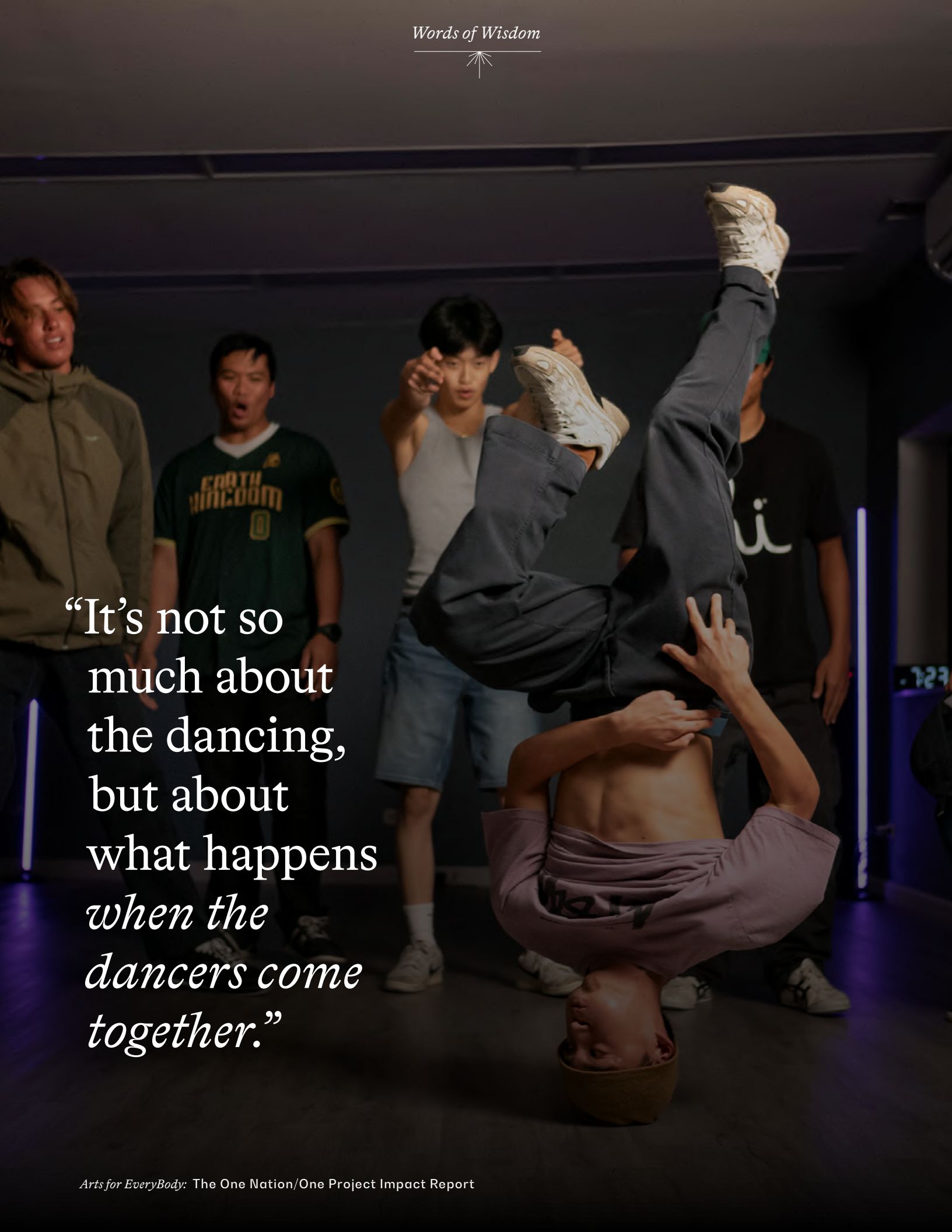


Arts for EveryBody



THE ONE NATION/ONE PROJECT
IMPACT REPORT

A photograph of a breakdancer in a purple shirt and grey pants performing a handstand with legs raised in a studio. Several other people are watching in the background. The scene is lit with blue and purple ambient lighting.

“It’s not so much about the dancing, but about what happens *when the dancers come together.*”

Acknowledgments	1	What Happened	32	What Changed: Measuring Outcomes and Impacts	133
Purpose & Definitions..	3	<i>Site Selection</i>	37	<i>The Research and Evaluation Approach</i>	134
Acronyms Used in this Report.....	4	<i>The 18 Sites</i>	42	<i>Mixed Methods Research Design</i>	143
Forward	6	<i>Building a National Community</i>	46	<i>The Studies and their Key Findings</i>	145
Prologue	7	<i>Communications and Media Campaign</i>	55	<i>Evaluation</i>	166
Executive Summary ...	10	<i>The National Moment</i>	56	<i>Strengths and Limitations of the Research and Evaluation</i>	173
Why It Happened	17	<i>Capstone Convening</i>	57	<i>What We're Leaving Behind</i>	174
<i>The Need</i>	18	The Projects in the 18 Sites	60	What's Next	175
<i>The Inspiration</i>	19	<i>The Bronx, NY</i>	61	<i>Key National Impacts</i>	176
How We Built It	23	<i>Chicago, IL</i>	65	<i>Key Local Impacts</i>	180
<i>Building a Human Infrastructure</i>	24	<i>Edinburg, TX</i>	69	<i>Key Learnings</i>	182
<i>Building a Framework of Purpose</i>	29	<i>Gainesville, FL</i>	73	<i>The Call to Action</i>	185
<i>Building a Foundation of Resources</i>	30	<i>Harlan County, KY</i>	77	Epilogue	192
		<i>Hawai'i Island, HI</i>	81	Appendices	194
		<i>Honolulu, HI</i>	85	<i>References</i>	195
		<i>IMAN Chicago, IL</i>	89		
		<i>Kansas City, MO</i>	93		
		<i>Oakland, CA</i>	97		
		<i>Phillips County, AR</i>	101		
		<i>Providence, RI</i>	105		
		<i>Rhineland, WI</i>	109		
		<i>Seattle, WA</i>	113		
		<i>Tucson, AZ</i>	117		
		<i>Utica, MS</i>	121		
		<i>Washington, D.C.</i>	125		
		<i>Winston-Salem, NC</i>	129		

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Purpose & Definitions

Who is this report for?

This report is intended for people doing, aspiring to do, advocating for, influencing, or championing work at the intersection of the arts and health. This may include artists, arts organizations, health providers and systems, funders/investors, policymakers, institutional leaders, and community leaders.

What is the purpose of this report?

This report is intended to serve as an archive of One Nation/One Project's ambitious investment and a guide for ongoing work at the intersection of the arts and health in communities. It is our collective effort to document the work of this historic endeavor and to share our learnings for others to build on. The overarching goal is to advance evidence-based engagement of artists and the arts for health and wellbeing and, in turn, to contribute to healthier and more equitable communities across the US.

Purpose & Definitions

ARTISTS/CULTURE-BEARERS

creators and makers of all kinds and people who embody and transmit practices of particular cultures.

ARTS PARTICIPATION

modes, or ways, in which people engage with the arts, defined broadly and inclusively to include all forms of art and creative engagement. *See Sonke et al., 2023.*

ARTS DESK

partnerships between health and arts systems, organizations, or individuals at community health centers that engage the arts for patient care, staff wellbeing, and community health.

COMMUNITY

a group of people inhabiting a common physical space or having one or more common ties (*Hillery, 1982*).

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW)

a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison, link, or intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery (*American Public Health Association*).

EPISTEMOLOGY

a theory of knowledge or worldview held by a researcher that helps determine how a research study is designed.

FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER (FQHC)

a community-based health center that receives support from the federal government and offers primary care and preventive services to those who have limited access to healthcare.

HEALTH

a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (*WHO, 1947*); a state of feeling whole and able to achieve one's desired potential.

HEALTH EQUITY

a reality in which every person has equal opportunity to attain their full health potential.

ONTOLOGY

(for the purpose of this report) a researcher's view of reality and the social world.

MAPMAKERS GROUPS

ONOP's name for the community advisory groups who participated in, and sometimes led, the projects locally.

METAINFERENCES

narrative or theoretical statements that represent integrated findings from quantitative and qualitative studies in mixed methods research.

SOCIAL COHESION

the strength of relationships and a sense of solidarity among members of a community (*ODPHP, n.d.*).

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age...which are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources (*WHO, 2019*).

WELLBEING

the comprehensive view of how individuals and communities experience and evaluate their lives, including their physical and mental health and having the skills and opportunities to construct meaningful futures (*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019*).

Acronyms Used in this Report

AI Artificial Intelligence	NACCHO National Association of County and City Health Officials
ARPA SLFRF American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds	NLC National League of Cities
BIPOC Black, Indigenous, and People of Color	ONOP One Nation/One Project
CBPR Community-Based Participatory Research	P-VALUE (P=) Probability value. A statistical measurement used to validate a hypothesis against observed data (the lower the p-value, the greater the statistical significance of the observed difference)
CDFI Community Development Financial Institution	RFP Request for Proposals
CPI Critical Participatory Inquiry	RGV Rio Grande Valley
CRNY Creatives Rebuild New York	SD Standard deviation
DHHS US Department of Health and Human Services	SP Social Prescribing
EEI Equitable Evaluation Initiative	T1, T2, T3 Data collection time points one, two, and three in the Theory of Change study
FQHCS Federally Qualified Health Centers	TA Technical Assistance
FTP Federal Theatre Project	TOC Theory of Change
IMAN Inner-City Muslim Action Network	WHO-5 World Health Organization Five Well-Being Index
LEAD Leadership, Education, Advancement, and Development	WPA Works Progress Administration
MAPP Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships	

Please note that this list does not include acronyms used to refer to all lead and partner organizations and programs in the descriptions of the projects in ONOP's 18 cities.



Forward: Arts for Health's Sake

In Public Health, **the biggest stories are the ones never told:** the cholera epidemic that didn't happen after the tsunami because basic water sanitation procedures were followed, the traffic fatalities that didn't happen because people wore their seatbelts, the heart attacks that never occurred after people started eating better and exercising more regularly, the sicknesses that never occurred because people took their vaccinations, and on and on...

Over the last several decades, evidence has been building on the health benefits of arts participation, memorably highlighted in the **2019 WHO report** on the subject. But many of the examples and studies reviewed in that report were from clinical environments and focusing on individuals. Could these same benefits be realized at the community level? Could they be measured?

This report offers some answers to that question and in epic scale. In the One Nation/One Project initiative, communities across the US engaged in health-focused art projects together as communities and in the wake of the extreme disruption and isolation of the great pandemic, and the measurable impact was remarkable. The projects themselves you will read about in this report; but more remarkable to me is the impact the work had in exposing so many people to the power of collective artmaking, and its sustained effect on these individuals beyond the projects themselves.

A cornerstone quote of our work at WHO in Arts and Health is from Carl Jung who once said “Loneliness is not the absence of people. Loneliness is the inability to express what matters to you most.” The arts help us cope with adversity and everyday stresses; they build and reinforce the bonds of community on a deep neurological level; they help us imagine a better future; and, perhaps most importantly, they provide opportunities to celebrate moments of joy. From a Health Promotion perspective, we believe at WHO that the arts support our fundamental search for meaning and belonging, both individually and collectively. Creative expression helps complete us as humans.



My favorite stories from One Nation/One Project are the ones that will never be told. The people who did not succumb to despair, the communities that did not divide against themselves, and the children that thoughtlessly had faith in their future.

Health is not about merely lengthening our lives. **It is about making sure that our lives are well-lived.**

- Christopher Bailey, World Health Organization

Prologue: The Role of Arts in Society

FROM LEAR DEBESSONET

Since the beginning, every single thing that we've done, on any level, has been about not what any one person or sector can do, but about what we – what communities – can do when we come together.

The idea for this project was inspired by a convergence of two things.

I'd been obsessed with the Federal Theatre Project since my early 20s. I was deeply struck by the initiative, as one of the bright spots in the history of this country in which a serious federal investment in arts at the local level was made. The seed of that obsession was watered early in the pandemic. During that time emerged a series of overlapping crises, revealing things we know have been broken for a long time and bringing them starkly to the forefront. As an artist, I found myself asking, alongside many others:

“What is the role of arts in society, and in this particular moment of crisis, around so many different needs in our communities?”

And what would happen if we worked together across sectors, partnering with the health sector and cities? Could we do so in a way that could expand the reach of who benefits from the genuine healing powers of the arts?



When the time came to turn these questions into action perhaps the most important call I made was to my beloved friend and collaborator Clyde Valentín, who I had met during the process of building **Public Works**. We both shared a frustration with the fact that, when the arts sector came up for review in the broader conversation, almost everything had to do with the arts as an economic driver. But it felt like the elephant in the room was the arts as a healing factor, for bodies, souls, and for our social fabric — that the arts were something that were desperately needed as a force against despair and loneliness. We felt compelled by the question of how to get that part of arts' benefit into the conversation? How do we make it visible?

Almost 2 years later, we would make a pivotal call to Nataki Garrett to join us in co-leading this work.

The Federal Theatre Project uplifted the idea that arts in America are not just about what happens in a couple of coastal cities, but about what happens everywhere in every single place – rural, urban, and suburban. What became One Nation/One Project sought to re-illustrate this in a moment where the power of the *arts for everybody* is desperately needed.

Prologue: The Role of Arts in Society

FROM NATAKI GARRETT

In 2023, I received a call from Lear. She said, “Clyde and I are working on a national initiative. Why don’t you join us? We’re aiming to reach all four corners of the United States – and beyond. It’s time for you to step away from the organization you’re running and do this with us.”

I remember thinking, What? Not out of doubt, but because the idea was so expansive – so imaginative – it was difficult to fully grasp at first. Lear was describing something I hadn’t yet allowed myself to envision. It felt almost impossible to articulate, and even harder to imagine in practical terms. But it stayed with me. And a few months later, when she called again, I was ready. This time, I said yes.

What drew me in wasn’t just the national scope, although the opportunity to support communities across the country was undeniably compelling.

What moved me even more was the underlying question:

How do we amplify the work we do as artists?
How do we resource and empower the makers — the visionaries, the culture bearers, the community storytellers — so they can do what they do best: affect lives in deep, meaningful, and transformative ways?

And how do we do that at scale?

Now, as we reflect on what we’ve built together, we find ourselves asking: What comes next? Yes, we did it. We showed what’s possible. But the point was never just the project. It was always about planting seeds for the future. This initiative was time-bound by design, but the work itself doesn’t end.

From the beginning, I was committed to ensuring we left something behind: artifacts of meaning, records of purpose. Just like the community-based productions of 1936, this work becomes part of a larger legacy. Those earlier efforts were bold experiments in collective action. They remind us that communities across this country can come together to make change. And now we’ve shown we can do this, this time with research, with cross-sector collaboration, with artists embedded in places where art isn’t always named but is always alive. In health centers. In city partnerships. In everyday acts of care and imagination.

So the real question becomes: **What will you do to carry the work forward?**

We are living through an inflection point in our nation’s cultural and civic life. The pandemic, political polarization, the growing crisis of social isolation – all these forces have reshaped the way we connect, create, and care for one another. Against that backdrop, this initiative became more than a project; it became a proof of possibility. It reminded us that when artists, organizers, health workers, and local leaders align around shared purpose, profound transformation is possible.

Prologue: The Role of Arts in Society

FROM CLYDE VALENTÍN

When Lear called me with her vision in early 2021, I immediately leaned in.

What emerged as One Nation/One Project and the Arts for EveryBody campaign was scaled at hyper-speed: an artist and community-led, non-traditional, cross-sectoral enterprise synthesized into a spectacular national moment.

These collaborations and strategic partnerships can be inclusive of and transcend traditional arts philanthropy. Their potential is massive.

Health care in the United States is an over \$4 trillion sector. Community development funds (often private dollars invested by banks and other accredited financial institutions) average over \$2 trillion annually in things like affordable housing, micro-loans for small businesses and entrepreneurs, green initiatives and infrastructures, etc., – and all at the community or neighborhood level.

The institutions in these sectors — and others — would do well to consider Arts & Culture and specifically Artists – as critical actors and co- investors in their strategies and vice versa.

One Nation/One Project and our campaign Arts for EveryBody is/was meant to plant more seeds in this fertile ground. This report is one of those seeds.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A woman in a vibrant yellow dress and colorful headscarf is shown from the back, holding a large yellow fabric. She is standing in a room where several people are seated in the background, some looking at their phones. The scene appears to be an art installation or a performance.

On July 27, 2024, **18 cities** simultaneously premiered large-scale participatory art projects with a health focus and drawing on the sounds, styles, and stories of their places in response to the prompt “**No Place Like Home.**” The initiative resulted in one of the largest public art campaigns in recent US history, and this report tells its story.

AT A MOMENT IN US HISTORY when extreme social divisions have been exacerbated by a global pandemic, racial violence, political transition, and highly disparate and poor health outcomes despite significant health spending, there is growing awareness of the need for innovative, hyper-local solutions to problems that challenge the health, cohesion, and wellbeing of our nation.

**This report
uplifts a
powerful and
often undervalued
resource for
communities
working to build
new futures:
the Arts.**

The arts are an effective and proven, yet highly underutilized resource for the cohesion and wellbeing of our communities. Recognizing the opportunity to demonstrate the ability of the arts to help rebuild social fabrics, wellbeing, and health following the COVID-19 pandemic, One Nation/One Project (ONOP) was undertaken as a multi-year, national arts and public health initiative. Inspired in part by the Federal Theatre Project following the Great Depression, this national initiative brought together artists, community health leaders, and municipalities to create 18 distinct collaborations and projects to leverage hyper-local creativity for national impact.

The initiative recognized that improving social cohesion and wellbeing requires a profound transformation in societal norms, values, and behaviors—a shift toward a collective commitment to health equity, where everyone, regardless of geographic, demographic, or social differences, has an equal opportunity to thrive. It was founded on the understanding that creative expression, storytelling, and shared traditions often drive change faster than government policies or legislation. By leveraging the arts and the unique role of artists, the initiative equipped communities with tangible tools to envision new futures, challenge systemic barriers, and implement lasting impactful change.

WHAT HAPPENED. In the three-year ONOP initiative (2022-2024), 18 US cities activated the power of the arts and cross-sector collaboration to strengthen communities and demonstrate that arts participation can measurably build social cohesion and wellbeing. Each of the communities – with vastly different economic, social, racial, and geographic experiences and populations ranging from 633 to 2.6 million – developed scalable models for collaboration across their local arts, health, and municipal sectors and worked to provide as many opportunities for arts participation in their communities as possible.

Although it did not mark the end of what was created, the projects in the 18 cities culminated in simultaneous celebrations of arts and health on July 27, 2024, when each community created its own large-scale event.

The stories of the 18 communities were amplified through an audacious narrative campaign, Arts for EveryBody. Arts for EveryBody was designed to be a national celebration of US diversity and creative expression, to build unity through shared vision, and to make more visible the relationships between the arts and health. The campaign engaged millions of people through a dynamic multimedia strategy, including viral social media activations, photojournalism, a commissioned music anthem, high-profile celebrity endorsements, branded merchandise, widespread media coverage, and a five-part podcast series.

Before sunseting as an initiative in 2025, a Capstone Convening brought all 18 sites together with national stakeholders to reflect on how their communities had been changed, and to inspire others across the US to join the powerful work of cross-sector collaboration and community healing through artmaking.

Across the

18 sites,

over

3,475

**opportunities for
arts participation**

were provided, and over

110,000
**people
participated**

in those events and activities.

Activation in **18** Cities.

Each ONOP community created ongoing programming on the road to their large-scale event on July 27, 2024, as briefly summarized below.



THE BRONX: Developed an ongoing arts prescribing program, alongside workshops and classes in the health center. Hosted a community health fair featuring a parade, live performances, and art activities to highlight the connection between arts and health.

CHICAGO, IL: Built a municipal program to employ artists as community health workers in city-run mental health clinics. Culminated in a city-wide summit showcasing the impact of the arts on wellness through workshops, performances, and discussions.

EDINBURG, TX: Launched ongoing municipal-led arts programming to foster belonging, celebrate the region's cultural heritage, and promote community wellbeing. Presented ¡Despierta!, a 75-person original musical, alongside public art commissions, wellness activities, and the grand opening of a new Arts, Culture, and Events Center.

GAINESVILLE, FL: Funded 26 community-led arts projects to address youth gun violence through creative expression, including an arts prescribing program. Culminated with the "Summer (You)th Celebration," featuring performances, exhibitions, and the unveiling of a community mural.

HARLAN COUNTY, KY: Uplifted rural health and community care through an original community theater project. Presented the Mountains of Appalachia Music Arts and Wellness Festival (MAMAW Fest), bringing together local artists, musicians, and healthcare providers and culminating in the premiere of a new original musical.

HAWAI'I ISLAND, HI: Launched a year-long artist fellowship supporting 11 local artists to create art that fosters collective wellbeing, cultural storytelling, and community resilience. Culminated with 11 art showcases across the island, demonstrating the power of the arts to strengthen community connections.

HONOLULU, HI: Built art exhibits, workshops, and artist-led gatherings to uplift Hawaiian sovereignty and strengthen cultural resilience. Culminated with a community celebration honoring Lā Ho’iho’i Ea (Sovereignty Restoration Day), with cultural activities, performances, and storytelling, fostering connection to land, history, and collective wellbeing.

IMAN CHICAGO, IL: Developed a new community space for arts, wellness, and revitalization focusing on reparative gatherings, transforming disinvested spaces, and healing. Hosted a vibrant outdoor festival featuring murals, live music, poetry, dance, fresh foods, movement, and community art.

KANSAS CITY, MO: Engaged arts education and songwriting to support youth mental health, fostering self-expression, confidence, and community connection. Culminated in “Celebrate AMERI’KANA,” a music and arts festival featuring national and local performers, youth musicians, and an international open-air market.

OAKLAND, CA: Used arts, public dialogue, and community gatherings to address systemic inequities, foster healing, and build sustainable partnerships between cultural and health organizations. Culminated in an arts, health, and wellness fair to celebrate and collectively envision a more equitable future for the city.

PHILLIPS COUNTY, AR: Leveraged storytelling, gospel, and blues music to build a grassroots advocacy campaign to address the region’s urgent water justice issues and reframe historical divisions. Culminated with a community festival featuring local vendors, live performances, a traveling caravan, and a gospel concert on the Mississippi River.

PROVIDENCE, RI: Embedded two artists-in-residence in public housing communities to reduce social isolation, foster healing, and beautify shared spaces. Culminated in events including a mural unveiling, live music, art lessons, a stop-motion film and multimedia performance, and a community meal.

RHINELANDER, WI: Designed a new skatepark in partnership with local youth to reduce isolation and create opportunities for ongoing youth arts engagement. Culminated in a community event featuring a skate jam, a “March Against Social Isolation,” and a public sculpture unveiling – all leading to ongoing work to establish an arts prescribing program.

SEATTLE, WA: Developed “Arts & Culture as Apothecary,” an artist residency in a local FQHC to highlight the role of art, culture, and heritage in fostering mental and physical wellness. Culminated in an arts festival celebrating the historical, cultural, and artistic vibrancy of the local Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

TUCSON, AZ: Launched a narrative strategy campaign to highlight the power of art in community wellbeing, social cohesion, and community development. Culminated with “Art is Vital: An Art and Wellness Fiesta,” featuring theater performances, live music, food, exhibits, and wellness activities celebrating Latine and Chicanx heritage.

UTICA, MS: Used storytelling, public art, and community organizing to address food access, revitalize local public spaces, and strengthen rural self-determination. Culminated in a festival featuring live performances and activities, illustrating how arts and culture can drive local collaboration and sustainable food access.

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Engaged hip-hop, performance, and arts education to empower youth, strengthen the creative ecosystem, and advocate for health equity. Culminated with “DMV Made,” an arts festival on the National Mall promoting the power of the arts in fostering social connection and wellbeing.

WINSTON-SALEM, NC: Developed arts and mental wellness programming to address barriers to healthcare access, strengthen community trust, and respond to gun violence. Culminated in a free arts and health fair celebrating the city’s commitment to healing through the arts.

What We Learned.

A broad and values-based mixed methods research and evaluation agenda was designed to answer the primary question: **“How can arts participation in communities influence social cohesion and wellbeing?”** The research was committed to community ownership of data and to generating immediate value for the communities. It included 13 unique studies, with findings from six of those studies integrated and resulting in a theory of change that asserts and explains relationships between community-based arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing.



Our Theory of Change

The *Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change* represents the integration of findings from six individual studies that include quantitative and qualitative data collected from surveys (one with **2,200+ respondents over three timepoints**, and another with **10,346 respondents**), 21

focus groups, a review of previous evidence, evaluation surveys and interviews, and person-on-the-street interviews. Read from top to bottom, it suggests **relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing**, along with explanatory elements of these relationships.



Key Evaluations & Research Findings

Across the **18** cities, arts participation increased in the general population by **56.4%** across the project period.

Individuals with low incomes *participated more* in the arts than those with high incomes.

Social cohesion *increased* by 12.6% in the general population in ONOP communities across the project period.

The more frequently individuals participated in the arts, the *higher* their social cohesion scores were.

Those who participated in the arts weekly or daily had *significantly higher* social cohesion than those who participated less than once per month.

More frequent arts participation is associated with *increased* wellbeing.

Specifically, those who participated most in the arts had *improved* wellbeing over time, while those who participated the least experienced a decline.

Arts participation impacts wellbeing by enhancing mental health, stress-relief, engagement, expression, *and* empathy.

In a national sample of over

10,346 US adults

94% agree that arts participation builds *social cohesion* in their community;

96.2% agree that arts participation improves *wellbeing* in their community; and

90.3% would like to *participate more* in the arts to improve their wellbeing.

This Report tells the story of One Nation/One Project, including what happened and why, as well as what we learned from our research, our communities, and our experiences.

ONOP was a time-limited initiative that sought to have lasting impact. As such, appendices are included to make available the many materials and resources generated by the initiative.

WHY IT HAPPENED





The Need.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic made obsolete the “public squares” that anchor place-specific communities and drive social and economic health. Across the country and globe, there were fervent calls for equity and inclusion, and for addressing long-standing structural disenfranchisement and social divides. In the US, culture was stratifying to an alarming degree along numerous social fault lines. The nation was – and still is – in desperate need of creative solutions that bridge communities and help people respect and connect with one another.

In January of 2021, Lear deBessonnet called Clyde Valentín with an idea shaped around the question,

“What if the arts, health, and public sectors came together to heal US communities?”

As the founder of **Public Works**, one of the country’s largest programs for community engaged theater, Lear had seen first-hand how transformative the arts could be to individual and community life.

Her experience resonated directly with decades of research demonstrating the positive mental, physiological, and social outcomes related to arts participation.

In the winter of 2021, Lear also reached out to other artists and visionaries and academics, including Brisa Areli Muñoz, Stephanie Ybarra, Maria Goyanes, Dayron Miles, Adrian Alea, Victoria Davidjohn, Tyler Thomas, Michael Rohd, Jenny Koons, Rachel Chavkin, Sara Rosenbaum, and Jeff Levi. Lear refined her idea through dialogue with these individuals who shared her curiosity, and together, they agreed that the Federal Theatre Project provided an important precedent and opportunity for the need of that present moment. Their input helped shape the idea and bring in key initial partners, including Paloma Hernandez, the National League of Cities, and the Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health at George Washington University.

These visionaries also knew that the arts sector couldn’t do this work alone. The moment was ripe for artists and community leaders across the country to create multi-sector projects that could uplift and repair public life and redefine social cohesion in US communities. Together, Lear and Clyde, along with a core team, envisioned and shaped a national initiative called One Nation/One Project.

The Inspiration.

In 1935, amidst the Great Depression, the US federal government created the Federal Art Project, a sweeping relief effort aimed at addressing the most critical social effects of the economic crisis through investment in the arts. The initiative was a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency to implement public works projects (National Archives, n.d.). **It included the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), which was the largest experiment in community-driven public art in US history.** The FTP was a tool of the relief philosophy of the era: meet enormous calamity with necessarily ambitious ideas that holistically address complex and overlapping problems with complex and overlapping solutions.

Explicitly conceived as a way of putting unemployed arts workers back to work, FTP activities were also designed to actively address social crises in communities across the country and to create theater so vital to civic life that it has fundamentally shifted the country's relationship to art to this day.

Another source of inspiration for ONOP was “One City, One Book,” a model created by the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Arts, in which cities promote the reading of a single book among all residents to generate dialogue, build a sense of civic unity, and create a shared experience among community members.




One example of FTP activity was the widespread production of Sinclair Lewis' 1936 play, *It Can't Happen Here*, adapted from Lewis' popular novel about the rising threat of fascism at the time. The FTP invited 18 cities to imagine the play in relation to their community and to bring their own "take" to the story through both artistic form and content. The Birmingham, AL production of *It Can't Happen Here* resulted in a brass-band parade through city streets. In Seattle, the Negro Repertory Company used the play's metaphor of fascism to indict racism in their city. New York City created productions in three languages: Spanish, English, and Yiddish. The broad representation of artmaking and citizenry was key to the project's success and provided the inspiration for ONOP.

The FTP also exemplified a model of embedding artistic infrastructure in municipalities, creating an unprecedented level of collaboration between public sectors and new conduits for federal investment in local communities. It also helped the country imagine a future beyond the Depression, manifesting the social and political calls of the time for greater equity, investment in communities, and pathways for better health.

This formula – community-engaged artists in partnership with municipal government, at work in moments of crisis, and visible through simultaneous action – helped Lear and Clyde articulate the three tenets of ONOP: arts engagement at scale through cross-sector collaboration for greater community health.

Building on FTP, the vision for this moment was that, rather than working with one play, entire cities would create and share work in any artistic form and would define the artistic vision of their own projects. A national narrative would be crafted from the hyper-local narratives at the scale of a national spectacle. Lear and Clyde also felt it was critical to start with an artistic prompt broad enough that participating cities could shape it to their own contexts, needs, and local perspectives. That prompt became "No Place Like Home," and the overarching vision was to build a national moment celebrating the diversity and plurality of the country.





“The why is very important. *Why are we doing this?* It lays the foundation for something that can grow to be sustained and supported.”

From the beginning, embracing scale while centering community-based artistic enterprise and cross-sector collaboration was vital to ONOP's vision.

Additionally, the core team was clear from the beginning that the project would be time-based, meaning it would have an end point, in the same way a theater production eventually closes. They believed that a time-bound project with a defined conclusion would help communities embrace experimentation in relation to their own goals.



HOW WE BUILT IT



Building a Human Infrastructure

THE NATIONAL TEAM.

ONOP was envisioned
by artists and shaped with
cross-sector partners.

