

IMPACT REPORT

DIGITAL ACCESS FOR THE ARTS

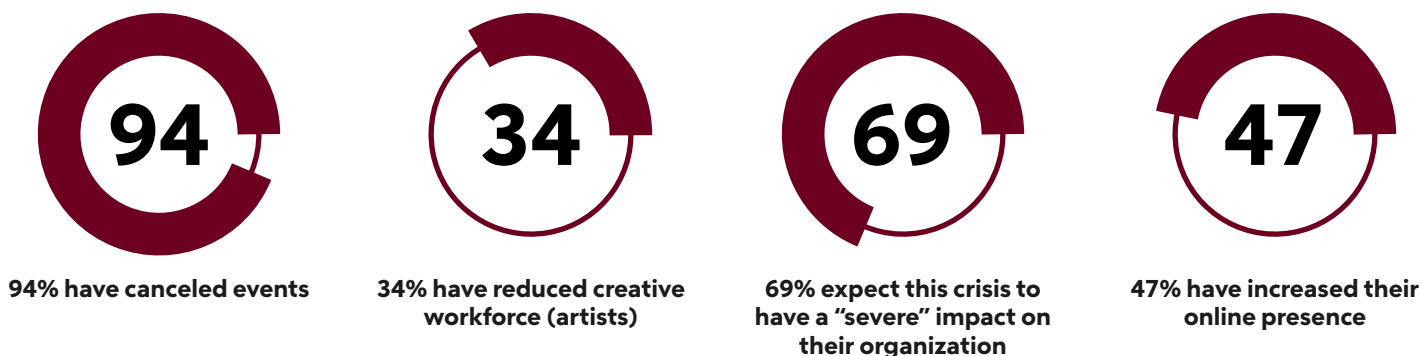


ROCKET
Community Fund

Background: How We Got Here

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, arts and cultural organizations were uniquely impacted. According to research conducted by **Americans for the Arts**, as a result of the pandemic, arts and cultural organizations have already experienced an estimated loss of 197 million event admissions due to canceled or postponed events. Financial losses to the nonprofit arts sector are estimated to be \$4.5 billion.

Impact of Pandemic on Arts and Cultural Organizations



The pandemic forced all of us to pivot our ways of connecting, both at work and home. This shift included arts and cultural organizations that suddenly had to adapt to online and digital programming. Unfortunately, many of these organizations were often unequipped to handle the infrastructure changes, training, and resources needed to adapt traditionally in-person events and programs to a virtual format.

That's why the Rocket Community Fund developed the Digital Access for the Arts Program (DAAP) alongside our partners at CultureSource. The goal of the DAAP is to provide arts and cultural organizations with the necessary resources to build, grow, and transform their work in preparation for a sustainable future. This collaborative initiative offers resources, services and learning opportunities to support arts and cultural organizations in both virtual and in-person environments. DAAP also serves as a foundation to strengthen the programming and flexibility of arts and cultural organizations for years to come.

This report outlines how DAAP works and the impact of the program on participating organizations.

Who is CultureSource?

CultureSource is a member association for arts and cultural nonprofits in Southeastern Michigan. They support the work of arts and cultural organizations through hosting professional development workshops and creating programs that support a diverse and thriving arts and culture sector. Overall, their mission is to advance the work of organizations that cultivate creative and cultural expression in Southeastern Michigan, with an emphasis on elevating historically underrepresented voices.

Breakdown of the Program

DAAP is a four-part program focused on helping CultureSource build their technology infrastructure and knowledge base to create diverse and inclusive online content and digital resources for flexible hybrid programming.

1. Learning Experiences, to support knowledge expansion on harnessing digital resources for online programming.
2. Research, to discover organizational needs with regards to technology and allow for capacity-building.
3. Tech Experts In-Residence, to pair organizations with a thought leader in the digital landscape who will educate on how to best use technology to build effective programming.
4. Funding, to support these organizations as they adapt to creating effective and engaging virtual programming.

Learning Experiences

A vital part of the learning experiences portion of the program was a seven-part workshop series designed to support those working in arts and culture organizations by expanding their knowledge on current trends in the online cultural space. Through these 30-minute workshops, CultureSource was able to highlight local, national and global leaders in the arts and culture discipline. Audiences were able to connect with these experts to strengthen their understanding of how to adapt and expand online cultural programming.

Top 3 Workshop Programs

Developing a Digital Identity for
Your Arts Organization

68

participants

Monetizing Arts Content Online

53

participants

Digital Archiving:
Preserving Work, Saving Coin

51

participants

Research and Capacity-Building

CultureSource commissioned the **8 Bridges Workshop** to better understand how organizations use technology in their daily work. Additionally, they wanted to discover how arts and cultural organizations could utilize digital resources to build upon future development. The research provided insight into how organizations use digital technology in their work, which informed recommendations on how arts organizations can build their digital capacity.

