

STATE POLICY BRIEFS

Tools for Arts Decision Making

WHY SHOULD GOVERNMENT SUPPORT THE ARTS?

State governments today are wrestling with fundamental questions: What are the appropriate roles, responsibilities and size of government? How can states ensure long-term productivity and economic competitiveness? What solutions are available for chronic challenges in education, health care and employment? While seeking answers to these questions, public managers and elected officials must uphold the principles that taxpayers expect: thrift, accountability, equity and transparency.

In this environment, all areas of spending—including the arts—come under scrutiny. Every public dollar becomes competitive. Lawmakers may ask whether government has a legitimate role to play in the arts, or may ask whether the arts should receive funds when so many other needs are pressing. The answer to both questions is yes. This document substantiates why the arts are a sound investment, helping states achieve both short-term and long-term policy goals.

We encourage you to welcome dialogue about these issues. The 50-year history of state arts agencies shows that when policymakers understand the benefits of the arts to government and to citizens, they find a way to continue support, even during hard financial times. We hope that this document will help bring the advantages of the arts to the foreground and help your state answer frequently asked questions about government's role in arts support.

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For more information on promoting the arts in state policy, explore the [Research](#) and [Advocacy](#) sections of the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies \(NASAA\) website](#) or contact the NASAA office at 202-347-6352.

1. Does every state fund the arts?

Yes. Like most areas of state spending, public appropriations to the arts have seen periods of growth and decline tied to state budget conditions. During the past 50 years, state governments have maintained a commitment to the arts, establishing arts agencies in all 56 states and jurisdictions and allocating funding—even during recessions—to state arts agencies and their programs.

2. Why are the arts a good public-sector investment?

The arts are an important policy asset and prosperity generator for states. In addition to their inherent value to society, the arts offer a distinctive blend of benefits:

- **ECONOMIC DRIVERS:** The arts create jobs and produce tax revenue. A strong arts sector is an economic asset that stimulates business activity, attracts tourism revenue and retains a high-quality work force. The arts have been shown to be a successful and sustainable strategy for revitalizing rural areas, inner cities and populations struggling with poverty.
- **EDUCATIONAL ASSETS:** The arts cultivate young imaginations and facilitate success in school, enhancing students' academic achievement in multiple subject areas. They provide the critical thinking, communications and innovation skills essential to a productive 21st-century work force.
- **HEALTH AND WELLNESS:** The arts foster physical, mental and emotional health, aiding recovery processes and contributing to well-being. The arts can be effective tools for achieving and maintaining wellness for aging adults and people suffering from trauma, including military combat personnel and veterans.
- **CIVIC CATALYSTS:** The arts create a welcoming sense of place and a desirable quality of life. The arts also support a strong democracy, engaging citizens in civic discourse, providing forums for important issues and encouraging collective problem solving.
- **CULTURAL LEGACIES:** The arts preserve culture and heritage, passing along a state's unique character and traditions to future generations of citizens.

“Arts and culture are consistent sources of economic growth, during both good and difficult economic times. Specifically, arts and culture policies and programs increase economic development in states by attracting businesses, creating new jobs, increasing tax revenues and promoting tourism.”

[National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

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- See [What the Research Says](#) for a detailed list of public benefits of the arts, including links to related research.

State lawmakers recognize other value-added advantages to making the arts a part of public policy:

- **Incorporating the arts improves the impact of other state policies and services.** Numerous states have recognized this and have incorporated the arts into economic revitalization, education, literacy, work-force development, tourism, community sustainability and social service plans.
- **Small businesses and individual entrepreneurs are critical to every state’s economy.** The arts are a dynamic contributor to the small business sector. The creative industries are composed of many talented workers who are self-employed, freelancers or employed by microenterprises. According to National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) analysis of U.S. Census occupational data, artists are 3.5 times more likely than other workers to be self-employed.¹ Nonprofit organizations, too, are small businesses and play an important role in training creative workers and incubating artistic enterprises.
- **The arts make communities vibrant, welcoming and desirable.** Cultural places, events and opportunities are magnetic, attracting not only artists and arts entrepreneurs but also families, travelers and businesses. Creative place making—the gravitational effect of culture on neighborhoods—positively impacts local economies and boosts quality of life. It creates jobs, stimulates commercial foot traffic and locally recirculates income, all of which leverage neighborhood revitalization, attract diverse populations and strengthen communities. Capitalizing on these effects of creative place making requires strong public-sector support.
- **The arts are a hallmark of state innovation.** The arts are part of a state’s creative capacity, spurring innovation and creating unique products and services. Creativity is part of any state’s competitive edge in the global marketplace, where distinctive design and effective communications can spell the success or failure of a business or policy venture.

