USArtists International Annual Survey Report First Edition (2022)

November 2022

National Endowment for the Arts Office of Research & Analysis





Executive Summary

As part of its <u>Strategic Plan for 2022-2026</u>, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has pledged to provide opportunities for the international exchange of artists, artworks, and arts activities. The NEA achieves this mission in part by partnering with U.S. regional arts organization Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation on <u>USArtists International (USAI)</u>, a program supporting U.S. dance, music, and theater ensembles that have been invited to participate in international arts markets. To assist the agency with gathering data that speak to the NEA's Performance Goal 1.4.1, the NEA developed an annual survey of USAI grantees. The report below details results from the first annual survey—administered to USAI grantees in June 2022. In addition, the report characterizes data supporting a performance goal under the NEA's Strategic Plan: that the NEA's investments result in positive experiences for U.S. artists who engage with such programs.

The first annual survey was administered between May 31, 2022 and June 27, 2022 to USAI grantees who completed a USAI-sponsored performance (in person or virtual) between October 2020 and September 2021. The survey was sent to USAI grantees, typically performing arts ensembles or companies, but was intended for individual artists participating in USAI-sponsored events to complete. Thirty-seven grantees were eligible to take the survey, and 27 artists associated with the grantee organization did, for a total response rate of 73 percent. The respondents came from a variety of performing arts disciplines. The highest number of respondents were musicians, consistent with the USAI grantees who received the survey. Just over 50 percent of respondents were first-time USAI grantees. Key findings from the survey include:



Just under half of respondents **secured one or more new bookings abroad** as a result of the USAI-supported experience.



The vast majority of respondents (96%) said they made **new international professional contacts** during their USAI-supported experience.



26% of responding grantees had an **interaction with a U.S. Embassy or Consulate**.



89% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they learned new artistic performance strategies for engaging international audiences. 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their USAI-supported experience strengthened their visibility as artists.



92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the USAIsponsored experience **benefited them creatively**. Two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they **incorporate more diverse ideas (e.g., innovative, novel, or creative ideas) into their artwork** as a result of their USAIsupported experience.

About the Study

Background on USArtists International Program

The National Endowment for the Arts funds opportunities for the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions, which yield demonstrable benefits for the arts and artists. These activities include supporting U.S. artists to showcase their work for audiences abroad through participation in global arts events. The NEA Office of International Activities (OIA) is the lead NEA office for these activities, and achieves this mission in part by working with the U.S. regional arts organization Mid Atlantic Arts to support U.S. dance, music, and theater ensembles that have been invited to participate in international arts markets. The program is USArtists International (USAI).

USAI currently supports in-person and virtual performances by American artists through engagements at international festivals and global presenting arts marketplaces outside of the U.S. The program funds American individuals and ensembles or companies across dance, theater, music and multidisciplinary, and performing arts disciplines. The USAI program has awarded on average 74 grants annually over the last five years, with an average award of just over \$10,000. Since the program's inception, USAI grants have supported artists traveling to 92 countries on six continents.

USAI is designed to encourage the presence of U.S.-based performing artists on international stages and in the global arts community; to support engagements that develop and expand both the careers and artistic goals of U.S. performers by providing connections with presenters, curators, and fellow artists; and to promote justice in the arts community by elevating the diverse voices contributing to the vibrant array of creative expression in the U.S.

Purpose of the Survey

As part of its <u>Strategic Plan for 2022-2026</u>, the National Endowment for the Arts pledged to provide opportunities for the international exchange of artists, artworks, and arts activities. In an ongoing effort to build an evidence base that can inform NEA programs and policies, the agency created an annual web survey of U.S. artists who have participated in international activities through USAI. The survey's aims for a richer understanding of the short- and longer-term impacts of these activities on artists' careers. The primary purpose of the annual USAI survey is to assist the agency with gathering data that speak to the NEA's Performance Goal 1.4.1, which states: *The NEA supports opportunities for the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions, which yield demonstrable benefits for the artists and the arts.*

The survey also includes questions on how the USAI program contributes to professional development and career benefits for artists across five domains: Professional Opportunities, Professional Networks, Professional Skills and Learning, Visibility as an Artist, and Creativity. The report below details results from the first annual survey administered to USAI grantees.

