

2021/2022



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



“ UTAH FILM CENTER WANTS TO WORK IN CONCERT WITH OUR COMMUNITY. ”

2022 was a big year for the Utah Film Center. As we celebrate our 20-year anniversary, we paused to reflect on how the industry has changed and how we can continue to be of service to communities statewide.

This year we conducted an extensive listening tour. Parents and teachers told us that they want opportunities to explore media with their kids and to help their students and children understand fact from fiction. Rural communities told us that they want to use film to create spaces to reconnect with each other and watch movies that invoke joy and thoughtful conversations. Our partners helped us identify gaps in the filmmaking ecosystem where we might partner to provide complementary support to our local filmmaking community. The Utah-based filmmakers told us they want opportunities to network, support each other, learn, and gain skills in both the craft and business of filmmaking. They want to stay in Utah and grow the filmmaking community with all of us.

As we celebrate our 20th year, we do so with more clarity and focus.

We are committed to being Utah’s Film Center, serving communities across the state.

We’re here to support young content creators and the teachers and parents who yearn to engage them.

We’re here to support professional filmmakers looking to reach Utah audiences.

We’re here to help communities from all walks of life and all regions of the state to use the power of film to connect to each other and to the stories at the center of our shared human experience.

I’m incredibly proud of my colleagues and our board for being willing to put aside preconceived ideas and try new approaches to our programs, new locations for our festivals, and new community programs and services. Not everything has gone smoothly, and not all of these new approaches will serve us long-term, but when I look back on 2022, I’ll remember this as the year we listened and learned to work in concert with our communities and partners. This year’s impact report is just a vision of the great work that can be done when we all work together.

MARIAH MELLUS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UTAH FILM CENTER



BY THE NUMBERS

Sept 1, 2021 - August 31, 2022

Revenue Grants & Contributions	\$1,113,343	Expense Core Programs	\$970,556
Events & Fundraisers	\$59,588	Administration	\$481,429
Earned Income	\$649,381	Fundraising	\$126,607
Film Services for Hire	\$6,030	Total Expense	\$1,578,592
Total Revenue	\$1,828,342		

20K

Nearly 20,000 Utahns attended our programs

97

We held 97 film events that reached audiences in 77 Utah cities

14K

We provided over 14,000 K-12 students and teachers with media arts education

40

40 artists participated in our film programming

74%

74% of the directors of film we showed identify as BIPOC, female or Utah-based

1.2M

Estimated on-air reach of Black, Bold, and Brilliant and Through The Lens is 1.2 million*

FILM EXHIBITION

Utah Film Center offered free outdoor films in Salt Lake County and around the state. These remain safe spaces for people to gather, be entertained, and enjoy the outdoors. As a film organization, we love to share good films and encourage appreciation of the craft. It is also affirming that more than 50% of attendees of our outdoor film series specifically cite “community” – as in strengthening, building, and being in community – as an important reason they attend.

In June, we also brought films to six rural Utah communities:

- Aneth Chapter and Monument Valley, Navajo Nation
- Boulder
- Escalante
- Green River
- Bicknell

One of our partners was the Rural Utah Project. They, too, cite the community-convening nature of these experiences.

We have to say, there is no experience quite like watching Star Wars dubbed in Navajo with audiences in the Navajo Nation.

We’re grateful for the communities that worked with us and hosted us as we traveled around the state, including the Alta Community Enrichment, Navajo Nation, Boulder Arts Council, Grand Staircase Escalante Partners, Epicenter, Rural Utah Project, Salt Lake County Recreational Centers, and Salt Lake City.

We continued to work with our community partners to offer Black, Bold & Brilliant and Through The Lens, two programs that highlight diverse storytelling in front of and behind the camera.

“Being able to attend free film screens by the Utah Film Center helped me feel deeply connected to my community. This past year, I was exposed to films I would have never seen otherwise and I’m so grateful to have been able to have a free activity nearly each week just blocks from my home.”

—response from an attendee at our **Summer Outdoor Film Series at Liberty Park**



“We loved partnering with the Utah Film Center again this year – events that bring a community together are always the best way to connect with people. Combining civic engagement and activism with the rural film tour gave our community organizers a chance to build bridges in new places and have conversations with new activists and community members that might have been hard to reach otherwise.”

