



# The Arts and America's Bottom Line

*Public investments in the arts deliver a high payoff and contribute to multiple policy goals.*

*Many sectors offer a sizable economic footprint, however **only the arts sector delivers a fivefold return on investment**: boosting economic productivity, improving education outcomes, fostering civic cohesion, facilitating good health, and preserving our cherished heritage and traditions. No other industry offers all those outcomes alongside beauty and inspiration.*

**The arts fuel a strong economy, on Main Street and across our nation.** America needs agile, innovation-oriented industries that create opportunities for growth and help American workers and their families to thrive.

- ▲ The creative industries account for [4.3% of the U.S. gross domestic product](#), adding \$1.10 trillion in value to our economy and employing 3,721,782 workers. The arts reinforce America's leadership in the global economy, too. Cultural exports represent a trade surplus that rose from [\\$15.5 billion to \\$21.0 billion](#) in 2022. On a local level, arts attendees spend an average of [\\$38.46 above the cost of admission](#) on other services when they attend arts events, boosting revenues for retailers, restaurants and other merchants.



Photo by Jennifer Bonauer

**The arts improve education outcomes.** [Chronic absenteeism](#) and [learning loss](#)—made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic—are persistent problems for schools, students and their parents. If not reversed, these trends could cost our nation up to [\\$31 trillion](#) in lost economic productivity.

- ▲ Students who study the arts have [better attendance](#), [lower dropout rates](#) and [higher scores](#) on standardized tests of reading and mathematics. The arts also teach perseverance and collaboration and give students a leg up in [workforce preparation](#), preparing students to be productive and innovative employees.

**The arts strengthen the social fabric of America's communities.**

[Disconnectedness is on the rise](#), and it's affecting our well-being in [multiple ways](#). Isolation leads to poor health and poor work performance, and it undermines community resilience, public safety and civic engagement.

- ▲ Arts participation offers a powerful antidote to isolation. People who participate in the arts are [more likely to be active in their communities](#) and make a difference in the lives of others through [volunteering, voting, philanthropic activity and other forms of civic engagement](#).

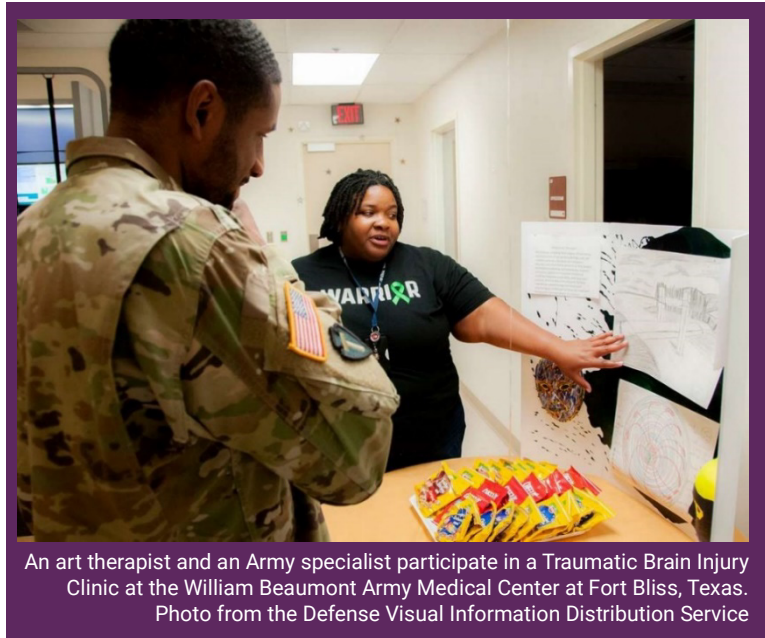


Hartsville, South Carolina, a rural town of 7,700 residents, has a thriving arts scene and is a state-designated South Carolina Cultural District. Photo courtesy of the South Carolina Arts Commission

**The arts facilitate good health.** The arts are increasingly used in clinical settings to address physical and mental health conditions. [Research](#) shows that the arts can facilitate patient healing and reduce stress for caregiving teams. Arts participation also supports [improved public health outcomes](#) at the community level.

- ▲ Music therapy [has been shown](#) to ease postoperative and chronic pain and reduce the need for pain medications. This has important economic implications given that the U.S. health care system spends almost [\\$800 billion per year](#) on pain management, much of which is shouldered by Medicare and Medicaid.
- ▲ The physical side effects of isolation among older adults—including increased risks for stroke, heart problems and dementia—accounts for an estimated [\\$6.7 billion in excess Medicare spending annually](#). But the arts offer a supportive solution. Older adults who participate in the arts report [lower rates of hypertension and higher levels of cognitive and physical functioning](#).

- ▲ Members of the military encounter acute health risks in service to our country. [More than 414,000](#) active-duty men and women have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) since 2000, and [up to 35%](#) of combat veterans will develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). [Research](#) shows that creative therapies successfully reduce symptoms of TBI, PTSD and chronic pain for wounded veterans.



- ▲ [More than 100,000 people per year die from drug overdoses](#) in the United States. We need to take advantage of all available tools to help reverse this trend. [The arts offer viable strategies](#) for the treatment and prevention of opioid addiction.

**The arts preserve cherished traditions.** The arts promote a shared sense of place and create desirable communities where young people want to live, work and raise their families.

- ▲ From the heartland to the mountains to the coasts, American communities have important stories to tell. The arts honor our distinctive culture and history, instill community pride, and preserve our traditions for future generations.



The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering is produced by the Western Folklife Center. Held in Elko, Nevada, the festival celebrates cowboy poetry, music and other Western traditions. Photo by Marla Aufmuth