CREATIVE HUB SANTA FE

Connecting Creativity, Community, and Opportunity



FINAL REPORT

CITY OF SANTA FE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF SANTA FE ARTS & CULTURE

VITAL SPACES

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SANTA FE

CREATIVE HUB

Final Report

In partnership with Santa Fe Office of Economic Development, this report has been compiled and created by Creative Startups

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Santa Fe Creative Hub Final Report / Mike Young, Brianna Figueroa, Emily Hunerwadel, Raashan Ahmad, Ginny Sterpka

Cover and interior designed by Emily Hunerwadel, Ginny Sterpka, and Mike Young
Text set in Termina, Futura, and Times New Roman

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INTRODUCTION



WHERE IS SANTA FE?

Let's say your car breaks down. We'll put you at the end of the trail. You're sunburnt, but you're impressed by the sunset. You follow the river with white shell beads. Is there water in the river? There's life in town. Where are you? Why adobe? What's a viga? You begin to love the feelings before you know the answers.

You're seven thousand feet above sea level, so the air is thin enough to make you forget any reasons against reinventing yourself. Someone tells you: "It's not even a desert, did you know that? It's a steppe." You're not sure how the distinction makes it easier to find a place to live, or afford rent once you do, but many people you meet seem to say such things. Strange, interesting, artistic people: tinkerers, inventors. New spins on ancient air. People are constantly closing their eyes to look at the sunset. Artists casually accumulate hyphens: musician-ceramicist-perfurmist-weaver-welder. It's a town of obsessions and dance parties in the alien-themed roller rink. Lavender pokes out of blue corn doughnuts. Eighty art galleries dot Canyon Road. Theatre ensemble members run ice cream trucks. A local glass recycler picks up your empty Happy Camper growlers and turns them into handblown art and crushed glass for erosion control. In the summer, Indian Market doubles the town's population. Someone waves a turquoise crystal in front of the fish oil bottles at the co-op to help them pick the right one. There's a new media festival in the same railyard as a Farmers Market, where a freshly blistered green chile appears, suddenly, on your breakfast burrito. Where did that come from?

You learn about the Pueblo Revolt and Warehouse 21. Old Man Gloom and Meow Wolf. The Earthseed Black Arts Alliance and Portalfest. Alas de Agua Art Collective and the hike to the petroglyphs. You play D&D with some St. John's students. All the years you weren't here seem like they never left, the past in every blink of dust, this feeling stronger here than all those other towns where you broke down and didn't stay, a swirl, like how Paseo de Peralta becomes Paseo de Peralta again, an analogy you will get right as soon as you understand Paseo de Peralta, an endlessness that seems half-awake, a little hard to trust but easy to give into: enchantment. Sure, there you go. There is always something that happened before you got here, but what happens next?

You almost run over Cormac McCarthy in the parking lot of the mall. You're distracted thinking about your rent. He's distracted thinking about the book he just bought on animal consciousness. You hear about another famous artist in town who goes to Smith's every Christmas Eve to buy cream cheese and roses. You hear about a famous musician who started a brawl on New Year's Eve because the bar had saguaro cactuses painted on the ceiling.

You could be such an artist, you decide. You congratulate yourself on the sunset, as the train crossing gate at the intersection of St. Michaels and Cerrillos begins to lower onto your car, which you have driven too slightly too far into the box. Nursing a drink at Tiny's, you tell someone you just met: "Locals call it Fanta Se, did you know that?" They stare at you. "I grew up here," they say. You get excited. You tell them your theory about the years and Paseo de Peralta. They sigh. "It's just a loop," they say.

WHAT IS SANTA FE?

Before the christening of Santa Fe, the Tewa people already had a name for this gathering-place in the foothills at the southernmost tail of the Rockies: Oghá P'o'oge, which means "white shell water place." Other names: Kua'p'o-oge (Tewa), Hulp'ó'ona (Northern Tiwa), Yootó (Navajo), Ts'u'yala (Zuni). When it snowed on the sunsets, the Spanish decided to call the mountains the Sangre de Cristos ("blood of Christ"). People have been coming and going and getting inspired in this place for centuries, visiting sacred hot springs, trading goods and ideas.

In "A Pueblo Perspective of the History of Santa Fe," Dr. Gregory Cajete (Santa Clara Pueblo) explains that Santa Fe has always been a place "of contradiction and conflict while at the same time being a place of great significance … tied to a larger history that is complex and conflicting but, at times, also a history of cooperative relationships between Pueblo peoples, Hispanos, and Genízaros." Such cooperation, by necessity, was creative. One grim definition of "creative," after all, is the opposite of "destructive." Santa Fe's history is as violent as any trail of colonization. But its cultures—its wellsprings of creativity—have persisted through adaptation, cross-pollination, pride, wile, defiance, and ceremony.

Long before the "creative economy" became a policy buzzword in the UK in the 1980s, Santa Fe was a hotbed of artistic innovation and heritage craftsmanship. Today, Santa Fe is globally renowned as both a tourist destination and a good place for an artist to grow up or have their truck to break down—because here they might be able to make a creative living. After all, creative industries generated 12.9% of the city's 2023 GDP and commanded 22% of all 2023 taxable wages. That's $205 million annually flowing through the hands of potters, programmers, and poets. Nearly one in four Santa Fe residents works in creative industries, giving this city of 87,000 one of the the densest concentration of creative workers in America. These numbers, it must be said, are likely an undercount, as they do not capture the full portrait of self-employed and gig workers. Consider that 10% of all taxable 2023 GRT receipts derived from the creative industries. In other words, when UNESCO designated Santa Fe as the first American Creative City in 2005, they weren't discovering something new: they were recognizing what hundreds of art galleries, many world-class art markets, and thousands of creative laborers had already built: an economy where culture creates capital.

However, while Santa Fe deserves its reputation as a creative economy hotbed, its creative residents nonetheless struggle with issues familiar to people everywhere who strive to make a living off their imaginative intellectual property. Space is expensive, both to live in and work in. Resources proliferate in silos: theater troupes unaware of technical assistance three blocks away, jewelers missing grant deadlines they never knew existed, assistance services competing rather than collaborating. Organizations face similar crises in isolation. Geographic inequity compounds the fragmentation: resources cluster downtown while Southside

creatives navigate deserts of support. Spanish-speaking creatives face additional barriers when resources exist only in English, and technical assistance programs designed for traditional businesses fail to address the hybrid nature of creative enterprises where personal practice and commercial viability intertwine. Funders with capital lack pipelines to fundable projects, while entrepreneurs with viable ventures can't penetrate the alien dialect of "funder speak" that distances on-the-ground work from financial support.

Meanwhile, the informal reciprocity network that has sustained generations of Santa Fe creatives—musicians sharing amps, gallery owners pointing emerging artists toward opportunities—struggles to scale beyond personal relationships. If favors and referrals tend to define Santa Fe's creative community, this system of reciprocity needs an infrastructure to survive contemporary economic pressures. With authentic, genuine resource sharing and relationship building, all creatives can amplify their means, and opportunities can reach beyond the lucky few with the right connections.

THE SANTA FE CREATIVE HUB

To address these concerns, the City of Santa Fe's Office of Economic Development and Arts and Culture Department secured a $100,000 grant from the New Mexico Economic Development Department's Creative Industries Division in 2024 to pilot a Creative Industries Hub. The goal of the project was to create "a community navigator hub to develop and organize the creative industries ecosystem and address existing challenges and gaps." To operationalize this vision, the City contracted Creative Startups, who worked with Raashan Ahmad, Executive Director of local nonprofit Vital Spaces, to brainstorm and formalize a process for establishing this Creative Hub.

Our goal for the Creative Hub Santa Fe was to design a community-led infrastructure project that would strengthen the city's creative economy by fostering collaboration and resource-sharing. The framework was fourfold: A) enhancing community gatherings, B) strengthening provider collaboration, C) supporting entrepreneurs, and D) creating an action network. We envision the Hub as a way to connect entrepreneurs, service providers, and creative communities, all in service of building an accessible and resilient ecosystem where the creative industries—and the people behind it—can thrive. As economic pressures grow and the landscape shifts, creatives are calling for more connection, support, and visibility. We believe the Santa Fe Creative Hub should respond by organizing resources and strengthening the ecosystem, ensuring creativity remains a force in our community.

