



# **2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT**



## **SPARK CREATIVITY SPARK POTENTIAL**



# **VIBE** ARTS



## Dear VIBE Arts Community,

Reflecting on the past year, we find ourselves navigating a pivotal moment for the arts sector. Across the country, celebrated arts organizations face significant challenges, with many forced to close their doors. The arts sector is undeniably in crisis. Yet, at VIBE Arts, we remain steadfast in our mission to support the next generation of artists and champion the transformative power of creativity.

In the face of these challenges, VIBE Arts has taken bold steps to secure our future and continue delivering impactful programming to the communities we serve. This year, we embarked on the development of a new strategic plan, set to be unveiled in 2025. This plan will chart a course toward sustainability and innovation, ensuring that VIBE Arts remains a cornerstone of arts education and mentorship in Ontario. Through these efforts, we are committed to strengthening our role as a vital resource for emerging artists and a trusted partner in the communities we engage.

Our vision for the future is one where the arts are not merely valued but recognized as essential to a thriving society. A world with creative people who are supported and empowered is a world enriched by innovation, empathy, and resilience. As we work tirelessly to ensure our programs endure, we also advocate for the recognition and support of our work by the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario. This support is crucial to sustaining the creative ecosystem that inspires and uplifts us all.

We are profoundly grateful to our community—our dedicated staff, talented artists, resilient participants, and unwavering supporters. Your belief in our mission fuels our resolve and inspires us to push forward, even in the most uncertain times. Together, we are proving that creativity can be a force for change, a beacon of hope, and a foundation for a brighter future.

Thank you for standing with us. As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering growth, creativity, and collaboration. Your support ensures that VIBE Arts continues to thrive and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

With gratitude and determination,

*Katie*

+

*Onika*

**Katie Hutchinson**  
Executive Director

**Onika Powell**  
Artistic Director







# OUR STAFF

**Katie Hutchinson**, Executive Director  
**Onika Powell**, Artistic Director  
**Hannah Doucet**, Community Program Manager  
**raven lam**, General Manager  
**Jason De Mata**, Mentorship & Program Manager  
**Emma Gaudio**, Communications Manager  
**Reia Tariq**, Program Administrator  
**Betty Xie**, Fundraising Consultant  
**Kyra Tudlong**, Fundraising Consultant  
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**//** *As an artist, I know firsthand the impact that VIBE's programming has on participants and on the artists given the opportunity to share their craft. This work is vital to building a sense of self and community, which is why I am always excited to support VIBE in their efforts.* – Dwayne Morgan, Board Chair



**DWAYNE MORGAN**  
CHAIR



**KHALID HADDAD**  
TREASURER



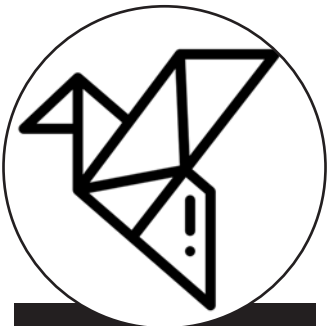
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DIRECTOR



**FATIMA KAMENGE**  
DIRECTOR



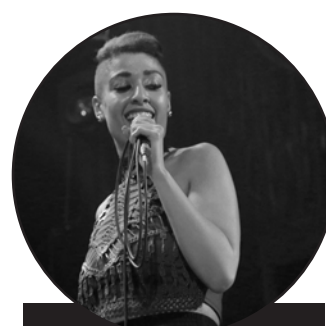
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DIRECTOR



**JANNELLE CHISHOLM**  
DIRECTOR



**STEVEN HUDSON**  
DIRECTOR



**TESSA BALAZ**  
DIRECTOR

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Established in 1995, VIBE Arts is a charity dedicated to providing arts education and artistic mentorship to the next generation of creatives. VIBE seeks to increase access and equity to the arts to encourage wellness, resilience, and a sense of belonging. Working directly within equity-deserving communities across Ontario, VIBE involves thousands of people each year in free arts experiences.



