



Why do we invest in Inspired People?

“Art bridges the silos that separate us as we confront today’s pressing issues. Art creates new visions and engagement, connecting the head and the heart.” -- Judith Marcuse, International Centre of Art for Social Change

Inspiration is an essential part of what makes us human

Arts, culture and heritage deeply affect our personal and collective wellbeing. As forms of human expression, they give us pleasure, enliven and inspire us, and help us to define our lives and make sense of the world. By bringing us together in an enriched atmosphere, they forge strong social relationships. And by shaping our personal, community and national identity, they give us a sense of who we are as a people.

Connecting and engaging in the arts improves our quality of life

Many recent studies have provided conclusive evidence of the far-reaching benefits of the arts, culture and heritage to people and communities. Exposure and, more importantly, access to sustained, high-calibre arts programming transform lives and build healthy and vibrant communities in many ways:

- When children and youth participate regularly in arts-based programming, their school engagement and performance improves in all subjects, especially literacy and numeracy. They also learn a range of higher-level skills – creativity, problem-solving, communication methods, self-discipline, critical thinking, and understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures – which they will need to succeed in a rapidly-changing workplace.¹
- For seniors, participating in arts experiences in both institutional and community settings results in improved health and wellbeing.²
- The arts connect people to each other in a direct way, overcoming differences in language and culture to facilitate complex interactions and increase social cohesion. This helps develop community pride and a sense of belonging.³

¹ ArtsSmarts, (2009). *Impact on Student Engagement: First Research Report 2007–2009*.

² Royal Conservatory of Music, (2011). *Exploring the Impact of Artful Engagement with Older Adults*.

³ ArtsSmarts, (2009). *Impact on Student Engagement: First Research Report 2007–2009*.

Arts, culture and heritage also build the economy

According to a 2012 Department of Canadian Heritage survey, 86% of Canadians consider the arts important to a community's economic wellbeing,⁴ and they are right. The arts sector has a significant effect on the economy:

- In 2003, the culture sector contributed an estimated \$43.2 billion to Canada's economy, accounting for about 3.8% of the gross domestic product.⁵
- Ontario's arts sector accounts for 4.2% of total employment (280,000 jobs) and contributes \$22 billion annually to the provincial economy, representing 3.7 % of Ontario's GDP.⁶

People value the arts highly, but may not be participating in them

The Department of Canadian Heritage survey also revealed that people across the country are aware of the value of arts, culture and heritage. 93% of respondents said the arts help them think and work creatively. The same number saw the arts as an effective way of bringing people from different cultural traditions together, and 87% felt that the arts help us express and define what it means to be Canadian.⁷ How those perceptions translate into action is a different matter.

According to the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Ontarians are spending less time engaged in arts and culture. In fact, time spent engaged in arts and cultural activities dropped by almost 12% between 1994 and 2005 and, despite increasing after 2005, remained below 1994 levels in 2010. Attendance at arts performances is also down, as is the overall amount spent on arts and recreation in Ontario. And while the percentage of Ontarians who volunteer rose slightly, Ontarians spent less time volunteering for culture and recreation organizations. (Canadian index of Wellbeing, 2014)⁸

Participation is important as a pre-condition for people to truly connect and benefit from arts, culture and heritage. The power of the arts depends on people going beyond mere exposure to a deeper and more meaningful experience.

- Not all communities have a strong cultural infrastructure: either the public spaces for arts programming do not exist, or they are aging or inaccessible. In a 2010 survey, 72% of arts organizations reported insufficient access to facilities or specialized equipment.⁹
- Changing demographics require greater diversity in the arts, but there is a lack of ethno-racial representation in the performing arts sector.¹⁰ This in turn reduces the relevance of arts offerings to an increasingly diverse population.
- While seniors naturally gravitate away from sports and toward more cultural activities, their focus is on attendance vs active engagement (e.g., playing an instrument or acting on stage).¹¹

⁴ Department of Canadian Heritage, (2012). *Arts and Heritage in Canada: Access and Availability Survey 2012*.

⁵ Statistics Canada (2007). *Economic Contribution of the Culture Sector to Canada's Provinces*.

⁶ Ontario Arts Council, (2015). *Quick Stats on the Arts*.

⁷ Department of Canadian Heritage, (2012). *Arts and Heritage in Canada: Access and Availability Survey 2012*.

⁸ Canadian Index of Wellbeing, (2014). *How Are Ontarians Really Doing?* 34-35.

⁹ Ipsos Reid, (2010). *Facility Needs Assessment Update Survey*. ArtsBuild Ontario.

¹⁰ Creative Mosaics, (2010). *Issues, Challenges and Barriers Faced by Immigrant and Culturally Diverse Artists in Toronto and Scarborough*.

¹¹ Ontario Arts Council, (2013). *2013 Environmental Scan*.

- There is a pressing need to develop younger audiences for the future, which depends in large part on school-based arts programming -- yet only 62% of elementary schools in the GTA – a huge urban area – have music teachers, and the numbers drop steeply for eastern Ontario (32%) and northern Ontario (26%). In one third of all Ontario elementary schools, students do not have the opportunity to work with an artist, be in a musical group, or learn an instrument.¹²

So what's our strategy?