The core ONOP team included artists with intersections across the fields of social impact, civic engagement, public health, and government. The team shared the belief that arts and culture can be a transformative agent of change and healing in our communities.

ONOP's initial staff was largely comprised of theater-makers (directors, devisers, administrators, and producers), individuals skilled in stewarding collaboration on the road to creative world-building. It is no surprise, then, that in the language of **Deepa Iyer's Social Change Ecosystem Framework**, the top identity-roles of ONOP's founding team included visionaries, weavers, and builders. These roles were discovered in an early team-building exercise that helped nurture cohesion, focus, and collaboration. As such, it was clear that the collective ability to imagine, connect, and co-create would provide the basis of our work together.

VISIONARIES: imagining and generating boldest possibilities (innovating).

WEAVERS: seeing through-lines of connectivity between people, ideas, and movements (cross-sector).

BUILDERS: developing, organizing, and implementing ideas in service of a collective vision (initiative building).

In addition to theater artists, ONOP's staff and partners included researchers and dancers, program managers and visual artists, senior executives, a former orchestra conductor, and poets. In 2023, Lear and Clyde were joined by a third Co-Artistic Director, Nataki Garrett, a nationally recognized arts leader known for her visionary approach to systems change, equity, and cultural strategy. Her expertise in transforming institutions and centering the arts as a vehicle for social impact helped guide and

shape the organization's vision. This constellation of practitioners and creative leaders came to represent, in the words of National League of Cities LEAD Senior Executive, Dr. Robert Blaine, a coalition of the willing – a group of people moved toward a common call, within uncharted space, to build something entirely new.

The assembly of this coalition was also a reflection of the unique positionality of ONOP's leaders within their respective fields.

Collectively, the national team of staff and partners represented decades of relationship and field-building that created a rigorous network through which the work could build. Notably, the team was also majority woman- and BIPOC-led, which certainly shaped the shared value for inclusion and equity.

THE PARTNERSHIP

FRAMEWORK. The structure of ONOP’s leadership team intentionally included a partnership framework on the national level that mirrored the invitation for cross-sector collaboration on the local level. Together, the staff and its partners created a body of experts capable of providing relevant technical assistance for 18 distinct cross-sector teams.

There was a specific need for a national partner with the expertise and network to support the sites’ municipal partners. **The National League of Cities (NLC)** became that partner and provided support to the local governments engaged in the initiative and their local collaborators. As a voice and advocate for cities, towns, and villages across the country, the NLC “advocates for and protects the interests of cities, towns and villages by influencing federal policy, strengthening local leadership, and driving innovative solutions.” The NLC also brought years of experience delivering effective technical assistance to cohorts of cities seeking to tackle local challenges within a peer learning environment.

Research and evaluation were also a high priority from the outset of the initiative. Lear and Clyde knew that it was essential to document the ways in which the work in communities would produce outcomes and impacts at both the local and national levels, and to support case-making for future investment and replication of these programs.



One of the key goals was to create a body of research demonstrating the efficacy of arts participation as a positive health behavior that can form the basis for new areas of study and funding from arts and health focused institutions. As a result, the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine (UF CAM) was engaged as a second key partner with its Director of Research Initiatives, Dr. Jill Sonke, appointed as ONOP’s Director of National Research and Impact. Dr. Sonke built a Research and Impact team including statisticians, a research manager, and 12 Research and Impact Associates. As an artist and mixed methods researcher, Dr. Sonke designed a values-based and intentionally broad mixed methods research and evaluation agenda designed to document initiative outcomes and impacts at the local and national levels, and to answer a primary research question: how can arts participation in communities influence social cohesion and wellbeing?

Several other organizational partnerships were also engaged to ensure the initiative was informed and supported by experts from across sectors. The Broadway production company Adventureland provided critical leadership related to the initiative’s scale, strategy, fundraising, and communications, and provided office space for the national team. Rockwell Group provided initial design work that was essential to the development of the initiative’s brand identity. Christopher Bailey of the World Health Organization advised on public health issues and facilitated the sharing of the initiative with international observers and audiences. The table below acknowledges the many individuals and partners who formed the human infrastructure of ONOP.

ONOP Staff and Leadership

CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Lear deBessonnet (Co-Founder)
Clyde Valentín (Co-Founder)
Nataki Garrett

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

National League of Cities,
University of Florida Center for
Arts in Medicine (UF CAM),
Adventureland, Jascula Terman
Strategic Communications
(JTTPR), Sunshine Sachs Morgan &
Lylis, The Soze Agency, Rockwell
Group, Awfully Nice, CSI
Solutions, Orbis Design, World
Health Organization, Hardpin
Media, State of Flow Productions,
Paloma Hernandez, Geiger Gibson
Program in Community Health at
George Washington University,
Jeff Levi, and Sara Rosenbaum

OPERATIONS SUPPORT

Executive Assistant
Kristen Gibbs

Development Director
Leslie Brand

Bookkeeper
Howard De La Rosa

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Associate Artistic Director
Tyler Thomas

Civic Collaborations Director
Michael Rohd

NLC Program Manager
Georgia Gempler

Cohort Collaborations Director
Rebecca Martinez

Partner Organization
CSI Solutions

RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Director
Dr. Jill Sonke

Research Manager
Nicole Morgan

Postdoctoral Researcher
Dr. Shanaé Burch

National Mapmakers Coordinator
Christina D. Eskridge

Statisticians
Dr. Ji-Hyun Lee, Derek Li

Research & Impact Associates
Seher Akram, Cassandra Belden,
Gray Davidson Carroll, Dr. Aaron
Colverson, Chenming Fang, Stefany
Marjani, Mariana Occhiuzzi,
Dr. Ginger Pesata, Katrina Pineda,
Alexandra K. Rodriguez, Clayton
Webb, and Jack Perry Wiggins

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS, & MEDIA STRATEGY

Chief Marketing Officer
Laura Matalon (Adventureland)

Social Media
Morgan McDonough (JTTPR)

National Photographer
Scout Tufankjian

Press Relations
JTTPR, Navalta Media

Media and Communications Support

Natalie Rella (UF CAM), Hardpin
Media, Awfully Nice, Tactile
Pictures, Jessica Hische, The Soze
Agency, State of Flow Productions,
Drew Hodges

Graphic Design
Danny Skinz, Undercurrent Design

IMPACT ADVISORS

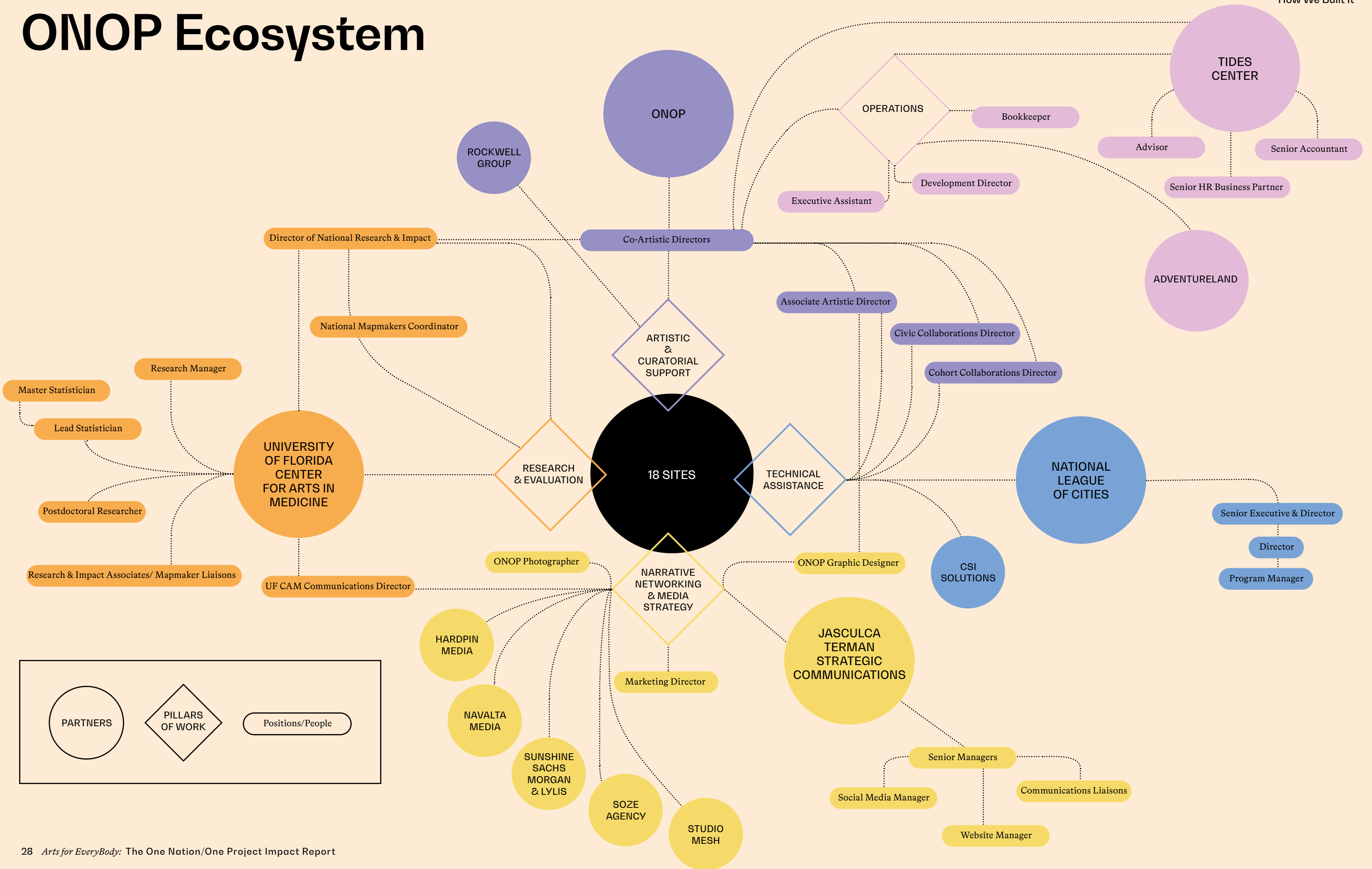
Maggie Bohn, Roger Chaufournier,
Rachel Chavkin, Deborah Cullinan,
Penelope Douglas, Sara Fenske-
Bahat, Kamilah Forbes, Paloma
Hernandez, Jenny Koons, and
Jeffrey Seller

OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Lourdes Aceves, Adrian Alea,
Preethashree Anbukkarasu,
Christopher Bailey, Janae Beaver,
Robert Blaine, Victoria Davidjohn,
Chloe Dean, Dr. Donna Hancox,
Lex Leifheit, Traci Sampson, and
Michele Wilson



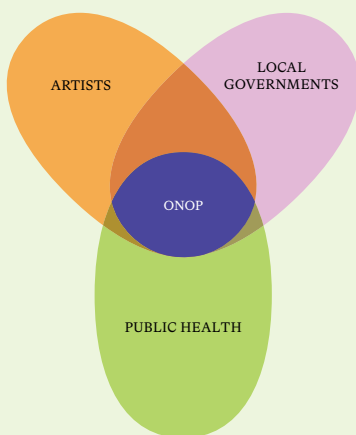
ONOP Ecosystem



Building a Framework of Purpose

In the fall of 2022, as the national team assembled, it was clear that this work had to be grounded in a shared mission, vision, and set of goals and values. **Transformational Leadership and Capacity Building Strategist, Marinieves Alba**, was engaged to guide the team in developing and defining values that would support equitable cross-sector, community-driven work across all 18 sites.

The process reflected ONOP’s commitment to nonhierarchical collaboration, while the mission, vision, goals, and values that resulted communicated a core commitment to ambitious, human-centered ways of working.



MISSION:

One Nation/One Project is a national arts and health initiative designed to activate the power of the arts to repair the social fabric of our nation and heal our communities.

VISION:

Leveraging the power of the arts for the wellbeing of all.

Our Goals

Four goal icons are arranged in a row. From left to right: 1. An icon of two hands shaking, with a blue box labeled 'ACTIVATE' and an orange box labeled 'COLLABORATION' below it. 2. An icon of a megaphone, with a blue box labeled 'AMPLIFY' and a green box labeled 'LOCAL NARRATIVES' below it. 3. An icon of a mortar and pestle, with a blue box labeled 'ADVANCE' and a purple box labeled 'HEALTH EQUITY' below it. 4. An icon of a face with eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, with a blue box labeled 'ACHIEVE' and an orange box labeled 'TRANSFORMATION' below it.

ACTIVATE COLLABORATION
Building cross-sector relationships across arts and culture, local government, and health

AMPLIFY LOCAL NARRATIVES
Uplifting diverse stories of home, community resilience and belonging

ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY
Driving equitable and holistic health outcomes among individuals and communities

ACHIEVE TRANSFORMATION
Inspiring ambitious artistic experiences that leverage the power of the arts for the wellbeing of all people

Building a Foundation of Resources

Leveraging the national in support of the hyper-local.

Early on, “leveraging the national in support of the hyper-local” emerged as a guiding mantra to inform strategy and operations for the initiative. This idea symbolized for the team the notion that a national-level undertaking with credible leaders, partners, and funders could well serve local community efforts. As such, resource-building was the first priority. The team knew that an ambitious vision meant nothing without the resources to make it happen. The next big question was where this funding would come from.

During the Biden administration, \$350 billion in funding was dedicated to pandemic recovery through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) (US Department of the Treasury). **In 2020-21, ARPA funding allocations were made directly to every city, town, and village in the US to support municipalities in their response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.** This represented a once-in-a-generation opportunity to direct flexible federal funding to local needs. It seemed possible to ONOP leaders that significant fiscal support could come from these pandemic relief funds. However, government representatives cautioned against an overreliance on ARPA SLFRF, which were in high demand. This led to the development of a broader plan to secure ONOP funding. Ultimately, ARPA SLFRF funds were used in five ONOP cities, representing significant endorsement for the projects from local municipalities. In **Winston-Salem, NC**, \$1 million was allocated to the project, and in **Gainesville, FL**, \$648,176 was allocated. Funds were also allocated in **Chicago, IL**; **Edinburg, TX**; and **Providence, RI**.

ONOP began with initial start-up capital raised through personal relationships. This first funding allowed for the development of an operating plan and the hiring of the initial team while additional fundraising took place. The co-founders made the decision to secure a fiscal sponsor rather than incorporate ONOP as a 501(c)(3) organization.



As the fiscal sponsor, the Tides Center – whose core values include centering community power and agency, building trust through accountability and service, and creating partnerships for transformative change – **provided vital operational infrastructure to help scale the project at the necessary pace.** This operating arrangement reinforced the time-limited nature of the initiative and significantly reduced the administrative burden required to operate a 501(c)(3) organization.

With a small start toward reaching its ambitious funding goal of \$15 million, project leaders decided to take a risk and launch the initiative with nine initial cities.

Numerous unknowns loomed, including where additional funds would come from and when, how long the initiative could operate, and how many cities could ultimately be engaged. Despite these unknowns, the core team embraced the risks and trusted that they would meet their goals.

Building a Foundation of Resources

Investment in the initiative, including the human infrastructure, communications campaign, Capstone Convening, and projects in all 18 cities, totaled **\$18,104,926.**

As the project was well underway, with a first cohort of nine sites onboarded, funding remained the key question in relation to whether or not to increase to 18 sites. Ultimately, a \$6 million commitment from an anonymous philanthropic donor enabled this expansion by providing the necessary funding to onboard a second cohort. With a strategy of focusing efforts on a small number of large investments to achieve the fundraising goal, it took more than two years of active fundraising efforts to raise \$13,936,596. Foundation grants made up \$7,215,000 of this amount, and philanthropic gifts from individuals totaled \$6,720,750. Over \$2.5 million of the funds raised by ONOP were distributed across the 18 sites, and the rest was used to support staffing, operations, research, documentation, storytelling and communications, and marketing. The funds ONOP raised were supplemented by \$4,169,176 in local investments in the cities. Together, this represents a total investment of \$18,104,926 in the initiative.

ONOP'S FOUNDERS

APOLLO THEATER FOUNDATION
 ANNE CLARKE WOLFF AND TED WOLFF
 BARBARA AND AMOS HOSTETTER
 BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES
 CREATE FOUNDATION
 CREATIVES REBUILD NEW YORK
 DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION
 FRANCES CLAYTON & JESSI HEMPEL
 HULL FAMILY FOUNDATION
 JASON COOPER
 KATIE MCGRATH & J.J. ABRAMS FAMILY FOUNDATION
 KEVIN RYAN
 THE KRESGE FOUNDATION
 MORTIMER & MIMI LEVITT FOUNDATION
 LYLE CHATELAIN FAMILY FOUNDATION
 MELLON FOUNDATION
 THE ROBERT AND MERCEDES EICHHOLZ FOUNDATION
 SOZOSEI FOUNDATION
 THE TOW FOUNDATION
 YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TOWARDS ONOP'S RESEARCH
 AND IMPACT WORK WAS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH
 THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND THE
 UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CENTER FOR ARTS IN MEDICINE

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

FOUNDATION GRANTS TO ONOP

\$7,215,000

PRIVATE GIFTS TO ONOP

\$6,720,750

ARPA SLFRF AND OTHER LOCAL INVESTMENTS

\$4,169,176

TOTAL INVESTMENT

\$18,104,926

WHAT HAPPENED



The Local Invitation

At the core of ONOP was the hyper-local activity that took place in the 18 partner sites across the US. Each of these cities, while showcasing different artistic disciplines and approaches to cross-sector partnership and collaboration, engaged a distinct strategy for how artists can be innovators in co-designing community-centered arts and health models and in addressing critical health and social issues.



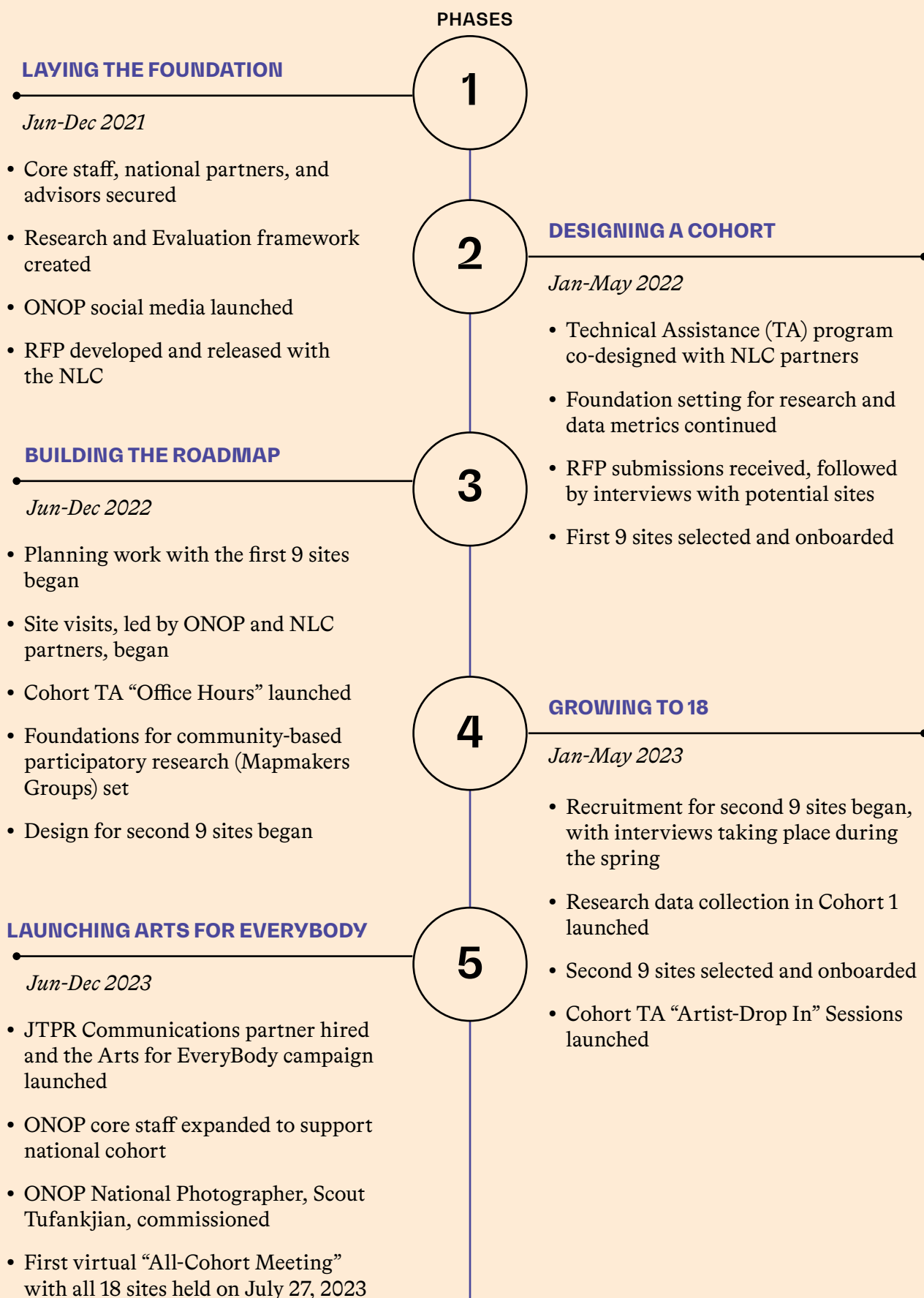
The work of cross-sector collaboration at the local and national levels was multi-faceted. At the local level, it included:

1. **Identification of a significant community need or health focus;**
2. **Development of relationships and structures for cross-sector collaboration between artists, local health and/or public systems, municipalities, and residents;**
3. **Implementation of regular opportunities for arts participation to support health and wellbeing; and**
4. **Design and implementation of a culminating artistic event on July 27, 2024.**

At the national level, it entailed leveraging an unprecedented partnership between the arts, municipal, and health sectors to build a dynamic national showcase of the power of the arts to build social cohesion and wellbeing.

In total, the initiative spanned four years from inception to its sunset in the summer of 2025. The primary activity of the initiative was carried out between January of 2022, when the partners began developing the request for proposals (RFP), and July 27, 2024, when the local projects culminated in each community. **ONOP's 18 sites were onboarded in two distinct cohorts with two distinct sets of commitments required, modeling different methods of building partnerships across the involved sectors.**

The National Timeline



6

CO-DESIGNING & ENGAGING IN COMMUNITIES

Jan-Mar 2024

- Ongoing local arts engagement and project plans finalized across the national cohort
- Artified web-application launched for Theory of Change and Arts Participation survey data collection
- Impact advisor CSI Solutions onboarded, and monthly Healthcare Learning Community launched
- Digital campaign and amplification strategy continued

7

PREPARING FOR FINAL PROJECTS AND PREMIERES

Mar-Jul 2024

- Final preparation for July 27th projects and premieres continued in and with community
- Arts for EveryBody Trailer, Celebrity PSA and Music Anthem videos released
- Social Media campaign continued

JULY 27TH

18 projects premiere on July 26th and 27th, alongside 6 additional sites who joined the “Call to Action”

8

CONCLUDING RESEARCH & PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Aug-Dec 2024

- Research and evaluation data collection concluded
- Planning for National Capstone Convening began
- Arts for EveryBody Podcast series launched

9

ONOP CONVENING & RESEARCH FINALIZATION

Jan-May 2025

- Arts for EveryBody Capstone Convening held, bringing together all 18 sites for the first and only time alongside national stakeholders
- Research and evaluation findings integrated and finalized
- Local data repositories shared with each site

10

SUNSETTING THE ONOP INITIATIVE

Jun 2025

- ONOP’s Final Report, Arts for EveryBody: The One Nation/One Project Impact Report, published
- Initiative Sunset as a project of the Tides Center



“Take the time to get all the right people in the room.”

Site Selection

THE PILOT COHORT. Building from technical assistance processes used by the National League of Cities (NLC), the first nine sites were selected to participate in an initial pilot cohort, from which lessons learned could be applied to a potential future cohort of nine additional cities. As the initial pilot centered on leveraging of ARPA SLFR funds, the RFP was distributed to local municipal governments through the NLC (See [Appendix A](#)), requiring municipal financial support at the outset for each applicant. However, it also positioned local governments as lead partners, which would later be identified as a challenge and key learning (see *Key Learnings* section below).

THE RFP ASKED APPLICANTS TO:

ALLOCATE at least 2% of their respective ARPA funds, with a minimum commitment of \$500,000, to support an arts and wellness project within their respective communities;

DEMONSTRATE the ability to assemble an effective and representative core project team across the arts, municipal, and health sectors;

DEVELOP an artistic project in response to the prompt “No Place Like Home;” and

DEMONSTRATE commitment to the project by the mayor or city manager;

DEVELOP and implement ongoing local participatory arts activities;

COMMIT to participate in regular peer-to-peer learning engagements within the Cohort.

Research demonstrating significant health benefits of regular arts participation had inspired the initiative, and communities were encouraged to create regular opportunities for arts participation that could be measured.

The initiative at this time identified two primary goals for participating communities:

1. **A culminating artistic project; and**
2. **A structure for sustainable local arts and health partnerships.**

The latter was referred to as an “**Arts Desk**,” a term coined by Urban Health Plan CEO and ONOP Impact Advisor, Paloma Hernandez, which was inspired by the “desks” in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) designed to address social determinants of health (e.g., “jobs desks” or “nutrition desks”). Regular arts participation that could be established through both the project and the Arts Desk component was additionally core to the initiative.

Site Selection

“Arts Desks” are partnerships between health and arts systems, organizations, or individuals, resulting in dedicated teams or units that coordinate and manage the integration of arts programs to enhance patient care, staff wellbeing, and community health.

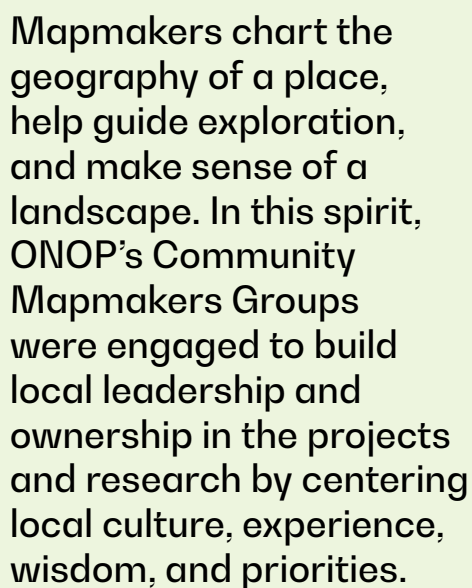
An initial information session for the initiative received significant interest from NLC member cities, indicating an eagerness at the local level to build multi-sector partnerships through and around the arts. Over **180** municipalities expressed interest in the initiative and registered for the information session. However, the requirement for the 2% local ARPA allocation was challenging for many communities, and ultimately only 12 municipalities applied for the initiative. As a result, the requirement was treated with flexibility during the site selection process to ensure that communities of a range of sizes, geographies, and internal capacities could participate.

Responsiveness and adaptability became a signature in ONOP’s way of working and proved essential to the building of trusting, equity-centered relationships.

NLC and ONOP representatives reviewed the applications using a modified NLC evaluation rubric (See **Appendix B**). The criteria centered on diversity (geographic, racial, and artistic), strength of the assembled core team, history of community engagement and community trust, rigor of the artistic point of view, and potential for impact. Finalist sites were interviewed by ONOP and NLC staff to provide additional context to the applications, and nine sites were invited to participate in the pilot cohort.

Notably, the application process for the first nine cities did not require applicants to put forward a proposal for the culminating artistic project. While some sites applied with a clear project vision in mind, ONOP and NLC knew that the initiative was asking collaborators to partner in new ways and sought to make space for projects to develop organically and with deep community partnership. To support this process, ONOP and NLC committed to building and facilitating a technical assistance program that would help sites collaborate, plan, and undertake their work with equity and resident voices at the center. Through this process, each city developed a project roadmap that included goals, strategies, and measurement indicators (see details in the Technical Assistance Program section below).

Site Selection



Mapmakers chart the geography of a place, help guide exploration, and make sense of a landscape. In this spirit, ONOP's Community Mapmakers Groups were engaged to build local leadership and ownership in the projects and research by centering local culture, experience, wisdom, and priorities.

Following site selection, each city was supported in the development of a project roadmap and a Community Mapmakers Group. These groups incorporated local community participation and leadership in project planning and in the research activities. Through broad community representation, **the Mapmakers structure helped ensure that local voices and priorities were centered in every aspect of the work, creating maximal opportunities to not only engage community, but to co-design with them.** More information about these groups is provided in the *Research* section below.

EXPANDING TO 18 SITES. After a year of building the initiative with the pilot cohort, learnings about growth feasibility crystallized for the national partners, and there was a key decision to make. Was scaling to 18 sites still necessary? Was there internal and financial capacity to do so? What were the pros and cons?

Ultimately, it was decided that the original vision for 18 sites remained relevant and powerful, and that expanding to 18 sites – supported by a modified invitation and structural model – could help the project achieve its goal of broad access, inclusion, and geographic, cultural, and artistic diversity.

This expansion also represented an opportunity to reach more artists and/or health partners who may not have been able to apply in the first cohort due to lack of mayoral buy-in or existing municipal relationships. Additionally, the original requirement for municipalities to be primary applicants in the first cohort introduced an imbalance of power among local partners that delayed project progress in some sites. To incorporate these learnings, ONOP leaders circled back to arts organizations that had previously expressed interest and to organizations recommended by Impact Advisors and others to build a second cohort. This led to conversations and invitations for artists, arts organizations, and health leaders to apply directly to the initiative without the requirement of an established relationship with a local government or health partner in January of 2023 (See [Appendix C](#)).

Site Selection

Second cohort applicants were asked to:

1. Develop and implement ongoing local participatory arts activities;
2. Develop an artistic project in response to the prompt “No Place Like Home;”
3. Commit to participate in regular peer-to-peer learning engagements within the cohort; and
4. Consider new and/or deepen current opportunities to assemble additional project partners across the arts, municipal, and health sectors.

