Over the past twenty years, federal, state, and local governments have increased public arts funding by a total of 12 percent. Despite this rate of growth, the future of arts funding on a federal, state, and local level remains uncertain, and very small compared to other government expenditures. The purpose of this study is to investigate the special challenges that confront fundraising in the arts, the work of large federal agencies to address these challenges, and the extent to which local organizations do or do not rely on this information in their fundraising efforts.

The first component of the study samples the scholarly literature that evaluates and ranks the role of the arts within an overall framework of social need. I will examine the main findings of this literature and its relationship to existing social appeals for arts funding undertaken by large federal organizations, such as the NEA and the DCCAH. The second portion of the study will involve conducting semi-structured interviews of managers in each of the four primary fields of arts management—visual art, dance, theater, and music—in the Washington, D.C. area, where federal, state, and local funders support the arts.
My research objectives are to understand the extent to which agencies at all levels incorporate the latest and best research on the societal value of arts funding. I also want to understand the extent to which the research covers the arts scene with a “one-size-fits-all” approach or whether it differentiates across the spectrum of arts and the extent to which local agencies are making use of this differentiation (if it exists) or relying on their own creative marketing strategies.