

The Impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust on the Statewide Cultural Policy Institutional Infrastructure

Patricia Dewey Lambert, Joshua Cummins, Milton Fernandez, Jennie Flinspach,
Brianna Hobbs, Victoria Lee, Brad McMullen, JK Rogers, Juliet Rutter, and Jes Sokolowski
School of Planning, Public Policy and Management
University of Oregon

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Corresponding Author:

Patricia Dewey Lambert, PhD
Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Arts Management
School of Planning, Public Policy and Management
University of Oregon
pdewey@uoregon.edu
541-346-2050

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Author Biographies

Patricia Dewey Lambert, Ph.D., is Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Arts Management in the School of Planning, Public Policy and Management, University of Oregon. The other authors were all graduate students completing their master's degree program in Arts Management in 2017-2018.

Abstract

The Oregon Cultural Trust (OCT) is a state-level public funding mechanism and public agency that was established in 2001 to strengthen and support all arts, culture, humanities, and heritage across the state. In 2017-2018, a faculty-led graduate student research team from the University of Oregon completed a study on the impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust on the statewide cultural policy institutional infrastructure, ultimately presenting the study to key public agency stakeholders. This article presents key findings from the study, focusing especially on analysis of the OCT's role within the institutional ecology of Oregon's creative economy. This article also provides insight into structuring an effective graduate-level team applied research project that contributes meaningfully as public scholarship.

The article begins with introducing what the Oregon Cultural Trust is and how it works as a cultural funding instrument. This is followed by a brief overview of the research design and methods, as well as a summary of main findings from the year-long investigation. The article then turns to a detailed analysis of Oregon's creative economy. The Oregon Cultural Trust is critically assessed within the conceptual framework that was used for this study, and analysis concludes with profiling the OCT philanthropic network. The Oregon Cultural Trust is presented throughout this article as a success story of cultural policy making and public administration.

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Introduction

The Oregon Cultural Trust (OCT) is a state-level public funding mechanism and public agency that was established in 2001 to strengthen and support all arts, culture, humanities, and heritage across the state. In 2017-2018, a research team from the University of Oregon completed a study on the impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust on the statewide cultural policy institutional infrastructure. This article presents key findings from the study, focusing especially on analysis of the OCT's role within the institutional ecology of Oregon's creative economy. This article also provides insight into structuring an effective graduate-level applied research project that contributes meaningfully as public scholarship.

The article begins with introducing what the Oregon Cultural Trust is and how it works as a cultural funding instrument. This is followed by a brief overview of the research design and methods, as well as a summary of main findings from the year-long investigation. The article then turns to a detailed analysis of Oregon's creative economy. The Oregon Cultural Trust is critically assessed within the conceptual framework that was used for this study, and analysis concludes with profiling the OCT philanthropic network. The Oregon Cultural Trust is presented throughout this article as a success story of cultural policy making and public administration.

What is the Oregon Cultural Trust?

Public Cultural Funding Policy in the United States

Public funding of arts and culture in the United States is managed at four levels of government: federal, regional, state, and local. At the federal level, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provide support to all 50 states and 6 jurisdictions, on condition that the state is able to match federal funds. All US states have a state arts agency and a state humanities council whose job it is to support arts and cultural programming in their state. Programs vary from state to state but often include grants to support educational efforts; operating support grants for organizations; individual artist, community, or organization grants; and grants to local agencies.

State arts and culture agencies are usually either their own independent state agency or an agency operating within a larger state department, such as cultural affairs, economic development, or education. Each state's cultural agencies may take a varied combination of approaches to generating revenue (National Assembly of State Art Agencies, 2016). There are three broad categories for classifying state cultural revenue strategies: federal funds (such as NEA funding), general funds (state-level appropriations), and dedicated strategies.

The category of *dedicated strategies* includes a wide array of taxation activities, fees, license plates, lottery and gaming revenue, bond measures, and all sources of private funding, earned income, and cultural trusts and endowments. A *cultural trust* or *endowment fund* is a funding mechanism through which a pool of money, called the principal, is raised and invested in long-term securities. The income generated from the interest on this investment is then given to the beneficiary to use as discretionary funds. As of FY 2018, 13 states have an active cultural trust or endowment fund. The cultural trust in the state of Oregon is widely regarded to be the most successful of these initiatives.

The Oregon Cultural Trust

At the center of the state of Oregon's cultural infrastructure is a tax credit instrument and a public agency called the Oregon Cultural Trust (OCT). In short, the OCT is a state organization dedicated to supporting the *culture*¹ of Oregon. It is a unique state-level mechanism and a state agency with two main roles. It is both a "joint venture between the state's agencies for arts, humanities, and heritage ... enabling each of these agencies ... to unite in accomplishing crosscutting, major cultural development work" and "a funding mechanism to preserve, strengthen and forge the future of cultural life for all Oregonians" (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 14).

