



The Greater Toronto region is home to approximately 8,500 arts and cultural organizations, employing over 150,000 people and generating about \$9 billion for the nation's GDP.<sup>64</sup> Arts and culture are not just important to economic development and employment opportunities; they are also a fundamental building block to a healthy and vibrant society. Summit participants believe we can build on our existing strengths and increase the profile of our arts and culture sector, making it a core pillar of our identity both domestically and abroad.

### Challenges

More than 200 artists, arts and culture administrators, funders and educators took part in pre-Summit Working Group meetings, regional roundtables and individual consultations. They acknowledged that every arts organization is struggling individually with these and other pressing issues:

- organizations need to grow revenue and diversify funding sources in the face of declining government support;
- smaller and medium sized organizations need to repair and renew facilities; and
- all organizations need to foster audience growth and development in an increasingly diverse region.

They also agreed that these struggles could be lessened, and greater results achieved, if they collaborated more on virtually every issue they face.

Yet, collaboration remains a big challenge for the sector. It will take time to build trust and recognition of mutual interest among organizations that compete for funds and audiences.

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Further, even once trust is developed, it will be complicated to get such a large number of organizations to align around common goals and speak with a unified voice. Scarce resources alone may deter many from committing to sector-wide efforts, as they instead focus their limited time and funding on running core businesses, developing future audiences and providing outreach efforts to fill the void left by declining arts education in schools.

### Strengths

The large number of people and organizations involved in the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector speaks to its power and potential to make change if its resources are aligned. It is a very positive sign that so many appear ready to pursue greater collaboration among arts and cultural organizations and with other sectors.

## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

### 1. Establish a steering committee comprised of representatives from a diverse range of arts organizations from across the region to move the sector towards greater collaboration and perhaps an enduring formal structure.

There was strong consensus at the Summit that the Greater Toronto region can be the world's leading cultural capital. It was suggested that the arts and culture sector adopt this vision and ensure that every person in the Greater Toronto region can see themselves in it, in particular those in business and education due to the key roles those sectors play in regional economic development and the cultivation of artists and audiences.

It was agreed that any collaboration should include representation from

organizations of all sizes and across all disciplines. Both for-profit and non-profit business representatives would also be key players in any collaboration, not just as funders, but also as active partners in determining and pursuing a path. Finally, it was agreed that a collaborative body would not necessarily need to be a new organization and could be housed in an existing arts service organization.

Establishing a regional steering committee to research and propose an action plan for the sector and relevant

*“This is not an ‘us and them’ situation. None of us can afford to be divided.”*

*- Jeff Melanson, Canada’s National Ballet School*

partners would be an important first step towards sustainable collaboration. Among other things, this committee could consider facilitating greater sector-wide collaboration (proposed during the pre-Summit consultations); perhaps developing a campaign or event with a single area of focus as a starting point, and later transforming the platform that emerges into a formal structure for future collaboration.

The Summit suggested a number of specific and pressing issues and opportunities that could anchor an initial campaign by sector and related leaders. The following are all ideas that could be driven or carried out by individual groups or sub-sectors, but that will only achieve their full potential with significant collaboration across the sector:

- **establish the independent research and policy centre** referred to below;
- **establish a region-wide arts and culture summit:** in the spirit of the Canada Arts Summit, the summit would regularly bring together leaders to discuss sector-wide challenges and practical solutions to address them;
- **create and launch a sector-wide brand to promote arts and culture in the Greater Toronto region to local residents and visitors:** this could be modelled on VQA Ontario, a powerful over-arching brand created by the

vintners in the late 1980s to help market their individual labels;

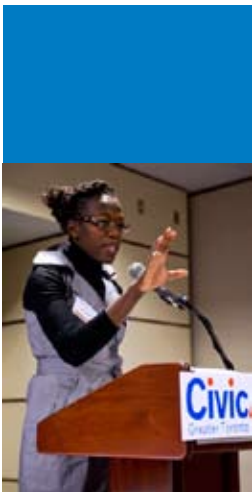
- **develop new audiences:** Summit participants proposed several ways to target and gather data about the arts interests of newcomers, students, tourists or other demographic groups: building on programs like the Toronto Public Library’s Museum and Arts Pass, a Greater Toronto region **“Arts Pass”** to provide access to all types of art as well as free public transportation to exhibits and shows; **“Culturalicious,”** an arts version of the popular Toronto restaurant promotion; and a program like Big Brothers and Big Sisters, in which experienced patrons expose the next generation to arts and culture or established arts organizations and artists mentor newer ones;
- **build the balance sheet of arts organizations:** develop a creative industry social venture fund and strategic partnerships to encourage more business involvement in the arts and to offset declining government support; and
- **incubate a sector-wide “Big Bang” event:** this would be aimed at bringing artists together with sports, cultural and other organizations to foster long term relationships and collaboration. The first of these events could be held at the Pan/Parapan Am Games – “PanAmania!”

If this initial collaboration proves successful, the committee should consider establishing a formal structure to facilitate ongoing collaboration within the sector on marketing, advocacy and other activities. There was considerable appetite during the Summit proceedings to consider a more enduring body.

## **2. Establish an independent research and policy centre focused on issues affecting the arts and culture sector.**

While many organizations have a wealth of information about the size and economic impact of the sector, this is not systematically shared for broad use. Creating a mechanism for organizing and providing access to information like this would help the larger arts ecosystem to:

- better communicate with the general population as well as funders and



The **Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance** has a stated goal of doubling audience participation in the arts by 2020. It engages in marketing, research, advocacy and policy work on behalf of the arts and culture sector in Greater Philadelphia. The Alliance conducts its own research and partners with third party researchers. It publishes the results of its extensive research to make its region's population, lawmakers and civic leaders aware of the social and economic impact of the arts and culture sector. The Alliance is also very active in policy and advocacy efforts, which are informed by its research and analysis.<sup>65</sup>

- policy makers;
- track relevant trends and highlight gaps needing attention; and
- identify more effective ways to reach out to new and broader demographics.

The sector would benefit also from a centralized source of data, best practices and research into the wider issues affecting arts and culture, including: international, national,

provincial and municipal cultural policy agendas; the impacts of social, economic and technological changes; and the potential for public-private partnerships and alternate funding models in the wake of diminishing government resources.

There are numerous organizations with mandates to gather information relating to their organization, genre or the sector at large, including the Creative Trust, the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts, Business for the Arts and individual arts organizations, to name a few. Any one or more of these could initiate an effort to create a sector-focused research and policy centre. There was a strong preference for such a centre not to be government-funded, at least initially, but instead to acquire resources through secondments, member contributions and other means.

See the related backgrounder, *Arts & Culture: Vision and Value Through New Collaborations*, prepared for the Greater Toronto Summit 2011 at: [www.civicaction.ca/publications](http://www.civicaction.ca/publications)

