



LEVERAGING
REGIONAL ASSETS
FOR A VIBRANT
FUTURE

CAPTIVATE

THE CAPITAL REGION'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Regional Alliance for the Creative Economy, we are pleased to present this Executive Summary of the Capital Region Creative Economy research study. The goal of this study was to identify and quantify the Capital Region's creative assets, and develop specific recommendations on activities to leverage those assets. **At its core, this is, and will continue to be, a community engagement initiative guided by research and best practices.**

On behalf of the stakeholders, the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region and Center for Economic Growth contracted with Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc. to review the Capital Region's creative economy and assist in the development of a Strategic Action Plan. We are grateful to the corporations, foundations and individuals who provided financial support for this ongoing project; to the more than 1,000 artists, organizations, businesses, and public agencies that participated in the research and analysis phase of the study; and to those key business, education, civic, philanthropic, and political leaders who helped shape the strategic action plan.

The result of this year-long effort is an action agenda intended to provide a blueprint for the public, private, and nonprofit sectors as well as for individual artists, creative freelancers, and residents as they collectively seek to leverage the region's creative assets to stimulate economic growth.

Over the past year, the Regional Alliance for the Creative Economy has built a foundation for promoting creative enterprises as economic drivers for the region.

- A diverse group of stakeholders comprising more than 25 corporations, foundations, and individuals have pledged nearly \$180,000 in support;
- The initiative was ranked as a priority project by the Capital Region Economic Development Council and was awarded \$65,000 from Empire State Development to support the initiative;
- More than 1,000 individuals were engaged through extensive one-on-one interviews, focus groups in each of the eight counties, work groups, and two regional summits;
- An online survey gathered information from 600 creative artists and creative freelancers, who are self-employed and earn part or all of their income through creative work.

So what did we learn and what will we do? We learned that the creative sector is a significant component of the regional economy. We confirmed that we have outstanding assets on which to build. We also learned that in order to grow this sector, we need to think regionally, promote transformation, encourage world class enterprises, and foster collaboration over time.

We look forward to your continued participation in this effort to embrace, promote, and leverage creativity as a core driver of our regional economy.



F. Michael Tucker
President and CEO
Center for Economic Growth



Karen Bilowith
President and CEO
The Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region

CAPTIVATE

THE CAPITAL REGION'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

When most people think about the eight-county Capital Region of New York, which includes **Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington** counties, they rarely focus on its diverse and world-class creative assets—where cutting-edge technology converges with design, arts, and culture.

THIS IS ABOUT TO CHANGE.

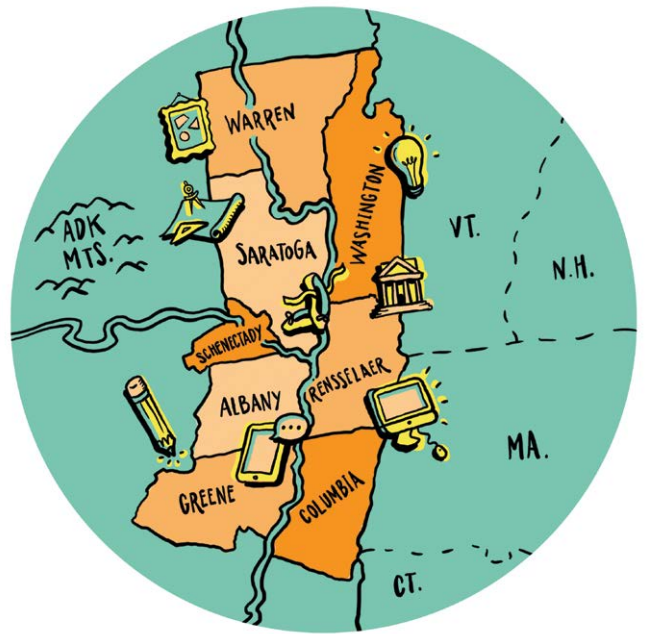
Within a 60-mile radius, one can choose to attend a Broadway performance of *Jersey Boys* in a magnificent historical theater venue, a world-class dance performance by the New York City Ballet, a cutting-edge performance art event in a renovated warehouse, a fiber art tour at more than a dozen farms or an exhibition at the historic homes of two of the most renowned painters of the Hudson River School of Art.

The Capital Region's creativity also is evident throughout its business community—where leaders of creative companies in architecture, computer gaming, graphics, and media are finding the region is an excellent location to build a thriving business.

There is an entrepreneurial energy in the region exemplified by the Tech Valley Center of Gravity, “a federation of makers, hackers, crafters, and artists” in Troy; the plan by the founder of Etsy to develop a new artisan center in Catskill; and the effort by world-famous performance artist Marina Abramovic to build a \$15 million center in Hudson devoted to the research and production of long duration performance art.



The Egg at Empire Plaza, Albany County



THESE NEW AND INNOVATIVE VENTURES BUILD ON WHAT IS ALREADY HERE

Strong and growing creative businesses

World-class cultural institutions

A vibrant community of creative people

A significant number of extremely high-quality venues

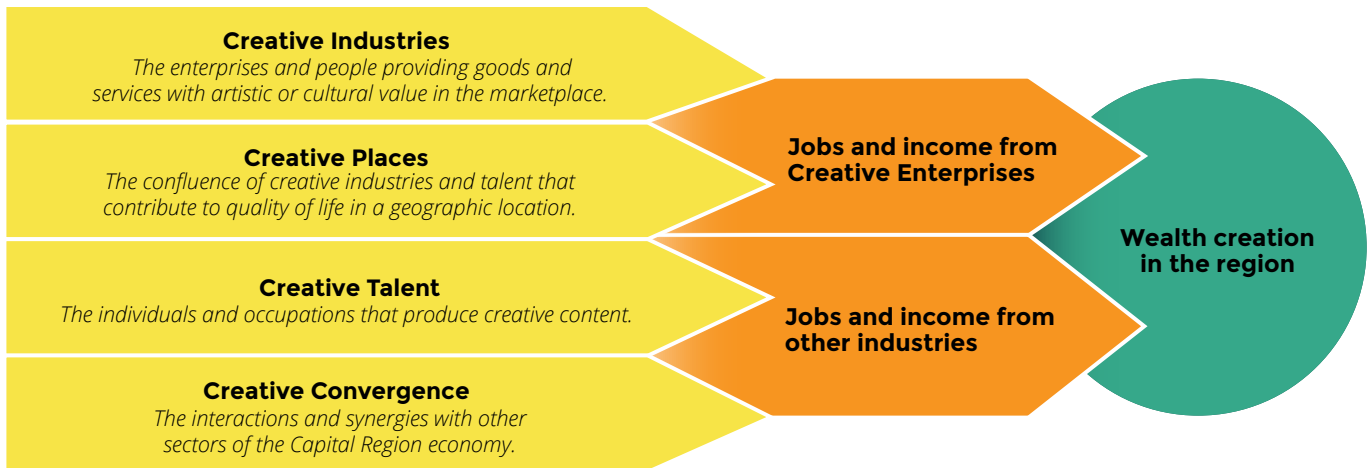
And now, a group of regional leaders has come together to better understand the creative economy—its economic importance and its strengths and challenges—and to develop a transformational plan that brings the eight counties of the region together to collectively leverage its creative assets for the economic benefit of the entire community.

The Capital Region is so rich in creative talent and enterprises that it is impossible in this executive summary to reference all companies and support organizations that play a role in the creative industries. The references are not intended to be all-inclusive, but are instead meant to serve as examples of creative assets within the region.

THE ECONOMICS OF CREATIVITY

There is increasing attention, nationally and internationally, on the economic importance of the creative economy. Findings of two United Nations reports affirm that the creative economy is “not only one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy, but also a highly transformative one, in terms of income-generation, job creation, and export earnings.” According to these studies, the global creative economy more than doubled between 2002 and 2011.

Four different aspects of the creative economy drive economic growth:



THE VISION

- THE CAPITAL REGION IS RECOGNIZED REGIONALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY AS A HUB OF CREATIVITY.
- LOWER INCOME AND MINORITY YOUTH ARE INSPIRED TO COMPLETE THEIR EDUCATION AND CONTINUE ON IN A CREATIVE FIELD.
- MORE TOURISTS VISIT THE REGION ATTRACTED BY THE CREATIVE PLACES AND CULTURAL ASSETS.
- NON-PROFIT CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS EXTEND THEIR REACH THROUGH INCREASED COLLABORATION, EFFICIENCIES, AND SCALE.
- NEW RESIDENTS, DRAWN TO ITS CREATIVE PLACES, MAKE THE CAPITAL REGION THEIR HOME.
- COMPANIES HAVE GREATER SUCCESS RECRUITING AND RETAINING TALENT.
- CREATIVE FREELANCERS EARN A BETTER LIVING.
- HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS HAVE GREATER SUCCESS RECRUITING STUDENTS AND FACULTY.
- NEW CREATIVE ENTERPRISES ARE ESTABLISHED AND THRIVE, CREATING THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS.



THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

This report draws on a comprehensive review of global practices used to define the Creative Industries. The most accepted definitions include businesses, organizations, and individuals in fields traditionally defined as “the arts” as well as enterprises involved in the applications of art and design, and technical and commercial activities such as broadcasting, publishing, music recording, film and video production, advertising, video games, graphic design, architecture, and interior design.