Impacts of COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel, performances, and festivals ceased across the globe in 2020. Those involved in international performances and festivals are still navigating the ripple effects of COVID-19—making up for cancelled seasons, balancing public health and

safety concerns, and encountering challenges to international travel. As a result, many of the USAI grantees from 2019 and 2020 have had to wait years to perform abroad. Grantees that never were able to perform in-person or virtually due to COVID-19 were excluded from the NEA survey. Instead, the survey captures USAI grantees that performed, either virtually or in person, as part of their award between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021—a smaller grantee cohort than in pre-pandemic years. For perspective: during the last full fiscal year prior to the pandemic (October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019), 87 grantee projects traveled with USAI support. By contrast, the grantee cohort represented by this survey is less than half of what would be seen in a pre-pandemic year.

Additionally, the survey, which was designed in 2020 based on pre-pandemic research, does not include specific questions related to the pandemic. All elements that contribute to professional development for artists traveling and performing abroad—modes of communication, performance, networking, artistic practice, etc.—have changed since the advent of COVID-19. Festivals have been scaled for both public health and financial motives related to increased costs, resulting in a cascade of impacts including fewer artists booked, and delayed timelines for contracting artists. COVID illness or exposure has impacted artists' the touring companies, resulting in unexpected disruptions, isolation, or quarantine. Artists have been forced to plan, as it were, contingencies for their contingencies. With its annual survey, the NEA will continue to collect data from grantees over time to see how experiences change with the ever-evolving post-pandemic arts landscape.

Methodology

Literature Review and Focus Groups

To develop an annual survey of USAI grantee experiences, the NEA conducted a literature scan covering research and evaluation studies that assess the impacts to artists' careers when they participate in international festivals, exchange programs, and other international experiences. The purpose of the literature scan was to define potential constructs of benefits that artists experience through their participation in exchange programs, and to determine whether measures of those constructs already exist. The literature scan revealed contrasts by three themes: artists' professional growth, development of an artist's artistic practice, and personal growth and development of an artist's identity.

The literature scan provided recommendations for constructs to be discussed in focus groups with artists who had participated in the USAI program. The purpose of these focus groups was to gain a deeper understanding of how the constructs apply specifically to the USAI artists' experiences, to illuminate how the constructs varied from the literature findings, and to collect rich qualitative data on professional outcomes from the artists themselves.

In summer 2019, former USAI-funded artists were invited to participate in two virtual focus groups. Grantees were selected to participate in a focus group based on first-time or repeat grantee status, artistic discipline, race/ethnicity, and festival location, with additional considerations for the participants' urban/rural context. Five first-time artists and five repeat artists ultimately were recruited to participate in virtual focus groups. Key findings from the two focus groups included:

- Following international tours, artists experienced boosts to their reputation among peers
 and the public. Through in-person conversations, USAI artists interacted with a wide
 variety of professional collaborators to facilitate ongoing engagements regionally,
 internationally, and domestically. Artists readily established new contacts during festivals
 and strengthened relationships over time through return visits.
- Following international festival performances and media coverage, artists gained clout within the international arts communities, and prestige with the public—leading to greater interest from artistic collaborators and the attraction of funding and future engagements.
- Following their participation in USAI-sponsored festivals, artists received significant
 increases in professional invitations and opportunities available to them. Artists used the
 international festival experience as a way to demonstrate their art, gain an
 understanding of the market for their art, and attract collaborators and funding
 possibilities, including for the opportunity to teach artistic practices.
- Artists learned new skills and strengthened existing skills in executing performances abroad. Artists learned new skills needed to overcome language barriers, gained practical and logistical experience, and practiced performance techniques.
- Artists led and participated in pedagogical activities and strengthened their teaching skills by engaging with diverse and foreign audiences.
- Exposure to new ideas and artistic practices sparked creativity in artists, which they
 leveraged to refine their own practices. Artists used time during festivals to consider and
 reflect on their artistic practices while being surrounded by other artists and
 performances.
- Artists flexed their creativity by engaging with new and foreign audiences and learning how to connect with audiences through shared values.

