



create VT

**ACTION PLAN
FOR VERMONT'S
CREATIVE SECTOR**

AUGUST 2021



VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK
create vermont
VERMONTCREATIVENETWORK.ORG

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“Let this plan give us all permission to re-animate ourselves and each other and ignite all sorts of creative projects in our dynamic state. We are only limited by our spirit and imagination and I know we have no shortage of either.”

- Vermont Senator Becca Balint

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Vermont is in the traditional un-sundered territory of the Abenaki people, one of five Wabanaki nations, who have had a continuous presence here since time immemorial.

The Vermont Arts Council learned from Abenaki elders that in Abenaki, *Waban* is the white flickering light in the sky and *Aki* is the word for land. So the Wabanaki are the *People of the Dawnland*.

We acknowledge their ancestors, their history, and their continuing creative presence today.

Chrissy Tate performs at Vermont Performance Lab's 10th Anniversary party. Photo: Kelly Fletcher.

CREATIVE VALUES

The following values are the fundamental beliefs that guide this plan. In our process, these values emerged again and again as foundational motivations for the development of strategies, actions, and priorities.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUTHENTICITY

We believe in leading with action-based intentionality and authenticity, intentionality and authenticity, holding each other accountable.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESS

We believe that the creative sector cannot thrive until we address racism, systemic injustice, and barriers to equity and accessibility.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND INVESTMENT

We believe that creative individuals, organizations, and enterprises can thrive, and can fuel a thriving state, if we invest in them and build capacity.

TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

We believe that communication, coordination and collaboration are essential to scaling up and supporting the creative sector.

CREATIVITY, EXPLORATION, INNOVATION

We believe that we must venture beyond the known in order to expand and grow as a creative sector.

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that the creative sector's ability to partner and build relationships is key to success.

EQUITY ACKNOWLEDGMENT



The creative sector cannot thrive until we acknowledge and address racism, systemic injustice, and barriers to equity and accessibility. We commit to recognizing past injustices, removing barriers, and sharing power with people of all races, genders, sexualities, religions, backgrounds, ages, and abilities.

We are interested in continued conversation, action, and long-term commitment about ways we need to approach inclusivity to ensure that all Vermonters—not the selected few—are heard, seen, and included in the creative sector.

In this spirit, we are sharing more about our approach to equity in this plan as we continue to receive feedback on all of these areas and do some careful thinking about the ways we need to move forward:

“Equity needs to be woven into every part of this plan and needs to be embodied within everything we do in the creative sector.”

- Shanta Lee Gander

INCLUSION AS A VALUE

Originally, we had a specific equity-focused goal within the plan. Based on important feedback and continued conversations, we changed our approach to center our values and all of our goals around diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. It became key that in every part of our plan— from strengthening infrastructure to advocacy— that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is an intentional part of how we approach the work and how we gauge progress.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

We thought carefully about authentic and clear language within the cultural context of this moment and recognize there is no consensus on “correct” language. We made a conscious decision to not use the term “BIPOC,” (Black, Indigenous and People of Color), given that all people of color do not refer to themselves in this way. We have chosen to refer to particular groups more specifically wherever possible and to use the phrase “traditionally underrepresented groups in Vermont (e.g. people of color, the Abenaki and other Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities)” where a broader term was needed when referencing issues of racism, accessibility, and inequity.

DATA NEEDS

Our existing data lacks clarity on the racial and economic inequities that we know exist in this sector and in this state. We look forward to strengthening infrastructure and continuing to build relationships that will support the work already being done in this area, and taking other actions within our communities across the state to continue to better understand and address these gaps.

We acknowledge that there are imperfections in what we present here and pledge to hold ourselves accountable while also using this moment as an opportunity for the creative sector to do better regarding the ways racial, economic, and all areas of equity need to be at the center of everything we do within the creative sector.

FEATURED ARTISTS

CreateVT benefited from Vermont's creatives at every turn. Many thanks to those who joined the conversations, and to the following creatives who made specific contributions to the process and this plan:

COVER IMAGE & ARTWORK THROUGHOUT THE PLAN

JUNIPER CREATIVE ARTS | JENNIFER HERRERA CONDRY, WILL KASSO CONDRY, AND ALEXA HERRERA CONDRY
junipercreative.bigcartel.com

Juniper Creative Arts is a Black and Dominican family collective that facilitates community mural projects with colleges and universities, K-12 schools, and community-based organizations. They are nationally recognized muralists, facilitators, and educators with a mission-driven practice of creating art that both involves and celebrates historically excluded communities. During the fall 2020 FutureJam, hundreds of creative Vermonters joined us to kick off the CreateVT vision and action planning process. Juniper Creative joined those conversations and drew this image to represent what they heard.

VISION PORTRAITS

REBECCA KINKEAD | rebeccakinkead.com

Rebecca Kinkead is a painter and portrait artist living in Cornwall, Vermont. She created "A Neighbor Project" —a community art project in which she has painted hundreds of 30-minute portraits of neighbors and community members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rebecca took the project online, painting portraits over Zoom. In the fall of 2020, we asked nine creative Vermonters to share their visions for a creative Vermont. Rebecca painted their portraits (pages 32-35) during those interviews.

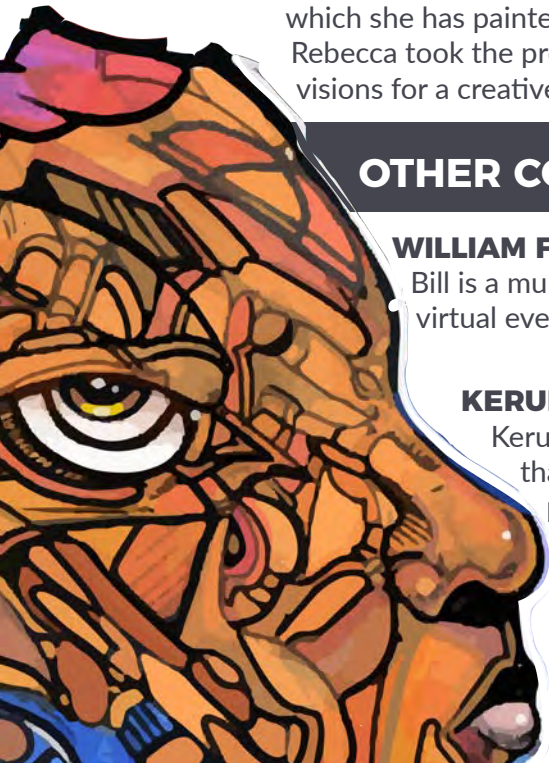
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

WILLIAM FORCHION | billforchion.com

Bill is a multi-disciplinary artist and visionary speaker based in Southern Vermont. Bill wrote and shared a poem during a virtual event in Fall of 2020, which is printed with permission on page 74.

KERUBO | kerubomusic.com

KeruBo is a Vermont-based singer/songwriter born in Kendu Bay, Kenya. She has been a working musician for more than 20 years. Her musical influences range from traditional African music to gospel, blues, and Afro-jazz. KeruBo performed live for the final CreateVT Jamboree! celebration in December 2020.



Create

VT

**ACTION
PLAN FOR
VERMONT'S
CREATIVE
SECTOR**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CREATE VT WITH US.

Creativity is essential to the cultural and economic vitality of Vermont. This plan is a portrait of our creative state. It's a roadmap to equitable growth. And it's a collective call to action.



VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK
create vermont



vermont's creative moment is now

This is a moment of astounding challenge and opportunity—a moment made for Vermont's creative sector.

The United Nations designated 2021 the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, affirming the value of the creative sector for fostering innovation and jobs, decreasing poverty, promoting racial and gender equity, and improving health and wellbeing. Vermont's creative sector is large, vibrant, and ready to lead in these areas.

Creative sector enterprises – publishers, galleries, theaters, museums, design firms, film studios, manufacturers, artisan cheese shops, and more – provide 9.3% of Vermont jobs. In 2019, arts and culture alone contributed \$1.1 billion to the Vermont economy.

Like roads and bridges, creativity and innovation are essential infrastructure for Vermont's recovery and future.

A growing body of research demonstrates the power of the creative economy as a catalyst for growth and change, particularly in rural places, and particularly in times of crisis and recovery. Creativity is embedded in Vermont's character and communities, from the innovation of technology start-ups to the surge in artisan foods and the vitality of bustling community arts centers and libraries. Local arts and culture are in turn one of the biggest amenities drawing visitors and younger residents to Vermont.

What if we placed creativity, culture and innovation at the center of our path forward?

CREATE VT WITH US

The CreateVT Action Plan envisions a Vermont that thrives through creativity, inclusivity, and innovation.

Realizing this vision requires a bold commitment of public and private resources, state and local policies, organized and grassroots action. Developed by the Vermont Creative Network over three years, the plan provides a roadmap for critical investment in Vermont artists, creative entrepreneurs, businesses and facilities at the state, local and individual levels.

The CreateVT plan commits to a creative sector that

is diverse, accessible, and that reflects the creative expression of people of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, origins, religions, belief systems, ages, and abilities.

Now is the moment to empower and invest in Vermont's creative sector, and in turn let creativity and innovation shape an equitable and prosperous Vermont. JOIN US.

the moment to THRIVE

9.3% of all Vermont jobs are in the creative sector. For Vermont to thrive, creatives must thrive.

The U.S. creative industry lost 34% of jobs in early 2020, due to COVID-19. To recover, creative people and businesses need business support; studio and work space; and affordable living. Rebuilding jobs means reopening facilities and restarting creative and cultural events; that will take funding and investments.

the moment to GROW

The creative economy is one of the world's fastest growing sectors. For Vermont to grow, creative industries must grow.

Vermont's creative sector contributes billions annually to our GDP, but our 8% growth rate is half the U.S. average. Growing creative industries will kickstart Vermont's economy. Expansion of broadband and digital capacity is urgent, if we want to promote Vermont as a creative hub.

the moment to LEAD

Racism, climate change, affordability, and automation need innovative solutions. For Vermont to lead, the creative sector must lead.

Vermont's biggest challenges will take big ideas. Our educational system must nurture creative skills essential to the future and open a pipeline to creative careers—that will build our capacity and reputation for innovation and will attract investment and employers, visitors and residents.

VERMONT'S creative sector

Creativity is everywhere in Vermont: at maker spaces and museums, on stages and on street corners, in classrooms and kitchens. To grow and amplify the sector, we first need to understand it.

CREATIVE SECTOR

The collective enterprises, organizations, and individuals whose products and services are rooted in artistic and creative content



41K

Vermont
creative
sector jobs



that's

9.3%

of all
Vermont jobs

CREATIVE JOBS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES

- K-12 music teacher
- industrial designer
- retail photographer
- non-profit marketer

26%

24%

CREATIVE JOBS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

- architect
- freelance writer
- chocolatier
- muralist

OTHER JOBS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

- theater security guard
- ad agency accountant
- museum custodian
- prep cook in artisan restaurant

50%

WHO ARE VERMONT'S CREATIVES?

Musicians, artists and writers are a critical component of Vermont's creative sector, but the sector overall contains a much larger set of occupations.

- A full 50% of Vermont's creative sector workers aren't in traditionally *creative occupations*—they are the custodians, accountants, line staff, and administrators who keep creative businesses and facilities afloat
- Another 26% are *creative workers*, like designers or media producers, but in other industries like education or retail
- Nearly 50% of Vermont's creatives are self-employed or freelance (compared to 40% nationwide)
- 72% of creative sector survey respondents make \$30,000 or less from creative work each year

Statistics from "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," Mt. Auburn Associates (2019), available at vermontcreativenetwork.org.

WHAT ARE OUR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES?

Vermont's seven major creative segments include everything from arts and culture to specialty foods and industrial design.

SEGMENT	JOB SHARE
➤ Design	26%
➤ Specialty Foods	18%
➤ Visual Arts & Fine Crafts	18%
➤ Performing Arts	13%
➤ Film & Media	12%
➤ Literary Arts	8%
➤ Culture & Heritage	4%

CREATIVE SEGMENTS

Industries in which the majority of enterprises are creative

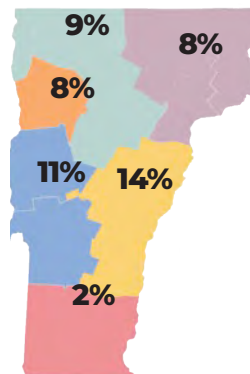


core creative industries in Vermont

HOW IS OUR CREATIVE SECTOR DOING?

Vermont has more creative industry jobs than the U.S. overall. Unfortunately, growth is lagging.

- 7% of all Vermont jobs are in creative industries (U.S. average: 5.1%)
- Creative industry employment in Vermont is growing at 8% per year (U.S. average: 14%)
- Growth is highest in Addison/Rutland & Windsor/Orange regions



SECTOR GROWTH
2010-2018

CREATEVT PROCESS

RESEARCH

In 2019, Mt. Auburn Associates completed Vermont's first creative sector economic study, using economic analysis, focus groups and a statewide survey. Read the full report and explore the findings:

vermontcreativenetwork.org

VISION & PLAN

In 2020, the Vermont Creative Network and Community Workshop led a creative visioning and planning process to engage creative sector leaders and stakeholders, identify priorities, and create an equitable plan.

**THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.
3 YEARS. 1 VISION.**



VERMONT'S creative vision

we believe that
creativity is essential
to the **cultural & economic**
vitality of **vermont**

in our vision:

- > arts, culture and creativity are
essential Vermont infrastructure
- > **Vermont communities thrive**
through creative expression and enterprise
- > **creative enterprises succeed**
in a diverse, equitable, connected, and collaborative
environment

ARTS, CULTURE & CREATIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL VERMONT INFRASTRUCTURE

vision

Arts, culture and creativity are just as essential to Vermont's future as roads, bridges and broadband. When we prioritize them as such, we will see a corresponding increase in statewide investment and resources, enabling policies, and education for the creative sector.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

GOALS & STRATEGIES

goal 1 | RESOURCES

Creative enterprises have equitable access to robust public, private and community funding and resources.

- 1.1 Expand, develop and diversify accessible public and private funding streams to support the creative sector
- 1.2 Develop and promote policies and funding programs that ensure equitable access to resources
- 1.3 Collect, synthesize, and share statewide data on the creative sector and its return on investment

goal 2 | EDUCATION

Educational systems develop creative talent, skills, access to, and appreciation for arts and culture.

- 2.1 Foster accessible, creativity-infused education programming from early childhood through college and adult education
- 2.2 Encourage programs that expand creative sector mentorship, career development, certifications or credentials of value, and workforce training
- 2.3 Promote inclusive professional development and learning opportunities in all creative disciplines

goal 3 | POLICY

State and local policies are designed to equitably support creative enterprises and infrastructure.

- 3.1 Organize a statewide advocacy team and annual strategy
- 3.2 Build capacity for advocacy within the creative sector and Vermont Creative Network
- 3.3 Create a multi-audience communications campaign and toolkit to increase awareness of and support for the creative sector

Local Policy
Strong local groups like Burlington City Arts advocate for effective creative sector policies.



Better Funding
Programs like Better Places offer more—and more equitable—resources for creative local projects and spaces.



Practical Skills
Programs like New England Youth Theater offer hands-on learning and career development, augmenting classroom creative education.

Photo credits left to right: Richard Amore, Laura Bliss, Sandy Milens

VERMONT COMMUNITIES THRIVE THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION & ENTERPRISE

vision

Creativity is at the center of thriving, healthy, and equitable communities. When we foster local creative enterprises, infrastructure, leadership and collaborations, it pays off in community building, problem solving, vibrancy, livability, and economic benefits.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

GOALS & STRATEGIES

goal 4 | LOCAL CREATIVITY

Communities are infused with opportunities for creative economic development, expression and engagement.

- 4.1 Support the development and improvement of accessible venues, facilities, and work spaces for creative programs and enterprises
- 4.2 Promote creative activities through new and existing funding programs
- 4.3 Develop resources to build local capacity for creative initiatives

goal 5 LEADERSHIP

Creatives are engaged in community building and leadership.

- 5.1 Create trainings and toolkits to support local and regional creative sector advocacy
- 5.2 Support and promote inclusive access to leadership development and opportunities for creative sector members
- 5.3 Support the development of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility strategies in Vermont's creative organizations

goal 6 | COLLABORATIONS

Cross-sector collaborations amplify creativity and local economies.

- 6.1 Cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other sectors such as transportation, tourism, recreation, and health
- 6.2 Establish reciprocal outreach partnerships with organizations that reach new audiences and diverse Vermonters
- 6.3 Promote cross-sector collaborations by sharing resources, successful models, and stories

Growing Leaders
Programs like Poetry Out Loud encourage creativity and leadership all at once.

Teaming Up
When cross-sector partners like Catamount Arts and Kingdom Trails team up for events, the economic benefits scale exponentially.

Local Solutions
Creativity sparks uniquely local solutions, like Harry's Hardware in Cabot, which created a tiny bar and music venue at the checkout counter.



Photo credits left to right: Harry's Hardware, Young Writers Project, Catamount Arts

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES SUCCEED IN A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, CONNECTED, & COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT vision

A strong creative sector means thriving creative people, entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations. We must dismantle inequitable systems, increase access to resources, and promote a diverse creative sector that includes underrepresented groups like people of color, indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, and people with disabilities.

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

GOALS & STRATEGIES

goal 7 | SUPPORT

Creative people and enterprises have abundant access to the resources they need to succeed.

- 7.1 Connect creative enterprises to business and technical support resources
- 7.2 Support statewide advocacy efforts for livability, affordability and accessibility
- 7.3 Provide COVID-19 recovery assistance and resources and support continuing creative sector disaster resilience

goal 8 | NETWORKS

Vibrant networks support creative people, industries, and communities of practice.

- 8.1 Define and promote VCN membership and participation to diverse creatives
- 8.2 Cultivate and support existing networks of support for people who identify with traditionally underrepresented groups
- 8.3 Expand and publicize creative networking events
- 8.4 Assess and strengthen accessible, user-friendly communication and networking channels for the creative sector

goal 9 | PROMOTION

Vermont is promoted as a hub for creative talent, experiences and communities.

- 9.1 Promote creative content and offerings that reflect the diversity of the state and elevate the culture and creativity of traditionally underrepresented groups
- 9.2 Develop solutions and partnerships to expand market reach of creative sector businesses, in-state and beyond
- 9.3 Integrate creative offerings into statewide marketing and incentives for tourists, investors, residents and businesses



Photo credits left to right: Hildene - The Lincoln Family Farm, AARP Vermont and Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, The Media Factory

action FRAMEWORK

Our implementation plan consists of three agendas to direct and prioritize actions: a statewide advocacy agenda to secure creative sector resources, a network agenda to connect and empower creatives, and a local agenda to guide regional and local action.

ADVOCACY AGENDA

Implementation requires resources and investment, which calls for clear and coordinated statewide advocacy. While annual needs will change, four major priorities for collective advocacy have emerged.

invest in CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Theaters, museums, libraries, parks, and community centers are essential for creative activity. Expanding programs like Cultural Facilities Grants and Historic Downtown Tax Credits can support upgrades, accessibility improvements, and new facilities.

promote CREATIVE LOCAL ECONOMIES

From food festivals to public art, increasing creative local economic development projects is a win-win, growing local economies, vibrancy, and access to arts & culture. Supporting them takes dedicated funding programs like Better Places, and creative projects in other programs.

invest in DIGITAL CAPACITY

Digital skills and the ability to connect will be essential for creative enterprises in a post-pandemic world. Vermont must invest heavily in broadband expansion, technical assistance and digital capacity.

develop ENTREPRENEUR & BUSINESS SKILLS

Diverse creative enterprises need diverse professional skills: fundraising, finance, project management, equity practices and more. Additional funding could scale up and customize small business trainings and programs for the creative sector.

NETWORK AGENDA

Making progress on this plan requires building the capacity for the Vermont Creative Network (VCN) to support a broader range of creatives and to forge coalitions of allied partners. These key actions will strengthen the VCN.

GROW & DIVERSIFY the network

Many Vermont creatives don't yet engage with the VCN, or even identify with the sector. We must create space for those left out and make the case to join in.

- Create a VCN brand and messaging campaign
- Define VCN membership and expand participation
- Create and support existing networks for underrepresented groups

CONNECT & ENGAGE creatives & partners

When creatives connect, opportunities happen. Statewide, local, and cross-sector events and networking opportunities are top priorities.

- Organize statewide events for VCN members
- Develop regular zone networking events and communication channels
- Connect with cross-sector partners in food, recreation, tourism and allied sectors

SUPPORT & EMPOWER the network

Creative people and businesses need resources and assistance to grow and market their work. VCN must help gather, broadcast and customize resources.

- Develop and share resources for COVID-19 recovery
- Scope, design, and build an online resource hub
- Offer network trainings in advocacy and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility

MEASURE & SHARE creative sector impacts

Successful advocacy hinges on demonstrating the creative sector's impact. Collecting and sharing data, stories, and impacts is a top priority.

- Develop a creative sector monitoring/reporting plan
- Form an advocacy team to create an annual advocacy agenda and plan
- Develop toolkits and events to expand members' advocacy skills

Statewide coordination is crucial, but progress happens locally—at the regional, town, organization, and individual levels. This agenda offers a guide to shaping local priorities for zones, planning commissions, select boards, nonprofits, businesses, and people.

LOCAL AGENDA

BUILD & JOIN TEAMS for local action

Some areas have strong creative networks, committees, or councils already. All areas should facilitate ways to work together.

- Get involved with a VCN Zone
- Develop a local or regional creative sector plan

STRENGTHEN PLANS and policies

Local plans and policies are powerful tools to support (or inhibit) creative sector growth.

- Review town and regional plans for creative language
- Develop a local or regional creative sector plan

IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY of spaces & programs

Make sure flexible, varied, creative community spaces and programs are accessible for all.

- Upgrade cultural, community and arts facilities for accessibility and flexibility
- Develop affordable offerings for diverse local audiences

CREATE! anywhere & everywhere

Creativity should be everywhere in communities. Publicize what's happening and start creating more.

- Make art. Create public spaces. Design products. Organize events. Grow food. Teach. Connect. Learn. Share. Inspire.

Acknowledgments

Thousands of people and dozens of organizations, agencies and partners provided the input, resources and support that shaped this plan. We're grateful to all of them for the dreaming and data crunching, cheerleading and challenging, wordsmithing and wondering, and most of all for the creating.

VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK

vermontcreativenetwork.org

The VCN is a broad collective of organizations, businesses, and individuals working to advance Vermont's creative sector. The Network was established by the Vermont Legislature in May 2016 as an initiative of the Vermont Arts Council. The Vermont Arts Council provides backbone support and a 19-member Steering Team provides guidance. The Network is organized into six regional "zones," each led by a zone agent.

VCN STEERING TEAM (*ZONE AGENTS)

Amy Cunningham, Director

Colin Bright, AIGA Vermont (American Institute of Graphic Arts)

Jason Broughton, Vermont Department of Libraries

Monica Callan, * Grange Hall Cultural Center & Across Roads Center for the Arts

Paul Costello, Vermont Council on Rural Development

Ben Doyle, Preservation Trust of Vermont

Jody Fried, Chair, * Catamount Arts

Kimberly Gilbert, *Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Peter Gregory, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Bob Haynes, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation

Erika Hoffman-Kiess, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation

Gary Holloway, Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, Vermont Humanities Council

James Lockridge*, Big Heavy World

Robert McBride*, Rockingham Arts & Museum Project

SUPPORTERS

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The Windham Foundation

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Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development

National Life Group Foundation

Ruth and Peter Metz Family Foundation

Eric Mallette, * Paramount Theater

Stephen Pite, Vermont Arts Council Board of Directors

David Schütz, Vermont Buildings & General Services

Morgan Webster, Common Good Vermont



VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK
create vermont

VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL (VAC)

vermontartscouncil.org



Since 1965, the Vermont Arts Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont. The Vermont Arts Council is the only designated state arts agency in the U.S. that is also an independent nonprofit organization. Its mission is to cultivate and advance the arts and creativity throughout Vermont.

VAC STAFF

Michele Bailey, Senior Program Manager

Amy Cunningham, Deputy Director

Dominique Gustin, Artist Services Manager

Meredith Bell, Grants & Database Administrator

Troy Hickman, Education Program Manager

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CW brings creative planning, placemaking and engagement to communities across North America. communityworkshopllc.com

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PLANNING & FACILITATION SUPPORT

Shanta Lee Gander is a writer and photographer, and brings both lived and professional experience to this process. shantaleegander.com

RESEARCHERS

This plan is deeply informed by Vermont's first comprehensive study of the creative sector, "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy." Mt. Auburn Associates completed this analysis in 2019 using national economic and employment data, a statewide survey of independent creatives, and focus groups. The research is available at vermontcreativenetwork.org.

MT. AUBURN ASSOCIATES mtauburnassociates.com

Beth Siegel, Alyssa Rosen, Emily Doglio

With support from Stuart Rosenfeld, Melissa Levy (Community Roots LLC), Michael Kane and Stephen Michon.

INTRODUCING CreateVT



Creativity is everywhere in Vermont—in the innovation of technology entrepreneurs and in the ingenuity of musicians finding ways to perform during a pandemic. Creativity drives a resurgence in our local food system and sparks revitalization in our towns, public spaces and village centers. It shines a light on Vermont's history—from the Abenaki people who have stewarded this land for thousands of years, to the farmers and foresters who have shaped our rural landscapes, to the increasingly diverse people building and reinventing our communities today. We see creativity at farmers' markets and heritage events, in classrooms and board rooms, on stage and on street corners, in galleries and in growing businesses. And—most importantly—we see creativity inspiring and catalyzing a bold future for Vermont.

Vermont's creative sector already provides many benefits to the state. Scaling it up and amplifying the sector will, in turn, scale and amplify the benefits it provides. The building blocks for a thriving creative sector are here, but it won't materialize on its own; Vermont now needs a coordinated, collaborative approach to moving the sector forward. Vermont's first Creative Sector Action Plan aims to do that, and more: this plan is simultaneously a milestone, a roadmap, and a celebration of creativity in the Green Mountain State.

6-WORD VISION:

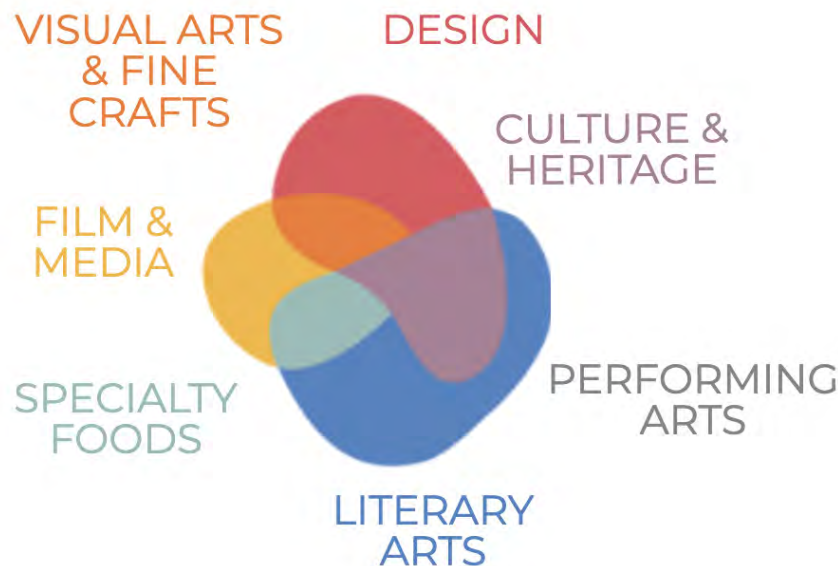
"Art & culture are VT's sweet spot"

Every Vermonters is a creative Vermonters	Arts recognized for more than economics	Re-invent sustainable vitality in the arts	where creativity fuels community, economy and activism	No worries if your art's "enough"	Random encounters with public art everywhere!	Art is a basic Vermont value
Create. Inspire. Connect. Collaborate. Be. Alive.	Art is integral, not the frosting	Art is essential and motivating.	Art & culture are VT's sweet spot	collaboration, support, excitement, fun, creative, education	Inspiring a Vermont = stronger, together	Art as accessible practice and sustainable
Innovative, multi- platform, expression identifying purpose and place	Regional creativity capital - where artists thrive!	We all catch these flying clouds	Embodied practice that transgresses technological oppression.	Arts, culture, creativity = essential community infrastructure	equitable, vibrant, inclusive- that's only three!	Incubating an innovative future for VT
streets alive with music and creativity!	mastering the abstract flow of color	creative energy & financial security merge online	Prosperity, Community, Education, Creativity, Cooperation, Support	To find out how creative networking can help the arts in Vermont	communities are alive with art!	Art accessible for all
Let us all make art together!	welcomed sustainable available exciting strong thought- provoking	Trip on art around every corner	Free to be you and me	Visible Accessible Vibrant Active Collaborative Resilient	Explore how 2020 changed our world forever	cooperative learning, supporting and creating
Identify unique aspects of rural creation- making	Encouraging and supporting our creative youth	Thriving Diverse Creative Ecosystem	creative expression for all in VT	innovate and create, connect with others	Healthy, Creative, Supported, Able to Learn	Inspired borderless access to all...arts.

During the CreateVT process we invited people to submit a "6-Word Vision" for Vermont. We incorporated hundreds of individual visions into the CreateVT vision, and you'll see them scattered throughout this plan.

DEFINING THE CREATIVE SECTOR

When people use the term “creative sector” or “creative economy,” arts and cultural industries often come to mind—visual artists and actors, writers and musicians. But the “creative sector” or “creative economy” is much broader. Vermont’s creative sector includes artisan bakers and brewers, architects and graphic designers, librarians and literary agents, museum curators and media producers. The creative sector includes not only creative people and businesses, but also the venues and institutions that house them, the funders and champions that support them, and the staff and service providers that keep creative enterprises afloat. It also includes creative workers in non-creative industries.



“Creativity is the answer we’ve been looking for—now is the time to embrace and invest in it.

- Marisa Henderson, Chief of the United Nations Creative Economy Programme,
and Amy Shelver, UNCTAD Public Information Officer

There are as many formal definitions of “creative economy” and “creative sector” as there are places and organizations defining them. For the purposes of this plan, we use the two terms interchangeably and use the following definitions.

Structure & Definitions

CREATIVE SECTOR/CREATIVE ECONOMY

The collective enterprises, organizations, and individuals whose products and services are rooted in artistic and creative content.

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES

Any entities (for-profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies or departments, projects or sole proprietorships) whose primary purpose is to develop, offer or support artistic, cultural, creative or aesthetic goods or services.

CREATIVES/CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS

Individual people who work in the creative sector, whether in creative occupations, creative industries, or both.

CREATIVE SEGMENTS

Economic segments or industries in which the majority of businesses, enterprises or occupations are creative enterprises (for example “film and media” or “culture and heritage”).

CREATIVE OCCUPATIONS

Jobs or roles that are primarily creative in nature or require artistic, cultural or creative skill sets, whether or not they are housed in creative industries or enterprises.

THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN CREATIVITY

In designating 2021 the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, the United Nations affirms the value of the creative economy for providing jobs, supporting innovation, decreasing poverty, promoting racial and gender equity, and improving health and well-being. Countries across the globe are spotlighting the creative sector as an essential tool in achieving its 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and 17 goals, ranging from quality education to poverty reduction, gender equality to economic growth, climate action to innovation and infrastructure.¹

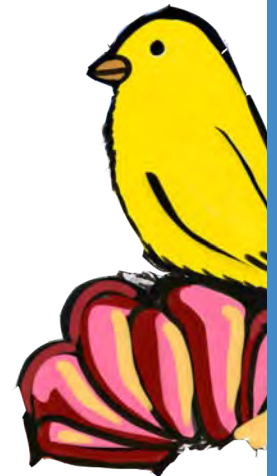
Neither Vermont nor the United Nations could have foreseen that 2021 would bring an unprecedented moment of challenge and opportunity, but the focus on creativity could not be more timely. The creative sector is among the hardest hit by COVID-19 in Vermont and the United States overall. A study by Richard Florida and Michael Seman estimates that 34% of creative sector jobs were lost nationally between April and June 2020. Vermont is tied as the fifth hardest-hit state based on job losses, with an estimated 8,090 creative industry jobs lost and \$216M lost in industry sales.² The size of Vermont's creative sector alone makes it instrumental to recovery and renewal. In 2019, Vermont's creative sector comprised nearly 41,000 jobs.³ The arts and cultural industries alone contributed \$1.1B of total market value to the Vermont economy, comparable to retail at \$2.5B, and construction at \$1.1B.⁴

But the sector is far larger than arts and culture, and its benefits extend far beyond dollars and jobs. Creative enterprises and experiences are essential for improving people's health and well-being, enhancing quality of life, revitalizing villages and downtowns, honoring and reimagining Vermont's culture and identity, driving equity and sustainability, building community, fueling entrepreneurship, attracting new visitors, and retaining young residents. In this unprecedented moment of challenge there

is also remarkable innovation. Creative people and enterprises are finding predictably creative ways to survive, adapt, and even lead our response and recovery. In Vermont this year, the creative sector has organized concerts out of pick-up trucks, designed public spaces that keep people safe and restaurants afloat, created artwork to elevate racial justice, produced artisan meals that feed bellies and souls, developed websites and tools to spread critical information, and much more.

Amidst this innovation lies unprecedented opportunity. The passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) includes a \$2.7 billion package of aid for Vermont—an investment with the potential to thoroughly reshape the future of our state and communities. It will take inspired thinking to design programs and projects that align with Vermont's values and leverage greater outcomes, and the creative sector is positioned to lead that transition. Based upon years of work and conversations, the Vermont Council on Rural Development has begun developing “A Proposition for the Future of Vermont”—a set of transformational goals that will guide three years of investment and action, which will in turn catalyze the next 30 years of prosperity.⁵ It's no coincidence that the Proposition's draft priorities are close parallels to the strategies and priorities presented in this plan: investing in creative economic solutions, opposing racism and expanding our statewide identity, developing digital tools and access to resources, investing in entrepreneurship and leadership, and more.

An investment in Vermont's creative sector is an investment in the future of Vermont.



1 United Nations, General Assembly. Resolution A/RES/74/198, “International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development, 2021: Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly.” United Nations Digital Library, 19 December 2019, digitallibrary.un.org.

2 Florida, Richard and Michael Seman. “Lost Art: Measuring COVID-19’s Devastating Impact on America’s Creative Economy.” Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, August 2020.

3 “Assessing Vermont’s Creative Economy.” Mt. Auburn Associates, 2019, www.vermontcreativenetwork.org.

4 “Creative Economy State Profiles: Vermont.” National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2019, nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/.

