

# Creative Washington

Growing and Strengthening the Creative Economy  
A Strategic Plan for Washington, December 2023



# Table of Contents

**Introduction..... 3**

What is the creative economy and why does it matter?

**Vision..... 9**

Our hopes and aspirations for the future of the creative economy.

**Values.....12**

The key values we have identified to help inform the Creative Economy Strategic Plan.

**Conditions .....14**

The factors we need to consider in context of Washington as a whole.

**Strategic Framework.....16**

Understanding the key priorities that make up the Creative Economy Strategic Plan.

**Implementation.....19**

Understanding how to put the Strategic Framework into action and make our future vision of the creative economy a reality.

**Methodology .....31**

The resources and data that helped craft and inform the Creative Economy Strategic Plan.

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# Introduction

What is the creative economy  
and why does it matter?

# Introduction

In 2022, the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce), inspired by legislative leadership in SB 5238 (2021–2022), initiated a sector focus on the creative economy and launched a planning process to guide the newly established key sector office at Commerce. The creative economy in Washington is a dynamic and multifaceted sector encompassing industries such as arts, culture, design, media, fashion, and a range of creative products and services fueled by technology. It has emerged as a significant element in economic growth in the state and is poised for continued growth and expansion. Washington’s creative economy leads the nation in terms of its size and scope.

A collaborative team from the Western States Arts Federation, Cultural Planning Group, and Third Way Creative was selected to produce a strategic plan for Washington’s creative industries, guided by a statewide working group of creative economy practitioners. Over an 18-month process, a wide range of stakeholders—artists, creative entrepreneurs, technology leaders, investors, educators, and other civic

leaders—from every corner of the state were engaged to inform and shape strategies for growing and strengthening Washington’s creative economy. More than 400 people reflecting a wide range of communities, identities, and affinities shared their knowledge, lived experience, and aspirations for the creative economy, and their perspectives have shaped the themes, findings, and strategies presented in this plan. With their input, the plan has been designed to make a material difference for Washington’s creative economy, supporting new jobs and increased economic contribution to the state.

The plan includes four priorities, ten strategies, and nine state investment recommendations for the next biennium that will expand statewide support of the creative economy ecosystem.

The plan aims to contribute to job creation and small business success reflecting the importance of the creative workforce and creative entrepreneurship to the growth and sustainability of the creative economy.

## Process at a Glance

### • **Contractor Selected**, March 2022

Section 129 107(e) of Chapter 297, Laws of 2022 (Supplemental Operating Budget) instructed Commerce to contract with a nonprofit organization with demonstrated expertise in the creative arts to establish a Washington creative economy work group, and to develop a strategic plan to improve the creative economy.

### • **Creative Economy Work Group Established**, March–April 2022

SB 5238 (2021-22) co-sponsored by Senators Robert Hasegawa (District 11), Joe Nguyen (District 34), Rebecca Saldaña (District 37), Lisa Wellman (District 41), and Claire Wilson (District 30), calls for a Creative Economy Strategic Work Group to be established. Though SB 5238 did not pass, the bill informed a nomination process for work group composition. A 35-person work group representing all regions of the state was established in 2022 and oversaw the development of the strategic plan.

### • **Sector Lead Appointed**, June 2022

Commerce appointed a Creative Economy Sector Lead in June 2022.

### • **Economic Data Analysis and Policy Research Completed**, July–December 2022

### • **Virtual and In-Person Consultation Meetings Conducted**, Summer 2022–Spring 2023

440+ people were engaged in crafting the plan through interviews, focus groups, and a statewide survey.

### • **Strategic Plan Development and Comment Period**, January–October 2023

### • **Strategic Plan Launch**, December 2023

For more information about the process, visit the [Creative Economy Strategic Plan landing page](#) on the Washington State Department of Commerce website.

# Guiding Questions

The strategic planning process was designed to address the following questions:

- What constitutes the framework of the state’s creative economy?
- What is the current employment and demographic profile of the creative economy?
- What specific occupations or industries are the most growth-oriented?
- What opportunities exist to grow the creative economy, particularly in rural and underserved communities?
- What economic conditions foster or hinder growth of the creative sector and the creative economy at large?
- What roadblocks exist that hinder the creative economy and what steps can be taken to support its growth in terms of jobs creation and growth?



**Left:** Photo provided courtesy of Northwest Native Development Fund, Supporting Native Artist Professional Development, 2023–Coulee Dam, WA

**Top Right:** Photo provided courtesy of Commerce, Creative Economy Strategic Plan Focus Group at Olympia Armory, 2023–Olympia, WA

**Bottom Left:** Photo provided courtesy of Commerce, Creative Economy Strategic Plan Work Group, s'g'wi g'wi ? altx'': House of Welcome at The Evergreen State College, 2023–Olympia, WA

# Defining Washington's Creative Economy

Based on an extensive review of national and international best practices, and the perspectives of Washington and tribal citizens, the state's creative economy has been defined to encompass the following economic sectors:

- Architecture and Living
- Creative Technology  
( For example: Video games, Web design, Podcasts)
- Culinary Arts and Beverage
- Cultural Institutions
- Design and Advertising
- Fashion
- Film, Television, and Radio
- Music, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts
- Publishing

93 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Codes and 73 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Codes make up this definition and were used in research. There is healthy debate about which industries should and should not be part of a creative economy definition, but this range of sectors is consistent with practice and

allows the unique assets of each of Washington's regions to shine through.

Creative technology, though the subject of much discussion, is a distinctive feature of Washington's creative economy that significantly contributes to the growth and strength of the creative economy as a key industry sector. The proliferation of online content in the creative economy as well as the continued growth of subsectors, like the video game industry, also make this a vital part of the creative economy to support and to further define through research and industry engagement.

The creative economy is characterized by a significant number of non-traditional workers who operate sole-proprietorships and sole-owner LLCs and who are small business owners, independent contractors, and freelancers. This makes small business and workforce development strategies essential to the development of the state's creative economy.