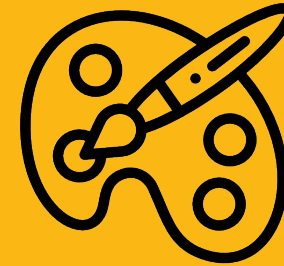
#### VISION

Vibrant communities where young people express themselves artistically and use their creativity and leadership to engage fully in community.



#### MISSION

To work collaboratively with partners in under-resourced communities to create a lasting impact on the lives of young people through arts education programming.



#### MANDATE

Bring the power of community and creativity to the children and youth of the GTA.

# 2025

## Strategic Focus



In October 2024, we embarked on a new strategic planning process with valuable input from our board, staff, and stakeholders. We are excited to unveil our new strategic plan in 2025. Until then, we remain steadfast in our mission to deliver exceptional, high-quality programs to communities across Ontario, while striving to be a celebrated leader in community arts and artist mentorship.



# OUR IMPACT

**6622**

**Program participants**

**645**

**Community arts education workshops**

**64**

**Mentorship workshops**

**93**

**Artists engaged**

**64**

**Community partners**





Headpiece Creation Workshop at Island Soul Festival



Framing Families Photography Program at East Scarborough Storefront



Community Arts Space Mentorship Program with the Gardiner Museum



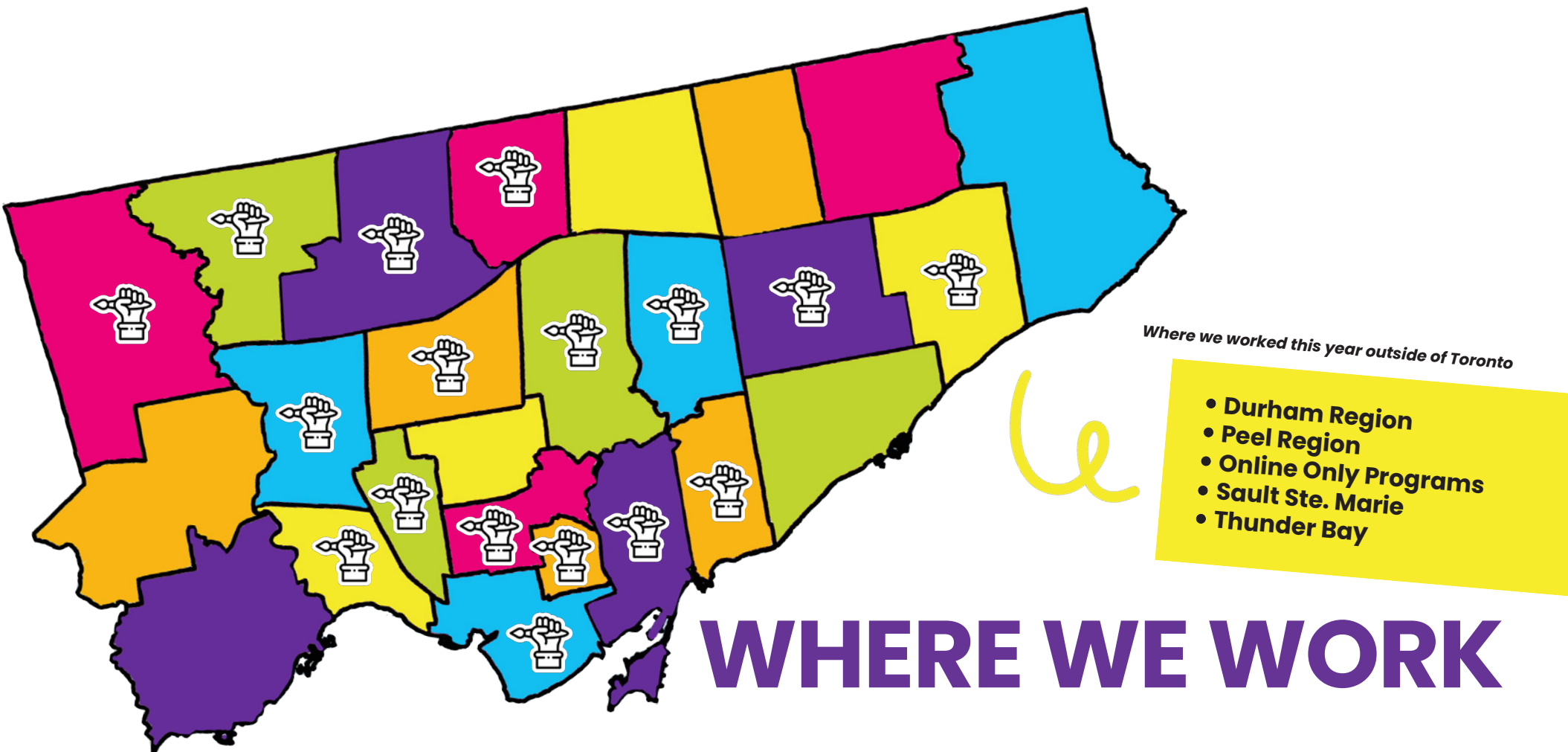
Photography at Rivercrest School



Charcoal Making at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School



NEXT: The Future of Art Exhibition 5.0 Launch Event



In our 2023-24 programming year, we provided arts education and creative mentorship in **17 of Toronto's 25 wards, 2 Greater Toronto Area Municipalities, Northern Ontario** and **online** to communities across the province. Here is how many workshop sessions we ran in each region:

Beaches-East York, 10  
 Davenport, 36  
 Don Valley East, 27  
 Don Valley North, 23  
 Durham Region, 18  
 Eglinton-Lawrence, 50  
 Etobicoke North, 41

Humber River-Black Creek, 28  
 Northern Ontario, 82  
 Online Only Program, 84  
 Parkdale-High Park, 1  
 Peel Region, 25  
 Scarborough Centre, 33  
 Scarborough-Guildwood, 14

Spadina-Fort York, 122  
