CONTEXT

CREATIVE WORKERS

ENGAGE

Jobs in Illinois' Creative Economy

The Creative Economy of Illinois: Impact and Assets reports find that the Creative Economy is one of the largest sectors for direct employment.

3rd Largest
in Chicago
5th Largest
in Cook County
6th Largest
Statewide

The creative economy directly employs 6.3% of the state's total workforce. It generates more direct jobs than these sectors:

6.2%
Transportation
5.1%
Construction
4.4%
Finance & Insurance

Labor Income in the Creative Economy

Activity	Amount
Audiovisual & Interactive Media	$149,225
Design & Creative Services	$107,480
Living Wage	**$50,796**
Performers & Visual Artists	$44,353
Performing Arts Companies & Venues	$42,018
Musicians	$40,587
Industry Support	$38,312
Visual Arts & Crafts Support	$37,482

Silent Labor

The idea of silent labor emerged as a key theme from Arts Alliance's statewide creative worker policy agenda listening sessions. Artists are often not paid for their time to choreograph a performance, write a play, create a design plan, etc. This labor is necessary in the creation of art regardless of discipline but typically goes un(der)funded.



Key Takeaway

The cultural amenities that drive Illinois tourism, hospitality, and urban desirability are effectively being subsidized by the economic precarity of the creators themselves, who must routinely navigate underemployment or the gig economy to survive.

POLICY & ACTIONS

Supporting Creative Workers in Illinois

EXISTING POLICIES

Wage Payment and Collection Act
Establishes when, where, and how often wages must be paid and prohibits deductions from wages or final compensation without the employee's consent.

Minimum Wage / Overtime
Guarantees a minimum wage of $15.00 per hour for workers 18 years of age and older.

Paid Leave for All Workers Act
Allows workers to earn up to 40 hours of paid leave from work each year. Workers can use paid leave for any reason and employers may not require workers to provide a basis for their time off request.

Other Paid Leave Legislation
Employee Sick Leave, Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act, Family Bereavement Leave.

One Day Rest In Seven Act (ODRISA)
Requires employers to provide employees a minimum of 24 hours of rest within every consecutive 7-day period.



Illinois Freelance Worker Protection Act

Passed in 2024, the landmark Freelance Worker Protection Act provides protections for independent contractors who provide products or services in Illinois or who work for a hiring entity located in Illinois when the value of that work is equal to or greater than $500 in a 120-day period.
Through conversations with our members and artists statewide, Arts Alliance Illinois identified several challenges with implementation:

- The Department of Labor can communicate with the contracting entity, but cannot force the contracting entity to pay the freelance worker
- Limited education and outreach: how do creative workers who need it know about it?
- Power dynamics make it difficult for some freelancers to request or demand a contract (Ex: issues of equity, needing the job making someone unwilling to fight for a contract, being at risk of not getting the gig/project, or risks of being seen as "difficult")
- The onus should be and is on the "employer" to develop the contract, but they may not understand the scope of work as they are not the creative worker/freelancer with expertise necessary to carry out the project/contract

NEAR-TERM POLICY IDEAS



Put a tag on a policy idea if you're interested in learning more!

Introduce Artist Corporations,
LLCs designed specifically for artists with provisions to protect artists' intellectual rights and creative control.

Pilot programs and collective models
for affordable healthcare and portable benefits access.

Improve capital/credit access (APR for All)
by requiring lenders to disclose annual percentage rates on small business loans, thus preventing predatory lending and improving transparency.

Expand current paid leave protections,
including the IL Paid Family Leave Act, to teaching artists, similar to Chicago's extension of Paid Sick and Safe Leave protections to all domestic workers regardless of employee or independent contractor status.

Expand DCEO's Job Training and Economic Development (JTED)
and similar workforce funding to support professional development, apprenticeships, and training for creative workers.



Federal changes to Medicaid and SNAP Benefits

There are upcoming changes to Medicaid and new eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits that may impact creative workers, particularly gig workers.

If you are on Medicaid or receive SNAP benefits and think you might be impacted, visit our Help Desk:

What is the number one issue facing creative workers in Illinois?

Do you know your rights as a freelance worker? What makes those rights difficult to protect?

Coalitions and Initiatives Fighting for Creative Workers

Arts Alliance is getting creative workers at the table and has joined other worker coalitions across the state to fight for worker protections here in Illinois:

- Arise Chicago
- Community Change Action
- Illinois Partners for Human Service
- Illinois RESET
- Illinois Revenue Alliance
- Illinois Skills for Good Jobs Coalition
- Small Business Majority
- On Our Team
- Women Employed
- Workers Center for Racial Justice

NEXT STEPS

Curious about how you're classified or about your rights as a creative worker?

Check out our Worker Rights 101 webinar, part of our Creative Worker Rights education series with Lawyers for the Creative Arts.

Worker Rights 101

Additional case-by-case support is available through Lawyers for the Creative Arts and Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts.



Want to get hands-on with our worker protection advocacy?

Leave your email on the clipboard below!