

HOW TO PARTNER WITH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

PART 2

CONNECTING COMMUNITY IMPACT TO
ARTS & CHAMBER PARTNERSHIPS

Becoming equal and respected partners in the business ecosystem.





WELCOME TO PART 2 OF HOW TO PARTNER WITH YOUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: CONNECTING COMMUNITY IMPACT TO ARTS & CHAMBER PARTNERSHIPS.

Just as local arts agencies act as voices and conveners for their arts and culture communities, so do local chambers of commerce for their business communities.

How can these two types of agencies work together to solve community, social, and economic issues?

As the second in a three-part series, this toolkit will take the foundational knowledge gained from [Part 1](#) and guide local arts leaders to expand beyond their role as arts leaders into the role of community and economic development partner. It will explore how local arts leaders can identify their own work and assets within their full community and creative ecosystem and begin to leverage new connections and relationships inside the chamber to address social impact and community issues. The toolkit will encourage arts leaders to gain fluency in the Arts & Economic Prosperity studies, as well as learn how to use other creative economy research to make their case to their chamber and economic development counterparts.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to be used in tandem with our online webinar series entitled, **“How to Partner With Your Chamber of Commerce, Part 2.”** The series is available on ArtsU and includes three pre-recorded sessions. The Part 2 sessions include:



Local Arts Agencies & Ecosystem Thinking

In session one of Part 2, local arts agency leaders will learn how to expand their view beyond only being an arts leader, to gaining the agility to build on the local business ecosystem through their role as an agency leader representing a body of organizations. Participants will hear examples from Mark Nerenhausen, president & CEO of Hennepin Theatre Trust, as to how Hennepin has become a trusted and vital community and economic development partner, beyond being a leading arts organization in Minneapolis.



The Economic Case for the Arts

In session two of Part 2, local arts agency leaders will gain deeper knowledge in making the economic case for the arts using research, while understanding how to identify and communicate their own organizational assets as anecdotes to business and chamber challenges. While hearing from Americans for the Arts Vice President of Research Randy Cohen and Commerce Lexington President & CEO Robert L. Quick, local arts agency leaders will understand the importance of talent attraction and retention to chambers and their members, and how they can design partnerships alongside chamber leaders to help create a healthy business environment.



Arts, Chambers, and Centering Equity

In session three of Part 2, local arts agency leaders will gain insight as to how chambers are thinking about centering and integrating equity throughout their programs and business membership. In addition to hearing examples of programs, evaluations, and arts activations, participants will start to connect how local arts agencies are vital partners to help create a sense of place and belonging alongside their chambers, especially in terms of talent attraction and retention. This session is presented by the Greater Des Moines Partnership.



About Part 1: Local Arts Agencies & Chambers of Commerce—The Basics

[Part 1](#) of this series established a foundational knowledge of local chambers of commerce, the networks in which they operate and that serve them, how to navigate a traditional business environment, and basic activations a local arts agency can undertake to establish a partnership. Participants heard from chamber and arts leaders, gained perspective on chamber priorities and challenges, and learned to identify the various chamber and economic development entities in their communities. Participants in the series are encouraged to use the toolkit as complimentary learning and participate in a live discussion with presenters once completing the three-part on-demand webinar series.

About Part 3: Supporting and Advancing Inclusive Creative Economies With Your Chamber of Commerce

Building on the first two parts of this series, participants will consider what they can do in their communities alongside their chambers after building trust and mutual respect. How can local arts leaders navigate policy, politics, resource distribution, access to capital, and economic development opportunities as equal players with their chamber partners? This module will also discuss centering equity and equitable economic development, and solidarity economy principals into the chamber space. Part 3 will become available in summer 2022.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE THIS TOOLKIT

- Using this toolkit
- Players in the business, economic, and workforce ecosystem
- Ecosystem thinking
- Arts and economic impact
- Chambers and equity
- Research and policy
- Partnerships in practice
- Business and chamber social impact & equity programming worksheet

USING THIS TOOLKIT

ARE YOU A LOCAL ARTS AGENCY LEADER WORKING ON BROAD COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS?

Americans for the Arts defines local arts agencies as either private community organizations or local government agencies that integrate the arts into the daily fabric of their communities and work to advance the arts locally. However, the information included in this toolkit can be used by any arts group seeking to deepen their relationship with chambers of commerce.

The content in this toolkit assumes that as a local arts agency leader you already have established relationships with your chamber(s) of commerce. It also assumes that as a center point for arts and culture support and advocacy within your community, you seek to participate in and influence broader economic development conversations and decision-making that affects the artists, creative workers, and cultural institutions in your community.

Use this toolkit as an aid to think beyond your role as an arts leader and to become an equal and respected community and economic development partner whose primary constituency is arts and culture. Use the worksheet at the end of the toolkit as a place to map existing social impact and equity-related activities taking place at your chamber(s) of commerce.

This toolkit assumes completion of Part 1 and Part 2 of the three-part series. Once completing Parts 1 and 2, we invite you to build upon your skills in Part 3. All three parts include their own set of three on-demand sessions, a toolkit, and periodic live conversation for peer learning.

[Learn more about local arts agencies](#) and the ways they are vital to their communities.

PLAYERS IN THE BUSINESS, ECONOMIC, AND WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

As outlined in Part 1 of this series, The Basics, chambers of commerce come in many sizes, forms, affinities, and with varying service areas. As with local arts agencies, no two are alike, yet they all share similarities in their common goal to further the collective interests of their business communities and ultimately advance healthy business environments. Yet, chambers of commerce are not the only local entities working to strengthen the economic vitality of their communities.

Other organizations invested in developing, advancing, and advocating for economic improvement include economic development organizations (EDOs), main street organizations, convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), destination marketing organizations (DMOs), and workforce boards. While it may not be necessary to become an expert about each of these entities and their networks, it is important to identify which organizations exist in one's community, their unique role, and how they work together.

Regional Chambers of Commerce

In addition to the many types of chamber structures detailed in Part 1, it's important to introduce the concept of 'regional chambers.' In addition to local, national, and international chambers, regional chambers exist in most communities.

