

ANNUAL REPORT

FY25



**DESIGNING
AN
ACCESSIBLE
FUTURE**

Image: CareerCREATE student at an exhibit at the Worcester Art Museum

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DEAR FRIENDS,

At Open Door Arts, our vision is a future where people with disabilities are fully represented and included as artists, leaders, employees, and patrons in every part of the arts and culture sector. This year, we took bold steps toward that vision, through innovative programs, transformative partnerships, and resources that center disabled voices at every level.

Our **CareerCREATE program** empowered students with disabilities to explore artistic disciplines and career pathways through accessible, yearlong, in-school programming, and guest artist visits to connect students with talented disabled artists like hip-hop activist Keith Jones and dancers from United Dance. The **Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum** set a new standard for accessibility with tactile artworks, audio tours, Braille and large-print materials, demonstrating what is possible when inclusion is built into every step of the visitor experience. We also launched the **Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub**, a free, national digital platform co-created with a majority-disabled team of experts, offering tools, resources, and templates to help organizations move beyond compliance and design truly welcoming cultural spaces.

Across all of these efforts, one thing remains clear: **the future of accessibility must be co-created with the disability community.** Disabled artists, students, leaders, and cultural workers are at the heart of every program and decision we make. Their voices, creativity, and leadership are shaping not only our organization but the future of the entire arts and culture sector.



NICOLE AGOIS

Managing Director

As you read the stories and accomplishments in the pages ahead, **we invite you to imagine this future with us** — and to take part in building it. Together, we can design a cultural landscape where access is not an afterthought, but a foundation, and where every person is welcomed, represented, and celebrated.

With gratitude for your continued partnership and belief in this work,

Nicole Agois

Managing Director

 **Open Door Arts**
An Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation



OUR MISSION

OUR SHARED CULTURAL COMMUNITY IS STRENGTHENED WHEN IT REPRESENTS, INCLUDES, AND ENGAGES ALL PEOPLE

Open Door Arts, an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation **increases access, participation, and representation of people with disabilities in arts and culture.** The next generation of employees, leaders, and artists with disabilities explore creative careers while learning artistic skills in our school programs. Disabled artists share their work with the community through our Open Door Gallery. Cultural organizations become more accessible to patrons and employees with disabilities by engaging with our resources, training, and research.

THE NEXT GENERATION



CareerCREATE offers high school and transition-aged students with disabilities (ages 14–21) accessible, yearlong, in-school arts programming that builds artistic skills and supports the exploration of creative careers, providing:

- 32 weeks of **in-school arts instruction** in visual arts, drama, or music
- **Two guest artist classroom visits** from disabled artists/cultural workers
- **A field trip** to an arts and culture organization, where students meet professionals working in a variety of roles.
- **A school-based “mini internship”** project, where students practice skills learned throughout the year and apply them to a real project.

CAREER CREATE AT-A-GLANCE

Classrooms

14

Students

208

Districts

BOSTON
CHELSEA
WORCESTER

This year, CareerCREATE brought students face-to-face with trailblazing disabled artists and cultural workers who are actively shaping the future of the arts. When **hip-hop artist and activist Keith Jones** visited, students lit up hearing his stories navigating and thriving in the arts and culture sector as a disabled artist.

Keith’s visit — along with those of Deaf teaching artist Takiyah Harris, visual artists Dominic Killiany and Dominic Quagliozi, and professional dancers from United Dance — **opened doors for students to imagine new possibilities for themselves and their futures**. These authentic connections helped students see disability as a powerful part of their identity and as a source of pride, strength, and creativity.

By doubling the number of guest artist visits this year, we amplified representation and inspired students to envision futures where they are not just participants but leaders and creators. Through art, stories, and reflection, students began to design their own visions of what accessibility — and their place in the cultural sector — can look like.





Artwork Credit: "Singing, Swinging, and Being Joyful" by DaNice D. Marshall

THE FUTURE ON DISPLAY

Designed as a partnership between Worcester Art Museum and Open Door Arts, the **Open Door Gallery at the Worcester Art Museum (ODG@WAM)** is a working studio and gallery that exhibits and celebrates the work of aspiring, emerging and established artists with disabilities, acting as a catalyst for community convening and conversation with the museum and beyond.

6 **58**

Exhibits Artists

FEATURED ARTISTS: Aspire Artists, Moriah Faith, Camilla Jerome, Creative Minds Artists, South High School Artists, Alana Guarino, Chenda Cope, DaNice D. Marshall, Liz Doles, Judith Klausner, Mika Cook-Wright, Omolara Williams McCallister, and Sophie Pearson.

