BUREAU OF BUSINESS & ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Albuquerque's Creative Economy

Prepared for the City of Albuquerque Arts & Culture Department

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Acknowledgments

We would like to begin by thanking the City of Albuquerque's Arts & Culture Department, especially Director Dr. Shelle Sanchez, Deputy Director Elsa Menendez, and Tanya Lenti. Thank you also to Amanda Sutton, Madrone Matishak, and Sheri Brueggemann for your early input that helped to shape this project. The department worked not only to see the project through, but also to give feedback and guidance on a regular basis. Without their invaluable input, we may have been stuck debating a quantitative definition of the creative economy for years.

A note of gratitude to former State Senator Bill O'Neill for sponsoring the legislative funding for the City of Albuquerque to make this research both possible and publicly accessible.

We would also like to acknowledge the groundwork laid for this project by BBER's former director, Dr. Jeff Mitchell, who we unexpectedly lost to cancer in 2021. He championed projects focused on New Mexico's creative economy for over two decades.

The backbone of this work comes from the many, many individuals and businesses in the creative economy who gave their time and energy taking our surveys, answering our endless questions, and showing up for focus groups. We cannot thank you enough. BBER would like to give special mention representatives of the following organizations for participating in our focus groups; they are only named here with their consent: ArtStreet at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless; Dita Dow, author, artist, and songwriter; Fiber Arts on 4th; The Groove Artspace; Guitar Vista; Jamie Harrison, recording artist and musician; Harwood Art Center; Keshet Dance and Center for the Arts; New Mexico Quilters Association; Southwest Costume Rentals; Southwest Writers Association; Story Quest Studios; Street Food Institute; Subliminal Gaming; Ass'yah Sulaimon, model and body artist; Tamarind Institute, The University of New Mexico; Thirsty Eye Brewing Company and Exhibit 208; Vault Studios; and Vortex Theater.

Informal conversations with government professionals in Boulder, Colorado and Richmond, California helped us understand how different communities seek to support their creative development. We thank those folks for giving their time and energy to talk about local successes and struggles. We also would like to acknowledge our dialogue with Arts Hub, as they are completing their own research with Albuquerque's creative professionals, and their willingness to let us participate in their ongoing community groups.

At UNM BBER, we have to recognize the work put in by Julian Baca, for first reviewing and revising the impact and contribution data as we refined our numbers and for then conducting the final impact analyses. We appreciate your patience and thoroughness. We would also like to thank BBER's students, Ashleigh LaBar, Gus Guikema, Vivi Rouge, Darrian Smith, Freshness Uzo-Hez. Our students helped in countless ways throughout the research process including data validation and entry, notetaking at focus groups, generating maps and visualizations, reformatting tedious datasets, calling hundreds of businesses to request participation, and doing it all with kindness and determination. This project would not be complete without your dedicated work.

We take full responsibility for any errors or oversights that may be contained within this report.

Rose Elizabeth Rohrer, UNM Senior Research Scientist
Suzan Reagan, UNM Senior Program Manager
Michael O'Donnell, UNM BBER Director

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*Cover photo taken by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer of Mago's Farm stand at the Downtown Growers' Market, Fall 2025

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Executive Summary

This study was initiated by the City of Albuquerque's Arts and Culture Department in 2024. Working with the University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the City sought to update previous research on Albuquerque's creative economy and better understand current opportunities, challenges, and trends in the creative professions both locally and nationally. This report is a result of that research, which began in October 2024 and concluded in October 2025.

Defining the Creative Economy

Before beginning an analysis of employment figures, numbers of establishments, and how the creative economy impacts Albuquerque's overall economy, it is essential to determine which industries and occupations should be counted and which should be left out. To complete this monumental task, BBER researchers and City of Albuquerque (CABQ) Arts & Culture experts worked to create a definition that combines nationally recognized definitions with details specific to our regional economy. Together, we drafted the definition as follows:[2]

> The creative economy is a broad term for the economic ecosystem of for-profit and nonprofit creative industries, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policymakers, and funders that produce and support creativity and distribute artistic-based goods and services. The creative economy centers the use of ideas and intellectual property, which add value to goods and services in either unique or traditional ways. A combination of skill, talent, knowledge, expertise, and/or inspiration are essential to the creative economy.
>
> More specifically, core arts and cultural production industries are the originators of ideas, content, and commodities associated with the creation of arts and culture. Furthermore, the supporting industries are ones that cultivate, reinforce, and disseminate arts and cultural products.

This definition informs all the quantitative analyses we present in this report. For consistency across datasets, we use the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrence, and Valencia Counties.

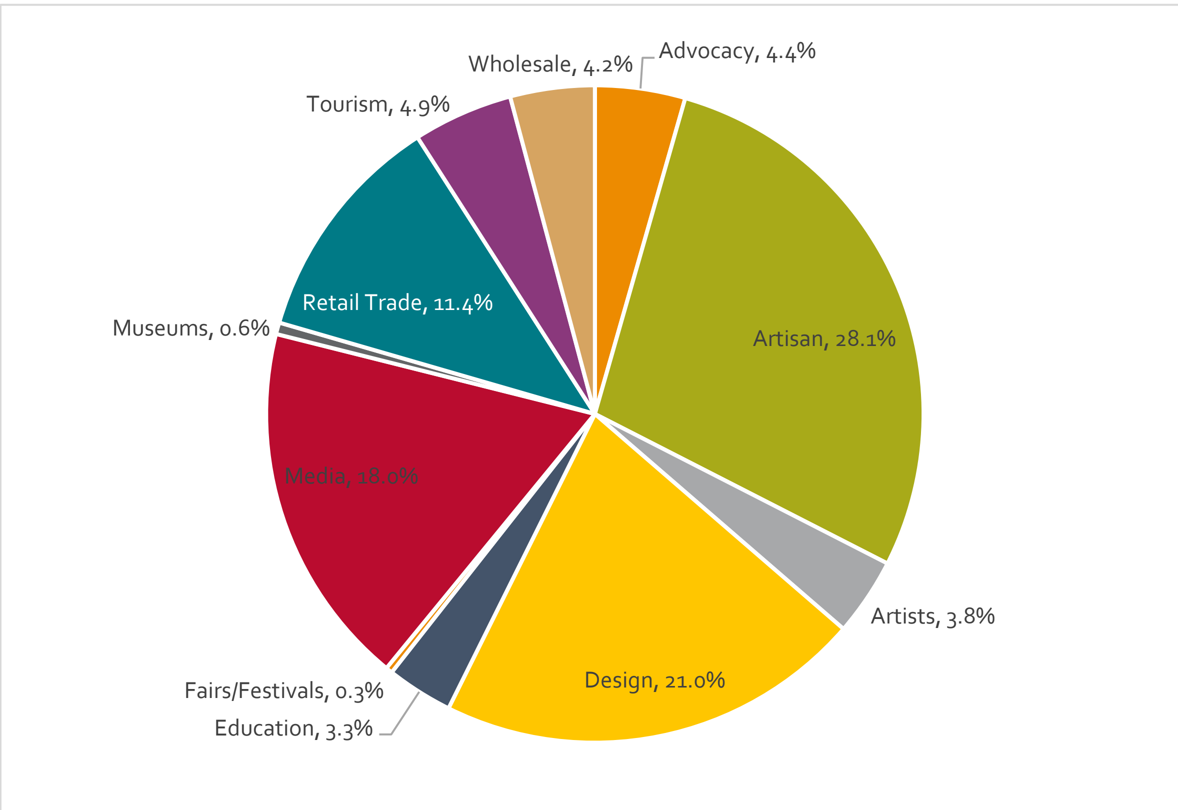
The creative economy's importance can be seen on both the supply and demand side of a traditional economic analysis. A vibrant arts and cultural scene can attract consumers to a locale, stimulating economic growth. Tourists may rent hotel rooms, spend time in museums and galleries, eat and drink at restaurants, and purchase a variety of goods within the creative economy. Likewise, with the primary intention of engaging with the creative economy they may also purchase downstream goods, such as groceries, gas, and other external amenities outside of it. As interest in the creative economy grows, so does the creative economy itself. Understanding the drivers of growth in Albuquerque and how the creative economy is shifting over time are essential to knowing how to distribute and concentrate resources.

[2] Parts of the definition are directly sourced from: https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-june-2024.pdf; https://nasaa-arts.org/research/creative-economy/; https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/creative-economy

Albuquerque's Creative Economy

An estimated 2,457 establishments comprise the Albuquerque MSA's creative economy in 2024. Artisan businesses make up the greatest portion at 27.9% (691 establishments), followed by Design (20.9%; 516), Media (18.4%; 456), and Retail Trade (11.4%; 281). Fairs and Festivals have the fewest establishments at 0.3% or 8 total businesses. The Artisan Industry has the highest number of establishments in part due to the broad definition of "artisan." Within the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) these business categories range from Construction and Manufacturing to Personal Care Services, such as hair salons. In total, creative establishments are 8.9% of all businesses in the Albuquerque MSA in 2024.

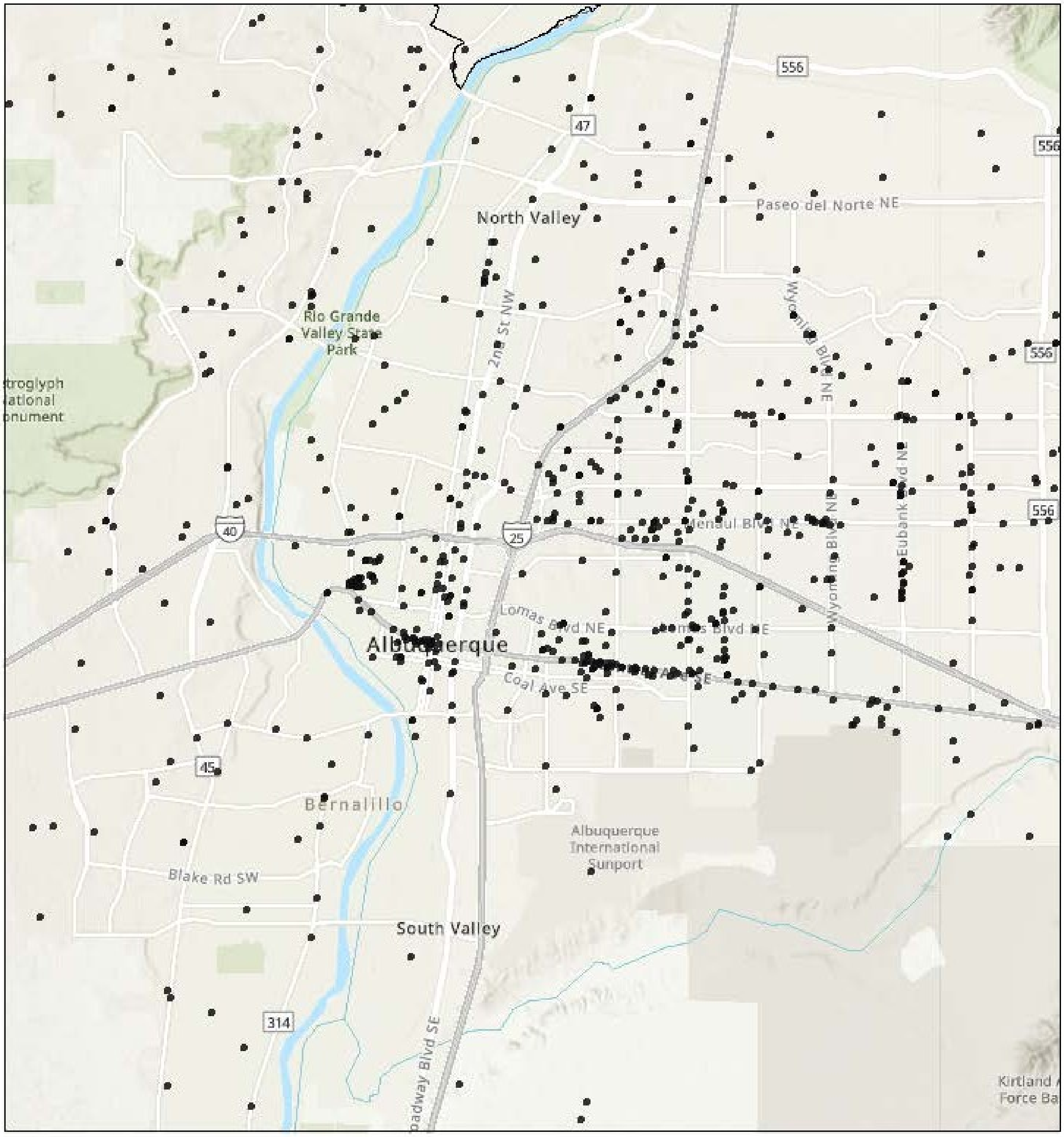
Albuquerque Creative Establishments by Category, 2024



The dot map below uses establishment location data[3] to give sense of how creative businesses cluster along certain corridors. Clear clusters can be seen along Central Avenue from the Rio Grande River to Louisiana Boulevard and along Menaul Boulevard east of I-40 to Wyoming Boulevard. Understanding the density and distribution of these businesses can help the city plan smart development for further creative infrastructure and continued access to these areas through various means of transportation. It can also help planners to make decisions about how to best improve access to the creative arts in all quadrants of the city.

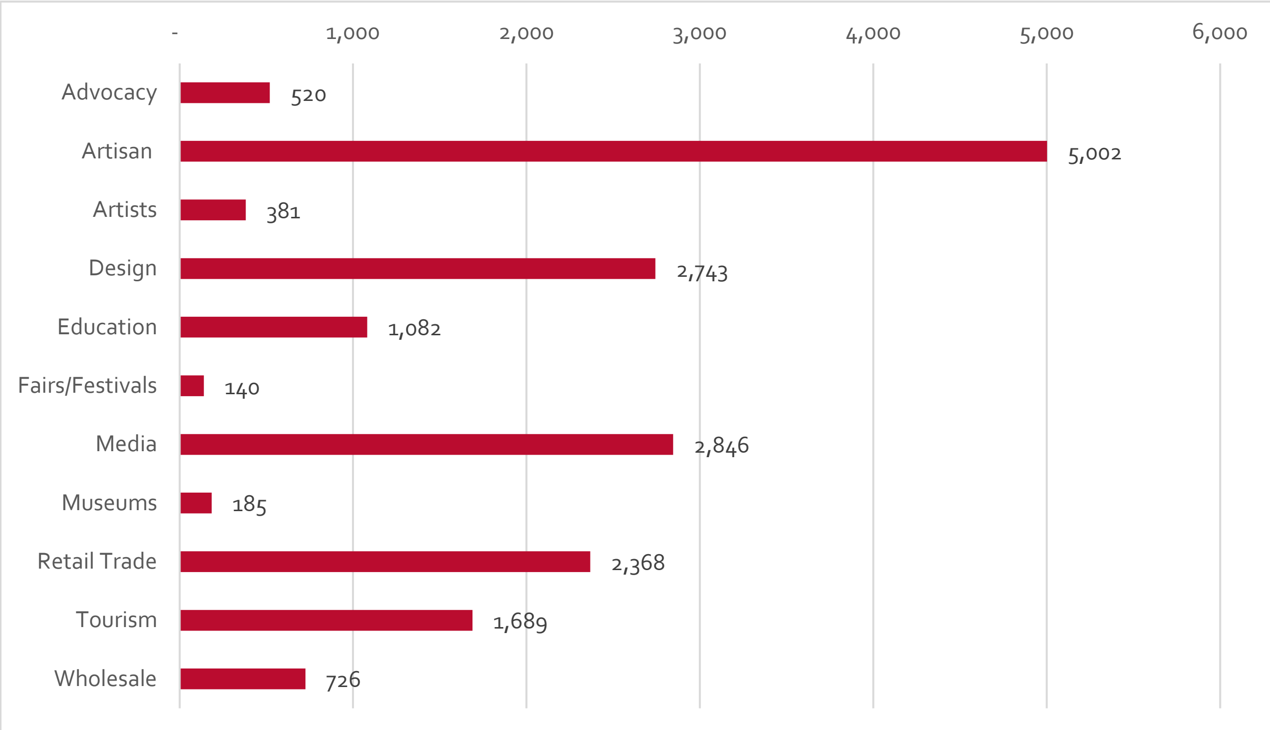
[3] Establishment information from Data Axle database 2024, matched with NAICS codes.

Dot Map of Albuquerque Creative Businesses, 2024



As well as having the greatest number of establishments within the creative industries, the Artisan category is the top employer, supporting 5,002 workers in 2024. It also is the industry with the highest number of establishments. The following chart illustrates employment by creative sector.

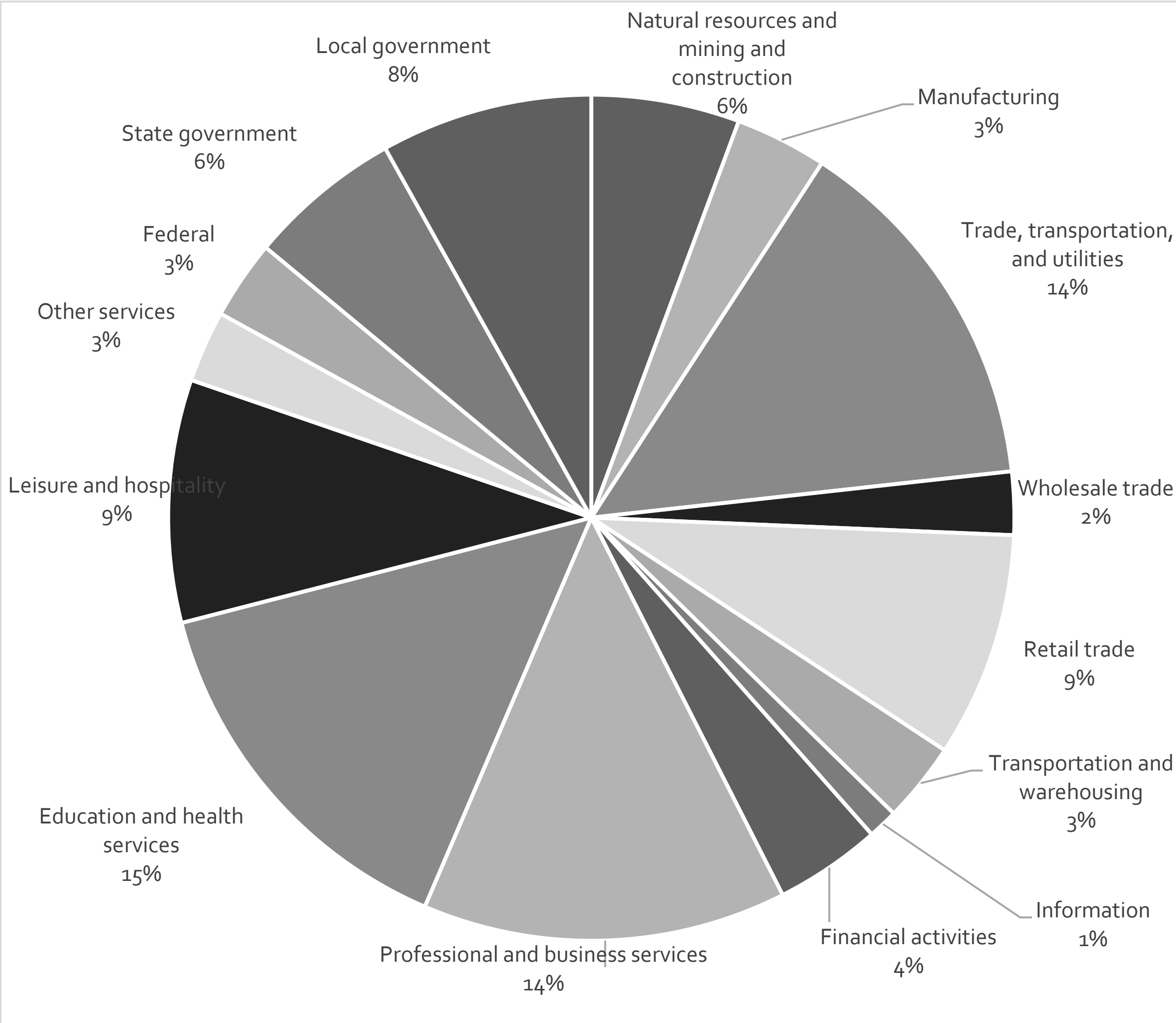
Total Albuquerque Employment in Creative Industries, 2024



In the Albuquerque MSA, creative businesses employed 17,682 workers in 2024. This accounts for 4.4% of all local employment. The following chart shows what percent of total employment each of the different industries in the Albuquerque MSA comprises.[4] There is no wedge for the creative economy as it is not a standalone category; instead, we use the chart to compare the size of each formal industry to that of the creative economy. Federal Government, Information, Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, Wholesale Trade, and Other Services all represent smaller employment proportions than the creative economy.

[4] New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Current Employment Statistics program in conjunction with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Albuquerque MSA Annual Average Employment by Industry, 2024

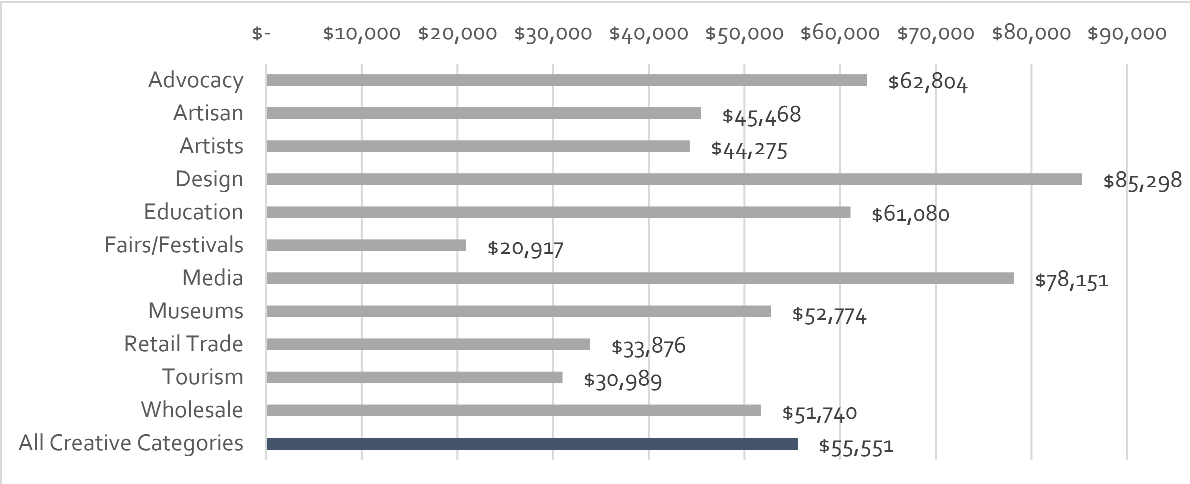


Examining wages paid per employee by creative category helps in understanding how individuals working in the creative economy compare across industries. Average annual per employee wages in the creative industries averages to $55,551 across all categories in 2024. The median earnings across the Albuquerque MSA in 2024 are $54,337, demonstrating the creative industries are competitive with other industries locally.[5] The Design category has the highest overall annual average wages per employee at $85,298 for 2024, followed by Media ($78,151) and Advocacy ($62,804). The Design category includes occupations in architecture, specialized design services, and computer systems design, all of which require specific technical training, which generally implies a higher wage.

The categories with the lowest per employee wages are Fairs and Festivals at $20,917 and Tourism at $30,989. The nature of these lowest categories may predict the wages as both hire part-time or temporary employees.

[5] Figure from US Census American Community Survey 1-year estimates.

Average Annual per Employee Wages by Creative Industry, 2024



The Economic Impact of the Creative Economy

Albuquerque's creative economy makes a significant impact on the greater MSA through the activity generated by the hundreds of businesses and individual artists and artisans, dozens of events and fairs/festivals, and their customers, patrons, and attendees. The economic impact measures only employment and dollars that are supported by dollars coming in from outside of the Albuquerque MSA. The idea is that these external dollars might not make it into the Albuquerque economy without the existence of the creative economy.

In 2024, the creative economy generated nearly $1.1 billion in *direct* economic output, including $305.8 million in labor income. These figures represent what the creative economy generates exclusive of its supply chains and induced impacts. In total, including indirect and induced impacts, the creative economic supports 9,687 jobs, $510.3 million in labor income, and $1.75 billion in output.

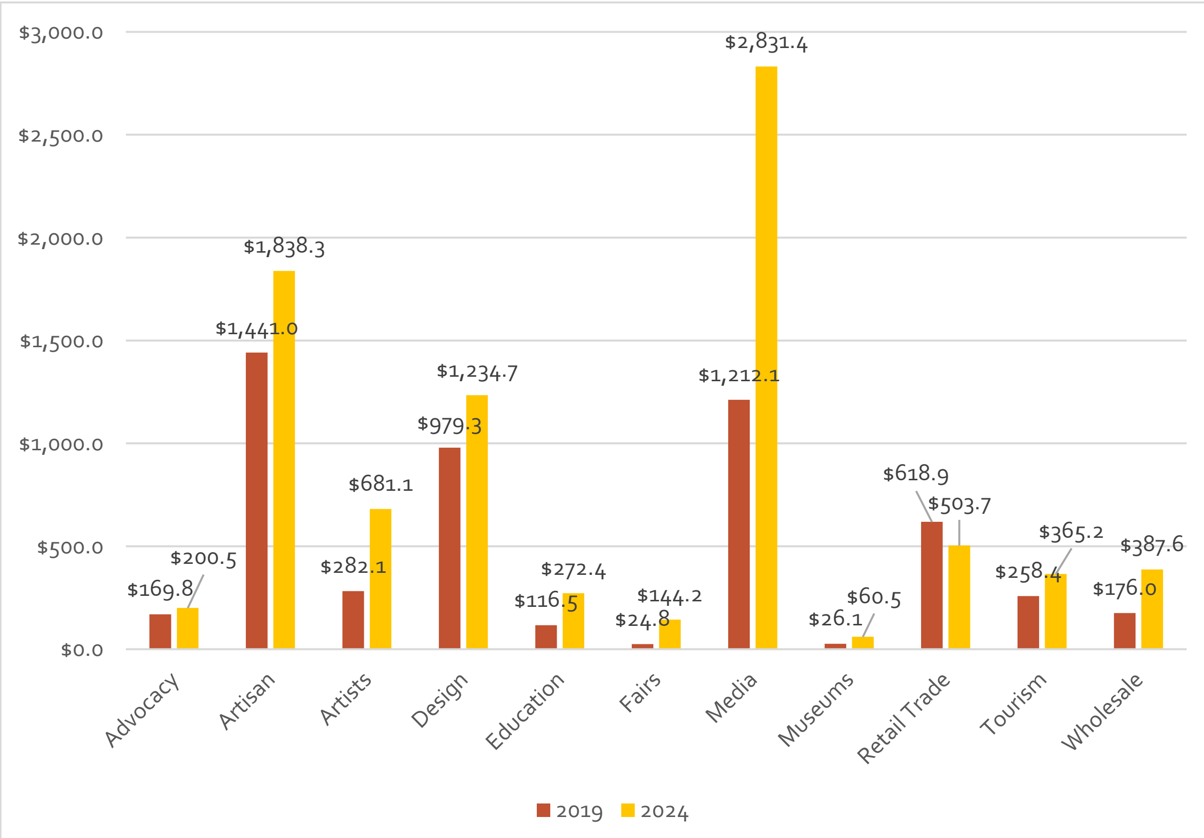
Economic Impact of the Creative Economy on the ABQ MSA, 2024

Impact type	Employment	Labor Income ($M)	Value Added ($M)	Output ($M)
Direct	5,771	$305.8	$460.0	$1,088.6
Indirect	2,378	$123.9	$190.0	$392.6
Induced	1,538	$80.6	$163.5	$270.8
Total	**9,687**	**$510.3**	**$813.6**	**$1,752.0**
Multiplier	*1.7*	*1.7*	*1.8*	*1.6*

Comparing output side-by-side from the contribution analysis, which takes into account both internal and external dollars within Albuquerque's creative economy, we can better estimate the total value of all the goods and services produced. The creative economy's estimated total output in 2024 totals $1.75 billion dollars.

The following chart demonstrates that all sectors grew in output dollars from 2019 to 2024 except Retail Trade with figures adjusted to 2025 dollars. The only sector to show a decline in total output is Retail Trade, dipping to $503.7 million in 2024 from $618.9 million in 2019. This total output value, however, is still greater than six of the other sectors within the creative economy, making it a significant contributor.

Output Contribution by Creative Sector in Millions of Dollars, 2019 and 2024



The Media sector had a greater than two-fold jump in output, rising from $1.2 billion in 2019 to $2.8 billion in 2024. While Media saw a large jump, output in other sectors also has had a marked rise. Output in the Fairs sector increased by nearly six-fold from $24.8 million in 2019 to $144.2 million in 2024. The Artists sector also saw a notable increase at 2.4 times its 2019 value, increasing from $282.1 million to $681.1 million. Also worthy of mention, the Education and Museums sectors both increased by a factor of 2.3.

Guidelines for Moving Forward

Bolstering and growing Albuquerque's creative economy requires a combination of thoughtful policy, well-distributed resources, and community initiative. While there are no single solutions that guarantee growth, in this report we offer some general suggestions and guidelines. Many of these strategies are already being taken on by CABQ's Arts and Culture Department as well as organizations throughout the community. However, based on our research and conversations with community stakeholders, we thought that it was important to highlight the key points that frequently came up alongside what we saw other cities emphasizing in their own plans. Our research points to five key suggestions that align with ideas grown out of the Albuquerque creative community and with national trends in policy and consumer behavior. Simply listed here, they are fully developed in the final chapter of this report.

