

WHO WE ARE

West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology (WMCAT) provides a culture of opportunity for people to make social and economic progress in their lives and community. We fulfill our mission through visual arts and tech engagement, workforce development, and social enterprise.



ARTS + TECH

Making space for teens to elevate their voices and build creative confidence through visual arts and technology engagement.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Building income security with families and young adults through post-secondary exploration, career training, and leadership development.



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Advancing and supporting WMCAT's mission through commercial business models Ambrose and Public Agency.

EXPLORE MORE AT [WMCAT.ORG](https://wmcats.org)



CENTERING PEOPLE

“When the world is bad, that’s when we have to be at our best.” I heard Dr. Michael McAfee of PolicyLink say these words at a national convening of leaders of color last year, and I haven’t stopped thinking about them since. In the face of difficulty, how do we show up “at our best” for our communities?

As a society, we believe ourselves to have the answers to the world’s problems. But we prescribe individual actions as the solution to messy systemic problems — assuming, often incorrectly, that these “solutions” work for everyone. *Want opportunity? Go to college! Want a stable future? Get a job!*

How might our approach to challenges shift if we listened to those most affected?

We may hear that student loan debt or balancing class schedules with parenting and work are preventing college enrollment as a bridge to opportunity; or that unaffordable childcare, unpredictable work schedules, or disjointed public transportation are significant barriers to maintaining a job that would lead to family income stability.

At WMCAT, we believe we are at our best when we center people, embrace their inherent value, and co-create opportunity. In this 2022 annual report, you’ll see how this year we worked to do just that: centering teen voice in creative pursuits, supporting young adults in designing their future pathways, and making work *work* for adults pursuing economic security.

And we invite you to look at the year ahead with us. How might we show up at our best this year? How might we center those most affected in the equitable future we aim to create?

Jamon Alexander
PRESIDENT + CEO



Teen Artist Marcos Barrera has found his passion in film photography.



ARTS + TECH

'I FOUND MY PASSION HERE'

Marcos Barrera jumped at the opportunity to try something new at WMCAT. After the high school senior practiced the basics of photography in his Teen Arts + Tech Program studio, Teaching Artist Dennis Grantz knew Marcos had the creative drive to learn a new medium: film photography.

"And from there I kind of just, I really loved it," Marcos explained. "So I've been doing a lot of film and that's pretty much my favorite thing to do."

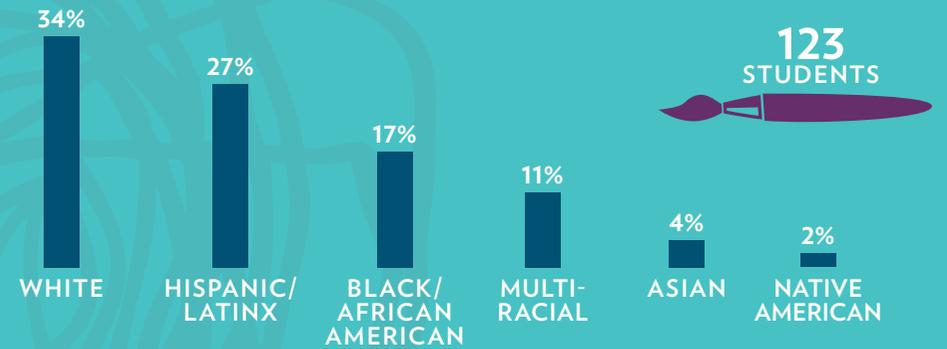
What used to be an interest in photography has become a passion. Marcos has found a creative outlet that helps him share "stories that otherwise wouldn't be told." Now preferring film over digital, Marcos had four photographs recognized through the 2022 regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

The Teen Arts + Tech Program provides the space, tools, and community for students to elevate their voice and build creative confidence. "WMCAT has given me a lot of encouragement to be able to express myself through photography."

Learn more at artstech.wmcats.org.

See photography by Marcos on the front cover!

2021-2022 TEEN ARTS + TECH AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM



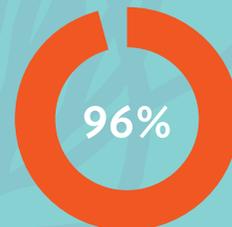
OUR STUDENTS SPEAK OUT



I would recommend the Teen Arts + Tech Program to another student



I feel WMCAT provides a positive, supportive, and safe environment



I feel confident expressing myself artistically



I feel comfortable receiving feedback from others about work

*"I like being able to surround myself with people who support me and being able to create things freely without pressure."
- WMCAT Teen Artist*



While TaKayla (right) and Shannon's (left) kids were playing, the two authors got real about their stories.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WRITING HER OWN STORY

An aspiring author, TaKayla Brown is a storyteller at heart. When it came to writing the next chapter of her own life, though, she needed support to plan her future pathway. Step Year at WMCAT was there to help.

