



# Upstage Your Newtown Neighbors



*Social Media  
Fundraising Campaign  
for Edmond Town Hall*

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## Background

Edmond Town Hall is a historic entertainment venue in Newtown, CT. Built in 1931, it houses a 500-seat theatre and regularly hosts concerts, theatrical performances, comedy nights, and engaging speakers. Over the years, it has also become known as an affordable cinema. In addition, it has five rooms to rent for private events, helping to make it a rare profitable art organization. It's a beloved local destination that improves the quality of living in a somewhat rural town. But, it still needs additional funding to support cultural programming. With a creative and strategic campaign plan, social media can help.

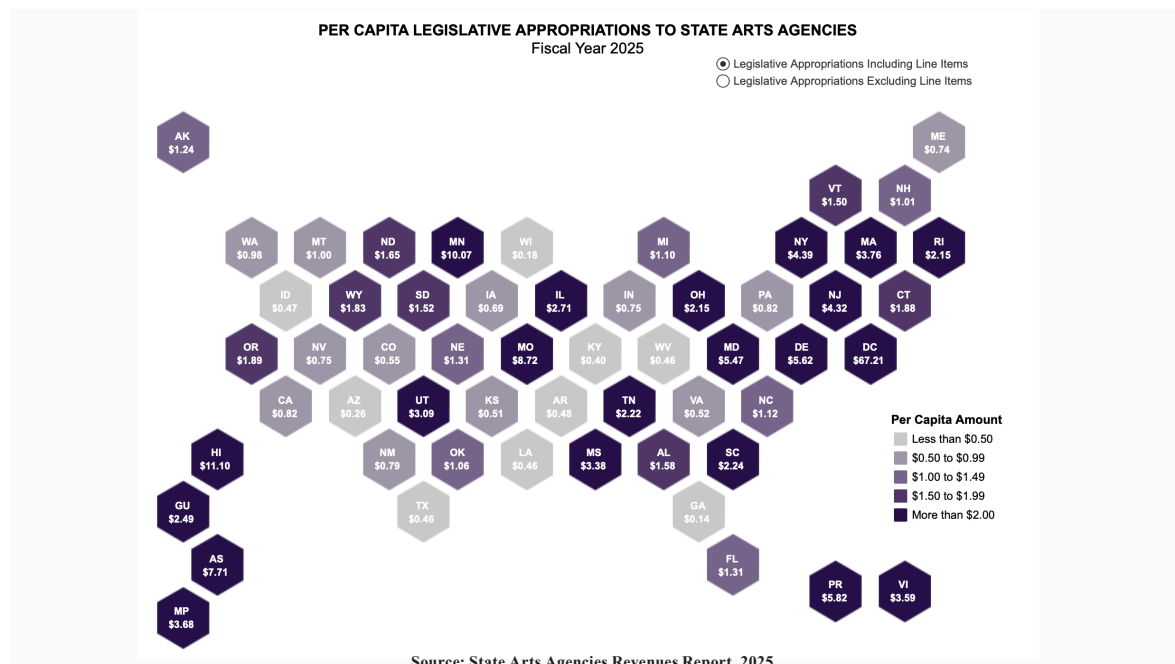


## State of the Arts

Perhaps no economic sector in American history had been brought to its heels like the creative industry during the pandemic. Based on historical accounts, it seems even the underground liquor scene was alive and well during Prohibition. Arts and live entertainment, on the other hand, came to a complete standstill. With mandated restrictions on public gatherings and travel, 99% of producing and presenting organizations canceled events for an entire performing season. An estimated 557 million admissions tickets went down the drain (Americans for the Arts, 2022). According to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics, the number of “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” jobs dropped from 2.5 million to 1.2 million between February and April 2020.

