



Contact: Kathy DeBrosse
VP, Marketing & Engagement
937.207.3079; kathy.debrosse@artswave.org

ArtsWave awards next wave of African American arts grants

CINCINNATI (August 29, 2023) – Approved during its last board meeting, ArtsWave, the region's engine for the arts, selected its fourth set of capacity-building projects submitted by Black-led and Black centered organizations.

Funded in part by its African American leadership donor group, referred to as "the Circle," eight organizations will receive grants, representing a total of \$100,000. Selections for the Circle's African American Arts Grants Program were made by six volunteers and community panelists.

ArtsWave is working to make inclusion a hallmark of the regions arts through its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access plan, "[Lifting as We Learn](#)," which calls for increased resources for Black and Brown arts. Through this grants program, more than \$700,000 has been invested in support of Black-led and focused organizations. Other ArtsWave BIPOC capacity-building programs include its Black and Brown Artist Grants Program for independent artists, and *Flow*, a series of African American Arts experiences.

For more information on ArtsWave's Circle of African American Leaders for the Arts, go to artswave.org/circle. To support projects like these, please go to artswave.org/give.

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About ArtsWave:

ArtsWave, the local nonprofit arts agency serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the late 1940s, it evolved to become the first united arts fund in the nation and in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising; coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action; piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement; and development of resources for the arts. Each year, ArtsWave raises \$11+ million from tens of thousands of donors — corporations, employees, foundations, residents and others — to support more than 150 arts organizations, projects and artists. Donations can be made at artswave.org/give.



2023 Circle of African American Arts Grants

ArtsWave convened a review committee of six volunteer community panelists on Monday, August 21, 2023, to review applications for the FY2023 Circle's African American Arts Grants. The panel recommended funding for eight projects totaling \$100,000. The Circle Grants are funded, in part, by donors in ArtsWave's Circle of African American Leaders for the Arts.

ArtsWave Circle Grants will strengthen the capacity for arts presenting, producing, programming and instruction at organizations led by or predominantly serving Black communities in the Cincinnati region. The program is one way that ArtsWave works to increase the sustainability of organizations that focus on the preservation and advancement of Black arts and culture. Eligible organizations have a mission related to the African American experience and a majority (51%+) of annual expenditures dedicated to arts and cultural activities.

Organization	Request	Award	Project Title
Cincinnati Black Theatre Company	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	Strategic Positioning for Growth and Strength
Elementz	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	Elementz Creative Futures Initiative
Learning Through Art	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	Books Alive! App: Expanding Impact on Literacy

Robert O'Neal Multicultural Arts Center	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	West End Arts Series
Sweet Sistah Splash	\$15,000.00	\$11,250.00	AfroSwag Hair and Fashion Show — Organization Capacity Building Strategy
Artsville	\$10,478.00	\$10,475.00	We Are the Change
Bi-Okoto	\$15,000.00	\$10,275.00	Continuation and Expansion of Bi-Okoto's Educational Programs
PAR-Projects	\$12,000.00	\$8,000.00	Visiting Artist & Education Program

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Cincinnati Black Theatre Company

Strategic positioning for growth and strength

This project builds an organizational infrastructure in two areas: governance and decision-making structures (development) and administrative structures (support services in public relations and education). These two areas are fundamental to the work that the CBTC does in the community. The strategic planning process will incorporate a deep dive into the CBTC's programs to fully understand operations, strengths and weaknesses; constructive collaboration with the mission and vision of the CBTC; and potential sustainability.

Elementz

Elementz Creative Futures Initiative

The Creative Futures Initiative (CFI) is an existing program that will undergo meaningful expansion efforts to deepen its impact on the young people Elementz serves. Elementz has created an exposure model that extends further down the educational pipeline, which includes elementary-aged students to high-school-aged students approaching graduation. This is a program designed to help young creatives of color leverage their interests and talents toward accessing and succeeding in creative college and career opportunities. The effort has the potential to close the educational, artistic and aspirational gaps that still limit the possibilities for creative college and career attainment among young people within the BIPOC community.

Learning Through Art

“Books Alive!®” app: Expanding impact on literacy

Learning Through Art will expand its impact on Greater Cincinnati students and families through continued development, improvement and expansion of the “Books Alive!®” app that launched last year. Free and accessible to all, the app primarily targets 3-9-year-olds and complements LTA’s suite of in-person and virtual programs and resources offered to Cincinnati Public Schools and other school districts. The app features BA!FK® content on a platform that is familiar to students and adaptable to individual learning needs. Content is updated continuously, aligning with curriculum and social-emotional learning standards.

Robert O’Neal Multicultural Arts Center

“West End Arts Series”

Season two of the ROMAC’s “West End Arts Series” will provide a series of free events ranging from theater to dance, music to visual art, all located in the West End. The ROMAC acts as producer for each event, coordinating the logistics of funding, scheduling and marketing, allowing the performers and artists to focus solely on the creation of their work. Each event will be free and open to the public, focused specifically on accessibility for residents of the West End and creating employment opportunities for local BIPOC artists. The series will showcase work and classes from partnering arts organizations and individual local artists such as Black Art Speaks, NrityArpana School of Performing Arts, Cincinnati Black Theatre Company, Annie Ruth, Revolution Dance Theatre, AfroChine, and Q-Kidz Dance Studio.

Sweet Sista Splash

“AfroSwag Hair and Fashion Show” — Organization capacity building strategy

Sweet Sista Splash will build capacity for by mobilizing around the “AfroSwag Hair and Fashion Show.” “AfroSwag” showcases African American and African fashion and hair design artists, visual artists, dancers, singers, actors, musicians, crafters, multimedia artists and models. Its theme is one of elaborate, Afrocentric hair and fashion designs to empower African

Americans to embrace their culture and heritage through Art and Beauty. "AfroSwag" has given a platform to over 200 Black Artists from the Cincinnati area and has exposed thousands to Black Art over the years.

Artsville

"We Are the Change"

This project will produce eight one-of-a-kind mini murals for installation on the Artsville building over a period of eight weeks. Students from the local community and schools, aged 12-18 and with a strong interest in art, will meet once a week with different instructors, artists, life coaches and writers. Each session will provide tools to create and the power to change the way the students see our community and the world. It will awaken participants to new perspectives, ideas and values by working in a reaffirming space mirroring all our diversity to generate opportunities to support the next generation of young Black artists, makers and designers.

Bi-Okoto

Continuation and expansion of Bi-Okoto's educational programs

Bi-Okoto currently reaches over 180,000 adults and children annually. The Bi-Okoto Cultural Center offers after school programs, summer camp, theatre productions, festivals and community space rentals. The organization's educational touring programs expand its reach, both locally and across the country. As a result of increased awareness and demand for its programming during the school year and the summer, Bi-Okoto will hire two more teaching and performing artists. Its program continues to be successful, with participating schools seeing an increase in students' math, reading, life and language skills and achievement scores. Bi-Okoto uses proven methodologies of increasing social and emotional growth and collaborative skills by implementing a series of collaborative partnerships.

PAR-Projects

Visiting Artist & Education Program

As PAR-Projects continues to grow into its campus, it has found a need for spaces where local artists can teach and grow among their peers. The organization has also noted the value of reserving space for Black & Brown artists to create. Pairing those realities with growing interest from local schools in new and interesting field trip options, PAR-Projects will develop the Visiting Artist & Education Program. The program is a combination of concepts that will focus on providing Black & Brown visiting artists with free studio space and teaching opportunities in return for sharing their space and work with the community and neighborhood elementary schools. This funding will also strengthen the PAR-Digital media classes and guest instruction initiatives — integral elements of this evolving program.