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Waymakers Collective Surpasses \$1M in Grants to Appalachian Artists, Releases 2023 Impact Report

KNOXVILLE (TN), January 29, 2024 – Waymakers Collective—the radical grantmakers and disruptive philanthropists in the heart of Appalachia—is proud to announce the release of its [2023 Impact Report](#). The report highlights Waymaker’s achievement of surpassing \$1M in grants for the first time since its founding.

“The Waymakers Collective is showing a new narrative of what it means to be a creative living and working in Central Appalachia, says Joe Tolbert Jr., Executive Director. “When people think about art and culture in this region, dominant narratives of white rural artisans come to mind. Our work is important in building an Appalachian future that is an inclusive vision of the overlooked members of our communities that have always made our region a beautiful place to live and work.”

Tolbert also notes that these grants, which cumulatively total \$1,188,000 over the course of 241 grants in direct cash payments to recipients (including 2023’s 105-grant “Radical Rest” program), can often be transformative to a creative community that is often marginalized and underfunded.

To that goal, 40% of Waymakers’ grantees in 2023 were BIPOC artists or BIPOC-led arts-led organizations. The members that make up its grantees are Appalachian artists and groups including theater groups, visual artists, poets, rappers, community centers, youth groups, activists, and more, and representing in full the huge geographic footprint of the Appalachian region, including Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. In addition to grants, Waymakers Collective also makes “impact investments” that are 100% mission-aligned and with assets not needed for immediate grantmaking or operations. As of the end of 2023, Waymakers’ impact investments total \$1,300,000.

The full 2023 Impact Report can be viewed [here](#).

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.

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