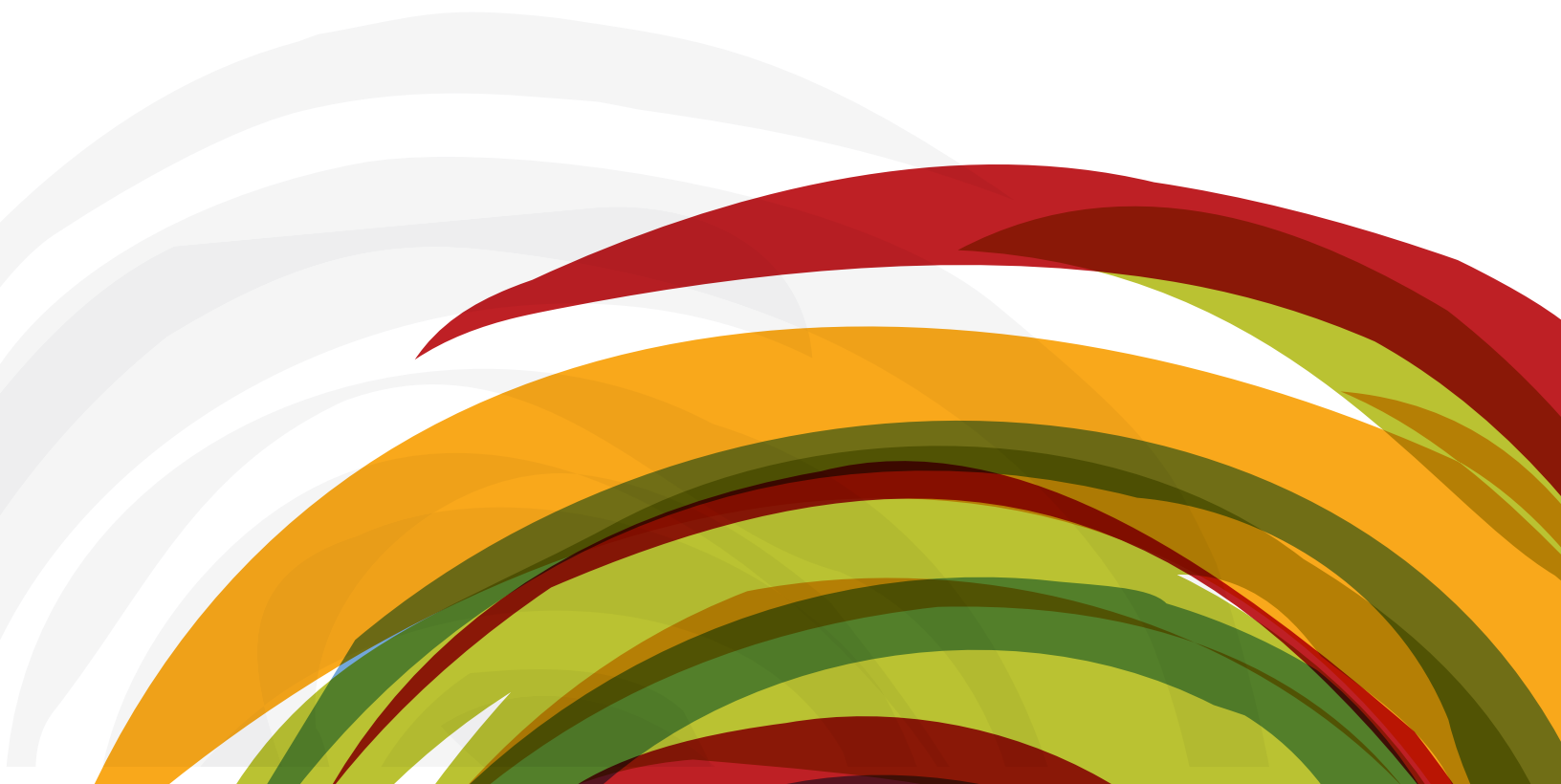
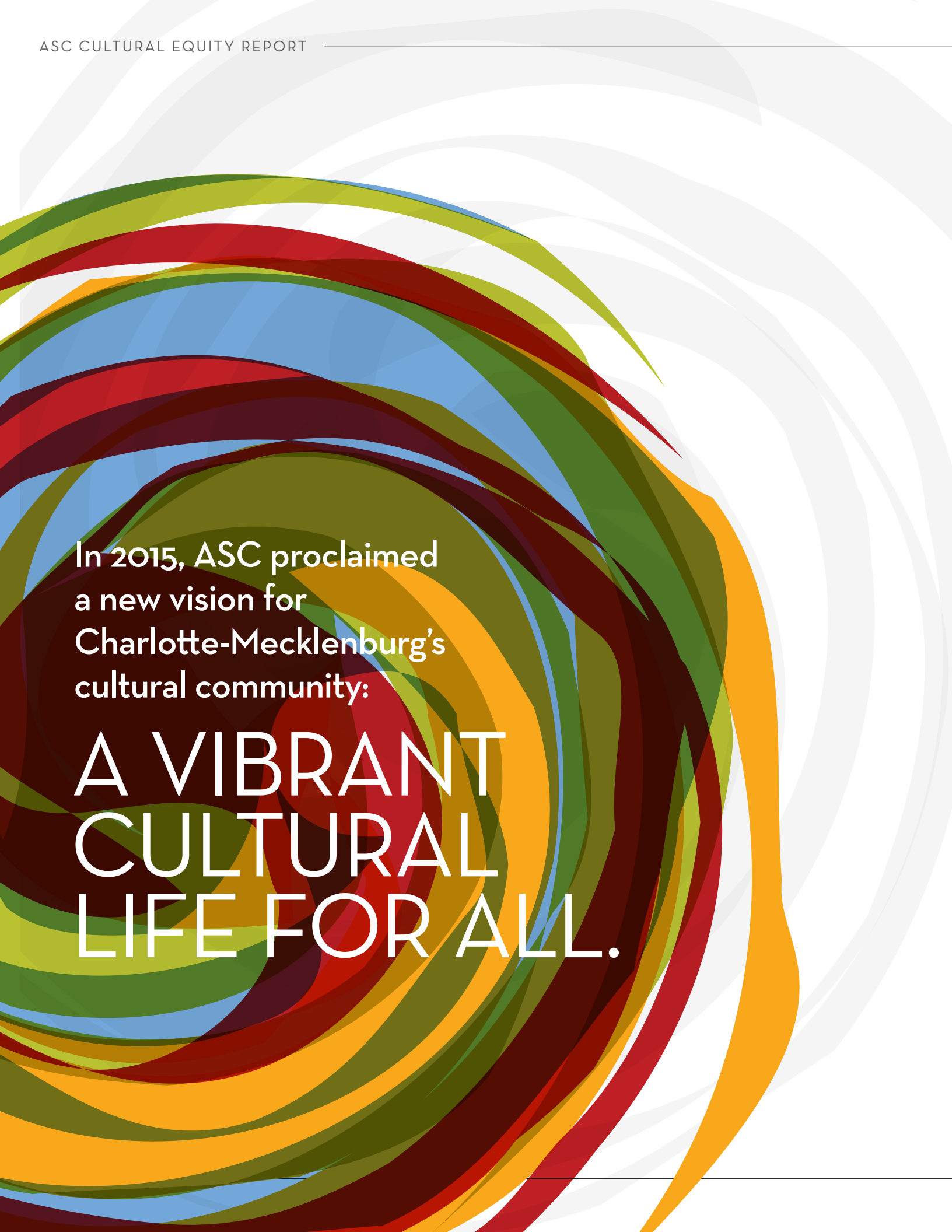




Culture For All.

# CULTURAL EQUITY REPORT 2020





In 2015, ASC proclaimed  
a new vision for  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg's  
cultural community:

A VIBRANT  
CULTURAL  
LIFE FOR ALL.

# INTRODUCTION

Systemic, inequitable access to opportunity has led to generations of unjust outcomes in Charlotte-Mecklenburg for those historically excluded from mainstream arts and cultural funding, discourse, leadership and resource allocation – particularly Black residents, Black-led organizations and residents and organizations of color. This is unacceptable and can no longer remain the case. To formalize our commitment to organizational policies and practices that promote more equitable funding and programming, ASC adopted its Cultural Equity Statement in 2019, acknowledging that, to truly achieve our vision of “Culture For All,” all residents must have equitable opportunity to participate in the cultural life of our region.

Before we can move forward, it is first imperative that we apologize and accept accountability for the role we have played in creating and perpetuating systems and structures that have exacerbated inequities in our cultural community and beyond. **ASC has been complicit in upholding funding practices that elevate certain cultures, creative traditions, identities and art forms above others.** These practices, upheld over many decades, have resulted in far too many community residents, individual creatives, emerging and African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, Native American (ALAANA) organizations not having access to the same opportunities for growth and development that others in our community have enjoyed.

