

Latino Creative Association Nonprofit Proposal

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Executive Summary

This white-paper addresses the need for a nonprofit professional organization, called the Latino Creative Association, to serve Latino designers in Dallas, Texas. Latino designers are an underrepresented group and are in need of support, resources, and community to support their profession:

- Designers make up 1 million jobs in the United States (NEA 2023)
- 12.3% of employees in the U.S. are Latinos in “Specialized Design Services” which include graphic, UX, and web designers (BLS 2024)
- 42% of Dallas residents are Latino (AEP6)

Additional studies note barriers that Latino design professionals experience including the lack of networks and support and financial constraints. Latino creatives are historically a disadvantaged group in the U.S., further signifying the need for the LCA.

Some efforts do support Latino designers indirectly such as local government programs, nonprofit organizations such as ALPFA, AIGA, and DSVC. The analysis of current data and literature available regarding the design industry and Latinos, while limited, informs the need for a nonprofit organization that offers workshops, resources, and community. The lack of data indicates the need for further research on this segment of the creative economy. The LCA can be supported by this as well. This document provides next steps to create the LCA nonprofit.

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 5

Literature Review..... 7

Analysis..... 14

Policy and Project Options.....17

Recommendation 20

Conclusion..... 23

Appendices..... 26

References 30

Introduction

Introduction

To those of us in the creative industries, we have or will become familiar with the many challenges that seem common our line of work. Individual professionals and businesses alike in the creative economy seek support, information, funding, and relationships to achieve their career or goals. Organizations such as the Dallas Chapter of the American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA) and Dallas Society of Visual Communicators (DSVC) are just two examples of the developing network of support being for design professionals in Dallas, Texas. These organizations support a broad and multi-cultural need but do not offer equity-focused support. These organizations, small in size, depend on volunteers to operate. Current research studying the creative economy indicate opportunities to support a significant portion of the creative workforce: Latino creative professionals.

Establishing the Latino Creative Association (LCA) nonprofit intends to address the challenges experienced by Latino creative professionals and conduct research that provides insight to overcoming these challenges. The LCA mission is to create a local, nonprofit organization for Latinos in the design industry, and other creative specialties of Dallas, Texas to facilitate connections between professionals and students complemented by resources, fiscal support, and development of the infrastructure for a diverse and creative workforce. This nonprofit organization will operate on a membership model to raise funding in addition to grants, donations, and revenue. The organization will have a board to operate towards its mission, comprised of experienced Latino creative professionals as president, treasurer, and secretary. Each of these roles support the necessary functions of the nonprofit organization to achieve its mission.

Literature Review

Literature Review

Design is heavily driven by Western/Global North influence due to Europe's history of art and design in addition to globalization (Tejada, 2023). Colonization, immigration, and globalization have shaped design as it is today. Design movements such as the Swiss Style, Art Deco, and postmodernism, Bauhaus, evolved in the Global North and remain cornerstones to design education. Principles of hierarchy and typography are founded with the premise of Latin-based writing systems, in which the written language is read from left to right. Within a western lens, these principles are normative and remain unchallenged (Franchi, 2022). Major developments shaping graphic design as it is known today came from western influences. For example, a famous designer is Paul Rand is known for poster and his corporate logo identities, such as IBM, was born in New York. The specialization of labor occurring as a result of the industrial revolution can be identified as the profession's emergence, but graphic design has no definitive exact date or origin. When design meets cultures outside of the Global North, principles and histories can clash, signifying a need to diversify the understanding of design. Maria Rogal, in her work *Decolonizing Graphic Design*, writes on the importance of acknowledging that theories and practices that come from western cultures carry ideologies from the originating cultures (2015). If cultures experience a clash, it is expected that individuals of different ethnicities, cultures, and nationalities, also experience a similar clash in working as creative professionals.

