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Cincinnati region Among top-20 most arts-vibrant Large communities in the U.S. for Fourth Time in a Row

The 2024 Arts Vibrancy Index from SMU DataArts Compiles List of 40 Most Vibrant Arts Communities Across the U.S., Based on Measures of Per Capita Supply, Demand and Government Support for the Arts

Cincinnati, OH, December 12, 2024 – SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, has released its annual ranking of the 40 most arts-vibrant communities in the United States. Organized into three lists by community size, the 2024 [Arts Vibrancy Index](#) once again includes the Cincinnati region among the top 20 large communities. This ranking is determined through a data-driven analysis of arts supply, demand, and government support across more than 900 communities nationwide. Cincinnati has earned a spot on the list every year since its debut in 2020.

“In the Cincinnati region, our community recognizes that the arts are not just a nice-to-have, they are a necessary part of the economy to the tune of \$1.6 billion in economic impact over the last 4 years,” says **Alecia Kintner**, President and CEO of ArtsWave, the region’s main source for arts funding and the community’s local arts agency (LAA). “This report is yet another proof point that our arts in Cincinnati are a significant driver of the vibrancy that is coming to define our region.”

Among the study’s metrics, Cincinnati ranks in the top 1% for earned program revenue, such as ticket sales, and in the top 2% for total compensation for arts workers. “This highlights the strength of our arts industry and our ability to attract high-quality creative talent that enhances our region’s growing reputation as a national creative hub,” says Kintner. “This growth is the result of decades of strategic, philanthropic investment in the arts by individuals and businesses, and the index provides a tangible way to showcase the return on that investment.”

The Cincinnati region is the only Ohio, Kentucky or Indiana community to be named to the list of large communities. Other Midwest cities joining Cincy are Chicago, Milwaukee and Nashville.

The Index reflects fluctuations in arts activity, participation, funding, access and employment that occurs in each community; however the Arts Vibrancy Index has consistently shown that highly arts-vibrant communities are dispersed broadly throughout the U.S., with every region of the country represented in the top rankings. This finding arises naturally out of objective analysis of the data, not from any selection of communities to achieve geographic representation. From Ohio to Colorado, New York to Alaska, arts vibrant communities recognize regional artistic diversity and community success.

“In the face of rising costs, shifting funding sources and long-standing inequities in access, funding and employment, arts communities have continued to demonstrate their resilience and the undeniable richness they bring to towns and cities across the country,” stated **Dr. Jennifer Benoit-Bryan**, Director of SMU DataArts. “The Arts Vibrancy Index helps the arts community – leaders, businesses, governments, funders – better understand the dynamics of arts activities that occur in local areas. Over the years, it's been rewarding to see the diverse ways the reports have been used: from funders who use data to analyze how their investments can increase arts vibrancy in the communities they serve to arts leaders who use the reports and interactive maps in their decision-making for relocating their operations or determining markets for touring shows. The Index has been indispensable in shining light on the arts in communities all across the country.”

The Lists

Arts-vibrancy scores for every county in the United States can be viewed [on an interactive map](#) that identifies arts and cultural strengths that are present in every community.

Large Communities (population: 1 million +)

Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX

Boston, MA

Cambridge-Newton-Framingham, MA

Chicago-Naperville-Evanston, IL

Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN

Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO

Frederick-Gaithersburg-Rockville, MD

Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA

Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI

Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI

Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN

New Orleans-Metairie, LA

New York-Jersey City-White Plains, NY-NJ
Newark, NJ-PA
Philadelphia, PA
Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA
Rochester, NY
San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City, CA
Seattle-Bellevue-Kent, WA
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV

Medium Communities (population: 100,000 – 1 million)

Ann Arbor, MI
Boulder, CO
Ithaca, NY
Kalamazoo-Portage, MI
Missoula, MT
Pittsfield, MA
San Rafael, CA
Santa Fe, NM
Syracuse, NY
Wilmington, DE-MD-NJ

Small Communities (population <100,000)

Auburn, NY
Branson, MO
Brevard, NC
Glenwood Springs, CO
Hailey, ID
Jackson, WY-ID
Juneau, AK
Steamboat Springs, CO
Taos, NM
Vineyard Haven, MA

The Arts Vibrancy Index is composed of [13 unique measures](#) which cover aspects of supply, demand, and public support for arts and culture, and are adjusted for cost of living and population differences among communities. For more information on how the

Arts Vibrancy Index is calculated, metrics, data sources, more detail on specific communities and the interactive map, please visit [www.culturaldata.org/what-we-do/arts-vibrancy-index]

About ArtsWave

ArtsWave, the local nonprofit arts agency serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the late 1940s, it established the first United Arts Fund in the nation and, in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising, coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action, piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement and development of resources for the arts. Each year, ArtsWave raises millions of dollars from tens of thousands of donors — corporations, employees, foundations, residents and others — to support more than 150 arts organizations, projects and artists. In 2024, ArtsWave raised a record \$12.5 million through its yearly campaign from individuals, businesses and foundations to further the region's strategic growth goals. Donations can be made at artswave.org/give.

ABOUT SMU DATAARTS

SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, is a project of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University. The mission of SMU DataArts is to provide the evidence-based insights needed to collectively build strong, vibrant, and equitable arts communities. Its research efforts range from academic papers published in leading journals, applied research undertaken with community partners, and actionable insights shared directly with arts practitioners. Its programs provide business intelligence tools and resources to help arts leaders leverage data to answer critical management questions and connect research analyses to their own work. Recent publications include research reports on [the scope of federal COVID-19 relief funding for the arts](#); [national operating trends for arts and cultural organizations](#) [the alchemy that drives high performing arts organizations of color](#); [audience diversity, equity and inclusion in large performing arts organizations](#); [impact of investments made in diverse creative communities](#); and more.

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