



SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE CREATIVE ECONOMY ADVANCEMENT AND TOURISM EXPANSION (CREATE) PLAN

SUSSEX COUNTY is the First State's southernmost county and has a population of over 250,000. Sussex boasts extensive beaches which make it a highly popular tourism destination and is home to a number of notable cultural assets. However, Sound Diplomacy's research found that Delaware's tourism offering and its cultural one are not currently supporting each other as much as they could. This provides Sussex County with a unique growth opportunity. In order to help Sussex County take advantage of opportunities to grow its creative economy, the Delaware Arts Alliance has partnered with Sound Diplomacy to develop an action plan which is the combined result of desk research, stakeholder consultation, and data analysis.¹

¹ These findings are specific for Sussex County. Please see the full CREATE Plan for statewide findings.
² GVA is the output minus intermediate consumption (the costs of all inputs – food and beverage suppliers, legal services, transportation, equipment, etc.).
³ Please refer to the statewide executive summary for the full SWOT analysis.



OBJECTIVES

Stimulate economic activity by fostering development and growth in all creative sectors.

Raise awareness and share knowledge amongst stakeholders in order to innovate and create a stronger and more sustainable ecosystem.

Increase transparency and accountability by introducing additional representative bodies for the full breadth of the creative economy and encouraging collaboration.

Put cultural tourism at the heart of Delaware's brand and marketing efforts, and expand existing cultural tourism offerings.

Improve strategic policy and funding infrastructure to support the entire creative economy.

Foster cross-sector collaboration and interdisciplinary dialogues to create new opportunities for the creative sector.

Ensure that sustainability practices are embedded into creative economy growth and development.

Expand opportunities for professional development for stakeholders in Delaware's creative economy.

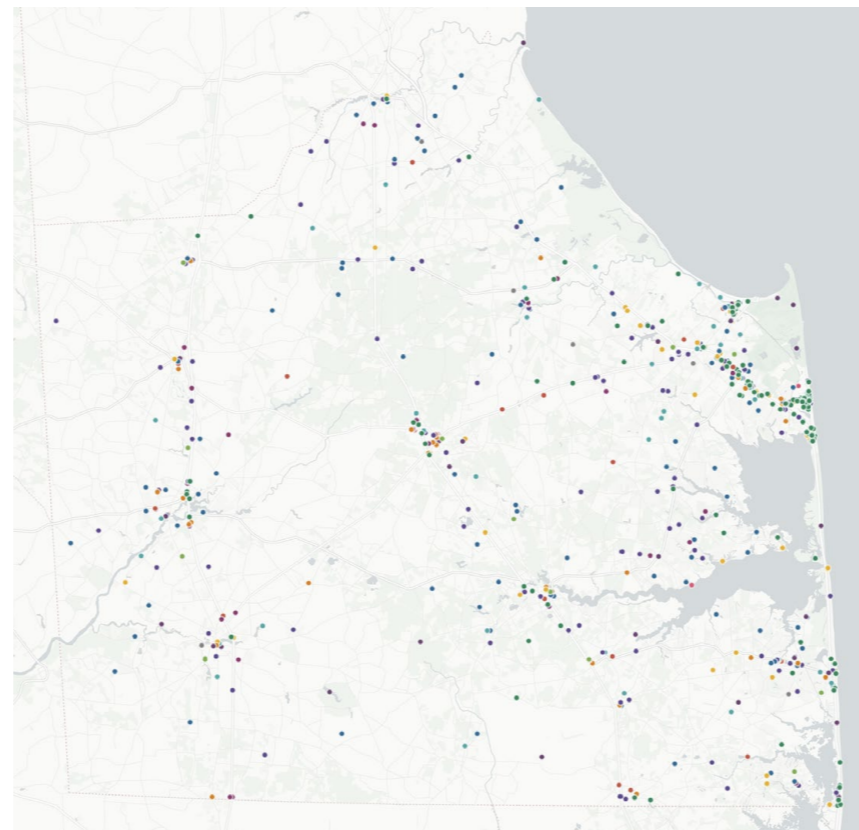
Provide a more equitable public education and increase access to arts education for young people.

Build Delaware's identity around its creative economy and arts scene.

Tackle geographic inequality by embedding creative economy growth efforts into every county.

Embed the values and imperatives of DEA&I into Delaware's creative economy and strategic thinking around it.