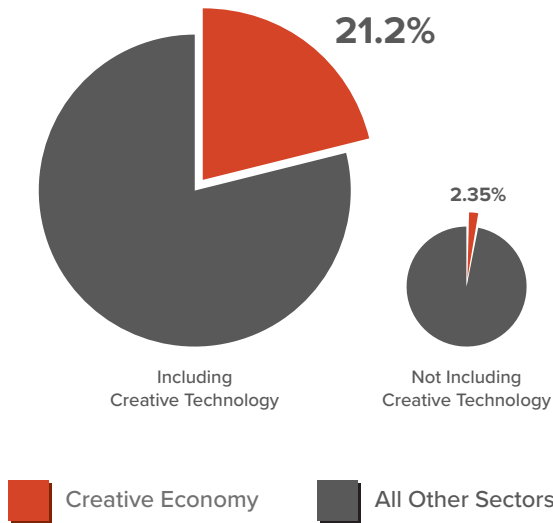
Additional information and research on developing a definition of the creative economy is available in the [full definition report](#).



# Washington's Creative Economy Profile

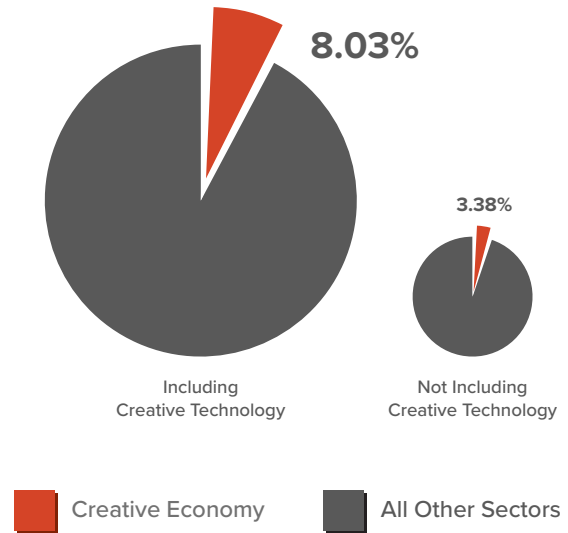
## Share of GRP 2022

% of Total Gross Regional Product (GRP)



