



# Economic Activity Study OF METRO DENVER CULTURE

*Presented by*



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Arts, culture, and scientific organizations—collectively referred to as *cultural organizations*—are the backbone of a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive society. The Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that connects businesses and the arts to advance Colorado’s cultural sector through advocacy, research, arts engagement, training, and volunteerism. CBCA has been reporting on the economic and social relevance of arts and culture in Metro Denver for 32 years. The first study was published in 1993 based on a model designed by Deloitte Consulting, and since then, CBCA has published an economic activity and impact report approximately every other year. CBCA’s 2025 Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture, presented by U.S. Bank, was conducted by BBC Research & Consulting (BBC) to quantify the current financial and social impact of cultural organizations in the Metro Denver region.

For the past three decades, CBCA has partnered with the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) to collect data from cultural organizations in the region to assess their *economic activity* and *economic impact* on the region. SCFD is a special tax district that serves as a consistent funding source for the Metro Denver cultural sector. SCFD was created and approved by Colorado’s General Assembly in 1988 and has been reauthorized by Metro Denver voters three times over the past 30 years, most recently in 2016. One cent of every \$10 in sales and use tax collected in Metro Denver goes to SCFD. The district distributes these funds to 285 arts, cultural, and scientific organizations ranging in size from volunteer-led community choruses and orchestras to internationally acclaimed museums. It is the largest contributor to cultural organizations in Metro Denver and the second-largest tax-based cultural funding mechanism in the United States. In 2024, SCFD gave nearly \$85 million to cultural organizations in the region, representing a 5.7 percent increase compared to 2022 levels.

This report presents information on the analysis, methodology, context, and reference material for the 2025 Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture, which was based on SCFD data from the 2024 calendar year. The study provides assessments of the recovery process of the Metro Denver cultural sector from the COVID-19 pandemic and of long-term trends across the past decade (and in some cases, even longer). **The full report is also available at [cbca.org/economic-activity-study](https://cbca.org/economic-activity-study)** along with digital copies of CBCA’s prior economic activity studies from 2000 to 2023. There is also a downloadable summary page of the 2025 report, which is available in English and Spanish.

## A. Summary

Figure 1 presents summary information from the 2025 Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture, including changes in the economic activity and impact of the Metro Denver cultural sector between 2019 and 2024. Data from 2019, 2020, and 2022 come from the 2021 and 2023 Economic Activity Studies of Metro Denver Culture. BBC’s analyses include data from SCFD-funded organizations as well as existing research from other sources.

**1. Record highs.** Results from the study indicate record-breaking levels of economic activity and impact of SCFD-funded organizations in the Metro Denver region in 2024. As shown in Figure 1:

- *Economic activity*, which is an aggregate measure of spending activity related to the cultural sector, reached a record high of \$3.1 billion in 2024 and represents an increase of 19.7 percent from 2022.
- The *economic impact* of cultural tourism, which includes spending related to attendance at Metro Denver cultural organizations from visitors who reside outside the region as well as the impact of operating expenditures, capital expenditures, and federal government grant funds, increased by 4.5

percent between 2022 and 2024.<sup>1</sup> Most of the impact of cultural tourism comes from audience spending on goods and services like meals and transportation.

- Educational experiences for school-aged children increased by 20.4 percent between 2022 and 2024 and by 6.1 percent since 2019. Educational experiences for adults also increased, albeit at a slower rate (3.5 percent between 2022 and 2024 and by 4.8 percent since 2019).
- Approximately 14,500 positions were staffed in the Metro Denver cultural sector in 2024, representing the greatest number of jobs in SCFD-funded organizations since the district began tracking this information and representing a notable increase since 2022. The largest increase in positions between 2022 and 2024 was for part-time positions, but full-time and contracted positions also reached all-time highs.
- Individual donation and foundation giving increased by 10.7 percent and 36.4 percent, respectively, between 2022 and 2024, helping bridge the gap left by an 89 percent decrease in federal government funding over that time period. Corporate sponsorships increased as well but less substantially (3.8 percent increase from 2022).
- SCFD funding was the largest single funding source for Metro Denver cultural organizations in 2024, providing stability and momentum for the recovery of the cultural sector from the pandemic. It reached record-breaking levels in 2024, as the district distributed approximately \$85 million to nearly 300 organizations.

**2. Areas of future growth.** While there were many increases in the economic activity and impact attributable to Metro Denver cultural organizations between 2022 and 2024, study results indicate that several measures of economic activity and impact have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Figure 1 shows that:

- Overall contributions in 2024 were 2.6 percent less than they were in 2022, driven primarily by an 89.7 percent decrease in federal government funding as well as a 3.1 percent decrease in state and local government funding.
- Attendance at Metro Denver cultural organizations increased by 12.5 percent between 2022 and 2024 but attendance did not recover to pre-pandemic levels. In particular, adult attendance has lagged in its recovery—it was 6.4 percent less in 2024 than it was in 2019. Similarly, youth attendance in 2024 did not recover to pre-pandemic levels, but it outpaced adult attendance in growth since 2022 (19.9% increase for youths versus 5.4% increase for adults).
- The number of volunteers at Metro Denver cultural organizations increased by 21.6 percent between 2022 and 2024 but was nonetheless 18.4 percent less than in 2019. The hours volunteers contributed to organizations also increased by 12.1 percent since 2022, yet were still 19.6 percent less than volunteer hours in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic impact is a subset of economic activity, analyzing additional dollars from outside the Denver Metro Region or beyond daily operations of Metro Denver cultural organizations in serving local patrons.