Because we recognize that apologies and statements alone are insufficient, this report is a first attempt to outline publicly the actions ASC has taken in recent years to address these systemic injustices and to articulate what we commit to do going forward. **Our intent is that this report honestly reflects the steps – and missteps – we have taken on our path to becoming an organization where our commitment to equity is reflected in everything we do, from our investments in the cultural community to the make-up of our staff and board.** This analysis will direct ASC’s cultural equity journey in the coming year and guide decision-making in all aspects of our work, while also providing a framework for measuring our progress year-over-year and holding ourselves accountable to the community.

It is our hope that ASC’s voice and actions relative to diversity, equity, inclusion and access will encourage others – both in our sector and in the broader community – to begin and/or continue dismantling oppressive systems in pursuit of a more just, inclusive Charlotte-Mecklenburg for all. **Working for a more equitable cultural community is not only the right thing to do – it is critical to ensuring that Charlotte-Mecklenburg is a place where our full cultural and creative ecosystem can thrive.**

We realize that we will make mistakes on this journey and ask that YOU – our community – hold us accountable along the way.

We thank you in advance for reading this report and sharing your feedback with us at [asc@artsandscience.org](mailto:asc@artsandscience.org).

# ASC CULTURAL EQUITY STATEMENT BACKGROUND & PROCESS

In the years following our adoption of the Cultural Vision Plan that outlined ways to support the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, ASC made a number of substantive changes to our organizational practices. To further formalize our internal commitment to this ongoing work, we began crafting a Cultural Equity Statement in 2018 to encourage more public accountability and transparency along our journey.

ASC’s Community Investment Committee, composed of (7) ASC Board members and (5) non-members who are broadly representative of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, drafted the initial Cultural Equity Statement for ASC in fiscal year 2019. The committee’s goal was to craft a working definition of cultural equity to guide the future work of ASC, create a framework to set organizational policies and practices and provide external visibility for the organization’s commitment to cultural equity.

The statement was presented to ASC’s Board of Directors, discussed multiple times and approved on June 19, 2019.

## WHAT’S INSIDE

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# ASC CULTURAL EQUITY STATEMENT

To truly achieve ASC's vision of "Culture for All," all Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents must have equitable opportunity to participate in the cultural life of our region as audiences, volunteers, artists, administrators, board members and donors.

*Adopted by ASC Board of Directors June 19, 2019*

## WE ACKNOWLEDGE:

- Systemic, inequitable access to opportunity has led to generations of unjust outcomes for those who have been historically marginalized in mainstream arts and cultural funding, discourse, leadership and resource allocation.
- Inequity – based on, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography, educational status, ability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, immigrant status, language, family structure and physical appearance – must be continually addressed and changed.
- Cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the arts and cultural sector.
- Despite the efforts of many people who have focused on equity in various forms for decades, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has significant work to do in this area.

## WE BELIEVE:

- Everyone has cultural traditions that are inherently valuable.
- Artists, scientists and historians play a unique role in challenging inequities and inspiring human understanding, justice and opportunity for all.
- **Cultural equity** embodies the values, beliefs, policies and practices that ensures all people are represented in the:
  - Development of arts, science, history and heritage policy;
  - Support of artists and cultural creators;
  - Nurturing of accessible, relevant and innovative venues for expression; and,
  - Just distribution of programmatic, financial and informational resources.

## WE WILL:

- Champion policies and practices that empower an inclusive and equitable community to support the role of all arts, science and history providers in achieving cultural equity.
- Embed a commitment to cultural equity in all ASC investments, governance and administrative policies and practices.
  - Invest in cultural competency training for staff, board, volunteers and other key stakeholders.
  - Expand the diversity of leadership within our board, staff, volunteer and advisory bodies.
  - Review and edit our grant, education and public art practices and policies to ensure that more underinvested and underrepresented communities can compete equitably for artist commissions, grants and other financial investments, and that resources are distributed in a way that aligns with the realities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's diverse population.
- Commit to continual agency-wide honest reflection, dialogue and evaluation about diversity, inclusion and equity that leads to organizational change and report annually on our progress.

## ASC COMMUNITY INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

### FISCAL YEAR 2019



**Tiffany Waddell  
Blackwell, Chair**  
City of Charlotte



**Denis Bilodeau**  
Commissioner,  
Town of Cornelius



**Lisa Lewis Dubois**  
Community  
Volunteer



**Whitney Feld**  
Foundation For  
The Carolinas



**Christian Friend**  
C.A. Friend  
Consulting



**Rod Garvin**  
EY - *formerly with*  
*Charlotte Regional*  
*Business Alliance*



**Susan Patterson**  
Community  
Volunteer



**Katrina Pride**  
Bank of America



**Jamie Rodgers**  
Charlotte-  
Mecklenburg  
Schools



**Philip Thomas**  
Retired Arts  
Administrator



**Denytra Whitner**  
Community  
Volunteer



**Banu Valladares**  
Charlotte Bilingual  
Preschool

“

“Charlotte-Mecklenburg must address issues of cultural diversity in developing its cultural plan. Just as in many communities, the pace of cultural development in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has been uneven. Multicultural arts organizations and artists have not enjoyed the same opportunities and levels of support as mainstream groups. The very definition of culture has in many cases been limited to traditional Western European traditions. Minority groups have been inadequately represented on boards, staffs, and in critical decision-making roles. This plan advocates a changed attitude toward multi-culturalism and suggests specific new efforts to involve minorities in all aspects of cultural development.”

*Source: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Action Plan 1991-1996.*

”



# ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRUTH

A look back at ASC's history of planning efforts through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens.

## “Culture For Some” to “Culture For All”:

The Charlotte Arts Fund, later renamed the Arts & Science Council, was created to fund 8 white, Western Eurocentric organizations with unrestricted dollars to support their operations. Those organizations still exist today: Charlotte Choral Society (Carolina Voices), Charlotte Symphony, Charlotte Nature Museum (now Discovery Place Nature), Children's Theatre of Charlotte, The Mint Museum, Theatre Charlotte, Oratorio Singers (now part of the Charlotte Symphony) and Opera Carolina.

ASC first took a deep look at the racial, financial and philanthropic inequities in the cultural sector through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Action Plan 1991-1996, which was published in October 1990. This conversation has progressed and evolved over the following three decades.

In April 1991, Charlotte City Council and the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners officially adopted the Cultural Action Planning Committee's recommendations, which designated ASC as the cultural leader for the community and mandated the restructuring of ASC's Board of Directors, which was majority white and whose members resided almost entirely in only two zip codes. Recognizing that this lack of representation ran counter to the organization's newly stated priorities, ASC's Board of Directors fired themselves and a new, diverse Board was formed.

The Cultural Action Plan of 1998 - ASC's next community-wide planning process - recommended ASC begin funding history and heritage organizations. It also called for the sector to focus on affirming the culture, identity and heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents and proposed the creation of celebrations and festivals that capture

and honor the lives of residents of all generations, engaging the local population in recognizing and celebrating community diversity. These experiences would help sustain an ongoing dialogue about the value of cultural expression and participation.

In the years that followed, ASC provided training for Board Chairs and Executive Staff, required diversity plans and annual updates as part of the Operating Support Grant review and held organizations accountable for their commitment to these important principles. By 2002, the Boards of many Operating Support Grant recipients looked more like the residents of this community. ASC determined that the work over the prior decades had become more ingrained in our sector's DNA and relaxed some of the reporting requirements. Unfortunately, during the spring 2010 Operating Support Grant review, it became clear that collectively, ASC and its Cultural Partners had fallen off the mark in demonstrating their commitment to diversity and inclusion in the make-up of boards and staff. ASC's Board, as part of approving Operating Support grants for fiscal year 2011, instructed the staff to develop a new effort to intentionally re-focus Operating Support Grant recipients on this important issue.

In 2011, ASC put together a Task Force, chaired by ASC Board member, Linda Lockman-Brooks, representing board and staff leadership of grantees, ASC Board members, graduates of ASC's Cultural Leadership Training (CLT) program and graduates of Community Building Initiative's Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) to help plan a new diversity and inclusion initiative. Their goal was to collectively address ongoing opportunities and issues while developing a plan to ensure ongoing involvement with an increasingly diverse community. Octavia Seawell and Edna



Norwood were engaged as consultants to guide this effort. Funding was provided by ASC and a Crossroads Charlotte Grant from Foundation For The Carolinas.

As part of the diversity and inclusion effort, ASC hosted 5 sessions attended by representatives of ASC and each Operating Support Grantee's staff and board leadership (e.g. President/CEO/Executive Director & Board Chair).

The sessions were designed to strengthen the cultural sector and individual organizations in supporting diversity and inclusion. Engagement in the work sessions was high, and individuals were open and honest in their engagement and in providing input through evaluation surveys following each session.

## TASK FORCE LEARNINGS + RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of collective learnings:

1. Diversity and inclusion is broader than just board and staff make-up and should include programming and audience engagement.
2. ASC should continue to identify workshops and training opportunities related to diversity and inclusion.
3. ASC should work to identify additional opportunities for group dialogue and support for Operating Support Grantees.
4. Organizations must have the freedom to set their own diversity and inclusion goals and metrics.
5. A sector-wide hunger exists for addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.
6. The value of truth. Don't hesitate to put the big complex truth in the room in order to create opportunity for people to be authentic and learn.
7. Diversity and inclusion should be reflected in organizational metrics of organizations receiving Operating Support and submitted annually to ASC.

