

# Strategic Plan 2025–2028



**ARTS AT LARGE**

**making the arts accessible for all**

[artsatlargeinc.org](https://artsatlargeinc.org)





# Table of Contents

WHO WE ARE	2
OUR VISION FOR MILWAUKEE	5
PRIMARY AREAS OF FOCUS	
Infrastructure	6
Culture of Philanthropy	8
Programming	10
PROJECTED DATA INFORMED GROWTH	12
REVENUE TARGETS	13
YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE VISION	14
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	17
CONTACT THE TEAM	back cover



# Who We Are

## OUR LEGACY AND EVOLUTION

Founded in 2001 by Kim Abler and Teri Sullivan, Arts @ Large (A@L) emerged as a response to the decline of arts education in Milwaukee County schools. From its inception, A@L has been committed to delivering high-quality arts experiences to students, engaging professional Artist Educators to lead programming. Over time, A@L's impact extended beyond students, fostering the artistic and professional growth of both emerging and experienced artists.

As the organization expanded, its reach grew through increased student engagement, a broader network of contracted artists, innovative programming, and meaningful community collaborations. In 2019, a significant milestone was achieved with the acquisition and renovation of the Arts @ Large Community Center in the Walker's Point neighborhood, solidifying A@L's role as a hub for creative expression and cultural enrichment.





## ADAPTING AND ADVANCING: 2023 AND BEYOND

A@L underwent a leadership transition in 2019, shifting from its founders to a long-time senior leader within the organization. Shortly after, the organization navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic while celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2021. This period prompted a strategic reassessment, including a refreshed brand identity and operational adjustments to adapt to an evolving landscape.



In June 2023, the A@L Board of Directors appointed a new leader to guide A@L into its next chapter. Recognizing that times of transition present opportunities for renewal, the Board of Directors and Administrative Team prioritized organizational stabilization and future-focused growth. Key initiatives included:

- Updating standard operating procedures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- Conducting a comprehensive mission alignment assessment to ensure all community-facing programs directly support A@L's vision.
- Refining core programming to maximize impact and sustainability.
- Conducting a full 360-degree review of program evaluations, improving how we measure outcomes and refine impact assessment.
- Launching a dedicated Development Department to strengthen financial sustainability through expanded fundraising efforts.
- Introducing a new signature fundraising event to increase community engagement and diversify revenue streams.

Today, Arts @ Large is one of Milwaukee's largest arts education providers, serving students, artists, and communities through impactful programming, collaborative partnerships, and dedicated artist development. These efforts have built a strong foundation for A@L, reinforcing our commitment to empowering creative expression and equitable access to the arts. With a clear vision, refined programming, and deep community ties, we are poised to expand our impact and shape the future of arts engagement in Milwaukee and beyond.



Photo Credit: Sadie McVey



Photo Credit: Sadie McVey





# Our Vision for Milwaukee

Following our rebrand in 2021, we introduced the tag line,  
**“Making the arts accessible for all”.**

**This is our vision for Milwaukee.**

Currently, only 35% of Milwaukee County youth are enrolled in a visual arts, music, dance, or theater class as part of their education (Wisconsin Arts Education Data Project). Meanwhile, Milwaukee continues to lose talented artists to the East and West Coasts, as local opportunities for sustainable work remain limited. On average, 12% of recent fine arts graduates in the United States are unemployed (Statista).

At Arts @ Large, we are committed to bridging these gaps. Through our multidisciplinary approach, we engage with artists at every stage of their careers, fostering artist development and growth. We create opportunities for the arts to be experienced in schools, in the community, and within our own space. By placing the Artist Educator at the heart of our model, we provide employment opportunities and ensure livable wages for Milwaukee’s creatives.

Our goal is to foster the creative potential of all individuals, regardless of age, and collaborate with the community to make the **arts accessible for everyone in Milwaukee.**

In our strategic plan, we’ve identified three key areas that will help address both isolated and shared challenges within the local arts sector. As one of the largest arts education organizations in Milwaukee, we are confident in our ability to uplift the community by strengthening our infrastructure, fostering a culture of philanthropy internally and externally, and enhancing our programming for youth and adults.



Photo Credit: Phillip Salat



# Infrastructure

Over the past two years, we have made significant strides in updating staff personnel and development tools, strengthening relationships with Artist Educators, and establishing standard operating procedures. These improvements have positively impacted staff morale and enhanced organizational efficiency. To continue empowering our Artist Educators and further strengthen our operations, we will focus on the following objectives:

## OBJECTIVES

### Artistic

- Build unique and inclusive relationships with Artist Educators, school educators, and administrative professionals that reflect the communities we aim to serve.
- Expand professional development opportunities for both youth and working professionals to gain valuable arts and administrative experience through A@L's programs.

