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HOW AND WHY BUSINESSES SUPPORT THE ARTS: Findings from the BCA Triennial Survey of Business Support to the Arts

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The Business Committee for the Arts, or BCA, is a division of Americans for the Arts whose mission is to ensure the arts thrive by encouraging, inspiring, and stimulating businesses to support the arts in the workplace, in education, and in the community. In this *Monograph*, we'll cover findings from the 2010 *BCA Triennial Survey of Business Support to the Arts*, delve into case studies about successful partnerships between arts and business, and provide some insights on how to best leverage business support for the arts.



Both the executive summary and the full survey report can be found online at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/go/MembersOnly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1968, the Business Committee for the Arts (BCA) has done a triennial field-wide survey of businesses to determine why, how, and to what extent they support the arts. Conducted by Shugoll Research, a total of 600 businesses participated in the *2010 BCA Triennial Survey of Business Support to the Arts*, yielding the only survey in the United States that tracks support from small, midsize, and large companies to bring you the most complete view of the funding landscape from businesses nationwide. For the purposes of analysis, the businesses were divided into three revenue size groups: under \$1 million (small), between \$1 million and less than \$50 million (midsize), and \$50 million and over (large). The findings provide analysis of the motivations behind business funding decisions, but also function as valuable tools for arts organizations and local, state, and federal government agencies in their efforts to stimulate business support for the arts.

How

Businesses use a variety of means to support the arts, including charitable contributions, sponsorships, employee matches, in-kind services, executive loan programs, corporate art collections, and workplace giving. In recent years, business support of the arts has shifted from general charitable giving to a more marketing-based and sponsorship-oriented strategy, enabling businesses to support the arts as well as use the arts to meet their business goals, expand their markets for products, and engage their employees.

In a remarkable shift this year, 60 percent of small and 57 percent of midsize businesses included non-cash or in-kind giving to arts organizations. While small businesses on average give a low dollar amount to the arts, this is an area that continues to provide a growing opportunity for arts organizations to generate support from the business community.

Why

Sixty percent of businesses said they support the arts because it is a good thing to do. Only 14 percent responded that giving is tied solely to business goals, although another 23 percent said they give both for philanthropic and business goal reasons. This means a net of 37 percent of businesses relate arts giving to business goals. When it comes to specific motivations, businesses responded with these top five reasons as most important in deciding to support specific arts organizations: the organization 1) offers arts programs to reach the underserved; 2) offers opportunities for company recognition; 3) is engaged in arts education; 4) has an existing relationship with someone at the business; and 5) ties the arts to social causes such as hunger, violence, or homelessness. The top two reasons, engaging the underserved and providing company recognition, show the role of both pure philanthropy and the need to have business goals fulfilled.

While more than a third of businesses said arts giving is tied to corporate goals, it is interesting that two-thirds acknowledged choosing organizations that provide opportunities for corporate recognition. Respondents cited a few other leading reasons for supporting specific arts organizations: an organization offers arts education initiatives (62 percent); the business has an existing relationship with someone at the arts organization (62 percent); and an organization offers programs that tie into social causes such as hunger, violence, and homelessness (61 percent).

▶ **Ashleigh, a participant in Alliance Data's mentorship program, smiles over the top of her interpretation of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. Photo courtesy of Alliance Data.**

To What Extent

Whether we work in nonprofit arts organizations or businesses, the turbulent climate of the last few years needs no introduction. Markets have plummeted, rebounded, and then dipped again. Uncertainty has been the watchword of the day. Not surprisingly, the 2010 BCA survey found that business





▶ **A little unsure of herself when she first started painting, Ashleigh just needed a little encouragement from Alliance Data mentor Alyson Evans to gain some confidence and make a beautiful work of art. Photo courtesy of Alliance Data.**

giving to any philanthropic cause is down across the board by 18 percent, and fewer businesses are giving at all. In that context, business giving to support the arts fell 14 percent from 2006 to 2009. The percentage of businesses giving to the arts is down among each of the three size categories: from 30 percent to 24 percent among small businesses, from 42 percent to 25 percent among midsize businesses, and from 58 percent to 35 percent among large businesses.

