



# COUNTY LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES

RESULTS FROM THE 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS  
AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS

# 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

## Introduction

In 2015, Americans for the Arts partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts to conduct The Local Arts Agency Census, the most comprehensive survey of the local arts agency (LAA) field ever conducted. Its purpose was to illuminate the ever-adapting role of LAAs in ensuring a vital presence for the arts at the community level.

The survey process was designed by a task force of local arts agency, research, and policy leaders to ensure relevance and rigor. The Census was composed of both a long-form survey and a short-form survey that were sent to the 4,377 LAAs in the U.S tracked by Americans for the Arts. A total of 1,127 LAAs responded (641 submitted the long-form; 486 participated via the short-form), providing invaluable details about their budgets, programs, partnerships, grantmaking, diversity, and staffing.

Americans for the Arts defines a local arts agency (LAA) as a private organization or an agency of local government that promotes, supports, and develops the arts at the local level. LAAs are not discipline-specific—rather, they work to sustain their entire local arts industry. Each of the 4,500 LAAs in America is unique to the community that it serves and each evolves with its community—no two are exactly alike. What they all share, however, is the goal of enabling diverse forms of arts and culture to thrive, ensuring their broad accessibility to the public, and building healthier communities through the arts.

This report concentrates on LAAs that define their service area along county borders, whether they serve a single county, or a region that includes more than one. In total, 47 percent of responding LAAs fit these criteria; 18 percent serving multiple counties, and 29 percent serving a single county.

2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

Table of Contents

2015 LAA Census County LAA Overview ..... 3

County LAA Budgets ..... 4

County LAA Demographics ..... 6

Grantmaking ..... 9

Public Art ..... 10

Looking to the future ..... 11

About Americans for the Arts..... 12

## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### 2015 LAA Census County LAAs Overview

- Legal Status: 89 percent of county LAAs are private nonprofit organizations, 11 percent are government agencies.
  - Of the private county LAAs, 50 percent have been designated by the local government as the official local arts agency for their community.
  - 94 percent of private county LAAs operate as independent organizations, programs, or facilities. The remaining 6 percent operate under the umbrella of other organizations such as colleges or universities, and chambers of commerce.
- Population: 36 percent of responding county LAAs serve populations of under 100,000, 49 percent serve populations from 100,000 to less than a million, and 15 percent serve areas with over 1 million people.
- Budgets: 35 percent have budgets under \$100,000, 48 percent from \$100,000 to less than \$1 million, 14 percent from \$1million to under \$5million, and 4 percent spend \$5million or more.
- Staff: 64 percent have at least one year-round full-time paid staff member. County agencies have, on average 46 staff members including full-time and part-time paid, and volunteers.
- Board: 96 percent are overseen by a board of directors or a commission. The average size of a county LAA board/commission is 14 members.
- Partnerships: 95 percent of county LAAs partner with at least one community organization: 71 percent partner with Chambers of Commerce, 67 percent with higher education institutions, and 54 percent with Parks and Recreation Departments.
- Services: 93 percent provide services to the general public, 87 to individual artists, and 80 percent to arts organizations in their communities.
- Public Art: 39 percent operate a public art program. Of those, 20 percent receive funding from Percent-for-Art program for its operation.
- Grantmaking: 55 percent of county LAAs are grantmakers. Four percent give only to individual artists, 20 percent to organizations only, and 30 percent to both.