### Operational

- Strengthen A@L's relationships with a broader network of Artist Educators and community stakeholders.
- Create professional development opportunities for both employees and Artist Educators to support continued growth and innovation.
- Analyze and document operational functions to enhance Board, staff, and organizational growth, ensuring sustainability and effectiveness.

### Marketing

- Develop strategies to amplify A@L's presence and program offerings, ensuring they meet the specific needs of our target audience, particularly marginalized groups.

Photo Credit: Melissa Miller





# Board and Staff Involvement

## TARGETS

- Outline the model life cycle of an A@L program participant.
- Strengthen the employee and contractor pipeline by enhancing communication channels related to programmatic and organizational growth.
- Design a comprehensive brand awareness campaign that reflects current and future programs and the communities we serve.

### In One Year

1. Implement a new employee/contractor onboarding process to ensure efficient documentation and a positive onboarding experience.
2. Document standard procedures by department to successfully manage active programs and ensure consistency across the organization.
3. Evaluate each program's alignment with A@L's mission and identify opportunities for deeper engagement and growth.
4. Review past and current marketing strategies to create a focused annual marketing plan.

### In Two Years

1. Standardize operational procedures and supplies for all active programs to improve efficiency and consistency.
2. Develop an Artist Educator database to categorize employees/contractors by discipline, experience, and A@L program interest.
3. Design an A@L experience guide to be shared with new hires and participants when applicable.
4. Redesign and launch a new A@L website that better serves the needs of our community and enhances accessibility.

### In Three Years

1. Design a comprehensive brand awareness campaign, including proposed strategies for implementation and community outreach.
2. Create growth opportunities for creative and administrative roles within A@L, including internships and assistant positions, to foster career development and strengthen our talent pipeline.

# Culture of Philanthropy



Over the past two years, we have identified key priorities for Fund Development at A@L, including establishing a dedicated development team, strengthening stewardship practices to foster lasting philanthropic relationships, and increasing the number of direct solicitations. To expand revenue streams and enhance community giving, we will focus on the following objectives:

## OBJECTIVES

### Artistic

- Assess current financial resources and identify programs in need of additional support to ensure sustainable growth and impact.

### Operational

- Deepen existing funding relationships while increasing awareness of A@L's programming among staff and Board members.
- Secure new revenue-generating partnerships—both earned and contributed—to strengthen A@L's community connections and long-term financial sustainability.

### Marketing

- Promote A@L's charitable status and outreach programming to enhance community engagement and donor participation.
- Elevate A@L's reputation as one of Milwaukee's largest and most impactful arts education providers.



# Board and Staff Involvement

## TARGETS

- Identify potential partnerships with businesses and community organizations—both arts-based and non-arts-based—that align with A@L's mission.
- Develop unified organizational language and community messaging to strengthen philanthropic engagement.
- Leverage A@L's platform to explore innovative strategies that enhance the financial health and sustainability of Milwaukee's arts sector.

## In One Year

1. Create a comprehensive list of community-based and arts-focused organizations to identify overlaps, differences, and collaboration opportunities.
2. Develop and refine consistent elevator pitches through team discussions to ensure unified messaging about A@L's mission and impact.
3. Expand and amplify opportunities for individual giving.
4. Design and launch a new signature fundraising event to increase donor engagement and community involvement.

## In Two Years

1. Establish one to two new community partnerships that support A@L's philanthropic culture through earned revenue opportunities.
2. Implement a structured approach to increase individual giving by developing major gifts and legacy giving programs.

## In Three Years

1. Achieve a 30% increase in earned revenue through diverse funding sources.
2. Develop a community-driven strategy to increase sustainable funding for Milwaukee's arts sector.



Photo Credit: Sadie McVey

# Programming

Over the past two years, we have reviewed our key programs to assess their community impact and mission alignment. This process involved sunseting and merging certain programs to ensure the continued innovation of A@L's arts education offerings. To make the arts accessible for all, we will focus on the following objectives:

## OBJECTIVES

### Artistic

- Conduct field research to identify barriers and biases that impact local artist development within the arts ecosystem.
- Collect participant feedback to refine and enhance the depth and impact of the artistic experiences we provide.

### Operational

- Increase A@L's programmatic presence in Milwaukee County through targeted earned revenue opportunities.
- Strengthen relationships with community partners, collaborators, and constituents to foster a robust network of support.
- Expand relationships with individual artists to broaden access to the arts in diverse Milwaukee communities.

### Marketing

- Foster city-wide collaboration between businesses, community-based organizations, Artist Educators, and the families they serve, promoting growth and shared resources.





# Board and Staff Involvement

## TARGETS

- Develop and implement annual program evaluation tools to measure year-over-year impact and ensure alignment with the needs of the communities we serve.
- Address accessibility gaps identified through participant feedback, including language, ability, and financial circumstance.