Given the economic turbulence, respondents did not predict a turnaround in overall charitable giving for 2010. Twenty-nine percent of respondents expected their giving to decrease from 2009, while 11 percent expected an increase and more than half (58 percent) expect giving to remain the same. The same trend is true for arts giving. Only 10 percent of those who support the arts expected their arts giving to increase in 2010, while 22 percent said it will decrease and 67 percent said it will remain the same.

But among the negative numbers is some encouraging news. The first hopeful statistic is that the percentage of total philanthropic contributions dedicated to the arts is actually up slightly from 13 percent in 2006 to 15 percent in 2009. So while funding is dropping, the arts may be getting a slightly bigger piece of the pie. Also, among the decreased number of businesses that continue to support the arts, median giving actually rose among small businesses (from \$500 to \$700) and midsize businesses (from \$2,000 to \$2,250). As a result, small and midsize businesses more than ever contribute the largest share of arts dollars.

Conclusion

While overall business support for the arts is down from 2006 to 2009, there are still opportunities for arts organizations to build successful partnerships with businesses both large and small. The data in the survey points to a variety of ways businesses continue to partner with the arts. The case studies in this *Monograph* demonstrate the importance of building relationships with small and midsize businesses, shifting the focus to educational and social issues, and tapping into the needs of business.

KEY FINDINGS

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS	2009	2006
Percent change from 2006 in total arts giving	-14%	-
Percent of all businesses contributing to any philanthropic cause	52%	70%
Percent of all businesses contributing to the arts in three-year period (cash/non-cash)	28%	43%
Median contribution to the arts per business	\$750	\$800
Percent the arts received of total philanthropic contributions	15%	13%

Base: All companies in survey

REASONS FOR SUPPORTING SPECIFIC ARTS ORGANIZATIONS	2009	2006
Offer arts programs to reach the underserved	68%	76%
Offer opportunities for company recognition such as signage, product displays, program listings, and promotional tie-ins	67%	73%
Offer arts education initiatives	62%	68%
Having an existing relationship with someone at the arts organization	62%	79%
Tie the arts to social causes such as hunger, violence, or homelessness	61%	63%
Offer sponsorship opportunities linked to a company's products and services	51%	58%
Have company employees serve as volunteers	47%	50%
Provide tangible employee benefits such as discount tickets or free admission	45%	49%
Provide tangible company benefits such as use of arts venues and workplace programs	39%	37%

Base: Only companies that support the arts

Percent indicating that each is a "very important" or "somewhat important" reason in deciding to support the arts.

REASONS BUSINESSES MIGHT INCREASE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS OR BEGIN SUPPORTING THE ARTS	CURRENT ARTS CONTRIBUTORS	
	2009	2006
Profitability improved	74%	63%
Could also support other social causes by giving to the arts	65%	62%
There is a proven need for the contribution	65%	69%
A direct impact on a company's bottom line can be shown	63%	62%
A direct tie-in to the company name or products	55%	51%
Could specify how the contribution is used	53%	46%
Helped with employee recruiting, satisfaction, and/or retention	38%	40%

Base: All companies in survey

HOW TO LEVERAGE BUSINESS SUPPORT

Arts organizations have many resources and assets they can provide to the business community for mutual benefit. Arts organizations need to focus on how they can leverage these assets and market them to the business community in a way that benefits both the arts and business communities.

Get on the Same Page

There are many reasons arts organizations can be attractive investments for businesses. It's interesting, however, to think about how we as arts professionals make our case in comparison to the way a business investor might view us. For example, Americans for the Arts' inaugural [National Arts Index](#) outlined this list of benefits that the arts offer. Businesses might focus on a certain set of benefits, while arts organizations might focus on an entirely different aspect.

- **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 and enhance economic health.
- **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.

