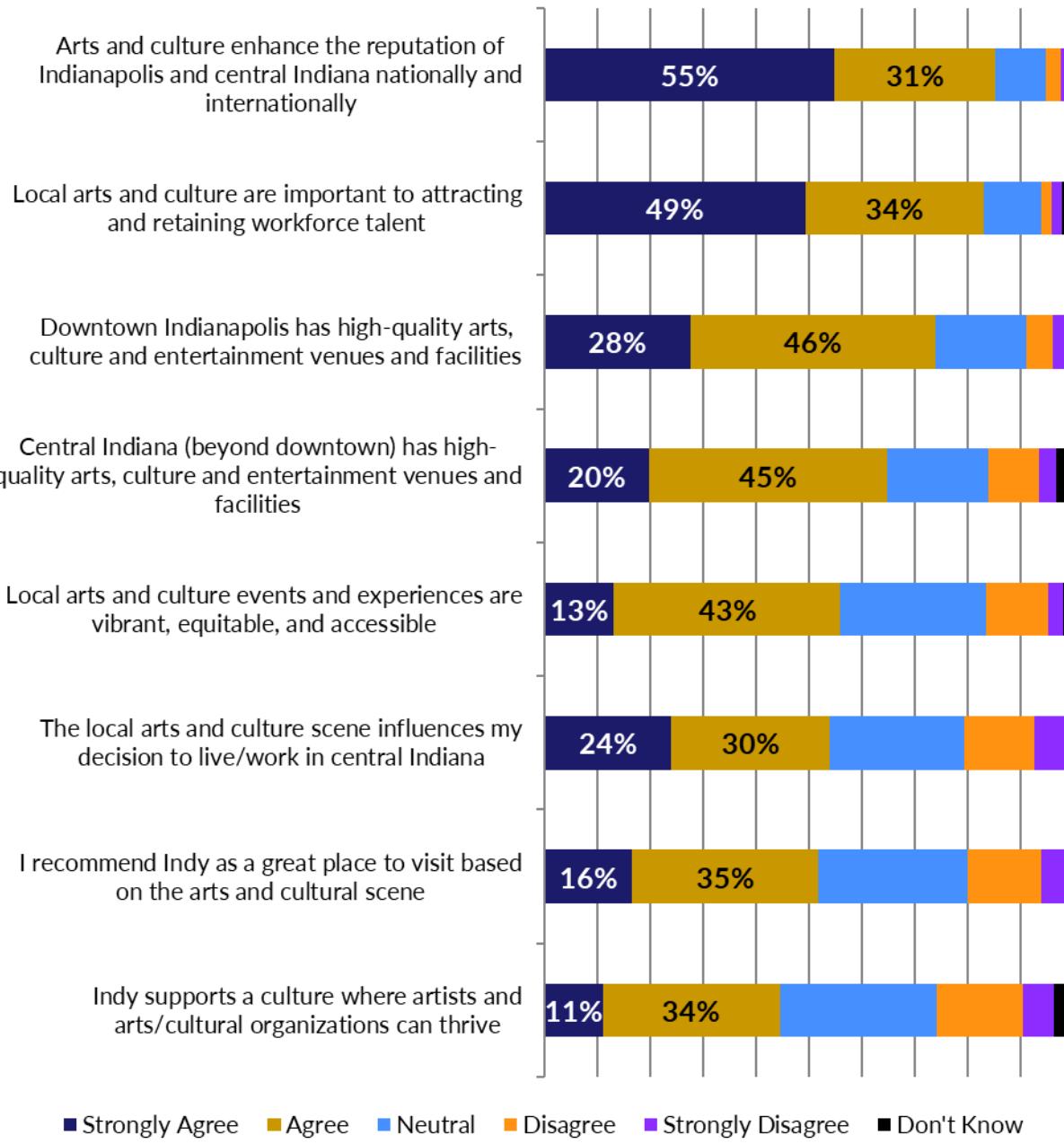


Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. In general, I believe arts and culture...

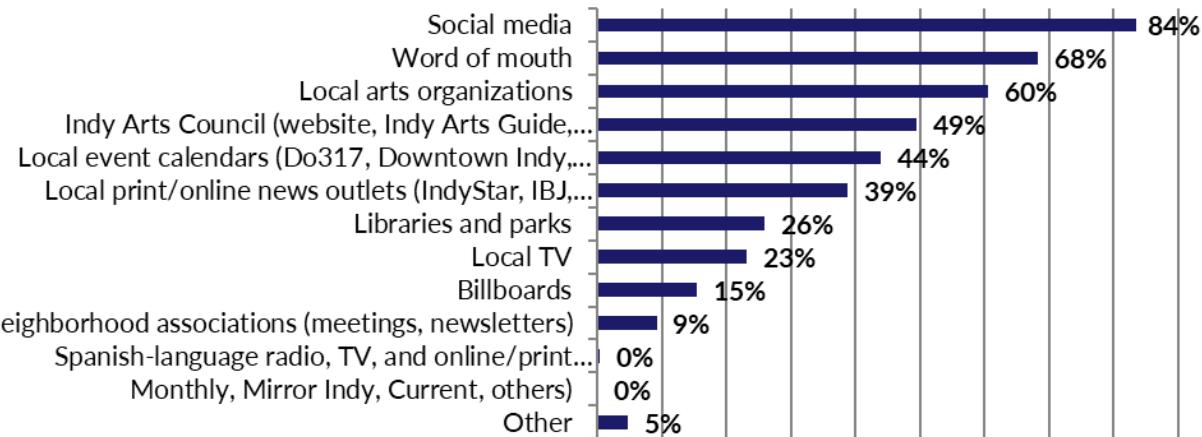


■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

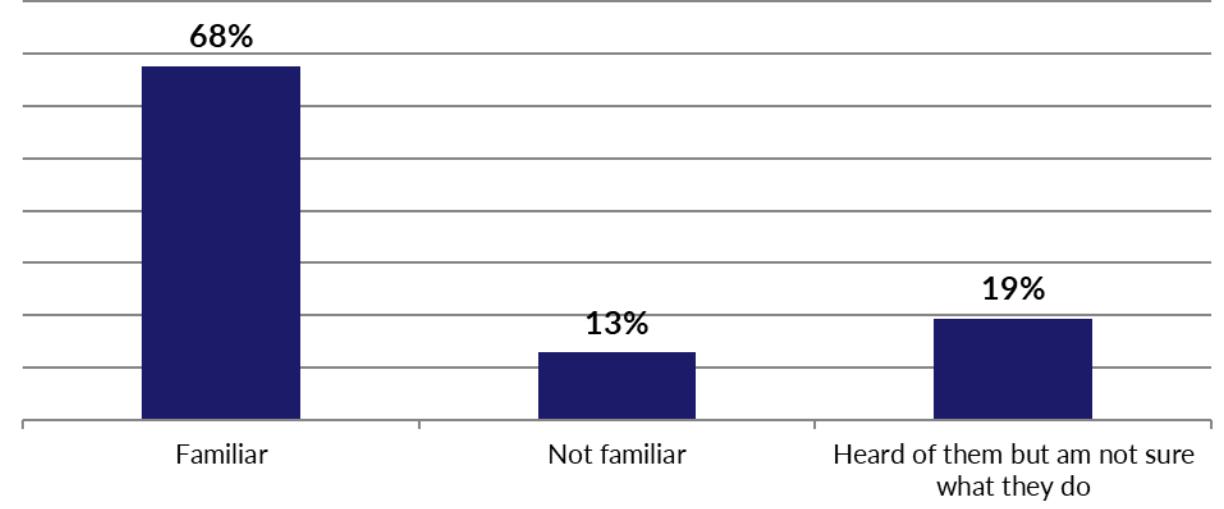
Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.



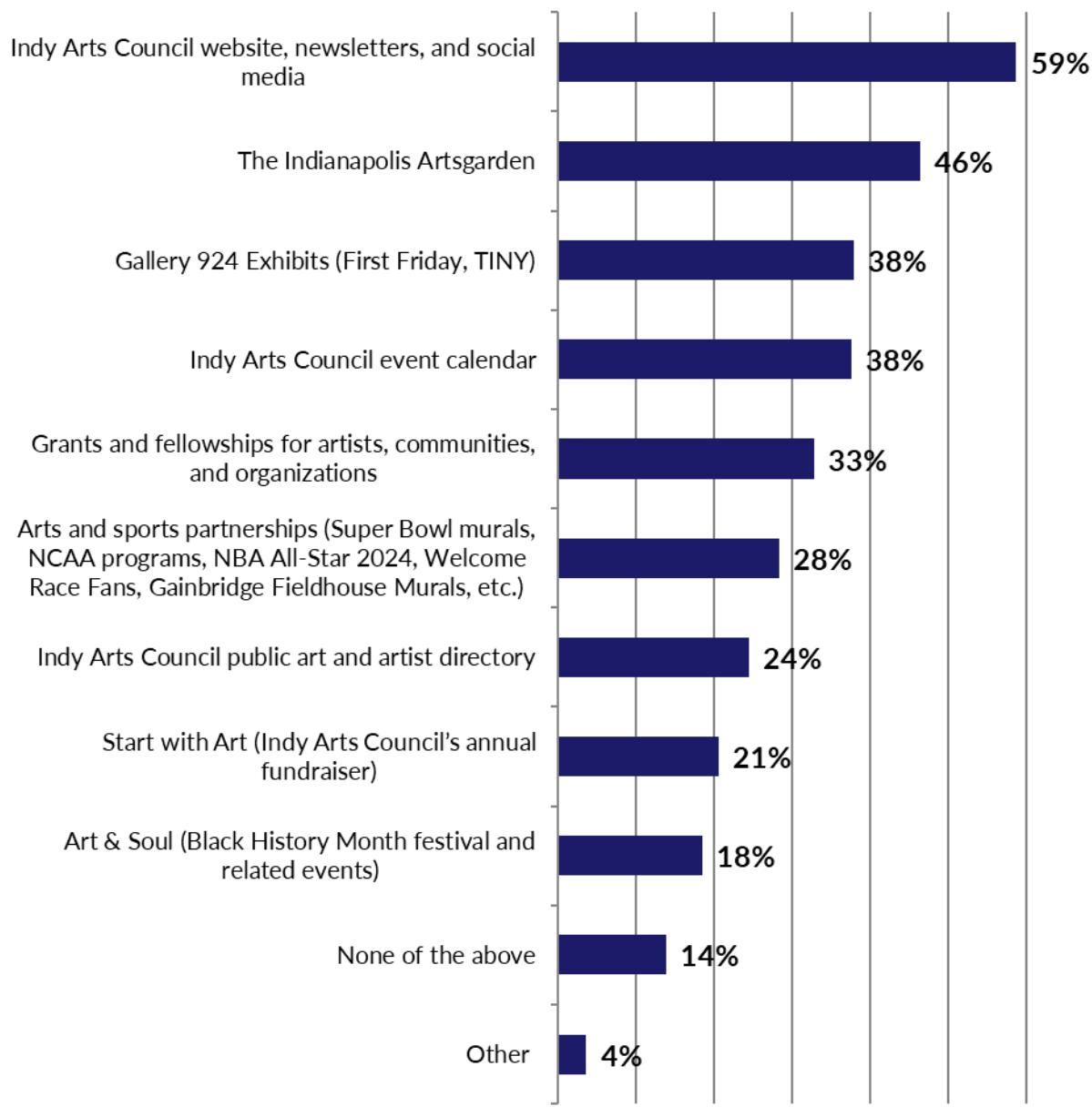
## How do you find out about local arts and culture events and experiences? (Check all that apply.)



