

THE ARTS IN PUBLIC POLICY: AN ADVOCACY AGENDA

Public support for the arts has become a matter of public policy. Government spending on the arts at the federal, state and local levels increases when legislators understand how the arts can help them advance their particular policy agendas. State funding for the arts has nearly doubled in the last decade, as advocates have successfully demonstrated the benefits of the arts investment in economic, social and educational terms. And using the arts to address community development issues is the fastest-growing program and service area for local arts agencies.

The arts give policy makers the tools to address a wide range of civic concerns in creative and cost-effective ways. Advocates can draw on a wealth of research demonstrating the arts' role in improving student learning, in building a strong workforce, in developing America's creative industries, and in offering positive alternatives to troubled youth. A small investment in the arts can help strengthen the economy of a community by promoting tourism, revitalizing the core commercial district and attracting businesses to expand local job opportunities.

the arts and education

With education a top public policy priority, the role of the arts in learning is of increasing interest to parents, educators, legislators, civic leaders and business owners. Research shows that children who study the arts demonstrate stronger overall academic performance. Arts programs improve students' self-confidence, build communication and problem-solving skills and prepare young people to be the creative thinkers that employers seek for today's workforce.

- In a national sample of 25,000 students, those with high levels of arts learning experiences earned higher grades and scored better on standardized tests than those with little or no involvement in the arts, regardless of socioeconomic status.¹
- The arts instill "foundation skills" needed for employment, like reasoning, making decisions, thinking creatively, solving problems and visualizing.²

"After all, arts education is really the only way to create a more knowledgeable public and new generations of leaders that will drive this creative industry, not-for-profit and for-profit alike. Art is central to a civil society. Kids who create don't destroy."

—Terry Semel, past chairman and co-CEO, Warner Bros. and Warner Music Group



- Learning through the arts has significant effects on learning in other disciplines. Students consistently involved in music and theatre show higher levels of success in mathematics and reading.³
- An 11-year national study that examined youth in low-income neighborhoods found that those who participated in arts programs were much more likely to be high academic achievers, be elected to class office, participate in a math and science fair, and win an award for writing an essay or poem.⁴

the arts and youth at risk

For young people at risk of delinquency, school failure, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and other problems, involvement in the arts can improve academic performance, reduce school truancy, provide positive outlets and build new skills that give kids a chance at a better life. Arts programs are an effective intervention strategy for troubled youth who have failed to respond to more traditional educational and social services programs. Arts learning experiences can alter the attitudes young people have about themselves and toward learning, even among those who have already had serious brushes with the law.

“Young people who are involved in making something beautiful today are less likely to turn to acts of violence and destruction tomorrow.... We all need to support the arts. In doing so, we are telling America’s youth that we believe in them and value what they can be.”—*Janet Reno, former U.S. attorney general*

“As a prosecutor, I know that crime prevention pays far greater dividends than prosecution. To this end, I make RICO funds available to after-school arts and social programs for at-risk children that stimulate imagination, develop skills and contribute to character development. Children whose hearts and minds are nourished and challenged in wholesome ways...are much less likely to succumb to the lure of crime.”

—*Richard M. Romley, Maricopa County attorney, Arizona*

- A three-year study of arts-based delinquency prevention programs in three sites—Atlanta, Georgia; Portland, Oregon; and San Antonio, Texas—showed that at-risk youths’ participation in arts programs improved their attitudes, behavior and academic performance; decreased delinquent behavior; and increased communications skills.⁵
- Arts programs, particularly those with youth mentorship components and ties to community organizations, guide troubled young people toward positive goals and behaviors.⁶

- Teens in correctional institutions who participate in projects like musical productions develop a more positive self-image, and learn respect for others, trust and teamwork.⁷
- Programs targeted toward very young children help prevent negative choices later on. Young children who participate in after-school arts programs have shown decreases in negative behaviors and increases in attention span, commitment and tolerance.⁸

the arts and business

The arts challenge the individual to think broadly, to attempt the new and to take risks.

Technology turns to the arts for innovation and inspiration, including developing the creative skills to compete successfully in the 21st century workplace. Public policy that supports arts education, artists and nonprofit arts organizations represents an investment in research and devel-

opment drawn upon by entertainment, advertising, design, technical, scientific and other industries. Investment in the arts by both the public and private sectors is an investment in the creative future of the United States.