DEFINITION OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The businesses, non-profit organizations, and self-employed individuals involved in the origination, production, and distribution of goods and services in which artistic and cultural content gives the product or service value in the marketplace.

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ARE GROUPED INTO FIVE SEGMENTS:



DESIGN

graphic design services, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, industrial design services, printing, other specialized design



MEDIA

motion picture and video industries, sound recording, radio and television broadcasting, internet publishing, newspapers, advertising, bookstores, books and periodical publishers, public relations agencies, video game developers, independent writers



VISUAL ARTS AND HANDCRAFTED PRODUCTS

photography, sculpting, painting, jewelry, pottery, textiles, pressed and blown glass, art dealers, galleries, craft making, craft stores



PERFORMING ARTS

performing arts companies, promoters of performing arts, music and dance schools, musical instrument manufacturing and supplies stores, self-employed actors, dancers, directors, musicians



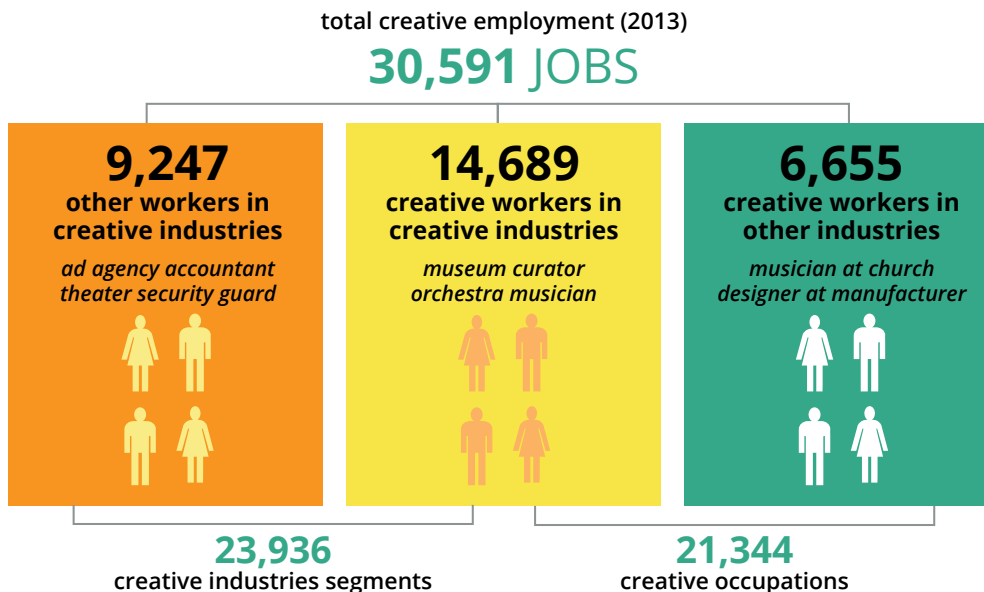
HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION

museums, historical sites, libraries/archives, antiques, preservation

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

To assess the economic importance of the creative industries, it is essential to view it according to the same standards that are typically used to analyze other industries. The following analysis does this by examining the number of jobs and earnings that are part of the creative enterprises in all of the five segments.

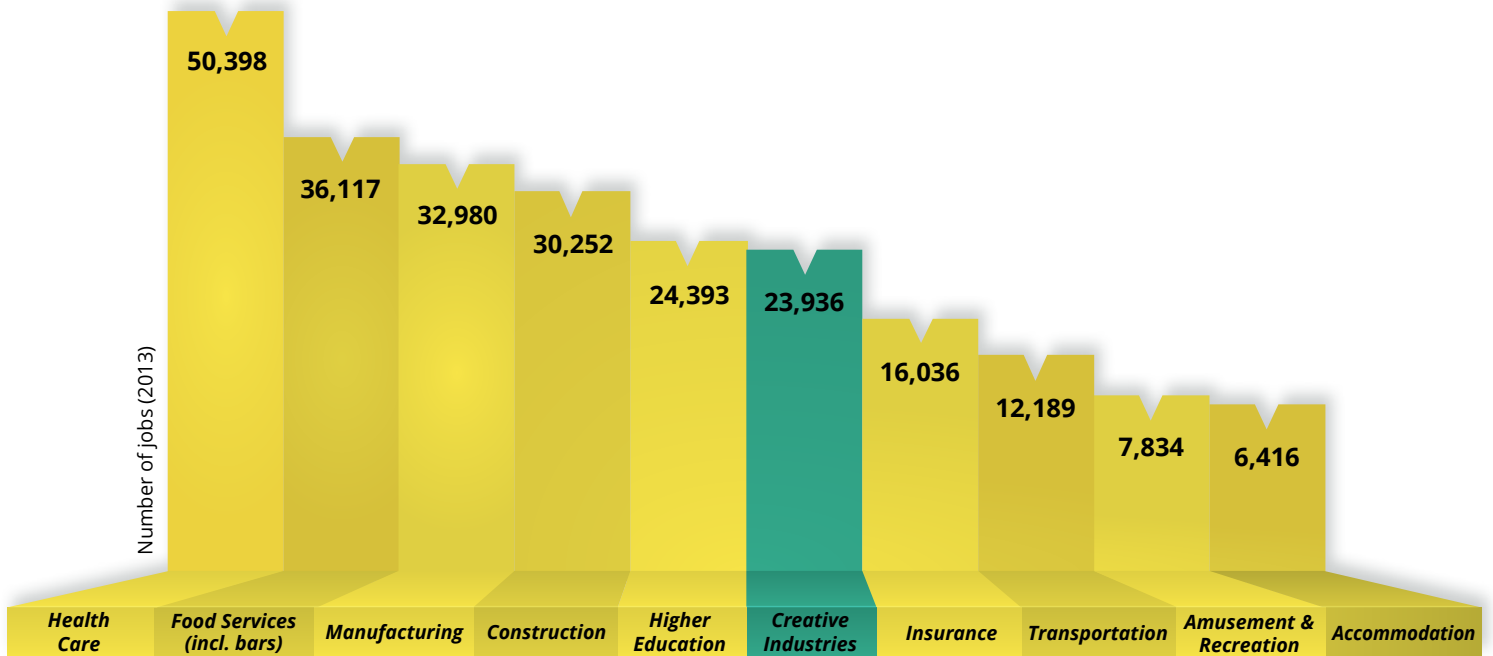
The creative economy includes workers in **creative industries** and workers in **creative occupations**—two groups that overlap, but are not identical.



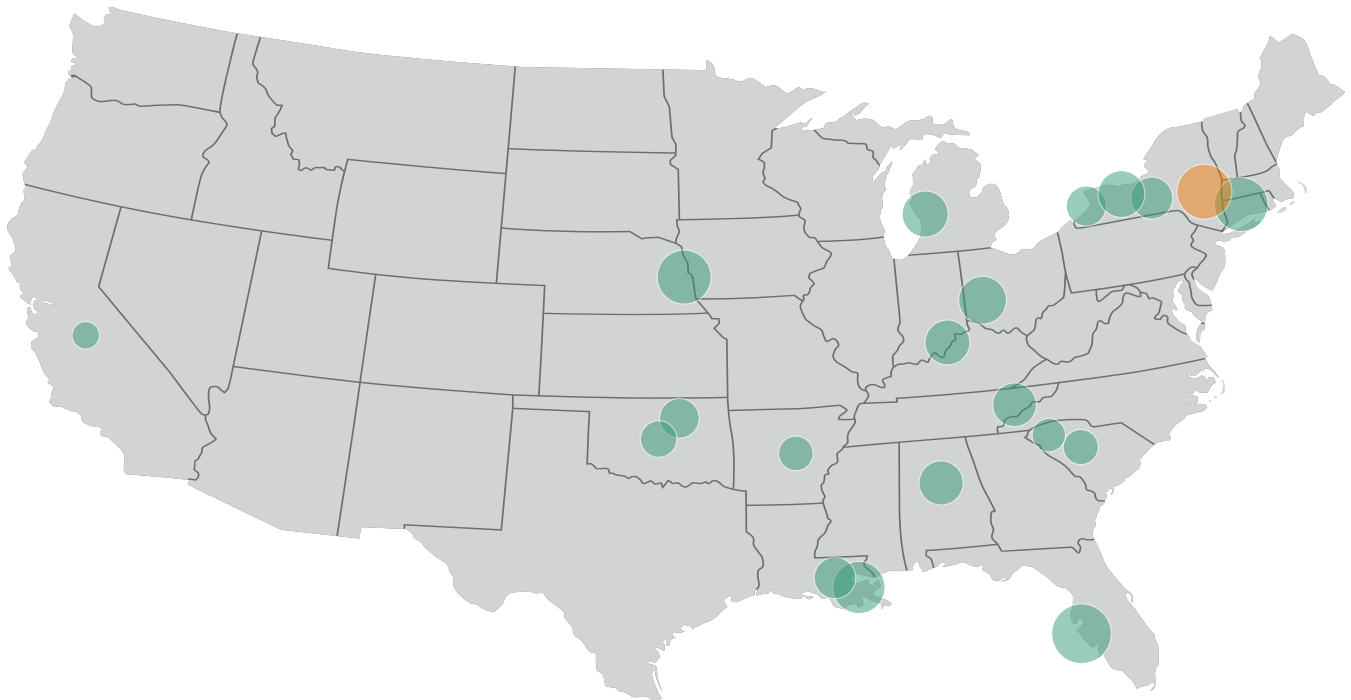
The jobs and earnings data are sourced from the fourth quarter 2013 dataset published by Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. EMSI's dataset includes wage and salary employment as well as self-employment.