Between March 2025 and June 2025, we all worked together to launch a preliminary pilot of the Hub, attempting to harmonize with Santa Fe's culture of unique intertwinings: ambition for experiment, reverence for tradition. Over these four months, we accomplished the following:

- Conducted 50+ informal individual conversations
- Collaborated on 5 events that engaged 500+ participant across the City (including events staged in or collaborators representing the geographic areas of Southside/Airport, Siler Rufina, Midtown, and Downtown)
- Launched a broad social media campaign that garnered 60,000 views
- Mapped 267 local and national resources
- Produced an 8000 word Resource Packet that included: advice for leveling up creative business practices; pricing tips; guides to starting/evolving both creative events and nonprofits in Santa Fe; and the full resource list



- Established a working group of 30+ leading local creatives
- Designed a project pipeline mechanism for creative founders to more directly connect with potential resources

Our efforts culminated in a Resource Fair at the Downtown Library on June 7, 2025, where over 75 creatives connected with resource providers through workshops, demonstrations, and live music, proving that systematic coordination could amplify Santa Fe's organic creative reciprocity without replacing its authentic community connections.

The creative economy is not going anywhere, especially not in Santa Fe. Globally, creative sectors already generate $2.25 trillion annually while employing 30 million people, with Deloitte predicting 40% growth by 2030 and G20 Insights forecasting the sector will command 10% of global GDP. In America, creative industries added $1.1 trillion in value in 2022—more than construction and transportation combined—while UNCTAD reports global exports of creative services surged from $487 billion to $1.1 trillion between 2010 and 2020. But 2025 is also undoubtedly a year of political and economic uncertainty, and Santa Fe is not immune. For the Hub to be a force that keeps creatives thriving in Santa Fe, the aritsts and leaders we met were insistent in their clarity: the Hub must shore up fragmentation, galvanize and weave, replacing competition with cooperation. This might look like monthly working group meetings that coordinate service duplication; digital platforms that make resources and processes more navigable; and bringing technical assistance directly to economically distressed creative entrepreneurs through routine programming. Such efforts also represent an opportunity, we would argue, to crystallize Santa Fe's success as a living laboratory that re-imagines the potential of the "creative economy" with the same earnestness that creatives who "find themselves" in Santa Fe (in both the geographic and spiritual senses) attempt their own reinvention.

HOW DOES THE HUB SUCCEED?

The Hub is a what if. What would a cultural economy look like in a town that embraces cultural production as something everyone has a

SANTA FE'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

$205 million
taxable annual wages in 2023

1,427
average annual establishments in 2023

7,509
average annual employees in 2023

22%
of all taxable annual wages in 2023

22.4%
of all average annual establishments in 2023

21.8%
of all average annual employees in 2023

12.9%
of Santa Fe GDP came from the creative economy in 2023

10.13%
of all GRT taxable gross receipts came from creative industries in 2023

civic right to partake in? Where the ability of creatives to make a living off their creativity is enhanced by their capacity to bring about more creativity in the lives of all their neighbors?

As we met with creatives and artists across Santa Fe, two passionate beliefs about both the economy and culture emerged. First: the economy is what we do to provide for our material needs, and the creative economy is when we provide for our material needs in ways that make us feel like we are more than our material needs. Second, culture is how we are creative together to become community.

These beliefs are not unique to Santa Fe; they tend to consistently re-emerge when artists conceptualize themselves as part of larger economic and civic fabrics. But not every city has a Creative Hub. And certainly not every city is the City Different. When resource-mapping becomes resource-sharing, and when the distance between artist and entrepreneur collapses into a single hyphenated identity that honors both impulses, the Hub can spur a future that honors Santa Fe's rich artistic past.

In this report, we will document the results of this initial experiment and suggest a series of recommendations that might sustain the Hub. Santa Fe stands poised—if the creative community commits to collective action over individual survival, if economic development priorities evolve to recognize creative industries as essential infrastructure rather than discretionary amenities—to pioneer a regenerative model where cultural heritage fuels economic innovation, where traditional knowledge systems inform contemporary entrepreneurship, and where the City Different becomes the city that makes a difference in how creative economies architect themselves nationwide. Let's figure out how.

THE CREATIVE HUB PROCESS



INITIAL PHASE

We began by working with the Santa Fe Office of Economic Development (OED) and the Santa Fe Arts and Culture Department to understand the current portrait of "challenges and gaps" in the local creative industries ecosystem, and what form a "community navigator hub" might take to best address them. Our City partners helped us identify "frequently asked questions" and patterns of communication that routinely circulated between creative entrepreneurs and public services.

While the City's grant from the New Mexico Economic Development Department's Creative Industries Division (CID) was announced in October 2023 and designed to support a year-long project, our contract was not finalized by the City until late February 2025, resulting in a window of operation that spanned from March 2025 to June 2025, with the concluding date of June 30th based on both City and CID deadlines for reporting.

In late February, we began to internally brainstorm and informally survey our initial contacts throughout the Santa Fe creative community. Because of the protracted nature of the contract, we prioritized strategies that would allow us to jumpstart the project's reach and efficacy. Additionally, to overcome procedural City limits on the contract that prevented the construction of full Web environments in the protracted time period, we focused on resource distribution (for example: transcripts of webinars, resource lists, etc) through informal online sharing mechanisms (Linktree, email) with aggregation of these resources ready for integration into eventual full online Hub environments. In light of these limitations, we recognized it was more important to establish a strong reputation for the Creative Hub than attempt to build anything so quickly it might run the risk of being half-baked or lacking community buy-in. We zeroed in methods to collect insights that could, in a later phase, result in a Creative Hub that felt truly community-sourced. Consistent with our discussions with the City, we also strongly believed it was important to proactively and equitably involve creative entrepreneurs and communities historically underserved by similar ventures.

Because we did not have the time to fully employ a participatory design process that covered the breadth of the City, we divided our outreach efforts across five initiatives:

1. conducting initial ethnographic research conversations with 50+ creatives representing a diverse range of

demographics and creative practices

2. connecting with existing events to promote the mission of the Hub and collect valuable insight about what creatives need throughout the City
3. designing a series of webinars on common topics important to Santa Fe creatives: alternative business structures, "real talk" about money (including pricing), and values-aligned capital
4. formulating a working group of 30+ creative economy leaders who could best help us understand existing challenges across Santa Fe's creative sectors and who might be interested in collaborating on long-term solutions
5. a final in-person Resource Fair with live entertainment and face-to-face interaction between service providers and creatives, featuring a preliminary branding strategy for the Creative Hub (refined based on City feedback) that the City could modify for use in ongoing Hub efforts

Simultaneously with our primary outreach, we began secondary research into both regional and national resources. Regionally, we focused on A) studio/gallery spaces open to collaboration, B) arts advocacy organizations and efforts, C) business support, D) creative manufacturing/ production hubs (such as makerspaces and craft guilds), E) funding opportunities, and F) performance/event spaces (perhaps the most critical list, as we alluded to earlier and will discuss in our final recommendations). Nationally, we focused on A) arts policy & advocacy organizations, B) creative business support services, C) diversity in arts advocacy/support, and D) national arts funders. After feedback from the City OED/ Arts and Culture team, we supplemented each resource with a short description of what the resource offered geared more explicitly to an audience of creative entrepreneurs, and we expanded the local resources with an additional layer of categorization tags:

- **Creative Spaces:** *Where artists make, rehearse, or present work*
  - Studios & Makerspaces (e.g., shared studios, ceramics, wood/ fabrication labs, print shops)
  - Rehearsal & Performance Spaces (e.g., music, dance, theater, media)
  - Coworking & Hybrid Creative Hubs (e.g., creative co-working spaces, gallery-workshop combos)
- **Business & Professional Support:** *Services that help artists build sustainable creative careers*
  - Financial & Administrative Support (grants, microloans, fiscal sponsors, tax support)
  - Business Development (LLC formation, marketing help, pricing, business coaching)
  - Legal & Regulatory Help (contracts, intellectual property, permitting/ licensing)
  - Professional Development (artist residencies, accelerator programs, workshops)

All told, we produced lists of 190 local resources and 77 national resources, with contact info, distributed via our Resource Fair Packet and formatted for inclusion in the OED's Small Business Navigator program.

Finally, we also embarked on thorough secondary research of discussions among creatives in online forums and media sources, focusing on the most

current conversations we could find and analyzing patterns. From this research (and our initial conversations, detailed below), we produced this list of "frequently asked questions" by the Santa Fe creatives most likely to use a Creative Hub:

Where can I find affordable studio, venue, rehearsal space for my creative work or performance in Santa Fe?

