

# ARTS *Across* Ontario



Prepared by:



Prepared for:



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

**IMPACT REPORT 2025**

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>07</b>
1.1. Background	08
<b>2. Ontario's arts and culture impact</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Provincial economic impact	12
2.2. Economic contribution of OAC grant recipients	14
2.3. Tourism impact	16
2.4. Social impact	17
<b>3. Ontario's culture sector impact by region</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1. South Central	23
3.2. Southwest	31
3.3. Toronto	41
3.4. Eastern	55
3.5. Central	63
3.6. Northeast	71
3.7. Northwest	81
3.8. Far North	89
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>5. Appendix</b>	<b>97</b>
Overview	97
Ontario Culture Sector Regional Economic Analysis	98
Ontario Tourism Impact and Regional Analysis	99

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ontario's culture sector is not just an economic engine – it's the heartbeat of our communities, the catalyst for innovation, and the bridge that connects diverse voices across the province. From vibrant urban arts hubs to grassroots cultural initiatives in rural and remote communities, the value of arts and culture are integral to Ontario's identity, economy and social fabric. Arts, culture and creative industry activities fuel economic growth, attract high-spending tourism, and improve community well-being. **This report — prepared by Nordicity, with support from the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) — provides evidence of the sector's impact at various geographies and the role of public investment in sustaining and growing Ontario's culture sector, in every Ontario community.**

OAC plays a significant role in building a strong province and harnessing arts and culture as key drivers of tourism. **In 2022, OAC-funded operating organizations generated approximately \$1.1 billion in GDP and created 16,164 jobs. Additionally, because of tourism spending on arts and culture activities, Nordicity estimates that OAC-funded operating organizations impact extended further into the economy and contributed a total \$2.7 billion to GDP and supported 28,600 jobs in 2022.** Visitors are often drawn to destinations that offer cultural experiences, such as museums, theaters, festivals, and galleries. These attractions not only enhance the visitor experience but also stimulate local economies by increasing spending on accommodation, dining, and other services. The economic ripple effect of arts and culture tourism extends beyond direct spending, fostering job creation and contributing to the overall economic health of the region.

**Ontario plays a pivotal role in driving the national culture sector forward.** Each year, Ontario generates almost half of Canada's national culture sector GDP and employment. **However, there has never been a method to illustrate**



Tanya Tagaq performs with the Royal Conservatory Orchestra in Koerner Hall in Toronto. (Photo: Lisa Sakulensky)

**the contributions of individual communities or regions within Ontario to this provincial impact.**

At the request of OAC, Nordicity has developed a Regional Economic Model to enhance the measurement of the economic output of the culture sector across the province by region, based on data from Statistics Canada's Cultural Satellite Account (CSA). Nordicity's Regional Economic Model offers a new standard for examining the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and jobs in Ontario's culture sector by region, establishing a robust foundation for the OAC to continuously measure and track the performance of the culture sector locally, with a consistent approach across regions, and can be updated and shared annually. **With Nordicity's Regional Economic Model, OAC can now illustrate that the economic output of Ontario's culture sector by region that occurs across the entire province. Further analysis of OAC funding by region in this study reveals how each region utilizes its distinct local strengths that collectively contribute to Ontario's growing and shared prosperity** through economic impact, tourism, building strong communities, and developing new future-focused products and experiences.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Arts Drive Impact in Communities Across Ontario

Ontario is a province characterized by its diverse landscapes, lively communities, and a vibrant array of cultural activities. From the urban centers of Toronto, which host internationally renowned festivals, to the small towns and rural areas that celebrate local heritage through community arts programs, Ontario's regions each make unique contributions to the province's cultural landscape. Clusters of cultural activity have emerged in various regions, including film and TV production hubs in and around Toronto and Sudbury, and the Niagara region's varied arts and culture offerings that engage tourists and local residents alike.

#### ONTARIO

**Ontario** stands as Canada's cultural powerhouse, with a vibrant mix of arts, culture and creative industries including film, music, galleries, and interactive digital media. Its rich diversity fuels innovation, inclusion, and global competitiveness, giving it a distinct edge that attract tourists to the province and promotes made-in-Ontario cultural experiences and products around the world.

- Culture Jobs: **270,000**
- Culture GDP: **\$26 billion**

#### ONTARIO REGIONS

**South Central Ontario** is a key economic engine for the province, focused on technology and manufacturing. It is second only to Toronto in culture sector jobs and GDP in Ontario, and its diverse population brings valued multicultural influences to the culture sector.

Culture Jobs:  
**69,590**

Culture GDP:  
**\$6.7 billion**

**Southwest Ontario** is shaped by a combination of industrial strength, technology, natural landscape, and cultural richness. The Niagara region is recognized as a culinary, arts and culture tourism hotspot.

Culture Jobs:  
**50,104**

Culture GDP:  
**\$3.9 billion**

**Toronto** is the largest city in Ontario and the provincial, financial, and cultural hub, with residents from around the world. The thriving arts scene is supported by major organizations such as the Toronto International Film Festival and the Aga Khan Museum.

Culture Jobs:  
**100,217**

Culture GDP:  
**\$11.4 billion**

**Eastern Ontario** is a region of cultural, linguistic, and historical significance at the crossroads of Canadian identity. Arts organizations in this region celebrate and reflect Indigenous and Franco-Ontarian culture.

Culture Jobs:  
**26,826**

Culture GDP:  
**\$2.7 billion**

The culture sector provides a high volume of employment with the visual and applied arts making up the largest share (30%) of **Central Ontario's** cultural economy in terms of GDP and jobs.

Culture Jobs:  
**15,901**

Culture GDP:  
**\$1.1 billion**

In **Northeast Ontario**, Indigenous-led initiatives and community-driven programs create safe spaces for intergenerational learning. The region also has a notable Franco-Ontarian presence, where French language and culture also contribute to the culture economy.

Culture Jobs:  
**5,748**

Culture GDP:  
**\$481.2 million**

**Northwest Ontario** is a region shaped by its Indigenous heritage and reflected in storytelling and visual arts. The region's strength in visual arts highlights its role in artistic innovation.

Culture Jobs:  
**1,896**

Culture GDP:  
**\$143.3 million**

With nearly half of Ontario's landmass and a small fraction of its population, the **Far North** grassroots art organizations amplify social impact through volunteering and community connection.

Culture Jobs:  
**247**

Culture GDP:  
**\$15.6 million**



## Arts Power Economic Growth

Ontario's cultural economy is the largest in the country. According to Statistics Canada, **Ontario's culture sector contributed \$26.4 billion to provincial GDP and supported over 270,000 jobs in 2022** (the most recent year of published data at the time of writing). The industry employs a wide range of professionals, from artists to administrators, high-skill technicians, artisans, fundraisers, accountants, and marketing specialists. As the twelfth largest employment sector, the culture industry is a major economic driver, outperforming traditional industries such as real estate, auto manufacturing, and forestry in terms of total employment.

Public investment has played a key role in delivering high economic returns in the culture sector. OAC investments are crucial to sustaining and growing

Ontario's creative workforce. In 2022, OAC invested in over 500 arts organizations across the province through operating grants. **These grant recipients generated \$1.1 billion in GDP during the 2022-23 fiscal year (April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023).** A portion of the operating grants was spent directly on wages and salaries, supporting employment in Ontario's culture sector. In total, OAC-funded organizations generated 16,164 jobs in 2022-23.

Beyond its economic contribution, OAC grants help arts organizations leverage additional resources from other public funders, philanthropy, corporate donations, foundations, and sponsorships. **For every dollar the OAC invests, \$25 in total revenues are generated by funded arts organizations.**

## Arts Fuel Ontario's Tourism

Ontario's culture sector is a magnet for domestic and international tourists, who spend more and stay longer than non-arts visitors. **In 2019, arts and culture tourism generated \$11.4 billion in visitor spending. The combined direct, indirect, and induced impacts totaled over \$10 billion in provincial GDP.** Furthermore, these activities generated more than \$5.7 billion in labour income, creating more than 100,000 jobs.

OAC operating grant recipients played a significant role in this impact. Nordicity estimates that 27% of the total \$11.4 billion arts and culture visitor spending can be attributed to OAC grant recipients. As a result of tourism visitor spending on arts and cultural activities, OAC-funded organizations generated approximately \$2.7 billion in GDP and supported 28,600 jobs.

## Arts Build Resilient Communities

Beyond economics, participation in arts and culture activities enhances quality of life, fosters inclusion, and strengthens communities. Many regions in Ontario are home to Indigenous and French-speaking people, who contribute rich traditions in storytelling, music, and visual arts to the cultural sector. **OAC investments in Indigenous and Francophone arts organizations and projects have led to significant economic and cultural impacts across Ontario.** These financial commitments not only strengthen communities but also catalyze economic returns, as evidenced by Nordicity's analysis.

The arts build community through volunteer opportunities. Volunteering enhances job skills, communication skills, and knowledge, while also

reducing social isolation. Local arts participation creates spaces for connection, combats loneliness and fosters a sense of belonging. Grassroots arts organizations amplify community-driven impact through volunteer engagement, while larger arts organizations also count on volunteers to support virtually all aspects of operations and to stay grounded in community. Across urban and rural regions, OAC-funded arts organizations bring communities together, **supporting nearly 50,000 volunteers who contributed more than 1 million hours of work.**

## Arts Future-Proof Ontario's Economy

**The arts are not just a cultural asset – they are a key component of Ontario's present and future economy.** The sector drives economic growth, tourism and social well-being. For instance, the audiovisual and interactive media domain leads in GDP contribution among all cultural domains, while the visual and applied arts domain is the largest employer. Ontario's culture sector prepares the province for the future economy by employing a skilled, innovative workforce and fostering creative businesses.

OAC-funded organizations are innovative and future-focused providing people of all ages and backgrounds with access and opportunity to develop a wide range of skills. Many organizations engage with children and youth as well as emerging professionals. The Nia Centre for the Arts is one such organization that

provides opportunities for young Black artists to incubate new creative businesses. Ontario is home to many thriving audiovisual hubs, and organizations such as the Near North Mobile Media Lab, equipping the next generation of media professionals with emerging technology and training.

OAC's investments across Ontario support a dynamic arts and culture sector. **OAC funded organizations leverage those OAC investments to secure additional revenue and to produce arts programs, festivals, performances, and exhibitions – activities that leaders and patrons recognize as key contributors to community building and personal development – cornerstones for entrepreneurship and economic sustainability.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Ontario's culture sector is an economic and social asset. The public funding from OAC sustains and secures a prosperous future for communities across the province. To further strengthen the culture sector's contribution to Ontario's economy and society, this report recommends:

### Expand Data Collection

Create an ongoing provincial cultural impact index to measure economic and social outcomes over time, providing municipalities with actionable data.

### Leverage Arts as a Tourism Driver

Implement targeted strategies to integrate arts and culture into Ontario's broader tourism marketing efforts, maximizing visitor engagement and spending, and continue to track the economic impact of visitor spending.

### Enhance Social and Community Impact Measurement

Develop new measurement tools to quantify the role of the arts in mental health, inclusion, and community resilience, enhancing understanding of their social and economic impact.

### Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration

Encourage partnerships between arts organizations, private enterprises, and government bodies to enhance sector measurement tracking that unlock new funding sources to drive economic innovation and local cultural impact.

# Introduction

Ontario's arts and culture sector is at the heart of our province's identity and economic resilience. The arts enrich daily life, create meaningful jobs, attract visitors, and build stronger, more inclusive communities. Yet, to fully realize the sector's potential, strategic public investment is needed to ensure accessibility, sustainability, and growth across all regions of Ontario.

OAC has long been a champion of artistic innovation, funding artists and organizations that drive economic activity and foster social cohesion. This report underscores the sector's critical role in Ontario's future and outlines actionable recommendations for policymakers to strengthen public investment in the arts.

By leveraging data-driven insights, we illustrate the arts' substantial impact on job creation, GDP growth, tourism, and community well-being. The evidence is clear: a thriving arts sector is not just beneficial—it is essential to Ontario's long-term prosperity.

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

*This report serves as a key tool for policymakers to demonstrate the essential role of arts and culture in Ontario's economy and society.*

The key objectives are to:

### Report on the Economic Contribution of Ontario's Culture Sector by Region

Provide clear evidence of the culture sector's contributions to Ontario's GDP, job creation, and tax revenues by region.

### Measure the Economic Impact of OAC Funded Activities and related Tourism Spending

Show how OAC grants help sustain arts organizations, leverage additional funding, and drive economic growth and visitor spending.

### Profile OAC Funded Ontario Arts and Culture Activity by Region

Highlight how public investment supports arts initiatives in communities of all sizes, from major urban centers to rural and remote regions.

### Recognize the Social and Community Impact the Arts

Explore how the arts contribute to social inclusion, well-being, and cultural identity across Ontario.

Nordicity worked with OAC to collate statistics on the economic impact of arts and culture within the Ontario economy and on a regional basis. This report highlights the findings of the study and analyzes the economic impact of Ontario's culture sector and OAC's contribution to these outcomes.

Where statistics did not already exist, Nordicity developed models to estimate employment and GDP. Models were developed to estimate the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of arts and culture on a region-by-region

basis as well as the impact of OAC itself through the arts organizations and projects it funds.

Arts organizations provide opportunities for people to work in meaningful high-skill jobs and volunteer roles – whether working on a film set, volunteering to coordinate the logistics for a community fair, or honing creative skills for a performance.

**Participation in the arts is about the collective experience, creative problem-solving, and innovation. The arts bring people together to work, to share, to collaborate and strengthen our province.**

The many Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) who first lived in this province are at the heart of our collective heritage. The Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabeg, Mohawk, Huron-Wendat, Oneida, Mississaugas, Ojibway/Chippewas, Attawandaron, Cree, Moose Cree, Algonquin, Oji-Cree, Mushkegowuk (Cree), Métis and Inuit generously share their long-standing arts and cultural practices formally and informally with Ontario residents. Indigenous people participate in making, leading, managing, promoting, supporting and participating in the cultural sector through all disciplines and art forms.

**The Woodland Cultural Centre (WCC)** is an Indigenous education and cultural centre established in 1972, under the direction of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians upon the closure of the Mohawk Institute Residential School. The WCC serves to preserve, promote and strengthen Indigenous language, culture, art and history; bringing the story of the Hodinohsho:ni people of the Eastern Woodlands to life through innovative exhibitions and programs. With over 50,000 artifacts in its museum collection, the Centre is one of the largest facilities in Canada managed and administered by First Nations.

Ontario has a vibrant Francophone community that contributes to the whole of the provincial culture sector while providing important opportunities for French language and cultural expression. Ontario's Francophone community today mirrors Ontario's diverse population bringing together a wide array of cultural traditions and creative expression.

Places with dynamic arts, heritage, and creative industries are magnets for business activity: (i) because businesses, workers, and prospective residents seek centres where their leisure time can be enriched through cultural offerings; and (ii) because arts, heritage, and the creative industries generate business activity – through purchases of supplies or professional services; or spending in the food, beverage and accommodations industries. Indeed, Ontario's arts and culture tourism

has triple the economic impact of other tourism sectors according to the 2023 *Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile* prepared by Forum Research. The report found that roughly \$11.4 billion was spent on arts and culture tourism in Ontario in 2019, resulting in \$5.7 billion in direct labour income for the province.

The culture sector, while a key employer of artists and artisans, also employs Ontarians across many different types of jobs and skill sets. The cultural sector hires digital technicians, software developers, managers, archeologists, accountants, historians, analysts, administrators, managers, marketing specialists, lawyers, and high-level strategic thinkers and leaders.



### ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISTS SPEND MORE

While **13% of unique tourist trips** included arts and culture activities, those trips accounted for **30% of tourist spending** in the province.



### ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISTS STAY LONGER

**40% of Canadian arts and culture visitors** made trips of three days or more, while only **13% of non-arts and culture visitors** did the same.



### ARTS AND CULTURE TOURISTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE FROM OVERSEAS

Nearly **1 in 3 international visitors** to Ontario participated in arts and culture tourism.



### ARTS AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES FEATURED IN ONE EIGHTH OF ALL TOURIST TRIPS TO OR WITHIN ONTARIO

Over **18.4 million unique tourist trips** to Ontario included arts and culture activities.





# Ontario's *arts and culture* IMPACT

*Arts and culture in Ontario are critical to a strong and diversified economy.*

The culture sector offers a wide range of benefits including direct economic contributions to society via GDP growth and employment, as well as tourism and social impacts. The arts and culture sector in Ontario is a critical component of a diversified economy. **By investing in arts and cultural experiences, the sector directly contributes to job creation, regional GDP growth, and tax revenues.** Indeed, communities that invest in the arts reap additional benefits, including job creation, economic growth, and an enhanced quality of life.

As cities around the world compete to attract new businesses and talent, those offering abundant arts and culture opportunities stand out.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the culture sector significantly boosts tourism spending. OAC's research shows that tourists

attracted by arts and culture activities spend three times more than other tourists, thereby contributing further to job creation, economic growth, and investment in local communities.<sup>2</sup>

**Central to these achievements is OAC, whose funding and support play a pivotal role in fostering arts activity and leveraging other public, private investment in OAC funded organizations.** This section presents the culture sector's contributions through an economic as well as social lens beginning with an analysis of the culture sector's contributions to GDP and employment. The analysis then extends to tourism impact and social impact, highlighting how cultural activities strengthen the economy and foster vibrant inclusive communities.

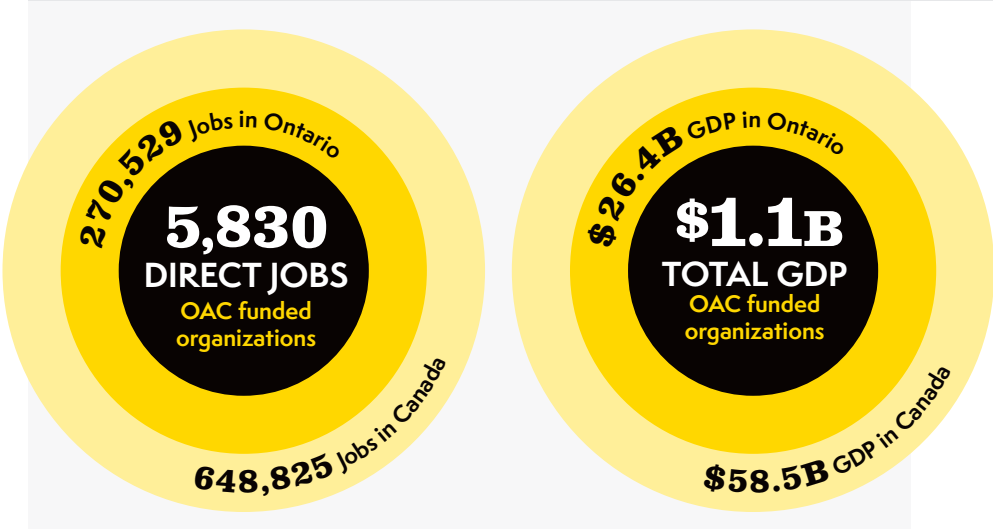
## 2.1. PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

*Arts and culture are key components of Ontario's economy, driving growth, fostering innovation, and delivering return on investment.*

### Total Economic Impact of Ontario's culture sector

Statistics Canada reports that Ontario's culture sector contributed \$26.4 billion to provincial GDP in 2022, representing 3% of the province's total GDP. The sector also supported over 270,000 jobs across the province, which refers to the total number of positions within a given domain or sub-domain of the Cultural Satellite Account. OAC funded organizations employed 5,830 workers, measured in full-time equivalents (FTEs).

**Figure 1:** Direct economic impact of arts and culture in Ontario, 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account, Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

### Economic impact of Ontario's culture sector

Ontario's culture sector supported 270,529 jobs in 2022, according to Statistics Canada's Culture Satellite Account. On a GDP basis, Ontario's culture sector was worth \$26.4 billion. The **visual and applied arts** domain was the largest source of employment in the culture sector in Ontario, with 77,000 jobs. In terms of GDP,

the **audiovisual and interactive media** domain was the largest in the province, generating \$7.7 billion in GDP in 2022. The higher value of economic activity in the audiovisual and interactive media domain means that its share of Ontario culture sector GDP (29%) outpaced its share of total Ontario culture sector jobs (21%).

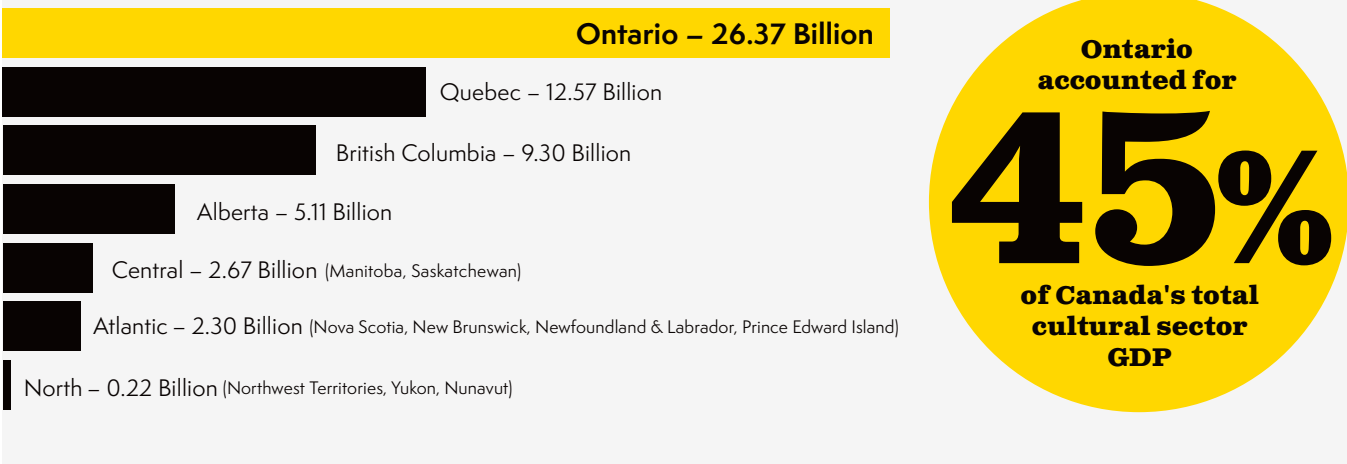
**Table 1:** Ontario Culture Sector by Domain, Jobs and GDP, 2022

	Jobs	GDP (\$000s)
Visual and applied arts	76,840	6,940,821
Audio-visual and interactive media	55,753	7,709,408
Written and published works	40,010	3,415,269
Governance, funding and professional support (culture)	32,581	4,106,503
Live performance	29,015	1,130,202
Education and training (culture)	23,357	1,868,916
Multi Domain	5,504	706,299
Heritage and libraries	5,335	234,480
Sound recording	2,134	253,602
<b>Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>	<b>26,365,500</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

# Economic impact of culture sector by province and territories

**Figure 2:** Provincial and territorial comparison of culture sector GDP (2022, \$)



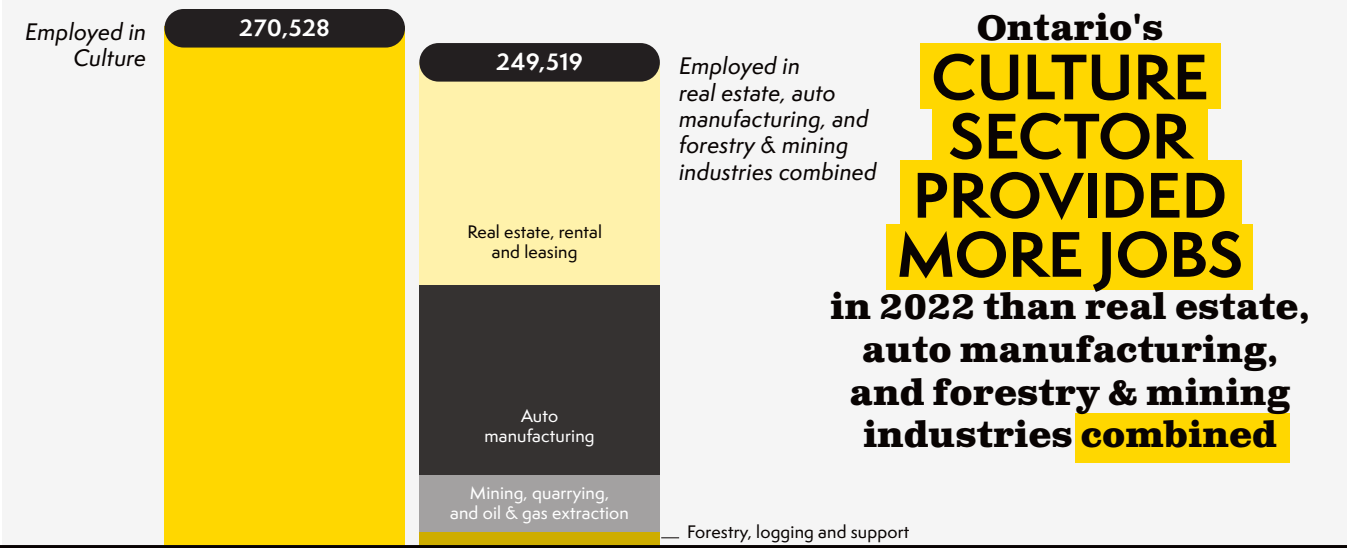
Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

The arts and culture sector supports a strong Ontario economy. When examining the provincial and territorial comparison of culture GDP (Figure 2), Ontario’s cultural economy stands as the largest in the country, contributing \$26 billion in 2022—more than double the GDP of the next largest province. **In the same year, Ontario accounted for nearly half (45%) of Canada’s total cultural sector GDP.**

## Ontario’s culture sector compared to other industries

In terms of the employment comparison by industry, **the culture sector in Ontario provided more jobs in 2022 than the real estate, auto manufacturing, and forestry and mining industries combined.** Compared to other industries, the culture sector was the 12th largest employer in the province in 2022.

