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Capital Region's Creative Spark

New research finds the Capital Region's arts and culture sector has quietly driven economic vitality—adding jobs and attracting new residents even as other industries declined. But that momentum is now at risk due to federal funding cuts, even as state investment has not kept pace.

by Rachel Neches, Eli Dvorkin, and Sarah Amandolare

- [Read the full Capital Region's Creative Spark report here.](#)
- [Read the report's policy recommendations here.](#)
- [View reports for all 10 New York state regions in the series here.](#)

The arts are a catalyst for economic vitality in the Capital Region, adding thousands of jobs, attracting visitors and tourists, and drawing more resident artists to the area over the past decade. At the same time, artists and the arts sector in the region are fragile and face challenges of financial insecurity, affordability, and cuts in public funding, mirroring challenges felt across the state. Capital Region's Creative Spark tells this story through data and interviews, and puts forth seven recommendations for state and local policymakers.

Here are some select data points from the report:

- From 2014 to 2024, the arts and culture sector in the Capital Region added over 1,000 jobs, a 50 percent increase, while overall employment increased by 3.7 percent—with jobs in the arts and culture sector making up 6.5 percent of all new jobs.
- From 2014 to 2024, the region's resident artist population increased 43.5 percent, while the overall regional population ticked up just 2.9 percent.
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding dropped by 83 percent, from \$381,000 in FY 2024 to \$66,724 in FY

2025, while the number of grants fell from 13 grants to three.

- In 2024, arts and culture workers earned \$42,500, roughly half of the region's overall private-sector annual average wage of \$80,900.
- Fully 77 percent of Capital Region artists surveyed by Creatives Rebuild New York earn less than \$35,000 annually, and 70 percent reported that they cannot cover a \$400 cash emergency.

[Read the full Capital Region's Creative Spark report here.](#)

Capital Region's Creative Spark is one of a series of 10 reports from the Center for an Urban Future on the growing power of the arts as a catalyst for economic vitality in each of New York state's economic development regions.

Capital Region's Creative Spark is a publication of the Center for an Urban Future. Researched and written by Rachel Neches, Eli Dvorkin, and Sarah Amandolare. Edited by Dorian Block. Additional research by Alejandra Díaz-Pizarro, Udonne Eke-Okoro, Rebecca Ortiz, Nora Lewis, Yona Litwin and Samuel Weidman.

Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a leading think tank focused on building a stronger and more equitable economy in New York City, and expanding economic opportunity for all New Yorkers.

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