

CHICAGO ARTS CENSUS: FAQ

How to use this FAQ

The Chicago Arts Census FAQ actively documents the project's mission, values, intentions, methodologies, and foundational information.

The table of contents links to each section so you can readily find answers to questions, or explore an area of development. The FAQ documents the process, and so contains space for our learnings.

[ACRE](#) and [Annas](#) are collaborative, process-based, and community-driven projects. We will keep this same spirit throughout the administration of the Chicago Arts Census. All are committed to remaining open to feedback, to continued self-education, to listening deeply, and being nimble enough to adopt practices that are in the best interest of those in the arts community.

If you would like to leave a note, provide feedback, or tell us your thoughts about something in the text, we would love to hear from you. Please see the feedback section for more information.

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Chicago Arts Census Mission Statement

The Chicago Arts Census emerged after conversations amongst our peers about what a sustainable arts ecosystem would look like. This project materialized after repeatedly hearing and feeling the profound exhaustion that comes from working multiple jobs, oftentimes without healthcare, while trying to maintain an arts practice. The Chicago Arts Census translates these anecdotes and realities into quantitative data that serves as an advocacy tool within the arts.

The Chicago Arts Census collects, maps, and visualizes data that illuminates the lived experiences and working conditions of art workers in Chicago. The collected data will be translated into a series of maps, a website, a publication, and public programs that demonstrate the interwoven and dependent relationships that make up Chicago's art ecosystem. [Read Our Original Mission Statement Here](#)

What do we want?

The Chicago Arts Census wants to conduct the first comprehensive, cross-discipline data collection project across the city created by and for the art workers of Chicago.

The Census is built to amplify our voices as art workers in Chicago, serve as an advocacy tool fighting for better working, living, and making conditions, and create opportunities for coalition-building across the art sectors of Chicago.

Our goal is that art workers from all neighborhoods and disciplines in Chicago are (1) eager to fill out and share the Census with their communities; (2) participate in programming and storytelling sessions; (3) actively use the map and directory to connect with one another to share resources (including space, tools, materials, knowledge, and care); and (4) feel the results of the Census are a reflection of their needs and aspirations.

It does so by collecting, mapping, and visualizing data sets identified by and with art workers to better illuminate the precarity of our living and

working conditions because a complex and intersectional account of our labor does not exist. The collected data will be translated into a series of maps, a website, a publication, and public programs that demonstrate the interwoven and dependent relationships that make up Chicago's art ecosystem.

We want the collected data to shift the way funding institutions offer and disburse resources, creating more opportunities for arts administrators, art handlers, community organizers, and facilitators.

We want the data collected by the Census to be used by funding institutions to recalibrate how they support art workers in Chicago, specifically to create more opportunities to support collaborative and community-based projects. Our work encourages foundations and other granting bodies to gather quantitative and qualitative information that shifts their assumptions and attitudes about resources, including who deserves aid and what aid looks like. We hope to see this shift reflected in the questions, language, and opportunities presented by funding institutions, as well as the relationships funding institutions create with grantees, such as more networks for on-the-ground learning, unrestricted grants, and place-based working groups to offer advice on deploying new grant dollars quickly and strategically.

We want to amplify and share the work being done around arts and labor in Chicago.

The Chicago Art Census hopes to amplify and champion the organizations, individuals, and projects rooted in community-centered labor and support. We stand in coalition and collaboration with our peers, understanding these efforts are in chorus, not in competition, with one another. In doing so, and by committing to amplify the work that these collaborators are doing through our own networks, we hope to draw attention to the abundance of support, care, and community based, tangible resources within our arts ecosystem.

We recognize that operating as an art worker IS labor and must always be viewed as such and supported as such, which has been made abundantly clear in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

We've adopted the term "art worker" to better illustrate both the reality of working in the arts as labor and to broaden the scope of who is included in discussions about the arts ecosystem.

See our extended definition of art worker and the arts below.

We recognize that there is a history of excluding marginalized voices and communities from discussions like these.