- Celebrate the Local
- Respond to Changing Opportunities, but Don't Chase Them
- Maintain Business Support Strategies
- Facilitate New and Existing Community Connections
- Consider Local Assets

These suggestions are intended to be less prescriptive and more of a reinforcement of what the larger market says will work to bolster the creative economy over the long term. They represent both a review of best practices as described in arts and culture planning documents of a variety of cities across the United States and the many conversations, focus groups, interviews, and surveys detailed throughout this report. Additionally, the best practices draw upon proposals and assessments created by national institutions including the National Endowment for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, SMU DataArts, and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

Albuquerque's creative ecosystem is just that – an interconnected community of creative professionals and supporters interacting with each other and our unique environment. Albuquerque already boasts a thriving creative economy, yet its full potential can only be unlocked through bold collaboration and strategic, long-term planning.

DEFINING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Defining the Creative Economy

1.1. What is the Creative Economy?

Defining the creative economy for the purposes of this research involves clearly determining which industries and occupations are counted in our quantitative analyses, but the boundaries in reality are not so sharp. Looking to the previous BBER studies and working with CABQ Arts & Culture staff, we produced this definition, which borrows heavily from nationally recognized definitions:[6]

> The creative economy is a broad term for the economic ecosystem of for-profit and nonprofit creative industries, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policymakers, and funders that produce and support creativity and distribute artistic-based goods and services. The creative economy centers the use of ideas and intellectual property, which add value to goods and services in either unique or traditional ways. A combination of skill, talent, knowledge, expertise, and/or inspiration are essential to the creative economy.
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> More specifically, core arts and cultural production industries are the originators of ideas, content, and commodities associated with the creation of arts and culture. Furthermore, the supporting industries are ones that cultivate, reinforce, and disseminate arts and cultural products.

This definition informs all of the quantitative analyses we present in this report. For consistency across datasets, we use the Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrence, and Valencia Counties, throughout this research. The full methodology including industry and occupation codes are included, what percentages of each are used in the analyses, and how we made those choices is included in a separate document, but we share some highlights throughout the rest of this chapter.

The economic importance of the creative economy can be seen on both the supply and demand side of a traditional economic analysis. A vibrant arts and cultural scene can attract consumers to a locale, stimulating economic growth. Tourists may rent hotel rooms, spend time in museums and galleries, eat and drink at restaurants, and purchase a variety of goods both within the creative economy and outside of it, in the case of groceries, gas, and other external amenities. As interest in the creative economy grows, so does the creative economy itself. Looking at the film industry in Albuquerque alone, we can see an increase in programs designed to train a variety of film technicians and creatives as well as an influx of creative professionals. Fostering an environment that concentrates and grows creative industries can continue to yield benefits across the whole local economy. Understanding what that looks like in Albuquerque and how it is shifting over time is key to knowing how to distribute resources and where to concentrate them.

1.2. Albuquerque's Creative Economy

An estimated 2,457 businesses comprise the Albuquerque MSA's creative economy in 2024. Artisan businesses make up the greatest portion at 27.9% (691 businesses), followed by Design (20.9%; 516), Media (18.4%; 456), and Retail Trade (11.4%; 281). Fairs and Festivals have the fewest establishments at 0.3% or 8 total businesses. The Artisan Industry has the highest number of establishments in part due to the broad definition of "artisan."

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* Chapter cover photo taken by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer at Albuquerque Photo-Technologies, Inc. 2025.

[6] https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/documents/otis-college-report-creative-economy-june-2024.pdf; https://nasaa-arts.org/research/creative-economy/; https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/creative-economy

Within the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) these business categories range from Construction and Manufacturing to Personal Care Services, such as hair salons. We do not include *all* businesses within the NAICS categories we have selected; we filtered for those directly related to creative work, as defined at the beginning of this chapter, but the diverse range of business types within a single industry needs to be noted. In total, creative establishments are 8.9% of all businesses in the Albuquerque MSA in 2024.

1.2.1. A Brief Overview of Employment by Occupation

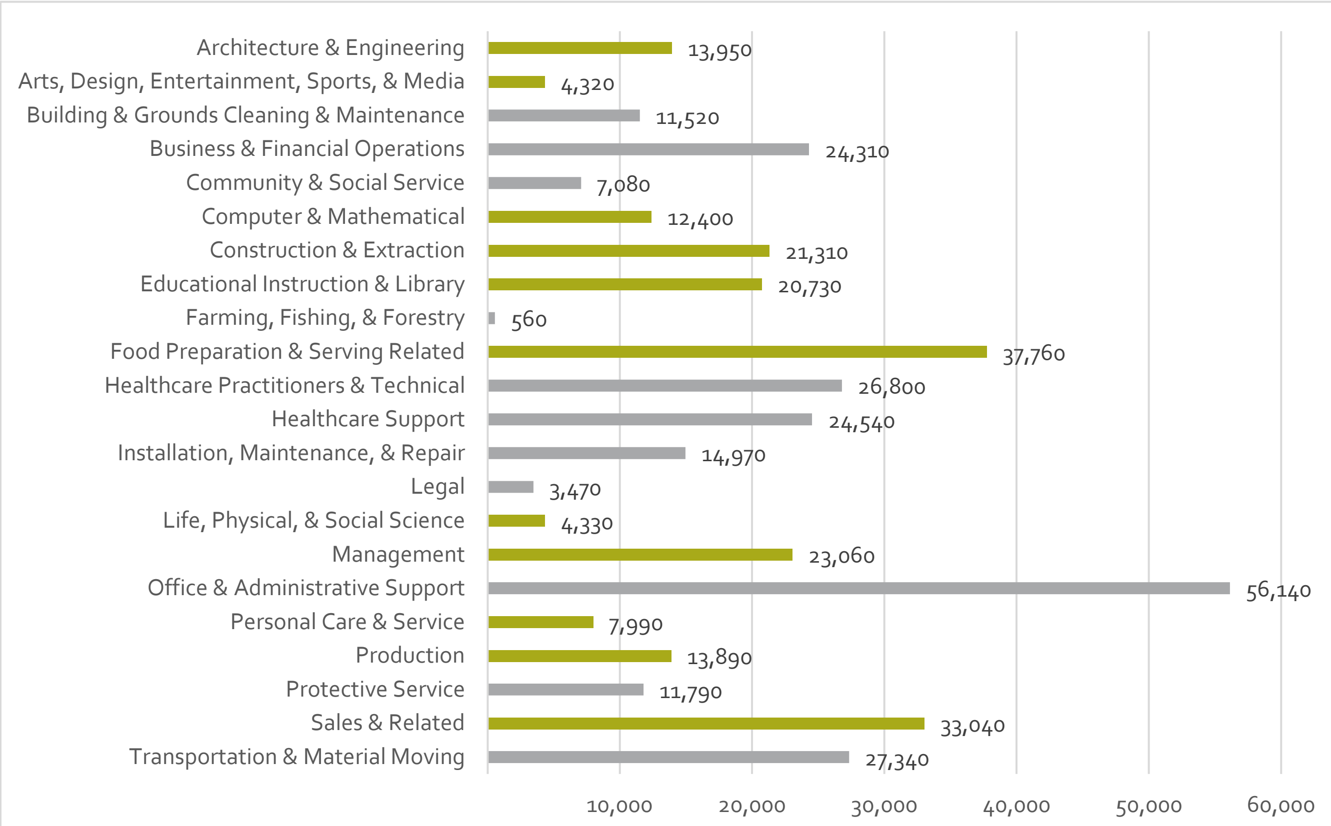
Throughout this report, we primarily refer to NAICS industrial codes to classify businesses and individuals within the creative economy, however, Employment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program provides data by occupational groups, which is, in part, how we determined what percentage of each industry can be considered "creative." For this report we reviewed the Standard Occupational Classification System maintained by the federal government Office of Management and Budget and assigned 102 of the 832 occupations into our calculations for the creative economy.[7]

We start by examining employment by occupational groups regardless of being part of the creative economy. Office & Administration Support Occupations have the most employment at 56,140 in 2024, followed by the sum of the two healthcare groups, Support and Practitioners & Technical combined to make 51,344 jobs. Both of the highest employing occupational groups in the Albuquerque MSA have no specific creative economy detailed occupations included. Even the occupational group Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media Occupations does not yield 100% "creative" occupations. Upon closer examination, this group contains 36 creative detailed occupations which account for about 70 percent of its employment figures; 30 percent of occupations within that category are not a part of the creative economy.

The chart below highlights in green which occupational groups are included in our calculations and total employment levels by all groups.

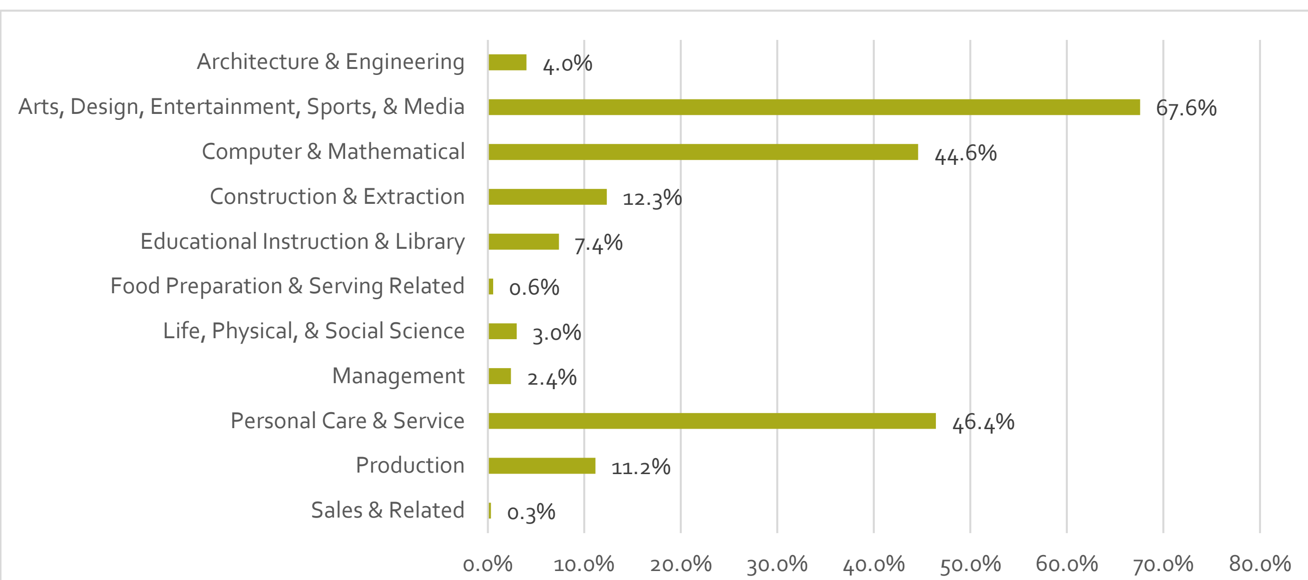
[7] Most current Federal Register for Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System. https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-11-28/pdf/2017-25622.pdf

Figure 1: Employment by Occupational Group in the Albuquerque MSA, 2024



Taking just those occupational groups that contain detailed occupations deemed to be a part of the creative economy, we determine the percentage of each that is included in all the quantitative analyses throughout this report.

Figure 2: Percent of Creative Occupational Categories Included in Analysis



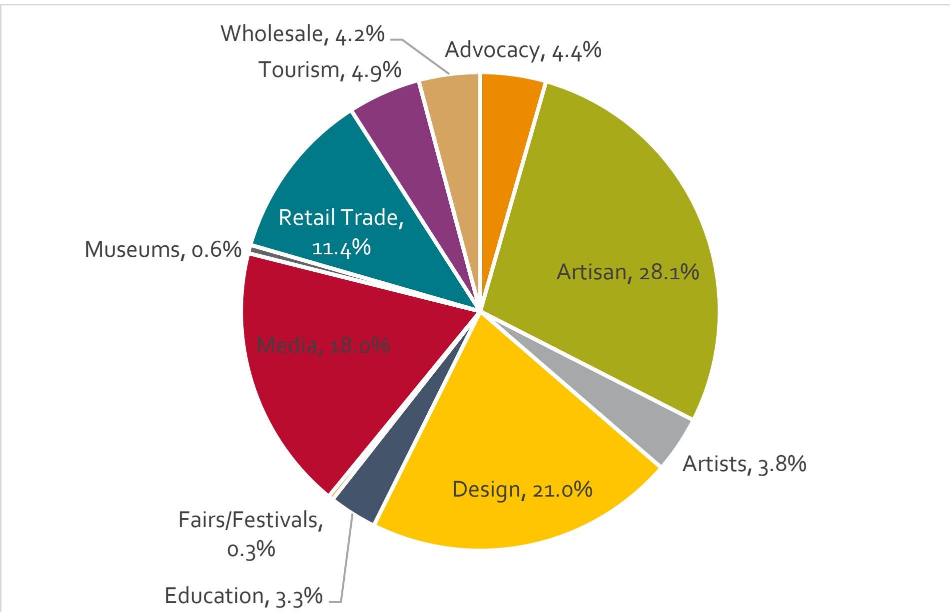
After Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media, the second largest creative employment group proportionally is Personal Care & Service Occupations at 46.4%. In this group, some of the creative occupations include Motion Picture Projectionists; Ushers; Lobby Attendants, and Ticket Takers; Amusement and Recreation Attendants; Costume Attendants; Barbers; Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists; Makeup Artists (Theatrical and Performance); and Manicurists and Pedicurists.

For a full breakdown of what each occupational group includes, please refer to the OEWS data using the link on the previous page. For a full list of all occupations included in our analysis, please refer to the addendum to this report.

1.2.2. Measuring Albuquerque's Creative Economy by Industry

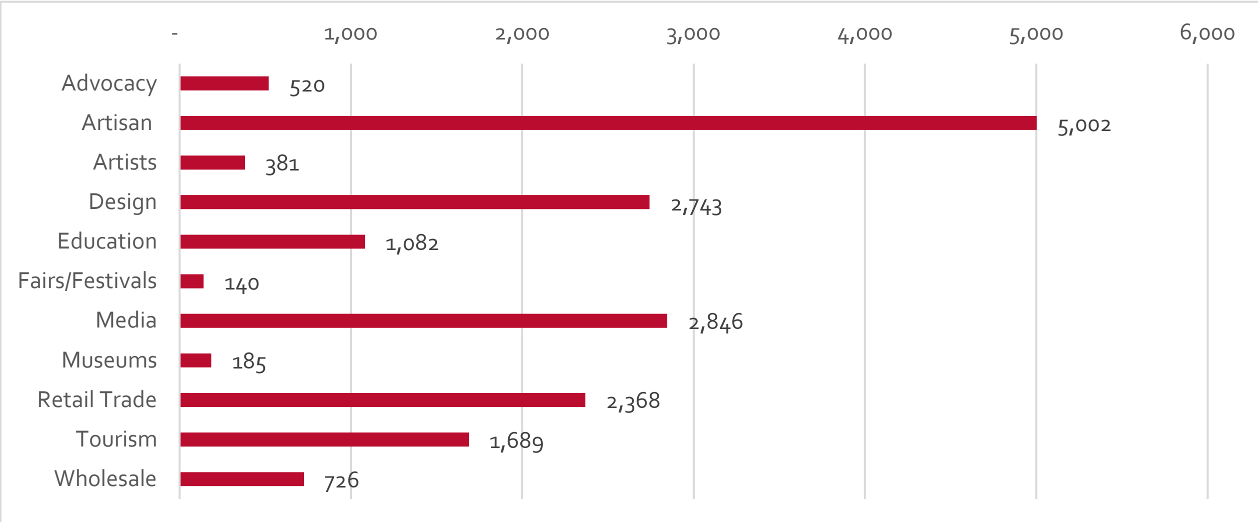
Now that we've covered *how* we measure creative employment across various industries, we examine what that looks like across the Albuquerque MSA in 2024 and 2019.

Figure 3: Albuquerque Creative Establishments by Category, 2024



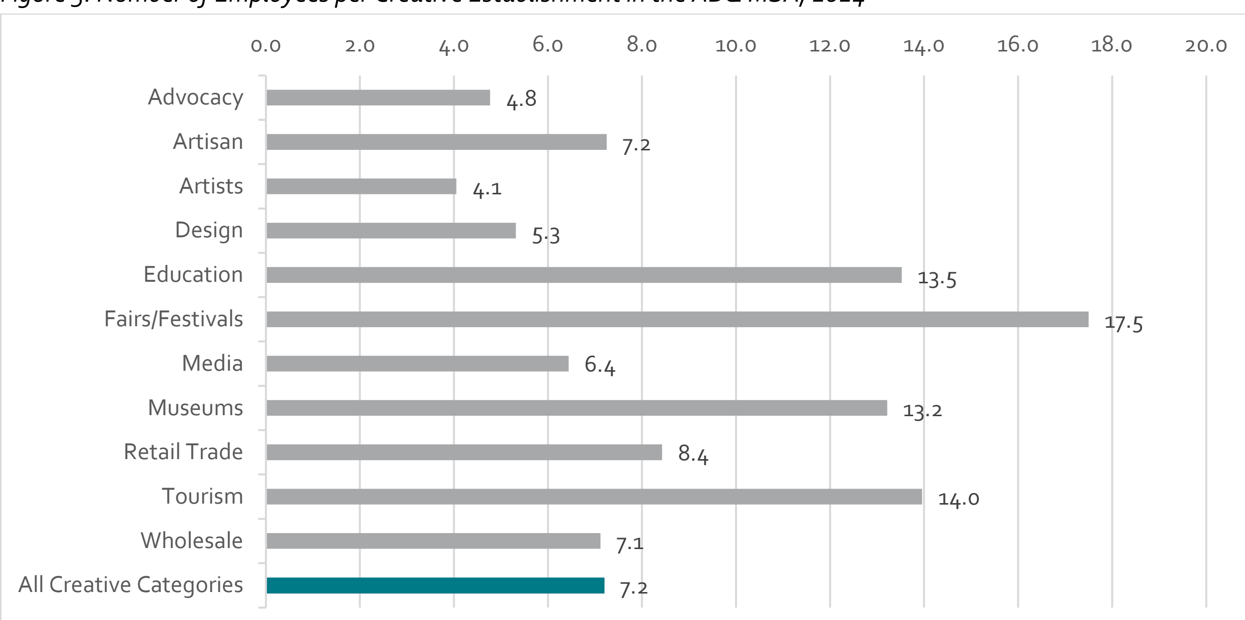
In the Albuquerque MSA, creative businesses employed 17,682 workers in 2024. This accounts for 4.4% of all local employment. The Artisan category is the top employer, supporting 5,002 workers in 2024. It also is the industry with the highest number of establishments. The following chart illustrates employment by creative sector.

Figure 4: Total Albuquerque Employment in Creative Industries, 2024



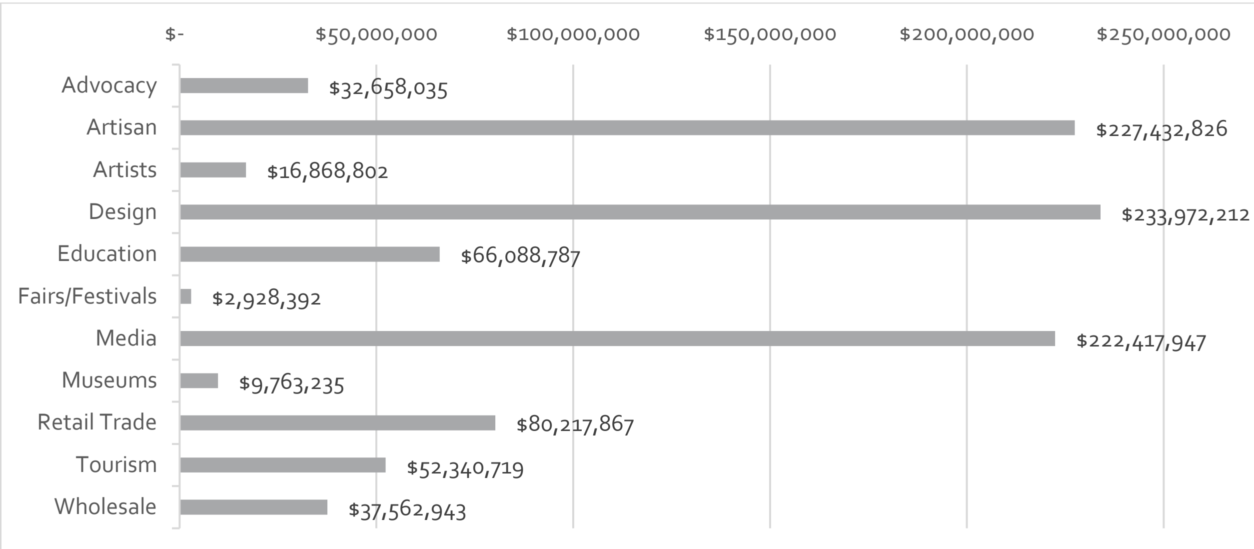
With 2,457 creative establishments and an annual average employment of 17,682 in 2024, the Albuquerque MSA has an average size of 7.2 employees per establishment. Fairs and Festivals tend to employ more workers than the other industries, having 16.6 employees per creative establishment. Creative categories with large employment per establishment include Tourism at 14.0 employees per establishment, Education (13.5), and Museums (13.2). The creative groups with smaller employment per establishment are Artists (4.0), Advocacy (4.8), and Design (5.3). The employment per establishment statistics gives an insight into the typical scale of operation in each sector and allows businesses in these sectors to identify how they match up to competitors. A little bit of care needs to be taken into account with this statistic as for some industry subsectors we used ratios for inclusion into this analysis. For instance, Fairs/Festivals we only included 27.2% of employment and business establishments. Still, it does point out that the Artists, Design, and Artisan sectors are more likely to be small businesses while the other sectors have larger employment ratios per firm.

Figure 5: Number of Employees per Creative Establishment in the ABQ MSA, 2024



Total annual wages paid to creative professionals in 2024 was $982.3 million. The Design industry has the highest total annual wages paid at $234.0 million, followed by Artisan at $227.4 million and Media at $222.4 million. Industries with the lowest total annual wages paid in 2024 include Fairs and Festivals ($2.9 million) and Museums ($9.8 million). Total annual wages paid are essential to the economic contribution and impact analyses, which are detailed in Chapter 2.

Figure 6: Total Wages Paid to Creative Professionals by Industry, 2024

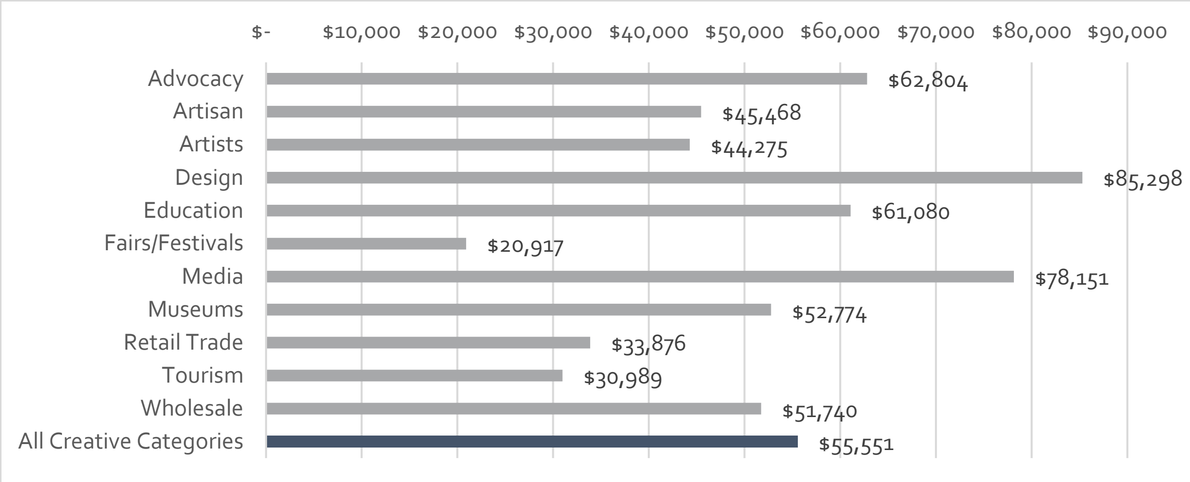


Examining wages paid per employee by creative category helps in understanding how individuals working the creative economy compare across industries. Average annual per employee wages in the creative industries averages to $55,551 across all categories in 2024. The median earnings across the Albuquerque MSA in 2024 are $54,337, demonstrating the creative industries are competitive with other industries locally.[8] The Design category has the highest overall annual average wages per employee at $85,298 for 2024, followed by Media ($78,151) and Advocacy ($62,804). The Design category includes occupations in architecture, specialized design services, and computer systems design, all of which require specific technical training, which generally implies a higher wage.

The categories with the lowest per employee wages are Fairs and Festivals at $20,917 and Tourism at $30,989. The nature of these lowest categories may predict the wages as both hire part-time or temporary employees. The full breakdown by category is found in Figure 7.

[8] Figure from US Census American Community Survey 1-year estimates.

Figure 7: Average Annual per Employee Wages by Creative Industry, 2024

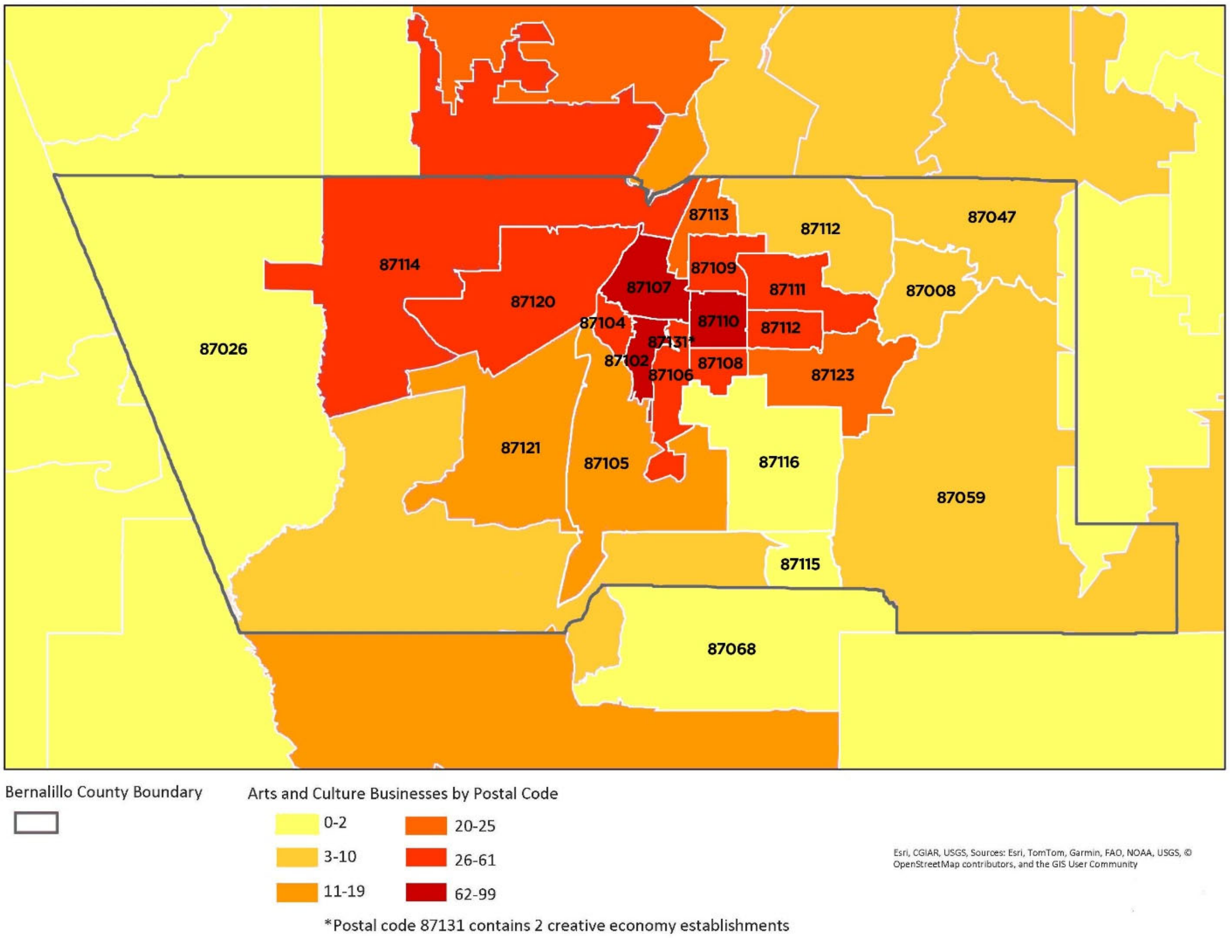


1.2.3. Locating the Creative Economy

Businesses in the creative economy are not equally distributed across the Albuquerque MSA. Clusters of creative firms follow cultural lines, like the area around Old Town and parts of Central Avenue, the former Route 66. These areas tie into both history and accessibility with available markets and real estate developed specifically for promoting culture and tourism.

