



I'm Sarah Van Anden, Executive Director of The Museum Association of New York, representing more than 750 museums across our state — from small, volunteer-run historical societies to world-renowned art, science, and cultural institutions. New York is home to the greatest concentration and diversity of cultural organizations in the country. This uniquely globally-admired ecosystem reflects the curiosity, creativity, and excellence that define who we are.

When people picture museums, they often picture New York City. But 88% of our members are outside the five boroughs. The recent study of the field identified as many as 2,500 self-identified nonprofit museums across the state

From the Great Lakes to Long Island Sound, from remote "forever wild" communities to the urban heart of a megacity, there are museums in all 62 counties with annual budgets ranging from <\$10,000 to >\$300 million, and staff sizes ranging from 1 to over 2,000.

In these communities, museums are trusted, place-based civic institutions and centers of learning.

- They present globally admired exhibitions.
- They publish original research.
- They preserve irreplaceable histories and collections.
- They foster creative public engagement and dialogue.
- They host countless nonprofit partners, public programs, and opportunities for cultural enrichment.

And every day, they serve their communities in very practical ways.

- Thirty-six percent provide tutoring or after-school education.
- Nineteen percent provide workforce development or job training.
- Seventeen percent offer mental health and wellness resources.
- Fourteen percent support digital access and literacy.
- Thirteen percent facilitate civic engagement activities.

These aren't extras. They are essential services.

According to research by Independent Sector, museums consistently rank among the most trusted public institutions for visitors across the political spectrum, socioeconomic statuses, and educational levels. That trust shows up in classrooms, senior centers, neighborhood partnerships, and rural main streets alike.

- They are places where young people build critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Where neighbors practice empathy and dialogue.
- Where communities see their histories and identities reflected — and feel a deeper sense of belonging.

Research shows that children in low-wealth communities with strong cultural assets perform 91% better in school. Day after day, across New York, museums help students thrive, connect neighbors, and strengthen the social fabric that holds communities together.

At the same time, many institutions are facing sudden funding losses. Earlier this year, the National Endowment for the Humanities terminated a nearly \$500,000 grant supporting MANY's statewide civic engagement and a 12-site exhibition tour about voting and the history of democracy. Our loss is just one example of what museums across the state are experiencing.

*Though some funds have been retroactively restored, combined IMLS, NEH, and NEA terminations withdrew \$78 million from New York State. (\$46 million outside of NYC, \$32 million in NYC).*

The need in our communities has not diminished — only the resources have.

That is why we support the call \$210 million for the New York State Council on the Arts, including \$100 million for localities, \$100 million for capital projects, and \$10 million for the much-needed reserve fund program, which we are so grateful NYSCA launched. The response was overwhelmingly positive; expanding the program is essential.

We are also grateful to Representative DiDi Barrett and peers who championed the study of *all* New York State's Museums, and look forward to working with Empire State Development and other partners to share that information broadly for the benefit of institutions in every community in the state. Because strong cultural infrastructure helps make strong communities.

25We are grateful for your attention to the needs of New Yorkers across the state and your passionate articulation of why the arts matter.

Thank you.

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Voices&Votes Sites (the NEH project that was cancelled)

- Preservation Long Island
- Sackets Harbor National Battlefield State Historic Site
- National Women's Hall of Fame
- Robert H. Jackson Center
- Munson
- Alice Austen House
- The Long Island Museum
- Skä•noñh Center
- Genesee Country Village and Museum
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission
- Chemung County Historical Society
- Underground Railroad Education Center

Sources:

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis  
Center for Urban Future: Arts Catalyzing Economic Vitality Upstate  
UPenn 2025 Social Impact of the Arts Project report  
Culture & Arts Policy Institute  
*2025 survey by the American Alliance of Museums*