



**Ohio Arts Council
FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget**

**Senate Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Senator Randy Gardner, Chairman**

**Tuesday, May 19, 2015
9:00 a.m.**

**Testimony submitted by:
Donna S. Collins, Executive Director
Ohio Arts Council**

Good morning Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Cafaro, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Donna Collins, and I am the executive director of the Ohio Arts Council (OAC).

This is a milestone year for the Ohio Arts Council. In 1965, Senator Stanley Aronoff (then a state representative) worked with Governor James Rhodes to enact legislation creating our agency. This month, the Ohio Arts Council celebrates 50 years of public funding and support for the arts in our state, so it is undoubtedly an exciting time.

On behalf of the OAC's board, staff, grantees and partners—as well as artists living and working in every Ohio community—I want to express my deep appreciation for the General Assembly's past and present support for the arts.

The Arts: A Sound Investment

I am here today to communicate the value of the legislature's continued investment in the arts through the Ohio Arts Council—as well as the far-reaching economic, educational, and cultural benefits this investment produces.

Quite simply, state funding for the arts creates jobs—and not just jobs for performers, curators, artists, and others working directly in the creative industries. Arts entrepreneurs and nonprofits employ accountants, engineers, highly skilled laborers and craftsmen, and others to support creative endeavors. Current research from Bowling Green State University demonstrates that Ohio's arts sector supports approximately 231,000 jobs, contributing nearly \$32 billion to the state's economy and generating about \$3.4 billion in annual tax revenues at the federal, state, and local levels.

In addition to creating and retaining jobs, Ohio's arts infrastructure supports economic development and competitiveness in other ways. The OAC's Creative Economy grant funding has supported an interactive 5,000-square foot LED light art installation in downtown Cleveland. It helped the Colony Theatre and its partners in Marietta launch new arts programming, collaborate in new ways, and better tell their story to tourists. It helped the Westcott House in Springfield create online content, including a virtual storefront and interactive tour of their Frank Lloyd Wright house, so anyone anywhere in the world can visit their incredible space from their computer. Funds supported

the development of the first comprehensive community-wide cultural plan in Dayton in the last 20 years; a multi-weekend arts event expected to bring 750 artists and 12,000 people to the Toledo warehouse district; and a mentorship project to simulate the development of emerging musicians in Cleveland's Waterloo Arts District.

Specifically, we know that the arts and cultural industries:

- are fast-growing, dynamic clusters of economic activity that aid the growth of other businesses;
- are internationally competitive export industries, closely connected to tourism;
- produce resilient, entrepreneurial jobs well-suited to making mature industries become more competitive;
- aid in the retention and development of an innovative and skilled workforce; and
- spur strong public-private partnerships that catalyze community revitalization in urban and rural areas alike.

The benefits of a robust arts and cultural sector extend beyond inspiring economic activity. The arts also inspire educational success. Ongoing research confirms a positive relationship between arts education and improved academics for all students. An education that includes the arts helps train our workforce and produce creative, critical thinkers and problem-solvers. In an American economy increasingly driven by innovation and creativity, arts education produces workers that are attractive to the employers of today and tomorrow.

Ohioans recognize these benefits and value having a vibrant arts and cultural landscape. Our state's citizens know their tax dollars are invested in the arts—and strongly support their continued investment. Last September, the OAC conducted a statewide survey that reached nearly 6,000 respondents from all 88 Ohio counties. It revealed that fully 91 percent of Ohioans believe public funds should go toward the arts, with 83 percent already aware that public funds support the arts in Ohio. In an era of increasing accountability across all parts of government spending, our state's residents continue to appreciate, understand, and prioritize ongoing investment in the arts as a critical role of the public sector.

Advancing Our Mission: Invest, Engage, Innovate, and Lead

I'd like to turn now to how the Ohio Arts Council fits into our state's arts infrastructure. Our mission is to strengthen Ohio's communities culturally, educationally, and economically. Our vision is to provide leadership and voice for the arts through funding and supporting quality arts experiences.

2015 marks our 50 year anniversary, and it also begins the implementation of a new strategic plan focused on four strategic action areas. Last winter and this spring, we met with hundreds of constituents in communities large and small from all over Ohio. We visited grantees, elected officials, artists, and citizens to learn about their ideas and receive suggestions about what they wanted from their Ohio Arts Council. The generous feedback we received is now being put into use shaping our policy development, guiding our planning, and informing our future.

Our shared perspective at the Ohio Arts Council is to **invest, innovate, engage, and lead** through actions that are mission-driven, people-focused, and forward-looking. These four actions frame our strategic plan for the upcoming biennium, and I'd like to share with you a few thoughts on each.

