



2024 Afterburn Report

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Summary

This was an excellent year for the Event and for the future of Firefly, generally. The volunteer organization is healthy and robust, we had capital improvements to the land which will allow for a great deal of future growth, and all while also operating with our highest number of tickets sold. Firefly appears to have grown through some of the adverse events of 2023 (critical medical emergency, disastrous weather), and reinforced our relationship with the land, the community where our event takes place, and the community itself as Survey results show the best results yet in some of the key metrics: transformative experience, perceived safety, and access to the event. The new Ring Road capital improvement has paid immediate dividends as the reduced strain of load-in and load-out was felt event-wide.

We hope the 2025 event will build on the successes of 2024 by continuing to solidify our relationships with the community in Bethel and at large, by continuing to make the volunteer Org more robust, and by adding more community gatherings which happen apart from the main Firefly event.

Art Cluster

2024 saw the onboarding of a new Art Cluster lead, Owen Williams, who had been a lead of Art Grants for multiple previous years. Despite some stumbles resulting from ramping up on all the new cores, Art Cluster had a great year. The biggest successes were the Bug, which was taller than ever and burned spectacularly; Grants disbursed over \$40K to over a hundred different projects; the Map had a fresh design and a new reverse-lookup grid; and the new Stage Core lead kept the schedule busy throughout the week. The biggest challenge was the long time that Placement required, and plans are underway to make this process more efficient for 2025. We also had trouble finding a volunteer to create the Map, but were able to find an artist well before the printing deadline.

Successes & Challenges

One major success of this and last year has been the Smol Grant program. As you can see from the numbers below, people have really been taking advantage of it. As a result, the woods have felt much more full of art than ever before, and full of art that's being produced by people who might not be able to commit a ton of time and money. I think that's a big win. I was also noticing, as I was compiling the numbers below, that a lot of the non-Boston projects were smol grants, which makes sense because if you have to travel, you might not want a large project in your car.

We've seen the Smol Grant category becoming more popular the last few years and people start asking about it pretty early in the Art Grant cycle.

Temple	\$2,000.00
Creativity	\$13,445.00
Creativity 2	\$8,598.00
Moonshot	\$0.00



Legacy	\$2,999.00
Burner Exchange	\$1,349.00
Skillshare	\$0.00
Plaques	
Smol	\$7,936.25
Total	\$36,327.25

Arrival Cluster

Other than the overconfident bus driver who got stuck during Exodus, 2024 was an **incredibly** smooth year for Arrival!

The Transport core arranges the charter of a motor coach bus to provide participants a travel alternative to a personal vehicle. In the past, we have had the bus pull over on the state road to allow participants to board/disembark — however, in 2023 the road was repaved and raised, which now prevents this. The two potential off-road spots (Frank's driveway, and the 419 drive) have a grade; we've had drivers refuse to use them, but the core lead made a point to discuss this with the charter company ahead of time. During Exodus, the driver was unwilling to follow volunteers' advice on turning and exiting, and ended up beaching the bus on the 419 driveway. This blocked incoming traffic to the Upper Parking lot, but volunteers quickly stepped in to guide this traffic around the bus. However once the tow arrived, it was necessary to hold traffic until the bus was pulled free and able to depart.

The bus is a popular option for participants, and Transport would rather keep looking for a better solution instead of doing away with it. One potential solution mentioned to me is to find a charter company with school buses, since they are more agile when turning etc than a motor coach.

GTFO is the volunteer core which oversees the operation of street vehicles within the bounds of the event to transport infrastructure, restricted to the Early Arrival and Exodus periods. Historically this has required careful orchestration and management of two-way traffic on a single lane, involving many vehicles over a short time period, at the times that are the most difficult to staff. The new ring road was enormously beneficial, allowing us to switch the traffic pattern to one-way travel.

This seemingly-minor change reduced **so** much time and frustration for participants and volunteers; anecdotally, some theme camps reported time savings on the level of hours for their load-in/out process. Additionally, the core lead expects that we will be able to reduce volunteer staffing since one-way traffic doesn't require as much active management.

Along the same lines, the other capital improvement we greatly benefitted from was the addition of an exit road from the Upper Parking lot. This lot is the most heavily trafficked, since it is also used as a gear drop-off point for participants who are parked in the offsite lot across the street. Originally, a single-lane dirt road was the only point of access, requiring management of



two-way traffic on a slope. With the exit road, we were able to convert the lot to one-way traffic and as with the ring road, a lot of time and frustration was saved. And when the aforementioned stuck-bus incident occurred, outgoing traffic was not affected rather than ALL traffic coming to a standstill.

