

PILLAR 1 OF 8



■ ★ WE WILL CHICAGO

# ARTS & CULTURE

Supporting equitable access and participation in the arts throughout Chicago's 77 communities

■ ★ CHICAGO  
MAYOR LORI E. LIGHTFOOT

[wewillchicago.com](http://wewillchicago.com)

# ARTS & CULTURE



**Arts and culture are fundamental components of healthy communities, providing social, educational and economic benefits that shape people's lives and neighborhoods.**

Despite contributing value to all communities, access to arts and culture is unevenly distributed throughout Chicago. While nearly 80 percent of Chicagoans believe arts and culture improve neighborhood vitality, only half of residents believe arts and cultural activities are available where they live, according to a recent Chicago Community Trust survey. Financial support for arts and culture organizations in Chicago is also



*“ Every community needs different things. Support looks different. Support should be led by the people who are trusted in their community through partnerships, nonprofits and informal projects. ”*

— *Wisdom Baty* | Honey Pot Performance,  
Artist-Organizer

uneven, with organizations led by people of color receiving half the grant funding that majority white entities typically receive, according to a report from ENRICH Chicago and Heartland Alliance.

The Arts & Culture pillar's goals are intended to improve access to cultural opportunities citywide, help make Chicago a place where working artists and creative sector workers can earn a living wage and build successful careers, and increase awareness and appreciation for the city's diverse cultural traditions, organizations, and artists.





## KEY TERMS

### Creative Sector/ Industries

An overarching term to capture the breadth of activity within artistic and cultural industries, including nonprofit organizations, creative businesses, museums and art galleries, music, film and television, digital media, theater, dance, fashion, publishing, architecture and design. Activities involve the development, production, dissemination, and preservation of creative goods and services, as well as related endeavors such as education and management.

### Creative Worker

Anyone who earns income from creative, cultural or arts-based pursuits, or works within the creative sector as an employee, independent contractor, entrepreneur or gig worker.

“ Arts and culture will be coming out of neighborhood-based cultural spaces that will be independent from... [past] models...it won't require any bureaucratic validation to exist...it will be able to be sporadic, permanent, continuous and planned. But most importantly, it will be both accessible and affordable. ”

– Libby | Ravenswood, We Will participant



## GOAL 1

# Support the resiliency of the creative sector—its workers, organizations and businesses—for a healthy and vibrant city.

Chicago's cultural environment requires almost all of the area's professional artists to work more than one job, according to a Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) report. While the number of nonprofit arts and culture organizations per capita in Chicago is higher than many other major U.S. metropolitan areas, their average budgets are significantly smaller and they are disproportionately underfunded by local government, the report also determined.

