



Culture For All.

CULTURAL  
EQUITY  
REPORT  
2021



# introduction

In 2015, ASC began its journey towards cultural equity. Why? Because ASC's staff and board realized that – to truly achieve the organization'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. ASC believes that everyone has cultural traditions that are inherently valuable, and that artists, scientists and historians play a unique role in challenging inequities and inspiring human understanding, justice and opportunity for all.

Since beginning its cultural equity journey, ASC has:

- Expanded Operating Support Grants to new grassroots and multicultural organizations
- Restructured project-based funding as Cultural Vision Grants to align with community priorities and diversify the funding pool
- Started Catalyst for Cultural Equity, a program that prepares arts and culture nonprofit professionals to help advance cultural equity in their organizations
- Launched Culture Blocks, a Mecklenburg County-funded program to provide arts and cultural experiences closer to where people live
- Started two artist fellowship programs that demonstrate ASC's belief investing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative individuals benefits the region's overall cultural climate
- Increased support for Regional Artist Project Grants, now called Artist Support Grants
- Aligned ASC supported education programs with key opportunity measures (PreK readiness, 3rd grade reading, middle school transition, high school graduation) as defined by community priorities
- Expanded opportunities for local/regional artists to receive Public Art commissions
- Focused workshops & training opportunities around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion
- Approved a Cultural Equity Statement that guides ASC's work and provides a framework to set organizational policies and practices



ASC's inaugural cultural equity report, released in 2021, focused on ASC's historic practice of inequitable funding and the work ASC has been doing since beginning its cultural equity journey in 2015. Much of the immediate reaction to the report centered on ASC's apology for its role in perpetuating systems and structures that have exacerbated inequities in our cultural community, and less focus on the steps ASC has taken to dismantle its inequitable systems and policies.

Still, leading national figures for cultural equity in the arts and philanthropy noted it was necessary for ASC to publicly acknowledge both its history and its cultural equity journey. Brigitte McQueen, the founder and executive director of Union for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska, lauded ASC's approach in the article "Centering Equity in the Arts." McQueen, who is challenging local arts and culture power brokers to do better when it comes to equity, said that ASC disclosed its history of inequitable grantmaking and implemented a restorative justice remedy. She also tweeted, "While the report was well received, overall, it was unfortunate that some in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community focused on ASC's apology of inequitable funding practices and were uncomfortable with the truth and that it was publicly shared. However, telling the truth and apologizing is the first step in healing and ensuring accountability moving forward."

Edgar Villanueva, the award-winning author of "Decolonizing Wealth," commended ASC on Twitter for "taking ownership for being complicit in upholding funding practices that elevate certain cultures, creative traditions, identities and art forms above others." In a subsequent tweet, he stated, "We must all take responsibility for mishaps and complicity, then work together to repair. It's the only path to racial healing and creating more equitable wealth."

ASC's commitment to cultural equity requires being transparent and accountable for its work, which is why ASC's "Cultural Equity Report 2020" outlined our cultural equity goals for fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021). We are pleased to share with you this overview of how ASC performed against those stated goals. We know that working for a more equitable cultural community is not on the right thing to do, it is critical to ensuring Charlotte-Mecklenburg is place where we all – creative individuals and organizations of all sizes – can move forward together.

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 2015, ASC made substantive changes to our organization practices on our journey to become a more equitable organization. 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 Cultural Equity Statement. The committee's goal was to craft 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.

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# ASC Cultural Equity Statement

*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. 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 embodies the values, beliefs, policies, and practices that ensure 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.

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.

# updates + progress

At the end of the 2020 Cultural Equity report, we shared that ASC would focus on the following items in fiscal year 2020-2021:

- ① Reviewing our Cultural Equity statement through community engagement with ASC internal working team and board
- ② Seeking deeper understanding of inequities amplified by COVID-19 and identifying new ways to address these gaps
- ③ Identifying goals for advancing equity with corresponding metrics to be adopted for fiscal year 2022
- ④ Capturing demographics (race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+) and addressing functions of Advisory Council Members
- ⑤ Providing Equity and Bias training for ASC Board, Staff, Public Art Commission and Advisory Councils along with grant panelists
- ⑥ Providing submission of Bio or CV/Resume, statement of interest or video to increase access to funding opportunities for smaller organizations and creative individuals
- ⑦ Providing Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals in English and Spanish
- ⑧ Creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement for Public Art
- ⑨ Developing a BIPOC (*Black, Indigenous and People of Color*) artists registry for public art projects and expanding the pool of regional artists

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**This report provides an update and status on that work, and our focus in 2021-2022.**

A person wearing a plaid shirt, a dark hoodie, and sneakers is sitting on a metal folding chair in an art gallery. They are viewed from behind, looking towards a large artwork on the wall. The gallery has a light-colored wooden floor and several other framed artworks are visible in the background. The text "equity supported" is overlaid in white on the upper part of the image.

equity supported

*Artist Carla Aaron Lopez at her LOCAL/STREET exhibit at The Mint Museum.*

CAREY KING PHOTO

**1** **Reviewing Cultural Equity statement through community engagement with ASC internal working team and board.**

ASC's Cultural Equity workgroup reviewed the Cultural Equity Statement, and crafted recommended updates that will be integrated within ASC's Strategic Planning process for alignment.

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**2** **Seeking deeper understanding of inequities amplified by COVID-19 and identifying new ways to address these gaps.**

ASC sought out and convened sessions to hear and learn from creatives, representatives of cultural organizations and residents to better understand existing inequities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative community. These learnings inform ASC's future work and provided actionable opportunities for ASC to partner with other organizations to better provide creatives and organizations access to resources and to engage residents.

PHOTOS (LEFT TO RIGHT): *Manoj Kesavan, MyLoan Dinh and Corey Mitchell* were among the local ALAANA creatives and cultural organization leaders that participated in a listening and learning session convened by ASC.





