



FY 24 ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS REPORT



Open Door Arts

An Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation

Table of Contents

Our Mission

Letter from our Managing Director

Our Work

CareerCREATE Program

Towards a Culture of Access Reports

Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment

Open Door Gallery @ WAM

Our Team

Financials

Our Partners

Funders and Donors

Dear Friends,

Our mission as an organization is to increase representation and participation of people with disabilities in the arts and culture sector as employees, leaders, artists, and patrons. This year, our programs addressed this goal in multiple ways:



The next generation of employees, leaders, and artists with disabilities explored creative careers while learning artistic and employment skills through our **school programs**.



Disabled artists shared their work and stories with the community through our **Open Door Gallery**.



Arts and culture organizations learned how to become more accessible and responsive to the needs of patrons and employees with disabilities by engaging with our **cultural access tools, training, and research**.

If one thing is clear from our community, our work, and our research, it is that **disabled people must be central to imagining, designing, and implementing any work that directly impacts them**. This year, in addition to our staff and advisory board, we engaged a team of consultants and paid advisors with professional expertise in disability, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and arts and culture. This team brought lived experience with disability (of 15, 12 identify as disabled) and their perspectives helped ensure that our projects, decisions, and programs were disability centered, informed, and led.

With deep appreciation for the role you played to make our work a reality this year, we invite you to learn more about this work in the pages ahead and, as always, to reach out to nicole@OpenDoorArtsMA.org to engage further.



NICOLE AGOIS
Managing Director

CareerCREATE

This year, we successfully piloted our new CareerCREATE program. **CareerCREATE (Connection, Representation, Expression, Artistry, Transition Readiness, Employability)** was developed in direct response to research and partner feedback indicating that high school students with disabilities in the Boston Public Schools continue to experience the largest equity gaps in access to arts education. To address these gaps, CareerCREATE expands on our typical program model to provide students with disabilities, age 14-21, with yearlong sequential arts instruction through a curriculum that focuses on developing artistry while exploring pathways to creative careers and building skills necessary for employment in the arts and culture sector including communication, self-advocacy, creativity, and self-expression.

The new program design includes **guest artist visits from disabled artists and visits to cultural organizations.** Through these program components, students explored disability as a positive part of their identity, increased their sense of belonging in their cultural community, and explored career opportunities in the arts. This pilot process confirmed that expanding our focus as an organization on this specific group of students effectively addresses a significant gap and capitalizes on our expertise and resources.

Want to learn more about the impact of the program? To read our 23-24 CareerCREATE Program Evaluation Report [click here](#) or visit: bit.ly/CC-Eval24

Program at a Glance:

135
students

5
Boston
Public Schools

Expanding
to 8 schools in Boston,
Chelsea, and
Worcester in 24-25



Towards a Culture of Access

This past July, Open Door Arts, in partnership with Mass Cultural Council, published the **“Towards a Culture of Access: Part II” report**—the second of a two-part publication on the state of accessibility in the arts and culture sector in Massachusetts.

Part I was published in 2022, and shared the perspectives of approximately 100 arts and culture organizations, including an assessment of their accessibility, and their perspectives on what’s getting in the way and what could help them improve.

Part II adds the critical perspectives of over 250 people with disabilities (including artists and cultural workers) as well as caregivers and service providers. Their responses help us understand their experience when engaging with arts and culture organizations, their hopes, and a call for a more accessible arts and culture sector.

Together, the data from these reports show a more complete picture of the accessibility of our sector from the perspectives of both individuals and organizations.

Read both reports at:
www.OpenDoorArtsMA.org/TCAReport22



Research Inspiring Collective Action

The data and results from our Towards a Culture of Access reports have influenced important actions for our organization and collective action in our field:

- In response to Part I, the **ACE Act (Accessibility in the Cultural Economy)** has been proposed to the Massachusetts legislature to create a state fund to support accessibility improvements in arts and culture organizations. It received a favorable report from the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and has advanced to the next stage of the legislative process.
- In support of findings from Parts I and II, **ArtsBoston** has developed a **comprehensive accessibility feature** for their robust calendar of cultural opportunities throughout the state.

Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment



More than 40 years of work and research with hundreds of arts and culture organizations have helped us understand the accessibility needs, challenges, and barriers for organizations and their patrons. We know that people with disabilities want to engage with arts and culture organizations as patrons, employees, leaders, and artists but face barriers, inconsistency, and fatigue in doing so.