Infrastructure Cluster

Overall we had a **very** successful year, we got a **lot** accomplished, but there are still areas for improvement.

Projects

Ring Road

We started the year out with a plan for a very ambitious and costly project - creating a continuous loop that would allow one-way vehicle traffic through the event, which we now refer to as Ring Road. This loop now allows for

- More efficient entry and exodus (saved hours of time for camp load-in and load-out)
- Will ensure quicker evacuation of the land in the event of another weather emergency in the future
- Provides another way emergency vehicles can access the event
- May in the future mean that we can provide serviceable portos further into the event area at more accessible locations
- Makes leadership and landowners more comfortable with the idea of growing the event in the future

To facilitate the building of the road, and to prepare for inclement weather affecting the condition of this road in subsequent years, we also purchased a number of ground protection mats and several large rolls of heavy duty Tenax - another big budget item. Ring Road, other annual land maintenance, the ground protection mats and Tenax altogether cost a total of close to \$100K.

UTV Loop

We created a new UTV path to enable vehicles to do a loop through the event rather than having to U-turn to get back to the other side of the event - which also prevents drivers from being tempted to go on the road with UTVs (which is very much frowned upon by neighbors, and not very legal)

Bridge Fixing/Widening

- Pedestrian bridges and boardwalks that needed fixing were patched
- One bridge was widened to enable UTVs to pass - this bridge allows for UTV access to and from the gate/greeters area without going against the one-way (car/truck) vehicle traffic on the access road.
- ~30' ramp created to remedy muddy part of pedestrian path from Kitchen to Upper Parking



Disassembled Dilapidated Permanent Structure

The permanent wooden structure - Altaer - suffered several winters without a sturdy roof, and had deteriorated to the point at which we decided it would be for the best to remove it (and hopefully rebuild it even better in a future year).

Core Reorganization

The Festival Committee worked together to identify changes to the cluster and core organization that made sense to us to explore.

- Accessibility moved to Service Cluster
- Bug moved to Art Cluster
- Ticketing moved to Arrival Cluster
- New - Late Crew core
 - This core was created in an effort to draw more attention to the DPW breakdown and late crew day shifts by having a designated core lead whose responsibility would be to drum up volunteership.
 - These folks stay an additional day after the event (Late Crew/LNT day) to finish breaking down the infrastructure, preparing equipment/tools to be put away for the year, and organizing and packing everything up into storage. The core leads would need to be prepared for the possibility that not all tasks will be accomplished on this day, and may have to come back for a Clean-Up work weekend and organize volunteers to sign up to help.
 - Core lead was brand new to the leadership position and pretty new to DPW in general and felt overwhelmed - in the future we need multiple leads for late crew in order to spread out responsibilities - accomplish tasks more efficiently and help avoid burnout. Will discuss ahead of next year whether Late Crew needs to continue as a separate core or return to being shifts within the DPW volunteer portal, but we certainly need more leads for these shifts in either case.
- New - Quartermaster role

This member of DPW would take lead in the inventorying of the infrastructure, gear, equipment, tools, consumables that Firefly has and would identify when things need to be fixed, replaced, or purchased. Fixes things, or arranges for them to be fixed. A Quartermaster needs to be able to think proactively about what Firefly needs to have on hand and to make sure that it is available when needed.

- DPW - recruited four core leads in an attempt to spread the work out more among folks in order to avoid burnout, and in order to have more redundancy. This worked out well, and we will continue to do this in the future.

Areas for future improvement

- While Breakdown/Late Crew volunteership did indeed increase, we were still not able to complete all the work that needed to be accomplished in one day (weather was also favorable which helped immensely). It took a handful of DPW folks an extra half day to finish. We may be able to finish within a day if:



- We can store all infrastructure on site rather than having an off-site storage location
- Cores give us a head start by including breakdown tasks to their last shifts of the event and help disassemble their structures and pack them up in their respective bins
- Breakdown Leads have enough information about tasks/goals and are able to effectively communicate with, organize and empower other volunteers to take initiative to complete tasks independently
- Weather is good (no pouring rain) - kind of out of our control
- Preventing conduit structure collapse - structures have collapsed in past years due to rain collecting on the tarp roof of conduit structures and bending pieces, causing the collapse of the structure. We will look into redesigning structures or replacing them with another option
- Well failure planning - the well's hand pump came apart (again) this year - we had to call the well company to do an emergency fix. We need to work on a more permanent (less prone to failure) solution for the well, and guarantee a secondary source of water, in case the well fails during the event again and cannot be fixed immediately
- Portos - participants really badly want portos to be available in additional more convenient/easily/quickly accessible locations throughout the event
- Way to keep food for DPW/LNT breakdown and late crew teams cool over the days after Ice Hole deliveries end. Probably will be looking into getting a chest freezer next year
- Need to start looking into a co-lead for Infrastructure (for the sake of redundancy, having a backup, and for effective knowledge management).