- Artists believed that cultural reflection tied closely to their growing creativity, based on their festival experiences. Artists did not report that festival attendance influenced their tolerance of other cultures, or that it heightened their willingness to discuss their own beliefs. Rather, more intensive cultural reflection extended sharing artistic practices and having specific interactions with artists and audiences during performances.
- Through international festivals, artists gained stronger identities as international artists
 and a greater understanding of how they contribute to their fields. Artists explored what it
 means to be international artists and gained new perspectives on the possibilities and
 variances of their art forms.

Findings from the focus groups provided a basis to identify the five domains that ultimately were included in the web survey of USAI grantees.

Pilot Survey

Following the literature scan and focus groups, the NEA created and piloted the USAI web survey, which was implemented in two phases in March and July of 2020—the initial phase did not receive a high response rate due to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilot test was administered to all USAI grantees who received funding from 2014 to 2018, who did not participate in prior focus groups or the survey cognitive testing, and who were not part of the respondent universe for the planned 2021 data collection (N = 183). The intended respondents for the survey were performing artists who traveled abroad under a USAI grant.

The pilot survey process provided several recommendations, mostly strategies to increase response rates representative of the entire survey population. Results from the pilot test of the survey indicated that the number and order of survey questions were manageable and logical for respondents. The estimated burden on respondents was accurately estimated and the survey provided data that can be easily reported as composite scores in the Arts Endowment's annual performance report.

2022 Survey

The first annual survey was administered between May 31, 2022 and June 27, 2022 to USAI grantees who completed a USAI-sponsored performance (in person or virtual) between October 2020 and September 2021. Thirty-seven grantees were eligible to take the survey, which drew 27 responses, for a total response rate of 73 percent. There were no statistical differences in those who responded to the survey and those who did not, except that applicants who were first-time grantees were more likely to respond to the survey than those who were not. One survey question asked if this was the respondent's first USAI-supported arts experience. If the answer to this question contradicted the administrative data provided by Mid Atlantic Arts, then the first-time grantee indicator variable was changed to reflect respondent updates. When the corrected variable is used, the difference is not statistically significant. The full survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

About the Respondents

The survey was sent to 37 grantees who completed a USAI-sponsored performance between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021. The survey was sent to grantees, who typically are performing arts companies and ensembles, and was intended for completion by artists who participated in a USAI-supported activity. Respondents came from a variety of performing arts disciplines. The greatest number of respondents came from a music discipline, in keeping with characteristics of the overall USAI grantee pool. Dance and theater followed in second and third place. The individuals responding to the survey reported participating in a performing arts ensemble or company comprised of a median of six artists, with a maximum of 12 and minimum of one. The majority of the surveyed artists participated in an in-person USAI-sponsored experience; two artists participated in music and theater presentations virtually.

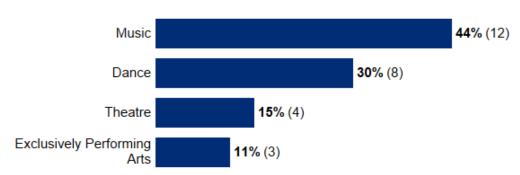


Figure 1: Artistic Discipline of Respondents

To better understand the demographic composition of USAI-grantee organizations, the survey captured data on first time grantee status, geographic location, and race/ethnicity. Just over 50% of respondents were first-time USAI grantees. About one-third were headquartered in a small city or rural area. Looking at the race and ethnicity of the majority of the artist performers associated with each grantee, 44% were majority white, 33% were of no particular race, 15% were Black/African American.

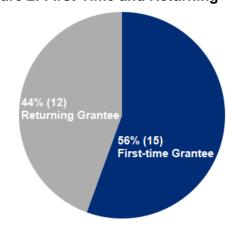


Figure 2: First-Time and Returning

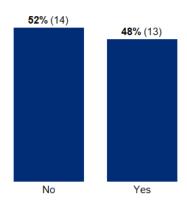
Findings

The survey findings are organized by the five domains of professional development identified in the survey instrument.

