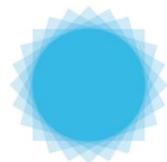


A New Value Proposition for Public Funding to the Arts

**Canadian Public Arts Funders (CPAF)
2013 Annual General Meeting**

Meeting Report

November 13-15, 2013
Banff, Alberta



CPAF
Canadian
Public Arts
Funders

OPSAC
Organismes publics
de soutien aux arts
du Canada

BACKGROUND

The [Canadian Public Arts Funders \(CPAF\)](#) is a network that unites and serves the federal, provincial and territorial arts councils and equivalent public arts funders in Canada. There is a CPAF [member organization in each province and territory](#), and the member at the federal level is the [Canada Council for the Arts](#), which also provides the CPAF Secretariat.

CPAF member organizations convened in Banff, Alberta, from November 13-15, 2013 for their Annual General Meeting (AGM), hosted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Each CPAF AGM provides a forum for Board Chairs, other Board representatives, Directors, and Associate Directors from CPAF member organizations to discuss current issues facing public arts funders and to exchange knowledge amongst their peers.

The theme of the 2013 AGM was *A New Value Proposition for Public Funding to the Arts*. The evolution of the case for public investment in the arts was explored, as was the need for a new proposition in the current context. The theme built on the 2011 and 2012 AGM and Strategic Development Meeting themes, as part of a broader exploration of the context for change, implementing innovation and public arts funding.

The objectives of the 2013 AGM were to provide participants:

- An opportunity to explore how the value proposition of public arts funding has changed over time; the implications this has for the mandate and interventions of public arts funders; and how CPAF members have addressed these developments in concrete ways; and
- A confidential and collegial forum to share knowledge; discuss issues unique to each member and those common to the network; and to gain insight into the general factors and practices affecting support to artists, arts organizations and the Canadian arts ecology.

This report summarizes the discussions that took place at the 2013 AGM, and highlights issues raised and decisions made. For further information, please contact Melanie Yugo, Partnership and Networks Officer, Canada Council for the Arts, and CPAF Secretariat, at 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5144, or by email at melanie.yugo@canadacouncil.ca.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

The Year in Review

Jeffrey Anderson, Chair of the CPAF Steering Committee and Executive Director of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, provided an overview of 2013 CPAF activities and budget, as well as a briefing on the current funding environment. The main points emerging were:

- The combined budgets of CPAF members remained relatively stable in 2013, at just over \$425 million. There were notable increases in British Columbia and Nova Scotia.
- Federal funding to culture has remained stable this year
- Shelly Glover was named the new federal Minister of Canadian Heritage. Colleen Swords was named the new Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage.
- CPAF members continue, at all levels of government, to work in an environment of fiscal restraint.

- Government priorities at the federal and provincial/territorial levels remain focused on recovery from the 2008 economic downturn.
- Many CPAF members are continuing to find ways to demonstrate value as our budgets remain stable or decrease. Like many sectors, public arts funders are trying to find ways to do more with less.

Roundtable Introductions and Theme-Based Agency Updates

Each agency provided a brief update on its activities and the current environment in which they are working. They also each outlined how the value proposition in their jurisdiction was changing and how they were making the case for the arts.

What's working: The language of changing narratives provided a coherent thread throughout all the agency updates. CPAF members are emphasizing a shift from a narrative of need to one of contribution and collaboration, outlining the integrated role that artists and the arts sector play in areas such as community well-being, economic impact, identity and pride. Many are communicating directly with elected officials, the business sector and community partners. The language of partnerships, particularly with regards to the business sector, was a common theme. Members are clarifying their links to other government policy agendas and integrating their programming into a variety of aspects of public and private work.

Ensuring that the programs and policies of CPAF members reflect the diversity of their communities is a preoccupation as is showing the impact of the arts on quality of life. This is critical as CPAF members develop the narrative of the ultimate beneficiaries of arts funding being citizens.

Many CPAF members are revisiting program assumptions and approaches to funding in light of shifts in the value proposition as well as changes in the arts funding environment. These changes must be balanced by the need to ensure excellence remains a defining value of the work of member agencies.

Challenges: Shared challenges include determining and reaching the audience for these messages. More direct approaches to elected officials is a risky proposition but one which appears to have worked for those agencies that have engaged that strategy. Elections and other changing government priorities can upset the balancing act that all agencies perform.

A critical theme that was underlined by a number of agencies is the difficulty in measuring the impact of a grant. This is seen as a weakness of the current funding paradigm in a number of jurisdictions that needs to be addressed through enhanced data sources and evolving approaches to reporting.

