



WATERERS

Gift as You'd Like to be Gifted

2024 CALL TO ACTION




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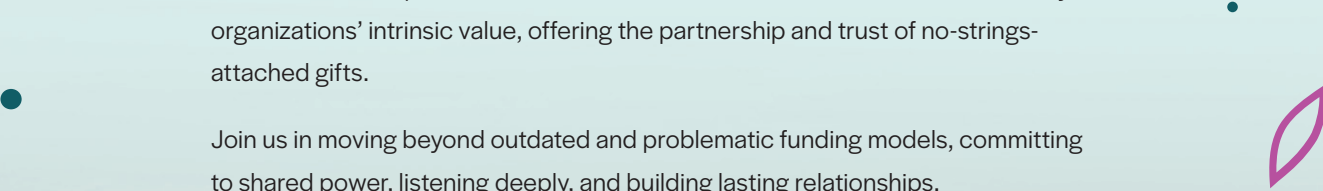
2024 CALL TO ACTION



Imagine a funding landscape that differs from the one we are in today, where every gift a funder offers comes via a local nomination, not application, where every gift is given in the spirit of mutual trust, respect, and opportunities for genuine partnership.

If you were seeking funding, wouldn't you appreciate that? We know we would; so this concept has been a guiding principle throughout our process.

We invite philanthropy to 'Gift as You'd Like to be Gifted' to inspire a field-wide system shift. We encourage all funders to prioritize relationships and authenticity to affirm BIPOC, queer, rural, and Native artists, culture bearers, and community organizations' intrinsic value, offering the partnership and trust of no-strings-attached gifts.



Join us in moving beyond outdated and problematic funding models, committing to shared power, listening deeply, and building lasting relationships.

Let your gifting mirror the respect and trust you'd like to receive, embracing simplicity and humanity in redistributing money. Our call to action is simple — 'Gift as You'd Like to be Gifted.'

INTRODUCTION

When we started the Waterers in 2020, there was a global pandemic, a racial justice reckoning, and a deep need for societal change. From late 2020 through 2023, we redistributed \$3.97 million in unrestricted gifts to 178 artists, culture bearers, and organizations working creatively in their communities.

In 2023, we received \$1M from the Builders Initiative Foundation, (now Good Chaos). Additionally, Propel was stewarding Seeding Cultural Treasures funding. They partnered with First Peoples Fund (\$500K) and the Waterers (\$500K) to move another \$1M to support culture bearers in North Dakota and South Dakota, recognizing both organizations' values, unique funding approaches, and deep connections in the region. These organizations shared our vision for trust-based philanthropy. They believed in - and invested in - the Waterers and our communities.

We continue to build deep and long-lasting grassroots relationships and disrupt the traditional grant-making process. We work to move money in ways that amplify and honor individuals and organizations. We are a conduit that distributes received funds locally to assist artists, culture bearers, and community folks in doing what they do best. We know that traditional, competitive, often project-based grant processes make applying and sustaining difficult for many. We give back to the artists, culture bearers, and organizations doing good work in their communities.

Because historically, rural areas, BIPOC, and Native American Communities in our region have received a smaller share of philanthropic dollars than urban areas, we have doubled down in our aspirations to reach those folks. As Susan Taylor Batten, President of ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities, says, "BIPOC-led organizations remain grossly underfunded despite philanthropy's stated commitments and interest in advancing racial justice."

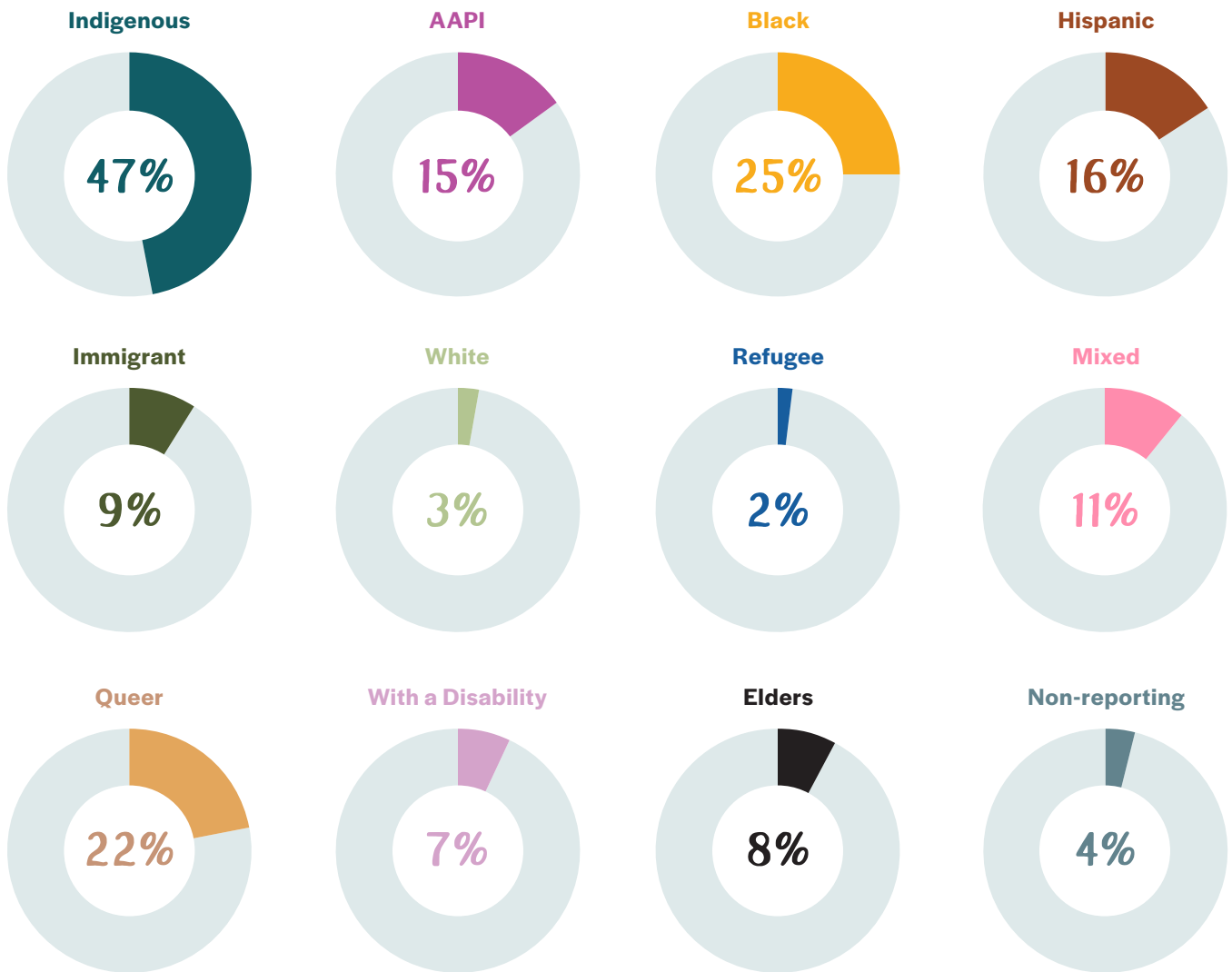
We established trust early on by involving community members in decision-making, which is part of being led by our values. This consistent North Star helped us to trust in the process and be trust-worthy in the eyes of others. In the first level of funding in the assembly, there were many self-accepted gifts from artists and culture bearers, and we also sought recommendations from people deeply connected to the community. We trust each other and local groups to make decisions based on these shared values.