1. Are there any shared workshops or makerspaces in Santa Fe where I can use tools, equipment, or technology without buying my own?
2. Where can I find an affordable commercial kitchen to produce or scale up my food or craft products?
3. How can I connect with other artists and creatives in Santa Fe to collaborate or share ideas?
4. How do I break into Santa Fe's creative scene and meet people if I'm new or just starting out?
5. How can emerging creatives find and connect with more established artists or mentors in the community?
6. Is there a central hub, directory, or online platform to discover creative resources and opportunities in Santa Fe?
7. How can I find people with specific skills (musicians, developers, designers, etc.) to join my project or team?
8. Where can I find grants or other funding opportunities to support my art or creative projects (and are there local artist grants or residencies I should know about)?
9. How can I secure an investor or small business loan for my creative venture or studio?
10. What resources (like workshops or business mentors) can help me develop business skills as a creative entrepreneur in Santa Fe?
11. Do I need to form a specific type of business (like an LLC, nonprofit, or co-op) for my creative venture, and how do I decide which is best?
12. How can I make sure I'm fulfilling all tax obligations (like paying gross receipts tax) for my creative business in New Mexico?
13. Where can I find a reliable bookkeeper, accountant, or lawyer who understands small creative businesses?
14. What steps do I need to take to host a pop-up event, workshop, or performance legally in Santa Fe (in terms of permits or city requirements)?
15. What should I know about zoning or city regulations if I want to use a space as a studio, gallery, or performance venue?
16. How can small food or craft producers meet health and safety requirements if they want to sell products in stores or markets?
17. Is there a way to navigate Santa Fe's permitting and inspection process more easily for a small creative business?
18. What are effective ways to market my art, performances, or creative services in Santa Fe if I have a very limited budget?
19. How can I attract a wider audience or customer base for my creative work beyond just my friends and local contacts?
20. Which local publications, websites, or social media groups are most useful for promoting creative events and businesses in Santa Fe?
21. What's the best way to build an online presence (like a website or social media following) for my creative brand or portfolio?
22. How can I earn a sustainable income as an artist or creative professional in Santa Fe's economy?
23. Are there affordable housing, live/work studios, or other cost-of-living resources available for artists in Santa Fe?
24. How can I balance pursuing my creative work with a day job or other responsibilities so I can still grow my artistic career?
25. What can I do to avoid burnout while managing the many tasks of running a creative business?
26. Is there a community for tech and digital creatives (like filmmakers, game designers, or digital artists) in Santa Fe?
27. How can I get my artwork or products into local galleries, shops, or art markets in Santa Fe?
28. What is the process for getting permission to create a public mural or art installation in Santa Fe?
29. Where can I access or borrow high-cost creative equipment or software (such as musical instruments, cameras, or design programs) if I can't afford my own?
30. How do I apply for Santa Fe's city arts grants or programs, like the "Art is the Solution" fund?
31. How can I balance making art with managing the business side of my creative practice?
32. How do I build a consistent brand and online presence for my artwork or creative services?

33. What are some ways to create multiple income streams as a creative entrepreneur in Santa Fe?
34. Where can I learn practical skills like grant writing, marketing, or financial planning to grow my creative business?
35. How do seasonal tourism swings impact art sales in Santa Fe, and how can I adapt my business strategy during slow periods?
36. How can I participate in Santa Fe's major art markets or festivals (like Indian Market or Folk Art Market) as a new artist?
37. Are there co-working spaces, incubators, or startup programs in Santa Fe tailored to creative entrepreneurs?
38. How can I integrate new technologies (like digital media or VR) into my creative work and still keep my authentic style?
39. Should I be concerned about AI tools replacing artists, and how can I use AI to my advantage rather than as a threat?
40. Where can I find affordable or donated art supplies and equipment in Santa Fe to support my work?
41. What are good ways to engage younger audiences (teens and 20-somethings) in Santa Fe or with my art, events, offerings?
42. How can I build a successful creative career in Santa Fe so I don't have to move to a bigger city for opportunities?
43. What's the best way to price my artwork or creative services for the Santa Fe market without undervaluing my work?
44. How do I get the word out about my shows, workshops, or products in Santa Fe's community (for example, through local media or event calendars)?



INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEWS



We attempted a healthy range of research conversation partners, both in demographic identity categories and creative pursuits. The final list represented diverse ages, races, ethnicities, class intersections, locations within the city, and institutional affiliations. It represented a healthy mix between people situated in the "service" side of the equation and situated on the "served" side, though anyone with even a passing involvement in the creative economy knows those distinctions quickly blur to meaninglessness.

We also attempted to survey at least one participant from every category of "creative enterprise" laid out by the New Mexico Economic Development Department's Creative Industries Division: performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, entertainment, media, information and broadcasting, applied arts and design (including architecture) landscape architecture, museum and gallery professions, marketing, coding and digital media, artisanal crafts, textile, and culinary arts.

As we discuss at length in all our literature, including the 2024 Strategic Plan we were commissioned to create by the aforementioned Creative Industries Division, artists who fit neatly into a single category exist only in the wishful thinking of Bureau of Labor Statistics staffers and anyone who yearns to replace infinity with a numbered list. But nonetheless, we tried to adhere to such categorization.

In our work, we attempted to remain conscious and respectful about community fatigue around "conversation" that does not translate into action. We held lightly structured interviews that revolved around "needs, goals, and barriers" with a special focus on reciprocity, always asking: "What do you find yourself always texting someone to ask for? What do people text you to ask for?" We discussed industry assets, desires and needs, prospects for growth, and the extensiveness of collaboration in the individual's own particular creative community. We explicitly sought interviewees who might have been previously left out of similar conversations or people who might have updated perspectives. To maintain privacy, cultivate trust, and encourage transparency, we assured the anonymity of all interview participants and annotated but did not record conversations. We were not able to talk to everyone in Santa Fe related to the creative industries. We recognize that we are responsible for any errors in judgment or important missing voices.

Here is a summary of insights from these conversations:

- **Affordable, flexible space is the #1 pinch point.** Rehearsal rooms, 100-200-cap venues, low-cost studios, darkrooms, and pop-up galleries are scarce, pricey, or fully booked; creatives keep hunting for "some weird space nobody's found yet."
- **Centralized wayfinding is missing.** People spend a lot of time just figuring out who has gear, how to book a venue, or which mentor can help. A searchable, community-fed directory or "matchmaking" service came up in almost interview.
- **Relationships unlock resources.** In tightknit scenes, help flows through trust: show up, volunteer, trade favors, then ask. Formal systems work best when they mimic that reciprocity culture rather than replacing it.
- **Silos—geographic, cultural, generational—are real.** Southside immigrant families, Indigenous makers, Spanish-speaking artists, and both younger *and* older practitioners all feel partly disconnected from downtown networks. Any Hub must be multilingual, multigenerational, and decentralized.
- **Youth need visible on-ramps.** Loss of Midtown/SFUAD

and Warehouse 21 left gaps in mentorship, tech access, and "learn-by-doing" spaces; pairing teens with experienced creatives and offering basic gear access is a repeated ask.

- **Low-barrier "early wins" build trust.** Pop-up resource fairs, potlucks, or micro-grants create quick momentum and show the Hub delivers more than talk.
- **Tech should meet people where they already are.** Rather than an expensive custom platform, creatives want to leverage the tools they already understand: Discord/WhatsApp/Instagram, plus data collection that can be communally maintained.
- **Micro-funding beats big-ticket grants for many projects.** Small, fast grants or accelerator-style stipends feel better matched to the scale of local experiments than lengthy competitive proposals.
- **Barter and time bank values resonate.** Swapping skills, gear, or even a "broken van for a chainsaw" is culturally normal and could be formalized without turning everything into cash transactions.
- **DIY spaces walk a legality tightrope.** Collectives value their gray-area freedom but also need templates for safe, pop-up events that won't attract costly enforcement.
- **Creative burnout & "emotional scar tissue" linger.** Past failed initiatives make people wary; keeping scope realistic and delivering tangible support early is essential to rebuild confidence.
- **Red tape fatigue blocks momentum.** From event fire inspections to food product manufacturing licenses, creatives describe "prehistoric" permitting that eats months of unpaid labor. A one-stop "permit concierge" or civic ombuds office would free up time and keep small experiments from dying in the paperwork.
- **Shared back office services are a missing layer of infrastructure.** Bookkeeping, GRT tax filings, grantwriting, and freelancer payroll repeatedly come up as pain points; people literally swap accountant phone numbers at meetings. Creatives would rather pool funds for a bookkeeper who understands GRT filings, payroll, and 1099s than sit through another generic business workshop; referrals for "someone who actually gets artists" circulate constantly. A cooperative service bureau could remove a chronic mental load.
- **Seasonality skews income and visibility.** Visitor traffic and outdoor events spike in summer, then flatten; businesses juggle shifting hours, yet updating Google listings or marketing every few months is a heavy lift. Tools that bundle calendar updates, joint promos, and slow-season pop-ups would help creatives ride the tourism curve instead of fighting it.
- **Libraries are sleeper super nodes.** Participants consistently pointed to public libraries as trusted, neutral ground for resource fairs, podcast studios, business "help desks," and newcomer orientation. Leaning on these existing "third places" could make the Hub visible to wider demographics without new bricks-and-mortar costs.
- The "missing-middle" production gap. Whether it's a ceramicist needing a small-batch kiln run, or a band screenprinting t-shirts, code-compliant spaces and services between hobby scale and enterprise scale are almost nonexistent.
- **Specialized finishing services are bottlenecks.** Small runs of label or merch design, gallery-quality framing, or short-run packaging still cost several thousand dollars and often require out-of-state vendors, stalling many projects at the prototype stage.
- **Audience-facing infrastructure is capital, not decoration.** Durable bilingual signage, way-finding, and accessible websites sit forever below the "urgent" line because they're treated as extra capital expense—even though they directly drive attendance and revenue.
- **Practitioner-led coaching earns the most trust.** Founders listen to mentors with "dirt under their fingernails," not lifelong consultants. Programs that start casually and layer paperwork later avoid the early "crisis of confidence."
- **Collaboration works when capacity and money are explicit on Day 1.** Successful partnerships begin with shared spreadsheets—scope, liability, revenue split—so nobody builds up invisible "favor debt."

