What We Heard

Summary of Feedback from Community Engagement on the Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector

May 2024

A report submitted to the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council

monumental

Land Acknowledgement

The land we are discussing in this document is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

We also acknowledge that Toronto .Tkaronto) is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississauga and Chippewa bands.

We also take this time to acknowledge the water that flows through and across the territory.

Many of us have come here as settlers, immigrants, newcomers in this generation or generations past. We would like to also acknowledge those of us who came here forcibly, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. Therefore, we honour and pay tribute to the ancestors of African Origin and Descent.

Can a Zoom Call Change the World?

Invited Protectors and Caregivers
Thank you for your courage and vulnerability

There is a sacred duty in caring
Future gazing while cradling the past
Looking around the corner
To a room full of noses pressed against the glass
Asking us to help them find the entrance

Taking hammers to the walls themselves
No structure can contain what we hold
Every creation requires us to conceive anew
What it means to have space
What it means to be alive

No more cutting off parts of who we are
Wholeness beyond labels
We rise, thrive, and twinkle
Brilliant stars
Look up and notice

We have been all along

Poem written by Facilitator Shay Erlich, Artist & Ready for Access Founder, during the Disability Arts Community Conversation on Dec 7, 2023.

Title page artwork created during Creative Facilitator Leila Fatemi's Culture Plan engagement on Nov 25, 2023.

Image description: Multi-colour string forms an Islamic geometric pattern in the shape of a hexagon.

About Monumental

Monumental is a business working in service of the public good. We are supporting an equitable recovery from COVID-19, by building fair and just institutions, profiling and amplifying BIPOC leaders, and launching creative, socially-driven initiatives.

Monumental is committed to building more fair and just cities, where social power is increasingly redistributed to local communities and neighbourhoods. We do this through research, public engagement, policy development and civic education to craft pragmatic solutions for critical urban issues.

We believe change happens everywhere, and is not limited to a particular sector. We resist siloed work that focuses on short-term outcomes, and are passionate about spearheading bold, changemaking initiatives that are collaborative in their design, flexible and responsive in their implementation, and grounded in strong relationships.

Image 1. *A view into one of the Community Conversations at Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, exploring barriers and ideas about the need for space.*

Image description: *A group of approximately 25 people sit in a circle in a large auditorium with wood floors on black chairs, discussing reflections from their breakout groups.*

About the team

Photos above of the Monumental team:
Top row (left to right): Zahra Ebrahim, Seema Jethalal, Sara Udow, Kofi Hope
Bottom row (left to right): Trina Moyan, Ameer Idreis, Jao Dantes

Our team is made up of passionate community and city-builders, including current and former artists, cultural planners, urban designers, arts administrators, consultants, and leaders who have managed festivals, cultural hubs, and artist capacity-building programs. We have led engagements at the local and national scale, and written culture plans for various cities. We represent a team that spans multiple generations, and has worked in non-profit, public and private sectors, for grassroots and large-scale institutions.

One of our common threads is our dedication to enhancing quality of life and equity for communities in every corner of Toronto. Our orientation as individuals and a collective is to listen deeply and create space for underrepresented voices who are often at the margins of shaping their cities. We believe that by designing for the margins, everyone gets included.

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Executive Summary

From September 2023 to April 2024, Monumental designed and delivered an engagement process to inform the development of the City of Toronto's Culture Plan (working title: *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector)*. This work was done in partnership with the City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division and the Toronto Arts Council (TAC). This report includes insights and feedback from the community engagement process for the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council to consider as they develop the Culture Plan.

The engagement was delivered through a variety of activities, delivered both virtually and in-person, engaging approximately 3,650 participants in total across Toronto. Activities were designed to meaningfully engage those working in the culture sector (artists, not-for-profit organizations, for-profit creative industries, etc.) as well as audiences and the general public. Over the seven months of engagement, the Monumental team delivered:

- **5 themed Community Conversations:** Deep dive conversations with a diverse and intersectional group of participants on the key issues and trends facing artists, creatives, and the culture sector. The Community Conversations covered the following topics: *The Need for Space (2 sessions), Arts for Social Change, Recovery and Economic Health, and Technology and the Future of Arts, Culture & Creative Industries.*
- **3 population-specific Community Conversations:** Deep dive conversations into the experiences of specific equity-deserving groups facing disproportionate barriers in the culture sector. These dialogues were focused on engagement with the following groups: *Indigenous artists, creatives and communities, Black artists and creatives, and the Disability arts community.*
- **Toronto-wide Creative Facilitator Engagements:** Five creatives across the geography of Toronto engaged their communities and the public using artistic methods.
- **Community Conversation Toolkit:** Eight organizations and residents led their own discussions within their workplaces and communities using a Community Conversation Toolkit developed by Monumental and shared online for public use.
- **Online Survey:** A questionnaire organized into two streams of questions - one for those working in the culture sector, and the other for the broader public.
- **Virtual Town Hall events:** Two online forums to engage the public, share emerging themes, provide feedback, and explore ideas and visions for culture in Toronto in 2034.

In parallel to the activities delivered by Monumental, the City of Toronto also conducted additional engagement activities to gather feedback from members from specific segments of the culture sector (feedback from these sessions are included in Appendix F and incorporated into this report).

State of Culture Today

We heard from participants over the course of our engagement that Toronto has a unique concentration of creative hearts and minds, diverse talent and cultural offerings. The general public, and those working in culture, appreciate the value of arts and culture in Toronto. Participants agreed that investing in arts and culture has a significant impact on individuals as well as communities, businesses, tourists and international audiences and collaborators. Community members we heard from, including those working in culture, understand the strengths of Toronto's cultural activities and creative offerings - from street festivals to concerts to film productions and more - and also understand its untapped potential. The overarching theme that we heard was that many Torontonians are struggling not only to thrive, but simply survive, and many are finding it hard to create and engage with arts and culture. The impact of this struggle can be felt across organizations, neighbourhoods and communities.

Artists and those working in culture are concerned that their health and wellness - and by extension creative potential - is threatened because basic needs like affordable housing, adequate funding, as well as space to work in, are not being met. Creative organizations are also struggling for many reasons, including changes in audience behaviour since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (which impacts revenue), decreases in public and private funding, loss of talent to other cities, and more. These impact not only employees and volunteers in those organizations, but also the general public served by them. We heard that people are struggling to engage in arts and culture for a few reasons: many have gotten accustomed to staying home in the aftermath of the pandemic lockdowns, have less disposable income due to rising costs of living, don't have energy or time to make long commutes across the city (and often can't find accessible events and venues), and simply aren't aware of opportunities to participate in artistic and cultural activities. Although the general public is increasingly seeking connection, meaning, and inspiration, they need better infrastructure and support to leverage cultural offerings to do that.

Many of the key issues identified in Toronto's previous culture plan (Creative Capital Gains, published in May 2011) continue to plague Toronto, and some have worsened - such as loss of cultural spaces and venues, rapid technology shifts (like Artificial Intelligence), limited arts education for children and youth, pipelines to enter creative careers, inequitable wages, increasing costs of production and rising ticket prices. We heard that individuals and organizations working in culture are "hanging on by a thread".

Those who continue to do this work do it because of the profound impact it has on the people and communities they create and share work with.

Visions for 2034

Participants were asked to envision Toronto in 2034 - to imagine that great progress has been achieved with the Culture Plan. They shared dreams of a city where arts and culture is central - where the arts are embraced, valued and prioritized. Leaders will understand its benefits and increase investments in arts and culture knowing it will make Toronto a stronger, healthier and more vibrant place to live, work and visit. The City will be responsive and coordinated in changing systems, processes and policies that are not working well, and advocate with other key players and departments to improve conditions for the public, including artists. It will feel easy to create and access culture - from smooth transportation to reach events, to tickets that feel affordable, to increased operational funding for important creative and cultural organizations. In ten years, artists will not worry about basic needs; artists and cultural organizations will thrive and create meaningful art, experiences and jobs. The diversity of Toronto will be reflected across the board - from leadership teams to characters portrayed in video games made here - which will impact how art is created and shared. Children in Toronto will be exposed to artistic experiences at a young age, and develop the desire to continue participating in the arts as both creators and audiences down the road. The city will feel more connected - residents from all walks of life will come together in every neighbourhood to build bonds, share ideas and support one another. Toronto will be known as a city where it is "accessible to both create and enjoy arts and culture" across every neighbourhood.

Participants had strong perspectives on *how* the City could move forward with implementing the Culture Plan, citing *key principles* that should inform the City of Toronto and the Toronto Arts Council's activities to ensure that investments in culture represent the diverse realities and identities of Torontonians. We heard:

- **Centre Indigenous knowledge and approaches:** Expand and decolonize the definition of what is included in the City of Toronto's definition of "culture" to include other ways of being, sharing and gathering. Meaningfully build relationships with Indigenous communities and engage them in all cultural planning, policy and decision-making.
- **Be equitable, fair, and accessible:** The Culture Plan should be designed with a lens of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility at the core, keeping *all* Torontonians in mind - particularly those who have been systemically disadvantaged and excluded.

- **Be bold:** An urgent call to key decision-makers in Toronto to move away from a risk-averse reflex towards ambitious, courageous and innovative policy and solutions.
- **Make it easy:** Simplify burdensome processes and systems by designing them in collaboration with the communities they are made for. Removing or reducing barriers to making or participating in art would be a win-win for artists and the general public who benefit from their offerings.

In addition to these key principles, participants shared specific, practical community priorities, outlined in this report as *insights* that point to a need, challenge, or area of opportunity. Participants implored the City to respond to these through the Culture Plan, and shared some ideas for each insight that could inform the work ahead for the City of Toronto, Toronto Arts Council, and other key players (outlined in more detail in the report and the attached Appendices).

- **Insight 1: Address critical space issues:** Toronto's arts organizations, artists, creatives and cultural workers as well as visitors, patrons and audience members have been experiencing a space crisis. For the general public, this means a decreasing number of places to experience culture and a sense of grief and loss about shuttered venues that once improved their quality of life. Those working in culture have had less space to live and work in, which has had compounding negative effects. Ideas related to improving space issues include: access to affordable housing, cultural spaces that are accessible for diverse communities and suitable for many creative practices, and spaces for culture in every neighbourhood. Participants hope the City will take bold actions to re-imagine how we protect and access cultural spaces such as repurposing vacant, underused and "meanwhile" spaces, supporting Community Land Trust movements, and even facilitating space-sharing by having the City or another organization play a 'matchmaker' role between artists, creatives, cultural workers and developers/ landowners.
- **Insight 2: Re-imagine funding & support:** The top barrier that makes participating in culture challenging for the general public is affordability. Those working in culture are also experiencing significant funding challenges. Artists, creatives, cultural workers and organizations shared that while public funding has been instrumental to seeding and growing their projects and programs, many feel that the processes are unnecessarily complicated, onerous, outdated and, many shared, inequitable. They shared a plea to overhaul the granting system and shift towards multi-year funding, simplified application and reporting, microgrants, and new assessment approaches, which would have positive impacts for creators and audiences. Some ideas shared to address financial challenges include subsidies or discounts and tax incentives, increasing investments for cultural programming, operations, and venues - particularly outside Toronto's downtown core.

- **Insight 3: Build community and capacity:** We heard across the board that participants are increasingly feeling isolated, lonely and disconnected from culture and from each other, particularly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has left audiences less inclined to attend concerts, festivals, etc. Both artists and audiences shared a deep desire to build a sense of community through informal gatherings and spaces to build and deepen relationships. Those working in culture specifically dreamed of spaces to share ideas and feel inspired, without an explicit end goal. We also heard that audiences and artists are craving connection and opportunities to build networks and share resources, ideas and skills. Some ideas shared by participants include: developing a centralized database for all arts and culture opportunities and events, increasing training and mentorship opportunities, spaces for shared resources, and more opportunities for children and youth arts education programs.
- **Insight 4: Collective Advocacy & Coordination:** Participants shared that there needs to be a strong, collective effort across the City, the Toronto Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Foundation, and partners in the sector to better understand, illustrate and evaluate the impact of arts and culture, in order to continue making a strong case for investing in it**.** Participants also shared perspectives on key issues that, if addressed, could improve the health of the sector, including collective advocacy for increased public funding in arts and culture, equitable wages, Universal Basic Income (UBI), social supports including childcare, better public transportation, and opportunities for artists to shape policy within and beyond the realm of culture. Ideas shared include improved data collection and evaluation of the impact of arts and culture, advocacy for basic needs like Universal Basic Income and public transportation, awareness about the role of culture in climate change, and stronger protections for intellectual property technological shifts like Artificial Intelligence which impact creators.

Leaders of arts organizations also shared the missed opportunity of a strong domestic cultural sector that can help drive international opportunities for cultural workers and the City as a global player and destination. That said, throughout the engagement activities, the discussions moved beyond cultural production to include broader issues such as affordability, the housing crisis, issues with public transit, inclusion, even mental health. Many of the challenges shared across the engagement activities fell out of the traditional domain of "arts and culture" - artists, cultural workers and audiences need to have their basic needs met so they can afford to create opportunities for the general public, as well as afford to experience arts and culture offerings respectively. In other words, *a thriving sector is not possible without thriving people and thriving arts organizations*, and the Culture Plan is an opportunity to reignite culture in Toronto by starting with the basics: taking care of the quality of life of its artists, creatives, cultural workers, cultural institutions - and by extension, residents.

While some of this feedback may feel different than what is typically included in a Culture Plan, and beyond the domain of the City's Economic Development and Culture Division and the TAC alone, it's an exciting opportunity to recognize that we need a different approach to ensuring the longevity and vibrancy of Toronto's cultural scene.

Introduction

What is the Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector?

The City of Toronto, in collaboration with Toronto Arts Council (TAC) and Foundation, is developing a Culture Plan (working title *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector*) to help guide cultural services, policy and programming over the next ten years. The Plan will set out a vision to strengthen Toronto's culture sector and identify actions that the City, TAC and community can advance across arts and culture, creative industries, museums and heritage services. The goal is to ensure that residents in all corners of the city have opportunities to engage with the arts.

The following report outlines the feedback gathered through the engagement activities which will support the City's development of the Culture Plan.

Feedback gathered and shared in this report represents advice presented to the City and TAC based on the engagements led by Monumental. They do not represent the final ideas that will be proposed in the Culture Plan.

