



Staying the Course

Early learning programs, arts and culture organizations and religious congregations immediately felt the pandemic's impact on their ability to function effectively. Many even wondered if their institutions could survive a prolonged shutdown.

Recognizing this, the Endowment made grants to Early Learning Indiana, the Arts Council of Indianapolis, and the Indianapolis Center for Congregations to help them help their stakeholders adapt to challenges brought on by the pandemic. Doors to child care centers and cultural institutions were kept open with best-practice adaptations and facility modifications, and new technology took arts programming into audiences' homes and worship services beyond congregational walls.

A \$15 million Endowment grant to Early Learning Indiana in May was distributed to 1,025 high-quality child care providers across the state. The grant helped preserve child care infrastructure, minimized learning losses and supported working parents. The 45,000 children served by the providers accounted for approximately four of every 10 enrolled in licensed providers, making the impact of the grant far-reaching.

Early Learning Indiana President Maureen Weber estimates child care enrollment tumbled an average of 20 percent across Indiana, a blow for a sector that typically doesn't break even until 88 percent of child care seats are filled. The grants enabled early childhood education providers to make their facilities safer and to hire extra employees to staff entrances and bring children inside to their classrooms, as parents were not allowed to enter the buildings because of COVID.

● Child care centers play a critical role in child development and also serve as a vital link in Indiana's economic recovery, said Early Learning Indiana's Maureen Weber.

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It was all about survival for many of the smaller child care providers. They simply would have closed their doors without this fund.

— Maureen Weber, Early Learning Indiana

Early Learning distributed most of the funds within weeks and plans to continue to disburse a residual amount along with an additional \$10.4 million grant from the Endowment for similar purposes.

“The funding came along at just the right moment,” Weber recalls. Referring to working parents, many of whom are low-income workers, she adds, “This grant enabled us to ensure the network of providers exists to help support Indiana’s economic recovery as well as the ongoing journey of these families toward self-sufficiency.”

In July, the Endowment announced a statewide, competitive initiative to help organizations serving older children ages 5-18 continue to operate safely. Applications for funding from the Youth Program Resiliency Fund were due in August. In early November, the Endowment made grants totaling nearly \$25 million to 297 youth-serving organizations working in Indiana for sanitation equipment, upgraded facilities, improved technology and additional

employees to lower staff-to-child ratios. The Endowment enlisted the Indiana Youth Institute and its extensive understanding of youth work to support the organizations in their grant applications to the Endowment.

One such organization, VOICES Corp., works with young people who have been referred by the Department of Child Services or the Marion County Juvenile Probation Department. It had to pivot from in-person sessions and home visits with families to doing everything virtually.

“We were really skeptical at first, but the virtual format seems to work seamlessly because the kids are already used to being connected to their devices,” said Executive Director Kia Wright. VOICES purchased electronic devices for students and hired

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additional tutors, program facilitators and case managers to help students keep up with their learning plans at home, said Wright.

The arts sector received an infusion in June, when the Endowment made a \$10.2 million grant to the Arts Council of Indianapolis to create the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund. The Arts Council is making grants from that fund to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations through 2021 to help them offset COVID-related expenses.

Among the 24 organizations receiving \$4.2 million from the fund during 2020 were The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians

“We had to have more rehearsal dates to work in small groups and to keep performances at 25 percent capacity,” said the theater company founder and executive director, Trina Dingle. That meant temperature checks and masks for the audience, socially distanced seating and no intermission for the 13 sold-out shows, which were followed by intensive cleaning. “We got it done,” said Dingle.

Julie Goodman, president and CEO of the Arts Council of Indianapolis, describes the initiative concisely: “It is the most critically important program ever administered by the Arts Council.”

The Indiana State Museum, which received a \$500,000 grant through the Arts Council in October, installed air purification equipment, touchless faucets and other equipment to make interacting within the facility safer.

Another major thrust of the Indiana State Museum was its initiative to develop education curricula that could be used immediately online—but also in the long term, especially in districts too distant from Indianapolis for day trips.

Program modules focused on Indiana Innovators, Engineering Design, Pioneering Innovations, Hoosiers Making History, Engineering Solutions and Voices from the Past. All are designed to give teachers a break as well as to make state history come alive. Museum staff also are made available to teach the material online.

The Indiana State Museum, while forced to close for three months during the height of COVID, was able to use its grant to help staff produce online content, provide virtual tours, participate in webinars and training and develop reopening plans and protocols.

“I don't know any other community in the country that had that kind of support that quickly,” Museum President and CEO Cathy Ferree says. “This was a time, as always, when Lilly Endowment showed its dedication to arts and culture.”

Houses of worship were made more resilient, as well.



& Western Art, Indiana Black Expo for its Performing Arts Academy, Fonseca Theatre, the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library, and the Indianapolis Performing Arts Centre. These grants helped organizations adapt so they could safely continue their work. Efforts included changes to physical environments and exhibits, the creation of new virtual programming and development of new outdoor performance spaces.

The Indianapolis Performing Arts Centre, which showcases Black artists and productions, saw the grant as a lifeline that enabled the organization to safely present “The Color Purple” in October at the Athenaeum.





Two grants totaling \$8 million to the Indianapolis Center for Congregations helped the organization support its Connect Through Tech program. The idea originated with a tip from the pastor of an Indianapolis church who mused that congregations needed help to continue serving their members and neighborhoods with improved technology.

The Center distributed all \$8 million, along with previously awarded Endowment grant funds, to nearly 2,700 congregations across Indiana. Congregations could apply for grants of up to \$5,000.

A \$3,868 grant to Abundant Vida Nueva United Methodist Church in Indianapolis enabled the largely Honduran American congregation to nearly double its outreach, says the Rev. David Peñalva. The combination of a video camera, tripod, memory cards, laptop with software, Zoom subscription and updated internet service resulted in increased attendance for worship and other ministry offerings.

Also, Zoom enabled the church to continue its remote summer painting class for children.

Etched in the memory of the Center's president, the Rev. Tim Shapiro, is a Bloomington congregation that was livestreaming services on Facebook with an iPhone duct taped to a camera tripod. Most congregations used their grants to add combinations of cameras and lighting and paid for online subscriptions to Zoom and Boxcast.

Having reached approximately a quarter of congregations in the state through the program, the Center is learning of unintended yet welcomed consequences. Young people who helped older individuals adapt to technology have formed new relationships, and some congregations have discovered that they are reaching new people with new approaches to outreach and worship. For example, according to Shapiro, it's not uncommon for online worship attendance at some churches to be twice the levels of in-person attendance prior to the pandemic.

"The creativity that opened up around COVID will continue beyond the pandemic, and it will be in ways unforeseen," Shapiro says. "Congregations' programs will become a hybrid of online and in-person."

● Arts organizations adapted on the fly to function in the face of public health mandates that limited in-person activity. The Indiana State Museum created educational curricula that could be used online. The Restart & Resilience Fund was a difference maker for arts organizations, noted Indianapolis Arts Council leader Julie Goodman (opposite page). ● Technology grants helped congregations, including Abundant Vida Nueva in Indianapolis, livestream their services and other outreach, said the Rev. David Peñalva (above).