The special investment into capacity building enabled CultureSource to take a deeper dive into building their own tech infrastructure. CultureSource staff had time to build long-lasting local, national, and international relationships while experimenting with new ways of engaging their audiences and supporting the organizations they serve with digital resources.

As a result of the funding provided by Rocket Community Fund, CultureSource was able to form new partnerships, collaborations, and relationships.

New Partnerships and Collaborations

- NEW INC. (a part of the New Museum)
- Detroit Disability Power
- The Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Lab at Indiana University
- The National Theatre (United Kingdom)
- Detroit Public Television
- Michigan Digital Preservation Network (MDPN)
- The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- Carnegie Hall
- Detroit Symphony Orchestra
- Michigan Arts Education and Instruction Assessment (MAEIA)
- Duo Security
- The Law Firm of Miller Canfield
- Rock Family of Companies
- Donnelley Foundation
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Tech Experts In Residence

From February through May of 2021, Tech Expert-in-Residence Jon Riley met with DAAP participants and CultureSource team members to provide individualized support and thought leadership in reimagining digital and online strategy. A big part of Riley's work was helping participants improve their tech infrastructure, capacity-building and contingency planning to better support digital programming. Riley also provided thought partnership on funding initiatives and helped design a series of monthly workshops created to help organizations develop and produce digital work. He worked with 28 CultureSource member organizations, providing design prompts and strategies for growing organizational digital capacity and infrastructure. Riley spent an estimated 52 hours working with member organizations to help grow their knowledge and capacity of using technology to enhance their work.

I'm a firm believer that the future of work will be largely hybrid in nature. Art and culture work is no exception. A silver lining to the tumult of the past year is that many of our organizations underwent a digital transformation out of necessity. The program as we designed it gave CultureSource members and myself a place to brainstorm together about both the past and present of each organization, looking forward at some steps or goals toward where each one sought to be in the future. Part of the beauty of the program was how open-ended it was, allowing us to explore all aspects of each member's technology challenges and aspirations rather than just solely technical ones.

John Riley, Tech-In-Residence

Funding

As the arts and cultural sector began to work remotely, it became clear that many arts organizations were lacking the appropriate tech infrastructure to produce and present their work and maintain communication. We launched the Digital Access for the Arts Funding Program to support arts and cultural organizations in making sustainable investments in technology that would best serve their organization in the current virtual context and the blended future of both in-person and virtual work.

20 organizations were selected from the 69 applicants to receive a total of \$100,000 in grants. Those who received funding represented a diverse snapshot of arts and cultural organizations in Southeastern Michigan, including visual arts centers, youth-driven arts collectives, performing arts venues, hubs for historical preservation, theater companies, and neighborhood arts centers.

DAAP Grant Recipient Demographics



80% of organizations are in Detroit and primarily serve Detroiters



65% of organizations are led by people of color



55% of organizations are women-led

Primary Use of Funding



Audio and visual equipment



Live streaming equipment



Web design, production, and operational equipment

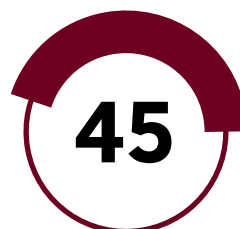
Types of Organizations*



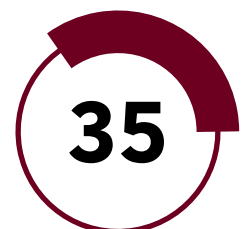
85% small businesses



50% serve youth



45% performing arts



35% neighborhood focused

Impact of DAAP

Thanks to this collaborative partnership, the Digital Access for the Arts Program has expanded CultureSource's important work while becoming an invaluable resource for participating arts and cultural organizations. This capacity-building and resource-sharing is critical in a sector that has been traditionally focused on in-person programming. DAAP empowers organizations to carry forward their work in a digital space, which will build resiliency and ensure that Detroit and Southeast Michigan stay an artistically and culturally vibrant place for many years to come.

CultureSource polled participants to learn how the program impacted their organization. Below is a sample of survey responses.

How have the technological investments, funded by the grant portion of DAAP, changed the work of your organization?



"Before 2020, we had practically no online presence and our website was a mess. The pandemic helped us pivot to virtual and online programming and events, including zoom life drawing sessions. We have learned how critical our virtual presence is and how we can extend our reach through our website, which now includes 360-gallery views and online exhibitions that offer works for sale."

MaryAnn Wilkinson, Executive Director at The Scarab Club

"These funds enabled us to completely bring production in-house, and to produce, mix and edit full productions from concept to global webcasting."

Brenda Terrell, Director of Development at The Carr Center



Supporting arts and cultural organizations is critical to building resilience in our communities. The impact of DAAP cannot be understated. We will apply what we've learned from this partnership to support DAAP in improving and expanding their programming.

Our Mission

The mission of the Rocket Community Fund is to support inclusive, thriving and resilient communities by making data-driven investments in housing, employment and public life.