

# Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

## OVERVIEW

AMERICANS  
for the  
**ARTS**

A community is at its best when it feels coherent, collaborative, and safe. Social tensions created by an influx of new people, economics, environment, or any number of factors can disturb citizens' sense of self and stress the threads that bind them. Arts participation contributes to social cohesion by reducing isolation, encouraging cooperation, and building community networks.

Involvement in the arts helps build individual identity, as well as group solidarity. Arts participation helps to resolve conflicts and increase tolerance and cross-cultural understanding by bringing together people from different backgrounds and providing opportunities to recognize the contribution of many segments of the community.

Arts participation crosses barriers of social class and ethnicity and leads to residents learning about each other and other neighborhoods. People involved in the arts meet more people, and participatory arts projects make marginalized groups more visible and promote positive community connections.

## ARTS + COMMUNITY COHESION

## IMPACT POINTS

### NINE OUT OF 10

arts participants report meeting new people and making new friends through their arts experiences.<sup>1</sup>

### 80% OF PEOPLE EXPLORE NEW PLACES FOR THE ARTS

Arts participation crosses barriers of social class and ethnicity. A Philadelphia study showed that 80 percent of participants traveled to another neighborhood to take part in arts activities.<sup>2</sup>

### 40% FEEL MORE POSITIVE ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY AFTER TAKING PART IN THE ARTS

Participatory arts projects celebrate local culture and heritage, making marginalized groups more visible and promoting positive community connections. In the UK, 40 percent of participants felt more positive about where they lived after participating in an arts activity.<sup>3</sup>

### 9 OUT OF 10 SAY THE ARTS INCREASE CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

New friends and connections are a primary positive outcome of arts participation and help to reduce social isolation. In the UK, 91 percent of participants reported making new friends by participating in arts activities.<sup>4</sup>

### ARTS BRIDGE LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND UNITE DISPARATE GROUPS

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

### GROUPS BUILT AROUND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES SCORE HIGHEST ON TRUST AND TOLERANCE

Research into how different formations of people in associations work reveals that cultural groups scored highest on trust and second-highest on optimism and tolerance.<sup>6</sup>

### ARTS PARTICIPATION UNITES GENERATIONS, REDUCES FEAR, AND EMPOWERS CITIZENS

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.<sup>7</sup>



# EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

## Hyde Square Task Force/ Artes Pa'lante, Boston, MA



Boston's Latin Quarter has been predominately Latinx for decades. As new residents move in, the Hyde Square Task Force tries to preserve its identity while making newcomers welcome. Artes Pa'lante connects residents, multi-generational artists, and businesses through outdoor arts interventions.

[hydesquare.org](http://hydesquare.org)

**image:** A salsa performance during the annual Tito Puentes Concert in Mozart Park. Photo by Mark Saperstein. Courtesy of ArtPlace America

## Sioux Falls Mural Project, Sioux Falls, SD

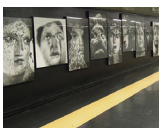


The mural located in Whittier—a working-class neighborhood of Native Americas as well as settlers from across the globe—shows the neighborhood working together to care for its natural beauty, the education of its youth, and the welfare of its residents.

[arts.gov/exploring-our-town/whittier-neighborhood-mural-project](http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/whittier-neighborhood-mural-project)

**image:** The World Comes to Whittier. Courtesy of the Sioux Falls Arts Council.

## SubArtSF, San Francisco, CA



SubArtSF integrates art into Bay Area Metro stations to identify and celebrate the cultural and social qualities of the network's local and collective community. It engages community members in collectively defining place and strengthening a sense of shared identity.

[subartsf.org/community-cohesion/](http://subartsf.org/community-cohesion/)

**image:** Wayfinding through art: a corridor leading to the National Museum, Naples, Italy. Photo by Rachel Dinno Taylor, SubArtSF.

## CREATE: The Community Meal, St. Paul, MN



CREATE: The Community Meal, commissioned from Seitu Jones by Public Art Saint Paul, aimed to create community dialogue and cohesion by gathering 2,000 people at a 1/2-mile-long table in the middle of Saint Paul's Victoria Street for a civic dinner table conversation.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-year-in-review-database/create-the-community-meal>  
[colleen@publicartstpaul.org](mailto:colleen@publicartstpaul.org)

**image:** Community gathers for a meal of food and conversation about food access, food for justice, and healthy eating. Photo by Andy King

## Irrigate, St. Paul, MN



Based on a three-year initiative created by Springboard for the Arts with the City of Saint Paul and Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation and in response to disruptive construction of a light rail line through the urban core, Irrigate is a community development strategy that mobilizes the skills and creativity of local artists to create innovative, meaningful, authentic solutions to local challenges.