5 “The Vermont Proposition: A First Draft for Discussion.” Vermont Council on Rural Development, 2021, www.futureofvermont.org. Accessed 20 April 2021.

Why Creativity Matters

Data and evidence from Vermont, the nation, and the world paint a picture of the myriad ways that investments in the creative sector benefit people and communities and pay for themselves.

creativity

LEVERAGES FUNDING

Investments in the creative sector are smart investments.

Every **\$1 OF
FEDERAL
ARTS
FUNDING**
nationwide

**LEVERAGES
\$9**
in other public and private funding.⁶

creativity

ATTRACTS REVENUE

The arts and culture sector added **\$919.7B IN VALUE TO THE US GDP** in 2019—ahead of construction, transportation, utilities, and agriculture.⁷

Arts and culture added \$1.1B in value to Vermont's GDP, ranking a close third behind retail and construction.⁸

creativity

IMPROVES EDUCATION

Research shows that **CREATIVE LEARNING** environments and initiatives can **IMPROVE ACADEMIC PROGRESS** across subjects, increase student motivation and focus, support social and emotional development, and develop capacity for entrepreneurship.⁹

creativity

DIVERSIFIES ECONOMIES

Nearly **50%** of Vermont's **CREATIVE SECTOR WORKERS** are **INDEPENDENT**—self-employed, freelance, or in microbusinesses.¹⁰

Strong small businesses create resilient economies that can withstand disasters and respond to opportunities.

creativity

BOOSTS EMPLOYMENT

IBM expects “more than 120 million workers globally will need retraining in the next three years due to artificial intelligence.”¹¹ The World Economic Forum predicts the **TOP 3** future **JOB SKILLS** **WILL BE CREATIVE:** complex problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity.¹²

⁶ “Why Should Government Support the Arts?” National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, State Policy Briefs, 2017.

⁷ “Creative Economy State Profiles: United States.” National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2019.

⁸ “Creative Economy State Profiles: Vermont,” 2019.

⁹ Davies, Dan et al. “Creative Learning Environments in Education—A Systematic Literature Review.” *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, Vol. 8, April 2013, pp. 80-91.

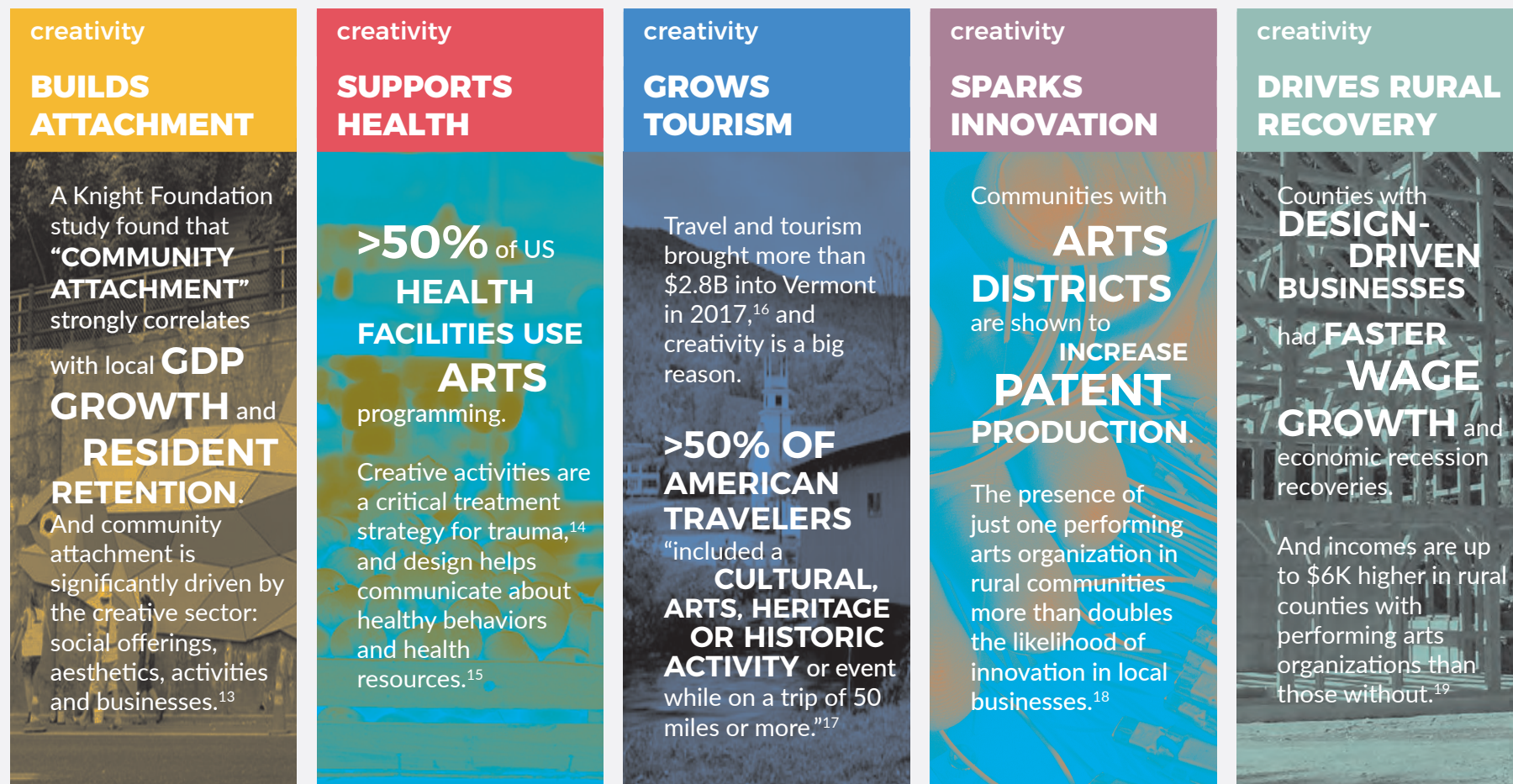
¹⁰ “Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy,” 2019.

¹¹ Kelly, Jack. “U.S. Lost Over 60 Million Jobs—Now Robots, Tech and Artificial Intelligence Will Take Millions More.” *Forbes*, 27 Oct 2020.

¹² “The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.” World Economic Forum, Global Insight Report, January 2016.

“Arts and Culture are consistent sources of economic growth, during both good and difficult economic times.”

- National Conference of State Legislatures



13 “Knight Soul of the Community 2010: Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A National Perspective.” John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup Inc., 2010.

14 Hanna, Gay, et al. “Arts in Medicine Literature Review.” Grantmakers in the Arts, 2017.

15 Golden, Tasha. “The Arts and Health Equity: Four Opportunities for Impact.” *Grantmakers in the Arts*, 2021.

16 Jones, Ken. “2017 Benchmark Report: Tourism in Vermont.” Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, December 2018.

17 Percentage of Foreign Visitors Participating in Arts & Culture While Visiting the U.S. 2006-2016.” Americans for the Arts, 2016.

18 “Facts and Figures on the Creative Economy.” National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2020.

19 Rural Prosperity Through the Arts & Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States.” National Governors Association, January 2019.



Vermont Arts Exchange

North Bennington, VT

For more than 27 years, the Vermont Arts Exchange (VAE) has been proving that arts can “get it done.” Matthew Perry co-founded VAE in 1994 and immediately put creativity to work tackling major community needs. First, VAE began converting a run-down, empty factory in North Bennington into a creative hub and oasis. Next, they brought community groups together to clean up debris from the Paran Creek and make artwork out of the junk. Then VAE transformed a school bus into the Art Bus (a mobile art studio), and five historic buildings into affordable housing, studio and gallery space. As word spread, communities all over the world began inviting Matthew and VAE to help transform their towns. Decades later, VAE continues its mission of “bringing the arts to people of all ages, abilities and income,” and does this through partnerships in art education, performance and exhibition. From pandemic parades to grocery store galleries, it’s VAE’s unique brand of “artreach” that has helped people all over the world experience the transformational power of art.

Photo: Vermont Arts Exchange

ABOUT THE CREATEVT ACTION PLAN

Developed by the Vermont Creative Network over three years, and with broad community input, the plan envisions a Vermont that thrives through creative expression, inclusivity, and innovation. But vision alone isn’t enough. In the “International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development” resolution, the United Nations affirms “the need to optimize the economic, social and cultural benefits stemming from the creative economy by creating an “enabling environment” for the promotion of the creative economy.”²⁰ Strengthening Vermont’s creative economy and optimizing its benefits requires that we build systems and change policies, invest in infrastructure and connectivity, and promote the sector.

The CreateVT Action Plan is at once a portrait and celebration of Vermont’s creative sector today and a roadmap for achieving our vision, but perhaps most importantly, it is a call to action for people, businesses, leaders, communities and champions to invest now, invest deeply, and invest together in our creative future.

A Portrait of Vermont’s Creative Sector

Our creative economy includes painters and musicians, performing arts centers and galleries. It also includes artisan brewers and food producers, architecture studios, libraries and maker spaces, teachers and technicians. It includes not just creative people and enterprises, but the organizations, businesses, agencies and workers that support, hire, fund and employ them and the venues that house them. The foundation for this plan is Vermont’s first economic study of the creative sector as a whole, completed in 2019, which helps to shine a spotlight on creatives at work in Vermont and the importance of planning for the whole sector. While additional data and research are needed, this study serves as a snapshot in time and a benchmark against which to measure growth and change.

²⁰ United Nations, 2019.

A Resource and Roadmap for Growth

Thousands of Vermonters, hundreds of businesses and organizations, and dozens of agencies and organizations have shaped this plan with their ideas and creativity. CreateVT offers a new vision for Vermont's creative sector, nine broad-based goals, and 28 strategies for moving the sector forward. Briefs on our statewide creative economy—as well as individual zones and creative segments—serve as resources to inform and encourage action around the state. And detailed descriptions of our strategies offer potential approaches and action steps to move forward together. CreateVT is not a blueprint; there are no fixed plans and budgets for growing our creative economy in the face of rapid change. Instead, it offers a roadmap to ensure that the creative sector can align around direction and destination, understand potential pathways to getting there, and make informed choices about priorities and actions.

A Call to Action

This plan marks the five-year anniversary of the 2016 launch of the Vermont Creative Network (VCN)—Vermont's first effort to build a network that encompasses the whole sector. Since then, the VCN has launched six creative “zones” (regional collaborations guiding local creative sector development), held numerous statewide events,

developed partnerships, and advocated for essential resources. Zone teams have completed regional plans and projects, hosted networking events, and shared resources.

CreateVT is a clarion call to anyone involved in the creative sector or supportive of the creative sector to amplify, align, connect, scale and prioritize actions moving forward. Doing so will take coordinated action on multiple levels; CreateVT lays out three action agendas to coordinate action across the state:

- **Statewide Advocacy** to secure resources, develop enabling policies and legislation, and establish accessible, creative infrastructure and resources;
- **Network Building** and resource development to continue connecting creative people and enterprises to each other, to support, and to partners; and
- **Local Action** to develop the creative local projects, spaces, programs, plans and connections that our communities need.

Facing the Sunrise: NEK Black Performing Arts Series

Northeast Kingdom

The Clemmons Family Farm and Catamount Arts are teaming up to increase access to African American and African Diaspora performing arts in the Northeast Kingdom. The 18-month performing arts series will foster racially diverse programming in an underserved region. More broadly, the unique partnership of Black-led and white-led organizations aims to promote racial equity in Vermont's creative sector and creative organizations, and provide a model for how racial equity can fuel social change.

Graphic: Clemmons Family Farm



RESEARCH AND PLANNING PROCESS

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT **2015** **2016** **ASSESSING VERMONT'S CREATIVE ECONOMY**
 A team led by Mt. Auburn Associates completed Vermont's

From 2006-2007, the Vermont Council on Rural Development supported twelve communities in exploring how to combine culture, community and commerce to grow local economies. A 2008 report summarized learning.

2016
Legislative authorization

2018
NEK Creative Economy Plan

A team led by Mt. Auburn Associates completed Vermont's first comprehensive statewide creative sector study, including analysis of federal economic and employment data, as well as additional stakeholder outreach to further develop and refine an understanding of Vermont's creative enterprises and individuals, their challenges, and statewide priorities. The study included economic data analysis, focus groups, interviews and a survey.

2006 2016 2019

The timeline consists of a horizontal line with vertical connectors leading to colored boxes. The boxes are: 2006 (pink), 2007 (pink), 2015 (orange), 2016 (orange), and FALL (yellow). The 2015 and 2016 boxes are larger and contain more text than the others.

Year	Event
2006	CCP project work in 12 communities
2007	Reports and creative economy conference
2015	VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK (VCN) LAUNCHED The VCN's first statewide summit was held in Montpelier in 2015, where participants helped shape the future of a network. In May 2016, the Vermont Legislature established the VCN as an initiative of the Vermont Arts Council.
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FALL	Economic analysis, data collection; survey analysis and focus groups

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**VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK (VCN)
LAUNCHED**

2006
CCP project work in 12 communities

2007
Reports and creative economy conference

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FALL
Economic analysis, data collection; survey analysis and focus groups

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

From 2006-2007, the Vermont Council on Rural Development supported twelve communities in exploring how to combine culture and economic development.

2015
First statewide summit

2016
Second statewide summit

2018
NEK Creative Economy Plan

ASSESSING VERMONT'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

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exploring how to combine culture, community and commerce to grow local economies. A 2008 report summarized learning.

2010
Legislative authorization

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CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

From 2006-2007, the Vermont Council on Rural Development supported twelve communities in exploring how to combine culture and economic development.

2015
First statewide summit

2016
Vermont Creative Communities Study

2018
NEK Creative Economy Plan

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ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Stakeholders: Anyone who works in or supports the creative sector; Vermonters from all geographic areas, all demographics, and all types of creative sector workers and enterprises.

Publicity Methods: The Vermont Arts Council's email list (10,000 members), partner distribution lists, online calendars and social media channels for target groups, direct invitations and outreach, statewide press releases and media channels.



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Main Street Middle School public art installation as part of Montpelier ArtSynergy Project. Photo: Gowri Savoor.



CREATEVT STRATEGY & PLAN

The VCN's first statewide summit was held in Montpelier in 2015, where participants helped shape the future of a network. In May 2016, the Vermont Legislature established the VCN as an initiative of the Vermont Arts Council.

FUTURE
What do you want to create in Vermont?

2021

CREATEVT VISIONING

Community Workshop designed and led a creative community engagement and action planning process to engage thousands of Vermonters to develop a shared creative vision and identify needs and opportunities for growth. With COVID restrictions in place, we pivoted to offering high-energy digital events and activities.

MARCH
Deep strategy sessions and interviews

MAY
Plan launch summit & celebration

FALL
Advocacy trainings & action support

ONWARD

CREATEVT ACTION!

Creating, connecting, strategizing, experimenting, capacity building, training, listening, researching, designing, celebrating, and much more.

Input Methods: Focus groups, stakeholder interviews, Zoom events with digital polling and breakout conversations, digital whiteboards, social media comments, surveys, asynchronous input options, speed networking and 6-word visions.



Want to learn more? For a full description of planning events and activities, see Appendix A3: CreateVT process.

VERMONT'S

creative sector TODAY





OVERVIEW

In 2019, arts and culture industries contributed \$1.1B to the Vermont economy (3.3% of Vermont's total gross domestic product) and accounted for 11,379 jobs statewide.²¹ That's a substantial segment of Vermont's economy by itself, but arts and cultural jobs actually represent only a quarter of total creative sector jobs in the state. In their 2019 study, "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," Mt. Auburn Associates reported that Vermont's total creative sector employment comprised 40,894 jobs (9.3% of employment statewide).²² And while Vermont has proportionally more creative sector jobs than the U.S. overall, our 8% growth rate (2010-2018) lags far behind the national average of 14%.

The team used a range of federal economic data sources to quantify and define Vermont's creative sector. Their methodology, which includes a deep analysis of a region's creative assets, recommended the inclusion of the specialty foods and design sectors. Their research paints a picture of a sector that is far larger, deeper, more complex and more impactful than most people realize.

How Big Is Vermont's Creative Sector?

Vermont has more people employed in creative industries than the U.S. average, but that won't last unless we start scaling up. Our industry growth rate is just over half the national average.

	Vermont	U.S.
 Creative Industry Employment as % of total state jobs	7%	5.1%
 Creative Industry Growth Rate from 2010-2018	8%	14%

Source: "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," 2019.



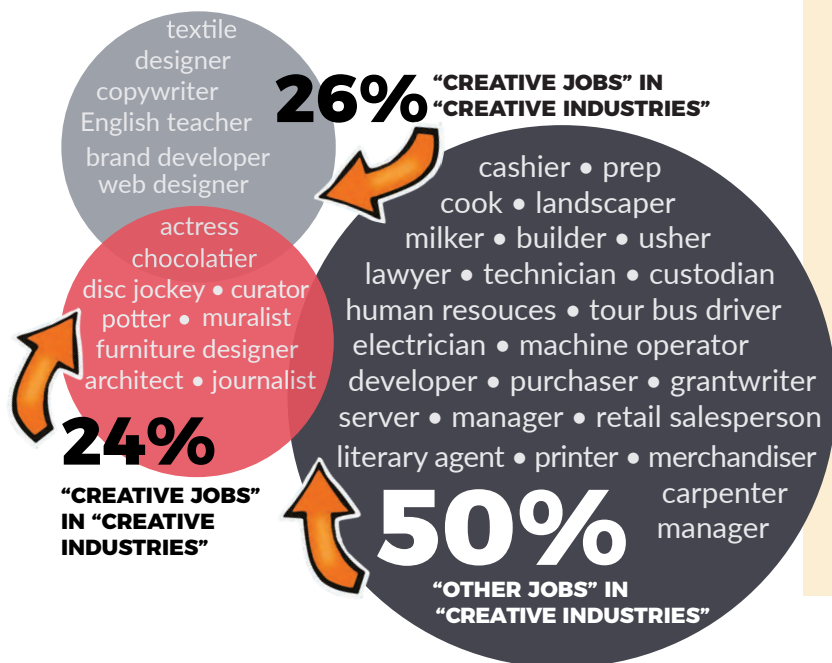
Brimington Farmers' Market. Photo: Don Shall. Flickr Creative Commons

"I am large, I contain multitudes."

- Walt Whitman, Song of Myself

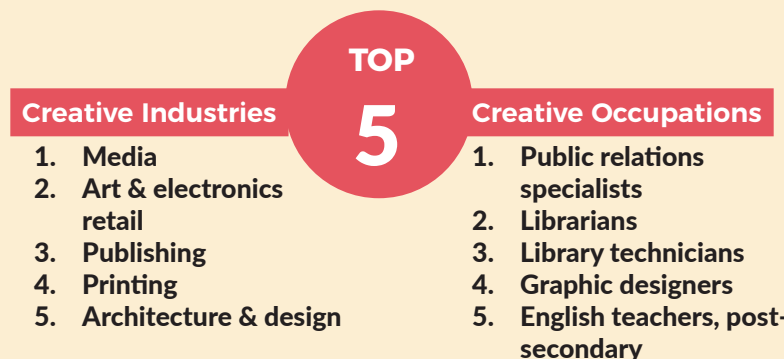
²¹ "Creative Economy State Profiles: Vermont," 2019.

²² "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," 2019.



What Are Vermont's Top Creative Jobs & Industries?

In a major study, the New England Foundation for the Arts quantified the top creative industries and occupations in each New England state, as of 2015. Here's what they found for Vermont.



Source: "Jobs in New England's Creative Economy and Why They Matter." Vermont State Sheet. New England Foundation for the Arts, 2017.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, OCCUPATIONS, ENTERPRISES, AND PEOPLE

Ask someone to describe the creative economy, and you're likely to hear about painters, writers and musicians. In Vermont, the creative sector includes seven major "segments:" Design, Literary Arts, Specialty Foods, Performing Arts, Culture & Heritage, Film & Media, and Visual Arts & Fine Crafts.

Creative Occupations and Industries

One critical finding of Mt. Auburn Associates' study is that, within those seven segments, there are also three major categories of creative workers (painters, writers, musicians and other traditional artistic jobs represent less than a quarter of the total). The full picture includes all who work in creative industries (such as theater, publishing, fashion, historic preservation or artisan foods), where the majority of enterprises and products are cultural or creative in nature. Creative industries provide 74% of all creative sector jobs in Vermont, but only 24% of workers are in creative occupations (like

actors, journalists, architects or curators). The majority of creative industry jobs are actually held by "other" workers—custodians, accountants, shift workers, maintenance staff or retail clerks whose essential roles may go unnoticed. The other 26% of statewide jobs are creative occupations in "other" industries (such as retail marketers or college English professors).

Creative People and Enterprises

We lack statewide demographic data on the full range of creative sector members, and available national estimates cover only a portion of Vermont's creative sector segments. Likewise, compiling detailed data on creative businesses and enterprises will be an ongoing need. Still, Mt. Auburn Associates' research shines a light on who our "creatives" (people working and participating in the creative sector) and creative enterprises are and what they have in common.

How do we measure and classify the creative sector?

Measuring the size of the creative sector (and comparing segments or regions) is an imperfect science. The creative sector overall is measured primarily through economic and workforce data, which are classified at the federal level into a set of unified industry (North American Industry Classification System or NAICS) codes. Economists decide which codes are grouped into “segments” of the economy. Many creative economy experts consider local attributes when define that region’s “creative economy.” (Specialty foods are included in Vermont, but not in many other places). In total, Mt. Auburn Associates’ 2019 study, “Assessing Vermont’s Creative Sector,” identified and studied seven distinct segments with different demographics, conditions, strengths and challenges. (See Appendix A4: Associations, Networks, and Resource Providers for a full list of occupations and federal classification codes used in Mt. Auburn Associates’ research.)

The nuances of these classification systems do create the strong potential for over- or under-estimating creative sector size, value, and growth rates. For example, some Culture & Heritage employment is often undercounted because jobs may be classified as government or education roles; farm-to-table restaurants are excluded from Vermont’s Specialty Foods tally because the federal “restaurant” code doesn’t distinguish between artisan/specialty restaurants and chains. Comparisons across segments, states or regions are at best only estimates for similar reasons. The number and nature of industries included in each segment classification affects the estimate of segment size: in Vermont’s study, Culture & Heritage includes only four industry classifications, while Design includes 30. Some creative economy data (like the total value of Vermont’s creative sector) has not yet been measured; we must compile data from different industries to estimate the overall picture or rely on partial measurements, such as the value of arts and culture segments alone. And many people or groups may simply be left out of federal data counts entirely, particularly vulnerable and underrepresented populations.

For now, even partial data is useful when viewed and understood in context and with supplemental qualitative research to round out the picture. Our current data can be especially helpful as a way to track progress over time, if we maintain consistent methods, and to think critically about who is being counted and who is not. Moving forward, we must collect more accurate and more equitable data.

Vermont Glove (and Mask)

Randolph, VT

Vermont Glove has been a fixture in Randolph for over a century, making goatskin gloves. The company credits the artisan design and quality with keeping the business afloat through economic shifts, outsourcing cycles and market declines. Owner Sam Hooper credits the company’s nimble structure and creativity with keeping it open through COVID-19. While most companies shut down in 2020, Vermont Glove quickly pivoted. It put its employees and 100-year-old machines to work cutting cotton masks and organized a brigade of workers and volunteers to sew at home. Vermont Glove’s community connections and capacity for innovation helped it meet a critical national need for masks while keeping the lights on and keeping creative sector workers employed.



We do know that in 2018, the most recent year for which we have data, 48% of Vermont creative workers are independent (self-employed or in extended proprietorships), compared to 52% in payroll positions (far higher than in the United States overall), and between 2010 and 2018, Vermont's independent workforce grew by 30%. Some segments include larger industries and employers (such as Design, which includes manufacturers like furniture companies) and therefore have a higher percentage of salaried workers. Other segments, like Visual Arts or Performing Arts, have a higher proportion of freelance, self-employed and part-time creatives.

Creatives employed in salaried jobs at large companies are more likely to be captured in larger industry and employment studies, and their employers are more likely to be supported by statewide economic development programs. As a component of its study, Mt. Auburn Associates conducted a statewide survey to better understand the self-employed and independent creatives who are missing from more traditional data.²³ The survey data showed that Vermont independent creatives are:

- **Entrepreneurial:** 48% are classified as self-employed or entrepreneurs
- **Part-Time:** 62% of survey respondents say creative work is not their primary income source
- **Engaged:** 26% of survey respondents are a member of a community board
- **Underpaid:** 72% of survey respondents make \$30,000 or less annually from creative work, and most would like to increase that income
- **Unique:** Employment status, income, education and stability varies significantly across the seven creative sector segments

The high number of microbusinesses and independent creatives is

²³ "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," 2019.

How Are Independent Creatives Doing?

Vermont has far more independent creative sector workers than the U.S. (proportionally), measured as self-employed or extended proprietorships. Many are in arts and cultural industries, where data shows that Vermonters earn far less than their U.S. counterparts.

	Vermont	U.S.
Independent Workers in the creative sector	48%	39%
Median Earnings in arts, entertainment & recreation industry	\$12,508	\$25,408

Sources: "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," 2019; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2021.

What Do Creative Workers Need?

The New England Foundation for the Arts' Creatives Count Survey identified the top resources of importance for creative workers' career advancement, as well as the top five unmet career needs. Some critical things like income from creative sources appear on both lists.

Important Resources

1. Earned income from creative work
2. Creative collaborations
3. Affordable health care
4. Distribution and market opportunities
5. Creative equipment, tools and software

Unmet Career Needs

1. Retirement or savings plan
2. Earned income from creative work
3. Business and legal advice
4. Distribution and market opportunities
5. Loans or capital

Source: "Jobs in New England's Creative Economy and Why They Matter," 2017.

good news for our communities and local economies; independent creatives report high community engagement, and for every \$100 spent in small businesses nationally, \$68 stays in the local community.²⁴ Unfortunately, it also means that Vermont's creative sector members are less likely to have the benefits of full-time jobs in the creative sector, such as healthcare, paid time off, and income stability. While it's not a perfect match to Vermont's creative sector definition, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data from 2018 shows that compensation for the arts, entertainment and recreation industry in Vermont is less than half that of the U.S. overall.²⁵

The 477 people who responded to the 2019 freelancer survey hailed from all regions of the state and all segments of the creative sector, though Visual Arts & Fine Crafts was overrepresented and the survey very likely undercounted people of color, new Americans, people with disabilities, English language learners, and other traditionally underrepresented groups. The research team used focus groups and interviews to better understand some of these critical stakeholders, but improving accuracy and equity in data collection is an ongoing priority for the creative sector.

Through conversations and planning events, Vermont creatives report a wide variety of needs and resources, in order to grow their work and make creativity more viable. The New England Foundation for the Arts identified critical unmet creative sector needs in each New England state, based on the 2017 Creatives Count survey.²⁶

24 Beals, Rachel Koning. "How Consumers and Communities Can Benefit from 'Buying Local.'" *U.S. News & World Report*, Oct. 28, 2011.

25 "Wages: Compensation by Industry, Vermont vs. U.S.—2018." The Vermont Future Project, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2018, vtfutureproject.org/our-workforce/wages/#tabs0. Accessed 2 April 2021.

26 "Jobs in New England's Creative Economy," 2017.



Jr Iron Chef Vermont

Statewide

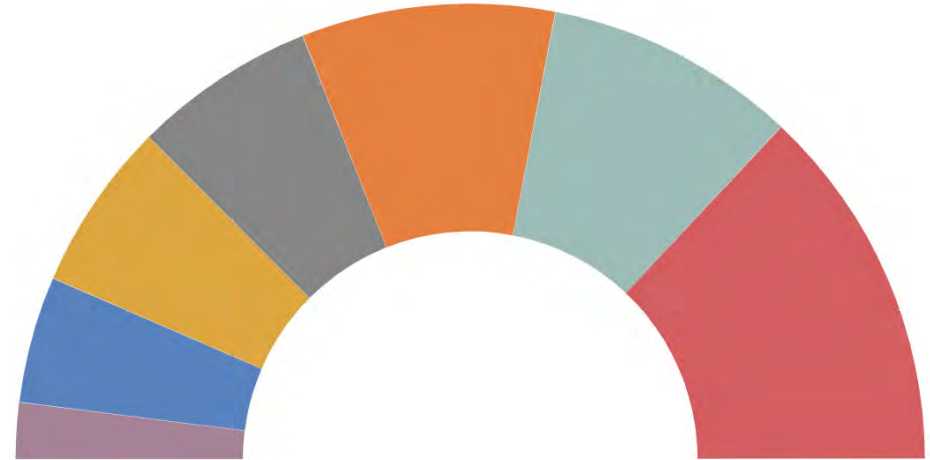
Vermont Farm to School programs are growing more than veggies -- they're also cultivating the next crop of youth food leaders, educated consumers, and artisan chefs. Jr Iron Chef VT is a statewide culinary competition that engages hundreds of middle and high school students in developing and preparing their own farm-to-table recipes, learning cooking techniques, and interacting with top professional chefs. Since 2008, nearly 5,000 Vermont middle and high school students have participated in this ground-breaking culinary competition. Along the way, they've not only created and prepared recipes from scratch, they've learned about local agriculture and nutrition, established relationships with peers, chefs, and local farmers, developed confidence, and honed teamwork, leadership, and communication skills.

Photo: Jr Iron Chef Vermont

CREATIVE SEGMENTS

From museums to clothing designers, distilleries to radio stations, Vermont's varied creative industries and enterprises each contribute a unique aspect of creativity, intellectual property, culture and content.

Whether they work in creative industries or not, Mt. Auburn Associates identified seven major "creative segments" of workers and enterprises. Of those, the largest (measured by number of employees) are Design, Specialty Foods, and Visual Arts & Fine Crafts. Within the segments, there is still great variety in specific types of businesses and jobs. The fastest growing segments in Vermont are Specialty Foods and Performing Arts. For detailed profiles of each segment, see the Segment Briefs starting on page 77.



Design (26%)

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

Specialty Foods (18%)

retail and commercial bakeries, breweries, spice and extract companies, specialty canning, chocolate and confectionery manufacturing, cheese manufacturing

Visual Arts & Fine Crafts (18%)

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

Performing Arts (13%)

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

Film and Media (12%)

motion picture and video industries, sound recording, radio and television broadcasting, Internet publishing, newspapers, advertising, public relations agencies, video game developers

Literary Arts (8%)

writers, poets, storytelling and spoken word performers, publishing houses, bookstores, printing companies

Culture and Heritage (4%)

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

"The challenges of our time call on us as Vermonters to unite to build a better future."

- first draft of the Vermont Proposition

CREATIVE SECTOR ZONES

Upon launching in 2016, the Vermont Creative Network defined six regional “zones” in Vermont. From then until now, each zone has taken its own approach to building local networks, planning for a local creative sector, and engaging the community. Vermont regions naturally have their own identities and strengths, and zones have worked to capitalize on those.

Chittenden County has the greatest number of creative workers, but the Cornerstone Creative Community has the largest share of creative sector jobs, relative to other employment. For detailed profiles of each zone, see the Segment Briefs starting on page 77.

How Are Vermont’s Creative Jobs Distributed?

The number of creative sector jobs varies significantly in different zones, and factors in both all *creative occupations* and all jobs in *creative industries*.

	Other workers in creative industries	Creative workers in creative industries	Creative workers in other industries	Total jobs in creative industries	Total creative sector jobs
Addison/Rutland	2,478	1,251	1,437	3,729	5,166
Chittenden	6,515	3,278	3,448	9,793	13,241
Cornerstone	2,644	1,427	1,293	4,071	5,364
Four-County	4,345	1,838	2,221	6,183	8,404
Northeast Kingdom	1,757	713	681	2,470	3,151
Southern Vermont	2,575	1,583	1,409	4,158	5,567
Vermont	20,315	10,089	10,490	30,404	40,894

Source: “Assessing Vermont’s Creative Economy,” 2019.



Matt Neckers' mobile art museum outside the Montpelier City Hall.
Photo courtesy of Matt Neckers.

CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to health, strength and potential, the creative sector is not an island. Just as important is the “enabling environment.” Income and expansion of creative enterprises depends on consumers who want creative goods and services and the ability to afford them. The feasibility of creative businesses and work depends on the availability of suitable work spaces, equipment, broadband and technology, suppliers and workforce. The appeal of creative destinations and experiences depends on the strength of the service sector, including lodging, restaurants, recreation and other activities. There is no comprehensive data on Vermont’s creative environment and demand, but several national and state measures provide useful context.

Creative Sector Vibrancy: A National Indicator

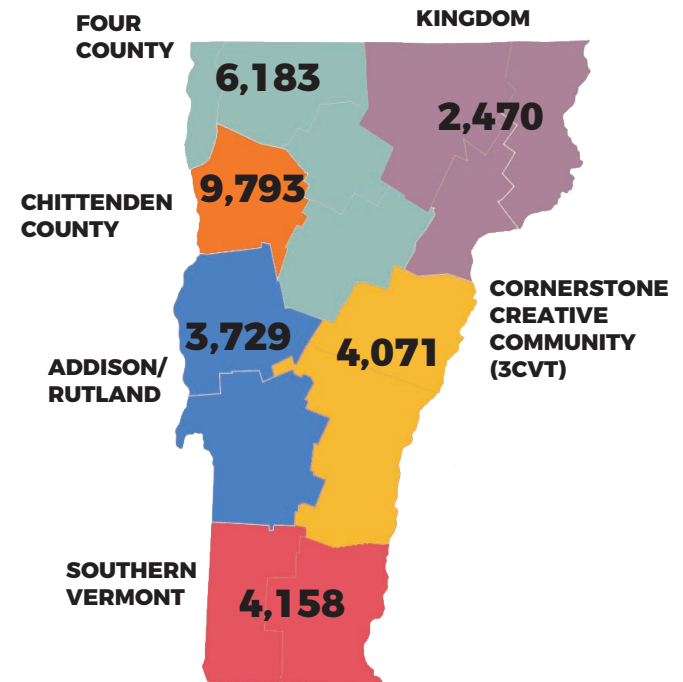
SMU DataArts’ national Arts Vibrancy Map²⁷ considers the full picture of creative activities and environment in creating an overall “arts vibrancy score” for every county nationwide. While the measure is for arts and culture alone and does not include some key segments in Vermont’s creative sector (namely specialty foods, design, and aspects of culture and heritage), it offers one of the best measures of our creative environment. The scores compile indicators in five categories: arts providers (number of creative sector employees, arts and culture organizations and firms, and independent artists); arts dollars (program revenue, expenses and compensation); government support (state and federal arts funding); socioeconomic conditions (employment, income, poverty and education levels); and other leisure (hotels, restaurants, cinemas, bars, zoos and sports).

