

The image shows the interior of a grand, ornate hall, likely a state capitol building. The walls are painted a vibrant red, adorned with intricate gold and green decorative patterns. Several tall, classical columns support the upper level. A balcony with a blue railing is visible on the second floor. The ceiling is high and features circular medallions with figures. In the foreground, several black-clothed tables are arranged, and a sign for the Montana Arts Council is visible. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and cultural significance.

THE MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL

Report On Arts And the Economy
January 2024

THE MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL: SUPPORTING CREATIVITY STATEWIDE

The Montana Arts Council is the agency, guided by a [15-member Council](#) appointed by the Governor, that supports Montana's complex, diverse arts and culture industry. MAC works for statewide access to the arts for all communities and all ages, and supports arts and culture workers and organizations in a multitude of ways. MAC is one of Montana's smallest state agencies, supporting our fourth-largest industry.

Art is the cornerstone of innovation. Engagement in the arts is critical to brain development, building problem-solving capacity, maintaining mental health, and creating social/civic bonds. Great art and authentic cultural expression also drive tourism, enliven communities, and strengthen local economies.

Art is a **powerful economic engine**, especially in rural communities. Montana's creative industries are primarily small, locally owned businesses. Art is a very agile business generally not tied to supply chain disruptions. Its activities are scalable, adaptable, and can respond more quickly to changes than standard manufacturing industries. Art lends itself to micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship. It is a pathway to economic independence for people who want to work for themselves, using their hands to create products that are uniquely Montanan.