EVENT COLLABORATION AND AMPLIFICATION

Our collective experience with creative communities in Santa Fe led us to theorize that a purely centralized effort would not necessarily be the best mechanism for navigating community and tackling challenges and gaps in the creative ecosystem. Centralized solutions collapse under the burden of their upkeep and inevitably re-manifest in slightly tweaked forms among disparate affinity communities, especially in the creative sectors. Our initial research conversations confirmed this theory.

What emerged instead—and was crucial for spurring success in our protracted timeline—was a vision of decentralized amplification: meeting creatives where they were already attempting to solve these challenges and gaps and serving as a conduit between these disparate scenes. If Santa Fe's creative communities are siloed, we did not see the wisdom in producing another silo "to rule them all." Instead, we attempted to define and pilot a framework of "hub as connective tissue," where the community navigation in question is a rhizomatic effort to sew conversation, collaboration, and reciprocity between strongly rooted and self-supporting scenes.

In practice, this took the form of designing an information booth and roving "communication hub" that could live comfortably and unobtrusively at existing community creative events, providing information about all events between each other, calls for "give/get" reciprocal activity (spaces and skills available), and a "love letter" campaign that allowed for inspirational, opt-in missives to travel between creative community silos.

Over the course of the four months, we engaged with four events:

1. **May 9th 2025:** *Creative Media Happy Hour* — A casual mixer co-hosted by film producer Tara Tovarek and cinematographer Vince Martinez.
2. **May 10th 2025:** *Feria Southside* — The City's annual bilingual resource fair with 80+ Southside micro-vendors, social-service tables, music and kids' activities.
3. **May 15th 2025:** *The Living Room with 505omatic* — A live taping of 505omatic's talk-show-style podcast featuring an audience-inclusive roundtable on local issues; part of a monthly series slated to run through summer.
4. **June 14th 2025:** *MADA Community Celebration* — A family-friendly block party with performances, music, food, art activities, circus arts, interactive mural pop-up, family photos, bike decorating, and information/tours of the new Midtown cultural center construction plans.

We amplified these events with our social media campaigns. LinkedIn generated 20,254 impressions with superior click-through rates for substantive actions. Instagram harvested 23,268 views with robust social interactions but minimal conversion beyond the platform. Facebook demonstrated particular efficacy for event promotion, especially posts featuring accomplished community members and vibrant visual documentation.

At the events themselves, creatives were eager to learn more about the Hub and express eagerness for its goals. While participation in the "love letter" and "give/get" activities was not robust in this protracted timeframe, the Hub was a welcome presence at these events, and visitors did learn about and circulate from one event to others they had not already heard about.

WEBINARS

Based on early discussions, feedback, and secondary research, we surfaced three webinar topics that to align the most frequent patterns of concern among Santa Fe creative entrepreneurs: A) "real talk" about money, including how to price one's work and how to standardize compensation across informal artist economies, B) alternative modes of ownership that go beyond individual LLCs to foster collective effort and community impact, and C) how to attract capital without compromising values. Each session balanced educational content with interactive discussion, attempting to model the kind of frank conversations creatives desire but rarely have space to pursue.

The webinar series faced challenges typical of digital programming in 2025. Despite 30-40 registrations per session, actual attendance remained low. Team discussions revealed the paradox of webinar culture: participants often registered with intentions to watch recordings later, creating a disconnect between interest and engagement. The team adapted by ensuring all sessions were recorded to be made available through the Hub website, acknowledging that asynchronous learning might better serve busy creatives.

Content from these webinars informed the development of downloadable resources, including worksheets on values-aligned capital and the full 8000 word Resource Packet we published for the June 7th Resource Fair. Participants appreciated the integration of webinar content into permanent resources as a sign of the Hub's commitment to creating lasting infrastructure rather than ephemeral programming.

Real Talk about Money for Creatives: May 14 2025

We opened this webinar by setting the themes of transparency, solidarity, and reciprocity: being open about how much things cost and how much to charge without undercutting

fellow creatives. The intimate group created space for remarkably candid exchanges about money struggles.

The session opened with an icebreaker asking participants to recall their most “unhinged” pricing story. One participant shared her experience negotiating with Netflix for artwork featured in a production, revealing not just the challenge of securing fair compensation from a major corporation, but the complex internal negotiations required to fairly distribute revenue among 31 contributing artists whose pieces ranged from $150 to $5,000. This story crystallized a recurring theme: “fair” pricing translates to consistent internal values and community relationships.

Participants discussed the emotional toll of underpricing—the “psychic damage” of consistently undervaluing one’s work—and strategies for breaking these patterns. The group explored alternatives to traditional pricing models, including Community Supported Art programs where patrons subscribe to support an artist’s practice rather than purchasing individual pieces.

Key insights emerged around the interconnection of pricing and community values. Participants noted how underpricing doesn’t just hurt individual artists but depresses wages across the creative ecosystem. The session concluded with commitments to continue these conversations, recognizing that changing deeply ingrained patterns around money requires ongoing dialogue and mutual support, both of which could be facilitated in an ongoing fashion through the Creative Hub.



Alternative Modes of Ownership: May 28, 2025

Attorney Talia Kosh, who has spent 20 years helping New Mexico creatives navigate legal structures, led the first part of deep dive into cooperative associations and employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs). Despite lower attendance than anticipated, the session provided crucial information for those ready to move beyond traditional business models, as well as a comprehensive resource for asynchronous review by Web viewers.

Kosh systematically compared nonprofit cooperatives, for-profit cooperatives, and hybrid structures, emphasizing that “purpose clauses” fundamentally shape an organization’s trajectory. Kosh assessed ESOPs (employee stock ownership plans) and effectively discouraged them for most creative enterprises due to high administrative costs, complex fiduciary requirements, and the need for at least 20 W-2 employees. Instead, she highlighted more accessible options: LLCs operating with cooperative principles, onramps to full nonprofit status via partnerships with fiscal sponsors, and various hybrid models that could provide both flexibility and mission alignment. Considerations throughout the conversation illuminated the practical challenges of “alternative” ownership models: balancing democratic ideals with operational efficiency, navigating tax implications, and maintaining flexibility for future growth.

Kosh explained that while many creatives are drawn to cooperative models philosophically, the technical and administrative requirements often prove daunting. Her recommendation was to start with simpler structures and

evolve toward more complex forms as capacity grows. For those considering nonprofits, Kosh emphasized the ease of forming them in New Mexico but warned about the ongoing compliance burden—a reality check that sparked discussion about shared administrative services as a potential Creative Hub offering.

Next, Jerome Morrison of 505omatic shared the nascent local news organization's ongoing journey to determine their organizational structure. As a collective of content creators working to build a media platform, they exemplify the challenges facing creative cooperatives in real time. Morrison opened by acknowledging the fundamental tension: "The entity type, that's just paperwork. But we've learned... what's most important here is the rules that we write down on how it is we are relating to one another." This philosophy guided their exploration through multiple organizational models, ultimately landing on a member-managed LLC with cooperative principles—at least for their first nine months.

505omatic's process began with extensive research through existing resources for forming cooperatives, which provided templates and questionnaires that forced difficult conversations. Morrison shared resources comparing different governance structures—collective, sociocratic, and holocratic—and their corresponding management styles and decision-making processes. For 505omatic, the challenge was balancing their desire for democratic participation with operational efficiency. Morrison walked through 505omatic's use of a 40-question framework covering everything from membership criteria to decision-making processes. Their approach was pragmatic: start simple, test, and evolve. They settled on three membership levels:

1. **Subscribers:** Supporting the platform financially but without governance rights
2. **Contributors:** On the path to membership, actively creating content and attending meetings
3. **Members:** Full participants with voting rights and profit-sharing

This simplicity was intentional. As Morrison noted: "When you break up that hierarchy, then weird power dynamics start happening." Their membership pathway required clear, achievable steps: subscribing to the platform, submitting content regularly, attending six meetings over two months, and demonstrating commitment to the collective's mission.