Edmond Town Hall stopped all programming, *and* its staff fell victim to the industry’s collapse. They fired their Executive Director, and angry letters came pouring into the local newspaper. In the November 12th, 2020 edition of *The Newtown Bee*, former resident, Cynthia Curtis, wrote, “He was given two weeks’ notice that he would no longer be needed. What does this mean exactly? How do you eliminate a position that will eventually be necessary to manage Edmond Town Hall and all its activities once the pandemic is over?” Few of us had Cynthia’s foresight, but many residents certainly shared a similar opinion. Could social media have been used sooner to gain support for the arts?

In Connecticut, the arts are funded through the Tourism Fund. Connecticut levies a 15% occupancy tax on hotel stays up to 30 days in length. 10% of the total tax revenue collected by the Department of Revenue Services is deposited into the Tourism Fund after every quarter which, in turn, invests in arts, culture, and tourism through a variety of line items in the budget appropriated by legislators. It currently funds the Connecticut Office of the Arts, and is matched by roughly \$1 million in federal funding through the Federal National Endowment for the Arts (Thompson, 2024). Connecticut ranks in the bottom 25% for arts funding, making grants extremely competitive for organizations like Edmond Town Hall.



### Previous Fundraising Attempts

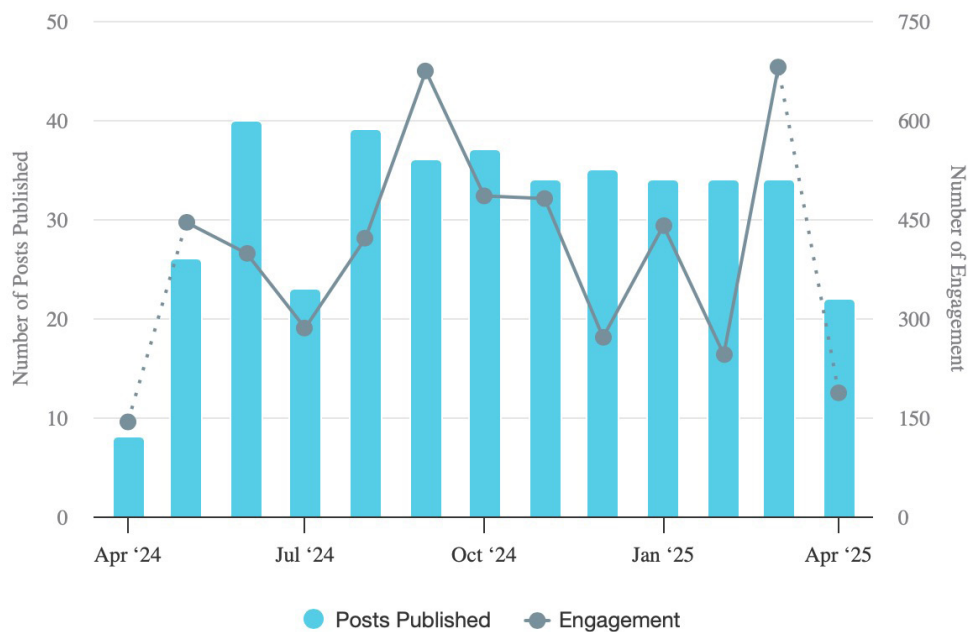
In 2024, the *Friends of Edmond Town Hall* hosted the first-ever Gala to raise money. The *Friends* are a separate non-profit organization committed to helping maintain the historic Edmond Town Hall building and bringing cultural events to the community. They posted rather infrequently to Facebook and Instagram, announcing new information as the campaign ran. Money was raised from ticket sales, a raffle, as well as live and silent auctions. Previously, the *Friends* had hosted other events at Edmond Town Hall to support specific fundraising initiatives. Unfortunately, the Gala planned for 2025 was canceled at the last minute.

