

# Creative Roots, Equitable Futures

CHICAGO

## Latino Arts in Chicago

# Why This Report Matters

- ◎ Builds on previous data work on Chicago's Latino community
- ◎ Follows questions many have asked: How much funding? What's changing? What progress is next?
- ◎ Grounds the conversation in numbers, history, and advocacy wins

# Goals

- ◎ To examine the vital role of Latino arts in Chicago from an economic perspective
- ◎ To analyze funding to Latino arts in Chicago in view of total funding to Chicago arts
- ◎ To consider existing challenges to funding

# The Starting Point

Chicago's Latino arts ecosystem is rich, deeply rooted, and nationally recognized. From the mural movements of the 1960s to today's prominent institutions and festivals, Latino artists have shaped Chicago's cultural identity through community expression, heritage preservation, and artistic innovation. Long-standing institutions and long-running festivals have helped anchor this ecosystem, alongside hundreds of smaller groups offering theater, dance, music, visual art, and multidisciplinary work rooted in Latino experiences.

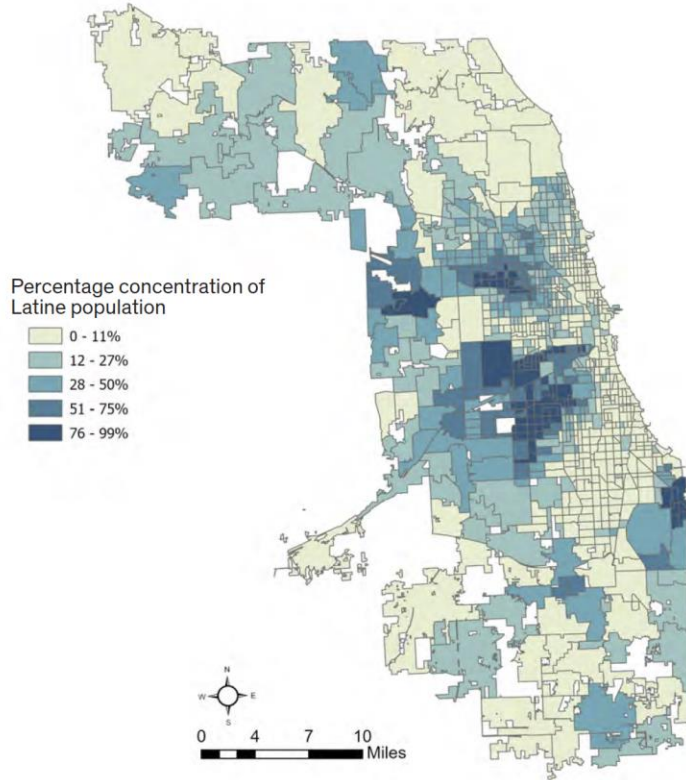
# Latino Cultural Infrastructure Is Deep and Proven

- ◎ Nearly 30% of Chicago's population is Latino.
- ◎ Latino arts ecosystem includes over 300 organizations, spanning theater, dance, music, film, visual arts.
- ◎ Many are not emerging organizations—they are legacy builders.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; 2022 Economic Census; Foundation Directory and NEA GrantSearch repeated and multiple grantees.

# Latino Population in Cook

## Chicago Arts Ecosystem Today



Map created by Great Cities Institute.  
Source: 2018–2022 5-Year American Community Survey Estimates.

**315** INDEPENDENT ARTISTS, WRITERS & PERFORMERS  
**176** PERFORMING ARTS COMPANIES  
**82** THEATER COMPANIES & DINNER THEATERS  
**70** MUSICAL GROUPS AND ARTISTS  
**51** MUSEUMS  
**14** DANCE COMPANIES

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 Economic  
Census, tabulated by UIC Great Cities Institute.



# Research Methodology in Brief

To analyze funding to Latino arts  
in Chicago



Candid Foundation Directory (IRS  
Form 990s)