 Toronto Centre, 16  
 Toronto-Danforth, 10  
 University-Rosedale, 31  
 Willowdale, 8  
 York Centre, 8  
 York South-Weston, 75





# ARTS EDUCATION

As VIBE embarks on our strategic planning process, we are looking to how we can extend our mission to deliver exceptional, high-quality programs to artists of all ages in under-resourced communities across Ontario. As an organization, VIBE has been providing free arts education programming to seniors since the onslaught of the pandemic, where there was a great need for connection and community. We have continued this work, becoming a go-to support for free, creative, and engaging workshops for children, youth and Ontarians of all ages who lack access to the arts.



Clay Program with Kindergartners at Adam Beck Junior Public School



Collaborhythm. Musical Theatre Movement with Balance for Blind Adults



**Collaborhythm** brings local emerging musicians and dancers into classrooms and community spaces to provide expressive music and movement sessions catered to various ages, from kindergartners to high school students and adults. Collaborhythm offers new ways for participants to engage, be creative and become connected to one another through the musical arts. Through the program, we've worked with a diverse group of partners, ranging from Newcomer and community service organizations to public schools, to help make arts education equitable and accessible for all!

This year's Collaborhythm art forms included: Hip Hop Dance, Drum Making, Songwriting, Beatboxing, African Dance, Musical Theatre, Djembe Drumming, Dramatic Arts and Musical Expression.

*Funded by The Slight Family Foundation*

**1052**

**Collaborhythm program participants**

**234**

**Collaborhythm workshop sessions**



Collaborhythm Hip Hop Dance Program at Charles G Fraser P.S.



Collaborhythm Drum Making Program at West End Alternative School





# MENTORSHIP

This year we celebrated 5 years of two of our signature mentorship programs—**NExT** and **Desire Lines**. These year-long programs offer unique opportunities for artists to collaborate and build their skills towards sustainable careers in the arts.