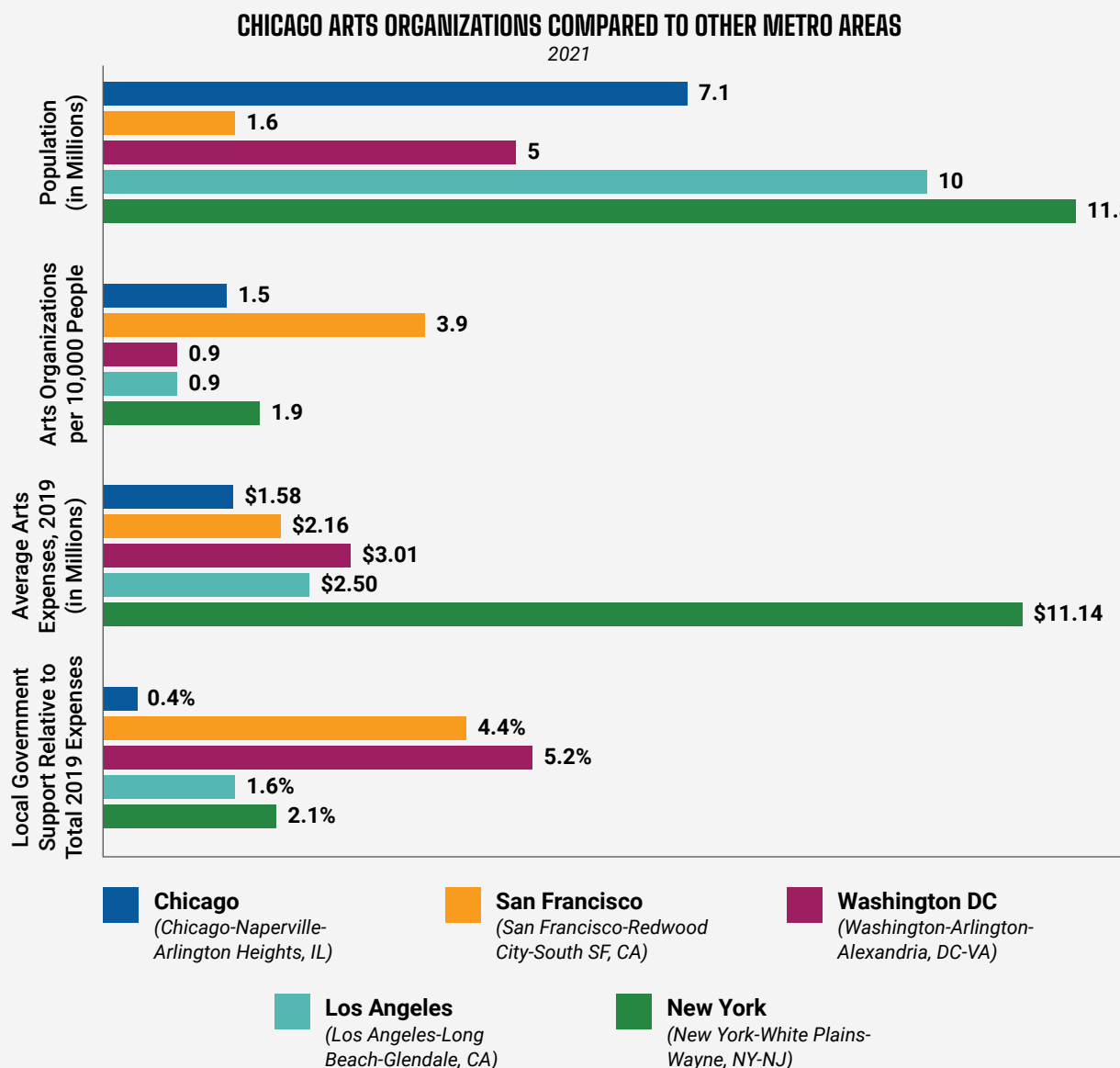
## OBJECTIVES

*To achieve this goal, We Will...*

- 1.1** Strengthen the infrastructure and systems of support needed for creative sector organizations, businesses and individuals to thrive.
- 1.2** Decrease barriers that have prevented access to city funding for creatives and arts and culture organizations; prioritizing racial, gender, disability, immigration status, and geographic and other equity considerations.
- 1.3** Ensure that employment policies for creative workers used by public and private entities are fair and equitable.
- 1.4** Support the relationships necessary for creatives to develop skills, pursue opportunities, access jobs and connect within the field.

## SUPPORTING DATA

Chicago's nonprofit arts and culture organizations have significantly smaller budgets and receive less local government funding than organizations in other metropolitan areas.



Source: SMUDDataArts and Bloomberg Associates

“ Some of the things we can name are the choices of how Chicago invested municipal money led to the creation of cultural assets and businesses in the Loop and Navy Pier and, over a period of time, contributed to the loss of cultural assets and businesses in Bronzeville and Pullman and South Shore. ”

— Henry Wishcamper | Urban Juncture, Co-Director of Community Development





**GOAL 2**

## Engage artists, creative businesses and cultural organizations to advance the quality of life in all Chicago communities.

Chicago's nonprofit arts and culture entities are predominantly headquartered in the Loop area and along the lakefront. As a result, many residents do not benefit from the economic, educational and quality-of-life contributions of the city's arts scene.

**OBJECTIVES**

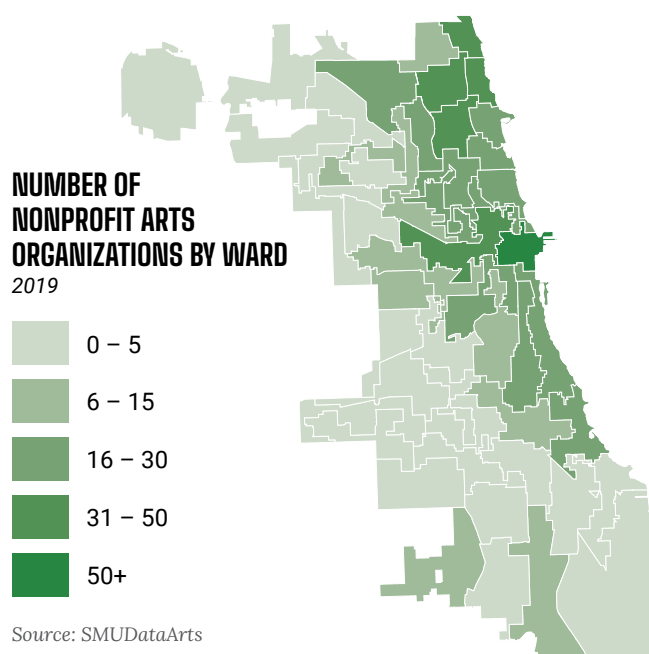
*To achieve this goal, We Will...*

- 2.1** Use the power of arts and culture to build vibrant, healthy communities.
- 2.2** Increase the number of creative businesses and cultural spaces in community areas that lack them.