**Figure 3:** Employment comparison by industry, Ontario (2022, Jobs)



Source: Statistics Canada Culture Satellite Account and Survey of Payroll, Employment and Hours. Note, employment within the culture sector—as defined by the Statistics Canada, Culture Satellite Account—falls under specific North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industries. These include ‘Arts, Entertainment and Recreation’ and ‘Information and Cultural Industries’.

## 2.2.

### ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF OAC GRANT RECIPIENTS

*OAC investments play a crucial role in sustaining and growing Ontario's creative workforce and jobs.*

As an independent agency of the Government of Ontario, reporting to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, OAC provides support to professional artists and arts organizations across Ontario in the form of grants, awards, and prizes. OAC invests in over 500 arts organizations across the province through operating grants. These organizations are primarily small businesses that range in size from micro businesses (56%) with 1 to 4 employees and small businesses (36%) with 5 to 19 employees to medium businesses (8%) with 20 to 99 employees.<sup>3</sup>

**OAC's 563 operating grant recipients generated over \$1.1 billion in GDP in 2022-23.** A portion of the operating grants is spent directly on salaries, supporting employment in Ontario's culture sector. In total, OAC funded organizations generated 16,164 jobs.<sup>4</sup> Beyond wages, OAC funding bolsters local economies by supporting payment of materials, services, and venue-related expenses. These activities stimulate business for suppliers, infrastructure, and the broader economy.

**Table 2:** OAC operating grants recipients' economic contribution, 2022

	Direct impact	Indirect + Induced impacts	Total impact
GDP (\$M)	538.5	593.5	1131.9
Employment (FTEs)	11,035	5,127	16,164

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Table 3:** OAC operating grants recipients' fiscal impact, 2022 (\$M)

	Taxes
Federal	158.7
Provincial	112.9
Municipal	61.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>332.6</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**563**  
operating  
grant  
recipients

**\$1.1**  
billion  
in GDP

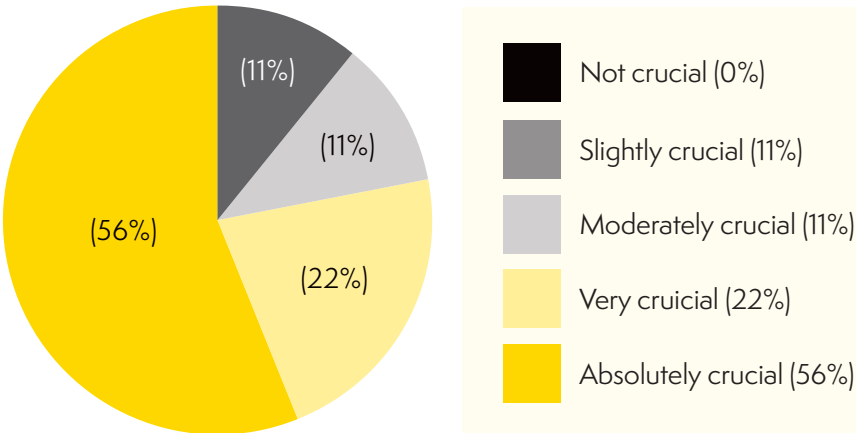
**16,164**  
FTE's

**\$332.6**  
million  
in fiscal impact



To further assess the impact of OAC funding on recipients, a survey was conducted among funding recipients. While individual responses varied, the survey received a total response of 284 covering both operating grant and project grant recipients. 56% of the respondents mentioned that OAC funding was absolutely crucial to their operations. 78% of the respondents indicated it would have had a devastating effect/significant effect on their organization, if OAC funding was absent in 2022-23.

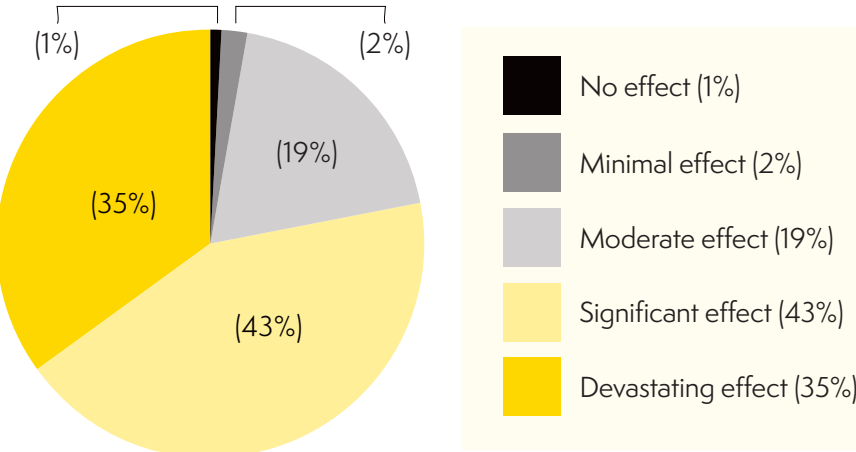
How crucial is OAC funding for maintaining operations 2022-23?



Source: Nordicity Survey, 2024

Effect on operational capabilities and strategic planning goals if the funding stopped in 2022-23

(In the highly unlikely case funding from the Province to OAC had been stopped in 2022-23, how would the absence of OAC funding in 2022-23 have affected your organization's operational capabilities and strategic planning goals?)



Source: Nordicity Survey, 2024

**OAC grants help arts organizations leverage additional resources from other public funders. OAC grants also enable arts organizations to attract philanthropy, corporate donations, foundations and sponsorships.**

25:1

Total revenue: \$853.9M  
OAC operating grants: \$34.9M

Financial leverage of OAC operating grants to arts & culture organizations

As part of their GDP contribution, OAC operating grant recipients generated a total of \$780 million in labour income, of which \$230 million was paid directly to artists as professional fees and salaries. When OAC funds arts and culture organizations, the direct labour income represents the money paid to artists and the staff hired by the organizations. These individuals include dancers, visual artists, and operational staff. Indirect and induced labour income refers to the wages earned by employees in businesses that supply goods and services to OAC operating grant recipients (indirect impact), as well as the wages earned by workers in other sectors where those employees spend their income (induced impact). In addition to salaries and professional fees, \$4.6 million was paid in copyright fees and royalties to artists in Ontario.

In addition to the economic contribution, OAC grants help organizations leverage additional resources and generate income through channels such as ticket sales and donations, while helping to unlock other sources of public funding. For every dollar OAC invests, \$25 in total revenues are generated by arts organizations. OAC operating grants demonstrate a high return on public investment.

## 2.3. TOURISM IMPACT

Arts and culture attract visitors from across the globe and significantly boost local economies. Arts experiences such as festivals, exhibitions, and heritage sites are key drivers of tourism, drawing audiences to communities of all sizes. Visitors engaged in arts and cultural activities often stay longer and spend more compared to other types of tourists, contributing to local businesses, from hospitality and dining to transportation and retail.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the economic contributions of the culture sector, arts and culture tourism play a pivotal role in strengthening Ontario's economy. **A recent study on arts and culture reported that roughly \$11.4 billion were spent on arts and culture tourism in Ontario in 2019.** The combined direct, indirect, and induced impacts totaled over \$10 billion in provincial GDP. Furthermore, these activities generated more than \$5.7 billion in labour income, creating more than 100,000 jobs.<sup>6</sup> This illustrates the far-reaching benefits of arts and culture tourism for the province's economy as a whole.

**Arts and culture tourism also enhances a destination's appeal, elevating the region's profile.**

Signature events like theatre festivals, film premieres, and concerts not only generate direct economic benefits but also enhance a region's profile on the global stage. For example, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival Theatre draws thousands of attendees and artists annually. It also provides a compelling example of the diversified economic impact, where each dollar spent generates more than seven dollars in additional spending at nearby restaurants, wineries, and attractions. Notably, more than 30% of the theatre's patrons travel from the United States.<sup>7</sup>



Based in St. Catharines, Carousel Players is Niagara's theatre for young audiences. The company regularly performs in schools, community venues, and performing arts centres across Southern Ontario, and has reached more than 2.8 million children, youth and families to date. (Photo: Lauren Garbutt)

Tourist spending on arts and cultural activities drove OAC-funded organizations to generate

**\$2.7  
billion  
in GDP**

**and create  
28,600  
jobs  
in 2022**

Nordicity estimates that about 27% of the total \$11.4 billion arts and culture visitor spending can be attributed to OAC grant recipients.<sup>8</sup> As a result of tourism visitor spending on cultural activities, OAC-funded organizations generated approximately \$2.7 billion in GDP and supported 28,600 jobs. This highlights the substantial impact OAC-funded organizations have in driving economic activity through arts and culture tourism.



Ottawa-based Propeller Dance is Ontario's only professional dance company that provides inclusive, accessible performance opportunities and dance training for people with disabilities. (Photo: Balfour Photography)

## 2.4. SOCIAL IMPACT

Without a strong cultural economy, communities lose out on direct, indirect and induced economic benefits; they risk stagnation in both economic and social vitality. In addition to their economic value, arts and culture play a vital role in enhancing quality of life for individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

Grassroots arts organizations amplify community-driven impact through volunteering.

**Volunteering increases job skills, communication skills and knowledge.** Research indicates that through the acquisition of skills and work-related experience, volunteers gain valuable knowledge and training leading to improved job prospects and employability and family functioning because of these changes.<sup>9</sup>

**Volunteering also decreases loneliness.** Arts participation offered by local organizations combats isolation by creating spaces for connection. A study conducted on health and retirement of almost 13,000 adults found that the increased interactions experienced by those who volunteered led to greater optimism and purpose in life as well as overall better psychosocial outcomes. This research supports the link between individual wellbeing and increased confidence.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond delivering intrinsic value to citizens, arts and culture are essential in addressing pressing urban challenges. Indeed, the 2024 trends report by the World Cities Culture Forum made the case for culture as a 'golden thread' through urban policy, shaping vibrant and sustainable cities.<sup>11</sup> The report highlighted ten emerging trends in cultural policy, and demonstrated how culture and creativity not



A behind the scenes look at Innisfil-based artist duo Dmitry Gretskey and Eugenia Kats' exhibition *House for Sale*, which took place at the MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie. (Photo: Dmitry Gretskey)

only address economic and social challenges, but also provide intrinsic value to citizens.<sup>12</sup> Benefits include promoting personal wellbeing, fostering creativity and innovation, and increasing participation of equity-deserving communities.

Arts and culture also contribute to more livable communities by strengthening social cohesion and enhancing community resilience. These non-economic impacts are interconnected, and collectively enhance society through cultural participation, as outlined within the conceptual framework below.

*"Seats on the Board of Art Windsor-Essex and other arts organizations are frequently sought out and often filled by professionals and business executives because **we see the value in arts organizations driving economic development and attracting business and employees to communities.** Vibrant arts organizations like galleries, museums, orchestras, theatres and other arts animators, give communities a sense of unique identity which is as good for business as it is for people."*

**Melinda Munro, Board Chair, Art Windsor-Essex**

*"Thanks a lot for caring about seniors in the community and colouring our world with lots of fun and bringing out our self confidence. Thanks!"*

**Senior Participant, Art Windsor-Essex**

**Figure 4:** Culture sector social benefit



OAC investments in Indigenous and Francophone arts organizations and projects across the province enables these organizations to operate and engage with their community, and all Ontario residents.

#### **OAC Indigenous grant recipients' impact**

In 2022, OAC invested \$3.9 million in operating funding for Indigenous organizations and projects. Nordicity estimates that the Indigenous arts organizations that received OAC grants generated a total of \$24.8 million GDP. The funding also supported the employment of approximately 268 FTEs for Indigenous organizations. This means that the funding not only sustained jobs but also created new employment opportunities within the sector. These jobs encompass a wide array of positions and skills, which contribute to the professional growth

of individuals within these communities. Moreover, these organizations contributed over \$6.7 million in total taxes, including \$2.7 million in provincial taxes to the Ontario economy.

#### **OAC Francophone grant recipients' impact**

Similarly, OAC's investment of \$4 million in Francophone arts organizations and projects generates significant economic returns. The economic output generated by OAC's investment of \$2.3 million in Francophone arts operating organizations amounted to \$19.2 million in GDP. Employment within these organizations accounted for 343 FTEs. The tax contributions from these organizations are estimated to be over \$5.2 million, including \$2.1 million in provincial taxes to the Ontario economy.



# Ontario's *culture sector* **IMPACT** *by region*

**Ontario is a province defined by its diversity, with vast geographies, vibrant communities, and a rich tapestry of cultural activity.** From the urban centers of Toronto, which host internationally renowned festivals, to the small towns and rural areas that celebrate local heritage through community arts programs, Ontario's regions each make unique contributions to the province's cultural landscape. Clusters of cultural activity have emerged in various regions, including film and TV production hubs in and around Toronto and Sudbury and the Niagara region's varied arts and culture offerings that engage tourists and local residents alike. **This section highlights the contributions of each of OAC's eight regions to the Ontario economy, to the tourism sector, as well as the economic and social impact of OAC operating grant recipients.**

The map and table below present the results of Nordicity modelling of the regional distribution of the economic impact of the culture sector in Ontario as per Canadian Cultural Satellite Account - Statistics Canada (CSA). Toronto stands out as the economic powerhouse, generating about 40% of the province's cultural GDP. Toronto has the highest share of Ontario's employment in the culture sector (37%) and the highest culture sector GDP per capita (\$3,813). The prevalence of the higher impact audiovisual and

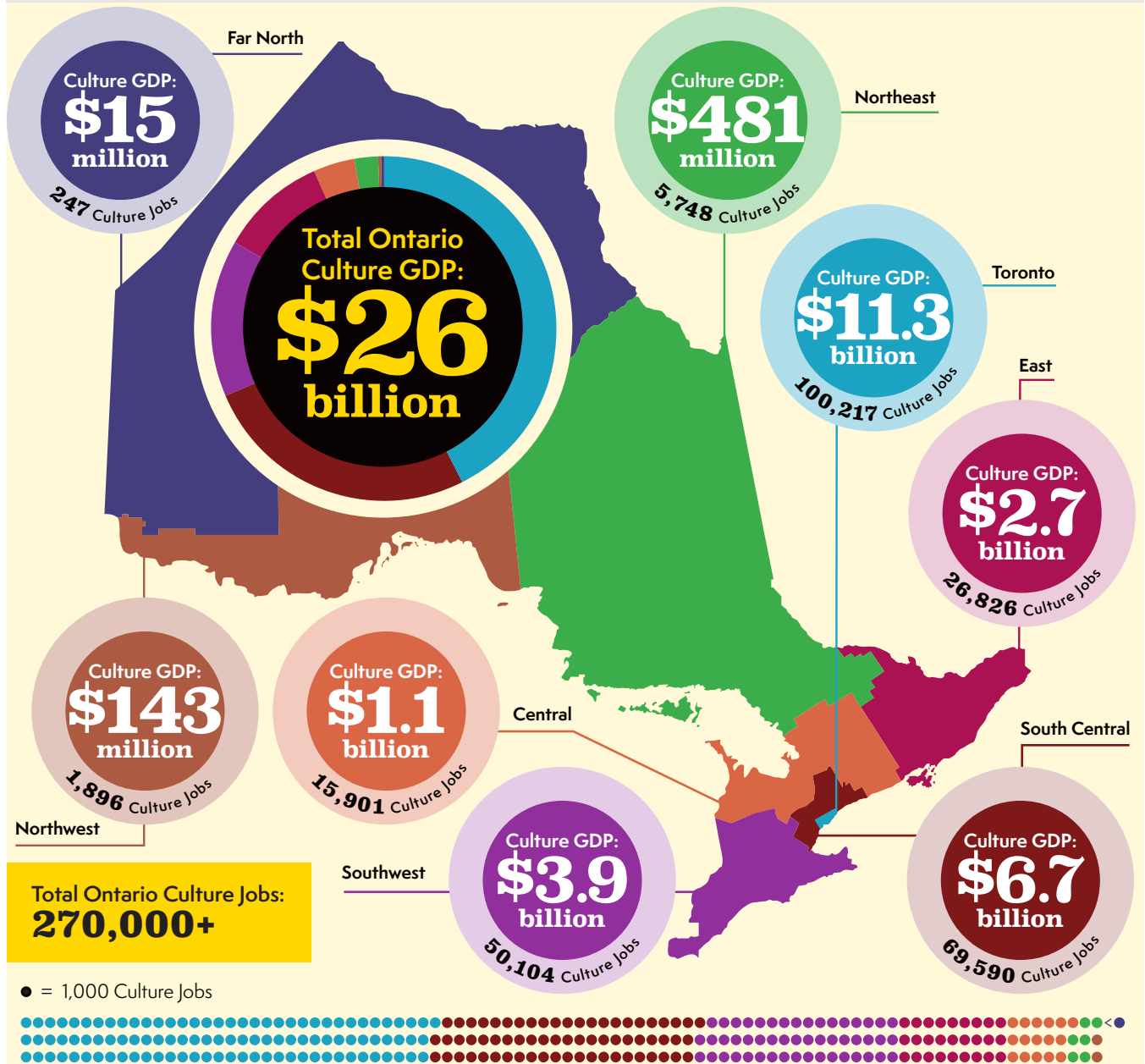
sound recording industries in the City of Toronto contributes significantly to this concentration of economic impact.

The South Central and Southwest regions of Ontario are also significant contributors to the Ontario cultural economy. There is a strong correlation between population and employment, and regional culture economic impact. These two regions combined contribute 40% of Ontario's culture GDP and 44% of Ontario's culture jobs. Central and East Ontario have the next highest GDP contribution to Ontario's cultural economy. These two regions combined contribute 14% of Ontario's culture GDP and 15% of Ontario's culture jobs.

The economy of the Northern regions: the Far North, Northeast and Northwest Ontario, is largely shaped by their natural resources including mining and forestry. With less than 10% of the Ontario population, the three northern regions offer vibrant cultural and natural heritage activities that attract tourism. All three northern regions have a highly concentrated Heritage and Libraries domain (top location quotient). The Far North, Northeast, and Northwest regions of Ontario have the highest Indigenous representation, with 44%, 13%, and 17% of their populations identifying as Indigenous in the 2021 census, respectively.



**Figure 5: Ontario culture sector, regional economic impact, OAC Regions, 2022**



OAC Region	Population	Employment	Culture Jobs	Culture share of employment	Culture GDP (\$000)	Culture GDP per capita (\$)
South Central	4,135,792	1,827,455	69,590	4%	6,693,695	1,618
Southwest	3,918,638	1,632,420	50,104	3%	3,898,312	995
Toronto	2,985,228	1,308,115	100,217	8%	11,382,797	3,813
East	2,012,550	873,565	26,826	3%	2,674,785	1,329
Central	1,256,407	519,085	15,901	3%	1,075,836	856
Northeast	589,614	233,955	5,748	2%	481,176	816
Northwest	173,737	71,575	1,896	3%	143,263	825
Far North	73,040	26,715	247	1%	15,637	214
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,145,006</b>	<b>6,492,885</b>	<b>270,529</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>26,365,500</b>	<b>1,741</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account, Nordicity Regional Economic Model

**Table 4: Ontario culture sector, tourism impact, OAC Regions, 2022**

	South Central	Southwest	Toronto	East	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Far North	TOTAL
Visitor Spend (\$B)									
Total Arts and Culture Trip Spend	1.78	2.18	5.39	1.30	0.45	0.19	0.09	0.01	11.40
GDP (\$B)									
Direct	0.89	1.09	2.69	0.65	0.23	0.10	0.04	0.01	5.70
Indirect	0.31	0.38	0.95	0.23	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.01	2.00
Induced	0.38	0.46	1.13	0.27	0.09	0.04	0.02	0.01	2.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>1.15</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>10.10</b>
Employment (Jobs)									
Direct	11,400	13,900	34,400	8,300	2,900	1,200	500	100	72,800
Indirect	2,600	3,200	7,800	1,900	700	300	100	<10	16,600
Induced	2,600	3,200	7,900	1,900	700	300	100	<10	16,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,600</b>	<b>20,300</b>	<b>50,200</b>	<b>12,100</b>	<b>4,200</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>106,100</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, National Travel Survey (NTS) and Visitor Travel Survey (VTS), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

The following sections explore the distinct economic and social contributions of each region, highlighting how public investment through OAC amplifies local creativity, empowers communities, and drives tourism. Organizational spotlights anchor those contributions in specific communities across Ontario.



The background image shows an art gallery with white walls and track lighting. Several people are present: a woman in the foreground with her back to the camera, a woman in the background speaking into a microphone, and other visitors. The image is overlaid with a dark red tint.

# South Central Ontario

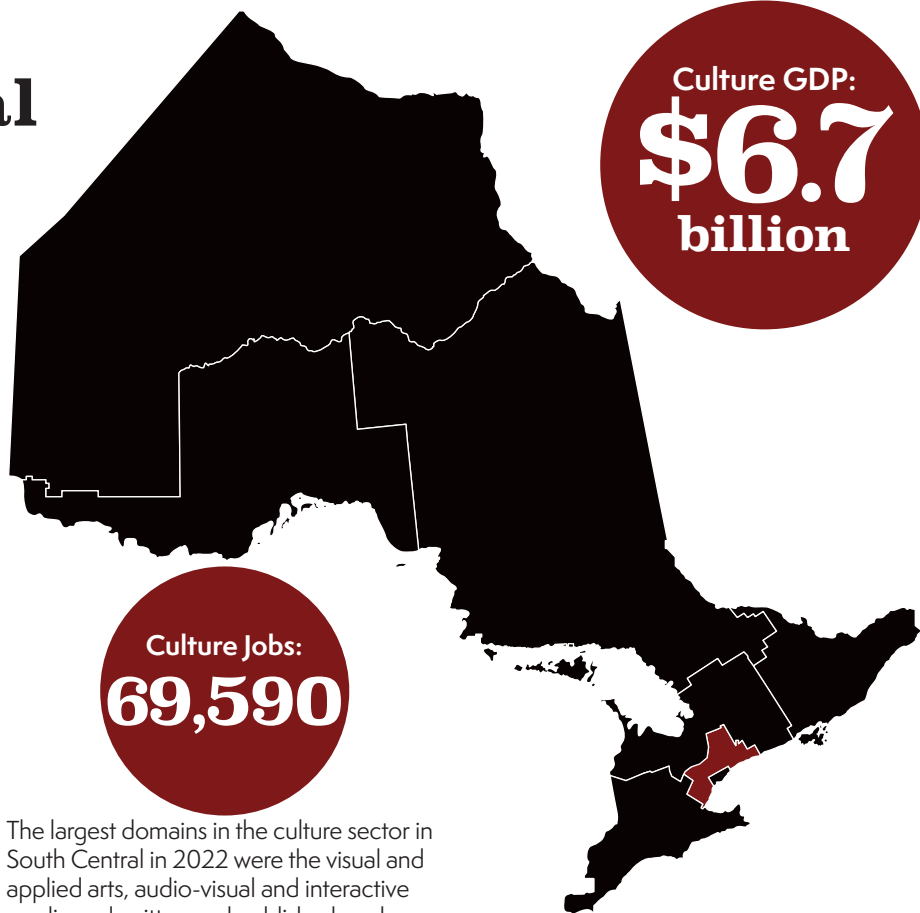
# 3.1. South Central Ontario

South Central Ontario blends a perfect harmony of vibrant urban centres and picturesque agricultural lands. It is a key economic engine for the province, focused on technology, manufacturing, and is second only to Toronto in culture sector jobs and GDP in Ontario. Its diverse population brings valued multicultural influences to the culture sector.

## Culture Sector IMPACT

South Central Ontario is the largest region in Ontario in terms of total population and employment at 4.1 million people and 1.8 million jobs, respectively. The region is a key economic driver in Ontario with a strong presence of tech firms and manufacturers.

**South Central Ontario is a hub of cultural activity, second only to the City of Toronto in jobs and GDP generated by cultural industries.** The region represented a quarter of estimated culture jobs and GDP in Ontario in 2022, contributing almost 70,000 jobs and \$6.7 billion GDP. Many places in the region offer a mix of diverse cultural heritage and modern artistic influences, such as Brampton, Mississauga and Markham. With a large immigrant population, South Central Ontario has a diverse population with South Asian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, and European communities.



The largest domains in the culture sector in South Central in 2022 were the visual and applied arts, audio-visual and interactive media and written and published works industries. The visual and applied arts industry in particular has a strong presence in the region, accounting for 32% of culture jobs and 30% of culture GDP in South Central. **Looking at the visual and applied arts industry across the whole of Ontario, the sector is highly concentrated in South Central.** Notably, the South Central region accounts for nearly 30% of Ontario's total employment and GDP in visual and applied arts and 30% of total employment and GDP in written and published works.

A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. In the South Central Region, there is a slightly higher concentration of jobs in the visual and applied arts (LQ 1.04), and written and published works (LQ 1.02) compared to the provincial average.

