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[Events](#)

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# NATIONAL ARTS ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY PUBLICATIONS DATABASE (NAAPPD)

## The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America



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### GENERAL

**Resource Type:**

Research Abstract

**Title:**

The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America

**Abstract:**

Small art towns have come to epitomize rural cultural coolness because who wouldn't want to visit a lively, open-minded town. In this book you'll find communities across the and Canada that are

attracting a new wave of cultural tourists, immigrant artists, culturally minded retirees, art gallery owners, musicians, mobile career professionals, theater directors, restaurateurs, arts festival promoters and coffee bar entrepreneurs.

A small art town is the type of community people love visiting on a weekend getaway. They might stay at a gorgeous B&B, have dinner in a great (but undiscovered) restaurant, wander around art galleries, antique shops, and flea markets, or perhaps visit an annual Art in the Park festival.

A small art town is the sort of place urbanites move to after selling their condo and finding a renovated farmhouse on five forested acres. On weekends these new residents enjoy art gallery openings and local musicians performing at cafes. On weeknights there are jazz concerts and dance programs at the local arts center, or maybe a Tennessee Williams play at the restored, art deco theater downtown.

A small art town is the sort of place where people can find a true sense of community. Families value small art towns because they place a high priority on neighborliness and security. Kids can walk home from school in safety, and the local cops know the name of nearly every teenager in town. Crime rates are reassuringly low, rendering armed response lawn signs pointless.

For the purposes of this book's third edition, a small art town has a full-time population of 65,000 or fewer. The book includes university towns like Lawrence, Iowa City and Athens, Georgia, which have part-time student populations approaching 30,000. With fewer than 100 residents, Round Top is the tiniest of the small art towns. With this edition, I have labored to broaden the community profiles to include all aspects of the visual arts, performing arts and music. Both mainstream and alternative arts venues are covered. Our national levels of arts participation, support and patronage are at all-time highs. Certainly, funding cutbacks at the federal level have hurt arts programs in many urban centers. But, for the most part, the entrepreneurial spirit that's driven the small art town phenomenon has emerged unscathed - in large part because small town residents have long demonstrated an amazing level of independence. Dozens of small-town downtowns have been revitalized and preserved and tens of thousands of jobs have been created as a direct result of arts-driven economic development. And each year this phenomenon takes root in even more small communities from coast to coast.

It's this combination of traditional can-do-ism teamed with an infusion of creative thinking and entrepreneurialism that's fueled the arts explosion in small towns. (p. 1, 3)

CONTENTS  
Introduction.

Alabama: Northport.  
Alaska: Homer.  
Arizona: Bisbee, Flagstaff, Sedona.  
Arkansas: Eureka Springs, Hot Springs.  
British Columbia: Nelson, Salt Spring Island.  
California: Carmel, Eureka and Arcata, Grass Valley and Nevada City, Mendocino  
and Fort Bragg, Mill Valley, Ojai, Santa Cruz.  
Colorado: Aspen, Creede, Durango, Loveland, Salida, Telluride, Vail.  
Florida: Key West, New Smyrna Beach, Panama City and Seaside.  
Georgia: Athens.  
Idaho: Moscow, Sandpoint. Sun Valley.  
Illinois: Quincy.  
Iowa: Cedar Falls, Iowa City.  
Kansas: Lawrence.  
Kentucky: Berea.  
Louisiana: Natchitoches.  
Maine: Belfast, Camden, and Rockport. Deer Isle and Blue Hill, Portland.  
Maryland: Easton.  
Massachusetts: Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, Northampton, Provincetown.  
Michigan: Saugatuck and Douglas.  
Minnesota: Grand Marais, Lanesboro, Stillwater.  
Mississippi: Ocean Springs, Oxford.  
Montana: Bozeman and Livingston, Flathead Valley, Helena, Missoula.  
New Hampshire: Hanover and Lebanon, Keene and Peterborough, Portsmouth.  
New Jersey: Lambertville, Red Bank.  
New Mexico: Magdalena, Ruidoso, Santa Fe, Taos, Truth or Consequences.  
New York: Ithaca. Jamestown and Chautauqua Lake, Peekskill, Woodstock.  
North Carolina: Beaufort and Morehead City, Chapel Hill, Wilmington.  
Ohio: Athens, Yellow Springs.  
Ontario: Niagra-on-the-Lake, Stratford.  
Oregon: Ashland, Cannon Beach, Joseph and Enterprise.  
Pennsylvania: Easton.  
Quebec: Baie St. Paul.  
South Carolina: Beauford and Hilton Head.  
Tennessee: Woodbury.  
Texas: Big Bend, Kerrville and Fredericksburg, Rockport, Round Top.  
Utah: Park City.  
Vermont: Burlington, Montpelier.  
Virginia: Abingdon, Charlottesville.  
Washington: Bellingham, Olympia, Port Townsend, Walla Walla.  
West Virginia: Berkeley Springs, Lewisburg.  
Wisconsin: Bayfield and Madeline Island, Door County.