Public Service

Prior to 2024, Public Service Cluster was known as "City Cluster". In 2024, it included the following cores:

- Accessibility (new to the cluster)
- Coffee kitchen
- Gnomes
- Sanctuary (new to the cluster)

A new cluster lead was onboarded, Accessibility leads were also new, and a few new leads joined existing ones for other cores. Largely owing to new leads, there were some challenges relating to knowledge transfer from previous years but overall the year was a reasonable success.

A new volunteer attendance tracking system was implemented this year utilizing Gnomes as a hub for volunteer tracking sheets. This system ultimately did not capture much of the volunteer data for useful analysis, so it will likely be modified for the coming year.

General feedback around instructions for volunteer shifts within the cluster has indicated this as an improvement area for the future, at least for a couple of cores. Some volunteers mentioned their instructions felt inadequate to fully understand their shift responsibilities.



Despite some challenges, new leads did well getting up to speed on their roles and no major problems were seen.

Safety Ops Cluster

Both Cluster Leads were new in their roles this year, along with several organizational changes that were implemented for the first time in 2024:

- Perimeter and OOD broke away from Rangers to become their own cores
- DMV was a core for the first time
- Sound Core became part of Ops in 2024, previously under a different cluster
- 2024 is the first year that this cluster has gone by the name of “Ops” rather than “Safety”
- First Aid Core volunteers operated in tandem with hired medical staff (North Beast)

While these changes were overall successful, there were a few bumps in the road that could have gone more smoothly with better communication from the Board about expectations for these changes. Most glaringly, there were some fundamental misunderstandings about DMV Core and its purpose, which led to several scrambling adjustments and some tense email discussions in April and beyond.

There were some notable successes as well: In a project coordinated by Aster between Radios, Rangers, Landowner Liaison, DPW, and Accessibility Core, we were able to set up a new structure (known temporarily as the Satellite Outpost) where someone beyond Upper Parking would be able to access a working radio 24/7 to summon assistance if needed. Additionally, a new Ambulance Emergency Plan was drawn up and distributed to key vehicles, cores, and North Beast. Rangers also had a notably good year, with the strongest levels of participation seen since pre-2019.

Exec Group

2024 was the first year for the “Executive Group,” (Exec) which is an imperfect name for a few Roles and Committees which are not part of any existing Cluster, and whose tasks are asynchronous from the normal festival operations, but are still important to the function of the volunteer organization (the Org). Those are the Event Leads, Board Liaison, Landowner Liaison (LOL), Volunteer Coordinator, Communications Committee (Comms), and Survey Core. This is also the first year for the LOL, and the Volunteer Coordinator.

Most of these roles, like the LOL and Comms, only function when requested and are inactive for much of the event cycle: Comms sends out information to the larger community when requested by a part of the Org, and LOL is a single point of contact between the Org and our various landowners. Survey, Comms, Board Liaison, and Event Lead are long standing roles, and there had not been a named Volunteer Coordinator for several years.

When the novelty of the group and some of the roles is considered, the group functioned quite well. The “new” roles made an immediate impact, as the LOL had been requested by one of our landowners and seemed to help that relationship, and the Volunteer Coordinator’s



absence had been noted by some long-time Core Leads. The Volunteer Coordinator made an immediate impact to both the Org's culture and function, and most cores and Clusters now function with more than one Co-Lead, rather than single Leads which reduced the personal strain on those volunteers and aids in succession planning Org-wide.

Communications functioned without a single Chair in 2024, and instead relied on a similarly-sized small group of volunteers who divided up the areas of responsibility in advance, which gave everyone a manageable workload. Survey core worked somewhat siloed from the event, as it does not spring into action until after the rest of the Org is finished, but fulfilled its normal role without note or incident.

Event Lead Notes

This was the second year with three people serving the role of Event Lead, which breaks down quite well, as one of 2023's leads cycled out and a new Co-Lead cycled in (who had been the Board President in 2023). This spread out the workload enough so that the size of the role was not overwhelming to any of the individuals, as each was able to miss some meetings, or have fewer responsibilities for different parts of the event cycle. The role itself and its responsibilities has changed quite a bit over the years to fit the changing Org and the individuals in the role: while this might be somewhat unorthodox or unexpected, we feel that it fits the mandate for any role within the larger Org.

