

Artists' Adaptability Circles

2022/2023 CONDENSED REPORT



Executive Summary

Artists' Adaptability Circles (AAC) is a **community-driven granting and leadership development program** based in the Bay Area, designed to address the needs of artists, culture bearers, and arts workers. Rooted in mutual aid, AAC focuses on process, journey, and support for individual artists as its goal, rather than measurable objectives or deliverables.

AAC began in 2020 as a response to the pandemic's impact on artist communities. As many programs sought to meet the immediate financial needs of artists, arts workers and culture bearers, a small group of Bay Area arts leaders (funders, consultants, artists and arts workers) came together to ask what type of work was still not being funded.

With our founding arts leaders becoming an advisory circle to guide the AAC program, we sought to deeply impact small groups of BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled and other historically under-resourced artists by empowering them to address self-identified issues arising in their lives, practices and communities. Simultaneously, providing tools and resources to support their continued work together.

The program's goal is to fund grassroots, artist-led work that is already happening within our Bay Area ecosystem but that may not be eligible for existing funding opportunities. Specifically, **we seek to center and support small groups of artists, arts workers, and culture bearers:** to compensate them for their time participating in the program, provide \$10,000 in flexible funding, create opportunities for them to engage in mutual aid, and to build a network amongst participants.

AAC does this by centering the trust built within our creative communities, and the knowledge and experiences of participating artists, arts workers, and culture bearers. **We hope to show that direct investment in groups of individual artists has an exponential impact in our communities.** If we assume that artists can better identify and address their own needs and the needs of their culturally specific communities, then we can create larger and deeper change by investing directly in small groups of individual artists. This impact has the potential to extend beyond the Bay, **aiming to combat colonized concepts of art** to provide authentic support to historically under-resourced artists.

KEY BETA & ROUND I TAKEAWAYS:

- Critical role of trust in overall process and with artists
- Uniqueness of program structure
- Funding flexibility (not focused on a public outcome) is key
- Longer program timeline separating Engagement and Expenditure Phases
- More specificity on structure in application
- Demand for in-person connection and increased no-agenda time
- Some participants still anticipate needing to complete a project
- Inclusion of full circle in application process
- Increased presence of facilitation circle at independent circle meetings
- Fewer tools with deeper engagement

LEADERSHIP & PARTNERS



History & Introduction

The **Beta Round and Round 1 of AAC** was offered in collaboration with and guided by advisors including facilitating organizations Diamond Wave and Emerging Arts Professionals / San Francisco Bay Area (EAP), host organizations La Peña Cultural Center, Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA) and SOMArts Cultural Center, and funding organizations Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the San Francisco Foundation, Zellerbach Community Foundation, with additional funding from the Mellon Foundation, Castellano Family Foundation, and the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.

Our **first full round of AAC** (following a condensed 6-month Beta Round in 2021) spanned calendar years 2022 and 2023 and supported **three “freshman” artist circles, one “sophomore” artist circle, and two additional “sophomore” follow-up projects**, as illustrated on the right.

Figure 1, right, visually illustrates the programmatic structure of the AAC and the circles that it is composed of, with artist circles and projects receiving funding and support from the Advisory Circle.