**Table 5: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in the South Central Region, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	829	1%	16%	33,607	1%	14%	0.55
Live performances	4,967	7%	17%	184,082	3%	16%	0.61
Visual and applied arts	22,498	32%	29%	2,017,548	30%	29%	1.04
Written and published works	11,527	17%	29%	965,323	14%	28%	1.02
Audio-visual and interactive media	13,486	19%	24%	1,742,930	26%	23%	0.86
Sound recording	480	1%	22%	54,744	1%	22%	0.80
Transversal domains	15,805	23%	26%	1,694,462	25%	25%	0.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,590</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>6,693,695</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>0.91</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account





Gallery visit with work by visual artist Héritier Bilaka. (Photo courtesy of Heritier Bilaka)



The Brampton-based Festival of Literary Diversity Kids Book Fest. (Photo: Herman Custodio)

**Table 6: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector in the South Central Region, by municipality, 2022**

South Central Municipality	Jobs	% share of GTA Municipality Total	GDP (\$M)	% share of GTA Municipality Total
Mississauga	10,882	6%	1,233,214	7%
Brampton	10,232	6%	1,159,518	6%
Markham	6,244	4%	693,679	4%
Vaughan	6,016	4%	668,438	4%
Oakville	4,751	3%	383,095	2%
Burlington	4,073	2%	328,441	2%
Richmond Hill	3,727	2%	414,032	2%
Oshawa	3,098	2%	170,968	0.9%
Milton	2,996	2%	241,566	1%
Whitby	2,461	1%	135,806	0.8%
Ajax	2,188	1%	120,762	0.7%
Clarington	1,797	1%	99,148	0.5%
Pickering	1,738	1%	95,899	0.5%
Newmarket	1,626	1%	180,676	1%
Halton Hills	1,388	0.8%	111,909	0.6%
Caledon	1,207	0.7%	136,792	0.8%
Aurora	1,154	0.7%	128,226	0.7%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	950	0.6%	105,513	0.6%
Georgina	899	0.5%	99,923	0.6%
East Gwillimbury	677	0.4%	75,271	0.4%
King	511	0.3%	56,748	0.3%
Scugog	377	0.2%	20,820	0.1%
Uxbridge	367	0.2%	20,249	0.1%
Brock	225	0.1%	12,406	0.1%
<b>South Central Municipalities</b>	<b>69,584</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>6,693,099</b>	<b>37%</b>

**GTA Municipality Total 169,801 18,075,897**

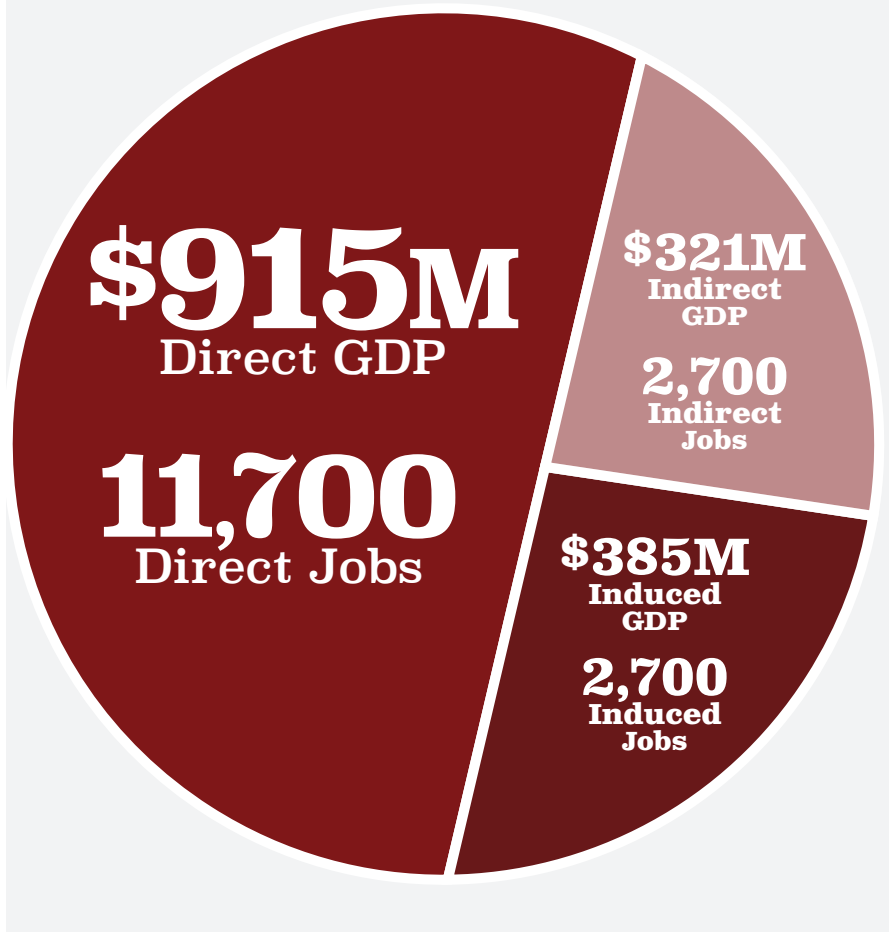
Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT

**\$1.6  
billion  
in GDP**

The visitor-facing arts and culture sector in South Central Ontario generated a total of \$1.6 billion in GDP and 17,100 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$1.8 billion.

**Figure 6:** Economic Impact of arts and culture tourism, South Central Ontario, 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

# Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

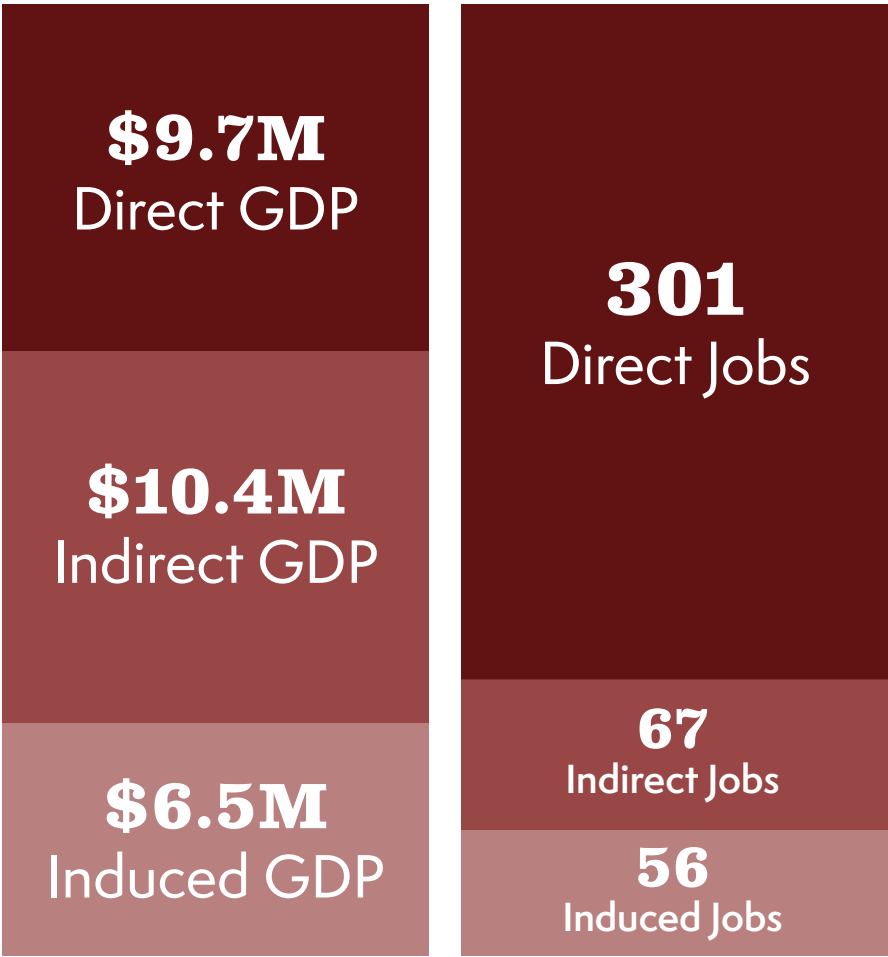
With a total investment of \$815,000 in operating grants by OAC, 27 arts organizations contributed a total of \$26.7 million GDP and 422 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$7.8 million in taxes, including \$3.7 million in federal taxes, \$2.6 million in provincial taxes and \$1.4 million in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$1.3 million (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in South Central Ontario.



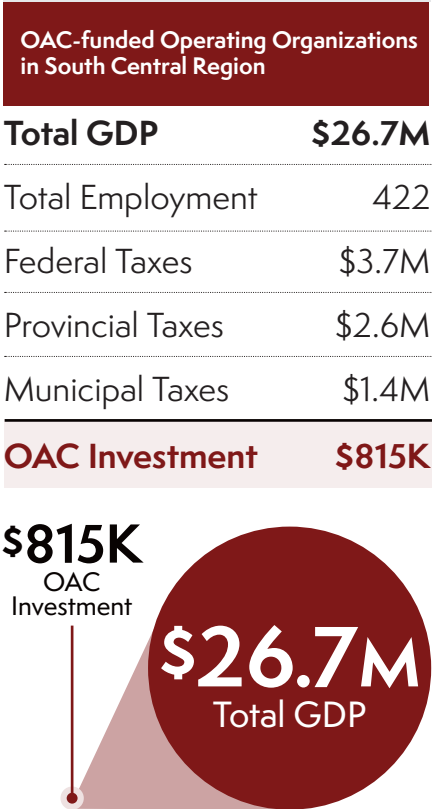
Mississauga-based Sampradaya Dance Creations. (Photo: Pawan Patheja)

**Figure 7:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, South Central Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 8:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, South Central Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





Amphitheatre Unplugged at Mississauga's Celebration Square presented by the Mississauga Arts Council.  
(Photo courtesy of Mississauga Arts Council)

In 2022-23, 27 OAC-funded arts organizations in South Central Ontario built community through 2,524 volunteers who provided a total of 128,103 hours of work valued at \$4 million, supporting a range of events with a total audience attendance of over 2 million.

### Figure 9: Volunteerism and Attendance, South Central Ontario, 2022

#### OAC-funded Operating Organizations in South Central Region

Total number of volunteers	2,524
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	128,103
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$4,004,500
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>2,114,522</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"The Ontario Arts Council has supported the Festival of Literary Diversity and our expansion projects from the start. It feels especially meaningful as we prepare for our 10th festival to acknowledge how the OAC has played such a pivotal role in our work and in our industry as a whole."*

**Jael Richardson,**  
Executive Director,  
The FOLD Foundation

## The Robert McLaughlin Gallery

The **Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG)** founded in 1967 has occupied a building designed by Arthur Erickson since 1987. Its permanent collection of over 4,500 works focuses on Canadian modern art and the Painters 11; and exhibitions, educational outreach, and community programming reflect contemporary art practices. RMG is committed to supporting regional artists and touring exhibitions. The RMG has become a cultural hub for Oshawa with its strong focus on Canadian modern and contemporary art. Its commitment to inclusivity, education and community engagement ensures its relevance as a space for social connection and heritage preservation in the region.



Community members participate in *The Neighbour's Project* at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa. (Photo courtesy of Robert McLaughlin Gallery)

*"The Robert McLaughlin Gallery is a space for community, creativity, and care. We are focused on our vision that art creates caring communities. Over the last five years we expanded how we support artists, build genuine community bonds, and reimagine what a gallery can be. **We are creating a more sustainable, equitable, and welcoming gallery for Durham region and beyond.** Those who know the RMG appreciate it as a place that fosters care, champions artists, connects artists to community, and raises awareness about important issues and stories."*

*We believe that meaningful connections are the foundation of a thriving cultural institution and that galleries are more than spaces for art. The RMG is a gathering place and cultural destination where everyone feels welcome."*

**Lauren Gould, CEO, Robert McLaughlin Gallery**

*"I had no idea so many people would be interested in what we all collectively created. I learnt that ART is for everyone regardless of age or prior experience. **It can be and often is a lifeline for those we were trying to serve.** Sometimes it was their only way of expressing themselves, whether in private or shared with others."*

**Participant,  
The Neighbour's Project Program**

*"Creativity for me is a way to be healthier, bring healing into my life, add peace and meet so many delightful people along the way, I couldn't ask for anything better."*

**Participant,  
The Neighbour's Project Program**

## Mississauga Arts Council

Founded in 1981, **Mississauga Arts Council (MAC)** seeks to enrich the lives of its citizens by fostering and developing, supporting and championing a vibrant, dynamic arts community.

*"We're excited for the inevitable success of the arts writ large all over Ontario. You see why in the determination of the people to come out, get together, and enjoy what the artists they connect with have to present."*

***There's scientific proof everywhere for the health benefits derived from enjoying creative events.** And with a growing network of arts councils and local collectives, Ontario has the human creative infrastructure to begin delivering arts care to residents everywhere."*

*We have to because participating in the arts offers the single greatest hope for reducing healthcare costs in Ontario."*

**Mike Douglas, Executive Director, Mississauga Arts Council**



ArtsCare program organized by Alethia Caraccioli at Visual Arts Mississauga, funded by a MAC MicroGrant. (Photo: Alethia Caraccioli)



## Iranian-Canadian Centre for Art and Culture

The **Iranian-Canadian Centre for Art and Culture** was founded to advance the public's appreciation of Iranian arts, culture, and heritage through engaging multidisciplinary festivals and arts-based education. The centre presents events that celebrate Iranian arts, culture and heritage; signature annual festivals Nowruz and Tirgan take place in March and July respectively, regularly drawing large crowds.

*"Our main objectives are to unite people through art and culture and promote cultural expression to foster creativity, connection, and identity. Our initiatives strengthen communities, drive economic growth, and enhance well-being. **Cultural spaces inspire, educate, and bring people together, creating a vibrant, inclusive society where everyone can experience the power of creativity.** Elevating society begins with empowering individuals, and investing in art and culture plays a vital role in this transformation."*

**Mehrdad Ariannejad, Board Chair, Tirgan**



Performance during the Tirgan Festival in Toronto.  
(Photo: EventGraphers)



The Festival of Literary Diversity presented by the FOLD Foundation. (Photo: Herman Custodio)

## The FOLD Foundation

Founded in 2016, the **FOLD Foundation** presents the Festival of Literary Diversity (The FOLD), which promotes diverse authors and stories in Brampton, Ontario. Other activities include occasional author tours and a regular webinar series for emerging writers. The FOLD celebrates and promotes diverse authors and stories in Brampton, one of Canada's most culturally diverse cities. It presents a spring festival for adults and teens, a fall festival of children's literature, and a regular webinar series for emerging writers.

*"I've attended the FOLD as both a guest author and an audience member, and no matter what, I walk away with a mesmerizing number of books and authors I can't wait to get more acquainted with! The FOLD is a gift to the Canadian literary landscape!"*

**Tanya Boteju, Author of *Bruised***

*"A special thank you for your dedication and hard work in organizing this festival. The success you've achieved – **reaching thousands of students and educators** – is a testament to the passion and commitment of your entire team. We're grateful for the opportunity to work together and look forward to future collaborations that continue to inspire and uplift!"*

**Educator, Halton District School Board**





# Southwest Ontario



## 3.2. Southwest Ontario

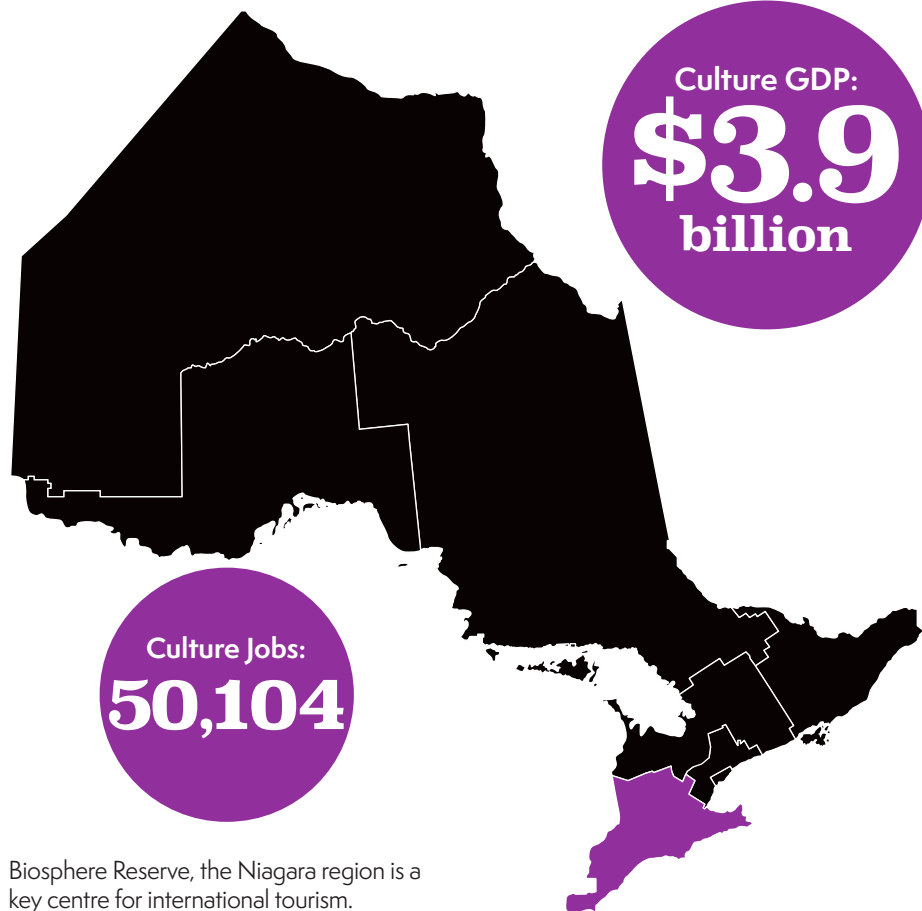
Southwest Ontario is shaped by a combination of industrial strength, technology, natural landscape, and cultural richness. The Niagara region is recognized as a culinary, arts and culture tourism hotspot.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

Southwest Ontario is the second most populous OAC region with 3.9 million residents, and an employment level of 1.6 million jobs. **In 2022, Southwest Ontario accounted for one fifth of all culture sector jobs in Ontario and 15% of culture GDP.**

Located at key U.S. border crossings, such as Windsor-Essex, the region is a major center for automotive production and manufacturing. The region also has a strong ecosystem of startups and research institutions, with Kitchener-Waterloo at the heart of Canada's technology and innovation corridor.

Culturally, the region boasts a thriving arts scene and tourism industry. The Stratford Festival and the Shaw Festival draw global audiences and artistic talent. Many towns, such as Niagara-on-the-Lake and Stratford also offer heritage experiences through specific architectural styles. As a wine-producing region with a unique natural landscape and a UNESCO World



Biosphere Reserve, the Niagara region is a key centre for international tourism.

**Within the region, visual and applied arts is the largest of the cultural domains, on both a jobs and GDP basis** (30% of the region's culture sector). Written and published works and the audio visual and interactive media sector are the next largest in Southwest Ontario.

**While the live performance domain accounts for 13% of the region's culture jobs, it represents one fifth of all live performance jobs and GDP generated in Ontario.** Southwest Ontario also accounts for a quarter of all jobs and GDP in the

heritage and libraries sector in Ontario, the largest share of any of the eight OAC regions. A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. In the Southwest Region, there is a slightly higher concentration of jobs in heritage and libraries (LQ 1.04), compared to the provincial average.

**Table 7: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in the Southwest Region, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	1,389	3%	26%	55,104	1%	24%	1.04
Live performances	6,618	13%	23%	214,467	6%	19%	0.91
Visual and applied arts	14,927	30%	19%	1,175,242	30%	17%	0.77
Written and published works	8,615	17%	22%	659,133	17%	19%	0.86
Audio-visual and interactive media	6,882	14%	12%	782,227	20%	10%	0.49
Sound recording	293	1%	14%	28,409	1%	11%	0.55
Transversal domains	11,379	23%	19%	983,731	25%	15%	0.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,104</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>3,898,312</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

**Table 8: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector in the Southwest Region, by CMA, 2022**

Southwest Region CMA	Jobs	Share of Ontario Total	GDP (\$M)	Share of Ontario Total
Brantford	1,279	0.5%	86	0.3%
Guelph	2,592	1%	248	1%
Hamilton	11,000	4%	900	3%
Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo	4,136	2%	361	1%
London	6,433	2%	536	2%
St. Catharines - Niagara	5,922	2%	381	1%
Windsor	1,191	0.4%	96	0.4%
<b>Southwest Region CMA's Total</b>	<b>32,733</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>2,608</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Ontario Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>		<b>26,366</b>	

Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model

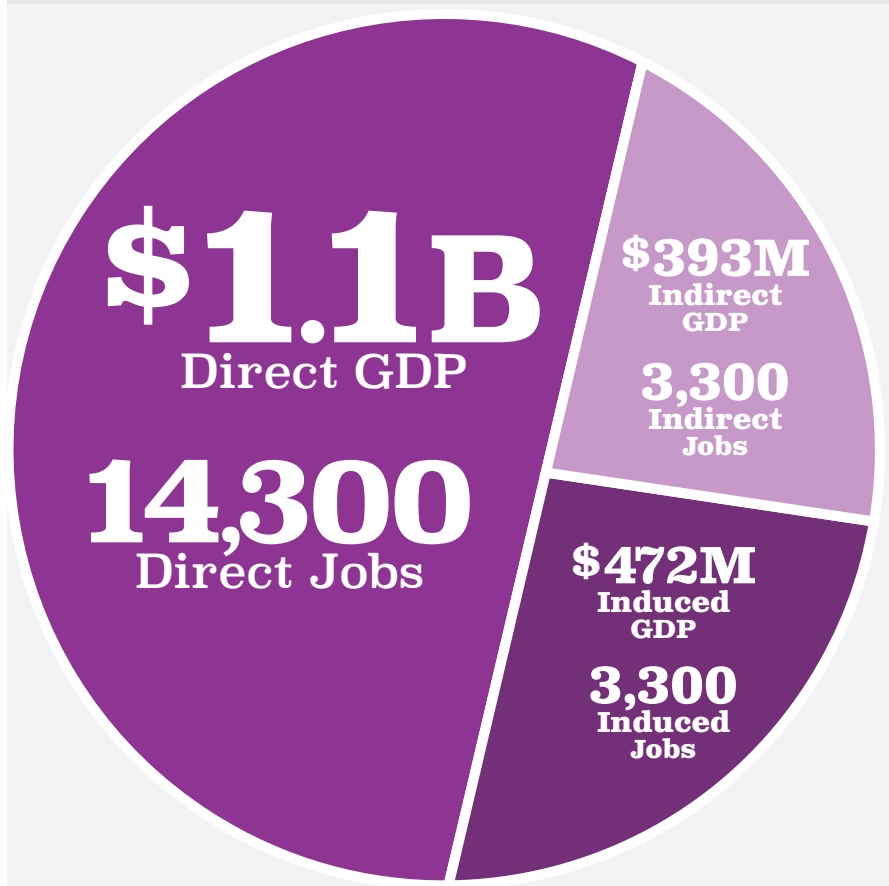


Fashion and design workshop hosted by Art Windsor-Essex. (Photo courtesy of Art Windsor-Essex)

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT **\$2 billion in GDP**

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Ontario generated approximately \$2 billion in GDP and 20,900 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$2.2 billion.

**Figure 10: Economic Impact of arts and culture tourism, Southwest Ontario, 2022**



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

# Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

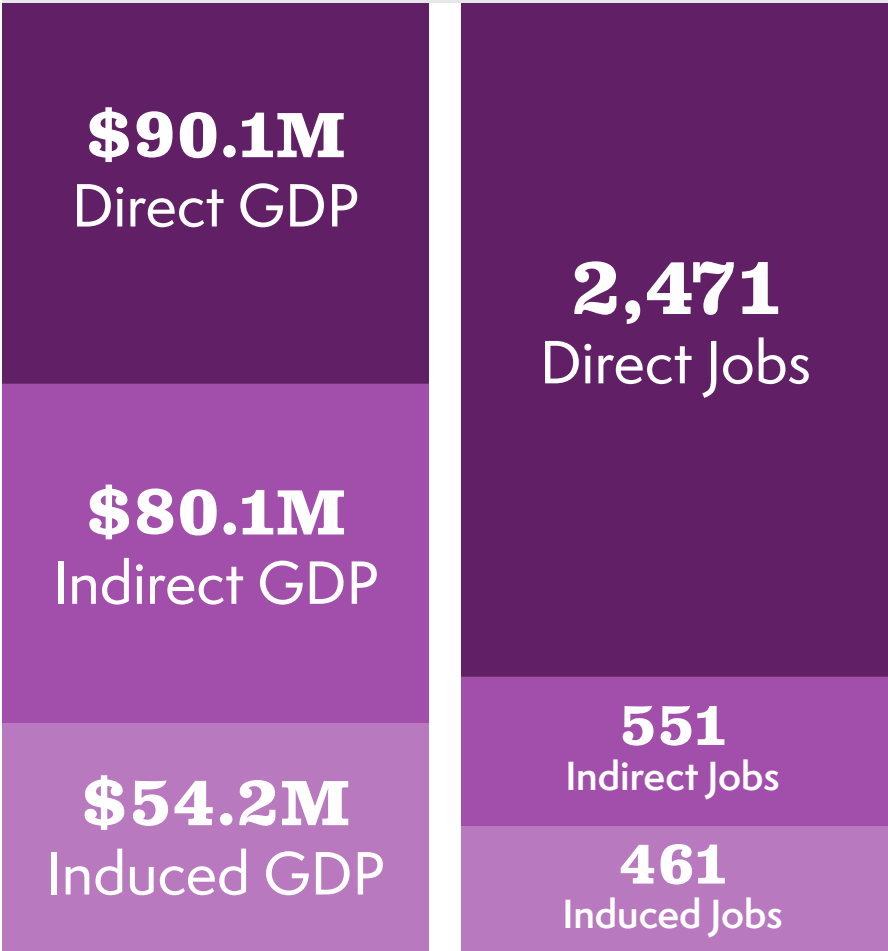
With a total investment of \$6.9 million in operating grants by OAC, 90 arts organizations contributed a total of \$224.3 million GDP and 3,482 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$65.8 million in taxes, including \$31.4 million in federal taxes, \$22.3 million in provincial taxes and \$12.1 million in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$2 million (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Southwest Ontario.



