

IMPACTS OF THE RICHMOND FOLK FESTIVAL



AUGUST 2018

VENTURE
richmond



VCU Center for Urban and Regional Analysis

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Center for Urban and Regional Analysis is grateful to Anedra Bourne, Lucy Meade, and Lisa Sims at Venture Richmond for their leadership and support throughout this project. Additionally, CURA would like to thank the individuals who participated in focus group sessions and interviews conducted in preparation for this report. Their comments and insights were essential in developing a better understanding of the role played by Venture Richmond and the Richmond Folk Festival on the region's economy.

ABOUT CURA

The Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) is the economic and policy research center of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government & Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. The Center serves stakeholders and organizations at all levels of focus, providing information systems support, program impact analysis, public policy evaluation, targeted investment models, and strategic plans to state agencies, regional and metropolitan organizations, planning districts, cities, counties, and towns, as well as businesses and non-profit organizations.

PHOTOS BY DAVE PARRISH PHOTOGRAPHY AND PROVIDED BY VENTURE RICHMOND.



IMPACTS OF THE RICHMOND FOLK FESTIVAL

Prepared for:

VENTURE RICHMOND

Prepared by:

JEFF CRAWFORD, WILDER FELLOW

FABRIZIO FASULO, PH.D

BRITTANY SCOTT KEEGAN, PH.D CANDIDATE

Prepared at:



VCU

Center for Urban and
Regional Analysis

L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

AUGUST 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
INTRODUCTION	1
FOLK FESTIVAL BY THE NUMBERS	4
SECTION ONE: ECONOMIC IMPACT	5
1.1: ECONOMIC IMPACT METHODOLOGY	7
1.2: ECONOMIC IMPACT INPUTS	8
1.3: ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS	12
SECTION TWO: QUALITATIVE IMPACTS	14
2.1: WHY THE FOLK FESTIVAL IS SUCCESSFUL IN RICHMOND	16
2.2: THE FOLK FESTIVAL CROWD	17
2.3: ROLE IN THE REGION	18
2.4: IMPROVEMENTS	18
2.5: ALTERNATE SCENARIO	19
CONCLUSION	20



a drop in attendance and diversity. When addressing a total cancellation of the Folk Festival participants said it would be, “a death in the family,” or, “like if they canceled the Super Bowl.”

In addition to community input on the qualitative impacts, a focus groups with Venture Richmond staff also provided insight:

- The Value of an Experienced Staff:** Many organizers of the festival have worked in some capacity with the festival for over a decade. The staff has continued and improved the festival with the help of the former organizers, the National Council for the Traditional Arts.
- A New Target Audience - Everyone:** Venture Richmond staff members highlighted that they no longer are proactive to attract specific audiences but instead aim to bring in a diverse audience by providing a wide variety of performers and experiences.
- Focus on Local Vendors:** Approximately nine out of ten vendors for the Richmond Folk Festival are local to the area. While there is no internal policy regarding vendor selection, the ethos of Venture Richmond is to support local businesses. Venture Richmond brings the world’s cultures to Richmond while supporting local industries.
- Improving the Festival:** One area of improvement pointed out by Venture Richmond staff is expanding the marketplace area. A thousand vendors apply but there are only 25 spaces available. Expanding the event space could mean a greater economic impact for small business in the city and surrounding region.
- Keep Folk Free:** Something that is constantly on the minds of Venture Richmond staff is the importance of keeping the festival free because it encourages inclusiveness - a priority for the festival. However, Venture Richmond staff members acknowledge that maintaining free entry is dependent on sponsorship from local businesses and support from the city.

The Richmond Folk Festival creates profound impacts on the city, its residents, and visitors. A sampling of the main findings is included in the following report. CURA invites you to explore the full report in depth. Economically and culturally, the Folk Festival is critical to Richmond’s identity as a city that encourages inclusivity and economic growth.

FIGURE E.1: SUMMARY FOLK FESTIVAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON THE GREATER RICHMOND REGION

ECONOMIC IMPACT	STATE/LOCAL TAX REVENUE
 \$37,356,009	 \$2,466,413
JOBS CREATED	EMPLOYMENT WAGES
 459	 \$14,960,808

FIGURE E.2: FOLK FESTIVAL WORD CLOUD FROM COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS





INTRODUCTION

A woman with dark hair is shown in profile, looking upwards and to the right. She is wearing a dark, textured top. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

**“THERE IS SOMETHING
FOR EVERYONE. IF I HEAR
OF A FRIEND THAT HAS
NEVER BEEN TO THE
FOLK FESTIVAL, I CANNOT
BELIEVE IT. THERE IS SO
MUCH DIVERSITY. ”**

INTRODUCTION

The Richmond Folk Festival, produced by Venture Richmond and the National Council for the Traditional Arts, brings the world, its culture, sound, and flavor to the Richmond Region. The entire state anxiously awaits this three-day celebration in October every year as it has grown into one of the largest festivals in Virginia. It is an event that brings people from all over the state, country, and world to celebrate traditional arts that are firmly rooted in community.