**Figure 1.**  
**Cultural economic activity and impact metrics in Metro Denver (dollars and attendance in millions)**

| Economic activity and impact                                | Years            |                  |                  |                  | Percent Change |               |               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                                             | 2024             | 2022             | 2020             | 2019             | 2022 - 2024    | 2020 - 2024   | 2019 - 2024   |
| <b>Economic activity</b>                                    | <b>\$3,120</b>   | <b>\$2,605</b>   | <b>\$1,515</b>   | <b>\$2,294</b>   | <b>19.7%</b>   | <b>105.9%</b> | <b>36.0%</b>  |
| Operating expenditures                                      | \$1,302          | \$1,091          | \$786            | \$963            | 19.3%          | 65.7%         | 35.1%         |
| Capital expenditures                                        | \$163            | \$92             | \$152            | \$288            | 78.0%          | 7.4%          | -43.3%        |
| Audience expenditures                                       | \$1,655          | \$1,422          | \$578            | \$1,043          | 16.3%          | 186.5%        | 58.6%         |
| <b>Economic impact</b>                                      | <b>\$864</b>     | <b>\$827</b>     | <b>\$435</b>     | <b>\$860</b>     | <b>4.5%</b>    | <b>98.6%</b>  | <b>0.5%</b>   |
| Capital expenditure impact                                  | \$163            | \$92             | \$152            | \$288            | 78.0%          | 7.4%          | -43.3%        |
| Operating expenditure impact - visitors outside metro area  | \$111            | \$90             | \$58             | \$104            | 23.3%          | 90.2%         | 7.1%          |
| Audience event related impact - visitors outside metro area | \$581            | \$564            | \$210            | \$465            | 3.0%           | 176.3%        | 24.9%         |
| Federal government grant fund impact                        | \$9              | \$81             | \$15             | \$3              | -89.0%         | -39.6%        | 214.5%        |
| <b>Personnel expense</b>                                    | <b>\$312</b>     | <b>\$246</b>     | <b>\$199</b>     | <b>\$213</b>     | <b>27.1%</b>   | <b>56.6%</b>  | <b>46.5%</b>  |
| <b>Payroll, seat, and sales tax</b>                         | <b>\$43</b>      | <b>\$34</b>      | <b>\$24</b>      | <b>\$28</b>      | <b>26.4%</b>   | <b>79.9%</b>  | <b>55.3%</b>  |
| <b>Contributions</b>                                        | <b>\$286</b>     | <b>\$294</b>     | <b>\$225</b>     | <b>\$213</b>     | <b>-2.6%</b>   | <b>27.1%</b>  | <b>34.1%</b>  |
| Individual                                                  | \$51             | \$46             | \$43             | \$38             | 10.7%          | 19.0%         | 35.7%         |
| Corporate sponsorships                                      | \$12             | \$11             | \$8              | \$11             | 3.8%           | 44.1%         | 9.8%          |
| In-kind donations                                           | \$18             | \$17             | \$11             | \$25             | 7.6%           | 63.0%         | -26.4%        |
| Foundations                                                 | \$58             | \$43             | \$47             | \$31             | 36.4%          | 24.5%         | 86.6%         |
| Government                                                  | \$39             | \$75             | \$41             | \$25             | -47.6%         | -4.4%         | 56.3%         |
| Federal government                                          | \$4              | \$38             | \$7              | \$1              | -89.7%         | -43.4%        | 194.8%        |
| State and local government                                  | \$35             | \$36             | \$34             | \$24             | -3.1%          | 3.6%          | 48.4%         |
| SCFD                                                        | \$85             | \$80             | \$63             | \$63             | 5.7%           | 34.7%         | 33.6%         |
| Other                                                       | \$23             | \$22             | \$12             | \$20             | 5.8%           | 89.3%         | 12.2%         |
| <b>Employment</b>                                           | <b>14,466</b>    | <b>13,551</b>    | <b>9,688</b>     | <b>13,392</b>    | <b>6.8%</b>    | <b>49.3%</b>  | <b>8.0%</b>   |
| <b>In-person attendance</b>                                 | <b>14,519</b>    | <b>12,905</b>    | <b>7,821</b>     | <b>15,285</b>    | <b>12.5%</b>   | <b>85.6%</b>  | <b>-5.0%</b>  |
| <b>Volunteers</b>                                           | <b>34,042</b>    | <b>27,987</b>    | <b>24,247</b>    | <b>41,741</b>    | <b>21.6%</b>   | <b>40.4%</b>  | <b>-18.4%</b> |
| Volunteer hours                                             | 1,295,619        | 1,155,409        | 887,083          | 1,610,696        | 12.1%          | 46.1%         | -19.6%        |
| <b>School outreach</b>                                      | <b>4,569,012</b> | <b>3,826,485</b> | <b>2,311,156</b> | <b>4,307,614</b> | <b>19.4%</b>   | <b>97.7%</b>  | <b>6.1%</b>   |

Notes: Decreases between 2024 and previous years are highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

## B. Methodology

The 2025 Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture is based on SCFD data from the calendar year 2024. Data were self-reported by 285 arts, cultural, and scientific organizations funded by SCFD in the seven-county Metro Denver region: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties, with the exception of the towns of Castle Rock and Larkspur in Douglas County. The study does not include data from non-SCFD funded organizations, for-profit creative businesses, higher education institutions, or individual artists. Data came directly from SCFD final grant reports that grantees submit to SCFD on an annual basis, so there is a 100 percent response rate from SCFD's data collection tool. Study analyses covered 96.6 percent of SCFD funds on which grantee organizations reported as of December 31, 2024. The unaccounted portion of these funds was due to differences among grantees in the timing of distributions, fiscal year-end dates, and accounting practices. Although many organizations have fiscal years that are identical to the calendar year, some organizations' fiscal



years start and end in the middle of the calendar year. As a result, data for some organizations were incomplete for the second half of 2024, an issue that existed with past CBCA studies as well.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Economic model.** BBC used a longitudinal analytical model to assess economic activity and impact over time. We used Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II) multipliers from the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis. We used RIMS II multipliers from 2023 regional data and the 2017 national benchmark input-output data.

To the extent possible, attendance at virtual events was removed from BBC's economic analyses, including cultural programs and events that organizations offered digitally or that were live-streamed in 2024, because the accuracy and consistency of attendance and engagement data for virtual events and programs could not be verified. Moreover, the longitudinal model's multipliers do not apply to virtual attendance. The assumptions for audience expenditures are different and more variable for virtual than for in-person events and programs.

**2. Qualitative information.** In addition to quantitative data SCFD-funded organizations provided on revenue, attendance, volunteering, and employment, they also provided open-ended responses related to school-related educational experiences they facilitated and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) efforts they made. BBC conducted qualitative analyses on the open-ended responses and integrated the results throughout the report to highlight those initiatives and provide additional context for key results.

## C. Results

The cultural sector is an economic driver both nationally and across Colorado. Considering the entire sector, including both for-profit and nonprofit enterprises, the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that cultural activity, which includes arts, entertainment, and recreation, accounted for \$1.17 trillion, or 4.2 percent, of the United States economy in 2023, contributing 5.4 million jobs.<sup>3</sup> In Colorado, the cultural sector accounted for \$19.7 billion, or 3.7 percent, of the state's economy in 2023 and contributed to 121,228 jobs.<sup>4</sup> Compared to 2021 (the first year of comparison in the 2023 report), the arts, culture, and recreation industry comprises a larger share of the total gross domestic product (GDP) of both the United States as well as Colorado. Compared to the rest of the country, Colorado's cultural sector is the fourth largest as a proportion of total state GDP behind Nevada, Tennessee, and Florida.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, Colorado was ranked sixth for the proportion of its state GDP generated from arts and culture, indicating that the cultural sector became an even larger part of the state's economy over that five-year time period.

**1. Economic activity.** Cultural organizations contribute substantially to the Metro Denver region's economy through different types of spending, which is captured by various economic activity metrics. Economic activity comprises three main categories of spending:

- Operating expenditures, such as programming costs, supplies, rent, and personnel expenses;

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<sup>2</sup> Data are not broken out by SCFD funding tier, geography, or discipline (e.g., performing arts versus natural history). The current SCFD final grant report does not inquire about the demographics of cultural audiences and attendees, except for adult and youth participation.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bea.gov/news/2025/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account-us-and-states-2023>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/acpsa0425.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "SAGDP2 Gross domestic product (GDP) by state 1" (accessed Tuesday, September 23, 2025).

- Capital spending on renovations and new facilities; and
- Audience spending and ancillary expenditures beyond admission, subscriptions, and concessions (e.g., spending on meals and transportation).

Each category includes *direct spending* and *indirect spending* that add to the total economic activity attributable to it. Direct spending includes organizations' costs of scheduled programs, operations, personnel expenses, and facilities maintenance, as well as audience members' spending before, during, and after their attendance at cultural events and programs. Indirect spending includes the cumulative spending effect that direct spending has on other economic sectors in the Metro Denver region every time someone participates in a cultural activity. For example, personnel spending has *ripple effects* through the purchases cultural employees make with their wages. Indirect spending from audiences often includes the cost of childcare, transportation, and dining before or after the cultural experience. Capital expenditures are injected into the local economy through the purchase of materials or transportation costs for construction workers.

**a. Key trends.** Figure 2 shows the economic activity attributable to Metro Denver cultural organizations for 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2024 disaggregated into total operating, capital, and audience expenditures. As shown in Figure 2, the overall economic activity attributable to the Metro Denver cultural sector in 2024 was \$3.1 billion, which represents a 19.7 percent increase from 2022 and a 36.0 percent increase since 2019. The economic activity attributable to operating expenditures and audience expenditures in 2024 both showed increases compared to 2019 (35.1% and 58.6%, respectively), indicating that the industry has surpassed pre-pandemic levels. Capital expenditures increased 78.0 percent since 2022, but they decreased by 43.3 percent since 2019.