“Jobs” in creative industries account for the work individuals do. An individual may have one, two, or more jobs. “Occupations” account for the type of work an individual does.

Employment in Creative Industries— One of the most important sectors of the Capital Region’s economy

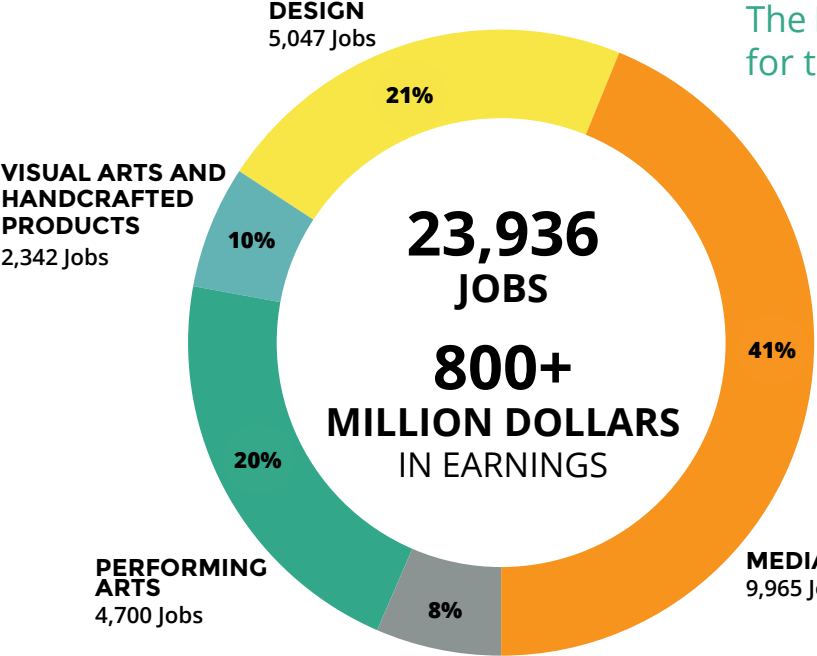


The Capital Region has the **second highest concentration of creative jobs** amongst metropolitan regions of similar size.



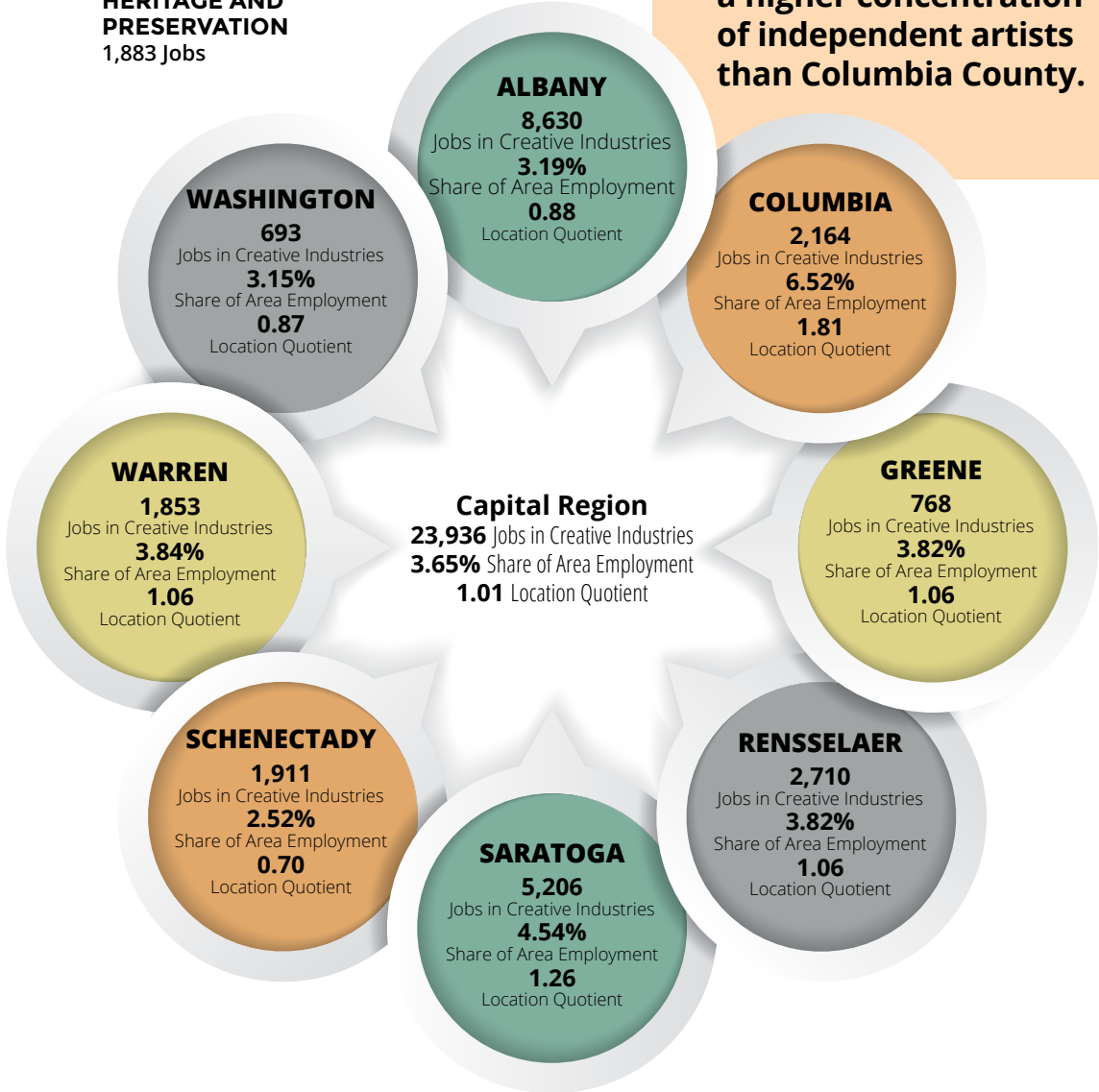
1. Sarasota/Bradenton/Punta Gorda, FL
2. Albany/Schenectady/Amsterdam, NY
3. Omaha, NE/Council Bluffs/Fremont, IA
4. Hartford/West Hartford, CT
5. New Orleans/Metairie/Bogalusa, LA
6. Dayton/Springfield/Greenville, OH
7. Rochester/Batavia/Seneca Falls, NY
8. Grand Rapids/Muskegon/Holland, MI
9. Louisville/Jefferson County, KY/Elizabethtown/Scottsburg, IN
10. Birmingham/Hoover/Cullman, AL
11. Knoxville/Sevierville/La Follette, TN
12. Syracuse/Auburn, NY
13. Buffalo/Niagara/Cattaraugus, NY
14. Tulsa/Bartlesville, OK
15. Baton Rouge/Pierre Part, LA
16. Oklahoma City/Shawnee, OK
17. Columbia/Newberry, SC
18. Little Rock/North Little Rock/Pine Bluff, AR
19. Greenville/Spartanburg/Anderson, SC
20. Fresno/Madera, CA

The **Media and Design segments** account for the highest number of jobs.



23,936
JOBS
800+
MILLION DOLLARS
IN EARNINGS

Only two U.S. counties—*Kings County, NY (Brooklyn) & Taos County, NM*—have a higher concentration of independent artists than Columbia County.



Location Quotient (LQ) is a ratio comparing the concentration of creative sector employment locally to the national concentration of creative sector employment. Location quotients greater than 1.00 indicate a higher concentration of employment in the local industry as compared to the nation.

CREATIVE TALENT

The growth of the Capital Region's creative industries rests first and foremost on its ability to attract, develop, and retain talented, creative, and entrepreneurial workers. Beyond the creative industries, companies throughout the Capital Region depend on imaginative and innovative applicants who have a wide range of skills, can quickly adapt to change, envision new products and processes, and can develop new markets.

The formal arts education in the k-12 system, the many private education and training programs, and the region's higher education institutions are all critical to creating the talent pipeline as they create and nurture the next generation of talent and foster a greater appreciation for the arts and creativity among all students.

To fully understand the importance of creativity to the Capital Region's economy, it is important to consider the range of individuals working in creative occupations.

- Of the 21,344 individuals who are in creative occupations, the largest numbers are in the film and media segment—approximately 35%. There are large numbers of writers and authors, multimedia artists, and animators.
- The relative concentration of creative occupations in the Capital Region is higher than in the U.S. overall.
- Approximately one-third of those reported as working in creative occupations are primarily employed in non-creative enterprises, such as musicians working in religious organizations or graphic designers working in financial service firms.

FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF 599 CREATIVE FREELANCERS IN THE CAPITAL REGION

Respondents report the income generated from their creative work is important to their standard of living:

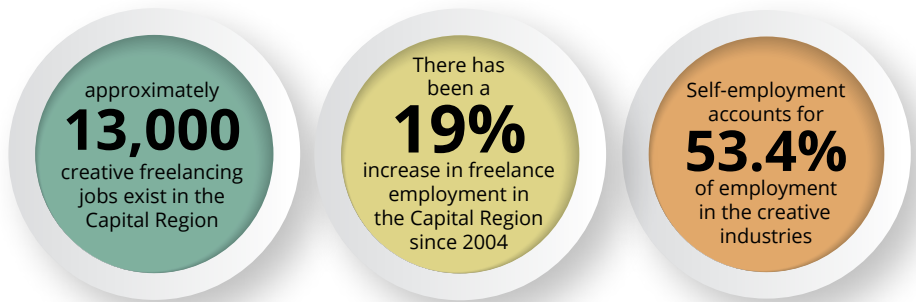
29% report their creative work is essential to allowing household to meet minimum household financial needs

21% report their creative work is essential to maintaining middle-class or better lifestyle

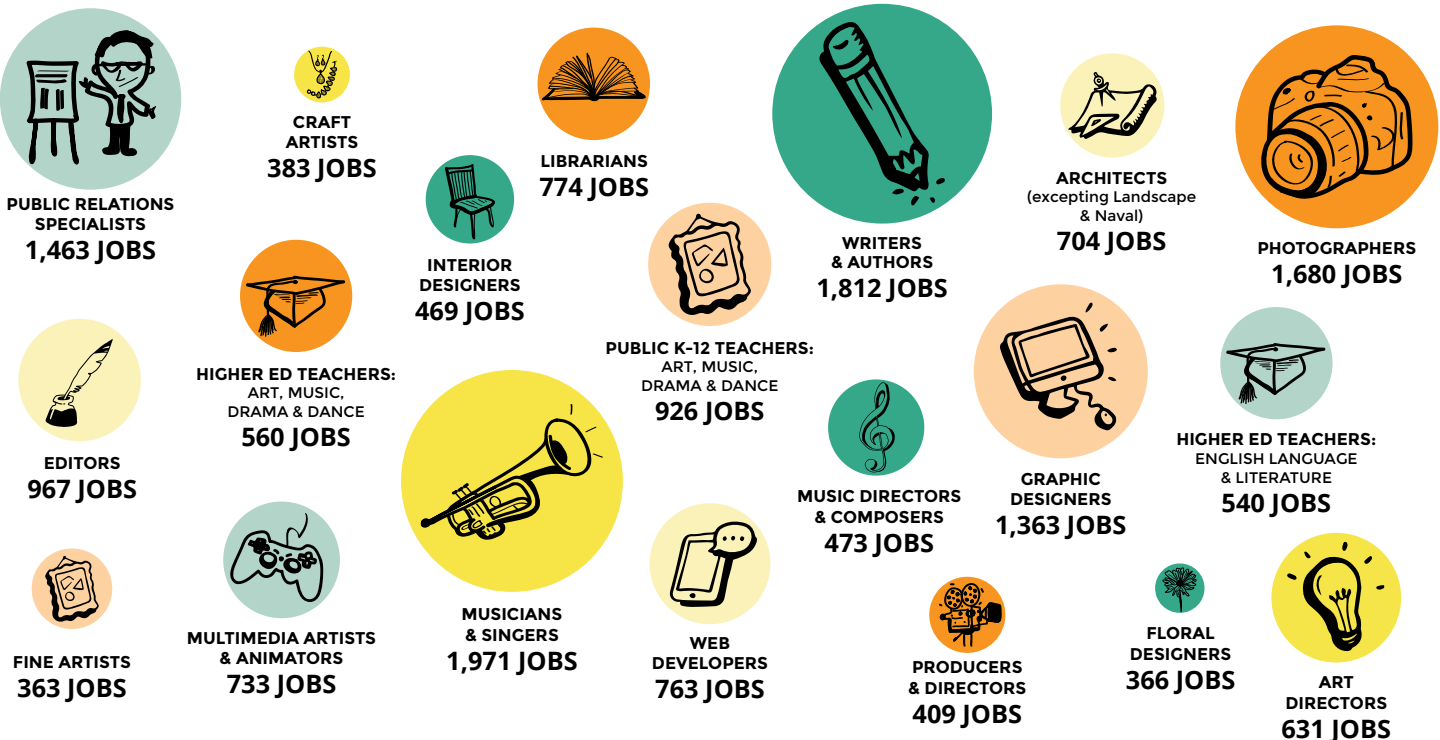
19% report their creative work results in income of **\$30k+**

OPPORTUNITY:

39% of survey respondents in design and 17% of those in media want to grow a creative business, adding employees over time.



The 20 largest creative occupations in the Capital Region (2013 Est.):



CREATIVE SEGMENTS

DESIGN

5,047
Total Jobs
(2013)

0.98
Location
Quotient

\$49,130
Average Annual
Earnings

43.3%
Self-Employment
Share as % of all jobs

Firms and freelancers working in environmental, product, and communications design make up the design segment of the Capital Region's creative economy. These enterprises and workers translate creative ideas into blueprints for useful economic goods—everything from cars to toothbrushes to buildings and interiors to websites and newsletters. Occupations range from architects to industrial designers to printers to graphic designers. The design segment in the region has much to celebrate from its prowess in commercial lithographic printing to Hudson's emergence as an interior design hub to communication firms reinventing themselves.



COMMUNICATIONS DESIGN

Communications design includes all forms of design intended to influence others through the creative forms—graphic, web and interactive design, marketing, printing, and commercial photography.

Industries within this segment have grown in recent years. As of 2013, the number of people employed in graphic design services increased 26% from 2004.

Commercial printing is a significant contributor to communications design, representing an industry that combines print media and visual communication under the umbrella of "graphic communications." Boundaries increasingly blur as firms incorporate services in graphic, web, and interactive design, and branding and marketing. There is a growing concentration of small creative design and branding shops in the Capital Region's urban centers. The strong higher education network facilitates new generations of talent for the communications design industries—from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and The Sage Colleges to the College of St. Rose's highly regarded graphic design program to SUNY Adirondack's signature new media degree.



PRODUCT & SERVICE DESIGN

The companies and freelancers that design manufactured and crafted products form this component of the Capital Region's design segment.

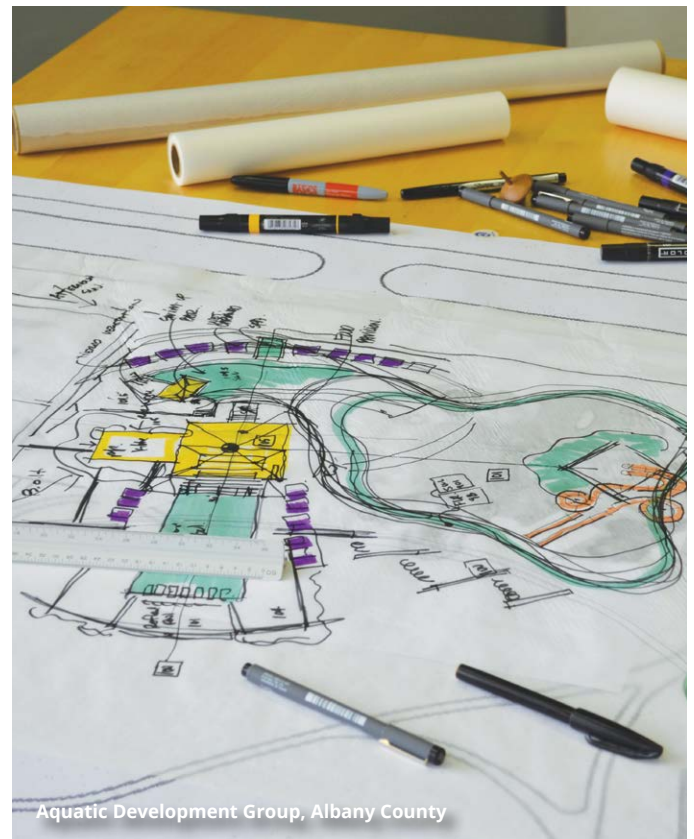
Although only a modest employment contributor, the innovations made by product designers play an integral role in overall economic competitiveness. There are a surprising number of textile producers and enough fashion designers to constitute a recent showcase—Saratoga's Electric City Couture Fashion show. Both traditional and modern furniture design have a strong foothold in the Capital Region. Beyond the innovation involved in the design of the products themselves, enterprises are also experimenting with new models to get product designs to market and launch companies. Quirky.com crowd-sources product design ideas and brings them to market. At RPI, art, design, and engineering converge. Its dual major program in Product Design and Innovation is an incredible asset for the Capital Region's product design field.



ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design make up environmental design. The Capital Region claims both prominent architecture firms and training programs. RPI

offers undergraduate, master's, and doctorate degrees in architecture as well as one of the country's only master's degrees in lighting, and a unique Lighting Research Center that engages in design-centered work. Interior design in the Capital Region is on the rise with related jobs increasing by 24% since 2004. Hudson's growing reputation as a hub for interior design has had spillover benefits for interior design service companies.



