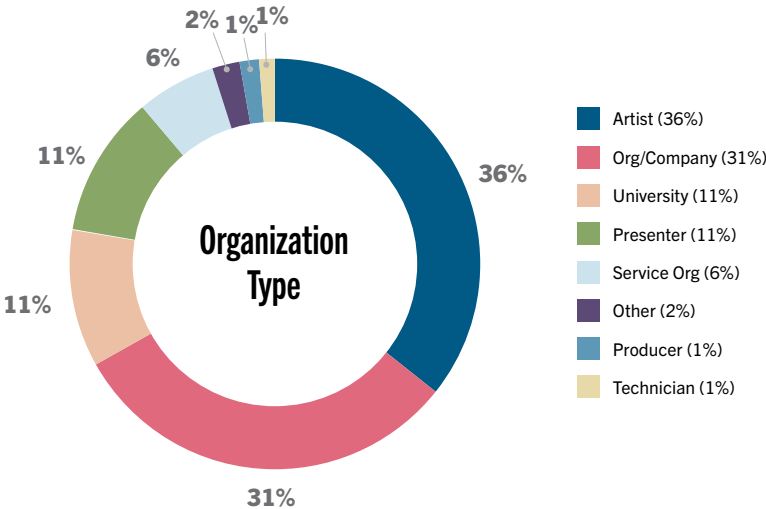# Technology and the Performing Arts: A Field Scan

A MULTIPLICITY OF TECH INNOVATION

In March 2024 the Doris Duke Foundation's Arts Program launched a request for proposals for phase one of the Performing Arts Technologies Lab (PATL), which would provide support for rapid prototyping and feasibility testing of big ideas at the intersection of the performing arts and digital technology. The program received 745 applications. Callahan Consulting for the Arts reviewed all applications for characteristics and themes.

In their project designs and methodologies, applicants combined a wide variety of methods, tools, and ideas.
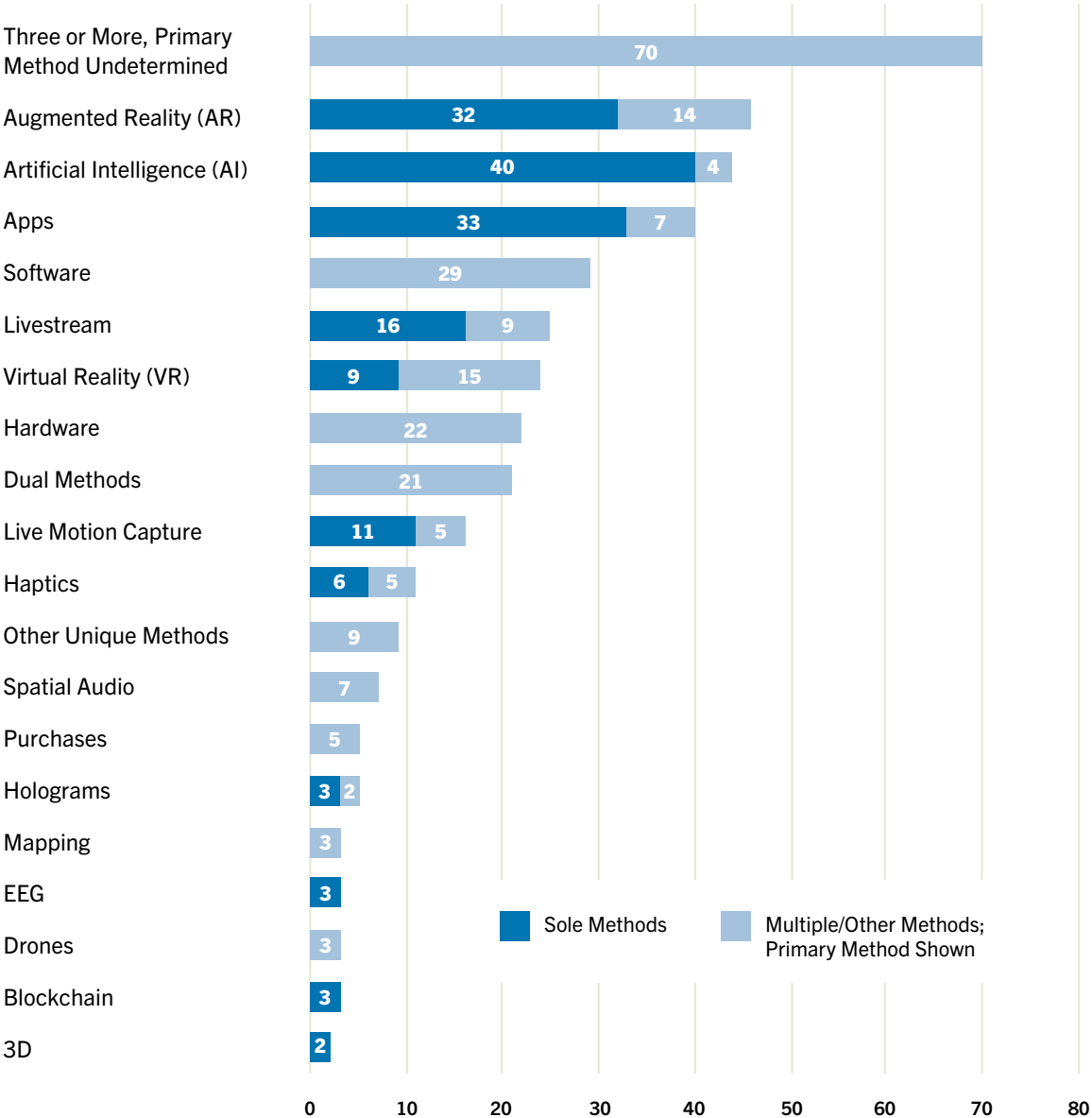
Primary Discipline