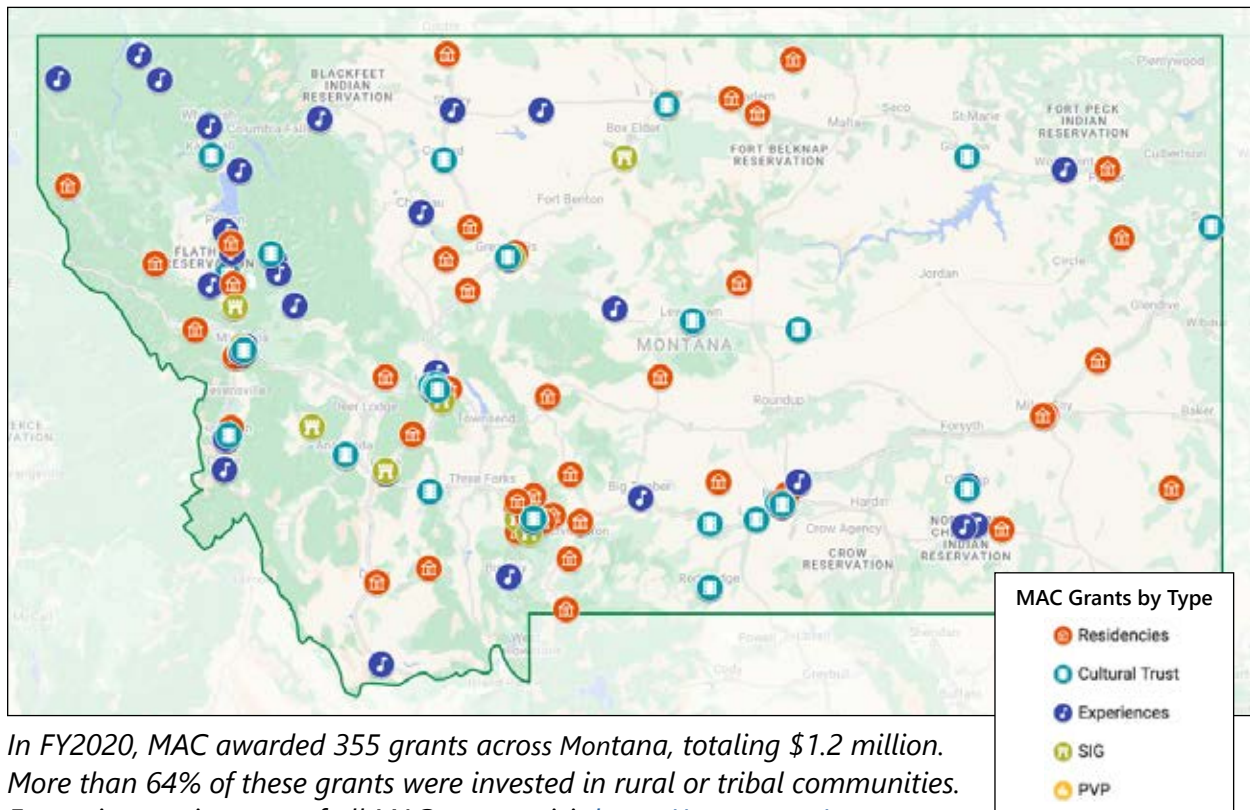


*Arts instruction at
the Imagine Butte
Resource Center.*

ARTS IN THE MONTANA ECONOMY

- Arts and Cultural activities in 2021 added \$2,072,986,000 to Montana's Gross State Product (GSP). Surprisingly, this is more than agriculture, forestry, and mining. This comprises 3.5% of Montana's GSP. 15,584 people were employed in the Arts and Cultural sector ([Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#))
- Arts & creative industries employ 15,584 Montanans—more than mining, education, agriculture, or utilities. (See above)
- One in every 18 Montanans identify as a creative (including professional and side-workers). This is higher than almost any other state.
- From 2012-2021, Montana had more fine-arts painters per capita than any other state except Vermont. ([Source: Census Bureau's American Community Survey, as reported in The Washington Post](#))
- RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Every \$1 of public investment in the arts leverages an average of \$9 in private and other matching funds. Economic benefit is far higher in small towns than in larger towns/cities. ([Source: National Endowment for the Arts](#))

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS AT WORK



In FY2020, MAC awarded 355 grants across Montana, totaling \$1.2 million. More than 64% of these grants were invested in rural or tribal communities. For an interactive map of all MAC grants, visit <https://art.mt.gov/grant-map>

HOW MAC SUPPORTS THE ARTS

MAP: Montana Artrepreneur Program – Art-centered business development program that turns artists into entrepreneurs, with 40+ hours of college-level instruction and business development support. Participants have averaged 654% increase in net sales, with 60% increase in out-of-state sales, since 2019.

Cultural & Aesthetic Trust – Using funds derived from the interest earned on the Cultural Trust, this program supports organizations statewide that are contributing significantly to Montana's cultural life and economic diversity. Funding is provided by coal severance taxes paid based upon coal mined in Montana and deposited in Montana's cultural and aesthetic projects trust fund.

MCAM: Montana's Circle of American Masters – Celebrating the masters of Montana's handmade heritage. MCAM awards are designed to honor and preserve the traditional arts that are important to Montana's unique cultural identity.

AISC: Artists in Schools and Communities – Ensures statewide, lifelong access to arts learning and arts engagement. AISC deploys artists to conduct creative residencies in schools, community centers, senior facilities, and arts centers to address specific needs in the community.

SIG: Strategic Investment Grants – Micro-grants for up to \$1,000 available to artists and 501(c)(3) organizations statewide to respond to a particular opportunity. SIG grants build careers, strengthen small arts organizations, spur innovation, and help small businesses expand markets.

Public Value Partnership – Providing operating support for the artistic and educational mission of Montana nonprofit arts organizations.

Statewide Service Organizations – Operating support to statewide service organizations to increase impact in communities large and small in several fields (performing arts, visual arts, dance, symphonies, and playwright network.)

WHERE MAC FUNDS COME FROM

Montana is 50th among the states/territories for legislative funding. You have to go to Guam or the Marianas Islands to find a legislative apportionment in the US smaller than Montana's.

In terms of per capita state investment, Montana ranks 36th, at \$0.54 per capita.

Funding from State of Montana:

\$615,567 – HB2 (General Fund) FY2024 allocation

\$221,387 – Cultural Trust Fund FY2024 allocation

\$558,976 – HB9 Cultural Trust Funds for re-granting- Biannual FY2024-25 allocation

Funding from National Endowment for the Arts:

\$1,074,400 – FY2024 allocation

WHY DO THE ARTS WARRANT PUBLIC FUNDING?