These entities may or may not have 'chamber of commerce' in their name. They have names like The Greater Des Moines Partnership, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Economic Alliance Snohomish County, etc.

While each city may have their own chamber of commerce, usually they have a regional chamber they are associated with. Local chambers can be small and interested in serving their local community, while the regional chambers are larger, cover multiple counties, have larger staff, bigger budgets, are more powerful, influential, and take projects that will move the region forward.

For example, The Greater Des Moines Partnership led efforts for a \$152 million project, the Iowa Confluence Water Trails (ICON), that touches many counties and brings public-private partnership together to coordinate and move big projects that affect not just one city or the county but the entire region.



In addition to making connections to your local chamber, find the regional chamber in the community and build relationships with them, connect with them, and work with them. Find out what big projects your regional chambers are working on and see where you can offer help.

What are Economic Development Organizations (EDOs)?

According to the [International Economic Development Council](#), “Economic developers often, but not always, work within an organization solely purposed to support economic development, referred to as Economic Development Organizations, or EDOs. Communities may have one or more EDOs, as independent organizations or part of a government entity, a public-private partnership, a chamber of commerce, or a nonprofit or non-governmental organization. Some community organizations, such as utilities, corporations, or higher-education institutions may also have offices or divisions within them tasked with supporting economic development.” Information on their website further explains EDOs:

Funding for EDOs, as well as specific economic development projects, may come from several sources, including federal, state, and local government, foundations and NGOs, businesses, and other private funds. EDOs may be accredited, certifying operational excellence.

An economic developer is a professional practitioner of economic development. Economic developers have a code of ethics, profession-specific education and training, and a professional certification. With varying backgrounds and specializations, economic developers frequently provide both leadership in policy making, as well as administering policies, programs, and projects in support of economic development. The effectiveness of economic developers lies in their ability to collaborate with industry, government, and community stakeholders. Often thought of as conveners, economic developers play a central role in leveraging the resources of a community—such as businesses, utilities, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, banks, real estate developers, neighborhood groups, foundations, NGOs, and more—to support economic development.

What are Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)?

Business Improvement Districts are organizations formed in a specific area of a community by business and commercial real estate holders to provide services that are usually not provided by local government that benefit the businesses in the area. They are primarily funded by a special tax or levy paid by member businesses and can also draw on other local private or public funding. BID services can range from providing additional security, beautification, and landscaping to advocacy and lobbying on behalf of the businesses, capital improvement projects, cultural and tourist activities, and coordinated economic and community development projects. Your community may have multiple BIDs, in addition to chambers of commerce and economic developers.

What are Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Destination Marketing Organizations, and Destination Marketing Companies?

According to Destinations International, the leading organization supporting destination organizations, a **Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)** is a nonprofit organization that promotes tourism, convention and meeting sales, long-term marketing of a destination, and supports economic activity of its locale through meetings and events. While CVBs are often their own nonprofit organizations, they are typically contracted by the local government as an extension of the planning and development arm. They are largely funded by hotel occupancy taxes, membership dues, and fundraising efforts. CVBs assist meetings and events planners with site selection, local service providers, vendors, and experiences.

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) may serve as the local CVB though not every DMO is a CVB. Some destinations don't have facilities, or meetings and events may not be the focus of the local tourism office. Some chambers of commerce and main street organizations act as the local DMO, especially in small communities. Additionally, some economic development organizations may house the chamber and tourism or destination marketing activities. It's important to do research into the activities and priorities of these types of organizations to understand how they are operating in your community.

Destination Marketing Companies (DMC) are private businesses that specialize in meetings and events. They may intersect and/or work alongside the CVB or DMO, but they operate independently of local government. They work in a singular community and charge fees for services. The Association of Destination Management Executives International is the service organization for these businesses and professionals.

What are Workforce Boards?

Workforce development boards are organizations that identify the needs of the local jobs market, act as one-stop resource centers for workers and job-seekers, and align workforce development initiatives in their area. Workforce boards liaise with and seek membership from local government, education, businesses, labor representatives, and community leaders to grow job opportunities; skill and re-skill workers; and link businesses and talent to put people back to work. They help recruit talent, identify economic development opportunities, and prioritize resource distribution to meet the priorities and needs of their economic and educational development partners.

Workforce boards can exist as government entities, nonprofit organizations, or private programs operated by businesses. Generally, workforce boards are governed by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which provides federal block grants to each state, creates service jurisdictions, and directs local workforce systems (the organizations) to develop regional plans and industry cluster initiatives as part of regional planning and economic development activities. WIOA dictates performance metrics for each region.

Workforce boards and the federal policy that legislates them largely hold preference for moving job seekers to W-2 worker status. Understanding that the creative economy consists of a creative workforce that ranges from the sole proprietor to independent contractor to those working in established creative industries, it is important to connect with your local workforce board and understand where mutual benefit may lie, and where your community's artists and creative workers can intersect.

For information related to current creative economy and workforce-related policies, please see the Research and Policy section of this toolkit.

ECOSYSTEM THINKING

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STEP OUT OF AN “ARTS ONLY” LANE? WHERE CAN YOU CREATE IMPACT AND ALIGN MUTUAL ASSETS?

Long past are the days when arts organizations and local arts agencies can operate in an arts-only mind frame. A scarcity mindset and the very real historical underfunding of the arts has led to operating in competition with other sectors. Recessions, the COVID-19 pandemic, reckoning with longtime racial injustices, and inequitable distribution and valuation of resources are all factors that make it necessary for all facets of community to work together in partnership to address broad community and economic challenges. Community cultural plans have evolved over the years from “how do we get more funding for artists and arts organizations” to “how do we build healthier communities through the arts”.

With many competing priorities, the question may be: how do the arts become relevant to the economic and business network partners throughout the community? We know that the arts hold significant intrinsic, economic, and social impact. To build strong partnerships with the business and economic development networks throughout the community, local arts agencies must work to become an interwoven part of the broader civic strategy by connecting their role and impacts to business recruitment, planning and development, and tourism. Local arts agencies can understand how to become a civic institution while advancing the arts. But what constitutes the civic agenda?