- Dance (43%) — 43%
- Theater (42%) — 42%
- Jazz (15%) — 15%
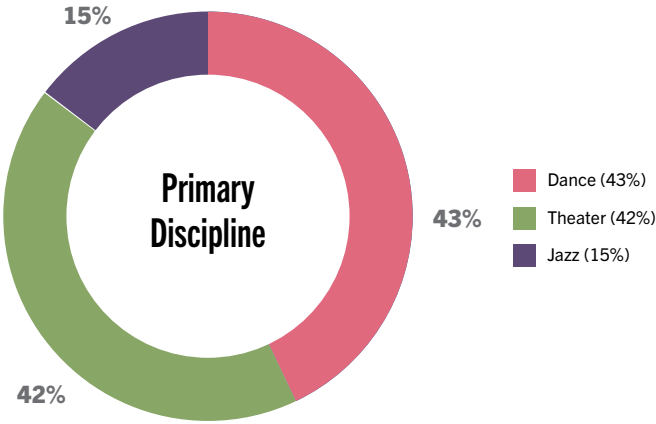
Close to half of applications submitted have a primary discipline of dance and of theater. A relatively small proportion is in jazz.

Organization Type

- Artist (36%) — 36%
- Org/Company (31%) — 31%
- University (11%) — 11%
- Presenter (11%) — 11%
- Service Org (6%) — 6%
- Other (2%) — 2%
- Producer (1%) — 1%
- Technician (1%) — 1%

About one-third of applicants are artists (36%), one third are organization/companies (31%), and the remaining third are all other types combined.

Breakdown of Tech Methods

Methods were only identified for applications that were deemed specific enough to warrant them.

Method	Sole Methods	Multiple/Other Methods; Primary Method Shown
Three or More, Primary Method Undetermined		70
Augmented Reality (AR)	32	14
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	40	4
Apps	33	7
Software		29
Livestream	16	9
Virtual Reality (VR)	9	15
Hardware		22
Dual Methods		21
Live Motion Capture	11	5
Haptics	6	5
Other Unique Methods		9
Spatial Audio		7
Purchases		5
Holograms	3	2
Mapping		3
EEG	3	
Drones		3
Blockchain	3	
3D	2	

Technology and the Performing Arts: A Field Scan

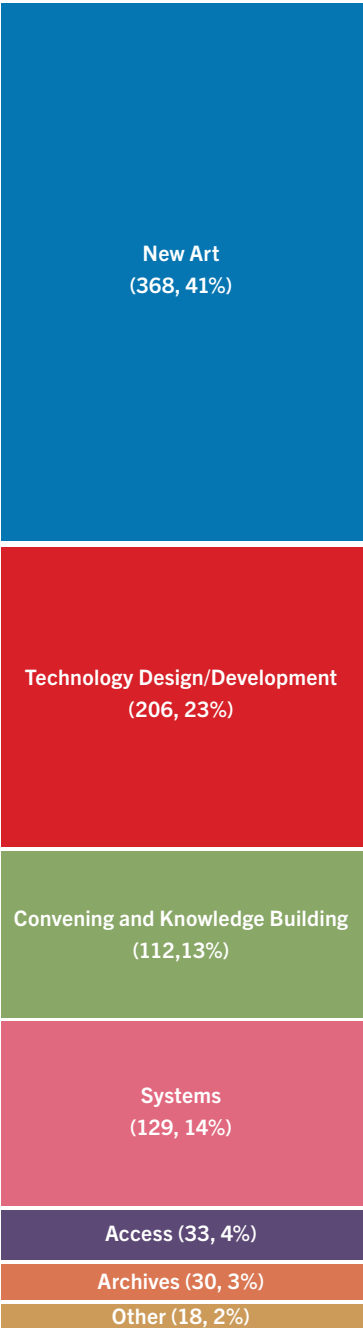DD DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION | CALLAHAN CONSULTING *for the arts*

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT TYPES

This view by project type provides an overview of applicants' goals in utilizing technology and hints at the ways in which new technology is manifest in the 745 projects.