Our enduring vision is to radically transform the paradigm of 'granting.' We want to gift, not grant; taking us from a scarcity economy model to one of abundance and cooperation. We envisage more unrestricted funding where giftees can use their gift however they want because no one knows better than the individual artist and culture bearer how best to use the funds. Our [2022 report](#) shared our process, vision, and the first call to action. This 2024 report shares the last two years of learning and an updated call to funders.

"BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS REMAIN GROSSLY UNDERFUNDED DESPITE PHILANTHROPY'S STATED COMMITMENTS AND INTEREST IN ADVANCING RACIAL JUSTICE."

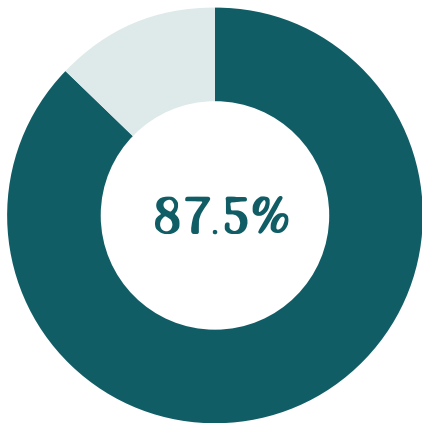


INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES ACROSS ALL GIFT RECIPIENTS

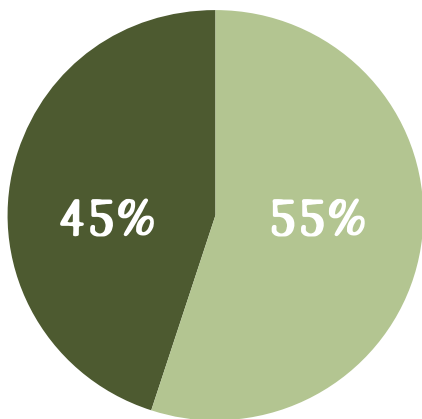


Individual Self Identity		
Indigenous	\$810,000	47%
AAPI	\$262,250	15%
Black	\$423,750	25%
Hispanic	\$276,250	16%
Immigrant	\$162,500	9%
White	\$48,750	3%
Refugee	\$41,000	2%
Mixed	\$187,500	11%
Queer	\$373,500	22%
With a disability	\$119,500	7%
Elders	\$130,500	8%
Non-reporting	\$67,950	4%

