

# Montréal's Creative Economy: Defining Its Industries and Impact

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## Montréal's Creative Economy: Definition and Scope

The **creative economy** comprises industries that produce cultural, artistic and knowledge-based products – from art, design and entertainment to media and tech. These “creative work” activities, defined as the production of “symbolic, artistic and innovative products,” are now recognized as a major contributor to economic growth [wekh.ca](http://wekh.ca). UNESCO notes that creative industries are essential for inclusive growth and innovation, and Canada’s cultural and creative sectors are a large and growing source of GDP and jobs [wekh.ca](http://wekh.ca). In Québec, Montréal is the epicenter: nearly half of the province’s professional artists live on the island [artsmontreal.org](http://artsmontreal.org). In 2020 Montréal had about

20,900 “professional artists” and 91,000 people in arts/culture occupations – roughly 8% of all jobs on the island [artsmontreal.org](https://artsmontreal.org). (By contrast, Québec as a whole had only 48,000 artists and arts workers.) Montréal is also a **UNESCO Creative City** (design), reflecting its world-class design, architecture and cultural scene. Its creative cluster includes flagship institutions (Museums, Quartier des Spectacles, Mile End arts scene) and many festivals (Jazz Fest, Just for Laughs, etc.), underscoring the city’s role as a cultural hub.

## Key Sectors Where Freelancers Thrive

Montréal’s creative economy spans many industries. [Freelancers](#) and gig workers are especially common in fields where project-based and contract work prevail. Major sectors include:

- Visual Arts & Design (Graphic, Industrial, Fashion, Architecture):** Montréal is home to tens of thousands of designers, architects and visual artists. UNESCO even dubbed Montréal a “City of Design.” [Freelance](#) illustrators, graphic and web designers, architects and fashion designers abound. For example, design agencies and independent studios in Montreal service clients locally and abroad. (A 2018 source notes over 25,000 designers contribute roughly one-third of Montréal’s cultural economic output.) The city’s many design schools and museums (e.g. Artex) support this ecosystem.
- Film, TV and Video Production:** Québec offers generous tax credits (e.g. up to 25–37.5% of labour costs in Québec [bctq.ca](https://bctq.ca)) that have made Montréal a global production centre. Dozens of production companies and studios (including the NFB and Télé-Québec) operate here, and freelancers work as directors, cinematographers, editors, animators and crew. In 2023 the Canadian film/TV industry generated ~\$10.4 B in revenues [www150.statcan.gc.ca](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca) (up 15% since 2019), driven in large part by Québec’s incentives and Montréal’s skilled workforce. Montréal also hosts major film festivals (Fantasia, RIDM, Jutra Awards), further engaging freelance crews and artists.
- Video Games & Interactive Media:** Montréal is a **world-leading video game hub**. Over 200 studios (from indies to giants like Ubisoft, Eidos and Warner Games) employ about 15,000 game developers, artists and designers [montrealinternational.com](https://montrealinternational.com) and a 37.5% refundable tax credit on game development labour [montrealinternational.com](https://montrealinternational.com) help sustain this sector.