**Figure 2.**  
**Economic activity of the Metro Denver cultural sector (dollars in millions)**

| Spending type                  | Years          |                |                |                | Percent Change |               |              |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                | 2024           | 2022           | 2020           | 2019           | 2022-2024      | 2020-2024     | 2019 - 2024  |
| Operating expenditures         | \$1,302        | \$1,091        | \$786          | \$963          | 19.3%          | 65.7%         | 35.1%        |
| Capital expenditures           | \$163          | \$92           | \$152          | \$288          | 78.0%          | 7.4%          | -43.3%       |
| Audience expenditures          | \$1,655        | \$1,422        | \$578          | \$1,043        | 16.3%          | 186.5%        | 58.6%        |
| <b>Total economic activity</b> | <b>\$3,120</b> | <b>\$2,605</b> | <b>\$1,515</b> | <b>\$2,294</b> | <b>19.7%</b>   | <b>105.9%</b> | <b>36.0%</b> |

Note: Decreases between 2024 and previous years are highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

**b. Deep dive.** Despite the overall economic activity attributable to the Metro Denver cultural sector increasing between 2019 and 2024, capital spending among Metro Denver cultural organizations decreased over the same time period, but rose between 2022 and 2024. Figure 3 shows that, since 1992, capital spending has varied widely from year to year, rising and falling as new construction and other capital improvement projects began and ended. However, there appears to be a general increase in capital spending among Metro Denver cultural organizations over time. The notably large amount of capital spending in 2019 is due in part to the Cultural Facilities Bond that Denver voters approved in 2017, which provided \$117 million in bonds for improvements to cultural facilities in the city. State and

local funding is not the only funding mechanism for capital improvements for cultural organizations, however, the bonds issued by the City and County of Denver are notable because they are specifically dedicated towards capital improvements.

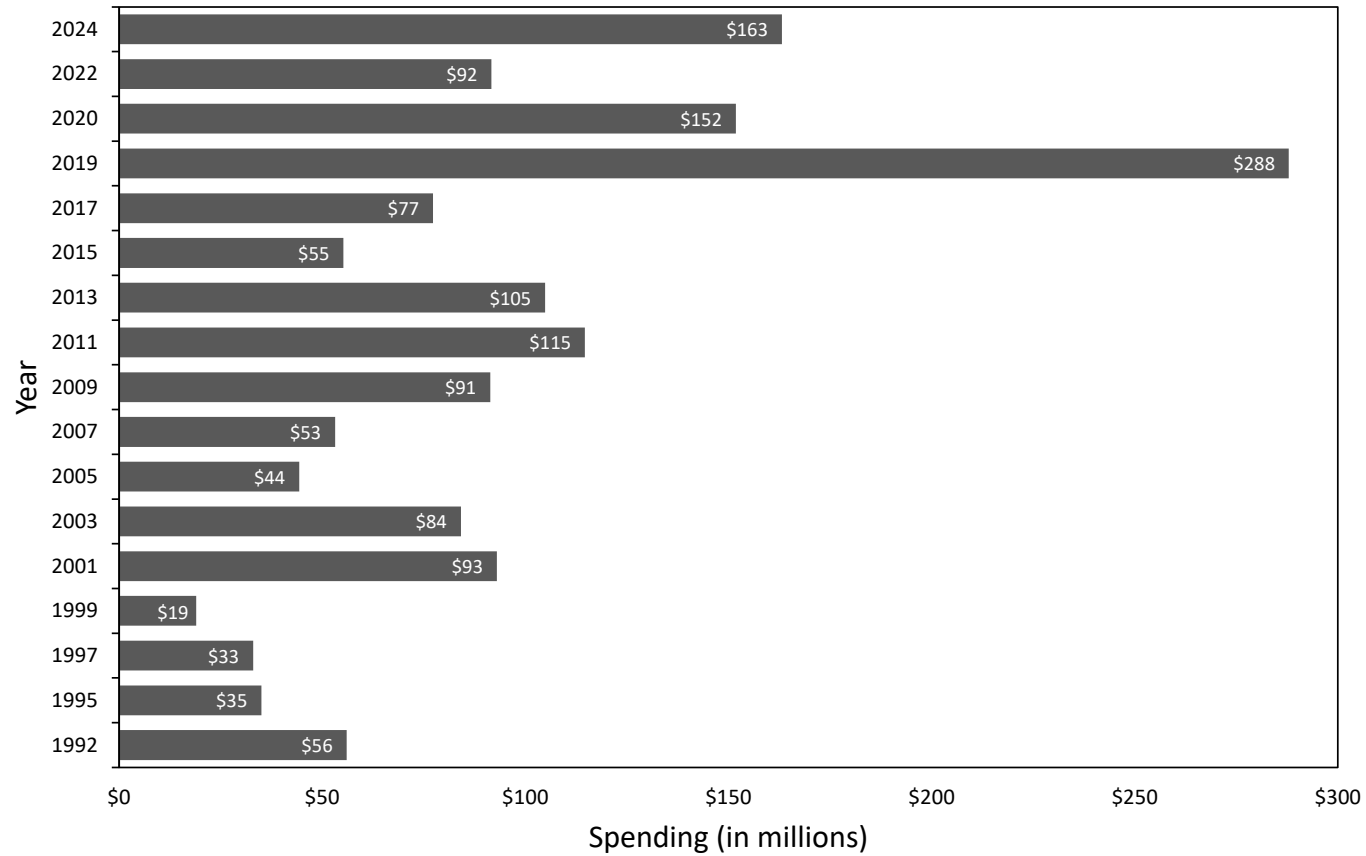
In addition to the bonds approved in 2017, the City and County of Denver issued \$260 million in a general obligation bond in April 2022 called the Rebuilding for an Inclusive and Sustainable Economy (RISE) Denver Bond to fund improvements to cultural facilities. Bond funding was first distributed to cultural organizations in May 2022, and the remaining funds were distributed in April 2024. Multiple SCFD fund recipients, such as the Denver Botanic Gardens and the Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance, have received funding through the RISE Denver Bond to complete maintenance of their facilities.<sup>6</sup> Most projects funded by the RISE bond are still in the design phase, so the total effect of those dollars is not captured in this report but will be measured in upcoming years.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Citywide-Programs-and-Initiatives/GO-Bonds>



**Figure 3.**  
**Capital spending impact by Metro Denver cultural organizations over time**



Note: Data represents the economic impact of capital spending by SCFD-funded cultural organizations.

Source: SCFD data.

**2. Economic impact.** Economic impact is a subset of economic activity that, in the context of the cultural sector, indicates the degree to which cultural organizations attract additional dollars from *outside the Metro Denver* region and beyond organizations' spending associated with their daily operations.<sup>7</sup> Economic impact comprises three categories of spending:

- Capital spending on renovations and new facilities;
- Federal government grants; and
- Cultural tourism by visitors from outside the region, which includes portions of cultural institutions' revenue (e.g., ticket sales and concessions) as well as ancillary spending, including on dining and lodging before or after visits to cultural organizations and their programs and events.

The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade reports that in 2023, there was an increase of 6.4 million total visitors to Colorado from the previous year, totaling 93.3 million out-of-state visitors in 2023. The state saw a 3.9 percent increase in the total amount of money spent by all tourists, bringing in \$28.2 billion in tourism revenue. That revenue led to a 5.3 percent increase in tourist-related employment in the state from 2022 levels. State and local tax revenue growth increased proportionally, increasing from \$1.7 billion in 2022 to \$1.8 billion in 2023, a 5.7 percent increase.<sup>8</sup> As it relates to the cultural sector, more visitors to the state meant larger attendance at Colorado cultural organizations and increased economic impact.