Engagement Approach

From September 2023 to April 2024, Monumental designed and delivered an engagement approach that created numerous touchpoints for Torontonians to participate in the discussion about the new Culture Plan. The engagement happened against the backdrop of dramatic change for the city and the culture sector, coming out of the COVID 19 pandemic, and in a climate of rising costs of living and working, philanthropic austerity, and ongoing challenges with inclusion and access affecting both artists and audiences.

The approach to engagement was delivered across two streams. The first stream focused on targeted, smaller, deep conversations with groups of participants from across the culture sector and from equity-deserving communities who face disproportionate challenges. We designed smaller group discussions, allowing participants to dig deep, probe, unpack, and ideate in ways that can be challenging in larger group settings. The second stream focused on broader public engagement using different methods to ensure more voices were captured in the engagement process. In this second stream, we provided opportunities to engage together, in real time, as well as asynchronously, on an individual's own time, in order to maximize public participation.

Across both streams, the engagement team collaborated closely with City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council staff both in planning and delivering the events.

Engagement Goals

Across all activities, our process focused on the following goals:

- **Increase awareness and understanding of key challenges facing Toronto's culture sector.** This includes non-profit arts, cultural heritage and creative industries.

- **Create opportunities for people working across sectors to discuss and co-create solutions to shared challenges.**

- **Inspire Torontonians and create pathways for participants to develop and deepen relationships.** We created safe spaces for people to do and see things differently through rich conversations.

- **Build capacity for artists and community.** We supported local artists through skills-sharing and support, particularly through five artist-led creative engagements. Participants from the general public also built skills related to policy development and advocacy.

- **Ensure broad public engagement activities are inclusive, safe, inspirational, educational and designed with a decolonized approach where possible.** Engagements were designed to include and amplify under-represented voices.

Who Engaged

Over eight months, over 3,650 Torontonians participated across the various engagement activities. Across both streams, the voices of equity-deserving communities were prioritized, with a specific focus on those who identify as Indigenous, Black, or part of the Deaf, Mad and Disabled Community as well as organizations, businesses and individuals living and or working outside of the downtown core.

Detailed voluntary demographic data was submitted from participants who engaged through the online survey and virtual town halls (see Our Activities). Summaries of the demographic data, per tactic, is included in Appendix G.

Survey participants were asked to voluntarily identify the fields and disciplines they work in. Respondents could select all fields that apply. The disciplines identified from survey participants specifically, include:

- Performance arts (32%)
- Visual and applied arts (32%)
- Arts administration (27%)
- Music (23%)
- Community arts (23%)
- Festival and events (21%)
- Film and television (20%)
- Education and training (16%)
- Galleries (16%)
- Dance (13%)
- Literary arts (12%)
- Design (10%)
- Cultural heritage (9%)
- Creative technology/interactive digital media (9%)
- Museums (8%)
- Accessibility/Disability Arts (7%)
- Business development (7%)
- Fashion (4%)
- Tourism (4%)
- Culinary arts (2%)
- I'm not sure (1%)

Note on Disaggregating Data:

The online survey specifically included two branches: one for those who identified primarily as audience members ("the general public"), which had 722 responses, and a second brand for those who work and volunteer in the culture sector, which had 1,773 responses. We specifically analyzed responses for commonalities and differences between the general public, the non-profit, and the for-profit culture sector. It is important to note that we disaggregated data to analyze and understand perspectives specific to Indigenous, Black and Mad, Deaf, and disabled participants. As identified in the report below, the majority of sentiments, challenges, and ideas remained similar across all groups. There are specific notations throughout where perspectives diverge for specific user groups. For more details, the Appendices include the detailed summaries from the various engagement methods.

Our Activities

The table below outlines the specific activities undertaken under each engagement stream, the number of people engaged, intended audience, and objective of the activity.

Tactics	Purpose	Audience	Participants
5 themed Community Conversations (in-person) October - December 2023	Deep dive conversations with a diverse and intersectional group of participants on the key issues and trends facing artists, creatives, and the culture sector. Explored four issues /themes: • *The Need for Space (2 sessions)* • *Arts for Social Change* • *Recovery and Economic Health* • *Technology and the Future of Arts, Culture & Creative Industries*	Targeted individuals and organizations involved in the culture sector (With priority given to equity-deserving communities, and those representing geographies outside the core)	86
3 population-specific Community Conversations (in-person/ virtual) November - December 2023	Deep dive conversations into the experiences of specific equity-deserving groups facing disproportionate barriers in the culture sector. Explored issues with people identifying as part of the following: • *Indigenous artists, creatives and communities* • *Black artists and creatives* • *Disability arts community*	Targeted individuals and organizations from equity-deserving communities, specifically those involved in the culture sector	70
Creative Facilitator Engagements **(in-person)** October 2023 - January 2024	To share resources, build capacity and engage Torontonians creatively, five creatives from Etobicoke, Scarborough, North York, Downtown Toronto and East York engaged with their communities and the general public using creative methods. • Sarah St-Fleur (Sista Got Jokes) led an interactive comedy event in Etobicoke • Kevin Ramroop hosted a book launch and discussion in Scarborough • kumari giles facilitated an outdoor gathering and discussion on culture and care • Johl Whiteduck Ringuette led a walking tour of Red Urban Nation	General public and creatives, with a specific focus on those outside of the downtown core, and for folks that may not have access to virtual meetings or online surveys	180

Tactics	Purpose	Audience	Participants
	Collective' murals at Bickford Centre in downtown Toronto • Leila Fatemi hosted a community arts gathering in east end Toronto		
Community Conversation Toolkit Late January - Early March 2024	Monumental developed a toolkit for interested residents and organizations to host their own conversations to seek feedback to inform the Culture Plan. This toolkit was posted online for all to access. Interested organizations and residents led their own discussions within their workplaces / communities using the Community Conversation Toolkit, and shared key takeaways with the Culture Plan Engagement Team.	General public, with specific outreach to organizations and community networks outside the downtown core, equity-deserving communities and diverse disciplines	89
Online survey Late January - Early March 2024	Online survey was organized into two streams of questions, one for those working in the culture sector, and the other for the broader public. Survey questions focused on understanding sector priorities and audience experiences.	Targeted (culture sector, culture sector adjacent) and general public	2,670 (722 of which identified as mostly being audience members) were members of general public)
Town Halls (virtual) February 2024	Two online town halls engaged the public to share key messages, high-level themes, priorities and goals, collect feedback and provide an opportunity for visioning.	Targeted (culture sector, culture sector adjacent) and general public	380
City-led consultations February - April 2024	In parallel to the activities delivered by Monumental, the City of Toronto also conducted additional engagement activities to gather feedback from members in specific cultural sectors and industries, including museums and cultural heritage, creative industries sectors, post-secondary educational institutions, the Local Arts Services Organizations, and various Council Advisory Bodies. Documentation of those engagements can be found in Appendix F.	Targeted conversations	158

Gratitude & Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the approximately 3,650 participants who shared their views generously in hopes of shaping the future of arts and culture in Toronto!

We are also grateful to:

- The five creative facilitators: Johl Whiteduck Ringuette, Kevin Ramroop, kumari giles, Leila Fatemi, and Sarah St Fleur, who engaged over 180 residents from across Toronto through a mural tour, community art event, comedy show, Islamic geometry weaving workshop, book launch and facilitated discussions.
- Organizations that hosted their own conversations and submitted Community Toolkits: Bad Dog Theatre Company, Deputy Mayor Malik's office, Don Valley Art Club members, École secondaire Toronto Ouest, élèves MHS en Arts et Culture, Ontario College of Art & Design University Cultural Policy Hub, Red Head Gallery Collective and The Theatre Centre.
- The Culture Plan External Advisory Panel, a group of leaders who shared wisdom, guidance and insights that strengthened every stage of this project.
- Guest speakers at the Town Hall events: Cameron Bailey, Leila Fatemi, maxine bailey, Rajni Perera and Sean Lee, who shared their dreams for Toronto.
- Shay Erlich, Ready for Access Founder, who facilitated the Disability Arts Community Conversation and advised Monumental on best practices for accessibility design.
- Outreach partners including Flaunt It, Native Earth Performing Arts, POV Film, Sketch Working Arts, and Workman Arts who helped spread the word far and wide.
- Venue and catering partners including Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Spadina House, City Hall, Out of This World Catering (CAMH), Afghan Women's Catering Collective and One Love Catering, who provided nourishing meals and welcoming spaces to ground our conversations.

The City of Toronto acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, whose generous contribution helped to deliver engagement sessions related to cultural space.

How to use this document

Our hope in writing this document is to bring you into the energy of the community engagements we hosted over the last seven months. Our goal was to hear a broad range of perspectives from the general public, including members of the culture sector. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, neighbourhoods, professions, and communities within Toronto, we created space for generative conversations around the issues facing both those working in the culture sector as well as audiences participating in it, while also generating ideas for potential responses and solutions.

We've done our best to capture the rich data from the engagement in the subsequent pages[1]. The **State of Culture Today** section outlines the context of creating and participating in culture in Toronto, shared with us by engagement participants. This section is meant to supplement the City's existing work around the state of the culture sector with wisdom gleaned from the public. Key perspectives are summarized in the section **Vision for Culture 2034**.

From there, we move into **Principles** and **Insights**, which is the analysis of feedback we heard. The **Principles** outline four "lenses" shared by participants that focus on *how* the Culture Plan can come to life, encouraging the City of Toronto to apply these approaches across all of their activities. They are considerations shared by participants that can underpin the actions the City of Toronto and other key players take in the Culture Plan. Following the principles are the core **Insights**: specific, practical priorities we heard - a synthesized collection of challenges, opportunities, and needs.

For each insight you'll find:

- **Overview**: A summary of the feedback we heard on that topic including shared perspectives across several engagement activities.

- **Ideas and Solutions posed by participants**: Specific and higher-level strategic comments and ideas shared by participants. While not all of the ideas listed here represent broad consensus, they are compelling ideas that help bring insights to life! (See Appendices for more detailed ideas and solutions.)

- **Quotes**: Verbatim comments shared by participants throughout the report to help illustrate feedback and insights. These are intentionally unattributed to protect privacy, except for guest speakers at the town halls who provided consent.

- **Green boxes**: These primarily include quantitative data from the online survey, highlighting feedback from the general public and audiences as well as other nuanced input.

We close the document with **Conclusion & Next Steps**, which includes our reflections on what we heard, as well as considerations for the City of Toronto and TAC to keep in mind as they develop the Culture Plan. Detailed summaries for all of our engagements (as well as those conducted by the City of Toronto) are included in the **Appendices**.

NOTE: The content shared in this report details what was heard from the public, and is intended to inform the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council as they develop the Culture Plan.

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[1] See appendices for detailed summaries from each engagement tactic.

Image Gallery 1. *Photo series from Community Conversations and Creative Facilitator Sessions.*

Image descriptions: *A cluster of six photos. Top-right: Two people standing and having a conversation with each other. Top-left: Hima Batavia, performance artist, shares an excerpt of her work entitled "Higher Hair" at a Community Conversation session. Middle-right: Four people gathered together with two sitting on the floor and two on a couch having conversations and a meal together at a Creative Facilitator session led by Leila Fatemi. Middle-left: Small group discussion in a circle with participants sitting down. Top-centre: Small group discussion with people on the floor. Bottom-center: People standing and having one-on-one conversations.*

State of Culture Today
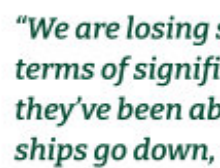
Culture in Toronto is in Crisis

Culture in Toronto today is a story of polarities. Participants across the board shared that the city is home to a unique concentration of creative hearts and minds, diverse talent and cultural offerings. Many participants shared appreciation for the ways arts and culture improves the quality of life in Toronto for everyone - from creating a much-needed sense of community and belonging; improving mental health and general wellness; creating meaningful jobs as well as opportunities to develop transferable skills; providing inspiration and joy; driving economic growth and tourism and highlighting vital stories. And some participants shared that the organizations they work for - from film production studios to national festivals - have chosen Toronto as their home intentionally - because of the strong workforce and easy access to creative collaborators. Participants shared the ways that investments in arts and culture have a positive impact on individuals, communities, businesses, tourists and international audiences and collaborators. Despite this, we heard that many Torontonians - the general public and those working in culture - are struggling not only to thrive, but *simply survive,* and many are finding it hard to create and engage with arts and culture.

When asked how Torontonians experience culture, participants highlighted a broad spectrum of activities such as: street festivals, live music, podcasts, movies, culinary experiences and more. They emphasized Toronto's diversity and talent as key strengths, citing its wide range of traditions, experiences, festivals, food and unique neighbourhoods that attract people from all corners of

"We are losing some major organizations - in terms of significance, in terms of what they've been able to contribute…We see those ships go down, and we think 'Oh geez, that's too bad'. We don't see the waves coming that will hit all of us."

the world. It is worth noting that the general public consider trips to public libraries and community centres as a primary way to engage with culture, whereas people working in culture are more inclined to visit cultural spaces like art galleries. The general public has a very broad understanding of culture - they highlighted restaurants and food, nightlife and natural attractions as important ways to engage with culture, while those working in culture primarily engage with it by supporting fellow creatives at their arts and cultural activities.

61% of survey respondents indicated that their participation in cultural events and activities changed since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic because of safety concerns (and a reluctance to attend large or indoor gatherings), limited time, increased costs of

living, shifts in their own behaviours after having experienced pandemic lockdowns and a lack of information about cultural events. As one survey respondent explained, "I go out less, unfortunately. I feel like I lost my flow and my drive to participate. The lockdowns made it really hard to want to get back into cultural activities." Some participants shared new ways they engage with arts and culture, and a renewed interest in it since the pandemic. They are more inclined to attend virtual arts and culture events and programs or explore local community events like local community programs at public libraries.

Below are some responses to the question of how participation has changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- "Cultural venues such as museums and galleries have restricted their hours and cut back on membership activities. I work and cannot attend during daytime working hours."

- "I tend not to go to events that will be packed with people if there is an option. I pick and choose times that might be less busy."

- "I can't afford it anymore. If I do spend on activities then I can't afford to eat."

