

# Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study: Introduction

**In 2022, Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) launched its Guaranteed Income (GI) for Artists Program.** This program provided 2,400 artists across New York State with \$1,000 a month for 18 months. Built on the principle that all artists deserve financial security, artists could use those payments for any purpose, including directly supporting their artistic practice, stabilizing their financial situation, building a savings buffer to help with financial emergencies, paying down debts, or anything else.

Commissioned by Creatives Rebuild New York, the Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study was a multidisciplinary, collaborative research effort to document and assess the impact of these guaranteed income payments on participating artists' lives and livelihoods. This introductory document includes a summary of findings, a detailed description of data collection and analytical methods, and an introduction to the scholars and research institutions involved.

# 1. Summary of Findings

This series of research briefs provides initial insights into the impacts of this program across a variety of topics: artistic practice and earnings, work-life balancing, financial well-being, spending patterns, physical and mental health, and community impacts. Each of seven briefs offer data-driven lessons about New York State (NYS) artists and the impacts of the GI program.



## BRIEF #1

### Artists' Demographics

This brief shows that the artists in the GI program worked across multiple disciplines, with visual arts being the most common. Many participants were highly credentialed, with over 75% holding at least a college degree, yet they still faced financial insecurity, highlighting the vulnerability of artists despite advanced qualifications. The majority of artists were based in New York City, but the program included participants from rural and suburban areas across the state, showcasing the geographic diversity of the artistic community. As a commitment to equity, the program focused on supporting marginalized communities; a high percentage of participants identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQIAP+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, Pansexual), or Deaf/Disabled. Artists also valued their cultural heritage, with many reflecting on how their backgrounds influenced their practice and identity.

The GI program allowed artists to pursue their work more freely, alleviating financial strain and enabling them to dedicate more time to their craft. In addition, many artists served as caregivers, and the support they received helped them balance family responsibilities. The program was instrumental in removing barriers for artists to thrive both creatively and in their personal lives, ultimately fostering a resilient and diverse cultural landscape in New York State.

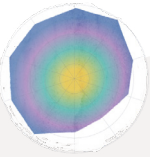


## BRIEF #2

### Spending Patterns

This brief draws on administrative bank account and transaction data, which tracked where and how almost every participant in the program spent their money. This dataset allowed us to explore changes in artists' spending patterns after receiving the GI payments, what they spent their funds on, and how the funds impacted their account balances and sources of income, including their employment. We found that artists, like others who receive guaranteed income, used the payments to catch up on bills, improve their account balances, pay off debts, buy food and other essential items, and invest in themselves and their families. They did so while still working and dedicating time to their artistic practice.

Our qualitative interviews revealed one important way that artists who received GI payments likely differed from other groups that receive guaranteed income: the payments afforded participants more flexibility to dedicate themselves to their craft and get paid for their work. This finding speaks to a common thread that runs through much of the research on GI pilots: unconditional cash payments give cash-strapped individuals and families the space to pursue their personal, professional, and economic goals. For policymakers, foundations, and community organizations who care about the arts and promoting the vibrancy of their communities, a guaranteed income for artists offers a path to doing so, while also ensuring that those artists—and the places they live in—have the economic support they need to thrive.

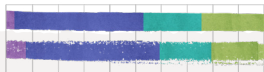


BRIEF #3

### Financial Well-being

This brief illustrates that artists face particular economic challenges due to the nature of their work, often relying on gig jobs and supplementary income streams. These circumstances often make them vulnerable to financial instability. Using surveys and in-depth interviews, we found the GI payments helped bridge the gaps created by these structural challenges. Overall, the guaranteed income provided vital financial relief and improved participants' financial health across multiple dimensions. GI participants were better able to cover both personal and artistic expenses, save money, and manage debt. They also experienced reduced financial hardship, including less food insecurity. By addressing these financial challenges, guaranteed income enables artists to devote themselves more fully to their creative work which in turn enriches the broader cultural and economic landscape.

Artists in the program reported greater satisfaction with their artistic development, quality, and impact, and were more likely to engage in community-based projects. The GI program also alleviated some barriers to creating art, such as lack of time, studio space, or materials. Artists receiving GI were more likely to consider continuing their artistic careers long-term, highlighting the positive effect of financial support on career sustainability. Overall, the GI program significantly improved artists' ability to experiment, create impactful work, and maintain a sustainable career.



