

Toronto Arts Council Community Consultations

Report on Findings

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“When youth are inspired to perfect their art they also learn discipline, research, study and public speaking skills – opening up a world of opportunity previously closed.”

Kristen Fahrig, McGregor Park Art Club

Consultation Process

During the months of May and June, 2008, TAC held consultation sessions and conversations with 130 people including artists, arts organization representatives and community stakeholders. TAC grant recipients, individuals from the arts community, the granting community, educational institutions, the City of Toronto, and the general public were invited to take part through individual email invitations and an open call through the web site. A total of 11 group sessions were held in addition to numerous individual meetings and telephone conversations with John McKellar, the Chair of the Board and TAC's Executive Director, Claire Hopkinson. Please see page 10 for the list of those consulted.

Group sessions were oriented to individual artists, members representing arts organizations or stakeholder groups. Sessions were not divided into arts disciplines. Each of the sessions followed a similar format, beginning with a 20 minute presentation on Toronto Arts Council, its current funding programs and support from the city and moving into set questions. All sessions were facilitated by Susan Wright, TAC Director of Operations, and notes were taken by Lydia Perovic, TAC Executive Assistant.

In general – the sessions were both exciting and illuminating. It was gratifying that so many people were enthusiastic about providing their thoughts and suggestions for how Toronto can become a more hospitable city for artists and what TAC can do to improve its work.

Artists and arts workers expressed great pleasure at having been invited to sessions, and at the diversity among those attending. Artists and arts workers represented every arts discipline, a broad cross-section of organizations, and many of Toronto's diverse cultural backgrounds. Those attending also noted that they were pleased to have the opportunity to find out more about TAC and its funding programs.

“Toronto is home to the largest community of practicing artists in Canada. Toronto has the healthiest arts organizations and the highest concentration of arts organizations.”

Bob Sirman, Canada Council for the Arts

“In major international cities the museums are free, public art is everywhere, events are people's events.”

Sara Meurling, Young Centre for the Performing Arts

Artists living and working in Toronto

In general – artists have located in Toronto because it's where they can work – it's where artists, audiences, diverse cultures, universities, colleges, and public and private sector financing all come together. Toronto is the centre of the arts in English Canada making it easier to attract artists with international credentials. Toronto is considered by many individual artists to be the only place that it is possible for them to make a living from their work. It was also frequently noted that Toronto Arts Council is a significant asset to Toronto's arts community.

However, arts practitioners in Toronto generally believe that they are making a greater contribution to the city than is acknowledged. Funding for Toronto's artists and arts organizations is inadequate by any measure. Toronto falls behind major Canadian cities, even farther behind major North American cities and supports its artists to a tiny fraction of what is offered by European cities. By far the most consistent of all comments throughout the consultation sessions was that funding must increase.

Arts infrastructure in Toronto is also considered inadequate. There is not sufficient space for artists to create and present their work. In particular, mid-size and small performance, exhibition, and screening space, rehearsal and workshop space are all insufficient. This comment was consistent across all arts disciplines and came from individual artists as well as administrators of arts organizations.

The issue of media in Toronto was raised frequently. All media – print and broadcast – daily and weekly – were felt to be unsupportive of Toronto's artists. Again and again it was pointed out that performances are not being reviewed, that American pop culture takes priority over Toronto arts and that the work of entire arts disciplines (new music for example) is completely ignored.

With regard to living in Toronto, there was consistent concern expressed that far too many artists live below the poverty line. As is the case with other low-income groups, artists note that housing is inadequate and social supports are not available. Furthermore, artists work is often temporary, insecure and without any kind of long term pension prospects.

Other concerns raised about working as artists in Toronto included the need for more networking among artists and arts organizations; the need for reduced bureaucracy for obtaining permits, and the need for more professional development opportunities.

“The advantage of being in Toronto is obvious to anybody who's ever taken a streetcar: all the languages and cultures are minutes away, it's enriching to be in the city”.

Karen Haze, individual artist

Toronto Arts Council Programs

Almost all those attending the consultation sessions expressed very positive opinions of Toronto Arts Council. There were many comments indicating that TAC is viewed not just as a funder but as an advocate for artists and arts organizations.