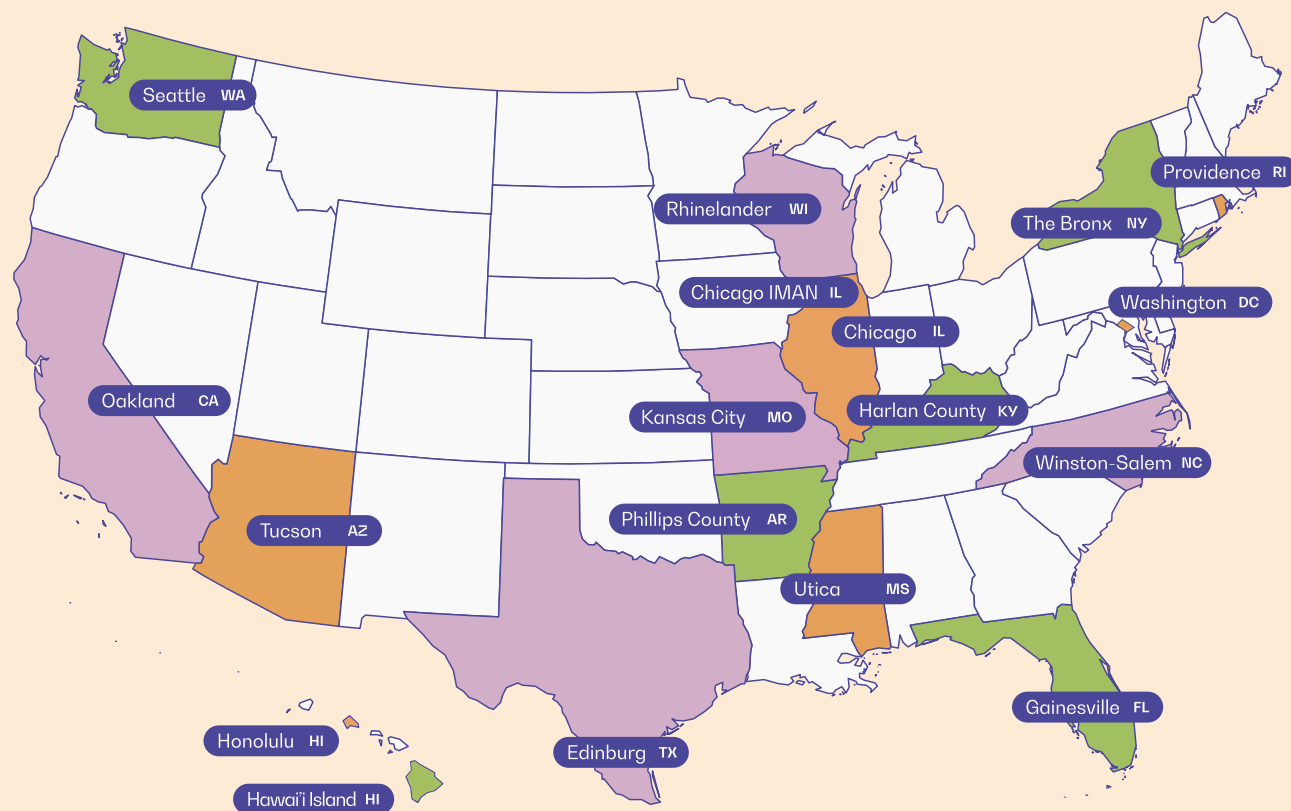
This approach to the second cohort reflected a significant refinement of ONOP’s core aim: **to activate local artists and their artistic practices as key levers to building sustainable cross-sector muscles and partnerships.** It also provided a compelling example of two strategies for cross-sector collaboration: one that involves established government institutions, and a second that initiates from the impulses of artists and innovative community organizations. Notably, the second cohort did not undertake as intensive a project road mapping process and was not required to establish Community Mapmakers Groups. However, the cities in the second cohort received technical assistance from NLC, where needed, in the form of networking support and strategic thought partnership, and the same broad national collaboration from the ONOP Technical Assistance team. To accomplish this support with the larger cohort of cities, an additional Co-Artistic Director, Nataki Garrett, was brought on board, along with a dedicated liaison for the second cohort, Rebecca Martínez.





“Create a relationship
that will bring you *ten*
other relationships.”

The 18 Sites



18 sites were onboarded to the initiative between April 2022 (Cohort 1) and April 2023 (Cohort 2). While the cities are organized by cohorts below, it is important to note that all 18 cities functioned as a single cohort leading into the final year of the project, starting in Summer 2023 with the first National Cohort Meeting.

COHORT 1: Gainesville, FL; Utica, MS; Harlan County, KY; Winston-Salem, NC; Phillips County, AR; Chicago, IL; Edinburg, TX; Providence, RI; Rhinelander, WI

COHORT 2: Tucson, AZ; Honolulu, HI; Hawai'i Island, HI; IMAN Chicago, IL; Kansas City, MO; Washington, D.C.; The Bronx, NY; Oakland, CA; Seattle, WA

These cities ranged in population from 633 people to 2.6 million people (US Census Bureau), and included rural, suburban and urban environments spanning the nation, and two Hawaiian Islands.

The 18 Sites

THE BRONX, NY

POPULATION

1,472,654
(34,920.2 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

36.7

ETHNICITY:

55% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$46,838

RACE

45.1% Black
42.6% White
5.0% Asian
3.9% Two or More Races
3.1% American Indian, Alaska Native
0.4% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

CHICAGO, IL

POPULATION

2,746,388
(12,059.8 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

36.4

ETHNICITY:

29.6% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$74,474

RACE

39.0% White
28.4% Black
12.0% Two or More Races
7.1% Asian
0.9% American Indian, Alaska Native
0.1% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

EDINBURG, TX

POPULATION

100,243
(2,241.4 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

28.8

ETHNICITY:

85.8% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$61,059

RACE

48.2% Two or More Races
39.9% White
1.9% Black
2.5% Asian
0.2% American Indian, Alaska Native
0.0% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

GAINESVILLE, FL

POPULATION

141,085
(2,234 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

28

ETHNICITY:

13.4% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$47,099

RACE

59.2% White
21.6% Black
9.7% Two or More Races
6.2% Asian
0.2% American Indian, Alaska Native
0.1% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

HARLAN COUNTY, KY

POPULATION

26,831
(57.6 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

41.2

ETHNICITY:

1.2% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$37,198

RACE

95.9% White
2.0% Black
1.2% Two or More Races
0.5% Asian
0.3% American Indian, Alaska Native
0.1% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander

HAWAI'I ISLAND, HI

POPULATION

200,629
(49.8 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

44.3

ETHNICITY:

11.9% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$74,580

RACE

34.7% White
30.6% Two or More Races
20.4% Asian
12.8% Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander
1% Black
0.6% American Indian, Alaska Native

The 18 Sites

HONOLULU, HI

POPULATION

350,964
(5,796.8 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

42.7

ETHNICITY

6.6% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$84,907

RACE

52.9% Asian
18.4% Two or More Races
17% White
8.5% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander
1.8% Black
0.2% American Indian,
Alaska Native

KANSAS CITY, MO

POPULATION

508,090
(1,614.5 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

36.5

ETHNICITY:

12.3% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$67,449

RACE

57.8% White
25.8% Black
8.6% Two or More Races
2.7% Asian
0.4% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.3% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

OAKLAND, CA

POPULATION

440,646
(7,787.4 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

38.6

ETHNICITY

28.9% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$96,828

RACE

30.5% White
21.1% Black
15.5% Asian
11.6% Two or More Races
1.2% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.4% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

PHILLIPS COUNTY, AR

POPULATION

16,568
(24 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

39.9

ETHNICITY:

2.2% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$38,874

RACE

62.6% Black
34.4% White
1.7% Two or More Races
0.8% Asian
0.5% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.0% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

PROVIDENCE, RI

POPULATION

190,934
(10,373.5 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

32.7

ETHNICITY:

44.3% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$65,206

RACE

40.7% White
18.7% Two or More Races
13.3% Black
5.9% Asian
1.0% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.1% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

RHINELANDER, WI

POPULATION

8,285
(983.6 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

38.9

ETHNICITY

2.2% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$53,561

RACE

94% White
3.0% Two or More Races
1.5% Black
0.8% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.0% Asian
0.0% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

The 18 Sites

SEATTLE, WA

POPULATION

737,015
(8,791.8 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

35.6

ETHNICITY

8.2% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$120,608

RACE

61.8% White
17.2% Asian
10.5% Two or More Races
6.6% Black
0.6% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.3% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

TUCSON, AZ

POPULATION

542,629
(2,251.6 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

35.6

ETHNICITY

42.7% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$55,708

RACE

58.2% White
19.1% Two or More Races
5.0% Black
3.1% Asian
2.7% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.2% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

UTICA, MS

POPULATION

636
(people per sq. mile data
missing)

MEDIAN AGE

43.3

ETHNICITY

9.4% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$36,750

RACE

70.1% Black
22% White
3.8% Two or More Races
1.1% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.0% Asian
0.0% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

WASHINGTON, D.C.

POPULATION

689,545
(11,280.7 people per sq.
mile)

MEDIAN AGE

34.9

ETHNICITY

11.6% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$108,210

RACE

43.3% Black
39.1% White
8.4% Two or More Races
4.1% Asian
0.3% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.1% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

WINSTON-SALEM, NC

POPULATION

249,545
(1,880.8 people per sq. mile)

MEDIAN AGE

36.1

ETHNICITY

17.9% Hispanic or Latino

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$59,189

RACE

48.7% White
32.4% Black
8.8% Two or More Races
2.3% Asian
0.5% American Indian,
Alaska Native
0.0% Native Hawaiian,
Other Pacific Islander

Building a National Community

From the beginning, the core team knew that technical assistance (TA), as a core pillar of the initiative, would be essential to scaling cross-sector collaboration across 18 very different communities. The TA program included several components:

- Initial road-mapping to help site teams plan their work;
- Site visits by the national ONOP team;
- Regular virtual site team meetings with initiative staff;
- Office hours for individual and cross-community support; and
- Regular full-cohort (all 18 sites) virtual meetings.

ROAD-MAPPING. Project road-mapping for the pilot cohort began in April 2022. The model was designed by the NLC and ONOP team. **Consilience Group co-founder and frequent NLC partner, Traci Sampson, served as a key collaborator and facilitator in this process.** The sites met every other month for group design sessions and had individual sessions with the TA team in alternate months. During these sessions, the sites developed a roadmap to:

- Define site-specific project goals, values, and vision;
- Identify necessary additional local partners;
- Establish a regular meeting cadence for all project partners and advisors;
- Define metrics for measuring project success; and
- Identify key strategies for achieving their core project goals.

After the 2022 planning phase, sites began to implement their projects. The implementation timeline for each site was bespoke, depending on factors such as the need to complete a public procurement process for hiring, onboard additional partners, navigate staff turnover, align with existing schedules, or develop new relationships. Overall, the need to build trust and shared understanding among local partners affected the implementation timeline in every city.

The second nine cities were onboarded in May of 2023. Technical assistance for this cohort engaged similar road-mapping principles, but on a more condensed timeline. The primary objective was to create a process by which onboarding the new sites could build a shared sense of the national agenda as well as build a foundation for local efforts.

SITE VISITS. ONOP and NLC conducted site visits in all 18 cities. These visits enabled relationship-building between ONOP leadership and each site, strengthened the national team's understanding of the local context and communities, and helped to advance project efforts according to each site's needs. Prior to the visits, the site teams were encouraged to consider how they could best leverage the presence of the national team with regard to local support and priorities. During the visits, the local teams conducted community tours to contextualize their work. The national team presented to local stakeholders, partners, influencers, and gatekeepers to help put the local work in a national context and support the respective goals. Some sites held press conferences or community meals, some arranged meetings with local elected officials, and others invited the national team to sit in on ongoing programming. The visits gave the local and national teams time to discuss, imagine, and plan, and provided time for community members and stakeholders, including Mapmakers Groups, to join in visioning.





“Make sure you’re building *the right infrastructure* for everybody to feel successful and impactful in what they’re doing.”

Building a National Community

Inspired by the national prompt “No Place Like Home,” site visits included a story circle activity in which community members were invited to share senses of home or, “**what they see, hear, taste, touch, and feel that is unique to their community.**” ONOP Research and Impact Associate/ Mapmaker Liaison, Gray Davidson Carroll, then shaped these responses into poems that were returned to the sites as portraits of their community in their own words.

OFFICE HOURS. Optional monthly virtual meetings with the TA team were offered for all cities to attend. Some meetings focused on specific topics (e.g., social prescribing, using ARPA funds, etc.), while others were guided by questions or concerns brought forth by cohort members. Many participants attended the call simply to be in fellowship with other members of the cohort. As the work progressed in the cities, the TA team offered several office hour spaces for different sectors, such as municipalities, artists, and healthcare partners, as well as sessions focused on support for July 27 Events.

FULL-COHORT MEETINGS. The virtual, national “all-cohort” meetings functioned as opportunities to uplift stories of local progress, share project discoveries, tackle challenges that had relevance across sites, communicate news and national updates, share resources, and build collective momentum and joy. The ONOP team took very seriously the opportunity and responsibility to not only support local activity, but to also contribute to national field-building and solidarity.



CASE EXAMPLES OF THE TA PROCESS IN ACTION

Utica, MS

Utica's project team spurred the development of a Community Advisory Group (CAG), which also served as the project's Mapmakers, guiding project direction and development. During the organizing of the CAG, the project team noted that the group held varying perspectives on what community organizing meant and what it was meant to achieve. The group wanted to engage as large a portion of the community as possible, and the internal disagreements prompted them to seek outside guidance. At the project team's request, ONOP TA team members attended a CAG meeting virtually and facilitated a session on community organizing. The ONOP team led a group conversation among the CAG, whose members later reported that this approach effectively helped the group communicate and move forward.

The ONOP TA team also met with both the mayor and Sipp Culture's lead artist, Daniel Johnson, to support and build the case for a large-scale Utica-based event, which eventually emerged as "Homegrown Utica."

Moreover, through support from ONOP's national public relations team, the Utica team leveraged the national connection to garner significant local press in print and local television.



CASE EXAMPLES OF THE TA PROCESS IN ACTION

Edinburg, TX

The Edinburg project included the commissioning of an original musical, which presented the need to clarify copyright and intellectual property rights for the musical in addition to the individual songs composed for the piece. This was challenging because the City of Edinburg did not have experience negotiating individual artist contracts that included intellectual property rights for the commissioning of original work. ONOP's TA team was invited into conversations with the artists and city staff to help them navigate these challenges. The team provided examples from other cities and facilitated brainstorming and problem-solving exercises. The result was an agreement acceptable to all parties that will serve as a model in Edinburg for similar partnerships in the future. Moreover, the work of the lead artist, Brisa Areli Muñoz, a Rio Grande Valley native, was incorporated directly into city operations through her appointment as a part-time city worker.

This key decision integrated artistic leadership more closely into the City of Edinburg's existing cultural programming team to strengthen the communications and planning process.

The collaboration became so successful that the "No Place Like Home" theme of July 27 now lives as a mural on the Arts, Culture and Events Center, and Brisa continues to work with the City of Edinburg as a programmatic and artistic consultant.



CASE EXAMPLES OF THE TA PROCESS IN ACTION

Kansas City, MO

The local lead organization in Kansas City, Art as Mentorship (AM), had been led and driven by musicians, including Founder Enrique Chi, for 10 years. The organization was struggling to gain additional recognition for their work with students in their songwriting program, the “Rebel Song Academy.” As an artist and leader of the band Making Movies, Enrique received more personal recognition than the arts and education organization he founded.

Working closely with the ONOP TA team during an initial site visit, AM leveraged the presence of the national team to garner several high-level meetings with existing and possible new funders and elected leaders, resulting in stronger relationships with both.

The organizing work undertaken with the ONOP TA team also helped AM garner several new multi-year funding opportunities, successfully raising its local, regional and national profile.



Communications and Media Campaign

In addition to stewarding sites through their creative processes, a significant focus of ONOP's work was a national communications and media campaign designed to shift the broader narratives around US communities and the important roles that arts and culture can play in public health. To create more clarity around the project's focus on arts and health,

“Arts for EveryBody” was chosen as the name for the public-facing, national campaign that would uplift and drive the narrative work of the 18 sites and ONOP's national arts and health agenda.

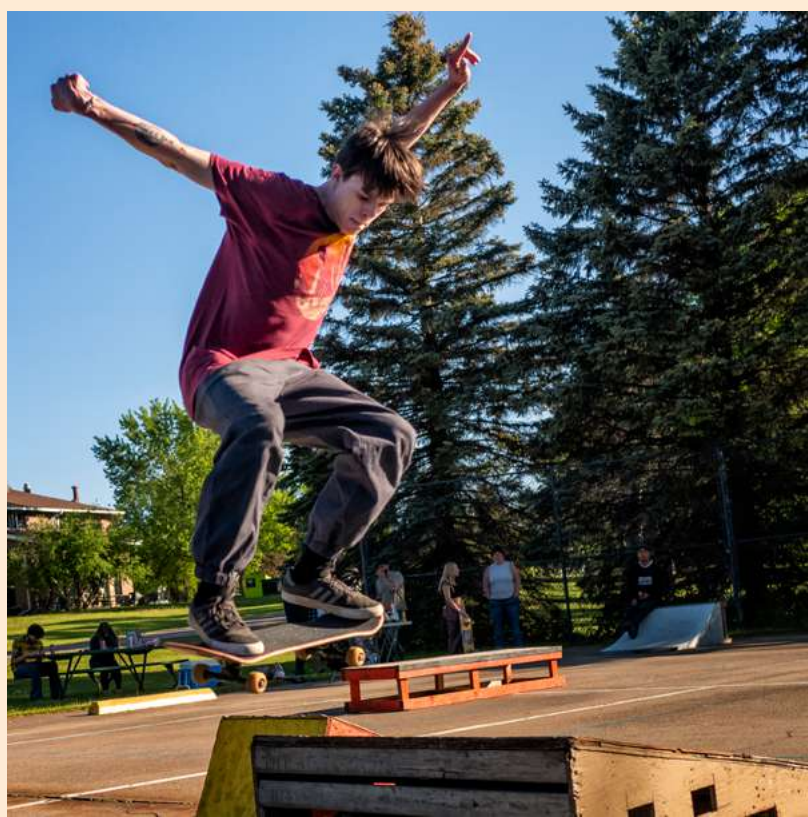
Jasculca Terman Strategic Partners (JTSP) were brought in to guide the campaign, coordinated by ONOP's Marketing and Communications Consultant, Laura Matalon, President of Fourth Wall Marketing and Chief Marketing Officer for Hamilton.

Leading with the headline message “Arts for EveryBody,” the campaign launched in September 2023 and was amplified by **The New York Times**. Arts for EveryBody prioritized high-quality story documentation and thoughtfulness in building a narrative to benefit and empower the project sites, especially those representing BIPOC communities who have faced long patterns of abuse and extraction. It also leveraged the 18 simultaneous project premieres on July 27 to generate national excitement.

PHOTOJOURNALISM. The Arts for EveryBody campaign was designed to amplify the artists, stories, and culture of ONOP's 18 communities as they prepared for July 27 and to uplift them as a national

cohort of leaders in the field and movement of arts and health moving forward. To support this endeavor, **ONOP commissioned Scout Tufankjian, a Brooklyn-based, award-winning photojournalist and author best known for her documentation of the 2008 Obama presidential campaign, to document each site as they developed their work and their culminating July 27 projects.**

Scout's photos would become the visual bedrock of the initiative's storytelling – the tools by which the work of the 18 sites was shared, along with the story of their communities. Her photojournalism captured how arts and culture were defined by each place, as well as how home was understood by each community. Scout's photos were also featured prominently in Arts for EveryBody's media campaigns and were provided to each site for use in perpetuity. Notably, Scout was the only member of the ONOP team to visit all 18 sites in person.





“Plant a forest
and *the rains*
will come.”

Communications and Media Campaign

LOCAL AND NATIONAL MEDIA. Each of the 18 sites was assigned a Communications Liaison from JTTPR to support, advise on, and bolster media strategies within their local community. This team member attended check-in meetings with each site to gather project updates and develop pitches for local media to generate awareness about their project. These relationships resulted in more than 200 media stories about the 18 Arts for EveryBody events. In the months leading up to July 27, the Communications team highlighted each community's story to build national awareness of the campaign. Their efforts would also include inviting local elected officials to attend the culminating events taking place in their cities. ONOP's Co-Artistic Directors appeared on broadcast platforms like [The Kelly Clarkson Show](#), [Good Day New York](#), and [CBS Sunday Morning](#) to invite people nationwide to join in-person or share art on social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA. ONOP and Arts for EveryBody posted content daily, including research infographics, memes, site photography by documentary photographer Scout Tufankjian, site activities, and tiny-mic video content of national team members. The channels ran ads and boosted social content to attract audiences, resulting in rapid growth for all channels, particularly Instagram. **Leading up to July 27, the campaign encouraged people to attend events in person, share their art via #ArtsForEveryBody, and take the “art-ified” arts participation research survey.** The social media team additionally created toolkits for the 18 sites to capture and quickly share photos and videos, to ensure consistent local storytelling. Toolkits also included copy-and-paste social media posts for their local channels to ensure the campaign reached their communities regularly. From the launch of the channels through August 31, 2024, Arts for EveryBody channels grew to

nearly **20,000** followers *with*
1.9M combined impressions.

WEBSITE. The Arts for EveryBody website was established to become a one-stop-shop for audiences to learn about not only the national project and its goals, but also the details and stories of each individual site project. The campaign created an interactive map for users to navigate to each site project, taking them to a dedicated page with photos captured by Scout Tufankjian, local artist profiles and news, project updates and more. These pages were periodically updated to ensure all relevant details about the projects were up to date.

The website was also updated with a dedicated “Call to Action” page for easy access to ways to get involved, as well as other exciting drops including the campaign video, ambassador campaign, and anthem music video. The Arts for EveryBody campaign grew quickly in under a year, with large numbers of followers and shares, suggesting that Americans were resonating with the campaign's ideas.



Communications and Media Campaign

THE JULY 27 CALL TO ACTION: A NATIONAL INVITATION. A “call to action” was created to invite all cities and artists across the country to leverage the July 27 moment in their communities.

The call highlighted how works and actions of art have the power to alter the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and our nation.

It invited artists and cities to hold events to celebrate and mobilize the healing power of the arts in their communities, and to join the Arts for EveryBody campaign on social media.

As a result, at least 16 additional cities held Arts for EveryBody events:

Miramar, FL; Bennington, VT; Lakeland, FL; Lawrenceville, GA; Austin, TX; Dublin, CA; Dearborn, MI; and Morris, IL all declared “Arts and Health Day” in their communities. Organizations like the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Cheboygan Public Library (MI) and The Alpharetta Arts Center (GA) pledged to recognize “Arts and Health Day” in their programming on July 27. The Granite Church in Georgetown, CT held a “Mental Health Recovery Day” with music, arts, and food. In Orlando, FL, Arts for EveryBody joined the International OCD Foundation Conference’s “Creative Corner,” an artmaking station for conference attendees.

Notably, Baton Rouge, LA (Lear’s hometown) joined the call with a two-day-long arts and health celebration called “48 Hours in Baton Rouge.” The Arts Council of Baton Rouge partnered with the City of Baton Rouge to bring 14 different art events throughout the two-day festival including a ribbon-cutting for a new neighborhood mural, sculpture making, basket weaving, a poem reading, music and more. The celebration culminated in a theater performance based on the national theme – “No Place Like Home” – featuring six playwrights, six directors, and 18 actors.

COMMISSIONED ANTHEM SONG. John Forté was commissioned to lead the development of a song in support of the Arts for EveryBody campaign. The song includes artist participants and contributions from Edinburg, TX; Kansas City, MO; Chicago, IL; and Phillips County, AR. The song title “You Are Home / You Are Loved” references the theme driving many of the site’s artistic projects that premiered on July 27 and features artists John Forté, Binta, Making Movies, Olivia Mills, the Living Waters Gospel Choir, Duncan Burnett, Enrique Chi, Jesus Villegas, Brenda Hughes, MaryAnn Hughes Goldsberry, Lita Moore-Johnson, Maple Edwards, and JT White.

ARTS FOR EVERYBODY PODCAST SERIES. In partnership with production company, Awfully Nice, ONOP created a podcast series, No Place Like Home, to tell the story of Arts for EveryBody as one of the largest public art campaigns in recent US history. This documentary podcast features the stories of five ONOP communities – Edinburg, TX; Phillips County, AR; Seattle, WA; Providence, RI; and Kansas City, MO – with artists, local leaders, and public health experts sharing insights about how they are using the arts to transform their communities. The series is narrated by award-winning spoken word, performer, writer, and librettist, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, and was made widely available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Deezer](#), and [Pocket Casts](#).

ARTS FOR EVERYBODY PSA VIDEO CAMPAIGN. A talent partner, the Soze Agency, was also engaged to create a celebrity public service announcement about the arts impact on health. Artists and celebrities Debbie Allen, Craig Robinson, Yaya DaCosta, Quinn XCII, Jay Ellis, Jerry Trainor, and over 20 others participated in the video and photoshoot, providing the campaign with promotional content. The PSA launched in [US Weekly](#), and Arts For EveryBody social media channels featured the photos in the final weeks leading up to July 27. Collaborative posts on Instagram brought new audiences, reaching over 9 million people during this effort.



[See the campaign assets here.](#)

The National Moment



JULY 27 WAS THE CULMINATION of months of collaboration between municipal leaders, artists, and health leaders in each community. While the day-of act of making and participating in art together activated each community and brought health and wellness to the forefront, the broader intention was that those cross-sector relationships forged in the leadup would outlast ONOP and serve as replicable models for other communities. **This national day of action was designed to be a visible moment, both in the hyper-local and national scene, that could be leveraged towards lasting change in US communities.**

Images from July 27 events in each community can be seen [here](#) and on social media platforms under the hashtag #artsforeverybody. An ONOP anthem video showcasing July 27 events in all 18 sites was commissioned.



See the July 27 Anthem Video [here](#).



Capstone Convening

Before fully sunsetting as an initiative in June of 2025, leaders and artists from all 18 cities came together for the first and only time to reflect on how their communities had been changed and to inspire others across the US to join in on the powerful work of cross-sector collaboration and community healing through artmaking.

The Convening was hosted in Dallas, TX, February 5-8, 2025, with 150 cohort members and over 100 others in attendance.

The event included exhibits of artwork from the communities and from the collection of photography created by Scout Tufankjian, spotlights on the work in cities, presentations on topics designed to support future work, and many dynamic performances by artists from ONOP cities, as well as acclaimed national artists. The Convening was a powerful moment of transition for ONOP as arts, health, and municipal leaders from cities beyond the original 18 joined the conversation. It marked the completion of ONOP's founding vision, with impact and future adaptation of the work handed to new leaders across each sector.



[See the Capstone Convening agenda here.](#)

THE PROJECTS IN THE 18 SITES

Each city built their own leadership teams, partnerships, and plans to leverage the arts to strengthen social fabrics and to support health and wellbeing in general and in relation to pandemic recovery. The local teams were supported by ONOP's Co-Artistic Directors, the TA team, Communications staff, and Research and Impact team. Each city developed structures for sustainable cross-sector collaboration, opportunities for community arts participation, and a plan for a large-scale event on July 27.

The focus and work in each city are summarized below, and more in-depth descriptions of the leadership and work in each city can be found in [Appendix D](#).

THE BRONX



THE BRONX

What if a local community health center prescribed arts and culture for wellbeing?

LOCATION

The Bronx, NY

PROJECT LEAD

Urban Health Plan (UHP)

PARTNERS

Local arts and culture consultant and organizations

PROJECT FOCUS

Arts integration within healthcare

KEY OUTCOMES

Arts prescribing, onsite art/artists presentations, workshops, and an exhibition

JULY 27 EVENT

“Fiesta San Juan Presents: Arts for EveryBody”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$100,000)

THE VISION: To make arts and culture an integral part of the healthcare experience. UHP is a network of community health centers located in the South Bronx, Central Harlem, and Northern Queens, NY, with the distinction of being recognized as a Top 10 community health center in the US. In partnership with ONOP, UHP leveraged the arts to revitalize the community in its main site in the South Bronx – a historic hub of creativity with neighborhoods ranking among the most underserved in the US.

THE PROJECT: Led by the vision of its CEO, UHP launched Arts for EveryBody – one of the first arts prescribing programs in New York City. Through partnerships with local arts and cultural organizations, UHP’s patients participate in free and low-cost arts experiences including visual arts, dance, music, and theater, as well as literary, horticulture, and culinary arts. Through its holistic approach, UHP works to foster participation and joy amongst patients and staff, and to create a more enriching and supportive healthcare culture.

ON JULY 27: UHP hosted “Fiesta San Juan,” a long-running, daylong community celebration in the South Bronx to highlight the deep connections between arts and health. “Fiesta San Juan Presents Arts for EveryBody” kicked off with a parade led by a local marching band and included performances by merengue, salsa, swing bands, and Bengali and hip-hop dancers. Residents enjoyed cooking demonstrations, a visual arts exhibition, and community art classes led by local artists.



ENABLER: “It’s extremely vital to get leadership from across the organization on board and to be talking at the same time to conceptualize the vision, the mission, and the aim. What do we see here? What do we want to do? Why are we doing this? What impact do we want to have? Having everybody from the get-go involved in that process lays the foundation of something that can grow and be sustained and be supported.”

BARRIER: “Some partnerships took longer to establish than others due to scheduling conflicts. Staffing limitations were another barrier; some organizations we reached out to simply did not have the bandwidth to collaborate on external programs or projects like ours. These factors occasionally hindered the speed and scope of partnership development.”



MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “When we started getting the social prescriptions from providers, that was a very pivotal moment. I’ve been doing this for 30 years and we always get people into the programs, but to have providers start generating prescriptions to the arts, it was just phenomenal to me. It just showed that all the town halls we did, all the provider trainings, all the things that we tried to do to show the importance of the arts – it had some impact.”

“Years ago, the words healthcare and quality weren’t married to each other. Now it’s like everybody knows it. Quality is on the tip of your tongue when you talk about healthcare. And this is a next cultural transformation. You’re going to start thinking of those words together – arts and health. And to me, that’s huge.”



CHICAGO



CHICAGO

*What if we
validated artists
as valuable members
of a community's
wellness workforce?*

THE VISION: To expand paid job opportunities for local artists in response to workforce needs within the arts and behavioral health sectors. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, high artist unemployment and burnout within the healthcare workforce resulted in workforce challenges amidst a growing need for mental health care. Together, the partners launched Healing Arts Chicago to employ artists within city-run mental health clinics to increase community wellbeing.

THE PROJECT: Ten artists were recruited and received training and certification to be Community Health Workers through City Colleges of Chicago. They were embedded in five mental health clinics operated by CDPH in the West, South, and Northwest areas of the city. The artists supplemented traditional behavioral health services with arts activities to support patient and clinician wellbeing. Each artist facilitated free art classes and workshops, including movement, puppetry, music, sound meditation, photography, spoken word/poetry, visual arts, hand sewing, and more.

