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Cincinnati Hits Top 20 List of Most Arts-Vibrant among U.S. Metros

Cincinnati (September 29, 2020) – Coming on the heels of ArtsWave's 10th anniversary of its name and mission change to broaden support to arts throughout the region, Cincinnati emerges for the first time in the top ranks on a seminal national ranking for the arts.

SMU DataArts, a national center for arts research at Southern Methodist University, released today its annual [Arts Vibrancy Index](#), ranking Cincinnati at #20 nationally on its list of large-sized metropolitan areas with over one million in population. It is one of only four Midwest cities to be among the top 20, and it's one of only four to be newly added to the overall list. In total, the six-year-old index considers more than 900 communities.

ArtsWave President & CEO Alecia Kintner notes, “Cincinnati’s emergence on the Arts Vibrancy Index is a tribute to our history of strong citizen support for the arts. In a year of unprecedented disruption and uncertainty, it’s gratifying to see our region’s arts landscape affirmed as among the country’s most vibrant along with other regions that we compete with for employees, business relocations and tourists.” Cincinnati joins the following large sized cities:

Top 20 Arts-Vibrant Large Communities (MSAs or Metro Divisions with population over 1,000,000)

RANK	MSA (*= METRO DIVISION)	REGION	2019 POPULATION
1	New York-Jersey City-White Plains, NY-NJ*	Northeast	11,834,851
2	San Francisco-Redwood City-South San Francisco, CA*	West	1,648,122
3	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, CA*	West	10,039,107
4	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	South	4,970,252
5	Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	South	1,934,317
6	Boston, MA*	Northeast	2,031,884
7	Newark, NJ-PA*	Northeast	2,167,829
8	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	Midwest	3,640,043
9	Frederick-Gaithersburg-Rockville, MD	South	1,310,235
10	New Orleans-Metairie, LA	South	1,270,530
11	Philadelphia, PA*	Northeast	2,150,811
12	Cambridge-Newton-Framingham, MA*	Northeast	2,400,733
13	Cleveland-Elyria, OH	Midwest	2,048,449
14	Oakland-Berkeley-Livermore, CA	West	2,824,855
15	Chicago-Naperville-Arlington Heights, IL	Midwest	7,122,725

16	Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, WA	West	3,074,865
17	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	West	2,492,412
18	Austin-Round Rock, TX	South	2,227,083
19	Nassau County-Suffolk County, NY	Northeast	2,833,525
20	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	Midwest	2,221,208

The Arts Vibrancy Index is based on scores on three metrics of vibrancy: level of arts providers (supply), arts dollars (demand), and government support for the arts.¹

Cincinnati's score was positively influenced by arts demand which places the city in the top 20 on every component and #14, overall. At the same time, the city ranks considerably lower relative to its size in both supply (136th highest) and government support (91st highest). Here is how Cincinnati ranked on each of the three areas that comprise the overall index:

Arts Providers		136th
	Independent artists	254 th
	Arts and culture employees	81 st
	Arts and culture organizations	231 st
	Arts, culture & entertainment firms	120 th
Arts Dollars		14th
	Program revenue	12 th
	Contributed revenue	17 th
	Total expenses	15 th
	Total compensation	16 th
Government Support		91st
	State arts dollars	60 th
	State arts grants	281 st
	Federal arts dollars	130 th
	Federal arts grants	153 rd

"Cincinnati's rankings on the list give us things to be proud of and things to work toward," says Kintner. "We are ahead of the curve for arts dollars, which corresponds to our legacy of decades of community giving to ArtsWave and its predecessor, the Fine Arts Fund, and it correlates to high public demand for the arts. At the same time, we have an opportunity to nurture new and emerging arts providers as well as make Cincinnati more supportive and attractive to independent artists. These steps can increase the 'supply' of arts in our region."

Report authors mention the following about Cincinnati:

¹**Supply** is assessed by the total number of arts providers in the community, including the number of arts and culture organizations and employees, independent artists, and entertainment firms. **Demand** is gauged by the total nonprofit arts dollars in the community, including program revenue, contributed revenue, total expenses and total compensation. The **level of government support** is based on state and federal arts dollars and grants. All financial metrics have been adjusted for cost of living in order to level the playing field.

"Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN, boasts a diverse economy, ranging from sectors in manufacturing to financials to marketing, providing an incubator for growth. The city's German heritage and prominence in the mid and late 19th century created deep arts roots and a vision as an arts city by early founders and philanthropists. The city is adorned with mural art painted over the last 25 years by arts apprentices in a youth employment program and is home to architecturally significant buildings ranging from preserved Italianate brownstones to Zaha Hadid's first U.S. commission, the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). Cincinnati refers to itself as "the city that sings." The May Festival is the longest-running choral festival in the Western Hemisphere, dating back to 1873. A newly formed Young Professionals Choral Collective is the fastest-growing group of its kind in the nation, with more than 1,200 members. Cincinnati is home to a top-10 U.S. orchestra, the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops Orchestra; the second-oldest opera company in the country, Cincinnati Opera; the Cincinnati Ballet; Tony Award-winning Playhouse in the Park; Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati; and one of the few Shakespearean theaters to complete the canon, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company. Cincinnati is also home to a professional school of music, the College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), and a leading College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning (DAAP), both at the University of Cincinnati. The Art Academy of Cincinnati got its start at the Cincinnati Art Museum, which was founded in 1881 and became the first art museum west of the Alleghenies. The Taft Museum is a small art museum housed in a National Historic Landmark, with European and American masterworks. Cincinnati is recognized as a top city in North America for film production because of its locally based on- and off-camera talent. Locals often note that Cincinnati has more festivals than it has weekends. In 2017 and again in 2019, Cincinnati created a new four-day festival called BLINK®, one of the largest light, art, and projection mapping events in the nation. In 2019, nearly 1.5 million people visited Cincinnati to experience BLINK, which spanned 30 city blocks and two states by crossing over the Ohio River into Kentucky. Cincinnati is home to the nation's first and largest community arts campaign, the ArtsWave Community Campaign, which has raised and invested over \$340 million in the region's arts since 1949. ArtsWave funds 125 organizations every year through an impact-based framework called the Blueprint for Collective Action in the Arts Sector, which drives a more vibrant regional economy and more connected community. Given this commitment to the arts, it is no surprise that Cincinnati ranks in the top 2% on all Arts Dollars measures. Over the last two decades, ArtsWave has committed to broaden support for small, mid-sized, emerging, and multicultural arts organizations, which has helped create a greater balance in the arts landscape. There has been significant capital investment in the arts in the last several years as well: a \$160M restoration of historic Music Hall; expansion of Ensemble Theatre; construction of a new home for Cincinnati Shakes; creation of the outdoor "Art Climb" staircase at the Art Museum; and more. Underway is a new Center for Dance and home of Cincinnati Ballet; new 4,500-seat music venue at The Banks built by the Cincinnati Symphony; and new main-stage theater at Playhouse in the Park."

While the report is based on 2019 data and therefore does not reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, its findings help illustrate the critical role of the arts, both socially and economically, in cities and towns around the nation. At this historic moment, the report also serves as a pre-pandemic benchmark of where the most arts-vibrant communities are located.

The full lists, with detailed information on each community, are available on the SMU DataArts [website](#). In addition to the Arts Vibrancy Index, SMU DataArts provides scores for every U.S. county on its interactive [Arts Vibrancy Map](#) on measures of arts dollars, arts providers, government support, socio-economic factors and leisure characteristics.

In six years of reporting, the Index has shown some modest fluctuations in the rankings, but changes tend to be evolutionary, rather than radical. This year, ten percent of communities listed are entirely new to the lists, while another ten percent return after an absence of one year or more. Dr. Zannie Voss, director of SMU

DataArts adds, It's important to stress that rankings are based *entirely* on data, never on opinions or a popular vote."

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About ArtsWave:

ArtsWave, a nonprofit serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the late 1940s, it evolved to become the first united arts fund in the nation and in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising; coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action; piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement; and development of resources for the arts.

Strong funding for the arts has allowed Cincinnati's arts and culture scene to become a national draw and regional asset, creating a wave of economic and community benefits. Each year, ArtsWave supports the work of over 100 arts organizations, school outreach programs, festivals, community centers, neighborhoods and various collaborations through impact-based grants. In 2020, ArtsWave amassed \$13+ million for the arts, through a combination of its 2020 Campaign and a separate Arts Vibrancy Recovery Fund, designed to ensure the solvency and a vibrant return of the region's arts assets in the wake of the unprecedented health and economic crisis.

ArtsWave is focused on helping the Cincinnati Region's arts sector weather the coronavirus crisis. The region's arts sector has an economic impact of more than \$300 million annually and includes more than 225 organizations throughout Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana that employ 10,000+ individuals as artists, performers and staff. The sector was hit at the onset of the coronavirus crisis, when venue and performance closures were announced in early March. ArtsWave has accelerated \$2.4 million in grant payments for 44 organizations which receive operating revenues, expanded its \$10,000 Working Capital Bridge Loans for eligible arts organizations, and has provided Emergency Arts & Culture Organization grants to 47 organizations. The public can help fund these and additional, evolving efforts at artswave.org/give.