**a. Key results.** Figure 4 shows the economic impact attributable to Metro Denver cultural organizations for 2024, 2022, 2020, and 2019 disaggregated into the impact attributable to capital expenditures, cultural tourism, and federal grants. As shown in Figure 4, the overall economic impact of the cultural sector increased when compared to both 2022 (4.5% increase) and 2019 (0.5% increase). However, the impact attributable to federal government grants decreased substantially in 2024 compared to 2022 (89% decrease) and 2020 (39.6% decrease). But compared to 2019, the impact of federal grants has increased by 214.5 percent. However, the impact from federal grants in 2019 is closer to the typical impact of federal grants in the last two decades than that observed for 2020, 2022, or 2024.

**Figure 4.**  
**Economic impact of the Metro Denver cultural sector (dollars in millions)**

| Spending type                    | Years        |              |              |              | Percent Change |               |                |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
|                                  | 2024         | 2022         | 2020         | 2019         | 2022-<br>2024  | 2020-<br>2024 | 2019 -<br>2024 |
| Capital expenditures             | \$163        | \$92         | \$152        | \$288        | 78.0%          | 7.4%          | -43.3%         |
| Cultural tourism                 | \$692        | \$654        | \$269        | \$569        | 5.8%           | 157.6%        | 21.7%          |
| Federal government grant funding | \$9          | \$81         | \$15         | \$3          | -89.0%         | -39.6%        | 214.5%         |
| <b>Total economic impact</b>     | <b>\$864</b> | <b>\$827</b> | <b>\$435</b> | <b>\$860</b> | <b>4.5%</b>    | <b>98.6%</b>  | <b>0.5%</b>    |

Note: Decreases between 2024 and previous years are highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

<sup>7</sup> Because economic impact is part of economic activity, BBC applied the same RIMS II multipliers to estimate both.

<sup>8</sup> <https://oedit.colorado.gov/tourism-research>

**b. Deep dive.** The economic impact of the Metro Denver cultural sector is driven by both ongoing spending and one-time spending categories. *Ongoing spending* includes the economic impact from spending related to day-to-day operations, which includes attendance by those from the Metro Denver area and cultural tourism by those from outside the region. *One-time spending* includes capital spending and federal grants. When BBC separated the economic impact attributable to ongoing spending from those attributable to one-time spending, it revealed a complex picture of economic impact. The results shown in Figure 5 indicate that the economic impact of ongoing spending resulting from cultural tourism increased by 5.8 percent in 2024 compared to 2022 and by 21.7 percent compared to 2019. In contrast, the economic impact of one-time spending decreased by 0.2 percent between 2022 and 2024, which appears to be largely driven by the decrease in federal grant funding. The decrease in one-time spending between 2019 and 2024—a 40.8 percent decrease—is even more stark. That decrease appears to be driven primarily by the decrease in capital investments.

**Figure 5.**  
**Economic impact of the Metro Denver cultural sector by type of spending**  
(dollars in millions)

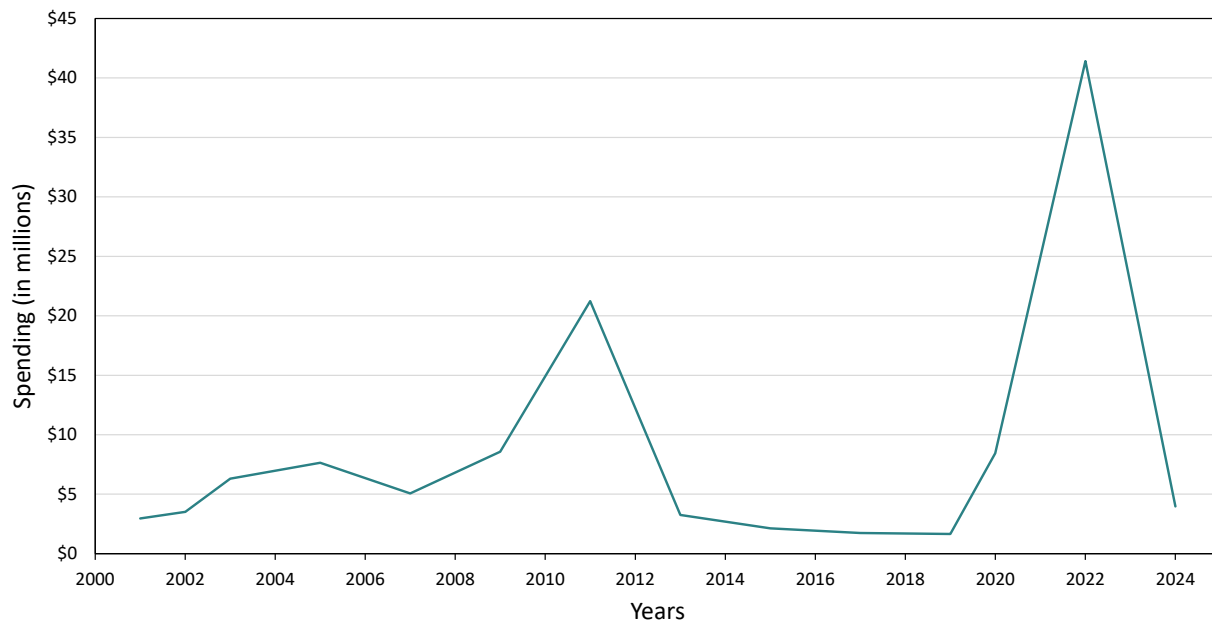
| Spending type                              | Years        |              |              |              | Percent Change |               |               |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                            | 2024         | 2022         | 2020         | 2019         | 2022-2024      | 2020-2024     | 2019-2024     |
| <b>Ongoing spending (cultural tourism)</b> | <b>\$692</b> | <b>\$654</b> | <b>\$269</b> | <b>\$569</b> | <b>5.8%</b>    | <b>157.6%</b> | <b>21.7%</b>  |
| Operating expenditures                     | \$111        | \$90         | \$58         | \$104        | 23.3%          | 90.2%         | 7.1%          |
| Audience-related expenditures              | \$581        | \$564        | \$210        | \$465        | 3.0%           | 176.3%        | 24.9%         |
| <b>One-time spending</b>                   | <b>\$172</b> | <b>\$172</b> | <b>\$167</b> | <b>\$291</b> | <b>-0.2%</b>   | <b>3.3%</b>   | <b>-40.8%</b> |
| Capital expenditures                       | \$163        | \$92         | \$152        | \$288        | 78.0%          | 7.4%          | -43.3%        |
| Federal grants                             | \$9          | \$81         | \$15         | \$3          | -89.0%         | -39.6%        | 214.5%        |
| <b>Total economic impact</b>               | <b>\$864</b> | <b>\$827</b> | <b>\$435</b> | <b>\$860</b> | <b>4.5%</b>    | <b>90.0%</b>  | <b>-3.8%</b>  |

Note: Decreases between 2022 and previous years are highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

Although federal grant funding to Metro Denver cultural organizations has an important impact on the organizations that receive it, it has been inconsistent over time, as shown in Figure 6. Historically, funding increases have largely been associated with major economic downturns such as those resulting from the Great Recession (reflected in 2011 in Figure 6) and the COVID-19 pandemic (reflected in 2022 in Figure 6). The economic impact of federal grants decreased substantially after pandemic-related grants such as the Shuttered Venue Operators and the American Rescue Plan Act grants had been distributed to cultural organizations. However, the impacts of federal grants increased markedly from pre-pandemic levels (214.5% increase).

**Figure 6.**  
**Federal government grant funding to SCFD-funded cultural organizations' impact, 2001-2024**



Note: Results are inflation-adjusted to 2024 dollars.

Source: SCFD data.

