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ArtsWave Fuels Creativity and Connection by awarding over \$160,000 in Catalyzing Impact Grants

CINCINNATI (DATE) – ArtsWave, the engine for the arts in the Greater Cincinnati region, has awarded \$160,726 through 30 Catalyzing Impact grants to support a wide range of arts and cultural projects that bring people together, amplify local voices, and strengthen communities across the region.

Funded by thousands of community gifts through ArtsWave's annual campaign, the Catalyzing Impact Grant Program supports new and expanded projects that advance ArtsWave's vision for a more vibrant, connected, and creative region. This year, ArtsWave received 93 applications totaling more than \$730,000 in funding requests.

Grant recommendations were made by a panel of 13 community volunteers, working in partnership, for the first time, with ArtsWave's Women's Leadership Roundtable (WLR). WLR is an ArtsWave affinity group of more than 680 women whose collective philanthropy helps power the Catalyzing Impact grants.

"The Women's Leadership Roundtable is proud to play a meaningful role in bringing these projects to life," said Isabel Mendez, Chair of the Catalyzing Impact Grants and a member of the Roundtable. "By partnering in the review process of ArtsWave's largest pool of project support, we're able to help ensure these investments reflect the creativity, diversity and impact we want to see across our community."

Among this year's funded projects is **ARTE's 17 Neighborhoods**, a community-wide public art initiative that invites residents across Hamilton to collaboratively design and paint a large-scale traveling mural celebrating neighborhood identity, history, and pride. Another highlighted project, **CindeNext** from the **Cindependent Film Festival**, provides hands-on filmmaking education and mentorship for high school students, empowering young storytellers to create original films that will premiere for live audiences at the festival.

“These 30 projects reflect the incredible imagination and collaboration happening across our region,” said Alecia Kintner, President & CEO of ArtsWave. “From youth filmmaking and community murals to performances, festivals and educational programs, this year’s grant recipients show how the arts spark connection and make our region a more vibrant place to live.”

The Catalyzing Impact Grant Program is ArtsWave’s only grant opportunity open to all nonprofits seeking support for arts projects. By investing in a broad range of initiatives, the program helps ensure that arts and cultural experiences reach people in every neighborhood, every township, and every corner of the region.

Descriptions of all selected projects can be found below.

For more information about ArtsWave and its community impact, visit artswave.org.

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About ArtsWave

ArtsWave fuels the Cincinnati region’s arts, supporting 150+ organizations, projects and artists each year. Since 1927, it has been the primary way the region funds the arts, raising millions annually from tens of thousands of individuals, businesses and foundations to drive a more vibrant economy and connected community. Through the Blueprint for Collective Action, ArtsWave strategically makes investments that maximize the arts’ impact across the region. To learn more and give to the 2026 community campaign, visit artswave.org.

FY2026 Catalyzing Impact Grants

African Professionals Network - APNET | Afrifest 2026 | \$5,000

AfriFest 2026 is a free, public celebration of African arts and cultural heritage that activates Sawyer Point and surrounding community spaces in Cincinnati. The festival features live music and dance performances, visual arts, cultural showcases, and creative entrepreneurship, bringing together artists, vendors, and community members from diverse backgrounds. Building on the success of *AfriFest 2025*, which welcomed more than 7,500 attendees, the project creates an inclusive, welcoming environment that strengthens neighborhood vibrancy, bridges cultures, and connects residents through shared arts and cultural experiences.

Art Academy of Cincinnati | Cincinnati Intergenerational Art Initiative | \$5,000

The *Cincinnati Intergenerational Art Initiative* provides no-cost access to art workshops tailored to the needs of family groups and students of all ages. Taking place at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, four free, open-to-the-public events offer a series of unique opportunities for locals to participate in artmaking with family and community members. As a pilot project in Summer 2026, the Initiative will connect Cincinnati families to engaging visual art education guided by professional and working resident Artist Educators. These dynamic experiences will bolster the visual arts in Cincinnati and increase access to intergenerational community engagement opportunities for 500 community students.

ARTE | 17 Neighborhoods | \$10,000

The *17 Neighborhoods* project is a community-wide public art initiative led by ARTE that brings residents together through the creation of a large-scale mural. The mural is composed of portable 4x8-foot panels that travel to all 17 neighborhoods of Hamilton, allowing each community to paint its own section. Youth, families, and residents collaborate with local artists to visually represent their neighborhood's history, culture, and identity. Once completed, the panels will be assembled and permanently installed at a central community location, creating a shared artwork that celebrates unity, inclusion, and neighborhood pride while amplifying local voices across the city.

