

The Benefits of the Arts in Greater Minnesota

Project Synthesis

Overview

Minnesota has a thriving arts scene. In 2020, over 50,000 Minnesotans worked as artists and 1.7 million reported creating or performing art (Minnesota Compass 2022). The following year, arts and culture production accounted for over \$12 billion dollars and contributed approximately 85,000 jobs to the state's economy (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies 2022).

While a majority of artists and art organizations are located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, vibrant arts communities also exist in Greater Minnesota. In 2023, the Minnesota State Arts Board contracted with Rise Research to conduct a multi-phase study of the benefits of the arts in communities outside of the Twin Cities metro. The study examined the distribution of Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding across Greater Minnesota and analyzed relationships between the strength of an arts community and economic, health, and other quality of life outcomes; factors that contribute to a thriving arts community; and perceptions of the benefits of the arts for communities in Greater Minnesota.

The mixed-methods research design included:

- ➔ A quantitative analysis of Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding in Greater Minnesota (total and per capita, at regional, county, and city levels);
- ➔ A quantitative analysis of relationships between Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding and economic outcomes, health and wellbeing, youth cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes, and community-level social benefits; and
- ➔ A case study analysis of seven cities in Greater Minnesota.

The analysis revealed that strong arts communities, as measured by per capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding, are located across Greater MN. Although counties with above-average arts funding levels have a larger number of arts establishments and employees and serve more individuals through the arts, there is limited evidence that Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding is significantly associated with economic, social, or health outcomes at the county level.

The case studies suggest that individuals in Greater MN perceive both intrinsic and instrumental benefits of the arts across a range of domains including social and community benefits, economic benefits, youth benefits, and health benefits. Across Greater MN, arts communities depend on many different types of inputs to develop and sustain their growth and are actively working to foster inclusion.

This following pages elaborate on key findings from the analysis and discuss considerations for the Minnesota State Arts Board for supporting the growth of arts communities across the state.

Background Image: A redesigned alley serves as a community gathering space in downtown Battle Lake. The gathering space is home to multiple public arts projects, including two metal fish sculptures named "Rusty" and "Little Rusty," commissioned by the City of Battle Lake and created by artist Sue Seeger.