One important thread of the conversation involved intellectual property. Kosh outlined the tension: a traditional approach would require creators to assign all IP to 505omatic, but she guessed that would not be an "exciting concept" to creator members. The discussion explored alternatives:

- Non-exclusive licensing allowing creators to retain ownership
- Time-limited exclusive periods (e.g., three months) before reverting to non-exclusive
- Different arrangements for employee-created versus contractor-created content
- The distinction between core team members (potential employees) and broader membership

Morrison's most exciting revelation was their adaptation of the "Slicing Pie" model for tracking contributions in pre-revenue organizations. Having



previously used profit-sharing models for events in Austin, he discovered software designed for startups to track both tangible investments (money, equipment) and intangible contributions (time, expertise, connections). For 505omatic, this meant establishing fair market values for different types of work—video production, editing, event management—even before generating revenue. "We're not making any money right now," Jerome explained, "but it is important for us... to have good understanding of what we are putting into this thing." This approach creates transparency and fairness from the beginning, preventing the resentments that often destroy creative collaborations.

Finally, the discussion of fiscal sponsorship revealed sophisticated thinking about hybrid structures. As an LLC, 505omatic could partner with fiscal sponsors to receive tax-deductible donations and grants without the compliance burden of nonprofit status. Kosh's advice was practical: "If you can find anything under 8% admin fee, you're doing great. If you can, get them to come to 5% … some nonprofits will even waive it." No matter what the sponsorship fee ends up being, this strategy allows organizations to test their model and build capacity before committing to more complex structures, a particularly valuable insight for creative collectives navigating the tension between mission-driven work and market sustainability.

In sum, the webinar revealed several critical tensions in alternative ownership models:

- **Complexity vs. Accessibility:** While cooperative principles attract creatives philosophically, the legal and administrative requirements can be overwhelming. Talia's advice to "start simple" resonated throughout.
- **Mission vs. Operations:** The tax benefits of different structures come with constraints. For example, under Subchapter T of the IRS tax code, cooperatives can't distribute dividends on common stock, forcing organizations to truly prioritize member benefits over capital returns.
- **Idealism vs. Pragmatism:** Morrison's candid sharing revealed the gap between cooperative ideals and daily operations. 505omatic's commitment to document and revisit decisions showed maturity in navigating this tension.
- **Individual vs. Collective:** The IP discussion highlighted how creative cooperatives must balance individual creative ownership with collective sustainability.

Value-Aligned Capital for Creatives: June 11, 2025

Alice Loy of Creative Startups provided a seminar in understanding the capital landscape, demystifying everything from grants to venture capital. Recognizing that creatives often feel locked out of funding conversations dominated by tech entrepreneurs, Loy mapped the entire spectrum of capital options while emphasizing how to find funding that aligns with creative values.

The session began with a powerful framework: capital allocators live in professional worlds with specific expectations, languages, and risk assessments. Understanding their perspective—what Loy called "getting inside their heads"—proves crucial for successful fundraising. She traced the evolution from purely profit-driven capital to impact investing, showing how the landscape has expanded to include funders who measure success beyond financial returns.

Participants shared deeply personal challenges around funding. One participant articulated a common creative dilemma: the exhausting cycle of taking paying work that leaves no energy for creative practice, describing it as "almost an addiction" to denying oneself the work one truly wants to do. This sparked discussion about how systemic barriers—particularly for women and people of color who face additional perceived "risk"—compound individual struggles.

Loy provided practical tools, including a detailed chart showing different funding types across business stages, from pre-seed grants through Series A investment. Crucially, she emphasized that values-aligned capital exists within each category; the challenge lies in finding it. Her advice included tactical strategies (approaching women investors first, given documented bias) and broader wisdom about patient capital, community investment, and the importance of building relationships before seeking funds.

The session concluded with discussion of emerging models like investment crowdfunding, fiscal sponsorship through platforms cheaper than traditional community foundations, and the importance of viewing fundraising as relationship-building rather than transaction-seeking. Loy's offer to review pitch decks and financials for participants exemplified the practical support creatives need to navigate these complex systems and a potential service that could be coordinated through the Creative Hub.

Collective Takeaways

Across all three webinars, several themes emerged that inform broader Creative Hub strategy:

- **Knowledge gaps are real but surmountable:** Each session revealed how basic business concepts—pricing, organizational structure, fundraising—remain opaque to many creatives, not from lack of intelligence but lack of exposure.
- **Peer learning resonates:** While the presence of experts was a vital hook for each webinar, some of the most powerful moments came when participants shared real experiences, whether it was negotiating with Netflix or 505omatic's transparent structure considerations.
- **Systemic barriers require collective solutions:** Individual struggles with pricing, structure, or funding often reflect broader systemic issues that collaborative approaches can address more effectively.
- **Technical assistance must be ongoing:** One-hour webinars can spark awareness, but changing entrenched patterns requires sustained support, whether through peer groups, mentorship, or professional services.

The gap between registration and attendance numbers suggests both the hunger for this information and the overwhelming demands on creatives' time. This reinforces the need for multiple delivery methods—recorded sessions, written resources, and peer support groups—to meet creatives where they are. The intimate scale, initially disappointing, ultimately enabled deeper conversation and relationship building, suggesting that smaller, ongoing cohorts might prove more transformative than large, one-time events.

WORKING GROUP

The Working Group represented the Hub's most ambitious attempt at systematic coordination. Three meetings convened 30+ leading local creatives, including representatives from galleries, theaters, music venues, creative businesses, and support organizations. The goal of the working group was to test whether a shared action network—convened by the Creative Hub—could strengthen Santa Fe's creative economy by reducing service duplication, identifying ecosystem gaps, and developing collaborative solutions. The success of these working group discussions, and the group's hunger to continue meeting, sharing resources, and working together, suggests that such an action network would indeed be a powerful manifestation of the Hub's mission.

Early meetings focused on relationship building and sector education. Participants introduced themselves and their organizations, revealing unexpected connections and potential collaborations. Discussions surfaced immediate needs: sound and lighting equipment for events, videographers for documentation, accessible performance spaces with 100-200 person capacity, and mentorship programs pairing experienced creatives with newcomers.

As meetings progressed, consistent themes emerged. The need for centralized communication dominated discussions, with participants proposing various solutions from shared Canva documents to WhatsApp groups to collaborative wikis. The desire for resource aggregation—knowing who had what available when—appeared repeatedly. Participants expressed frustration with existing silos while acknowledging their own tendencies to operate in isolation.

Even before each meeting's formal agenda began, the chat filled with greetings and laughter, signalling a collegial mood. Participants expressed relief at finding space outside their usual silos. At the last meeting, Dylan Tenorio of Little Globe distilled the collective enthusiasm: "We don't want this to end—we want to keep going." Discussions were candid about structural obstacles—time, space, money—yet consistently solution-oriented. Breakout groups returned with rapidfire reports, and the full group prioritised ideas that could launch quickly alongside longer-term aspirations. The sessions demonstrated both ongoing demand for coordinated infrastructure and a willingness among practitioners to contribute their own resources.

Recommendations that emerged from the Working Group sessions:

- **Monthly Zoom + quarterly in-person cadence:** Maintain a standing online call each month and rotate a convivial in-person gathering across venues every quarter.
- **Shared knowledge base:** Create an internal Canva or wiki-style document to park locations, prices, funders and partner contacts.
- **Decentralised message channels:** Aggregate the existing Santa Fe WhatsApp groups and Discord servers, rather than forcing a single platform, to form a "mycelial" communications web.
- **Event programming and talent matching:** Compile lists of local talent (bands, DJs) and maintain through volunteer coordination that prioritizes seeding and description by in-person event attendance and review by bookers who don't have time to go to every event. Similar models could exist for tech talent around lighting/sound etc.
- **Pop up event guidelines:** Draft risk-managed guidelines for legal pop-up shows in under-used rooms.
- **Time-and-mentorship studio model:** Prototype

mixed-experience studio sessions where newcomers book supported slots alongside veteran creators.

- **"Invitation & Prayer" space activation:** Embed ritual-informed welcome practices into every Hub-supported event.