In an interview with Lauren DiMartino, Business Manager at Edmond Town Hall, I discovered social media failed to gain interest for this year’s event. She listed a few possible explanations. First, the *Friends* didn’t do a lot of promotion — on social media or otherwise — and neither did Edmond Town Hall. Second, DiMartino mentioned that the quality of food

and entertainment wasn't up to traditional Gala standards in 2024, providing a lack of incentive for people to attend. Above all, the financial uncertainty that many people face in 2025 may have prevented people from purchasing expensive event tickets. With the prospect of President Trump's global tariffs raising the price of everything from avocados to aluminum, investing in the arts has taken a back seat to providing basic goods for the family.

### Social Audit

Gala aside, Edmond Town Hall is a fairly active participant on social media. In order to promote their upcoming shows, they post two to three times per week on Facebook and Instagram. Facebook has gained 7,800 followers and has 6,600 likes, while Instagram has 2,030 followers. They also have a Facebook and Instagram account for, "Live at Edmond Town Hall," which is used only to promote shows. However, they don't post as often to these two accounts, and they have fewer followers. (I would recommend deleting these accounts altogether, as they create brand confusion.) Their Twitter/X account has not been updated since 2022, and their YouTube channel has only 21 subscribers, making both of those platforms inconsequential.

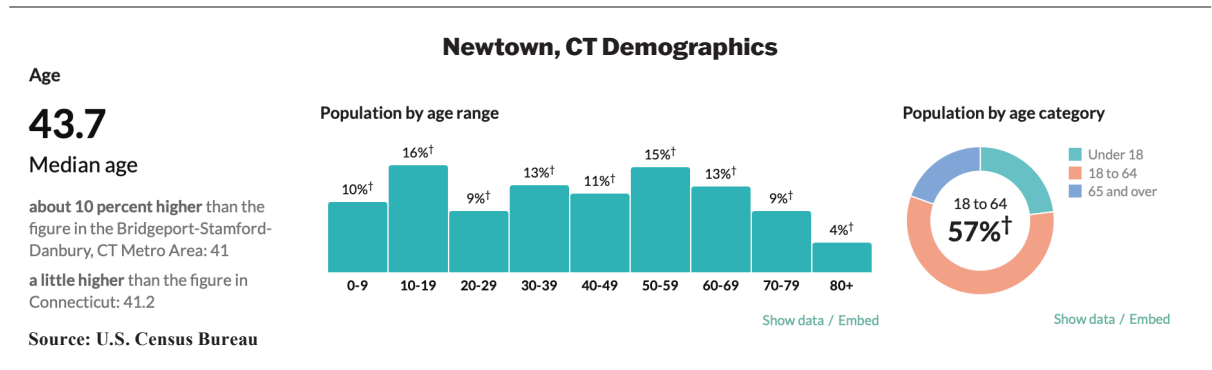


BuzzSumo

Using the online analytics tool, BuzzSumo, it was discovered that Edmond Town Hall has respectable engagement, specifically on Facebook. In March of this year, for example, they posted 34 times, and had over 600 likes, reactions, shares, and comments. When followers share posts, it helps to organically spread awareness about upcoming shows. Each post averages over 12 engagements, making it the ideal channel for future campaigns.

## Target Audience

Compared to other Fairfield County towns, Newtown is a somewhat rural community. There are several working agricultural farms and, on my own street, a sheep farm. The population is rather homogeneous: 87% is white, the median age is about 44, and 65% are over the age of 30 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Arts advocates in Newtown will be the primary audience for this campaign, however, we also hope to expand reach to surrounding towns as the campaign gains traction. The people in Newtown are active on Facebook, though, making it the ideal social channel for the target audience.



