



# WORKING TOGETHER 4

*(Building Community through the Arts)*

## EVANSTON

*A project of the Illinois Arts Alliance in cooperation with the Evanston Community Foundation.*

### **ABOUT WORKING TOGETHER**

Working Together was established as a project of the Illinois Arts Alliance in 1995 and has resulted in research and community building through the arts in 11 Illinois communities since its inception. Results from the Working Together survey are intended to provide a factual understanding of the economic and social impact that arts organizations and individual artists have on their local communities. In addition, the survey provides insights into sources of support for the arts community, identifies areas of shared opportunity and profiles the current relationship between businesses, local government and the arts.

This Working Together survey was conducted in Evanston in late 2005. The information gathered provides the basis for dialogue among local artists, arts organizations, city government and businesses with the goal of developing mutually beneficial relationships - true collaborations at the community level.

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## ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

- Good response rate (37%) with 33 of 89 surveys distributed returned.
- **Majority of respondents (75%) are nonprofits.** Twenty-four percent are performing arts groups; the remainder of respondents represent a wide variety of disciplines.
- Responding organizations reflect a wide range of operating budgets, revenue levels, and length of operation.
- Half of the organizations have operating budgets less than \$200,000 per year; 5 of the 33 organizations have operating budgets in excess of \$1million,
  - Average budget level is \$1.1 million; median annual budget for responding organizations is \$150,000.
- **Responding organizations earn much of their income.**
  - In 2005, these organizations were successful in meeting nearly half (46%) of their revenue through earned income.
  - Fundraising –whether grants, gifts or events –contributed another 36%.

### How Arts Organizations Contribute Locally

Arts organizations are making meaningful and multifaceted contributions to the city of Evanston in a number of ways:

#### *Through the people they involve in the community*

- Each responding organization engages an average of 22 volunteers (including board members) and receives an average of **2,568 volunteer hours per year.**

#### *Through the services they provide to the community*

- 58% of responding organizations **supplement educational programming** in local schools through performances, instruction and workshops.
- **27% provide after school programming** for young children, and 18 % provide after school programming for high school students.
- 55% of responding organizations **provide programming for specific populations such as at-risk children** (21%), pre-school aged children (15%) and economically disadvantaged persons (15%).

#### *Through the people they bring into the community*

- **Evanston arts organizations drew an audience of 303,000 in 2005** – four times the total Evanston population and almost six times the Evanston population aged 21 and over.
- The total audience served is increasing with the number of events offered – estimated **audiences served increased by over 8%** in the last two years (up from 259,000 in 2003).
- An estimated **35% of audiences come from outside Evanston's** city limits.

#### *By making property improvements*

- One third of responding organizations own their space.
- 60% of those organizations **made improvements to the building or façade** in the past five years, **and spent an average of \$287,000 per organization.**
- One third of all respondents plan to make improvements to their space in the next one to two years.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 25 nonprofit arts organizations in this survey that provided complete expenditure data have an economic impact in Evanston of \$25.1 million comprised of \$11.6 million in direct expenditures, \$7.4 million in indirect expenditures from the re-spending of the direct dollars, and \$6.1 million of induced impact through positive changes in employment, personal earnings, and taxes generated by populations levels associated with the direct expenditures. *Additional nonprofit arts organizations whose spending was not captured by the survey, commercial arts venues, individual artists, and audience spending associated with arts attendance make the actual economic impact of the arts in Evanston much higher.*

*Annual Economic  
Impact:*  
**\$25.1 million**

## INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS

- Moderate response rate (15%) - 70 responses from 451 surveys distributed.
- Narrow definition of artist for purposes of this survey: respondents are over 18 years of age, have received some education or training in their discipline (formal or informal), attempt to derive income from their artistic work and are actively engaged in creating art and presenting it to the public. *(This definition is consistent with that used by the Urban Institute in national studies.)*
- One third of respondents are musicians, one third are visual artists, the remaining third distributed across many disciplines.
- 74% have a graduate or professional degree, over two times the Evanston average

### How Individual Artists Contribute Locally

Evanston artists dedicate significant hours to their creative work and generate a variety of benefits for the greater community:

#### *Economic contributions:*

- **Evanston artists contribute to the city's economy** through personal income from their arts and supporting Evanston businesses (up to 83% depending on category of goods/services)
- **They are the primary wage earners in their households**, contributing from 57% to 100% of their household's income

#### *Support of local arts institutions:*

- These individuals also **contribute to the arts as audience members** – attending over three events per month on average with just under one event per month attended in Evanston and just under two events attended per month in the rest of the Chicago area.

