

Economic and Community Impacts of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)

The Economic and
Community Impacts
of the
Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston



Client

Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)

Facts

Period

2015

Project Country

United States**For the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in partnership with Mt. Auburn Associates, 2002 and 2015**

2015

EDR Group (now EBP) developed a profile of the economic contribution of the MFA for both Boston and the state of Massachusetts. The firm developed the economic analysis and reported findings in a technical report to the MFA, and calibrated a two-region IMPLAN model for Suffolk County (Boston) and the rest of Massachusetts to trace the overlapping economic role of the Museum in each of the two regions. This included separate assessment of the Museum art galleries, its store, restaurant, special events, and the Museum School (affiliated with Tufts University and recently ranked as one of the ten most Influential MFA programs in the world).

In general, our work consisted of a review of the operations of the MFA and its components. In its approach to this analysis, EDR Group “mapped” each MFA vendor contract in FY 2014 and each construction vendor contract over the preceding ten years to industry and locations in Boston and the rest of Massachusetts. In addition to the Museum, its components and the impacts of the MFA’s 10-year capital investment program, the economic analysis included spending in Boston and Massachusetts outside of the MFA that can be attributed to the MFA as a primary visitor attraction, spending by SMFA students, spending by family and friends who attend SMFA’s graduation, and an assessment of public revenues that accrue to the City of Boston and Commonwealth of Massachusetts due to the MFA.

2002

This study was released in conjunction with announced plans for a major expansion of the museum and led to wide media attention. Traditionally, many economic impact studies have been seen as merely exercises in generating big numbers. In contrast, the MFA study showed how the nature of the local community and statewide economies have been affected by the museum. The study was noted for its comprehensive nature, combining stories and numbers and methodically breaking down impacts of the museum operations, its associated retail stores, and school activities, as well as its special shows and community outreach. It showed how the museum and its special exhibits also attract a large number of additional visitors and tourists to the region, and is directly responsible for a range of lodging, restaurant, and retail activities, in addition to spending on the museum itself and its own retail and restaurant services.

Altogether, the study showed that the museum is responsible for \$369 million of additional spending by visitors to the region. The study also compared the scale of the museum activities and visitor attraction with that of local professional sports teams and other major institutions and employers. Most importantly, the study showed how capital investment in the expansion of the museum would lead to future payoffs in terms of jobs and income for residents of the region.

The team of EDR Group and Mt. Auburn Associates developed a unique approach for assessing the broad impacts of arts and visitor attractions, and have conducted similar studies for arts facilities in New York and other states. For the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in partnership with Mt. Auburn Associates, 2002 and 2015

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Contact Persons