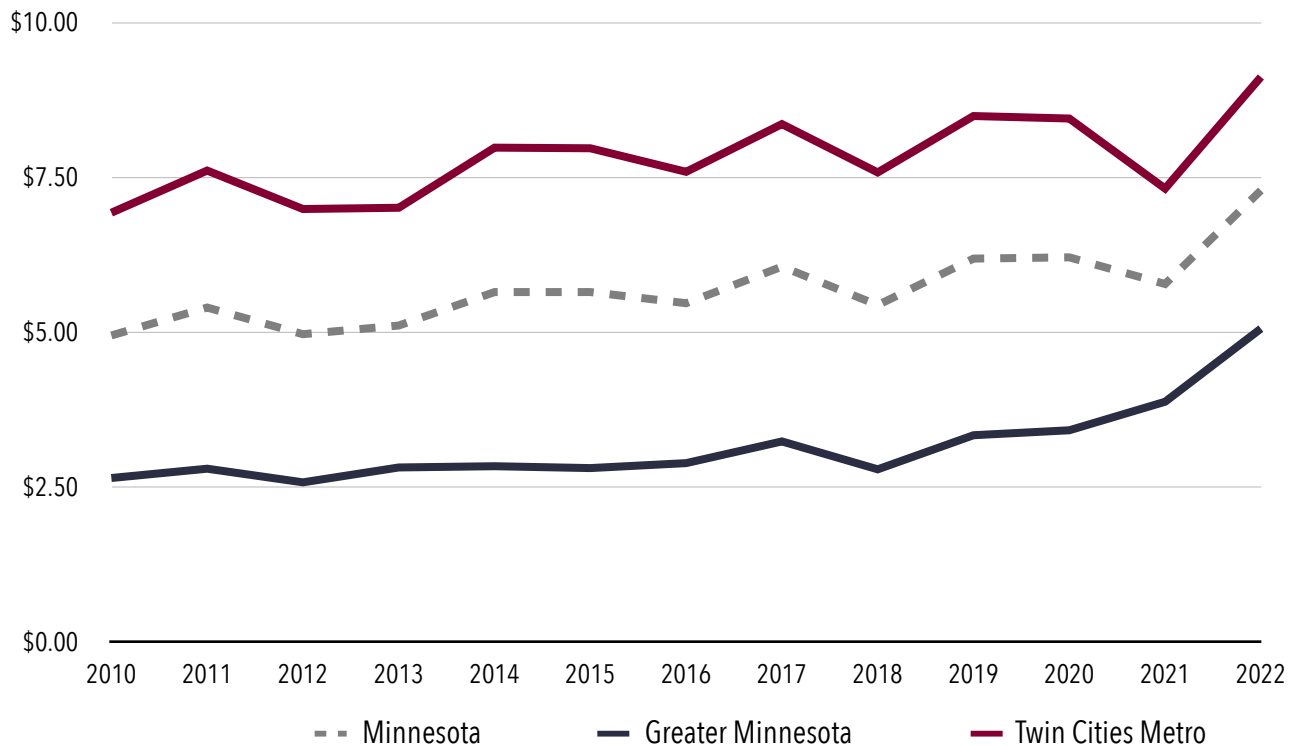
Key Findings

Minnesota is one of the nation's leaders in public funding of the arts. In 2023, Minnesota's legislature appropriated just over \$43.5 million to support the arts - or \$7.62 for every person. The state ranks third in the nation in per capita spending on the arts (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies 2023).

While artists, art projects, and arts organizations receive funding from a range of federal, state, and local sources, most public funds travel through the Minnesota State Arts Board (Arts Board) and the state's 11 regional arts councils. In 2022, the Arts Board and regional councils distributed just over \$41.6 million in grants to artists, arts organizations, and arts activities across Minnesota. During this year, Greater MN received 31 percent (\$12.9 million) of all Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of per capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding over time for Greater Minnesota, the Twin Cities metro, and the state. This figure shows that per capita funding has increased over time, with sharp increases between 2021 and 2022.

Figure 1. Per Capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council Funding in Minnesota, the Twin Cities Metro and Greater Minnesota (2010-2022)



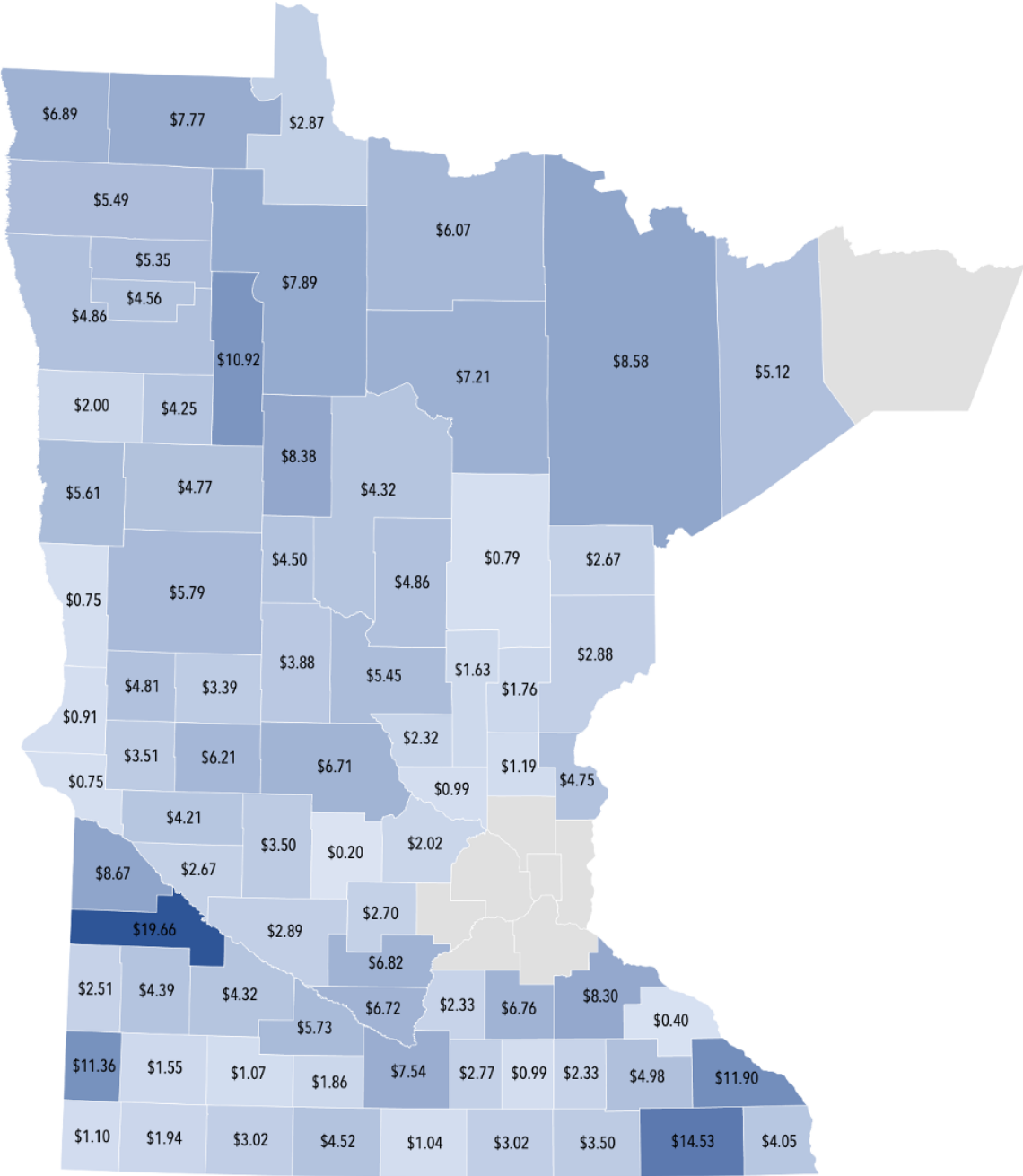
Sources: Minnesota State Arts Board, Final Descriptive Reports, Fiscal Year 2022; US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census. In this figure, per capita funding is defined as funding distributed via the Arts Board and regional arts councils in each fiscal year.

Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding is lower in Greater MN relative to the Twin Cities metro, but has shown consistent growth in recent years. In 2022, Greater MN's per capita funding level of \$5.05 was nearly double the national average.

There is considerable variation across Greater MN in Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding, with particularly wide variation at the city level and across rural communities.

Figure 2 shows per capita funding levels across counties in Greater MN. This figure shows that counties with a strong arts presence, as measured by per capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding, are located across the state. The strength of an arts community does not appear to be related to geographic location or to the rural/urban nature of a community.

Figure 2. Per Capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council Funding by County in Greater MN (2022)

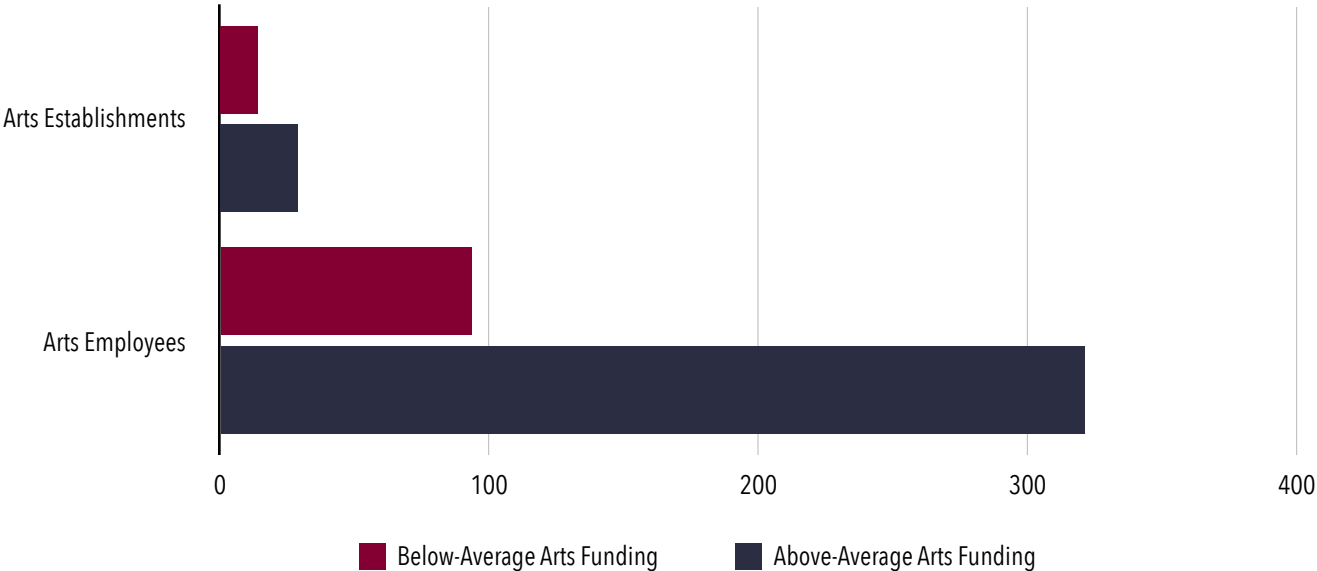


Sources: Minnesota State Arts Board, Final Descriptive Reports, Fiscal Year 2022; US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census. To enhance interpretation, Cook County (an outlier at \$52.72 per person in 2022) is excluded.