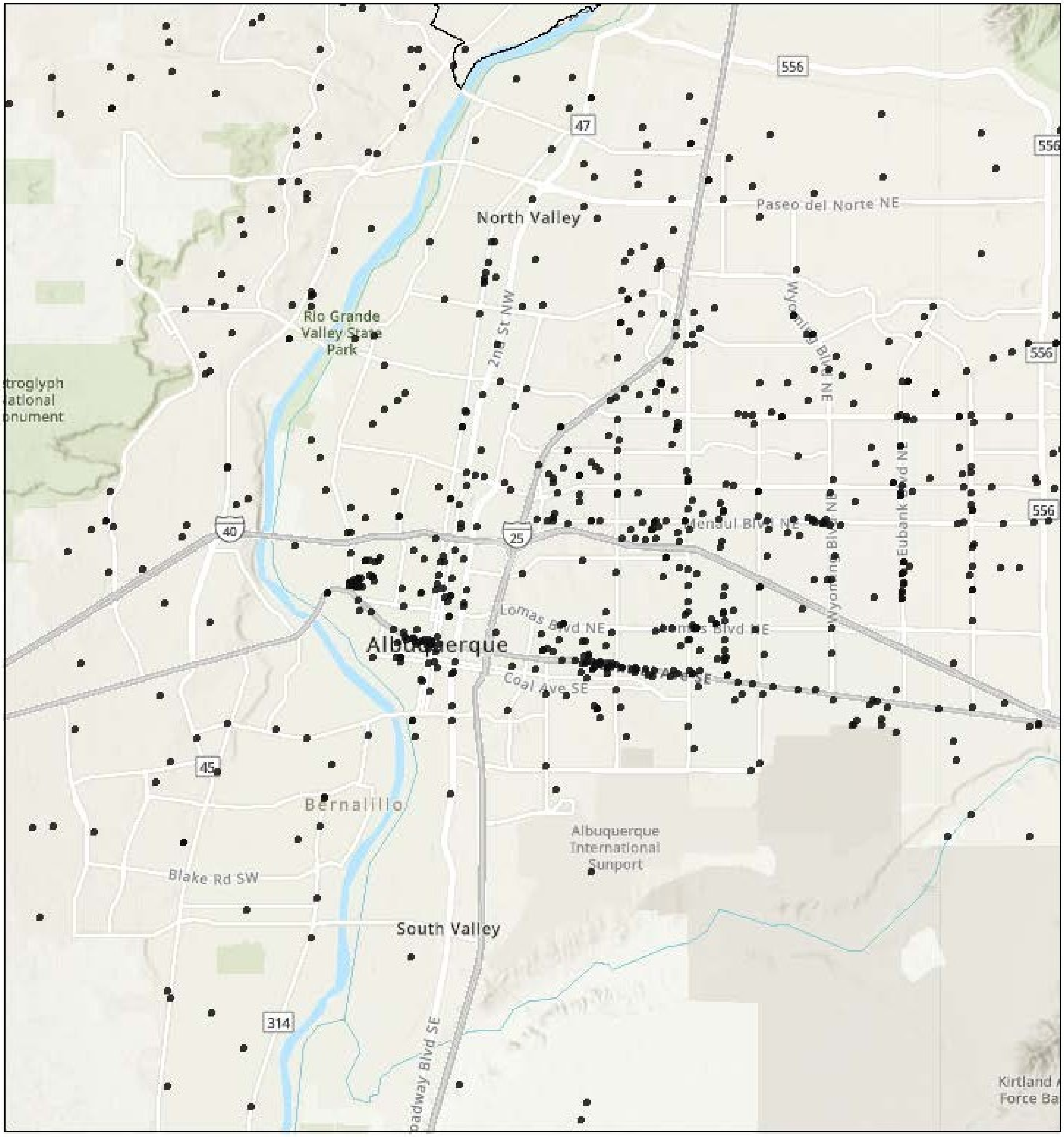
Using Data Axle's database of businesses in the Albuquerque MSA in 2024, we sorted by NAICS code and filtered using the definition of "core" arts and cultural industries as described at the beginning of this chapter. This includes businesses that are the originators of ideas, content, and commodities associated with the creation of arts and culture as well as some of the supporting establishments such as museums and galleries. It is significantly easier to apply a percentage to employment and establishment totals than to filter out whole businesses based on this definition. In that regard, we include all businesses that fit into our target NAICS codes. One example of where this becomes difficult is an artisan establishment that designs and produces decorative gates but also produces mass-marketable fencing options. The NAICS codes account for this, in part, by applying only the code that best represents the majority of revenue for that business, but we felt it important to note our methods here. We err on the side of inclusion on the maps so as not to erase the contributions of businesses that create, even if it is part-time.

Figure 8: Heat Map of Creative Businesses in the ABQ MSA, by Zip Code, 2024



The greatest concentration of creative businesses in the Albuquerque MSA is found in the areas corresponding to zip codes 87102, 87107, and 87110. 87102 includes all of Downtown and East Downtown, running south through the Rail Yards and Hispanic Cultural Center and just north of I-25. Los Ranchos de Albuquerque as well as the Near North Valley are included in 87107, which extends east across I-25 to include businesses along that corridor. 87110 is adjacent to much of 87107, bisected by I-40, including creative businesses in areas like Menaul Boulevard, which include many jewelers, photography and framing businesses, tattoo shops, hairdressers and barbers, and clothing design and alteration. 87116 and 87115 show only 0-2 creative businesses in their postal codes, but those areas include Kirtland Air Force Base and the unincorporated area south of the base and east of the Isleta Pueblo. On the whole, creative businesses are fairly well-distributed throughout Albuquerque, concentrated with the population concentration in the center of the city.

Figure 9: Dot Map of Creative Businesses in Albuquerque, 2024



The above dot map uses the same data as the heat map but gives a better sense of how creative businesses cluster along certain corridors. Clear clusters can be seen along Central Avenue from the Rio Grande River to Louisiana Avenue and along Menaul Boulevard east of I-40 to Wyoming Boulevard. Understanding the density and distribution of these businesses can help the city plan smart development for further creative infrastructure and continued access to these areas through various means of transportation. It can also help planners to make decisions about how to best improve access to the creative arts in all quadrants of the city.

1.3. The Creative Economy in Albuquerque Over Time

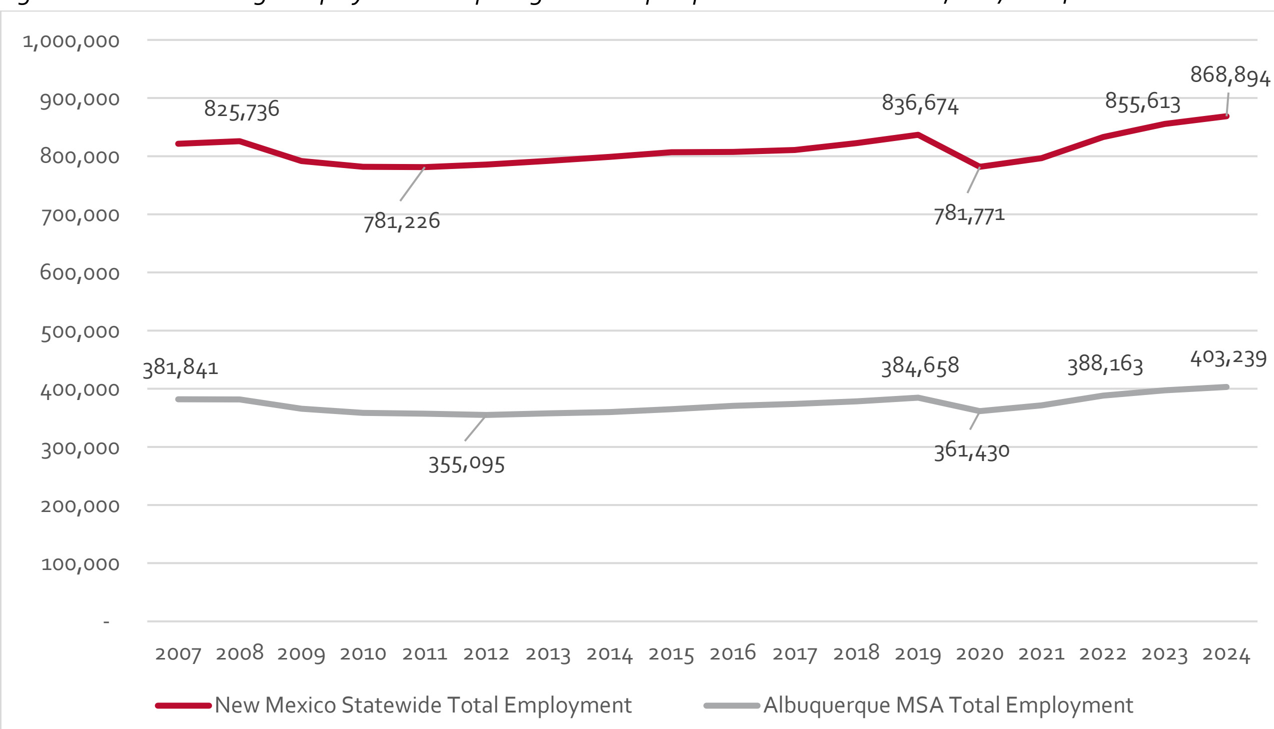
Moving from the static timepoint of 2024, we now examine economic trends over time and how the creative economy compares to both New Mexico and the Albuquerque MSA as a whole. In this section, we look at data from 2007-present.

1.3.1. Creative Establishments and Formal Employment

In New Mexico, the peak annual average employment before the Great Recession was 825,736 in 2008.[9] In 2011, with the recession at its greatest impact, average annual employment was down to 781,226. In 2019, New Mexico had finally recovered employment numbers to surpass the 2008 figures with 836,674 individuals employed; however, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, those numbers plummeted to 781,771, nearly the lowest level seen during the Great Recession. Since 2023, New Mexico's employment numbers have fully rebounded, showing a 1.6% growth between 2023 and 2024, painting a hopeful recovery picture.

The Albuquerque MSA's annual average employment trends in alignment with the state. 2007 saw Albuquerque's highest employment figures pre-recession and its lowest in 2012 during the recession. The chart below details the change over time and highlights the highs and lows.

Figure 10: Annual Average Employment Comparing the Albuquerque MSA to New Mexico, 2007-2024



In the next section, we examine trends in creative establishments and employment of creative professionals. Establishments include all of those found within the creative industries as described at the beginning of this chapter. Employment figures are calculated using a percentage of the number of workers in each type of industry determined to be employed in creative occupations. It is important to note that the industry codes (NAICS) are revised by the federal government every 5 years as needed, so we did see some shifts in how creative companies are categorized. However, we attempt to keep the creative industries comparable

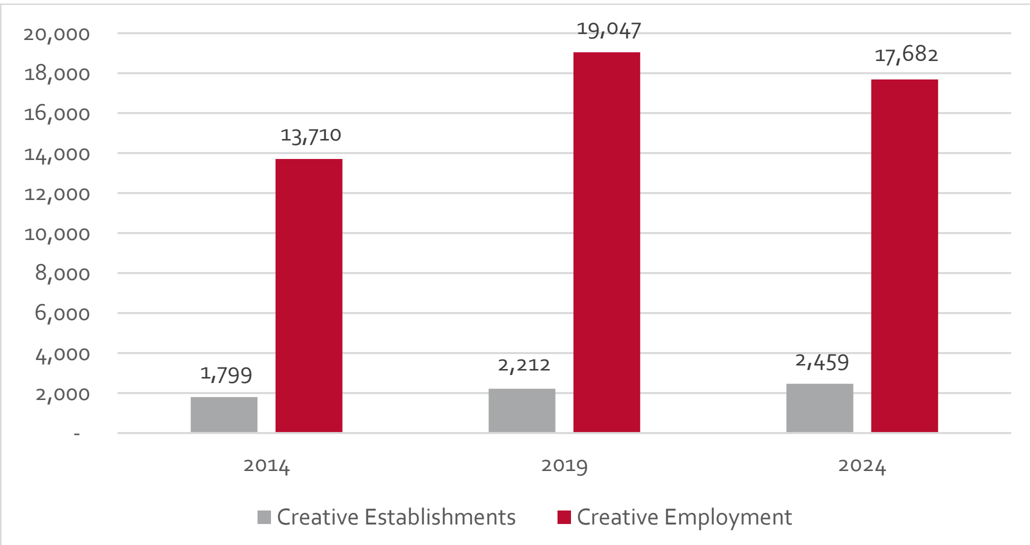
[9] Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data Series.

throughout timepoint comparisons. The full methodology for calculating these percentages and determining what constitutes a creative industry is found in the data addendum to this report.

Looking at timepoints in 2014, 2019, and 2024, we are able to analyze trends in five-year increments spanning the end of the Great Recession, the period just before the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the current time period.

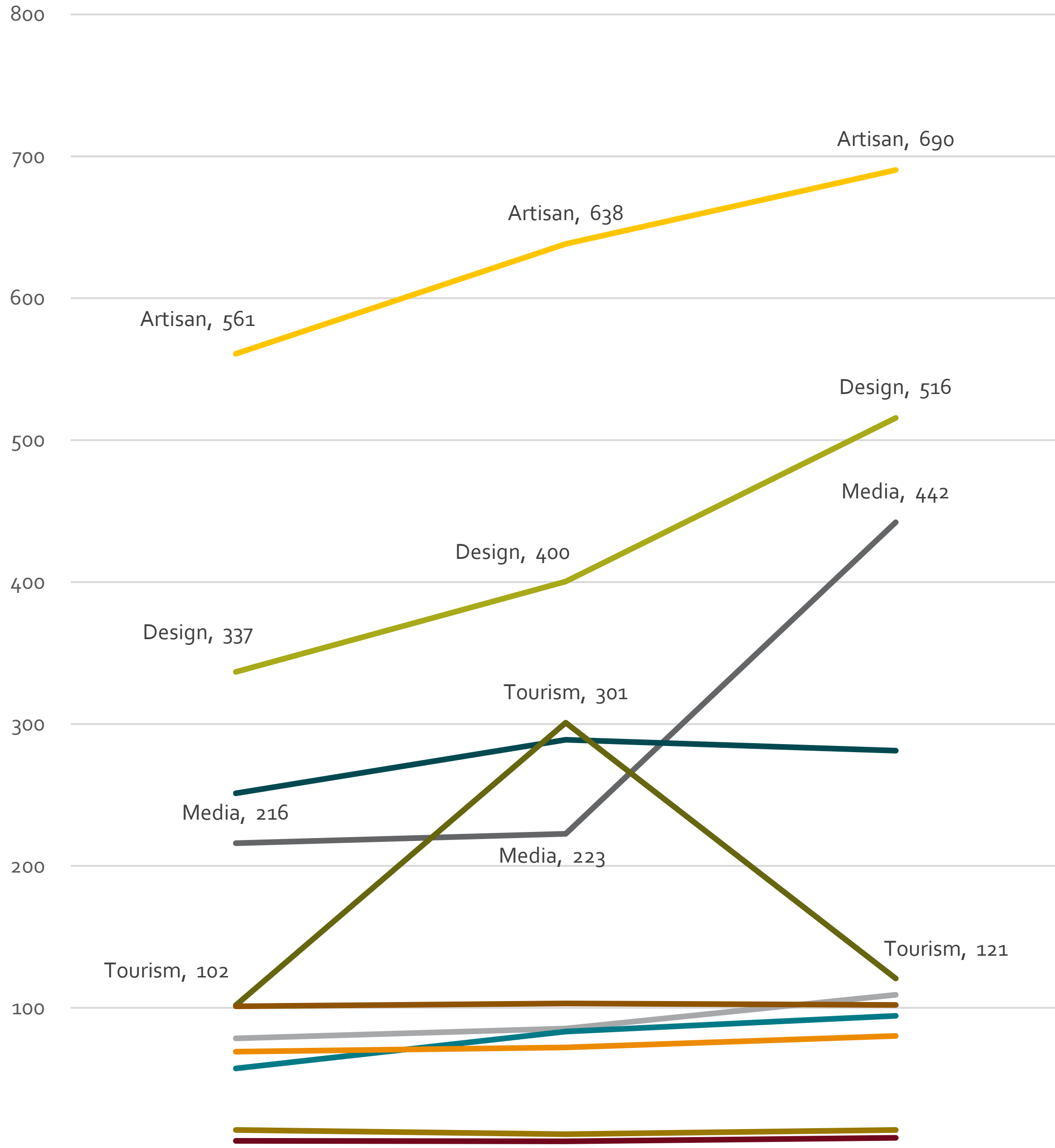
The number of creative establishments in the Albuquerque MSA was 1,799 in 2014. By 2019, this figure increased to 2,212 establishments, a 22.9% increase. Another 247 establishments were added between 2019 and 2024, for a total of 2,459 creative establishments and an 11.1% increase. Considering this timespan includes the COVID-19 shutdowns, that indicates a strong recovery for establishments.

Figure 11: Number of Creative Establishments and Creative Employment in the Albuquerque MSA, 2014-2024



Looking at trends over time, we can identify areas of growth and decline within the specified creative industries. Both the number of establishments and the employment figures in the Artisan category and the Design category increased considerably from 2014-2024. The number of Tourism establishments spiked significantly in 2019 but fell back to near 2014 levels in 2014. This is also reflected in the employment figures. Tourism has not recovered from the COVID-19 Pandemic in the same way the other creative categories have.

Figure 12: Number of Establishments in the Albuquerque MSA by Creative Category, 2014-2024

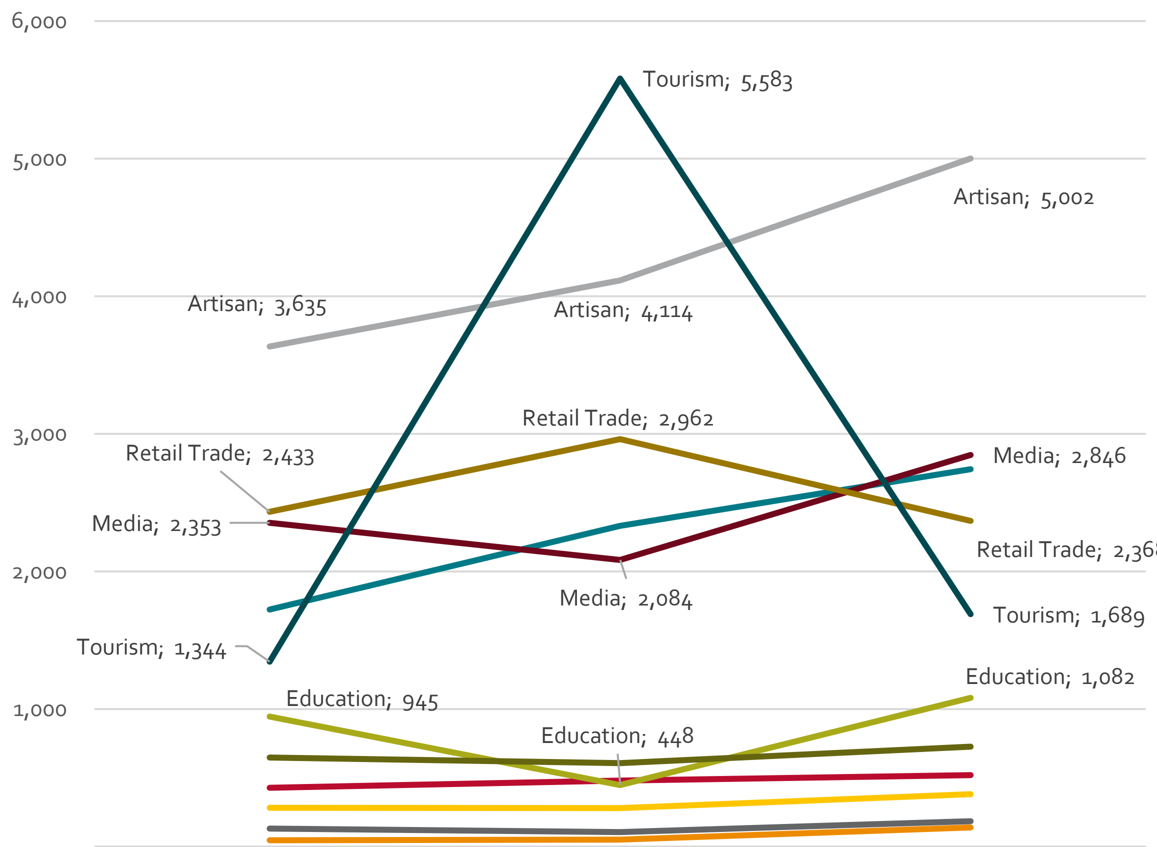


	2014	2019	2024
Advocacy	79	85	109
Artisan	561	638	690
Artists	57	83	94
Design	337	400	516
Education	69	72	80
Fairs/Festivals	6	6	8
Media	216	223	442
Museums	14	11	14
Retail Trade	251	289	281
Tourism	102	301	121
Wholesale	101	103	102

Employment in the Media category declined in 2019 but showed strong growth by 2024. Some of the uneven employment growth in Media could be attributed to a slower demand after the recession and a contrasting increased demand after COVID-19, but some might also be attributed to the NAICS revisions in 2019. Employment in the Design category is also impacted by the revisions with the addition of computer software design to the category in 2019.

All the creative categories showed employment growth from 2014 to 2024 except the Retail Trade category. category. The decline and slower growth in the creative groups for these may be indicative of a slower recovery from COVID-19 impacts. Growth in the Museum, Fairs and Festivals, Advocacy, and Wholesale categories was minimal.

Figure 13: Employment in the Albuquerque MSA by Creative Category, 2014-2024



	2014	2019	2024
Advocacy	428	480	520
Artisan	3,635	4,114	5,002
Artists	282	280	381
Design	1,723	2,332	2,743
Education	945	448	1,082
Fairs/Festivals	46	51	140
Media	2,353	2,084	2,846
Museums	131	106	185
Retail Trade	2,433	2,962	2,368
Tourism	1,344	5,583	1,689
Wholesale	647	607	726

2.3.2. Finding the Formally Self-Employed by Industry

The creative economy includes many businesses that formally report to the government as having no employees, commonly referred to as sole proprietors. Typical employer business data, as we use in the previous section, does not include sole proprietors. The U.S. Census Bureau data series, "Nonemployer Statistics" (NES),[10] includes establishments that are primarily individual proprietorships as well as other legal forms of organizing a business.[11] The NES data series helps identify the number and impact of these types of businesses. In the following section, we refer to "creative industries" as they are categorized by NAICS code. Recall that not all establishments within a given industry may be considered creative; the methodology used to determine the percentage of creative businesses within an industry is found in the addendum to this report.

There are 39,702 creative nonemployer establishments in the Albuquerque MSA, accounting for $1.6 billion in sales in 2022; a figure that underscores their significant presence. Notably, nonemployer establishments are four times more numerous than employer businesses and outnumber employer businesses across all industry sectors. Annual Business Survey data are used in comparison to the Nonemployer data in Table 1 below.[12] If each nonemployer were considered part of the employment total, then the creative economy would account for a 11.8 percent of total employment in the Albuquerque area in 2022.

Excluding the industrial sectors outside what we have defined as the creative economy, nonemployers have a lower reported sales value than their employer establishment counterparts, despite their large share of total businesses in Albuquerque. This makes sense overall, given that when a business grows, it often requires the hiring of additional employees.

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services has the greatest number of nonemployers establishments at 8,842 and Wholesale Trade the fewest at 902. The Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector has the highest ratio of nonemployer establishments at 17.6, indicating for every employer firm in this sector, there are 17.6 nonemployer establishments. Again, this makes sense given that many independent artists, included in this sector, will register as their own business without employees. The lowest ratio of nonemployer businesses in the creative economy is Accommodation and Food Services at 0.9.

Table 1: Ratio of Employer to Nonemployer Establishments

		Nonemployer Establishments		Employer Firms	
NAICS Industry	**Ratio of Nonemployer to Employer**	**Number of Establishments**	**Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue ($M)**	**Number of Firms**	**Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue ($M)**
Construction	2.5	4,754	$349.7	1,867	$6,252.3
Manufacturing	1.6	996	$48.0	624	$5,958.2
Wholesale Trade	1.2	902	$91.0	735	$12,927.3

[10] U.S. Census Bureau. "All Sectors: Nonemployer Statistics by Legal Form of Organization and Receipts Size Class for the U.S., States, and Selected Geographies: 2022." Economic Surveys, ECNSVY Nonemployer Statistics, Table NS2200NONEMP, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/NONEMP2022.NS2200NONEMP?q=NONEMP2022.NS2200NONEMP&g=310XX00US10740. Accessed on April 16, 2025.

[11] This includes C-corporations, S-corporations, and Partnerships. Source: U.S. Census Bureau NES Methodology, April 29, 2025. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/nonemployers-statitstics/technical-documentation/methodology.html

[12] 2Annual Business Survey: Statistics for Employer Firms by Industry, Sex, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ABSCS2022.AB2200CSA01?t=Value+of+Sales,+Receipts,+Revenue,+or+Shipments&g=310XX00US10740&y=2022&nkd=ETH_GROUP~001,RACE_GROUP~00,SEX~001,VET_GROUP~001 . Excluding industry 55 Management of Companies and 99 Industries not classified.

Retail Trade	3.0	4,532	$265.1	1,488	$16,542.1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4.0	8,842	$406.4	2,201	$7,854.9
Educational Services	8.8	2,513	$40.0	285	$242.0
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	17.6	4,623	$96.6	263	$394.6
Accommodation & Food Services	0.9	1,164	$48.6	1,261	$2,662.0
Other Services, except Public Admin	6.3	5,997	$209.5	947	$932.3
Creative Industry Sectors	*3.6*	*34,323*	*$1,555*	*9,671*	*$53,766*

1.4. Conclusion

There are many ways to measure and quantify Albuquerque's creative economy. In this chapter, we focus on creating a base framework for describing who is in the creative economy, how much employees and businesses earn in different sectors of the economy, where creative businesses are found, and how the creative industries have changed over time. In the next chapter, we look at the economic impact and contribution of the creative economy on the Albuquerque MSA, building on the foundational ideas laid out in this chapter.

The Economic Effect of Albuquerque's Creative Economy

The Economic Effects of Albuquerque's Creative Economy

2.1. Introduction

Albuquerque's creative economy is much more than the economic output it generates but understanding the value it adds to the community in terms of dollars can help to illustrate another facet of its importance. In this section of the report, we first look at the creative economy's economic impact on the Albuquerque MSA in 2024 and then compare its economic contribution to the greater economy in 2019 and 2024.[13]

In short, an economic impact quantifies the dollars generated within a specific geographic area that can be attributed to a specific event, institution, or sector of the broader economy, representing new dollars in the regional economy that would not have been spent here otherwise. These figures are greater than the sum of the creative economy's total spending on payroll, goods and services, and other direct business expenditures because money spent by those in the creative economy is spent again by their employees and vendors. Additionally, money spent by visitors and patrons of creative establishments and events also cycles through the local economy.

An economic contribution analysis examines gross spending as a part of the creative economy, including dollars that would likely have been spent locally on something else, not only new money flowing in.

To conduct these analyses, BBER collected data on the employment and revenues generated by local creative businesses as well as the percentage of funds that come from outside of the Albuquerque MSA by industry. Both the economic impact and contribution analyses are estimated using IMPLAN software's input-output modeling system. The full methodology used to calculate the impacts and definitions of the terms used in this section are found in Appendix A, with a more abbreviated description of terms below.

Direct economic effects include employee compensation, operational expenses, and other expenses by businesses within the creative economy. The impact measures these effects based on how the economy changes with the influx of outside dollars. The contribution measures the effects based on the existing state of the creative economy. To follow, the indirect effects are the result of business-to-business purchases in the creative economy's supply chain and induced effects are generated when employees both within the creative economy and in those businesses in the supply chain spend their income locally.

Output is the total value of all goods and services produced in 2024 within the creative economy (direct), within its supply chain (indirect), and as a result of spending by employees both in the creative economy and its supply chain (induced). Labor income includes all employee compensation and proprietor income. Finally, the value added represents the difference between total output and the cost of goods and services, indicating the creative economy's contribution to the Albuquerque MSA's GDP. All figures in this chapter are in 2025 dollars.

2.2. Economic Impact

* Chapter cover photo taken by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, 2024.

Albuquerque's creative economy makes a significant impact on the greater MSA through the activity generated by the hundreds of businesses and individual artists and artisans, dozens of events and fairs/festivals, and their customers, patrons, and attendees. The economic impact measures only employment and dollars that are supported by dollars coming in from outside of the Albuquerque MSA. The idea is that these external dollars might not make it into the Albuquerque economy without the existence of the creative economy.

In 2024, the creative economy generated nearly $1.1 billion in *direct* economic output, including $305.8 million in labor income. These figures represent what the creative economic generates exclusive of its supply chains and induced impacts. In total, including indirect and induced impacts, the creative economic supports 9,687 jobs, $510.3 million in labor income, and $1.75 billion in output.

Table 2: Economic Impact of the Creative Economy on the ABQ MSA, 2024

Impact type	Employment	Labor Income ($M)	Value Added ($M)	Output ($M)
Direct	5,771	$305.8	$460.0	$1,088.6
Indirect	2,378	$123.9	$190.0	$392.6
Induced	1,538	$80.6	$163.5	$270.8
Total	**9,687**	**$510.3**	**$813.6**	**$1,752.0**
Multiplier	*1.7*	*1.7*	*1.8*	*1.6*

It is important to note that these figures are significantly larger that the most recent report from the organization, Americans for the Arts.[14] Their Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 impact results for the City of Albuquerque only includes information from nonprofit arts and cultural organizations whereas this report includes for-profit enterprises. Further, their data is from 2022 and possibly still depressed due to the aftereffects of the COVID-19 shutdowns. This report uses data from 2024, which is two years farther from the pandemic's height.

In the next section, we focus on the economic contribution of the creative economy on the Albuquerque MSA. In that section, we break down the figures by the smaller sectors within the creative economy. However, since the impact data require businesses to estimate the percentage of their revenue that comes from outside of the Albuquerque area, we see a larger margin of error and do not report those same breakdowns for the impact.