- "My interest in cultural activities has increased since the start of Covid-19. During Covid, we were restricted to purchasing from big box stores and getting takeout. I have come to realize I want so much more than that in my life."

The overarching theme we heard is that Torontonians are struggling. Artists, cultural workers and creatives explained that their health and wellness - and therefore creative potential - are stifled because basic needs - like affordable housing, adequate funding, health benefits, and space to work in - are not being met. Cultural organizations and creative industries are also treading water. Many of the key issues identified in Toronto's previous culture plan (Creative Capital Gains, published in May 2011) continue to plague the sector today, and some have worsened - such as access to cultural spaces, rapid technology shifts and uncertainty, and rising cost of production. The COVID 19 pandemic wide ranging negative impacts on both individuals, organizations and entire cultural industries. We heard that many organizations and their participants have not bounced back.

Although the general public is increasingly seeking connection, meaning, and inspiration, they need better infrastructure and support to access cultural and artistic experiences. At one of the Town Hall events, guest speaker Cameron Bailey (CEO of the Toronto International Film Festival Inc.) shared, "In order to participate in cultural production in a city like Toronto, first you need the stability and the safety and the time to even think

about engaging and going out and taking it in... housing, economic health, physical and mental health, and social services are all culture issues."

"Culture should bring us closer, help us trust each other and inspire delight in our city and community."

"Survival mode can be the wet blanket over creative mode. It gets in the way of just making cool things, and getting people as enthusiastic as they would be over a sporting event. Our work is just as fun and enriching."

"Artists are human beings and citizens, not just producers of art. You cannot give a couple more million [dollars] to a theatre organization or festival. You need to offer more funding and financial, medical and housing resources directly to artists...The City of Toronto Culture Plan needs to include how it plans to take care of artists as a whole. We are sick, we are marginalized. We cannot make art if we are trying to survive."

Survey highlight: How culture is experienced today

Note: Percentages indicate the portion of the participants who selected or agreed with the specific response

Overall, in the past 12 months, survey participants engaged in the following activities (top five):

63% attended live performances (such as a concert, comedy show, theatre, etc.)

51% engaged with art and culture in their day-to-day lives (listening to podcasts, music, etc)

48% watched a movie (at the cinema or at home)

45% visited an art gallery

44% attended festivals and/or cultural events
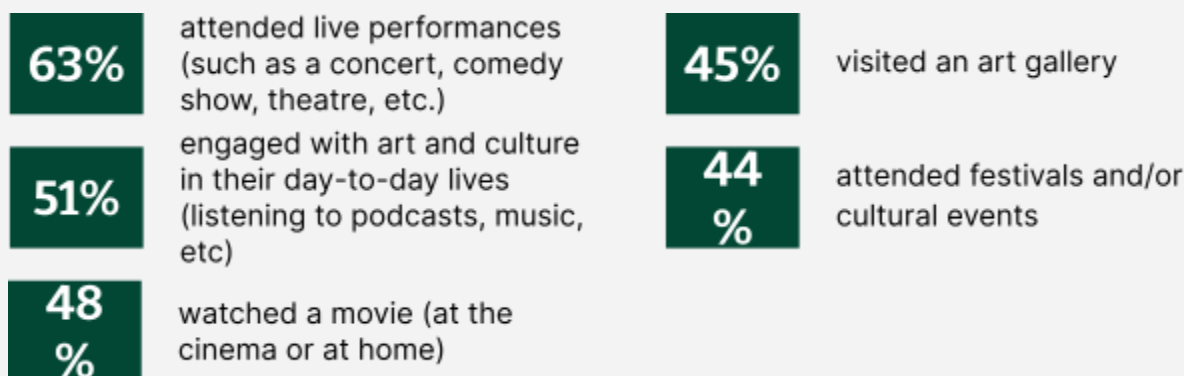
Note: *When isolating participants who identify as the "general public", visiting public libraries and community centres was included in the top five activities and visiting an art gallery was not; differing from the overall insights.*

Overall, we heard that the five top strengths for arts and culture in Toronto include the following:

1. Toronto is home to many diverse cultural groups and traditions (66%)

2. The city is full of unique neighbourhoods with lots of creative energy and cultural history (51%)

3. Toronto offers a range of live performances, including music, theatre and dance (48%)

4. Toronto has a one-of-a-kind food scene that lets you discover food from all over the world (46%)

5. Festivals and events help me to discover cultures and neighbourhoods across the city (37%)

Overall, we heard that the top three challenges to experiencing arts and culture in Toronto include:

1. The costs to participate are too high (57%)

2. I have a hard time finding information about cultural activities and events (36%)

3. Cultural activities are too far to travel to or too hard to get to by public transportation (27%)

When asked, artists, cultural workers, and creatives indicated the top five challenges facing the sector:

1. Undervaluing Arts and Culture: Lack of understanding and devaluation of arts and culture among funders, decision makers and the public. (65%)

2. Funding Availability: Grant funding available is not adequate or is too low to meet the needs of artists, creatives and cultural workers. (58%)

3. Meeting Basic Needs: Difficulty affording rising costs of living and access to housing as an artist or creative in Toronto. (52%)

4. Space: Limited affordable, accessible and/or suitable spaces for working, performances and other cultural uses (such as for office use, events, production, and creation). (50%)

5. Increased Costs of Production: Increased production and daily operational costs, including supply chain disruptions and insurance coverage complexities. (43%)

Note: *When comparing responses between for-profit and non-profit culture sector participants, the top five challenges remained the same.*

Note: *When isolating specifically for self-identified Black survey participants, "Bias and Discrimination" was identified as a top challenge which differs from the overall findings.*
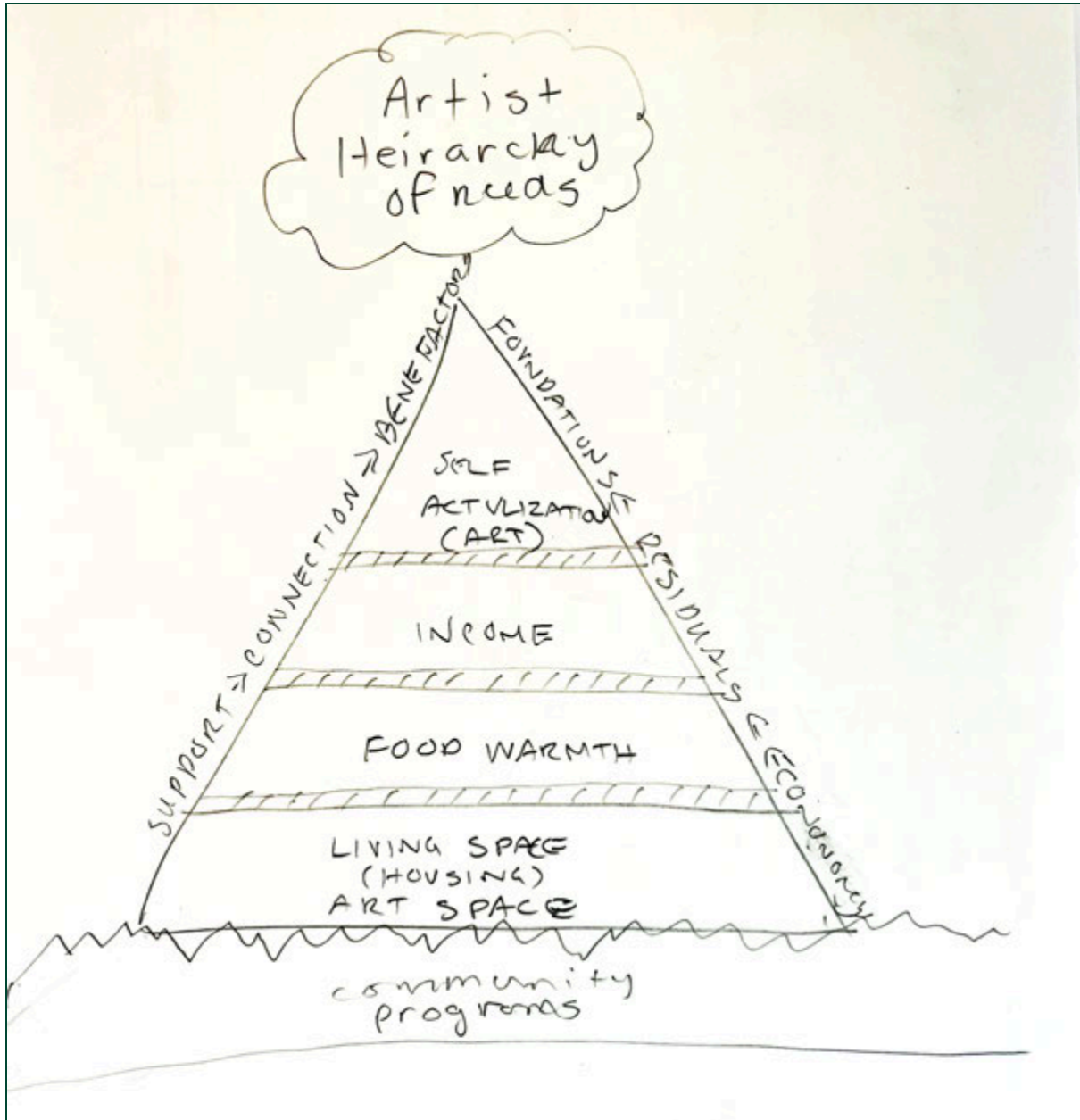
Image 2. A drawing by Chris Decorte (a participant of the Community Conversation for Indigenous Artists and Creatives) entitled "Artist Hierarchy of Needs".

Image description: The image shows a triangle with four categories: living space at the bottom, food & warmth above it, then income and finally self-actualization (art) at the top. Community programs are located below the bottom of the triangle. indicates that space is a core baseline need for artists, followed by food and warmth, then income and finally self-actualization and art at the top.

Visions for Culture in 2034

Across all engagement activities, participants were asked to imagine what the future of Toronto could look and feel like. Below is a summary that highlights the themes across participants' responses.

- **Art and culture is valued.** The importance of arts and culture is celebrated and has broad support akin to sports. Increased investments enable arts and culture to be accessible and affordable to the general public (starting at a young age) and audiences can afford cultural events and discover them with ease.
- **Basic needs are met.** Affordable housing, living wages, accessible transit and other fundamentals are addressed so Torontonians can experience and embrace arts and culture. Artists and creatives have a baseline income support (e.g. Universal Basic Income), cultivating an environment for them to innovate, dream big and take risks.
- **Arts and culture are part of everyday life**. High quality performances, shows, and activities happen across every Ward, including public spaces like parks, community centres and subways. Art is affordable and available in every corner of Toronto.
- **Cultural space is protected and prioritized.** Throughout the city, including the inner-suburbs, music venues, theatres, public spaces and other spaces where culture happens are safeguarded and supported.
- **The idea of "culture" is broader.** Culture means many things to many people and in the future, participants hope the City's definition will include fashion, culinary arts, comedy, storytelling, and other forms of culture - especially Indigenous forms of culture and culture-making.
- **Artists, creatives and cultural workers have support.** Regardless of age or stage of careers, they have access to equipment, mentors, training and other support to develop professionally.
- **The City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council embrace experimentation, innovation and risk-taking**. They make bold choices to try new programs, policies and opportunities that centre community needs.
- **Toronto celebrates and honours its diversity.** Arts and cultural activities and opportunities are inclusive, fair and accessible. Diversity is reflected in the make-up of leaders, artists, and cultural workers. Audiences see themselves reflected across the board - from the stories told on stage to policies developed that impact them.
- **People feel more connected to each other because of art and culture.** They come together to share ideas and resources, collaborate, broaden their networks and support each other. There are informal gathering spaces and cultural hubs in each neighbourhood that are easy to access from creators and audiences.

Survey highlight:
How can we support Vision 2034?

Percentages indicate the portion of the participants who selected or agreed with the specific response.

Overall, we heard that the top three ways to motivate survey participants to get more involved in arts and culture activities include:

- More low-cost or free options (63%)
- More events and cultural experiences that are in my local neighborhood (46%)
- Better advertising/information on events taking place (43%)

When asked, the general public said the top three ways that the City of Toronto and TAC can support the sector include:

1. Offer affordable and accessible space for cultural uses and creative industries (41%)
2. Provide funding and grants (to artists, creative industries, cultural institutions, community organizations, etc.) (36%)
3. Identify policies to protect existing, significant venues (such as live music venues) from redevelopment (30%)

Note: *When isolating specifically for self-identified Indigenous survey participants, "simplifying and enhancing process to access funds, space and support" was identified within the top three ways the City of Toronto and TAC can support the sector.*

"Imagine a Toronto where community hubs are spaces for non-transactional experimentation. These spaces would exist as sanctuaries where we can come together and collaborate and grow and learn from each other. In my vision, experimentation is not just encouraged, it is celebrated as a fundamental part of the artistic process. It is a fertile ground for which groundbreaking ideas sprout and a catalyst that propels artistic pursuits forward ... And perhaps most importantly experimentation fosters a culture of openness, curiosity and dialogue."

- Leila Fatemi, contemporary visual artist, Curator of Education and Community Outreach, Gallery 44, and Guest Speaker at Town Hall

Headline News

We asked the Culture Plan's External Advisory Panel to imagine that the state of culture in Toronto has improved significantly in ten years. They were tasked with writing imaginary newspaper headlines from the year 2034. Here are some samples of headlines:

- Toronto: The Global City that built Affordable Housing and Arts Centres in every new building in the last 10 Years
- Cities across the globe have been asking the same question: How did Toronto's arts and culture sector become the global hub for accessibility in the arts?
- New York, Tokyo, Paris, London, Accra all attending The Arts and Culture Summit to learn from the ones who did it BEST
- Toronto's cultural offerings overtakes the auto, and financial industries
- The people of Toronto agree: arts and culture is valuable without needing to produce capital
- Art and culture recognized as top driver of well-being for 10th year in a row!
- Creatives around the world flock to Toronto as a global centre of opportunity
- Toronto is all in for the arts, and it shows
- Toronto's massive influx of new residents credited to its vibrant cultural ecosystem
- Canadians from coast to coast to coast participating in National Culture Day in record numbers
- Toronto's culture scene is explosive. Mix of local neighbourhood cultural spaces and companies, aided by a connected transit system, and Toronto artists on the world stage make for a thriving community.
- Arts tourism hit an all time high this summer as GTHA local tourism and global tourism animated Toronto throughout the summer and autumn months
- Toronto has it all, culturally rich and vibrant - see the world in one place.
- Toronto tops NYC, Paris, and London as a cultural hub
- How Toronto transformed its arts and culture in 10 years

When asked to imagine an ideal Toronto in 2034, some survey respondents said...