CASE STUDY

ECOSYSTEM THINKING AND THE CIVIC AGENDA AT HENNEPIN THEATRE TRUST

According to Mark Nerenhausen, president & CEO of Hennepin Theatre Trust in Minneapolis, Minnesota, understanding and aligning with the civic agenda and moving from an arts-only lane to operating in the broader economic ecosystem involves a few key shifts in how an arts leader thinks. These shifts, as well as deeper insight and examples are available in a full pre-recorded presentation format in the first session of Part 2 of this series on ArtsU.

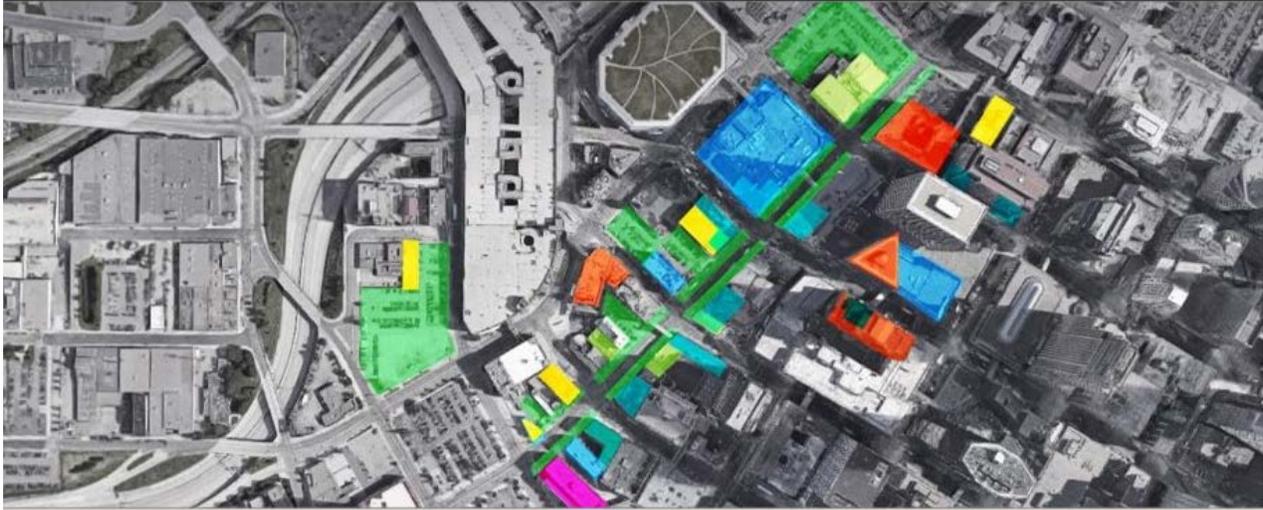
 **Shift perspective.** Think about advocating for *us*, not me. It is important to think more expansively about how to achieve mutual benefit, and how to use one's resources to advocate for the collective, not only to meet one's own organizational or sector needs. Capacity and funding needs are real, yet shifting the approach to one that recognizes the long-term benefit and return of working as a partner in the broader ecosystem will pay off.

 **Define extrinsic benefits that matter.** Arts leaders have an abundance of data at their fingertips to show the impact of their work, including several research resources listed starting on page 21 of this toolkit. However, the data and resulting benefits that the arts provide to the economy and community need to tell a story to those to whom it matters. Understanding who the priority partners are, what their goals and metrics of success are, and then aligning to that will drive home the connection in a much more relevant way.

 **Communicate common interests.** Arts leaders and arts communities as a whole are great storytellers. This is an asset that can be leveraged across business and economic development network partners to achieve mutual benefit. Understanding each other's needs and homing in on where assets can be matched will help arts leaders prioritize capacity and not try to be all things to all people.

Hennepin Theatre Trust does this by looking at the big picture; quite literally the holistic view of their physical surroundings to determine who their priority partners could be within the broader economic ecosystem.

Collective Impact – The 30,000 Foot View



This image depicts the whole of the Hennepin Theater District. While Hennepin Theatre Trust owns five of these buildings, the highlighted spaces are the entities that are directly impacted by the Theater Trust. They include parking garages, restaurants, hotels, apartments, a charter school, and small businesses. With a clear understanding of who is in their direct line of sight, these then become the focus of civic agenda. Restaurants are part of the restaurant association just as businesses are part of their chamber of commerce, while hotels will be connected to the Tourism and Visitors Bureau and will have considerations related to hotel/motel taxes. Understanding the networks and ecosystem of their immediate neighbors, Hennepin can target their engagement strategy and go from the abstract to specific impacts. Further narrowing into these networks, Hennepin can learn and understand what their goals and metrics are, frame their own impacts in those goals and metrics, and communicate those directly. This moves the communications and intentions from transactional to relational and reciprocal.

Nerenhausen explains that though Hennepin's primary output may be artistic content, the story of creating art and communicating that to civic partners is an 'advocating for me' approach. Demonstrating how Hennepin Theatre Trust is part of the civic story in terms of creating jobs, educating students, attracting and retaining talent, for example, is part of their partners' story, and therefore advocates for 'us' as a whole.

For more information and the full presentation on this case study, please view Session 1: Local Arts Agencies & Ecosystem Thinking as part of the on-demand recordings within [Part 2: Connecting Community Impact to Arts & Chamber Partnerships available on ArtsU](#).

GETTING STARTED ON ECOSYSTEM THINKING



Consider the information in the section above about who the ecosystem players are.

Learn about and understand who the business, chamber, and economic development players are in your ecosystem. What business-related associations are connected to your service area? Which business sectors in your community have a higher concentration of economic or community impact as a result of their proximity to your organization or that of your arts and culture groups?



Use the network mapping worksheets. [The Part 1 Toolkit: The Basics](#), and the worksheet at the end of this toolkit serve as a starting place to map your immediate network connections in an effort to align priorities.



Do the research. What are the strategic plans, policies, and service priorities of the business and economic development networks and associations in your community? What can you learn from their websites, staffing arrangements, CEO speeches, and programming that reveal more about where they are dedicating resources? How do these align with your mission, vision, and services?

