



ECONOMIC IMPACT
of the
PROFESSIONAL
CRAFT INDUSTRY
in
WESTERN
NORTH CAROLINA

Did you know?

Craft is a growth industry for the 25 counties of Western North Carolina and has established this region as one of the leading centers for craft production and education in the United States.

Western North Carolina's Professional Craft Industry:

- provides jobs and encourages new business with a total annual economic impact of \$206.5 million in 2007, an increase from \$122 million in 1995
- attracts tourists, one of the region's main sources of revenue
- represents a clean, sustainable industry that will remain in the region
- educates the public about the history and heritage of this unique and culturally rich area
- enhances learning for local elementary, high school and college-level students





A recent study concerning the Craft Industry's economic impact within the community was conducted and the data analyzed by DESS Business Research in 2008. The results highlight the vitality, leadership and innovation found in Western North Carolina's Craft Industry.

Economic Impact of the Professional Craft Industry in Western North Carolina

TOTAL Annual Economic Impact	\$206,500,000
Craft Artists	\$86,200,000
Craft Consumers	\$31,500,000
Craft Retail Galleries	\$57,700,000
Craft Schools	\$11,800,000
Craft Non-profit Organizations	\$4,400,000
Craft Suppliers and Publishers	\$15,000,000





Craft Artists

Annual Economic Impact

\$86,200,000

The survey, mailed to more than 2,200 full and part-time professional craft artists, portrays a population that is engaged in the community and committed to Western North Carolina.



56% of respondents operate a full-time business; many craft artists also teach at area schools, colleges and universities

33% have full and/or part-time employees

\$48,000 is the median household income for artists

66% of respondents have at least a college degree

33% have lived in WNC more than 20 years, including many second-generation artists



16% of respondents are new arrivals within the last 5 years; Western North Carolina attracts both relocating professional artists and emerging younger crafts artists

50% of graduates from area craft residency programs remain in WNC to establish their own studios



65% of craft artists have their work marketed within WNC, 8% in North Carolina outside the region and 25% outside the state

Craft Retail Galleries

Annual Economic Impact \$57,700,000

There are more than 130 craft galleries in Western North Carolina with average annual gross sales of \$500,000.

70% of the galleries' inventory is produced in WNC

62% of the sales are to tourists/visitors

3.6 is the average number of full-time gallery employees with the largest gallery having 60 full-time employees

33% of Western North Carolina galleries have been in existence for 10 or more years

20 of the 100 galleries surveyed are located in the city of Asheville while the majority of galleries are found in small towns and villages. The Oaks Gallery in Dillsboro, for example, represents 125 craft artists and Crimson Laurel Gallery in Bakersville showcases the work of 90 area craft artists.





Craft Consumers

Annual Economic Impact \$31,500,000

Tourism, vital to Western North Carolina's economy, relies on the area's rich cultural and artistic energy to attract visitors. The survey indicates that 60% of craft consumers come from 38 other states, Canada and Mexico, and 16% come from other regions of North Carolina.

57% of craft consumers have household incomes above \$75,000

72% graduated from college and are between the ages of 36 and 65

56% of craft consumers stay overnight for an average of 3.7 nights

\$642 per visit is the average amount spent by craft consumers coming to Western North Carolina

38% of craft consumer spending goes toward purchasing art while 62% includes hotels, restaurants and local cultural activities

Craft Schools

Annual Economic Impact \$11,800,000

Western North Carolina offers the greatest concentration of craft education in the country. A major reason artists live in this region is the educational opportunities offered through area workshops, classes and degree programs.

Two internationally recognized crafts schools in WNC are responsible for more than a \$10 million economic impact on the local economy:

Penland School of Crafts enrolls more than 1,300 students from 48 states and overseas annually and attracts over 14,000 visitors a year.

John C. Campbell School offers more than 800 classes in contemporary and traditional craft.