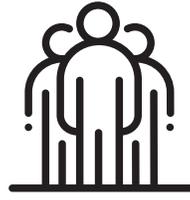
Venture Richmond partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) housed in the Center for Public Policy of the Wilder School to gather and analyze a wide variety of data on the festival in a two-pronged process that values the input of dollars as much as the viewpoints of community members. This analysis shows that the Richmond Folk Festival is an annual economic driver in the region that is inclusive of the entire community.

The quantitative economic impact analysis occurs on two geographic scales: the City of Richmond and the Greater Richmond Region. Utilizing spending data from Venture to host the event, total attendance information, and spending data from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, it aims to quantify the financial impact to the city and surrounding region in terms of economic output, supported jobs, and their associated wages.

Dollar figures only express a portion of the story. The qualitative impacts section of this report will include valuable insight from community members on why the Folk Festival is such a success in Richmond, how the attendance has changed over the years, its role in the region, what improvements can be made, and what would happen if the Folk Festival were canceled. Unique thoughts and opinions from several individuals that - in different roles and capacity - are engaged or associated with the Folk Festival provide key information that goes beyond the numbers of the economic impact section.

Supporting the qualitative section, which addresses the opinions and observations from community members, CURA also completed an additional focus group with Venture Richmond's staff. This focus group provided a unique look inside Venture Richmond's organization and operations. This insight is paired throughout the qualitative section with opportunities identified by interviewed community members in the form of Staff Spotlights.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE

220,000

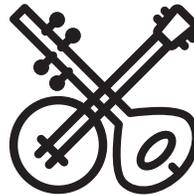
This total attendance of 220,000 included 144,936 people from Richmond, 18,106 people from other parts of Virginia, and 56,958 from the US and around the world.

COST OF FESTIVAL

\$1.6 M

Venture Richmond's total cost to host the festival was \$1.6 M. Nearly \$1.2 M of this was spent directly in the region and has a large impact on Richmond and Central Virginia's economy.

PERFORMING ARTISTS

36

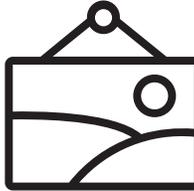
36 folk groups and soloists from across the globe formed the heart of the Folk Festival. Numerous folk styles from Appalachia to the shores of Cabo Verde entertained crowds.

FOOD TRUCKS

27

27 food trucks were doing business at the Richmond Folk Festival. Southern barbecue, fusion tacos, vegan fare, and more was available to hungry festival goers.

CRAFT VENDORS

22

22 artists and small businesses set up booths to sell crafts at the festival.

FOLK LIFE DEMOS

9

9 artisans shared their craft with attendees. Demos included Mexican cooking traditions, oyster shucking champions, heirloom apple grafting, traditional Indian cooking, and more.

KEGS OF BEER SOLD

480

Festival attendees enjoyed themselves! 480 kegs is almost 80,000 beers. Proost, gan bay, salute, and cheers!