BRIEF #4

### Artists' Labor

This brief shows that the GI program enabled participating artists to spend more time on their artistic practice, increasing their average weekly arts work hours from 19.4 to 23.1 compared to non-participants. Financial support also allowed artists to dedicate a greater proportion of their work hours to art, improving opportunities and productivity. GI participants experienced upward trends in earnings, although fluctuations persisted. Overall, the program helped minimize severe income declines. Financial stability fostered creative growth, allowing 72% of participants to experiment with new media or techniques.



BRIEF #5

### Juggling Responsibilities

This brief reveals how financial support helped participants balance their artistic and personal lives. GI participants spent significantly more time on their artistic practice compared to non-participants, while reducing hours on non-arts work. Nearly half of the artists eligible for GI were caregivers, and many cited domestic responsibilities as barriers to their artistic pursuits. The program empowered 75% of participants to improve their work-life balance, dedicating more time to caregiving, family, and self-care. Artists described the GI program as a "breather," enabling them to stabilize financially and focus more on their craft. Despite these gains, both groups continued to face challenges such as insufficient income from the arts, caregiving demands, and limited access to facilities. These findings underline the transformative potential of guaranteed income while highlighting the ongoing need for broader support systems to help artists sustain their creative practices and contribute meaningfully to cultural and community life.



## BRIEF #6

## Health and Well-being

This brief describes how the GI program improved artists' physical and mental health, relationships, self-esteem, and sense of purpose. In particular, artists reported in both surveys and interviews that they felt a greater sense of control and autonomy over their lives, which allowed them to care for themselves and pursue their artistic practice. GI payments also supported artists financially during unexpected health emergencies while in the program, alleviating mental and physical strain during that time. A guaranteed income for artists offers a powerful opportunity to promote improved health and stable well-being, benefiting both the artists themselves and the communities they enrich.

### PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT

**"Maduenu," a Nigerian-American artist living in an urban neighborhood, tells stories through sound, music, and visuals.**<sup>1</sup> For years, financial struggles and caregiving responsibilities for a younger sibling with a disability left Maduenu feeling stuck and disconnected from his art. Working long hours in a physically demanding job added to the stress, leaving little room to focus on creative goals. The Guaranteed Income payments from CRNY were a turning point for Maduenu. With \$1,000 a month in support, he reduced his work hours and devoted himself to his craft, taking classes to refine his skills and experiment with new techniques. The financial stability also gave him the space to prioritize his mental health, starting therapy and building self-care routines. At home, the reduced stress improved his relationship with his sibling, fostering a more harmonious and supportive environment.

1. "Maduenu" is a pseudonym for the artist who offered this personal story.



## BRIEF #7

## Community and Family Impacts

This brief explores the impact these payments had not only on the individual artists who received GI payments, but also on their broader communities. We assessed the program's community impact through in-depth interviews, surveys, and analysis of bank account and transaction data. We found that artists who received the GI payments engaged in more community-based work. In addition, participants reported that the monthly payments enabled them to invest in their close relationships and provided them the capacity to engage with others in a more positive and supportive way. These findings illustrate how the effect of a guaranteed income can extend outward. It can foster both personal and community-level growth and contribute to a richer cultural and social landscape where artists are better positioned to thrive not only in their artistic practice, but also in their lives.



## APPENDIX

## Research Poetry

This component of this study transformed participant narratives into poetic forms, offering a deeply human and resonant perspective on the impact of the Guaranteed Income program. This innovative method moves beyond traditional qualitative analysis, allowing participants to co-create poems that distill the core themes, emotions, and lived experiences they shared during interviews. The collaborative process ensures that these works authentically reflect the voices and stories of the artists involved. Through Research Poetry, the project captured the multifaceted realities of participants, revealing the profound ways financial stability influenced their creative practices, personal lives, and communities.

## 2. Methods and Data

### 2.1 Quantitative data and methods

The analyses here used several data sources. CRNY's data collection began with the applications to the GI program and then an optional survey (Portrait of NYS Artists) for applicants. Then, in the month prior to exiting the program, participants were recruited to complete a survey. At this 18-month mark, applicants not participating in the program were also recruited for the same survey. Spending data were also made available for GI participants.

