

The Cultural Arts Landscape in Salina, Kansas

A Report to the Salina City Commission



by Joe Iurato for the Boom! 2025 Mural Festival

Monday, October 13, 2025

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State of the Arts Executive Summary:

Salina's cultural arts venues and programs set a high bar in the State of Kansas in their quality and professionalism. Few cities the size of Salina throughout the Midwest have the variety of offerings that include strong private support and critical help from the City of Salina through direct funding of Salina Arts & Humanities as well as financial support through the Transient Guest Tax (TGT) and in-kind services, and the allocation of downtown development funds (TIF, CID, and Star Bond funding) that foster the strong cultural identity of the city to both residents and guests.

The City's support of TGT-funded Cultural Arts Regional Marketing Grants has helped cultural agencies improve their regional advertising, increasing overnight stays and visitor spending since the program began in 2009. The city's investment in the arts is further benefited through privately funded initiatives like SculptureTour Salina and the Boom! Street Art & Mural Festival that has positively contributed to Salina's identity as a cultural arts destination.

Additional factors contributing to the strength of the community as a cultural leader in the state, in addition to the support provided through the City of Salina, are:

- **Cultural Leadership and Community Engagement:**

- Strong institutional leadership fosters collaboration across arts organizations. Stable and professional leadership of cultural organizations allow for continuity, trust, and consistency.
- Community participation, from events to arts education in schools, strengthens civic pride and nurtures artistic talent. Strong charitable support by individuals and businesses also demonstrates the value that residents and businesses place on the cultural fabric of their community.

- **Economic Impact:**

- Cultural tourism significantly boosts revenue, with festivals and events drawing tourists and supporting local businesses. Cultural travelers are inclined to stay longer and spend more than other tourist groups nationally.
- The arts sector contributes to job creation, from event management to technical roles, with national and regional events enhancing Salina's economic profile. The employees of cultural arts organizations are active in

the town outside of their work, helping bring energy and creativity to many other areas of the community.

- **Public Art and Cultural Identity:**

- Extensive public art installations embed art in daily life, reflecting cultural heritage and fostering community pride. The arts are literally unavoidable in Salina, KS. More than 500 works of two and three-dimensional art are on the streets, in public buildings, and prominently displayed at private homes and businesses. This is a further example of civic pride that the arts provide.
- Art initiatives serve as literal and figurative storytelling tools, celebrating Salina's heritage while evolving its cultural identity. This engages citizens directly and helps build ownership as stories are shared.

- **Performing Arts and Festivals:**

- A dynamic performing arts scene and robust festival culture attract diverse audiences, providing key economic stimuli and cultural touchpoints. Music, theatre, poetry readings and book discussions, and other cultural programs take place in cultural venues, schools, churches, and along the city streets and stages nearly every day of the year.

- **Educational and Equitable Access:**

- Commitments to a wide variety of arts education opportunities and programs ensure broad access and prepare the next generation of artists. Many of these offerings are free or can be supplemented by scholarships from the host organizations, ensuring that the arts are accessible.
- Efforts are being made to focus on reducing economic barriers, improving accessibility, and increasing cultural diversity that reflect the Salina's social and ethnic audiences.
- Libraries and universities further engage citizens in cultural enrichment through programs, performances, and professional development.

- **Zoos and Living and Historical Museums:**

- Rolling Hills Zoo: Offers conservation education, enhancing understanding of biodiversity, while serving as a family-friendly attraction that integrates education with leisure.

- Smoky Hill Museum: Preserves and shares local and regional history with well-researched cultural narratives, offering exhibits and programs that engage the community in its heritage.
- The Garage Automotive Museum: Celebrates automotive history and design, providing interactive experiences that appeal to auto enthusiasts and families alike.

Challenges and Opportunities for Arts and Cultural Organizations:

- **Long-term financial sustainability is crucial, especially for smaller organizations.** This happens through increasing memberships, season ticket sales, and donors, growing endowments, and attracting new audiences, especially at venues where a majority of earned revenue is from admission fees.
- **Expanding outreach and program diversity requires strategic investment.** Like many businesses, cultural organizations continually explore new approaches to engage current participants and attract new audiences. It's important for arts and cultural heritage organizations to be prepared for new residents and businesses during Salina's economic and housing boom.
- **Regional collaborations can enhance Salina's cultural leadership role.** Part of Salina's success can be attributed to the strong pull-factor from cultural, retail, medical, and other service providers. It will be important to explore new ways to strengthen the relationship cultural organizations have with communities in Kansas that rely on all that Salina has to offer.
- **Salina's cultural partners are ready for a new community cultural plan.** The Big Ideas Cultural Plan was adopted by the City Commission in 2009. All 4 goals and 58 strategies have been addressed, some with multiple adaptations. Since that time, there have been leadership changes at some cultural organizations, a revitalization of the downtown cultural arts district, an upcoming redevelopment of the Smoky Hill River, private initiatives like SculptureTour and Boom, and the emergence of new cultural organizations. It's time to develop a new roadmap for Salina's cultural future, ensuring that the arts continue their positive impact on the community.

