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ArtsFund Study Uncovers Profound Impact of COVID-19 on Washington State's Arts & Culture

New COVID Cultural Impact Study demonstrates why investment in cultural institutions is critical to the state's pandemic recovery.

SEATTLE, JANUARY 19, 2022 – Today, ArtsFund announces the release of the COVID Cultural Impact Study, an expansive effort to analyze the pandemic's impact on Washington's cultural institutions and their essential role in the state's communities. Arts and cultural venues were among the first to close when COVID hit in March 2020 and often remained the last to re-open, if at all. Utilizing data from both cultural organizations and Washington residents, the COVID Cultural Impact Study (CCIS) analyzes the depth of the challenges the pandemic has created for Washington's art and culture sector and illuminates the support necessary to revitalize these integral institutions.

"COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way that we interact with each other and arts and culture have been a substantial part of what is seeing our communities through this change," explained Michael Greer, ArtsFund President and CEO. "We recognize we are not at the tail-end of the pandemic—we are at the beginning of a structural transformation. As our sector continues to provide economic, social, and emotional support for our communities, this study offers both the qualitative and quantitative evidence needed for arts organizations to advocate for support and plan for the future."

The COVID Cultural Impact Study, funded by Bank of America, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and the Nesholm Family Foundation, underscores how critical arts and culture organizations are to Washington's continued economic and community recovery and highlights the pivotal opportunity to transform how Washington invests in the future. Key findings include:

- **FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Across 121 reporting organizations, there was a \$95.9 million (21 percent) decrease in overall revenue and \$68.5 million (20 percent) reduction in operating budgets in 2020 alone.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** The cultural workforce has been significantly impacted, prompting concern for a "cultural brain drain." Nearly half (41 percent) of organizations furloughed staff or reduced hours and/or pay.
- **REOPENING:** While over 70 percent of cultural organizations are open in some capacity, public participation declined significantly during COVID and the constantly changing nature of the pandemic means many have not returned to in-person events. Cultural participants are expected to spend about half of what they spent pre-pandemic on cultural programming, impacting related industries including food, lodging, and retail, among others.
- **THE FUTURE:** Cultural participants resoundingly agree (93 percent) that the role of art and cultural organizations will be important to Washington's post-pandemic recovery. Half (48 percent) of cultural participants have placed more value on cultural programming since March 2020.

"At Bank of America, we believe in the power of the arts to help economies thrive, educate and enrich societies, and create greater cultural understanding," said Brian Wineke, Bank of America Private Bank Market Executive, the study's chief sponsor. "This study demonstrates the crucial role that government, cultural organizations, and patrons of the arts can play in shaping the future of art and culture in Washington as we work together to recover from the pandemic."

The study also demonstrates the critical role government, cultural organizations, funders, and cultural participants can play in shaping the future of art and culture in Washington. As organizations look to rebuild for the future, the study reveals the immediate need to expand and sustain public support for these organizations, center the cultural sector in economic development, protect the cultural workforce, increase the focus on equity in participation, and find innovative ways to help organizations adapt to future needs and challenges.

The arts and culture community continues to demonstrate incredible creativity and resolve that speaks to the promise of what greater sustained support for the sector could do for the communities and economies that rely on them. ArtsFund is hosting a Community Conversation featuring cultural organizations from across the state to further discuss the COVID Cultural Impact Study on January 20, 2022. [Registration is free and open to the public.](#)

The COVID Cultural Impact Study is authored by BERK Consulting with research collaboration by GMA Research and Dr. William Beyers, University of Washington.

The full results of the COVID Cultural Impact Study can be found at [ArtsFund.org/CCIS](https://www.artsfund.org/CCIS).

Methodology

The COVID Cultural Impact Study uses several data sources, a Nonprofit Organizational Survey with 212 survey respondents across Washington State, a Cultural Participant Survey of 737 adults who had attended at least one cultural program since March 2020, and a Statewide Omnibus Poll which was a sample of 874 individuals representative of all Washington residents. The study began in the Spring of 2021 and concluded data collection in early Fall of 2021. At the time of their response, 53% of organizations were re-opened with limited capacity, 20% were opened at full capacity, and 26% had not reopened yet.

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About ArtsFund

ArtsFund supports the arts through leadership, advocacy, and grant making in order to build a healthy, equitable, and creative Washington. Founded in 1969, the Seattle-based nonprofit has been building community through the arts for over 51 years. ArtsFund was originally founded to bring corporate and civic leaders together to help establish and sustain our region's arts and cultural institutions. Over its granting history, ArtsFund has supported over 650 arts organizations with nearly \$100 million in grants, and provided valuable leadership and advocacy. Learn more at www.artsfund.org.

About Bank of America

At Bank of America, we're guided by a common purpose to help make financial lives better, through the power of every connection. We're delivering on this through responsible growth with a focus on our environmental, social and governance (ESG) leadership. ESG is embedded across our eight lines of business and reflects how we help fuel the global economy, build trust and credibility, and represent a company that people want to work for, invest in and do business with. It's demonstrated in the inclusive and supportive workplace we create for our employees, the responsible products and services we offer our clients, and the impact we make around the world in helping local economies thrive. An important part of this work is forming strong partnerships with nonprofits and advocacy groups, such as community, consumer and environmental organizations, to bring together our collective networks and expertise to achieve greater impact.