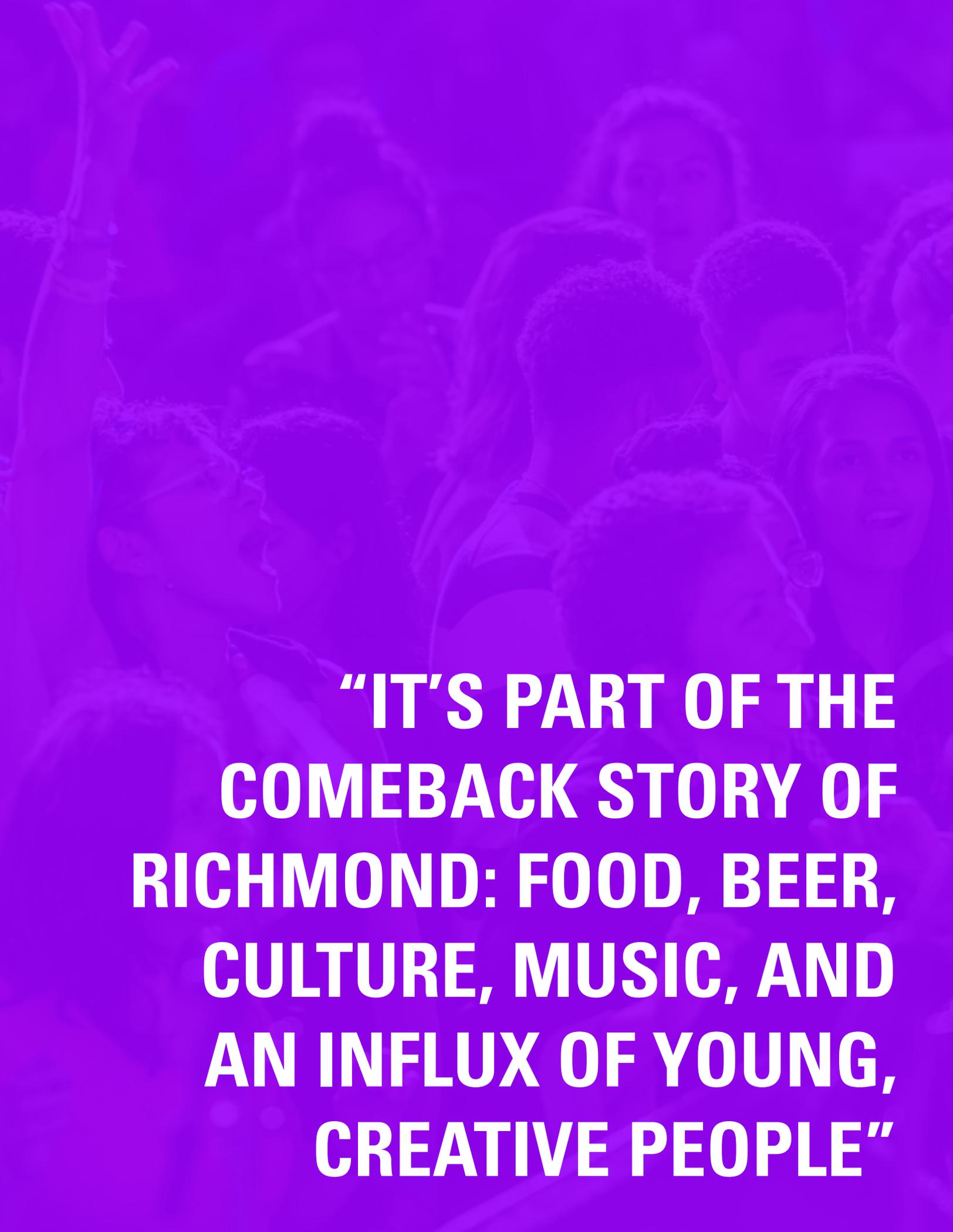
BUCKET DONATIONS

\$127,015

The Richmond Folk Festival is a free event thanks in large part to donations. Attendees in 2017 did a large part to help keep the event free in 2018.



SECTION 1: ECONOMIC IMPACT

A photograph of a diverse crowd of people at what appears to be a concert or festival. In the foreground, a hand is raised with fingers spread. The background shows many people looking towards the camera or slightly away. The image has a semi-transparent purple overlay.

**“IT’S PART OF THE
COMEBACK STORY OF
RICHMOND: FOOD, BEER,
CULTURE, MUSIC, AND
AN INFLUX OF YOUNG,
CREATIVE PEOPLE”**

SECTION 1: ECONOMIC IMPACT

1.1: ECONOMIC IMPACT METHODOLOGY

This section of the report uses economic input-output analysis to illustrate the impact of the Richmond Folk Festival in 2017.

An input-output model measures the economic impact of an activity or entity by looking at the spending that goes into the activity, modeling the resultant economic output in dollars, and feeding those dollars into the model as an input for economically linked business sectors.

These economic linkages may be best described as an interconnected network, including suppliers manufacturers, retailers, and customers. When one part of the network increases or decreases production, it sends a pulse that is felt in other parts of the network, forwards and backwards. That change affects the supply and demand for materials, labor, and goods. Economic impact models, like the one created for this study, illustrate the network's structure so that the effect of a change in production in one area can be estimated throughout the economy.

To estimate the impact of the Richmond Folk Festival, CURA used IMPLAN Pro™ software to prepare and customize an economic model exclusively for the City of Richmond as well as a larger model that includes the City of Richmond and counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, and Henrico. IMPLAN is a regional input-output computer modeling system used by economists to estimate the effects of spending and policy actions. In this case, IMPLAN was used to estimate the economic effects that take place as goods and services are purchased in connection with expenditures by Venture Richmond, the organizers of the Richmond Folk Festival, and local and visiting attendees.

The IMPLAN model divides the effects of a change in the economy into three components—direct, indirect, and induced effects—and sums them to derive a total economic impact (See Table 1.1).

TABLE 1.1: DEFINITIONS OF IMPLAN TERMS

IMPACT TYPE	DEFINITION
Direct Impact	The initial expenditures, or production, made by the industry experiencing economic change
Indirect Impact	The effects on local inter-industry spending through backward linkages (which track industry purchases backward through the supply chain)
Induced Impact	The results of local spending of employee wages and salaries for both employees of the directly affected industry and the employees of the indirectly affected industries

DIRECT IMPACTS are expenditures made in relation to putting on or attending the event. For example, in order to put on a music event, equipment (tents, stages, portajohns, etc.) needed to be rented. This initial spending causes ripple effects (also known as “multiplier effects”) within the study area. These additional effects are called indirect and induced impacts.

INDIRECT IMPACTS are “supplier” effects. To continue the example, businesses, like event equipment rental companies, which receive money from the original purchases must also buy additional goods and services to accom-

modate the new demand. As purchases are made from other firms, the economy is stimulated further.