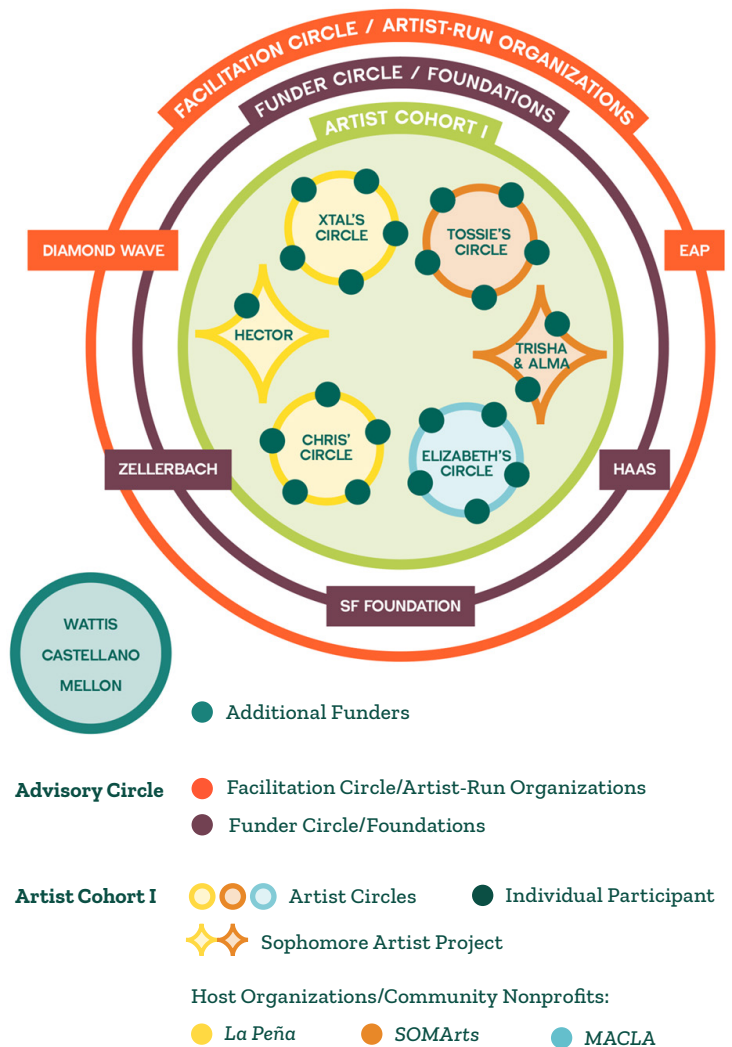
Advisory Circle members offer expertise in support of the development and evolution of the project. Composed of local Bay Area arts & culture leaders, the Advisory Circle is available to council, advise, network, and/or fund in order to assist the participating artists and continue to move the program forward. They also contribute to strategic decision making and ensure the program’s continuity.

- **Facilitation/Administrative Circle members** are leaders at artist-run organizations and administer and facilitate program operations, learning, professional development, and support the emerging needs of participants.
- **Host Organization members** distribute stipends and flexible funding to participants.
- **Funder Circle members** contribute financially to the program and support fundraising
- **Additional Funders** contribute financially to the program, but do not act as Advisory Circle members

It is important to note that **the intention of AAC was to distribute funds amongst core partners**; that multiple organizations would hold funding and be part of decision-making, reflecting shared leadership, as well as a distributed funding model.

Artist circles are selected through a nomination process and consist of up to four participating artists and a lead artist that is responsible for submitting paperwork for payments and ensuring full circle participation in the program.

ARTISTS’ ADAPTABILITY CIRCLES STRUCTURE COHORT I (2022/2023)



In the first several months of the program, artists are expected to meet independently. They attend **cross circle meetings** that build connections between and amongst artists while walking participants through the details and process of the AAC program. In addition, **equity-based tools** developed by EAP are offered throughout these meetings to support professional development, including:

- Accessible Introductions
- Creative Groundings
- EAP Cultural Practices/Protocols
- Collaboration Agreements
- Peer Coaching
- 3M Anti-Burnout Plans
- Network Mapping
- Equity Framework & Strategies for Systemic Power Shift

Following robust engagement and guidance through developing a work plan, **artist circles are asked to share how they will spend \$10,000 in flexible funding toward their specific issue.**

Recognizing that systemic issues were exacerbated by the global pandemic, AAC addressed core issues facing creative communities overall?

- **Sustainability & burnout**—How do we better fortify the engines of our creative economy?
- **Scarcity**—How can we use tools like network mapping to ensure access to a bounty of resources, specifically for historically under resourced artists?
- **Navigating red tape**—What is the least amount of info and infrastructure necessary to get funds where we know they'll do good? How do we change how we fund artists to ensure we are building a better experience for future artists, not creating future headaches or obstacles to creativity?