MAPPING ASSETS IN SUSSEX COUNTY

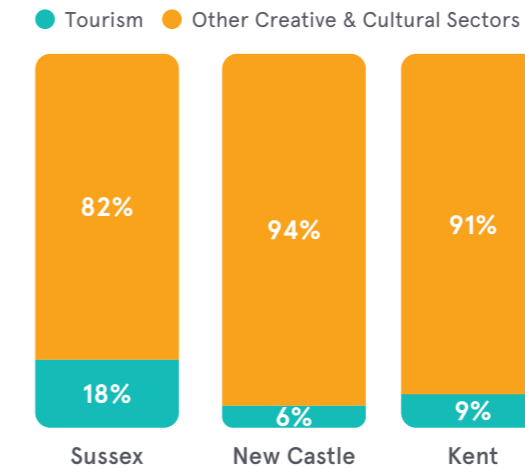


All categories are included and mapped on the [interactive map](#) developed specifically for Delaware.

- Sussex County comprises 778 assets, representing 31% of Delaware's total creative and cultural ecosystem assets.
- The most prominent sectors in the county are design & creative services with 159 (20%), and visual arts & crafts with 133 (17%).

- Compared to Kent County and New Castle County, the Tourism sector is significantly more important in Sussex County, with 138 tourism-related assets.
- Most of these assets are clustered near beach communities on the eastern coast, and access is not always equitable for those living in the western portion of the county.

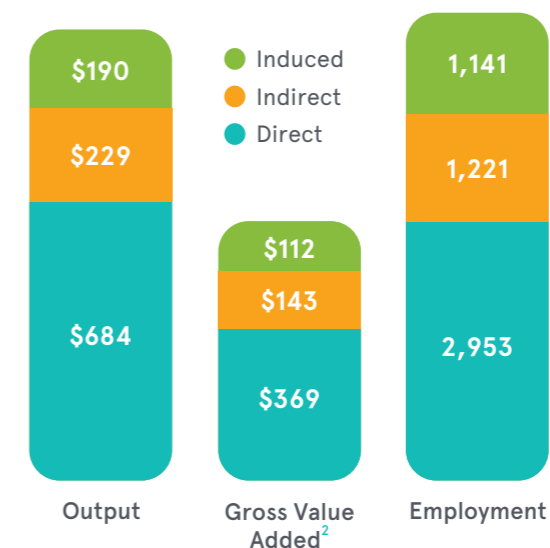
TOURISM ASSETS BY COUNTY



- DESIGN & CREATIVE SERVICES
- VISUAL ARTS & CRAFTS
- AUDIOVISUAL & INTERACTIVE MEDIA
- TOURISM
- ARTISTIC CREATION & PERFORMANCE
- PERFORMING ARTS: LIVE MUSIC, THEATRE, DANCE, CIRCUS
- BOOKS & PRESS
- CULTURAL EDUCATION
- INDUSTRY SUPPORT - RETAIL
- CULTURAL & NATURAL HERITAGE
- MUSIC RECORDING & PUBLISHING
- OTHER PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SUPPORT

ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

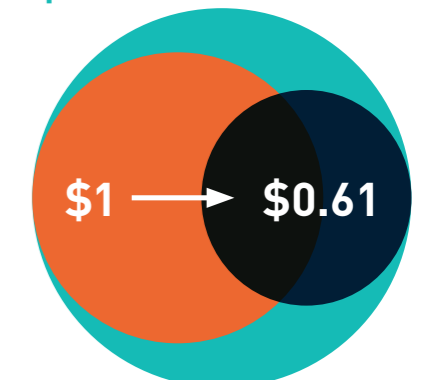
SUSSEX COUNTY ECONOMIC IMPACT CREATIVE ECONOMY (MILLION \$)



TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT

For every \$1 of output of the creative economy, there is an output of \$0.61 in the rest of the economy.

\$1.61



SWOT ANALYSIS³

The following provides a sector-specific and transversal theme SWOT analysis of all research and stakeholder engagement findings from this project. The findings are divided by strengths and weaknesses (SW) within Delaware's creative economy and opportunities and threats (OT) that are outside of the creative economy but nonetheless influence it.

STRENGTHS

- Sussex County has many tourism and visual arts & crafts assets and benefits from a strong tourism industry.
- The towns of Milford and Georgetown have relatively clear municipal event permitting processes, although there is room for improvement in this area.
- Milford has a live theater, a music school, a dance school and a museum all within its downtown area.
- Georgetown is part of Sussex County's "25 Jewels," and is home to a film festival, the Festival Hispano, and an "Arts Around Town" program.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Georgetown operates the GREAT Fund (to support recreation, education, and the arts) but Sound Diplomacy was unable to determine how the fund is being utilized. An ongoing review of this fund opens the way for more transparency.
- There are numerous Downtown Development Plans throughout the county. These reflect an appetite to think strategically about urban development and to upgrade infrastructure and opportunities for economic growth.
- Sussex County's towns and cities are witnessing quick population growth and diversification.

