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Link for photos: [IncentOvate 2016/2017 Grant Projects](#)

**“INCENTOVATE” GRANTS HELP CHICAGO’S CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS CREATE INNOVATIVE NEW ARTS EXPERIENCES FOR THE PUBLIC**

Competitive Grants Totaling \$550,000 Awarded to Eight Cultural Projects in Chicago

The **Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)** is pleased to announce its 2016/2017 IncentOvate Program grant recipients: the Chicago Architecture Foundation, the Chicago History Museum, Chicago Public Media, Illinois Humanities, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the National Museum of Mexican Art, the Old Town School of Folk Music and Steppenwolf Theatre Company. The City of Chicago will award competitive grants totaling \$550,000 to these cultural institutions to support projects that create innovative new arts experiences for residents and visitors, in neighborhoods across Chicago.

“This group of IncentOvate Program grantees shows the creativity and ingenuity of our city’s cultural institutions,” said DCASE Commissioner Mark Kelly. “Each of these projects contributes to the cultural landscape across the city and engages residents and visitors in interesting and challenging artistic experiences.”

The IncentOvate Program, now in its third year, is part of the Cultural Grants Program of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, which provides more than \$1.7 million annually in direct funding to artists, creative professionals and arts and cultural organizations across Chicago – including the CityArts Program, which supports small to mid-sized nonprofits, and the Individual Artists Program, which assists professional artists in creating new work that elevates their careers and brings value to the City of Chicago. IncentOvate stimulates cultural innovation and supports the city’s larger cultural institutions. This competitive grants program is made possible by Chicago Cultural Plan implementation funds designed to advance priorities articulated in both the Chicago Cultural Plan and the Chicago Tourism Strategy. Twenty-nine applications were reviewed by an external panel on criteria that focused on two main priorities: innovation and community engagement.

The eight projects funded include:

- The Chicago Architecture Foundation will plan *Rebel Garages*, a proposed one-day festival in spring 2018 that will enlist local architects, designers and artists to activate Chicago’s alleyways, parking garages, empty lots and vacant industrial spaces with pop-up installations. The IncentOvate funds will go towards feasibility planning for the inaugural event including research on the practice of exhibiting architecture, interviews with curators and designers and site analysis.
- The Chicago History Museum will engage its mission to share Chicago’s stories with a new exhibition *Everybody Gets the Blues* in October 2017. The exhibition and public program series will explore the history of Chicago-style blues music at its influential peak in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, with a focus on neighborhood venues and the musicians who created the sound. The recently acquired collection of powerful photographs by Raeburn Flerlage, who documented the explosion of the blues scene in the 1950s and 60s, will provide the visual backbone for the project, accompanied by interactive components for visitor engagement and a rich series of public programs.
- Chicago Public Media will introduce the Urban Alternative (UA), amplifying the city’s rich urban music culture, engaging next generation Chicagoans and creating an identity for the “Chicago Sound.” The UA will use a noncommercial format to celebrate Chicago’s urban art scene and feature a variety of genres, including Hip-Hop, Dance and Indie Rock, as well as talk programming that highlights issues of immediate significance. Further, the new broadcast will support the local arts scene by hosting and sponsoring live events that provide a platform for Chicago musicians and artists.

## DCASE IncentOvate Grants 2016/2017 page 2 of 2

- Illinois Humanities will produce Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang's *Crowd Out*, working with renowned choir director Donald Nally and former eighth blackbird ensemble member and Grammy Award®-winning musician Tim Munro. *Crowd Out* calls for a 1,000-voice choir made up of professional and untrained singers. This October 2017 performance will compose its choir from across the 50 wards of Chicago, identifying a neighborhood school, church or local singing group from each ward to each contribute 20 voices. In the months leading up to the program, Illinois Humanities will also facilitate a community dialogue in each ward about the arts and cultural resources in the area, with a short performance by the ward's selected singing group.
- The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago will pilot SPACE (School Partnership for Art and Civic Engagement), a new program that deepens the MCA's connection with the local community. SPACE is a creative residency that takes place in a Chicago Public School high school that is part of an under-resourced community. An artist with a socially-engaged practice will relocate his/her studio into the school and transform the site for artistic and civic exchange. In conversation with students, teachers and neighbors, the artist will design a contemporary art-based civic engagement curriculum, encouraging students to investigate issues in their community and to create social action through contemporary art.
- The National Museum of Mexican Art will work with a consortium of local Latino cultural organizations to produce an international Latino theater festival. In cooperation with the International Latino Cultural Center and the Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, the festival will premiere works by four of Chicago's leading Latino theater companies – Teatro Vista, Agujon Theater, Water People and Urban Theater Company, plus the work of two companies from Latin America. Performance venues will include downtown locations as well as those in the city's neighborhoods and parks.
- The Old Town School of Folk Music will celebrate Chicago's locally-grown music and trace the socio-cultural evolution of musical history over the last 100 years in Chicago in a program called *Soundtrack of the City*. For each of the decades between 1917 and 2017, the program series will present a concert and dance party that celebrates that era in unique and unconventional settings throughout Chicago that speak to the tempo and sensibility of each time period. Drawing connections between the music, the political and social context in which it was made and the physical places in which it was enacted, the historic sites and events will also be focal points for collecting community history and memories to produce historic vignettes of these neighborhoods to be shared on the project's website.
- Steppenwolf Theatre Company, through its Steppenwolf for Young Adults program, will tour a world premiere, commissioned production of *Monster* with accompanying educational curriculum to as many as 1,000 court-involved teens. Based on the New York Times bestselling novel by Walter Dean Myers, *Monster* tells the story of an African American teen accused of felony murder. Partnering with Storycatchers Theatre, an organization with 26 years of experience serving court-involved youth, Steppenwolf will create a series of workshops for youth who have read the book and seen the production to further explore the play's themes.

For more information about the Cultural Grants Program of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, please visit [chicagoculturalgrants.org](http://chicagoculturalgrants.org).

### Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors. For more information, visit [cityofchicago.org/dcase](http://cityofchicago.org/dcase).

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