

# 2016 National Arts Policy Roundtable

Negotiating the New: Public and Private Sector Support in Changing Times

## Briefing Book

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The Redford Center at the Sundance Resort and Preserve, Utah



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## Introduction

One of the defining questions of the past year has been: “What is the new normal?” Election years are typically politically turbulent, but the past 24 months in particular have been marked by increased social unrest and political polarization in the U.S. on a level not experienced in decades. This uncertainty about the future is felt in many sectors and the creative industries are no exception. Insecurity is, unfortunately, particularly common in industries dependent upon the strength of the economy and those requiring diverse sources of funding.

This year’s National Arts Policy Roundtable will address head-on the uncertainty of “the new” and the role the arts can play in a society desperately in need of unification and healing. Our topics of discussion will address the arts as a point of connection throughout all levels of society. We will explore support for, and the benefits of, the arts at a local and national level, and particularly how philanthropy can empower artists and communities. Our discussions of arts in the prison system and arts education will address not only the impact of the arts on individuals, but also on communities. In addition, we will explore the arts as a constant through all phases of an individual’s life – whether as a tool to be embraced early on or later in life even when one’s path might be perceived as without hope.

These discussions are held within the context of a hope for cultural understanding in an effort to help overcome our national divide. At the individual level or the national level, a vibrant arts and cultural sector is integral to a healthy society – and in these most polarizing and unstable of times, we need the arts more than ever.

## The Value of the Arts

The significance of the arts and culture to American life make the vitality of the arts a matter of pressing interest. The arts are a fundamental component of a healthy society, based on values that touch the individual, community, and the nation – benefits that persist even in difficult social and economic times:

- Aesthetics: The arts create beauty and preserve it as part of culture.
- Creativity: The arts encourage creativity, a critical skill in a dynamic world.
- Expression: Artistic work lets us communicate our interests and visions.
- Identity: Arts goods, services, and experiences help define our culture.
- Innovation: The arts are sources of new ideas, futures, concepts, and connections.
- Preservation: Arts and culture keep our collective memories intact.
- Prosperity: The arts create millions of jobs, enhance economic health, and reinvigorate communities.
- Skills: Arts aptitudes and techniques are needed in all sectors of society and work.
- Social Capital: We enjoy the arts together, across races, generations, and places.

For these reasons it is important to understand how the arts thrive so they can deliver these valuable benefits. It is the health of arts industries, and their ability to sustain themselves over time that we refer to as the “vitality” of arts and culture, and this is what the National Arts Policy Roundtable seeks to advance.

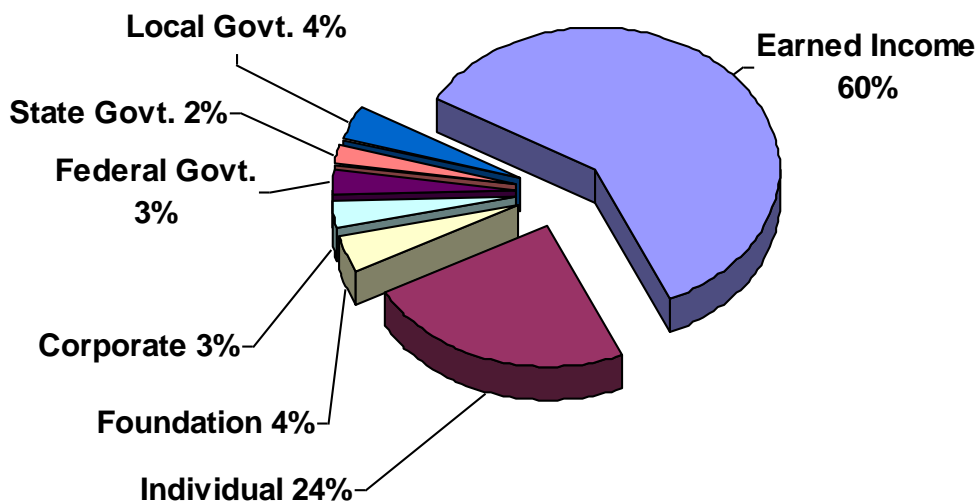
## What is “the new”?

The next few years represent an unknown – politically, socially, and culturally. The arts and creative industries, and those who support these efforts, must not only prepare themselves to tackle whatever challenges the future brings, but also consider the benefits they can offer in the face of upheaval.

## How can the arts be ensured stability in uncertain times?

Maintaining the arts’ role as the foundation of a healthy society requires support at all levels. In this regard, we must consider how philanthropy can truly empower artists and communities to engender systemic change.

