



Walton Arts Center

Walmart  
**amp**

# Community Impact Report

## 2024







Walton Arts Center



# Community Impact Report 2024

Connecting with and engaging the community through inspiring arts experiences has been our focus from the very start. This is the mission of our organization, and it's demonstrated daily through our education programs, community outreach, work with non-profits and arts affiliates, in the artists and shows we present, and through the work and daily commitment of our staff, volunteers and crew at both of our venues.

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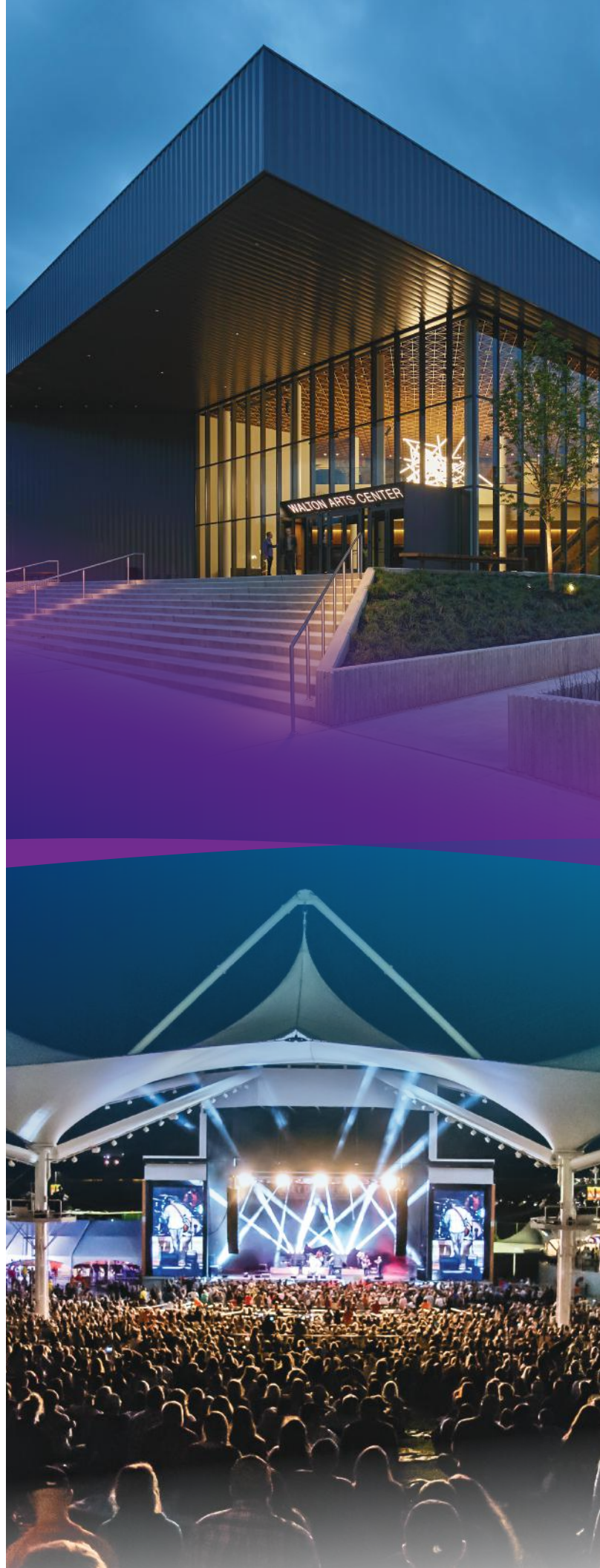
**More than 514,000 people  
attended a public performance,  
special event or school show at  
our venues during the  
2024 season**

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We do this because we believe in the transformative power of the arts to not only entertain but also to inspire, connect, educate, bridge differences, increase understanding and build better communities.

While anyone can talk about their commitments in general terms, we strive to go deeper. This community impact report tracks, measures and shares stories about what we are doing and how it tangibly impacts the communities that we serve. The report covers July 2023 through October 2024.

To our sponsors, grantors and *Friends*, thank you for supporting the work that we do. Your support has made all that is detailed in this report possible.



# Thinking Outside the Box



Photo credit: Micahela Reynolds

Walton Arts Center and the Walmart AMP operate under a unique business model—not just for Arkansas, but for the entire live entertainment industry. We lovingly call it “rock pays for Bach.” Here’s why.

Walton Arts Center is a nonprofit performing arts center. When you purchase a ticket to see a show, the price typically only covers the cost to present that show and pay the artists.

