

## **What Is the Creative Economy?**

People use the term “creative economy” in slightly different, but closely connected, ways. Below are a few samples of creative economy definitions:

- » The creative industries are the activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.
- » Creative economy promotes the dynamic interplay between a community’s cultural and economic life coming together to enrich and sustain that community.
- » The creative economy is a new name for Vermont’s traditional strengths. It links creative energy, an industrious work ethic, and a strong sense of community.
- » Some reports define the creative economy by specific occupations tracked by federal and state agencies. The New England Council, for example, studied employment in Applied Arts; Performing Arts; Visual Arts; Literary Arts; Media; Heritage; Support (educational institutions, non-profit organizations) and Independent Artists

The Creative Communities Program starts from a basic premise that the creative economy leverages cultural development for community development and, ultimately, economic development. We guide the process by asking questions based on these key aspects:

- » The Importance of Place: When we talk about place, we include the natural, physical and social environments that form the foundation for creative economy work. Is one’s community a place where people will choose to work, live, and participate as active citizens? Is there a healthy mix of culture and commerce? Is there a strong community identity that distinguishes it from other places?
- » Partners in Creative Economic Development: The 2004 *Advancing Vermont’s Creative Economy* report began to outline the breadth of businesses, individuals, and organizations that contribute to a strong economy. These contributors include groups that have not traditionally been thought of as business partners, such as arts, heritage, place-based, and other (usually) not-for-profit organizations. They are core partners in economic development discussions.
- » Creative Assets: Businesses in every field generate a competitive advantage from new ideas and unique skills, and these are one type of creative asset. We also look at how to leverage cultural assets to generate income for a region while also forming a community environment that inspires new ideas and encourages people to explore diverse skills. How do we ensure that all types of creative assets are utilized fully in our economy? How do we sustain or renew these resources?

The Creative Communities Program uses questions like those above to complement traditional economic planning and develop action steps that advance the creative economy goals of participating communities.