There were many, many suggestions for changes and additions to TAC's programs. All assumed additional funding. In other words, there were no suggestions to eliminate or replace existing programs. Note that some of the suggestions were contradictory. Those listed below are in order of priority according to frequency and emphasis of comment.

Changes to Existing Grants Programs

Core funding increase: By far the most widespread comment was that Toronto Arts Council needs to increase its core funding or operating grants to organizations. Many organizations expressed frustration that even when TAC's budgets have increased, their own grants have remained static. (Note: the TAC presentation provided at the outset of each consultation session, demonstrating that TAC's budget increases have not nearly kept up with growth in the sector, did help explain to those attending why their grants were not increasing).

Increase project grants: Some went so far as to say that if TAC cannot increase its project grant levels, the project grants program should be eliminated since they felt that there is no point in providing inadequate grants to projects. Others felt that it is better to give something than nothing – even a small grant offers encouragement.

Provide individual grants in installments: this was an extremely sensible suggestion supported by a number of people. Individual artists are taxed on grants in the year they are received, which may be unfair if the work is to be done in the year following. It was requested that TAC provide individual artists with the option of receiving their grants in installments to offset the tax burden.

Make it possible for operating clients to apply for project grants in addition to core funding: This opinion was expressed frequently by those from organizations receiving annual funding who feel that the restrictions of annual operating funding do not allow flexibility to respond to one-time events.

Individual artist definition: there was some concern expressed by visual artists that the definition of individual artist being used by TAC no longer corresponds to the reality of those working in the visual and media arts field and requesting that the definition be updated.

Recognition of facilities costs: With space for all arts activities being so limited, those organizations operating facilities requested that the cost of operations should be reflected in their grants. If those organizations with facilities are to be able to make them available to other arts organizations at below market rates, they need to have their own costs recognized.

Other suggestions:

- Create separate program for ASOs with particular focus on managing networks
- split media arts and visual arts project applications

New Grants Program suggestions

Creating a multi-disciplinary or inter-arts program: many artists, individuals and those from organizations, expressed frustration that TAC does not have a multi-disciplinary program. Forcing a group to select an arts discipline and be adjudicated by artists without experience in multi-disciplinary arts was considered unfair and definitely behind the times. Many people noted that arts in Toronto are becoming more, not less, multi-disciplinary in nature.

Professional Development Program: lots of artists and arts administrators would like the opportunity to receive funds for professional development conferences, workshops and training opportunities.

Arts Education Program: Arts Education was an area brought up again and again as requiring additional investment. TAC could fund an artist in the schools program or arts training and education organizations.

Marketing and Promotion: Create a program offering funds to operating clients specifically for marketing and promotion initiatives.

Publishing Program: Add a publishing program specifically targeting magazines and literary press. This program could have the added benefit of simultaneously providing a media platform for Toronto artists.

Additional new program suggestions:

- Accessibility - program to offset accessibility costs for wheelchairs, strollers, elderly
- Cultural Diversity Program – base on Canada Council's stand firm program
- Documentation grant – allow for documentation of work
- Emergency fund for artists
- Grant materials program (to offset costs of preparing support materials for grant applications)
- Media Arts Preservation Program – support for archival materials, space, standards
- Touring Costs – addition of a touring program was recommended by a number of people.
- Translation Costs – a program to underwrite the costs of translation

Beyond Grants Programs

Discussion of TAC's operations and support activity covered many areas. There was considerable support voiced for TAC's staff, particularly grants staff, and the value of their presence in the community. Many people suggested that TAC should have a larger staff so as to be better able to offer services to the community. This was particularly noted for the areas of Community Arts Grants and communications.

A number of people noted a general lack of communications materials and outreach activities and recommended increased emphasis on this area including improvement to TAC's web site.

It was hoped that TAC might assist in a number of areas in which artists in Toronto feel a need for support. These included the creation of networking opportunities for artists, and support for broad based advocacy campaigns for all of Toronto's arts.

There was considerable discussion of the lack of media support for Toronto's arts and a general appeal to TAC to work with the media to help address this situation.