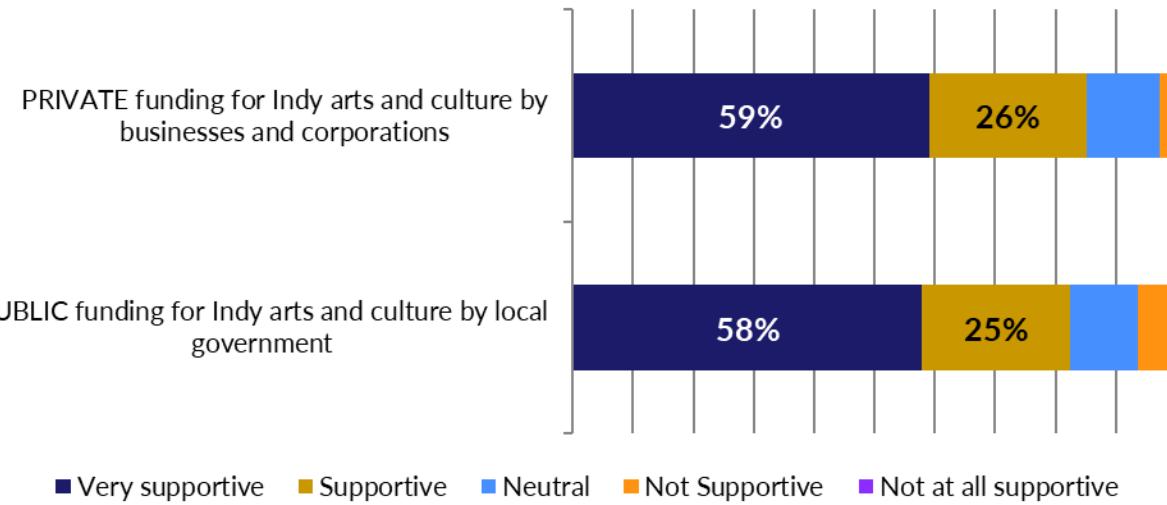
## How familiar are you with the Indy Arts Council?



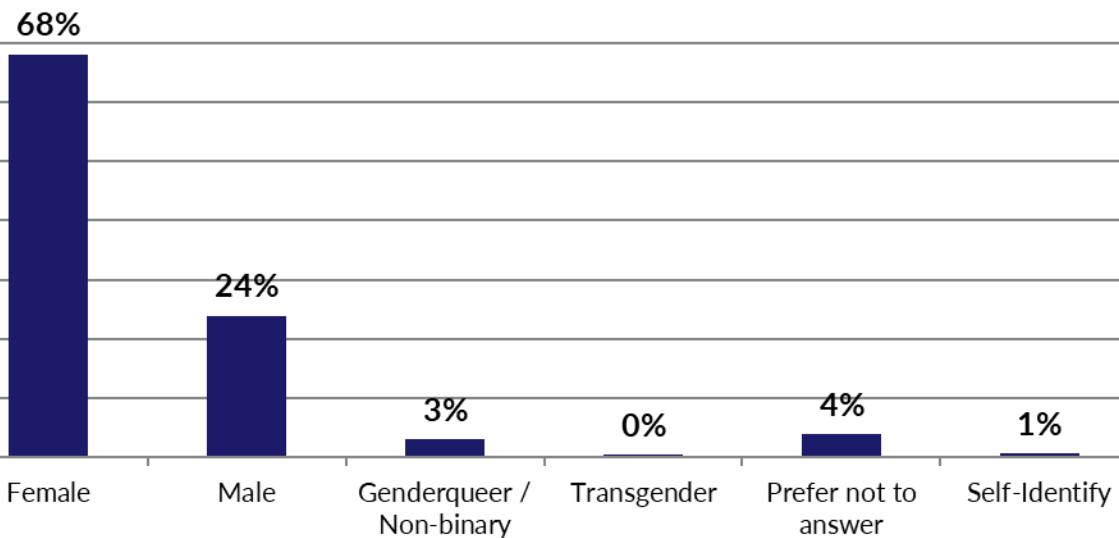
Which of the following Indy Arts Council programs and services have you engaged with? (Check all that apply.)



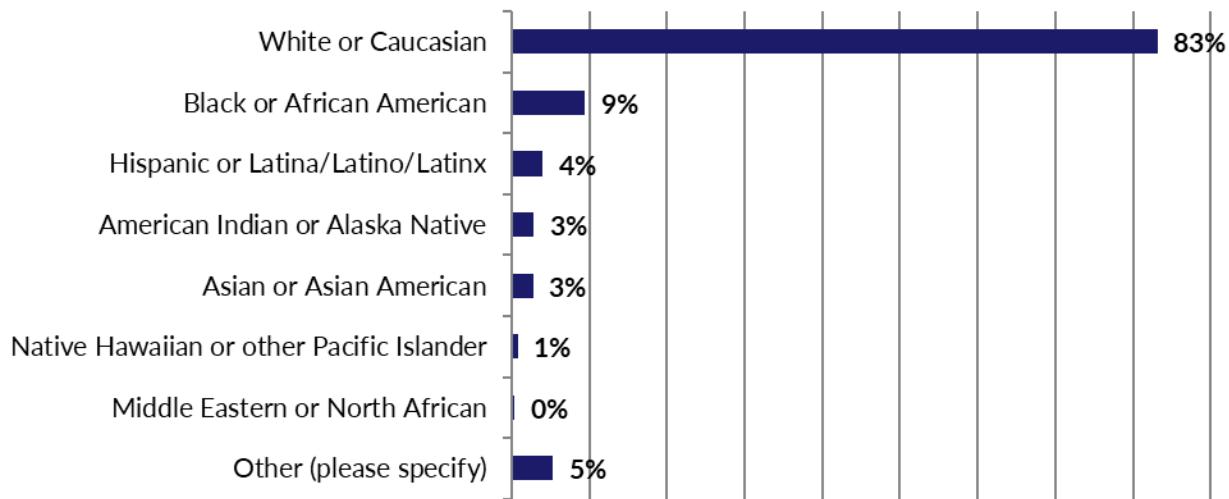
## Please rate your support for each of the following:



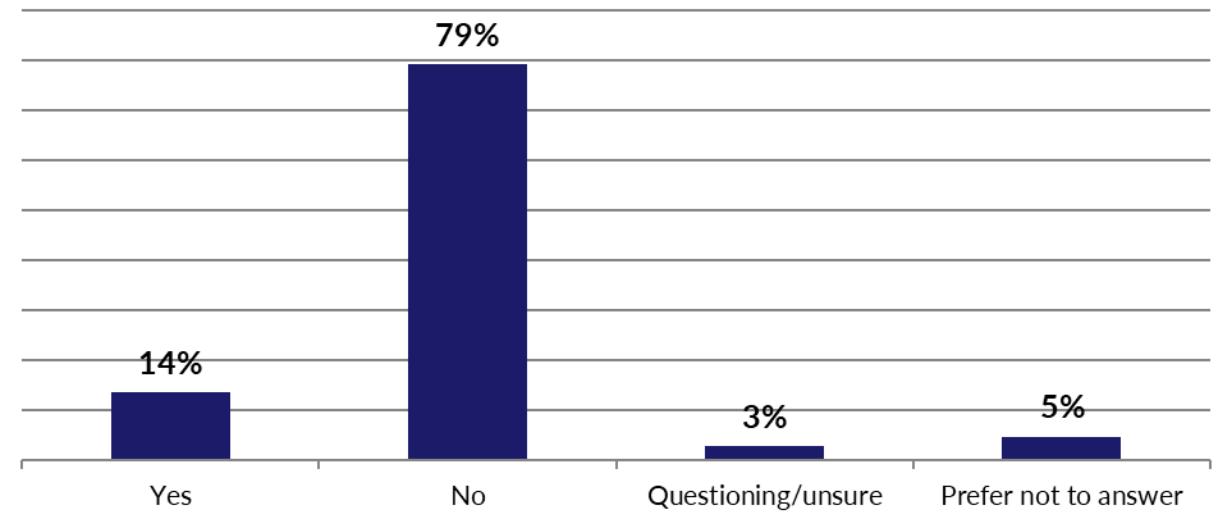
## Your gender identity:



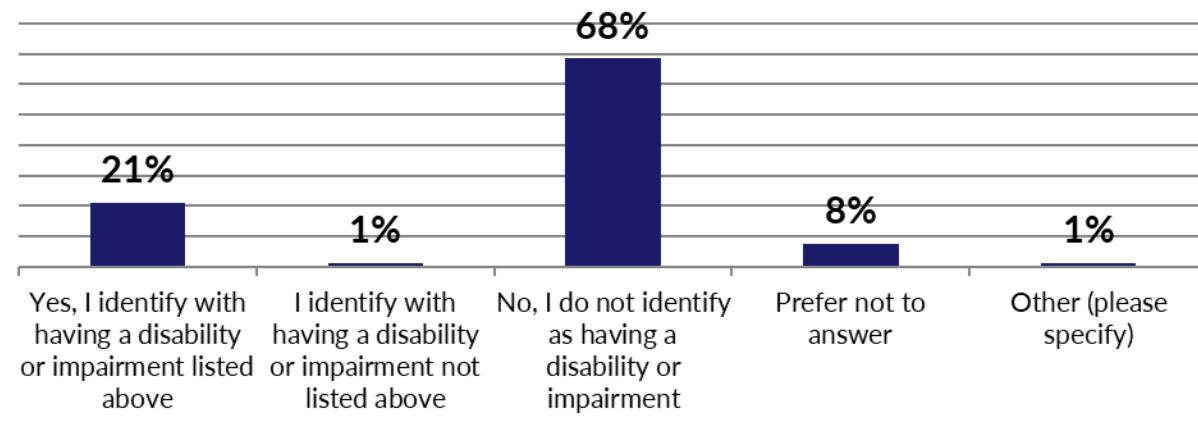
## Which of the following best describes your race / ethnicity? (Check all that apply)