DESIGNING AN ACCESSIBLE GALERY

This year, **ODG@WAM set a powerful example for what truly accessible arts spaces can be.** Guests explored exhibits through audio described tours, tactile representations of artworks, Braille and Large Print guides, image descriptions, and Large Print labels. Sighted guide tours or ASL interpretation were available upon request during receptions and events. Our partnership with the Vermont Association for the Blind and the Worcester Talking Book Library made many of these services possible, and User/Experts helped ensure the gallery experience reflects the needs and perspectives of the disability community.

By centering accessibility at every stage, from planning to implementation, the gallery modeled what is possible when inclusion is not an afterthought but a foundation for design, inspiring other cultural spaces to reimagine access.



THE FUTURE OF OUR SECTOR

INTRODUCING THE HUB: A RESOURCE THE FIELD NEEDED AND THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY DESERVED

This year, Open Door Arts took a transformative step forward with the **launch of the Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub** — a first-of-its-kind, FREE digital platform co-created with a majority-disabled team of cultural access experts from across the country. The Hub was designed to help arts and culture organizations move beyond good intentions and take meaningful action to improve accessibility in every area of their work.

This groundbreaking resource is designed to meet organizations wherever they are — whether just beginning their accessibility journey or ready to deepen their practices. By providing accessible, easy-to-use tools rooted in collaboration and inclusion, the Hub empowers organizations to design policies, programs, and spaces where everyone belongs.

The launch of the Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub marks a bold step toward building a future where accessibility is not an afterthought, but a foundation for the arts and culture sector. Through this work, Open Door Arts is helping organizations nationwide create lasting, systemic change and shaping a cultural landscape that celebrates and welcomes people with disabilities at every level.