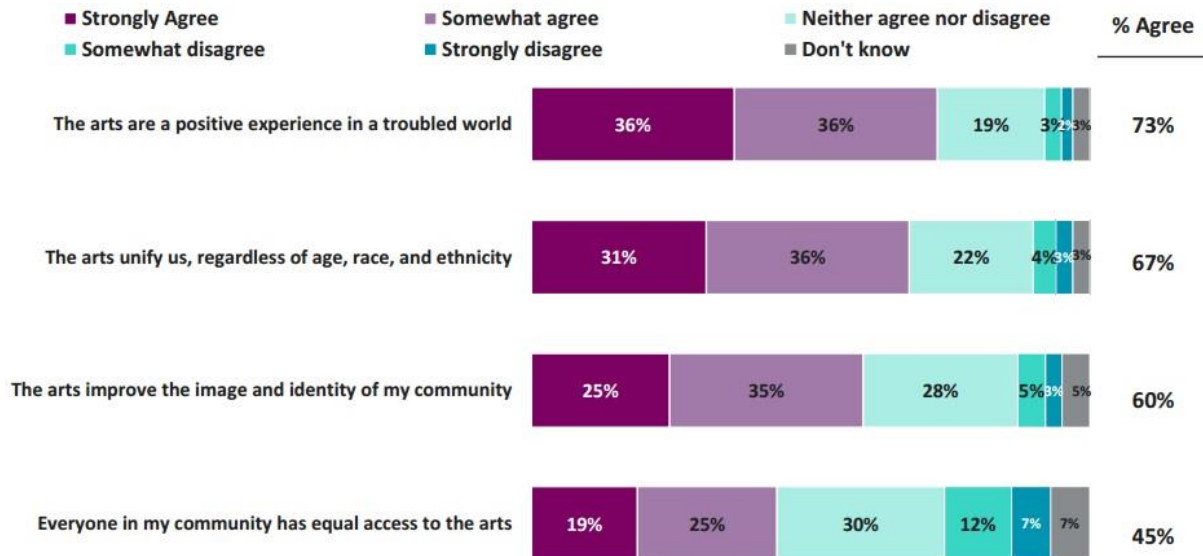
Support for the nonprofit arts is a mosaic of funding sources – a delicate 60-30-10 balance of earned revenue, private sector contributions, and government support. Earned income is the largest source of revenue for nonprofit arts organizations. The remainder must be raised through contributions and grants. Even small fluctuations in contributed revenue can mean deficits for many organizations.



- Earned income (e.g. ticket sales, sponsorships, and fundraising events) represents a little over half of the total revenue of nonprofit arts organizations.
- Private sector contributions (individual, foundation, and corporate giving) are the next largest portion, accounting for about one-third of revenue. Individuals comprise the largest segment of private contributors.
- Government funding (local, state, and federal) is the smallest of the three revenue categories. At the national level, funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

grew to \$148 million in 2016 after remaining flat at \$146 million since 2012. This remains significantly lower than the 2010 appropriation of \$167.5 million.

### How can the arts provide unity and meaning to a polarized society?



Americans for the Arts recent survey of “What Americans Believe about the Arts” indicates that the arts are, in fact, valued and play a key role during times of upheaval.

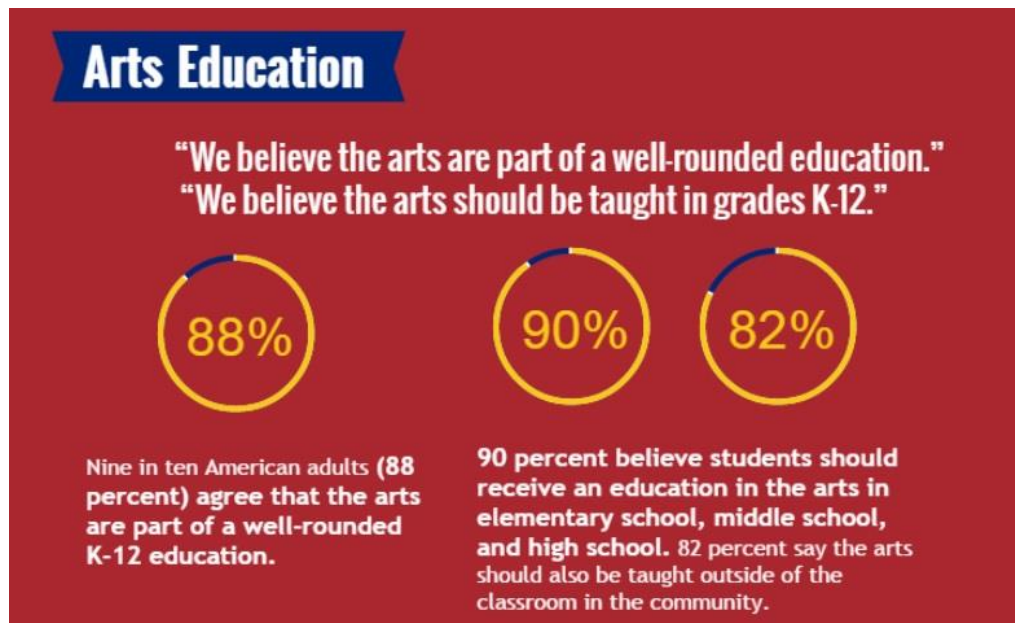
- It is clear that the arts are perceived as providing meaning to our lives – 63 percent of the population believe the arts lift them up “beyond everyday experiences,” while 73 percent agree that the arts provide a “positive experience in a troubled world.”
- Furthermore, 67 percent of Americans believe “the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, and ethnicity.”

