

ALABAMA

OVERVIEW

The Alabama State Council on the Arts was created by executive order in April 1966, a move that was followed by the Alabama Legislature in 1967 formalizing the Council’s official role “recognizing, encouraging, and supporting the growth and development of the arts in Alabama.”¹ From its initial \$25,000 allocation secured from the federal National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Council’s budget had increased to a little over \$5 million by fiscal year 1998, which included \$4.6 million in state appropriated dollars and \$500,000 in federal grants.

In fiscal year 2005, according to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the Council’s state appropriation was \$3.2 million. The Council’s 15 members, each appointed by the governor for a six-year term, works to promote Alabama’s diverse and rich artistic resources, assisted by a staff of 21.

FUNDING FOR THE ARTS

As the primary state arts agency, the Alabama State Council on the Arts receives an annual appropriation from the Legislature along with additional funds from the NEA. Since 1983, the Council also has administered the Arts Development Fund, a fund comprising contributions made by Alabama citizens from their state income tax refunds. More recently, the Legislature approved the issuing of a new *Support the Arts* automobile license tag. Proceeds from the sale of the tag provide funding for the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, arts education and folk arts.

As was the case in practically every other state in the country, the initial few

years of this decade posed significant fiscal problems for Alabama, a trend that resulted in significant cutbacks in state appropriation to the Council. In fact, as demonstrated in Table 5, Alabama suffered the third most serious setback (-48 percent) in legislative appropriations among the 16 SLC states during the review period of this report, fiscal years 2001 through 2005. Specifically, legislative appropriations to the arts plunged from \$6.1 million in fiscal year 2001 (an appropriation level that ranked Alabama the SLC state with the fifth highest appropriation level, a noteworthy achievement), to \$4.8 mil-

lion in fiscal year 2003, to \$3.2 million in fiscal year 2005. Additional details on the legislative appropriation levels are presented in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, legislative appropriations declined by -7 percent between fiscal years 2001 and 2002 (\$6.1 million to \$5.7 million) and continued this descent by -15 percent between fiscal years 2002 and 2003 (\$5.7 million to \$4.8 million), by -6 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2004 (\$4.8 million to \$4.5 million) and, finally, by -30 percent between fiscal years 2004 and 2005 (\$4.5 million to \$3.2 million), the most precipitous percentage decline during the five-year review period. As noted earlier, cumulatively, the percentage decline between the two book-end years of the review period was -48 percent.

Another important measure of state appropriations to the arts involves per capita spending, and Table 5 provides this information for Alabama between fiscal years 2001 and 2005. In fact, until the last two years of the review period, Alabama’s arts appropriations levels remained very impressive even from a national perspective. Nationally, the state’s \$1.38 per capita appropriation ranked it 16th and fourth among the SLC states even though in the subsequent four years state ap-

Table 5
Alabama’s Legislative Appropriation to the Alabama Arts Council Fiscal Years 2001 to 2005

Fiscal Year	State		Per Capita Spending	
	Appropriation	% Change	Amount	National Rank
2001	\$6,121,164	-	\$1.38	16
2002	\$5,704,653	-7%	\$1.28	17
2003	\$4,828,285	-15%	\$1.08	18
2004	\$4,544,407	-6%	\$1.01	20
2005	\$3,169,195	-30%	\$0.70	29

Source: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, April 13, 2005

propriations to the Council gradually declined. This development caused Alabama's per capita ranking (\$0.70) to decline to 29th nationally and to tie for eighth place (with North Carolina) among the SLC states by fiscal year 2005.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

During the review period, there were several economic impact reports carried out in Alabama, though none of them were statewide reports. These studies, funded by either private, public or foundation monies, were conducted by the International Festival and Events Association; the University of Alabama in Huntsville; Wolf, Keens and Company; and the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce. As in the case of the economic impact studies carried out in the other states, even though the data is often several years old, it is safe to conclude that more recent analysis would demonstrate even greater economic impacts than the amount reported in these studies. The following section provides a summary of the results of these economic impact studies.

