

Create Wisconsin rolling out economic development initiative aimed at the arts

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A group called Create Wisconsin, which wants more state support for the arts industry, is rolling out a new multi-pronged economic development initiative.

In an interview yesterday, Create Wisconsin Director Anne Katz said the group has submitted its Grow Wisconsin Creatively Initiative to Gov. Tony Evers' office and is holding a series of discussions with regional economic development groups to tout the proposal.

"The need for transforming our 21st century economy is greater than ever," Katz told WisBusiness.com. "We've had various proposals over the years about how to invest in the creative economy, all of which are basically around investing in people, organizations, businesses and communities."

An overview on the initiative says the availability of American Rescue Plan Act funds represents an opportunity to boost the state's arts and entertainment industry.

In a recent column, Katz wrote Wisconsin ranked 50th among U.S. states for funding arts and culture in 2022, with 14 cents per capita in spending. The state lags Midwest neighbors such as Minnesota, which spends \$7.34 per capita on the arts, and Illinois, which spends \$5.04 per capita, she noted.

While Create Wisconsin isn't requesting a specific dollar amount at this point, Katz said "several million dollars over the course of a few years" would make a significant difference for the organizations and communities already working to support and expand the industry.

"There's still a lot more to do that could be done with a relatively small investment ... we're kind of working on getting the idea to be embraced and figuring out what that means in terms of money," she said. "Whatever money we get, any organization or agency or business working with it will take that money and use it

as an investment to leverage other money.”

The initiative includes a number of proposals, including: establishing a Governor’s Commission on the Creative Economy to provide policy direction on related efforts; creating programs at two-year schools and technical colleges to encourage creative workers to join other sectors such as health care and manufacturing; launching a statewide public information campaign spotlighting the arts; providing more resources for entrepreneurs in the arts; and more.

“That creativity is one of the really great things about Wisconsin, and helping people be involved in the arts, helping creative businesses start and continue, helping communities define themselves by their unique, authentic cultural assets — everyone gets that, no matter what side of the aisle you’re on,” she said.

See details on the initiative here:

<https://createwisconsin.org/blog/creative-placemaking-state-investment-key-to-attracting-young-workers>

-By Alex Moe