

# The Arts and the Creative Economy: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Growth in Wisconsin

**Now, more than ever, investment in the arts, arts education and creative economy is not separate from the overall priorities of the state—it's vital to the overall health and well-being of the people of Wisconsin and all of the state's communities.**

Wisconsin is seeking ways to expand its horizons beyond the state's historic economy to target talent, increase high paying job creation and retention, and provide the public and private leadership necessary to insure the resources for a sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy. The shift from a *traditional* commodity-based, mass production economy to a knowledge-based, *creative* economy demands strategic focus on productivity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Wisconsin must intentionally strategize and invest in 21st century infrastructure that leads us forward instead of chasing an old economy, prepares our workforce for the jobs that will stay, and drives traditional sectors onto new ground. The Council on Competitiveness recognized this back in 2005: "from an economic development perspective, many communities are still pursuing the old, incentive-based strategies. These don't work in a world in which firm success depends ever more on the quality of ideas and talent, and ever less on traditional infrastructure."

The question before us is: *what kind of future is in store for Wisconsin?* It's a time for energy, action and resourcefulness. ***If there ever was a time that we needed the arts, it's now.*** There is growing understanding among political, business and civic leaders and the general public that creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship – all qualities inherent in the arts - are the qualities that will move our state and our nation out of the economic downturn and forward, to:

- revive and stimulate the economy locally and statewide
- create locally-based, sustainable jobs
- educate our children for the 21st century workforce
- enliven our communities large and small and bring diverse communities together
- enhance and strengthen Wisconsin's competitive edge and international reputation.

This 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure goes beyond traditional definitions - roads, bridges, dams and air traffic control - to include a healthy arts and culture industry which animates community development on all levels. Our creative economy assets are significant and cover the state. Creativity is not limited to one cluster, but is essential to all Wisconsin industries and clusters.

To achieve these goals, Wisconsin's decision-makers and citizens should:

- **Invest** in Wisconsin's economic development and community revitalization by using the state's diverse artistic, cultural, historical and creative resources.
- **Assist** in the creation and retention of high-paying jobs based in the creative economy.
- **Support** a consistently high-quality educational system that uses creativity in the acquisition of local and global knowledge and understanding, and prepares students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.
- **Strengthen** the artistic and cultural infrastructure statewide, for vibrant, livable communities everywhere.

**It is time to pro-actively plan to support creativity throughout Wisconsin, and use the state's abundant arts, culture, and creative assets as essential tools for local, regional and statewide economic, educational, and civic vitality.**

**To get involved, contact** Arts Wisconsin | 608 255 8316 | [info@artswisconsin.org](mailto:info@artswisconsin.org) | [www.artswisconsin.org](http://www.artswisconsin.org).