

Future Directions in Public Arts Funding: What Are The Shifts Required?

November 16-18, 2011
Whitehorse, Yukon

Canadian Public Arts Funders (CPAF) Annual General Meeting
Meeting Report - Executive Summary



CPAF
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Note to the Reader from the CPAF Secretariat

Please note that the following document was presented at the Canadian Public Arts Funders (CPAF) Annual General Meeting, Future Directions in Public Arts Funding: What Are The Shifts Required?, on November 16-18, 2011, in Whitehorse, Yukon and was intended to serve as information for a discussion on the theme of the meeting.

The views expressed by the author(s) are based on their interpretations from a variety of sources of information and do not necessarily represent all points of view, or the current program structures and policies of the membership of CPAF.

The reader is invited to provide feedback to this report by contacting Melanie Yugo, Partnership and Networks Officer, CPAF Secretariat, at melanie.yugo@canadacouncil.ca or 1 800 263 5588 ext 5144.

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I. BACKGROUND

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. The CPAF Annual General Meeting (AGM) provides a forum for the Executive Directors, Associate Directors and Chairs from CPAF member organizations to discuss current issues facing public arts funders and exchange knowledge amongst their peers. The theme for the 2011 AGM was *Future Directions in Public Arts Funding: What Are the Shifts Required?*

This report summarizes the presentations and discussions that took place at the 2011 AGM, and highlights key issues that were raised. 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.

Year in Review: 2011

In a volatile global economic climate, CPAF members experienced relative financial stability, with only a slight decrease in collective total funding from approximately \$440 million in 2010-11 to approximately \$430 million in 2011-12.

Progress was made in the exploration of two themes identified as priorities at the 2010 AGM: equity and digital transitions. CPAF commissioned two reports: *Equity within the Arts Ecology: Traditions and Trends*, prepared for the CPAF Strategic Development Meeting on Equity in June 2011; and *Digital Transitions and the Impact of New Technology on the Arts*, prepared for the Strategic Development Meeting on Digital Transitions in March 2011.

Recap of 2010 CPAF AGM in St-John's, Newfoundland

- The global economic downturn had a severe impact on cultural agencies and arts funding around the world
- Canadian arts agencies would do well to learn from the strategies (successful and otherwise) of arts agencies in the U.S.
- Audience building was identified as a significant issue for arts funders
- New technologies on the arts are transforming how art is produced and experienced

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2011

II. FUTURE DIRECTIONS: PERSPECTIVES FROM NORTHERN ARTISTS

On the opening evening, three Yukon artists (visual artist Sonja Ahlers, choreographer Andrea Simpson-Fowler and carver Ken Anderson) were invited to present their work and reflect on what it means to be an artist in Canada now and into the future. The presentations were delivered "Pecha Kucha" style, with each artist allotted six minutes, forty seconds to present 20 slides.

III. KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SHIFTING ENVIRONMENTS, SHIFTING PRIORITIES, SHIFTING VISIONS

The keynote address from Alan Davey, Chief Executive, [Arts Council England](#) (ACE) detailed the ACE's strategic response to the challenges posed by a very cold economic climate. In England, this included a drastic cut in public arts funding just prior to Mr. Davey assuming his position with the ACE in 2007. Under Mr. Davey's leadership, the ACE's response was bold. A

number of short-term measures were taken to mitigate the impact of the cuts, and the influx of £70 million in lottery funds helped offset the 30 per cent reduction so that the cut to organizations was minimal. More significantly, ACE went beyond short-term fixes to develop a long-term vision to see the arts through this period of austerity. In developing this vision, the Council shed its insular tendencies and looked outward for solutions.

The end product was a set of guiding principles and a framework for the future, published as *Achieving Great Art for Everyone: A Strategic Framework for the Arts*. A new application system was introduced and applicants were judged by the criteria laid out in the framework and its five long-term goals which were as follows:

1. Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated. In times of economic certainty, there may be a tendency to play it safe. However, excellence requires that artistic innovation and risk are embraced and rewarded. The upcoming 2012 Olympics provide an opportunity to encourage excellence.
2. More people experience and are inspired by the arts. People experience many social and economic barriers to accessing the arts. The goals are to tackle “cold spots” of engagement, improve distribution through touring and digital distribution, and equip people to make choices in where and how they engage in the arts.
3. The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative. Artist organizations must become better citizens by collaborating with community partners and investing in the sector.
4. The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled.
5. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts.

Major points raised:

- Be bold and innovative in times of certainty, and support innovation and courage in the arts.
- Look outwards and seek out new partnerships and new sources of funding.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2011

IV. SHIFTING ENVIROMENTS

This opening session of the first official day of meetings featured three panelists who offered their thoughts on the shifting environments that are creating “pressure points” for public arts funders in Canada and internationally. What societal, technological, demographic, economic and political factors are impacting and shaping public arts funding structures in Canada and elsewhere? What are the factors affecting artists and arts organizations? Citizens and the public?

Cynthia White-Thornley, Director General, Arts Policy, Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada

Ms. White-Thornley presented the shifting environment within the Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH), in particular the internal factors impacting the development of arts policy at the federal level. There are four big drivers behind the internal changes:

- the economic downturn;
- the digital revolution;
- demographic shifts ;
- the movement to “democratize” culture.

Since 2008, there have been several milestones for PCH's arts policy. PCH is responding to changes taking place in the way art is produced, distributed and consumed, including:

- a move from linear production chains to a divergence of platforms such as e-publishing;
- a shift from passive to active audiences deciding when, where and how they would experience culture;
- the evolution from a closed regulatory environment to more open and global markets;
- the emergence of cultural entrepreneurs who do not require the intervention of gatekeepers.

Stephen Huddart, President and Chief Executive Officer, McConnell Foundation, Montréal

Mr. Huddart began by indicating he meant to put a philanthropic perspective on the theme of shifting environments and suggested that we begin by looking backward. The world has shifted fundamentally, and we are experiencing a renaissance moment, characterized by other cultures, other ways of knowing and tremendous diversity. Within the current operating context for the arts, funders need to take a long-term approach to innovation and to realign their focus to create the resiliency to adapt. One area that will require an innovative approach is addressing intergenerational equity, for example identifying what young people, the "digital natives", require from the arts funding sector. Arts funders also need to gain ground when defining cultural space in Canada. How do citizens express what it means to be a Canadian? What are the opportunities for creative citizenship? We need to create a new narrative that is long term: what is the 50-year vision? What is the 100-year vision? We are living an evolutionary moment in consciousness, and creativity is a driver for that. What is it like to be an artist in this environment?

Alan Davey

Mr. Davey's challenges are money, people and politics. Arts are important in times of trouble, and we need to argue to politicians that the arts sector is not typical. We need a new discourse for articulating how arts and culture matter to communities, to identity and defining space, to building aspiration in young people and avoiding hopelessness. We need to question current assumptions and the way we do things as arts funders. Do traditional boundaries work for artists? Are international boundaries still relevant? Does cultural diplomacy mean anything anymore? We need to seek new ways of financing and fundraising by sharing priorities and exploring venture philanthropy, an approach Mr. Davey describes as "promiscuity with dignity."

Discussion topics

- Evaluating programs
- Reporting and accountability of fund recipients
- Defining and supporting communities
- Democratization of culture and cultural democracy
- The role of broadcasters in a transforming environment
- Partnerships and relationships with other sectors

Major points raised

- How do we make a case for the importance of the arts? How do we find the language that resonates with both government and with the public?
- How do we contribute to both the cultural democracy and the democratization of culture? How do we facilitate an environment of access? How do we support creativity in, diverse communities, including those that are not currently being served?

- Simplicity in reporting for artists and arts organizations. Take a more risk-based approach that recognizes that small project grants and large operating grants do not require the same level of reporting.
- Learn from other sectors (e.g. sports and agriculture), for example, examining how they compare professional vs. amateurs, and specialist vs. non-specialist.

V. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND THE ARTS AND NEW FUNDING

This session featured Mr. Huddart speaking to imaginative and practical approaches to funding in arts. He began the discussion by pointing to the complexity of the challenges we face today: from occupy movements and climate change, to ruptures in the economy and health care and a growing Aboriginal population disengaged from society. These are complex problems that cannot be solved in traditional ways: we need to be innovative and move institutions in new directions. How can we become a more resilient and adaptive culture? Arts funders can be part of this shift. Professional art practice provides opportunity for sustained reflection and inquiry into what gives meaning to our lives.