Revisiting the Case for Public Funding to the Arts

Following an introduction by the CPAF Secretariat with a synthesis of past CPAF AGM themes and the evolution of arguments for arts funding, the participants split into groups to discuss the notion of a changing value proposition. The following summarizes themes from each breakout group and the subsequent plenary discussion.

Defining value: All groups wrestled with the idea of value and of a value proposition. A proposed definition of a value proposition was to “explain something that has promise and what will happen by delivering on that promise”. However, the debate about the central concept was broad. Is it about the value of the arts, the work that is supported, or public arts funding and public funders? Value to which public or which community? What are we valuing: the return on investment or the qualitative impact? The consensus around the table was that there had to be a focus on the impact on the public.

Changing values: Since the formation of the first arts councils in Canada, there have been some changes to the conditions of artists and creation, but many continue to feel that the need for a unique voice that defines Canadians in the world remains. What that voice represents, given the dramatic changes in Canadian society, is different now than then. Changes in infrastructure, training and dissemination have altered the terrain considerably. The role of the arts in supporting community engagement, social well-being and impact on the public has grown substantially.

Messaging: The groups expressed a number of different messages or approaches to messaging. Some came forward with specific wording (e.g. supporting creativity advances community well-being), while others discussed the importance of having a central narrative that can be tailored to different audiences and diverse voices. How the sports sector has positioned itself within a broad spectrum of messaging about the value of physical activity was seen as a model. Many agencies had worked on economic impact studies that helped to highlight this issue for the business community while others wished to emphasize the context of creativity and how artists facilitate and ground a broader definition of creativity. There continued to be considerable discussion of for whom this messaging was intended.

Case Studies: Changes in Practice by Public Arts Funders

Expanding Ideas of Support to the Arts

- ***Development of Business and Arts Newfoundland:*** This [new organization](#) is the result of over two years of conversation. It will act as a broker to bring businesses and individual philanthropists together with artists and arts organizations, help with board development, and matching. The goal is to supplement existing government funding and sponsorship partnerships.
- ***Building Connected Communities through Invest Alberta:*** This [crowd-sourcing platform](#), originally developed for Calgary 2012, has the potential to expand throughout Alberta. It distinguishes itself from other crowd-sourcing initiatives in its emphasis on pre-assessed projects, ensuring high quality. The challenges include the delivery model and competing with commercial crowd-sourcing platforms.
- ***Public Benefit and the Relationship between Audience and Artist:*** This initiative (*Ontario Dances/Ontario Danse*) from the Ontario Arts Council provides a variety of supports to presenters outside of Toronto to encourage them to present more dance, develop the capacity of the presenter to engage audiences with work that might be unfamiliar, diversify their offering and support dance artists in marketing their work. With support from this funding program, a dance animator is hired by each presenter as part of audience development. The program has resulted in a significant increase in performance bookings

for Ontario dancers and companies. Next steps include replicating this program for theatre (*Theatre Connects/Connexions théâtres*).

From Capacity-Building to Adaptive Capacity

- ***Leadership for Change:*** The Canada Council for the Arts discussed the program which is replacing the Flying Squad, a program which supported organizational capacity. The [new Leadership for Change program](#) focuses on helping arts organizations manage change, either through specialized support or through regional or sectoral-shared initiatives. The intent is to foster greater experimentation and collaborative solutions to issues. The program's first deadline is December 2014; the program will be adjusted based on this first round.
- ***Evolution of Capacity Building Funding:*** The British Columbia Arts Council (BCAC) discussed two initiatives that are fostering greater capacity in arts organizations. The first is the evolution of ArtsPod that supported consultants to work with arts organizations. It was found that the work was not having long-term impact. BCAC has since launched the [Capacity and Sustainability](#) program that draws more on internal knowledge, including considerable analysis and scanning for the application. The outcome has shown greater reflection on the issues but not necessarily innovative solutions. Therefore the BCAC, with a number of partners, convened [WhereNext](#), a gathering in March 2014 of organizations to understand resilience and adaptation.
- ***Towards Addressing Equity:*** The New Brunswick Arts Board (artsNB) has analyzed the situation of equity-seeking groups within its funding streams and found considerable disparity. As a result, artsNB has put in place a number of measures to increase their support of Aboriginal artists, including dedicated staff, regional partnerships and community outreach. This has aided them in raising some additional funding and raised the profile of Aboriginal arts generally.