Conclusion:

Salina's cultural sector is vital to its identity and economic health. Quality of life has always been an important factor for residents and prospective workers to consider where to live. This is even more important now with younger generations entering the workforce. The energy and vitality offered through music, theatre, literature, cultural heritage, and the

visual arts provide a wonderful welcome to Salina. Diverse forms of cultural expression allow a wide variety of residents and visitors to experience the positive energy of being in a creative community.

Continued investment in arts programming, public art, and art education will strengthen its position as a creative powerhouse in Kansas. Education in the arts is life-long. Whether it's taking an acting or dancing class, music or art lessons, participating in a writers group, attending museum presentations, engaging with environmental awareness experiences, or continuing with well-supported arts programs in the public schools, these programs build strong and healthy communities.

Salina Arts & Humanities will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2026, the Smoky Hill River Festival will be 50, and the Smoky Hill Museum will recognize 40 years as a division of the City. This is in addition to the nation's 250th birthday, and other local cultural organizations are also celebrating anniversary years. Watch for upcoming programming and events throughout 2026.

In addition to the upcoming celebrations, October is National Arts & Humanities Month, which provides an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the strength of Salina's arts and cultural success. Thanks to the Salina City Commission for their support in building a better community where creativity thrives and the arts are unavoidable.



Attendees interact with Stone Lion Puppet Theatre at the 2025 River Festival.

Salina Arts & Humanities (SAH) Department Overview

Mission Statement: The cultivation of this place through the power of the arts and humanities to change lives and build community.

Salina Arts & Humanities benefits from having the Smoky Hill Museum as a division of the department. Arts, culture, and heritage programs and services include the Smoky Hill River Festival, the Smoky Hill Museum Street Fair, Kansas Days, First Thursday museum talks, the Arts Infusion Program, Horizons Grants Program, museum traveling exhibits, the Spring Poetry Series, museum programs and tours, and Community Art & Design (public art). Both divisions are professionally staffed and the staff serve as valuable resource partners to citizens, businesses, and other cultural partners throughout the region.



Educational Initiatives

- **Arts Infusion Program:** Connects teaching artists with K-12 schools, emphasizing creative learning. It leverages the arts to enhance educational experiences and integrate artistic learning in standard curricula.
- **Kansas Days:** The museum welcomes more than 1000 third graders from Salina and central Kansas each year in conjunction with Kansas' birthday. A Saturday open house also welcomes hundreds of visitors.

Public Art and Design

- **Public Art Collection:** Salina engages in developing an extensive public art collection, reflecting the city's cultural heritage and contemporary creativity. More than 400 works of two and three-dimensional art are in the public collection.
- **Community Art & Design (CAD) Committee:** Integral to the planning and implementation of art projects, ensuring community involvement and local relevancy. The work includes permanent additions to the public collection and private work in public rights-of-way. The department also assists private purchasers with the acquisition, display, and care of work they own.

Funding & Grant Programs

- **Horizons Grants Program:** Allocates approximately \$30,000 annually in funding to local artists and organizations, fostering regional creative projects and artistic growth. Since 1986, this is a privately funded program through the Salina Arts & Humanities Foundation, a 501c3 philanthropic board.
- **Artist Integration Fund Pilot Program:** Supports the integration of local artists into various community and development projects, promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration in Salina. These funds help see developing artists as they expand their practices in the community.

Events and Festivals

- **Smoky Hill River Festival:** Celebrating 50 years, it remains a highly-valued cultural event, blending music, art exhibitions, and local food, enhancing community engagement. The Festival is supported with earned revenue, private contributions, in-kind products and services, and more than 1500 volunteers.
- **Smoky Hill Museum Street Fair:** This day-long celebration held each September features a parade followed by musical, cultural, and creative programs to engage citizens and guests. More than 6000 people attend the events, which are free of charge. (The Chili Cookoff costs \$2.50 per ticket.)
- **Salina Spring Poetry Series:** Preparing for its 43rd anniversary in 2026, the series encourages literary arts through poetry readings and workshops, inclusive of local and visiting poets. The Poet Laureate of Kansas serves as the curator of that event.

Community Collaboration and Advocacy

- **Cultural Roundtable:** A platform for local cultural organizations and stakeholders to collaborate, offering advocacy and resources for arts initiatives. Besides local cultural partners, Visit Salina, Friends of the River, and Salina Downtown Incorporated attend monthly meetings.
- **Arts Advocacy:** The department also focuses on raising awareness of the significance of arts, heritage, and culture in the community and its positive impact on economic development.

Institutional Partnerships

- **Smoky Hill Museum:** As a division of Salina Arts & Humanities, the staff supports each division's programs and administration as needed. The Museum Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of museum operations.

- **Local Educational Institutions:** Collaborations with institutions like USD305 and Kansas Wesleyan University enhance cultural programming and educational opportunities.
- **Travel & Tourism and Special Events:** SAH works closely with Visit Salina and Salina Downtown Inc. as opportunities arise. These organizations rely on a dynamic and engaging cultural community to attract visitors and engage residents of Salina.

