CREATIVE DISTRICTS IN COLORADO

Maryo Gard Ewell and Margaret Hunt

This is the story of how Creative Districts are growing and flourishing in Colorado as a result of legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2011. We describe how the legislation came to be and how it was translated into a statewide program of support for Creative Districts, and we will mention a few of the remarkable things that are happening in Colorado as a result. Finally, we will identify the many things that we have learned in the process that may be valuable to other states seeking to enact similar legislation.

Appendix 1 – “Examples” - presents a quick story from each of Colorado's 12 Creative Districts.

Appendix 2 – “Tidbits and Soundbites” – presents a few numbers of interest.

Appendix 3 – “Summary Table” – presents a table showing Creative Occupations, Revenue, Exports, Number of Nonprofits, and Nonprofit Arts Revenues for each Creative District.

COLORADO LEGISLATION

In 2011, the Colorado General Assembly passed HB 11-1031, “Concerning The Creation Of Creative Districts;” Colorado was the eighth state to pass such a law. This legislation, crafted with the assistance of Colorado Creative Industries (CCI), the state arts agency, was a significant step in a carefully constructed strategy to position creativity as a vital force in the State's economy.

The timing was right. Artists, business owners, and local government officials responded with enthusiasm, affirming that creativity was vital to the development of their local economy, the articulation of their sense of place, and the revitalization of their downtown. But the good timing was not accidental; the foundation had been carefully laid.

Prior to 2003, CCI was the Colorado Council on the Arts (CCA). It was an agency within the Department of Higher Education. Despite its programs which garnered great support from artists and non-profit cultural groups, CCA’s profile within state government was relatively low. The fiscal year 2002-3 was a bad one in Colorado, as it was elsewhere, and the State was forced to
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make dramatic cuts throughout its budget. By year’s end, CCA was reduced to a single staff member, with a minimal budget. During this year, however, CCA’s Council Chair convened a task force of prominent citizens to design CCA’s future.

A key recommendation of the task force was to move CCA out of Higher Education and into the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT), an office which enjoyed positive gubernatorial, legislative and public attention. This move was effected on July 1, 2006.

The Council realized that merely being located within OEDIT would be meaningless unless it could provide solid evidence that the arts and culture were important to the economic well-being of the State of Colorado. In 2008, Elaine Mariner, Executive Director at the time, commissioned “The State of Colorado’s Creative Economy” from the Alliance for Creative Advantage/Regional Technology Strategies of Carboro, North Carolina. The creative sector was identified as the fifth-largest industry cluster in the State. CCA’s major media campaign caught the attention of leaders in the private and public sectors.

The Council, needing to update its strategic plan, then assembled a Creative Economy Advisory Panel of non-profit cultural organizations, artists, entrepreneurs, key people in the State’s business development sector, creative businesses and the Lt. Governor – using a deliberately broad definition of “creative business” that included fashion designers, architects, game and software designers, and others whose products directly emerged from their creative talent. The Panel created a strategic plan to capitalize on the immense potential for the State’s creative sector to drive economic growth in Colorado and to continue to expand the State’s quality of life.

One element of the plan was the 2010 merger of the CCA, the Art in Public Places program, and the Film Commission into a single new entity – Colorado Creative Industries (CCI); the bill’s sponsors announced this merger at a major media event and voiced their recognition of, and support for, the creative industries as an important force in Colorado. The next element of the plan was passage of the Creative Districts legislation, sponsored by State Representative Joe Miklosi, who sought the passage of an arts-related bill important to the entire state but which would have little to no fiscal impact, given Colorado’s current economic reality. As with the other Creative Industries legislation, this enjoyed strong support from both the Governor and the Lt. Governor.

The complete title of HB 11-1031 is: “Concerning the creation of Creative Districts, and, in connection therewith, authorizing specified local governments to designate a portion of their territory as a Creative District subject to certification by the Creative Industries Division within the Colorado Office of Economic Development.” The bill describes a Creative District as “a well-recognized, designated mixed-use area of a community in which a high concentration of cultural facilities, creative businesses, or arts-related businesses serve as the anchor of attraction…. Creative districts may be found in all sizes of communities, from small and rural to
large and urban. Creative districts may be home to both nonprofit and for-profit creative industries and organizations."

With the overarching statement that “the arts and culture transcend boundaries of race, age, gender, language, and social status,” the bill goes on to identify the particular ways that Creative Districts improve and promote both local communities and the State.” Creative Districts:

- “Attract artists and creative entrepreneurs to a community, thereby infusing the community with energy and innovation, which enhances the economic and civic capital of the community;
- “Create a hub of economic activity that helps an area become an appealing place to live, visit, and conduct business, complements [sic] adjacent businesses, and results in the creation of new economic opportunities and jobs in both the cultural sector and other local industries. Cultural resources attract businesses and assist in the recruitment of employees.
- “Are a highly adaptable economic development tool that is able to take a community's unique conditions, assets, needs, and opportunities into account, thereby addressing the needs of large and small and rural and urban areas;
- “Establish marketable tourism assets that highlight the distinct identity of communities, attract in-state, out-of-state, and even international visitors, and become especially attractive destinations for cultural, recreational, and business travelers;
- “Revitalize and beautify neighborhoods, cities, and larger regions, reverse urban decay, promote the preservation of historic buildings, and facilitate a healthy mixture of business and residential activity that contributes to reduced vacancy rates and enhanced property values; and
- “Provide a focal point for celebrating and strengthening a community's unique cultural identity, providing communities with opportunities to highlight existing cultural amenities as well as mechanisms to recruit and establish new artists, creative industries and organizations.”

The legislation – unlike that of some of the other states – did not include any tax incentives. It directs CCI to determine standards for the certification of Creative Districts, and then design a process for certification. Finally, the legislation directs CCI to offer a “helping hand” to communities across the state seeking to create such a District.

