Canvas Cultural Plan Benchmarking

The comparison counties are:

1. Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, NC
2. Clark County, NV (Las Vegas)
3. Hillsborough County, FL (Tampa)
4. Miami-Dade County, FL
5. Palm Beach County, FL
6. Travis County, TX (Austin)

These six counties were selected as peer comparisons to Orange County, FL for analyzing arts and culture governance, funding mechanisms, public art programs, cultural tourism strategies, and municipal relationships.

Benchmarking Key Highlights:

Governance Models

Most Common Structure: Arts councils or departments with advisory boards (11-18 members) that include civic leaders, artists, and government representatives. Orange County's tripartite model (County + City + United Arts) is relatively unique.

Staffing Variations: Ranges from robust teams (Miami-Dade has 25 staff) to more modest operations, with most having dedicated arts leadership positions that Orange County currently lacks in some areas.

Public Art Programs

Percent-for-Art Requirements:

- **Standard**: 1-2% of capital projects (Austin: 2%, Charlotte: 1%, Miami-Dade: 1.5%)
- **Orange County Gap**: Limited enforcement of existing requirements
- **Private Development**: Most peers don't require private development contributions, but some cities within counties do

Governance: Most have dedicated public art committees with 7-15 members including artists and design professionals.

Cultural Tourism Integration

Revenue Sources: Tourist Development Tax (TDT) or Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding is standard, with 15-35% typically allocated to tourism promotion including arts.

Measurement: Most participate in Americans for the Arts Economic Prosperity studies (AEP), with Austin notably not participating in recent rounds.

Promotion Strategies: Integrated arts/culture sections on tourism websites, dedicated cultural tourism marketing plans, and coordination between arts agencies and convention/visitor bureaus.

Funding Mechanisms

Tourism-Arts Linkage: All peer counties heavily rely on tourism taxes for arts funding, similar to Orange County's TDT approach.

Diversification: Some combine tourism taxes with general funds, grants, and private philanthropy, suggesting Orange County's mixed approach is appropriate.

Municipal Relationships

Coordination Approaches:

- **Formal**: Joint funding pools and shared governance (Charlotte/Mecklenburg)
- **Representation**: Municipal representatives on county boards
- **Regional**: Multi-county consortiums (South Florida Cultural Consortium)
- **Orange County Opportunity**: No formal municipal convening currently exists

Special Initiatives

"Arts and..." Programs:

- **Health**: Miami-Dade (Arts for Wellness, Mental Health through Arts)
- **Business**: Las Vegas, Miami-Dade (Arts & Business Council)
- **Homelessness**: Austin (ARPA-funded initiative)
- **Climate/Environment**: Palm Beach County, Miami-Dade

Evaluation Practices

Common Methods:

- AEP participation for economic impact
- Tourism data analysis
- Annual strategic plan assessments
- Some conduct equity audits of funding distribution

Orange County Positioning: The benchmarking suggests Orange County's current approach aligns well with peers, but reveals opportunities for enhancement in municipal coordination, public art enforcement, and specialized "arts and..." initiatives.