We also know that organizations want to be more accessible to people with disabilities but struggle to understand and address accessibility in consistent, standardized ways. In response, we created the **Arts and Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment** to help arts and culture organizations access the information and resources they need to better understand and improve their accessibility, and ultimately, help our sector become more equitable and inclusive.

The self-assessment, which was released publicly in July, is a free, comprehensive, fully electronic tool that helps organizations assess their accessibility in five key areas:


Organizational Approach, Space, Access Services, Communication, and Programming. After completing their assessment, organizations are provided with a **customized report** filled with clear data and numeric scores to help clarify their strengths and areas for improvement as well as step-by-step guidance and templates to create an **Accessibility Plan** that transforms learning into action.

Access the self-assessment at: www.ArtsAccessResources.org

"The self-assessment provided **excellent direction** for our efforts in the short and long term. We found it **easily accessible** to all levels of access experience."

 **Lincoln Park Zoo**
ILLINOIS


"As my organization's champion for accessibility, this is a great tool and **resource to bring to my leadership.**"

 **Stratford Hall Historic Preserve**
VIRGINIA

"This is a great, **comprehensive tool** with a huge amount of information in one place."

 **Denver Art Museum**
COLORADO

"The combination of learning and assessing the organization was **very effective.**"

 **Jacob's Pillow Dance**
MASSACHUSETTS

"Accessibility can feel so big you don't know where to start. This self-assessment and report **break it down** and help to highlight the direction you need to move."

 **The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**
WASHINGTON, D.C.



Open Door Gallery @ WAM

Our Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum (ODG@WAM) was in full swing this year! As the only permanent gallery in the state solely dedicated to exhibiting the work of disabled artists within a large regional art museum, ODG@WAM provided exhibitions, studio space, classes, and WAM visits to disabled artists, and opportunities for the community to come together in dialogue around disability through art.

An important goal of the ODG@WAM is to truly be a space created with and for the disability community, and this starts with representation. This year, **Megan Bent**, a disabled artist who has exhibited at ODG@WAM, became our part-time **Gallery and Communications Manager**, bringing a wealth of personal experience as a disabled artist, professional experience with curation, administration, and gallery management.

At a glance:

27
exhibiting
artists

- 3 solo shows
- 2 group shows

100+
artists participating
in studio classes

To ensure that multiple voices inform our vision and decision-making, we created a paid **Gallery Committee** this year, composed of 3 disabled artists (Jeff Kasper, Gordon Sasaki, and Dominic Quagliozzi) and Samantha Cataldo (Curator of Contemporary Art at WAM). Along with their guidance, we are also forming deeper relationships with disabled artists throughout the state, disability organizations, and the broader community. We are committed to making the gallery experience as accessible as possible by featuring tactile representations of artworks, large print and Braille signage and texts, audio description, and virtual alternatives, as well as providing ASL interpreters and sighted guides for all events.



Jeff Kasper



Gordon Sasaki



Dominic Quagliozzi



Samantha Cataldo



Megan Bent

Our Team

We're so grateful to everyone who contributed to our work this year!



Staff: Nicole Agois, Megan Bent, Portia Brown, Hannah Goodwin, and Mehdi Raoufi.

Teaching Artists: Stephanie Charlton, Alex Conley, Esia Hernandez-Edmundson, Halle Katz, Silvina Mizrahi, and Mehdi Raoufi.

Advisory Board: Jeremy Alliger, Tom Keane, Elaine Fallon, Maureen Finnerty, Robin Foley, Ruth Mercado-Zizzo, Carl Richardson, and Heather Watkins.

Gallery Committee: Samantha Cataldo, Jeff Kasper, Dominic Quagliozzi, Gordon Sasaki.

CareerCREATE Guest Artists: Moe Finnerty and Megan Bent.

Project Advisors and Consultants: Marcela Bastida, Mia Branco, Maria Cabrera, Stephanie Hakulin, Takiyah Harris, Saki Iwamoto, Robin Jones, Karen Krolak, Niki Lamberg, Nora Nagle, Jessica Oddi, Amber Percy, Dani Rose, Elisabeth Staal, and Heather Watkins.