### ASC Board also recommended:

1. The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force should be converted into a permanent committee of ASC's Board - the Access and Inclusion Committee.
2. ASC should identify and fund initiatives to increase program access, including discounted or free admissions, to underserved populations.
3. ASC Board members whose terms are ending should be a resource for candidates for the boards of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural institutions.
4. ASC should model the behavior of diversity and inclusion in its activities, staffing, and all other endeavors.
5. ASC Board members and staff should work together to address issues of diversity, access and inclusion.

In 2014, the community's most recent cultural plan, "Imagine 2025: A Vision for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's 21<sup>st</sup> Century of Cultural Development" was published to rethink ways the cultural sector could further contribute to community vitality.

"Quite simply, our community is growing and changing, and planning for our cultural future needs to reflect the needs and dreams of the variety of residents that makes Charlotte-Mecklenburg so uniquely and excitingly diverse. We invite everyone to share the vision and become active participants in building an even more vibrant and inclusive creative and cultural community."

Source: Imagine 2025: A Vision for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's 21st Century of Cultural Development, Diane L. Mataraza Inc. Consulting Services, September 2014.

The community planning sessions confronted important issues:

- *Are our community's cultural investment and stewardship policies as far-reaching as they could be, or do they tend to favor the traditional major institutions?*
- *Given Charlotte-Mecklenburg's demographic change from 2010 to 2019, with non-whites representing 52 percent of the population, is our current definition of the arts and cultural sector comprehensive, accessible and inclusive?*
- *Is the cultural sector as intentional as it could be in assisting with important community agendas?*

The Imagine 2025 plan emphasized the community's changing demographics and called for the cultural sector to serve residents to help build community and bridges across difference, provide relevant, innovative programming that reflects the changing population and have those experiences close to where people live.

The plan challenged ASC to shift into an innovative service provider to the cultural sector whose success is measured by the adaptability and sustainability of the institutional partners and creative individuals in which it invests. Gathering resources remains important, but creating connections among institutions and individuals throughout the community that celebrate and amplify investment in the cultural sector and its programming became ASC's driving force and motivation for meaningful change. A new mission statement was also approved as part of this effort - "Ensuring access to an excellent, relevant, and sustainable cultural community for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Region."

A new governance structure reduced the size of the ASC Board from 56 to 26 and established new Advisory Councils to increase ASC's efforts to connect more deeply into the county and become a continuous learning organization that adapts and changes more quickly.



## A LOOK BACK AT FUNDING

Operating Support Grants are the largest pool of investments in ASC's grant portfolio. Grants are correlated to budget size of organizations, so larger, more established organizations receive larger grants. The grant supports the general operations, administration and programming of eligible arts, science and history organizations.

For decades, white, Western, Eurocentric organizations have been the primary beneficiaries of Operating Support Grants. In the 1980s, the Afro-American Cultural Center (now the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture at Levine Center for the Arts) became eligible to receive an Operating Support Grant. While ASC has provided additional ALANNA\* organizations Operating Support Grants, the Gantt Center is the only ALAANA organization that has consistently received an Operating Support Grant.

ALAANA organizations have received just 3.43 percent of all ASC Operating Support dollars granted since 1991, or just over \$8 million out of total investments of \$235 million.

Today, there are 6 eligible ALAANA organizations that receive Operating Support Grants - reflecting 16 percent of all grantees and just over 7 percent of the Operating Support Grant budget.

ALAANA\* organizations are those whose primary intentions, practices and mission are by, for and about African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American (ALAANA) artists, cultures and communities.

In ASC's history of Operating Support Grants, only 9 of 61 recipients have been ALAANA organizations.

A Sign of the Times of the Carolinas<sup>+</sup>  
Afro-American Children's Theatre  
Brand New Sheriff Productions<sup>+</sup>  
Carolinas Latin Dance Company<sup>+</sup>  
Harvey B. Gantt Center for  
African-American Arts + Culture  
at Levine Center for the Arts<sup>+</sup>

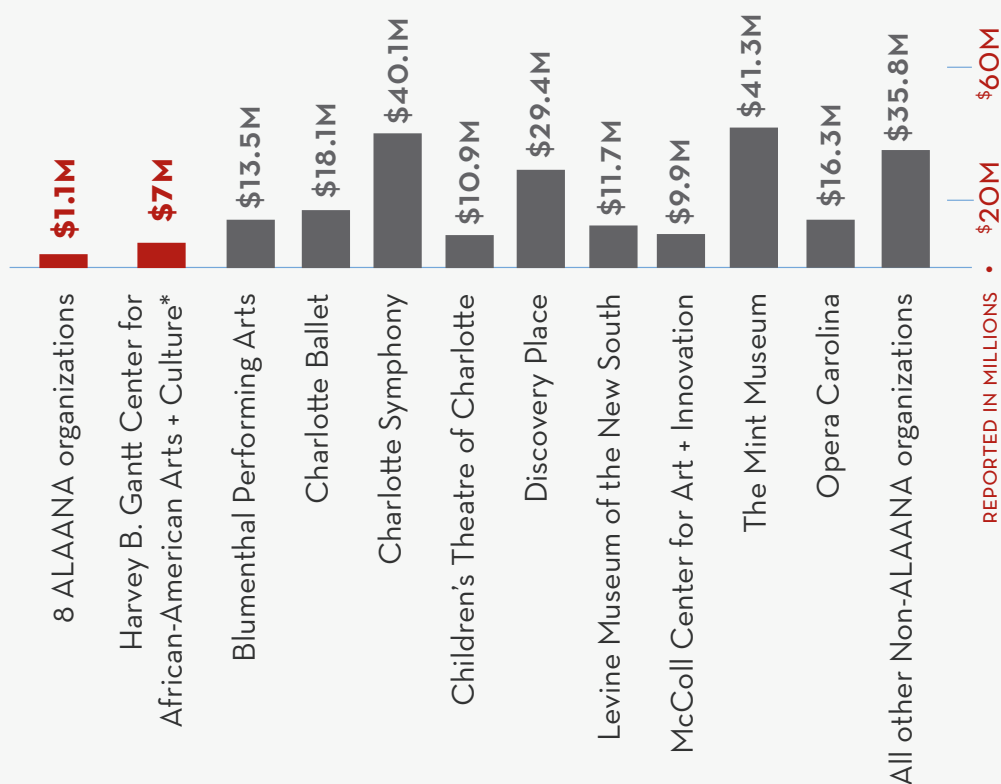


JazzArts Charlotte<sup>+</sup>  
On Q Performing Arts  
Que-OS<sup>+</sup>  
Second Ward High School  
National Alumni Foundation

<sup>+</sup>Currently receiving Operating Support Grants

## ASC OPERATING SUPPORT GRANTS • 1991-2020

**Due to ASC's historic grant making practices**, 9 organizations have received more in ASC Operating Support Grants than all ALAANA organizations combined since 1991. Historic funding to ALAANA organizations represents just over 3.4 percent of total Operating Support dollars awarded from 1991 to the present.



\*The Harvey B. Gantt Center is highlighted separately in this chart because it is the only ALAANA organization that has consistently received an Operating Support Grant since the 1980s.

# OUR JOURNEY TO EQUITY

ASC's work to-date on the "We Will" commitments in the Cultural Equity Statement

In 2020, the tenets of the Cultural Vision Plan continue to guide ASC's work in the equity space. The following section outlines ongoing efforts to bring our investments, policies and practices into alignment with the commitments surfaced in the Vision Plan and formalized in the more recent Cultural Equity Statement.

## **Champion policies and practices that empower an inclusive and equitable community to support the role of all arts, science and history providers in achieving cultural equity.**

ASC is committed to serving a diverse range of individuals and organizations through its programs and services and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any characteristic protected by law.

For grant making, every individual or organization that meets the specific eligibility requirements for a grant program may apply to that program. No eligible applicant will be prevented from applying for or receiving a grant based on race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or any characteristic protected by law.

ASC's sole purpose in providing grant support to eligible applicants is to offer a broad range of quality programs which enhance and expand the cultural opportunities for the education and enjoyment of all residents.

As such, ASC will discourage grant applications from non-profit, public service organizations that seek to exclusively advance a particular agenda inconsistent with ASC's sole purpose.

Every ASC grantee contract currently requires recipients to comply with ASC's nondiscrimination policy.

ASC works to be a leader in this space and recognize that historically, equity has not been a primary driver of philanthropy in

Charlotte-Mecklenburg. As such, ALAANA\* organizations, individual creatives, and programs have not had equitable access to philanthropic dollars, which has contributed to the inequities found in the cultural sector.

To help ensure greater equity in the broader philanthropic space, ASC advocates for equitable funding among other funders and not solely within our own practice.