“...governors and states are finding that arts, culture, and design can be important components of a comprehensive strategy for growth.”

[National Governors Association](#)

Leading public-sector organizations—including the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Education Commission of the States—have recognized the arts as part of a strong policy portfolio. Business leaders, economists, property developers, tourism officials and community planners have joined with parents, educators and civic leaders to promote public policies that strengthen the arts. They do so because they recognize the benefits that accrue to communities when government helps to foster a robust arts sector.

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3. How can we afford to support the arts in hard times?

Economic downturns, natural disasters and other hardships require public officials to make the most of every asset and to adopt policies that maximize a state’s recovery potential. The arts are a proven part of that mix. The arts are an economic asset that supports jobs, stimulates commerce and stabilizes property values, among other benefits. In the words of the Southern Legislative Conference, “...the growing strength of [the arts]—as proven admirably during the most recent downturn, when they continued to create positive economic flows despite depleted budgets—may bring a time when policymakers think twice about substantially cutting funding during the next economic crunch.”²

“A society that supports the arts and the humanities is not engaging in philanthropic activity so much as it is assuring the conditions of its own flourishing.”

[President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities](#)

In addition to their many economic advantages, the arts offer timely assistance with educational and civic challenges that tend to escalate during tough times. The arts are also central to community resiliency: whether states are facing economic distress, natural disasters or other adversity, the arts are a powerful force for recovery and healing, a benefit that few other industries offer.

Given current arts funding levels, cutting the arts will not eliminate any state’s budget gap. The arts comprise a very small portion of state spending—less than one half of one tenth of one percent. Reducing expenditures that modest won’t appreciably affect state budgets, but will damage the cultural sector’s ability to provide jobs, goods and services to communities. Furthermore, arts cutbacks can lead to greater losses, since arts grantees use the “seal of approval” of state funding to attract dollars from other sources.

[Review the research](#) about the economic and civic benefits of the arts.

4. What do states currently invest in the arts?

Legislative appropriations to all state and jurisdictional arts agencies in fiscal year 2014 totaled \$306.6 million, or \$0.96 per capita.³ This represents only 0.037%—less than one half of one tenth of one percent—of state general fund expenditures.⁴ Yet the return on this investment is tremendous. State arts agencies support about 21,000 projects undertaken by communities, organizations, schools, individual artists and others, making the economic, educational, civic and cultural [benefits](#) of the arts available to 4,400 communities across the United States.⁵

State arts agencies receive 0.037%—less than one half of one tenth of one percent—of state general fund expenditures.

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#)

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Over time, changes to legislative appropriations to the arts mirror the health of overall state budgets. Historical data shows that governors and legislatures invest more in the arts in times of state budget stability and that arts funding contracts during recessions. State arts agencies operate with no reserves, dedicating all available resources to current constituent services. This means that even small-magnitude cuts to state arts funding tend to have a high-magnitude impact, resulting in fewer communities reached, numerous projects cancelled, loss of leveraged funds and gaps in services to the public.

[Review the research](#) about state funding for the arts.

5. Is support for the arts a partisan issue?

No. Records of appropriations to state arts agencies show that the partisan affiliation of lawmakers—Republican, Democrat or Independent—does not determine arts decision making. Data from recent years, which display sharp partisan divides on a number of other policy issues, yield no similar pattern for the arts. There is no statistical relationship between the party control of a state's legislature and/or the governor's office and the amount appropriated to state arts agencies. Historically, arts increases and arts reductions have occurred in nearly equal measure under Republican and Democratic leadership. What drives state appropriations for the arts and culture isn't political affiliation or partisan agendas, but rather the benefits of the arts that can be documented in a lawmaker's home district and the resources that are available to policymakers at any given time.