In 1998, a Joint Interim Task Force on Cultural Development was established to assess the cultural needs of Oregon. This task force proposed founding the Oregon Cultural Trust as a potential solution to insufficient statewide support for cultural organizations. The three goals for the organization were articulated as follows:

The development of a new Oregon Cultural Trust and Fund will work to:

- Protect and stabilize Oregon's cultural resources, creating a solid foundation for the future.
- Expand public access to and use of Oregon's cultural resources and enhance the quality of those resources.

¹ This research team used the UNESCO (1982) definition of *culture*, viewed as "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs; that it is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations."

- Ensure that Oregon’s cultural resources are strong and dynamic contributors to Oregon’s communities and quality of life. (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 4).

In 2001, after many years of robust cultural advocacy efforts, House Bill 2923 was passed and the Oregon Cultural Trust was established as a staffed entity that is actively involved in statewide cultural activities (Morgan, Howard, Tibbles, & Young, 2006). Housed within the Oregon Business Development Department, the OCT operates alongside one of their state partners, the Oregon Arts Commission.

The OCT was tasked with creating a new governance structure to link the state’s many cultural entities. In doing so, the agencies and organizations would still maintain their autonomy, but by collaborating with one another, they would facilitate new partnerships to address the cultural development needs of the state. The newly partnered agencies would be able to strengthen cultural initiatives throughout the state of Oregon and bring higher visibility and a greater sense of urgency to the work already underway. Their coordination would allow for the facilitation of a broad, statewide coalition of people and organizations in culture; it would (and does) exponentially increase cultural agencies’ capacity to leverage both public and private funds for programs and initiatives advancing culture in Oregon (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 23).

How the Trust Fund Works

The OCT serves as the fiduciary agent of the Trust’s investment account, the “Trust for Cultural Development Account,” and is responsible for its stewardship in partnership with the State Treasury. The Trust Fund was established with a 10-year goal of \$218 million principal balance as a public initiative². The two primary sources of revenue for the Trust are were intended to be contributions from individuals and corporations and the conversion and re-allocation of existing state funds to the Trust. Additionally, the Trust was to receive funds from a special Cultural Trust license plate available to Oregonians as well as keeping the existing public funding models in place through the Oregon Lottery and the Oregon General Fund (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 23).

Private contributions to the Oregon Cultural Trust, incentivized by the *tax credit*³, work as follows:

1. An individual or corporation donates to a qualifying Oregon cultural nonprofit(s).
2. After donating to the cultural nonprofit(s), donors provide the Oregon Cultural Trust with matching donations.
3. If a donor itemizes their taxes, they receive a tax credit that matches the amount donated to the Oregon Cultural Trust. This tax credit has a matching limit of \$500 for an individual tax filer, \$1,000 for joint tax filers, and \$2,500 for corporate tax filers.

² Detailed financial analysis of the Oregon Cultural Trust from 2001 to 2018 goes beyond the scope of this article but is available in the full research report (see footnote 6).

³ A tax credit is defined as “... an amount of money that taxpayers are permitted to subtract from taxes owed to their government” (Investopedia.com, 2018)

Contributions to the Oregon Cultural Trust are also considered charitable donations for those filing federal income taxes. The schematic prepared by the OCT, provided in Figure 1 on the next page, assists in visualizing this unique state-level public cultural funding mechanism.