## **Embed a commitment to cultural equity in all ASC investments, governance and administrative policies and practices.**

- **Invest in cultural competency training for staff, board, volunteers and other key stakeholders.**

ASC staff (50 percent) and board members (38 percent) have participated in Community Building Initiative's (CBI) Leadership Development Initiative, a 12-month program increasing awareness of and the ability to influence for diversity, equity and inclusion. Staff have also participated in CBI's Leaders Under 40, an 11-month program focused on building connections across difference for emerging community leaders. ASC staff members have participated in Race Equity Workshops presented by Race Matters for Juvenile Justice. More comprehensive cultural competency training for full ASC staff and board is an organizational goal for fiscal year 2022.

ASC also offers Capacity Building workshops and anti-racism training for staff/board members of cultural institutions and creative individuals.



**Tim Nicodemus**, Board Member of Rebuilding Together of Greater Charlotte | Charlotte Justice Conference | It Ends Now Charlotte | Queen City Unity

“Self to Systems was great for pushing my view of board service. Self to Systems made me re-evaluate our use of inclusive language (i.e. are we looking at our work as ‘us serving them’, or do we see our work as tearing down unjust systems) and what role the community we serve should be playing in the organizations (i.e. pushing for more community voices on our board, making sure we are asking them what they want us to assist with, etc.). Without Self to Systems, I probably would not have had the language or courage to speak up around how we center voices of those impacted, how we may be fitting into the ‘nonprofit industrial complex’, or how we sometimes act as saviors instead of partners.”

The changing demographics of Charlotte-Mecklenburg require cultural organizations to strengthen their capacity for engaging with our diverse community.

ASC is helping cultural groups build their muscle for this work through initiatives like Catalyst for Cultural Equity. The initiative supports individual leaders within cultural organizations and the broader cultural sector by providing them with tools, resources and skills needed to work towards a more equitable cultural community.

#### EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- **Self to Systems Race Equity Workshop**  
*2 cohorts in the last two years*

The series, designed and facilitated by Jasmine Hines of The Inspower Agency and co-facilitated by Patrice Funderburg of Educate 2 Engage, builds the capacity for learning about race equity within the context of arts and culture. Bringing awareness to structural racism, our patterns, ways of being, and language, participants inquire how their biases affect how we listen and communicate with others. The series scratches the surface of awareness and provides participants with a framework to dialogue with increased confidence about race, racism and white supremacy.

- **Catalyst for Cultural Equity**  
*3 cohorts in the last five years, involving 80 participants from 16 organizations*

Designed and facilitated by Octavia Seawell of OZS Consulting, this program supports individual leaders and organizations by building awareness, tools, resources and skills required for their organization to become more equitable in its operations and engagement.

The program has strengthened organizations’ commitment and capacity for being of service to and engaged with diverse communities, shifted organizational culture and thinking in leveraging organizational resources and inspired an initial plan of action for increased cultural equity.



The program requires participants to consider:

- What stories the cultural community is telling and who is telling them;
- What the programmatic output of the arts and culture sector looks like and who engages with that programmatic input; and
- How available resources are used.

It also forces them to look beyond their own walls, said Charlotte Ballet Academy Director Ayisha McMillan Cravotta.

“Culture is happening everywhere. It’s happening in every neighborhood,” Cravotta said. “What are we doing to see it and tap into it?”

While the Catalyst for Cultural Equity program aligns with the work Charlotte Ballet is already doing to address access and inclusion, it also struck a personal chord with Cravotta.

She joined Charlotte Ballet in 2002 as a dancer, retiring from the stage in 2007 and transitioning to the ballet’s administrative office as the Academy’s director.

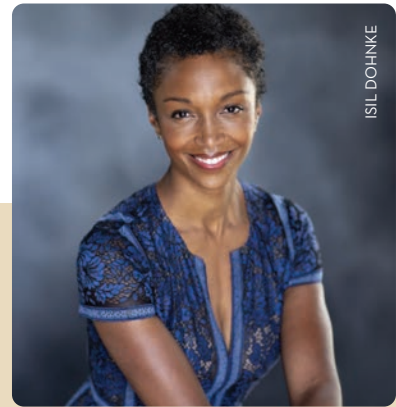
“Ballet has a longstanding tradition of not being so inclusive,” said Cravotta, who is African American.

“There were a lot of people that had to break down barriers for me to get to where I am today, so what’s the point if I can’t carry that on?”

- **Expand the diversity of leadership within our Board, Staff, Volunteer and Advisory bodies.**

#### ASC Board of Directors

Historically, ASC’s Board was very large, majority white and decisions were concentrated at the executive committee level. After a restructure of the board and governance model in 2016 that included a new service policy and job description, the board is small and the members are more diverse and highly engaged.



**Ayisha McMillan Cravotta**  
*Charlotte Ballet Academy Director*

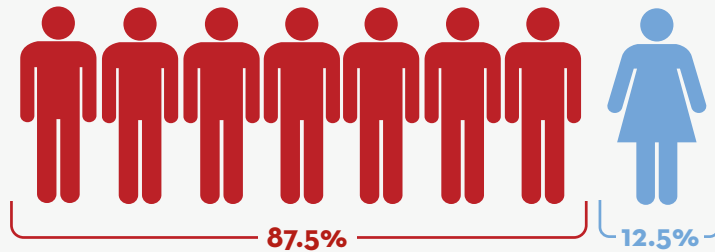
## CATALYST for CULTURAL EQUITY PARTICIPANTS

A Sign of the Times  
Actors Theatre of Charlotte  
Carolina Raptor Center  
Carolina Voices  
Charlotte Ballet  
Charlotte Symphony  
Children’s Theatre of Charlotte  
Clayworks  
Discovery Place  
Festival in the Park  
JazzArts Charlotte  
Levine Museum of the New South  
The Light Factory  
The Possibility Project  
Opera Carolina  
Theatre Charlotte



## ASC LEADERSHIP

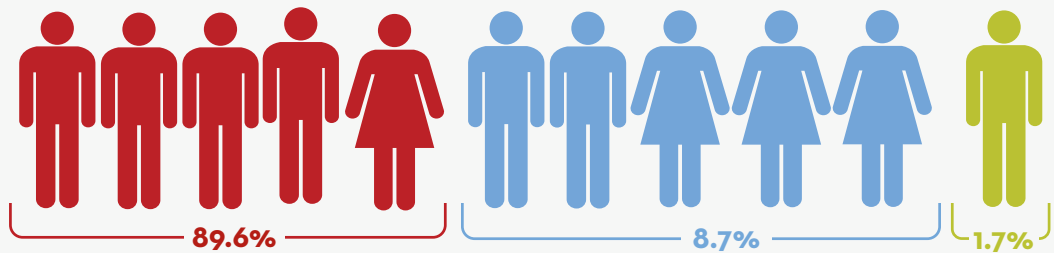
### ASC PRESIDENT 1976-2020



7 WHITE Men • 1 BLACK Woman • 2 LGBTQ Men

*Before 1975, ASC did not have a President and was led by the volunteer board chair.*