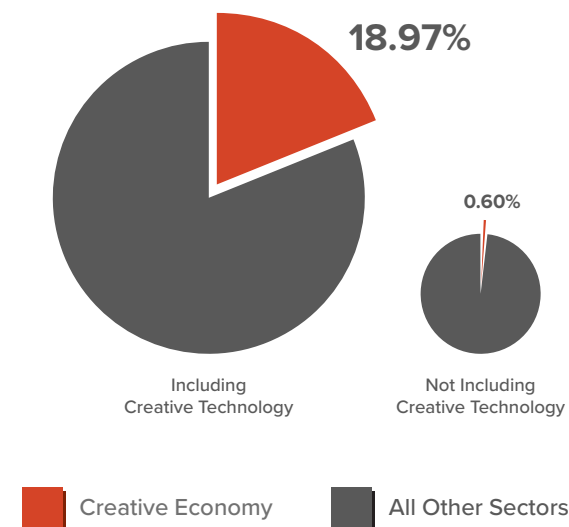
## Share of State Jobs 2022

% of Total State Jobs



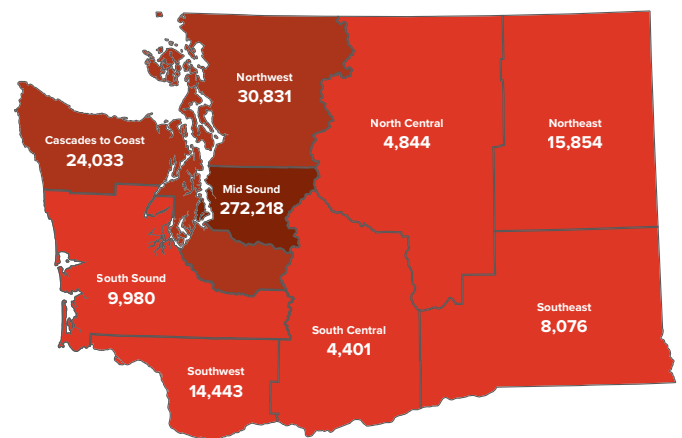
## Share of Total Exports 2022

% of Total State Exports



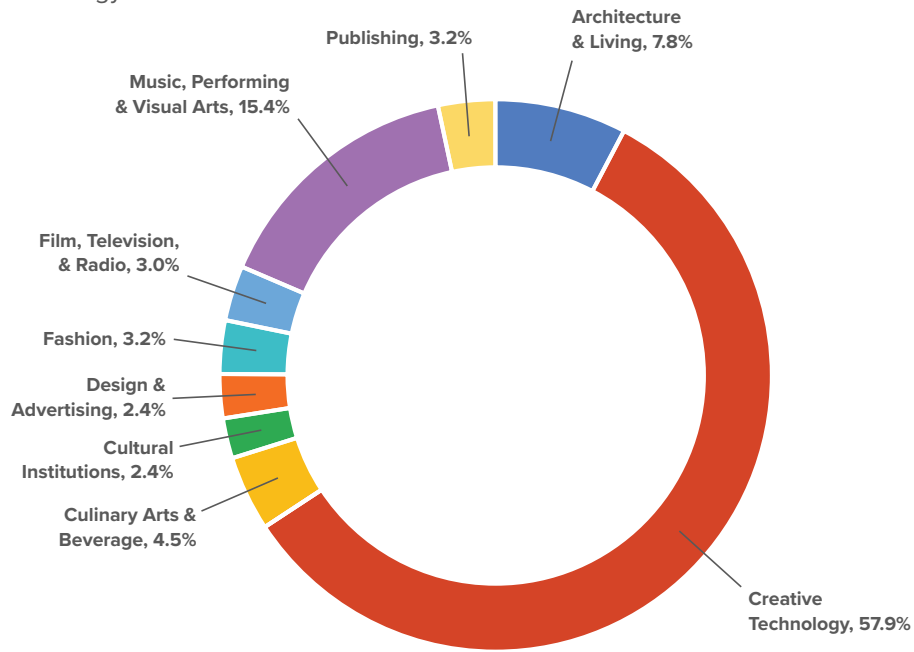
## Creative Economy Jobs by Region 2022

Map subdivided into economic development regions



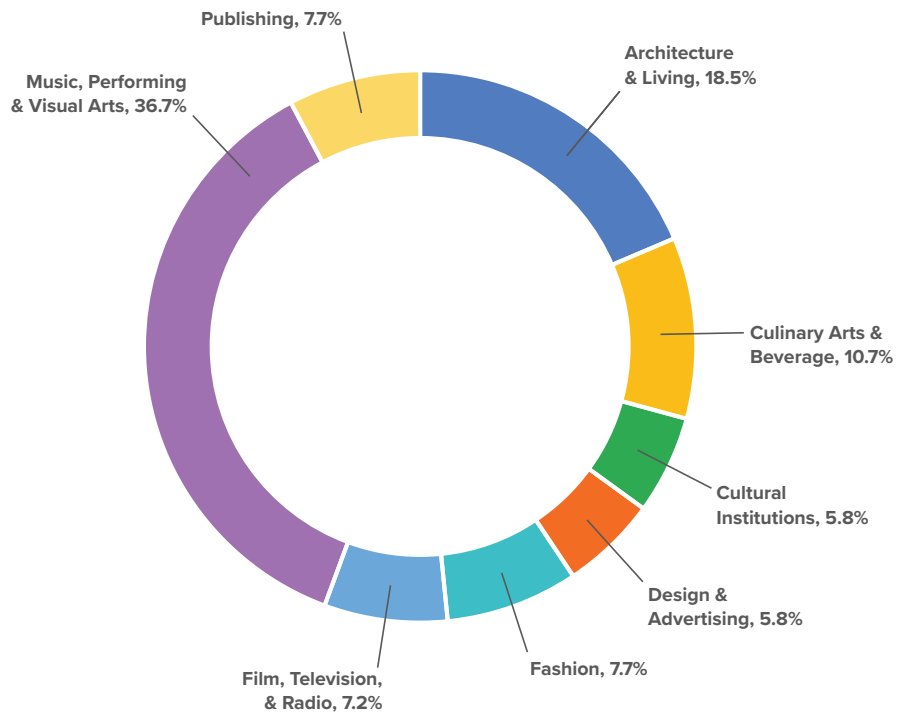
## Creative Economy Employment by Sector 2022

Including Creative Technology



## Creative Economy Employment by Sector 2022

Not including Creative Technology



Extensive economic research was conducted as part of the process and can be found in the linked appendices to this plan. The full economic model and ecosystem analysis is available [here](#).



# Vision

Our hopes and aspirations for the future  
of the creative economy.

# A Vision for Washington's Creative Economy

We envision a vibrant state, where creativity thrives in every corner, where artists, innovators, and dreamers are empowered to bring their visions to life. This is not just a dream; it is a vision rooted in strategic actions that build, grow and enhance the success of the creative economy.

We envision the creative economy flourishing across all elements of the sector, and where entrepreneurs, innovators, and visionaries are empowered to transform their ideas into thriving businesses. It is a vision grounded in strategic initiatives that foster, expand, and elevate prosperity, the work and success of artists and creative entrepreneurs, and provides open access to education, tools, and resources.

## Plan Priorities

These are touchstones of an ambitious plan to propel Washington's creative economy; retain our talent; and develop goods and services that can be exported nationally and internationally:



Equitable access to resources within the creative economy (Equity and Access)



Investments in a creative economy that contributes to livability (Infrastructure and Investment)



A robust creative talent pipeline (Learning and Skills)



Creative entrepreneurship and the creative workforce (Sector and Workforce Development)

We envision a **more inclusive, just, and equitable creative economy** in Washington. Inclusivity becomes the heartbeat of a robust, thriving creative sector, contributing to the strength of the Washington economy. Small business assistance becomes a lifeline for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led and women-led creative enterprises, ensuring that the creative economy is a beacon of diversity and equality.

We envision **increased state and local investment in the creative economy**, providing resources to artists, cultural nonprofits, and creative businesses, creating a flourishing ecosystem. Through investments facilitated by Commerce and the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) with connection to local and regional partners statewide, financial

support becomes the bedrock upon which creativity flourishes in every community in Washington. The nature of those investments range from direct grants, support for intermediaries, expanded access to small business loans and venture funding, to investments in infrastructure that support creative entrepreneurship and community development. Local communities fully participate in the [Washington State Cultural Access](#) program to support and enhance their local creative economy.

We envision **young people having pathways to explore creative skills and career paths** through creative economy-focused skills centers fostering the imagination of young artists, designers, and creators. The transformative journey continues through K-12

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs tailored for the creative economy. Students are not merely prepared for careers; they are ignited with passion, equipped with skills that transcend generations, and entrusted with the legacy of creativity.

We envision more communities across the state leveraging **Public Development Authorities (PDAs) and Associate Development Organizations (ADOs) to spur local creative economies.** PDAs can become beacons of opportunity and champion the cause of the creative economy, nurturing it into a formidable force that transcends borders, while ADOs understand that creativity knows no boundaries, and their investments ensure that no corner of the state is left untouched by its transformative power.

The state goes a step further, expanding and retooling **incentives that expand opportunity and spur growth into the creative economy,** such as the motion picture

competitiveness program. These incentives are not just financial; they are a testament to the state's commitment to fostering an environment where creative endeavors thrive.

The state pioneers **creative apprenticeship programs, where aspiring creative workers can learn while they earn.** These programs, funded both federally and at the state level, are a testament to the belief that creativity is not a solitary endeavor; it is a collective journey.