- America's creative industries are our nation's leading export with over \$60 billion annually in overseas sales, including the output of artists and other creative workers in publishing, audiovisual, music and recording, and entertainment businesses.
- Workers with arts-related skills are critical to software development and Web site design companies, advertising firms, the motion picture and broadcast media industries, automobile design companies, architectural and engineering firms and other fields seeking employees with high-level communications, computer and creative problem-solving abilities.
- Support of the arts is a workforce issue for companies—the arts develop the kind of thinker and manager that businesses must have more of if they are to remain competitive in the global marketplace.⁹
- The arts help extend the boundaries of the digital frontier. Many of the digital imaging

“People who create in our companies—whether they be scientists, marketing experts or business strategists—benefit from exposure to the arts. People cannot create when they work and live in a culturally sterile environment....”—*John D. Ong, chairman emeritus, The BFGoodrich Company*

“Bayer believes that the arts, along with the sciences, provide challenges for the mind—challenges that encourage creativity in all aspects of life. As a company which is highly dependent on creativity through its research and development, we recognize that it is in a corporation's best interest and its obligation to support the arts.”—*Helge H. Webmeier, president and CEO, Bayer Corporation*

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING ARTS SUPPORT

techniques that have become common tools in the corporate and scientific worlds were pioneered in the art and design industries.

- Involvement with the arts provides employees with networking opportunities, stimulates creative thinking and problem solving, and builds team spirit.¹⁰

the arts and tourism

The arts attract tourism, America's third-largest retail sales industry. Public support of cultural tourism plays a critical role in community revitalization as well as the expansion of tourism—one of the fastest-growing economic markets in the country today.

- As America's favorite tourist attractions, museums ranked third (behind shopping and outdoor activities) in a tourism industry study, and historical places and cultural events ranked fourth, ahead of beaches and parks, sports, gambling, nightlife and amusement parks.¹¹
- 92.7 million Americans traveling in the United States in 2000 included cultural activities in their trip, an increase from 1998. Thirty million U.S. travelers lengthened their trips because of cultural events and activities.¹²
- Cultural tourists spend more money (\$631 per trip) than the average U.S. traveler (\$457), and travel for longer periods of time: 4.7 nights vs. 3.3 nights.¹³

Cultural tourism is identified as a key strategy for job and economic growth in states that seek to capitalize on their region's distinctive historic and cultural resources.

- Roughly 6.2 million out-of-state visitors attend events hosted by Connecticut's non-profit arts and cultural industry. When combined with 18.3 million visits from state residents, this industry has an impact of over \$1.3 billion.¹⁴
- The arts industry in California provides state and local government with \$77 million in revenue through cultural tourism activities alone. Visitors to cultural destinations in California spend more than visitors seeking shopping or theme parks. Cultural tourism in California translates into 4,200 jobs and \$158 million in income to the state's economy.¹⁵
- Nonprofit arts organizations in Florida report total direct spending of \$616.7 million, helping to attract cultural tourists to the state. These tourists spend \$2.9 billion, an average of \$349 each as compared to \$291 spent by non-cultural tourists to Florida.¹⁶

“The sheer volume of travelers interested in arts and history, as well as their spending habits, their travel patterns and demographics, leaves no doubt that history and culture are now a significant part of the U.S. travel experience.” —*William S. Norman, president and CEO, Travel Industry Association of America*

the arts and economic development

Cultural development plays a central role in urban revitalization and community renewal strategies. The arts attract businesses, visitors and new residents, and encourage consumer spending, all of which result in increased tax revenues. Cultural offerings enhance the market appeal of an area, encouraging corporate relocation and generating new jobs. To understand these benefits, legislators often ask for examples of how the creative sector has contributed to their region's economy.

Legislators seek effective strategies to help them achieve their economic development goals. The relative merits of public appropriations are weighed according to economic returns, and policy makers look for investments that produce measurable results and give their state or locality a competitive edge. The arts are an important part of this equation.

Data gathered from economic impact studies conducted by city, county and state governments have repeatedly shown that the economic benefits of the arts exceed the investment of public support.