Professional Opportunities

Just under half of respondents secured one or more new bookings abroad as a result of their USAI-supported experience. Of the 13 grantees who responded that they had secured new bookings, artists reported an average of three new bookings, with a maximum of eight and minimum of one. The majority of these bookings were for performances in Europe, with some across North America and Africa.

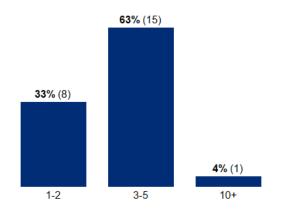
Figure 3: As a result of this USAI-supported experience, did you secure one or more new bookings for performances abroad?



Professional Networks

The vast majority of respondents (96%) said they made new, international, professional contacts during their USAI-supported experience. This figure includes grantees who participated in virtual experiences. For the purposes of this survey, new professional contacts included industry contacts such as booking agents, managers, festival liaisons, or other artists or presenters who may provide an opportunity for new artistic projects in the future.

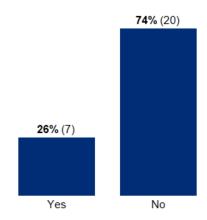
Figure 4: Please estimate the number of international professional contacts you have



Most respondents (96 percent) who made new contacts still maintained between 1-5 contacts they had made during their USAI-sponsored experience. Eleven respondents (41 percent) indicated that these contacts had resulted in a new, collaborative performing arts project.

Expanding beyond artistic contacts, the survey probed for interactions with U.S. Embassies or Consulates in grantees' host countries before or during a USAI-supported experience. Interactions were defined as contacting the Embassy or Consulate to invite individuals to attend performances or other performance-related communications. Interactions could also include the Embassy or Consulate contacting artists regarding their performances. Twenty-six percent of responding grantees interacted with a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but the majority of respondents did not.

Figure 5: Did you interact with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your host country either before or during this USAI supported experience?



Professional Skills and Learning

The survey also asked participating artists what types of skills and learning occurred during their USAI-sponsored experience. These skills were related to performing for international audiences, managing travel and logistics in presenting art abroad, and marketing.

Seventy-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new about travel and logistics, and regulations about presenting art abroad. Eighty-nine percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new artistic performance strategies for engaging international audiences.

Figure 6: I learned something new about travel logistics and regulations related to performing arts presentations and touring in other countries (e.g., visa, import/export) as a result of this USAI supported experience.



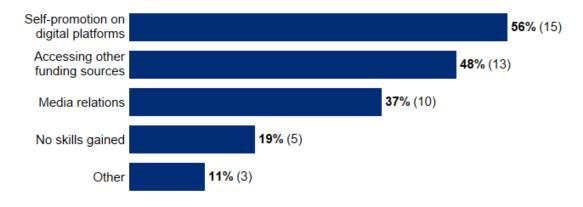
Figure 7: I learned new artistic performance strategies for engaging international audiences as a result of this USAI supported experience.



When asked whether they had gained or enhanced their marketing skills, 56 percent of respondents said that had gained or improved self-promotion skills on digital platforms, 48

percent said that they had accessed other funding sources, and ten (37 percent) respondents said they had gained or enhanced media relations. Five respondents said that they did not gain or enhance any marketing skills.

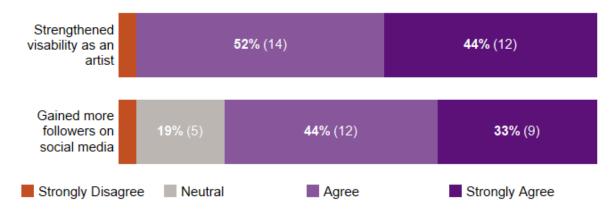
Figure 8: Which of the following marketing skills did you gain or enhance following this USAI supported experience?



Visibility as an Artist

Respondents were asked what their USAI-sponsored activities did to increase their prominence within their respective artistic communities. Ninety-six percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their experience, funded in part by the USAI program, strengthened their visibility as artists. Seventy-seven percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had gained more social media followers as a result of the USAI-supported experience.

