

**ART FOR
JUSTICE
FUND**

Forging Connections Between Artists and Advocates

2023 Grantee Survey

MAY 2023

 engageRD

INTRODUCTION

From 2018 through 2023, the Art for Justice (A4J) Fund brought together artists, advocates, and allied donors to build public will for ending mass incarceration. Central to this work was the idea that artists, especially formerly incarcerated artists, have a vital role to play in envisioning a new future and solutions where shared safety is available to all. Since its inception, the Fund has explored various approaches to connecting artists and advocates to support this vision, from awarding joint grants, hosting grantee convenings in New Orleans and Arizona, and creating space for dialogue through webinars, an active listserv, and more.

About this Survey

As A4J winds down in 2023, the Fund partnered with Engage R+D to better understand how grantees built and strengthened their relationships with one another. In March and April 2023, Engage R+D sent a survey to 51 organizations and individuals who received core funding for more than one year. This document summarizes findings from the survey, guided by the following questions:

- How are people/organizations connecting?
- What is resulting from these connections?

The data from the survey included multiple-choice responses, open-ended comments, and social network data that was used to create a series of maps showing how connections between participants have changed and grown.

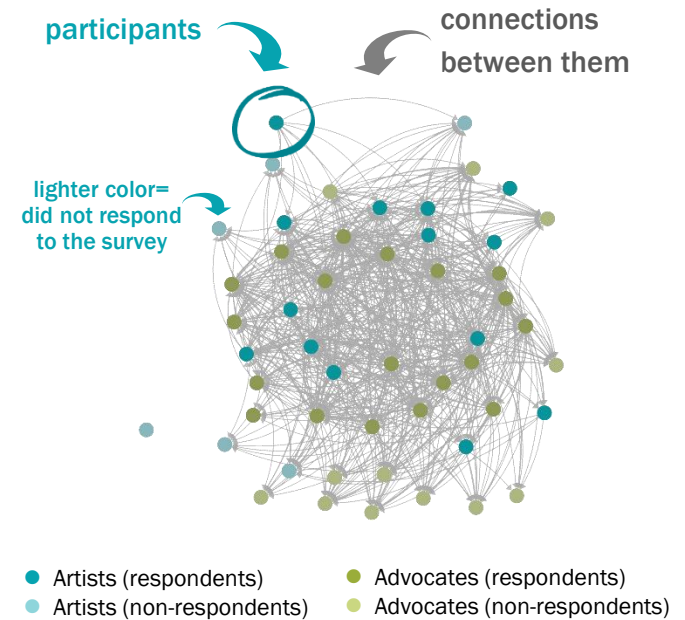
“The A4J program offered me that first chance to revisit my dream of creating narratives that move people to compassion.” – Grantee

Methods and Limitations. Of the 51 grantees, 34 responded to the survey, representing a 64% response rate. While we recognize that many grantees operate at the intersection of arts and advocacy, we asked survey participants to categorize themselves as either an artist/arts organization or an advocate/advocacy organization. Artists accounted for 41% of respondents and advocates accounted for 59%. Analyzing connections between these two groups allows us to better understand how A4J helped artists and advocates partner with one another and grow their network.

Participants who responded to the survey may differ in important ways from other grantees who did not respond. As a result, findings in this report may not be representative of the experiences of all grantees. Recognizing this limitation, our analysis has uncovered useful insights into connections being made among grantees. See the Appendix for the full participant list, methods, and limitations of our approach.

Reading the Maps. In the map at the right, survey participants are represented by the blue dots (artists) and green dots (advocates). The connections that respondents reported with other grantees are shown by the grey lines connecting them. Those with lighter colored dots did not respond to the survey; they are included in the map because we have some information about them from the survey respondents. However, without their response, this information is incomplete, meaning they may appear to be less connected to the network.

To understand the extent to which grantees in each map are connected overall, we use a metric called network density. Density is shown as a percentage and is calculated as the number of connections in the map out of the total possible number of possible connections.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

This report synthesizes survey findings that show how relationships have formed among grantees and served to integrate arts and advocacy work to end mass incarceration. The report also includes grantee perspectives on how A4J has supported progress in narrative change and criminal justice policy. Our hope is that these findings will spark new insights about what it takes to build and grow a network of artists, advocates, and allied donors working towards transformative change. Below we highlight four key takeaways:



Grantees became better connected over the course of A4J.