While many businesses recognize these values are inherent in the work that arts and culture organizations perform in any community, they also have a host of practical needs that drive philanthropic decision-making. More than a third of businesses responded that arts giving is tied to corporate goals, and another two-thirds acknowledged choosing



organizations that provide opportunities for corporate recognition. When asked what might encourage them to increase their giving, 74 percent noted increased profitability, while another 63 percent would consider additional giving if a direct impact on a company's bottom line can be shown. Businesses, both those that now give to the arts and those that don't, agree that arts giving can also benefit them by

increasing name recognition (79 percent) and offering networking opportunities and the potential to develop new business (74 percent).

▶ A caricature artist sketches a Work for Art donor at The Standard's Volunteer Expo. Photo by Steve Kelly courtesy of Regional Arts & Culture Council.

Listen, Speak, Then Connect

But how can you ensure that you are aligning with the goals of the business you are approaching for support? Ask questions first and then sit back and listen. Rather than investing so much time and energy in convincing business partners to accept the fact that what we do is important, arts organizations should spend more time listening to, and truly hearing, our donors. Are we asking them what they want, what they value, and how we can help?

In discussing partnership between the arts and business communities, President of [Arts + Business Partners LLC](#) Alice Zimet remarked that: "You should know your funders so well that you know how to help them." Don't go in to a meeting thinking it's about how the business can help you—turn the tables. How can you help them? It's not enough to focus solely on the benefits of partnering with your organization—you have to convince businesses why they should partner with the arts *at all*. Think logically and strategically, Zimet tells us, about how your organization, your programs, products, or services can help meet key business needs.

Do your homework. Understand who you are talking to and what their interests are. Businesses can be opaque about their intentions and community investment goals, but before you dive into a direct ask or even the initial interaction, try to understand as much about them as you can. As Bob Speltz, director of public affairs from The Standard in Portland, OR, aptly framed it, "It's sort of like dating...start slow and work your way to greater understanding."

THE PRIVATE SECTOR & CREATIVITY SPOTLIGHT

How can we get inside the heads of the influencers and decision-makers charged with disseminating corporate contributions and make a strong case for support? IBM recently released the fourth edition of its own biennial [Global CEO Study](#) series, led by the IBM Institute for Business Value and IBM Strategy & Change. This study conducted face-to-face conversations with 1,541 CEOs, general managers, and senior public sector leaders around the world. In IBM's past three global CEO studies, corporate leaders consistently reported that coping with change was their most urgent challenge. In 2010, the conversation itself has changed, with a new primary challenge at the forefront—complexity.

The study distills its findings into three primary areas of focus to address the increase in complexity: embody creative leadership, reinvent customer relationships, and build operating dexterity. Facing a world becoming dramatically more complex, CEOs selected creativity as the most important leadership attribute. Creative leaders invite disruptive innovation, encourage others to drop outdated approaches, and take balanced risks. They are open-minded and inventive in expanding their management and communication styles, particularly to engage with a new generation of employees, partners, and customers.

[Ready to Innovate](#), produced by Americans for the Arts in partnership with The Conference Board and the Association of School Administrators, also demonstrated that U.S. employers rate creativity/innovation among the top five skills that will increase in importance over the next five years. Employers rank arts study second, topped only by self-employed work, as an indicator of creativity while school superintendents rank arts study as the highest indicator of creativity, followed by experience in performing arts/entertainment.

These are all issues, worries, and concerns on the minds of those who we would ask for support. In the current economic climate, businesses are looking for ways to manage complexity, form closer relationships with consumers, increase productivity and profits while improving employee morale and encouraging innovation. Arts organizations are not operating in a vacuum. We face similar challenges. What steps can we take to begin speaking a common language and working together with the business community toward a win-win scenario benefiting us all?

SIDEBAR

10 Ways the Arts Can Help Business

Arts organizations have many benefits they can provide to businesses. It is not just about what businesses can provide to the arts. Alice Sachs Zimet, president of Arts + Business Partners LLC and creator of the first Cultural Marketing Group at Chase Manhattan Bank, offers the following angles to help you leverage business support and provide valuable benefits to the business community.