CCI determined to take advantage of media momentum. Executive Director Elaine Mariner pledged to the General Assembly that two exemplary Districts would be chosen for certification, and a “helping hand” program designed, within six months.

CREATING THE PROGRAM

CCI had a staff of four – an Executive Director, a Program Assistant, a Public Art Manager, and an Arts Education Manager. Meeting the self-imposed deadline seemed impossible; but excitement about the potential to dramatically improve the quality of life in Colorado, the creativity that surfaces when there are no evident resources, and perhaps the spirit of Colorado “can do” optimism came together. Lacking the ability to hire new staff, CCI released a
Documented Quote – in effect, a request for proposals – soliciting a contractor with a plan to make it happen – fast.

The DQ process drew eight competitors, and ultimately the proposal submitted by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), with consultant Maryo Gard Ewell in partnership with Ginger White Brunetti and Jamie Licko, was selected. Ewell, a community arts specialist, lived in rural western Colorado; Brunetti lived in Denver where she managed the Creative Economy program for Denver Arts &Venues; and Licko was an internationally-respected downtown revitalization consultant. Their plan featured the following elements:

- Contacting the other states whose Creative (or Arts) District legislation was most similar to Colorado’s, and seeking their advice about the most important things to do and to avoid doing.
- Convening a team that included representatives of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, a rural regional economic development agency, a nascent Creative District, an artist-entrepreneur and the director of the Colorado Main Street Program to review the Colorado legislation, assessments of other state programs, and to recommend content of Creative District guidelines for Colorado.
- Convening seven different State agencies and offices concerned with economic and community development, tourism, transportation, housing, revenue and history, as well as the Colorado Municipal League, Colorado Counties Inc., Colorado Rural Development Council and Downtown Colorado, Inc., to discuss the overlap and mutual value of the Creative Districts program and their programs, and to obtain their pledge to assist CCI’s constituents as appropriate.
- Releasing the new program guidelines through all of these diverse entities, as well as through CCI’s usual cultural and media channels, in order to reach the broadest possible public. We recognized that it was essential to directly reach elected officials, city managers and planners, developers, zoning specialists, and economic development specialists – people not typically on CCI lists.
- Identifying two communities ready to be certified immediately; and additionally, inviting the next-ranked 13 communities to participate in a Creative Districts training program so that within two years they, too, could successfully compete for certification.
- Addressing the “helping hand” requirement by providing resources to each of these 15 communities for two years so that all – whether certified or candidate communities – could progress.
- Recognizing that the first two years of the program would be experimental in nature, in which we would study best practices, learn much, and make adjustments. The consultants recommended that the next open application would not take place for at least two years.

Indeed, the time was right. Once the guidelines reached the broad public, the response was encouraging. From all corners of the state, from Denver neighborhoods to communities as small as 200 queries were received from 68 communities in 41 of Colorado’s 64 counties. Ultimately, this led to 49 applications from 32 cities in 24 counties.

The reviewers considered:
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- The degree of local government support.
- District characteristics. This included the density of for-profit and non-profit creative businesses, emphasis on creating and selling local products, ongoing events, festivals, and gathering places such as plazas, parks, restaurants or breweries.
- Management and Planning. This included such elements as a steering committee reflecting many partners, some sources of revenue, some form of strategic plan, a staff person (paid or unpaid) and more.
- Community Buy-In. This included such elements as opportunities for any resident or business in the District to participate in events, planning and governance, a way for legacy residents to be engaged and a way for the diverse peoples of the District to “own” the district.

A panel selected 15 communities, naming the top two as Certified Creative Districts. These two – Denver’s Art District on Santa Fe and the Salida Creative District in a rural town - had been building their District for more than ten years, although all of the other 13 had been engaged in that work for at least two years. Among the group were two Denver neighborhoods, downtowns in three mid-sized cities, four Denver-area ring cities, three cities of populations 5,000-10,000, one ski/festival/resort town of 2,500, one town of 900, and a small region including three towns, the largest of which was 1,500. They represented almost all parts of the State. One of the small cities dropped out, realizing that they were not equipped for the intense work demanded of them by CCI, leaving a cohort of 14 communities to participate in the first round of the Creative Districts program.

CREATIVE DISTRICT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

While the legislation did not include funding for Creative Districts, CCI recognized that the local Creative Districts would develop more quickly if modest resources were available to them. CCI had approached the Boettcher Foundation, which typically did not fund the arts, but which was deeply concerned about building strong, resilient communities across Colorado, to see whether a partnership between CCI and Boettcher could be viable. The Boettcher Foundation recognized the potential of the Creative Districts program to play a vital role in community development, and was especially concerned with building sustainable local infrastructure. The Foundation entered into a partnership with CCI to provide $300,000 over a three year period to be matched by the state in which both entities agreed to provide modest funding (typically $5,000-10,000) to the Districts, which could be used for anything in their strategic plan that would help build a lasting local program.

CCI insisted that all of the Districts in its program must continue to grow and to develop; to this end, CCI announced that any certified Creative District must apply to be re-certified every five...
years. Candidate Creative Districts could apply to be certified after two years. With this in mind CCI created a training regimen mandatory for all 14 communities that included these elements:

- 30 hours of consultant time were paid for by CCI, in each of two years. A pool of 60 consultants – the Professional Advisory Network (PAN) – was hand-picked and included specialists in strategic planning, downtown revitalization, finance, zoning, wayfinding, landscape architecture, community engagement, and more to meet the diverse needs of the Districts. Crafting or revising their strategic plan was the Districts’ primary need initially. Afterwards, they used consultants to help create their brand, design their marketing campaign, assess the feasibility of artist live-work space, design a comprehensive public art policy and plan, build programs to enliven the streets, assess the feasibility of various finance options, or address local issues.