- The average grantee doubled their number of connections, from knowing 2 in 5 grantees before A4J to 4 in 5 by 2023.
- Grantees reported three times more relationships in which they supported, advocated for, or partnered with one another by 2023.



Advocates and artists made new connections.

- Before A4J, the average advocate knew less than 1 in 5 artists in the sample; after they knew 3 in 4.
- Artists had connections with less than 1 in 4 advocates before A4J and 3 in 4 after.
- Advocates and artists reported over 40 new partnerships with one another since the start of A4J.



Artists gained visibility and funding for their work.

- Over the course of A4J, both artists and advocacy organizations gained more visibility from their peers, with artists in particular becoming better known amongst the group.
- Nearly all grantees reported attracting new funding during their time in A4J.



Grantees reported progress in narrative and policy change.

- Nearly all grantees said A4J was shifting old narratives about mass incarceration.
- Nearly all advocates said that the Fund supported advancements in policies to promote re-entry and reduce jail and prison populations.

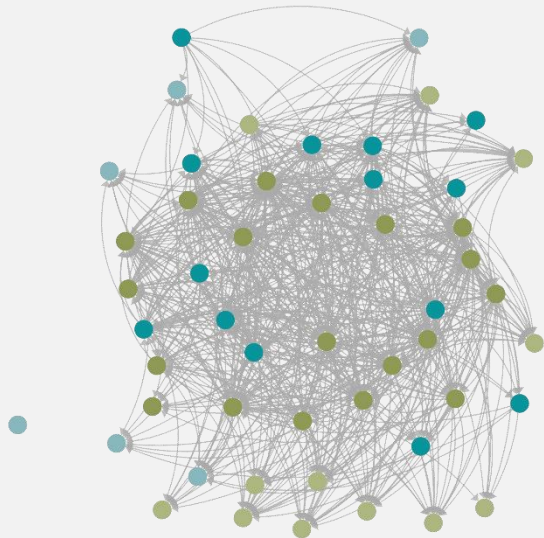
Grantee Connections

This section shares network maps showing how grantees were connected before A4J compared to when the survey was fielded in 2023. This information is contextualized with responses to multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

GRANTEES BECAME BETTER CONNECTED OVER THE COURSE OF A4J

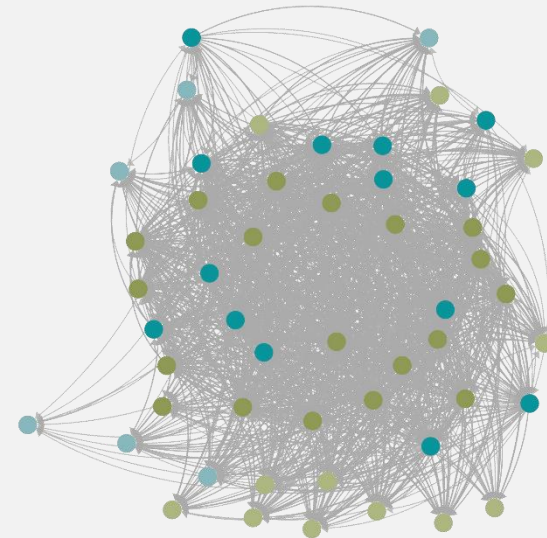
Through joint grants and spaces for dialogue (e.g., A4J events, webinars, and the listserv), the Fund built intentional opportunities for grantees to connect and work together. Before A4J, the average grantee knew 2 out of every 5 grantees in the sample. By 2023, the number of relationships had doubled, with the average grantee knowing 4 out of 5. The group was even more connected than in 2020, when a similar study showed the average grantee knew 3-4 grantees out of 5.* In the survey, 94% of grantees said that A4J helped them feel like part of a larger community working to end mass incarceration.

Before A4J: 39% connected



**The average grantee knew
20 out of the other 50 grantees in the sample.**

After A4J: 81% connected



**The average grantee knew
40 out of the other 50 grantees in the sample.**

*See appendix for a comparison between the 2020 and 2023 survey results.