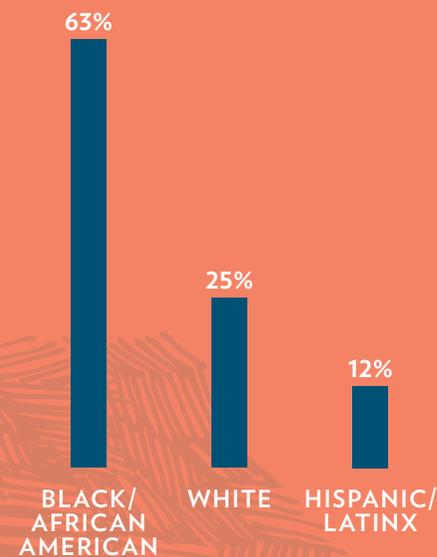
Step Year guides young adults through college and career exploration to create a plan that's uniquely theirs, centering each student's interests and goals along the way.

"I am a really shy person," shared TaKayla. "But I like to step outside the box, to try something different." She went on field trips and industry visits, learned more about herself, and built "a little family" with fellow students. TaKayla also met with entrepreneur and author Shannon Cohen to learn about her career path. Shannon encouraged TaKayla to start on her dream of writing a memoir now, affirming that she already has a story to tell.

While TaKayla puts pen to paper on her past experiences, she's working toward the goals she made in Step Year. TaKayla has applied to Grand Rapids Community College in pursuit of a degree. "I feel like now is the time to really start doing everything that I want to do."

Learn more at wmcats.org/stepyear.

2022 SPRING STEP YEAR COHORT

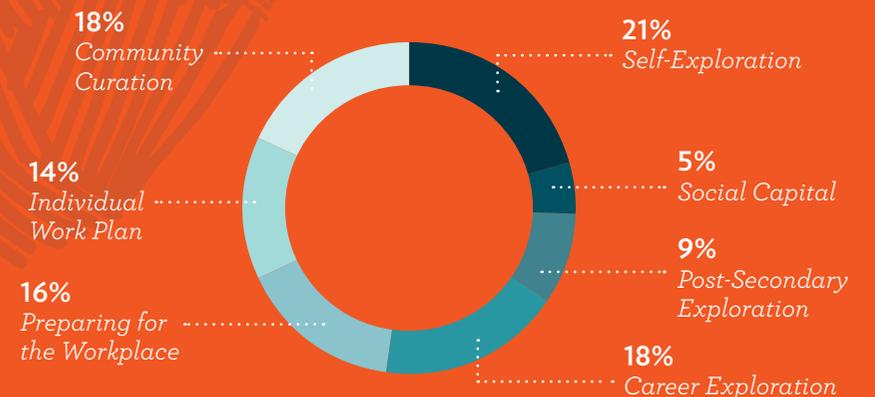


Took steps toward their goals in the three months following Step Year



Felt Step Year helped them think about their future, believe they can be successful, and set and achieve goals

THE STEP YEAR EXPERIENCE





Scott (right) builds connections at WMCAT's Mix + Mingle, a networking event for students, employer partners, and community leaders.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

MAKING WORK WORK

Work doesn't always *work* for people. Experiencing unpredictable hours and irregular pay, Scott Shirey decided his job wasn't working for him and found hope for a new opportunity in WMCAT's Adult Career Training Program.

"It's probably the hardest thing I've ever done. But it was definitely worth it," Scott shared. He encountered challenges early in the program when he discovered classroom learning was at odds with his obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). He worried about judgment when sharing his situation with program staff, but was met with support.

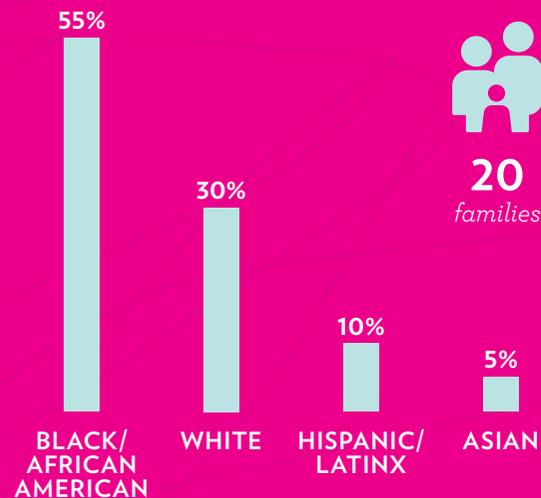
They centered Scott — not his diagnosis. WMCAT adapted instruction to best meet Scott's needs and connected him to Michigan Rehabilitative Services (MRS); there he found a counselor who offered strategies for success.