MAKE IT YOUR GOAL TO UNDERSTAND THE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PRIORITIES OF YOUR CHAMBERS, BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS TO CREATE LONG-STANDING, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS ROOTED IN MUTUAL BENEFIT.

THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE SNOHOMISH COUNTY SERVES 23 CHAMBERS IN ITS REGION AND USES ITS REACH TO CONNECT WITH THE ARTS AND CULTURE DISTRICTS IN EACH OF THOSE AREAS. ITS GOAL IS TO CONNECT LIVABILITY, TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION, AND REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS WITH THE NATURAL ALIGNMENTS THE ARTS BRING IN THESE AREAS.

ARTS & ECONOMIC IMPACT

There's a long-standing myth that investing in arts and culture comes at the expense of economic development. Yet this idea is simply that—a myth. Chamber and economic development leaders tend to intrinsically understand that the arts are good for local businesses and tourism. Attracting creative businesses, artists, and entertainment to downtown centers and main streets has long been a practice of boosting a local economy. However, establishing strong and lasting partnerships with the arts has not necessarily been a priority. Armed with data, a desire for shared purpose, and meaningful case studies, repairing the disconnect can lead to long-term relationships that support the entire ecosystem.

Communicating the value of the arts in terms of economic impact also provides common ground for the business community, elected officials, economic developers, and others less comfortable with talking about the arts' intrinsic value. Using the [Arts & Economic Prosperity](#) study (AEP) is a great way of showing the economic value of the arts in the context of the larger business environment. AEP provides information nationally and locally, not just about the size and scope of the nonprofit arts industry, but also its impact on restaurants, parking facilities, tourist expenditures vs. local audience expenditures; local, state, and federal tax revenues; and job creation and talent retention. Combined with federal, state, and county-level data about the entirety of the creative economy, arts leaders can tell a concrete story about how arts and culture is integral to establishing a healthy business environment.¹

Local communities can and do launch their own studies to get specialized relevant information. [Colorado Business Committee for the Arts \(CBCA\)](#) has reported on the economic impact of the arts in the Denver Metropolitan Region since 1993 and uses the study as an opportunity to tell the story of the arts' impact in the region and to deepen partnerships across the business and chamber communities.

[“Colorado Business Committee for the Arts \(CBCA\)'s Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture](#), presented by U.S. Bank, quantifies the financial and social impact of arts and cultural nonprofit organizations in the metro Denver region. CBCA has been reporting on the impact of the arts for 28 years. The latest study is calculated using data from the 2019 and 2020 calendar years. It illustrates years of record-breaking cultural growth and how a community responds to drastic and disruptive circumstances. Data is self-reported by nearly 300 arts, culture, and scientific nonprofits funded by the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) in a seven-county metro Denver region. CBCA uses a longitudinal analytical model to track changes over time. As such, comparisons are drawn to the last study released in November 2018, examining data from the 2017 calendar year, as well as comparisons to before, during, and after the Great Recession, as well as back to the early 1990s when this study began. **In summary, this latest study illustrates a decade of growth lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Denver metro region.**” —Colorado Business Committee for the Arts

¹ [Arts & Culture Production Satellite Account](#) (ACPSA), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2020
[State-level profiles of the ACPSA](#) provided by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
[County-level creative economy data](#) provided by Americans for the Arts

CBCA SHARES THIS DATA WITH REGIONAL CHAMBERS WHO IN TURN USE IT TO TELL THE STORY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE REGION TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

CHRISTIN CRAMPTON DAY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COLORADO BUSINESS COMMITTEE FOR THE ARTS

Not all communities are prepared to conduct their own economic impact study. For this reason, Americans for the Arts offers a [local economic impact calculator](#) for communities that are not formal AEP study partners.

USING ECONOMIC IMPACT DATA CAN HELP LOCAL ARTS LEADERS STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.



Economic impact data, including that from Arts & Economic Prosperity, allows arts leaders to speak the language of business and gives confidence and credibility in interactions with business.



The research can give arts leaders a seat at the table with businesses and chambers of commerce. It allows leaders to inject the arts into conversations around community and economic development.



It can raise general awareness of the arts sector within the business community and is one way to validate the existence of the arts within society beyond its intrinsic value.



Using economic impact research helps develop the ability to change how the local business community perceives the arts, which creates lasting overall systems change in a community.

Arts & Economic Prosperity study partners are keen to share how making the case for the arts via economic impact deepens partnerships with businesses and chambers:

“THE ARTS AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY STUDIES HAVE PROVIDED US WITH AN INVALUABLE WAY TO CONNECT TO OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THEY HAVE GIVEN US A COMMON LANGUAGE ABOUT THE ECONOMY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND JOBS. NOW, OUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUALLY INVITES US TO ADDRESS THEIR CLASSES OF SENIOR BUSINESS EXECUTIVES WHO ARE NEW TO OUR COMMUNITY AND WHO ARE ENGAGED IN THEIR LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS. THIS GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO THESE CIVIC LEADERS AS AN INDUSTRY SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE ABOUT THE ESSENTIAL ROLE THAT THE ARTS PLAY IN FUELING THE ECONOMY AND GIVING OUR COMMUNITY A COMPETITIVE EDGE AS A GREAT PLACE TO GROW A BUSINESS, RAISE A FAMILY, AND VISIT. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDIES HAVE ESTABLISHED THE ARTS AS A VITAL AND INDISPENSABLE PART OF OUR OVERALL ECONOMY.”

MICHAEL SPRING

DIRECTOR, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

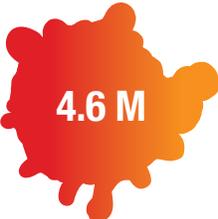
ECONOMIC DATA THAT RESONATES WITH CHAMBERS AND EDOS

A quick snapshot of the national value-add of the creative economy to the GDP, combined with workforce and jobs data, is an easy entry point to raise the visibility of the foothold the arts have in our country.

The arts mean business. The arts also mean jobs, local investment, social cohesion, and a ripple effect across other industries that boosts the whole economy.