GIFT DISTRIBUTION

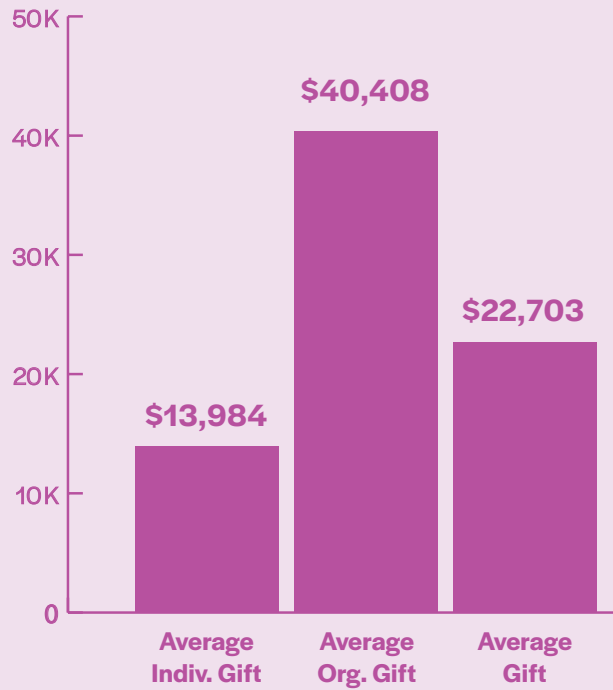


Amount Gifted from Funds Received



Urban Giftees Rural Giftees

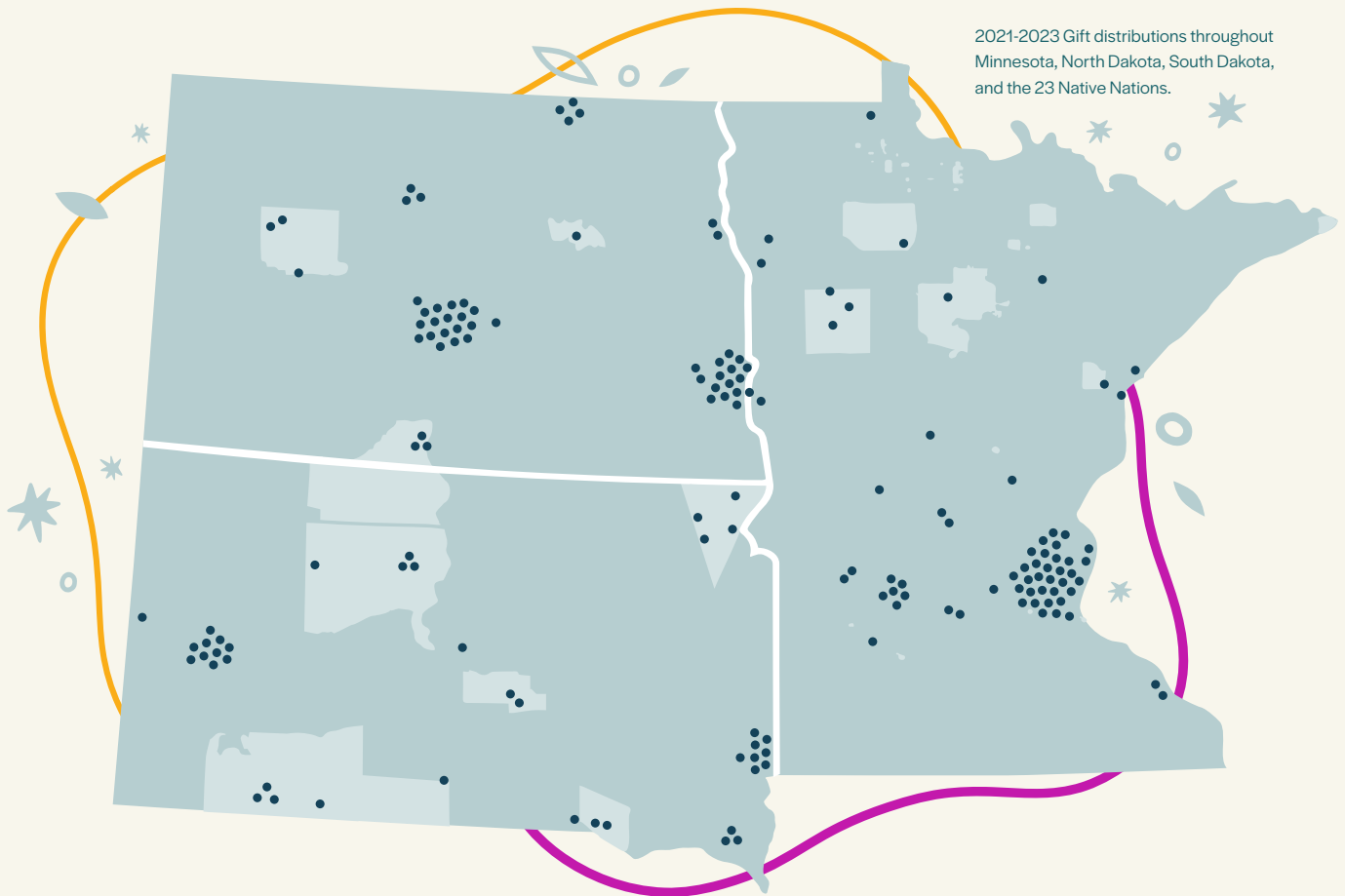
AVERAGE GIFT AMOUNT



Total Received	\$4,540,000	
Number of Gifts	178	—
Total Gifts	\$3,972,950	88%
Individual Gifts	\$1,726,200	38%
Organizations	\$2,194,000	49%
Nominators	\$52,750	1%
Fiscal Sponsor Capacity Building Gift	\$214,000	5%
Admin and Giftee Support	\$567,050	12%
Population Under 50k Rural	\$2,153,500	48% of Total Funds, 55% of Gifting Funds
Urban	\$1,764,500	39% of Total Funds, 45% of Gifting Funds
Average Individual Gift	\$13,984	—
Average Organization Gift	\$40,408	—
Average Gift	\$22,703	—

WHO WE ARE

We are • Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) led • Rooted in belonging & relatedness • Artist centered & narrative shifting • Centered in tactics for decolonization, anti-oppression, reparations • Ensuring that gifts do no harm • About healing, risk-taking & trust-building



We are the Waterers. We are a group of disruptors in the philanthropy space. Our work is part of the Local Control, Local Fields initiative of ArtPlace America. We are one of six groups using a people-powered process led by grassroots assemblies in six geographies. Each group has further shaped the use of a funding pool to strengthen our local creative place-tending field of practice. The Upper Midwest Assembly entrusted the Waterers as fund stewards from Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native Nations geographic regions.

Our assembly centers on BIPOC artists and culture bearers as leaders. Our gift-making strategy attends to the nuance and complexities of this region. We exist to keep decision-making power within communities. Support those communities already doing the work. Disrupt traditional grant-making.

We move money. We are not a funder. We are a conduit of giving.



MISSION

Our mission is to propel the philanthropic field to change how it redistributes funding to prioritize BIPOC Artists and culture-bearers who have been historically exploited. Traditional competitive grant processes and systems make sustaining, let alone applying, out of reach. We urgently center land, identity, healing, and time - recognizing the land and peoples grounded in cultural power, which comprises the field of creative place-keeping.



