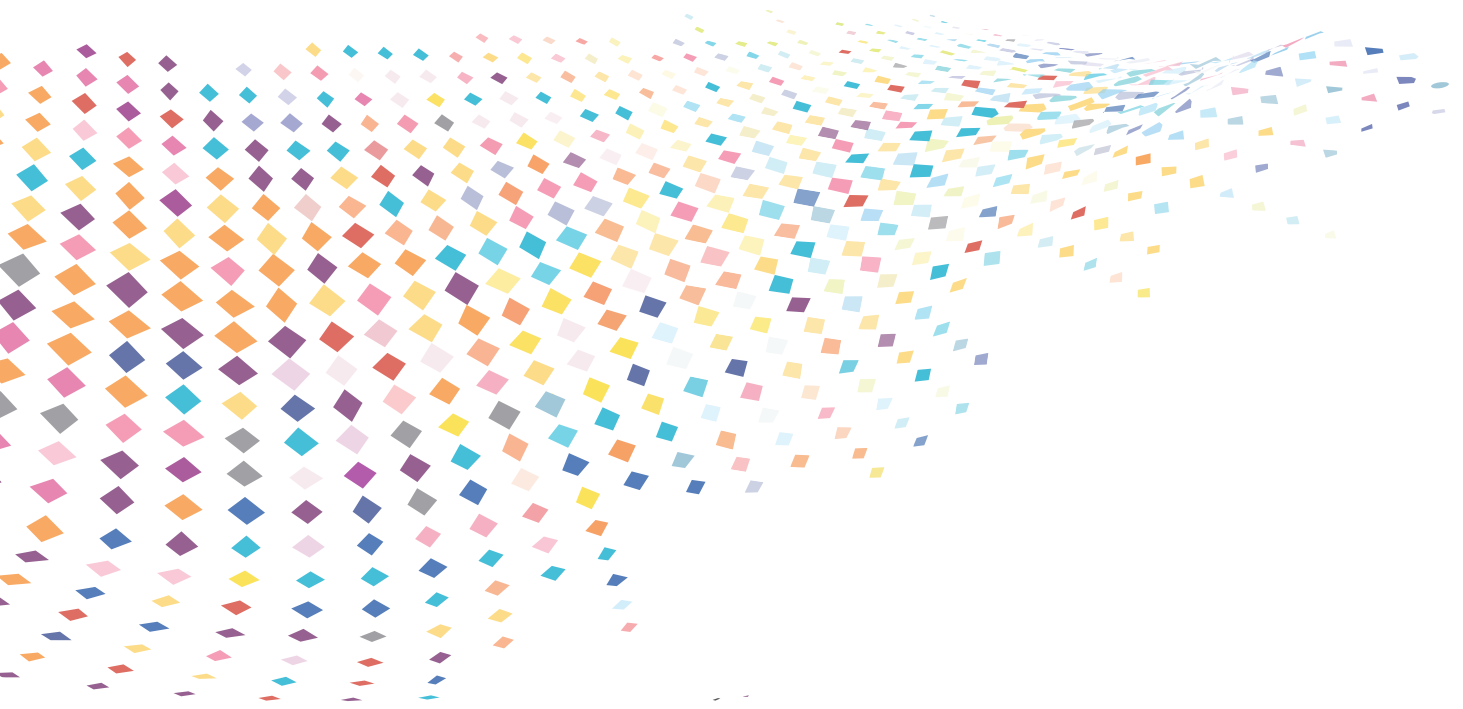


FY25 IMPACT REPORT

CREATIVITY, COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION





LETTER FROM THE CEO

A Year of Transition, Renewal, and Purpose

Dear Friends,

Nationally, last year was one of upheaval – from a contentious election season and administration change to federal funding cuts and layoffs impacting hundreds of thousands of federal workers. The economic aftershocks of these changes were felt acutely in Montgomery County, home to more than 75,000 federal employees. National Endowment for the Arts' shifting priorities rocked the arts community nationwide as the agency cancelled more than 500 federal grants, including ours.

Within this shifting landscape, VisArts experienced seismic organizational change as well. Alice Nappy, who built VisArts into a cornerstone of Montgomery County's cultural landscape, retired after 15 years as Executive Director. Jack Devine, who served as President of VisArts' Board of Directors for 10 years, retired last year, as did Lisa Gallant, who led VisArts' award-winning education program for 15 years. I'm grateful to these makers who came before me and crafted VisArts into a beloved center for creativity and connection in our community.