Aquatic Development Group, Albany County

MEDIA

9,965
Total Jobs
(2013)

0.97
Location
Quotient

\$44,954
Average Annual
Earnings

42.2%
Self-Employment
Share as % of all jobs

A host of freelance talent and enterprises in 32 different industries make up the media segment. Filmmakers, writers, and video game developers generate content. Diversity and efforts at resiliency are the overarching stories of the region's media portfolio. Throughout the eight counties, one finds prizewinning authors, newspaper publishers, TV stations, visiting film production companies, a video game development hub, and more.



LITERARY ARTS

Authors, residency programs, support organizations, and bookstores collectively make up the literary arts niche of the media segment. The Capital Region's natural beauty and strong educational offerings attract talented writers such as the two Pulitzer prize-winning fiction authors—William Kennedy and Steven Milhauser. Many more artists attend prestigious residency programs in beautiful settings, such as historic Yaddo, or receive training through degree programs. In addition, the New York State Writers Institute hosts 65-70 events during the academic year, and in partnership with Skidmore offers the New York State Summer Writers Institute. Other support organizations, such as Albany Poets, have nurtured the Capital Region's small, but strong, spoken word scene. The region's independent bookstores and libraries connect audiences to literary works, serve as a venue for readings, and cross-promote other literary events. Finally, the region has a handful of literary magazines.



TELEVISION & RADIO

The Capital Region's commercial and public television and radio stations are significant contributors to the media segment. Both television and radio are more concentrated in the Capital Region than in the nation overall. The Capital Region was an early mover in radio and television broadcasting. WRGB, currently a CBS affiliate, became one of the first broadcast television stations in 1928, while WGY, a radio station, came on the air in 1922. Public broadcasting plays an important cultural role in the region, with WMHT serving an audience of about 1 million throughout the greater region, through both its public radio and television station. In addition, WAMC/Northeast Public Radio is a regional public radio network that serves parts of seven northeastern states and operates a performing arts center in downtown Albany. The Sanctuary for Independent Media and the College of St. Rose's William Randolph Hearst Center for Communications & Interactive Media provide young adults and independent artists training in media production.



VIDEO GAMING

The Capital Region is home to an authentic video game industry cluster. Thanks largely to RPI's innovative academic training offerings and business incubation, a healthy cohort of gaming companies has emerged. Vicarious Visions, the largest, now employs over 150 people at its Menands headquarters.



NEWSPAPERS & PUBLISHERS

The firms that publish newspapers, books, and other periodicals, as well as companies involved in Internet publishing, form the newspaper and publishing niche. Despite vulnerabilities, the newspaper publishing industry is one of the largest contributors, in terms of employment, to the Capital Region's creative economy. In addition to several larger publications, there are a number of boutique book and periodical publishers specializing in niche markets and industry-specific content, including Fence Books, Adenine Press, Mount Ida Press, Hudson Whitman, Ernst Publishing, SUNY Press, and Slocum Publishing providing hundreds of jobs.



FILM

Firms and freelancers involved in the production and distribution of films and video fall into this category. Although employment contributions are modest, focus group members and interviewees identified opportunities in this industry. A trio of major motion pictures—*Salt*, *The Other Guys*, and *The Place Beyond the Pines*—shot in recent years raised expectations that film could benefit the regional economy. Today, the Capital Region's film strengths lie in film presentation. A range of venues screen foreign and independent films and film festivals, from Capital Cinema Cultural Exchange's four-day multi-cultural film forum to Ballston Spa's annual film festival and to screenings in Saratoga at the Saratoga Film Forum and Criterion to weekly film screenings and the annual film festival at the Basilica in Hudson. Upstate Independents links film and media artists, while other arts organizations, such as YouthFX, Revolution Studios, and the Digital Film Farm Workshop, offer film production training opportunities for youth and adults.



PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADVERTISING

The Capital Region has a large concentration of firms and freelancers working in public relations and advertising. These enterprises have considerable overlap with the design creative economy segment as PR firms also offer web and graphic design, or marketing and brand strategizing. Advertising firms cluster in the urban centers with several firms moving into new downtown locations within the last few years.

VISUAL ARTS AND HANDCRAFTED PRODUCTS

2,342
Total Jobs
(2013)

1.00
Location
Quotient

\$19,064
Average Annual
Earnings

76.3%
Self-Employment
Share as % of all jobs

The visual arts and handcrafted products segment of the Capital Region's creative economy includes fine arts and crafts. Artists create paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, and illustrations. Artisans fabricate ceramics, glass, woodwork, fiber, jewelry, and metal work. Beyond producers, the segment includes the galleries that exhibit and sell these wares and the companies that supply materials.



INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS

The Capital Region's mountainous terrain and topography have inspired visual artists for centuries. In the mid-1800s, Thomas Cole, Frederick Church, Sanford Gifford, and others drew from the landscape's beauty to form the Hudson River School, America's first distinctive school of art. Today, the region's artists include highly acclaimed artists who exhibit at major museums and are represented by major national galleries and young, emerging artists increasingly attracted to the region's creative centers. In addition to the independent craftspeople and "makers," some artisans function as small-scale manufacturers, employing others to create and fabricate their visions. Ulla Darni employs about 30 people in her Catskill Mountain studio to fabricate colorful reverse-painting glass lamps.

Artists and artisans create their work in a variety of locations, many of which take advantage of the growing number of artists live/work and studio spaces throughout the region. The Shirt Factory in Glens Falls houses more than 80 visual and craft artist studios. There are additional smaller shared work spaces throughout the region. Long wait lists for The Shirt Factory and the Albany Barn suggest an opportunity for additional spaces.



GALLERIES & ARTISAN MARKETS

Communities in the Capital Region host a number of galleries and artisan markets. Some places have developed "hub" reputations, and others offer more modest options for visual and craft artists to display and sell their work. Hudson hosts nearly 40 art galleries with over 30 lining downtown's Warren Street. Catskill also has a number of galleries. Saratoga Springs galleries are clustered in downtown on Broadway and in the arts district on Beekman Street. Albany and Troy offer a more modest array of exhibition spaces, with galleries operated by universities, non-profits, and social enterprises augmenting commercial spaces. Through its robust art and culture program, the Albany International Airport has emerged as a major player in the regional exhibition scene. The College of St. Rose, Sage College, Union College, SUNY Albany, Siena College, and RPI each provide gallery exhibition space. Small galleries at non-profits, such as the Albany Center Gallery, Collar Works, and Spring Street Gallery, and social enterprises, such as the Foundry for Art Design + Culture and PhotoCenter of the Capital District, showcase and sell artists' work.

The region's more rural areas host a number of galleries and artisan markets. For instance, in Greene County, the Catskill Mountain Foundation's Kaaterskill Fine Arts Gallery showcases fine arts and crafts, and Brik Gallery exhibits abstract and traditional contemporary art. In Washington County, two major artisan markets sell crafts produced by locals working in all disciplines: the Valley Artisan Market and Gardenworks Farm. In addition to brick and mortar galleries, First Fridays, open studios, and festivals connect patrons with art and craft products. Volunteer-based organizations spearhead many of these efforts.



THE ALBANY BARN

The Albany Barn, a converted abandoned school building, is now a unique resource for low-income artists and the larger community. Within the building one finds 22 live/work apartments, a large multi-tenant incubator space, and other shared resources such as a recording studio, multi-media computer lab, and performing space. To gain entry, resident incomes cannot exceed 50% of area median income and all vowed to give back to the Albany community. Artists pay no more than 30% of their income up to a rate of approximately \$600 per month. The wait list exceeds 70.

PERFORMING ARTS

4,700
Total Jobs
(2013)

1.13
Location
Quotient

\$16,633
Average Annual
Earnings

78.3%
Self-Employment
Share as % of all jobs

Companies and organizations that create or present music, theater, and dance make up most of the performing arts segment. Freelance actors, dancers, musicians, comedians, as well as theater, lighting, and AV equipment supply shops join them. The Capital Region's performing arts portfolio spans an Indie music duo that rehearses synth pop music in a barn to major performing arts centers that host everything from the New York City Ballet to Phish.



MUSIC

A wide range of players contribute to the music component of the Capital Region's creative economy, including creators, performers (composers, musicians, bands, and symphonies), festivals, and a smattering of other entities, including makers of musical instruments, recording studios, and organizations and institutions dedicated to offering educational opportunities. These people, organizations, and the public interrelate and establish distinct "scenes" in different genres. Jazz has flourished in the region thanks to festivals, events, and support organizations dedicated to the form. The Capital Region hosts symphonies, youth orchestras, choral groups, and an opera company. Among them are world-class performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra and Emmy Award-winning Albany Symphony Orchestra. In the contemporary scene, there are a number of local bands creating buzz beyond the region.



The region provides opportunities for community members to learn and participate in various musical genres. Musicians can receive immersive training. Community choruses for all ages offer opportunities to engage in the joy of musical expression. Additionally, there are contributors to musical supply and production chains. Recording studios, scattered in rural and urban areas, offer musicians significantly more affordable rates than those found in New York City.



