



CREATIVE ECONOMY
WORKGROUP OF CALIFORNIA

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California's Creative Economy: Research Review and Current-State Analysis

Prepared for the California Arts Council
by Institute for the Future (ITF)

About This Project

This report is part of Institute for the Future (ITF)'s collaboration with the Creative Economy Workgroup (CEW) and the California Arts Council (CAC). It represents a synthesis of ITF's review of existing information related to the creative economy. It is based on available studies, reports from government agencies, and a review of existing programs, as well as on the suggestions and input of CEW members (though it does not represent the views of either the CEW or the CAC). It will be used to inform the ongoing work between ITF, CAC, and the CEW to develop a strategic planning document for California's creative economy.

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Introduction:

California's Creative Economy Is Larger than Statistics Capture

Creative industries and activities constitute a significant portion of California's economic activity, are central to the vibrancy of the state's culture, and play an important role in the public and private lives of Californians. The strength of the creative economy has implications for both the health of the state and the well-being of its residents. Consequently, California has an explicit interest in growing creative industries, supporting creative workers, and improving access to creative jobs.

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) estimated that in 2022 (the most recent year for which data is available), arts and cultural production in California accounted for 8% of the state's total economy, \$2.9 billion in total value added to the economy, and 847,688 jobs (compared to 4.3% of the total economy, \$1.1 trillion in total value added, and 5.1 million jobs for the United States as a whole).¹ Yet, despite its size and significance, there is no consistent definition of "creative economy." For example, NASAA includes economic activity from 35 industries led by information services, broadcasting, public cultural institutions, publishing, and motion pictures. Alternatively, the National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Reporting Center (NASERC) tracks activity across four domains: artists and other cultural workers, arts participation, arts and cultural assets, and arts and education.² NASERC's definition of "artists" includes designers, fine artists, architects, writers, producers, musicians, photographers, announcers, actors, entertainers, and dancers, and "other cultural workers" as those whose occupation is not covered under the "artist" definition but are employed in a role that supports the arts. And the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, which releases an annual report on California's creative economy, limits relevant industries to entertainment, architecture and related services, fashion, creative goods and products, and performing arts.³

¹ NASAA uses U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data in its analysis:

https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/

² <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/NASERC#:~:text=The%20National%20Endowment%20for%20the,arts%20in%20the%20United%20States.>

³ <https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-june-2024.pdf>

There are also disagreements as to whether it makes sense to include creative workers in noncreative industries and/or noncreative workers in creative industries in these counts. CVL Economics argues for the inclusion of both:

The creative economy comprises organizations operating in creative sectors and individuals working in creative occupations. Intuitively, creative occupations are well represented in the creative sectors. But individuals working in creative occupations may work in non-creative sectors as well. A graphic designer, for instance, may begin their career as a contractor in the film production industry and eventually decide to pursue a full-time opportunity in the marketing department of a financial services firm. Similarly, the creative sectors also employ workers in non-creative occupations. Many creative firms have management and finance departments whose staff are counted as creative sector workers since they contribute to the production and commercialization of creative goods and services. While an accountant working at a financial services firm is not considered a participant in the creative economy, an accountant working at a film production company would be.⁴

In addition, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD) draws attention to the varying definitions of creativity that bear upon definitions of the creative economy, explaining that “creative activities have moved from including mainly traditional arts and crafts to encompassing designing smartphone applications,” and that the creative economy can be conceptualized to include activities involving artistic creativity, scientific creativity, and economic creativity.⁵

Many also argue that the creative economy does more than just augment the economy. The UNCTD, for example, states that creative industries “produce a series of non-economic benefits by maintaining and promoting cultural and artistic values that contribute to societies’ well-being.” To capture the various actors and activities that contribute to both the economic and noneconomic and for-profit and nonprofit elements of the creative economy, some adopt a creative ecosystem or ecology model, rather than a creative economy model. For example, Americans for the Arts sees the creative economy as “an economic ecosystem of for-profit and nonprofit creative industries, artists and artist workforce, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policymakers and funders that produce and distribute creativity-

⁴ Unpublished presentation, [CVL Economics](#).

⁵ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctsce2022d1_en.pdf

and artistic-based goods and services.”⁶ Meanwhile, in their work on creative place-making, Ann Markusen (Markusen Economic Research Services) and Anne Gadwa (Metris Arts Consulting) define California’s arts and cultural ecology as the overlapping and interconnected activities of people (cultural workers, supporters, and participants), business and organizations (arts nonprofits, cultural firms, and public arts agencies) and places (cultural regions, cities, and neighborhoods).⁷ We find these ways of viewing the creative economy useful for the preparation of a strategic plan for California’s creative economy because they address the diverse needs and interests of Californians, support equitable access to creative economy pathways and jobs, and take into account the noneconomic benefits of creative work. Though we use the term “creative economy” throughout the report, we do so with Markusen and Gadwa’s more expansive definition in mind.

The economic and social aspects of the creative ecosystem are related, but also sometimes in tension with each other. Developing a strategic plan to support both requires addressing both objectives and, at times, navigating complex trade-offs. These include:

Supporting businesses while also ensuring good-paying jobs and an equitable economy

On the one hand, California has an interest in improving the competitiveness of its creative economy by attracting relevant businesses to the state, supporting existing firms, and developing exportable goods and services. This can involve providing tax incentives as well as a skilled and cost-competitive labor force for businesses looking to minimize operating costs, including labor costs. On the other hand, California has a mandate to cultivate and respect the diverse interests, strengths, and needs of residents and to pay attention to historically marginalized communities’ access to the creative economy, which in part requires the creation of good jobs with high wages and realistic pathways into them. In addition, retaining creative talent within the state and attracting new creative talent requires cultivation of creative communities, investment in creative infrastructure, and attention to broader issues like affordability, cost of living, and access to a social safety net. We have to ensure that strategies for incentivizing increased economic output and competitiveness go hand-in-hand with those that intend to foster the social, civic, and cultural benefits of art – outcomes that are important but particularly difficult to measure.

⁶ <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/creative-economy>

⁷ https://www.irvine.org/wp-content/uploads/CA_Arts_Ecology_2011Sept20.pdf

Meeting the diverse needs of regions and communities in the state

Various industries and creative communities require different strategies to support their flourishing: the best ways to improve the creative economy and support creative workers in Los Angeles or San Francisco may not be the best way to bolster those in Redding or Fresno. And in Native American communities in particular, the production of art and artistic expression takes unique forms and offers a powerful tool to expand market economies in general, while also preserving cultural heritages.⁸

Acknowledging different definitions of “good jobs”

Research by Gallup and several foundations identified 10 key characteristics of “good jobs”. These include:

- Good pay level
- Stability and predictability (in pay and in working hours)
- Having control over hours and location of work
- Job security
- Access to benefits
- Career advancement opportunities
- Enjoyment of work
- Having a sense of purpose and dignity in one’s work
- Having the power to change things things in one’s work that are not satisfactory

While most of these characteristics apply across jobs and professions, the work many artists and creatives are engaged in is unique in some respects. According to the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., arts workers are more likely to be self-employed and less likely to have full-time jobs. Arts workers also tend to “have a strong desire for autonomy in the creative process as well as ownership of their work’s intellectual property rights. Although people often think of platform companies such as Uber or Instacart when they think of the ‘gig workforce,’ the term is rooted in short-term contracting work that artists and other arts workers in the creative industry have long performed.”⁹ In addition, while some industries, like film and television, have strong unions that offer benefits and various protections and guarantees to their members, others are characterized by more precarious working conditions. And it can be difficult to assess the working realities for many artists and creative workers, given that it is not uncommon for them to work informally or have multiple jobs that

⁸ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ljm_3xUGeIK_GMjTX_1lbJbZ3ly-so2e/view

⁹ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103496/arts-workers-in-california_0_0.pdf

span industries. According to the Otis College of Art and Design, the average annual wages for creative workers in California in 2023 were \$202,410, but this ranged from \$360,964 in new media to \$65,372 in fine arts.¹⁰ And the California Labor Lab¹¹ determined that in 2023, 1.1 million Californians held a job in an arts-related occupation or industry, or both. Of the 732,260 people with arts-related occupations, 52% held two or more jobs, and 56% held arts-related occupations only in their second job. In addition, 51% of people in arts-related employment work as independent contractors (versus 20.3% in the overall economy excluding arts-related occupations), and 42% in arts-related occupations report personal earnings below \$40,000 a year. Determining how to support creative workers depends on how we think about good jobs, and this can vary drastically within creative economy industries and occupations.

We should also keep in mind that creative work and the creative economy are constantly evolving. In a decade or two, it will look quite different than it does today, and it is important that we take major forces of change into account when recommending strategies for supporting the creative ecosystem of the future. In particular, we should pay attention to:

- Concentration and financialization in many industry sectors, including media and entertainment, and the resulting shift in returns to shareholders over workers. At its simplest, financialization establishes the primacy of financial institutions, financial considerations, and financial actors both in business and cultural spheres.
- Competition for creative industry via increasingly popular tax incentive policies, as well as new capabilities in remote work
- Changes to various aspects of creative production and distribution stemming from advances in technology and evolving business models
- Increasing attention from the scientific community to the benefits of art to health and the related integration of art and creative workers into noncreative fields, including climate mitigation and disaster relief

Below, we summarize existing data and research on aspects of the creative economy that will influence the development of the Creative Economy Workgroup's strategic plan. It is worth noting that, thanks to the efforts of scholars, public and private research groups, professional associations, and state agencies, there are many things we know about the

¹⁰ <https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/creative-economy/dashboard.html>

¹¹ [https://calaborlab.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tkssra7771/f/Employment in Arts and Related Occupations and Industries in California.pdf](https://calaborlab.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tkssra7771/f/Employment%20in%20Arts%20and%20Related%20Occupations%20and%20Industries%20in%20California.pdf)

creative economy today – basic information on numbers of jobs and incomes for creative economy workers in a variety of industries, general areas of growth and contraction in the creative economy, and how other states and jurisdictions are attempting to grow their creative economies. But there are also several things we do not have good information about, including what the reality of creative work is like for professionals across the creative industries (which can include underemployment, low wages, and informal work) and how the positive externalities of creative work might translate into real economic benefits beyond the creative economy, like reduced health care costs¹² and improved community well-being. However, research into such impacts is ongoing, and findings thus far are positive and substantial – for instance, an evaluation of the impact of California's Arts in Corrections program found numerous direct and indirect benefits.¹³

¹² <https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2021/12/06/public-art-cities>

¹³ <https://artsincorrections.org/impact>

Regulatory, Economic, and Demographic Drivers of the Creative Economy

Impacts of tax policies

The effects of tax policies and incentives vary based on industry segment and the nature of the incentive. The issue of tax credits is perhaps most salient in the film and television industry, as states and countries compete vigorously for film and television production to relocate within their jurisdictions. The California Film Commission (CFC) has had a tax credit program in place since 2009. Currently in its third iteration, it incentivizes career readiness and career pathways programs. California offers \$330 million in tax credits annually, and according to the CFC's 2023 report, "the 134 projects approved during the first three and a half years of Program 3.0 are estimated to generate \$7.3 billion in direct in-state spending, including more than \$2.7 billion in qualified wages."¹⁴ There is, however, concern that California is falling behind its peers in terms of available tax credits and is consequently losing film and television productions to Georgia, New York, and New Mexico, among other states and countries vying for this business.

