



Colorado Artists in Recovery

2025 Impact Report



Colorado Artists in Recovery (CAiR) inspires healing and connection through free, peer-led creative arts programs for people impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and anyone seeking connection or growth. Partnering with community organizations across Denver, Larimer, and Weld Counties, CAiR creates inclusive, accessible spaces where creativity fosters belonging, joy, and sustainable recovery.

2025 Impact Report

This year reflected a period of intentional growth and deepened impact for Colorado Artists in Recovery. CAiR strengthened its role as a trusted, peer-led space for creative expression, expanding access to inclusive programs across Denver, Larimer, and Weld Counties. Through hundreds of workshops and community gatherings, participants experienced increased well-being, stronger social connection, and greater confidence in sustaining their recovery journeys. These efforts affirmed creativity, community, and joy as powerful foundations for healing and belonging.

“Recovery doesn’t happen in isolation. When people feel safe, welcomed, and connected, creativity becomes a powerful bridge to healing and hope.”

—Darin Valdez, Executive Director

Program Overview	3
External Growth	4
Internal Growth	7
Financial Growth	9
Impact	11
Closing	14

Program Overview



1 Six-Week Creative Recovery Workshops

Structured, peer-led cohorts that use art, music, writing, and creative practices to support healing, connection, and sustained recovery. These workshops provide consistent community, skill-building, and a safe space for participants to explore creativity as a recovery tool.

2 Drop-In Creative Workshops

Single-session creative experiences designed to be low-barrier and accessible for individuals seeking connection, expression, and community support. These workshops invite participants to engage at their own pace and often serve as an entry point into CAiR six-week programming.

3 Community Partnership Workshops

Collaborative workshops hosted in partnership with community organizations, shelters, treatment centers, libraries, and correctional settings. These programs bring creative recovery experiences directly into trusted spaces serving diverse and historically underserved communities.

4 Sober Community Arts Events

Inclusive, substance-free fellowship events such as Sober Open Mics and Recovery Art Shows that celebrate creativity, storytelling, and community connection. These events foster belonging, joy, and visibility for people in recovery and their allies.

External Growth

50%

Increase in
People
Reached

Expanded
Geography



Expanded
Reach into
**Underserved
Communities**



We served 7,500 participants this year, up from 5,000 the year before

Including Denver, Larimer, Weld Counties, and surrounding rural communities

Including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Spanish language, housing instability, and justice-involved individuals

Program Updates & Changes

CAiR has evolved its existing programs by expanding delivery through new and deepened community partnerships, allowing creative recovery workshops to reach more people in trusted, accessible settings. While the core program model remained consistent, CAiR increased the number of collaborations with over 40 organizations for one-off events and community engagement opportunities, and tailored workshops to better reflect the needs, cultures, and strengths of the communities served. This includes providing partnership workshops for over 20 organizations serving individuals in recovery. This shift reinforced the importance of meeting people where they are and offering flexible, low-barrier pathways into creative connection and healing.

Reflecting on this year, we learned that consistency in values combined with adaptability in delivery strengthens both participation and impact. Peer-led facilitation, inclusive environments, and creative expression continue to be central to what makes

“We bring creative recovery workshops into trusted community spaces, led by lived experience and grounded in joy.”

—Darin Valdez, Executive Director

CAiR programs effective, while partnerships have become an increasingly vital tool for expanding access, safety, and belonging across diverse communities.

Expanded Reach

People Served

The number of people served increased significantly compared to previous years. We served 7,500 participants this year, up from 5,000 the year before, representing a 50% increase in people reached.

Events & Engagements

The number of events and engagements increased compared to previous years. We facilitated 756 workshops and community engagements this year, up from 592 the year before, representing an approximate 28% increase. This growth was driven primarily by expanded community partnerships, additional program capacity, and increased demand for accessible, peer-led creative recovery spaces.

Demographics

This year, the demographics of people served reflected an intentional focus on reaching historically underserved communities, including BIPOC participants, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Spanish-speaking communities, people experiencing housing instability, and justice-involved individuals. These shifts were driven by deliberate outreach, expanded partnerships with community-based and justice-system-adjacent organizations, and the delivery of programs in trusted, culturally responsive settings where barriers to participation are lower.

Importantly, funder support played a critical role in enabling this work. Flexible and sustained funding allowed us to offer free programming, expand partnership-based delivery, support bilingual and peer-led facilitation, and bring creative recovery workshops into community and justice-involved settings. Together, this intentional strategy and supportive funding environment helped CAiR reach

a more diverse group of participants while maintaining safety, belonging, and alignment with our mission and values.

