



ISSUE BRIEF

Expanding Arts Opportunities and Strengthening the Workforce

Action Needed

Increase of \$3,000,000 in South Carolina Arts Commission funding to support Operating Support Grants and Creative Workforce Programming

Highlights

- **Operating Support Grants** provide flexible support so organizations can focus on community impact.
- This program currently supports **200 organizations** through the state, with **35 potential new applicants**.
- An increase in funding will **open the program to additional organizations** and **provide further support to current grantees**, who are experiencing the effects of inflation.
- The creative economy in South Carolina supports **123,000+ jobs**, representing **5.5% of all employment**.
- An increase in funding for **Creative Careers Studio** programming will continue to **strengthen the workforce** and help **prepare the next generation of creative workers**.



We support a \$3M Increase in State Arts Funding.

The creative industry in South Carolina supports over 123,000 jobs and provides over \$14.1 billion to our state’s economy. The primary tool the state has to support this important industry are competitive grant and programs offered by the South Carolina Arts Commission (SCAC).

An **increase of \$3,000,000 in recurring funds** to the SCAC would provide stable and meaningful support for Operating Support Grants to community organizations. It would also expand access to valuable creative workforce resources for the next generation of arts workers, strengthening and sustaining a sector that represents 5.5% of total employment in South Carolina.

Request: + \$3,000,000

Funding Source: General Fund (Recurring)

Agency: South Carolina Arts Commission

Purpose: Operating Grants, Creative Workforce Programs



Talking Points

Grant-Making Impact

- Most grants require a match, **leveraging private support.**
- **Over 3.4 million arts experiences** are provided annually by recipients of state arts grants for residents and visitors.
- Grants reach **all 46 South Carolina counties.** In FY25, **673 grants** were awarded totaling **\$12.5 million.**
- Grantee organizations often play a **critical role in the economy of their community.** They create and sustain jobs, provide community space, and positively impact educational outcomes.
- By proviso at least 70% of general fund appropriations to the SC Arts Commission must go to grants. The agency well exceeds this amount each year.
- Current state funding for grant making is **\$1.47 per capita.** A comparatively small investment with huge returns.

\$2.5 Million Operating Support Grants

200 community organizations currently receive operating support from the SC Arts Commission (SCAC). These funds provide flexibility for organizations to ensure that programs which benefit the local community can be carried out professionally, all while helping the organization remain sustainable in its general operating needs. Very few private funders provide this support despite it being the most highly sought after type of grant support by organizations.

- OS Grants require matches of 1:1 up to 3:1, meaning state dollars help leverage **private and local investment.**
- These grants are of particular benefit to small or rural communities that have fewer resources to take advantage of the economic impact of the arts.

An increased costs of goods and services due to inflation means **expenses have risen faster than revenues.**

- From FY19 to FY24, the median increase in expenses across all grantees was 34%, while the median increase in revenues was only 27%.
- While organizations have done well at adapting to these changing conditions, **in FY24 median expenses slightly exceeded median revenues.**

Additionally, grant applications for General Operating Support continue to outpace available funds, leaving **at least 35 expected new applicants with no available grant funding.**

Increased Funding for FY27 Will:

- Enable the SCAC to open the program to additional organizations without having to decrease the funding of established award recipients.
- Help current grantee awards to reflect increased operating expenses due to inflation.
- Move state grant dollars closer to the national average of \$1.63 per capita.



Talking Points

Investing in Our State

In a 2023 study by the Darla Moore School of Business, the arts are shown to be major force in our state’s economy. Annually, for-profit and non-profit arts industries generate:

- \$14.1 billion Total Economic Impact in South Carolina
- 123,550 South Carolina Jobs Supported, or 5.5% of workforce.
- \$5.7 billion in wages and salaries
- \$360.2 million in State Tax Revenue

In 2022, an Americans for the Arts study of the Greater Spartanburg Area showed that **nonprofit** arts and culture organizations and their audiences generated:

- Over 1.2 million event attendees spending an average of \$35.75 per person, per event.
- Over \$77 million in total expenditures - \$33M by organizations and \$44M by their audiences.
- Over \$3.2 million in State and local tax revenue.
- Nearly \$40M in personal income paid to residents.

\$500,000

Creative Workforce Programs

Launched in FY2025, **Creative Careers Studio** is a website for high school and college students who want to explore a career in the arts. This digital resource also helps connect, parents, teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors information about arts careers.

- The arts represent a rapidly growing job market. Creative sector jobs in South Carolina grew by 19% between 2012 and 2022 and are projected to grow another 10.9% by 2032 (National Endowment for the Arts).
- In FY2026, the SC Arts Commission is expanding its workforce development programs to include college and career fairs, arts industry field trips, and an arts professionals speakers bureau for high school students.

These programs also align with goals and strategies outlined in the **Unified State Plan for Education and Workforce Development**.

- The report identifies photographers, graphic designers, and entertainers/performers as priority occupations - meaning the job market outweighs the number of available workers.
- Many 21st century arts careers are found across non-arts industries.
- In addition to traditional arts careers, these programs highlight creative professionals working in fields such as the automotive industry and product development.

Increased Funding for FY27 Will:

- Enable the SCAC to further develop and sustain its Creative Workforce programs.
- Empower stakeholders and partners in connecting students with creative careers.
- Help respond to the growing needs of the creative industry, and prepare the next generation of arts workers in South Carolina.



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Our Mission

To build a stronger South Carolina by advocating for the creative sector, empowering artistic communities, and promoting the power of the arts for all its citizens.

Our Vision

As the state's primary, nonprofit arts coalition, we envision a South Carolina where:

- Public policy and funding supports access to the arts in every community and every classroom across the state and nation.
- Our state's creative sector is supported by professional learning opportunities that empower advocates, artists, and organizations.
- Communities of all sizes embrace the arts as a tool for development, collaboration, and celebration.

More Advocacy Resources