\$876.7 billion is the current value-add to the nation’s GDP by the creative economy. This remains a greater value-add than such industries as construction, transportation, mining, and agriculture; and is third in overall value-add to the entire U.S. economy behind healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade.²



4.6 million people are considered creative workers, over a third of whom are independent workers or entrepreneurs that provide essential value-add to their local economy.³



69% of nonlocal arts attendees indicated that the primary purpose of their visit was “specifically to attend this arts event.”⁴



41% of local, resident arts attendees said they would have “traveled to a different community to attend a similar cultural event” when surveyed.⁵

2 [Bureau of Economic Analysis Arts and Culture Satellite Production Account, 2020](#)
3 [Bureau of Economic Analysis Arts and Culture Satellite Production Account, 2020](#)
4 [Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, 2015](#)
5 [Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, 2015](#)

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & EQUITY AND INCLUSION

In this section we provide you with some business language that will assist as you approach chambers for collaboration, highlighting the business case for arts and culture and its role in economic development and building inclusive economies.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING, ROLE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN BUILDING A CULTURE OF BELONGING.

It is no secret that our world has changed after witnessing the murder of George Floyd. The call for racial equity started with protests and marches in the streets but made it to boardrooms and employers as well. This made many organizations who had been doing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) work to pause, reflect, and reset; and prompted many organizations who had not started the journey of DEI to start asking questions, dig deep, and start having conversations around it.

The chambers of commerce industry is no different. While chambers have always been working on some form of Diversity Inclusion initiatives, the conversation and deep dive around the issues of equity were amplified by the events of 2020—the murder of George Floyd, reckoning with racial injustice, and the inequities in our communities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the first time, many chambers coordinated conversations with communities of color—Black communities in particular—to listen to them and create focused programming to help Black businesses and center their chamber-focused DEI efforts.

While most chambers had DEI as a part of their workforce programming in the past, many came to the realization that for DEI to be successful, it has to be a top organizational priority and be integrated in everything they do. Many chambers started focusing on building minority business accelerator programs, DEI education programs, and amplifying the concept of supplier diversity as a way to diversify the vendors and suppliers contracted.



Check out the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion resources and examples provided to chambers of commerce by the [Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives \(ACCE\)](#). Where can you envision the arts intersecting with their work?

TOP 3 BUSINESS REASONS WHY CHAMBERS SHOULD COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES

Changing Demographics: There is plenty of research that shows the demographics of our country are changing rapidly. According to one report from the Brookings Institute, the U.S. will become 'minority white' by the year 2045 and whites will account for only 36% of the population under age 18 by the year 2060.

A similar report from the Pew Research Center mentions that more than one-third of the country's workforce are millennials and almost half of them do not identify as white.

As organizations grapple with workforce issues, understanding this key demographic shift and creating strategies to understand these demographics is of utmost importance.

Keeping this rapidly changing population in mind and ensuring inclusion and equity is embedded in all programming of the chamber is key in attracting and retaining this new generation of workforce. Integration of diverse arts and culture in chamber priorities and programming will certainly help with that.

Talent (human resources) is the number one issue that employers face in any given city, state, or industry. Availability of talent, attracting talent, and keeping talent is the number one issue all chambers focus on. While small and local chambers may not have the resources to have many programs and initiatives, the regional chambers will almost always have a dedicated staff, strategies, initiatives, and resources to work on talent attraction and retention.

There are many factors that affect attraction and retention of talent in any community. Covering all of them in this section is beyond the scope of this toolkit, however arts and culture play a huge role in creating vibrant and thriving economies, which has a direct impact in attraction and retention of talent. Keeping in mind the changing demographics mentioned above, work closely with chambers to offer diversity in arts to be reflected in the community, which can help in creating inclusion and belonging.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT OURSELVES AS A COMMUNITY TO THE WORLD, WE INCREASINGLY LEAD WITH THE ARTS AND CULTURE. IT DRIVES INCLUSION, IT DRIVES TALENT, IT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER; AND ALL OF THAT HAPPENS BECAUSE ARTSWAVE CHOOSES TO INVEST IN THE KINDS OF THINGS THEY INVEST IN.

BRENDON CULL —

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, COO CINCINNATI USA REGIONAL CHAMBER

‘OTHERING’ IS A TERM THAT NOT ONLY ENCOMPASSES THE MANY EXPRESSIONS OF PREJUDICE ON THE BASIS OF GROUP IDENTITIES, BUT WE ARGUE THAT IT PROVIDES A CLARIFYING FRAME THAT REVEALS A SET OF COMMON PROCESSES AND CONDITIONS THAT PROPAGATE GROUP-BASED INEQUALITY AND MARGINALITY...BELONGINGNESS ENTAILS AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO NOT SIMPLY TOLERATING AND RESPECTING DIFFERENCE BUT TO ENSURING THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE WELCOME AND FEEL THAT THEY BELONG IN THE SOCIETY...BELONGINGNESS MUST BE MORE THAN EXPRESSIVE; IT MUST BE INSTITUTIONALIZED AS WELL.

JOHN A. POWELL AND STEPHEN MENENDIAN

THE PROBLEM OF OTHERING: TOWARDS INCLUSIVENESS AND BELONGING

Keep the Promise of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity: After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, like many companies, the chamber of commerce industry made public statements and written commitments to improve racial equity in their communities. While they may not have all the answers yet, this is a good start, and they are always looking for partners who can help them in their mission of achieving racial equity in their community.

This is a great time to find the Diversity, Inclusion, or Equity initiatives that are happening at your local and regional chamber. Proactively reach out and offer partnership where you can help in their mission and initiatives. Offer your chamber(s) the business case of how integrating diverse arts in everything they do will help connect with diverse members of their communities; help those individuals feel seen, valued, and accepted in the community; and will help them to solve the business issues (of talent attraction and retention) they are dealing with while helping them keep their promise of equality and justice.



LEVERAGE COMMON GOALS OF ACHIEVING EQUITY AND INCLUSION

This is the moment! We are in a unique time where all types of organizations, businesses, and chambers are focusing not just on the D (diversity) and the I (Inclusion), but the E (Equity) and also the B (Belonging)!

