The Arts Ripple Effect:

A Research-Based Strategy to Build Shared Responsibility for the Arts

Produced by the Topos Partnership for the Fine Arts Fund

FineArtsFund

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FineArtsFund The Fine Arts Fund is enhancing our community with arts and cultural experiences that offer joy, promote inclusion, and inspire creativity for a strong region. We accomplish this by engaging the entire community in supporting experiences that benefit people and sustaining and strengthening a healthy arts and culture sector. Toward these ends, we provide leadership, resources, and services. We organize and manage the nation's largest annual community fundraising campaign for the arts. Each year tens of thousands of people donate to this campaign, supporting about one hundred local arts organizations. We leverage the collective strength of our arts and culture to expand participation, develop innovative collaborations, and promote Cincinnati as a great place to live, work, and visit.

topos Founded by veteran communications strategists Axel Aubrun and Joe Grady of Cultural Logic and Meg Bostrom of Public Knowledge, Topos has as its mission to explore and ultimately transform the landscape of public understanding where public interest issues play out. Our approach is based on the premise that while it is possible to achieve short-term victories on issues through a variety of strategies, real change depends on a fundamental shift in public understanding. Topos was created to bring together the range of expertise needed to understand existing issue dynamics, explore possibilities for creating new issue understanding, develop a proven course of action, and arm advocates with new communications tools to win support. For more information:
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Introduction

In late 2008, leaders of the Fine Arts Fund in Cincinnati embarked on a research initiative designed to develop an *inclusive community dialogue leading to broadly shared public responsibility for arts and culture* in the region.

We concluded that our work with the community through arts and culture must be based on a foundation that incorporates a deeper understanding of the **best way to communicate with the public in order to achieve that shared sense of responsibility.**

Many of us have spent years searching for the strongest possible message and the best case on which to build support for the arts. Yet the messages we have used, and successfully integrated in the dialogue across the country, have not yielded the broad sense of shared responsibility that we seek.

For example, we have observed years of successful attacks on public policy proposals to provide limited funds to the arts as part of the national budget. Unfortunately, the arts are an easy target in the public forum – vulnerable to the charge that *art is nice, but not necessary*.

Indeed, while we know that many people in our region say they like and value the arts, this has not been enough in recent years to grow charitable giving or public funding for arts and culture. Historically, we've had great success raising funds for the arts in our community. Yet, we are observing a plateau in that support that has little to do with the current economy and threatens the future success of our community. Furthermore, already minimal public funding of arts and culture has declined in recent years at the same time that our sector has continued to make the case for more investment in sustaining the arts.

Even as business and philanthropic leaders have established new goals for the arts and culture sector through the Cincinnati USA Cultural Partnership, other local groups have criticized these efforts in an apparent attempt to undermine public support.

We determined that we needed more analysis and knowledge of public views and assumptions about arts and culture to develop the necessary foundation for a conversation that leads to increased shared responsibility and public support.

This report summarizes a year of work and important findings for widespread use by others. While leaders of business and other nonprofit sectors have conducted research using framing science methodology to develop communications strategies for change, this is a *first-in-the-nation* analysis for arts and culture.

In the long term, we want broad support and public demand for arts and culture. While most people *feel positively* toward the arts, we will have to change the conversation in order to *motivate action* by the public for the arts. This research is designed to develop the communication tools necessary to motivate that action.

We will share these findings widely – both locally and nationally – in the belief that supporters should use them in communication about our sector, creating the echo chamber necessary for the sense of shared responsibility that is critical to future success.

We hope that this report will also inspire leaders in other cities and regions to use this research and to replicate it in order to influence the national conversation which shapes media content and, in turn, the public will.

The Fine Arts Fund
January 2010

Executive Summary

Supporters of the arts have struggled to develop a national conversation that makes the case for robust, ongoing public support for the arts.

Supporters of the arts have struggled to develop a national conversation that makes the case for robust, ongoing public support of the arts. While arts enthusiasts feel deeply about the importance of the arts and can speak quite eloquently about a number of aspects such as the universality or the transcendent nature of the arts, many have been frustrated by an inability to spark a positive, national, constructive public conversation on the topic – in Cincinnati and elsewhere. Instead, public spending on the arts is too often criticized as an example of "wasteful" government spending or "misguided" government intrusion into an area where it doesn't belong.

In order to create a more constructive public dialog, it is necessary to explore the dynamics in the current public conversation – in the media, for instance – as well as in the thinking of the majority of people who do not focus on the arts in their daily lives.

Understanding attitudes and beliefs more deeply is a key to negotiating them more successfully in future efforts. And of course messages intended to create public support must be tested with audience members in order to find out whether they can effectively create new conversations and new perspectives. A new argument, or lens on the issue, is useful to the extent it can move people to shared action in support of the arts.

Once an effective approach is identified, it can be the basis not only for new conversations with the broader public, but also with leaders in various sectors of public life, from business to government to the faith community. While nuances and emphases will vary from context to context, the essence of a public conversation is that the same themes echo from a variety of sources, in a variety of voices. When legislators, business leaders, community leaders and so forth all take in the same core messages – and in turn repeat them to their own constituencies – the resulting "echo chamber" can begin to transform the accepted common sense on the issue.

After a year of investigation into the topic, this research finds that public responsibility for the arts is undermined by deeply entrenched perceptions that have nothing to do with government and everything to do with understanding of the arts. Members of the public typically have positive *feelings* toward the arts, some quite strong, but *how they think* about the arts is shaped by a number of common default patterns that obscure a sense of public responsibility in this area.

For example, it is natural and common for people who are not insiders to think of the arts in terms of *entertainment*. Problematically,

entertainment is a matter of personal taste, not public responsibility, and is an extra not a necessity.

Furthermore, art-as-entertainment is difficult to distinguish from other forms of entertainment, such as professional sports or reality television.

Underlying what people *say* are several assumptions that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good:

The arts are a private matter: Arts are about *individual* tastes, experiences and enrichment, and *individual* expression by artists.

The arts are a good to be purchased: Therefore, most assume that the arts should succeed or fail, as any product does in the marketplace, based on what people want to purchase. [1]

People expect to be passive, not active: People expect to have a mostly passive, consumer relationship with the arts. The arts will be offered to them, and therefore do not need to be created or supported by them.

The arts are a low priority: Even when people value art, it is rarely high on their list of priorities.

The end result of these patterns – most of which are probably not unique to Cincinnati – is that it becomes easy to see government aid, for instance, as frivolous or inappropriate. Even charitable giving can be undermined by these default perceptions.

