



Report - March 2026

## Long Island's Creative Spark

New research finds Long Island'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 Long Island'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 Long Island, 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 to public funding, mirroring challenges felt across the state. Long Island'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, cultural sector employment on Long Island surged 25.7 percent, from 6,771 jobs to 8,511 jobs, by far outpacing overall job growth of 5.4 percent.
- From 2014 to 2024, the number of independent artists, writers, and performers working on Long Island nearly doubled, from 1,760 to 3,324, whereas the under-65 population declined by 1 percent.
- Tourism spending increased 18 percent from 2019 to 2023, reaching a record \$7.5 billion, more than any region outside of New York City.

- In 2024, arts and culture workers earned \$49,300, far less than the region's \$86,500 overall private-sector annual average wage.
- Even as Long Island makes up 14.8 percent of the state's population, it received just 2.8 percent (\$2.5 million) of NYSCA operating funding in FY 2025, a smaller amount than six out of the 10 economic development regions.
- Long Island received just 0.9 percent (\$70,000) of New York state's funding from the National Endowment for the Arts in FY 2025.

[Read the full Long Island's Creative Spark report here.](#)

**Long Island'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.

**Long Island'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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