



CERTIFIED CREATIVE DISTRICTS PROGRAM  
COMMUNITY READINESS WORKBOOK

2021 EDITION



WASHINGTON STATE  
ARTS COMMISSION

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# INTRODUCTION

Since Richard Florida published his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* in 2003, communities around the world have spent more time focusing on their creative economy. Creative industries are major economic drivers and among the most rapidly growing sectors worldwide. According to a joint report published by CISAC and UNESCO in 2015, cultural and creative industries make up approximately 3% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>[1]</sup> They employ 29.5 million people around the world, more than the auto industry in Europe, Japan, and the US combined (29.5M vs. 25M workers).<sup>[2]</sup>

Governors across the US recognize how important the creative sector is to their state's economy. According to the National Governors Association report, *Arts and the Economy*,<sup>[3]</sup> there are a number of reasons to include art in community-based planning activities.

- creative industries are growing and play a major role in a community's ability to compete economically
- companies decide to locate in communities that have a readily available creative workforce
- arts and culture create new jobs
- arts and culture foster a quality of life that attracts talented workers

In Washington State, 303,839 people were employed in the creative industries in 2017. This is a 2% increase from 2016.<sup>[4]</sup> In fact, the number of creative jobs in Washington has increased between 2 – 4% annually since 2011, making it one of the fastest-growing sectors in the state.<sup>[5]</sup>

## ABOUT ARTSWA

The Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) was established in 1961. Its purpose is to promote, conserve and develop the state's artistic resources. The agency manages statewide activities and programs that grow and develop the arts and culture. This contributes to a high quality of life for all Washingtonians.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CREATIVE DISTRICTS PROGRAM

The state legislature passed a bill in 2017 to fund the Certified Creative Districts program. The bill was signed into law by Governor Inslee in May 2017. This bill gave ArtsWA the authority to create and manage this program. The focus of the program is two-fold:

- to help communities create long-term economic opportunities in their region, and
- to support the long-term growth of Washington's arts, culture and creative sector.

Creative Districts are geographically defined areas where a concentration of artistic, cultural, and economic activity takes place. ArtsWA provides a five-year state-certification to communities based on specific criteria. It is an endorsement of the activities that may already exist in a community. It recognizes growth potential for the future. The criteria requires that a broad coalition of stakeholders come together for this process. They work together to plan a District and create a vision for the long-term economic health of their region.

The Creative District program provides a platform for artists and creatives to help develop their local economy. It fosters innovation, entrepreneurship and community values. This combination creates a holistic, sustainable and diverse economy, so that communities and their future generations can thrive.

## HOW WE SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY'S SUCCESS

Our goal is to see arts and creative industries thrive, and be renowned throughout the state. The Creative Districts program creates a support system for communities to achieve long-term goals. We will:

- provide resources to help you plan your program
- offer guidance throughout the planning process
- administer a rigorous and fair application process

If your community becomes a Certified Creative District, ArtsWA will:

- provide ongoing support and advocacy
- offer access to training programs
- provide ongoing technical assistance
- host and encourage networking activities amongst Creative District communities
- support your community in finding grants and other funding opportunities
- promote success stories to the public, elected officials, and other stakeholders

## YOUR FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

This toolkit provides a framework to help your community organize a Creative Districts Program. The exercises in this handbook are simple to use. They were created for you to orient your thinking about how to establish a successful district. Based on economic development best practices, they're designed to help you promote dialogue in your community about its vision of the future.

## CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING YOUR DISTRICT

You should think of this toolkit as a road map for your community. Understanding your community's strengths and weaknesses will help you choose the direction and focus of your Creative District. Doing the exercises is a critical part of the certification process. This will strengthen your community's bid for Creative District designation.

We recommend you read through the entire workbook first before you start to answer the questions. This will give you a holistic idea of what your district can be at the end of the process.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please complete all sections. Try to answer as many of the questions as possible. You may not be able to answer every question in this toolkit at the beginning. Please don't let that discourage you. The purpose of this workbook is for you to think about your community's identity and how it is unique compared to other places.
2. Work on the exercises in this toolkit with other members of your community. The Toolkit con-

tains three distinct focus areas, with 13 major criteria. It is unlikely you will have all the answers by yourself. Getting input from lots of community members will be key in creating a holistic plan.