NEA GrantSearch database

DCASE documents

Impact of Latino arts from an  
economic perspective



IMPLAN economic modeling

ESRI Spending Potential

To consider representation and  
challenges



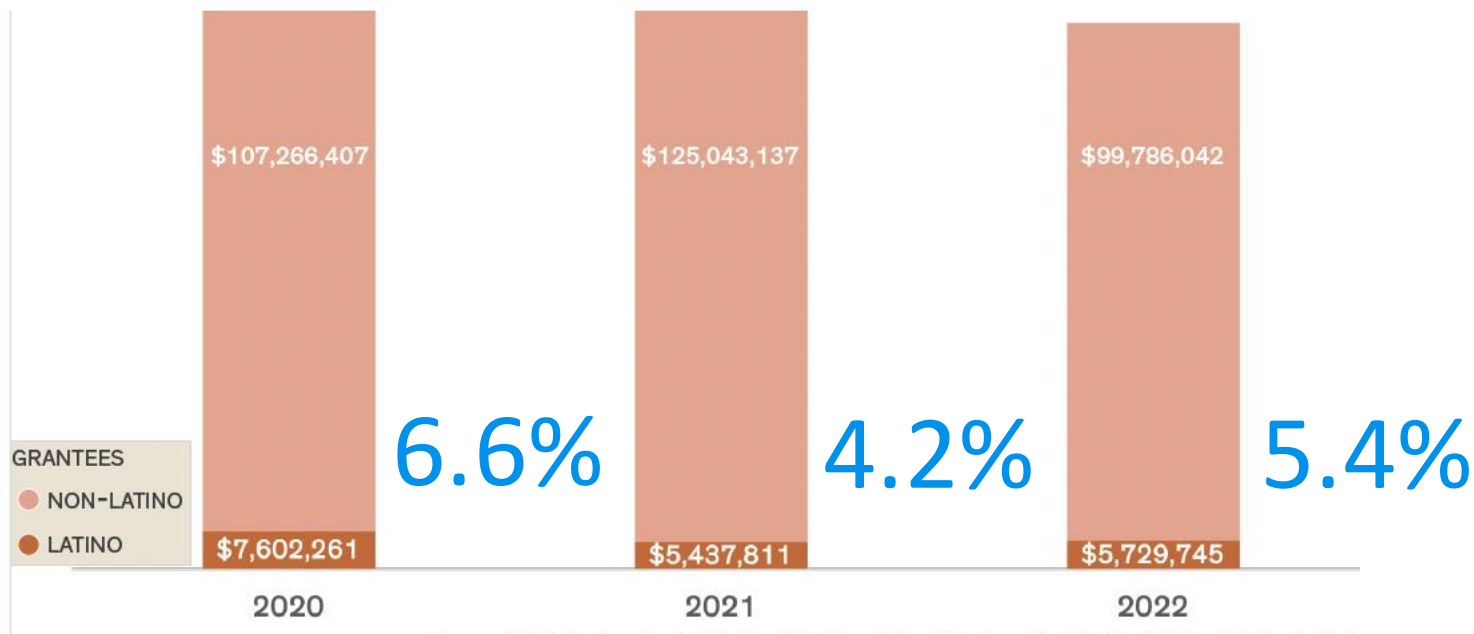
Chicago media and reporting

Other publicly available sources



# Philanthropic Support Not Proportionate

Proportion of philanthropy arts dollars to Latino arts



Source: IRS data, downloaded via Candid's Foundation Directory, tabulated by UIC Great Cities Institute.



# What Philanthropy Is Funding

**56 Latino arts organizations**

received philanthropic support in 2020–2023

**655 grants**

received by Latino arts organizations

**\$21.9 million**


in Latino arts funding in 2020–2023

Source: Foundation Directory / Candid, downloaded and analyzed by UIC Great Cities Institute.

# Overview of Philanthropy Findings

- ◎ Latino funding is not proportionate to presence or contributions to city cultural life
- ◎ Mix of one-time large investments and recurring small grants, which may position some for growth and stability
- ◎ Nearly all grants for general operations—a sign of funder trust but flexible funding still needed

# DCASE

- ◎ 2022: Equity milestone as grants budget increases to \$12.7M from \$2.7M
- ◎ 2024: Budget cuts, initiatives threatened
- ◎ 2025: Modest increase restored due to advocacy  
 Arts Alliance letter signed by 1,000+ artists and leaders

But... no demographic tracking, no structured data available,  
hard to measure real impact

Source: DCASE documents available online; Arts Alliance and news media coverage.

# NEA Funding

- ◎ 2020–2024: \$17.7M to arts in Chicago in 424 grants
- ◎ Most Latino grants \$10K–\$20K
- ◎ Many repeat grants
- ◎ Vast majority to major institutions

**Table 1. NEA funding of Chicago's Latino arts as percentage of total grant number and total dollars**


	% of grants	% of total dollars
2020	7.7%	2.40%
2021	6.5%	5.40%
2022	8.2%	3.40%
2023	6.7%	4.20%

Source: NEA GrantSearch, tabulated by UIC Great Cities Institute.

# Arts' Impact in Chicago

- ◎ Illinois arts added \$36B in economic value and supported 216,000 jobs—Latino arts contribute via employment, education, and neighborhood economic activity.
- ◎ Chicago arts sector = 11,000 jobs, generates \$490M in labor income, and produces \$1.72B in economic activity.
- ◎ Chicago Latino arts = from volunteer-led groups with \$24K budgets to multimillion-dollar institutions, contributing at every level—from grassroots engagement to year-round operations.
- ◎ Chicago households spent over \$930 million on arts and entertainment in 2022—above the national average

Source: IMPLAN; Bureau of Economic Analysis; ESRI Business Analyst and Spending Potential; Foundation Directory.



Every **\$1** spent in the arts sector  
generates approximately **\$1.30**  
in economic impact = **130%**  
return on investment

## What the Impact Means

- ◎ Investing in Latino arts is an economic development strategy.
- ◎ Latino arts is part of that arts multiplier ( $\$1 = \$1.30$ )
  - Creates jobs for artists, admin, youth, etc.
  - Supports neighborhood business (festivals, performances, tourism, etc.)
  - Stimulates construction and revitalization (Paseo Boricua, The Miracle Center, etc.)



# Barriers Beyond Money

- ◎ Access = to growth, networks, venues, and real estate
- ◎ Representation = few Latinos on grant panels or foundation boards overall
- ◎ Low visibility =
  - 16% of arts mentions in the *Sun-Times* since 2000
  - 5% of 2024 Jeff Awards nominations (previously many Latino productions didn't qualify for consideration)

## Toward Funding Equity

- ◎ % grants to BIPOC organizations grew to 54% (from 27%) in 2020–2023 (*Funding Equity* by Enrich Chicago)
- ◎ General operating support has increased to 71% of grant dollars (*Funding Equity* by Enrich Chicago)
- ◎ Various initiatives (Chicago's Cultural Treasures, Paul M. Angell Foundation mentorship, Nuestro Futuro, etc.)
- ◎ Coalitions working together (CLATA, Arts Alliance, Enrich Chicago, CLIP) to shape the landscape

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