6. Can't we just use federal funds?

No. According to federal statute, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding for state arts agencies cannot be used to supplant nonfederal funding. This means that states may not use federal dollars to replace state dollars with the intention or effect of reducing state funding for a state arts agency.

Furthermore, a viable and effective state arts agency supported by state government is a prerequisite for receiving federal funds. States get federal funds in the form of Partnership Agreements, which are flexible block grants from the NEA. Although a state arts agency may allocate these funds according to its own state's needs, the following criteria must be met:

- The state must have a state arts agency that is officially designated and financially supported by the state.
- The state arts agency must have its own board, council or commission.
- The agency must have a comprehensive statewide plan for the arts that includes input from the public and is responsive to the needs of the state.
- Funding and programming decisions must be made on criteria that take fairness and excellence into account.

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- The agency must demonstrate leadership in providing public access to the arts and arts education as well as addressing the needs of underserved communities.
- The agency must maintain sound fiscal management, administrative procedures and accountability reporting.
- Federal funds must be matched on at least a 1-to-1 basis.⁶

In the 1960s, the federal government provided incentive grants designed to assist states in the creation of arts agencies. Since that time, however, state appropriations for the arts have far surpassed the initial federal investment, because states recognized the many benefits of investing in the arts and sought to maximize those returns. Today, legislative appropriations for the arts comprise 88% of total state arts agency revenue, whereas NEA dollars comprise 10.5%.⁷

7. Why can't the private sector do this job?

It takes a mixture of both public and private funds to support the arts. Although many citizens and companies contribute to cultural activities, the benefits of the arts cannot be fully realized without the unique contributions of government. Foundation support of the arts, for example, can be highly concentrated (in 2011, just 2.1% of the grants awarded by 1,122 foundations accounted for 46.4% of their total giving to the arts⁸). Among corporate and individual philanthropists, many motivations (including personal goals and advertising exposure) drive funding decisions. Moreover, market pressures can narrow cultural experiences by favoring the most popular or commercially successful art forms, thereby jeopardizing cultural preservation.

In comparison, **state investments in the arts are citizen-driven and beholden to the public interest.** They support inclusive experiences and community based activities and ensure that all regions of a state benefit. Government support also:

- **provides fair access to arts resources**, especially among underserved populations;
- **accurately assesses the state's cultural needs and assets**, then organizes efforts to help the state achieve goals that are relevant to its policy priorities;
- **provides accountability**, ensuring transparency of decision making that involves citizens in award adjudication;
- **reduces barriers to public participation in the arts**, such as those linked to poverty, geographic isolation, limited education, lack of information, disability, age or ethnicity;
- **secures federal Partnership Agreement dollars**, which only state arts agencies are eligible to receive on behalf of a state.

In addition, important civic functions of the arts are not routinely accomplished through corporate support or the marketplace. These civic functions—encouraging inclusive dialogue, awareness of

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diversity and sympathy for fellow Americans, among other things—are vital to a democratic, pluralistic society, and they can be seen as providing a lifelong education of democratic citizenship.⁹ While philanthropy may yield some of these benefits, they are market externalities and no substitute for a government role in educating its citizenry.¹⁰ The National Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 says as much, noting that it is necessary for government to support a “climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry” because “democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens.”¹¹

8. Don’t arts funds mostly benefit big cities?

No, which is another reason state support for the arts is so crucial: it ensures that the benefits of the arts accrue in all communities, not just urban areas. State support increases access to the arts in rural areas and facilitates arts production, promotion, participation and preservation statewide. While the arts in all communities improve quality of life for residents, attract visitors and investment, and grow sustainable small businesses, in rural areas they also address unique challenges such as geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations and population flight.

Equitable distribution: Because state arts agencies administer both federal and state dollars, they are in a strong position to ensure that this combined investment reaches rural communities. Many rural arts organizations lack the capacity to apply for National Endowment for the Arts grants and instead rely on state arts agencies to share the federal funding they receive. This public investment is especially important given the uneven distribution of private support for the arts; most foundations (corporate, family and community) are located and concentrate their investments in the most populous areas of the country. ¹²

State Arts Agency Support for Rural Communities

- 26% of all state arts agency grants go to rural communities.
- 15% of all state arts agency grant funding goes to rural communities.
- 17% of the U.S. population lives in rural communities.