Like other marginalized groups, Latinos experience can discrimination, lack of diversity, and other barriers to their education and careers in any industry (Guimaraes et al, 2023). Further exploration into the experience of Latinos designers comes from The National Endowment for the Arts, which helped to explore the demographics of creative professions in depth. In 2023, it was revealed that 13% of artists identified as Hispanic/Latino; the report includes designers as artists and thus Latino designers are included in the 13%. Other studies, such as from the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) Design Census, report that 9% of designers indexed in the report identified as Latino. For additional context, Latinos make up 18% of the U.S.

population and are therefore underrepresented in the design industry. The AIGA Design Census also conduct qualitative surveys, and found that:

“The top challenges faced by underrepresented groups when entering the Design profession are: (1) lack of networks/access to people; (2) financial barriers; and (3) lack of support.”

This further indicates the importance and need for diversity in creative industries. Similarly, a 2011 report by the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) closely surveyed the experience of Latino creative professionals and organizations, which revealed that Latino artists in the community lacked infrastructure, support, and funding, specifically after the economic downturn of 2009-2010. More research is needed and is developing to study Latinos and the creative economy. The BLS reports that 12.5% of those employed in Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations are Hispanic or Latino, signifying that this segment of the population makes a significant contribution to the creative economy (2024). According to the *Measuring the Arts Report*, conducted by the National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center, designers comprise the largest segment of the arts in 2023 at over 1 million professionals (2024). This suggests an investment in the professional development of designers will have significant impacts. It is crucial, however, to address gaps in data that muddy the analysis of the creative economy. For example, data may not accurately represent individual contractors, especially those who participate in part time creative work or simply fail to self-report. Data does not appear to exist looking at the intersection of Latino designers at a regional level or is very difficult to find; estimates must be deduced from national data. Data may also not represent creative roles that take place in unrelated industries, such a graphic designer for a town's government office.

Is it also difficult to definitively define who and what roles to include when considering the creative economy—should the manager of a local mail/print shop be included? The BLS reports managerial/leadership, educational agents, architects separately from this data. Additionally, the BLS does not account for relational industries or roles that support designers

or other creative roles such as equipment maintenance workers. This indicates a need not just for more data, but a need to create more robust criteria that can be used to analyze data and make the data more meaningful. Additional studies should also both be qualitative and quantitative will provide additional context and further the meaningfulness of data during analysis.

Dallas is a significant hub for creative workers. The AEP6, a report focusing on the nonprofit arts and culture industry, revealed that this sector of the regional economy generated over \$850 million in economic activity during the 2022 fiscal year (reported in 2023). Of course, graphic designers often find employment in for-profit businesses. A report completed by Compare the Market AU ranked Dallas as the tenth best city for creatives based on factors such as average salaries, number of hubs, and number of galleries (Bowling, 2025). The BLS reports the average salary in the category of Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations in the region is \$65,950 (2024). Again, Latinos in “Specialized Design Services”—which include graphic, UX, and web designers—make up around 12% of employees in the U.S. according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024). Considering that Dallas, the city itself, is made up of 42% Latinos, it can be inferred that the demographic is underrepresented in the creative economy despite its significance to the region. Research examining and analyzing the creative economy and creative professionals highlight the need for supporting Latino creative professionals. Further developments in research will continue to inform the needs of Latino designers and recognize changes in the creative economy over time.

In Elizabeth Currid’s work, *The Warhol Economy*, the author’s analysis of New York’s creative economy includes the importance of social networks to creative economic activity. Currid reinforces the concept of weak ties, introduced by Mark Granovetter, in which a large number of superficial connections will provide economic opportunity due to the breadth of knowledge (2009). Building upon this work, Nadia Y. Flores-Yeffal and Li Zhang sought to test a hypothesis of how different racial and ethnic groups are affected by the quality of their social networks—in this case, quality is referring to the weak ties of connections—and how the connections affect their earnings (2012). Latinos do benefit from an increased number

of connections, but the demographic was observed to benefit from strong ties—like family or friends instead of workplace peers—attributed to their experience of risk in the U.S. An additional finding of the study is that Asians are higher earners than Hispanics and African Americans, not because of their weak or strong ties, but rather their human capital. The human capital the authors are referring to are education, language skills, and experience in the labor market. This suggests that a mixed approach may be beneficial to Latinos in their creative work, such as through professional organizations.