- The arts strengthen the economy, drive tourism, and unify communities.
- Many studies have shown the arts benefit brain development, education, mental health, physical well-being, and civic unity.
- Public funding ensures broader access to the benefits of the arts across geographic and economic divides. Public investment is critical if the arts are to benefit more than its own patrons.
- The arts are as vital to healthy communities as public roads, bridges, schools, and communication networks.
- Economic benefits from the arts have remained remarkably stable since 2001, maintaining a steady positive influence and rebounding faster than most industries. ([Source: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#))
- Arts employment per capita tends to boost overall employment per capita more strongly in rural areas than in cities.
- The arts ennoble and inspire the best in the human character.

The creative industries are a fast-growth sector in hard times. Nationally, the arts maintain more economic stability, and rebound faster, than most other industries. After the 2008-09 Great Recession, while the overall economy struggled to recover, the arts economy outpaced the overall economy—and states with larger creative economies grew more rapidly than those without. The arts also tend to grow independently from other industries, suffer few supply-chain inhibitions, and inherently include a diversity of skill sets, employment opportunities, and partnerships—all adding to the state’s economic resilience.

One of the biggest obstacles to Montana’s arts and culture field is access to funds to support capacity building. Most arts organizations are not-for-profits, and are supported by community donations and grants. But with few large corporations and foundations based here, Montana is a singular funding desert in terms of capacity-building in the arts and culture field. Yet it is this capacity building that will enable our vibrant arts/culture organizations to respond to the needs and opportunities Montana’s future presents.



FY2024-25 BIENNIUM GOALS

The Arts Council's 2025 Biennium Goals & Objectives, as submitted January 2023:

- To expand opportunities for Montana artists, arts organizations, and arts-based small businesses in every county in Montana
- To ensure and expand access to the arts for every community
- To build connections – i.e, facilitate partnerships, provide grant technical assistance, and open doorways for innovation in the arts & creative industries

For Montana's \$2 billion arts and culture industry to grow and thrive, public investment is warranted—and crucial—in a few key places:

- Strengthening Montana's arts organizations to increase sustainability and long-term effectiveness in every county;
- Creating stronger pathways for Indigenous and other visual and performing artists to market their works;
- Focusing strategic investments in key organizations through transformative grants, coupled with growth metrics and professional trainings.



Hanging art funded by MAC's Percent for Art program in Montana State University's reimagined Romney Hall.



Blackfoot Pathways Sculpture In the Wild has helped make the small community of Lincoln an arts destination by embracing the town's mining and timber heritage—the raw materials of which are used in the large-scale artworks featured throughout the park.

In 2024 Montana's arts enterprises face fresh challenges: shifts in audience attendance, increased costs, difficulties in retaining professional staff and recruiting volunteers, and lack of funding opportunities available to other regions. The Arts Council continues to collaborate with artists, non-profit arts organizations, community organizations, and Tribal communities, to support Montana's creative activities on every level.

As always, we continue to evaluate all our programs, honing them to best answer the needs of the field and have the highest impact statewide. Additionally—with the support of the Governor's Office and the State Legislature—we propose to create and model a strategic program of targeted funding opportunities to stimulate sustainable capacity-building, and to increase the economic benefit to Montana from our arts and culture field.

Even though chronically under-capitalized, Montana's arts sector consistently contributes an outsized value to the citizens of Montana. **Multiple data show the arts offer a higher return on investment than almost any other industry.** We believe the time is right for strategic investments in Montana's arts and creative sector to boost economic vitality across the state.

There are few industries that offer so much to Montana's economic, social, educational, civic, and intellectual well-being. The arts field in Montana is robust and diverse, engages people from all walks of life statewide, and presents tremendous opportunity for development. Now is the time for strategic state investment in Montana's arts industry to lay the groundwork for a more vibrant, solid future.



The annual Red Ants Pants Music Festival brings the arts, Montana culture, traditional skills, civic engagement and agritourism together at the intersection of creativity and commerce.

*Blacksmith and Montana
Circle of American Masters
honoree Glenn Gilmore
crafts red-hot steel at his
Corvallis studio.*



**MONTANA
ARTS COUNCIL**
an agency of state government