Now that the COVID pandemic is no longer central in our funding horizons, **how can we utilize this model to combat colonized concepts of what art and artists' role is in our society and better serve historically under-resourced artists and culture-bearers in moving towards the next stage in their creative paths?**

How can we continue to build and improve upon programmatic structures that intersect with addressing historic racism as well as centralized cultural systems gaps?

Timeline, Impact, & Budget

TIMELINE

Below is the timeline for the **2022/2023 cohort** cycle:



BUDGET

The **overall budget for the 2022/2023 Round I was \$393,256**; with **\$206,531** going to Diamond Wave and Emerging Arts Professionals to facilitate and administer the program, **\$97,000** going directly to Bay Area artists and their self-identified issues (including **\$40,000** in flexible funding), and **\$24,700** going toward advising organizations La Peña Cultural Center, MACLA and SOMArts including **\$5,000** each to participate in the advisory group as well as a 10% fee for administering artist funds.

79.6% OF FUNDS GO DIRECTLY TO BENEFIT ARTISTS

35.2% of the budget goes to participating artists as artist fees and expense grants; 44.4% of funds support the sustainable income of artists by providing wages to the creatives running the program. Of the remaining 20.5% of the budget, 10% goes to program expenses such as supplies and venue rentals, and 10.5% goes to fees to fiscal sponsors, who provide insurance, bill pay, financial reporting and oversight, and tax documents.

TOTAL BUDGETED	TOTAL INCOME	TOTAL ACTUAL	NET
\$372,286	\$389,931	\$393,256	-\$6,083
ARTIST FEES		HOST ORGANIZATION FEES	
\$97,000		\$24,700	
BUDGETED ADMINISTRATION		ACTUAL ADMINISTRATION	
\$71,860 (EAP) + \$101,500 (DW)		\$78,120 (EAP) + \$128,411 (DW)	
BUDGETED PROGRAM EXPENSES		ACTUAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	
\$25,795 (EAP) + \$24,180 (DW)		\$12,566 (EAP) + \$20,528 (DW)	
BUDGETED FISCAL SPONSORSHIP		ACTUAL FISCAL SPONSORSHIP	
\$10,830 (EAP) + \$16,600 (DW)		\$14,862 (EAP) + \$17,067 (DW)	

Sophomore Circles & Projects

Lead artist **Chris Evans** and participating artists **Keisha Turner**, **Sheila Russell**, **Tobe Melora Correal** and **Yvette Aldama** are addressing the health, wellness, and self care of Black Women in Oakland with the **Black Women's Self-Care Reparations Project**.

This circle participated in the Beta Round and was **invited back for full funding (\$22,000)** due to their sustained work as a circle. This year, Chris's circle conducted a **rest retreat for four days in Bodega Bay** where they envisioned what a thriving life might look like (centering questions like *How do we start to make this [self-care for Black women] happen?*). They chose to pay additional stipends for circle members to attend this retreat as well as for retreat expenses. The circle also chose to make a donation to the **Sogorea Te' Land Trust**,

an urban Indigenous Women-led land trust that facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people.

Completing the first phase of their project (Healing Ourselves), the circle is now focused on healing themselves as they learn to heal others and grow skills that enable them to be economically sustainable. With support of funding partner Esailama Artry-Diouf, Chris's circle was also able to apply for and receive a **\$40,000 grant** from the San Francisco Foundation to continue their work.

HOST ORGANIZATION



For more information, please visit the **Black Women's Self-Care Reparations Project [website](#)**.

HOST ORGANIZATION



Lead artist **Hector Lugo** is creating safe, open, accessible physical and social spaces for Afro-Latin music and dance community jams, in collaboration with a bilingual education public school in Oakland.