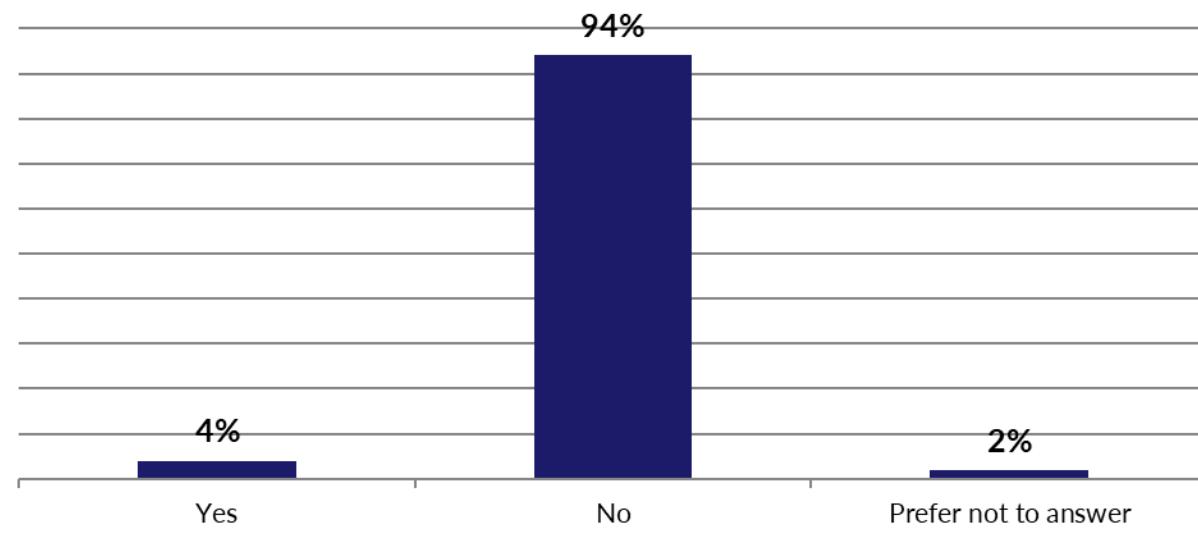
## Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?



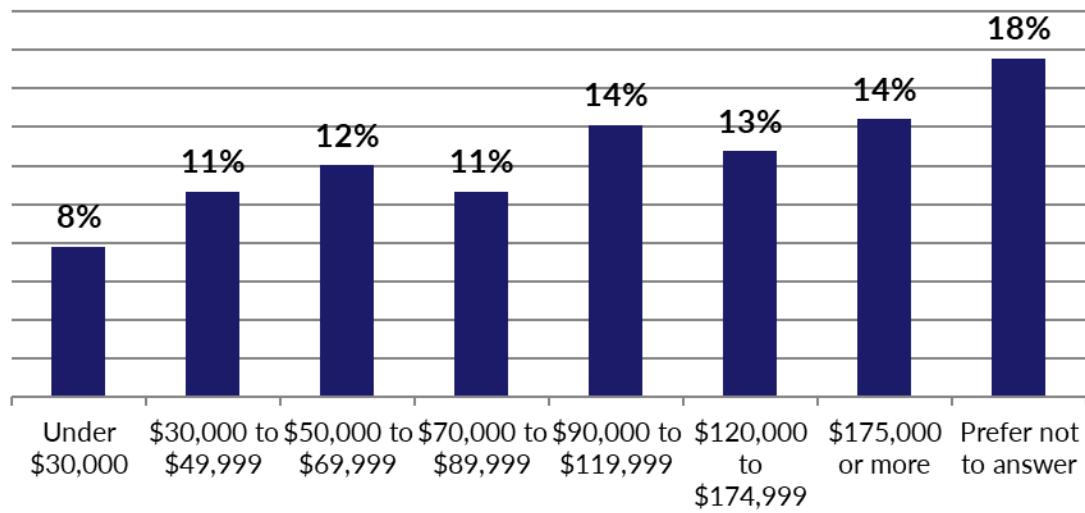
Do you identify as a person with a visible or non-visible hearing or visual impairment, physical, intellectual, psychiatric and/or neurological disability?



Do you identify as an active member or a veteran of the military?



## Would you say your total annual household income is...

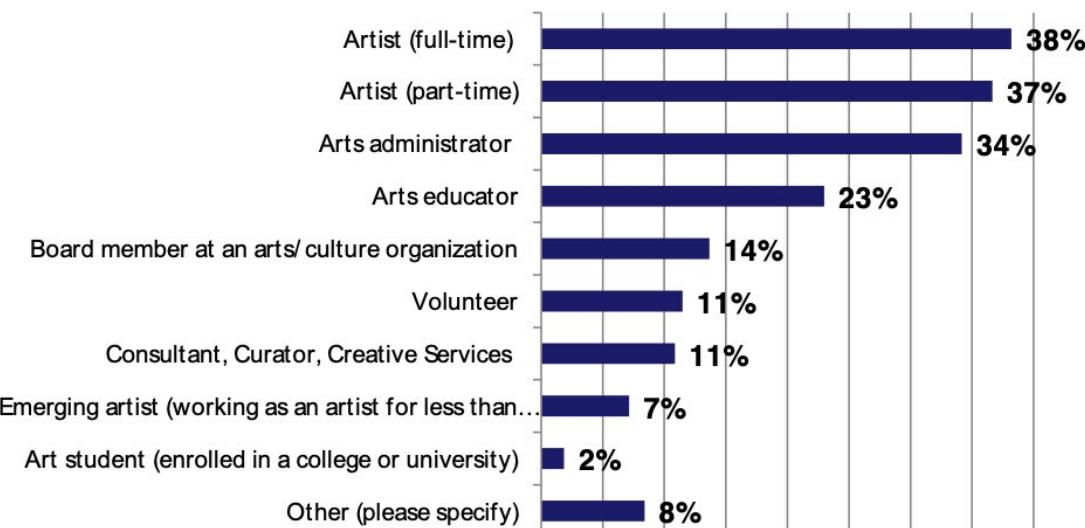


## ○ APPENDIX C: INDY ARTS & CULTURE SURVEY RESULTS

### HOW DO YOU ENGAGE IN THE LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITY? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

The Indy Arts & Culture Sector Survey reveals diverse engagement in the local arts community. The largest groups are full-time (38%) and part-time (37%) artists, followed by arts administrators (34%) and educators (23%). Board members (14%), volunteers (11%), and those in creative services (11%) also contribute significantly. Emerging artists (7%), art students (1%), and others (8%) round out the community, showcasing a broad spectrum of participation across various roles.

#### How do you engage in the local arts community? [Check all that apply]

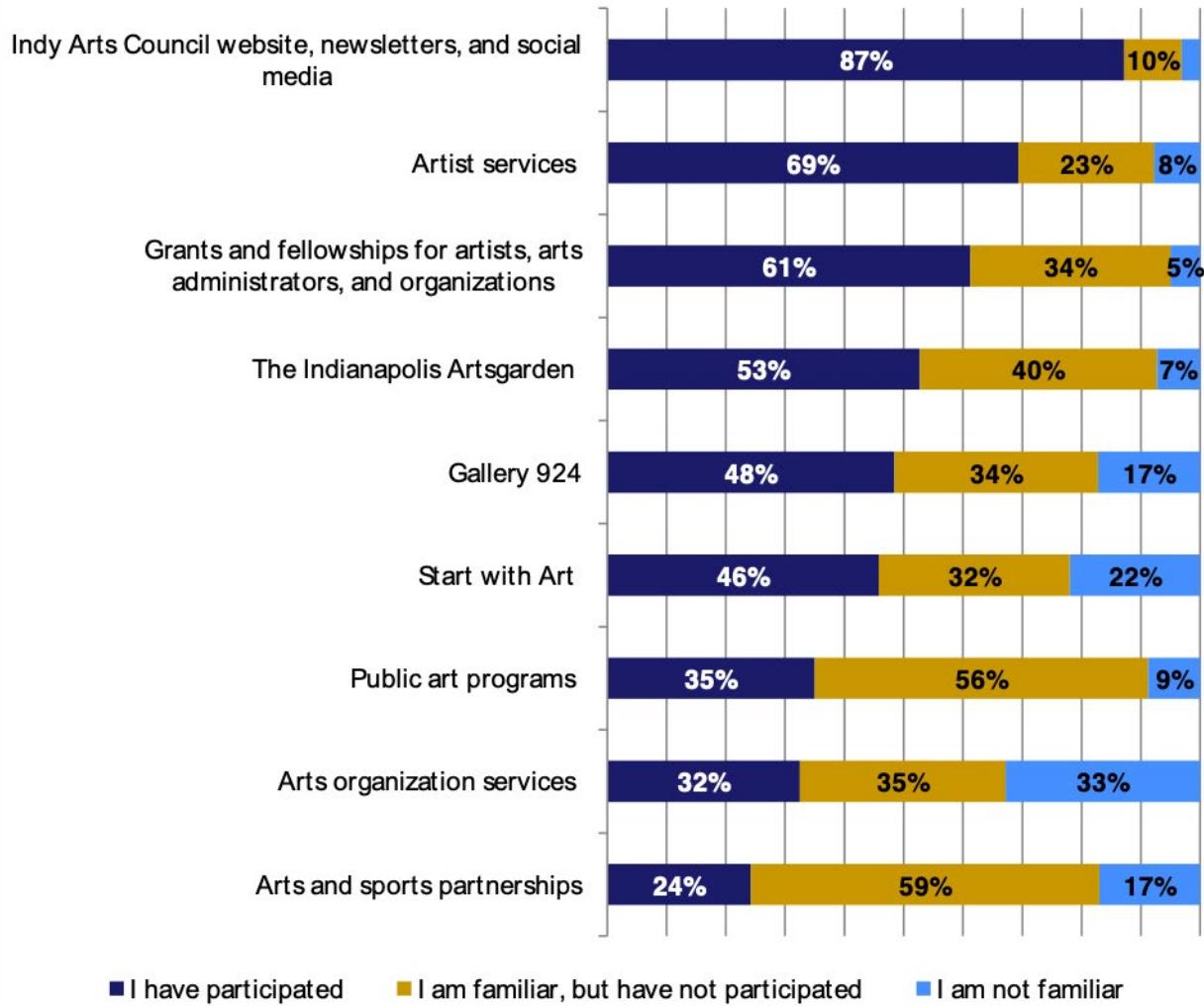


## PLEASE INDICATE YOUR FAMILIARITY WITH THESE IAC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

The survey data reveals that the most familiar IAC program is the website, newsletters, and social media, with 87% of respondents having participated. Artist services are also widely recognized, with 69% participation. Grants and fellowships for artists, arts administrators, and organizations have a participation rate of 61%.