1. Showcase or promote products and services.
2. Provide opportunities to create business-to-business relationships.
3. Enhance customer loyalty by connecting with a respected arts organization.
4. Offer business executives access to members, trustees, or government officials.
5. Cultivate prospects for customers and clients.
6. Provide marketing opportunities for a new office, store location, or a re-located headquarters.
7. Penetrate demographic markets by partnering with an arts organization that reaches the desired clientele.
8. Provide access to arts events to thank clients.
9. Promote partnerships to enhance a business reputation.
10. Offer tickets or memberships to boost employee morale and retention.

▶ Young artist John Caughman from Portland Youth Philharmonic performs at The Standard's Volunteer Expo. Photo by Steve Kelly courtesy of Regional Arts & Culture Council.

Step out and engage employees and decision-makers on a personal level. Sometimes, in the scramble to craft our eloquent corporate pitch for dollars, we forget that we are just people talking to other people. Interestingly, only nine percent of businesses *not* giving to the arts cited a “lack of measurable business benefits from arts contributions” as a deterrent. Most businesses see the measurable benefits, so arts organizations should be focusing on how to best connect the two organizations.

Craft the Ask

It has never been more important to truly integrate marketing, communications, and development functions within your organization. Working in sync with one another is key to telling a compelling story and being consistent in your external messaging. One thing the BCA survey shows is that as a field, we've been asking a lot more: 44 percent businesses said they were asked to support the arts in the 2009 survey compared to 29 percent in 2006. As contributions shrink, you are competing with countless other voices.

We all know that it is often the little things, the “moments,” that convey far more than the polished brochures, PowerPoint presentations, or spiral-bound sponsorship proposals. The more you can introduce employees and decision-makers to the real work of your organization, the more





Attendees and award honorees listen to keynote presentations at the 2010 Council of Smaller Enterprises Arts Business and Innovation Awards. Photo courtesy of COSE Arts Network.

effective you will be in soliciting support. If you can't arrange a site visit, rely on new media. Every organization should have a digital camera and Flip Video™ or other portable device to capture high-quality videos of your programs and impact on community.

As development and marketing minds come together, organizations are able to create and test integrated messaging. In "Brand

Control to Major Tom: The New Rules of Brand Management" on ArtsMarketing.org, Roger Sametz notes that "monologues need to be replaced by dialogues," and if we can begin with the following steps, we are far more likely to create and distribute powerful messages. 1) Be clear internally; 2) Get your story straight, simple—and portable; 3) Identify different "ways in" for different constituency groups and craft messages that are meaningful to them; 4) Appeal to a higher power. Honestly connect to a vision that people can emotionally connect with; and 5) Design (consistently) to differentiate. This internal conversation can go a long way in helping to position you far more effectively externally.

Once organizations have taken the time to walk around in a potential funder's shoes, determine key business needs, and align appropriate internal resources, there are powerful opportunities to leverage current trends in business giving.

Other Tips

EMBRACE OTHER SECTORS By far, non-arts givers said on an unaided (non-prompted) basis that the leading reason they don't support the arts is that education, healthcare, youth and/or social causes are more important (31 percent of respondents). Similarly, 65 percent of companies said they might increase contributions or begin supporting the arts if they could also support other social causes by giving to the arts. Ironically, the companies *already* supporting the arts said that addressing social issues through the arts is a key consideration in their decision to donate. Business that are already

➔ **Darreonna creates her own, red sky version of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, alongside Alliance mentor Tammy Turner. Photo courtesy of Alliance Data.**

funding the arts are doing the majority of that work with organizations that are either involved in programming that reaches the underserved (68 percent); work toward arts education initiatives (62 percent); or engage in social causes such as hunger, violence, and homelessness (61 percent). These results show quite a communication gap. The paradox is that many arts organizations are already engaged in these types of endeavors: we just aren't doing a very good job of telling our story. And of course, as members of a much larger nonprofit sector, there is still tremendous opportunity to expand and embrace mission-appropriate partnerships advancing a wide range of social causes.