But what about daily operational costs for the organization, funds to develop and staff new programs, or budget for community outreach and accessibility programs? Ticket sales alone are not enough to support the mission-critical work we do. We have always relied on support from our *Friends of Walton Arts Center*, corporate sponsors and foundations to help fund our programs and initiatives.

When Walton Arts Center acquired the Arkansas Music Pavilion in 2011, leadership created the new business model. Operating surpluses from the Walmart AMP are combined with support from individuals and corporations, foundations and fundraising events like AMP Up the Arts and Masquerade Ball to subsidize Walton Arts Center programming and expand arts education and access opportunities for our community.

**“This is a unique blending of our two venues for the benefit of our community. It allows us to bring artistically important, accessible programming and create needed initiatives that positively impact students, teachers, local artists and other nonprofits serving our region and our state.”**

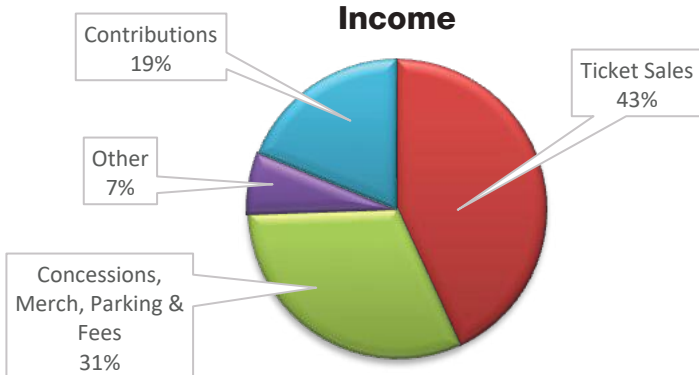
Peter B. Lane, CEO of Walton Arts Center

Because of this business model, Walton Arts Center can operate programs that are needed and beneficial to the community. It allows the organization to present works that are artistically valuable but not commercially successful.

When we talk about the commercial success of the Walmart AMP in a season, keep in mind that the operating surplus funds new programs and subsidizes tickets to make the arts more accessible to all and bring world-class performances to our region.

## 2024 Budget

### Income



### Expenses



Ticket sales represent only 43% of our revenues.

While 70% of our budget (artist fees and production expenses) go towards bringing the greatest artists to NWA.



# Mission Matters

These are just some of the **mission-critical programs** that have continued or expanded largely due to our unique business model and strong community support.



## Teacher Training & Classroom Support

- + Walton Arts Center's arts education initiatives served more than **26,000 students and teachers**.
- + In-School Performances and workshops—Bringing touring artists into schools to work with students. **Nine workshops** and **two in-school performances** reached **1,881 students** in FY24.
- + SmART Residency for teachers—This year-long professional development residency trains teachers in arts integration. In FY24, **17 teachers** participated in this program. Those teachers impacted **525 students** during the school year. **180 additional teachers** at the SmART Residency schools also participated in a one-time, all-school training.
- + Stage to Studio—Free opportunity for students to attend a performance, have lunch and create art responding to the themes of the show. In FY24, **346 students** participated in this program.
- + AWE Institute for teachers—Training prepares

**“After we completed the Concentration Challenge, a student came to me after class and expressed how happy they were to ‘finally have someone to teach me concentration skills instead of repeatedly telling me to try harder and to lock in.’”**

Tim Washington, Ramsey Middle School, Fort Smith

teachers to use the arts in their curriculum in order to make it more engaging and effective. In FY24, **25 teachers** were trained.

- + Artlook—Interactive, data-mapping platform that connects parents to arts programming that fits the needs of their children in their local school or after-school programs or summer programs offered by arts partners.
- + Arts advocacy—Walton Arts Center regularly visits with state and national legislators to share information about the benefits of arts integration for students and to advocate for their support.

## Accessibility Programs

- + Take a Seat—Free tickets for those served by partner nonprofit organizations in our region. In FY24, **377 tickets** were provided to **25 nonprofits**.
- + Bus subsidy—**\$25,000** helps schools offset the cost of transportation to attend a classroom series show.
- + 10x10 Arts Series—10-show series with all tickets priced at \$10.
- + Artosphere—Annual Arts + Nature festival with dozens of free and low-cost performances throughout the region that make the performing arts easy to access for all. In FY24, **33 events** (21 of those were free) reached **35,756 people**.

## Community Outreach

- + Classes and workshops—Free demonstrations or events with visiting artists for the community. **663 community members** participated in an outreach activity this season.
- + Walton Arts Center partnered with NWA nonprofit Teen Action & Support Center for a hygiene product donation drive during *Jagged Little Pill*. The drive collected **255 items** for their programs to help NWA teens.

