

ValleyCreates

Arts and Creativity Fund

Shaping a Creative Legacy



“My experience [as a grantee] has been an important part of my transformative and evolutionary journey as an artist and messenger of connections, through my culture and my identity.”

Yaya Mzuri
Singer, Drummer, Dancer
ValleyCreates Artist Grantee, '23

Photo by **Michelle Falcón Fontáñez**,
ValleyCreates Artist Grantee and owner of
production company Falcón Fontáñez Foto



From the President|CEO and Trustees

Since 2018, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts' ValleyCreates program has supported hundreds of artists, arts organizations, and arts education programs in our three-county region. In addition to vital funding, ValleyCreates has offered capacity-building workshops and arts gatherings that inspire collaboration, promote the sharing of expertise, and build connections among and across our arts ecosystem.

From the start, our vision was to develop a program that:

- Is shaped by the voices and insights of the artists and smaller, grassroots organizations we aim to support.
- Supports the places where artists perform or display their work, where arts organizations provide safe inclusive spaces for community members to express themselves, and where all residents of the Valley could come together to be inspired by the many forms of creativity that exist in our community.
- Fosters trust and belief that the arts are impactful and create a vibrant place for all residents to live.
- Engages donors and institutional partners who make this work possible.

With nearly 10 years of consistent support from the Barr Foundation and local donors and advocates, we've engaged over **140 individual artists** living or working in the Valley, including rural and Black artists, Indigenous artists, and artists of color, who have historically been excluded from funding opportunities. We have funded over **88 arts organizations** with **\$3.6 million in support** to strengthen their capacity and provide the resources and connections needed to contribute to our creative economy. Together, we have built something remarkable—a vibrant, inclusive, and lasting community of artists, arts organizations, and arts appreciators seeking a bright future for our region.

As we look forward, bold gifts are needed to sustain ValleyCreates, ensuring artists and arts organizations have the resources they need to create, connect, and flourish. To continue and grow the program's success, **we have launched a \$5 million permanent endowment fund that will provide stable, long-term support for local arts and creativity.** With your partnership, we can guarantee that ValleyCreates continues to flourish—nourishing creativity, fostering connection, and ensuring opportunities for years to come. **Join us!** Give today and be part of shaping the future of our Valley.

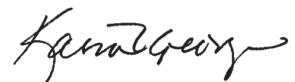
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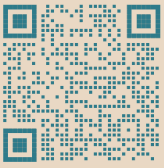
OUR ARTS COMMITMENT

In a time of heightened uncertainty for artists and arts organizations everywhere, we are making a permanent commitment to creativity and cultural vitality across our Valley. Recent reductions in public and private arts funding have significantly impacted artists, arts nonprofits, and arts education programs, underscoring the need for increased philanthropic support.

Over the course of three years as grant support from the Barr Foundation comes to an end, the Community Foundation is partnering with local donors to raise support for a \$5 million endowment fund to sustain ValleyCreates.

Join us in this commitment by visiting communityfoundation.org/valleycreatesgiving or scanning the QR code above to make a gift and help us create lasting impact.

Make Your
Gift Today!



OUR ARTS IMPACT TO DATE

TOTAL GRANTS TO ARTS ORGS

\$3.6 Million

TOTAL GRANTS TO ARTISTS

\$358,500

TOTAL # OF GRANTS TO ARTS ORGS

191

TOTAL # OF GRANTS TO ARTISTS

181

TOTAL IN CAPACITY GRANTS
TO ARTISTS

\$198,500

TOTAL IN PROJECT EVOLUTION GRANTS
TO ARTISTS

\$160,000

Data in this booklet reflects the most recent unaudited figures available as of December 31, 2024. Updates may occur as new information becomes available.

“Play Incubation Collective is incredibly grateful to...help launch playwrights to the next level of their work, bring artists and community members together for meaningful conversation, and inspire the next generation of artists through its creative programs for youth.”

Sarah Marcus

Co-Founder of Play Incubation Collective
ValleyCreates Flexible Funding Grantee, '24





Erin Long Photography

A STRONG BEGINNING

In 2017, the Community Foundation received a planning grant as a participant in the Barr Foundation's Creative Commonwealth Initiative (CCW). We convened an advisory committee and conducted surveys and listening sessions to understand assets and opportunities in our region's arts sector.