LEVERAGE NON-CASH RESOURCES LIKE IN-KIND GIVING AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Don't discount the importance of in-kind giving. A significant number of small (60 percent) and midsize (57 percent) businesses include non-cash or in-kind giving to arts organizations. For small businesses, this is up significantly from 46 percent in 2006. Close to half of the larger businesses (46 percent) also contribute in-kind to the arts. In fact, as Alice Zimet of Arts + Business Partners reminds attendees in her sponsorship boot camps, in lieu of a cash contribution, think about the myriad other ways a business might be able to help your organization. Zimet lists the following as a starting point, but recommends that every organization take the time to compile a thoughtful list of your needs and brainstorm all the ways those needs might be met through in-kind or product donations:

- Products (books, meals, advertising space, silent auction items, press kits)
- Services (mailings, transportation, printing, dry cleaning)
- Facilities (use of meeting rooms, public spaces, storefronts, signage)



In addition to tangible donations, more and more companies are seeing the value of their employees' skills and are turning to them to help meet the organization's philanthropic goals by enlisting employees' skills through volunteer programs in their communities. The 2010 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey, which received responses from 300 executives in charge of volunteer programs at companies with at least 1,000 employees, found that corporate managers report that the top priorities when determining workplace volunteer activities include the potential to alleviate a social issue (36 percent), help the nonprofit function more effectively (31 percent), and serve more clients (31 percent).

▶ **Artists from Do Jump Movement Theatre perform on stilts at The Standard's Volunteer Expo, featuring Work for Art. Photo by Steve Kelly courtesy of Regional Arts & Culture Council.**

DON'T FORGET SMALL BUSINESS The BCA survey shows that 93 percent of all arts funding comes from small and midsize businesses and 97 percent of support focuses on local initiatives. We are now operating in a truly global marketplace, but most businesses—particularly small businesses—remain highly focused on local markets. Don't lose sight of the power you have to make a strong local case for support. With innovative programs serving broad community audiences, arts organizations have a natural opportunity to capitalize on the “buy local” movement.



Conclusion

Ultimately, just like in the business community, our success as arts administrators will be based on creative leadership, cultivating deeper relationships with our customers and donors, and organizational clarity and agility. The most successful organizations will be proactive and aggressive in addressing the current environment, and perhaps even stimulated by the pressure to think in new ways.

As Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch commented in a recent interview with *Philanthropy News Digest*, “Private-sector

SIDEBAR

Resources

- **Ready to Innovate**
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/pdf/information/services/research/policy_roundtable/ReadytoInnovateFull.pdf
- **Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy:**
 - Measuring the Value of Corporate Philanthropy
www.corporatephilanthropy.org/resources/thought-leadership/research-reports/measuring-the-value.html
 - Giving in Numbers: 2010 Edition
www.corporatephilanthropy.org/research/benchmarking-reports/giving-in-numbers.html
- **Giving USA 2010**
www.givingusareports.org
- **Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Research**
www.deloitte.com/us/2010volunteerimpactsurvey.com
- **Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund**
www.charitablegift.org
- **National Arts Marketing Project**
www.ArtsMarketing.org
- **IBM 2010 CEO Study**
www-935.ibm.com/services/us/ceo/ceostudy2010/index.html

investment in the arts needs major amplification. We've seen slippage over the last decade—not just during the recession, but since the beginning of the decade—in the percentage of support going to the arts, and I think it's because, in terms of the number of nonprofits, there are simply more mouths to feed. Other causes like the environment and climate change have emerged, and the organizations working on those issues have very effectively made their case for funding. The arts need to make the case that they are not only inherently valuable but are also part of the solution to other problems.”

While research reports like the *BCA Triennial Survey of Business Support to the Arts* remind us that we are still operating in an extremely challenging environment, these findings also provide us with invaluable insights into how we can improve arts and business partnerships. And there are signs of hope out there. A report released by [Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund](#) in October 2010 found that the majority of American donors (55 percent) plan to maintain their level of charitable giving in the coming months, despite the volatile market and economic environment. “There’s no denying that it’s been a challenging year for many Americans,” said Sarah C. Libbey, president of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund. “Priorities and pocketbooks are stretched, while the call for charitable giving is greater than ever. Yet, it is clear that Americans are deeply committed to giving—whether money or time—to the causes they care about, and that this commitment endures through both good and challenging times.” Many businesses share a similar commitment, but as they say in sports, a good offense is the best defense.



