



# 2017 SURVEY OF PUBLIC ART PROGRAMS

## INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Americans for the Arts conducted a survey of the nation's public art programs. The purpose of the survey was to better understand and appreciate current organizational structures, plans, diversity requirements, and educational components of public art programs in the United States.

The survey process was designed by Americans for the Arts staff in consultation with the Public Art Network Advisory Council, a membership-based body of expert public art professionals from around the country. The questionnaire was a long-form survey sent directly to the 728 U.S. public art programs that have been identified by Americans for the Arts. In addition, a general survey was made available online through public art publications and social media which would allow unknown programs to participate. A total of 227 programs responded and provided details about their programs, staffing, revenue, collection management, and artists selection process.

Public art programs work to engage their communities with the visual arts. Each of the 728 U.S. public art programs is unique to the community that it serves, and each evolves with its community—no two are exactly alike. However, they all share the goal of enabling artists to create works in the public realm while engaging community members and building healthier, vibrant communities through public art.

**LEGAL STATUS:** 60 percent of the responding public art programs are public agencies, 34 percent are private organizations, and 6 percent identify as a public-private partnership or other. +

**LOCAL ARTS AGENCY RELATIONSHIP:** 39 percent of the responding public art programs are operated through a Local Arts Agency (LAA), 39 percent are operated under the umbrella of a larger organization that is not an LAA (such as a transit agency), and 22 percent are independent programs or organizations.

**SERVICE AREA:** 56 percent of the responding public art programs have a geographic service area that is a city or a town, and 39 percent serve populations of less than 100,000. Private organizations are more likely to serve areas with fewer than 100,000 people than are public programs (51 percent and 33 percent respectively).

POPULATION	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP/ OTHER	ALL PROGRAMS
Less than 100,000	51%	33%	36%	39%
100,000 to 999,999	36%	38%	36%	37%
1,000,000 or more	13%	29%	29%	24%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**YEAR ESTABLISHED:** 44 percent of the responding public art programs were founded in the year 2000 or later, 37 percent were founded between 1980 and 1999, and 19 percent were founded prior to 1980. Two programs were founded before 1900 (and are therefore more than 100 years old).

**BOARD/COMMISSION:** 90 percent of the responding public art programs are held accountable to—or overseen by—a board of directors or commission of appointed officers. Within this group, 31 percent have a written policy to encourage diverse representation of board or commission members, 34 percent have unwritten guidelines, and 24 percent have no policy. Another 11 percent responded “not applicable” to this question; past research suggests that this answer is likely provided because they are public agencies bound to follow the diversity policies of the municipal government.

**MISSION/GOALS:** 73 percent of the responding public art programs have a mission statement or written goals. Some common themes among statements or goals were:

- **Supporting economic activity:** Moscow, Idaho has a 1 percent for public art, which lists “attracting tourism, and providing incentives to businesses to locate within the City, thus expanding Moscow’s economic base” as part of its mission.
- **Highlighting history and diversity:** The City of Coral Springs, Florida public art program has a goal “to create a stimulating environment that reflects and enhances the City’s heritage, diversity, and character through public artworks integrated in the architecture, infrastructure, and landscape.”
- **Engaging and supporting artists:** The Seattle public art program listed that part of their mission “is to engage artists in civic dialogue, integrating artworks and ideas of artists into a variety of public settings.”

\* For the purposes of this survey an unwritten policy or guideline is a general understanding or direction provided by the leadership of a public art program.

+ In general, most private public art programs are nonprofits, but the term was not specified in the survey.

- **Enriching the aesthetic quality life of the community:** For the Los Altos Arts Commission, a goal “is to advise the City Council on incorporating public art that improves the aesthetic quality of public spaces and makes the City of Los Altos a unique and vibrant community.”
- **Generating dialogue and community engagement:** The Bernalillo County, New Mexico public art program mission states, “Public art has the power to inspire curiosity, encourage contemplation, facilitate dialogue, foster community engagement, and create a sense of place.”
- **Increasing public awareness of and education about public art:** The Office of Public Art in Pittsburgh lists the following mission: “OPA provides technical assistance and educational programs about public art in the Pittsburgh Region. We work with organizations and individuals in the public and private sector to facilitate the development of and information about public art.”
- **Humanizing space:** The Rhode Island percent-for-art program states, “Art creates a more humane environment: one of distinction, enjoyment, and pride for all citizens.”