The existing landscape of public understanding is not conducive to a sense of *broadly shared responsibility for the arts*. To achieve that objective, we need to change the landscape by employing a message strategy that:

- Positions arts and culture as a *public good* – a communal interest in which all have a stake,
- Provides a *clearer picture* of the kinds of events, activities and institutions we are talking about,
- Conveys the importance of a *proactive stance*, and
- Incorporates all people in a *region*, not just those in urban centers.

Holding typical arts messages up to these standards clarifies why some messages, even emotionally powerful messages, fail to inspire a sense of collective responsibility. Art as a transcendent experience, important to well-being, a universal human need, etc., all speak to *private, individual* concerns, not *public, communal* concerns. While many people *like* these messages, the messages do not help them think of art as a public good.

Messages that are more communal in nature, such as the commonly used economic investment message, or a message about creating a great city, fail for other reasons. For instance, traditional economic messages end up competing with other (usually more compelling) ideas about how to bolster an economy.

Of the many communications approaches explored in testing, one stood out as having the most potential to shift thinking and conversations in a constructive direction. This approach emphasizes one key organizing idea:

A thriving arts sector creates "ripple effects" of benefits throughout our community.

We need a message strategy that positions arts and culture as a public good.

We learned that the following two ripple effects are especially helpful and compelling to enumerate:

- A vibrant, thriving economy: Neighborhoods are more lively, communities are revitalized, tourists and residents are attracted to the area, etc. Note that this goes well beyond the usual dollars-and-cents argument.
- A more connected population: Diverse groups share common experiences, hear new perspectives, understand each other better, etc.

These ideas can be expressed in a variety of ways, but the following is one example of putting them together in a brief text:

Why do leaders of cities around the country think of arts and culture as important priorities? Because when creative 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. The arts ripple effect creates at least two kinds of benefits: 1) in the economic vitality of an area, and 2) in how communities come together and understand each other. In economic terms, theaters, galleries, concerts and so on mean more energy and life in a community, more tourists, more renovated buildings, more people and businesses moving to an appealing place. A vibrant arts environment with music, storytelling, and community art centers also means more people coming together to share experiences and ideas, connecting with each other and understanding each other in new ways. Cincinnati has historically supported the arts and enjoyed the benefits of these ripple effects. We should be proud of what we've built, and take responsibility for keeping our investment going.

This organizing idea shapes the subsequent conversation in important ways. It moves people away from thinking about private concerns and personal interests (me) and toward thinking about public concerns and communal benefits (we). The arts are no longer just nice – they become necessary because practical benefits become just as apparent to people as does the emotional appeal. Importantly, people who hear this message often shift from thinking of themselves as passive recipients of consumer goods, and begin to see their role as active citizens interested in addressing the public good.

The Sector/Ripple Effects Frame is distinct from existing messages in several important ways:

- It focuses on public, community-wide benefits, not private benefits (such as individual enrichment).
- It goes well beyond the limited dollars-and-cents economic argument to offer a richer, more vivid picture of thriving, vibrant communities filled with life and energy.
- It ties a practical point together with the less tangible, but emotionally powerful public benefit of sharing experiences that allow people in a community to better understand each other and live and work together.
- It incorporates a new term, "arts ripple effect," that is simple and vivid, and helps people learn and remember the main idea.
- When fleshed out with examples like galleries, theaters, and concerts, it provides a very concrete picture of an active arts community.

Taken as a whole, this approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians. They are able to repeat the gist of the point, and their discussion suggests they understand the idea and find it a compelling argument for widely shared responsibility for the arts.

Finally, the focus of this project is specific to the Cincinnati area, but it is fair to assume that at least some of the default patterns of thinking, as well as responses to new messages, reflect patterns that would be repeated elsewhere. While it would be risky to assume that this strategy is identical in other cities or regions, we believe this project provides a head start for those planning to embark on similar efforts in other parts of the country and at the national level.

Our Perspective & Research Approach

Underlying the conclusions and strategic implications of this analysis is a unique perspective on communications informed by cognitive and social science. Developed over a decade of close collaboration between its three principals, Topos' mission is to transform the landscape of public understanding by studying and rethinking a given public interest issue from the ground up. A basic premise of the Topos approach is that, while it is possible to achieve short-term victories on issues through a variety of strategies, real change depends on a fundamental shift in public understanding.

Only when people see an issue in a new way can they begin to act accordingly.

Only when people see an issue in a new way can they begin to act accordingly. In this way, our work seeks to *lead the public to new understanding, rather than just follow what the public already values or believes to be true*.

The Topos approach is grounded in the science of framing, which tells us that the terms and images that are used to introduce a topic can have a powerful effect on how we see and understand it. A frame is a "central organizing idea... for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue." [2] This central organizing idea has consequences for how people define the problem and solution, and attribute responsibility for addressing the problem.

Many communications efforts on social issues are unsuccessful because they fail to establish a frame that will help people understand the issue in a new way. Instead, communicators frequently rely on simply heightening the emotional power of a message, or turning up the dial on existing communications frames. An emotional appeal will be insufficient if the fundamental framing is flawed. Beyond tapping emotions, communications must often provide people with a new conceptual understanding of an issue that helps them appreciate the big picture and the causal dynamics at work in a way they didn't before.

Our approach is designed to 1) give communicators a deeper picture of the issue dynamics they are confronting, 2) uncover the fundamentally different framing alternatives available to them, and 3) deliver communications tools with a proven capacity to shift perspectives and create a favorable climate for change.

The Topos approach makes use of unique analytical tools, many of which we have developed or adapted from other disciplines. The analysis that follows is based on multiple rounds of research conducted over the course of one year, including cognitive elicitations, a media review, focus groups, and "talkback" testing of messages.

Cognitive Elicitations

In order to explore the default patterns of thinking and association on topics related to broadly shared responsibility for arts and culture, Topos conducted a series of one-on-one, semi-structured, recorded interviews with a diverse group of 20 individuals in the Cincinnati area, in September and October 2008. [3] The goal of this methodology, adapted by Topos principals from methods of psychological anthropology, is to identify the underlying patterns that persistently guide reasoning, even if subjects also have other perspectives, or "know better" on some level. In other words, we uncover *how people think* about an issue and what drives that thinking, rather than simply chronicle *what they know.*

The sample included 12 women and eight men, representing a range of ages and educational experiences, diverse races and partisanship, and different lengths of time living in the Cincinnati area.

Media Review

Frames are created and reinforced in a variety of ways, and media coverage is a leading driver and shaper of dominant frames. To explore the current landscape of opinion and better understand the frames in play, Topos conducted a thorough review of over one hundred articles and notices from Cincinnati's daily and weekly papers that focused or touched on arts and culture.