Various state agencies have assessed the efficacy of their tax incentive programs. Georgia found a sizeable impact on its state economy¹⁵, while New York questioned the value of some incentives' return on investment, while noting significant increases in economic activity for others.¹⁶ In addition, a few scholarly studies have examined the efficacy of these types of tax incentive programs. Alec Workman found that incentives increase the likelihood of a film being made in California by 19% and significantly increase project budget and number of filmmakers hired.¹⁷ Patrick Button found that incentives have a meaningful impact on attracting TV series production but not feature film production, and that their ability to affect business location decisions and economic development is mixed.¹⁸ He also found that incentives do little to build up local film industries, although this may not be a problem for California, where the industry is already well-established.

¹⁴ <https://cdn.film.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Progress-Report-2023.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.audits.ga.gov/ReportSearch/download/28730>

¹⁶ <https://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/research/economic-impact-of-tax-incentive-programs.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/08912424211000127>

¹⁸ https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25963/w25963.pdf

Tax policies can impact creative workers and the creative economy in other important ways. For example, tax policy that allows individuals to make charitable donations to nonprofit arts and educational organizations can serve as a boon to organizations and artists who work across various domains. According to Americans for the Arts, approximately 40% of the financial support for nonprofit performing arts organizations comes from charitable contributions.¹⁹ In addition, tax policies that allow or disallow artists to get a charitable deduction for the fair market value of their artwork they donate (versus just for the cost of materials) can strongly influence the way artwork is created for and donated to museums and other types of charitable organizations. For example, the Museum of Modern Art received over 90% fewer gifts from artists after a law change in 1969 that limited deductions to material costs.²⁰ Sales tax exemptions for creative products can also make these products more affordable and incentivize their purchase. In Texas, for example, production companies can use a tax exemption on items rented or purchased for direct use in the production of a motion picture, television and commercial project.²¹

Legislation related to zoning, land use, and intellectual property has an outsized impact on creative work

Legislation effectively sets the “rules of the game” for creative industries, impacting everything from alcohol sales at performance venues to classification of workers to funding incentives for creative projects. Beyond tax policy and employment law, two issues are of particular importance to creative work: zoning and land use legislation, and intellectual property protections.

Land use and zoning regulations can play a key role in helping creative communities thrive by designating specific areas for creative spaces, studios, galleries, live-work spaces for artists, or cultural districts. For instance, San Francisco's cultural districts program is designed to preserve, enhance, and promote cultural communities, focusing on place-making and place-keeping initiatives.²² Established by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, opportunity zones also provide federal tax incentives for investments in economically distressed areas, encouraging development and creative projects in these zones.²³ As California cities from San Francisco

¹⁹ <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/legislative-issue-center/charitable-giving-tax-reform>

²⁰ <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/legislative-issue-center/charitable-giving-tax-reform>

²¹ <https://www.austintexas.org/film-commission/incentives-and-grants/>

²² <https://www.sf.gov/information/cultural-districts-article-series>

²³ <https://economicdevelopment.business.ca.gov/place-based-strategies/opportunity-zones/>

to San Bernardino grapple with how to revitalize their downtowns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, laws governing the adaptive reuse of buildings have the potential to substantially increase the number of art and entertainment venues and creative workspaces, helping to attract artists and creative workers and adding to the vibrancy and attractiveness of these city centers. Adaptive reuse can also alleviate housing shortages that disproportionately impact low-income creatives. For example, the Santa Ana Arts Collective converted an old bank building into a 58-unit affordable rental development for artists in midtown Santa Ana. This socially driven initiative garnered support from both the city and local community members who were eager to rejuvenate the downtown area by establishing an arts and culture district.²⁴ In addition, regulations on parking, alcohol sales, and noise limits impact the viability of entertainment and performing arts venues, while legislation related to historic preservation can support tourism²⁵ and creative place-making (integration of arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities).²⁶ Furthermore, legislation mandating public art requirements for new developments can support local artistic communities and local creative economies.^{27 28}

Legislation related to intellectual property (IP) and copyright are crucial to artists' and creative firms' ability to protect and monetize their work. For example, copyright grants creators automatic protection over their original works as soon as they are fixed in a tangible form, giving them exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, and display their creations, which allows them to earn royalties through licensing.²⁹ Trademarks help protect brand names and logos, enhancing the market position and value of creative businesses. Patents safeguard new inventions and processes, enabling commercialization through licensing. Digital rights management technologies protect digital content from unauthorized use, while collective management organizations collect royalties on behalf of artists. International agreements like the Berne Convention ensure global copyright protection, allowing artists to enforce their rights worldwide.³⁰ But what specifically is covered by these protections and how others can legally use them is not set in stone and is a question of great import for those engaged in all types of creative production. While artists, creative workers, and creative businesses have a strong interest in protecting their IP, some argue that IP protections are

²⁴ <https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Adaptive-Reuse-November-2021.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/national-historic-preservation-act.htm>

²⁶ <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

²⁷ <https://sfplanning.org/private-owned-public-open-space-and-public-art>

²⁸ https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/report_arts_culture_equitable-development.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf?loclr=blogcop>

³⁰ <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>

already too strict and stifle creativity. For example, extending copyright protection beyond an author's lifetime does not incentivize further creation, and large corporations can exploit IP laws to their advantage, leaving individual artists with little influence over their own work. The rise of technologies undergirded by artificial intelligence and large language models is raising urgent questions about the fair use of artists' work, and how governments respond to these technologies and creative workers' concerns will likely impact how art is produced and distributed in the future.

Employment and Demographics: Creative workers are at the forefront of changing patterns of employment

In many ways, artistic and creative work is a harbinger of the kinds of changes many face in today's economy. Making more types of creative and artistic work "good work" would allow California to be the leader in creating good economic opportunities for many other workers.

Several key aspects of artistic and creative work are worth special attention. According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, nearly 34% of artists were self-employed, compared with just over 9% of all workers.³¹ Prior to the COVID pandemic, more than half of all photographers and other visual artists, such as fine artists, art directors, and animators, were self-employed.³² Self-employed artists often face challenges related to precarious access to health insurance and social protections, underpayment, and misclassification as independent contractors versus employees.³³ As such, issues related to the protection of freelance workers is paramount for many arts workers, who are the original "gig workers." Nonprofit and advocacy organizations, like Los Angeles' Sol Center for Liberated Work³⁴, address these and other issues that specifically affect creative work in California.

³¹ <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists-in-the-Workforce-Selected-Demographic-Characteristics-Prior-to-COVID-19.pdf>

³² <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists-in-the-Workforce-Selected-Demographic-Characteristics-Prior-to-COVID-19.pdf>

³³ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103496/arts-workers-in-california_0_0.pdf

³⁴ <https://solcenter.work/about/>

Percent self-employed, by artist occupation: 2015–2019

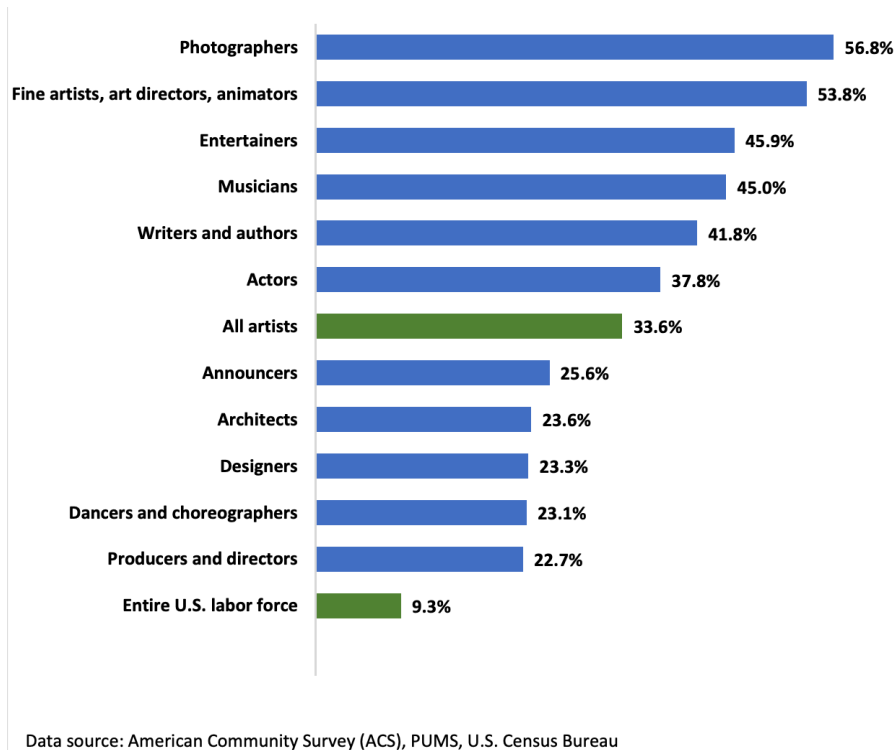


Figure source:

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Artists-in-the-Workforce-Selected-Demographic-Characteristics-Prior-to-COVID%E2%80%909019.pdf>

Despite their importance to the creative economy, the activities of self-employed artists are often not captured in the federal and state employment data that are frequently used to develop job numbers in reports.³⁵ It is also worth noting that direct employment in the arts supports a larger employment network through indirect and induced effects. A 2020 report examining the economic impact of creativity in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties found that when direct employees work within the creative industries, indirect jobs are created when these industries purchase from suppliers. Induced employment then results from employees spending their wages on unrelated goods and services. In this way, every creative-economy job supports other jobs in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, leading to broad-based job gains and increased income.³⁶ Employment in the creative economy not only sustains the industry itself but also promotes wider economic growth and prosperity.