The Grimsby Public Art Gallery. (Photo: Ollie Lauricella)

**Figure 11:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, Southwest Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 12:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, Southwest Ontario, 2022

OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Southwest Region	
Total GDP	\$224.3M
Total Employment	3,482
Federal Taxes	\$31.4M
Provincial Taxes	\$22.3M
Municipal Taxes	\$12.1M
OAC Investment	\$6.9M



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





Intro to Camera Operation, workshop hosted by Ed Video Media Arts Centre in Guelph. (Photo: Stephanie Badoe)

In 2022-23, 82 OAC funded organizations attracted audiences of nearly 5 million, and provided community-building opportunities to 8,110 volunteers who provided 275,591 hours of work valued at over \$8.6 million in Southwest Ontario.

### Figure 13: Volunteerism and Attendance, Southwest Ontario, 2022

#### OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Southwest Region

Total Number of Volunteers	8,110
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	275,591
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$8,614,975
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>4,999,384</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"My experience with the Sandwich Visionaries program was so heartwarming and connecting. I was able to connect with members of my neighbourhood through art and discuss our many pathways and journeys to Turtle Island. This meaningful experience is something I reflect fondly upon and I'm very grateful to Art Windsor-Essex for the opportunity to participate".*

**Safa Youness,**  
Participating Artist



The Blyth Festival's production of *St. Nicholas Hotel* by James Reaney. (Photo courtesy of the Blyth Festival)

## Blyth Festival

The **Blyth Festival** specializes in the production and promotion of Canadian plays. Founded in 1975, the festival is a cornerstone of Canadian theatre having premiered over 200 original Canadian plays since inception. Notable productions include Beverley Cooper's *Innocence Lost: a Play About Steven Truscott*. In 2024 alone, the festival attracted over 25,000 visitors and contributed over \$8.1 million in visitor spending in the region.<sup>13</sup> Through the festival's educational programming, workshops and volunteer opportunities, it has become a vital organization that enriches the social fabric of Blyth and the surrounding region.

*"I have often said this may look like a theatre, but it's really a community-building machine. For more than 50 years, the Blyth Festival has brought people together to explore, observe and celebrate the unique stories of rural Canada, and – by extension – the rest of the country."*

*Through this commitment to community storytelling, it has "normalized" theatre attendance in a community far from major urban centres, launched the careers of countless young writers, artists and theatre technicians, and ignited conversations about Canadian arts, culture and history that continue to this day."*

**Gil Garratt, Artistic Director,  
Blyth Festival**

*"It's a delight for us to volunteer for Blyth – for the education, the fun and the chance to see every show. The Festival is like family to us."*

### Longtime Volunteer

*"Blyth captures something that simply doesn't exist in the rest of the country. As Canadians, we need to engage with what being Canadian means, and what it means to be alive in the world right now. Blyth makes that happen." that continue to shape my journey."*

### Theatre Scholar, University of Guelph

*"We hear a lot about how today's young people don't have the resiliency that comes from trying new and risky things in a safe space. Programs like the YoCo [Blyth Festival's Young Company] provide exactly this space, and are more important now than ever"*

**Actor, Artistic Director and Former  
YoCo Participant**





*"For 50 years, GPAG has been a thriving cultural hub where art and community come together. From its grassroots beginnings to welcoming 10,000 visitors annually, the Gallery remains a testament to the power of creativity and connection. Through thought-provoking exhibitions, meaningful programs, and dynamic community events, we inspire critical dialogue, artistic expression, and a sense of belonging. GPAG is more than a gallery—it's a space where artists, families, and enthusiasts gather to share in the transformative power of art. As we look to the future, we remain committed to enriching our community's cultural well-being for generations to come."*

**Alexandra Hartstone,**  
Manager/Curator,  
Grimsby Public Art Gallery

Grimsby Public Art Gallery (Photo: Jordyn Stewart)

## Grimsby Public Art Gallery

As the only public art gallery in Niagara, the **Grimsby Public Art Gallery (GPAG)** plays a vital role in enhancing the social and cultural landscape of the Niagara region. Forging and maintaining connections with the community is of primary importance to the gallery.

It not only offers platforms for emerging artists to gain exposure and connect with broader audiences but also makes visual art accessible to all community members through a range of educational programs for all ages and skill levels. It collaborates with local organizations in the heritage and libraries domain, such as the Grimsby Museum and the Grimsby Public Library.

Providing volunteer opportunities has been essential to GPAG since its founding in 1975. Initially called the Women's Committee, these dedicated individuals collaborate with staff to make art and culture accessible to Grimsby and the whole Niagara region. Their contributions range from assisting in the running of Wayzgoose, an internationally celebrated book arts fair, to organizing the annual fundraising auction, and many other critical activities.

*"Levi is SO happy to be in your class! While out to the car she said, 'I love this place. It helps me find my true self!'"*

**Parent of Children's Program Participant**

*"Amazing work! Thank you, keep doing what your gallery is good at. Love it!"*

**Gallery Visitor**

## Art Windsor-Essex

Established in 1943, **Art Windsor-Essex** collects, conserves, interprets, and presents Canadian art. Through exhibitions and related educational programs, the gallery provides access to works by significant local, regional and national artists. In 2001, the gallery opened its current purpose-built 73,000 sq ft facility in downtown Windsor on the Detroit River. The collection includes approximately 4,000 paintings, sculptures and works on paper.

*"Art Windsor-Essex is the largest public art gallery in Southwestern Ontario. The work that we undertake saves lives – there are growing bodies of research showing how engaging with art uplifts people's health, civic engagement, as well as their economic position. **Art doesn't just help people survive – it helps them to thrive.** Our institution is an important cultural hub in downtown Windsor. We are a hub for makers and thinkers to gather and have important conversations that transform our community for the better. AWE seeks to drive vibrant change in our community through our work as a community-centred, person-driven art gallery for the 21st century. We inspire growth through the power of art."*

**Jennifer Matotek,**  
Executive Director,  
Art Windsor-Essex

*"This program helped me connect with other artists in my community and made it easier for me to access a space that I previously had felt intimidated be a part of."*

### Participant, Creative Business Bootcamp

*"I cannot express enough how thankful I am for this program. Over the past three days, I felt very connected to my grandmother who went to residential school. She would be very proud of the things I am doing today."*

### Participant of Indigenous Youth Fashion Show



AWE at Night. (Photo courtesy of Art Windsor-Essex)



Indigenous Youth Fashion Show. (Photo courtesy of Art Windsor-Essex)





Shaw Festival's production of Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution* (Photo: Emily Cooper)

## Shaw Festival

The **Shaw Festival** was founded in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1962. Its current mandate is to produce plays inspired by the work of George Bernard Shaw. With an internationally acclaimed ensemble company of actors, it offers professional development activities for its artists and arts education activities for the public in its four theatre spaces and a relatively new production centre.

*"As one of the province's most successful tourism generators, the Shaw Festival annually leverages more than \$300 million in economic benefit to the province, with attendees spending \$7 or more locally for every dollar spent at The Shaw. **This is a super-power of rural arts and culture orgs – we generate outsized results for our communities** because the people who visit us are curious, invested and repetitive visitors and our communities thrive because we value them and they value the quality of the experiences, inspiration and memories we provide."*

**Tim Jennings,**  
Executive Director/CEO,  
The Shaw Festival





Niagara Artists Centre hosts concert in the park. (Photo: Niagara Artists Centre)

## Niagara Artists Centre

Established in 1969, **Niagara Artists Centre (NAC)** presents regional and national exhibitions relevant to the Niagara community in its three galleries. NAC also operates a rooftop performance space. The members' gallery, media arts production facilities and professional development workshops support the region's artists. In 2005, NAC purchased its building, an accessible storefront location, and in 2017, it opened an additional facility with print-making equipment and studio space for artists.

*"NAC has been working to make Niagara culturally distinct for over five decades. We offer over 75 visual art exhibits, film screenings, musical performances, literary readings, and other special events to the public every year. Whether you are living in Niagara or just passing through the Peninsula, **NAC's specialty is surprising audiences with experiences not to be found anywhere else.**"*

**Stephen Remus, Minister of Energy, Minds, and Resources, Niagara Artists Centre**

*"Great people, great art, great events! Inclusive and inviting space to hang out. What they bring to St. Catharines is so important! Check out the movie nights."*

*"I recently went to a show at NAC and was greeted by the most amazing staff, you felt like you were part of the family. They were so warm and welcoming and when I was watching the show I felt like I was in my living room being entertained, so comfortable and cozy inside. Absolutely love it, big shout out to the staff."*

*"Phenomenal and welcoming community that puts on a diverse and exciting range of events. **Has made St. Catharines into a home for me.**"*

**NAC Visitors**

## Kaha:wi Dance Theatre

**Kaha:wi Dance Theatre** creates, presents and promotes innovative dance theatre that draws inspiration from contemporary and traditional Indigenous dance forms and culture. Kaha:wi means "she carries" in the Mohawk language.

## Wolsak & Wynn Publishers

Founded in 1982 and initially funded by the sales of the founders' chapbooks, **Wolsak & Wynn Publishers** is a small press that focuses on poetry works. Within six years the organization had gone from its first anthology of poems to its first Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry.

*"For more than 40 years Wolsak & Wynn has been publishing brilliant books from writers across Canada. We've won many awards, from Governor General's Awards to regional awards and even design awards. But with our press deeply ensconced in Hamilton, we're particularly proud of our many Hamilton Arts Council Literary Awards. **Hamilton is a complex and fascinating city and we're delighted to celebrate its many stories** in our James Street North imprint, which brings out books about the city, and surrounding areas, written by the people who know it best. Those who, like us, call it home."*

**Noelle Allen, Publisher, Wolsak & Wynn**

*"Whenever I pick up a nonfiction book published by Wolsak & Wynn, I know I'm going to read something that changes the way I look at the world around me."*

**Holley Ghadery, Author and New Books Network Podcast Host**



# Toronto

### 3.3.

# Toronto

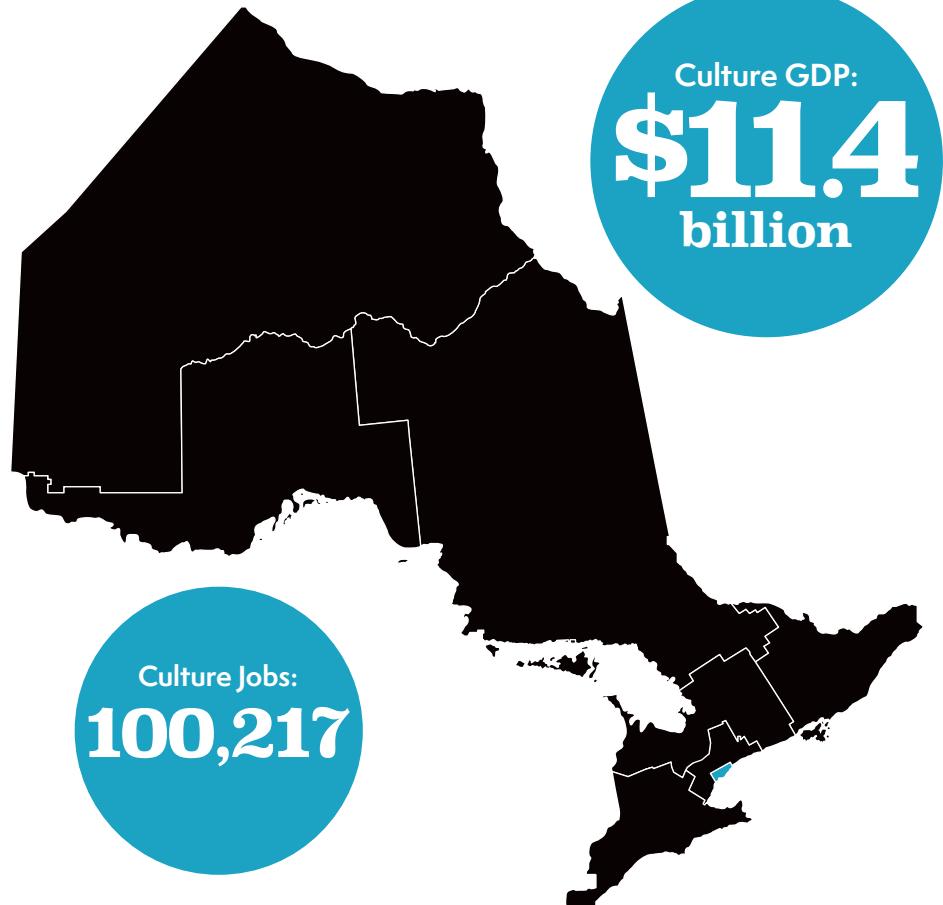
Toronto, Ontario's largest city and provincial capital, is recognized as a national financial and cultural hub with a global profile. Welcoming residents from around the world, Toronto's cultural diversity is one of its defining features. The thriving arts scene is supported by major organizations such as the Toronto International Film Festival and the Aga Khan Museum.

## Culture Sector IMPACT

Toronto is the third most populous of the eight OAC regions with 3 million people and 1.3 million workers. As the largest metropolitan area in Ontario, Toronto accounts for more culture sector jobs and GDP than any other of the seven regions.

**By every metric, Toronto is the centre of the cultural economy in Ontario. Almost 8% of the city's workforce are employed in the culture sector, and Toronto's culture sector generates almost twice the amount of GDP as the next largest region (South Central).**

The audio-visual and interactive digital media sector is the largest of Toronto's cultural industries, generating over \$4 billion in GDP, or 37% of the culture sector GDP in Toronto. Alongside visual and applied arts, these industries



account for 50% of cultural jobs and GDP in Toronto. These sectors drive the concentration of cultural economic output in Toronto, as they tend to be higher value and better paying.

**Toronto also boasts a strong live performance economy, accounting for 45% of the jobs and 50% of GDP in this industry across the province.**

A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the

industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. In the Toronto, there is a high concentration of jobs in sound recording (LQ 2.68), audio-visual and interactive media (LQ 2.43), live performance (LQ 2.23), visual and applied arts (LQ 1.56), and written and published works (LQ 1.35), compared to the provincial average.

**Table 9: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Toronto, Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	981	1%	18%	51,449	<1%	22%	0.91
Live performances	13,008	13%	45%	568,953	5%	50%	2.23
Visual and applied arts	24,123	24%	31%	2,470,651	22%	36%	1.56
Written and published works	10,918	11%	27%	1,084,610	10%	32%	1.35
Audio-visual and interactive media	27,275	27%	49%	4,163,840	37%	54%	2.43
Sound recording	1,151	1%	54%	148,193	1%	58%	2.68
Transversal domains	22,751	23%	37%	2,895,100	25%	43%	1.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,217</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>11,382,797</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>1.84</b>

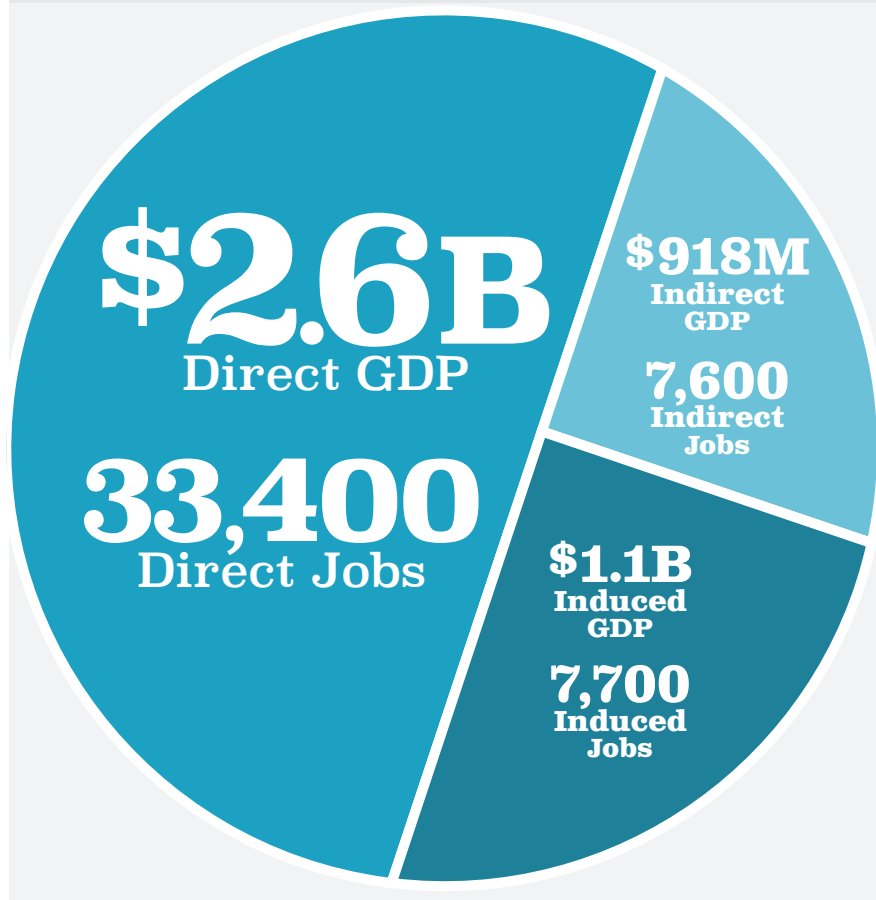
Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

# Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT

## \$4.6 billion in GDP

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Toronto, Ontario, generated approximately \$4.6 billion in GDP and 48,700 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$5.2 billion.

**Figure 14:** Economic impact of arts and culture tourism, City of Toronto, 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





# Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

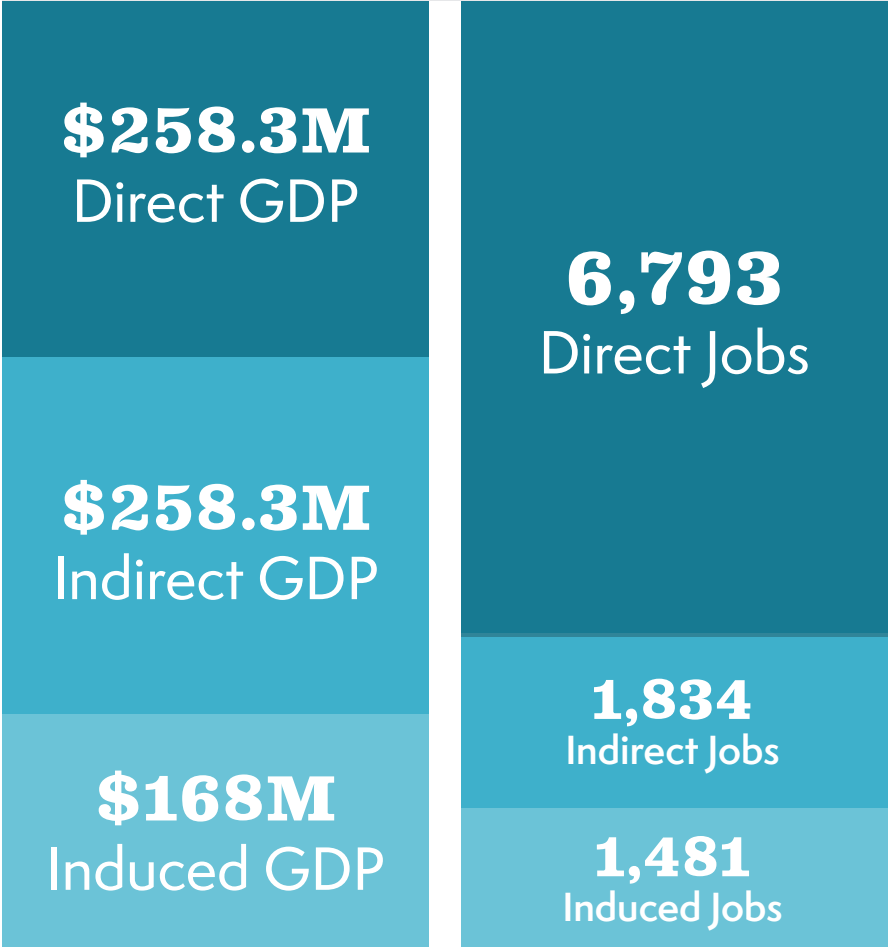
With a total investment of \$21.9 million in operating grants by OAC, 294 funded arts organizations contributed a total of \$727.9 million in GDP and 10,108 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$213.3 million in taxes, including \$102 million in federal taxes, \$72.2 million in provincial taxes and \$39.1 million in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$8.6 million (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Toronto.



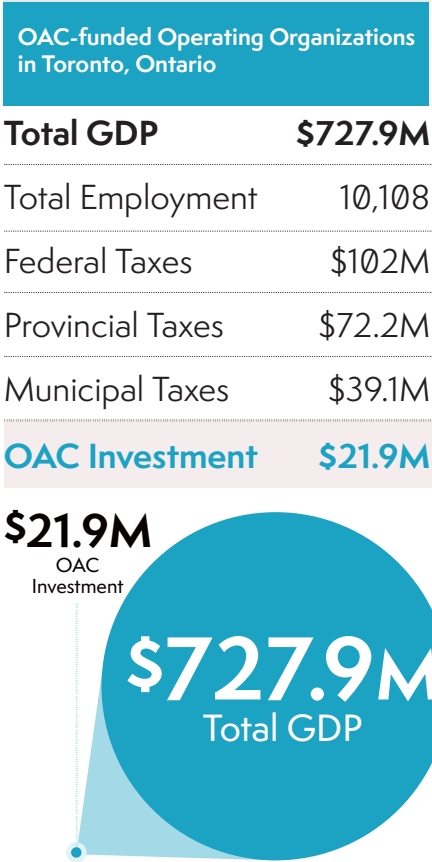
imagineNATIVE's Art Crawl in Toronto. (Photo: Lindsay Duncan)

**Figure 15:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, City of Toronto, Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 16:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, City of Toronto, Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





Students at Canada's National Ballet School in Toronto. (Photo: Karolina Kuras)

In 2022-23, 262 OAC-funded arts organizations attracted a total audience of over 25 million and provided community building opportunities to 22,158 volunteers who provided a total of 382,407 hours of work valued at \$12 million

**Figure 17: Volunteerism and Attendance, City of Toronto, 2022**

OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Toronto Ontario	
Total number of volunteers	22,158
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	382,407
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$11,954,043
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>25,207,321</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"As someone who entered the arts management field with no practical training, I wish I had the opportunity when I was younger to participate in an event like [this]. It is critical for the next generation of arts workers to see the variety of pathways available to them, which this event helped to illuminate."*

**Arts Professional Participant  
Work in Culture**



*the ties that Bind Us, the ties that Bond Us*, performance work by Nickeshia Garrick presented by Nia Centre for the Arts in Toronto.  
(Photo courtesy of Nia Centre for the Arts)

## Nia Centre for the Arts

**Nia Centre for the Arts** supports, showcases and promotes an appreciation of arts from across the African Diaspora. It strives to create opportunities for young people to develop healthy identities and for communities to enhance their creative capacity. Nia incubates, produces, exhibits, and facilitates the creation of risk-taking, boundary-bending interdisciplinary art forms reflecting Afrodiasporic life.

*"Nia Centre for the Arts is Ontario's premier destination for Black art and culture. **We are shaping the cultural landscape by providing a platform for Black artists to create, innovate, and share their stories.** From emerging creatives to established professionals, we foster artistic excellence and expand the narrative of the Canadian experience. Our facility adds much needed infrastructures that ensure there are spaces where Black creativity thrives and influences the broader arts ecosystem."*

**Alica Hall, Executive Director,  
Nia Centre for the Arts**





Doors Open Toronto at the Aga Khan Museum. (Photo: Alnoor Meralli)

*"As the first museum in North America dedicated to showcasing the arts of the Muslim world and their global interconnectedness, the Aga Khan Museum has become a leading platform for innovative intercultural dialogue, creativity, and learning. Using our internationally renowned Collections, exhibitions, public programs, and performing arts initiatives as conversation-starters, **the Museum prides itself on being an intercultural connector, serving Toronto, Ontario, and Canada as a whole** while positively impacting lives and fostering vibrant, pluralistic communities."*

**Dr. Ulrike Al-Khamis, Director and CEO, Aga Khan Museum**

## Aga Khan Museum

The **Aga Khan Museum** is a project of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), under the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). As the only museum in the Western hemisphere dedicated to the arts of Muslim civilizations it seeks to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage as well as of contemporary Muslim communities and diasporas around the world.

The Museum encourages a full spectrum of public engagement with its permanent collection and its ever-changing roster of exhibitions and innovative programs – including music and dance performances, theatre, lectures, workshops, and film screenings. Much arts programming and many external collaborations connect the Aga Khan Museum to other cultures and heritages.

## Paprika Theatre Festival

The **Paprika Theatre Festival** was founded by young artists in 2001, with the support of Tarragon Theatre, to showcase work created by artists under 21 years of age. Its artistic directors have always been new generation artists, and activity has expanded over the years to become the home of emerging theatre artists. The young artists work with mentors in playwriting, collective creation, design, producing, spoken word, and other related areas.