## Listening and Learning

In April 2021, ASC hosted a gathering of ALAANA (those of African, Latin-a/o/x/e, Asian, Arab, and/or Native American descent) visual and performing artists, including creatives with individual practices as well as those working within and leading cultural organizations. ASC organized this event in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the cultural community can do a better job of addressing the needs within our region. Several themes emerged, including: the need for financial investments early in the lifespan of emerging organizations; opportunities for grantmakers to identify emerging artists and offer support rather than waiting for those artists to seek funding; nurturing mentor-mentee relationships between upcoming and established artists; and the need for multi-year/sustained funding for creatives, allowing them to focus on their creative work rather than grant management and allowing them time to develop their creative vision. The creatives were clear that systems-level change was needed to support the passing of experience across generations, providing multiple points of access to resources (financial/ administrative/ physical spaces) to ALAANA creatives directly, and giving ALAANA creatives a seat at the table of boards and foundations, locally and nationally.

## Beyond the Sound Bites

ASC hosted “Beyond the Sound Bites” in May 2021 to share ASC’s equity journey, listen to residents’ feedback and incorporate that learning into ASC’s work. The session was hosted by Dr. Tom Hanchett, historian, History South, and Janeen Bryant, racial equity and education advocate.

Residents voiced their opinions and gave ASC feedback that ranged from the need for more voices from the Latin-/a/o/x/e community and greater investment in culturally affirming work in the Pre-k-12 education space to linking resources directly to communities and geographic spaces, and building relationships between community members and artists in ASC’s work.



“The initial application processes are so arduous and there is a specific language needed to know that is intimidating. It leads to self-deprecation. We need to think about springboards; not enough access for the youth to have entry into our world.”

- JESSICA MOSS, *artist, curator and founder of The Roll Up CLT* -

## LOCAL/STREET

Often Black and Latin-/a/x/e/o artists have not seen themselves represented in the exhibits of the cities established museums. Carla Aaron Lopez, a local artist inspired as a child during visits to The Mint Museum, sought to change this with LOCAL/STREET. The pop-up exhibition at Mint Museum Randolph featured 50 ALAANA artists and allies. Supported, in part, with a \$4,600 ASC Cultural Vision Grant, the project struck a chord with local audiences as lines poured out of the museum to experience this event. The exhibition attracted 1,062 visitors.



Artist Carla Aaron Lopez at her LOCAL/STREET exhibit at The Mint Museum.



The Latin band Café Amaretto performing at Belle Johnston Park in Pineville. Photo by Ernesto Moreno.



Singer, songwriter and instrumentalist Quisol.

HARRIS JETER PHOTO



The Hola Charlotte Festival.

ERNESTO MORENO PHOTO

“Latino artists were 7 percent in 2016 and then 6 percent in 2020 (regarding ASC funding). This demographic is increasing, but the funding has remained the same. What can we do to get more Latino people to apply so we don’t have the same three groups of artists always being representative of a demographic?”

Alex Piñeres  
Beyond the Sound Bites participant

## **Access to Resources**

The community-wide shut down of performance spaces, galleries and studios due to COVID-19 had a particularly sudden and deep impact on Charlotte Mecklenburg's creative community in FY21. This experience hit ALAANA communities the hardest.

ASC joined forces with Hue House, Charlotte is Creative and Foundation For The Carolinas to provide Mecklenburg County creatives and organizations relief for lost wages through federal funding provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security, or CARES, Act. Through this process, we discovered there were stipulations with CARES funding. Among those, applicants had to demonstrate expenses incurred while running their business OR expenses they had paid having lost income. When ASC staff eliminated applications that were not eligible based on those two stipulations, it saw a racialized impact in the applicant pool. We also learned that financial insecurity meant many creatives faced losing their homes. This led us to partner with DreamKey Partners, a nonprofit focused on providing access to safe and affordable homes, to first evaluate barriers members of the creative gig economy faced when applying for rental and mortgage assistance and then, in March 2021, offer a special information session about newly released emergency funding for Charlotte residents impacted by the pandemic, with specific tips for how creative workers could document the impact of COVID-19 on their income.

## **Partnering to Serve Senior Residents**

Mecklenburg County residents, especially its senior community, were especially impacted by the pandemic. Social isolation and loneliness are major causes of health disparities among older populations. Because of the pandemic, older populations were encouraged to stay at home, where they were isolated from families, friends and activities. Older adults in high-risk zones were often limited to the option of virtual experiences.

ASC's Culture Blocks program partnered with Mecklenburg County's Senior Nutrition Center to serve senior residents by engaging five local artists to create 1,750 age-friendly activity kits. Mecklenburg County Senior Nutrition distributed the kits to clients in their homebound program and Grab and Go programs.

## CULTURE BLOCKS CONTINUED TO PIVOT VIRTUALLY AND ENGAGE RESIDENTS

“We were able to offer diverse artistic programming to our community. This continues to be an amazing benefit to us, as artists and to the community as a whole. As a small cultural organization, this is a great opportunity to be creative about offering different and unique concepts to the community, such as the cross-cultural, cross-genres collaborations we were able to incorporate as part of this program. The community welcomed our concept with open arms. The whole virtual programming world keeps changing due to COVID conditions. Just when we thought we were done doing virtual programs and that the community were a bit tired of them, then there is the Delta variant making us change plans again. I think the learning here is to stay fluid, flexible and ready to adapt, either from in person programs to virtual, or from virtual to in-person. This is important in order to keep the audience engaged.”

- ANA LUCIA DIVINS, CRISS CROSS MANGOSAUCE



creative access



*Local dance company Barre Belle.*

COURTESY NOEL PIPKIN.



