



Arts | Community | Economy

## Create Wisconsin needs your support! Help us grow the state's creative economy through our new Regional Leaders Network.

### What is **Create Wisconsin**?

Create Wisconsin is a **Regional Leaders Network** that ensures Wisconsin is a thriving state where creative industries are central to the economic revitalization, workforce development, and community life.

### What is the **Regional Leaders Network**?

The Regional Leaders Network expands and advances Wisconsin's creative capacity from the ground up by **identifying, supporting, and connecting regional leaders and program initiatives as an interconnected community of small business practice and support.**

### Who are the **Regional Leaders**?

The regional leaders themselves are representatives working in the arts, business, education, political and civic arenas who have actively engaged in creating and advocating for modern economic platforms. Regional Leaders are entrepreneurial, creative and self-reliant. They are natural connectors who can actualize their visions.



**Melinda Childs**  
ArtStart  
Rhineland, WI



**Jay Salinas**  
Wormfarm  
Institute  
Reedsburg, WI



**Sam Luna**  
The Heist  
Ripon, WI



**Dana Sonnenberg**  
CREATE  
Portage County  
Stevens Point, WI



**Carolyn Nelson-Kavajecz**  
Sterling  
Silver Studios  
Superior, WI



**Mal Montoya**  
Milwaukee Artist  
Resource Network  
Milwaukee, WI

### Why does **Wisconsin** need a **Regional Leaders Network** now?

The creative industries have long been an organic and integrated force throughout the state, most notably in our small towns and rural communities. Wisconsin must activate the economic, workforce and community development benefits of the creative economy, through targeted, strategic efforts that are authentic, small-scale, connective, and community-focused. With the current profound and historical shifts affecting every aspect of our lives, a strong creative economy and sense of place will drive and shape Wisconsin's recovery, re-emergence, and revitalization. Creativity and innovation is key to a shared agenda that shapes our future, locally and globally.

Before the effects of the coronavirus pandemic took hold throughout the state and the country, the economic contributions of the arts to all 50 states, the U.S. territories, and the nation as a whole were significant, according to the latest data issued in March 2020 by the US Department of Commerce and the National Endowment for the Arts (click here for more info). Nationally, arts and cultural economic activity accounted for 4.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), or \$876.7 billion, in 2020. Wisconsin is 50th out of 50 states (at \$.14/per capita) in per capita funding for the state arts council (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2023). The most recent numbers for Wisconsin (as of 2022) were:

**\$9.6b**

*in value-added to the Wisconsin's overall economy through the creative economy*

**83.2k**

*culture worker jobs in Wisconsin – more jobs than the state's beer, paper-making, and biotech industries*

**2.8%**

*value added by creatives as a share of Wisconsin's economy*

## Why does **Wisconsin** need a **Regional Leaders Network** now?

The impact of pandemic shutdowns and cancellations on the creative sector was immediate and has been sustained since 2020, especially in our most rural areas of the state.

As a result these creative businesses are seeking new ways to operate, expand, and survive. In addition, because creative businesses and events are intertwined with other Wisconsin industries, including tourism, entertainment, and education, the effects of the pandemic are ongoing, cascading and interconnected throughout the state. It is a critical time for creative problem solving and cross-sector collaboration.

In this time of social, political and economic upheaval, the Create Wisconsin Regional Leaders Network will provide an essential pathway to connect, support, and celebrate Wisconsin's creativity while imagining and embracing positive change toward a new future.

## How much **funding** do we need?

Create Wisconsin needs **\$150,000 of funding** support for the following in Phase One of its Intensive Regional Leaders Network Program:

Regional Leaders.....	To Create Multiple Cohorts per Year
Staff & Benefits.....	To Attract the Best Leaders
Consultants.....	To Add Capacity to Staff & Board
Programs/Events.....	To Convene the Leaders & Other Programs
Website/Marketing.....	To Amplify the Organization & the Leaders
Regional Leader Program Funds.....	To Support Regional Leader Projects

Long-term Create Wisconsin needs \$300,000 annually to support two cohorts of Regional Leaders and sustain its ongoing efforts in advocacy, convening & program development.

## How will we use the **funding**?

The Create Wisconsin Regional Leaders Network provides long-term benefits to people, organizations, businesses, and communities throughout Wisconsin by:



Building the skills capacity of the next generations of creative workers and leaders.



Providing strategic, consistent networked engagement and support.



Expanding the ranks of entrepreneurial creative workers throughout the state.



Promoting quality of place and improving quality of life for workers and their communities.

### Phase I:

#### **3-Month Intensive with 2 Parts:**

1. Combination of In-Person & Hybrid Meetups with Interactive Audit & Capacity Building per Regional Leader:

- Cross-Sector Leadership
- Media & Communication
- Labor & Management
- Fundraising & Financing
- Programs & Services
- Advocacy & Assembly

2. Regular Convening Set by the Regional Leaders Post-Exploration Intensive

#### **Resulting in:**

*New model for operating Create Wisconsin as a decentralized network of Regional Leaders, including collaborative fundraising plans & agreements between regional leaders & Create Wisconsin.*

### Phase II:

Cross-sector leadership groups across diverse geographic regions are activated to begin to transform the Wisconsin economy in new and innovative ways.

In addition to the original cohort of Regional Leaders, Create Wisconsin will run multiple new cohorts annually to continue to invest in new leadership that will:

- Strengthen localized funding for geographically specific projects and developments,
- Convene regionally and state-wide for practice-sharing and networking with expanding cross-sector participation,
- Advocate effectively to public and private funding and policy decision-makers at local, state and national levels,
- Create robust online media presence for Create Wisconsin and regional leaders to promote creative industries through engagement and tourism,
- Allow intergenerational leadership to be identified and supported per region who contribute to shared evaluation of industry growth.

**Make a Contribution Today:**  
[createwisconsin.org/support](https://createwisconsin.org/support)

Questions? Email [info@createwisconsin.org](mailto:info@createwisconsin.org).  
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