

The logo for Springboard for the Arts, featuring the word "SPRINGBOARD" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "for the arts" in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font below it. The text is enclosed within a stylized, hand-drawn leaf-like shape.

SPRINGBOARD
for the arts

A stylized, hand-drawn illustration of a woman's face and hand. The woman has dark skin, closed eyes, and is wearing a large, yellow, teardrop-shaped earring. She is holding a blue cup with a white lid. The background is a solid purple color. On the left side, there is a green vine with several leaves. The overall style is artistic and illustrative.

THE ART OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE

An Impact
Report on
**Guaranteed
Income Pilots**
for Artists and
Creative
Workers in
Minnesota

February
2023

Artwork: Briauna Williams

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FUNDERS AND PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS WORK POSSIBLE:



MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

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ABOUT SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

Founded in 1991, Springboard for the Arts' mission is to support artists with the tools to make a living and a life, and to build just and equitable communities full of meaning, joy, and connection. With headquarters in St. Paul and Fergus Falls, Minnesota, Springboard works at the intersection of arts and economic and community development, helping local artists and communities thrive together. Springboard's practitioner-led work consists of direct resources, consulting, training, and movement building that supports over 22,000 artists and community members and helps support, incubate and launch over 500 artist-led businesses each year. [Learn more at www.springboardforthearts.org.](http://www.springboardforthearts.org)

WHAT IS GUARANTEED INCOME?

A guaranteed income is a monthly cash payment given directly to individuals. It is unconditional, with no strings attached and no work requirements. It is meant to supplement, rather than replace, existing social safety nets and can be a tool for racial and gender equity.

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Springboard for the Arts launched one of the first Guaranteed Income pilots in the country focused on individual artists and creative workers.

This innovative pilot and narrative change strategy was designed in partnership with the City of St. Paul's People's Prosperity Pilot guaranteed income program. The City of St. Paul is a leader in the national Mayors for Guaranteed Income network, which works to incorporate learning and research from local pilots into state and federal policy recommendations.

Springboard undertook this work to demonstrate that artists should be recipients of economic system change and that they are powerful allies in movements for economic justice.

ABOUT THE PILOT

The goals of Springboard's GI original pilot were:

- 1) **Provide 25 artists and creative workers** located in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods of St. Paul, MN with \$500 monthly payments for 18 months.
- 2) **Support a cohort of artists to lead narrative change projects** to build understanding about the need for economic justice in our community.
- 3) **Develop research and inform policy** by specifically demonstrating the impact that guaranteed income has on artist communities and the ways in which artists can contribute their skills to movements around economic justice.

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS MOMENT

The pandemic has demonstrated the career precarity facing artists in the U.S. who primarily make a living as contractors and gig workers, often cobbling together different income sources and non-traditional employment arrangements.

There is little to no safety net for most individual artists. This creates a pressing emergency of equity in economic opportunity and representation in our field, especially for artists who are Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color, artists in rural places and underinvested urban neighborhoods, and artists identifying as LGBTQ+ or from the disability community. In 2022, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that the overall unemployment rate for artists was still twice what it was pre-pandemic.

Springboard's guaranteed income pilot is the result of our work to transition from providing emergency relief for artists to laying the groundwork for larger systems change. This report provides a summary of the impact we are seeing and the steps we are taking to extend the impact of this work.

"Springboard for the Arts is a vital partner in our work to ensure **no one is left behind in this pandemic.** With this new program supporting artists and creative workers, they join the growing guaranteed income movement to the benefit of our entire community."

Melvin Carter, Mayor
City of Saint Paul

THE PARTICIPANTS

Springboard's Guaranteed Income pilot supported 25 artists in Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods—the neighborhoods that are home to Springboard's St. Paul offices and community space—as part of an intentional reinvestment in historically underinvested communities.

ABOUT FROGTOWN & RONDO

St. Paul's Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods are culturally vibrant, resilient, and community oriented, yet they continue to be disproportionately impacted by historical disinvestment, discrimination, and extraction.