3. Work on the workbook sections in order. The sections build on one another, laying the foundation for your community to apply for and seek district certification.

If your group has questions or concerns about a particular focus area or criteria, please contact the Creative District Program Manager.

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1 CISAC and EY, Cultural Times: The first global map of cultural and creative industries ([www.worldcreative.org](http://www.worldcreative.org), December 2015).

2 CISAC, Cultural Times: The first global map of cultural and creative industries.

3 Arts and the Economy: Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate Economic Development, NGA Center for Best Practices 2009

4 WESTAF, Creative Vitality Suite ([www.cvsuite.org](http://www.cvsuite.org), November 18, 2017).

5 WESTAF, Creative Vitality Suite.



## SECTION 1: SETTING THE GROUNDWORK

In this section, you will focus on the basic characteristics of your proposed Creative District:

- What are the Creative District's mission, vision and values?
- Where will the district be located?
- What types of arts and creative industries exist in the area?
- What is the demographic makeup of your community?
- What is the community's unique identity as compared to other communities?
- Who will be part of your district planning team?
- Who are the partners involved in planning the Creative District? Are agreements in place that cover how partners will work together?
- Is there an organization or group that will be the District Administrator?

Answering these questions is the foundation of your Creative District. These elements are required in the final application for Certified Creative District designation. This section should be completed first and in its entirety before you move to the next section.

## VISION, MISSION, VALUES

WHAT IS THE VISION FOR THE CREATIVE DISTRICT? *A statement that describes your ideal future. This short statement should describe how your District will change your community.*

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WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CREATIVE DISTRICT? *A phrase that describes how you will work toward achieving your vision. In other words, it's what you'll do and how you'll do it.*

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WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY/CREATIVE DISTRICT'S VALUES? *Use short words or phrases to describe the core beliefs or guiding principles your community holds dear.*

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# ITEM 1: GEOGRAPHY AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Is the proposed Creative District a contiguous, well-defined, appropriately sized area?

Yes    No    Don't Know

If the locale is urban, is the proposed district walkable?

Yes    No    Don't Know

If the locale is rural, are there geophysical barriers that prevent district from being well-defined and functional?

Yes    No    Don't Know

Are there any barriers that prevent the movement from one place to another in the District? *(e.g., impassable river, freeway, railroad crossing, etc.)?*

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Please describe the physical boundaries of the proposed area and include a map.

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PLACE-MAKING/ARTS ANCHOR

Are there **place-making** and/or arts-related anchor attractions that exist in the community? *Examples include an entertainment complex, museum, waterfront access, etc.*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If so, please list them below:

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CREATIVE ECONOMY INDUSTRIES

What other activities take place in the proposed creative district? What other businesses and attractions exist that would appeal to residents and visitors?

*Examples include: breweries, food production, publishing, video production/broadcasting, design services, performing arts companies, photography, museums, boat building, etc.*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If YES, what are they?

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What is missing from these lists? What would you like to see come into your community?

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# ITEM 3: COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND IDENTITY

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Please describe the demographics of your community: gender, ethnicity, age, disability, etc. You can find this information from the [US Census Bureau](#) and [Washington State's Office of Financial Management](#).

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Please describe your community's cultural or historical heritage. Include information about: indigenous people, pioneers or settlers, the origins of the local economy (consider and include immigrant and migrant populations), etc.

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COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Please describe what your community's unique identity is. What sets it apart from other places? Why do you or people you know love your community?

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Please describe the district's unique arts and culture niche. What kinds of arts, heritage or cultural activities will people find in your District that they can't find anywhere else?

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COMMUNITY IDENTITY

What are some adjectives that describe the personality or vibe of your future Creative District? How do you want visitors and residents to feel when they are in your District?

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Describe how the Creative District will reflect the values of the community:

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## ITEM 4: PARTNERSHIPS

**Partnership** amongst community members and organizations is key to the district's success. A broad agreement of community leaders is a good sign that a district will be successful long-term. Partnership(s) must include local government(s) (or similar entity), and shall include arts organizations, artists and other creatives, local chamber or downtown association, economic development agencies, businesses engaged in arts activities, local tourism bureau, local colleges and/or school districts, local arts agencies, other public agencies such as local port authority or regional transit, regional planning agencies, local tribal governments or agencies, businesses engaged in complimentary industries, etc.