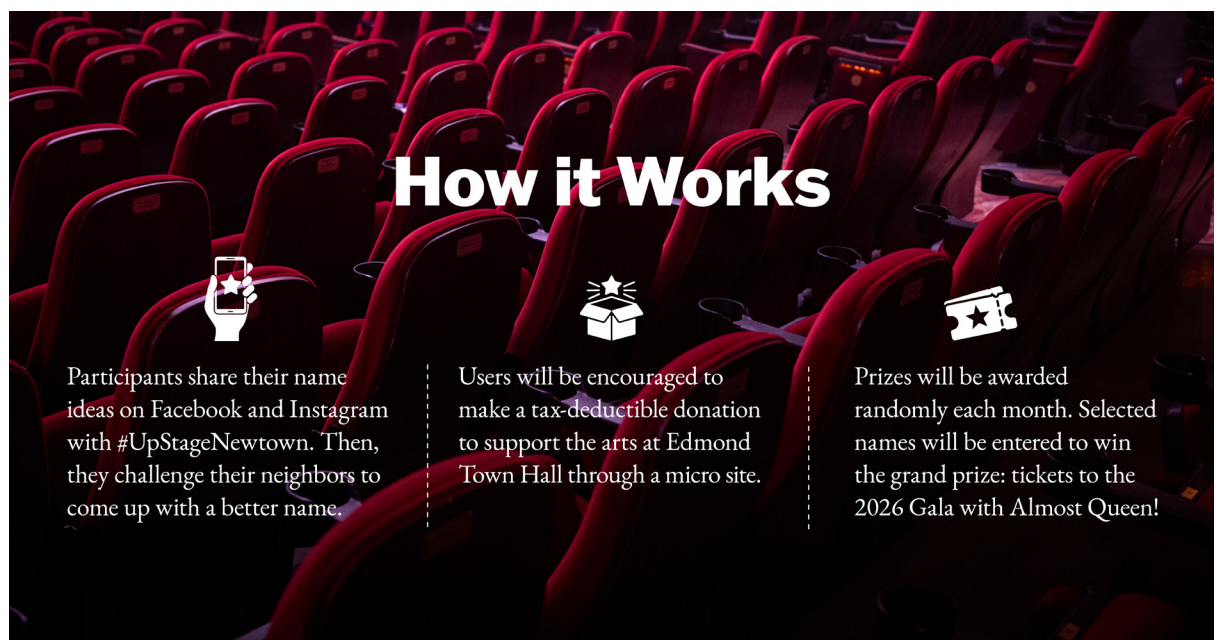
## Proposed Solution

During a recent meeting to discuss Edmond Town Hall's brand strategy, we reviewed the various names of the rooms available to rent: The Alexandria Room, The Alley Room, The Mary Hawley Room, and others. They all sounded somewhat intriguing and luxurious. Interestingly, it was discovered that the main stage didn't have a name. Our concept was born. In order to gain local interest in the arts and encourage engagement, we're asking the local community to help name the main stage with a social media campaign called, "Upstage Your Newtown Neighbor."





## How it Works


First, Edmond Town Hall will ask followers to raise awareness of the arts by providing creative name options for their main stage. Participants can use the hashtag #UpStageNetown on Facebook and Instagram to share their solution, then challenge their neighbors to come up with a better name. This campaign will primarily look to generate authentic User Generated Content. Updating their social media channels on a consistent basis with fresh content will help to keep the program sticky (Patel, 2020). Next, users will be encouraged to make a tax-deductible donation to support the arts at Edmond Town Hall through a standalone micro site. And last, prizes will be randomly awarded each month. Studies show that offline activity helps to improve a sense of community among activists, as individuals can gather support from networks in the form of experience, information, and resources (Cammaerts, 2015). To reinforce this, selected participants will be entered to win tickets to live shows and events, where they can meet with other arts advocates in person.



**How it Works**

 Participants share their name ideas on Facebook and Instagram with #UpStageNewtown. Then, they challenge their neighbors to come up with a better name.

 Users will be encouraged to make a tax-deductible donation to support the arts at Edmond Town Hall through a micro site.

 Prizes will be awarded randomly each month. Selected names will be entered to win the grand prize: tickets to the 2026 Gala with Almost Queen!