*"The Paprika Theatre Festival has been supporting Toronto's young and emerging artists for nearly 25 years, helping to launch the careers of 1,600+ performing artists. By providing paid and well-supported training programs and showcase opportunities to artists, Paprika gives emerging artists the ability to enter a daunting new industry with dignity and care. Acting as a more accessible alternative to formal theatre training, Paprika empowers its artists to dream up and create a better industry for everyone."*

Amanda Lin, Artistic Producer,  
Paprika Theatre Festival

*"Paprika took a chance on me and I feel they truly awakened the sound designer within me. They were nurturing, provided lots of support and room to grow, hands-on training, and the invaluable experience of allowing me to sound design an actual show within the festival."*

*"This year's Paprika Festival really felt like a moment, coming at a crucial time for us as hungry artists on the forefront of live theatre's return. I was honoured, happy, and proud to be a part of it. We're here and the world is ours."*

Paprika Design Lab Artists



*Chitra*, presented during the Paprika Theatre Festival's Directors Lab.  
(Photo: Natalie Daniela Cortes)





The Sissokho Brothers perform during Afrique Nouvelle Musique's Bana y'Africa series.  
(Photo courtesy of Afrique Nouvelle Musique)

## Afrique Nouvelle Musique

Since its creation in 1993, **Afrique Nouvelle Musique** has presented Franco-Ontarian and world music from African and Caribbean cultures to its Toronto-based cultural communities and the general public. It supports the work of emerging, French-language culturally diverse artists from Ontario and elsewhere. Its Bana y'Afrique festival provides a springboard for emerging artists.

*"The mission of Afrique Nouvelle Musique is to use the arts to build bridges between cultures. Our initiatives, such as our Bana y'Africa series, offer artists from culturally diverse communities a platform to express themselves and enrich Ontario's cultural landscape. We believe that artistic diversity is a driving force for inclusion and economic vigour, and we're proud to contribute to a society in which every voice can find its place."*

**Thomas Tumbu,**  
Executive Director,  
Afrique Nouvelle Musique

*"Attending Afrique Nouvelle Musique's events, its like traveling across cultures while remaining in Toronto. Their concerts are a celebration of diversity and creativity."*

**Participant, Bana y'Afrique Series**



## Inside Out Toronto 2SLGBTQ+ Film Festival

Since 1990, **Inside Out Toronto 2SLGBTQ+ Film Festival** programming has represented a diversity of 2SLGBTQ+ communities and media practices. They offer youth residency programs and emerging artist grants and scholarships, and programs for children and families, celebrating and advocating for the queer community.

*"Queer cinema has the power to challenge attitudes, change lives, and bring communities together. At Inside Out, we are more than a film festival—we are a movement, a platform, and a celebration of the diverse voices that shape our world. In 2025, as we mark our 35th anniversary, we remain committed to championing queer storytellers, fostering industry innovation, and ensuring that these vital stories are seen, heard, and celebrated. Together, we amplify queer voices, fuel cultural transformation, and reaffirm that queer film is, and always will be, essential."*

Elie Chivi, Executive Director, Inside Out Film Festival



A panel during Inside Out Film Festival's International Finance Forum. (Photo: Dahlia Katz)

## Raag-Mala

Founded in 1981, **Raag-Mala** is a presenter of Indian classical music, shastriya sangeet. It offers an annual concert series at the Aga Khan Museum and the University of Toronto's Medical Science Auditorium. Raag-Mala aims to preserve shastriya sangeet, and to draw audiences and learners from all cultures.

## imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival

**imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival** promotes and fosters emerging and established Canadian Indigenous filmmakers and media artists in an international context. Established in 1998, imagineNATIVE is regarded as the most important Indigenous media arts festival in the world. It showcases Canadian and international Indigenous film and video makers, supports artists through workshops and panels, and provides a forum for discourse around global Indigenous aesthetics.



Nimkii & The Urban Niniis perform during the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival in Toronto. (Photo: Lindsay Duncan)

*".... imagineNATIVE is a home, a huge sense of belonging and it's truly inspiring and very heartwarming that such places can exist. This is how I want the future to be, community among indigenous, a place of belonging, where we don't have to over-explain our cultures because there's instant understanding among each other."*

*"imagineNATIVE is a community event, and it always feels like a reunion, seeing friends and artists that I might not have seen since the last festival. I attend mostly because it's a fun week, but also to see as many films as I can, to see music and art, to meet old friends, and to network and meet other artists and new people."*

*"It is the best, most important, and largest festival of its kind, with consistently high-caliber films and events."*

**Audience Members, imagineNATIVE**

*"As imagineNATIVE enters its 25th year as a global leader in showcasing Indigenous film and media arts, we reflect on the invaluable support and work that have fueled growth and strengthened the ability to serve our creative communities. **It's inspiring to recognize the progress made over the years, particularly the rise of Indigenous leadership across the arts and the positive impact this has had within the creative sector.** I am deeply aware of the important role imagineNATIVE has played in advancing these efforts, and I feel privileged to help hold space for and continue pushing forward the principles of Indigenous narrative sovereignty."*

**Naomi Johnson, Executive Director,  
imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival**





*Spectrum of Connection*, produced by Little Pear Garden Dance Company. (Photo: Ronny Nge)

## Little Pear Garden Dance Company

**Little Pear Garden Dance Company** is a repertory dance company founded in 1994 to raise the profile of professional Chinese-Canadian dance through the presentation and production of contemporary dance, Chinese opera, dance lectures, workshops, and exhibitions locally and nationally.



Workman Arts Members' Shorts Program at the Rendezvous with Madness Festival.  
(Photo: Henry Chan)

## Workman Arts

Founded in 1987 on the principle that the creative process is integral to the quest for personal and spiritual development, **Workman Arts** supports aspiring, emerging and established artists with mental illness and addiction issues in developing and refining their art forms. It also promotes a greater understanding of mental illness and addiction through creation and presentation activities, including the Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival.

*"Workman Arts is proud to enrich Toronto by blending the transformative power of art with mental health awareness through various initiatives. Through engaging exhibitions, creative workshops, and community events, Workman Arts provides safe and inclusive spaces for self-expression and healing, sparking important conversations."*

**Amadeo Ventura,**  
Executive Artistic Director,  
Workman Arts



Workman Arts poetry workshop at the Art Gallery of Ontario. (Photo: Workman Arts)

*"Making your day brighter by being there for you. Art and wellness. That's a great combination. Very supportive and generous!"*

**Member, Workman Arts**

*"There are so many programs and opportunities for arts education and community engagement! Spaces are accessible, accommodating, and welcoming for diverse individuals/populations as well."*

**Member and Instructor, Workman Arts**

*"This amazing organization helped me profoundly, after years of severe mental illness. It gave me not only enjoyable but also practical courses and development opportunities to discover & build my career in filmmaking, writing, acting well as poetry and painting. All for Free. It continues to be an incredible source of inspiration and always has trained, successful professionals teaching the courses. **It is literally life-changing.**"*

**Member, Workman Arts**





Learning opportunity led by Work in Culture. (Photo: Murphy Owusu)

## Work in Culture

**Work in Culture (WIC)** promotes and facilitates access into cultural careers, as well as career advancement and self-management, through a variety of programs and services.

*"Work in Culture believes strongly in the vital contribution of a thriving, vibrant and equitable arts, culture, and creative community to Canadian society. **We are here to support artists, creatives, and cultural workers across all arts disciplines and career levels by providing the business and entrepreneurial skills training, resources, and connections that they need to build a meaningful, sustainable career in the arts** – because we all stand to gain when artists and creators can practice and contribute their talent and perspectives to our Canadian communities."*

**Diane Davy, Executive Director,  
Work in Culture**



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored hoodie, stands on the right side of the frame, gesturing with her hands as if presenting. In front of her, a group of children are sitting on the floor, facing her. The background is a large, colorful mural. The mural features a large, stylized fish-like creature with a wide, toothy mouth and a red stripe running along its side. Above the fish are two circular symbols, each with a diagonal line through it, resembling 'no' signs. To the left of the fish is a smaller, patterned object. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent magenta filter.

# Eastern Ontario

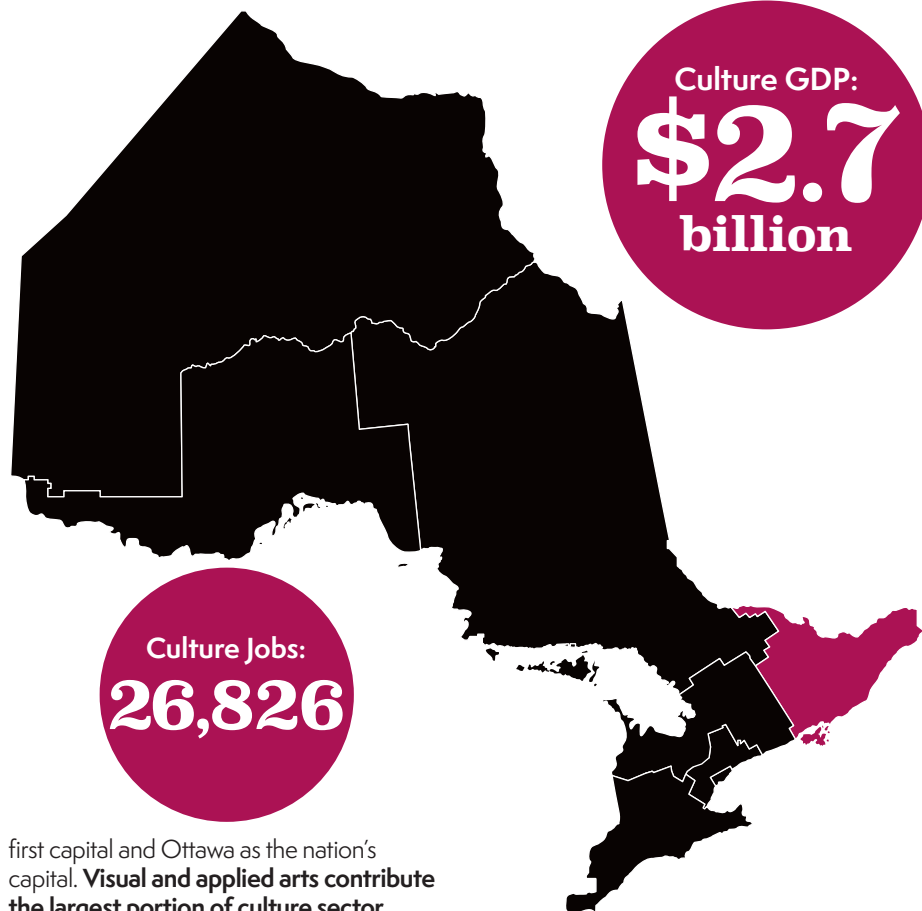
## 3.4. Eastern Ontario

Eastern Ontario is a region of cultural, linguistic, and historical significance at the crossroads of Canadian identity. Artists and arts organizations in this area celebrate and reflect Indigenous and Franco-Ontarian culture, and many diverse communities. The economy is supported by institutions, tourism, agriculture and technology sectors.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

Eastern Ontario is home to a thriving bilingual arts scene that accounts for 10% of the economic activity of the culture sector in Ontario. With a relatively urban population of two million people, the region is a significant contributor to Ontario's cultural economy. It is a region deeply shaped by the enduring presence of Indigenous and Francophone communities. Institutions like Aboriginal Experiences, Arts and Culture, Théâtre Action and small grassroots organizations honor both traditional and contemporary artistic expressions. With its economy anchored by Ottawa (population 1.1 million) and Kingston (population 168,000), the region employs a total of 874,000 people in sectors such as the federal government, public administration and educational services.

Eastern Ontario has a rich historical and cultural heritage with Kingston as Canada's



first capital and Ottawa as the nation's capital. **Visual and applied arts contribute the largest portion of culture sector work in the region at 8,047 jobs or 30% and generated \$769 million in GDP in 2022.** The region is also home to a significant print publishing industry. Both the heritage and libraries (23%) and written and published works (11%) sectors have a stronger presence in Eastern Ontario relative to their overall cultural domain share of the province (10%). The audio-visual and interactive media also makes up a significant proportion of the culture sector in Eastern Ontario, around 17% of all culture jobs and 25% of all culture GDP in the region.

A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. In Eastern Ontario, there is a high concentration of jobs in heritage and libraries (LQ 1.71), compared to the provincial average.

**Table 10: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Eastern Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	1,224	5%	23%	60,233	2%	26%	1.71
Live performances	2,477	9%	9%	102,464	4%	9%	0.63
Visual and applied arts	8,047	30%	10%	768,865	29%	11%	0.78
Written and published works	4,254	16%	11%	386,850	14%	11%	0.79
Audio-visual and interactive media	4,617	17%	8%	665,606	25%	9%	0.62
Sound recording	115	0%	5%	14,585	1%	6%	0.40
Transversal domains	6,093	23%	10%	676,183	25%	10%	0.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,826</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2,674,785</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

**Table 11: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector, Eastern Ontario, by CMA, 2022**

East Region CMA	Jobs	Share of Ontario Total	GDP (\$M)	Share of Ontario Total
Belleville	927	0.3%	78	0.3%
Kingston	425	0.2%	37	0.1%
Ottawa-Gatineau (Ontario part)	17,986	7%	1,949	7%
<b>East Region CMA's Total</b>	<b>19,338</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2,064</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Ontario Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>		<b>26,366</b>	

Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model

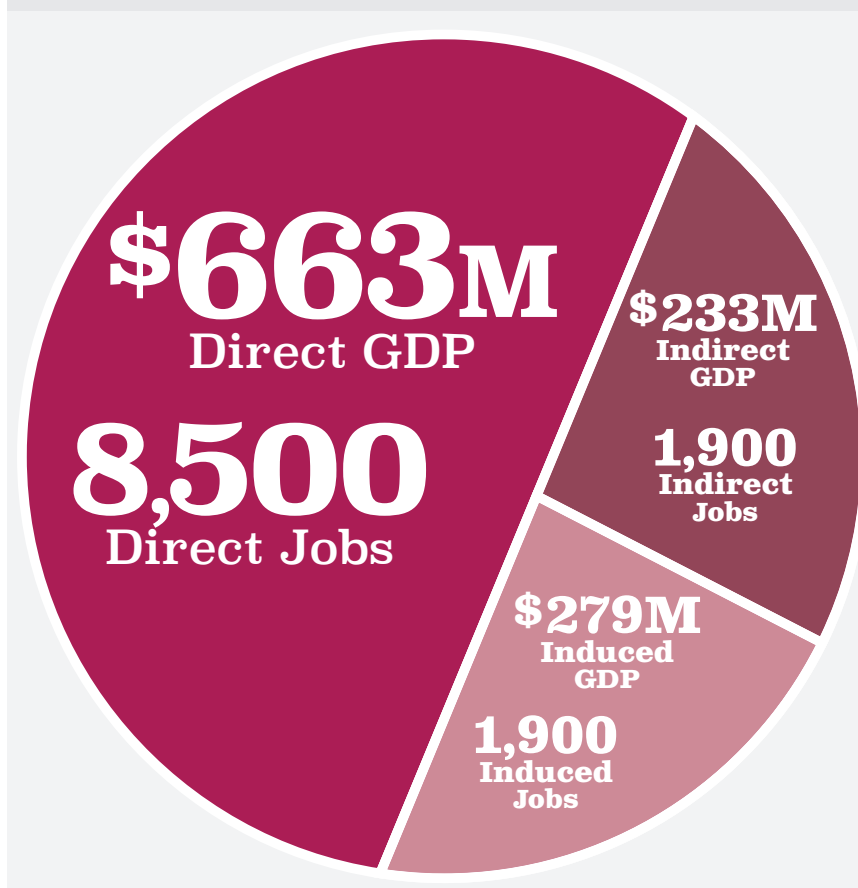


Agnes Etherington Art Centre camp.  
(Photo: Viara Mileva)

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT **\$1.2 billion in GDP**

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Eastern Ontario generated a total of \$1.2 billion in GDP and 12,300 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$1.3 billion.

**Figure 18: Economic Impact of arts and culture tourism, Eastern Ontario, 2022**



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)



## Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

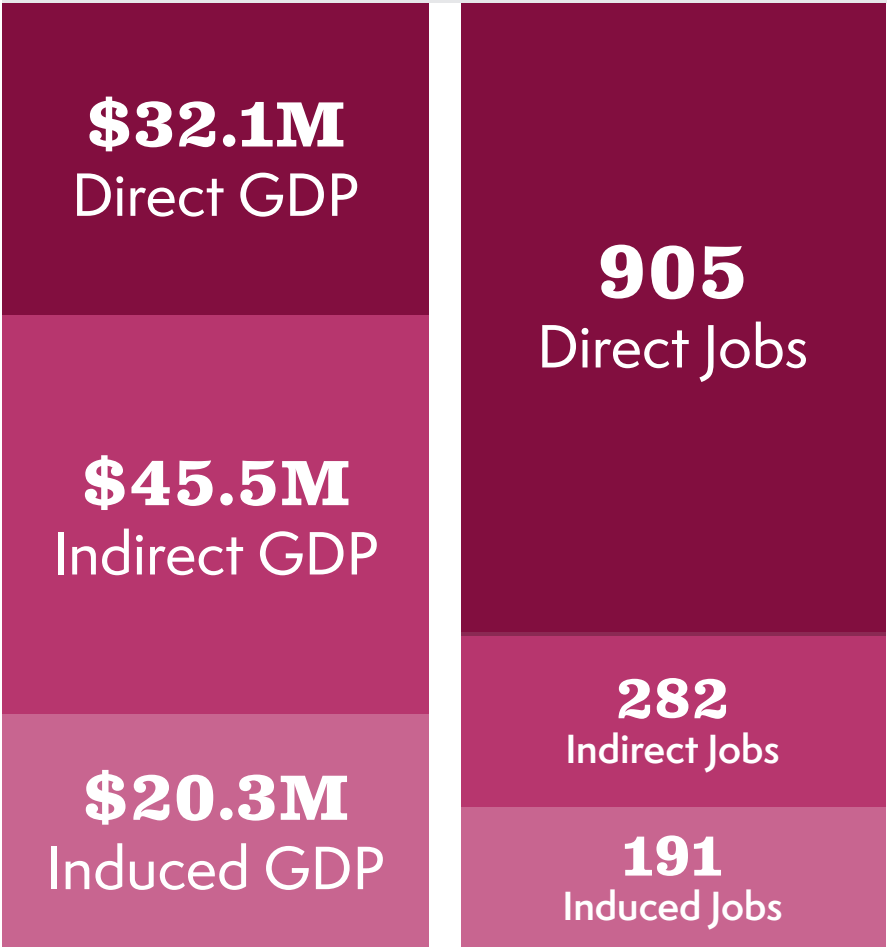
With a total investment of \$3.7 million in operating grants by OAC, 85 funded arts organizations generated a total of \$97.9 million in GDP and 1,378 FTEs to Ontario economy. Additionally, Nordicity estimates that OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$29 million taxes, including \$13.7 million federal taxes, \$10 million provincial taxes and \$5.3 million municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$1.9 million (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Eastern Ontario.



Ottawa's Capital Chamber Choir. (Photo: Curtis Perry)

**Figure 19:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, Eastern Ontario, 2022

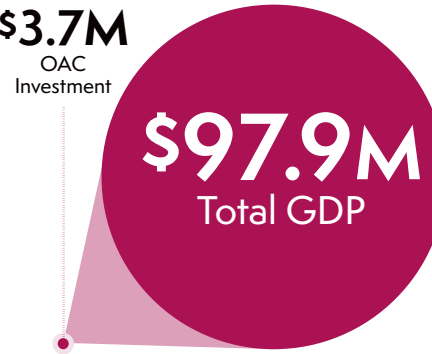


Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 20:**

Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, Eastern Ontario, 2022

OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Eastern Ontario Region	
Total GDP	\$97.9M
Total Employment	1,378
Federal Taxes	\$13.7M
Provincial Taxes	\$10.0M
Municipal Taxes	\$5.3M
OAC Investment	\$3.7M



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)



*SPIN*, presented by OutSpoke Productions. (Photo courtesy of OutSpoke Productions)

In 2022-23, 79 OAC-funded organizations attracted audiences of over 9 million and provided community building opportunities to almost 10,000 volunteers who provided a total of 255,224 hours representing an estimated financial value of about \$8 million.

**Figure 21: Volunteerism and Attendance, Eastern Ontario, 2022**

**OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Eastern Ontario Region**

Total number of volunteers	9,671
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	255,224
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$7,978,302
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>9,762,587</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"Tourism Kingston is so excited for Agnes's Arts and Events Hub! It's an ideal location for a variety of events, from weddings and corporate celebrations to so many cool arts events that will benefit all sectors of Tourism Kingston. We look forward to collaborating with Agnes to host conferences and other events in this beautiful, state-of-the-art facility."*

**Ashley Bradshaw,**  
Destination Development  
Manager, Tourism Kingston

## Agnes Etherington Art Centre

The **Agnes Etherington Art Centre** serves Queen's University and the Kingston area through collecting, research, interpretation, and exhibition. It opened in 1957 in the historic Etherington House and was expanded in 2000 to include eight exhibition spaces and a studio space for education programs. The collection of 17,000 works has strengths in Canadian, European and African art. The Agnes Etherington Art Centre is closed from May 2024 to September 2026 while their new facility, Agnes Reimagined is built. During the closure, the "Agnes" continues to engage in partnerships across the arts ecosystem.

*"Indigenous self-determination spaces will allow for the continued use and implementation of our cultural practices and traditions, while also providing a safe space for Indigenous staff, students, artists and guests alike. Agnes Reimagined is a step toward reconciliation and Indigenizing spaces at Queen's University."*

**Al Doxtator, Oneida Elder,  
Cultural Advisor,  
Office of Indigenous Initiatives,  
Queen's University**

*"The team at Agnes have been offering much needed art and wellness programming over the last number of years ... Art Hive was such a special program that we decided to open one for patients at Providence Care Hospital in Kingston. **This is a great way for patients to join in a community setting and let their stress and pain relax a bit through making art.** If Agnes had not started offering this, we might not have known about the magic of Art Hive. It's so important that healing come from creative expression as art is medicine too. Thank you, Agnes!"*

**Barb Robinson,  
Clinical Nurse Specialist  
Providence Care Hospital**



Students are led through the first portion of Agnes's educational school programs, designed to engage school-aged children in art and artmaking. (Photo: Tim Forbes)

**"Socially minded and civically engaged, Agnes values our region as a site of artistic innovation and entrepreneurship.** As Kingston artist Francisco Corbett said after we graffiti'd our facades (Transformations, 2022): "Kingston isn't boring anymore!" We're the "big" institution in town, but we choose to use that stature to transform the culture of this place—the first capital of Canada—exemplifying how museums of the past can inhabit the future. Through our community-engaged design process for Agnes Reimagined (opening in 2026), modelled on Anishinaabe talking circles, the beloved Agnes is building a welcoming culture-making hub with and for the diverse communities we serve."

**Emelie Chhangur, Director and Curator, Agnes Etherington Art Centre**

**"As a community docent since 2002, I have experienced first-hand the rewards of taking visitors through many exhibitions at Agnes,** from ESL students grasping a new language, to groups from the School of Rehabilitation honing their observational skills, to local seniors enjoying a tour and tea. This range shows Agnes's strong public outreach. We docents are ambassadors for Kingston in our encounters with tourists, for whom the city has become an important stop on the route between Quebec City and Toronto. We are all impressed with the world-class collection in this lovely house and gallery that is the Agnes Etherington Art Centre."

**Judith Walker, Community Docent**





The Department of Illumination presents The Firelight Lantern Festival at the Crystal Palace in Picton. (Photo: Krista Dalby)

## Great Canadian Theatre Company

**Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC)**, Ottawa's regional theatre company, was founded by Carleton University professors and students in 1975. An important contributor to the development of a Canadian canon of theatrical work, with a particular interest in social justice and political themes, it is one of the foundational alternative theatres in the country. In the fall of 2007, its previous, inadequate facility was replaced with a purpose-built space with two theatres and sufficient administrative and production facilities.



Ottawa-based Great Canadian Theatre Company production of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. (Photo: Curtis Perry)

## Théâtre Action

Founded in 1974, **Théâtre Action** is the oldest Franco-Ontarian arts service organization. It provides members with professional development opportunities, conducts research on the theatre community, and coordinates advocacy efforts for the sector. Théâtre Action's programming includes the biennial festival *Feuilles vives* that features unpublished works by Francophone theatre artists, as well as their annual *Festival de théâtre en milieu scolaire* that has been a model for arts education activity.