### ASC BOARD CHAIR 1958-2020



51 WHITE 38 Men + 13 Women • 5 BLACK 2 Men + 3 Women • 1 HISPANIC/LATINX Man

### PUBLIC ART COMMISSION CHAIR 2003-2020

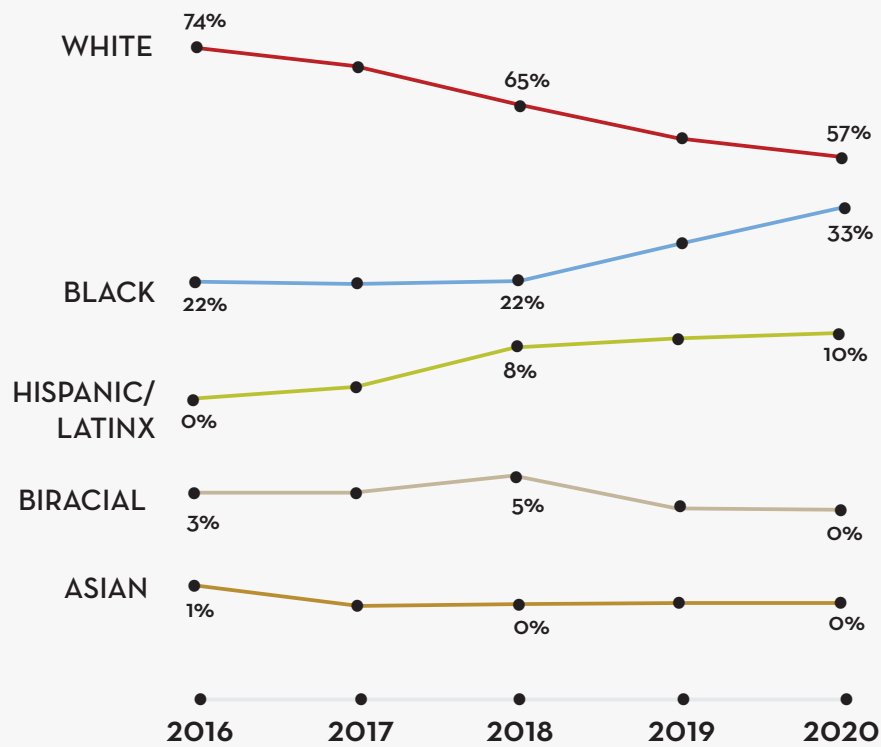


7 WHITE 4 Men + 3 Women • 4 BLACK 2 Men + 2 Women

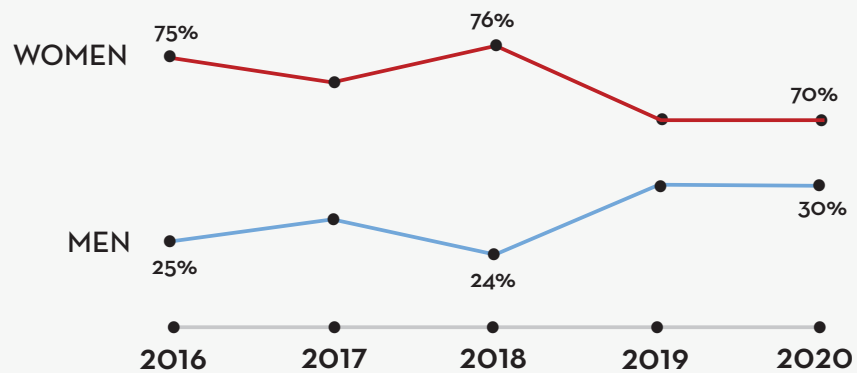
## ASC STAFF\* COMPOSITION • 2016-2020

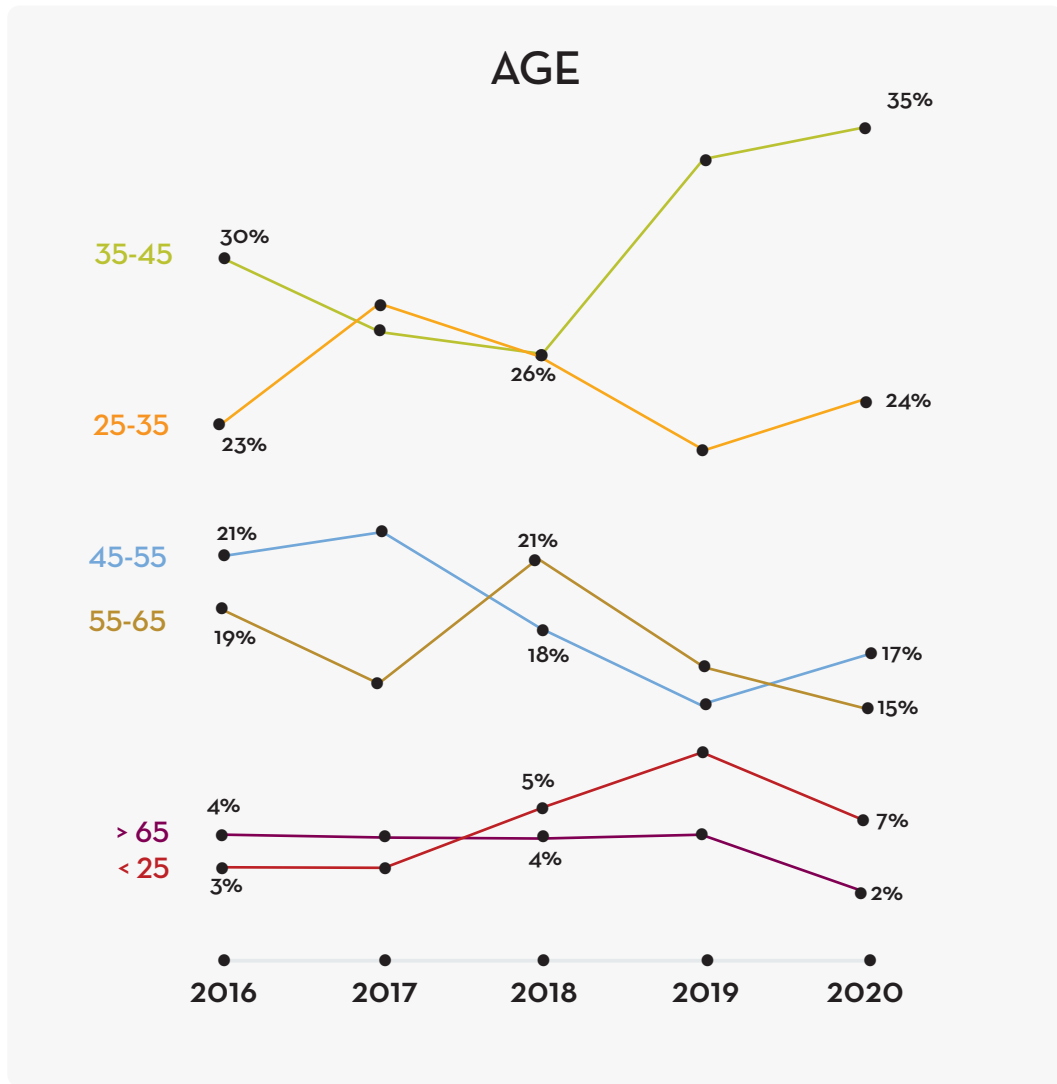
\*PART-TIME + FULL-TIME STAFF

### RACE & ETHNICITY

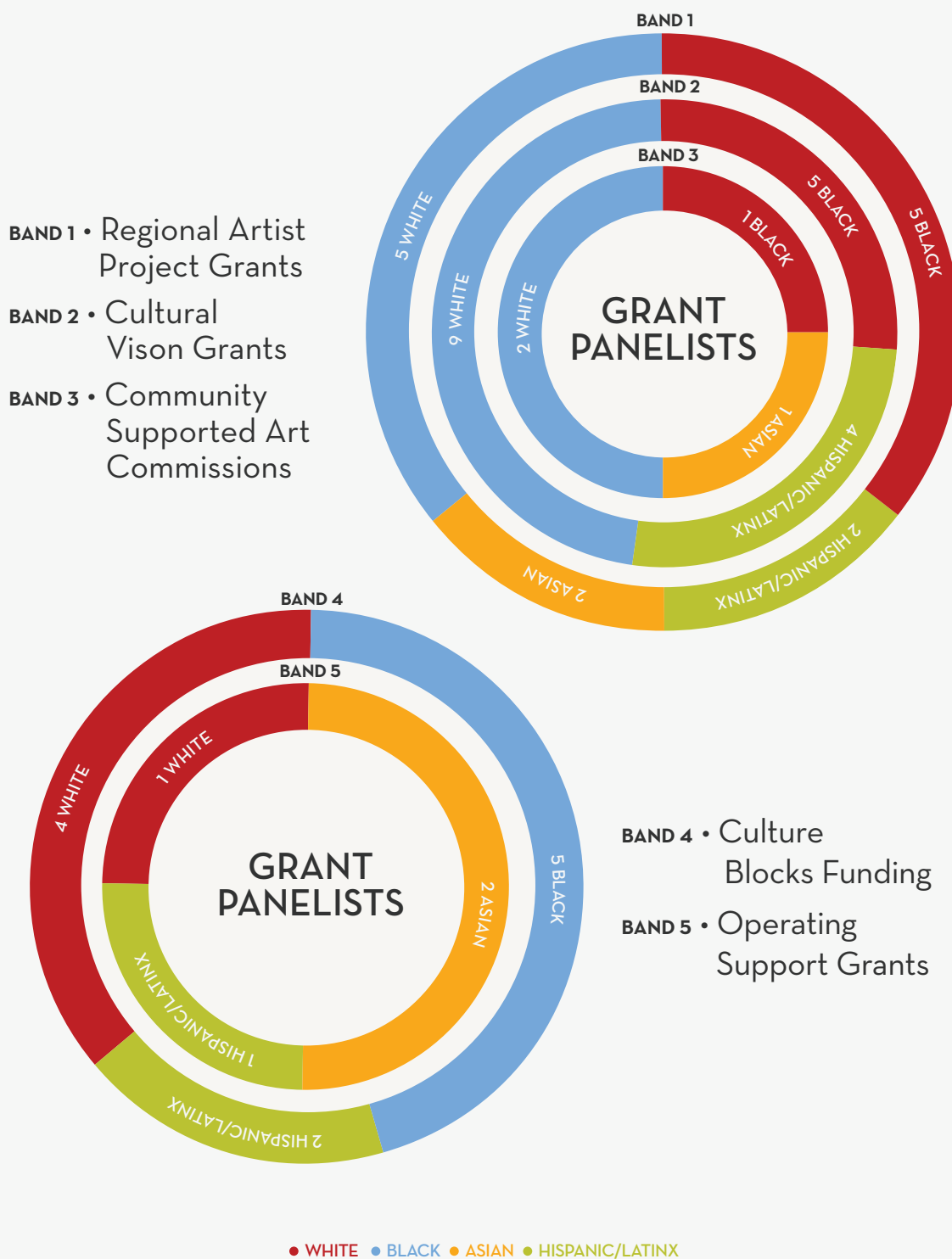


### GENDER



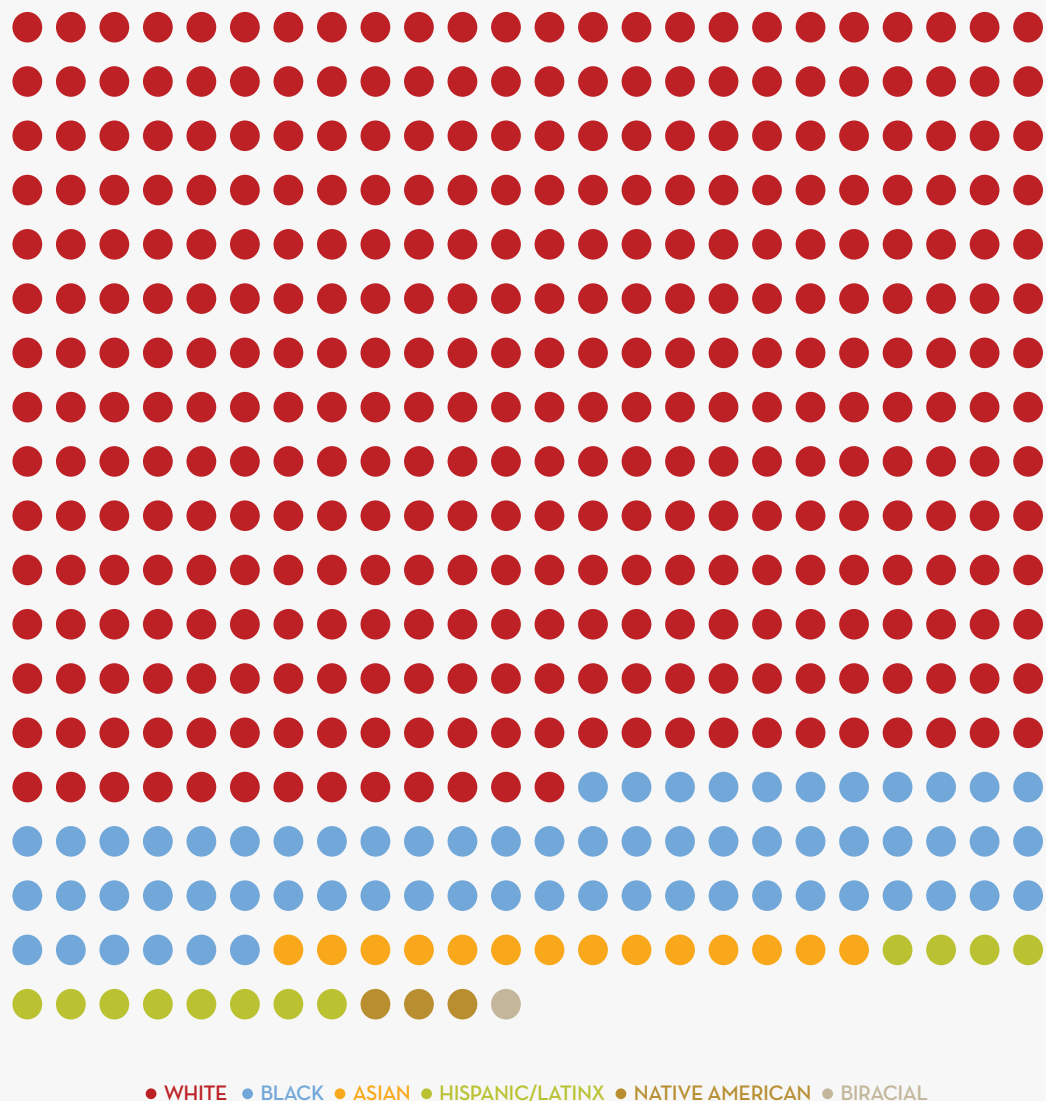


## ASC GRANT PANEL DEMOGRAPHICS • FISCAL YEAR 2020



## CULTURAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Since 2005, the program has had  
**445 PARTICIPANTS** from the community.



WHITE  
219 Women  
130 Men

BLACK  
43 Women  
23 Men

ASIAN  
7 Women  
7 Men

HISPANIC  
LATINX  
8 Women  
4 Men

NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
1 Woman  
2 Men

BIRACIAL  
1 Woman



CULTURAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM GRADUATES

### ASC Staff

ASC is intentional in having a diverse candidate pool for open positions. Due to that commitment and work, ASC's staff is now more diverse.

### ASC Advisory Councils

ASC's Advisory Councils were established in 2016 to receive ongoing counsel and input from community partners and key stakeholders, and to ensure that the cultural community is aligned with the needs of local communities. In addition to our current Advisory Councils (North/West, South/East, Central, Private Sector, Cultural Sector - Institutions), we have established a council for Creative Individuals. While the Advisory Councils have provided input, they have not been fully utilized and integrated in a way that drives ASC's decision-making.

### ASC Grant Panels

ASC grants are reviewed by panels that reflect the community and purpose of the grant program. For grants supporting the professional development of creatives, ASC draws from local and regional arts professionals representing expertise in visual, performing, literary, film and multimedia arts. For grants investing in community programming, ASC ensures that a variety of creative disciplines are represented, as well as neighborhood leaders and arts administrators who bring an understanding of how diverse communities may be served. Program Directors intentionally build grant

panels to closely represent the demographics of Mecklenburg County by race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

### Public Art Commission

In recent years, the Public Art Commission has made intentional steps to cultivate diversity in the make-up of the commission. A nominating committee identifies a pool of qualified candidates and works proactively with the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to ensure diversity.

The committee convenes annually to review current member skills and demographics, as well as potential candidates/applicants for committee vacancies. Based on this analysis, the committee recommends candidates that will increase diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, residential district, and skill sets to ensure the committee is representative of the diverse Charlotte-Mecklenburg region.

### Cultural Leadership Training (CLT) Program

Founded in 2005 - when the majority of board members serving the cultural sector were white men over 50 - ASC's Cultural Leadership Training (CLT) Program was designed to expand the local volunteer leadership pool, increase new leader effectiveness, ignite civic engagement, and support future giving. The program targets newcomers to the community, emerging leaders, members of diverse populations and others looking to deepen their commitment to the nonprofit sector.

In the years since its inception the program has placed over 400 graduates in varying leadership roles on the boards of more than 50 nonprofit arts, science, and history organizations. CLT has been particularly effective at recruiting, training and placing women (2/3 of all participants) and younger volunteers (over 90 percent under 50) on local boards of directors. Racial and ethnic diversity of board members is an ongoing focus with just over 20 percent of all graduates representing BIPOC communities.