It was also felt that TAC could work with City organizations and institutions to encourage greater accessibility for artists and arts organizations. In particular:

- the Toronto District School Board – encourage more arts use of TDSB space; also, help to establish a volunteer program which can access high school volunteers
- City Departments - reduce red tape for permits (street closures, use of parks, parades, busking)
- BIAs - provide artists access to local support
- Ministry of Education - ensure greater art expertise among teachers

Finally, there was some frustration expressed about TAC's (and all other arts councils') grant applications and a frequent comment was that forms should be simplified and the process made easier with results available more quickly.

“You don't need to be poor to be creative”

Guy Mignault, Le Theatre de Francais de Toronto

“The TAC has offered great encouragement to many individual artists. Receiving a grant not only pays the bills and buys time. It is a vote of confidence from your colleagues that what you do is of value. Artists can use all the encouragement they can get!”

James Rolfe, composer

What Can More Money Do?

It was clear from all comments that additional funds invested in Toronto's artists and arts organizations would primarily be spent on job creation. The greatest need is for additional human resources, artistic and administrative. It is interesting to note the correlation between artists' first instincts for new spending and Toronto City Council priorities.

Artists and Staffing:

When asked how additional funds would be spent if made available, almost everyone's first reaction was that more money would make it possible to increase artists' fees and hire additional people, including artists, arts practitioners and administrators. In many cases, more funding would mean paying artists and staff rather than relying on volunteers.

Other priority areas included:

Accessibility:

Quite a few organizations commented that they would reduce ticket prices as well as be able to expand the capacity for audiences and participants in classes and workshops. A number of people emphasized that they cannot grow without funds to increase space and participants.

Capacity building:

Additional funds could be put towards larger and more suitable rehearsal and performance space, more and better equipment and provision of adequate administrative support.

Outreach and promotion:

Many people suggested that promotion budgets are often the first thing that is cut when budgets are tight. Across the sector there was consistent concern that not enough funds are available for promotion.

“We push to bring music, visual arts to kids who are considered by society (and by themselves) as nothing more than ‘Latino thugs’. We see them turn into musicians, producers, photographers. We’re very proud of that.”

Sergio Elmir, Salvador Allende Festival

Toronto Arts Council Foundation

General response to questions about Toronto Arts Council Foundation demonstrated little awareness of what the foundation is doing.

There was very strong support for the idea of TACF engaging in private sector fundraising provided that proceeds go to TAC's grants program. Artists and arts organizations expressed the feeling that TACF is in a better and stronger position to fundraise than almost all the city's arts organizations, and provided that care be taken not to impair existing corporate arts relationships, the entire community would benefit from increased support. It was often noted that the sector needs all the financial support it can get; and further that fundraising by TACF could serve to educate the private sector about the value of arts funding. There was general consensus that a program modeled after the United Way would be ideal.

Many people did raise questions and concerns which primarily focused on the need for the development of a carefully thought out fundraising campaign that answers the following questions:

- Endowment or annual giving
- Individual, foundation or corporate fundraising (or all three)
- Will funds go directly to TAC grants program or will it be possible for donors to specify a discipline
- If fundraising is to be effective, will recipient artists and arts organizations need to be involved in the ask
- Are there any donations that would be unacceptable for ethical reasons

“I can tell you without exaggeration that the poetry that these kids I work with are doing is saving their lives”.

Clare Nobbs, Support Our Youth

Recommendations

The following are key recommendations arising from the consultation sessions.

For City of Toronto

1. Increase funds to TAC to per capita levels at least equivalent to those invested in Montreal.
2. Explore possible initiatives to address space needs including performance, rehearsal, workshop, screening and exhibition space
3. Streamline city bureaucracy for permits (street closures, use of parks, parades, busking)
4. Toronto should promote itself as an art city
5. Continue to work with artists in the development of affordable housing

For Federal Government

1. Allow income averaging for artists
2. Make children's art lessons tax deductible under same program that sports activities are tax deductible

For TAC Grants Programs

Create the following new grants programs:

1. Multi-disciplinary program and/or inter-arts program
2. Add a career development; mentorship and professional development program. These could be for small grants with short applications and fast turnaround.
3. Add a Promotion and marketing program providing support for outreach and marketing initiatives. Program would offer project grants and would be accessible to either project or operating applicants.
4. Add an Education program offering support for artists in schools and other education programming
5. Add a Publishing program specifically targeting magazines and literary press. This program could have the added benefit of simultaneously providing a media platform for Toronto artists

Recommended Changes to Existing Programs:

1. increase funding: increase core grants and increase numbers of applications funded for project and individual programs
2. open project grants to those receiving operating funding
3. Recognize cost of operating facilities in core funding programs
4. improve definition of visual artist – too many artists currently do not qualify
5. Provide individual artists the option of receiving grants in installments to offset the possibility of negative tax implications.