2.3. Economic Contribution

A contribution analysis is different from an impact analysis in that a contribution looks at the total economic activity generated by an existing industry whereas an impact measures the change in the economy due to an event or the influx of outside dollars. The contribution analysis in the next section illustrates how much economic activity the creative economy supports in the Albuquerque MSA. For comparison, we also include a contribution analysis for 2019. Looking at the contribution analyses for 2019 and 2024 side-by-side can help to understand the economic recovery of different sectors of the creative economy after the COVID-19 lockdown.

[14] The methodology the Americans for the Arts study uses alongside the local and national reports can be found here: https://aep6.americansforthearts.org/local-regional-findings https://aep6.americansforthearts.org/local-regional-findings

Table 3: Economic Contribution of the Creative Economy on the ABQ MSA, 2024

Impact type	Employment	Labor Income ($M)	Value Added ($M)	Output ($B)
Direct	17,680	$1,478.5	$2,418.6	$5.0
Indirect	11,633	$626.0	$1,043.6	$2.1
Induced	8,370	$449.8	$891.2	$1.5
Total	**37,683**	**$2,554.2**	**$4,353.5**	**$8.5**
Multiplier	*2.1*	*1.7*	*1.8*	*1.7*

The IMPLAN analysis uses wage, employment, and RP80[15] data to calculate direct, indirect, and induced effects, much like the economic impact analysis. In total, Albuquerque's creative economy supports 17,680 jobs directly employed within the sector. Through supply chains and the cycle of spending of buying goods and services through other local industries, this further supports 11,633 jobs. And as the employees within the creative economy spend their money in other parts of Albuquerque's economy, another 8,370 jobs are supported. This makes the 2024 total jobs supported by the creative economy 37,683. For every 10 jobs in the creative economy, another 11 are supported outside of the sector.

The direct output to the Albuquerque area by the creative economy's inputs is $5.0 billion and the total contribution of the industry inclusive of supply chains and induced impacts is $8.5 billion. This significant contribution highlights the role of creative work within Albuquerque's broader economy. In the next section, we break this contribution down by sector finding the biggest generators of employment and dollars. Note that not all sectors are included at 100%; each sector was broken down into its component occupations and assigned a figure that represents its share of employment within the creative economy, as described in the addendum to this report.

Table 4 breaks down the employment portion of the economic contribution into creative sector. Of note are that the Artisan category comprises the largest direct employment contribution at 5,001 employed in the category, but Media generates the largest employment contribution to the broader economy at 9,294 total jobs. This table also helps illustrate that the higher total employment contribution of the Media sector overall when compared to the larger Artisan sector; much of the labor employment contributions are in the supply chain (indirect) rather than direct employment within the sector. The smallest employment sectors in the creative economy are Fairs/Festivals (140), Museums (185), and Artists (381).

[15] RP80 data uses gross receipts tax figures as a proxy for revenue. Specifications and limitations of this dataset can be found here: https://www.tax.newmexico.gov/businesses/non-taxable-transaction-certificates-nttc/

Table 4: Employment Contribution by Creative Sector, 2024

Creative sector	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Advocacy	520	178	208	906
Artisan	5,001	1,858	1,949	8,808
Artists	381	1,782	512	2,675
Design	2,744	1,218	1,573	5,535
Education	1,082	215	413	1,710
Fairs/Festivals	140	417	112	669
Media	2,845	4,223	2,226	9,294
Museums	185	83	68	336
Retail Trade	2,368	558	588	3,514
Tourism	1,689	412	375	2,475
Wholesale	727	690	347	1,764
Total	**17,680**	**11,634**	**8,371**	**37,685**

Despite having lower direct employment figures, the Artist sector generates more direct labor income than the Advocacy sector at $52.6 million and $42.7 million respectively. Again, the largest generator of total labor income in Albuquerque's creative economy is the Media sector at $672.5 million, reflected in the dramatic increase in the film industry over the past few years. The smallest contribution in terms of labor income is in the Museum sector, at $20.9 million in total.

Table 5: Labor Income Contribution by Creative Sector, 2024

Creative sector	Direct ($M)	Indirect ($M)	Induced ($M)	Total ($M)
Advocacy	$42.7	$10.8	$11.2	$64.7
Artisan	$384.7	$106.5	$104.7	$595.9
Artists	$52.6	$76.0	$27.5	$156.1
Design	$323.9	$72.1	$84.6	$480.6
Education	$93.6	$12.0	$22.2	$127.8
Fairs/Festivals	$10.9	$17.2	$6.0	$34.1
Media	$317.3	$235.6	$119.6	$672.5
Museums	$12.8	$4.5	$3.6	$20.9
Retail Trade	$116.8	$30.8	$31.6	$179.2
Tourism	$71.1	$24.0	$20.1	$115.2
Wholesale	$52.0	$36.4	$18.7	$107.1
Total	**$1,478.4**	**$625.9**	**$449.8**	**$2,554.1**

Recall that output measures the total value of all goods and services produced in 2024 within the creative economy (direct), within its supply chain (indirect), and as a result of spending by employees both in the creative economy and its supply chain (induced). In the table above we see the same total output as the overall contribution, at $8.5 billion, broken down by creative sector. Direct output in the Media sector is the highest at $1.6 billion, contributing over a quarter of the total direct output for the entire creative economy. The Artisan and Design sectors each also contribute over a billion dollars to the total output at $1.8 billion and $1.2 billion, respectively. In total, the smallest contribution is found in the Museum sector at $60.5 million for 2024. This is less than half of the contribution of the next smallest sector, Fairs, at $144.2 million.

Table 6: Output Contribution by Creative Sector, 2024

Creative sector	Direct ($M)	Indirect ($M)	Induced ($M)	Total ($M)
Advocacy	$132.1	$31.8	$36.6	$200.5
Artisan	$1,136.4	$358.7	$343.2	$1,838.3
Artists	$333.0	$258.0	$90.1	$681.1
Design	$748.7	$208.8	$277.2	$1,234.7
Education	$154.9	$44.8	$72.7	$272.4
Fairs/Festivals	$66.8	$57.7	$19.7	$144.2
Media	$1,604.5	$834.7	$392.2	$2,831.4
Museums	$32.5	$16.0	$12.0	$60.5
Retail Trade	$302.9	$97.3	$103.5	$503.7
Tourism	$220.6	$78.6	$66.0	$365.2
Wholesale	$224.0	$102.4	$61.2	$387.6
Total	**$4,956.4**	**$2,088.8**	**$1,474.4**	**$8,519.6**

The COVID-19 shutdowns impacted all sectors, but in-person sectors such as Museums, Tourism, and Fairs faced significant financial hardships. In the next section, we look at how 2024's contribution figures compare to those of 2019, to give an indicator of what the sectors looked like before the shutdowns so we may assess whether they have recovered from that economic shock.

In 2019, Albuquerque's creative economy supported a total of 29,252 jobs with a total labor income of over $1.5 billion dollars.[16] The creative economy added over $3.3 billion in output to the MSA. For every ten jobs in the creative economy, another nine were supported in other sectors.

Table 7: Economic Contribution of the Creative Economy on the ABQ MSA, 2019

Impact type	Employment	Labor Income ($M)	Value Added ($M)	Output ($B)
Direct	15,282	$976.2	$1,597.9	$3.3
Indirect	7,516	$276.9	$564.8	$1.1
Induced	6,455	$265.1	$500.8	$0.9
Total	**29,252**	**$1,518.2**	**$2,663.5**	**$5.3**
Multiplier	*1.9*	*1.6*	*1.7*	*1.6*

Looking side-by-side at the output in 2019 compared with the output in 2024, it is easy to see that direct, indirect, and induced contributions have all increased. Total output has risen by just over 160% from $5.3 billion in 2019 to $8.5 billion in 2024. This over-time growth illustrates strength across the creative economy in the Albuquerque MSA.

Table 8: Creative Economy Contribution in Output, 2019 and 2024

Impact type	2019 Output ($B)	2024 Output ($B)
Direct	$3.3	$5.0
Indirect	$1.1	$2.1
Induced	$0.9	$1.5
Total	**$5.3**	**$8.5**

[16] As noted earlier in the chapter, all figures are in 2025 dollars for comparison purposes.

What the overall figures don't show is how each sector is faring within the greater creative economy. In the table below, we align employment numbers in 2019 with those in 2024 by sector. Notably, nearly every sector has seen direct employment growth, with the exceptions of Retail Trade and Tourism. This shows that fewer individuals are being employed in those two sectors whereas all other sectors have added jobs. Tourism and Retail Trade within the creative economy have not seen the same robust jobs growth that the other sectors have post-COVID.

Table 9: Employment Contribution by Creative Sector, 2019 and 2024

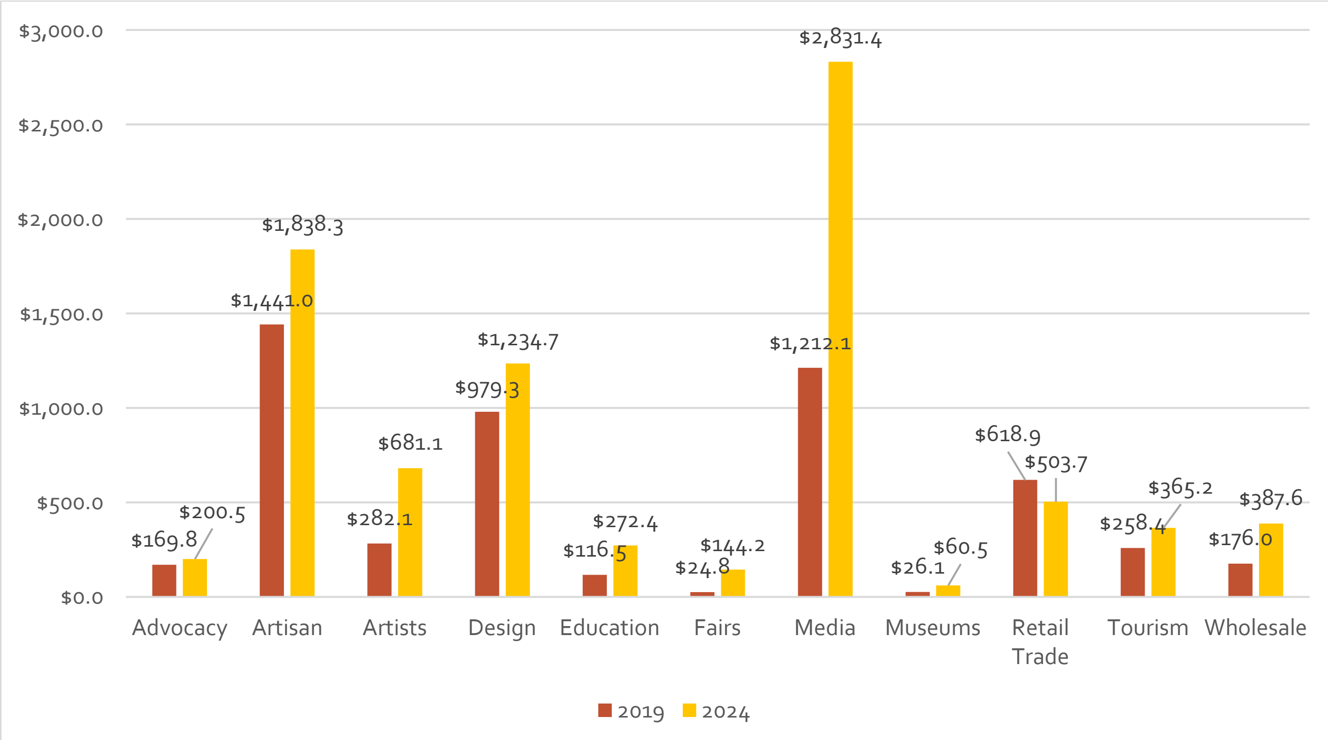
Creative sector	Direct		Indirect		Induced		Total	
	2019	*2024*	*2019*	*2024*	*2019*	*2024*	*2019*	*2024*
Advocacy	480	520	197	178	209	208	886	906
Artisan	4,115	5,001	1,959	1,858	1,276	1,949	7,349	8,808
Artists	280	381	781	1,782	397	512	1,457	2,675
Design	2,331	2,744	1,372	1,218	1,802	1,573	5,505	5,535
Education	448	1,082	122	215	120	413	690	1,710
Fairs	51	140	92	417	25	112	167	669
Media	2,083	2,845	1,639	4,223	1,100	2,226	4,822	9,294
Museums	106	185	41	83	38	68	185	336
Retail Trade	2,962	2,368	774	558	882	588	4,618	3,514
Tourism	1,818	1,689	308	412	388	375	2,514	2,475
Wholesale	607	727	232	690	219	347	1,059	1,764
Total	**15,282**	**17,680**	**7,516**	**11,634**	**6,455**	**8,371**	**29,252**	**37,685**

The two sectors with the greatest direct employment expansions proportionally since 2019 are Education and Fairs. The Fairs sector has nearly tripled its direct employment, indicating substantial growth since 2019. Interestingly, although the Media sector has experienced strong direct employment growth, its indirect employment contribution has grown by a factor of 2.6, which shows strong supply chain growth within that sector. This is likely because the nature of Media jobs has shifted as the film industry has expanded and other Media jobs have contracted.

Again, we compare output side-by-side to understand the total value of all the goods and services produced as a result of the creative sectors' contribution to Albuquerque's economy. As is shown in the employment figures, all sectors grew from 2019 to 2024 except Retail Trade and Tourism. Tourism's output increased from $258.4 million in 2019 to $365.2 million in 2024, despite a reduction in jobs numbers. The only sector to show a decline in total output is retail trade, dipping to $503.7 million in 2024 from $618.9 million in 2019. This total output value, however, is still greater than six of the other sectors within the creative economy, making it a significant contributor.

The Media sector had a greater than two-fold jump in output, rising from $1.2 billion in 2019 to $2.8 billion in 2024. It looks particularly striking on a chart to see that differential, however, output in other sectors also has had a marked rise. Output in the Fairs sector increased by nearly six-fold (a factor of 5.81) from $24.8 million in 2019 to $144.2 million in 2024. The Artists sector also saw a notable increase at 2.4 times its 2019 value, increasing from $282.1 million to $681.1 million. Also worthy of mention, the Education and Museums sectors both increased by a factor of 2.3.

Figure 14: Output Contribution by Creative Sector in Millions of Dollars, 2019 and 2024



The creative professions serve as much more than just window dressing to Albuquerque's economy; these essential industries are vital and significant contributors to widespread economic growth. The creative economy promotes development and encourages tourism and workforce retention by improving the region's vibrance and vitality. Economic effects are seen both in generating new revenue sources into the Albuquerque economy and in growing and maintaining local spending, bringing in billions of dollars annually.

Opportunities and Challenges in Albuquerque's Creative Economy

Opportunities and Challenges in Albuquerque's Creative Economy

In this chapter, we focus on how workers in the creative economy see Albuquerque as a place for creative work, what challenges they face in doing their creative work, and how they fit into the broader creative landscape. This chapter is driven by primary data collected between November 2024 and September 2025 through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with local creatives.

3.1. A Brief Methodology

3.1.1. Surveys

The primary survey conducted for this report is the Survey of Creative Professionals. The City of Albuquerque was especially interested in finding those creative professionals who are not captured in the industry and occupation data. These individuals may volunteer in the arts, may earn less than the minimum taxable income, or may fall through the cracks in other ways. BBER staff handed out QR codes and spoke with vendors at seven different artisan markets a total of twelve times throughout the research process. The City's Arts and Culture Department posted the survey link in their social media accounts and distributed it through their email lists. Finally, we asked those who took the survey to pass the link onto other creative professionals they knew. In all, 458 surveys were conducted either online using the Qualtrics survey platform or in person, on paper.

Few questions in the survey were mandatory in order to receive the largest number of total question responses, therefore, the number of respondents for each individual question may vary. One example of why this is necessary is how resistant many people are to offer information about their income and other demographic information. All respondents were first given an informed consent and survey responses are confidential and deidentified. The full survey is found in Appendix B.

A second survey targeted business owners and focused on one question alone: "Approximately what percent of your revenue, earnings, or funding comes from outside of the Albuquerque area?" This question was key to conducting the economic impact analysis with confidence. Nearly 2,500 businesses were identified as part of the creative economy. BBER students called over 350 of those, receiving 225 responses in most industries identified as creative. For those industries we were unable to reach, we imputed a figure using other measures. For example, to impute a value of external dollars for higher education, we used the percentage of students attending UNM from outside of the Albuquerque MSA.

3.1.2. Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups and interviews were designed to gain a deeper understanding of the creative population in Albuquerque. Participants were chosen based on agreeing to be contacted in a survey response they gave or targeted by industry and called or visited directly. The 13 interviews were informal and happened throughout the research process. Conversation revolved around the current creative climate in Albuquerque. Participants were allowed to remain anonymous.

* Photo by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer, Summer 2020. Mural by M. Mackenzie, 2020.

Semi-formal interviews were held with comparison cities, when possible. BBER staff reached out to Arts and Cultural directors in 11 comparison cities, informally spoke with two, and held formal conversations with another two. In total, eight individuals in four cities gave information about their policies and initiatives in their creative communities.

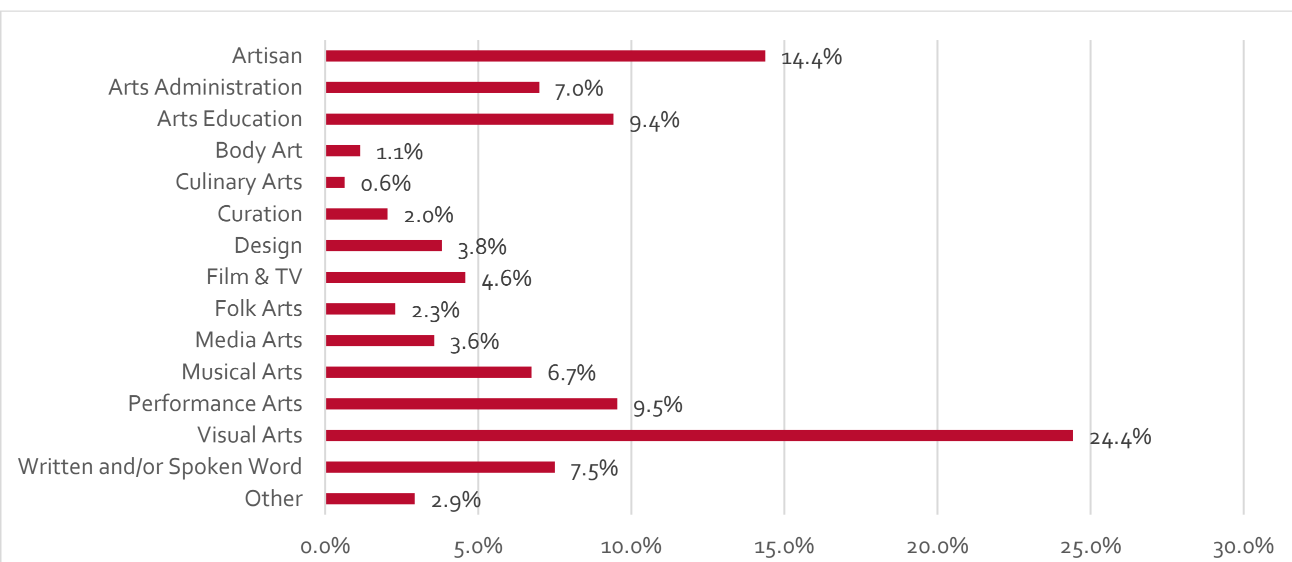
Focus groups were held both virtually and in-person in July 2025 and included 26 participants. Participants were invited to have their business thanked in the acknowledgements section of the report. Each group lasted approximately 1.5 hours and conversation was guided by BBER staff, examining questions of what being a creative in Albuquerque is like and how they might want to see changes at the city level. In-person groups were held at Street Food Institute, who graciously offered to host for free and to cater breakfast. All participants were given a family pass good for admission to some of the city-managed venues in Albuquerque. The focus group questions and handouts are found in Appendix B.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Survey of Creative Professionals

As the target population for this survey is professionals not always captured by the official occupation and wage data, we began our survey with questions about what kind of work the respondents were engaged in and whether they made money from their creative endeavors. We also wanted to understand how long individuals have been doing creative work and whether they pursued a degree in the creative arts. The following section outlines who our participants are in this regard.

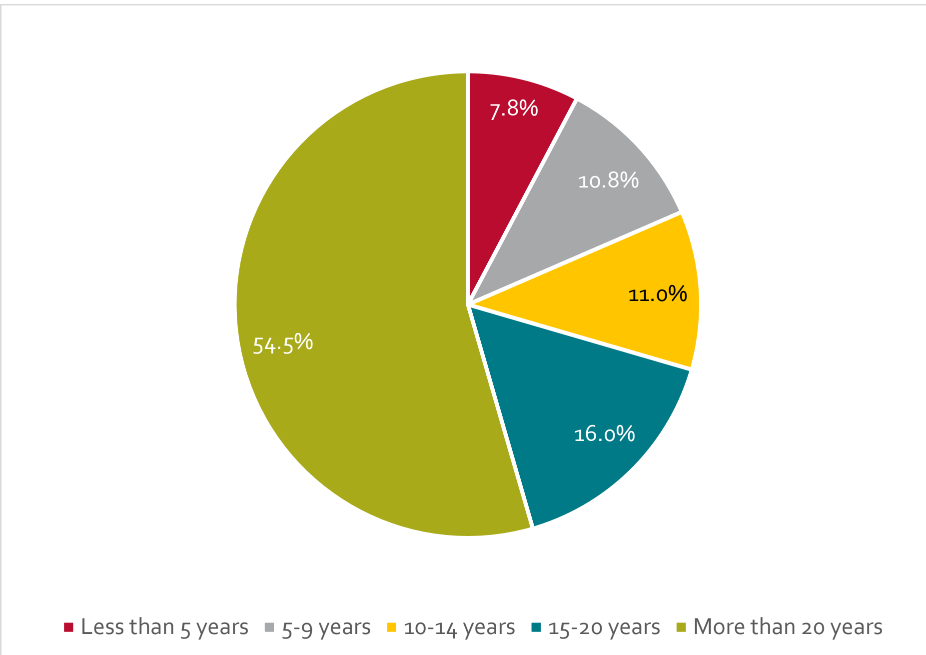
We asked our respondents to choose no more than three categories to describe their creative work. We did this, in part, because we know how many roles each of us fills and prioritizing how we define those roles helps identify our main areas of focus. We included an "other" category as we realize that not all the predetermined categories would fit someone's self-description. Our primary respondents identified as part of the visual arts community, with 24.4% of participants choosing that category. Second were artisans at 14.4% and performing artists and arts educators came in at 9.5% and 9.4% of the sample respectively. Unfortunately, despite attempts to target professionals in the culinary arts, they represent the smallest portion of our survey sample at 0.6%.



After coding respondents who chose other, but described a category listed above (for example, we recoded sculpture as visual art), 23 individuals remained outside of our primary categories. These individuals fell into the following general descriptors: arts critics, community arts, fair and festival organizers, docents, art therapy, video game development, consultants, retailers and suppliers, and patrons of the arts. Not all the respondents hold paid creative positions; in fact, patrons of the arts pay into the system rather than receive a salary and docents are volunteers. However, we chose to include their responses in the survey as they are part of the creative economy, albeit in a different type of way.

Most of the survey respondents have been involved in their creative work for more than 20 years. When that figure is combined with those who have been in their field for 15-20 years, we see 70.5% of our sample. Only 7.8% have been involved in their creative work for less than five years.

Figure 15: Length of Time Respondents Have Been Involved in their Creative Work, N=400



A large portion of the survey respondents also hold a specialized degree or training in their creative field, at 65.3%. With the majority of the sample having 15 or more years of experience and nearly 2/3 holding a specialized degree or training, we see Albuquerque has a highly experienced creative workforce.

Figure 17: Do you have specialized training or a degree related to your creative work? N=400

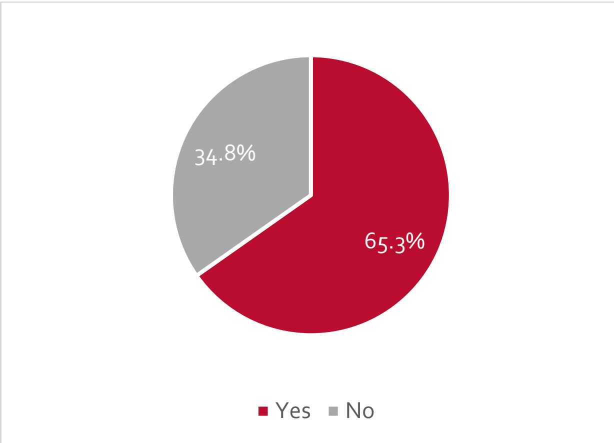
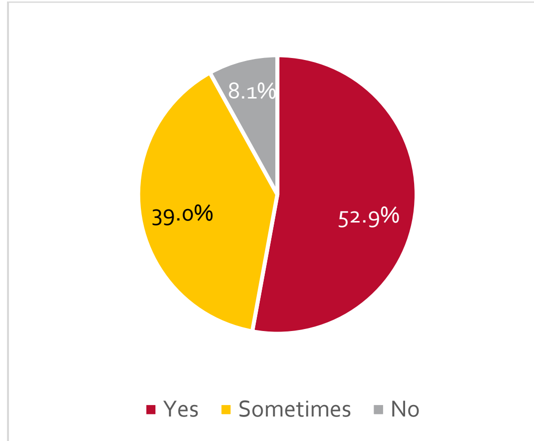


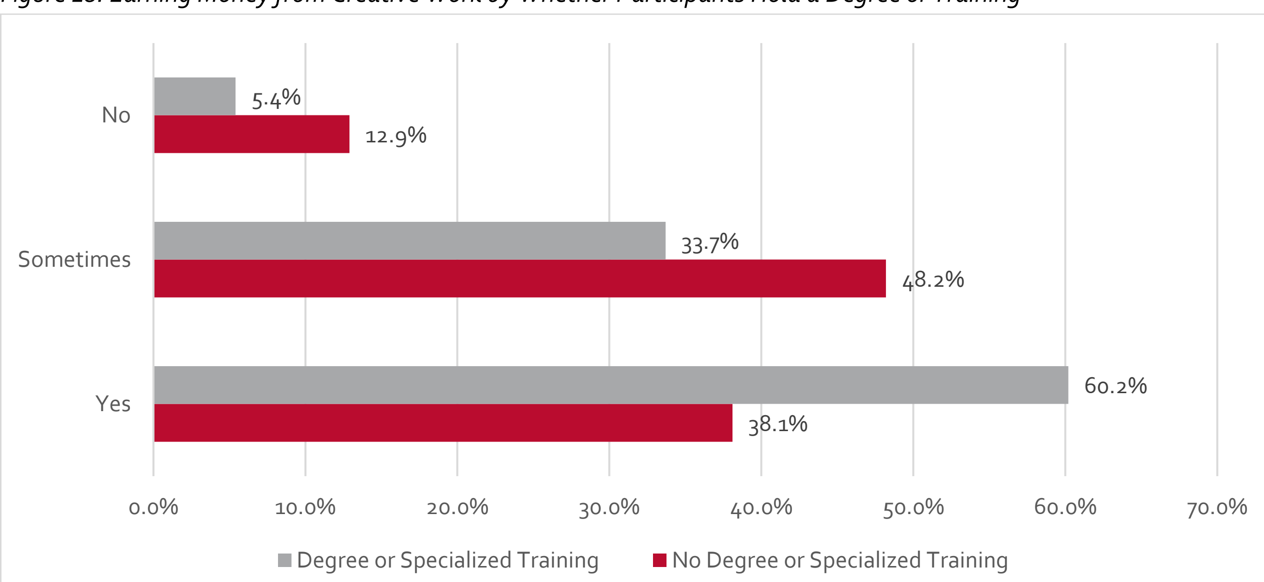
Figure 16: Do you make money from your creative work? N=397



Nearly all respondents in our sample indicated they make some kind of money from their creative work, however, only about half make money consistently. 8.1% do not make any money from their creative work.

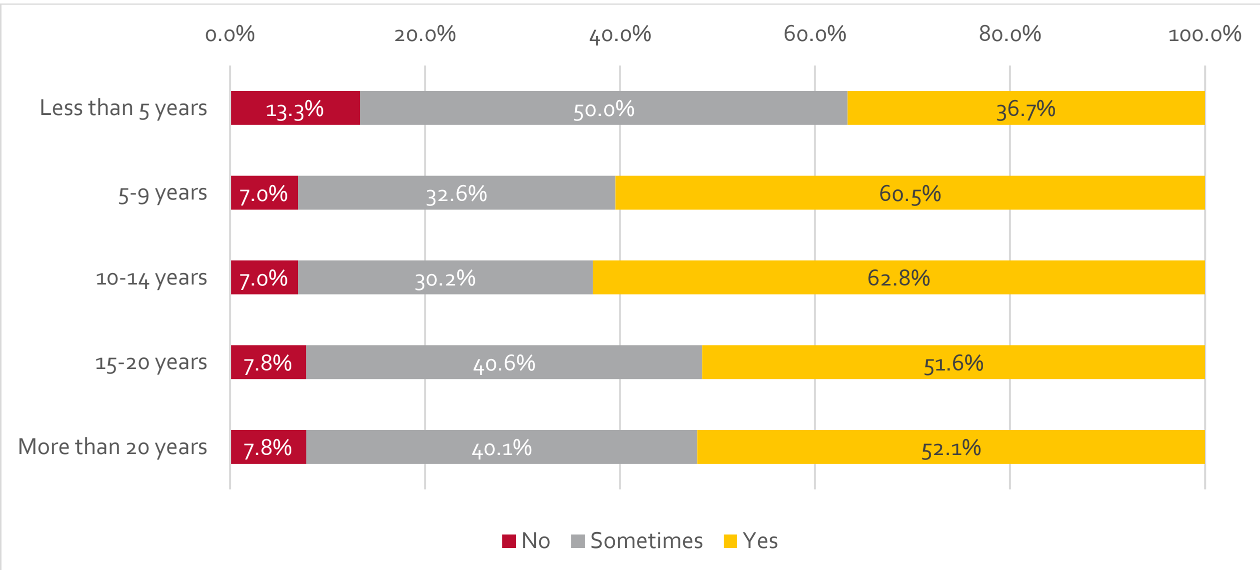
These questions lead us to ask whether having a degree or specialized training related to creative pursuits impacts whether a creative professional makes money from their work. What we found is that within our sample, a degree or specialized training does yield a higher proportion of respondents who report consistently making money from their creative work at 60.2% of respondents with a degree or specialized training versus 38.1% without. Only 5.4% of respondents who have a degree or specialized training report that they do not make any money from their creative work. Some of these individuals further report being retired in their qualitative responses, indicating that some training in the creative industries may yield a higher likelihood of maintaining an income from that work.

