

Foreword

Amber Sharples, Executive Director

The start of fiscal year 2025 was an exciting period of momentum for the Oklahoma Arts Council and the arts sector. Organizations statewide were beginning to receive critical relief from the historic \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds invested by state leaders to rebuild the arts. Our staff was making progress administering nearly 200 grant awards made possible by the investment. To capture the impact of the grants, we documented stories of more than a dozen grantees. I invite you to view these “Recharge the Arts” stories now on our website at arts.ok.gov to see and hear firsthand how this funding is making a difference for the future of our sector.



Building on the momentum of dispersing ARPA funds, the start of the fiscal year saw our team putting pieces in place for our two flagship development programs, Leadership Arts and the Oklahoma Arts Conference, both offered every two years. We also looked ahead at major visual and public art projects coming to fruition in FY2025, including the reopening of the Betty Price Gallery in its new space at the Capitol.

While the start of the year was marked by momentum, the end of the fiscal year was defined by uncertainty, as our agency and the organizations we serve endured concerns about federal arts funding. The fallout from this unpredictability led to our difficult decision to postpone the 2025 Oklahoma Arts Conference and suspend art exhibitions in the Capitol’s rotating galleries. Restrictions on agency hiring also began impacting our program offerings.

Despite uncertainties with federal arts funding, our agency continued looking ahead at what we could accomplish for Oklahomans. In spring 2025, we introduced our new brand identity and logo—creating a stronger connection to our role in state government. We started planning our next five-year strategic plan. And, we began commemorating our 60th anniversary as an agency.

Through successes and challenges, our six-decade legacy leveraging the arts to strengthen our state is one we will build on in the next fiscal year and beyond.



In 2025, staff viewed renovations in progress at the Jim Thorpe Building, the agency's longtime office building.



About the Oklahoma Arts Council

History

Established 60 years ago, in 1965, by Governor Henry Bellmon and the Oklahoma State Legislature, the Oklahoma Arts Council was created as part of a national movement to bring the arts to communities across America. For more than half a century, the Oklahoma Arts Council has carried out its mission through various innovative programs created to meet the evolving needs of Oklahomans. Reflected in this impact report are programs and activities through which accomplishments of the agency were achieved in its most recent fiscal year.

How We Make an Impact

Oklahoma Arts Council programs and activities are designed around one or more functions of the agency. This report highlights our work under the following functions:

Supporting the sector

Developing creative infrastructure

Educating a creative workforce

Preserving our heritage

➤ Supporting the Sector

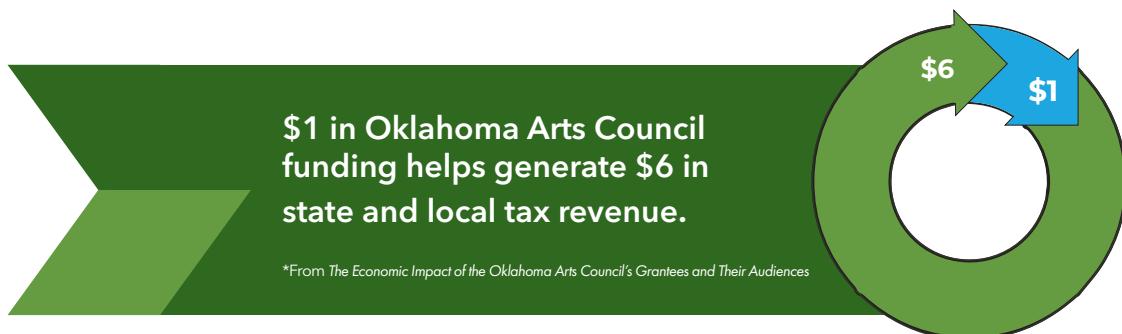
Oklahoma Arts Council grant funding makes arts programs possible in communities and schools across the state. A rigorous panel review process using national industry standards and community expertise ensures funded programs meet agency guidelines and are accountable to taxpayers. In FY25, we invested:

465 grants in
327 schools and organizations
across **112** Oklahoma communities

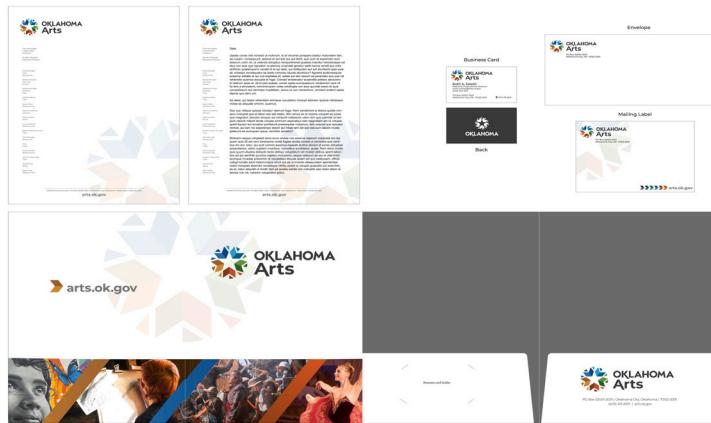
Return on Investment

The Oklahoma Arts Council leads in the support and development of a sector that produces excellent return-on-investment. According to a report released in 2017, Oklahoma Arts Council grantees and their audiences:

- Had a \$241 million impact*
- Generated \$22.9 million in state and local tax revenues*
- Supported more than 8,100 full-time equivalent jobs*



► Fiscal year 2025 brought **exciting changes**. New branding, an updated logo, and a new grants platform were introduced. The changes mean better service for Oklahomans.



► The state's ARPA investment is **rebuilding the sector**. Our #RechargeTheArts videos are showing how.



► We held Cornerstone Conversations across the state, getting **input from Oklahomans** to shape our new five-year strategic plan.

► Organizations are leveraging our new **Oklahoma Creative Aging Partnership Grants** to meet the wellness needs of a growing older adult population. Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) funding is making it possible.

➤ **Developing Creative Infrastructure**

The Oklahoma Arts Council is the backbone organization for creative infrastructure development. The agency's programs generate and equip leadership, provide expertise and technical assistance to the field, and broker valuable resources and relationships for the sector.



➤ Our **Leadership Arts XIII** class convened for four monthly spring sessions in different communities. Research-based curriculum designed by our agency equips members to leverage local arts assets for economic development, education, and quality of life. Altus, Woodward, Tishomingo, Ponca City, and many other communities were represented in the class.





➤ Health, aging, and social service organizations, teaching artists, and arts organizations attended our **Oklahoma Creative Aging Exchange III** event. They gained a valuable network and resources for serving older adults.

➤ We announced Enid as the host for the **2025 Oklahoma Arts Conference**, expecting to draw 400 Oklahomans for professional development. Uncertainties with federal funding forced us to **postpone** the event.