The Indianapolis Artsgarden and Gallery 924 are familiar to over half of the respondents, with 53% and 48% participation, respectively. Start with Art is known to 46% of respondents, while public art programs and arts organization services have lower participation rates at 35% and 32%. Arts and sports partnerships are the least familiar, with only 24% participation.

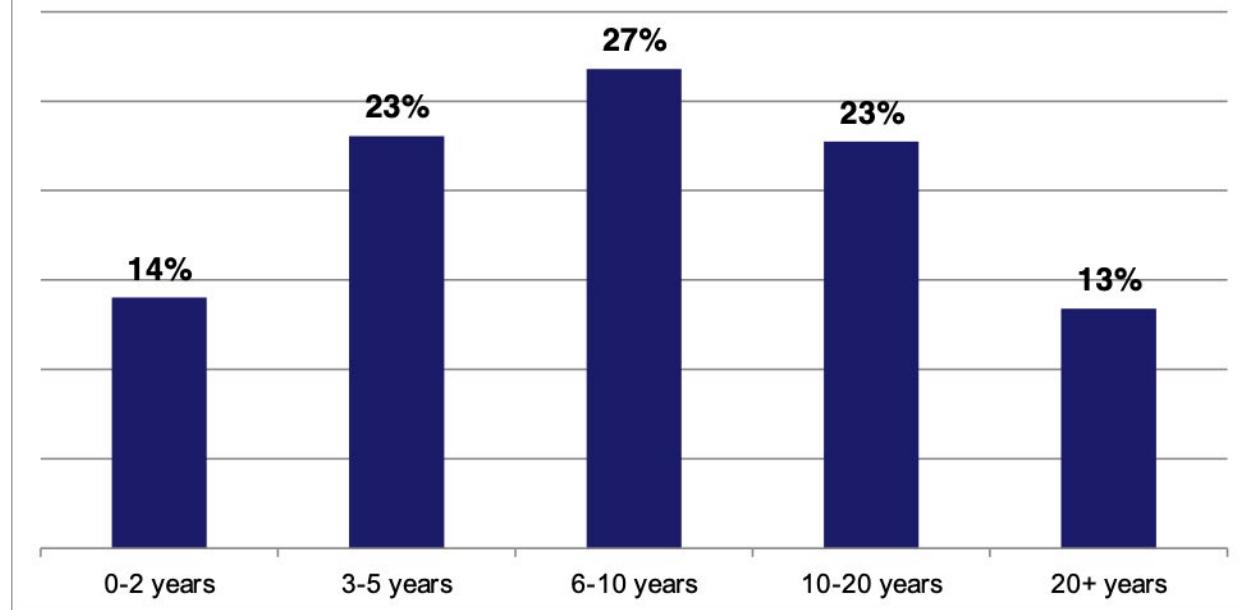
### Please indicate your familiarity with these Indy Arts Council programs and services:



## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ENGAGED WITH INDY ARTS COUNCIL?

The survey data shows that respondents have a range of engagement durations with the IAC. The largest group, 27%, have been involved for 6-10 years. This is followed by those engaged for 3-5 years (23%) and 10-20 years (23%). A smaller percentage, 14%, have been engaged for 0-2 years, while 13% have been involved for over 20 years.

### How long have you been engaged with Indy Arts Council?

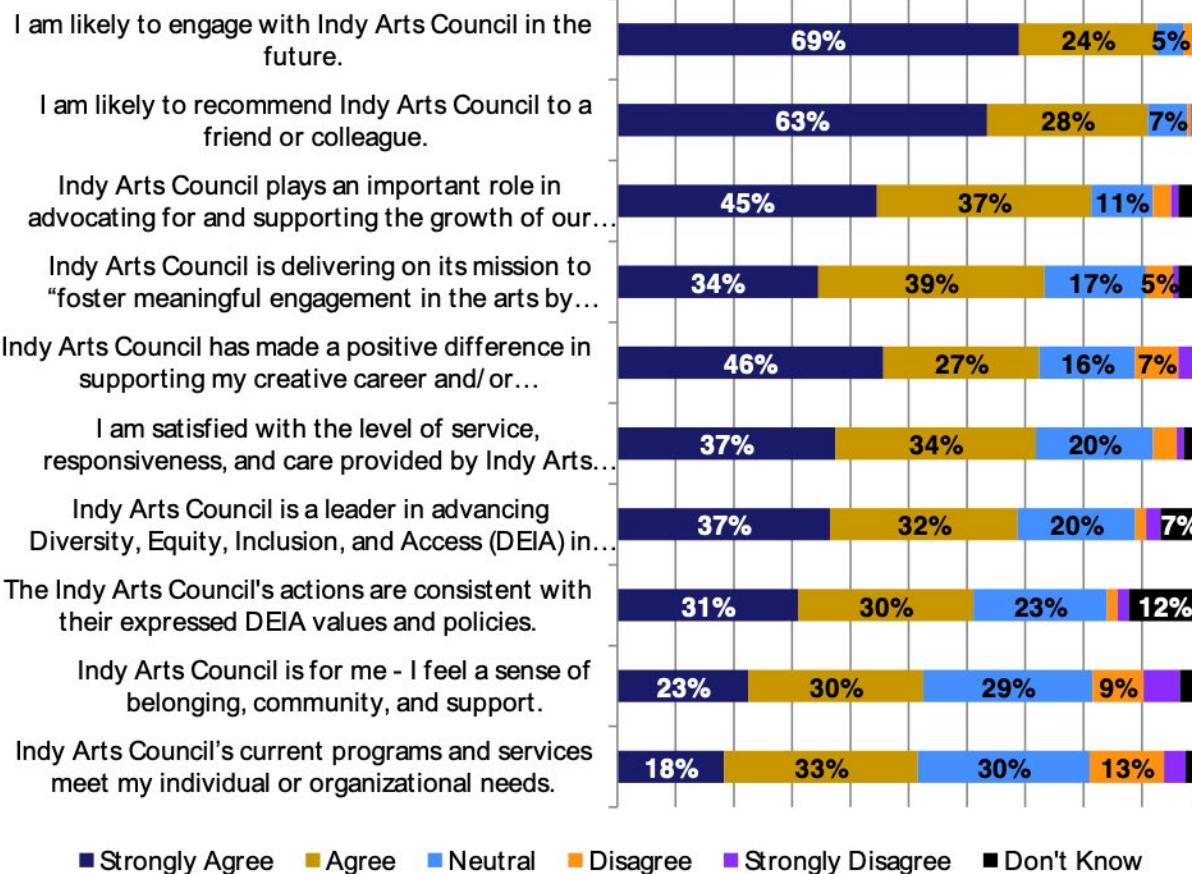


**PLEASE RESPOND WITH YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT WITH THESE STATEMENTS REGARDING INDY ARTS COUNCIL'S STAFF, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES:**

The survey results show strong positive feedback for the Indy Arts Council, with 93% of respondents likely to engage in the future and 91% likely to recommend the Council to others. A majority agree that the Council advocates effectively for the arts sector (82%) and delivers on its mission (73%).

Additionally, 73% feel it has positively impacted their careers or organizations. Satisfaction with service is high at 71%, and 69% recognize the Council's leadership in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA). However, there are areas for improvement in meeting individual needs and ensuring consistency in DEIA values and actions.

**Please respond with your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements regarding Indy Arts Council's staff, programs, and services:**



## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

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44 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC's staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Need for Inclusivity Across Art Forms:** Multiple respondents feel that the IAC predominantly supports visual arts, with insufficient focus on performing arts, music, dance, theater, and literary arts. They express a desire for more balanced support across all art forms.

**Improved Communication and Feedback:** There are calls for better communication, especially regarding grant rejections and program opportunities. Respondents also seek more feedback and responsiveness from the IAC when they reach out.

**Support for Artist Development:** Many artists appreciate the financial support through grants but desire more opportunities for professional development, partnerships with local organizations, and networking. They suggest initiatives like partnership grants, fee-free rentals, and artist showcases to enhance local artists' visibility and opportunities.

**Concerns About Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Some respondents highlight issues related to the IAC's inclusivity practices. There are specific mentions of the need for better support for disabled artists and artists from underrepresented groups.

**Perception of Favoritism and Exclusivity:** There is a sentiment that the IAC could appear to be exclusive, with perceived favoritism towards certain demographics or established artists. Some respondents feel that the selection process for shows and grants lacks transparency and inclusivity.

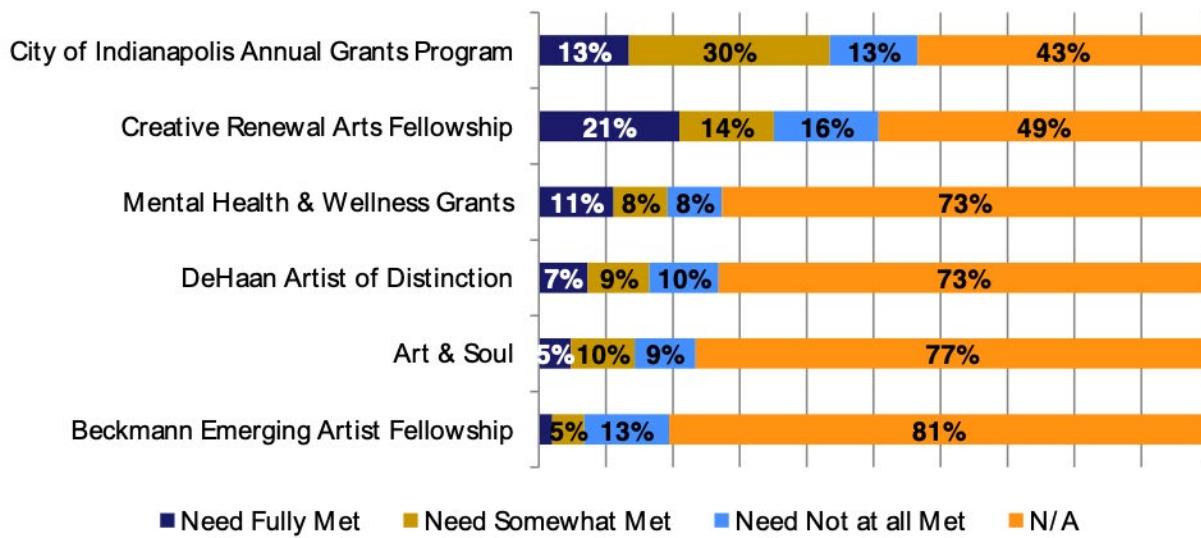
## PLEASE RATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS MEET YOUR NEEDS.