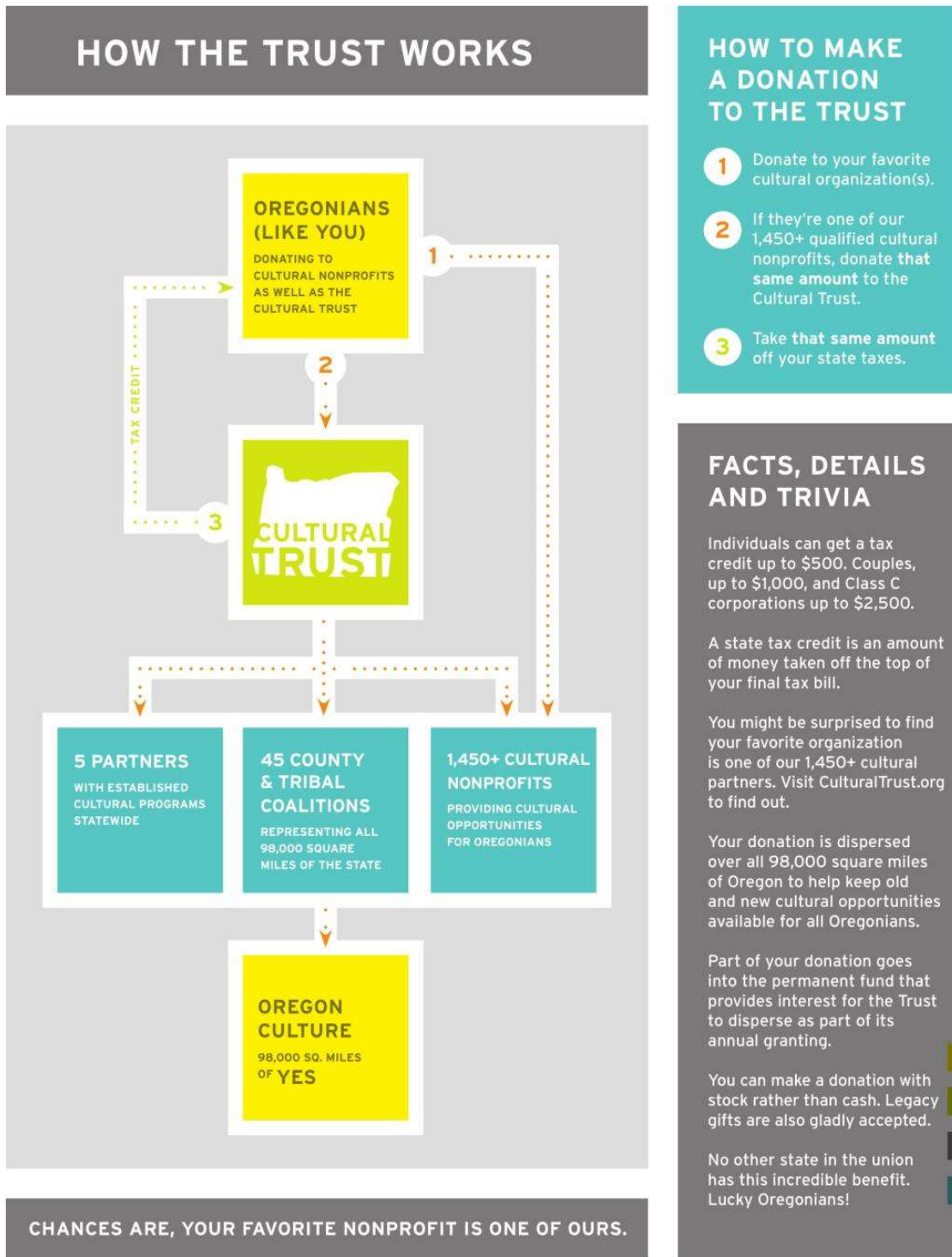


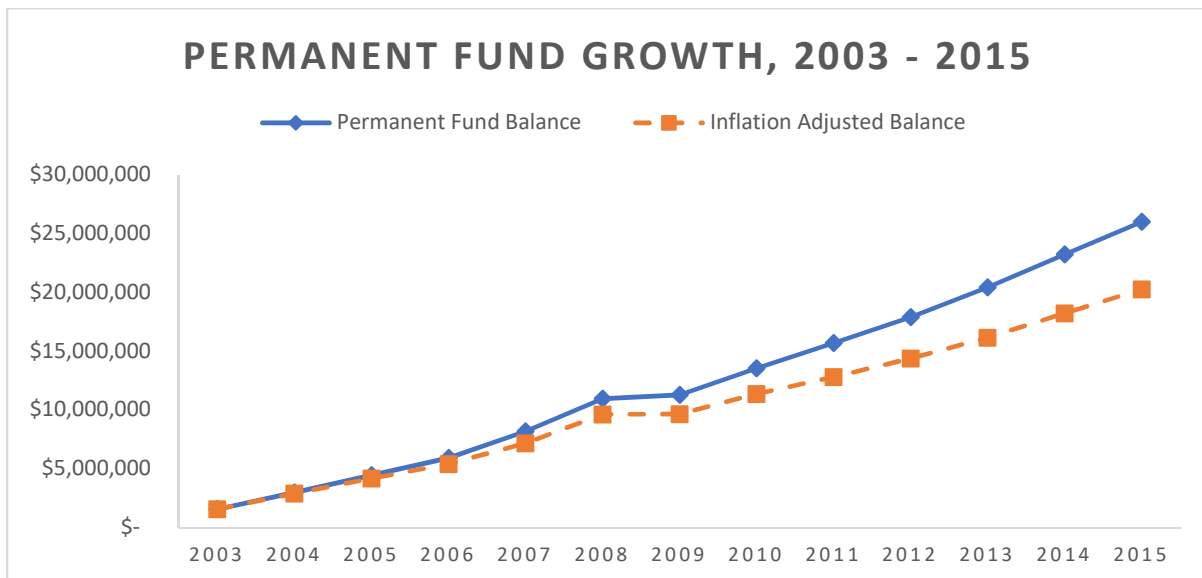
Figure 1: How the Oregon Cultural Trust Works⁴

As of 2015 (the most recent fiscal year for which detailed financial data were available to the research team), the Trust balance stood at \$26 million. The initial goal of \$218 million did not account for certain predictable and unforeseen variables in the state economy and legislative decisions. It is, however, noteworthy that the Trust grew their permanent fund by nearly 1,210% from 2003 to 2015 (see Table 1 and Figure 2), representing an average annual growth rate of 25.58%. This growth rate is even more impressive considering the various economic downturns experienced during that time frame.