— **TJ Ellerbeck, executive director, Rural Utah Project**



TUMBLEWEEDS FILM FESTIVAL FOR KIDS

In 2022 Tumbleweeds Film Festival's traditional home, the Salt Lake City main library theater, remained closed. It seemed like a good opportunity to move the festival to a location more central in the county and to a community that has a high number of families but who might not have easy access to arts and cultural opportunities. We held the festival at Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center in Taylorsville May 20-22.

May 2022 was a difficult time to hold indoor public events. Festivals are like puzzles that have to be planned months in advance and it can be difficult to secure optimal dates when using a community facility. While we didn't know it when planning, a new and highly contagious strain of COVID would start circulating in late spring; families weighed the safety of indoor and outdoor events against each other. This was just one of the challenges we had in attracting audiences and attendance was lower than we planned for.

However, we were able to capitalize on several important learning opportunities:

- For the first time, we offered an affordable festival day pass (\$6/person) and a pay-what-you-can-afford model. Families told us that this was an important reason they chose to attend: they could bring their family to an affordable cultural event.
- We also held two parent focus groups on site to learn how COVID impacted families' relationship to media arts and community events. We learned that families were concerned with the amount of screen time and types of media their kids consume. They value a trusted resource such as the Film Center to help them find artistically valuable content. They are looking for resources and opportunities to support their kids in creating media with meaning.

This feedback will inform subsequent festivals.

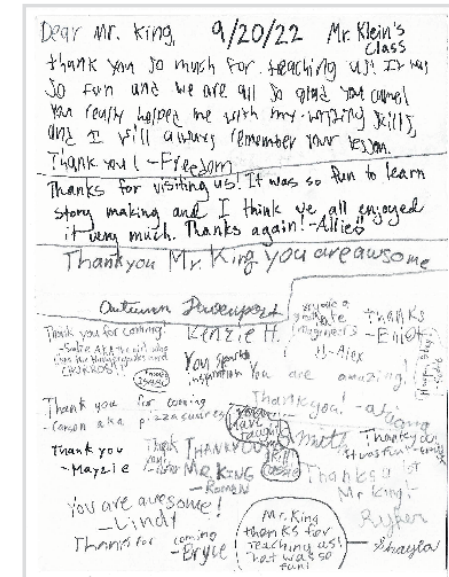


Families who attended Tumbleweeds told us that the festival was a fun-filled cultural event for their families. They appreciated the wide variety of things to do, and that there seemed to be something for every age and child interest.

The 2022 Tumbleweeds Film Festival offered:

- Eight feature-length and three short programs, featuring films from around the world
- Workshops on virtual reality, sound effects, filmmaking, film makeup, and more
- Free storytelling activities for the whole family

MEDIA EDUCATION & FAMILY PROGRAMS



This thank you note was written to Mr. King, one of our teaching professionals who offers a screenwriting workshop for Utah students.

As context for the thank you note, Mr. Klein, a 6th grade gifted & talented class teacher, said, "My students' demographics are 90% White, mostly upper-middle class, but a significant amount of neurodiversity. I signed up for this course because I like using the arts & film in my instruction. I encourage students to write plays and skits to represent key concepts in our units of study, and scriptwriting is a skill that will help them improve their projects. When students can represent their understanding of general education curriculum in artistic ways, they tend to make more meaningful and enduring connections with the materials."

Kids today are digital natives. Utah Film Center believes in supporting teachers with best practices as they utilize media arts in the classroom. We also believe it is just as important for kids to know how to engage and understand all types of media and to cultivate the skills that help them thoughtfully craft media pieces that will carry their voices and opinions into the world.



2021-2022
SCHOOL YEAR

272
Schools

13,006
Students

40
Districts

1,470
Teachers

110
Title One Schools

DAMN THESE HEELS QUEER FILM FESTIVAL

Jeff Paris was part of the community programming team for Damn These Heels for years before he served as festival director in 2022. Over the years he has realized the impact festivals have on communities. Interviewed for the Film Center's 20th anniversary, Jeff said, "It is about why the festival matters here. It is working to tell stories that otherwise wouldn't be told in this part of the world. That matters." As Jeff spoke of the power of film, he also reflected on our community, and how Utah Film Center has worked to bring films from all over the world, while remembering the diversity and complexity of Utah. He said, "It's been a realization to me that the Damn These Heels is all about bringing communities together" and that festivals allow "a safe space to learn, grow, and connect with each other."



