

# snaap.

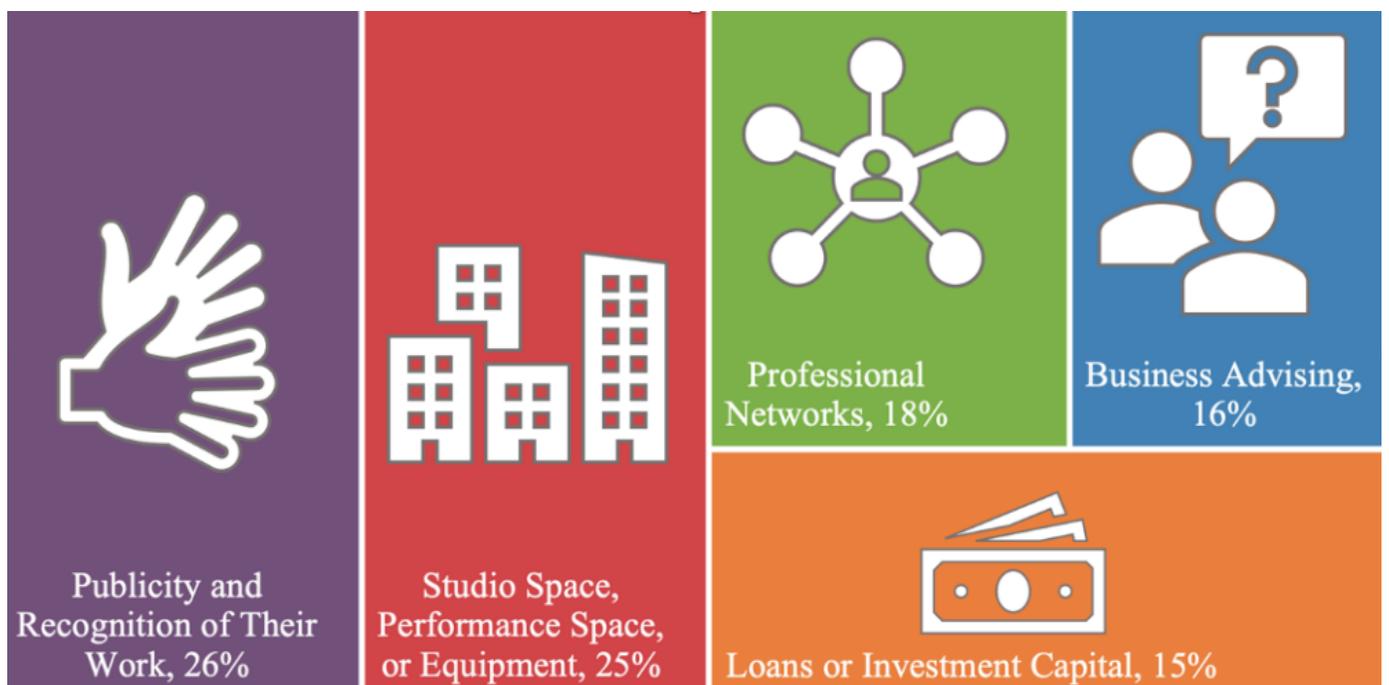
● **STRATEGIC  
NATIONAL  
ARTS ALUMNI  
PROJECT**

**VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1**

## How COVID-19 Has Impacted the Needed Resources of Arts Graduates

Past SNAAP reports and [DataBriefs](#) have investigated which resources are most important for arts alumni to thrive in artistic careers. The barriers that arts graduates face in the labor market of diverse art worlds intersect with their individual needs and personal situations, with prior SNAAP findings showing a split between alumni who say they most need publicity and recognition of their work, professional networks, business advising, loans or investment capital, studio space, equipment, and performance space. More details about these needed resources were published in a [prior annual report](#). However, these findings reflect the needs of artists surveyed from 2015 – 2017, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Alumni Rankings of the Importance of Resources for Artistic Career Advancement that They Most Needed but Lacked for Their Careers (2015 – 2017)



Publicity and recognition of their work, 26%. Studio space, performance space, or equipment, 25%. Professional networks, 18%. Business advising, 16%. Loans or investment capital, 15%.