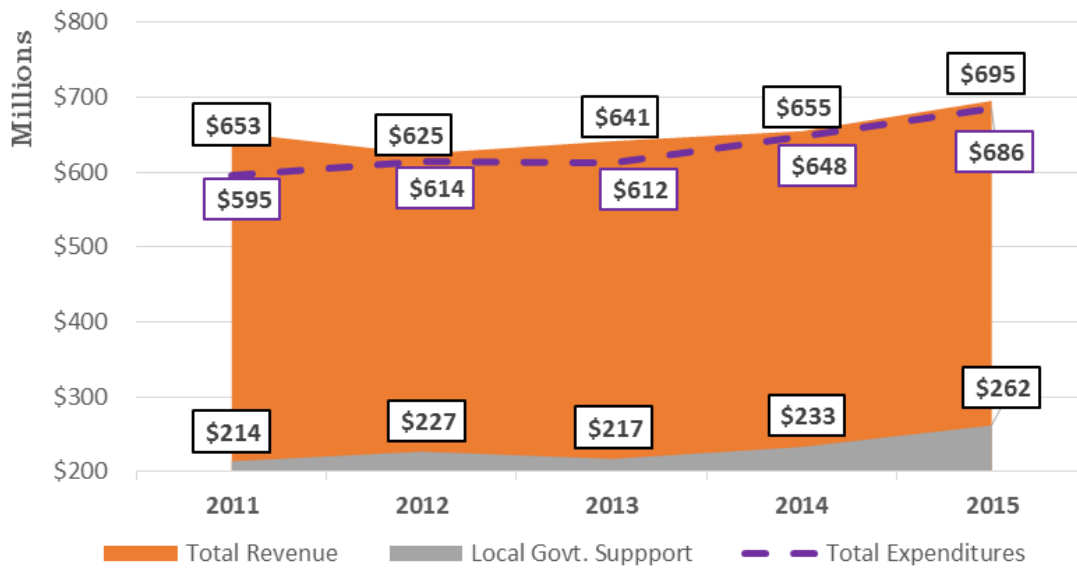
# 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

## County LAA Budgets

Estimated aggregate revenues for all county LAAs was \$695 million in 2015, and their total expenses were \$686 million.

- At the end of their last fiscal year, 49 percent of county LAAs had budget surpluses, 27 percent were in a break even position, and 23 percent reported having an operating deficit.
- Between 2014 and 2015, 78 percent of county LAAs had level or increased budgets.
- In 2015, arts funding from local government sources (city and/or county) was \$262 million.

### County LAAs Budgets 2011 - 2015 (Millions of Dollars)



## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### County LAA Sources of Revenue

	ALL LAAS	ALL COUNTY	PUBLIC COUNTY	PRIVATE COUNTY
Earned Income	23%	26%	10%	28%
Private Sector Contributions	26%	29%	7%	32%
Government Support (County)	8%	14%	50%	8%
Government Support (Other)	35%	22%	28%	22%
In-kind/Miscellaneous	9%	9%	5%	10%

Overall, county LAAs receive 36 percent of their revenue from government sources; 14 percent directly from their city government, and 22 percent from other government levels such as city, state or federal entities. Private sector contributions represent 29 percent of county LAA revenue while earned income accounts for 26 percent, and In-kind/miscellaneous 9 percent. Public county LAAs derive 78 percent of their budget from government, while private ones receive 30 percent.

### County LAA Expenditures

EXPENDITURES	ALL LAAS	ALL COUNTY	PUBLIC COUNTY	PRIVATE COUNTY
Payroll expenses	30%	32%	38%	31%
Grants / contracts	22%	20%	34%	18%
Fund-raising (all fund-raising-related expenses)	3%	3%	1%	3%
Advertising, marketing, and promotion	5%	5%	2%	5%
Public art	4%	2%	4%	1%
Cultural facility management	3%	4%	3%	4%
Administrative overhead (e.g., rent, utilities, supplies)	9%	10%	6%	10%
Delivery of programs and/or services	9%	11%	6%	12%
Cultural programming	10%	9%	5%	10%
Others / miscellaneous / not listed above	5%	5%	1%	5%

Spending by county LAAs almost exactly mirrors the LAA field as a whole. County LAAs that are public agencies spend a larger portion of their budget on grantmaking, compared to private county LAAs (34 percent and 18 percent, respectively).