Collaborative Partnerships

Colorado Artists in Recovery continued to deepen and expand collaborative partnerships with community organizations serving people impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, incarceration, and other barriers to care. In addition to strengthening long-standing relationships, CAiR partnered with new organizations and delivered programming in additional community settings, including work within correctional and youth justice environments such as Larimer County Jail and Gilliam Youth Services Center. These partnerships allow CAiR to bring creative recovery spaces directly into settings where access to supportive, expressive programming is often limited.



CAiR also expanded collaborations with Spanish-speaking community partners like Servicios De La Raza, Promotores de Esperanza, and Conectoras de Montbello by offering bilingual creative workshops that increased accessibility and cultural responsiveness for their participants and families. Reflecting on this year, we learned that partnerships grounded in trust, shared values, and flexibility create the strongest outcomes. Meeting people where they are, whether in community spaces, justice-involved settings, or culturally specific programs, continues to strengthen safety, belonging, and meaningful connection across our work.

Visibility & Recognition

Throughout the year, we increased visibility through in-person engagement at conferences, community resource fairs, and recovery-focused gatherings. We shared our peer-led creative recovery model at statewide and regional convenings, including the Annual Opioid Abatement Conference in October, creating opportunities to connect with community partners, service providers, and systems leaders addressing substance use and mental health challenges. At this conference, we received the RARE Community Leadership Award, recognizing our leadership and impact in advancing inclusive, arts-based recovery supports. These opportunities strengthened trust, deepened partnerships, and reinforced our role as a respected voice for creativity, belonging, and community-centered recovery.

External Growth Reflection

External growth this year was guided by our newly adopted Mission, Vision, and Values, approved in December 2025, which now serve as a clear framework for how and where we grow.

Mission:

To inspire healing and connection through creative expression by providing transformative, inclusive spaces for all communities, including those impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and anyone seeking connection, creativity, or growth.

Vision:

A vibrant recovery community for all Coloradans, where creativity is a bridge to healing, connection, and personal growth.

Values:

Inclusivity, Safety, Creativity, Community, Healing, Accessibility, and Joy.

Rather than expanding for scale alone, our external growth focused on bringing peer-led creative recovery workshops into trusted community spaces where people already feel safe and welcome. This values-driven, place-based approach allowed us to increase access while maintaining the integrity, joy, and lived-experience leadership that define our work, and it continues to guide how we think about sustainable growth moving forward.

Internal Growth



Plus a new Board President and Secretary to strengthen governance and continuity

Supporting workshop coordination, facilitation logistics, and on-the-ground delivery

Alongside a formalized commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

“Building a strong internal culture grounded in equity, care, and belonging strengthens everything we do.”

—Darin Valdez, Executive Director

Team & Capacity

Over the past year, we strengthened internal capacity through both governance growth and targeted program support. We welcomed two new board members and elected a new Board President and Secretary, bringing additional lived experience, professional expertise, and leadership to guide organizational strategy and oversight. These changes strengthened governance, accountability, and continuity during a period of program expansion.

To meet increased program demand, we added a new contracted, part-time Program Assistant role to support workshop coordination, facilitation logistics, and on-the-ground delivery. This new role will allow us to scale programming responsibly while maintaining safety, care, and meaningful connection.

Staff & Culture Development

This year, we prioritized staff development, leadership growth, and organizational culture, with a focus on clarity, care, and shared values. Rather than expanding full-time staff, we strengthened the skills and capacity of our existing team with collaborative team meetings and one on one coaching. We supported our Program Managers in developing stronger people management, supervision, and coordination skills as they oversaw a growing and more diverse network of peer facilitators across multiple programs. This work improved communication, consistency, and program quality while supporting staff sustainability.

In partnership with The Steadman Group, we engaged in a facilitated process to develop and adopt a new Mission, Vision, and Values that reflect who we are today and where we are headed. In response to broader shifts and challenges within the nonprofit sector, we also formalized our commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, grounding our work in the belief that accessible, inclusive creative spaces empower individuals, especially those from historically underserved communities, to share their unique stories and experiences. Together, this work strengthened shared language and alignment across staff, facilitators, and board leadership and reinforced a culture where people feel welcomed, valued, and heard.