*Barre Belle provides access to dance by working with community partners and utilizing local community centers.*

## CONTINUING TO REACH HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES

Barre Belle, a dance company founded by Noel Pipkin, is “designed to expose and provide universal access to the art of dance by way of local community centers and schools.” Throughout the pandemic, Barre Belle worked with community partners like Freedom Schools, Salvation Army, Boys & Girls Club, Charlotte Community Services Association, Ronald McDonald House and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to assure that students maintained opportunities to explore movement for both their physical and mental health. They offered online dance classes in ballet, yoga and modern dance, distributed dance activity packets, read dance stories to young students, and as safety allowed, held classes in-person. Their work was supported by a \$3,000 ASC Cultural Vision Grant.

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### 3 Identifying goals for advancing equity with corresponding metrics to be adopted for fiscal year 2022.

#### Advancing Equity

ASC identified three ways to advance equity during fiscal year 2022: 1) marketing of funding opportunities through community partnerships; 2) developing new application processes to capture better demographic data and; 3) creating new grant opportunities that respond to needs expressed by ALAANA creatives and organizations.

Corresponding metrics for these goals were not identified in FY21.

A key learning from the COVID-19 pandemic is that the virtual environment ASC leaned into because of social distancing measures created new opportunities to connect with creatives who may have thought ASC did not have funding opportunities for them. Through community partnerships, creatives who had never sought ASC funding discovered ASC does have grantmaking programs to support their work. Fostering partnerships with Charlotte is Creative, Hue House and the Latin American Coalition have been key to this success. ASC must continue to forge new partnerships and host additional grant workshops outside of traditional spaces to encourage participation in the grant application process by ALAANA creatives and organizations.

ASC also realized its application forms did not adequately allow us to track investments across all dimensions of equity. ASC had not consistently track a grant-seeking organization or creative individual's personal demographic characteristics or the intended audiences. The shift to include these questions consistently across all applications is helping ASC better track grant recipients and their audiences across a variety of equity dimensions (ethnic/racial, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.).

ASC's past work fostering ALAANA creatives and organizations has had limited success. In the convening of this group participants, many expressed a need for sustained, multi-year funding. To meet this need, ASC must evaluate its current grantmaking programs and develop new opportunities. One such program is the Founders Grant, an initiative being developed to accelerate emerging non-profits and creative enterprises. This program would provide unrestricted support at the early stages of organizational development, as well as dedicated funding to underwrite capacity building initiatives like marketing or fundraising. ASC hopes to raise funding for a program pilot in FY22 and start its first cohort in FY23.





## SECOND BLACK WOMAN NAMED ASC PRESIDENT IN 21 YEARS .

*Krista Terrell, APR, was named ASC President in April 2021.*

She is the second Black woman to lead the organization. *Harriet Sanford* was the first Black woman President and led ASC from 2000-2004.



## 4 Capturing demographics (race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+) and addressing functions of Advisory Council Members

ASC Advisory Councils were established in 2016 in response to resident feedback seeking broader and deeper community representation. Advisory Council members are an extension of ASC's listening to and learning from community and serve as two-way conduits in their respective communities. They educate and inform their neighbors of ASC-supported programming, artists and ideas. They also provide input, feedback, and recommendations to ASC's Board to ensure cultural offerings are aligned with community needs.

While ASC sought from the beginning to ensure Advisory Councils memberships broadly reflected the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, data supporting this intention was not originally recorded.

That changed in FY21, when ASC began surveying Advisory Council members to capture membership demographics, including age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and veteran status.

Through the inaugural survey, ASC learned that 64.29% of Advisory Council members in FY21 were white, while 28.57% of members were Black. The combined representation of Asian, Latino and individuals who identify with two or more races was 7.14%.

The survey also showed that 69.05 percent of members identified as female and 30.95% identified as male. Only 6.98% of members identified as LGBTQ+.

While ASC met its goal of capturing demographics and addressing functions of Advisory Council members, the data demonstrated that there is still work to do to ensure the councils are truly reflective of the broader Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

## 5 Providing Equity and Bias training for ASC Board, Staff, Public Art Commission and Advisory Councils along with grant panelists.

In October 2021, ASC's board, staff and Advisory Council members participated in an equity and bias training led by Deborah Walker, a consultant based in Charlotte who works with local, national, and global organizations to help them achieve their goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Deborah focused on implicit bias - an unconscious preference that inhibits a person's capacity for impartial judgment - and how that can undermine the progress in dismantling racism and inequities.

ASC's board, staff and Advisory Council members learned and discussed topics ranging from microaggressions and examining relationships between individual biases to institutional, structural and systemic racism, and contemplated how and why it is in each of our best interests to work for racial equity. The training provided ASC's Board and staff some foundational understanding on which to continue to build their capacity. It was also the first such training in which Advisory Councils participated and created a framework for their continued work in equity and bias training.

A training workshop was planned for the Public Art Commission and was not executed.

### **Grant Panel orientation that incorporates Animating Democracy**

ASC frames a focus on equity, cultural competency and inclusion during the orientation process for individuals serving on ASC grant panels using tools from Animating Democracy, a project of Americans for the Arts. This framework helps advance the role of the arts in fostering resident participation and social change and better integrate the talents of artists and cultural organizations toward helping people engage in civic and community life.

Below are examples of questions ASC has prepared panelists to think about when reviewing an application:

- How is the applicant connected to the community that is the focus of the work? What history and relationship does the artist or provider have with the knowledge, traditions, and practices they are engaging in? What is the facilitator's cultural relationship to the aesthetics and techniques of the project?
- If the artist(s) or organization(s) are not of the community or culture in which the work is rooted, how are they dealing with questions of privilege or potential for appropriation?

“Addressing implicit  
bias and building trust  
requires listening.  
We must probe for what  
we do not know.”