Supporting New Models in the Arts Community

- ***Northwest Territories Gatherings:*** The Northwest Territories Arts Council (NWTAC) has been addressing an ongoing issue in the territory: the isolation of arts and culture practitioners from across this vast and diverse region. It has organized four years of gatherings within the arts, culture and heritage, in partnership with other funders, to find common cause. The gatherings have provided an opportunity for exchange, provided governments with a better understanding of the context of arts and heritage practice and stimulated dialogue about joint actions. In a territory with no arts service organizations, the NWTAC is filling a critical need.
- ***Organizational Restructuring:*** For the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the largest environmental change has been the creation of a new cultural industries agency, Creative Saskatchewan. This has prompted the Arts Board to reinforce the narrative of the importance of creation and presentation. It has also challenged assumptions around the disciplinary-based program and organizational model. The SAB is now re-aligned around clusters of expertise: independent artists, arts organizations, and engagement in the arts with disciplinary expertise brought in as needed. It has been well received, both internally and externally.

- ***New organizational structure for the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec:*** The [new organizational structure](#) of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) promotes the organization's vision and development and aims to achieve overall cultural objectives (digital shift, regional action, inclusion of diversity, international visibility, disciplinary decompartmentalization). CALQ has grouped its programs into three main branches based on its mission's fields of intervention (creation, production and dissemination) by encouraging the cross-fertilization and growth that comes from interdisciplinary decompartmentalization and interaction. This new structure offers a collaborative dynamic and transversal management structure, encouraging versatility and synergy between teams to offer better integrated services tailored to the needs, expectations and realities of the art communities. This reorganization will also include four think tanks (visibility and impact of arts, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary arts, generational renewal and cultural diversity) that will focus on major current issues such as the digital revolution, demographic shifts and globalization.

Discussion

Supporting change: The role of public arts funders in anticipating and supporting change in the arts sector was seen as central. Public funders need to support transitions in a balanced way (e.g. growth of emerging artists and organizations and the graceful winding down of established ones when required or appropriate) and foster inter-dependency and collaboration within the community (incubations and mentorships, for example).

Civic footprint: Participants looked at the civic footprint of public arts funders themselves, noting the links and relationships needed to be able to integrate as citizens in their own communities and have a positive impact. Some are doing this through collaborations with other organizations and events and others are changing their public presence. This is a new area for most and fits within the broader narrative around a value proposition for the arts.

Clarifying the value proposition: Developing this new value proposition is one that funders must do with a broad set of collaborators, both within and beyond the arts, in a bottom-up approach. If this is seen as a “re-branding” of the arts, there are two elements to consider: (1) the value of public arts funders; and (2) the ways that the arts are received and perceived. Different arguments will be needed to support these two elements as they will resonate with different audiences.

Summary of the Day

“Value proposition” is a contested term and may not be the perfect language but there are clear indications of what the principles of a new argument or case could be based on. CPAF members place themselves differently within the understanding each of the following continuums:

Value Continuums

Argument / Rationale

Need	→	Contribution
Special Interest	→	Public interest

Beneficiary

Artists	→	Public
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Relationship of artists and public

Artists as separate	→	Artists as citizens
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Relationship with government

Authorizers	→	Allies
Reporting to	→	Aligning with

CPAF members and the arts sector need to work to change the narrative together both within their own organizations and within the community. This will require work to advance and stimulate an honest conversation about the limitations of the current approaches to demonstrating value. Some parts of the system will need to be changed through means such as partnerships, leveraging influence, supporting change and adaptive capacity. The coming period will be one of “narrative wars” and it will be up to public arts funders to learn to navigate this, to not just keep up, but to lead the change.

Some final questions for post-AGM thinking include:

- Beyond grants, what is our value and how do we articulate this?
- Is a new value proposition needed for public funding to the arts or for public funders themselves?
- How do you change what you are saying without fundamentally changing what you stand for?

- What is the benefit that you are trying to create that has your attention? If I create benefit here, will it cascade through the system to other people, and, ultimately, to society at large?

Reflections on Thematic Discussions

The development and evolution of CPAF itself was noted. The ability to influence each other, to build up common skills, to find opportunities for partnership, and to develop shared leadership were all mentioned.

Rethinking the 'value proposition', while still a negotiated term, was seen as central to the work of each CPAF member individually and of the network as a whole. Understanding the language being used to convey both intrinsic and instrumental value, establishing and broadening relationships and convening the sector are part of these efforts.