

Connecticut Arts Alliance Advocacy Platform (adopted 9/14/10)

Executive Summary

The Connecticut Arts Alliance (CAA) is the leading statewide grassroots nonprofit arts advocacy organization seeking to broaden public and private support for Connecticut arts and cultural policies and funding. CAA is firmly committed to the critical importance of arts and cultural resources in attracting and retaining jobs and business investment, building vibrant communities, and nurturing student creativity and innovation in our schools.

Our priorities are aligned with the National Governors Association, which states “arts and culture are important to state economies. Arts and culture-related industries, also known as “creative industries,” provide direct economic benefits to states and communities: They create jobs, attract investments, generate tax revenues, and stimulate local economies through tourism and consumer purchases.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the social, cultural and economic revitalization and strengthening of Connecticut, we urge candidates for Connecticut public office to consider these following recommendations:

1. Strengthen the Capacity of Nonprofits Arts Organizations to Serve Connecticut’s communities. Maintain sufficient and consistent funding for the ARTS grants programs of the Commission on Culture and Tourism, including a restoration to \$5 million in funding for Basic Cultural Resources grants. Significant reductions in CCT the past two years have weakened the State’s cultural capacity and caused organizations to close, and eliminate jobs and programs. Decreases in funding have also weakened Connecticut arts organizations’ ability to compete for other private and public funds.
2. Protect and maintain annual allocations into the Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund.
3. Protect the longstanding tax exemption of nonprofit arts organizations in recognition of the vital public benefits they provide.
4. Reserve an annual share of state bond funds to finance the capital improvement, restoration and modernization of cultural facilities.

THE ARTS CONTRIBUTE TO CONNECTICUT’S VITALITY AND ECONOMY

The rich array of Connecticut arts and cultural organizations, together with the contribution of individual artists and the creative industries, contributes significantly to the vitality of communities large and small.

- Over 22 million people per year experience Connecticut’s cultural attractions.
- Our non-profit arts and cultural organizations generate positive impacts on people and communities through the power of creativity.
- The arts and culture sector generates 3.8 billion in gross state product annually.
- Like for-profit entities, these organizations maximize limited resources to sustain and grow operations. But unlike their private counterparts, they are rooted in Connecticut’s communities and will not relocate to take advantage of more desirable business incentives or lower labor costs.
- Connecticut’s arts and cultural organizations which employ 40,000 people, will contribute significantly to Connecticut’s revitalization into the future.

CONNECTICUT ARTS ALLIANCE ADVOCACY PLATFORM

The Connecticut Arts Alliance seeks to work with citizens, organizations, and government officials in supporting policies and practices that help to strengthen Connecticut's economy and its communities by creative investment in the basic infrastructure, resources, and services underlying artistic and cultural activity: from education, environment, and transportation, to health care, public safety, and more. All are critical building blocks for developing and sustaining revitalized, strong communities. Only when we begin to reinvest in our communities will Connecticut and its economy be competitively positioned on the national and global stage. We believe our municipal, regional, state and federal governments bear a responsibility to support the arts and cultural sector, as they do other critical infrastructure and services, because of the significant return on investment the arts bring as major contributors to our state economy and the quality-of-life of our citizens.

Our priorities are aligned with the National Governors Association, which states "arts and culture are important to state economies. Arts and culture-related industries, also known as "creative industries," provide direct economic benefits to states and communities: they create jobs, attract investments, generate tax revenues, and stimulate local economies through tourism and consumer purchases. These industries also provide an array of other benefits, such as infusing other industries with creative insight for their products and services and preparing workers to participate in the contemporary workforce. In addition, because they enhance quality of life, the arts and culture are an important complement to community development, enriching local amenities and attracting young professionals to an area." ¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the social, cultural and economic revitalization and strengthening of Connecticut, we urge candidates for Connecticut public office to consider these following recommendations.

- 1) Strengthen the Capacity of Nonprofit Arts Organizations to Serve Connecticut's Communities
 - a. Maintain sufficient and consistent funding for the grant programs of the Commission on Culture and Tourism that are directly focused on the arts including \$5 million for Basic Cultural Resources grants. Significant reductions in CCT the past two years have weakened the State's cultural capacity and caused many organizations to close, and eliminate jobs and programs. Decreases in funding have also weakened Connecticut's ability to compete for other private and public funds.
 - b. Protect and maintain annual allocations to the Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund
 - c. Reserve an annual share of state bond funds to finance the capital improvement, restoration and modernization of cultural facilities.
 - d. Protect the longstanding tax exemption of nonprofit arts organizations in recognition of the vital public benefits they provide.
 - e. Ensure that nonprofit arts organizations have access to all benefits extended to small businesses including access to working capital, state sponsored tax credits, loan funds and loan guarantees.
 - f. Strengthen incentives for giving to and volunteering for arts organizations.
 - g. Develop new tax credits and expand existing tax credits in order to encourage greater charitable giving by corporations and individuals.