Wyoming: Jackson.  
Towns by rank.  
Index.

## Summary:

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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[Cultural Tourism \(/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/search?browse=true&tags=2229\)](#)

[ADVOCATE](#) [RESEARCH](#) [CONNECT](#) [LEAD](#)

By Program

[Reports and Data](#)

[Networks and Councils](#)

[Services and Training](#)

[Promotion and Recognition](#)

By Location

[States](#)

## [International](#)

### Sister Sites

- [Arts Action Fund](#)
- [National Arts Marketing Project](#)
- [pARTnership Movement](#)
- [Animating Democracy](#)

### By Topic

- [Advancing Arts Locally](#)
- [Arts & Business](#)
- [Arts & Economy](#)
- [Arts Education](#)
- [Arts & Healing](#)
- [Arts Marketing](#)
- [Arts Policy](#)
- [Cultural Districts](#)
- [Culture & Communities](#)
- [Disaster Preparedness](#)
- [For Artists](#)
- [Funding Resources](#)
- [Grantmaking](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Public Art](#)
- [Social Change](#)
- [Strategic Partners](#)
- [United Arts Funds](#)
- [Volunteerism](#)
- [Young Arts Professionals](#)

### Events

- [Arts Advocacy Day](#)
- [Nancy Hanks Lecture](#)
- [Annual Convention](#)
- [The BCA 10](#)
- [National Arts Awards](#)
- [National Arts & Humanities Month](#)
- [National Arts Marketing Project Conference](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [ArtsMeet National Event Calendar](#)

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# WHAT IS ARTS POLICY?

## Integrating the Arts into National Issues to Bring about Innovation and Change

Through rigorous research and external collaboration, Americans for the Arts provides potent arguments and actionable steps toward integrating the arts into our nation's domestic and foreign policy objectives today to create a better future for our country tomorrow.



In conjunction with national and local partners, we work at the forefront of creating new value propositions for the arts in America. Explore with us the positive impacts of applying arts solutions to pressing challenges such as rapid globalization, the return of service members from global conflicts, or the health and wellness needs of our senior population. Arts policy at Americans for the Arts reaches beyond today's challenges and strives to activate conversations about the world of tomorrow—and the ways in which the arts can knit an increasingly diverse, disparate planet together at both the grassroots and

highest levels of decision-making.

## How Arts Policy Can Impact Your Community

Our society at large struggles with many of the same issues that we as arts professionals are already tackling through our arts programs. Professionals across disciplines want to address social, educational, health, and wellness needs to contribute to quality of life. Government officials and local leaders are looking for ways to promote economic prosperity both domestically and internationally. As we address issues facing the arts in our daily work, we also confront broader issues in our society—enhancing creativity, growing the creative workforce, valuing intellectual property rights, adapting to new technologies, or building stronger economic and diplomatic relations in a rapidly changing world.

Through arts policy programs, Americans for the Arts joins your work with the work of others across disciplines and sectors. Collectively we begin to tackle the same issues and our toolbox is now richer as it combines the rich array of creativity, innovation, and passion that the arts can contribute to pushing for solutions.

## Making an Impact through Our Arts Policy Programs

Joining national partners and thought leaders in the field with Americans for the Arts' cutting edge research and expert staff in art policy issues, we forge arts-based solutions that are innovative and practical, to address the needs of both domestic and international communities.

Arts policy at Americans for the Arts employs multiple strategies to help take concepts from ideas to concrete policy change at the national, state, and local levels:

1. **Convene** policy forums, such as the National Arts Policy Roundtable, to explore and share ideas, policy, and private sector best practices nationwide.
2. **Research** concepts and ideas to support arts-friendly policy positions.
3. **Collaborate** with national and international strategic partners to take the set of positions and create an action strategy to advance a cultural policy agenda.
4. Provide critical **tools and information** for our various action networks to put the policies into play on the federal, state, and local levels.