In 2024, the Event Leads functioned closest to Portfolio Managers, taking broad oversight over the Clusters and Cores, and only picking up direct responsibility for certain tasks, such as the annual Meet & Greet or All Hands meeting. The Event Leads also organize and take ownership of the bi-weekly meetings of the Festival Committee, where it has been very helpful to have the Board Liaison, and Landowner Liaison which gives a clear path of escalation to anything not able to be answered by the Committee or the Leads.

Financial Information

1. RECEIPTS	ESTIMATED	ACTUAL
Ticket Sales	\$217,196	\$216,773
Gate Cash		\$1,468
Bus Sales Projection	\$3,000	
Donations		\$8,888
Interest		\$25
2. TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$220,196	\$227,154
	\$220,196	\$227,154
3. EXPENSES	2024 Estimates	2024 Expenses
<u>Infrastructure Cluster and Rent</u>		



Event Land Rent	\$18,000	\$21,000
polaris rental	\$6,200	\$3,063
other equipment rental	\$610	
porto toilets	\$8,000	\$8,000
Land Maintenance (road repair, forestry, mowing)	\$22,000	\$1,501
Infrastructure Projects	\$92,050	\$90,334
Work Weekends	\$4,483	\$2,675
DPW Expenses	\$7,758	\$12,659
LNT / GTFO Core	\$286	
equipment repairs and maintenance	\$769	\$468
Bethel Storage	\$1,000	
dumpster	\$1,400	\$1,157
Late Crew	\$200	\$155
INFRASTRUCTURE TOTAL	\$162,756	\$141,013
<u>Art Cluster</u>		
Art Grants	\$37,500	\$43,653
Plaques	\$0	\$1,050
Bug Expenses	\$10,000	\$10,493
Placement Core	\$770	
Sign Core	\$600	\$24
Maps	\$900	
ART TOTAL	\$49,770	\$55,220
<u>FAC Organization</u>		
Event Insurance	\$7,523	\$7,011
D&O Insurance	\$768	\$698
Excise Tax - trailer	\$6	
Firefly Meetings/admin	\$2,500	\$1,696
Legal Fees	\$1,000	
Donations to other organizations	\$2,000	\$0
Professional Fees (CPA)	\$1,500	\$275
Tax Software	\$75	\$75
Postage and Delivery	\$20	\$15
BAM Meeting Support	\$2,180	\$600
BAM attendance		\$1,426.60
Board Phone	\$50	
Miles Reimbursement	\$1,413	
Prior Year Reimbursements	\$0	\$893
Somerville Open Studios		\$156
Office Supplies + Software		\$261
Banking Expenses & Fees		\$95
FAC TOTAL	\$19,035	\$13,203



<u>Ops Cluster</u>		
Medical & Security Contract	\$25,378	\$21,465
Ranger Core	\$2,410	\$1,452
Fire Safety Core	\$290	\$198
First Aid Core	\$363	\$336
Sound Core	\$100	
Radio Rental	\$2,773	
Radio Core		\$4,691
Perimeter	\$805	
OOD	\$1,510	\$201
Other Ops (Shirts)		\$1,958
OPS TOTAL	\$33,629	\$30,300
<u>Service Cluster</u>		
Kitchen/Caffeine Core	\$994	\$518
Accessibility Core	\$1,006	\$118
Sanctuary	\$100	
Gnomes Core	\$100	
SERVICE TOTAL	\$2,200	\$636
<u>Arrival Cluster</u>		
Parking	\$3,741	\$4,462
Greeters	\$300	
Gate	\$410	
GTFO	\$700	\$587
Wristbands	\$1,000	
transport core (bus)	\$4,342	\$4,469
Gear Truck		\$144
Art Truck	\$3,000	\$3,757
Arrival	\$910	\$1,749
ARRIVAL TOTAL	\$14,403	\$15,168
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$220,196	\$227,154
4. TOTAL EXPENSES	\$281,792	\$255,541
5. INCOME LESS EXPENSES	-\$61,596	-\$28,387
"INCOME" AS PERCENT OF EXPENSES	-21.86%	-11.11%