- Access to four Cultural Heritage specialists was provided. CCI stressed the importance of articulating the unique story of a given District as the key to sustainability. As with the PAN roster, CCI paid for the specialists who were used in many ways, including leading workshops and story-circles, surfacing community identity and history, assisting with the applications for historic building designation or discussing ways that community heritage could be reflected in the built environment.

- Two convenings were held each year for two years with the goal that Districts had tools and information necessary to meet CCI’s and Boettcher’s expectations, to build a network of mutual support, problem-solving and information-sharing among the other districts; and to develop a strong bond with CCI. The Districts’ progress reports offered new ideas and set an increasingly high bar for the group. Artist exchanges were begun between rural and urban Districts.

- A six-part webinar series was created on topics such as understanding a community’s unique story, branding/marketing, financial sustainability, structure options, building the management team, and evaluation. The webinars were recorded and participants were provided with an on-line link.

- Copies of two books, Tom Borrup’s *The Creative Community Builder’s Handbook*, and the Amherst Wilder Foundation’s *The Collaboration Handbook*, were provided.

- Districts were provided with an opportunity to request up to $500 for professional development according to local needs. Funds enabled Districts to attend the State Tourism conference, to study a heritage festival in Salt Lake City, to attend Americans for the Arts’ National Arts Marketing Partnership conference, to hear Richard Florida and others speak in Denver, and to join such organizations as Americans for the Arts, the International Downtown Association, or Downtown Colorado, Inc.

- Districts were required to design a map for their website that told their story and provided information in as many ways as possible, from the addresses of creative businesses to historical information through Esri’s Storymapping program. Districts received unlimited access to Esri staff for technical help subsidized by CCI through a reduced rate negotiated with Esri.

- WESTAF’s Cultural Vitality Index™ (CVI) was provided by CCI to each district. The CVI™ tracks the numbers of creative jobs, nonprofit cultural groups and other elements at the zip code level. CCI negotiated a reduced rate to purchase the CVI for each of the 14 communities as part of the data-collection strategy mandated by CCI.

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CCI’s consultants communicated frequently with the 14 communities, passing on information on funding sources or other special opportunities. As a result, one of the communities won a special award from Sherwin-Williams for paint for storefronts in their Creative District. Another received a significant grant from the Colorado Tourism Office for regional promotion.

The Creative Districts in the program were expected to advance toward CCI’s Standards. They were expected to:

- Report quarterly on their progress in meeting CCI’s Standards for Certification
- Collect certain data
- Post events and other information on the Colorado Tourism Office website
- Design a website that included their map
- Design and install wayfinding signage directing visitors to creative venues and businesses.
- Assist CCI by serving as panelists for presentations at statewide conferences such as the Colorado Municipal League
- Provide information CCI could use with media, or participate in CCI’s presentation to legislative committees

CCI provided additional special opportunities to the communities, once they became certified:

- Commissioned three episodes per District for the “Beyond the Gallery” Web TV series, each featuring the work of an artist in the District
- Provided in partnership with the Colorado Department of Transportation, two Creative District Informational signs on state highways at entrances to creative districts
- Promoted the Districts in Colorado Tourism Office publications
- Provided financial assistance through the Creative District Community Loan Fund

By the end of 2014, 12 Creative Districts had successfully met the State’s standards and had achieved the status of Colorado Certified Creative District: [http://www.coloradocreativeindustries.org/communities/colorado-creative-districts/certified-districts](http://www.coloradocreativeindustries.org/communities/colorado-creative-districts/certified-districts) Seven additional communities were accepted into the program in 2014, beginning the two-year training required to apply for certification in 2016.

POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR STATEWIDE DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurial Governor John Hickenlooper recognized the importance of the Creative Districts program, saying in a 2014 press release that “…certified and candidate creative districts are great examples of how the arts create exciting places for people to visit and live. These districts not only increase quality of life, they also help with economic vitality of the area and attract people from all over Colorado and the country.”

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The Colorado General Assembly was pleased with the success of the program. The Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade supported the program through its business development and funding and incentives divisions participating in many ways. The Boettcher Foundation applauded it as a way of helping communities around the state build diverse, stable economies and increasingly livable communities. And CCI hired a new Executive Director, Margaret Hunt, in the spring of 2013 with combined experience in economic and community development as well as arts administration of a state agency. She recognized that all of the elements were in place to take the program and the State to a new level through the advancement of additional funding tools.

In the summer of 2013 HB13-1208 was signed into law by Governor John Hickenlooper, authorizing CCI “to offer incentives in the form of need-based funding for infrastructure development in creative districts and to provide such funding from any moneys appropriated to the creative industries cash fund for that purpose.” While CCI was already making grants to communities in the Creative Districts program, the import of the bill was to ensure that CCI would continue to do so in the future. Certain supportive members of the General Assembly had initially envisioned legislation to create tax incentives for businesses and developers within a Creative District, but it was determined this would have little financial value to districts. Still, the bill provided an opportunity for CCI to engage the General Assembly in conversation about the value of Creative Districts. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Cristanta Duran, whose district includes Denver’s Art District on Santa Fe, one of Colorado’s first two certified Creative Districts.

The following year, in the 2014 legislative season, a bill of great significance was passed by the General Assembly. HB 14-1093, also sponsored by Rep. Duran, established the Creative District Community Loan fund. Within any certified Creative District, or any of the candidate Creative Districts, “any person who is developing, constructing or redeveloping commercial real estate, mixed use projects, community facilities or infrastructure such as sidewalk improvements, pathways for wayfaring and signage” may be eligible for a loan of up to $250,000. CCI entered into an agreement with Mile High Community Loan Fund to administer the program. In addition to CCI’s $100,000 allocation to the loan fund, Mile High pledged up to $4.5 million in uncommitted funds for credit worthy projects.