For TAC – Beyond Grants programs

1. TAC Operations: there were a number of recommendations directly related to TAC operations:
 - a. Although there was strong support voiced for TAC grants staff, it was recommended that the number of grants officers should be increased; in particular TAC requires a full-time community arts officer
 - b. TAC needs a larger communications budget and its web site must be improved

2. TAC should support the creation of networks, especially an effective music community network
3. TAC should engage in a broad-based public awareness campaign advocating increased support for the arts, including a campaign encouraging Toronto media to feature local artists
4. TAC should consult with other Canadian and international municipal arts councils to identify best practices, particularly as related to advocacy
5. TAC should work with partners:
 - a. With TDSB to secure arts space; and to establish a volunteer program (high school volunteer hours)
 - b. With City Departments to reduce red tape for permits (street closures, use of parks, parades, busking)
 - c. With BIAs to provide artists access to local support
 - d. With Ministry of Education, to ensure some art expertise among teachers
 - e. With media & pr colleges – have students work on PSAs advocating arts support
6. TAC's grant application process should be easier and results should be available more quickly

For TACF

1. TACF should engage in private sector fundraising with proceeds to support TAC grants programs. The fundraising campaign should be carefully planned and executed to ensure support from the arts community.
2. TACF needs to establish criteria and a more formal structure for political advocacy through Toronto Arts Coalition.
3. TACF needs a more clearly defined strategic mission.

“The TAC is more than a funding agency; it is one of our stalwart advocates.”

Geoffrey Taylor, International Readings at Harbourfront

Community Consultations, List of those consulted

Andrews	Derek	Toronto Blues Society/Worlds of Music Toronto
Arthurs	Gideon	Toronto Fringe Festival
Attariwala	Parmela	artist, TAC Music Committee
Baker	Jessie	Scarborough Sweet Adelines
Balay	Billyann	Ontario Arts Council
Barlow	Curtis	TAC/F Board, Institute for Canadian Citizenship
Bartleman	Gwen	Canadian Actors' Equity Association
Bennett	Diana	TAC/F Board, artist
Bichan	Dougal	Winterfolk
Bonas	Teresa	Toronto Sinfonietta
Boni	Franco	Theatre Centre
Brotman	John	Ontario Arts Council
Carey	David	Toronto International Film Festival Group
Caron	Ghislain	Theatre Francais de Toronto
Chaiton	Sam	Great Rainbow
Christakos	Demetra	Ontario Association of Art Galleries
Clark	Lynda	Children's Peace Theatre
Clarke	Kristian	Carfac
Collela	Stephen	Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People
Dalrymple	John	Textile Museum
Daurio	Beverley	artist
Davies	Rita	City of Toronto, Culture Division
de Freitas	Sandra	Commfest (Community Film Festival)
de Silva	Paul	International Council for Diversity in Film and TV, TAC Large Institutions Committee,
Dooh	Jasmine	LAMP
Eaton	Karin	Mural Routes
Eldon	Salina	Keys to the Studio
Elmir	Sergio	Salvador Allende Festival
Engel	Hans	Carfac
Enrique	Esmeralda	Esmeralda Enrique Dance Company
Fahrig	Kristin	artist, Dufferin Grove
Ferguson	Scott	Inside Out
Fernandez	Melanie	Harbourfront Centre, TAC Board
Fisher	Debbie	Art Heart
Freeland	Alejandro	Latino Canadian Cultural Association
Frey	Ellen	CAMMAC Toronto
Frost	Julie	Arts for Children
Garfield	Louise	Arts Etobicoke
Garland	Kevin	National Ballet of Canada
George	Gomo	artist
Gilbert	Mallory	arts administrator
Gilbert	Nathan	Laidlaw Foundation
Girolami	David	Pixel Gallery
Gladstone	Brian	Winterfolk
Glick	Rani	Toronto School of Art
Hall	Gary	Toronto Photographers Workshop
Haze	Karin	artist, Regent Park Film Festival