### WHO ARE OUR KEY PARTNERS?

Which groups, people, and organizations do we already have on board to ensure our Creative District is successful?

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Will the partners you've identified write letters of support for your district application?

Will there be a partnership agreement/**memorandum of understanding** (MOU) between the main partners to help guide activities in district?

Yes     No     Don't Know

## ITEM 5: DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Proposed Districts must designate a structured business entity to act as the **district administrator**. *Types of allowed entities include: local government (municipal or tribal), 501(c)(3) or 501 (c)(6) (such as registered neighborhood organization, downtown development authority, associate development organization).*

Is the total annual operating budget of the administrative organization at least \$20,000 (does not refer to Creative District budget)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Does the administrative entity agree to include district activities as part of the annual work plan of staff liaison, in compliance with ArtsWA requirements?

- Yes
- No

If the entity is not a local government, does it have the cooperation of the municipal entity that governs the geographical location of the proposed district?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Please identify administrative entity and its operating structure.

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Is there a designated staff position assigned to oversee district activities?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If YES, please describe staff role.

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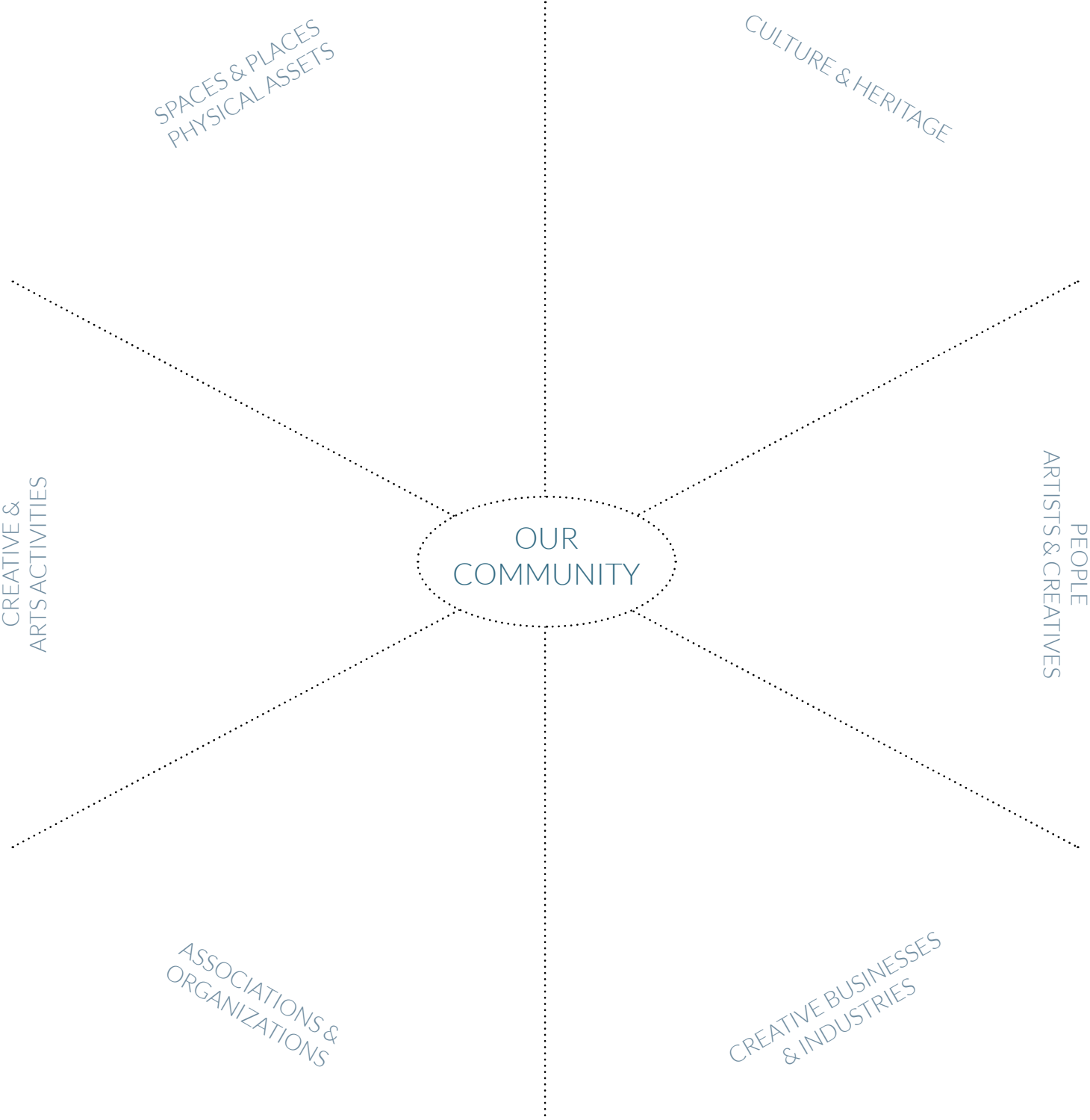
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# ASSET MAP TEMPLATE