Figure 18: Earning Money from Creative Work by Whether Participants Hold a Degree or Training



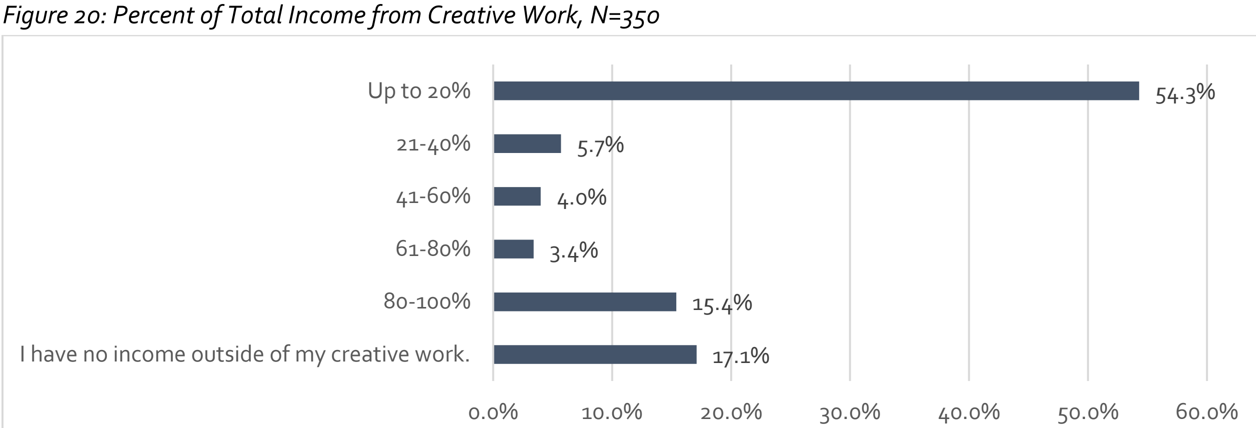
Again, exploring what might impact earning more income from creative work, we looked at whether individuals with more experience reported earning money more consistently. In this case, only the respondents with less than 5 years of experience varied significantly from the larger group. These professionals have lower rates of consistent income from creative work at 36.7% with 50-65% across all other groups. They also have the highest rates of earning nothing from creative work at 13.3% versus 7-8% across all other groups.

Figure 19: Earning Money from Creative Work by How Long Participants Have Been Engaged in that Work



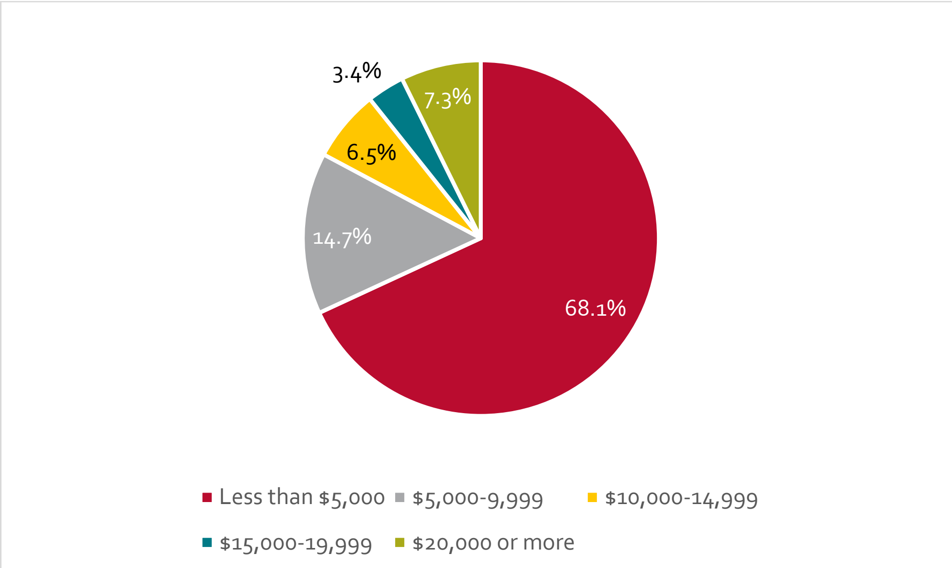
We also asked participants to indicate how much of their income came from their creative work. The largest portion, by far, said less than 20% of their income came from creative pursuits, at 54.3% of our sample. However, 32.5% indicate that they make greater than 80% of their total income from their creative work. There are fewer professionals in the middle, indicating that most of our respondents seem to either make creative money through "side hustles" or they are formally employed in a creative industry. Splitting time between creative pursuits and formal, non-creative employment is the least likely scenario.

Figure 20: Percent of Total Income from Creative Work, N=350



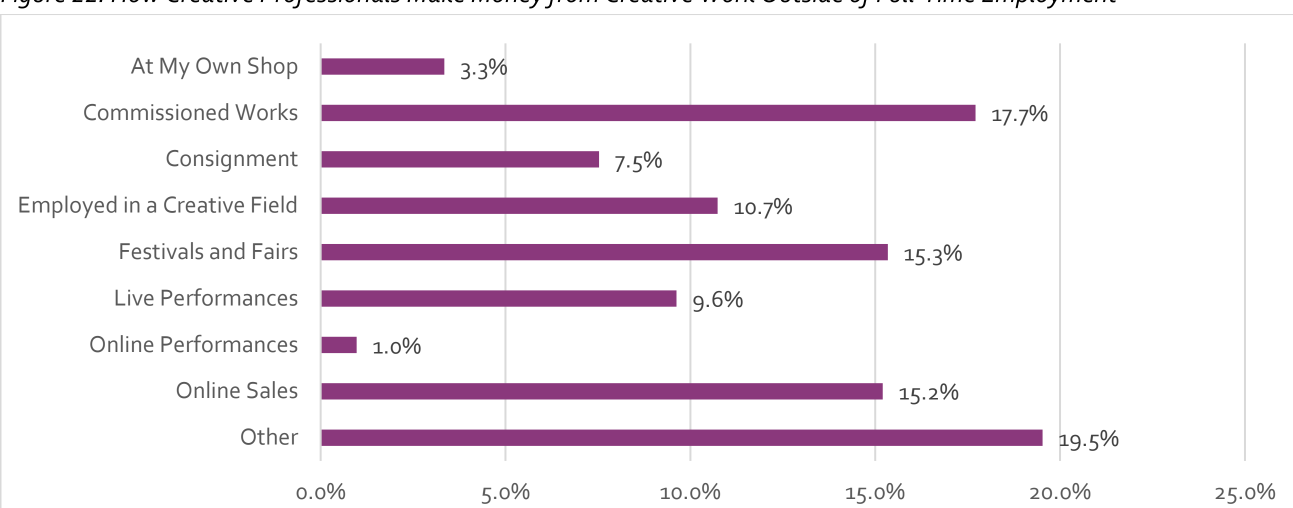
The final question we asked about income was directed only at those whose primary income does not come from their creative work. When asked approximately how much money they made annually from their creative work, the majority of respondents said less than \$5,000, at 68.1% of the sample. As our target population was professionals not fully captured in the workforce data, this is good for our analysis, but of course we'd also like to see creatives being well compensated for their work.

Figure 21: Approximate Annual Earnings by Creative Professionals Whose Primary Income is Not Creative, N=232



Moving into logistics, we asked the respondents to indicate all places at which they earn income. We used predetermined locations based on other national and local surveys but included the option for respondents to write in other locations. Some key sources of income that were not included in the survey, but were frequently mentioned by participants include gallery shows, teaching lessons, royalties, contributions, grants and other competitive funding, contests, fellowships and residencies, and independent art shows. Of course, the type of creative work will dictate, in part, where it is marketable, but in general, survey responses noted that commissioned works, festivals and fairs, and online sales are primary sources of creative income.

Figure 22: How Creative Professionals Make Money from Creative Work Outside of Full-Time Employment

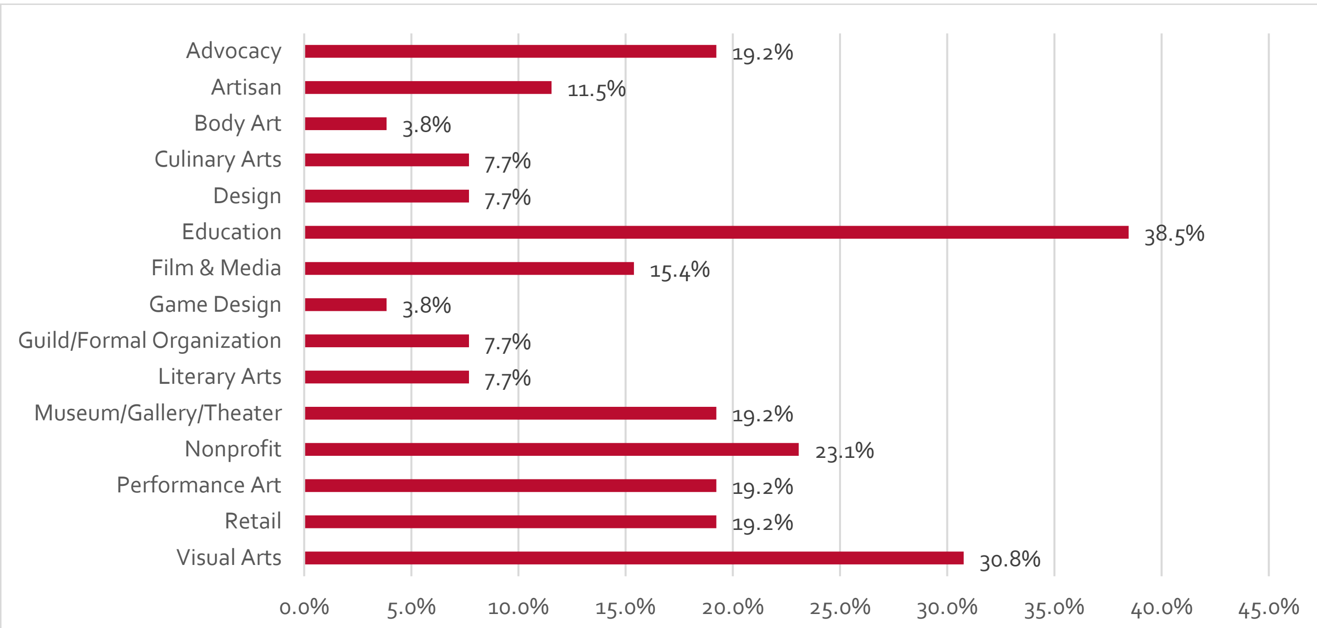


In the next section, we shift our focus towards the focus groups so that later in this chapter we can tie their responses to some of the deeper questions about Albuquerque that we asked our survey participants.

3.2.2. Focus Groups

As described earlier in this chapter, focus group participants were chosen based on agreeing to be contacted in their survey response or targeted by industry and called or visited directly. Many of the individuals who agreed to participate are business owners, nonprofit directors, guild/organization presidents, gallery owners, and/or program directors, though all also create and generate their own creative work. A few participants are solely independent artists or artisans. In the same manner as in the survey, focus group participants are categorized by their three primary categories within the creative economy. The largest proportion of participants fit into categories of education (38.5%) and visual arts (30.8%). The percentages in the chart below will not total 100% because the 26 participants each fit into more than one category.

Figure 23: Focus Group Participants by Creative Category



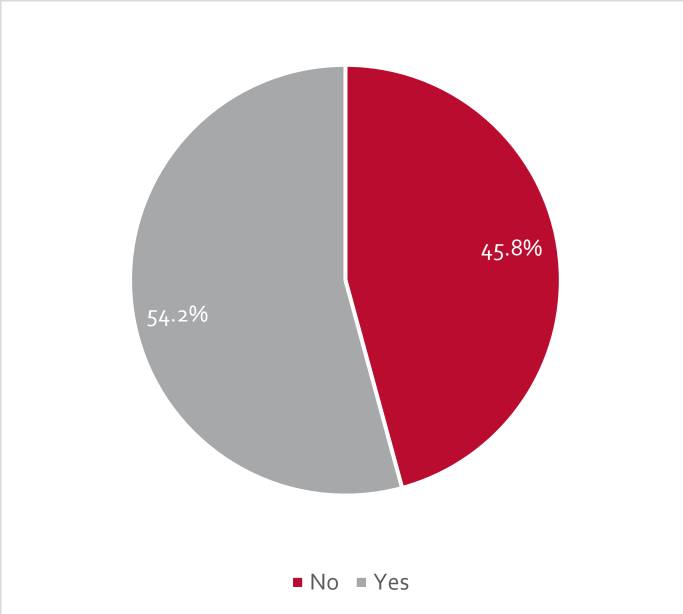
Nearly all the participants in the focus groups earn their primary income through creative employment, though most do so with a combination of direct creative production and indirect support work, such as running a gallery, nonprofit, business, or retail store.

Combining the in-depth responses from the focus groups with the short-answer responses available to survey respondents, we will now turn to perceptions of Albuquerque's current creative climate, the struggles and challenges local creatives are facing, and what opportunities keep creative professionals working in the region.

3.2.3. Describing Albuquerque's Creative Climate

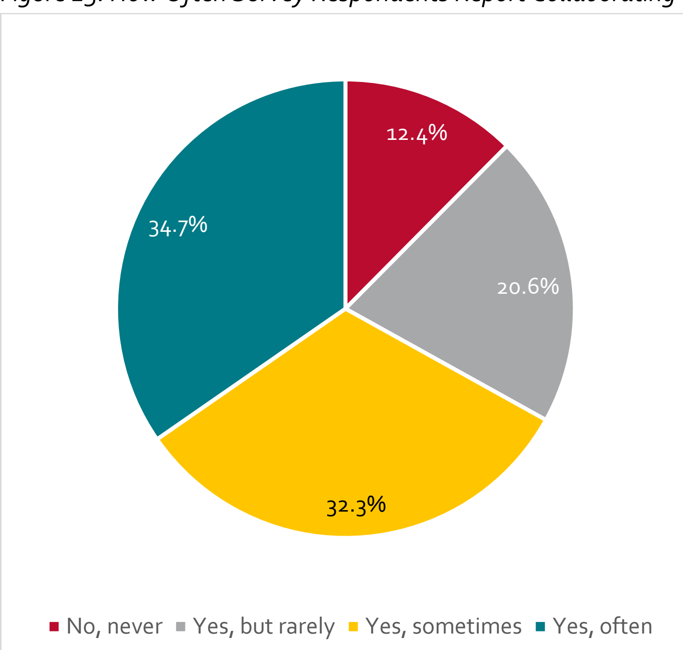
A few quantitative questions from the survey were designed to better understand how creative professionals feel about Albuquerque as a home to their creative work. We began by asking if respondents belonged to any professional organizations, guilds, or other creative groups. Just over half of the survey respondents noted belonging to a group of some kind (54.2%). All the participants in the focus groups belonged to some sort of group, although many organized groups themselves. This is important information because later in this report, we will discuss how creatives feel connected and disconnected from other creatives in the community.

Figure 24: Percent of Survey Respondents Who Belong to a Creative Group, Guild, or Professional Organization, N=378



Another way to understand community connections is to ask about collaboration. Again, all of the focus group participants said they collaborated with other creatives in some way, though many noted they were seeking additional opportunities for collaborative work. In the survey, the majority of respondents (87.6%) indicate they collaborate with other artists, craftspeople, or creative workers, but only 34.7% do so frequently.

Figure 25: How Often Survey Respondents Report Collaborating with other Creatives, N=378



The quality and frequency of collaboration is something many respondents mention in the survey but are divided on. Some see Albuquerque as an ideal space for working with other creative professionals whereas others see it as divided and isolating.

One respondent notes,

> *"The wealth of theater, writers, musicians, galleries, arts teachers, museums and collectors/consumers of the arts we have here must surpass many cities of our size. You can do something different here every night of the week that will bring you tiny contact with a visual or performing artist."*

Similarly, a theme in the survey comments is creative saturation and although it sounds negative, most describe it as positive and vibrant. They discuss the many opportunities to engage with the creative scene and express a desire for increased ways to meet, dialogue, and work together.

> *"It needs more places for artists to come together to work."*

> *"No place to collaborate or meet, galleries are expensive."*

> *"Incredibly talented, excited to collaborate, but very siloed."*

> *"I see many levels of artists and there is room for all but overall we're not unified or cohesive and high quality like some other communities."*

> *"Lots of smaller groups and orgs but info is separated and hard to find online."*

> *"I love the collaboration and it seems we need a community database or catalogue and quarterly meeting/gathering."*

Overall, the survey respondents are seeking more ways to work together and get to know each other's work. In one of the focus groups, two individuals from prominent fiber arts organizations met for the first time and realized that they had a lot to share with one another. They exchanged contact information and were grateful for the opportunity to meet and have a conversation about their work.

Some of the survey respondents express specific skepticism about how different institutions treat their networks. In a few cases, respondents note that they feel their networks are established by local artists and are not well-supported by the City or other larger local institutions.

> *"[The] Albuquerque creative scene seems to be coming up as a destination for emerging and established artists. We have a strong network of artists that bring each other up…[this is] in spite of [institutional] efforts to suppress and disenfranchise our representation."*

> *"Highly controlled and set up for people from elite backgrounds that have resources and historically co-opt local arts that has historically occurred in the US especially in a place like New Mexico."*

Other respondents lean into the institutional support to generate collaboration and cooperation.

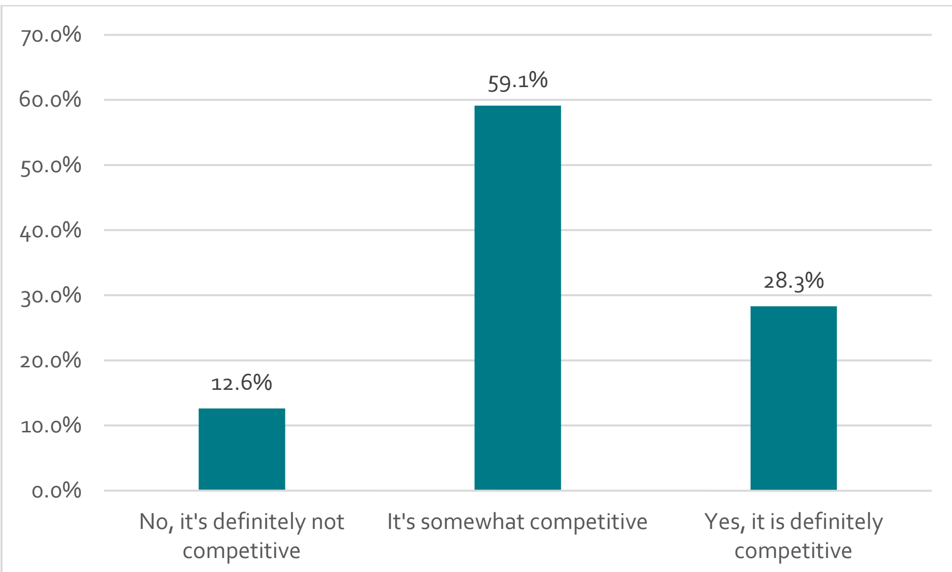
> *"[Albuquerque] supports a mighty, but humble group. Despite financial limitations we have a thriving scene of artists."*

> *"[Albuquerque is] vibrant! I have had the pleasure to witness several indigenous artists base their experimental phases in Albuquerque and become leading conceptual artists of this century."*

The responses are divided and do not fall into strict categories by racial identification, time spent in the profession, nor type of creative work, but the diversity of descriptions of networking within Albuquerque's creative scene illustrates the potential to work towards a more unified creative voice and more opportunities for collaboration and dialogue.

Another question discussed both in the focus groups and the survey looked at whether Albuquerque is a competitive environment for creative work. We left this question vague to allow participants to define "competitive" in their own words and followed it up with an optional qualitative response. The majority of respondents found Albuquerque to be at least somewhat competitive, at 59.1%. Another 28.3% stated that Albuquerque is definitely competitive, illustrating a fairly competitive environment as described by creative professionals.

Figure 26: Competitiveness of Albuquerque's Creative Environment, N=357



Many participants were uncomfortable making a singular choice without more context, but the context given in the qualitative response was rich and diverse. When looking at competition between creative professionals, respondents indicated that it was less about a lack of cooperation and more about a lack of opportunities. This extended into the responses from many different creative sectors.

> *"I think, like any place, we have our share of artistic cliques and groups that do not collaborate, but overwhelmingly I think we hold onto the spirit of collaboration not competition...It IS, however, extremely competitive for money. We don't have a lot of it here, and it can feel like it's impossible to get funding before another artist or group snags it."*

> *"Competitive in the sense there are not enough exhibition opportunities. But artists here share their techniques and creative endeavors with each other."*

> *"There are not a lot of full-time career options for artists. Most opportunities are for project and contracted work making it more competitive."*

> *"It is particularly difficult for BIPOC artists, especially when they don't fit into the imagination of what New Mexican art should be (based on the tricultural myth)."*

"...There are not yet enough venues that provide a space for dance artists to participate in an active market."

"...There are very limited opportunities for almost any artist outside of visual art communities, and somewhat within musical communities."

When competition was interpreted as Albuquerque's creative scene versus the scene in other locales, Albuquerque was generally seen as less competitive.

"I feel there are many people engaged in creative work and as such it is competitive enough to have a high standard but not competitive to the point where people are excluded from participating."

"For me, it's friendly competition. Compared to other metro markets, artists here are very supportive rather than cutthroat."

"It does not compete with Santa Fe at all."

"It depends on how you mean it: there is a lot of competition in the city among artists, but as far as being competitive with other states, no, we are not at all in most cases. The Chicharra Poetry Slam festival is one of the largest events of its kind on the nation, and pulls poets from over 30 cities, so it is very competitive and some of the music events, like AMP are fairly competitive in that way, but overall, many of the opportunities in Albuquerque are either limited to locals or do not offer enough incentives to really draw artists and audiences from out of state."

Marketing Albuquerque as a destination for creative works is a challenge when Santa Fe has established a particular kind of arts and cultural reputation. However, utilizing Albuquerque's distinctive offerings and nurturing the collaborative networks that already exist could generate a unique strategy for increasing deeper external interest in the local creative economy.

3.3. Recurring Themes: Challenges

Synthesizing the words of our interviewees, focus group participants, and survey respondents, we offer the primary themes of discussion in this section and the next, dividing them into challenges faced by the creative community and opportunities creative professionals see for continued growth.

3.3.1. Venues and Meeting Spaces

A recurring theme throughout all the interviews and surveys was the lack of venues both for showcasing creative work of all types and for meeting and creating. The ability to meet and create ties into conversations about breaking into networks and collaborating with other creative professionals, key to innovation and development within the creative arts. The need for more locations to showcase work and clearer arts spaces links consumers to the producers of creative works, driving the ability for individuals to break into the economy more fully and/or maintain income from their work.

Meeting and creating spaces would ideally be built into the same districts that support galleries and venues to encourage development of unified creative spaces.

"One has to know where to look to find the creative arts that appeals…I think Albuquerque could benefit from more collaborative venues and events."

"There are many artists living here and there is need for facilities to hold meetings, teach classes, have exhibitions, etc."

"ABQ is an afterthought. Doesn't help that there's not really an art district…hitting up the galleries and then grabbing coffee or dinner is not an easy task here."

The limited venue space also suffers from disjointedness throughout the city. Although it is critical to support creative endeavors throughout the city, having centralized spaces would more easily connect creatives to each other and to their consumers.

"One aspect of the limited gallery space for artists to show their work is that the greater Albuquerque community of clients or viewers don't really get the chance to see art in convenient, free, practical way in their routine daily world."

"There just are not that many places to show work or excite buyers."

"Albuquerque has hundreds and hundreds of wonderful artists with few places to show their work. If artists can't show their work it is difficult to grow creatively so I suspect there are frustrated artists who could move their work into new areas if they only have places to show their work."

Unification of the collaborative and financial components of the creative economy can help keep wealth within the Albuquerque economy by supporting the innovative aspects of creating alongside the importance of generating revenue from local creation. Singular venues are less likely to take on the risk of unestablished art and artists when isolated from other creative spaces. In other words, it is less likely that a tourist will visit an obscure Albuquerque gallery outside of an arts district seeking local art experiences and more likely that they will visit established locations with a variety of offerings they can explore. Focusing on spaces for creation and purchase to exist together could benefit the creative economy overall.

3.3.2. Bureaucracy

Paperwork and formal organization are necessary for any municipality but can hinder development when a small business is trying to get off the ground. This is true for any small business but was noted repeatedly in both the survey responses and the focus groups. In fact, the topics of tax code, vendor fees, funding requirements, and general sluggishness of bureaucracy were mentioned far more than expected as barriers to entry and continuance within the creative economy.

Some of these critiques could be addressed internally, but some are outside of the purview of the City and some are not able to be tackled directly, requiring support structures rather than internal changes.

"I'm supported, but it's disorganized. There's a lot of talent working in their own little pools, I don't think the city or the county really has a vision for the local artistic economy."

The coordination and cooperation [with the City] often lacks support and communication is limited. I had the opportunity to work with the city…and was left with no support and little communication."

"The city also moves incredibly slow, with little to no communication, direction or organization."

Addressing communication concerns, being clear with a vision and expectations, and offering guidance when needed are straightforward steps the City can continue to take to alleviate some of the stresses about bureaucracy. Clarity in expectations for how and when to look for official communications and opportunities is essential, acknowledging that many things just won't move more quickly.

Another bureaucratic struggle reported by creative professionals is fees and paperwork to showcase their work publicly. As one of the focus groups brainstormed together to generate ideas for streamlining paperwork for creative professionals, they suggested that, at bare minimum, a single, county-wide permitting process should be enacted to allow creatives to apply for different local fairs and festivals. The group first suggested a statewide permit but pushed for at least some local solutions to various barriers to entering public events. Further, they wanted to see standardized vendor fees and transparent selection processes whenever any event is supported by public institutions. This concept is echoed in the survey responses.

> *"I think Albuquerque has a very rich creative scene, but there are often institutional/administrative barriers (like permits and licensing to sell) to generating income from creative avenues."*

In previous reports, ideas of small business assistance workshops with direct services and consultations should be made available to creative professionals. In conversations with City officials, it seems that though some of these services have been implemented, they have not always been well-utilized. It may be beneficial to broaden a public-private partnership and seek out deeper input of how creative professionals can best be served with existing city resources; it may be as simple as a matter of matching times, topics, and locations with community needs.

3.3.3. Access to Networks

Strong professional networks and varied opportunities for cooperation and growth are vital to fostering a thriving creative economy. Working with other professionals can drive innovation and motivation as individual creatives can feel they are part of a vibrant community. As discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, most creative professionals feel they have collaborative relationships, but access to the greater creative networks can feel out of reach for some. This ranges from feeling isolated in general to feeling deliberately excluded.

> *"There is a high degree of "politicking" which limits opportunities for folks outside of certain circles."*

> *"Depending on your particular art form, due to ego politics and cliquish attitudes, it can be extremely difficult to find opportunities to share work or create new work."*

> *"Fractured and pocketed communities, and no communication."*

For those who feel more isolated than excluded, ideas of public contact information or a public "classifieds" type of page for creative professionals was one idea. Another is the idea of more frequent, city-sponsored mixers and gatherings. One of the focus groups particularly liked this concept and many said they were encouraged and rejuvenated just by meeting each other in the research group. This might be another small way to encourage further cooperation and a sense of community among creatives.

> *"I love the collaboration and it seems we need a community database or catalogue and quarterly meeting/gathering."*

In the survey, we asked about guild, collective, or professional membership as noted in an earlier section of this chapter. The majority of respondents (56.2%) did not name a specific, local organization. For the individual creative person, this may indicate a lack of connectedness to community groups, and it may also indicate that community groups are not always well connected to each other. As it stands, there is not enough data to draw a firm conclusion about organizational membership.

3.3.4. Changing Consumer Habits

As discussed in the chapter examining employment within the creative sector in Albuquerque, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the creative economy particularly hard as much of the work is done in person. However, even with the employment recovery in most of the industries we examine, consumer habits have shifted slightly. The 2025 "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US" report notes that consumers continue to prioritize "unique experiences over buying material goods."[18] This is a positive for the performance arts but may prove difficult for selling visual art and artisan work. The report does state that "art experiences" are drawing larger crowds, which may represent an opportunity for marketing to audiences looking for engagement rather than traditional take-home purchases. Expressing what makes Albuquerque's creative economy unique, especially in close proximity to Santa Fe, is key to garnering consumer interest.

