

Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

OVERVIEW

AMERICANS
for the
ARTS

When individual and collective actions identify and address issues of public concern, we've entered into a civic dialogue. As engaged citizens, we volunteer in areas of need, work with others to solve a problem, or interact with our government institutions. As engaged citizens, we develop the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in the civic life of our communities.

Communities in which residents socialize with and trust each other have higher livability scores than communities with lower social trust, and the arts are a driver in building that trust. In addition, cultural participation leads to wider community participation and to increased volunteerism and increased tolerance—all of which are key to civic engagement. It also increases involvement in local issues and projects that promote community health.

The role of the arts in civic processes manifests in many different directions, but focuses on the power of the arts to bridge gaps in understanding, offer new and innovative ways of thinking about challenges, and to catalyze change. The arts provide a focal point for dialogue, spark individuals to action, and reduce barriers to participation.

ARTS + CIVIC DIALOGUE

IMPACT POINTS

86% INCREASE IN CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Arts activities increase residents' interest in getting involved in local issues and projects. Eighty-six percent of civic engagement participants want to be involved in future projects, and after their involvement, people living where projects occurred were more than twice as likely to be civically engaged as those whose blocks did not have projects.¹

ARTS PROVIDE 20% INCREASE IN COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

The arts drive trust, and trust drives community satisfaction. Levels of civic engagement predict the quality of community life and residents' happiness better than education or income. In the communities with the highest trust, 52 percent gave their community a top rating as a place to live; in the communities with the lowest levels of social trust, only 31 percent felt positively.²

40% MORE LIKELY TO HAVE DIVERSE FRIENDS

Participation in arts activities increases tolerance. Twelfth graders who participate in the arts are 40 percent more likely to have friends from different racial groups and are 29 percent less likely to feel that it is "okay" to make a racist remark.³

ARTS UNITES GENERATIONS

Arts participation has a positive effect on social cohesion by bringing generations together, encouraging partnerships and intercultural understanding, reducing fear of crime, and fostering organizational skills. People report feeling more in control of their lives and more activated as citizens.⁴

ARTS BRIDGE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Children from immigrant and resident populations cohere best when barriers around language come down. Research shows that art making provides a common bridge and increases friendship, empathy, and mutual trust.⁵

2X AS LIKELY TO REGISTER TO VOTE

Young people engaged in participatory arts are highly motivated to vote. A study of young artists found that 84 percent of participants were likely or very likely to vote when eligible/in the next election, compared to just 44 percent of 18-24-year-old who voted in the previous election.⁶



EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

Catalyst Initiative, Center for Performance and Civic Practice, Chicago, IL



The Catalyst Initiative supports place-based project teams comprised of an individual artist and a civic partner to conceive and execute a small-scale, local arts based projects created in response to an expressed need by the community.

thecpcp.org/catalyst-initiative/

image: Catalyst Initiative Grantees gather with CPCP Staff for a convening in Phoenix, AZ. Photo by Sara Sawicki. Photo courtesy of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice.

City Council Meeting, USA



City Council Meeting is performed participatory democracy: a performance of empathy, democracy, and power created fresh in each city where it is presented, with local artists, activists, government officials, and other citizens.

citycouncilmeeting.org/

image: Courtesy of Aaron Landsman, City Council Meeting. Photo by David A. Brown / dabfoto creative.

Mural Arts, Philadelphia, PA



Mural Arts is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. It is the home of the Porch Light project, which centers on improving community health through public art.

<https://www.muralarts.org/>

image: Curing Community © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Cesar Viveros, Philadelphia Pharmacy, Front Street and Lehigh Avenue. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Urban Bush Women, New York, NY



Urban Bush Women seeks to bring the untold and under-told histories and stories of disenfranchised people to light through dance. It galvanizes artists, activists, audiences, and communities through performances, artist development, education, and community engagement.

urbanbushwomen.org/about_ubw/mission_values

image: Urban Bush Women. Hair & Other Stories. Photo by Hayim Heron.

