



The Mission

The Chicago Arts Census collects, maps, and visualizes data that illuminates the lived experiences and working conditions of arts workers in Chicago to work toward a more sustainable, healthy, and equitable arts ecosystem for the city.

What it seeks to do:

The project collects, maps, reflects, and shares information about employment, living conditions, debt, demographics, existing support networks/systems, and making practices of arts workers in the city. The Census focuses on the experiences of arts workers as it asks — How do you see yourself and your community? What support do you have and what support do you need? What would you like the public to know?

Similar to the national census, this project seeks to ensure an equitable distribution of arts funding and resources by more accurately capturing what exists, what is needed, and how arts workers are working today. The Census uses collected data to visually map the interwoven and dependent relationships that make up Chicago's arts ecosystem. The mapping method is central to the project's primary goal — sharing the information so that arts workers might better connect to fellow value-aligned individuals, collectives, and organizations in the community. In doing so, this project seeks to shift definitions of support and resources away from scarcity-based monetary models to mutual systems of aid, including opportunities for formal and informal mentorship, libraries of conceptual and physical resources, and new financial/resource redistribution models.

The secondary goal of the Census is to provide an update on arts workers' living and making conditions to funding institutions. Existing models for arts funding usually offer *limited* monetary support, and so often rely on outdated definitions of a single discipline and socioeconomic models of living. They often include unnecessary expectations of professional studio spaces and individualistic practices, all which serves to narrow the field for who is eligible for funding opportunities. The Census seeks to expand upon this information to provide a more realistic and updated perspective on how arts workers are working, how they are adapting their creative practices and their livelihoods to trends in housing and employment, and to better enable systems of support to adapt their models to these trends. The Census also

intends to be reflective of the current COVID-19 pandemic, presenting arts workers ways of living both prior to, during, and expectations for the time following the current quarantine measures.

Methodology:

The Chicago Arts Census seeks to combine quantitative and qualitative data to concretize the realities, needs, and desires of arts workers in Chicago, as well as recognize mutual and collaborative systems of support that exist outside of main funding streams.

Collective authorship, care, and transparency will guide all processes and stages of research, testing, data collection, synthesis, and distribution. The project will begin with a series of feedback roundtables in order to create the Census and establish:

1. The format, form, and distribution methods of the Census inquiry
2. How the Census data will be translated into a written report and mapping system
3. How the information from the Census can be shared with others for use and what form and timeline of sharing makes sense in relation to the information received, such as a directory of resources for artist workers
4. Published interviews with stakeholders
5. Bibliography and literature reviews of relevant resources
6. Programmatic conversation around the project goals and findings

In doing so, the project will seek to rearticulate what resources are useful and necessary and emphasizes the lateral distribution of these support systems.

The data collection platform that this project proposes to continually update its findings. It recognizes that needs and the language used to articulate these needs are ever-changing. Thus, funders and other organizations can adjust their priorities accordingly.