INDUCED IMPACTS are generated by changes in household expenditures. When companies receive additional business because of the direct and indirect effects, they meet the new demand by hiring additional workers or paying existing employees more to work longer hours. As a result, these employees will have more money to spend on the goods and services that they buy within the study area. To complete the example, employees of event equipment rental companies will be paid from the patronage of Venture Richmond's spending and in turn spend their paychecks on goods and services.

The direct, indirect, and induced impacts are estimated for labor income, value added, economic impact, and employment impact. These components are defined below:

- **EMPLOYMENT:** The number of total jobs in the study area, including full-time and part-time employees, supported by the new economic activity.
- **LABOR INCOME:** The wages and salaries paid to local employees of firms as well as an estimate of the value of benefits earned by these workers. Labor income also includes payments received as income by freelance employees.
- **ECONOMIC IMPACT:** The overall economic effects on the region, which can be viewed as the total additional output generated by rehabilitation, are equal to the value added plus intermediate expenditures. Consider the economic impact as the value of change in sales or the value of change in production.

All spending generates some economic impact. However, not all spending related to the Folk Festival happens within the study area(s). When money is spent outside of the model area(s) that is considered an economic leakage - e.g., an event equipment rental company located outside of the Greater Richmond Area in our example. The spending data was therefore reduced to reflect only the spending happening within the City of Richmond, or in the Greater Richmond Area.

Economic impact models are spatially defined by political boundaries. The larger the spatial definition, the more localities included, the more economic spending is captured. For this reason, single locality models experience higher rates of economic leakage when compared to regional models. Similarly, regional models experience more economic linkage than statewide and so forth.

2.2: ECONOMIC IMPACT INPUTS

To measure the economic impact of the Richmond Folk Festival, two major spending categories were identified. The first spending inputs are payments from Venture Richmond to vendors in order to organize and host the event. The second is attendee spending in association with the event. Both of these spending inputs were further subdivided.

The budget (spending) for the organization on the festival was divided across multiple industry sectors based on the spending patterns provided directly from Venture Richmond. Attendee spending was divided between local attendees (those attending from the Richmond MSA) and non-local attendees (those attending from outside the Richmond MSA). The share of these attendee groups was calculated using website analytics from the Richmond Folk Festival website as a proxy. Unique spending patterns were then applied to these two attendance figures to form the input for economic input-output modeling.

VENTURE RICHMOND SPENDING

Measuring the impact of spending by Venture Richmond to host the Folk Festival was the first step in understanding the economic impact of the festival. In order to capture these impacts, fiscal information was provided to CURA by Venture Richmond regarding categorized expenses. These expenses included:

- Bank fees
- Beverage purchase
- Electrical Equipment Expense
- EMS/First Aid
- Equipment Rental/Purchase (Tents, Stages, Portajohns, etc.)
- Event Insurance (includes licenses, permits, legal, etc.)
- Hospitality
- Labor
- Marketing
- Merchandise Purchase (to sell)
- Performers' Fees
- Performers/Staff (food, housing, travel)
- Professional Services (NCTA, Herb's, non-profits, Plan9)
- Program Management Allocation (staff time)
- Sales Tax
- Security
- Signage
- Transportation (public/performers shuttles)
- Trash removal (refuse & recycling)
- Volunteers

While all spending creates an economic impact, for the purpose of this study - as discussed in the previous section - we are only interested in the economic impact that occurs within Richmond and the surrounding counties. For this reason spending on performers was not utilized in the model as very little of the performer pay will be spent in the region.

The remaining spending categories were converted into IMPLAN industry sectors. For example, EMS/First Aid Services becomes Sector 477 - Offices of Other Health Practitioners while Marketing becomes Sector 460 - Marketing, Research, and All Other Miscellaneous Services. The corresponding spending value for each sector was utilized as the input for the input-output economic modeling and provides the direct, indirect, and induced effects with regards to employment, labor income, and economic impact - for all affected industries in the model area - initiated by Venture Richmond spending.

Venture Richmond's spending in the model areas totaled \$1,169,100. It was spread across the numerous aforementioned industry categories and accounted for 7 percent of the total spending created by the Richmond Folk Festival. This 7 percent is crucial as this relatively small amount of spending attracts and initiates nearly fifty times as much spending in the model region from local and non-local attendees.

ATTENDEE SPENDING

If Venture Richmond's fundraising and spending is what makes the festival possible, the majority of the economic impact comes from attendee spending. Non-local attendees in particular have a large impact on the local economy, as they spend money not only at the event but across a wide array of associated tourism industries.

In order to determine the impact of local and non-local visitor spending, the initial step was to determine the share of attendees who are from the Richmond MSA and those who visit Richmond for the event. As the event relies on donations as opposed to the sale of tickets, there was no direct percentage value for how many visitors came from outside the Richmond Region. For the purposes of this analysis, analytics from the Richmond Folk

coming from outside Virginia). According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation's Arts & Culture Travel Profile, the median travel expense per visitor was \$300, which resulted in \$22,519,200 worth of spending. As was previously discussed, not all of this spending necessarily occurred within the model areas. For this reason, some categories (e.g. Transportation to Get to State) were entirely eliminated, while others (e.g. Gasoline Within State, Lodging) were discounted utilizing informed assumptions for local purchase percentage. The total subsequent spending was reduced to \$18,522,042, which accounted for 86 percent of the total spending and was applied to the remaining 11 spending category percentages.