Although Hector worked with a circle of three collaborators last year, the circle didn't continue their mutual aid work and instead focused on programming at **Manzanita SEED Elementary School**. In this second round, Hector received a **\$4,000 stipend** to continue his work which provided a base stipend that was augmented by funding from Manzanita SEED, thanks to state-provided arts education funding from CA Prop 28. This year Hector and collaborating teaching artists (**María de la Rosa**, **Shefali Shah**, and **Jesse Carasinos**) offered a **ten-week residency** focused on Latinx musical, dance, and cultural traditions for an estimated **150 students**. In addition to coming into the school to teach these traditions, Hector also hosted **two bombazos** centering bomba music and traditions with community practitioners at Manzanita SEED.

Although Hector continued his work with a circle, he expressed a sense of freedom not being seen as a leader responsible for ensuring other artists attended AAC sessions. Hector has expressed interest in continuing this work with Manzanita SEED but has no immediate plans to expand the program out to other schools —instead favoring a deepening relationship with one school. Hector has titled this initiative **ALMA (Afro-Latin Music Alliance)**. Although there is currently no web presence for this project, he has **shared some project documentation [here](#)**.

Image (left) shows Hector in a red sweatshirt teaching bomba drumming during an outdoor class.



Co-lead artists **Alma Landeta** and **Tricia Rainwater** are addressing the gap in resources and representation for BIPOC queer and gender-expansive artists.

HOST ORGANIZATION



Alma and Tricia emerged from the beta round as a duo leading a new visual art and poetry magazine entitled **Queer Rain**. In the second round, Alma and Tricia each received **\$2,500 stipends** to continue their work on *Queer Rain*.

As co-leads, Alma and Tricia decided to move forward with a **second edition** of the *Queer Rain* magazine featuring approximately 20 international BIPOC, queer, and gender expansive artists. They hosted a **launch event** at Queer Arts Featured in June 2022 and participated in events with SF Zine Fest, Friends and Family Bar in Oakland, and Berkeley Art Center, as well as hosting **digital events** on Zoom and Instagram.

Although *Queer Rain* was well received by communities and filled



a necessary gap in support for BIPOC queer and gender-expansive artists, the working relationship between the two co-leads became difficult in this round and **ultimately they decided to dissolve their partnership**, ending production and programming related to *Queer Rain*.

The artists continue to do work in community and collaborate with AAC artists. In 2023, Tricia was commissioned to include a large-scale multi-media installation in a group show at SOMArts Cultural Center, curated by AAC cohort member Xtal Azul.

For more information on *Queer Rain*, please visit the publication's [Instagram profile](#).

Freshman Artist Circles & Projects

HOST ORGANIZATION



Lead artist **Elizabeth Jimenez Montelongo** and participating artists **Adriana Garcia**, **Josiah Luis Alderete**, and **Laura Diaz** are exploring and expanding opportunities for under-served communities of color in the Bay Area to create, present, publish, experience, and engage with multi-disciplinary creative works that inspire conversation on important issues and celebrate shared culture.

Their emphasis is on supporting women of color and Indigenous people whose heritage is rooted in areas that are now Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Elizabeth's circle received full funding (\$22,000) and chose to undertake several projects related to each circle members' specific interests.

Elizabeth led the creation of a new Gente Chicana edition of *La Raíz*, a literary magazine that publishes visual art, poetry, and writing by community members, writers, and artists based in San Jose, Santa Clara County, nationally

and internationally. ***La Raíz Gente Chicana* features 42 artists and attracted approximately 50 people to two digital events supporting and launching the publication.**

Adriana and Laura led the creation of a new podcast titled **Conexiones Mágicas: Diálogos para la Vida Auténtica** ("Magical Connections: Dialogues for Authentic Living"). The pair attended podcasting workshops to ramp up their understanding of podcast production and purchased equipment to support continued podcast production.



Image (above) shows attendees at zine workshop.

Josiah Luis Alderete hosted a **zine making workshop with facilitator Soledad Con Carne** at Medicine for Nightmares bookstore and gallery along San Francisco’s Calle 24 Cultural District. The two days of workshops in May 2022 attracted 20 people.