50+

Content pages



42

Featured disabled artists



400+

Vetted Resources



60+

Experts in directory



1

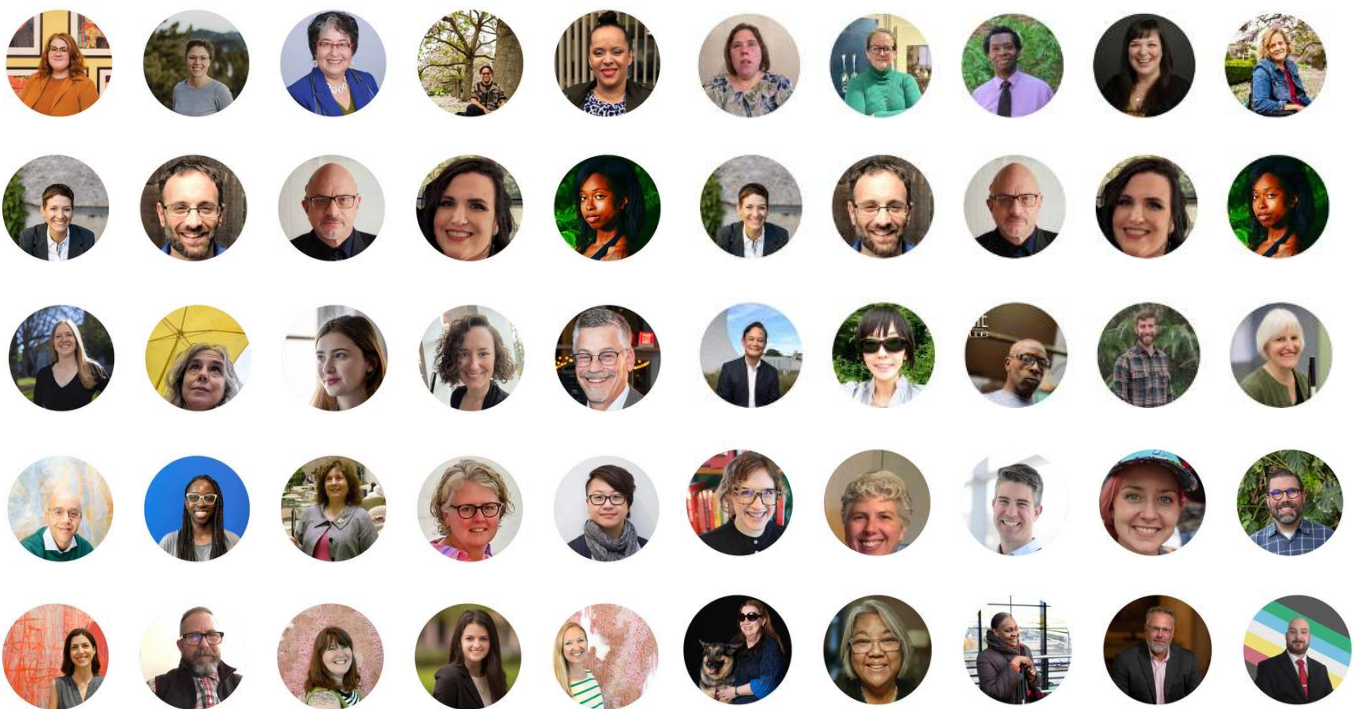
Accessibility Self-Assessment



Visit the Hub at **ArtsAccessHub.org**

THE ACCESS DREAM TEAM

The Hub was co-created with 40+ of the most trusted experts in arts and culture, accessibility, disability, and the ADA. Each contributor brought both deep professional expertise and rich lived experience, with **80% self-identifying as disabled** and representing a wide range of disabilities. Together, they shaped every aspect of The Hub's content and design, ensuring that disabled perspectives were centered in every step of the process. Their collective contributions have helped create a truly one-of-a-kind resource for our sector.



HUB CONTRIBUTORS

Project Leads: Nicole Agois, Portia Brown, Jenna Gabriel, Rachel Kolb, Dani Rose, Betty Siegel, Nae Vallejo

Content Creators and Editors: Charles Baldwin, Sydney Bromfield, Kim Charlson, Tina Childress, Cheryl Cumings, Ken Darsney, Ross Edelstein, Hannah Goodwin, Bryan Gould, Liza Grant, Bill Green, Michael Greer, Stephanie Hakulin, Valerie Haven, Melinda Huff, Sam Hwang, Roger Ideishi, Saki Iwamoto, Keith Jones, Alexander Jones, Georgina Kleege, Karen Krolak, Anya L'Esperance, Leah Mattern, John McEwen, Jean Morrison, Ross Newton, Jonathan O'Dell, Kait Pascall, Ellice Patterson, Amber Percy, Kristin Peszka, Christopher Robinson, Katie Samson, Elise Schaffer, Danielle Schulz, Jessica Swanson, Heather Watkins, Wally Zielinski

Website Design and Accessibility: Graphic Details, National Center for Accessible Media

DISABILITY MADE VISIBLE

Every page of **the Hub** features artwork by a disabled artist—over 50 in total—each piece a testament to the power, nuance, and brilliance of disabled creativity. This was a deliberate act of centering disabled artists, whose stories, perspectives, and cultural labor are too often sidelined. Their work invites reflection, provokes imagination, and provides deeper context for the work featured on the Hub. All artists were compensated for the use of their work.



Credit (from left to right): “Create More Anti Ableist Spaces” by Jen White Johnson; Untitled (D1466) by Felicia Griffin; “Gold Wheelchair” by Gordon Sasaki

HUB ARTISTS

Micah Bazant, Megan Bent, Ezra Benus, Aurora Berger, Laron Bickerstaff, Gregory Blackstock, Frances Bukovsky, Elendë Connor, Jillian Crochet, DaNice D. Marshall, Alex Dolores Salerno, JJJJerome Ellis, chiara francesca, Tony Giordano, Felicia Griffin, Sugandha Gupta, Shana Harper, Seo Hye Lee, Sins Invalid, Camilla Jerome, Jeff Kasper, Em Kettner, Dominic Killiany, Bo Kim, Zooey Kim Conner, Judith Klaunser, Anya L'Esperance, Emilie Louise Gossiaux, Ariana Martinez, Bec Miriam, Dylan Mortimer, Michaela Oteri, Carmen Papalia, Chloe Pascal Crawford, Daisy Patton, Stephen Proski, Dominic Quagliozi, Dorian Reid, Shawn Sanders, Gordon Sasaki, Finnegan Shannon, Andy Slater, Heidi Swevens, Liza Sylvestre, Delana Thompson, and Jen White Johnson.

✳ **Learn more at:** <https://artsaccesshub.org/about-us/art/>

OUR TEAM

We are so grateful to everyone who gave their time, creativity, expertise, passion, and commitment to help us design a future where access is a foundation and people with disabilities are nurtured and celebrated in arts and cultural spaces.