- Review and edit our grant, education and public art practices and policies to ensure that more underinvested and underrepresented communities can compete equitably for artist commissions, grants and other financial investments, and that resources are distributed in a way that aligns with the realities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s diverse population.

In 2015, an internal Grant Making Task Force was convened to review and address historical funding practices and make recommendations for a more equitable way forward.

### The Task Force identified the following opportunities for change in 2015:

87.5 percent of ASC grant making supported Operating Support Grants to 13 organizations. As a result, support for additional organizations and investment strategies had been starved out by commitment to maintaining significant resources to a limited number of organizations.

ASC’s grant making structure did not meet demand or address opportunities for emerging grassroots organizations or creative individuals. 200+ organizations and creative individuals have been historically under-resourced, thereby not afforded opportunities by ASC to grow or mature. Support for creative individuals was less than 1 percent of the overall investment portfolio.

### Subsequent recommendations included:

- Expand Operating Support Grants to emerging grassroots organizations to more fully reflect the diversity of the region (geography, audience, discipline, multicultural).
- Recalibrate Operating Support Grants levels to current grantees and institute a universal cap on Operating Support awards to more closely ensure sustainability of program.
- Align Project Support Grants with Cultural Vision Plan priorities.
- Increase Capacity Building/Technical Assistance support to invest more substantially in management and fundraising capabilities of cultural organizations.
- Increase support to creative individuals at all career stages.



## NOUVEAU SUD

ASC is proud to invest in Carlos Alexis Cruz, an assistant professor of voice and movement at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and his organization “Nouveau Sud” - a cirque-style performance that incorporates the “underground” dance, acrobatic and physical theater scenes that thrive within Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s ethnic communities.

Cruz’s works have addressed community issues that affect people of color ranging from the feeling of safety following the Keith Lamont Scott police shooting that led to the unrest in the city to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement crackdowns to issues around the Confederate flag.

“We all want this region to be our home and the only way we can succeed in that is if we feel this place can be different and welcoming.”



## Since the Task Force issued its recommendations, the following changes have occurred:

### Sustainable Funding

- ASC Operating Support Grants opened to new organizations, nearly doubling the number of recipients from 20 to 37.
- Awards to the largest organizations have dropped by nearly \$2.5 million, and awards to small and mid-sized have grown by just over \$470,000.
- Cultural equity, access and inclusion are key components of Operating Support Grant applications and reviews, providing critical panel feedback for organizations designed to improve programs, processes, and practices.
- Additionally, 6 of the 37 Operating Support Grants are now ALAANA-led with two (Brand New Sheriff Productions and Que-OS) being new to the pool in fiscal year 2021. This is up from only one ALAANA organization (the Harvey B. Gantt Center) receiving Operating Support in fiscal year 2016.
- All ALAANA organizations, except for the Harvey B. Gantt Center, have established themselves, worked in communities and built a relationship with ASC through project support funding, indicating the importance of funding emerging grassroots organizations that reflect the diverse community ASC serves—making way for future Operating Support Grants.
- ALAANA organizations received 7 percent of the Operating Support Grants allocation in fiscal year 2021 which represents an increase of 78 percent since 2015.
- A new formulaic approach to Operating Support Grants - introduced in fiscal year 2021 - focuses on a more equitable allocation model.
- ALAANA organizations that received Operating Support also received an equity supplement in fiscal year 2021 - increasing their grant amounts by 33 percent above what they would have received with the formula alone.