Technological and Digital Expansion

- **Digital Outreach:** SAH and the museum utilize social media and digital platforms to increase accessibility and engagement with the community. Information, advocacy, and promotion of arts and culture events are included in social media postings. This includes Creative Connections, a bi-weekly e-mail newsletter for the regional creative community.
- **Online Resources and Virtual Events:** Expanded during 2020, maintaining these digital options post-pandemic furthers reach and inclusivity. Many resources are available through the department's three web pages (SAH, Museum, River Festival). The Museum offers an online live video option for its First Thursday programs. SAH will be expanding in two new areas in late 2025-26 including documenting all of Salina's publicly accessible art to the Public Art Archive, a national database of public art, and subscribing to CaFÉ, an online portal to reach artists across the nation for various projects and proposals.

Strategic Goals for 2025 As Reported in February

- *Continue to serve as advocates for the programs offered by the Smoky Hill Museum and Salina Arts & Humanities. Encourage community volunteer support for special events.* These efforts are ongoing. The department is partnering with Salina Area United Way's new United Volunteers web portal for sign-up and selection of jobs. Sharing stories of the positive impact volunteers make is also in the works.
- *Assist where appropriate in Salina identity efforts with the city and Chamber of Commerce marketing division, etc.* The Chamber is continuing to develop community identity and will be reporting later this year.
- *Continue reviewing public performance opportunities for musicians and buskers.* Provide feedback or recommendations for possible improvements to the guidelines. This is an ongoing effort with other cultural entities and programmers.
- *Continue discussions around equitable access to the arts & humanities, through the program and services provided by the department.* The Smoky Hill River Festival and

Salina Arts & Humanities were recently recognized as the first recipients of the Accessibility Champion Award presented by Independent Connection of Salina. The staff is also reviewing additional social, physical, and financial barriers that prevent some of the population from participating in programs or services.

Additional SAH activities in 2025

- **Expand Public Art:** *Enhance the visibility and integration of public artworks across the city, including new installations and community-based projects.* This is ongoing. New trash corrals have been installed, a new sculpture in Lakewood Park, and the department will feature all of Salina's public art on the Public Art Archive, a web-based platform for residents and visitors to learn more about Salina's collection.
- **Strengthen Educational Partnerships:** *Expand the Arts Infusion Program to more schools, ensuring broader access to creativity in education.* This fall saw a strong level of engagement with arts education offerings from public and private institutions.
- **Increase Grant Accessibility:** *Adjust the grant application process to be more inclusive, ensuring diverse artistic voices and community projects receive support.* A grant-writing workshop was held on August 28, resulting in new developing artists and organizations participating. Applications are now being taken.
- **Sustainability and Growth:** Focus on sustainable practices within arts programming and secure long-term funding partnerships.

Conclusion

Salina Arts & Humanities is the only stand-alone city government department of arts and culture in the State of Kansas. Other organizations in the state function as a division of another department or reside outside the city government structure. This provides an important opportunity for arts, culture, and heritage offerings to be presented in professional and sustainable ways.

The staff provides high levels of community service and is a valuable resource partner to Salina and the region. The City of Salina's demonstrated commitment to supporting the arts instills a sense of community pride and strengthens the city's reputation as a state-wide cultural leader.

Strategic growth of the department and Salina's cultural community is important as the city continues to attract new workers and businesses. A strong relationship between private cultural agencies will provide continuity in programming, marketing, and providing valuable services to the community. Salina Arts & Humanities will continue to serve as a key pillar in Salina's cultural and economic vitality.

Cultural Partners Receiving Public Funding Support

Individual profile sheets on each of these cultural agencies follows this report. A summary sheet of the collective economic impact of these eight organizations is also included.

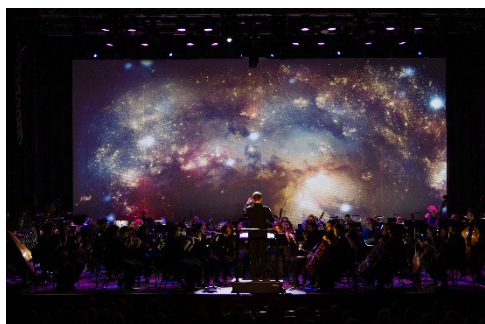


1. Rolling Hills Zoo

- **Conservation and Education:** Focuses on wildlife conservation, education programs, and offers family-friendly events that highlight global biodiversity. The RHZ has a large, professional staff and is actively partnering with Salina cultural organizations and businesses.
- **Zoo and Museum:** Combines traditional zoo exhibits with an accompanying museum featuring lifelike dioramas and hands-on educational activities. Numerous special programs take place throughout the year.

2. Salina Art Center

- **Exhibitions and Programs:** Offers diverse contemporary art exhibitions, youth education programs, and community art-making activities, fostering dialogue and creativity.
- **Facilities:** Includes galleries, a culinary kitchen, sales gallery, an art cinema, and a maker's space, hosting events like independent film screenings and artist talks, workshops, and studio spaces.