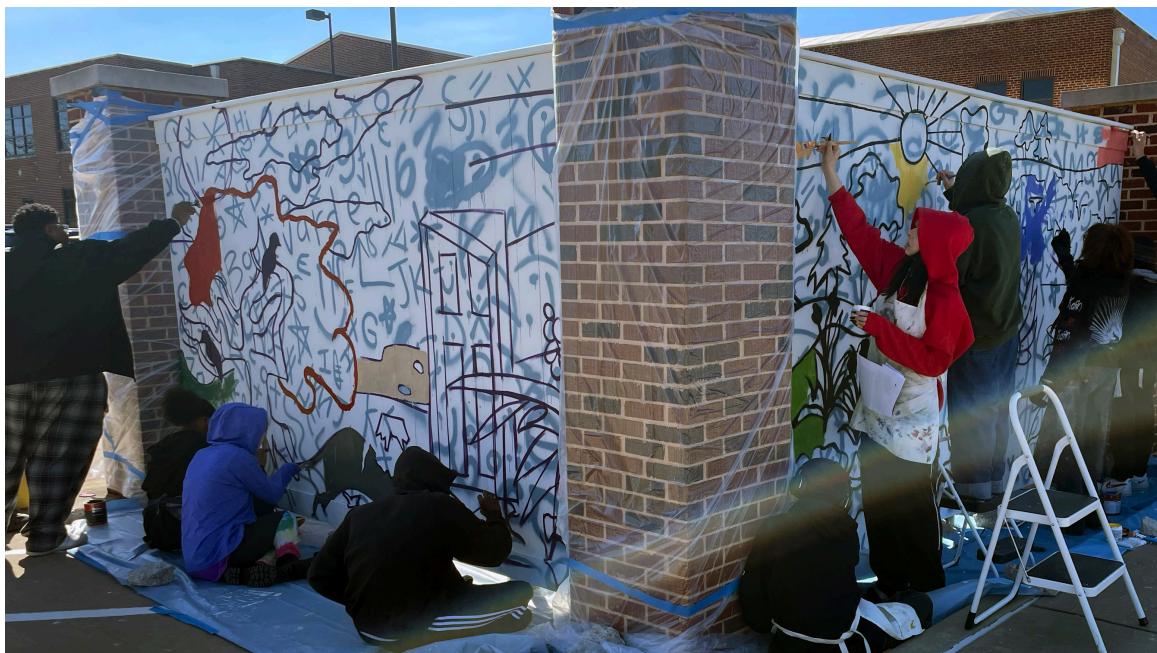


➤ In partnership with Oklahoma Main Street and more than a dozen statewide entities, our **Kickstart 66 Tour** brought resources to Route 66 communities ahead of the highway's centennial.



Educating a Creative Workforce

Through programs of the Oklahoma Arts Council, resources are made available to meet the educational needs of individuals of all ages and abilities. Research confirms the strong connection between arts education and improved academic outcomes in schools. Studies also show the benefits of community arts learning programs in the health and well-being of adults.



Our **Arts in Alternative Education Community Partnership Grants** are empowering nonprofit arts organizations to use their expertise and resources with schools where students are at greater risk of not graduating. The positive results of the program are clear:

Students and teachers vocalized the challenges of learning to work as a team. In the end, they noted collaboration as one of the most valuable takeaways from the project. - Edmond Boulevard Academy grant report

One student really came out of her shell. She was quiet most of the week, but towards the end, she asked if she could have a bigger role. Our quiet, reserved introvert stepped into the role and flourished. She came alive in a way her teachers said they have never seen from her before. - Painted Sky Opera grant report



▶ Staff **trained new groups of volunteer docents** to provide engaging educational tours centered on Oklahoma history, art, and government for thousands of visitors from around the world.

▶ We **convened arts educators from across the state** and provided them with tools to leverage our grants and programs during the school year.



▶ Jenks High School student Elisha Dalmeida was a **national finalist in the Poetry Out Loud** competition in Washington, D.C. Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the state's contest is made possible by the Oklahoma Arts Council in partnership with Oklahoma A+ Schools Institute.

► Preserving Our Heritage

The Oklahoma Arts Council is a steward of the history and heritage of the people of Oklahoma. The agency manages the collections of artwork at the Oklahoma State Capitol, administers the state's public art program, and commemorates Oklahomans who have influenced and shaped our state.



Former Governor George Nigh (l) with
Council member John Kennedy (r).



Left to right: Amber Sharples, Sen.
Adam Pugh, Gov. Kevin Stitt, Rep. Chad
Caldwell, Council Chair Kristie Buerger

► We reopened the **Betty Price Gallery** in its new second-floor Capitol location in February 2025. Current and former state leaders were among those attending the special ribbon-cutting. Home to the Oklahoma State Art Collection, the gallery's inaugural exhibition featured works by many of Oklahoma's most prominent visual artists.