In the 2021 scores, Vermont is ranked highly statewide and across most counties. Eight of Vermont’s 14 counties rank in the 90th percentile or above, nationally, and the rest score in the 60th-89th percentiles. Bennington is listed as #9 in the Top 10 Arts-Vibrant small communities nationwide.

Despite our overall spread, the score does point out some critical areas for improvement; most fall within the realm of “enabling environment.”

- **Geographic spread:** While Vermont is remarkably strong overall (especially for a rural state), the northern tier lags behind the rest of the state. Franklin and Essex counties score lowest, followed by Orleans and Grand Isle.

How Many Creative Jobs Are in Each Vermont Zone?



The Vermont Creative Network is organized into six creative “zones” or regional networks. The number (and type) of creative jobs varies a lot across the state, but the population size in each zone is a significant factor.

Source: “Assessing Vermont’s Creative Economy,” 2019.

²⁷ “Arts Vibrancy Map and Index Report.” SMU DataArts, 2021, culturaldata.org/what-we-do/arts-vibrancy/. Accessed 5 April 2021.

- **Other leisure:** Across most Vermont counties, overall scores are pulled down by low scores in the “other leisure” category. Hotels, restaurants, bars, and other recreational opportunities are critical to helping the creative sector thrive.

- **Socioeconomic conditions:** Vermont’s scores are also pulled down by relatively low socioeconomic condition scores in many counties. Increasing income and employment levels and decreasing poverty will help many more Vermonters afford creative sector purchases, activities and experiences.

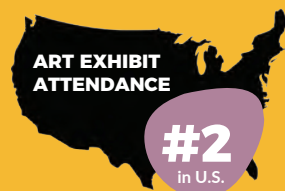
Arts Participation

Data around arts participation show that Vermonters in general are avidly engaged in creative enterprises and activities. The annual Survey of Public Participation in the Arts²⁸ reports national and statewide estimates of how many adults attend or participate in arts and cultural activities, and Vermont ranks exceptionally well in national comparisons. Nationwide data shows that attendance rates at performances, museums, and galleries are, on average, 10-12 points higher in urban areas than rural. Despite the rural barriers, 68.3% of Vermont adults attended visual or performing arts events in 2017, and Vermont is among the top 10 states in the country in several distinct measures.

²⁸ “State-Level Estimates of Arts Participation Patterns (2017-2018).” National Endowment for the Arts, Vermont Profile, December 2019.

How Do Vermont’s Creative Audiences Measure Up?

The creative sector depends on engaged audiences and consumers. National comparisons of arts participation rates are our best measure, and Vermonters are doing very well.



2017: 40% attended an art exhibit



2018: 50% personally performed or created art



2017: 68% attended performing arts events



Farm to Ballet

Statewide

In 2015, two Vermont dance professionals hatched a plan to bring ballet performances to rural places — very rural places. Soon the Farm to Ballet project was staging dance performances on farms across the state. The project increased rural access to the arts, celebrated agricultural history, and generated income for the host farms. It had another unexpected benefit: the unusual venue and exposure created so much interest in dance that it sparked Ballet Vermont — a full-time dance school and performance company for adults.

Photo: Jessica Notargiacomo Photography.



Labyrinth at The Art House, by stoneworker Matt Allen.
Photo: Ceilidh Galloway-Kane

How Does Vermont's Creative Industry Growth Compare?

Specialty Foods are Vermont's fastest growing creative industry, with 53% growth between 2010 and 2018 (compared to 7% in the U.S. overall). Performing Arts is the only other of Vermont's creative segments that beats the national average, with 23% growth compared to the U.S.'s 5%. Growth rates for Vermont's other segments lag behind the rest of the U.S., and Design is shrinking.

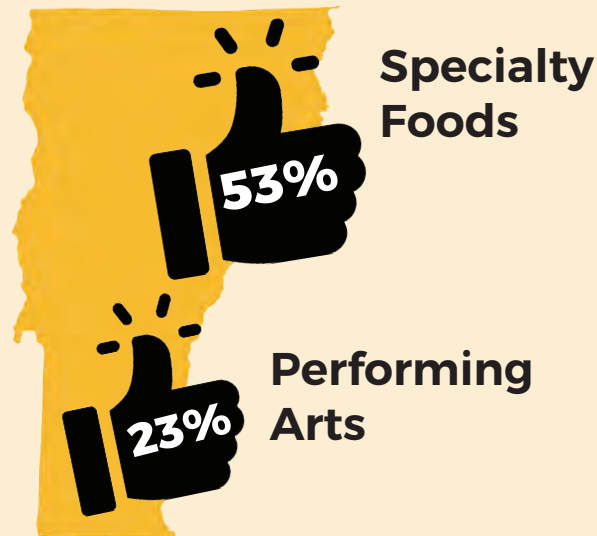
Source: Mt. Auburn Associates, 2019.

CREATIVE SECTOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

In order to assess Vermont's creative sector, it's critical not just to look at the numbers today but how they are changing over time—and the creative sector is never stagnant. Its members are constantly innovating, shifting, responding to challenges and new opportunities. And large cultural and economic forces—from pandemics to recessions, consumer tastes to market opportunities—drive bigger changes in the sector. There are also shifts in how the sector is defined, categorized and measured, which makes it challenging to compare data over time.

While Vermont's creative sector overall is larger and stronger than most states, the rate of growth is lagging behind. The New England Foundation for the Arts estimated in 2017 that employment in Vermont's creative economies declined by more than 3,000 jobs (more than 25%) between 2000 and 2015. In its 2019 report, Mt. Auburn Associates found that Vermont's creative industries (categorized differently) were growing, but at a rate of 8% between 2010

and 2018, compared to a national average of 14%. Mt. Auburn found that growth in extended proprietorships grew faster than the national average during the same time (30.2% growth in Vermont, vs. 29.4% in the US), indicating that more Vermonters are pursuing self-employment and independent creative work, but they may be less likely to have the support and stability of a full-time job.



“There are opportunities in any sort of disruption to come up with creative solutions and innovative ways forward.”

- Lisa Davis Mitchell, Middlebury Town Hall Theater

How Are Creative Industries Doing Across Vermont?

Certain creative industries represent a bigger share of creative jobs than others, but others are catching up. Here's an in-depth look at segment sizes and growth rates.

PERCENTAGE OF CREATIVE SECTOR JOBS BY SEGMENT (2018)								
Creative Segment	Addison/Rutland	Chittenden County	3CVT	Four Counties	Northeast Kingdom	Southern Vermont	Vermont	US
Culture & Heritage	4%	3%	6%	3%	4%	6%	4%	12%
Design	32%	25%	26%	26%	36%	22%	26%	29%
Film & Media	9%	19%	11%	9%	8%	8%	12%	20%
Literary Arts & Publishing	7%	7%	10%	8%	5%	11%	8%	15%
Performing Arts	14%	13%	15%	10%	12%	14%	13%	7%
Specialty Foods	19%	15%	17%	26%	19%	15%	18%	4%
Visual Arts & Crafts	18%	17%	16%	19%	14%	24%	18%	13%
GROWTH OF CREATIVE SEGMENTS (2010-2018)								
Creative Segment	Addison/Rutland	Chittenden County	3CVT	Four Counties	Northeast Kingdom	Southern Vermont	Vermont	US
Culture & Heritage	22%	2%	7%	1%	-13%	12%	5%	27%
Design	10%	-18%	9%	0%	-12%	2%	-7%	32%
Film & Media	-22%	32%	9%	-25%	3%	-24%	3%	15%
Literary Arts & Publishing	14%	-6%	-2%	7%	-17%	-16%	-4%	10%
Performing Arts	25%	30%	26%	16%	40%	7%	23%	-5%
Specialty Foods	47%	36%	67%	47%	147%	63%	53%	7%
Visual Arts & Crafts	-2%	11%	-5%	4%	-9%	-10%	-7%	32%

Source: Mt. Auburn Associates, 2019

COVID-19 and the Creative Sector

Most of the data included in this plan is from 2019 or earlier, but the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the creative sector more heavily than most. It may be years before we know the true impacts, but a few data sources give a snapshot.

COVID-19's Impact on America's Creative Economy

A study by Richard Florida and Michael Seman²⁹ paints a troubling picture of creative sector losses nationwide between April and June, 2020. Vermont is tied as the fifth hardest-hit state by percent of job losses.

- Estimated creative industry job loss: 8,090 (34%)
- Estimated industry sales loss: \$216M (10.6%)
- Estimated creative occupation job loss: 6,901 (29.8%)
- Estimated creative occupation earnings loss: \$195M (15.4%)

Nationwide, the authors estimated the heaviest losses fell in the visual and performing arts industries, design and advertising, publishing, and crafts. Note that this study does not include specialty foods in its definition of the creative sector.

Creative Sector Relief in Vermont

While there are no measures of COVID-19 relief to the creative sector overall, the Vermont Arts Council and Vermont Humanities tracked assistance to arts and cultural enterprises and individuals as of April 2021.³⁰

- 470 artists received \$196K in Rapid Response Artist Relief grants from the Vermont Arts Council, New England

Foundation for the Arts, Vermont Community Foundation Arts Endowment, and private donations.

- 181 organizations applied for relief funding projected at least \$26.7M in losses through 2020.³¹
- Organizations received \$781K in Cultural Relief Grants thanks to the federal CARES Act, and \$4.8M in Vermont Economic Recovery Grants allocated by the Vermont Legislature to the nonprofit arts and culture sector.

The Good News

While the numbers are stark, COVID-19 has also prompted the creative sector to do what it does best: create and innovate. Crafters and comedians, puppeteers and performance venues, librarians and legislative allies have all stepped up to find new ways of surviving, adapting, and creatively engaging communities. Here are a few of the more innovative ways that creative Vermonters are adapting.

"There is light, if only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it."

- Amanda Gorman, The Hill We Climb

²⁹ Florida and Seman, 2020.

³⁰ "COVID-19 Resources." *Vermont Arts Council*, www.vermontartscouncil.org/covid-19. Accessed 2 April 2021.

³¹ Grayson, Margaret. "Vermont Arts Organizations Face Economic Fallout in the Pandemic." *Seven Days*, 20 May 2020.

Inside-Out Art and Spaces

Moving indoor activities outside, and bringing creativity directly to people instead of bringing people into creative venues.

- St. Johnsbury Art on the Street—free outdoor gallery with art displayed in storefront windows
- Hurly Burly Pop-Up Concerts—free, socially-distant outdoor concerts in Burlington, performed from a flatbed truck
- Fairlee Community Makeover—rapid, temporary village “makeover” to create safe outdoor seating and social spaces

Digital Connections

Taking performances, events and conversations online in creative new ways.

- “Coping with COVID” Series—productions from Well Told Films highlighting ways local businesses responded
- First Wednesdays Lectures—free Vermont Humanities lecture series adapted for Zoom
- Art Party Central—a virtual craft show hosted by Swan&Stone Millinery where artists pitch to shoppers at online parties

Quick Pivots

Rapidly adapting and scaling offerings and delivery models to address COVID-19 needs and restrictions.

- Mask Making—craft groups, individual creatives, and larger companies like Vermont Glove Company quickly organizing to design and mass-produce masks and protective equipment
- Everyone Eats—food access program putting restaurants back in business cooking free meals using relief funding
- TechCorps—Brattleboro mutual aid group, quickly organized to help businesses and people get online

Making it as a Maker

Chester & Bethel, VT

Jeweler Rebecca Haas and potter Becca Webb each spent years honing their crafts and their marketing skills. When COVID-19 hit and typical sales venues closed, they teamed up to launch a new business—Making it as a Maker—teaching other makers how to market their work and brands online. It's a win-win: the coaching and training business means a new income stream for two independent creatives, and essential training for their peers in digital and business skills.

Photo: Making It as a Maker



VERMONT'S




creative vision

The CreateVT vision describes the Vermont that we love, the Vermont that we believe in, and the Vermont that we will work toward. It is a tapestry woven from thousands of individual ideas and visions, many of which are sprinkled throughout this plan. It describes many things that already exist and also what is possible: that Vermont's communities, people and businesses will thrive because of our investments in creativity.

This vision sets the stage for our goals, strategies, and actions. In turn, the goals on the following pages further describe what each element of the vision means.

we believe that **creativity is essential** to the **cultural & economic vitality of Vermont**

in our vision:

-  **arts, culture, and creativity are essential Vermont infrastructure**
-  **Vermont communities thrive** through creative expression and enterprise
-  **creative enterprises succeed** in a diverse, equitable, connected, and collaborative environment

ARTS, CULTURE, AND CREATIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL VERMONT INFRASTRUCTURE

We believe that arts, culture and creativity are just as essential to Vermont's future as roads, bridges and broadband. We envision a future where everyone from community members to state leaders recognizes the essential nature of the creative sector and invests in it accordingly. Treating art, culture and creativity as essential infrastructure means we will see a corresponding increase in statewide investment and resources, enabling policies, and education for the creative sector.

Achieving this means:

goal 1 | RESOURCES

Creative enterprises have equitable access to robust public, private and community funding and resources.

State and community investments should reflect the reality that arts, culture, and creativity are foundational to functioning communities. This includes dedicated funding for creative ventures, expansion of technical assistance resources and programs, and development of physical and technical infrastructure to support the creative sector. It also means reimagining funding and resource allocations for equity and removing barriers to access. Vermont currently has mixed success in this regard: some creative organizations compete successfully for federal and private dollars, but state and local funds for creative enterprises are relatively limited. Minnesota, by comparison, allocates an estimated \$6 per capita to the creative sector, compared to \$1.15 per capita in Vermont.³² Making the case for public investments in the creative sector requires advocates to gather, synthesize, and communicate the data and stories that demonstrate the sector's value. This same data will enable individuals and organizations to better pursue unique funding opportunities.

goal 2 | EDUCATION

Educational systems develop creative talent, skills, access to, and appreciation for arts and culture.

A thriving creative sector relies on a well-trained workforce in all disciplines and areas, but it also relies on appreciative audiences, leaders and community members who will support and invest in creativity. Vermonters of all ages and backgrounds need accessible, frequent and varied opportunities for creative experiences, activities, and careers. Early, elementary and secondary education must build awareness of the value of creativity, teach the creative process, and expose learners to the diversity and magic of creative experiences. Secondary education must offer meaningful and practical creative skill-building and learning opportunities, including connections to creative careers and employers. College and workforce training programs must offer top-notch curriculum, facilities, apprenticeships, and education in the creative skills of the future. Lifelong learning and professional development opportunities for creative people and businesses must build digital and business skills alongside mentorships and opportunities to enhance creative practice.

³² "Raise Your Ranking." *National Association of State Arts Agencies*, 2021, nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/raise-your-ranking/. Accessed 5 April 2021.

“Expanding the creative curriculum and providing a pipeline from schools to creative industries and careers are critical to inspire the next generation of Vermont entrepreneurs and creative workers.”

- Karen Mittelman, Vermont Arts Council

goal 3 | POLICY

State and local policies are designed to equitably support creative enterprises and infrastructure.

Policies include the rules, procedures, incentives, and investments made by the State of Vermont and its agencies, as well as cities and towns. Policies can guide, hinder or help creative efforts on every level. Town zoning bylaws, for example, can make the difference between building studio space or not. The state can create financing mechanisms to support creative efforts, such as a 1% for the Arts program or a link between certain revenue streams and investments in the creative sector. Agencies can budget for adding creative expertise to teams and staff and can ensure that arts and culture are allowable expenses in grant and program budgets. Policies are often guided by plans, which also offer opportunities to prioritize creative investments and approaches. From town or regional plans to statewide strategies and dedicated creative and cultural plans, including creative sector language and strategies enables action.



Better Places Program

Statewide

State organizations in community development, public health, the arts, and philanthropy have partnered with the Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development to create “Better Places”—a new grant program designed to activate and enhance public spaces through placemaking. In 2020, \$130,000 of private funds from partner organizations were used to support eight pilot projects around the state. The legislature approved \$1.5 million in funding to continue this initiative. In addition to funding projects, Better Places is also an experiment in more equitable, accessible grantmaking: it pools funding from multiple entities and streamlines the application process, provides technical assistance, and incorporates crowdfunding as a way to democratize support.

Photo: Richard Amore, Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development

VERMONT COMMUNITIES THRIVE THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND ENTERPRISE

We envision a future where creativity is at the center of thriving, healthy, and equitable communities. Thriving communities nurture opportunities for creative expression, support imaginative approaches to leadership and community building, and employ creative talent to leverage economic development in all sectors.

Achieving this means:

goal 4 | LOCAL CREATIVITY

Communities are infused with opportunities for creative economic development, expression and engagement.

Vermont ranks near the top of the nation in overall arts and cultural vibrancy³³ and is celebrated worldwide for the beauty, character and authenticity of its communities. From concerts to classes, public art to historic sites, Vermont communities embrace and support creative enterprises; and creativity gives back by driving economic development and improving quality of life. Beyond creative content and programming, creatives amplify other industries and provide new approaches to solving problems. Communities thrive when they are full of creative people, businesses, events and activities. Creative people, businesses, events and activities thrive when communities offer the infrastructure and resources to support them: work and performance spaces, committees and funds, plans and policies, public spaces and gathering places.

goal 5 | LEADERSHIP

Creatives are engaged in community building and leadership.

When important matters are up for discussion, creatives should have a place at the table. This isn't just to advocate for creative enterprises; it's to apply the unique skills and abilities of creative people and processes to forging stronger communities and a stronger state.³⁴ Community building efforts that are centered in creativity and creative approaches offer unique benefits to everyone involved. These include innovations in problem solving, new and more effective ways to communicate and foster dialogue, and relationship-building opportunities that reach across divides.

³³ "Arts Vibrancy Map and Index Report," 2021.

³⁴ Nicodemus, Anne et al. "Not Just Murals: Insights into Artists' Leadership in Community Development." Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Fall 2017.

“The focus on [creativity] is about not just saving individuals. It’s about saving our downtowns, saving our rural communities, so that they’re vibrant places and they survive COVID.”

- U.S. Representative Peter Welch

goal 6 | COLLABORATIONS

Cross-sector collaborations amplify creativity and local economies.

Developing a strong creative economy doesn’t just mean selling concert tickets and goods at craft fairs. Creatives add financial and performance value to every other industry. In collaboration with other enterprises, creatives are busy developing craft brews and designing logos, repurposing vacant buildings, making public art, managing maker spaces, filling storefronts and supporting restaurants. Creatives facilitate new approaches to communication, social services, education, and health services. And these other industries and disciplines, in turn, can offer opportunities and collaborations that expand the reach, audiences, and approaches of creative sector enterprises. By promoting partnerships between individuals and organizations in the creative sector and allied industries (education, business, agriculture, technology, government, recreation, real estate and more), we can scale the efficiency, innovation and impact of them all.



Vermont African American Heritage Trail

Statewide

Black heritage and history run deep in Vermont, if not always visibly. The statewide African American Heritage Trail aims to change that by promoting the museums, historic sites, exhibits and cultural hotspots that reveal Vermont’s Black history through the stories of teachers, activists, ministers and legislators who lived here. Connecting these sites and stories through a statewide trail and promoting in partnership with Vermont’s Department of Tourism and Marketing draws visitors, attention, and revenue to these essential historic sites. Adding layers like spoken word poetry connects Black history to Vermont’s vibrant Black culture today.

Photo: Hildene, The Lincoln Family Farm

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES SUCCEED IN A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, CONNECTED, AND COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

We envision a Vermont where all creative people, entrepreneurs, small businesses, facilities and organizations have the connections, resources and support they need to thrive. This means acknowledging the discriminatory failures of many systems both past and present and creating new, inclusive ones to promote, connect, and support the entire creative sector, including those who are non-heteronormative, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities, and other groups. It also requires us to proactively develop resources, systems and channels that allow creatives to grow and thrive: business support programs, technical assistance, peer support networks, and statewide promotion to amplify creative sector offerings.

Achieving this means:

goal 7 | SUPPORT

Creative people and enterprises have abundant access to the resources they need to succeed.

For the sector to thrive, we must ensure that each creative person and enterprise has the opportunity to succeed. This means ensuring that all Vermonters have equitable access to opportunity—affordable and quality housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation, education, employment and business support, and social networks. This means developing new funding channels, training programs, guides and resources, tools and channels. This also means developing systems that allow creatives to share equipment, spaces, information and assets.

goal 8 | NETWORKS

Vibrant networks support creative people, industries, and communities of practice.

Vermont's creative sector is rich with talent and resources, yet opportunities to connect to people, information, events, support and other resources are mostly informal and ad hoc. In our outreach, creatives consistently ranked network building as one of the most helpful and urgent approaches to amplifying their work. When creative enterprises have access to networks (within and beyond the creative sector), their capacity to innovate, collaborate, and share resources will grow. When our collective understanding of the creative sector grows to include the full spectrum of industries and occupations, our network will automatically expand. That connection and collaboration, in turn, will expand the creative sector and allow it to become more than the sum of its parts.

“As Vermont faces the demographic reality of a rapidly shrinking workforce, prioritizing arts, culture and creativity will attract young professionals and families.”

- Jody Fried, Catamount Arts and Vermont Creative Network Chair

goal 9 | PROMOTION

Vermont is promoted as a hub for creative talent, experiences and communities.

Vermont has a deep bench of creative talent and offerings that must be amplified and promoted to consumers, workers, residents and visitors both within and beyond the state. This includes coordinated promotions and marketing that results in a broader and deeper reach for Vermont’s businesses, as well as accessible channels for sharing and publicizing creative offerings. It means lifting up the full spectrum of creative people, cultures and experiences in Vermont—not just those of the majority. And it means expanding Vermont’s brand and identity to include creativity, which will draw new residents, businesses, and investment.



The Media Factory

Burlington, VT

Plenty of people dream of being on TV (or film, or radio...), but the Media Factory in Burlington makes it possible for people to create and broadcast their own productions. The community media center provides the tools, training, space, equipment and access to distribution channels that give people the power to share their stories. This community resource has big impacts: providing affordable training and equipment for digital content production, removing barriers and increasing equity in media, building 21st century career and business skills, improving transparency in community and government communication, and of course fueling creativity.

Photo: The Media Factory



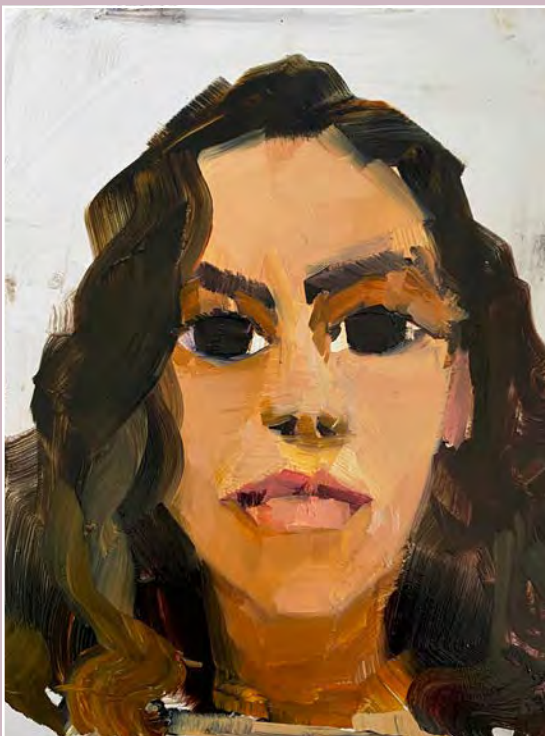
Vision Gallery

Our collective vision for the creative sector builds on the individual visions, hopes and beliefs of thousands. As we launched the CreateVT visioning process, we aimed to capture and celebrate the rich stories, experiences and words of creatives representing the full spectrum of disciplines, perspectives, races, ages, regions and backgrounds. We selected nine creatives from around the state and invited them to sit down for 30-minute interviews and portraits. Artist Rebecca Kinkead of Weybridge painted portraits of each person while Community Workshop team members interviewed them about their visions for Vermont.

6-WORD VISION: “Arts, culture, creativity = essential community infrastructure”



Screenshots of Rebecca Kinkead holding her portraits of Jason Broughton (top left) and Jesse Kreitzer (bottom right) after their interviews. Images courtesy of Rebecca Kinkead and David Hohenschau.



VERA ESCAJA-HEISS
student, poet
Poetry Out Loud state winner | South Burlington

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

A greater sense of community and diversity. Equity (not necessarily equality). Awareness! Of faults, and reparations that need to be made before moving forward. An open conversation, and true collaboration, around how to move forward together.

HOW WE GET THERE

Start to have conversations. Talk to real people. Less competition, more support. More Poetry Out Loud. Make sure everyone is heard. It starts with education. More diversity training at young ages. More programs and opportunities. We need to amplify creative outlooks at a young age.



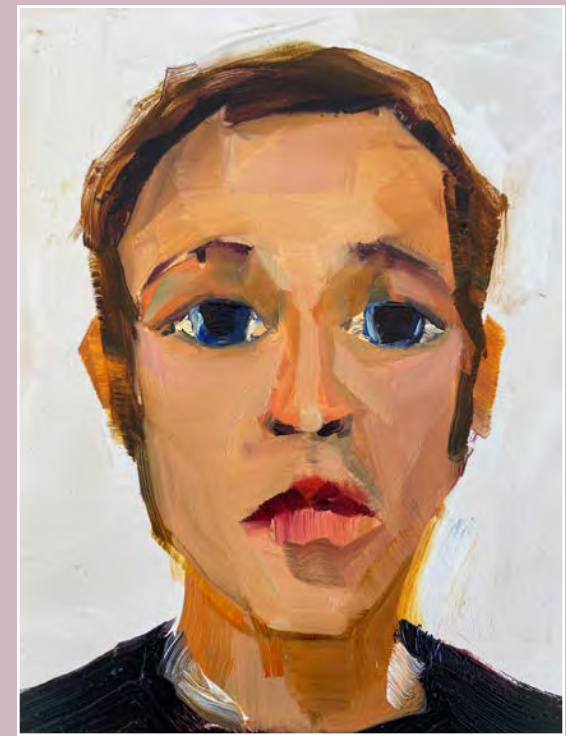
MICHAEL JAGER
designer
Solidarity of Unbridled Labour, Karma Bird House | Burlington

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Vermont's creative community should be working to create Vermont as a massive magnet– to attract and retain amazing talent from all disciplines... to create this magnetic energy we must generate far greater awareness of the incredible talent here. By pulling it together, it will become far more visible.

HOW WE GET THERE

Great art, ideas, design, from all disciplines is what powers the magnet. A magnet of course also repels negative energy, we must support our creative space with responsible, just, and equitable values– always... and repel those who generate negativity. Attract. Repel. Create. Celebrate our differences!



CRAIG MOWERY
technical director, business owner, organizer
Local 919-International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Pentangle Arts | Upper Valley

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Guaranteed pay. Respectable pay. More recognition for the people—the “artisan workers”—behind the scenes. There needs to be a change in perception of unionized workers. People deserve to know that imbalances in the arts exist.

HOW WE GET THERE

Have more events and make the arts available to more folks. The drive is there for performing arts in schools; we have to nurture and define it. We should all be a part of training folks for the future.



JASON BROUGHTON
state librarian
Vermont Department of Libraries | Barre

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Concentrated effort to diversify and be far more inclusive to the differently-abled—those with hearing/vision impairments in particular. This population should have access to the arts and opportunities to participate in the arts, from street art to murals.

HOW WE GET THERE

People must have access to the resources they need. And we must provide art literacy education and art appreciation across the State. This conversation and efforts should look like a tapestry of who we are—celebrating all things from gender to abilities. We must be able to express our unique perspectives.



MOLLY VEYSEY
museum director
Old Stone House Museum | Brownington

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Networks and collaborations in the creative economy. A creative economy is a really important part of the fabric of this area. Connections and partnerships with other sectors will create a more resilient community.

HOW WE GET THERE

We already have a culture of caring. We need strong infrastructure built to support the creative economy. Vermont does a good job supporting it already. But we need more resources directed to support this work in the NEK.



MARK FOLEY, JR.
small business owner, public art supporter
MFK Properties | Rutland

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

How to improve our communities? With art. Art is critical to a community's success. Art can improve the community's love. Art can drive our creative economy.

HOW WE GET THERE

There needs to be a higher value on art. It's a fine line between chasing your paycheck and creating the art you want to. There are mechanisms that are successful in bringing capitalism and creativity together. We need more opportunity for artists and creatives. We need more venues and opportunities to show work.



Portrait: Robert Liberace

SHANTA LEE GANDER

writer, poet, speaker, photographer, journalist
shantaleegander.com | Brattleboro

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Well-fed artists who can be sustained by their creative work and have the skills to make art their business. Communities, municipalities, businesses and organizations that are deeply engaged with art and are held accountable for supporting the arts. Diversity and opportunities for individuals who do not represent the norm, but a range across class, race, age, etc. A pipeline that truly engages the next generations of artists and creatives, and a broader and more inclusive understanding of what it means to be an artist.

HOW WE GET THERE

The state, towns, and cities should develop ways to support the creative economy through legislation, policy, and budgeting. Study the creative economy and identify strengths and gaps. Build a bigger, more diverse, and more inclusive understanding of what it means to be creative or even a part of the creative economy.



HEATHER RITCHIE

granite carver
Bonnie Wee LLC | Barre

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

Having art accessible and available is really important. For businesses to thrive, we need to get everyone excited about art. Vermont is an amazing place to take classes and engage in art. Buy a membership to art galleries to get people engaged and do something creative. Purchase something as a gift. Plenty of people appreciate art and the culture, but not enough people to buy memberships and purchase art.

HOW WE GET THERE

Art projects have been waking people up, but it will take more. It takes a community, and it takes a community who want art in their lives. If every family in Vermont purchased a membership to their local art gallery or craft store, it would change everything. We need to offer [visitors] a slice of life that not everyone has. We want to share it with the world.



JESSE KREITZER

filmmaker
Lanterna Film | Marlboro

VISION FOR A CREATIVE VERMONT

A sense of community among other Vermont filmmakers, whether formal or informal, would allow us to commiserate with and challenge each other. It would help us avoid the potential for isolation and—with film-specific grants—foster a more engaged and visible film community.

HOW WE GET THERE

A stronger film culture—the kind that supports arthouse cinemas and film festivals—would be a big asset to Vermont. Grants, philanthropy, and tax-incentives that are directed specifically to Vermont film production would nurture that culture and give us the chance to showcase Vermont on screen. Vermont is rich with beautiful landscapes but even movies that are set in Vermont are usually filmed in some other state. Without a state film commission and tax incentives it's unlikely that Vermont would attract larger scale productions.



CREATEVT

action framework

CREATE

VT

WITH US

There is no step-by-step recipe or exact blueprint for moving Vermont's prolific creative sector forward. There is no single organization or individual tasked with this effort. Instead we have thousands of people with great ideas, hundreds of organizations with inspiring missions, communities with a variety of priorities and capacities, and with this plan we have a clear call to work together in pursuit of a shared vision.

Anyone looking to join this effort can play a role by supporting local actions, joining a coalition, playing some statewide role, or by connecting in the work they are already doing.

This action framework shows everyone how to plug in and how their work can add to the collective impact of the network. The framework outlines three elements:

ROLES that creative sector advocates, coalitions, and individual people and organizations may play;

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS to support each of our nine plan goals and inform the approach of anyone working in these areas; and,

AGENDAS for statewide advocacy, local and statewide network building, and individual or collective action at the local level.

“Don’t plan it all. Let life surprise you a little.”

- Julia Alvarez

Traditional Abenaki Sugaring and Stories



Chief Don Stevens, Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe



Traditional Abenaki Sugaring & Stories

Statewide

Maple sugaring is a key part of Vermont's story and sense of place, but the first chapter is often left out. The Abenaki people have been sugaring on this land for thousands of years, and Abenaki sugaring operations continue the tradition today. In 2020, the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk-Abenaki Nation joined together for a virtual event focused on Abenaki sugaring. The sold-out event drew people with both conservation and cultural interests, allowing both partners to reach new people. Chief Don Stevens shared stories of Abenaki sugaring methods and traditions, and then joined VLT forester Caitlin Cusack for a conversation about the relationships between people and land, history and present, culture and conservation. With a request that Abenaki stories should only be shared by Abenaki people, a recording of this event is available online.

Photo: Caleb Kenna, Vermont Land Trust

ROLES

Implementing this plan will be a long-term effort and will require the coordination and creativity of many different stakeholders. There are opportunities for statewide partners and groups to lead major initiatives, for local and regional teams to organize around specific goals, and for individuals to start taking action today.

Vermont Creative Network (VCN) and Steering Team

The VCN is a collective of organizations, individual creatives, champions, businesses and leaders with a Steering Team of appointed members. By itself, the VCN is not in the business of “fulfillment” activities, such as program delivery, content creation, or grant administration. Instead, the many individual network participants and partners can support or lead actions in many different ways. The job of the VCN itself is to coordinate, connect and communicate with the sector’s many members, supporters and partners. The Steering Team’s role is to chart VCN’s direction and priorities, oversee and direct backbone support and investments in the Network Agenda and other key priorities, and represent individual zones and segments in network planning. The Steering Team will develop targeted action teams or convene specific groups to take on critical projects or planning steps when there is no clear lead entity.

Vermont Arts Council (VCN backbone provider)

As the designated backbone organization for the VCN, the Vermont Arts Council and the VCN coordinator are tasked with implementing steps identified by the Steering Team. While the VCN is not structured as a formal “collective impact” network, it borrows several key principles. As the backbone organization, the Vermont Arts Council’s key responsibilities vary through the life cycle of the Plan, and will involve setting overarching vision and strategy, supporting priority activities aligned with shared goals, establishing shared measurement practices, advancing policy and mobilizing funding and resources to support the collaboration, and ensuring continuous coordination and communication among VCN members and partners.³⁵

VCN Zones, Local Teams and Segment Collaborations (by region, locality, initiative, or creative segments)

Much of the work of growing and strengthening the creative sector is best planned and activated locally—in towns or regional groups, or by segment. Groups might organize as community or regional action teams, or as coalitions to advance specific agendas. The six VCN Zones are already organized to coordinate regional work such as networking, regional creative sector planning, and resource sharing; some counties or regions have arts councils or cultural committees. Creative segments, such as Performing Arts or Design, vary in their current level of organization and capacity. Some, like Specialty Foods, are already well organized and supported by other groups and networks such as the Farm to Plate Network and Vermont Specialty Foods Association; they may already have clear action plans for developing and supporting their enterprises. Where segment-based coordination is lacking, new networking and communication activities may be an important first step to help creative entities begin working together.