# 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

## County LAA Demographics

About a third of county LAAs (35 percent) agree that their organization has an appropriate level of diversity among staff, board, and volunteers; 42 percent disagreed; and 23 percent had a neutral opinion. County LAAs are as diverse as LAAs as a whole. At the average county agency, 84 percent of the board is white, 58 percent is female and 78 percent is over the age of 44. Similarly, at the average county LAA, 84 percent of staff is white, 74 percent is female, and 57 percent is over the age of 44. Like the field overall, the larger the service area, the more diverse the boards and staff are.

### Demographic Composition of the Average LAA and the average County LAA<sup>1</sup>

BOARD	NON-HISPANIC WHITE	FEMALE	OVER 44
All LAAs	85%	59%	77%
County LAAs	84%	58%	78%
STAFF (PAID AND VOLUNTEER)	NON-HISPANIC WHITE	FEMALE	OVER 44
All LAAs	83%	74%	57%
County LAAs	84%	74%	57%

### Demographic Composition of County LAA Boards and Staff

	ALL LAAS	ALL COUNTY LAAS	COUNTY LAA SERVICE AREA POPULATION		
			Less than 100,000	100,000 to 999,999	1,000,000+
Boards					
100% Non-Hispanic White	34%	31%	45%	32%	0%
50% or more Non-Hispanic White	95%	95%	94%	97%	92%
Less than 50% Non-Hispanic White	5%	5%	6%	3%	8%
	ALL LAAS	ALL COUNTY LAAS	COUNTY LAA SIZE OF WORKFORCE		
Year Round Staff (paid and volunteer)			1 staff	2 staff	3 or more staff
100% Non-Hispanic White	51%	51%	88%	75%	40%
50% or more Non-Hispanic White	91%	91%	88%	95%	90%
Less than 50% Non-Hispanic White	9%	9%	12%	5%	10%

<sup>1</sup>The average LAA means percentages were calculated first individually and then averaged for all LAAs (and USUAFs) to avoid assigning more weight to organizations with larger staffs, budgets etc.

## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### Partnerships

County LAAs work with a broad range of organizations across their service areas. 95 percent maintain at least one partnership with a community agency or organization, and 83 percent have three or more ongoing collaborations. These partnerships provide new opportunities for artists and arts organizations, and bring cultural experiences closer to the public in traditional and non-traditional arts venues.

Partnership can take many forms; county LAA respondents characterized them using five categories:

- 79 percent have “informal conversations” with a partner organization (65 percent talk with three or more)
- 68 percent “meet regularly” with a partner organization (41 percent meet with three or more)
- 79 percent “work together to plan, fund, and implement programs” (62 percent work jointly with three or more)
- 34 percent fund a partner “through grants or contracts” (19 percent fund three or more)
- 49 percent have a partner that has fully “integrated the arts into their initiatives” (29 percent have three or more).

### County LAA Partnerships with Community Organizations<sup>2</sup>

PARTNER	ANY	TALK	MEET	WORK TOGETHER	FUND THEM	INTEGRATED THE ARTS
Chamber of Commerce	71%	45%	33%	35%	2%	17%
Convention and Tourism Bureau	69%	35%	40%	45%	2%	28%
Local arts agencies in other cities/states	68%	50%	38%	31%	6%	11%
Colleges / universities / higher education	67%	40%	19%	50%	15%	25%
Museums	64%	38%	24%	40%	26%	17%
Schools	62%	35%	22%	59%	19%	24%
Libraries	62%	46%	20%	47%	16%	26%
School districts	60%	39%	28%	57%	13%	27%
Historical societies	55%	51%	20%	35%	19%	11%
Parks and Recreation Department	54%	39%	31%	48%	16%	20%
Economic development agencies	49%	54%	29%	32%	0%	13%
Main Street Associations / programs	45%	40%	33%	45%	10%	22%
Community development agencies	44%	45%	22%	38%	10%	14%



## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

PARTNER	ANY	TALK	MEET	WORK TOGETHER	FUND THEM	INTEGRATED THE ARTS
Community-based education organizations	43%	39%	30%	41%	16%	21%
Cultural districts	37%	36%	30%	41%	9%	27%
Humanities organizations	31%	48%	17%	30%	19%	7%
Boys and Girls Club(s)	29%	47%	2%	31%	27%	24%
Economic Development Corporation	27%	47%	29%	29%	2%	11%
Healthcare providers	25%	57%	13%	42%	6%	22%
Faith-based organizations	23%	74%	9%	16%	10%	10%
Film commission	21%	54%	17%	23%	14%	20%
Social service departments	20%	48%	21%	30%	17%	14%
Environmental agencies	19%	65%	7%	35%	3%	17%
Professional associations (e.g., realtors)	19%	71%	7%	22%	3%	5%
Agricultural Extension Service(s)	18%	63%	2%	28%	9%	16%
Entrepreneurial centers	18%	62%	13%	27%	2%	15%
Airports / aviation	17%	50%	8%	33%	2%	35%
Bookstores	16%	78%	2%	22%	4%	10%
YMCA / YWCA	16%	43%	20%	39%	18%	18%
Housing agencies / organizations	15%	55%	19%	13%	13%	13%
Law enforcement -- juvenile justice	14%	50%	26%	50%	10%	33%
Sister Cities	13%	51%	7%	46%	5%	7%
Small Business Development Centers	13%	63%	18%	33%	0%	5%
State and national parks	12%	56%	25%	33%	3%	25%
Transportation agencies / organizations	12%	47%	28%	39%	6%	17%
Law enforcement -- corrections / prisons	9%	57%	7%	39%	7%	11%
Immigration agencies	5%	50%	19%	25%	13%	19%
Other / Miscellaneous / Not listed above	11%	23%	29%	60%	17%	20%

<sup>2</sup> First column to the left is the percentage of County LAAs that indicated they partner with that type of organization. For example, 71 percent of County LAAs collaborate with Chambers of Commerce, of those, 33 percent meet regularly, and 17 percent have a Chamber of Commerce partner that has integrated the arts into their initiatives.

# 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

## Grantmaking

Fifty-five percent of county LAAs are grantmakers. Four percent give only to individual artists, 20 percent to organizations only, and 30 percent to both.

- 39 percent of grantmaking county LAAs that give to organizations provide funding to organizations who do not have official 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.
- 46 percent have funding programs that require the recipient of the funds to demonstrate diversity in at least one area, most frequently in the audience being served (30 percent), and the artists (23 percent).

Seventy-seven percent of grantmaking county LAAs require for at least one of their funding programs, that panels consider the issue of diversity when making funding decisions. Most of them do so through informal considerations (53 percent), and the rest have a written policy (23 percent). When choosing the participants in funding review panels, 82 percent of county LAAs consider diversity—70 percent informally, and 13 percent through a written policy.

County LAA Grants by the Numbers (based on responses to the long form Census, n=311):

- County LAAs received 10,491 funding requests from organizations during their last fiscal year. Of those, 24 percent received no funding, 37 percent partial funding, and 38 percent received full funding.
- The requests received by county LAAs from organizations totaled \$218.5 million, of which they awarded \$122.6 million (56 percent). The largest award was of \$3.04 million.
- County LAAs received 4,063 funding requests from individuals, of those, 61 percent received no funding, 15 percent received partial funding, and 24 percent received full funding.
- Requests from individuals totaled \$15.5 million, and \$4.1 million (27 percent) were awarded. The maximum amount awarded to an individual artist was \$20,000.

### County LAA Grantmaking Expenditures total \$126.7 million



## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### Public Art

Thirty-nine percent of county LAAs operate a public art program. Of those, 20 percent receive funding from Percent-for-Art program for its operation. Of all county LAA public art programs, 43 percent have at least one full-time person who does this work as one component of a multi-departmental job, and 19 percent at least one dedicated full time employee.