We recognize that the discussions we had and will have are inextricably linked to systemic inequalities, that inequalities can be intersectional, and that exclusion of certain voices is both deeply rooted and an active practice. Data and mapping have historically been used as tools of colonialism, surveillance, and control used actively against or in spite of the communities they collect information about. By creating this project by and for the art workers of Chicago, we hope to present ways that data collection and mapping can be used to build and connect communities.

While crafting, administering, and evaluating the Census these facts will remain at the forefront of our thinking.

See below our extended commitment to equity, access, and the tangible steps we plan to implement in order to combat the aforementioned inequities present in our ecosystem. [Click here to jump to it.](#)

We want the power to determine and name what constitutes support to be determined by those living the experience of an art worker.

The needs of the arts community are best known by those operating within it. Art workers whose labor in the ecosystem helps it to thrive should be the ones identifying their needs and crafting the language to explain them.

The Census is intentionally co-authored in community with art workers

throughout Chicago. As part of this initiative, the Census is made through the participation of several Census Committees, or groups of art workers who represent a breadth of communities, disciplines, organizational affiliations, and zip codes will be integral to the creation, dissemination, and evaluation of the Census.

Arts Committee members will work collaboratively on all aspects of the Census and connect to networks that will form city-wide coalitions necessary to achieve the goal of delivering a comprehensive Census of the arts in Chicago.

The Chicago Arts Census includes five committees:

1. Census Consultants, who provide big-picture thinking, advice, and critique to the overall project.
2. Research and Census Building Committee who help create questions that reflect the overlapping but discrete audiences for the Census
3. Community Outreach Committee who focus on coalition-building throughout the Chicago arts community and create strategies for equitable dissemination of the Census
4. Community Liaisons who help distribute the Census
5. Census Peer Reviewers who help test the Census while it's being created and offer feedback

We want to build a Census project that is specific to our community but transferable to other organizations and initiatives within and beyond Chicago.

Though this particular Census is built by and intended for the Chicago arts community, we strive to create a methodology (how the Census was built rather than the questions themselves) that can be implemented in other locales. We understand this project as a collection of information and resources that we hope to share with other organizations doing similar work.

If you are interested in knowing more about how we created, funded, built, or supported this project, [please be in touch by filling out this form here.](#)

The Census recognizes the capacity for this ecosystem to operate sustainably and equitably

We want to see full employment with living wages and healthcare that ensures a quality of life for all art workers where they not only survive but thrive.

We want to shift the framework for discussions about resources from scarcity to abundance.

We see microcosms of networks of support and mutual aid operating at the community level. The scarcity mindset which organizes the arts ecosystem pits us against one another for available resources. Abundance calls for us to recognize and lift up the multiplicity of ways that support is already present within our arts ecosystem and acknowledge that together with our voices can form a resounding chorus as we advocate for support.

We believe that hope empowers us and our community to work and fight for justice, and that community work is necessarily rooted in hopefulness.

In other words, we don't want to go back to "normal".

What do we mean by Art Workers?

What do we mean by “Arts”?

We define ‘art worker’ as anyone who works to bring artwork into a public presentation and/or consciousness. This includes, but by no means excludes other possibilities, those that define themselves as artist, arts writer, art handler, educator, fabricator, custodian, preparator, intern, docent, administrator, security guard, designer, and/or curator.

Art worker includes artist, but also reach beyond the confines of the word to 1) bring visibility to the artistic labor that goes into making an artwork public, 2) speak to a diversity of creative practice outside of the usual definitions of professional artist and 3) acknowledge and an important history around artistic labor and be a participant in a current conversation of organizing in the arts.

The Census will survey and engage across the visual, performing, literary, musical, and cinematic arts. Although we make distinctions between the different forms of arts to define the scope, we also support and seek to engage with art workers that define their work as inter-, multi-, trans-, post-, and non-disciplinary.

Why Participate and Where Does My Information Go?

As art workers, we live and work in a state of precarity. We are underpaid, juggling multiple jobs, without healthcare, navigating unemployment, moving every year. We are tired. We feel the strain and scarcity of resources in our everyday lives, and yet what we feel and what we need is continually unreconciled.

The Chicago Arts Census wants that to change, and we can't do it without you.