A few of the focus group respondents also describe some of these changes, stating that classes in creative pursuits frequently sell out and the market for arts materials seems to be on the rise, but finished "pieces" are not selling as quickly as in the past. Survey respondents also note these changes asking whether it could be due to artist saturation, lack of space for sales, too many small markets too frequently, or even election year sales reductions. If however, changing consumer habits are part of a long-term trend, then now is the opportunity to address that challenge and consider how creative works are marketed, both locally and beyond.

3.4. Recurring Themes: Opportunities

Despite the challenges in the previous section, creative professionals in Albuquerque also see many opportunities to build upon.

3.4.1. Vibrance and Inspiration

From a total of 200 written responses to the question, "What do you think of when you think of Albuquerque's creative scene?" 15.5% wrote the word, "vibrant." This is no small figure when participants were able to use any descriptors they felt appropriate.

"Albuquerque's creative scene is vibrant, unique, and resilient."

"Vibrant, diverse, thriving, in need of support, in need of money."

"Vibrant, up & coming, non-pretentious."

The Albuquerque-focused portion of the Arts & Economy Prosperity 6 (AEP6) study by Americans for the Arts reports increased community pride as a result of local arts and cultural organizations.[19] With creative

[18] Dalal, Michal. September 2025. "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US." IBIS World.
[19] Americans for the Arts. 2023. Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in the City of Albuquerque." https://aep6.americansforthearts.org/local-regional-findings

professionals drawing inspiration from the region and the general population indicating increased satisfaction in their communities due to arts and cultural activities, fostering these relationships is essential.

In the focus groups, we discussed whether any of the creative professionals would consider leaving Albuquerque. Only one of twenty-six participants indicated an interest in leaving and that person is closely tied to the film industry and its changing locations. When we explored why these individuals were planning to stay, many of them discussed ties to place and the inspiration of not only the locale, but of their creative communities as well.

3.4.2. History and Tradition

The unique character of Albuquerque's history and tradition is another opportunity for creative development and is of particular interest to many of the survey respondents.

> *"As someone who works in the arts, we are truly blessed to be working in a state that believes in education and the arts. Albuquerque has…become the Flamenco Capitol outside of Spain."*

Five respondents specifically mentioned the importance of flamenco to Albuquerque and noted that performances often draw large crowds who also often spend money on food and drink. They discuss the demand for venues and the pride in sharing an art form across generations.

> *"Knowing my son will be able to learn what I learned from my mother gives me joy."*

Public art also was strongly tied to ideas of Albuquerque history. Eight survey respondents mention the importance of murals as community art and storytelling. One focus group participant mentioned the importance of art that anyone can enjoy and noted that public art in Albuquerque reflects what people see in themselves. She pointed to the murals and mosaics at Dolores Huerta Gateway Park stating that they bring beauty and history together in a way that makes the community feel it is their space to use.

A variety of creative strengths that make Albuquerque unique were also mentioned in the surveys and focus groups. These included Route 66 neon, New Mexican cuisine, low rider culture, and the cultural dance traditions, especially those at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. Although Albuquerque does not want to become a caricature of itself to generate tourist dollars, leaning into some of the existing and distinctive strengths is an opportunity to consider.

3.4.3. Growing Industries

In our conversations and in the surveys, participants discuss that a major opportunity for growing the creative economy in Albuquerque is to get to the front of growing industries. In this case, they primarily refer to film, digital creative development, and experiential art, and these are good insights. Albuquerque is developing its strengths in these industries, but there is concern about support for some of the more unusual creative professions and about aiming too low when it comes to career training.

> *In the film industry, "Skills training is for below the line crew members which is just feeding into…the toxic relationship [with Hollywood]…deals benefit Hollywood conglomerates but not New Mexicans, so New Mexicans are quitting the film industry and suffering."*

Although this quote might not seem like an opportunity, the focus group participant who made this case presented it as one: New Mexico should focus more heavily on training "above the line" creatives, those who are responsible for the artistic vision in the industry, and not just the technical workers and extras. This person went on to argue that if New Mexico seizes the opportunity to develop its own film industry more fully, it could become more self-supporting and less reliant on the whims of Hollywood and the tax breaks those productions often see. Further, another participant in the same group described "bait and switch pay" from Hollywood productions, being promised one thing and then given another after the service was fulfilled. The original commenter then noted that mental health services for building resiliency and negotiation skills would be very beneficial for local creatives working with large companies to help them know and demand their own worth.

Looking at the film industry as potentially exploitative of local creatives was an argument I was unfamiliar with, I asked about this idea in a number of informal interviews and in another focus group that had a film industry participant. There was good agreement that focusing resources on internal development could lead to more independence and greater employment opportunities for New Mexican creative professionals. Although respondents said they currently see some focus on developing these talents, the infrastructure is not there to build a homegrown industry effectively.

Another industry well-positioned for local development is the digital creative arts. One focus group participant, a game developer, noted that

> *"We have major brain drain for technical creatives like programming or digital media will go to California or Canada. There is some work like Meow Wolf but a lot of our stuff is very DIY."*

This participant described the importance of guilds and events for networking and finding in-roads to an industry that requires a lot of legwork on the part of the creative professional. Small business assistance specifically focused on helping digital creatives find opportunities and advances for locally-grown ideas could become invaluable as Albuquerque already has strong training and education in the more technical side of the digital economy. Translating these skills into the creative realm could combat brain drain and provide opportunities for local digital creatives to flourish.

In the "challenges" section of this chapter, we describe changing consumer habits and the importance of experience over material goods in the current economy. Some of the creative professionals we spoke with are trying to get ahead of this and it may be another opportunity for Albuquerque to distinguish itself. One interviewee described how taking a ride on a hot air balloon and visiting the Balloon Museum tie together into a very unique local event. Another talked about artisan classes filling upon release and having wait lists that go uncontacted.

These experiences illustrate some of the simple ways in which appealing to the consumer desire for something different from the creative economy, while still bolstering local talent. At the 2024 New Mexico Arts & Crafts Festival, over 90 vendors sold their wares and over a dozen classes were offered, ranging from punched tin ornaments to dyeing fabric with natural materials. Finding the ways to unify the immensely diverse creative work in Albuquerque with opportunities to sell and teach is a way to tap into current consumer trends without radically altering the way in which creative professionals currently work.

3.5. Conclusion

Consumer habits change, industries shift, but community persists. This chapter seeks to give voice to the more than 500 creative participants in this study, synthesizing their ideas as best as possible given the format. There are substantial challenges the creative economy in Albuquerque is facing, but there are also significant opportunities. A central finding of this chapter is the sense of pride and ownership local creative professionals have about their role in Albuquerque's economy. Acknowledging the challenges creatives see early, seizing potential opportunities, and facilitating communication amongst various stakeholders will be key to building a stronger idea of which strategies to employ moving forward and how to differentiate Albuquerque from other creative markets.

National Comparisons

National Comparisons

4.1. Comparing Creative Industries across MSAs

Working with City of Albuquerque Arts & Culture staff, we chose fourteen Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) across the United States to gain a better understanding of how Albuquerque's MSA might compare. An MSA is an important unit as it consists of the core city population and the nearby communities considered to have a "high degree of economic and social integration with that core."[20] The comparative cases were chosen based on size, demographics, geography, and/or similar creative programming. We began with a list of approximately twenty-two, then reduced it to fourteen for comparisons by sector and to three for a slightly more in-depth profile.

The base-level comparison MSAs we use throughout this section are Austin, Texas; Boulder, Colorado; Buffalo, New York; Denver, CO; Detroit, MI; El Paso, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Madison, Wisconsin; Memphis, Tennessee; Richmond, Virginia; Salt Lake City, Utah; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Tucson, Arizona; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Figure 27: Map of Comparison MSAs[21]

* Chapter cover photo taken by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer at Ihatov Bread and Coffee, 2025

[20] United States Census Bureau. « About [Metropolitan and Micropolitan]. » https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro/about.html

[21] Map made using BatchGeo online software. Available only for noncommercial distribution. https://www.batchgeo.com/

Starting with population and income, we examine the basics to better understand how each community measures up against Albuquerque. We can see that in 2024, El Paso and Tulsa are the closest in population to Albuquerque, with El Paso having just 46,911 fewer residents and Tulsa having 133,500 more residents. Detroit is the largest MSA we examine and is nearly 3.5 million residents larger than Albuquerque.

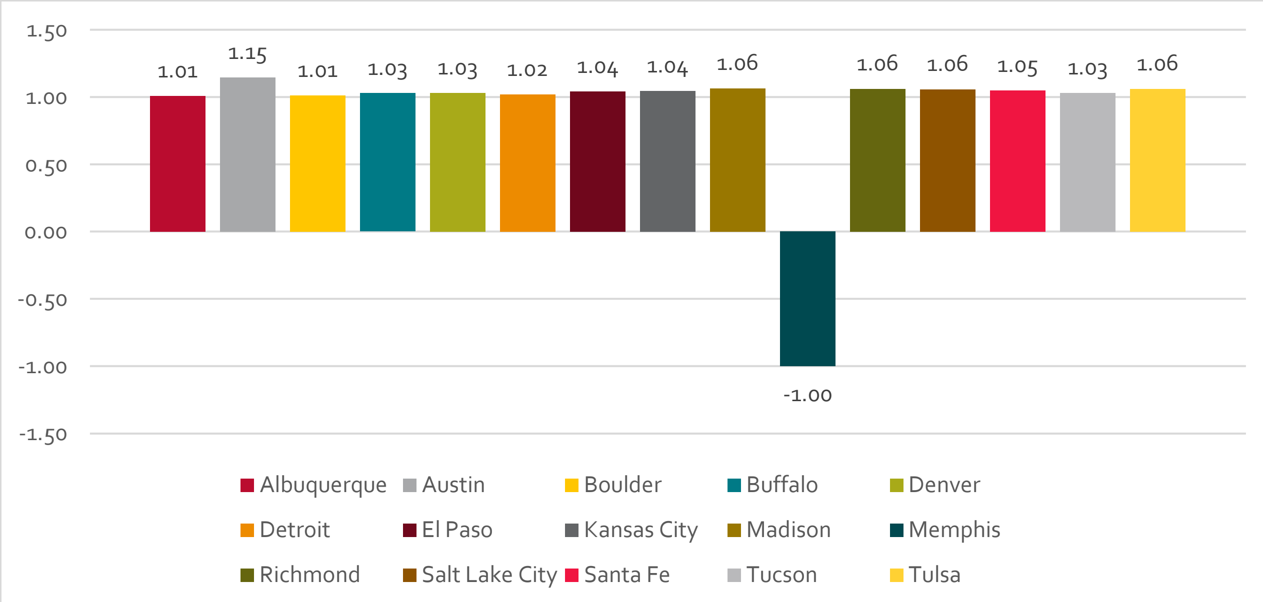
Table 10: MSA Populations, 2019 and 2024

	2019	**2024**
Albuquerque	918,018	926,303
Austin	2,227,083	2,550,637
Boulder	326,196	330,262
Buffalo	1,127,983	1,160,172
Denver	2,967,239	3,052,498
Detroit	4,319,629	4,400,578
El Paso	844,124	879,392
Kansas City	2,157,990	2,253,579
Madison	664,865	707,606
Memphis	1,346,045	1,339,345
Richmond	1,291,900	1,370,165
Salt Lake City	1,232,696	1,300,762
Santa Fe	150,358	157,765
Tucson	1,047,279	1,080,149
Tulsa	998,626	1,059,803

But when we look at population growth, Albuquerque is most similar to Boulder, both growing at a rate of 1% between 2019 and 2024. Austin showed the most growth at 15% and Memphis is the only MSA that lost population over that period of time. Slower population growth can hinder audience development for creative works as a stagnant population will not always experience the sense of novelty a growing one does without a quickly evolving creative scene and/or stable funding systems that allow the arts to flourish.[22]

[22] SMU DataArts. https://culturaldata.org/insights/arts-vibrancy/

Figure 28: MSA Population Change 2019 to 2024



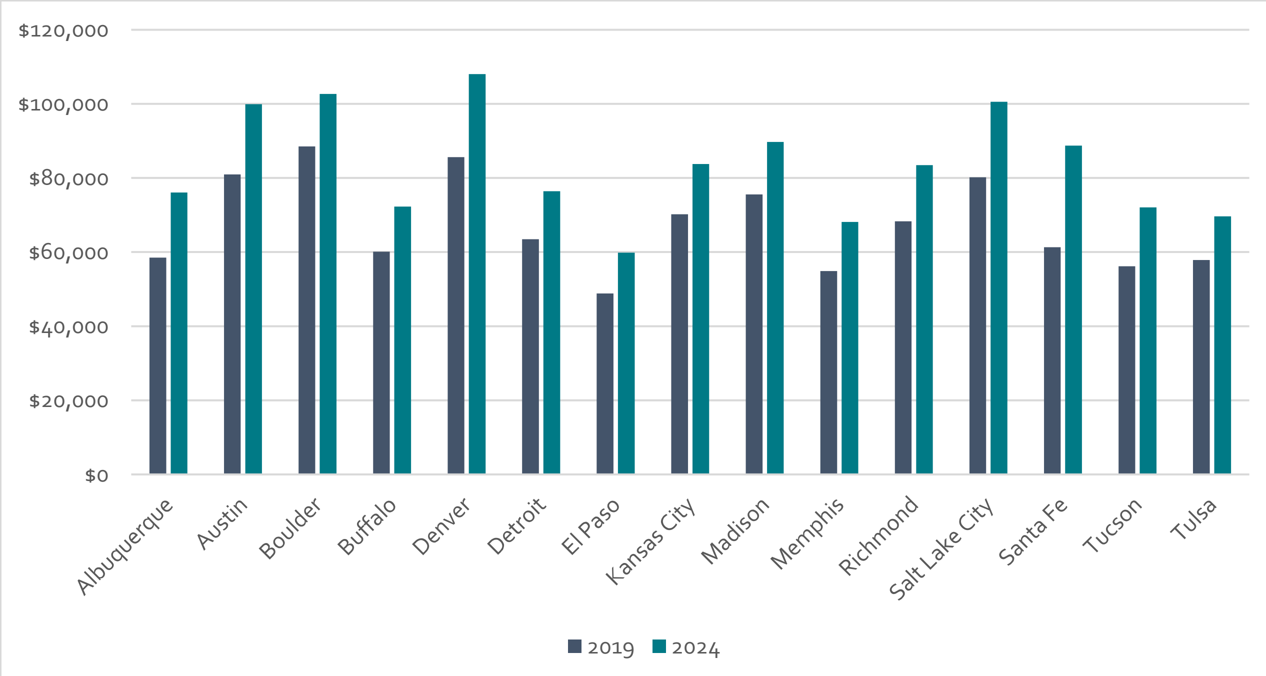
Comparing median household income[23] across the MSAs, we see Detroit is the closest comparison at $306 greater annually and Buffalo is next at $3,797 less. The greatest difference is seen between Albuquerque and Denver, with households in Denver making $31,949 more than those in Albuquerque annually.

Table 11: Median Household Income by MSA, 2019 and 2024

	2019	2024
Albuquerque	$58,512	$76,097
Austin	$80,954	$99,897
Boulder	$88,535	$102,697
Buffalo	$60,105	$72,300
Denver	$85,641	$108,046
Detroit	$63,474	$76,403
El Paso	$48,823	$59,834
Kansas City	$70,215	$83,785
Madison	$75,545	$89,714
Memphis	$54,859	$68,124
Richmond	$68,324	$83,460
Salt Lake City	$80,196	$100,548
Santa Fe	$61,298	$88,719
Tucson	$56,169	$72,067
Tulsa	$57,859	$69,658

[23] Missouri Census Data Center. 2025. ACS Profiles [dataset application]. Available from https://mcdc.missouri.edu/applications/acs/profiles/.

Figure 29: Median Household Income by MSA, 2019 and 2024



Another way to look at income in a location is to examine the living wage for the MSA and compare it to median household income. However, some assumptions must be made about what constitutes a household as living wage calculators are broken down based on how many people are earning that income. For this report, we use the figure that represents two adults in a household, one working full-time and the other working part-time with two children for each MSA from the Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator in 2024 dollars.[24] Further, we then use the figure that accounts for employer benefits and capped childcare costs to make our living wage estimates. Full-time is estimated at 1,992 hours annually, which accounts for all federal holidays and part-time is estimated at 77% of full-time work, as described in the EPI documentation citing other relevant studies on living wage.[25]

None of the MSA's median household income measures from the Census data meet the estimated annual living wage for their location. However, we can use these figures to estimate how much of a difference exists between the two estimated measures to understand both the potential disposable income of creative economy consumers and the potential struggles creative economy workers may face in each MSA.

The largest deficit between median household income and estimated living wage is seen in Boulder at $36,292 annually. The smallest deficit is in Salt Lake City at $10,340 annually. Among this group of fifteen, Albuquerque has the fourth smallest deficit at $21,040 annually with only Madison, Austin, and Salt Lake City showing incomes closer to estimated living wages.

[24] Economic Policy Institute. 2025. "Family Budget Calculator." https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/
[25] Economic Policy Institute. 2024. "What Constitutes a Living Wage?" https://www.epi.org/publication/epis-family-budget-calculator/

Table 12: Comparison of Living Wage against Median Household Income by MSA, 2024

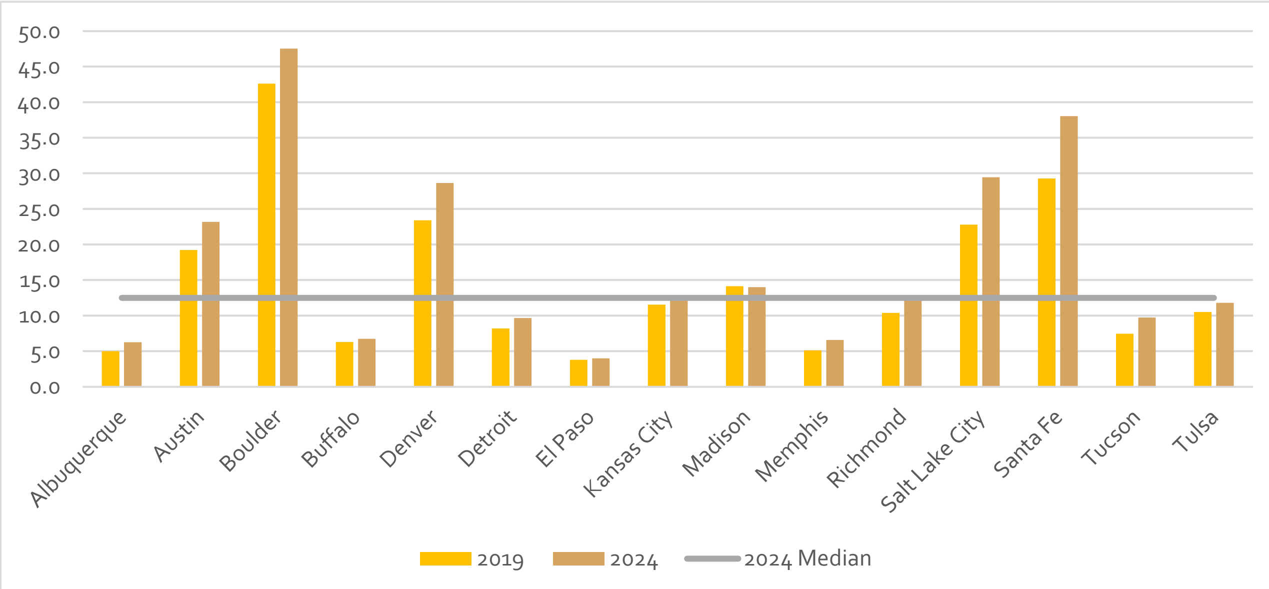
	Median Living Wage (Hourly)	**Annual Living Wage (Total)**	**Median Household Income (ACS)**	***Median Income vs. Living Wage***
Albuquerque	$27.55	$97,137	$76,097	*-$21,040*
Austin	$33.42	$117,834	$99,897	*-$17,937*
Boulder	$39.42	$138,989	$102,697	*-$36,292*
Buffalo	$29.34	$103,448	$72,300	*-$31,148*
Denver	$38.05	$134,158	$108,046	*-$26,112*
Detroit	$27.66	$97,525	$76,403	*-$21,122*
El Paso	$24.72	$87,159	$59,834	*-$27,325*
Kansas City	$30.19	$106,445	$83,785	*-$22,660*
Madison	$30.83	$108,702	$89,714	*-$18,988*
Memphis	$27.90	$98,371	$68,124	*-$30,247*
Richmond	$31.09	$109,618	$83,460	*-$26,158*
Salt Lake City	$31.45	$110,888	$100,548	*-$10,340*
Santa Fe	$31.50	$111,064	$88,719	*-$22,345*
Tucson	$27.77	$97,913	$72,067	*-$25,846*
Tulsa	$28.87	$101,791	$69,658	*-$32,133*

In this next section, we break down the number of creative establishments per 100,000 residents to understand both the density of creative work in each MSA but also how that density changed from 2019 to 2024. Using a density figure makes the MSAs more comparable by accounting for the size of each area.

Design within the creative economy includes architectural work, some computer systems design, specialized design services, and a portion of advertising work.[26] All MSAs saw growth in the number of design establishments from 2019-2024 per 100,000 residents. Albuquerque has 6.3 establishments per 100,000 residents, similar to Buffalo at 6.7. The highest number of design establishments per 100,000 residents is seen in Boulder, at 47.5. However, Albuquerque falls well below the MSA median in 2024 of 12.5 design establishments per 100,000 residents.

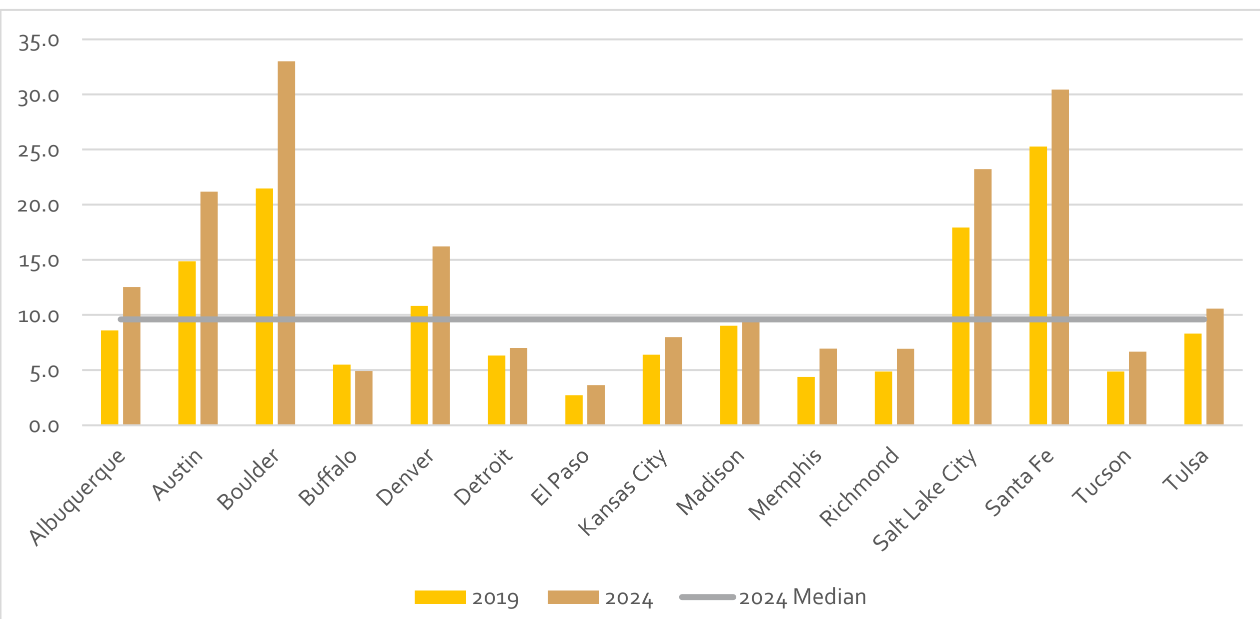
[26] For a detailed list of what occupations are included in our calculations, please reference the data addendum.

Figure 30: Design Establishments per 100,000 Residents; 2019 and 2024



The media industry includes publishers of books, software, newspapers, and periodicals as well as occupations associated with film, radio, and television. As discussed in earlier chapters of this report, Albuquerque saw a large jump in media employment and revenue between 2019 and 2024. As the following chart shows, media establishments increased across all of the comparison MSAs except Buffalo. Albuquerque's 12.5 media establishments per 100,000 residents is well above the median, which is 9.6. Boulder has the greatest number of media establishments at 30.4 per 100,000 residents and El Paso has the fewest at 3.6.

Figure 31: Media Establishments per 100,000 Residents; 2019 and 2024



When looking at artist establishments, it is important to remember that these figures do not encompass all individual artists within an MSA, but rather the businesses and organizations classified as part of the artist industry. This includes performing arts companies; agents and managers for public figures; a very small portion of the gambling industries that provide venue space; and independent artists, writers, and performers who have registered as businesses.

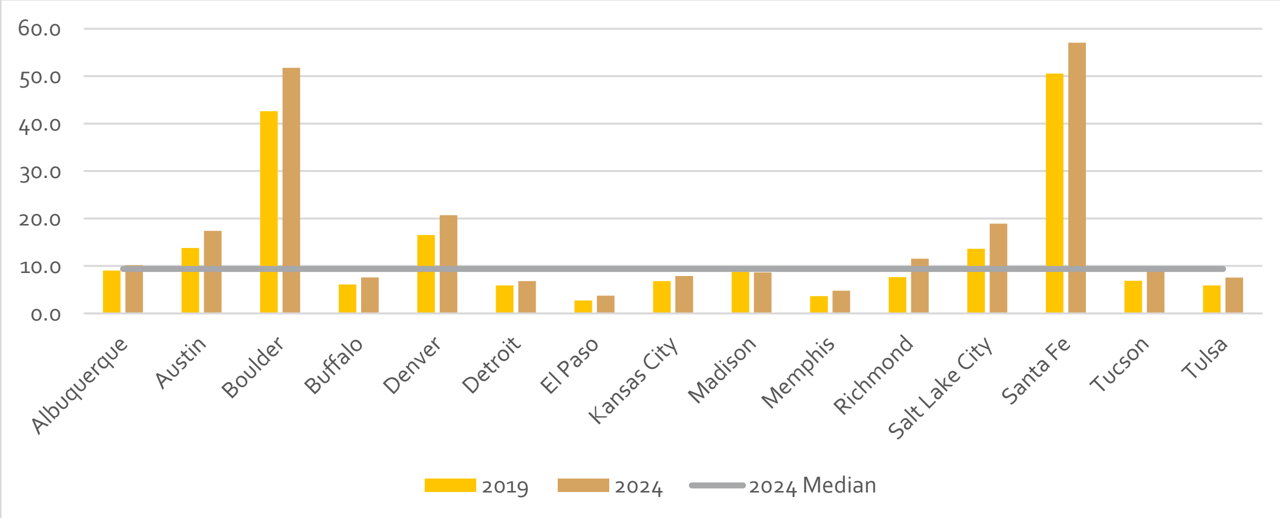
In 2024, Albuquerque sits just above the median number of artist establishments per 100,000 residents, which is 9.4, at 10.1. Boulder and Santa Fe outstrip the other MSAs by more than double the third most dense MSA in terms of artist establishments, Denver.

All MSAs showed growth in density of artist establishments with the exception of Madison, WI, which had a 1.2% reduction from 2019 to 2024. Salt Lake City showed the greatest growth at 38.8% over the time period. Albuquerque and Santa Fe saw similar growth at 12.2% and 12.9% respectively.

Table 13: Artist Establishments per 100,000 Residents by MSA, 2019 and 2024

	2019	**2024**
Albuquerque	9.0	10.1
Austin	13.8	17.4
Boulder	42.6	51.8
Buffalo	6.1	7.6
Denver	16.5	20.7
Detroit	5.9	6.8
El Paso	2.7	3.8
Kansas City	6.8	7.9
Madison	8.7	8.6
Memphis	3.6	4.8
Richmond	7.7	11.5
Salt Lake City	13.6	18.9
Santa Fe	50.5	57.0
Tucson	6.9	9.4
Tulsa	5.9	7.5

Figure 32: Artist Establishments per 100,000 Residents by MSA, 2019 and 2024



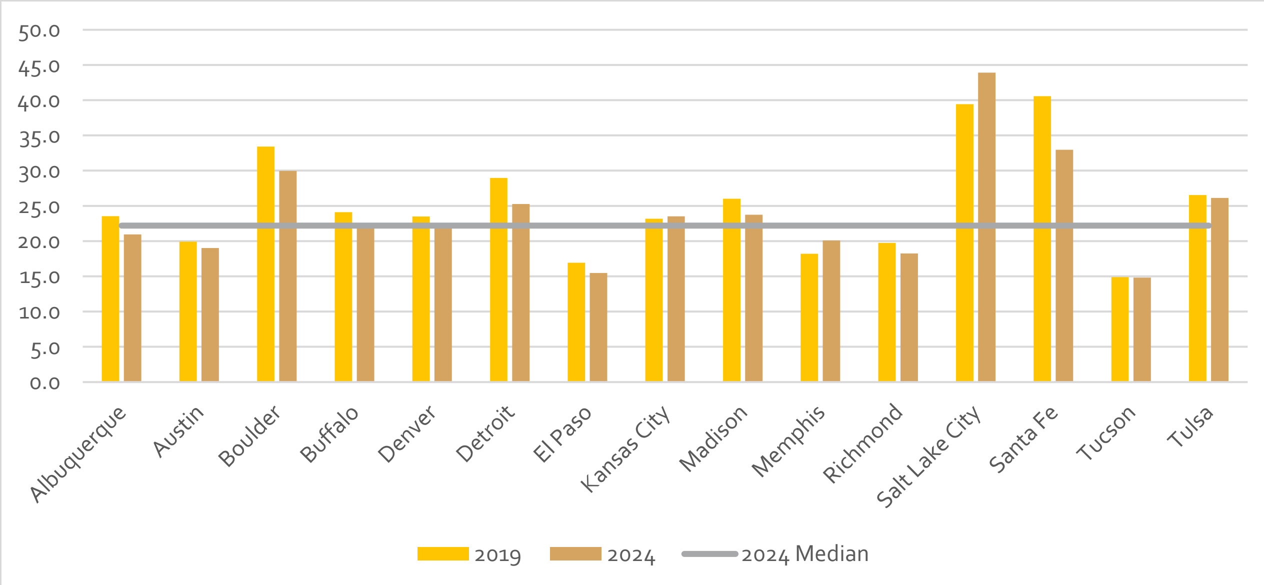
Establishments classified as part of the artisan industry include a wide array of activities. For example, glass manufacturers, bakeries, and jewelers are artisan establishments. Barbers, chocolatiers, and breweries are all artisan establishments. The biggest driver of the artisan industries within the creative economy falls under "personal care services," which include barbers, hairdressers, makeup artists, and similar occupations. Again, for a full list of what we include in the creative industries, please refer to the data addendum.