Social innovation addresses unmet needs by applying new strategies and learning to complex social challenges such as poverty reduction. As a national funder for initiatives that push for innovation, the McConnell Foundation found that its efforts needed to go farther faster, so it brought together a group of social entrepreneurs to scale up the innovations required to make change. The result was the Social Innovation Generation (SIG), a partnership between academic, business and social entrepreneurial communities. SIG is generating systems-level change, such as developing the social marketplace in Canada. Economic tools and investments are used for social and environmental benefits as well as financial returns to introduce change faster in our communities.

Another program supported by the McConnell Foundation is ArtsSmarts, which is funded by 450 organizations rather than just one. The program is a partnership between educational and cultural sectors and is a catalyst to personal and institutional transformation. The program marks a shift in relationships between schools and communities. It has made a profound difference in students' lives, and educators and communities have rallied to sustain ArtsSmarts' work.

Major points raised:

- Today's complex social issues require innovative solutions. The arts have a role in social innovation, and are often the catalyst for transformation.
- Foundations are now smaller nimbler, more flexible and innovative in who and what they fund. Arts councils might learn from foundations in seeking an innovative way of doing business.
- What is the role of arts councils in the collaborations that characterize social innovation? Most arts councils can already cite examples of innovative programming, from ArtsSmarts to Culture Days to more regionally specific initiatives, but should they take a more active approach?

VI. THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ARTS FUNDERS

In introducing this session the facilitator referred to "choice phrases" from the readings in the meeting package, including:

- Richard Evans' idea, in his [Entering upon Novelty: Policy and Funding Issues for a New Era in the Arts](#) article, of old structural features vs. emerging structural features, for

example, the shift from marketing products to passive consumers to engagement of audiences as active participants;

- Robert Sirman's reference to the Canada Council's objective to "advance arts practice in Canada, including both the making and experiencing of art in all its forms";
- Alan's Brown's look in his think piece, [Engaging the Every-Day Artist: Non-profit Arts in the Participatory Culture](#), at the ecology of participatory arts practice and the challenges for arts funders in building and sustaining the arts "ecosystem."

All three authors recognize the importance of audience and communities as well as artists, and the shifting relationships between them, for example, places where arts practice and engagement happens, a single creative voice vs. pluralized curation and so on. The animated discussion that followed included reflection and debate on the role of arts funders in such an environment, and in particular the tension between an old funding model that focused primarily on professional artists and artistic excellence, and the contemporary emphasis on community, audience and participation. In the end, there was a sense of optimism amidst the tension, but also calls for action. Mr. Davey, for instance, urged members to organize rather than to mourn, and to have courage, confidence and collaboration. Mr. Huddart urged members to ask: what paradoxes or beautiful problems do we have? We can create community by supporting a thriving arts sector, and by looking at the edges of what we're doing to provide education at all levels.

Major points raised:

- The tension between funding artistic excellence and funding community engagement. Does this tension exist? How can it be navigated and accommodated?
- How do we measure and fund the community impact of the arts? How can we work it into our programs? Should we?
- Education, equity and excellence.
- Citizenship and the responsibility of public institutions and organizations to their communities.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2011

VII. OPENING REFLECTIONS

Reflections on the previous day included debate on a number of issues including:

- Are arts councils ahead of the curve when it comes to change, or are they reactive?
- Do arts councils really need to change, or does the fundamental granting function remain stable?
- How are we dealing with the "digital tsunami", and how does its impact on arts production and distribution impact our processes?

VIII. WAYS FORWARD: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PUBLIC ARTS FUNDERS

The final session on the second day of meetings offered reflection as well as some thoughts on the role of public arts funders in the midst of economic uncertainty, the digital revolution, and arts production and engagement. What needs to be kept and what needs to be changed?

Major issues raised:

- How can funders be heard at the table when budget decisions are made? What language do we use? Where do we position ourselves in relation to other sectors?
- Should arts councils be innovators, or do they create the environment for innovation?

- How do we navigate the challenge of ongoing operational funding to mature organizations, while accommodating emerging organizations? Do mature organizations need to take more responsibility for being relevant to communities?