



ARTS COUNCIL for Monterey County

COUNTY OF MONTEREY DSA WORK PLAN 2025-26 \$603,164

The mission of the Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC) is to improve the quality of life for everyone in our region through the arts.

Arts4MC's overarching strategy is to advance social equity through the arts by supporting artists, programs, and organizations that are emerging, under-resourced, or underrepresented.

In 1985, the Board of Supervisors selected the Council as a member agency of the new Development Set-Aside Fund - formally recognizing the critical role of the arts sector in “strengthening and broadening the County’s economic base.”

In July 2021, the Board of Supervisors recognized the Arts Council for Monterey County as the “County’s official arts organization” supporting our efforts to match the County’s investment with additional funding to the arts in our community.

And on average, **every \$1 invested in the arts generates \$5 to \$7 in economic activity** through local spending, job creation, and tourism, which amounts to over **\$4 million each year.**

Sustaining and enhancing local support for arts and culture is a strategic imperative for Monterey County. Such investment enriches the community's economic vitality, social fabric, and cultural heritage.

Why the Arts Matter in Monterey County

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, the arts and cultural industries hit an all-time high in 2022, contributing 4.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), or **\$1.1 trillion**, to the U.S. economy. And in California, the creative economy was responsible for a total GRP of \$507.4 billion, roughly 14.9% of the state’s total (Otis Report 2023) and supported 7.6% of California’s jobs. **In Monterey County, the creative economy is approximately \$1.5 billion, supporting 14,278 jobs**, with just the performing arts sector contributing \$320 million to the economy, including \$43 million to state and local tax revenue and supporting 4,273 jobs.

Again, we are experiencing a stressful time in our nation. Communities need art during these times because it serves as a powerful tool for healing, resilience, and connection. Art allows individuals to express emotions that are difficult to verbalize, offering a therapeutic release that can reduce anxiety and promote mental well-being. Additionally, community art projects foster a sense of unity and belonging, helping people come together to overcome shared challenges and build a stronger social fabric. This collective creative experience can uplift spirits, spark hope, and provide a sense of normalcy during uncertain times, ultimately contributing to the emotional and cultural resilience of the community.

We propose the following activities for 2025-2026 based on the same budget amount as this current fiscal year:

Goal 1: Economic Development \$356,000

The arts contribute significantly to the local economy of Monterey County. Arts organizations, galleries, theaters, and creative industries generate revenue, create jobs, attract tourists, and stimulate business activity. Additionally, **cultural tourism**, driven by attractions such as the Monterey Museum of Art and the annual Monterey Jazz Festival, brings in visitors who support local businesses and contribute to the overall economic vitality of the region.

Economic development consists of targeted activities and programs that work to improve the economic wellbeing and quality of life of a community. Desired outcomes can include building local wealth, diversifying the economy, creating and retaining jobs, attracting businesses and talent, and building the local tax base.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Partnering with the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, we will increase capacity for approximately thirty (35) local nonprofits to expand art programs and events to grow their business, through funding, technical assistance and consulting. Coordinate two (2) County Grant Awardee Receptions;
2. Support at least ten (10) festivals, concerts, or performances with funding and promotion that are economic drivers in the county. Internationally recognized presenting groups like the Monterey Jazz Festival, Monterey Symphony and the Carmel Bach Festival have a long tradition of multi-day events, are finding new audiences from every corner of the globe, which increases our transient occupancy tax (TOT);
3. Facilitate access to entry for under-resourced, emerging, or typically underrepresented artists and groups by providing affordable artists' studios and gallery space to assist in launching or expanding their art business, while increasing sales. Sales increased by over 200% from December 2023-December 2024 at the ArtWorks @Salinas;
4. Curate annual art installation at County Government Center, including CAO's conference room, showcasing 30-40 local artists and organizing and promoting the annual Awards Reception.

Goal 2: Workforce Development \$142,164

"Artwork is real work" because it requires creativity, skill, time, and emotional investment. Artists are professionals who contribute to society through their creative endeavors, enriching our lives and culture in meaningful ways.