Since joining VisArts as CEO last June, many of you have shared how VisArts has helped you express yourself, connect with others, and find solace. I'm proud to highlight a few sparks and gems from FY25 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025), which show how the arts can ground and center us in times of change, and also what it takes to empower people to create boldly and find community through the visual arts.

Warmly,



Lisa Marie Ryder
Chief Executive Officer



Lisa Marie Ryder
VisArts Chief Executive Officer

"I'm proud to highlight a few sparks and gems from FY25 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025), which show how the arts can ground and center us in times of change, and also what it takes to empower people to create boldly and find community through the visual arts."

PASSING THE TORCH

Honoring Alice Nappy, Former Executive Director

Fifteen Years of Vision, Growth and Grit

When Alice Nappy stepped into the role of VisArts' Executive Director in 2012, the organization was on the brink of collapse. Over the next 15 years, she led a remarkable transformation, turning a small grassroots arts center with a handful of programs and a skeleton crew into a \$3+ million arts anchor in our region.

Under Alice's leadership, VisArts grew to reach more than 37,000 community members in FY25, becoming the largest employer of artists in Montgomery County, a hub for individuals with disabilities, and a home for creativity, community, and healing through the arts.

The journey wasn't without challenges. Alice guided VisArts through government shutdowns, economic downturns, and a global pandemic with grace, resilience, and a sense of humor, grounded in her unwavering belief in the power of the arts to connect and sustain us.

VisArts is deeply grateful for her leadership, vision, and service to our community.



Alice Nappy
VisArts Executive Director, 2012-2025

“Alice’s legacy is not only in the programs she built but in the spirit of creativity and community she nurtured. Alice leaves behind a lasting impact—one that will continue to inspire and empower future generations of artists and art lovers.”

— Sonal Verma
VisArts Board President

PASSING THE TORCH

Spotlighting Emily Fucello, Education Director

A Passion for Teaching and Inclusion

In January, more than 100 friends and fans gathered in VisArts' Buchanan Room to celebrate retiring Education Director Lisa Gallant's many accomplishments - and to welcome Emily Fucello as her successor.

Emily joined VisArts in 2012 as an instructor before becoming Assistant Education Director, and later Education Director. Over the years, she has played a key role in expanding our programs, especially those serving individuals with disabilities, and in strengthening our commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

With deep expertise and a passion for teaching, Emily continues to shape VisArts' educational vision by developing innovative curriculum, supporting professional growth for instructors, and championing the power of art for everyone.

"Seeing Emily flourish as Education Director is a joy to witness and a gift to all who benefit from her intellect, commitment to equity, and outstanding work ethic. VisArts is a better organization with her at the helm!"

— Lisa Gallant
VisArts Former Education Director



Emily Fucello
VisArts Education Director

PASSING THE TORCH

Welcoming Sonal Verma, Board President

Leading with Heart and Purpose

Last year, we honored a longtime friend, advocate, and supporter - retiring Board President Jack Devine. After ten years of spirited and steadfast leadership, Jack passed the ceremonial gavel to Sonal Verma, who joined the Board in 2020 and served as Secretary from 2022 to 2024.

Sonal is a co-founder and partner at Verma Cortes LLC, a boutique immigration law firm in Rockville. She's been a dedicated supporter of VisArts for more than a decade—sending her child to summer camps and hosting family and business events in our spaces.

With deep roots in Montgomery County, Sonal brings both a love for the arts and a strong commitment to VisArts' mission to transform lives through the visual arts.



*Sonal Verma
VisArts Board President*

“The energy, focus and enthusiasm Sonal has brought to the VisArts board has been tremendous! Her balance of pragmatism and passion are key to her leadership and a true asset to the organization.”

— Jack Devine, VisArts Past Board President

GEMS OF RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

Empty Bowls: Relief for Artists and Neighbors



Last fall Hurricane Helene crashed into Asheville, NC, decimating the city's vibrant arts district, displacing hundreds of artists, and sparking an outpouring of support from across the country. In response, VisArts' craft community gathered to raise money for struggling artists and neighbors.

- More than 100 people attended VisArts' annual Empty Bowls event, a nationwide philanthropic movement that engages students, faculty, and staff in creating ceramic bowls to support individuals in need. The event raised \$4,500 through ticket and raffle sales, which VisArts donated to CERF+, supporting craft artists in crisis, and Stepping Stones Shelter, a local Rockville organization addressing food insecurity in our own backyard.

“Being a part of Empty Bowls, feeling the energy around supporting craft artists with such beautiful artwork, was humbling and directly connected to the spirit of artists supporting artists that founded us 40 years ago.”