Conflict Kitchen, Pittsburgh, PA



Conflict Kitchen serves cuisines from countries with which the United States is in conflict. It integrates food culture with programming that helps diners connect with the experiences of those often misrepresented and marginalized by the government and mass media.

conflictkitchen.org

info@conflictkitchen.org

image: People in line at Conflict Kitchen for cuisine from countries with which the U.S. is in conflict

top image: Urban Bush Women. Hair & Other Stories. Photo by Hayim Heron.

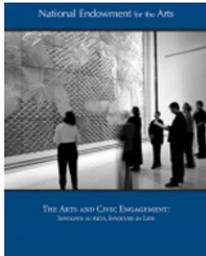
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READING LIST

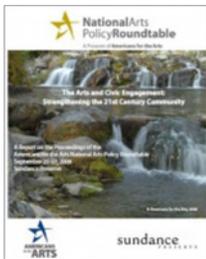
The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life



This National Endowment for the Arts study looks at the relationship between arts and civic engagement demonstrated by data from the Public Participation in the Arts survey.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/85500>

The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community



The 2008 Americans for the Arts policy roundtable report looks at trends and best practices in arts-based civic engagement and makes recommendations to the field.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100566>

Hearts and Minds: The Arts and Civic Engagement



Commissioned by the James Irvine Foundation, this paper shows the impacts of arts participation on civic engagement and distinguishes between kinds of impacts and between community engagement efforts of arts organizations and the social science framing of civic engagement.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100565>

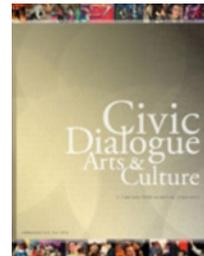
Participatory Art-making and Civic Engagement



Participatory art making programs are used to increase civic engagement and this paper reviews three examples that illustrate the ways participatory art making programs can have a positive impact on community life. This is one of a series of Animating Democracy papers looking at different segments of the arts-for-change field.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100568>

Civic Dialogue, Arts, and Culture



This book from Animating Democracy explores the power of the arts and humanities to foster civic engagement while advancing possibilities for participating organizations to be vital civic partners. It covers 37 projects from a wide range of cultural organizations.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/94942>

top image: Why We Love Coltrane © 2017 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Ernel Martinez, 29th and Diamond Streets. Photo by Steve Weinik.

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ORGANIZATIONS

Arts and Democracy Project

Connects artists, cultural organizers, and activists who wouldn't otherwise know each other and creates the connective tissue and generative environment needed for cross sector collaboration to succeed.

<http://artsanddemocracy.org/index.php>

Animating Democracy

A program of Americans for the Arts that that brings national visibility to arts for change work, builds knowledge about quality practice, and creates useful resources.

<http://animatingdemocracy.org>

Art Works for Change

Art Works for Change strives to harness the transformative power of art to promote awareness, provoke dialogue, and inspire action through art exhibitions. Focused on issues of serious concern—human rights, social justice, gender equity, environmental stewardship, and sustainability—in creative, inspiring, and ultimately positive ways by engaging with audiences fully, creating experiences that are at once emotional, intellectual, and sensory.

<http://www.artworksforchange.org>

Working Films

Working Films links nonfiction film to cutting edge activism. The goal is to leverage the storytelling power of documentary film to advance the efforts of social, economic, human and civil rights, and environmental justice. Working Films offers consultation, strategic planning for alternative distribution, website and social media development, and complete campaign management services to filmmakers to ensure the content of nonfiction media truly meets the intention for change.

workingfilms.org

Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University

IACD, founded by Anna Deavere Smith, exists to support artists whose works address social justice and related themes, arts education, and the creation of meeting spaces for artists, scholars, and audiences to exchange ideas.

<http://www.annadeaveresmith.org/iacd-at-nyu/>

top image: From exhibition Survival Architecture and the Art of Resilience, by Mitchell Joachim, Terreform ONE, cricket sky terreform.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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Americans for the Arts developed this Fact Sheet as part of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer.

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