➔ **Council of Smaller Enterprises Arts Business and Innovation Awards Young Arts Entrepreneur Award winner Michael Kubinski of C.L.E. Clothing Co. Photo courtesy of COSE Arts Network.**

CASE STUDIES

Despite the negative news about business funding for the arts, arts organizations across the country continue to build successful partnerships with the business community. The following case studies serve as examples of how arts organizations can leverage their core competencies to engage the businesses in their communities. In Texas, Alliance Data and the North Texas Business Committee for the Arts created a successful partnership around a shared focus on connecting the arts with education and social causes. In Cleveland, the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture partnered to share resources for mutual benefit. In Portland, the Regional Arts & Culture Council focused on the needs of the business to enhance a relationship.

▶ **Jalen and Kameron proudly display their best photos alongside Alliance Data mentor Richard Huggins. Photo courtesy of Alliance Data.**



Alliance Data, Plano, TX

Alliance Data, based in Plano, TX, does not list arts and culture among the three focus areas primarily supported by the company's charitable initiatives. Like many other businesses, Alliance Data redefined its charitable focus areas in 2008 to include learning, independent living, and children's advocacy. Prior to this shift, however, the company had developed a valued relationship with North Texas Business Council for the Arts (NTBCA) and wanted to continue the partnership. As the BCA survey demonstrates on a national level, a leading reason for supporting specific arts organizations is the existence of arts education initiatives. Receiving equal weight, interestingly, is having an existing relationship with someone at the arts organization. Both of these trends worked in the favor of NTBCA, as Alliance recognized that the organization could assist the company with endeavors targeting the learning focus area.

"Arts education receives less and less funding in public schools, private ones, too, for that matter," noted Alliance Senior Corporate Communications Specialist Alyson Evans, "so we set about finding a way to promote arts education in a one-on-one setting with a

➤ Precious had a great time making her papier mâché mask with Alliance Data mentor Patti Collins. Photo courtesy of Alliance Data.




small group of kids.”

Alliance was also looking for a way to keep their employees engaged and active in their charitable programs, so the organizational leadership was very interested in devel-

oping a program that allowed associates to share their time and talents. NTBCA’s director of membership “was instrumental in helping us by coming up with unique ideas on how we could turn [the partnership] into a focus on arts education, especially as it relates to emotional expression through art,” said Evans.

Alliance quickly found that working with public schools proved too difficult, as they must abide by specific policy, regulations, and curriculum, so NTBCA connected them with the local Boys & Girls Club. NTBCA was able to offer counsel, expertise, and connections to help the company develop an innovative arts mentoring program designed to educate children in the arts as well as provide one-on-one mentoring time between Alliance mentors and Boys & Girls Club students. This alternative, according to Evans, “provided a great option because of their flexibility in being a nonprofit after-school program.” The initial consultation and partnership with NTBCA helped Alliance design the program and ultimately take the reins as a company-led initiative.

In the first year of the program, artist mentors taught mentees between the ages of 9–11 to create unique pieces of art based on their interests and skill level. Throughout the month of May, company volunteers spent at least an hour each week of quality, one-on-one time with Boys & Girls Club students, both teaching and learning about art. Activities centered around creative media, including photography, acrylic on canvas, papier mâché, and clay sculpture. Of the four sessions, two were taught by Alliance volunteers and two were taught by local artists, whom Alliance found through its partnership with NTBCA. At the close of this four-week program, each student had learned new skills, created original works of art, and, most importantly, made strong connections with their Alliance mentor. As a culminating event, the company hosted an exhibition in downtown Plano to showcase the students’ work. Alliance also plans to display some of the artworks in its offices during the company’s own art exhibition, which is held as part of NTBCA’s annual On My Own Time program.