LOCATION

Chicago, IL

PROJECT LEADS

City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events (DCASE), Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), City Colleges of Chicago (Malcolm X College)

PARTNERS

Local artist apprentices, city health clinic staff and patients

PROJECT FOCUS

Mental health, behavioral health workforce development

KEY OUTCOMES

Healing Arts Chicago (Formerly known as Chicago Arts & Health Pilot for Creative Workers)

JULY 27 EVENT

“Healing Arts Chicago Summer Celebration: Arts x Health x Wellness Summit”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

>\$1,000,000 (ONOP: \$137,500; ARPA: \$705,000; Other: \$200,000)

ON JULY 27: Healing Arts Chicago hosted a city-wide celebration and creative summit featuring artists, local leaders, arts organizations, and health institutions in a day of workshops, conversations, performances, and interactive experiences at Malcolm X College. Workshops were led by Healing Arts Chicago artists and the day highlighted the versatility of the community health worker role, demonstrating how artists and cultural workers can be powerful members of the wellness workforce.

CHICAGO



ENABLER: “Making a link with the Dean at the College was an enabler. This would later keep the energy of the collaboration alive amidst leadership transitions. And being able to pull in private funding to support the artists with money for health benefits. Because they aren’t direct employees of the city, we had to find additional funds and we finally got a private funder to do that.”

BARRIER: “Governmental slowness. It’s things like marketing, where we know what we need to do, but having to go through various teams, having to have two departments talk and figure out who’s doing what, while the people assigned within those departments are balancing other work, and this is a new project that is coming in... I think we have figured it out now, but it took some time to do so.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “The artists getting their footing in the clinics and starting to build relationships with clinicians and health staff on site really took it from theory and learning to being applied in the spaces. This is where everybody began to actually understand the work.”

CHICAGO



THE FUTURE: The team is working to expand the reach of Healing Arts Chicago through new partnerships across the city. Since July 2024, they have expanded to seven clinic sites and have begun engaging new populations via CDPH’s Substance Use Disorder program, extending the inaugural cohort’s employment by one year. The site partners are exploring social prescribing models and have received funding to support a second Healing Arts summit in August 2025 to continue building momentum.

“We were working to see how healthcare could expand to include the arts as part of total wellness, and then, flipping that, how the arts sector could think in more expansive ways about using their creative practices in the service of health and wellness.”

EDINBURG



EDINBURG

What if arts participation was recognized as a cornerstone of our cities' cultural identity and public health?

THE VISION: To increase belonging and celebrate the cultural heritage and growing diversity of the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) region. As a city along the US-Mexico border, the initiative sought to reframe border narratives on the local and national stage, strengthen community connectedness, and uplift joy not only as a social determinant of health, but as a radical act.

THE PROJECT: The city launched SaludArte, a year-round free arts and wellness initiative. As the “City of Festivals,” Edinburg has a strong practice of celebrating community through the arts.

Through their partnership with ONOP, the Cultural Arts Division expanded their scope to include arts and health programming to improve community wellbeing. SaludArte programming was offered for all ages and included visual arts, theater, dance, and music. The SaludArte program hired wellness practitioners such as art therapists and yoga instructors to lead workshops and classes. This programming became the foundation for the city’s new Arts, Culture and Events Center. The initiative also developed a 75-person original musical uplifting RGV cultural history and the power of connectedness.

LOCATION

Edinburg, TX

PROJECT LEAD

City of Edinburg Department of Library & Cultural Arts

PARTNERS

Local artists, local university and college

PROJECT FOCUS

Belonging, cultural pride, a community arts center

KEY OUTCOMES

SaludArte arts programming (embedded in municipality), original community musical

JULY 27 EVENT

“FridaFest: Arts & Wellness Festival” and *¡Despierta!* premiere

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$500,000-\$1,000,000 (ONOP: \$130,000; ARPA: \$500,00)

ON JULY 27: Edinburg’s downtown came alive with an art and wellness extravaganza – combining their ONOP events with their biggest festival of the year: “FridaFest.” The night began with the premiere of *¡Despierta!*, an original musical devised and performed by 75 community members, celebrating the rich cultural history of the Rio Grande Valley region. The festival also included public art commissions, demonstrations by artists, health and wellness partners, local performers, and a culminating musical headliner.

EDINBURG



ENABLER: “A library is a community center and the fact that we could incorporate art into what the library is already doing was huge. The library also changed, too, because of some of the programming we offered. We had parents wanted to bring their kids and the class wasn’t appropriate for kids. So, we said, ‘We have someone who can teach art to youth.’ And so while that adult class is going on, we’re going to have a teen class going on. So that was win-win.”

BARRIER: “There was a huge barrier that existed in terms of giving the artist the tools that they needed to understand how to engage with a municipality – for example, how to put in a proposal of what they wanted to do.” In some ways, this feels like the perfect place to pick up when it comes to skill building and the cultivation of an artist workforce: how we are providing the opportunity for people to really understand why these processes are important.

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “Our art classes have really created their own community. I think seeing those relationships grow and the ownership that they feel about the programs and the new building has been really incredible. They’re excited to know that it’s part of their community and that they’re part of the community that’s helping make that happen. I think that’s a very transformational thing.”

EDINBURG

“Overall, this experience has only deepened our dedication to making creativity a driving force in our community – not just as a means of self-expression but as a catalyst for wellbeing, economic growth, and professional opportunity.”

THE FUTURE: The Cultural Arts Division is working to strengthen the local creative workforce through specialized training and professional development workshops aimed at equipping artists with the tools they need to build sustainable careers. The team is in discussions to create a second original musical with the community.



GAINESVILLE



GAINESVILLE

What if an entire city came together to rally around youth wellbeing?

THE VISION: To leverage arts, culture, and mental health to address youth gun violence; to engage incarcerated and justice-involved youth, as well as youth impacted by and at risk of gun violence through arts programming designed to reduce risks of gun violence and improve youth emotional wellbeing.

THE PROJECT: Gainesville undertook a three-phase project to respond to a crisis of youth gun violence. Phase One included an open call for small-scale, arts-based

community listening activities, along with convening a Youth Steering Committee of youth impacted by gun violence to provide leadership on how to reduce youth gun violence. Phase Two projects developed larger scale activities that built upon data gathered from youth in Phase One. Phase Three culminated with a celebration on July 27 that showcased project work and local talent. Adjacent to these efforts, AIM developed an arts prescribing program.

LOCATION

Gainesville, FL

PROJECT LEADS

City of Gainesville's Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs; Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR)

PARTNERS

University of Florida Health Shands Arts in Medicine (AIM); University of Florida Center for Arts, Migration, and Entrepreneurship (CAME); Alachua County Public Schools; Gainesville Youth Steering Committee; local artists and arts organizations; a Broadway director

PROJECT FOCUS

Youth gun violence

KEY OUTCOMES

Local artist and wellbeing granting program, arts prescribing

JULY 27 EVENT

"Summer (You)th Celebration"

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$500,000-\$1,000,000 (ONOP: \$130,000; ARPA: \$648,172)

ON JULY 27: A celebration featuring conversations and presentations with Gainesville artists, evening performances by Gainesville youth, arts activations by youth and arts organizations that participated in Phases One and Two, including a ribbon-cutting ceremony for AIM's "HeART Wall: A Love Letter to Gainesville from Gainesville," a lasting symbol of the power of art to address youth gun violence and strengthen social cohesion.

GAINESVILLE



ENABLER: “A large enabler was our focus on youth gun violence. It was something the City already had a vision toward, but didn’t really have an operational plan to address. It had been identified as a big issue by the City of Gainesville, but now the community support was also there. Overall people wanted *to see it work.*”

BARRIER: “Navigating the contractual payment process dealing with ARPA dollars. With ARPA being reimbursement-based only, nonprofits were not often able to front that level of cost. We did every best effort we could to make that process as transparent and easy as possible, but that was still a challenge that we faced in terms of organizations who wanted to apply for the funding.”

MOMENT OF

TRANSFORMATION: “We had a meeting with the city manager and the mayor to show them, at the end, what data we were looking at, how intentional all this was on the back end of things. And that moment kind of shifted this from being a project to a new way of doing things. I felt like ‘Wow, they are really bought into this. They want to uplift the youth voice in this.’ That was the moment where it, like, really, really set in.”

GAINESVILLE



THE FUTURE: Partnerships between project awardees, partners, and city agencies will continue in the form of artist-in-residence programs and expanded youth arts programming. Over the next 18 months, the City will use ARPA funding to implement two community-based and after-school arts and wellbeing programs. The Youth Steering Committee has grown in membership, with increasing opportunities to continue to inform community engagement strategies that generate solutions to gun violence.

“When you want to do something that’s community wide and you have more departments on board, the impact of that work can be so much greater, not just because of the reach the departments have, but what they bring to the table. We’re setting the stage for when we work on big things, they don’t just fall in one area. It really should be collaborative, whether it be other city departments or other community partners.”

HARLAN COUNTY



HARLAN COUNTY

What if an ensemble of artists reimaged community care?

LOCATION

Harlan County, KY

PROJECT LEAD

Higher Ground

PARTNERS

Clover Fork Clinic, Harlan County Fiscal Court, Harlan County Tourism, Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College, Harlan County Community Foundation, City of Harlan, MAMAW Festival Coordinator

PROJECT FOCUS

Mental health, community care

KEY OUTCOMES

Original community-based musical, arts and health festival

JULY 27 EVENT

“MAMAW Fest: Mountains of Appalachia Music Arts and Wellness Festival”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$170,000)

THE VISION: To deepen the legacy of community care and to explore new partnerships with municipal and health leaders in the county.

THE PROJECT: Higher Ground worked to create a community-based production, *Angels Unaware*, using story and song to respond to the questions, “How do we take care of ourselves?” and “How do we take care of each other?” The ensemble held regular community potlucks, workshops, festivals,

and creative events, providing space for local artists and county residents to gather, be creative, and build community. Alongside these experiences, the team worked with the local community health center, Clover Fork Clinic, to explore ways to integrate the arts into rural healthcare delivery. Collaborations included a new mobile health clinic and an arts channel streamed within the clinic waiting room, featuring videos of local creatives sharing their art and its impact on mental and public health.

ON JULY 27: On July 27, “MAMAW Fest: Mountains of Appalachia Music, Arts, and Wellness Festival” took place all day on the streets of downtown Harlan. A celebration of community care, the day featured headlining duo The Local Honeys, as well as other local artists, vendors, musicians, and healthcare providers from around the county. The celebration culminated in an evening performance of *Angels Unaware* – written, performed, and created by over 85 community members.

HARLAN COUNTY



ENABLER: “One of our greatest enablers was allocating Mapmakers funds to cover childcare, meals, and transportation costs for our community members. These resources significantly reduced barriers to participation.”

BARRIER: “Transportation was a major barrier. One thing we really wanted to do was set up a shuttle system connecting different parts of the county to downtown. This would have allowed more people to attend the free festival, regardless of whether they had their own means of getting there.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “After MAMAW, I talked to one of the owners of a business in downtown Harlan. They were a cooling station for the festival, and they also had the Health Department set up with a table and had Narcan and COVID tests and pamphlets in their store, and so people could come in, get some free water, do a little Narcan training and take home a Narcan. And the owner said, ‘I knew really early on in my life that I was different, and I learned to mask super early. The second I had the chance, I moved away.’ Then she said, ‘If there was something like MAMAW Fest when I was growing up, I would have had hope.’”

HARLAN COUNTY



“ONOP gave this little town a chance to do something and to be a part of something really big.”

THE FUTURE: Higher Ground is excited to join the Appalachian Family Wellbeing Collaborative, a cohort of regional organizations dedicated to supporting arts and culture practitioners working at the intersection of child and family wellbeing and narrative change. Through this work, Higher Ground will continue exploring models of community care—particularly for families navigating disability amidst a culture that often prioritizes hyper-independence and ableism. Proposed work includes listening sessions, community meetings, and art events centered around themes of family wellbeing in the Appalachian region. In addition, Higher Ground members are working to create the outline for a community board to foster collaboration, provide guidance, and ensure that community voices are represented in decision-making processes.



HAWAII ISLAND



HAWAI‘I ISLAND

What if 11 local artists were supported to create place-based projects designed to uplift community wellbeing?

THE VISION: To nurture a cohort of native and non-native Hawaiian artists to amplify the connection between the health of individual artists and the collective strength and wellbeing of community; to celebrate diverse stories of culture in Hawai‘i and build community resilience and social cohesion.

THE PROJECT: After an island-wide call for applications that garnered over 90 applications, 11 local artists from various disciplines representing all districts of the island were selected to complete a year-long fellowship. The fellowships were designed to create space for artists to build a

peer network, grow professional skills, and develop deeper partnerships in local communities through community-engaged and participatory artmaking. The fellows met monthly to learn from industry experts to support their growth and sustainability as artistic entrepreneurs and working artists. They participated in regular art making experiences, together and in community, through offerings such as community quilting groups, painting classes, weekly kapa-making, music rehearsals, and storytelling sessions.

LOCATION

Hawai‘i Island, HI

PROJECT LEAD

Vibrant Hawai‘i

PARTNERS

11 local artists

PROJECT FOCUS

Community resilience, artist development

KEY OUTCOMES

Artist fellowship program

JULY 27 EVENT

11 artistic showcases held across Hawai‘i Island

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$150,000)

ON JULY 27: The fellows exhibited the culmination of their work in 11 showcases across Hawai‘i Island. The artists joyfully engaged their community in artistic sharing ranging from visual arts, natural fiber weavings, devised theater, music performances, kapa (Hawaiian barkcloth) workshops, participatory quilting, writing, storytelling, and more. The day highlighted the powerful role of artists in bringing community together in celebration of place, home, and connection.

HAWAII ISLAND



ENABLER: “There were a lot of invitations for the artists to work across the year to root into their communities and start planting seeds. There was a lot of time for building and learning. One artist came in as a woodworker and decided, ‘I want to quilt with my community. Throughout this year, I’m going to engage my community, offer space for connection, and see who shows up and what is created as a result.’ The invitation to add opportunities for participation throughout the year was really powerful in creating momentum toward the final showcases.”

BARRIER: “One of the primary challenges we faced was navigating the complex and deeply personal notion of “home” within our cohort. We grappled with the varying experiences of Native Hawaiians, non-Hawaiians born in Hawai‘i, and those who had moved to the islands. These discussions often intersected with broader topics of colonization and cultural respect, requiring us to create intentional spaces for dialogue and reflection. While challenging, these conversations ultimately deepened our understanding and strengthened our commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “Some artists felt overwhelmed while planning their showcase. They were not sure if the community would show up, but they created pieces they were proud of and felt were close to their heart. And the community did show up! These artists were transformed, growing in courage and confidence as they recognized their potential.”

HAWAII ISLAND



THE FUTURE: Building off the success of the first cohort of fellows, Vibrant Hawai'i launched the 'OAKA youth artist fellowship supported in part by a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. 'OAKA serves 12 artists aged 18-24 to support their creative exploration, skill-building, personal growth, and civic engagement. Many of the adult artist fellows have returned as mentors and facilitators. Vibrant Hawai'i is also exploring implementation of social prescribing in alignment with cultural practices of aloha 'āina.

“This project prioritized artists as healers, art as medicine, and relationships to our home and to one another. Truly, it was an embodiment of aloha.”

HONOLULU



HONOLULU

What if a group of artists and cultural practitioners came together to celebrate ancestral story as a means of collective wellbeing?

THE VISION: Undergirded by the ancestral knowledge that the health of a people is tied to the health of its land, the team sought to foster healing by creating narratives and gatherings that strengthened their community and moved them towards ancient pathways of understanding that still flow below the chaos of Honolulu city life. Together, they worked to build new creative collaborations to strengthen connections to ancestral stories, to ‘āina (that which feeds), and to community.

THE PROJECT: The Hō‘eu Mana Series, a place and community-

based celebration of reawakening ancestral stories, brought to life old stories of Kou (what is now known as downtown Honolulu) through photography depicting Hawaiian wāhine akua (female deities). The exhibit launched a year of artist-led community collaborations designed to highlight ancient stories and cultural practices as ways to bring health and wellness to communities. Rooted in a core emphasis on pilina (relationality), the project brought together groups of art, culture, and wellness practitioners and invited new ways of collaborating for community healing. Practitioners co-designed a culminating event that created a free space for O‘ahu

LOCATION

Honolulu, HI

PROJECT LEAD

Pu‘uhonua Society

PARTNERS

Lā Ho‘iho‘i Ea, ‘Ōiwi Lens, NiU NOW!, The 808 Breakers, Keanahala, Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) and local artists and cultural practitioners

PROJECT FOCUS

Cultural resilience

KEY OUTCOMES

Arts and health festival

JULY 27 EVENT

Celebration of Lā Ho‘iho‘i Ea (Sovereignty Restoration Day)

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$100,000)

residents to connect to the land and be nurtured by community.

ON JULY 27: A celebration at Thomas Square, the site of the restoration of Hawai‘i’s sovereignty in 1843, as part of Lā Ho‘iho‘i Ea (Sovereignty Restoration Day). The day celebrated community-created works rooted in place and featured the Hō‘eu Mana exhibit alongside hands-on activities with organic mediums such as lauhala (pandanus), ‘ohe (bamboo), and niu (coconut), as well as breaking workshops, traditional performances, holistic grief processing, and telling of mo‘olelo (stories).

HONOLULU



ENABLER: “Artists are like anybody. We like to talk to people. We want to share with people about our lives. And so to have the time to listen and to also think about our work expansively and to give people the freedom to explore... I have deep gratitude for how you folks worked with us. Whatever parameters the grantor or the collaborator sets up, it’s hard not to then go and pass those on. So, if the person you’re working with trusts you, then you can trust those you work with. That abundance...was super important.”

BARRIER: “Making a living in Hawai‘i is a hustle for many, but almost always when working in art and community-serving spaces. Getting all collaborators in one room at one time was a small miracle.”



MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “The magic happens in the bringing together of the usual suspects with the unlikely allies. There were people present who had never even heard of Lā Ho‘iho‘i Ea, yet alone attended the celebration in the past, breakdancing in front of images of protest created by Uncle ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele, one of a small group of individuals credited with helping to bring back our current celebration of this over 180-year-old holiday.”

HONOLULU



THE FUTURE: The team will expand on the relationship between artists and Community Health Workers at Kōkua Kalihi Valley (KKV) Comprehensive Health Center. They plan to gather again in July 2025 at Thomas Square to celebrate Hawaiian life and sovereignty, and to maintain connection with other cohort members to share inspiring creations with new communities.

“Isn’t that what the arts and community can do? Bring people together who didn’t know they had allyship.”

IMAN CHICAGO



IMAN CHICAGO

What if a community came together to transform a vacant lot into a cultural hub for healing and possibility?

THE VISION: To foster health, wellness, and healing in the inner-city by organizing for social change, cultivating the arts, and operating a holistic health center in Marquette Park, Englewood, and surrounding neighborhoods on Chicago’s South Side; to advance IMAN’s larger reparative and healing-informed intervention approaches to reduce Englewood’s life expectancy gap – the country’s greatest urban life expectancy gap – and amplify the community’s rich and expansive traditions as a tool for healing and transformation.

THE PROJECT: IMAN works to revitalize disinvested spaces through creative placemaking, public safety interventions, community organizing, art making, and its own Federally Qualified Health Center. Their ONOP efforts included transforming an abandoned, vacant lot into a vibrant cultural space called Go Green Griot Plaza. The reactivation project included the reopening of a closed public transit station through a campaign designed to promote transit equity and economic justice for the neighborhood. IMAN also hosted artmaking classes as part of their holistic approach to bringing wellness and a dignified life to South Side residents.

LOCATION

IMAN Chicago, IL

PROJECT LEAD

Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

PARTNERS

Municipal and neighborhood organizations, local artists

PROJECT FOCUS

Community revitalization, economic and racial equity

KEY OUTCOMES

Revitalization of abandoned public lot

JULY 27 EVENT

“Go Green Griot Plaza festival”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$500,000-\$1,000,000 (ONOP: \$100,000; City: \$500,000)

ON JULY 27: IMAN Chicago demonstrated “the world as it could be” in a festival centering reclamation, reimagining, and redemption in the newly developed Go Green Griot Plaza. The celebration featured a commemoration of the new murals, live music, poetry, storytelling, dance, fresh foods, cooking demonstrations, movement classes, a community drum circle, activities for children, and visual art activations. Headliners included Grammy-nominated singer and songwriter John Forté; poet, writer and lyricist Aja Monet; Grammy-nominated hip-hop artist Vic Mensa; and IMAN’s own project leader, singer-songwriter, Binta.

IMAN CHICAGO



ENABLER: “We were programming in a space that already had sustained a commitment to radically reimagining what’s possible. So, we put it in a plaza next to a fresh market that already has ongoing commitments so that it doesn’t feel so isolated as a one-off event. And I think that’s an important piece, that there are threads of continuity that are already embedded in the locality.”

BARRIER: “Money is not always the answer, but money deployed well is the answer for a lot of things, especially in communities that have been so robbed of monetary resources. So, if I had my magic wand and I was going to say, ‘Arts for EveryBody, next year, the same event,’ I would quadruple the budget.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “To see John [Forté], out of all the places that he could have been out of the 18 sites that day. He kept saying, ‘I so wish I had more of this.’ It was just so beautiful to see a legend in hip hop and a legend in this community just light up. He was so blown away by every part of it. And to see its life transforming impact, to be out in the community and have someone like John still feel moved and inspired to the point where he felt compelled to express that all day. That was a real powerful affirmation of what we were doing.”

IMAN CHICAGO



THE FUTURE: While IMAN's FQHC was not a direct partner in the work leading up to its July 27 event, the Health Center is exploring the development of an arts prescribing initiative to directly connect patients to artmaking opportunities at IMAN. As of Summer 2025, the work to reopen the Green Line continues.



KANSAS CITY



KANSAS CITY

What if a neighborhood with 55 languages shared a single stage to uplift its youth and community?

THE VISION: To tackle a youth mental health crisis through the power of music engagement and support in one of Kansas City’s most linguistically diverse communities, a predominantly immigrant and refugee neighborhood in the city’s Historic Northeast district.

THE PROJECT: Art as Mentorship’s flagship program, Rebel Song Academy (RSA), was developed in 2017 in partnership with a licensed therapist. Merging mentorship, skill-development, and mental health support, the youth music program invites young artists to meet weekly to write, collaborate, and record

songs in sessions led by industry professionals and mentors. In partnership with ONOP, Art as Mentorship worked to expand their reach and build new collaborations with health care systems in Kansas City. The team also leveraged the national partnership to increase the scale, engagement, and impact of its summer festival, “Celebrate AMERIKANA.” The festival partnered with the RSA programming by inviting youth artists to perform and engage as production interns, further amplifying their creative voice, talent, and healing journeys within the community.

LOCATION

Kansas City, MO

PROJECT LEAD

Art as Mentorship

PARTNERS

Local youth, schools, mental health professionals

PROJECT FOCUS

Youth development and mental health

KEY OUTCOMES

Youth arts program

JULY 27 EVENT

“Celebrate AMERIKANA”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$125,000)

ON JULY 27: Art as Mentorship hosted “Celebrate AMERIKANA,” a music and arts festival bringing together national and local performers in a celebration of the cultural breadth of American music and Kansas City’s Northeast district. The festival featured youth performers from Art as Mentorship’s Rebel Song Academy, alongside Rubén Albarrán of the Mexican rock band Café Tacvba, Justus West, and more from the vibrant Kansas City arts community. It also featured Mercado, an international open-air market showcasing local artists, creators, growers, small businesses, and local food trucks.

KANSAS CITY



ENABLER & BARRIER:

“The Northeast district is not a neighborhood that is often considered in the city, let alone considered safe. It’s a bit of an uphill battle to convince people that it’s still a place to invest in. This can also be our biggest enabler in some ways because the people who really care about this place come in wielding their purpose and resources. I feel like, if you get it and you want to be a part of it, then you’re all in because you care about making it better. Finding those people can be a challenge for sure.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION:

“The transformational moment for us was when we changed the way we tell our story. We were inspired by ONOP and a deep understanding that our work is a driver of health. We had hit the same walls within our network, and then due to this new awareness, we added a whole new network of folks to pitch.

Finally late in the game, United Healthcare came on board as a sponsor. Once we got that momentum from a major health partner, it was like, ‘All right, this thing has legs,’ and everybody turned on another gear. It validated that it was actually happening, and we saw a lot of those loose pieces come together pretty quickly thereafter, with community partners and more and more people wanting to jump on board.”

KANSAS CITY



THE FUTURE: Art as Mentorship is positioning themselves as a leader in practice and advocacy for the arts as a health behavior within the Midwest region. They are working to produce a symposium, convening cross-sector partners across Kansas City, that will highlight Art as Mentorship’s work, impact, and vision related to art as a driver for mental, physical, and social wellness. The team is also working to expand their youth offerings to include more sites, curriculum sessions and drop-in nights, as well as to pilot their first adult program. In fall of 2025, they will host the fourth annual “Celebrate AMERI’KANA” festival with a renewed and expanded focus on our community health partnerships.

“The perception of what is possible and what we are creating has been elevated significantly.”

OAKLAND



OAKLAND

What if residents, cultural leaders, and city workers came together to reimagine Black life in Oakland?

THE VISION: To collectively acknowledge the pain and power of Black life in Oakland through partnerships that uplift racial justice and affirm an equitable future through public dialogue, community gatherings, and interactive art exhibitions.

THE PROJECT: E4E produced a series of community events in the lead up to July 27, including radio events, youth programming, and a design sprint engaging community residents and partners on their “preferred future of Oakland.” E4E and Youth Speaks produced the “Life is Living Festival,” a 17-year multi-modal, Black-led arts and

culture festival in West Oakland. The festival invited over 4,000 people to the historic Lil’ Bobby Hutton Park for free breakfast, health resources, arts workshops, live poetry and graffiti battles, performances, and more. With the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) and the City of Oakland Department of Race and Equity, E4E hosted Exhibit A: A Townhall on Anti-Blackness in Oakland, an interactive data experience interpreting and presenting systemic anti-Black outcomes in the city.

LOCATION

Oakland, CA

PROJECT LEAD

Edutainment for Equity (E4E)

PARTNERS

Youth Speaks, People’s Kitchen Collective, Oakland Museum of California, Village Oakland, DeFremery Park

PROJECT FOCUS

Racial justice and equity

KEY OUTCOMES

Arts and health festival

JULY 27 EVENT

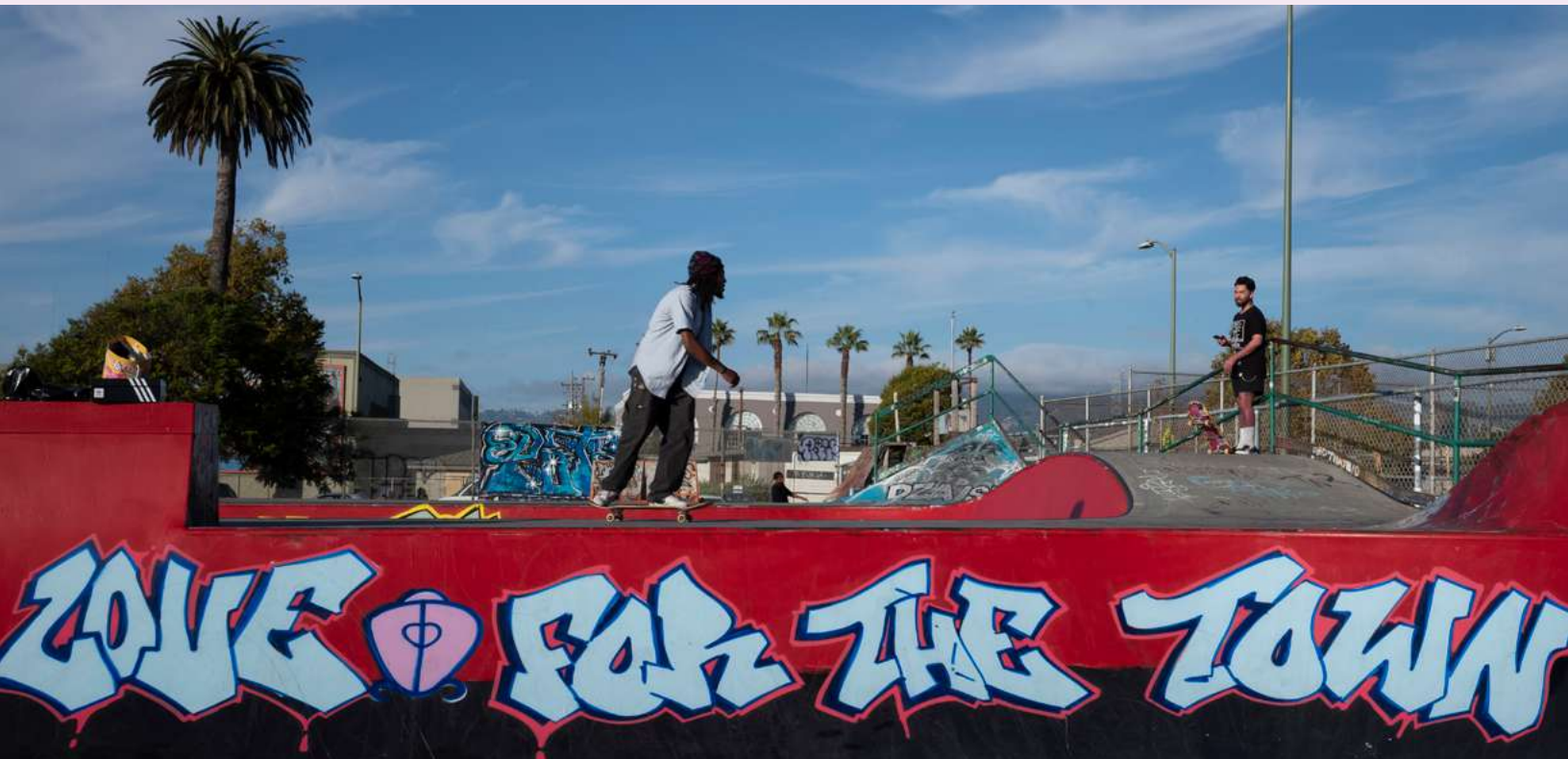
“No Place Like the Town”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$140,000)

ON JULY 27: E4E hosted “No Place Like the Town,” an event to collectively grieve and imagine Oakland’s future and affirm a commitment to the ethos of its elders, “All power to the people.” The event featured an art, health and wellness fair, free food and services for Oakland’s downtown unhoused population, local vendors, and performances by Oakland artists, including former Oakland resident and internationally renowned spoken word poet, Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Attendees also participated in interactive art activities, including an augmented reality exhibition of race and equity data to imagine a more equitable future in Oakland.