- 2.3** Prioritize private and public investment in historically under-resourced community areas.

**SUPPORTING DATA**

The vast majority of Chicago's nonprofit arts and culture organizations are located along the lakefront.



**14%** of Chicago's nonprofit arts and culture organizations are located in just **ONE WARD (DOWNTOWN);**

**ONLY 21%** of the City's arts and culture nonprofit organizations are located in **64% OF THE CITY'S WARDS.**



## GOAL 3

# Ensure all Chicagoans have access to robust, relevant and joyful arts education and to creative workforce opportunities at every stage of their lives.

The arts provide pleasure and support for human growth, including an individual's capacity for empathy and meaningful social bonds, according to a report by the Rand Corp. Roughly 40% of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) facilities are failing to provide strong arts programming, and Black students are disproportionately less likely than students in other racial or ethnic groups to access quality arts education, according to a recent report from Ingenuity Inc. Low-income students who attend arts-related classes and programs are twice as likely to finish college as their peers with no arts education. Their dropout rates prior to college are exponentially lower than their peers with no arts education, according to Americans for the Arts.

## OBJECTIVES

*To achieve this goal, We Will...*

- 3.1** Advance access to pre K-12 arts education within Chicago Public Schools and other school-based providers.
- 3.2** Advance access to lifelong arts education opportunities within each Chicago community area.
- 3.3** Strengthen the infrastructure needed to support pathways to careers in arts education as part of broad workforce development efforts.



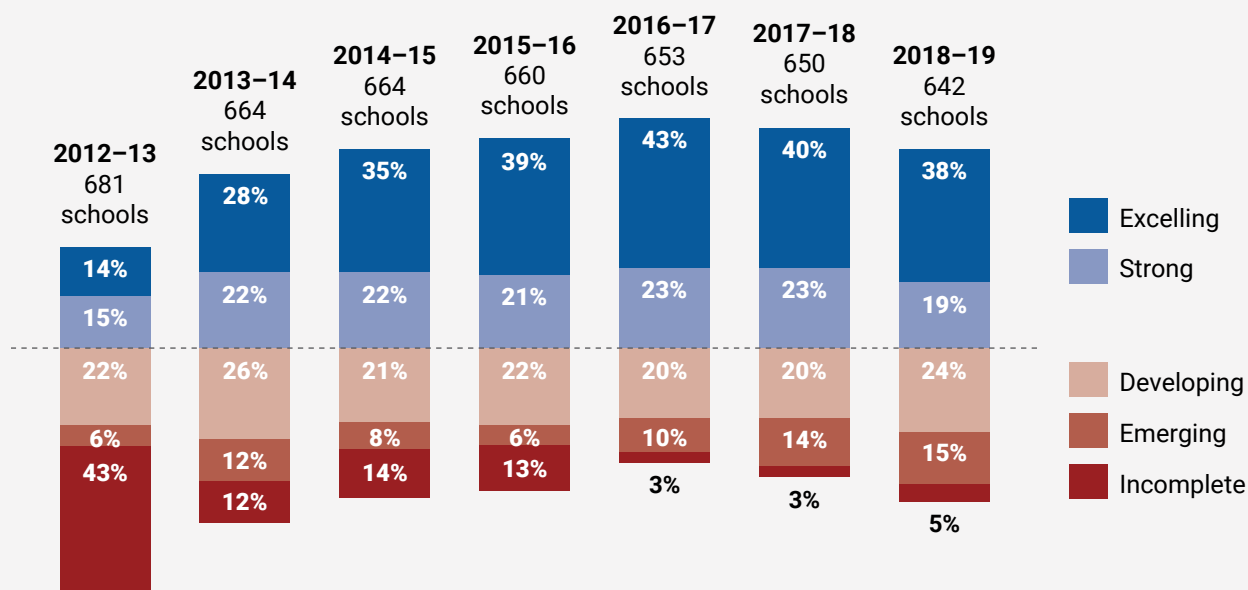


## SUPPORTING DATA

The number of CPS schools with arts education programs that are strong or excelling has doubled over the last 16 years.

## CREATIVE SCHOOLS CERTIFICATION CUMULATIVE SCORES OVER TIME (ACCESS AND QUALITY)

Chicago



Source: Ingenuity

“ [Ingenuity finds] that Black students are significantly less likely than their peers to have access to quality arts programming, even after controlling for the enrollment and type of school the students attend. ”

—Ingenuity Data Snapshot | Arts Education Access in CPS

## GOAL 4

# Promote awareness and appreciation for the value of the city's cultural sector—its current and historical contributions—to residents and those beyond the Chicago's borders.