3. Salina Symphony

- **Concert Series:** Regular performances feature both symphonic classics and contemporary compositions, often collaborating with guest artists. In recent years, outreach concerts in neighboring communities have helped connect the symphony with new, rural audiences. Additional small ensemble performances are also occurring around town.
- **Educational Programs:** Includes youth symphony programs and educational concerts aimed at schools and young audiences.

4. Stiefel Theatre

- **Performing Arts Venue:** Hosts national and international touring artists, offering a varied lineup from music concerts to comedy shows and theatrical productions.
- **Community Engagement:** Provides a venue for local performances and cultural gatherings, enriching Salina's performing arts scene. The Stiefel is an important attraction for architecture and history lovers who appreciate the building's renovated Art Deco design. The recently opened Mike Finnegan School of Music provides group lessons on a variety of musical instruments at an affordable rate.



5. Smoky Hill Museum

- **Historical Exhibits:** Broad collection of more than 30,000 artifacts and displays that showcase the local and regional history of Salina and the evolving cultural narrative. Regular changes to exhibits and displays keep content fresh for residents and guests.
- **Public Programs:** Includes educational lectures, workshops, and community events focused on local heritage and preservation. The Curiosity Shop is a hands-on, interactive space that invites kids and families to explore their community in engaging ways. A retail sales shop also provides revenue for the Friends of the Museum to support programming and equipment.

6. Theatre Salina

- **Theatrical Productions:** Provides a wide array of performances, from classic plays to avant-garde works, engaging local talent alongside regional artists. Additional outreach programs are also provided to school children during the academic year.



- **Educational Outreach:** Offers workshops and summer camps in theater arts, cultivating the next generation of performers and enthusiasts. Vocal music, dance, and acting classes are taught through the Center for Theatre Arts.



7. The Garage Automotive Museum

- **Automotive History:** Features exhibits of classic automobiles and memorabilia, celebrating mechanical design and automotive heritage.
- **Interactive Displays:** Offers visitors hands-on experiences with automotive technology and history.

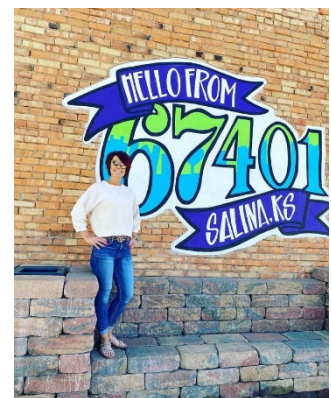
8. The Temple

- **Entrepreneurial Center:** Is a 160,000 sq. ft. entrepreneurial co-working space on the National Register of Historic Places. More than 22 businesses have offices in the space. Many tenants participate in cosmetic improvements to their workspaces. Rents help cover the operational costs.
- **Event/Community Center:** The ballroom and auditorium serve as a special event center for parties, weddings, and other special occasions. The parking lot also serves a variety of purposes as a community gathering area.



Collaborative Initiatives

- **Joint Programs and Events:** These partners often collaborate on community programming and special events, such as city-wide festivals and educational initiatives, fostering a holistic cultural ecosystem.
- **Cultural Tourism:** Collective efforts to market Salina as a cultural destination enhance tourism, supporting economic development and community enrichment.



- **Educational Collaborations:** Through partnerships with schools and educational institutions, these entities support the integration of arts education, increasing access and engagement for students across the region.

Strategic Impact

- **Economic and Social Benefits:** The synergy between SAH and cultural partners enhances economic vibrancy and social cohesion through art-driven tourism, community events, and education.
- **Enhanced Profile:** Joint marketing initiatives and collaborative branding efforts position Salina as a dynamic cultural center in Kansas, attracting visitors and residents alike.

The combination of SAH initiatives with these and other cultural partners underscores Salina's rich cultural landscape. Future opportunities exist in expanding digital programming, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and further integrating cultural offerings into community development plans.



The Lawrence, KS Parks and Recreation Department brought a group of citizens to Salina so they could experience the city's arts and cultural offerings.

Rolling Hills Zoo

Organizational Profile

Mission: Touching Hearts . Igniting Passion . Saving Wildlife

Description of services: Rolling Hills Zoo, a 65-acre haven nestled among the Smoky Hills west of Salina, invites guests to explore and experience the wonder of wildlife. Home to over 80 animal species, many part of AZA's SAFE program, the zoo features family-friendly amenities including a Nature Playground and sensory-inclusive Quiet Areas. Step inside the Wildlife Museum to experience over 500 full mounts displayed in immersive dioramas spanning seven global ecosystems, plus rotating exhibits in the Earl Bane Gallery. With dynamic education programs, camps, and year-round events, Rolling Hills Zoo is more than a destination—it's an adventure in conservation, discovery, and connection.

