

Cultural Policy Action Can Grow Resilience, Prosperity, and Belonging in Maine

A report from the Cultural Alliance of Maine
March 2024



When cultural activity is happening in large and small ways throughout an area, it creates surprising ripple effects of benefits, even for those who don't participate directly.

Maine is working hard to increase its workforce by 65,000 in only a few years. Two out of three young people choose where they want to live before choosing

a particular opportunity.¹ It is not enough to offer a good job: we must offer a good life and ample opportunities for lifelong learning, creativity, and connection with our local community. We must compete for the skilled, future-facing workforce our state needs by investing in our state's cultural assets and the benefits they bring to our communities and residents.

Capitalizing on the ripple effects of culture starts with investing in the people and organizations dedicated to connecting us to one another. Maine's investments in culture have not kept pace with other states despite the substantial dividends this sector pays. The time has come to identify cultural funding models that support health, wealth, and happiness.

TWO OUT OF THREE

Maine residents participate in local cultural activities.²



DENMARK

Dam Jam Revival 2023.

Denmark Arts Center

Photo: Mike Dana

BAAM strives to create a creative community where kids who grew up here can say “I grew up in a place that values the arts.”

Kate Webb | Program Director

According to newly released Census Bureau data on arts & culture participation, 68% of Maine residents engaged in local cultural activities in 2022.



BETHEL

Youth Open Stage
Bethel Area Arts & Music

Maine’s reputation as a haven for artists, writers, historic architecture, and cultural heritage runs deep in our history, and these activities remain central to our way of life today. We take lessons in creative writing, acting, photography, art appreciation, dance. We see live performances, attend poetry and book readings, visit historic buildings and sites, go to museums, use our libraries, and attend festivals and exhibits. We write creatively, sing together, play music, dance, act, make films, and share our work with others. We work with pottery, metal, fiber, wood, jewelry, digital media, paint, and much more.

Participation in culture is not a one-off. Of the 46% of Mainers who reported attending a cultural event like a performance, exhibit, or program, 23%

took part in six types of such events in 2022, 18% in four, 13% in seven, 13% in five, 11% in one, 9% in two, 8% in three, and 5% attended eight or more types of cultural events in 2022.

That means Mainers attended cultural events at least 2.4 million times in 2022. Each and every time those two out of three Mainers get out into their communities, or explore a new one, great things happen for our state, from spending at local businesses to the formation of relationships to improved health outcomes. Cultural activity has a ripple effect, benefiting all Maine communities and residents. The cultural activity ripple effect creates two important kinds of benefits: 1) in the economic vitality of an area, and 2) in how communities come together and understand each other.

Vibrant libraries, historical societies, historic buildings and districts, theaters, museums, concerts, festivals, and creative industries mean more energy and life in a community, more tourists, more businesses, and more young people and families.



WATERVILLE

Murder on the Orient Express
at the Waterville Opera House

Cultural nonprofits & freelancers are businesses



Culture drives commerce to other local businesses



Culture-driven travelers stay longer & spend more

They employ people locally, purchase goods and services from within the community, are members of their Chambers of Commerce and Main Street organizations, and attract tourists to their regions.

Culture, unlike most industries, leverages significant amounts of event-related spending by their audiences. In 2017, for example, cultural event attendees nationally spent \$31.47 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission on items such as meals, parking, and lodging— vital income for local businesses. Tourists driven by cultural experiences spend an average of \$48 per person and stay longer in the area.

PORTLAND

- Cultural organizations spend \$58.2 million on an annual basis.
- Audiences spend \$27.8 million with local businesses every year.
- 1,872 local jobs are supported by the cultural industries.
- \$20.7 million in tax revenue is generated for local, state and federal government.