### Public Art Supported by County LAAs

39 PERCENT OF COUNTY LAAS HAVE A PUBLIC ART PROGRAM	
Of those, they work with...	
Two-dimensional work (e.g., murals, mosaics, terrazzo, photography)	73%
Three-dimensional work (e.g., sculpture, bas-relief, statues)	71%
Temporary installations	70%
Site-specific integrated artwork (e.g., architecture, landscape architecture)	58%
Art-based street fairs and/or festivals	45%
Performance, time-based artwork (e.g., music, theater, dance, spoken word)	41%
Multi-media / new technology (e.g., light art, projections, video, audio)	30%
Other	5%

### Public Art Funding Sources at County LAAs

FUNDING SOURCES	
Revenue from government sources	55%
Cash contributions from individuals	46%
Cash contributions from private businesses	44%
General operating support	40%
Grants from foundations	40%
Percent-for-art ordinance/policy	20%
Public art in private development ordinance/policy	4%
Other	13%

## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### Looking to the future

When asked about the financial outlook of their organizations, county LAA leaders forecasted a period of stability: 62 percent described their financial outlook as “about the same as it is in 2015.” Of those who anticipated a change, 18 percent said it would be easier and 21 percent it would be more difficult. Similarly, half of county LAA leaders (50 percent) believe their organization has the correct mix of financial resources, while 17 percent had a neutral opinion, and 34 percent disagreed.

County LAA leaders also feel optimistic about the stability of their funding sources over the next three years. For example, 27 percent anticipated an increase in local government funding, 53 percent thought there would be no change, and 20 percent thought it would decrease. More than half anticipated growth in earned revenue (56 percent), 38 percent anticipated no change in earned revenue, and 6 percent predicted a decrease.

Regarding the services they provide, only about a third (35 percent) of county LAA leaders felt increased competition in the past two years. This was most commonly by another arts organization or arts service organization (25 percent). Sixty-one percent of county LAAs anticipated demand for their services would increase in 2016, and 35 percent thought it would stay the same. Only 3 percent anticipated a decrease in demand for their services.

County LAAs remain at the forefront of ensuring the arts have a vital presence in every community across the country- strengthening their arts industries, ensuring equity and access for the public, and connecting the arts to the pressing issues of our times. While the “how” is different for all of them, the “why” always remains: all the arts for all the people.

This report was written by Graciela Kahn, Randy Cohen, and Ben Davidson. The Local Arts Agency Census was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. To learn more about the Local Arts Agency Census and download topic reports please visit: [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/LAACensus](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/LAACensus) -

## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

### About Americans for the Arts

Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. For more than 50 years, it has been dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. From offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City, it serves more than 150,000 organizational and individual members and stakeholders.

Americans for the Arts is focused on four primary goals:

1. Lead and serve individuals and organizations to help build environments in which the arts and arts education thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Generate meaningful public and private sector policies and more leaders and resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.
4. Ensure the operational stability of the organization and its ability to creatively respond to opportunities and challenges.

To achieve its goals, Americans for the Arts partners with local, state, and national arts organizations; government agencies; business leaders; individual philanthropists; educators; and funders throughout the country. It provides extensive arts-industry research and professional development opportunities for community arts leaders via specialized programs and services, including a content-rich website and an annual national convention.

Local arts agencies throughout the United States comprise Americans for the Arts' core constituency. A variety of unique partner networks with particular interests such as public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, and emerging arts leaders are also supported.

Through national visibility campaigns and local outreach, Americans for the Arts strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers who can make the arts thrive in America. Americans for the Arts produces annual events that heighten national visibility for the arts, including the National Arts Awards and BCA TEN honoring private-sector leadership and the Public Leadership in the Arts Awards (in cooperation with The United States Conference of Mayors) honoring elected officials in local, state,

## 2015 LOCAL ARTS AGENCY CENSUS

and federal government.

Americans for the Arts also hosts Arts Advocacy Day annually on Capitol Hill, convening arts advocates from across the country to advance federal support of the arts, humanities, and arts education.

For more information about Americans for the Arts, please visit [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org)