*"This was a Théâtre Action tour de force, which doesn't surprise me. Yet I'm always amazed by how your extraordinary organization is continually increasing its efforts to nurture the artists of tomorrow."*

**Participant in the Festival Théâtre Action en milieu scolaire**



Community theatre activity led by Théâtre Action in Vanier. (Photo: Gessyca Bikakoudi)

*"Théâtre Action is a pillar of Ontario's Francophone theatre community. It brings together artists, professional companies, community troupes, and school initiatives across the province. By fostering spaces for reflection, training and creation, we actively contribute to the theatre ecosystem's resilience and sustainability. Motivated by values of inclusion, solidarity, leadership and high standards, we amplify our members' voices, promote their outreach, and support sustainable development that celebrates diverse practices and perspectives."*

**Benoit Roy, Executive Director, Théâtre Action**





# Central Ontario



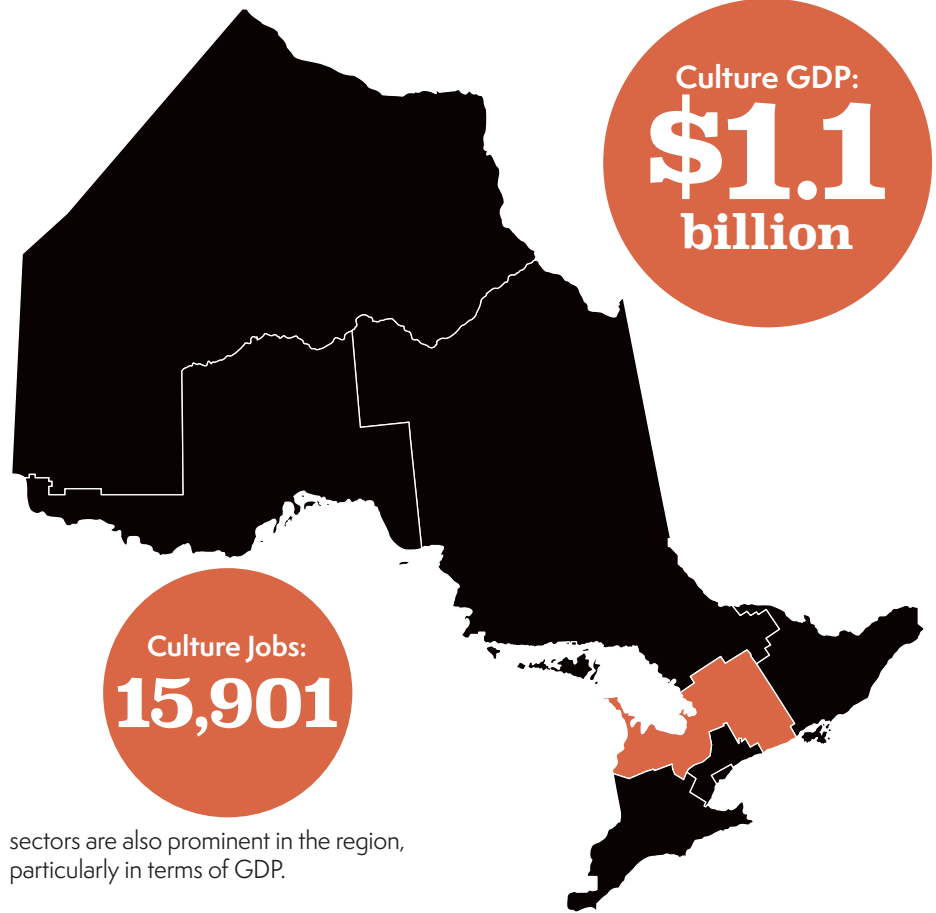
## 3.5. Central Ontario

The culture sector provides a high volume of employment with the visual and applied arts making up the largest share (30%) of Central Ontario's cultural economy in terms of GDP and jobs. Heritage and Libraries represent a high concentration of jobs and GDP compared to the provincial average.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

Central Ontario is home to 1.3 million people, with total employment of 519,000 in 2022. Its economy is driven by the culture sector; tourism; agriculture; forestry and fishing; and power generation primarily by the Bruce Nuclear Generating Station with over 4,000 employees. Barrie (population 157,000) and Peterborough (population 88,000) are the region's largest commercial centres.

**Central Ontario's culture sector contributes nearly 16,000 jobs and over \$1 billion in GDP.** It accounts for 6% of the province's culture sector employment and 4% of the province's culture GDP. The visual and applied arts make up the largest share (30%) of the region's cultural economy in terms of GDP and jobs. The publishing and audio-visual and interactive media



sectors are also prominent in the region, particularly in terms of GDP.

Central region also boasts a strong heritage and libraries domain, accounting for 11% of the jobs and 8% of GDP in this industry across the province. Central Ontario has a high location quotient for Heritage and Library jobs (LQ 1.79) and GDP (LQ 2.06) among OAC regions. A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the

provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. On a job or GDP basis, Heritage and Library activity is almost twice as concentrated in Central Ontario as compared to the entire cultural economy in the province. **These figures suggest that the region has a higher number of cultural and heritage sites that employ a larger share of the local workforce, particularly in areas like Muskoka and Kawartha Lakes.**

**Table 12: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Central Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

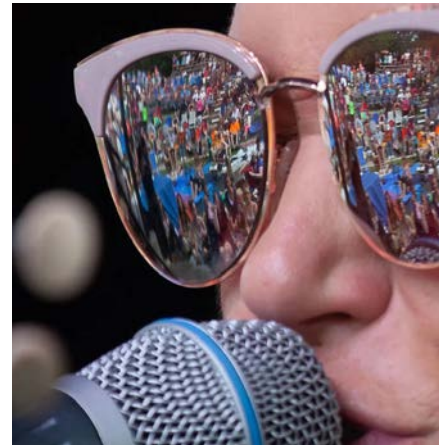
Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	562	4%	11%	19,700	2%	8%	1.32
Live performances	1,287	8%	4%	36,753	3%	3%	0.55
Visual and applied arts	4,770	30%	6%	312,205	29%	4%	0.78
Written and published works	3,343	21%	8%	217,917	20%	6%	1.05
Audio-visual and interactive media	2,246	14%	4%	212,298	20%	3%	0.50
Sound recording	82	1%	4%	6,230	1%	2%	0.48
Transversal domains	3,611	23%	6%	270,733	25%	4%	0.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,901</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1,075,836</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

**Table 13: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector in Central Ontario, by CMA, 2022**

Central Region CMA	Jobs	Share of Ontario Total	GDP (\$M)	Share of Ontario Total
Barrie	2,792	1%	165	1%
Peterborough	2,145	1%	148	1%
<b>Central Region CMA's Total</b>	<b>4,937</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Ontario Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>		<b>26,366</b>	

Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model

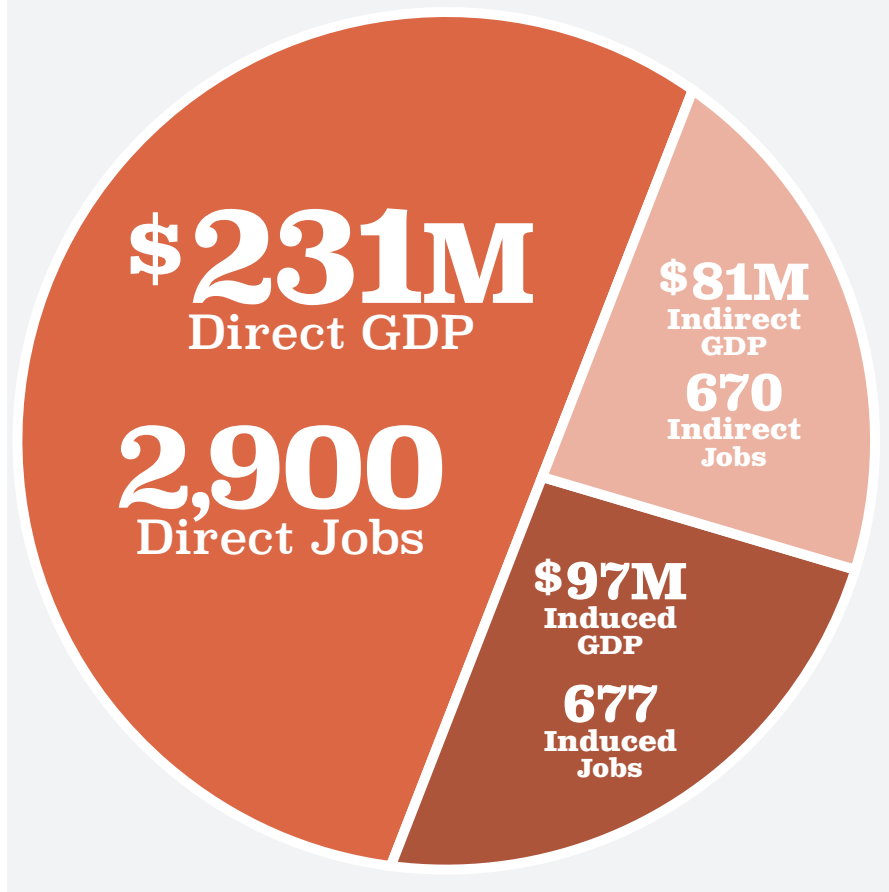


Summerfolk Music and Crafts Festival in Owen Sound. (Photo: John Fearnall)

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT \$409 million in GDP

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Central Ontario generated a total of \$409 million in GDP and 4,247 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$461 million.

**Figure 22: Economic Impact of arts and culture tourism, Central Ontario, 2022**



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

## Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

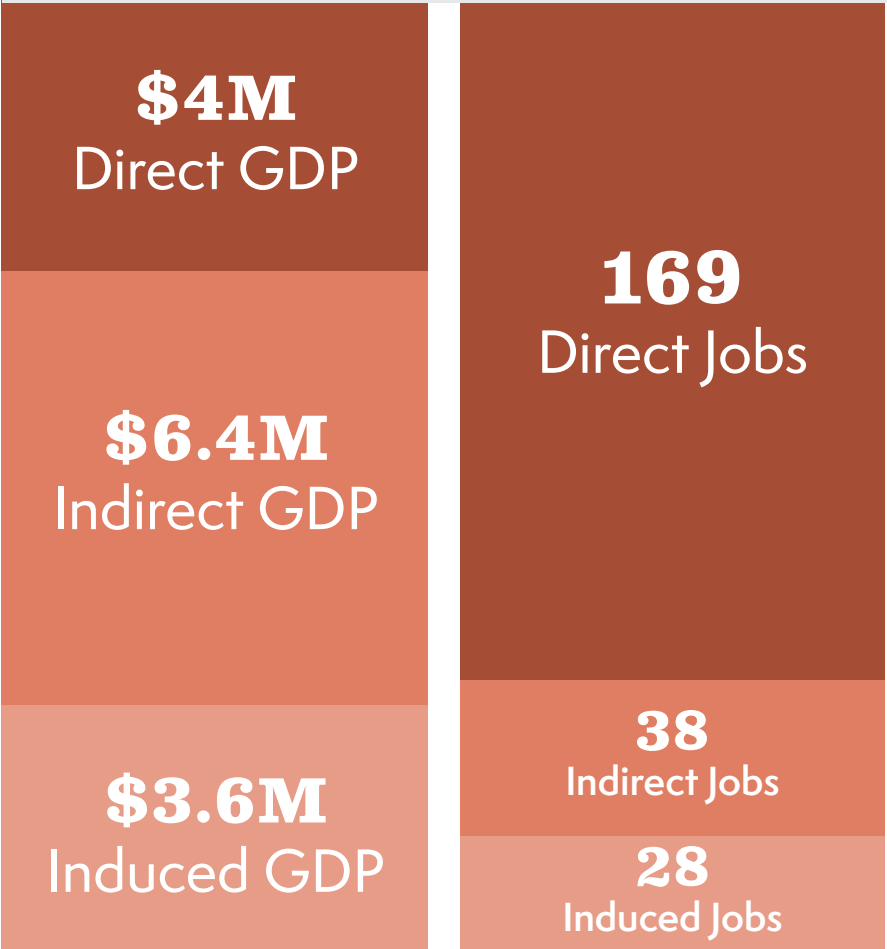
With a total investment of \$945,000 in operating grants by OAC, 23 funded arts organizations contributed a total of \$14 million in GDP and 238 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, Nordicity estimates that OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$4.2 million in taxes, including \$2 million in federal taxes, \$1.4 million in provincial taxes and \$800,000 in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$644,000 (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Central Ontario.



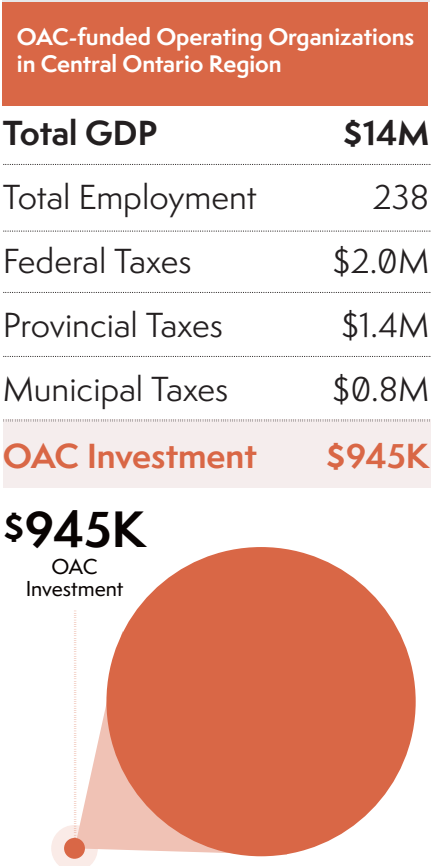
School tour of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound. (Photo: Heather McLeese)

**Figure 23:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, Central Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 24:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, Central Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





*Saltwater Cures All*, multimedia video installation by artist Racquel Rowe at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound.  
(Photo: Becky Comber)

In 2022-23, OAC-funded arts organizations in Central Ontario employed over 3,000 volunteers which contributed a total of 67,666 working hours. **Nordicity estimates that those volunteers delivered over \$2 million in financial value.**<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 25: Volunteerism and Attendance, Central Ontario, 2022**

**OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Central Ontario Region**

Total number of volunteers	3,080
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	67,665
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$2,115,239
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>194,994</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"Michèle and I had such a great time at Westben last night. While I've had the pleasure of working there many times over the years, and been in the audience on numerous occasions, it never ceases to amaze me how very well run and welcoming Westben is. From the moment we pulled into the driveway we got that feeling that we were somewhere special. The first person who greeted us made us feel like family. Just the walk along the path to the entrance seems to take one to another place, a place of peace and relaxation, away from the hustle and bustle of our busy lives."*

**Brian Barlow, Musician and Audience Member**





Performance at Westben in Campbellford. (Photo courtesy of Westben)

## Westben Arts Festival Theatre

**Westben** is a year-round performing arts center that brings people together through music in nature. Located on a 50-acre farm near Campbellford, it has presented over 1,000 performances featuring 1,200 artists and 170,000 ticket buyers since July 1, 2000. The rich variety of genres presented at its four outdoor venues reflect ongoing relationships with partners ranging from nearby Alderville First Nation to a multiplicity of cultures from across Canada. In addition to the summer music festival, the annual international Performer Composer Residency invites artists to share practices and cultures with the local community. Year-round educational programming has welcomed over 5,000 families through 4 choirs, lifelong learning programs and performance opportunities.

*"In the spring, my three children were involved in Westben's production of *The Selfish Giant's Garden*. Westben has always been a safe place for my children, where they feel accepted and heard. They look forward to every season, but this year was different. **Taking part in a fully-staged musical was a dream come true for my little theatre lovers, and they looked forward to every rehearsal.** The positive impacts of this production will have a ripple effect on my kids (and I suspect all of the children involved) for years to come."*

**Lorraine Morford, Mother of Children in the Westben Youth & Teen Choruses,  
Westben's Education Programming**



Exhibit installation of work by Innisfil-based visual artist Janet Read. (Photo courtesy of Janet Read)





Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia. (Photo: John Fearnall)

## Mariposa Folk Festival

Central Ontario has an active live performance scene with deep roots in folk music, song, and dance. The **Mariposa Folk Festival** is one of the oldest folk festivals in the country and perhaps the world; it has gone through many changes over its lifetime. Now back in its original home in Orillia, Mariposa presents its yearly festival out of a storefront community arts centre, as it continues to preserve folk art in Canada through song, story, dance, and craft.

## Georgian Bay Folk Society

**Georgian Bay Folk Society (GBFS)** is the primary presenter of roots music in the Grey Bruce region since 1978. In addition to their annual Summerfolk festival at Kelso Beach in August in downtown Owen Sound, GBFS produces year-round programming that supports emerging, local, and Canadian artists, and includes youth-focused outreach initiatives. It also produces year-round concerts and showcases featuring local and national folk and roots musicians.



# Northeast Ontario



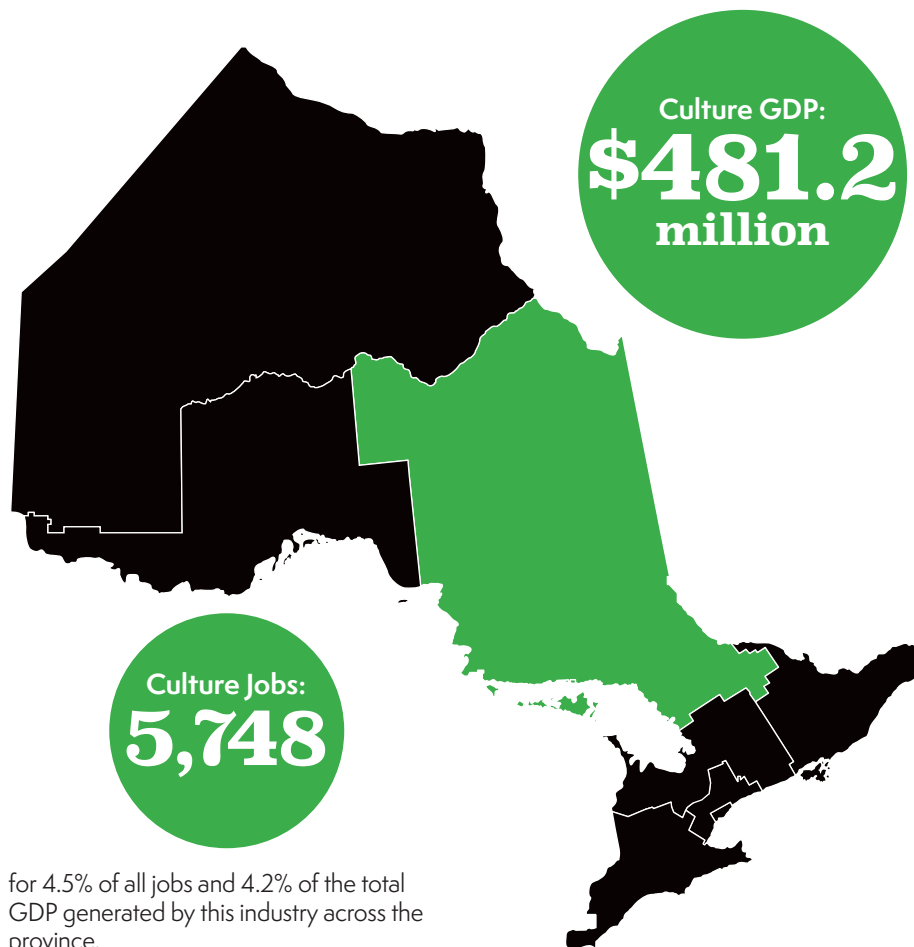
## 3.6. Northeast Ontario

In Northeast Ontario, arts and culture is a vital thread connecting people to land and legacy. Indigenous-led initiatives and community-driven programs create safe spaces for intergenerational learning.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

Being one of the smaller regions in Ontario on a population basis, 590,000 with 234,000 employed, Northeast Ontario accounts for 2% of the province's culture jobs and GDP. The region has a strong Indigenous presence, with 13% of the identifying as Indigenous in the 2021 Census. Many First Nations communities play an active role in businesses and tourism initiatives. Northeast Ontario also has a rich Franco-Ontario heritage: for 17% of population, French is their first language, according to the 2021 Census. Indeed, in regions such as Sudbury French-language cultural institutions thrive.

Although the culture sector represents a modest share of employment and GDP in the region, the Heritage and Library industry is significantly concentrated in Northeast Ontario. The region accounts



for 4.5% of all jobs and 4.2% of the total GDP generated by this industry across the province.

Northeast Ontario is known for its natural resource-based economy; however, the regional economy has diversified. **Cities like Sudbury and North Bay have become hubs for film and TV production in Northern Ontario, which is reflected in the audio-visual and interactive media domain, which makes up 27% of the total culture GDP of Northeast Ontario. An equally well-developed economic driver is the visual and applied arts domain, which represents 30% of the**

#### cultural output of Northeast Ontario.

A location quotient (LQ) is a measure used to analyze the concentration of a particular industry in a specific area. An LQ greater than 1 suggests that the industry has a higher concentration of activity in the local area compared to the provincial average. LQs are useful for identifying regional economic strengths and specializations. Northeast Ontario has a higher concentration of jobs in heritage and libraries (LQ 1.25), compared to the provincial average.

**Table 14: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Northeast Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	240	4%	4.5%	9,945	2%	4.2%	1.25
Live performances	420	7%	1.4%	14,516	3%	1.3%	0.40
Visual and applied arts	1,740	30%	2.3%	138,277	29%	2.0%	0.63
Written and published works	911	16%	2.3%	67,672	14%	2.0%	0.63
Audio-visual and interactive media	1,133	20%	2.0%	129,090	27%	1.7%	0.56
Sound recording	0	0%	0.0%	0	0%	0.0%	0.00
Transversal domains	1,306	23%	2.1%	121,675	25%	1.8%	0.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,748</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>481,176</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>0.59</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account



**Table 15: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector in Northeast Ontario, by CMA, 2022**

Northeast Region CMA	Jobs	Share of Ontario Total	GDP (\$M)	Share of Ontario Total
Greater Sudbury	2,239	1%	210	1%
<b>Northeast Region CMA's Total</b>	<b>2,239</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Ontario Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>		<b>26,366</b>	

Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model



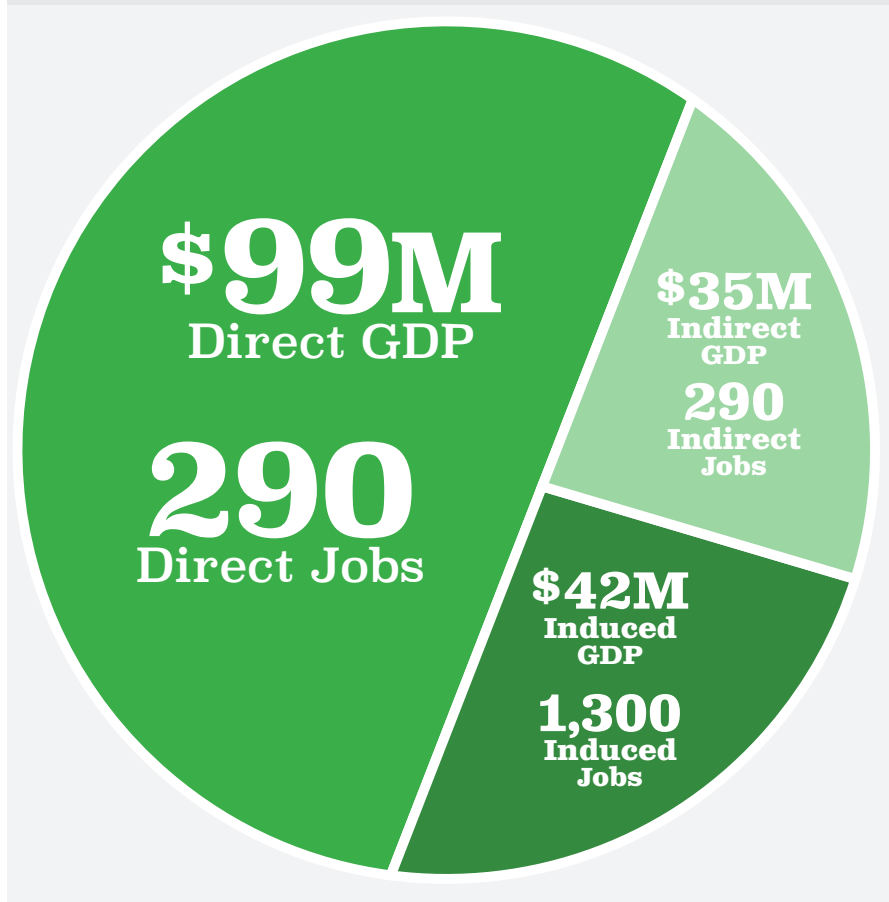
Performance as part of Centre régional de Loisirs culturel's St-Jean festival in Kapuskasing. (Photo: Julien Boucher)

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT

# \$176 million in GDP

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Northeast Ontario generated a total of \$176 million in GDP and 1,880 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$198 million.

**Figure 26: Economic impact of arts and culture tourism, Northeast Ontario, 2022**



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

# Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

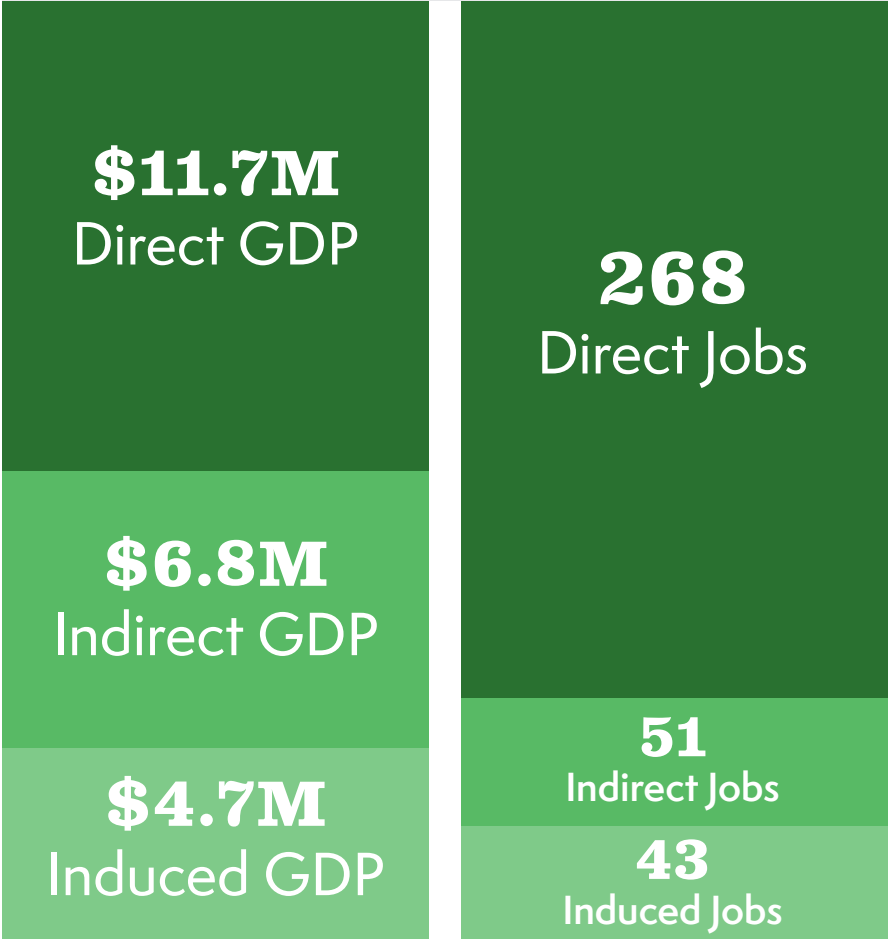
With a total investment of \$1.9 million in operating grants by OAC, 32 funded arts organizations contributed a total of \$23.2 million in GDP and 361 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, Nordicity estimates that OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$6.7 million in taxes, including \$3.2 million in federal taxes, \$2.3 million in provincial taxes and \$1.2 million in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$1.5 million (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Northeast Ontario.