Colleges and Universities:

Haywood Community College Professional Craft Program is nationally recognized for providing technical and business skills in clay, fiber, metal and wood for more than 30 years. The college will break ground in 2010 for the new Creative Arts building which will increase the capacity for students interested in obtaining an AAS degree.

Mayland Community College, Blue Ridge Community College, Southwestern Community College and Western Piedmont Community College offer innovative craft programs.

UNC Asheville, Appalachian State University and Western Carolina University all offer craft instruction within their BA, BFA or MFA programs. UNC Asheville recently committed to building a Craft Campus and degree program uniquely focused on contemporary craft and the environment.

The UNC Center for Craft, Creativity and Design organized the writing, funding and publication of the first comprehensive textbook related to American craft history (2009).

Several local organizations and schools offer classes in specific media, including:

Earth Guild, Odyssey Center for the Ceramic Arts, Asheville BookWorks, Mountain Metalsmiths School of Jewelry and Lapidary, Cloth Fiber Workshop and Asheville Woodworking School.



Craft Non-Profit Organizations

Annual Economic Impact \$4,400,000

Many organizations contribute to the economic revitalization of Western North Carolina.

Two local programs help establish craft as a sustainable and energy-conscious industry:

Energy Xchange Incubator—supports entrepreneurs in starting, managing and operating new businesses in glass blowing and pottery using landfill methane as an energy source.

Jackson County Green Energy Park—“fuels the craft industry”—its program, modeled after the Energy Xchange, includes a metalsmith forge fired on landfill gas.

Three major national organizations are headquartered in Asheville:

The Furniture Society of America

The Alliance of the American Quilt

The Arts Business Institute

Two strong and vibrant regional organizations help focus attention on craft sales and public education:

The Southern Highland Craft Guild—With more than 900 juried artists, guild members sell their work at two annual craft fairs and five craft shops in the area hosting nearly 300,000 visitors each year.

HandMade in America—Founded in 1993, HandMade in America promotes traditional and contemporary craft in 22 WNC counties. More than 50,000 copies of HandMade’s *Craft and Heritage Trails Guidebook of Western North Carolina* direct visitors to 125 craft artist studios and 136 galleries.

The region’s many active community arts agencies and local organizations focus on craft, including:

River District Artists—represents 100 artists operating studios in many of the converted industrial buildings along the French Broad River

The Carolina Mountain Woodturners—the largest of the 290 local chapters of the American Association of Woodturners

Western North Carolina Quilters Guild—sponsors workshops and exhibitions

Fiber Arts Alliance—actively supports more than 300 members

Potters of the Roan—a guild of emerging and nationally recognized potters

13 Community Arts Councils—focus much of their programming on craft artists

Craft Suppliers and Publishers

Annual Economic Impact \$15,000,000

The national and international focus on craft in Western North Carolina inspires businesses in the area. Craft suppliers and publishers, for example, produce products that are sold throughout the United States and beyond.

Highwater Clays manufactures clay and distributes ceramic supplies and equipment nationally and has 25 employees in their Asheville headquarters. The company expanded in 2002 to open a second location in Florida.

EarthGuild has a showroom in downtown Asheville with 8 employees and sells tools and materials “for serious craft work” throughout the country.

Artpaper is a supplier of fine art papers, bookbinding materials and other supplies for artists, schools and universities.

Spruce Pine Batch Company sells equipment and supplies to glass blowing artists nationally.

Lark Books, with more than 50 employees, publishes 60-70 new titles each year on various craft subjects.



*Places that are open to creative innovators
will be more likely to produce,
retain and attract innovators of all sorts,
including technological innovators.
This, in turn, will generate
new firms and businesses.*

—from *Urban Density,
Creativity and Innovation*
by Brian Knudsen, Richard Florida,
Gary Gates and Kevin Stolarick
May, 2007

The following sponsors worked in collaboration to update a 1995 survey related to the economic impact of the professional craft industry in Western North Carolina. The data was analyzed by DESS Business Research.

A full report can be seen at www.craftcreativitydesign.org



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