The articles were carefully reviewed to identify and analyze the frames commonly in play in Cincinnati media coverage that are likely to influence public understanding.

Focus Groups

In order to explore the group dynamics as Cincinnatians discuss the issue and to determine which messages hold up under debate and which do not, Topos conducted four focus groups with engaged citizens (people who are registered to vote, who pay attention to the news and who are involved in the community) representing a range of demographics (mix of gender, age, education, political affiliation, etc.). Two of the groups consisted of Cincinnati citizens who are arts-connected (meaning they attend or participate/perform in art three or more times each year), and two consisted of those who are not arts-connected.

Two groups were conducted at the beginning of the message and strategy development phase (May 13, 2009), to provide a baseline against which to measure subsequent efforts, and two were conducted after a significant phase of "talkback" testing of various communications approaches (July 9, 2009), in order to investigate the different dynamics in public discourse that result from introducing new frames to address the topic.

TalkBack Testing

The "talkback" approach allows us to clearly determine how a single key concept, such as a particular aspect of a complex issue like arts and culture, is understood and remembered by members of the public. The testing is designed to assess whether a given idea has the capacity to become an organizing principle for thinking and communicating in a new way about the issue – as well as its overall effects on reasoning and engagement.

In the talkback method, subjects (in telephone interviews or Internet surveys) are presented with brief texts (roughly 80-120 words) and then asked several open-ended questions, focusing in part on subjects' ability to *repeat the core of the message, or pass it along to others.* Measures of the effectiveness of a message include subjects' ability to remember, explain, use, and repeat the explanatory ideas.

Talkback subjects included a diverse group of over four hundred individuals. Over half (207) of these were residents of Greater Cincinnati, including Northern Kentucky; 65 were other Ohioans; and 131 were from neighboring states (Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois and other parts of Kentucky).

The Landscape: A Situation Analysis

Though Cincinnatians have positive feelings toward the arts, how they think about the topic is guided by a number of common default patterns that are often counterproductive. In particular, these habitual perspectives often obscure a sense of collective responsibility for the arts.

The Traditional Narrative: The Arts and "High Culture"

Until recently, there was a dominant narrative to explain why arts and culture are important to a community and a public responsibility – *the arts have a unique ability to lift individuals and communities to a higher and better state*. For much of the past century, supporters of the arts were able to evoke this strong and familiar idea about "high culture" to create a sense of public good.

While this idea may have been strongest among elites, nevertheless it offered a widely understood rationale for public support of the arts, related to the greater good. Unfortunately, it is clear that this narrative no longer shapes Cincinnatians' thinking or discourse about the topic in a meaningful way.

The idea that the arts have a *unique ability to lift individuals and communities to a higher and better state* has died out almost without a trace. For the most part, interview subjects in our research showed no awareness that such an idea was ever significant to creation of local organizations like the Cincinnati Opera or the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, for instance.

Neither are current Cincinnati residents focused on embracing the arts as a way of showing that they are "moving up." Instead, they appear to see little or no connection between the arts and social class. The opera and so forth are simply niche tastes – things that some people happen to enjoy.

In today's more democratic, inclusive, and culturally diverse environment, the elevation narrative is basically irrelevant, and no new narrative has really taken its place. An important part of the art advocate's rhetorical toolkit, a rationale for why the arts are important to the greater good, has been lost.

I think that these days, as a member of the arts community, we have to prove a little more to people why the arts are worth it. It's become more about proving the legitimacy of things. You can't just say anymore this is great, go see it . . . I mean, even in terms of arts education. Arts education is becoming more about how can you use the arts to promote normal or regular subjects.

25-year-old woman, arts educator

Not a Clear Category

Many Cincinnatians treasure particular arts and culture experiences very highly, and virtually all acknowledge their value. However, *there is often no single category that organizes these thoughts, memories, feelings, etc. into one coherent topic in their minds.* "The arts" does not evoke much feeling as a category, while culture has a strong connection with ethnicity, or events focused on a distinct culture.

For insiders, "the arts" is a clear and important category (even if it might be a bit fuzzy at the edges). For those who are not connected to the arts, though, there is no such clear category. Instead, the specific components that all fall under a single heading for insiders are associated with a variety of distinct topics (discussed below) that are not necessarily closely connected to each other.

Average people may have strong feelings about concerts, or about movies, or festivals, etc. – but not much to say about the category as a whole (just as they may have strong feelings about dogs, cats or horses, but not much to say about mammals).

Associated with this category problem is a problem with *vocabulary*. Common insider terms like "the arts," "fine arts," or "culture" may or may not mean the same thing to average Cincinnatians.

Arts could be things like roller-skating, if you do it that way.

49-year-old man, salesperson

Fine arts? I think expensive. I can't afford it. I think of elegance and shiny, beautiful things . . . Right when you walk into the art museum, there's this huge blown-glass chandelier thing that hangs from the ceiling and it is so pretty. That's what I think about when I think of fine art.

29-year-old woman, homemaker

Adding the word culture doesn't help as it is almost always understood as something like ethnicity. "Cultural events" are ones that celebrate or focus on a particular (ethnic or regional) culture – such as Hispanic or African-American events.

Default Understandings

There are several common understandings that dominate non-insiders' thinking about the topic:

The arts as entertainment: The most natural way for people to think about the arts falls under the heading of *entertainment.* Arts happenings are often lumped together with many other kinds of enjoyable "things to do."

It's something different to do. It's a learning experience in addition to being something social. And it's just something to expand your mind and make you think, rather than sitting in a bar or something.

33-year-old-woman, office worker

Though entertainment and enjoyment are obviously valued, there are important downsides to this default understanding:

- Art-as-entertainment is a matter of taste, and is not associated with collective responsibility or public value.
- Entertainment is often viewed as an "extra" or a luxury that people choose to indulge in or not as they have the time, money, and inclination.
- The perspective reinforces a passive consumer relationship to the issue – the opposite of collective responsibility.

The arts as personal expression: When people do distinguish art and arts events from other kinds of events – such as football games or reality TV shows – they often focus on the idea of individual expression and creativity.

[Art] is a way of expression. A lot of people write books to express their ideas and their fantasies or dreams. A lot of people paint pictures ... A lot of people create music to explain their childhood or describe a future.

29-year-old woman, homemaker

While people may believe personal expression is valuable and important, it is also a *personal matter* more than a *public one*.

The arts as beauty: Thinking about the arts sometimes focuses on beauty, refinement, and an attractive environment.

It's nice to have something artistic around you. I just poured a patio in the backyard last year and instead of square I made it like a teardrop just 'cause it's different and it looks good 'cause it's different. Not that the square one would have looked bad, but this one looks different and then that's pleasing. Again, you get back to the thing of art being subjective.