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#)
[Fiscal year 2012 data](#)

Access to culture: Proximity to urban centers provides access to major cultural assets, markets and activities. In areas without large museums, performing arts centers or other types of arts infrastructure, state arts agencies provide crucial services and programming through a variety of community facilities such as schools, community centers and other public venues.

Grant funding: State arts agencies invest \$32 million in rural communities. These grants support a diverse range of institutions and all types of arts activities, disciplines and education. State arts agencies make more than 5,400 direct grants to more than 2,100 rural communities across the

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country.¹³ The extent of their investment is yet greater through their regranting or [decentralization programs](#).

Leveraging rural resources: State arts agencies form partnerships with federal, state and local programs that benefit rural communities. Partners include agriculture departments, cooperative extension networks, and city or county agencies.

9. Why are state arts agencies essential?

The presence of a strong state arts agency ensures that all communities—regardless of their geographic location, political affiliation or economic status—are systematically and equitably served. Other public funding mechanisms do not attain these same goals.

For instance, legislative earmarks are used in some states to supplement arts appropriations. While these line items can be a valuable source of funding, they inevitably exclude some communities. Local government funding is another key source of arts support, but it remains uneven, with more resources and opportunities available to residents of larger communities. Only state arts agencies are positioned to provide strategic and equitable leadership and support to all areas of a state.

“The most fundamental unique asset of an SAA [state arts agency] is its authorization to represent the interests of the state in developing the arts as an important human activity and industry.”

[Mark H. Moore,](#)
[John F. Kennedy School of Government,](#)
[Harvard University](#)

- **State arts agencies possess specialized expertise related to creative business development and cultural planning.** These skills provide sound stewardship of resources and position state arts agencies to act as a locus of expertise and learning that benefits the arts community, other branches of government and the private sector, too.
- **State arts agencies support functions that are overlooked by other funding mechanisms.** Well-established arts organizations are most competitive for federal arts funds, whereas state arts agencies devote much of their funding to smaller organizations, community groups and schools. Corporations, in order to secure maximum marketing exposure, are most likely to sponsor blockbuster arts events or other highly commercialized activities. In contrast, state arts agency grant making emphasizes grass-roots arts development. State arts agency grants place priority on educational programming, community outreach, long-term planning and other activities consistent with the public interest. In addition, state arts agencies often provide operating grants and funding for individual artists—two important areas that few foundations or corporations routinely support and that the federal government, per statute, cannot.
- **State arts agencies are the designated vehicle for receiving Partnership Agreement funding** from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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What Do State Arts Agencies Achieve?

State arts agencies offer a variety of services, including grants, marketing assistance, public information, technical assistance, training and research. Combined, these services:

- **make the economic, educational and civic benefits of the arts available to all communities** by broadening public access to the arts and reducing barriers to cultural participation;
- **support academic success** by helping schools to tap the arts as a teaching and learning asset;
- **promote the attainment of state education standards** for learning in key subjects;
- **foster sound management practices** by requiring grantees to adopt rigorous planning, evaluation and financial management systems;
- **hone a state's competitive edge** by fostering a creative work force, reinforcing a creative brand identity and offering a climate appealing to businesses, investors, residents and travelers;
- **support small business development** by providing catalytic funding and essential skills to creative entrepreneurs;
- **preserve cultural heritage** as a legacy for future generations;
- **build bridges across cultures, generations and geographies**, supporting civic engagement and involving citizens in community and civic life;
- **leverage federal dollars** that can be used to address each state's individual goals and to support arts activities in many communities;
- **encourage other investments in the arts**, catalyzing tax revenues, public and private investment, and entrepreneurial business practices;
- **demonstrate accountability and good government** by adhering to the highest management and accountability standards.

State arts agencies have demonstrated their ability to deliver value to the public over time. About half of the states established state arts agencies prior to the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965. The NEA then incentivized the rest of the states to create state arts agencies shortly thereafter. Since that time, state arts agencies have achieved periods of strong growth and have shared, along with the rest of state government, the pain of recessions. In good times and bad, however, state legislatures have continued a commitment to state arts agencies because of the singular combination of benefits that they provide to citizens and state government.