Year	Fund Balance (adjusted for inflation)	Yearly % Change	Total % Change
2003	\$1,545,862	0.00%	0.00%
2004	2,880,584	86.34%	86.34%
2005	4,169,154	44.73%	169.70%
2006	5,390,767	29.30%	248.72%
2007	7,160,104	32.82%	363.18%
2008	9,602,875	34.12%	521.20%
2009	9,629,357	0.28%	522.91%
2010	11,369,929	18.08%	635.51%
2011	12,810,416	12.67%	728.69%
2012	14,367,126	12.15%	829.39%
2013	16,158,215	12.47%	945.26%
2014*	18,221,930	12.77%	1,078.76%
2015	20,259,170	11.18%	1,210.54%

* Estimated. Actual numbers not publicly available.

Table 1: Annual OCT Permanent Fund Percent Change, 2003-2015, adjusted for inflation



⁴ This figure is publicly available on page 15 of the document uploaded to <https://culturaltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-public-plan-flip-book-web.pdf>

Figure 2: *Oregon Cultural Trust Permanent Fund Growth, 2003-2015*

Similarly, annual contributions from individuals and corporations have grown consistently from 2003 to 2015 (see Table 2), representing an average annual growth of 7.23% and total contribution growth of 104.68%, when adjusted for inflation.

Year	Current Contributions	Yearly Change (inflation adjusted)	Cumulative Growth (inflation adjusted)
2003	\$1,735,918	0.00%	0.00%
2004	1,745,425	-2.62%	-2.62%
2005	2,989,578	65.62%	61.28%
2006	2,467,317	-19.51%	29.81%
2007	2,851,559	11.04%	44.14%
2008	3,576,422	25.31%	80.62%
2009	3,522,276	-4.12%	73.17%
2010	3,734,110	4.45%	80.88%
2011	3,899,332	1.42%	83.45%
2012	3,794,658	-4.35%	75.47%
2013	3,948,600	2.52%	79.88%
2014*	3,880,863	-2.45%	75.47%
2015	4,560,000	16.65%	104.68%

* Actual numbers not publicly available. Estimated using a 3-year moving average 2011-2013.

Table 2: *Annual Current Contributions to the OCT, 2003-2015, with Inflation-Adjusted Yearly Change and Cumulative Growth*

Today, the Oregon Cultural Trust acts as a cultural steward by providing Cultural Development Grants to Oregon’s many cultural organizations, disseminating funds to state-level partners, county-level Coalitions and tribal communities, and investing in the State Treasury-housed cultural fund. The OCT has five partner organizations: the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Humanities, the Oregon Historical Society, the Oregon Heritage Commission, and the Oregon Historical Preservation Office. The OCT and its partners also support an array of additional state-level cultural organizations (such as Oregon Public Broadcasting, Oregon Tourism Commission, Oregon Folklife Network, and many others) that comprise the entire state ecology of arts, humanities, and heritage initiatives⁵.

Before the framework of the Trust, the partner agencies had little chance or reason to collaborate with each other on projects that impacted more than one cultural sector. The formation of the Oregon Cultural Trust created convenient channels of communication between the partners, binding them together as the first ring of the cultural network that surrounds the Trust. The benefits of partnership with the Oregon Cultural Trust were designed to be both financial and programmatic. One third of the funds disbursed by the Oregon Cultural Trust annually is given to

⁵ In developing this research project, the team completed a detailed mapping of arts, culture, humanities, and heritage entities across the state, similar to the study completed for the state of Washington in 2003 (see https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/mapping_state.pdf). A concise list of all Cultural Policy Entities in the State of Oregon is provided in Appendix B of the full research report.

the partners to use to support their operations, programming, and grant making. Additionally, the OCT provides opportunities for the partners to interact and share what they are doing, providing chances for programming and activities that impact both organizations and the state's cultural sector as a whole.

An essential part of the Trust's statewide influence is disbursement of funds through grant making. To date, donations have generated more than \$23 million in grants (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2017). These awards are disbursed through three grant programs: Cultural Development Grants, the County and Tribal Cultural Coalition Grants, and Statewide Partner Grants. These grant programs are directly funded by individual contributions associated with the OCT tax credit initiative. Of the average \$4.9 million raised annually by the Trust, 40% is used as a pay-in toward growing the permanent fund and the remaining 60% (plus investment income from the permanent fund) is distributed through the three grant programs. For example, in FY17-18, the OCT was able to award \$735,887 to its statewide partners, \$735,887 to the 45 County and Tribal Coalitions (for regranting in their own communities), and \$1,471,774 in competitive grants to 86 cultural organizations across the state (Oregon Cultural Trust, 2017).

Overview of the Research Design and Findings

In academic year 2017-2018, a faculty-led team of graduate students in the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program partnered with senior staff of the Oregon Cultural Trust and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies on a research project investigating the impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust (OCT) on the statewide cultural policy institutional infrastructure. The research team investigated two main research questions supported by multiple sub-research questions. The main research questions were as follows: (1) What is the role of the Oregon Cultural Trust within the statewide cultural ecology? and (2) How does the Oregon Cultural Trust compare with other state-level cultural funding mechanisms that exist across the United States? The qualitative study included secondary analysis of statistical data, and research methods encompassed literature review, document analysis, key informant interviews, and surveys.