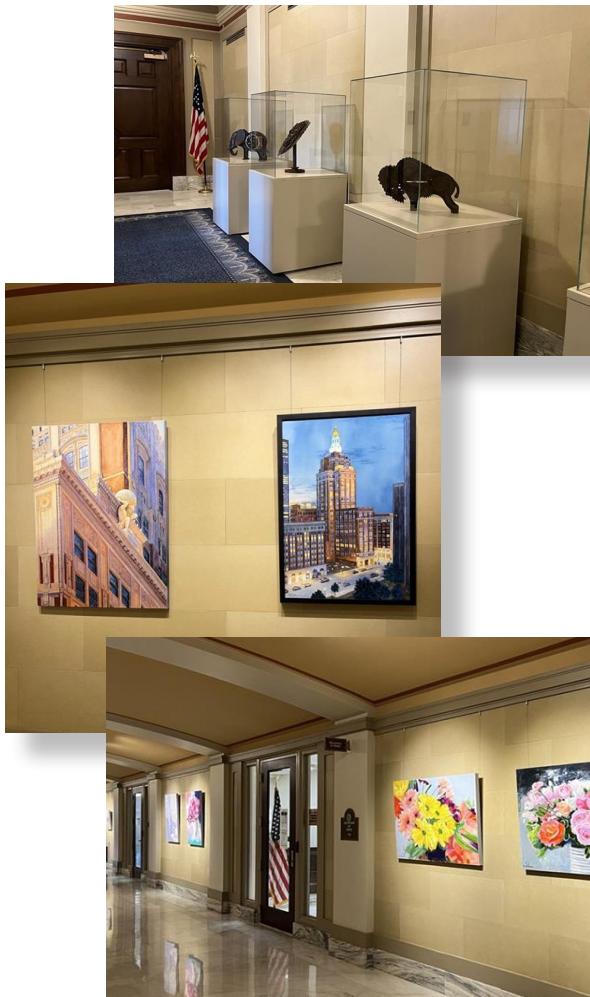


Wills' daughter, Carolyn Wills, and granddaughter, Andrea Ruby, received legislative citations.

With the Oklahoma Historical Society and Oklahoma Film & Music Office, we presented **Bob Wills Day** at the Capitol, commemorating the life and legacy of the "King of Western Swing." Wills' imprint on popular music can still be heard today. The day featured music and dancing under the rotunda, and recognitions of Wills, featuring his daughter and granddaughter, in the Oklahoma State Senate and Oklahoma House of Representatives.



Working with Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell, the agency organized a special Capitol exhibition of **artwork based on the official brand of the State of Oklahoma**. Titled "Imagining Oklahoma: Artists' Perspectives Inspired by the New State Brand," the exhibition featured quilts, ribbon work, beaded necklaces, and more. Artists incorporated interpretations of the state brand in their designs.



➤ We **restarted rotating exhibitions** of artwork by current Oklahoma artists in the North, East, and Governor's galleries at the Capitol—exhibitions were on hiatus during the Capitol restoration. However, late in the fiscal year, **the program was again suspended**, this time due to federal funding uncertainties and state agency staffing constraints.

➤ In the new, specially-designed storage area of the Capitol, our curatorial staff managed several state-owned collections of artwork, applying museum-level **expertise to care for and conserve** hundreds of priceless artworks belonging to the people of Oklahoma.



An Oklahoma Art in Public Places project partnered our agency with the Oklahoma Department of Labor for the commissioning of several paintings for their renovated offices in Oklahoma City. Artworks created through the project **celebrate Oklahoma's workforce**—our state's greatest asset.