Member-oriented organizations offer a way to develop the communities of creative professionals, such as the AIGA and the Dallas Society of Visual Communications (DSVC). Professional organizations provide specialized resources for professionals and students, including development, educational, and networking opportunities. The organizations typically operate as nonprofits, relying on donations and membership fees to conduct their mission. Professional organizations operating on a membership model utilize monthly or annual membership fees, offering discounted rates for emerging professionals or students highlighting the importance of these organizations and recognizing the disadvantages new professionals face in starting their careers. Both previously mentioned organizations—AIGA and DSVC—operate in Dallas for creative professionals in the design industry.

The AIGA was founded in 1914 in New York with 40 founding members. It is now the largest organization for designers in addition to being the oldest. The support and resources provided by the AIGA demonstrate its importance to creative professionals through the U.S.. For example, the AIGA conducts reporting and research on the creative industry. The organization now includes over 70 chapters across the nation, including the Dallas chapter. The Dallas chapter was founded in 2003, now serving students, leaders, and professional through events, networks, and resources. The AIGA Dallas also support four student groups at local universities. The AIGA Dallas hosts events such as projects showcases—offering a place to show off works—and workshops for professional or creative development. The organization works with local

businesses for event hosting facilitating networking and generating economic activity. Through volunteering, the organization can build the leadership skills of contributing members.

The Dallas Society of Visual Communications is similar organization to AIGA Dallas offering networking, access to events, and other resources to support designers in the Dallas area. It was originally founded as the Dallas/Fort Worth Art Directors Club in 1957, undergoing a name change to the Dallas Society of Visual Communications in 1975 to represent the various professions, organizations, and accomplishments of the region. Today, the DSVC hosts networking events, portfolio reviews, and student showcases to uplift young professionals in their emerging careers. Like AIGA Dallas, leadership and volunteer opportunities provide ways to build skills relevant to creative professionals.

Related to creative professional organizations is the Association of Latino Professionals for America (ALPFA). ALPFA is Latino-oriented nonprofit professional organization focused on uplifting future leadership with education, resources, and networking for each sector of the economy. ALPFA, like the AIGA, is a large organization with regional chapters, including one in Dallas. Community engagement, well-being, education, and generational wealth creation are some pillars of the organization. Latino professionals are supported through workshops, events, scholarships, and other programs as part of their membership with the organization. The nonprofit, however, due its origins in accounting and finance, as well as a broad economic scope, may not best suited for Latino creative professionals in their professional development and occupational-related community building.

The research above indicates that Latinos in the design industry are a marginalized and underrepresented group in the U.S. economy. Although industry specific data is difficult to find, some deductions can be made in comparing national data and regional data, like that of Dallas. The lack of data also highlights the need for more reporting to collect data at residing at the intersection of specific demographics and occupations. It is also indicated, through the works of Currid, Granovetter, Flores-Yeffal, and Li Zhang, that social networks play an important role in professionals' careers. Channeling these social networks can uplift Latino designers in

Dallas, like professional organizations such as the DVSC, AIGA, and ALPFA. Of course, more research is necessary to evaluate the success of efforts, but this informs possible solutions to the challenges Latino designers face in the current creative economy of Dallas.

Analysis

Analysis

In the previous section, literature and data at the intersections of demographics, labor, and arts reveal the challenges Latinos designers experience in the creative economy. Design in the U.S. was largely influenced and developed within a homogeneous America culture inherits a bias to white Americans. Latinos already experience barriers to entry, discrimination, and other hurdles to their career development unlike white Americans, so the influence of the Global North/West enhances the challenges .