### Creative Infrastructure

- Restructured Cultural Project Grants into Cultural Vision Grants to align with the community's priorities outlined in the Cultural Vision Plan to Build Community (connecting individuals across points of difference to increase understanding and acceptance and positive regard between our communities, and/or nurturing, celebrating and supporting the authentic cultures and creative expression of historically underinvested populations) and Increase Relevance and Innovation (activating nontraditional performance or exhibition spaces close to where people live, and/or providing groundbreaking and/or participatory experiences that reflect the changing communities in which we live).
- Launched Culture Blocks to listen and learn from community residents about their needs related to arts, science and history and deliver experiences close to where they live.

### Leadership & Capacity Building

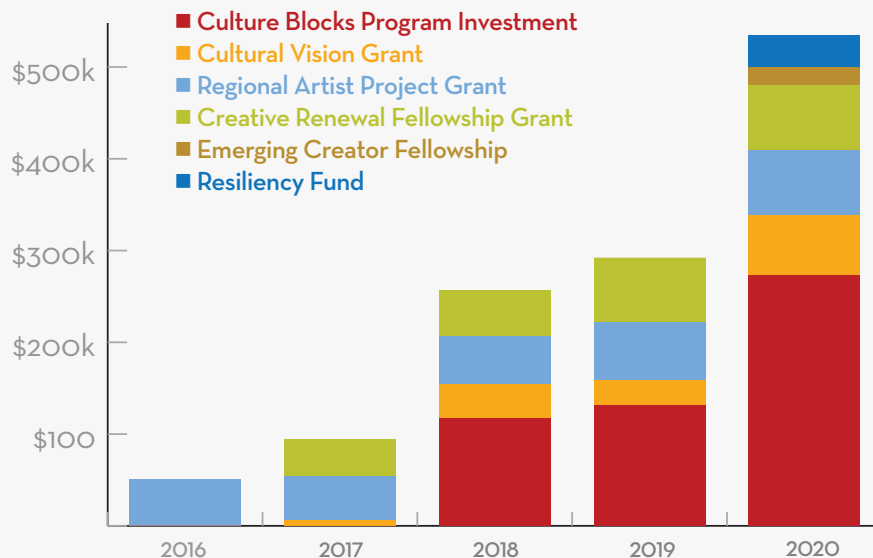
- Increased funding for Technical Assistance, Capacity Building and Professional Development to assist in creating a pipeline for emerging organizations and creative individuals to grow and thrive.

### Investment in Creative Individuals

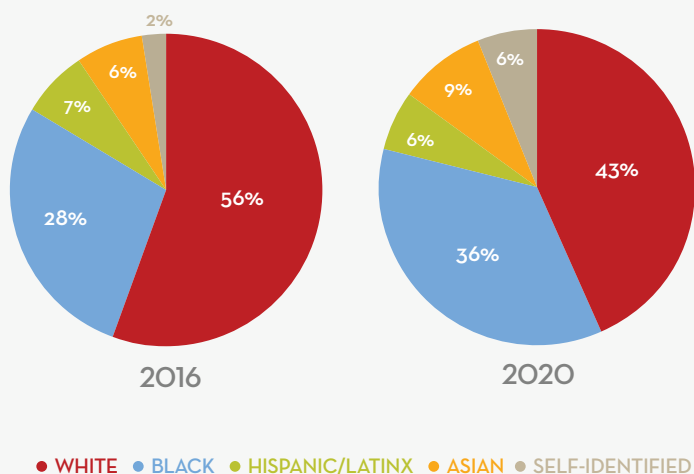
- Introduced Creative Renewal and Emerging Creator Fellowships, resulting in a 227 percent increase in direct funding to creative individuals over the past five years.
- Historically, ASC did not heavily invest in the creative individual community. In 2016, one funding opportunity was available to creative individuals. In 2020, individuals had six separate grant opportunities for which they may be eligible to apply.

In 2016, one funding opportunity was available to creative individuals. In 2020, individuals had six separate grant opportunities for which they may be eligible to apply.

## GRANT FUNDING TO CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS



## ASC GRANTS TO CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS by RACE/ETHNICITY



## Increasing Community Engagement Efforts

From tackling broader and systemic community issues to connecting residents to artists commissioned for public art projects, ASC works intentionally to reach out to residents to ensure their engagement and input.

The following are examples of what those changes look like to better serve the community.

- **Culture Blocks**, a partnership between Mecklenburg County and ASC, connects residents with cultural and creative opportunities that are of interest and relevant to them - occurring close to where they live. ASC initially identified 5 geographic areas with historically low levels of participation in ASC-funded programs but high participation with other County services (libraries, parks and recreation centers), based on ticket sale/donor data from major cultural organizations.

ASC's approach intentionally departs from traditional "outreach programming" that drops existing programming into an area that is assumed to be "in need." Through methods ranging from organized community meetings to anecdotal feedback, ASC facilitates dialogue, listening and understanding that embraces and celebrates the cultural life and desires of neighbors. Then, informed by resident feedback and delivered in partnership with creative individuals, cultural providers and community agencies, Culture Blocks addresses barriers to arts participation by hosting community-centered cultural programming in the designated geographies.

From its inception in 2016 through June 2020, Culture Blocks has grown to serve 10 geographically specific communities: Northwest Charlotte, North End/Sugar Creek/Hidden Valley, East Charlotte, West Charlotte, Southwest Charlotte, Mallard Creek/University City, Pineville, Steele Creek, Matthews/Mint Hill and North Mecklenburg. Overall impact includes 2,541 programs and 92,876 participant experiences in more than 40 programming facilities, with over 74 cultural organization partners and 30 creative individual partners. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ASC worked with providers to

## CULTURE BLOCKS

programs have responded to community-identified concerns such as gentrification, health and wellness, programs for seniors, building community among and between diverse neighborhoods, youth development and much more.



## CULTURE BLOCKS PROGRAM EXAMPLES

**PROJECT HARMONY** - a partnership between Arts+ and the Charlotte Symphony - is a free, community-based after-school orchestra program for 2nd through 5th grade students from four neighborhoods across Mecklenburg County: Winterfield, Montclair South, West Charlotte and West Sugar Creek. Project Harmony promotes the success of its participants by fostering community, developing leadership, and expanding the vision of what's possible in the lives of local youth.

**CLAYWORKS** • Through Culture Blocks, Clayworks offers free community pottery classes in neighborhoods throughout the county. Accessible to an array of ages, Clayworks' programming enables families to relate and have fun across generations. One participant, who attended classes along with her daughter and her father with dementia, affirmed her support of the program, stating that, "the only truly accessible programming is free."

**DANCE WITHOUT LIMITS** provides classes that cover cultural dances, social dances, dancing with props, improvisation and choreography. Its deliberate design promotes creativity, well-being and problem solving, especially for its senior participants. According to one dancer in the program, the classes "made [him] move. [He] liked it a lot." By collaborating on original choreographed works, dancers develop team building skills and build camaraderie.

shift existing programming to virtual platforms wherever possible and hosted special "COVID calls" to ensure ongoing digital arts and cultural experiences for residents impacted by stay-at-home orders.

In 2018, Culture Blocks was recognized as one of 10 national finalists for Americans for the Arts' Robert E. Gard Award, which celebrates exemplary work at the intersection of the arts and community life.

- **Pearl Street Park**

Located in "Brooklyn," Charlotte's historic Black neighborhood that existed from the 1880s to the 1960s, the first land purchased by local government to create a Black public park was named "Pearl Street Park." Artist Cliff Garten was commissioned to create public art for the park, conducted one-on-one interviews with community members, including the Black Cultural Heritage Group, former residents of the Brooklyn neighborhood and the Second Ward High School Alumni Association.

- **Second Ward High School Gymnasium**

Commissioned artist Tommie Robinson met with members of the Second Ward Alumni Association to learn more about their experience at the first public high school for African-American students in Charlotte that closed in 1969 in the name of "urban renewal" to create the pieces "We Too, Shall Rise" and "Go Tigers!" Alumni also visited Robinson's studio to learn more about his artistic practice.

- **David B. Waymer Recreation Center**

Waymer Gym was part of the historic Torrence-Lytle School, established in 1937 as the first high school for African-American students in the historic African-American community of Pottstown, located in the town of Huntersville. The gym was renovated and restored as a community center. Artist Michele Tejuola Turner held community meetings and one-on-one interviews with residents to create "Community," a public artwork



**Sherri Belfield**

*Past Chair, Public Art Commission*

Director, University Communications and Marketing, Johnson C. Smith University

that pays tribute to the school and the generations of students it impacted by incorporating significant community members, symbols and structures, including cotton leaves, flowing water, antique desks and chairs, farmhouses and the school's Trojan mascot.