The impact of NExT and Desire Lines since 2019:

**100**

artists received paid creative mentorship and exhibition opportunities

**267**

professional development workshop sessions



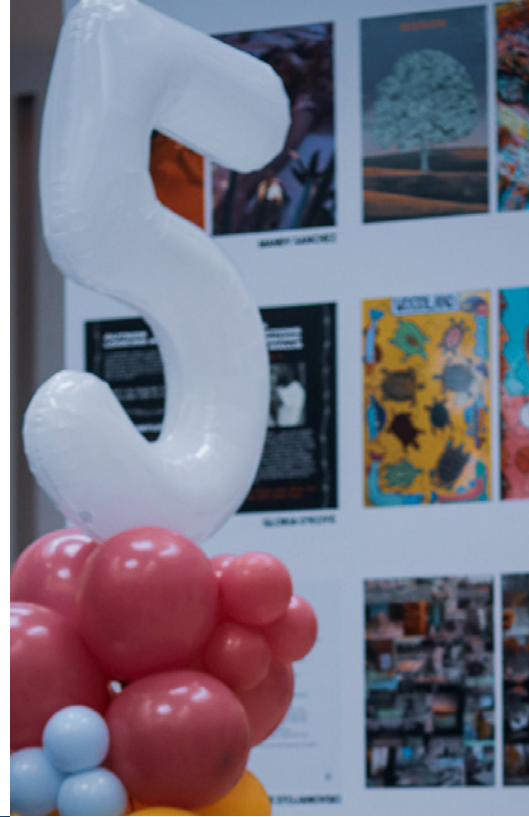
NExT Participant, Shahaddah Jack, and VIBE's Artistic Director, Onika Powell at the 5 year NExT Celebration.



**Desire Lines** provides equity-deserving youth artists employment and mentorship opportunities to lead and curate their own hands-on art experiences for children and youth. These artists create two unique works of art that go on to be displayed in TTC Stations across Toronto.

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of the program, in addition to a new cohort of artists displaying their artwork across the TTC, all 44 program artists had their work showcased in a public exhibit at Scarborough Town Centre, with a celebration event that included performances and an artist talk.

*Desire Lines is made possible by RBC and presented in partnership with PATTISON Outdoor Advertising. Cohort V was presented with additional funding from Herschel Supply Co.*



Desire Lines V Artist SRE



**NEXT**—short for Network and Explore Together—was built on the vision to build, connect, and strengthen networks of Black artists throughout the GTA.

Throughout the program, members of the cohort receive one-on-one mentorship opportunities and access to valuable programs and opportunities. NEXT creates a shared understanding and space to overcome the barriers faced by upcoming artists in pursuit of artistic success.

NEXT V celebrated the 11 mentees who took part in the program and invited past NEXT artists to showcase their artistic talents, from spoken word, to rap, to an art making activity.

*NEXT V was funded by Canada Council for the Arts, Canadian Race Relations Fund and CIBC Foundation.*



NEXT V Artist Ajhani Azure



# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

## VERO DIAZ



### **VIBE: Tell us about yourself!**

VD: Hi, I'm Vero Diaz. I'm an artist and healer. My artistic background is in decolonial art practice, which I started in my master's at York University and have been maturing as I do workshops with VIBE Arts, which then has been flourishing into the realm of Re-Indigenizing.

As an artist, I focus on the process of art making for belonging and freedom, with an intention for participants to find that inner wisdom. I include these elements and my decolonial art practice every time I do art facilitation, like with storytelling, or with mixed media, creative writing, and painting. I invite each participant to connect to one's inner wisdom with these art forms that I use within a Re-Indigenizing lens.

### **VIBE: When did you start your journey with VIBE?**

VD: I've been a part of VIBE Arts for six years as an established artist on the roster, facilitating workshops with art and well-being as lead facilitator. Recently I've been working with VIBE at Humber River Hospital, where I've been facilitating and leading

eight week workshops with watercolours and mixed media for youth ages 7 to 18.

I began leading programs with VIBE in TDSB school and ended up taking a break because it was really triggering for me. I just felt like I couldn't hold space for the experiences a lot of students had. So I took a break and I did some inner work and healing. Then came back to art education and I love it. I can hold space and I have the capacity to lead the workshops.

### **VIBE: How has VIBE Arts supported your artistic and career growth?**

VD: I feel very loved. I have little things like notes and drawings from the children who participate in the programs I lead. So it's really sweet to be part of a community with young people. That's part of my mission as an artist to assist young people and their growth.

Another thing that VIBE has helped me is with self-worth. At the beginning, I had doubts about myself as an artist, as a facilitator. Leading workshops with VIBE has really helped me believe in myself and believe in art itself as a vehicle, as a tool.