<https://springboardforthearts.org/programs/irrigate/>  
[laura@springboardforthearts.org](mailto:laura@springboardforthearts.org)

**image:** Irrigate closing celebration. Credit: Sean Smuda.

**top image:** The World Comes to Whittier. Courtesy of the Sioux Falls Arts Council.  
REFERENCES

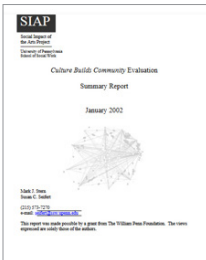
1. Stern, M. & Seifert, S. (2001). Culture Builds Communities Evaluation Summary Report. Philadelphia: Penn School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania.
2. Stern et al., 2001.
3. Stern et al., 2001.
4. Stern et al., 2001.
5. Lee, D. How the Arts Generate Social Capital to Foster Intergroup Social Cohesion. The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, 43(1) 4-17. Statistics retrieved 16 May 2018 from summary found at <https://culturecase.org/research/2014/04/using-the-arts-to-help-social-cohesion?format=pdf>

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# READING LIST

## Culture Builds Community Evaluation Report



This study evaluated the impact, successes, and failures of a William Penn Foundation program in Philadelphia.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/86875>

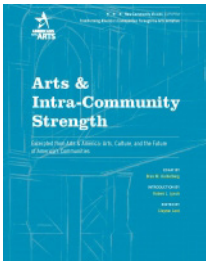
## Informal Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity, and Other Benefits in Unexpected Places



A team with the Chicago Center for Arts Policy found that the informal arts help to build both individual identify and group solidarity.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/101040>

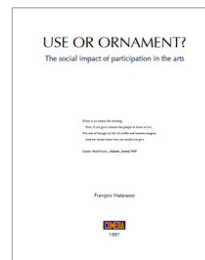
## Arts & Intra-Community Strength



This essay from the book *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of American Communities* looks at how transformations in the definition of “community” are changing how and where communities find strength and cohesion, as well as the role that the arts may play in positively impacting those changes over the 10–15 years.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/90689>

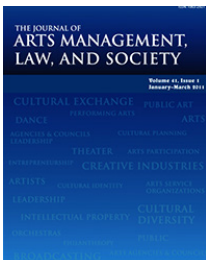
## Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts



This seminal British study of amateur, semi-professional, and community programs demonstrates impacts on personal development, social cohesion, and community empowerment.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100680>

## How the Arts Generate Social Capital to Foster Intergroup Social Cohesion



The case study of the Guernica Peace Mural Project in Columbus, OH, explores how community arts enabled participants to better understand each other’s cultures and form friendships across cultural divides. (Full text requires request).

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100918>

top image: Aimee Tejeda leads community Zumba classes on the steps of the Blessed Sacrament Church in the Latin Quarter. Photo by Mark Saperstein. Courtesy of Hyde Park Task Force

REFERENCES continued

6. Stolle, D. and Rochon, T. (1998) “Are all associations alike? Member diversity, associational type and the creation of social capital”, *American Behavioral Scientist* 42(1), 47–65
7. Jeannotte, S. “Singing Alone? The Contribution of Cultural Capital to Social Cohesion and Sustainable Communities.” *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9(1) 35-49. Retrieved 15 May 2018 from [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/33690600/singing\\_alone.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1526490332&Signature=7zF0sxR8S7jwDbkVUMipXDznWE%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DSinging\\_alone\\_The\\_contribution\\_of\\_cultur.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/33690600/singing_alone.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1526490332&Signature=7zF0sxR8S7jwDbkVUMipXDznWE%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DSinging_alone_The_contribution_of_cultur.pdf)



# ORGANIZATIONS

## European Commission

The website has a number of resources on best practices around arts and community cohesion and development.

[ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/)

## Nottingham Arts and Community Cohesion Working Group

This working group, housed at the University of Nottingham, has a website with a variety of arts and community cohesion case studies and resources.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/artsandhealth/>

## Social Impact of the Arts Project, University of Pennsylvania

The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) is a research group at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy & Practice in Philadelphia, PA convened to ask questions and develop methods to explore the impact of the arts and culture on urban communities.

<https://repository.upenn.edu/siap/>

## Tandem

Tandem is a cultural collaboration program that strengthens civil society in Europe and neighboring regions.

<http://www.tandemforculture.org>

## Chicago Center for Arts and Technology (CHICAT)

CHICAT works to elevate the talents, culture, and community through the arts and technology, in the belief that united communities are stronger and have more opportunity and vitality.

<http://www.chicat.org/about/who-we-are/>

top image: Community gathers for a meal of food and conversation about food access, food for justice, and healthy eating. Photo by Andy King.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



The Arts & Social Impact Explorer was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

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[AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG/SOCIALIMPACT](http://AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG/SOCIALIMPACT)

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