On this page you will make a list (or '**ASSET MAP**') of all the resources in your community within the following areas. The purpose is to identify the resources in your area, and to understand how these resources are connected. This exercise can also be used in a larger community engagement meeting to get a full picture of the assets your community has.





## SECTION 2: DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

The focus of this section will be a deeper dive into the Creative District planning process. You will work on:

- understanding and developing community assets
- reaching underserved communities and incorporating them into the planning process
- knowing your community's strengths and weaknesses
- branding and promoting your Creative District, and
- preparing your community to focus on creative economy activities.

Units in this section include:

- community buy-in
- branding and promotion
- economic development
- education and workforce development, and
- development, land use, and housing.

Please note: Some of the elements in this section are not *required* for your district application, but planning for them will help your Creative District be more successful over time.



## ITEM 6: COMMUNITY BUY-IN & CONNECTION

Has this idea been presented to the elected officials in proposed district?

Yes  No  Don't Know

If so, will they officially endorse the Creative District as an approved activity?

Yes  No  Don't Know

If YES, what type of endorsement will they provide?

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Are there citizens who can act as advocates or cheerleaders on behalf of the Creative District?

Yes  No  Don't Know

If so, who are they?

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Is there broad community buy-in for the proposed Creative District?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Have you made concerted outreach efforts to artists and other creatives? Do you have artists and creatives actively working on your planning committee?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Please describe community outreach activities that your group has done:

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Has your outreach been inclusive of underrepresented groups in your community? How are their voices being added to your Creative District planning or activities?

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What challenges have you had in your outreach efforts?

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How are you ensuring your Creative District activities reflect the diversity of your community?

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## ITEM 7: BRANDING AND PROMOTION

Based on the arts and creative activities you identified in Section 1, list 3 - 4 target markets for the district. Why would they want to come to this District?

TARGET MARKET 1:

Why will they come to the District?

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TARGET MARKET 2:

Why will they come to the District?

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TARGET MARKET 3:

Why will they come to the District?

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TARGET MARKET 4:

Why will they come to the District?

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Will there be a marketing and promotional budget assigned to the promotion of the District?

- Yes     No     Don't Know

How does the District intend to promote its arts and tourist activities to these target markets? What types of marketing will you do throughout your first five years of District designation?

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What type of marketing or promotional materials or collateral do you think you will need to create in order to successfully market your District?

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## ITEM 8: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

What is the organization(s) that does economic development work on behalf of the local community?

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Is there a designated economic development plan that includes the arts as a driver of economic activity?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If yes, please describe key aspects of the plan:

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Please describe activities that community and this organization does or will do to support **creative-sector** economic development.

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## ITEM 9: EDUCATION, WORKFORCE AND JOB CREATION

### ARTS EDUCATION & TRAINING

Does the community support and foster arts educational opportunities for K-12 students?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

What are some of the organizations that do this work? What services do they provide?

