

Governor Quinn Launches Illinois Creative Economy Initiative

Written by Erin Wilson

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CHICAGO - As part of his commitment to creating jobs and driving Illinois' economy forward, Governor Quinn today launched the Illinois Creative Economy Initiative. The initiative will explore innovative strategies to grow the \$2.7 billion creative economy in Illinois, which employs thousands of people and is a key driver of tourism to our state. The governor made today's announcement at the Illinois Arts Alliance's "Make Art Work" forum, where he highlighted the significant positive impact the arts have on Illinois' economy.

"Culture means business in Illinois," Governor Quinn said. "This initiative will strengthen our creative economy in Illinois, which will create more economic growth and make Illinois an even more vibrant place to live and raise a family."

The Creative Economy Initiative will be led by Ra Joy, who will work to bring all stakeholders together to identify and deploy strategies to boost a variety of arts and strengthen their role in the state's economy. Joy has served as executive director of the Illinois Arts Alliance since 2007, and has been an advocate, community organizer and coalition builder for various arts causes for more than 15 years. He also serves on the Chicago Cultural Advisory Council.

According to the Illinois Arts Alliance, the arts contribute at least \$2.75 billion annually to our economy, creating more than \$300 million in state and local tax revenue and supporting 78,000 full-time equivalent jobs for artists, managers, marketers, designers, carpenters and other related professions. In addition to their direct positive impact, studies show that the arts are a magnet for business and attract companies that want to lure high-skilled employees by locating in places that offer strong cultural amenities like museums, theaters, dance

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companies and orchestras. Those institutions are also a strong driver of tourism, with cultural tourists spending an average of two and a half times more on event-related expenses than local residents. Illinois hosted a record 93.3 million out-of-state visitors in 2011, a 10 percent increase from 2010.

Governor Quinn long supported the creative economy in Illinois and was awarded the 2012 Public Leadership in the Arts Award from Americans for the Arts. Throughout his career in public service, he has worked to ensure that all Illinois residents have meaningful opportunities to experience and participate in the arts. He has also kept Illinois at the cutting edge of the creative economy by supporting strategic incentives like the Illinois Film Tax Credit and the Live Theater Tax Credit.

Additionally, through his Illinois Jobs Now! capital construction program, Governor Quinn has delivered vital funding for numerous arts projects around the state. Projects funded by the program include new performing arts centers at Western Illinois University and Rock Valley College as well as Chicago's Black Ensemble Theater and Cinespace Studios, which has been home to many Illinois-based productions including Chicago Fire and the upcoming feature film Divergent, which alone is expected to bring 1,000 jobs and \$30 million in local spending.

For more information about the Creative Economy Initiative, visit CreativeEconomy.illinois.gov.

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