

DCASE Budget Statement 2023

Commissioner Erin Harkey

Thank you, Alderman Ervin, and Council members for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).

Thanks to an unprecedented level of public funding in 2023, DCASE has worked to increase support for the cultural community through expanded grant programs, workforce development initiatives, expanded investment in neighborhoods, cross-agency collaboration, philanthropic partnerships, and research.

DCASE committed over \$23.5M in grant dollars through annual and recovery grant programs, a 25% increase over 2022. There were 900 new applicants to DCASE grant programs in 2023, which was 51% of total applicants. 63% of Individual Artists Program (IAP) grantees were first-time applicants and 60% of those identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Grantees are now more reflective of the city of Chicago – 60% of Individual Artists Program grantees are BIPOC as compared to 38% in 2016, and grants were awarded to artists and arts organizations in all 50 wards in 2022, a trend continuing since 2022 and representing an increase from 94% of Wards in 2021 and 66% in 2016.

We saw record attendance at the Chicago Jazz Festival in Millennium Park with over 170,000 visitors over 4 days, and increased attendance at Gospel Festival. DCASE also supported the inaugural cohort of organizations in residence in Millennium Park which showcased a wider diversity of artists and arts organizations and engaged new audiences. The Taste of Chicago continued its expansion into neighborhoods, alongside favorites such as SummerDance and the World Music Festival.

The Chicago Band Roster doubled its impact in 2023, with 20 organizations receiving support to hire more than 400 local musicians to participate in neighborhood events. Across the hundreds of free cultural programs downtown and throughout our neighborhoods, DCASE partnered with over 100 organizations, 61% of which are BIPOC-centered organizations. Over \$2.2M supported the hiring of over 1,600 individual artists of which 69% are artists of color.

Our public art team is now managing close to \$10M in investments across 24 wards. This includes 4 aldermanic menu-supported projects completed in 2023, with another 9 projects slated for completion in 2024. 17 installations were also completed and unveiled at the O'Hare Airport T5 arrival corridor project, and 19 new projects are being developed in South and West side neighborhoods. Additionally, DCASE secured \$6.8M in new funding for public art from the Mellon Foundation to support the creation of new, diverse cultural monuments and educational programs.

In 2023, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding allowed us to invest in the ongoing recovery of arts nonprofits and includes the Creative Worker Arts and Health Pilot program which launched in partnership with City Colleges and the Chicago Department of Public Health. But while the COVID-19 public health emergency officially came to an end on May 11, 2023, there is a growing – rather than waning – sense of financial and operating crisis in the arts.

A recently commissioned report by SMU DataArts illuminates ongoing challenges. The data shows that in-person attendance is still 60% lower than it was pre-pandemic. And while total government funding supported an increasing level of the average organization's expenses over the past four years, federal relief dollars that buoyed many organizations during years of pandemic crisis have now run out. Many

organizations have been forced to weather the crisis by scaling back their operations with nearly two-thirds fewer programs offered in 2022 than in 2019.

It has also been a precarious year for creative workers. Chicago organizations that we studied reduced staff during the pandemic – reinstating all but 10% of employees in 2022. In addition, The Writers Guild of America (WGA) and SAG-AFTRA initiated general strikes during which no writers or actors could work on film or television projects backed by major studios, television networks, and streamers.

The 2023 strikes notwithstanding, Chicago’s film and television industry continued its rise during 2022 and the first four months of 2023. In 2022, film expenditures in Illinois set a record of \$691M, breaking the previous record of \$630M set in 2021. Wages in 2022 hit \$403M representing approximately 15,400 job hires. While this data is tracked by the Illinois Film Office for the entire state, every year the City of Chicago is responsible for well over 90% of all film production activity in the state.

I am honored to be leading the DCASE team which remains committed to supporting Chicago communities through the arts. In 2024, we look to sustain the progress we have made. In addition to the resources allocated to the department through the city’s budgeting process, we will work in partnership with other City agencies and private philanthropy to identify additional funds to expand essential resources to the cultural community.

In 2024, DCASE is committed to:

- Completing an evaluation and assessment of professional development and capacity-building programs to identify gaps and create new programs that will provide a network of support structures for creative individuals, businesses, and organizations.
- Supporting the ongoing, equitable recovery of the cultural sector by convening, evaluating data, distributing reports, and working in partnership with philanthropy to support new projects and programs that contribute to the health and vitality of the sector.
- Celebrating Millennium Park’s 20th anniversary with new public art commissions and special performances, reigniting energy around the Midwest’s #1, most-visited destination for generations to come.
- Updating DCASE’s Special Events Ordinance to reflect recent changes in the special event application regulations and processes that will make producing a special event in the city easier, friendlier, and more transparent.
- DCASE will also work to identify exciting partnerships to develop large-scale events and activations that will activate downtown and neighborhoods to promote economic growth.