







MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR
APRIL 2025










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Introduction – Massachusetts' Cultural History

Across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, arts, humanities, heritage, and culture are integral parts of our society. Delivering roughly $29.7 billion in annual economic value to our economy and accounting for over 133,000 jobs (according to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis), the creative sector is vital not only to the economic well-being of our state, but also to the Commonwealth's sense of identity and spirit. Renowned for its rich history, with world-famous museums and concert halls, historic monuments, iconic landmarks, and prominent tourist destinations, Massachusetts stands out as a national leader in arts, humanities, heritage, and cultural vibrancy.

To ensure that Massachusetts' creative and cultural sector continues to be vibrant, innovative, and economically impactful in all our communities, and to better understand and support the cultural economy, the Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council convened to recommend coordinated actions to revitalize policy, funding, infrastructure, and partnerships.

Background

In the Spring of 2024, Governor Healey signed Executive Order No. 631: *Establishing a Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council*. Assembled in September 2024, this diverse group of creative professionals and state and local officials was tasked with exploring strategies for better supporting artists and creative workers, while fostering more economic opportunities for the cultural sector.

The Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council (also known as the "Cultural Economy Advisory Council") consists of 29 individuals from the business community, higher education institutions, local governments, non-profits, economic development agencies, planning councils, arts organizations, cultural workers, culture bearers, and artist collectives.

Over the past eight months, the full council convened three times and identified key focus areas, which led to the creation of four working groups: Community Support; Economic Development & Impact; Infrastructure for Cultural & Creative Spaces; and Workforce, Education & Talent. Working groups convened 12 times over three months with each group led by a captain from

[1] Cover Photo Credits: Open Air Markets, Rockland; Lawrence Bread and Ross Festival; Brazilian Festival Worcester, 2023 by Annielly Camargo; AXIS Dance, Jacob's Pillow; Many Cultures One Heart Festival, Framingham; Clark Art Institute; Fiestal Patronales de Holyoke by Lauren Miller; Somerville Glass Arts Festival; First Friday Martha's Vineyard by Lauren Miller; Seaport Cultural District, New Bedford; Indigenous People's Day Celebration, Great Barrington; Sharon Chalk Fest by Bruce Spero; The Donkey Show at OBERON, American Repertory Theater; Catwalk, watercolor, collaged watercolor, marbled paper by Stephanie Anderson, 2018; Urban Textile Event, Fall River by Annielly Camargo.

the Council. Captains spearheaded the development of recommendations aimed at harnessing Massachusetts' economic and workforce development potential in support of the state's broader goals. This approach expanded and extended the reach of the council.

Cultural Economy Advisory Council Members (29)		
Secretary Yvonne Hao, EOED (Chair)	**Maggie Gaipo-Scott,** Museum of Fine Arts Boston	**Lynda Roscoe-Hartigan,** Peabody Essex Museum
Kate Fox, MOTT (Vice Chair)	**Deborah Hall,** YWCA of Central Mass.	**Emily Ruddock,** MassCreative
Tiffany Allecia, Springfield Creative City Collective	**Candace "Lee" Heald,** AHA! New Bedford	**Lindsey Schmid,** 1Berkshire
Fabian Barracks, City of Worcester	**Taneshia Laird,** Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory	**Anne Scott-Putney,** Heritage Museums & Gardens
Luke Blackadar, Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston	**Joyce Linehan,** Mass College of Art and Design	**Annis Sengupta,** Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Michael Bobbitt, Mass Cultural Council	**Terese Lukey,** Boston Public Art Triennial	**Chad Smith,** Boston Symphony Orchestra
David Bogen, Berklee College of Music	**Senator Paul Mark,** Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development	**Julie Wake,** Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
Representative Mindy Domb, Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Cultural Development	**Mark Melnik,** Umass Donahue Institute	**Malik Williams,** Reel Sync Music
Kristy Edmunds, Mass MoCa	**Ming Min Hui,** Boston Ballet	**Silvia Lopez Chavez,** Murals and Fine Art Painting and Illustration
Yasmin Eisenhauer, Amherst Cinema	**Tim Ritchie,** Museum of Science	

Summary of Recommendations

Based on the findings of the council and its working groups, there are five recommendations for the Healey-Driscoll Administration to explore:

1. **Define Cultural Economy**
   Map the Cultural Economy and Standardize a Definition

2. **Elevate Arts, Humanities & Culture Within State Government**
   Encourage Cross-Sector Partnerships and Integrate Arts Professionals Directly into State Government

3. **Establish Capital Initiatives to Support Downtown Revitalization and Space Preservation**
   Review Capital Authorizations and Explore Public-Private Partnerships

4. **Identify Permanent Sustainable Revenue Stream**
   Convene a Group to Discuss the Plausibility of a Sustainable, Consistent Revenue Stream for Arts, Humanities, and Culture

5. **Promote Business Acumen and Workforce Development for Creative Workers**
   Explore Ways to Develop Educational Pathways for Artists and Cultural Workers

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Define Cultural Economy

The term “cultural economy” (also known as the “creative economy”) lacks a consistent, statewide definition, making it challenging to measure its impact, allocate resources, or develop effective policies. Although the phrase has been in use for decades, its meaning varies significantly. In some contexts, it refers only to arts organizations, other times to sectors like tourism, entertainment, sports, leisure, hospitality, or education, which are related but distinct. In broader interpretation, it may even encompass the "creative" aspects of all businesses, such as innovative models or production methods.