We want to collect the voices and lived experiences of our peers because a complex and intersectional account of our labor does not exist. Our working livelihoods are a missing dataset. We understand that data is insufficient on its own. But data combined with context, maps, and stories turns into information and knowledge. Information and knowledge shared, discussed, and critiqued by a community transforms into wisdom (Toni Morrison, *The Source of Self-Regard*).

Whether filling out the Census, working on a committee, asking questions, sharing a referral, offering resources, or volunteering, you are amplifying the needs of art workers like yourself and your peers. Together we are louder, together we are demanding: Fair wages and benefits, healthy working conditions, job security. Together we can change the way our work, needs, and labor are talked about and supported.

When you take the Census, your anonymous information is protected and encrypted thanks to our partnership with Datamade. The anonymous information will be synthesized by the Census Lead Organizers, partners at DataMade, and shared with Committee Members to create legible, intersectional reads of what we learn.

Who are we?

We are art workers who found a home in Chicago's arts ecosystem. Who, through Annas, ACRE, and independent projects, are continually honored to be in community with the creative energy, knowledge, spirit, and generosity of our peers, friends, collaborators, and comrades. We believe the power of this arts community lies in its deep-rooted sharing and intergenerational care. But we see and experience, every day, ways of living and creating that are not sustainable.

The Chicago Arts Census emerged from conversations between ACRE and Annas collaborators on re-imagining how we serve our arts community during this pandemic, in a time when we can't gather in person, and after considerable losses in income and opportunities.

The Census serves the missions of ACRE and Annas to generate unique programming by and for artists that insist on our capacity to shape our futures together. Rather than shuttling all of our programming online, we considered the needs of our community in the moment. Conversations with our communities didn't revolve around making new work or presenting exhibitions, but worries about being able to pay rent, or make debt payments, navigating the state unemployment filing, getting a COVID test without insurance, being forced to move out of studios, and ultimately how could we work together to create new models and survive. This year has given us a moment of reflection and has demanded that we look more deeply at the unsustainable systems in which we are building our lives. Artists and art workers need new information in order to collaboratively generate new propositions for the future. The pandemic didn't break our systems, it showed us how fragile and fundamentally broken they already were.

We are [Kate Bowen](#), [Alden Burke](#), [Stephanie Koch](#), and [Adia Sykes](#).

Want to know about the projects we run? Check out the [ACRE](#) and [Annas](#) websites for more.

The Census

Methodology

The Chicago Arts Census seeks to combine quantitative and qualitative data to concretize the realities, needs, and desires of art workers in Chicago, as well as recognize mutual and collaborative systems of support that exist outside of main funding streams.

Collective authorship, care, and transparency will guide all processes and stages of research, testing, data collection, synthesis, and distribution. The project will include ongoing roundtables and public programming to create the Census and establish:

1. The scope of work, format, form, and questions for the Census
2. The distribution methods of the Census inquiry
3. How the Census data will be translated into a written report and mapping system
4. How the information from the Census can be shared with others for use and what form and timeline of sharing makes sense in relation to the information received, such as a directory of resources for artist workers
5. Published interviews with stakeholders
6. Bibliography and literature reviews of relevant resources
7. Programmatic conversation around the project goals and findings

In doing so, the project aims to rearticulate what resources are useful and necessary and emphasizes the lateral distribution of these support systems via three platforms: a dynamic website, public engagement, and a widely distributed publication. We will focus on access, education, interpretation, use, and empowerment via these platforms.

Each step of the project adopts a bottom-up approach of grassroots community organizing—a strategy intended to build collective power by identifying shared needs. The Census, and accompanying public programming, is meant to raise the city-wide coalitions needed to align our interests, as a whole community, and influence change over time.

This approach emphasizes democratic notions of expertise, transparency, and community building. Co-creation is a core value we fostered throughout all phases of creating and synthesizing the Arts Census. Additionally, the project environment is framed as a learning opportunity for everyone who participates, positioning learning and collaboration as a social and necessary community-building activity rather than the effect of a technical task.

These core principles allow us to be responsive to the conditions of real-time learning while creating a common understanding of our shared practices and behaviors.

Outcomes

The census aims to collect information that can shape policies that affect the creative sector, the distribution of funding within the arts, and that aid the strategic development of organizations should be developed by the people intended to be served. The project takes the form of a conversation with the sector, forefronting civic agency and self-determination as part of the process.

