

Lifelong Arts INDIANA

An Innovative Approach to Creative Programming for Older Adults.



**INDIANA ARTS
COMMISSION**

Evaluation Report Summary

Indiana has an aging population that is rapidly increasing. From 2005 to 2040, the state of Indiana is expected to have a general population growth of 15%; over that same time frame, the number of people 65+ will increase by 90%. One in five Indiana residents will be 65 or older within ten years. For many rural counties in Indiana, all age groups are expected to decline in population except the 65+ age group. According to the State Well-Being Rankings for Older Americans, Indiana was ranked 46 out of 50 states in health and well-being, as reported in their most recent publication. An aging population that reports a low quality of health and well-being is in significant need of support.

Artists and Arts organizations are natural partners in serving this vulnerable population. They are embedded in communities across Indiana and are trusted allies in community development and skilled in partnership development. Most arts organizations serve older adults, and many provide arts learning activities in their community. Artists and arts organizations also provide general art opportunities and a pathway for older adults to deepen their social connectedness and arts enrichment. Utilizing the strong assets of Indiana's local artists and arts organizations, Lifelong Arts Indiana works to improve older residents' physical and mental health and can bring value to program participants, communities and the state.

The Indiana Arts Commission (IAC), in partnership with Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's (FSSA) Division of Aging and Division of Mental Health and Addiction, designed and implemented the Lifelong Arts Indiana (LLA) initiative to bring evidence-based participatory arts programming to older adults across Indiana between 2022 and 2024. The first part of the initiative trained artists and providers of services to older adults on a participatory arts framework designed by the IAC in consultation with national experts. The second part of the initiative awarded funding to LLA-trained facilitators for the implementation of programming of their own designs within their own communities. In total, \$514,600 was awarded to a total of 107 individual artists, older adult-serving organizations and libraries across 44 Indiana counties impacting more than 2,000 older adult participants.

“ Art as a process is good for mental health. When you are in the studio, you are able to let what is happening to you go and just love the process.”

- Lifelong Arts Program Participant



Creative
Expression with
Watercolor and
Mixed Media,
Photo by Scott
Lengerich.

To evaluate the impact of this program, the IAC engaged the University of Indianapolis Center for Aging and Community (UIndy CAC) to conduct a rigorous evaluation process resulting in some of the most robust research findings on creative aging programming in the country. This report summarizes the findings of this evaluation process.

FINDINGS

- Lifelong Arts Indiana:
- **improves the mental health of older adults.**
 - **has even more significant impacts on well-being in rural communities.**
 - **creates meaningful employment opportunities for artists.**
 - **creates sustainable community partnerships.**
 - **is a solution for the issues impacting older adults' well-being.**

APPROACH

UIndy CAC conducted their evaluation using a variety of research methods, including interviews with participants, artists and site partners; surveys of training participants and older adult project participants; site observations; and document review. The evaluation scope was robust with input from many participants representing diverse perspectives: 18 project facilitators were interviewed one-on-one; 18 project sites were observed in person by trained evaluators; 36 final report documents were analyzed; and 322 surveys were collected.

Notable within this valuable data is a nationally validated survey of health, the short-form-12 health survey (SF-12). The data from the SF-12 forms indicates that participants in the LLA program report higher levels of well-being in both physical and mental health compared to the national average. **These statistically significant changes indicate that the improvements in well-being are a result of participating in Lifelong Arts Indiana.**

Nationally, an evaluation of this size and scope has not been done on a creative aging program for nearly two decades. This research contributes critical new knowledge to the field of creative aging, providing evidence to support the case that high-quality, sequential arts activities led by trained artists significantly improves the mental health of older adult participants, opening up an exciting new pathway of potential health interventions that can improve quality of life at a fraction of the cost of most medical treatments. It also serves to bolster the growing national movement toward creative aging initiatives as a meaningful way to support this vulnerable and growing population.

Huntington Arts and Entrepreneurial Center, Create & Celebrate with Flowers Workshop, Photo by Ngozi Rogers.



DEEP IMPACTS

This evaluation examined many dimensions of impact the Lifelong Arts Indiana program provided for Indiana communities. Aside from the immense positive impacts to the health and well-being of older adults, this evaluation discovered how the design of the training experience for project facilitators set them up for success in delivering meaningful experiences to older adults. It was also discovered that older adults found confidence in themselves and created new social connections that lasted well beyond the classes.

These programs developed an atmosphere of trust and safety among participants and created a sense of accessibility to creativity previously unknown to the participants.



Without these programs, exposure to the creative arts for older adults doesn't exist for some areas."

- Lifelong Arts Program Participant

Greenwood Public Library + Southside Art League, The Magic of the Zhen Xian Bao: Chinese Thread Box, Photo by Sonja Lehman.

CONCLUSION

The Lifelong Arts Indiana program provides a successful example of how to implement evidence-based creative aging programs. The evaluation report demonstrates the statistically significant outcomes of the program being implemented statewide and makes an undeniable case that more states should more deeply invest in similar initiatives to improve the lives of their older adult citizens now and in the future. Aging is inevitable for all, and as we see improvements in medicine, our older adult communities will become an even more significant percentage of our population.

Creating an infrastructure to ensure the quality of life for older adults now will improve our communities for generations. Programs like Lifelong Arts Indiana are a key piece of the strategy to making our communities a place to age well. Increased investment in these low-cost solutions is essential for Indiana and beyond.

ABOUT THE INDIANA ARTS COMMISSION

The Indiana Arts Commission (IAC) is an agency of state government that works directly with communities, creatives and organizations to harness the power of creativity to strengthen Indiana. Through its programs and services, the IAC funds and supports arts experiences, arts education and the arts economy to enhance the quality of life for Indiana's people and places.

To learn more about the Indiana Arts Commission, Lifelong Arts Indiana and the other agency programming, please visit [IN.Gov/Arts](https://www.in.gov/arts).



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