This lack of clarity has led to inconsistency and confusion among funders, policymakers, cultural sector practitioners, and others when developing an approach to the sector. The cultural sector needs a clear, widely accepted definition to measure its impact, track investments, and develop effective policy. To build a stronger foundation for public investment, strategic planning, robust policy, economic growth, and jobs, Massachusetts needs a clear, inclusive, and widely accepted definition of the cultural economy. Policymakers, workforce and economic development leaders, and data analysts must operate from a common set of assumptions about the sector’s scope, impact, and infrastructure needs.

Massachusetts has the opportunity to lead nationally by developing a clear, inclusive, and widely accepted definition of the creative economy that reflects the state’s values and cultural assets. A statewide definition will strengthen the sector’s ability to demonstrate its value, attract new investments, and advance statewide goals for innovation, economic growth, and community development.

Strategic Opportunities:

- Explore opportunities to provide funding and coordination support for key state agencies, foundations, and groups to come together to jointly engage external perspectives (labor, economists, economic development professionals) to make recommendations on a consistent and formalized definition of the cultural economy.

Values:

- Ensure stakeholder engagement includes marginalized communities, including underrepresented racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups, BIPOC artists, rural creatives, and cultural practitioners outside of traditional disciplines to gather diverse perspectives and ensure equitable representation.

- Develop a Massachusetts-specific definition and framework that includes both economic metrics and community impact measures.
- Employ a data-driven framework to measure the economic, social, and community impacts of the CE, incorporating quantitative metrics (e.g. economic contribution, employment rates, income levels) and qualitative insights (e.g. community engagement, community vibrancy, visitorship).

2. Elevate Arts, Humanities & Culture Within State Government



Origins of the Eternal Art of the Maya Presented by Rosalba Solis, by Lauren Miller.

Massachusetts has a powerful opportunity to integrate arts, humanities, and culture into the core operations of state government. Doing so can unlock significant public value: new jobs and contracts for creative professionals, greater visibility and recognition for creative workers, and improved public services due to stronger collaboration between state initiatives and creative sector organizations and individuals.

Fostering collaboration with cultural organizations will lead to greater impacts. Cross-sector partnerships can not only raise the profile of arts, humanities, and culture, but will also demonstrate the tangible impact of the cultural economy in tackling social and civic challenges.

By intentionally weaving arts and culture into government priorities and functions, Massachusetts can amplify the reach and impact of public programs while also demonstrating the concrete value of the creative sector in addressing complex social and civic challenges. A coordinated, statewide strategy can serve as a model for innovation in cross-sector collaboration and address critical social challenges, improve public services, and enhance community well-being.

Strategic Opportunities:

- Collaborate with state agencies to identify and pursue opportunities for partnerships between state services and creative entities, particularly those focused on community engagement, social justice, education, and public health. This should include education around funding opportunities and grant programs offered by the state.
- Encourage strategic partnerships with sector leaders including the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, Mass Cultural Council, MASSCreative, Mass Humanities, and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.
- Encourage the Commonwealth to develop a fellowship-type program such as an Artist-in-Residence program which could serve as a home for creativity within state government by integrating creative professionals directly into state government, applying their artistic skills to governmental problem-solving, innovation, and public service delivery.
- This initiative would create a dynamic collaboration between the cultural sector and the public sector, fostering unique cross-disciplinary and expanded creative solutions to

government challenges while providing creative professionals with increased exposure, opportunities, and professional growth.

Values:

- These partners can help agencies embed creativity into public programs, economic development, and regional identity-building.
- Institutionalize long-term partnerships between the creative sector and social service sectors to ensure sustained collaboration, creative problem solving, shared value through improved service delivery and broader access to resources for underrepresented communities.
- Expand reach and improved impact of public services, made more effective, inclusive, and engaging through creative collaborations.
- Increase visibility of the cultural sector, demonstrating its social and economic impact, especially in areas of public health, education, and community development.
- Pursue opportunities to impact public policy and programs through creative public communications, community-building initiatives, and creativity-based solutions for societal challenges such as mental health, public health campaigns, and educational programs.
- Collaborate and integrate the creative process with the technical and policy goals of the state to foster innovation. Such a program should allow the creative professional to work closely with government staff, participating in brainstorming sessions, contributing creative solutions, and collaborating on long-term projects.



Aquinnah Native Artisan Market by Lauren Miller.