WATERVILLE

- The typical cultural event participant spends \$37.62 per person per event, not including the cost of admission, on food, drinks, shopping, lodging, and/or transportation.
- 42.7% of cultural activity participants were from outside Kennebec County. They spent an average of \$53.60.
- 88% of respondents agreed that the activity or venue they were attending was “a source of neighborhood pride for the community.”
- 87% said they would “feel a sense of loss if that activity or venue was no longer available.”⁴

STATEWIDE:
\$2.2 BILLION IMPACT
2.6% of MAINE'S GDP
18,749 JOBS
\$1.2 BILLION IN WAGES³

Traditional Arts Network meeting
Mayo Street Arts



PORTLAND



Historic Preservation Work
Victoria Mansion

Saturday morning chess at Porter Memorial Library challenges the brain and feeds the soul.

Lee Downing | Library Director



MACHIAS

Chess camaraderie for all ages
Porter Memorial Library

In early 2024, CAM asked cultural organizations to rank their top impacts on the well-being of their communities.

#1 Connection to Neighbors

70% rated Belonging as one of their top impacts, followed by Community Collaboration (49%) and Civic Pride (34%) and.

88% of cultural activity participants surveyed in Waterville agreed that the activity or venue they were attending was "a source of neighborhood pride for the community." Data from a three-year study show a significant link between resident attachment and local GDP growth, with culture as a critical component.⁵ The ripple effect: **Love for your community and trust in your neighbors leads to economic growth.**

We bring hands on activities directly to people who may have not ever explored these mediums.

Nick Blunier | Common Roots Studio



BELGRADE LAKES

Mobile Art Bus visits Pine Tree Camp

Students are eager to discover the stories of the past as well as the traditional skills still alive today.

Kirstie Truluck | Executive Director



BATH

Students with Riggers, Shipwrights & Historians
Maine's First Ship

We preserve and celebrate the rich culture of French-heritage peoples in northern Maine and western New Brunswick.

Patrick Lacroix | Director



FORT KENT

Archives acadiennes (Acadian Archives)

We provide informational programs that help people to understand and connect with their community.

Matt Murphy | General Manager



BLUE HILL

Volunteers in action
WERU 89.9 FM

#2 Education

28% placed Lifelong Learning in their top impacts, followed by Youth Education (27%).

In early childhood, the arts have been implicated in improved IQ, spatial cognition, and numeracy compared to kids without the arts access.⁶ For the elderly, activities like dancing, playing an instrument, and reading lower the risk of cognitive decline: older adults who do at least 11 cognitive or physical activities per month are 63% less likely to have dementia.⁷ Learning doesn't stop after the bell rings, after graduation, or after retirement. The ripple effect: **People are happiest and healthiest when we're constantly learning. The cultural sector is an endless supply of new ideas for exploration.**

#3 Individual Health & Well-being

15% named Community Livability or Healthy Aging as one of their top impacts, followed by Social Opportunities for Residents Under 40 (12%), Supporting New Mainers (11%), and Mental Health and Wellbeing (10%)

91% of cultural activity participants report meeting new people and making new friends through their cultural activities. 9 out of 10 say culture increases their connection to the community.⁸ The ripple effect: **Culture is our most effective tool against isolation and loneliness, and for encouraging young people to put down roots.**

Few industries deliver this multitude of benefits for Maine.

Unsurprisingly, 71% of MaineBiz readers believe that, despite other funding priorities, Maine should increase its investments in culture.⁹ Maine has enjoyed the benefits of these ripple effects. We should be proud of what we've built in our communities, and take responsibility for keeping our investments going.

Learn more at www.culturalmaine.org or contact mollie@culturalmaine.org.

¹ American Institute for Economic Research ² U.S. Census Bureau and National Endowment for the Arts ³ Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Commerce Department ⁴ Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Study ⁵ John S. and James L. Knight Foundation ⁶ Learning, Arts, and the Brain ⁷ Journal of the American Geriatrics Society ⁸ Penn School of Social Policy & Practice, University of Pennsylvania 2023 ⁹ MaineBiz poll