³⁵ <https://edcollaborative.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/The-2020-Report-on-the-Ventura-and-Santa-Barbara-Creative-Economies.pdf>

³⁶ <https://edcollaborative.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/The-2020-Report-on-the-Ventura-and-Santa-Barbara-Creative-Economies.pdf>

Artificial intelligence (AI) poses a significant threat to employment across creative roles in the entertainment industry, with current trends pointing to dislocation of many workers. While AI is seen as a useful tool for writing rather than a replacement for writers, how its use evolves remains to be seen. It also has the potential to reduce opportunities for actors, musicians, and visual artists. Early indicators suggest AI may be decreasing demand for certain office-based jobs in the industry, while increasing demand for workers with certain soft skills and financial expertise.³⁷ Although AI will likely replace some jobs and change and create others, the current trajectory is toward short-term disruptions in employment in the entertainment sector.

While California boasts robust employment across the creative economy, these opportunities are not evenly distributed geographically. Infrastructure for creative industries is heavily concentrated in California's urban centers, as is access to employment opportunities. This makes it harder for creative workers outside the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles to build careers in creative industries. While this is in part due to the fact that creative communities tend to cluster in urban centers, other factors, including California's Career Technical Education legislation, which emphasizes "regional workforce priorities," have created significant equity and access gaps for nonurban communities to access career education funding for arts, media, and entertainment.

The entertainment industry has undergone a significant transformation in its workforce over the past decade. There has been a notable shift toward knowledge-intensive "white collar" jobs, while manual "blue collar" positions in urban areas, like Los Angeles, have declined.³⁸ This change has turned an industry that once provided ample opportunities for workers without college degrees into one dominated by educated professionals such as creatives, managers, and specialists.³⁹ Los Angeles County has seen substantial growth in creative roles like writing, acting, directing, and producing. The proportion of college-educated workers in the industry rose from 46% in 2000 to 68% in 2022.⁴⁰ Skills in critical thinking and complex problem-solving have become increasingly valuable, while the importance of manual tasks like equipment maintenance has diminished. This shift has led to the displacement of workers without college degrees, while attracting more college-educated talent from other

³⁷ <https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-december-2023.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-may-2024.pdf>

³⁹ https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103496/arts-workers-in-california_0_0.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-may-2024.pdf>

economic sectors. Interestingly, as the industry has become more skill-oriented, it has also grown more racially diverse.⁴¹

California's shift to a "minority majority" state has significant implications for how communities of color intersect with the creative economy. This demographic shift raises questions about representation in media, access to jobs in the creative economy, and demand for and consumption of creative products and entertainment. For example, Latinos – who make up 40% of California's population – buy a disproportionately high number of movie theater tickets despite being underrepresented both on-screen and in media company boardrooms. An analysis by McKinsey found that improving Latino representation in Hollywood could result in \$12 billion to \$18 billion a year in annual revenue, in addition to improving workplaces for Latinos and producing a broader range of Latino stories for all audiences.⁴² Meanwhile, Asian representation has jumped dramatically in Hollywood. A University of Southern California study that analyzed 1,600 top box office films and 69,858 characters portrayed on films from 2007 to 2022, found that the percentage of Asian characters with speaking roles leaped from around 3% to nearly 16%.⁴³

The representation of artists with disabilities in the workforce is comparable to the general U.S. labor force, with around 5% of artists reporting disabilities, according to a report on artists and other cultural workers by the National Endowment for the Arts.⁴⁴ However, the overall labor force participation rate for people with disabilities is significantly lower than for those without disabilities.⁴⁵ While the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 has led to substantial improvements in opportunities for individuals with disabilities, including better integration in schools and increased workplace accommodations, challenges persist for artists with disabilities. These include accessibility issues and societal perceptions that can hinder career success. It is noteworthy that disabled artists may face compounded barriers, particularly if they belong to multiple marginalized groups.⁴⁶ This intersectionality of identity factors can create more pervasive obstacles to professional advancement in the arts. Participation can also be difficult for those with disabilities in a position to fear losing their Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, which may

⁴¹ [ibid](#)

⁴² <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/latinos-in-hollywood-amplifying-voices-expanding-horizons>

⁴³ <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-inequality-in-1600-popular-films-20230811.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/artists-and-other-cultural-workers-statistical-portrait>

⁴⁵ <https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2019/dec/30/disabled-artists-overcome-barriers-buil/#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20artists%20with,more%20disabilities%20from%202012%2D2016.>

⁴⁶ [ibid](#)

be their stable source of both income and health insurance coverage.⁴⁷ The prospect of working as a freelancer without employer-sponsored healthcare coverage may also discourage disabled workers from pursuing creative careers. There is a need for benefits planning information for artists with disabilities, particularly regarding how much they can earn while maintaining their benefits and understanding healthcare options.

⁴⁷ https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/careers-in-the-arts-brief-rev3_0.pdf

Local Governmental Strategies for Cultivating Creative Economies

California has long been recognized as a global leader in the creative industries, from the silver screens of Hollywood to the video game developers of Silicon Valley. Sustaining this competitive edge and encouraging the growth of creative communities depends upon the concerted efforts of local governments, with counties and cities playing a pivotal role in fostering healthy, local, creative ecosystems. In particular, they have the ability to support their creative economies by lowering barriers to entry into the creative sector for workers and businesses, by supporting creative communities, and by attracting both creative talent and consumers of art from outside the state or region. Counties and cities are uniquely positioned to cultivate this ecosystem by implementing targeted local strategies through policymaking, the provision of support mechanisms, and creative place-making.

Counties and cities have a direct impact on arts and culture by leveraging their dedicated arts and culture departments or agencies, as well as by implementing policy related to economic development, permitting, and zoning. In addition, dedicating public funding for initiatives and projects related to arts and culture is a particularly important tool for stimulating creative activity.

Public funding for the arts

Funding can be secured through legislative appropriations or through voter initiatives. For example, in 2018, San Francisco voters approved Proposition E funding for the arts, which allocates 8% of the city's existing hotel tax to arts-related city programs, including art grants and supporting cultural arts districts.⁴⁸ Local governments can also make grants to artists and the organizations that serve them through their arts and culture departments. Americans for the Arts found that in 2019, 58% of local arts agencies across the United States operated direct grant-making programs, 28% provided nongrant contracts to arts organizations, 84% supported direct culture programming, and 62% managed cultural facilities.⁴⁹ And according to a report prepared by the California Arts Council State-Local Partner network, it distributed over \$39 million in grants to artists and organizations in 2021 alone, with a direct impact of approximately \$91 million (direct expenses).

⁴⁸ <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/files/pdf/ArtsAndTheEconomySFMarch2021Final.pdf> (p. 22)

⁴⁹ <https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/2022-arts-funding-snapshot.pdf> (p. 12)

Creating a more business-friendly environment for creative enterprises

This may involve relaxing zoning rules and simplifying permitting. It can entail streamlining the process for opening studios, galleries, and performance spaces by removing unnecessary hurdles. For example, the city of New Orleans established a “one-stop shop” app for event permitting that allows organizers to search, apply, and track multiple permits and licenses through a single platform.⁵⁰ Another development in this domain is the establishment of “night mayors” to help guide policy and mediate nighttime cultural economic activities. A study from 2020 found that more than 45 cities around the world had a formally appointed “night mayor” to handle urban challenges and create more vibrant, safer, and competitive environments for nighttime businesses. New York City and Washington, D.C., have additionally created special offices of nightlife.⁵¹ Counties and cities also play a leading role in facilitating events that merge entertainment, art and culture, and commerce, such as fairs, street festivals, and night markets. In addition to allowing these to take place in accessible public spaces, they are in a position to promote such events by leveraging local tourism boards, chambers of commerce, and culturally specific professional and community organizations.

Changing land use codes and making creative spaces more accessible

Cities can employ various methods for increasing the availability of spaces for creative economic activity. In 2024, the mayor of Seattle passed legislation, called the Downtown Activation Plan, to grant more flexibility in the types of business that can occupy street-level commercial spaces downtown, in an effort to fill vacant storefronts and increase pedestrian traffic. Previous zoning laws prohibited uses such as art studios, but the newly unveiled plan allows spaces to be used for crafts manufacturing, art installations, and similar activities that revive urban vibrancy or increase the variety of goods and services available.⁵²

Such measures can include easing transit in the area by removing parking restrictions or ensuring that late-night public transportation is available. It may also involve making experiences more enjoyable for attendees by, for example, allowing alcohol to be sold at venues without requiring owners to maintain alcoholic beverage licenses. Public safety is another area where cities can impact attendance at arts and cultural events. Fighting petty crime and property theft, as well as taking security precautions to prevent more serious

⁵⁰ <https://onestopapp.nola.gov/>

⁵¹ <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/2020/07/andreina-seijas-charts-the-emergence-of-the-night-mayor-an-advocate-mediator-and-policy-maker-for-a-citys-nocturnal-life/>

⁵² https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6499fe47e327f2a9cfab2e97/6570f73d4f77401241870282_Seattle%20Downtown%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Full%20Plan%20-%20Accessible.pdf

incidents, like shootings, can influence residents' decisions to attend an event or stay home. One initiative to alleviate safety concerns and ease parking struggles is Oakland's Five After Five program, launched in 2023, which extends parking-garage hours from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., increases garage security personnel, and guarantees a flat \$5 parking rate in the city-owned downtown parking garage after 5 p.m. on weekdays.⁵³ The new policy has been welcomed by residents who want to enjoy the city's nightlife but may have been deterred by the recent increase in car break-ins and the high prices of some downtown garages. Such initiatives can help relieve costs associated with security, permitting, and trash pickup, which currently make hosting events prohibitively expensive for creative businesses in both urban and rural settings.

Providing ecosystem support to creative communities

Counties and cities can play a critical role in shaping an ecosystem of support for local creative workers and businesses by supporting the transfer of knowledge and capacity-building opportunities, by fostering connections among and between creatives and other sectors, and by supporting arts and cultural events. Effective collaboration between local governments, educational institutions, and a wide variety of creative industry participants is crucial for nurturing a competitive creative ecosystem. State and federal governments are also key in funding educational institutions, but by facilitating partnerships, counties and cities can help to align workforce development initiatives with industry needs, promote cross-disciplinary collaborations, and encourage knowledge-sharing among creative professionals. They can also support the vital community spaces that seed creative collaborations and spark inspiration, which include maker spaces and coworking facilities, community centers, artist residencies, and incubator and accelerator programs.

Cities and counties can help experienced and emerging creatives connect to foster knowledge-sharing and professional career development. They can additionally address the needs of creatives by sharing resources for professional development, financial well-being, and entrepreneurial training and business acumen, to which many artists may not have had access. For example, New York City's Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment has several career development programs, including those focused on women in film, TV and theater, and trainings for production assistants, post-production, animation, and other creative occupations.⁵⁴ In Belgium, the Flemish government established Cultuurloket, an agency that

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<https://www.oaklandca.gov/news/mayor-sheng-thao-launches-community-safety-initiatives-for-oaklands-business-districts>

⁵⁴ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/#government-support>

provides free business and legal advice for individuals and enterprises in the cultural sector, as well as vocational training, personal coaching, and financing advice.⁵⁵ Cities and counties can also leverage the existing efforts of nonprofits and professional associations by promoting them to artists or by funding them directly. For example, the Brooklyn-based nonprofit ArtBuilt posts resources online and hosts workshops to share information with artists on how to budget, build assets, and buy a home.⁵⁶ Strengthening the local nonprofit ecosystem of support for creatives is a relatively easy way for cities and counties to support artists and creative workers.