## Support To Artmakers

- + Arkansas History Through the Arts – Stage productions that spark students' interest in Arkansas history. This season Walton Arts Center presented *Bear State of Mind* with artistic affiliate Trike Theatre. Ten performances reached **1,069 students** and **192 adults**.
- + VoiceJam – A cappella festival created by Walton Arts Center to further appreciation for and participation in the art form. These

programs impacted **222 students** this year through outreach. Also, **eight groups** competed, **17 local performers** in WACappella and **127 people** attended the free a cappella workshops.

- + Walton Arts Center provides support or services to **two resident companies**, Community Creative Center and the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas, and presents performances by **several artistic affiliates** including the Northwest Arkansas Jazz Society and Trike Theater.



# More Than Just a Concert

The Walmart AMP recently concluded one of its most successful seasons to date with **49 shows** — the largest Cox Concert Series to date — and an unprecedented **385,834 tickets** sold. Highlights of the season included a new attendance record set by Chappell Roan. Benson Boone had the highest ticket sales. Post Malone had the highest-grossing show. Brooks & Dunn generated the most revenue from food and beverage sales.

The Walmart AMP is also being noticed by others in the industry. Pollstar's Year End ranking of Top 100 Amphitheaters worldwide has the Walmart AMP at No. 34 based on number of tickets sold and No. 38 based on gross ticket revenue.

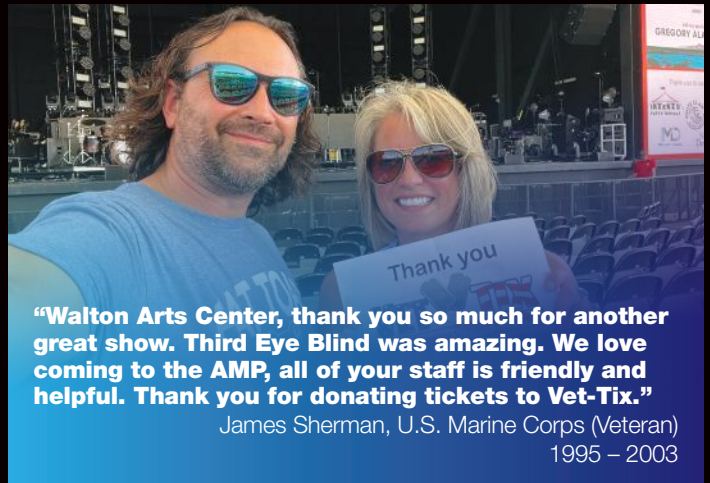
While these are important things to celebrate, we don't want to forget what the Walmart AMP means to our community. Yes, we bring top touring acts to our region, but what we do is about more than just a concert.

## Taking Care of Concertgoers

Our team works hard to create an atmosphere where fans, friends and the community can come together and celebrate, whether it's a fan's first-ever concert or their 101st time to see a favorite band. From providing sensory bags and earplugs to lanyards celebrating a birthday, we help fans create memories worth sharing.



At a show this season a concertgoer with three young children approached one of our staff and explained that their son was having trouble coping with all of the stimulation. "The staff member took them to Choctaw Plaza and got them earplugs, and it completely changed the experience for them. Hugs from everyone!" said Sheri Barnett, front of house and experience manager. "The staff member kept checking on them, and they were so thankful that we were able to help them stay and enjoy the show."



Through our continued partnership with VetTix, we provided tickets for **1,905 veterans, active military and their families** to have a night out together at **14 different concerts** throughout the season. We worked with local first responder agencies and provided **545 free tickets** to those who worked tirelessly during the Rogers tornado response and recovery.

## Taking Care of Artists

We also want the artists who visit to feel welcome, safe and cared for while they are here. Our team goes to great lengths to make sure they have some of their favorite things when they arrive like Uncrustables, ginger shots and even puppies. Many of these artists are traveling for months at a time and are missing the comforts of home, including their pets. For several shows, we partnered with **Best Friends Animal Society NWA** to bring adoptable dogs backstage.



“We take a look at who we have in our program that would do well with many different types of people. We usually like to bring two to three young adult dogs for a two-hour period,” said Caitria Mick, local events specialist with Best Friends. “Opportunities like this are great for Best Friends and our dogs because it’s more exposure for the animals and our cause to end the killing of pets in shelters. We love to get out in the community and educate people while socializing our animals in a safe manner.”

Many times, artists will donate to Best Friends as a thank you for bringing the animals backstage and to support the great work that they do. Chappell Roan, Niall Horan, Dierks Bentley and Brooks & Dunn all had some quality dog time before their shows. All of the dogs who got backstage passes during the AMP season have now found their forever homes.