56-year-old man, retired city worker

In this way of thinking, the arts are not understood as the *cause* of good things happening in a city. Instead, the arts are a *pleasant result* of fundamentals being in place.

The arts as a school subject: People who aren't used to thinking about the arts tend to think in terms of *art as a school subject*. "Art class," "art teacher," etc. are familiar phrases, and discussions of the arts easily trigger such associations. While it would obviously be a positive development if arts education received more support, art and music are not perceived as core subjects, so the understanding of art as a school subject can end up reinforcing the secondary importance of the arts.

Art's not what they consider an absolute necessity. It's easy to cut. I mean, they cannot cut core classes, and you have to have your English, math, science, social studies.

50-year-old woman, bookkeeper

Another common association with arts education is as a way to expose children to the arts when they fail to get arts in other ways. Again, this leads to more support for arts education, but does not necessarily convey the communal benefits of the arts.

I think a lot of it is to introduce it to our children to allow them to be able to see some of it. Because some kids just don't know about art.

Woman, not-arts-connected, greater Cincinnati

Consequences of Default Understandings

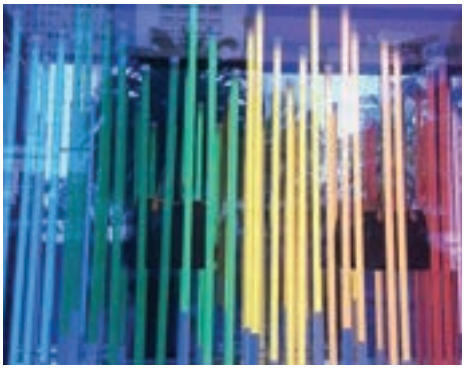
The result of these default understandings is that even when people can clearly focus on the arts, the way they think about the topic makes it less likely Cincinnatians can see art and culture as a broadly shared responsibility. Underlying all these default understandings are some consistent perspectives that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good.

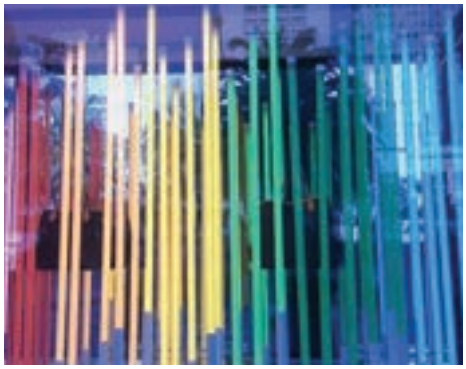
The arts are a private matter: Arts are about *individual* tastes, experiences and enrichment on one side (i.e., for consumers), and *individual* expression on the other (for the artists).

I think just arts and things like that are just more important to [some] people 'cause that's how they've grown up, or that's just how their mind works. People like different things and that's just what people like.

21-year-old man, computer tech

The arts are a good to be purchased: Since entertainment, particularly professional entertainment, shapes people's understanding of and relationship to the issue, the arts are subject to the economic thinking that people bring to other products. For example, supply and demand comes up fairly frequently, e.g., if enough people want it, they will pay and it will succeed.





Underlying all these default understandings are some consistent perspectives that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good.

If the arts cannot justify their existence by attendance then they should be replaced by endeavors that can . . . City funding should not be viewed as a substitute for self-support. If a music festival . . . needs city funding to cover the expenses that admissions should cover then I question if that's a good event to support.

61-year-old woman, clerk

It is not fair to make everyone pay for something that they may not necessarily enjoy or take part in.

31-year-old woman, paralegal

(Note that a version of "marketplace" thinking can even apply when people are focusing on the role of *donations* in supporting the arts. People donate to the organizations or art forms they happen to value.)

People expect to be passive, not active, in this area: People take, and are expected to take, a mostly passive stance toward the arts. "We" are the consumers of what "they" (the professional artists) provide.

I don't think you definitely need to be active as far as making the art . . . It seems like there's enough people that want to do that.

31-year-old woman, events coordinator

The arts are a low priority: While most Cincinnatians value the arts, this does not mean arts and culture are high on their list of priorities, particularly public priorities.

I think by and large we're distracted by other things. In fact, every now and then I'll make a comment about something being very interesting from an artistic point of view, and it seems like more often than not I receive sort of a little look of disbelief from the other person. "Huh? What? What are you talking about?" Most people I know are pretty practical-minded and not into daydreaming and things like that.

61-year-old man, municipal worker

The end result of these patterns – most of which are probably not unique to Cincinnati – is that it becomes easy to see government funding, for instance, as frivolous or inappropriate. Even charitable giving can be undermined by these default perceptions.

Downtown

One final problem bedevils conversations on arts and culture in Cincinnati in particular: a default focus on the major institutions and the downtown environs where they are located. This focus is problematic because:

- It limits thinking to a narrow range of what arts and culture encompasses,
- It narrows thinking to a small geographic area that some residents feel more connected to than others,
- It can trigger associations with the "high art" that is seen as a particular niche taste, and
- It can trigger distracting thoughts about safety and neighbor-hood crime.

I'll state my opinion in one sentence. I don't like downtown, so you can ask me why and whatever but I don't like downtown. There is a lot going on and I've been to some of the events and they are very nice, but I am not comfortable downtown.

Woman, not-arts-connected, greater Cincinnati

Changing the Landscape: Creating New Understandings

The existing landscape of public understanding is not conducive to the kind of relationship to the arts the Fine Arts Fund wants to establish. To overcome the obstacles discussed in the previous section and create a sense of *collective responsibility for the arts,* an effective message strategy must:

- Position arts and culture as a *public good* – a communal interest in which all Cincinnatians have a stake,
- Provide a *clearer picture* of the kinds of events, activities and institutions we are talking about,
- Convey the importance of a *proactive stance*, and
- Incorporate the *entire region* (as opposed to just downtown Cincinnati).

To determine whether or not various frames meet the above criteria, testing went well beyond exploring whether research participants like or agree with a particular message. Instead, our measure of success is whether or not a frame can change people's perspective. Therefore, we held the message accountable to factors such as whether it prompts people to focus on certain aspects of the topic (such as public benefits) rather than others (such as personal tastes or downtown crime); whether a message is coherent and memorable; whether it promotes the idea of public/collective action; and so on.

After testing dozens of options, a clear strategy for success emerged. (See next section for discussion of approaches that missed the mark.)

The Main Organizing Idea: "Arts Ripple Effect"

Of the many communications approaches explored in testing, one stood out as having the most potential to shift thinking and conversations in a constructive direction. This approach emphasizes one key organizing idea:

The arts create "ripple effects" of benefits throughout our community.