"Arts and culture are nested into a much more 'green' city with projects that actually enhance the environment, allow birds and other animals to thrive in the spaces and shelters they provide. Instead we have a vision of art plopped onto natural places creating jarring contrasts with nature."

"In 2034, I wish culture would be localized, from neighborhoods to cafes. [Culture] hasn't seamlessly integrated into everyday life."

"Toronto 2034 should definitely have more of an Indigenous arts and culture scene."

"Toronto is a vibrant cultural hub, boasting a diverse array of immersive experiences. A futuristic blend of virtual and physical art installations transforms public spaces, engaging residents and visitors alike. Interactive street performances, inspired by global events like the Venice Carnival or Rio's Carnival, bring energy to the city. A cutting-edge digital arts festival rivals Tokyo's teamLab Borderless. Local theaters showcase experimental performances, echoing the innovation of Berlin's art scene. Toronto's streets are alive with dynamic murals, drawing inspiration from the vibrant street art of Mexico City. The city has become a global cultural destination, embracing innovation while celebrating its rich diversity."

"My Toronto would have more art in local neighbourhoods, more music outside of street festivals in the local bars and restaurants. Concerts and theatre productions would be more affordable. And online or hybrid versions for those who are immobile or unable to attend in person."

Principles

Across all of our engagement activities, participants had strong perspectives on *how* the City could move forward on implementing the Culture Plan. We also heard that at this critical moment for the sector, there are key principles or lenses that should inform activities led by the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council, to ensure that investments in culture represent and honour the diverse realities of Torontonians.

We've gathered feedback about "how" the City and key partners should move forward designing and implementing a new culture plan.

The four principles we recommend are:

- *Centre Indigenous knowledge and approaches*
- *Be equitable, fair, and accessible*
- *Be bold*
- *Make it easy*

Centre Indigenous knowledge and approaches

Core to the success of the Culture Plan will be using a lens that centres Indigenous knowledge, approaches, and ways of being. Through the engagement activities, many Indigenous participants pointed to the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) as a necessary starting point for the team working on the Culture Plan to consider, review and incorporate into the priorities for the Culture Plan. Specifically, we heard that before the City explores policies connected to culture planning, there needs to be commitment to the actions of the Reconciliation Action Plan. We heard that many Indigenous people live under the poverty line, have experienced significant trauma due to colonialism[2] and therefore recommend that basic needs, healing and commitment to self determination be prioritized.

Across our engagements with Indigenous communities, we heard about the importance for the City of Toronto to decolonize its definition of "culture", and transition away from the idea of culture as simply cultural production. As one participant shared,"Culture as we know it is a colonial term: [for us] it is our way of life." Participants were clear that to embody the City's commitment to reconciliation, we must redefine culture to capture ways of being, sharing and gathering, which were the subject of intentional suppression and erasure through colonization. Redefining culture would include recognizing family, storytelling, language, ways of gathering, connection to land, food, and many other aspects central to Indigenous life. This includes recognizing that care is a part of that

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[2]Colonialism, the theft of lands and knowledge, and the many other harms perpetuated by the colonial state have fractured relationships, and make journeying together now down a mutual path very difficult. The fact is that colonial state actors have attempted to forcefully assimilate, displace, and systemically erase Indigenous Peoples from this place, perpetuating grave injustices, inequities, and fatal consequences. (Source: City of Toronto 2022-2032 Reconciliation Action Plan)

definition of culture, and acts of care that consider broader wellness of body, mind and spirit, are critical. Another example is to recognize that Indigenous Elders are the core of the community, and that part of "culture" means ensuring that Elders are supported so they can pass on their knowledge and traditions to younger generations.

Engagement participants urged the City to continue to consider the history of this land and its original stewards in all cultural planning and policy-making. One approach is to ensure a more prominent presence and visibility of Indigenous practices, ways of being, artists and craftspeople in Toronto's cultural landscape, through investments in public art, cultural spaces, and signage (some referenced Vancouver, BC as an example). We also heard that any investments in culture should be environmentally sustainable and minimize negative impacts on the planet and future generations. Additionally, there is a desire to see increased Indigenous representation in decision-making positions across all City of Toronto divisions, to ensure that Indigenous values and ways of being are embedded into the design and implementation of all policies and action plans, including this one.

> "You can't take these recommendations and interpret them without us there. We need to be involved at the table when the Culture Plan is being written."

Image 3. Photo from the Creative Facilitator Engagement led by Johl Whiteduck Ringuette where participants joined for a walking tour of the Red Urban Nation Collective murals at Bickford Park.

Image description: A crowd of participants gather with their backs facing the camera. Johl is in the centre speaking in front of a small green courtyard and a mural of a person with red and yellow radiating rays behind them.

We repeatedly heard that across Indigenous communities, strong relationships and partnerships are foundational to any endeavour, and that *engagement itself* is relationship-building. It is critical for the City to continue to work with diverse Indigenous communities of Toronto - to engage and collaborate early and often - as the Culture Plan gets developed and implemented. Participants want the City to prioritize relationships over transactions, and to take into account a more holistic appreciation of what culture means to Indigenous communities.

"My dream for Toronto and as an artist and a cultural practitioner is that every single Canadian that comes to live in this city and beyond understands that you are on Indigenous land. That we are the original peoples. That we are the only people that hold sovereign nation-to-nation treaties, and that sadly we struggled to have accessibility to culture and art because we're living on or below the poverty line."

Be equitable, fair and accessible

The Culture Plan should be designed with a lens of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility at its core. Whether designing solutions to support people from Deaf, Mad and disabled communities to participate more in culture; distributing or redistributing public funds more equitably; or considering *who* to develop new solutions to old problems with, it is essential to keep *all* Torontonians in mind - particularly those who have been systemically disadvantaged and excluded in the past.

"We need an equity lens, not an equity policy... We need an equity lens on everything."

We heard that it is important not only to involve people from equity-deserving communities in decision-making, but also to engage them early and often, and provide ongoing opportunities to influence policy. Continuing to deepen our understanding about the challenges facing these communities will support better and fairer decisions.

The disability justice philosophy of 'designing for the margins' so everyone gets included is a helpful framework. For instance, if designing a wheelchair ramp to a theatre, elders, people using strollers, and others benefit as well. While new regulations for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) and the Accessible Canada Act may incentivize accessible design in the coming years, accessibility requirements should be considered minimum standards for designing the kind of cultural landscape Toronto needs.

Communities at the margins (e.g. Indigenous, Black; Deaf, Mad and disabled; youth and seniors, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, etc.) should not be treated as monoliths. Engaging members of these communities meaningfully (ideally on staff, and also through meaningful and paid community engagement) is a great way to minimize exclusive and unfair decisions.

There were recommendations to increase representation of equity-deserving community members in decision-making processes and staffing positions across the board, including at the City. Participants were wary of tokenism at some cultural organizations, including inauthentic diversity, inclusion and accessibility efforts designed to help secure funding. They shared concerns about the "glass cliff phenomenon"- in which people from equity-deserving communities are hired in leadership positions (often during times of crisis or instability) with insufficient support and a high likelihood of failure. This trend reinforces stereotypes and perpetuates biases that get in the way of meaningful change.

Several participants referenced "spoon theory" - a theory in which spoons are used as a metaphor for physical or mental energy within the Deaf, Mad and disabled community. The world of arts and culture is often designed with an assumption that people have a certain amount of "spoons" in order to work at a fast pace, attend in-person events, etc. without understanding that some tasks take significantly more energy for certain communities.

Continuing to learn (and unlearn) about injustice, ableism and other forms of systemic discrimination will help us understand the subtle ways that inequity shows up in our work - for example cultural appropriation of Indigenous designs. The Culture Plan presents a much-needed opportunity to model policy development that is progressive, fair and truly leverages Toronto's diversity.
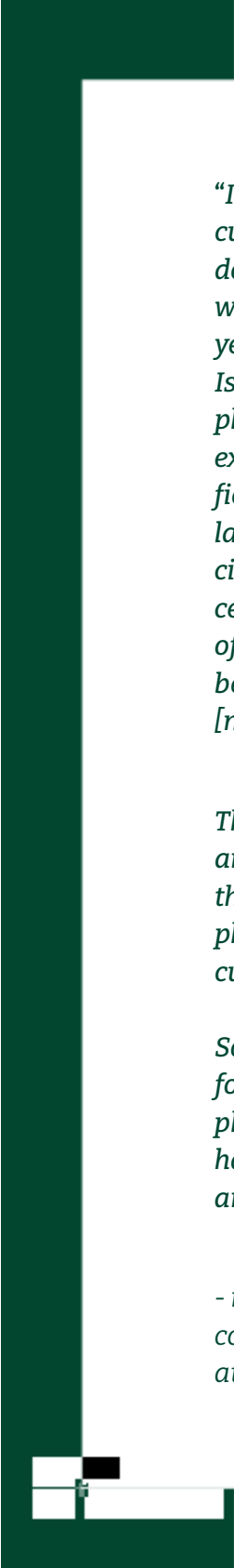
> "My dream for the city is an accessible cultural sector. Access in every sense of the word. So we can all feel invited and considered and welcomed by the culture that we are purported to experience. And this is really a future where we imagine disabled folks not just surviving, but thriving and leading and shaping the culture that we all experience together...we have a chance to dream bigger than AODA compliance."
>
> - Sean Lee, Director of Programming, Tangled Art + Disability, member of the Culture Plan External Advisory Panel and Guest Speaker at Town Hall

Be bold

We consistently heard that Toronto feels conservative, unimaginative and risk-averse. There is an urgent call to decision-makers in Toronto to move away from risk-averse reflexes, towards courageous, ambitious and innovative policy and solutions. Participants urged decision-makers to get comfortable with measured experimentation, looking for inspiration from other cities that have adopted creative solutions. Bold ideas might come from collaborations with other partners - within and beyond the public sector - including artists!

Examples of what 'bold' can mean in the context of a culture plan can include taxing landlords with vacant storefront spaces and encouraging them to share those "meanwhile" spaces with artists for rehearsals, pop-up performances, meeting space and more. In the context of funding, a bold idea would be to move away from process-heavy, risk-averse funding models towards trust-based philanthropy, with simplified application and reporting processes, shorter turnaround times, and multi-year and unrestricted funding. These types of process-based changes would yield significant benefits for Toronto's cultural community and the people they serve.

"I worry about our city. Our city is the financial - and arguably the cultural and diversity hub - of the province and country. So, why doesn't it feel like a winning world-class city? When I think about what I love about Toronto, the city I have called home for over 50 years, I reflect on my youth and spaces like Caravan … and Centre Island, which I attended with my family, and all the affordable places that we could participate in with music and new experiences (which I believe led me to my work in this creative field). However … for a city that claims to be so diverse… there is a lack of public art and benches to enjoy art, and places to enjoy the city and… a lack of green spaces and a lack of gathering spaces to celebrate and to have our voices heard…I have mourned the lack of streets with sidewalk cafés. When did the city of Toronto become the city of naysayers and where did all of these [naysayers] come from?

This is not just an incredible natural landscape with bike trails and parks, but with world-renowned artistic talent, film festivals, theatre, dance and opera companies, art crawls and photography, fashion exhibits, museums… it is a mecca for culture!…

So, are we willing to embrace beauty, interesting buildings, parks for walking and lounging, and transportation to get you to those places, and to enjoy music, film, theatre and food and all that we have to offer? Are we willing to challenge our current view on how and where art and entertainment and beauty and joy find us?"

- maxine bailey, Executive Director, Canadian Film Centre, co-Chair Culture Plan External Advisory Panel and Guest Speaker at Town Hall

Make it easy

Participants want support for the general public to be able to attend cultural events, venues, programs, etc. more easily - whether visiting a museum, attending a music festival, or taking a silk screening workshop. They also want to see commitments in the Culture Plan that will make it easier for artists, creatives, cultural workers and cultural organizations to thrive.

There are many ways to make creating and participating in the arts easier. For example, increasing visibility through strong marketing and information-sharing and exploring new or improved levers beyond financial support (e.g. tax incentives, subsidies, etc.). This could lead to greater participation, while building strong communities, exposing residents to new ways of thinking and creating, cultivating transferable skills, and more. Redesigning programs, processes and policies, minimizing administrative burdens, and centring the 'user,' can improve the experience people have doing things like booking spaces, applying for funding, or signing up for city programs.

Image 4. Photo of the Leila Fatemi Creative-led Engagement session.

Image description: People gathered around a table working with yarn to make Islamic geometric patterns on paper while talking.

Insights

Insight 1: Address critical space issues

"Going beyond the language of gentrification...there's something deeper that's happening and we don't have the language in this moment to describe it..."

Toronto's artists, creatives and cultural workers as well as visitors, patrons and audiences have been experiencing a space crisis - a decreasing amount of space to live, work, produce and attend cultural events and offerings in. The news of Artscape[3] moving into receivership was concerning to many, and a marker of the state of the environment. The decrease in cultural space is extremely frustrating at a time when development is booming across the city at significant rates. Participants who described a decline in mental wellness and morale within the culture sector, shared that it is in part due to challenges finding places to live and work.

"I need to sit down and draw, but our apartment isn't that big. And I work in the horror [illustration] genre... my daughter shouldn't be seeing my drawings. So I go to the library to work. Being a parent is expensive, and finding a co-op workspace is expensive - and they all seem tobe south of Bloor street."

A few overarching themes are highlighted below:

Loss of Cultural Space

Experiencing beloved cultural venues and studios closing down, creative community members being priced out of Toronto, and the burnout from juggling multiple jobs to pay rent, have all taken a toll on the creative community.

Organizations that operate dance studios, live music venues, theatres, art galleries, production houses, rehearsal spaces, studios and other spaces have been struggling to keep their doors open. Many

"It's largely racialized communities and artists being displaced from their spaces and having to move back to their parents' place in Brampton and running an art studio out of their garage."