## Objectives

There are three primary objectives for the #UpStageNewtown campaign. First, we want it to be fun and engaging for Newtown residents. Giving the community an opportunity to be a part of this viral event hopefully creates excitement. Second, it should drive awareness about the importance the arts in our community. Edmond Town Hall will increase sales when more people attend live events. In turn, they can expand cultural programming. Third, the campaign needs to raise money for Edmond Town Hall's main stage flooring. Specifically, the goal is to raise the \$40,000 needed for a specific vinyl dance flooring called Marley floors (Visca, 2025), that protect the original wood floors during performances.

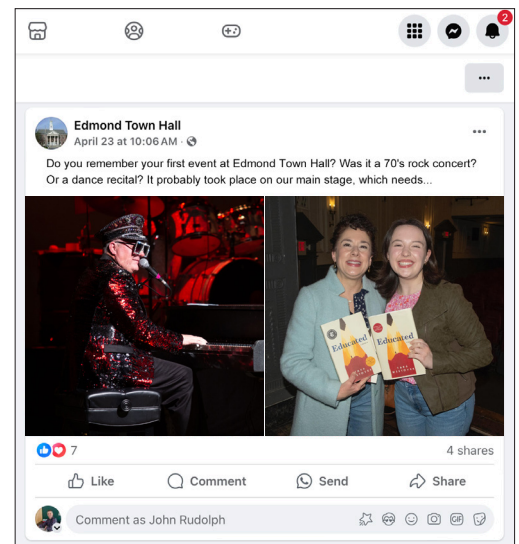
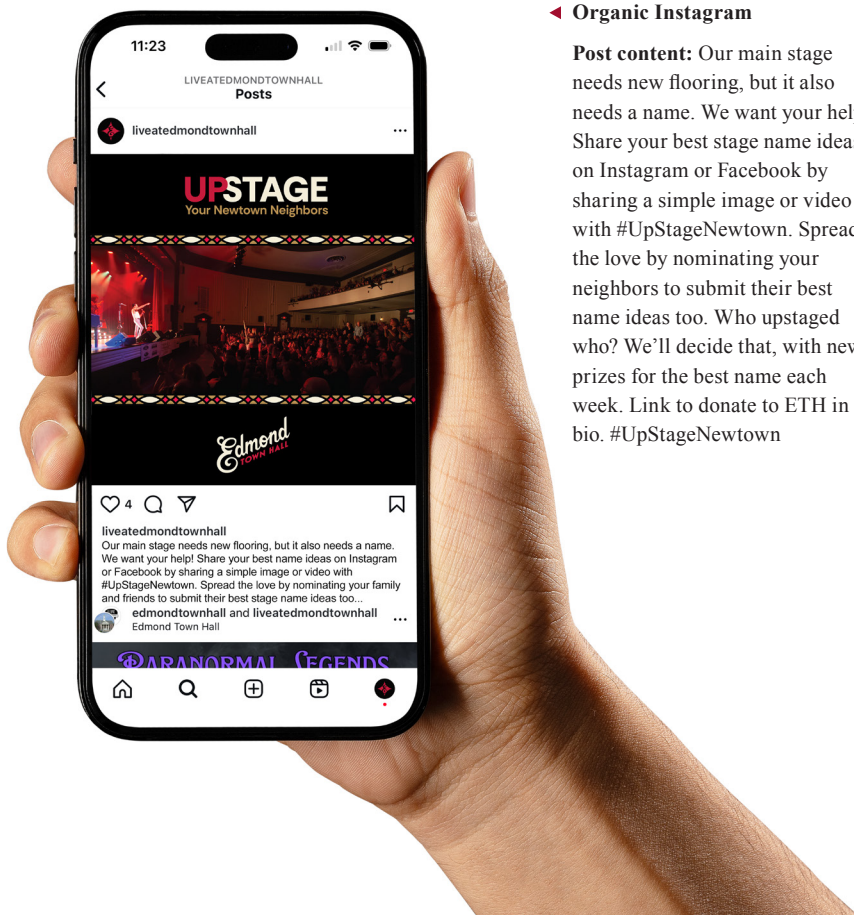
## Tactics

Given the demographics, Facebook and Instagram will be the most appropriate social media channels. The community is rather active on these channels — A local private Facebook group, *Newtown Neighbors Unite*, has almost 12 thousand members! Considering the population is only 27,000, that represents a 44% participation rate. Even with a hefty margin of error, there's great potential to reach many primary members of our target audience by posting organically, which will reduce advertising costs.