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Does the local community college/ school district offer arts-based job training curriculum?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If YES, list the curricula:

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### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Does the local workforce development agency have a plan to create **workforce development** opportunities in creative economy jobs in region?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Do these plans include disadvantaged demographic groups (such as veterans, low-income, persons with disabilities, etc.)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

If YES (to either question), please describe some of the plans that assist with developing the local workforce. *Please note, answering this question may require you to forge a partnership with an organization outside the Creative District region.*

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## ITEM 10: DEVELOPMENT, LAND USE & HOUSING

### LAND USE AND ZONING

Is this area appropriately zoned for intended uses or activities?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Are there restrictions that could hinder potential development of this area (such as restricted-use zones, environmental mitigation, etc.)?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Please list the types of land use zone categories in the area:

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Are there infrastructure projects (e.g., traffic mitigation, improved lighting) that may need to take place to make the area more accessible or user-friendly?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Please list any infrastructure upgrades, etc.

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### RE/DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Are there designated assets that people would like to see redeveloped? *Examples include: historic buildings, transit centers, community plazas, etc..*

Yes  No  Don't Know

Please describe the identified assets.

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### HOUSING/ARTIST WORKSPACE

Is there a local need for affordable housing and/or workspace for artists?

Yes  No  Don't Know

Please describe the greatest need, and if the Creative District would like to pursue opportunities in this arena:

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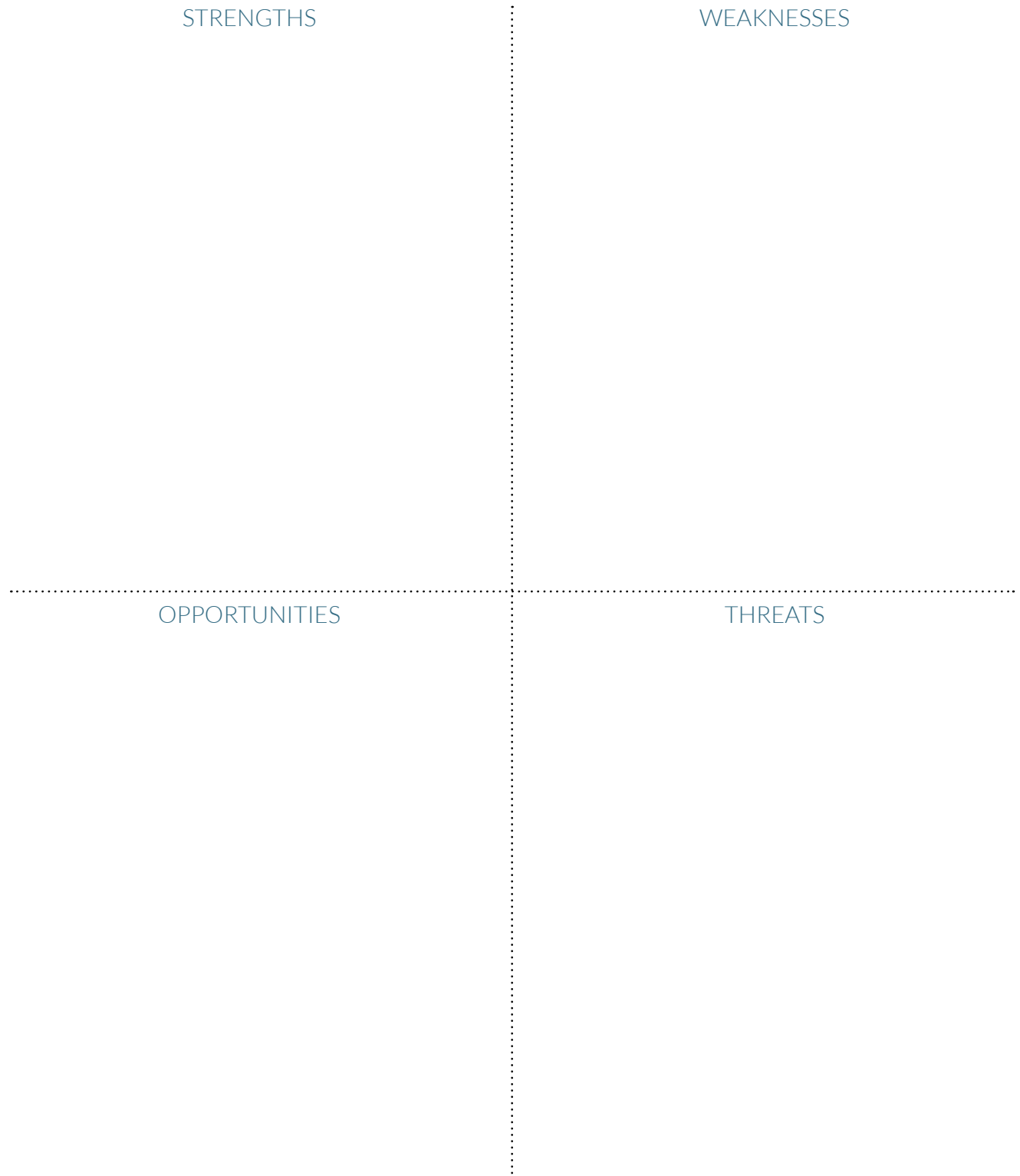
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## EVALUATING COMMUNITY ASSETS

