

# Culture Heals



*Power of culture*

Tower Hill Botanic Garden | Boylston

# We Are Mass Cultural Council

2

Mass Cultural Council is the Commonwealth's independent state arts agency.

Our charge is to bolster Massachusetts' creative & cultural sector.

Our efforts:

- Advance economic vitality
- Support systems change
- Celebrate, preserve, and inspire creativity



Isaura Oliveira's Power of Skirts in performance at Dance Happens Here: 2022 | Baby Viking Photography

# Strategic Priority Areas

3

We equitably invest in stakeholders across the creative and cultural sector.

We offer grants to:

- Artists and Creative Individuals
- Youth Arts/Education Programs
- Communities & Tribes
- Cultural Organizations & Groups



Worcester Brazilian Festival | Annielly Camargo





# Arts Prescriptions

# Our role in individual and community health

5

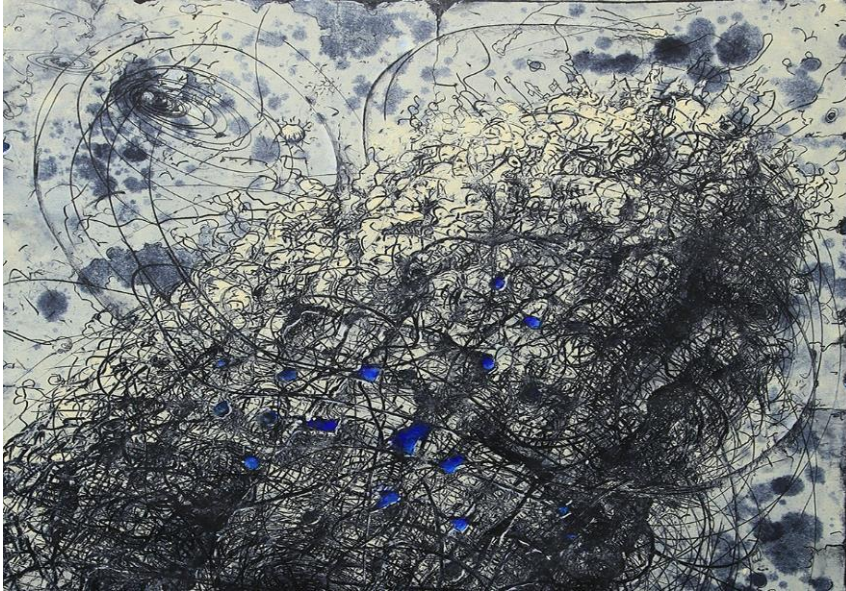
- Massachusetts has one of the most renowned and expensive healthcare systems in the world.
- More than 40% of the MA state budget is dedicated to healthcare.
- In 2019 roughly 80% of healthcare spending was on sick care, and 20% on preventative care



Lawrence Bread and Roses Festival

# Loneliness: a Public Health Crisis

6



Sweep | Gerald Bergstein, 2020 | Oil on canvas

According to the World Health Organization, loneliness significantly increases the risk of:

- Dementia by 50%
- Stroke by 31%
- Heart disease by 29%

Additionally

- 1 in 2 adults experiences loneliness
- Especially prevalent for young people
- More harmful than 15 cigarettes/day

# Social Prescription & CultureRx

7



Mariona Lloreta | Photo by Annielly Camargo

**Social Prescribing** connects people to local, non-clinical services through referrals from health professionals to improve health and well-being.

## **CultureRx Phase I (Jan–July 2020)**

Launched by Mass Cultural Council as the nation's first arts and culture prescription initiative, reimbursing cultural orgs working with healthcare providers.

## **Phases II–IV (July 2020–June 2023)**

Expanded to include more cultural partners, as well as doctors, social workers, community health workers, therapists, and teachers.

# CultureRx Impact Snapshot

8

## In 2023

- 1,200+ referrals made by 30 providers to 10 cultural organizations

## Over 3 Years

- 1,940+ total prescriptions issued

## Successes

- 92% of participants reported positive experiences and wanted to repeat them
- Providers expressed strong enthusiasm and advocated for program expansion

## Challenges & Learning

- Equity & Access — Barriers included transportation, digital and language access, literacy, and perceived exclusion
- Sustainability & Scale — Long-term funding and infrastructure are key



# Statewide Arts Prescription Launch

9



Clark Art Institute

**Mass Cultural Council** and **Art Pharmacy** partnered to launch and scale the nation's first statewide arts prescription solution.