Counties with above-average Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding have a greater arts supply and serve more people. However, few other differences exist at the county level.

Figure 3 shows that counties with above-average per capita arts funding levels have a larger number of arts establishments and employees. Further analysis of relationships between per capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding and economic, health, youth, and social benefits in Greater MN provides limited evidence that such funding is significantly associated with outcomes across a range of domains.

Figure 3. Number of Arts Establishments and Employees, by Level of Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding



With respect to perceived benefits of the arts, the case study findings are largely consistent with existing research (see Table 1, next page). In all cities, respondents drew attention to both intrinsic and instrumental benefits of the arts across a range of domains including social and community benefits, economic benefits, youth benefits, and health benefits. Respondents were somewhat more likely to discuss the social and community benefits of the arts, though this varied across cities.

The case studies show that arts communities are actively working to engage the diversity of each city's population through free arts events, mobile arts activities, and targeted engagement. Across cities, artists and arts organizations rely on multiple sources of funding, including funding from the schools or city government, local foundations, donations from local businesses, in-kind donations from local partners, and volunteers.

Respondents generally spoke favorably about the resources available via the Arts Board and regional arts councils, while highlighting challenges including knowledge of grants, especially among younger and traditionally underrepresented populations; artists' perception of their own ineligibility or inadequacy to compete for grants; organizational capacity to write grants; and complex relationships between nonprofit, public, and private organizations in creating or supporting arts activities and events.

Table 1. Findings on the Benefits of the Arts across Domains

<p>Social and Community Benefits. Researchers hypothesize that the arts foster social cohesion, improve trust, and generate a sense of shared meaning and collective efficacy. While research on the social and community benefits of the arts is limited, studies suggest that the arts can contribute to prosocial behaviors (volunteering, for example) and foster inclusion in diverse groups. Such benefits are thought to be particularly important in small cities and rural areas.</p>	<p>Social and Community Benefits. Case study respondents discussed social and community benefits more than any other benefit. Respondents point to several ways that the arts help build community, including by encouraging participation, fostering social engagement, and building community pride. Across cities, arts communities are active in using the arts to foster inclusion and bridge differences.</p>
<p>Economic Benefits. The economic benefits of the arts are widely touted. Although the causal impact of the arts on local economies remains unclear, a growing evidence base provides support for the argument that the arts can add to the economy by generating new spending. Research also suggests that in rural areas, the arts may increase cultural vitality, promote economic resilience, and aid community revitalization.</p>	<p>Economic Benefits. While the arts contribute to the local economy in varying degrees across cities, they generally represent a very small part of the overall economy. Few artists or arts organizations sustain themselves through art alone. Respondents, however, perceive an economic impact of the arts. Several cities promote tourism through the arts and there is evidence that such activities yield economic benefits for the cities.</p>
<p>Youth Benefits. Recent research on the benefits of the arts for youth finds causal relationships between arts education and participation and outcomes including reduce absenteeism and drop-out, improved critical thinking skills, and enhanced school engagement. Studies also show benefits for social-emotional outcomes. Notably, research suggests a particularly strong role for the arts for populations that experience marginalization based on race and class, as well as rural communities.</p>	<p>Youth Benefits. Respondents frequently highlighted the social-emotional benefits of the arts for youth. Few respondents discussed the benefits for school-based outcomes. Case studies also suggest that strong arts programs in schools foster inclusion both in schools and within the community.</p>
<p>Health Benefits. Research provides strong support for the argument that the arts can help prevent ill health, promote good health, and support the management and treatment of various health conditions, including mental illness and acute conditions.</p>	<p>Health Benefits. Interview respondents were most likely to discuss health benefits through a lens of wellbeing, noting that the arts provide both entertainment and a unique type of comfort and joy. Some respondents drew attention to a positive impact for mental health. Several cities have worked to make the arts accessible to populations that may be particularly likely to benefit, including the elderly and those with disabilities.</p>