## Community Outreach

The Walmart AMP is more than just a concert venue, it is also a community resource. This season, we hosted graduation for **Northwest Arkansas Community College**, giving the new graduates an opportunity to walk across the AMP stage and celebrate their scholastic achievement.



We’ve also worked with **NWA Women & Girls in Technology** and **School of Rock** to inspire the next generation with backstage tours and the opportunity to learn more about job opportunities in the live music industry and the role that technology plays in our work.

Blankets or unclaimed clothes left after Walmart AMP shows were collected, laundered by our facilities team and given to area nonprofits who can use them. More than **300 blankets** were donated to **Benton County Animal Control, Washington County/Johnson City Animal Shelter, Benton Animal Control** and **Humane Society of Delaware County** in Oklahoma. Clothing items were cleaned and donated to the **NWA Women’s Shelter**, and discarded pepper sprays were sanitized and donated to a self-defense class in Benton County.

“The opportunity to explore the behind-the-scenes aspects of the music business was invaluable for our students. Witnessing firsthand the dedication and expertise that go into creating such a vibrant atmosphere left a lasting impression on each of them. Your team’s knowledge and passion were palpable throughout the tour, making it both educational and inspiring.

We genuinely appreciate the effort and time you invested in making this tour a reality. It’s clear that the Walmart AMP is committed not only to excellence in music but also to nurturing young minds and fostering a love for the arts. Your generosity in sharing your expertise will undoubtedly impact our students’ futures in profound ways.”

Bea Escobar, School of Rock



# Expanding the Creative Ecosystem

What started in 2022 as a performance at Walton Arts Center by CONTRA-TIEMPO, a Los Angeles-based activist dance group, has resulted in new teaching artists and dance-focused education opportunities for Northwest Arkansas students and teachers.

CONTRA-TIEMPO invited several local dancers from NWA Movement Hub to rehearse and perform *joyUS justUS* with the company at Walton Arts Center. Those dancers were then invited to attend a 10-day summer workshop in California focused on learning Latino, African and Caribbean ancestral dance and the methodology of using art as a social action.







Featured on Kennedy Center's Social



With support from the Walmart Foundation, Walton Arts Center funded six dancers attending the workshop. Four were local emerging dance professionals working for dance organizations that serve our community. In exchange, the artists agreed to write, choreograph and perform an interactive show to be presented on Walton Arts Center's Classroom Series.

The dancers became Rooted Movement Collective and created *Reclaiming Our Roots*, which examines how Black Americans have used dance to challenge, overcome and change their circumstances. The interactive performance encourages audiences to get up and move with the performers as they learn the steps for West African traditional dance, Juba, jazz, disco, hip-hop and more.



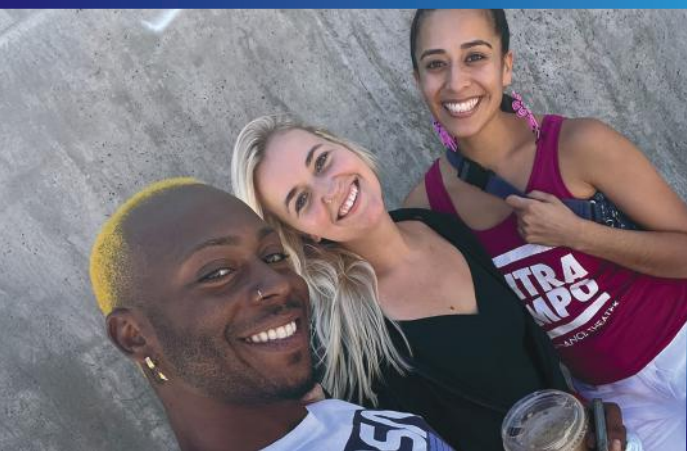
In February 2023, during Black History Month, *Reclaiming Our Roots* was taken out to local schools and performed **13 times** for **625 students** as part of Walton Arts Center's Classroom Series. The students and teachers loved the show.

"My students returned to see the dance for the second performance, even when they were supposed to be in other classes," said Alex Lalonde, teacher at Har-Ber High School.



Walton Arts Center and dancers from Rooted Movement Collective attended Kennedy Center's Partners in Education Annual Meeting in February 2024 and led an education workshop called "Dancing Through Black American History," based on *Reclaiming Our Roots*.

The show now belongs to the dancers who created it, led by CeCe Marie, and they continue to perform it, including a week-long engagement in **Texarkana** that reached **600 kids**. Marie has become a teaching artist for dance and is working on a new project with Walton Arts Center focused on hip-hop for FY25. She's also the recipient of an Artist 360 grant through the Mid-America Arts Alliance to support her work as an artist.