**Mass General Brigham** joined **Art Pharmacy** with this arts-based healthcare solution across Massachusetts.

**Art Pharmacy**



**Mass General Brigham**



**Mass  
Cultural  
Council**

# New evidence from Canada

A 2024 Analysis of the **Potential Economic and Social Impacts of Social Prescribing** in Canada



Reduced levels of  
loneliness



Decreased hospital  
admissions



Improved mental  
and physical health



Improved skills and  
confidence.



Reduced primary  
care visits



Reduced ED visits

A savings of **\$4.43** is achieved for **every dollar** invested in social prescribing.

Additionally, estimated savings include:

- \$296M savings in annual costs from reduced hospital admissions and emergency visits.
- \$114M in annual cost savings from reduced primary care visits.
- \$59.9M annual increase in employment income for youth with depressive symptoms.
- 16,900 fewer cases of coronary artery disease.
- 2,000 fewer cases of avoidable deaths.



# More Key Initiatives

# Card to Culture: Expanding Access to the Arts

12

Mass Cultural Council's **Card to Culture** program offers free or discounted admission to **EBT, WIC, and ConnectorCare** cardholders at hundreds of arts, humanities, and science organizations.

In partnership with:

- Department of Transitional Assistance
- Massachusetts Health Connector
- WIC Nutrition Program
- 400+ cultural organizations statewide

**Impact:** Over 1 million admissions granted to low-income and working families.



The Clark Art Institute



# Universal Participation (UP) Initiative

13



Abilities Dance Boston | Osa Isagede Photography

Advancing the goals of the ADA, the **UP Initiative** helps break down barriers to full civic participation in the cultural sector.

Supports organizational change through:

- Innovation Learning Network
- UP Designation
- Innovation Fund

Over 90 organizations have received a UP designation, forming a statewide community of practice built on 8+ years of peer learning.

# Arts & Culture Benefit for Employees

14



Capulli Mexican Dance Company | Jacob's Pillow

## The Idea

- Employers expand wellness programs to include arts participation
- Offering arts reimbursement benefits via HR systems

## Why It Matters

- 73% of employers (World Economic Forum) say creative thinking is a top workforce priority
- Supports alternative wellness solutions and boosts employee satisfaction

# Additional Avenues to Explore

15

- Integrate arts into Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).
- Use creative practices in worker's comp recovery.
- Include arts prescriptions in government healthcare plans.



Mass MoCA

An abstract, colorful artwork with various shades of green, blue, red, and yellow, featuring splatters and brushstrokes, located in the top-left corner of the slide.

# Thank you!

Engage with us @MassCultural  
**Michael.Bobbitt@mass.gov**



# Art Pharmacy

Healthcare-grade Social Prescribing



Over 43 million Americans aged 12+ are affected by Substance Use Disorders (SUDs), yet only 6% receive treatment annually. Even more are at risk of SUD.

Treatment access is hindered by **stigma, provider shortages, and systemic barriers to care**.

**Social Isolation is a large risk factor:**

- SUD is tightly linked to loneliness, marginalization, and disrupted social networks.
- Social disconnection increases vulnerability to initial use, relapse, and poor treatment engagement.

There is a growing consensus on the need for models that are **community-rooted, non-stigmatizing care models** that go beyond clinical interventions for preventing and treating SUD.

