

For Discussion Purposes

Grow Wisconsin Creatively Initiative

Community economic development leaders recognize that arts and culture sustain and attract people and businesses that underpin local economies. They understand that **businesses and workers** want to be in communities that have vibrant creative businesses harnessing culture, arts, and sense of place. An **increased state investment is urgently needed to support the growing interest in and need for creative economic development** in rural and urban communities throughout Wisconsin.

MISSION

To promote, support and expand the creative economic sector to grow local economies, strengthen workforce development, and encourage quality of life and sense of place.

GOALS

The proposed investment in **regional creative economic development** will support:

- Strategic planning for community cultural growth and sustainability.
- Initiatives to revitalise downtowns and main streets, including civic engagement initiatives and cultural tourism programs.

In addition, **the regional creative economic development investment will support Wisconsin's creative people, organizations, businesses** through the development of:

- Relief, recovery, and start-up core operating and program grants to engage and grow audiences and community involvement.
- Programs to increase access to arts and cultural opportunities.
- Projects to accommodate post-pandemic public health guidelines.

OBJECTIVES

1. Connect creative economy stakeholders, including regional policy makers, creative workers, employers, creative advocacy organizations, and consumers of creative works to build capability, connect stakeholders, and support inclusive, sustainable economic growth.
2. Grow momentum and opportunities and close gaps and disparities.
3. Quantify creative sector economic impact.
4. Highlight and support rich cultural and creative activity.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

To build a collaborative umbrella among regional economic development organizations, local governments, businesses, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and creative industries (including artists/small business owners):

- Develop a plan to unify regional and local promotion of the creative sector.
- Develop incentives, information, and resources to facilitate regional collaboration.
- Facilitate development and expand local creative economy programs and projects.

To encourage the retention and growth of talent in the creative economy:

- Provide technical support and access to capital for culturally-based businesses and creative entrepreneurs.
- Provide seminars and training to improve creative business management.

To promote and document creativity, culture, and innovation in Wisconsin:

- Track and report on the creative economic sector.
- Reinforce arts and heritage education through regional and statewide public information campaigns.
- Promote civic engagement leading to cultural growth, including cultural tourism and celebratory events and initiatives.

To make culture and heritage priority community investments:

- Provide funding for historic towns and village centers and arts and craft businesses with long-term, deep roots in the community (e.g., Bayfield's Eckels Pottery www.eckelspottery.com).
- Encourage and facilitate creative entrepreneurial development in vacant industrial and retail spaces (e.g., [Phantom Galleries – Wisconsin](#) from the Wisconsin Arts Board).
- Facilitate the preservation and increased volume of creative spaces (e.g., Austin, TX's Creative Spaces Program; www.austintexas.gov/creative-space-assistance-program).

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Program Development and Oversight

The *Grow Wisconsin Creatively Initiative* will support creative sector economic development and will be developed and managed by the **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)**, in collaboration with the **Wisconsin Arts Board**. WEDC will provide a forum for collaboration around program design and micro-grant distribution that includes input from key stakeholders, including Regional and County Economic Development Organizations, Main Street programs, BID Districts, CVBs, and Chambers of Commerce.

Fiscal and Programmatic Management

Each of the nine participating **Regional Economic Development Organizations** will serve as the fiscal and programmatic administrator for *Grow Wisconsin Creatively* program activities. In addition to program grants, funds can be utilized to retain program staff to develop and oversee program activities. Duties will include: 1) operational oversight and 2) compliance with program requirements to ensure that funds are spent and managed according to the goals, objectives and mission of the initiative.

Technical Support

Create Wisconsin, in coordination with WEDC and the Wisconsin Arts Board, will provide individualized technical assistance to participating regional economic development organisations.

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