**3. Attendance.** Attendance at cultural organizations is defined as people visiting, attending, or participating in events, installations, programs, or performances offered by cultural organizations. Across the country, multiple live entertainment industries have reported a return to in-person attendance that meets or exceeds pre-pandemic rates. However, recent research by Deloitte Consulting indicates that the return has been tempered by the rising costs of attending these events, with many potential attendees indicating that they would have attended particular events had the costs been lower.<sup>9</sup>

Calculations of attendance at Metro Denver cultural organizations included both adult and youth attendance as well as both paid and free attendance at events, installations, and performances the organizations facilitated. It includes visitors from both within the Metro Denver region and those coming from outside of it. Virtual attendance at cultural events and activities has also become common since 2020, when social distancing requirements were put in place to stem the spread of COVID-19. In 2024, more than 650,000 virtual engagements were reported by SCFD-funded organizations. However, BBC did not include virtual attendance in our analyses for the reasons explained in the Methodology section.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/digital-media-trends-consumption-habits-survey/2024/funflation-goes-up-against-cost-conscious-consumers.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/digital-media-trends-consumption-habits-survey/2024/funflation-goes-up-against-cost-conscious-consumers.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

**a. Key results.** Figure 7 presents the number of arts engagements by people who attended Metro Denver cultural organizations for 2024, 2022, 2020, and 2019. As shown in Figure 7, overall attendance at cultural organizations in Metro Denver decreased by 5.0 percent between 2019 and 2024.

**Figure 7.**  
**Number of arts engagements at Metro Denver cultural organizations**  
**(visitors in millions)**

| Years  |        |       |        | Percent Change |               |                |
|--------|--------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 2024   | 2022   | 2020  | 2019   | 2022-<br>2024  | 2020-<br>2024 | 2019 -<br>2024 |
| 14,519 | 12,905 | 7,821 | 15,285 | 12.5%          | 85.6%         | -5.0%          |

Note: Decreases between 2022 and previous years are highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

**b. Deep dive.** Figure 8 presents attendance by the geographical regions from which attendees visit. Between 2019 and 2024, attendance at SCFD-funded organizations increased only for people from the Metro Denver region (2.3%) and for international visitors (95.8%). Attendance among people from other parts of Colorado and other parts of the country decreased markedly over the same time period by 12.0% and 22.4% respectively. Visitors from the Metro Denver region increased somewhat as a share of total attendance, representing 79.6 percent of all attendees in 2024, compared to 72.6 percent in 2022. International attendance also increased, albeit slightly, as a share of all attendees, representing 1.4 percent of all attendance in 2024 compared to 0.8 percent in 2022.

### Attendance Spotlight

Concerns over the cost to attend cultural organizations are at the forefront of many organizations' minds. Given the rising costs of many basic household needs, multiple organizations have started initiatives to provide more discounted tickets to community members. Some organizations, such as the Denver Center for Performing Arts, the Longmont Museum, and Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, are setting aside tickets for Colorado Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to offer at deep discounts. Other organizations, like the Arvada Center for the Performing Arts and Humanities, offers both SNAP discounts and their own discount programs to encourage more visitors regardless of cost.

**Figure 8.**

**Attendance at SCFD-funded organizations by geographical region**

| Geographical region            | Year       |            |           |            | Percent Change |               |                |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
|                                | 2024       | 2022       | 2020      | 2019       | 2022-<br>2024  | 2020-<br>2024 | 2019 -<br>2024 |
| Metro Denver                   | 12,079,923 | 10,085,846 | 6,476,435 | 11,812,285 | 19.8%          | 86.5%         | 2.3%           |
| Colorado outside Metro Denver  | 1,093,043  | 968,522    | 658,521   | 1,241,952  | 12.9%          | 66.0%         | -12.0%         |
| United States outside Colorado | 1,196,626  | 1,302,758  | 693,362   | 1,541,592  | -8.1%          | 72.6%         | -22.4%         |
| International                  | 211,562    | 109,645    | 38,377    | 108,051    | 93.0%          | 451.3%        | 95.8%          |
| Unknown region                 | 591,960    | 1,418,281  | 1,549,469 | 1,316,095  | -58.3%         | -61.8%        | -55.0%         |

Notes: Total attendance includes virtual attendance.

Decreases between 2024 and previous years highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

Figure 9 demonstrates that despite cost concerns, SCFD-funded organizations attract high levels of attendance compared to attendance reported for the Colorado Rockies, the Denver Broncos, The Denver Nuggets, the Colorado Avalanche, and the Colorado Rapids. Nearly three times as many in-person engagements were reported for Metro Denver cultural organizations than for five of the major sports teams in the region.

**Figure 9.**

**SCFD-funded organizations' attendance compared to the Colorado Rockies, the Denver Broncos, the Denver Nuggets, the Colorado Avalanche, and the Colorado Rapids**

Source:

[1] <https://www.baseball-almanac.com/teams/rockattn.shtml>

[2] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/197357/nfl-regular-season-home-attendance-of-the-denver-broncos-since-2006/>

[3] [https://www.espn.com/nba/attendance/\\_/year/2024](https://www.espn.com/nba/attendance/_/year/2024)

[4] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/198882/nhl-home-attendance-of-the-colorado-avalanche-since-2006/>

[5] <https://www.worldfootball.net/attendance/usa-major-league-soccer-2024/1/>

| Organization                     | 2024              |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Colorado Rockies <sup>1</sup>    | 2,540,195         |
| Denver Broncos <sup>2</sup>      | 591,754           |
| Denver Nuggets <sup>3</sup>      | 807,062           |
| Colorado Avalanche <sup>4</sup>  | 742,206           |
| Colorado Rapids <sup>5</sup>     | 260,720           |
| <b>Total Sports</b>              | <b>4,941,937</b>  |
| <b>SCFD-funded Organizations</b> | <b>14,519,332</b> |

**4. Cultural educational experiences.** Cultural organizations can play an important role in providing enriching educational opportunities to students. BBC assessed any changes over time in *cultural educational experiences*—such as arts integration in the classroom, cultural performances in classrooms, school field trips, after-school cultural activities, and cultural classes and lessons—that Metro Denver cultural organizations organize or facilitate among both adults and youths.



**a. Key results.** BBC assessed how engagement in cultural educational experiences organized or facilitated by Metro Denver cultural organizations has changed over time for both adults and youths. As shown in Figure 10, attendance at both adult experiences and youth experiences increased year over year. Adult experiences increased by 3.5 percent between 2022 and 2024 and by 4.8 percent since 2019. Even more pronounced, youth experiences increased by 20.4 percent between 2022 and 2024 and by 6.1 percent since 2019. Regardless of changes over time, youth experiences have always accounted for the vast majority of cultural educational experiences.

**Figure 10.**  
**Attendance at adult and youth cultural educational experiences over time**

| Experience type                      | Year             |                  |                  |                  | Percent Change |              |             |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
|                                      | 2024             | 2022             | 2020             | 2019             | 2022-2024      | 2020-2024    | 2019 - 2024 |
| Adult educational outreach           | 237,389          | 229,266          | 117,872          | 226,547          | 3.5%           | 101.4%       | 4.8%        |
| Youth educational outreach           | 4,331,623        | 3,597,219        | 2,193,284        | 4,081,067        | 20.4%          | 97.5%        | 6.1%        |
| <b>Total educational experiences</b> | <b>4,569,012</b> | <b>3,826,485</b> | <b>2,311,156</b> | <b>4,307,614</b> | <b>19.4%</b>   | <b>97.7%</b> | <b>6.1%</b> |

Note: Attendance at youth cultural educational experiences include all youth experiences and not just those associated with school events.

Source: SCFD data.

BBC also assessed how attendance at cultural educational experiences has changed over time separately for free and paid experiences. As shown in Figure 11, attendance at both free and paid educational experiences have increased year over year, although attendance at free experiences showed larger increases. Free experiences increased by 20.5 percent between 2022 and 2024 and by 12.3 percent since 2019. Paid experiences increased by 18.6 percent between 2022 and 2024 but by only 1.6 percent since 2019.