It is especially helpful and compelling to enumerate two particular ripple effects:

- A vibrant, thriving economy: Neighborhoods are more lively, communities are revitalized, tourists and residents are attracted to the area, etc.
- A more connected population: Diverse groups share common experiences, hear new perspectives, understand each other better, etc.

This simple idea shapes the conversation in important ways:

The arts create "ripple effects" of benefits throughout our community.

Away from Problematic Understandings	> Toward Constructive Understandings
Me: Personal tastes and interests	Us: Community beliefs
Private concern	Public concern
Passive consumer	Active Citizen
Nice	Necessary
Downtown	Everywhere
Vague	Clear
Emotional	Emotional *and* practical

Taken as a whole, the "ripple effect" approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians. They are able to repeat the gist of the point, and their discussion suggests they understand the idea and find it compelling.

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

The arts are important not only because they can stimulate the creativity of the individual, but also because they can revitalize large cities. Creativity and art can cause a ripple effect that helps business and tourism in cities. In fact, it can invigorate the city's energy, and can even reduce crime.

54-year-old woman, attorney, Cincinnati

Because the arts can bring together a diverse community, allowing people to meet and exchange ideas. These same people might not otherwise have met, or been inspired to communicate their ideas, visions and goals with each other. All of this can spark economic growth in an area, and lead to new buildings and a sense of excitement, which in turn can lead to more tourism.

49-year-old man, salesperson, Akron

The arts are important to a city because they help citizens interact, fight crime, bring communities together, and create an overall beneficial ripple effect on the entire city.

22-year-old woman, administrative assistant, Cincinnati

The arts create jobs – jobs for those who are the artists but also they have a ripple effect on the community. The place that holds the performance, the advertisers, even the ones who print the programs receive work and thus pay that is taxed by the community and government.

58-year-old woman, religious educator, Cincinnati

It creates a ripple effect of benefits, both directly and indirectly . . . It improves the vitality of an area and the economy. More arts mean more culture in neighborhoods. Economically, the increased enthusiasm and construction projects in turn increase tourism, which increases the economy . . . Arts and culture benefit the city as a whole, both economically and culturally.

22-year-old man, assistant manager, Cincinnati

Though the main organizing idea is simple, clear and concise, there are several aspects communicators should keep in mind in order to get the most benefit, and a number of additional supporting points to reinforce the central idea.

Flexibility

In principle, the idea of diverse ripple effects can apply to any number of benefits.

Communicators can choose any they like, as long as they are careful not to trigger the problematic defaults discussed earlier, such as reinforcing *personal* benefits, entertainment or arts as a school subject.

Two particular benefit streams are mentioned above because:

- They represent two very different kinds of communal benefits, reinforcing that arts and culture produce a *range* of effects that benefit the public.
- They allow communicators to have a single conversation about both the *practical* and *less tangible* benefits of arts and culture.
- Each proved to be a particularly strong and intuitive idea.
- Each can be illustrated with several easy-to-understand examples, for clarity.

Vibrant and thriving: distinct from the typical economic argument

The recommended approach includes a reference to economic benefits, and this proved to be an important strength, since no matter how much they value the arts for their own sake, supporters must be able to also point to practical, tangible benefits as they discuss the issue.

Taken as a whole, the "ripple effect" approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians.

Imagine a friend says to you, "The last thing this city should be spending money on is another dance troupe or art exhibition!" What would be a good response in favor of the arts?

Investing in the arts creates a ripple effect throughout the city. Spending money on a dance troupe or art exhibition promotes the local community and can have a positive effect on tourism and a long-lasting effect on the local economy.

25-year-old woman, finance manager, Cincinnati

The city would be investing in its own future by supporting a dance troupe or art exhibition. These help to promote tourism and instill a sense of pride and ownership in the citizens of the city.

52-year-old woman, business manager, Cincinnati

Importantly, the recommended approach does not simply rehash the familiar and limited idea that investments in the arts help the economy of an area. In particular:

- It does not focus on the dollars-and-cents economic argument that can easily be undermined by other industries that can provide greater returns on the dollar or different kinds of jobs,
- It offers a richer and more vivid picture of economic benefits (thriving neighborhoods filled with life and energy) that evokes quality of life, and
- It is expressed with a particular term/image ("ripple effect") that helps set it apart.

More connected: desire for unity

The second benefit – *through sharing common experiences and new perspectives people in a community can better understand each other and live and work together* – is less tangible than the prosperity benefit noted above. However, it speaks to a genuine desire noted by Cincinnatians to have more unity among residents.

We have a lot of different types of people in Cincinnati. When functions come or when any event comes to Cincinnati, it caters to one group here. It doesn't cater to all the groups. It's segregated big time ... why can't it be multicultural? It's like there is always – we just cater to one specific group and there is multiracial people out there.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

This idea is a new, graspable way to think about the public benefits of the arts.

I think art and music can definitely be a different avenue of social communication amongst a group. You can get a lot of things from art and music that you can't read in a book necessarily, or in a newspaper. So in that respect, you can get a lot from it. It can definitely get a lot of people talking and thinking about a new idea.

Arts-connected man, Cincinnati

There is so much going on out in the world that we miss. If you bring in the arts and the culture, you can see what everybody else's perspective is.

Not-arts-connected man, Cincinnati

Coining a term

The main idea of the approach – that arts cause (unexpected) effects that benefit the community – could be conveyed in any number of ways. The phrase "ripple effect" proved to be a memorable and user-friendly way of capturing this key idea – presumably because it is both familiar and relatively vivid. Whether or not communicators choose to use this particular phrase, they should take care to find simple and vivid language to make the same point. Further, experience in a variety of issue areas has shown that the use of a new but quickly grasped term can help make an idea easier to remember and focus on. If communicators use phrases like "the arts ripple effect" (or others) they are subtly cuing audiences that there is a new idea to pay attention to.

It is a ripple effect with arts and culture. A vibrant arts environment will bring more people together as well as grow our city financially . . .

This was eye opening!! Thank you so much for helping to spread the word of the importance of arts and culture activities.

34-year-old woman, manager, Pennsylvania

Community-wide benefits

One of the keys to the message is that it does not focus on the value to individuals, but on what the arts offer to *communities* – including those who don't participate directly. This is a big-picture perspective that guides people away from the default understandings of the arts as personal enrichment, entertainment tailored to particular tastes, etc.

Arts create a ripple effect throughout a city. The benefits are far-reaching, and help make a city vibrant.

39-year-old woman, Cincinnati

The arts are important to a city because they help citizens interact, fight crime, bring communities together and create an overall beneficial ripple effect on the entire city.