Jubilee CityFest (Montgomery)²

This three-day festival in historic, downtown Montgomery, begun in 1976, includes a number of arts and cultural activities. According to this 2002 study, the direct economic impact of visitors, visiting vendors, local residents and the festival budget of Jubilee CityFest was \$3.7 million. When the industry-established multiplier of 1.5 is factored, the direct and indirect effects lead to an overall economic impact of \$5.6 million, a significant number indeed. While the estimated attendance at the review year's festival was 100,000, the state of Alabama and the city of Montgomery garnered more than \$214,000 and \$107,000 in sales taxes, respectively, from spending at the festival.

Panoply Arts Festival (Huntsville)³

Panoply is a three-day arts festival that showcases the best in local and touring performances. It has been held every year since 1983. According to



Showcase of Alabama Artists, Alabama State Council on the Arts Gallery at the RSA Tower. Photo courtesy Alabama State Council on the Arts.

the July 2000 economic report, the prior year's festival had an attendance of approximately 75,000. In terms of the economic impact specifics, the report noted that total sales impact (direct and indirect retail, food and beverage, hotel and motel and business services) amounted to \$1.6 million; total payroll impact (direct and indirect) amounted to a little more than \$1 million; and the total tax impact (city, county and state) totaled just under \$59,000.

A Cultural Plan for Mobile (Mobile)⁴

In order to publish this 2001 study, the consultants gathered financial information from 20 cultural organizations active in the Mobile area. Among the key findings of the study was the fact that the total direct and indirect organizational spending of Mobile's cultural sector amounted to \$27 million, direct and indirect audience spending added another \$20.6 million, generating a total contribution to the economy of \$47.6 million. In addition, the cultural sector had 265 full-time equivalent employees with a payroll of just under \$7 million. The more than 200,000 hours donated by more than 5,000 volunteers annually to the cultural organizations in Mobile amounted to a contribution of about \$1.6 million.

The Economic Impact of the Arts Survey (Tuscaloosa)⁵

This 2001 study reviewed 39 organizations in Tuscaloosa and documented that these organizations had an annual budget of \$7.8 million. The study also noted that these organizations had earned revenue of \$2.2 million and contributed revenue of \$3.2 million during the same period. They also maintained 77 full-time employees, 106 part-time employees and 146 seasonal/stipend employees. In addition, just over 3,400 volunteers contributed their time and energy to the activities of these organizations during the review period. An impressive \$2.4 million was spent by these organizations on such items as printing, materials, contract services, advertising, equipment, insurance, rent and other expenses. A total of 1.9 million local residents and 1.1 million non-local residents attended events hosted by these organizations during the review period.

Cultural Economic Development (Birmingham)⁶

This comprehensive study, released in 2002, was part of a larger report reviewing economic development strategies for the Birmingham region. In terms of the arts and cultural component of this study, financial information from 29 cultural organizations was gathered. Accordingly, the aggregate budgets of these organizations was a whopping \$42.7 million with almost

half of the 29 organizations maintaining budgets in excess of \$1 million dollars. Overall, contributed income (private, public and corporate support) amounted to about 60 percent of the total revenue of these organizations with the remaining 40 percent originating in admission and ticket sales, income from endowments and other earned income sources.

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

2007 has been designated as the *Year of Alabama Arts* and will involve the efforts of the Council and the state Bureau of Tourism and Travel in promoting this theme. It will include a significant marketing and promotion campaign, a publication of *Alabama Masterpieces, Literary Trail, Performing Arts Showcase* and a folklife publication and exhibition. In fact, in meeting its mandate from the Legislature, the Council already sponsors a number of programs to address the needs of the arts in Alabama including Arts in Education, Community Arts, Folklife, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Literary Arts.

BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITIONS

Huntsville Museum of Art (Huntsville)

- » *Becoming a Nation: Art from the Diplomatic Reception Rooms – U.S. Department of State* (2004)
- » *Fashion in Film: Period Costumes for the Screen – Trust for Museum Exhibitions* (2005)

Birmingham Museum of Art (Birmingham)

- » *The European Masterpieces: Six Centuries of Painting – National Gallery, Victoria, Australia* (2002)
- » *The Triumph of French Painting – The Museum of FRAME* (2004)

Mobile Museum of Art (Mobile)

- » *Picturing French Style: 300 Years of Art and Fashion* (2002) – organized by the Mobile Museum of Art for the Tri-Centennial of Mobile
- » *The Quilts of Gee Bend* (2003)
- » *Treasures from the Vatican Museums* (2004)