Here are some key examples of our work in each of these areas.

### Convene

The Americans for the Arts policy roundtable programs include the [Aspen Seminar for Leadership in the Arts \(/node/3113\)](#) and the [National Arts Policy Roundtable \(/node/27731\)](#). Both convene a select group of artists, philanthropists, and thought leaders in lively dialogues that explore how we can create a more vibrant role for arts and culture in 21<sup>st</sup> century American society. Each National Arts Policy Roundtable yields a report containing recommendations on public policies and private sector practices that are necessary to move the issue from thought to action. Reports are available on the [National Arts Policy Roundtable web pages \(/node/27731\)](#).



### Research

Americans for the Arts established the Institute for Community Development and the Arts to provide a research-based understanding of how the arts are being used to address social, educational, and economic development issues in communities across the country. Here you will find an archive of all past [Monographs \(/node/27727\)](#) and [special reports \(/node/3078\)](#) written to address these issues through the arts and arts policy.

## Collaborate

The [National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military \(/node/3146\)](#) is a national collaborative effort, launched in 2012 and co-led by Americans for the Arts and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, to advance the arts in healthcare and healing for military service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers. The goals of the National Initiative are to:

- advance the policy, practice, and quality use of arts and creativity as tools for health in the military;
- raise visibility, understanding, and support of arts and health in the military;
- make the arts tools for health available to all active duty military, staff, family members, and veterans. More information about the Initiative can be found at [www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org](http://www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org) (<http://www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org>).

## Tools and Information

The [National Arts Administration and Policy Publications Database \(/node/3080\)](#) is a repository for some of the most seminal research, policy, and management documents written in the last 50 years. This collection is a helpful resource for anyone working in the arts management field today, with papers ranging from how-to manuals to data-driven research reports to advocacy guides to policy papers. Start your search here—and if we don't have what you're looking for, we want to hear from you!

Want more training on how arts policy works? [Webinars \(/node/3269\)](#) are a great way to start. Coming in 2014 we will feature a number of policy-focused webinars, following up on the successful [2011 Backyard Diplomacy webinar \(/node/28215\)](#) with a new expanded arts and global affairs webinar. We will also feature webinars on arts & the military, and how our policy work is helping creating an environment to allow for the growth of arts and healing programs for our service men and women across the country.

Keep an eye out for our week-long Arts Policy Blog Salons, which feature a variety of viewpoints on the latest arts policy issues on [ARTSblog \(http://blog.artsusa.org\)](http://blog.artsusa.org). Check out our recent Blog Salon on [Arts & the Military \(http://blog.artsusa.org/tag/may-2013-salon/\)](http://blog.artsusa.org/tag/may-2013-salon/).

## Join Us to Bring about Change through Arts Policy

Policy requires action to reach implementation and permeate down into our communities and arts programs - at both the grassroot and the grasstop levels. Through advocacy, we push for policy changes to be reflected in our laws. If you are an arts professional, you know the transformative value of the arts and you realize the potential of creating polices across disciplines that include art components. Start to learn more about advocacy by visiting our [Advocate hub page \(/advocate\)](#) or consider participating in the next [Arts Advocacy Day \(/node/3762\)](#), held annually on Capitol Hill. Or join our [Arts Policy Listserv \(/node/27726\)](#) to keep up to date on topics related to arts policy and be the first to hear of new programs at Americans for the Arts in support of arts policy.

To help us better serve you, let us know what you want to explore. Contact the staff liason for Arts &

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[States](#)

[International](#)

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[Animating Democracy](#)

By Topic

[Advancing Arts Locally](#)

[Arts & Business](#)

[Arts & Economy](#)

[Arts Education](#)

[Arts & Healing](#)

[Arts Marketing](#)

[Arts Policy](#)

[Cultural Districts](#)

[Culture & Communities](#)

[Disaster Preparedness](#)

[For Artists](#)

[Funding Resources](#)

[Grantmaking](#)

[Professional Development](#)

[Public Art](#)

[Social Change](#)

[Strategic Partners](#)

[United Arts Funds](#)

[Volunteerism](#)

## [Young Arts Professionals](#)

### Events

[Arts Advocacy Day](#)

[Nancy Hanks Lecture](#)

[Annual Convention](#)

[The BCA 10](#)

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