22-year-old woman, administrative assistant, Cincinnati

A concrete picture of an active arts community

To combat the problem that "arts and culture" doesn't call to mind any clearly defined idea, it is important to flesh out any claims about the arts ripple effect with concrete examples of the kinds of activities and institutions that help create the effect – galleries, theaters, concerts, community art centers, etc.

Beyond downtown

In order to avoid the downtown trap, it should be made clear that a wide variety of arts and culture activity results in a range of benefits throughout the area.

The ripple effect causes good things to happen in area neighborhoods . . . It makes me feel more positive about the arts and what effects they have on an entire city and its people.

39-year-old woman, accountant, Cincinnati

Civic pride

Though it did not prove compelling enough as the lead idea, research subjects were often motivated by the idea that Cincinnati's commitment to the arts is a source of pride, and makes the city distinct from other places. Quite a few brought this idea up themselves, even when it was not mentioned in test materials.

I think it speaks to our rich heritage and is a source of pride, really, when you live here, when you realize how much there is here.

Arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

The arts stimulate a ripple effect in a community. They help revitalize neighborhoods, encourage tourism, build a sense of pride, and encourage people to work together to maintain and nurture their city.

52-year-old woman, business manager, Cincinnati

Call to collective action

It is helpful to be explicit about the idea that "we" need to take responsibility and take action on the issue. This can be expressed in various ways, such as the idea that past investments in the arts created huge payoffs for Cincinnati, and "we have a responsibility to keep that investment going."

I believe we do have a responsibility to keep it going, and not only keep it going but make it better.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

Sample paragraph

The sample paragraph illustrates one way communicators might express the main organizing idea and several supporting points. The language in this chart closely resembles texts used in testing and the full paragraph above. We also include the framing effect column to highlight the intentions of the text.

Language	Framing Effect
Why do leaders all across the country think of arts and culture as important priorities?	Frames as public priority – affects cities/areas, not just individuals
Because when creative 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.	Avoids downtown focus; Emphasizes broad benefits – not just for those who enjoy the arts
The arts 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.	Treats "arts ripple effect" as a special term to focus on; emphasizes multiple streams of public benefits
In economic terms, theaters, galleries, concerts and so on mean more energy and life in a community, more tourists, more renovated buildings, more people and businesses moving to an appealing place.	Creates a picture of "economic" benefits that go beyond dollars and cents; gives concrete examples of art and culture
A vibrant arts environment with music, storytelling, and community art centers also means more people coming together to share experiences and ideas, connecting with each other, and understanding each other in new ways.	Creates a picture of intangible community benefits; gives concrete examples of arts and culture
Cincinnati has historically supported the arts and enjoyed the benefits of these ripple effects. We should be proud of what we've built, and take responsibility for keeping our investment going.	Triggers civic pride; reminds people of collective responsibility to maintain what's been built

Approaches That Miss the Mark

It is easy for seemingly promising messages to fail.

In this issue area, as in many others, it is easy for seemingly promising messages to fail. A message can accidentally trigger counterproductive perspectives, can make wrong assumptions about an audience's knowledge or concerns, or can be fundamentally misunderstood because an audience's own assumptions interfere.

In this section, we review a number of messages that proved not to have the same potential as the recommended approach. These failures offer particularly helpful illustrations of how messages in this area can fall short.

Note that there are some obvious directions that were not included in testing, because of the strong traps that had been identified earlier in the research. For instance, none of the texts promote a stronger appreciation of arts as great *entertainment* – since framing arts as entertainment ends up promoting a passive stance, where the marketplace is expected to determine what succeeds and fails, etc. Likewise, none of the tested materials focuses on art as an important means by which we *express ourselves*, since this perspective promotes a view of arts as a private, individual matter rather than a public one.

Civic Inspiration

Great civilizations have always invested their resources in great public works of art, architecture, and performance. The Greeks, Mayans, Romans, ancient Chinese and others created civilizations that pushed human progress forward with new inventions on every front – and their great traditions of public art, music, performance and so on helped that progress by inspiring people with pride and vision. America, too, has inspired the world with its music, films, plays, and the architecture of its great cities. We need to keep that momentum going by remembering that public art has the power to inspire all of us to greater things.

Results:
The idea that great art inspires us and helps progress was basically not heard by research subjects – perhaps because it is a very unfamiliar idea in this era.

Instead, the message was boiled down to the much simpler (and less explanatory) idea that great cities and civilizations produce great art.

Overall, the argument did not prove compelling.

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

The arts can bring respect and admiration to a city.
43-year-old man, self-employed

What are your personal reactions to the statement?

Any expression of oneself is important to any society because without art life would be pretty boring. We need more entertainment areas.
30-year-old woman

Great Cities

Great cities have always invested in great public works of art, architecture and performance because they inspire people with pride and a vision of achievement. When it comes to support for the arts, Cincinnati has historically been first-rate. Our parents and grandparents recognized the value of the arts, and it is partly their investment in our museums, galleries, concert halls and cultural organizations that has put Cincinnati on the map, and made us one of the great cities of the region and the country. We have a responsibility to keep that investment going for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Results:
This variant on "civic inspiration" resonates well with arts supporters, who already take pride in what Cincinnati has achieved.

It helps those already committed to the arts focus on our current responsibility to uphold them.

On the other hand, there are certain traps in this phrasing that undermine its effectiveness:

- It can be heard as a message about *decline*.
- Its focus on the past can trigger objections that we should focus on what the city needs *now* (such as economic help).

We have a responsibility to living, breathing people. Not to some dead thing hanging on a wall.
47-year-old man, health care professional, Cincinnati

- More generally, its historical focus can fail to connect with people.

Rich grandparents and rich parents have supported the arts. If they enjoy attending concert halls, etc. let them give money to them.
41-year-old woman, professional, Cincinnati

- Finally, its emphasis on the great downtown institutions is a liability for reasons discussed earlier in the report.

We have a responsibility to our children, grandchildren and future generations to make this city safer; it isn't going to make any difference if we have the best museums, etc., in the world if you're going to get mugged or shot while going to or from them. If we do not clean up the city, no one will go to the museums, etc.
39-year-old man, electrical engineer, Cincinnati

Health and Science

As Americans, we often overlook the connection between our health on one hand, and experiences like art, music, dance and stories on the other. In fact, these kinds of arts experiences are essential to our physical and mental well-being. They have been scientifically proven to improve the health and well-being of premature babies, the elderly, those suffering from depression, stress, pain, and some specific diseases like Parkinson's. It's not just that they are relaxing or distracting – like watching sports on TV for some – but that somehow humans are "wired" to need these kinds of experiences with each other, just as we need vitamins, physical exercise and so forth. And if our environment doesn't provide them we don't do as well.