VISION

Our vision is to radically transform the paradigm of 'giving' from a scarcity economy model to one of abundance and cooperation. We envision funding and resources that continue building communities with unrestricted funding. Imagine if the elder bead workers, culture-bearers, and story-weavers had just as much access to funding as the white-led arts agency. It can happen in a funding paradigm where we center local BIPOC Artists and culture bearers to make the decisions.

VALUES

Our values are still guiding our process. Our values are a compass for who receives funds - they shape our process. We boldly diverge from the types of traditional 'gift making' we've all experienced. We believe in mending the connective tissue to deepen the roots of relation and taking risks to build trust and capacity through every step of our design and decision-making. Our choices seek reconciliation.

Unlearning colonial philanthropy - Our program thrives on collective leadership, decision-making, and fully invested people who know and are part of the geographies and communities. The Waterers identified individuals within their respective localities to make the decisions.

Our community - Artists and culture bearers have long existed in our communities. Our assembly and all who receive funding are invited to be in relation, make decisions, mentor each other, and build camaraderie and alliances beyond a funding period.

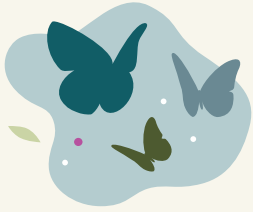
Blossoming connectivity - We invite everyone associated with this program to be in continuing relation to each other as peers, mentors, advocates, and fellow practitioners.

Sustaining practice - Recipients don't apply; they get recognized for their work by their communities. We amplify the possibility of mutual support, aid, connections, and relationships.

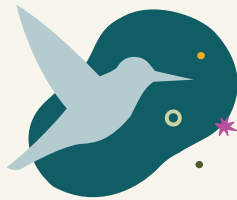
WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED



Focus on relationships, not money. Throughout the evolution of our work, our insights always underscore the importance of trust, shared vision, deep, genuine relationships, and the decentering of money (even though funding is obviously about money.) We are conduits of giving prioritizing relationships, joy, visibility, and community beyond mere financial transactions.



Gathering is good. We've found that coming together regularly is vital because this is not surface work. It takes deliberate time and commitment, which leads to deeper and long-lasting connections. We take the time we need to allow us to dig deeper to understand the multiple truths that exist across our lived experiences. Bringing the giftees together has been a remarkable opportunity to share stories and experiences.



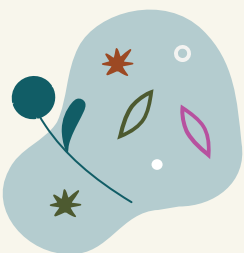
Make your own rules. We have never wanted to walk the same paths of traditional philanthropy; so we went back to the drawing board to create our own norms and processes, building trust while challenging conventional practices. We've aimed to democratize our process by bringing together diverse perspectives, building solid relationships, and offering transparency in communication.



Actual rural/urban balance takes time and capacity. Despite our stated desires and efforts, achieving a rural/urban balance and equitable regional distributions has faced challenges; especially in reaching historically underfunded rural and Native American communities. This reflects a broader issue in philanthropy's commitment to reaching beyond the usual suspects and resource allocation.



It's not about us. We've sought to decenter ourselves and center others, using our resources to be good relatives and support BIPOC artists and cultural bearers. We have involved community members in decision-making and adopted a consensus-based model that prioritizes shared values and seeks to always "do no harm." Engaging in meaningful community engagement allowed us to stay vigilant against our implicit and systemic biases that can cloud judgment and stifle ingenuity.



Communication is key. We continue to be intentional with our vocabulary and processes and adapt to technological challenges in reaching giftees to expand our outreach. We think people should have ownership of their narratives and the right to decide how and what parts of their stories are shared in an inclusive and respectful process. In all our work with giftees, we strive to shift the narrative from trauma to resilience, empowerment, and strength. We encourage people to share stories highlighting their capabilities, achievements, and positive impact on their communities and how it feels to be acknowledged as community leaders and artists, some maybe for the first time. We offer resources, training, and workshops in storytelling techniques to help giftees tell their own stories and equip them to share their narratives authentically and comfortably.

OUR IMPACT AND PRACTICE

NOMINATION, NOT APPLICATION

Reflecting on giftee stories and testimonials, it becomes evident that our “nomination, not application” process has created a meaningful shift. Quinn, one of our giftees, expressed deep emotional resonance upon receiving her gift. She has been used to navigating extensive application processes with other organizations. The burdensome task of articulating work in written applications often left her feeling disconnected and unseen, reflecting the emotional toll placed on artists who struggle to convey the essence of their work through conventional grant applications. One of our Waterers shared that this was the first time they did not have to “showcase their trauma” to receive funding. Our practice involves the nominators’ time and energy to vet potential giftees, and that’s another shift we’d like to see in philanthropy; foundations usually have the staff, resources, reach, and capital to consider doing the leg work of finding out about the potential giftee and creating systems that make it easier for them to find out about and access funding.

BEYOND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Getting funded is always great, but there’s more a funder can offer. We want to restore hope in the grant-seeking experience. Our unrestricted funding allows artists to feel seen for themselves rather than for what they can do or make. We see and recognize their good work and invite them to use their gift for whatever they need. The lasting effects of our approach will continue to unfold, making a difference in the lives of the artists we support in a “ripple effect.” Measuring transformative impacts on someone’s life can be difficult because what’s the “metric” for that? Part of this work is that we don’t always know where the impact lands and that not knowing is also part of the ripple. We aspire to continue working this way and want to hear from other funders on how they evolve their processes.

We would like to acknowledge the visionary work of the original consortium of funders behind Artplace America with the first round of funding with the Local Control, Local Fields program that started everything, and we applaud funders like the Builders Initiative Foundation (now named Good Chaos) who continue it.