Being a part of VIBE has also helped me mature my own methodology, which is called the Ancestral Arts Method. It's part of my background and my philosophy as an artist to look into the ways of art making of my ancestors from Mexico and the philosophy of the Tolteca's and not being shy about sharing my culture. In that way, others have the permission to share who they are. I can see the sparkle in the youth's eyes when I share my philosophy and my art making. Art not just about doing pretty things or accomplishing a task, but more about expression and remembering that we're part of a lineage of philosophers, storytellers, visionaries and such an important piece of humanity. I believe that artists play such an important role in society. VIBE has helped me share that, to remind myself that I'm impacting people's lives.

Meeting other artists within VIBE's community has also really nourished me. To get to see what they're up to, being part of a community. I've made friends, future collaborators. It has also been really rewarding to meet nurses, youth workers, teachers through VIBE programs and collaborate together and create beautiful programs where kids really benefit and

grow. I can see that from the beginning, there's like a seed and then there's a little tree, which is really wonderful.

**VIBE: What do you think makes VIBE Arts unique as a community arts organization?**

VD: VIBE really supports artists. I feel very supported. I feel understood. I felt very supported by the staff, for example, when I first started I was doubting myself and thought "I can't do a creative writing spoken word workshop", VIBE told me: "if I was one of the participants and I had you as a teacher, I would be happy and it would help me because I am someone who is also soft spoken and was shy as a child." So I realized, wow I can do this.

VIBE also has a really interesting structure where I'm a contractor and it really fits with my other part-time responsibilities and jobs and I've been able to have flexibility. At the same time, I can have consistency with places like, for example, Humber River Hospital or CAMH, where I've been able to return to and lead programs.

**VIBE: What is the most memorable you've had from a program?**



Storytelling Extravaganza, Grenoble P.S.

VD: A favourite moment was when I was leading a Mixed-Media Storytelling program at Grenoble. There was this one student who didn't know how to write and read. It didn't deter me from focusing or including him within the workshop. I sat down and took my time to go really slow, gave him different directives and met him where he was at. Suddenly he was drawing, and then at the end, he created a story. It's super cute, it's about dragons. It was really beautiful to see that the student was able to accomplish his story through his own process even though he needed a little extra help.

**VIBE: Why is it important for people to support arts education programs?**

VD: It's important to have arts education programs like VIBE's offered to young people because there is a gap that I've witnessed and heard about straight from youth and services providers like teachers, nurses and youth workers. They're always mentioning that there's not enough space for the youth to feel safe and held where they can really explore who they are through art and there are not enough resources. Some teachers have shared that they only have around \$300 for art supplies for the whole year and they go



Wellness Visual Arts, Humber River Hospital

through materials so fast. Because of the lack of materials, support and spaces, the kids don't have opportunities to really explore their emotions, their ideas, their identity. And they're kind of this limbo.

Arts education programs like VIBE's impact lives and youth's development. At Humber River Hospital, the nurses would always speak to me after the session about how the workshop would impact the participants. For example, one time I led a session where there was a youth who had a more severe mental health condition. And with the amazement from the nurse, this youth was able to accomplish the whole workshop. She finished, she followed the directives and she created something really beautiful and expressive. The nurse explained to me that this youth wasn't able to accomplish any tasks for many days. And just having that day, that workshop and accomplishing a task was just such a humongous accomplishment in her development. She was very excited and she just wanted us to always be there. She said, "you guys should come every day."

It's also important to have arts education programs because it really promotes leadership. There's some small kids that have good ideas and then others want to get inspired and they want to follow them. I really see that through art you can help youth discover how they can be leaders. Fostering what a leader means to them, how it can look, and that maybe others get inspired by you.