- Find what initiatives and activities chambers are doing that involve arts and culture. There are plenty. To give you some examples, many of them host large events like art festivals, film festivals, farmers markets, world food and music festivals, and more.
- Engage in conversation with chamber leaders to make the connection between arts and culture, social cohesion, and culture of belonging.
- Champion and advocate for strong funding for arts and culture to support inclusion and belonging for all people.
- Chambers are usually looking for diverse vendors for everything they do. Help make the connection, offer them a list or introduce them to diverse artists and vendors.
- Many chambers have multiple awards they give out. Explore to see if these awards can be made by diverse artists to add more meaning to them.
- Encourage chambers to be mindful of office decors and incorporate diverse art to create a welcoming and inclusive space for all.
- Engage in ongoing discussion with your chamber(s) to explore all the programming they offer and find where diverse arts could be incorporated.
- All chambers host big conferences and summits, some particularly around DEI. Encourage chambers to incorporate diverse arts experiences in these events.
- Many chambers are conducting executive tours to attract senior level leaders to their community. Showcasing vibrant arts and culture can play a key role in attracting a skilled workforce to their local communities. Offering tours of cultural districts, ethnic districts, diverse art, and showcasing the integration of diverse arts in the offerings in local civic and art centers could be a draw in attracting talent.
- Lead by example. All the members of chamber organizations look up to the chambers to set examples and lead by example. If chambers make it a priority to be intentional about making the connection between arts and culture and economic vibrancy, attraction, and retention of talent, member companies will follow suit. Change is a process. This will take time. Intentionality and effort have to be present to keep nurturing this connection for it to grow until it becomes natural, normal, and integrated in everyday decision-making.
- Use examples from the [pARTnership Movement](#) and the [8 Reasons for Businesses and the Arts to Partner](#) to bring to your chamber(s) of commerce to discuss ways to integrate the arts into diversity, equity, and inclusion work with local business.

RESEARCH FROM THE PARTNERSHIP MOVEMENT



57% of companies with less than 100 employees believe that the arts support their corporate objectives to create conversations about important issues.⁶



73% of the U.S. population agree that the arts “help them understand other cultures better.”⁷



50% of companies with more than 25,000 employees say that the arts support their corporate objective to address issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.⁸

ARTSWAVE OPERATES IN A REGIONAL SERVICE AREA INCLUDING THE CINCINNATI METRO REGION AND NORTHERN KENTUCKY. IT NOW CONVENES LEADERS OF THE REGION’S MINORITY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AT THE CINCINNATI ART MUSEUM, WHICH SERVES AS A JOINT CONVENING FOR THESE LEADERS. NOT ONLY DOES IT SERVE AS A VITAL CONNECTING POINT FOR THESE CHAMBERS, IT GIVES THEM AN ARTS DESTINATION AND EXPERIENCE IN THE PROCESS.

We thank Sanjita Pradhan for contributing to this section of the toolkit. Sanjita Pradhan worked at the Greater Des Moines Partnership as the director of diversity and inclusion for almost five years, where she led internal and external DEI initiatives. Sanjita is now working as an independent consultant around DEI. She specializes in helping organizations develop their comprehensive DEI plans that have measurable goals and outcomes, providing DEI training on a variety of topics and consultation around DEI issues. She can be reached at sanjita@sanjitapradhan.com, president and chief consultant, Sanjita Pradhan Consulting LLC.

⁶ [Business Contributions to the Arts, 2018 Edition](#)

⁷ [Americans Speak Out About the Arts in 2018](#)

⁸ [Business Contributions to the Arts, 2018 Edition](#)

RESEARCH & POLICY

Research is a powerful tool to support the case for a chamber/local arts agency partnership. There is a wide variety of research on the benefits of business partnerships with the arts and economic impact of the arts, creative industries, and local arts and culture production. Research is only meaningful if it can be used to tell a story, facilitate change, or aid in the creation of policy. The following research resources are a good place to start to make an effective case for the arts in the chamber and economic development community.

Arts & Economic Prosperity 5

This study features national data collected by Americans for the Arts, localized economic impact reports for participating communities, and an online calculator for those who want custom data. Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 will be available in fall 2023.

[Full Report](#)

Arts and Culture Production Satellite Account

Published by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Bureau of Economic Analysis, this report highlights the economic impact, contributions to GDP, output, employment, and compensation of the arts and culture sector in the United States.

[Full Report](#)

Arts & Creative Economy County Reports

Published by Americans for the Arts and available in late 2022, these reports will be freely accessible, and will cover all 3,143 counties in the United States. They will quantify employment and commerce at the county level for aspects of the nation's creative economy based on the most current federal data available.

[Full Report](#)

Arts Data in the Public Sector

Published by Bloomberg Philanthropies, this report provides a resource for cities that shares best practices for leveraging arts data and identifies areas of ongoing complexity and opportunity.

[Full Report](#)

Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19's Devastating Impact on America's Creative Economy

Published by The Brookings Institute. The COVID-19 crisis hit hard at arts, culture, and the creative economy. This study estimates the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the creative economy, comprising industries such as film, advertising, and fashion as well as creative occupations like musicians, artists, performers, and designers.

[Full Report](#)

Arts + Social Impact Explorer

An online primer that draws together top-line research, example projects, core research papers, and service/partner organizations from about 26 different sectors, and makes the incredible, wide-reaching impact of the arts more visible.

[Full Report](#)

Municipal Arts Partnership Guide

A guide for both municipalities and artists, to help them successfully collaborate. This guide synthesizes best practices; features the voices of partners; and offers case studies, tools, and resources from a number of remarkable partnerships across the U.S.

[Full Report](#)

If you are interested in pursuing the development of research in your community, Americans for the Arts offers customized [Research and Survey Services](#).

FEDERAL POLICY TO SUPPORT THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

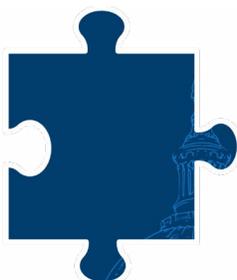
At the time of publication, there are multiple pieces of pro-arts, creative economy-focused legislation making their way through the federal government. These policies intersect with economic development, workforce and labor issues, and chambers of commerce and their business members. They are a great connecting point for talking with those partners to determine how these policies might be implemented at the local level or what similar local policies might be pursued in partnership to support the growth and development of an inclusive creative economy. [The Arts Action Fund](#) is a central hub for the latest on pro-arts federal policy.