ASC ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

## INVESTING IN BLACK CULTURE

ALLturnatives Community Drumline approaches its drumline program not only as an effective way to engage Black youth, but as a community connecting tool. The drumline participates in local parades, competitions, festivals, cultural celebrations, charitable events and social justice demonstrations. It not only features traditional marching band percussion instruments, but West African drums like djembes and talking drums, too.

Michelle Wyms, founder of ALLturnative Community Drumline, says they are, “docents of African and African-American heritage.” Michelle has always sustained the drumline out of her own pocket and with the support of families involved in the program, but a \$7,200 FY21 ASC Cultural Vision Grant has helped the organization invest in new instruments to keep the music going and, in a documentary, celebrate their work in the community.



*ALLturnatives Community Drumline engages Black youth through its drumline program and participation in local events.*



invested engagement

*ALLturnatives Community Drumline.*

PHOTO COURTESY MICHELLE WYMS

## 6 Providing submission of Bio or CV/Resume, statement of interest or video to increase access for smaller organizations and creative individuals

Providing the option to submit a Bio and Video of Interest in lieu of a Letter of Interest and a Curriculum Vitae or Resume is an example of ASC's Public Art staff identifying and eliminating barriers for artists who have historically had limited access to the public art field, education, and resources. Public Art staff implemented these options in FY21. Bios allow artists to speak to select artistic accomplishments as opposed to providing a chronological listing of all experience and education. This option is extremely beneficial for artists who have not been trained in institutions and/or don't have a great deal of public art experience. Also, providing artists the opportunity to submit a video of interest increases access for artists not experienced in writing for a panel. This option is also available for ASC's Cultural Vision Grant applicants.

### WHY A RAPPER AND A VIOLINIST WALKING ONTO A STAGE IS NOTEWORTHY

Singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Quisol grew up in Charlotte but had never been to the Blumenthal until he was tabbed to perform there as part of NoteWorthy, the innovative series presented by WDAV Classical Public Radio and FAIR PLAY Music Equity Initiative that pairs local musicians with classically trained musicians for concerts that blend diverse musical styles. He played in the band at North Mecklenburg High School, but never heard his hometown orchestra in his hometown's concert hall.

Will Keible, WDAV's Director of Marketing and Corporate Support, was a participant in the second cohort of Self to Systems, a cultural equity training program offered by ASC that is designed and facilitated by Jasmine Hines and co-facilitated by Patrice Funderburg. Inspired by his experience, Will approached FAIR PLAY to develop a project that supports local ALAANA artists and builds community through the power of classical music, but not classical music alone. The result is a curated concert series that breaks ground, fosters collaboration, and brings communities together by fusing classical music with other genres, including but not limited to hip hop, jazz, gospel, and world music. ASC invested \$5,100 in WDAV through its Cultural Vision Grant program.

## 7 Providing Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals in English and Spanish

While this is an ambition of ASC's, it was not financially feasible in FY21. We continue to explore options and look to secure funding to fill this gap due to an increased demand of Latin-/a/x/e/o artists and organizations seeking funding from ASC.

### ASC FELLOWSHIPS

#### Turning Pandemic Downtime into Music

Charlotte's Tony Arreaza has a process for putting out an album. It includes making videos of a couple of songs and releasing those in advance of the album.

"It's very typical when you release a full album to release one single a few months before the whole album," said the Charlotte musician. "I'm trying to create a buzz."

An ASC Creative Renewal Fellowship helped generate that buzz. The \$10,000 fellowship helped fund production of the video for "Soñando Despierto," ("Daydreaming"), the second single from his band's album that highlights the breadth of Latin-a/o/x/e musical talent in Charlotte.

"When the pandemic hit, musicians were the first ones to shut down and the last ones to get back up," Arreaza said. "We do what we do for passion - not the money - because we could do so many other things and make more money."

When the pandemic hit, Arreaza suddenly found himself with time on his hands.

"I basically taught myself how to produce an album," he said. "I started buying a bunch of equipment. My wife was like, 'Tony, this doesn't make any sense. You are not working, but you are spending all this money.'"

"Once I was awarded the grant, it made all the sense in the world."

Writing new material, recording an album, involving other musicians - it suddenly seemed like it was meant to be. "Musicians - we weren't playing, we weren't making money, we weren't doing what we loved," he said. "That's when I decided that I wanted to feature or collaborate with different Latin bands in Charlotte. And that was a wonderful thing."



## Following Her Passion Leads Artist to the Right Track

Irisol Gonzalez dates her first artistic experience back to kindergarten, when she would use her mom’s makeup to create landscapes.

Everything pointed to an artist in the making. She had her parents’ support, but Gonzalez also felt the pressure of being a first-generation college student. So, she decided to study something “more solid than an art career.”

After graduation, she got a job at a mutual fund company. One fateful day, she was assigned to draw a poster for her team.

“I spent like five hours on that poster,” she said. “They gave me some markers, and I was happier those five hours than I had been the entire nine months that I had been at that company.”

There was no turning back. In 2017, Gonzalez became a fulltime artist. Three years later, she was awarded a \$5,000 ASC Emerging Creators Fellowship.

Gonzalez used her award to purchase materials and work on her “Machismo Series,” which focuses on sexism in Latin American culture promoted and maintained by women. In 2021, The Mint Museum exhibited her work from that series.

“When I got the fellowship, it was a solidifying moment,” she said. “The effort that I’ve put into being a better artist, in terms of what I see for myself, was recognized, and not only recognized, but also funded. That was the reassurance that I needed to know that I’m on the right track.”





# partnerships built



*Public art collaborators Unique Patton (left) and Tom Stanley.*

COURTESY UNIQUE PATTON AND TOM STANLEY.

## 8 Creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement for Public Art

After further review, ASC Public Art staff determined that a separate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement for public art was not necessary. ASC's Cultural Equity Statement outlines the inequities Public Art staff seeks to address through its revision of public art commissioning policies and processes.