- **Music and Performing Arts:** Montréal has a vibrant music scene – home to international festivals (Jazz Fest, Osheaga, Nuits d'Afrique) and over 150 live venues. Freelance musicians, sound engineers, producers and event technicians are plentiful. The live music sector in Canada contributed ~\$10.9B to GDP in 2023 (and in Montréal the nightlife industry alone generated \$2.26B and 33,559 jobs in 2019 [mtl2424.ca](https://mtl2424.ca)). Montréal also has many recording studios and a strong indie label community (supported by SODEC grants and tax credits). In theatre and dance, Montreal's touring shows and Cirque du Soleil spawn freelance choreographers and set designers. Montreal's English-language music industry (via ADISQ and local co-ops) and its minority-language arts organizations (ELAN, Mondial Montréal) also support creators.
- **Digital Media & Publishing:** Digital content creation – from advertising graphics to web series and e-learning – is a big freelancing niche. Agencies and freelancers produce digital campaigns, mobile apps, animation (Mindscape, 3D studios) and more. Québec offers credits for multimedia and book publishing, and Montréal's publishing houses (e.g. Éditions XYZ, Drawn & Quarterly, magazine studios) hire freelance writers, translators and illustrators. There are also many journalism and media freelancers, as Montréal remains a major French- and English-language publishing centre in Canada.
- **Advertising, Marketing & Communications:** Large ad agencies (e.g. Sid Lee, LG2, Cossette) and many smaller shops are based in Montréal, but they contract out much work. Freelance graphic designers, copywriters, marketing consultants and photographers serve local businesses and international brands. This sector's creative output (TV commercials, digital ads) is a significant part of Montréal's economy, often overlapping with film and digital media production.
- **Technology / IT:** While not traditionally "creative," [Montréal's tech sector](#) strongly intersects with creative industries. AI labs (MILA), animation/CGI firms, and a booming startup scene (security tech, fintech, etc.) involve many creative-skilled freelancers (software developers, UX designers, data visualizers). Even in general IT, many professionals freelance or contract, offering app development and digital services to clients in Canada and abroad. Montréal is one of Canada's largest tech ecosystems, with [remote work](#) enabling freelancers to work for global companies while living in the city.

## Economic Impact and Contribution

Montréal's creative sectors have a **substantial economic footprint**. Québec's broader information and cultural industries (publishing, film, broadcasting, telecom and data) employ about 96,400 people (2.2% of provincial employment) and generated \$13.2B in GDP in 2023 [jobbank.gc.ca](http://jobbank.gc.ca). Montréal – with half the province's population – accounts for a major share of this activity. In the city, the arts, culture and heritage sector employs roughly 8% of workers (~91,000 people) [artsmontreal.org](http://artsmontreal.org) – nearly twice the national proportion. For example, the **nightlife and live entertainment** sub-sector alone contributes heavily: a 2019 study found Montréal's sociocultural nightlife generated \$2.26B in direct spending and supported 33,559 jobs (about \$994M in payroll) [mtl2424.ca](http://mtl2424.ca). In **video games**, Greater Montréal's 200 studios produced blockbuster titles and ecosystems supporting 15,000 workers [montrealinternational.com](http://montrealinternational.com). Meanwhile, **film and TV** tax credits have helped sustain a local industry that feeds into Canada's \$10.4B film/TV output [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca).

Despite this scale, creative workers in Montréal earn far less than average. In 2020 the **median employment income** for Montréal artists was only \$17,400 – barely half the \$35,600 median for all workers on the island [artsmontreal.org](http://artsmontreal.org). (CityNews likewise reports an “average” artist income of about \$17K in Montréal [montreal.citynews.ca](http://montreal.citynews.ca).) This underscores the prevalence of project-based work and modest freelance pay rates. Nationally, 72% of self-employed Canadians have no paid staff [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca), reflecting that many creative freelancers operate solo. Moreover, surveys (e.g. *Canadian Artists and Content Creators Economic Survey*) show creative workers juggling multiple gigs and often lacking steady income. Globally, cities researchers note the fragility of “artists and freelancers – the bedrock of the cultural ecosystem” exposed by the pandemic [worldcitiescultureforum.com](http://worldcitiescultureforum.com), a reality mirrored in Montréal's creative workforce.

## Institutions, Incubators and Funding Bodies

Montréal's creative freelancers benefit from a dense support infrastructure:

- **Government Agencies and Grants:** The Québec government's **SODEC** (Société de développement des entreprises culturelles) administers key grants and tax credits for film, TV, music, book publishing and multimedia production. For example, Québec's refundable tax credit for film/TV covers 25% of Québec labour costs (plus bonuses) [bctq.ca](http://bctq.ca), and SODEC also handles credits for music and sound recording. At the federal level, **Telefilm Canada** and the **Canada Media Fund (CMF)** fund Canadian content production, and **Canada Council for the**

**Arts** awards project grants to individual artists across disciplines. Montréal's **Conseil des arts de Montréal** (CAM) provides grants, studio space (Orora platform) and advocacy for local artists. During COVID, Québec budgets pledged hundreds of millions in recovery aid: e.g. \$136.6M over three years to CALQ and SODEC to help cultural industries rebound [quebec-elan.org](http://quebec-elan.org).