Figure 9: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your USAI supported experiences.



Creativity

The final domain that the survey covered was creativity and how artists' USAI-funded activities had creative benefits. Ninety-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the USAI-sponsored experience benefited them creatively. Seventy-four percent agreed or strongly

agreed that they now take more risks in their artistic practice, including incorporating new art forms and styles, as a result of their USAI-supported experience. Two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporate more diverse ideas (e.g., innovative, novel, or creative ideas) into their artwork as a result of their USAI-supported experience.



Figure 10: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your USAI supported experiences.

Additional Benefits

Respondents were given an opportunity to describe any additional benefits to their career not already discussed in the survey; 16 grantees chose to write in comments. Six respondents talked about how their USAI experience had led to new opportunities, such as new commissions, new strategies to participate in new festivals aboard, as well as a heightened sense of recognition. Survey participants also referenced growth in artistry and other skills

"Receiving this award came during an extremely difficult several years of self-doubt. I not only felt seen by USAI, but validated that what I am doing, and what my company is creating is viable and worthwhile. I received a moment of validation, and a recognition of connection outside of my immediate community. I was also able to connect more to my own identity as a mixed-Latinx artist and made several additional contacts in that context as well."

necessary to tour successfully abroad, such as developing administration skills, connecting with company members, and learning how to communicate with tech professionals.

Respondents also talked about how their international experiences resulted in success at home in the U.S., where they secured more funding after their USAI-sponsored experience. Some referenced the importance of making new connections with other artists.

Three respondents mentioned difficulties due to COVID-19, though one respondent described an ability to use virtual platforms for expanding connections to national and international audiences and collaborators, as the virtual formats made their work "significantly more accessible."

"As an artist, this program has expanded my creative mind and assisted me with my ability to create work virtually, with increased pressure, and little time. I am now more equipped to conceive quality work at a faster pace."

Conclusion

While the pandemic limited the number of opportunities for performing artists to travel abroad, the USAI-grantees who did have in-person and virtual experiences between October 2020 and September 2021 reported many tangible benefits from professional development. Across five domains—Professional Opportunities, Professional Networks, Professional Skills and Learning, Visibility as an Artist, and Creativity—respondents benefited from new bookings and connections, they developed new skills and enhanced visibility as an artist, and they enhanced their sense of creativity.

Acknowledgements

The National Endowment for the Arts would like to acknowledge its contractor, 2M Research, particularly Dr. James Murdoch, for conducting preliminary research and drafting the survey instrument. The NEA would also like to acknowledge Mid-Atlantic Arts and its staff for providing data and expertise, as well as co-funders of the USArtists International program: the Mellon Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and the Howard Gilman Foundation. The NEA also consulted with staff at the Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

The National Endowment for the Arts ("the Arts Endowment") conducts an annual survey of artists participating in the USArtists International (USAI) program. If you or your organization have received more than one USAI grant, please answer this survey thinking about the grant that supported your travel in (month, year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES], as noted in the survey.

The questions will ask about benefits of your participation in the USAI grant program. We are specifically looking for performing artists that used USAI support to travel to international festivals or arts marketplaces to respond to this survey. If you are not an artist who meets these criteria, please forward the survey link to an artist who used USAI support to travel to an international festival or arts marketplace.

Please answer all questions honestly. Your response to this survey will help the Arts Endowment understand how the USAI program benefits the careers of U.S. artists. Evidence of the success of the USAI program is vital to the continuation of the program and will benefit the broader community of U.S. artists. Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential and the survey data will only be analyzed and reported in aggregate. Your responses to this survey will in no way impact the outcome of any present or future grant applications, contract proposals, or cooperative agreement proposals with the Arts Endowment or its partners.

Please note, if you cannot complete the survey in one sitting, you can save it and complete it at a later date. The survey will take about 5–8 minutes to complete. Please note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may stop at any time if necessary. We thank you for your participation and cooperation in this very important study.

