



A Call for Possibility

Artists are, by nature, inventors, engineers, explorers, and discoverers. Artists see possibility everywhere. Monetizing talent, however, is a daunting task for an artist. At the Montana Arts Council, we recognize that creating a sustainable life in the arts is complicated, that there is no singular approach to building a creative enterprise, that it doesn't happen quickly, and that success has its roots in relationship-building. With a mission to help artists build a sustainable life in the arts, we provide a program to Montana artists called the Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP). MAP is an art-centered business development program taught by working artists and open to all visual artists.

At the program's heart, is the philosophy that a sustainable career in the arts is attainable by earnestly developing one's skill and expertise in a chosen medium, understanding and proactively engaging in the arts community, confidently articulating one's story and purpose as an artist and strategically seeking patrons for one's work. MAP provides practical coursework covering 35 pragmatic, professional practice tools of art and business:

The Artrepreneur's Toolbox ©

- 1. Log of Studio Hours** *(at least 120 hours total)*
- 2. Annotated list of area heritage and cultural resources**
- 3. Landscape journal for creative ideas and marketplace branding**
- 4. Product line list with both retail and wholesale prices**
- 5. System for record keeping and organization**
- 6. Written mission, values, and vision statements for the artist's business**
- 7. Three goals and three objectives to reach each goal**

8. **Artist Statements** (*three versions required: one typewritten page, one-two paragraphs, and 25-30 words*)
9. **Customer Profile**
10. **A small window or table display of the artist's work**
11. **Diagram and photos of the artist's booth for use at a show**
12. **Documentation of five hours spent with an art mentor**
13. **6 professional quality product photographs of artwork**
14. **2 professional quality process photographs** (*the artist at work*)
15. **A logo for use in the artist's business of art**
16. **A business card for use in the artist's business of art**
17. **A brochure for use in the artist's business of art**
18. **Hangtags to use on the artist's work**
19. **A sample of packaging for use in sales, customer transport, and shipping of the work**
20. **A sample of business transaction materials** (*eg. invoices, statements, receipts, and order blanks*)
21. **2-minute video presentation**
22. **Research of four shows** (*one local, two regional, and one national*)
23. **Research of credit card/PayPal capability**
24. **Proof of participation in an area show**
25. **Ten hours of internship with a creative sector business**

26. Press Release

27. Press Kit

28. A Quality Portfolio

29. Site Map showing the organization of a future website

30. E-portfolio

31. Resume and cover letter for use with a gallery

32. Studio Budget for the coming year

33. Mini-proposal for funding a project in line with the artist's goals

34. Plan outlining the artist's strategies for marketing

35. Business plan to use in building a business of art

MAP also provides each artist validation for doing the art that brings them the greatest joy and the reminder that they must commit to seeking their authentic voice in their medium. We ask artists to lean all the way in to their potential, reaching beyond what they're simply capable of doing and to really access their unique genius. It's not enough to just be "artsy." Once they develop their unique body of work, we teach them to authentically articulate the story of their art – the "why" of what they do. Artists find relief knowing that they don't need to develop a sales schtick or become someone else to sell art.

We recognize that the matter of money is further complicated by decades of philosophical wrangling between artists who believe that selling art equals selling out, that true art can have no declared monetary value and by a culture enamored with, and thus helping to perpetuate, the mythos of the "starving artist." MAP provides affirmation of choosing the title of "Artist" as a credible profession and further works toward perpetuating a dialog which includes artists as small business owners.

MAP artists have examined their passion for art through coursework that encourages artistic growth and demystifies business from the perspective of discovering the story, showing the story, telling the story and funding the story. They have developed specific strategies to

achieve carefully and sensibly planned goals and objectives. They've taken the bold stand for possibility and have committed to the promise of art as profession. Upon finishing the course and completing the tools, many artists claim that a sustainable life in the arts feels "doable" and that rather than reaching the end of a process, they feel they have encountered the beginning of the life they had previously only imagined. Many artists call the experience "transforming."

MAP has earned national acclaim, impacting nearly 400 artists across Montana to date. 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. The survey was 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.

MAP artist survey respondents reported being:

- More confident in their business management skills (78%)
- More satisfied with their art business (70%)
- In progress toward their art business financial goals (70%)
- More specific and clear on their art business financial goals (74%)
- Actively making art and pursuing their art businesses (78%)

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

- Increased inventory for sale (78%)
- Increased customer base (76%)
- Increased investment in art business (68%)
- Increased sales locations and prices for product lines (65%)
- Increased state business spending (59%)
- Increased local business spending (54%)
- Increased out of state sales (45%)
- Made capital investments in art business (45%)
- Employed/contracted new or more people for art business (18%)
- Rented new space for art business (14%)

MAP artists have more than just talent; they have passion – passion enough to commit their energies to developing the necessary tools to create a sustainable life in the arts. They have passion enough to lean all the way in to their potential, to identify the work that truly brings them alive, and to do that work every day in a world that tells them to get a “real job.” They are BRAVE! And they’ve learned from other artists - people who “get it, and get them”- that developing and sustaining an art business is doable. These artists recognize and personify the fact that the arts mean business in the great state of Montana.

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

- Generated upwards of \$1.2 million in gross art sales, which is an 86% increase since participating in the program.
- Increased gross annual sales per artist from \$3,734 to \$6,938 on average, with some as high as \$68,317.
- Generated \$275,000 in net art sales, a 275% increase in net art sales on average since participating in the program, some as high as \$18,000.
- Increased sales of their art outside of the state of Montana by 31%, on average, from years prior to the program to years after participating in the program.
- Reported that in 2013, 21% of their gross personal income of \$1.58 million was derived from their art sales (\$328,059).
- Invested two-thirds of their gross personal income (\$614,340) in their art businesses in 2013, \$406,691 of which was spent in the state of Montana. Artists who invested in their art businesses spent an average of \$8,969.

...proving that the program works.

We also know the value of the shared experience. Because artists are natural problem-solvers and creative engineers, there is no better place than MAP to share ideas. At 375+ artists and growing, our network is substantial and media-diverse; our artists can find support for most any challenge, whether business- or studio-related. We strive to facilitate a festive atmosphere of mutual helpfulness, leaving everyone knowing that they are connected to a larger whole and the belief that “it’s doable.” MAP was designed on a founding principle of transformational learning and offers artists, not just practical tools with which to build a solid business, but peer-to-peer mentoring to examine and personalize goals and objectives, and the experience of community to balance and sustain the process.

Participating in MAP requires a commitment to attend monthly workshops over the course of approximately ten months and to financially invest in one's business of art, as well as a moderate fee and an application process. The Montana Arts Council is committed to ensuring that the MAP program is affordable and accessible to Montana artists. Becoming part of MAP and building a business, however, requires an investment of time and money for expenses including but not limited to travel, promotional materials, inventory expansion, and market development. These costs are the artist's responsibility will vary from person to person. Artists are encouraged to build their businesses according to the budget and timeline that works specifically for them and for their lifestyle, understanding that long-term sustainability is the ultimate goal. The particular long-term, diversified strategy that each artist crafts for their future will likely vary from their fellow artists as much as the artwork that they each produce.

The course is offered as group learning opportunities, called cohorts, throughout the state in eight locations each year, takes place over an eight-to-ten month period, and begins around February, depending on location. MAP cohorts consist of six to ten artists each and applications are accepted until each group is full for the course year. The Montana Artrepreneur Program is presented in partnership with Made In Montana, a program of the Montana Department of Commerce. Interested artists should contact Sheri Jarvis, Montana Artrepreneur Program director, at (406) 865-0884 or sherijarvis@mt.gov.



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