#### Application Data

From February 14-March 25, 2022, CRNY opened the GI program to applications from eligible artists. Details on this process can be found in the process evaluation report.<sup>2</sup> In total, 21,921 artists applied. The application form was largely limited to collecting just the information necessary to establish eligibility for the program and indicate whether certain priority criteria were met by applicants. Eligibility required applicants to meet four conditions: being an artist or culture bearer, demonstrating financial need (based on the Self-Sufficiency Standard)<sup>3</sup>, being an adult, and residing in New York State. Artists were broadly defined<sup>4</sup> to include diverse creative practices aimed at expression, cultural knowledge sharing, or social impact. Selection was conducted via a weighted lottery to prioritize applicants facing systemic disadvantages, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, Pansexual individuals (LGBTQIAP+); immigrants; people with disabilities; caregivers; those with criminal legal system involvement; those lacking a financial safety net; and rural residents. Prioritized applicants received additional entries to increase their chances while ensuring all eligible applicants had an opportunity. Thus, application

data include information on demographics and artistic discipline.

#### Portrait of New York State Artists Survey

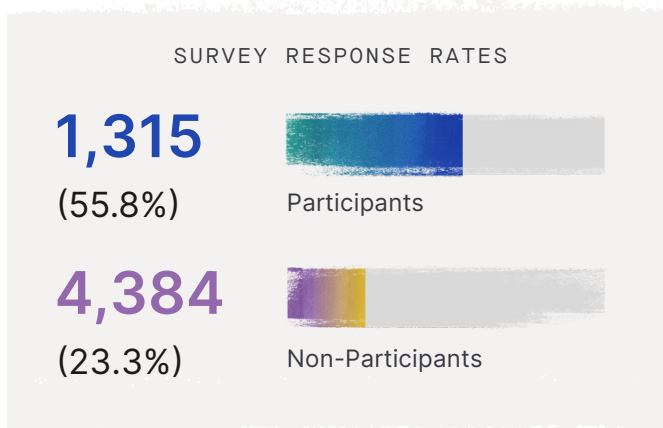
When artists submitted their applications for the Guaranteed Income for Artists, they were invited to voluntarily answer additional questions related to their artistic practice, financial situation, well-being, pandemic experiences, and views on policy and advocacy. This survey allowed CRNY to collect additional information on the needs, circumstances, and experiences of artists across New York State while also keeping the application form as minimal as possible. 11,728 (53.5%) GI applicants completed the Portrait of NYS Artists Survey. The full survey and dataset is available at National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture at ICPSR.<sup>5</sup>

#### Survey Data

The survey targeted all artists who applied to the GI program in 2022 and provided an email address, including 2,357 participants who consented to research and 18,812 non-participants. Surveys were collected between November 8, 2023, and April 2, 2024, with timing aligned to program start dates. Participants received the survey 18 months into the

2. Frasz, A. (2024). *Creatives Rebuild New York Guaranteed Income for Artists Process Evaluation*. Creatives Rebuild New York / Helicon Collaborative. [https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CRNY-Evaluation-Report\\_GI.pdf](https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CRNY-Evaluation-Report_GI.pdf)
3. The Self-Sufficiency Standard determines the amount of income required for working families to meet basic needs at a minimally adequate level. This Standard considers family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs. Kucklick, A. & Manzer, L. (2021). *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York 2021*. Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington School of Social Work. [https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NY2021\\_SSS.pdf](https://selfsufficiencystandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NY2021_SSS.pdf)
4. CRNY defined an artist, culture bearer, or culture maker as "someone who regularly engages in artistic practice to: express themselves with the intention of communicating richly to others; pass on traditional knowledge and cultural practices; have social impacts with and within communities; and/or bring cultural resources to their communities." <https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/>
5. Hand, Jamie, and Calderon, Sarah. *Portrait of New York State Artists Survey, 2022*. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2024-05-21. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR39025.v1>

program, prior to exiting, and again three months after the program ended. Non-participants were invited to complete the survey in November 2023.