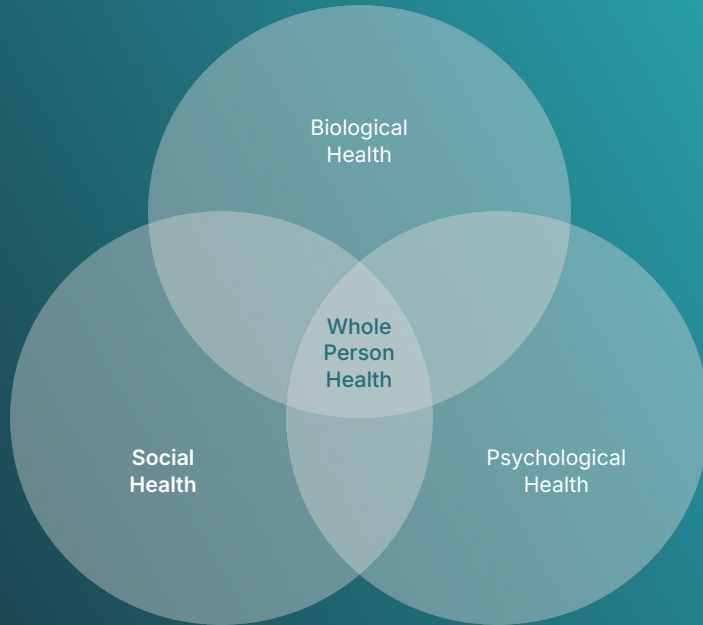


## Meet Art Pharmacy

Art Pharmacy is a healthcare services business that leverages arts-based social prescribing to solve the biggest challenges related to supporting individuals experiencing concerns related to their mental health.



# Biopsychosocial Model of Health



Optimal health is typically thought to include biological health and psychological health (only); modern healthcare is built to address the *bio* (pharmaceutical) and *psycho* (talk therapy) components of health but, importantly, *not* the social leg of the stool.

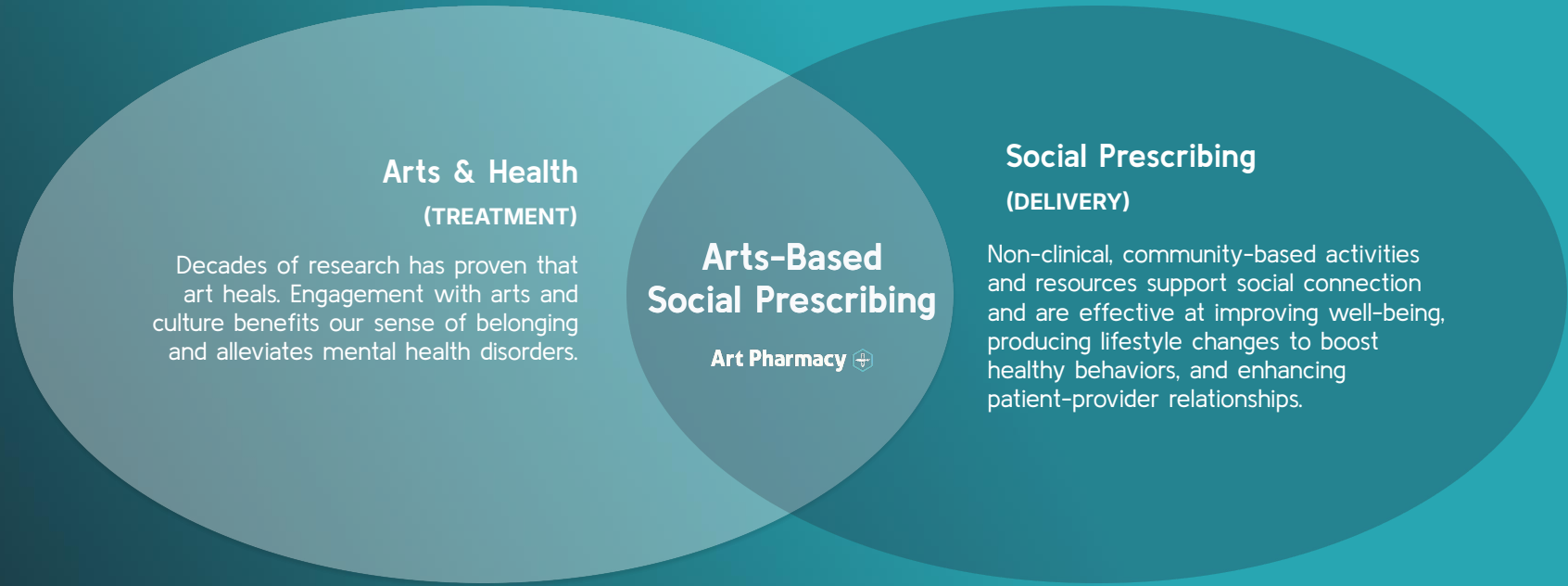
There is a social component to all health but especially for chronic illness and mental illness, which are necessarily bio-psycho-social in nature.

Art Pharmacy's approach is to recognize all three legs of the stool, because we believe a focus on whole person health fosters innovative models of care and ultimately creates better, more sustainable outcomes.