- » *The Devonshire Inheritance: Five Centuries of Collecting at Chatsworth* (2005)

Montgomery Museum of Fine Art (Montgomery)

- » *In the Spirit of Martin: The Living Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (2004)
- » *Duane Hanson: Portraits from the Heartland* (2005)

BUILDING BOOM

The Council noted that there were a number of Alabama arts facilities that had either undergone or were in the process of expanding their facilities. In this connection, the Mobile Museum of Arts underwent a major expansion; the Montgomery Museum of Art added a new education wing; the Whole Backstage Theater in Guntersville underwent a major renovation; and the Virginia Samford Theater in Birmingham recently opened after a major restoration.

ALABAMA'S BLUEPRINT FOR SUPPORTING THE ARTS

After a two-year deliberation and research effort, the Council presented in 2000 a detailed blueprint to guide the state supporting the arts in Alabama in the coming decades.⁷ The overarching theme in this blueprint was the fact that enhancing the quality of life for all Alabamians was a priority for state and local policymakers. Toward this goal, the blueprint noted, creating a government and business environment that focuses on cultural and creative energies would be crucial in both stimulating economic growth and fostering an improved quality of life for the state's residents. Consequently, the Council adopted the following mission statement and goals to augment the quality of life for all Alabamians through the arts and culture.

Mission Statement:

- » To enhance the quality of life in Alabama culturally, economically and educationally by supporting

the state's diverse and rich artistic resources.

Goals:

- » Commit greater financial resources to support excellence and professionalism in all art forms so that quality is the hallmark of artistic activity in Alabama.
- » Incorporate the arts as an essential element in the educational experience of all Alabamians.
- » Provide an opportunity for all Alabamians to participate in and appreciate the arts.
- » Forge new public and private partnerships that broaden support for the arts which impact the quality of life in areas such as education, recreation, cultural tourism and more livable cities.
- » Identify, preserve and present folk traditions through direct support and model programs.
- » Establish multifaceted support and marketing opportunities for individual artists both in the state and beyond.
- » Expand support, understanding and program venues for multicultural artistic expression.
- » Enhance the quality of life and economic vitality in communities by making the arts central to planning, design and development.
- » Support the expansion and improvement of cultural facilities involving new and old spaces.
- » Increase public recognition of and appreciation for the arts.

OTHER

In May 1999, Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama, closed as part of the 1995 round of base realignments and closures.⁸ The closure of this 9,000-acre property, originally created by the U.S. Department of War in 1917, resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs both on the base and in neighboring towns. While road construction and environmental cleanup continues, local public officials and developers are pro-actively working on a plan to attract industry and retail developments to create jobs and boost the local economy. An integral part of this redevelopment effort involves

creating an 11-acre arts district—anchored by the Buckner Arts & Exhibit Center—that includes a theater, retail galleries and working areas for artists. In summer 2005, a four-week concert series that included performances by the Alabama Symphony, The Miracles (a Motown band) and a presentation entitled *Broadway under the Stars*, took place.

In July 2005, *Americans for the Arts*, in conjunction with the National Association of Counties (NACo), presented the 2005 National Award for County Arts Leadership to the Jefferson County Commission of Birmingham, Alabama.⁹ The award, presented annually, honors an elected county board or individual leader who has

significantly advanced the arts in the communities they serve. The Jefferson County Commission was chosen due to its endorsement and support of a countywide cultural master plan and for increasing its financial contribution to the arts by more than \$3 million annually.

The genesis for this countywide cultural push began in 2002 when the Jefferson County Commission appropriated funds to partially underwrite the development of a Cultural Master Plan for the Greater Birmingham Region. After the Commission approved the findings of the Cultural Master Plan, it voted to increase its annual contributions to the arts and cultural sector from \$1.4 million to a stagger-

ing \$5 million. Then, the Commission designated the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham as its re-granting agency and established a transparent, open, highly accountable and non-politicized granting process that includes participation by area residents. Not only is the Jefferson County Commission leading the way for Alabama's remaining 11 counties and numerous municipalities to provide support for arts and cultural activities, its appropriation level also is the largest source of funds for arts and culture in the state. Interestingly, the Commission's appropriation level exceeds the level appropriated by the Legislature during the same period.