ODA LEADERSHIP

Nicole Agois, Managing Director

Portia Brown, Director of Operations & Strategy

Megan Bent, Manager of Gallery & Communications

Mehdi Raoufi, Director of School Programs

Dani Rose, Director of Cultural Access

ADVISORY BOARD

Jeremy Alliger, Tom Keane, Elaine Fallon, Maureen Finnerty, Robin Foley, Ruth Mercado-Zizzo, Carl Richardson, and Heather Watkins.

TEACHING ARTISTS

Megan Bent, Sadye Bobbette, Stephanie Charlton, Silvina Mizrahi, and Mehdi Raoufi

GALLERY COMMITTEE

Samantha Cataldo, Jeff Kasper, Dominic Quagliozzi and Gordon Sasaki

ORG CONSULTANTS

Jenna Gabriel, Niki Lamberg, and Amber Pearcy

INTERNS

Anya L'Esperance

Dani Rose

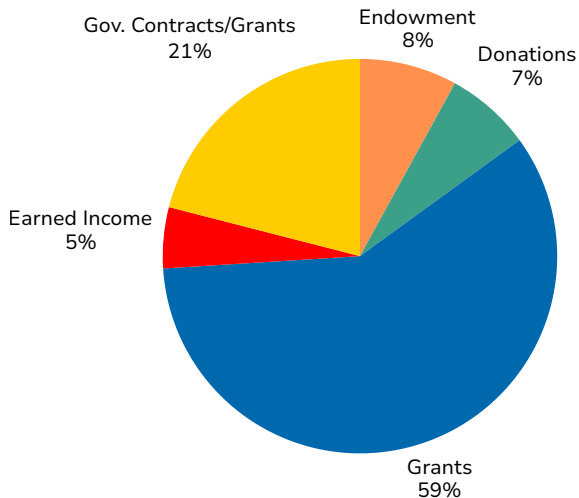
Welcoming an established leader to our team



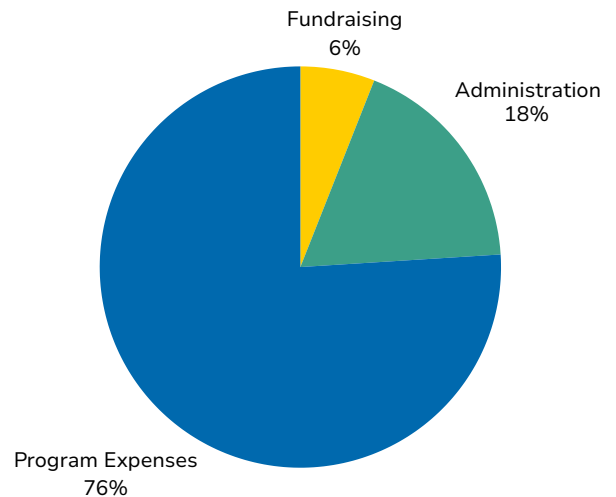
We are thrilled to welcome **Dani Rose** as our new **Director of Cultural Access**, a pivotal step in shaping the future of Open Door Arts and the field of cultural accessibility. Dani has contributed to our work for the past two years as a consultant and joined our leadership team in July. She brings a powerful blend of lived experience, justice-driven leadership, and deep expertise to guide our efforts in helping organizations move beyond compliance toward true inclusion. In her role, Dani is stewarding transformative tools like the Accessibility Self-Assessment and Arts & Culture Accessibility Hub, while building innovative strategies and partnerships to support lasting systems change. With Dani's leadership, we are growing our impact and designing a future where access is woven into the very fabric of arts and culture spaces.

FINANCIALS

REVENUE



EXPENSES



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

OUR FUNDERS

The Beker Foundation
Boston Cultural Council
BPS Arts Expansion Fund at EdVestors
Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Fund,
Bank of America, N.A., Trustee
Genesis Inspiration Foundation
Greater Worcester Community Foundation
The Hestia Fund
J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Linde Family Foundation
Mass Cultural Council
Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation
Someone Else's Child Foundation
UniBank
Webster Five Foundation
Wellington Management Foundation
Worcester Arts Council