CREATE Act—Comprehensive Resources for Entrepreneurs in the Arts to Transform the Economy

The [Comprehensive Resources for Entrepreneurs in the Arts to Transform the Economy \(CREATE\) Act](#) aims to support the people who comprise the creative economy, namely artists and creative entrepreneurs. It has pieces that touch the SBA, U.S. Economic Development Administration, Rural Development, Commerce, FEMA, and others and includes:

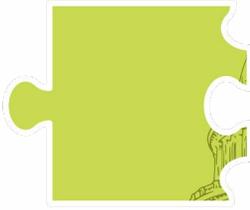
- Requiring the Economic Development Administration (EDA) ensure that traditional economic development tools, such as incubators and grant programs, support the creative economy throughout the country.
- Expanding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration to include arts-focused economic development.
- Adding a new priority to the Housing and Community Development Act to include arts-based community development and creative placemaking.
- Creating an Artist Corps to increase national service through the arts, as called for in the Serve America Act.
- Improving the visa processing time for foreign guest artists and U.S. nonprofit arts organizations.
- Developing a model to promote the creative arts in local economic initiatives, such as cultural district planning.



PLACE Act—Promoting Local Arts and Creative Economy Workforce

The [Promoting Local Arts and Creative Economy Workforce \(PLACE\) Act](#), is a Senate bill that includes 11 provisions, some similar to the CREATE Act, and others further expanding the federal government's support of the creative economy workforce specifically. The PLACE Act addresses workforce readiness by establishing the following:

- Technical assistance offered by small business development centers in order to foster strong business plans and the execution of those plans.
- The Creative Economy Grant Program to incubate small businesses in their startup phase by allowing for wage subsidies.
- Creative Economy Apprenticeship Grants established under the Department of Education to help teach the future creative economy workforce.
- Allowing creative economy businesses to partake in the existing New Markets Tax Credit.



CERA—Creative Economy Revitalization Act

The [Creative Economy Revitalization Act \(CERA\)](#), a bipartisan bill, authorizes \$300 million via a new granting program that will mitigate creative worker displacement, stimulate local creative workforce growth, strengthen connections for local creative small businesses and networks, create a pipeline for new creative jobs, enrich communities, increase access to culture, and invest in creative workers and local economies harmed by COVID-19. CERA defines the following eligibility and uses as:

- A competitive grant program available to a state, local area/local board, an Indigenous or Tribal entity, a public or nonprofit agency that employs or supports the employment of creative workers, or a state workforce agency.
- The grants can be used to create or produce publicly-available creative products, including but not limited to outdoor community events (concerts, fairs, performances, live music, etc.); interviews or written stories through any medium that “capture and document the history of the United States;” temporary or permanent public artworks; poetry, writing, photography, theater, visual or media arts, or dance exhibitions; programs/work that support arts in schools and community cultural spaces, particularly including preservation of folk traditions and the elevation of a community’s history and culture.

EXTRA TIPS FOR LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES

- **Learn their language.** Read and understand the plans, goals, and metrics for success of your chambers of commerce and economic development counterparts. Being able to frame your assets in their words will show an intentional effort to develop meaningful partnerships.
- **Identify shared objectives.** Are you and your local tourism office both trying to grow audiences for your community? Where are you each meeting challenges? Can you leverage each other’s tools and capacity to meet your mutual goals in creative ways? Is your chamber concerned with talent attraction and retention for its business members while you are trying to expand your business audience or connect business leaders to arts boards throughout the community? What kinds of creative activations can help you each achieve these objectives?
- **Meet crises together.** Whether it be a global pandemic or local natural disaster, your civic partners can be important allies in recovery. Building relationships over time will create a bookmark in your community partners’ minds about who to go to when difficulties arise.
- **Go on chamber and economic development field trips.** Chambers and EDOs are often traveling in delegation with business, civic, and elected leaders to other communities to understand how they are competing for jobs, businesses, and funding in a never-ending effort to expand the tax base. Arts and culture are integral to the economy and livability of a community, and it can be an important opportunity to attend these field trips alongside these leaders.
- **Encourage staff to participate in leadership programs.** Most chambers of commerce sponsor, organize, and/or produce leadership development programs. Encourage and sponsor your staff to participate in these. It’s great for their personal professional development but will also create an opportunity to infuse the arts perspective in the agenda and raise the profile of the arts community.

PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE

The previous sections highlight the benefits of and strategies for expanding and deepening local arts agency relationships with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and civic partners. Below are two examples of successful partnerships from across the country to spark inspiration.

GREATER DES MOINES PARTNERSHIP, DES MOINES, IOWA

In Des Moines, Iowa, the Greater Des Moines Partnership integrates Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) into all internal areas of work for the greater Des Moines (DSM) area. Ongoing investment in DEI includes monthly luncheon sessions, regular blogs on multicultural issues, monthly webinars for members and staff, multicultural receptions for the community and building intentional relationships with diverse groups in the community. As part of its multi-pronged approach to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion, [the Greater Des Moines Partnership \(DSM\)](#) established an Inclusion Council to provide input, guidance, and feedback on DEI-related programming, issues, and content. They adhere to the value, “nothing about us without us,” and ensure representation from a multitude of diverse populations. The council comprises half private sector entities and half nonprofit partners, including arts and culture partners. The council acts as a bridge between DEI, inclusion programs, and the arts community. Many chambers of commerce have various councils and committees, including those who are focused on DEI. These are great opportunities for arts and culture leaders to bring forward the arts and ensure that they are leveraged as a community asset.

In addition to the Inclusion Council, the DSM incorporates DEI into their downtown and placemaking programs. They believe that placemaking is an effort to create public spaces that promote health, happiness, and well-being for all residents. They capitalize on the community’s assets by giving Des Moines a sense of identity and use the arts as drivers who can solve problems for the community. DSM partners with a number of community and arts organizations to achieve placemaking and DEI goals. These include ArtForce Iowa, Bravo Greater Des Moines, the Latino Heritage Festival, the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, and more.

