

OVERVIEW

As the United States experiences a weakened economy, arts and cultural programs have seen significant cuts in funding and support. In Massachusetts, these cuts have been particularly severe. In 2003, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) experienced a 62 percent cut in funding. It was the largest funding cut of any agency in Massachusetts, as well as the largest cut experienced by any state art agency in the country. (Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities) These funding cuts perpetuate the misconception that arts and cultural organizations contribute less to a community or state's well-being than other services. In fact, they may contribute more. Recent studies have determined that art and cultural programs not only promote a strong economy, but also create a vibrant community.

Definition of art and culture

The term "art and culture" as defined by the Center for Arts and Culture is described as:

All creative expressions – in support of, or in opposition to, a nation's or a community's flavor and essence, that ally it with and distinguish it from other nations or communities – that can be read, heard, viewed, and/or participated in. (Strom, 2001)

This definition is broader than many prior definitions and encompasses both popular and unpopular art, created by both professionals and amateurs for both profit and non-profit purposes.

Why it is important to support the arts

Arts and cultural events and activities improve the quality of life for individuals and communities in numerous ways. This improvement often occurs through the promotion of community identity, the spurring of community and economic development, the promotion of education and cultural literacy, and the meeting of social needs. (Strom, 2001)

Promoting a sense of community identity and stability

Studies show that residents who regularly participate in art and cultural activities are more satisfied with the quality of life in their community. Furthermore, communities with active cultural institutions make that community more resilient to deterioration and difficult economic times, all the while accommodating and preserving ethnically diverse populations. (Strom, 2001)

Spurring community and economic development

According to the *Arts & Economic Prosperity* study, non-profit arts organizations are a significant industry and economic force in the United States. Contributions made by the arts and culture industry include:

- \$134 billion in economic activity;
- 4.9 million jobs supported; and
- \$24 billion in government revenue. (Americans for the Arts, 2002)

The impact of arts organizations in Massachusetts is particularly important as the New England Foundation for the Arts reports that cultural organizations and attractions generate \$3.9 billion annually while supporting 110,000 jobs. (New England Council, 2000)

Promoting education and cultural literacy

Arts and cultural programs provide tremendous benefit to participants, particularly to children and young people. It was determined that young people who regularly participate in community-based art activities are:

- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement;
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office;
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math or science fair;
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance; and
- 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem. (Heath, 1998)

Other findings show that students involved in the arts are less likely to watch television and more likely to perform community service. (Strom, 2001)

Addressing social needs

In recent years, non-profit arts organizations increased the number of programs that address social issues and have found particular success with programs targeting youth. The Department of Justice determined that participation in these programs significantly reduced the criminal activity of at-risk youth. (Strom, 2001)

Non-profits generally aim to improve the quality of life in a targeted population; the goal of arts and culture organizations is no different, but is often viewed as less vital.

Arts and culture as good business in Massachusetts: *The Creative Economy Initiative*

In 2000, The New England Council, in partnership with several state art agencies, conducted a study called *The Creative Economy Initiative: The Role of the Arts and Culture in New England's Economic Competitiveness*. The purpose of the study was to analyze the creative sector, both non- and for-profit entities, and understand its economic impact. The study identified three components to the "creative economy": the creative cluster, the creative workforce, and the creative

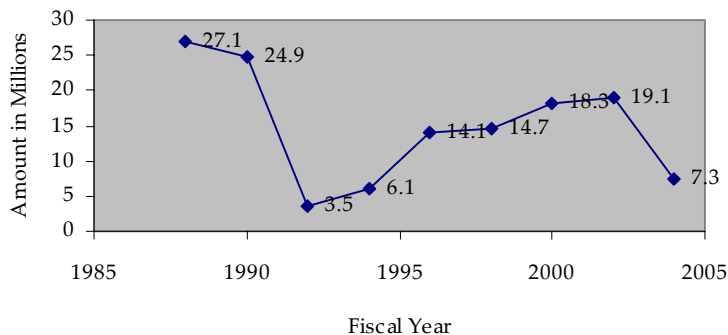
community.