WHAT WE ARE PROUD OF

We “Gift as we’d like to be Gifted.” Anyone who has been through the three-ring circus that is traditional grantmaking and philanthropy knows about the rigamarole and hurdles. Every one of the Waterers has been in this position, so it felt vital to us not to replicate it. We wanted to approach our funding differently and take it further- to make it our business to reach out to those who don’t even know such funding exists or if they are eligible to receive it. Ours is a collective community effort based on trust.

Our approach is defined by the values we hold dear. In a departure from traditional practices, we offer anonymity to giftees, acknowledging that some folks may have cultural or individual misgivings about public recognition. Giftees’ stories are theirs to tell; they are not our stories; the impact of their work is theirs, not ours to share.

We stack resources to support BIPOC artists. In doing so, we seek to decenter ourselves and use our access and assets to offer resources to build community and networks.

Grantmakers in the Arts in 2023 was a great opportunity to present our work at a combined session with the original Artplace America’s “Local Control Local Fields” grantees. We shared our processes and learning with the grantmaking community. Organized by Lora Smith, co-creator and member of our sister group, the Waymakers Collective, we shared how the original ArtPlace Assemblies have evolved into unique place-based iterations and that we all continue to challenge traditional models of philanthropy to transform our communities and uproot historical power dynamics within arts funding.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE WATERERS

As we reflect on the past few years, it's clear that our commitment to creating a trust-based, open-source grant-making process has left a mark on us, our giftees, and even some corners of the field. Before the Waterers, many of us had never experienced non-BIPOC folks prioritizing BIPOC funding. As Waterers, we have focused on funding BIPOC artists and culture bearers first and foremost and have always tried to ensure good representation for the queer community, and are always seeking to improve.

We want to carry on being as purposeful and radical as we can be, and keep our imaginations from getting stuck in convention, even when faced with budget and capacity constraints. We envision all that we could do with an ongoing substantial budget but all our hopes and dreams are contingent on us getting that funding. We are intermediaries who can only fund others if we ourselves are funded.

Acknowledging capacity constraints, we can see two ways forward.

1. Our first way forward is to inspire additional collaborations with funders to continue our impact and gifting. Once that happens, we can continue learning from and leaning into our process. We want to continue fostering a shared learning approach with philanthropic organizations and maintain our momentum with visits and gatherings in communities we don't yet know.
2. The second way forward is that we continue operating with a sustaining fund and continue our calls to action for change in philanthropy. Engaging existing Waterers even more effectively and introducing new voices requires a conscious effort to avoid limiting our funding to familiar territories, encouraging ourselves to lean into "what we don't know we don't know."

CONCLUSION

This report reflects our journey and an opportunity for shared learning, and we offer it also as a call to action for all those involved in philanthropy. We urge foundations and philanthropists to embrace our three principles.

1. Let's collectively strive for a philanthropic culture that values trust, respect, and non-transactional relationships.
2. Let's acknowledge, value, and support historically underfunded artists, culture bearers, and communities with genuine partnerships, understanding, and respect.
3. This paradigm shift towards a more human-centric model of giving is essential for creating sustainable change and building a more equitable and compassionate world.

Join us in our endeavor to make philanthropy more decent, more human, and "Gift as You'd Like to be Gifted."

Giftee Stories



ARTIST STORIES



“My mouth was open for like ten minutes. I told my husband, oh my God, oh, my God. I think I just got an artist grant.”

Dyana DeCoteau-Dyess

Dyana DeCoteau-Dyess is a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. She is a photographer, painter, and printmaker, now pursuing a BFA at Minot State University in North Dakota, where she is the art club president and the vice president of the Native American Culture Club.

Dyana says that art talent is inherent in her indigenous community, and she is grateful for that legacy. Because both her grandmother and mother are resident school survivors, she wasn't taught her own culture and sometimes feels some “imposter syndrome” as a Native artist. Making art has become Dyana's way of reconnecting.

While one of her biggest barriers is money, applying for funding is challenging. “Applying for a grant, the jargon is confusing. I struggle with the correct terminology to use, and a lot of times, I just give up. For folks who have always done it themselves, it's hard to ask for help. I'm hoping with this grant, I can showcase that we can work a job, and we can also do our art and make that our career.”

Representation matters. Dyana says, “There might not be room for me, but I'm going to slowly move myself in. I want to show other folks the potential that they have. This kind of stuff never happens to us; I never thought I would be where I'm at right now. This is everything I always wanted.”

See more of Dyana's work as a photographer [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“You take a deep breath. You know, you feel like you want to pinch yourself and see if it’s real. I opened the email and read it again, I told my wife... it seems like I got the gift.”

Hamzat Koriko

Hamzat Koriko, PhD, is a translator, playwright, executive, and former artistic director of the [African Arts Arena](#), based in Grand Forks, ND, he now leads [Kori Art](#) where he uses performing and visual arts to engage communities around immigration.

Originally from Togo, West Africa, Hamzat loves using traditional Tongolese storytelling to connect with people and reconnect with his roots. Drumming, for Hamzat, is not just a work of art; it is a reminder of where he came from. “When I drum, it’s more of a heartbeat. It is a reminder that I come from somewhere”

Hamzat thinks the biggest challenge for people who historically haven’t been given funding opportunities is to let go and trust. “The Waterers said, ‘Somebody told us about you and we want to learn more. You don’t have to give up time with your family—you just have to sit down and tell us who you are.’ The Waterers truly see what you’re doing; they welcome and want to celebrate you. They make it easy for people to access resources.”

“My message for those trying to serve their community is to keep going. You know, it’s a long, long, long process. But one day, your dream will come true.”

Learn more about Hamzat’s work [here](#) or [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“I’m still blown away. I never could have fathomed something like this. It makes me want to go ten times harder and be a million times more in tune with what I’m doing.”

Kyle Mesteth

Kyle Mesteth is Oglala Lakota from Pine Ridge, South Dakota. A musician, filmmaker, and painter, he works with skateboarders and artists. He is the CEO and founder of [Ground Control](#), an indoor skatepark in the heart of the Pine Ridge Lakota Reservation.