Total budget (financial numbers are based on FY 2024): \$4.6M

Earned Revenue: \$1,141,085.36 Charitable Contributions: \$1,439,842.77

In-kind contributions: \$6,352.54 42 Full-time staff and 8 part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25: 81,950 Visitors through Admissions through September 30, 2025.

75,200 Total in-person visits through October 1, 2024 through September 25, 2025.

38% of in-person visits reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

Rolling Hills Zoo is excited to announce Tiger Falls, our brand-new, state-of-the-art tiger habitat, designed to house up to seven tigers and provide an immersive, enriching experience for both guests and animals.

On October 11th, families can enjoy Pumpkin PaZOOla, a fall favorite featuring pumpkins, seasonal activities, and wildlife fun. The holiday season begins with Cookies with Santa on December 7th, a cherished family tradition. From November 28th through December 20th, the Zoo's Museum will shine with Holiday Lights, open every Friday and Saturday evening, creating a festive and magical experience for all ages.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve: If approved each year we receive the CARM grant. Last year the grant amount awarded was \$28,000.

Salina Art Center, Inc.

Organizational Profile

Mission: *to create exchanges among art, artists, and audiences that reveal life*

Description of services: The Salina Art Center is a non-collecting contemporary art museum, cinema, and education hub in North Central Kansas. Our mission is to create exchanges among art, artists, and audiences that reveal life. Through exhibitions, films, youth and community programs, and artist residencies, we connect people with creativity and ideas that inspire curiosity, dialogue, and belonging. With free admission, a reimaged facility, and a commitment to accessibility, we serve as a vital cultural anchor in our region—supporting artists, engaging diverse audiences, and strengthening community through the power of art.

Total budget: \$646,272 **Earned Revenue:** \$233,000 **Charitable Contributions:** \$373,272

In-kind contributions: \$40,000

3 Full-time staff and _12_ part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

_23.5K_____ Total in-person visits: **_78,142** virtual tours

39 % of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.

- 7.4K visitors to the gallery w/ 52% outside Saline Co.
- 13K visitors to the cinema w/ 58% outside Saline Co.
- 3.1K visitors to the warehouse w/ 8% outside Saline Co.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know: The Salina Art Center continues to spark creativity and connection through exhibitions, films, and hands-on programs. In 2025 we launch *ReVision*, the largest exhibition of contemporary Native American artists in Kansas, curated by Taiomah Rutledge. The Art Center Cinema expands with documentaries, independent films, and community events, while free programs like Mini Masters, Art Club, Reel Film Fans, and Netty's scavenger hunt keep art accessible. The Warehouse Art Studio offers artists open memberships with key card access, and community collaborations like Repair Café show how creativity and learning thrive when shared.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve: The City provides vital support for one of our three downtown facilities through utility coverage and janitorial services, ensuring a clean and welcoming environment for visitors. The City also contributes to ongoing facility maintenance and recently partnered with us to install two new HVAC units as part of a match during our capital campaign, in which we replaced three additional units. This investment safeguards our exhibitions, upholds the standards required for national museum accreditation, and ensures year-round comfort for audiences, artists, and program participants. City support strengthens our ability to serve the community by maintaining safe, accessible, and sustainable facilities for art, film, and education.

Salina Symphony

Organizational Profile

Mission: The Salina Symphony is dedicated to enriching lives through artistic music performance and education.

Description of services: The Salina Symphony is a regional orchestra performing six mainstage concerts each season as well as chamber concerts, educational programs, and an annual patriotic outdoor concert held on the grounds of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum. A variety of soloists are featured each season, ranging from orchestra members to regional and internationally acclaimed artists.

The Symphony's Youth Education Program serves students from elementary through high school. The program, which includes four ensembles and String Academy group lessons, serving approximately 140 students from more than 20 different schools in the region.

Total budget: \$830,000

Earned Revenue: \$266,500

Charitable Contributions: \$563,500

In-kind contributions: \$25,000

2 Full-time staff and 2 part-time staff (Plus 110 contract labor).

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

_11,341_Total in-person visits (Please use Placer AI data): ____ (Optional) Social media/virtual visits

51% of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

- The Salina Symphony performed two runout concerts last season, with the same planned for the current season. [Definition of runout concert: a concert performed by an orchestra or musical group in a location away from their home base]. Last season, the Symphony performed in Junction City and Concordia. This season, we perform in McPherson and Hutchinson. The goal is two-fold: 1) to serve the surrounding region and 2) to draw those patrons to Salina for our mainstage concerts at the Stiefel Theatre.
- In addition to the free concert for local 4th graders, the Symphony will perform a Family Concert in January with family-friendly pricing of \$5. Students will have an option to join us for an instrument petting zoo and other activities following the concert.
- The Youth Education Program recently added String Academy group lessons to the program offerings. We currently have 22 participants.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

- City Funding & the Ripple of Economic Impact
 - The Symphony received approx. \$13,355 in support through the Cultural Arts & Regional Marketing grant.
 - Thanks to this funding, our regional marketing efforts have grown in recent years, which is reflected by the fact that a significant portion of our audience resides outside of Saline County.
 - Before and after concerts, our regional patrons support local restaurants, businesses and hotels. There is no busier place than downtown restaurants after one of our late afternoon concerts!
- A Local Symphony Orchestra Impacts Quality of Life
 - Enrichment – for patrons who enjoy classical music and all that it brings to a community.