The Creative Cluster includes nonprofit organizations, commercial businesses and individuals whose work is based in the arts and culture. This group supports 3.5 percent of New England's entire workforce, a larger percentage than the software and medical technology industries. The creative cluster is growing at almost twice the rate of other regional industries. (NEC, 2000)

The Creative Workforce includes those who may not be employed by a cultural organization but still fall under the title of artist, performer, and other professional engaged in creative work.

The Creative Community is the geographic area in New England that has a concentration of creative endeavors that directly connect to a higher quality of life. High concentrations of creative workers, businesses and

Figure 1: State Funding of the Arts, 1999 - 2004



Source: Massachusetts Culture Council

organizations correlate to a high quality of living and civic pride among citizens. (NEC, 2000)

According to the study, New England is ready for a shift in economic focus to the arts and culture sector which they project will provide a much more robust economy and unlimited growth. To enrich the lives of New England residents and spur economic growth, the NEC believed it was imperative to invest Massachusetts time, talent

and treasure in each component. To carry out this goal, the Creative Economy Council was created and a blueprint was designed to implement the NEC strategy.

State and national support of the arts

The MCC will provide \$9.3 million in grants to local arts and culture agencies and non-profit organizations this year. Of that funding, \$7.3 million comes from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the other \$2 million comes from National Endowment for the Arts grants, the Wallace-Readers Digest Funds and other sources. (Massachusetts Culture Council) However, because so many non-profit arts organizations rely on these funds to receive matching funds from private donors, the significant reductions in funding from the Commonwealth will cause many organizations to lose millions of dollars in matching funds.

In Boston, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) works to strengthen the city for both residents and visitors through its cultural agenda. In addition to providing grants to local programs, the OCA is responsible for overseeing the city's "cultural agenda." The agenda is a comprehensive plan that provides cultural economic development, opportunities for youth both in and out of school, public access to a wide array of art, preservation of cultural facilities, and technical assistance. (OCA, 2004)

The future of arts and culture

Despite the massive cuts in funding and programs, arts and culture remains an important part of community life for most of Massachusetts' citizens. In a poll conducted by the University of Massachusetts in February 2003, overwhelming support was shown for arts education and public funding for the arts, sciences and humanities. (McCormack Institute of Public Affairs)

- 94 percent considered arts to be as fundamental to basic education as math and English.
- 92 percent favored state funding of school arts programs.
- 87 percent felt that nonprofit art organizations contributed to the quality of life in their community.
- 84 percent favored state funding of arts and cultural programs. (McCormack Institute of Public Affairs)

For 2005, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts plans to award the MCC \$7.3 million in funding, the same amount as awarded in 2004. (*Figure 1*). As a result, many non-profit arts organizations and programs will seek additional volunteers and development sources to keep their programs running.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Local & State

Arts and Business Council of Greater Boston
www.artsandbusinesscouncil.org

Massachusetts Cultural Council
www.massculturalcouncil.org

Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities
www.mfh.org

New England Council
www.newenglandcouncil.com

New England Foundation for the Arts
www.nefa.org

Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities
www.maash.org

National

Americans for the Arts
www.artsusa.org

Center for Arts and Culture
www.culturalpolicy.org

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
www.nasaa-arts.org

The Wallace Foundation
www.wallacefunds.org

Government

National Endowment for the Arts
www.nea.gov

National Endowment for the Humanities
www.neh.fed.us

For more information on this and other local issues, we encourage you to utilize the *Boston Indicators Project*, available online www.tbf.org/indicators. Produced and maintained by the **Boston Foundation**, this web site features indicators of change and progress in ten sectors and is regularly updated with new information and reports.



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About Boston Cares

Boston Cares organizes and leads volunteer teams and services in and around Boston that have a positive impact on individuals and communities. Since 1991, thousands of people of all ages have volunteered through Boston Cares at over 240 Greater Boston schools and non-profits.

Boston Cares is a member of the Hands on Network (formerly City Cares,) an alliance of volunteer organizations working to transform individuals and communities through service and civic engagement, with affiliates and partners in 41 US and international locations.



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