Meanwhile, after assessing the districts’ ongoing and unmet infrastructure needs, affordable live-work space for artists became an important factor for long-term sustainability of districts. Ms. Hunt was working closely with Timothy Schultz, President and CEO of the Boettcher Foundation. Schultz had said that “The state’s newly designated Creative Districts are capitalizing on Colorado’s creative assets to grow their local...”
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economy and to improve the quality of life for their residents. We want to help them be successful and sustainable over the long-term and we look forward to the Boettcher Creative District Leadership Awards taking them even further along the road to success.” While the Boettcher Foundation had made funds available to the participating communities to build their sustainability, Schultz believed that the Foundation could also be instrumental in helping Districts to develop much-needed affordable artist live-work space. This need had been discovered during CCI’s assessment of districts’ unmet needs in the fall of 2013.

In 2014 CCI and the Boettcher Foundation approached Artspace, a national leader in affordable live-work space for artists and their families, to explore funding needed for marketing and feasibility studies in communities in smaller, rural or mountain communities.
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STANDARDS FOR CERTIFICATION

2014 saw the conclusion of the test period of the Creative Districts program. CCI Council, staff and consultants took a hard look at the elements of the program created in 2011-12, to strengthen the elements that worked well, and discard those that did not, modifying and formally adopting the new Standards for Certification. The Standards follow:

CREATIVE DISTRICT STANDARDS
FOR CERTIFICATION BY COLORADO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
Revised 2014

Foundational Elements

A Certified Creative District will demonstrate the following:

1. A District must capture its unique story and reflect that story. The unique story may include history, the people(s) who have lived in the place, the unique style of the place as reflected in architecture, historical identification, streetscape, events and/or marketing.
2. District must be integrated with other community systems such as planning, economic development, tourism, transportation, urban renewal, safety, public gathering spaces, addressing social needs and/or community development.
3. A District must have local government endorsement. This could mean one or more of the following:
   - A resolution from City Council demonstrating commitment to or endorsement of the Creative District.
   - Inclusion in a municipal or county plan such as a master, comprehensive, neighborhood, cultural and/or business plans.
   - Management by a quasi-government entity such a Downtown Development Authority or Business Improvement District for which City Council reviews the budget and operating plan and appoints board members.

District Characteristics

A Certified Creative District will demonstrate the following:

1. Specific, identifiable boundaries. There must be a clear rationale for these boundaries. Most Districts are contiguous and walkable.
2. Arts and creative industries as a key organizing principal. Cultural events and venues that attract residents and visitors with a density of cultural organizations, artists and other creative entrepreneurs.
3. Activities and plans whose purpose is to retain creative industries and entrepreneurs and to attract complementary businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops and others.
4. Evidence of integration of creative industries with other activities such as farmer’s markets, downtown retail promotions, coordination with restaurants and/or coordination with the visitor industry.
5. Articulation/incorporation of cultural heritage, story and a unique sense of place. Ideally, applicants will include community historians and story bearers on their planning team.
6. An identity that has already been branded and evidence such as signage or media coverage demonstrating the community is recognized as a Creative District.
7. Projects and/or a built environment that indicates a commitment to revitalization and beautification.
   - Colorado Creative Industries is especially interested in sustainable and affordable artist live/work space.
8. Signage, website, brochures and other easily located information that makes it easy for visitors to know where they can find creative industries and entrepreneurs, as well as food and lodging.

Management and Planning

A Certified Creative District will have in place:

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1. A designated paid staff person, full or part-time, who coordinates District planning, management, marketing, funding and evaluation.
2. A governing body that includes local government, for-profit business, nonprofit business and creative entrepreneurs. This must be one of the following:
   - An independent entity such as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(6) organization or application in process.
   - A unit of local government such as a designated government office with a Creative District advisory committee or an appointed commission; a quasi-governmental entity such as a Downtown Development Authority whose workplan and budget includes Creative District management.
   - A formal partnership among entities with a signed memorandum of understanding in place that acknowledges shared and individual responsibilities.
   - A formally-adopted strategic or business plan. All of the following elements must either be incorporated into one plan or there may be separate plans for each.
     - Marketing
     - Financial sustainability
     - Leadership
     - Community input
     - Keeping local government, Chambers of Commerce, local Tourism offices and other key players regularly updated on District activity and impact.
   - A budget for the District. If the District is managed by local government, the budget must be a line item that identifies the District expenses and revenue clearly. Priority will be given to those Districts showing diverse and reliable sources of income.
   - A consistent method to collect the Value Reporting information, including numbers of participants, artists, youth, visitorship, total of creative businesses and number of creative jobs gained (or lost) in the District. A set of strategies to assist creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations within the District and/or community to become increasingly more successful as business entities.
   - The creative use and re-use of vacant spaces.

Community Buy-In

A Certified Creative District will demonstrate active involvement in District planning by a variety of groups:

1. Active involvement and endorsement by local government.
2. Broad participation by the arts and culture sector, both nonprofit and for-profit, and individual creative entrepreneurs.
3. Broad participation and input from residents and people living within and adjacent to the District. Priority will be given to Districts that reflect efforts to engage groups mirroring the demographics of the community.
4. Broad participation by business owners in the District.
5. Broad participation by people who own property in the District.
6. Strategic alliances with key individuals and stakeholders in the community who may influence local decision-making.
7. Engagement of youth.

VALUES REPORTING

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CCI realized that it was essential to systematically collect and benchmark data and information. Not only did local communities need to show evidence of growth and development to their elected and decision-makers, but CCI needed to demonstrate these things for the State of Colorado. Here is what the Creative Districts need to do, and how they need to do it:

**What is Value Reporting?**
Telling the story about the valuable contributions that Creative Districts make to Colorado is important. Both interesting and factual information must be captured to give the message value. The answers to the questions below help measure Creative District success and progress over time in a meaningful way:

- What social and capital assets are there in Creative Districts?
- What creative businesses can be found in the District and how many people are employed in creative businesses?
- What activities are offered to District visitors?
- What is the Creative Districts’ unique story and cultural heritage that helps identity and brand it?
- How many citizens and visitors participate in activities and what are their experiences?
- How are Creative Districts leveraging their resources?