Investing in creative place-making

Creative place-making consists of deliberate efforts to boost local culture and provide the physical spaces needed for creativity and the arts to thrive, essentially integrating art and culture into the social fabric of a place to create a vibrant and attractive environment. This process can involve designating cultural districts, hosting creative events and activities that celebrate a region's heritage, and ensuring access to affordable housing, workspace, and production facilities. Through this process, cities can build the cultural amenities needed to attract and retain creative and noncreative businesses and talent. Importantly, in the context of increasing migration and urbanization (seven out of every 10 people in the world are expected to reside in urban areas by 2050⁵⁷), cities especially will need to pay attention to the value of creative place-making.

Cultural districts are one tool cities can use to protect and support creative communities, and there are many successful examples. Los Angeles's NoHo Arts District⁵⁸ has become a thriving hub for artists, galleries, and creative enterprises in North Hollywood, and in 2023 the city's planning commission expanded it by approving the construction of "District NoHo," which will increase housing, retail, and public plazas on 16 acres of land.⁵⁹ In 2018, San Francisco passed legislation that formalized the creation of cultural districts across the city. Each designated area was required to send the city its strategic plans for development, which include historical preservation and a focus on the arts.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, cities like Santa Monica have implemented development plans that prioritize pedestrian-friendly streets and public open space. Such development plans have been successful in smaller, less urban

⁵⁵ <https://www.sipotra.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Culture-Fix-CREATIVE-PEOPLE-PLACES-AND-INDUSTRIES.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.artbuilt.org/what-we-do>

⁵⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

⁵⁸ <https://nohoartsdistrict.com/>

⁵⁹ https://planning.lacity.gov/plndoc/Staff_Reports/2023/09-28-2023/CPC_2019_7239_1_.pdf

⁶⁰ <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/files/pdf/ArtsAndTheEconomySFMarch2021Final.pdf> (p.70)

areas as well. California's first state-designated cultural districts include locations like Grass Valley, home to a vibrant arts community and recently emerging as an augmented-reality hub nestled in the Sierra Nevada mountains,⁶¹ and Lancaster, a high-desert city whose BLVD district boasts historic sites like the Cedar Center for the Arts and embraces innovative green and creative initiatives.⁶²

Organizing targeted marketing and promotional campaigns: Cities and regions can further strengthen their creative place-making work by highlighting their assets through campaigns to attract tourists, businesses, and new residents. One way cities try to build an attractive brand is by winning an international designation as a creative or vibrant place. San Diego and Tijuana, for example, were jointly awarded the title of World Design Capital (WDC) for 2024 by the WDC organization, an international nonprofit, after submitting a 250-page binational bid. The designation recognizes cities' commitment to human-centered design and is marked with a year-long program of public events, which include festivals, designer dialogues, museum exhibits, and community-based design opportunities.⁶³ It is viewed by some local officials as a way to showcase these cities' local creative economy, create jobs, attract tourists, and create a legacy. The long-term benefits of these types of designations are still being evaluated. In this case, however, the winning cities pay \$500,000 to WDC for the honor, in addition to paying for the year's worth of events (the government of Valencia, Spain, a former WDC honoree, ending up paying 4 million euros by the end of its campaign).⁶⁴ As a lower-cost alternative, cities can apply to programs like UNESCO's Creative Cities Network⁶⁵ as a way to elevate their brand domestically and internationally and join a network of 350 member cities that support the fields of crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music. Creative City members must demonstrate a record of "placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans" and commit to implementing four-year action plans related to arts and culture and to exchanging knowledge and experiences within the network. For instance, the city of London, Canada, was named a UNESCO City of Music in 2021 and attributed its designation to decisions like approving an official music strategy for the municipality and hiring a music industry development officer.⁶⁶ Such programs could benefit smaller cities, particularly in rural California, assuming they are sufficiently accessible.

⁶¹ <https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/grassvalley-nevadacity>

⁶² <https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/blvd-district>

⁶³ <https://www.sandiego.org/press/press-releases/2023/world-design-capital-san-diego-tijuana-2024-and-city-of-san-diego-announce-year-long-program.aspx>

⁶⁴ <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2024/may/15/cover-boost-or-bust/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities?hub=80094>

⁶⁶ <https://london.ca/newsroom/public-service-announcement/london-designated-canadas-first-unesco-city-music>

Focusing on affordability and access to housing and workspaces for creatives

Affordability is a key issue in creative place-making work, especially where artists are being priced out of urban areas. In San Francisco, the cost of housing is particularly high, and a 2015 survey by the San Francisco Arts Commission showed that over 70% of artist respondents had been or were being displaced from their workplace, home, or both.⁶⁷

Affordable workspaces and housing are a critical need for many creative workers, and city governments are crucial to ensuring artists can remain in their communities. Housing is a major challenge for cities in California, but targeted efforts are being made to support creative workers. For example, after the passing of Assembly Bill 2011⁶⁸, which allows affordable housing to be built on commercially zoned land, two nonprofits filed plans with the city of San Francisco to build 100 units of affordable housing dedicated to artists, individuals in arts administration, and their families.⁶⁹

Cities and counties can provide additional spaces for creative work and performance by building or renovating cultural spaces like theaters, museums, and landmarks, and by mandating the installation of art in public places like parks, plazas, and boulevards. According to Greg Richards, “Iconic architecture and events are currently among the most important cultural catalysts used to revamp urban identity, increase vibrancy, and attract creative people and tourists.”⁷⁰ Beyond supporting the creative ecosystem, these efforts have the potential to produce multiple positive economic effects. However, a 2012 study by the University of Chicago Cultural Policy Center and NORC⁷¹ found no conclusive evidence of spillover impacts from brick-and-mortar investment within a community, positive or negative. In addition, the adage “build it and they will come” was complicated by a lack of realistic or long-term planning for many institutions, which led to financial distress.⁷²

One way cities and counties can fund these types of projects is by securing private investments for arts and culture infrastructure. For example, in Medellín, Colombia, the Moravia Cultural Development Center was built in 2007 with 100% of its \$2.8 million cost paid for by a corporate foundation. The center has helped the neighborhood of Moravia transform

⁶⁷ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1luYwyQDPcsBY9wQW_99YlhWCbX1s1wLe/view

⁶⁸ https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB2011

⁶⁹ <https://www.sfchronicle.com/realestate/article/sf-housing-artists-nonprofits-19447521.php>

⁷⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160738320300669>

⁷¹ <https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Set-In-Stone.pdf>

⁷² <https://www.giarts.org/blog/janet/set-stone>

from one of its most violent and poorest neighborhoods to a place in which residents now gather and take pride.⁷³

Recognizing the diversity of cultural approaches and needs

It is important to note that city and county strategies for supporting local creative economies are not one-size-fits-all. Creative ecosystems tend to be most robust in densely populated, urban areas where there are high concentrations of cultural amenities and larger creative communities. While all California counties are home to creative residents, creative infrastructure and creative jobs are not evenly distributed throughout the state. Los Angeles – and to an extent, Ventura and Orange counties – and the San Francisco Bay Area counties already have strong creative economies and infrastructure. Other cities and counties, like San Diego, Santa Barbara, Ukiah, and Joshua Tree have established communities of artists. Others could benefit from increased arts funding. For example, many towns in rural Humboldt and Shasta counties lack the infrastructure, including an adequate number of accessible roads, that would allow for large-scale events or the development of major cultural centers. And some counties, like San Bernardino, face shortages of good, creative jobs, consequently forcing creatives out of their local communities and into nearby urban centers like Los Angeles. The tools that each county and city has at its disposal may vary, as does the best approach to fostering a vibrant, local creative economy.

⁷³ <https://www.creativityculturecapital.org/blog/2021/09/13/culture-the-key-to-the-transformation-of-medellin/>

Financing Creative Economy Projects: An Increasing Number of Funding Models

The financing of creative projects has evolved significantly over the decades, adapting to changing economic landscapes, technological advancements, and evolving consumer behaviors. Here we review various financing models that California can leverage to support and grow the creative economy.

Historically, the arts and cultural sector relied heavily on a mix of public and private funding sources. Government grants and subsidies played a pivotal role, with federal and local governments providing crucial financial support to cultural institutions, NGOs, and individual artists. This public funding was essential for maintaining the vibrancy of the cultural sector, especially for projects with significant cultural value but limited commercial potential. Revenue generated from sales and services typically supplemented these funding sources. The performing arts, cinema, and museum sectors relied heavily on ticket sales and admissions as primary sources of income. Additionally, the sale of related merchandise and publications, and the provision of ancillary services such as guided tours and workshops played a role in bolstering traditional revenue streams, ensuring the sustainability of various creative enterprises.

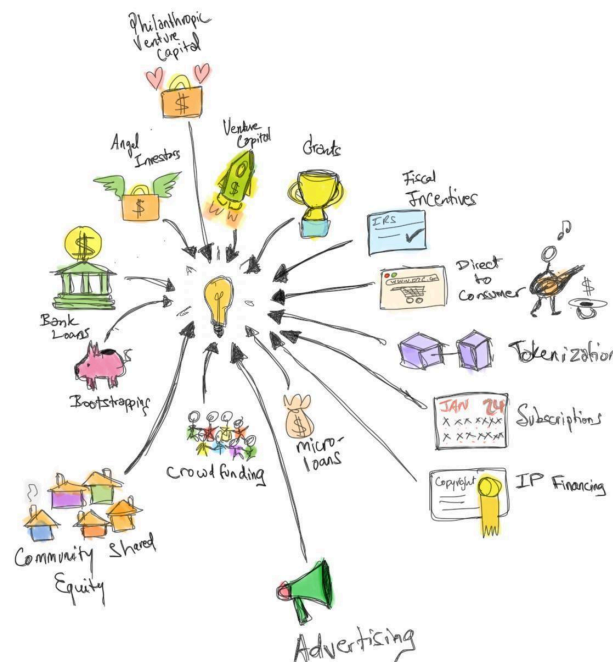


Illustration: Teffera G Teffera, IFTF, 2024

In California, its controversial (and now defunct) Redevelopment Agency program put hundreds of millions of dollars into developing arts infrastructure, funded through potential future tax increases, directing over \$350 million to arts and culture in Los Angeles alone over the course of over 60 years.⁷⁴

Emergence of digital funding and distribution platforms for creators and artists

In recent years, the financing landscape for creative projects has changed dramatically, driven by technological advancements, changes in consumer behavior, and the rise of digital platforms. Crowdfunding, for example, has emerged as a revolutionary model for financing creative projects, broadening access to capital by allowing artists and creators to bypass traditional funding gatekeepers. Platforms such as Kickstarter, Indiegogo, and Patreon have become essential tools for funding a wide range of creative endeavors. Kickstarter, for example, reported that as of June 2024, over \$8 billion had been pledged to more than 260,000 projects across various categories, including film, music, art, and design.⁷⁵ Prominent creators on Patreon leverage the platform to connect directly with their audiences and secure consistent funding.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the digital transformation has revolutionized how creative content is distributed and monetized. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok offer artists unprecedented access to global audiences, enabling them to build a following, engage with fans, and market their work directly. These platforms facilitate various revenue-generating opportunities, including tips, sponsored posts, crowdfunding campaigns, and direct sales through integrated e-commerce features. At the studio scale, streaming services like Netflix, Spotify, and YouTube have become dominant players, introducing new revenue models through subscriptions, advertising, and direct consumer payments. Social platforms, streaming services, and online marketplaces have become central to how artists reach audiences and generate revenue.