In this narrative of a state transformed, creativity is not just a spark; it is a path to a brighter future. These strategies, investments, and programs are not just policy decisions; they are the aspirations and needs of a state united by creativity and driven by boundless imagination.



Photo by Nallayer Studios (Thompson, Reyallan) provided courtesy of Tacoma Arts Live, Accelerating Creative Enterprise, 2023–Tacoma, WA

# Values

The key values we have identified  
to help inform the Creative  
Economy Strategic Plan.

# Values

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The values we seek to advance through the plan and that have defined its priorities, goals, and recommended strategies are:



## **Prioritize Accessibility:**

Ensure that state programs, services, and resources are accessible to individuals, organizations, and communities throughout the state irrespective of identity or affinity.



## **Strengthen Vitality:**

Support the creative economy as a key economic sector statewide and value its contributions to community vitality in every region of the state.



## **Center Collaboration and Coordination:**

Advance solutions that can only be achieved through collaboration across the private and nonprofit sectors and coordination between state agencies.



## **Encourage Local Responsiveness:**

Enable local communities to leverage and adapt a statewide plan to local needs.

### **From Top to Bottom:**

- Photo by Nallayer Studios (Thompson, Reyallan) provided courtesy of Tacoma Arts Live, Accelerating Creative Enterprise, 2023–Tacoma, WA
- Photo provided courtesy of ArtsWA, Village Theatre, 2023–Issaquah, WA
- Photo by Nallayer Studios (Thompson, Reyallan) provided courtesy of Tacoma Arts Live, Accelerating Creative Enterprise, 2023–Tacoma, WA
- Photo by provided courtesy of Terrain Spokane, Creative Enterprise, 2023–Spokane, WA

# Conditions

The factors we need to consider in context of Washington as a whole.

# Conditions

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This plan cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader statewide context. A number of factors will present opportunities and challenges to the vision for the creative economy that we seek:

## Political Factors:

As of 2023, the political environment in Washington State appears conducive to the plan's proposals. The state's Economic and Revenue Forecast Council has projected increased revenue for multiple bienniums. Recent legislative and executive actions indicate a commitment to addressing housing costs, population growth, and demographic changes. This is relevant to the plan as it aligns with priorities and presents opportunities for policy solutions in areas such as affordable housing, infrastructure investment, and workforce development for the creative economy. Potential challenges lie in the cost of implementing proposed policy interventions. However, with the projected state revenue and potential for public-private partnerships, there are opportunities to secure funding. Successful implementation will require support from elected officials, public agencies, the private sector, and diverse community stakeholders.

## Economic Factors:

General economic conditions in the state seem favorable for the next five years, with forecasts predicting increased

real income, employment in various sectors, and decreased unemployment. However, recent tech industry layoffs raise recessionary concerns. These economic conditions affect the creative economy differently, with various sectors experiencing distinct growth trajectories. Low wages and income variability exacerbate the cost-of-living challenges faced by individuals and families within the creative economy.

## Social Factors:

National and statewide affordability trends, including concerns about housing, workspace, childcare, public school enrollment, and educational/workforce changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, impact all communities, including creative workers and industries. Integrating creative economy development with ongoing efforts in these areas presents an opportunity for synergy and addressing these issues collectively.

## Technological Factors:

Technological advancements and digital transformation will play a crucial role in the creative economy's evolution, influencing how creative work is produced, distributed, and consumed. Adapting to and leveraging these technological changes will be essential for the creative economy's success.

# Roadblocks

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The individuals that participated in the consultation process identified the following as major roadblocks for the growth of the state's creative economy:

- **Inequity.** People from underrepresented groups often face discrimination in the creative economy. This can make it difficult for them to find jobs and opportunities.
- **Lack of access to finance.** Creative businesses often have difficulty accessing finance, which can hinder their growth and development.
- **Lack of affordable housing and workspaces.** The cost of housing and workspaces is often high in cities and towns where creative workers live and work. This can make it difficult for them to afford to live and work in the same place.

- **Lack of access to education and training.** Many people do not have access to the education and training they need to participate in the creative economy.
- **Competition.** Creative businesses face competition from both domestic and international competitors. This competition can be intense, and it can be difficult for small businesses to compete.
- **In addition to these barriers, the COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on the creative economy.** Many creative businesses have been forced to close or reduce operations, and many creative workers have lost their jobs.





# Strategic Framework

Understanding the key priorities  
that make up the Creative  
Economy Strategic Plan.



# Strategic Framework

Four priorities and ten associated strategies define this Creative Economy Strategic Plan. These priorities and strategies were created in consultation with over 400 individuals. Full consultation results can be found [here](#), which informed the following four priorities:

 <b>Priority 1: Equitable Access to Resources</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.1</b>	<b>Accessible Business Services:</b> Expand small business services for creative economy businesses with a focus on BIPOC-led and women-led enterprises.
<b>Strategy 1.2</b>	<b>Digital Equity and Access:</b> Partner with arts and cultural organizations to increase broadband access focused on BIPOC/ ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American), rural, low income, and other populations.
 <b>Priority 2: Investments in Livability</b>	
<b>Strategy 2.1</b>	<b>Strategic State Investment in the Creative Economy:</b> Increase state grant funding of artists, arts and cultural nonprofits, and creative businesses through state grants programs (Commerce, ArtsWA, and other state departments), loan products, and venture funding.
<b>Strategy 2.2</b>	<b>Creative Districts:</b> Increase support of statewide creative districts programs and enhance through use of incentives and other economic development strategies.
 <b>Priority 3: Creative Talent Pipeline</b>	
<b>Strategy 3.1</b>	<b>CTE and Career Connected Learning for the Creative Economy:</b> Enhance career and technical education (CTE) and career connected learning for the creative economy.
<b>Strategy 3.2</b>	<b>High School Skills Centers for the Creative Economy:</b> Expand creative economy-focused course offerings in skills centers for high school juniors and seniors throughout the state.
 <b>Priority 4: Creative Entrepreneurship and the Creative Workforce</b>	
<b>Strategy 4.1</b>	<b>Creative Apprenticeships:</b> Establish state and federally funded creative apprenticeship programs and other “learn and earn” opportunities to open up entry and progression routes in creative fields.
<b>Strategy 4.2</b>	<b>Incentives for the Creative Economy:</b> Increase funding of and refocus current incentives to advance equity.