Median survey completion times were 21 minutes for participants and 17 minutes for non-participants. The survey questionnaire included matrix (Likert), closed-ended, and open-ended questions about artistic practices, time spent on these practices, income, financial health, living situations, overall health, and demographics. Questions were adapted from the CRNY GI application and validated instruments, including the Patient Health Questionnaire<sup>6</sup>. The questionnaire was the same for participants and non-participants except for a handful of questions that applied only to participants.

## Spending Data

The dataset on individual transaction-level spending (credit) and deposits was sourced from Steady, a mobile application that managed the majority of CRNY transfers. It includes detailed information on the transaction date (by week), spending category, and spending amount for each participant. The dataset spans from the first week of 2022 to the 30th week of 2024. This allowed the researchers to observe transaction behavior for most participants both before the initial payment and after the conclusion of CRNY transfers. While the sample comprises 2,058 unique participants, only 1,148 have the complete 18 distinct CRNY payments recorded in the Steady App. For the analyses in the briefs, we focused on only those participants for whom there was complete data, though our findings were similar when we expand the sample to include those with incomplete data.

## Analytic Methods

The quantitative analyses rely on these data sources to describe the participating and non-participating artists. Statistical tests allowed us to see whether the average characteristics of one group differed from the other. Because of the randomized nature of the selection of artists to participate in the GI program, we can be confident that the differences between the participant and non-participant groups are due to their receiving GI payments rather than other factors.

Like a randomized trial, the differences in the briefs are causal or the average impacts of the GI program. Of course, individual participants experienced a wide variety of impacts as a result of the program. But comparing (selected) participants' situations and experiences after 18 months in the program with the (unselected) non-participants' after 18 months identifies how the GI program altered the trajectory and outcomes of participants.

Because the GI program's randomization used a weighted lottery to select participants, the analysis accounted for each participant's different likelihood of winning the lottery. We used Generalized Boosting Methods (GBM) to create weights that adjust for potential biases arising from differences in treatment assignment. These biases could affect our results if certain groups of participants were more or less likely to receive the treatment. By creating these weights, we ensure that our study results better represent the entire population (of applicants), leading to more accurate and reliable findings. The GBM uses application information (e.g., demographics, artistic discipline, public assistance status) to control for the likelihood of selection into the program. This gives equal representation in the data regardless of the weighted nature of the lottery.

6. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., Williams, J. B. W., & Löwe, B. (2009). Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) [Database record]. APA PsycTests. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t06168-000>

## 2.2 Qualitative data and methods

Before beginning data collection, we convened an Artist Advisory Board composed of GI program participants to collaboratively frame the research questions and ensure alignment with the lived experiences of artists. Following data collection, the Advisory Board reconvened to provide feedback on the initial interpretation of findings, ensuring that the analysis reflected participant perspectives and maintained relevance to their experiences.

### Qualitative Interviews

There were two sets of qualitative interviews conducted as part of this research. The first set explored the labor and income effects of CRNY's GI for Artists program through one-on-one interviews with participants. A random sample of 1,072 artists who responded "Yes" or "Maybe" to questions in the Guaranteed Income Impact Survey expressing interest in follow-up participation was selected. From this group, the research team chose 40 artists for interviews. In consultation with the Indiana University Center for Survey Research (CSR) and CRNY, the research team prepared interview questions, a study information sheet, email recruitment messages, and an incentive message for IRB submission. All materials were translated into Spanish to accommodate participants who needed to conduct the interview in Spanish. Interviewers from CSR conducted 30 one-on-one virtual interviews via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and included open-ended questions about the participant's income and work activities before, during, and after the GI program. Participants were compensated \$75 for their time in completing the interview.

The CSR Study Director selected four CSR staff members, including a native Spanish speaker, with experience in qualitative interviews to conduct the interviews. Two training sessions were held on July 1 and August 1, 2024, to introduce the project's aims, review study questions, discuss the sample and recruitment processes, explain the incentive plan, and provide instruction on interview transcript cleaning and editing.

The second set of interviews were guided by a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of CRNY artists. Thirty participants were randomly selected from the survey respondents who consented to qualitative interviews, with ten individuals chosen from each of the following groups: LGBTQIAP+,

Black, and immigrant participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June and August 2024 by a doctoral student at the City University of New York (CUNY), exploring the impact of guaranteed income on their artistic practices and economic well-being. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized to protect confidentiality, with participants receiving \$75 for their time. The qualitative interview data were analyzed using a phenomenological method to identify significant themes and patterns. The coding process involved multiple reviewers and triangulation, supported by Atlas.ti software.