- **Five Points Plaza**

Lead artist Stacy Utley, whose work addresses complex narratives found within the African-American diaspora, held community engagement meetings at Johnson C. Smith University, a Historically Black University, with residents in Historic West End including the Northwest Corridor Council of Elders, a community group of residents who live along the corridor. Utley also presented his work concept to students studying art at the university.

- **Druid Hills Neighborhood Park**

In talking to community leaders, ASC's public art team learned that technology is a challenge for residents in the area. In response, for their community meeting with artist Monique Luck, residents were provided a landline phone option in addition to online to engage in the discussion.

- **On the Hook**

ASC provided funding and planning support for a series of collaborative performances in 2015 called for action on issues of justice and inequality in the community and the nation. On Q Productions, One Voice Chorus, The Possibility Project, A Sign of the Times of the Carolinas and XOXO were participating organizations.

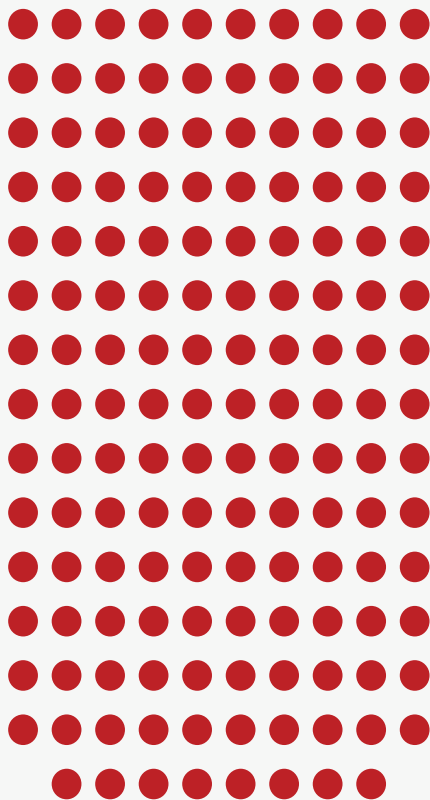
- **On The Table/ Finding Home: Where Do I Belong?**

ASC partnered with organizations throughout the county to host critical dialogues about experiences with race, immigration and belonging in our community. ASC staff member Liz Fitzgerald served on the advisory committee for On the Table, and ASC hosted a series of conversations throughout the day together with Dupp & Swat and the Harvey B. Gantt Center staff.

"Stacy [Utley, Five Points Plaza artist] and his team did an excellent job of engaging the community in a meaningful, authentic way that allowed those who participated in the sessions to provide honest insight and feedback. As a result, the final artwork represents the community, gives voice to the community and speaks to the community. Stacy's experience as an educator and his passion for educating young minds on the connections among art, architecture, race, culture and the social sciences were evident in the master class he gave for students at Johnson C. Smith University. His presentation helped students understand the gentrification in neighborhoods around the university in a national context and explained the role of art in preserving culture as change occurs. Each of the individual engagements with JCSU students and community residents helped inform the design of the public art for the Historic West End. However, these engagements collectively informed the soul of the art, while also informing the community about the importance of making their voices heard, knowing their history and preserving it."

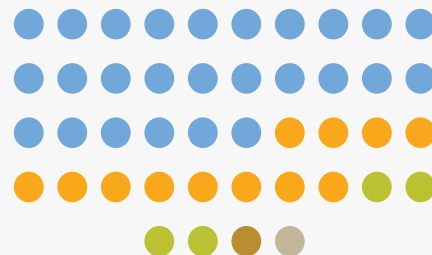
For public art, ASC has increased the number of artists of color commissioned since the program's inception to present day. We have much more work to do.

**157 WHITE ARTISTS**  
Public Art Commissions  
totaling \$16,311,524



94 MEN + 63 WOMEN

**44 ARTISTS of COLOR**  
Public Art Commissions  
totaling \$5,069,632



26 MEN • 18 WOMEN

26 BLACK  
12 ASIAN  
4 HISPANIC/LATINX  
1 NATIVE AMERICAN  
1 OTHER

● WHITE ● BLACK ● HISPANIC/LATINX ● ASIAN ● NATIVE AMERICAN ● OTHER

**THE NUMBER OF COMMISSIONED ARTISTS OF COLOR  
INCREASED FROM 1 IN 1989 TO 44 OVER THE COURSE OF 31 YEARS.**





• **Offer options for grant applicants to submit a video in addition to/in lieu of written narrative.**

- To increase accessibility for smaller organizations and creative individuals, a video narrative option was introduced in the spring 2020 call for Cultural Vision Grants which resulted in the first round of awards for fiscal year 2021.

**Panel instructions emphasizing diverse applications/projects**

- In fiscal year 2020, all of ASC's grant panelists for Cultural Vision Grants, Regional Artist Project Grants, Creative Renewal and Emerging Fellowships, Operating Support Grants and Community Supported Art program received copies of the Cultural Equity Statement as part of their orientation materials, and that commitment was re-emphasized in conversations with panel members as they convened for deliberations. Panelists were also given a series of questions from Animating Democracy (a project of Americans for the Arts) to encourage ways of considering equity when reviewing applications.

**Investing in the LGBTQ+ Community**

- In 2017, ASC began providing Operating Support Grants to One Voice Chorus and Gay Men's Chorus. It was the first time in the organization's history that LGBTQ+ organizations received an Operating Support Grant.
- In addition to Operating Support, ASC has provided project funding to support the efforts of LGBTQ+ organizations like Time Out Youth, Girls Rock Charlotte, R.A.I.N., Charlotte Pride, and Charlotte LGBTQ Elders. Projects ranged from "Mis Raíces," an opportunity to raise visibility and awareness about Latinx LGBTQ faces and stories through showcases of photographs of this community, to a series about LGBTQ artists and working men/women, using the arts to put personal stories into societal context, with facilitated conversations around discrimination and privilege.





### Investments lead to growth

- **JazzArts Charlotte**, whose mission is to connect the cultural community and develop an audience for jazz through quality education, performance and musician support, has grown through a pipeline of support from ASC that started from the project support category (up to \$7,500) to now receiving Operating Support (an annual award of \$58,893 for fiscal year 2021). ASC has also invested in JazzArts Charlotte for professional development, technical assistance, education grants and more. Between fiscal year 2019 and 2020, JazzArts Charlotte has grown from being an Operating Support 1 grantee (organizations with a budget less than \$300,000) to an Operating Support 2 grantee (organizations with budgets of \$300,000 to \$999,999). Since 2011, ASC has invested more than \$262,000 in JazzArts Charlotte and is proud to be a partner in their growth as they serve the community through the experience of jazz.

## JazzArts Charlotte

### Lonnie Davis

*Co-Founder, President & CEO,  
JazzArts Charlotte*

“ASC’s support has been one of the main factors contributing to JazzArts Charlotte’s success and growth over the past ten years. In that time, the organization has received project grants that sustained our JazzArts Academy educational programs which then led to our first Operating Support Grant several years later. The initial operation support grants also provided us [JazzArts] with the confidence to plan more strategically and develop the organization further. That growth has continued, allowing JazzArts to be an organization that moved into the Operating Support Grant 2 grant category from Operating Support Grant 1.

ASC’s impact on JazzArts Charlotte has been tremendous.”

# IN PROGRESS

We commit to continual agency-wide honest reflection, dialogue and evaluation about diversity, inclusion and equity that leads to organizational change and to report annually on our progress.

During fiscal year 2021, ASC is focusing on the following items on our journey to equity:

- Reviewing Cultural Equity statement through community engagement with ASC internal working team and board
- Seeking deeper understanding of inequities exacerbated by COVID-19 and identifying new ways to address these gaps
- Identifying goals for advancing equity with corresponding metrics to be adopted for fiscal year 2022
- Capturing demographics (race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+) and addressing functions of Advisory Council Members
- Creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement for Public Art
- Providing Equity and Bias training for ASC Board, Staff, Public Art Commission and Advisory Councils along with grant panelists
- Providing submission of Bio or CV/Resume, statement of interest or video to increase access for smaller organizations and creative individuals
- Providing Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals in English and Spanish
- Developing a BIPOC artists registry for public art projects and expanding the pool of regional artists

## IN CLOSING...

We are motivated and committed to working for a more equitable cultural community.

We know this entails sustained effort, focus, intention and urgency.

We will make mistakes on this journey.

We are committed to holding ourselves accountable to ensure we live up to our vision for a vibrant cultural life for all, and we ask you to hold us accountable as well.

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## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

### Share Your Story



Tell us about your experience with diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the arts and culture sector in Charlotte-Mecklenburg at the **form here**.

### Share Your Feedback + Join Us

Tell us what you think and how you feel about our Cultural Equity report, our work moving forward and if you want to join us on our journey.

Email us at [ASC@ArtsAndScience.org](mailto:ASC@ArtsAndScience.org).

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Ensuring access to an excellent, relevant, and sustainable  
cultural community for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Region

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