Bader+Simon | In Living Color: A Mural of Cincinnati's Diverse Art History | \$5,000

An 80' x 8' mural, created in collaboration with Bader+Simon, Black Art Speaks, and the community, will be installed on the exterior of the Bader+Simon Gallery in Cincinnati. Set for completion by August 2026, the mural will honor the city's cultural diversity, art

history, and creative legacy. Featuring figures and symbols that reflect Cincinnati's diverse artistic communities and Art Deco architecture, the mural will also serve as an educational tool within Bader+Simon's art history curriculum. Community and youth involvement in its creation will emphasize inclusivity, representation, artistic collaboration, and cultural expression for all audiences.

Creative Aging Cincinnati | *Arts Programming for Seniors* | \$5,000

With recent funding from ArtsWave, Creative Aging Cincinnati is able to expand impact in the senior community. New cultural collaborations with BI-OKOTO African Heritage Cultural Institute and The Cultural Centre of India will offer demonstrations and greater insight into African and Indian customs. Two new complimentary Outreach Programs will also be offered in 2026 to any senior-serving group, bringing several organizations together to enjoy an entertaining production and promote a sense of camaraderie and community. Funds will also be designated for a scholarship program that provides complimentary programs to facilities serving low income and minority seniors.

CET, Greater Cincinnati Educational Television | *The Art Show* | \$5,000

CET's Emmy Award-winning, flagship series "The Art Show" grows Cincinnati's recognition by beaming our homegrown artistry across the city, state and country. This season, CET will slide into sculptor Tom Tsuchiya's public works; take a dive into OTR's synchronized swim team; get abstract with painter Rebecca Barker; and more. New in-person events will foster inspiration, sensory connection and artful community.

Cincinnati Pride, Inc. | *2026 Cincinnati Pride Festival* | \$4,000

The 2026 Cincinnati Pride Festival will include entertainment on three different stages, highlighting visual and performance art of all different varieties- including and not limited to singer/songwriters, drag artists, dance troupes, choral collectives, and more. The festival will kick off with the Cincinnati Pride Parade leading everyone to the festival grounds at Sawyer Point/Yeatman's Cove on June 27, 2026!

Cindependent Film Festival (CIFF) | *CindeNext* | \$4,000

CindeNEXT is a hands-on youth filmmaking program presented by the Cindependent Film Festival and hosted at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). Serving high school students ages 14–17 from across the region, the program emphasizes inclusivity, mentorship, collaboration, and creative leadership. Guided by professional filmmakers and educators, participants build

practical filmmaking skills while exploring career and college pathways. Working individually and in teams, students will create an original short film from concept to final cut. Completed films will be screened for live audiences at the Cindependent Film Festival, amplifying young voices and building confidence in the next generation of storytellers.

City of Blue Ash | *Under the Canopy: Cultural Connections* | \$5,601

Under the Canopy: Cultural Connections is a free, year-long cultural performance series taking place at Summit Park in Blue Ash, Ohio, throughout 2026. The series features nine live events showcasing music, dance, theatre, and storytelling rooted in Indian, Japanese, Irish, Hispanic/Latino, and other global traditions. Presented outdoors under Summit Park's performance canopy, each event will invite audiences of all ages and abilities to experience culture together in a welcoming public space. *Cultural Connections* will transform everyday diversity into shared experiences that build understanding, connection, and community across the region.

Dancefix Foundation | *Dancefix Foundation Summer on the Plaza Series* | \$4,000

Join the Dancefix Foundation for our *Summer on the Plaza Series*, featuring free weekly adult community classes—R&B and Soul Line Dance and Seated Tap. Offered indoors and outdoors at the DANCEFIX studio in the Paramount Launch Plaza in Walnut Hills, these high energy, inclusive classes will welcome all levels and abilities. Move your body, meet your neighbors, and build community while having fun!

Film Cincinnati | *The Business of Storytelling* | \$4,000

Film Cincinnati is launching *The Business of Storytelling*, a program that will equip local creators with the knowledge needed to navigate the rapidly changing content landscape. In partnership with Christine Vachon, the University of Cincinnati, the business school, and the co-op program, this initiative will teach artists how to sustain their craft by understanding the business and commerce of content creation. As storytelling continues to evolve across new platforms, this program will build a foundation for long term training at the future film center and ensure that Cincinnati creators remain competitive and relevant for years to come.

Friends of the Harriet Beecher Stowe House | *Centering African American Stories: Poetry, Storytelling, and Music at the Edgemont Inn* | \$8,250

Centering African American Stories: Poetry, Storytelling, and Music at the Edgemont Inn will bring the historic spirit of the Edgemont Inn to life through poetry, spoken word,

storytelling, and music at the Harriet Beecher Stowe House. Through open mic nights, a poetry slam, and a community jazz and storytelling concert, the project will celebrate African American history, creativity, and community. Rooted in Walnut Hills and inspired by the Edgemont Inn's legacy as a gathering place, these events invite neighbors and visitors to experience history through living artistic expression.