● Artists (respondents) ● Advocates (respondents)
● Artists (non-respondents) ● Advocates (non-respondents)

Grantees deepened their connections with one another. In addition to making new connections, grantees in this group developed deeper relationships over the course of A4J. The number of connections that involved supporting, advocating for, or partnering with one another nearly tripled, with 20% saying they now **supported** each other through sharing information or resources, 11% using their influence to **advocate** for one another’s work, and 13% **partnering** on joint goals. “[A4J] strengthened relationships, understanding, and collaboration across leaders, artists, administrators, students, and organizations that are part of the movement to end mass incarceration,” explained one grantee. Some grantees, however, would have liked additional supports for building relationships: “As a new leader, I sometimes felt out of my depth in the A4J space because I didn’t know many people,” commented one grantee. “I wish there had been more opportunities to deepen relationships to advocates, supporters, and partners. However, I am grateful for the community A4J fostered.”

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS:

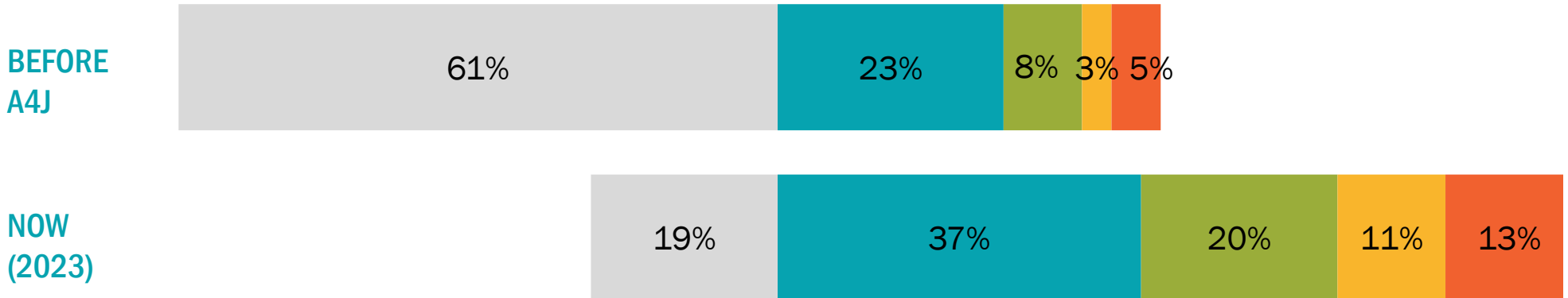
Unaware: I have not heard of them.

Colleague/Peer: I know of them but have had minimal or no interaction.

Supporter: I support them in ways that are low-stakes such as sharing information, resources, or opportunities or attending their events.

Advocate: I actively use my influence, reputation, network, etc. to amplify their work. I look for opportunities to engage in collective work/action.

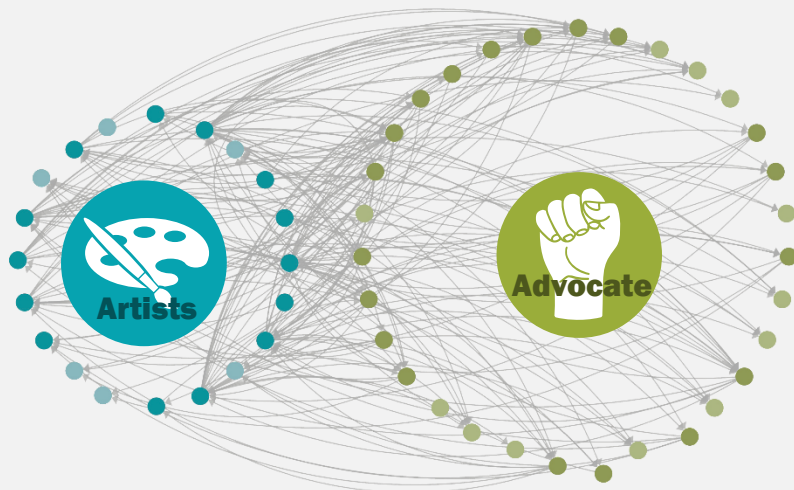
Partner: We collaborate to achieve collective goals as equals. We have a deep level of trust and commitment to each other.



ARTISTS AND ADVOCATES MADE NEW CONNECTIONS IN THEIR WORK

Of particular interest to the Fund was fostering connections between artists and advocates to work together on changing the narrative around mass incarceration. Before A4J, the average artist knew less than 1 in 4 advocates in the sample, while the average advocate knew less than 1 in 5 artists. When compared to the network as a whole, this means grantees were less likely to know those outside their group. Following A4J, the number of connections more than tripled; artists now knew on average 3 out of 4 of the advocates and vice versa. “The cross-collab between people in the movement, especially across the arts/policy divide, in the A4J community has been incredibly significant,” noted one grantee in a sentiment echoed by many.