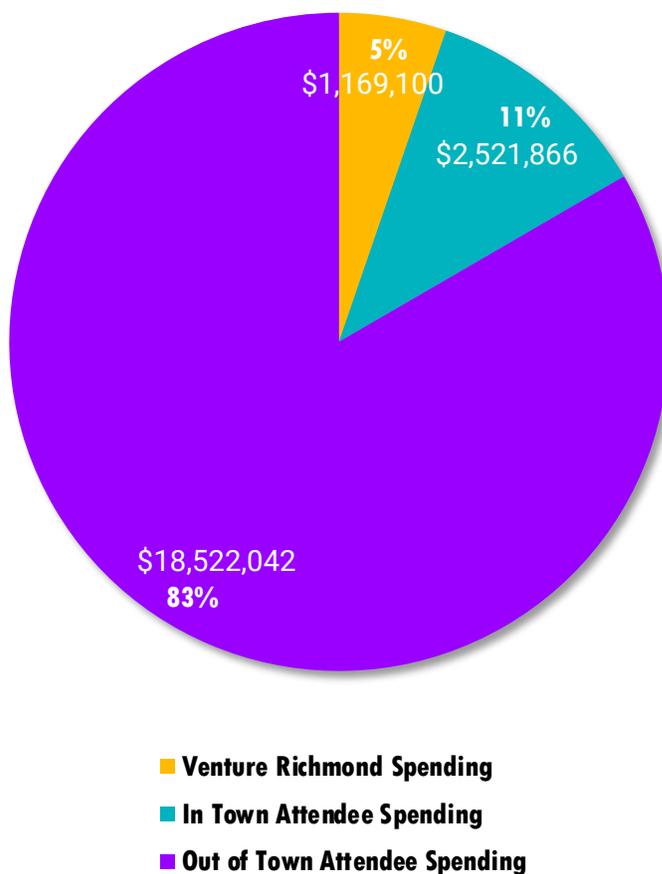
TOTAL SPENDING INPUTS

The Richmond Folk Festival had:

- \$1,169,100 (5 percent) in considered initial spending from Venture Richmond
- \$2,521,886 (11 percent) in spending from local attendees
- \$18,522,042 (83 percent) in considered spending from non-local attendees

See Figure 1.1 to the right for an illustration of the spending inputs from Venture Richmond, local attendees, and non-local attendees.

FIGURE 1.1: TOTAL SPENDING INPUT SHARE



ECONOMIC IMPACT

TOTAL IN-MODEL SPENDING:
\$22,213,028

1.3: ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS

The previous spending categories were utilized as the input to two input-output economic impact models. The first model is exclusive to the City of Richmond while the second covers the so-called Greater Richmond Region which includes Richmond, and the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover, and Henrico. Both models considered the input in dollars across a variety of industries and created economic output results based on industry linkages. Output included employment, associated labor income, and economic impact (output) for the direct, indirect, and induced impacts. These three levels of impact were then summed to produce total impact, which also includes state and local taxes generated by the input activity.

Between the two models there is an evident difference in impact. Models that include multiple localities inherently have a greater impact than a single locality due to stronger industry linkages and relatively less spending leakages due to geography size. Economic linkages also cross political borders. For example, the equipment rental company contracted by Venture Richmond is located within Richmond, but they may source some materials from Richmond, some materials from the surrounding counties, and some materials from outside of either study area. The larger the geographic net that is cast the larger the economic impact will be as there is naturally less leakage.

What follows are the estimated results from the economic impact analysis utilizing IMPLAN (Tables 1.2 and 1.3).

CITY OF RICHMOND MODEL ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS

In the smaller economic model encompassing only the City of Richmond, there was an economic multiplier of 1.2. A total spending of \$22,213,028 produced a total economic impact of \$27,274,212. This spending resulted in a total of 362 supported jobs, with 308 of these jobs a result of direct spending. These jobs provided employees with \$12,064,904 in wages.

TABLE 1.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS - CITY OF RICHMOND MODEL

IMPACT CATEGORY	ECONOMIC IMPACT	JOBS CREATED	EMPLOYMENT WAGES	STATE/LOCAL TAX REVENUE
Direct	\$17,810,987	308	\$8,609,657	-
Indirect	\$5,589,630	29	\$2,094,471	-
Induced	\$3,873,596	25	\$1,360,775	-
TOTAL	 \$27,274,212	 362	 \$12,064,904	 \$1,432,053



1.2 X **ECONOMIC MULTIPLIER**
[IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND]

GREATER RICHMOND REGION MODEL ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS

In the larger economic model encompassing the City of Richmond as well as Chesterfield, Hanover, and Henrico counties, the economic impact was considerably higher as the larger region minimized leakage compared to only modeling the City of Richmond. The economic multiplier for the spending of \$22,213,028 was 1.7. The input value generated \$37,356,009 across the four modeled localities. This spending supports a total of 459 jobs within the modeled region, with 337 of those jobs coming in the form of direct impact. Employees working in these jobs earned a total of \$14,960,808.