OAKLAND



ENABLER: “The greatest support system for making this happen was the Life is Living community who was willing to engage in the planning and execution of ‘No Place Like the Town,’ enduring the highs and lows of organizing and working together. It was a testimony to the years we have worked together to make the larger festival happen and the intergenerational community of people who have been involved over the years as business people, artists, and attendees.”

BARRIER: “Funding continues to be a barrier to sustainability. The multi-million-dollar deficit being faced by the city and the uncertainty of arts funding locally and nationally are real challenges to making our work happen. Despite our organizational and individual success, and the good will it has generated among our neighbors and friends, the city is not structured in a way to truly value our contributions.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “This project has positioned Edutainment for Equity in relationship to the city in a different way. I feel like we have more leverage. There’s conversation about the freeway coming down and we’re part of that conversation. So, in that way, I feel like this project, this year specifically, has initiated some engagement with the city in ways that we were not engaged before.”

OAKLAND



THE FUTURE: The team is currently conducting research to deepen its understanding of how Oakland residents understand and navigate systemic anti-Blackness within the city. E4E Arts is also working in a collaborative to build and launch Exhibit A: San Francisco, another data visualization project aimed at exposing systemic anti-Blackness in the city. E4E is also working in coalition with community partners to plan the 18th annual “Life is Living Festival” with an emphasis on restoring partnerships, increasing collaboration, and galvanizing mutual aid and community services for West Oakland.

“This project has been a strong counter narrative to a national narrative of what Oakland is about – that Oakland is crime ridden and that the communities don’t come together – and that’s not true. Oakland is a place of deep pride and love, and this event once again showcases that.”

PHILLIPS COUNTY



PHILLIPS COUNTY

What if local artists and community leaders came together to advocate for clean water access?

LOCATION

Phillips County, AR

PROJECT LEADS

The Elaine Legacy Center, Tri County Rural Health Network, the County Judge's Office, Living Waters, Hollerin Space

PARTNERS

Delta Cultural Center; THRIVE; Main Street Helena; Helena-West Helena A&P Commission; Boys, Girls, Adults, Community Development Center; Local and diasporic Phillips County artists; Local churches

PROJECT FOCUS

Clean water access

KEY OUTCOMES

Arts and health festival, collection and archive of community stories, poetry and research publication, ongoing arts markets

JULY 27 EVENTS

"There's No Place Like Home" Festival, gospel concert and fish fry on the Mississippi River, traveling caravan

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$198,000; Other: \$40,000)

THE VISION: To leverage community stories, collective strategies, and creative action to address the region's urgent water justice issues and reframe historical social divisions.

THE PROJECT: The Water Stories Project was designed to gather stories, memories, and creative responses from Phillips County residents. Building on this community engagement, three separate projects were created, each designed to engage the community around advocacy for clean water and the cultural and recreational importance of the Mississippi River. Efforts

leading up to July 27 included vacant lot gardening projects to increase access to healthy foods, water forums, quilting workshops, monthly creative gatherings marrying water themes and gospel music, and a task force of local artists and organizers working to address the need for clean water access. A local researcher and artist worked alongside all three projects, assisting with each and leading research efforts.

ON JULY 27: Through a partnership between the Elaine Legacy Center and the County Judge's Office, a "There's No Place Like Home" festival celebrated a

new community splash pad and featured local food, artisan vendors, and live performances. In the evening, a catfish fry and gospel choir concert, "Living Waters", were held on the banks of the Mississippi River, inviting choirs from across the county to perform and amplify the need for clean water in Phillips County. Throughout the weekend, artist collective Hollerin Space presented "HOLD ON: Blue Hole Homecoming", leading a traveling, tailgating caravan along the county waterways, broadcasting the event via radio stream. On July 28, twenty sponsoring churches hosted a special homecoming service, coming together under the theme "There's No Place Like Home."

PHILLIPS COUNTY



ENABLER: “Starting with stories. People are suspicious of art as an elite thing here. Stories allowed us to include rural definitions, to publicly uplift the things that people are already doing: the vacant lot gardening, the gospel music that you do in church all the time, the poetry, the zines. It’s deep, ancestral art. And then being able to link that specifically to policy -- that was huge.”

BARRIER: “The systemic issues that persist in Phillips County are not necessarily unique, but the fight for resources is acute, and it’s real, and it’s daily.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “Seeing people at the water. Where we had the gospel concert was less than a mile from downtown Helena and there were people who had never been there. Seeing that a physical outcome of this project was a part of reconnecting people in Phillips County to the water and doing it in a way that is not out of an emergency like a flood or not out of just the water infrastructure woes like those. Those wheels are now turning.”

“In a highly divided community, unity took place in discovering no matter how we differ, we all agree: we value and want clean water and will work together to have it.”

PHILLIPS COUNTY



THE FUTURE: The Phillips County team is continuing to build an ongoing arts market to benefit local artists and connect residents directly with health providers to generate better health awareness. Members of the Living Waters project are designing “Sunday Salons” to incubate more creative work, center Phillips County as a wellspring for gospel music, and uplift local talent. Hollerin Space is continuing to develop the “Mothership” caravan and activate it across Arkansas, in coordination with water justice warriors regionally and nationally. A second gospel fest and catfish fry is planned for July 26, 2025.

“The connections and the relationships that we build with each other. The actual coming together, the gathering, the ritual of it – that’s very necessary for who we are as thinkers, artists, and community members.”

PROVIDENCE



PROVIDENCE

What if artists were placed “in residence” in public housing to support resident health and wellbeing?

THE VISION: To improve community wellbeing among residents of two public housing communities in Providence grappling with social isolation and loss of community during the pandemic by implementing artist residencies within both communities.

THE PROJECT: The project team worked closely with their Community Mapmakers Group to design programming to support healing from COVID-19 and gun violence-related losses, and to find new ways to strengthen community connections. Mapmakers identified grief, isolation, and healing as goals, and theater and murals as

art forms of interest. Mapmakers helped select two local artists who then engaged residents in regular arts activities centered around the theme of “home” and who also worked alongside Community Health Workers to provide resources for health and wellbeing. The project team leveraged July 27 as an opportunity to connect PHA residents to the larger city narrative.

ON JULY 27: At Carroll Tower, the artist in residence and residents unveiled a community fiberglass mural at a community event that also featured a domino competition, community brunch, live music and dance performances,

LOCATION

Providence, RI

PROJECT LEADS

City of Providence Department of Health and Human Services, Providence Housing Authority (PHA), and the Department of Arts, Culture, and Tourism (ACT)

PARTNERS

Local artists in residence, PHA residents from Chad Brown and Carroll Tower

PROJECT FOCUS

Social isolation among elders, access to arts in public housing, community-building and beautification

KEY OUTCOMES

Artists-in-residence embedded within public housing in partnership with community health workers

JULY 27 EVENT

Community mural unveiling and celebration, youth parade, outdoor multimedia performance and live music

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$250,000-\$499,000 (ONOP: \$142,000); ARPA: \$150,000

resident-led art lessons, and a gallery exhibit of community members’ work. At Chad Brown, the artist in residence and residents premiered “Casa Futura,” a short stop-motion film with multimedia performances created with residents commemorating their past, present, and future. The evening included community-led processions, resident performances, gallery showings, a community dinner, and bomba and plena music performances. At both housing sites, local politicians and councilpersons were invited to speak and connect.

PROVIDENCE



ENABLER: “Having an artist as a project manager. Because artists wear so many hats, and our feet and hands are in so many different spaces, we naturally can gather people from different places and bring them together.”

BARRIER: “Timing – when you are working with a housing authority, you have to schedule activities within the schedule of the staff because they want to make sure that somebody is there.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “The project allowed residents to build direct relationships with PHA administration, to feel like they didn’t need a third person to talk directly to leadership who began coming to the meetings. And because they were there, participating alongside the residents, the power structure really shifted.”



PROVIDENCE

“The biggest shift has been in the social connection. It really does feel like a community.”

THE FUTURE: The teams at ACT and PHA are working to further integrate artists into PHA’s programming – from early childhood education and workforce development to continuing the arts access programming. ACT leaders have begun conversations with other Providence agencies and organizations to think about social prescribing and other arts-health models.



RHINELANDER



RHINELANDER

What if a rural community came together to combat social isolation?

LOCATION

Rhineland, WI

PROJECT LEADS

ArtStart and the City of Rhineland

PARTNERS

Local youth organization (Over It!), Oneida County Department of Social Services Alderperson, Aging and Disability Resource Center, local and regional artists

PROJECT FOCUS

Social isolation among youth and elders, youth mental health

KEY OUTCOMES

Youth-led public campaign against social isolation, foundation for arts prescribing and expanded arts and health programs, re-energized public art for the community, community-led skatepark design process

JULY 27 EVENT

“Push Against Loneliness Day”, community march, music performances, and unveiling of new public sculpture-installation

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$170,000)

THE VISION: To create ongoing opportunities to engage the arts as a space for connection and social cohesion, and to reduce social isolation and improve youth mental health. The project sought specifically to build a skatepark for youth and art programs for adults with memory loss.

THE PROJECT: Following the death of a local young person to mental illness, the skateboarding group, Over It!, asked the City to develop a new skatepark to provide a critical gathering space for isolated youth. The resulting project

centered leadership of youth to amplify youth voices, provide youth mentorship and arts opportunities, and build pathways for ongoing community engagement amongst Rhineland’s most isolated communities. They created pop-up skate parks, mural projects, weekly teen arts programming, and intergenerational creative workshops to facilitate interviews between elders and youth around themes of social isolation and connection. The text generated from these interviews were incorporated into a public sound sculpture.

ON JULY 27: The “Push Against Loneliness,” a day celebrating community and belonging in Rhineland, kicked off with a Skate Jam celebrating the proposed location for the new skate park. Attendees engaged in a “March Against Social Isolation” and witnessed the unveiling of an interactive public sculpture that features the voices of youth and elders. Following the sculpture dedication, the day featured art activities and a tree planting, and concluded with a community meal and performances by local artists.

RHINELANDER



ENABLER: “I think having a council person involved definitely deepened our relationship with the City. An Alderperson even said at one point, ‘I get ArtStart so much more now. I thought you were just a gallery, but I get that you’re so much more than that, and I understand your work so much better.’ I think it definitely made the support for the skate park more unanimous, even with other council people. I think it just legitimized it.”

BARRIER: “Capacity. It’s always capacity. So much grant funding or foundation funding is program focused and is limited. They don’t want to fund the admin. And this work is really admin heavy because it’s coordinating meetings and it’s bringing people together and it’s sharing information.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “When the artists were doing their sculpture installation, people, you know dog walkers and people in the park, started checking in on them every day and became part of the process. I was like ‘Gosh, I didn’t even think about that install process being another point of connection for people to engage in the arts and with one another and have conversations and understand the deeper meaning of the project.’”

RHINELANDER

“Arts for EveryBody has completely changed our trajectory as an organization.”

THE FUTURE: ArtStart is developing a new strategic plan that will center arts and health initiatives. They will offer ongoing programs, including recovery programs, youth leadership programs, and arts events. ArtStart has also joined a statewide committee to develop social prescribing and is planning the new skate park.



SEATTLE



SEATTLE

What if a local heritage museum worked to preserve, heal, and revitalize a historic and endangered neighborhood?

LOCATION

Seattle, WA

PROJECT LEAD

Wing Luke Museum

PARTNERS

Seattle Office of Economic Development & Department of Transportation, International Community Health Services (ICHS), Wing Luke Community Advisory Committee, city leaders, local stakeholders, and community artists.

PROJECT FOCUS

Neighborhood revitalization, cultural preservation, social connection among elders and other community members

KEY OUTCOMES

Artist residency embedded within a local Federally Qualified Health Center

JULY 27 EVENT

“JamFest”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$100,000)

THE VISION: To engage city leaders, local stakeholders, and community artists to work towards healing, restitution, and revitalization of the Chinatown-International District (C-ID) neighborhood and its residents.

THE PROJECT: The Wing Luke Museum partnered with International Community Health Services (ICHS) to develop the health center’s first artist residency, providing art workshops and wellness activities to the neighborhood’s assisted living residents through ICHS’s Healthy Aging and Wellness Program. The residency created safe and

nurturing spaces for dialogue, reflection, wellness, and joy, with a focus on senior residents at the ICHS Legacy House. The Museum partnered with Seattle’s Office of Economic Development & Transportation to engage in artist-led conversations around the development of a light rail threatening to cut through the C-ID.

ON JULY 27: The Museum hosted “JamFest,” a free and all-ages outdoor event in the historic Canton and Maynard Alleys and along 7th Avenue to highlight the rich historical, cultural, and artistic vibrancy of the C-ID. The day included sound baths, Cantonese

opera, martial arts and community workouts, performances and demonstrations led by the Seattle Chinese Community Girls Drill Team, cabaret shows, and printmaking workshops, all celebrating the community’s Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander migrant roots and culture.

SEATTLE



ENABLER: “Trust – you have to trust the people who are doing the good work and keep investing in them.”

BARRIER: “I would say, when we do a big event like this in the neighborhood, definitely translation. We have many languages spoken in the neighborhood, and written language is different from spoken language.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “Due to internal challenges, I actually didn’t know if we were going to do this and if it was going to happen. And that morning, I was checking in with the local businesses, and one storeowner was like, ‘Thank you. Really, thank you. Anything good for the neighborhood is a good thing.’ I was really glad and proud of our staff that we could do this and provide the joy with all our new carnival games and music and see the community members face to face and provide that connection.”



SEATTLE



“We do a lot of the work to make sure that the neighborhood can determine its own present and future. So, we point at the things that are giving this neighborhood and the people who live in it life.”

THE FUTURE: The Museum is continuing partnership with ICHS’s Legacy House with plans to extend the artist residency by a year, enabling another workshop series and community art project with Legacy House elders. Together, they continue to make health and wellness a focus in their festivals and events, and to offer art activities and performances that are free and accessible to all.

TUCSON



Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

ARTS + AGING

IMPACT POINTS

\$43.3 BILLION IN SAVINGS FROM REDUCED DOCTOR VISITS

63% INCREASED NUMBER OF CONCERTS

Groups built around cultural experience seen highest art and theater use

Makes better

TUCSON

What if local artists came together to shift a city-wide narrative around the power of arts in health?

LOCATION

Tucson, AZ

PROJECT LEAD

Borderlands Theater

PARTNERS

City of Tucson Community Safety, Health and Wellness Program; City of Tucson Mayor's Office

PROJECT FOCUS

Narrative change

KEY OUTCOMES

Public narrative strategy campaign in partnership with the Mayor's Office, artist residency within public housing

JULY 27 EVENT

Concert performance and "Art is Vital: An Art and Wellness Fiesta"

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$100,000)

THE VISION: To shift public perceptions about the role the arts play in wellbeing, social cohesion and community development through a narrative strategy campaign working in tandem with the Mayor's arts, culture, and heritage initiative.

THE PROJECT: The project developed new theatrical productions, along with a range of offerings including a community poster workshop, poetry reading series, and deeper partnerships with Galeria Mitotera, Southwest Folklife Alliance, and Arizona Arts Live. A new partnership was developed with the City of Tucson

Community Safety, Health and Wellness Program, resulting in a grant for artists-in-residence to work at a public housing site, using theater and storytelling to amplify resident voice, strengthen community bonds, and celebrate the city's diverse cultural heritage and resilience.

ON JULY 27: Borderlands hosted the "Art is Vital: An Art and Wellness" fiesta to celebrate Latine and Chicanx home and heritage in Tucson. The evening kicked off with a concert reading of *Anita*, a new musical about the power of joy and resilience found in community, followed by live music,

heritage food booths, an art contest exhibit, poetry tarot card readings, and interactive art activities promoting the connection between arts participation and wellbeing. The mayor announced winners of the "Art is Vital" art contest, as a part of the ongoing narrative strategy campaign to build a local understanding of arts and culture as being essential to individual and community health.

TUCSON



ENABLER: “Somebody that worked with us on one of our Barrio Stories series, he had never seen theater before, and because of that experience, he has now seen all of our plays since. For our July 27 event, he drove folks from a housing complex to the event. And I think that sometimes that’s what it takes: having a liaison that is willing to bring folks or provide transportation. That and, you know, having mariachis. People get really excited about mariachis in town.”

BARRIER: “Folks don’t really understand the value of theater here because either it hasn’t been about us, or it hasn’t been accessible. It’s not a known to our community. Another barrier that I think we’ve been coming to terms with lately is not having a space to invite people into. I think that if people know where to find you, they’re more likely to go and come back. And come back again.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “What we hear often is “this is the first time I’m in an all-Latine, musical theater piece, and I’m actually a lead.” We had actors comment on how it’s different when it’s an all-Latine cast working on a musical – it just feels like home. For us, I think it’s a matter of making the opportunities so that people see that there are possibilities for them. That local stories are a resilient, hopeful way of being. I think it’s a rebranding for us – that it can be a joyful experience to see our stories.”



TUCSON

“We were getting the narrative out in different ways that were accessible to the community. And we picked up allies and stewards of that work along the way. The more the message spread, the more allies we found.”

THE FUTURE: The team continues to lead projects to build social cohesion in the public housing community, where six artists are developing a performance piece based on residents’ oral histories that will be performed at the housing development for the public. The team plans to create an official artist residency at four additional city housing development sites.



UTICA



UTICA

What if an entire town came together to build a local infrastructure for healthy food access?

LOCATION

Utica, MS

PROJECT LEAD

Mississippi Center for Cultural Production (Sipp Culture)

PARTNERS

The Town of Utica, Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center, Jackson Hinds Library and local schools, local artists, Community Advisory Group (CAG)

PROJECT FOCUS

Healthy food access, self-determination, sustainable working relationships

KEY OUTCOMES

Food Buyers' Club, artist residency within local school system

JULY 27 EVENT

"Homegrown Utica Fest"

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$170,000)

THE VISION: To address a lack of access to healthy foods, revitalize the local economy, and build sustainable coalitions for equitable food access in Utica through storytelling, mapping resources, and prototyping collaborative, community-driven solutions around food access.

THE PROJECT: The team began the Homegrown Utica project with a year of listening and dialogue, convening members of their Mapmakers Group to discuss what mattered to the community and how they might leverage the ONOP

opportunity. They launched a collective food purchasing initiative, commissioned local public art projects, designed artist and farmer residencies in partnership with schools, and worked with JHCHC to expand the reach of the clinic's services through health education, pop-up health checks, and other creative projects.

ON JULY 27: "Homegrown Utica Fest" took place on Main Street to celebrate and showcase local food culture, the arts, and community connectedness. Activities included live music,

food and craft vendors from the county, cooking demonstrations, health checks, presentations of public art commissions, and art activations on Main Street at Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Clinic and within the Utica Library. Residents were invited to add their handprints to a new community mural on the local library building and celebrate the "ground-seeding" of Sipp Culture's new Main Street Cultural Center, illustrating the revitalization possible through strong local collaborations driven by art and culture.

UTICA



ENABLER: “The library was a huge enabler as far as not having to expend resources or try to figure out where to be, having that predictability of a location and being able to store supplies at that location really made meetings more productive. Down to the superintendent of the library system coming through and being excited about the project and saying, ‘Whatever you need.’”

BARRIER: “Communication — the lack of public institutions and spaces, from a school to workplaces to the grocery store, limits your chance to get communication about what’s going on in town. And so, there’s a lack of awareness of who the people we want to reach are and a lack of channels to reach them. The festival was very intentionally that invitation to create those channels.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “We held a safety and logistics meeting at the library a couple weeks before the festival. It was the first time that we were able to successfully convene our public safety and health-related partners all in one place. And there was a real willingness to commit to different tasks and to also be coordinated by somebody else, as a set of people with different skill sets. And for those institutional partners to take up logistics for repeating a cultural festival that the residents have said they want to repeat -- it really seemed like, in that moment, there was this transformation insofar as when someone looks around and recognizes we have everything we need, we are those people, let’s do that.”

UTICA

“When Sipp Culture came to Utica we were at a point where we, as a community, were not able to dream past what we were experiencing every day. The Main Street Cultural Center is the first part of a growing process that we hope will help revitalize the entire town.”

THE FUTURE: The Utica Food Club continues to meet and is developing into a self-governed cooperative entity. Building on the success and energy of the ground-seeding on July 27, the team plans to open the Main Street Cultural Center by Summer 2025. The space will operate as a community kitchen, arts venue, and gathering space for local events and collective projects.



WASHINGTON, D.C.



WASHINGTON, D.C.

*What if you staged
and celebrated
a region on the
National Mall?*

LOCATION

Washington, D.C.

PROJECT LEAD

Words Beats & Life (WBL)

PARTNERS

Local artists, local hospitals

PROJECT FOCUS

Creative expression as wellness, place activation

KEY OUTCOMES

First-ever arts & health festival on the national mall, foundation for arts prescribing

JULY 27 EVENT

“DMV Made” on the National Mall

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

\$100,000-\$249,000 (ONOP: \$180,000)

THE VISION: To elevate hip-hop culture and empower marginalized voices, inspiring artists to create, refine, and define systems that demonstrate positive change. Through its partnership with ONOP, Words Beats & Life (WBL) worked to invest in the creative ecosystem of the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) region and to employ local artists and creators as living examples of what the region’s creative youth can accomplish with the right tools.

THE PROJECT: Through their honed artistic practice of producing large scale festivals, WBL’s project sought to draw attention to social

justice concerns of DMV residents, including health equity and clean water. Additionally, building on their successful relationship with Children’s National Hospital to bring performances and workshops to young patients, WBL leveraged its partnership with ONOP to develop connections with new health partners across the DC area.

ON JULY 27: “DMV Made” brought together creatives from throughout the DMV region to celebrate “home” on the National Mall. This outdoor festival centered on hip-hop, theater, performance poetry, and live music, including jazz, go-go, punk,

and hip-hop, with renowned music ensembles The Blackbyrds and Sweet Honey in the Rock as headliners. The day included live mural painting, large-scale crochet workshops, educational workshops, puppeteering, face painting, bubble making for children, and more. “DMV Made” was an opportunity to showcase the human and material treasures of the region on a national stage while also coordinating across health systems to promote storytelling, art access, and the impact of arts on social isolation and cohesion.

WASHINGTON, D.C.



ENABLER: “Things don’t happen on the National Mall that are led by people from here, unless it’s the federal government. I think that was the significant appeal because Washingtonians and people from the region generally don’t go to the Mall because usually it’s national things that happen. But reclaiming a part of the city for the city and the region, I think that was really inspiring for some folks. That was an enabler – the literal choice of the space.”

BARRIER: “The challenge of working with hospitals and federally qualified community health clinics – they require so much more lead time than any other partner to solidify their participation.”



MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION: “A lot of things that Words Beats & Life does, they’re hard for people to understand until they’re in them. But one of the things I did immediately was coordinate a walkthrough of the site in advance for everybody: myself, our director of poetry, our marketing director... And I saw a light switch go on for them, like, ‘Whoa, we’re on the Mall. It’s really big. This is really exciting.’”

WASHINGTON, D.C.

“We have been thinking and working for decades to integrate our youth work into larger institutions like libraries, schools and museums. ‘DMV Made’ became the bridge to collaborate with larger institutions for a multi-generational community, expanding our work from youth development into human and community development.”

THE FUTURE: Words Beats & Life plans to host “DMV Made” on the National Mall again in 2026. The team is also working to develop stronger partnerships with healthcare facilities and to integrate wellness activities into their regular work through art therapy programs, artist healthcare boot camps, on-site performances and workshops, and community outreach fairs. They are planning new ways to fund and upskill volunteers for this expanding portfolio of work.



WINSTON-SALEM



WINSTON-SALEM

What if local leaders came together to invest in artists as drivers of community connection, trust, and mental wellbeing?

THE VISION: To build programming that would activate local artists as conveners and health resources within community, with activities that aimed to address barriers to healthcare and social isolation in Winston-Salem neighborhoods.

THE PROJECT: Winston-Salem partners collaborated to increase community connection through responsive arts programming in and outside of the United Health Centers clinic and convened a robust Community Mapmakers Group to ensure resident engagement throughout the project.

Mapmakers were also invited to submit proposals for microgrants to support their artistic practice. Project examples included biophilic design community workshops, Afro-Indigenous Mexican hand embroidery, youth griot training programs, and interactive community arts experiences integrating mindfulness, visual artists, music, and movement. Outcomes have included shifts in the value of the arts within city leadership, as well as new, emerging collaborations between local artists and institutional leaders.

LOCATION

Winston-Salem, NC

PROJECT LEADS

Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, United Health Centers, City of Winston-Salem Neighborhood Services, and Forsyth County Health and Human Services

PARTNERS

Mapmakers, local artists, community-based organizations

PROJECT FOCUS

Trust, community connection, and mental wellbeing

KEY OUTCOMES

Arts and health festival at local community health center, artist and community grants, foundation for arts prescribing

JULY 27 EVENT

“Creative Wellness Community Day”

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT (RANGE)

>\$1,000,000 (ONOP: \$100,000; ARPA: \$1,115,000; Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts: \$135,000)

ON JULY 27: Winston-Salem presented “Creative Wellness Community Day,” a public arts and health fair hosted by United Health Centers. The day opened with traditional West African dance and djembe drumming, and featured interactive creative spaces for youth and families, and live performances by local artists. Free health screenings were provided alongside various health resource vendors. The day also included the premiere of a water tower mural, designed and created by Ernel Martinez, which pulled language and images from community conversations and the data poem created by Winston-Salem residents.

WINSTON-SALEM



ENABLER: “You’ve got to have passion for this work. You can put stuff on a piece of paper and say, ‘This is what we need to do, and these are the people,’ but if you don’t have passion to get it done, then yeah, it makes a big difference.”

BARRIER: “Honoring community intelligence as a part of the process, design, and implementation is essential. When institutional voices dominate, community wisdom can be drowned out. However, our commitment was to elevate resident intelligence in every design decision that impacted community health and mental wellbeing.”

MOMENT OF TRANSFORMATION:

“Those first listening sessions were definitely a moment of transformation – where communities started seeing our action and opened up to us to talk to us about what they needed, what they wanted to see, and what they wanted to do in the community.”

WINSTON-SALEM



“We were in silos, but we created a place where people from different silos can interact with a low barrier for entry.”

THE FUTURE: Following July 27, the team released an open call for ten Arts for EveryBody community project grants up to \$35,000. Grant funds supported artist-led and/or community-based projects designed to foster arts participation and improve community health. Examples of selected projects include an arts prescribing pilot program for older adults in Forsyth County, an intergenerational arts festival with participating artists from ages 4 to 94, music and performing arts-based arts programming in Winston-Salem Freedom Schools, a large-scale, community-based metal casting and iron work event, and an immersive, monthly arts block party in the downtown arts district.

WHAT CHANGED: MEASURING OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, is seen from the side, looking out over a landscape. She is standing behind a dark wooden railing. The background shows a vast, open landscape with a body of water and a cloudy sky. The overall tone is contemplative and serene.

The Research and Evaluation Approach

The research and evaluation approach sought to answer the primary question:

“How can arts participation in communities influence social cohesion and wellbeing?”

This question was inspired by the We-Making Theory of Change which asserts that “place-based arts and cultural strategies can contribute uniquely to building social cohesion in communities and that, in turn, social cohesion can cultivate equitable community wellbeing” (Eng et al., 2021).

The We-Making project was developed through a unique multi-year collaboration between the Kresge Foundation, Bush Foundation, Knight Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, ArtPlace America, University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine, and Metris Arts Consulting. It investigated community-based arts practices across the US and created a theory of change called *We-Making* that articulates how place-based arts participation could activate specific drivers of social cohesion and, in turn, result in more equitable community wellbeing (Eng et al., 2021).

More information on the We-Making Theory of Change can be found [here](#).

Recognizing the complexity of studying a broad range of unique activities across 18 very diverse communities, a complex research and evaluation agenda was designed. This agenda included a suite of studies meant to employ a range of methods and a breadth of data to assess changes that these activities might make, both within and across the communities, as well as to assess relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing. The research began with formative work, which helped shape the approach and ground it in clear ontologies, epistemologies, and values.

Formative Work

The research agenda was shaped through dialogue with ONOP’s founders and partners, who identified key areas of inquiry based on their initial curiosities, questions, and interests. In two 90-minute dialogues, the project’s visionaries, leaders, and partners discussed their reasons for joining the initiative, their expectations for community impact, and the key research questions that should be explored. Audio recordings of these conversations were transcribed, and then Dr. Sonke conducted thematic analysis to develop a set of guiding hunches and curiosities to guide the development of the primary research question (“*How can arts participation in communities influence social cohesion and wellbeing?*”) and the research agenda.

Notably, this work had to take place in the absence of understanding of what local “interventions” or activities the research would study, and the research agenda had to be defined prior to this knowledge for funding applications. The team thought conceptually and abstractly about 18 cities generating as many opportunities for community-based, collective arts participation as possible. Knowing that the result would be 18 very different sets of activities, a broad and mixed methods research agenda that included 13 unique studies related to the primary research question was developed.

Rigorous work was undertaken to ground the research in clear concepts and definitions.

Having identified three primary constructs that made up the research question – arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing – the Research and Impact team worked to choose or create definitions for each.

For arts participation, the team undertook a study to develop a new definition (*see Foundational Studies section*); for social cohesion, the definition from Healthy People 2030 was chosen; and for wellbeing, a definition developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was chosen.

DEFINITIONS		
ARTS PARTICIPATION	SOCIAL COHESION	WELLBEING
Sonke et al., 2023	Healthy People 2030	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2019
<i>See full definition in box on page 147 below</i>	“The strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community.”	“The comprehensive view of how individuals and communities experience and evaluate their lives, including their physical and mental health and having the skills and opportunities to construct meaningful futures.”

These definitions led to the development of key indicators for the project. **For arts participation**, key indicators were attendance, activities, jobs, and artworks. **For social cohesion**, indicators were social capital, social relationships, social networks, social support, inclusion, belonging, trust, and participation. **For wellbeing**, indicators were social, mental, and physical health and satisfaction with life. These indicators led directly to either the choice of validated research instruments (e.g., the WHO-5 to measure wellbeing) or development of new instruments (e.g., our social cohesion scale and Theory of Change survey, as described below). These definitions and indicators were also used to develop variables for statistical analyses.

The Research and Impact team, in partnership with the NLC, also took time to collect local health, demographic, and economic information for each community. MySidewalk, an NLC data partner, created data reports for each city in the first cohort. These reports included data from 40+ databases, including the US Census, DHHS, local communities, and data generated by the research team. The intent was to help the local communities better understand themselves and for ONOP’s Research and Impact team to better understand them as well.

