



For Immediate Release
August 31, 2022

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Pandemic Spurs New Career Advancement Program & Grant Opportunity for Artists and Creative Small Business Owners

Denver - [Colorado Business Committee for the Arts](#) (CBCA)'s [Advancing Creatives](#) program has accelerated from a series of responsive workshops during the pandemic to a comprehensive, cohort-based model to provide professional development and business support to artists and creative entrepreneurs. To help arts workers disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, CBCA offered dozens of webinars and resources in 2020 and 2021, which evolved into the inaugural Advancing Creatives Intensive (ACI) in 2022 and distribution of nearly \$10,000 in Career Advancement Grants, funded by [Colorado Creative Industries](#) (CCI), to participants in the first cohort.

CBCA's Advancing Creatives Intensive (ACI) is a six-module curriculum designed to be a launch pad for creative professionals who want to articulate and take practical steps to achieve their business goals. ACI is focused on tangible business growth and planning for artistic careers, as well as building business skills. The curriculum includes goal and career planning, portfolios, marketing, funding, legal issues and business plan essentials. The cohort approach incorporates peer learning, networking and accountability. By completing the program, participants were eligible and prepared to apply for a Career Advancement Grant, funded by CCI, to support their ongoing work.

There was a competitive application process in March 2022 for the inaugural cohort of 23 participants. The cohort, listed below, included artists in a range of creative disciplines, from painting, sculpture and textiles to filmmaking, dance, theatre and music.

- [Bushenga AaronAli](#)
- [Katy Casper](#)
- [Ben Coleman](#)
- [Aundra Coleman-Howard](#)
- [Jhonpierre Contreras](#)
- [Courtney Cotton](#)
- [Lily Curley](#)
- [Alissa Davies](#)
- [Leilani Derr](#)
- [Kevin Douglas](#)
- [Kate Fitzpatrick](#)
- [Marcos Garibay](#)
- [Hart Krypilo](#)
- [Anaclaudia Magalhaes](#)
- [Johnny Miller](#)
- [Edgar L. Page](#)
- [Heather Schulte](#)
- [Elizabeth Stanbro](#)
- [Autumn T. Thomas](#)
- [Shelley Thomas](#)
- [Tricia Waddell](#)
- [Clifford Whitehouse](#)
- [Mar Williams](#)

ACI sessions ran from April through June 2022, hosted at venues that also offer resources for artists and small business owners, such as The People's Building, Denver Metro Small Business Development Center, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design and Mi Casa Resource Center. Almost every session was located in a state-certified [Creative District](#). Sessions featured guest speakers, most of whom were also artists or focused their professional work on the creative industries, such as visual artist Chloe Duplessis and singer/creative producer Leah Podizmek, or arts-focused businesses like Creative Law Network, Artwork Archive and Transforming Creatives.

“The Advancing Creatives Intensive helped me define my goals more clearly and gave me the tools to talk about my work and what I stand for as an artist in a more compelling and focused way,” shared Tricia Waddell.

“The ACI was an amazing experience that opened my eyes to a world of opportunity as a creative and as a business. The connections I made with the members of the cohort have also been amazing,” said Marcos Garibay. “Each speaker enthusiastically shared their journey and expertise with us and their talks inspired me to take bigger and bolder steps.”

Through support from CCI, cohort members were able to apply for a Career Advancement Grant up to \$500 to continue the investment in their arts business and creative career. The goal of the funding is to assist awardees in achieving tangible business benefits, such as increased revenue, new audiences / markets, or improved management practices.

Twenty of the 23 cohort members applied for this grant in July 2022. As of the end of August, all 20 applicants received funding totaling \$9,717 in career advancement support. Grant awards supported items like website upgrades, new accounting or inventory software, upgraded music equipment, professional artwork photography or videography, art fair booth equipment, marketing consultants and travel for professional development opportunities.

CBCA is already starting to plan for the next iteration of the Advancing Creatives Intensive in 2023, which may include an abbreviated weekend-long version in the Pikes Peak region and an expanded curriculum in the Denver metro area.

Meanwhile, CBCA continues to offer regular educational workshops and resources to artists and creative entrepreneurs. CBCA has administered Colorado Attorneys for the Arts (CAFTA) since 2015, which is a referral service to connect low-income artists and creative entities with pro bono legal services. CAFTA also offers legal workshops and clinics year-round, both in-person and virtually. In addition, CBCA partners with numerous arts organizations and businesses to offer professional development workshops, such as “[Keeping Your Books Clean When Art is Messy: Tax & Accounting Basics for Artists](#)” with Kaleigh Canavan, EA on October 26. Up-to-date information can also be found on the webpages for [Advancing Creatives](#) and [Colorado Attorneys for the Arts](#).

“I feel very grateful to be involved with CBCA. This intensive empowered me with a deeper connection to the resources available to me as an artist and entrepreneur,” said Autumn T. Thomas. “I now have a greater range of tools and access to resources needed to excel as an artist.”

CBCA thanks our generous program sponsors who made Advancing Creatives possible: [Colorado Creative Industries](#), [Kenneth King Foundation](#), [Meow Wolf Denver](#) and [Ent Credit Union](#).

Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) advances Colorado’s creative economy by connecting business and the arts through arts engagement, advocacy, training, research, and volunteerism. CBCA is a 501c3 nonprofit membership organization of leading Colorado companies who recognize the link between cultural vitality and economic success. Learn more at www.cbca.org.

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