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Andrew Sherburne, *Director / Iowa City*
Anne Zwink, *Director / Fort Dodge*
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Des Moines - The Iowa Cultural Coalition (ICC), a statewide nonprofit organization championing arts and culture, has released a comprehensive report about the state of Iowa's creative sector.

The [2025 Create in Iowa Report](#) provides an in-depth portrait of an industry that has maintained an overall trajectory of growth over the last decade despite being among the first and hardest by the pandemic in 2020. Since 2015, the total value added to Iowa's economy by Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation has [more than doubled](#), with [arts and culture](#) showing some of the strongest gains.

Among the report's other key findings:

- Iowa ranks 23rd among all states in arts and cultural employment growth and 26th among all states in value added growth;
- Iowa's artist labor force has increased by 36% over the last decade.
- More than 42,000 Iowans work in the creative sector, across more than 5,800 arts and creative businesses, generating nearly \$5 billion in annual economic impact.

"Iowa's creative sector is a vital source of jobs, income and tax revenue for Iowans and Iowa communities and is deeply intertwined with our state's economic, cultural, and social fabric," said Lindsay Bauer, president of the Iowa Cultural Coalition board of directors. "With this report, we hope to advance the conversation about growing Iowa's population by leveraging the full potential of the creative sector."

The Create in Iowa initiative was spurred by a 2022 Envision Iowa report, issued by Business Publications Corp. and Baton Global, both of Des Moines, and supported by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). The Envision Iowa report included a call to action to Iowa leaders to work together to address an urgent need to grow Iowa's population and workforce.



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The 2025 Create in Iowa report builds on research conducted by the Iowa Arts Council (IAC), part of the IEDA, in 2024 and publicly-available data and information gathered through surveys, regional meetings and interviews with Iowa business, foundation and civic leaders.

“In recent years, many states have seen success by keeping the arts and culture industry at the forefront of policy and investment planning, resulting in increased economic competitiveness and a more attractive national profile for tourism and talent acquisition, “ added Matthew McIver, principal at McIver Communications, which partnered with the IAC and IEDA on the research.

“Iowans agree: the creative community is an asset worth leveraging. With simple and incremental adjustments today, we can set the stage for even greater growth and vitality in all sectors of our state in the coming years,” said McIver.

The report also points to significant and ongoing challenges for Iowa’s creative sector:

- Iowa leaders expressed concerns that demands on city finances, combined with constraints created by property tax reform, may lead to a downgrading of arts and cultural programs as cities face tough budgetary choices.
- Declines in corporate giving are of concern for many arts organizations as companies shift funding priorities, scale back giving, or discontinue investments in local communities.
- Iowans shared a need for more investment in rural communities, in particular, and for more scalable and flexible space for creatives to create, perform and sell their works.

Among the report’s top recommendations are to better align the creative sector with strategies led by foundations, chambers, cities and tourism organizations to drive rural, community and economic development efforts; improve navigation of existing resources and strengthen creative infrastructure for artists and creative businesses; and promote improved regional coordination through cross-sector partnerships.

As a statewide nonprofit membership organization, the Iowa Cultural Coalition (ICC) champions Iowa's creative sector and provides a strong and unified voice in promoting research and advocating for policies that can advance Iowa’s growing arts and culture industry.

Through its advocacy work, the ICC organizes Iowans to advocate for public investment in arts and culture. As a part of those efforts, the **ICC’s third annual Arts Advocacy Day takes place at the Iowa Capitol on March 5, 2025.**

Learn more at www.iowaculturalcoalition.com

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