TABLE 1.3 ECONOMIC IMPACT RESULTS - GREATER RICHMOND REGION MODEL

IMPACT CATEGORY	ECONOMIC IMPACT	JOBS CREATED	EMPLOYMENT WAGES	STATE/LOCAL TAX REVENUE
Direct	\$18,331,607	337	\$8,645,564	-
Indirect	\$7,993,325	46	\$2,696,454	-
Induced	\$11,031,076	75	\$3,618,789	-
TOTAL	 \$37,356,009	 459	 \$14,960,808	 \$2,466,413



X

ECONOMIC MULTIPLIER

[IN THE GREATER RICHMOND REGION]

ECONOMIC IMPACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF VENTURE RICHMOND SPENDING ON ECONOMIC IMPACT

As a percentage of input, Venture Richmond’s spending may seem small when compared to spending from local and, particularly, non-local attendees. However, Venture Richmond’s \$1,169,100 in in-model spending created an economic snowball effect that had an outsized impact on the economy of Central Virginia including the City of Richmond.

The additional spending by 220,000 Festival goers would not have been possible without the efforts of Venture Richmond. Due to this direct cause and effect of Venture Richmond’s spending on the spending of Folk Festival attendees, it makes sense to measure economic multipliers not only as a relationship between total spending and total economic impact, but also as a relationship between Venture Richmond’s spending and total economic impact. Venture Richmond’s spending of just over \$1.1 million had an economic multiplier of 23.3 in the city alone, and an even higher multiplier of 32.0 in the Greater Richmond Region.

Venture Richmond’s spending on the Richmond Folk Festival is the culmination of their fundraising efforts. As a non-profit organization they rely on donations from local government, private businesses, and attendees. Donations to Venture Richmond are spent locally and their economic impact is felt across the city and the Greater Richmond Region.

A group of people at a concert, with a man in the foreground holding a drumstick. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered and reads:

**“WE HAVE A DIVERSE
DEMOGRAPHIC BECAUSE
WE ARE OFFERING A
DIVERSE RANGE OF MUSIC.
OVER THE YEARS, WE
HAVE SEEN PEOPLE
COMING FROM ALL OVER
THE WORLD.”**



SECTION 3: QUALITATIVE IMPACTS

SECTION 3: QUALITATIVE IMPACTS

So far, this report has examined quantitative impacts of the Folk Festival on the Richmond community. This qualitative chapter serves to supplement the information presented in the previous chapters, and to offer a perspective not captured by numbers alone.

Data and information in this chapter was gathered from open-ended, first-person interviews with five community members involved in different capacities with the Folk Festival to learn more about their thoughts on the Folk Festival. Participants were asked to share their opinion on several topics, including:

- Festival contributions to the city economy
- Additional contributions that cannot be quantified - e.g., cultural vibrancy, community pride, etc.
- How the festival has changed over time and the subsequent impacts of these changes
- What they believe to be the overall impact on the Richmond region
- What can be done to improve the festival

In addition to these community interviews, CURA also completed a focus group with Venture Richmond staff members to gather information on the organization and process involved in hosting the festival. What emerged from interviews and the focus group was a deeper understanding of how the Folk Festival impacts those living and working in our community. After our discussion of key themes related to the Festival's recipe for success, attendees, and role in the region, we conclude this section by sharing information about how the Festival might be improved.

3.1: WHY THE FOLK FESTIVAL IS SUCCESSFUL IN RICHMOND

During the interviews and in the focus groups, we asked participants to provide us with three words that they would use to describe the Folk Festival. While their responses were varied, they were all positive, uplifting, and demonstrative of the value of the event. The word cloud in Figure 3.1 below depicts these descriptions.

The words in this figure were mentioned frequently through these interviews, particularly "community," "inclusive," "culture," and "diverse." All of these features have helped contribute to the Festival's success. According to two participants, as noted below, another key reason for the success of the Folk Festival is the fact that it is a highly anticipated community celebration:

- "[The Folk Festival is successful because of] the fact that we have the community looking forward to the festival...all aspects of it."

FIGURE 3.1: FOLK FESTIVAL WORD CLOUD



- “It’s how fall begins in Richmond.”

Participants also felt that diversity and inclusivity were key components of the festival, and that these components played major roles in their success:

- “[The Folk Festival] is a crown jewel of Richmond cultural life. It’s so diverse, so inclusive...it’s brought the community together in ways not seen before this festival.”
- “...a rainbow of demographics across the board.”
- “speaks of the cultural diversity of the city, despite its history.”
- “...a collision of culture.”

Others mentioned the importance of the organizers and volunteers in the success of the Folk Festival:

- “[The Folk Festival] is well-run, well-planned, and well-executed. It’s a year-round planning process with Venture Richmond, the City of Richmond, the National Council, and volunteers working together to make it run smoothly.”
- “Venture and their team do an outstanding job.”