Current policy in Dallas is led by the Office of Arts and Culture. The mission of the agency is to make recommendations that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in ways that are measurable. The office works with creative professionals, the public, and other local agencies to develop policy and promote the collaboration between the previously mentioned stakeholders. The collaboration is done via advocacy for resources, networking, and other policy integrations. For example, the Office of Arts and Culture creates contracts for cultural services with partnering organizations through the Cultural Organizations Program. A report released in 2022 reviewed accomplishments of the agency (Appendix, Table A2). With a budget of over \$21 million, over 8 million were served by the agency's efforts—an increase from the previous fiscal year—and 35 public art events were created with the City's Public Art Collection (AEP6, 2022). While 30% of minority artists and organizations (African, Latino, Asian, Arab, Native American) received funding, this was a decrease from the previous fiscal year by 1%. Additionally, \$173 million was leveraged by partnering organizations, but this was also a decrease by roughly \$5 million from the previous year. The report also highlights the planned expansion of the Latino Cultural Center, a division of the Office of Arts and Culture, focused on the "preservation and development of Latino and Hispanic arts and culture." Design was only named indirectly in the report in relation to the program Arts Activate. This program provides funding to arts and artists. In relation to design, some funding went to the Nova Pangea musical group. The group, creating inclusive experiences, kicked off the Together in Harmony Festival, featuring interactive events featuring creatives from various specialties, including designers,

though the festival's primary goal was to host the first inclusive art festival for the hard of hearing.

Arts and culture are supported by local policy, residents, and nonprofits, indicated by the Office of Arts and Culture. Support is also indicated by economic activity—\$850 million—from over 130 organizations according to the AEP6 reporting on the fiscal year 2022. There is not, however, a significant focus on designers in the report nor the agency. Additionally, while Latino and other minority groups are reported on, the demographic data is oriented to artists and other cultural products, not designers specifically.

Professional organizations create access to social networks which lead to career growth and increased earnings such as ALPFA, AIGA Dallas, and DSVC. These organizations don't simply provide access to networks but work to create community among its members and partners. This would be beneficial, along with targeting Latinos—a demographic-based organization—as studies indicate strong ties work to the benefit of Latino professionals. Finally, professional organizations can work in conjunction with local colleges and universities, providing access to networks, communities, and resources to students who are just beginning to develop their careers that may not otherwise have this access to support. Considerations must, however, must be made to the success of the organizations relying on primarily on volunteers to operate; the availability of volunteers is dependent on their work and home life. The nonprofit status of professional organizations requires funding and maintenance, again relying on volunteers, but nonprofits must find other sources of revenue to support their cause. Paid membership offers a solution to funding, depending on the size of the organization and goals, however this may act as a barrier of entry to those with low-income such as students or emerging professionals.

Policy and Project Options

Policy or Project Options

There are several options to improve the experience of Latino designers and support their professional growth. While art and cultural policy in Dallas includes a broad scope, the focus on specific talent, such as theatre and music, demonstrates the possibility that policy can focus and positively impact Latino designers despite that currently there is little to be found surrounding design. Latinos are a researched group, but little data can be found at the intersection of Latinos, design, and regions which poses additional opportunities for Latinos to receive support through more research.

Dallas already has an Office of Arts and Culture which can expand or direct more focus to minority designers. The agency can provide more specific programs or opportunities for Latino designers. For example, funding or creating specific resources—such as grants—offer support for the creative professionals either to independent practitioners or studios/organizations. Grants exist for arts and cultural programs at a broad scope, but applications take time to fill out and are competitive. Other policy exploration could include improving the marketing of programs and initiatives and support or conducting more research on the creative economy of the region that examines demographic data more closely. The development of policy indeed takes time and requires public support; constituents and interest of policy leaders will be key to the success of these programs.

The Latino Cultural Center, a part of the Dallas Office of Arts and Culture, could also offer design-centered programs. Current exhibitions include and programs are typically traditional art, theater, and music, but do not necessarily focus on commercial arts. The development and inclusion of design-oriented programs will require the interest of the organization and patrons. The LCC may also consider creating programs that partner with local schools for education on the creative economy and its relevance to the Latino communities, specifically to the students and young adults of Dallas. Although the umbrella of cultural products the LCC supports, while inclusive, may not provide the tailored support for designers, the organization provides networking opportunities, workshops, and showcasing opportunities

that still are somewhat relevant to designers and can developed to further to improve these opportunities for Latino designers.