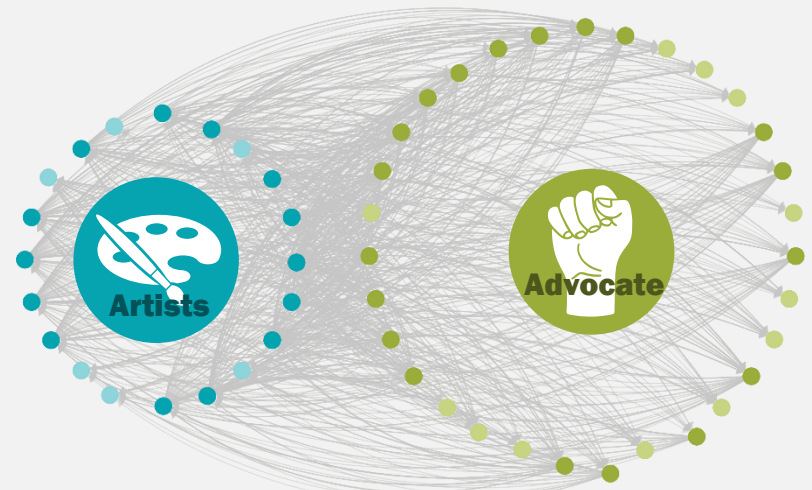
Before A4J: 23% connected



The average **artist** knew 8 of the 31 advocates (26%).

The average **advocate** knew 4 of the 20 artists (20%).

After A4J: 75% connected



The average **artist** knew 23 of the 31 advocates (74%).

The average **advocate** knew 15 of the 20 artists (75%).

- Artists (respondents)
- Artists (non-respondents)
- Advocates (respondents)
- Advocates (non-respondents)

Artists and advocates partnered on projects to change the narrative on mass incarceration.

The Fund made more than one hundred grants to support artist-advocate partnerships. Within the survey sample alone, participants reported more than 40 new partnerships between artists and advocates since the start of A4J and 94% agreed that A4J catalyzed new partnerships or collaborative projects that blended art and advocacy. These partnerships involved working with a deep level of trust and commitment to achieve collective goals as equals and ranged from public art exhibits to murals, youth projects, and collaborative spaces focused on changing the way Americans think about incarceration and public safety. “[I have seen the most progress in] bringing the art world into social justice issues,” said one grantee reflecting back on the work. For some, however, partnerships didn’t always go as planned, indicating that more support may have been needed to ensure all grantees were ready to partner. For example, one grantee commented that a potential partner “had no real idea of what it really means to be abolitionist,” causing the grantee to end the partnership. Still, many reported positive relationships, including the following, with grantee names in bold:



“The partnership between **Youth First** and **Performing Statistics** has enabled youth organizers to explore and express their vision of a world without youth prisons, to see their ideas and dreams literally come to life through virtual reality artistic installations, to share with their communities what it means to support young people and believe in their potential.”



“**[Mural Arts Philadelphia’s]** work with **Fair and Just Prosecution** led to an ongoing artist in residency in the DA’s office. When James Yaya Hough did his series on the search for justice, it had incredible power to not just break down walls between the DA’s office and the public, it brought people together, in respectful conversation, on all sides of the criminal legal system.”



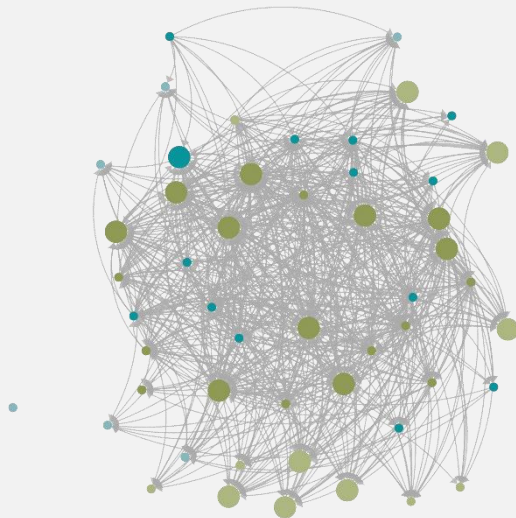
“Undoing Time” considers the foundational roots of confinement from an art historical perspective to better understand the fact that today’s mass incarceration crisis is centuries in the making.

