

COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Local Arts Community

Arts organizations are among your most important partners—particularly with regard to your economic and social impact study. After all, they provided the survey data that made the study possible in the first place. Results of AEP6 are providing hard evidence of the fundamental role nonprofit arts and culture organizations play in your community's economic and social health. Here are some steps you can take to leverage the support of your local arts community:

- Meet with the directors of your community's arts and cultural organizations as soon as possible to share the findings in your AEP6 report. If your group of directors is small, include other staff members, especially those who work in marketing and development. If you have many directors, meet separately with the organizations' marketing and development staff members. Above all, ask the arts and cultural organizations for their suggestions about the best ways to use your AEP6 findings.
- Share your customized final report with the organizations. Explain that individual organizations can use the step-by-step instructions found in the "AEP6 Calculator" section of the report to estimate their economic impact on your community.
- Hold a special meeting for the board chairs or executive committees of your local arts organizations. Give them an overview of Americans for the Arts and the AEP6. Many of these board members are likely to be from the business community. They will understand the importance of economic impact and will be among your strongest allies if they are informed and involved.
- Ask each organization to use their programs for the next year to highlight AEP6 statistics. Organizations that have newsletters (emailed or hard copy) can mention one statistic in each of their newsletters. Organizations that have performances or other events can mention the study and share a fact about the arts and economic impact in their community in their playbills or in brief introductions just before the performance begins.
- Maintaining and strengthening connected relationships takes intentional planning and commitment. Your team's participation in forums, on panels, and attending events hosted by partner organizations will not only increase your organization's visibility but will also go a long way toward building stronger partnerships.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The business community will be interested, intrigued, and excited by AEP6; economic impact studies speak their language. Your AEP6 report presents an opportunity to speak to people about arts and culture with statistics and facts. Communicating the value of arts and culture in terms of economic impact also provides common ground for the business community, public officials, and others less comfortable with talking about the arts' social and intrinsic value. Here are some tips for leveraging the business community to generate support for arts and culture:

- Use your Board of Directors. You probably have several members of the business community on your board. They are your best sources for advice regarding contacts and the distribution of this research to the business community. Ask them to help you develop your plan for reaching members of the business community, establishing priorities, and making connections.
- Meet with a few business leaders in your community as soon as possible. Tell them about AEP6 and ask for their suggestions and help contacting other business organizations in your community. It's a good idea to take a board member with you to the meeting, preferably someone familiar to the business leaders with whom you are meeting.
- Consider smaller groups and associations that are affected by the economic impact of arts and culture:
 - Meet with the chair of your local hotel/motel association. Tell them about AEP6. Talk about those who are coming from outside the area. Show them that people are travelling arts and culture. Engage them in stimulating a cultural tourism initiative.
 - Set up meetings with groups focused on building the community leaders of tomorrow: community and statewide Chamber of Commerce, an economic development board, a downtown business association, a Rotary Club, a Kiwanis Club, a Lions Club, New Leadership group (frequently part of the Chamber of Commerce), a Young Professionals group, or a 40- under-40 organization.
 - Meet with other organizations that are industry-focused, particularly if your community has a large concentration of those specific types of businesses (e.g., an association for bankers or for those that work in real estate or insurance).

As soon as you determine your priorities, contact these organizations to speak at one of their meetings. Ask if you and your board member can share some new information with the organization's membership regarding the economic impact of the arts and how it applies to your community. If possible, involve a current (or former) board member who is a member of your targeted organization.

- Most communities also have some type of economic development organization. The organization may be funded by city government, part of the Chamber, or a separate nonprofit organization. Ask to make a presentation to this group as soon after your announcement as possible. If the economic development department is within your community's government, ask for a list of committee members. In some cases, this and other useful information may be available on the department's or local government's website.