— Ruby Lopez Harper
Executive Director, CERF+

GEMS OF RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

Los Extranjeros (The Foreigners): A Gallery Transformed

What does it feel like to enter a space that seems both familiar and strange, only to find yourself instantly cast as a foreigner, a non-citizen, an “other”? Visitors who stepped into VisArts’ Kaplan Gallery last year encountered this unsettling experience firsthand.

Part of VisArts’ 21st Century Emerging Curator Program, *Los Extranjeros* was a powerful and timely exhibition by Baltimore-based artist, illustrator, and designer TLaloC, organized by VisArts Mentoring Curator Mehveç Lelic. The installation fused sound, scent, and image to construct a dystopian landscape mirroring the deepest insecurities of displacement, reflecting on the sociopolitical realities that many immigrants navigate every day. VisArts Galleries Director + Curator Frank McCauley described *Los Extranjeros* as “one of VisArts’ most ambitious and impactful exhibitions to date,” a show that continues to resonate long after leaving the gallery.

“The show ... is intentionally ominous. But the illuminated glyphs aren’t the only bright touch. Colorful flowers bloom at the feet of each of the strangers, as if germinated by their presence. They offer, if only tentatively, a promise of rebirth.”

— Mark Jenkins
Art Critic, *DisCerning Eye*



Image: Vivian Mari Doering Photography

GEMS OF RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

Connection in Uncertain Times



During the winter and spring of 2025, devastating federal layoffs brought financial insecurity and shared trauma to thousands of households across the region. VisArts believes that the arts are essential in times of unrest, bringing people together to bond, share, escape, laugh, create, and heal.

Throughout the year, VisArts offered a number of free programs to our community members in need, including a free workshop for federal workers who lost their jobs earlier that year and weekly free studio sessions for community members to work on their own projects in the company of others. One artist recently shared a catalogue of works he created in FY25 during these therapeutic sessions at VisArts, and many community members stressed the importance of creativity and connection in both good and challenging times.

“We are so grateful that VisArts offered this workshop free of charge, allowing us to participate without having to worry (for a little while) about our finances. Thank you for supporting our community and reinforcing the important role art plays in our lives and wellbeing.”

— Community Member Affected by
Federal Layoffs

GEMS OF RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

Inclusion Without Exception

Last spring VisArts received an unwelcome notification: “The NEA is updating its grantmaking policy priorities to focus funding on projects that reflect the nation’s rich artistic heritage and creativity as prioritized by the President ...Your project to support a disability-focused artist development program unfortunately does not align with those priorities.”

While the cancellation of our federal grant to support VisAbility Art Lab, our studio for neurodivergent artists, was disappointing, it didn’t change our commitment to access and inclusion. We know how vital these programs are, especially to members of the disability community who are feeling the impact of federal cuts on healthcare, food assistance, and support programs. Over the past four years, our accessible arts offerings have tripled in size and have become a model of inclusivity. In FY25, these programs engaged more than 300 artists with disabilities who learned new skills, created art, launched careers, and found community at VisArts.



“VisAbility Art Lab is like no other place on earth. The atmosphere in the studio is filled with passion, inclusivity, creative talent and respect for each artist. Great things are happening at VisAbility Art Lab every day.”

*- Karen and Dennis Sandstedt
VisAbility Art Lab Parents*

IMPACT, GROWTH, AND THE COST TO SUSTAIN IT

Our Impact by the Numbers

VisArts is deeply proud of the impact we've had through free and discounted programs, artist stipends, scholarships, and subsidized studio space in FY25. Our attendance grew by 22%, and programs grew by 14% over FY24. Our galleries remained free and open to the public, and VisArts brought comfort and healing to a record-breaking number of community members last year.

37,181 People served
1,769 Programs delivered
437 Artists engaged
12,538 Studio hours offered

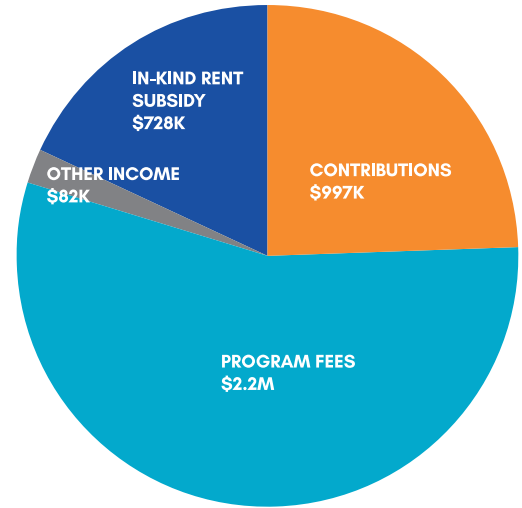
The Financial Picture

Comparing VisArts' income and expenses over the past four years, a clear trend emerges. Revenue has grown steadily—about 5% each year—but expenses have risen nearly twice as fast. In FY25 VisArts closed the year with a \$330K deficit, representing approximately 8% of overall revenue. We're confronting this challenge head-on and calling on our community to help close the gap moving forward, evaluating and addressing spending, and refining financial practices to ensure sustainability.