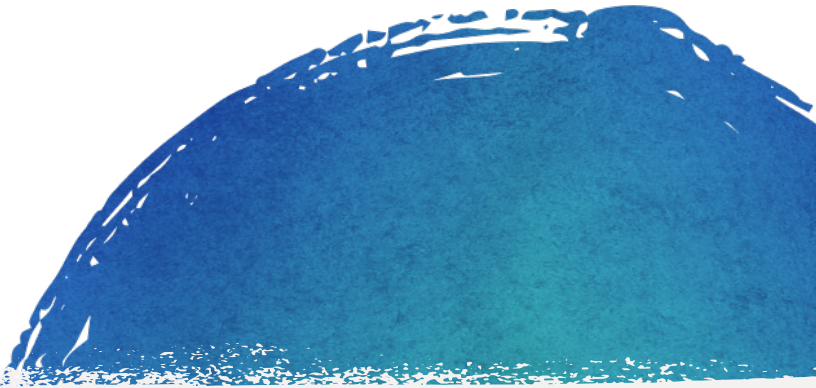
### Research Poetry

The research poetry component engaged interview participants in a collaborative process to transform their narratives into poetic forms. After the interviews were transcribed, the CUNY interviewer returned to the participant with the transcript, and together they co-created poetry that distilled the key themes, emotions, and stories shared during the interview. This process ensured that the poetic representation remained authentic to the participant's voice and experiences. Participants who contributed to the research poetry were compensated with an additional \$100 for their time and effort.

### Creative Expression

All GI participants were invited to contribute to the creative expression project, which sought to explore the impact of guaranteed income through artistic mediums. Participants were asked to submit any form of art—such as photographs, videos, writing, or other mediums—that reflected their personal experiences with the guaranteed income program. Submissions included a brief description explaining how the piece connected to their experience with the program.

The project resulted in 80 diverse submissions, which were capped to ensure manageability. Each participant was compensated \$200 for their contribution, recognizing the importance of supporting artists' livelihoods. Participants retained ownership of their work while granting the research team the rights to use the submissions for public dissemination. This included integration into social media campaigns, reports (including this series of research briefs), conference installations, and other efforts to promote understanding and advocacy for guaranteed income programs. Artists had the option to remain anonymous or receive attribution for their work.



### 3. Research Partners

Creatives Rebuild New York commissioned two research teams to evaluate the Guaranteed Income for Artists program: one led by the Center for Cultural Affairs at Indiana University, and the other led by Appalachian State University in collaboration with Washington University in St. Louis and New York University's Cash Transfer Lab. While collaboration across institutions on data collection, participant communications, and analytical methods is complex, this dual approach was strategic and intentional—ensuring multi-disciplinary analyses and a range of research products that can reach the diverse fields of practice engaged in the guaranteed income movement.

**Douglas Noonan** is Faculty Director at the Center for Cultural Affairs, Indiana University. His research focuses on policy and economic issues related to cultural affairs and regional quality-of-life. He is co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Cultural Economics* and co-director of the Arts, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Lab, a National Endowment for the Arts national research lab. He is a professor at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Indianapolis.

**Joanna Woronkovicz**, Faculty Director, Center for Cultural Affairs, Indiana University, is a cultural economist who conducts research on labor, capital, and technological investments in arts and culture. She is an associate professor at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and also served as the senior research officer for the National Endowment for the Arts. Her forthcoming book, *Artists at Work: Rethinking Policy for Artistic Careers* will be published with Stanford University Press in Fall 2025.

**Sarah Cowan** is an Associate Professor of Sociology at New York University and the founder and Executive Director of New York University's Cash Transfer Lab. Her cash transfer research examines Alaska's long-standing universal cash transfer policy, which has paid a substantial cash payment to hundreds of thousands of Alaskans annually since 1982. Additionally, she is a social demographer with expertise in American fertility, social networks and survey methodology.

**Alex Dobill** graduated from East Carolina University in 2022 with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Sociology and minors in Gender Studies and Composite Natural Sciences. She is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work degree with a concentration in Community and Organizational Practice at Appalachian State University.