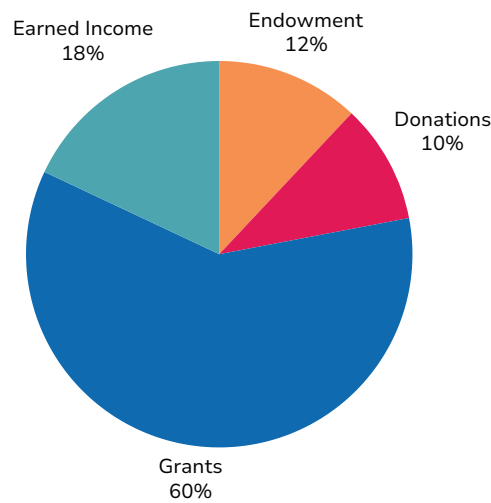


Remembering Andy Holiner (1947-2023)

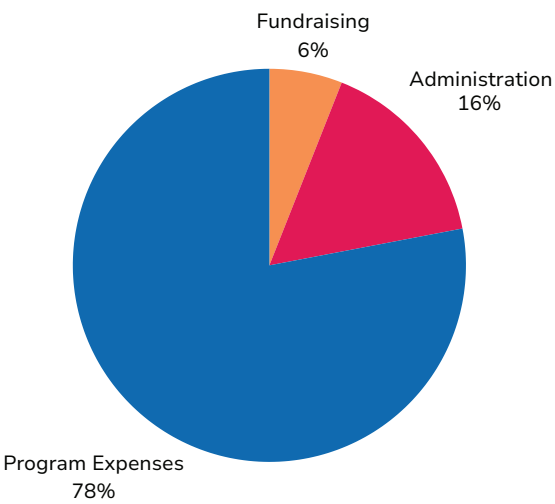
In 2023, we said goodbye to our dear friend Andy Holiner, one of the longest-serving teaching artists on the ODA team. Andy's contagious smile always lit up the room and warmed our souls. He was deeply dedicated to his students and believed that music had the power to transform our lives at such a deep level. Andy leaves behind a lasting legacy of music, love, and joy. We will always cherish our memories of Andy and be grateful for his beautiful spirit.

Financials

Revenue



Expenses



We're so grateful to all the funders and donors who sustained our work this year*!

Funders

The Beker Foundation
Boston Cultural Council
BPS Arts Expansion Fund at EdVestors
Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Fund,
Bank of America, N.A., Trustee
Genesis Inspiration Foundation
Greater Worcester Community Foundation
The Hestia Fund
J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Linde Family Foundation
Mass Cultural Council
Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation
Someone Else’s Child Foundation
UniBank
Webster Five Foundation
Wellington Management Foundation
Worcester Arts Council

Donors

Anonymous (3), George Abrams, Nicole Agois and
Pierre Hurel, Jeremy Alliger, Frances Anthes and
Charles Washburn, Melissa Antonik, Joseph
Barone, Gloria Bent, Jane Bernstein, Archie Calise,
Brendan Cavanaugh, Christine David, Craig Dunn,
Maureen Finnerty, Katherine Gilliland, Leah
Hamilton, Laura Hoffman, Judy Jacobson and
Daniel Wiener, Ruth Kahn, Thomas Keane, Vincent
Lombardi, Morellen H. Macleish and John Voci,
Jaime Martinez, Susan and Richard Neckes,
Princess Perfect Parties, Pamela Quiggle,
Constance Quinn, Malcolm Roberts, Adam
Salsman, Ellen and Reed Sturtevant, Megan
Sullivan and Carl Richardson, Susan
Wannemacher, and Heather Watkins.

*Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

Artwork descriptions and credit

Cover: “Home” by Dominic Quagliozzi

Pg. 1 - Artwork by ASPIRE! artist

Pg. 2 - Top to bottom - CareerCREATE at “Studio Without Walls” exhibit in Brookline; Bethany Noël’s exhibit “Aphasia” at ODG@WAM; Portia Brown and Nicole Agois at the LEAD Conference in Seattle.

Pg. 3 - Top to bottom - CareerCREATE students visit the Museum of Fine Arts; colorful masks created by students at Community Academy of Science and Health; CareerCREATE students before a performance at Wheelock Family Theatre; CareerCREATE student drawing.

Pg. 4 - Covers of the “Towards a Culture of Access” reports.

Pg. 5 - Speech bubbles featuring quotes from pilot organizations that took the Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment.

Pg. 6 - Left to right - Bethany Noël at her exhibit “Aphasia”; ASPIRE! “Artistic Aspirations” exhibit entrance panel; “Home” by Dominic Quagliozzi; participants in Dominic’s workshop; ASPIRE! artists speaking at opening reception; “Monarch” by Dominic Quagliozzi.

Pg. 7 - Collage of 30 color photos of Open Door Arts team members, advisors, and consultants.

Back cover - “Fragmentation” by Bethany Noël.



www.OpenDoorArtsMA.org
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