- The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$36.8 billion annually in economic activity and supports 1.3 million jobs. The arts employ 2.7% of the American workforce, more than agriculture. The arts account for 6% of the U.S. gross national product, more than the construction industry (4.8%). Substantial tax revenue is also generated through sales taxes, and the many for-profit businesses that are supported by the industry.¹⁷
- Governments reap sizable revenues from arts activities—\$790 million at the local level, \$1.2 billion at the state level and \$3.4 billion at the federal level.¹⁸
- American consumers spent more than \$10 billion on admissions to performing arts events in 1999. That adds up to \$2.8 billion more than admissions to motion pictures and \$2 billion more than spending on spectator sports.¹⁹

“The arts not only add an important and unique dimension to our lives, but we have found that the arts are a concrete economic development asset, as well, enhancing states’ abilities to attract knowledge-workers, building livable communities and giving states a competitive edge in the new economy. Our studies indicate that every dollar we invest in the state’s Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs results in \$10 of in-state direct spending.”—*Michigan Governor John Engler*

“Successful businesses do more than simply pass through a community. They have a vested interest in living where the quality of life attracts the very best employees, customers, suppliers and government, academic and civic leaders. It is inconceivable that such a quality can exist where the arts are silent.”
—*A. Thomas Young, former executive vice president, Lockheed Martin Corporation*

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING ARTS SUPPORT

In the new economy, a business' success depends on its ability to recruit skilled knowledge workers. The arts and cultural life of a region is often taken into consideration by companies and workers when deciding where to relocate.

- A community's arts activities and offerings contribute to a region's "innovation habitat" by nurturing new jobs, new forms of knowledge and vibrant public spaces that include the arts.²⁰
- A 1998 KPMG survey of more than 1,200 high-tech workers examined the most important factors associated with taking a new job. "Community quality-of-life" was the second most important factor—after salary—and more important than benefits, stock options or company stability.

The arts also provide diverse employment opportunities, ranging from the artists and managers of arts organizations, to the creative software and advertising designers working in high-tech firms, to the workers in the restaurant and hospitality industries that arts participants patronize.

- The arts support more than 245,000 jobs throughout the six states of New England, which is 3.5 percent of the region's total job base, or more than the region's software or medical technologies industries.

The arts industry exhibited 14 percent growth over a four-year period, much higher than New England's overall economic growth of 8 percent.²¹

- Colorado nonprofit arts workers pay \$1.7 million in state income taxes. Beyond the nonprofit sector, the arts industry also includes graphic artists, architects, art teachers, commercial photographers, as well as visual, performing, and literary artists. The nonprofit and commercial arts sectors comprise more than 27,000 workers, or 1.59% of Colorado's workforce.²²
- Nearly one percent of employment in New York is generated directly and indirectly from the arts, providing 174,000 jobs to the state's residents. The arts provide a total impact of \$13.4 billion, with \$4.1 billion of this impact coming from nonprofit organizations, or nearly four times as much as the impact of commercial theater.²³

"Compelling evidence exists to demonstrate how federal funding for the arts combined with private sector and other public sector support has had a profound impact upon the health, education, and economy of our nation. Business leaders are taking the opportunity to build upon the strong networks and partnerships, the broad access and cultural diversity, and the economic stimuli and social problem-solving abilities created by the arts to nurture further growth at the local level. The arts enrich the lives of all Americans because they speak to our economic, intellectual, and spiritual well-being."—*Michael H. Jordan, chairman and CEO, CBS Corporation*

The message for advocates is clear: Public arts funding serves a public purpose. When the arts connect to other public policy issues, the arts win attention as a matter of public policy. With the arts on the policy agenda, funding for the arts turns out to be everyone's business.

endnotes

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⁷"Using the Arts to Transform Young Lives," *Partners*, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2000.

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¹⁸*The Arts in the Local Economy*, Americans for the Arts, 1994.

¹⁹*The Arts in the GDP*, Research Division Note #77, National Endowment for the Arts, 2001.

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²²*The Arts Industry in Colorado: A Vital Contributor to the Economic Prosperity of the State*, Western States Arts Federation, 1998.

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