By intertwining artistic endeavors with workforce strategies, the arts and culture sector not only enriches societal well-being but also plays a pivotal role in developing a dynamic and resilient workforce. Labor studies show that the value added by arts and culture to the U.S. economy is **five times greater** than the value from the agricultural sector.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Support at least fifteen (15) emerging and established artists to launch or expand their businesses through grant support and mentorship (examples: travel support to a national competition, material support for a first solo exhibition, etc.);

2. Partner with Monterey County Business Council, incubators, and educational institutions to support arts-based entrepreneurship and creative industries that can spur economic growth and job creation;
3. Provide resources, training, and networking opportunities for artists, designers, and creative entrepreneurs can foster innovation, talent retention, and economic diversification. Provide at least four (4) free professional development programs, specifically directed to underserved artists and arts organizations, on starting and building arts businesses, marketing and promotion, etc, including strategies that transform part-time positions into living-wage jobs with benefits;
4. Prop 28, which passed in November 2022 provides \$1 billion annually to fund more than 5,500 credentialed arts and music teachers to fulfill the mandated visual and performing arts programs throughout California schools. Our local region is short by almost 300 credentialed teachers and the school districts need to obtain state waivers to contract with arts organizations such as the Arts Council. We will continue to collaborate with regional partners, community colleges, universities and workforce development agencies to help build this pipeline for artists and teachers to obtain the required training.

Goal 3: Marketing \$45,000

Effective marketing highlights a county's cultural assets, attracting tourists and their spending. It is a catalyst for economic growth, tourism, community development, and increased tax revenues, making it a vital component of the county's economic strategy.

The arts make communities vibrant, welcoming, and desirable to visitors from all over the world. Cultural places and events are magnetic, attracting not only artists but families, travelers and businesses. Creative placemaking—the gravitational effect of culture on neighborhoods—positively impacts local economies and quality of life. It creates jobs and stimulates commercial traffic, all of which leverage neighborhood revitalization, attract diverse populations and strengthen communities.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Produce and promote the annual Open Studios Art Tour in October 2025. In our first year in 2024, we increased participation by 87%, with 42% as first-time participants and 87% stating they will participate in 2025. The MC Weekly will once again design, print and distribute 24,000 guides; and our FREE mobile app will also include a mural tour throughout the county;
2. Promote and participate in at least five (5) community events, festivals, and outreach programs to connect with local residents to build relationships and draw visitors to the county to increase local revenue;
3. The arts attract cultural tourists who stay longer and spend more money compared to other types of visitors. Cultural tourists spend an **average of \$31.47 more per person per event** than local residents. As eighty percent of participants at large festivals (Cali Roots, Monterey Jazz Festival) are from outside the county, we will leverage digital marketing channels such as social media, email marketing, website, and online advertising to reach a broader audience; and continuously update specialized apps such as self-guided tours (Cultural Road Trips) in collaboration with See Monterey and our Mural Tour on the Open Studios Art Tour app.

Goal 4: Collaborations and Partnerships \$60,000

By fostering collaboration and partnership across sectors, the arts can serve as a powerful catalyst for economic development, driving innovation, creativity, and prosperity in communities. By leveraging the unique strengths and assets of each partner, communities can harness the transformative power of the arts to create vibrant, inclusive, and resilient economies for all.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Partner with the County, See Monterey, Monterey County Film Commission, Monterey County Business Council and local chambers of commerce to promote arts and cultural programs/events to attract visitors to the area, which stimulates spending on lodging, dining, shopping, and entertainment. Collaborative marketing campaigns, cultural events, and arts festivals can showcase the community's unique cultural assets and attract tourists;
2. Collaborate with developers, and civic and community stakeholders to integrate arts and cultural amenities into revitalization projects to enhance property values, attract investment, and catalyze economic growth. Mixed-use developments such as East Garrison Artists Live/Work project, City of Marina Arts Village, and arts hubs can create synergies between arts, commerce, and community development, fostering a vibrant and sustainable local economy;
3. Public art installations, murals, and cultural districts can transform underutilized spaces into vibrant destinations, attracting residents, businesses, and investment. We are currently working with the City of Soledad and Chualar to provide bold and beautiful murals in their communities.