The existing nonprofits mentioned—ALPFA, AIGA, and DSVC—offer the inspiration and framework to develop a nonprofit organization specific to Latino design professionals and students. As networking organizations, they provide the spaces and opportunities for meetings, events, and workshops that can help Latino designers to progress their careers all while facilitating the connections professionals and students also need to advance their careers. As these organizations operate typically by volunteers, this volunteer involvement can also work towards goals of professional development. Highly motivated individuals are provided with the opportunities to develop their skills with hands-on experience to create and host a networking event, as just one example. The reliance on volunteers comes with its own set of challenges, however. Finally, the incorporation into university communities facilitates to invaluable connections that can help jumpstart students' careers proactively.

There are several policy and project options to explore in addressing the challenges Latino designers face in their careers. The creative economy in Dallas is significant, and Latino professionals play a notable role. New or updated policy offers solutions that will take time and support, so creating a nonprofit organization may best be suited to serve Latino designers.

Recommendation

Recommendation

Based on analysis of Latino creative professionals, as well as local economic activity and policy, the recommendation is to create a nonprofit professional organization, such as the DSVC and AIGA, specially targeted for Latino designers in Dallas. Research indicates a gap in resources and the importance of social networks to the professional growth of Latino design professionals. Given that Latinos are an underrepresented demographic in the creative industry, specifically design, a nonprofit can focus on providing the support and resources needed for these designers to grow their career in addition to promoting diversity in the industry.

To create a nonprofit professional organization for Latino designers and other creative professionals in Dallas, the organization will need a name: Latino Creative Association. The nonprofit will need to establish a mission and goals created in response to Latino designers being underrepresented in the creative economy. Goals of the organization should be to provide resources such as workshops, seminars, and speaker panels to assist members in their career development; to promote diversity in the design industry; to provide opportunities for local designers; to facilitate networking among creative professionals. The nonprofit will need to establish a mission statement reflective of these goals.

A business plan is necessary to illustrate the viability and success of any nonprofit. The business plan will establish where funding will come from, including earned, possibly through membership fees or fundraisers. Funding can also come from donations, sponsorships, and grants. The nonprofit will also need to plan programs such as workshops, meetings, and community outreach. Financial projection should outline the costs of programs and their generated revenue as relevant. A budget detailing revenue, expenses, and cash flow are documents that should be included in the business plan.

The nonprofit will also need to designate personnel to carry out its mission. A board of directors is necessary and, at minimum, should have a president, secretary, and treasurer. Each member of the board should have relevant experience to their roles in addition to having

professional and personal experience that aligns with the mission and goals of the organization. Lastly, members should be representative of the target audience, Latino designers.

Nonprofits must be filed according to law. Nonprofits will need to file with the IRS for a 503(c)(3) to be recognized as a public charity and be tax-exempt. Nonprofits will also need to file as a trust, corporation, or association as well as file for an employer identification number. In Texas, nonprofits will also need to appoint a registered agent to receive legal notices for the organization and must obtain state tax identification numbers. Nonprofits will also need to apply for 501(c)(3) exemption in order to apply for grants and grow fundraising efforts. The 501(c)(3) will require bylaws and conflict of interest policies approved by the board.

Developing a nonprofit to benefit Latino designers in Dallas is no simple task but can immensely support creative professionals and students through their careers. The flexibility of a nonprofit is far more than that of policy developments or funding programs. Therefore, a nonprofit has a more hopeful outlook in regards to getting started and active. Keeping up-to-date with laws regarding nonprofits, strategic planning, and having the proper talent and volunteers will be key to the organization's success.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The design industry is a significant force in the creative economy. Latino designers in the U.S. and Dallas are underrepresented despite making up a sizable portion of the creative economy, yet more data looking at the creative economy broken down by demographics is needed. An estimated 1 million jobs belong to designers, and studies show that Latinos make up 9%-13% of designers, suggesting they are a underrepresented group as in the U.S., as Latinos make up 18% of the nation's population. Region specific data is difficult to find and must be inferred from national data. Latinos make up over 40% of Dallas city residents, and it can be inferred that Latinos make up roughly the same percentage of designers at 9%-13% in Dallas. Finally, the development of graphic design in the Global North/Western societies renders the industry to historically lack diversity further demonstrating the underrepresentation of Latino designers.