The impact of the arts is vital at every level, particularly in troubled times. What are the most effective ways in which the arts can be leveraged as we prepare to face “the new”? Not only do the arts provide meaning, stability, and unity in a turbulent world, they can also serve as an agent for change. We must use the arts to push back against intolerance and polarization, and use them as a tool to empower individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

### Arts Interventions Early in Life

One of the most visible benefits of the arts is the impact of arts education programs early in life. Not only do the arts empower students’ individually, but they impact schools and communities. According to the U.S. Department of Education, over the past ten years, “students in arts programming had better attendance, fewer disciplinary issues and improved on-task behavior” relative to others. Furthermore, when schools embrace the arts, they become vibrant and successful

centers of learning and community life – places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach.



In December 2015, Congress passed bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which President Obama signed into law. This newest iteration, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), will begin in force in the 2017-2018 school year. Unlike its predecessor, No Child Left Behind, ESSA reduces the role of the federal government in education reform, and empowers the states to make decisions.

Critically, it provides exciting new opportunities for arts education. Among them:

- The arts maintain their position as crucial to a “well-rounded education,” but the list of subjects has expanded to include music, as a stand-alone.
- Those advocates on the side of the arts in every state are now empowered to lobby their states which have increased discretion on how to spend Title I funds which may be used for all subjects encompassing a “well-rounded education.”
- ESSA entails support for integration of the arts into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

This renewal in the form of ESSA provides advocates at the local and national levels the tools to ensure that students maintain access to the vital resource that is arts education. Not only can arts education assist in closing the achievement gap, but it also facilitates programs that boost achievement for young children, students with disabilities, and those in under-served and under-resourced environments.

These arts interventions at an early age are eagerly backed by parents – 66 percent of whom say they have taken action to support arts education during the past year. This includes encouraging their children to participate in school or community arts programs (33 percent), and donating to (22 percent) or volunteering for (20 percentage) such programs.

Providing students with access to arts education puts them on a secure and positive path to the future, and prepares them to become engaged and productive members of their communities.

## Are arts interventions effective even when some policy leaders might say it's "too late"?

The arts are fundamental to our humanity. In no situation is this statement truer, and is the benefit more necessary, than in the prison system where it is, perhaps, easiest to lose one's humanity. Since 2010, the U.S. has experienced a shift away from its trend of mass incarceration, which saw the number of people in U.S. state and federal prisons reach 1,615,487 in 2009 (not counting those in local jails or under probation or parole).

At the same time, the number of short-term and death penalty sentences are decreasing and a higher percentage of inmates are serving Life without Possibility of Parole (LWOP) sentences. In an essay for Americans for the Arts entitled "Arts, Prisons, & Rehabilitation," Judith Tannenbaum, using statistics from the Marshall Project, notes that: "As of late 2014, there were 3,049 people awaiting execution in the United States and 50,000 serving sentences of life without possibility of parole."

In this context, the arts can play a vital role in three aspects related to the prison system:

- Helping prisoners – particularly those serving LWOP sentences – lead more humane lives, by improving their health, increasing their social connections, and allowing them to express themselves.
- Assist those who have been released with rehabilitation to society, working to decrease the likelihood they will return to the system.
- Provide comfort to families with loved ones in the prison system and their communities.

A number of states are beginning to incorporate arts programming into their prison systems in order to achieve these goals. California, in particular, has taken a big step towards understanding the value of arts in the prison system and investing in programs. As a state with one of the highest populations of incarcerated adults, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, along with the California Arts Council, run an Arts-in-Corrections partnership which seeks "to combat recidivism, enhance rehabilitative goals, and improve safety and environment of state prisons." This program has contracted with ten organizations providing "rehabilitative arts services in state correctional facilities."