Following decades of evidence, Art Pharmacy uniquely combines the proven efficacy of arts and health *with* the community-based care model of social prescribing.



Art Pharmacy leverages the science of arts engagement and our network of partners to improve member outcomes. **Here's how it works:**



## REFERRAL

Prescribing Partners in the community complete an online referral for individuals who are a good fit. Art Pharmacy reaches out to members to enroll them in the program.



## CARE NAVIGATION

A specialized Care Navigator connects the member with smart-matched arts and culture engagements. They get members tickets to the activity, help with logistics of attending, and serve as an accountability partner.



## PARTICIPATION

The member enjoys an arts and culture experience specifically chosen for its therapeutic benefits and the member's personal preference once a month for 12 months.



## FOLLOW-UP

The Care Navigator monitors the members progress utilizing clinically validated scales. If additional support or a higher level of care is needed, the Care Navigator works with the referring provider to get support.



Our partners are seeing outstanding outcomes for their members.

72%

**ENGAGEMENT**

72% of referred members complete an intake assessment and at least one arts and culture experience.

77%

**CLINICAL IMPROVEMENT**

77% of members with poor mental health at baseline demonstrate improvement in WHO-5 scores

94%

**PROVIDER SATISFACTION**

94% of members would recommend their health care provider to others because of Art Pharmacy after completing their prescription.

72<sub>HRS</sub>

**TIME TO CARE**

100% of referred members complete an initial intake visit within 72 hours of enrolling in an Art Pharmacy program.

77%

**ADHERENCE**

77% of prescribed doses were completed by members.

9 10  
OUT OF

**SATISFACTION WITH  
ART PHARMACY**

Members rate their overall satisfaction with Art Pharmacy, on average, a 9 out of 10.



Art Pharmacy provides a strategic pathway to combat isolation, build belonging, and strengthen protective factors for SUD prevention and recovery for individuals.

### PREVENTION

*Focus on providing protective benefits to combat risk factors for SUDs*

- Increasing **social connection and feelings of belonging**
- Increasing exposure to **substance free activities** and safe space in the community
- Increasing ability for **emotional regulation**
- Reducing symptoms of **depression and anxiety**
- Providing an alternative to **pain management**

### RECOVERY

*Focus on providing additional tools to support recovery of SUDs*

- Reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety to boost **motivation and treatment readiness**
- Exposure to in person **substance free activities**
- Opportunities for improved **social relationships**
- Reducing the risk and experience of **social isolation and loneliness**
- Enhancing **neurobiological pathways** related to reward and stress regulation



Art Pharmacy partners  
with municipalities  
through implementation  
and provides ongoing  
support for a successful  
launch and partnership

## IMPLEMENTATION

- Building the local Arts and Culture Partner network
- Training and onboarding of initial Prescribing Partners
- Establishing escalation policy and protocol
- Developing personalized referral workflows
- Developing reporting and evaluation structure
- Establish cadence and communications for improvements

## ONGOING SUPPORT

- Access to agreed upon “doses” of arts and culture for community members, including companion participation
- Member access to Care Navigation services
- Crisis escalation support when needed
- Ongoing data collection, reporting, and analysis
- Program evaluation and monitoring
- Continued Arts and Culture Partner network building
- Continued Prescribing Partner onboarding and training





**TOWN *of* FRANKLIN**  
MASSACHUSETTS



**OPIOID  
SETTLEMENT  
FUNDS**

**01**

# OVERVIEW

- *Abatement from the harms caused by the opioid epidemic.*
- *Will bring over \$900 million into Massachusetts.*
- *Distributed in allotments from calendar years 2022 to 2038.*





## SUBRECIPIENT AGREEMENT

### *Municipal Uses of Abatement Funds:*

1. Opioid Use Disorder Treatment
2. Support People in Treatment and Recovery
3. Connections to Care
4. Harm Reduction
5. Address the Needs of Criminal-Justice-Involved Persons
6. Support Pregnant or Parenting Women and their Families, including Babies with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
7. Prevent Misuse of Opioids and Implement Prevention Education



**ART  
PHARMACY  
PILOT**

**02**

# CareMass.org / Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

*Art Pharmacy would be an appropriate use of opioid settlement funds as long as:*

1 Funds are being used to support residents of Franklin with SUD or in recovery.

3 The Town of Franklin should be able to document how the funding is to be used in a way that supplements and/or strengthens the services Art Pharmacy is already providing.

