



# TODD NOVAK

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 51<sup>ST</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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DATE: Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
RE: Testimony on Assembly Bill 449  
TO: Assembly Committee on Rural Development  
FROM: State Representative Todd Novak

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Thank you Chairman Armstrong and members of the Assembly Committee on Rural Development for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 449 (AB 449), which creates a rural creative economy grant program.

I co-authored this bill with Senator Quinn after having initially worked on this idea during the budget process. I am glad to see this proposal come before the committee for a public hearing because this grant program would surge investment dollars to our rural communities.

Large cities and urban areas often benefit from philanthropic donors that work to advance the creative economy in those spaces. This oftentimes leaves our rural creative economy with the potential to be overlooked when it comes to fostering artistic and cultural efforts in small communities. Beyond the appreciation for these artistic and cultural elements there is also a significant economic component at stake; the creative economy provides jobs.

The proposal before you today would provide grants with a dollar-for-dollar match to businesses, associations, or local governments working to promote and assist creative businesses, products, or services in communities with less than 20,000 people or areas that are not urbanized according to the federal Census Bureau. The Arts Board in the Department of Tourism would distribute these grants on a competitive basis and report back to the Legislature to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The funding available for the grants would be \$1 million over the biennium with a maximum grant award of \$50,000 per recipient.

This proposal will assist our rural communities as they recover from the pandemic and will inject critical investment dollars into our local economy to support the creative economy.

Thank you for your consideration of AB 449.



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# Romaine Robert Quinn

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STATE SENATOR • 25<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Romaine Robert Quinn  
To: Assembly Committee on Rural Development  
Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 449  
Relating to: rural creative economy grant program and making an appropriation  
Date: November 8, 2023

Thank you members of the Assembly Committee on Rural Development for allowing me to share testimony on Assembly Bill 449. This bill would create a Rural Wisconsin Creative Economy Grant Program and follows up on our efforts to invest in our rural communities.

Assembly Bill 449 creates a \$1 million grant program over the biennium, administered by the Arts Board under the Department of Tourism. This state investment would additionally generate a minimum of \$1 million annually in matching funds from grant recipients and the National Endowment for the Arts. The grants are to be capped at \$50,000 and awarded on a competitive basis to those that work to promote creative businesses, products, or services in rural areas of Wisconsin with the specific goals of fostering the following:

1. Job and business creation and capacity building.
2. Workforce training and development.
3. Community and sector planning, development, and engagement.
4. Products or services with artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic qualities.

Through the budget, we significantly boosted the state's tourism and marketing resources to promote Wisconsin and compete with our neighboring states. We want to ensure that rural Wisconsin also gets a fair share, as currently, just 20 percent of the grant dollars available through the Wisconsin Arts Board are awarded to rural areas. With a grant specifically dedicated to our rural areas, my area of the state will be better suited to compete with Minnesota who as of 2022 invested \$7.34 per capita to arts agencies as opposed to Wisconsin's \$0.14.

Earlier this year, I was invited on a Creative Economy Tour throughout my district where I visited some of the arts facilities and spoke with leaders from the chambers and business owners. It's clear that our rural areas have a lot to offer, but need a grant program like this to help promote their unique characteristics to appeal to both visitors and residents.

Thank you again for your consideration today.

Good morning!

Thank you, Chairman Armstrong and thank you, members of this Committee for having me here today to talk about AB 499, a piece of legislation that I believe can have a real meaningful impact on the lives of a great many people in our State's rural communities.

My name is Chris Clemens and I'm the Executive Director of the Viroqua Chamber in Viroqua, WI. The Viroqua Chamber is a 501(c)(6) non profit acting as a traditional Chamber of Commerce, providing leadership and resources to strengthen and build our economic base. We are a Main Street organization, committed to the preservation and social and economic vitality of our beautiful historic downtown district. We serve as the chief tourism agent for our community, contracting with the City of Viroqua to produce cultural events and amenities that will attract overnight visitors.