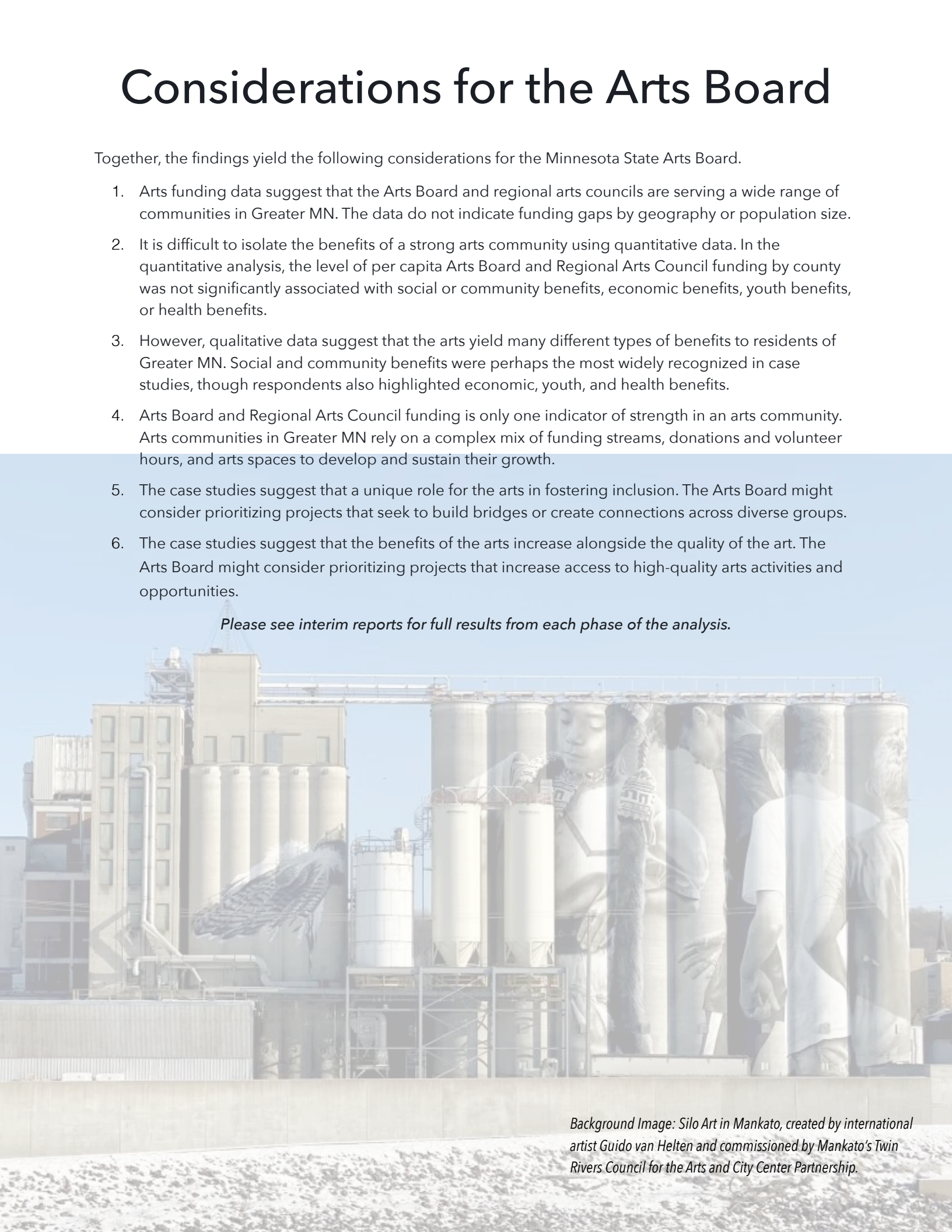
Image shows attendance at Pine City's Art in the Park 2023 summer series. Source: Pine City Arts Council Facebook Page

Considerations for the Arts Board

Together, the findings yield the following considerations for the Minnesota State Arts Board.

1. Arts funding data suggest that the Arts Board and regional arts councils are serving a wide range of communities in Greater MN. The data do not indicate funding gaps by geography or population size.
2. It is difficult to isolate the benefits of a strong arts community using quantitative data. In the quantitative analysis, the level of per capita Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding by county was not significantly associated with social or community benefits, economic benefits, youth benefits, or health benefits.
3. However, qualitative data suggest that the arts yield many different types of benefits to residents of Greater MN. Social and community benefits were perhaps the most widely recognized in case studies, though respondents also highlighted economic, youth, and health benefits.
4. Arts Board and Regional Arts Council funding is only one indicator of strength in an arts community. Arts communities in Greater MN rely on a complex mix of funding streams, donations and volunteer hours, and arts spaces to develop and sustain their growth.
5. The case studies suggest that a unique role for the arts in fostering inclusion. The Arts Board might consider prioritizing projects that seek to build bridges or create connections across diverse groups.
6. The case studies suggest that the benefits of the arts increase alongside the quality of the art. The Arts Board might consider prioritizing projects that increase access to high-quality arts activities and opportunities.

Please see interim reports for full results from each phase of the analysis.



Background Image: Silo Art in Mankato, created by international artist Guido van Helten and commissioned by Mankato's Twin Rivers Council for the Arts and City Center Partnership.