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The survey results indicate that satisfaction with the IAC's grants and fellowships varies. The City of Indianapolis Annual Grants Program and the Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship have the highest satisfaction, with 43% and 35% of respondents, respectively, feeling their needs are met to some extent.

However, many respondents marked grants such as the Mental Health & Wellness Grants (73%), DeHaan Artist of Distinction (73%), Art & Soul (77%), and Beckmann Emerging Artist Fellowship (81%) as not applicable, suggesting limited engagement or awareness of these specific programs.

## Please rate the extent to which these specific Indy Arts Council GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS meet your needs.



### ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

41 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC's staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Awareness and Familiarity:** Many respondents are not aware of the various grants and fellowships or are unsure about the details and eligibility requirements, indicating a need for better communication and outreach.

**Inclusivity Across Art Forms:** There is a perception that visual arts receive more support compared to other artistic mediums like music, dance, theater, and literary arts. Respondents suggest a more balanced distribution of resources.

**Grant Application Process:** Some respondents express frustration with the grant application process, including repeated rejections and perceived favoritism. They suggest more transparency and additional support for applicants.

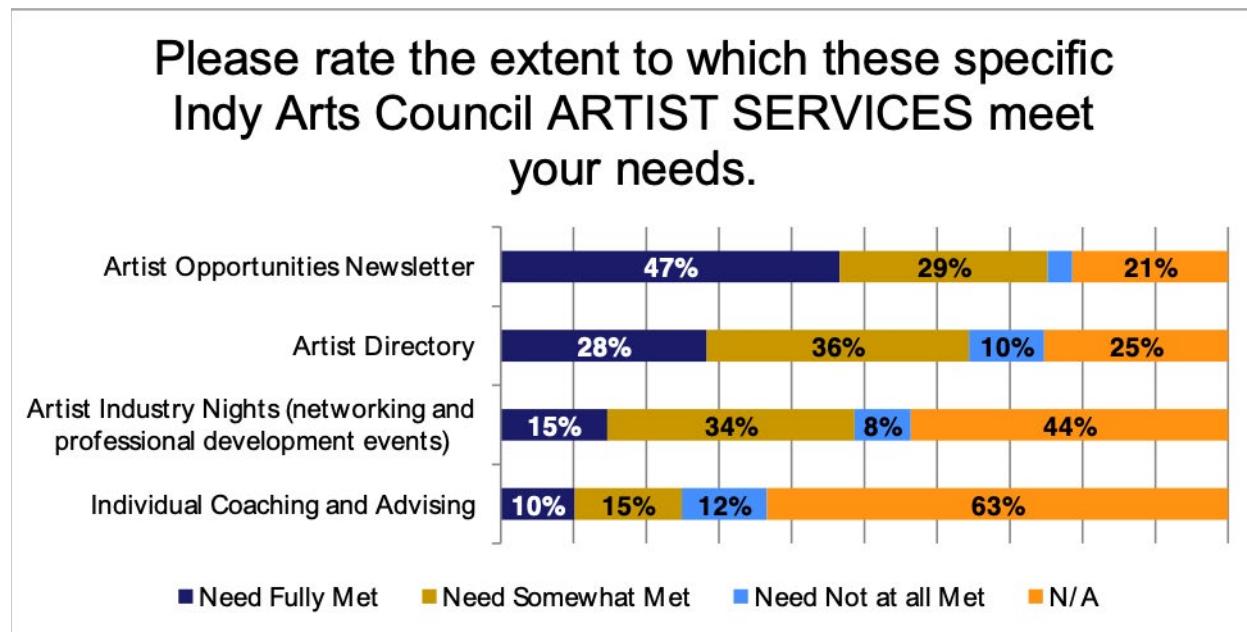
**Eligibility and Accessibility:** There are concerns about the eligibility criteria for certain grants, with some artists feeling excluded based on their specific circumstances or artistic disciplines.

**Impact of Fellowships:** Those who have received fellowships highlight their positive impact on their careers and personal growth. However, there is a call for more opportunities and support for both emerging and established artists.

## PLEASE RATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC ARTIST SERVICES MEET YOUR NEEDS.

The survey results show that the Artist Opportunities Newsletter meets the needs of 76% of respondents, making it the most well-received service. The Artist Directory is also appreciated, meeting the needs of 64% of respondents.

However, services like Artist Industry Nights (49%) and Individual Coaching and Advising (25%) have lower satisfaction rates and higher percentages of respondents who marked them as not applicable, indicating a need for increased awareness and engagement with these offerings.



## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

22 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC's staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Lack of Awareness:** Many respondents were unaware of specific services such as individual coaching and advising, indicating a need for better communication and outreach about the available resources.

**Positive Feedback on Responsiveness:** Those who have reached out to the IAC report positive experiences, highlighting the staff's kindness and supportiveness in responding to inquiries and providing guidance.

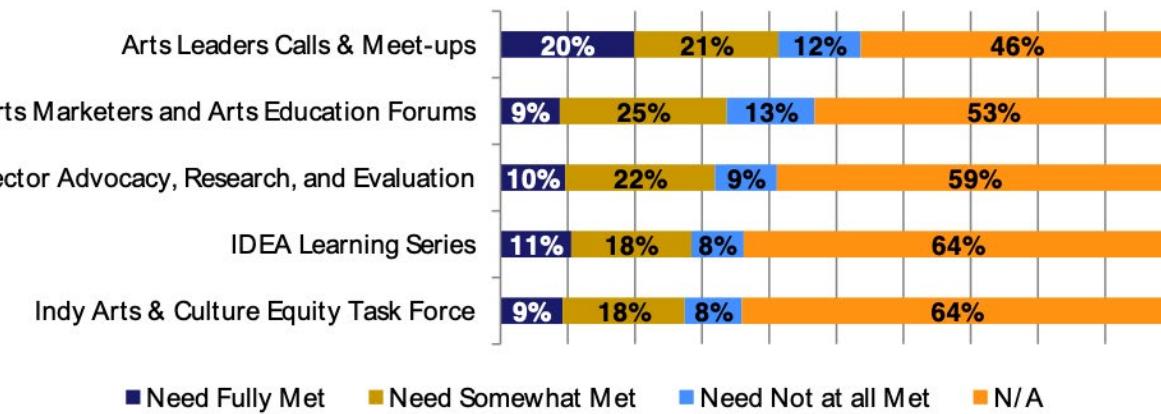
**Underutilization of Services:** Several respondents mentioned not using the services fully, either due to lack of time or because they were unaware of how to access them, suggesting a need for increased engagement and clearer information on how to utilize these services effectively.

## **PLEASE RATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES MEET YOUR NEEDS.**

The survey results indicate varied satisfaction with the IAC's organizational services. Arts Leaders Calls & Meetups are the most appreciated, with 41% of respondents feeling their needs are met, while other services like the Arts Marketers and Arts Education Forums (34%) and Sector Advocacy, Research, and Evaluation (32%) have lower satisfaction rates.

Additionally, a significant portion of respondents marked these services as not applicable, suggesting a need for greater promotion and accessibility to enhance engagement.

### **Please rate the extent to which these specific Indy Arts Council ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES meet your needs.**



## **ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK**

35 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Lack of Awareness:** Many respondents were unaware of various services and programs offered by the IAC, indicating a need for better promotion and communication about these opportunities.

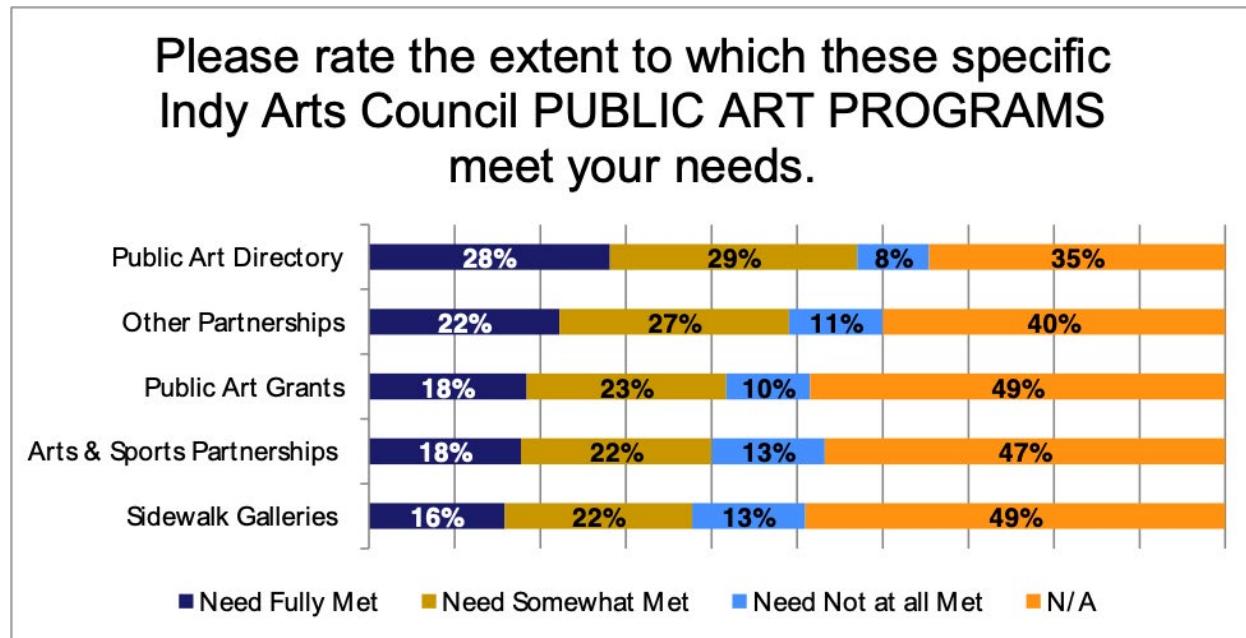
**Desire for More Information:** Respondents expressed a strong interest in learning more about the available services, suggesting that providing detailed information and resources could help increase engagement.

**Perceived Focus on Visual Arts:** Several respondents felt that the IAC focus seems to be primarily on visual arts, with less attention given to other art forms, highlighting a desire for more inclusivity across different artistic disciplines.

**Challenges with Participation:** Some respondents mentioned difficulties in participating due to time constraints, unclear eligibility, or lack of knowledge about how to get involved, indicating a need for more accessible and flexible options to engage with the IAC programs and services.