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[3] For over 30 years Artscape provided below-market space for artists and creatives to live and work in. In January 2024, Artscape formally entered receivership.

have shuttered in recent years because of changes in audience behaviour, policy, operational and production costs, sponsorship and funding, earned revenue and the real estate market more generally. Participants want protections to preserve and enhance existing cultural and community spaces, as well as support managing infrastructure challenges, including facilities that need upgrades.

"We are seeing condo development but not the development of the creative spaces we also need. The same can be done for shopping malls, many of which have empty spaces that could be prime arts spaces".

Affordable Housing

Many participants spoke to growing fears of being evicted or "renovicted", and many have already been priced out of their neighbourhoods, and out of Toronto - which has had a negative impact on their livelihoods, the people they serve, and their families. Participants shared that as the city rapidly gentrifies, artists, creatives and cultural workers are unable to build roots and invest in communities in a long-term way. Participants from creative industries explained that housing concerns affect their ability to attract and retain talent. As employees are forced to move outside the downtown core, long commutes and poor public transportation are affecting talent pools and, most importantly, quality of life.

Affordable housing is also tied to the urgent need for a living wage for artists, creatives and cultural workers. It is worth noting that people who face multiple systemic barriers (e.g. a racialized person who is also disabled) are among the most vulnerable when it comes to affordable housing.

"I dread that folks are moving further out from downtown due to precarity in housing and financial stability. With in-person events being an important intersection for creation, they have less and less access to events".

> ## Survey highlight:
> # Current space types
>
> *Percentages indicate the portion of the participants who selected or agreed that specific response.*
>
> ### When asked, artists, cultural workers, and creatives said that they practice art or work in the following spaces:
>
> Rental space(s) (separate from where a participant lives) (52%)
> Residence/dwelling space(s) (in a participant's house/condo/apartment, etc.) (41%)
> Shared space(s) within other individuals or organizations (26%)
> Owned space(s) (separate from where a participant lives) (20%)
> No access to space at all (10%)
> No need a physical space (3%)
> We also heard that some respondents are using public spaces like parks and community centres as well as schools to get work done.
>
> **Note:** When comparing for-profit and non-profit culture sector survey participants, there was no significant difference in the breakdown of space types and uses to practice art or work.

Accessible and Welcoming Spaces

In our conversations, we heard that many spaces for in-person cultural activities are inaccessible. Members of Deaf, Mad and disabled communities continue to face accessibility barriers even when baseline regulations have been adopted. For example, tech booths that are not designed with accessibility in mind prevent people living with disabilities from getting hired as event/venue technicians. People also shared that other factors such as geographic location and proximity to subway lines, safe transit drop-off and pick-up etc. impact accessibility significantly.

We heard that the best way to make cultural events or experiences fully accessible is to provide a hybrid option where possible for people who face significant barriers (e.g. have physical disabilities, health and safety concerns, challenges booking accessible transportation and personal support workers). See Appendix A (Key Takeaways -

Disability Arts) for more information on specific challenges shared by people from Deaf, Mad and disabled communities.

To many, accessible spaces are spaces that are also affordable. Artists, creatives and cultural workers are not simply in search of space that they can afford *today*, but also spaces that are sustainable over the long-term. The demand for affordable workspace for artists and creatives is significant. For example, Akin Studios, an organization which offers (temporary) subsidized space to visual artists across the city, shared that they have a 450+ person waitlist that grows by the day. Participants shared frustrations with the increasing number of vacant buildings since the onset of COVID-19, citing underutilized office spaces, shuttered retail stores and restaurants as potential spaces for culture.

"It's frustrating in a city that has so much underused space that artists can't accessff those spaces"

Creatives are also struggling to find suitable - ideally purpose-built - spaces that support their practices. For instance, some visual artists require access to sinks to clean their supplies, as well as ventilation systems for toxic fumes. Some musicians and dancers require sound proofing. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for space that can meet the needs of everyone working in culture and many participants we heard from have adapted to space that is not optimal (e.g. condo party rooms or church basements) due to limited suitable and affordable options.

"The average hourly fee for spaces in Ontario is $42 per hour, almost double theff average fee the community says it can afford - $22 per hour."

We also heard that people want easier access to public spaces like parks, libraries and community centres to share and experience cultural activity with ease. Currently, there are several barriers to accessing these spaces including bureaucratic processes, permits and insurance. In addition, many participants do not feel welcomed in many spaces, and feel surveilled - particularly Black, Indigenous, queer and trans folks who are surveilled disproportionately. Public space is also at risk of being lost (e.g. Ontario Place) and people who are cautious of indoor cultural offerings (particularly since the onset of COVID 19) have fewer places to experience arts and culture.

Some Indigenous participants reminded us to think about creating spaces that are culturally appropriate. For instance, some participants need access to spaces that can accommodate smudging, access to land and green spaces for cultural ceremonies, and

access to spiritual advisors. Some participants spoke of racism and discrimination in both public and private cultural spaces, such as harassment of firekeepers. We also heard that there is a deep need for more spaces for Indigenous people to come together, teach protocols, make crafts and share knowledge, stories, and food.

"To have a sacred fire [in a park], we need a fire permit!"

"We are sovereign, let us be...we know the solutions, and we know how to manage ourselves and do it well: just give us the spaces, opportunities, funding to do it."

"I'd like to see more art in public spaces and parks."

Spaces for Culture in Every Neighbourhood

Many participants shared that several cultural spaces outside of Toronto's core are thriving - and critical to the communities they are situated in - and they have a strong desire for more cultural spaces. We heard from many participants that the concentration of cultural spaces downtown is frustrating, especially with congestion and inadequate public transportation. The third most common barrier to participating in arts and culture, according to the online survey, was distance and poor accessibility in terms of public transit. We heard a strong desire for a better transit system, as well as art and culture *in every neighbourhood* - places people can walk, bike, or easily commute to, as many participants noted is the case in Montreal. This is true for both artists and audiences. While many feel that Toronto's libraries and community centres have potential to develop into stronger artistic and cultural hubs, others felt that they are not accessible for a variety of reasons such as limited hours of operation.

"LASOs [Local Arts Service Organizations] outside the downtown core are well-liked but they can't be everywhere. There is a lack of local hubs and cultural connections in 'suburban' areas creating barriers to community building and cultural resource sharing."

"I would love to see a major train system that can take you from the far north east to the north west end of the city, in under an hour (zoo to Pearson airport) which would allow cultural and art events to be found all around the city not just down town."

Participants want more third spaces - spaces that facilitate interaction, community-building and relaxation. Artists and creatives are keen to expand their communities and need places to facilitate connection - during *and after*

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regular business hours. We heard that people want opportunities to meet new people, share ideas, explore collaborations, talk, and even heal together.

The loneliness epidemic is on the rise in Toronto, and given people are working remotely more than ever, the desire for "non-transactional" spaces (where people can connect with friends, colleagues or strangers, without feeling pressured to pay an entrance fee or purchase a drink) - not to mention spaces that feel safe and foster a sense of belonging - is hugely desired.

"When there's no place to unify, it becomes tricky to build community."

> "As a place [Scarborough] that is about to, I believe, boom into a Renaissance akin to Brooklyn, to Manhattan, if we play our cards properly and pay attention to the variety and multitudes of cultures that come from that part of GTA. And pay special attention to that and nurture that in the right way."

- Rajni Perera, visual artist, member of Culture Plan External Advisory Panel, and guest speaker at Town Hall

We also heard concerns about the risks of artists being censored at a time of increased global conflict. Participants we heard from want to be their full selves, and be free to express their views safely.

Ideas and Solutions Proposed by Participants

In this section we have captured ideas shared by multiple participants on ways to help improve cultural space challenges in Toronto.

- Provide tax incentives and property tax measures to encourage landlords and developers to include cultural spaces in their projects, whether by transforming vacant commercial spaces, subsidising rents for cultural uses, or including cultural spaces in new developments. This includes broadening eligibility for the Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass Program[4].

- Repurpose underutilized buildings: Whether with municipal buildings or through partnerships with developers and landowners, repurpose underused buildings

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[4] The Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass supports the sustainability and growth of creative enterprises and live music venues in Toronto. Properties must be designated as a Creative Co-Location Facility by the City of Toronto to be included under the property tax subclass. A property may apply if it is either a tenant-based operating facility, a membership based co-working facility or a live music venue.

such as vacant offices, faith spaces (underused churches) into affordable workspaces and rehearsal venues.

- Support community ownership and alternative models: Increase support for community bonds, alternative financing models, and capacity-building programs to empower communities (especially equity-deserving community members) to purchase and manage spaces.

- Build partnerships with Community Land Trusts and promote the concept of "Creative/Cultural Land Trusts" to secure and preserve cultural spaces.

- Increase awareness and access to "meanwhile spaces"[5] to support people in accessing them through databases and creative partnerships. This could include use of buildings on laneways or other creative opportunities to provide affordable venues.

- Advocate for policy changes, including rent control, inclusionary zoning to protect cultural spaces and improve access to venues.

- Decrease red tape and improve access to public spaces like libraries, public gardens, parks and community centres with simplified application processes, sensitivity training for staff, and supports for renting (e.g. insurance).

- Facilitate space-sharing (play a 'matchmaker' role) between artists, creatives, cultural workers and developers/landowners.

- Provide capacity-building assistance such as support to develop business plans to buy, rent or manage spaces.

- Raise awareness about recourse and rights when artists and arts workers are mistreated by landlords.

Although suggestions for addressing space were shared across all engagements, Appendix A (Key Takeaways - The Need for Space) includes additional ideas on this topic shared by participants.

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[5] Meanwhile-use: The activation of underutilized space on a temporary basis – often of space that sits empty between tenants – for various uses including pop-up retail and cultural use. See as an example Why Not Theatre's Space Project, which through unique cross-sector partnerships accesses meanwhile use spaces.

EXAMPLES OF SPACES

Bong Cafe · 401 Richmond · C-Space in Calgary · Sun Gallery in Ottawa · Alberta has 0 property taxes for non-profits · Repurposed Historic Sites · Trans European Halls European Streets · Vancouver Dance Centre · Community Land Trust · Gibraltar's Point · Akin

NEEDS OF SPACE AND SOLUTIONS

Many Spaces are Dormant during PrimeTime · Building Bridges between Property Owners & Orgs · TTC access · Walkable · ↑ Incentives & Costs for Cultural Organizations · Look into Past Models · Bikeable · Food Security · Collaborative · Run & Owned by Artists · Defines need for Community not Art Consumption · Noise Allowed · Subsidized Farming · DIY/DIYT · Multisectoral · Heritage Buildings · Arts Ecology · Tax Breaks · Subsides · Tall Ceilings · Feasibility Studies · Purpose Built · Sustainable Infrastructure · Info / Database of Available Vacant Spaces · Grassroot Groups Need More $ · Intergenerational · Need as many Subwoofers as Zambonis · Depth of staff = Value of Experience · Need intimate & Large Capacity spaces 200+ People · Support · Feelings of the Space / City · Artists make use of any space · Creative Energy · Night-time Activity · Housing · Councillors influence developers to secure deals & negotiate leases · Centre for Learning and Teaching · Devotional / Spiritual space · Education for developers to understand the economic realities for artists · Homege to Sovereignty · Rehearsal Space · Invite artists into public space management conversations · Rerooting · Digital Art, Growth, Temp Release, Web space · Property Taxes · Rehearsal Space · Shareable · Coops

DIFFICULTIES & CHALLENGES FACED

hoops to jump through incl. library · cultural groups do not identify as "artists" · groups fall between the cracks · expensive · artists assuming risks & costs · noise limitations · suburban lack of space · gentrification · power dynamics · advanced booking · adaptation not by choice · developers can be dangerous e.g. TMAC · time limits · immediate need · high costs · no municipal infrastructure · lack of transparency · inaccessibility · taxes · maintenance and management · not owning space = risk · being TOO small/ TOO big for public funding · being policied via security · driven by event rentals

Image 4. Image drawn by artist and graphic recorder Radha Pithadiya, capturing key themes from one of two Community Conversations "The Need for Space". **Image Description:** Text on gradient backgrounds categorizing different challenges, needs solutions, and examples of space. Vines, flowers, and geometric lines frame different sections.

Insight 2: Re-Imagine Funding & Support

Participants had strong opinions about funding, including some polarizing views. On the one hand, public funding - particularly from the Toronto Arts Council (TAC), Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF) and the City of Toronto, has been instrumental in helping individuals and organizations get their start, develop projects, sustain and grow operations, and leverage funding from other sources. Generally, participants working in or with non-profit organizations were more concerned about the state of funding than those working in creative industries. Participants feel that most funding processes are unnecessarily complicated, onerous, outdated and, many shared, inequitable. The needs of the general public and audiences have changed (in terms of rising cost of living, accessibility, health and safety, etc.) and funding opportunities should reflect these changes as well.

The two most common themes shared about funding were the need for more investment in arts and culture by the City, and the need to overhaul the granting system. There was a plea from many artists and creatives to explore new funding models altogether, and a baseline need to revamp how funding is promoted, accessed and distributed - especially given the needs and capacity of applicants which feel secondary to funders' priorities. Indigenous participants shared that funding applications do not align with Indigenous worldviews (due to colonial eligibility criteria, written application formats, etc.) and consideration should be paid to decolonizing funding and providing alternative processes for some communities.

Survey Highlight: Funding Source

Percentages indicate the portion of the participants who selected or agreed that specific response.

When asked, artists, cultural workers, and creatives shared that the top five ways they fund their practice, business, or organization are (participants were allowed to select all that applied):

Product sales or fee-for-service work (example: selling product or licensing rights to product, ticket sales, commissioned work, subscriptions) (48%)

Provincial / Federal grants, loans, or equity investments (42%)

City of Toronto / Toronto Arts Council grants (36%)

Donations (31%)

Funding from independent funding bodies (for example: The Bell Fund, Metcalf Foundation) or philanthropic organizations (25%)

A few overarching themes related to funding are included below:

Funding is inadequate

Participants who do not work in culture shared several challenges in participating in cultural events and activities. One participant shared a common sentiment when he said, "I used to enjoy going to concerts but now I have to spend that money on expensive groceries." Funding to subsidize cultural events and programs is needed given the increasing cost not only of living, but also tickets, transportation to events, etc. The impact of not making arts and culture accessible to young audiences was also highlighted - young people in particular need affordable ways to participate in culture to drive interest in careers, and to develop future audiences for creators.