This demonstrates the long-term impact that touring arts can have on Northwest Arkansas students and on the arts ecosystem in our region.



# Mission Accomplished

**Maestro Corrado Rovaris and members of the Artosphere Festival Orchestra celebrate their finale season.**

After **12 seasons** and **more than 35 performances**, the Artosphere Festival Orchestra (AFO) took its final bow in May 2024, having accomplished its mission.

Walton Arts Center established the Artosphere Festival Orchestra in 2010 when professional symphony performances were not as readily available in our region. The goal was to make live symphony orchestra performances easily accessible for the whole community and to foster a love for the performance medium.

Maestro Corrado Rovaris joined as music director to lead this vision. A world-renowned, critically acclaimed conductor in high demand in Europe, Asia and the Americas, Rovaris prioritized AFO from the start.

Since it was formed, the Artosphere Festival Orchestra has performed for over **35,000 patrons** across **33 orchestra concerts**, **31 chamber music concerts** – including performances on our 10x10 Arts Series – and many free public events each season, including AFO Off the Grid, Trail Mix and pop-up concerts around Northwest Arkansas.

AFO performances over the years have featured some of the world's top chamber musicians, including members of Dover Quartet, Seraph

Brass, The Aeolus Quartet, Aizuri Quartet, arx duo and more. Artosphere Festival Orchestra performances have been featured on American Public Media's *Performance Today* with **21 performances aired 62 times** on a radio show that is heard by 16.7 million weekly listeners on over 1,000 local public radio stations across the United States.



Meanwhile, Artosphere Festival Orchestra concert videos have been viewed on YouTube over **440,000 times** and AFO's *Mozart in the Museum* at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art has been broadcast live on KUAF 91.3FM NPR for eight seasons.

While the Artosphere Festival Orchestra has ended, Walton Arts Center's Artosphere Arts + Nature Festival will continue offering programming and free and low-cost opportunities to experience art in nature around the region in May.





# Supporting Art Makers

Walton Arts Center played a role in the production of *NORTH*, a new theatrical piece for young audiences by Ashli St. Amant. The show was presented on its first national tour as part of the Kids and Family Series and for the Classroom Series.

The story explores Black American life during the antebellum period and aims to bring out the full range of experiences of freedom seekers. While acknowledging the realities of slavery, the narrative and original musical compositions explore themes of optimism, bravery, playfulness, wonder, suspense and mystery.

“This was an important piece of theater that we felt needed to exist, and we were excited to be able to support its development and to be a stop on its first national tour,” said Sallie Zazal, director of learning and engagement. “This exponentially expands our reach, giving us the ability to positively impact students, teachers and families across the country through this work.”

Walton Arts Center’s role in this production positioned the organization on an international stage among the list of presenters passionate about theater for young audiences and willing to

financially support it. Walton Arts Center is now part of the newly formed TYA Tour Development Collective, a group of agents and presenters who have come together to collectively support the development of new work for young audiences.



## Spotlighting Local Artists

For the third year Walton Arts Center presented *Our Art, Our Region, Our Time*, a visual arts exhibition showcasing **92 pieces** by **76 Arkansas artists**.



## Walton Arts Center

### By the **Numbers** FY24

(July 2023-June 2024)

**117,855** Tickets sold

**210** Performances and events

**4,755** Broadway subscriber seats

**222** Volunteers donating  
**20,859** hours

**503,689**  
**Total**  
Tickets

## Walmart AMP

### By the **Numbers** FY25

(April 2024-March 2025)

**385,834** Tickets sold

**60** Shows and events (the largest season to date)

**15** Shows with more than 10,000 tickets sold

**\$49.87** Average ticket price

**270**  
**Total**  
Shows & Events

## Community Impact

**884** Annual employees

**\$52 million** Annual operating budget

**19%** Budget funded by donations

**3,243** Tickets donated to 37 agencies or nonprofits serving NWA residents

**26,026** Students and teachers served by arts education programming

**\$25,000** Bus subsidy paid to schools to offset school transport costs

**252** Teachers received arts integration training

**663** People experienced free workshops or classes

**133,679** Pounds of materials were kept out of a landfill by recycling



## State and Local Economic Impact

**\$21,783** Fayetteville sales and liquor tax revenue

**\$724,714** Rogers sales and liquor tax revenue

**\$13,615** Washington County sale tax revenue

**\$314,361** Benton County sales tax revenue

**\$2.38 million** Arkansas sales and liquor tax revenue

## Total Economic Impact\*

**\$68.2 million** in event-related spending

**Over 1,000** Jobs supported



\*Based on Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Calculator for Arkansas