

Established by Congress in 1965, the **National Endowment for the Arts** is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America.

The National Endowment for the Arts is the only funder, public or private, to support the arts in all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. The agency awards more than \$120 million annually with each grant dollar matched by up to nine dollars from other funding sources.

Economic Impact of the Arts

The arts generate more money to local and state economies than several other industries. According to data released by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the arts and cultural industries contributed \$804.2 billion to the U.S. economy in 2016, more than agriculture or transportation, and employed 5 million Americans.

**FUNDING THROUGH THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
THEATER PROGRAM:**

From 1996-2013, theater projects were funded through the Arts Endowment's Theater program. Musical Theater was combined with Opera as a separate program. Theater and Musical Theater were brought together into one funding program from 2014-2017. For fiscal year 2018, Musical Theater became its own funding program, separate from Theater. For the purposes of consistency in this fact sheet, the historic funding total for Theater does not include the years 2014-2017, although the Arts Endowment awarded more than \$27 million for theater/musical theater projects over those four years.

Direct grants awarded, 1967-2013 plus 2018:

\$302 million

Direct grants awarded, 2018:

\$5.13 million

2018 FUNDING EXAMPLES

Supporting theater festivals: **Theatre Squared in Fayetteville, Arkansas**, to support the Arkansas New Play Festival that will serve as a laboratory for new play development, giving a voice to emerging playwrights whose work resonates with the shifting demographics of Arkansas and mid-America.

Enriching children's lives through theater: **Chicago Shakespeare Theater in Chicago, Illinois**, to support a series of education and civic engagement initiatives. The theater will provide mentorship services to youth from underserved areas and will help promote literacy in the local public school system.

Bringing theater to prisons: **Pioneer School of Drama in Danville, Kentucky**, to support Voices Inside: The Northpoint Prison Writing and Performance Project. At the Northpoint Training Center, a medium security prison, sessions will offer opportunities for self-expression and enhancing inmates' communication skills.

Funding new plays: **Penobscot Theater Company in Bangor, Maine**, to support the commission of a new play based on the book *Molly Spotted Elk: A Penobscot in Paris*. The book chronicles the life of Molly Spotted Elk, a 20th-century American Indian performing artist.

Convening scholars to discuss theater, **North Carolina Black Repertory Company in Winston-Salem, North Carolina**, to support the biennial National Black Theatre Festival that will include an International Colloquium on Black Theatre, produced in collaboration with Winston-Salem State University and the Black Theatre Network.



NATIONAL INITIATIVE

Shakespeare in American Communities supports high-quality, professional productions of Shakespeare's plays and related educational activities for middle and high school students in underserved schools throughout the United States. In the 2017-2018 year, Shakespeare in American Communities grants supported 750 performances and educational activities with over 240,000 students in 1,053 communities. In 2019, the Arts Endowment is expanding its Shakespeare in American Communities program to engage youths within the juvenile justice system with the works of Shakespeare through theater education programs.

BUILDING THE THEATER FIELD

In 2016, the National Endowment for the Arts received a Special Tony Award for its "unwavering commitment in paving the road" between Broadway and cities throughout the U.S.

The Arts Endowment was directly responsible for the growth of the national infrastructure of American nonprofit theater, helping launch organizations such as the Theatre Development Fund in 1968 and strengthening networks in part through funding of Theatre Communications Group.

Arts Endowment-supported plays have transferred to Broadway, extending the life and commercial success of new work and connecting those works with bigger audiences. Examples include:

- *Fairview*, which won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama was presented at Soho Repertory Company.
- *The Humans*, which won the Tony Award in 2016 for Best Play was presented by Roundabout Theatre Company.
- *August: Osage County*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2008 was presented by Steppenwolf Theatre.
- *American Song*, which transferred to Broadway in 2018 starring Kerry Washington

RESEARCH

The Arts' Endowment's report *U.S. Trends in Arts Attendance and Literary Reading: 2002-2017* (2018), is a first look at results from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, a partnership of the NEA with the U.S. Census Bureau. The report found that adult attendance at musical theater productions held steady from 2012 to 2017 despite a five percent increase in U.S. adult population. In 2017, 9.4 percent of U.S. adults (22.9 million people) attended a non-musical play.

Projects funded through the Arts Endowment's Office of Research & Analysis examine the impact of theater:

- A 2017 Research: Art Works grant to George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, supported studies examining the outcomes of high-quality, intensive theater education for adolescents. The project includes qualitative analysis of high school-level theater education in several communities in the United States.
- Reports submitted by recipients of Research: Art Works grants include
 - *Assessing the Impact of Theatre-Making on Individual Behavioral Change: Applied Theatre and Healthy Eating* (working paper, 2017)
 - *Joining the Spectrum: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry into Theatre as an Intervention for Autism Diagnosed Teens* (working paper, 2015).

RESOURCES

NEA Roundtable: Creating Opportunities for Deaf Theater Artists (2016) summarizes a roundtable conversation hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts on creating opportunities for Deaf theater artists. More than 50 artists, administrators, academics, and funders gathered in New York City in January 2016 to discuss barriers, needs, and opportunities for American Deaf theater artists.

For more information on theater at the NEA, go to [arts.gov/artistic-fields/theater](https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/theater). For more information on the NEA and its programs, go to [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov). The NEA is on Twitter @NEArts as well as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and iTunes.