Government and philanthropic funding are still critical

Despite the rise of digital platforms, traditional grants from government and philanthropy remain a critical financial support for many artists and cultural organizations. Government grants, such as those from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the California Arts

⁷⁴ https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Redevelopment_WhitePaper.pdf

⁷⁵ <https://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats>

⁷⁶ <https://www.patreon.com/about>

Council (CAC) continue to fund a wide range of cultural initiatives that offer significant cultural and societal value. The NEA's budget allocation supports thousands of projects nationwide, ensuring diverse forms of art can flourish and be accessible to a broad audience. State arts agencies and local governments also contribute significantly to funding the arts. After a dip in funding at the start of the COVID pandemic, public funding for the arts increased, with a surge in funding in 2023, when federal, state, and local funding for the arts totaled \$2.28 billion for an aggregate per capita investment of \$6.83.⁷⁷ However, this rise in support was short-lived, causing organizations to contend with what, in the context of the 2023 increase, is being experienced as a sudden decline in funding.

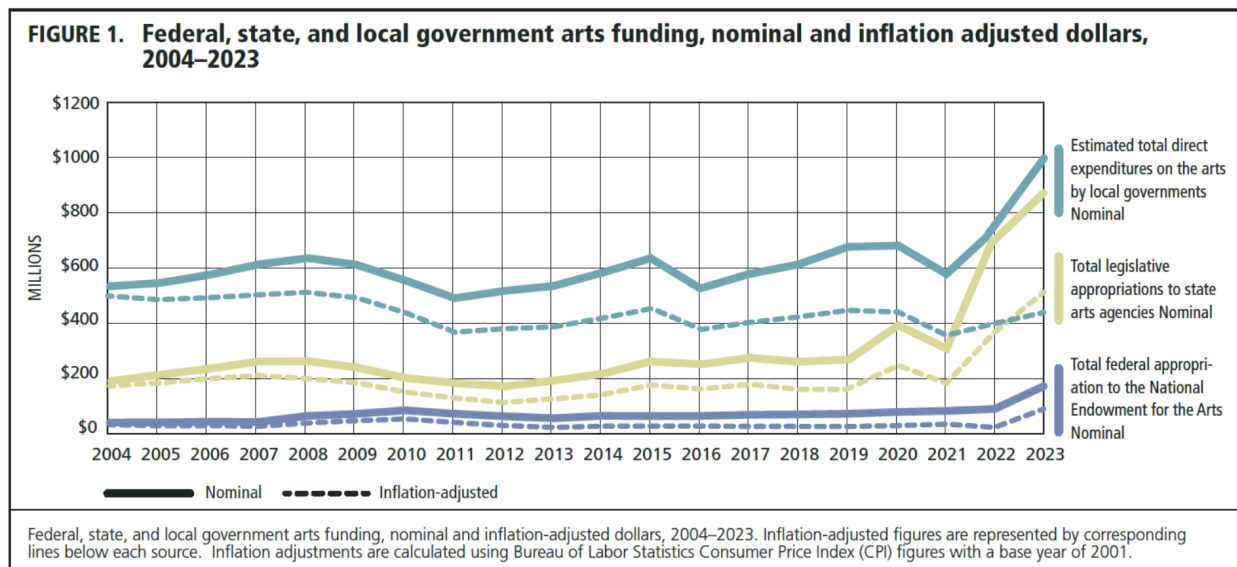


Figure source:

<https://reader.giarts.org/read/public-funding-for-the-arts-2023#:~:text=2023%20Funding%20Levels,increase%20of%2015%25%20from%20FY2022.>

Additionally, funding is highly uneven across different California geographies. Rural areas, in general, have fewer funders. And massive inequities even exist between major metropolitan areas – the San Francisco Arts Commission alone (only one of multiple arts funders in the Bay Area) had cash equating to over \$40 per capita, compared to the Los Angeles Arts Commission (now the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture), which had cash equating to only 93 cents per capita cash in 2019.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ <https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/2024/GIA%20Arts%20Funding%20Snapshot%202024.pdf>

⁷⁸ <https://view.publitas.com/ca-arts-council/2020-cac-slp-report/page/14-15>

Philanthropic foundations, including the Ford Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Bloomberg Family Foundation, also provide substantial grants that enable artists and organizations to undertake innovative projects and reach underserved communities.⁷⁹ These foundations focus on promoting cultural equity and supporting underrepresented artists. For example, the Ford Foundation's Creativity and Free Expression program funds initiatives that amplify the voices of marginalized artists.⁸⁰

Charitable donations from smaller family foundations and individual donors are also important vehicles for funding the arts. In 2023, total charitable giving to arts, culture, and humanities in the United States totaled \$25.36 billion, an 11% increase (6% adjusted for inflation) over 2022.⁸¹ However, such philanthropic funding is not available in many rural communities and is often difficult to access for smaller NGOs. There is also concern that as the great wealth transfer from baby boomers to millennials and Generation Xers progresses, giving priorities may shift as well, potentially away from the arts.

Expansion of private investments

The role of private investment in the creative sector has increased significantly over the past several decades. Venture capital and private equity investors are major investors in creative industries, although private equity investment in entertainment has declined in recent years as streaming has shifted business models.⁸² Investments in start-ups within digital media, gaming, and creative technology are common, fueling innovation and growth. Angel investors, particularly in the early stages of creative projects, can provide not only financial support but mentorship and industry connections, which are meaningful for the success of these ventures and those undertaking them.⁸³ Such investors typically have extensive experience and networks in the creative industries, offering strategic advice and guidance that can help creatives navigate the complexities of starting and growing an enterprise. For example, in the film industry, angel investors often assist emerging filmmakers by providing the initial capital needed to start production while also connecting them with experienced directors, producers, and distributors who can help bring their projects to fruition. Impact investors, who focus on generating positive social and environmental impact alongside

⁷⁹ <https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/2024/GIA%20Arts%20Funding%20Snapshot%202024.pdf>

⁸⁰ <https://www.fordfoundation.org/work/challenging-inequality/creativity-and-free-expression/>

⁸¹ <https://givingusa.org/giving-usa-u-s-charitable-giving-totaled-557-16-billion-in-2023/>

⁸² <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/private-equity-investment-in-movies-entertainment-plunges-to-6-year-low-in-2023-80197797>

⁸³ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/29f05369-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/29f05369-en>

financial returns, have also turned toward the arts in recent years.⁸⁴ Cornerstone Capital Group, for example, employs impact funds focused on creativity and the arts to counter opportunity gaps created by the knowledge economy, creates on-ramps to wealth-building for diverse entrepreneurs, and unleashes “enormous opportunity to drive economic growth and employment through coherent, broad-based strategies to invest in this space.”⁸⁵ Imagining arts, culture, and entertainment as an area of impact has the potential to unlock greater investment in the field.

In addition, funding models that were previously only available to larger enterprises are now becoming accessible to smaller businesses. For example, small businesses are now able to issue their own bonds, which can be purchased by local community members or others looking to invest outside traditional venues. SMBX is one platform that simplifies this process and allows investors to earn market-rate returns by purchasing bonds in local creative endeavors, such as the Ciel Creative Space in Berkeley.⁸⁶ In addition to offering small businesses a funding mechanism not otherwise available to them, these types of platforms allow community members to be more involved in local culture, both by investing financially and through increased familiarity with local cultural endeavors.

The value of hybrid public-private financing models

These models blend public and private money to support large-scale cultural projects and infrastructure. Public-private partnerships are a key example, combining government resources with private-sector investment to fund and manage cultural initiatives such as the construction of museums, performance spaces, and cultural centers. For instance, the redevelopment of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) involved significant private donations (80%) and public funding (20%) provided by the county, demonstrating how combined resources can achieve large-scale cultural enhancement.⁸⁷ The High Line cultural space, which is owned by the City of New York, is a park that relies on private donations collected by the Friends of the High Line for 100% of its operating budget. It is another example of a successful public-private partnership, transforming an abandoned rail line into a heavily visited public attraction and spurring significant development around it.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ <https://upstartco-lab.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/170320-CPB-Final-Report.pdf>

⁸⁵ https://missioninvestors.org/sites/default/files/resources/Read%20the%20Full%20Report_0.pdf

⁸⁶ <https://www.thesmbx.com/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.lacma.org/press/lacma-surpasses-750-million-campaign-fundraising-goal>

⁸⁸ https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/caseconsortium/casestudies/128/casestudy/www/layout/case_id_128_id_902.html

These types of partnerships leverage public funds to attract private investment, ensuring that projects can be completed without relying solely on public resources.

Governments can also deploy funding to help promote private investment by de-risking it. For example, the European Union Investment Bank's Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility provides loans and other financial products to help micro-businesses and small- and medium-size enterprises in the cultural sector secure affordable debt financing for their projects. The program encourages financial intermediaries to adopt a specific credit assessment approach with these organizations and offers investors the opportunity to receive customized training to help them better understand the needs of cultural and creative sector projects.⁸⁹ Government guarantees or assistance in the lending process can be particularly valuable for financing creative projects led by individuals or small organizations that traditional investors may find too risky.