The goal of the Inspired People action area is to move Ontarians from passive audiences to active participants in the creative process. Communities with good cultural infrastructure and high levels of participation have a stronger sense of social cohesion. Children and youth with access to arts-based learning perform and socialize at a higher level. And there is no better way to activate new pathways of thinking, understanding and doing than through deeper engagement in the arts, culture and heritage.

OTF will support initiatives that foster the development of talent, deliver training to artists and curatorial staff, provide relevant, meaningful programming, and create spaces where that programming is accessible to all. We will invest in a wide range of opportunities for people to actively engage in arts-based learning, more compelling and engaging experiences, community-based arts creation, and the animation of cultural heritage.

Priority Outcome: Better quality programming and infrastructure to experience culture, heritage and the arts

OTF seeks to fund initiatives that achieve the following results:

1. Arts, culture and heritage have appropriate spaces

Facilities play a large role in hosting the exchange between artistic product and audience. Spaces that are welcoming, accessible, technically sound and aesthetically pleasing improve the quality of the production or program, while also engaging participants physically, intellectually and emotionally. They create the conditions for the work to be well received and eliminate barriers to full and active participation.

Project or Grant Examples:

- The purchase of an accessible, mobile event stage enables performing arts groups to reach new audiences by delivering performances in unconventional spaces, particularly outdoors.
- By purchasing and installing a new dance floor, a contemporary dance ensemble ensures a safer environment for its students and performers.
- A heritage site is renovated to provide a community hub for arts organizations and individual artists.

¹² People for Education, (2013). *The Arts in Ontario Schools*.

2. Skills and knowledge are transferred to the next generation of artistic leaders

Artists are essential to our communities. Whether professional or amateur, good arts programming depends on expert guides. Artists and other facilitators require ongoing education, training and mentorship to ensure that they remain relevant and responsive to evolving audience needs and interests. They need both the technical tools of creation as well as business and organizational development skills.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Independent artists come together for business skills training in partnership with a local community college.
- Training, mentorship and succession planning is provided to theatre artists to ensure the artistic integrity of their work.

Priority Outcome: More people connect with culture, heritage and the arts

OTF seeks to fund initiatives that achieve the following results:

1. Access to arts-based learning opportunities and compelling artistic, cultural and heritage experiences

Arts-based learning leads to improved student engagement and has a positive impact on performance and self-esteem. It can happen in classrooms or the community at large, and it can include everything from residencies and workshops to weekly instruction and annual performances. Compelling artistic, cultural and heritage experiences are built on diverse, relevant and meaningful programming that engages audiences and creates a lifelong connection to the arts.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Low income children with limited access to music instruction receive regular lessons from internationally-trained artists.
- A multi-media festival of local heritage provides opportunities for inter-generational and inter-cultural exchanges.

2. People are engaged in community-based arts creation

Arts organizations that work with communities to co-create, produce and present new artistic work generate a dynamic exchange of creative ideas, validate the lived experience of community members, engender a sense of belonging and share a collective vision with the wider community. When the community sees itself in a performance or exhibition, artistic expression becomes an integral part of its identity and a catalyst for community-building.

Project or Grant Examples:

- Over 500 seniors, youth, newcomers and low-income families come together with a local artist to design and create a public art installation to define and celebrate their neighbourhood.
- First-time dancers perform for their neighbours in professionally choreographed dances in local parks and private gardens.

3. Preservation and animation of cultural heritage

Preserving and interpreting records, stories, languages, customs and traditions revitalizes our history, re-shapes our knowledge of the past and illuminates lived experiences. This enhances

people's understanding of themselves and their community, as living traditions link the past to the present. For indigenous communities, the act of preservation and appreciation is deeply tied to the land, language, ritual, customs and works of art, and allows them to connect with each other and undertake a community-driven process of cultural revitalization.

Project or Grant Examples:

- On-reserve Aboriginal families attend immersive language and culture camps designed to encourage use of their native language at home and instil cultural pride.
- Community members are invited to share their experiences of emigration for a collection of oral histories to be made available online and through a social media campaign.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do you define 'better and more appropriate spaces'?

This refers to improvements to facilities and equipment that enhance the artistic quality and the audience experience.

2. What do you mean by 'better quality programming'?

Better quality programming has artistic integrity; there is intention in how the work is made and how it will be received. The space or conditions in which it is presented are important, as is the extent to which the work is responsive to audiences. High-calibre work is successful at forging a connection with its participants.

3. What is community based arts creation?

It brings artists and people together to co-create a play, or a piece of music, or a collection of poetry. The keys to community-based arts creation are participation, collaboration, learning and building something that is aspirational.

4. What is arts-based learning?

This is arts education, both within the school and in the community at large. It can be short or long-term residencies, workshops or other forms of creative engagement.

5. Is there a reason you've linked preservation and animation in cultural heritage?

We don't support heritage for the sake of documentation. We want to breathe life into our examples and stories of the past. Animation is interpretation and it allows for the revitalization of memory, and the reshaping of knowledge.

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