## Artists as Change Makers

Not only the arts writ large, but artists themselves can be agents of change in their communities. They make up part of a broader systemic "tool box" which can elevate issues and mediate strife and unrest. Artists and arts organizations can make positive contributions both to the lives of individuals and their communities. One community benefiting from the healing power of the arts and work of arts organizations, is that of returning service men and women. Organizations such as

SongwritingWithSoldiers and Veterans Writing Project, which offer rehabilitation through the arts allow those returning to process their experiences and tell their stories through poetry, prose and song.

In the realm of community change and social justice, Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy program "inspires, promotes, and connects arts and culture as potent contributors to civic and social change." The initiative "creates useful resources for artists, cultural, and community leaders, and funders; builds knowledge about quality engagement and evaluation; and brings national visibility to arts for change work." The program's Arts & Social Change Mapping Initiative, for example, aims to make artists and arts organizations aware of each other's work in the realm of social change with the goal of working together to strengthen impact.

How can philanthropists become involved in this work? Awareness of the funding landscape for organizations working for social change is crucial. In 2010, the Animating Democracy Initiative released a report "Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking", which assembled a first-time portrait of arts funders, social change funders, and others supporting civic engagement and social change through arts and cultural strategies. What does that landscape look like today? Where do the initiatives already in place still need assistance? Where are there gaps yet to fill – which communities and individuals are still in need of the healing power of the arts and the benefits of artists as change makers?

## Conclusion

The arts provide meaning to our lives. They are beneficial at all levels – not only to individuals, but also to communities and society more broadly. As we consider and evaluate the big-picture impact of the arts, and what should be done to maintain that impact, we must remind ourselves that the positive effects of the arts are felt not only top-down, but also bottom-up. Just as support for the arts benefits communities and individuals who live in those communities, so individuals empowered by the arts can help build healthier communities which, in turn, encourage support for the arts at a higher level.



## About the National Arts Policy Roundtable

The National Arts Policy Roundtable assembles leaders from business, government, philanthropy, education, and the arts to Sundance every autumn to address issues critical to the advancement of American culture. It is a forum for national leaders to discuss timely issues, recommend public policies and private sector initiatives, and to identify research needs.

The National Arts Policy Roundtable was launched in October 2006 by Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and Robert Redford, founder of the Sundance Institute, on the premise that issues important to the arts are also important to society. Since its inception, the Roundtable has convened more than 350 top level decision makers and thought leaders from the fields of business, government, the social sector, education, and the arts in a unique cross sector forum designed to discuss issues—and propose solutions—critical to advancing American culture and vitality. Each Roundtable yields a series of recommendations on public policies and private sector practices that are necessary to move the issue addressed from thought to action, on such topics as the future of private sector funding for the arts, the role of the arts in building an internationally-competitive and creative 21st century workforce, fostering civic engagement, and strengthening global communities. Significant cultural policy achievements in both the private and public sectors have been the result. The findings and recommendations from the Roundtable are distributed broadly via Americans for the Arts website, publications and industry journals, op-eds, the media, and through Americans for the Arts' National Arts Policy Network which includes more than 5,000 local arts agencies across the country and over 200,000 citizen activists.

For more information, visit [www.americansforthearts.org/napr](http://www.americansforthearts.org/napr).

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The 2016 National Arts Policy Roundtable is facilitated by David Grant.

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### **Further Recommended Reading**

“Arts Education: Creating Student Success In School, Work, and Life”

[http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/arts-advocacy-day/handbook/2.Issue Briefs/Issue Briefs/5.Streamlined Arts Education Unified Statement.pdf](http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/arts-advocacy-day/handbook/2.Issue%20Briefs/Issue%20Briefs/5.Streamlined%20Arts%20Education%20Unified%20Statement.pdf)

“ESSA and Arts Education: 7 Basics to Know”

[http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/legislation\\_and\\_policy/ArtsEd/ESSA\\_7\\_Basics.pdf](http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/by_program/reports_and_data/legislation_and_policy/ArtsEd/ESSA_7_Basics.pdf)

“Arts, Prisons, & Rehabilitation” Judith Tannenbaum

[http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Arts%26America PrisonsRehab.pdf](http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Arts%26America_PrisonsRehab.pdf)

California Arts council – Arts-in-Corrections

<http://arts.ca.gov/initiatives/aic.php>

ArtSpring

<http://artspring.org/>

Rehabilitation Through the Arts

<http://www.rta-arts.org/about/>

Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking

<http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/funding/grantmaking-report>