Rondo Avenue was once the heart of St. Paul's most prominent African-American community with a rich history, dating back to the years following the Civil War. The center of Rondo was demolished between 1956 and 1968 to build the I-94 freeway, displacing families, homes, businesses, and community sites.

Frogtown is one of the most ethnically diverse communities in the Midwest, home to families from Southeast Asia, Africa, Central and South America who began emigrating to Minnesota in the late 20th century.

A 2020 study by the Economic Innovation Group identified these neighborhoods as either "persistently poor" (neighborhoods that had a high poverty rate in 1980 and 2018) or "deepening poverty" (neighborhoods that had a poverty rate above or equal to 20 percent and below 30 percent in 1980 and were high poverty in 2018).

These neighborhoods also have a higher-than-average percentage of renters (62%), and more than half of residents have annual household incomes under \$35,000. These neighborhood corridors were also impacted by the uprisings following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

Springboard selected participants at random from an eligible pool of artists in these two neighborhoods. Our selection criteria included individuals who had been adversely impacted by COVID-19, received support from Springboard's Coronavirus Personal Emergency Relief Fund, and live in Frogtown or Rondo.

Over 85% of the 25 participants identified as Black, Native and/or People of Color. 30% are ages 20-29, 20% are ages 30-39; 30% are ages 40-59; 20% are age 60+. Recipients identified as painters, sculptors, hip hop artists, visual artists, singers, composers, teaching artists, culture bearers, performers, and writers.



"Artists have valuable skills to help us build social connections, improve mental health, rethink public spaces, and tackle our most pressing challenges like environmental justice, racial equity, and education. If we are going to tap into artists' skills to help us imagine a new future, **we need to find new ways to support the sustainability of our creative community.**"

Laura Zabel, Executive Director
Springboard for the Arts



IMPACT

Springboard for the Arts is working with the University of Pennsylvania Center for Guaranteed Income Research to collect data and analyze the impact of guaranteed income at both the individual and community level.

Emergent themes from the pilot are compelling, with monthly income positively contributing to:

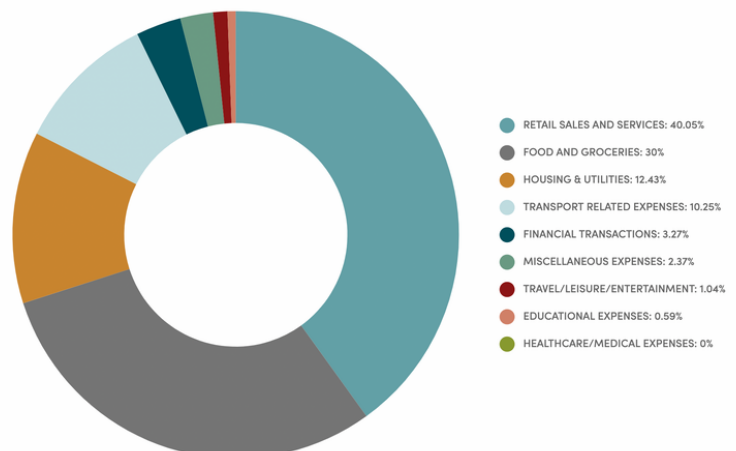
- 1) **Financial Stability**; including helping with basic needs, especially as pandemic-related aid runs out;
- 2) **Long-term planning**; including healthcare, savings, homeownership and equipment for art practice;
- 3) **Shifting exclusionary practices** in the art world to make them more accessible; and
- 4) **Increases in resiliency** leading to artists being able to generate creative work for their community and stay in their neighborhood

For many artists, the pandemic wiped out savings as gigs and opportunities dwindled due to restrictions, such as bans or limits on indoor gatherings. Most participants spent the first months of the pilot paying down debt and stabilizing, after which they were able to shift to more long-term planning. In one example, a participant reported having their rent raised three times in the last year, the first raise occurring as soon as pandemic restrictions on rent increases lapsed. **Without the guaranteed income program, this participant would have been displaced from their neighborhood.** Another participant, a hip-hop artist, was able to buy back DJ equipment he had sold to pay his rent, invest in maintaining the SUV he uses to transport his gear to gigs, and buy groceries. **"I've literally been using it to restart, or kickstart, my career from a bit of a dead zone."**

Guaranteed income has also provided freedom in creating, letting artists take risks, invest in themselves (such as renting dedicated studio space and upgrading equipment), and allowing them to create what they want and what serves their communities rather than what is driven by funders.