## Methods

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These strategies emerged from the consultation process with more than 250 participants and were validated by a statewide survey of more than 200 respondents. These priorities and strategies also address the economic development priorities established in the ecosystem analysis:

- Labor force
- Education/workforce development
- Governance (e.g., economic development incentives and other development policies)
- Housing
- Finance (small business and entrepreneurial funding)
- Quality of life
- Infrastructure
- Entrepreneurship
- Social capital



Photo provided courtesy of ArtsWA, Village Theatre, 2023—Issaquah, WA

# Implementation

Understanding how to put the Strategic Framework into action and make our future vision of the creative economy a reality.

# Implementation

The priorities and strategies presented in the Strategic Framework define a five-year work plan articulated in this strategic plan.

## 5-Year Implementation Pathway

This plan is phased over five years, and key stakeholders helped to set the sequence of activities.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Time Frame: 1 – 2 years	Time Frame: 3 – 4 years	Time Frame: 4 – 5 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital Equity and Access</li> <li>Accessible Business Support</li> <li>Strategic State Investment in the Creative Economy</li> <li>Creative Districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative Apprenticeships</li> <li>Incentives for the Creative Economy</li> <li>CTE and Career Connected Learning for the Creative Economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artist Housing and Creative Space Affordability</li> <li>Focus on Local and Regional Assets: PDAs and ADOs</li> <li>High School Skills Centers for the Creative Economy</li> </ul>

## Tactics

The plan presents 30 potential tactics for implementing the plan, which act as a guide for the types of activities that can ensure connection with businesses, communities, and individuals across the state. These tactics create or expand existing programs; reform incentives; establish new partnerships; and more.

## Prospective Partners

During the planning process, a number of prospective partners were engaged on the ways in which these strategies support their objectives across state government and beyond:

- Department of Commerce: Workforce Development, Housing, Growth Management, Small Business Resources
- Department of Revenue
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): Arts, Career and Technical Education, Educational Technology
- Washington State Skill Center Association
- Washington State Microenterprise Association
- Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA)
- Washington Film Works
- Association of Washington Cities

These prospective partners and others are listed in the work plan presented below.

# Investment Requests

Provisional investment requests that could inform future policy options and proposals are also outlined in the work plan. Over \$20 million in new investments, supporting a number of new programs and initiatives, are outlined in this plan. Investment amounts are based on a review of similar programs in Washington and nationwide and informed by stakeholder and prospective partner consultations. Over the first year of the plan’s implementation, stakeholders, including elected officials, will determine the viability of these recommendations and consider them in the context of budget decisions. Additional decisions to be made include whether to structure specific investments as pilot initiatives or requests for ongoing funding in key areas.



Photo by provided courtesy of Terrain Spokane, Creative Enterprise, 2023–Spokane, WA

# Creative Economy Strategic Plan



## Priority 1: Equitable Access to Resources

**Goal:** Build a more inclusive, just, and equitable creative economy in Washington.

### Strategy 1.1: Accessible Business Services

Expand small business services for creative economy businesses with a focus on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals (SEDI).

Tactics	Partners	Biennium Investment Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify local and regional small business services programs for partnerships on targeted business services for SEDI artists and creative businesses</li> <li>Promote existing small business services programs in Commerce, such as the Flex Fund, to SEDI creative businesses</li> <li>Partner with the State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises and other agencies of state government on providing technical assistance for artists and creative businesses</li> <li>Produce an aggregated website of resources with focus on promoting as a resource in the creative economy community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commerce</li> <li>Office of Women and Minority Owned Enterprises</li> <li>WA State Micro-enterprise Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IR1: \$5,000,000 to support statewide Inclusive Creative Business Network of small business services and technical assistance providers focused on creative businesses</li> </ul>

### Strategy 1.2: Digital Equity and Access

Increase broadband access for creative businesses, workers, and entrepreneurs with a focus on BIPOC/ALAANA, rural, low income, and other populations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with Creative Districts and arts and cultural organizations on the provision of free broadband</li> <li>Engage with libraries and other arts and cultural institutions to expand Drive-In Wifi Hotspots</li> <li>Develop program to pair emerging creative economy businesses with normally inaccessible technology platforms for business development and management based on a needs assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Broadband Office</li> <li>Office of Digital Equity</li> <li>ArtsWA</li> <li>Library Council of Washington</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IR2: \$1,500,000 for Creative Sparks program to support statewide digital equity engagement with arts and cultural organizations and creative districts</li> </ul>
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## Priority 1: Equitable Access to Resources

### Case Studies

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In the context of a strategic plan for the creative economy, equity and access are vital components that ensure fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all individuals or groups involved. This can be achieved through various strategies, including inclusive community development, prioritization of traditionally marginalized communities, and providing funds to communities who have traditionally struggled to access capital. Programs that serve as case studies across Washington include:

#### [Tacoma Arts Live Accelerating Creative Enterprise](#)

##### **Tacoma, WA**

In 2023, Tacoma Arts Live launched its Accelerating Creative Enterprise (ACE) small business incubator program. The ACE program incubates and supports emerging BIPOC and women entrepreneurs, and is administered in partnership with the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County with funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce. The ACE program aims to transform the Tacoma Armory into a hub for arts, culture, and community while elevating community-led micro enterprise by supporting working creative professionals, owners of small businesses, and nonprofit visionaries. The program does this by offering rent-free office and conference space at the historic Tacoma Armory, offering professional development workshops for small businesses, emerging nonprofits, and creative professionals, and providing event sponsorship to help beneficiaries turn their vision into a major event at the Armory or beyond.