OUR DONORS

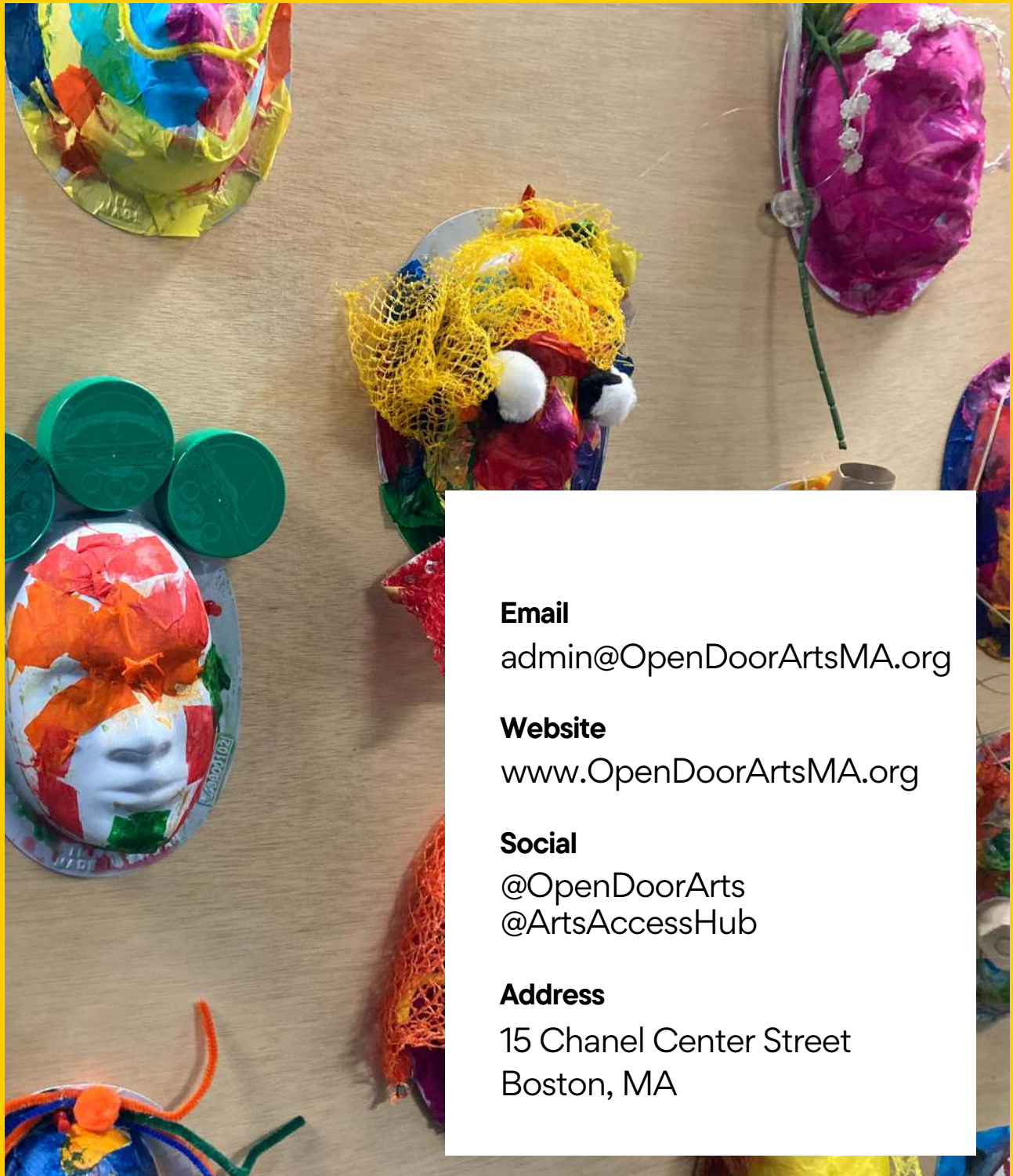
Anonymous, George Abrams, Jeremy Alliger, Frances Anthes and Charles Washburn, Nicole Agois and Pierre Hurel, Gloria Bent, Jane Bernstein, Archi Calise, Christopher Calos, Ellen Donaldson, Craig Dunn, Elaine Fallon, Katherine Gilliland, Harvey Gould, Jean Holman, Thomas Keane, Arthur D. Levin, Vincent Lombardi, Jeffery Melzack, Richard Neckes, Ann O'Donnell, Adria Steinberg and Steve Seidel, Reed Sturtevant, Megan Sullivan and Carl Richardson, Heather Watkins, and Daniel Weiner.

**A SPECIAL
THANK YOU**



We're deeply grateful to the **Mass Cultural Council**, our founding partner for the Arts and Culture Accessibility Hub, for their financial commitment and steadfast partnership.

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