WEAKNESSES

- There is significant geographic inequity in terms of arts access, with activities distinguished by stakeholders as "above" and "below" the Chesapeake and Delaware canal.
- Due to the large geographical expanse of the county coupled with a poor public transportation system, it is difficult for residents without a car to access cultural events.
- Various stakeholders in more rural parts of the state noted feeling left out of Delaware's creative scene. The mapping, which shows a heavy concentration of assets in Wilmington and New Castle County, reflects this.
- Though Milford is considered an "art town" by stakeholders, and the mapping shows a cluster of assets, local creatives have difficulty securing institutional support.
- Generally speaking, public transport options are very limited.
- Despite being a tourist hub, there are no cultural districts in the region.

THREATS

- The Downtown Development projects do not secure people sufficient access to cultural activities and arts and culture are largely missing from these plans.
- Sussex County's tourism industry is focused on coastal communities and seasonally based, posing challenges in the offseason.
- Mapping shows that rural parts of Sussex are geographically disconnected from a majority of cultural economy assets.

REGULATIONS, PERMITS & LICENSING UPDATE

Sussex County, and its town and city councils, should review regulations, permits and licensing processes which impact the creative economy, with a focus on those listed below.

National benchmarks for these topics are provided in the full report. In addition, it should collaborate with Delaware's Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner and other statewide stakeholders to modernize liquor licenses in the state and implement a One-Stop Shop for permits and licensing processes.

County Regulations to Review

- Sound Ordinance
- Event Permits
- All Ages Ordinances

City Regulations to Review

- Sound Ordinance
- Agent of Change
- Busking

CREATE Plan Recommendations

Informed by the research and analysis outlined here, these are the actionable recommendations that require regional involvement and implementation. Sussex County Council, alongside the councils in Georgetown and Milford will need to be involved in implementing and supporting these recommendations, as will city and town councils. Recommendations 3, 8, 10, 12 and 22 in particular require legislative support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNTY ACTIONS

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

- #1 Establish a Creative Economy Task Force That Continues To Build Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Engage Stakeholders
- #2 Establish Creative Hubs in Each County
- #3 Update Special Event and Performance-Related Permits and Licenses at the State, County, and City Level
- #4 Develop a Statewide Digital "One-Stop Shop" for Permits and Licenses

- Stakeholders located in Sussex County should be included in this Task Force.
- A creative hub in Sussex County will improve residents' access to cultural life.
- Inspired by national benchmarks, Sussex County should review and revise licenses and permits related to events.
- Permit and licensing processes from across Sussex County should be included in this platform.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

- #5 Include the Creative Economy in Statewide Business and Economic Development Communications and Programs
- #8 Modernize Delaware's Film & Media-production Industry

- Economic and business development plans in Sussex County should be inclusive of creative economy sectors.
- Sussex County should review and revise its film permits.

TOURISM

- #9 Develop a Statewide Cultural Economy Brand to Benefit Tourism, Economic Development, Export, and Audience Development
- #10 Increase Cultural Tourism Offerings

- Stakeholders from Sussex County should be involved in planning and implementation efforts to generate this brand and identity.
- Identified geospatial correlations between tourism, performing arts, and cultural/natural history assets in Sussex County should provide opportunities for increased connections between the creative economy and tourism.

FUNDING

- #12 Identify Additional Revenue Streams to Support Delaware's Creative Economy

- Stakeholders from across the county should work to identify funding sources and investment opportunities for the for-profit arts and creative sectors from untapped organizations and entities.

EDUCATION

- #14 Secure Arts Funding for Every Student in Public Education
- #16 Improve Career Development Opportunities for Secondary Education Students

- Stakeholders from Sussex County should campaign for sustained arts education funding from the State, and the County and City governments can supplement arts education funding with their own investments.
- Introduce county-specific career days and mentorship programs to facilitate the entrance of more young people into the creative industries.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- #18 Host Professional Development Workshops and Lectures

- Local business development and creative economy professional groups should be part of efforts to organize, promote and host workshops, lectures and networking events on creative economy professionalization across the state.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- #21 Identify and Promote Spaces for the Creative Economy
- #22 Support Access to Increased Public Transportation in Delaware

- Vacant and underused property in towns and cities throughout Sussex County should be reviewed for their viability to be used by artists and other creative economy professionals.
- Sussex County should identify ways in which existing public transport gaps could be covered by localized services, i.e. shuttle buses for special events.

MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- #23 Offer Transit Shelter and Outdoor Advertising Space to Nonprofits

- Publicly owned facades and buildings in Sussex County should be identified and offered as sites where creative economy organizations can advertise events and initiatives.