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Arts Council announces grants for Artist Restart program, mental health services

Keep Indy Creating Fund will offer 270+ grants inspired by needs expressed in artist surveys

INDIANAPOLIS – In 2020, the Arts Council of Indianapolis collaborated with community partners to raise more than \$1 million for the Keep Indy Creating Relief Fund, a resource that helped many independent artists and nonprofit arts and cultural workers cope with the financial challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Arts Council is now offering an additional round of \$240,000 in grants to support artists and creatives and ensure #IndyKeepsCreating. Applications open June 8 at indykeepscreating.org.

“Central Indiana is home to more than 30,000 independent artists and cultural workers who are essential to our creative economy and civic identity,” said Julie Goodman, president and CEO of the Arts Council of Indianapolis. “From the earliest days of the pandemic, Indy’s philanthropic and corporate partners, and generous individuals have helped ensure artists had access to financial support and related services. We’ve been honored to provide resources ranging from relief grants and mental health support to unemployment benefits counseling and paid gigs through [Swish Indy](#)—all direct responses to priorities expressed by artists.”

According to the latest artist survey conducted by the Arts Council, 52% of respondents reported their total income in 2020 was reduced by more than 40% due to COVID-19. As a result, 60% said they had to reduce their work-related expenses, and more than half reported challenges covering essential living expenses, including food, rent, and healthcare.

Along with financial struggles, artists expressed a need for mental health support services, due to challenges presented by the isolation and loneliness that resulted from the pandemic shutdowns.

In response to these findings, the Arts Council has adapted its programs to reflect artists’ evolving needs. Artists and performers from all disciplines can apply now through August 22, 2021, for the following two grant opportunities and applications will be reviewed weekly:

- **Artist Restart Grants** will provide assistance to artists who are working to restart their creative practices, by helping cover the cost of tools and supplies, studio rentals, rehearsal spaces, submission fees or other work-related costs. 175 grants are available at \$1,000 each.
- **Wug Laku Mental Health & Wellness Grants** will help artists who are experiencing social and emotional challenges due to the pandemic, but don't have sufficient means to obtain treatment. These grants cover one-on-one therapy, support groups, art therapy, and wellness and mindfulness practices. Nearly 100 grants will be awarded, ranging from \$250 to \$750.

Laku, who died in 2017, was an Indianapolis visual artist and grassroots advocate for the arts. From 2007 to 2013, he ran wUG LAKU's Studio & gARAGE, a gallery that was oftentimes the host of local artists' first solo shows. He helped turn the Circle City Industrial Complex into a refuge for artists and artistic center for artists and patrons alike. His unaddressed mental illness led to his death at age 63.

In addition to these grants, the Arts Council will also offer emergency grants of up to \$2,000, which will help artists cover unexpected expenses as a result of a catastrophic event, such as a fire or a health crisis.

The funding for this new round of grants comprises the balance of the \$517,000 that was raised through the Arts Council's [\(Re\)Start with Art virtual benefit](#) in October, which supported 272 \$1,000 relief grants to artists in November and December 2020. From March to June 2020, the Arts Council also awarded 950 \$500 rapid-relief grants to central Indiana artists and cultural workers who experienced immediate and severe income losses due to nearly 30,000 local arts and culture event cancellations and venue closures.

The [Keep Indy Creating Relief Fund](#) was made possible thanks to leadership commitments from the Christel DeHaan Family Foundation, the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, Glick Philanthropies, the Herbert Simon Family Foundation, Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF), presenting sponsor Schahet Hotels, and more than 25 generous corporate and civic partners. The Fund was also supported by a public campaign to reach the \$1 million goal. Individual donations were doubled by the Efroymsen Match Challenge up to \$100,000.

"We are deeply grateful to the many partners and individuals who have made these programs possible," said Goodman. "We've heard over and over from artists since March 2020 that these grants have been a lifeline of financial *and* emotional support by demonstrating how much our community values their work and well-being. It's been an important part of making sure we not only survive the pandemic, but retain and grow our creative talent so #IndyKeepsCreating."

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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](#).