#### *Civic involvement:*

- **94%** of the artists in this survey **are registered to vote** with 45% reporting voting in all the general and primary elections
- **54% volunteer** for community service, civic organization or serve on local boards

## WHAT'S NEXT? OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANSTON

Through the Working Together survey, Evanston's arts community was shown to be incredibly rich in cultural offerings. Many opportunities exist to further strengthen Evanston's creative community. **Collaboration and communication are key** to making Evanston an even better place for artists and arts organizations to thrive and contribute further to the social and economic growth of the city.

Responding **ARTS ORGANIZATIONS** share a common stake in the Evanston community and find common ground on many fronts.

- **“Improved support system for the arts”** and **“more and better places to exhibit and perform”** are singled out as important areas to focus and work together on.
- They all agree that **arts-business collaboration is important** if not critical, but that leadership is needed to make this happen.
- They all agree on the need for more **support from community leaders**.
- All expressed a need for **professional networks** that enable communication and collaboration

**Organizational needs and priorities often differ by size of operating budget and number of years in operation.** Thus, opportunities exist for service providers to target strategies according to organizations' size and developmental stage.

When asked to describe their most pressing problems:

- **Small organizations** focused on **audience development** and marketing, programming and volunteer development.
- **Mid-sized arts organizations** perceived the need for help with audience development and marketing, specifically in the form of **more media coverage** – something heard loud and clear from individual artists too. They also focused on fundraising, board development and strategic planning.
- **Large organizations'** needs focus on **fundraising** and **facilities management**.

- **Strong arts – business collaboration has the potential to deepen the stake that arts organizations feel in the community.** Today only 27% of the organizations agree strongly that working in Evanston enhances their economic well being, and even fewer (15%) feel it enhances their artistic well being. Effective collaboration can improve these percentages.
  - **Increased collaboration and communication with city government leaders** is another area for attention: only 36% of survey respondents agree that government leaders behave in a way that supports the idea that “Arts are the Heart of Evanston”.
- **Seasonality is an important factor in making collaborations work.** Responding arts organizations indicated that **May through September** would be the best time to engage in new efforts.

**The arts organizations in this survey voiced their optimism for success and the need for new ways to grow and develop. This will take leadership, focus and collaboration.**

**INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS** described a number of ways that their already strong investment in the community could be deepened.

- Responding **artists aged 20 – 39 struggle to find their place in Evanston**. Communication with this group may be helpful in making them feel welcome and deepening their stake in the community.
- Those making the highest economic contribution to Evanston express a need for **quality, affordable performance/exhibit space** that meets the specifications of experienced artists.
  - Artists responding to the survey value most strongly the **validation of their work through direct public contact** and their **ability to support themselves as working artists**. It is in this second point where the gap vs. their current situation is widest.
- Specifically, **artists expressed a desire for high priority action in the following areas:**
  - **more media awareness** in the Evanston and Chicago media and on NPR and PBS
  - **skill building opportunities** in marketing, PR and grant writing
  - effective **networking opportunities** (formal and informal) with peer groups – that is, networking that gives ideas, exposure to their work, enables the dissemination of their work, and offers emotional support



## **ABOUT THE ILLINOIS ARTS ALLIANCE**

The Illinois Arts Alliance (IAA) was established in 1982 when a small group of artists and arts administrators united to combat the threatened elimination of state funding for the arts in Illinois. Today, IAA is the primary multi-disciplinary arts service and advocacy organization in Illinois, serving the arts community through education, research, public relations, and coalition building and is widely recognized as one of the most innovative and effective statewide arts advocacy groups in the nation. More information can be found at [www.artsalliance.org](http://www.artsalliance.org).

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