2 Supplanting or “double dipping” is not allowed (i.e., if funds are already available through insurance companies or other sources you should not use the settlement funds).



**ECONOMIC  
BENEFIT**

**03**



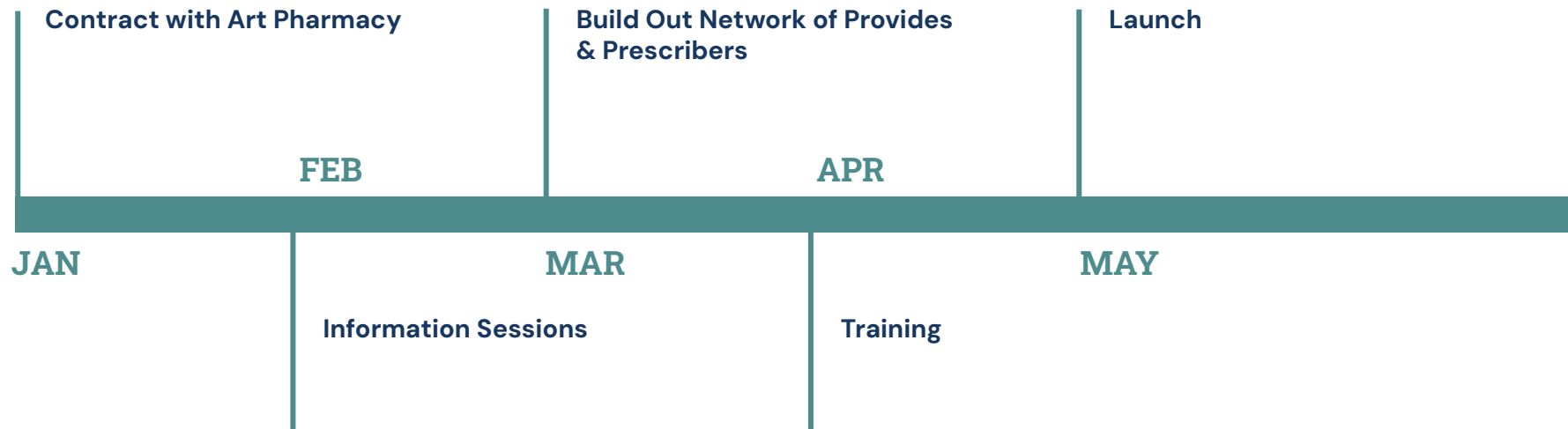
## Supports local economy:

- ❖ Allows Art Pharmacy to send members to arts and culture engagements, paid for through the Town's Opioid Settlement Funds.
- ❖ When prescribers send members to programs, it's free to them, the organizations receive new patrons, members benefit from the work these organizations do, and Art Pharmacy opioid settlement funds pay full price for admissions to local arts and culture programming.





# 2025 TIMELINE





## RESOURCES

- [www.franklinma.gov/1080/Art-Pharmacy-Strengthening-Franklin-Thro](http://www.franklinma.gov/1080/Art-Pharmacy-Strengthening-Franklin-Thro)
- [artpharmacy.co/](http://artpharmacy.co/)
- [mass.gov/doc/march-4-2022-ma-subdivision-agreement/download](http://mass.gov/doc/march-4-2022-ma-subdivision-agreement/download)
- [caremass.org/](http://caremass.org/)
- [mass.gov/opioid-recovery-and-remediation-fund-advisory-council](http://mass.gov/opioid-recovery-and-remediation-fund-advisory-council)
- [mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-the-ag-s-statewide-opioid-settlements-with-opioid-industry-defendants](http://mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-the-ag-s-statewide-opioid-settlements-with-opioid-industry-defendants)

14

PROVIDERS

12

PRESCRIBERS



**TOWN** *of*  
**FRANKLIN**  
MASSACHUSETTS

## Next Steps and Contact Information

### Partner with Art Pharmacy

1. Reach out at [artpharmacy.co/contact](https://artpharmacy.co/contact) or email [hello@artpharmacy.com](mailto:hello@artpharmacy.com)
2. You will hear from the Art Pharmacy team to schedule a time to connect

### Contact Us

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