Additionally, Elizabeth reached out to the Advisory Circle for fundraising support and together they secured a **\$2,000 grant** (to MACLA) from the Castellano Family Foundation for Elizabeth to attend the **Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS)** Summer Institute.

The circle participated in each other’s projects and shared knowledge. They did not centralize their efforts under a specific banner or organization, but did create **public programming** which is accessible. Please refer to the links below:

- [La Raíz Magazine: Gente Chicana Edition](#)
- [Conexiones Mágicas: Diálogos para la Vida Auténtica](#)
- [Medicina Zine Workshop with Soledad Con Carne](#)

Lead artist Tossie Long and participating artists Crystal Sanders-Alvarado, Jamil Nichols, Maria Judice, and Miles Lassi are amplifying Black voices and Black sounds of San Francisco.

HOST ORGANIZATION 

Tossie’s circle received full funding (\$22,000) to expand the work she leads under the organization **Red Clay Sound Haus**. With her circle consisting of sound, film, and installation artists, Tossie worked with San Francisco residents to **document the sounds and stories of an unoccupied house** owned by the family of Andy Brothers Contracting in San Francisco’s historic Black Bayview District.

Originally, this circle had hoped to complete three site specific activations but, with AAC support, they were able to narrow their scope to a **creative retreat centering research and development** for what has become known as the **158 Activation**. During the retreat they engaged with each other and the family around central ideas of consent, capacity, and willingness to participate in various kinds of expression—centering questions like “How can the director, musicians, and arts administrators create a sense of hospitality and care so that participants—those whose stories we are exploring—can have a transformative experience along with us?” and “If risk is often an element of transformative experiences, how can we create a

foundation of trust and safe communication in order to build a space where risks can be taken?”

Funding supported additional stipends for circle members, hospitality for retreat, equipment for research and development of the project, as well as stipends for the family members and additional artists to support the project. Circle lead, Tossie, raised an **additional \$2,225 in funding** from an individual donor to support the project, and brought in organizational partner **Audium** with whom she is building a creative relationship.

In fall of 2023, Tossie exhibited some of her early research from the **158 Activation at Thacher Gallery**. In their role as a curator for USF’s Thacher Gallery, EAP Co-Director **Rhiannon Evans MacFadyen** featured work from the 158 Activation. The Advisory Circle also supported Tossie applying for a grant in the amount of **\$600** from Center for Cultural Innovation’s Quick Grant program.

To read more about the project, please visit the [artist-created documentation of the 158 Activation](#).



Image (above) is from 158 Activation. Artists are with family members who grew up in the home.

Lead artist **Xtal Azul** and participating artists **Edgar Fabian Frias, M. Zamora, Ruth Villasenor, and Tlahuizpapalotl (Angel) Fabian** are (re)establishing spaces/systems of mutual aid for Indigenous artists, specifically two-Spirit and Indigequeer artists, cultural bearers and practitioners in order to envision individual and collective projects that decolonize creative practice, sexuality and gender expression, supporting the sovereignty of their work, shared cosmologies, and embodied spirituality.



Image (above) is a photo from the retreat of the ceremony conducted.

Their vision is to specifically address the lack of dedicated community, sustainable ritual-art spaces for **Two-Spirits** and **Indigequeers**.

Xtal's circle received full funding (\$22,000) to engage with and support Two-Spirit and Indigequeer artists, culture bearers, and practitioners. The group conducted a **regenerative retreat at WildPlaces** on the Tule River Land in July 2022. Members of the circle were joined by **Batul Trueheart**, who facilitated an agua florida workshop which connected them to sacred plant medicines, and **Yoli**, who created a place for circle members to play and dream together. Funding supported retreat expenses including venue rental, food, travel, and stipends for circle artists and facilitators.