#### [Northwest Native Development Fund Supporting Native Artist Professional Development](#)

##### **Coulee Dam, WA**

Based in Coulee Dam, Washington, the Northwest Native Development Fund (NNDF) seeks to foster economic and financial independence for Native people by assisting in the development of personal assets through financial and entrepreneurial education as well as providing access to capital through business, personal, employee loans, and professional development courses.

While primarily focused on small business development, NNDF supports native artists both in educational programming and exhibition opportunities. NNDF owns and operates an art gallery in Coulee Dam where it can exhibit 10 to 12 artists at a time. NNDF also operates pop-up art exhibits and a winter art market. In addition to the gallery, NNDF partners with the First People's Fund to provide the two-day Native Artist Professional Development (NAPD) program. This program is offered once or twice a year. Trainers for the NAPD are local, community-based, and certified by First People's Fund. The curriculum includes creative entrepreneurship topics such as pricing of goods and services, marketing, taxes, and more. Artists who have participated in the NAPD often remain connected with NNDF and have the opportunity to have their work presented at NNDF's art gallery or arts events.

#### [Terrain Spokane Creative Enterprise](#)

##### **Spokane, WA**

Located in Spokane WA, Terrain is a groundbreaking nonprofit building community and economic opportunity for the artists, makers, and culture creators of the Inland Northwest. In addition to a gallery and retail space, Terrain's Creative Enterprise program is an in-depth, cohort-based training program for artists, makers, and creative entrepreneurs living in, and around, Spokane. This 14-week program includes weekly classes, one-on-one coaching, peer-to-peer learning, and a proven curriculum that equips participants with the skills to transition their creative endeavors into living-wage small businesses.



## Priority 2: Investments in Livability

**Goal:** Build the capacity of the creative economy to be sustainable and contribute to livable communities.

### Strategy 2.1: Increased Direct State Investment in the Creative Economy

Increase state funding of artists, arts and cultural nonprofits, and creative business through state investments (Commerce, ArtsWA, and other state departments).

Tactics	Partners	Biennium Investment Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support dedicated revenue models for local arts and cultural funding across the state that are appropriate for different communities by amplifying Cultural Access, potentially through a Cultural Access Toolkit</li> <li>• Build out more assertive sector specific programs utilizing existing small business development programs</li> <li>• Establish Creative Economy Sustainability Fund/Innovation Fund at Commerce and ArtsWA</li> <li>• Expand Creative Economy budget and team at Commerce with a focus on strategic plan implementation/ new initiatives</li> <li>• Commission research and develop a strategy for addressing creative housing and space needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commerce</li> <li>• ArtsWA</li> <li>• OSPI</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Washington Association of Cities</li> <li>• Washington Association of Counties</li> <li>• Tourism Marketing Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IR3: \$5,000,000 to establish Creative Economy Sustainability Fund/ Innovation Fund at Commerce and ArtsWA to support creative economy businesses and arts and cultural nonprofits with a focus on SEDI</li> <li>• IR4: \$500,000 to conduct creative housing and space study and define potential strategies</li> <li>• IR5: \$500,000 to build out staffing of Creative Economy Key Sector Office in Commerce (ongoing)</li> </ul>



**Strategy 2.2: Stronger Creative Districts Program**

Increase support of statewide creative districts program and enhance through use of incentives and other economic development strategies.

<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Biennium Investment Recommendations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore state or local sales tax abatement for sale of creative goods and services within creative districts, an artist housing incentive, and other incentives</li><li>• Pilot an innovation fund to support partnerships with ADOs statewide on small business development</li><li>• Expand capital and administrative funding for Districts to make the development of creative use spaces as part of the Districts program more viable</li><li>• Pilot regrant funding program to District administrative organizations to use as small business development and incentive pool to attract/invest in creative entrepreneurs and to partner with ADOs on wider economic development efforts</li><li>• Engage Chambers of Commerce, local tourism authorities, Association of Washington Cities, and Association of Washington Counties as key partners in developing local strategies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ArtsWA</li><li>• WA Main Street Program</li><li>• Commerce</li><li>• Washington State Department of Revenue</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IR6: \$5,000,000 to support Economic Development Fund for Creative Districts</li></ul>



## Priority 2: Investments in Livability

### Case Studies

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Infrastructure and investment provide the necessary foundation and resources to support a strong creative sector. Without places and spaces to work and live, the creative workers who make up the creative economy will not be able to contribute to the vitality of their communities. By incorporating infrastructure and investment considerations into a strategic plan, stakeholders can effectively allocate resources, enhance operational efficiency, and facilitate long-term growth for the creative economy. Examples of how governments and organizations have come up with ideas on how to secure affordable spaces for creative workers include:

#### [TwispWorks](#)

##### **Twisp, WA**

TwispWorks is a 6.4 acre campus in the Methow Valley that serves as an economic and community hub. In 2009, the Twisp Public Development Authority (PDA), a branch of municipal government, was chartered by the Town of Twisp to purchase the TwispWorks site. In 2014, the Twisp PDA transferred most of the site to the TwispWorks Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The Twisp PDA owns two buildings on the TwispWorks campus that are part of the Community Solar Project. When that program sunsets, these two buildings will also become the property of the TwispWorks Foundation. Today, TwispWorks welcomes businesses, nonprofit organizations, artists, craftspeople and the community at-large to its campus to share, collaborate and celebrate the vibrant culture that makes the Methow Valley a special place to live, work and visit.

#### [Cultural Space Agency](#)

##### **Seattle, WA**

The Cultural Space Agency is a mission-driven, values-based cultural real estate development company chartered by the City of Seattle as a PDA. It is designed to secure long-term affordable commercial cultural space with community partners; to build community wealth through direct investment in real property; to create opportunities for ownership of commercial cultural space; and to partner with communities of color, with a particular focus on the needs of Black and Indigenous communities. Strategies of the Cultural Space Agency include: purchase properties, develop new properties, master-lease and sublease property, and manage and curate sites for owners who maintain site control themselves.