Unlike all the other industries we discuss in this chapter, artisan establishments declined relative to population growth in nearly MSA from 2019 to 2024. In the first chapter of this report, we illustrate that the total number of artisan establishments in Albuquerque increased from 2014 to 2019 to 2024. However, per 100,000 residents, we see a slight decline from 23.5 in 2019 to 20.9 in 2024. This figure is also below the median value of 22.2 establishments per 100,000 residents. Only Kansas City, Memphis, Salt Lake City saw an increase in artisan establishments relative to population over this time period and generally, growth was not substantial.

Table 14: Artisan Establishments per 100,000 Residents by MSA, 2019 and 2024

	2019	**2024**
Albuquerque	23.5	20.9
Austin	19.9	19.0
Boulder	33.4	30.0
Buffalo	24.1	21.9
Denver	23.5	22.2
Detroit	29.0	25.3
El Paso	16.9	15.5
Kansas City	23.2	23.5
Madison	26.0	23.7
Memphis	18.2	20.1
Richmond	19.7	18.2
Salt Lake City	39.4	43.9
Santa Fe	40.6	33.0
Tucson	14.9	14.8
Tulsa	26.5	26.1

Figure 33: Artisan Establishments per 100,000 Residents by MSA, 2019 and 2024

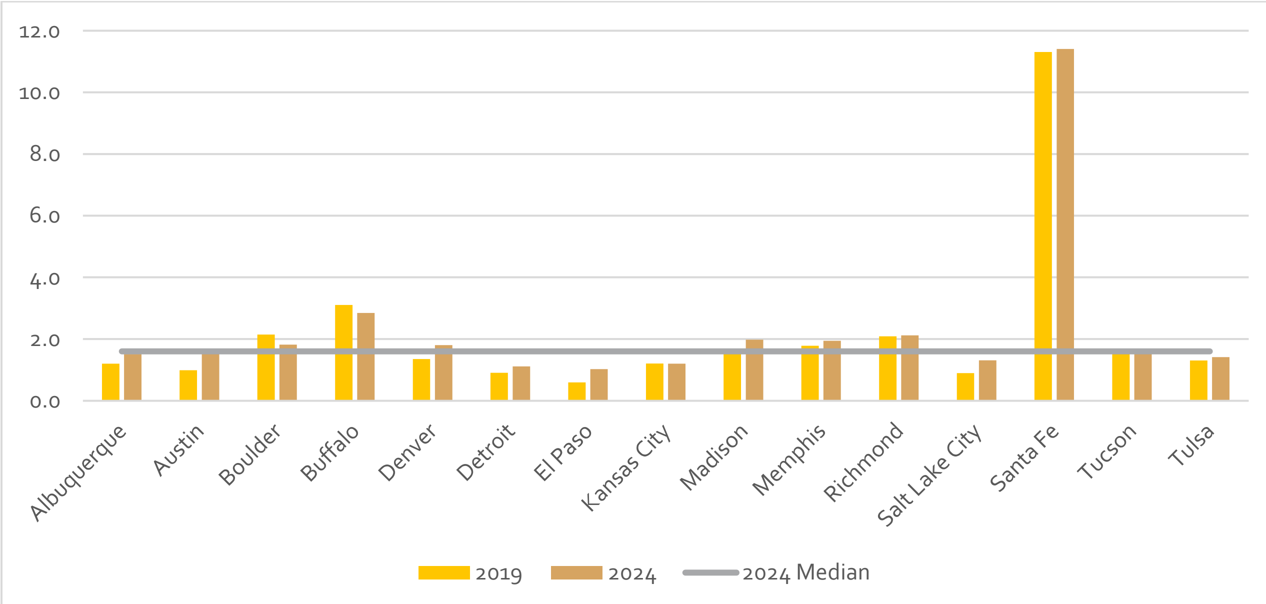


Perhaps the simplest figure to compare across MSAs is the number of museums per 100,000 residents. There is no distinct pattern of growth or contraction in the comparison group between 2019 and 2024. Albuquerque showed a slight increase in museum density, increasing from 1.2 museums per 100,000 residents in 2019 to 1.5 in 2024. And although Santa Fe more than quadruples the next MSA's museum density, the growth was relatively flat between 2019 and 2024, with the number of museums per 100,000 residents increasing at a pace that mostly matched overall population growth. Albuquerque is just below the comparison median, which sits at 1.6 museums per 100,000 residents.

Table 15: Museums per 100,000 Residents by MSA, 2019 and 2024

	2019	2024
Albuquerque	1.2	1.5
Austin	1.0	1.6
Boulder	2.1	1.8
Buffalo	3.1	2.8
Denver	1.3	1.8
Detroit	0.9	1.1
El Paso	0.6	1.0
Kansas City	1.2	1.2
Madison	1.7	2.0
Memphis	1.8	1.9
Richmond	2.1	2.1
Salt Lake City	0.9	1.3
Santa Fe	11.3	11.4
Tucson	1.5	1.6
Tulsa	1.3	1.4

Figure 34: Museums per 100,000 Residents; 2019 and 2024



These density figures give a sense of how Albuquerque's creative economy compares to similar locations nationwide. With the exception of a much higher density of media establishments and a much lower density of design establishments, Albuquerque tends to fall towards the median of the group.

In the next section, we briefly profile three of the comparison MSAs from this section: Tucson, Memphis, and Santa Fe. Tucson was chosen for its southwest location and similar size and demographics to Albuquerque. Memphis was chosen based on similar demographics despite a geographically dissimilar and much larger location. Memphis also is frequently compared to Albuquerque when it comes to other statistics such as education, crime, and growth patterns. Santa Fe was chosen as Albuquerque's closest competitor, a much smaller locale that draws significant national attention when it comes to creative endeavors.

4.2. Brief Profiles of Select MSAs

4.2.1. Tucson, Arizona

On the surface, the Tucson MSA is easy to compare to the Albuquerque MSA. Both are multicultural southwestern cities with flagship universities and similar geographic and population footprints. In 2024, Tucson's population is just over 1 million residents while Albuquerque's is just under. Population growth between 2019 and 2024 is slightly higher in Tucson, at 3% versus Albuquerque's 0.9%.

Table 16: Population Comparison, Albuquerque and Tucson

	Population, 2024	**Population Growth, 2019-2024**
Albuquerque	926,303	1.009
Tucson	1,080,149	1.031

Both living wage requirements and median household income are similar in both MSAs as well, though Tucson sees a higher deficit when the metrics are compared.

Table 17: Wage Comparison, Albuquerque and Tucson, 2024

	Median Living Wage (Hourly)	**Annual Living Wage (Total)**	*Median Household Income (ACS)*	*Median Income vs. Living Wage*
Albuquerque	$27.55	$97,137	$76,097	*-$21,040*
Tucson	$27.77	$97,913	$72,067	*-$25,846*

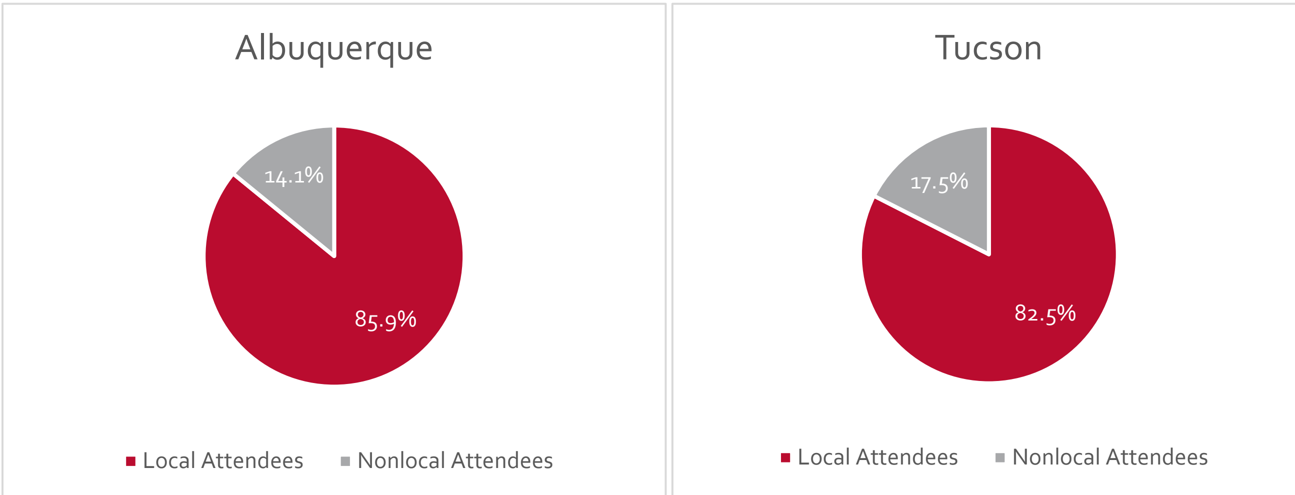
Using the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) measures from Americans for the Arts, we can roughly compare the social and economic impacts of the nonprofit creative economy in both MSAs.[27] However, there are two important points to note: First, the AEP6 only looks at nonprofit impacts whereas this study includes private businesses. Second, the study regions in the AEP6 do not always neatly align with the MSA. For example, Tucson is represented within a study on Pima County and Albuquerque is limited to the City of Albuquerque alone. Despite these limitations, it is worth examining how these locations compare using national metrics.

In the Tucson area, total spending in fiscal year by the entire nonprofit arts and culture industry was $251.3 million, lower than, but comparable to the $270.7 million spent in Albuquerque. 45.1% of this spending in Tucson was done by the nonprofit organizations themselves, leaving 54.9% to audience expenditures. Albuquerque saw slightly higher organizational spending at 47.7% and 52.3% spent by audiences.

Of note, the AEP6 data also shows that Albuquerque had fewer nonlocal attendees at events than Tucson. Although the difference is not extreme, every outside dollar creates a larger economic impact than dollars that would otherwise be spent locally.

[27] Americans for the Arts. 2023. "Arts & Economic Prosperity 6." https://aep6.americansforthearts.org/local-regional-findings

Figure 35: Local vs. Nonlocal Attendees at Arts and Culture Events, Albuquerque and Tucson, 2022



In Albuquerque, nonlocal attendees spent an average of $48.94 at these events, 23.8% more than their local counterparts, who spent $35.93. On the other hand, 91.5% of Albuquerque local attendees agreed with the statement that the activity or venue inspires "a sense of pride in this neighborhood or community," which emphasizes the importance of creating space for local creative endeavors while also advertising to larger, nonlocal markets. In Tucson, the spending share of nonlocal attendees at a single event far outstrips that of local spending, at an average of $66.45 compared $29.58, an increase of 124.6%. Tucsonans also responded that they had a sense of pride from the activity or venue, with 88.6% agreeing with the statement.

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) also compiles information on the national creative economy but does so on a state-by-state basis. In conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) they look at both overall arts and cultural economic activity and state-level economic drivers and trends.[28]

Using 2023 data, they illustrate that New Mexico's top five creative industries by value-added location quotient are jewelry and silverware manufacturing, public cultural institutions, construction, motion pictures, and fine arts education. The value-added location quotient represents the share of the net market value of the goods and services within an industry relative to the national share in that industry. It is the concentration of value added by industry within an area compared to the overall concentration nationally. For example, jewelry and silver manufacturing has a value-added location quotient of 5.18, indicating the value of this industry in New Mexico is 418% greater than its national share.

In Arizona, the top five industries by value-added location quotient are interior design services, custom architectural woodwork and metalwork manufacturing, landscape architectural services, rental and leasing, and retail industries. There is no overlap between New Mexico's and Arizona's top industries. Given proximity and some relative similarity, the lack of overlap is useful to note. New Mexico and Arizona specialize in different creative industries.

[28] National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. 2025. "Creative Economy State Profiles." https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/

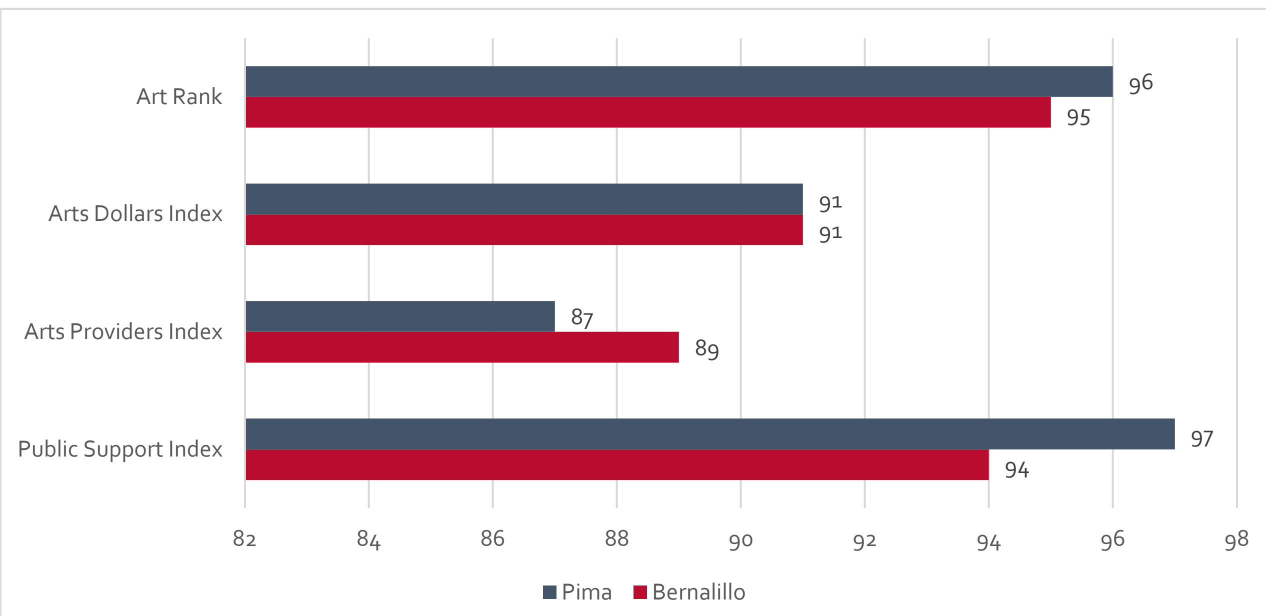
The arts and cultural industries in Arizona do contribute a slightly larger share to the state's GDP than the industries in New Mexico, at 3.0% and 2.6% respectively.

Each year, SMU DataArts, a research collaboration based at Southern Methodist University, develops a vibrancy ranking for arts communities nationally. Profiles of each county are included in their rankings, and the Top 40 Arts Vibrant Communities are profiled.[29] Neither Tucson nor Albuquerque are on the Top 40 list, but both rank highly in overall vibrancy scores. SMU DataArts uses a variety of metrics to determine vibrancy, including Arts Dollars, Arts Providers, and Government Support indices. The Dollar index represents revenue, compensation, and expenses related to nonprofit arts and cultural programming. Provider metrics include the core creatives and the organizations and firms related to an area's creative economy. Public Support looks at grants and government funding for the creative arts in the economy.[30] The indices represent how a county performs compared to other counties on a standardized 0-100% scale.

In the chart below, we report the described indices for Bernalillo County, home to Albuquerque and Pima County, home to Tucson. The overall art rank of Pima County is 96, indicating Pima County is performing better than 96% of other counties on a national level. Bernalillo is right behind Pima, performing better than 95% of other counties.

The most noticeable difference between Bernalillo and Pima County is that Pima has a lower provider score with a larger public support score. This indicates that public support in Pima County is greater for fewer providers.

Figure 36: SMU DataArts Indices for Bernalillo and Pima Counties, 2024



[29] SMU DataArts. 2025. https://dataarts.smu.edu/ArtsVibrancyMap/
[30] For a full methodology, please visit SMU DataArts at https://culturaldata.org/arts-vibrancy-2024/methodology/

In 2025, Tucson published the State of Culture report, which is part of their larger "Somos Uno" project, aimed at strengthening and unifying cultural heritage projects in Tucson.[31] Leaning into the idea that the unique history, heritage, and creative arts are foundational to not only community wellbeing but also economic strength, Somos Uno is an integrated planning effort to evaluate Tucson's unique assets and build policy around them.

4.2.2. Memphis, Tennessee

We have chosen Memphis as our second comparison MSA due to both its similarities to and differences from Albuquerque. Certain features of Memphis align well with Albuquerque including geographic mobility of its residents, income and education levels, and diverse racial and ethnic composition. Memphis also is located near to a major tourist destination known for its creative economy: Nashville. Albuquerque's proximity to Santa Fe can bring similar struggles to showcase and market its unique creative offerings.

One notable difference between Albuquerque and Memphis is that Albuquerque's population is slightly growing and Memphis is seeing a decline in residents. Earlier in this report, we discuss the idea that a growing population can foster new interest in creative endeavors and provide a continued stream of funding. With nearly flat growth and/or decline, MSAs may have to work harder to generate revenue streams for the arts, especially over the long term.

Table 18: Population Comparison, Albuquerque and Memphis

	Population, 2024	**Population Growth, 2019-2024**
Albuquerque	926,303	1.009
Memphis	1,339,345	-1.000

Living wages are similar in both Albuquerque and Memphis, but Memphis has a lower median household income and therefore a larger cost of living deficit by household. This may also indicate difficulty in maintaining local funding streams for the creative arts.

Table 19: Wage Comparison, Albuquerque and Memphis

	Median Living Wage (Hourly)	**Annual Living Wage (Total)**	*Median Household Income (ACS)*	*Median Income vs. Living Wage*
Albuquerque	$27.55	$97,137	$76,097	*-$21,040*
Memphis	$27.90	$98,371	$68,124	*-$30,247*

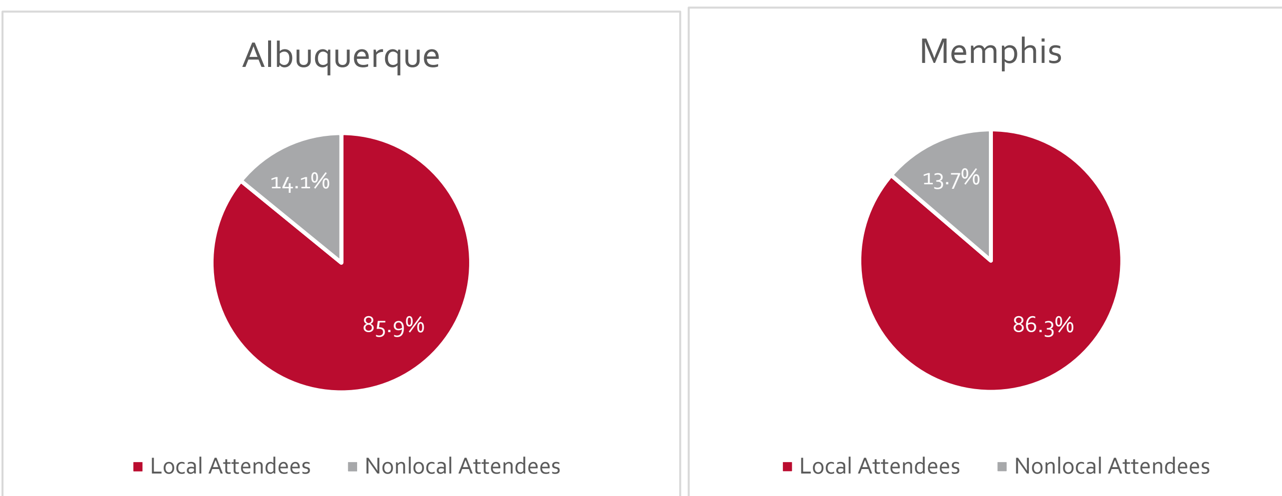
[31] City of Tucson. 2024. "¡Somos Uno!: A Cultural Heritage Strategy for Tucson." https://somosuno.tucsonaz.gov

Turning again to the AEP6, we compare social and economic impacts of the nonprofit economy on both Albuquerque and Memphis. The study region representing Memphis in this case is Shelby County and Albuquerque is represented by the city alone.

Total spending by the entire nonprofit arts and culture industry in Memphis is reported at $192.9 million, significantly smaller than the $270.7 million spent over the same time period in Albuquerque. The nonprofit organizations in Memphis make up 62.6% of that spending with only 37.4% spent by audiences. Again, this may tie back to the higher cost of living and lower overall wages. Albuquerque's organizational spending is 47.7% with a slightly higher proportion being spent by audiences at 52.3%.

Local and nonlocal attendees at creative events are similar in Albuquerque and Memphis with 85.9% and 86.3% local attendance respectively, according to AEP6 data.

Figure 37: Local vs. Nonlocal Attendees at Arts and Culture Events, Albuquerque and Memphis, 2022



Nonlocal attendees in Memphis spent nearly double the amount that local attendees spent on creative events at $63.55 and $32.56 respectively. Again, this ratio outpaces spending by nonlocal attendees in Albuquerque, who spent only 23.8% more than their local counterparts. In Albuquerque, either local attendees are spending more than expected or nonlocal attendees are spending less.

Pride stemming from local activities or venues is nearly as high in Memphis as in Albuquerque at 90.2% and 91.5% respectively. Clearly creative endeavors are integral to a community's quality of life and overall wellbeing, which can't be measured in dollars alone.

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) also compiles information on the national creative economy but does so on a state-by-state basis. In conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) they look at both overall arts and cultural economic activity and state-level economic drivers and trends.[32]

The 2023 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies data list Tennessee's top five creative industries by value-added location quotient as sound recording; performing arts companies; agents and managers for artists,

[32] National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. 2025. "Creative Economy State Profiles." https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/

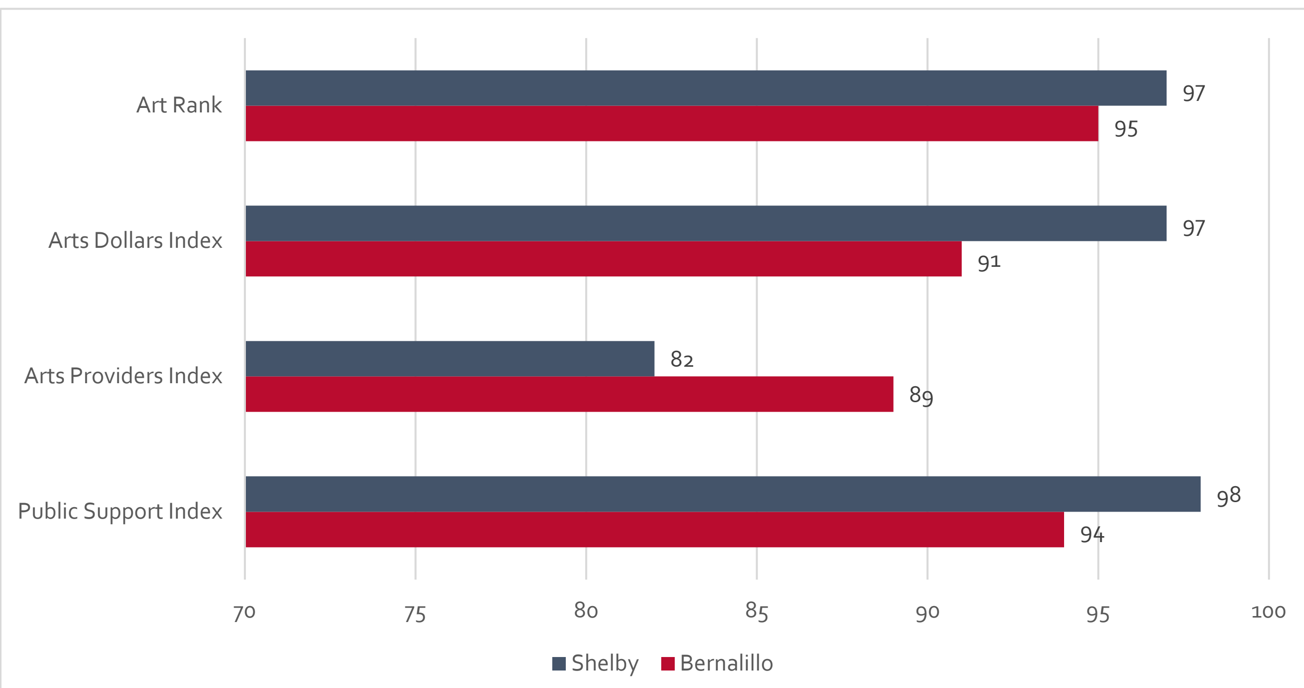
entertainers and other public figures; musical instrument manufacturers; and other goods manufacturing. Again, we see no overlap with New Mexico's top five: jewelry and silverware manufacturing, public cultural institutions, construction, motion pictures, and fine arts education. With both Memphis and Nashville in Tennessee, it makes logical sense that some of the primary arts and cultural industries are related to the music industry.

The arts and cultural industries in Tennessee contribute a larger share to the state's GDP than the industries in New Mexico, at 4.1% and 2.6% respectively.

Like Albuquerque, Memphis does not make the SMU DataArts' Top 40 Arts Vibrant Communities, but both rank highly overall. As neither is on the Top 40 list, we compare county-to-county. Memphis is in Shelby County and Albuquerque is in Bernalillo. These designations do not fully encompass the MSA but do include the full cities. The overall art rank of Shelby County is 97, two points higher than Albuquerque's 95, which indicates that Shelby County is performing better than 97% of other counties nationally in terms of the creative arts.

Again, Bernalillo County surpasses Shelby County in terms of arts providers but falls short on the public support index. Revenue, compensation, and expenses related to nonprofit creative arts programming, as represented by Arts Dollars, is also significantly lower in Bernalillo County than in Shelby County.

Figure 38: SMU DataArts Indices for Bernalillo and Shelby Counties, 2024



One strategy employed by the City of Memphis has been to focus on the music sector of their creative economy and generate actionable strategies to bolster the music economy.[33] The Memphis Music Strategy Report was delivered in November 2024. The research process included community listening sessions and a voting process

[33] Sound Diplomacy. 2024. "Memphis Music Strategy." https://www.artsmemphis.org/sound-diplomacy

for which approaches might have the greatest impact. The City's Office of Creative and Cultural Economy is building a plan to implement the strategies found in the report.

4.2.3. Santa Fe, New Mexico

Santa Fe is a natural comparison to Albuquerque in terms of the creative economy. Santa Fe is New Mexico's capital; Albuquerque is home to the University of New Mexico and New Mexico's primary airport. The cities are close enough to each other to share transportation and cultural similarities. However, Santa Fe is significantly smaller in terms of both population and geographical footprint. Santa Fe is also growing in population whereas Albuquerque's growth is fairly flat.

Table 20: Population Comparison, Albuquerque and Santa Fe

	Population, 2024	**Population Growth, 2019-2024**
Albuquerque	926,303	1.009
Santa Fe	157,765	1.049

The cost of living in Santa Fe is much higher than in Albuquerque, but due to higher overall wages, the deficit between median household income and living wage estimates is similar in both locations.