10. Why fund artists and arts organizations?

Artists form the foundation of a state's creative environment. Artists act as creators and individual entrepreneurs who provide many of the products and designs that drive innovation and shape a state's cultural character. Many artists also work as educators, providing training in creative skills and passing on cultural traditions from one generation to the next. However, few programs in either the private or public sector assist artists. State arts agencies play an important role in offering resources, information and training programs that help artists develop their careers, market their products and share their ideas with others.

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State arts agencies also provide extensive grants and services to nonprofit arts organizations. The effects of these grants accrue far beyond the recipient groups to benefit the community as a whole. Arts organizations create many opportunities for citizens to experience and learn about the arts. They form an essential bridge between artists and communities, facilitating public access to artists and to artworks. Cultural organizations small and large act as community hubs and catalysts for social cohesion and neighborhood revitalization. Like other enterprises, they employ workers, purchase goods and services, and contribute to a state's economic bottom line.

11. Does state funding for the arts cause dependence on public dollars?

No. Arts organizations rely on a blend of funds, predominantly earned income and private contributions. Although the mix of funds varies among different kinds and sizes of arts organizations, government funding is typically a very modest slice of the pie. Funding from state arts agencies composes just a small percentage—approximately 1.6%—of total grantee revenue.¹⁴

Despite its small size, that percentage plays a large role in providing benefits to citizens. State government support ensures the accessibility of the arts and strengthens education programs and the public outreach that aligns arts services with the needs of each community. State arts agencies require management and planning practices that contribute to long-term financial stability for grantees. Like other forms of government assistance to small businesses, state investments in the arts also support creative entrepreneurship, catalyze new ventures and create a vibrant market for the import and export of a state's cultural goods.

Furthermore, government funding helps to attract other investments. State arts agency grants typically come with a minimum 1-to-1 matching requirement, but matches often exceed that minimum. Dollars from a state arts agency provide a widely recognized “seal of approval” that helps grantees to raise additional funds from individuals, corporations and foundations and to attract partners in entrepreneurial and earned income ventures. For every \$1 of total grant funds awarded by state arts agencies nationwide, about \$60 in matching funds is secured from earned or contributed funds.¹⁵

“...direct grants do not finance the bulk of artistic activity in the U.S.; they fill gaps, enhance arts education, nourish arts creation, assist in the presentation and delivery of artworks, and enable preservation. These grants thus complement, and do not replace, other means of arts funding.”

[National Endowment for the Arts](#)

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12. What the Research Says

Research has documented numerous economic, educational, health and civic benefits of investing in the arts. The catalogue below offers a succinct summary of those research findings. For additional details and links to the source material, follow the “Review more research” links at the end of each section.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The arts help communities to prosper. The arts are part of a well-diversified 21st-century economy. Along with nonprofit arts organizations, creative enterprises make significant contributions to state and local economies, generating employment and tax revenues and providing goods and services sought by the public. In fact, according to the U.S. Census, in 2011 the value of arts and cultural production in America was \$504 billion, or nearly 3.2% of gross domestic product (GDP). For context, consider that the estimated value of U.S. travel and tourism in 2011 was only 2.8% of GDP.¹⁶ (Sources: [National Governors Association](#); [Americans for the Arts](#); [U.S. Census/National Endowment for the Arts](#))

“People don't come to America for our airports, people don't come to America for our hotels... they come for our culture, real and imagined.”

Garrison Keillor

The arts put people to work. By investing in the arts, the public sector is fostering a skilled work force of creative occupations that contribute to economic productivity. The arts employ artists, managers, marketers, technicians, teachers, designers, carpenters, and workers in a wide variety of other trades and professions. Like other occupations, arts jobs help to pay mortgages and send children to college. The 905,000 creative businesses in the United States employ 3.35 million workers.¹⁷ (Sources: [National Governors Association](#); [Americans for the Arts](#); [Americans for the Arts](#))