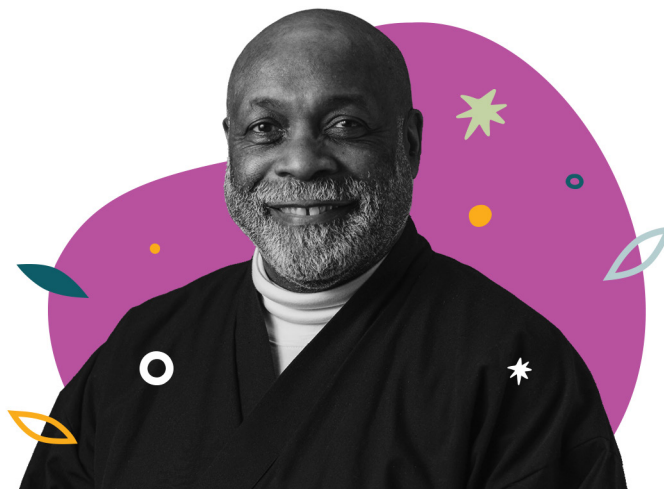
Ground Control helps skaters and artists make their dreams a reality. There, Kyle sees young people and families struggling with addiction, grief, and loss. “I’m dealing with kids who want to take their lives. People who’ve lost their kids, kids who lost their siblings, kids who are addicted, kids who have parents who are addicted. When I became a father ten years ago, I wanted my son to grow up in a better place. I realized this work was really important when I would get to the Ground Control building and the skaters would be there, waiting for me.”

“You don’t go around asking, hey, recognize me? See me? You just do the work. When funding comes, it’s a blessing. I’ve learned how to make things happen without money, but with money, I can make them bigger and better. I’m trying to become someone who can apply for grants and not lose sight of why.”

Kyle’s message to funders is, “If you can help somebody in a struggling community like a reservation, trust them. Trust that they’ll get the work done because they will.” The Waterers’ approach is based on trust, which is important to Kyle. “That trust thing goes far. It lit a fire in me: I knew it. I knew it. If I work hard, people will notice, and good things will happen.”

Learn more about Kyle’s work [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“When we create art together, we can tell a deeper story than just the words we use.”

Lawrence Diggs

Lawrence Diggs, 76, is an artist, a Soto Zen monk, and a Buddhist prison chaplain. He founded The International Vinegar Museum in South Dakota, designed and created a national emergency medical system in Burkina Faso, and helped plan and build a Buddhist temple in San Francisco. He has been honored with numerous awards, including a Medal of Honor with gold stars from Burkina Faso.

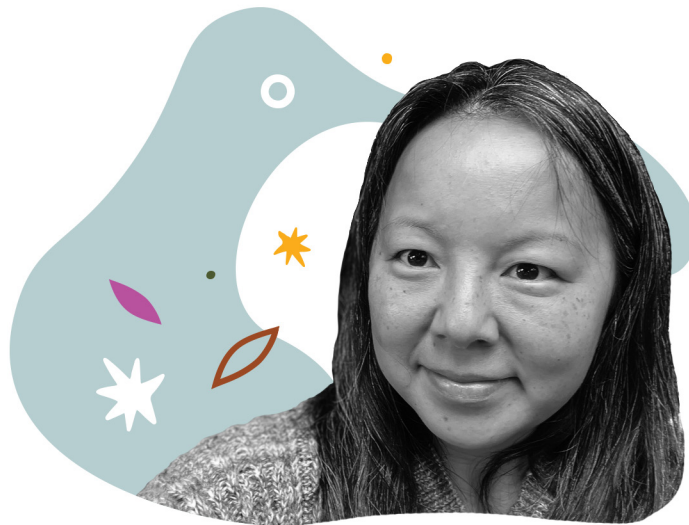
Lawrence employs diverse media to be a conduit for others to learn new techniques, use different materials, and discover new ways of thinking about art. “I say, come sit with me. If you feel scared, let me know and we can work it out. If you don’t have resources, let me help you find them. That seems to be the most important thing I do.”

As a prison chaplain, Lawrence helped individuals impacted by the justice system create an outreach group that crafts handmade greeting cards to normalize compassion in the prison. They draw the images and write the greetings, and the message is, “You are not forgotten, you are seen, you exist, and you have people in this prison who care about you.”

When we talk about funding, we usually focus on the money. Lawrence approaches funding from a standpoint of inquiry: he asks, what are you trying to do? What is it that you want? What’s your goal? What’s your mission statement? Not just in this one piece, but in your whole life?

Experience Lawrence’s work and words [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“I am a little bit shocked because people like me don’t get recognized. I’m still in that shock state. This gift came right when I needed it the most.”

Sai Thao

Sai Thao has been producing videos since she was 13 years old. She is Hmong American and resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota. For the past 30 years, Sai has produced experimental and documentary shorts and as a producer for public television and has made more than 10 video shorts exhibited throughout the US, Thailand, and Laos.

Sai is currently producing *Hidden in My Heart*, a 30-minute experimental documentary about grief trauma and the fragile bonds of family within her culture. She co-founded [In Progress](#), a non-profit dedicated to building the voices of young artists from rural, tribal, and migrant communities through storytelling for the last 27 years.

When she learned about the Waterers, she connected them to her narrative through gardening. “Waterers are not only creating life, they are giving life and sustaining life. Seeing people from my community recognize my work is beautiful because it is rooted in building it. I appreciate how the Waterers are creating a “community giving back to the community’ cycle. I wish other foundations considered that process.”

Learn more about Sai’s work [here](#) and [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“The grant was a wonderful surprise. It was such amazing timing as I’m right now working on how to support other creatives.”

