



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: GVM Communications
Alicia Brown (alicia@gvmcommsinc.com)
Brenda Loughery (brenda@gvmcommsinc.com)

WAYMAKERS ANNOUNCES \$250,000 GRANT FROM THE FORD FOUNDATION FOR LGBTQ+ APPALACHIAN ARTISTS

KNOXVILLE (TN), (APRIL 25, 2024) – Waymakers Collective—the radical grantmakers and disruptive philanthropists in the heart of Appalachia that has so far granted more than \$1 million to underfunded artists and organizations—is thrilled to announce it has been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

The Ford Foundation grant represents one of the largest single grants for Waymakers to date and will be dedicated to support LGBTQ+ organizations and artists in Central Appalachia.

“In recent years, our region has been rocked by the legislative attacks on queer creative expression through “don’t say gay” and “drag ban” laws in several of our Appalachian states,” says Joe Tolbert Jr. (he/they), Executive Director of Waymakers Collective. “It is important to support LGBTQ+ artists in these difficult times because so much of our cultural production is about joy, and that joy is our resistance to these times of repression. We are grateful that the Ford Foundation recognizes the value of helping to support our LGBTQ+ arts community in a way that continues to celebrate our Appalachian culture.”

“At the Ford Foundation, we recognize the power of art as a pivotal force for advocacy and change,” says Lane Harwell, Senior Program Officer at Ford Foundation. “Partnering with Waymakers Collective to support LGBTQ+ artists in Appalachia aligns perfectly with our mission to advance gender and LGBTQ justice. This initiative not only celebrates the rich diversity of expressions within the queer community but also boldly challenges the barriers they face. We are committed to enhancing the visibility and impact of these vital cultural efforts, demonstrating that joy and resilience through art can be a profound form of resistance. We proudly support Waymakers Collective in this essential work, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.”

This seed funding from The Ford Foundation coincides with the launch of the Waymakers’ Appalachian Futurism: [Queer Arts Liberation Fund](#) and its inaugural round – providing one-year project grants in the amount of \$5,000 to LGBTQIA2S+ individual artists, organizations, and/ or cultural workers in the Central Appalachian region to create projects that support and impact the LGBTQIA2S+ communities that have been historically underserved.

The Queer Arts Liberation Fund is currently welcoming applications from LGBTQIA2S+ individual artists; cultural workers; organizations; and groups living in, working in, and/ or have a

demonstrated commitment to Appalachia. Applications will close on Tuesday, April 30, 2024. The Waymakers Collective AppalCore and Voting Members will review all applications and contact grantees on Wednesday, May 15, 2024. There will also be a brief post-reporting process to express the impact of the fund for our grantees.

About Waymakers Collective (<https://www.waymakerscollective.org>):

The Waymakers Collective are radical grantmakers dedicated to supporting community arts and organizations in the heart of Appalachia that are historically underfunded: those led by BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color), youth, LGBTQIA+, and non-English speakers/immigrants. Founded in 2022, Waymakers seeks to disrupt the traditional model of philanthropy through the direct distribution of monetary gifts towards "Appalachian Futurism," an inclusive path rooted in equitable justice, creative cooperation, and sustainable stewardship. This approach to giving challenges traditional power dynamics between foundations and grantees, and answers the urgent call to remove barriers for creatives and their communities to receive the resources they need and deserve. As of Nov 2023, Waymakers has been able to redistribute more than \$1 million—mostly to individual artists and organizations that had never received funding before.

Follow Waymakers Collective on [Facebook](#) [@WaymakersCollective] and [Instagram](#) [@waymakersco].

###