

National Endowment for the Arts: Arts and Health Fact Sheet

The intersection of the arts and health is an area rich with creativity and innovation. The National Endowment for the Arts is committed to artists and arts organizations engaged in this expanding realm to extend their work and offer insights and new practices to the field of health. The Arts Endowment's support of the arts and health is demonstrated through its initiatives, research, funding, and content development.

INITIATIVES

Creative Forces

The National Endowment for the Arts' **Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network**, a partnership with the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and the state and local arts agencies serves the special needs of military patients and veterans with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions, as well as their families and caregivers.

The program places creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at 11 clinical sites throughout the country, plus a telehealth program, and increases access to community arts activities to promote health, wellness, and quality of life for military service members, veterans, and their families and caregivers. In addition, research is an important component of Creative Forces. Administrative support for Creative Forces is provided by Americans for the Arts. Go to arts.gov/creative-forces to learn more and read stories from veteran artists.

Federal Interagency Taskforce on the Arts and Human Development

The taskforce encourages more and better research on how the arts can help people reach their full potential at all stages of life. Task force members represent multiple units across federal government, including the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education, among others.

Sound Health

Beginning in 2017, the NEA has contributed expertise to Sound Health, a partnership with the National Institutes of Health and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to promote knowledge about music's relationships to brain development, learning, and health and well-being.

RESOURCES

[*Staying Engaged: Health Patterns of Older Americans Who Participate in the Arts*](#) (2017) describes arts participation patterns of older adults (aged 55 and over) tracked by the 2014 Health and Retirement Study. Central to the report is an examination of the health characteristics (cognitive ability, physical function, and hypertension rates) among adults who created art, who attended arts events, or who did both or did neither.

[*The National Endowment for the Arts Guide to Community-Engaged Research in the Arts and Health*](#) (2016) advises arts practitioners and biomedical or behavioral health researchers how to partner effectively in documenting and studying the contributions of community-based arts programs to positive health outcomes.

[The Arts in Early Childhood: Social and Emotional Benefits of Arts Participation](#) (2015) is a literature review and gap-analysis of recent research about the arts' relationship to social-emotional benefits in early childhood. Music-based activities, drama/theater, and visual arts and crafts were among the types of arts participation studied.

The Creative Forces initiative has investing in research on the impacts and benefits of arts therapy, and papers on that research can be found [here](#).

EXAMPLES OF FUNDING

The following projects are taken from various National Endowment for the Arts grant categories.

Colorado State University in Fort Collins to support a series of cross-disciplinary, mixed-method studies to examine the cognitive, physiological, and social benefits of live performing arts attendance for older adults with cognitive impairment and for their caregivers.

Creative Agents of Change Foundation in Louisville, Kentucky, to support Project HEAL, a program in rural Jackson, Kentucky. Project partners, including Breathitt County Health Department and several local and regional healthcare organizations seek to increase public engagement in health issues through arts and culture, specifically in the areas of cancer and opioids, which account for a large percentage of preventable health costs in Jackson.

Newark Arts Council in Newark, New Jersey, to support an arts education collective impact project in partnership with Newark Arts Education Roundtable, the Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition, and My Brother's Keeper Newark. The project will develop arts interventions that address the social and emotional needs of Newark's students who have experienced trauma and provide professional development for those who serve them. This includes developing criteria for assessing arts programming to improve trauma-informed care.

MVLE in Springfield, Virginia, to support a case-study evaluation of dance performances featuring adults with varying levels of intellectual and developmental disability alongside professional dancers.

HEARING FROM EXPERTS AND PRACTITIONERS

In [an NEA podcast](#), actor, director, producer Jeffrey Wright discusses his documentary produced for HBO, *We Are Not Done Yet*, which profiles a group of former and current service members who are part of a writing workshop at Walter Reed National Military Center; all of them struggling with PTSD.

"And what we need to do, though, for the good of these veterans but also for the good of a healthy society, we need to take on this trauma as a collective. We need to hear them, listen to them, understand our responsibility relative to their trauma."

In an Art Work's blog, [Taking Note: NIH Director on Music & the Brain](#), the National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins says of the agency he directs, "What could we do as the world's largest supporter of biomedical researcher, to try to provide some kind of path forward that would further increase the scientific credibility and the potential power of music therapy to help a whole range of people, with various illnesses, who might benefit?"

In an NEA podcast, [Creative Forces Music Therapist Rebecca Vaudreuil and Master Sergeant Michael Schneider](#) at Walter Reed Medical Center talk about how engaging in music therapy allowed Schneider to finally understand the true purpose of his healing: "... to put me back into society to help everybody around me, and to be a better person for my family."