The research project team's analysis of data collected in the field led to a final report⁶ comprised of two sections. First, the report introduces the cultural policy infrastructure within the state of Oregon and the twenty-year evolution of the Oregon Cultural Trust. Second, the report presents the team's analysis of the impact of the OCT on the statewide cultural policy institutional infrastructure. The development of *impact* focuses on three areas: (1) impact on the internal infrastructure-development activities taking place within the OCT; (2) impact on select issues pertaining to cultural development across the state; and (3) economic impact.

Research findings suggest that the Oregon Cultural Trust provides much more to the state's cultural sector than public *funding*. As a central node in the cultural policy institutional ecology,

⁶ The 150-page final report is publicly available at <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/23299>

the OCT also provides *connectivity* within and *stabilization* of the creative sector. The research team investigated these three fundamental pillars (funding, connectivity, and stabilization) of the state's arts and culture funding instrument through a lens of creative sector analysis drawn from published scholarship. The focus of the 2017-2018 research project was on analysis of the *institutional structure* of the Oregon Cultural Trust as well as on the *cultural impact* and *economic impact* of the Trust's grant programs, structure, and activities. The study led to five main findings:

- The Oregon Cultural Trust is an endowment fund supported by a unique tax credit that incentivizes cultural investment and earmarks revenue for arts, humanities, and heritage;
- A variety of statewide networks impact or are impacted by the OCT, including philanthropic networks, state agency partnerships, and county/tribal "Cultural Coalitions";
- Due to Oregon's low population variety, issues of cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion have been primarily limited to race/ethnicity and geography;
- The existence of the OCT and the tax credit shows that Oregonians are deeply invested in cultural development and that the state is high in *cultural vitality*⁷;
- The OCT is a key driver in Oregon's cultural economy, helping to stabilize and connect the creative sector.

Numerous recommendations for additional research and program evaluation as well as improved management of the Oregon Cultural Trust also emerged from the research. This article, however, focuses on the research team's analysis of the public role of the Oregon Cultural Trust as a connector and stabilizer within the state's ecology of cultural sector institutions.

Analysis: The Institutional Ecology of Oregon's Creative/Cultural Economy

Oregon's Creative Economy

The sector of the global economy surrounding the creative industries is known as the *creative economy*, which is the focus of *cultural economics*⁸. The term *creative industries* groups together visual and performing arts with the already classified *cultural industries* (industrial scale production of creative content including, but not limited to, architecture, design, films, and publishing). The concept of *creative industries* (also referred to as *cultural industries*) and the

⁷ *Creative Vitality* is defined as "The evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities" (Jackson, Kabwasa-Green, & Herranz, 2006, p. 13).

⁸ *Cultural Economics* is the area of study concerned with the economic and policy aspects of the creative and cultural industries (art, heritage, and cultural fields). Cultural economists engage in a wide range of theoretical frameworks and methodologies to assess the many aspects of the creative sectors, including producers, consumers, and government agents (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2010, p. 5).

subsets of output they encompass that is generally accepted by many national governments has similarly been set by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Several other models, classifications, and variations do exist in the literature and some ambiguity persists around core and peripheral industries and activities (Towse, 2011, p. 125). The creative industries comprise four main groupings: heritage, arts, media, and functional creations, as listed in Table 3 below (UNCTAD, 2010, p. 8).

Industry Groups	Industry Subgroups	Industry Examples
Heritage	Traditional cultural expressions	Arts crafts Festivals Celebrations
	Cultural sites	Archaeological sites Museums Libraries Exhibitions
Arts	Visual arts	Painting Sculpture Photography Antiques
	Performing arts	Live music Theater Dance Opera Circus
Media	Publishing and printed media	Books Press Other publications
	Audiovisuals	Film Television Radio Other broadcasting
Functional Creations	Design	Interior Graphic Fashion Jewelry
	New media	Architecture Advertising

Table 3: *Creative Industry Groups*

Several figures illustrate the scope and nature of Oregon’s cultural economy in broad brush strokes. Throughout Oregon, arts and cultural production (ACP) employment is responsible for approximately 3.62% of total employment in the state with 64,712 jobs in total. This is notably close to the national average of 3.6%. At \$1,157/week, average weekly wages from those portions of arts and cultural industries directly responsible for cultural production are noticeably higher (approximately 147.25%) than the average weekly wage in Oregon, and are slightly higher than that of the US (108.43%). Oregon’s share of arts and culture production is 9.3% greater than the national average (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2016). Overall arts and culture

spending in Oregon is split nearly equally between organization and audience spending (Americans for the Arts, 2015).

In Oregon, the largest shares of ACP employment are comprised of government, retail, motion pictures, and broadcasting industries. Together, these account for 65.4% of all employment responsible for the production of cultural goods and services. These same industries also capture the largest share of compensation, totaling 67.2% of all compensatory dollars. These ACP portions of industries are similar to the state's largest overall related industries, which include retail, government, wholesale and transportation, publishing, and education services.