**Figure 11.**  
**Attendance at free and paid cultural educational experiences over time (visitors in millions)**

| Experience type                      | Year         |              |              |              | Percent Change |              |             |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
|                                      | 2024         | 2022         | 2020         | 2019         | 2022-2024      | 2020-2024    | 2019 - 2024 |
| Free educational experiences         | 2,033        | 1,688        | 1,170        | 1,810        | 20.5%          | 73.7%        | 12.3%       |
| Paid educational experiences         | 2,536        | 2,139        | 1,141        | 2,497        | 18.6%          | 122.2%       | 1.6%        |
| <b>Total educational experiences</b> | <b>4,569</b> | <b>3,826</b> | <b>2,311</b> | <b>4,308</b> | <b>19.4%</b>   | <b>97.7%</b> | <b>6.1%</b> |

Note: Attendance at youth cultural educational experiences include all youth experiences and not just those associated with school events.

Source: SCFD data.

## Education Spotlight

Multiple SCFD-funded organizations reported efforts to intentionally engage with schools and reduce barriers to access to cultural experiences. For example, the Denver Art Museum and the Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance provide subsidies to schools for transportation costs to their organizations. Other organizations, such as the Central City Opera and the Colorado Chautauqua Association, offer discounted or complimentary experiences to economically underserved schools.

**b. Deep dive.** A total of 205 SCFD-funded organizations in Metro Denver (71.9% of all SCFD-funded organizations) reported organizing or facilitating over 12,150 cultural educational experiences with schools in 2024, including schools visiting them and them visiting schools. Despite the substantial number of such experiences in 2024, the number of experiences declined substantially between 2015 and 2020 before beginning to increase again in 2021. As shown in Figure 12, Metro Denver cultural organizations facilitated nearly 18,000 school-related educational experiences in 2015, dropping to a low of just over 6,000 in 2020 before beginning to increase again in 2021. However, the number of school-related educational experiences in 2024 did not recover to the heights seen in earlier years.

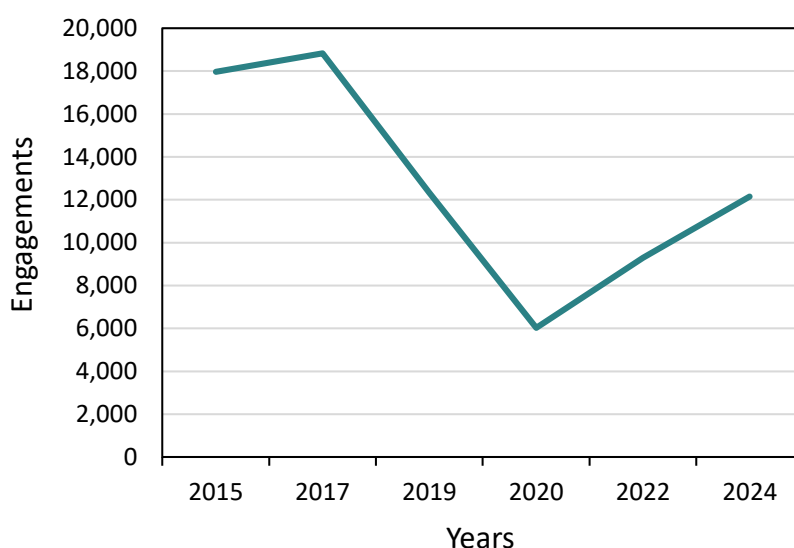
**Figure 12.**  
**Number of school-related cultural educational engagements, 2015 - 2024**

Note:

School engagements include school visits to SCFD-funded organizations or visits to schools by SCFD-funded organizations.

Source:

SCFD data.



**5. Jobs.** Cultural organizations are major employers in the region, employing people for a range of positions, from curators and dramaturges to accountants and marketing professionals. Data from the Colorado State Demographer's Office indicates that the number of jobs in the region's cultural sector increased by 1.9 percent between 2022 and 2023.<sup>10</sup> Employment results in substantial economic activity and impact on the local economy, so BBC calculated the total number of jobs in the SCFD-funded organizations by counting full-time, part-time, and contract positions in each organization over time. BBC calculated jobs based on the number of *total positions* at Metro Denver cultural organizations and not the number of individuals employed by those organizations, because there may be overlap resulting

<sup>10</sup> Total employment data is available from 2001 – 2023. Colorado State Demographer's Office (<https://demography.dola.colorado.gov/assets/html/economy.html>).

from individuals working for multiple cultural organizations in the region over the course of a year, particularly in contract roles like performers, curators and educators.

**2. Key results.** Jobs at cultural organizations in the Metro Denver region continue to show year over year increases, hitting the highest levels in 2024 since 1992 when SCFD began collecting such data. Figure 13 shows the number of positions in the Metro Denver cultural sector for 2024, 2022, 2020, and 2019. The number of jobs in the cultural sector—across all types of positions—increased by 6.8 percent between 2022 and 2024, with part-time positions increasing at a higher rate than full-time or contract positions. The total number of jobs in the cultural sector increased by 8.0 percent since 2019.

**Figure 13.**  
**Number of jobs in the Metro Denver cultural sector**

|                         | Years         |               |              |               | Percent Change |              |             |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
|                         | 2024          | 2022          | 2020         | 2019          | 2022 - 2024    | 2020 - 2024  | 2019 - 2024 |
| Full-time position      | 2,930         | 2,772         | 2,134        | 2,609         | 5.7%           | 37.3%        | 12.3%       |
| Part-time position      | 3,943         | 3,600         | 2,926        | 3,980         | 9.5%           | 34.8%        | -0.9%       |
| Contracted position     | 7,593         | 7,179         | 4,628        | 6,803         | 5.8%           | 64.1%        | 11.6%       |
| <b>Total employment</b> | <b>14,466</b> | <b>13,551</b> | <b>9,688</b> | <b>13,392</b> | <b>6.8%</b>    | <b>49.3%</b> | <b>8.0%</b> |

Source: SCFD data.

**b. Deep dive.** In 2024, 12 SCFD-funded organizations were exclusively staffed by volunteers (i.e., they did not have any employees), representing 4.2 percent of all SCFD-funded organizations. The number of organizations staffed exclusively by volunteers was 25 percent fewer in 2024 than in 2022, meaning that more organizations funded by SCFD rely on paid staff rather than exclusively on volunteers. Similarly, the number of organizations that have no full-time positions but only have part-time or contract employees decreased between 2022 and 2024. In 2022, these organizations represented 42.8 percent of the total SCFD-funded organizations in Metro Denver, and in 2024, that number decreased to 38.2 percent (109 organizations). Forty percent of all SCFD-funded organizations have full-time, part-time, and contract employees. Figure 14 presents the counts of organizations based on their employment types, as well as the total number of employees for each employment type, the median number of employees, and the average number of employees.

In addition to the growth in total employment, the Colorado Secretary of State reported that wages in Metro Denver increased year over year, growing 4.9 percent between 2023 and 2024.<sup>11</sup> Similar trends are seen at SCFD-funded organizations, where the number of jobs increased by 6.8 percent and overall personnel expenses increased by 27.1 percent. However, when expenses are adjusted to 2024 dollars, personnel expenses have only increased by 18.1 percent since 2022 and are 8.2 percent lower than personnel expenses reported in 2019.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/business/quarterlyReports/2024/2024Q1SOSIndicatorsReport.pdf>

**Figure 14.**  
**Distribution of Metro Denver cultural organizations**  
**according to their types of employees**

| Employment type                              | Total                  |                 |                  |                   |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                                              | Count of organizations | Total employees | Median employees | Average employees |
| No employees                                 | 12                     | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| Only contract employees                      | 74                     | 1,506           | 5                | 20                |
| Only part-time employees                     | 10                     | 23              | 2                | 2                 |
| Only full-time employees                     | 2                      | 5               | 3                | 3                 |
| Part-time and contract employees             | 25                     | 1,090           | 22               | 44                |
| Full-time and contract employees             | 21                     | 806             | 43               | 38                |
| Full-time and part-time employees            | 27                     | 1,253           | 17               | 46                |
| Full-time, part-time, and contract employees | 114                    | 9,783           | 43               | 86                |
| <b>Total employment</b>                      | <b>285</b>             | <b>14,466</b>   | <b>17</b>        | <b>51</b>         |

Note: Average and median number of employees are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: SCFD data.