A **SWOT analysis** is a powerful tool to help you develop your Creative District. A SWOT helps you organize your top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat into a simple organized list.





## SECTION 3: CRAFTING YOUR DISTRICT PLAN

You should have a good understanding of what makes your community unique. You should also know how your community can support a cohesive, sustainable, creative and cultural economy. Now it's time to start crafting your Creative District [program plan](#).

In your plan, you should identify goals for your District, and how you plan to achieve those goals. You should measure your creative economy progress in the form of data tracking. ArtsWA will require specific types of data to be tracked in each Creative District. However, we encourage you to think about what other types of data will help you to measure progress that reflects your community values and standards.

## ITEM 11: SETTING GOALS AND MILESTONES

### SETTING CREATIVE DISTRICT PROGRAM GOALS

Please describe 3 - 5 goals your District would like to achieve over the next 3 - 5 years:

GOAL 1:

How will this goal advance your Creative District?

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GOAL 2:

How will this goal advance your Creative District?

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GOAL 3:

How will this goal advance your Creative District?

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GOAL 4:

How will this goal advance your Creative District?

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GOAL 5:

How will this goal advance your Creative District?

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SETTING PROGRAM MILESTONES

Please describe program milestones for Program Years 1, 2, 3 and 5:

YEAR 1 MILESTONES:

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## ITEM 12: MEASURING PROGRESS

### TRACKING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DATA

Does the proposed district have economic data to demonstrate current or projected growth of sector(s) in region\*? Examples of data to track include:

Data Points	Current Data	5 Year Projection (goal)
Number of creative industry jobs within Creative District boundaries		
Number of creative businesses within Creative District boundaries		
Number of total businesses within Creative district boundaries		
Retail sales tax revenue within Creative district boundaries		
Lodging tax revenue (if applicable)		
Number of visitors/tourists to activities/venues within Creative District boundaries		
Estimated number of children/youth that directly benefit through Creative District activities (include students, participants)		
Artist live/work spaces or affordable housing units		
Number of new business starts within the District boundary annually		

*\*ArtsWA has a subscription to Creative Vitality Suite, an online tool that tracks economic data in the creative sector throughout the United States. We can help you create a benchmark for data analysis if needed.*

Are there additional categories of data, based on stated community values or standards, that the district would like to track that demonstrate creative economy vitality in the region? Examples include: property value trends, occupancy rates, crime statistics, income levels, relative percentage increase in creative businesses/activities in

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## ITEM 13: PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

The Creative District certification comes with a small one-time seed grant from ArtsWA (subject to availability). Does the proposed district administrator have the ability to provide matching operating funds to begin program?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Please describe where these match funds will come from:

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Creative District certification lasts for five (5) years. Has the administrative entity thought about how District program activities will be funded during this time?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Please describe funding mechanisms. Please provide 5-year funding projections for Creative District:

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## GLOSSARY

**Artistic or cultural activities:** arts or culture-related actions by individuals or companies that generate income or develop job or business opportunities.

**Arts and culture niche:** arts and cultural products, services or activities that appeal to a specific group of people

**Asset mapping:** a process to make an inventory or 'map' of resources, skills and talents of people and organizations to find out and connect the links between different parts of a community.

**Community assets:** a resource that can be used to improve the quality of community life. Examples include: the capacities and abilities of community members; a building or place; a business that provides jobs; or local private, public, and nonprofit institutions or organizations

**Community development strategy:** an action plan created to promote economic and social progress for a community

**Competitive advantage:** something that a company or community does better than its competitors due to its services or its brand position.