Council of Smaller Enterprises Arts Business and Innovation Awards Individual Artist Award winner and Project Runway contestant Valerie Mayen of Yellow Cake Shop. Photo courtesy of COSE Arts Network.

This partnership has become a win-win for both the company and the arts council. The council leveraged an existing relationship, listened carefully, and positioned itself as a valuable resource to keep a longtime donor engaged despite changing philanthropic focus. Alliance Data also sees tremendous value in the program. “It’s so important to bring a program like this to kids you know might never see a paintbrush—those kids who don’t have coloring books at home. They soak up both the attention and the lessons like little sponges,” said Evans. “Because we have at least 12 mentors participating in this program every year, we also have many new pieces of art to include in our On My Own Time employee art show. And having real judges look at these kids’ art and award them ribbons makes the kids feel their accomplishments are that much greater. For us, it really has strengthened our partnership with NTBCA and Boys & Girls Club—it’s an unusual, tri-fold partnership. But because the program works, the partnership does, too.”



Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, Cleveland, OH

For Cleveland, new beginnings seemed hard to imagine. The Rust Belt city was once host to approximately 50 of the Fortune 500 companies (now down to two) and has lost half its population in the last 50 years. However, the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC) has embarked on a path toward a brighter future by leveraging a word in its own name: *partnership*.

As articulated in the organization’s core values, CPAC believes that “creative and innovative ideas, the core attributes of arts and culture, are central to a community’s development. In this era of knowledge-based economies, business and civic leaders should strategically position their communities to take full advantage of the benefits provided by creative individuals and organizations in the arts and culture sector.” CPAC has demonstrated its commitment to these values by developing a unique and deeply integrated series of partnerships and programs with the local small business community. These partnerships focus on finding commonalities rather than emphasizing differences.

In 2000, CPAC released a communitywide arts and culture plan that found significant need for local artists to become better equipped with basic business practices. As an early step to address this functional gap, CPAC held a community forum to brainstorm solutions, and

Attendees network and socialize at the 2010 Council of Smaller Enterprises Arts Business and Innovation Awards. Photo courtesy COSE Arts Network.



thought to invite a representative from the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE), the region's small business support organization. While COSE was initially skeptical that its membership had anything in common with

local artists, after attending the forum it recognized that the needs and concerns of practicing artists actually aligned quite closely with those of small business owners.

As a result, the concept of "let's build something together" emerged, and the two organizations have been in partnership ever since, working toward a holistic approach for addressing the needs of both artists and creative small business owners. The first joint initiative was the development of the Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute (AEI), a course of study designed to help individual artists operate in the marketplace more effectively and see themselves as small business entrepreneurs. Modules are taught by local business professionals, often COSE members, most of whom donate their time.

Following the success of AEI, COSE launched the COSE Arts Network, a network of professional artists and arts-based business owners offering professional development resources, education and networking events, benefits programs, and business savings to those in the creative industries. Over the past four years, nearly 500 artists have either joined COSE outright or been reclassified as artists within the existing membership. Paying half the regular rate, artists benefit from group purchasing, access to health insurance, discounted marketing and other business-related workshops, and professional networking and showcasing events. COSE Arts Business and Innovation Awards now recognize the unique point of intersection between the art and business worlds, and artists also participate in the annual two-day COSE Small Business Conference. COSE has hired a full-time staff member to manage the Arts Network, and just this year, also took over management of the AEI program from CPAC.

CPAC Vice President Megan Van Voorhis noted that, "We, as a community, cannot be singular," but instead should be consistently "positioning [the arts and culture] as a tool for community problem solving." This collaboration has paid dividends for both partners. For COSE, it has expanded their membership base. For CPAC, it has built trust between the artist and business communities, helped artists begin to see themselves in a much broader

role, and opened up access to previously untapped resources. Van Voorhis reminds us that partnerships like this do not happen overnight. They require building established relationships, creating credibility and trust on both sides, doing your homework to reduce the risk for both parties, and continuous evaluation and feedback along the way.