*(Left) Artist Tom Stanley and collaborator Unique Patton. (Right) Artwork Stanley created with CATS for the Tom Hunter light rail station.*

## BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH PUBLIC ART

At first blush, you might not guess that Unique Patton and Tom Stanley have much in common.

Unique is a Black design student at N.C. State University. Tom is a white retired college professor. Unique's career is just taking off; Tom jokes that his is in a cargo container floating out to sea.

But for all their differences, there is one significant similarity between the two: They've got a penchant for public art projects that inspire communities.

Two new bus shelters will be installed in Charlotte's Hidden Valley neighborhood in 2023. Both will feature artistic panels designed by Unique and Tom, who ASC commissioned to design elements to enhance safety and walkability along Tom Hunter Road.

Since middle school, Unique and her family have lived in Hidden Valley. It was then - in 2012 - that Unique met Tom.

He had partnered with Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) to produce art for the Tom Hunter light rail station. He enlisted help from local students, who shared with him the best things about living in their neighborhood. Unique wrote a poem about her community, and Tom incorporated her words into his design.

For the Tom Hunter Road project, Tom wanted someone in Hidden Valley who could reconnect him to the community. He remembered Unique.

In August 2019, they got to work. Unique collected stories and quotes from Hidden Valley neighbors; their words will be featured on the shelters' panels.

As they await the shelters' installation, they've reflected on the nature of their partnership, which has evolved into a bond between mentee and mentor.

"It's always in my heart to help minority communities," Unique said. "I'm super blessed to, in a sense, record my community's voice in a visual piece that other people can see."

## 9 Developing a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) artist registry for public art projects and expanding the pool of regional artists

A BIPOC artist registry for public art projects was not completed and was included in ASC's FY22 goals.

ASC's Prequalified Regional Artist Directory serves as an internal resource to identify North and South Carolina artists who can design/build creative features for City, County, and private projects that may or may not be associated with larger scale public art projects. The pool is used to select artists for projects with 1% project budgets of \$100,000 or less and does not replace the RFQ process for public art opportunities with budgets over \$100,000. The Public Art Commission (PAC) utilizes this prequalified directory to match artists with opportunities commensurate with skills and experience necessary for the specific project scope. Sixty-seven (67) artists were pre-approved for the directory, and two artists were commissioned from the directory FY21:

**MEREDITH CONNELLY** was commissioned in February 2021 for the Mecklenburg County Ezell Farms Community Park in Mint Hill. Connelly is in design development for free-standing sculptures along the trail and throughout the park that provide an element of wayfinding.

**GEORGIE NAKIMA** See page 31.

## CULTURAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ASC's Cultural Leadership Training Program, a 9-month program that develops individuals into productive volunteers and board candidates for cultural organizations across our community, did not happen. The program resumed in 2022.



### 3 ALAANA CREATIVES WERE COMMISSIONED FOR PUBLIC ART PROJECTS TOTALING \$1,008,050\*

**NOVA JIANG** was commissioned in September 2020 for the Mecklenburg County Northeast Community Resource Center Public Art Opportunity. Jiang is creating an impactful, large scale, highly visible artwork capable of directing pedestrian traffic to the customer entrance of the facility. The commissioning budget was \$451,350.

**TIFF MASSEY** was commissioned in October 2020 for the Mecklenburg County's new Main Library. Massey's artwork will activate a large, central, entrance facing wall located adjacent to a sloped walkway between the ground and upper lobby. Massey participated in a community engagement in May 2021 to gather inspiration from the community for the artwork's design. The commissioning budget was \$460,700.

**GEORGIE NAKIMA** was selected from ASC's Regional Artist Directory in May 2021 for Mecklenburg County's Independence Park. Nakima was commissioned to create a mural acknowledging the historical significance of the park, celebrate a beloved green space within the city, inspire continued use of the environment and celebrate the park's connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods and urban environment of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The commissioning budget was \$96,000.

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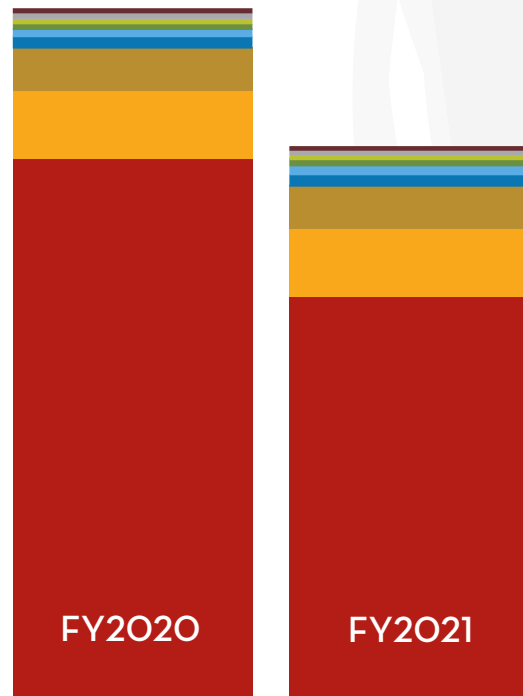
*\*Commissioning budgets for public art projects include the artist's fee, design, engineering, fabrication, installation and other project-related costs.*

# in progress

During fiscal year 2022, ASC focused on the following items on our journey to equity:

- Development of a Cultural Equity Language Bank
- Creation of Regional Artists Directory Call to Artists to further expand the directory
- Facilitation of workshops to build the capacity of local/regional artists and ALAANA creatives
- Planning/development of the ALAANA Creatives Registry
- Continued review of policies and processes to ensure equitable opportunities for all artists
- Equity and bias training for Public Art Commission