Sharon Mansur

Sharon Mansur is a dance and interdisciplinary experimental artist, educator, curator, and community builder of Lebanese heritage based in Winona, Mni Sota Makoce/Minnesota, Dakota land. Her creative practices weave movement making, improvisation, visual environments, food, and site-situated/responsive art to offer multi-sensory and immersive experiences rooted in body, imagination, and environment. She loves creating artistic opportunities for people from all walks of life to connect and engage.

Sharon lives and works in a rural area and appreciates how much she can see from right where she is. “It keeps me growing and I can pass it along, which keeps our community growing and learning, too.”

Sharon thinks of funding as a continuous path forward. “Rather than ‘I’m going to spend this amount and then we’re done for the year,’ it’s ‘how could those funds perhaps be invested to continue to grow and support?’ I’d like to use this opportunity to engage in more questions about funding and what that means or could look like. Let’s dream big. I’d love to just keep dreaming.”

Learn more about Sharon’s dance and movement art [here](#) and [here](#).

ARTIST STORIES



“I was like, What? I read everything, and I couldn’t believe it. I was in a moment of, like, wait a minute. What’s going on? Who me? Of all people?”

Quinn Villagomez

Quinn Villagomez, a trans Latine woman, is a broadcast journalist, host, and MC. She co-hosts RARE on KFAI Radio’s Fresh Fruit, the longest-running LGBTQ radio program in the nation. Quinn graduated from Brown College in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, in 2003 with a degree in radio broadcasting. She is on the board of directors at the [Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition](#), and hosts concerts, fashion shows, and other events in the Twin Cities.

As a trans woman of color, Quinn writes from her heart when submitting a grant application. “I write what’s on my mind, and sometimes that is not how a grant should be written. When I don’t get funding, I feel like it’s because I’m trans or I’m a woman of color or I’m less than, that my passion for community art is not real.”

Learning about the Waterers grant, Quinn was in disbelief. “I’ve never been gifted anything like this before. It was so surreal. I kept thinking, wait a minute, is this real? And then I cried. I truly cried. I’m super amazingly over the moon.”

Quinn knows from experience that trans and trans-BIPOC individuals are not often given opportunities to do community work. “We have to work, show up, speak ten times harder. We have to show our work to prove that we are worthy, that we are powerful, that we exist, and that we can do great things. All of the ‘no’s’ that I’ve been told make me think, okay, I will do this. I’m going to create art and events that bring all the things that are important to me to the forefront. I practice by showing up and giving.”

Learn more about Quinn’s work [here](#) and [here](#).

WHO ARE THE WATERERS

Keila Anali Saucedo (They/them) • Minneapolis, Minnesota

Keila Anali Saucedo is the child of Jaime Saucedo Corona y Rosalia Martinez Salgado. They have been writing, storytelling, lying, and creating travesura since their childhood. They are a playwright, performing artist, and theatre maker originally from Chicago, IL. They have presented work with Patrick's Cabaret, Teatro del Pueblo, Pangea World Theatre and the 20% Theatre Company. Produced works include "Only I", "What I Have Left To Eat", and "Brujería for Beginners" which premiered through 20% Theatre company at Mixed Blood Theatre in 2021. They currently serve as the co-Artistic Director of Lightning Rod, a queer trans arts organism. They are a freelance arts administrator, project manager, facilitator, and artist in Mni Sota Makoce. Keila Anali's work is an attempt at alchemy using ancestral wisdom, survivor technology, and queer discoveries.

Joua Lee Grande (She/her) • Minneapolis, Minnesota

Joua Lee Grande is a storyteller, filmmaker and community educator whose work elevates marginalized voices and experiences. Her work has screened on platforms like WORLD Channel, PBS digital, CAAMFest, L.A. Asian American Film Fest and PBS Short Film Festival. Her short film On All Fronts received an Honorable Mention for CAAMFest's Loni Ding Award for Social Justice Documentary. She is a True/False Confluence Fellow (2023), a Jerome Hill Artist Fellow (2021-23) and was a MediaJustice Network Fellow (2021-22) and Diverse Voices in Docs fellow (2019). Joua was previously a news editor at WCCO TV 4 News. She currently serves on the steering committee of [Asian American Documentary Network \(A-Doc\)](#) and mentors and supports underrepresented filmmakers in the midwest. She spent over 10 years in community nonprofits supporting marginalized storytellers, families and youth. She has an extensive background in community media education, working with underrepresented community members to tell their own stories.

Abdurrahman Mahmud (He/him) • Saint Paul, Minnesota

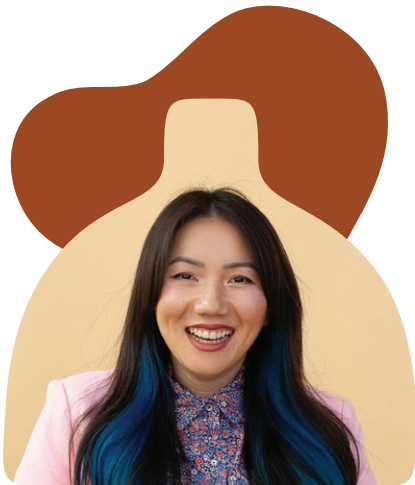
Abdurrahman Mahmud, aka Abdu, is a dynamic and passionate community leader dedicated to helping individuals and communities thrive. With a background in organizing and leading community development programs, Abdu has a proven track record of catalyzing positive change. Alongside his work in community development, he is also a serial entrepreneur and investor, leveraging his skills and resources to support innovative ventures and projects. Furthermore, Abdu is a skilled storyteller and filmmaker, utilizing the power of narrative and visual arts to amplify his message and drive progress toward his goals. Through his multifaceted approach and tireless dedication, Abdu Rahman is making a meaningful impact and inspires others to join him in creating a better future for all.