I am also a husband, a father of two children, ages eight and ten, and I'm the owner of two small businesses in Viroqua. My wife and I own and operate a specialty cheese, meat, and fine foods store with a small restaurant, and I own a soap manufacturing company dedicated to supporting women in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

I'm a kid who grew up on a farm outside Rochester, MN. We grew corn and beans and raised just enough beef cattle to keep the freezer full and keep me busy enough to stay out of trouble, mostly. We grew up with seven different cousins living under our roof at different times, children whose parents struggled with alcohol and drug addiction and mental illness. Although mom and dad barely scraped by taking care of me along with my sister and brother, they instilled in me the importance of looking after folks, folks who need somebody to believe in them and to give them some chance to make it in this mixed up world.

I want to thank the Assembly Committee on Rural Development for their leadership in the crafting of AB 449. It reflects your awareness of the important work being done all across the state by organizations similar to Viroqua Chamber and who are using the creative economy to uplift their communities.

Viroqua is in Vernon County and by the most recent data, Vernon County is the tenth poorest county in the state as measured by per capita income. In order for our small business owners to succeed, it's important for us to attract outside dollars to our community because the local population can't support the businesses year-round. We direct advertising dollars to the cities of Chicago, Milwaukee, and the Twin Cities to bring much needed dollars into our community, dollars that go into the pockets of our small business owners who live here and will recirculate those dollars again throughout the community.

While many folks are coming from the larger cities to get out and enjoy nature, they also want to find familiar amenities that they would enjoy at home: live music, art galleries, great bookstores, theatres. Travelers are also looking for authentic experiences, romanticized versions of small town americana that make them think about giving up the 9-5 for "the simple life." Farmers markets, community festivals, and just about anything involving bratwurst, beer, and cheese it would seem somehow makes folks want to trade their BMW for a John Deere.

The type of amenities I'm describing aren't important only for attracting tourists and visitors, but are also critical components of our workforce strategy in Viroqua. When folks from across the country are considering taking a job in or around Viroqua, they want to know that they're coming to a place where their families will be happy and fulfilled, that they're coming to a welcoming and vibrant community that is full of opportunity.

So how do we achieve these goals in Viroqua? By leaning into the artists and the creators, the thinkers and problem solvers, and most importantly, the doers in our community who are likewise committed to making great things happen.

In 2023, we held 26 Farmers Markets from May through the end of October. Our Market averaged around 38 weekly vendors made up of local farmers, bakers, crafters, creators, artists, and a "house band" comprised of local elders who show up weekly to play fiddles and guitars. We put out a giant box of sidewalk chalk and invite children to make art while mom and dad cruise the market. Through the Viroqua Farmers Market, we helped put \$480,000 into the pockets of our friends and neighbors. About 43% of those dollars went to our produce vendors while the rest went to our artists, crafters, and creators.

We hosted or supported 26 free outdoor concerts in and around Viroqua this year. The magic of the music events is how they bring people together. We supported the Winding Roads Art Tour, a weekend long sojourn through the bluffs and valleys of the Driftless Region where visitors are invited into the homes and studios of dozens of area artists and creators. We supported the inaugural Ridges and Rivers Book Festival, a weekend long event featuring authors and poets from across the country and indeed, from around the world. The event featured readings, writing workshops, and opportunities to meet renowned creators. We spearheaded the revival of the Harvest Parade, an annual event celebrating the harvest season and honoring the plants and animals through enormous paper mache puppets and young children festooned in creative odes to the shifting seasons in all its forms.

As an organization, we've accomplished great things with extremely scarce resources. I'll open the books and let you know what our financial picture looks like.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 449 | November 8, 2023**

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We are a husband and wife film production team, we own Smoking Monkey Films, and we've been producing projects for film, corporate videos, documentaries, theatre and Public TV programs for over thirty years. In 2005 we purchased a small farm property with acreage in the Highland township just outside of Dodgeville, and moved our business and lives from Milwaukee to "our little slice of heaven."

There are small communities like ours, all over Wisconsin, with a rich arts and cultural heritage. People in small towns and surrounding areas have just as much a need to create and support that creativity, as in the big cities. Maybe more. As it's outlined in the bill, this just makes good economic sense.