Visual and Public Art Director Jaija Walsh (l) with Labor Commissioner Leslie Osborn (r)

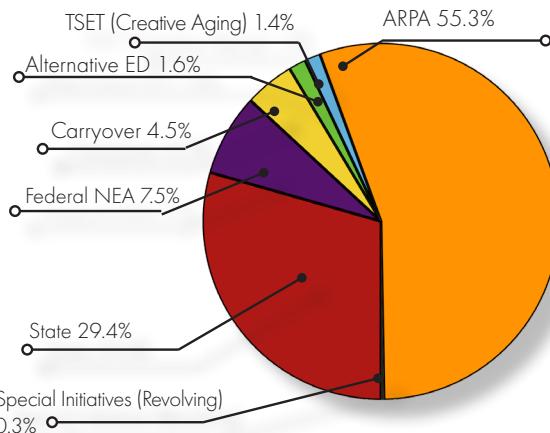
▶ Six public art installations along underpasses of Interstate 244 in Tulsa's Greenwood District neared completion in fiscal year 2025. The **Pathway to Hope Public Art Trail** is a project of our Oklahoma Art in Public Places program in partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The works commemorate themes of creativity, resilience, vision, justice, hope, and remembrance.



Oklahoma Arts Council FY25 Grants and Programs

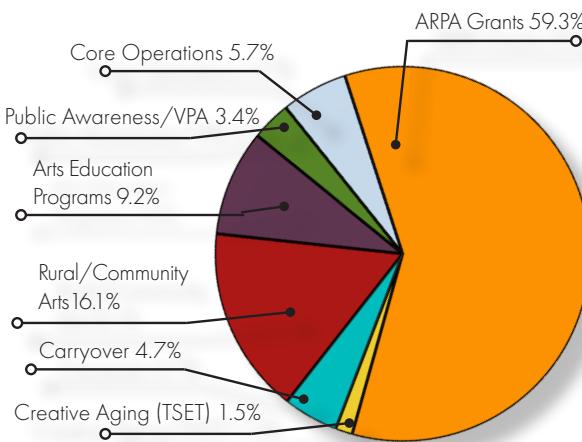
FY25 Funding Sources

State Appropriations	\$3,952,325
Federal NEA	1,002,100
Carryover (FY24)	606,582
Arts in Alternative Education	210,856
TSET (Creative Aging)	193,034
ARPA	7,429,403
Special Initiatives (Revolving)	36,345
Total	\$13,430,645



FY25 Expenditures by Program

Rural/Community Arts	\$2,063,308
Arts Education Programs	1,171,802
Core Operations/IT	732,718
Public Awareness/VPA	433,732
Carryover (FY24)	606,331
Creative Aging (TSET)	188,453
ARPA Grants	7,582,509
Total	\$12,778,853



State Appropriations

Appropriated funds from the Oklahoma State Legislature.

Federal NEA

State partnership grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Only available to the Oklahoma Arts Council as the state arts agency.

Carryover (FY24)

To be used for grants, travel expenses, professional fees, professional development, and contingency funds for agency relocation.

Arts in Alternative Education

Grant programs, partnerships, and services to provide vulnerable youth with high quality arts education experiences that increase classroom engagement and improve high school graduation rates.

TSET (Creative Aging)

Funding from the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) for creative aging programs.

ARPA

State leaders' investment of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to rebuild the arts sector.

Special Initiatives (Revolving)

Arts and Military Summit, Creative Aging program, and Visual and Public Art commissions.

Rural/Community Arts

Administration of grants for audience-based programs; administration of rural and community development grants and programs.

Arts Education Programs

Administration of grants and programs for: arts instruction in PreK-12 schools and arts instruction in community settings serving Oklahomans of all ages and abilities.

Core Operations/IT

Administration of agency mission, including oversight and evaluation of programs, fiscal management, compliance, implementation of staff work plans.

Public Awareness/VPA (Visual and Public Art)

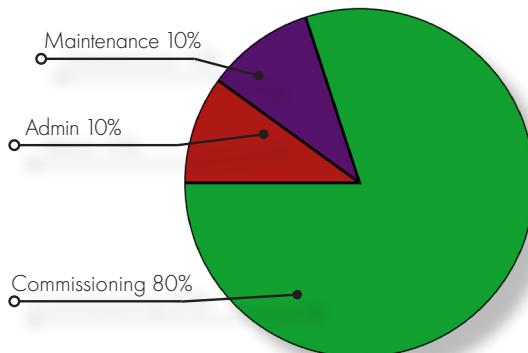
Administration of communications (digital and print publications, marketing activities, media relations, events). Administration of activities related to managing and preserving artwork at State Capitol.