By asking these types of questions, CCI is learning the common denominator that makes Creative Districts successful and it enables sharing the message at both the State and local levels. CCI’s goal is to provide Creative Districts with the tools to tell their unique story using a multitude of methods.

Creative Districts in CCI’s program must participate in telling their story by submitting a Value Report annually.

**Value Reporting Instructions**
Below are the questions that will be asked on the Final Report Form and tips on how to gather these answers. CCI is planning to setup training on some of these collection methods and staff members are available to brainstorm, problem-solve and provide advice.

** Pick the method that is best for you or create your own method. Use same method each year.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation and Visitorship</th>
<th>Suggested Collection Methods</th>
<th>What CCI needs from Creative Districts</th>
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| 1. Number of youth directly benefiting | - Head count at all events and participatory opportunities such as tours, classes, volunteering, etc.  
  - Questionnaire or survey to organizations who are working with youth | Each year, CCI needs a total from you. CCI is required to report this to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). |
| 2. Number of artists participating | - Head count at all events and participatory opportunities such as lectures, classes, volunteering, exhibits, etc.  
  - Number of artists in District directory or linked to your website  
  - Annual artist census | Each year, CCI needs a total from you. CCI is required to report this to the NEA. |
| 3. Number of visitors | - Total figure provided by your visitors bureau  
  - Headcount at signature events  
  - Headcount at a series likely to draw visitors such as a summer outdoor concert series | Each year, CCI needs a total from you. |
| 4. Number of all individuals benefiting | - Estimate based on all the totals above plus others not included above | Each year, CCI needs a total from you. CCI is required to report this to the NEA. |

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## National Cultural Districts Exchange

### New Partnerships and Funding

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Suggested Collection Method</th>
<th>What we need from you</th>
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| 1. What new partnerships and funding opportunities were gained?           | - Track a running list                                                  | - A list of entities that provide funding to the District; put an asterisk (*) by new activities  
|                                                                            |                                                                        | - A list of District partners-sponsored activities; put an asterisk (*) by new activities                                                                          |
| 2. What opportunities were gained as a result of leveraging District     | - Track a running list                                                  | One or more concrete examples of how CCI Creative District status leveraged new funds or opportunities                                                              |
| status and funding?                                                        |                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                       |

### District Characteristics

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Required Collection Method</th>
<th>What CCI needs from Creative Districts</th>
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| 1. What and where are the creative assets in the District? (e.g., art    | - ESRI map                | - ESRI map showing non-profit, for-profit and government cultural venues and businesses  
| orgs, galleries, studios, public art, architecture, music venues, etc.)  | - Annual count (may use membership list and/or physical count)                                               | - A single total of these assets                                                                                                                                 |
| 2. What and where are other related assets in the District? (e.g.,        | - ESRI map                | - ESRI map showing these entities  
| coffee shops, restaurants, trails, library, public plazas, historic     | - Annual count: Identify those relevant to you: coffee shops, taprooms, restaurants, plazas, trails, historic landmarks, etc.   | - A single total of these assets                                                                                                                                 |
| landmarks, etc.)                                                          |                           | |
| 3. How many creative sector jobs are in the District’s zip code?         | - CVI annual report        | - A single total of these jobs provided to you by Western States Arts Federation in the CVI report                                                                  |
| 4. How many creative sector jobs are within the District’s boundaries?   | - Annual count (may survey members used in #1 above and/or physical count)                                 | - A single total of these jobs                                                                                                                                 |
| 5. Did the District’s boundary change? If so, how and why?               | - ESRI Map                | - ESRI map showing the new and old boundary and a narrative description                                                                                                   |

### Storytelling

Experiences of creative businesses, employees, visitors and citizens

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Suggested Collection Method</th>
<th>What CCI needs from Creative Districts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How has working in a Creative</td>
<td>Identify ways of capturing</td>
<td>One or more concrete examples of what</td>
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<tr>
<td>District affected the bottom line, customer awareness, innovation, etc.?</td>
<td>are meaningful to you, such as an annual questionnaire, systematic collection of anecdotal material, blog posts, etc.</td>
<td>you have learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is most enjoyable about visiting the Creative District? What do visitors like to do?</td>
<td>Identify ways of capturing this that are meaningful to you, such as comment books, website testimonials, social media posts, etc.</td>
<td>One or more concrete examples of what you have learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How has the unique cultural heritage contributed to the District and community?</td>
<td>Identify ways of capturing this that are meaningful to you, such as comment books, website testimonials, social media posts, new engagement of people not previously engaged such as elders, legacy residents, specific cultural groups.</td>
<td>One or more concrete examples of what you have learned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Types of Activities Offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Suggested Collection Method</th>
<th>What CCI needs from Creative Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What activities are offered to visitors? (e.g., artist talks, art exhibits, arts education, theatre, tours, concerts, festivals, shopping, dining, etc.)</td>
<td>- Track a running list</td>
<td>A total of these activities; put an asterisk (*) by new activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Meaningful Value Measures

Because of the unique nature and character of each Creative District, there may be other meaningful measures that District’s can capture reflecting the District’s specific goals. Here is a list of other measures that Districts may want to gather and that, if gathered, should be reported in the CCI Final Report.

- Ethnicity of participants and District’s businesses and employees
- Visitor zip codes
- Number of historic sites or buildings and/or new historic designations
- Lodging tax collection
- Sales tax collection
- Capital investment projects or infrastructure improvements
- Artist live/work spaces
- Gross sales receipts
- Occupancy rates
- Crime statistics

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WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Here are some of our key takeaways since the program was launched in 2012:

• Building a Creative District program must be part of a broadly shared, long term vision. In effect, Colorado’s program began in 2004, when the Task Force recognized that the state arts agency’s influence would be most significant if it were aligned with the forces of economic development. A myriad of strategic steps were taken between 2004 and 2011: moving the agency to the Office of Economic Development, building a broad Creative Economy Advisory Panel of key industry leaders, seeking certain gubernatorial appointments to CCI’s governing board, broadly using vocabulary words and phrases such as “creative industry” or “creative economy,” commissioning a major data analysis of the state and potential of the creative economy, building allies within state government and the media, and shifting the agency name from CCA to CCI. The foundation had been carefully laid for the passage of HB 11-1031.