#### [Watershed Community Development](#)

##### **Seattle, WA**

The Georgetown Live/Work District managed by Watershed Community Development is an example of how equity and access can be prioritized in the development of the creative economy. Living and working in Seattle is increasingly expensive. The project aims to lock in long-term affordability and preserve the spirit of Georgetown by developing an arts community centered around workforce housing and community services for neighborhood workers and artists. The project is a collaboration of community members, affordable housing developers, and artists with support from private and public funders.



## Priority 3: Creative Talent Pipeline

**Goal:** Activate long-term growth of Washington’s creative economy by investing in the future workforce.

### Strategy 3.1: K-12 Career and Technical Education for the Creative Economy

Enhance career and technical education (CTE) for the creative economy.

Tactics	Partners	Biennium Investment Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map statewide creative economy CTE provision</li> <li>• Partner with Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop a new CTE curriculum for the creative economy that builds upon Arts, A-V Technology, &amp; Communication Career Cluster/Pathways with potential links to Information Technology, Hospitality and Tourism, and Architecture and Construction Career Clusters/Pathways</li> <li>• Engage OSPI on establishing a school districts working group on media arts CTE implementation including resources, best practices, etc.</li> <li>• Partner with OSPI to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to expand creative economy CTE offerings statewide</li> <li>• Explore connections between creative economy and computer science course offerings that can strengthen CTE programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSPI</li> <li>• Washington State Skills Center Association</li> <li>• Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be determined based on further engagement with OSPI</li> </ul>

### Strategy 3.2: High School Skills Centers for the Creative Economy

Expand creative economy-focused skills centers for high school juniors and seniors throughout the state, leveraging partnerships with the nonprofit and private sector.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with OSPI on an integrated Creative Economy CTE curriculum deployed through Skills Centers statewide</li> <li>• Explore connections between Skills Centers and community colleges for further specialization/ credentialing and dual enrollment graduation pathways tied to careers in the creative economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSPI</li> <li>• Washington State Skills Center Association</li> <li>• Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be determined based on further engagement with OSPI</li> </ul>
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## Priority 3: Creative Talent Pipeline

### Case Studies

Career and technical education (CTE) for K-12 exists in the state of Washington. Currently there are 16 skills centers across the state of Washington that teach young people practical skills to prepare them for jobs. Of the 16 skills centers in the state of Washington, 15 of them have coursework in creative sector industries generally and 7 have coursework in digital creative industries such as video game design and animation. Of the 16 skills centers, the Washington Network for Innovative Careers (WANIC) has the most sophisticated and developed course offerings in creative industries. WANIC's creative industries curriculum can serve as a case study for strategic development of coursework in other skills centers across the state.

<u>Washington State Skill Center Association</u> Location	WA Creative Economy Related Programs Offered in 2023
<a href="#">Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center</a> , Yakima	Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Entertainment Media Production
<a href="#">West Sound Technical Skills Center</a> , Bremerton	3D Animation & Gaming, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Welding
<a href="#">Wenatchee Valley Technical Skills Center</a> , Wenatchee	Digital Media Arts, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Video Game Design & Programming
<a href="#">Washington Network for Innovative Careers (WANIC)</a> , Kirkland	DigiPen Art & Animation Yr 1, DigiPen Art & Animation Yr 2 (AP), DigiPen Data Analytics & Visualization, DigiPen Game Design Yr 1, DigiPen Music & Sound Design Yr 1, DigiPen Music & Sound Design Yr 2, DigiPen Video Game Programming Yr 1 (AP), DigiPen Video Game Programming Yr 2, Baking & Pastry, Culinary Arts
<a href="#">Twin Harbors Skills Center</a> , Aberdeen	Cosmetology
<a href="#">Tri-Tech Skills Center</a> , Kennewick	Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Digital Arts & Filmmaking, Radio Broadcasting & Audio Engineering, Video Game Design, Welding Technology
<a href="#">Spokane Valley Tech</a> , Spokane Valley	
<a href="#">Southeast Area Technical Skills Center</a> , Walla Walla	Careers in Media and Entertainment
<a href="#">Sno-Isle Tech</a> , Everett	Cosmetology, Culinary Arts Baking & Pastry, Culinary Arts Service & Production, Fashion & Merchandising, Animation Program, Video Game Design, Welding & Metal Fabrication
<a href="#">Seattle Skills Center</a> , Seattle	Video Game Animation
<a href="#">Puget Sound Skills Center</a> , Burien	Culinary Arts & Sciences, DigiPen Video Game Design (AP), Digital Art and Video, Digital Sound Recording, Design & Marketing
<a href="#">Pierce County Skills Center</a> , Puyallup	Culinary Arts, Video Game Development
<a href="#">Northwest Career &amp; Technical Academy</a> , Mount Vernon	Animation & Graphic Design, Culinary Arts, Video Game Development, Welding
<a href="#">New Market Skills Center</a> , Tumwater	Art and Animation, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Video Game Programming (AP)
<a href="#">Columbia Basin Technical Skills Center</a> , Moses Lake	Welding, Cosmetology, Video Game Programming
<a href="#">Cascadia Tech Academy</a> , Vancouver	Cosmetology, Culinary Baking & Pastry Arts, Fashion Design



## Priority 4: Creative Entrepreneurship and the Creative Workforce

**Goal:** Strengthen Washington’s creative economy by investing in its most critical resource - the creativity and talent of its people.

### Strategy 4.1: Creative Apprenticeships

Establish state and federally funded creative apprenticeship programs and other “learn and earn” opportunities.