Continuous Growth

Ongoing learning and reflection remained central to our internal growth. Through continued coaching and strategic conversations, including support from The Steadman Group and HadaNao Collective, we examined internal processes, leadership practices,

and decision-making through an equity-centered lens. This reflective approach helped clarify priorities, strengthen internal alignment, and create a stronger foundation for thoughtful, values-driven growth.

Internal Growth Reflection

Internal growth this year was shaped by both organizational evolution and the broader climate facing the nonprofit sector. In response, we took time to clarify who we are and what we stand for by adopting a new Mission, Vision, and Values and formalizing our commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. This process helped us slow down, listen, and build shared clarity across staff, board, and facilitators, ensuring that as we grow, we do so in ways that remain inclusive, accessible, and grounded in compassion.



Financial Growth



\$473k

Total Funds
Raised

5

Successful
Grant
Applications

+\$88k

In Individual
Donations

We were able to raise 99% of
2024 revenue

Totaling \$385,000

Up \$20,000 from 2024

Funder Relationships

Over the past year, we successfully renewed all existing grant partnerships, including support from the Colorado Health Foundation, the Caring for Denver Foundation, Larimer County Behavioral Health Services, and the Signal Behavioral Health Network. These renewals reflect strong alignment, trust, and shared confidence in the value and effectiveness of our peer-led, arts-based recovery programs. Ongoing communication, transparency, and shared learning strengthened these relationships and supported both program continuity and long-term organizational sustainability.

Grants & Grant Applications

This year we raised \$473,000 in grants and donations, including \$385,000 in grant funding and \$88,000 in individual donations, which increased by \$20,000 from 2024.

We had 5 successful grants this year totaling \$385,000, including support from the Colorado Health Foundation (\$50K), Larimer County

“Our financial growth this year reflected deep community belief and strong funder partnerships. Individuals who experienced our programs stepped forward to give, and funders continued to invest in our shared vision for creative recovery.”

Behavioral Health Services (\$75K), Signal Behavioral Health Network (\$100K), Caring for Denver Foundation (\$150K), and Colorado Access Foundation (\$10K).

Financial Reflections

In 2025 we were able to raise 99% of 2024 revenue. (2024 - 478K, 2025 - 473K)

So equal overall to what we raised in 2025.

Increased revenue this year enabled us to expand access to free, peer-led creative recovery programs, support a growing team, and strengthen internal systems that sustain our work. Additional funding allowed us to deliver more workshops across trusted community settings, invest in staffing and facilitator support, and respond to increased demand while maintaining program quality and care. Reflecting on this year, diversified and stable

revenue strengthened our financial health and provided greater flexibility, allowing us to plan thoughtfully, support our people, and continue offering accessible, values-driven programming with confidence.

Financial growth this year provided greater stability and flexibility, allowing us to respond to increased demand without compromising care or program quality. We were mindful about pacing and capacity, using resources to reinforce core operations and support the people delivering the work. This steady approach supported both immediate needs and long-term organizational health.

We are still seeking additional funding to sustain our programs in 2026, but are hopeful to find values aligned funding partners to join us on this journey.



Impact

7,479

Participants Served



756

Workshops
& Community
Engagements

98%

Maintained Sobriety
During 6-Week
Programs

Across free, peer-led creative recovery programs delivered in multiple community settings

Including 686 community-based creative art workshops and 70 sober fellowship events

Alongside strong outcomes in connection, mental health, hope, and inclusion

Overall Reach

People Served

We served nearly 7,500 participants this year through free, peer-led creative recovery programs delivered across multiple program formats and community settings.

- 2025 All Event Total: 2217
- 2025 Drop-in Total: 2991
- 2025 Partnership Total: 2052
- 6-week workshop participants: 219
- **Cumulative Participant Total: 7479**

This represents a 50% increase from 2024, and a 100% increase over the past two years.

Events & Engagements

This year, we facilitated a total of 756 creative workshops and sober fellowship events. Of these, 686 were community-based creative art workshops, and 70 were sober fellowship events that supported connection and recovery through shared creative and social experiences.

“By using creativity as a bridge to healing and personal growth, we helped thousands of people feel connected, supported, and hopeful about their recovery and sense of purpose.”

— *Darin Valdez, Executive Director*

In addition, we hosted 3 CAiR fundraising events and participated in 3 large-scale recovery community gatherings in collaboration with community partners. These larger events expanded visibility, reduced stigma, strengthened partnerships, and connected participants to creative recovery spaces beyond traditional workshop settings.