Results:
The main idea struck many as new and interesting.

But, the story quickly reduced to the idea that relaxation helps reduce stress – and any particular significance of arts and culture disappeared.

That the arts are soothing and make people happy and healthy. I want to see arts more accessible to those who are low-income and to those who are ill so that they may get the benefits.
30-year-old woman, homemaker

It's good to have something positive to concentrate on rather than all the negatives that are out there weighing the world down.

31-year-old woman, homemaker, Cincinnati

When their attention is directed toward stress relief, then any activity that relieves stress becomes equivalent with art.

It's a stress relief for me when I get involved with my church. Just different things we do in our church, when I get involved it relieves the stress I get, the anxiety.

Arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

My dad, after he retired he became a hospital chaplain. In that job you can see a lot of people, unfortunately, pass away in the hospital. So sometimes it is kind of tough and he's like, "Sometimes I just need to go see a stupid movie." That's exactly – the whole stress thing is huge.

Arts-connected, man, greater Cincinnati

The story also reinforced an *individual* focus, rather than helping promote the idea of collective stakes and collective responsibility.

I believe that things like art are helpful in our feeling better, especially emotionally . . . but there are other areas that are more important. I would prefer to see the arts receive more funding from private individuals and companies rather than taxpayers' money.

46-year-old man, dispatcher, Burton, Ohio

Broadening our Horizons

Through art and music, we connect to and learn from each other, which makes us stronger as a community. There is a strong and surprising connection between a community's ability to get along and solve problems, and the art, music and dance experiences that are available to local residents. This is because arts experiences and an arts perspective provide benefits that can't be achieved in other ways. For example, they help open our eyes to the many different ways to see and interpret the world, to be sensitive to other perspectives, or help us see that there is more than one way to solve a problem. When our community offers us these ways to broaden our horizons, and we take advantage of them, we are more able to work together and make progress together.

Results:
This text resonates well with arts supporters, and taps into their sense of art's deep emotional value.

On the other hand, when standing alone the case about the arts' practical value is basically ignored or dismissed, and it does not end up promoting the idea of public responsibility.

The arts is a way to open our horizons and expose us to culture . . . but with the struggling economy there are other things that are more important than the arts . . . [They] are not an absolute necessity for citizens.

30-year-old woman, sales manager, Batavia, Ohio

I think it depends on the city's budget situation. A city that has ample money should spend some on arts opportunities so that our views can be challenged in a fun new way.

32-year-old woman, homemaker, Marblehead, Ohio

Human Universal

Music and art are what are sometimes called human universals – things that people have done in every single place and culture and period of history – along with work, meal times, some form of leadership/government, etc. We sometimes think of them as luxuries, but they are really a very basic aspect of human life, like eating or interacting with family. This is why more and more cities, states and countries are working to make sure that there are opportunities for people to experience and create music and art. They are a basic need that we shouldn't ignore as we set priorities for our communities.

Results:
The idea that the arts are a "basic need" is intriguing, novel and memorable to research participants.

On the other hand, the text offers no explanation for how or why we need art, music, and so forth. The result is that it ends up boiling down to an *assertion* that the arts are important.

Emphasis on the great downtown institutions is a liability.

References to the "creative community" are not very compelling or memorable.

The arts help to keep people well rounded . . . however, I do not think it is as important as eating!
40-year-old woman, greater Cincinnati

Few subjects pay attention to the more historical or scientific aspects of the text.

I would say it is important because it is part of who we are and helps us understand our backgrounds.
24-year-old woman, clerk, Bethel, Ohio

City Planning

What do cities need in order to prosper? City planners in American towns think of arts and culture as fundamental economic development tools. Galleries and theaters, music festivals and public art, studios, lofts and community cultural centers are key tools cities have used to revitalize downtowns, attract tourists, preserve historic buildings and promote local vibrancy, stabilize communities and solve community problems. The creative community that comes together also helps a town by selling their artwork, investing sweat equity in neighborhoods, and providing a pool of talented workers for local employers. This is why encouraging and investing in the creative community makes so much economic sense.

Results:
Some aspects of this text resonate well with Cincinnatians, including the relatively concrete image of how arts can transform a city.

A downside is that it is easily read as a discussion of how to help "bad" neighborhoods, and can lead to a distracting focus on downtown Cincinnati and crime.

For something like stabilizing communities, in an abstract way the arts can do that, but what really does it is police presence, availability of economic resources, job growth, etc.
39-year-old woman, editor, Pennsylvania

It does little to convince people to move the arts up their list of priorities about what a city needs to thrive.

Cities need water, resources, jobs, etc., but also need arts and cultural events. These are important to have a high quality of life in that city . . . Arts are important, but I believe there are other problems to be dealt with first.
20-year-old man, student, Pickerington, Ohio

The references to the creative community are not very compelling or memorable – this aspect of the text tends to disappear from discussion.

Innovation

Creativity and innovation have been keys to American success, and it turns out that creative activities like painting and music are linked to technological progress. The two go hand in hand. Almost all scientists who win Nobel prizes also do creative activities like painting, playing an instrument or

writing poetry. And many important inventions are based on innovations by artists – from micro-sutures adapted from the fine tools and threads used in lace-making, to microchips that are made using methods developed by etchers, silk-screeners and photo-lithographers. Even the encryption used in many of today's cell phones was invented by a composer and an actress, inspired by the structure of piano music. When we encourage creative activity we plant the seeds for innovation.

Results:
The main idea of this text, as well as the examples, struck research participants as new and interesting.

I never really thought about the arts and creativity being linked to technology. They always seemed as two separate and unrelated groups to me. In fact, the technological field seems very regimented and orderly while the arts seem more laid back and free-spirited. I can see the connection now that I really think about it.

48-year-old woman, homemaker, Alexandria, Kentucky

But subjects did not easily bridge from the text to thinking about communal responsibility, or the well-being of a city/area – one of the central goals of the project. The following person includes this connection as an afterthought, but like other research participants, seems not to see a strong connection between the text and the question of what communities need.

The arts are a source of inspiration to many people. It not only supports tourism and provides a small amount of income to the city, but it may provide advantages in seemingly unrelated categories, like technology.

25-year-old man, student, Pennsylvania

Works of Beauty

The human spirit needs to experience beauty and excellence, as a change from our ordinary daily routines. Why do all cultures everywhere produce fine creative works – music, paintings, poetry, carvings that are valued as the pinnacle of what the culture can achieve? Why are these great works considered treasures? Why are churches and temples decorated with beautiful objects? Why should it matter if a city had no orchestra to hear, fine paintings to look at, no museum to see them in, no quality theater to attend? Because works of beauty are important to the spirit and if they aren't there we lead lesser lives.

