



IU BLOOMINGTON

EMERGING AREAS OF RESEARCH

Abstract Template -- Due June 30, 2017

Title of initiative to be proposed:

Arts and Cultural Investments: Measuring the Social and Economic Impact

Name of lead PI, with title, department/school:

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Key team member names and departments/schools (up to 10 names):

Michael Rushton (SPEA), David Audretsch (SPEA), Matthew Baggetta (SPEA), Jeffrey Bardzell (Informatics), Shaowen Bardzell (Informatics), Brad Fulton (SPEA), Amy Gonzales (Media School), Craig Johnson (SPEA), Jill Nicholson-Crotty (SPEA), Anya Peterson Royce (Anthropology)

Description of area to be proposed. What constitutes this area of research or creative activity as emerging?
(Word limit=500)

Investments in the arts and culture are often supported by an array of potential instrumental impacts, effects that go beyond the public enjoyment of art for its own sake, such as fueling economic growth, improving citizen well-being, and reducing neighborhood poverty and crime. Often, assumptions about the instrumental impacts of arts and culture help to justify expenditures; however, the lack of systematic evaluation prevents us from understanding any subsequent investment returns. As such, representatives of government, business, and private philanthropy struggle with articulating a broad-base rationale for future investments in arts and culture. The need for evaluation is particularly dire in an era when governments and foundations are deprioritizing arts and cultural funding.

That said, there is existing research across various disciplines focusing on arts and cultural investments. For example: economists examine artist employment behavior, the role of cultural infrastructure in economic development, and the efficacy of public sector spending on the arts; historians study patterns of cultural development and artistic patronage, and cultural heritage preservation; sociologists study the arts' relationship with civic engagement, and class, gender, and racial inequities in the arts; and psychologists and humanists have been investigating the influence of the arts on the empathy of readers, and how arts and cultural experiences can help bridge across social and political divides.

With scholars in siloed disciplines studying issues related to arts and cultural investments, the area as a whole remains underdeveloped. In particular, the fragmentation of the area prevents its movement forward with respect to understanding the socioeconomic impact of arts and cultural investments. For example, while economists focus on measuring the economic effects of cultural facility investments in neighborhoods, sociologists work on understanding the consequences with regard to racial and social equity, and historians are documenting the provenance of neighborhood sociocultural dynamics. Each line of research is equally relevant, and in tandem could inform policies related to investments in cultural infrastructure. In other words, policymakers could have the information they need to design policies that further the economic development goals of arts and cultural investments, at the same as protecting the most vulnerable populations and preserving a neighborhood's authenticity. Furthermore, each discipline's methodological approach provides a unique perspective on a similar topic and could be combined in order to enhance our understanding of arts and cultural investments more broadly.

By combining the theoretical frameworks and methodological strengths of an interdisciplinary group of researchers, this proposal seeks to develop a research program in measuring the social and economic impact of arts and cultural investments. The program will build upon existing research in this area; however, the focus will be to generate research that identifies cause-and-effect relationships between investments in arts and culture and socioeconomic outcomes. The program will leverage on the existing strengths of faculty in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (ranked top in the nation amongst schools of public affairs) in program and policy evaluation, and faculty in the arts and humanities, in understanding the role of the arts and culture in public life.

Please submit to earprogram@indiana.edu