Partner Organizations

Partner organizations include creative businesses, individuals, and organizations as well as local governments, institutions and supporting organizations that may not identify as “creative.” Regional Planning Commissions, Regional Development Corporations, and many more organizations and agencies in Vermont are already at work addressing key priorities and needs in this plan, whether they consider themselves part of the creative sector or not. Organizations that find their work or their mission aligned with CreateVT are invited to connect with the VCN and collaborate, or simply use this plan to guide their own actions. This could mean joining or forming a coalition around a specific initiative, helping with advocacy or networking, or launching a creative project that supports our vision. Creative sector members can boost partnerships by participating in partners’ activities and establishing communication and collaborations that support shared goals.

³⁵ Kania, John and Mark Kramer. “Collective Impact.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011.

Individuals

Any individual creative person, business or enterprise can take action in a variety of ways. One of the best ways is to design, create and carry out creative, on-the-ground community projects. Many stakeholders shared these ideas during the CreateVT process. This plan aims to create the environment for creative ideas to be realized, we aim to empower local creative sector champions to follow through on those ideas and use the Vermont Creative Network to find support. Whatever your goals and interests, the Vermont Creative Network website (vermontcreativenetwork.org) is the best place to start. Here are a handful of suggestions:

SIGN UP for VCN news and events and join social media groups

JOIN YOUR ZONE by connecting with a VCN Zone Agent or signing up for your zone's communications channels

CONTACT A LEGISLATOR to express support for bills currently in the legislature that would support creative sector needs

CONNECT LOCALLY with a local arts and culture committee, or approach your town about starting one

INVITE A CREATIVE for coffee, reach out to explore ideas, or find a way to collaborate

LOOK UP PLANS and policies in your area to see whether they address the creative sector

“It’s a quiet revolution begun by ordinary people with the stuff of our daily lives.”

- Bill McKibben



Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE)

Hardwick, VT

CAE is a Northeast Kingdom-based nonprofit taking a systems approach to growing the local food economy. CAE's food hub helps small farm and food businesses grow by offering shared production space, regional supply chains, financing, and direct business advising. CAE's programs take root in the relationships between people, land, and community. CAE works with local partners in place-based education and food access, stewards a community art-food-green space, and supports an organizing network to help grow an informed, equitable, and connected community.

Photo: Center for an Agricultural Economy

GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

CreateVT's three-part vision sets up a nine-goal framework for action. This section describes each of the nine goals and 28 strategies to support them. Each goal on the following pages includes a review of what's already happening in that area, what success could look like for that goal, and the strategies and specific actions recommended to achieve that goal.

6-WORD
VISION:

"Prosperity, Community, Education,
Creativity, Cooperation, Support"

Recommendations are just that—there are many potential ways to implement this plan. The best approaches and actions will vary with different groups and communities, with time and changing conditions, and with stage of implementation. As the creative sector grows, we hope to learn more about what's already happening, engage new and different voices, connect people to needed resources, inspire and support additional efforts, and revisit our approach.

Organized by the vision themes, the nine goals and their supporting strategies are:

CREATEVT
VISION

ARTS, CULTURE & CREATIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL VERMONT INFRASTRUCTURE

goal 1 | RESOURCES

Creative enterprises have equitable access to robust public, private and community funding and resources.

- 1.1 Expand, develop and diversify accessible public and private funding streams to support the creative sector
- 1.2 Develop and promote policies and funding programs that ensure equitable access to resources
- 1.3 Collect, synthesize, and share statewide data on the creative sector and its return on investment

goal 2 | EDUCATION

Educational systems develop creative talent, skills, access to, and appreciation for arts and culture.

- 2.1 Foster accessible, creativity-infused education programming from early childhood through college and adult education
- 2.2 Encourage programs that expand creative sector mentorship, career development, certifications or credentials of value, and workforce training
- 2.3 Promote inclusive professional development and learning opportunities in all creative disciplines

goal 3 | POLICY

State and local policies are designed to equitably support creative enterprises and infrastructure.

- 3.1 Organize a statewide advocacy team and annual strategy
- 3.2 Build capacity for advocacy within the creative sector and Vermont Creative Network
- 3.3 Create a multi-audience communications campaign and toolkit to increase awareness of and support for the creative sector

VERMONT COMMUNITIES THRIVE THROUGH CREATIVE EXPRESSION & ENTERPRISE

goal 4 | LOCAL CREATIVITY

Communities are infused with opportunities for creative economic development, expression and engagement.

- 4.1 Support the development and improvement of accessible venues, facilities, and work spaces for creative programs and enterprises
- 4.2 Promote creative activities through new and existing funding programs
- 4.3 Develop resources to build local capacity for creative initiatives

goal 5 LEADERSHIP

Creatives are engaged in community building and leadership.

- 5.1 Create trainings and toolkits to support local and regional creative sector advocacy
- 5.2 Support and promote inclusive access to leadership development and opportunities for creative sector members
- 5.3 Support the development of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility strategies in Vermont's creative organizations

goal 6 | COLLABORATIONS

Cross-sector collaborations amplify creativity and local economies.

- 6.1 Cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other sectors such as transportation, tourism, recreation, and health
- 6.2 Establish reciprocal outreach partnerships with organizations that reach new audiences and diverse Vermonters
- 6.3 Promote cross-sector collaborations by sharing resources, successful models, and stories

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES SUCCEED IN A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, CONNECTED, & COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

goal 7 | SUPPORT

Creative people and enterprises have abundant access to the resources they need to succeed.

- 7.1 Connect creative enterprises to business and technical support resources
- 7.2 Support statewide advocacy efforts for livability, affordability and accessibility
- 7.3 Provide COVID-19 recovery assistance and resources and support continuing creative sector disaster resilience

goal 8 | NETWORKS

Vibrant networks support creative people, industries, and communities of practice.

- 8.1 Define and promote VCN membership and participation to diverse creatives
- 8.2 Cultivate and support existing networks of support for people who identify with traditionally underrepresented groups
- 8.3 Expand and publicize creative networking events
- 8.4 Assess and strengthen accessible, user-friendly communication, sharing and networking channels for the creative sector

goal 9 | PROMOTION

Vermont is promoted as a hub for creative talent, experiences and communities.

- 9.1 Promote creative content and offerings that reflect the diversity of the state and elevate the culture and creativity of traditionally underrepresented groups
- 9.2 Develop solutions and partnerships to expand market reach of creative sector businesses, in-state and beyond
- 9.3 Integrate creative offerings into statewide marketing and incentives for tourists, investors, residents and businesses

goal 1

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ROBUST PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND COMMUNITY FUNDING AND RESOURCES

6-WORD VISION:

“Re-invent sustainable vitality in the arts”

State and community investments should reflect the reality that arts, culture, and creativity are foundational to functioning communities. This includes dedicated public and private funding for creative ventures, expansion of technical assistance resources and programs, and development of physical and technical infrastructure to support the creative sector. It also means reimagining funding and resource allocations for equity and removing barriers to access. Vermont currently has mixed success in this regard: some creative organizations compete successfully for federal and private dollars, but state and local funds for creative enterprises are relatively limited. Minnesota, by comparison, allocates an estimated \$6 per capita to the creative sector, compared to \$1.15 per capita in Vermont.³⁶ Making the case for public investments in the creative sector requires advocates to gather, synthesize, and communicate the data and stories that demonstrate the sector's value. This same data will enable individuals and organizations to better pursue unique funding opportunities.

What Success Looks Like

- Creative enterprises have access to public and private financial support for arts, creativity, and business development and creation.
- Individuals in the creative sector have access to business development resources, training, networking and professional development.

What's Happening Already

- Agency of Commerce and Community Development offers small business loans, COVID-19 recovery funding, downtown and village center designations and assets, and other grant and technical assistance resources.
- Center for Women and Enterprise, the Vermont Small Business Development Center, and SCORE Vermont offer free trainings and business coaching for entrepreneurs.
- Vermont Arts Council offers funding and resources for developing creative spaces, community facilities, public art, and operating support for arts organizations.
- Vermont Crafts Council offers an annual Marketing Conference for members and other artists.
- Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Humanities and New England Foundation for the Arts offer grants for arts and humanities-focused programming and professional development.
- Numerous libraries, universities, co-working and maker spaces and other organizations offer access to equipment, software, learning resources and more.
- Multiple funders collaborated to create the Better Places program (a model for more accessible community funding) and advocate for State funding.
- The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) (a Federal-State partnership), U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Economic Development Administration, and other federal programs invest in community and economic development projects.

“Some people feel like equity work ... or anti-racism work doesn't belong in a place that only or mostly has white people, but that's where it most belongs,”

³⁶ “Raise Your Ranking,” 2021.

- Alana Harte, author

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1.1 Expand, develop and diversify accessible public and private funding streams to support the creative sector

- Organize or support existing coalitions to attract bigger funding to Vermont
- Curate and promote resources for developing local funding and financial incentives, e.g., tax credit programs, crowdsourced funding programs, and grant assistance
- Seek funding to increase backbone staff support for the Vermont Creative Network and compensate additional VCN leaders
- Support funding programs that explicitly address equity, inclusion, and accessibility

1.2 Develop and promote policies and funding programs that ensure equitable access to resources

- Support the redesign of grants, policies, and funding programs to intentionally address equity, inclusion, and accessibility and reduce barriers to access
- Develop and expand partnerships with organizations advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion work to connect within the creative sector
- Promote funding opportunities with a clear intention to reach traditionally underresourced, underrepresented Vermonters
- Develop and/or curate and promote resources that offer best practices regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and access

1.3 Collect, synthesize, and share statewide data on the creative sector and its return on investment

- With support from partners such as state agencies and the University of Vermont, develop a creative economy monitoring plan that identifies essential, accessible data points and an annual process for collecting and reporting on them
- Develop best practices and partnerships to ensure that future data and research is more inclusive of underrepresented groups
- Develop an annual report on the creative sector and communications plan to promote it

Brattleboro Parking & Placemaking

Brattleboro, VT

A Brattleboro collaboration has been proving that even an unappealing parking structure can be a first-rate venue for public art and education. Artists Evie Lovett, Elizabeth Billings and Andrea Wasserman teamed up with conservation organizations for a project called Ask the River. They placed a temporary kinetic art installation on the side of the garage to call attention to the river, while partners created watershed education exhibits. With business and community partners stepping in, they installed permanent artistic parking level signage. The Downtown Brattleboro Alliance organized a pop-up placemaking event in the adjacent alley, and transformed a blighted elevator into “the Great Art Elevator.” The project proves that any space can become a place, with the power of art and community.

Photo: AARP Vermont and Downtown Brattleboro Alliance

goal 2

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS DEVELOP CREATIVE TALENT, SKILLS, ACCESS TO, AND APPRECIATION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

6-WORD VISION:

“Encouraging and supporting our creative youth”

A thriving creative sector relies on a well-trained workforce in all disciplines and areas, but it also relies on appreciative audiences, leaders and community members who will support and invest in creativity. This requires a cradle-to-grave strategy, offering Vermonters of all ages and backgrounds accessible, frequent and varied opportunities for creative experiences, activities, and careers. Early, elementary and secondary education must build awareness of the value of creativity, teach the creative process, and expose learners to the diversity and magic of creative experiences. Secondary education must offer meaningful and practical creative skill-building and learning opportunities, including connections to creative careers and employers. College and workforce training programs must offer top-notch curriculum, facilities, apprenticeships, and education in the creative skills of the future. Lifelong learning and professional development opportunities for creative people and businesses must build digital and business skills alongside mentorships and opportunities to enhance creative practice.

What Success Looks Like

- Creative capacity is a central priority of K-12 education, after school programs, adult and secondary education, and community institutions.
- Vermont serves as an incubator and magnet for creative people and enterprises, and develops a pipeline to creative careers.
- People value the arts, creativity and culture as key components of Vermont’s essential infrastructure.
- Creative sector members have ready access to professional and organizational development resources.
- Creative sector enterprises have ready access to a strong, skilled workforce.

- Educational programs and services intentionally lift up underrepresented voices, stories, and teachings.
- Educational programs and services are provided in a way to improve accessibility and equity for people from traditionally underresourced groups.

What’s Happening Already

- The Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools develops and promotes ethnic studies, disability studies, Native American Studies, and LGBTQIA2S+ curriculum and pedagogy for all Vermont students.
- The Abenaki Arts and Education Center shares Abenaki educational resources with classrooms across *N’dakinna* (an Abenaki word meaning roughly “my homeland”).
- An Agency of Education curriculum coordinator supports arts education curriculum (K-12) and career and technical education.
- Statewide education policy supports independent and experiential learning for grades 9-12 through Flexible Pathways/ Act 77.
- Clemmons Family Farm offers a “Windows to a Multicultural World” curriculum.
- The Vermont Arts Council maintains a teaching artist roster and funds school residencies.
- Champlain College and Vermont College of Fine Arts offer leading creative sector degree programs.
- Independent schools such as the Center for Cartoon Studies and Yestermorrow Design/Build School offer renowned educational programs in specific creative industries.
- The Vermont State College system, community colleges, and technical career centers offer degree and non-degree programs in essential creative sector skills, such as digital technology, engineering and design, and multimedia content production.

- The Vermont Arts Council and New England Foundation for the Arts offer professional development funding and programs for creatives.
- Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Small Business Development Centers, and SCORE Vermont offer free trainings and business coaching for entrepreneurs.
- Local and regional arts centers, co-working and maker spaces, community centers, libraries and other facilities offer a wide variety of classes, trainings and resources in creative and business skills.

STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
2.1 Foster accessible, creativity-infused education programming from early childhood through college and adult education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and support existing coalitions of educators to advocate for strengthening creative curriculum and to develop educational resources • Develop and curate communications and resources for integrating creativity in the curriculum, including how creativity supports “non-creative” aspects of education, e.g. transferable skills, digital literacy, design thinking, civic and social awareness, performance assessments • Develop and curate communications and resources about creative career paths and mentorship/apprenticeship opportunities • Support the development of creative sector educational programs for all ages including workforce training, arts appreciation, best practices, mentoring, and creativity
2.2 Encourage programs that expand creative sector mentorship, career development, certifications or credentials of value, and workforce training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with education and workforce training organizations (including Agency of Education, Vermont Works for Women, and Department of Labor) to expand and publicize a variety of career development opportunities across the creative sector, including formal education, mentorships and apprenticeships, and post-secondary education • Support and promote programs that prepare youth for careers in the creative economy, such as Flexible Pathways, mentorships, apprenticeships, certifications, and dual enrollment • Develop or support existing mentorship programs and informal mentor match-ups for the creative sector, ensuring that people from underrepresented groups gain access to opportunities
2.3 Promote inclusive professional development and learning opportunities in all creative disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with education providers and promote existing learning opportunities, classes, workshops and training programs to creative sector members • Develop partnerships with libraries, colleges and universities, local maker spaces and creative venues, and state agencies and organizations to promote professional learning opportunities • Develop communication strategies and information-sharing channels allowing creative sector members and organizations to share resources and learning opportunities; ensure that communications are accessible and reach people underrepresented groups

goal 3

STATE AND LOCAL POLICIES ARE DESIGNED TO EQUITABLY SUPPORT CREATIVE ENTERPRISES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Policies include the rules, procedures, incentives, and investments made by the State of Vermont and its agencies, as well as cities and towns. Policies can guide, hinder or help creative efforts on every level. Town zoning bylaws, for example, can make the difference between building studio space or not. The state can create financing mechanisms to support creative efforts, such as a 1% for the Arts program or a link between certain revenue streams and investments in the creative sector. Agencies can budget for adding creative expertise to teams and staff and can ensure that arts and culture are allowable expenses in grant and program budgets. Policies are often guided by plans, which also offer opportunities to prioritize creative investments and approaches. From town or regional plans to statewide strategies and dedicated creative and cultural plans, including creative sector language and strategies enables action.

What Success Looks Like

- State and local plans, budgets, and policies specifically support creative enterprises and the resources they need to thrive.
- Communities and regions establish creative and cultural plans to intentionally grow the sector.
- Vermont creative sector members and partners effectively advocate for and participate in policymaking.
- Equity is a core value driving investment and policy decisions in the creative sector.

What's Happening Already

- The Vermont Arts Council advocates for the creative sector and coordinates other advocacy partners.
- Two Vermont regions and several communities have developed creative sector or arts and cultural plans.
- As of 2016, more than half of Vermont town plans (104) mention the arts, culture, creativity, and innovation and nearly 10% address arts, culture, creativity, and innovation in a substantial way.
- The Vermont Agency of Transportation is creating new policies and guides for incorporating creative work into state infrastructure.
- The Better Places grant program represents a new investment of public and private funds in community placemaking projects, including public art installations and cultural activities.

“A sense of community shall be fortified by the expansion of arts and other cultural opportunities.”

- Essex Town Plan

6-WORD
VISION:

“Identify unique aspects of rural creation-making”

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

3.1 Organize a statewide advocacy team and annual strategy

- Create a creative sector advocacy team to identify feasible and impactful options for annual policy and legislation
- Advocate for state legislation that: 1) Invests in our aging cultural infrastructure; 2) promotes community-based economic development projects; 3) invests in digital capacity building for arts and culture businesses; and 4) nurtures the entrepreneurship and skills of creative businesses

3.2 Build capacity for advocacy within the creative sector and Vermont Creative Network

- Develop partnerships with groups offering leadership development and advocacy training programs
- Develop resources and programs to support advocacy by local teams and organizations
- Build the advocacy capacity of the Vermont Creative Network by nurturing regional and local teams, initiative-specific teams, coalitions, and individual/organizational champions within the creative sector

3.3 Create a multi-audience communications campaign and toolkit to increase awareness of and support for the creative sector

- Develop a strategic communications plan and toolkit with statewide messaging to empower individuals to communicate and advocate; resources may include:
 - clarified VCN brand and messaging
 - creative sector case statement and fact sheet
 - VCN participation options
 - local action ideas (policy, financing, program)

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN STATE HIGHWAY RIGHT OF WAY

OCTOBER 2020



Pictured: Demonstration bike lane and parklet along VT Route 12 in downtown Bethel, part of the Bethel Better Block initiative.

VTrans Demonstration Project Guide

Statewide

Communities in Vermont and beyond are increasingly looking at streets and infrastructure as opportunities for beautification, placemaking and accessibility improvements. But transportation design is a high-stakes game; it's easiest and safest for transportation agencies to just say, "no." Vermont's Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is taking the opposite approach, designing cutting-edge policies that allow communities to safely experiment with pop-ups and other enhancements. Policy change starts small: creative community pilot projects like pop-up bike lanes in Burlington and a mural collaboration in Bethel helped demonstrate possibilities and shape these new policies.

Photo: Vermont Agency of Transportation

goal 4

COMMUNITIES ARE INFUSED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EXPRESSION AND ENGAGEMENT

6-WORD VISION:

“Art is integral, not the frosting”

Vermont ranks near the top of the nation in overall arts and cultural vibrancy³⁷ and is celebrated worldwide for the beauty, character and authenticity of its communities. From concerts to classes, public art to historic sites, Vermont communities embrace and support creative enterprises; and creativity gives back by driving economic development and improving quality of life. Beyond creative content and programming, creatives amplify other industries and provide new approaches to solving problems. Communities thrive when they are full of creative people, businesses, events and activities. Creative people, businesses, events and activities thrive when communities offer the infrastructure and resources to support them: work and performance spaces, committees and funds, plans and policies, public spaces and gathering places.

What Success Looks Like

- Vermont communities, buildings, infrastructure and public spaces are infused with character and creativity.
- Creative and cultural activities are affordable, appealing and accessible to more diverse people (by geography, race, income, age, education).
- Flexible and varied spaces and facilities are available in all communities to support creative work, performances, and collaboration.
- Local governments and institutions plan for and invest in the creative sector.

What's Happening Already

- Inclusive Arts Vermont offers resources and services for making the arts accessible to children and adults with disabilities.
- Funding and grant programs for local creative programming include the Better Places program; the Vermont Arts Council's Animating Infrastructure and Cultural Facilities grants; state historic preservation grants and tax credits, and village and downtown designation programs.
- Numerous statewide and regional groups support networking, collaboration, and idea-sharing, including a statewide placemaking leadership group; VCN zones; and local arts/culture committees in many towns or regions.
- Numerous regional facilities, arts centers, co-working and maker spaces, food hubs, libraries and universities offer affordable access to equipment, space, broadband, and creative communities.
- Two Vermont regions and several communities have developed creative sector or arts and cultural plans, and several communities have public art, public space, or pop-up event policies.
- State placemaking leaders and the Vermont Community Leadership Network have gathered or developed many resources for completing local projects.

“One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.”

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

³⁷ “Arts Vibrancy Map and Index Report,” 2021.

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

4.1 Support the development and improvement of accessible venues, facilities, and work spaces for creative programs and enterprises

- Promote short-term funding streams and information for adapting facilities and venues for COVID-19, such as outdoor stages or seating and ventilation upgrades
- Develop and promote best practices and resources to finance, maintain, develop, and improve the accessibility of arts and cultural facilities
- Advocate to maintain and expand funding programs that support the renovation, adaptation and expansion of local cultural and creative facilities and venues, such as the Vermont Arts Council's Cultural Facilities grant or historic preservation funding and incentives

4.2 Promote creative enterprises and programs through new and existing funding programs

- Advocate for funding and expansion of the Better Places program in 2021 to support local creative placemaking, as well as capacity building and resources for local organizers
- Design and advocate for additional dedicated creative sector funding programs, using Better Places and other creative sector examples and data to develop new models
- Work with state agencies and funders to ensure that creative activities are eligible expenditures in local planning, development, and infrastructure projects
- Develop and promote best practices and resources for local fundraising and financing of creative enterprises and programs

4.3 Develop resources to build local capacity for creative initiatives

- Develop a centralized hub or system to compile resources, guides, case studies and information on planning and developing local placemaking and creative projects
- Identify resources and training needs that local organizers need to move forward
- Develop and share templates, model policies or projects, and stories from other communities



The DEN at Harry's Hardware

Cabot, VT

Where can you stock up on hardware and hard cider all at once? In rural Cabot, Harry's Hardware has been meeting community needs for generations. So when the community needed a gathering place, Harry's installed a bar at the checkout counter and launched the DEN. Now community members can enjoy live music, social space, and local brews and food while they stock up on seeds and screws. Each part of the business draws customers and new audiences for the other, and creative space sharing makes it easier for a small town to support two essential local businesses.

Photo: Harry's Hardware

goal 5

CREATIVES ARE ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP

6-WORD VISION:

“Every Vermonter is a creative Vermonter”

When important matters are up for discussion, creatives should have a place at the table. This isn't just to advocate for creative enterprises; it's to apply the unique skills and abilities of creative people and processes to forging stronger communities and a stronger state.³⁸ Community building efforts that are centered in creativity and creative approaches offer unique benefits to everyone involved. These include innovations in problem solving, new and more effective ways to communicate and foster dialogue, and relationship-building opportunities that reach across divides.

What Success Looks Like

- Creatives participate in policymaking and leadership at all levels of government.
- Creatives have ready access to leadership, professional development and networking opportunities.
- Creative sector leaders include traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities).
- Creative community members and assets are used as key planning tools in community development.

What's Happening Already

- The State of Vermont's Racial Equity Advisory Panel provides racial equity resources, including an Action & Allyship Guide.
- Creative sector members are already heavily involved in communities, leadership positions, and local government.
- The Vermont Leadership Institute includes sessions exploring the state's creative sector.
- The Vermont Community Leadership Network and numerous regional groups offer community leadership trainings, guides networking events and leadership development programs.

³⁸ Nicodemus et al., 2017.



Cambridge Silo Project

Cambridge, VT

Two empty grain silos had long been an eyesore in rural Cambridge. Now they are an attraction, a landmark, and a point of community pride. The Cambridge Arts Council received a Vermont Arts Council Animating Infrastructure grant to paint murals on the silos, completed by artist Sarah C. Rutherford. The project sparked strong debate in the community about public art, but organizers deeply engaged the community in decision-making through forums and conversation. In the end, many naysayers transformed into cheerleaders, and the silos transformed into vibrant canvases reflecting Cambridge's past and future.

Photo: Ellen Hill.



STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
5.1 Create trainings and toolkits to support local and regional creative sector advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop advocacy resources for local and regional creative sector teams including information, messaging, and best practices regarding creative economy policy, public investments, and creative education• Curate, develop, and promote resources related to creative approaches to community building and leadership
5.2 Support and promote inclusive access to leadership development and opportunities for creative sector members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect creatives to existing leadership program opportunities and resources for leadership training and development• Support programs that offer leadership opportunities to the creative sector, including ambassadorships, mentorships, and leadership incubators• Encourage creative organizations and providers to develop funding sources allowing equitable access to creative opportunities, e.g. sliding scale or “pay what you can” memberships and tickets
5.3 Support the development of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility strategies within Vermont’s creative organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and support creative organizations in diversifying leadership and compensating people for traditionally volunteer leadership and service opportunities (with a particular focus on underrepresented groups including people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, women, youth, and people with disabilities)• Start a diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility recognition or pledge program for creative enterprises that are committed to best practices and developing model approaches• Promote successful diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility strategies through trainings, best practice recommendations, and network building

Bill, resident at Allen Brook Memory Care, holds a portrait of himself made by artist Corinne Yonce. Photo courtesy of Vermont Arts Council.



Five stilt-walkers reach for the sky at Smirkus Camp. Photo: Brady Raiville



goal 6

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIONS AMPLIFY CREATIVITY AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

6-WORD VISION:

“Visible Accessible Vibrant Active Collaborative Resilient”

Developing a strong creative economy doesn't just mean selling concert tickets and goods at craft fairs. Creatives add financial and performance value to every other industry. In collaboration with other enterprises, creatives are busy developing craft brews and designing logos, repurposing vacant buildings, making public art, managing maker spaces, filling storefronts and supporting restaurants. Creatives facilitate new approaches to communication, social services, education, and health services. And these other industries and disciplines, in turn, can offer opportunities and collaborations that expand the reach, audiences, and approaches of creative sector enterprises. By promoting partnerships between individuals and organizations in the creative sector and allied industries (education, business, agriculture, technology, government, recreation, real estate and more), we can scale the efficiency, innovation and impact of them all.

What Success Looks Like

- The creative sector is broadly viewed as not just an asset, but foundational to the success of different sectors and to the state overall.
- Creative endeavors benefit from partnerships with business, recreation, tourism, real estate, education, food, and other industries.
- Other sectors, industries and enterprises benefit from partnerships with the creative sector.

What's Happening Already

- Many creative sector members and enterprises are already connected to local partners and allied networks including the Vermont Farm to Plate Network, Vermont Community Leadership

Network, professional associations, chambers of commerce, and local networking groups.

- Catamount Arts has fostered several programmatic and promotional collaborations with Northeast Kingdom outdoor recreations enterprises including Burke Mountain and Kingdom Trails.
- The Vermont Arts Council and Vermont Creative Network leaders have been developing partnerships and relationships with statewide agencies, organizations, service providers and funders in other sectors.
- Many examples of cross-sector partnerships already exist across the state, from performance venues to festivals, parks and recreation to food production, healthcare to humanities.
- The Cornerstone Creative Community (3CVT) and other zones are starting to form cross-sector steering committees to find collaboration opportunities.
- Stages in the Sun was launched in 2021 by the Vermont Arts Council, The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing, and the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association, with funding from the Vermont Community Foundation to promote and support outdoor performances statewide in response to the pandemic.

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

6.1 Cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other sectors such as transportation, tourism, recreation, and health services

- Lay the groundwork for cross-sector opportunities by building relationships and connections with Vermont industry conveners and leaders, state agencies and offices, networks and associations
- Support authentic dialogues to address history of mistrust between traditionally underresourced groups and state agencies

6.2 Establish reciprocal outreach partnerships with organizations that reach new audiences and a diverse array of Vermonters

- Develop reciprocal partnerships with advocacy organizations and networks serving diverse Vermonters to ensure that creative network offerings and opportunities reach all Vermonters. Consider NAACP chapters, the Vermont Professionals of Color Network, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Inclusive Arts Vermont, Migrant Justice, the Pride Center, etc.
- Develop partnerships to encourage cross pollination with outdoor recreation groups including the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association and the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative

6.3 Promote cross-sector collaborations by sharing resources, successful models, and stories

- Capture, curate and promote resources, stories, data and models that illustrate and demonstrate the impact of cross-sector partnerships
- Develop intentional cross-sector networking events and opportunities at the state and regional levels



The Abenaki Land Link Project

Statewide

For the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk-Abenaki Nation, growing traditional crops is a cultural, economic and health imperative. With tribal land limited, the Nulhegan Band, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and the Vermont Farm to Plate Network created the Abenaki Land Link project. It provides Indigenous seeds to gardeners, homesteaders and commercial growers across Vermont, who grow and harvest food for Abenaki citizens. Specialty food producers like Vermont Bean Crafters and Running Stone Bread have partnered to help process and preserve the harvest. The project provides sustenance to the Abenaki community and educational opportunity for growers to explore land access, food sovereignty and Indigenous crop resilience. The Abenaki Land Link Project is a small but powerful step toward building resilience, meeting basic needs, and bridging cultures.

Photo: Livy Bulger, NOFA-VT

goal 7

CREATIVE PEOPLE AND ENTERPRISES HAVE ABUNDANT ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

6-WORD VISION:

“Thriving Diverse Creative Ecosystem”

For the sector to thrive, we must ensure that each creative person and enterprise has the opportunity to succeed. This means ensuring that all Vermonters have equitable access to opportunity—affordable and quality housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation, education, employment and business support, and social networks. This means developing new funding channels, training programs, guides and resources, tools and channels. This also means developing systems that allow creatives to share equipment, spaces, information and assets.

What Success Looks Like

- Creative sector organizations, members, businesses and practitioners have access to equity, diversity and inclusion training and resources.
- Creative enterprises (including arts and cultural nonprofits) have access to state and private financial support for creation and business development.
- Creative enterprises owned and led by individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups have the capacity and resources to thrive.
- Creatives have access to affordable equipment and spaces to design, create, perform, display, produce and market their work.
- Creatives have access to business development and technical assistance resources and training.
- Strong statewide directories and information systems facilitate creatives finding resources, opportunities and each other.

What's Happening Already

- Inclusive Arts VT offers training, professional development, and other resources for children and adults with disabilities.
- Clemmons Family Farm supports a network of nearly 200 African American/African diaspora artists with opportunities and resources.
- The Vermont Abenaki Artists Association promotes regional Indigenous arts and offers professional development resources for members.
- The Vermont Arts Council is examining and adapting funding policies and practices to foster inclusive and equitable grantmaking.
- The Pride Center of Vermont offers training to help organizations better support their LGBTQIA2S+ community members.
- Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Small Business Development Centers, and SCORE Vermont offer free trainings and business coaching for entrepreneurs.
- Vermont has progressive local investing regulations, making it easier for small businesses to raise much-needed capital from friends, families, customers and neighbors.
- Regional Development Corporations and Regional Planning Commissions across the state have capacity to offer resources and assistance with planning, business development, and technical resources.
- Numerous local co-working and maker spaces, innovation hubs, food hubs, libraries and community centers offer access to affordable shared space and equipment.

“We cannot do everything at once, but we can do something at once.”

- Calvin Coolidge

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

7.1 Connect creative enterprises to business and technical support resources

- Support the development of opportunities that connect creatives to business development and management resources via workshops, peer-to-peer networking, 1:1 support, or in-depth technical assistance and consultation
- Curate and promote existing business support and technical assistance resources, events and programs
- Develop relationships with statewide service providers and work to promote or adapt offerings for the creative sector
- Support programs that offer technical assistance cost-sharing such as Northern Community Investment Corporations' cost sharing for professional services model
- Develop systems and channels that enable creatives to trade services and skills

7.2 Support statewide advocacy efforts for livability, affordability and accessibility

- Cultivate partnerships with existing advocacy groups and campaigns working to improve access to affordable housing, childcare, education, transportation, accessibility and healthcare for all Vermonters

7.3 Provide COVID-19 recovery assistance and resources and support continuing creative sector disaster resilience

- Advocate for the state to direct new financial resources towards short-term and long-term creative economy needs including digital capacity building, operational grants and loans, disaster planning, investment in cultural infrastructure, and community development that leverages the power of creativity
- Develop promotion systems and policies to ensure that resources are equitably distributed and accessible to underrepresented groups and underserved regions
- Develop and promote resources for COVID-19 adaptation and recovery such as digital activities, outdoor events, best practices for in-person activities, updated safety and regulations

NEK Tri-Sector Action Plan

Northeast Kingdom, VT

Good things happen when you mix food, art and fun, but it's rare to find these sectors planning together. The Northeast Kingdom Collaborative did just that when it developed a Trisector Task Force and created an action plan for "advancing economic development through the intersection of the creative, recreational and food sectors." Shared plans and priorities for three sectors means more power and efficiency for implementation. It's already paying off with cross-sector events and festivals that attract bigger audiences, more resources and greater benefits than any sector could garner on its own.

Photo: Catamount Arts



goal 8

VIBRANT NETWORKS SUPPORT CREATIVE PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES, AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

6-WORD VISION:

“collaboration, support, excitement, fun, creative, education”

Vermont is already rich with talent, resources and support for and within the creative sector, yet opportunities to connect to people, information, events, support and other resources are mostly informal and ad hoc. In our outreach, creatives consistently ranked network building as one of the most helpful and urgent approaches to amplifying their work. When creative enterprises have access to networks (within and beyond the creative sector), their capacity to innovate, collaborate, and share resources will grow. When our collective understanding of the creative sector grows to include the full spectrum of industries and occupations, our network will automatically expand. That connection and collaboration, in turn, will expand the creative sector and allow it to become more than the sum of its parts.

What Success Looks Like

- Participation in the Vermont Creative Network grows and diversifies.
- People in and beyond the creative sector understand its true size, scope, depth and impacts.
- Vermont’s creative sector acknowledges and actively works to address racism, systemic injustice and barriers to equity.
- Vermont’s creative sector has organized systems, platforms and dedicated resources to support network building.
- Creative sector members can easily access and share valuable resources, information and opportunities.

What's Happening Already

- Several state and regional organizations provide networking, promotion and resources for specific groups and demographics.
- The Clemmons Family Farm is a center for African American/ African diaspora arts and culture and offers networking and opportunities for Vermont’s Black artists and culture bearers.
- Out in the Open in Brattleboro connects and supports rural LGBTQIA2S+ people and offers resources and toolkits for building rural social justice movements.
- The Vermont Abenaki Artists Association connects and promotes the work of Vermont’s Indigenous crafters and artists.
- The Vermont Creative Network offers online information, an email list, statewide networking events and a Facebook group.
- Other regional and segment-specific networking platforms and information channels include the Creative Ground database for New England, Vermont Farm to Plate Network.
- VCN Zone teams support part-time regional coordinators (agents) and teams, which organize events, activities and communication channels by sector.
- Numerous creative disciplines and communities have associations, guilds, informal networking groups or social media channels to connect and promote members (crafters, specialty foods, music, placemaking, graphic design, dance, and more).
- The Vermont Arts Council has worked to build relationships and build connections with statewide networks and sectors including tourism, recreation, food and farm, and education.

STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

8.1 Define and promote Vermont Creative Network membership and participation options to diverse creative segments and members

- Create a communications package that outlines clear pathways and reasons for participation in the Vermont Creative Network, including benefits and opportunities for involvement
- Create membership materials and incentives, sign-on forms or needed collateral and promote membership and allow members to promote their involvement
- Develop guidelines allowing members to self-organize and publicize activities under the Vermont Creative Network name, or reference the CreateVT Action Plan in funding proposals
- Support and promote networks or coalitions of smaller groups: segment-specific groups (e.g. film, design, specialty foods); networks for people from traditionally underrepresented groups; initiative-specific groups; and regional and local teams

8.2 Cultivate and support existing networks of support for people who identify with traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities)

- Train and equip creative sector organizers to proactively reach out to people, including those from traditionally underrepresented groups
- Support networks and networking opportunities that help connect people from traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities)

8.3 Expand and publicize statewide, regional, and informal creative sector networking events

- Design and offer ongoing statewide networking, learning, planning and advocacy events for the statewide Vermont Creative Network
- Expand regional and local networking opportunities by encouraging zone agents and partner organizations to coordinate regular events and activities
- Support and develop statewide leadership and collaboration groups among leaders, organizations and agencies (such as the placemaking leadership group or a creative caucus)
- Publicize creative sector and allied networking events around the state and encourage creative sector “ambassadors” to participate in other sectors
- Create a system for supporting regional and segment-specific organizers to promote networking events to the broader creative community

8.4 Assess and strengthen accessible, user-friendly communication, resource sharing and networking channels for the creative sector

- Scope, improve, and/or create online platforms or systems allowing creative sector members to find, access and share resources; promote networking opportunities and creative work; and communicate with each other

goal 9

VERMONT IS PROMOTED AS A HUB FOR CREATIVE TALENT, EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNITIES

“Vermont should be a massive, creative magnet... To create this magnetic energy we must generate far greater awareness of the incredible talent here.”

- Michael Jager, *Solidarity of Unbridled Labour*

Vermont is known worldwide for maple syrup and craft beer, which is no accident: statewide promotion has built up our reputation for these unique industries. It's time for creativity to join the list. Vermont has a deep bench of creative talent and offerings that must be amplified and promoted to consumers, workers, residents and visitors both within and beyond the state. This includes coordinated promotion and marketing that results in a broader and deeper reach for Vermont's businesses, as well as accessible channels for sharing and publicizing creative offerings. It means lifting up the full spectrum of creative people, cultures and experiences in Vermont—not just those of the majority. And it means expanding Vermont's brand and identity to include creativity, which will draw new residents, businesses, and investment.

What Success Looks Like

- Vermont is known worldwide for creativity, and creativity is an integral part of Vermont's brand identity.
- Vermont's creative image represents the full diversity of the state and its people, places and traditions.
- Statewide marketing strategies and campaigns promote Vermont as a creative hub to attract tourists, investors, students, workers, and new residents.

What's Happening Already

- The Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity offers training and consulting to help make Vermont a welcoming place for all, particularly for people of color. It runs the iamavermont.org website, a resource for people of color relocating to Vermont for school, work, or retirement.
- The Agency of Commerce and Community Development has marketing initiatives that highlight the creative sector, including Vermont Vacation, ThinkVermont, and the 2020 virtual concert series, Forever Green.
- Existing communication hubs: New England Foundation for the Arts' Creative Ground directory, Vermont Arts Council events calendar, Big Heavy World's All-Vermont Band Guide, and many regional hubs, including creative zone email groups, and Brattleboro's "plantagogo" events calendar.
- The Vermont Art's Council's I Am a Vermont Artist interview and exhibition series promotes a broader and more inclusive understanding of the state's creative landscape.
- Downtown Brattleboro is working with a marketing firm and an advisory team to focus on marketing the creative sector and other events within the Southern region of Vermont with a focus on people of color and Indigenous creatives.
- Vermont Almanac. This relatively new project launched in 2020 and within this next iteration, the almanac will feature stories of people of color and their relationship to the land with some historical context about the role that people of color have played in Vermont's early history.



STRATEGIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
9.1 Promote creative content and offerings that reflect the diversity of the state and elevate the culture and creativity of traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and promote programs that elevate the culture and creativity of traditionally underrepresented groups, e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities
9.2 Develop solutions and partnerships to expand market reach of creative sector businesses, in-state and beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide digital capacity support for businesses to promote their creative offerings• Strengthen partnerships with traditional and new media outlets like Vermont Public Radio, local television and radio stations, newspapers, leading blogs and social media influencers• Work with the Vermont Department of Tourism and other promotional agencies to promote creativity as a Vermont asset, while shifting Vermont's current "image" toward one that authentically conveys a more inclusive and diverse place
9.3 Integrate creative assets and offerings into statewide marketing and incentive programs for tourists, investors, residents and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with state agencies, local governments, and local organizations to include vouchers, memberships, or discounts for creative events, venues, or products to new local residents, e.g. theaters, classes; coordinate this with the "New Workers" incentive program

"Vermont will be on the national map as the creative state."

- Diane Derby, field representative for Senator Patrick Leahy

AGENDAS

Our implementation plan consists of three agendas to direct and prioritize actions:

ADVOCACY AGENDA

to secure creative sector resources at the state and local levels

NETWORK AGENDA

to connect and empower creatives

LOCAL AGENDA

to guide regional and local action

ADVOCACY AGENDA

“We must help this effort as we did with the rural electrification project and the way we’re thinking about rural broadband. So must we invest in the rural infrastructure for the creative sector.

- Vermont Representative Sara Coffey

Implementation requires resources and investment, which call for clear and coordinated priorities for advocacy. While annual needs will change, four major areas for statewide advocacy have emerged. The core action implied by this agenda is that the Vermont Creative Network will organize a team of advisors and advocates to help identify opportunities for legislative action. This may include creative sector allocations within broader funding proposals, specific allocations, or enhancing existing resources.



invest in CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Vermont's aging cultural infrastructure includes downtown theaters, museums, libraries, schools, historic structures and places, community centers, and creative spaces, such as studios and galleries.

- Beyond repair and preservation, investments should support improved accessibility and flexibility of structures to support more people and activities.
- Existing sources of funding that might be increased or expanded include:
 - **Cultural Facilities Grants** (part of the state's Building Communities Grant Program)
 - **Historic Downtown Tax Credits** through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development



promote CREATIVE LOCAL ECONO- MIES

Invest in community economic development, whether the primary outcome is specifically creative or the process itself includes creative methods or practices.

- The Better Places place-based economic development program is a multi-partner initiative supported by a \$1.5 million appropriation of state funds for 2021-2024. It launched with \$130,000 in pilot funding to provide placemaking grants that support downtown and village revitalization. The goal is to improve the vitality of state designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas.



invest in DIGITAL CAPACITY

Help businesses expand their market reach and audience engagement through digital content. Online events for example invite audiences from across the nation or around the world to engage with Vermont's outstanding artists. Online marketing helps creatives reach markets around the world. Despite the obvious benefits there is a huge cost barrier: staff expertise, equipment, and other resources are well beyond what most of our cultural organizations possess.

- In a recent survey of Vermont theaters, libraries, museums and community arts centers, the majority cited the costs of producing, marketing, and distributing content digitally as one of the greatest challenges in rebounding from the pandemic.
- The Vermont legislature allocated \$1.15 million in FY22 state funds to build the digital capacity of cultural nonprofits.
- The State of Vermont is planning for \$150 million in federal investment to increase broadband Internet access.



develop ENTREPRENEUR & BUSINESS SKILLS

Expand and increase outreach for resources and training opportunities for creative entrepreneurs, businesses and organizations on topics including:

- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Business start-up procedures, finance and accounting
- Grantwriting and fundraising
- Communications and marketing, digital technology, social media and web presence
- Board and staff development

Existing sources of technical assistance and support that might be expanded and/or customized for the creative sector include: Vermont Small Business Development Center's trainings and workshops, Vermont Arts Council's Artist Development Grants

NETWORK AGENDA

Making progress on this plan requires building the capacity for the Vermont Creative Network (VCN) to support a broader range of creatives and to forge coalitions of allied partners. These key actions will strengthen the VCN.



GROW & DIVERSIFY the network

Many Vermont creatives don't yet engage with the VCN, or even identify with the sector. We must create space for those left out and make the case to join in.

- Create a VCN brand and messaging campaign
- Define VCN membership and expand participation
- Create and support existing networks for underrepresented groups



CONNECT & ENGAGE creatives & partners

When creatives connect, opportunities happen. Statewide, local, and cross-sector events and networking opportunities are top priorities.

- Organize statewide events for VCN members
- Develop regular zone networking events and communication channels
- Connect with cross-sector partners in food, recreation, tourism and allied sectors
- The State of Vermont is planning for \$150 million in federal investment to increase broadband Internet access.



SUPPORT & EMPOWER the network

Creative people and businesses need resources and assistance to grow and market their work. VCN must help gather, broadcast and customize resources.

- Develop and share resources for COVID-19 recovery
- Scope, design, and build an online resource hub
- Offer network trainings in advocacy and diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility



MEASURE & SHARE creative sector impacts

Successful advocacy hinges on demonstrating the creative sector's impact. Collecting and sharing data, stories, and impacts is a top priority.

- Develop a creative sector monitoring/reporting plan
- Form an advocacy team to create an annual advocacy agenda and plan
- Develop toolkits and events to expand members' advocacy skills

NETWORK ACTIONS

The Vermont Creative Network’s core team includes the Vermont Arts Council executive and deputy directors, the Vermont Creative Network Steering Team and Zone Agents (regional coordinators). Other supporting groups include partner organizations and staff at the Vermont Arts Council. The actions listed below support the four priorities described and are categorized as follows:

Foundational Actions

Actions necessary to build VCN capacity for most other actions

Early Priorities

Urgent or priority actions that should be implemented immediately

Medium Lifts

Short- to mid-term actions that are less urgent and require time to ramp up

Long-Term Efforts

Actions with systemic impacts, which require effective coalitions and time to develop



Drag Queen Story Hour

Burlington, VT/Statewide

Two of Burlington’s best-loved drag queens are familiar faces at burlesque shows, late night dance parties—and library story hours. Drag Queen Story Hour originated in California, but Emoji Nightmare and Nikki Champagne brought the program to Vermont. Libraries across the state have invited them in to read, meet, engage and give rural kids “unabashedly queer role models.” They are also simply creative role models, sharing stories with messages of inclusivity and freedom of expression and helping people “imagine a world where people can present as they wish.”

Photo: Nightpagne

Foundational Actions Actions necessary to build network capacity for most other actions

ACTIONS	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
1. Develop a creative economy monitoring and reporting plan that identifies essential, accessible data points and an annual process for collecting and reporting on them. Ensure data includes metrics relating to underrepresented groups.	UVM Center for Rural Studies, Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
2. Continue to organize regional and local teams to build capacity for local implementation and advocacy.	Economic development corporations, regional planning commissions, regional arts councils
3. Train and equip creative sector leaders to proactively reach out to people, including traditionally underrepresented groups, rather than wait for people to find the VCN.	
4. Scope, design and build online resources and communications/networking platforms for the Vermont Creative Network to find, access and share resources; promote networking opportunities; and communicate with each other.	New England Foundation for the Arts (Creative Ground directory)
5. Create a communications system for supporting regional and segment-specific organizers to promote networking events to the broader creative community.	
6. Support regional and local teams with a communications and action resource kit, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clarified VCN brand messaging b. Creative sector case statement c. Network participation options d. Local action ideas (policy, financing, program, etc.) e. Membership materials and incentives, sign-on forms or needed collateral and promote membership or participation heavily across the state 	
7. Organize regular state and local networking events with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Network building within regions and segments (e.g. film, design, or northwest Vermont) b. Inclusion/equity/accessibility in creative organizations and programs c. COVID-19 recovery strategies and disaster resilience d. Promotion of available business and tech resources e. Leadership development 	Partner organizations offering aligned resources, including the Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network (VACDaRN), Inclusive Arts Vermont, the League of Local Historical Societies
8. Propagate diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility strategies through training, best practice recommendations, and network building.	NAACP chapters, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Inclusive Arts Vermont, Migrant Justice, LGBTQIA2S+ groups, etc.
9. Develop reciprocal partnerships with advocacy organizations and networks serving diverse Vermonters to ensure that VCN offerings and opportunities reach all Vermonters.	NAACP chapters, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Inclusive Arts Vermont, Migrant Justice, LGBTQIA2S+ groups, etc.
10. Support existing networks and the development of new networks and networking opportunities that help connect people from traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities).	NAACP chapters, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Inclusive Arts Vermont, Migrant Justice, LGBTQIA2S+ groups, etc.

Early Priorities

Urgent or priority actions that should be implemented immediately

ACTIONS	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
11. Advocate for the state to direct new financial resources towards short-term and long-term creative economy needs including digital capacity building, operational grants and loans, investment in cultural infrastructure, and community-based development that leverages the power of creativity. Ensure that these resources are equitably distributed.	
12. Expand the VCN communications strategy to fill gaps in reach and provide channels/platforms for peer exchange.	
13. Provide digital capacity support for creative enterprises to promote their creative offerings.	Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Small Business Development Center
14. Promote short-term funding streams and info on Covid-19 adaptations, including funds and resources to complete COVID-19 response activities like outdoor stages or seating and ventilation upgrades.	Vermont Recreation and Parks Association, Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network
15. Develop tools and resources for COVID-19 adaptation and recovery: e.g. creative events, outdoor events, teaching artist in-school practices.	Vermont Department of Health, Agency of Commerce and Community Development
16. Develop partnerships with organizations and networks serving diverse Vermonters to diversify the VCN's reach.	Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, NAACP chapters, Inclusive Arts Vermont
17. Develop coalitions of partners to bring existing programming and services into the VCN and develop fulfillment capacity.	
18. Curate and promote existing training and professional development program offerings and connect to creative sector, focus on equity/inclusion/accessibility, COVID-19 recovery, business and tech supports, financial opportunities, leadership development.	Vermont Leadership Institute, Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network, Vermont Small Business Development Center, Center for Women and Enterprise
19. Organize and support existing networks/coalitions of segment-specific groups (e.g. Film & Media, Design, Specialty Foods).	
20. Start a diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility pledge program for creative organizations that are modeling best practices and unique approaches.	Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Vermont Racial Equity Task Force, Inclusive Arts Vermont
21. Support and promote programs and organizations that elevate the culture and creativity of traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities).	Clemmons Family Farm, Vermont Abenaki Artists Association, Vermont Folklife Center, Inclusive Arts Vermont
22. Continue to curate and broadcast creative sector offerings and resources, include allied sector opportunities (e.g. networking with tourism groups, business and tech resources).	Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing

Medium Lifts

Short- to mid-term actions that are less urgent and require time to ramp up

ACTIONS	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
23. Organize or support existing coalitions of educators to advocate for strengthening creative curriculum and to develop educational resources.	Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont Music Educators Association, Vermont Art Educators Association
24. Support and promote educational programs in the creative sector including workforce training, arts appreciation, best practices, mentoring, creativity, arts-centered career paths, infusing education with creativity, etc.	Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont Music Educators Association, Vermont Art Educators Association
25. Develop partnerships to coordinate promotions for professional learning opportunities across the state.	Libraries, colleges and universities, local maker spaces and creative venues, and state agencies and organizations
26. Organize a legislative advocacy team to develop and implement a medium to long-term advocacy campaign (see Advocacy Agenda).	Vermont League of Cities and Towns, allied elected officials
27. Curate and promote resources, stories, and models that support creative cross-sector collaborations.	Vermont Humanities Council
28. Monitor and advocate for cross-sector opportunities by maintaining connections with Vermont industry conveners/leaders, including state agencies and other state offices.	
29. Curate and promote existing business support and technical support resources.	Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Small Business Development Center
30. Develop partnerships with groups offering leadership development programs to connect creatives with these opportunities.	Vermont Leadership Institute, Vermont Community Leadership Network
31. Develop, gather and share a comprehensive set of learning opportunities and resources to inform the development of local creative projects, programs, events, advocacy and planning needs.	Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Arts Council, AARP Vermont

PoemCity

Montpelier, VT

Ten years ago, Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library launched a community project to celebrate National Poetry Month. Each April, local poets of all ages and abilities submit poems. PoemCity places them on posters in 100 storefronts and windows, bringing poetry to people wherever they go. It's nurtured hundreds of local poets and given people platforms to share the work. The event has grown rapidly over the years, building Montpelier's reputation as a literary hub, and so has the buzz. Local creatives in Bradford, Randolph and St. Johnsbury heard about the simple concept and replicable idea, and were inspired to start their own PoemTown celebrations.

Photo: Michelle Singer, Kellogg-Hubbard Library



Long-Term Efforts

Actions with systemic impacts, which require effective coalitions and time to develop

ACTIONS**POTENTIAL PARTNERS**

- | | |
|--|--|
| 32. Develop and advocate for viable statewide investment programs in the creative economy (including existing or start-up programs like Better Places and Animating Infrastructure), including: local creative activities; creative facilities and venues; professional development and marketing; and baseline staff support for creative economy organizing. | Legislative advocacy team |
| 33. Cultivate partnerships with existing advocacy groups to support efforts to improve access to affordable housing, childcare, education, transportation, accessibility and healthcare. | Let's Grow Kids, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Migrant Justice |
| 34. Work with the Vermont Department of Tourism and other promotional agencies to promote creativity as a Vermont asset, while shifting Vermont's current "image" toward one that authentically conveys a more inclusive and diverse place. | Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing, Vermont Chamber of Commerce |
| 35. Support the development of technical support programs for creatives, e.g. business training, skills development, and digital capacity. | Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Small Business Development Center, Vermont Crafts Council |
| 36. Support the development of accessible/affordable creative venues, spaces, and facilities. | Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Preservation Trust of Vermont, Department of Libraries |
| 37. Develop a local funding options resource kit including options or best practices for towns and regions to develop financing mechanisms for creative community funds, e.g. tax credits or community investment programs. | Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Agency of Commerce and Community Development |
| 38. Work with state agencies, local governments, and local organizations to include vouchers, memberships, or discounts for creative events, venues, or products to new local residents (e.g. theaters or classes), including Vermont's relocation incentive program. | Designated downtown groups, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Agency of Commerce and Community Development |

I am a Vermont Artist

Statewide

Who is a Vermont artist? This groundbreaking profile series is expanding people's perceptions. It showcases the range of artistic people and disciplines in our state, particularly amplifying artists of color, while exploring how their creative expression reflects experiences of ethnicity, gender identity, religion, disability, or age. Produced during the pandemic, the series evolved into an online "virtual gallery" with Zoom events, increasing accessibility for people from home. From New Americans to Vermont's first residents, from jazz to graffiti, I am a Vermont Artist demonstrates that Vermont is a creative hub for multifaceted, multicultural people and art, which can help draw more multifaceted, multicultural people to Vermont's artistic community.

Photo: Six of 19 featured artists in the Vermont Arts Council's I AM... 2021 exhibit, from left to right: Jericho Parms, KeruBo Webster, Toby MacNutt, Samirah Evans, Shani Stoddard, and John Hughes. Courtesy of the Vermont Arts Council.



“We believe wholeheartedly that artists have a responsibility to tell the truth by any means necessary... we’re given that gift to communicate what the masses need to hear, and maybe not so much what they want to hear.”

- Will Kasso Condry, Juniper Creative Arts

LOCAL

AGENDA

Statewide coordination is crucial, but progress happens locally—at the regional, town, organization, and individual levels. This agenda offers a guide to shaping local priorities for zones, planning commissions, select boards, nonprofits, businesses, and people.



BUILD & JOIN TEAMS for local action

Some areas have strong creative networks, committees, or councils already. All areas should facilitate ways to work together.

- Get involved with a VCN Zone
- Develop a local or regional creative sector plan



STRENGTHEN PLANS and policies

Local plans and policies are powerful tools to support (or inhibit) creative sector growth.

- Review town and regional plans for creative language
- Develop a local or regional creative sector plan



IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY of spaces & programs

Make sure flexible, varied, creative community spaces and programs are accessible for all.

- Upgrade cultural, community and arts facilities for accessibility and flexibility
- Develop affordable offerings for diverse local audiences



CREATE! anywhere & everywhere

Creativity should be everywhere in communities. Publicize what's happening and start creating more.

- Make art. Create public spaces. Design products. Organize events. Grow food. Teach. Connect. Learn. Share. Inspire.

LOCAL

ACTIONS

The Vermont Creative Network’s “Zone Agents” are tasked with organizing regional and local action teams. Some of those teams have already created regional plans for the creative economy (NEK, 3CVT); some municipalities have initiated related plans (Bennington County Cultural Plan, East Central Vermont Creative Economy Study, Northeast Kingdom Creative Economy Action Plan); and some areas are just getting organized. This section outlines a sampling of action ideas for VCN zones or other local teams. The actions include:

Network Building

Actions that connect and build teams within the network.

Advocacy and Communications

Actions that promote the creative economy.

Resource Development

Actions that provide resources to creatives and creative organizations.

Individual Actions

Actions that individuals and individual organizations can take.

NETWORK BUILDING ACTIONS	CONSIDERATIONS
1. Reach out and team up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out what’s already happening and add to that or aim to fill gaps. Before launching a new action team or some creative initiative, check in with the regional Zone Agent, the VCN coordinator at the Vermont Arts Council, local organizations, etc.
2. Organize local creative projects and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making something together is a tried-and-true way to forge relationships, build communities, and make the case for the value of creativity. A consistent request during this planning process was to see creativity infused into our public spaces, schools, downtowns, municipal buildings, farms, trails, and forests. Apply for a small grant to fund small, community-driven, creative projects. See the Vermont Arts Council website or ask for help from the VCN Facebook group.
3. Improve networking and communication channels for the VCN overall and zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage people to sign up for existing communication channels: VCN has a Facebook group; some creative zones have regional listservs or email mailing lists; and many towns or creative disciplines have channels. Identify gaps, and start regional or local peer-to-peer communications channels such as email groups, Facebook groups, or listservs.

NETWORK BUILDING ACTIONS	CONSIDERATIONS
4. Organize networking events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize regular networking events using virtual options or in person when possible. There are many models to emulate such as brown bag lunches, young professionals networks, green drinks happy hours, or creative mornings. • Topics of interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making connections (speed networking is fun!) - Equity, inclusion, and accessibility—learning, sharing, training - COVID-19 recovery strategies and resources - Promotion of local events, programs, etc. - Connecting creatives to local resources, business and technical supports - Leadership development - Collaborative creative activities, placemaking, etc. - Skill sharing - Cross-sector connections—connecting creatives with people from other industries
5. Cultivate supportive leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit community leaders and elected officials to participate in and advocate for the VCN. Encourage creatives to join boards and committees and run for office. The VCN aims to develop a leadership resource kit for local champions and provide leadership development opportunities.
6. Diversify local representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an intentional effort to reach and include people who add diversity to local action teams and networks. • Be mindful that not everyone feels automatically welcome, follows the same information channels, or has the time or resources to access such groups even when they have much to offer and much to gain from participation. Learn, practice, and advocate for radical listening.
7. Develop a Creative Economy Strategic Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your area doesn't have one, and your team has the patience and appetite to organize a comprehensive local strategy, this approach sets the stage for a multi-year comprehensive approach. • Work with local and regional planners and economic development corporation staff to ensure capacity for the long haul, buy-in of local policy-makers, and viability of the recommended actions.
8. Organize a local training around equity, inclusion, and accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize an Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility training for local creatives and creative organizations.
9. Become a mentor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find and join (or create) a mentoring program and offer to connect with youth or young adults who are interested in creative professions. • Check with local schools, the United Way, or other nonprofits to find out if such a program already exists. • Reach out to a school or teacher. Many teachers informally bring guests into their classrooms to share and explain their work to students.

ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIONS	CONSIDERATIONS
10. Make the case for the creative economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for local investment in the creative economy by organizing public presentations, presenting to selectboards and committees, and meeting with local leaders and officials. The VCN aims to develop an advocacy resource kit for local champions that should include messaging and presentations.
11. Ensure that local plans support the creative sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for model town or regional plans, or language within them, that your town could use. The Vermont Arts Council reviewed town plans from across the state in 2015 and identified plans that refer to the creative economy. Work with the regional planning commission or town planners and zoning administrators to find and fix local policies that inhibit growth of the creative economy.
12. Advocate for a public funding strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local leadership to identify and propose a viable means to fund local creative projects. The VCN aims to develop a local funding resources kit for action teams.
13. Find media and service-provider allies to relay information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach a broader regional audience and connect with more diverse demographics by cultivating allies in local radio and newspapers, service providers who serve more diverse audiences, etc. Ask these allies to relay opportunities, resources, and events.
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS	CONSIDERATIONS
14. Organize a grantwriting collaborative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring a team of local partners together to pursue bigger grants and teach grantwriting skills. Find a 501(c)(3) that can act as a fiscal sponsor to receive grants if you do not have one on your team.
15. Launch a local marketing program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a team of local partners to promote creative resources in the area using maps and guides, websites, etc. Consider different programs or campaigns for different audiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism: retail, studios, specialty foods, museums, performance venues, etc. Professional services: graphic design, architecture, printing, photography, catering, etc. Work with local business and economic development corporations to find funding.
16. Create a local orientation/welcome kit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it easier for newly-arrived creatives and other businesses to find the resources they need. Consider the variety of business services, municipal supports, and personal connections people will need to navigate life as a new business in the area.
17. Develop facilities for creatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to create affordable studio, gallery, and retail spaces.
18. Organize software and equipment libraries for creatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a “library of things” or equipment lending program to support creative projects and enterprises and reduce overhead. The cost of owning equipment can be a huge barrier even to established creatives.

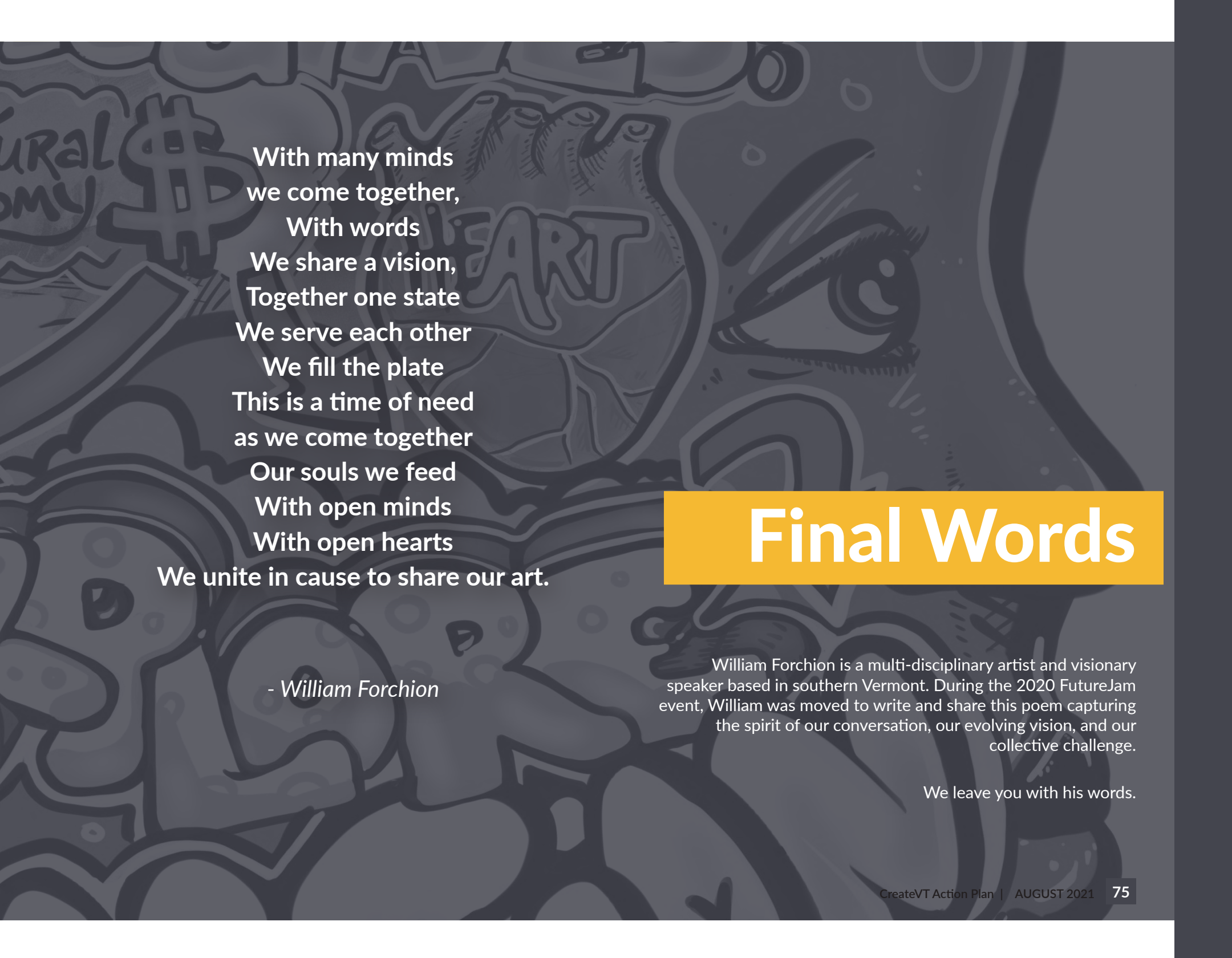
INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS	CONSIDERATIONS
1. Be a VCN champion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let the VCN know that you exist, sign up for newsletters, join the VCN Facebook group. Join or create a VCN group or initiative to advance CreateVT (advocacy, resource development, segment-specific networks, etc.).
2. Join or organize a local action team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find your regional zone agent (via the VCN website) and find out whether there's a team to join or if a local one is needed.
3. Organize local (or statewide) creative projects and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop or help with a creative local project large or small, such as public art, creative placemaking, education, performances, cultural talks, etc. A consistent request during this planning process was to see creativity infused into our public spaces, schools, downtowns, municipal buildings, farms, trails, and forests. Apply for a small grant to support local creative efforts. Many grants fund small, community-driven, creative projects. See the Vermont Arts Council website or ask for help from the VCN Facebook group.
4. Share your content or program/ services with the VCN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CreateVT identifies a variety of needs that your business may already offer: business training or services, communications, education and professional development, technical support, creative stories, etc. Share your offerings with the VCN to amplify your work and connect it to those who need it.
5. Revise your policies and programs with an inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility lens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Vermont Arts Council's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility webpage for resources.
6. Organize or sign up for training on inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize an Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility training for your company or sign up for one in the area.
7. Become a mentor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start an internship program at your company or organization. Find and join (or create) a mentoring program and offer to connect with youth or young adults who are interested in creative professions. Reach out to a school. Many teachers informally bring guests into their classrooms to share and explain their work to students.
8. Share skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find ways to share your knowledge and experience with others. Offer workshops, join VCN networking events, etc.
9. Make space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent out underutilized space in your building to creatives. Offer to share WiFi access. Diversify your organization's board by inviting traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. young people, people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities) to join.

Closing Thoughts

CreateVT is a plan. It describes a vision and pathway to support Vermont artists, creative entrepreneurs, and businesses. We believe that all Vermonters will experience the benefits of its implementation. From community health to personal growth, and from statewide economic development to more robust regional economies, we see a thriving creative sector at the center of Vermont's future.

CreateVT is a thank you. Thank you to the many creative individuals who joined our calls, read draft versions, and shared their ingenuity and passion. We hope it represents what you said and reflects back the inspiration that we gained from those conversations.

CreateVT is a crossroads. We mark the end of a planning process and the beginning of a journey that will continue to evolve, adapt, adjust and inspire.



With many minds
we come together,
With words
We share a vision,
Together one state
We serve each other
We fill the plate
This is a time of need
as we come together
Our souls we feed
With open minds
With open hearts
We unite in cause to share our art.

- William Forchion

Final Words

William Forchion is a multi-disciplinary artist and visionary speaker based in southern Vermont. During the 2020 FutureJam event, William was moved to write and share this poem capturing the spirit of our conversation, our evolving vision, and our collective challenge.

We leave you with his words.

CreateVT Briefs

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CREATIVE SEGMENT BRIEFS

Vermont's creative enterprises and activities are tremendously diverse, ranging from symphony orchestras to artisan furniture factories, from major employers to small farmers, from individual artists to the venues, suppliers, retailers and service providers they connect with. Many are self-employed or 'extended proprietors', workers who are not full-time; either retired, in school, or have a secondary source of employment.

Growing and supporting our creative sector overall requires that we zoom out and understand the whole system. It also requires that we zoom in and understand the unique strengths, assets, opportunities and needs of the very different creative enterprises, people, businesses and projects in the sector. In its 2019 study of Vermont's creative sector, Mt. Auburn Associates identified six major "segments" to our creative economy. The following briefs give an overview of the size and nature of these segments, as well as opportunities and needs that are specific to each.

The information and ideas in these briefs comes from several sources.

- **Creative sector economic data:** 2019 Mt. Auburn Associates research on Vermont's creative sector
- **Needs, priorities, activities and plans:** synthesized from CreateVT events and input, interviews with industry leaders, and segment-specific plans or reports.

