



10 Reasons to Invest in Your Local Arts Agency During a Crisis

Local arts agencies—arts *councils*, arts *commissions*, *cultural affairs departments*—are an essential tool for community leaders as they rebuild their economies and promote social cohesion. The nation’s 4,500 local arts agencies (LAAs) support, present, and promote the dynamic value of the arts. Through their partnerships and leadership, LAAs are building healthier communities through the arts in the following ways:

1. **Support a robust jobs sector.** Arts and culture is an \$878 billion industry in the U.S. (nonprofit, commercial, education)—a larger share of the nation’s economy (4.5%) than transportation, tourism, and agriculture (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis). The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$166.3 billion in economic activity annually—spending by organizations and their audiences—which supports 4.6 million jobs and generates \$27.5 billion in government revenue. 1-in-10 LAAs are based in the city’s economic development agency.
2. **Drive commerce to local businesses.** 72% of Americans attend arts or cultural events, such as the theater, museum, zoo, or a musical performance. Arts attendees spend \$31.47 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission (meals, retail, and lodging)—vital commerce for local businesses. Nationally, total event-related spending by arts audiences is \$103 billion. 49% of LAAs partner with their Chamber of Commerce to strengthen local businesses.
3. **Grow the creative economy.** 60% of employed adults say that the more creative and innovative they are at their job, the more successful they are in the workplace. Creativity is among the top five applied skills sought by business leaders, per the Conference Board’s *Ready to Innovate* report (72% say creativity is of high importance when hiring). Engagement in the arts is among the top indicators of creativity. More than one-third of LAAs produce programming that serves the business community (e.g., employee engagement, business volunteers for the arts, artist in residency).
4. **Promote tourism.** As travel restrictions begin to lift, arts travelers are ideal tourists, staying longer and spending more to seek out authentic cultural experiences. 34% of arts attendees live outside the county in which the arts event takes place; they spend an average of \$47.57 apiece. 14% of nonlocal attendees had a lodging cost and spent \$162 per person. 62% of LAAs partner with their Convention and Tourism Bureaus.
5. **Unify communities.** The arts provide shared experiences in public spaces. 72% of Americans believe “the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, and ethnicity;” 81% of the population says the arts are a “positive experience in a troubled world;” and 73% agree that the arts “helps me understand other cultures better.” More than one-third of LAAs use the arts to address social equity, racial awareness, or civic engagement.
6. **Partner in education.** 76% of LAAs provide arts education programs or services in the community. Students with an arts education have higher GPAs, standardized test scores, and more college-going as well as lower drop-out rates. These academic benefits are reaped by students regardless of socio-economic status.
7. **Improve civic pride.** Public art enhances the identity and character of the community and promotes tourism, which attracts and retains new economy workers and businesses. 70% of Americans believe that the “arts improve the image and identity” of their community. 54% of LAAs manage a public art program.
8. **Support the health and well-being of the military.** The arts heal the mental, physical, and moral injuries of war for military servicemembers and Veterans as well as aid in their reintegration into the community. Creative arts therapies are consistently ranked in the top four (out of 40) interventions and treatments for effectiveness. 26% of LAAs engage with military or Veteran constituencies in their community.
9. **Promote healthy communities.** 21% of LAAs use the arts to address physical and mental health issues in their community. Nearly one-half of the nation’s hospitals provide arts programming for patients, families, and staff because of their healing benefits to patients—shorter hospital stays, better pain management, and less medication. 73% of the population feels the arts give them “pure pleasure to experience and participate in.”
10. **Build social cohesion.** University of Pennsylvania researchers have demonstrated that a high concentration of the arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates. 67% of LAAs are delivering artistic content to raise community spirits and morale and strengthen community cohesion during the COVID-19 crisis.