One artist shared, **"Having a little comfort means I can go back to creating. Before, I couldn't create unless it was generating income. I couldn't justify it."**

Participant data has also been collected and shared via *The Guaranteed Income Pilots Dashboard*, a national platform designed to visualize data from 30+ guaranteed income pilots across the United States. Spending habits are almost identical when comparing artist participants in our pilot to other GI participants across the country.



Source: Guaranteed Income Pilots Dashboard | <https://guaranteedincome.us/>



*"Altitude" , narrative change installation
by Nicole Mary Milligan*

"There were many areas in my life that I knew would substantially improve with this [income]. However, what ended up seriously catching me off guard and being profoundly helpful to me (and honestly paramount to everything) was the ability I've had to try out a few alternative treatments I've always wanted to explore addressing a disease that's been with me since my mid-20's.

I don't feel beaten down because of the lack of options I've had in the past."

—Guaranteed Income Participant

NARRATIVE CHANGE

We are committed to centering artists not only as recipients of guaranteed income but as change agents and storytellers, essential in the work to make our economy more equitable and just.

While the concept of guaranteed income is gaining traction across the country, there are still deeply embedded cultural and political beliefs that limit how far economic justice policy change can go.

Narrative change is a strategy of shifting the patterns embedded into the stories we tell.

When we consider the harmful, often racist, stories that come up around the idea of guaranteed income, they can range from:

Do people deserve it? How do they spend the money? Why don't they just get a job?"

We have seen, time and time again, that telling the story on a human level can transform pervasive narratives about inequality and poverty into belief systems of belonging, deservedness, and inherent self-worth.

We also know that artists who are locally rooted in their communities are best positioned to tell these stories.

With this in mind, Springboard for the Arts and The City of Saint Paul collaborated with a cohort of artists on the narrative change project: **Artists Respond: People, Place, and Prosperity**. These artists created public projects highlighting the root causes that lead to the need for guaranteed income, and its impact on the families and communities.

Culminating projects have ranged from podcasts and coloring books (available in print and PDF), to audio postcards, a stained glass installation, and a collaborative performance/dance meditation made available on YouTube.

These projects have been widely disseminated locally, including the St. Paul Public Libraries and Parks and Rec department, and shared in presentations to the City of St. Paul Office of Financial Empowerment, Asset Building Coalition, Mayors for Guaranteed Income, and the Fall 2022 Guaranteed Income Now conference in Atlanta, GA.



*"Altitude" installation in its permanent location
at the YWCA | Nicole Mary Milligan*

NARRATIVE CHANGE ARTISTS



"I am a visual artist, so I made a coloring book. Art and coloring is therapeutic — you can relax and relieve stress. People who don't have a lot of income don't have time to relax and hone in on self-care a lot — at least, that is my experience. You feel like you're sinking, drowning, stuff like that. So I made a coloring book with **images that bring joy, remind you to take self-care, and [feel] gratitude.**"

—Briauna Williams

NARRATIVE CHANGE PROJECTS

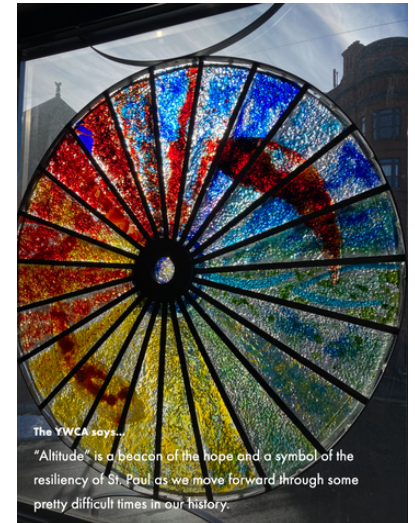


Bright Futures Audio Postcards are a visual and audio representation of Saint Paul's People's Prosperity Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. The Bright Futures physical postcards have a QR code with a link to a produced audio story of one of the current participants in the People's Prosperity Pilot, describing why the program worked for their family.