**MASTER PLAN:** A public art master plan provides a vision and policy framework that guides the public art program in a region for a defined period of time. Master plans can be used to guide a program or a specific project. For this question, we focused on program master plans.

- 35 percent of the responding public art programs have a master plan.
- 23 percent do not have one but are currently developing one.
- Of the 43 percent of programs who do not have a master plan (nor are currently developing one), 55 percent are interested in creating a master plan.

**REVENUE:** Public art programs receive funding from multiple funding sources, including government funding, cash contributions, and in-kind donations.

- Overall, 46 percent of public art programs have a percent-for-art ordinance or policy.
- Public programs are more likely than private programs to receive funding from a percent-for-art ordinance (66 percent and 14 percent, respectively).
- Private programs are more likely to receive cash contributions from private businesses than public programs (70 percent and 21 percent, respectively). They are also more likely to receive in-kind contributions and grants from other private sources such as individuals (74 percent and 24 percent, respectfully).
- Only 9 percent of responding programs have a public-art-in-private-development ordinance or policy. Of those, 45 percent state that the calculation is more complicated than a single number and 55 percent have a specific percentage.
- 67 percent of programs serving areas of 1 million or more receive funding from a percent-for-art ordinance or policy. Additionally, 48 percent of programs with a population between 100,000 and 999,999, and 20 percent of programs with a population under 100,000 receive funding from a percent-for-art ordinance or policy.

SOURCES OF REVENUE	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP/ OTHER	ALL PROGRAMS
Revenue from other government sources (not listed)	48%	47%	57%	48%
Percent-for-art ordinance/policy	14%	66%	21%	46%
Cash contributions from individuals	74%	24%	57%	43%
Cash contributions from private businesses	70%	21%	57%	40%
Grants from foundations	52%	28%	64%	38%
In-kind contributions from individuals	60%	19%	57%	35%
In-kind contributions from private businesses	57%	16%	43%	32%
Grants from other private sources (not foundations)	34%	12%	50%	22%
Other	22%	15%	29%	18%
Public-art-in-private-development ordinance/policy	5%	12%	0%	9%

SOURCES OF REVENUE (BY POPULATION)	LESS THAN 100,000	100,000 TO 999,999	1,000,000 OR MORE	ALL PROGRAMS
Revenue from other government sources (not listed above)	48%	55%	37%	48%
Percent-for-art ordinance/policy	30%	48%	67%	46%
Cash contributions from individuals	62%	35%	24%	43%
Cash contributions from private businesses	57%	35%	19%	40%
Grants from foundations	45%	38%	28%	38%
In-kind contributions from individuals	46%	31%	24%	35%
In-kind contributions from private businesses	43%	28%	19%	32%
Grants from other private sources (not foundations)	26%	18%	22%	22%
Other (describe)	16%	21%	19%	18%
Public art in private development ordinance/policy	7%	11%	9%	9%

**STAFF:** 68 percent of the responding public art programs have at least one full-time employee who is either dedicated to managing/coordinating the program (39 percent) or who does this work as one component of a multi-departmental job (31 percent).

- 61 percent of programs with a service area of over 1 million have at least one full-time employee that is dedicated to their program.
- 16 percent of programs with a service area population of under 100,000 do not have any staff.

**TYPES OF ARTWORK:** 63 percent of the responding public art programs have developed or commissioned temporary public art installations within the last five years; 82 percent have completed a permanent public artwork in the same timeframe.

- 5 is the average number of temporary public artworks produced in one year. 7 months is the average length of time a temporary artwork is installed.
- 6 is the average number of permanent public artworks produced in a year by a public art program.