## ASC INVESTMENTS IN FY21

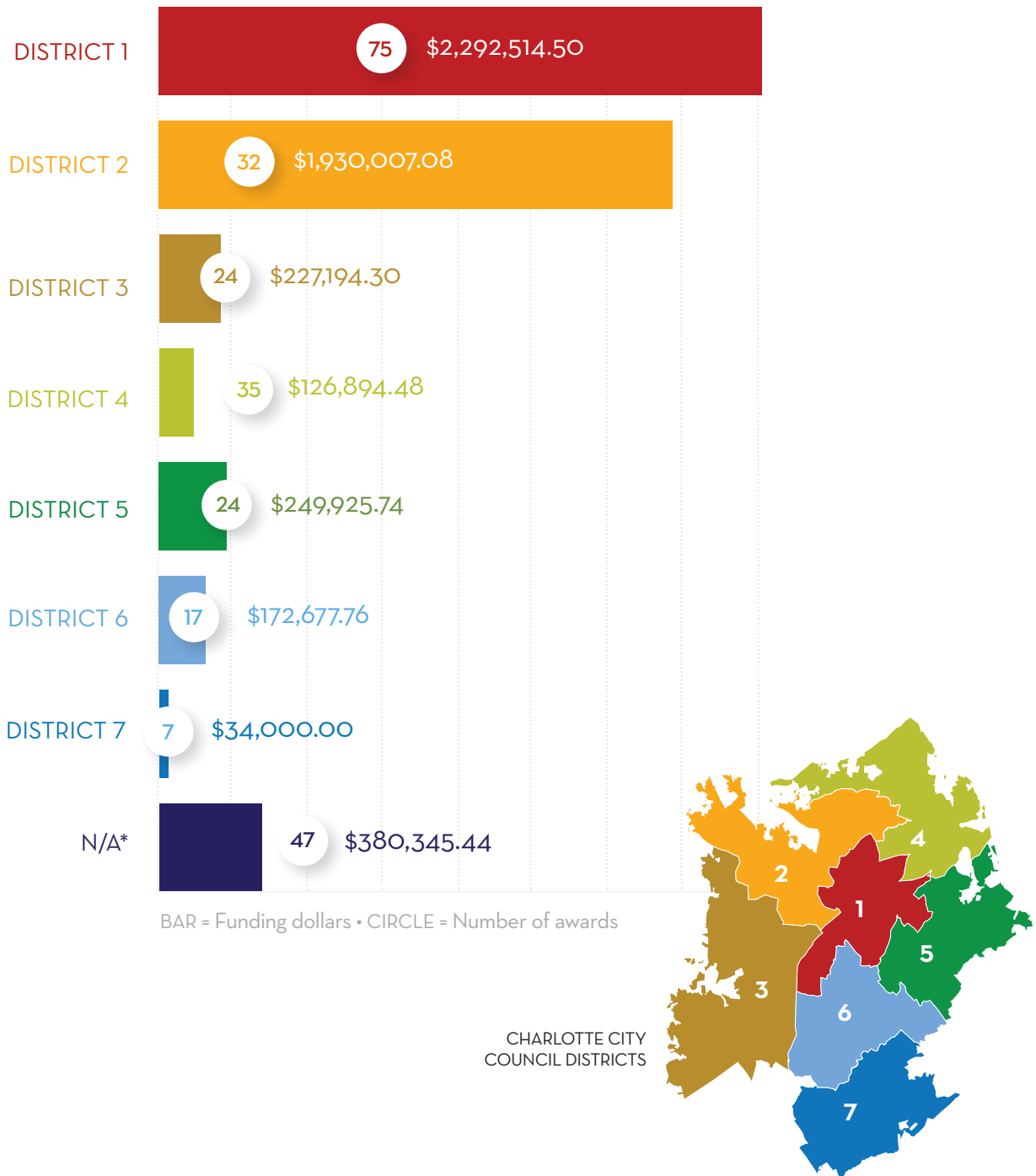
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Operating Support Grants</b> <i>Provides an unrestricted investment in the general operations, administration and programs of eligible arts, science and history and heritage organizations.</i></li> </ul>	\$5,932,867.00 / 32	\$4,300,000.00 / 37
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Culture Blocks Program Investment</b></li> </ul>	\$838,969.00 / 82	\$561,521.10 / 75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cultural Vision Grant</b></li> </ul>	\$293,230.00 / 56	\$286,910.08 / 50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creative Renewal Fellowship</b></li> </ul>	\$70,000.00 / 7	\$80,000.00 / 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional Artist Support Grants</b></li> </ul>	\$71,499.40 / 42	\$75,004.58 / 42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technical Assistance Grants</b></li> </ul>	\$73,817.00 / 17	\$62,173.00 / 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emerging Creator Fellowships</b></li> </ul>	\$20,000.00 / 4	\$30,000.00 / 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mecklenburg Resiliency Fund</b> <i>Supports artists and performers living in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that have been financially impacted by COVID-19.</i></li> </ul>	\$71,500.00 / 143	\$15,500.00 / 31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Professional Development Scholarship Grants</b></li> </ul>	\$14,291.00 / 16	\$2,450.50 / 5