As an example, we are on the board of a newly proposed Community Center in Dodgeville, called Merrimac and Main. And it not only will support social events and other gatherings, but we're also trying to create a space for arts and creativity. I've volunteered to teach a class there on beginning film making. Folks young and old can come in to learn camera work, sound and editing. They can basically make their own film. And we'd love to have those finished projects be part of a local film festival to be shown at The Dodge Theatre, right there on Main Street in Dodgeville. Folks from the community can come see films about the area made by people they know, and the money from ticket sales could go to the theatre owners to give a boost to their business. After the show folks can have a bite to eat at the new Mexican restaurant next door, or down the block at Bob's Bitchin' Barbecue for some ribs. People from the class learn a fun new skill, they get to see their movies on the big screen, and the businesses in the area get an up-tick. It's a win-win.

If you're out for a Sunday drive and you go through some of these small towns, you can see the examples of the past arts and culture, many of them have opera houses or performance theaters that have been there for generations. And they not only housed traveling operas and vaudeville shows, they were also home to the local community theaters and orchestras. And people from all over the surrounding area would come and support them. We're also helping out with a new group called The Dodgeville Area Arts Community. A few years ago the local tax payers voted overwhelmingly to spend millions for a new, state-of-the-art theatre to be built for the High School. The Dodgeville Area Arts group want to open that theatre up to other shows outside of high school performances. We'd like to bring in touring bands, vocal groups, comedy shows and other stage performers, just like those old style open houses. The people coming out to see these shows can go out and potentially spend money at the local eateries and taverns, helping our local businesses.

Last month we kicked off the Dodgeville Area Arts group by hosting a local variety show called American ShinDig. We had stories, music, and interviewed folks like the new Sheriff. People learned just what a sheriff did, what his jurisdiction was, and what were the most serious crime elements in the community. We also highlighted local business by interviewing members of the Chamber of Commerce, and producing short films showcasing retail businesses that have opened in the area. Now this was a free, no budget show. So it was a little bare bones, but we did get VERY positive feedback from the audience. We'd like to keep doing these shows on a regular basis, maybe four times a year, and support from a bill like this would help pay bands, storytellers and other local performers to motivate them to showcase their talent. And the more local talent we have on stage, the more friends and relatives of those performers will turn out and spread their money into the community. Folks love an excuse to come out and support their friends and neighbors. I, personally, would skip seeing a Broadway touring show at the Orpheum to see my local hardware store owner belting out "Luck Be A Lady Tonight" in a community theater production of *Guys and Dolls*, or go to a local open mike night to see our farmer neighbor do stand-up comedy.

We have examples in our area of just how the arts have contributed to economic growth. In the 1960s Mineral Point was a charming former mining and farm community that was a little bit on the decline. But then

a group of young painters, sculptors, woodworkers and other artists who wanted to be free of the financial confines of the big cities, found Mineral Point, bought some of the old stone buildings and they set up shop. And now Mineral Point is a thriving tourist destination for the arts. Shake Rag is renowned for hosting arts and crafts classes, The Driftless Film Festival is a yearly event in the Opera House, and the town is literally over-run during the Fall Art Tour in October.

And the same thing can be said of Spring Green. In the 60's a bunch of rag-tag actors and writers formed a theatre in the woods in the "middle of nowhere" and called it American Players Theatre. Today APT has grown into a world class Shakespearean company, and people travel from all over the country to make Spring Green their destination. They sell out nearly all of their shows, and those audience members spend their dollars on meals, hotels, and shopping in the area.

And this bill is even more important in this new, shifting economic climate. Post Covid many people learned that they weren't necessarily needed in the office, and could work from home. "Home" being anywhere with an internet connection. So over the past five years or so we've been meeting new transplants to the area who dreamed of casting off the "shackles of urban living" and making their move out to the country.

We've met people from Highland, Avoca and the Clyde township who are aviation and computer engineers, film producers, geological drone pilots, we even have a Hollywood special effects expert who moved to the farm a mile and a half down the road from us, and he still does his business, creating special effects for movies and TV shows, from a small office in Spring Green. These are people who, even though they love the peace and solitude of country living, they are also ardent supporters of the arts. And they'd love to spend their money being part of an active arts and performance culture in a town like Dodgeville.

And as we all know, dollars spent within a community can have a snowball effect. A thriving arts scene can contribute to restaurants, bars and hotels. Those businesses also spend those dollars for plumbing, heating and cooling, carpentry for expansion. And new businesses looking for a place to set up shop, will look at these thriving communities. Communities spending their dollars locally. Communities who have good schools, fire and police departments, hospitals and health care. And they will want to bring their businesses there. Raise their families there. Contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of that community.

But our final point might seem a little out there in left field. As beneficial as the arts are to the economic growth of any small town, it's not just about money. It's about something just as important; bringing communities together. No one can argue we are living in a dangerously divided country right now. Due to Covid, people are used to being siloed into Our screens are taking the place of real community interaction. Real honest dialog. I know it's an everyday fact for those of you who work here under the Dome, but out there the world is more than just Red or Blue. On an artist's pallet there are more than 16.7 million different colors.

When people get involved in performance and art, they come together for a common goal. No one rehearsing a theatre production or community band performance cares one iota about who voted for who or what yard signs you have up. All they care about is making sure everyone has learned their lines, hit their marks and not played any sour notes. Everyone is working together for the success of the whole group. And when they work together they soon realize that whatever few differences they might have politically, pale in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of things they have in common. And that's when any divisions we have can shrink.

We cannot stress enough how important this bill would be to small communities around the State, both building them up economically, and bringing them closer together socially. It would bolster local businesses by bringing in tourism and visitor dollars, increase local spending, as well as attracting new businesses and families to the area to build the local tax base. Arts and culture are one of the leading factors when measuring a rich and thriving community. And this bill would help start the ball rolling for any small Wisconsin communities wanting to grow and reach their full potential. Winston Churchill once said, "The arts are essential to any complete national life. The State owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them." Thank you for your time and consideration.

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 449 | NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Justin Fonfara

I write to you as a reference and vision for our creative economy within Wisconsin and the support that I am asking for.

The proposed grant would benefit many of our communities throughout the state. As an acknowledgement to how our communities have formed and continue to exist, and is the backbone of society, cultural and artistic vibrancy is integral in increasing. We make the connection that our schools teach us how to toot the recorder in 1<sup>st</sup> grade or work the table saw in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. We even make the connection that that our schools teach us about spinning clay to make pots in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

We understand that we need these basic functions taught to us even so that we have created curriculum for our schools to teach it to the masses. But what does that have to do with your support? What are we really trying to accomplish?

Without the ability to have a maker's space, *Proof* would not be able to exist.

*Proof* is a company utilizing a collaborative effort approach in the Tiletown Brewery building in Green Bay. They are a company dedicated to helping food and beverage entrepreneurs build stronger, more scalable, and sustainable businesses. They achieve this by providing educational accelerators, innovative coaching, and turn-key incubator facilities to talented food and beverage makers, restaurateurs, and small business owners. They believe the food industry is the key ingredient to a vibrant and diverse community and it is their mission to create more sustainable economic opportunities for the industry. *Proof* is possible because of several sponsors aiding them in their financial efforts.

Or perhaps without the Shell Lake Center for the Arts, Mr. Dominic Serpa would not have come from abroad to be a master teacher for the summer and teach jazz and trumpet. Further and most notably, creating the Dominic Serpa Scholarship Fund to help young musicians financially meet their summer camp needs.

We can see that the impact of investing in infrastructure of these programs is a multi-faceted necessity. Not only do we see the immediate benefit of their attendance, but also the longevity of what the individuals can do with the skills they have acquired through these programs and how they use these newly acquired skills to enhance and bolster local economies. Lifelong networking is defined as the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts, none of this being possible if a space to facilitate these interactions is not created.