A final reason for success that participants mentioned was the location of the Festival, and it’s ability to showcase the beauty that Richmond has to offer:

- “It’s a really good formula. A beautiful location, it showcases a slice of nature in a very urban environment...there’s a subliminal message of possibility.”

3.2: THE FOLK FESTIVAL CROWD

Participants were also asked to share their thoughts on the target demographic of the Folk Festival. Many discussed an evolution in the attendance, moving from an older, predominantly white crowd in the early days of the Festival to a more diverse event now attracting people of all ages and races.

- “[The target demographic] is changing. It started as whiter and older, with some hipsters and people looking for novelty. It’s become more racially and culturally diverse.”
- “At first it was smaller, Caucasian, and older adults. Now it’s every demographic.”
- “It’s changed; we try to incorporate all types of music so everyone is interested.”

Many also noted that people came from various places that may not typically visit Downtown Richmond:

- “People are coming from non-local and from surrounding areas that don’t usually come down town.”
- “It’s attended by as many as 200,000 people in three days, it puts us on the map as a city that celebrates diversity and makes people want to visit or live here.”
- “[The Folk Festival] is a calling card for Richmond.”

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: SUCCESS OVER A DECADE

“We have a team who has worked on this event for over a decade. We all know our roles, we all know everyone else’s roles [...]. I feel like that’s probably what the key to [the Folk Festival] is - the staff producing it. It’s a little scary to think that a lot of the folks have [organized] it for so long. The folks with the National Council [for the Traditional Arts] play a major role in the music at the festival and they’re key.”

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: A NEW, DIVERSE AUDIENCE

“There is a lot of change. We have been very proactive over the past few years [in attracting a diverse audience]. We were more proactive in the early years [in trying to] attract specific audiences.”

some.”

- “Assist people more with mobility issues and make it easier to navigate the site, you can’t have vehicles because there are too many pedestrians, but make it easier.”
- “We may be maxing out this site; it’s crowded and maybe not able to accommodate everyone.”

One participant also noted the importance of continuing to select diverse performers and artists to participate at the festival:

- “We have been trying to bring new music. Different music brings different people; when people come for one artist, they’ll stay to hear other artists.”

Another participant suggested expanding the festival and possibly linking this expansion to other events happening in Richmond:

- “[The Folk Festival] could add a fourth day, or satellite events leading up to it. Maybe with the schools.”

3.5: ALTERNATE SCENARIO

In order to get a full understanding of the impact of the Folk Festival and of participant’s feelings toward the event, they were also asked about an alternate scenario – what would happen if Venture Richmond stopped hosting the Folk Festival. One participant noted that, in this scenario, the Festival may no longer be free and that this could lead to a decline in diversity and new music:

- “There would be a price tag, and attendance would suffer as well. It could lose diversity if it pandered to the crowd, maybe it would only focus on popular acts to bring in more money.”

Another participant felt that it would be unfortunate, but that people would find a way to move on:

- “It’d be a major disappointment, but they’d get over it, move on, and seek similar events elsewhere.”

For the majority, however, especially those who were directly involved in organizing the Festival, this scenario it would be a devastating loss and that others would quickly take action to ensure that it continued:

- “It would be a death in the family. People look forward to it, plan around it...there would be a major groundswell of creative support rising to say it’s not acceptable. We may have to change the location, but everyone involved would bend over backward to see it not end.”
- “There would be a void, and people would look for something to fill that void.”
- “It’d be very sad, we’ve become quite woven into the fabric of Richmond. People expect this, it’d be like if they canceled the Super Bowl.”

