



**2020-2021 Research Package**  
**Topic 2: THBT public money should**  
**not be used to finance art.**



**Background:**

Governments are often criticized for decisions surrounding the funding of the arts using taxpayer money, whether it is paying for a multi-million dollar statue, or cutting funding to youth art programs. With the variety of projects that require government funding, should public money be used to finance art?

**Questions to think about:**

The following questions are meant to help you approach the topic and to guide your research. Keep in mind how your answers might differ on proposition vs opposition.

**What is art?**

While we often think of publicly funded art as public exhibits such as statues, “art” could be defined much more broadly and might include arts programs, theatre, individual artists, or cultural events. Take a look at how government funding for the arts differs around the world and why. How you choose to define art will influence the direction and scope of the debate.

**What makes something valuable?**

A topic about public money should immediately bring to mind the economic advantages and disadvantages of funding the arts. However, keep in mind that there are a number of other ways to define value, such as the impact of the arts on children or the representation of diverse cultures and communities.

**What is public funding?**

While there are a number of potential definitions possible, public funds generally involve the use of taxpayer dollars for some “common good,” such as healthcare or infrastructure. Here, an understanding of what public funding is and what it is used for should inform your argument to either support or oppose its use for art. Does art provide the advantages necessary to justify the use of government funds?

**Is there a better use for the money?**

Your answers to the above questions all come down to whether funding the arts is “worth it.” Opposition may argue that art has value in the form of cultural celebration, childhood development, or simply pleasure, and therefore merits funding. Proposition may argue that while art is “fun,” there are a number of more urgent things such as welfare, healthcare, or environmental initiatives which provide more concrete benefits.

**What is the role of the government?**

In addition to the question of whether funding art is “worth it,” each side is also responsible for explaining why it is or is not the responsibility of the government to fund art. This is closely tied to the more general question of what the role of the

government is, how “hands on” they should be in the regulation of the economy, and whether they should interfere in the “free market.”

**Links:**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidmarotta/2012/09/17/public-funding-for-the-arts/#665a99aa65f8>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-12759987>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/mayor-calls-470k-blue-ring-billed-as-public-art-awful-1.1930104>

<https://thephilanthropist.ca/2019/05/a-balancing-act-supporting-the-arts-in-canada/>