Results:
This idea is moving to many subjects, in that it captures some of their own feelings about the arts.

On the other hand, it is difficult for people to express the idea clearly themselves – it often boils down to something like "arts are important to people" – and therefore does not offer much help to people trying to justify investments in the arts.

The arts are important as a cultural thing for a city. They allow a variety of modes for expressing ourselves. With museums and centers we have places to go and enjoy these things and get away from the everyday life . . . It is about cultural pride and a necessary part of our lives.

64-year-old man, retired, Dayton, Ohio

It is also hard to tie this idea to the welfare of the city/region.

Imagine a friend says to you, "The last thing this city should be spending money on is another dance troupe or art exhibition!" What would be a good response to this in favor of the arts?

I suppose that I could say that the arts are important to the population's mental well-being but I would agree with the person.

37-year-old woman, Pennsylvania

Transcendence

Art can be a transcendent experience that takes us away from the familiar and everyday. It broadens our horizons by allowing us to experience new and different ideas.

Results:
This can be a powerful, emotional connection for many people.

However, it reinforces art as a personal, private concern. Transcendence causes people to think of benefits to themselves, not to the greater community.

Also, it can easily result in a very broad definition of art as anything beautiful or noteworthy.

Art can take you away from your problems no matter what it is – for that moment and time. In the car, at a light and you might hear something and it takes you. That's what that statement means to me. And the best part is sometimes you don't even know and then you wake from a minute and that was that experience from something art.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

Arts and Kids

When we talk about why art and music is important for kids we usually focus on how it's good for the kids themselves – it promotes better problem-solving skills, it teaches them ways to express their feelings, etc. But we often don't talk about how kids' arts and music experiences end up benefiting all of us. The benefits range from kids who are more likely to grow up to create new innovations that improve our lives, to the painters, musicians and storytellers of tomorrow who are going to make our cities more livable and our lives more satisfying.

Results:
This text resonates with those who believe arts are important for children.

One important weakness is that its attempt to refocus attention on broader benefits to the community is not very successful – research subjects continue to focus on benefits *for kids*.

I definitely agree we need kids to be involved with something and the arts are something that is influential and will help make a kid more rounded. But I do not feel there is as much future with the arts as with other professions or community activities.

25-year-old man, accountant, Cincinnati

What was the most important idea in the paragraph?

That kids need exposure to arts. That it fosters more creative thinking and problem solving.

39-year-old woman, office manager, Cincinnati

Additionally, it doesn't promote support for arts initiatives other than arts education, i.e., it has one important but limited use even when successful.

House and Home

There is a difference between a house and a home. You can have the foundation, lumber, plumbing, electric wiring, etc. without having a comfortable place you would want to live in. To make a home livable you need everything from heat or air conditioning to furniture to paint on the walls. In the same way, an important part of what makes a city livable and special is the local creative activity, from art to music, dance, storytelling, etc. These are an important dimension of life in a community, and without them life is diminished. This is why, in good times and bad, so many cities support and encourage galleries and theaters, music festivals and public art, studios and community cultural centers.

Results:
Research participants found this analogy interesting and memorable.

And for supporters, it is a helpful way of encapsulating the value they see in a strong arts scene in Cincinnati.

A city is more than buildings, streets, homes, and parks. Without arts and creative enterprise, there is no spark to provide the city with a sense of community and charm . . . spending money on arts is as important to personal comfort as transforming bricks from a house to a home.

60-year-old woman, corporate trainer, Cincinnati

On the other hand, it is less successful at helping others see the value more clearly.

I agree about the house and a home, but in these economic times I don't agree with cities spending money that they don't have on the arts. That should be cut in these tough times.

45-year-old woman, educator, Cincinnati

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

I'm not sure it is ... Cultural heritage doesn't seem to be as important today as it was in the past.

33-year-old woman, homemaker, Cincinnati

Conclusion

The communications approach discussed in this report is more than a slogan or campaign image. It is an orientation that can inform any kind of communication – from interviews to websites to speeches – and should help make any of these communications more compelling and effective. A new frame for any issue is most valuable if it becomes a habit of mind for communicators, an organizing idea that informs their own thinking as well as their communications with others.

That said, the approach recommended from this research allows for a considerable degree of flexibility, depending on communicators' priorities and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The same basic organizing idea could be expressed with various words and images – "ripple effect" is helpful but other user-friendly language might work as well. A range of scenarios and examples could work effectively – involving a variety of arts events and institutions, different illustrations of economic vibrancy, and so forth.

It should also be noted that the tools recommended here are for arts supporters as well as audiences that are more neutral. Even those Cincinnatians who already feel a commitment to the arts can often feel they lack the ideas and words to make a compelling case or have a lucid discussion with their peers, and the tools offered here can be just as useful with those who are already sympathetic as they are with those who need persuasion.

Finally, this research project has focused on developing helpful insights and tools for advocates of the arts in Cincinnati, but we also hope it provides a head start for similar efforts either nationally or in other parts of the country.

While some of the circumstances, obstacles, and opportunities are probably specific to the Cincinnati context – such as particular associations with cultural diversity, or with downtown neighborhoods and institutions – other findings are likely to be similar in other places. The idea of ripple effects of surprising benefits applies to any community, and both streams of benefits emphasized in the recommended approach are likely to resonate in many locations throughout the United States. While we can't be confident without testing – and local circumstances could certainly come into play – a compelling picture of economic vibrancy, or of a community that is more connected, stands a fair chance of motivating people in towns across the country. Hopefully, Cincinnati's experience will provide useful insights for those planning to embark on similar communications research efforts in other places.

The tools recommended here are for arts supporters as well as audiences that are more neutral.

[1] Note that people can toggle between contradictory default mental pictures, and sometimes arts are seen through the common lens of struggling arts organizations. But even so, these can naturally be thought of as struggling in their own marketplace – e.g., competing for donations rather than purchases.
[2] See Gamson and Modigliani (1987), "The changing course of affirmative action."
[3] Note that in-depth work with a relatively small group of informants has been the norm in cognitive anthropology, allowing researchers to work more closely with subjects than is possible using large-scale methodologies. Because a culture (of a nation or community) is defined by a set of broadly shared understandings and assumptions, studying cultural models is analogous to studying the structure of a natural language. One does not need a large group of speakers to determine the basics of a language's grammar and syntax – a few speakers will typically suffice. Similarly, working with only a relative few subjects, one can identify the commonly held belief system typical of those subjects' culture.

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