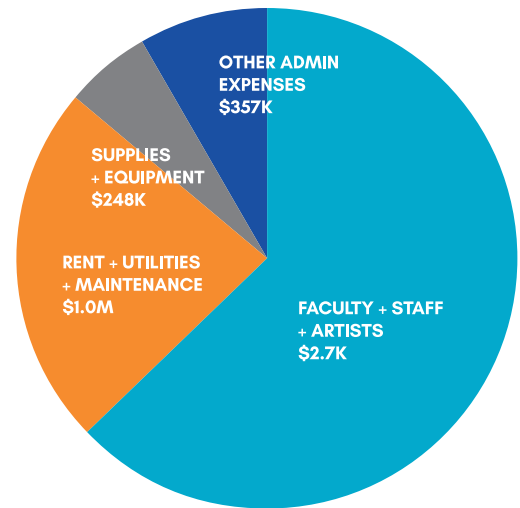
At the close of FY25, VisArts began a period of financial realignment, streamlining our staffing structure, evaluating programs against sustainability metrics, and aggressively soliciting contributions from our supporters. VisArts' FY26 budget sets an ambitious fundraising goal of \$1.4M (an increase of 44% over FY25's performance); as of this publication, the organization has raised \$1.2M toward this goal.

**These financials include an in-kind contribution of \$728K (rent subsidy from the City of Rockville) and don't include depreciation. FY22-FY24 financials are audited; FY25 financials are pending audit.*

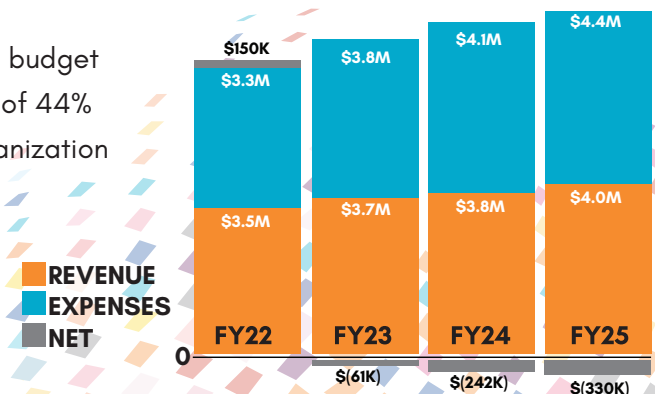
FY25 REVENUE: \$4.0M



FY25 EXPENSES: \$4.3M



FOUR-YEAR TREND



IMPACT, GROWTH, AND THE COST TO SUSTAIN IT

With Gratitude to Our Supporters

VisArts is grateful for our individual donors, who contributed \$132,387, and our corporate, government, and private foundation funders, who contributed \$864,525, in FY25. Your commitment to our mission stoked our fire and fueled our growth.

We were proud to receive grants from Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County, the City of Rockville, Maryland State Arts Council, Rockville Rotary Foundation, Windgate Foundation, and an anonymous foundation.



*Stefanie Mathew
VisArts Supporter*

Donor Spotlight

VisArts also welcomed new supporters, including recurring donor Stefanie Mathew. Stefanie is a fellow fundraiser, valued community member, and creative who holds a deep appreciation for the arts. She not only pledged monthly contributions to help sustain our programs and operations but also acted as a steadfast VisArts ambassador at donor events where she brought friends and helped expand our community.

“There are so many reasons why I support VisArts as a new monthly donor. I love exploring my creative side and pushing myself out of my comfort zone by taking art classes. I also live close by, so I appreciate how valuable VisArts is in bringing people of all ages to Rockville Town Square for classes, exhibitions, and events. I love being a VisArts neighbor!”

– Stefanie Mathew, VisArts Supporter



*Art connects us, even in times of change.
Every artist, student, and supporter who walks
through our doors helps sustain the creative fire
that makes this community stronger. Thank you
for being part of it.*