DANCE

Freelance dancers and choreographers, dance companies, and schools of dance instruction constitute the dance component of the performing arts segment. Although home to relatively few professional dance companies, the Capital Region commands national standing within the discipline due to SPAC and the National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame. The superb 2014 dance season at SPAC included New York City Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, MOMIX, and Martha Graham Dance Company; modern dance made possible because of SPAC's partnership with Skidmore College's modern dance residency program. Albany claims the Albany Berkshire Ballet and the modern groups Nacre, eba, and the Ellen Sinopoli Dance Company. Dance companies, studios, art centers, and universities offer instruction in a wide range of dance forms.



THEATER

Actors, directors, theater companies, venues, and festivals all make up the theater component of performing arts. The Capital Region supports diverse genres, from the avant-garde to children's theater to Broadway musical productions and Shakespeare. Summer is theater high season in the Capital Region. Companies like Park Playhouse, Fort Salem Theatre and Mac-Haydn Theatre, the Adirondack Theatre Festival, and Lake George Theatre Lab attract professional actors from outside the region. The Exchange's Orchard Project provides a summer theatre and performance "accelerator," hosted by the Catskill Mountain Foundation. The Capital Region also supports a small number of professional theater companies that produce their own seasons throughout the year. Many small producing companies, some of which present in unusual settings, produce cutting-edge work.

Theater venues stand to gain from recently authorized tax credit legislation. The Upstate New York Musical and Theatrical Production Tax Credit will reimburse up to 25% of production costs for touring theatrical and musical productions that rehearse their shows or do technology work at the theaters.



PERFORMANCE ART

The Capital Region has a notable strength in long-duration performance art. The proposed Marina Abramovic Institute has the potential to bring a truly unique experience to upstate New York. The 33,000-square-foot facility in downtown Hudson will feature a space for visitors to practice the methods of Abramovic, one of the most renowned performance artists in the world. EMPAC also supports long-duration performance art.



Photo: Matt Wade, Creative Commons

HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION

1,883
Total Jobs
(2013)

1.08
Location
Quotient

\$19,115
Average Annual
Earnings

48.3%
Self-Employment
Share as % of all jobs

Museums, historical sites, heritage societies, libraries, archives, and other institutions and organizations that preserve or exhibit cultural or natural heritage make up the heritage and preservation segment of the Capital Region's creative economy. These institutions generate a sizable cultural impact, with contributions to tourism, education, and public access to artistic, cultural, and historic resources.



ARTS & CULTURAL MUSEUMS

The Capital Region is home to over 60 arts and cultural museums including art, children's, science, topical, and museums that celebrate the region's industrial roots. Collectively, these museums attract more than one million annual visitors. The region hosts enviable collections at institutions such as the New York State Museum, the Albany Institute of History and Art, and the Hyde Collection. University museums and galleries, such as Skidmore's Tang Museum, Union College Art Museum, and SUNY's University Art Museum, serve as educational centers and showcase contemporary visual arts. Youth have access to four different children's museums. Other institutions, such as the National Bottle Museum and the Slate Valley Museum, interpret the region's industrial history. Topical museums reach another level at Saratoga Springs' two national museums and halls of fame, the National Museum of Racing and the National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame.



HERITAGE & PRESERVATION

Historical societies, cultural centers, festivals, and antique shops help preserve and share the Capital Region's diverse heritage. Many organizations, such as the African American Cultural Center, work to preserve specific ethnic, racial, or religious cultural heritages, often powered by volunteers. Festivals celebrate the Capital Region's cultural heritage—both its historic roots and today's diversity. The Tulip Festival and Pinksterfest celebrate the African American/Dutch tradition, while LatinFest and Guyanese Family Fun Day represent festivals that showcase the region's ever-evolving cultural heritage.

A cadre of private, public, and non-profit organizations provides critical services related to preservation. Hudson's status as a hub for antiques put it back on the map with it now housing over 60 antique dealers and related businesses. The Capital Region also has a relatively large number of architectural and preservation-related businesses that cater specifically to architectural historic preservation. In the public sector, New York State's Bureau of Historic Sites on Peabbles Island offers technical assistance and preservation services to all of New York's state-owned parks and historic sites.

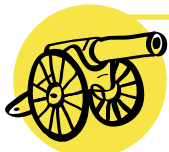


The Hyde Collection, Warren County

Photo: Robert Gray, Creative Commons



Olana State Historic Site, Columbia County



HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS

A vast array of historic sites, buildings, and landmarks preserves and shares the Capital Region's history. The area has notable architectural jewels such as Schenectady's Stockade Historic District, with the highest concentrations of historic homes in the country, as well as the Hart-Cluett House, a 19th century townhouse recognized for its sophisticated architecture. Two large historic sites—the Lakes to Locks Passage and the Olana State Historic Site—deserve particular attention because their success at regional collaborations holds promise for other Capital Region contributors.



LIBRARIES

Most of the libraries in the Capital Region, more than 80 public, are part of local and county governments. Though the majority of these libraries operate on limited budgets, they offer a remarkable roster of resources and programs to their community members. Specialty offerings include access to genealogical materials, local cemetery and marriage records, and aviation materials. Some smaller, local libraries have managed to develop important cultural programs. For instance, the Troy Public Library presents story-telling groups, music-making classes, and computer workshops, while the Hudson Area Library collaborates with the Columbia County Photo Club on a library photo exhibit where artists also sell their photos.

CREATIVE CONVERGENCE

Creative talent and creative businesses intersect with other sectors of the Capital Region Economy. Individuals with creative talent contribute to companies across industry sectors; creative enterprises and assets are key drivers to a vibrant and thriving economy. In the Capital Region, these four sectors converge with the creative economy in a significant way:



TECHNOLOGY

Art and technology are in many ways interdependent. Artists design the creative content of video games, smart phone apps, websites, and many software interfaces. The quality of the arts and cultural environment is important to technology companies trying to attract talent. The Capital Region is fast becoming a hub for experimental art—where creativity and technology come together.



MANUFACTURING

One result of growing global competition is that authenticity and quality design are becoming a more important competitive factor for regional manufacturers. So while mass-produced products may face serious international competition, manufacturers of artisan products in the furniture, textile, and jewelry industries are able to succeed through craft production and design excellence.



CULINARY ARTS

The intersections between the region's agriculture, artisanal food products, microbreweries, and restaurants are significant and deep. From the quarterly publications to the plethora of microbreweries and local distilleries, the growth of the culinary arts and creative industries is closely linked.



TOURISM

The connections between the region's arts and cultural assets and its tourism industry are widely recognized. The region's venues, museums, and historic sites attract many visitors from outside of the region. Year-round festivals and events revolving around music, visual arts and crafts, and literary arts have a major impact on the tourism industry.



Cream of Wheat Laser Light Show at Hunter Mountain, Greene County

ADVANCING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: A CALL TO ACTION

STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON

ENTREPRENEURIAL ENERGY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The Capital Region has a strong, geographically balanced set of business support services, including entrepreneurial training, one-on-one technical assistance, shared workspaces, and events such as Startup Weekend, encouraging entrepreneurial activity in the region. The region's higher education institutions strongly support and encourage student entrepreneurship. The result—robust entrepreneurial activity throughout the region with room for growth.

PRESENTING CAPACITY AND STATE-OF-THE-ART VENUES

In any given week, state-owned, commercial, non-profit, and university-owned venues throughout the Capital Region present a significant number of arts and cultural events. Some of these venues, such as EMPAC, the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, and the Arthur Zankel Music Center, are widely acknowledged in the music industry for acoustical excellence. Other notable venues, including the Times Union Center, Proctor's, the Capital Repertory Theatre, the Egg, and the Palace Theatre, draw large crowds from in and outside the region. Smaller commercial venues, such as Helsinki Hudson, the Basilica, and Caffè Lena, further contribute to the cultural environment.

COMPANIES AT THE INTERSECTION OF CREATIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY

The Capital Region has a number of companies that work at the intersection of creative content and technology. The region has two significant computer gaming companies as well as a number of smaller start-ups; marketing and design companies that work globally; and companies, such as Adirondack Studios and Tribune Media Services, that serve the national entertainment industry and employ hundreds of residents.

NEW COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

There is increased collaborative energy among non-profit organizations in the region. Some of this is place-based, with four arts organizations in Greene County forming Mainly Greene; multiple organizations forming the Troy Cultural Alliance; and the Glens Falls Collaborative focusing on downtown. Others are new collaborations across cultural institutions; Cap Rep collaborates with Proctors, while Park Playhouse, The Palace Theater, and Albany Symphony Orchestra share resources. Additional collaborations exist between higher education institutions with Accelerate518 promoting student entrepreneurship amongst Siena College, RPI, Russell Sage College, and Union Graduate School.

EXPERIMENTAL AND ELECTRONIC ARTS

The Capital Region has a niche in cutting-edge performance art, experimental installations, and media and digital art. EMPAC at RPI brings international talent in the experimental arts to the region for residencies and performances.