In short, the creative economy is an essential part of the state's economy as a whole. The *Creative Vitality Index* for Oregon is 1.04 (where 1.00 represents the national average). This measure is widely used as an indicator of the economic health of a region's creative economy⁹.

How the Oregon Cultural Trust is Embedded in the Creative Economy

This research team sought to identify how the Oregon Cultural Trust is embedded within Oregon's creative sector at both the state and local level. Findings suggest that the OCT, operating as a central node within this sector, influences the growth and vitality of the creative economy by fundamentally supporting multiple levels of infrastructure. This study investigated the cultural and economic impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust as framed by the public infrastructure, the downstream infrastructure, and the cultural economy. The conceptual framework for the year-long research project is provided in Figure 3.

The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 3 was developed from a body of existing research¹⁰ that defines and maps the symbiotic nature of the creative sector. The central lines of inquiry associated with researching the OCT led to research and analysis in three domains: the *public infrastructure*, the *downstream infrastructure*, and the *cultural economy*. The *creative industries* are embedded within the cultural economy domain, which is closely linked with the downstream infrastructure.

In Oregon, the *public infrastructure* associated with the OCT includes public funding, policy and legislation, legal restrictions, advocacy, professional and trade associations, and partners and collaborators. The Cultural Trust tax credit is also placed here because there is some legislation involved, even if the funds are technically considered private. Additionally, there is a link between the public infrastructure and the greater economic area of philanthropy, as it relates to private funding and contributions to both the OCT and to Oregon cultural nonprofits.

⁹ The *Creative Vitality Index* "measures a carefully selected set of economic inputs related to the arts and creativity in a given geographic area. The Index includes three weighted indicators that capture the for-profit and nonprofit arts activity with measurements on occupational employment in the arts and community participation from creative industries and nonprofit arts organizations" (see <https://cvsuite.org> for further details).

¹⁰ The schematic of the creative sector developed by Wyszomirski (2008) was particularly informative in conceptualizing the complex constellation of support that creates an infrastructure for the cultural industries.