On Instagram, we'll feature photography of some of the most popular shows. Followers will be challenged to "Up Stage" their neighbors with a better main stage name, and a link for donations will be added to the bio. On Facebook, which has a bit of an older audience, we're going to ask followers to recall their first show at Edmond Town Hall. Was it a 70's cover band? A dance recital? The idea is to evoke a sense of nostalgia and will feature actual member photos to be more authentic. When followers see their friends posts online, hopefully they'll want to participate in the challenge as well.

### ◀ Organic Instagram

**Post content:** Our main stage needs new flooring, but it also needs a name. We want your help! Share your best stage name ideas on Instagram or Facebook by sharing a simple image or video with #UpStageNewtown. Spread the love by nominating your neighbors to submit their best name ideas too. Who upstaged who? We'll decide that, with new prizes for the best name each week. Link to donate to ETH in bio. #UpStageNewtown



### ▲ Organic Facebook

**Post content:** Do you remember your first event at Edmond Town Hall? Was it a 70's rock concert? Or a dance recital? It probably took place on our main stage, which needs new floors... and a name! Share your best name ideas with #UpStageNewtown for a chance to win tickets to the next show! Then, nominate friends to play too, and help support needed upgrades to Edmond Town Hall. [Donate today!](#)

In order to reach a younger audience, Edmond Town Hall can also invest a small amount to partner with local social media influencers. One potential example, found using HypeAuditor, is Lauren McBride. She has a large following in CT and often attends art shows and galas. For a minimal fee, we would ask her to visit Edmond Town Hall and announce the “UpStage Your Newtown Neighbors” campaign to her audience of 300,000 followers. Of course, her content should be authentic — compelling narratives aid in the “spreadability” of social media campaigns (Bal et al., 2013). We would provide a basic outline, but let Lauren create content that’s true to her personal brand.

## Influencer Campaign

Instagram & TikTok  
@iamlaurenmcbride

Engagement Rate: >3%  
Avg. Likes: 1.5K  
Est. Reach: 309K

**Direction:** Invite CT travel blogger, Lauren McBride, to a live show at Edmond Town Hall, and have her capture the experience in an honest and authentic voice. Announce the #UpStageNewtown challenge to create awareness among CT residents.