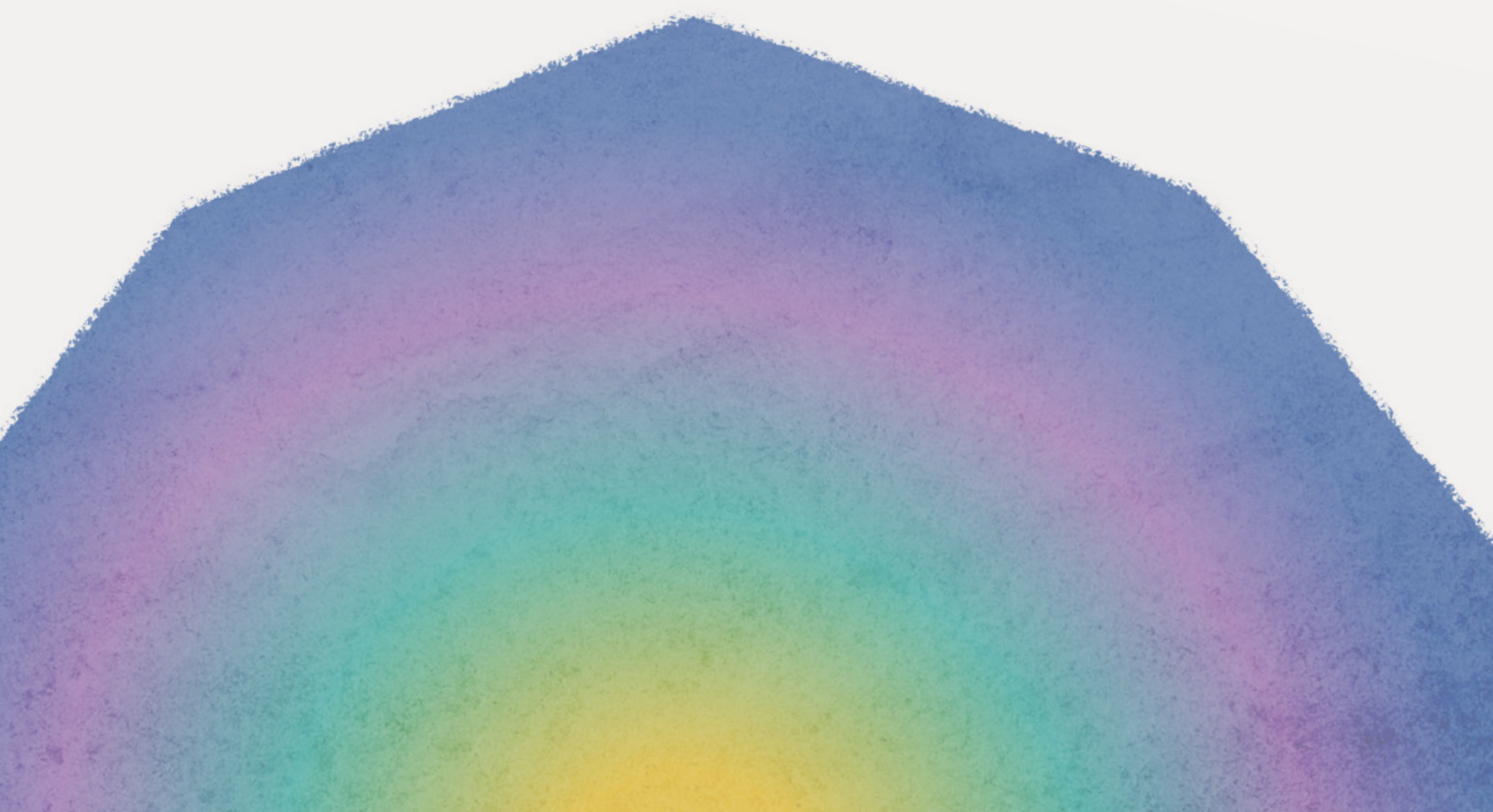
**Leah Hamilton**, MSW, Ph.D., is a Professor of Social Work at Appalachian State University and a Senior Fellow at the Jain Family Institute. Her book, *Welfare Doesn't Work: The Promises of Basic Income for a Failed American Safety Net* was released in 2020. As Principal Investigator of the [Family Economic Policy Lab](#), she leads the evaluation of several basic/guaranteed income pilots across the United States.