JUNE 7TH RESOURCE FAIR

On Saturday, June 7, 2025, we staged a four-hour Resource Fair at the Main Library downtown (10:00 AM – 2:00 PM). This event represented both a culmination of the pilot phase of the Creative Hub and a catalyst for future action. Over 75 creatives connected with resource providers through workshops, demonstrations, and live music. Conceived as a one-stop "office hours" marketplace, the Fair invited working group members, service organizations, and independent creatives to meet face-to-face, share tools, and surface immediate needs. The event answered the call—frequently voiced in Hub meetings—for a space where practitioners could step out of sector silos and ask concrete "How do I…?" questions in real time.

The Fair featured staffed information tables from Creative Startups, MADA, the Arts and Culture Department / Office of Economic Development, and the Santa Fe Community Foundation, as well as literature from WESST and the Santa Fe Business Incubator, and a live installation with the Axle Contemporary mobile artspace. The Fair was anchored around three sequential, 45-minute mini-panels:

What do you need to start or evolve a creative event series?

Panelists: Maggie Fine (Santa Fe Magazine/Canyon Road Walk), Tim Franke (Lensic 360), Raashan Ahmad (Vital Spaces)

The opening session traced the personal journeys that led each panelist into event production. Tim Franke recounted arriving in Santa Fe nearly three decades ago, learning the trade from bartending through to talent-buying, and now co-producing the "Santa Fe Summer Scene" through Lensic 360, which (with support from the City of Santa Fe and City of Santa Fe and Tourism Santa Fe) produces 50 free music and movie events throughout the summer. Maggie Fine, a Santa Fe native and theatre artist, described returning home in 2017 and launching the Canyon Road Summer Walks to reconnect residents with the historic art-rich avenue. Rashaan Ahmad, a touring hip-hop musician who moved from Oakland in 2013, explained how residencies evolved into community-driven parties and, eventually, his role as executive director of Vital Spaces.

Across the discussion, the panelists converged on three practical lessons for new organizers: take an immediate first step (because no idea advances without action); align with partners and collaborators who complement your skills; and secure modest but diversified funding from foundations, city





arts grants, and small local businesses by demonstrating clear community benefit. They emphasised that imperfect or unconventional venues often heighten a project's appeal, that free or low-cost entry broadens access, and that sustained goodwill—rather than a single marquee act—is what ultimately attracts sponsors.

What do you need to start or evolve a creative nonprofit?

Panelists: Jamie Blosser (MADA), Dylan Tenorio (Little Globe), and Yolanda Cruz (Santa Fe Community Foundation)

We opened by framing nonprofits as a cornerstone of Santa Fe's creative economy and introduced the three speakers,whose work spans incubation, capacity-building, and place-based arts development.

Cruz outlined the concrete pathway from idea to 501(c)(3) status: researching unmet need, documenting mission fit, recruiting a skills-based board, and filing state and IRS paperwork. She urged first-timers to consider fiscal sponsorship through intermediaries such as the New Mexico Foundation. She stressed that funders look for proven fiscal stewardship, often requiring three years of operations, and explained how sponsors handle back-office compliance in exchange for a 10–15 percent administrative fee.

The conversation then turned to sustainability and collaboration. Blosser described MADA's plan to co-locate arts nonprofits on the Midtown campus and pool shared services such as accounting, legal, and joint purchasing, arguing that collective infrastructure can free smaller organizations from "siloed scarcity."

Tenorio traced his own journey from ensemble member to co-executive director of Little Globe, illustrating how community storytelling circles build both healing and measurable impact; he acknowledged the challenge of translating qualitative outcomes into grant metrics.

All three panelists named burnout—especially around

fundraising and reporting—as a persistent risk and recommended strategic planning, clear boundaries, and board development to distribute labor. Looking ahead, they imagined a locally governed arts-and-culture fund that would channel community wealth into flexible, trust-based support for grassroots creatives.

Level Up: Make Your Art a Business

Panelists: DezBaa' (Adobe Town Productions), Niyia Mack (The Unusual Creative), and April Cleveland (Exodus Ensemble)

For this panel, we welcomed three multi-hyphenate practitioners: screenwriter-producer DezBaa' (Adobe Town Productions), creative producer Niyia Mack (The Unusual Creative), and theatre director April Cleveland (Exodus Ensemble). Each traced a route to full-time artistic work that required redefining conventional career ladders.

DezBaa' described pivoting from geology to film, teaching herself video production, earning an MFA at IAIA, and joining Dark Winds as a staff writer while parenting and planning a local incubator for Native filmmakers. Mack recounted moving from acting to company management at New York's Players Theater—learning box-office math for a 99-seat house—before producing large-scale immersive shows in Los Angeles. Cleveland detailed building Exodus Ensemble after pandemic relocation: a 12-artist, donation-based company where performers double as administrative staff, keeping 90 percent of the budget in artists' pockets.

Across the dialogue, the panelists stressed four takeaways:

1. Multi-hyphenate skills are essential: artists must pair craft with budgeting, marketing, or project management to stay solvent.

2. Community collaboration beats competition: DezBaa' urged creatives to "look at what we already have here" rather than chase Hollywood, while Mack framed growth as solving shared problems with peers and sponsors.

3. Radical transparency attracts support: Cleveland's sliding-scale model asks audiences to pay according to means; Mack's practice exchanges in-kind venue or newsletter swaps before cash.

4. Progress requires disciplined presence: DezBaa' relayed advice to "bend space and time" by focusing intently on the next task—one "bite of the burger" at a time—echoing Mack's mentorship story of offering help first to gain knowledge.

Collectively, the session illustrated that viable creative livelihoods in Santa Fe depend on local networks, clear value exchange, and artists' willingness to own both the art and the business.

A live band—Suavecito—closed out the gathering at 1PM, turning the library's exterior plaza into a festive zone for celebration and networking.

To extend the value of the day, the team produced an 8,000-word Resource Packet—printed on-site and available by QR code—that collates frequently asked questions (permits, zoning, pricing, marketing, funding, technology, and wellness) alongside step-by-step "level up" roadmaps and lean-ops toolkits for pricing, starting/extending events, and creative nonprofits. Participants could annotate the booklet, circle next steps, and carry it into future conversations.

Anecdotal feedback captured on site echoed earlier Working Group insights: creatives crave streamlined, peer-vetted information and are eager for regular, low-barrier meet-ups that mix knowledge sharing with conviviality. The Resource Fair model—a concise schedule, rotating local experts, take-home tools, and music—offers a replicable template for quarterly "office hours" pop-ups across the city.

TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The Santa Fe Creative Hub's three-month pilot demonstrated that systematic coordination has the potential to align scattered creative assets into economic infrastructure in the City Different by A) emphasizing the power of formalized reciprocity; B) making resources and processes transparent and easily navigable; and C) facilitating regularly-scheduled collaboration. But pilots, by definition, end. The question confronting Santa Fe is whether to institutionalize this emergent architecture or allow the creative economy to recede back into an underground circuit that, while it might fitfully sustain itself, does not elevate the practical livelihoods of diverse creative entrepreneurs or reverberate with implications for the larger civic community.

In this light, our recommendations emerge from a fundamental insight crystallized during our pilot: Santa Fe's creative economy already possesses extraordinary vitality in its individual node, whether they be individual artists and entrepreneurs, service providers, or existing institutions (venues, collectives, and so on). These individual nodes lack for a Hub of plumbing. Systems to flow shared resources, methods to channel shared knowledge, accurate and shared strategies to demystify common unknowns. A Hub, in this vision, would power these individual nodes' growth to produce favorable outcomes: more entrepreneurial income through export and diversified revenue streams, more civic participation in creativity.

Our conversations revealed creatives spending disproportionate energy simply navigating fragmentation: hunting for affordable spaces, decoding permit requirements, texting for who can do light projections for the weekend. The working group sessions demonstrated palpable hunger for coordination, with participants literally exchanging phone numbers mid-meeting, recognizing lost opportunities in their isolation.

The protracted timeline forced methodological innovation that proved instructive. Rather than conjuring a new event series whole cloth, we embedded ourselves within existing creative gatherings across Santa Fe's geography, from Southside's Feria to MADA's block party. This decentralized approach surfaced stark disparities: downtown creatives discussed gallery representation while Southside artists struggled to access basic business registration information in Spanish.

Our webinars revealed knowledge gaps that persist not from creative deficiency but

from systemic exclusion. When participants shared pricing horror stories—like negotiating with major entertainment corporations not particularly interested in transparent contract practices—the problem became clear: business acumen exists within siloed networks but rarely crosses demographic boundaries.

Most critically, the Resource Fair validated our hypothesis about low-barrier activation. Over 75 creatives connected with service providers through simple face-to-face interaction, proving that sophisticated digital platforms matter less than consistent, accessible touchpoints. The enthusiastic response to basic offerings—printed resource packets, live music, direct Q&As—suggests that sustainable infrastructure requires human presence, not just technological solutions.