“The **[Arizona State University Art] Museum** was able to work with many artists, including A4J grantees **Luis Rodriguez, Paco Cantu, Xaviera Simmons, Ashley Hunt, and Paul Rucker** on the exhibition.”

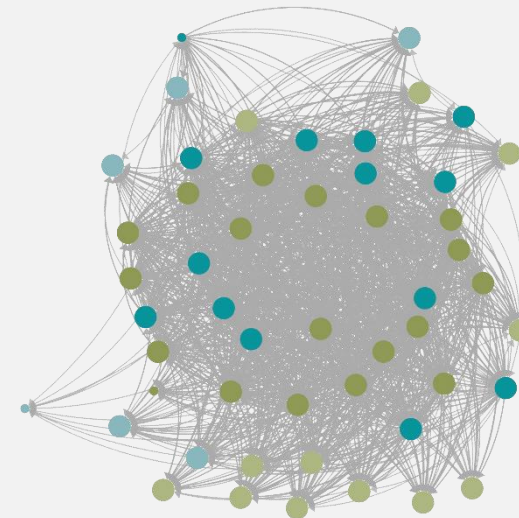
THE WORK OF ARTISTS GAINED VISIBILITY OVER THE COURSE OF A4J

Before the start of A4J, the ten most well-known grantees in the sample were all advocacy organizations (shown as the larger green dots in the maps below). Over the course of A4J, both artists and advocacy organizations gained more visibility from their peers. Of particular interest to the Fund was raising the profile of artists as equal partners in the movement. By 2023, two of the top five best-known grantees in the sample were artists. Artists and arts organizations accounted for 3 of the top 10 and 6 of the top 20 most well-known grantees in the sample. In the words of one participant, “A4J has helped ensure artists looking to end mass incarceration became more visible.” Some grantees, however, experienced these changes as competition: “There has been a cost, especially as it relates to relationships within the movement as well as resources and competition amongst the community,” noted one grantee.

Before A4J:



After A4J:



Note: Grantee dots in the maps above are scaled proportionately to the number of connections others reported with them.

- Artists (respondents)
- Artists (non-respondents)
- Advocates (respondents)
- Advocates (non-respondents)

A4J attracted additional funding. Beyond its own grantmaking, the Fund serves as an allied funder for its grantees, aiding in efforts to secure additional funding. As of May 2022, A4J had raised over \$25M via more than 300 donations, including Julie Mehretu, MacKenzie Scott, Walton Family Foundation, and Madeleine Rudin. “There has been a huge shift in both attention and funding towards issues of mass incarceration in the art world. [The art world] has not only become much more aware of what is happening with mass incarceration, but they are directly lending their support in various ways.” With the sunsetting of A4J, however, some grantees expressed concerns about finding continued funding. As one grantee noted, “I am concerned about the gap of funding many grantees will experience. Losing multi-year funds is always difficult so I hope A4J can continue to inspire philanthropic efforts to continue supporting this work.”

According to grantees, A4J’s efforts :

94%
grantees

Attracted **new donors** to the movement to end mass incarceration*

71%
artists

Helped artists attract new **funding** for work

“When we started working in prisons, there was not a network of people we could turn to, the press never wrote about the work, there were few funders supporting the work—and this went on for a long time. Art for Justice was able to breathe light and life into the fact that those behind bars not only have extraordinary talent but have stories to tell and their narratives matter.”

– Grantee

*Percent of responses indicating that this had occurred to a great or moderate extent.

Progress on Narrative and Policy Change

In addition to understanding the connections between grantees, the survey asked participants about how A4J was supporting progress in changing the narrative on mass incarceration and achieving policy wins. This section shares high-level findings related to these areas based on survey responses, with more detail to come in a forthcoming report.

THE A4J COMMUNITY IS ADVANCING NEW NARRATIVES ON MASS INCARCERATION

One of the most reported outcomes of A4J, especially among artists, was how grantees had helped to shift narratives about mass incarceration. This work, however, was not without challenges. As one grantee shared, “Things were looking good for narrative change some years ago, but the last five years have seen the Trump years, COVID, the George Floyd uprisings, and then this ferocious racist backlash.” According to grantees, A4J:



Increased the visibility of the **human impact** of mass incarceration through art*



Shifted old narratives to those that better reflect the priorities and solutions of those most affected*



Helped grantees and their organizations **influence public perception**

Below are examples of three ways grantees shared that the narrative was changing in their work:

RECOGNIZING THAT MASS INCARCERATION IS UNJUST (n=11)

“Many people who have been in denial for a long time have a feeling that **something needs to change.**”
“The normalizing — and **‘mainstreaming’** — of looking critically at the history, context, and structural forces behind mass incarceration has been striking.”
“There have been significant efforts to **shed light on the injustices** within the most marginalized of communities and the need to dismantle a system that causes harm and exacerbates trauma.”