WORLD-CLASS ARTS AND CULTURAL RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

The Capital Region is a region of creative learning and reflection. Three arts residencies programs in the region—Yaddo, the Millay Colony, and Art Omi—receive international recognition. Add to these EMPAC, the New York State Writers Institute, almost a dozen additional residency programs, and summer institutes such as the Skidmore Jazz Institute, New York State School of Orchestral Studies, Saratoga International Theater Institute, and the Skidmore Summer Dance Workshop. These programs draw international talent to the region and mark the region as a center of creativity.

In a 1968 tribute to the executive director of Yaddo, John Cheever noted that the “forty or so acres on which the principal buildings of Yaddo stand have seen more distinguished activity in the arts than any other piece of ground in the English-speaking community and perhaps the world.”

HIGH-QUALITY NATURAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Urban centers in the Capital Region are in the process of revitalization and are developing amenities that are of interest to young, mobile artists and professionals. Troy is referred to as the new Brooklyn; *The New York Times* recently highlighted Hudson's restaurants, amenities, and events; and a number of new restaurants have recently located to downtown Schenectady. The diversity of the creative assets in each county creates a distinct sense of place that contributes to a high quality of life for residents. Perhaps what makes the Capital Region unique is the outstanding natural environment that surrounds these urban centers; lakes, rivers, mountains, and the types of landscapes that inspired the Hudson School of Painting.



Agora Games, Rensselaer County
rendering courtesy of id29

LOCATION AT CENTER OF NORTHEAST CREATIVE HUBS

The Capital Region has the advantage of being close to established creative hubs—the Berkshires, Southern Vermont, and the Hudson River Valley. The region’s close proximity to New York City is also a competitive strength as creatives and freelancers can live in the region and freelance in New York City or, conversely, live in New York City and perform or work in the region. Proximity to Montreal and Boston is also an advantage, particularly for those at the intersection of creativity and technology.

TARGETED TAX INCENTIVES

The region has a number of potential incentives that could be leveraged to support creative individuals and enterprises. These include: New York State’s 25% tax credit to producers who tech their shows in New York’s facilities, including in the Capital Region and Start-Up NY, which provides tax incentives to new or certain expanding businesses that are willing to partner with universities in the state and locate near their campuses.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Capital Region boasts four graduate and professional schools, three research universities, five four-year schools, five two-year community colleges, and two adult long-distance learning programs. These institutions offer courses in all aspects of creativity, including fine arts, music, music business, drama, graphic design, architecture, communications, electronic media, games and simulations arts, film, and broadcasting. Beyond producing a pipeline of creative talent, the colleges and universities also have impressive venues and summer programs in arts and culture. The strong support these institutions have provided for student entrepreneurs has led to dozens of creative alumni businesses that have stayed in the region.



CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

REGIONAL FRAGMENTATION

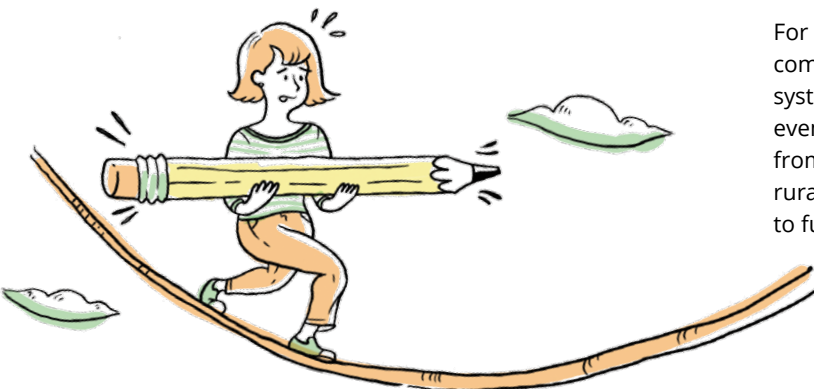
The Capital Region is not a cohesive region with strong networks and collaborations that cross the county borders or even its rivers. The survey of creative freelancers found that while residents might attend a creative offering or network with colleagues in a neighboring county, few feel a cohesive part of the eight-county region.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDES

While the creative economy has led to many changes in the region, perhaps best seen in the revitalization of some of the Capital Region’s urban centers, this energy is not reaching across socio-economic boundaries. In many of the region’s cities, one block off the main streets there remain deep pockets of poverty.

GENERATION SILOS

In many ways, there are two creative economies in the Capital Region, one that involves the millennials and one that involves the rest of the community. There are different networks, ways of working, and aspirations. A strong regional creative economy would involve crossing some of these divides and engaging younger residents in the leadership of the creative economy.



A LARGE NUMBER OF SMALL, SOMEWHAT FRAGILE NON-PROFITS

The Capital Region benefits from its wealth of creative assets, but a downside of this plethora of organizations is heightened competition for both funding and markets, and many organizations with limited scale and capacity. There are multiple symphonies, numerous children’s museums, and a very large number of organizations providing arts-related classes to young people. Funders of the arts struggle to prioritize their support so that the overall arts and cultural environment is sustainable.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Given the fragmentation of the services and the various constituencies, many in the creative community remain unaware of what is available and how to access it. For example, many of the needs that freelancers identified in the survey for this project are actually available in some capacity in the Capital Region. The challenge is that there is no readily accessible source of information on resources in the region.

LIMITED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

For creative enterprises to thrive, they require access to basic community infrastructure, most notably a public transportation system that supports access to employment, and arts and cultural events, and the broadband services needed to work successfully from remote locations. In a large eight-county region with many rural areas, both forms of infrastructure are critical constraints to further growth in the creative economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is a call to action to individual and organizational leaders and provides a shared opportunity to build a world-class creative economy. The recommendations are a set of possibilities to support a portfolio of activities and fall within two areas:

CONSTRUCT AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The support infrastructure needed to facilitate creative economic growth.

IMPLEMENT A PORTFOLIO OF ACTIVITIES

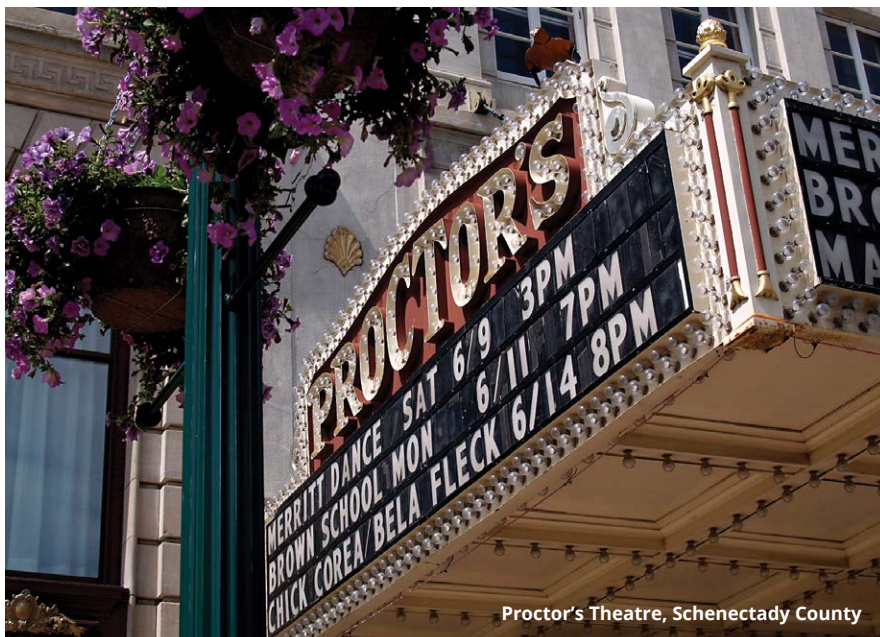
The set of potential actions that organizations and individuals can undertake over the course of the next decade.

The recommendations on the subsequent pages follow six guiding principles that will enable the Capital Region to build an internationally-recognized creative economy:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *Have a regional scope*
- *Scale-up successful existing support infrastructure*
- *Incite true transformation*
- *Enhance collaboration among public, private, and non-profit actors*
- *Support the emergence of world-class talent, enterprises, events and facilities*
- *Strengthen and expand existing networks to maximize cross-pollination across disciplines, across county lines, and across ages and socio-economic divides*

The following recommendations do not include recommendations to address county or entity-specific stakeholder needs that surfaced during the course of this project. Instead, the recommendations follow the principles outlined above in order to ensure not only a regional impact, but also a transformational impact that will contribute to a world-class creative economy.



Proctor's Theatre, Schenectady County

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

RESIDENTS

Growth of the creative industries and the contributions creative talent and creative companies make to other industries will create new economic opportunities for individuals in the region. Additionally, support and promotion of excellence in the creative economy will create a substantially enhanced quality of life—providing a more vibrant and culturally rich place to live and work.

CREATIVE BUSINESSES, FREELANCERS & NON-PROFITS

A thriving and vibrant creative economy will spawn new markets, generate new collaborative opportunities, and contribute to innovative and supportive infrastructures that support creative endeavors.

ALL BUSINESSES

A strong cultural environment and new image for the community will help companies attract and retain talent needed to be competitive. Additionally, the infusion of creativity and innovation into traditional business models provides for economic competitiveness.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Colleges and universities benefit when students have access to more career opportunities in the community, the quality of life in the community is seen as a positive for students, parents, and faculty and their families, and the broader community recognizes the abundant, high-quality creative assets embedded within higher educational institutions.