A NATIONAL RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP was also formed to provide guidance on the research agenda and study designs. The group (*see members [here](#)*) met several times over the first year of the project, and individual members were called on to advise on specific elements of the research as needed.

Commitment to Values-Based Research

From the outset, the research was anchored in a commitment to community engagement at every stage, prioritizing capacity-building and local ownership of the research process. ONOP's approach sought to advance equity in research methodologies, recognizing the historical legacy of extractive and harmful practices in the US. By centering ethical, participatory frameworks, the initiative aimed to model how researchers can move beyond traditional paradigms to foster meaningful partnerships and generate tangible, immediate benefits for the communities involved.

To accomplish this, clear ontologies, epistemologies, and values were articulated to guide research design, as well as day-to-day decision making.

OUR ONTOLOGIES. Ontologies are the ways in which a researcher views the social world and the nature of reality.

ONOP's research was grounded in an ontology that values social relationships and interactions, cultural and social practices, complexities of power, and the importance of equity.

The approach also brought an appreciation of the complex, pluralistic, and subjective nature of reality, which is expressed and can be understood through people's lived experiences, perspectives, narratives and stories, artworks, and creative and cultural expressions.

OUR EPISTEMOLOGIES. Epistemologies are a researcher's worldviews, or how they view the generation of knowledge and understanding. ONOP's work held an ecological worldview which values the complex layering of the social world, as well as an interpretivist worldview which values the sense people make of their own lives and experiences.

OUR THEORETICAL FRAMES. The research agenda was grounded in three primary theoretical frames:

- *The We-Making Theory of Change* (Engh et al., 2021);
- Arts participation is a health behavior (Fancourt & Finn, 2019, Rodriguez et al., 2024); and
- Access to the arts is a social determinant of health (Dow et al., 2023).



The Research and Impact team articulated values that grounded and guided the research processes. From the start, the team was critically aware of the harmful and extractive practices that persist in community-based research practices in the US and was determined to demonstrate how researchers could do better.

These values were:

A clear understanding of who the research was for *(the participating 18 communities, first and foremost)*

Centering critical & participatory practices

Equity & inclusion

Doing no harm

Multi-cultural validity

Participant ownership

These values were expressed and activated in the following ways:

Centering Who the Research was For.

One of the most fundamental questions in the research design was who the research was meant to benefit, or who it was for. Formative processes were undertaken to articulate the following intended beneficiaries, listed in order of priority:

1. **The 18 ONOP communities**
2. **ONOP partners and investors**
3. **The fields or sectors involved (public health, healthcare, arts and culture, arts in health, local government, etc.)**
4. **US communities and the general public**

This shared understanding was critical in day-to-day decision making, including in the decision to allow each community to opt in or out of each research process.

Participatory and Critical Inquiry Practices.

The work started with a participatory community-based research orientation, knowing that engaging community members as leaders in the research process and cultivating local ownership of data and findings were priorities. Mid-project, the team adopted a Critical Participatory Inquiry approach (Vaughn-Guy et al., 2024) that values the co-creation of knowledge and change by community members and researchers in equitable partnership. This epistemology better represented the work undertaken to understand the histories of each of the 18 communities, as well as the histories and harms related to research in each place. This work included site visits to the communities and engagement of local Community Mapmakers Groups. In practice, this meant inviting community partners and community members more fully into the research by engaging them in analyses, meaning-making processes, and in the writing and publication of findings.

Multi-Cultural Validity.

Multi-cultural validity refers to the accuracy or trustworthiness of understandings or assertions (i.e., the research findings we would produce) across multiple, intersecting dimensions of cultural identities and diversity (Kirkhart, 2010). In keeping with ONOP's core value of complexity, holding the value of multi-cultural validity helped the team recognize and respect the complex intersections of identities across individuals and groups in the communities and ensure that the research included a diversity of voices and that the analyses could hold meaning and relevance across differences.

Participant Ownership - Returning Data and Findings to the Communities.

In recognition of the extractive history and persistently extractive norms in research practices in the US, and with a commitment to generating the most immediate local value possible, the Research and Impact team maintained a core commitment to participant ownership of all data and findings. A goal of returning all data and findings to each community within 3 months of data collection was set and achieved (except for one report that required more time). Each community received raw de-identified data, full statistical reports, focus group transcripts, thematic analyses, and plain-language reports of findings at each data collection point. In addition, a data repository was created in Microsoft Teams for each community to enable free access to the data over time. The University of Florida provided this access, along with a commitment to providing technical assistance to the communities for four years following the initiative.



*“It created a whole
community
empowerment thing.”*

Putting Our Values into Action.

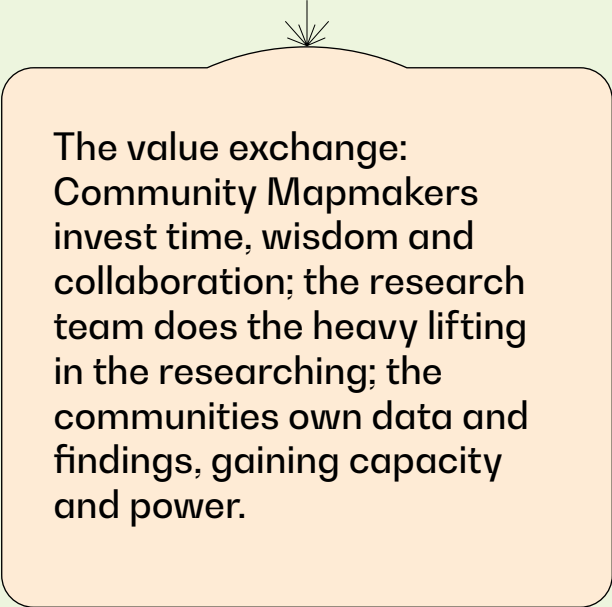
Clearly articulated ontologies, epistemologies, and values led to all research choices, including what was studied, how communities were engaged, what was considered data (information that held meaning), how it was collected, how it was analyzed, and how it was returned to communities and translated to the public. Articulated values also guided day-to-day choices. Notably, holding benefit to the communities as a top priority helped the team make daily decisions, such as when to modify timelines to accommodate more – or more diverse – participation, or when to analyze the data in ways that would be more beneficial to the communities, rather than merely considering its contribution to general understanding in the peer-reviewed literature. The following are examples of other ways in which values were centered in the research practices.

CHOICE. Participating cities were able to opt into or out of each component of the research agenda. This decision recognized and respected histories of harm, limitations in local resources including time, access to technology, and general interest or lack of interest in research. Communities were also given choice regarding what data was collected (see *Community Mapmakers Groups* below) and how it was collected. Several communities, for example, recognized that electronic surveys or use of QR codes would not be acceptable or effective in their communities. In these instances, the team developed paper and pencil or other options for data collections. Communities were also able to make choices related to language and terminology in data collection instruments and reports. Spanish, Mandarin, and Native Hawaiian language translations were provided as needed for data collection and reporting.

COMMUNITY MAPMAKERS GROUPS. Our commitment to engaging the communities in the design and undertaking of the research and to generating value for the communities through the research led to an expectation for the first cohort of nine cities to implement Community Mapmakers Groups. None of the cities opted

out of this process. When the decision to add a second cohort of nine cities was made, budget and capacity constraints led to a decision to not expect the new cities to implement Mapmakers Groups. While funding (as described below) could not be provided, the cities were encouraged to implement groups, and some did.

The term “mapmakers” was chosen because mapmakers chart the geography of a place and help guide exploration and sense-making in a place. The structure was designed to be a more robust and empowered version of a traditional research advisory group. The groups were intended to build local leadership and ownership in both the research and project processes, and to center local needs and priorities in the work through engagement of a broad representation of the community. Each site was invited to create groups of 6-12 individuals representing the diversity of their community across age, gender, race, culture, and roles. Each group was provided with an annual budget of \$10,000 per year, which could be used in any way, such as for member stipends or hourly pay, compensation for the designated local group lead, food, childcare, or transportation. Each group was assigned a Mapmakers Liaison from the Research and Impact team as support.



The value exchange:
Community Mapmakers invest time, wisdom and collaboration; the research team does the heavy lifting in the researching; the communities own data and findings, gaining capacity and power.

COLLECTING INCLUSIVE AND NUANCED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA. The team conducted extensive research and benchmarking to develop measures that would collect detailed and inclusive demographic data. It was important to the team to never “other” anyone participating in the research. Therefore, ample demographic options were offered in the surveys. There were nine options for race, ethnicity, or origin, and nine options for gender identity. Both included an option to self-describe or not report. In reporting findings, identities were never grouped under a single heading of “other.” This approach allowed more accuracy in representing those who participated in the research and the populations they represent. This approach was critical to multi-cultural validity, as it allowed better understanding of the demographic and cultural contexts of the data and helped ensure that the research both respected and had relevance across groups and differences.

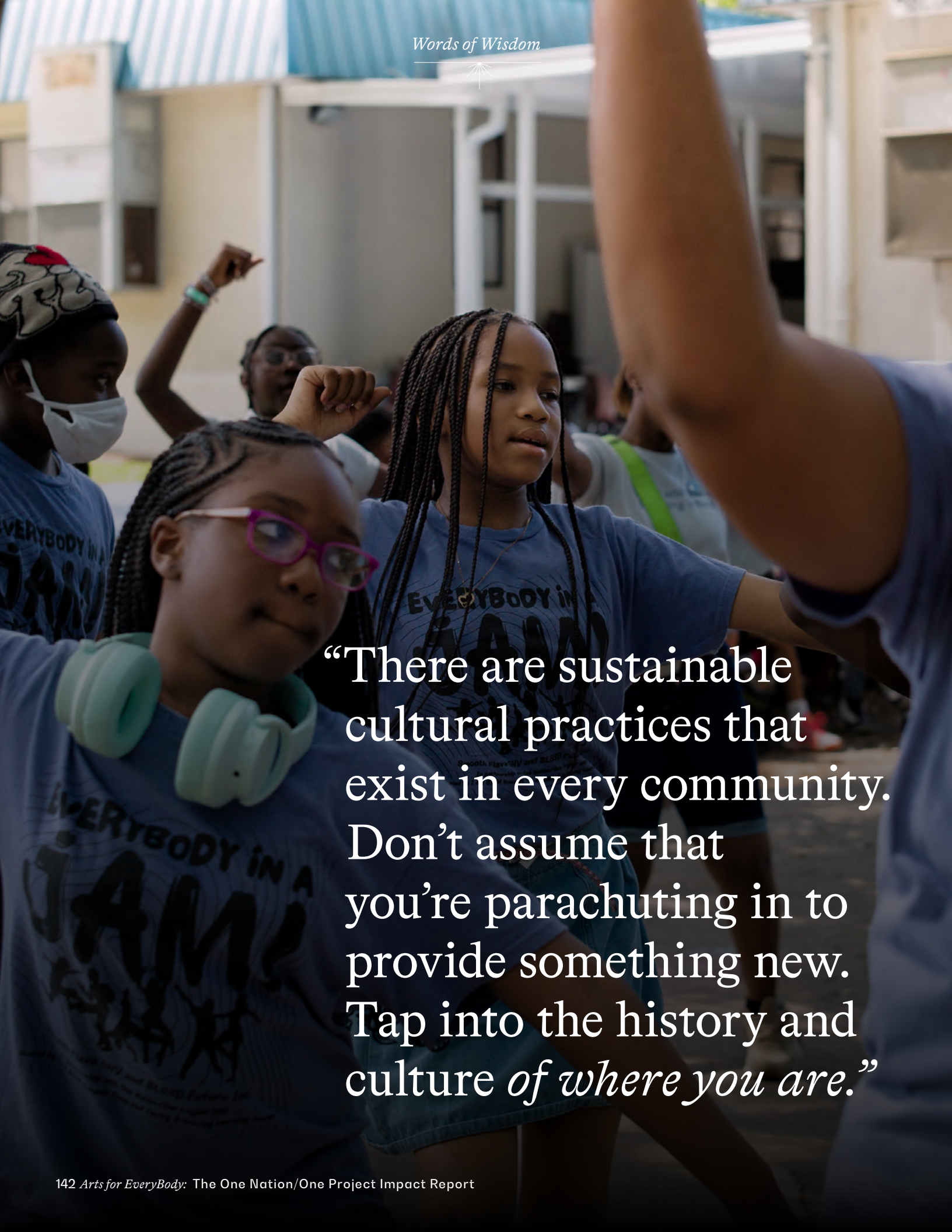
MEMBER CHECKING. Following analysis of the data from each of the 21 focus groups conducted over the three timepoints, analyses were sent in a full plain-language report to the focus group participants for member checking. Participants were asked, “Did we get it right?” They provided feedback, and findings were revised as needed in response. This input was critical to ensuring not only the accuracy of findings, but also local ownership and utilization of the findings.

DATA REPOSITORIES. Data repositories were created to provide the communities with ownership and control of their own data. In addition to returning data and findings to the site teams in a timely manner, the Research and Impact team built data repositories for each community using a University of Florida Microsoft Teams platform, which could provide access to the communities for free. Each repository includes all raw quantitative data collected through surveys and other means (in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets), all focus group transcripts, data poems, evaluation data, including interview transcripts, images and other media, and reports of all analyses, as well as all publications generated from the research. The repositories will be available to the 18 cities for at least four years (through 2028), with technical assistance provided throughout that time.

SHARING FINDINGS IN PLAIN LANGUAGE AND WITHOUT PAYWALLS. While recognizing the importance of peer-review and of contributing to knowledge in the academic and scientific arenas, the research team held a strong commitment to creating broader access to research and its findings. Local ownership of data and findings was the highest priority, followed by accessibility to data and findings across professional sectors and the general public. All findings were translated into plain language reports that were provided to the communities and into research briefs that were made available on the Arts for EveryBody website, as well as through partner websites. *The 12 Research Briefs can be accessed [here](#).*



ARTIFIED SURVEYING APP. Recognizing the burden of surveying to research participants, the Research and Impact team worked to develop ways of engaging people in research that could create a more immediate value exchange. The team sought to make the process of data collection more enjoyable and for it to immediately provide meaningful and valuable information back to participants within the surveying process. ONOP partnered with Deborah Cullinan, Vice President for the Arts at Stanford University, to undertake the development of a novel “art-ified” surveying application. Deborah helped identify potential collaborators for this undertaking, and ONOP ultimately contracted **Tactile Pictures** for the project. Nisma Zaman and Derek Chung, of Tactile Pictures, along with artist Sophia Rose Cruz, designed and developed the app in creative partnership with Dr. Sonke and members of the Research and Impact team. The resulting app was tested nationally, and ultimately – following its successful use – won a prestigious international juried Collision Award at the silver level.



“There are sustainable cultural practices that exist in every community. Don’t assume that you’re parachuting in to provide something new. Tap into the history and culture *of where you are.*”

Mixed Methods Research Design

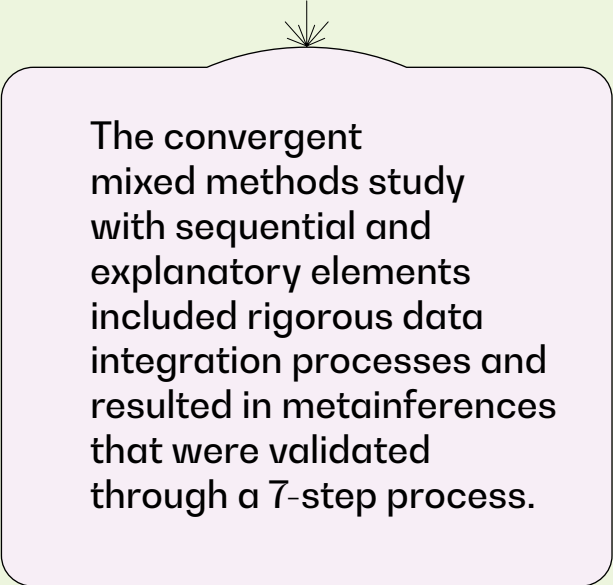
A CONVERGENT MIXED METHODS STUDY WITH SEQUENTIAL AND EXPLANATORY ELEMENTS was designed and undertaken to explore associations between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing in the 18 communities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The overarching study was designed to allow integration of various forms of quantitative and qualitative data, and to provide a more comprehensive view of the extent to which the key variables (arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing) may have changed or may be associated, and to also provide understanding of how or why the variables may have changed, and to further articulate nuances of the relationships between them. The convergent design allowed the research, for example, to compare answers to the same questions asked in both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) forms. This was designed to enhance the reliability of the findings and to create a more nuanced understanding of the outcomes of the project than any one form of data could produce alone.

As described below, rigorous data integration processes were used to

- 1. compare findings across data sets;**
- 2. use qualitative findings to enhance the quantitative findings; and**
- 3. look for differences in the findings across data sets.**

This approach maximized the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research and minimized the weaknesses of using one approach alone. The research design also used a seven-step process for generating and validating a final set of meta-inferences, which in mixed methods research are the final overarching insights or learnings derived from the data (Younas et al., 2023). This level of rigor was especially important given the wide range of “interventions” (activities) each community implemented, as well as the differences in populations engaged.

An inductive social sciences approach was also taken, meaning that observations and data were collected



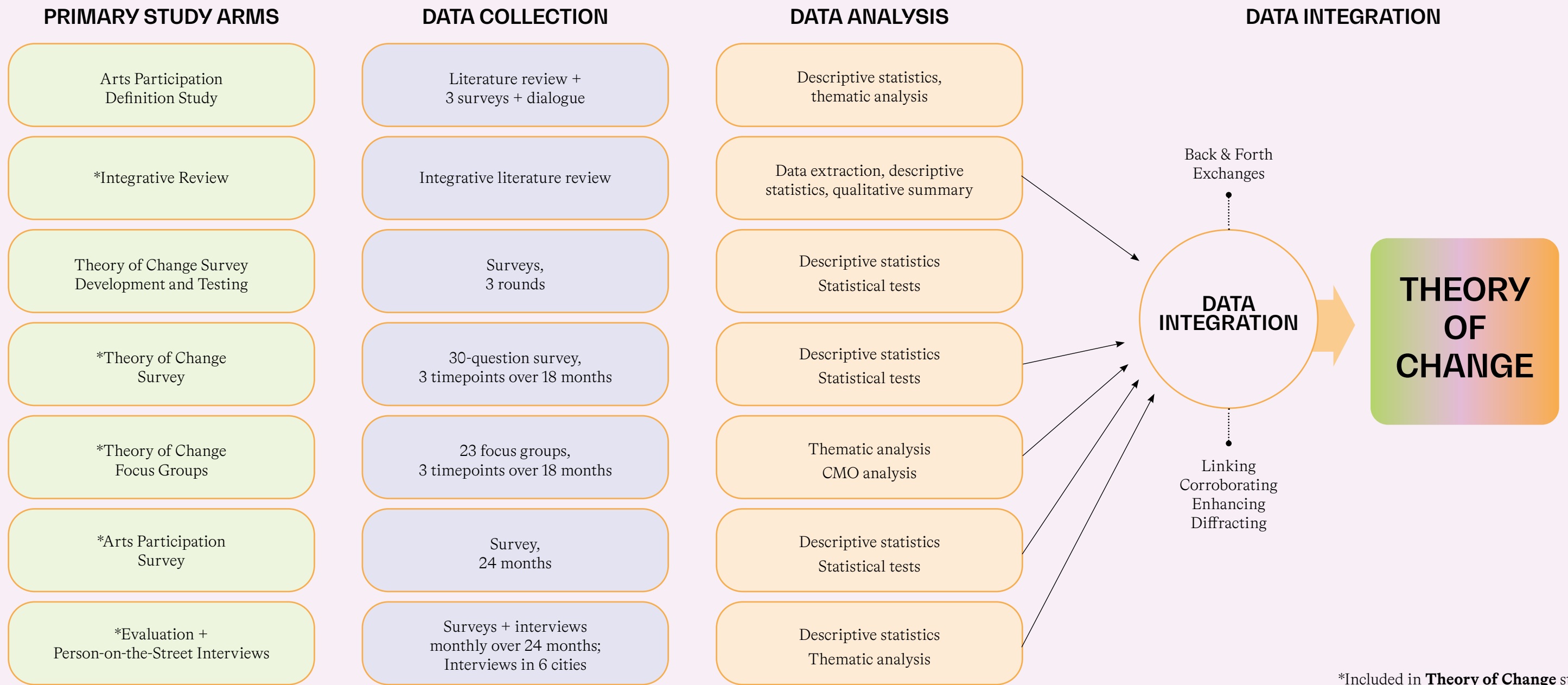
The convergent mixed methods study with sequential and explanatory elements included rigorous data integration processes and resulted in meta-inferences that were validated through a 7-step process.

and then analyzed to identify patterns and to make meaning in the form of findings and inferences. The primary unit of analysis in the research was the community. Data were collected from individuals through surveys and focus groups that engaged community members in group dialogues to obtain collective perspectives, including consensus and dissent, through the process of group dialogue. Some survey questions asked people about their individual arts participation and wellbeing, but most of the questions asked participants about their perspectives of social cohesion and wellbeing in their communities. Focus group dialogues asked people to consider arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing in their communities.

An important component of the research agenda was its multi-faceted evaluation plan, which included monthly survey reports completed by each team, quarterly interviews with site teams, and a final evaluation to assess July 27 activities and overarching outcomes and perspectives. While elements of the research design were intended to measure community-level outcomes, the evaluation plan included *process evaluation* (how ONOP did in accomplishing what it had set out to accomplish) and impacts evaluation (what changed at the collective- or systems-level as a result of the project in each community and overall).

The research agenda was organized in seven main parts, including evaluation (*see figure below*).

ONOP Research Agenda Mixed methods with multiple linked components



*Included in **Theory of Change** study

Theoretical Frames

- We-Making Theory of Change ¹
- Arts Participation as a Health Behavior ^{2,3}
- Arts Participation as a Social Determinant of Health ^{3,4}

Epistemologies

- Critical Participatory Inquiry ⁵
- Equity & Inclusion
- Multicultural Validity
- Participant Ownership ⁶
- Interpretivist Worldview
- Ecological Worldview

Aims

QUAN: 1. Measure associations between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing; 2. Measure changes in social cohesion and wellbeing in relation to arts participation in ONOP communities. QUAL: Describe associations and changes.

Citations

- ¹ Eng, et al., 2021
- ² Fancourt & Finn, 2019
- ³ Rodriguez et al., 2023
- ⁴ Dow et al., 2023
- ⁵ Call-Cummings et al, 2023
- ⁶ Stewart & Irons, 2018; Equitable Evaluation Framework, 2020

The Studies and their Key Findings

Within these seven study arms, or components, there were 13 unique research studies, as shown in the table below. The Theory of Change study integrated findings from six unique sub-studies.



FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES	THEORY OF CHANGE STUDY	OTHER STUDIES
Arts Participation Definition Study	*Integrative Review	Participatory Community Murals
Data Poems	Theory of Change Survey Study	Social Prescribing Case Studies
ONOP Founders Study	Theory of Change Focus Group Study	Artist Compensation and Wellbeing Analysis
*Integrative Review	Arts Participation/ Perceptions Survey Study	
Theory of Change Survey Development and Testing	Person-on-the-Street Interviews	
	Evaluation Surveys and Interviews	

**The Integrative Review served as a foundational study and as a part of the Theory of Change study*

These studies were organized and linked in several ways. The first five studies were foundational to the project. They grounded the primary Theory of Change study with a clear definition of arts participation, an understanding of the perspectives of the founding leaders and partners, the identities of the 18 communities, and an understanding of what had been

studied and found in the past. They were also linked in important ways to form a comprehensive research agenda. For example, a unique study was undertaken to develop and test a new survey instrument as a necessary component of the Theory of Change study, which included unique survey and focus group studies as well as an overarching mixed methods study. Each of the studies, and their results, are summarized below.



The Foundational Studies

Five foundational studies were conducted to ensure the research agenda was advancing and not duplicating previous research and to establish the definitions and measurement tools needed.

Arts Participation Definition Study.

Recognizing the need for a more inclusive definition for arts participation than had been published to date, this study created a definition that grounded the research agenda and study designs, and was offered to the field for the purpose of public health research (Sonke, et al., 2023; *See ONOP Research Brief #1 [here](#)*). The study included both qualitative and quantitative methods. It began by reviewing definitions that had previously been published and drafting of a starting definition based on previous ones. Surveys were then administered to two groups of people – cross-disciplinary arts and health field experts and the general public – to collect their thoughts about the definition. After surveying, the research team analyzed the perspectives and revised the definition. This process was undertaken three times, until the surveyed group was satisfied with the definition. Between each survey, perspectives of the ONOP team and partners were collected through dialogic processes and were reflected in the revisions.

Full details of the study, including the research methods and results, are available in the article published in *Health Promotion Practice* (link [here](#)).



Arts Participation Definition

Modes

(ways in which people – including makers, collaborators, audiences, observers, and others – engage, including informal, formal, live, virtual, individual and group participation)

Attending live arts and cultural events and activities

Creating, practicing, performing, and sharing art

Participating in social, civic, spiritual, and cultural arts practices

Consuming arts via electronic, digital, or print media

Learning in, through, and about the arts

Forms

(art forms or disciplines with which people engage)

**The examples provided are intended to suggest a broad range and are not intended to note every possible art form*

DANCE/MOVEMENT

(such as aerial, ballet, ballroom, ceremonial, contemporary, cultural, hip-hop, jazz, step, or tap)

LITERARY ARTS

(such as storytelling, fiction, non-fiction, short stories, memoir, screenwriting, poetry, literature for children, or graphic novels)

MEDIA

(such as film, animation, video, or other work at the intersection of technology, aesthetics, storytelling, and digital cultures)

MUSIC

(such as rap, choral, contemporary, experimental, gospel, instrumental, hip-hop, classical, chanting, rock, electronic, drumming, pop, world, or jazz)

THEATER/PERFORMANCE

(such as theater, musical theater, devised theater, puppetry, performance art, ritual, opera, spoken word, stage design, circus arts, comedy)

VISUAL ARTS, CRAFT, AND DESIGN

(such as illustration, painting, drawing, collage, printmaking, installation, photography, gardening, sculpture, video art, street art, pottery, glass, jewelry, metalworking, textiles, fashion, culinary arts, graphic, floral, architectural, environmental, or industrial design)



Data Poems.

A unique approach was used to create data poems as a “portrait” of each community. The data collection process and resulting poems helped inform the work of both the Research and Impact team and the larger national initiative by providing insight into the nuances of each city from the perspectives of its residents. Data were collected through sensory exercises facilitated by ONOP team members during the first round of site visits. The exercise invited community members to respond to five sensory questions: “What do you see, hear, taste, touch, and smell that is uniquely of your community? Community members shared words and phrases which were recorded verbatim by notetakers. These notes were then synthesized in an analytic process of creating data poems. Gray Davidson Carroll, a poet and Research and Impact Associate, led the poem-making process. The poems helped ground the research team and processes in how the communities saw themselves, which was essential to the team’s ability to research more effectively as outsiders to the communities.

See *ONOP Research Brief #2* [here](#).

Utica, Mississippi

Here/

*you will find Memories of Depot Street
the Breakfast Committee who hang out
at the pit stop every morning
Small town- see buildings that aren't up to code
Here, the people help each other. You'll find them here
Larry on the corner, children on bikes
People in their yards on Sunday mornings*

*Here, you'll find land and opportunity
Will smell the sawmill's dust, and the grills going
taste the hog cracklins and the one-pot boil
And if you're lucky, Grandma's lemon cake
Here, you will hear the honking of car horns
See people throwin' one hand high, gesturing a
greeting and hugging each other*

*Here, you'll see motorcycles and waterfalls
Will find cast-iron skilletts and grasshoppers
the black bears, deer, and so many flowers
you'll find an atmosphere of connection
here, you'll find, we hold the old together*

Founders Study.

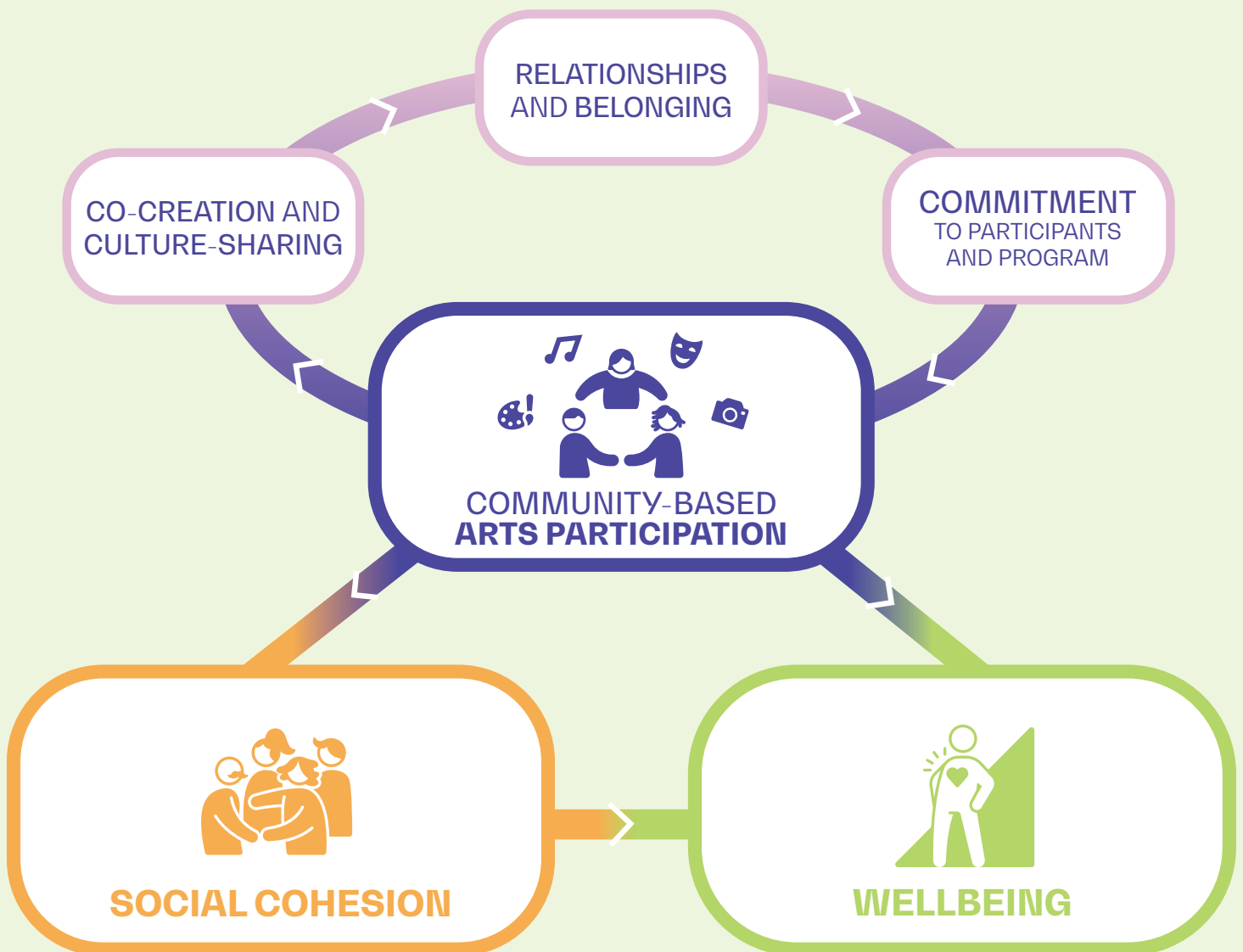
This interview study collected and distilled the perspectives of ONOP’s leaders and partners across the life of the initiative. The study aimed to distill and offer insight and guidance for future cross-sector initiatives. Data were collected through individual interviews at three timepoints, including at the initiative’s inception (prior to city selection), at the mid-point, and following July 27. Twelve initiative leaders and partners participated in the semi-structured interviews, and members of the research team transcribed the interviews and conducted thematic analysis.