- Performance Opportunity – for musicians considering moving to Salina and the surrounding region.
- Youth Symphony & Youth Choir – for families considering a move to Salina.

Smoky Hill Museum

Organizational Profile

Mission:

The Smoky Hill Museum connects people to universally shared stories, unleashing the power of local history to engage, inspire and surprise.

Description of services:

The Smoky Hill Museum is the official repository for Salina’s history. As such, it collects and stores artifacts and documents for the benefit of the community. In addition to collecting, the Museum provides educational programs and exhibits through both face-to-face and online interactions. Key programs include group tours and activities, a First Thursday lecture series, Kansas Day programming for area third graders, Culture Crawl for Salina seventh graders, and the Street Fair. Museum staff produce various types of exhibits such as onsite exhibits, traveling exhibits, and online exhibits. Other services include answering public research inquiries, serving as consultants to regional and national professionals and institutions, and offering a Museum Store that carries area and regional books and artwork.

Total budget: \$737,680 (2025 budget)

Earned Revenue: \$14,143 (FY 2025 for traveling exhibits)

Charitable Contributions: \$41,559 (FY 2025)

In-kind contributions: \$7,678 (FY 2025)

_6_Full-time staff and _4_part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

_19.2K__Total in-person visits: _ 219,260_(Optional) Social media/virtual visits

40% of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Smoky Hill Museum will host the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, *Americans*, in March of 2026. This exhibit is hosted by only six other sites in Kansas. The exhibit uncovers the many ways American Indian images, names, and stories have been part of the nation's identity since before the country began. It explores the lasting legacies of Pocahontas, the 1830 Indian Removal Act, and the 1876 Battle of Little Big Horn. The Smoky Hill Museum will also have a companion exhibit about the Battle of Indian Rock.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

As a division of the City of Salina, the City of Salina provides day-to-day operations, staffing and programming support to help the Museum remain an accredited, free-admission educational institution. To have the most impact on our visitors, the staff takes the mission, especially the keywords – stories, engage, inspire and surprise – to heart.

The staff believes history is a verb. The stories and objects collected stand as witnesses to Salina's past and brings history alive. As one of only five accredited Kansas history museums, we share these objects and stories in dynamic and creative programming and exhibits to connect our past to the present and future of our community. Our focus on interactivity, education and community engagement makes the Museum a hub for learners of all ages.

Many techniques are used to reach people in fun and unique ways. Artifacts are not just props, they are used to further the story being told, and when possible, they become part of the interactivity. Information is also presented through games, scavenger hunts, technology, toys and experiments. We are excited when we get comments like this one from a 17-year-old, *"I've never been here, if I had kids I would bring them here. Great place. Keep doing what you're doing."* Or this comment from a 10-year-old, *"My favorite part of the museum is peoples lifes of learning them and because I like to learn of what happened to them. You can never make it better well expect for more historys but your museum is the best museum I could ever imagine."*

Stiefel Theatre

Organizational Profile

Mission: To provide quality experiences that enrich, educate, and entertain.

Description of services: Briefly describe your organization in 100 words or less.

As a non-profit concert venue, we provide world class concerts and entertainment for local and regional patrons, helping to make downtown Salina a destination for people of all ages.

Total budget:

Earned Revenue: \$2.2 million

Charitable Contributions: \$550,000

In-kind contributions: \$40,000

4 Full-time staff and 20 part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

46.6k Total in-person visits: ____ (Optional) Social media/virtual visits

70% of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Stiefel Theatre continues to provide a robust variety of shows, new shows announce regularly and we program shows all year. People still travel from all over the country to attend performances here and we pride ourselves in the care we take of both the theatre patrons and the artists that play here. On our show nights, downtown is buzzing with activity and restaurants are full. With the nomination for Theatre of the Year with the ACMs in 2023, the Stiefel has grown in recognition as a major player in the concert industry in this part of the country.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

The Stiefel receives no outside subsidy for operational support. All overhead is raised with donations. The Stiefel show expenses and revenue thankfully break even and last year generated a small amount of overhead. We are grateful for CARM funding (\$25,000-\$30,000 annually). It helps with the \$400,000 we spend annually on regional marketing.

The Garage Automotive Museum

Organizational Profile

Mission: The mission of The Garage (Salina Educational Automotive Museum of America) is summed up as: **Relive the Past. Drive the Future.** Our broader vision clarifies how we carry out that mission: A world-class museum which educates young and old through entertaining interactive rotating exhibits, serves as a gathering place for automotive enthusiasts from around the globe, and provides training ranging from simulated welding and painting to a full licensed drivers education program.