CONSTRUCT AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

1 BUILD A CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE

For this report to go beyond a planning document and become the first step in the implementation process, it is critical to have collaborative commitment and participation from key cross-sector leaders throughout the region. The collaborative would include representatives from organizations throughout the Capital Region with shared interests who are committed to achieving the outcomes and who will take responsibility for portions of the proposed portfolio. First steps include identification of lead organizations and representatives, and definition and adoption of a set of outcomes.

Rather than build a new, non-profit organization, the proposed implementation structure involves a collaborative that will be led by a director who is further supported by staff and resources from two backbone organizations—the *Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region* and the *Center for Economic Growth*. These two organizations provided this support for the planning phase, leading to the development of this report, and are well positioned to continue this work going forward.

2 ESTABLISH THE FUND FOR CREATIVE EXCELLENCE

There is a highly competitive funding environment in the Capital Region, with large numbers of non-profit arts organizations competing for limited funding. The objective of the Fund for Creative Excellence is to pool philanthropic and corporate resources, and define a set of outcomes funders are seeking to achieve. Outcomes to be funded support efforts that exemplify principles outlined in this report with regional impact: efforts focused on building to excellence, initiatives that embrace new and innovative collaborations, projects that bring to scale existing capacity, and activities that represent new networking opportunities across the creative economy.

In addition to regional philanthropic and corporate funders, the Fund for Creative Excellence will seek other sources to grow capital. For instance, fund management will engage private equity and debt investors to create a pooled capital fund for real estate and venture development in the creative economy, seek national philanthropic funders to co-invest, and explore the use of crowd-sourcing.

3 DESIGN A CREATIVE PORTAL

The creative community needs a virtual gathering place—a place where creative jobs, internships, and freelance opportunities are posted; where one can find news of events related to the creative economy and information on training; where resources and networks are available for entrepreneurs and small businesses; and where the capacity for the exchange of ideas and opportunities exists.

4 CATALYZE CREATIVE NETWORKS

This analysis found that many of those working within the creative industries do not network in person across counties or across disciplines. In-person networking promotes collaborations, a sense of community, and new creative opportunities, while reducing the sense of isolation that some artists feel, particularly when living and working in rural communities. Formal and regular networking events are an important element of building the Capital Region's creative ecosystem.

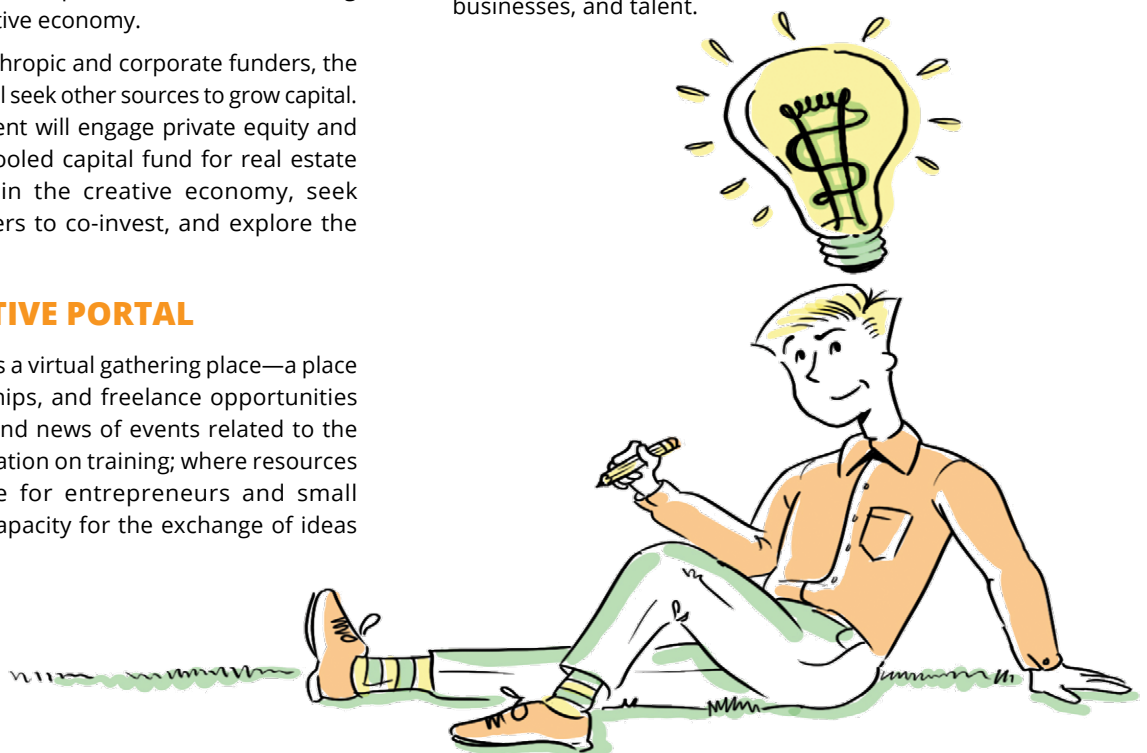
5 COMMUNICATE THE CREATIVE ECONOMY MESSAGE

Many residents, businesses, and policymakers in the region have begun to shift their thinking about the Capital Region and recognize the growing importance of technology-based companies. However, few think of the region in terms of its creative strengths. This report provides evidence about the economic importance of creative industries and talent to the region's economic future. This message needs to be disseminated more widely throughout the community.

Key leaders in the business, creative, and non-profit communities will be designated as "creative ambassadors" with the primary objective of making the case in their community about the importance of the creative economy.

6 CREATE A REGIONAL CREATIVE BRAND

One of the most frequently heard messages in focus groups and interviews was that the image of the Capital Region continues to suffer from a legacy of outdated perceptions that are difficult to change. The consensus is the current image does not reflect the region's distinctive and authentic creative assets and attributes. A regional, creative brand will provide vision and a competitive edge necessary to attract visitors, businesses, and talent.



IMPLEMENT A PORTFOLIO OF ACTIVITIES

CAPITALIZE ON THE CONVERGENCE OF CREATIVITY, ARTS, AND TECHNOLOGY

- **Grow and attract new businesses in the digital media and computer gaming industries**
Develop a marketing campaign and target these industries as part of the regional StartUP NY plan and other regional economic development initiatives.
- **Scale-up Center of Gravity and Accelerate518**
Develop strategies and resources to develop a network of specialized Centers of Gravity in the region and engage more actors and expand the scope of Accelerate518.
- **Create a region-wide event spotlighting experimental collaboration in art, science, and emerging technologies**
Establish a Task Force to develop a signature creative event in the region focusing on the intersection of art, science, and technology. Include visual, literary, and media artists in this effort.



TURN ON THE REGION'S TALENT PIPELINE

- **Convene a Creative Higher Ed Working Group**
Develop a collaborative, cross-institutional effort to identify activities that will benefit the creative economy as well as the educational institutions. For instance, develop a catalogue of classes and programs relevant to the creative economy and offer cross-enrollment agreements.
- **Host creative career events and internship programs for high school and college students in the region**
Expose students and parents to the broad range of regional educational and career opportunities in the creative industries.
- **Make the region a center of excellence in arts education**
Build upon the Capital Region's leadership in STEM with the addition of the arts and a focus on innovation.
- **Develop events that highlight the region's creative assets targeted to those who come for summer programs and residencies in the region**
Cultivate a regional marketing program specifically designed to target summer education and residency participants.

EXPAND CREATIVE MARKETS

- **Grow the business arts market**
Increase the market for local creative products and provide new places for exhibiting art by growing the number of companies willing to exhibit or purchase work from regional artists.
- **Improve access to business support services for creative entrepreneurs and freelancers**
Develop a one-stop virtual portal that has information about all of the services available to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Additionally, expose business service providers to the creative industries to provide them a better understanding of the unique needs.
- **Create customized training and degree programs that are specific to the needs of freelancers**
Develop and market programs designed to support skills creative freelancers need. Incentives and subsidies will encourage participation.
- **Encourage young people and college students to attend arts events**
Develop and distribute a regional "Passport for the Arts" with discounts to cultural institutions and performances for students in k-12 and higher education. Exposure to arts in the community increases audience and builds lifelong learnings.
- **Identify connections to the state-wide global market initiative**
Assess opportunities for creative industries expansion and export in the global marketplace.

SPREAD THE CAPITAL REGION'S CREATIVE WEALTH

- **Cultivate creative ambassadors in underrepresented communities**
Identify and cultivate creative talent embedded in low-income communities, and connect and facilitate needed economic resources.
- **Develop creative middle-skill job training programs**
Use the new tax incentives for theater to develop programs that target middle-skill jobs for low and moderate income residents. Middle-skill jobs require training and certification and do not require a four-year degree.
- **Create entrepreneurial and creative working spaces in low-income communities**
Establish a specialized maker space as part of the effort to scale-up the Center of Gravity in lower income urban neighborhoods throughout the region.

CAPTIVATE

THE CAPITAL REGION'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

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