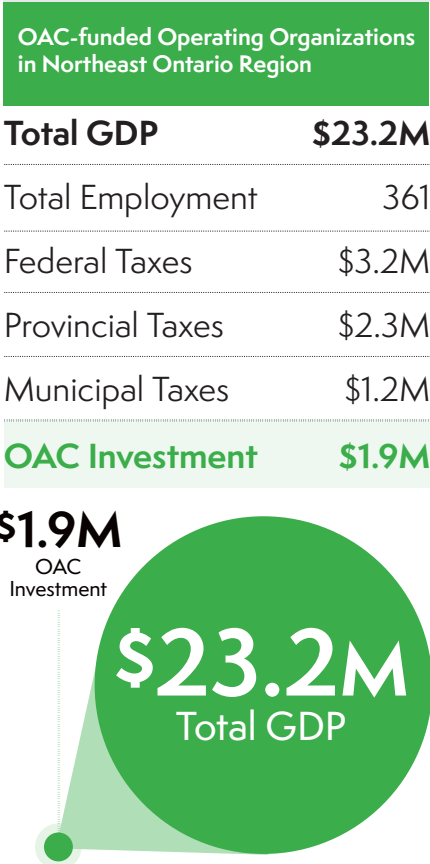
L'Exposition idéale at the Place des Arts in Sudbury, part of Carrefour francophone de Sudbury's programming. (Photo: Aline Fablet)

**Figure 27:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, Northeast Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 28:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, Northeast Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





YES Theatre presents *Here Comes the Sun: The Music of the Beatles* at the Refettorio in Sudbury. (Photo: Juan Enchavarria)

In 2022-23, 29 OAC-funded arts organizations in Northeast Ontario attracted audiences of 197,177 providing community building opportunities to 1,848 volunteers who delivered a total of 38,740 hours of work valued at over \$1 million.

**Figure 29: Volunteerism and Attendance, Northeast, 2022**

OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Northeast Ontario Region	
Total number of volunteers	1,848
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	38,740
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$1,211,012
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>197,177</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"The Near North Mobile Media Lab (N2M2L) is central to the North Bay arts community. It is the lead organizer of the Ice Follies Biennial and the North Bay Film Festival, both of which are storied and beloved highlights of North Bay's cultural event calendar. N2M2L's key role in supporting and amplifying the diverse and emerging artistic voices in Northern Ontario is further exemplified by its Digital Creator and media arts equipment rental programs. Without N2M2L's essential role, these events and programs would simply not be possible."*

**Stephen Lee, Past N2M2L Board Member and North Bay Film Collective Member**



## Thinking Rock Community Arts

### Thinking Rock Community Arts

is a non-profit community arts organization based in Thessalon, Ontario, that creates art with, and for, people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds living along the North Shore of Lake Huron, from Spanish to Sault Ste. Marie and all points in between. It aims to build relationships across cultures and communities and to increase access to the arts for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The organization has generated over 100 local jobs and secured \$1 million in funding directly reinvested into Northern Ontario communities.

In addition to the economic impact, Thinking Rock has played a transformative role in reconciliation and cultural healing by leveraging community-engaged arts to address social, cultural, and economic challenges. Thinking Rock projects often create safe spaces for dialogue and story-sharing on difficult topics, such as systemic racism and intergenerational trauma. Over the years, the organization has collaborated with Indigenous and settler artists to co-create art rooted

in local stories. Projects like The Story of Our Stories engage participants in sharing personal and collective histories through creating arts. The Story of Our Stories research report findings suggest that community-engaged arts have the potential for healing through creating connections to cultural and personal histories and legacies.

The multi-year project Social Fabric explores diverse fabric and textile-making traditions. It is a unique initiative that blends shared practices from Indigenous, Newcomers, and settler communities. Local and regional artists, practitioners and skill-holders collaborate with community and artistic team members to uncover the region's rich history of craftsmanship. By engaging in these traditional handcrafts, the Social Fabric project fosters cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogues. Participants from the program draw inspirations from repair techniques to reflect on healing within the community.

*"I am a senior artist who sculpts in papier mâché and paints and draws in a variety of mediums. I joined Thinking Rock at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, having heard of it from a fellow artist who was living in Northern Ontario. **The Social Fabric meetings and workshop sessions took me through the pandemic and beyond with a sense of belonging to a Northern Ontario artists' community.** Starting in 2020, I attended Social Fabric meetings and joined every online workshop I could through the pandemic. [These programs] provided a welcoming space to listen to and share ideas... I have incorporated many of the learned skills and ideas into my own practice and continue to share these new skills and ideas with my local community of friends, fellow artists and students. Through the pandemic I looked forward to receiving mailings of carefully prepared supplies for each workshop. They became a physical connection to the Thinking Rock online workshops and I still refer back to them...Thinking Rock has given me a unique and valuable opportunity to meet with and share ideas with fellow artists throughout Northern Ontario and beyond ... an opportunity that I would not have without this group. I am speaking for myself, but I have no doubt that other artists who are part of the Thinking Rock community feel the same."*

**Suzanne McCrae, Programming Participant**

*"We fulfill our mission of **community benefit in artful, heartfelt ways:** providing high-quality, inclusive artistic programs and projects created with, for and about the communities we serve; caring for people and the sector by championing decent work and the value of artistic labour; nurturing well-being, joy and interconnection in our rural, under-resourced region through arts-based programming, job creation and local investment; and demonstrating, alongside collaborators of all Nations, ages, abilities, backgrounds and identities, art's unique effectiveness at bringing us together to surface and celebrate our stories and share our gifts in the co-creation of vibrant todays and brighter tomorrows."*

**Miranda Bouchard,**  
Artistic Director,  
Thinking Rock Community Arts

*"For the last month or so I've been thinking about access. Coming from a community arts background I always found there was so much magic in those spaces in taking care of each other. **This is the first time in a long time I've felt that connection and I'm really appreciative.** We're all alone but these kinds of opportunities to come together and talk about what matters to us and what's important – with a little bit but not too much structure – are really important and powerful moments."*

**Focus Group Respondent**









Ice Follies on frozen Lake Nipissing in North Bay, co-presented by Aanmitaagzi, Near North Mobile Media Lab and the White Water Gallery. (Photo: Liz Lott)

## Near North Mobile Media Lab

The **Near North Mobile Media Lab (N2M2L)** has been supporting the creation and presentation of media arts in the near north region since its inception in 2004. Based in North Bay, it has a mobile unit that can travel and serve artists and arts organizations in other regional communities. The Near North Mobile Media Lab co-curates the biannual Ice Follies event on Lake Nipissing, the North Bay Film Festival, and runs the Digital Creator North program, a free, low-barrier program for youth and emerging artists with a focus on using digital and media arts tools to support creativity.

*"This is the place where my career in animation has started!"*

**Cohen, 12, Participant at Digital Creator Animation Camp**

*"It was wonderful to get to make a work for Ice Follies. I was particularly interested in the exhibition space as it exists only when it's cold enough to freeze as solid ground. I learned a lot in the process of working with sound and electronics in the cold wind of lake Nipissing."*

**Anyse Ducharme, Media Artist,  
Curator and Teacher from  
Northeastern Ontario**

*"As an Indigenous artist and community arts organizer, storytelling and connection are at the heart of everything I do. **The mentorship and support I've received from the Near North Mobile Media Lab when I was working with them was instrumental in helping me grow both creatively and professionally.** They also helped me with my grassroots organization's (Taleweavers Alliance) first grant, acting as an organization mentor throughout the process. Through my work with Taleweavers Alliance, N2M2L, and Digital Creator North Bay, I've had the opportunity to uplift Indigenous and queer voices, foster safe spaces for youth, and build relationships that strengthen our creative community. The guidance I've received has allowed me to walk this path with confidence, and I'm grateful for the opportunities that continue to shape my journey."*

**Katya Serré, Two-Spirit Anishinaabe  
Interdisciplinary Artist from Nipissing  
First Nation**

*"Near North Mobile Media Lab champions northern Ontario's creative voices by providing essential tools, training, and platforms for digital and media artists. Through hands-on workshops, youth-focused programs like Digital Creator North, and community-driven festivals such as Ice Follies and the North Bay Film Festival, we cultivate vibrant spaces where artists and audiences connect. Our partnerships with local organizations and mentorship of emerging arts leaders strengthen the region's cultural landscape. We are dedicated to building a thriving, sustainable arts community that supports innovative media artists and contributes meaningfully to broader artistic discourse."*

**Sharon Switzer, Executive Director, Near North Mobile Media Lab**





Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario's production *Garçon !*, in the Grande Salle at the Place des Arts in Sudbury. (Photo: Loïc Gauthier Le Coz)



Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario's production of *Encyclopédie de l'échec*. (Photo: Joël Ducharme)

## Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario

**Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario (TNO)** is a theatre company based in Sudbury that was founded in 1971 at the height of a cooperative artistic movement called la Coopérative artistique du Nouvel-Ontario (CANO). Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario creates, tours and presents theatre with the aim of developing and promoting works by Franco-Ontarian authors and Canadian playwrights. As part of La Place des Arts du Grand Sudbury, along with six other arts organizations, it is a significant contributor to the development of Francophone artists in the North.

*"At TNO, we're convinced that theatre is an integral part of a vibrant society, and that we have a crucial role to play in our community's vitality. Our projects over the next few years will therefore continue to energize the arts scene in Sudbury by providing opportunities not only for the creation of original works, but also for ongoing professional development and the employment of many Ontario artists. Our activities will continue to play an essential role in fostering a flourishing and successful Francophone community by involving it in meaningful theatrical works and other engaging cultural projects."*

**Joanne Huneault, Board President,  
Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario**

*"I appreciate your presence in our community immensely. Your activities in our beautiful Place des Arts are palpably vibrant. Keep it up! You are valued and needed! So, hats off to you!"*

**Audience Member**



## Creative Industries

**Creative Industries (CI)** is the regional arts service organization for North Bay, Nipissing. Its mandate is to support, connect and promote the creative sector to foster a progressive and prosperous community. Through regional relationships and working alongside

local creative and non-creative sectors, CI communicates the positive impact of a strong creative sector by engaging in research and producing videos. In 2022, it launched a local creative sector micro-grant program with municipal funding support.



Guest artists Angela Garwood-Touw and Joanna Millson perform with the Timmins Symphony Orchestra at St. Anthony of Padua Cathedral.  
(Photo: Karina Douglas-Takayesu)





# Northwest Ontario



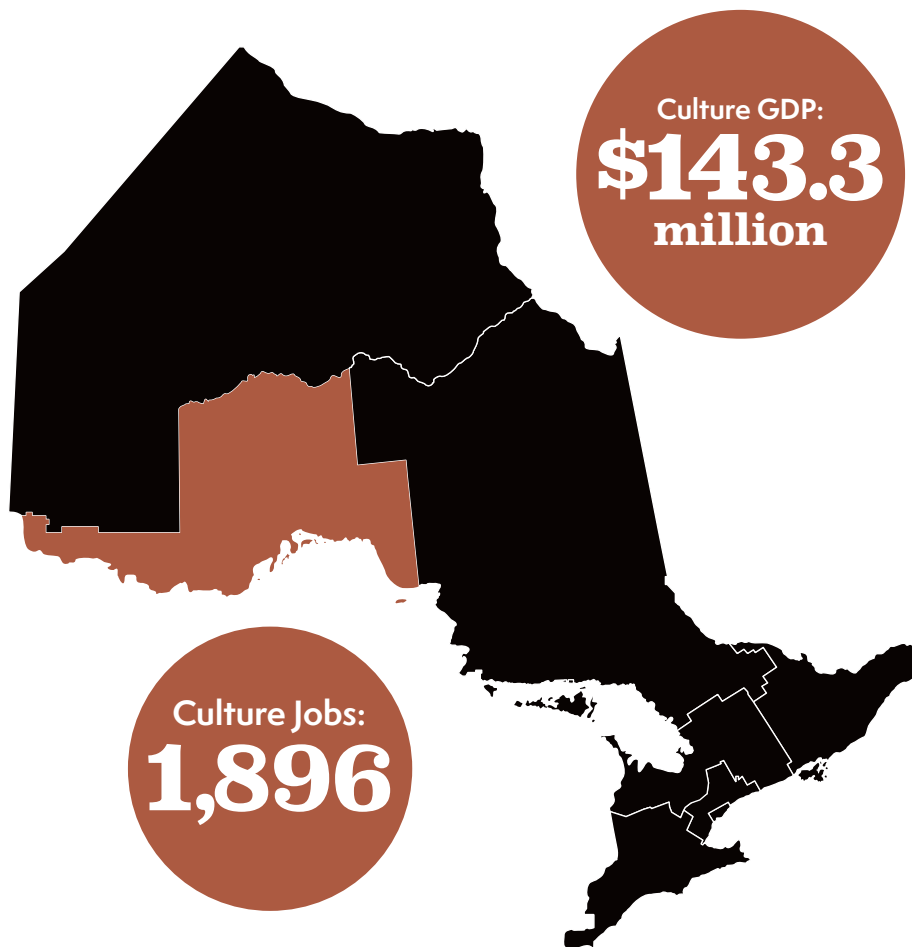
## 3.7. Northwest Ontario

Northwest Ontario is a region shaped by its Indigenous heritage and reflected in storytelling and visual arts. The region's strength in visual arts highlights its role in artistic innovation.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

Northwest Ontario is the second smallest of the eight OAC regions with a population of 174,000 with a total employment of 72,000 and culture employment estimated at 1,896 in 2022. The regional economy is largely shaped by natural resource industries including mining and forestry.

Northwest Ontario is home to Anishinaabe, Cree, and Métis communities and cultural activity has a strong focus on artisanal crafts, Pow Wows, and storytelling. Indeed, the region has a strong Indigenous presence, with 17% of the population identified as Indigenous in the 2021 Census.



**The largest culture domain in the region is the visual and applied arts sector, supporting 34% of all culture jobs and generating 37% of all culture GDP in Northwest Ontario.** Written and published works also make up a significant proportion of Northwest Ontario's cultural output at just over one fifth of the jobs and GDP.

As with other less densely populated regions in Ontario, the Heritage and Library industry shows a strong

concentration in Northwest Ontario, relative to the province, with a location quotient (LQ) of 1.67. The LQ is a metric used to assess how concentrated a particular industry is in a specific area compared to the provincial average. An LQ greater than 1 indicates a higher local concentration, highlighting regional economic strengths and areas of specialization.

**Table 16: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Northwest Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	98	5%	1.8%	4,023	3%	1.7%	1.67
Live performances	196	10%	0.7%	6,736	5%	0.6%	0.61
Visual and applied arts	653	34%	0.8%	52,364	37%	0.8%	0.77
Written and published works	407	21%	1.0%	31,327	22%	0.9%	0.92
Audio-visual and interactive media	96	5%	0.2%	11,466	8%	0.1%	0.16
Sound recording	14	1%	0.7%	1,442	1%	0.6%	0.61
Transversal domains	431	23%	0.7%	35,905	25%	0.5%	0.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,896</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>143,263</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.64</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account

**Table 17: Economic Contribution of Culture Sector in Northwest Ontario, by CMA, 2022**

Northwest Region CMA	Jobs	Share of Ontario Total	GDP (\$M)	Share of Ontario Total
Thunder Bay	1,423	1%	109	0.4%
<b>Northwest Region CMA's Total</b>	<b>1,423</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>0.4%</b>
<b>Ontario Total</b>	<b>270,529</b>		<b>26,366</b>	

Source: Statistics Canada, Nordicity Regional Economic Model



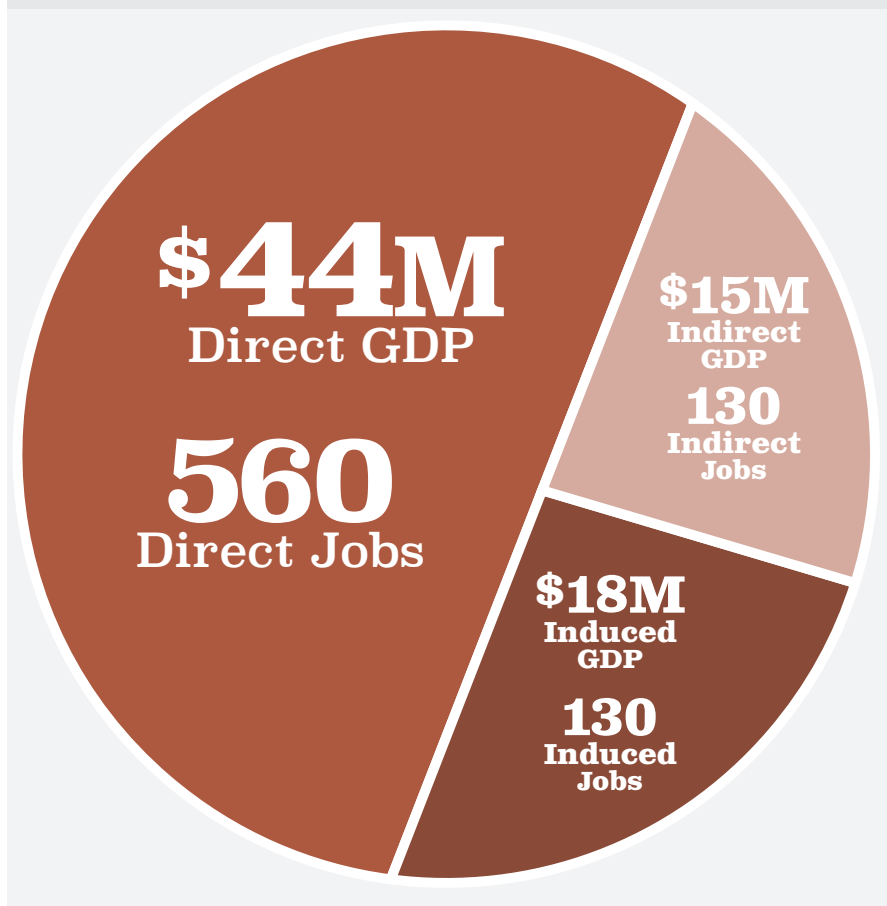
Woodland Art Workshop at St. Edward Catholic School in Nipigon.  
(Photo: Erin Roxborough)

## Arts & Culture TOURISM IMPACT

# \$78 million in GDP

The visitor facing arts and culture sector in Northwest Ontario generated a total of \$78 million in GDP and 820 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$88 million.

**Figure 30: Economic impact of arts and culture tourism, Northwest Ontario, 2022**



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)



## Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

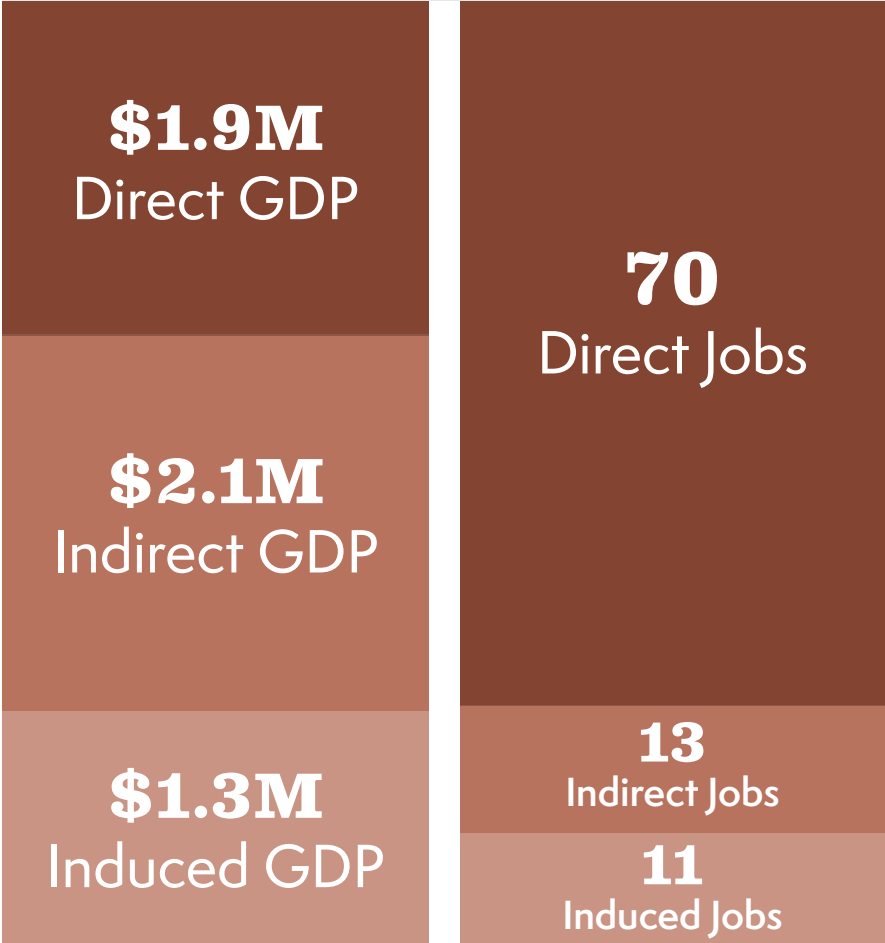
With a total investment of \$511,000 in operating grants by OAC, 5 funded arts organizations contributed a total of \$5.3 million in GDP and 94 FTEs to the Ontario economy. Additionally, OAC operating grant recipients contributed \$1.5 million in taxes, including \$0.7 million in federal taxes, \$0.5 million in provincial taxes and \$0.3 million in municipal taxes.

OAC also invested \$630,000 (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations in Northwest Ontario.



The Thunder Bay Art Gallery presents a Lakehead University student exhibition. (Photo: Babrui Ba)

**Figure 31:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations, Northwest Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

**Figure 32:** Economic impact of OAC-funded operating organizations details, Northwest Ontario, 2022



Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC), Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)





Children's parade at the Live from the Rock Blues & Folk Society Festival in Thunder Bay. (Photo: Paul Jokelainen)

In 2022-23, five OAC-funded arts organizations in Northwestern Ontario attracted audiences of 85,432 and provided community building opportunities to 1,847 volunteers who delivered a total of 16,580 hours of work valued at over \$500,000.

**Figure 33 : Volunteerism and Attendance, Northwest, 2022**

**OAC-funded Operating Organizations in Northwest Ontario Region**

Total number of volunteers	1,847
Estimated number of hours worked by all volunteers	16,580
Total financial value of work by all volunteers	\$518,291
<b>Number of people engaged</b>	<b>85,432</b>

Source: Canadian Arts Data (CADAC)

*"I left the [Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra] performance with my heart full. It is such a nice opportunity for the kids to be able to feel like "stars" on stage. I know that they especially liked sitting and facing the orchestra and being so close up. I had wonderful comments come from parents as well."*

**Teacher,  
Thunder Bay Catholic  
School Board**



School tour at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery. (Photo: Babrui Ba)

## Thunder Bay Art Gallery

The **Thunder Bay Art Gallery** has a distinctive focus on contemporary Indigenous artists and artists from Northwestern Ontario, with a commitment to produce significant touring projects. The permanent collection of Indigenous art numbers 1,300 works. The gallery engages audiences through public programs and educational initiatives. The gallery plans to move into a new waterfront location, doubling its gallery space, to include a cafe, event hall, outdoor art displays, and an extension of the waterfront trail.

*"Our programs deal with at-risk youths from grades 9 through 12. Students were engaged with the activities – pattern design and the beaded bracelets. Many of our students would not go to see the exhibit on their own. They really enjoyed seeing the beautiful work. **We have many Indigenous students in our programs and it was good for them to see their culture honoured.** Thank you for your great presentation and connection you had with the students."*

**School Teacher**

*"I would like to sincerely thank you [all] for yesterday's tour and workshop. **The students told me how it was a wonderful learning experience for them and they were so appreciative of having had the opportunity to learn about and create art.** One student told me that she wished to stay there forever because she completely forgot all her problems during the two hours we spent there. Thank you again for everything and I hope I will have an opportunity to bring other students again in the future."*

**University Professor**





Music director, Evan Mitchell, conducting the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra.  
(Photo courtesy of Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra)

"The Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra is an essential part of life in Northwestern Ontario, bringing music to people of all ages through performances, education, and outreach. **We create spaces for connection, creativity, and shared experiences—whether in the concert hall, classrooms, or community programs.** Music has the power to inspire and uplift, and the TBSO is committed to ensuring it reaches as many people as possible, enriching the cultural and social fabric of our region."

Ryleigh Dupuis, Executive Director, Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra

## Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra

The **Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra (TBSO)** is a professional orchestra in the Northwest region. For over 60 seasons, it has enriched the region's artistic landscape through diverse performances, educational initiatives, and community engagement. It also conducts extensive education programs and community engagement to support social causes and community well-being. For example, TBSO offers concerts and workshops for students of all ages and participates in events like "A Night to Remember" in support of the United Way.

The TBSO contributes to Canada's cultural heritage by actively promoting Canadian compositions, regularly featuring works by national artists and commissioning new pieces. And, through its annual touring program, it brings live symphonic music to communities across Northwestern Ontario.