Jeff Paris at the 19th annual Damn These Heels Queer Film Festival

The 19th annual festival was held October 14-16 in downtown Salt Lake City as a way to celebrate queer stories, ideas, history, challenges, and triumphs. The Festival offered:

- Eleven in-person films, six additional films online
- A shorts program featuring the locally made "We're Here"
- Several Utah-based and international filmmakers
- A partnership with Ririe Woodbury to bring Raja Feather Kelly, a multimedia artist and choreographer from New York, for his film and a workshop
- Black, Bold & Brilliant Damn These Heels edition: Queering the Lens

Planning for the 2022 Damn These Heels Queer Film Festival took place during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The event was held at the start of the 2022-2023 fiscal year.



ARTIST SUPPORT

While growing up in Salt Lake City, Erika Cohn wanted to figure it all out at a young age. Filmmaking could be her outlet – a means to explore and understand the world. Erika made her first film at 15. Soon after, co-founder of Utah Film Center, Geryl Dreyfous, connected Erika to opportunities any 16 year old could dream of by placing her as a personal assistant during Sundance. Her first feature-length film was another local filmmaker, Tony Vainuku; on any given day during that experience, one of them would be on the phone with the Film Center. Erika remembers these lessons and opportunities over the years:

"The Utah Film Center has been a consistent support and resource for me as a filmmaker... With each one of my films: IN FOOTBALL WE TRUST, THE JUDGE (about the first woman judge to be appointed to the Middle East's Shari'a courts), BELLY OF THE BEAST (about forced sterilizations happening in California's women's prisons today), and now with A SHOT AT HISTORY, I've utilized the Film Center's fiscal sponsorship program as part of their artist support services which has provided donors an opportunity to make tax-deductible donations in support of my projects.

Once the films are complete, I've really appreciated how the Utah Film Center's exhibition program, especially Through the Lens, has connected me to Utah audiences. I've screened films across the globe and our Utah audiences are special...we value independent film because of how both the Utah Film Center and Sundance have cultivated community engagement for decades."



Erika Cohn at the Utah Film Center 20th Anniversary Gala

Utah Film Center's artist support programs include fiscal sponsorship and the filmmaking resource center, the Artist Foundry. Fiscal Sponsorship allows mission-aligned and board-approved projects to utilize the Film Center's 501(c)(3) status to fundraise and allows donors to make tax-deductible donations to film projects they care about. The Artist Foundry supports Utah-based filmmakers with co-working space, editing technology, and a variety of filmmaking workshops. The Film Center's exhibition program, including Through The Lens, and our two annual film festivals provide filmmakers with opportunities to connect to audiences.

These programs served over 180 independent filmmakers in 2022.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Utah Film Center's Black, White, and Silver Screen Gala, held in September, celebrated the Film Center's 20th year and the power of the moving image to leave us profoundly transformed.