Unfortunately, one circle member did not attend the retreat because they have a hearing disability and the circle

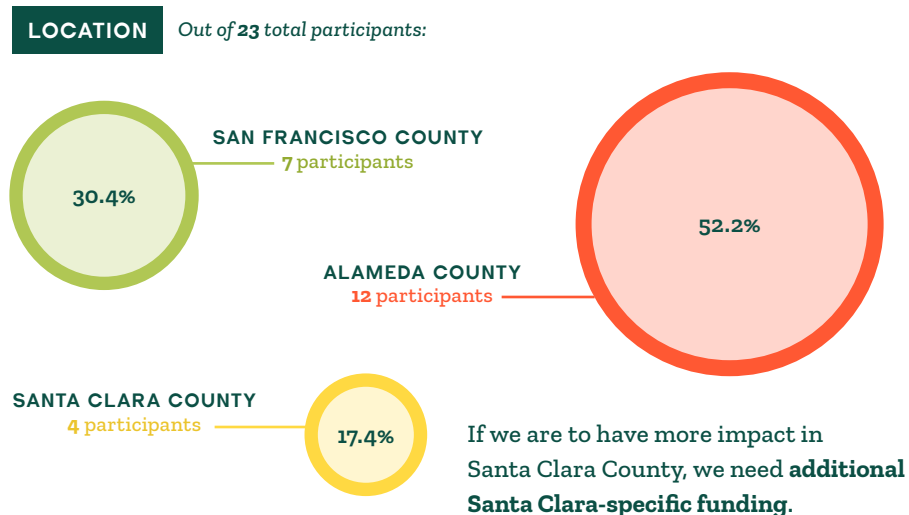
did not secure an interpreter to support their presence. AAC leadership only learned of this after the retreat had happened. This scenario caused us to create a **larger bucket of funding for accessibility** in the program's overall structure as we do not want accessibility to be the reason that keeps any artist from participation.

Although this circle worked well together, many members no longer have capacity to continue their direct work together. However, this group **continues to contribute to Indigequeer culture** in the Bay Area with many members participating in **BAAITS** (Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits) and BAAITS Drum Circle group.

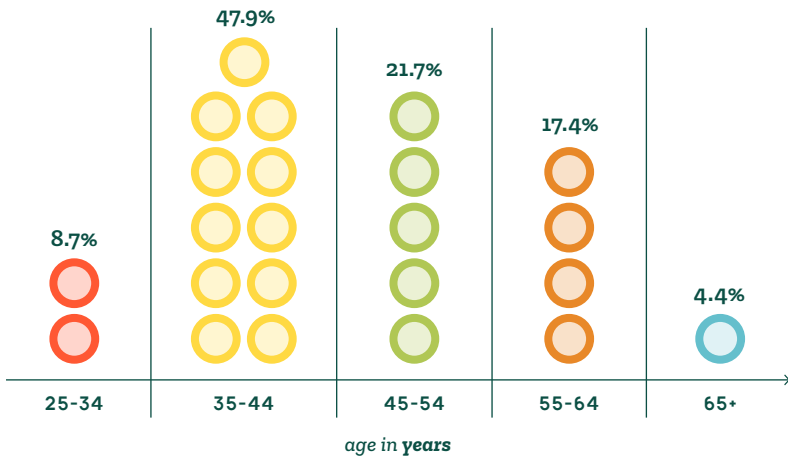
There is currently no central web presence for Xtal's circle's documentation, but the circle **collected photo and video documentation of their retreat [here](#)**.

Demographics

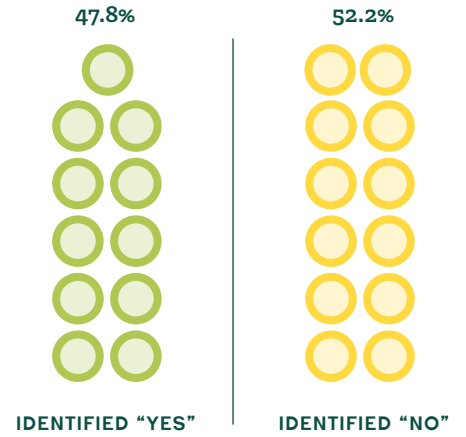
As part of the onboarding process, we requested that artists respond to a **demographic survey**. Overall, participants of the AAC reflect a broad spectrum of geographic, racial, age, and gender identity. **Here are a few key findings:**