Current policy and projects do offer some opportunities to support Latino designers. Local Dallas policy support includes the Office of Arts and Culture. The office backs many programs and partnerships that support cultural initiatives, including the Latino Cultural Center, but focuses more on traditional arts such as visual arts and music. The efforts are still significant, with a \$21 million budget from the Office of Arts and Culture and 8 million served in 2023. While efforts can be expanded, time and public support is needed to create initiatives for Latino designers. The failure of action does not necessarily directly harm Latino designers, but the omission of efforts will continue the effects of their underrepresentation. As the AIGA reported, underrepresentation is connected to lack of networks and support as well as financial barriers.

The recommendation to create a nonprofit professional organization, the Latino Creative Association, can provide the support and resources that Latino design professionals need to develop their careers, grow their earnings, and promote diversity in the industry. ALPFA, AIGA, and DSVC provide frameworks and examples to model the nonprofit organization geared toward creative professionals and a specific demographic. Objectives centered around providing resources such as workshops, seminars, to facilitating networking among creative professionals

will be crucial to its success. Nonprofits require filing with IRS and their state of operation. They need a board of directors and, if needed, staff that have experience that aligns with a nonprofit's mission and goal. Personnel also needs to be representative of the target audience they are trying to reach. In this case, Latino design professionals and/or leaders would be best suited to serve on the board, along with financial and legal professionals. Financial projection is also needed, such as in the form of budgets and cash flows. Finally, nonprofits offer flexibility that policy options do not have, making it the best option to combat the underrepresentation that Latino designers face.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1

Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

Occupation	2024					
	Total employed	Percent of total employed				
		Women	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Total, 16 years and over	161,346	47.1	76.3	12.8	7.0	19.4
Graphic designers	294	59.1	83.1	5.5	8.4	12.1
Web and digital interface designers	96	47.5	81.6	5.8	12.6	6.4

Note: The above table breaks down occupations into two categories, spanning across five demographic segments. From: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, January 29). *Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

Table A2

Total Economic Impacts of the Entire Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry in the City of Dallas During Fiscal Year 2022