\*INVESTMENT DOLLARS / AWARDS

## ASC INVESTMENT VIA CITY OF CHARLOTTE DISTRICT

DATA REFLECTS WHERE THE GRANTEE LIVES

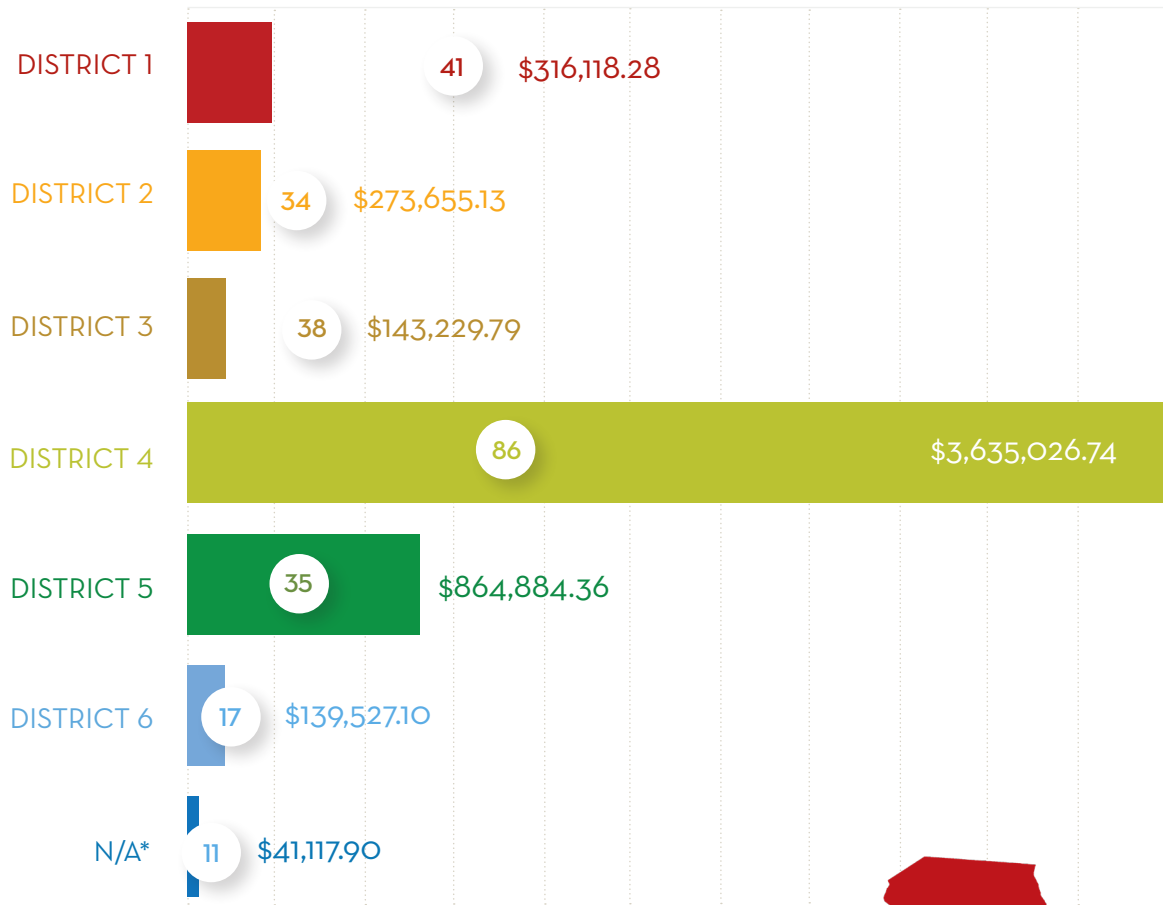
\*N/A - represents Mecklenburg Towns + Outside of Mecklenburg County



## ASC INVESTMENT VIA MECKLENBURG COUNTY DISTRICT

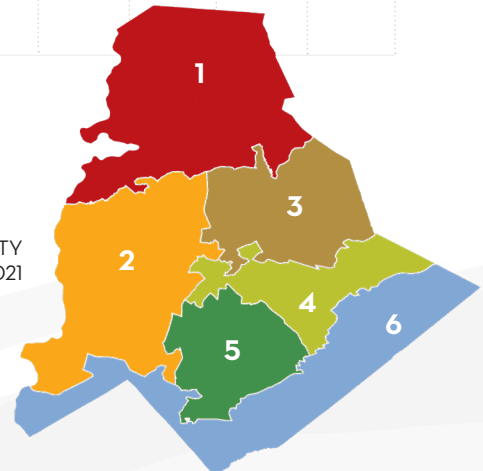
DATA REFLECTS WHERE THE GRANTEE LIVES

\*N/A - represents Mecklenburg Towns + Outside of Mecklenburg County



BAR = Funding dollars • CIRCLE = Number of awards

MECKLENBURG COUNTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS 2021

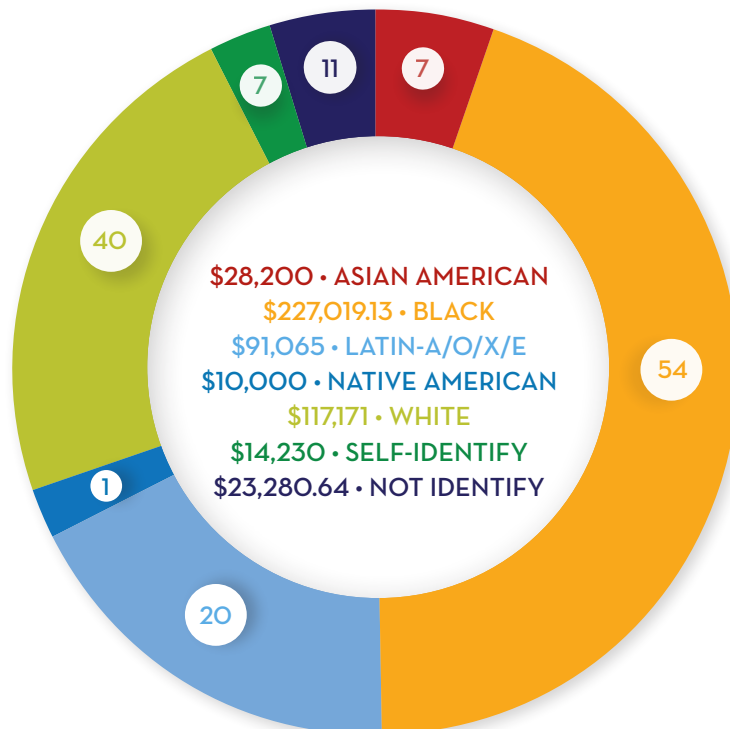


## ASC INVESTMENT IN INDIVIDUALS & ORGANIZATIONS



## ASC INVESTMENT IN CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS BY RACE & ETHNICITY

BAND = Funding dollars • CIRCLE = Number of awards



## ASC GRANT PANEL DEMOGRAPHICS • FISCAL YEAR 2021

Grant review panels are critical to ASC's work of awarding grants. Panels are composed of members of the community who volunteer their time, passion and experience to review grant application materials and make recommendations to select the strongest applicants for each funding opportunity.