Informed by this process, we launched ValleyCreates at the start of 2018. Fueled by annual CCW grants, Community Foundation investments, and generous matching gifts from local donors, ValleyCreates has greatly expanded opportunities for artists and arts organizations, addressed gaps and inequities across our artistic communities, and strengthened connections within and across Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. Today, ValleyCreates is recognized as a source for economic vitality, civic engagement, and wellbeing across the region.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Moving forward, we will offer two meaningful ways of giving to help us sustain a future for ValleyCreates while also meeting the program's immediate needs. Whether you're inspired to ensure ValleyCreates' longevity or to support its current activities, every gift plays a vital role in advancing this strategic priority.



Joanna S. Ballantine

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**Let's continue shaping
a creative legacy
together!**



The CCW Initiative brought together eight community foundations in a journey of shared learning and collaboration to strengthen resources for local arts across Massachusetts. Through this partnership, we've seen firsthand the unique role community foundations play in catalyzing change and elevating the transformative power of the arts. We are grateful for CFWM's leadership and ongoing commitment to nurturing resilient, vibrant, and equitable creative communities throughout the region.



San San Wong

Senior Advisor, Arts & Creativity
Barr Foundation

“The friendships created and deepened, and the enriching programming are just a few reasons why I’m proud to call myself a grantee.”



Akilah Scharff-Teoh
Artist and Creative Technologist
ValleyCreates Artist Grantee, '24



**ARTS ECONOMICS &
EMPLOYMENT IN MASS**

VALUE ADDED TO
STATE'S ECONOMY

\$28.6B

ARTS INDUSTRIES AS
SHARE OF ECONOMY

4.1%

TOTAL COMPENSATION
EARNED BY ARTS WORKER

\$15.6B

NUMBER OF PEOPLE
EMPLOYED IN THE ARTS

133,773

*Arts and Culture Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), 2021; U.S. Bureau of
Economic Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts. B = billions*

“Thanks to ValleyCreates Flexible Funding, our 100% volunteer-run organization went from the brink of closure to an award-winning nonprofit in just two years. This support was truly transformational for grassroots organizations like ours.”

Linda Hill, Ph.D.

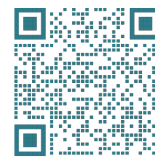
President of the Chinese Association of Western Massachusetts
ValleyCreates Flexible Funding Grantee, '24



Photo by **Richard Ang**

A NEW CHAPTER

Join us in making
a difference!



The Community Foundation has launched the **ValleyCreates Arts and Creativity Fund**, a \$5 million permanent endowment to provide stable, long-term support for a thriving arts ecosystem. This fund will help ensure resources for our local arts community that extend beyond annual campaigns, economic fluctuations, and the limitations of short-term funding cycles.

We have learned that appreciation of and funding for the arts is strong across Massachusetts. We are grateful that

creativity and potential support are plentiful and we seek to harness the energy of the entire community. By shifting our approach to building a permanent endowment fund while continuing annual fundraising, we move to a future where our arts community will have a pool from which it can grow now and into the future.

We invite you to join donors contributing towards our \$5 million goal and ensuring that we catalyze a strong future for ValleyCreates.

TWO WAYS TO GIVE:



To Amplify Immediate Funding
Make a gift to the
ValleyCreates Fund.



To Build Lasting Support
Make a gift to the
ValleyCreates Arts and Creativity Fund.

The arts are an ecosystem—artists are the pollinators, organizations are the roots. Without reliable funding for both, the garden withers. In Western Mass and beyond, we've seen how stable investment allows creativity to flourish, deepens civic pride, and seeds innovation in unexpected places. It's not charity—it's strategy for a healthier, more vibrant Commonwealth.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Executive Director
Mass Cultural Council



“It’s been really helpful to be given the opportunity to talk with other artists, discuss the ways we create, and how we carve out space to make that possible.”



Charles Thompson
Green Woodworker
ValleyCreates Artist Grantee, '24



WHY THE ARTS

The arts are not just a reflection of culture; they are a driving force behind economic vitality, social cohesion, and academic and professional advancement. Investments in the arts generate billions in revenue statewide while supporting small businesses. Beyond our local economy, the presence of the arts enriches communities, breathing new life into our neighborhoods, fostering pride, and creating spaces where our neighbors can connect. Artistic expression

serves as a powerful tool for engagement, giving voice to diverse perspectives while making our communities more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient.

We are building on our success. ValleyCreates has flourished thanks to dedicated neighbors like you who have invested in their Community Foundation so that we may have the chance to transform this success into a permanent legacy.

Education and Youth Development

Engagement in the arts has been associated with higher academic achievement. Those highly involved in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic excellence, highlighting the role of arts in education.

Economic Growth and Jobs

In Springfield during 2022, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$82.4 million in economic activity, supporting 1,483 jobs and contributing to \$15.3 million in tax revenue for the state of Massachusetts.

