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Arts Council of Indianapolis Receives \$20,000 NEA Grant to Hire Four Local Artists to Assess its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Practices

Arts Council Equity Ambassadors will examine agency's engagement with communities of color

INDIANAPOLIS – National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Mary Anne Carter has [announced](#) more than \$84 million in grants as part of the organization's second major funding announcement for the fiscal year 2020. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of \$20,000 to the Arts Council of Indianapolis to create a new Equity Ambassadors program to improve racial equity in programs and services. This is one of 1,144 grants nationwide that the NEA has approved in this category.

The Art Works grant will fund a team of four local artists who will conduct an intensive, 18-month audit and assessment of the Arts Council's programs and services as they relate to and impact artists of color in Indianapolis. Their findings will inform a series of recommendations to be considered and implemented by the Arts Council for stronger and more inclusive engagement with communities of color.

In August, the Arts Council will announce an open call for local artists to apply for the program, with selections made in November. Each Equity Ambassador will receive a \$4,500 stipend for their work. The new program and the selection process will be overseen by the four current Americans for the Arts' Arts & Culture Leaders of Color Fellows based in Indianapolis. They include Danicia Monet (Purdue Black Cultural Center); Devon Ginn (Madam Walker Legacy Center); Kavita Mahoney (Garfield Park Arts Center); and Channie Jones (Edison School for the Arts).

Inspired in part by the Central Indiana Community Foundation's (CICF) Artist Ambassador program, the Arts Council initiated the grant application last fall to accelerate its commitment to equity, inclusion, diversity, and access through an artist-led evaluation process. The Equity Ambassadors program builds on the values expressed in the Arts Council's [Equity Statement](#) and related programs and priorities adopted in 2016.

The Equity Ambassadors will use the lenses of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Sustainability to evaluate the Arts Council's artist-related grants and fellowship programs, presenting venues (Indianapolis Artsgarden and Gallery 924), and artist services programs, including public art. Each artist-ambassador will employ various research methods, such as focus groups and surveys, with artists of color in their networks to identify barriers and opportunities to engaging with the Arts Council of Indianapolis.

“This grant provides meaningful capacity to engage Indy artists to help accelerate and expand our commitment to equity through artist-led and artist-informed evaluation and planning,” said Julie Goodman, CEO and President of the Arts Council. “We believe in ‘A Full Creative Life for All’ and this program will help us create deeper, more meaningful connections with our community to improve the way we deliver on this promise and potential for our city. We are grateful for the NEA’s support of programs like this and we look forward to working with these artist-ambassadors to listen, learn, and grow our community impact as a result of their work.”

“These awards demonstrate the resilience of the arts in America, showcasing not only the creativity of their arts projects but the organizations’ agility in the face of a national health crisis,” said Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “We celebrate organizations like the Arts Council of Indianapolis for providing opportunities for learning and engagement through the arts in these times.”

For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).

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[The Arts Council of Indianapolis](#) fosters meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations can thrive. Read the Arts Council’s Equity Statement [here](#).