WHO ARE THE WATERERS



Holly Doll, Anpao Win (First Light Woman) (She/her) • Mandan, North Dakota
– Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

Holly is the founder and president of [Native Artists United](#), owner of [Five Nations Arts](#), a public speaker on cultural education and racial sensitivity, and making a shift to having a healing-centered approach to work and life. She is also an artist, specializing in traditional Lakota forms of beadwork and quillwork, modern painting with watercolor, and occasionally writing poetry. Her mother taught from the age of two everything she knows when it comes to art and she has kept it up ever since. A lover of Halloween, astrology, fall scented candles, poetry, baking, fiction books, and crying over Pixar movies. Lives by this quote by spoken word poet Shane Koyczan: “If we ever become who we hope we are, it is because we see how far there is still to go. And if we are none of these things to everyone, then we are none of these things at all.”



Ka Oskar Ly* (They/them/she/her) • Saint Paul, Minnesota

Ka is a queer Hmoob (Hmong) American artist and cultural producer based in Imnizaska Otunwe, Mni Sota Makoce. As an immigrant and child of refugees, Ka is driven by exploring previously unimaginable possibilities to forge cultural innovations and community futures inspired by their ancestors. They have worked at the intersection of art, organizing, and community development. Ka is a co-founder of [Ua Si Creative](#), a Hmong womxn artist collective creating and playing in the public and community realm through cultural power that spun out of ArtCrop, an art and agriculture Community Supported Share. Ka is also a Springboard for the Arts 20/20 Fellow and Artist Consultant, a 2021 ILI (Intercultural Leadership Institute) Fellow, and a 2021 McKnight Fiber Artist Fellow.



Michelle Fredericks DuBray (She/her) • Mandan, North Dakota

Michelle Fredericks DuBray, a citizen of the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation of North Dakota, is the founder and principal of [Pinto Horse Woman Consulting](#) which focuses on providing services to Native Non-Profits. Michelle has over 35 years of experience assisting many organizations in working to build Native communities, develop partnerships, forge collaborative efforts, and encourage the sustainability of rural communities. She has been a Kellogg Fellow through the Americans for Indian Opportunity Ambassadors Program and was a member of the 1st Cohort of the Bush Foundation’s Native Nations Rebuilders Program. Michelle lives on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota where she makes her home on her family’s buffalo ranch along the Missouri River.

*Emeritus Waterers member

WHO ARE THE WATERERS



John Davis (He/him) • Warroad, Minnesota

John is passionate about creating opportunities for artists to help transform communities. With over 30 years of experience creating and implementing rural artist residency programs and art centers, John has spent his career working to transform policy and amplify narratives of the arts in rural America. His collaborative and innovative work in New York Mills, MN has been recognized as a national model for rural economic development in the arts, and the town was twice recognized as one of the top 100 Small Arts Towns in America. His work with the Lanesboro Arts Campus initiative resulted in the city's selection as one of the top 12 Small Town Artplaces in America. As a Bush Fellow, he has studied and advanced the field of rural arts and rural sustainability and is currently the Executive Director of Warroad RiverPlace, a rural arts, culture and event center in northern Minnesota.



Peter Strong (He/him) • Rapid City, South Dakota

Peter has been active in the arts, culture, and museum fields for most of his life, and has extensive experience in many aspects of museum and arts work. He is dedicated to supporting Native artists, arts, culture, and communities through creativity and being a good relative. Peter worked as Director of [The Heritage Center at Red Cloud Indian School](#) and Vice President of Operations and Programs for [First Peoples Fund](#) before co-founding [Racing Magpie](#) in 2015 where he is currently its director. He has served on multiple arts boards of directors, and was the chair of the organizing committee and was the first executive director for the [Native POP: People of the Plains](#) cultural event in Rapid City. Peter has been an adjunct instructor at Oglala Lakota College since 2019. He earned a BA in American History from Marshall University and an MA in Museum Studies, History, and New Media from George Mason University.



Rachel Asleson (She/her) • Fargo, North Dakota

Rachel is many things...Friend. Project Manager. Trotter. Includer. Positive. Communicator. She sees beauty and values connection, creativity, possibility and presence. She is a Fargoan (Red River Basin), queer, small-business owner, [\(Reach Partners, Inc\)](#) project and event manager, facilitator, and jill-of-all trades. She's never done anything alone, and together with many partners, has curated exhibits, organized international conferences, hosted conversations that matter, and organized community events. She identifies with those who seek deep, meaningful connections; those who are curious, who find joy in reflection and beauty in odd places and times, and those who delight in diversity. She is working towards a new collective openness in the region; opening hearts and minds to everyone's humanity, and possibility. She wants to imagine the future in years, not just answer today's needs.

“Good Chaos has been proud to partner with the Waterers from its inception. The Waterers heart-centric gift-making strategy centering care, relationships, trust, lived experience, and collaboration was and remains needed to redistribute resources, while shifting the power dynamics inherent in traditional philanthropy. The work is grounded in Indigeneity and non-colonialist practices and has centered rural and BIPOC creatives and culture-bearers that have historically - and continue to - receive the least institutional support. An early organization ourselves, we have been incredibly lucky to learn from the deep wisdom of the Waterers leaders, and to be welcomed into their homes and communities to meet the inspiring artists and creatives they serve so beautifully.”

– **Allyson Esposito**, Good Chaos

Assembly members

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Fowzia Adde | Lauren Carlson | Willow Doll | Ka Ly |
| Rachel Asleson | Vicki Chepulis | Michelle DuBray | Abdurrahman Mahmud |
| Mary Bordeaux | Nicole Crutchfield | Julie Garreau | Jessica Preuss |
| Keith BraveHeart | John Davis | Ashley Hanson | Keila Anali Saucedo |
| Anna Claussen | Holly Doll | Christopher Luehr | Peter Strong |

Facilitation Team

- Maura Cuffie
- Sandra J. Agustín
- Melissa Olson

WATERERS

waterers.org