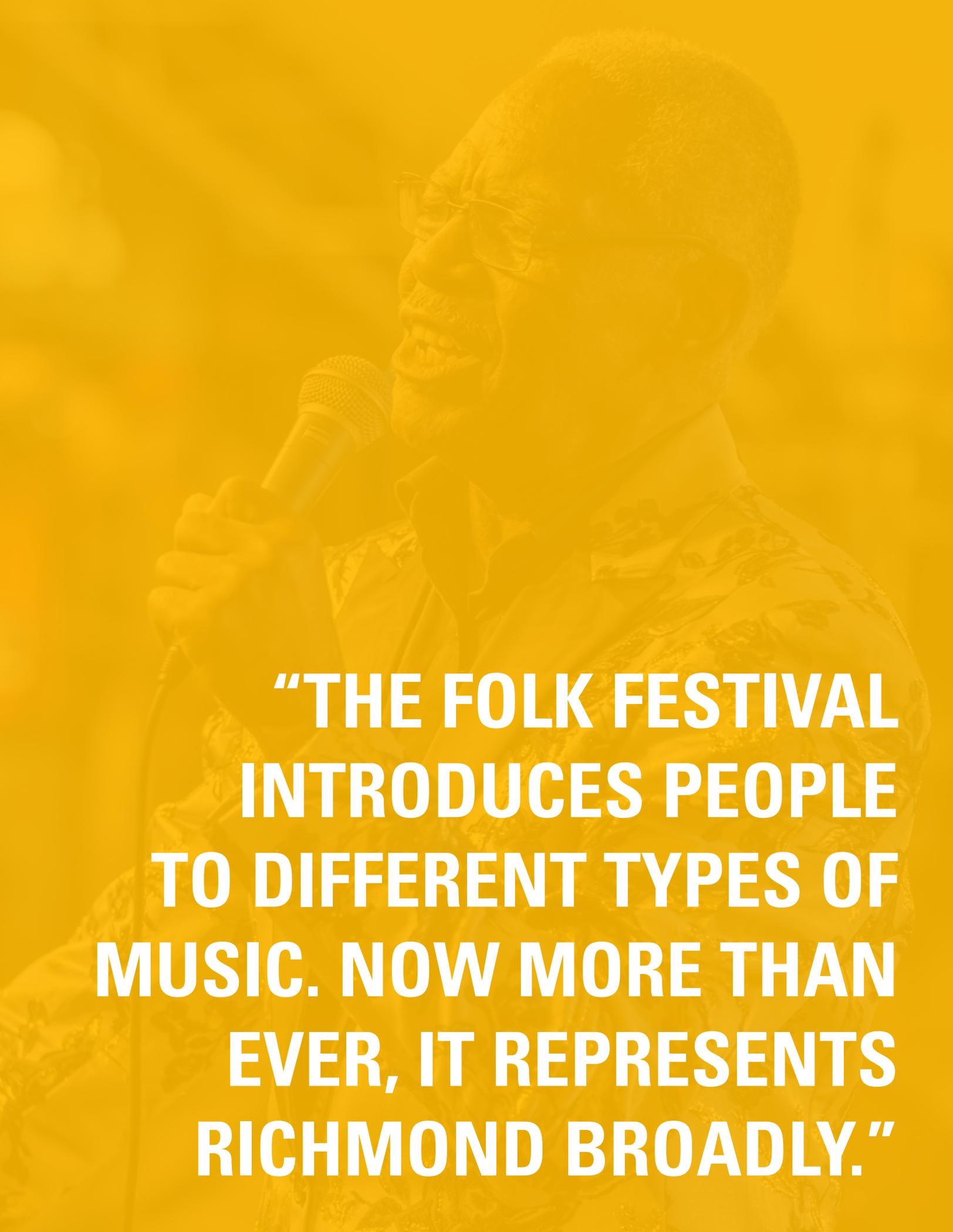
STAFF SPOTLIGHT: IMPROVING THE MARKET

“The marketplace has more vendors to choose from, [but] because of our location we are kind of confined. I believe when we first started the marketplace it had a sponsor, it was Ten Thousand Villages. We had them for a couple of years and then that kind of fizzled out.”

“You get a thousand vendors [applying] and only 25 spaces to fill.”

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: KEEPING FOLK FREE

“This isn’t something to improve it, but [just] to maintain its freeness. [We] keep in the back of our heads that it could easily become a \$5-\$10 per day ticket if we lose one sponsor. That could change the event, the feel, and vibe very easily. That’s a constant thing in the back of our heads.”



**“THE FOLK FESTIVAL
INTRODUCES PEOPLE
TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF
MUSIC. NOW MORE THAN
EVER, IT REPRESENTS
RICHMOND BROADLY.”**



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The Folk Festival is an important weekend in Richmond's cultural landscape - *it's when the fall begins*, to paraphrase one of the stakeholders. Thanks to strong partnerships between Venture Richmond, the National Council for the Traditional Arts, business sponsors, and a large team of dedicated volunteers, the Folk Festival is a free weekend event that highlights a wide variety of unique cultures, their traditions, and the arts born out of those traditions. The Folk Festival is a weekend when all of Richmond comes together to celebrate.

In addition to a diverse variety of Richmond residents, it also attracts attendees and their associated spending to Richmond. 83 percent of all spending associated with the festival comes from out-of-town attendees. The Folk Festival generates more than \$22 million in spending in the Greater Richmond Region which generates an economic impact of over \$37 million for the region with more than \$27 million of that impact occurring directly in the city itself. This equates to the support of 459 jobs across Greater Richmond. The Folk Festival serves as a model for the connection between cultural programming and the economy of Central Virginia.

The Folk Festival is successful due to its inclusiveness. Key to this inclusiveness are two major factors:

- **Diversity of Unique Performers/Vendors** - Ensures that there is a wide variety of things to see, hear, do, and taste. This draws people to the Richmond Folk Festival from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and geographic areas.
- **Free Admission** - Allows everyone to participate regardless of socio-economic standing. Free admission means that if anyone wants to enjoy Richmond and the world's culture, they can.

The growth and success of the Folk Festival reflects the growth and success of Richmond. The city and festival organizers, increasingly throughout the history of the festival, have been mutually supportive partners which bring together private businesses, local government, and non-profit entities like Venture Richmond to engender a socially inclusive community and an economically growing city.