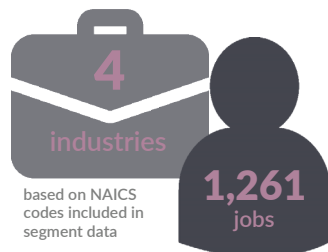


Culture & Heritage

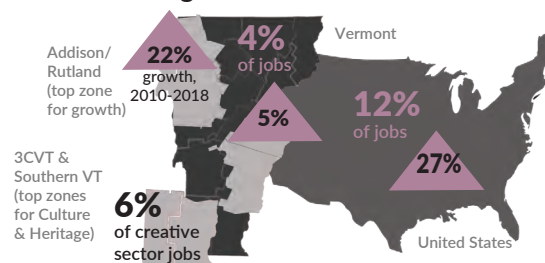
Outbuildings at the Rokeby Museum in Ferrisburgh. Photo: Don Shall, Flickr Creative Commons

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

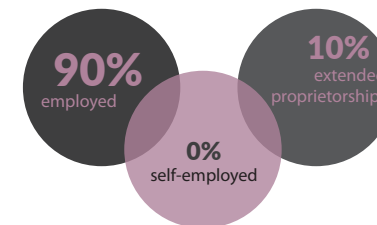
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Many museums, libraries, historic sites and facilities are government-operated or institutionalized, with more stable funding than nonprofit creative sector facilities
- Increased focus and programming on traditionally underrepresented groups (e.g. people of color, Indigenous people, LGBTQIA2S+, new Americans, migrant workers, people with disabilities)
- COVID-19 aid packages include significant funding for cultural organizations such as libraries, museums and historic sites

Challenges

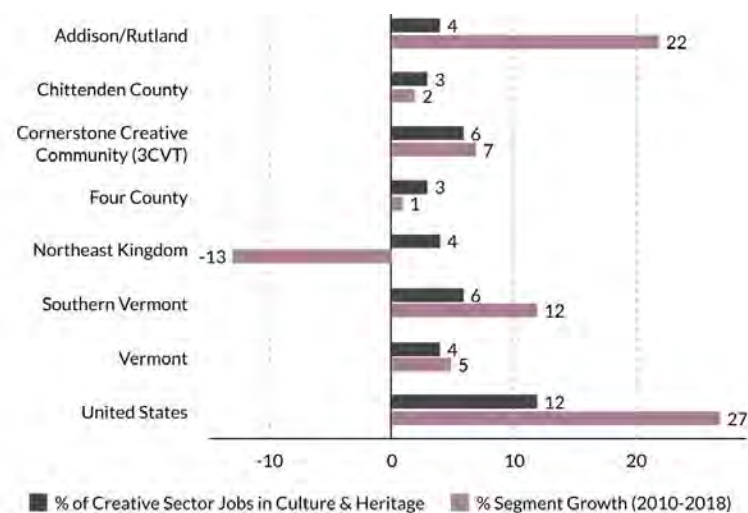
- Lack of understanding of what culture and heritage is, and what it means in Vermont
- Lack of connection between culture and heritage segment and other creative industries
- Small size of sector
- Difficulty of measuring the sector accurately (many Culture & Heritage occupations are classified by government employer)
- Historic facilities are aging and costly to operate, and often lack accessible and energy-efficient infrastructure

Needs

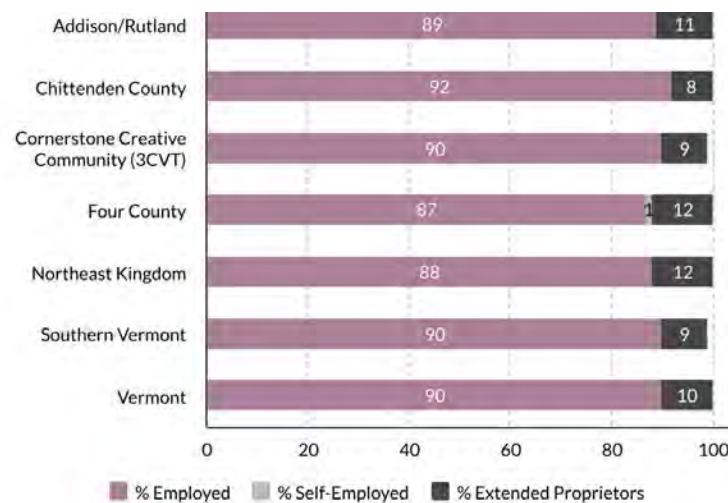
- Education to help the public understand what culture and heritage are and why they matter
- More diverse programming and audiences (age, race, ethnicity, etc.)
- Statewide conversation about Vermont's culture, heritage, identity and future
- More accurate data to demonstrate the size, economic impact and social impact of the sector

CULTURE & HERITAGE SEGMENT STATEWIDE

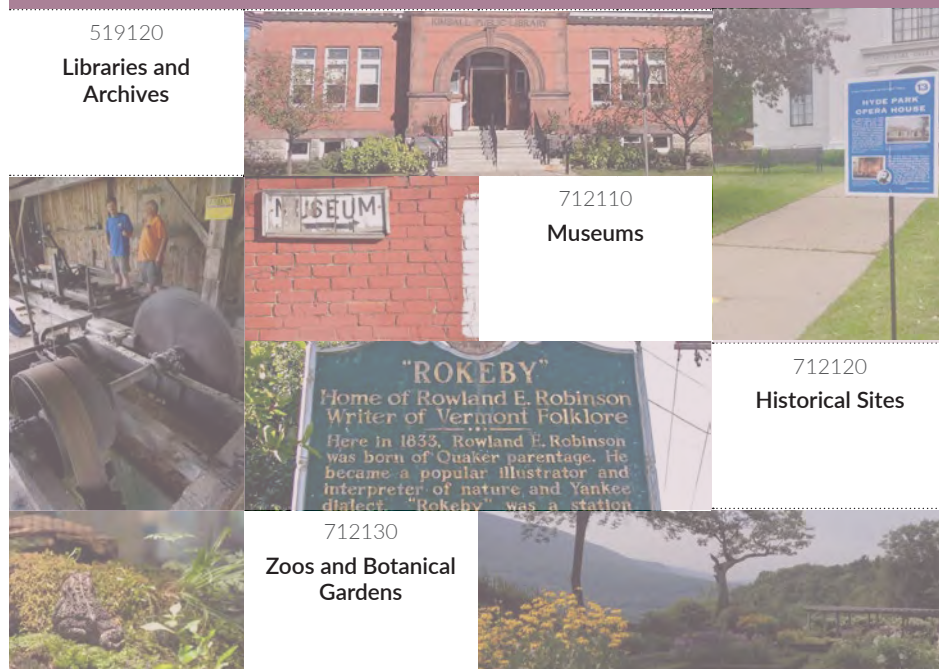
Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)



CULTURE & HERITAGE RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

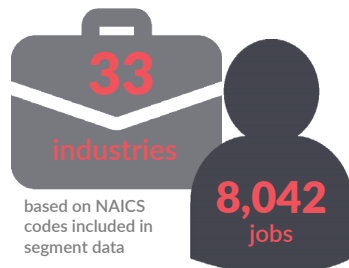
- Clemmons Family Farm Artists Directory
- Creative Ground Database
- League of Local Historical Societies
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- New England Museum Association
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Vermont Abenaki Artists' Association
- Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network
- Vermont Attractions Association
- Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Vermont Council on Rural Development
- Vermont Curators Group
- Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
- Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
- Vermont Folklife Center
- Vermont Historical Society
- Vermont Humanities
- Vermont Library Association
- Vermont Tourism Network

Design

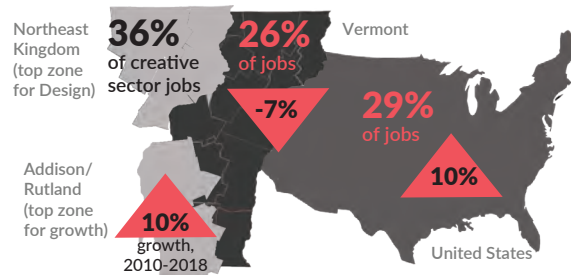
Redesigned City Hall Park in Burlington. Photo: Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Community Workshop.

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

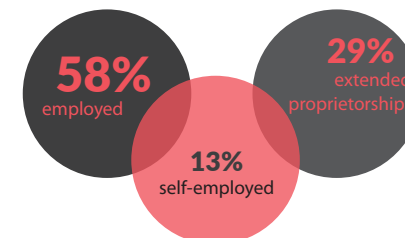
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Segment includes many larger companies, which may offer more stable employment and benefits to creative sector workers
- Strong interest within certain design communities to engage in social justice and community work
- Vermont chapter of AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) recently completed significant outreach and visioning with its network and is now restructuring
- Many segment members are interested in learning, teaching, and honing their skills

Challenges

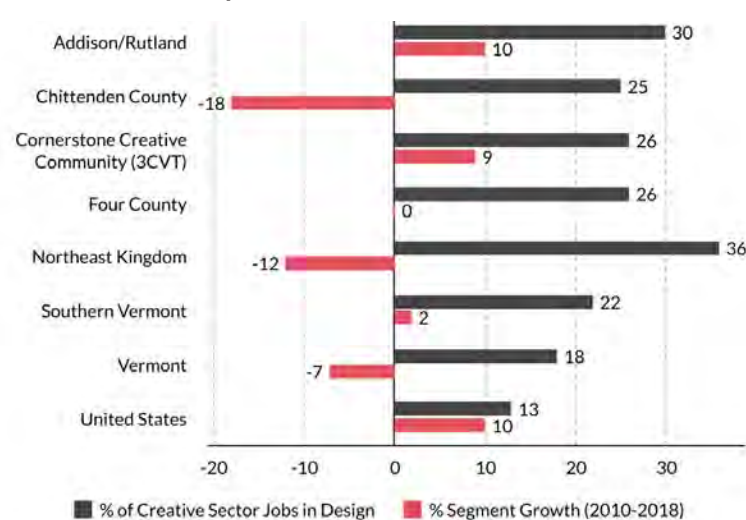
- Segment is very large, dispersed and diverse, with little sense of cohesion or coordination
- Many enterprises or workers may not identify as part of creative sector
- Segment includes many sole proprietors, who may be isolated and struggle to market themselves
- Many potential customers undervalue design or don't know where to find providers

Needs

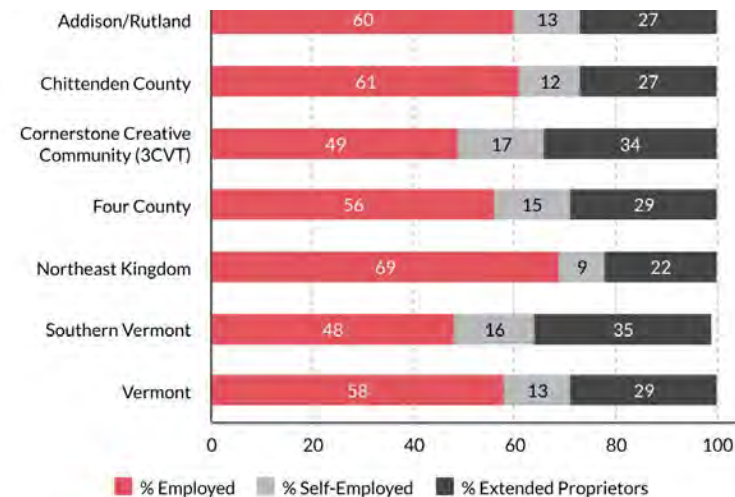
- Increased participation in networking and collaboration opportunities, within Vermont Creative Network and industry networks and associations
- Messaging and communication tools to communicate the value of design to businesses and leaders
- Centralized directory and point of contact to help businesses and customers find each other
- Workforce development and mentorship opportunities from middle school to mid-career
- Engagement activities to connect with workforce and major employers and better understand their needs and circumstances

DESIGN SEGMENT STATEWIDE

Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

323111/113 Commercial Printing & Screen Printing	541430 Graphic Design 541810 Advertising Agencies	541850/860 Outdoor & Direct Mail Advertising	541890 Other Services Related to Advertising	541922 Commercial Photography	332323 Ornamental and Architectural Metal Work Manufacturing
337212 Custom Architectural Woodwork and Millwork Mfg.	541310/320 Architectural & Landscape Arch. Services	541340 Drafting Services 541410 Interior Design Services	315210 Cut and Sew Apparel Contractors	315220/240 Women's, Girl's, Men's and Boys' Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing	315280 Other Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing
315990 Apparel Accessories and Other Apparel Manufacturing	316998 All Other Leather Good and Allied Product Manufacturing	332215 Metal Kitchen Cookware, Utensil, Cutlery, Flatware Manufacturing	335121 Residential Electric Lighting Fixture Manufacturing	337110 Wood Kitchen Cabinet and Countertop Manufacturing	337121/123 Upholstered & Non-upholstered Household Furniture Mfg.
337127/211 Institutional & Wood Office Furniture Manufacturing	339910 Jewelry and Silverware Manufacturing	339920 Sporting and Athletic Goods Manufacturing	339930 Doll, Toy, and Game Manufacturing	451120 Hobby, Toy, and Game Stores	541420/490 Industrial & Other Specialized Design Services

DESIGN RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

- American Institute of Architects – Vermont
- American Institute of Graphic Arts—Vermont Chapter
- American Society of Landscape Architects—Vermont Chapter
- Center for Rural Innovation
- Creative Ground Database
- Generator Makerspace
- Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Crafts Council
- Vermont Forest Product Industry Network
- Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center
- Vermont Wood Works Council

Film & Media

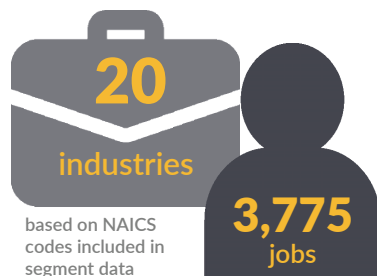
THE SIMPSONS MOVIE
WWW.SPRINGFIELDMOVIE THEATER.COM

PENELOPE

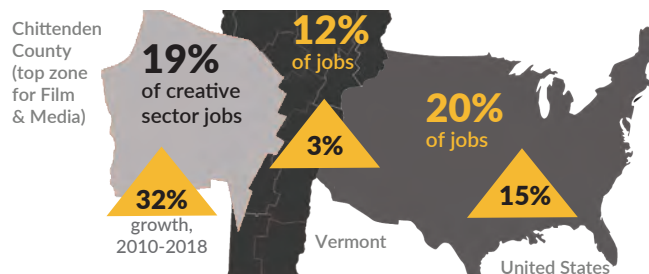
Simpsons Movie Premiere in Springfield. Photo: Victoria Hingston, Flickr Creative Commons

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

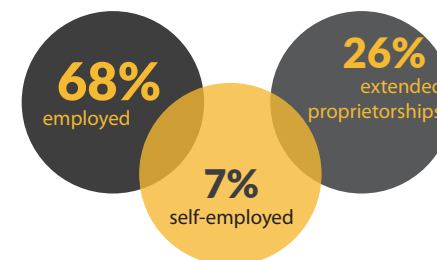
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Public access television stations exist across the state providing local resources
- Film & Media is among the highest paying and highest grossing creative industries
- Film & Media jobs and activities are growing quickly across the United States
- The Film & Media segment holds strong appeal for younger people with native digital skills
- Film festivals are growing across the state and have a large economic impact for communities
- Fluctuations in the media industry are driving rapid innovation in media and content formats, distribution channels, and payment models

Challenges

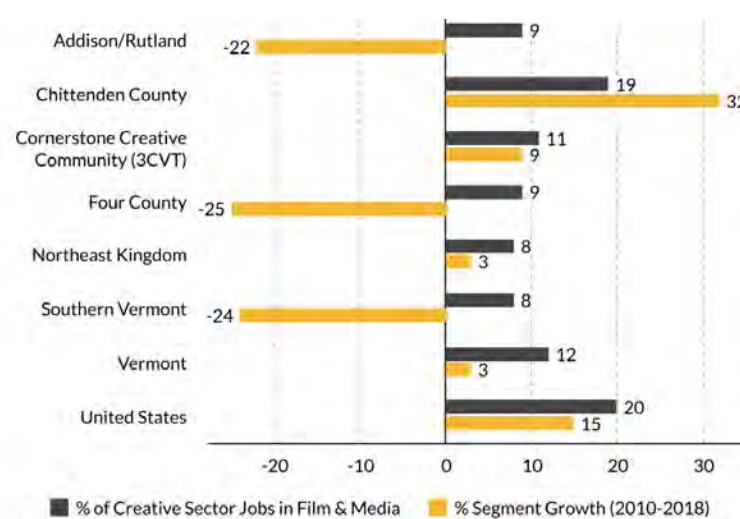
- Relatively small number of Film & Media jobs in Vermont and relatively low segment growth rate, compared to the U.S. as a whole
- Decline in print media and rise of digital media have created significant fluctuation in the sector
- Film & Media jobs and entrepreneurial businesses may have high barriers to entry, often requiring specialized technical training, software and equipment
- Uneven distribution of segment across the state, with strongest concentration in Chittenden County
- Broadband accessibility challenges hinder job growth and consumption, particularly in rural areas
- Gap in state and local economic development programs—no incentives to encourage film and media in Vermont as compared to other states
- No film commission or other body to attract in state film production

Needs

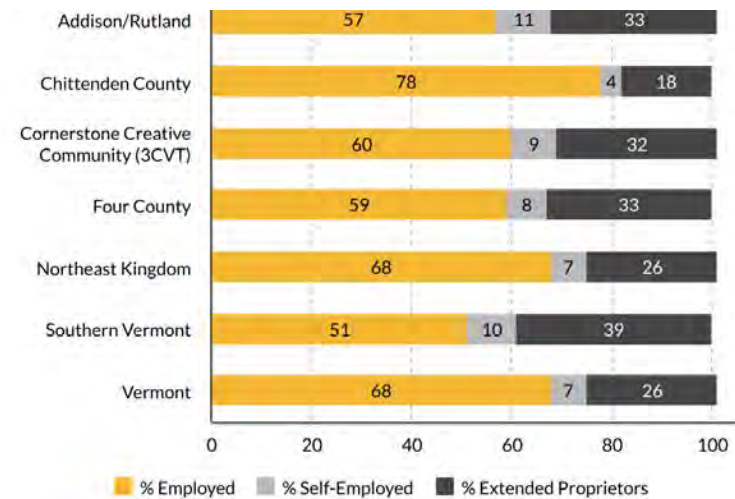
- Statewide broadband development
- Development of sharing systems, libraries and co-working and maker spaces statewide
- Improved access to digital equipment and software
- Increased training and education in digital and media technologies

FILM & MEDIA SEGMENT STATEWIDE






Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

334310 Audio and Video Equipment		424920 Book, Periodical and Newspaper Merchant Wholesalers	451212 News Dealers and Newsstands	511110 Newspaper Publishers	512110 Motion Picture and Video Production
	512120 Motion Picture and Video Distribution			511210 Software Publishers	
				512131 Motion Picture Theaters (except Drive-Ins)	512132 Drive-In Motion Picture Theaters
512191 Teleproduction & Other Postproduction Services	512199 Other Motion Picture and Video Industries	515111 Radio Networks	515120 Television Broadcasting	515210 Cable and Other Subscription Programming	
		515112 Radio Stations			
519110 News Syndicates	519130 Internet Publishing & Broadcasting & Web Search Portals		541830 Media Buying Agencies	541840 Media Representatives	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers

MEDIA RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

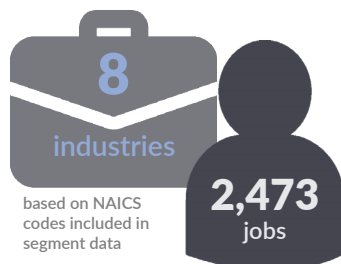
- Creative Ground Database
- League of Vermont Writers
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- Vermont Access Network
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Association of Broadcasters
- Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies
- Vermont Community Newspaper Group
- Vermont Folklife Center
- Vermont Press Association
- Vermont Technology Alliance

Literary Arts

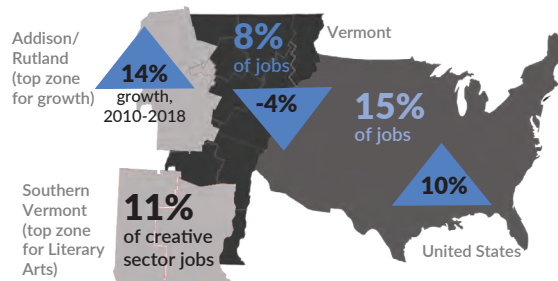
Northshire Bookstore in Manchester, Vermont. Photo: Mark Buckawicki, Wikimedia Commons.

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

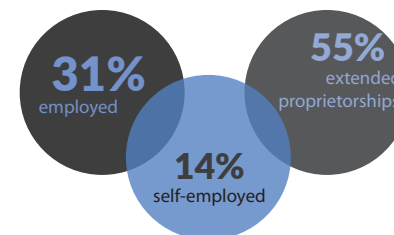
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Vermont has a strong identity as a center for Literary Arts
- Strong Literary Arts organizations, publishers and retail organizations remain in Vermont
- Strong educational institutions and degree programs in Literary Arts, including Vermont College of Fine Arts, Bread Loaf School of English, Bennington College, and Center for Cartoon Studies
- Statewide recognition/amplification for poetry through the poet laureate designation, the Poetry Out Loud competition, and local Poem City/Town projects

Challenges

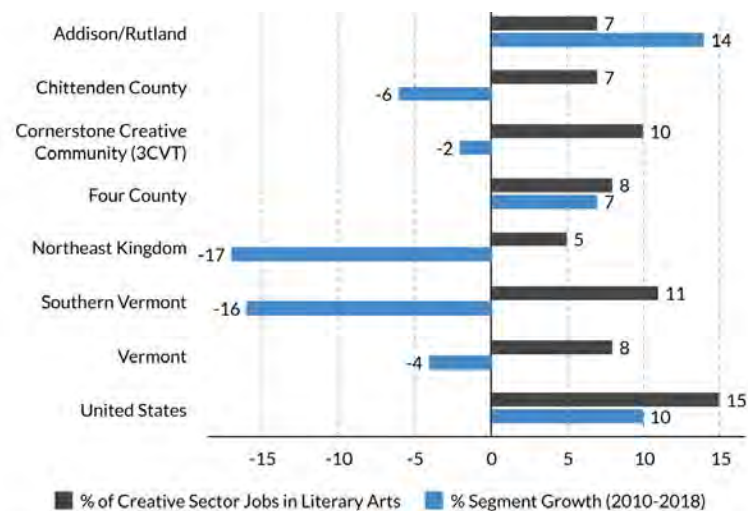
- National declines in print media and increases in online retailers have led to segment declines in Vermont
- Limited funding for projects and enterprises led by individuals or businesses (as opposed to nonprofits)
- Segment is less visible in communities than other arts segments
- Lack of understanding of the value of Literary Arts
- Literary Arts segment is smaller in Vermont than the national average, and growing more slowly

Needs

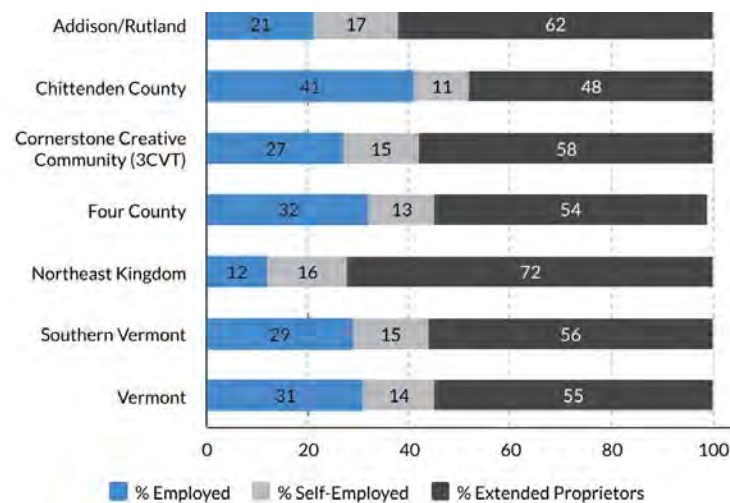
- Education to help the public understand what Literary Arts are and why they matter
- Lack of connection between culture and heritage segment and other creative industries
- Small size of sector and difficulty of measuring the sector accurately
- Collaboration and innovation within the Literary Arts community to counter declines and slow growth rates
- Partnerships with other sectors or segments to expand growth and income potential for Literary Arts
- Funding and resources to support creative Literary Arts enterprises, work, and projects

LITERARY ARTS SEGMENT STATEWIDE

Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

323117 Books Printing			323120 Support Activities for Printing
	451211 Book Stores	511120 Periodical Publishers	
511130 Book Publishers		511191 Greeting Card Publishers	
	511199 All Other Publishers	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	

LITERARY ARTS RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

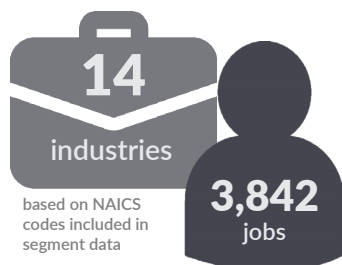
- Center for Cartoon Studies
- Clemmons Family Farm Artists Directory
- Creative Ground Database
- League of Vermont Writers
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- New England Independent Booksellers Association
- Sundog Poetry Center
- Vermont Abenaki Artists Association
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont College of Fine Arts
- Vermont Humanities
- Vermont Department of Libraries

Performing Arts

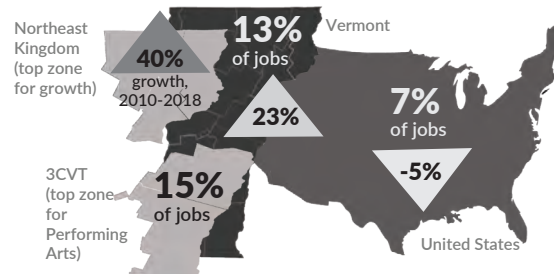
Opus 34 performers, composers and teachers at Vermont College of Fine Arts. Photo: Matt LaRocca.

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

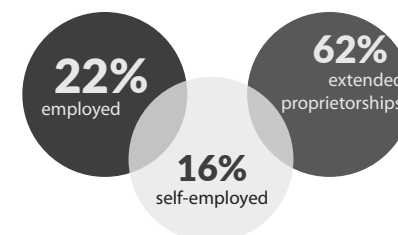
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Strong culture and environment for performing arts in Vermont
- Rapid innovation in delivery models and accessibility during COVID-19 (especially digital access)
- Diverse opportunities to integrate and share performing arts through bars, clinics, community centers and unusual venues

Challenges

- Venues are often old, expensive to keep up, and have accessibility barriers; problems exacerbated by COVID-19
- Lack of information channels, events, and opportunities to meet and connect with other artists (particularly across disciplines and geographies)

Challenges, cont.

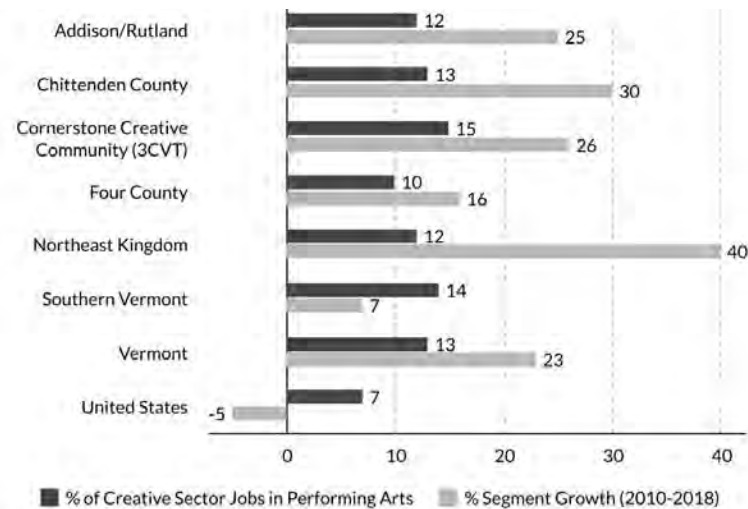
- Artist funding model typically only pays for product—not process
- Arts viewed as a luxury or frill—not as essential
- Lack of support and resources available to artists without a “brick and mortar” establishment
- Uneven broadband accessibility around the state limits digital opportunities
- Many consumers can’t afford arts experiences now
- Audience hesitancy to gather indoors may remain after the pandemic is under control

Needs

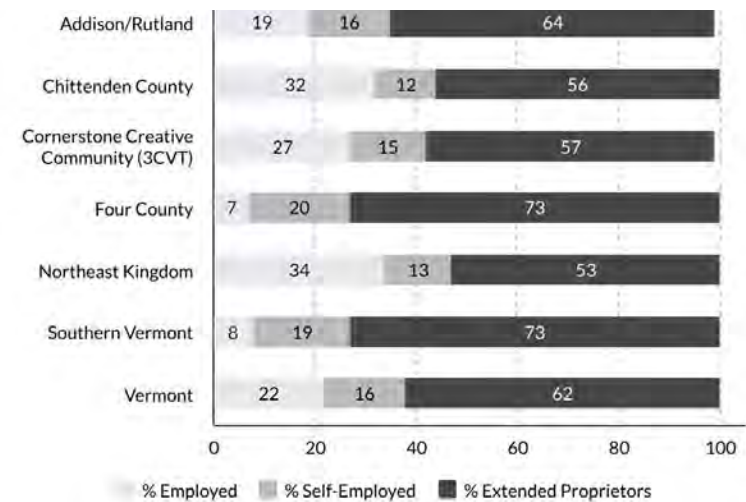
- Strategies to diversify income streams for performance venues and performers
- Community education to increase support and appreciation for the arts
- Affordable living and increased compensation in general for performing and teaching artists
- Increased statewide opportunities for networking, collaboration, problem-solving and peer support
- Clearinghouse with a variety of information (resources, ideas, directory, jobs and funding, events)
- Process to identify successful COVID-19 adaptations and replicate or carry forward
- Funding streams or new models that ensure audience affordability and living wages for artists
- Arts appreciation education for youth and state leaders and decision-makers

PERFORMING ARTS SEGMENT STATEWIDE


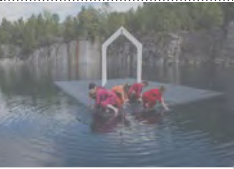
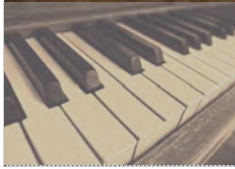


Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

711190 Other Performing Arts Companies		711310 Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports & Similar Events with Facilities	711320 Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports & Similar Events	711410 Agents and Managers for Artists, Athletes, Entertainers & Public Figures
	711120 Dance Companies	339992 Musical Instrument and Manufacturing	451140 Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores	
512230 Music Publishers		512240 Sound Recording Studios	512250 Record Production and Distribution	512290 Other Sound Recording Industries
711130 Musical Groups and Acts	711110 Theater Companies and Dinner Theaters			
			711510 Independent Artists, Writers and Performers	

LITERARY ARTS RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

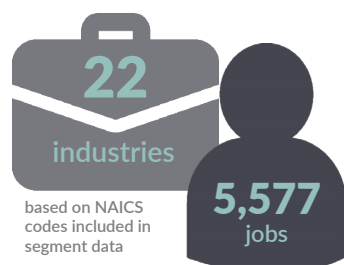
- Big Heavy World
- Clemmons Family Farm Artist Registry
- Creative Ground Database
- New theater teachers association
- Theater Engine
- Vermont Abenaki Artists Association
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Association for Jazz Education
- Vermont Dance Alliance
- Vermont Humanities
- Vermont Music Educators Association

Specialty Foods

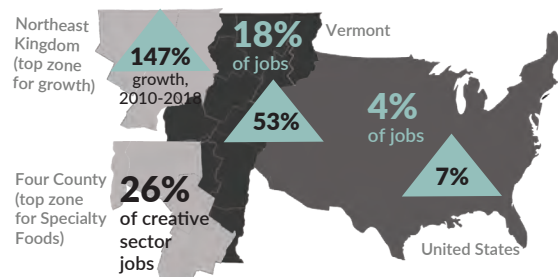
Award-winning blue cheese by The Cellars at Jasper Hill in Greensboro. Photo: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Flickr Creative Commons.

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

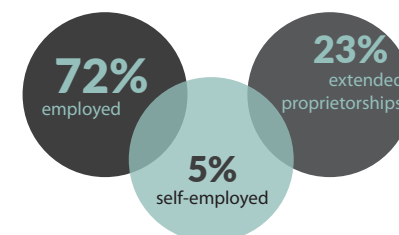
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Strong networks and associations already planning and advocating for the sector (Farm to Plate, Vermont Specialty Foods)
- Strong and growing local and artisan food movements and successful food businesses, with track record of national growth
- Strong models and state investment in collaborative food system development
- Extensive resources, directories, maps, event listings and professional development
- Innovations underway in sourcing, production and distribution models

Challenges

- Federal data undercounts segment
- Availability of commercial kitchen and food processing space and equipment

Challenges, cont.

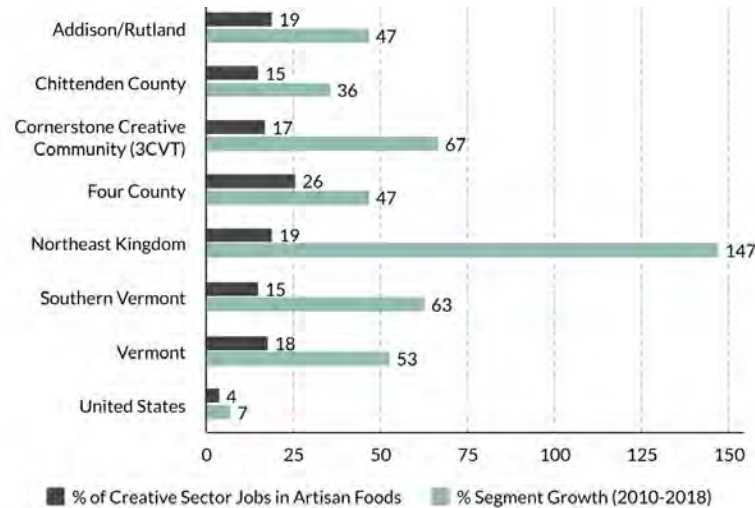
- Many within and outside the creative sector don't consider specialty foods to be included
- Lack of connection between specialty foods segment and Vermont Creative Network
- Major declines and business losses in restaurant, bar and hospitality industries due to COVID-19
- Limited awareness among food producers about marketing and business resources that are available
- High barriers to entry in food production, including equipment, space, and legal/permitting processes

Needs

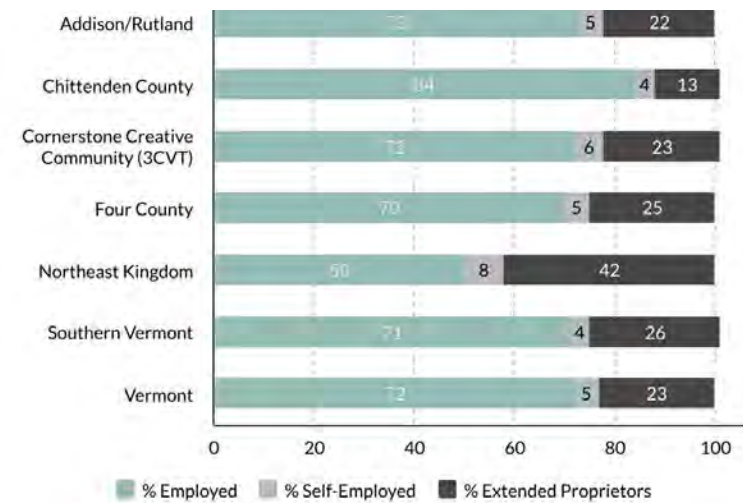
- Stronger partnerships and connections between specialty food producers (particularly through their existing channels and networks)
 - Education for consumers, creatives and leaders about specialty foods as a creative sector segment
 - Innovating financing and development of shared or collaborative commercial food production, preparation, packaging and distribution facilities
 - COVID-19 recovery support for the restaurant, bar and food service industries (funding, business development resources, and development of outdoor spaces)
 - Statewide marketing and branding programs to highlight products within and beyond Vermont
 - Support to industry groups to provide technical assistance and training on business development
- *input from the CreateVT process is supplemented with planning recommendations from the 2021-2030 Vermont Food System Plan*

SPECIALTY FOODS SEGMENT STATEWIDE

Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

311340 Nonchocolate Confectionery Manufacturing	311351 Chocolate and Confectionery Manufacturing from Cacao Beans	311352 Confectionery Manufacturing from Purchased Chocolate	311412 Frozen Specialty Food Manufacturing	311421 Fruit and Vegetable Canning	
311513 Cheese Manufacturing	311811 Retail Bakeries 311812 Commercial Bakeries		311821 Cookie and Cracker Manufacturing	311919 Other Snack Food Manufacturing	
311930 Flavoring Syrup and Concentrate Manufacturing		311941 Mayonnaise, Dressing, and Other Prepared Sauce Manufacturing	311942 Spice and Extract Manufacturing	311991 Perishable Prepared Food Manufacturing	311999 All Other Miscellaneous Food Manufacturing
3112120 Breweries 3112130 Wineries 3112140 Distilleries	445291 Baked Goods Stores	445292 Confectionery and Nut Stores		445299 All Other Specialty Food Stores	

FOOD RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

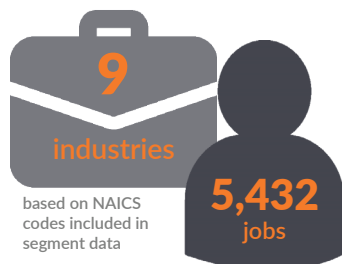
- Center for an Agricult. Economy
- DigInVT
- Migrant Justice
- NOFA VT
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Bakers Association
- Vermont Brewers Association
- Vermont Farm to Plate Network and Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030
- Vermont Farm to School Net.
- Vermont Food Investors Net.
- Vermont Fresh Network
- Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association
- Vermont Retail & Grocers Association
- Vermont Specialty Foods Assoc.