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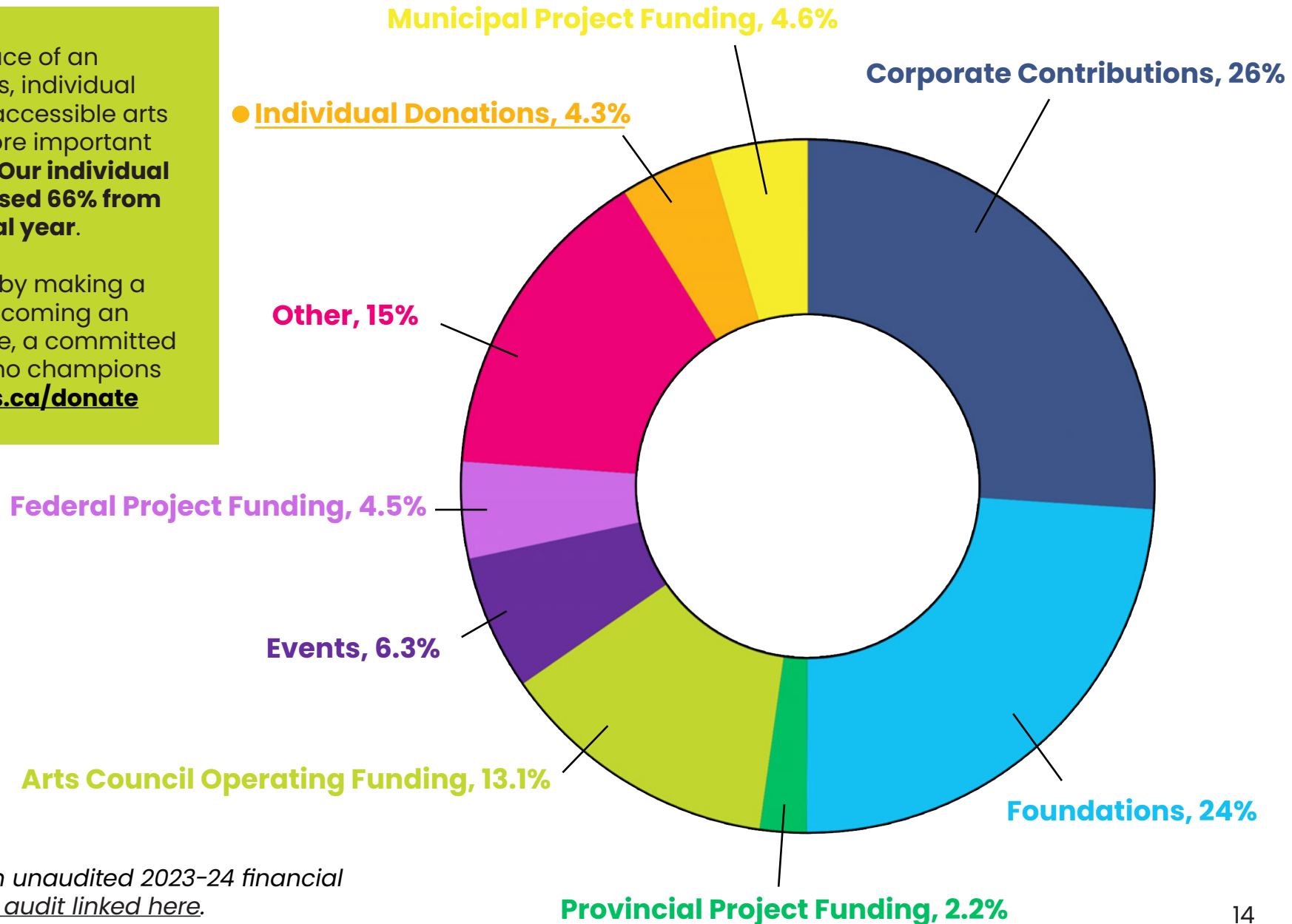
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# 2023-24 FINANCIALS

This year, in the face of an arts sector in crisis, individual donors saw how accessible arts programming is more important than ever before. **Our individual donations increased 66% from our previous fiscal year.**

Support our work by making a donation or by becoming an VIBE Arts Advocate, a committed monthly donor who champions our work: [vibearts.ca/donate](https://vibearts.ca/donate)



Figures based on unaudited 2023-24 financial records. [2022-23 audit linked here.](#)



# SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our donors, funders, sponsors, community and corporate partners for their continued, meaningful support!

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Vicki Rodgers



VIBE Artist Kseniya Tsoy at a live painting activation