Deliverable outcomes for the project include:

1. A new body of public, labor-focused research created by, for, and with Chicago art workers that result in the first-ever Chicago Arts Census
 - a. The Census will include questions on the employment, living conditions, debt, demographics, existing support networks, and practices of art workers
 - b. The Census will be available in English and Spanish, online via the Census website and distributed physically at art spaces, libraries, community centers, and on-the-ground canvassing
2. A Census made in collaboration with DataMade to create the coding and buildout of the survey on a digital platform hosted by Submittable
 - a. Collaboration with DataMade to create graphics that visualize changes in quality of life and artistic practice across time
3. The creation of three arts community research groups to co-author the Census, research, and synthesis reports
 - a. These communities meet at least twice (via Zoom) on the topics of Research and Census Building, Partnership and Outreach, and

Public Engagement. More info on these committees detailed in the 'Chicago Arts Census Team Members' attachment in this proposal.

4. Findings will be held on a dynamic website, public engagement, and a widely distributed publication
 - a. The content will focus on access, education, interpretation, use, and empowerment via these platforms.
5. The creation of public programming produced in response to the core questions posed by the Census project, specifically in relation to the lived experiences of art workers in Chicago
6. A publication that synthesizes Census findings, community stories, and a directory
 - a. The publication includes an essay by the lead organizers, the data visuals made in collaboration with DataMade, and mapping sections made in collaboration with the Chicago Parks District

In addition, the project's larger vision is to establish the Census as a tool and a methodology that can be built and deployed every two years to generate a long-term picture of the changing arts ecosystem of Chicago. Our proposition is that the data being used to define the arts is best developed in the community.

Transparency and Accountability

The project adopts the bottom-up approach of grassroots community organizing—a strategy intended to build collective power by identifying shared needs. The Census, and accompanying public programming, is meant to raise the city-wide coalitions needed to align our interests, as a whole community, and influence change over time.

This approach emphasizes democratic notions of expertise, transparency, and community building. Co-creation is a core value we fostered throughout all phases of creating and synthesizing the Arts Census. Additionally, the project environment is framed as a learning opportunity for everyone who participates, positioning learning and collaboration as a social and necessary community-building activity rather than the effect of a technical task.

The following core principles will allow us to be responsive to the conditions of real-time learning while creating a common understanding of our shared practices and behaviors.

Our overall approach holds commitments to:

- Take action and hold space for the needs and visions of Chicago art workers
- Strive for strategic diversity of tactics so all who want can play a role in the creation of the Census
- Build trust and practice transparency in the process and production of the Arts Census
- Move boldly and swiftly: we will take risks, make mistakes, and share lessons
- Recognize the continual need to evaluate the systems we work and participate in, and consider how our work, methods, and ethos might reorient us towards a more equitable, supportive future
- Empower creative approaches to data collection and information-sharing that celebrate and honor the needs of Chicago art workers

How we foster transparency:

- This FAQ will be updated as questions are posed about the Census and its methodology and serve as a repository through which users can see how our thinking has changed or evolved.
- Committee meeting minutes will be kept and made public (complying with any individual member's requests for confidentiality).
- All questions and comments submitted to the Census organizers will get a response.

Equity and Justice

Racial Equity, Addressing Anti-Blackness, and Community Care

The Lead Organizers of the Census and their affiliated institutions, Annas and ACRE, intend to operationalize equity, justice, and intersectionality. Additionally, the Lead Organizers commit themselves and the project of the Census to the work of anti-racism, which we understand as active work against anti-Blackness and racial capitalism.

We aim for this project to not only highlight issues in the arts of access across geography, race, gender identity and/or expression, age, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic status, institutional affiliation, educational background, professionalism, and resident status but for our administrative and research practices to not further these issues. The below is by no means an exhaustive list of points of exclusion, but a beginning for our work toward inclusion.