Headley	Charmaine	COBA
Heart	Norman	Commfest (Community Film Festival)
Hill	Lynda	Theatre Direct Canada
Hillman	Shana	InDance
Hinman	Pam	Via Salzburg
Houston	Sandy	George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation
Hudson	Sharon	Via Salzburg
Huh	Dae Tong	Korean Canadian Literary Forum
Hunt	Kristina	Panthelia Singers
Hutinec	Tatiana	artist
Ionescu Vaccarino	Cosmina	artist, Artscape tenant
Jacob-Edwards	Rosslyn	Dance Ontario
Jones	Michael	George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation
Kain	Karen	National Ballet of Canada
Knechtel	John	Alphabet City
Kolanad	Gita	IMPACT, Indian Martial and Performance Arts Collective of Toronto
Krajnc	Anita	Latin American Arts Project/ RabbleTV rabble.ca
Krishnan	Hari	InDance
Kupka	Michael	St Joseph's House
La Plante	Ann	Alliance of Canadian New Music Projects
Lamb	Andrew	Tarragon Theatre
Lander	Slade	Dance Umbrella of Ontario
Lefebvre	Denis	Laidlaw Foundation
Litzenberger	Shannon	Integrated Dance Artists Company
Locilento	Juniper	Soulpepper Theatre Company
Logue	Dierdre	VTape
Loncol Daigneault	Marilou	Ministry of Culture
Lozano	Jorge	AluCine Latin Media Festival
MacCallum	Peter	artist
Malbogat	Simon	Mixed Company Theatre
Marsella	Richard	Canadian Music Centre, Ontario Region
Mason	Junia	artist
Melville	Catherine	Storytellers School of Toronto
Meurling	Sara	Young Centre for the Performing Arts
Mignault	Guy	Le Theatre Francais de Toronto
Miller Berry	Scott	Images Festival
Moffat	Don	TACF Board, architect
Moliner	Marie	Canadian Hertiage
Mooney	Peggy	Heritage Toronto
Nobbs	Claire	Supporting Our Youth
Olds	David	New Music Concerts
Piller	Madi	Toronto Animated Image Society
Quin	Emma	Ontario Crafts Council
Rocca	Laura	"Shoot With This" film mentorship project
Rolfe	James	artist
Rozeboom	Cindy	Toronto Fringe Festival
Rozo	Sinara	AluCine Latin Media Festival
Schklar	Lois	artist
Secord	Lois	The Franklin Carmichael Art Group
Seiler	Mayumi	Via Salzburg

Silverberg	Jerry	Cascade Theatre
Singh	Sunder	Elspeth Heyworth Centre
Sirman	Bob	Canada Council for the Arts
Sit Yee,	Christina	Reel Asian Film Festival
Smith	Laurel	Burning Passions Theatre
Squires	Sherri	St Christopher House Music School
Stackhouse	Ruth Ruth	Friendly Spike Theatre Band
Steinberg	Tamara	Art Starts Neighbourhood Cultural Centre
Stolk,	Jini	TAC Board, Creative Trust
Sunahara	Kay	Gendai Gallery
Suri	Andrew	IMPACT, Indian Martial and Performance Arts Collective of Toronto
Switzer	Sharon	Toronto Photographers Workshop
Taylor	Geoffrey	International Readings at Harbroufront
Taylor	Jennifer	Music Toronto
Thomson	Scott	AIM Toronto
Thornestone	Karen	Ontario Media Development Corporation
Tolley	Chris	Expect Theatre/Spark Collective
Trentham	Gerry	Chair, TAC Dance Committee
Van Burek	John	Pleiades Theatre
Van Cooten	Shiren	Reel World Film Festival
Van Dusen	Richard	Dancemakers
Vosberg	Wendy	Harbourfront Centre
Watkins	Jennifer	Esmeralda Enrique Dance Company
Wilhelm	Kelly	Canada Council for the Arts
Wilson	Ruth	Access Alliance
Wood	Heather	Toronto Small Press Book Fair
Zendel	Lilie	City of Toronto, Culture Division