Therefore these recommendations, in sum, attempt to architect systematic support for what Santa Fe's creatives already do brilliantly: transform individual creativity into collective cultural wealth through authentic reciprocal relationships. Most of these compact recommendations reflect the original intent of the Creative Hub project, which this pilot lacked sufficient time to fully launch because of the protracted contract period. We hope these recommendations offer a clear and lean path for standing up these initiatives that build on the lessons learned in this pilot.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH PERMANENT CREATIVE ECONOMY COORDINATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The pilot's most profound revelation was the hunger for sustained coordination. As Jamie Blosser from MADA articulated during working group sessions: "For such a small town, we are never in the same room. The reason this Working Group is happening because there are hosts: Brianna/Mike/Raashan. There needs to be a person or multiple people ASSIGNED to organize this group."

This administrative reality—that coordination requires dedicated labor—emerged repeatedly. Tim Franke from Lensic 360 noted it takes "tons of work to maintain something as quote-unquote simple as a list." The working group recognized that voluntary coordination inevitably fails when volunteers face their own economic pressures. Sustainable infrastructure requires sustained investment.

Recommended Structure: Establish a permanent OED position or ongoing external service provider contract for:

- Maintaining the resource database with quarterly verification
- Managing centralized communication channels across platforms
- Coordinating monthly working group meetings and quarterly gatherings
- Facilitating cross-sector introductions and collaborations
- Tracking outcomes and generating quarterly impact reports
- Serving as liaison between creative community and city departments
- Event logistics and space coordination
- Data collection and impact measurement
- Social media management and community engagement
- Website maintenance and resource updates

Such a model—proven viable during the pilot—provides the minimal Hub scaffolding necessary for maximum community self-organization. This coordination effort would not direct the creative economy but enable its organic connections to flourish through systematic support.

RECOMMENDATION 2: FORMALIZE THE WORKING GROUP AS SANTA FE'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

Such a model—proven viable during the pilot—provides the minimal Hub scaffolding necessary for maximum community self-organization. This coordination effort would not direct the creative economy but enable its organic connections to flourish through systematic support.

The working group's evolution from tentative gab session to strategic planning body demonstrates the power of sustained cross-sector dialogue. Participants repeatedly expressed that "this felt like the beginning" and "we don't want this to end." The recommendation: formalize this energy into a Creative Economy Council with defined responsibilities and recognition.

Proposed Framework:

Monthly Virtual Convenings: First Wednesday of each month, 4:00-5:30pm, rotating facilitation among sector representatives. Agenda items include:

- Resource sharing and immediate needs ("I need sound/lighting this weekend")
- Cross-sector introductions and collaboration opportunities
- Policy recommendations for city consideration
- Coordination with state Creative Industries Division initiatives

Quarterly In-Person Gatherings: Similar to successful existing film sector initiatives. Rotating venues across Santa Fe's geography (southside, midtown, Siler/Rufina, downtown). Format combines:

- Social time for organic relationship building
- Structured networking with sector-specific breakouts
- Guest presentations from successful creative enterprises
- Collaborative problem-solving on systemic challenges

Annual Creative Economy Summit: Full-day convening bringing together working group members, city officials, state CID representatives, funders, and broader creative community to:

- Present annual impact data
- Recognize creative economy champions
- Launch new initiatives and partnerships
- Strengthen connections with regional/national networks

The Council structure provides the "direct line" between creative community and city government that participants craved while maintaining community ownership of the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 3: DEVELOP MULTI-PLATFORM COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Such a model—proven viable during the pilot—provides the minimal Hub scaffolding necessary for maximum community self-organization. This coordination effort would not direct the creative economy but enable its organic connections to flourish through systematic support.

The pilot surfaced overwhelming demand for centralized communication that respects diverse preferences. As Frank Rose of Hecho a Mano put it: "We're all doing similar but separate things—we need centralized communication." But centralization cannot mean homogenization. Different sectors, generations, and cultural communities require different platforms.

Integrated Communication Architecture:

Digital Hub Infrastructure:

- Enhanced website serving as canonical resource repository
- Embedded calendar with easy community creation/update capabilities
- Interactive map of creative spaces and resources
- Downloadable toolkits in English and Spanish
- Online booking system for shared equipment/ spaces

Platform-Specific Channels:

- WhatsApp groups for real-time resource sharing
- Discord server
- Email newsletter for traditional communication
- SMS alerts for time-sensitive opportunities
- Printed newsletter quarterly

Content Strategy:

- Weekly "Creative Economy Digest" aggregating opportunities
- Monthly spotlight features on creative businesses
- Quarterly impact reports demonstrating collective progress
- Annual "State of Creativity" report benchmarking growth

This multi-modal approach ensures no creative gets left behind due to technological preferences or access limitations.

RECOMMENDATION 4: LAUNCH STRUCTURED MENTORSHIP, SKILLSHARING, AND ACTIVATION PROGRAMS

The pilot revealed extensive mentorship already occurring through informal networks, but it also exposed the limitations of such networks. For example, Tim Franke from Lensic 360 expressed the desire "to be of service to new artists," but he also said he lacked mechanisms for connection. Frank Rose of Hecho a Mano wanted to "provide support to people interested in starting a gallery" but needed a structured pathway to do so. Juliana Ciano of Reunity Farms explained that they currently have a dormant food truck but lack the time and resources to run it themselves; they would be interested in a trusted third-party accelerator to activate this valuable asset, similar to their relationship with Lensic 360's concert programming on Reunity Farm grounds.

Mentorship Architecture:

Creative Mentorship Matching Program:

- Quarterly cohorts of 20 mentor-mentee pairs
- Six-month commitments with monthly meetings
- Structured curriculum covering business basics and sector-specific knowledge
- Culminating showcase of mentee projects
- Alumni network for ongoing support

Skill Share Cooperative:

- Monthly workshops rotating among disciplines
- "Each one teach one" model where participants both learn and instruct
- Equipment lending library with training requirements
- Time-banking system for reciprocal skill exchange
- Documentation creating permanent knowledge repository

Peer Learning Circles:

- Sector-specific groups meeting bi-weekly
- Facilitated discussions on common challenges
- Group problem-solving and resource pooling
- Guest experts addressing technical topics
- Connection to national/international peer networks

Activation Alignment:

- Establish a database of unactivated spaces and assets
- Detail a list of third-party activation specialist organizations
- Match and resource activation specialist organizations with assets

These programs transform individual knowledge into collective capacity while honoring the reciprocal ethos already animating Santa Fe's creative economy.

RECOMMENDATION 5: CREATE GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY THROUGH DISTRIBUTED PROGRAMMING

The pilot's deliberate multi-nodal approach—collaborating with existing events all over Santa Fe—surfaced dramatic differences in creative economy experiences across Santa Fe's geography. The recommendation: institutionalize geographic distribution to ensure equitable access and opportunity.

Distributed Infrastructure Model:

Creative Economy Nodes:

Southside Hub:
Partnering with existing community centers to provide:

- Weekly business development workshops in Spanish
- Youth creative entrepreneurship programs
- Traditional arts business development
- Pop-up market opportunities

Midtown Hub:
Leveraging MADA infrastructure for:

- Shared production facilities
- Equipment libraries and maker spaces
- Cross-sector collaboration events
- Workforce development partnerships

Downtown Hub:
Utilizing library and city facilities for:

- Tourist-facing creative showcases
- High-visibility networking events
- Policy discussions and advocacy
- Connection to state/federal resources

Mobile Creative Services:

- Van equipped with business development resources
- Rotating schedule serving outlying neighborhoods
- On-site technical assistance and resource connection
- Documentation of geographic-specific needs

This distributed model ensures creative economy benefits flow throughout Santa Fe rather than concentrating in already-resourced areas.

RECOMMENDATION 6: ESTABLISH CREATIVE SPACE ACCESS MECHANISMS

Space emerged as the most persistent challenge across all sectors. Musicians need late-night venues; theatre groups lack spaces of specific capacities; visual artists can't afford studios. Yet the pilot also suggested underutilized

spaces lacking coordination mechanisms.

Space Access Infrastructure:

Creative Space Inventory and Matching System:

- Comprehensive database of available spaces with:
- Capacity, amenities, and restrictions
- Hourly/daily/monthly pricing
- Centrally organized online booking and payment system
- User reviews and recommendations

Space Subsidy Program:

- Bartered arrangement templates (maintenance for studio time)
- Group purchasing of insurance and permits

Pop-Up Activation Initiative:

- Quarterly calls for temporary space use
- Streamlined permitting for creative activations
- Marketing support for experimental venues
- Documentation creating "proof of concept" for permanent spaces

Creative Space Development Pipeline:

- Annual assessment of space needs by sector
- Connection to city planning processes
- Advocacy for creative space requirements in new developments
- Partnership development with property owners

This systematic approach transforms space scarcity from individual problem to collective opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 7: BUILD BRIDGES TO CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT

While the pilot focused on resource coordination rather than direct funding, participants consistently identified capital access as a critical need. The recommendation: create pathways connecting creative entrepreneurs to appropriate funding sources while building investment readiness.

