

Survey communicates impact of local arts organizations on economy

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New London — When the peer-reviewed medical journal "The Lancet" in 2010 asked Tom Südhof **to name his most influential teacher** ([http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)61210-X/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)61210-X/fulltext)), he replied, "My bassoon teacher, Herbert Tauscher, who taught me that the only way to do something right is to practice and listen and practice and listen, hours, and hours, and hours."

Südhof went on to win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

This is an example that Randy Cohen, vice president of Research and Policy at Americans for the Arts, gave to show the value of the arts on numerous sectors.

"The arts affect every facet of our lives, sometimes in quiet ways," said Kristina Newman-Scott, who oversees the Connecticut Office of the Arts.

Cohen came to The Day on Thursday morning to address elected officials, business leaders and members of the arts community on the results of Arts & Economic Prosperity 5.

The survey involved 341 regions across all 50 states, some as small as 1,500 people and some as large as 4 million. It was the fifth AEP survey since Americans for the Arts began the study in 1994, but the first for southeastern Connecticut.

The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition **presented the local results at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum on Oct. 11** (<https://www.theday.com/local-news/20171011/survey-measures-economic-impact-of-local-arts-organizations>), and Cohen's visit is part of a tour to put local results in a larger context. Cohen said New London was the 63rd city he's visited since June.

State and local arts promoters are hopeful that showcasing data on the economic impact of the arts can lead to investments that help prevent businesses and young people from leaving Connecticut for cities like Boston.

"We're going to change the conversation about arts today from one about charity to one about industry," Cohen said.

Taking the audience through a night out at the theater, he commented that a dance production necessitates the involvement of financial institutions, electricians, an accountant, and a writer, graphic artist and printer for the program. Additionally, patrons may support farmers and waiters by eating at a restaurant beforehand, and local government by parking in a municipally owned garage.

For southeastern Connecticut, Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 involved surveying 786 attendees of festivals and arts events. Americans for the Arts also reached out to 230 nonprofits and received surveys from 70; Cohen said the average response rate nationally was around 50 percent.

The local results found that outside of event admission, the average attendee spends \$25.77 per event — that's \$14.78 on meals and snacks, \$4.32 on souvenirs/gifts, \$1.69 on transportation, \$3.52 on lodging and \$1.46 other/miscellaneous.

Cohen showed a map of the 569 arts businesses in southeastern Connecticut, which he noted are not simply piled up in cities.

Some municipal and state officials discussed efforts in their communities and how they can build on the survey results.

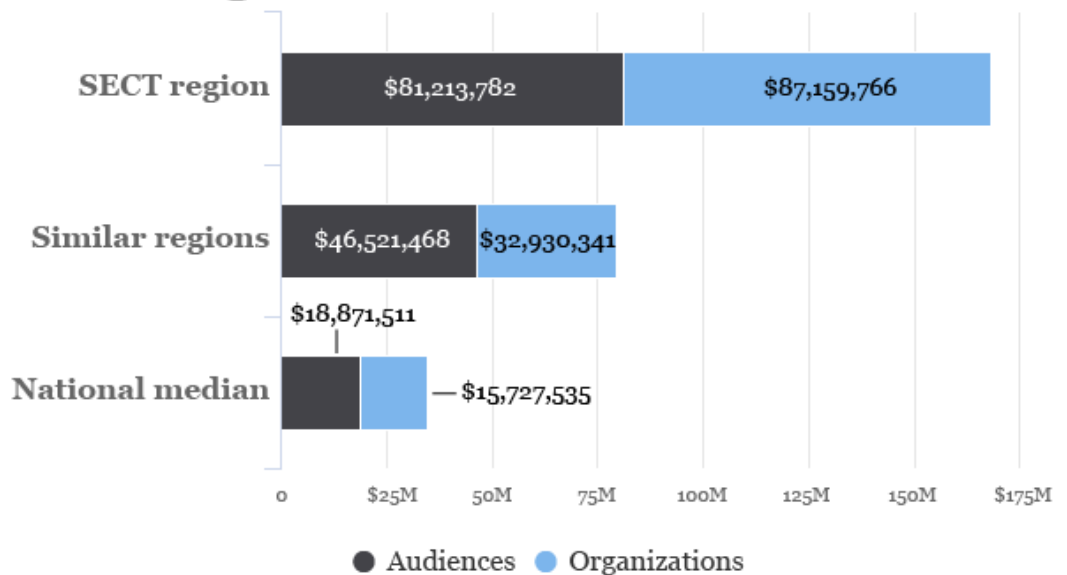
"We've been working to enable the grass-roots efforts, so citizens who live in the community are going to change the community, not the people you hire," said Jason Vincent, director of planning in Stonington.

State Sen. Heather Somers, R-Groton, said the Public Health Committee, of which she is co-chair, was asked to come up with licensing for music and art therapy, and said it is looking at how to use art therapy to combat the opioid epidemic.

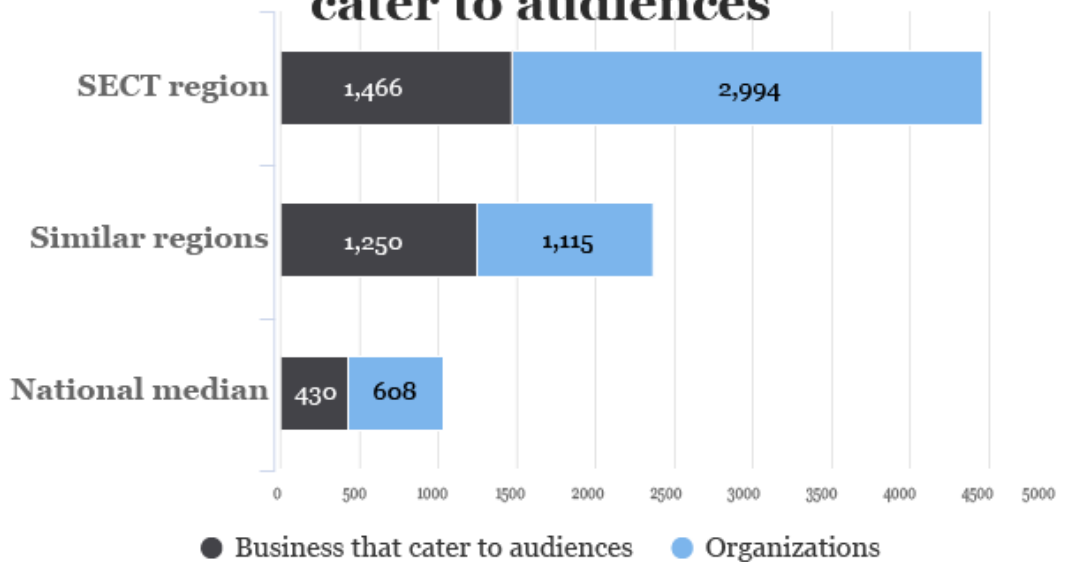
While some say Connecticut can't afford to invest in the arts, Somers commented, "We can't afford not to do it, that's the way I look at it."

Cohen argued that arts funding is a nonpartisan issue, noting that while President Donald Trump's budget proposed eliminating the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee recommended \$145 million for each, a 3 percent cut over last year.

Total spent by arts and cultural organizations and audiences



Jobs created by arts and cultural organizations and businesses that cater to audiences



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Randy Cohen on the impact of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations

