



Creating Connection Through Culture

We value cultural amenities because they entertain, provide opportunities to make sense of the world, help us heal, and create spaces to connect with each other. Three-quarters of Americans say they “consider arts and culture personally important to them,” and 86 percent believe “arts and culture improve my community’s quality of life and livability.” Most Americans also believe all students should have access to quality arts education (92 percent) and that government plays an important part in funding for the arts (83 percent).¹

Arts and cultural institutions—including theater, music, libraries, education and community centers—are also strong drivers of community connectivity. The Urban Institute and Knight Foundation’s 2020 study on community ties found that people who say their neighborhood “has easy access to arts and cultural amenities are more satisfied with their city as a place to live, identify more with the local lifestyle and culture, and invest more time and resources in their communities.”² Arts and cultural education programs in K–12 schools are also shown to increase test scores and lower dropout rates.

Arts, Culture, and Michigan’s Economy

Michigan is home to a robust arts and culture industry that employs almost 150,000 people as creators or in organizations that support the arts. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that arts and culture activities contribute about three percent of the Michigan economy, more than three times as much as the state’s agriculture sector.³

Several Michigan cities have developed strong arts and culture economies and built national reputations for their programs and offerings.

Grand Rapids’ Art Prize draws over 800,000 people to the city every year and generates over \$70 million in economic activity.⁴ The Detroit Institute of Art is an internationally renowned gallery and is among the top six collections in the United States, with more than 65,000 works.⁵ Smaller places like Marquette, Saugatuck, Traverse City, Lowell, and East Lansing have invested in public arts and their cultural economy.

In addition to significant funding support from philanthropic organizations, the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (the state’s government arts organization) funds almost 1,000 grants each year, with over \$12 million invested in 2023.⁶ These investments are critical for supporting and growing a vibrant arts and culture economy in Michigan.

Retail **\$48,153,300,000**

Construction **\$26,492,000,000**

Transportation **\$20,870,200,000**

ACPSA Total **\$20,546,147,000**

Utilities **\$13,360,000,000**

Agriculture and Forestry **\$6,279,600,000**

Education Services **\$4,947,300,000**

Mining **\$2,353,300,000**

1 Americans for the Arts. Americans Speak Out About the Arts in 2023, a national public opinion survey. 2023. <https://www.americanforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/public-opinion-poll>. Accessed 11/12/25. 2 Urban Institute (with funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation). Community Ties: Understanding What Attaches People to the Place Where They Live. 2020. <https://knightfoundation.org/press/releases/landmark-study-reveals-value-of-the-arts-in-communities-nationwide/#:-text=Out%20of%20a%20dozen%20urban,to%20arts%20and%20cultural%20activities>. Accessed 11/18/25. 3 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Creative Economy State Profiles. 2023. https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/. Accessed 11/18/25. 4 Grand Valley State University. Economic Impact of Art Prize 2024. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcagglejffndmkaj/https://a-us-storyblok.com/f/1015523/x/58f751265c/2024-economic-impact-report-final-12-26-24.pdf. Accessed 11/16/25. 5 Detroit Institute of Arts. <https://dia.org/about>. Accessed 11/20/25. 6 Michigan Arts and Culture Council. Annual Report 2023. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcagglejffndmkaj/https://www.michiganbusiness.org/globalassets/documents/macac/macac-2023-annual-report.pdf. Accessed 11/14/25. 7 SMU DataArts. of the ArtsArts Vibrancy Rankings. 2024. <https://culturaldata.org/state-of-the-arts-2024/overview/>. Accessed 11/14/25. 9 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Creative Economy State Profiles. 2023. https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/. Accessed 11/18/25. 10 Romens, Anne. Public Funding for the Arts in the Midwest: 2024 by the Numbers. <https://artsmidwest.org/about/updates/public-funding-for-the-arts-in-the-midwest-2024-by-the-numbers/>. Accessed 11/17/25.

State Spending on Arts and Culture: How Michigan Stacks Up



A Stage Set for Growth

While Michigan has seen significant growth and investment in its creative economy and cultural amenities, we still lag behind some of our peers on important indicators. Michigan ranks 26th among states for overall vibrancy in the SMU Data Arts Vibrancy Index. On its measure of “Arts Provider” (a gauge of supply that includes the number of independent artists, arts and culture employees, nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and related firms), Michigan ranks 47th out of 50 states.⁷ Taking both these measures together, it suggests there may be a concentration of arts providers at larger institutions and communities, and opportunities for expanding support of arts and cultural production in more Michigan communities.⁸

Michigan has strong employment in the arts and culture sector and ranks 3rd in the Midwest for our location quotient (our state’s employment concentration relative to other states). But our employment in these industries is still 28 percent below the national rate.⁹

Finally, while the Michigan Art and Culture Council awards substantial grants for arts and cultural activities each year, Michigan is not a top performer

on state spending on the arts nationally or among Midwest peers. Our neighbors Minnesota and Ohio were both in the top 10 (Minnesota is No. 1 with a per capita spend of \$9.62/year) while Iowa and Wisconsin were ranked almost dead last.¹⁰

The Path to Thriving

A thriving Michigan means state policies must commit to strong arts and cultural systems that ensure the wellbeing of people living and working here.

- Increase Michigan’s per capita state spending on arts and culture to be a top performing state nationally and in the Midwest.
- Expand arts and culture education programming for K–12 students, and encourage schools to take advantage of resources like the Michigan Arts Education Instruction and Assessment Project.
- Ensure that cultural identities, traditions, and creative outputs are respected, celebrated, and recognized as critical social and economic assets in Michigan communities.

Thriving Michigan evaluates how well Michigan is fostering thriving communities where people want to live, work, and build their futures. This series benchmarks the state’s performance across key indicators that contribute to long-term prosperity. Each report presents a clear, data-driven snapshot of how state policies and investments are impacting one of the key indicators in Michigan communities, including health and safety, economic and financial security, natural resources, virtual and physical infrastructure, arts and cultural, lifelong learning opportunities, and housing.