Capital Access Architecture:

Investment Readiness Curriculum:

- Quarterly cohorts preparing creatives for funding
- Modules covering financial planning, pitch development, impact measurement
- Connection to accountants and legal advisors
- Practice pitches with feedback from funders
- Alumni presenting successful funding stories

Creative Economy Investment Network:

- Quarterly investor education sessions on creative sectors
- Deal flow pipeline from investment-ready creatives
- Impact measurement frameworks valuing cultural outcomes
- Connection to state and national funding sources
- Annual investor showcase featuring creative enterprises

Alternative Financing Mechanisms:

- Revolving loan fund for creative businesses
- Crowdfunding campaign support and training
- Revenue-sharing agreements for creative projects

- Equipment financing pools
- Peer-to-peer lending circles

Grant Writing Collaborative:

- Shared grant writing services for smaller organizations
- Template library for common applications
- Funder relationship mapping
- Collaborative applications for larger opportunities
- Success story documentation for future applications

This multi-faceted approach acknowledges that different creative enterprises require different capital structures while building collective capacity for resource acquisition.

RECOMMENDATION 8: STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS TO STATE AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

Santa Fe's creative economy doesn't exist in isolation. The state's new Creative Industries Division offers unprecedented opportunity for coordination and resource sharing. The recommendation: position Santa Fe as a model for municipal creative economy development while accessing state-level resources.

State-Local Integration Strategy:

CID Partnership Development:

- Quarterly meetings between Hub leadership and CID staff
- Santa Fe as pilot site for state programs
- Shared data collection and impact measurement
- Joint funding applications for federal opportunities
- Best practice documentation for statewide replication

Regional Creative Economy Network:

- Connections with Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Taos creative initiatives
- Shared touring/ exhibition circuits
- Collaborative market development
- Joint advocacy for state creative economy policy
- Annual gathering of municipal creative economy leaders

National Visibility Campaign:

- Documentation of Santa Fe model for national dissemination
- Conference presentations at creative economy gatherings
- Hosting site visits from other cities
- Media coverage of innovative approaches
- Connection to UNESCO Creative Cities Network

This multi-scalar approach ensures Santa Fe benefits from broader networks while contributing its unique insights to the field.

RECOMMENDATION 9: IMPLEMENT ROBUST IMPACT MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS

Sustainable support requires sustained measurement. The recommendation: implement comprehensive data collection demonstrating creative economy contributions to Santa Fe's vitality.

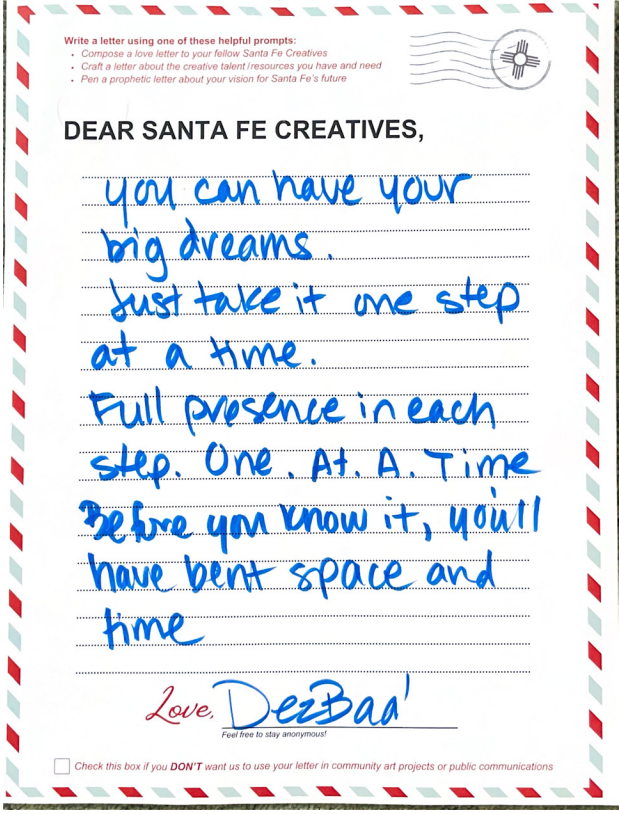
Measurement Framework:

Quantitative Metrics (Quarterly Collection):

- Business starts and jobs created
- Revenue generation and tax contributions
- Event attendance and participant demographics


10. CREATIVE STARTUPS
Canyon Road
Summer Walk
Canyon Road
Summer Walk
Canyon Road
Summer Walk

CONCLUSION



Santa Fe's creative economy doesn't need a one-size-fits-all salvation. Instead, what it needs is systematic support for the reciprocity networks already sustaining it.

Consider the aspens that grow in the Ski Basin above Santa Fe. Not actually individual trees as they appear, each "lone" aspen is instead a finger of a centralized root system that pumps life-giving resources throughout the network without trying to impose an overly centralized identity on any one tree.

We hope these recommendations offer that support structure for the ongoing efforts of the Hub, grounded in community wisdom and proven through pilot success. Implementation won't be simple, but the alternative—allowing coordination infrastructure to collapse back into invisibility—represents a far greater cost to Santa Fe's economic and cultural future.

As we have said elsewhere, the creative and cultural industries are not beautification engines: they are proven paths to community economic development and the potential of long-term prosperity for historically underserved populations. Creative entrepreneurs grow value across not just financial capital but other forms of capital that make a place worth living in: human, social, cultural, and natural.

With this in mind, the Creative Hub needs to represent more than business support; it needs to demonstrate how cities can architect ecosystems that honor creative authenticity while driving measurable economic growth that leads to community quality-of-life development, what Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum call the "capabilities approach," where economic growth is only as good as its ability to deliver citizens the capability to lead lives they value and enjoy.

One can break down into all the enchantment they can handle in Santa Fe. But here's what Santa Fe's creatives are painfully aware of, and what we re-discovered during four months of conversations, events, and resource fairs: enchantment doesn't pay rent, and it doesn't carve out a universe where you have the time to innovate. The musician-ceramicist-perfumist still faces the same expensive studio lease. And even if creative enterprises, by definition, devote more time to the most aesthetically exciting manifestations of their visions, their everyday business challenges do not reciprocate. Those still take forever and pinch their pocketbook.

What Santa Fe's creatives lack are the mundane mechanisms that transform creative passion into sustainable livelihood: affordable spaces, navigable regulations, accessible capital, and most crucially, time. Time currently spent hunting for that "weird space nobody's found yet," decoding GRT riddles, or knowing the right person who knows the right person who knows the right person who has the rig to screenprint t-shirts.

The Creative Hub represents a commitment to honor the reciprocity networks and ingenuity engines already sustaining Santa Fe's creative

economy. When Exodus Ensemble's donation-based theatre company keeps 90 percent of its budget in artists' pockets, they demonstrate what's possible. When 505omatic experiments with cooperative ownership structures while building local media infrastructure, they model creative sustainability. When DezBaa' teaches herself video production while planning a Native filmmaker incubator, she embodies the multi-hyphenate resilience this city cultivates.

In a city where creative industries generate $205 million annually and employ nearly one in four residents, supporting creative livelihoods is sound economic strategy. More than that, it's an acknowledgment that creativity itself constitutes a civic good. When traditional Pueblo pottery techniques persist through contemporary entrepreneurship, when Spanish colonial tin work finds new markets through e-commerce, when hip-hop producers collaborate with chamber musicians at the Lensic, Santa Fe demonstrates how heritage fuels innovation.

A responsible Creative Hub would not seek, we hazard, to manage or direct this creative ferment or design it toward any economic development goals that might worship the pursuit of scale over community quality-of-life.

Instead, a responsible Creative Hub would offer missing connective tissue: the monthly convenings where service providers coordinate rather than compete, the multilingual resource guides that make business formation accessible to all, the space-matching systems that activate rooms as creative venues. A responsible Hub would provide the essential support system that cracks open more creativity in the City Different and lets creatives focus more of their lives—and their livings—on what they do best: creating.



ONLINE ASSET REFERENCE

- Event Documentation (Photos and Videos)
- Recordings and Transcripts
- Media Assets
- Regional Resources
- National Resources
- Resource Fair Packet
- Additional Entrepreneurship Resources
- Social Results
- Creative Hub Linktree
- Project Pipeline Submissions
- General Email List
- Working Group List