Description of services:

The Garage Automotive Museum in Salina, Kansas provides interactive educational experiences that celebrate automotive history, innovation, and culture. The museum features rotating exhibits showcasing classic, custom, and international vehicles, along with simulators, hands-on learning stations, and a theater for educational films. It hosts community events such as car shows, Cars & Coffee gatherings, and youth programs that inspire interest in STEM and craftsmanship. Through partnerships with collectors, schools, and industry sponsors, The Garage promotes restoration, preservation, and workforce development. Accessible to all ages, the museum serves as a dynamic destination for education, tourism, and community engagement in central Kansas.

2024 Total Income: \$1,033,316.94

- **Revenue earned: \$357,009.37**
- **Charitable Contributions: 295,913.84**
- **In-kind contributions: \$319,000**

4__Full-time staff and 6__part-time staff

2025 Patrons and Citizens served from January 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025

Total Visitors = 17, 813

- Within a 60-mile radius of Salina = 10,887
- Outside of a 60-mile radius of Salina = 6,926
- To drill further -- Visitors from outside of Kansas = 1,299

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Garage Automotive Museum in Salina, Kansas is embarking on an exciting expansion project that will enhance its educational and visitor experiences. The project includes additional exhibit space called The Shop and The Station, which is a dedicated restoration and welding shop for hands-on learning, and new areas for community events, youth programs, and private gatherings. The expansion will also feature improved accessibility, upgraded technology for hands-on experiences, and enhanced visitor amenities. By growing its footprint, The Garage aims to welcome more guests, support workforce development, and strengthen Salina's position as a regional destination for automotive history, innovation, and tourism.

- HEAL Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce The intent of the HEAL program is to provide funding for underutilized buildings in downtown districts to become fully utilized, economic drivers for the community. \$100,000 grant
- Community Service Tax Credit Program (CSP) \$200,000 of tax credits awarded from the State of Kansas to help us \$400,000. Donors received a 50% tax credit based on their donation.
- Kansas Department of Tourism – Tourism Attraction Grant awarded for \$60,000

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

Development agreement with Salina Vision 2020, The City of Salina, and The Garage - \$483,000. CARM Funding.

Theatre Salina

Organizational Profile

Mission: Creating live theatre to inspire, educate, and entertain.

Description of services: Briefly describe your organization in 100 words or less. Theatre Salina remains one of the most prolific creative organizations in the Midwest, producing 14 original productions annually that serve the entire state of Kansas. The Theatre also has robust educational programs serving students from preschool through adult. We bring more than 5200 students to the theatre during the school year to enjoy live theatre, many seeing theatre for the first time.

Total budget: \$1,012,000

Earned Revenue: \$617,320

Charitable Contributions: \$394,680

In-kind contributions:

8__ Full-time staff and _2_ part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

49,650_____Total in-person visits: _____(Optional) Social media/virtual visits

_36__% of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

Theatre Salina continues to be a destination site for tourism, selling tickets in more than 130 communities in Kansas and 26 other states. The Theatre has infused more the \$9M in direct spending into the local economy over the past decade, and more than \$310,000 in collected sales tax. The Theatre is an eight-time national award-winning organization.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

Theatre Salina's 52-year partnership with the City of Salina serves both well. The Theatre enjoys significant support from the City that allows it to flourish. The City enjoys significant economic support and tourism boosts created by the Theatre.

The Temple

Organizational Profile

Mission: To save and preserve the historic Temple building for use as a community resource center. We strive to make The Temple a beacon that cultivates opportunity and strengthens community.

Description of services: Salina Innovation Foundation (dba The Temple) is repurposing the spaces throughout the 160,000 sq ft 7-story historic building to include such uses as private offices for startup businesses, shared coworking areas, meeting rooms, event venue spaces, performing arts theatre, culinary kitchen for hire, donated spaces for veteran gatherings, nonprofit meetings, historic tours and more.

Total budget: \$150,000

Earned Revenue: \$125,000

Charitable Contributions: \$20,000

In-kind contributions: \$10,000

1 - Full-time staff and 10 volunteer part-time staff

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

13,000 Total in-person visits: 97,092 Social media/virtual visits from 2,560 followers on Facebook **40% of in-person who reside outside of Saline County.**

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Big Lift campaign will transform the Temple with two modern elevators, two ADA-compliant bathrooms, and new HVAC in the Theatre, greatly improving accessibility and comfort. These upgrades position the Temple as a prime regional venue for events, meetings, and coworking. Home to 24 startups, the Temple fosters business growth. Two recent businesses who have success are Jonathan Hess, who expanded his Temple recording studio into a downtown retail record store, Gryphon's Wing records on Iron Ave, and Tish Morrical, who launched Morrical Legal Family Law and moved to a permanent downtown office at Santa Fe and Walnut.

