

CREATING CONNECTION

Enriching lives through the
power of **creative expression**

About This Initiative

Background about the origins, findings, and purpose of Creating Connection.

Origins

Creating Connection is a national initiative with in-depth pilots in select states designed to advance the position of arts and culture as a recognized, valued, and expected part of our everyday lives.

Based on a shared concern for declining engagement with arts and culture, Arts Midwest and Metropolitan Group (The Project Team) joined together with leadership funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, to strengthen the value of, support for, and active engagement with arts and culture in our society. The initiative has been supported with funding and input by state and city pilot teams, arts councils, and foundations.

Although numerous studies have proven that the arts are essential to strong communities, bright and enriching lives, deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, and competitive industries, they are often considered a “nicety rather than a necessity.” Frequently perceived as low priority for busy lives or tight household budgets, the arts community is repeatedly expected to prove its relevancy during budget and policy negotiations.

The Project Team conducted original research to identify closely held values and messages that would begin to shift the way people think about arts and culture, encouraging them to embrace the arts as an integral part of everyday life in every community—not just a luxury for those with enough time and money.

Research included a national survey with oversamples in four geographically diverse locations; focus and discussion groups across the country; one-on-one conversations with leaders of communities of color; and robust dialogue with arts leaders, working artists, and others.

Key findings

Connection is the key reason many people choose to express themselves creatively or engage in creative experiences. They define connection in four ways: with themselves, with people closest to them, with their cultural heritage, and with others around them.

“**Creative expression**” is more welcoming entry point for a conversation with the public than “arts and culture”, which has less relevance and value for most people.

People identify **four primary benefits** of expressing themselves creatively or experiencing something creative: personal growth; health and well-being; sharing and experiencing diverse voices; and happiness.

People of color, women, parents of children under 18, and millennials are **key groups** for whom creative expression and experiences are particularly valued.

The “costs” associated with engaging in creative activities (including **time and money**) are very real for people, and need to be addressed in order to successfully motivate them to seek out such opportunities.

Implementation

Informed by these key findings, we identified a core message that defines our overarching purpose: **Sharing creative experiences—and expressing our own creativity—helps us connect with others and ourselves.**

We are now partnering with arts and culture organizations in select pilot locations to implement messaging and tools and we **invite you to join the movement.** Visit our website, **creatingconnection.org**, to learn more about the initiative, and to access research, tools, and resources, that bring the power of this initiative to life.