Demographics

Racial and ethnic diversity: Dashboard data shows that approximately 30% of participants identified as BIPOC, reflecting CAiR's continued reach into communities historically underrepresented in traditional recovery spaces.

LGBTQIA+ inclusion: About 22% of participants identified as LGBTQIA+, highlighting the importance of affirming, peer-led creative spaces.

Housing instability: Roughly 11% of participants reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability, underscoring the need for low-barrier, community-based programming.

Geographic reach: Participants represented a wide range of zip codes across Denver, Larimer, and Weld Counties, including almost 300 individuals living in rural communities of Colorado.

Broad accessibility: Participants spanned multiple age groups and genders, with increased access through partnership-based and bilingual programming.

This year's impact reflects both increased reach and deeper alignment with our mission, vision, and values. As our programming expanded, we remained focused on delivering creative recovery spaces that prioritize safety, belonging, and personal growth, not just participation counts. Our outcome data consistently shows strong impacts on connection, mental health, hope, and feelings of inclusion, reinforcing that creativity, when offered in trusted community settings and led by lived experience, is an effective bridge to healing and growth.

Community Outcomes

NOTE: The following metrics all come from our 6-week programs.

97% of respondents reported a deeper sense of community and increased confidence to reach out for recovery support.

98% of respondents reported experiencing a positive effect on their mental health.

99% of respondents reported feeling more hopeful about sustaining their recovery journey.

+99% of respondents reported that CAiR programs felt like a safe and inclusive space.

98% maintained sobriety throughout the full program period. (45 days)

“CAiR has been a lifeline for me. When I felt isolated and close to relapse, this community gave me connection, creativity, and hope.”

— CAiR participant

“Being part of CAiR helped me stay sober and reminded me that my voice and creativity still matter.”

— CAiR participant

“These workshops helped me reconnect with parts of myself I thought I had lost. CAiR didn’t just help my recovery, it helped me find purpose again.”

— CAiR participant

“This is the first place where recovery felt joyful instead of heavy. I found people who understand me and a creative outlet that keeps me grounded.”

— CAiR participant

“I’ve built real friendships here. CAiR gave me a safe space to show up as myself and feel supported in my recovery.”

— CAiR participant

Closing

What's Next

As I look ahead, I often think about the quiet moments that tell our story best. A recovery professional sitting across from a client hears, "I used to be an artist," or "I used to play music before everything fell apart." In that moment, there's often a pause, and then clarity. They know exactly where to send them. CAiR has become that place, a space where creativity isn't a side activity, but a bridge back to identity, connection, and personal growth.

That trust means everything to us. It reflects how unique this work is and how deeply it resonates, not just with participants, but with the professionals walking alongside them. Looking forward, I'm

excited to build on that foundation by bringing on a new full time staff member to help launch our All Pathways Creative Recovery weekly support groups and peer navigation support for our participants through support from our funders. This additional support for our community feels like a powerful deepening of the impact we have seen through our programs.

As we move ahead, we remain grounded in our Mission, Vision, and Values, committed to growing with care and continuing to create joyful, welcoming creative spaces where people can rediscover who they are and what's possible in recovery.



Final Thoughts

We are deeply grateful for the support and trust that have allowed us to continue growing with intention, purpose, and compassion. This year was marked not only by increased reach, but by deeper alignment with our mission to use creativity as a bridge to healing, connection, and personal growth. Across trusted community spaces, we saw how art, music, and creative expression helped people reconnect with themselves, build meaningful relationships, and find renewed hope in their recovery journeys.

What continues to inspire us most is the resilience and creativity of our participants, the lived experience and dedication of our facilitators, volunteers, and staff, and the unwavering commitment of our Board of Directors. Each plays a vital role in making this work possible. Their leadership, generosity, and compassion allow us to show up with integrity and purpose. In a year that challenged many organizations to clarify who they are and what they stand for, we also reaffirmed our commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, ensuring our programs remain accessible, inclusive, and welcoming, especially for those from historically underserved communities.

Together, we are building something truly unique, a recovery community rooted in joy, inclusion, belonging, creativity, compassion, and purpose. As

we look ahead, we remain committed to growing with intention, staying aligned with our Mission, Vision, and Values, and continuing to create creative spaces where people feel seen, valued, and empowered to grow.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping make this vision a reality.

—

Darin Valdez

Executive Director, CAiR



Thank you.