Appendix A: Official Regional Event Afterburn Summary

BASIC DETAILS

- **Name of event:** Firefly
- **What was the first year this event took place?** 2003
- **Start date of this year's event:** 7/2/2024
- **Duration of this year's event (in days):** 6
- **What type of event was this?** Campout
- **Number of years at your current location:** 16 (incl 2 years with no event due to COVID)
- **Does this event take place on land owned by your entity/regional group?** No
- **State or Province event takes place in:** Vermont
- **Country event takes place in:** United States
- **Name of event entity:** Firefly Arts Collective Inc.
- **Type of entity ownership:** Non-Profit / Association

ATTENDEES & TICKETS

- **Total attendees this year:** 1400
- **Were minors (under 18 years of age) in attendance for any part of your event?** Yes
- **Which of these ticket tiers did you offer?** Pay What You Can
- **Did you offer directed tickets?** Yes
- **What percent of all tickets were directed (if known)?** 1.6%
- **What ticketing vendor/tool did you use?** In-house software

PARTICIPATION

- **Number of team leads on your event production team:** 83
- **Approximate number of production volunteers (i.e., Your teams and not all artists and theme camps, for example.):** 891
- **Total Estimated Volunteer Hours:** 8354
- **Number of theme camps:** 68
- **Number of art projects:** 62
- **How many estimated performing artists?** Unknown (not tracked)
- **Total number of mutant vehicles:** 9
- **Total number of burns:** 3
- **Total Number of Scheduled Events (if known):** 943

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

- **What technology tools do you use for planning your event?** Google Docs, Other Google Workspace components (Meet, Voice, etc), WordPress, Mediawiki



- **What tech tools have your team built to support your event, if any?** Ticketing, Volunteer Portal, Gate Check-In, Art Grant Portal
- **Would you be interested in sharing the tool(s) you built, or lessons with others?** Yes, and we have, but some are a bit janky.

GRANTS AND FINANCIAL REPORT

- **How are funds raised from the event going to be used to benefit the community?** Art Grants, Local Civic and Social Impact Projects/Programs, Charitable Donations to non-Burner group(s)
- **What were your gross ticket sales for this year (in U.S. dollars)?** \$215,941 (at time of reporting; financial figures above are final)
- **Total grants given in support of creative expression, in U.S. dollars (Do not include the value of tickets or other resources provided.)** \$44,263.50
- **What was the total number of grants you gave this year?** 104

ADDITIONAL ITEMS THAT ARE HELPFUL/INTERESTING TO INCLUDE

- **Percent of your participants that were first time attendees?** 35%
- **Did you offer any of the following to your volunteers?** Thank you schwag (e.g., t-shirts, stickers, patches, etc), Food, snacks, meals
- **A more diverse and radically inclusive community is an important part of our future. If this event supported making your regional community more diverse and radically inclusive, please describe how your production team and/or participants contributed to this effort.** Our community has zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination, and reports are investigated and acted upon by our Conduct Committee. We attempt targeted outreach through our Volunteer Coordinator to under-represented groups when seeking to fill open leadership roles.
- **Environmental sustainability is an important part of our future. If this event tried to address sustainability, reduce carbon impact, and/or experiments with green living innovations, please describe how your production team and/or participants contributed to this effort.** Firefly organizes an art transport truck and a participant bus program in order to minimize the number of large vehicles between Boston and our host community in Vermont. We have also subsidized the installation and maintenance of a modern well to avoid the need to truck water from off-site. A participant initiative has ice delivered twice daily to minimize cargo requirements for participants and allow for denser carpooling.
- **Do you have a Sustainability Lead?** No
- **What are the top three challenges your event faces?**
 - A board member who had purchased part of the land where our event takes place passed away suddenly in 2023 before he was able to transfer the property to a community organization. Confusion regarding ongoing ownership puts at risk the future use of this land, and have burned out several high-contributing board members
 - Recruiting and retaining volunteer leaders able to contribute significant time continues to be a challenge as our community ages and our event grows



- Availability of event insurance remains precarious and increases in cost substantially each year. Outsourcing additional services such as medical, security, and accounting also increases expenses, which make our event less affordable to participants.
- **What are some really cool out-of-the box ideas or solutions you have used to solve problems that might be interesting or useful to others.**
 - Our "Pay What You Can" ticketing program continues to be a resounding success.
 - Site-specific improvements such as the well and trail-making work have made our event more accessible and allowed more time to be spent on art without becoming a fee-for-service convenience event.
 - Our Accessibility Core has allowed volunteers to make a physically challenging event site more available to participants with disabilities.
- **What happened this year that gives you hope and inspiration that what we are doing as a culture is working and worth doing?** The positive feedback we receive in the free-form answer portion of our post-event survey is always inspiring. Community donation and engagement with the major land improvements undertaken in 2024 was fantastic.