The arts attract tourism revenue. Cultural tourism is a huge market, comprising some 129.6 million cultural travelers, whose participation in cultural and/or heritage activities contributes more than \$171 billion each year to the U.S. economy.¹⁸ Furthermore, cultural tourists stay longer and spend more than twice as much as local arts patrons.^{19, 20} (Sources: [Mandala Research](#); [U.S. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#); [Americans for the Arts](#))

The arts are a sound rural development strategy. The arts help to address some of the unique challenges faced by rural communities, including geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations and population flight. The arts can boost rural employment and help to diversify rural economies by creating sustainable small businesses, improving quality of life for residents, and attracting visitors and investment. (Sources: [National Governors Association](#); [U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service](#))

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The arts are a business magnet. Arts organizations purchase goods and services that help local merchants thrive. Arts audiences also add to the local economy, buying admission tickets but also spending money—more than \$74 billion in 2010—on transportation, food, lodging, gifts and souvenirs.²¹ The arts act as a magnet for businesses, attracting companies that want to offer their employees and clients a creative climate and an attractive community with high amenity value. (Sources: [State Arts Agency Economic Impact Studies](#); [Americans for the Arts](#))

The arts give industries a competitive edge. American companies face an international marketplace in which value is increasingly determined by a product’s artistic qualities, uniqueness, performance and design. Creative workers help businesses to innovate product lines and effectively market their services. (Source: [National Governors Association](#))

The arts create a distinctive state identity. Along with a community’s physical landmarks, its culture, traditions and character are part of its magnetism. A cohesive brand identity is an economic asset that can help both places and products to prosper. (Source: [National Governors Association](#))

The arts enhance property values. The arts make neighborhoods attractive places to live, work and play. The arts help to revitalize blighted areas and strengthen both commercial and residential housing markets. (Source: [Social Impact of the Arts Project/The Reinvestment Fund](#))

[Review more research](#) about the economic benefits of the arts.

EDUCATIONAL AND WORK-FORCE BENEFITS

Students engaged in the arts perform better academically. Numerous longitudinal research studies have documented that students who receive arts education exhibit improvements on standardized test scores and in their performance in other subjects, including reading and math. (Sources: [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies/Arts Education Partnership](#); [The College Board](#); [National Endowment for the Arts](#); [Arts Education Partnership](#))

“Education in the arts is more important than ever. In the global economy, creativity is essential. Today’s workers need more than just skills and knowledge to be productive and innovative participants in the workforce.”

[Arne Duncan](#),
U.S. Secretary of Education

The arts help kids to succeed in school and life. Students who receive arts education have stronger social skills, improved motivation to learn, and more esteem for themselves and their peers. Arts education helps to create a positive school environment in which learning and human development can occur. (Sources: [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#); [National Endowment for the Arts](#); [Arts Education Partnership](#); [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies/Arts Education Partnership](#))

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Arts education provides skills critical to 21st-century success. In a global economy that is driven by knowledge and ideas, arts education is a necessity. The best-paying jobs require workers with creativity and higher-order thinking and communication skills, and companies are increasingly looking for these qualities in the workers they recruit. While studying the arts, students hone their perceptual, analytic and interpretive skills while developing creative thinking, communications and problem-solving abilities. (Sources: [Education Commission of the States](#); [National Governors Association](#); [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#))

The arts address a shortage of creative workers. Eighty-five percent of business leaders say they can't find enough job applicants with creativity and innovation skills.²² Arts education, K-12 and beyond, is part of the solution to this challenge. (Source: [The Conference Board](#))

The arts keep kids in school. Dropout rates are causing serious academic and economic concerns for many communities. Numerous studies have found that arts education programs can help to reduce dropout rates, increase student engagement and raise educational attainment levels. (Sources: [Center for Arts Education](#); [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies/Arts Education Partnership](#))

The arts help at-risk youth. Participation in arts programs decreases young people's involvement in delinquent behavior, increases academic outcomes for disadvantaged children, and improves students' attitudes about themselves and their future. (Sources: [National Endowment for the Arts](#); [U.S. Department of Justice](#))

Voters are committed to arts education. The American public, by an overwhelming margin, believes the arts are vital to a well-rounded education. Studies also indicate that a majority of voters, regardless of political affiliation, are willing to cast their ballots against elected officials who oppose education programs designed to foster student imaginations. (Sources: [Lake Research Partners](#); [Harris Polling](#); [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies/Arts Education Partnership](#))

[Review more research](#) about the educational and work-force benefits of the arts.