¹ *Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate State Economic Development*, National Governors Association 2009

- 2) Support Arts Programs That Impact On The Quality-Of-Life Of Individuals And Communities
 - a. Support programs that use the arts to engage youth in high-risk environments, strengthen civic engagement and community development, increase awareness of the natural environment, enhance the lives of individuals with mental and physical disabilities, and develop cross-cultural understanding.
 - b. Retain the arts in the definition of core academic subjects of learning and support the reauthorization of the Arts in Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. There is overwhelming consensus from superintendents (98 percent) and corporate leaders (96 percent) that “creativity is of increasing importance to the U.S. workforce.” Of those corporate respondents looking for creative people, 85 percent said they were having difficulty finding qualified applicants with the creative characteristics they desired. The unintended consequences of the No Child Left Behind Act have diminished the presence of arts education in our schools.
 - c. Support programs that provide arts education programming and shape creative minds for the future in school districts where budget cuts for education have eliminated arts classes, band and orchestra programs, theater, dance and more.
 - d. Collect and publicly report the status and condition of arts education and other core academic subjects at the state level for parents, policymakers, and arts educators to ensure equitable access to a comprehensive education for all students.
- 3) Support Connecticut’s Creative Industries In Stimulating The Economy By Considering And Supporting Legislation That Would Invest In The Workforce And Create And Protect Jobs
 - a. Support proposals to provide tax credits for nonprofit businesses to spur hiring such as payroll and social security tax credits to hire new employees and increase wages.
 - b. Support and assist federal funding initiatives such as The Americans Recovery & Reinvestment Act to help support arts jobs in Connecticut.
 - c. Support the Extension of Unemployment & Healthcare Benefits for Part-Time Employees, including professionals in the creative Industries. The creative economy relies heavily on professionals who make a living from non-traditional employment structures. Artists are disproportionately self-employed, and many work multiple jobs in volatile, episodic patterns. The ability to access unemployment insurance and healthcare benefits would offer critical assistance to this population.
 - d. Make Human Capital Investments in Arts Job Training, The Department of Labor’s Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs, and the Wagner-Peyser Act, which are administered by the states, to “help up-skill workers and provide employment services and support that will increase worker employability and earning power.” We support that program with an interest in expanding the services available to workers in the creative sector and through arts institutions that can provide professional development training.
 - e. Ensure that state and national healthcare insurance coverage as outlined within healthcare reform proposals include individual artists and cultural nonprofit organizations that are currently excluded for all practical purposes from employer-based insurance plans.
- 4) Maximize Federal Programs That Can Benefit The State Through Arts Investments And Participation
 - a. Fund CCT programs to the fullest extent possible to maximize matching funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
 - b. Boost arts projects in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to mayors’ community development offices, the CDBG program provides “bricks & mortar” funding for a variety of state and municipal projects and is a primary government source for local arts institutions of all disciplines.

- c. Link Transportation Enhancements (TE Program) with State Arts Agencies. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement (TE) program funds 12 general transportation enhancement activities including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, historic preservation, and public art projects. Through the upcoming reauthorization of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), this program, administered by state transportation departments, should receive an increase in funding and all public art projects should be developed and implemented in coordination with the state arts agency.
- 5) Actively Involve Leaders From The CT Arts Alliance And constituent organizations In participating in Governmental, Business And Civic Policy Discussions and Planning to ensure that the arts and culture can best serve, complement and enhance economic, educational and cultural public and private initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The rich array of Connecticut arts and cultural organizations, together with the contribution of individual artists and the creative industries, contribute significantly to the vitality of communities large and small. Our organizations focus on generating positive impacts on people and communities through the power of creativity. Like for-profit entities, these organizations maximize limited resources to sustain and grow operations. But unlike their private counterparts, they are rooted in Connecticut's communities and will not relocate to take advantage of more desirable business incentives or lower labor costs. Connecticut's arts and cultural organizations will contribute significantly to Connecticut's revitalization into the future.

- Over 22 million people per year experience Connecticut's cultural attractions.
- The arts employ over 40,000 people in Connecticut
- The arts industry supports over 38,000 jobs statewide
- Connecticut has 9,520 arts-related businesses.
- The arts and culture sector generates nearly \$9 billion each year in travel and tourism revenues and over \$87 million in hotel tax revenue.
- The arts generate over \$3.8 billion in gross state product annually, including \$2.6 billion in personal income.
- State funding for the arts (grants to arts organizations and artists) is matched by private sector contributions at the rate of \$11 for every dollar spent by the state.

For more information about the CT Arts Alliance, visit www.ctartsalliance.org