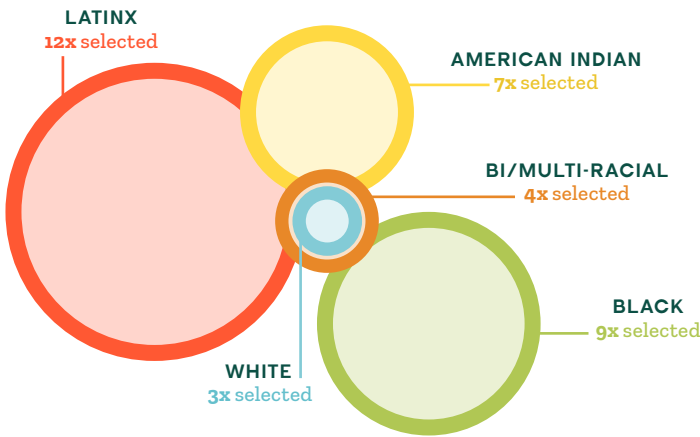
AGE Out of 23 total participants:



LGBTQ+ Out of 23 total participants:

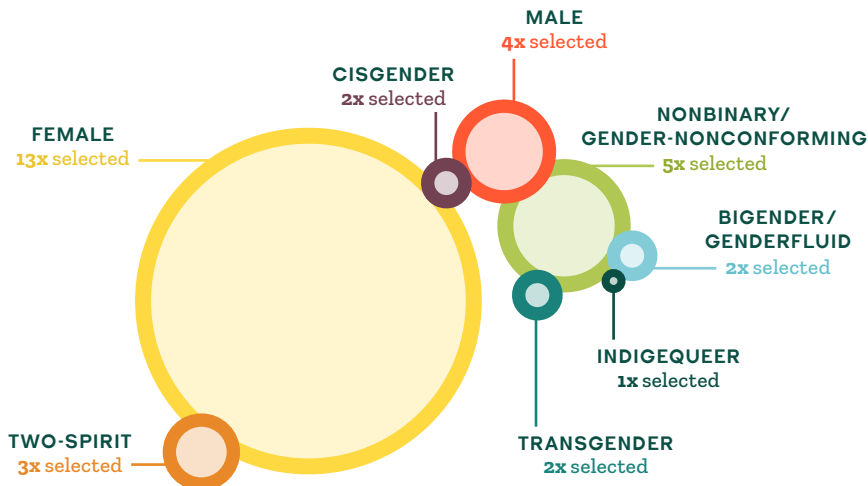


RACE Out of 35 total selections (x) across multiple categories:



Written responses were extremely varied and provided specificity in racial identity. Many people who selected **Black** provided additional context with responses like **Black-American, Generational Black American, and Black/Diasporic African/Afro-descendant US-ian**. Similarly, folks that identified as **Native** or **Latinx** chose to write in specific tribal associations and/or nationalities. One glaring omission from the 22/23 AAC program is the fact that **no participants identified as Asian** (Descended from people originating from East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and/or Southeast Asia) or **Middle Eastern** (Descended from people from the Middle East including Western Asia, North Africa and such countries as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia or Turkey). **In the next round, we hope to do a better job including participants in these communities.**

GENDER Out of 32 total selections (x) across multiple categories:



This list doesn't quite capture the **nuance** of gender identity as respondents selected multiple categories and there was a **multitude of intersecting gender identity**. Also, individuals that identify as trans selected **Transgender**, however those selecting **Female** or **Male** did not frequently also select **Cisgender** (most likely due to cisgender privilege). Recommend removing **Cisgender** and **Transgender** from this list and shifting to a separate question ("Do you identify as trans/transgender?") for better data collection.