## PLEASE RATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC PUBLIC ART PROGRAMS MEET YOUR NEEDS.

The survey results show varied levels of need met with the IAC's public art programs. The Public Art Directory is the most well-received, with 57% of respondents feeling their needs are met, while Other Partnerships (49%), Public Art Grants (41%), Arts & Sports Partnerships (40%), and Sidewalk Galleries (38%) have lower satisfaction rates. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents marked these programs as not applicable, highlighting a need for increased awareness and promotion.



## ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

22 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Perceived Focus on Visual Arts:** Many respondents feel that the IAC programs primarily cater to visual arts, with less support and opportunities for performing arts, literary arts, and other artistic disciplines.

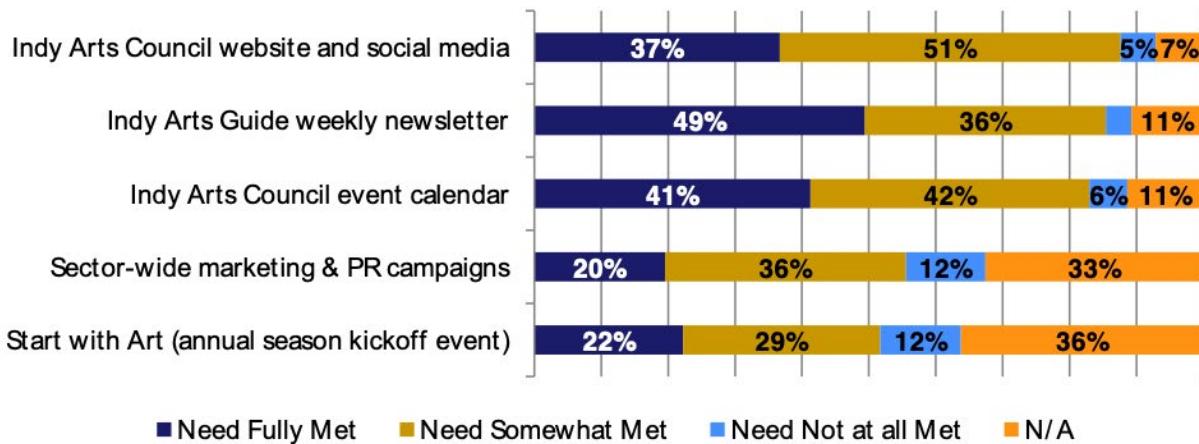
**Lack of Awareness and Engagement:** Several respondents mentioned they have not engaged with or explored the available opportunities, indicating a need for better communication and promotion of these programs.

**Geographical and Demographic Inclusivity:** There are concerns about the equitable distribution of public art grants and opportunities, with some respondents feeling that certain neighborhoods or demographics are underrepresented or overlooked.

## PLEASE RATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC SECTOR MARKETING MEET YOUR NEEDS.

The survey results show that the IAC website and social media (88%), weekly newsletter (85%), and event calendar (83%) are highly effective in meeting respondents' needs. However, sector-wide marketing campaigns (56%) and the Start with Art event (51%) have lower satisfaction rates, indicating room for improvement in these areas. A significant portion of respondents also rated these services as not applicable, suggesting a need for increased awareness and engagement.

### Please rate the extent to which these specific Indy Arts Council SECTOR MARKETING meet your needs.



### ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

17 respondents chose to provide additional comments or feedback about the IAC staff, programs, and services on this question. The most common themes of those responses are:

**Lack of Familiarity and Engagement:** Many respondents mentioned being unfamiliar with certain services or needing to engage more with the IAC offerings, indicating a need for better communication and outreach.

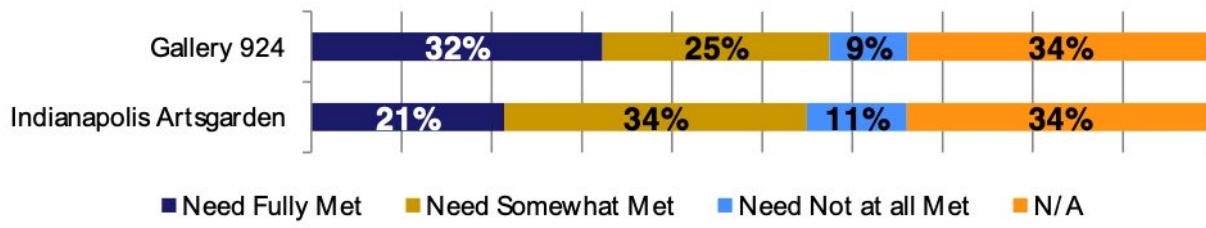
**Desire for Improved Marketing and Comprehensive Coverage:** Respondents appreciate the IAC's marketing efforts but suggest more comprehensive coverage of artists and activities, as well as enhanced marketing support and campaigns to promote the arts more effectively.

**Feedback on Specific Programs and Tools:** There are mixed feelings about the usability of new directories and the updated website. Some respondents find them less user-friendly and suggest improvements, while others appreciate the changes but need more time to adjust. Additionally, there are suggestions for making events like Start with Art more accessible and impactful.

## PLEASE RANK THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE SPECIFIC IAC VENUES MEET YOUR NEEDS.

The survey results show that Gallery 924 meets the needs of 57% of respondents and the Indianapolis Artsgarden meets the needs of 55%. However, about 34% of respondents marked these venues as not applicable, indicating many are unaware of or do not use these facilities.

### Please rank the extent to which these specific Indy Arts Council VENUES meet your needs.



## WHAT'S MISSING FROM INDY ARTS COUNCIL'S CURRENT PORTFOLIO?:

These are the top five common themes from responses to the question "What's missing from Indy Arts Council's current portfolio?":

- **Mentorship and Peer Support:** Respondents desire peer-to-peer mentorship programs, artist-led professional development workshops, and support for smaller and newer arts organizations. There is also a need for mentorship opportunities for emerging artists and professional artists looking to advance their careers.
- **Funding and Grants:** Increased funding for arts nonprofits, more winners for Creative Renewal grants, and more small grant opportunities for individual artists were frequently mentioned. There is also a call for more micro-grants or emergency grants, and a suggestion for a "shark tank" style event for artists to pitch ideas.
- **Support for Performing Arts:** Respondents expressed a need for more performance opportunities, including neighborhood series, music festivals, and exhibition opportunities. Suggestions included a major performance arts complex and more opportunities for musicians to perform.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Enhanced marketing services, broader campaigns for all arts, and better communication around artist support resources and programs were highlighted. Respondents also want more visibility for individual artists and organizations, along with marketing assistance for the non-beginner.
- **Youth and Community Engagement:** More youth-related programs, increased support for inner-city youth, and family festivals were commonly mentioned. Respondents also called for neighborhood-focused arts marketing and more engagement with local arts organizations, especially in underserved areas and communities of color.

## WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITY NEEDS IN THE NEXT 1-5 YEARS?

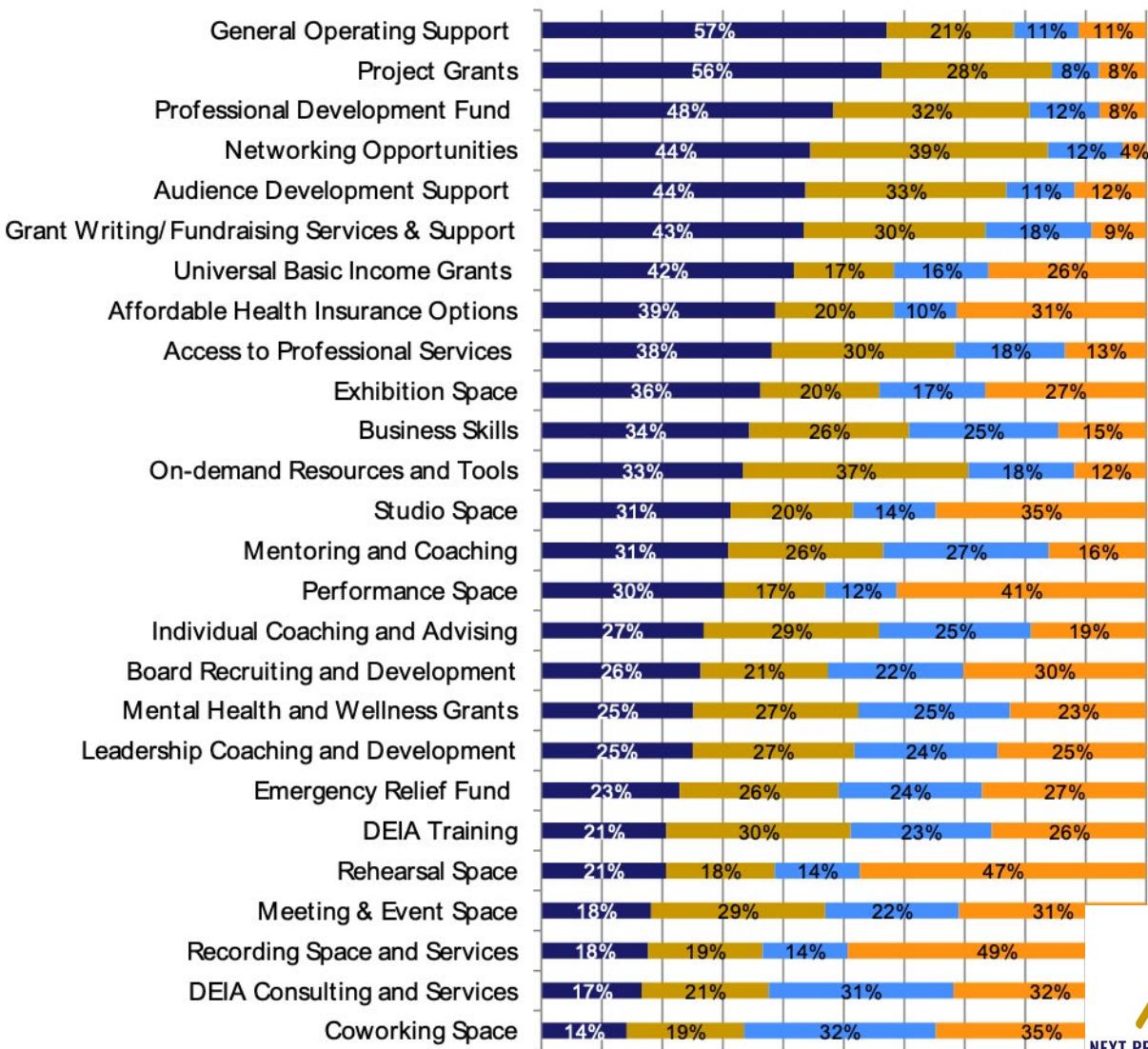
The Indy Arts & Culture Sector Survey highlights the top priority needs for the next 1-5 years as general operating support (57% high priority), project grants (56% high), and professional development funds (48% high). Other significant needs include networking opportunities (44% high), audience development support (43% high), and grant writing/fundraising support (43% high).