"Make the arts available for everyone to enjoy, not just the people who can afford it."

The sentiment was virtually unanimous: there is not enough funding - public and private - to support arts and culture in Toronto. With recent funding cuts by some funders, participants working in culture shared a sense of increased competition for limited funding. Many people are disappointed in the City's "marginal budget increase" in arts and culture in 2024, and hope that the City will show how much it believes in the positive social, economic and cultural benefits of arts and culture with increased investments in the future. Other government funders, sponsors and donors are also cutting back and many participants shared concerns about implications on communities across the city. They also shared that costs of operating and programming, and general costs of living, are increasing disproportionately to funding levels. Participants working in creative industries also highlighted growing concerns about technology shifts and inadequate funding for equipment, software and new technologies that are shifting rapidly and will have long-term impacts on the workforce, audiences and culture sector.

"Despite frozen and decreased levels of funds, artists are expected to produce the same levels of programming despite many challenges like inflation."

"Our industry has been struggling since COVID. The numbers are not coming back, funding flatlined and organizations cannot keep up with inflation. We see organizations downsizing across the board, terminations because of tough financial decisions, and annual programming cut in half. We are struggling. With each organization that goes under, it is a huge loss for the community. Increasing capital for organizations to hire new talent is crucial for the success of our sector. We need people invested in what we do and want to continue doing it."

"Companies are feeling the pinch, with production costs rising but funding streams not meeting the increases which means there is no money to be able to pay artists/employees more to match increased cost of living."

Funding is inequitable

Participants from across engagements are concerned that funding is not being distributed fairly, and some have questions about how some funding decisions are made. Many artists and smaller arts organizations shared concerns about historical inequities between the 'haves' (typically larger organizations, focused on Eurocentric art forms) and the 'have nots', and the need to prioritize equitable rebalancing to level the playing field and allow for the true diversity of Toronto's culture to access financial support. Survey participants shared that this would be an impactful and critical first step to rebalancing, and funding smaller and underrepresented organizations that need more support.

"Within the visual and media arts, there are a lot of organizations that are obsolete that are still getting funded at a high level. Many smaller organizations [are] being under-funded."

Accessibility supports are limited

While some organizations are making stronger efforts to be more accessible, there is a lot of work to do to support disability arts. It is worth noting that there is no organization or alliance dedicated to advocating for Toronto's Deaf, Mad and disabled communities, in part because of the barriers many of those members face that make advocating for themselves difficult. Deaf, Mad and disabled participants generally felt that there is not enough funding or flexibility to accommodate full (and often hidden) costs. Access is always contextual: access needs vary depending on participants, venues, location, etc. - hence the need for flexibility in funding. Examples of granting constraints include: limitations to cover unexpected costs (e.g. a last minute participant with unique access needs) or ample funding to support artists with multiple disabilities on a project. We heard from a few Deaf participants who expressed that within the community, they are often *the most marginalized*; even accessible events and venues tend to prioritize people who can

hear. We also learned that accessibility statements are rarely in place for funded artists showing their artwork in public-facing places, which limits how accessible they are.

"Almost 30% of all Canadians have a disability of some kind, and that is increasingly significant. The question is about why any public funds are spent without considering accessibility at the granting stage. Every project funded should be asked who they are making it available to, and should be assessed by a disabled person."

For more details about additional challenges facing Deaf, Mad and disabled people, please see Appendix A.

Funding processes are limiting, burdensome and outdated

Funding eligibility is often limited to certain disciplines and prioritizes 'traditional' forms of cultural production like film, music and visual arts. Creative practices like fashion and culinary arts are often excluded as are cultural groups that host festivals and events but don't qualify as 'artists' - which feels random and unfair to some participants. Requirements to qualify as a 'professional' artist can feel limiting and exclusive.

Participants also want funders to widen the scope of eligibility expenses to include more accessibility costs and mental health-related expenses. Some participants also shared that eligibility requirements such as years of incorporation as an organization prevent many newcomer and emerging applicants from accessing funding. People from creative industries also indicated that there is limited funding for emerging industries, such as e-sports and other creative startups that want to focus on streaming and social media instead of traditional arts or film production.

Artists, creatives and cultural workers expressed many issues with the granting process. Some participants shared how difficult it is to find out about opportunities for public funding, corporate sponsorship and private philanthropy. If they do find the opportunities, many find navigating the application and reporting processes challenging;

"One-year projects don't breed sustainability. The very framework does not lend itself to the needs of the community. If you make bread, you don't need to make statements about making bread. After making art for 20 years, I don't need to keep justifying my art."

–
Participant in "The Need for Space" Community Conversation

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these processes are unnecessarily bureaucratic and use complicated 'grant speak' that can get in the way of genuine accessibility. Even when they find the opportunities, the application process is lengthy and time-consuming, and many participants lack the experience or skills needed to develop strong applications (e.g. some participants cited needing support with tasks like developing project budgets). The amount of effort invested - often for short-term project funding - feels out of sync with the amount of money awarded. The turnaround time to hear back from funders about successful applications is too long and can stifle the development process. Participants also feel that rejection rates feel high, and funders have little time available to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants who want to improve their chances for future applications.

With respect to evaluation, many participants believe that the way funders measure impact is problematic. Metrics like attendance numbers and other measures of "output", for instance, do not necessarily indicate how impactful and transformative their initiatives or organizations are. Instead participants want other ways to demonstrate impact and relevance.

Ideas and Solutions Shared by Participants

In this section we have captured ideas shared by multiple participants as high-level or specific strategies that could help improve funding.

- Investigate and consider alternatives to the current funding model, and move towards trust-based funding models that:
  - Simplify application and reporting processes
  - Decrease response times for applicants
  - Provide multi-year and unrestricted funding
  - Prioritize relationships and support (e.g. provide mentorship)
  - Allow for flexibility and adaptability as needs evolve
- Redistribute funds and close the equity gap: Evaluate how *equitably* funding is and has been distributed, and redistribute funds from large well-funded institutions to newer organizations, particularly those led by equity-deserving communities.
- Consider ways to support and subsidize arts and culture, such as providing discounts at hotels during major events, providing free TTC access to attend, etc.
- Explore ways to remove barriers to funding such as financial support for grant writing, video and oral applications, office hours for support, etc.
- Provide micro-grants to distribute smaller amounts of funding efficiently
- Be flexible. For example, adjust expectations given rising costs, re-imagine eligible expenses (e.g. therapy and counseling, tobacco, etc.), broaden applicant eligibility (e.g. eligible disciplines) and fund unforeseen expenses in unique circumstances.

Insight 3: Build Community & Capacity

We heard that Torontonians are feeling increasingly isolated, lonely and disconnected from culture and from each other. This sentiment is especially prevalent among seniors, newcomers, and Deaf, Mad and disabled communities. Amongst artists and cultural workers, there is a sense that Toronto lacks a fulsome and holistic arts and culture ecosystem, where people working in culture can easily engage with others to strengthen skills, share resources, discuss partnerships or even experience art and culture together. Being in connection, for many, is central to their growth as creators of art and culture. We heard that making connections and building community ultimately leads to capacity building.

> *"Senior artists feel pushed out...as they reach the point where they cannot afford to keep going and so many programs are for emerging and next gen artists."*

A few overarching themes we heard about building community and capacity are included below:

Deepening Relationships

Participants we heard from have a desire to deepen relationships and build community, both formally and informally. Across engagements, we heard about the need to reframe how we build connection - away from a transactional approach to a more reciprocal and relational one. The Creative Facilitators we hired relayed a strong desire from their participants for informal gatherings and spaces for people to connect with potential collaborators, audiences, and others without an agenda or end goal.

> *In 2034, "the cultural ecology would be humming and organizations of all kinds and types are working together to keep it that way."*

Sharing knowledge, skills and training

Participants who work in culture shared challenges engaging with others to strengthen skills, share resources, discuss partnerships or just experience art and culture together. Many participants - particularly those working in creative industries - shared the strong sense of collaboration and mutual support in Toronto, and across the board (for instance to strategize and come together during strikes). Participants are seeking more

opportunities to network, access mentorship and training, and to informally share ideas and skills which strengthens creative processes and propels career growth, while building a more sustainable sector. Participants mentioned that the City of Toronto could play a key role in facilitating support and capacity building.

Specifically, there were calls to remove barriers to education and training, mentorship and networking opportunities. Many participants shared that affordable and accessible professional development opportunities and peer networking events will help to also address inequities within the sector.

"There is a strong desire in Toronto to have a healthy [cultural] ecosystem. Coming out of major strikes in the film industry, there are lots of working groups and informal opportunities, and places where competitors are coming together to figure out how to make their pocket of the industry thrive".

Participants also expressed concerns about uncertainty with respect to technology and Artificial Intelligence in particular, and hope that more opportunities for skills training (both retooling for jobs that may be lost due to new technology, as well as training to understand how to leverage technology) will be made available to protect Toronto's cultural workforce.

We heard that there is a digital divide in the Toronto arts and creative sector, and that we need to bridge it through investing in infrastructure, programs, education and online resources. Specific solutions suggested are outlined below.

Education and Youth Programming

In order to ensure a holistic arts and cultural ecosystem, participants across the board shared the need for increased exposure and access to arts and culture at a young age to instill the value of arts and culture early on, and to promote the various career paths. Some spoke to the long-term and systemic impacts of not providing wide access to artistic programming for children and youth - Toronto's youngest residents may not attend theatre and art exhibitions because they may not have developed the habit of participating in culture in these ways at a young age. This may lead to decreasing audiences for arts and culture, not to mention the host of other impacts this could have on the wellness and vitality of communities. Participants suggested increased exposure through school programs, libraries and community centres. Specifically, participants from the creative industries suggested the need for technological programming at a young age to develop interest in and talent for the sector.

"Looking at the public school system, and the lack of emphasis on culture and art is depleting the momentum and the spark on a community-wide basis. Comparing it against the public education system I was in, there was choir, school play, and art was such a big part of our education. And now my kids don't have any music classes because their school can't afford it. It definitely feels like something that is missing from a lot of childhoods right now."

Survey Highlights:
Community & Capacity Building

Percentages indicate the portion of the participants who selected or agreed that specific response.

Overall, we heard that the top five ways participants hear about arts and culture activities include:

Social media (Facebook/Meta, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, etc.) (79%)
Word of mouth from friends, family or colleagues (74%)
Cultural organization websites or mailing lists (43%)
Flyers or posters in public spaces (41%)
Event listing websites or apps (Eventbrite, Meetup, Toronto-specific websites) (37%)

When asked what would motivate participants to get more involved in art and culture activities, 37% said better advertising and information on events taking place.

Ideas and Solutions Shared by Participants

In this section we have captured ideas shared by multiple participants as high-level or specific strategies that could help build community and capacity.

- Foster spaces where people can connect, formally and informally, specifically that are accessible and free or low cost (e.g. for multiple disabilities, neurodivergence, etc.) where communities can gather, share, and co-create. This includes both physical and virtual spaces that cater to diverse needs and abilities, and allows for intergenerational connection to share knowledge, co-create, etc.
- Invest in arts and culture education for children and youth, integrating arts education in schools and community spaces, ensuring that children have easy access to art classes and activities. For instance, consider arts programming at Toronto's EarlyON centres.
- Increase skills training, mentorship, and information-sharing opportunities for a diversity of careers, at each career stage.
- Increase access to technology to address barriers such as affordability, access to educational technology opportunities. Specific examples include providing access to subsidized software, digital tools, equipment and fabrication labs, integrating STEAM education with creative industries to prepare students for diverse career paths.
- Offer more free or subsidized arts programming and increase the number of City-funded recreation programs for all ages (e.g. adult woodworking programs).
- Support and incentivize more arts incubators that offer artists more stability and flexibility.
- Create events or opportunities for connection (e.g. monthly socials) to enable artists and creatives to share ideas, build networks, etc.
- Encourage and support "super-connectors" - people and organizations that can build connections between artists, creatives and people working across sectors e.g. a partnership between a small and large arts organization. The City of Toronto should play a key role as a matchmaker or facilitator.
- Provide support to bridge the gap between people working in culture and the private sector. Support them in building the skills to diversify their revenue.

Image 5. A colourful, hand drawn illustration by Graphic Recorder, Sue Cohen, who created this piece live at the Arts for Social Change Community Conversation on Nov 8, 2023.

Image Description: A collage of images and text including visualizations of city hall, heritage buildings, parks, art spaces, people, and nature.

Insight 4: Collective Advocacy & Coordination

We heard that many people in Toronto - including decision makers, funders and the general public - undervalue arts, culture, and creativity. This was a source of disappointment and frustration across all engagements. Some participants also shared concerns about the City of Toronto's 2024 budget investments in arts funding, particularly in relation to the significant investment in the Toronto Police Services.

Many members of the public also shared challenges with awareness and visibility - many don't know how to find out about cultural events, activities and programs happening in the city. Participants also shared a desire to promote all that Toronto has to offer in terms of arts, culture and creativity to help garner public excitement, support and investment.

"Advocacy and connection-making should not be a 'nice to have' from the City, rather it is the City's role to play."

"It's good to build talent but then we're losing that talent. Toronto definitely has a marketing problem. People come out of Waterloo engineering but immediately want to go work in San Fran; or from film move to LA... We have great success stories coming out of Toronto but we don't talk about it here or promote it."

A few overarching themes are included below:

Awareness, Information Sharing and Promotions

Many people don't participate in cultural events in Toronto because they don't know they exist. People shared challenges finding out about events, as well as opportunities, resources and training. They want support from the City and local marketing and tourism agencies such as Destination Toronto to spread the word about their activities. They spoke to a missed opportunity not only with Toronto residents, but also tourists who may not be aware of cultural attractions and opportunities. Artists and participants working in cultural organizations also shared the need for more support with international

"I wish there was a website where all the information would be available. For example I always go to the Winterlicious or Summerlicious events but I don't see ads anywhere. Because I already live here for 15 years I know where to find information. It would be nice having more ads or even a centralized website with all the events promoted by the city (culture sector, library events, festivals, etc)."

exposure and opportunities, like trade missions, to connect with international audiences.