See *ONOP Research Brief #6* [here](#).



Integrative Review.

This integrative review aimed to identify, describe, and synthesize research on arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing in a community context by addressing the question: “*What is the evidence base regarding relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing?*” Literature searches were conducted using 10 databases, and 18 articles met inclusion criteria – 16 original research articles and two reviews.



KEY FINDINGS. Results include four themes that articulate dimensions of and relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing, as well as a conceptual model highlighting these relationships.

1. **Arts participation in community spaces that includes creative physical or tactile engagement can build social cohesion.**
2. **Culturally rooted arts programs can enhance individual and shared cultural identity, belonging, solidarity, and cooperation.**
3. **Co-creation and social relationships cultivate commitment to a group and program, which can result in more regular participation, and in turn, enhance benefits.**
4. **Social cohesion, and its various components, may serve as a mechanism for enhancing wellbeing.**

CONCEPTUAL MODEL. Findings of this review highlight how arts participation can be a useful approach to enhancing social cohesion and wellbeing in communities. As represented in its conceptual model (above), the review suggests that community-based arts participation, particularly when co-creation and/or cultural sharing are involved, helps build relationships, a sense of belonging to a community, and solidarity. This can lead to a greater commitment to the program and fellow participants, which in turn can lead to more regular participation in the program. This virtuous cycle of arts participation enhances both individual and community wellbeing. The review also suggests that the social cohesion that is cultivated through arts participation may act as a mechanism for enhancing wellbeing.

Notably, the findings of this study align with learnings from the **Public Works** program, one of the inspirations for ONOP. The Public Works program, which has been implemented in communities across the US and beyond, is grounded in the understanding of three things that lead to group transformation: group enterprise, safe boundaries, and high stakes. Participants of the program reported significant mental and physical health benefits, along with a deep sense of bonding and social cohesion. This study supports the relationships between such creative group enterprise and the generation of social cohesion and wellbeing.



Theory of Change Survey Development and Testing.


Given that no measurement tools for assessing arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing together existed, the team created an original survey instrument. Using the definitions for the three concepts, the team developed indicators for each:

ARTS PARTICIPATION	SOCIAL COHESION	WELLBEING
Monthly participation	Social Networks	Social
Annual participation	Social Support	Mental
	Social Participation	Physical
	Trust	Health
	Sense of Belonging	Satisfaction with Life

A literature review was then undertaken to search for existing instruments that measured each concept. After examining all options, the team selected those that best aligned with the indicators. The team selected existing arts participation and wellbeing measures and developed an original scale for social cohesion. Both the social cohesion scale and the full survey were rigorously tested with national participants, and the result was an original 30-question survey instrument (See [Appendix E](#)).

See *ONOP Research Brief #5* [here](#).





*“Look for small ways early on to be responsive to things people say they want to do with very small scale interventions and actions. This creates a permission structure to *do something bigger.*”*

The Theory of Change (TOC) Study

OVERARCHING STUDY DESIGN

The most central part of the research agenda was the Theory of Change Study.

This overarching mixed methods (including both quantitative and qualitative methods) study was grounded in the *We-Making Theory of Change* noted above. It built on this important work – which included a literature review, case studies, and a dialogic inquiry – by applying the theory of change to a prospective observational and mixed methods study that included cities across the nation.

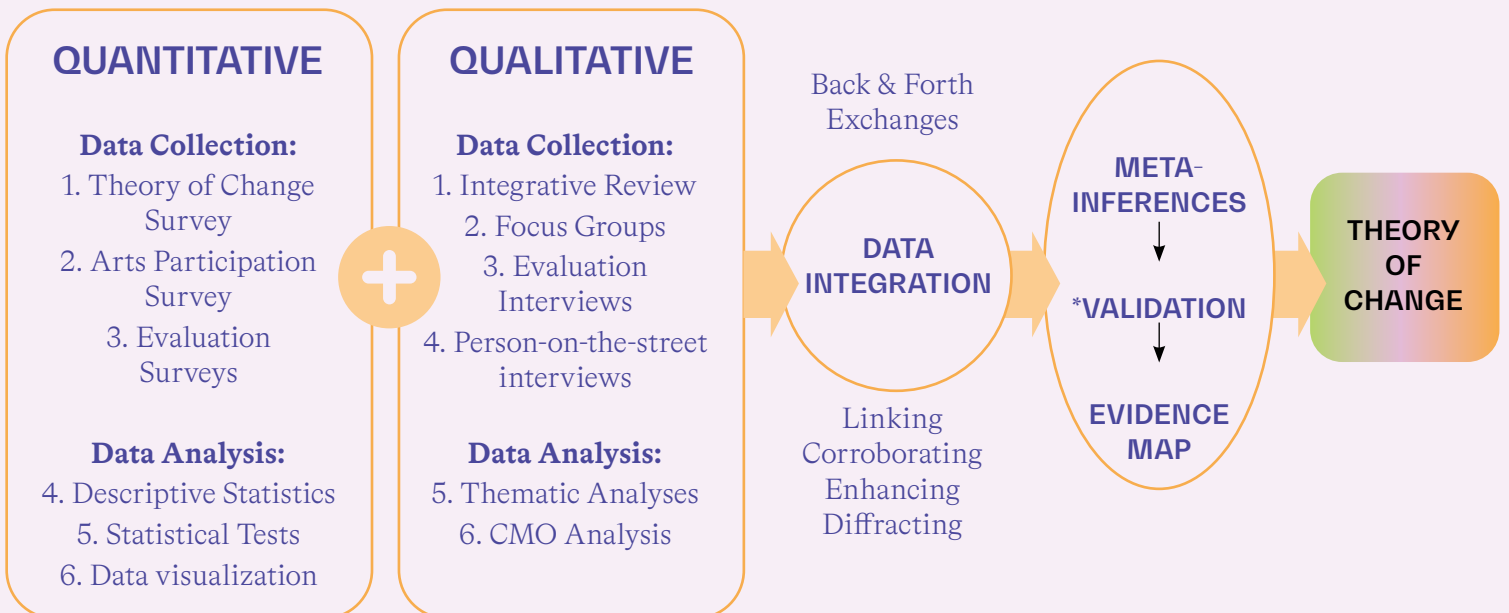
The convergent mixed methods study with explanatory and sequential elements included six unique sub-studies:

1. the integrative review of the literature described above;
2. a survey study;
3. a focus group study;
4. a national arts participation and perceptions study;
5. person-on-the-street interviews; and
6. evaluation surveys and accompanying interviews. Data integration included findings from each of these studies.

Theory of Change Study

Assessing relationships between arts participation, social cohesion & wellbeing in US communities

A convergent mixed methods study with explanatory and sequential elements



*Younas et al., 2023

The Theory of Change (TOC) study included three data collection timepoints for the primary 24 question survey and for parallel focus groups.

Over 12,955 people participated in the study’s surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

The 10-question arts participation and perceptions survey was administered nationally (not just in the 18 cities) over an 18-month period. Participants were recruited in a variety of ways, as shown in the table below.

DATA COLLECTION	TYPE OF SAMPLE	MODES OF RECRUITMENT
Integrative Review	Purposive sample	Systematic database search, manual reference checking, and inclusion of grey literature
Theory of Change Survey	Purposive convenience sample incorporating voluntary, snowball, and intercept sampling (statistical significance=70 surveys/city per timepoint)	Social media, flyers in public spaces, in-person recruitment in public spaces, direct invitations through social networks of site team members
Theory of Change Focus Groups	Purposive convenience sample incorporating voluntary, snowball, and intercept sampling	Social media, flyers in public spaces, in-person recruitment in public spaces, invitations through social networks of site team members
Arts Participation Survey	Convenience sample incorporating voluntary sampling and snowballing	Social media, flyers in public spaces, in-person recruitment in public spaces, invitations through social networks of site team members and national public health and arts organizations’ listservs/networks, Centiment, Verasight, ResearchMatch
Evaluation Surveys and Interviews	Purposive, longitudinal sampling with key informant selection	Direct invitations to local site team members
Street Interviews	Intercept sampling as a form of convenience sampling	In-person recruitment in public spaces

TOC SUB-STUDY #1:

Integrative Review

– See *Foundational Studies* above.

TOC SUB-STUDY #2:

Theory of Change Survey Study

Using the original survey, the team undertook a three-phase survey study to assess arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing across the ONOP cities and at the community level. Data collection took place between May 2023 and October 2024 at three timepoints lasting about three months each. Timepoint one (T1) represented the baseline (pre-activities); timepoint two (T2) began after six months of activity, and timepoint three (T3) began just after the July 27 events. Community members aged 18 and older from the participating communities were eligible to participate and were recruited as noted in the modes of recruitment table above.

KEY FINDINGS.

A total of 2,206 people from 16 ONOP cities completed surveys. Approximately 50-70 surveys were collected in each participating city at each timepoint.

See [Appendix F](#) for participant demographic details.

OVERARCHING KEY FINDINGS.

Arts participation and social cohesion increased steadily across the project timeframe.

There was a significant association between arts participation and social cohesion – the more frequently individuals participated in the arts in the past year, the higher their social cohesion scores were.

There is a positive association between social cohesion and wellbeing, with the relationship being particularly strong at T3.



Key Findings.

ARTS PARTICIPATION.

Arts participation *increased* steadily across the three timepoints.

The mean (average) number of days of arts participation per year was 134.6 (SD 136.1), and the median (middle of the range) was 70 days (minimum=0; maximum=365).

72.5% of respondents participated in the arts more than once per month.

Across ONOP cities, arts participation increased in the general population by 56.4% across the three timepoints (T1-T3).

WELLBEING.

More frequent arts participation is associated with *increased* wellbeing.

Those who participated most in the arts had improved wellbeing over time, while those who participated least experienced a decline.

SOCIAL COHESION.

Social cohesion *increased* significantly across timepoints ($p=0.002$).

More arts participation was associated with higher social cohesion. Specifically, individuals who participated 13 or more days in the past year had significantly higher social cohesion than individuals who participated less than 13 days.

PERCEPTIONS.

People strongly perceive relationships between arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing (across all data sets).

Perceptions of these relationships increased across the three timepoints (T1-T3). Those who participated in the arts 13 days or more per year (more than once per month) had higher perception scores than those who participated less.

TOC SUB-STUDY #3:

Theory of Change Focus Group Study

At the same three survey timepoints, the research team conducted focus groups. A total of 21 groups were conducted, with 6-8 groups at each timepoint. The focus groups were designed to assess the same concepts as the survey to provide a comparison between quantitative and qualitative collection methods, and to provide a richer understanding of people's experiences and perceptions (See *Focus Group Discussion Guide in Appendix G*). Community members aged 18 and up were recruited in partnership with local site teams, and thematic analysis and context-mechanism-outcomes (CMO) analysis were used to analyze the data. Member checking provided focus group participants with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the analyses and findings.

KEY FINDINGS. Thematic analysis yielded themes and insights from across all communities. See *participant demographic details in Appendix H*. The themes are distilled below into sets of key findings related to each of the primary constructs (arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing), followed by themes related to people's perceptions of the relationships between the constructs.

ARTS PARTICIPATION. Availability of accessible spaces, geographic distance, and transportation both limit and facilitate participation, as does affordability. Inclusivity was noted as a key variable, as were welcomeness and cultural relevance. Communication and awareness of activities were consistently noted as both important and often lacking, including the importance of using languages beyond English. Other key barriers included safety risks, competing personal priorities, lack of governmental support, and exclusion of the arts in education. Financial constraints and affordability were identified as either a barrier to or facilitator of arts participation in 81% of focus groups.



SOCIAL COHESION. Social cohesion was described in highly varied ways across the communities, but with a common perception of reluctance among people in the communities to engage across identity groups (e.g., racial, age, economic, political groups). Social cohesion was described as stronger within identity groups than across groups. In 71% (N=15) of focus groups, participants described greater social cohesion within groups than across groups or differences. Other barriers to social cohesion were economic challenges (e.g., high living costs, gentrification, and financial instability), historic inequities, safety concerns, digital lifestyles, and generational differences. The groups noted that social cohesion is supported by shared cultural events and activities, intentionally cross-cultural arts activities, and availability of gathering spaces and community organizations.

WELLBEING. Across the communities, financial constraints, poverty, and economic disparities were understood to significantly hinder community wellbeing. Social isolation was recognized to profoundly impact wellbeing, especially since the pandemic. Other barriers to wellbeing were mental health stigma, limited access to mental health resources, structural racism, violence, cultural trauma, and systemic oppression, especially for marginalized populations. Economic opportunity and availability of health, arts, cultural, and recreation resources were seen as key enablers of wellbeing.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ARTS PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL COHESION, AND WELLBEING.

Across communities, there was a clear and consistent recognition of the relationships between these three constructs. Across groups, there was consensus that the arts create inclusive environments where people can share personal experiences, advocate for mental health, and build support networks. Additionally, arts participation was seen as a way to strengthen social bonds and build trust, belonging, connection, and community pride. Participating in the arts alongside other community members was seen to foster empathy, solidarity, and collaboration, which supports community wellbeing. The perception that arts participation builds social cohesion was generally stronger than the perception of its impact on wellbeing.

See [Appendix I](#) for a complete list of focus group themes.

The context-mechanism-outcomes (CMO) analysis yielded 14 instances wherein statements by focus group participants put arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing in relationship with each other, with social cohesion positioned as a mechanism to wellbeing.



TOC SUB-STUDY #4:

National Arts Participation Survey.

The Arts Participation survey was another original survey developed by the research team. Akin to polling research, and consisting of just 10 questions, the 1-minute survey was designed to generate advocacy data that communities across the country could use to support efforts related to arts funding and policy in local communities (See *Survey in [Appendix J](#)*).

The survey was administered nationally through social media, via e-mail, and through fliers distributed in ONOP and other communities. The survey was first administered through the survey platform, Qualtrics, before being launched on ONOP's original art-ified surveying app. **A total of 10,346 people across the country completed the survey.**

Key Findings.

See participant demographic details in [Appendix K](#).

67% of respondents had participated in the arts in the past 7 days, *33% had not*

94% agreed that arts participation builds social cohesion in their community

96.2% agreed that arts participation improves wellbeing in their community

90.3% would like to participate more in the arts to improve their wellbeing

See *ONOP Research Brief #8* [here](#).

TOC SUB-STUDY #5:

Person-on-the-Street Interviews.

Three of the same questions asked in the Arts Participation survey were asked of people on the street in six ONOP cities as part of a media project with our Hardpin Media partners. Responses were audio recorded and transcribed, and thematic analysis was conducted to develop themes from the data. Themes were similar to those garnered from the focus groups:

1. **Participating in the arts significantly contributes to individual and community wellbeing.**
2. **Participating in the arts provides mental health benefits, stress relief, and emotional expression.**
3. **Arts participation enhances social bonds.**
4. **Arts participation provides physical health benefits.**
5. **Engaging in the arts fosters creativity, self-expression, and personal growth.**
6. **The arts offer therapeutic benefits, helping individuals process emotions and heal from trauma.**
7. **The arts help build social cohesion by bringing diverse community members together, fostering understanding and collaboration.**
8. **The arts play a key role in creating a sense of identity and pride within the community, enhancing cultural awareness and appreciation.**



TOC SUB-STUDY #6:

Evaluation Surveys and Interviews – See *Evaluation* section below.

Theory of Change Study Data Integration

Findings from each of the studies were integrated using rigorous methods for comparing, corroborating, linking, diffracting, explaining and enhancing. A main “joint display” positioned all quantitative findings (in the form of quantitative constructs, such as descriptive statistics and statistical findings) on one side of a table and all qualitative themes on the other side of the table (See *Joint Display in Appendix L*). This allowed the research team to compare the quantitative and qualitative data by drawing lines between concepts to compare, corroborate, link, diffract, explain, and enhance the findings. Individual joint display tables were then used to link concepts across each primary thematic component of the study, such as relationships between arts participation and social cohesion (See *Appendix M*). These joint displays were used to develop metainferences, which are the final insights or conclusions derived from integrating qualitative and quantitative findings (Younas et al., 2023). A rigorous seven-step process was then used to validate the metainferences, resulting in assertions that are either confirmed, enhanced, or complimentary, based on the data and supported by prior research.

Key Findings.

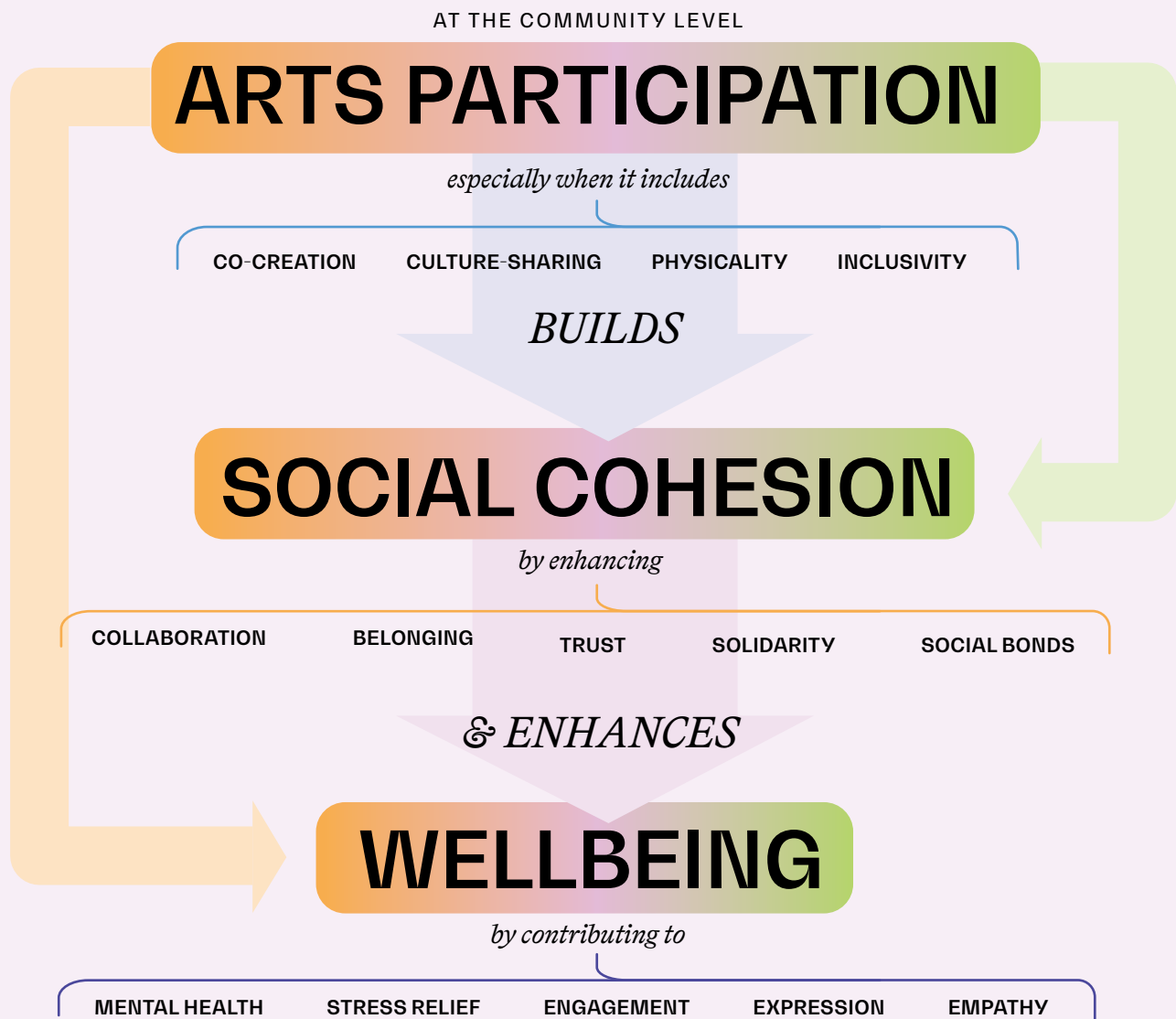
The study produced seven metainferences.

- 1 Arts participation builds social cohesion (confirmed).
- 2 Arts participation builds social cohesion by strengthening collaboration, belonging, trust, solidarity, and social bonds across groups and differences (expanded).
- 3 People strongly believe that arts participation builds social cohesion in communities (expanded). Arts participation is associated with wellbeing (complementarity).
- 4 People believe that arts participation contributes to individual and community wellbeing (confirmed).
- 5 Arts participation builds social cohesion and contributes to wellbeing (expanded).
- 6 Social cohesion contributes to wellbeing (confirmed).
- 7 Social cohesion can serve as a mechanism through which arts participation improves wellbeing (confirmed).

These meta-inferences led to the development of a theory of change that both supports and advances the *We-Making Theory of Change*. Notably, this *Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change* includes a national prospective study, which was not a part of the *We-Making Theory of Change*. The *Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change* asserts – based on a broad range of evidence – that, at the community level, arts participation builds social cohesion and enhances wellbeing.

The Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change also articulates *how* arts participation builds social cohesion and improves wellbeing. These identified mechanisms represent a synthesis of prior evidence, along with the lived experiences and perceptions of people in ONOP communities and across other parts of the US.

Our Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change





“Center people.”

Other Studies

Social Prescribing Case Studies.

This component of the research agenda was designed to document activities related to social prescribing programs that were implemented in ONOP communities. Social prescribing (SP) is a systems-level approach to addressing social determinants of health and wellness that offers a way for healthcare providers to refer patients to non-clinical community services to improve health and wellbeing and address underlying causes of patients' health and wellbeing issues (Muhl et al., 2023).

Among the 18 cities, three sites – Gainesville, Harlan County, and the Bronx – worked to develop social prescribing or arts prescribing programs as a way of making local arts, cultural, nature, and social resources available for the health and wellbeing of community members. People at each site who were involved in developing and implementing the social prescribing program were asked to complete an online survey with 55 questions about their social prescribing activities. After the survey responses were reviewed, the program leaders participated in a follow-up interview to provide more detailed information about their program. Survey and interview data were used to create the case studies, which were reviewed for accuracy by the site team before being finalized.

See *Research Brief #4* [here](#).

Artist Compensation and Wellbeing Analysis.

A survey of artists who participated in ONOP projects in the 18 cities was conducted to explore relationships between compensation and wellbeing. The study was supported by Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) and incorporated their data from over 13,000 artists in New York State. A survey was designed to generate data regarding employment, compensation, and wellbeing that could be compared to the CRNY data to generate insights related to potential relationships between compensation and wellbeing among ONOP artists. Regression analyses were used to examine the influence of variables such as type of employment, type and level of compensation, benefits, rurality, race and gender identity, age, and artistic discipline on several dimensions of wellbeing, including physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

KEY FINDINGS. Data provided by 51 artists from across the 18 ONOP cities were analyzed. 83% (n=39) of the artists surveyed were paid for their work. For 35% (n=16) this represented a new job, and for 28% (n=13) a change or expansion of their current job. 55% (n=30) were paid as independent contractors, and 9% (n=4) were paid as full-time employees with benefits. Notably, 90% (n=38) of respondents to the question felt that their rate of compensation was appropriate. The artists also reported on how their participation in ONOP affected various domains of their personal and professional lives, and the analysis found that participating in ONOP had significantly positive impacts in the lives of the artists, as shown in the table below.

PARTICIPATING IN ONOP ...

CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO PHYSICAL HEALTH	40.9%
CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH	77.3%
CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	90.9%
CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE	92.8%
CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO OPTIMISM	93.0%
CONTRIBUTED POSITIVELY TO AGENCY OVER FUTURE	79.6%
ADVANCED ARTISTIC PRACTICE	79.1%
ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL GOALS	65.9%
LED TO PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	44.2%
FELT RESPECTED	97.7%

The wellbeing of the artists who were paid for their work was compared with that of those who were not paid. Notably, and differing from the findings of the CRNY evaluation, those who were not paid reported very slightly (statistically insignificant) higher levels of overall wellbeing than those who were paid. Further research is needed to determine why this may be so.

Participatory Murals.

Participatory murals were used as an arts-based method to collect community perspectives on how the arts affect their lives. The murals used short prompts that invited participants to complete the phrases “The arts give...”, “take...”, “break...”, and “create...” on reusable panels displayed at community arts events. Analysis of data collected from three sites (IMAN Chicago, Hawai’i Island, and Seattle with two separate activations in January and July 2024) revealed themes that emerged from across the communities.

Key themes included that the arts give liberation (“freedom,” “permission to be completely me”), vitality (“joy,” “energy”), and community connection. That the arts take investment, including time, patience, and emotional vulnerability. They break barriers, constraints, and negative cycles, with “boundaries” and “stereotypes” appearing repeatedly across sites. Finally, they create healing (“a realm where one can heal in your own way”), connection (“with ancestors,” “family,” “community”), and new possibilities. Notably, the mural exercise provided a platform for community members to express solidarity with other communities, with multiple participants writing messages like “Free Palestine,” “Free Gaza,” “Free Sudan,” “Free Congo,” and “Free Yemen.”



Evaluation

Elements of several evaluation frameworks were applied to guide the evaluation design, implementation, and reporting:

1. [the Equitable Evaluation Framework \(EEI, 2021\)](#);
2. [the Conceptual Framework for Evaluating Health Equity Promotion within Community-Based Participatory Research \(CBPR\) Partnerships \(Ward et al., 2018\)](#);
3. [Arts for Health and Wellbeing: An Evaluation Framework \(Public Health England, 2016\)](#); and
4. [the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships \(MAPP\) Framework \(NACCHO, 2022; Erwin et al., 2017\)](#).

In collaboration with NLC, the Research and Impact team developed an evaluation rubric to guide the evaluation of six key components of the initiative and to measure process outcomes, as well as overarching impacts of the initiative in complement to the research agenda. The rubric served as the basis for the design of the evaluation process and data collection instruments. Data collection included a 32-question monthly evaluation survey for the local sites, which was completed by a designated representative from the site teams between October 2022 and August 2024.



Evaluation Matrix

COMPONENT	INDICATORS	KEY METHODS	OUTPUTS	PROCCES OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
ONOP (project/ organization)	Participation Partnerships Milestone achievements Media coverage Fiscal effectiveness	Internal tracking Partner survey Media tracking/ analysis	Replicable national model 18 sites/projects Arts Desks Community partnership model Web/media Video Series Theory of change Publications/ resources	Participation Sustained partnerships Achievement of milestones Successful budget management Effective investment	Cross-sector collaboration norming (municipalities, public health, and arts and culture) Greater public awareness of arts-health relationship National policy, e.g., social prescribing
Site Teams	Participation Partnerships Utilization of partnerships for other purposes Milestone achievements	Monthly reports	Project roadmap Meeting/ communication structures Jobs	Participation Sustained partnerships Regular meeting Established working culture Achievement of milestones	Sustainable cross-sector partnerships Cross-sector collaboration norming Local arts and health investments Influence on local policy

Evaluation Matrix

COMPONENT	INDICATORS	KEY METHODS	OUTPUTS	PROCESS OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Arts Projects	Participation Partnerships Jobs	Monthly reports Interviews Media analysis	18 projects New or revised jobs	Participation (by site and total)	Cross-sector infrastructures Greater public awareness of arts-health relationship Public Participation
Healthcare/ Public Health and Arts Activities	Participation Partnerships between health, arts, or other sectors Jobs	Monthly reports Key informant interviews	Programming (unique at each site) Program infrastructures (e.g. social prescribing) Jobs	Participation Cross-sector collaboration Achievement of milestones	Sustainable cross-sector partnerships Sustainable program structures (e.g. service co-location, social prescribing) Jobs
Community Mapmakers Groups (n=9)	Participation Objectives (establishment/achievement) Utilization of group for other purposes Policy activities	Participant observation Key informant interviews Internal tracking Quarterly reports	Project roadmap Local data collection structures Local data repository	Participation Regular meetings Established working culture	Influence on local policy Enhanced leadership and participation in research Cross-sector collaboration norming
Technical Assistance Program/ Cohort Process	Participation Perceived value	Attendance Monthly reports Participant observation	Replicable model	Regular office hours Participation Expressed value	Milestones achievement (impact on project)

Data collection included a 32-question monthly evaluation survey for the local sites, which was completed by a designated representative from the site teams between October 2022 and August 2024. In some cases, members of the site teams collaborated on completing surveys to provide more comprehensive information. These surveys captured the site team’s experiences, their perceptions of partnerships and collaborations, the opportunities they provided for arts participation, successes and challenges, and overall project progress and achievements. In addition to the monthly surveys, site teams participated in quarterly interviews to capture additional nuances about their work and experiences.

A final, longer survey (78 questions) was conducted in August 2024. In addition to collecting the regular monthly data, this survey asked site teams to report on details about their July 27 events, participants, and collaborations, as well as on the entire project from start to finish. In addition, a final evaluation interview was conducted in August 2024 across all sites and focused on surprises and moments of transformational impact, as well as community participation, sustainability, and local systems and structures created through the project.

A total of 243 total surveys were completed across the 18 sites between October 2022 and August 2024. Given that not all cities reported monthly, and one city never reported, the quantitative results are presumed to under-represent what actually occurred. As with the research, communities were given the autonomy to opt out of evaluation processes when they had more urgent priorities or limited capacities. Despite this underreporting, these results suggest a high level of activity among site teams and public participation in activities.