Universal basic income grants (42% high) and affordable health insurance options (39% high) are also important, while lower priorities include rehearsal space (21% high), recording space and services (17% high), and coworking space (14% high).

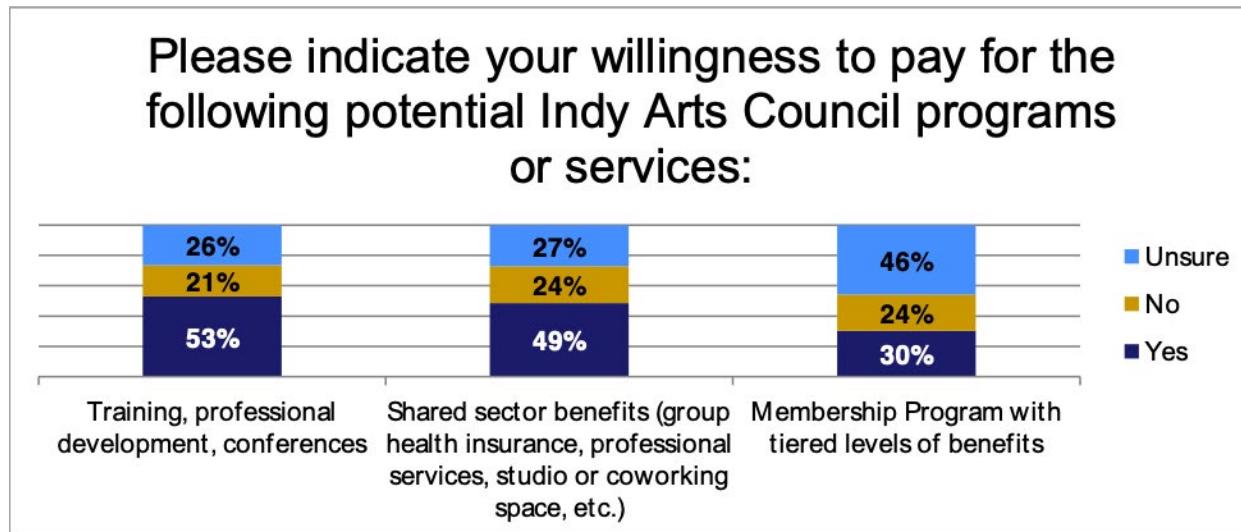
## PLEASE INDICATE YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL IAC PROGRAMS OR SERVICES:

The survey results show that 53% of respondents are willing to pay for training, professional development, and conferences, while 21% are not, and 26% are unsure. For shared sector benefits such as group health insurance and studio space, 49% are willing to pay, 24% are not, and 27% are

### What are your top priority needs in the next 1-5 years?



unsure. Meanwhile, a membership program with tiered levels of benefits has the least willingness to pay, with 30% in favor, 24% opposed, and 46% unsure.



### IN THREE WORDS, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE?

The following is a word cloud from responses to the question “How would you describe the local arts and culture scene”



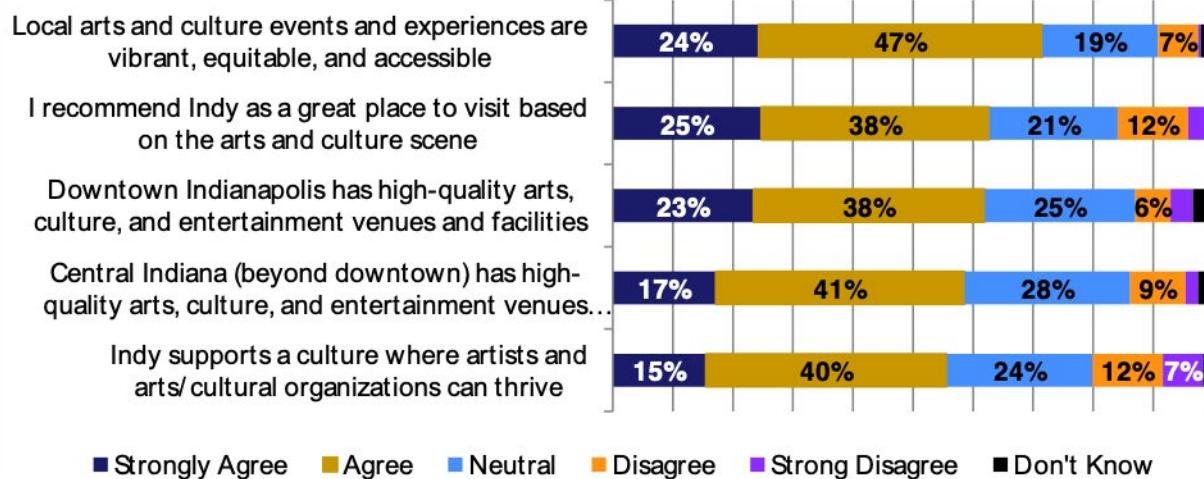
### PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT WITH THESE STATEMENTS ABOUT INDY'S ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE:

The survey data indicates a generally positive perception of Indy's arts and culture scene. About 71% of respondents agree that local arts and culture events are vibrant, equitable, and accessible,

with 24% strongly agreeing. Additionally, 63% would recommend Indy based on its arts and culture scene.

Downtown Indianapolis is recognized for its high-quality arts and entertainment venues by 61% of respondents. However, fewer respondents, 58%, feel that Central Indiana beyond downtown has high-quality arts and entertainment venues. Lastly, only 55% agree that Indy supports a culture where artists and arts organizations can thrive.

**Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements about Indy's arts and culture scene:**



## IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE, PLEASE PROVIDE THEM HERE.

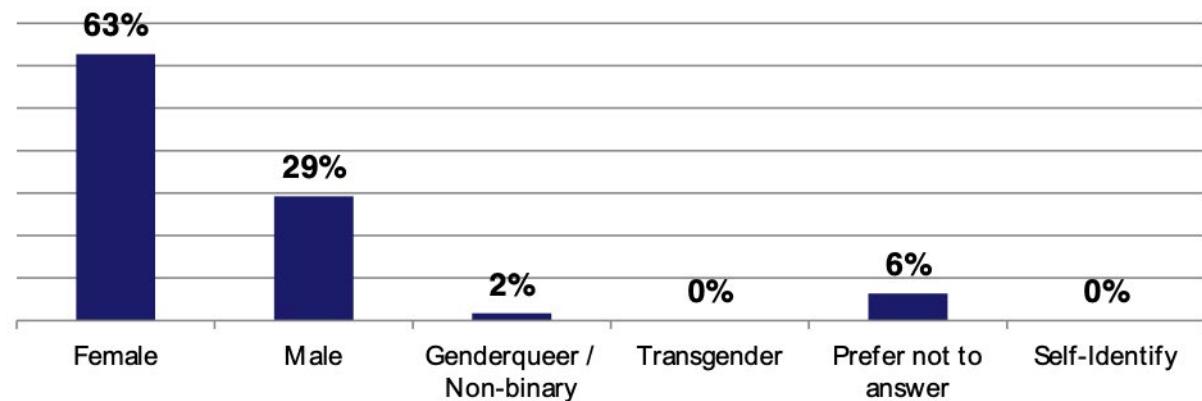
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Respondents had the chance to offer additional suggestions at the end of the survey, resulting in 66 responses. The five most common themes from these responses are:

- **Greater Inclusivity and Diversity:** Respondents highlighted the need for more inclusive and diverse representation, especially for minority, senior, and underrepresented artists. This includes incorporating artists outside of heritage months and more engagement with different communities, such as the LatinX and international communities.
- **Improved Communication and Marketing:** There were calls for better marketing and communication strategies, such as using more than just email for promotions, increasing visibility through various media channels, and making all events and opportunities more widely known to the public.
- **Support for Senior and Emerging Artists:** Many responses emphasized the importance of supporting senior artists who feel excluded, as well as emerging artists who need guidance and mentorship. Suggestions included more programs for senior artists and accessible resources for emerging artists to navigate funding and grants.
- **Collaboration and Community Engagement:** Respondents suggested fostering more collaboration among arts organizations, bridging gaps between different artist communities (e.g., youth and elderly artists), and increasing public engagement through city-wide arts events and more public art exhibitions.
- **Financial and Resource Support:** There was a strong emphasis on the need for increased financial support, including more grants, funding opportunities, and resources for artists. Suggestions included small, targeted grants for past winners, affordable health insurance options, and better access to professional services.

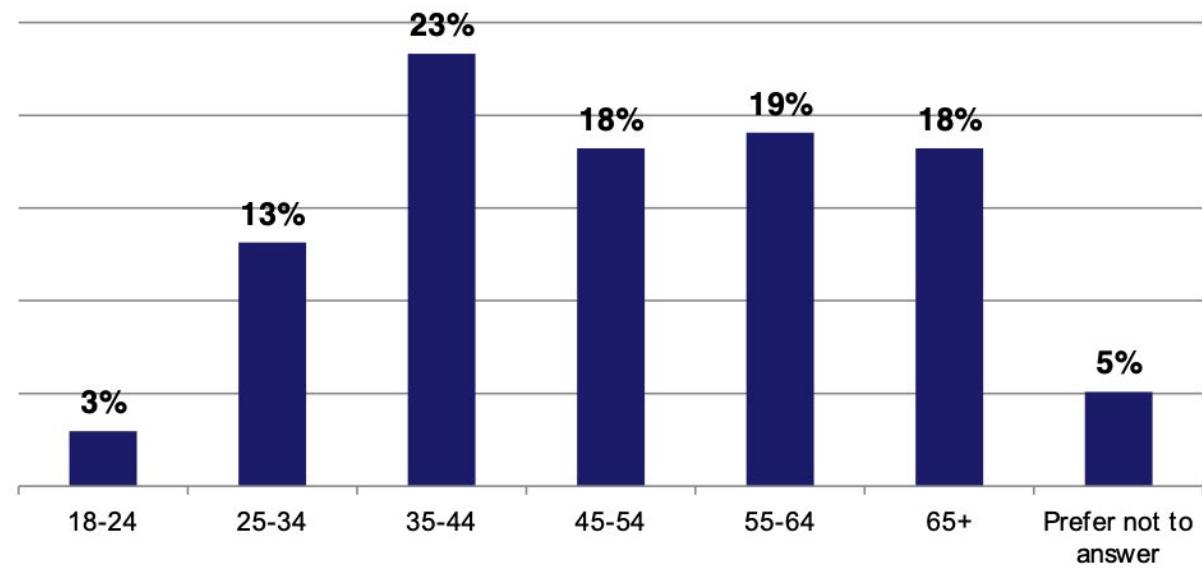
## GENDER

Your gender identity:



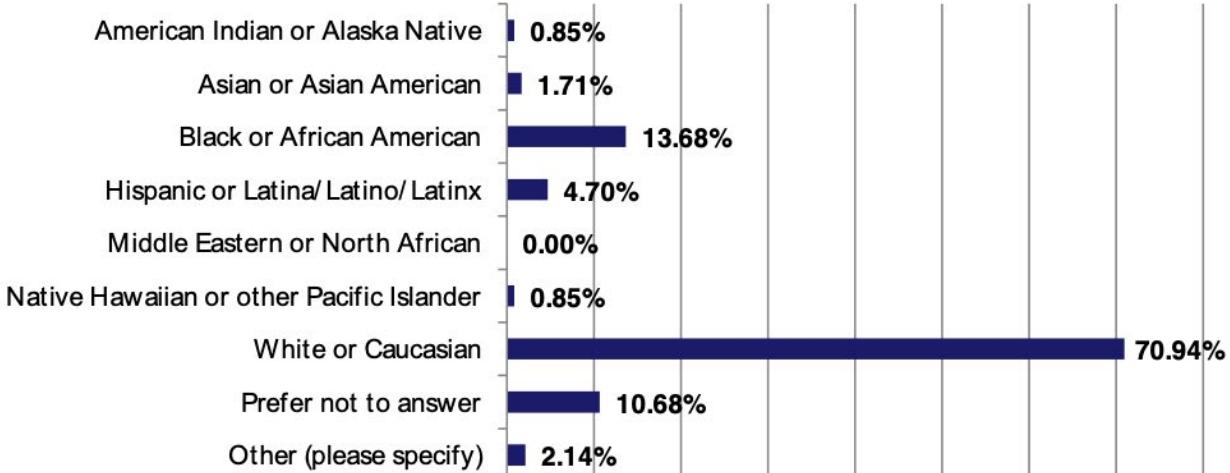
## AGE

What is your age range?



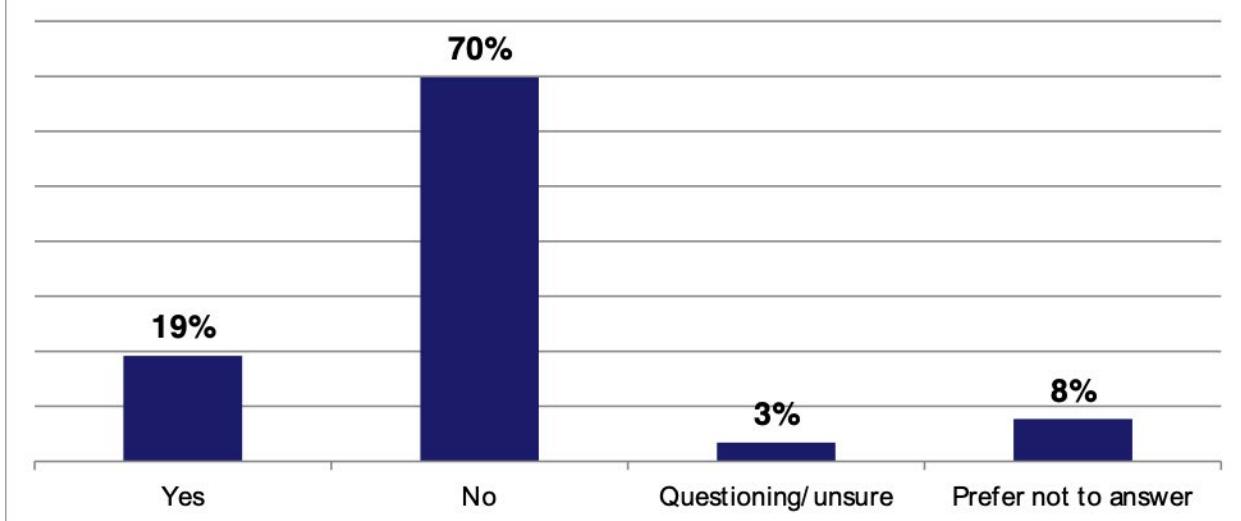
## RACE/ETHNICITY

Which of the following best describes your race / ethnicity? (check all that apply)



## LBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

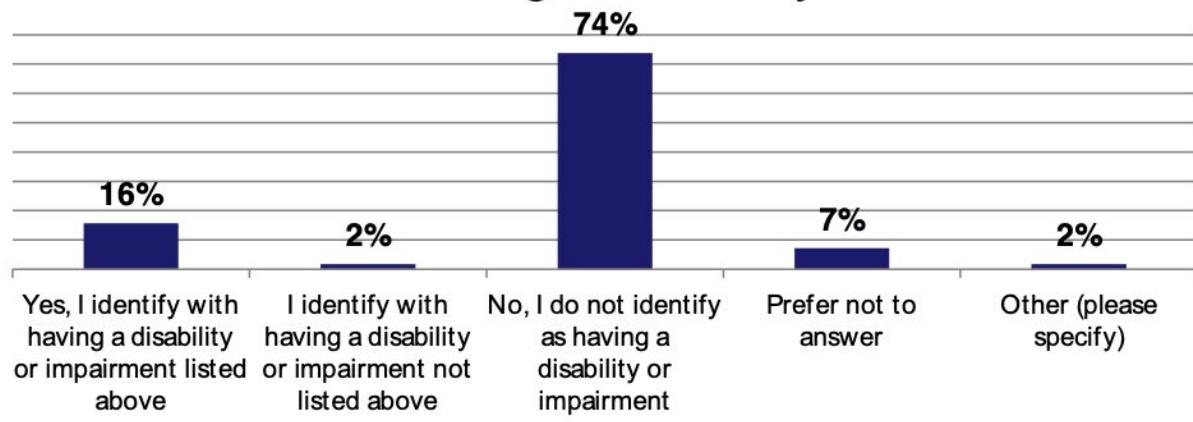
Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?



**VISIBLE OR NON-VISIBLE HEARING OR VISUAL IMPAIRMENT, PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL, PSYCHIATRIC AND/OR NEUROLOGICAL DISABILITY**

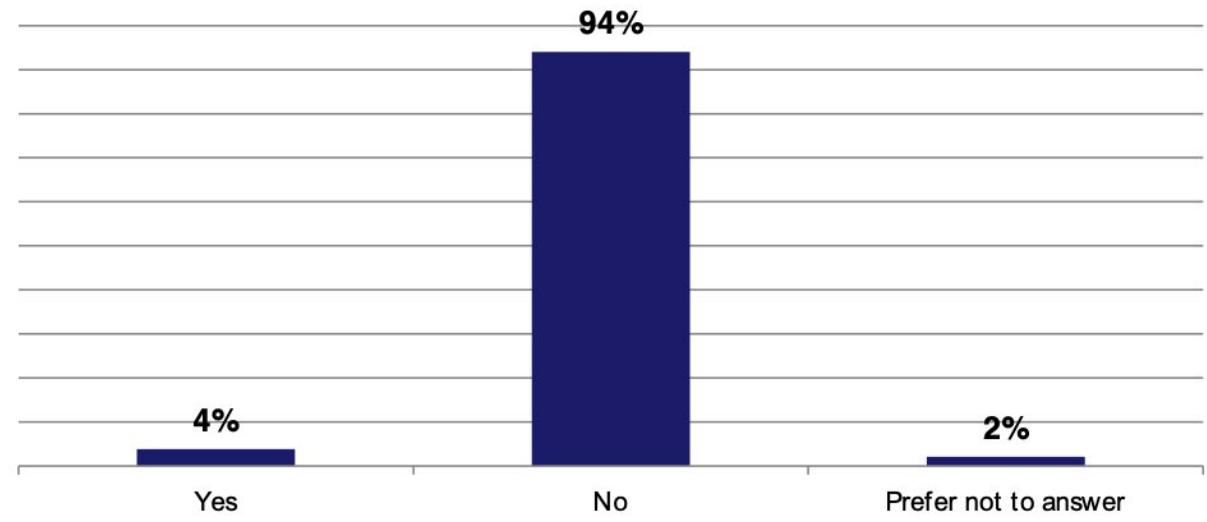
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**Do you identify as a person with a visible or non-visible hearing or visual impairment, physical, intellectual, psychiatric and/or neurological disability?**



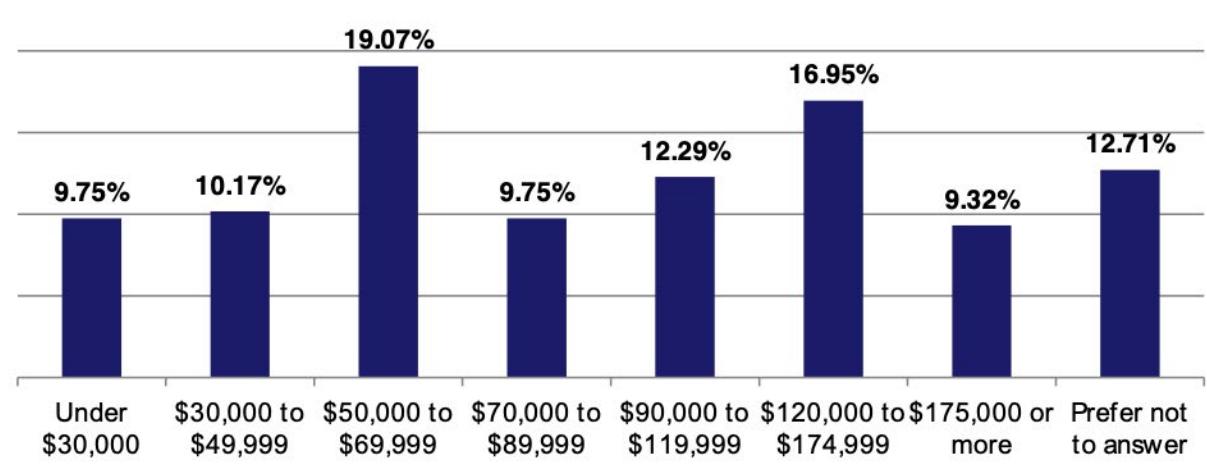
## MILITARY

Do you identify as an active member or a veteran of the military?



## INCOME

Would you say your total annual household income is...



[go back to top](#)