Visual Arts & Fine Crafts

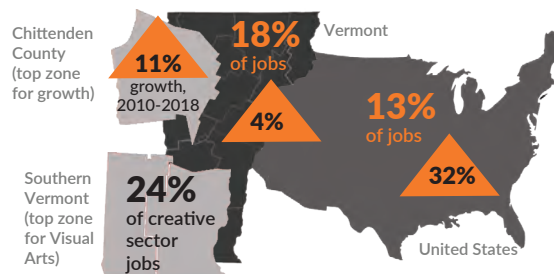
Peggy Potter Bowls at the Waitsfield Farmers' Market. Photo: Don Shall, Flickr Creative Commons

SEGMENT SNAPSHOT

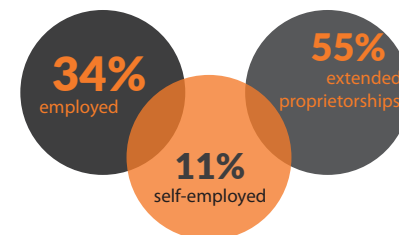
Segment Size



Segment Size & Growth



Type of Employment



CREATIVE SEGMENT ASSESSMENT

Strengths & Opportunities

- Strong tradition of appreciation for visual arts and artisan crafts in Vermont
- Vermont brand includes artisan products and experiences
- Sole proprietors and independent creatives can easily innovate, pivot, and partner
- Independent enterprises and creatives with other jobs are better able to weather losses
- Small state and collaborative culture support networking within segment
- Expanding access and opportunity to sell and market artwork via Instagram and e-commerce platforms

Challenges

- Artists often expected to volunteer or work for very little funding

Challenges, cont.

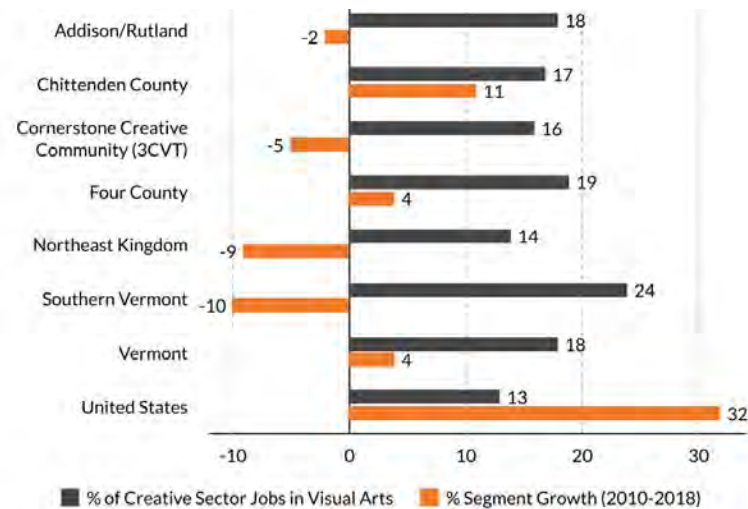
- Arts are viewed as a luxury and consumers are often reluctant or unable to pay much for art
- Venues and facilities are expensive to maintain and struggling; problems exacerbated by COVID-19
- Lack of information channels, events, and opportunities to meet and connect with other artists (particularly across disciplines and geographies)
- Artist funding model typically only pays for product—not process
- Lack of artists in leadership and policymaking positions
- Lack of mentorship opportunities for emerging artists

Needs

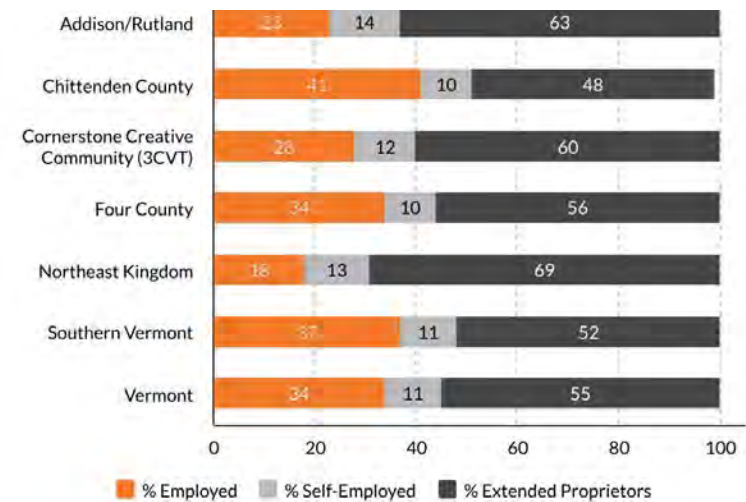
- Affordable living and increased compensation in general for artists
- Increased funding for art creation (grants or project funds) or to support artists' process
- Improved directories and information channels to connect artists with each other, facilities, suppliers, spaces, etc.
- Community education to increase support and appreciation for the arts
- Leadership development and recruitment programs for artists in policymaking
- Better statewide promotion activities or channels for arts

VISUAL ARTS & FINE CRAFTS SEGMENT STATEWIDE






Segment Size & Growth by Zone



Type of Employment by Zone



SEGMENT OCCUPATIONS (NAICS CODES)

327110 Pottery, Ceramics and Plumbing Fixture Manufacturing			327212 Other Pressed and Blown Glass and Glassware Manufacturing
	448310 Jewelry Stores	451130 Sewing, Needlework and Piece Goods Stores	
453220 Gift, Novelty, and Souvenir Stores		453920 Art Dealers	541921 Photography Studios, Portrait
616610 Fine Arts Schools	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers		

VISUAL ARTS RESOURCES & PROVIDERS

- Clemmons Family Farm Artist Registry
- Creative Ground Database
- Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers
- Vermont Abenaki Artists Association
- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Crafts Council
- Vermont Curators Group
- Vermont Weavers Guild

SEGMENT BRIEF PHOTO CREDITS

Thumbnail photos in segment profiles (left to right, top to bottom).

Culture & Heritage

- Kimball Public Library, Randolph. Photo: Jessamyn West, Wikimedia.
- Hyde Park Pop-Up History Trail and Opera House. Photo: Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Community Workshop.
- Robinson Sawmill in Calais. Provided.
- Museum sign (stock photo).
- Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh. Photo: Don Shall, Flickr Creative Commons.
- Frog exhibit at the Montshire Museum of Science in Norwich. Photo: Heather Katsoulis, Flickr Creative Commons.
- Gardens at Hildene: the Lincoln Family Home in Manchester. Photo: Kent Brewster, Flickr Creative Commons (@kentbrew).

Film & Media

- Microphone (stock photo).
- Film students. Photo: AiClassEland, Wikimedia Commons.
- Bethel Drive-In movie theater (stock photo).
- Soundboard (stock photo).
- Radio interview by 107.1 WORK FM. Photo: U.S. National Archives.

Literary Arts

- Type (stock photo).
- Brattleboro Literary Festival. Photo: Jenny Altshuler.
- Vermont Magazine cover. Photo: Vermont Magazine.
- Greeting card art (stock photo).
- Major Jackson reading at Brattleboro Literary Festival. Provided.

Performing Arts

- Puppets for Montpelier Chamber Orchestra Performance. Provided.
- The Quarry Project by Hannah Dennison & Cradle to Grave Arts in Websterville. Photo: Julia Barstow.
- Piano (stock photo).
- Yellow Barn's Music Haul mobile performance venue. Photo: Zachary Stephens.
- Fua Nascimento teaching dance at Ripton Elementary School. Provided.

Specialty Foods

- Vermont Salumi by Chef Matt Jennings. Photo: @BrevilleUSA, Flickr Creative Commons.
- Bread (stock photo).
- Maple sugaring (stock photo).
- Magic Hat Brewery in Burlington. Photo: Musik Animal, Wikimedia.

Visual Arts & Fine Crafts

- Potter working on the wheel (stock photo).
- Holiday Artisan Market at Chandler Center for the Arts in Randolph. Photo: Elissa Campbell, Flickr Creative Commons.
- Quilt shown at the Robinson Sawmill in Calais. Provided.
- Stained glass by artist Andy O'Brien. Photo: Andy O'Brien.
- Essex High School lights parade. Photo: courtesy of Essex High School.



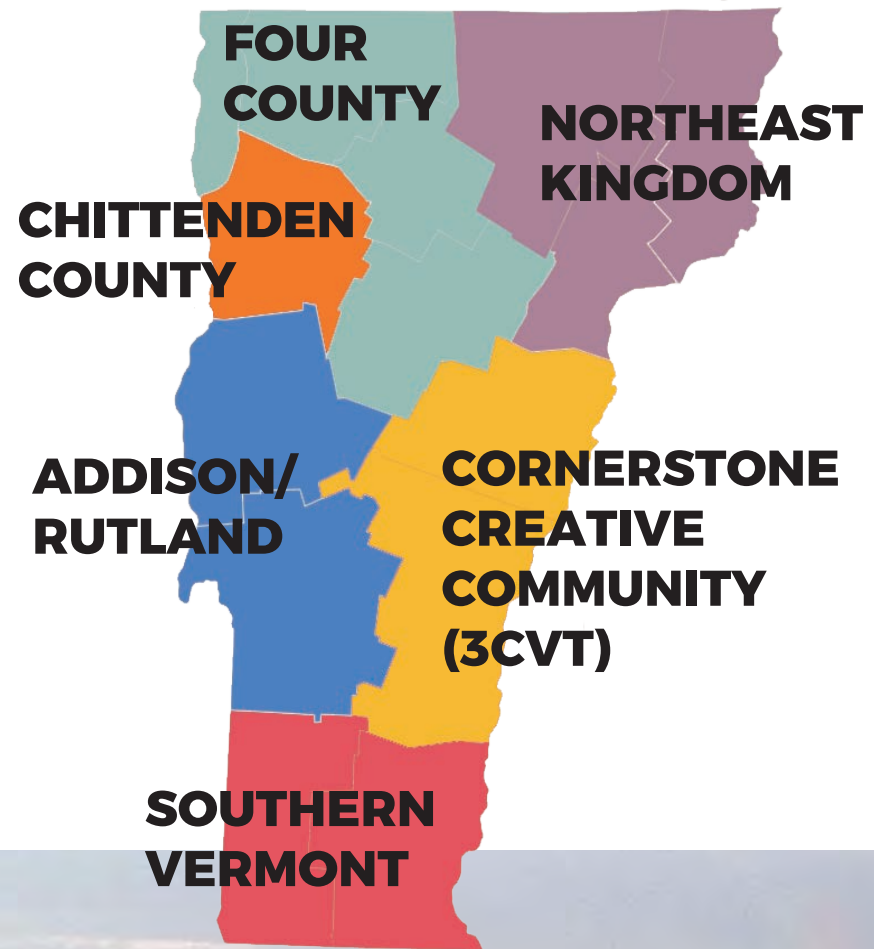
ZONE BRIEFS

The pulse of Vermont's creativity is local, and each of our unique communities and regions has a distinct creative and cultural identity. The future of our sector is also local, with great potential to connect, coordinate and strengthen the creative economy in ways that make sense for each town and region. The Vermont Creative Network is organized into six regional "zones," each charged with creating a strong local network to lift up, connect, and grow local creativity.

The following briefs give an overview of the creative sector in each zone as well as the zone's focus and activities. Each creative zone has a page on the vermontcreativenetwork.org website with more detailed research and information on how to get involved.

The information and ideas in these briefs come from several sources.

- **Creative sector economic data:** 2019 Mt. Auburn Associates research on Vermont's creative sector
- **Population data:** U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates
- **Needs, priorities, activities and plans:** synthesized from zone-specific plans, Vermont Arts Council summaries, CreateVT events and input, and zone toolkits compiled in 2020 by the Applied Community Planning class at the University of Vermont



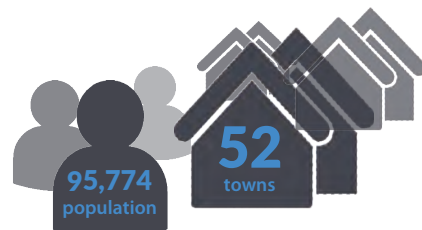
Addison/Rutland

Addison & Rutland Counties

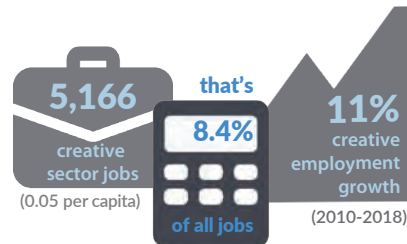
Rutland Downtown Ethnic Festival. Photo: Shawn Pemrick, Wikimedia Commons.

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

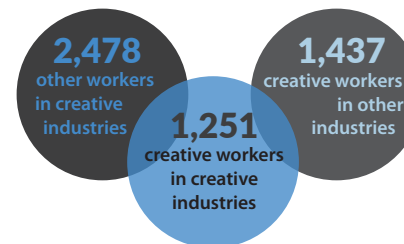
About the Zone



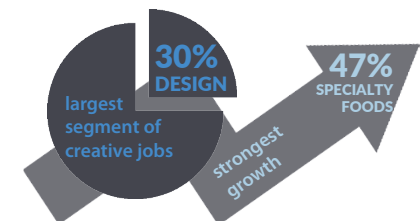
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs

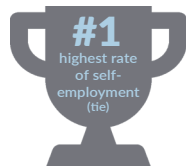


Creative Segments

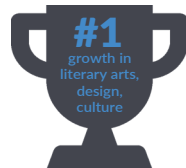


CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

Claims to Fame



Highest rate of self-employment (three-way tie for 12%)

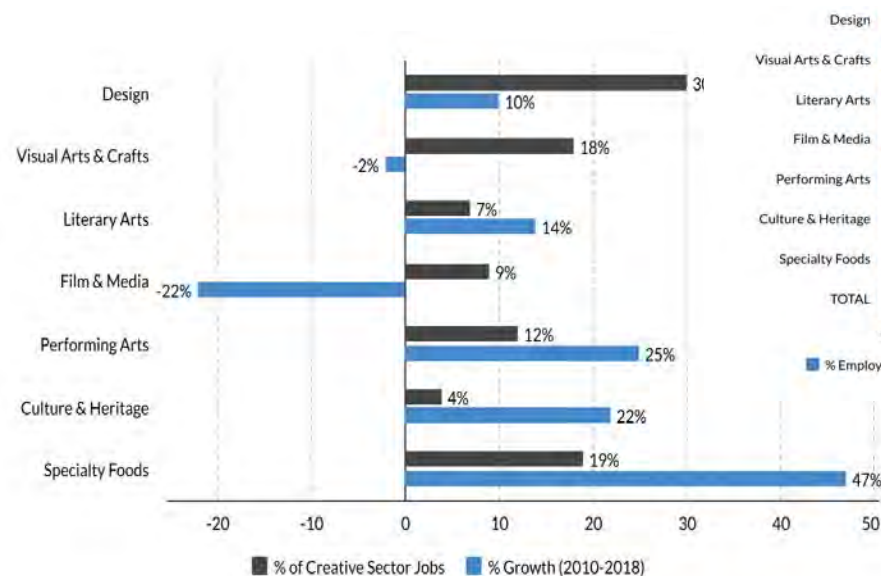


Strongest growth in three segments (Culture & Heritage—22%, Literary Arts—14%, and Design—10%)

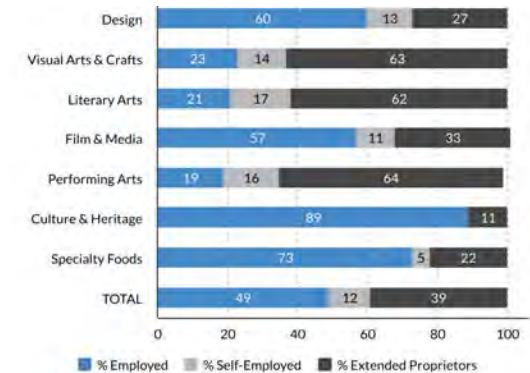


Second highest percentage of Design (30%) and Specialty Foods (19%) jobs

Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- High number of collaborative places and spaces, small and experimental venues
- Vibrant Main Streets, downtowns and village centers
- Concentration of higher education institutions and museums
- Strong talent and enterprises in sculpture, trades, and larger artisan manufacturing
- Largest growth statewide in Culture & Heritage segment (22%), Literary Arts (14%), and Design (10%) (2010-2018)
- Strong tourist/travel corridors (Routes 4/7 and Amtrak)
- Strong downtown organizations, arts cultures, festivals and events, venues and creative community development in Rutland and Middlebury
- Major ski and outdoor recreation attractions

Challenges

- Decline in Visual Arts & Fine Crafts jobs and significant decline in Film & Media (2010-2018)
- Lack of a cohesive regional identity across Rutland and Addison Counties
- Lack of zone-wide creative sector planning
- Many small towns with limited resources and planning capacity

Needs

- Creative sector action planning for the zone
- Increased communication, collaboration and relationship building systems within the zone
- Expansion of creative sector activities and development in smaller, rural towns
- Capitalizing on tourism and visitors with creative collaborations
- Increased zone participation
- Better measurement, communications and advocacy tools

Plans, Programs & Studies

- Middlebury Creative Communities Program Final Report and Action Plan (2017)
- Rutland City Creative Communities Program Final Report and Action Plan (2006)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Addison County Economic Development Corporation
- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Castleton University
- Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region
- Middlebury College
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- The MINT- Rutland's Makerspace
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Folklife Center

Current Priorities *(From CreateVT ZoneJam notes)*

- Recruitment of creative sector members to participate in zone
- Eliminating the divide and increasing collaboration across the two counties
- Helping venues adapt to COVID-19
- Developing zone identity (and considering a new name)

Key Activities

Communication channels: Facebook group



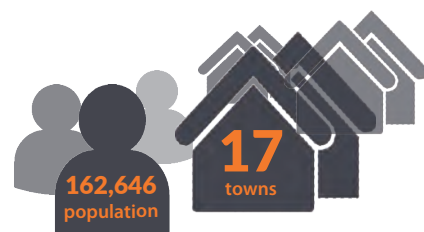
Chittenden County

Chittenden County

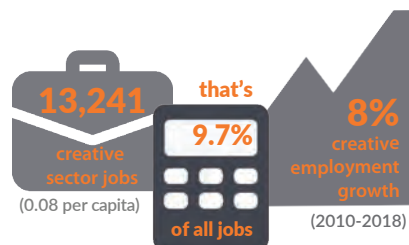
African Market in Burlington's Old North End. Photo: Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Community Workshop

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

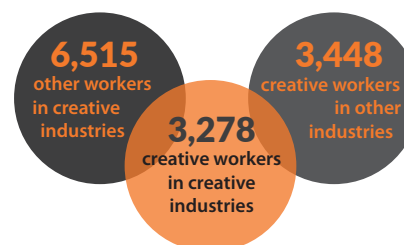
About the Zone



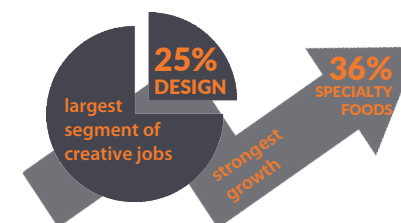
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs



Creative Segments

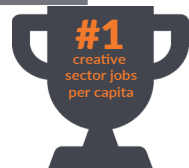


CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

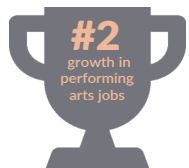
Claims to Fame



Only zone with significant jobs in Film & Media (19% of jobs, with 32% growth)

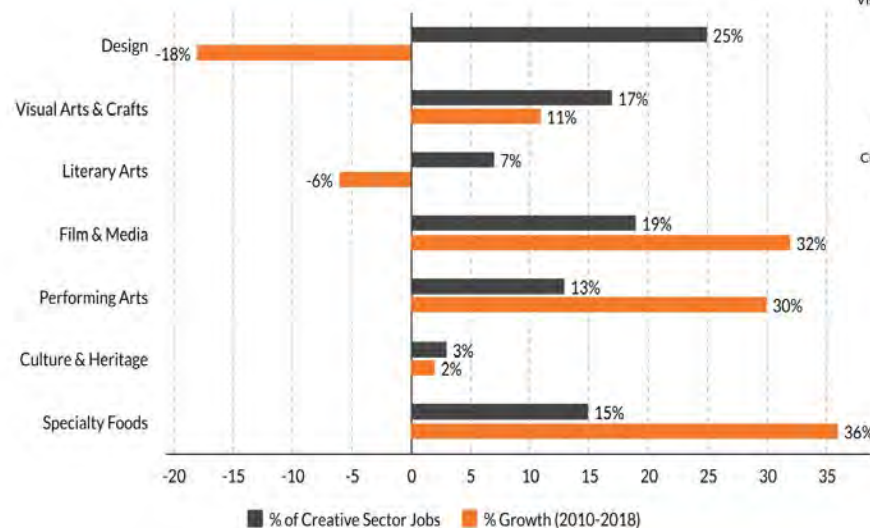


Highest level of per capita employment in the creative sector (0.08)

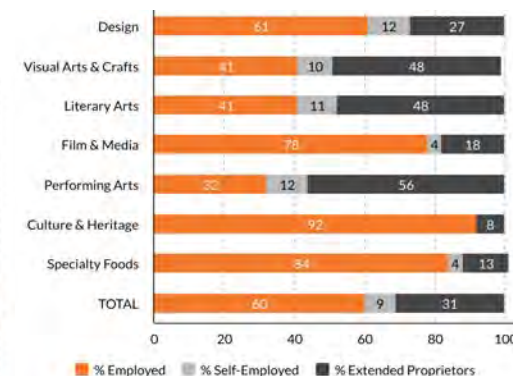


Second highest growth in Performing Arts segment (30%)

Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Density of population, businesses and creative enterprises (particularly in Burlington's South End)
- Racial and cultural diversity
- Brand and identity as arts and cultural center
- Proximity to Lake Champlain, airport, Amtrak, Routes 7 and 89, and Canada
- Strong institutions including University of Vermont and Champlain College
- Vibrancy and talent in music, design, digital media and film segments
- Strong support for creative economy within the community and progressive leadership
- Strong collaborative spaces, culture and environment
- Highest growth rate statewide for Visual Arts & Fine Crafts (2010-2018), Performing Arts, and Film & Media
- Strong, coordinated community development and planning capacity
- Wide variety of venues and spaces for different types of creative work and sites with potential for redevelopment

Challenges

- Design segment is large proportion of county's creative jobs, and has a greater rate of decline in jobs here than anywhere in the state
- Cost of living and working (including housing and work/studio space)
- Developing funding models that are affordable and work for creatives, venues, and audiences

Needs

- More frequent communication and peer-to-peer support opportunities
- Addressing inclusivity in creative sector (accessible spaces, racial and economic equity)
- Directories and information sharing systems to connect people with creative skills (such as editing, developing, filming)
- Sharing systems and funding to increase access to software, accounts and equipment
- Unified messaging and communications
- Connecting and integrating creative sector with politics, nonprofit, tech, and tourism sectors

Plans, Programs & Studies

- Arts and Economic Prosperity 5: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the Greater Burlington Area, Chittenden County, Vermont (2017)
- PlanBTV 2019 Update and South End Plans (2019)
- Richmond Area Creative Communities Program: Final Report and Action (2007)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Burlington City Arts
- Champlain College
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Generator Makerspace
- Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation
- University of Vermont

Current Priorities (From CreateVT ZoneJam notes)

- Adapting events and programming for COVID-19
- Increasing communication, collaboration and information sharing

Key Activities

Communication channels: Email newsletter



Cornerstone Creative Community (3CVT)

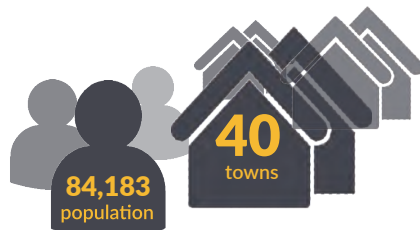
Windsor & Orange Counties

ecvdd.org/3cvt/

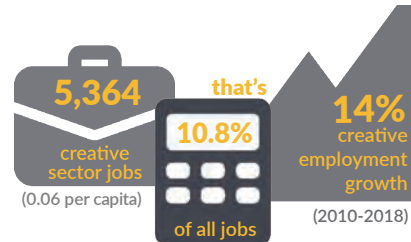
Artisan timber frame barn by North Springfield's Vermont Timber Works. Photo: Vermont Timber Works, Wikimedia.

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

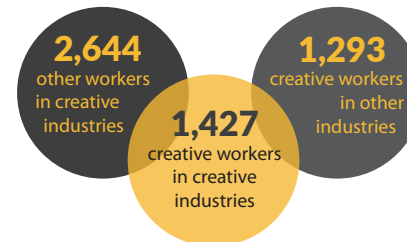
About the Zone



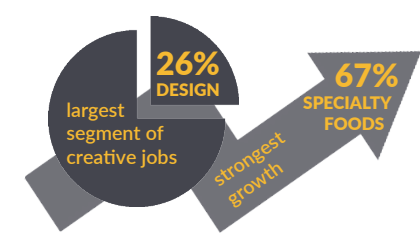
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs

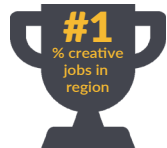


Creative Segments



CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

Claims to Fame



Highest creative sector employment statewide, as % of all jobs

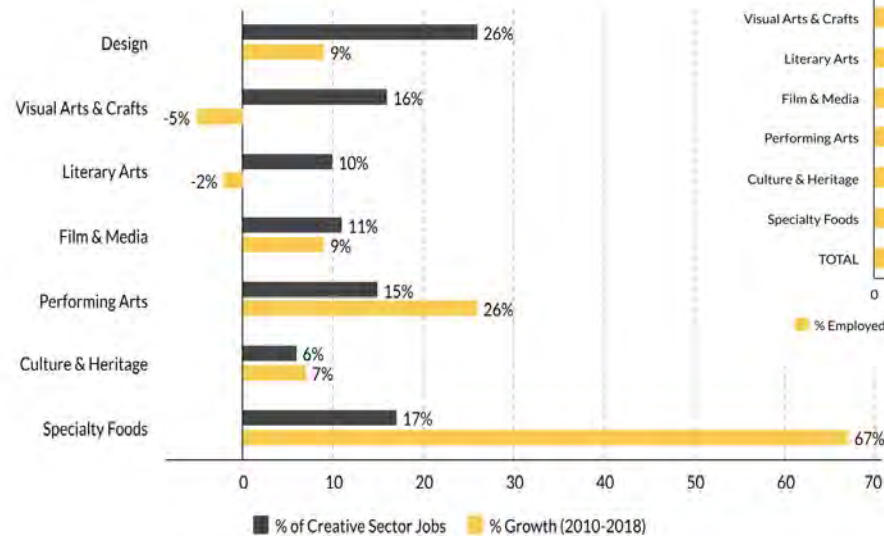


Highest growth rate in creative employment statewide

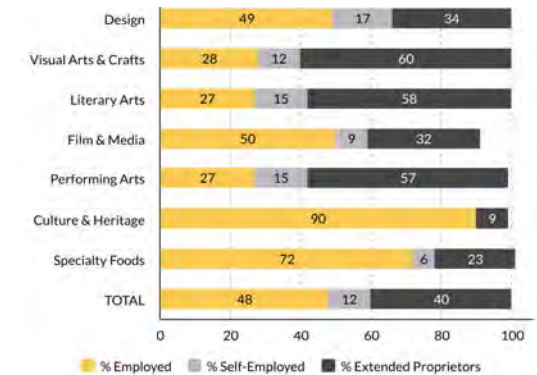


Zone with strongest growth in three segments (Specialty Foods—36%, Film & Media—32%, Performing Arts—30%)

Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Artisanal culture and enterprises, including high concentration of microbusinesses
- Strong knowledge economy and large number of higher education institutions, libraries, hospitals, and local media
- Strong sense of place, downtowns, authenticity, and small town character in towns and micro-regions
- Creative sector planning integrated with strong regional planning
- Highest concentration of Performing Arts jobs in any zone (2010-2018)
- Significant growth in Film & Media jobs (second only to Chittenden County)
- Accessible location and transportation networks, including proximity to NH
- Strong broadband development, schools, and social services
- Multiple designated Opportunity Zones
- Strong agricultural and industrial history
- Strong and collaborative local food and outdoor recreation sectors
- Strong performing and visual arts centers in several communities

Challenges

- Decline in Visual Arts & Fine Crafts and Literary Arts jobs (2010-2018)
- Many small towns with relatively low municipal capacity and high dependence on volunteers
- Rural and mountainous region makes travel within zone challenging and leaves communities isolated
- Large region, and lack of unified regional identity
- Upper Valley region crosses state lines, making planning and coordination challenging
- Aging population (older than much of state)
- Proximity to tax-free NH challenges retail competitiveness

Needs

- Developing a “creative identity” for the region
- Collaborative work/maker spaces (and repurposing vacant/existing buildings)
- Business development and marketing training
- Funding and collaborative systems to support small towns, venues and organizations (to reach economies of scale and reduce reliance on volunteers)
- Inter-state development of advanced manufacturing
- More networking events and activities

Plans, Programs & Studies

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis (2020)
- Artists, Artisans, and Entrepreneurs: Creative Economy of the East Central Vermont Region (2016)
- East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD) 2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Randolph Area Creative Communities Program (2007)
- Creative Communities Programs Final Report and Action Plan, Windsor, VT (2006)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Center for Cartoon Studies
- Dartmouth College (NH)
- Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation
- Mount Ascutney Regional Commission
- Springfield Regional Development Corporation
- Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
- Vermont Law School

Key Support Organizations (cont.)

- Vermont Technical College
- Vital Communities

Current Priorities (From 3CVT Work Plan)

- Regional marketing plan
- Business development trainings and workshops
- Zoom networking events
- Coordination with other sectors (farm/food, health/wellness, education)

Key Activities

Communication channels: website, Listserv and Facebook group



Events: 2017-2019 “Mashup” networking events

Programs: 2021 Creative Sector Recovery Program (US Economic Development Admin. grant)



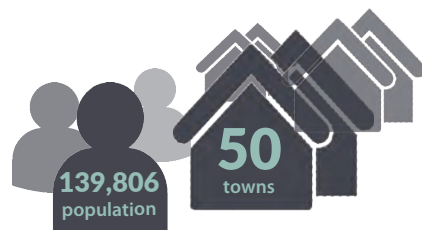
Four County

Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Washington Counties

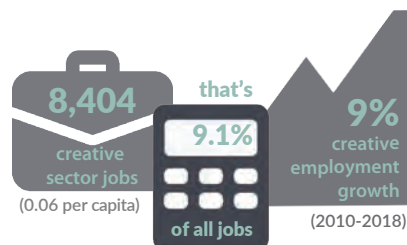
"Before I Die" installation at Langdon Street Alive, Montpelier. Photo: Ward Joyce.