We recognize the privilege we have in forging this project in collaboration with many partner organizations and individuals, and our work for them is as follows:

- Prioritizing the voices of Black, Indigenous, and all art workers of color as leaders, administrators, and contributors of the Census project
- Offering compensation to all participants for their labor at the amount [W.A.G.E.](#) specifies for a small arts organization which is \$25/hour.
- Creating an active bibliography to credit labor and ideas
- Ensuring confidentiality, security, and privacy when asking people to share information about their labor and living conditions
- Building trust in communities we want to reach by building intentional relationships with community leaders and partners
- Prioritizing the time and talents of our participants by being clear about time commitments, meeting schedules, and outcomes in advance
- Employing accountability, transparency, and sharing power on the part of Lead Organizers whenever and wherever possible. We will hold town hall meetings and Q&A public programs throughout the making of the Census for critical questions and feedback. We aim for the process and

methodology of the Census to be available on our website as an archive after the close of the Census.

- Holding space for processing trauma and healing by collaborating with facilitators in our committee meetings, but also in our public programming. Talking about our labor is labor, we want to find collective healing in this conversation as well.

Regarding inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racism, art institutions have failed their stakeholders (employees, contractors, artists, communities, and visitors) in many ways. The above list is the ways in which we not only want to work differently but work against such failings.

Accessibility

The Census endeavors to provide a positive, accessible, and inclusive experience for all who will collaborate with us during the development of this project, engage with our programming, and participate in the survey and analysis.

We show appreciation to [Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice written by Carolyn Lazard](#) for providing the foundation of our education. Our approach to accessibility is evolving and seeks to go beyond legal requirements. Our current approach is as follows:

- Prioritizing accessibility in all internal and public materials, both digital and printed, from the beginning of their making, not translated or modified in afterthought. We will:
 - Caption live and archived public programming
 - Deliver options for text size, text spacing, distinguishable contrast, and audio control for digital materials
 - Choose colors for digital and printed materials that are accessible across visual abilities
 - Caption images created for both social media and the website
 - Deliver a website that is clear, consistent, and easily navigable; a design that is approachable
- Access also includes legibility. Our materials should speak to more than one audience. We will:
 - Use plain and clear language
 - Translate the Census into Spanish
 - Code translation plug-ins into the website for it be multilingual
 - Create digital materials that are readable and accessible on multiple devices and data plans

While we position ourselves as Lead Organizers, we do not suppose that our knowledges or experiences are more final or meaningful than anyone else. We have a lot to learn; the efforts are ongoing and the Census' Lead Organizers welcome feedback about the ongoing work toward inclusion and accessibility at Census@acreresidency.org

During the development of the Census, we will hold office hours to answer questions and receive feedback on accessibility on Mondays from 1-2 pm CST through March 29 to May 3. You can schedule a time [here](#).

Security & Data Privacy

The Lead Organizers prioritize the requirement to create an infrastructure that ensures the security of the data information we gather and the elective anonymity from our art workers community. To that end, we are working with [DataMade](#), a data and web consultancy firm that supports work toward democracy, justice, and equity. Return to this section of the F.A.Q. for developments of this security architecture ahead of the Census's release.

Copyright

The Census—its survey, research, programming, written materials, and media—are protected by a Creative Commons license.

Partnerships and Participation

The Census serves ACRE's and Annas' missions to generate unique programming by and for artists that insist on our capacity to shape our futures together. Rather than shuttling all of our programming online, we considered the needs of our community in the moment. Conversations with our communities didn't revolve around making new work or presenting exhibitions, but worries about being able to pay rent, or make debt payments, navigating the state unemployment filing, getting a COVID test without insurance, being forced to move out of studios, and ultimately how could we work together to create new models and survive. This year has given us a moment of reflection and has demanded that we look more deeply at the unsustainable systems in which we are building our lives. Artists and art workers need new information in order to collaboratively generate new propositions for the future. The pandemic didn't break our systems, it showed us how fragile and fundamentally broken they already were.

Partnerships

The Chicago Arts Census is an ACRE project, conceived in collaboration with Kate Bowen, Stephanie Koch, Alden Burke, and Adia Sykes. Annas, a rotating collective of resident artists founded by Koch and Burke, is a core organizing partner and an affinity project.

