

The Challenge

The Greater Toronto region is home to approximately 8,500 arts and culture organizations, employing over 150,000 people and generating around \$9B for the region's GDP. While the region is already world-renowned for its many arts and culture activities, momentum now exists to build on the strengths of the sector and increase the profile of arts and culture both among the region's population and globally. To achieve this, increased coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among arts and culture organizations and players in other sectors is required. To do this, a framework to allow sector participants to address the sector's issues and challenges relating to arts and culture in a unified way is needed.

Current Situation

There is a clear opportunity to build on the existing strengths of the region's arts and culture sector and establish the Greater Toronto region as a global arts and culture capital. To achieve this, four main challenges have been identified that must be addressed:

- creating a common vision for the sector;
- fostering audience growth and development;
- increasing cooperation among sector participants; and
- developing a robust sector-wide research effort and fact base.

The Need for a Common Vision

An agreed-upon common vision will help to ensure that sector leaders continuously show that they are aware of the broader arts and culture ecosystem to which they belong. Any potential vision needs to be sensitive to the goals and aspirations of organizations across all sizes and disciplines.

Fostering Audience Growth and Development

To build a more vibrant arts and culture scene in the Toronto region, audience growth and development is essential. Many festivals and cultural events enjoy stable or growing audiences from year to year. However, many organizations' audiences are not growing at the same pace. This is particularly true for paid events (as opposed to free ones, which are a big part of festivals such as Pride, Caribana, and Luminato). CivicAction's consultations suggest that there may be a significant imbalance between the supply of and demand for artistic products and services in the region. To address this, it has been suggested that the sector take better advantage of the region's population diversity in growing interest in arts and culture among local residents. The goals would be to make arts and culture a widely recognized part of the region's identity and instil within the local population a sense of pride and ownership in the sector.

Increasing Cooperation Amongst Sector Participants

To inspire residents of the Toronto region to engage and take pride in local arts and culture activity and also to gain support from the public and private sectors, increased collaboration amongst sector participants is required. Currently, the sector often operates in geography- or discipline-specific silos, which can result in the sector presenting a fragmented and uncoordinated image. Increased sector-wide coordination, cooperation, and collaboration can also establish the cohesive platform needed to more effectively influence and educate public and private sector decision makers on the value and importance of arts and culture.

Developing a Robust Sector-wide Research Effort and Fact Base

While most arts and culture organizations have a strong fact base related to their own activities, there is currently no effort to capture and track robust sector-wide data. While it is possible to obtain data regarding the size and economic impact of the sector from various sources, there is no mechanism for organizing it in ways that would help the broader sector such as: shaping it into messages that would resonate with the general population as well as policy makers; tracking it over time to identify relevant trends; and analyzing audience characteristics to identify more effective ways to reach out to broader demographics.

Promising New Developments

Three high-profile and relatively recent examples of the arts and culture sector coming together to advocate with one voice are 1) Toronto's Cultural Renaissance, 2) the movement to mitigate the impact on the sector of Ontario's new HST, and 3) ArtsVote Toronto.

Toronto's Cultural Renaissance successfully brought together the ROM, the AGO, the Gardiner Museum, the Royal Conservatory, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, and the National Ballet School to advocate as one group for funding for new or enhanced physical spaces.

The **HST Committee** consisted of a number of prominent Arts organizations that studied the effects of the HST on performing and visual arts organizations and engaged in joint advocacy efforts to mitigate the impacts of the tax on the province's arts organizations.

ArtsVote Toronto is a group of sector participants from across arts disciplines that work effectively together to inform the public and election candidates about arts and cultures issues and mobilize arts-savvy voters during municipal elections.

Promising Practices – Other Jurisdictions

Culture Montréal is a non-profit organization with a cross-sectoral approach to promoting culture as a key component of Montréal's identity. The main objectives of the organization include promoting culture and making it accessible to all citizens of Montréal and helping to strengthen the profile of the arts and culture in Montréal in order to achieve national and international recognition.

The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance engages in marketing, research, advocacy, and policy work on behalf of the arts and culture sector in Greater Philadelphia. The Alliance conducts and publishes extensive research to inform the region's population, lawmakers, and civic leaders on the social and economic impact of the arts and culture sector.

Chief Barriers to Progress

- **Scarce Resources:** Resources in the arts and culture sector are generally very limited and some organizations may not be able to commit to sector-wide efforts because their time is invested in running the core business.
- **Complexity of Creating Broad Alignment:** It will be challenging to align such a large number of organizations around common goals and objectives and enable them to truly speak with a common voice.
- **Reluctance to Share Information:** Any coordinating structure must build an environment of openness, trust, and sharing and ensure that participants see the sharing of necessary information to be of benefit to all, and not fear negative consequences from doing so.
- **Decline in Arts Education:** Significant cuts to arts and culture related programs in educational curriculums have created a need to for the sector to fill that void and provide education and outreach efforts to children and youth in the region.

Opportunities for Action

Three broad opportunities for action present themselves to the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector as it looks to build profile and audiences:

1. Single campaign leading to enduring collaboration

Focus on one or more specific campaign(s) relevant to a central issue facing the sector, then use this campaign as a springboard to establish a formal framework for cooperation and collaboration on common issues in the future. The sector can dedicate significant resources to address one or more specific challenge(s) within a set timeframe, then identify other challenges to organize around in the future.

2. Establish a framework for cooperation

Rather than focusing on a specific campaign, the sector can work toward establishing a sector-wide framework to address issues and challenges in a common voice. To succeed, the framework would have to be sensitive to the needs and voices of organizations regardless of size or discipline.

3. Create a research and policy centre for Arts and Culture

Complementing either of the two potential opportunities above would be to develop a comprehensive and robust research and analysis effort for the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector. Adding a research and policy element to the framework for collaboration described above would ensure that those involved have the benefit of the most up-to-date information on the sector and that this information is used effectively in both policy influence and marketing efforts.

Questions for Discussion

1. How should the vision for the Toronto region's arts and culture sector be defined?
 2. Which of the three opportunities for action should be pursued? Or should a different action be considered?
 3. What are the two most important opportunities/issues to catalyze cooperation among sector participants?
 - a. Is the required change incremental or dramatic?
 4. The arts and culture sector in Toronto is comprised of a diverse set of individual organizations, associations and stakeholders. They are large and small, non-profit and for-profit, comprised of many different disciplines and are geographically diverse. Give this complexity:
 - a. How can the dramatically different perspectives and models of the region's arts and culture community be unified?
 - b. How should collaboration and cooperation be governed? Is a looser, more grass-roots structure favoured? Or is a more formal, centralized structure needed?
 - c. Can an existing organization coordinate and drive the effort? Or is a new body required?
 5. How should any proposed initiative be funded?
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¹ This backgrounder paper has been summarized from a longer version, which is available for download on CivicAction's website, www.civicaction.ca.

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