### EDIA and Jobs

Various cultural organizations are working to make their employment practices more equitable and accessible to all people. Qualitative SCFD data from 2024 indicated that many Metro Denver cultural organizations evaluated their EDIA efforts as it related to their hiring practices for staff, board members, and volunteers. Those efforts appear to have resulted in increases in the representation of people with disabilities; women; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-plus; and people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in staff and leadership positions.

**6. Giving.** According to Giving USA, nationally, Americans gave \$592.5 billion to charity in 2024, a 6.3 percent increase compared to 2023. Of 2024 giving, cultural organizations received approximately \$25 billion (4.2 percent of all charitable donations).<sup>12</sup> Individual donations accounted for two-thirds of cultural sector donations nationally, followed by foundation giving at nearly 20 percent. (Foundation grants include grants from corporate, private, and public foundations.) Specific to Colorado, the Secretary of State reports information on all solicitation campaigns done by organizations registered to solicit contributions in Colorado. In 2024, those organizations collected \$629.8 million.<sup>13</sup> BBC calculated total giving to cultural organizations in Metro Denver by summing contributions from both private and public organizations, including individual donations, corporate sponsorships, in-kind gifts, foundation grants, government funds, and SCFD sales-tax revenue disbursements.

<sup>12</sup> <https://givingusa.org/giving-usa-2025-u-s-charitable-giving-grew-to-592-50-billion-in-2024-lifted-by-stock-market-gains/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/charities/reports/2024/DataExplanation.html>

**a. Key results.** Figure 15 shows contributions Metro Denver cultural organizations received from different sources in 2024, 2022, 2020, and 2019. Total contributions declined between 2024 and 2022, but 2024 was a record-breaking year for individual donations, foundation giving, and SCFD disbursements for the Metro Denver cultural sector. Much of the decrease in giving since 2022 can be attributed to a decline in federal government grant funding, which decreased by 89.7 percent between 2022 and 2024. Excluding declines in federal, state, and local government funding, total contributions to SCFD-funded organizations increased by 12.8 percent between 2022 and 2024.

**Figure 15.**  
**Contributions to Metro Denver cultural organizations**

| Contributions              | Years        |              |              |              | Percent Change |              |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
|                            | 2024         | 2022         | 2020         | 2019         | 2022 - 2024    | 2020 - 2024  | 2019 - 2024  |
| Individual                 | \$51         | \$46         | \$43         | \$38         | 10.7%          | 19.0%        | 35.7%        |
| Corporate sponsorships     | \$12         | \$11         | \$8          | \$11         | 3.8%           | 44.1%        | 9.8%         |
| In-kind donations          | \$18         | \$17         | \$11         | \$25         | 7.6%           | 63.0%        | -26.4%       |
| Foundations                | \$58         | \$43         | \$47         | \$31         | 36.4%          | 24.5%        | 86.6%        |
| Government                 | \$39         | \$75         | \$41         | \$25         | -47.6%         | -4.4%        | 56.3%        |
| Federal government         | \$4          | \$38         | \$7          | \$1          | -89.7%         | -43.4%       | 194.8%       |
| State and local government | \$35         | \$36         | \$34         | \$24         | -3.1%          | 3.6%         | 48.4%        |
| SCFD                       | \$85         | \$80         | \$63         | \$63         | 5.7%           | 34.7%        | 33.6%        |
| Other                      | \$23         | \$22         | \$12         | \$20         | 5.8%           | 89.3%        | 12.2%        |
| <b>Contributions</b>       | <b>\$286</b> | <b>\$294</b> | <b>\$225</b> | <b>\$213</b> | <b>-2.6%</b>   | <b>27.1%</b> | <b>34.1%</b> |

Notes: Dollars in millions.

Decreases between 2024 and previous years highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

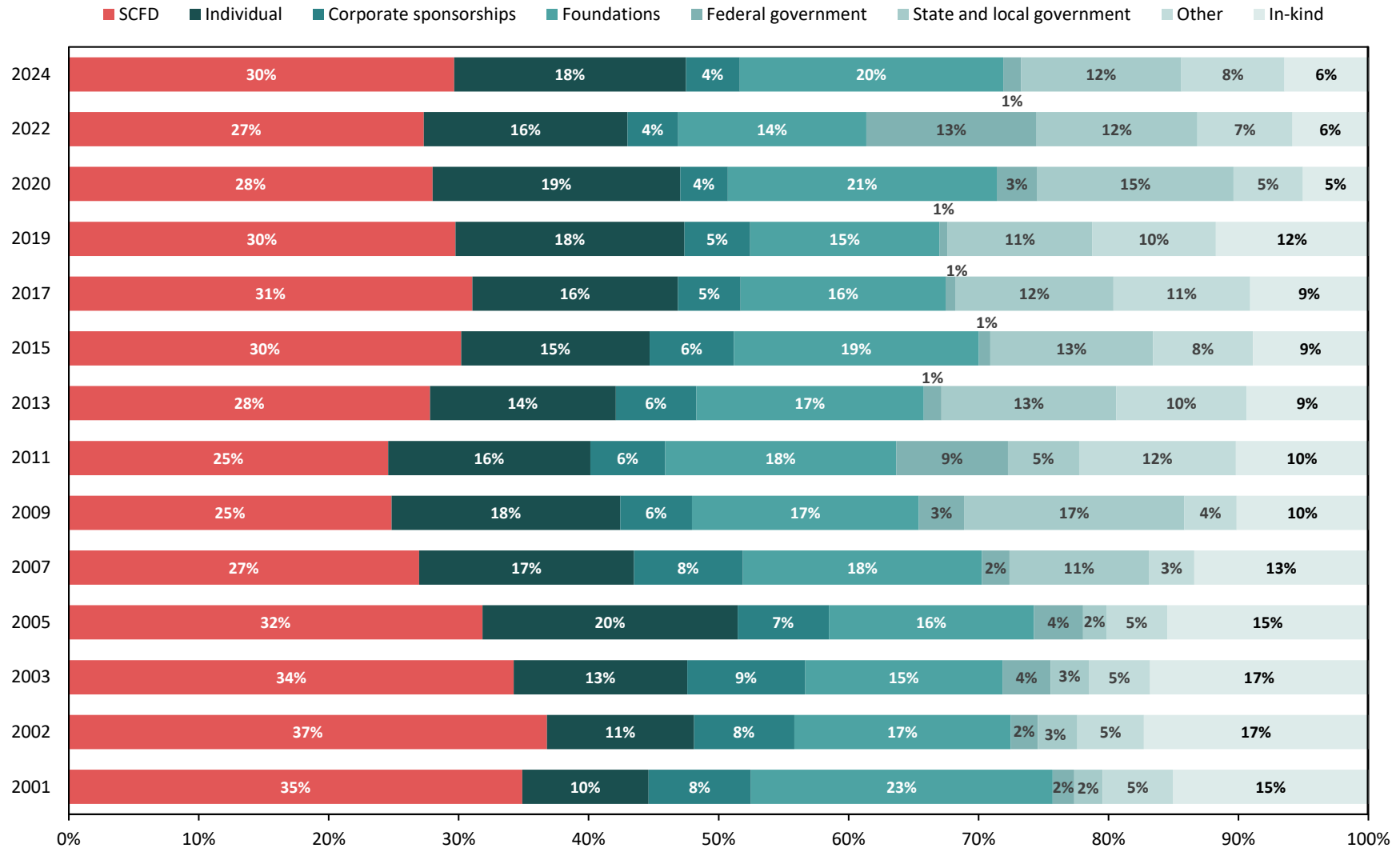
**b. Deep dive.** The funding source that represents the largest proportion of all SCFD-funded organizations is, unsurprisingly, SCFD. SCFD funding in Metro Denver reached an all-time high in 2024, exceeding \$85 million. However, as shown in Figure 16, the share of all contributions that SCFD funding represents has slowly declined since its peak in 2002, when it represented 36.8 percent of all contributions to Metro Denver cultural organizations. SCFD funds represented 29.6 percent of all contributions in 2024.