We have initiated a collaboration with the Chicago Parks District's Cultural Asset Mapping Project (CAMP). While the Census aims to collect data from individuals, CAMP identifies and maps cultural assets in the city by neighborhood. Mapping and public accessibility of resources are important goals for both projects. As partners, we offer each other connections to art workers across the city and growing networks for distribution and dissemination. Additionally, we will exchange our independent data to better inform a public resource mapping effort.

Our primary goal with all partnerships is to ensure that the Census reaches art workers from every part of the city's arts and culture sector. To maintain the project's ethos of collective authorship, the project will establish a

comprehensive peer review that will ground an equitable and transparent process. Committees of art workers who represent a breadth of communities, disciplines, organizational affiliations, and zip codes will be integral to the creation, dissemination, and evaluation of the Census. Arts Committee members will work collaboratively on all aspects of the Census and connect to networks that will form city-wide coalitions necessary to achieve the goal of delivering a comprehensive Census of the arts in Chicago.

Another key partnership is with DataMade, a data and web consultancy that supports projects working toward democracy and equity. DataMade will offer research and discovery, strategic consulting, process improvement, visualizations, building and maintaining data management tools and APIs, and performing data analysis and modeling.

Additional contributors include artists and arts community members who will be commissioned to create programs and writing that contextualize the Census; arts community members who will lend their expertise and insight on two core committees; consultants who will offer a specialized knowledge of a community (both geographical or practice-based), an area of research, or best practices to a core committee on a specific area or concern; community liaisons who will work to physically disseminate the Census in Chicago's communities to ensure access; and Census Peer Reviewers representing Chicago's 77 community areas who will take and review the Census before release to the wider public. All committees and consultants will assist with maintaining visibility of the project, mobilizing to provide context of the Census to the arts community via outward-facing programming. Meetings via Zoom and labor outside of these meetings will be compensated at \$25/hour per W.A.G.E standards.

How do I participate?

There are many ways to get involved with the Chicago Arts Census! Below is information on how to get in touch with the Census organizers. If none of the below fits your needs, please send us an [email](mailto:Census@acreresidency.org) to Census [at] acreresidency [dot] org.

We will respond to every inquiry, but due to the high volume of emails and a small staff, there may be some time between our responses.

I want to ask a question or give feedback

Our [Feedback + Inquiries Form](#) is for you to leave a note, provide feedback, ask a question, or inform us about text concerns. This form can be filled out anonymously, or you can share your information so we might be in conversation with you. **Collected information helps shape our mission, FAQ, and project methodology.**

I know someone who does similar work

Our [Referrals Form](#) helps us connect to people and projects across doing mission-aligned work. Whether you are in direct contact with them or admire them from afar, we would love to know who they are! **The collected data will help shape Census committee groups, Census outreach, and audience participation.**

I have a helpful resource you should look into

Our [Resources Form](#) helps us collect readings, exercises, workshops, or other information that would add to the project's research and bibliography. **Collected information will be shared in our living resources collection**, which helps promote and share research around art, labor, policy, mutual aid, and history in Chicago and beyond.

I want to volunteer

Our [Volunteer Form](#) helps us connect to you and your work! Simply tell us about yourself and how you'd like to get involved and we'll be sure to reach out!

How is the Census funded?

The Chicago Arts Census is generously funded by the Walder Foundation and the ArtWorks Fund.

As of March 2021, we have received a total of \$125,000 worth of funding. This grant money is allocated in the following ways:

Staffing: \$55,000

- Census Lead organizers: \$10,000/year for three lead organizers, working at ~10 hours/week
- Programs Manager: \$20,000/year for ~20 hrs/week with an additional \$5,000 for healthcare

Census Committees: ~\$16,000

- 117 committee members, all paid \$25/hr for varying number of hours based on their committee placement

Storytelling + Programming: ~\$12,000

- Collaboration with Sixty Inches from Center in the publication of 6 articles to accompany the Census distribution
- Working with arts educators, writers, and facilitators for varied programming throughout the run of the Census, commissions vary but lump sums around \$500 per program are available.

Census + Website Buildout: ~\$40,000

- DataMade Census buildout, survey security, and website integration:
- Dynamic and accessible website design and Census branding by KT Duffy and Jonathan Sangster