Scott's WMCAT instructor, Becky Deroos, became his cheerleader, calling out his strengths when he felt he was failing. "I don't think I could have kept going without the people from WMCAT and MRS."

Now a patient services representative at University of Michigan Health-West, Scott is in a career that works for him.

Learn more at work.wmcat.org.

2021-2022 ADULT CAREER TRAINING PROGRAM



20 families

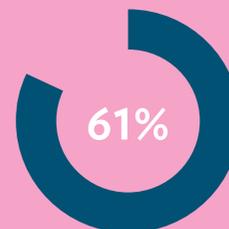


11 Kent County zip codes represented, the highest number from 49509



6-9 month courses in medical billing, medical coding, and pharmacy technician

LASTING IMPACT



2022 graduates employed as of December 2022



2020 graduates employed full-time two years post-graduation



President + CEO Jamon Alexander (right) poses with WMCAT Teen Artist Minni Peters (left) in the Black History Month apparel Minni designed for Meijer. The 6,000 garments were screen-printed by Ambrose.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

IMPACT BY DESIGN

Social enterprises — revenue-generating businesses with a mission — are a people-centered approach to sustainability at WMCAT. Whether amplifying messages of artists and local businesses on t-shirts, or leveraging the design thinking process to examine justice systems, Ambrose and Public Agency advanced our mission while contributing to earned revenue in 2022.

AMBROSE AT WMCAT

Ambrose at WMCAT is a custom design and screen printing business focused on quality, creativity, and providing opportunity in West Michigan. With local and regional clients, Ambrose prints t-shirts, totes, notebooks, and more for anything from small projects to large commercial orders.

Learn more at printambrose.wmcat.org.

PUBLIC AGENCY AT WMCAT

As a human-centered design consultancy, Public Agency at WMCAT works with organizations at a local, statewide, and national level to foster cultures of equity, action, and innovation. Through workshops and project coaching, Public Agency promotes the methods and mindsets that prioritize the lived experiences of those most impacted by the work being done.

Learn more at publicagency.wmcat.org.



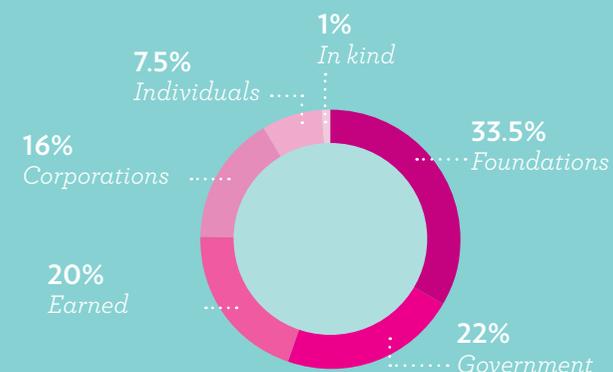
Director of Public Agency Trudy Ngo-Brown (right) and Design Associate Kiara Conway (left) facilitate a "Listening to Learn" workshop.

OUR FINANCIAL POSITION + STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

(OPERATIONS, INCLUDING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES)

FISCAL YEAR 2022 REVENUE:

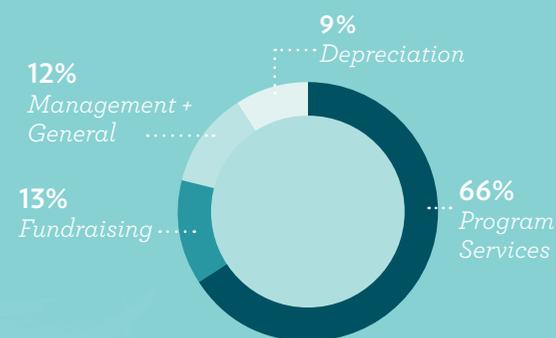
\$2,626,305*



*FY22 revenue does not include multi-year grants pledged in previous years, but allocated to subsequent year expenses.

FISCAL YEAR 2022 OPERATING EXPENSES:

\$2,303,105



FY22 FISCAL ASSETS AVAILABLE TO MEET GENERAL EXPENDITURES OF THE NEXT 12 MONTHS:

\$2,533,847

Source: Fiscal Year 2022 Audit by Hungerford Nichols CPAs + Advisors

WMCAT'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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