I was headed to see 2 of the 5 children I have in Norfolk, Va in February of 2015. My wife and I planned an extended vacation after we left Norfolk and we headed toward Asheville, NC to visit the Biltmore. Because of a late start, we made it as far as Charlotte and had to hunker down for the night. As we ate dinner, I was perusing a tourism magazine and found many venues of interest, one of which included an outdoor, theater-in-the-round event center that hosts many musicians and acts from all over the country. The 2,000-person occupancy theater-in-the-round has around the perimeter many businesses including eating and drinking establishments to feed the masses and help create the atmosphere of joy and merriment.

Without the infrastructure of venues like the Shell Lake Center for the Arts and Proof in Tiletown Brewery, the theater-in-the-round could not exist.

There are so many great organizations and people around the state of Wisconsin with so many phenomenal ideas that could thrive with support on what we are asking. Creative economy isn't an unmeasurable beast that drains money for hopefuls, but rather it is a viable and vibrant part of our economy that requires help. Your help. It fuels our tourism, businesses, educators, cities, government and so many more things unmentioned.

Today, I ask for your support and your yes vote to Assembly Bill 449.

Justin Fonfara

Mayor, City of Rice Lake

Co-Owner of Mr. Fun's Candy Shop, Mr. Fun's Toy Shop, Tactical Escape 101 Escape Rooms and Endgame Mini Golf

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# Cultural and Creative Vibrancy Essential to Thriving Rural Economies



**CREATE  
WISCONSIN**

Arts | Community | Economy

**Assembly Committee on Rural Development  
PUBLIC HEARING  
November 8, 2023**

Testimony in Support of **ASSEMBLY BILL 449**, relating to rural creative economy grant program, and making an appropriation.

Anne Katz, Executive Director, Create Wisconsin

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# AB 449: Rural Creative Economy Grant Program

Under Assembly Bill 449, a RURAL CREATIVE ECONOMY GRANT PROGRAM would be created in the Wisconsin Department of Tourism to promote and assist the development of businesses, products, or services in *RURAL AREAS* that have an artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic value.

Under the bill, "*Rural areas*" means a city, town, or village with a population of less than 20,000, a county with a population of less than 25,000, or an area that is not an urbanized area, as defined by the federal bureau of the census. Estimates reveal that *1808 of 1850 municipalities have 2023 populations of less than 20,000, while 26 of 72 counties have 2023 populations of less than 25,000. Wisconsin has 18 "urbanized areas", with populations of 50,000 or more.*

Grants, **not to exceed \$50,000**, would be awarded on a competitive basis to businesses, municipal and county governmental agencies, tribal governmental agencies, and business development organizations or associations that work to promote and assist creative businesses, products, or services in rural areas in this state, including by fostering any of the following:

- Job and business creation and capacity building.
- Workforce training and development.
- Community and sector planning, development, and engagement.
- Products or services with artistic, cultural, creative, or aesthetic qualities.

The proposed state investment of \$500,000 GPR in each year of the biennium would generate a minimum of \$1 million more annually in matching funds from state grant recipients and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The Wisconsin Arts Board may not award a grant unless the business, governmental agency, or business development organization or association has **secured from nonstate sources an amount equal to the amount of the proposed grant.**

The arts board is directed to develop a matrix to evaluate the effectiveness of rural creative economy development grants awarded and submit a report on the effectiveness of the rural creative economy development grants, as determined by the matrix, to the Joint Committee on Finance no later than May 1, 2025.