HEALTH BENEFITS

The arts promote physical health and expedite medical recovery. According to the evidence, the arts have a positive effect on physical health. They facilitate the recovery processes of ill and injured people. Arts engagement enhances patient resilience and coping skills, and it has been associated with cutting the length of hospital stays and decreasing health care related infection rates and the need for pain treatments. (Sources: [American Journal of Public Health](#); [Americans for the Arts](#))

The arts contribute to healthy aging. Research shows that seniors who participate regularly in the arts report better health, fewer doctor's visits and less medication usage. The arts can help ameliorate age-related conditions, such as dementia and cognitive decline, and they promote emotional well-being by

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increasing social engagement and encouraging independence. (Sources: [George Washington University Center on Aging](#); [National Endowment for the Arts](#); [National Center for Creative Aging/National Guild for Community Arts Education](#))

The arts can help wounded warriors and trauma survivors. The arts have been used effectively to treat soldiers, combat veterans and survivors of physical and emotional trauma. The arts open avenues for expression, engagement and other key elements of trauma recovery. (Sources: [Americans for the Arts](#); [National Center for Creative Aging/National Guild for Community Arts Education](#))

The arts improve medical environments. Arts opportunities for patients in hospitals and other medical environments generally increase their levels of satisfaction with the health care experience. As a result, they improve the working environments of medical professionals. (Source: [Americans for the Arts](#))

The arts are good for mental and emotional wellness. The arts can be an effective treatment tool for mental and emotional health issues. For example, the arts can reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and they can increase self-esteem. The processes of creativity—brainstorming, planning, making and presenting—all engender self-efficacy. (Sources: [American Journal of Public Health](#); [Americans for the Arts](#); [National Center for Creative Aging/National Guild for Community Arts Education](#))

[Review more research](#) about the health benefits of the arts.

CIVIC BENEFITS

The arts contribute to community vitality. A growing body of research points to the arts as an engine for civic renewal. Citizen engagement in the arts creates a strong shared identity and instills pride in a state’s cultural heritage. (Sources: [Social Impact of the Arts Project/The Reinvestment Fund](#); [The Urban Institute](#))

The arts bring public spaces to life. Artworks and arts activities make public spaces livable, attractive and distinctive, engaging residents in the creation of welcoming and sustainable places to live, work, play and raise families. (Source: [Social Impact of the Arts Project/The Reinvestment Fund](#))

The arts contribute to collective efficacy. Research has shown that the arts build resiliency, foster social capital, strengthen interpersonal ties and empower residents, all of which nurture the collective efficacy of a community to address major problems, including poverty. (Sources: [Social Impact of the Arts Project/The Reinvestment Fund](#); [John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University](#); [Americans for the Arts](#))

“...the arts and culture play a key role in urban revitalization and community renewal strategies.”

[National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

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The arts foster civic participation and a strong democracy.

The arts enhance our ability to illustrate viewpoints, to engage issues, to inspire action and to see things through the eyes of others—all necessary components of a thriving democracy. Americans who participate in the arts are more likely to engage in other aspects of community life, such as voting and volunteering. The arts also enhance civic dialogue, capturing the American experience and giving voice to our joys and aspirations and the conscience of our communities. (Sources:

[National Endowment for the Arts](#); [Americans for the Arts](#); [Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities](#))

“...in a pluralist democratic state, the government has an obligation to encourage citizens to reap the civic benefits of the arts.”

[Daniel Reid, Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities](#)

The arts are a communications asset in a global society. The arts build bridges among people. They facilitate intercultural understanding and provide a common lexicon for building relationships in an increasingly diverse and global society. (Sources: [Social Impact of the Arts Project/The Reinvestment Fund](#); [National Governors Association](#))

[Review more research](#) about the civic benefits of the arts.

Notes

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About the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is the membership organization representing the state and jurisdictional arts councils of the United States. NASAA is a clearinghouse for research about government support for arts and culture in America, providing statistical data, policy analysis and information on exemplary practices used to serve the public. Additional information on [state arts agencies](#) is available on the [NASAA website](#).