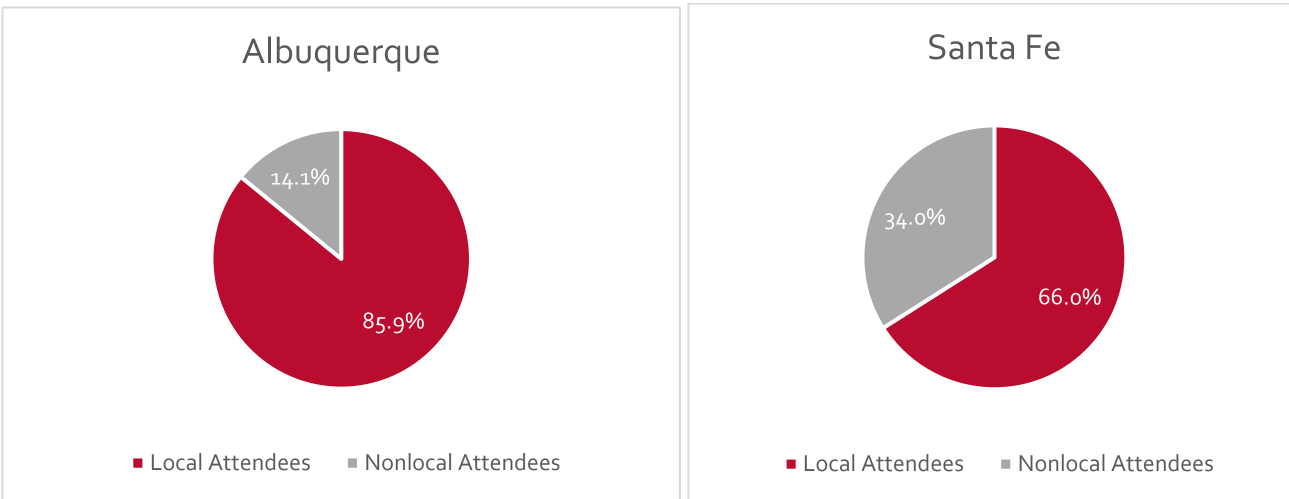
Table 21: Wage Comparison, Albuquerque and Santa Fe

	Median Living Wage (Hourly)	**Annual Living Wage (Total)**	*Median Household Income (ACS)*	*Median Income vs. Living Wage*
Albuquerque	$27.55	$97,137	$76,097	*-$21,040*
Santa Fe	$31.50	$111,064	$88,719	*-$22,345*

The AEP6 social and economic impacts of local nonprofit economies on Albuquerque and Santa Fe are calculated for the metro areas. Expenditures as a result of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in Santa Fe are reported at $353.8 million, $83.1 million more than total spending in Albuquerque, greater than $100 million more than Pima County [Tucson], and more than double Shelby County [Memphis]. Interestingly, this is driven by audience spending, which represents 71.8% of this total. Albuquerque's audience spending is 52.3% of the total $270.7 million in expenditures.

Not only is audience spending a greater portion of Santa Fe's arts and culture economy, nonlocal spending is also a significant portion of the economic impact. Local attendees at Santa Fe's arts and culture events represent only two-thirds of all attendees. The 34.0% of attendees the are coming from outside of the area generate revenue that otherwise would not have been spent in the area.

Figure 39: Local vs. Nonlocal Attendees at Arts and Culture Events, Albuquerque and Santa Fe, 2022



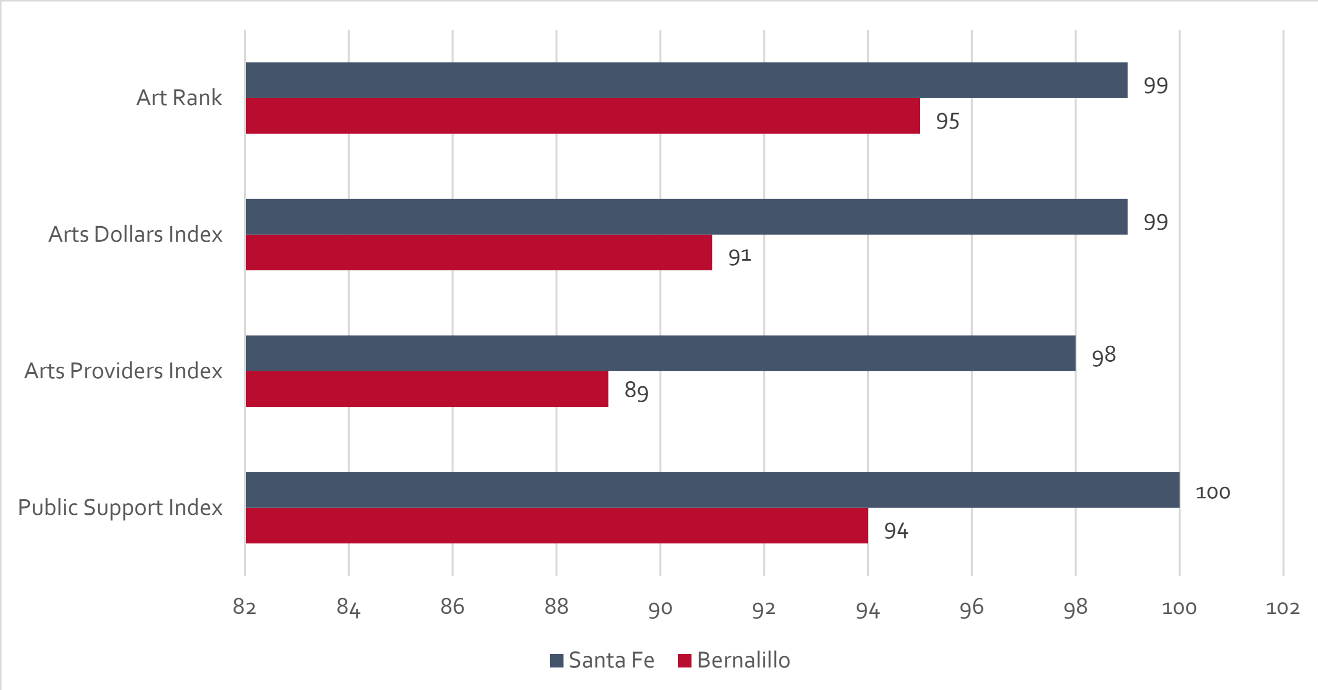
These nonlocal attendees in Santa Fe also outspend local attendees by more than twofold.at $111.50 and $52.98 on average, respectively. Furthermore, the local spending average in Santa Fe is higher than the average nonlocal event spending in Albuquerque, which is $48.94. These are major differences in how the creative economies are driven.

Santa Fe residents demonstrate pride in their local activities and venues but at a slightly lower rate than in Albuquerque, at 84.5% and 91.5% respectively. This may be due to perceived saturation of arts and cultural endeavors.

Santa Fe is the number one most vibrant medium-sized city on the SMU DataArts' Top 40 Arts Vibrant Communities. To remain consistent with other sections in this chapter, we utilize figures from Santa Fe County rather than the Santa Fe MSA, but the geography is very close. The overall art rank of Santa Fe County is 99, illustrating that Santa Fe County is performing better than 99% of other counties nationally in the defined terms of creative vibrancy.

Bernalillo County falls short of Santa Fe County on all metrics within the Vibrant Communities study. In fact, Santa Fe County's Public Support index tops the list it is performing better than 100% of other counties nationwide measured through grants and government funding of the arts in the area.

Figure 40: SMU DataArts Indices for Bernalillo and Santa Fe Counties, 2024



In 2005, Santa Fe was designated as one of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) first "creative cities of crafts and folk art." Not only does Santa Fe have the historical roots of creative traditions, but it has also continuously branded itself as such and has received accolades for celebrating those roots. Tying civic identity to cultural and creative tradition has helped Santa Fe set itself apart. This is the strategy we have also documented for both Tucson and Memphis. Tucson as it looks to lean into its heritage more heavily and Memphis focusing energy on continued support for its music industry, recognizing one of the sectors that makes it especially unique.

Best Practices

Best Practices Analysis

Bolstering and growing Albuquerque's creative economy requires a combination of thoughtful policy, well-distributed resources, and community initiative. While there are no single solutions that guarantee growth, we offer some general suggestions and guidelines in this chapter. Many of these strategies are already being taken on by the City of Albuquerque's Arts and Culture Department as well as regional governments and organizations throughout the community. However, based on our research and conversations with community stakeholders, we thought that it was important to highlight the key points that frequently came up alongside what we saw other cities emphasizing in their own plans. With this in mind, this chapter is intended to be less prescriptive and more of a reinforcement of what the larger market says will work to bolster the creative economy over the long term. The recommendations offered are based on both a review of best practices as described in arts and culture planning documents of a variety of cities across the United States and the many conversations, focus groups, interviews, and surveys detailed throughout this report.

5.1. Strategies for Continued Creative Economic Development

5.1.1. Celebrate the Local

Albuquerque has a dense concentration of creative talent, as shown in the SMU Arts vibrancy scores, which provides significant advantages in the production of arts and cultural assets. Stakeholders, including the City of Albuquerque have worked to leverage these assets, yet the rapidly changing and increasingly competitive market creates conditions that have not allowed the city to fully realize its potential as a prime destination for creative endeavors.

As discussed in Chapter 3, market research has shown that travelers are looking for authentic, unique, local experiences.[34] Travelers and tourists are interested in experiences that do not feel contrived or generic but truly reflect the place that they are visiting. This focus on the local requires engaging the community at all stages. This not only generates buy-in but it also creates a sense of ownership and pride that a top-down approach cannot.

Several cities and regions have started to do this by conducting regularly planned community listening sessions to generate ideas and empower local creatives. However, it is critical that these conversations do not become an echo chamber or a space for one type of creative work only. Looking back to the BBER report that examined arts and cultural industries statewide, we noted that even the marketing efforts for the creative economy need to have input from the bottom-up and not simply advertise what an outsider might assume New Mexico is. Again, community input and buy-in is key to creating the authentic experience tourists are seeking and will doubly generate pride and ownership of any strategies local government and organizations take on.

Another strategy employed by other municipalities and well-articulated by Tucson's *Somos Uno* plan is the idea of completely building arts and cultural practices into all local planning endeavors. This means utilizing the creative arts as a resource for decision making, even when it does not appear "creative" on the surface.

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* Chapter cover photo taken by Rose Elizabeth Rohrer at "An EJAZZ Christmas" presented by Entourage Jazz at Outpost Performance Space, December 2025.

[34] Dalal, Michal. September 2025. "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation in the US." IBIS World.

Embedding the arts into planning has been shown to enhance the quality of life for residents and strengthen potential workforce recruitment and development strategies.[35]

Some examples of this in Albuquerque include the mosaics and pillars dotting the International District supported by the public art program,[36] the sixteen flower beds maintained by the City in small parks,[37] and the section of historic Route 66 (now Highway 333) that plays "America the Beautiful" when vehicles pass over it driving the speed limit.[38] These seemingly small touches can enhance community investment and pride, draw in interested outsiders, and give an overall impression of Albuquerque as a vital and creative community.

In 2026, Route 66 will celebrate its centennial. The City of Albuquerque Arts & Culture Department is already spearheading a variety of events and exhibits designed to tie what is uniquely local to a broader national interest. This opportunity could be key to showcasing what makes Burqueños proud of their home while appealing to a national audience simultaneously.

The basic strategy in this section requires the understanding that creative vitality, authenticity, and economic development are deeply intertwined. All efforts towards building a vibrant creative community should ideally be a collaboration between arts administrators, creative professionals, and community members.

5.1.2. Respond to Changing Opportunities, but Don't Chase Them

One major theme that emerged in the focus group conversations was about changing markets and opportunities. The participants relayed various challenges and articulated strategies for adapting to change, so we followed up on some of those to see how they fit into the broader economic picture.

Key to adaptation is information sharing between groups to leverage their respective experience and expertise. Educational institutions will have certain insights, creative professionals may have others, and arts administrators contribute another perspective. Bringing these unique perspectives together can help to build useful networks, elucidate opportunities, and build resilience into the creative economy.

Employment within the film industry is a straightforward analysis to use as an example. As seen in Chapter 2 of this report, The Economic Effects of Albuquerque's Creative Economy, the media industry is a major contributor to the overall economic picture. This industry, which includes the film industry, directly employed 2,845 Albuquerque workers in 2024, more than any other creative industry except the artisan industry.

But this study's participants involved in the film industry questioned the long-term quality of some of those jobs and asked whether Albuquerque might better leverage local creative talent in more "above-the-line" jobs, such as directing, screenwriting, and serving as lead actors rather than extras. Above-the-line jobs are those most responsible for the creative development of a film project. Below-the-line jobs include technical work such as sound production, editing, background acting, and the like. The argument follows that if we prepare our workforce to primarily focus on "below-the-line" skills, we miss opportunities for developing local talent more

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35 Dalton, Aaron. "Recruit and Retain Talent." On the Americans for the Arts & pARTnership Movement essay resources. https://www.partnershipmovement.org/tools-resources/essays/partnership-movement-essay-recruit-and-retain-talent

36 https://www.cabq.gov/artsculture/public-art/public-art-in-albuquerque/

37 https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/greenhouse

38 This section of highway is currently needing repair to restore it to its musical days but still serves as a unique example of integrating planning and creative arts.

fully and create jobs that are considered replaceable by the greater industry.[39] Although there are fewer jobs available for above-the-line work, fostering these skills has the ability to reinforce Albuquerque's homegrown industry, rather than one that is dependent on Hollywood for jobs.

Bringing together local industry professionals with funders and key educational decision-makers could generate opportunities for grassroots film industry growth. Both skilled technical work and skilled creative work are critical to developing an industry that has the potential for self-sufficiency. This example could be applied to other industries that are especially reliant on non-local funding.

Suggestions for assessing and responding to the needs of ever-changing industries start with building coalitions of local leaders within the field, educators and administrators working to train new workers, and funders who can help facilitate educational opportunities to better build long-term organizational capacity.

Another potential avenue for growth in a changing industry is in digital creative professions. Albuquerque does not lack professionals skilled in computer design and development and related fields. However, opportunities for digital creatives are somewhat limited locally. The major educational institutions offer coding classes, workshops, degrees, and certificates, but most of these feed into technical professions rather than creative ones. There is an opportunity to join the two fields in ways that could expand Albuquerque's creative arts in new directions. The University of New Mexico's ARTSLab[40] is one venue where these bridges are being formed and represents an opportunity for future directions of creative growth, should Albuquerque be able to retain the talent being cultivated there.

One potential opportunity for local governments and organizations is to identify key subindustries and potential mismatches in workforce development, funding, and existing opportunities might be a periodic creative economy labor survey to assess what might be holding these industries back and what might help them grow.

5.1.3. Maintain Business Support Strategies

Several strategies for enhancing the creative economy were routinely suggested by the local creative community and by other municipalities in terms of their approach to best practices. While the City of Albuquerque has already pursued many of the strategies that were mentioned, some were new. This section focuses on concepts and practices that were emphasized in our communications with local stakeholders and peer municipalities so the city can both fortify its investment in key current approaches and so that it can assess potential opportunities to novel approaches.

5.2.3.1. Capacity Building and Business Development

The need for capacity building and business development assistance is a key takeaway from the primary data in this report. Both seasoned and newer creative professionals discussed difficulties in creating and maintaining businesses in Albuquerque and generating the capacity for a longer-term employment within the creative economy. Participants in this study consistently pointed to the need for affordable consultations on business registration, employment regulations, and business growth strategies. This is especially true for the large number of freelance and startup creative professionals who are looking to expand into a more permanent

[39] Pruner, Aaron. 2022. "Above-the-Line vs. Below-the-Line Jobs in Film." *Backstage Magazine* [online]. https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/above-the-line-vs-below-the-line-crew-differences-74969/
[40] https://artslab.unm.edu/

creative role within the economy. These individuals face unique challenges as independent entrepreneurs, but all creative businesses could benefit from well-organized and well-funded support and services.

Capacity building also can come in the form of mentorship program stipends. Research on the creative economy from Los Angeles to New York[41] notes the importance of mentorship programs, especially for newer artists and businesses. Notably, the surveys completed in Los Angeles with over 1200 women artists showed that 78% of those surveyed under the age of 65 cited a lack of mentorship as a barrier to success within the creative economy.[42] With the changing economy and drastic federal government reductions in spending on the arts, many resources that seasoned creative professionals have relied on in the past are no longer available. Working together can create capacity for mutual aid and collaboration in finding and acquiring new resources and teach strategies of resilience in challenging situations.

5.2.3.2. Reduce Bureaucracy Whenever Possible

A business support strategy that was discussed at length in the focus groups and mentioned frequently in the surveys is reduction in bureaucracy. The following emergent ideas were regularly mentioned:

- Provide assistance with ever-changing gross receipts tax and consider a flat rate for self-employed creative professionals.
- Clarify all grant and funding opportunities so creative professionals can decide whether they qualify or not without a lengthy question and answer process. Further, ensure that the process of choosing recipients is transparent and publicly available.
- Create opportunities for understanding what it means to register a business in different industries so new proprietors do not spend excessive time choosing from the many categories they fall into, only to realize that they are now ineligible for one type of assistance or another.
- Consider counting non-owner employee hours rather than total employees when offering tax breaks to small businesses.
- Work with the County and State to create a single application for publicly sponsored fairs and festivals and clear guidelines for all fees the business will have to pay if it participates.

Some of these suggestions are directly tied into business development and capacity building, but many do not. Participants used words like "confusing," "frustrating," and "infuriating" when describing their interactions with business and tax paperwork. Streamlining some of these processes and ensuring clarity of language and purpose whenever possible could go a long way to reducing complaints and could be beneficial for all small businesses generally, not just those businesses within the creative economy.

5.2.3.3. Formal Network Establishment

Building thriving networks is a strategy supported by both research from other municipalities and feedback from our participants, especially in focus groups. This approach can take many forms, and the city must decide which roles it will assume and which it will encourage within the community. While networks can be privately

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[41] HueArts NYC. 2022. "Mapping a Future for Arts Entities Founded and Led by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and All People of Color in New York City." https://www.hueartsnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HueArts2022BrownPaper.pdf

[42] Anonymous Was A Woman and SMU DataArts. 2025. "Artists Speak: The Anonymous Was A Woman Survey." https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b42673c1aef1dea2e4fa0bd/t/67f588f446f54c4152a12d16/1744144632778/AWAWFinalReportDesign_4_3.pdf

managed, doing so risks making them exclusive and inaccessible. A publicly managed network, by contrast, offers greater transparency and inclusivity. An example of a formal network is one that connects people face-to-face or virtually and has them exchange information on a regular basis. This internal creative network ties into capacity building in that networks can facilitate collaboration and exchange of ideas, which allows the creative economy to strengthen itself. Resource and skill sharing are key features of such networks and can serve as a foundation for mentoring relationships and leadership development within the community.

Another type of formal network discussed more in the literature from other cities than in our primary research is a pathway for interested businesses to connect with local creative professionals for collaboration. This could be a tricky role for a public entity to take on, but even the creation of a creative directory, along with its regular maintenance, could be a benefit to both the creative professionals and the business community. Linking this idea with professional training on contract management and work valuation has the potential to further develop capacity within the creative community.

5.2.3.4. Collaboration and Community Leadership

In Tucson's *¡Somos Uno!* Cultural Heritage Strategic Plan, the authors suggest building a coalition of local leaders to "exchange ideas and updates around advocacy and sector needs."[43] This idea of collaboration and developing community leadership echoes calls we heard in the survey responses to ensure representative voices are being heard by city administrators. The City of Albuquerque maintains an Arts Board, which includes members from each of the nine City Council Districts and two at-large members.[44] However, survey respondents frequently mentioned feeling left out of the larger creative economy conversations. One approach might be to consider whether the board should include creatives representing different sectors of the economy as well as different geographic locations in the city.

A major difficulty in building community leadership in sustainable ways, however, is funding. Throughout this research, we heard from creative professionals who wanted to participate in the study but required a consulting fee to justify the time spent away from their primary occupations. This highlights the notion that not everyone will have the internal capacity to represent their interests on a volunteer basis given the current economic environment and some will not participate due to what they perceive the devaluation of creative labor. Often creative professionals are asked to donate time and resources in ways that other professionals are not.[45] When seeking leaders and participants in city efforts to improve the creative economy, it will be necessary to attend to issues around representation and make decisions about whether feedback is effectively capturing the whole of the creative community.

5.1.4. Consider Local Assets

Acknowledging and building upon the decades-long investments in Albuquerque's creative economy is critically important. Albuquerque is not starting from scratch and already has countless programs, organizations,

[43] https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/gis/somosunos/tucson_final-plan_1.14.25.pdf, page 48.
[44] https://www.cabq.gov/artsculture/public-art/staff-and-board/arts-board
[45] Brook, Orian; Dave O'Brien; and Mark Taylor. 2020. ""There's No Way That You Get Paid to Do the Arts": Unpaid Labour Across the Cultural and Creative Life Course." *Sociological Research Online 25(4).* https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780419895

facilities, and creative initiatives at its disposal. Rather than looking to create something new, one best practice discussed in the literature is strengthening the capacity that already exists.

A primary challenge we discuss in the previous chapter is the lack of venue space for creatives to showcase their work. This lack of space isn't necessarily due to the absence of facilities, but rather absent opportunities. In the focus groups, participants noted the library system as being well utilized and amenable to a variety of arts displays. Local governments and organizations might consider what other spaces could be managed in similar ways. For example: how might publicly owned spaces become gathering places for creative professionals or venues for a variety of art? Are there underutilized spaces that could be transformed into maker spaces or temporary exhibition halls, either temporarily or permanently? Evaluating the current local real estate resources local governments already have access to could be a way to revitalize and integrate the creative professions more fully into existing spaces rather than focusing on new development.

This solution may look like adaptive reuse, an architectural concept that converts existing structures for uses other than the original intention for that structure, such as the Rail Yards Market inside of the old rail yards buildings. However, the conversions do not have to be as formal as the Rail Yards to be successful. For example, New York City built a music venue within a formerly abandoned site under the Kosciuszko Bridge, now known as Under the K.[46] Although this initiative required a public-private partnership, it has benefited Brooklyn by increasing green, public space and by generating its own revenue through the hosting of events.

Major transformations through adaptive reuse are large-scale projects, requiring funding, time, as well as community buy-in, effort, and support. Another, even simpler, way to utilize existing resources is to continue to integrate the arts into existing public spaces, as the Arts and Culture Department has done with the City Hall exhibition space, Gallery One. Further, much of Albuquerque's City Hall has been informally integrated with a variety of exhibits and displays. Spreading this concept to other public buildings is a smaller-scale, and likely less costly, way to develop local cultural assets.

Similarly, supporting existing community initiatives in the creative economy should be a priority over seeking to develop new organizations and entities. Continuing to develop the creative economy from the ground up will help with community buy-in and foster ownership of changes as they happen.

5.1.5. Facilitate Community Connections, Both New and Existing

A robust creative economy requires support not only from a selection of artists, artisans, and arts administrators, it also requires active community involvement. This includes collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors to boost arts development, in donations and contributions to creative professionals and their organizations, and in community organizing to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods that integrate arts into planning efforts. Earlier in this chapter, we discuss the importance of buy-in from the creative community, but external support is also key to preserving and promoting creative vitality. In an SMU Arts publication on vibrancy in more rural areas, the author notes that the only way to achieve sustained vibrancy is through community-wide, collaborative efforts.[47] Although the publication focuses on rural communities, the principle stands for maintaining a strong creative economy anywhere.

[46] https://nbkparks.org/under-the-k/

[47] Kershner, Geoffrey. 2024. "Arts Vibrancy in Rural Communities is Achieved through Collective Action." https://culturaldata.org/learn/data-at-work/2024/arts-vibrancy-in-rural-communities-is-achieved-through-collective-action/

In this way, it is critically important for local and regional government to continue to catalyze and promote meaningful and innovative partnerships; but government action alone cannot sustain the creative economy. The community must also continue to take the initiative to build relationships, continue existing projects, and generate original opportunities. In times when opportunities for federal funding of the arts is limited and the economy more generally seems unstable, it is especially important for all groups to collaborate to prioritize economic development that uplifts the creative professions, which in turn operates to preserve Albuquerque's local heritage and creates more livable and desirable communities.

In real terms, facilitating these community connections can take on multiple forms. For example, Albuquerque and regional governments can seek to strengthen mutual relationships within the MSA. Working together, the connected communities can better develop regional opportunities and pool resources to attract broader economic investment.

Facilitating connections among creative professionals and key partners, such as the New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Workforce Solutions Department, Small Business Development Centers, economic development corporations, colleges and universities, trade associations, private sector micro-lenders and other business development programs, remains essential for strengthening community ties without duplicating efforts already underway.

Another way to connect the creative economy with the wider economic ecosystem is continuing to engage in meaningful relationships with the business sector, community organizations, and local developers. Tucson's *¡Somos Uno!* Plan suggests training local businesses in effective methods of collaboration with the creative industries, integrating residencies, projects, and development into their business frameworks. With evidence that creative efforts generate healthier communities and attract a more stable workforce, businesses may be eager to invest given the right partnership opportunities.

5.2. Conclusion

The best practices described in this chapter are based on an extensive review of recommendations and strategies found in cultural and creative planning documents of comparable MSAs nationwide as well as suggestions put forth by the local creative professionals in surveys and focus groups over this past year. Additionally, the best practices draw upon proposals and assessments created by national institutions including the National Endowment for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, SMU DataArts, and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Further, we linked these concepts to recent innovations in local and national economies, looking at trends in consumer habits and changes in employment and wages. Sources and examples of this research are documented throughout the report. Albuquerque's creative ecosystem is just that – an interconnected community of creative professionals and supporters interacting with each other and our unique environment. Albuquerque already boasts a thriving creative economy, yet its full potential can only be unlocked through bold collaboration and strategic, long-term planning.

Appendix A: Terms and Methods for the Impact and Contribution Analyses

IMPLAN Analysis Terminology

- Direct Effect: The direct effect of the creative economy on the Albuquerque MSA reflects the jobs, payroll, and sales directly related to creative businesses and individuals. Additionally, this includes any benefits stemming from capital improvement projects and all visitor spending in this sector.
- Economic Contribution: the total economic activity generated by an existing industry in a specific geographic area.
- Economic Impact: the change in a region's economy due to an event or the influx of outside dollars.
- Employment: The number of full-time, part-time, and temporary jobs supported through spending.
- Geographic Area: The Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties
- Indirect Effect: Spending generated through the supply chain connected to the creative economy. This is often referred to as "supplier impacts" and is the jobs, payroll, and output created by businesses which provide goods and services essential to maintaining the creative economy.
- Induced Effect: The economic activity that occurs as a result of spending by employees and vendors supported by the creative economy, including food, housing, transportation, health care services, entertainment, etc. The spending by these employees and vendors creates further demand for goods and services, for which non-creative firms must purchase supplies and hire employees to produce. The sum of these iterations constitutes the induced effect. This metric accounts for taxes and savings.
- Labor Income: The value of all forms of employment income paid for all types of impacts. This includes benefits, bonuses, and all other employment income.
- Multiplier Effect: The secondary employment impacts stemming from the industry or organization's economic impact. For example, if the multiplier is 1.4, it would suggest that for every 10 jobs within the target industry, 4 additional jobs would be created outside that industry, adding a total of 14 jobs to the geographic area.
- Output: The value of industry production.
- Secondary Effect: The sum of the indirect and induced effects.
- Total Impact: The sum of the direct, indirect, and induced effects.
- Value Added: The difference between total output and the cost of goods and services, representing the creative economy's contribution to the Albuquerque MSA's GDP.

Calculation Method

To determine the direct economic impact, we use the following calculation:

Direct Impact = (%Out-of-Area Revenue) x (%In-Area Expenditures) x (Total Expenditures)

"Area" is defined as the Albuquerque MSA, which is the primary geography we use throughout this report. This equation illustrates that direct impacts are created by externally-funded dollars spent locally. The input-output multipliers model called IMPLAN is used by BBER staff to estimate this direct impact along with the indirect and induced impacts.

Appendix B: Survey and Focus Group Questions

B.1. Creative Economy Survey

Q1. Where do you currently reside?
City, State *or* International location: ______________________________
Zip Code (if in the United States): ______________________________

Q2. What type of artistic work are you involved in?

____

Q3. How long have you been engaged in this work?
- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 5-9 years
- ☐ 10-15 years
- ☐ 15-20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

Q4. Do you have specialized training or a degree in your art? Yes No

Q5. Do you make money from your artistic work? Yes No

If no, please skip to Q8

Q6. About what percent of your annual income comes from your artistic work?
- ☐ Up to 20%
- ☐ 21-40%
- ☐ 41-60%
- ☐ 61-80%
- ☐ 81-99%
- ☐ I have no income outside of my artistic work.

Q7. How do you make money from your artistic work?
- ☐ Online sales
- ☐ Festivals and fairs
- ☐ I have a shop
- ☐ Live performances
- ☐ Online performances
- ☐ Other, please describe: ______________________________

Q8. Do you belong to any art or crafts guilds or groups? Yes No

Q8a. If yes, please name them: ____

Q9. Do you collaborate with any other artists or craftspeople? Yes No

Q10. What comes to mind when you think about Albuquerque's art scene?

____

____

Q11. Do you consider Albuquerque to be a competitive environment for artists? Yes No

Q10a. Please elaborate if you wish: ____

Q12. Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview? We will be interviewing a few individuals as a part of this research project; you may or may not be contacted, even if you respond "yes."
Yes No

Q13. Please tell us a little about you.
Age: ____________
Racial Identification: ________________
Gender Identification: _______________

Thank you so much for your time!

B.2. Focus Group Protocol

1. Introductions
2. What should be included in any definition of the Creative Economy? What should be excluded?
3. I have given you a list of local organizations and businesses. Please put an X on the line for those you support, an S on those that support you, and an M on those that you have a mutually supportive relationship with. (discuss)
4. What other local creative organizations/businesses do you interact with most frequently? (name 3 max)
5. What are some of the advantages to being in ABQ vs other locations? Some of the disadvantages?

a. Networking and the creative scene/collaboration

b. Access to space/making space/rehearsal space/exhibition space, etc, etc

6. Have you considered leaving Albuquerque or NM? Why or why not?
7. What's driving the creative economy (positively)
8. I have a set of categories to start the conversation, but I want to hear your ideas as well. Top 5 pressing issues – think about this wording and how to incorporate/discuss – maybe ask for positive/negative.
    - Accessibility and Inclusion
    - Changing Consumer Habits
    - Connection to Place
    - Cost of Living
    - Investment Capital Availability
    - Mental Health
    - Skills Training
    - Taxes and Regulation
    - Technology
    - Workforce Changes
    - [Insert Your Idea Here]
9. What would you say are the key needs for local creative organizations?
10. What else do you want me to know/report?
11. What questions do you have for me?

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