⁸⁹ https://www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/cultural_creative_sectors_guarantee_facility/index.htm

Nontraditional financing options

Other financial instruments, such as cultural bonds and land trusts, are emerging as effective strategies for financing creative projects or supporting creative communities. Cultural bonds are debt securities issued to raise funds for cultural projects, offering investors returns based on the project's financial performance and its broader societal benefits. For example, the city of Denver issued cultural bonds to fund the renovation and expansion of the Denver Art Museum, raising \$35.5 million to support crucial safety and infrastructure upgrades while providing financial returns to investors.⁹⁰ Land trusts, on the other hand, are living trusts that take ownership over a piece of land. They can be administered by government or nonprofit organizations and allow for value-aligned development. For example, the Creative Land Trust in the United Kingdom is a social enterprise aiming to secure workspace for artists that would otherwise be unattainable. By securing 1,000 studios in London, the enterprise wants to build a financial and operating model to provide long-lasting, affordable studio space rentals.⁹¹ And the Artist Space Trust, a community land trust in Northern California, is gathering individual properties into a collective structure, “offering long-term community control and artist-sensitive management and expertise.”⁹² Similarly, the Bay Area's Community Arts Stabilization Trust administers programs and services to help arts organizations build pathways to ownership and help artists to secure long-term, affordable leases.⁹³ Tools like this show great promise for expanding cultural infrastructure and helping creative communities remain in areas experiencing rapid increases in cost of living and housing prices.

Several trends are likely to shape the future financing of creative projects. An increased focus on sustainability and social impact in financing decisions stands to influence the decisions of both investors and consumers seeking to support projects that offer both financial returns and positive societal contributions. Meanwhile, the adoption of blockchain technology and non-Fungible tokens) are potentially transformative tools that might allow artists and creators to monetize their work, providing new ways to ensure authenticity and ownership in the digital realm. The financing of creative projects in California – and globally – is becoming increasingly diverse and dynamic. The blending of traditional and innovative funding sources reflects the sector's adaptability and resilience, and as the landscape

⁹⁰ <https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/press/release/martin-building-reopening-oct-2021#:~:text=City%20voters%20approved%20the%20Elevate.at%20a%20three%20Done%20ratio>.

⁹¹ https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLT_Report_Inside_Strategy.pdf

⁹² <https://www.artistspacetrust.org/>

⁹³ <https://cast-sf.org/about-us/>

evolves, these changes in funding models can serve as a lifeline for creators, investors, and policymakers alike.

Education and Training for Creative Economy Work: A Rich Variety of Options

As a whole, creative industries are highly competitive. The number of people who want to do creative work generally exceeds the number of available jobs. However, when it comes to jobs that require specific technical skills, such as sound engineering, creating visual effects, and color grading in video post-production, media companies and other creative-sector employers often struggle to find an adequate number of qualified workers. Part of this is due to the pace of technological change – unlike in other industries, in which skill sets may be more enduring, technical skills in creative work often need to be refreshed frequently to keep up with emerging technologies. While this creates a challenge for arts education programs, it also represents an opportunity for the educational system to strengthen the competitiveness of California's creative economy. State education and training programs in the creative arts play an important role in the creative ecosystem, and consequently in the creative economy overall. For example, the California Career Technical Education Incentive Grant Program⁹⁴ is a state education, economic, and workforce development initiative that aims to deliver high-quality career technical education programs, with \$300 million allocated in the 2023-24 school year.

There is a need for more arts programs and better access to them

A great number of these programs exist throughout the state to serve students and professionals – ranging from public primary and secondary school curricula to specialized college and university degree programs to afterschool programs to apprenticeships to professional development programs. But while the quantity and variety of programs in the state is impressive, they remain inadequate given high demand from students hoping to enter creative fields, existing creative workers, and creative economy employers. In addition, these programs are not universally accessible. California has fallen short of its own stated goals of providing arts education to students equitably in K-12 schools. A 2007 study found that only 11% of California public schools reported meeting the state education code's requirement to provide a sequential arts education in four arts disciplines: music, visual art,

⁹⁴ <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/ig/>

dance, and theater.⁹⁵ A follow-up study in 2022 found substantial, but uneven, progress. A greater number of schools were offering a course of study in each of the required arts disciplines, higher percentages of elementary school students were participating in arts education, and more students were enrolled in career technical education courses in the arts, but schools serving low-income communities had 22% fewer students receiving arts instruction in music and 28% fewer students receiving instruction in visual arts than those serving the highest-income communities.⁹⁶ In addition, four out of five public schools lacked a full-time teacher dedicated to either traditional arts programs (such as music, dance, theater, or art) or to newer forms of creative expression (such as computer graphics, animation, coding, costume design, or filmmaking).⁹⁷

Secondary school is a time when many young people cultivate passions and interests and make decisions about their career paths. A study of adolescents' dream jobs found that 24% of a sample of 3,367 teenagers aspired to an artistic career, although many fewer end up pursuing these paths.⁹⁸ Regardless, access to arts education in this phase of life is crucial for increasing the number of creative workers in the state, as well as for giving all students a sense of the variety of professional paths available to them. Californians recognize and value arts education and have passed ballot measures allocating funding for these programs. For instance, in 2022, California voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 28, which increased school budgets for visual arts, theater, dance, music and media arts, showing constituents' enthusiasm for arts education.⁹⁹ In addition, over 250,000 thousand high school students and graduates are enrolled in aArts, mMedia, and eEntertainment Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in California¹⁰⁰, and over a billion dollars go out to local education agencies to fund CTE. However, despite these good intentions, there have been reports of misuse of funds, calling into question the impact of these types of budgetary allocations.¹⁰¹

Higher education institutions in California also offer a wealth of courses and degree programs in creative economy industries. The 116 community colleges across the state allow students to earn associate degrees in a wide variety of fields, including 2D and 3D animation, architecture, art history, dance, design, digital illustration, fashion, interior design,

⁹⁵ <https://hewlett.org/library/an-unfinished-canvas-arts-education-in-california-taking-stock-of-policies-and-practices/>

⁹⁶ <https://hewlett.org/creativity-challenge-the-state-of-arts-education-in-california/>

⁹⁷ <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2022/02/arts-education-is-woefully-underfunded-in-california-schools/>

⁹⁸ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10690727211026183#bibr21-10690727211026183>

⁹⁹ <https://calmatters.org/california-voter-guide-2022/propositions/prop-28-arts-education/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/career-technical-education-among-california-high-school-graduates>

¹⁰¹ <https://calmatters.org/education/k-12-education/2024/05/arts-education/>

photography, theater arts, visual media production, and web development.¹⁰² The state's universities, including its 23 state universities¹⁰³ and its 10 University of California campuses¹⁰⁴ offer high-quality academic and professional training at an undergraduate and graduate level to students across the state, although the most well-known programs tend to be clustered around Los Angeles and in the Bay Area. In addition, California's private colleges and universities offer world-renowned training in the arts. While private college and university programs tend to be expensive (with a few exceptions – the University of Southern California, for example, is now offering tuition-free MFA programs¹⁰⁵) and both private schools and University of California campuses tend to have competitive admissions, many of these programs are well-connected to industry leaders and businesses, providing students with industry connections and access to employment opportunities.

Earn-and-learn opportunities

Creative work carries a reputation for being driven by passion. But this is sometimes used as a justification for practices in creative industries that are inequitable or exclusionary. People seeking to enter the creative economy are sometimes expected to perform unpaid or underpaid work to gain industry experience and exposure. This practice leads to issues related to access and diversity, as it creates barriers for low-income and low-wealth individuals and for young people without family financial support. On-the-job training, paid apprenticeships, and other earn-and-learn training programs represent an important mechanism to improve equity in the creative economy, while strengthening the pipeline of creative workers across a variety of fields. These programs can also provide professional education that addresses quickly evolving creative techniques, while giving participants valuable hands-on experience.

Two examples of these types of programs are registered apprenticeship programs and pre-apprenticeship programs, which are approved by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or a state apprenticeship agency. Pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to prepare people for registered apprenticeship programs and have the potential to provide opportunities through work-based learning to people without pre-existing skills. Typically in these apprenticeship programs, participants are paid by an employer for on-the-job learning and receive supplementary classroom instruction either online or in-person. The Alliance for

¹⁰² <https://icangotocollege.com/career-categories/3-arts-audiovideo-technology-and-communications>

¹⁰³ <https://www.calstate.edu/attend/campuses>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses-locations>

¹⁰⁵ <https://dramaticarts.usc.edu/usc-school-of-dramatic-arts-to-offer-free-tuition-for-its-mfa-programs/>

Media Arts + Culture, a national network of media arts organizations founded to provide support services to its institutional members and advocate for the field, created the first federally registered apprenticeship program in media arts and creative technologies. At the time, these types of apprenticeships had only been established for workers such as plumbers, pipefitters, and electricians. The arts program was established when the organization made the case that arts training was equally economically valuable.¹⁰⁶ Examples of registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs include:

- The Alliance for Media Arts + Culture's apprenticeship program, Arts2Work, specifically assists people with a high school diploma or equivalent and basic digital media skills in getting placed as a paid multimedia producer or digital video editor.¹⁰⁷ Apprentices are mentored on the job by a senior staff member, and receive 150 hours of supplemental training, which is either paid for by the employer or by Arts2Work through grants and training stipends.
- AIM-N-INSPIRE is a registered pre-apprentice and apprenticeship program in animation, interactive gaming, and filmmaking.¹⁰⁸ Run by Better Youth, a nonprofit that serves foster, homeless, low-income and system-impacted youth in Los Angeles County, it gives young people the chance to develop practical life skills through social-emotional mentorship, professional development, and media arts training over the course of a 24-week paid apprenticeship. The program provides comprehensive training in animation, interactive gaming, media production (including film and TV shows), or new media with virtual and mixed realities. This includes hands-on experience with state-of-the-art equipment, professional development workshops, and mentorship from industry experts.
- The nonprofit EVEN's¹⁰⁹ registered apprenticeship program offers participants opportunities to work in the live-events industry in backstage positions including lighting, audio, and scenic technicians. EVEN is aiming to build an end-to-end pipeline to help those aspiring to creative jobs to move from paid apprenticeship placements to stable careers. EVEN also contributes in writing

¹⁰⁶ <https://arts2work.media/stories/arts2workapprenticeship>

¹⁰⁷ <https://arts2work.media/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.betteryouth.org/aim-n-inspire>

¹⁰⁹ <https://theevennetwork.org/ca-ra-program>

the arts, media, and entertainment model curriculum standards for California high schools, which creates analogous pre-apprenticeship tracks for students.

- The Music Forward Foundation, Live Nation's corporate foundation, has a paid apprenticeship program for California residents ages 18 to 24 and veterans who want to work in live entertainment.¹¹⁰ The program provides supplemental instruction, six months of mentorship, a certificate of completion, and 1,080 to 2,000 hours of paid on-the-job training as a marketing coordinator, special-events coordinator, lighting technician, grip/rigger, stagehand, audio and video technician, music supervision coordinator, talent coordinator, or audio engineer.