- **Academic Institutions:** Universities and colleges are talent and research hubs. Concordia University (Fine Arts, Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, District3 tech incubator) and UdeM (École d'arts visuels et médiatiques, design labs) churn out creatives and entrepreneurs. McGill and UQAM likewise host media/film programs. Specialized schools (École de Technologie Supérieure, Polytechnique) partner on game and multimedia projects. These institutions often incubate startups or joint projects (e.g. Concordia's *App Studio*, UdeM's *MOOC lab*).
- **Incubators and Coworking Spaces:** Montréal offers many spaces where freelancers collaborate. **Notman House** and **Jalon MTL** foster tech and digital startups (often with creative applications). District3 Innovation (Concordia) and the **École de technologie supérieure Entrepreneurship Center** coach creative entrepreneurs. Media-specific incubators include **Cinéma Paradiso** (animation/film), **MUTEKlab** (interactive arts), and **Propulsion Montréal** (digital media start-ups). The city's cultural district, *Quartier des Spectacles*, provides stages and networking events for freelancers in performance, audiovisual and visual arts.
- **Industry Associations:** Various NGOs and councils support freelancers. For example, **ELAN Québec** (English-language Arts Network) offers business tools and advocacy; **ADISQ** and **Fédération culturelle canadienne-française** support music and francophone media; **ACTRA**, **UDA** and **IATSE** represent performers and crew on set (often negotiating contracts for freelancers). **CreativeMornings Montréal**, **Ladies of Design (Mod)** and meetups like *UNFractured* connect freelancers.

## Policy and Regulatory Environment

Freelancers in Montréal navigate Québec's and Canada's policy landscape, which includes generous creative incentives but also challenges:

- **Tax Incentives and Grants:** Québec offers a suite of refundable tax credits for cultural production (e.g. film/TV, multimedia, sound recordings, book publishing). These credits – administered via SODEC and Revenu Québec – can cover 20–37.5% of eligible labour costs [bctq.cabctq.ca](http://bctq.cabctq.ca). At the federal level, Canadian content tax credits (through Telefilm and CMF) add roughly 15–20% more on labour, and Scientific Research & Experimental Development

(SR&ED) credits sometimes apply to interactive media R&D. Moreover, Montréal's city grants (through the Cultural Development Policy) support local festivals and community arts. Small business tax rates and deductions (e.g. for home offices) also affect freelancers.

- **Labor Laws and Social Protections:** As independent contractors, freelancers are generally not covered by Québec's labour standards (minimum wage, vacation pay, etc.). They must set up businesses (often as sole proprietorships or incorporated companies), remit their own income taxes and contribute to the Québec Pension Plan. Québec has recently allowed self-employed workers to opt into public employment insurance (for parental/maternity benefits), but otherwise freelancers lack employer-paid benefits. Health care is covered provincially for all, but freelancers must manage business-liability insurance and, in some cases, join industry pension plans voluntarily. Collective agreements in film and performing arts can cover freelancers on union projects, but many work outside such agreements.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Creative freelancers also contend with local regulations. For instance, Montréal nightlife producers cite "complex rules governing the consumption of alcohol and the use of public spaces" as a barrier to events [mtl2424.ca](http://mtl2424.ca). Zoning laws, noise bylaws, and cultural content regulations (such as Québec's Charter of the French Language) can affect freelancers in media and the arts. On the upside, the government's *Culture Policy* aims to foster a "creative, inclusive and responsible" cultural sector [quebec-elan.org](http://quebec-elan.org), and recent budgets have significantly expanded funding via CALQ and SODEC [quebec-elan.org](http://quebec-elan.org).