Oklahoma Arts Council FY25 Art in Public Places

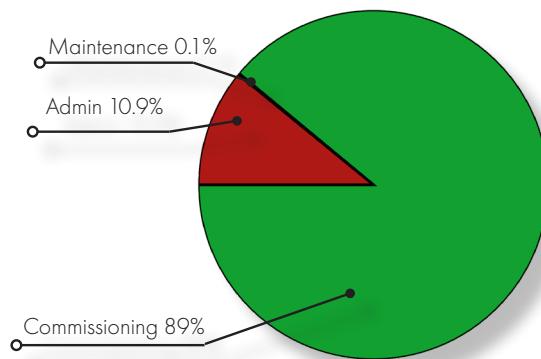
FY25 Art in Public Places Revenue

Administrative	\$200,408
Maintenance	200,408
Commissioning	1,603,260
<hr/>	
Balance	\$2,004,076
Fund Balance	3,571,155
<hr/>	
Total	\$5,575,231



FY25 Art in Public Places Expenditures

Administrative	\$125,565
Maintenance	1,296
Commissioning	1,022,888
<hr/>	
Total	\$1,149,749



Art in Public Places Program (AIPP) Administrative
Funds dedicated to the administration of the Art in Public Places program support the creation of educational materials and dedication events for completed artwork. Funds are also applied to workforce expenditures to administer the program.

AIPP Maintenance
The program reserves funds from each Art in Public Places assessment for ongoing maintenance needs of the Oklahoma Public Art Collection, a strategic investment for the long-term preservation of the artwork.

AIPP Commissioning
Commissioning funds are utilized for the preservation of existing work on site and/or the creation of new artwork for the participating capital expenditure project.



Oklahoma Arts Council Members

Barbara Braught, Chair
Duncan

Stephania Grober
Tulsa

John Kennedy, Vice-Chair
Oklahoma City

Rebecca Marks Jimerson
Tulsa

Jake Yunker, Secretary
Oklahoma City

Vi Le
Yukon

Melinda Adwon
Tulsa

Carrie Leonard
Oklahoma City

Saxon Allton
Oklahoma City

Lauren C. Reinmiller
Tulsa

Deanna Cardenas
Oklahoma City

Emily Smith
Altus

Shannon Crites
Ardmore

Sally Starling
Oklahoma City

Lucy Fusselman
Oklahoma City



Oklahoma Arts Council Staff

Executive Director
Amber Sharples

Finance Assistant
Sterling Hayes

Deputy Director
Chandra Boyd

Executive Administrator
Calen Kinnaman

Director of Visual and Public Art
Jarica Walsh

Finance Director
April Kowardy

Director of Arts Education
Jennifer Allen-Barron

Collections Manager
Liam Larson

Arts Education Assistant
Paige Busick

Director of Art in Public Places
Erin Latham, PhD

Web/Publications Director
Scott Cowan

Art in Public Places Program Assistant
Sarah Pugh

ARPA Grants Assistant
Madeline Curry

Grants and Programs Associate
Martyna Sandoval

Director of Marketing and
Communications
Joel Gavin

Grants Director
Thomas Tran

Director of Community Arts
and Workforce Programs
Miranda Gilbert

Arts Learning in Communities Director
Erika Wilhite



Governor Henry Bellmon (left) championed the establishment of the Oklahoma Arts Council

Celebrating 60 Years of Building the Arts across Oklahoma 1965-2025

PO Box 52001-2001 • Oklahoma City 73152-2001 • 405.521.2931
Fax 405.521.6418 • okarts@arts.ok.gov • arts.ok.gov



OKLAHOMA