*"Our students had an unforgettable experience at the TBSO Sing-Along! The energy in the room was contagious as they sang along with the orchestra, making music come alive in a way that was both engaging and inspiring. **It was a joy to see their excitement and enthusiasm as they connected with the performance.** Events like these foster a love for music and create lasting memories for our students. Thank you for an incredible and interactive musical experience!"*

**Principal,  
Thunder Bay Catholic School Board**

*"Unlike some of the larger centres, we, as a community, have the opportunity to get to know our orchestra on a more approachable and personal level. We support the TBSO, because, without them, there would be a large cultural and emotional gap in our community. The TBSO provides an opportunity for us to forget the many current problems in our society and to enjoy the artistry of a group of people who are dedicated to perfecting their craft and sharing that joy with us."*

**Longtime Supporter of the TBSO**





Flash Frame Film and Video Network workshop in Thunder Bay. (Photo courtesy of Flash Frame Film and Video Network)



# Far North

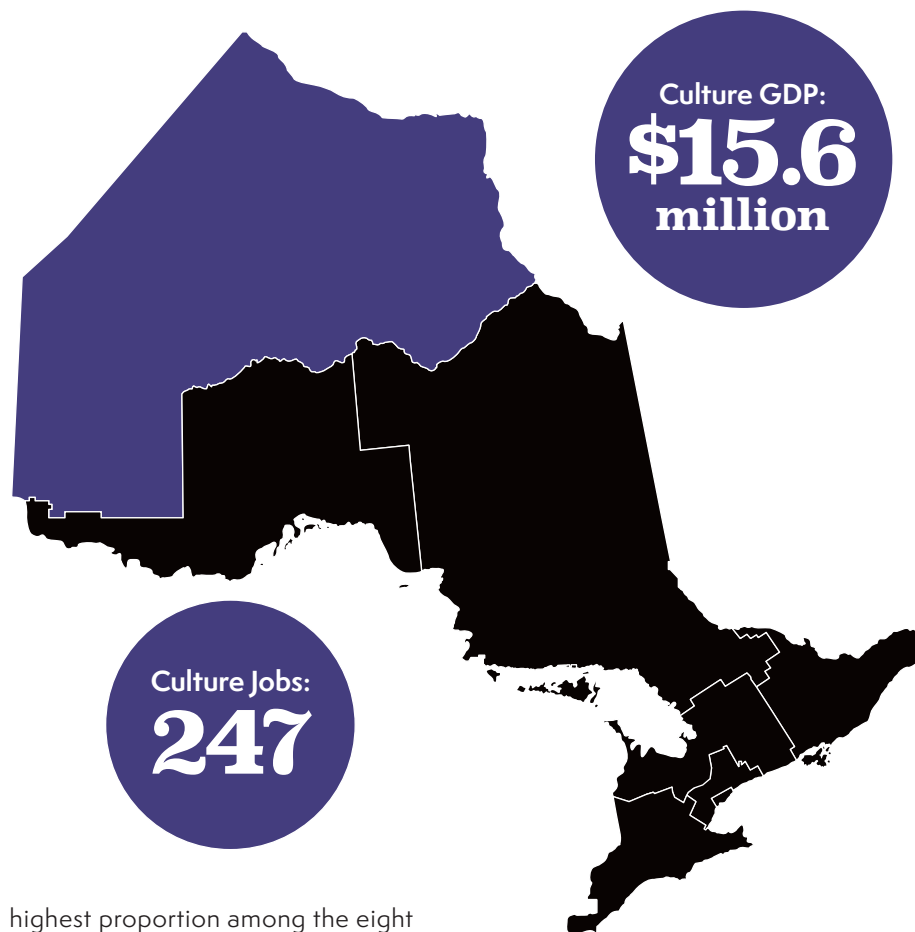
## 3.8. Far North

With nearly half of Ontario's landmass and a small fraction of its population, the Far North grassroots art organizations amplify social impact through volunteering and community connection.

### Culture Sector IMPACT

With a total population of 73,000 and total employment of 27,000, the Far North economy is focused on forestry and mining, with construction, healthcare and social services also major employers. **The culture economy contributes 247 jobs, \$15.6 million in GDP, and fuels critical opportunity for community building activities.**

Far North has a strong Indigenous presence, with 44% of the population identifying as Indigenous—the



highest proportion among the eight OAC regions.

The Visual and Applied Arts domain leads in both employment and GDP, contributing 33% of jobs and 36% of GDP in the region's cultural sector. Transversal Domains also play a significant role, accounting for 23% of jobs and 25% of GDP. These include essential support activities such as cultural education and training,

governance and funding, cultural infrastructure management, and research and development, which sustain and enable the broader cultural ecosystem. Sound Recording and Audio-visual and Interactive Media are the least concentrated, while the Heritage and Libraries sector shows the highest employment concentration.

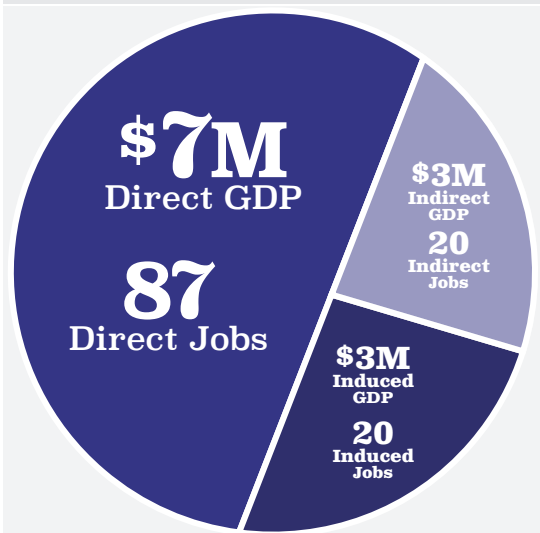
**Table 18: Direct economic impact of arts and culture sector in Far North Ontario, by Jobs and GDP, 2022**

Domains	Total Culture Jobs	Culture Jobs Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Total Culture GDP (\$000s)	Culture GDP Distribution	Share of Ontario Total	Employment based LQ
Heritage and libraries	12	5%	0.2%	419	3%	0.2%	0.53
Live performances	42	17%	0.1%	1,232	8%	0.1%	0.35
Visual and applied arts	82	33%	0.1%	5,670	36%	0.1%	0.26
Written and published works	36	15%	0.1%	2,437	16%	0.1%	0.22
Audio-visual and interactive media	19	8%	<0.1%	1,950	12%	<0.1%	0.08
Sound recording	<10	<1%	<0.1%	<10	<1%	<0.1%	0.00
Transversal domains	56	23%	0.1%	3,929	25%	<0.1%	0.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>15,637</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.22</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Cultural Satellite Account



**Figure 34:** Economic impact of arts and culture tourism, Far North Ontario, 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, Ontario Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

## Arts & Culture

# TOURISM IMPACT

# \$12 million in GDP

In addition to the culture sector impact, the visitor facing arts and culture sector in Far North generated a total of \$12 million in GDP and 127 total jobs based on a total tourist spend of \$13 million.

## Regional Spotlight: OAC Operating Grant Recipients

OAC invested \$10,000 in operating grants in the Far North of Ontario, and **\$224,000 (2022) in projects by artists and arts organizations.**

### Trout Forest Music Festival

Every August the **Trout Forest Music Festival** takes place at the Ear Falls Waterfront Park, located one hour north of Vermillion Bay. With an audience of over 1,440, the "Trout" provides local residents, as well as visitors from other regions of Ontario and neighboring Manitoba with the opportunity to engage in a range of workshops and performances over three days.

Attendees camp on the shores of the English River, part of the Historic Red Lake Gold Rush Trail and have access to a selection of concession and artisan offerings during the festival. In addition to attracting visitors to Ear Falls and the surrounding area, the Trout Forest Music Festival provides employment and income opportunity to musicians, artisans and other small business owners. The organization builds community working with some 115 volunteers who, with three part time employees, make the festival possible.



The Mariachi Ghost perform at the Trout Forest Music Festival in Ear Falls. (Photo: David Latimer)

*"The purpose of why we all (Board of Directors, Music Producer and Volunteers) do what we do to put on the Trout Forest Music Festival is to provide a top-notch musical experience, as well as a fun-filled festival for our patrons. Of course, our success as a festival is entirely dependent on you the festival goers, many of you, who have been coming year after year, every second weekend in August to enjoy the Trout. We appreciate your continued patronage and loyalty to our unique festival. Our number of attendees are growing every year, ensuring the longevity of this wonderful event."*

**Kathy Robinson, Chair,  
Trout Forest Music Festival**

*"I was looking through some of my old photos from the festival over the years and was overcome by some of the amazing moments that we've experienced out there (Trout Forest Music Festival) over the years... Thanks once again to Devin for pulling together so many magical moments every year and to everyone who makes it happen and makes it so special."*

**Patron, Trout Forest Music Festival**

*"Was so much fun. Thank you everyone."*

**Patron, Trout Forest Music Festival**





**4**

# Conclusion



Ontario's culture sector is a cornerstone of the province's economic development and social fabric. This report highlights the significant contributions of the sector and showed that public investment in arts serve as a strategic economic driver. In addition, OAC served as a catalyst for the economic, tourism and social contribution across regions in Ontario. Key findings revealed the following points:

- **In 2022, Ontario's culture sector contributed \$26.4 billion to provincial GDP and supported over 270,000 jobs.** As a result, the culture sector ranked the 12th largest employer in the province in 2022, surpassing industries such as real estate, auto manufacturing, forestry and mining. Arts in communities support a strong Ontario economy. In the same year, **Ontario's cultural economy stood as the largest in the country**, accounted for nearly half (45%) of Canada's total cultural sector GDP — and contributed more than double the GDP of the next largest province.
- Arts and culture tourism is a key economic driver to Ontario's economy. **Tourists drawn to arts and culture activities tend to spend more, stay longer, and are more likely to come from international destinations than other tourists.** The culture sector's ability to attract this higher-value tourism segment underscores the strategic importance of arts and culture in elevating Ontario's tourism profile.
- Equally significant is the social impact of the arts and culture activities. Beyond their economic value, **arts and culture activities enrich quality of life, amplify underrepresented voices and build resilient communities.** Regional spotlights, such as Thinking Rock Community Arts, illustrates how OAC grant recipients make vibrant contribution of Indigenous heritage arts while also stimulate tourism and local businesses spending.
- **Regionally, the cultural landscape varies significantly across Ontario.** Regions with urban centres such as Toronto and South Central Ontario thrive as hubs for commercial industries, including audiovisual media and live performance. Rural and northern regions, such as Far North and Northeast Ontario, rely more on heritage, libraries and visual arts. Despite having smaller arts organizations and modest economic output, these regions demonstrate the unique power of the arts to foster community identity and resilience. The Indigenous-led initiatives and grassroots cultural programs play a critical role in preserving traditions and strengthening social cohesion.

- **Central to these achievements is OAC's funding investment, which has played a pivotal role not only in directly supporting the operations of arts organizations but also in leveraging additional resources from other public funders and the private sector.**
- **The OAC's investments in Indigenous and Francophone arts organizations and projects have generated significant economic and cultural impacts across Ontario.** These financial commitments have not only supported the growth and sustainability of these cultural sectors but have also catalyzed economic returns, as demonstrated by data analyzed by Nordicity.

To build on the findings of this report, further research is recommended as follows:

- **Expand data collection:** OAC should develop longitudinal studies to track the evolving impacts of the culture sector and OAC's funding.
- **Capture the broader economic ripple effects:** A more comprehensive approach to collecting visitor spending data would enhance the assessment of the broader economic impact of arts and culture tourism. This would enable OAC to evaluate how arts and culture activities drives spending locally. To advance this research, tourism spending attribution must be identified, along with an analysis of the variations in impact by region.
- **Develop social impact framework and metrics for OAC's investment:** The intrinsic value of the culture sector extends beyond economic benefits. Arts and culture activities enhance personal well-being, strengthen community resilience and enrich social development. To capture these broader impacts, it is crucial to establish a framework for evidence-based measurement. Integrating a Theory of Change framework into the assessment process could help connect immediate outcomes with long-term impacts. This would not only reinforce the tangible benefits of cultural investments but also provide stakeholders with a structured approach to tracking social change and evaluating progress toward intended goals.

## Recommended Actions

Ontario's culture sector plays a pivotal role in the province's economic and social well-being. This report presents compelling, region-specific evidence of the sector's ability to generate GDP, support jobs, attract tourism, and strengthen communities. These impacts are integral to the quality of life, identity, and prosperity across Ontario.

To fully harness this potential, coordinated action is needed from all levels of government, public agencies, and cultural stakeholders.

## Recommended Actions by Partner Group

### Cross-Sector Priorities

- **Support Long-Term Cultural Planning**  
Encourage municipalities and provincial agencies to embed arts and culture into long-term planning frameworks, including community revitalization and urban development initiatives.
- **Strengthen Partnerships Across Sectors**  
Promote collaboration between municipal departments, local arts organizations, and educational institutions to amplify arts investments and build resilient cultural ecosystems.
- **Invest in Data and Impact Measurement**  
Develop robust mechanisms for tracking the social, economic, and cultural impacts of the arts sector to inform strategic planning and ensure accountability.
- **Champion Local Cultural Assets**  
Celebrate and invest in local artists, institutions, and cultural heritage to build community pride and regional distinctiveness.

## For Local Municipalities

- **Recognize Arts as a Driver of Inclusive Development**  
Publicly acknowledge the arts as essential to sustainable and inclusive community growth.
- **Create Dedicated Arts Funding Streams**  
Allocate a specific budget line for arts and culture within municipal budgets. This may include grant programs, cultural entrepreneurship hubs, or public art installations.
- **Integrate Arts into City Planning**  
Include arts districts, creative hubs, and cultural programming in long-term urban and regional development strategies.

## For Government Partners and Policy Makers

- **Enact Supportive Policy Frameworks**  
Ensure stable, predictable arts funding through policy tools such as streamlined grant processes, and performance-based funding.
- **Establish Accountability Measures**  
Form a multi-stakeholder advisory group to evaluate funding outcomes and guide policy adaptations based on measurable results.
- **Include Arts in Economic Development Strategy**  
Leverage the arts sector in broader economic planning, emphasizing job creation, tourism, and social resilience.

## For Local Arts Organizations

- **Use This Report as an Promotional Tool**  
Share data and stories to showcase potential and impact.
- **Build Strategic Coalitions**  
Form or strengthen regional coalitions to collaborate on policy engagement, program delivery, and shared goals.
- **Seek Capacity Building and Innovation Support**  
Advocate for grants and programs that support organizational growth, training, audience development, and innovation.

Investing in our arts sector is investing in Ontario's future. Working hand-in-hand with community arts organizations, government partners will foster innovation, enhance cultural vibrancy, and drive inclusive economic growth. Now is the time to ensure that every community benefits from a robust, sustainable arts ecosystem.





# Appendix

## Overview

The Nordicity project team convened a Regional Economic Impact Report Advisory Committee of diverse industry representatives from Ontario's cultural sector, tourism, and local economic development. Throughout the project, the committee members provided real-time insights and feedback on the research and modelling methods. Their advice directly contributed to the impact modelling advancement.

In order to conduct the assessment, Nordicity's analysis relied on data collected through Culture Satellite Account 2022 published by Statistics Canada, OAC funding recipients Canadian Arts Data (CADAC) 2022-23, the Arts Across Ontario Survey, and photos and quotes collected from OAC funding recipients.

# Ontario Culture Sector Regional Economic Analysis

The Statistics Canada Culture Satellite Account (CSA) provides a framework for estimating the economic importance of the culture, arts and heritage sectors in Canada, measured via two key metrics, GDP and jobs. CSA provides statistics for output, jobs and GDP for six culture domains (plus three transversal domains) at the provincial level, or for Ontario in total.

Given that Statistics Canada does not publish a regional breakdown of the economic contribution of the Ontario's culture sector, a model was developed to allocate or distribute the province-wide economic contribution. This model was essentially based on the observed regional distribution of employment within the NAICS industries that either comprise the various culture sector domains or closely mirror them. Nordicity deployed following steps when building the model:

- 2021 Census collects labor force status data at the census division (CD) level, stratified by NAICS.
- 4-digit NAICS were mapped to the CSA domains using Statistics Canada's Canadian Framework for Culture Statistics (see table below)<sup>15</sup>
- The number of workers in each of these mapped NAICS codes was obtained for each CD in Ontario.
- Using employment data in the 2023 Statistics Canada Labor Force Survey (LFS), a time adjustment was applied to the 2021 Census data to bring it in line with 2022 CSA data.
- This data was used to calculate the geographic distribution of each culture sector's total employment, or the share of total sector employment in each CD, for each of the CSA domains.

Culture Satellite Account domain	NAICS
Heritage and Libraries	712 Heritage institutions
Live Performance	7111 Performing arts companies
Visual and applied arts	7115 Independent artists, writers and performers 5418 Advertising, public relations, and related services 5413 Architectural, engineering and related services 5414 Specialized design services
Written and published works	5111 Newspaper, periodical, book and directory publishers 4513 Book stores and news dealers
Audio-visual and interactive media	5121 Motion picture and video industries
Sound recording	5122 Sound recording industries

## Example: Employment in Live Performance CSA the Toronto CD<sup>16</sup>

<b>Mapping:</b> CSA Live Performance domain Mapped to: NAICS 7111 – Performing Arts Companies	<b>Census 2021</b> <b>Total employment in NAICS 7111</b> Toronto <b>4,648</b> Ontario <b>10,368</b> <small>*2021-22 Time adjustment calculated using LFS applied.</small>	<b>Ontario Culture Satellite Account</b> Live Performance domain Total employment (2022): <b>29,015</b>	Toronto Census Division Live Performance domain Estimated employment (2022) <b>13,008</b>
	→	<b>44.8% x</b>	<b>=</b>

The same process of allocating the jobs was followed to allocate the GDP within each culture domain to the 49 CDs; however, a productivity adjustment was applied this allocated GDP amount to account for regional variations in labour productivity and income\*.

The adjustment factor was calculated by taking economy-wide GDP at the smallest geographic scale possible, Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), from the Statistics Canada Supply, Use and Input-Output tables, and dividing by total employment (in all industries) in that CMA (from the LFS), to calculate the amount of GDP per employee in each CMA.

This ratio of GDP to employment in each CMA was divided by the ratio for the whole province to arrive at an adjustment factor (see table below).

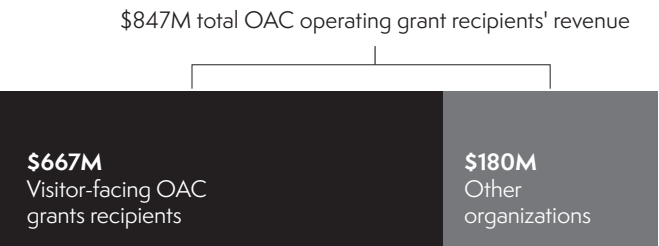
CMA	GDP Adjustment Factor
Toronto	1.2
Non-census metropolitan areas	0.8
Ottawa – Gatineau, Ontario part	1.2
Hamilton	0.8
Kitchener – Cambridge – Waterloo	0.9
London	0.9
St. Catharines – Niagara	0.8
Windsor	0.9
Oshawa	0.6
Guelph	1.1
Greater Sudbury	1.0
Kingston	1.0
Barrie	0.6
Thunder Bay	0.9
Brantford	0.7
Belleville	0.9
Peterborough	0.8

This allocation model results in estimates of the culture jobs and GDP in each of the 49 Census Divisions (CDs) in Ontario, for the culture domains defined in the CSA. This CD level data forms the building blocks of various regional breakdowns. CDs were used to build regional models for the following breakdowns:

- OAC Regions (see map)
- Tourist Regions
- Economic Regions
- CMAs<sup>17</sup>
- GTA Municipalities<sup>18</sup>

## Ontario Tourism Impact and Regional Analysis

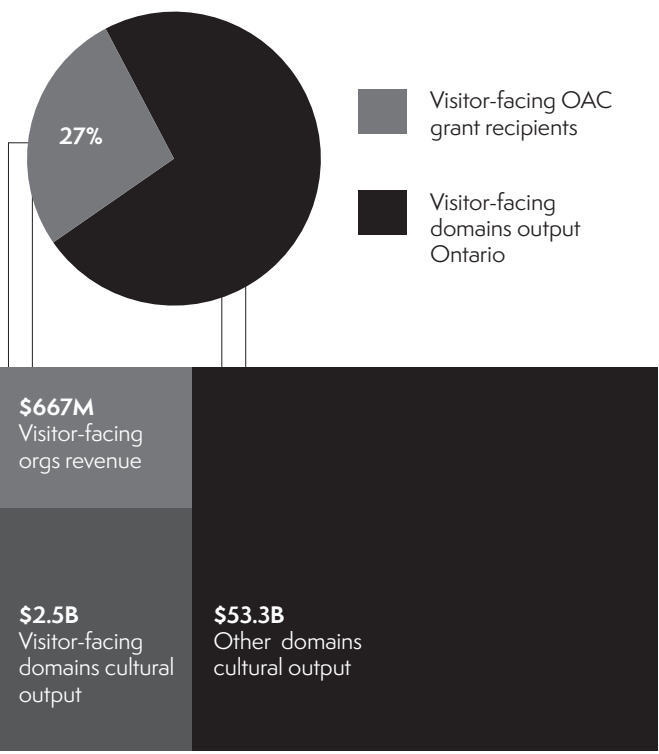
In 2022-23, the total OAC operating grant recipients' revenue is \$847 million. About 80% of the revenue (\$667M) comes from visitor-facing organizations supported by OAC.<sup>19</sup>



In the same year, total visitor-facing domains in Ontario (culture satellite account) totaled \$2.5B output. This includes 88% of Heritage and libraries domain and 100% of Live performance domain.



OAC visitor-facing grant recipients therefore accounted for 27% of the visitor-facing domains cultural output in Ontario in 2022.



The Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile (2023) shows that \$11.4 billion was spent on arts and culture tourism in Ontario. Nordicity applied the 27% share of Ontario visitor-facing cultural output to the \$11.4 billion Ontario arts and culture visitor spend. The 27% share of the arts and culture tourism spend (\$11.4 billion) attributed to OAC grant recipients translates to \$2.7 billion in GDP and supports 28,600 jobs (see table below). This highlights the substantial impact OAC-funded organizations have in driving economic activity through arts and culture tourism.

	Ontario (Forum Research)	Non- Ontario	OAC Funded Organi- zations
Total AC Trip Spending (\$B)	11.4	7.2	3.1

GDP			
Direct	5.7	3.6	1.5
Indirect	2.0	1.3	0.5
Induced	2.4	1.5	0.6
Total GDP	10.1	6.3	2.7

Employment (Jobs)			
Direct	72,800	45,699	19,600
Indirect	16,600	10,422	4,500
Induced	16,700	10,503	4,500
Total Employment (Jobs)	106,100	66,624	28,600



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> American for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity III, [http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information\\_services/research/services/economic\\_impact/aepiii/national\\_report.pdf](http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/aepiii/national_report.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, Ontario Arts Council, <https://www.arts.on.ca/oac/media/oac/Publications/Research%20Reports%20EN-FR/Economic%20Contribution%20of%20the%20Arts/Ontario-Arts-and-Culture-Tourism-Profile-2023-FINAL-s.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada (CADAC), and categorization of small businesses from, A Portrait of Small Business in Canada: Adaption, Agility, All at Once. Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Jan. 2024
- <sup>4</sup> Nordicity estimates based on data from Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada (CADAC), Ontario Arts Council and Statistics Canada. Note, these estimates are not adjusted for attribution to OAC.
- <sup>5</sup> Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, Ontario Arts Council, <https://www.arts.on.ca/oac/media/oac/Publications/Research%20Reports%20EN-FR/Economic%20Contribution%20of%20the%20Arts/Ontario-Arts-and-Culture-Tourism-Profile-2023-FINAL-s.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>7</sup> Globe and Mail, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-the-economic-case-for-more-funding-for-the-arts/>
- <sup>8</sup> More details of the methodology can be found in the Appendix; Ontario Tourism Impact and Regional Analysis.
- <sup>9</sup> Casiday, R. 2015. Volunteering and Health: What impacts does it really have? University of Wales Lampeter
- <sup>10</sup> Kim, E. 2020. Volunteering and subsequent health and well-being in older adults: An outcome-wide longitudinal approach. American Journal of Preventive Medicine
- <sup>11</sup> World Cities Culture Trends 2024, <https://worldcitiescultureforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/World-Cities-Culture-Trends-Report-2024.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>13</sup> Eric Thompson, CKNX, Blyth Festival season extended in 2025, <https://cknxnewstoday.ca/midwestern/news/2024/12/05/blyth-festival-season-extended-in-2025>
- <sup>14</sup> Nordicity calculated the financial value of volunteering by multiply the number of hours volunteered by the hourly value of that work, using Statistics Canada's hourly wage in Information, culture and recreation industry.
- <sup>15</sup> While LFS is more up to date than the 2021 Census, it lacks the geographic granularity of the Census, so could not be directly used for regional allocation.
- <sup>16</sup> Transversal domains: As there was no NAICS code that could be directly mapped for the following cultural domains, the share of the total cultural employment in the domains mapped in each CD was applied to the remaining transversal domains:
- Education and training (culture)
  - Governance, funding and professional support (culture)
  - Multi-domain
- This process provided estimates of the number of jobs in each cultural domain in each CD in 2022.
- <sup>17</sup> CMAs and GTA municipalities boundaries correspond to Census Subdivisions, CDs overlap CMA boundaries in many cases. As a result, further steps were taken to allocate and model these regional breakdowns.
- <sup>18</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>19</sup> Nordicity defines visitor-facing organizations as those that provide services for direct public engagement and generate revenue from audience-facing activities such as ticket sales.

## Nordicity

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