Descriptive Information A-1. Please select the category that best describes your role in your most recent USAI-supported

experience.
☐ An artist that traveled abroad for the project. Examples may include a performing artist, director, stage manager, etc.
☐ Not an artist that traveled abroad for the project.
A-2. Based on the Arts Endowment's records, USAI supported your travel to:
(Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].
Is this information correct?
☐ Yes [WEB SURVEY WILL SKIP TO A-3]
□ No [WEB SURVEY WILL CONTINUE TO A-2a]
A-2a. Please enter the festival name, country, and year of your most recent USAI-supported experience.
Festival Name:
Location (Country):
Year:
A-3. Was the project you participated in at (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES] the first USAI-supported experience that you participated in?
□ Yes
\square No

Section 1: Professional Opportunities
Please answer the following questions based on your experiences during and after (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].

As a result of this USAI-supported experience, did you secure one or more new bookings for performances abroad?

☐ Yes [WEB SURVEY WILL CONTINUE TO 1-2a]
☐ No [WEB SURVEY WILL SKIP TO 2-1]
1-1a. Please estimate the number of bookings that resulted from your USAI-supported experience.
1-1b. Please list the countries in which you secured bookings (Separate the country names with commas):

Section 2: Professional Networks

Please answer the following questions based on your experiences during and after (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].

2-1. Did you make any new international professional contacts during this USAI-supported experience? New professional contacts may include industry contacts such as booking agents, managers, festival liaisons, or other artists or presenters who may provide an opportunity for new artistic projects in the future.
☐ Yes [WEB SURVEY WILL CONTINUE TO 2-2]
☐ No [WEB SURVEY WILL SKIP TO 2-3]
2-2. Have you maintained at least one international professional contact that you made during this USAI-supported experience? New professional contacts may include industry contacts such as booking agents, managers, festival liaisons, or other artists or presenters who may provide an opportunity for new artistic projects in the future.
☐ Yes [WEB SURVEY WILL CONTINUE TO 2-2a]
☐ No [WEB SURVEY WILL SKIP TO 2-3]
2-2a. Please estimate the number of international professional contacts you have maintained.
□ 1-2
□ 3-5
□ 6-9
□ 10+
2-2b. Did any of these contacts result in a new, collaborative performing arts project? A new, collaborative performing arts project could be a new performance or some other product.
□ Yes
□ No

2-3. Did you interact with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your host country either before on
during this USAI-supported experience? Interactions may include contacting the Embassy or
Consulate to invite individuals to attend performances or other performance-related
communications. Interactions may also include the Embassy or Consulate contacting artists regarding their performances.
□ Yes
\square No

Section 3: Professional Skills and Learning

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your experiences during and after (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
3-1. I learned something new about travel logistics and regulations related to performing arts presentations and touring in other countries (e.g., visa, import/export) as a result of this USAI-supported experience.						
3-2. I learned new artistic performance strategies for engaging international audiences as a result of this USAI-supported experience.						
3-3. Which of the following marketing sl supported experience? (Select all that appoint of Self-promotion on digital plats ☐ Media relations (e.g., interview	ply) forms (e.g.,				this USAI-	
☐ Accessing other funding sources, accessing funding in other	ees (e.g., suc					ng
☐ Other (please specify):						
☐ I did not gain or enhance any i	marketing sl	xills.				

Section 4: Visibility as an Artist
Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your experiences during and after (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
4-1 . I strengthened my visibility as an artist in the international arts community as a result of this USAI-supported experience.						
4-2. I gained more followers on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) as a result of this USAI-supported experience.						

Section 5: Creativity

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements based on your experiences during and after (Festival Name, Country, Year) [WEB SURVEY POPULATES].

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5-1 . I take more risks in my artistic practice, including incorporating new art forms and styles, as a result of this USAI-supported experience.					
5-2. I incorporate more diverse ideas (e.g., innovative, novel, or creative ideas) into my artwork as a result of this USAI-supported experience.					
5-3. I benefitted creatively in other ways as a result of the USAI-supported experience.					

Survey Conclusion

6-1. Optional: Please use this space to describe any additional benefits to your career not already discussed (Word limit of 150).

Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your responses will help us better understand the impact of this program on artists' careers. Click "Submit" to complete the survey.

Your survey is now complete.