Tourism and Local Business

Arts and cultural events attract visitors who spend money on accommodations, dining, and shopping, thereby supporting local businesses and contributing to the economic vitality of communities.

Social Cohesion & Engagement

The arts serve as a unifying force, bringing together individuals from all backgrounds and fostering a sense of community. Participation in arts activities has been linked to increased civic engagement, with 86% of participants expressing a desire to be more involved.

Community Revitalization

Investments in arts and culture have been instrumental in revitalizing downtown areas. For instance, in Greater Shelburne Falls, cultural organizations support approximately 325 jobs and generate \$7.6 million in economic activity.

Enhanced Quality of Life

Access to arts and culture activities contributes significantly to residents' satisfaction with their communities. Studies show that people with access to quality arts experiences are more satisfied with their neighborhoods and are more likely to invest locally.

Sources include: National Endowment for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, Creative Collective, Mass Cultural Council, WBUR/NEPM, and the US Travel Association.

ValleyCreates Timeline of Firsts



Artists are essential to our region's health, prosperity, and legacy. They are culture bearers, innovative problem solvers, and the storytellers of our past, present, and future. They contribute to education, economic vitality, and community wellness. Reliable funding through initiatives like ValleyCreates ensures that artists and arts organizations can continue to inspire, connect, and uplift. In uncertain times, the arts help us find clarity, courage, and community, sustaining not just creativity, but our collective future.

Karen Finn

Executive Director
Springfield Cultural Partnership



“More than just one-off help,
the Community Foundation has
stuck around and continues to
offer opportunities to grow.”

Sharona Color
Multimedia Artist and Muralist
ValleyCreates Artist Grantee, '25



*“Our legacy is not in what we leave behind,
but what we set in motion.”*

Lynne Twist, Author of The Soul of Money

Photo by **Ranée Chén**
Headshot photo by **Ray Brod**



VALLEYCREATES STRATEGIES

Community Advisors—artists, arts professionals, and cultural leaders—play a vital role by helping to convene artists, ensuring artist perspectives shape the program. In this way, ValleyCreates is able to address real needs and foster a thriving, inclusive arts community.

Grants for artists, offered in partnership with MASS MoCA's Assets for Artists, pairs grant funding with individualized coaching, workshops, and community-building opportunities. This ensures artists have the tools they need for their projects to succeed.

Grants for organizations provide general operating support for small arts nonprofits to promote creativity, community engagement and a more inclusive arts ecosystem.

Organizational training to provide capacity-building and mini-grant opportunities to small arts and creativity organizations.

Capacity-building opportunities provide grant funding and workshop opportunities for individual artists eager to explore best practices in engaging community through their work. Planning and implementation support prepares them to create meaningful change through the arts.

Convenings and communication include monthly online meetings, annual arts community gatherings, and special events that involve donors and showcase the work of ValleyCreates grantees.

Community Advisors

Kent Alexander, Emeritus
Rosemary Tracy Woods, Emeritus
Matthew Glassman, Emeritus
Vanessa Pabon-Hernandez
Andrae Green
Irene Shaikly/I-SHEA
Mark Guglielmo

Artists need support, resources, and the freedom to express. In a divided world, creativity unites—telling untold stories, sparking dialogue, and helping communities heal and mobilize. Arts and creativity aren't just forms of expression! They reflect resilience, fuel transformation, and ignite change.

Vanessa Pabon Hernandez
Community Advisor
CEO for the Women's Fund of WMass



ValleyCreates represents the very fabric of our community, knitting us together in ever more meaningful, lasting ways, despite an otherwise siloed, often segregated society.

Mark Guglielmo
Community Advisor
Multimedia Artist



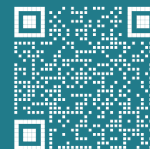
PARTNERING ON A CREATIVE LEGACY

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts invites you to join a growing community of partners investing in our region's creative sector. Together, we will sustain and grow ValleyCreates—and the artistic ecosystem we have nurtured together over the past decade.

Ways to give:

- Make a gift that lasts forever. Contribute to the **ValleyCreates Arts and Creativity Fund** and help us reach our \$5 million goal
- Support this year's \$100,000 annual goal by making a gift to the **ValleyCreates Fund**
- Set up a **recurring donation** to simplify your steady support for the arts
- Make ValleyCreates part of your will or bequest as a **legacy gift**
- Establish a **corporate partnership** between ValleyCreates and your business

We commit to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the region's three counties, including our work places and institutions by prioritizing racial equity in all facets of our work.



SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS: communityfoundation.org/mail



**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

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Cover artwork by **Sunny Allis**, ValleyCreates Artist Grantee
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