### Philanthropy Spotlight

In Colorado, nonprofit organizations participate in Colorado Gives Day to gather donations from individuals, organizations, and other groups each December. In 2024, the event raised \$54.6 million, of which \$5.3 million went to cultural organizations across the state. Since its founding in 2010, Colorado Gives Day has raised over \$523 million.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://coloradogivesfoundation.org/generous-coloradans-come-together-to-donate-54-million-for-colorado-gives-day>

**Figure 16.**  
**Contributions to SCFD-funded organizations, 2001 - 2024**



Note: Contributions are presented as a percentage of all contributions reported in a given year. Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: SCFD data.

**7. Volunteers.** Volunteer opportunities offer a meaningful way for people to give back to organizations about which they care. They help offset operational and personnel costs for those organizations, providing valuable people power. Across all industries in the United States, 28.3 percent of the population over the age of 16 volunteered with an organization between the fall of 2022 and the fall of 2023. Volunteers served a total of approximately 5 billion hours and contributed an estimated \$167.2 billion in economic value during that time. Volunteering in 2024 exceeded pre-pandemic levels in 14 states. However, in Colorado, volunteering rates are still 7.6 percent below those in 2019.<sup>15</sup>

At cultural organizations, volunteers participate in a wide range of positions, including as ushers, docents, event staff, and board and committee members. In 1993, over 20 percent of all SCFD-funded organizations in the Metro Denver region were “volunteer-only.” In 2024, that number dropped to just over 4 percent. Although reliance on volunteers to keep cultural organizations running has decreased over the last 30 years, volunteer work remains a vital part of the events, programs, and activities they offer. BBC analyzed volunteerism at Metro Denver cultural organizations over the past five years to assess any more recent changes.

**a. Key results.** Figure 17 presents the number of volunteers at Metro Denver cultural organizations and the number of hours they contributed for 2024, 2022, 2020, and 2019. As has been the case historically, volunteerism continues to make up a substantial part of the Metro Denver cultural sector. In 2024, nearly 35,000 volunteers served at cultural organizations in the region, and they contributed 1.3 million hours. Those totals represent an equivalent of an estimated 623 full-time employees and an estimated \$40.8 million in donated time.<sup>16</sup> As shown in Figure 16, there has been a 21.6 percent increase in the number of volunteers since 2022 and a 12.1 percent increase in the number of volunteer hours. However, neither total volunteers nor total volunteer hours have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, showing declines of 18.4 percent and 19.6 percent between 2019 and 2024, respectively.

**Figure 17.**  
**Volunteers at Metro Denver cultural organizations**

|                 | Years     |           |         |           | Percent Change |           |           |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------|
|                 | 2024      | 2022      | 2020    | 2019      | 2022-2024      | 2020-2024 | 2019-2024 |
| Volunteers      | 34,042    | 27,987    | 24,247  | 41,741    | 21.6%          | 40.4%     | -18.4%    |
| Volunteer hours | 1,295,619 | 1,155,409 | 887,083 | 1,610,696 | 12.1%          | 46.1%     | -19.6%    |

Note: Decreases between 2024 and previous years highlighted in red.

Source: SCFD data.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2024/11/civic-engagement-and-volunteerism.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.philanthropycolorado.org/resources/value-volunteer-hours>



**b. Data deep dive.** The distribution of volunteers and their hours varies based on the type of employees each organization has. As shown in Figure 18, not surprisingly, organizations with no employees have the highest average number of volunteer hours donated each year (120 hours per volunteer per year) followed by organizations with only part-time and contract employees (112 hours per volunteer per year). These organizations received an average of nearly three full work weeks of donated time for each volunteer in 2024. For all SCFD-funded organizations considered together, the average number of hours donated per volunteer has remained stable between 2019 and 2024 at 38.6 hours per year. Across all SCFD-funded organizations, for every paid position there are two unpaid volunteers donating time, effort, and commitment to the Metro Denver cultural sector, providing a consistent support system for cultural organizations in the region.

**Figure 18.**  
**Volunteering by organizations’  
employment types**

Note:

The average number of hours donated per volunteer has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source:

SCFD data.

| Employment type                              | Average hours per volunteer |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| No employees                                 | 120                         |
| Only contract employees                      | 61                          |
| Only part-time employees                     | 56                          |
| Only full-time employees                     | 80                          |
| Part-time and contract employees             | 112                         |
| Full-time and contract employees             | 25                          |
| Full-time and part-time employees            | 46                          |
| Full-time, part-time, and contract employees | 29                          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>38</b>                   |

### Volunteering Spotlight

Only six organizations out of the 285 that receive SCFD funds did not report any volunteer support during 2024. The remaining 279 organizations received valuable support from their volunteers, developing meaningful connections with individuals dedicated to their causes and allowing them to continue to provide invaluable arts, cultural, and scientific experiences to Metro Denver residents and visitors. One organization in particular, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, noted that one of their board members joined the organization after volunteering with an organization with a similar mission.

**8. Analogous programs.** Other localities throughout the country have implemented similar mechanisms to SCFD for funding cultural organizations. For example, Allegheny Regional Asset District in Pennsylvania is similar to the SCFD in that funds from sales and use taxes (0.5%) are invested in local organizations, but the program is not limited to arts, science, and cultural organizations like the SCFD. Rather, funds are dispensed to arts and cultural organizations, libraries, parks and trails, sports and civic facilities, regional attractions, public transit, among other organizations in the county. This program has been in place since 1994, and in 2024 it distributed 19.6 million to arts and cultural organizations.<sup>17</sup> In addition, King County, Washington, passed a sales tax in 2023 dedicating revenue to cultural programs and organizations. Through the additional 0.1 percent sales tax, more than \$37 million was given to 709 organizations in early 2025.<sup>18</sup> Salt Lake City also collects a portion of sales tax (0.1% or one cent for every ten dollars) to fund its local botanical, cultural, recreational, and zoological organizations. Known

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.radworkshere.org/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.4culture.org/doors-open-first-grants/>

as the zoo, arts, and parks tax (ZAP tax), it was first established in 1997 and in 2023 distributed approximately \$36.7 million to more than 200 organizations.<sup>19</sup> Tacoma, Washington voters approved legislation in 2018 allowing for an increase in either sales tax or property tax to fund its cultural organizations. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, more than \$5.8 million were distributed.<sup>20</sup>

Sales tax is not the only way cities and counties can fund cultural organizations. For example, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis, Missouri is funded primarily through a hotel/motel tax and has distributed more than \$118 million since the program began in 1985.<sup>21</sup> Cuyahoga County, Ohio levies an additional tax on cigarettes to help fund its cultural organizations. Originally approved by voters in 2006, more than \$247 million has been distributed to 485 organizations as of 2023.<sup>22</sup>

## **D. Acknowledgements**

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Finally, our heartfelt appreciation to the arts, culture and scientific organizations that fuel our regional economy and quality of life, and to the voters in the seven-county metro region who continue to support the SCFD.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.saltlakecounty.gov/globalassets/1-site-files/zap/resources/zaptax-july2024.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tacomacreatives.org/funding-history>

<sup>21</sup> <https://racstl.org/about-rac/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://2023report.cacgrants.org/>