Newer initiatives funded by the state of California include the Creative Corps, which seeks to support artists engaged in creative work in different geographies. This initiative provides artists with a living wage as they work with nonprofit institutions in their communities within key issue areas (civic engagement, climate justice, community health and wellness, and social justice) to create a project of their choice. The initiative taps 14 organizations across the state, including the Inland Empire Community Foundation and Kern Dance Alliance, to administer grants locally.¹¹¹

In addition to these state-sponsored programs, businesses, nonprofits, and cultural institutions also offer earn-and-learn opportunities in a variety of creative fields. Among these are:

- The BRIC Foundation established an Arts, Media, and Entertainment High-Road Training Partnership that works with registered apprenticeship programs to target high-skill, high-wage jobs.¹¹² The program aims to support a diverse and inclusive workforce and includes paid on-the-job training, mentorship, career coaching, and ongoing support for participants on career pathways in film/television, animation, VFX, games, music/audio, live entertainment, and design.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ <https://musicforwardfoundation.org/about-us/>

¹¹¹ https://arts.ca.gov/grant_program/california-creative-corps/

¹¹² https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2023/07/2022.HRTP_BRIC_Arts-Media-and-Entertainment_ACCESSIBLE.pdf

¹¹³ <https://www.bricfoundation.org/ame-hrt>

- The Getty Marrow Undergraduate Internship Program supports paid internships at organizations in Los Angeles County with the aim of diversifying the staff of art museums and visual arts organizations to better reflect the communities they serve. Founded in 1993, it is the largest and oldest diversity internship program in the visual arts in the United States. It has supported paid positions for 3,200 interns at 175 organizations as of 2020. A report released in 2020, based on analysis of more than 2,500 intern alumni surveys, found that 32% of interns supported by the program went on to work in the arts.
- The Los Angeles County Arts Internship Program, a sister program to the Getty Marrow program, was established in 2000 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to support the county's cultural sector by providing access to high quality opportunities for college students of all backgrounds in the arts, the creative economy, and engagement in public life.
- The Diversity Apprenticeship Program is an initiative by The Broad Museum to create career opportunities for people from underrepresented communities in the museum field broadly and in the art-handling and preparations world specifically.¹¹⁴ It provides nine-month paid apprenticeships in art handling and preparations for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or LGBTQIA+; people of color; women; immigrants; people who were formerly incarcerated; and foster youth. In addition to giving participants experience in art handling, the program seeks to push the museum field toward more equitable workforce strategies.
- Manifest Works offers 12-week training programs in film, television, and new media to youth impacted by homelessness, foster care, or incarceration.¹¹⁵ It has partnered with IATSE Local 80 and the IATSE Training Trust to offer employment and job placement in technical roles.¹¹⁶
- The Alliance for California Traditional Arts has a long-running apprenticeship program that seeks to ensure that master practitioners of traditional arts pass on their craft to younger generations, preserving cultural heritage. The program contracts mentor artists to offer intensive, one-on-one training to eligible

¹¹⁴ <https://www.thebroad.org/dap/program-overview#:~:text=The%20Diversity%20Apprenticeship%20Program%20>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.manifestworks.org/approach-1>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.entertainmentequityalliance.org/community/manifestworks>

apprentices.¹¹⁷ Mentor artists are paid \$5,000 to cover fees, supplies, and travel, and the program serves as a form of professional development for the apprentice.

- The Handy Foundation offers paid internships as part of the California Film Commission's Pilot Career Pathways Training Program. These internships place participants in below-the-line (i.e., film and television crew) positions at a variety of film and television production studios.¹¹⁸ The Handy Foundation also offers a Glam Squad Training Program, in partnership with the NAACP and Netflix via its Fund for Creative Equity, which provides seven-week training programs to aspiring BIPOC hair and makeup artists.¹¹⁹ Although this training is not paid, one or more participants are guaranteed the opportunity to work as a production assistant in the hair and makeup department for an industry partner. The program gives hair and makeup artists experience with different hairstyles, textures, and skin tones, and is meant to support the next generation of both performers and beauty professionals.
- Sony Pictures Imageworks offers as-needed apprenticeships that are defined by the needs of current shows. Participants who successfully complete the program receive eight-week paid internships on upcoming Imageworks projects. It is open to recent graduates who are interested in professions in film and digital content creation, as well as to junior artists employed in similar roles at other companies.¹²⁰
- The Keycode Media Post Production Engineering Apprenticeship Program, developed by media production software and hardware company Key Code Media, pays apprentices \$18 to \$21 per hour for 2,000 hours of skills training, on-the-job learning, and one-on-one mentorship, and provides participants with certifications upon completion.¹²¹

These types of paid training opportunities can be invaluable to up-and-coming creative workers hoping to break into the industry of their choosing. They also create a pipeline of

¹¹⁷ <https://actaonline.org/program/apprenticeships/#:~:text=For%20over%2020%20years%2C%20ACTA's.outstanding%20traditional%20artists%20and%20practitioners.>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.handyfoundation.com/more-info>

¹¹⁹ <https://naacp.org/articles/naacp-handy-foundation-and-netflix-team-support-next-generation-hair-and-makeup-artists>

¹²⁰ <https://www.imageworks.com/icad/apprenticeships>

¹²¹ <https://keycodeeducation.com/ppe-apprenticeship/>

creative talent in a variety of fields, and in the case of employer-sponsored programs, provide jobseekers with skills explicitly matched to employers' needs. While such programs represent a powerful tool to carve out pathways into creative work, their ultimate success is dependent on an ample number of good, well-paying jobs in relevant fields that await newly trained workers as they enter the workforce and as their careers progress.

Successful Models of Creative Economy Plans and Programs

The creative economy encompasses industries that combine the creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that are cultural, artistic, or creative in nature, including areas such as arts, entertainment, design, media, and technology. The creative economy contributes significantly to both economic growth and cultural enrichment, making its cultivation a priority for local, state, and federal governments. Below we highlight and compare the creative economy plans of Washington, Massachusetts, and New York states; Ontario, Canada; and Berlin, Germany. We identify best practices and lessons learned related to economic impact, inclusivity and diversity, funding and support mechanisms, partnerships, and education and skills development programs in order to provide insights for California and other regions aiming to develop their own creative economy initiatives.

Washington

Washington's strategic plan for its creative economy focuses on building an inclusive, sustainable, and innovative creative sector. Key components include investment in creative technologies and workforce development. Washington's creative sector accounts for nearly 20% of the state's economy, contributing nearly \$120 billion annually to the state GDP.¹²² In 2023, the Washington State Department of Commerce released a strategic plan titled "Creative Washington: Growing and Strengthening the Creative Economy."¹²³ This plan was inspired by SB5238, legislation that focused on the creative economy sector and aims to contribute to job creation and small business success. It recognizes the importance of the creative workforce and creative entrepreneurship in driving the growth and sustainability of the creative economy.

In developing a strategy for future growth, the study highlighted four main priorities: promoting equity and access to create a more inclusive creative economy in Washington, leveraging resources to enhance the infrastructure and sustainability of the creative sector, investing in learning and skills for the long-term growth of the workforce, and strengthening the sector by supporting the creativity and talent of its people. To achieve these goals, the study identified 11 interconnected policy areas and made initial recommendations, including:

¹²² <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/news/report-creative-economy-contributes-nearly-120-billion-to-washington-state-gdp/>

¹²³ https://app.leg.wa.gov/ReportsToTheLegislature/Home/GetPDF?fileName=WACESP%20FinalReport%20122623_fb946f00-40a3-4c0c-993a-21d771b5aaed.pdf

increasing broadband access developing housing plans and live/work spaces for artists, reducing business taxes for small creative enterprises, enhancing funding and incentives, expanding access to licenses with social equity programs, utilizing zoning for affordable housing and creative spaces, increasing the number of public development authorities, special purpose quasi-municipal corporations that can administer programs or develop and operate real estate, while limiting the municipality's liability for any debts taken on in the process,¹²⁴ expanding creative districts and investing in entertainment areas, engaging workforce boards to meet industry needs, establishing funded apprenticeship programs, and using Community Economic Revitalization Board grants and loans to build supportive infrastructure.

These recommendations are designed to expand statewide support for the creative economy ecosystem, which consists of architecture and living, creative technology, culinary and beverage arts, cultural institutions, design and advertising, fashion, film, television, radio, music, performing arts, visual arts, and publishing. The creation of this plan involved collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including artists, creative entrepreneurs, technology leaders, investors, educators, and other civic leaders from across the state. Over 400 diverse stakeholders contributed knowledge, lived experience, and aspirations to help shape the themes, findings, and strategies outlined in the plan.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts recognizes the importance of its creative industries, which include the many sectors that provide creative services and create and promote intellectual property products. These include nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and individuals working in the following industries: advertising and marketing; architecture; visual arts and craft; design; film, media, entertainment, music and performance; and publishing.¹²⁵ The arts and culture sector is a major economic driver in Massachusetts. In 2021, arts and cultural production in the state had an \$27.2 billion economic impact, accounting for 135,181 jobs, and 4.2% of the state's economy.¹²⁶ ¹²⁷ Massachusetts has multiple creative economy plans, including the Creative Economy Network, and MASSCreative.

In 2012, Massachusetts established the Creative Economy Network to enhance the visibility and coordination of the support system for creative industries in the state, with the goal of

¹²⁴ <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/economic-development/financing/public-development-authorities>

¹²⁵ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/creative-economy-network-application/download>

¹²⁶ <https://www.mass-creative.org/priorities/creativeeconomy>

¹²⁷ <https://creativecollectivema.com/the-economic-impact-of-arts-and-culture-in-massachusetts/>

accelerating the growth of these vital sectors.¹²⁸ This network sought to bolster the state's creative industries by fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development. It also aimed to generate new business opportunities and enhance access to capital for creative enterprises and organizations. As a result, an action agenda was approved as a two-year guide for regional efforts led by the Creative Economy Network. It focused on several priorities, including:

- Business development: Improving access to technical assistance, expertise, mentorship, and training for creative companies.
- Access to capital: Increasing financial support options and training to help creative businesses access funding.
- Visibility: Raising awareness of the creative industries through events, campaigns, and content marketing.
- Talent: Developing connections between creative industries and emerging talent from colleges/universities.
- Space: Supporting development of convening spaces, incubators, and coworking facilities for the creative sector.