### TOTAL GRANT PANELISTS • 64 PARTICIPANTS



### ARTIST SUPPORT GRANT PANEL • 17 PARTICIPANTS



### CULTURAL VISION GRANT PANEL • 29 PARTICIPANTS



### CULTURE BLOCKS PANEL • 8 PARTICIPANTS



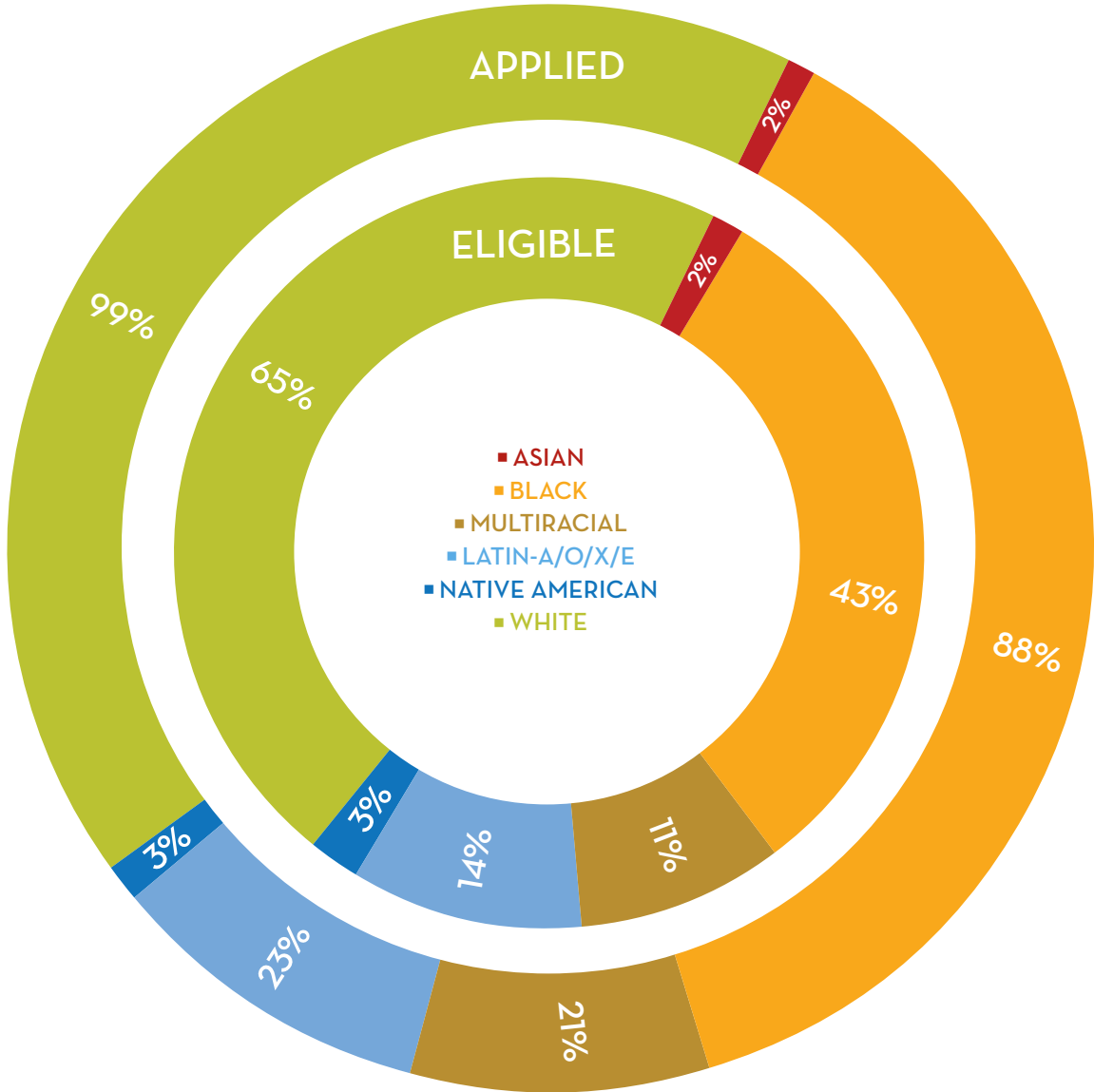
### FELLOWSHIP PANEL • 12 PARTICIPANTS



■ ASIAN AMERICAN ■ BLACK ■ LATIN-A/O/X/E ■ WHITE

# FEDERAL CARES FUNDING DATA

Data on Federal Funding That Supported Arts & Culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security, or CARES, Act



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.

## editorial credit

### Cultural Equity Report Contributors

**ASC Staff** • *Randella Foster, Eboni Lewis, Bernie Petit, Adam Santalla Pierce, Krista Terrell, Robert Touchstone*

**ASC Board** • *Susan Patterson (Board Chair), Tim Miller, Samantha Sosa*

### Cultural Equity Report External Readers

*Tamara Brothers, Deputy Director, North Carolina Arts Council*

*Kaiwen Cheng, Chairman and President, Queen City Robotics*

*Valaida Fullwood, Author, Founding Member, New Generation of African American Philanthropists, and Principal Architect and Vision Keeper, The Soul of Philanthropy*

*Edwin Peacock III, President, Pomfret Financial*

## 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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