▶ **The Standard employees help celebrate the 25th birthday of *Portlandia*, one of the Portland's most beloved public artworks. Photo by Mary Bauer.**

The Standard, Portland, OR

The Standard, a leading provider of financial products and services headquartered in Portland, has been a longtime supporter of the arts and education in the area. Cultural development remains a key area of focus for the company's corporate philanthropic investment, with a particular emphasis on supporting organizations offering multicultural programs that provide access to the arts for underserved communities, as well as programs that build audiences and promote the arts through education, interactive mediums, and sustainable artistic excellence. As the largest non-government employer in downtown Portland, the company also recognizes the importance that arts and culture organizations play in building a thriving, vibrant community. With the company headquarters located downtown for 104 years, The Standard is aware that the entire ecosystem is interconnected

and that the presence of major arts and cultural anchors helps maintain a viable downtown and provide compelling reasons for people to live, work, play, and raise a family in the area.

As the BCA survey indicates, a company's CEO, chairman, owner, or partner exerts tremendous influence over most arts-based philanthropic decisions. This individual or group of individuals is involved in decisions on charitable giving 91 percent of the time in small businesses, 90 percent in midsize businesses, and 81 percent in large businesses, so having a strong supporter at the helm of the company can be invaluable for arts organizations seeking support.

Fortunately for Portland, The Standard's CEO Greg Ness believes in a community commitment to arts and culture. In his role as honorary chairman for the Regional Arts & Culture Council's (RACC) 2010 "Work for Art" campaign, Ness penned an editorial that appeared in the *Portland Business Journal*: "Art has a near limitless potential to change

▶ (left to right) Carole Morse (PGE Foundation President), Greg Ness (President & CEO of The Standard), and Gregg Kantor (President & CEO of NW Natural) hatch a competition to become the top Work for Art company in 2010–2011. Photo by Bill Barry.



the way we look at the world and to strengthen our communities,” he wrote. “Fostering an appreciation for the arts builds a foundation for a lifetime of curiosity and learning.

A vibrant community of arts and artists energizes our region and attracts the innovators and creative thinkers we need in the public and private sectors.”

The Standard’s Director of Public Affairs Bob Speltz admitted that while we are conditioned socially to act in our own self interest, “it can be invaluable for arts organizations to approach potential funders prepared and ready to listen to the businesses’ needs and motivations.” He also recommended that arts organizations: a) come prepared for a company to want to invest more than cash; b) make sure to encourage clear and direct communication about what each party wants from the partnership; c) be realistic and stay grounded about what’s possible; and d) let the company hear from you when you’re not asking for money. This last tip is one we often overlook: “People think they have to be asking every time they have interaction, but it goes a long way *not* to do that.” It’s nice “to have a moment that doesn’t involve money, when you’re just letting supporters know how you’re doing.”

Speltz closed our interview by cautioning: “We are facing intergenerational changes in business leadership. The elder statesman CEO is gone, and the men and women leading companies today are seeing fundamental change. Doing it ‘the old way’ is not an option, and it will require a very different set of skills for arts administrators to appeal to new leadership and the people who work around them.” Ultimately, he said, success “comes down to relationships that you create, establish, nurture, and steward.” Arts organizations should be out there, “meeting those decision-makers and influencers and understanding what they are looking for in community partnerships and collaborating in intelligent and innovative ways.”

Conclusion

These case studies demonstrate the variety of ways arts organizations have successfully partnered with businesses during a time of decreased corporate support for the arts. By understanding the needs of businesses, these arts organizations have leveraged their assets to create mutually beneficial relationships.

SIDEBAR

About the Author

Katherine Mooring has worked in arts management for 12 years. At the [Arts & Science Council \(ASC\)](#), she manages pre K–12 education and professional and volunteer development programs, including ASC’s board training program for business professionals. Mooring has a master’s degree in mass communications from the University of South Carolina and a B.A. in American history from Washington & Lee University.

Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading arts information clearinghouse, with a 50 year record of objective arts industry research. As the preeminent arts advocacy organization, it is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.



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