

Executive Summary
Montana Artrepreneur Program
Artists' Sales and Impact on Household Income
2009-2014

For more information about this report contact



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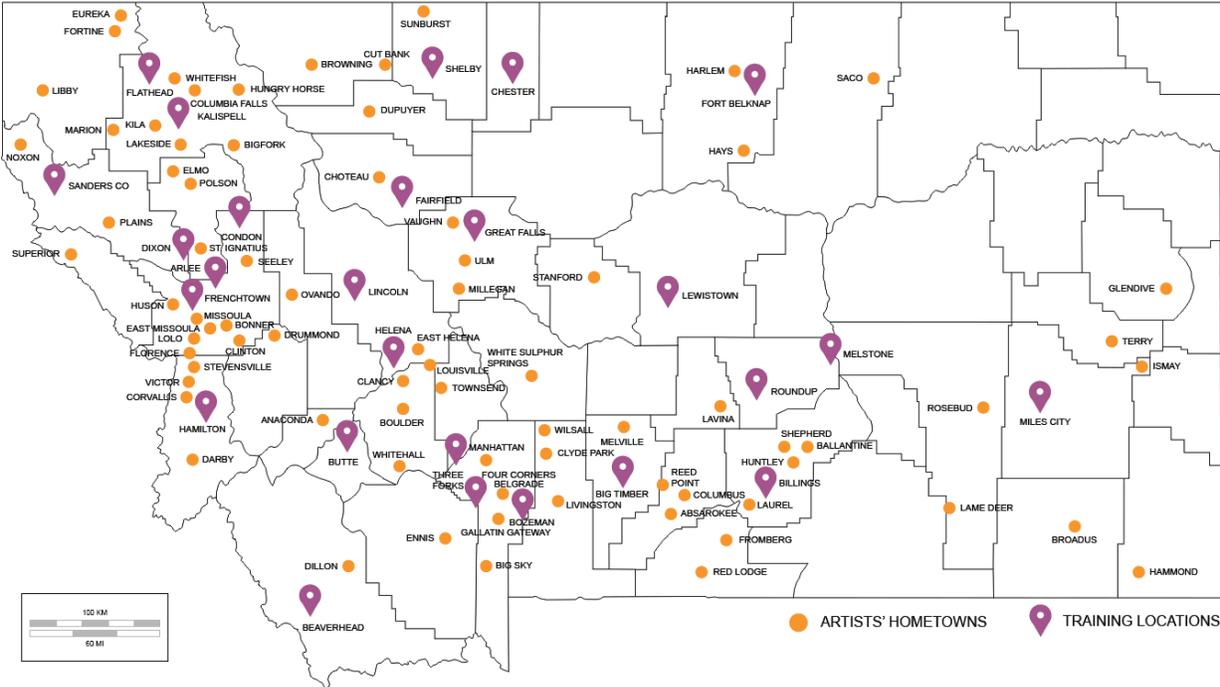
The Montana Arts Council established the Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) in 2009 to support individual artists working in rural areas throughout the state who wanted to increase their household incomes through the sale of their art. The basic structure of MAP is a ten-month course of participatory training in a regional cohort of artists, followed by a process of formal certification. With business development as the intended outcome, the certification process requires artists to complete a comprehensive toolkit to become market ready.

In May 2014, Decision Support Partners, Inc. was contracted by the Montana Arts Council to develop a survey to gather data from Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) participants from 2009 through April 2013. Following that initial inquiry, the consultant was contracted to augment that first study with 2014 data from the responding MAP artists.

The surveys were intended to help the Montana Arts Council better understand the impact of the program on participating artists and to help inform the future of the program. In 2013, a letter from Arlynn Fishbaugh, executive director of the Montana Arts Council, was sent to 221 artists who had completed the program asking for participation in this evaluation. Both surveys were administered electronically and anonymously by Decision Support Partners. Because the survey was lengthy and required respondents to provide multiple years of financial information (from the time they participated in their formal MAP training through 2014), artists were provided an incentive of \$25 to \$150 to complete the surveys. The amount of the incentive was determined based on the timeliness and thoroughness of the response. In total, 80 artists (36%) responded to the survey and 73% of these artists provided complete financial information as requested.¹

Each artist was asked to report on data from the year prior to their participation in MAP, as well as for all years following their participation through 2014. For years following participation in MAP the data was averaged across relevant years and totaled for all respondents.

Cohort Training Centers and Artists' Hometowns 2010 - 2016



¹ The second survey collecting 2014 data was administered in January 2015. Seventy nine percent of the original survey group responded. This report represents an accumulation of data collected in both efforts. Data from 2013 was applied to the 17 missing cases in 2014, where applicable, and treated as static. Data reported on either survey as zero was calculated as zero. Missing data in all other cases was suppressed and reflected in the valid cases reported.

As a result of the Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) participating artists in the survey sample have:

- Generated \$470,837 in net art sales, a 397% increase in net art sales on average since participating in the program, some as high as \$29,500.
- Generated upwards of \$2.02 million in gross art sales, which is a 123% increase since participating in the program.
- Increased sales of their art outside of the state of Montana by 44% on average, from years prior to the program to years after participating in the program.
- Reported that in 2014, 37% of their gross personal income of \$1.48 million was derived from their art sales (\$547,553).
- Invested two-thirds of their gross personal income (\$550,333) in their art businesses in 2014, \$306,536 of which was spent in the state of Montana. Artists who invested in their art businesses spent an average of \$7,398.