3. Establish Capital Initiatives to Support Downtown Revitalization and Space Preservation

The state offers a variety of grants and resources to support regional and economic development. This includes programs at the Executive Office of Economic Development and its quasi-public agencies like the MassWorks Infrastructure Program, the Transformative

Development Initiative, and the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative. Combined, these programs offer millions of state resources to unlock economic opportunities and enhance downtowns and town centers across Massachusetts. Gateway Cities across Massachusetts have experienced the positive effects of art in enhancing neighborhood vibrancy and character.

The 2024 economic development bill, the *Mass Leads* Act, also authorized $9.5 million of capital funding over five years for a Downtown Vitality program. The Downtown Vitality program seeks to provide grants to downtown management entities, such as Cultural Districts in downtowns with a particular focus on Gateway Cities, rural areas, and historically underserved communities. Such a program could support important economic development goals such as strengthening local economies, promoting local businesses, increasing sustainability, and energizing cultural and creative hubs.



However, it's important to note that for a capital authorization to be funded it must be included in the state's annual Capital Investment Plan (CIP).[2] Recognizing the value of downtown revitalization, the state should consider a range of options to advance these goals. Further, sector leaders have identified the need and opportunity for a public-private partnership to establish a Space Preservation and Creation Initiative. Options for funding could include public-private support, philanthropic investments, or one-time revenue sources. The initiative could support a loan fund for quick responses to at-risk spaces, offering tax relief for property owners, providing creative space, and facilitating the transfer of surplus public property for cultural use. Such an initiative would require further research, discussion, and engagement.

Strategic Opportunities:

- Consider the inclusion of the Downtown Vitality program (or portions thereof) in future annual Capital Investment Plans.
- Review existing capital programs to identify opportunities to provide direct support for downtown vitality and revitalization.
- Conduct research and a feasibility assessment for the development of a Space Preservation and Creation Initiative. The process should include community engagement to gather feedback, representing diverse cultural perspectives.

Values:

[2] Currently, there is a total of more than $40 billion authorized to finance capital spending, while the most recent CIP budget is $3.1 billion. This presents a real challenge to supporting the program, as the state balances many competing but critical capital priority areas such as infrastructure, transportation, and housing.

- Increase affordable creative spaces and encouragement of more private investment.
- Protect vulnerable communities and populations from displacement.
- Conduct community engagement to gather feedback and represent diverse cultural perspectives.

4. Identify Permanent Sustainable Revenue Stream

To ensure the Massachusetts cultural sector continues to thrive across the state, a sustainable, consistent revenue stream for arts and culture needs to be identified.

Strategic Opportunities:

- Collaborate with partners to identify a plausible revenue source.
- Funding should be additive to Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and Mass Cultural Council funding.

Values:

- A reliable funding source will enable the state to effectuate the recommendations put forth in this report, thereby increasing economic opportunities for the cultural sector.

5. Promote Business Acumen and Workforce Development for Creative Workers



IBA Boston by Annielly Camargo.

This approach focuses on integrating business acumen into arts education and providing creative workers with the tools they need to thrive economically. The inclusion of business courses in arts degree programs can prepare creative professionals for the financial realities of the sector and help them navigate the challenges of running sustainable creative businesses.

The state can amplify the importance of these skills and encourage higher education institutions to incorporate business courses directly into their arts program curricula, especially in public colleges and universities.

Additionally, the state can partner with higher education institutions and promote workforce development resources, such as the Commonwealth Corporation's Workforce Training Fund Program, the Express Program, MassHire, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's Registered Apprentice Program, and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Innovation Career Pathways and other state supported workforce and business development programs, which can equip workers with the skills necessary for higher-paying jobs and opportunities for economic mobility. These efforts can help Massachusetts build a strong cultural talent pipeline.

Strategic Opportunities:

- Encourage public schools and higher education institutions to adopt business courses directly into their arts degree program curricula.
- Convene leadership at state schools, private schools, alum, and professionals in the cultural sector to contribute to framework development.
- Increase targeted communication and promotion of state-funded workforce development programs to arts departments at higher education institutions.

Values:

- Increase opportunities for a living wage for cultural sector students and workers.
- Support new business growth and upward mobility.
- Empower cultural sector students with a wider skillset to increase their earning potential and their ability to contribute to the cultural economy and the state's overall economy.



Right to Left: Abilities Dance by Osa Isagede Photography, Dorchester Open Studios by Annielly Camargo, and Raw Artworks Block Party by Creative Collective.

Conclusion

The cultural sector in Massachusetts is both a cornerstone of the state's identity and a significant economic engine, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs and generating billions in annual revenue. As the Commonwealth continues to evolve, the recommendations put forth by the Cultural Policy Development Advisory Council (aka the "Cultural Economy Advisory Council") provide a forward-thinking roadmap to sustain and strengthen this vital sector. By redefining and mapping the economy, elevating arts, humanities, and culture within state government, integrating creative professionals into public service, investing in revitalization efforts, building workforce capacity, and establishing long-term funding strategies, Massachusetts can make significant strides to ensure its vibrant cultural economy remains a driver of innovation, community, and growth for generations to come.



USS Constitution Museum by Michael Blanchard.