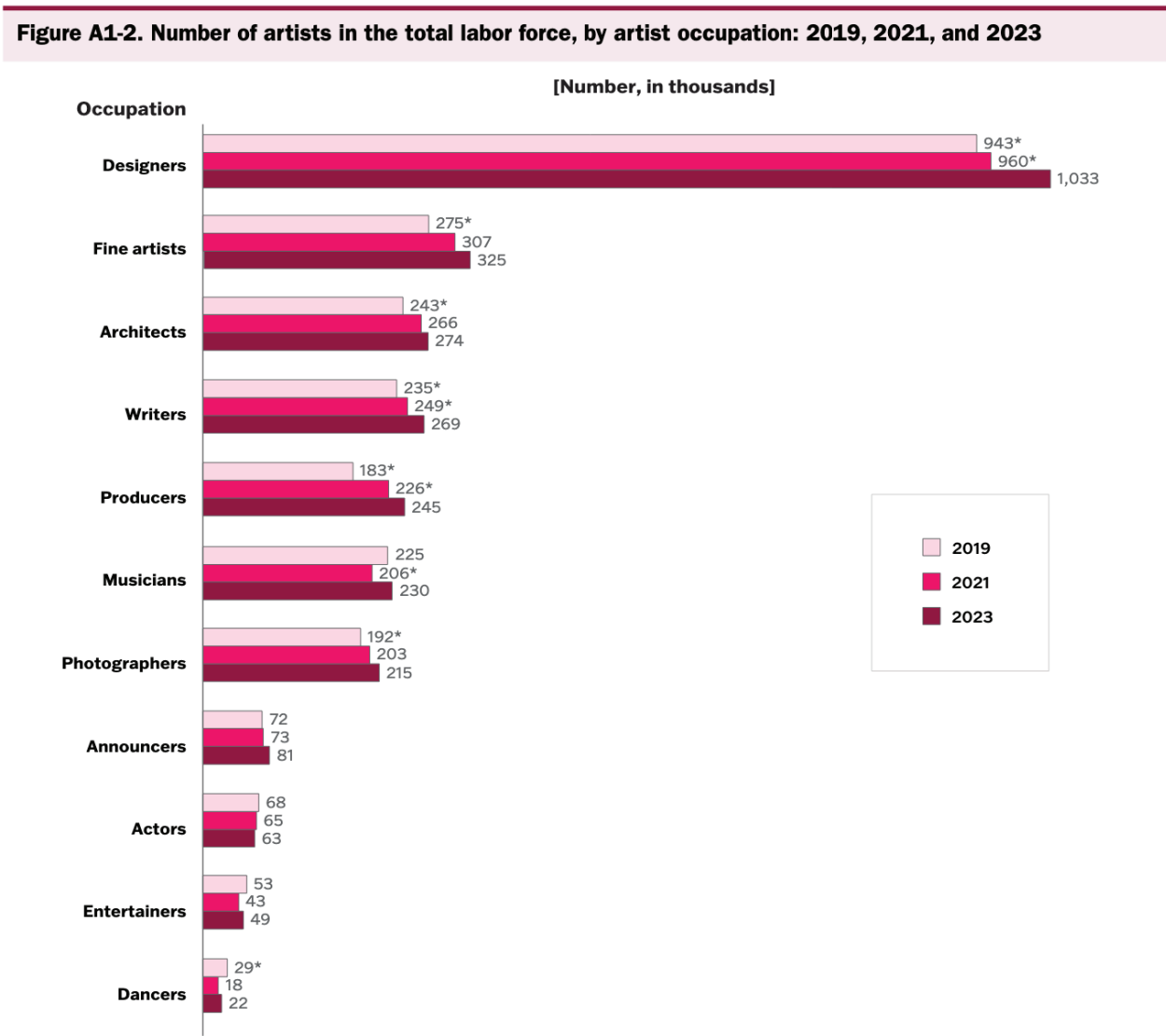
Table 1: Total Economic Impacts of the Entire Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry in the City of Dallas During Fiscal Year 2022			
	Organizations	Audiences	Industry Totals
Direct Expenditures	\$523,552,085	\$330,059,790	\$853,611,875
Jobs Supported	8,567	5,386	13,953
Household Income Paid	\$467,739,100	\$192,035,594	\$659,774,694
Local Government Revenue	\$11,525,016	\$9,029,683	\$20,554,699
State Government Revenue	\$11,113,116	\$8,567,242	\$19,680,358
Federal Tax Revenue	\$94,167,165	\$34,163,196	\$128,330,361
Total Tax Revenue	\$116,805,297	\$51,760,121	\$168,565,418

Note: The table shows economic activity generated from nonprofit art and culture industry.

From: Americans for the Arts. (2023, April 27). Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6). City of Dallas Office of Arts and Culture. <https://dallasculture.org/2022/09/arts-economic-prosperity-6-aep6/>

Table A3

Number of artists in the total labor force, by artist occupation: 2019, 2021, and 2023



Note: “Artists in the labor force are individuals currently employed in an artist occupation (regardless of work intensity [employed full time or part time] and class of worker [private or wage-salary, government, or self-employed]) or unemployed and looking for work in an artist occupation. Data from 2019, 2021, and 2023 are included to compare artists in the labor force before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.” From: National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC). (2023). *Measuring the Arts*. Washington D.C.; National Endowment for the Arts.

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White Paper
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