Indigo Hippo | *Material Play* | \$6,000

Material Play is a creative workshop series exploring community, resilience, and sustainability through art making with upcycled materials. Indigo Hippo will partner with various community arts organizations and studios across Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky's neighborhoods to offer free and accessible neighborhood-focused creative sessions for all ages, where participants will explore different creative mediums and learn new skills from local artists.

Jazz Alive | *2026 Jazz in the Camp at the American Sign Museum* | \$4,000

Jazz Alive presents *Jazz In the Camp at the American Sign Museum*, a weekly jazz concert series in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Camp Washington. Held every Wednesday, the 2026 6-week series will feature well known jazz artists from the greater Cincinnati area and internationally known jazz artists. Each week attendees will reflect a mosaic of the greater Cincinnati community with families from various neighborhoods, seniors, jazz lovers, and members of the museum. Admission for *Jazz In the Camp* is free.

Lightship Foundation | *Black Tech Week: The Creative Frequency Finale* | \$4,000

CTRL + ALT + CREATE is the theme of Black Tech Week 2026, a multi-day conference celebrating the intersection of humanity, creativity, and technology in Cincinnati. As the cultural finale of the week, *Black Tech Week: The Creative Frequency Finale* will close the conference and feature a curated showcase of live music, visual art, and immersive creative activations by local and regional artists. Designed to center artistic expression within the innovative economy, the finale will invite attendees to experience how art, culture, and creativity influence technology and community.

May-We-Help | *Cincinnati Adaptive Arts and Music Camp* | \$10,000

May-We-Help is partnering with the Adaptive Arts & Music Project to present the *Cincinnati Adaptive Arts and Music Camp (CAAMC)* from July 19 to July 25, 2026, at Northern Kentucky University. Celebrating creativity, skills, and unique perspectives that artists with disabilities contribute to the arts, CAAMC welcomes children and adults with

physical disabilities to join an inclusive community where everyone has access to musical instruments and artistic tools and can grow as musicians or visual artists, regardless of the number of fingers or hands they have available to create their art.

Music Resource Center-Cincinnati | *Community Studio: Bringing Music to West Side Youth* | \$10,000

The Music Resource Center will expand its mobile recording and music-creation program to the West Side through the Gamble-Nippert and Clippard YMCAs. Using new professional-grade equipment, teens will produce original music, collaborate with local artists, and host community sharing events. This project brings accessible arts to youth who often lack creative outlets, helping them build confidence, develop skills, and connect with peers and caring adults. ArtsWave funding supports outreach instruction and teen-centered creative experiences.

Musicians for Health | *Cash: The Business of Art and the Art of Business* | \$1,000

Business and art blend harmoniously together at this unique career development seminar. Valarie Shephard, former Group Vice President, Treasurer, and Controller at The Procter & Gamble Company, and Ixi Chen, Second Clarinet in the Cincinnati Symphony and active artist consultant and mentor, will present a panel and discussion to introduce creatives of any medium to the financial structures and practices that will be the foundation for a sustainable career in the arts. Specifically tailored to early-career artists, Ms. Sheppard and Ms. Chen will address the creative's responsibilities and possibilities as an entrepreneur.

Ohio Arts Professionals Network (OAPN) | *Ohio Arts Professionals Network 2026 Conference* | \$5,000

From October 18–20, 2026, the *Ohio Arts Professionals Network Conference* will bring together presenters from across Ohio and the region with touring artists and agencies from around the world. Held entirely at the Fitton Center for the Creative Arts in Hamilton, the conference features juried showcases, an exhibit hall, professional development sessions, and dedicated networking. This event strengthens industry connections, drives future bookings, and supports presenters as they build their upcoming seasons.

Ohio Justice and Policy Center | *Just Art Initiative: Voices from the Inside* | \$10,000

The *Just Art Initiative* will use visual art and storytelling created by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals - especially women - to build community connection

and understanding. Through exhibits, school workshops, and community events, the project brings justice-impacted artists into dialogue with youth and the broader public. In 2026, OJPC will host four public exhibits and six school-based programs, expanding statewide reach and fostering empathy, learning, and cultural connection across divides and a focus in Cincinnati.

ProjectArt | *ProjectArt Cincinnati* | \$5,000

ProjectArt will empower youth, artists, and communities through free visual arts education in public libraries. Launched in Cincinnati in 2023 in partnership with the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library, ProjectArt began at the Avondale and West End branches. In the 2025–2026 school year, ProjectArt will expand its Cincinnati footprint with the launch of a third full program site at the Bond Hill branch, including the addition of a third Resident Teaching Artist and a new schedule of weekly classes. This expansion will establish Bond Hill as a permanent program site - significantly increasing geographic reach, instructional capacity, and neighborhood-level impact across Cincinnati.