• The window is open. Graduates of planning schools – who become city or town managers or who direct local government planning efforts – are increasingly familiar with the concept of creativity as a key force in community development. The creative industries job sectors have shown growth even during economic recessions. Tourism studies abound showing that cultural tourism is growing and that the cultural visitor tends to stay longer and spend more. Evidence exists that cultural districts can help provide economic stability during shoulder seasons – important for states like Colorado with vigorous summer and winter economies but slow springs and falls. Data is being gathered which provides evidence that Creative Districts matter in local economies. “Maker” programs are growing and flourishing everywhere, as are business incubators. In places urban and rural, artists, inventors, fashion designers and other creatives are meeting regularly. Plenty of examples abound of Creative Districts that have been important in the development or redevelopment of their cities and towns for many years. It’s an excellent time to be thinking about building local Creative Districts – which surely explains the landslide of applications from Colorado communities as small as 190 people to become Colorado Certified Creative Districts.

• Authenticity and the unique local story is foundational. Exploring local story engages groups who typically do not work together: legacy residents and newcomers, diverse cultural groups who have come to the community at different times. The local story can be reflected in the Creative District’s brand, in street furniture, in urban redevelopment, and in architecture. It creates pride of place among local people who see themselves reflected and honored in the District; it creates unique experience for visitors.

• Intentional development matters. In 2012, we thought that each of the 14 communities would know what they needed to do next in order to be ready for certification or recertification. We learned that this was not so. We have now developed a curriculum that outlines steps each District must take every three months. This begins with a convening of all of the candidate Districts which includes a plenary on each of the four sections of CCI’s Standards, as well as many topic roundtables. Each district must begin their use of the PAN by engaging a strategic planning consultant, and CCI is explicit about the elements of a successful plan. In no way does CCI expect – or want – generic
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

plans, but each in its own way must address the Standards; and there must be goals that address economic development, local community needs including social interaction, physical elements such as buildings, wayfinding, parks, and programs.

- The Creative District idea works equally well for industrial urban areas, densely residential urban neighborhoods, the downtowns of small cities, and small rural or mountain towns. Colorado’s original 14 communities included a town of 900; its current group of seven new candidates includes a town of 190. Systems and ways of getting things done vary dramatically: but the principles remain the same.

- Beginning at once to identify a staff person, at least part of whose job description explicitly includes working on the Creative District, is essential; and finding ways to ensure that this person is paid as soon as possible is important.

- Considering long-term funding options is essential in the initial stages of development. There are many choices including membership organizations, Business Improvement Districts, Urban Renewal Authorities, 501c3, 501c4, LLC’s as well as staff and program cost sharing with other structures such as a Main Street Programs, Historic Districts. Chambers of Commerce and local government.

While CCI doesn’t have years of data by which to track local economic progress there is early evidence that Creative Districts do have significant social and economic impact. Certain ideas, such as affordable live work space for artists and their families are still in the planning stages in many of Colorado’s Creative Districts. It’s true that after only a few years there hasn’t been the time for a second generation of participants and administrators to keep the Districts viable and ever-evolving.

We can say that in Colorado’s Creative Districts, there is interaction among people who have not before interacted. There is a sense of joy and fun that is infectious. There is use of the arts to create local pride of authorship for a shared collective vision and to address pragmatic issues of housing, blight and community engagement. Crime is dropping where it is being measured. Visitors are finding interesting communities and places. Business owners are reporting increased property values, sales and the creation of new jobs and employment opportunities for young people.

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APPENDIX I: EXAMPLES

- Colorado’s Creative Districts have many management structures. The 12 Certified Creative Districts include
  - 501c3 organizations
  - a 501c6
  - a primary program of a Business Improvement District
  - a primary program of a Downtown Development Authority
  - a primary program of a Downtown Partnership of 4 interlocking organizations whose staff of 7 all have formal District responsibilities
  - a program managed by local government
  - a partnership between an Arts Alliance and an Urban Renewal Authority
  - a program managed through legally-binding Memo of Understanding among a Downtown Development Authority, a state University, and the City

- Weld County is Colorado's leading producer of cattle, grain and sugar beets, and is the richest agricultural county in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. Greeley, its county seat, is also home to a major beef packing house and a major state university. The CCI reviewers indicated that, before they could certify Greeley’s Creative District, they wanted evidence of the Greeley story and agricultural heritage. With the help of three cultural heritage specialists, an all-day workshop was conducted. Invitees included representatives of old Greeley families; ranchers; university educators; historians; cultural organizations; individual artists; the Latino, Japanese-American, German and Russian communities; and college students. They identified heroes, important places, key moments of community history. And at the end of the day, they identified the themes that they saw bespoke the meaning of their community. An outcome was the Agri-Culture Feast – a dinner beneath the stars, featuring local foods, underwritten by the local agricultural community. The meat packing company donated steaks for everyone. Local chefs ranged from those celebrated for their Nouvelle Cuisine, or their traditional Italian cuisine, to the University food service chef to the culinary specialist of the Food Bank. 250 people bought tickets to sell out the event, which raised $12,000.