HUMANIZING NARRATIVES (n=9)

“We are showing the **humanity, creativity, and intelligence** of currently and formerly incarcerated people.”
“The dominant narratives are much **more human focused** and less systematic and statistical in framing. The acknowledgment that mass incarceration is wrong and must end is nearly ubiquitous across the country, even within many conservative-leaning communities.”
“A4J has created a path where we as **directly impacted people are seen as human.**”

ABOLITION (n=6)

“Because of the work of grantees and others, the conversation around **prison and police abolition has gained momentum** and national attention. These are not new conversations, but they have more force and a higher profile.”
“**Abolition as both a philosophy and political strategy** has become both more palatable and energized within the conversation on reform of mass incarceration. A4J has contributed to the shared language and critical learnings needed for these conversations.”
However, this narrative did not resonate with everyone: “I work closely with people who are incarcerated, but those conversations have become pretty monolithically pro-prison abolition. **Those parts of the conversations aren't very helpful for me** because I'm not gathering perspectives I can bring back and try to work with our partners on.”

*Percent of responses indicating that this had occurred to a great or moderate extent.

GRANTEES SUPPORTED KEY NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CHANGE EFFORTS

A4J focused on three major policy areas: bail reform to reduce needless jail detentions, sentencing reform to stop excessive and disproportionate punishment of young people and people of color, and addressing collateral consequences and the creation of meaningful re-entry opportunities. While it can be difficult to link policy wins to individual efforts, one grantee explained: “[A4J] helped to support the narrative and organizing campaigns that led to major victories for rights for returning citizens in Florida, New Orleans, and other places.” In the survey, grantee advocates reported that A4J:



Supported advancements in **policies that reduce jail and prison populations***



Supported advancements in **policies that promote re-entry***

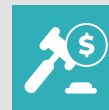


Helped grantees and their organizations achieve **policy wins**

EVALUATION SPOTLIGHT: The evaluation team tracked key policy wins that A4J grantees have supported across multiple states and at the national level, including:



Florida’s Amendment 4 won in 2018, restoring **voting rights** to over 1.4M formerly incarcerated Floridians, although opponents have enacted new barriers since.



Landmark **cash bail reforms** in New York, California, Illinois, and the cities of Houston, New Orleans, and Los Angeles have kept tens of thousands from being unnecessarily detained.



Bans on **juvenile** life without parole won in 8 new states over the course of A4J, bringing the total to 27 states.



In their spring 2020 **COVID response**, A4J grantees expedited release of over 10,000 elderly and vulnerable people from prisons and jails in California, New York, and Louisiana.

*Percent of responses indicating that this had occurred to a great or moderate extent.

AN INVITATION TO REFLECT

What did you notice about the findings in this report? What's important to you?

Findings from the grantee maps show us how arts and advocacy grantees formed connections and deepened their relationships within the A4J community. Where do you see yourself in this network and what would you like to continue going forward?

What lessons have we learned about what is needed to build a just future?

The A4J team, its partners, and grantees played a variety of roles in the broader social change ecosystem. What can funders do to support, catalyze, and deepen relationships after the initiative sunsets? What is important to sustain and grow?



APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS

Artists and Arts/Culture Organizations

Arizona State University Art Museum (Miki Garcia)*
Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (Elida Ledsema)
Designing Justice+Designing Spaces (Deanna Van Buren)
Eastern Penitentiary Museum (Sean Kelly)
Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority (Abby Ehrlich)
Illinois Humanities (Jane Beachy)*
jackie sumell
Jesse Krimes
Justice Arts Coalition (Wendy Jason)
Los Angeles County Arts Commission (Kristin Sakoda)*
Mahogany L. Browne
Mural Arts Philadelphia (Jane Golden)
Paul Rucker
PEN America (Caitis Meissner)
Performing Statistics (Mark Strandquist)
Recess Art (Shaun Leonardo)*
Silver Arts Projects (Joshua Pulman)
Soros Justice Fellowship (Samora Pinderhughes)
University of Arizona Poetry Center (Diana Delgado)*
Xaviera Simmons*

