

SUNY New Paltz studies arts' economic impact

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Gauging the economic impact of an arts organization can involve a range of parameters — and it is a process that continues to evolve.

The New York State Council on the Arts, which distributes state grant funding, doesn't use the economic impact of an organization as a specific criterion when allocating money. NYSCA uses a wide range of parameters when recommending organizations for grants, including raw financial data supplied by arts organizations to the Philadelphia-based Cultural Data Project. Information from the Cultural Data Project is also being utilized by the Center for Research, Regional Education & Outreach at the State University of New York at New Paltz to study the economic impact of the arts in Dutchess, Ulster, Putnam, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Westchester counties.

The \$20,000 grant that the Center for Research, Regional Education & Outreach received from the New York Community Trust's Arts & Culture Research Fund to conduct its study was part of \$110,000 awarded in May to six nonprofit groups to study the impact of the arts around the state. The Center for Research, Regional Education & Outreach will rely heavily on data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics and U.S. Department of Commerce to conduct its research, said Janis Benincasa, assistant director.

"What exactly do arts and culture contribute to New York City and (the) state's economy and to community development efforts?" reads an announcement of the grants. "Are neighborhoods with cultural organizations safer, healthier, more economically vital or stable? The Arts & Culture Research Fund was set up in the New York Community Trust in 2012 with the encouragement of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts to answer these questions."

Benincasa said the study is scheduled to be completed in June and was prompted by research that showed the arts played a pivotal role in the region, attracting people and keeping them here. But it will examine the impact at the county and regional level, not the organizational level.