**Erica Hobby** is the Director of Research Operations at New York University's Cash Transfer Lab where she oversees the lab's portfolio of research projects. Erica has a Master of Public Administration from NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service with a specialization in public policy analysis and quantitative methods.

**Tabashshum Jahan (TJ) Islam** is a Bangladeshi-American writer and performance artist pursuing their PhD in Social Welfare at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. Their interests include trauma-informed approaches to empower and honor communities through narrative, teaching, and research. They are currently engaging in qualitative research and arts-based inquiry to explore artists' experiences in receiving a guaranteed income through Creatives Rebuild New York.

**Stephen Roll** is the Co-Director of Research and Policy Innovation at the Center for Social Development, and an Assistant Professor at the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. His work focuses on policies and programs aimed at increasing the economic mobility, wealth, and stability of low-income communities, including projects focused on benefits expansion and guaranteed income.

**Guangli Zhang** is a Data Analyst III at Washington University in St. Louis and a Research Fellow at Saint Louis University. He has expertise in applied economic research and working with alternative datasets. His research portfolio includes work on unemployment insurance, credit behavior, government regulation, and municipal finance.



## 4. About Creatives Rebuild New York

Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY) was a three-year, \$125 million initiative that provided guaranteed income and employment opportunities to 2,700 artists across New York State. CRNY's direct funding programs were complemented by research, storytelling, policy, and advocacy efforts that advanced the notion that artists are workers who deserve equitable, sustainable support structures and that improving the lives of artists is paramount to the vitality of New York State's social and economic wellbeing. Fiscally sponsored by Tides Center, CRNY's funding commitment was anchored by \$115 million from the Mellon Foundation and \$5 million each from the Ford Foundation and Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

The Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study is one of several research initiatives related to CRNY's Guaranteed Income for Artists program. Preliminary findings from the Impact Study were released in September 2024. Other efforts include a detailed process evaluation, convening a working group of peer GI program administrators to make strategic recommendations to the field, and an exploration of the relationships between disability, public benefits, and no-strings-attached cash assistance programs. The following reports, as well as a series of multimedia storytelling efforts documenting the impact of guaranteed income on a range of artists in the program, are available at [www.creativesrebuildny.org](http://www.creativesrebuildny.org).

- **Guaranteed Income for Artists: Preliminary Findings.** (2024). Creatives Rebuild New York.
- Frasz, A. (2024). **Creatives Rebuild New York Guaranteed Income for Artists Process Evaluation.** Creatives Rebuild New York / Helicon Collaborative.
- Frasz, A., Hand, J. and Cuffie-Peterson, M. (2024). **Advance Guaranteed Income Now: Recommendations from Creatives Rebuild New York's Guaranteed Income for Artists Working Group.** Creatives Rebuild New York / Helicon Collaborative.
- Gotkin, K. (2024). **Crip Coin: Disability, Public Benefits, and Guaranteed Income.** Creatives Rebuild New York.

CRNY staff members who supported the Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study include Jamie Hand, Director of Strategic Impact and Narrative Change; Maura Cuffie-Peterson, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Guaranteed Income; Isaiah Madison, Program Manager, Guaranteed Income; Naja Gordon, Program Manager, Guaranteed Income; Sarah Calderon, Executive Director; and Soley Esteves, Director of Programs and Operations. This series of *Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study* briefs was edited by Jamie Hand and Maura Cuffie-Peterson, with support from Erinrose Mager, Writer and Assistant Director of Media and Communications.



Copyright © January 2025

Creatives Rebuild New York, a project of Tides Center. [www.creativesrebuildny.org](http://www.creativesrebuildny.org)

Permission is granted for reproduction of this document for non-commercial, charitable, educational, and other purposes at all times consistent with Tides' 501c3 status, with attribution to Creatives Rebuild New York.

Please cite as: Hand, J. and Cuffie-Peterson, M. (Eds.). (2025). *Guaranteed Income for Artists Impact Study: Introduction*. Creatives Rebuild New York.

Publication Design: Fenton