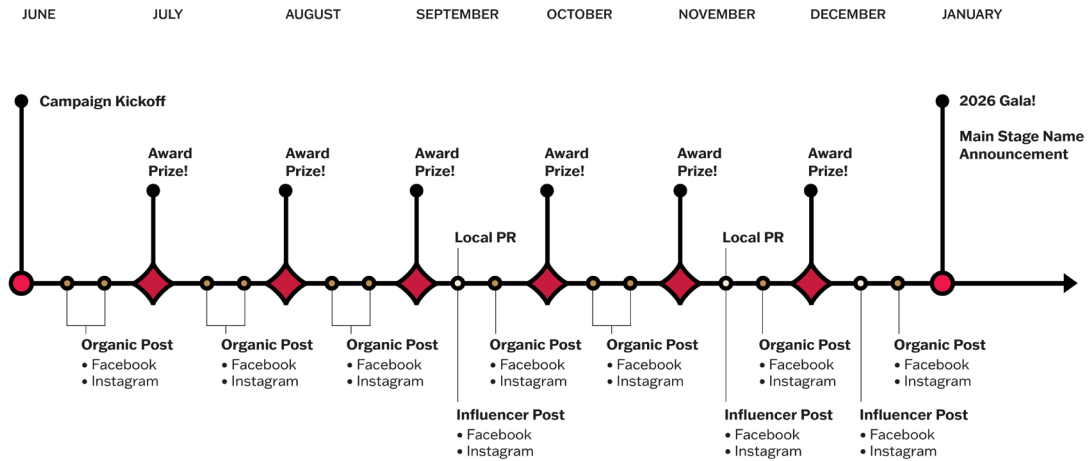


## Content Strategy

Overall, the content strategy is to create six to eight months of content leading up to the official name reveal, which will take place at the reintroduction of the Edmond Town Hall gala in 2026. We would encourage the use of the hashtag, #UpStageNewtown, in organic Instagram and Facebook posts, and connect the online communications with offline media at the box office and potentially in the local newspaper, *The Newtown Bee*.

The main concept behind this strategy is to build anticipation and provide time to collect donations. Initially, the social calendar would include a single organic post per week to help spread the word. As people start to share their prizes and participate, influencers would be brought in to reach a larger audience in more affluent towns like Ridgefield, Westport, and Wilton. Local PR may also be added to the marketing mix. To create something more viral, the program is going to rely on exciting prizes each month. Some of the prizes could include tickets to upcoming shows, custom swag, or more exclusive items like backstage passes.

# Social Media Calendar



## Obstacles

There’s no doubt that this proposed campaign will face a few obstacles. It might be a challenge, for example, getting Newtown’s older audience to participate on social media. There are financial hurdles that definitely need to be considered during a time of economic uncertainty. Last, the community may also participate in “slacktivism” by liking and sharing social media posts, but not donating or attending events (Gladwell, 2020). At the same time, given the community’s love of Edmond Town Hall and their active participation on Facebook, there’s great potential to reach the \$40,000 goal for new stage flooring.

## Conclusion

The arts are consistently cut from public funding, despite studies that have proven they help to raise the quality of living and support economic development. In 2023, Connecticut non-profit arts and culture organizations spent \$606 million on payroll, supplies, and services, while audiences contributed another \$350 million in spending — a nearly \$1 billion economic impact (Phillips, 2023). Randy Cohen, Vice President of the non-profit organization, *Americans for the Arts*, couldn’t be more clear when he said, “Everybody gets, ‘Yeah, it provides cultural benefits.’ But now we can also start to see in the data that it provides social and economic benefits as well.”

Despite this understanding, President Trump has significantly reduced federal funding for the arts recently. His actions have directly affected organizations ranging from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C., widely considered *the* national cultural center of America, operates similarly to Edmond Town Hall. Only 16 percent of its public-private funding comes from the government. The remaining revenue comes from a mix of ticket

## Potential Prizes



### Tickets

- Upcoming concerts/show.
- Purchase tickets early.
- Discounts on room rentals.



### Swag

- Custom tote bags.
- Hats and t-shirts.
- Branded mugs.



### Exclusive Access

- Backstage passes.
- Special invitation to galas.
- Meet and greet with speakers.

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sales, space rentals, parking fees, and donations (Pogrebin and Hernández, 2025). David M. Rubenstein, co-founder of the Carlyle Group and principal owner of the Baltimore Orioles, donated well over \$100 million to the Kennedy Center during his tenure as chairman. Mr. Trump ousted him in February, making himself chairman. Efforts like these have had a trickle-down effect, monetarily and psychologically, to the state and local levels. Public support for the arts are waning.

With Edmond Town Hall being a local entertainment venue, comparing it to the Kennedy Center is probably unfair. The Kennedy Center is one of the premier cultural centers of the world. However, the similarities are unmistakable. Both Edmond Town Hall and the Kennedy Center receive some operational funding from taxpayers, but they have also found ways to be largely self-sufficient. And, they both need to promote fundraising for the arts through social media. Their own programming depends on it. If public funding is going the way of David M. Rubenstein, it's time for local advocates to step up. Social media might be the best way to support the arts for all cultural organizations moving forward, including Edmond Town Hall.

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