ANALYSIS METHODS. The research team developed descriptive statistics and conducted a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, including narrative responses from open-ended survey questions and interview transcripts. The analysis combined manual and AI-assisted analysis using CoLoop, Claude, and ChatGPT for various functions. All AI work was rigorously checked and validated by the research team. Themes and thematic categories were developed in alignment with the components and indicators in the rubric, with additional domains added based on the data. All domains contained both successes and challenges impacting project progress. The technical assistance domain was assessed separately, as that information was not included in surveys or interviews.

MEASURE	VALUE
Site team meetings	1,036
Partner meetings	1,109
Opportunities for community-based arts participation	3,475
Hours of arts programming provided	4,030
Total participants in arts programming	109,600
Arts desks (arts and healthcare programs/partnerships)	6
Total jobs created or revised*	1,013

**The total jobs figure includes the artists and vendors hired to participate in the July 27 events.*

SUCCESS FACTORS SUMMARY. The following table summarizes key factors reported to contribute to success at the local level (across communities).

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	SUCCESS FACTORS
Site Team	Key Attributes	Diversity in group members Flexibility of the group Clarity of desired outcomes
	Processes	Collaboration Network building Strategic planning/engagement Adaptability and problem-solving
	Cultural Engagement	Relationship with ONOP Innovation and adaptability Community-centric engagement
Artistic Projects	Community Engagement and Empowerment	Community engagement Community empowerment Creating structures for community engagement
	Innovative Art Initiatives	Innovative approaches to art Bringing in local talent Cultural connection and healing Celebration of local talent
	Event Planning	Event planning and preparation
Project Management	Strategic Planning and Management	Effective project management Strategic project management Effective organization and planning Development of supportive structures
	Funding	Diverse funding sources Effective grant applications Timelines and consistent engagement Co-branding with community partners
	Long-Term Focus	Long-Term Focus
Equity and Inclusion	Empowerment and Access	Power-sharing Creative expansion of access Culturally relevant marketing/communication
	Community Resilience	Cultural connectivity and local focus Adaptation in response to challenges

KEY BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES. The following table summarizes key barriers and challenges to success at the local level (across communities).

GROUP OR COMPONENT	KEY BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES
Site Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracting challenges Scheduling and coordination conflicts Staffing disruptions Budgeting Tracking progress
Mapmakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power-sharing Coordination of schedules Identifying the desired tasks/outcomes of the group
Partnerships/Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex coordination Community navigation of sensitive events Logistical hurdles Scheduling conflicts Commitment and engagement Communications Power-sharing
Artistic Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination Project complexity Budgeting constraints Sustainability
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representation gaps Distribution of information across the community Accessibility challenges (e.g., transportation, cost, sharing information, childcare, language translation, and logistics) Lack of trust and past experiences
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community safety concerns Lack of cross-sector collaboration Time constraints Process and/or mission misalignment
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding uncertainty Leadership changes Sustainability of funding Timing of funds distribution Administrative constraints
Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity of concurrent planning

A man with a beard, wearing a red t-shirt and a light-colored baseball cap, stands on a wooden deck. He is smiling and looking to his right. In his left hand, he holds a clear plastic cup with a pink drink. The background shows a wooden structure with a corrugated metal roof, a green field, and a white building in the distance under a cloudy sky.

“Go into this work
with an open heart
and open mind.
Let things happen.”

STRENGTHS. The primary strength of the ONOP research agenda was its breadth. 13 unique studies collected an array of quantitative and qualitative data representing people, experiences, and perspectives from across the 18 communities and across the nation. The mixed methods approach allowed qualitative data (people’s direct lived experiences and perceptions) to confirm and explain the quantitative data from surveys. This approach also used a rigorous 7-step process for validating each of its resulting meta-inferences, which shaped the Theory of Change.

Two other primary strengths were the team’s investment in time and effort to

1. **define the values that would ground the research practices; and**
2. **to undertake foundational studies that would ground the work in clear definitions and prior understandings.**

In addition, the research team itself was a significant strength. The team included exceptional statisticians,

including lead statistician Dr. Ji-Hyun Lee, President of the American Statistical Association (2025-26); individuals with diverse lived experience and research expertise; and a director with over 20 years of research experience at the intersections of the arts and health. The team brought a deep commitment to advancing equity in its practices and invested significant time and effort in benchmarking and researching decisions, such as how to most inclusively and equitably collect demographic information, how to center value to communities in every aspect of the research, and how to fairly compensate everyone who shared their knowledge, perceptions, or experiences.

LIMITATIONS. The primary limitation of the research agenda was that the initiative was designed to be time-bound, therefore limiting the ability for outcomes to be studied over a longer period of time. A second primary weakness of the research was that it had to be designed before the 18 communities had been selected and before they had made their plans. This meant that the research team had to both make assumptions and cast a very wide net for data collection (this wide net also represents a strength of the research), without knowing what activities would be implemented. These two circumstances, along with the initiative’s intention for each city to undertake bespoke activities in response to unique local issues, meant that there was no single common activity or health outcome to study across all sites. As a result, a very broad research agenda was developed that focused on the broad concepts of arts participation, social cohesion, and wellbeing.

The Theory of Change study was limited by low participation in some communities. Notably, some of the communities surveyed did not meet the target of 70 participants in each round of surveying, which limited the ability to report findings in all of the participating communities and to generalize across communities. This study was also limited by the decision to allow communities to opt in or out of each component of the research plan. While this represented an important decision related to the values of the research, it limited both participation and generalizability.



What We're Leaving Behind

ONOP's focus on values-based research included a priority for building research capacity in participating communities as well as making all aspects of the work available to other communities and future researchers who might advance this work. ONOP's research and evaluation leaves behind several substantial resources, including:

- A definition of arts participation for the purpose of public health research (See *Research Brief #1* [here](#)).
- Two original survey instruments (See [Appendix E](#) and [Appendix J](#)).
- An original award-winning surveying app.
- A conceptual model that suggests how community-based arts participation builds social cohesion and wellbeing in communities (See *Research Brief #3* [here](#)).
- *The Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change* that can guide evidence-based community arts programs designed to enhance social cohesion and wellbeing.
- Advocacy data that can be used in funding and policy efforts locally and nationally.
- A model for values-based research that can be useful as a precedent and guide for other projects.



WHAT'S NEXT



Key National Impacts

One Nation/One Project has demonstrated that artists can and should be welcomed into and included in non-arts spaces as powerful collaborators.

Demonstrated effectiveness of cross-sector collaboration.

Artists help make change. They do so through work that offers visions of what was, what is, or what might be, and they do it by building experiences that help people connect, imagine, and transform. Artists have always done this work, but they haven't always done it with partners who are outside of the arts but share similar goals, such as health practitioners and health systems, or local governments. ONOP has demonstrated that artists can and should be welcomed into and included in non-arts spaces as powerful collaborators. It has also demonstrated how these kinds of partnerships can work in service to concrete goals related to equitable health outcomes and municipal public engagement, and how they can help build trust between residents and leaders, stronger relationships between providers and patients, and social cohesion across groups and differences in communities.

Supported the longstanding precedent for artists as critical leaders and partners in community change work.

ONOP sets a strong example of how artists can be critical leaders and partners in making substantive change in communities. Artists are highly adept at working at the hyper-local level as guides on the ground, illuminators of complex or unspoken issues, and critical thinkers in problem solving. Artists can also serve as effective connectors across local sectors, including health organizations, community and culture centers, economic development entities, and municipal agencies.

Demonstrated the value of cross-sector funding.

ONOP sets a significant precedent for how funding can be garnered from across sectors to create a comprehensive network of program support and partnership. At the national level, ONOP garnered funding from across sectors (including arts and culture, health, government, entertainment, and social change), and two of our major institutional supporters made innovative investments that pooled funds from across program areas. Individual communities were also able to diversify funding sources and, in turn, broaden disciplinary input and partnership. For example, the site lead in Kansas City, Art as Mentorship, received a major multi-year commitment from the Kauffman Foundation, while Urban Health Plan, the site lead in The Bronx, received a major award from the National Endowment for the Arts, marking its first donation from an arts-centered funder.

Set a new precedent for artists as critical leaders and partners in addressing community health issues.

ONOP has demonstrated how – across a diverse range of cities – artists and the arts can help address critical health concerns. In cities of all sizes, ONOP projects engaged community artists in examining and understanding local health and social issues and in designing and implementing programming to address these issues. These models can serve as inspiration and roadmaps for how artists and the arts can be engaged both locally and nationally to address health issues and to help build healthier communities in the US.

Key National Impacts

Demonstrated how health centers can be community centers.

ONOP highlights how clinics and health centers, including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), can be trusted places and conveners in communities, and how the arts can help this happen. Clinics make a powerful home base for artists doing cross-sector, health-focused work, and the arts can help make these clinical spaces more welcoming and comfortable for community members. Co-location of arts and health services can significantly increase access and uptake of both.

Increased arts participation across communities.

ONOP projects provided over 3,400 opportunities for arts participation across the 18 cities, and more than 110,000 people participated in those activities. Notably, the research measured arts participation across the 18 communities using a sample of the general population of each city – not just those who participated in ONOP activities – across three timepoints. Using the Theory of Change survey, arts participation was measured before project activities began (baseline, May-July 2023), at a mid-point (January-March 2024), and after the culminating events (August-October 2024). The study found that arts participation increased across the cities by 56.4% between the first and last timepoints. It also found that people with low incomes participated more than those with high incomes, and that people in large-sized communities participated more than those in small- or medium-sized communities.

Increased social cohesion across communities.

ONOP research found that social cohesion increased by 12.6% between the first and last study timepoints. These statistical findings were supported by findings from 21 focus groups conducted across the same three timepoints. Additionally, the research found a significant association between arts participation and social cohesion – the more frequently individuals participated in the arts, the higher their social cohesion scores were.

Created an actionable Theory of Change for building social cohesion and wellbeing through arts participation.

ONOP's *Theory of Change*, based on data from a national mixed methods study and including both quantitative and qualitative findings, provides a roadmap that communities can use to develop evidence-based arts programs to build social cohesion and improve wellbeing. The *Arts for EveryBody Theory of Change* articulates how arts participation (especially when it includes co-creation, culture-sharing, physicality, and inclusivity) builds social cohesion by enhancing collaboration, belonging, trust, solidarity, and social bonds and, in turn, enhances wellbeing by contributing to mental health, stress-relief, engagement, expression, and empathy. The model suggests that social cohesion is an important mechanism for enhancing community wellbeing.

The Theory of Change articulates how arts participation builds social cohesion and, in turn, enhances wellbeing.

Key National Impacts

Generated new national data to support advocacy and investment in the arts for improving social cohesion and wellbeing.

ONOP collected survey responses from over 10,346 people across the country over a 12-month period. 66% of people had participated in the arts in the past seven days, 34% had not. We found that:

94% agree that arts participation builds social cohesion in their community

96.2% agree that arts participation improves wellbeing in their community

90.3% would like to participate more in the arts to improve their wellbeing

Created a suite of resources to guide and support future work.

These new open-source resources provide case studies, insights, and recommendations based on the work of One Nation/One Project and Arts for EveryBody. They include:

- Field Guide: **Creativity and Collaboration for Healthier Cities**, National League of Cities
- Field Guide: **Creative Partnerships for Stronger Healthcare**, CSI Solutions
- **Arts For EveryBody “Culture is Free” Zine**
- **No Place Like Home Documentary Podcast**
- *Arts for EveryBody: The One Nation/One Project Impact Report* (this report)





“The more the message spreads,
the more allies you’ll find.”

Key Local Impacts



Built confidence for cross-sector collaboration and change-making.

The work in the 18 cities demonstrated that the initiative helped generate confidence among those who were involved, and that confidence matters. Site team leaders articulated how the initiative provided opportunities for them to learn the cultures and languages of other sectors, as well as best practices for building and implementing arts and health initiatives. This confidence was supported by the cohort experience in which site leaders benefited from cross-sector collaboration, support in local fundraising and partnership building, as well as the regular opportunities for site leaders to share their work and accomplishments with fellow cohort members and ONOP stakeholders. Opportunities such as these provided cohort members with the confidence to approach new partners in the future. Their local work also generated confidence that artists and the arts can make change in communities. And, most importantly, that community members themselves can do so as well.

“We’re more confident now in speaking the language of our health partners.”

“Our artists are seeing that they belong in new types of spaces and programs, and that they don’t have to disqualify themselves.”

- ONOP COHORT MEMBERS

Key Local Impacts

Generated awareness and understanding of arts organizations as critical community assets.

The initiative strengthened recognition of arts organizations as essential community assets by deepening relationships and increasing understanding between arts groups, healthcare, local government, and residents. Local health and municipal organizations, along with community members, gained a better understanding of local arts organizations' abilities and roles. In some communities, those arts organizations are now seen as "hubs" for innovation and community health, not just the arts. Government staff learned about the complexities and usefulness of producing arts events and, reciprocally, artists also became familiar with city staff and government processes such as procurement.

"I think we opened up a whole new way of thinking around how people work together."

"When we started, I don't think a soul understood the connection between arts and health. I feel like a lot of people get it now."

- ONOP COHORT MEMBERS

Built a sustainable community of practice and leaders.

ONOP, at its core, was a community of practitioners committing to big, new ideas. One of its greatest impacts may be that it created 18 teams of community leaders, practicing across the arts, health, and government sectors. Through their experiences in ONOP, they gained new skills and strengths, not only for collaboration, but also for innovation and risk-taking. This community of leaders understands and will continue to model the value of experimentation, the vibrancy of innovation, and the necessity for the kind of resilience that is needed now more than ever.



Key Learnings

Building Cross-Sector Partnership.

As a “building the plane as we fly it” initiative, ONOP navigated real-time decision-making, taking strategic leaps that yielded valuable lessons – particularly in the complexities of partnership, both broadly and across specific sectors. In the earliest phases of the ONOP and NLC partnership, many details about the initiative were unknown; ONOP was still actively fundraising, and the scale of what was possible had not yet been determined. Although the primary partners (ONOP and NLC) had a contract that outlined a scope of work, areas of uncertainty regarding roles and responsibilities, technical assistance design, and staffing remained. Perhaps most importantly, the risk tolerance of each partner – as they embarked on an entirely new venture – was not yet articulated. As an institution, NLC sought clarity and clear expectations, while as an artistic venture, ONOP sought to lead from discovery and to put supporting structures into place as needs emerged. As a result, tensions arose and intentional dialogue about how the partnership was and wasn't working was necessary until understanding and agreements were established.

The initiative demonstrated that, while not always comfortable, it is possible to create a strong partnership through trial and error as work evolves. **Courage** to engage in open and honest communication and a commitment to **trust** building were essential ingredients in this process. This also required a continuous **commitment** to the partnership itself – modeling the adaptability, determination, and resilience that we encouraged across the 18 sites involved in the initiative. Building healthy, impactful partnerships – especially cross-sector ones – is not easy work. But through commitment, communication, and investment of time in the partnership itself, greater shared achievement than one organization can accomplish alone is possible.

Key learnings related to partnership:

Clear understanding and articulation of each partner's capacity for risk and uncertainty is crucial. Discussing differences in risk tolerances can help prevent early tensions and set a foundation for greater trust.

Clarity and transparency around partnership expectations is also essential. Articulating expectations and preferred ways of working at the beginning can help mitigate tensions and set a foundation for effective partnership. An important part of this process is the development of a shared culture that builds on the respective strengths of each partner's organization and practice.

Partnership takes time. A partnership is, in itself, an entity that needs time, attention, and care. Time for alignment-building practices, and examination and communication around the partnership itself, is time well spent. Taking time to build a solid foundation of clarity in the beginning will save time and support success in the long run.

Navigating Money and Power with Care.

A major learning from the initiative was the importance of thoughtfully addressing money and power in relation to historical and current power structures and dynamics. When an outside organization brings opportunities and resources to local communities, there is tremendous potential to cause systemic harm. In the initial site selection process, the RFP required that a local municipality serve as the applicant and, therefore, recipient of funds. This structure, while intended to streamline processes, unintentionally reinforced existing power dynamics where municipalities often hold greater power and influence in cross-sector partnerships in some communities. The decision of who would receive and administer funds was challenging in some communities and, ultimately, ONOP's clear values helped guide these decisions. However, earlier anticipation and consideration of this issue would have mitigated later challenges.

Key Learnings

Supporting Locally to Build Nationally (through technical assistance).

Building genuine trust as the foundation for lasting partnership takes time. While developing a virtual technical assistance program was crucial for bringing together a national cohort and network of leaders, time spent on the ground – breaking bread, hearing stories, experiencing culture, and building trust – was an irreplaceable component of building relationships and achieving success. ONOP's technical assistance infrastructures and national leadership team served as amplifiers of and added capacity to the work to strengthen local efforts. This philosophy of supporting locally to build nationally is a key principle in effective organizing and was critical to the national success of the initiative.

Maintaining Flexibility.

While setting a culminating date gave sites a clear target around which to plan, it also created, at times, a tension between the needs of the initiative for information and clarity and the pace at which new partners, working in community, could arrive at them. Flexibility was crucial, and transparency and open communication were equally key to the success of a national initiative with a shared timeline across 18 diverse communities with changing and pressing needs.

Creating Narrative Change at a National Level.

Engagement of a photojournalist with the expertise and sensitivity that Scout Tufankjian possesses was essential not only to the narrative amplification of each community's story, but also to the deepening of trust and relationships with local partners. Scout's photography, the products of weeks spent in all 18 communities, provided sites with agency over how their stories were told. This work evidenced ONOP's commitment, as a national collaborator, to the question "Are we getting it right?" It was also an opportunity to build understanding of each local community, an essential resource in effective partnership.

"You have managed to harness the power of celebrities and be totally locally rooted in communities. It celebrates professional artists and makes it clear art is democratic. It's about the self and the collective. The messaging is just so perfect. It brings in the research about what we know about what the arts do while still being down to earth and relatable. As someone who is always trying to thread those needles, you have done such a great job at getting to the essence of what matters and executing an incredibly complex thing."

– NATIONAL ARTS
LEADER & CONSULTANT



“There are health organizations wanting to reach into arts spaces and arts organizations wanting to reach into health spaces. They’re not talking to each other yet, so *be the reason that they do.*”

The Call To Action

Linking National Movements and Emerging Trends.

As ONOP has completed its formal initiative timeframe, there are other significant national movements, trends, and bodies of work that could be connected to carry its momentum and impact forward. For example, the models and learnings from ONOP could be applied to the work of social prescribing and to the national creative youth development movement. One current effort to bring greater cohesion to these bodies of work at the intersection of the arts and health is the newly established Bright Eyes Coalition, a group of arts and health leaders that is developing a national framework to advance understanding of the connections between the arts and health. There is significant power in coalescing around common goals and purpose. Every site focused on its own priorities with an understanding – as well as a concrete public positioning – that they were not alone in their efforts. As a nexus, ONOP helped create the narrative cohesion that made this real for the sites through its coalition and its efforts in social media and communications.

ONOP demonstrated that local activity can be bolstered by national connection, and national narrative change can be accelerated and amplified by local learnings.

Encouraging Innovative Funding Paradigms.

ONOP offers insights into opportunities for deeper and longer cross-sector funding collaborations and is among other important examples in the US (e.g., ImpactPHL in Philadelphia, PA, and the Public Works Alliance in California) that need to be more visible to those with funding capacity and obligation. ONOP reinforces the importance of building innovative funding approaches across institutions and investment types. For example, the initiative not only garnered support from foundations and philanthropic donors with a range of interests, but it also enabled foundations, such as the Doris Duke Foundation, to undertake internal collaboration that brought both funds and thought leadership from across internal units (e.g., arts and health units).

While grants and philanthropic support are important for initiatives such as ONOP, there is a need for exploration of different and more sustainable funding and investment models for this kind of work. Artist-centered investment models are still rare, and to meet opportunities for sustained programming, **Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs), private family foundations, corporate social investment, locally driven public finance, and longstanding local health organizations should work together.** Knowing that private philanthropy cannot be the only answer, philanthropic partners should consider ways that their means and influence could activate these localized investment networks. There are also innovative trends today that likely will grow, including the use of corporate **Donor Advised Funds (DAFs)** for flexible forms of philanthropy, and the pooling of dollars among medium wealth investors interested in higher impact. CDFIs are currently gaining new millions in resources from federal agencies and large financial institutions for market building and innovation.



To Funders




FROM NATAKI GARRETT (ONOP CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
CHANGEMAKER, EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC LEADER)


At this critical moment, as our country faces a mental health crisis, widespread social isolation, and polarizing rhetoric, the arts sector is more than just a space for creative expression – it is a catalyst for social change, economic growth, and public wellbeing. Far from being a luxury or an isolated industry, the arts intersect with healthcare, education, and community development, offering tangible solutions to some of our most urgent challenges. We will need the continued support from foundations, government funders, and private family foundations to sustain and expand projects and research that, like One Nation/One Project, demonstrate the arts sector's essential role in enhancing community wellbeing and resilience.

Some federally funded health centers are now adopting social prescribing methods that integrate the arts into patient care, recognizing their impact on mental and physical health. However, these efforts require sustained investment to continue this vital work. At the same time, systemic barriers – such as insufficient funding, high admission costs, and geographic inaccessibility – continue to restrict access to the arts, limiting their benefits to only those who can afford them. Supporting community service centers, arts organizations, and teaching artists with the necessary resources is critical to ensuring that the transformative power of the arts reaches those who need it most.



At this moment of national crisis, we must also recognize that the arts are not a luxury – they are a proven, evidence-based tool for addressing some of our most urgent societal challenges. From reducing anxiety and depression to fostering social connection and civic engagement, the integration of the arts into community health strategies is not just beneficial; it is necessary. Investing in arts-based interventions can help mitigate the long-term effects of trauma, strengthen community resilience, and create pathways for economic and social revitalization. If we fail to support these efforts, we risk losing a critical means of fostering collective healing and progress.

Access to both the arts and health should be recognized as a fundamental right, not a privilege. Continued investment in initiatives like One Nation/One Project will strengthen the infrastructure of arts and health organizations, enabling them to serve more communities in meaningful and lasting ways. By deepening your commitment, you can help harness the power of the arts to drive social cohesion, inspire civic engagement, and create a healthier, more inclusive society. The moment to act is now. Your support is essential in shaping a future where the arts are recognized as a cornerstone of public health and community wellbeing.





To Artists

FROM MICHAEL ROHD (ONOP CIVIC COLLABORATIONS
DIRECTOR, THEATER-MAKER, EDUCATOR, PROCESS DESIGNER)

Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD, during her time as chair of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), spearheaded an unprecedented movement across the federal government to integrate the arts across all federal agencies and to support allowable expenditures for arts-based strategies in all infrastructure and other funding priorities at the federal, state, and local levels. This meant cross-sector collaboration was incentivized and community organizations, like arts institutions, could partner with local and state government agencies to tackle community needs in areas such as public engagement, housing, and health equity at a scale and frequency not seen since the Great Depression.

If you work at an arts institution, imagine if you had a department of arts and health, funded to place artists inside health spaces across your community – some in clearly health-related contexts (hospitals, medical clinics, rehab centers), some in spaces that feel community health-adjacent (senior centers, shelters for the unhoused, veteran's services).

If you're an individual artist, imagine bringing your skillsets to public housing communities,

partnering with the Department of Transportation, or engaging your direct community in place-based cultural strategies that make way for greater equity, justice, and joy.

If you train artists, imagine preparing your students to think about a cross-sector ecosystem that recognizes the contributions artists make to healthy communities and an economy that sustains artists partially in and through that work.

This is an opportunity that reaches beyond our buildings and seasons, beyond our school tours and classroom residencies – indeed, beyond our fields.



To Local Governments



FROM GEORGIA GEMPLER (ONOP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM MEMBER,
NLC PROGRAM MANAGER, VISUAL ARTIST)

Local governments are at the front lines of community life. As institutions charged with representing the diversity of local experience and empowered to safeguard wellbeing, local governments can uniquely bring together cross-sector coalitions that make real impacts in people's day-to-day lives. Inviting artists to work with cities is a cost-effective investment in local wellbeing that supports the local creative workforce and public health workforce and can build better relationships between government and residents.

To get started on this work, local governments should embrace a philosophy of exploration. Charged with maintaining public services and solving local challenges, local government officials often feel the need to have an answer.

However, to meet our most complex challenges and build more authentic relationships, local governments need to become comfortable with publicly acknowledging that learning, failure, and experimentation will be required to reach solutions that work. Artists can be the guides and the facilitators of this process.

These creative collaborations can lead to better governance and healthier outcomes for us all.



To Healthcare Organizations



FROM ROGER CHAUFURNIER (ONOP HEALTHCARE PARTNER, VETERAN HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE, THOUGHT LEADER, EDUCATOR, INNOVATOR)

Healthcare organizations continue to be challenged to improve the experience of care by patients, to improve health outcomes while reducing costs, and to find ways to bring joy to work in order to recruit and retain healthcare professionals. An evidence-base is well established in terms of the positive outcomes associated with the integration of art into clinical medicine – whether it be the impact of music during surgery, the use of art therapy for stroke recovery patients, or arts as a vehicle to engage and heal those experiencing mental or behavioral health conditions. Despite the evidence, arts and artists represent underutilized assets by healthcare systems. Numerous opportunities exist for healthcare organizations to take advantage of these underutilized assets.

Music and the culinary arts are powerful vehicles to engage communities, especially those that the healthcare system has historically struggled to engage with, such as underserved communities who are disenfranchised and distrustful of the healthcare industry. Incorporation of art and photography from the local community can

present a welcoming clinical environment and facilitate relationship building while improving the experience of patients in the clinical setting. Retaining artists from the local community and training them as community healthcare workers can expand the impact of the care team while providing invaluable outreach and engagement expanding access to the people served. Poets-in-residence can help patients and families deal with challenging illnesses. Social prescribing for art resources in the community can lead to retention in care while having a therapeutic impact on the patient. Establishing relationships with the artistic community can also lead to philanthropic opportunities supporting the organization's mission. Finally, integrating the arts into the healthcare setting can also bring joy to the workforce, contributing to retention and recruitment. Healthcare organizations should consider incorporating arts as a comprehensive strategy to help bring in new energy and refreshing approaches to tackling the long-standing challenges facing healthcare organizations.



To Community Investors




FROM PENELOPE DOUGLAS (ONOP IMPACT ADVISOR; SOCIAL CHANGE MOVEMENT
BUILDER, NATIONAL ADVISOR FOR ARTS-RELATED SOCIAL/COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT, VISUAL ARTIST)

You are the enlightened investors, committed to highly creative transactions to solve barriers to housing, education, food security and health. The call to action is to value artists highly in every piece of the investment process. This means starting with culture, the culture of a neighborhood or place. Artists are both the keepers of culture and central actors, guides on the ground for understanding community-first, community-owned models for investing productively and increasing your impact on the health and wellbeing of long harmed places.

Artists illuminate what a community values most highly. Artists illuminate critical issues that are difficult to articulate, particularly when the capital provider is an outsider. Artists move people to create and to express themselves creatively, which we know increases a person's sense of social cohesion and belonging. Artists are also critical and out of the box thinkers, excellent innovators with shared resources.

As a first step, bring local artists – those already working within their communities – directly into every step of your community investment process and document your shared learning. If you've already done this, invite these artists to co-design investment structures for artists and artist-led enterprises with you.

**Learn together what
impact you want
to achieve and the
equitable, shared
future you want to
create through your
community investment.**



“We as an organization would not have stepped into *this courageous space* if it had not been for the gift that you offered.”

Epilogue

ONOP demonstrated what is possible when **creativity**, **cross-sector collaboration**, and **experimentation** collide at scale.

So, what else is possible?

What if cities decided to mobilize their neighborhoods towards one common goal on an annual or biannual basis? *What if* more social campaign work invested in grassroots in addition to grass tops, understanding that authenticity and influence exist everywhere and among the people of a place? *What if* the approaches taken by the national leadership of ONOP were adapted for future use and longer-term investments were made for each place to learn and grow from the changes of their work?

Moreover, what if those individuals of means, who gifted ONOP a transformative one-time gift to realize its goals, made that commitment beyond ONOP and galvanized others with means to pour resources into the most hyperlocal opportunities for change and transformation and continued to model that work for others?



ONOP demonstrated the power of diverse perspectives, experiences, and creative expressions that exist across the US.

It engineered a series of artistic platforms for each place to contribute their own meaning and visibility into a larger whole without comprising local needs and priorities. This act was and is a demonstration of collective effort, power building, and democracy itself.

The US landscape today, as of the writing of this report, is fundamentally different than when the project started.

Yet, the truth remains that people across this vast country, when standing together, cannot be denied. Real change begins at the community level, and we must invest locally to power progress nationally.

Municipal leaders will continue to serve their residents, health sector workers will continue to provide needed services to their clients, and artists will continue to imagine new possibilities, making meaning of the worlds around them and serving as stewards of the stories, cultures, and places they call home.

The needs that inspired this initiative in 2020, along with those that inspired the Federal Theatre Project of 1936, remain relevant today. Let's not end this here. Be inspired to coalesce, to gather, to challenge, and to be seen. Engage the power of artists and the arts in your community to make the change you can envision.



“The question is:
what did you develop
that will *sustain*?”

Appendices

Appendix A:

Cohort 1 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Appendix B:

**Cohort 1 Site Selection
Evaluation Matrix**

Appendix C:

Cohort 2 One Sheet

Appendix D:

Cohort Descriptions Extended

Appendix E:

Theory of Change Survey Instrument

Appendix F:

**Theory of Change
Participant Demographics**

Appendix G:

**Theory of Change Focus Group
Discussion Guide**

Appendix H:

**Theory of Change Focus Group
Participant Demographics**

Appendix I:

**Theory of Change Focus Group
Study Themes**

Appendix J:

Arts Participation Survey Instrument

Appendix K:

**Arts Participation Survey
Participant Demographics**

Appendix L:

Theory of Change Study Joint Display

Appendix M:

**Theory of Change Data Integration
Individual Joint Displays**

Appendix N:

Theory of Change Evidence Map

Appendix O:

**Chicago Arts and Health Pilot –
Artists Call**

Appendices

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A woman in traditional white and yellow attire, including a headwrap and a large white shawl, is performing on a stage. She has her right arm extended and is smiling. The background features a purple brick wall with colorful decorations and a sign that says "FRESH NOW OPEN".

“You have to love
your community.
You have to *love the
people you represent.*”

ARTS FOR EVERY BODY

ONE NATION/ONE PROJECT



rockwellgroup



SOZE



Milken Institute School
of Public Health
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



APOLLO



COMMUNITY
HEALTH PROVIDERS