MASSCreative, part of the Cultural Equity Incubator¹²⁹, is an organization that advances the advocacy learning, cross-sector alliances, and organizing efforts necessary for a more equitable and inclusive arts, cultural, and creative sector in Massachusetts.¹³⁰ It focuses on policy and advocacy, providing opportunities for arts and cultural advocates in Massachusetts to connect directly with their elected officials on relevant issues. MASSCreative supports the creative economy by advocating annually for state funding for the Mass Cultural Council and budgetary allocations benefiting the creative sector. These efforts secured \$25 million for the Mass Cultural Council and \$895,000 for specific local cultural projects in fiscal year 2024, representing an 11% increase in public funding over the previous year's budget.¹³¹

¹²⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/creative-economy-network-application/download>

¹²⁹ <https://www.culturalequityincubator.org/>

¹³⁰ <https://www.mass-creative.org/priorities/creativeeconomy>

¹³¹ <https://www.mass-creative.org/priorities/finalfy24>

Additionally, MASSCreative is championing the Massachusetts creative economy by rallying support for the 2023-2024 Creative Sector Agenda.¹³² These policy priorities emerged from a statewide effort in 2022 to gather feedback from artists, creatives, cultural organizations, advocacy groups, regional planning councils, and changemakers on policy changes needed for a more equitable and visible sector. The Creative Sector Agenda includes five bills to help artists stay in their communities, make creative spaces more accessible, promote equity in cultural tourism, and allocate revenues for cultural districts.

Overall, Massachusetts has implemented a multifaceted strategy coordinated at the state level, while enabling regional customization through local networks and partnerships – all aimed at providing resources, funding, spaces and visibility to support the growth of its creative economy sector.

New York

Arts and culture generates \$120 billion for New York state's economy and is a main driver for its \$177 billion tourism industry.¹³³ Approximately 12% of all creative industry jobs in the United States are located in New York City.¹³⁴ New York's creative economy initiatives include the New York State Council on the Arts, which provides grants and support to a range of artistic and cultural projects.¹³⁵ New York City is widely recognized as a global hub for the creative industries, particularly in fields such as fashion, media, advertising, and the performing arts. The city invests in infrastructure, talent development, and international promotion. It has implemented various initiatives and programs to support and promote its creative economy, such as the NYC Media Center,¹³⁶ which provides workspace and resources for media companies, and the Made in NY initiative,¹³⁷ which promotes locally produced films, television shows, and other media content.

In 2017, the City of New York released CreateNYC, New York City's first-ever cultural plan.¹³⁸ Nearly 200,000 residents from every corner of the city stepped up to share their priorities, concerns, and ideas about how to ensure culture is for everyone. Building on the 2017 plan, the city's Department of Cultural Affairs and partners released a new CreateNYC Action Plan

¹³² <https://www.mcan-ma.org/take-action/legislativeagenda>

¹³³ <https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/>

¹³⁴ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/>

¹³⁵ <https://arts.ny.gov/>

¹³⁶ <https://www.nyc-arts.org/organizations/made-in-ny-media-center/>

¹³⁷ <https://www.madeinnyc.org/>

¹³⁸ <https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us/the-cultural-plan/issue-areas/se/>

in 2019 to streamline the original recommendations and better communicate progress to date and strategies going forward.¹³⁹ Progress on key indicators of the plan has been mixed.^{140 141}

The city currently faces significant livability and affordability issues, including rapidly rising rental prices.¹⁴² Multiple recovery initiatives were launched after the COVID pandemic to address these issues, including Creative Rebuild New York (CRNY). Launched in 2021, CRNY is a three-year, \$125 million investment aimed at enhancing the financial stability of New York State artists and the organizations that employ them.¹⁴³ CRNY has two funding programs: the Artist Employment Program, which provides artists with full-time employment in arts and community organizations, and the Guaranteed Income for Artists program, which provides artists with no-strings-attached monthly income.¹⁴⁴ These programs aim to reduce unemployment among artists, sustain creative collaborations with organizations and communities, and allow artists to continue living and working in New York with less financial pressure. CRNY has employed various methods to assess the impact of both programs. Process evaluations of both programs were published in February 2024.^{145 146}

Ontario, CanadaP

Ontario recognizes the importance of its creative industries, collectively known as the "creative cluster," which includes film, entertainment, advertising, design, and other creative sectors. This cluster contributes over \$12 billion annually to the provincial economy.¹⁴⁷ Ontario's strategy nurtures creative talent and invests in infrastructure while promoting the province's creative industries on a global scale. Ontario aims to develop creative talent through initiatives and programs focused on training, skills development, and educational pathways tailored to the creative technology sector's evolving needs. This includes efforts to adapt post-secondary curricula to better align with real-world labor-market demands in

¹³⁹ <https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us/the-action-plan/>

¹⁴⁰ <https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us/action-plan-key-indicators/>

¹⁴¹ https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CreateNYC_2021Indicators_FIN_20211201.pdf

¹⁴² <https://worldcitiescultureforum.com/city/new-york/>

¹⁴³ <https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/>

¹⁴⁴ https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CRNY-Evaluation-Report_GI.pdf

¹⁴⁵ https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CRNY-Evaluation-Report_GI.pdf

¹⁴⁶ https://www.creativesrebuildny.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CRNY-Evaluation-Report_AEP.pdf

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.creativefutures.ca/guidance/the-creativity-job-market-is-expanding-1/>

creative technology roles like design, animation, and visual effects.¹⁴⁸ The province also invests in infrastructure, resources, and an overall ecosystem to support and grow its creative industries, including funding for creative tech studios, coworking spaces, and business incubators.¹⁴⁹

Ontario has a focused strategy to promote its creative industries globally and maximize export opportunities for its creative businesses and content. This includes trade missions, participation in international events, export funding programs, and dedicated resources like the Creative Export Navigator Service to assist companies in expanding to global markets.¹⁵⁰ Overall, Ontario's approach centers on leveraging its creative cluster as an economic driver, recognizing creativity and innovation as vital for economic growth, job creation, and the province's prosperity. Strategic plans and initiatives aim to support creative entrepreneurship, attract investment, integrate creative industries into broader economic development efforts, and maintain Ontario's competitive edge in this sector.

Berlin, Germany

Berlin actively supports the development of creative clusters and coworking spaces that bring together start-ups, entrepreneurs, artists, and creative professionals across different disciplines. This cluster approach aims to foster collaboration, innovation, and a vibrant creative ecosystem within the city.¹⁵¹ In addition, the Berlin Senate Department of Economics provides significant public funding specifically targeted at creative sectors like literature, design, games, fashion, music, arts, advertising, film and broadcasting. Funding schemes include subsidies, micro-loans, venture capital funds, cash flow financing for film productions, and design transfer bonuses. Over 30 million euros have been allocated through the Creative Industries Growth Capital Fund to finance emerging Berlin-based creative start-ups over the past five years.¹⁵² Berlin actively promotes its creative industries globally and facilitates international collaborations and partnerships. This includes participation in trade shows, funding for market development of creative businesses, and exchange programs like Erasmus for young entrepreneurs.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ <https://interactiveontario.com/2023/05/addressing-labour-demand-and-growth-in-the-ontario-creative-technology-sector/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.ontariocreates.ca/about-us/strategic-plan>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/exporting-creative-industries/creative-export-strategy.html>

¹⁵¹ <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/en/cultural-policy/creative-economy/>

¹⁵² <https://www.creative-city-berlin.de/en/questions-answers/questions-on-funding-and-financing/>

¹⁵³ [ibid](#)

Connecting and centralization are also a key part of Berlin's strategy. Its creative city website¹⁵⁴ serves as a central digital platform and resource for Berlin's cultural and creative workers. The site provides information, networking opportunities, event listings, job postings, and a forum to foster connection within the creative community. Overall, Berlin has adopted a multipronged approach involving financial investment, dedicated creative spaces, international promotion, centralized resources, and an integrated economic development vision – all aimed at establishing it as a leading global hub for creative industries and entrepreneurship. The city leverages its rich cultural heritage and modern creative spirit through targeted policies, public-private collaborations, and substantial funding to nurture its vibrant creative economy ecosystem.

How cities responded to COVID's impact on arts and culture:
the World Cities Culture Forum 2022 report

The World Cities Culture Report¹⁵⁵ underscores the significant impact of the COVID pandemic on cultural sectors globally, noting a 50% drop in theater and music performances between 2019 and 2021, which severely affected employment and income for artists and creative workers. Despite these challenges, cities demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovative responses to these challenges. The report highlights culture's crucial role in driving economic and social recovery post-pandemic and in addressing urban challenges. It provides an extensive account of how cities responded with creative solutions, showcasing new cultural initiatives worldwide. The pandemic's devastating effects included a 95% drop in main festival attendance, a 72% decline in international tourism, and a 51% decrease in annual music performances. Examples of innovative solutions include Taipei's online arts festivals, New York's Culture at Risk Task Force, Helsinki's Culture Kids program, San Francisco's guaranteed income for artists, and Buenos Aires' Cultura en casa. Launched at the World Cities Culture Forum Summit in Helsinki, the report aims to serve as a resource for city policymakers, academics, and planners to inspire urban renewal and strengthen city resilience. It is re-released every three years and provides a comprehensive dataset and case study research on cities and culture, emphasizing the power of culture in driving recovery, bringing people together, and addressing global challenges like climate change and equity.

¹⁵⁴ www.creative-city-berlin.de

¹⁵⁵ <https://worldcitiescultureforum.com/publication/world-cities-culture-forum-report-2022/>

Conclusion:

A Quickly Changing External Landscape Requires Future-Facing Strategies

California's creative economy is a powerhouse that leverages the creativity of its residents to drive innovation and economic activity in the state. It is also a key component of a creative ecosystem that contributes substantially to California's culture, vitality, and allure, improving quality of life for residents and attracting talent and tourism. As detailed here, California has a number of tools at its disposal to nurture and grow this ecosystem, as well as a variety of successful models to draw upon and inspire action. However, California's creative economy faces a number of challenges, including fierce competition for core creative industries like film and television; the lack of an adequate social safety net to support creative workers who are self-employed or have multiple, often temporary jobs; rising costs of living in major urban areas; and the emergence of technological tools that are reshaping many aspects of creative production and distribution. These are challenges that the state is equipped to address, and the health of its creative ecosystem will depend on it.

State and local governments will need to think expansively about the best ways to implement policies and programs in different geographical areas and support diverse demographic groups. As California crafts a plan to strengthen its creative economy, we suggest it simultaneously takes steps to improve knowledge about its creative economy, particularly as it relates to the changing nature of creative work and the particularities of economies in smaller and more remote jurisdictions. Given how quickly our society, industries, and technologies are shifting, we also suggest turning attention to the ways the creative ecosystem may change over the next decade and beyond. In particular, we urge the devising of strategies to support the creative workers and creative production of the future by anticipating the ways in which the creative ecosystem will likely evolve. These projections – to be developed by the Creative Economy Workgroup – will feature prominently in the group's strategic planning recommendations.