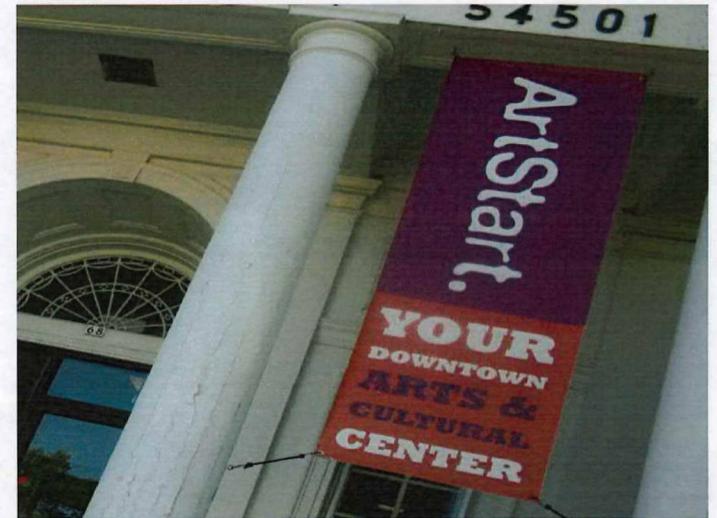
Rural Creative Economy Grant Program proposed 2023-24 investment of \$500,000 GPR will help boost tourism in rural communities by promoting and assisting Wisconsin's creative people, places, and cultural assets.



## Rural Travel Visitors Seeking Arts and Culture Activities

“Hundreds of thousands of people bring millions of dollars into the economies of Wisconsin’s vibrant rural places each year, encouraged as much by **arts and culture** as by scenic beauty and outdoor assets,” according to Rural Voices for Prosperity.

“Families who used to spend their time off sitting in a cabin taking in nature now also want, and sometimes expect, access to **plentiful arts and cultural activities**, along with interesting local foods, and unique shopping and lots to do,” the report says.





## Tourism is big business.

**111.1 MILLION  
VISITS**

**in 2022, up 8.8  
million visits, or  
8.7%, over the  
previous year.**

### 2022 RECORD-BREAKING YEAR WISCONSIN'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

**14.9B**  
DIRECT  
VISITOR  
SPENDING

**23.7B**  
TOTAL  
ECONOMIC  
IMPACT

**174,623**  
JOBS  
GENERATED

**1.5B**  
STATE & LOCAL  
TAXES  
GENERATED

Source: *Data from Annual study by Tourism Economics commissioned by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.*

TRAVEL  
**WISCONSIN**  
— .COM —

Wherever you go in  
Wisconsin, you are sure to  
discover incredible art and  
culture.



Exhibits



Museum & History



Native Culture



Architecture



Art Schools



Art Tours



Performing Arts

Every corner of the state contributes to Wisconsin being a premier travel destination

Visitors generated significant economic benefits in 2022 in all 72 counties.

Source: *Data from Annual study by Tourism Economics commissioned by the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.*

County	Total Economic Impact Millions	County	Total Economic Impact Millions	County	Total Economic Impact Millions	County	Total Economic Impact Millions
Milwaukee	\$3,914	Washington	\$284	Juneau	\$115	Taylor	\$53
Sauk	\$1,920	Fond du Lac	\$274	Shawano	\$111	Washburn	\$53
Dane	\$2,356	Marinette	\$249	Grant	\$108	Kewaunee	\$48
Waukesha	\$1,591	Portage	\$245	Lincoln	\$103	Burnett	\$44
Brown	\$1,271	Adams	\$240	Dunn	\$96	Rusk	\$44
Walworth	\$887	Ozaukee	\$230	Bayfield	\$89	Marquette	\$41
Outagamie	\$683	Manitowoc	\$216	Green	\$80	Richland	\$40
Door	\$582	St. Croix	\$208	Langlade	\$77	Price	\$36
Winnebago	\$522	Columbia	\$201	Iowa	\$74	Iron	\$36
La Crosse	\$489	Wood	\$198	Vernon	\$73	Buffalo	\$28
Racine	\$486	Jefferson	\$195	Crawford	\$71	Lafayette	\$27
Marathon	\$459	Barron	\$180	Calumet	\$68	Forest	\$24
Rock	\$439	Chippewa	\$174	Trempealeau	\$67	Pepin	\$14
Sheboygan	\$439	Polk	\$156	Ashland	\$65	Florence	\$10
Eau Claire	\$433	Monroe	\$148	Jackson	\$63	Menomonie	\$5
Kenosha	\$424	Sawyer	\$141	Green Lake	\$62	STATE	\$23,655
Vilas	\$363	Oconto	\$135	Clark	\$60		
Oneida	\$362	Waushara	\$120	Pierce	\$59	Pop. Under 25,000	

## WISCONSIN'S CREATIVE SECTOR Creativity, Culture & Art

Wisconsin's creative sector contributed **\$10.8 billion** to the state's economy in 2021 and employed nearly 90,000 workers – more workers than in the beer, biotech, and papermaking industries.

Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) [analysis](#) developed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis



## WISCONSIN'S CREATIVE SECTOR

- **21st** among states in value added in 2021
- **41st** among states in value added growth between 2020-2021
- **8.44%** increase in value added growth since 2020, compared to **14.43%** increase nationally

Source: Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) [analysis](#) developed by the Bureau of Economic Analysis

- **50<sup>th</sup>** nationally in per-capita funding for arts and culture in 2022. Wisconsin appropriated **\$807,100**, or **\$0.14 per capita** in 2022 for the Wisconsin Arts Board, compared to the \$41.9 million, or \$7.34 per capita, appropriated to the Minnesota State Arts Board, according to [National Academy of State Art Agencies](#).
- Fiscal Year 2024 per capita funding will increase to \$0.18. In 2023-24, Act 19 provided **\$954,500 GPR**, while in 2024-25, the Arts Board budget is projected to be **\$1,078,100 GPR**.

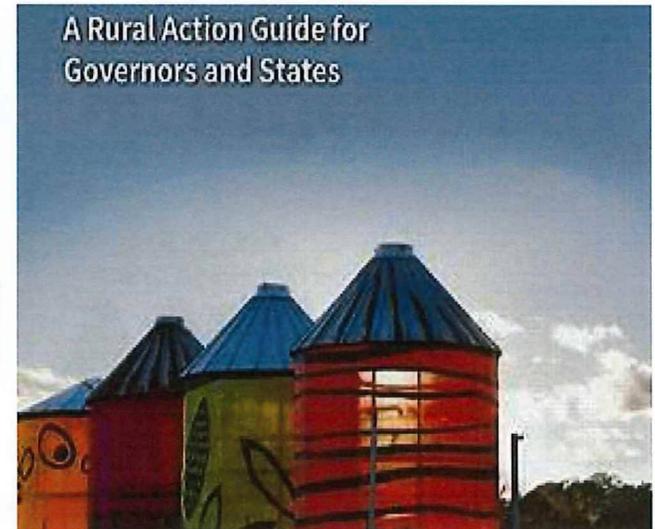
# Rural Prosperity through Arts and Culture

**Increased state investment in creative economic development will bolster rural workforce development efforts targeted to young working age adults.**

Many rural Wisconsin communities have authentic unique cultures to celebrate, yet they have long contended with problems related to an evolving economy, including the loss of industry and outmigration of young and skilled workers.

- Between 2012 and 2020, data from federal income tax returns show that Wisconsin lost 106,000 “families,” in which the tax filer was under 26 years of age. Often, these are single individuals.
- “Bright lights, big city” may best describe the reason many left. Only 37% of those who left moved to a state bordering Wisconsin. Of those, nearly 70% migrated to either Minneapolis (42%), Chicago (26%), or Detroit (2%), the three largest metro areas in the Midwest.
- To address out migration challenges, Forward Analytics, the research arm of the Wisconsin Counties Association, suggests that Wisconsin policymakers should **consider a multipronged approach to better attract talent, including bolstering amenities that appeal to young adults.**

Source 2022 Forward Analytics report, [Moving In? Exploring Wisconsin's Migration Challenges](#).



The National Governors Association in a 2019 report, [RURAL PROSPERITY THROUGH THE ARTS & CREATIVE SECTOR, A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States](#), highlights steps that elected officials and states can take to promote rural prosperity through the arts and culture. Cover Photo: Wormfarm Institute, Reedsburg, Wisconsin.

## ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING ASSEMBLY BILL 449/SENATE BILL 448

The proposed state investment in rural creative economic development will help boost the visitor economy which spans multiple industries. Key beneficiaries of the growth of the creative sector especially include business in accommodations, food and beverage, recreation, retail shopping, local transportation and air travel.