One recent example of the impact of these improvements is The Temple serves as a convenient, centrally located venue for businesses like Schwan's and Amazon to host hiring events. Amazon will be hosting hiring sessions three times a week through December.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

We are deeply grateful to the City of Salina for its support, which has played a vital role in preserving and enhancing the Salina Temple and its contribution to the local community. In 2019, the City contributed \$70,000 toward our first capital campaign, *Raise the Roof*. This support helped us successfully reach our \$250,000 goal, allowing for critical repairs to the

Temple's roof. As a result, we were able to preserve the integrity of this historic structure and protect its contents for future generations. Since the completion of the project, the Temple has experienced a 50% increase in both event bookings and overall attendance—demonstrating its growing role as a cultural and community hub.

In addition, the City's commitment of \$420,000 in STAR Bond funding for improvements to the Temple's parking lot is creating a safe, well-lit space that serves not only Temple visitors but also downtown events, parades, local businesses, and restaurants. This infrastructure investment enhances accessibility and supports broader downtown revitalization efforts. The impact of these investments is tangible. A recent example includes a Sweet 16 celebration hosted at the Temple, which brought together 350 guests from India, England, and across the United States. These visitors stayed in local hotels and spent the weekend enjoying downtown Salina—contributing to the local economy and showcasing Salina as a welcoming and vibrant destination.

The City's support has not only helped preserve a historic landmark, but it has also amplified its role as a catalyst for community engagement, tourism, and economic activity.

COMBINED IMPACT REPORT 2025

From eight cultural organizations that receive public support:

- 1. Total budgets: \$11,209,269** (\$11,241,437)
- 2. Total earned income: \$ 3,347,057** (\$5,276,067)
- 3. Total private donations: \$3,465,437** (\$4,852,809)
- 4. Total FT Employees: 70 Total PT Employees: 54**
- 5. Total Visitors: 263,054** (253,230) **Outside Saline County: 117,987** (125,780)
- 6. Estimated local attendee spending in addition to the cost of admission:**
\$4,086,647 (\$3,794,186)*
- 7. Estimated out-of-county spending in addition to the cost of admission:**
\$7,146,473 (\$7,618,494)
- 8. Total estimated spending beyond cost of admission: \$11,233,120** \$11,412,681.10

*Per-person spending estimates are based on data provided by Americans for the Arts and their Arts & Economic Prosperity survey work.



2025 Smoky Hill River Festival Financial Report

Cash Income

Advanced Wristband Sales	\$101,740
Gates Sales	\$73,888
Employer Wristband Purchases	\$32,040
Vendor Fees	\$124,259
Grants	
SAH Foundation Support	\$121,650
Miscellaneous	\$24,217
Total Cash Income	\$477,794

Accounts Receivable (Outstanding)

Adj. Total Income w/encumbrances	\$477,794
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Expenses

Technical Services and Equipment	\$119,558
Entertainment	\$121,650
Visual Arts	\$82,041
Lodging/Travel	\$11,875
Printing/Advertising/Marketing	\$78,278
Office/Administration	\$8,411
Part-time personnel	\$12,229
Miscellaneous	\$19,381
Total Expenses	\$453,423

Accounts Payable (Outstanding)	\$1,725	Zapp
Adj. Total Expenses w/encumbrances	\$455,148	
Net Income Loss	\$24,371	

Net Income (Loss) w/adj. encumbrances \$22,646*

*The Smoky Hill River Festival income and expense report does not include full-time staff expenses for SAH or other city departments that assist with the event.

In-Kind Cost Avoidance

Hospitality-Food, Beverage, Hotel	\$35,296
Media/Marketing	\$38,389
Technical Services and Products	\$108,195
Total in-kind avoidance	\$181,880

In-kind Festival enhancements not included in annual budget

(City of Salina personnel, additional programming,
technical improvements, customer service
volunteers, ancillary events, transportation,
technology, ATM, river clean-up, etc.)

Volunteer Shifts 1614	\$112,302
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Attendance and Sales

15,430 Total Wristbands sold with 783 Festival
Families First participants (\$202,868)

Gate count (adjusted estimate: 52,040
Note: From digital tracking system)

\$395,852.57 in reported food sales

\$414,974.90 in reported art show sales

1614 volunteers including more than 120 committee
members

What's Coming in the Year Ahead?

Six special buttons to commemorate the 50th Smoky Hill River Festival were designed by 5 local or Kansas designers. These will be shared with the public at various button-making events in the months ahead.



A new 50th Anniversary Festival logo was announced and will be utilized on marketing and promotion for the upcoming year. Michael Freeland's design was selected from submissions by multiple graphic artists.

- A new brochure is included in the Commission packet. It highlights some of the key programs and services of Salina Arts & Humanities, advocacy messages, and how citizens can get involved.
- The Smoky Hill River Festival is featured in Kansas! Magazine with a four-page story about the upcoming anniversary year.
- A 60th Anniversary graphic was developed for SAH. A sticker has been placed in the Commission report. Additionally, SAH is partnering with the Smoky Hill Museum, the Salina Symphony, and Theatre Salina who are all celebrating anniversary seasons in 2025-26. The Passport to the Arts program encourages people to visit all four venues and be eligible for prize packages to be awarded after October 31, 2025.