Tactics	Partners	Biennium Investment Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote existing state apprenticeship programs to artists and creative workers</li> <li>• Partner with community colleges to establish credentialing in creative/media trades tied to apprenticeships with creative firms</li> <li>• Seek opportunities for placement through partnerships with business networks and individual creative businesses</li> <li>• Establish Statewide mentorship program to pair creative business leaders with aspiring/emerging creative entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington State Department of Labor and Industries</li> <li>• Commerce</li> <li>• ArtsWA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IR9: \$2,000,000 to establish Creative Apprenticeships program in collaboration with Washington State Labor and Industries</li> </ul>

### Strategy 4.2: Incentives for the Creative Economy

Increase funding and focus of incentives (such as the motion picture incentive).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore sales tax abatement for sale of creative goods and services within creative districts, an artist housing incentive, and other incentives</li> <li>• Continue to fund the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program at the current level and ensure that the program remains competitive and supports increased wages for local cast and crew and stimulates economic growth. To achieve this goal, a biannual adjustment equal to inflation and / or cost of living is recommended.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington State Department of Revenue</li> <li>• Commerce</li> <li>• ArtsWA</li> <li>• Washington Filmworks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IR7: \$1,000,000 to support Video Game Development Program at the Department of Commerce</li> <li>• IR8: Biannual adjustment to the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program to equal to inflation and / or cost of living</li> </ul>
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## Priority 4: Creative Entrepreneurship and the Creative Workforce

### Case Studies

Sector and workforce development play crucial roles in the success of a strategic plan by addressing the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities within the creative economy. Creative workers tend not to see themselves as entrepreneurs or small business owners. People working in the creative economy need support when it comes to developing and enhancing relevant skills. Existing programs in sector and workforce development in Washington include:

#### [Spaceworks Tacoma](#)

##### Tacoma, WA

Spaceworks Tacoma's mission is to make Tacoma culturally vibrant and economically strong through training and support for artists and creative entrepreneurs. It does this by offering programs that train and develop the creative workforce. Since 2010, the Spaceworks Incubator has provided relevant and meaningful business training for first-time business owners, ambitious creative professionals, and folks passionate about making Tacoma a great place to live and work. They serve as a training ground to test new ideas, products, and services with a safety net of technical assistance and mentorship. Additional programs include a gallery and affordable coworking space.

#### [Department of Commerce Creatives Academy](#)

##### Statewide

Washington State's Department of Commerce developed a series of online courses called Creatives Academy to help creatives learn the skills needed to be taken seriously in the business world, to increase their earning potential and destigmatize creative work as low earning. Courses in this series cover a wide range of business skills, from protecting your intellectual property to reading a balance sheet.



Photo provided courtesy of ArtsWA, ArtsWA Art in Public Places Conservation Lead Jonathan Hickerson reinstalls hand-built Porcelain Tile Mural (1984) by Rudy Autio, 2023—Walla Walla, WA

# Methodology

The resources and data that helped craft  
and inform the Creative Economy  
Strategic Plan.

# Methodology

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The Creative Economy Strategic Plan has been developed through a comprehensive research and consultation process launched in June 2022. Economic research establishes a baseline understanding of the creative economy in the State of Washington, and consultation with hundreds of individuals across the state informs the strategies presented in this plan. The plan has four cross-cutting and interrelated priorities and eight strategies that aim to support equity and access, learning and skills, sector and workforce development, and infrastructure and investment in the creative economy.

More than 400 individuals across the state participated in shaping the values, vision and priorities of this plan. Their input—through interviews, discussion groups and a state-wide survey—was essential to understanding the character of the creative economy in each region of the state; understanding the strengths and barriers for creative businesses and entrepreneurs; and in developing strategies that will foster an environment for strengthening and growing all elements of the creative economy.

The overall research process was structured around foundational elements of economic development, recognizing and incorporating the many factors that affect the development of an economy, many of which are beyond the typical focus of economic development efforts (i.e., incentives, business tax structure, early-stage finance, and workforce development).

The process resulted in the following outcomes defined at its beginning:

- Consent/consensus achieved for a Washington Creative Economy Strategic Plan
- Concrete recommendations developed to enhance public and private investment in Washington’s creative economy
- Increased connectivity of organizations leading creative economy efforts across the state
- Increased or strengthened engagement of rural and underserved communities in creative economy agenda setting
- Emergence of a statewide creative economy taskforce that can lead the implementation of the Creative Economy Strategic Plan

## Note on Data Sources

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### **Creative Vitality Suite:**

The statistics presented in the final plan are taken from CVSuite. The consulting team used data versions 2022.3 for its NAICS employment jobs. Jobs represent all worker types including Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, Self-Employed, and Gig Economy Workers. These data are provided by Lightcast (previously known as EMSI Burning Glass). Lightcast’s industry data have various sources depending on the class of worker. (1) For QCEW Employees, EMSI primarily uses the QCEW, with supplemental estimates from County Business Patterns and Current Employment Statistics. (2) Non-QCEW employees data are based on a number of sources including QCEW, Current Employment Statistics, County Business Patterns, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) State and Local Personal Income reports, the National Industry-Occupation Employment Matrix (NIOEM), the American Community Survey, and Railroad Retirement Board statistics. (3) Self-Employed and Gig Economy Worker types are primarily based on the American Community Survey, Nonemployer Statistics, and BEA State and Local Personal Income Reports. Projections for QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees are informed by NIOEM and long-term industry projections published by individual states. Lightcast’s occupation employment data are based on industry sources and staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed and Extended Proprietors).



## IMPLAN:

The economic analysis conducted in the process, particularly the ecosystem model, also used IMPLAN data. More on the use of IMPLAN and the differences between it and standard approaches is detailed in the Appendix to the Economic Data Analysis and Ecosystem Model.

For more information on methods and research findings, please review the following deliverables submitted to Commerce in advance of the plan.

- [Working Definition of WA Creative Economy](#)
- [Economic Data Analysis and Ecosystem Model](#)
- [Updated Initial Consultation Findings and Policy Research](#)
- [Revised Strategic Framework and Key Consultation Findings](#)



Photo by Drummond, Dave, provided courtesy of Washington Filmworks, 2023—Coulee, WA

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