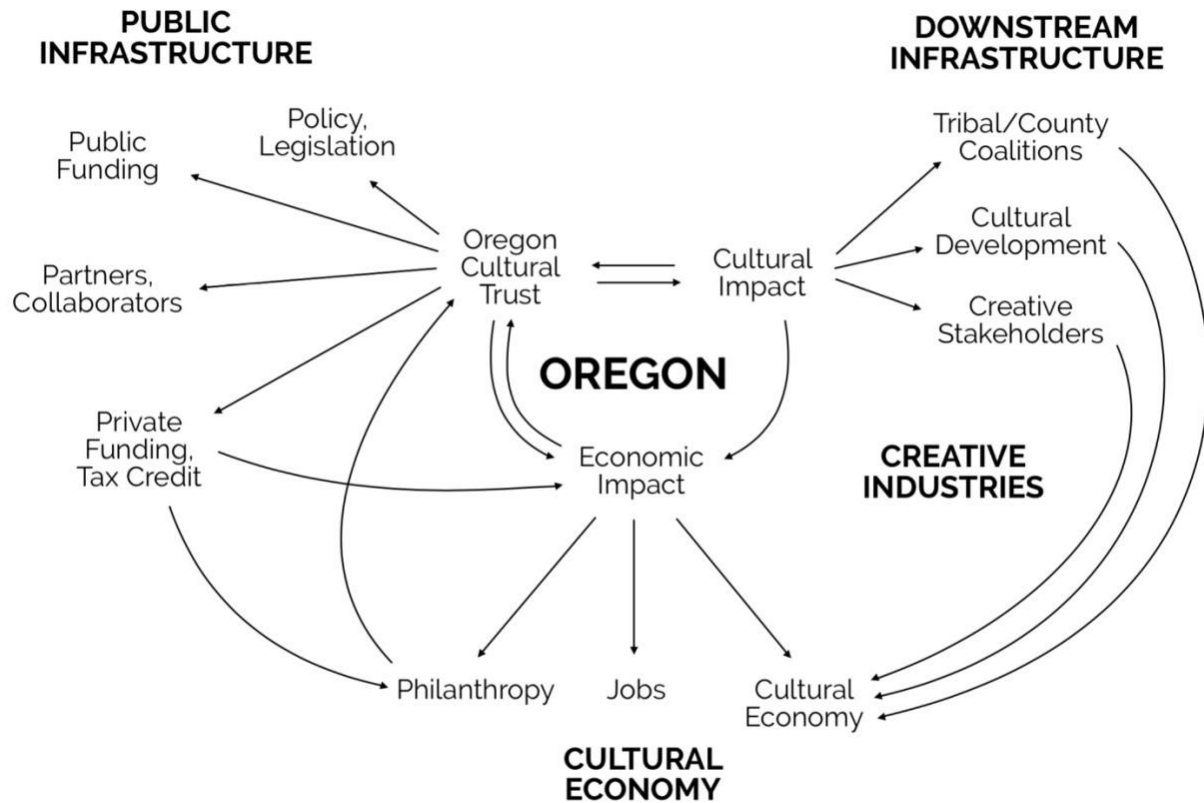


Figure 3: *Conceptual Framework*

The *downstream infrastructure* is what connects the creative industries and cultural sector back to the OCT. In other words, this is the creative and cultural output; these are the actors and consumers of the artistic products. In addition, this infrastructure contains partners and collaborators involved in curating and facilitating the cultural product: the County and Tribal Cultural Coalitions. To some degree, the Coalitions are linked to public infrastructure as well, but because they play such a large role in distributing funds and supporting culture in local communities and regions, they are placed in the downstream infrastructure. Lastly, cultural development (consumers, DEI initiatives, artistic development, support, etc.) is included in this category, along with the creative stakeholders of the industry.

The *cultural economy* domain contains the economic output of Oregon and Trust as it pertains to the broadly defined cultural sector. Areas of analysis include the creative industries, jobs (FTE), philanthropy, and contributions to GDP. The creative industries are an essential part of infrastructure along with the cultural economy and creative sector employment. It is important to note that this area also includes non-artistic and peripheral industries engaged in the cultural sector (such as construction or information technology). It is this segment of the conceptual framework that provides the quantitative value from which to assess the vitality of arts and culture in Oregon. In other words, it provides a way to quantify the intrinsic value associated with the downstream infrastructure.

The Oregon Cultural Trust Social Network

The conceptual framework provided in Figure 3 guided the analysis of the Oregon Cultural Trust's impact on the cultural economy. The research team found that the Oregon Cultural Trust could best be understood as a network of organizations, policy mechanisms, and incoming and outgoing funding streams that supports the greater web of arts, heritage, humanities, preservation, and other cultural activities that occur throughout the state. Investments in these core cultural/artistic industries also support and strengthen the broader array of creative industries that comprise the state's creative economy.

As the central node of arts and culture within the state, the OCT is able to promote a holistic view of culture that explicitly encompasses all arts, culture, humanities, and heritage within the state. Not only does the Trust support various cultural activities around the state, it also strives to develop a shared identity throughout the state by operating as both an arts and culture connector and facilitator via its philanthropic network, partner organizations, Cultural Coalitions, and other supported organizations throughout the state. Organizational collaborations developed through the Trust and its grant programs serve as a primary arts and culture output and a strong focal part for regional impact.

Although it remains unclear whether the Trust has the social impact that was originally intended by its charter, these collaborations contribute to the cultural and philanthropic network the OCT has crafted throughout Oregon and are increasing the connections among those who are engaged in this network. This network includes the Cultural and Tribal Coalitions as well as the partnering organizations, and expands beyond the initial infrastructure to other identified areas throughout the state that can potentially benefit from a deeper connection with the Trust's network. Through engaging instruments of *social network analysis*¹¹ to visualize these relationships (see Figure 4), the research team found that there is a rich cultural ecology spanning across Oregon, in addition to a significant amount of public support for the arts and culture. However, the qualitative detail and success of these relationships merit much further study.

Analysis of the Oregon Cultural Trust as a philanthropic network offers insight into the ways in which the OCT goes beyond serving the state as a cultural funding mechanism to also provide connectivity and stabilization across the cultural sector. A *philanthropic network* is a complex system of philanthropic and social ties that link people to one another. Those within a philanthropic network are not just the donors and prospects, but the leaders of the sector, employees within the sector, for-profit organizations, foundations, government agencies that influence the sector, stakeholders, community leaders, volunteers, and participants who use the services. Social network analysis allows researchers and professionals to highlight and understand connections between organizations or people while also understanding collaborations within the community as a whole (Oehler, Sheppard, Benjamin, & Dworkin, 2007, p. 2).

In analysis of the OCT, relational partnership building is a key aspect of how the OCT has enabled collaborations among the partners. It is as important as the financial support provided by the partnership grants. Although much work remains to be done in building collaborative

¹¹ *Social network analysis* "studies actors and the ties, interactions, and relationships connected to them using graph theory" (Vicsek, Kiraly, & Konya, 2016, p. 86).

partnerships across the cultural sector, the funding provided by the partnerships grants and the efforts taken by the partners across the state – thanks to OCT funding – have all had a positive impact on Oregon’s cultural ecology.