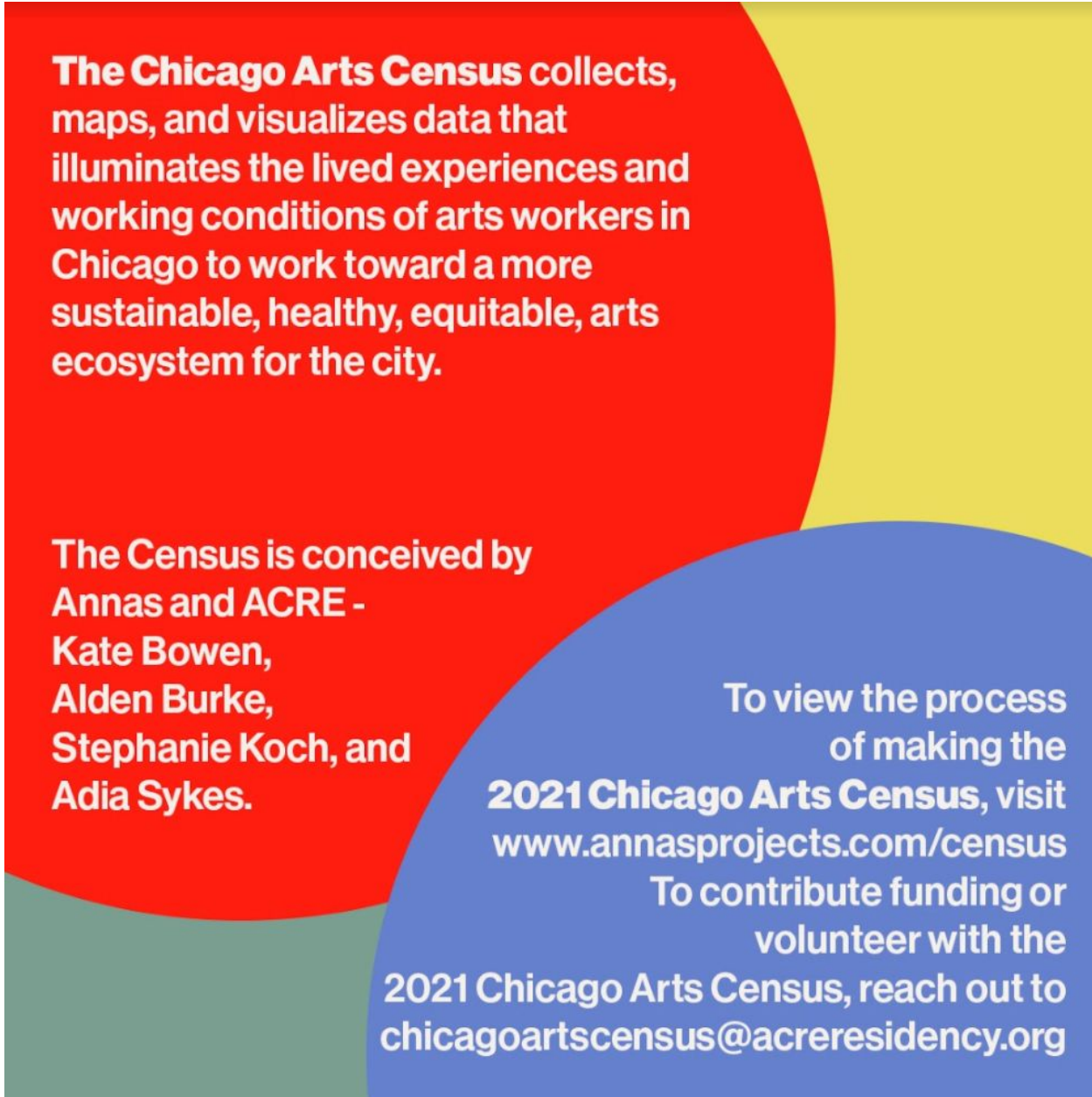
Why it matters:

Funding for the arts often approaches support from a framework of scarcity rather than abundance. As the funding model currently exists, arts workers and arts institutions are often required to balance their growth and practice against limited availability of grants, sponsorship, and fundraising opportunities. This model requires Chicago's arts workers to frequently evaluate their work/practice as per the stipulations (or requirements) defined by funders, scramble to make things work from one opportunity to the next, and exhaust themselves and their resources. Instead of truly supporting the overall well-being of arts workers, current systems establish and perpetuate a competitive, isolating landscape in which arts workers stretch themselves thin to merely survive and maintain their practice, creating an unsustainable system of working.

The project's ethos is rooted in collaboration — built from the interconnectivity of Chicago's arts and culture sector with the understanding that each part is integral to

its health and sustainability. It recognizes that arts and culture play a vital role in Chicago's livability and its social cohesion. The foundation of this ecosystem is the arts workers whose daily lives and labor enrich the formation of strong arts communities and amplify a visual identity to Chicago's concerns and aspirations. These individuals are not only knit together through a network of shared labor, but also through their relationships with the organizations, institutions, and funders who position themselves as resources for the arts in Chicago.

Strengthening these connections — forging more durable relationships of mutual support and evolving existing systems of resource (re)distribution — requires the recognition of nuance and complexity within a collaborative framework. Because when we share language, redefine need, and act collectively we better enable arts workers to find support, generate artistic work, build economically and emotionally sustainable lives and contribute to Chicago as community leaders. The Chicago Arts Census builds the informational foundation for this work through a comprehensive and self-determined data report created for and by arts workers.



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The Census is conceived by Annas and ACRE -
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To view the process of making the **2021 Chicago Arts Census**, visit www.annasprojects.com/census

To contribute funding or volunteer with the **2021 Chicago Arts Census**, reach out to chicagoartscensus@acreresidency.org