Being a city with very cold winters, Des Moines has a large system of skywalks in the downtown core that connect buildings. The city has a population of individuals with visual impairment that move through these pathways. **Downtown Skywalk Art** is a partnership between ArtForce Iowa and the Iowa Department for the Blind. When asked, limited vision community members wanted art pieces that they could enjoy and that would convey that they had the same joys, struggles, and goals as other populations in the community. All murals now have a component that is touchable so that those with visual impairment can experience them.

Downtown DSM Adventure Stories is a free program encouraging the community to explore downtown Des Moines in a new way. It includes five fictional stories throughout downtown, with onsite murals, paper airplanes, and art in vacant storefronts. The Partnership worked with local business members and identified spaces within downtown that needed vibrancy. They then worked with the public art agency to hire artists and writers to make the spaces come to life.

Downtown DSM Tweet Week is a ceramic bird scavenger hunt during the week leading up to the DSM Arts Festival. It was originally started in 2019 by a group of artists who did it on their own as a fun project with their own Twitter followers. They created and hid ceramic birds for anyone to find. However, the artists didn't initially have the promotional reach to get a lot of traction. The chamber partnered with the artists, compensated them, and promoted their work. This has been a great partnership that achieved its goals for everyone involved.

Similarly, **Hide and Seek Ornaments You Keep** is a 10-day winter activation that invites artists and arts groups to create 175 handmade ornaments and hide them throughout downtown. In 2021, 14 artists were hired and compensated. It's a fun and engaging way to get people outside and downtown during the cold months.

PARTNERS IN DIVERSITY, PORTLAND, OREGON

[Partners in Diversity](#) is a membership-based organization that operates as an affiliate of the Portland Business Alliance Charitable Institute. The Portland Business Alliance is the primary chamber of commerce in the Portland Metropolitan Region. In 2005, major employers in Oregon and southwest Washington joined forces as the Portland Workplace Diversity Task Force to cooperatively support more diversity in the workplace and in the community. The task force sought to examine regional information and develop a business case for corporate diversity initiatives. The result was a strategic plan which integrates the many ongoing initiatives in the region under one umbrella with a strong business focus.

Say Hey! is the largest multicultural networking event in the region. Each quarter, Partners in Diversity connects local businesses and community members with professionals of color who recently relocated to Oregon or southwest Washington. Recently relocated professionals of color (aka Honorees) are introduced during a special portion of the program. Held quarterly, Say Hey! includes tabling opportunities for local arts organizations to showcase their work and introduce newly relocated professionals to arts and culture offerings in the city. The program helps build community, deepen connections, and create an environment where everyone is welcomed. Employers can leverage this program as an extension to your onboarding experiences for new staff of color.

Partners in Diversity has a broad range of equity programs aimed at creating inclusion and belonging in the business community. Their Breakfast of Champions brings together human resources and diversity practitioners to network with each other and share best practices, while their Equity Conversations and Leadership Cohorts provide targeted opportunities for professionals to jump-start positive cultural and policy changes at their organization.

In these types of activities, where could the arts be integrated to support those goals? Check with your local chamber of commerce to see what programs or events they may have like these and ask how the arts can deepen the experiences.

WORKSHEET

BUSINESS AND CHAMBER SOCIAL IMPACT & EQUITY PROGRAMMING

Please complete the following information as best you can about your business and economic ecosystem, and your chamber(s) of commerce.

This worksheet should complement the worksheet in the Part 1 toolkit, which serves as a tool for mapping and identifying the industries and business networks in your community. With an understanding of the business networks that currently exist, this worksheet is designed to help identify community impact and diversity, equity, and inclusion activities throughout those networks. Use the information you collect to understand where intersections exist between your goals and work, and those of your chamber(s) of commerce and other economic development organizations.

PRIMARY SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND COMMUNITY ISSUES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Each community has its own unique challenges based on its history, culture(s), demographics, and economics. Ecosystem thinking requires understanding these often-complex issues, even if they are not directly related to every aspect of your organization. It may be housing, safety, workforce development, or civic engagement to list a few. List some of the primary challenges your community is facing.

WHO IN YOUR BUSINESS NETWORKS AND ORGANIZATIONS IS ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES?

List the business service organizations and agencies in your community that you believe are involved in addressing the issues you listed above. Start to think about who in their networks (either businesses, staff of the service organizations, or individual leaders associated with them) is leading those efforts. If you aren't sure or can't find anyone, who do you wish was involved?

WHAT ACTIONS ARE THEY TAKING?

Using your list from the previous page, list any activities that you know are taking place or those that could present an opportunity to integrate arts involvement. Are there committees to be involved in? Are there planning processes that are bringing together multiple partners and don't have arts and culture representation? Are there CARES, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), or infrastructure dollars from the federal government that could be used to fund arts and culture integration?

[Empty text box for notes]

YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Think about where your organization's goals, strategies, and actions relate to work that extends into the community. Think about your own relation to DEI work and whether it is internal, externally focused, both, or neither? Are there specific aspects of community and/or social impact work that you are already involved with? List your strategies and goals here, even if they are not yet being implemented.

[Empty text box for notes]

YOUR DEI PARTNERS

Looking at your notes above, who are the partners you already have throughout the community to accomplish your goals? What partners do you want and/or need that you do not yet have relationships with? List them here along with any possible connection to chamber(s) of commerce or other economic development entities in your area.

[Empty text box for notes]



THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Research the community impact and DEI goals, strategies, and actions of your chamber(s) and civic partners. Are they internal, externally focused, both, or neither? Are there areas where you can imagine alignment that could help them meet their goals? List as much information as you can here.

THEIR COMMUNITY IMPACT AND DEI PARTNERS

Looking at your notes above, who are the partners your chamber(s), EDOs, and/or other civic partners working with to accomplish their DEI goals? What artistic resources and/or partners throughout the arts and culture community could you imagine connecting them with to help each other meet mutual goals? Use this space to imagine broadly and draw connections between your work and that of your civic partners.