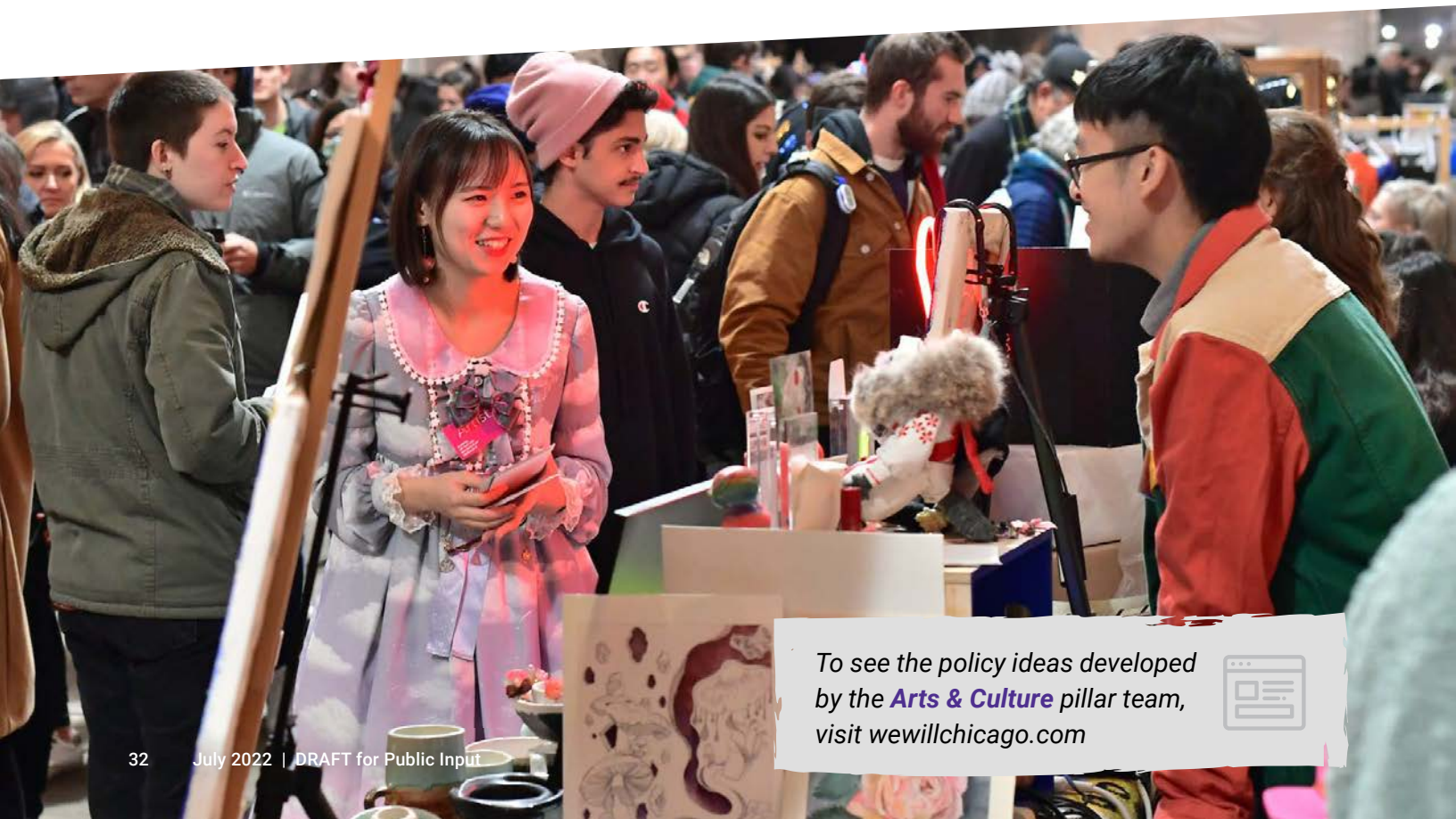
City support for local arts organizations can take many forms, including coordination with sister agencies, local media and cultural organizations to promote Chicago's cultural resources and opportunities. In 2022, DCASE launched a strategic initiative to market more neighborhood-based arts programming, in addition to ongoing efforts to highlight downtown opportunities. As the city grows and changes with time—welcoming new residents from across the country and around the world—these strategies should continue to evolve, promoting the cultural traditions and celebrations of new and existing residents alike.

## OBJECTIVES

*To achieve this goal, We Will...*

**4.1** Expand the focus of the City's marketing efforts to highlight the cultural assets and programming of all community areas.

**4.2** Support and respond to local marketing and advocacy efforts by communities and arts and culture groups.



To see the policy ideas developed by the **Arts & Culture** pillar team, visit [wewillchicago.com](https://www.wewillchicago.com)