Advocates and Policy/Advocacy Organizations

A Little Piece of Light (Donna Hylton)
A New Way of Life (ANWOL) (Susan Burton)
Alliance for Safety and Justice (Lenore Anderson)*
Baz Dreisinger
Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth (Jody Kent Lavy)
Civil Rights Corp (Alec Karakatsanis)*
College & Community Fellowship (Vivian Nixon)*
Columbia Justice Lab (Vidhya Ananthakrishnan)*
Common Justice (Danielle Sered)*
Detroit Justice Center (Amanda Alexander)
Essie Justice Group (Gina Clayton-Johnson)*
Fair and Just Prosecution (Miriam Krinsky)*
Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) (Desmond Meade)
Heartland Alliance (Marlon Chamberlain)
JustLeadership USA (DeAnna Hoskins)*
Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice (gabriel sayegh)*
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (All of Us or None) (Dorsey Nunn)*
Ohio Justice and Policy Center (Tyra Patterson)*
Operation Restoration (Syrta Steib)*
Prison Policy Initiative (Peter Wagner)
Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (Jon Sawyer)*
Re:Store Justice (Adnan Khan)
The New Press (Diane Wachtell)*
Vera Institute of Justice (Insha Rahman)*
Voice of the Experienced (Norris Henderson)*
We Got Us Now (Ebony Underwood)
Womens Community Justice Association (Sharon White-Harrigan)
Worth Rises (Bianca Tylek)
Youth First Initiative (YFI) (Liz Ryan)*
Youth First State Advocacy Fund (Carrie Rae Boatman)
Zealous (Scott Hechinger)

*Included in analysis comparing 2020 and 2023 survey results

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Survey Sample. In March and April 2023, Engage R+D fielded an online survey to a total of 51 individuals/organizations receiving A4J funding, including 20 artists and 31 advocates. These grantees, identified in consultation with A4J, have received core funding for more than one year. The survey received 34 responses (14 from artists and 19 from advocates) for a 64% response rate (70% for artists and 61% for advocates).

Connection Scale. To measure the types of relationships grantees had with one another before and after receiving A4J funding, the evaluation team developed a customized scale for measuring relationships specific to the A4J context. The initial scale was developed when the survey was first administered in 2020, where it underwent pilot testing, grantee reviews, and revisions.

Grantee Mapping. The grantee mapping was conducted using a social network analysis methodology. Like all surveys, it is more reliable with a higher survey response rate. At a 64% response rate, our analysis was somewhat limited and should be interpreted with this caveat. Most notably, the network maps are missing complete data from the 17 non-respondents. The associated metrics (i.e., connectivity scores), however, have been adjusted to account for non-respondents.

Other limitations to consider include:

- **Recall Bias:** Participants were asked to recall their interactions with other grantees dating back multiple years (before receiving A4J funding).
- **Causality:** This study is correlational in nature, meaning that it cannot make causal inferences about the extent to which A4J led to the observed changes in relationships over time.
- **Social Desirability:** Social desirability is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a way that will be viewed favorably by others. Respondents may wish to appear as if they've made more connections or have been positively impacted by A4J funding than they actually have.
- **Selection bias:** Participants who responded to the survey could differ in important ways from other grantees who did not respond.

Connection Scale:

Unaware: I have NOT heard of them.

Colleague/peer: I know of them but have had minimal or no interaction.

Supporter: I support them in ways that are low-stakes. This might involve sharing information about or attending their events/actions, and/or sharing resources or opportunities they might be interested in.

Advocate: I actively use my influence, reputation, network, etc. to amplify their work. I look for opportunities to engage in collective work/action.

Partner: We collaborate to achieve collective goals as equals. We have a deep level of trust and commitment to each other.

COMPARISON TO 2020 STUDY

In 2020, A4J and Engage R+D conducted a similar survey with the same network mapping methodology. The chart below compares the responses of grantees who participated in the same capacity in both surveys (n=23). Over time, this group became more connected, with the largest increase at the colleague/peer level.

	Before*	2020	2023
overall connectivity	34%	72%	85%
unaware	66%	28%	15%
colleague/peer	16%	28%	40%
supporter	5%	22%	20%
advocate	3%	11%	12%
partner	9%	12%	13%

*The before data utilizes responses from the 2020 survey. Note that there were some discrepancies between who participants said they knew before A4J on the 2020 survey compared to who they said they knew before A4J on the 2023 survey. This is likely due to recall bias.