## Freelancer Demographics and Income

Data on freelance demographics in Montréal is limited, but studies highlight key points: about 72% of self-employed Canadians have no paid employees [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca), implying most are solo entrepreneurs. The Conseil des arts de Montréal reports that Montréal's artists earned very low incomes in 2020 – a median employment income of just \$17,400 [artsmontreal.org](http://artsmontreal.org). This gap reflects part-time work, precarious gigs and competition. Freelancers in digital and tech fields may earn more (e.g. Montreal's tech wages are rising with demand), but even there pay can vary. A 10-year salary study found that creative-industry positions in culture often see stagnant wages, with many workers in entry-level contract roles [workinculture.ca](http://workinculture.ca). Representation is uneven: labour-force surveys suggest self-employed creators are diverse in age and background, but often younger and immigrant workers are well-represented among gig workers. (For example, Black and newcomer Canadians are statistically over-represented in digital gig roles [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca).)

## Case Examples of Montréal Creativity

Montréal has produced many **notable creative projects and companies**, illustrating freelance-driven success. Global videogames (like Ubisoft's *Far Cry* series) are developed here [montrealinternational.com](http://montrealinternational.com). Moment Factory, a local multimedia studio founded by a small team of designers, now creates international shows (e.g. Grand Central Station holiday displays). Independent filmmakers from Montréal (e.g. *Incendies* directors) often start in the local scene. In music, indie bands like Half Moon Run or Socalled leveraged the city's creative networks to tour globally. Tech startups like Lightspeed and Element AI began as small teams and have since grown large, often supported by Montréal's incubators. These examples show how individual freelancers and small agencies in Montréal can build internationally-renowned creative businesses, often with help from local grants, incubators, and talent networks [montrealinternational.commtl2424.ca](http://montrealinternational.commtl2424.ca).

## Challenges and Emerging Trends

Montreal's freelancers face familiar challenges: **financial instability, affordable housing, and navigating bureaucracy**. High living costs (Montréal rents have surged in recent years) make it hard for artists and media workers to stay local. The precarious nature of gig work — without steady contracts or benefits — leads many freelancers to hold multiple jobs or alternate careers. Advocacy groups (like the *Grande mobilisation des artistes du Québec*) are pressing for better social supports and funding, noting that static budgets have left many creatives "no longer able to make ends meet" [montreal.citynews.ca](http://montreal.citynews.ca). On taxation, freelancers must remain vigilant about income declarations and often lack the tax advantages of incorporated firms (though some file as small businesses to deduct expenses).

Looking forward, digital and remote work are reshaping the Montréal freelance scene. The rise of online platforms (Upwork, Fiverr, 99Designs) means Montréal creatives increasingly compete and collaborate globally. Approximately 20% of Canadians now work from home [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca), and many Montrealers in IT or media leverage telework to serve international clients. The COVID-19 shift to remote production has also expanded opportunities for animated filmmaking and virtual events in Montréal. Additionally, new creative niches are emerging: Montréal is a hub for AI and VR, with artists experimenting in immersive storytelling. Co-working and co-living trends (artists' collectives, maker spaces) are helping offset housing pressures. In policy, there is growing discussion of "portable benefits" or unionizing options for gig workers, which could affect Montréal freelancers.

In summary, Montréal's creative economy is large and diverse, with freelancers playing a critical role across design, media, arts and tech. The sector contributes billions to the local economy and tens of thousands of jobs [mtl2424.camontrealinternational.com](http://mtl2424.camontrealinternational.com). It is supported by robust institutions and generous tax incentives [bctq.caquebec-elan.org](http://bctq.caquebec-elan.org), yet its workers often struggle with low incomes and instability [artsmontreal.orgmontreal.citynews.ca](http://artsmontreal.orgmontreal.citynews.ca). As digital platforms and hybrid work reshape the landscape, Montréal's creative freelancers remain central to the city's cultural vibrancy and economic innovation – even as they push for policies that address their unique challenges.