Q-KIDZ Dance Team | *Stop The Violence: Youth In Motion Prevention Project* | \$5,000

The Stop the Violence: Youth in Motion Prevention Project will use performance as a prevention strategy to address youth exposure to violence, substance use, trauma, and negative peer influence. Many young people witness these challenges daily in their schools, neighborhoods, and homes but lack safe, creative spaces to process their experiences or learn healthier responses. Through this project, youth will create, write, and perform a prevention-based stage production rooted in real situations they face. Using storytelling, movement, and dialogue, the performance highlights consequences while demonstrating positive, preventable outcomes that encourage nonviolence, emotional wellness, and positive decision-making through peer-to-peer messaging.

Soulful Change | *The 3rd Annual Africa Day Celebration: Next-Gen Leadership, Global Impact, and Influence* | \$3,000

Cincinnati's *3rd Annual Africa Day Celebration* will be an immersive arts and cultural experience honoring Cincinnati's African community through music, art, and connection. Celebrated globally on May 25th, Africa Day commemorates the founding of the African Union (OAU) in 1963.

Talk Low Music Festival | *Talk Low Music Festival, Community Workshops, and Performances* | \$5,000

In 2026, the Talk Low Music Festival will present a unified series of immersive performances and participatory workshops that bring internationally recognized artists to Cincinnati. Award-winning turntablist Maria Chavez will lead a hands-on sound workshop followed by a live performance, while ambient music pioneer William Basinski's performance will be paired with a Deep Listening workshop facilitated by Innerspace Listening Lab. Together, these events position Cincinnati as a destination for innovative, world-class arts experiences.

The Clifton Community Players | *Where We Are Planted: A Verbatim Theatre Performance* | \$3,000

This project will engage high schoolers and community members in an innovative form of environmental education and community building through theatre. Using a form of documentary theatre called the Verbatim technique, students at the School for Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) will be guided through the process of bringing stories about human-environmental interactions in Cincinnati to life on stage. In interpreting and embodying these local environmental stories, these students will strengthen their artistic skills while using knowledge of Cincinnati's past to reflect on their place in the city's environmental future.

The Harmon Museum | *Lebanon Festival of the Arts 2026* | \$3,375

The *Lebanon Festival* is a collaboration between the Harmon Museum, Warren County Foundation, the City of Lebanon, Artscape and Soul Sidekick Studio. This strong collaboration will create a public Arts Festival in Warren County showcasing the visual and performing arts, providing diverse and interdisciplinary performance and exhibits for all age groups.

TransForming Families Ministries | *West Chester/Liberty Township Juneteenth Celebration* | \$2,000

TransForming Families Ministries' Juneteenth event will celebrate the significance of this historic African American holiday through arts, culture, and community engagement. Featuring African American artists, music, and spoken word, the event is designed to be fun, family-friendly, interactive, and engaging for all ages. Educational components highlight the history and enduring relevance of Juneteenth while artistic expression helps foster cross-cultural understanding. By bringing people together in a welcoming environment, the event will strengthen community connections and build shared appreciation for African American history and cultural heritage.

Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation | *Walnut Hills Arts & Culture Series* | \$2,000

The Walnut Hills community will host an Arts & Culture event series that showcases the rich cultural heritage of our neighborhood. These after-work events will feature DJs and live music performances along with dance and artmaking. The Spring/Summer series will demonstrate the strong, diverse collaborative relationships we're building with creative organizations, businesses, and rising artists.

Warren County Arts Council dba ArtScape Lebanon | *Expanding Ceramics Access for Underserved Children and Adults* | \$7,500

ArtScape Lebanon will expand ceramics access for underserved children and adults by creating comprehensive scholarship programs, adaptive programming for individuals with disabilities, and culturally responsive workshops. This project will eliminate financial and physical barriers to pottery education, serving 150-200 underserved community members including low-income children, at-risk youth, families in poverty, adults with disabilities, and isolated seniors. We will transform our pottery studio into an inclusive space where Warren County's most vulnerable populations experience creative empowerment.

Wave Pool Corp | *Wave Pool Incubator Residency* | \$10,000

Wave Pool will launch *Wave Pool Incubator*, a six-month residency for Cincinnati-area socially engaged artists developing ambitious, long-term community-centered initiatives. Selected residents receive a \$4,000 stipend, \$1,000 project budget, studio/office space, and mentorship to shape early-stage ideas into creative businesses, nonprofits, sustained community projects, coops, or other lasting structures. The first cohort will begin April 2026 with two artists sponsored through this funding.