Evaluating Impact and Telling Stories

When it comes to illustrating the impact of arts and culture, we heard that there needs to be a strong, collective effort amongst the City, TAC and other organizations to encourage City Councillors to invest more. This also includes reframing how arts and culture are valued, and looking beyond economic impact to other benefits on Torontonians and communities here. Part of the challenge is the lack of data to help demonstrate the value of investing in arts and culture.

"If we can't value arts and culture, we aren't going to get the funding, or supports."

"You can't just put it on us to advocate more – we're doing as much as we can. We are so tired."

Broadening Advocacy Efforts

Some participants highlighted the collective power and momentum for arts and culture advocacy that seems to have decreased in recent years, due in part to the daily struggles that people working in culture are facing. Some spoke of the Beautiful City Billboard Tax initiative[6] which led to the increase in per capita funding in arts and culture in 2012. Funding levels are still too low to support this sector, and too low to support the general public who need more financial assistance to participate in it. We heard that the City needs to prioritize a promotional campaign of culture in the city, to highlight the important role art and culture plays in our lives, community and city.

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[6] The Billboard Tax Initiative was a community and collective advocacy movement that resulted in new revenue by taxing billboard advertisers and directing funds to support the arts.

Participants complained about precarious, under-paid and often short-term work engagements, and need support in advocating for fair and equitable wages, as well as timely payment. There was a common appeal across all engagement activities for some form of universal basic income. Many artists, creatives and cultural workers reflected on how valuable the federal government's COVID-19 Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was during the pandemic in enabling people to continue their creative pursuits while enhancing wellness. While participants recognize that this kind of support is not within the City's jurisdiction, and they are keen for the City, TAC and TAF to continue to play strong roles - with other key leaders - in advocating on behalf of the culture sector. One town hall participant shared Ireland's recent pilot for Basic Income for Arts (BIA), describing the 3-year program that offered participants €325 per week and resulted in a reduction in reduced depression and anxiety, as well as a decrease in time spent working in other sectors (i.e. an ability to better support themselves through creative work).

"If there is not a genuine appreciation for art among the general public, then any prioritization is ultimately doomed to failure. The success and viability of arts funding at its core relies on the support of the general public."

"I cannot emphasize how important having a stable income is to our experiences. I believe it is something the City of Toronto can advocate for. I am so tired because I work multiple jobs ... it is literally killing me and making it hard for me to manage my chronic illness.... How can we thrive when we're just surviving? I am being paid so much less than I am worth, and less than my industry standards. This is so achievable, looking at what we were able to do with CERB [Canada's Emergency Response Benefit]... The City of Toronto and other government systems need to work on this."

"Funding during COVID for arts was fantastic... It gave us a baseline to try to figure out how we can operate in a cost-effective and stable way but now that it's gone, it's back to trying to catch separate small grants here and there."

People working in culture shared concerns about the lack of social supports for parents who work in culture and the need for advocacy to improve access to these supports. Some participants spoke of the trend in which cultural workers starting families either leave the industry/sector, or switch jobs to more administrative or institutional jobs not only for sustainable income but also access to health benefits and other social supports.

"One of the reasons I left [my freelance job] and went in-house was because I was struck by a car. Creatives don't have any safety nets. They often work with substances that are toxic…The health and safety risks are a barrier for artists. We need benefits, supports and UBI… We don't expect the city to solve these things. I recognize this means all three levels working together, but we just need to know you're listening and trying to align these pieces."

Finally, some participants discussed the need for increased advocacy regarding climate change within the realm of arts and culture. For instance, Music Declares Emergency[7] is pushing for more sustainable transportation methods in cities because of the significant carbon footprint from audience travel to music events. This aligns with audiences' concerns about the lack of transportation to cultural events. Others are advocating for stronger regulations e.g. against fast fashion. Some pointed to interesting initiatives linking climate and cultural work including Julie's Bicycle[8] in the UK and Green Tools Canada[9] in Canada.

Improving coordination

We also learned that improved coordination between the City's different divisions is essential to support the broader arts and cultural community. Many participants spoke of the need for various City departments to work together in order to better respond to needs of the public and people working in culture. This could include revamping city processes such as park permits, vendor licences, insurance requirements, responses to noise complaints for film productions, etc. One town hall participant, a program director of a Scarborough nonprofit, illustrated the lack of communication internally at the City. She shared that their project proposal received funding from the City's Economic Development and Culture team but was rejected later by the City's by-law office. This kind of disconnect impacts small organizations with limited time and resources negatively.

Additionally, there were calls to ensure that the voices of artists and cultural workers are not only heard but also actively included in decision-making processes and policy development within the City of Toronto, given their ability to creatively problem solve, and their lived experiences as end users of decisions made across City divisions. This could

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[7] https://www.musicdeclares.net/
[8] https://juliesbicycle.com/
[9] https://www.cgtoolscanada.org/about/creativegreen

include expanding the City's artist-in-residence programs and inviting artists to shape policies for other sectors like health, transportation and parks. Participants also made it clear that there is not adequate representation of equity-deserving communities in organizational leadership in the sector, and that both policy and advocacy are needed to ensure that leadership teams of publicly funded organizations reflect the diverse communities of Toronto.

"It would be great to get the chairs of the different advisory committees together to talk about opportunities for collaborations - music advisory, film board, fashion advisory... instead of operating in isolation, work together. The City can help bring that connectivity. That is low-hanging fruit."

"If we need to think beyond the budget and funding increases, then we have to look at the opportunity for the City to collaborate with other services. But is there the political will to make this happen?"

"If you don't have people who understand the arts involved in these discussions, it will very quickly become bureaucratic and focused on mitigating risk to the institution."

Ideas and solutions proposed by participants

In this section we have captured ideas shared by multiple participants as high-level or specific strategies that could help improve advocacy and/ or coordination:

- Explore opportunities to improve data collection and evaluation about the impact of arts and culture. Raise awareness about its impact and encourage decision-makers across sectors, including City Councilors, to look beyond its economic impact.
- Find new ways to build awareness and share information for events, activities, venues, and programs (including mentorship and professional development opportunities). Create a centralized database for all arts and culture opportunities and events, as well as support for neighbourhood based or discipline based promotions.
- Collaborate with key partners, including other levels of government to increase more arts and culture funding at all levels - particularly at the municipal level.
- Connect large, established arts and cultural organizations, businesses and industries with smaller organizations to share resources.
- Increase opportunities for artists and creatives to shape policy across City departments, through artist residencies and other creative opportunities.
- Find ways to increase wrap-around supports for individuals and organizations e.g. increasing financial literacy (via private or public sector partners).
- Equip Toronto Employment and Social Services to support emerging artists, creatives and cultural workers and connect them to opportunities.
- Promote Toronto e.g. through an annual campaign showcasing creative accomplishments and activities.
- Improve protection for intellectual property given rapid shifts in technology.
- Create a fee schedule for artists (of all disciplines), creatives and arts workers, including arts administrators to increase awareness of and expectations for equitable wages.

Image 6. *Hasheel playing the Bansuri to start one of our Community Conversations.*

Image description: *Classical musician perched on a windowsill playing a Bansuri (Indian flute) in front of participants sitting around tables.*

Reflections from Monumental

As a team of professionals and practitioners with lived experience working in arts and culture, we want to share some thoughts as we wrap up this community engagement process to inform the development of the next Culture Plan.

Throughout the document, we've shared feedback that the City of Toronto needs to expand the notion of what is considered "culture." In conversations with Indigenous participants, we heard that "culture" as it is currently defined, excludes important ways of being, knowing, and gathering. In our survey, we heard that some residents experience culture through a visit to their local library or park. Across the board, the message was clear: this is a moment for Toronto to recognize that "culture" is more than cultural production, it is about how we connect to each other, learn together, and expand our perspectives on the world. As a way to honour and recognize that culture in Toronto means different things to different people, we highly recommend the City of Toronto and the Toronto Arts Council rename the Culture Plan to *Toronto's Action Plan for Culture*, instead of the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector*, recognizing the diverse ways Torontonians are contributing to our rich cultural fabric.

We also heard that artists, culture workers, and audiences need to have their basic needs met in order to both develop work and enjoy Toronto's cultural offerings. Throughout this engagement, participants focused less on creative and cultural production, and more on issues of affordability, space, access, inclusion and mental health. In other words, *a thriving sector is not possible without thriving people and organizations*, and the Culture Plan is an opportunity to reignite culture in Toronto by starting with the basics: taking care of the quality of life of its artists, creatives, cultural workers and creative organizations, and prioritizing solutions to ensure cultural activities are accessible and affordable for the broad public. The City of Toronto's previous plan, *Creative Capital Gains* shared some of these priorities, calling out the need for affordable and sustainable cultural space, equitable distribution of cultural services to "all segments of the population", sustainable funding, the need for greater collaboration, and support for cultural clusters across neighbourhoods. Today, Toronto faces even greater challenges related to the increasing cost of living, technological shifts, deep inequities across communities, and growing instability among artists, creatives and cultural organizations. The Culture Plan could use more focus on how the City coordinates across departments and sectors to make it easier to produce and participate in culture. It could also focus on how the City as well as public and private partners can form meaningful partnerships to find creative solutions and better advocate for arts and culture together.

As we think about arts and culture over the next ten years, Torontonians are hopeful that the Culture Plan will be grounded in concrete actions to support not only the recovery of cultural sectors but also future proofing this vital part of our city's fabric. As one artist

shared, culture is more than just an economic driver, it contributes to our quality of life in Toronto.

Designing and delivering the engagement to inform the Culture Plan has been an incredible opportunity to bring the culture sector together at a time where artists, creatives, cultural workers, and audiences are feeling more disconnected than ever. Participants are feeling the rapid disappearance of hubs and informal spaces to meet and connect, and shared that the engagement process itself was an embodiment of what is needed in the City: time together to heal, to share, and feel reconnected to the transformative power of arts, culture and creativity. We strongly encourage the City of Toronto and the Toronto Arts Council to continue the dialogue with the sector and the public, knowing that engagement itself is an act of relationship-building, and knowing that the people most impacted by the Culture Plan may be the same people who can help develop the strongest ideas for it. We heard time and time again that more conversations are needed in order to take action on the learnings that surfaced.

"You need a home in order to practice your art. That's where you begin to dream and envision your art. If we don't have homes, we can't do that. It's all interconnected."

The future for Toronto is unpredictable: from economic uncertainty, to technological innovation and disruption, to environmental degradation, to political and social shifts and more - the time has never been more urgent to do what we can to safeguard culture as we know it in Toronto. Investment in culture is like an insurance policy for the City - it's a way to ensure that we stay connected to each other, stay in conversation with our neighbours and communities, and are exposed to and celebrate our differences at a time when the impacts of these disruptive shifts means that we can find ourselves more isolated and divided.

The good news: those who participated in our process know that Toronto has the potential to nurture thriving and vibrant culture for people within and beyond our borders. When asked what their dream for Toronto is ten years from now, we heard that people want a city where everyone - from youth to seniors, across every neighbourhood - can move beyond the struggle of meeting their basic needs, towards a place where they have the space, ability and desire to connect to culture in its many forms. A place where those working in culture are resilient and no artist is living below the poverty line. A place where access to quality arts education is introduced at a young age everywhere, and where people can access support throughout their lives to pursue a creative career path or participate in arts and culture. A place where they can feel welcomed in many cultural and

public spaces to hang out with friends, collaborate on projects and experience dance, storytelling, fashion, art and countless other cultural activities.

Writer, activist and educator Adrienne Maree Brown says, "What we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system." If we play our cards right, and work with partners across sectors to address fundamental needs for people working in culture, the rest of the city will flourish, and Toronto's potential will not only be realized, but will reverberate across borders.

Appendices

Appendix A: Meeting Reports
Community Conversations (8)

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
Indigenous Creatives - Mon Nov 6, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversation for *Indigenous Creatives.* We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Ange Loft
- Ashley McGregor
- Barry Chevrier
- Belinda Messon
- Benedict Ahuna
- Brad Ashkewe
- Cheryl Osawamick
- Chris Decorte
- Cole Alvis
- Farough Mazaraeh
- Hailey Sonnabend
- John Kim Bell
- Johnny Moore
- Lacey Gislason
- Lloyd Skanks
- Maquanay Nicholas
- Marta Orollana
- Melissa Bailey
- Melissa Podnar
- Michelle Williams
- Omar Attia
- Ramey Abraham
- Robert Mendoshkin
- Rodney Hookimaw

- Rory Maltese
- Rose Stella
- Sam Brockington
- Sarah Sharon Rocha
- Shane Kelsey
- Siera Han
- Sierra Lafave
- Tiffany Malley
- Vicki Foxx
- Winnie Ashkewe
- Amos Keye Jr.
- Angel Levec Brant
- Angela Aula
- Carolyn King
- Shak Gobert
- Christine Whiteduck Ringuette
- Danielle Hyde
- Sarah Chegahno
- Kevin Pinacie

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The following quotes capture some of the participants' key concerns and hopes.

"Culture is a way of life. How we live it. How we present ourselves. How we do it in our lifetime. When we teach others to carry on, that's when we are making strides to help each other."

"It is necessary to see our world and understand our places in the world. One way to prevent our future is to deny our past. We can't deny our past. We need to come together as a people and think through an alternative way forward."

"We do what we do today because we don't want our daughters to go missing or our kids to go to residential schools."

"I don't want to see a struggle to showcase our relevance"

"How we care for our family and community is our culture."

"I learned that we were stripped of our rights, including our languages. Stripped of our culture until 1952 - music and art. I decided to bring culture back and share my culture and started the [Canadian Aboriginal Festival](#) but had to take immense risks to do this (mortgage my house for the festival)".

"We are about family, gathering and caring for the environment. It's a trait. We need to come together and build that trait. Enabling this to happen is important."

"What is the culture plan going to include? Is it going to include us? Will there be structures developed and related to Indigenous ways of being? We need places to go and do and be who we are."

"We need more Indigenous people at the City. Grant allies. People who will take our suggestions."

"After my grandma passed, I was disconnected because I live in the City. There wasn't as much community then, pre-TRC. Happy for progress, especially for urban Indigenous people".

"Toronto has the opportunity to be a global leader culturally. How we show up (on a grassroots level) affects the rest of the world".

"I don't know any artists that have access to studio space for Native artists or even studio space in kind."

"You can't take these recommendations and interpret them without us there. We need to be involved at the table when the Culture Plan is being written."