## HOW HAVE ARTS GRADUATES' MOST NEEDED RESOURCES DIFFERED FROM ESTABLISHED PATTERNS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

We expected that just as structures like labor market uncertainty and the demands of the art world help explain what resources arts alumni needed before the pandemic, that specific changes and challenges brought on by COVID-19 will shape the resources arts graduates need most now. Broadly, artists indicated that the resources most needed during this time were related to professional networks, physical space and equipment, and business advising.

As prior SNAAP research firmly establishes, *artists need their network*, but isolation emerged as the most frequent problem among interviewees. While almost all respondents were still able to make, produce, and work in some fashion, they were limited without access to collaborators, audiences, mentors, and communities of practice. Acute changes in the availability and safety of physical gathering and in-person social connectedness limited opportunities for incidental word-of-mouth opportunities, support from colleagues and peers, and engagement with the public, for example through gallery openings and performance events. Without social connectivity, it was more challenging to remain successful and productive.

Some arts graduates weighed the potential health risks of in-person artistic work, choosing to sometimes gather physically and work collaboratively in order to create products, like blown glass, where artists frequently work with assistants or collaborators. Most respondents experienced challenges in navigating work relationships because of shifts in norms and expectations around personal interactions. Many indicated that they first turned to peers in their networks for advice and assistance as a resource for navigating challenges at work.



“...with glass blowing you have to have people around, you have to be really close to other people. It's not very COVID safe unless you are in a pod or something. I do have a couple friends that, we trust each other, and we have been blowing glass but very minimally. Like I think we blew glass, maybe twice during the pandemic.

-Glass Artist & Arts Administrator, 38

Stay-at-home orders, lockdowns, and closure of shared spaces altered whether and how artists were allowed *access to the studio space, performance space, and equipment* they needed. The lack of these resources had wide-ranging implications for interviewees (e.g., diminished ticket sales, rental income, challenges navigating technology for virtual programming and collaboration). This was particularly difficult for artists who work in the performing arts, such as dance, music, or theatre. Reduced access to space, specialized equipment, and the teams that facilitate artistic work in these spaces greatly altered their capacity to effectively create, produce, perform, and teach.



“I didn't have a proper microphone, and then my computer internal speaker blew out, and then not being able to see me properly because my lighting sucked. And you know, people were not willing to come [to my online workshop] because somebody else had better lighting, somebody else had better acoustics.”

Dance and Movement Artist, 52

Artists who own or were able to maintain access to rented studio and performance space were at an advantage, as they were able to continue working more easily. For those who did not have access to private workspaces, the principal experience of space during the pandemic involved being in the home more frequently than before. A major site of inequality among arts alumni has its roots in this resource. Those alumni who hold primary caregiving responsibilities experienced substantial increases in care demands, finding it challenging to partition both spaces and roles as domestic and professional activities co-occurred while they worked from home.

Technology access, in terms of both physical equipment and increased internet speed and capacity, was also a significant need, including cameras and webcams, lighting, microphones, and speakers. Other specific equipment needs included masks and respirators for occupational exposure to hazardous arts materials (which were redirected for medical use), individual supplies for students, and supplies for equipping themselves to work from home effectively.

Finally, arts alumni needed *business advice* to help them respond to the new realities of working and making or performing art during the pandemic. Innumerable outlets offered free or reduced-cost webinars and learning opportunities for arts workers to learn newly relevant skills. Specific

information resources that alumni needed included information about how to teach online, create video tutorials, price digital events, and promote online programming for the general public. They also needed information on applying for grants, unemployment, and the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)



“I've been finding a lot of resources for webinars. People just want to connect on LinkedIn, because they're interested in what other people are working on, what other people are doing. I find so much stuff on there. I feel like that was always something way in the back of my mind or interest level.”