- Trinidad is a small city that had been dependent on mining. In its heyday, beautiful buildings were designed by Isaac Hamilton Rapp, who later founded the Santa Fe style, and over 80 remain downtown in the historic district. The brick streets remain from those glory days as well. But the closing of the mine and other factors led to a dramatic downturn in the economy. The population shrank. Buildings were abandoned. Morale
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

was terrible. A new young planner, saying “Trinidad is a planner’s dream!” came to town. Immediately seeing that the arts and creative industries could help, he formed a team of government, business, and arts activists. As the credibility and visibility of the Corazon de Trinidad District have grown, developers and creative businesses have begun the revitalization of the downtown area. Negotiations are in progress for the purchase and rehabilitation of key downtown historic properties for purposes consistent with the Creative District; crime has dropped 4% in the District from 2013-2014. And morale is improving. A mystery painter (or maybe painters?) chalks art onto buildings and sidewalks literally during the night. A second Art Car festival was held, with vehicles from throughout the US as well as created by local resident...vehicles that were fire-belching dragons, vehicles that invited DIY poetry via magnetic kits. There were crowds downtown for the big parade, and one observer was overheard to say “This is the first time in 10 years that I’ve come downtown and smiled.”

- Denver’s Art District on Santa Fe – one of the first two Colorado Certified Creative Districts – has been in business for many years. Founders quickly realized that in this neighborhood in downtown Denver, art wasn’t enough to create a successful Creative District. If people didn’t perceive that it was safe, if people didn’t perceive that it was a good place to raise a family, if visitors weren’t struck at once by an engaging streetscape, then the Art District wouldn’t matter or last. The founders worked on an alley project, cleaning and beautifying the alleys – including the dumpsters! – with art. The Chicano Humanities & Arts Council, El Centro Su Teatro with its many youth programs and the Museo de las Americas, relocated to the District. Work with City transportation authorities to make crosswalks safer and to install traffic lights at key intersections was undertaken. Color and murals began to blossom. Galleries and a fashion design business and new restaurants and coffee shops relocated to the Art District on Santa Fe. A new outdoor lighting plan is being developed by a newly-relocated lighting design business. A Business Improvement District is in the works and 64% of the property owners have signed a petition to move the process to the next step. The First Friday Art Walk now regularly attracts 10,000 visitors. In fact, so large has it grown that a Thursdays Art Walk has been added just for serious collectors of art!
The North Fork Valley Creative Coalition in rural Delta County reports that the number of non-profit arts and culture organizations has grown from 6 in 2012 to 16 in 2014. Working with the country Agritourism personnel, they have co-produced banners helping visitors notice locations of creative businesses and local produce markets. They have created an Art Truck to represent the District in parades and they are a presence at all community events from the Festival of Lights to the farmers markets. They are working with the Board of Realtors to create a campaign to attract creative entrepreneurs to relocate into vacant storefront spaces, with temporary displays and art exhibits in vacant windows. They’re planning an online store to sell the art and creative products of Delta County. The board includes representatives of the cultural groups, county Tourism, chamber of commerce, public radio station individual creative entrepreneurs, and farmers.

Ridgway held a Story Circle, facilitated by Colorado’s state folklorist. It brought together representatives of the ranching, outdoor recreation, and arts communities, as well as a descendent of Chief Ouray, for the Ute tribal people had lived in the area. As a direct result of this event, Heritage Days has begun to include a group of Ute dancers, and a community bicycle tour was held – with the leader highlighting important places and events of his Ute people’s past.
The leaders of Colorado Springs’ Creative District realized that there were already too many plans governing the downtown area, and the first step in creating a new plan was to search the old ones. They also realized a new, stand-alone Creative District organization would get lost amongst the many players already in existence working on downtown revitalization. The solution? The District became an established part of the Downtown Partnership, itself a coalition that includes a 501c3, a 501c4, a Downtown Development Authority, and a Business Improvement District, with a 17-member Creative District Steering Council. Among them, they are a staff of seven, including a part-time Creative District manager. But Creative industry development is a priority shared by all staff so that, for instance, the staff member whose job is business recruitment has a special focus on attracting business incubators, music venues and creative alley-based businesses.

The Telluride Council on Arts & Humanities morphed into Telluride Arts, managing the Arts District. In this town of 2,500 there is an abundance of arts and culture, and the Arts Council had competed with 50 other nonprofit groups for public funds. Telluride Arts became a line-item in the Town budget, at $50,000, in 2014. This meant both that its public funding doubled as the Town recognized the breadth of its mission; but funds from the Town’s Commission for Community Assistance/Arts and Special Events were not decreased accordingly, and Telluride Arts no longer competes with other local nonprofits.

In Pueblo, whose economic history began with the CF & I Steel Mill, the revitalization of the historic district began in the mid-1990’s with the publication of the city planner’s The Soul of Pueblo, outlining a process by which that part of the city could be revitalized by drawing on the city’s rich, multicultural history, the Arkansas River, and interesting architecture as it met community needs. The Pueblo Cultural Corridor – a collaboration of Pueblo Arts and the Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority – fit well into the City’s plan. Income from the URA and membership dollars are supplemented with grants ranging from Kaiser Permanente Walk & Wheel program, the City of Pueblo for improvements in walk- and bikeability in the Cultural Corridor, and funds from the Colorado Garden Foundation for plantings and streetscape design which in turn generated considerable in-
kind support from businesses ranging from Bobcat of the Rockies and Pueblo Electric, to the Pueblo Rotary.

- Salida – one of Colorado’s first two Creative Districts – has been home to many artists and their businesses for over a decade. They were attracted by the beauty of Salida’s environment, low property values, and very high vacancy rate in commercial properties in the downtown. Occupancy rate in the Creative District is now 99%, including 112 creative businesses and 5 nonprofit arts/culture groups. The Salida Creative District realized that helping these business owners and artists to become increasingly well-managed and stable, and growing their businesses to their desired potential, was crucial for the stability of the District. Their Creative Mondays series – free business education for artists – was offered by specialists in marketing, branding, earned income development, website development, financial forecasting, and more. Over 350 people attended the series in 2013-14.