Artist: Katey DeCelle



Prosperity Sounds EP is a trio of songs in response to the question, "What does prosperity sound like?" It is a response to living in a capitalistic society during a pandemic; a hope that guaranteed income and universal basic income can provide solutions towards closing the wealth gap; a cry for equity and something more than the bare minimum. Artist: Kashimana



Altitude is a joyous celebration in glass, metal, and sound, consisting of kiln-formed glass panels inspired by the dreams of laughing children and a tight-rope walker's parasol.

Artist: Nicole Mary Milligan



Therapeutic. Mindfulness. Self-care. Gratitude. Briauna Williams' multi-page coloring book, **Exhale** was made available at over 25 Minnesota recreation centers, libraries, and public spaces. Artist: Briauna Williams.



DejaJoelle's meditative work **Prosperity Dance** is a collaborative performance that invites us to reflect on the essential nature of income, rest, togetherness and quality of life. Artist: DejaJoelle

For more information about all projects, click [here](#).

WHAT'S NEXT?

Springboard for the Arts is excited to announce Phase II of our economic justice work beginning in 2023.

PHASE II: EXTENDING AND EXPANDING THE ST. PAUL GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAM

We are now entering Phase 2 of our guaranteed income work, **which includes extending and expanding our urban St. Paul pilot for another 18 months**, thanks to generous support from Kresge Foundation. We will continue to support the original cohort of 25 guaranteed income recipients, add an additional 25 individuals to the program, and launch a new set of artist-led narrative change projects.

Our research partner, University of Pennsylvania, will produce in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses of the impact of guaranteed income for artists specifically; and for the neighborhood.

Research projects will include a book, photo-voice project led by guaranteed income participants, aggregate financial data about the uses of guaranteed income, and tracking outcomes of narrative change projects. The impact of this project will be both local and national at the intersection of economic justice, community development, and culture.

In addition to monthly unrestricted cash support over 18 months, guaranteed income participants will have access to wraparound services to support community wealth building, from debt paydown and restructuring, to homeownership, cooperative ownership, and business development coaching. We are grateful for the support that allows us to continue this deep community investment in Frogtown and Rondo and partner with artists as allies and leaders in our economic justice work.

"I literally have tears in my eyes.
Thank you beyond words."

—Guaranteed Income Participant
after receiving news of the pilot's 18-month extension



WHAT'S NEXT?

[continued]

Springboard is a national leader in rural artist support and economic and community development. Through our rural programming based out of our Fergus Falls office, we have the roots and the relationships—with rural artists, peer artist organizations, civic organizations, and more—to effectively push the boundaries of economic justice work in rural places.

PHASE II: LAUNCHING A GUARANTEED INCOME PILOT FOR RURAL ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS

With generous support from a national funder and private funds, **we are launching the first guaranteed income pilot in the country focused on rural artists, supporting 25 artists and culture bearers in Fergus Falls and Otter Tail County**, located in west central Minnesota.

In addition to monthly unrestricted cash support over 18 months, guaranteed income participants will benefit from wraparound services to support community wealth building, from debt paydown and restructuring, to homeownership, cooperative ownership, and business development coaching.

This pilot will also invest in a new set of artist-led narrative change projects—supporting a cohort of 4-6 rural artists—on the impact of economic justice in rural places. We'll amplify these projects through partnerships with the Rural Assembly and the online rural newsroom Daily Yonder, helping us build narrative power by reaching rural audiences nationally.

Our rural pilot will be accompanied by rigorous comparative research that will be used to:

1) Convey important trends about the needs and lives of artists in rural places; and

2) Advocate for equitable policy that includes rural geographies and rural artists who are Black, Native, and people of color, LGBTQIA+, and/or disabled.

Through our work, we know that rural places are powerful, connected, generous, complex, and creative. Guaranteed income is key to building a stronger safety net. Our work is to amplify the narrative that each person is deserving of one, especially and particularly in rural communities.



JOIN US

To learn more and to explore partner opportunities with Springboard for the Arts, contact:

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Acknowledgements:

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