**Sources:** Government and industry reports, academic studies, and news analyses (Statistics Canada, UNESCO, SODEC/Telefilm, Montréal International, Conseil des arts de Montréal, city and sector analyses) [wekh.caartsmontreal.org](http://wekh.caartsmontreal.org) [bctq.camontrealinternational.com](http://bctq.camontrealinternational.com) [mtl2424.ca](http://mtl2424.ca) [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca). (All citations as per embedded sources.)

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Tags: creative economy, cultural industries, montreal, economic development, urban economics, arts sector, design, quebec, knowledge economy

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## About 2727 Coworking

2727 Coworking is a vibrant and thoughtfully designed workspace ideally situated along the picturesque Lachine Canal in Montreal's trendy Griffintown neighborhood. Just steps away from the renowned Atwater Market, members can enjoy scenic canal views and relaxing green-space walks during their breaks.

Accessibility is excellent, boasting an impressive 88 Walk Score, 83 Transit Score, and a perfect 96 Bike Score, making it a "Biker's Paradise". The location is further enhanced by being just 100 meters from the Charlevoix metro station, ensuring a quick, convenient, and weather-proof commute for members and their clients.

The workspace is designed with flexibility and productivity in mind, offering 24/7 secure access—perfect for global teams and night owls. Connectivity is top-tier, with gigabit fibre internet providing fast, low-latency connections ideal for developers, streamers, and virtual meetings. Members can choose from a versatile workspace menu tailored to various budgets, ranging from hot-desks at \$300 to dedicated desks at \$450 and private offices accommodating 1–10 people priced from \$600 to \$3,000+. Day passes are competitively priced at \$40.

2727 Coworking goes beyond standard offerings by including access to a fully-equipped, 9-seat conference room at no additional charge. Privacy needs are met with dedicated phone booths, while ergonomically designed offices featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, natural wood accents, and abundant greenery foster wellness and productivity.

Amenities abound, including a fully-stocked kitchen with unlimited specialty coffee, tea, and filtered water. Cyclists, runners, and fitness enthusiasts benefit from on-site showers and bike racks, encouraging an eco-conscious commute and active lifestyle. The pet-friendly policy warmly welcomes furry companions, adding to the inclusive and vibrant community atmosphere.

Members enjoy additional perks like outdoor terraces and easy access to canal parks, ideal for mindfulness breaks or casual meetings. Dedicated lockers, mailbox services, comprehensive printing and scanning facilities, and a variety of office supplies and AV gear ensure convenience and efficiency. Safety and security are prioritized through barrier-free access, CCTV surveillance, alarm systems, regular disinfection protocols, and after-hours security.

The workspace boasts exceptional customer satisfaction, reflected in its stellar ratings—5.0/5 on Coworker, 4.9/5 on Google, and 4.7/5 on LiquidSpace—alongside glowing testimonials praising its calm environment, immaculate cleanliness, ergonomic furniture, and attentive staff. The bilingual environment further complements Montreal's cosmopolitan business landscape.

Networking is organically encouraged through an open-concept design, regular community events, and informal networking opportunities in shared spaces and a sun-drenched lounge area facing the canal. Additionally, the building hosts a retail café and provides convenient proximity to gourmet eats at Atwater Market and recreational activities such as kayaking along the stunning canal boardwalk.

Flexible month-to-month terms and transparent online booking streamline scalability for growing startups, with suites available for up to 12 desks to accommodate future expansion effortlessly. Recognized as one of Montreal's top coworking spaces, 2727 Coworking enjoys broad visibility across major platforms including Coworker, LiquidSpace, CoworkingCafe, and Office Hub, underscoring its credibility and popularity in the market.

Overall, 2727 Coworking combines convenience, luxury, productivity, community, and flexibility, creating an ideal workspace tailored to modern professionals and innovative teams.

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