- The 40West Arts District – so named because coast-to-coast Highway 40 passes through the community – realized that Lakewood, and its central Colfax Avenue, owes its existence to the highway and the automobile. There’s a theme of transportation among its myriad events and activities. For example, “Rolling Route 40: The Hubcap Art Show,” drew scores of artists whose “canvas” was a hubcap. The District worked closely with the Regional Transportation District to ensure that the new Light Rail station would be beautiful and would include plenty of public art. And, since one landing approach by planes arriving at Denver International Airport is over Lakewood, there’s talk about putting art on the roofs of buildings for the delight of airline passengers!

- Longmont is a rapidly growing city north of Boulder, Colorado, and felt that it lived in Boulder’s shadow. Now, it’s an arts destination in its own right, with plenty of new creative businesses, coffee shops, a cheese business, restaurants, an Artists Bistro, and more. In the District, the alleys have been painted with murals depicting scenes from Longmont’s history, and contemporary artist-designed entrance arches welcome visitors into the alleys between buildings. A mini-grant program for property owners to make the backs of their buildings as attractive as the street view has resulted in visitors strolling with their cameras in the back alleys, too. A new mixed-income housing development was built with three artist-in-residence studios included in the building design. On the ground floor, they have superb light, windows that allow strollers to watch the art being made, and garage-door style
entrances to facilitate the movement of equipment and art.

- The RiverNorth Art District – RiNo – is rising from the decay and detritus of old industrial Denver. The RiNo brochure says: “While retaining its industrial roots, the River North neighborhood is now fertile ground for arts and artists;” quite naturally, then, their slogan is “Where Art is Made.” The RiNo name lends to obvious branding – a blue rhinoceros lets visitors know the locations of artists’ studios, events venues, and gathering places. Its goals include: a) Build a stronger collective creative community; b) Accessibility – create a desirable area where people want to visit and engage; c) Awareness, recognition, promotion and education about the district; d) Ensure economic vitality and vibrancy and promote job creation; and e) Establish a permanent artistic element that fosters the growth of the district and ensures that art remains as its core.” RiNo is on Brighton Boulevard, designated by Mayor Hancock as a “corridor of opportunity.” Near downtown, it’s the taxi and driving route for visitors entering downtown from Denver International Airport on I-70; the potential to create a thrilling entrance experience is enormous. Here, an abandoned building is becoming a center/incubator for entrepreneurial new businesses, enabling 400 new jobs. JunoWorks is a leading provider of custom metal fabrication, and the industrial setting and scale enables the fabrication of huge sculptures commissioned by cities coast-to-coast that simply could not be built in other parts of Denver. There’s an abandoned depot that will soon become an art center, a brewery, even a kombucha brewery. Members include 142 creative businesses. The RiNo Art District regularly partners with the RiNo Neighborhood Association on overall neighborhood revitalization. Currently they are a 501c6 organization, with a 501c3 and a Business Improvement District in the work. A special membership program, “RiNo Guardians,” enables donors to support foundational work of RiNo with commitments of $3,000 for each of three years. Identified by developers as the next “hot” neighborhood in the city, RiNo is at the table, working with the City and developers on issues of safety, housing, transportation, and more.

All photos used in this document are courtesy of either Colorado Creative Industries or the Creative Districts.

Margaret Hunt is the Executive Director of Colorado Creative Industries; Maryo Gard Ewell is a Creative Districts Consultant for Colorado Creative Industries.

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In Ridgway – population 900 – the owner of Blue Corn Candles reports that since Creative District designation, it has doubled its workforce, from 5 to 11 people.

The 12 Creative Districts receiving Boettcher Creative District Leadership Awards raised $1,273,933 in 2013, an increase of 1.5 times more funds raised in the previous year.

In 2012, the Creative Vitality Index™ reported 9,689 creative occupations in the 14 Creative Districts in the original program, with $134.4 million in creative industry revenue, 3,561 new jobs created due to creative industry activities, 117 nonprofit arts organizations who generated $36.8 million in revenue. 2012 was the baseline year.

Denver’s Art District on Santa Fe identifies 273 creative businesses, 3,195 participating artists and 10,816 youth participating in Creative District activities. They boast 7,356 “likes” to their Facebook page – an increase of nearly 1,500 between August 1 and November 1, 2014.

RiNo counted 100,000 visitors to arts-specific events in 2013. The City of Denver has underwritten the cost of an Artspace feasibility study in the district.

In Trinidad, the occupied rate of commercial buildings in the Creative District has risen from 45% to 62% in three years.

Lakewood’s 40West Creative District received a $100,000 EPA grant to develop the Urban Design & Mobility Concepts plan, and a $50,000 Global Green USA grant to develop a sustainable neighborhoods plan. The city provided $30,000 to fund a feasibility study of artist live/work space.

The Pueblo Cultural Corridor documents an increase of 32 new creative businesses and 103 new jobs in these businesses alone during 2013-2014.

The North Fork Creative Coalition successfully raised $25,000 in a kickstarter campaign to enable the Paradise Theater in Paonia (population 1,500) to convert to digital equipment and keep its doors open.

Ridgway – population 900 – counted 7,300 visitors at five Creative District-sponsored events and identifies 92 creative businesses with $1.45 million in revenue in 2013.

Trinidad identified a 37% increase in building permits and a 21% increase in business licenses since it has been certified as a Creative District.

APPENDIX III: SUMMARY TABLE

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# NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Districts</th>
<th>Creative Occupations</th>
<th>Creative Industry Revenue</th>
<th>Creative Industry Exports</th>
<th>Nonprofit Arts Organizations</th>
<th>Nonprofit Arts Revenues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Springs Downtown</td>
<td>1236</td>
<td>$9,960,000</td>
<td>$8,850,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$8,710,000</td>
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<td>Denver's Art District on Santa Fe</td>
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<td>North Fork Valley Creative District</td>
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<td>Pueblo Creative District</td>
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<td>Ridgway Creative District</td>
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<td>Trinidad Creative District</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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