### In One Year

1. Utilize existing resources to design and implement an annual evaluation tool for active programs.
2. Launch the A@L Mobile Media Lab to engage new communities and expand partnerships.

### In Two Years

1. Refine and standardize evaluation tools to maximize responses and participant involvement in A@L mission.
2. Use evaluation feedback to identify and address accessibility gaps A@L is able to fulfill.
3. Integrate evaluation insights into programming structure and operational processes where applicable.

### In Three Years

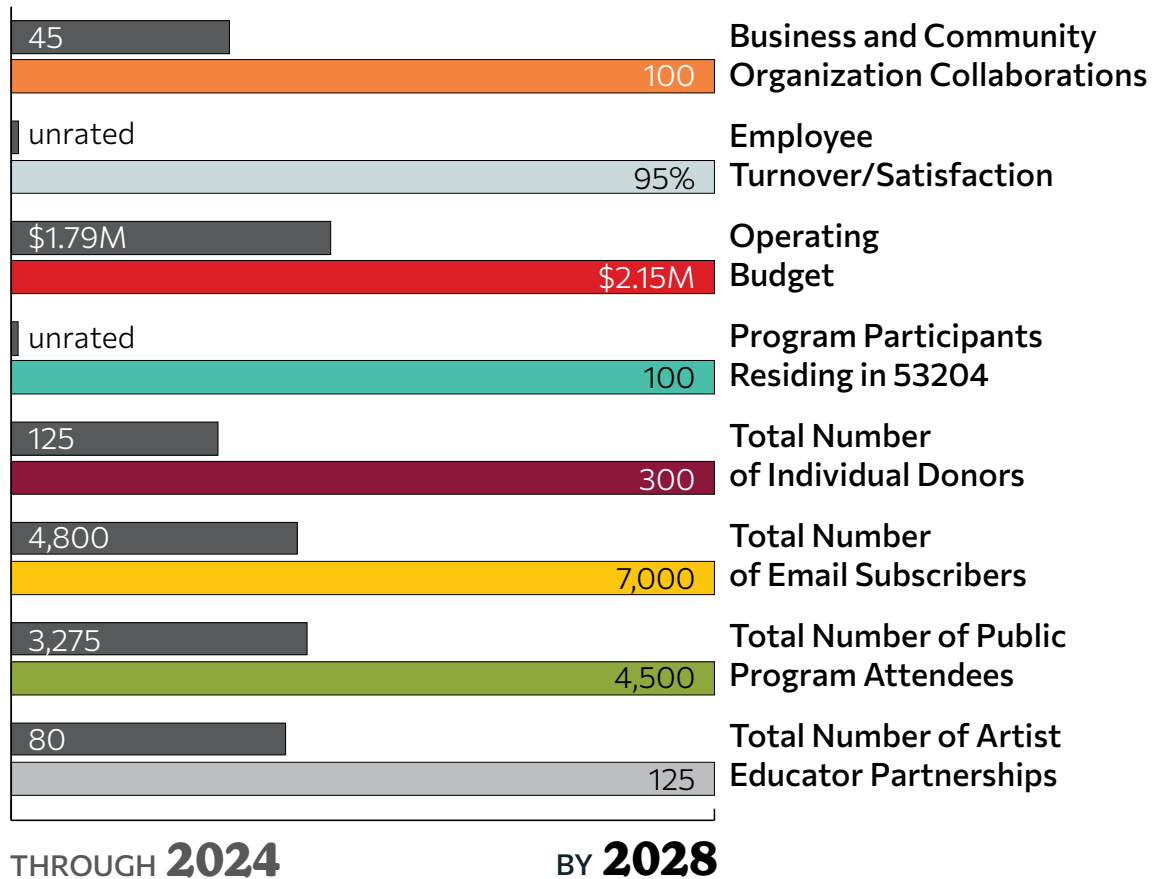
1. Incorporate accessibility findings into a comprehensive brand awareness campaign.
2. Finalize and implement standardized operating procedures for all programs to enhance efficiency, consistency, and long-term sustainability.



Photo Credit: Jeff Zimpel

# Projected Data

## Informed Growth



Following our annual team retreat, A@L reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing the quality of our programming, deepening community engagement, and strengthening our relationships with Artist Educators.

As part of our strategic plan, we will focus on expanding A@L's brand awareness within its existing communities while building its pipeline to creative opportunities.