**ARTIST SELECTION:** 66 percent of the responding public art programs have selected artists through a request for qualifications (RFQ), 38 percent through direct selection, and 46 percent through an open request for proposals (RFP).

- 14 percent of programs use an artist self-selected registry and 20 percent utilize a prequalified artist roster.
- To encourage diverse representation on selection and jury panels, 39 percent have unwritten guidelines and 25 percent have a written policy.\*
- To encourage diverse representation of artists, 37 percent have unwritten guidelines and 27 percent have a written policy.

\* For the purposes of this survey an unwritten policy or guideline is a general understanding or direction provided by the leadership of a public art program.

+ In general, most private public art programs are nonprofits, but the term was not specified in the survey.

ARTIST SELECTION PROCESS	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP/ OTHER	ALL PROGRAMS
Open Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	45%	77%	64%	66%
Open Request for Proposals (RFP)	53%	42%	43%	46%
Invitational Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	38%	44%	50%	42%
Direct Selection (through professional connections or a hired consultant/ curator)	43%	36%	36%	38%
Invitational Request for Proposals (RFP)	32%	28%	50%	31%
Prequalified Artist Roster (artists who are selected by professionals and peers and are then considered eligible for a public art project)	14%	24%	7%	20%
Artist Registry (artists who self-select as available for public art projects)	16%	14%	14%	14%
Other	8%	5%	14%	7%

ARTIST SELECTION PROCESS (BY POPULATION)	LESS THAN 100,000	100,000 TO 999,999	1,000,000 OR MORE	ALL PROGRAMS
Open Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	56%	73%	70%	66%
Open Request for Proposals (RFP)	49%	55%	26%	46%
Invitational Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	38%	47%	41%	42%
Direct Selection (through professional connections or a hired consultant/curator)	38%	44%	30%	38%
Invitational Request for Proposals (RFP)	34%	28%	30%	31%
Prequalified Artist Roster (artists who are selected by professionals and peers and are then considered eligible for a public art project)	15%	21%	26%	20%
Artist Registry (artists who self-select as available for public art projects)	18%	11%	15%	14%
Other	8%	6%	6%	7%

**COLLECTION MANAGEMENT:** 82 percent of the responding programs have some type of document or system to assist with the management of their public art collection.

- A gifts/donations policy was the most common document that programs have established (51 percent).
- 47 percent have a maintenance plan and 71 percent require artists to submit a maintenance plan as part of their commission.
- Only 13 percent have an emergency preparedness plan for their public art collection.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY	PERCENTAGE
Gifts/Donations Policy	51%
Maintenance plan	47%
Deaccession Policy	42%
Collection Management System	29%
Conservation Plan	26%
None of the Above	18%
Emergency Preparedness Plan	13%
Other	10%

**EDUCATION:** 71 percent of the responding public art programs present educational programs either independently or with partner organizations; 36 percent provide educational opportunities to train local artists on public art.

- To encourage diverse representation for public participation in public art projects, 37 percent of programs have unwritten guidelines and 24 percent have a written policy.\*

Public art programs provide unique services to artists and communities across the country. In the Public Art Programs Fiscal Year 2001 report, Americans for the Arts estimated 350 public art programs across the U.S. The 2017 survey identified twice as many (728 programs). Interestingly, the percentage of public art programs registered as nonprofits increased from 19 percent in 2001 to 34 percent in 2017, though most public art programs are still public (81 percent in 2001 and 60 percent in 2017). Future surveys may identify continued growth toward nonprofit-based public art programs as they are developed in areas with smaller populations.

As public art projects continue to increase across the U.S., so will the demand to develop, implement, and support public art programs and administrators working in their communities. Americans for the Arts, through the Public Art Network, continues to support public art professionals and artists through developing resources, focusing on best practices, and offering network opportunities to ensure the healthy growth of the field.

To learn more, visit [www.AmericansfortheArts.org/PAN](http://www.AmericansfortheArts.org/PAN).

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