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Central New York's Creative Spark

New research finds Central New York'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 Central New York'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 Central New York, adding 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 to public funding, mirroring challenges felt across the state. Central New York'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, arts and culture employment grew by 23.1 percent, even as overall employment declined by 1.1 percent and several major industries shrank—including finance and insurance (down 21.4 percent), retail (down 11.9 percent), and educational services (down 6.9 percent).
- From 2014 to 2024, the resident artist population increased by 34.5 percent, despite a 1.5 percent decline in the overall population.
- In 2024, arts and culture workers earned \$39,100, roughly half of the region's overall private-sector annual average

wage of \$72,700.

- Central New York received \$2.29 million in New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) funding in FY 2025 (representing 2.6 percent of total statewide funding), and \$235,000 in National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding.
- About 68 percent of Central New York artists surveyed through Creatives Rebuild New York say that they could not cover a \$400 cash emergency. Almost 40 percent say that they have experienced housing insecurity, and 33 percent have experienced food insecurity.

[Read the full Central New York's Creative Spark report here.](#)

Central New York'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.

Central New York'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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CENTER FOR AN URBAN FUTURE
120 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005

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