



Report - March 2026

## New York City's Creative Spark

New York City's arts and culture sector is more important than ever to its economic growth. Yet new research finds that the city's leadership in arts and culture is slipping, due to mounting affordability challenges, new threats to federal funding, and city and state investment that has not kept pace.

by Rachel Neches, Eli Dvorkin, and Sarah Amandolare

- [Read the full New York City's Creative Spark report here.](#)
- [Read the report's policy recommendations here.](#)
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The creative sector, from performing arts organizations to design firms, is more critical than ever to New York City's economy. But mounting affordability challenges threaten its future. New York City'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:

- New York City boasts more cultural and creative jobs than any other city in the United States, but its national share of the creative economy is slipping, declining from 9.3 to 8.6 percent since 2019.
- New York City is now losing artists; since 2019, the overall number of people working in the city's creative economy has declined by 6.1 percent.
- Creative workers in New York now earn about 26 percent less than the national average after adjusting for the city's high cost of living, down from 15 percent less than a decade ago.
- The New York State Council on the Arts FY 2025 budget for general operating grants is about \$87 million, up from 2019 but still down 35.9 percent from its 1990 peak after adjusting for inflation.

- National Endowment for the Arts funding to New York City plummeted 59.8 percent from \$16.3 million in FY 2024 to \$6.5 million in FY 2025, while the number of grants fell sharply from 460 to 187.

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

**New York City'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.

**New York City'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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