**Creative industries:** a group of businesses with highly similar, creative activities at their heart. Examples include: design, music, publishing, architecture, film and video, crafts, visual arts, fashion, TV and radio, advertising, culinary arts, and the performing arts.

**Creative sector:** a general segment within the economy that describes a general economic activity, in this case, arts, culture and creativity.

**District administrator:** an appointed staff person or organization responsible for overseeing the work plan and activities of the Creative District

**Economic development:** a sustained community effort to improve the local economy and quality of life by building capacity to adapt to economic change.

**Goals:** an observable and measurable end result to be completed within a specific time frame.

**Identity:** the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others; who or what a person or group is,

**Memorandum of understanding (MOU):** a document that describes a common agreement on an issue between two or more parties. Generally recognized as binding, even if no legal claim could be based on the rights and obligations laid down in them.

**Milestone:** a task, objective or stage into which a project is divided. Milestones serve as progress markers for monitoring and measuring achievements.

**Partnership:** a relationship in which two or more people or organizations work together to achieve a common goal.

**Program plan:** a written plan for a program that defines goals and describes a plan to reach those goals.

**Stakeholder:** a person and/or organization who has an interest in or investment in an activity, and who is impacted by, and cares about how it turns out

**SWOT Analysis:** a study taken on by an organization to identify its internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats.

**Workforce development:** an approach to economic development that works to enhance a region's economic stability by focusing on the overall employment needs of a region.

## RESOURCES

[Governing Statute SHB 1183 \(website\)](#)

[List of Approved Creative Industry Job Categories \(NAICS codes\) \(PDF document\)](#)

[List of Occupations by Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) Code \(PDF document\)](#)

[Creative Vitality Suite \(website\)](#)

[Labor Market Information - Washington State \(website\)](#)

[How to conduct a SWOT analysis](#)

### PROMOTIONAL AND PRESENTATION MATERIALS

[Creative Districts Program Handout \(PDF document\)](#)

[Creative Districts Overview Presentation \(PDF document\)](#)

[Sample Declaration For A City Council or Municipal Government \(PDF document\)](#)

[Sample Press Release for Creative Districts Community Meeting \(PDF document\)](#)

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES

[Strengthening Rural Economies Through the Arts: NGA Best Practices August 31, 2005 \(online article\)](#)

[Arts and the Economy: Using Arts and Culture to Stimulate Economic Development \(online article\)](#)

[New Engines of Growth: Five Roles for Arts, Culture and Design \(online article\)](#)

[Promoting Film and Media to Enhance State Economic Development \(online article\)](#)

[Community as Canvas: The Power of Culture in the Emergence of Intelligent Communities \(PDF document\)](#)

[How to Do Creative Placemaking. National Endowment of the Arts \(PDF document\)](#)

[Rural Prosperity through the Arts & Creative Sector. National Governors Association \(PDF document\)](#)



# CREATIVE DISTRICT PRE-APPLICATION CHECKLIST

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY

- Designated, contiguous geographic area recognized by local municipal entity
- Area is walkable and/or easily navigable
- Concentration of artistic or cultural activities and/or minimum of 1 - 2 primary arts-related industries occurring in region
- Clearly defined arts and culture identity, and brand
- Structured entity formally recognized by local government designated as district administrator, with assigned staff role to carry out Creative District activities
- Administrative entity has a minimum \$20,000 total annual operating budget (includes entire budget, not just Creative District funds)
- Broad community buy-in for community designation as Creative District
- Partnership agreement amongst entities, to help guide activities in district
- Program strategic plan (covering 3 - 5 years of activity)
- Site visit to proposed district by Creative District program staff has been scheduled or completed

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DISTRICT

- Actively promoting local arts, culture and tourist activities
- Appropriately zoned for activities/intended uses
- Engaged in preservation or promotion of cultural or historical heritage
- Exploring opportunities around maker space and/or affordable housing for artists and creatives
- Active engagement and participation in District by artist and creatives
- Active engagement and participation in District by a diverse coalition of community members, including underrepresented groups
- Economic and workforce development plans to bolster creative economy for region
- Economic development data to demonstrate current or projected growth of sector(s) in region
- Engaged in attracting creative entrepreneurs, investment and/or other related economic development activities to community



WASHINGTON CERTIFIED  
CREATIVE DISTRICTS PROGRAM



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