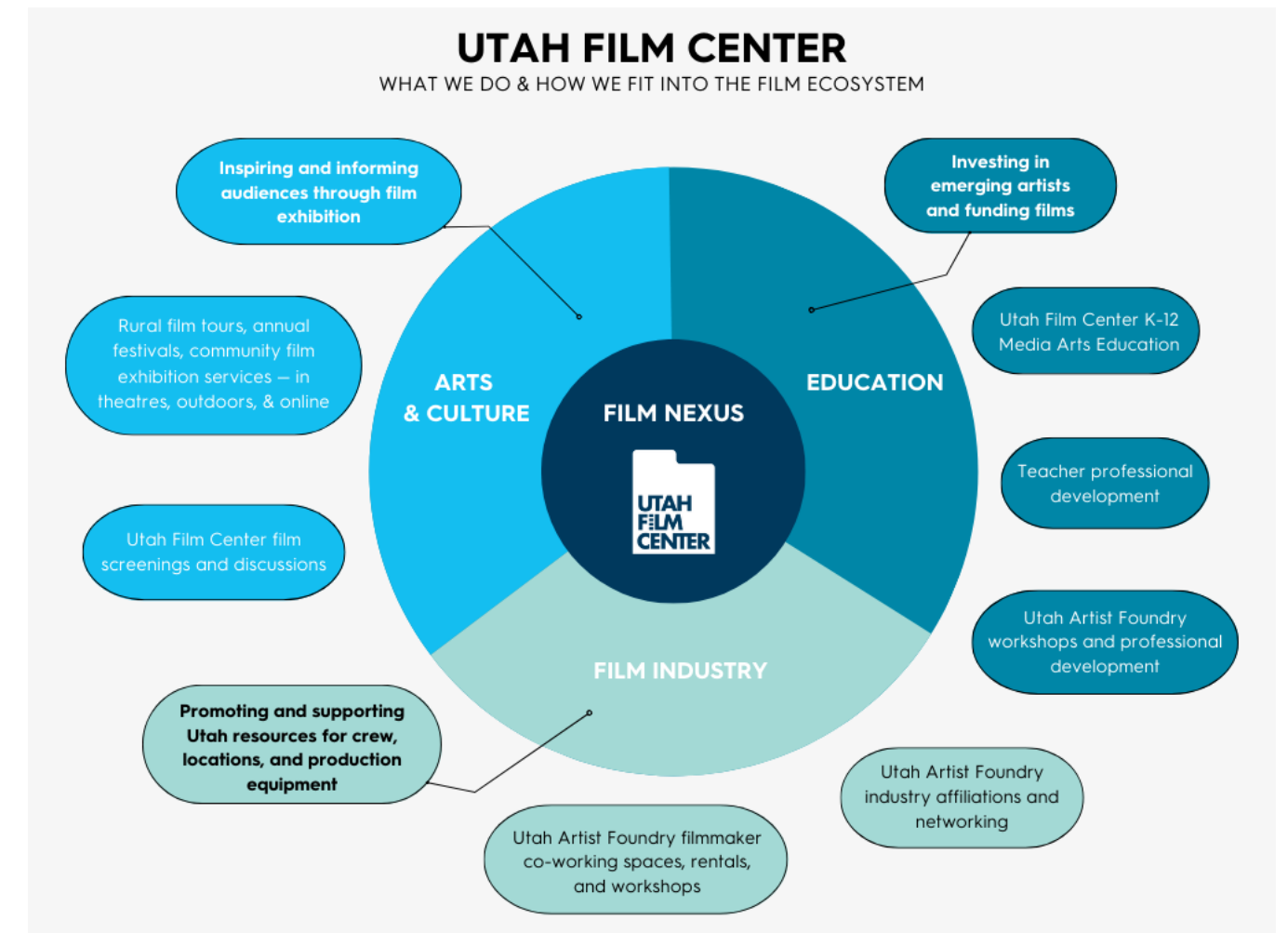
The Film Center honored its visionary funders including the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, the Swartz Family Foundation, Zions Bank, and Lynn Dougan who understood from the beginning how the Film Center could enrich the lives of tens of thousands of Utahns. We will always be grateful that they have backed their belief over the years with generous financial investments and collaborative guidance.

In attendance were also long-time friends of the Film Center, so many film lovers, over 20 Utah-based filmmakers, and community partners and industry representatives from Spy Hop and Sundance. Guests reconnected in person over their shared love of film; the energy in the space vibrated with possibility as people considered artistic collaborations and how to support one another. Two-time Emmy, Peabody, and DGA Award-winning filmmaker and Utah native, Erika Cohn, offered an inspiring keynote address on the power of film to connect us all.

"As a filmmaker, I'm inspired to create character-driven narratives about women, films about resilience and courage, power and perseverance, injustice and justice. I'm motivated to tell underrepresented stories with fullness of complexity in unconventional, unexpected, and innovative ways. I bring a unique level of authenticity and collaboration to my films, working alongside communities directly impacted by what my films are shining a light on. I believe deeply in the power of film to create change and feel strongly about the importance of empowering youth through media education. These core values and my filmmaking ethos were shaped by my childhood here, nurtured by Geralyn and our local film community, and supported by the Utah Film Center. I was a baby filmmaker when the Utah Film Center was founded and I like to think we grew up together."



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



At 20 years, Utah Film Center is excited to own what it means to be a mature organization. In this next phase, we are working to create something truly special: an organization that is at the nexus of filmmaking, media education, and arts and culture.

We are connecting the dots, complementing the work of our partners, and finding ways we can create a cohesive ecosystem: where a child with a story and a dream to share it can follow their passion in school; understand the professional pathways through high school and higher education; find a community once they exit those programs; have the creative, technical and financial support they need to thrive as a filmmaker; and exhibit their work to Utah audiences.

This evening of celebration reminded us that the energy, expertise, creativity, resource, and persistence exists in Utah to foster a vibrant home-grown filmmaking community. As the Film Center, we look forward to harnessing that alchemy and building out a filmmaking ecosystem that makes it possible for filmmakers to stay in Utah and craft the stories that inspire us all.



utahfilmcenter.org

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Utah Film Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.