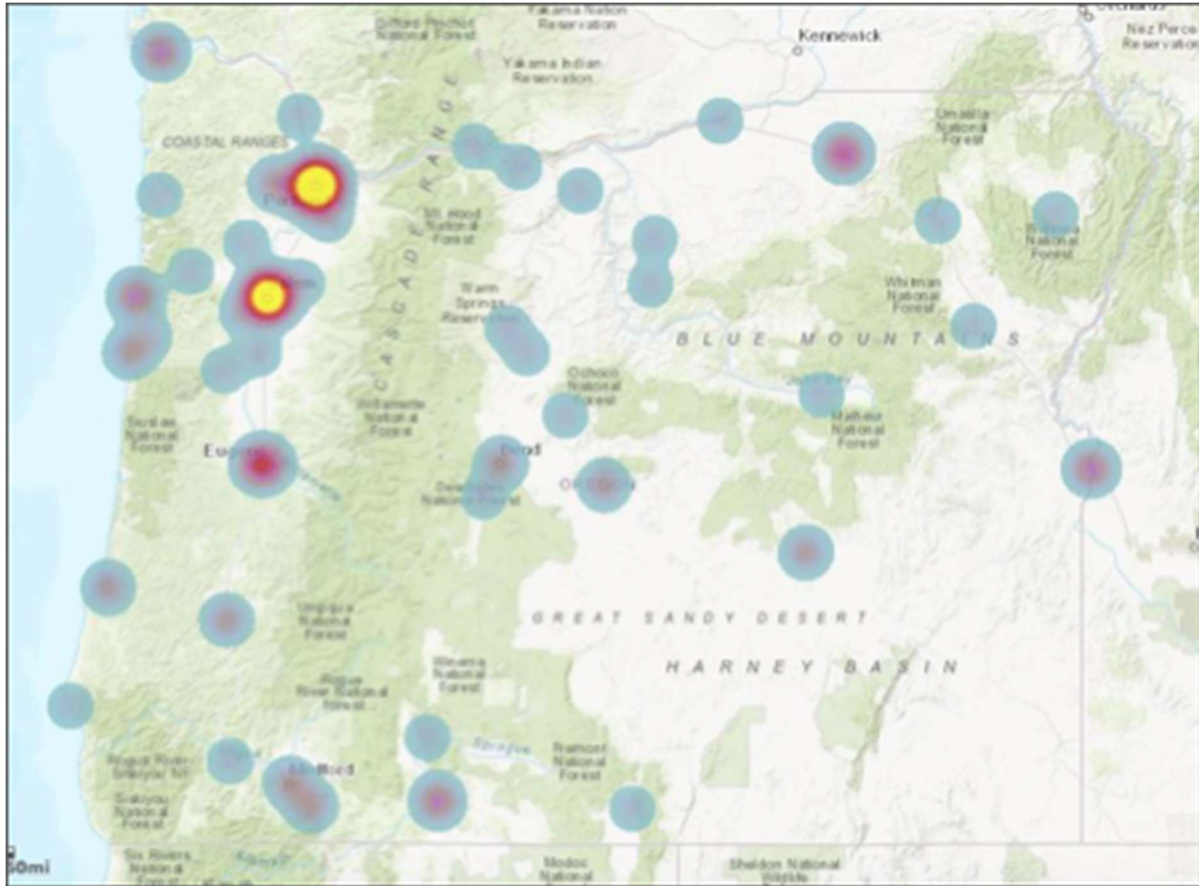


Figure 4: *Geographic Locations (Heat Map) of the Oregon Cultural Trust’s Social Network*

Conclusion

This article has presented key findings from a year-long research project titled *The Impact of the Oregon Cultural Trust on the Statewide Cultural Policy Institutional Infrastructure*. After introducing the Oregon Cultural Trust funding mechanism and state agency, the article offered a detailed analysis of the role of the OCT within the statewide institutional ecology that exists to develop the state’s creative economy. Although the research team articulated numerous recommendations and avenues for future research within the full research report, the overarching finding from this study is that the Oregon Cultural Trust is a success story of cultural policy-making and public administration.

The Oregon Cultural Trust was purposefully designed to provide a “true venture between the state’s agencies for the arts, humanities, history, heritage, and historic preservation” (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 14). The idea of partnership and the collaborations that result from strong partnerships is the crux of the Oregon Cultural Trust’s potential as an organization. Not only does it distribute funds to all sectors of culture, diminishing the distinctions between them and creating a more holistic view of culture for Oregonians, but it also strengthens work in the spaces between the sectors. The Trust exists to “facilitate partnership to address cultural development initiatives in a cohesive, coordinated fashion not previously possible through independent efforts” (Joint Interim Task Force, 2001, p. 4). The greater cohesion among the partners was intended to provide a more unified cultural policy than can be found anywhere else across the United States at the federal, regional, or state level.

The OCT is an innovative and unique state-level public funding model in the cultural sector. Currently, Oregon is the only state that uses a holistic approach to define culture and invest in cultural development. Furthermore, the OCT funding mechanism and progressive approach to disseminating funds is an effective model for enhancing cultural infrastructure, collaborations, partnerships, and the sharing of information throughout the state. In particular, as the central node, the Trust is a major connector in the cultural philanthropic network of Oregon. The tax credit encourages charitable giving to local cultural organizations and the Trust, which, in turn, strengthens the efficacy of the Trust and its networks. The activity occurring within the philanthropic network and its ability to not only develop resources but to also further connect this statewide cultural network are unique to Oregon.

The research team recommends that public policy-makers and administrators in other states consider the Oregon Cultural Trust to be an exemplary model for strengthening the creative economy throughout the nation.

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Oregon Historical Society

Eliza Canty-Jones

Oregon Heritage

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