The bar to the right displays the percentage of each project type that is present in the 745 projects.
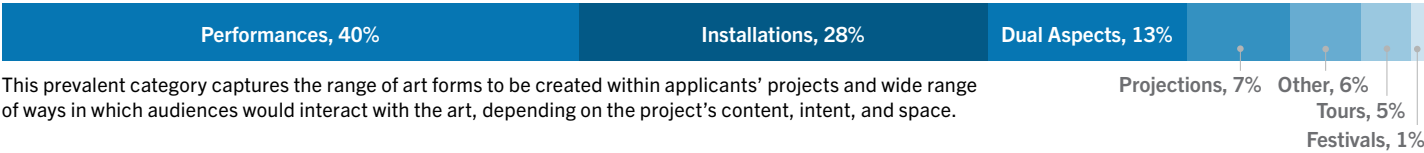
Across applications, artists and organizations are pursuing technology use within their artmaking to expand, if not transform, the art works being created; to deepen their interactions with audiences; to experiment with the myriad of possibilities that new technology allows, letting artists dream in new and bigger ways that were unimaginable even a few years ago; and to share knowledge with peers.

Note: Some projects were assigned two project types.

PROJECT TYPES

- **New Art (368, 41%)**
- **Technology Design/Development (206, 23%)**
- **Convening and Knowledge Building (112, 13%)**
- **Systems (129, 14%)**
- **Access (33, 4%)**
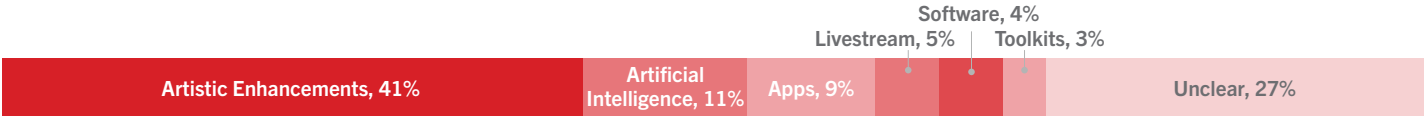- **Archives (30, 3%)**
- **Other (18, 2%)**

BREAKDOWN OF EACH PROJECT TYPE

The bars below represent percentages within each project type (and therefore total around 100% each). In some cases, the nature of the project was unclear.

Performances, 40% | **Installations, 28%** | **Dual Aspects, 13%** | Projections, 7% | Other, 6% | Tours, 5% | Festivals, 1%

This prevalent category captures the range of art forms to be created within applicants' projects and wide range of ways in which audiences would interact with the art, depending on the project's content, intent, and space.

Artistic Enhancements, 41% | **Artificial Intelligence, 11%** | **Apps, 9%** | Livestream, 5% | Software, 4% | Toolkits, 3% | **Unclear, 27%**

Projects are subdivided according to the types and uses of technology proposed. Artistic enhancements include extending the expressive ability of artists through software and hardware. Other applications envision creating or modifying AI to either enhance creative processes or streamline production efforts. Among the creative uses of apps are enhancing the immersive nature of a performance's storytelling or design; providing additional behind-the-scenes content; utilizing audience engagement tools; or developing services for artists, such as databases and networking tools.

Events, 36% | **Incubators, 27%** | **Unclear, 38%**

These projects gather groups of people—artists, technologists administrators, and directors—to ideate the potential uses of technology or foster learning about it. They include events, such as conferences, summits, and other gatherings and incubators, or gatherings of artists and/or technologists working together to explore and experiment with technology.

Systemic Solutions, 15% | **Facilities, 35%** | Regrants, 1% | **Unclear, 50%**
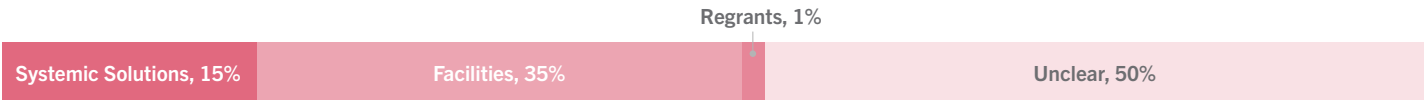
These projects include systemic solutions that are broad in goals and content yet specific in beneficiaries, as well as facilities, which include new or enhanced spaces equipped with state-of the art technology to meet artists' needs.

General Access, 42% | **Disability Related, 24%** | **Unclear, 33%**

Projects have goals to serve disabled and nondisabled people; address other kinds of access such as language; use technology to serve people with specific disabilities; or center disabled artists in prominent ways.

Archival, 70% | **Unclear, 30%**

Most projects are aimed at capturing artists' work. A few had goals of enhancing archival methods or extending an archive's reach by, for example, developing digital archives of artists' legacies, or enhancing archival capabilities by applying tech methods, such as motion capture or AI-powered software.

Other

These few projects could not be readily categorized.