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

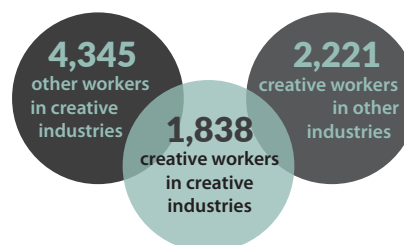
About the Zone



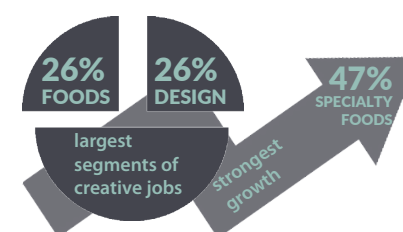
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs

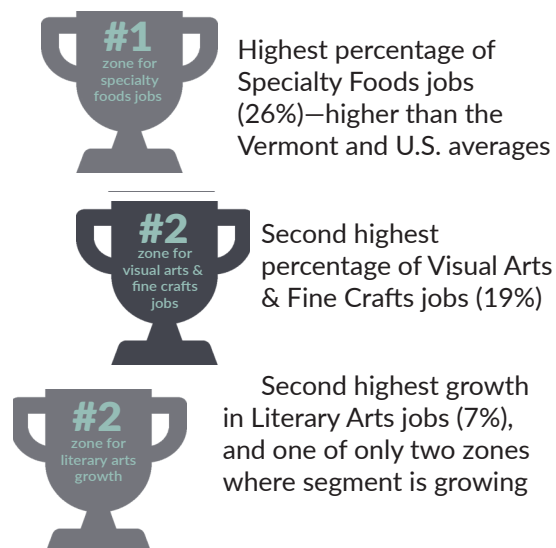


Creative Segments

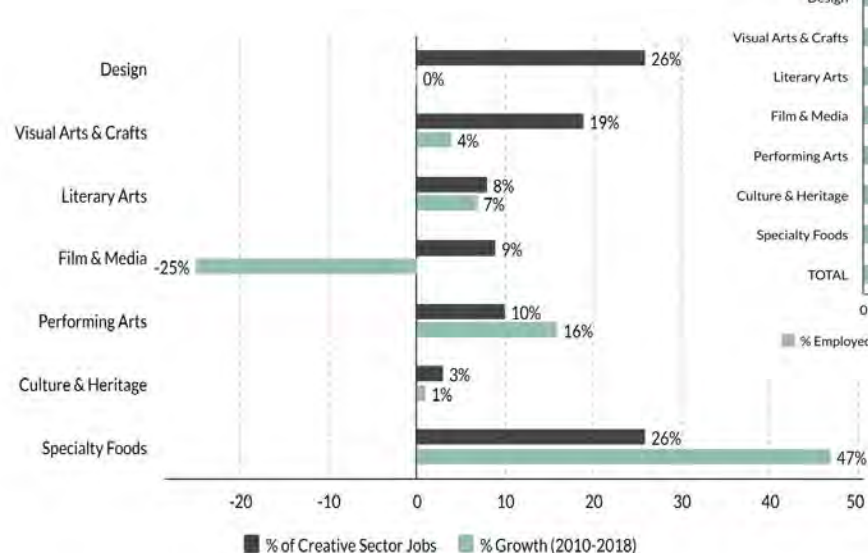


CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

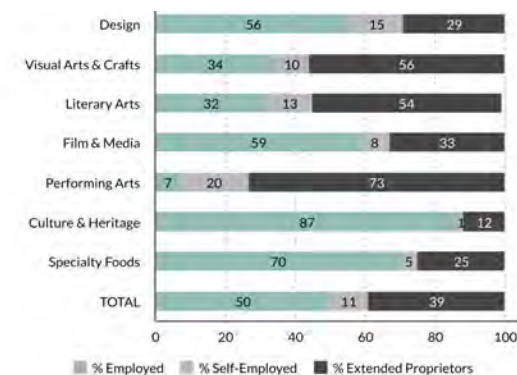
Claims to Fame



Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Strong local and artisan food culture and enterprises
- Strong collaborative spaces, culture and environment
- Strong institutions focused on creative skills
- Large amount of public art, placemaking and vibrant town centers
- Fastest rate of growth statewide in Literary Arts (2010-2018), which declined in most other areas
- Grand Isle, Lake Champlain and Stowe tourist destinations; proximity to Canada
- State capital and access to state government
- Vibrant, authentic and unique small towns with strong character and volunteerism
- Strong and growing outdoor recreation and farm/food economies and infrastructure
- Strong local arts and cultural development in individual towns (Waterbury, Montpelier, Plainfield, Grand Isle, Swanton, St. Albans, Stowe)

Challenges

- Relatively slow growth in Culture & Heritage, Design, and Visual Arts & Fine Crafts
- 25% decline in jobs in Film & Media (2010-2018)
- Large and diverse geographic area, with no unified regional identity
- Lack of recent or coordinated creative sector planning
- Developing winter attractions
- Large number of small, rural towns with limited capacity and venues

Needs

- Expanding four-county collaboration and creative sector planning or localized versions
- Expanding strategic connections with outdoor recreation and farm/food sectors
- Connecting creatives to grant opportunities, resources, and COVID-19 support
- Business development and recovery support
- Integrating and connecting creative sector with leadership, social justice and other sectors

Plans, Programs & Studies

- Plainfield Creative Communities Program-Final Report and Action Plan (2007)
- Grand Isle WAVES (WAKing Vibrant Economic Strategies)—Final Report and Action Plan (2006)
- St. Albans City Creative Communities Program-Final Report and Action Plan (2006)
- Montpelier Public Art Master Plan (2018)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation
- Goddard College
- Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation
- Lamoille County Planning Commission
- Lamoille Economic Development Corporation

Key Support Organizations (cont.)

- Northern Vermont University—Johnson
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission
- Vermont College of Fine Arts
- Vermont Studio Center
- Yestermorrow Design/Build School

Current Priorities (From CreateVT ZoneJam notes)

- Increasing and building connections within the zone
- COVID-19 recovery and support

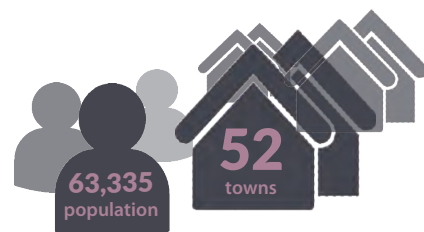
Northeast Kingdom

Caledonia, Essex and Orleans Counties

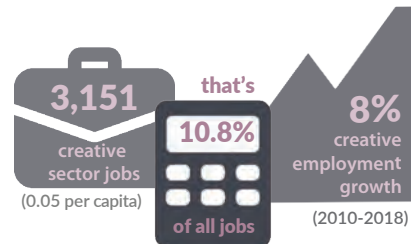
NEMBAFest mountain bike festival in the Northeast Kingdom. Photo: Catamount Arts

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

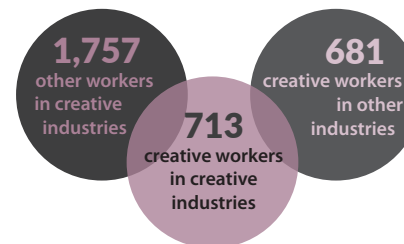
About the Zone



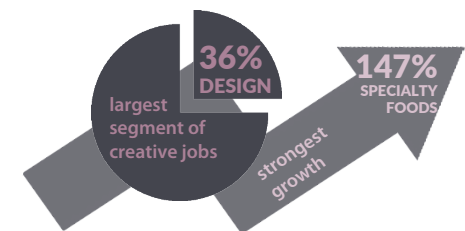
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs



Creative Segments

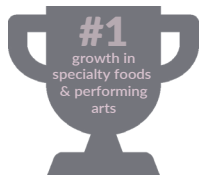


CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

Claims to Fame



Highest growth in extended proprietorships or part-time creative entrepreneurs (37.6%)

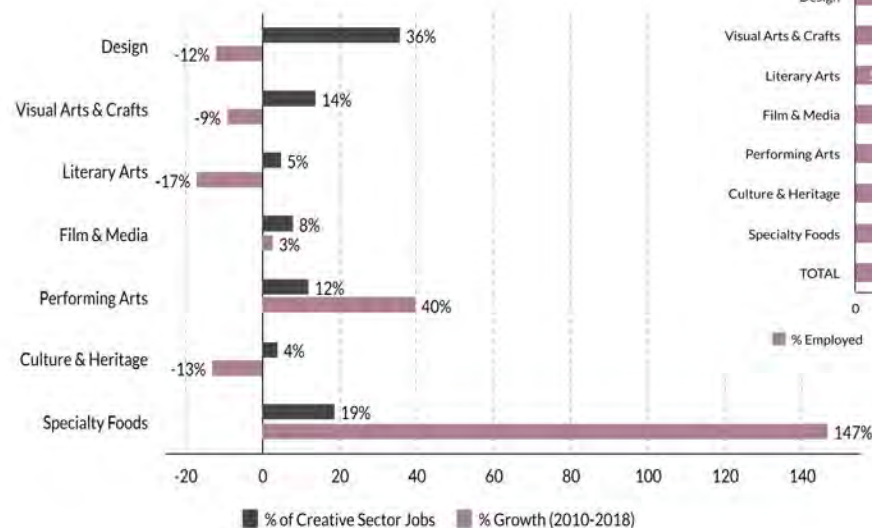


Strongest growth in two segments (Specialty Foods—147% and Performing Arts—40%)

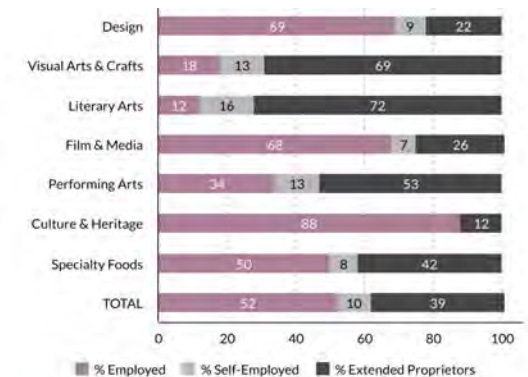


Highest percentage of Design jobs (36%)

Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Strong culture, network and systems for collaboration
- Strong ties between local food clusters, recreation economy and creative sector
- Culture of resilience and independence
- Highest rate of growth statewide in Performing Arts (40%) and Specialty Foods (147%)
- Strong cross-sector collaboration and regional planning work, including Tri-Sector Plan and COVID-19 Recovery Plan
- Strong brand and economy around farm and forest industries, literary arts, and performances
- History of collaboration across borders, with New Hampshire and Canada
- Priority for funding and support through federal economic development designations and programs

Challenges

- Decline in Visual Arts & Fine Crafts jobs, Culture & Heritage, and Design (the largest segment, with a 12% decline from 2010-2018)
- Lowest income and education rates (and highest poverty rates) in the state
- Region is remote and disconnected from the rest of Vermont and from population centers

Needs

- Short-term relief funding and support and long-term investment funds for the creative economy
- Increasing winter activities and economic attractions
- Revitalizing and developing co-working, maker, performance and production spaces to increase collaboration, communication and cross-pollination within creative sector
- General regional economic development and livability, including affordable housing, childcare, education and workforce training, and broadband accessibility
- Expanding services and business development resources to micro-enterprises and self-employed
- Increasing connections between creative, outdoor recreation, and farm/food sectors

Plans, Programs & Studies

- NEK Recovery Action Plan (2020)
- Building on a Legacy of Creativity: Understanding and Expanding the Creative Economy of the Northeast Kingdom (2018)
- Leadership Development Action Plan (2018) and Trisector Action Plan (2018)
- NVEDD Economic Development Strategy (2016)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Burklyn Arts Council
- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- Northeast Kingdom Collaborative
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association
- Northern Vermont University—Lyndon
- Sterling College

Current Priorities *(From CreateVT ZoneJam notes)*

- Increasing and building connections within the zone
- COVID-19 recovery and support

Key Activities

Programs: Creative sector study (2018)



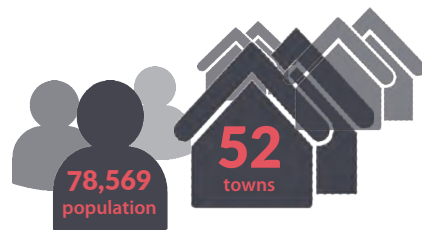
Southern Vermont

Bennington and Windham Counties

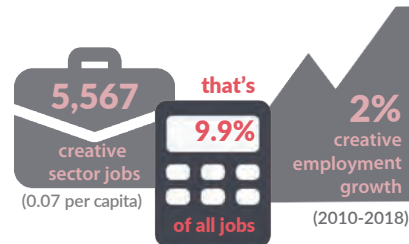
Brattleboro Farmers' Market. Photo: VTrans, Flickr Creative Commons

CREATIVE ZONE SNAPSHOT

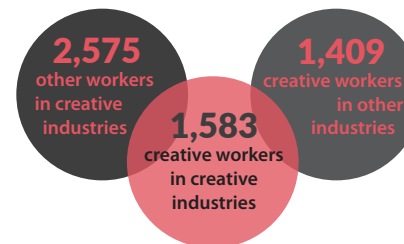
About the Zone



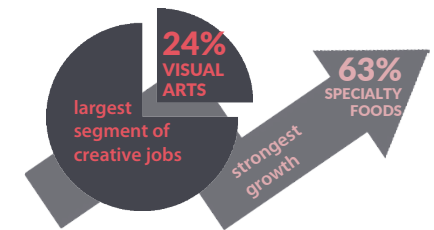
Creative Sector



Creative Jobs



Creative Segments



CREATIVE ZONE IN DEPTH

Claims to Fame



#1 independent creatives and entrepreneurs

Highest percentage of independent creative workers (self-employed and extended proprietorships)—56%



#1 zone for culture, literary & visual arts

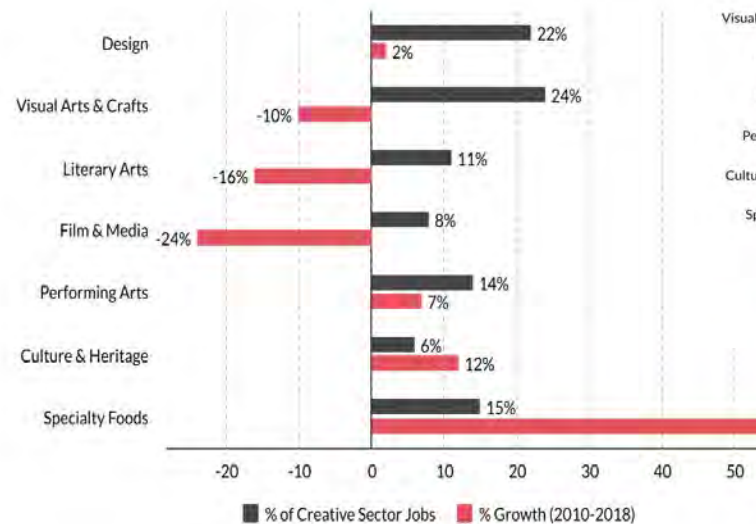
Highest percentage of Visual Arts & Fine Crafts (24%), Literary Arts (11%), and Culture & Heritage (tie at 6%) jobs; only zone where Design is not the top segment



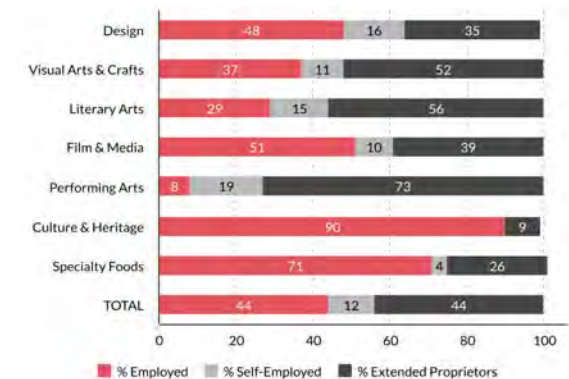
#2 growth in culture & heritage

Second highest growth in Culture & Heritage (12%)

Segment Size & Growth



Employment Types



CREATIVE ZONE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Strong collaborative spaces, culture and environment
- Strong creative education, theater and music organizations
- Location and access to markets and travelers in NY, MA and CT
- Large number and size of well-established arts and culture businesses and institutions
- Strong creative community development and placemaking
- High concentration of performing arts venues, activities and jobs
- Strong community assets and institutions
- Culture and history of appreciation for the arts and creativity
- Strong tourist and outdoor recreation economies and festivals
- Major community development and revitalization initiatives in Brattleboro and Bennington
- Extensive and free MOOVER transportation network

Challenges

- Slowest rate of growth in the creative economy of all zones (2010-2018)
- Visual Arts & Fine Crafts segment lost about 10% of jobs and Literary Arts 16% of jobs
- Lower % of Design jobs than other zones (Design can be large economic /employment force)
- Region can feel isolated from the rest of Vermont
- Multiple recent college closures: Marlboro College, Green Mountain College, and Southern Vermont College
- Distinct regional identities (Windham County orients toward Connecticut River and NH; Bennington County orients toward NY and MA)
- More VCN zone participation in Windham County than Bennington County

Needs

- Access to funding, social media, business development and marketing assistance
- Affordable housing, living, health care and livable wages
- Creative economy data to share with legislators and local officials
- More local creative sector advocacy and planning (local arts teams or committees)
- More networking, sharing and collaboration opportunities and events
- Increased zone participation from Bennington County

Plans, Programs & Studies

- Bennington County Cultural Plan (2019)
- Creative Communities Programs Final Report and Action Plan, Manchester, VT (2007)

CREATIVE ZONE FUTURE

Key Support Organizations

- Arts Council of Windham County
- Bennington College
- Bennington County Industrial Corporation
- Bennington County Regional Commission
- Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
- Community College of Vermont
- Landmark College
- Windham Regional Commission

Current Priorities

From CreateVT ZoneJam notes

- Regular Zoom networking and meeting opportunities (weekly or monthly)

Key Activities

Communication channels:
Email newsletter



Events: Town Hall Forums

Appendices

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A1. ACRONYMS

The acronyms found here may be listed throughout the plan, and are commonly referenced in creative sector work or in Vermont.

3CVT	Cornerstone Creative Community, a VCN Zone	GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UVM	University of Vermont
AARP	American Association of Retired Persons	LGBTQIA2S+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and (+) the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify	VAAFM	Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
ACCD	Agency of Commerce and Community Development	NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	VAC	Vermont Arts Council
AIGA	American Institute of Graphic Arts	NAICS	North American Industry Classification System	VCF	Vermont Community Foundation
AoE	Vermont Agency of Education	NBRC	Northern Border Regional Commission	VCN	Vermont Creative Network
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act	NEA	National Endowment for the Arts	VCRD	Vermont Council on Rural Development
CWE	Center for Women and Enterprise	NEFA	New England Foundation for the Arts	VDH	Vermont Department of Health
DHCD	Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development	NEK	Northeast Kingdom	VDTM	Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
EMSI	Economic Modeling Specialists International	PTVT	Preservation Trust of Vermont	VPR	Vermont Public Radio
FB	Facebook	RPCs	Regional Planning Commissions	VTrans	Vermont Agency of Transportation
FY	Fiscal year	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	VtSBDC	Small Business Development Center

A2. STUDIES & WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

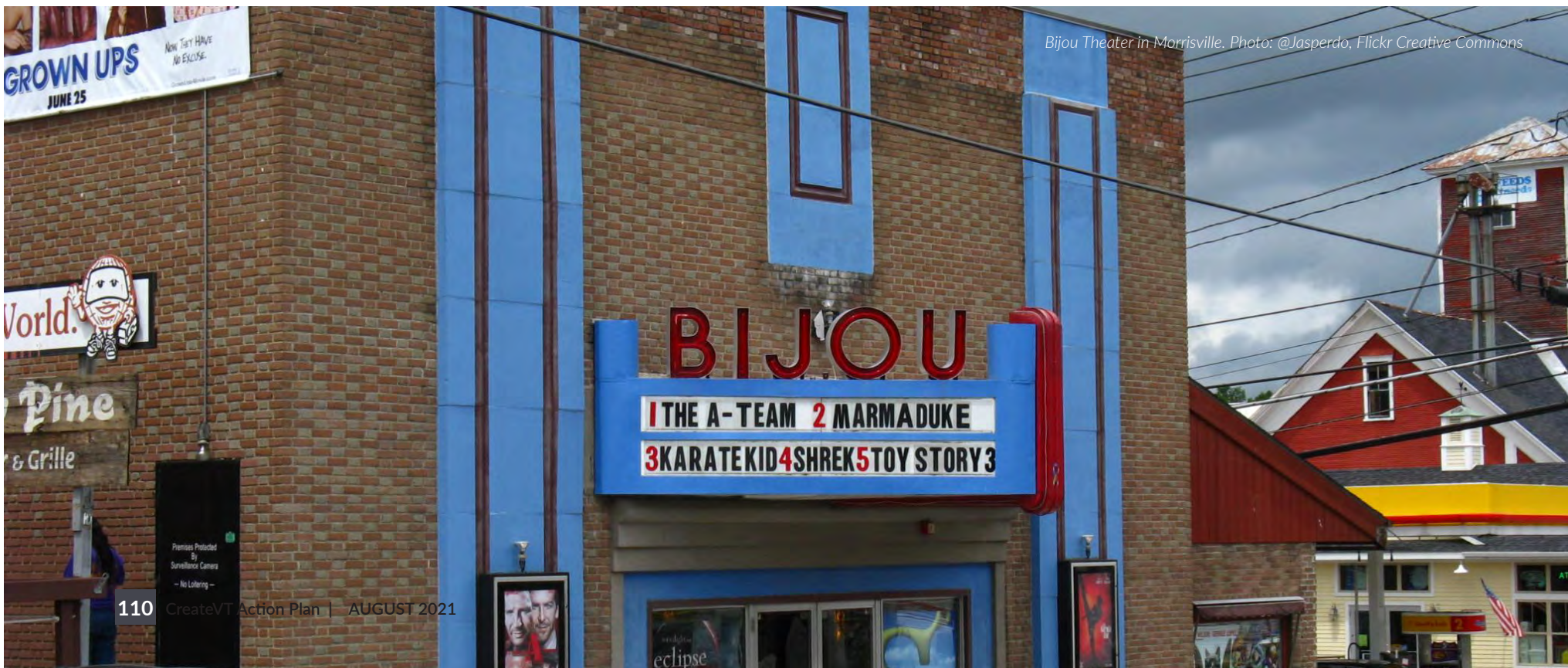
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OTHER VERMONT CREATIVE SECTOR STUDIES

Visit the Vermont Creative Network website for more info on Vermont's creative sector research: vermontartscouncil.org/vermont-creative-network/vcn-about/research

- 2009** CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT: Twelve communities explored the role of arts and culture for community development, supported by the Vermont Council on Rural Development.
- 2014** ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT OF THE ARTS STUDY: Center for Policy Analysis updated a 2010 study quantifying the economic impact of Vermont's arts sector.
- 2016** CREATIVE SECTOR STUDIES: FutureWorks used labor data to identify seven major sub-sectors in Vermont's creative economy.
- 2016** THE VERMONTER POLL: The University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies conducted a telephone poll to gauge Vermonter's support for the arts.
- 2016** CREATIVE ECONOMY OF EAST CENTRAL VERMONT: Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission and East Central Vermont Economic Development District completed a study of the Creative Economy of East Central Vermont.



A3. CREATEVT PROCESS

The CreateVT planning process began in earnest in 2018, but it builds on years of work developing, studying, and imagining the creative sector and what it could be. The planning timeline includes milestones, events and studies stretching back more than a decade.

2004 - 2009	CREATIVE COMMUNITIES PROJECT	Initiatives led by the Vermont Council on Rural Development in partnership with the Vermont Arts Council raised awareness and built momentum for Vermont's creative economy. "Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy" was published in 2004, followed by a statewide conference in 2007, and in-depth creative community planning in 12 towns across the state.
2016	VERMONT CREATIVE NETWORK AUTHORIZATION	The Vermont legislature formally authorized the formation of the Vermont Creative Network, with the Vermont Arts Council providing backbone support.
2016 - 2019	ZONE PLANS	Two regional creative economy studies provided a model for CreateVT. "Artists, Artisans, and Entrepreneurs: Creative Economy of the East Central Vermont Region" was prepared for the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission and the East Central Vermont Economic Development District in 2016. ³⁹ The Vermont Creative Network commissioned "Building on a Legacy of Creativity: Understanding and Expanding the Creative Economy of the Northeast Kingdom" in 2019. ⁴⁰
2019	"ASSESSING VERMONT'S CREATIVE ECONOMY" STUDY	Mt. Auburn Associates and Community Roots completed a comprehensive economic study and survey of the Vermont creative sector: its size and nature, needs, and opportunities for growth. A report of their findings, "Assessing Vermont's Creative Economy," is available at vermontcreativenetwork.org .
	Economic Data Analysis	Economic and employment analysis utilized the industry-standard 2018 Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI) data. EMSI's labor market information combines information from more than 90 sources, updated quarterly.
	Regional Focus Groups and Interviews	A series of ten open-ended focus groups around the state offered a chance for creative sector members to share their perspectives on the creative economy in each region: concerns, priorities, and ideas for growth.

³⁹ Rosenfeld, Stuart et al. "Art, Artisans, and Entrepreneurs: Creative Economy of the East Central Vermont Region." Michael Kane Consulting, Inc., 2016.

⁴⁰ Levy, Melissa et al. "Building on a Legacy of Creativity: Understanding and Expanding the Creative Economy of the Northeast Kingdom." Community Roots, 21 December 2018.

	Statewide Creative Sector Survey	A statewide survey focused on freelancers and small businesses in 2019, gathering input and data on business practices and needs.
2020 - 2021	CreateVT PLANNING PROCESS	The Vermont Arts Council and Community Workshop led a comprehensive visioning and planning process to create the Vermont creative sector's first action plan.
MAY 2020	Creative Sector Response & Recovery Forum	With the onset of Covid-19, there was a critical need to share pandemic-related information and resources with the creative sector and to learn how the pandemic was affecting creatives. A Town Hall-style event featured speakers from the legislature and resource organizations, sharing essential updates about pandemic support.
MAY - JUN 2020	COVID-19 Support Survey	Eighty-five creative sector members answered a short survey that followed the Creative Sector Response & Recovery Forum in spring of 2020. Responses helped the VAC immediately shape its short-term and long-term Covid-19 recovery resources, as well as the fall planning process.
SEP - NOV 2020	Creative Sector Vision Survey	Creative sector members responded to an in-depth online survey in fall of 2020, sharing their visions and priorities for advancing the creative sector. Responses shaped the vision and goals, offered action ideas, and defined the sector's priorities moving forward.
OCT 2020	FutureJam	The planning team hosted four visioning sessions throughout the day on Oct. 6, with identical content and agendas, giving stakeholders the opportunity to participate at the most convenient times. Participants learned about the CreateVT process and discussed three central questions about Vermont's creative sector.
	Vision Artwork	Juniper Creative Arts (Jennifer Herrera Condry, Will Kasso Condry, and Alexa Herrera Condry of Brandon) participated in the FutureJam sessions. They harvested ideas, comments and visions from the sessions and created an original artwork representing Vermont's vision for the creative sector.
	Portrait Interviews	Artist Rebecca Kinhead of Cornwall painted portraits of nine members of Vermont's creative sector, while Community Workshop team members interviewed them about their visions for the future of the creative sector.

OCT - DEC 2020	IdeaJams	In a series of three virtual “Idea Jams” in the fall of 2020, participants dove deeper into a vision and goals for the sector. Each jam session offered a chance to focus on a different aspect of the creative sector and interact with different groups.
DEC 2020	Jamboree	The fall visioning process concluded with a day of celebration, reflection and action. Creatives tuned in for a variety of sessions throughout the day: meet-ups with creatives working in similar areas (advocacy, business, social change, education and placemaking); brown bag action lunches with statewide leaders; and music from artist KeruBo.
MAR 2021	Strategy Sessions & Partner Review	<p>A series of four half-day strategy sessions in 2021 brought together groups of 8-15 creative sector leaders to process and shape potential action ideas. The team identified and invited participants representing a full spectrum of races, ages, regions, segments, roles and perspectives. Participants reviewed proposed outcomes and action ideas and identified the most critical priorities for the creative sector.</p> <p>Another group key stakeholders reviewed the first draft of this plan and provided critical feedback on structure, strategies, and language. Readers included: 1) people of color and stakeholders from groups that were underrepresented in other planning activities; 2) VCN steering team members, partners, and representatives of allied networks; and 3) statewide leaders, and experts with experience implementing similar plans and growing networks.</p>
MAY 2021	PLAN RELEASE	The VCN introduced the plan to the broader public via a public launch on May 3, inviting public comment and response before final release.
2021 +	IMPLEMENTATION	The Vermont Arts Council and Vermont Creative Network will oversee a network approach to implementation, with action opportunities for individuals, local teams, partners and allies, and statewide leaders.

A4. CREATIVE SECTOR RESOURCES

The networks, associations and organizations listed here all serve, support or connect Vermont's creative people, businesses and entrepreneurs. This list is not comprehensive; we focus on sharing organizations and associations that operate statewide and can connect people to more local and specific resources. Some directly support a particular creative segment or discipline while others support industry, innovation, learning or other areas critical to creative sector growth. Inclusion of an organization here is not an endorsement of its work or policies, but a resource for further connection.

- AIA Vermont (American Institute of Architects Vermont)
- AIGA Vermont (American Institute of Graphic Artists)
- ASLA Vermont (Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects)
- Big Heavy World
- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
- Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont
- Center for Women and Enterprise
- Clemmons Family Farm
- Common Good Vermont
- Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers
- Inclusive Arts Vermont
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- New England Grassroots Environment Fund
- NOFA-VT (Northeast Organic Farmers Association)
- League of Local Historical Societies
- League of Vermont Writers
- Literary North
- Migrant Justice
- NAACP (local chapters)
- Poetry Society of Vermont
- Preservation Trust of Vermont
- Resilient Vermont Network
- Rural Vermont
- Snelling Center for Government
- University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies
- University of Vermont Cooperative Extension
- USDA Vermont Rural Development
- Vermont Abenaki Artists' Association
- Vermont Access Network
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Development
- Vermont Agency of Education
- Vermont Agency of Human Services
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
- Vermont Agency of Transportation
- Vermont Art Educators Association



- Vermont Arts Council
- Vermont Arts and Culture Disaster and Resilience Network
- Vermont Association of Broadcasters
- Vermont Association for Jazz Education
- Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
- Vermont Attractions Association
- Vermont Bakers Association
- Vermont Brewers Association
- Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies
- Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Community Garden Network
- Vermont Community Leadership Network
- Vermont Community Newspaper Group
- Vermont Council on Rural Development
- Vermont Crafts Council
- Vermont Curators Group
- Vermont Dance Alliance
- Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development
- Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing
- Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
- Vermont Farm to School Network
- Vermont Folklife Center
- Vermont Food Investors Network
- Vermont Forest Product Industry Network
- Vermont Fresh Network
- Vermont Growers Association
- Vermont Historical Society
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

- Vermont Humanities
- Vermont Leadership Institute
- Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Vermont Library Association
- Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center
- Vermont Museum Association
- Vermont Music Educators Association
- Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity
- Vermont Press Association
- Vermont Professionals of Color Network
- Vermont Recreation and Parks Association
- Vermont Releaf Collective
- Vermont Retail and Grocers Association
- Vermont Small Business Development Center
- Vermont Specialty Foods Association
- Vermont StoryLab
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
- Vermont Technology Alliance
- Vermont Tourism Network
- Vermont Venture Network
- Vermont Weavers Guild
- Vermont Women's Investor Network
- Vermont Wood Works Council
- Vermont Writing Collaborative
- Women Business Owners Network of Vermont



A5. CREATIVE INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATIONS

Vermont's creative sector is measured and defined using the following NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes.

Specialty Foods	311930 Flavoring Syrup and Concentrate Manufacturing	722330 Mobile Food Services	Related to Advertising	and Infants' Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing
311340 Nonchocolate Confectionery Manufacturing	311941 Mayonnaise, Dressing, and Other Prepared Sauce Manufacturing	Culture & Heritage	541922 Commercial Photography	315280 Other Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing
311351 Chocolate and Confectionery Manufacturing from Cacao Beans	311942 Spice and Extract Manufacturing	519120 Libraries and Archives	332323 Ornamental and Architectural Metal Work Manufacturing	315990 Apparel Accessories and Other Apparel Manufacturing
311352 Confectionery Manufacturing from Purchased Chocolate	311991 Perishable Prepared Food Manufacturing	712110 Museums	337212 Custom Architectural Woodwork and Millwork Manufacturing	316998 All Other Leather Good and Allied Product Manufacturing
311412 Frozen Specialty Food Manufacturing	311999 All Other Miscellaneous Food Manufacturing	712120 Historical Sites	541310 Architectural Services	332215 Metal Kitchen Cookware, Utensil, Cutlery, Flatware (except Precious) Mfg
311421 Fruit and Vegetable Canning	312120 Breweries	712130 Zoos and Botanical Gardens	541320 Landscape Architectural Services	335121 Residential Electric Lighting Fixture Manufacturing
311513 Cheese Manufacturing	312130 Wineries	Design	541340 Drafting Services	337110 Wood Kitchen Cabinet and Countertop Manufacturing
311811 Retail Bakeries	312140 Distilleries	323111 Commercial Printing (except Screen and Books)	541410 Interior Design Services	337121 Upholstered Household Furniture Manufacturing
311812 Commercial Bakeries	445291 Baked Goods Stores	323113 Commercial Screen Printing	315210 Cut and Sew Apparel Contractors	337122 Nonupholstered Wood Household
311821 Cookie and Cracker Manufacturing	445292 Confectionery and Nut Stores	541430 Graphic Design Services	315220 Men's and Boys' Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing	
311919 Other Snack Food Manufacturing	445299 All Other Specialty Food Stores	541810 Advertising Agencies	315240 Women's, Girls',	
		541850 Outdoor Advertising		
		541860 Direct Mail Advertising		
		541890 Other Services		

Furniture Manufacturing	511110 Newspaper Publishers	Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals	Companies	711110 Theater Companies and Dinner Theaters
337127 Institutional Furniture Manufacturing	511210 Software Publishers		711310 Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events with Facilities	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers
337211 Wood Office Furniture Manufacturing	512110 Motion Picture and Video Production	541830 Media Buying Agencies		
339910 Jewelry and Silverware Manufacturing	512120 Motion Picture and Video Distribution	541840 Media Representatives	711320 Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events	Visual Arts & Crafts
339920 Sporting and Athletic Goods Manufacturing	512131 Motion Picture Theaters (except Drive-Ins)	Literary Arts & Publishing	711410 Agents and Managers for Artists, Athletes, Entertainers, and Public Figures	327110 Pottery, Ceramics, and Plumbing Fixture Manufacturing
339930 Doll, Toy, and Game Manufacturing	512132 Drive-In Motion Picture Theaters	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers		327212 Other Pressed and Blown Glass and Glassware Manufacturing
451120 Hobby, Toy, and Game Stores	512191 Teleproduction and Other Postproduction Services	323117 Books Printing	711120 Dance Companies	448310 Jewelry Stores
541420 Industrial Design Services	512199 Other Motion Picture and Video Industries	323120 Support Activities for Printing	339992 Musical Instrument Manufacturing	451130 Sewing, Needlework, and Piece Goods Stores
541490 Other Specialized Design Services	515111 Radio Networks	451211 Book Stores	451140 Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores	453220 Gift, Novelty, and Souvenir Stores
Film & Media	515112 Radio Stations	511120 Periodical Publishers	512230 Music Publishers	453920 Art Dealers
334310 Audio and Video Equipment Manufacturing	515120 Television Broadcasting	511130 Book Publishers	512240 Sound Recording Studios	541921 Photography Studios, Portrait
424920 Book, Periodical, and Newspaper Merchant Wholesalers	515210 Cable and Other Subscription Programming	511191 Greeting Card Publishers	512250 Record Production and Distribution	611610 Fine Arts Schools
451212 News Dealers and Newsstands	519110 News Syndicates	511199 All Other Publishers	512290 Other Sound Recording Industries	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers
	519130 Internet	711510 Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	711130 Musical Groups and Artists	
		Performing Arts		
		711190 Other Performing Arts		



CREATEVT

ACTION PLAN FOR VERMONT'S CREATIVE SECTOR

August 2021
vermontcreativenetwork.org

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