MAP artist survey respondents generated economic activity in the areas of:

- Employed/contracted new or more people for art business (26%)
- Made capital investments in art business (55%)
- Increased state and local business spending (64%)
- Increased customer base (83%)
- Increased inventory for sale (89%)
- Increased investment in art business (81%)
- Increased sales locations and prices for product lines (73%)
- Increased out of state sales and percentage of sales from outside of Montana (59%)
- Rented new space for art business (18%)

MAP artist survey respondents reported being:

- More confident in their business management skills (79%)
- More specific and clear on their art business financial goals (78%)
- Actively making art and pursuing their art businesses (75%)
- In progress toward their art business financial goals (71%)
- More satisfied with their art business (65%)

Of the 80 artists responding to the survey, 22 have received MAP certification. To become certified, artists must produce a toolkit (a comprehensive set of 35 professional business materials) in order to be deemed “market ready.” The results from MAP Certified Artists are higher in most cases than all program artists responding to the survey. The 22 MAP Certified Artists:

- Generated \$1,064,756 in gross art sales, which is a 157% increase since participating in the program.
- Increased gross annual sales per artist from \$5,766 to \$14,809 on average, with some as high as \$65,483.
- Generated \$261,483 in net art sales, a 649% increase in net art sales on average since participating in the program.
- Increased sales of their art outside of the state of Montana by 87%.
- Reported that in 2014, 45% of their gross personal income of \$364,912 was derived from their art sales (\$162,911).

MAP Artist Characteristics

MAP artists responding to the survey range from 28 years of age to 74 years of age, with an average age of 54. Approximately 60% have a four-year college degree or higher, and 70% are female. Approximately 20% report racial or ethnic background other than Caucasian, and three out of five artists are from Montana towns outside of the seven largest cities.

Sample Success Stories

Below are sample success stories reported by artists on the survey.

Owning an alpaca ranch primarily for breeding and sales during this economic downturn is difficult. By completing the MAP program I learned the skills to get my art out into the buying public. This program by all means, saved the ranch for the last several years. We are now looking at selling the animals and ranch after over 25 years but my art will continue as our primary income other than retirement.

My main motivation for participating in MAP was to develop the wholesale side of my business. During my MAP year, I added one (bringing the total to 2!) yarn shop buying wholesale, in Jackson, WY, during the Tour of Excellence. In 2013, I started reaching out to other yarn shops, and picked up another one or two. Then, in late April, I received a phone call from one of the largest yarn shops in Montana, Camas Creek Yarn, in Kalispell. The owner contacted ME and asked to carry my products! She had heard of me via word of mouth (a friend of hers had seen my booth at a fiber festival in Post Falls, ID). I brought my yarns and fibers to her shop the next week, and made the largest sale I had ever made. This was a huge boost to my confidence, and I decided that I would no longer sell to shops on consignment. Additional requests from shops came after that, and the wholesale side of my business has flourished since then.

Because of MAP my sales have increased and I have more money to invest in my art without taking out loans or carrying any personal debt. All of the wholesale income I have from my art can be attributed to the MAP program. I was able to develop a product line and an inventory to offer at wholesale to qualified buyers. My retail income has increased after learning more about more accurately pricing my work through MAP's pricing formula.

As the numbers reflect, since beginning MAP my sales increased exponentially each year - culminating in sales exceeding \$100,000 last year. Even after meeting all financial obligations (payroll, taxes, operating expenses, etc.) the extra income I earned as a full-time artist - but actually only working part time - gave my family two very important things: extra income that we used to offset the cost of building our new home, and most importantly, it gave me the flexibility to work odd hours, take time as needed to be with our small children, and allowed the family to enjoy time together.

In 2014, I wrote a weaving instructional book. This was one of my long range goals when I took MAP. That book is being published in 2016 and in 2015 led to me recording 3 instructional videos with the parent company that is publishing my book. The first of these videos was released in September 2015 and I am receiving royalty checks for the sales. The first royalty check in 2015 was issued on sales to September 30, 2015 and it was for nearly \$1,000.00. I love royalty checks!

In 2014, I wrote a press release to the Bozeman Chronicle's "Get Out" section (Arts Section) which I learned how to do through the MAP class. An article was written about my art business and I received a call from a man who was building a home and wanted to meet me. The project turned into a \$9,500 custom order comprised of a chandelier, three pendant lamps, kitchen backsplash, and a vessel sink for a powder room. The home was a "Parade of Homes" home in Bozeman for the year 2014. I'm still using the job for marketing today.

I made several sales in 2015 that brought in a lot of money. My most significant sale from 2015 happened recently with a patron that saw my work at a local distillery. The patron said she fell in love with a series of black and white images I've made depicting various people of all ages, shapes and sizes holding each other. The patron asked if I would be willing to photograph her and her daughter in this style, which does not fall into a classification of modern family portraiture. The work I made from my shoot with this patron was my first significant piece of commission work but it also enriched my body of photographs for this series. It wasn't my biggest sale of the year but it was excellent for building my inventory and also it validated my idea that showing my work in complementary settings (like fine artisan whiskey distilleries, where this patron spotted the series) is just as good as waiting on a gallery to represent my work. I held a successful opening at this establishment bringing in a ton of business for this establishment from all of the people present to view my work. The owner of the establishment was thrilled to have this collaborative event. Because of MAP and especially the tool that asks us to give a list of "Annotated Area Heritage and Cultural Resources" I've been able to seek out places that are not conventional "art" establishments. In the last two years, I was able to sell work in all of these outlier art establishments while at the same time enriching my community with art that celebrates their culture and landscape. These local establishments also experienced a positive impact in sales because of my supporters who came in to see my new work.