Our growth and impact will be measured through key performance indicators, including:

- Strength and expansion of **Artist Educator partnerships**
- Growth in **community organization collaborations**
- **Employee retention and satisfaction** rates
- Participation levels of **program attendees residing in the 53204 ZIP code**
- **Total number of email subscribers**
- **Increase in individual donors**
- **Total public program attendance**

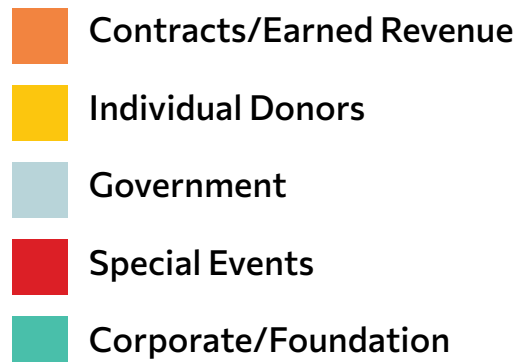
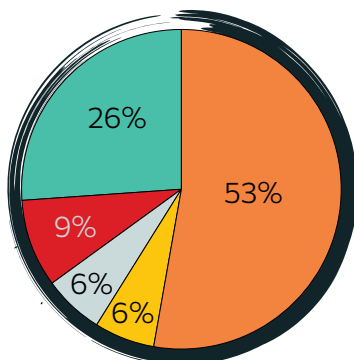


# Revenue Targets

## Based on Culture of Philanthropy

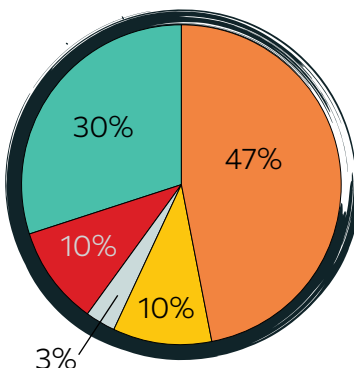
### IN ONE YEAR

Focus on establishing and growing signature special event



### IN TWO YEARS

Focus on growing individual giving, leveraging the organization's 25th anniversary



### IN THREE YEARS

Focus on diversification of Earned Revenue; achieve a 50/50 balance of Earned Revenue and Contributed Revenue

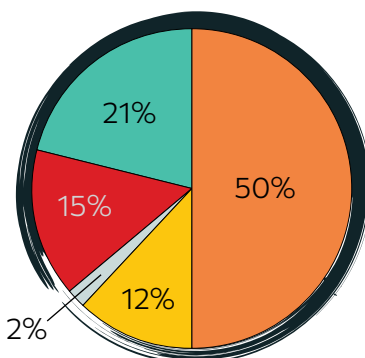


Photo Credit: Sadie McVey

# Your Contribution to the Vision

## COLLABORATE



Are you a **business or community organization** interested in launching a creative project or providing youth internship opportunities?

Are you an **Artist Educator** looking for teaching opportunities?

Are you a **school or district** seeking to introduce or expand creative educational offerings?

***Partner with us to bring the arts to more students and communities!***



## ATTEND FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS

***Want to see our mission in action?***

Join us for a free creative community event

— bring a friend and experience the power of the arts firsthand!



## DONATE

Every contribution, big or small, helps us provide **FREE arts education opportunities for all** — especially for youth who lack access to the arts.

***Your support makes a difference!***







Photo Credit: Tom Kiebzak





Photo Credit: Sadie McVey



# Message from the Executive Director

At Arts @ Large, we believe in the transformative power of the arts to inspire, educate, and connect communities. As we embark on this new strategic plan, we reaffirm our deep commitment to our mission — **making the arts accessible for all**.

Over the past two decades, A@L has grown into one of Milwaukee's largest arts education providers, impacting thousands of students, artists, and community members. Through times of transition and challenge, we have remained steadfast in our vision, adapting to meet the evolving needs of our community while staying true to our core values of creativity, equity, and education.



This strategic plan reflects a bold and forward-thinking approach to strengthening our infrastructure, deepening community partnerships, and fostering a culture of philanthropy that ensures long-term sustainability. It is our roadmap for continued growth — one that prioritizes **artist development, programmatic excellence, and meaningful engagement** with the communities we serve.

Achieving these ambitious goals required collaboration. We invite you — our partners, supporters, and advocates — to join us in shaping the future of arts education in Milwaukee. Together, we will create more opportunities for artists, enrich the lives of students, and expand access to the arts across our city.

With gratitude and excitement,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Cencius'.

Joel Cencius, CFRE  
Executive Director  
Arts @ Large

# Contact Our Team

*To invest in your creative Milwaukee, contact our team:*

## ADMINISTRATION

Joel Cencius, CFRE, Executive Director  
Joel@artsatlargeinc.org | (414) 763-7379 ext. 1001

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

Julia Dorf, Development Manager  
Julia@artsatlargeinc.org | (414) 763-7379 ext. 1004

## PROGRAMMING

Phillip Salat, Director of Programs  
Phillip@artsatlargeinc.org | (414) 763-7379 ext. 1002

## MEDIA INQUIRIES

Tricia Shinnars, Marketing Specialist  
Tricia@artsatlargeinc.org | (414) 763-7379 ext. 1007