Arts Administrator, 23

Part of the business advice that alumni needed was how to self-manage a career that is temporarily destabilized. Workflows and relationships with project managers, editors, and producers that were once more clearly defined became uncertain as schedules and budgets were put on hold. The collective impact of changing workflows, shifting timelines, and indefinitely postponed contracts was particularly impactful for those arts graduates whose portfolio careers require management of multiple projects and roles at the same time.

#### **WHERE AND HOW DID ARTS GRADUATES ACCESS THE RESOURCES THEY NEEDED?**

Interviewees were asked about where and how they accessed the resources they needed during the pandemic. Just as experiences and needs varied, so too did the resources they accessed to help them persist. Generally, the findings suggested that:

Alumni accessed online resources from their workplaces, arts organizations, governmental programs, and the institutions from which they earned their arts degrees.

Social media platforms were a frequent site for discovering and accessing resources; in turn, alumni shared resources and information on these platforms.

Online resources, conferences, and webinars made career and educational resources more accessible and affordable.

Many interviewees reported drawing on the federal government's CARES Act provisions, state unemployment, emergency grants made available to artists by creative sector organizations and

foundations, and other social service programs.

Some met financial needs or acquired secondary income through starting new business ventures or taking on platform jobs in the sharing economy (e.g., food delivery, ridesharing).

As we know from other SNAAP reports, an unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and structural privilege lead to disparate outcomes in the arts, including structuring who stays and who leaves artistic careers. Beyond the unequal starting points where alumni began, these discrepancies may have widened because arts sectors were not evenly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several respondents were well positioned leading into the pandemic, saw no change in their work, or even experienced an uptick in sales opportunities. In general, designers and arts administrators were most easily able to transition to working from home, barring additional caregiving obligations. Alumni working in the performing arts were most likely to lose work opportunities or contracts and anticipate the longest recovery to their fields. These examples indicate the unevenness with which the COVID-19 pandemic affected arts alumni and speak to the potentially varied strategies, programs, and resources that will be needed in an arts sector recovery.

Along with the many changes that accompanied the pandemic, the needed resources of arts graduates is one of many topics of interest as SNAAP develops new survey items for the 2022 survey. Understanding how arts graduates were affected by and are recovering from the pandemic is of key importance for educational institutions as they consider how to best support alumni and prepare arts majors for a post-pandemic world.

*This DataBrief was prepared by Dr. Rachel Skaggs, Lawrence and Isabel Barnett Assistant Professor of Arts Management at The Ohio State University; Molly Jo Burke and Erin Hoppe, PhD students in OSU's Arts Administration, Education and Policy Program.*

*This research was supported by The Ohio State University Global Arts + Humanities Discovery Theme and by Arts + Design Alumni Research, d.b.a. SNAAP.*

## **databrief archive**

*view all* →

**04.02.22**

Volume 10, Number 2

### **High-Impact Educational Practices in the Arts and Post-College Community Engagement**

**04.02.22**

Volume 10, Number 5

### **Unraveling Gender and Race Bias in Fashion Design Careers**

**04.02.22**

Volume 10, Number 4

### **How Does Skill Preparation in Higher Education and its Cost Influence Alumni's Entrepreneurship Career Choice?**

**04.02.22**

Volume 10, Number 3

### **Unpacking High-Impact Practices in the Arts: Predictors of College, Career, and Community Engagement Outcomes**

## OUR LATEST REPORT

### **DATA, PRESSING NEEDS, AND BIGGEST CHALLENGES: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD**

SNAAP set out to garner insights on pressing information needs within post-secondary arts and design fields as they relate to understanding and improving the careers and lives of graduates of related degree programs through a series of focus group conversations and interviews with faculty and administrators. The insights garnered through this process are presented in this report

*read report* →

## MAILING LIST

Sign up for the latest news from SNAAP

**SIGN UP** →

## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

## CONTACT



© 2022 SNAAP. [Photo Credits](#). [Privacy Policy](#)