Invest

At the heart of the OAC's work is our investment through grant-making activities, serving individual artists, arts organizations, schools, and other nonprofits. Our grant programs accommodate a range of needs.

To give you a few examples, the OAC:

- provides reliable support for arts organizations through grants awards in its flagship Sustainability program
- finances collaborative creative economy partnerships grounded in established local or regional development goals
- funds opportunities for artists to share and impart their skills with students and seniors
- rewards excellence in individual artistic disciplines
- offers career development funding for artists with disabilities, helping them maintain their independence and pursue a livelihood
- develops and trains the workforce through apprenticeships in the traditional arts, preserving the heritage of Ohio

Given the array of grants the OAC offers, one of my primary goals as the agency's new director is to ensure our investments have a continued sense of focus and efficiency. For me, that means assessing and improving all aspects of agency funding, services, and processes to better reflect arts constituents' needs, goals, and outcomes. With this in mind, our agency is in the midst of reviewing and streamlining our offerings from top to bottom. We are improving resources, expanding the ways we provide services within our current structure, and ensuring our future efforts produce a significant return on investment. In this way, the OAC will make bold, smart investments in the arts and culture while maintaining its reputation as a prudent steward of public resources.

Engage

In the upcoming biennium, the OAC will serve its constituents and the public in much greater depth by expanding efforts to reach them in ways beyond grant-making. In surveying arts constituents, the OAC uncovered a desire shared by arts administrators, board members, and artists that they want to take part in new professional development opportunities, including convening peer groups to provide networking opportunities, sharing best practices to improve arts administration efficiency, and reviewing innovative new research.

Similarly, constituents want the OAC's help in elevating their profiles and sharing their success stories. For some grantees, using the OAC's statewide platform to showcase artists and arts organizations, highlight best practices, and spotlight exciting innovations, can mean more than receiving a grant.

Innovate

When we encounter new ideas, our aim is to accommodate them by broadening already existing programs rather than creating new layers of bureaucracy. An example of this is an initiative under development to improve access to the arts in underserved rural areas by widening the scope of our Ohio Artists on Tour program.

Thanks to prioritizing technological needs in last biennium's budget, Ohio will also soon have a state-of-the-art online grants system to serve arts constituents. We expect it will serve as a model to other state arts agencies throughout the country once it is fully operational later this year.

Lead

Lastly, the OAC must play an active leadership role in the ongoing development of Ohio's arts and cultural sector. As new initiatives are developed and new ideas brought to life, our philosophy will be to look outward rather than inward. After identifying the artists, administrators, or educators already doing great work in the field, we will focus on determining how the OAC can best support, rather than duplicate, that good work. This approach will help to make us more cost-effective and expand our footprint to all areas of the state.

The agency has also been aggressive in developing and leading strategic partnerships and collaborations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to save state dollars on program, administrative, and technology costs. This will continue into the new biennium and beyond.

State and Federal Appropriations

The executive version of the FY 2016-2017 budget recommends GRF appropriations of \$24.4 million to fund and strengthen the arts in Ohio. The House version recommends an additional \$2.5 million in grants, bringing the GRF biennial total to \$26.9 million. On behalf of the Ohio Arts Council, I want to express my deep gratitude to lawmakers and to Governor John Kasich for their continued faith and investment in the arts in Ohio.

Through this modest public investment—which totals less than 0.04% of the state's total GRF appropriations—the OAC leverages a high match ratio. In the last grant cycle, every OAC dollar was matched with local and private funds at an incredible ratio of 53:1.

In addition to the state's investment, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the OAC the second-largest state arts partnership grant in the nation for six consecutive years, recognizing the excellence of our programming and building on Ohio's appropriation for arts and culture. NEA funding traditionally totals around \$2 million biennially, with all funds invested as grants.

As in the past, the OAC staff continues to implement cost-saving measures to operate efficiently and effectively. Since FY 2008, the agency's staff has been reduced by more than half, even as the need demonstrated by arts constituents increases. As a result, the OAC has lengthened its grant cycles and streamlined procedures, reducing administrative burdens on grantees and the agency itself, while decreasing grant application panel review time and expenses. Comparing last biennium to the current one, the OAC has reduced by 2% the portion of its budget that goes toward payroll.

In short, the Ohio Arts Council is making a positive impact in the lives of children, families, arts professionals, artists, and communities. The arts are economic drivers, sources of innovation and creativity, and at the very heart of our cultural infrastructure in Ohio. They are what makes Ohio Ohio. Your investment through an appropriation to the Ohio Arts Council is a commitment to more creative sector jobs, arts education, works of art in every genre, and the preservation of cultural heritage for all Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer questions.