"We need the heart of our culture represented - and the heart of our culture is not in the curriculum."

"Don't overcomplicate funding."

"Allow us to lead our spaces, work, things. We are sovereign, let us be....we know the solutions, and we know how to manage ourselves and do it well: just give us the spaces, opportunities, funding to do it."

"A lot of what I learned about my culture was self-taught – online and reading books. "On paper, my bloodline doesn't show".

"We need to increase visibility and have the City hire more Indigenous people."

"As soon as our art gets on the internet, it's copied. The Internet doesn't protect anybody".

What does culture mean to you?

- Culture is a colonial term… culture is "**our way of life**"
- **Ceremony** is culture
- Culture is **family.**
    - **"**Family was the first moment of feeling connected to culture"
- A set of **values, characteristics, songs, language, and connection to land**
- Indigenous culture is more in pace with **nature**
- An **expression of a worldview and of a society**; putting expression into the world
- Culture is a **sense of belonging**
    - "We're in Anishinaabe land, and language/culture is not taught in school".
- Culture is medicine - **plant medicine**, alternative medicine
    - "When we understand holistic medicine, we don't feel separated from nature".
- **Fashion and photography**, which is as a reclamation of self
- "Beyond being cultural coroners (museums or antiquities) – **it's about the present! We are here**".
- "The need to **share knowledge** – if we don't share knowledge, it goes straight to the grave. We want to **pass it on to the next generation**".
- Culture as coping mechanisms and as a means to **get to know oneself**.
- Culture means to be safe, **be yourself**, learn and **express yourself** without judgement, and for that you need a safe community.
- Culture is also graphic design, gaming and food e.g. Indigenous tacos

Do you see your idea of culture represented in Toronto? Is it visible?

- **No** – the "river of society flows around Indigenous rock."
- We need **elders in the community** to be able to see our culture represented
    - To learn about culture takes more than a couple of trips back home
- Indigenous **culture is visible through trauma** (e.g. on National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day)
- We only see Indigenous cultures **in certain places on certain days** (e.g. Toronto Raptors games.). It should be a common occurrence.
- It can be seen in Dream Catcher Arbours
- **We need education for staff on Indigenous culture** to increase their understanding.

- **It can be seen in some EarlyON** programs e.g. **programs for Indigenous women exiting incarceration** with a focus on Indigenous art – programming through a cultural lens.
- We need more **culturally appropriate services** (e.g access to spiritual advisors at hospitals)
- Some artists are using **art and tech to depict new Indigenous ways forward** (e.g. [Quinn's work at UofT Hart House](#))

How do you connect to culture?

- **Looking up resources about Indigenous art and artists.**. "We need to increase recognition for Indigenous artists".
- Running a program with culture and our food at Allen Gardens. **Being part of an Indigenous organization, making food, bringing people together, telling stories**.
- **Through nature and using textiles** to connect to an understanding of the land
- **Through elders**. "My grandma taught me **beading** at age 9, then she passed. I made my regalia, which was **my intro to pow wow dancing**".
- Learned beading at home during COVID through an **online Indigenous beader who designed beading kits** with all the supplies, instructions, and then I learned on **YouTube** how to do different types of beading seen at markets. I taught myself.
  - "I want to continue because that connection has been severed. My grandma wasn't taught the language. My grandparents went to residential school - they weren't taught or communicated to. That's how I connect to my culture."
- Through **festivals**, like the Canadian Aboriginal Festival.
- Through **medicine gardens** and using local rocks as the grandfathers to **teach the grandfather teachings to the youth.**
- Through a canoe-making project with a local canoe maker and now helping to **build a yurt where the Elders can come over and offer language sessions to the youth.**
  - "It's important that during the winter months the Elders are able to have a warm place to sit and to visit and to be outside on the land surrounded by the medicine garden to offer teachings to the youth."
- Art and culture is bonded in trauma, allowing us to experience the art and the trauma and then deal with the trauma – **healing through the expression of that art**.

- **Working with youth** to remember all of the ways of both the Cree and the Ojibway to create teachings, they blended them together and **created a lodge that represented both of them.** Blending those cultures and **sharing star formations and origin stories** and how Ojibwe and the Cree shared their diversity of knowledge and ways of being. **This is culture. Sharing it and merging and seeing it change and grow for the youth.**
- Taking part in a **drum group**, sharing culture with the community and touring to South Korea, singing for the Pope and city councillors.
- Helping those in the community with addictions
    - "You need to be more empowered, **we're losing youth to addictions, we need a way to get them through schooling**, unless they go to a first nation school"
- Through **fashion shows** that highlight Indigenous cultures and designers
- Optimistic that we can **use new media / new digital media to project Indigenous voices** (e.g. All the pioneers to start APTN and Canada Aboriginal Festival, Indspire... maybe it took a while to get around but it's there)
- Through NDN Collective - Action Camp, training people on creative resistance, rights as Indigenous people, artists, and activists, training on how to sit in ceremony

What are some of the barriers you face in engaging with arts and culture in Toronto?

- <u>**Workshops & Programs**</u>
    - **Issues with awareness, access and availability.** Workshops are incredible for building connection and community. Some traditional Indigenous cultural workshops (e.g. beading, moccasins, tufting, quilting, etc.) are available, but they are hard to find and often at capacity. Resources like Native Womens and Facebook pages are helpful.
    - **Lack of opportunities for adult workshops and programming**. The majority offered are for youth or seniors. Caregivers are often overlooked.
    - Timing. More diversity of times for workshops is necessary (e.g. caregivers are often busy after work hours, so 9am-5pm is a better time for them).
    - Lack of offerings for parents with children after hours

- ○ **Barriers to hosting.** Artists and creatives lack spaces and budget for hosting workshops, and spaces that are available to use for low to no cost may not be appropriate. "We can get a yoga studio but we may need to kill a dead animal for our workshop. Can't do that in a yoga studio".
- **Funding & Grants**
  - ○ **Funding applications don't fit with Indigenous worldview**
  - ○ **TAC and other funding applications are long, require too much information, and feel overwhelming**
  - **Funding timelines are too long and don't allow for seizing time-sensitive opportunities**.
    - **Art and culture offerings can be season-specific** (e.g. one participant mentioned that the Toronto Zoo offered fallen birch bark for use which had to happen quickly).
  - ○ **Calling a granting officer for support can feel overwhelming**
  - ○ **Grants timelines are very long and the wait time hinders the artistic process**
  - ○ **Artists can't start the project until the** money is confirmed
  - ○ Eligibility criteria is limiting
  - ○ Competition is high, rejection is common and disheartening. ""I've gotten funded on my own dollars. A lot of people are rewarded that don't put in the work, and don't finish the grants. I could do a lot more with actual funding. I spent about $1000 of my own money on my project."
  - **Lack of community connections** to make things happen
  - There is nothing built into **grants for people to pay it forward**
  - We need **legacy grants** and places to **put grants into trust for emerging entrepreneurs, creators, and activists**
  - "I know an Indigenous consultant whose main focus is assisting people with grants and funding applications. I think it's not just that people don't fit the mold" and need to us the" funders language" to fit with the grant requirements
- **Lack of Cultural Understanding and Undervaluing of Indigenous Culture**
  - Barriers getting into non-Indigenous markets. There's a **fear of cultural appropriation (e.g. if wearing an Indigenous fashion brand)** which results in non-Indigenous people being hesitant to purchase Indigenous designed clothes.
  - **Lack of understanding about the true costs** for Indigenous creatives and business owners: "To get the sweetgrass, we have to face bears,

prick it, dry it, braid it, and we have people complain about how much it costs here. It's medicine!"

- **Racism and harassment** e.g. of firekeepers, who are essential to coming together in ceremony.
  - **Lack of awareness leads to racism**
- **Need the entirety of us to be seen by wider society** – a network of memories and actions
- **Permitting barriers**. "To have a sacred fire, we need a fire permit!"
- **Lack of representation** to advocate for Indigenous communities.
- Indigenous cultural practitioners are **undervalued**. "How do we protect the value of an Elder doing ceremony to help someone heal? They are not seen as the value of a brain surgeon".
- The City holds a "willful ignorance" that ignores community, and essentially "flows around us like we are an island in the middle of a river".
- **Lack of meaningful exposure to Indigenous art history in Toronto.** Archives are hidden because no one can pay for storage and so they end up in people's basements and backyards.

- **Surviving Life in Toronto**
  - **Housing** is precarious. Finding stable, affordable housing is an increasing challenge.
- **Appropriation**
  - **Appropriation** - **Non-Indigenous teachers are teaching Indigenous subjects** and misrepresenting information.
  - Crafts (such as beadwork, which can take so much time to make, and sells for $15) get **copied overseas and sold for cheap**.
  - Some nations copy other nations' work
  - Lack of **laws to protect Indigenous people and their artwork**

What can/should we do? What can facilitate your culture in Toronto?

- Look at **public-private partnerships** (e.g. gym sponsored by Nike that serves addicts and is free for all)
- Emphasize **welcoming all nations, mixed descent, kids**, etc. Indigenous culture is not just one culture.
- **Hold an International Indigenous Culture conference in Toronto**: where we can gather, innovate, learn, and support each other. This will allow the City to move beyond, and actually be the leader they claim to be

- **Space**
  - **Space for Indigenous communities to come together** and hold space for healing from the past, be present, and imagine new future
  - **Space for seniors, including art spaces,** to share their knowledge and their cultural teaching protocols with youth
  - **More teepees and lodges around the city for youth and elders** across neighbourhoods – Rouge Hill is not close enough
  - More spaces to **conduct sacred ceremonies**
  - Space in more **secluded areas (including near rivers and ravines).**. "Our culture "is not a spectator sport"
    - **More community spaces like Native Child and Family Services**
    - **Subsidize rent for vacant commercial spaces.** For example, [ReNew Adelaide](#), offers subsidized rent in vacant commercial spaces for businesses to test their projects. Many businesses were successful and were able to take over the rent of the spaces they now occupied.
    - **Artist studio space!**
    - **Indigenous-led housing.** There's housing specific for Elder artists but need more across the board.
  - A proper **Indigenous district** with Indigenous art, tech, small businesses, and entrepreneurs (like Greektown & Little Italy)
  - **Land Back!**
    - **Continuing to work towards Indigenous sovereignty.**
  - **Provide a plot of land to Indigenous community** to do whatever they want for Indigenous culture.
  - Easier parks access - where you don't have to ask for permission to use it.
  - **Community centre spaces** and spaces without oversight.
  - A program to facilitate use of backyards.
  - A subsidized space "run by ladies, by grown up women to get together and dance" e.g. abandoned spaces.

- **Institutions**
  - **More investment in cultural venues** like the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
  - **Establishing an Indigenous Art Gallery of Ontario** (or an Indigenous Public Art Gallery) with an educational piece that leads to entrepreneurship.
  - **Indigenous Institutions - review which groups the City is funding.** Some are not benefiting the community.

- **Funding**
  - Rework the funding system and consider **trust-based philanthropy.**
    - Simple grant proposal, no requirement for reporting.
    - Relationship-based - almost all successful applicants will give a report back through photos and a thank you card.
    - Invite youth to apply with business plans
  - **Establish organizations to help us with banking and admin**. "There's no Indigenous artist support centre."
  - **Make funding more accessible** – not everyone has access to a computer to write an application.
    - Consider a walk-in option to access funding.
    - Offer micro-grants.
    - Consider barriers for neurodiverse applicants who struggle to fill out applications.
    - Allow applicants to submit videos instead of a final report.
  - **Provide ongoing funding for things that are already working** (versus one-off, project-based funding).
  - **Travel-focused grants**
    - **Create funding opportunities to take Indigenous youth out of the city to community**. Those teachings will be brought back to Toronto.
    - Funding to travel for tradition and ceremony.
  - **Issues with expensing and financing**
    - Make **tobacco** for gift-giving an eligible expense
    - Honorariums should not be taxable
    - Help Indigenous organizations navigate and/or recognize other ways of governance for taxes
  - Fund / advocate for Universal Basic Income
  - Provide free schooling/ training for Indigenous students

- **Education**
  - **Cultural training for Police and City staff** is important. "Are we protected when we do sacred fires?"
  - Combat Residential School deniers (an increasing issue).
  - We need **public education through art projects** (e.g. during public mural unveilings or public gatherings need to have Indigenous education sessions / opportunities).
  - **We need celebrations of Indigenous art projects and activations.**

- We cannot forget about Indigenous people in prisons – we should connect Elders across Canada to convey culture, art, and traditions to these individuals

- **The City**
  - "When I go to City Hall, I don't feel welcome."
  - "We need to know we're working with allies. We can't do this work alone"
  - **We need an Indigenous Arts Secretariat.**
  - **We need an "arts voice" on City Council**
  - **Increase representation** of Indigenous staff and decision-makers at City Hall.
  - Have a match-maker or connector role to help **facilitate connections** in Indigenous community
  - Create better ways for Indigenous people to navigate City Hall staff.
  - **Build on feedback provided already by Indigenous people.** The City has gathered on projects over the years. "A lot of feedback has not been reflected or acted on."
  - Stop the "us against them" relationship and mentality between the City and Indigenous people.

- **Other**
- **Facilitate connection and conversation** so people can help support each other in solving problems collectively.
- **Create opportunities for mentorship and leadership.**
- **Increase accessibility** to accessing programs, space, funding, etc.
- Bring back the teaching tour group that goes to every school and educates Indigenous kids (this visiting schools program dissolved).
- **Create more opportunities to see Indigenous culture visually** across the city e.g. Vancouver does this really well – manhole covers, totem poles, major public art.
- More **signage in Indigenous languages** (including English spellings and /or phonetic translations to help all of us learn pronunciations).
- Change the focus **from cultural events to living with our culture.** A "centring of our understanding of culture so we don't feel so out of place here".
- Support accessing Indigenous materials easier e.g. quillwork is important, but it can take 2 years to prep to host 2 workshops. "We have to understand the **environment of culture** (e.g. quillwork, beadwork, etc.)."

- Engage Indigenous people in **tree-planting programs** (connection to nature and earth and helps to develop transferable skills)
- Bring back a **pow wow for all** of our Tkaronto community to partake in

Note: Facilitator Trina Moyan noted a general lack of awareness about the City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2032
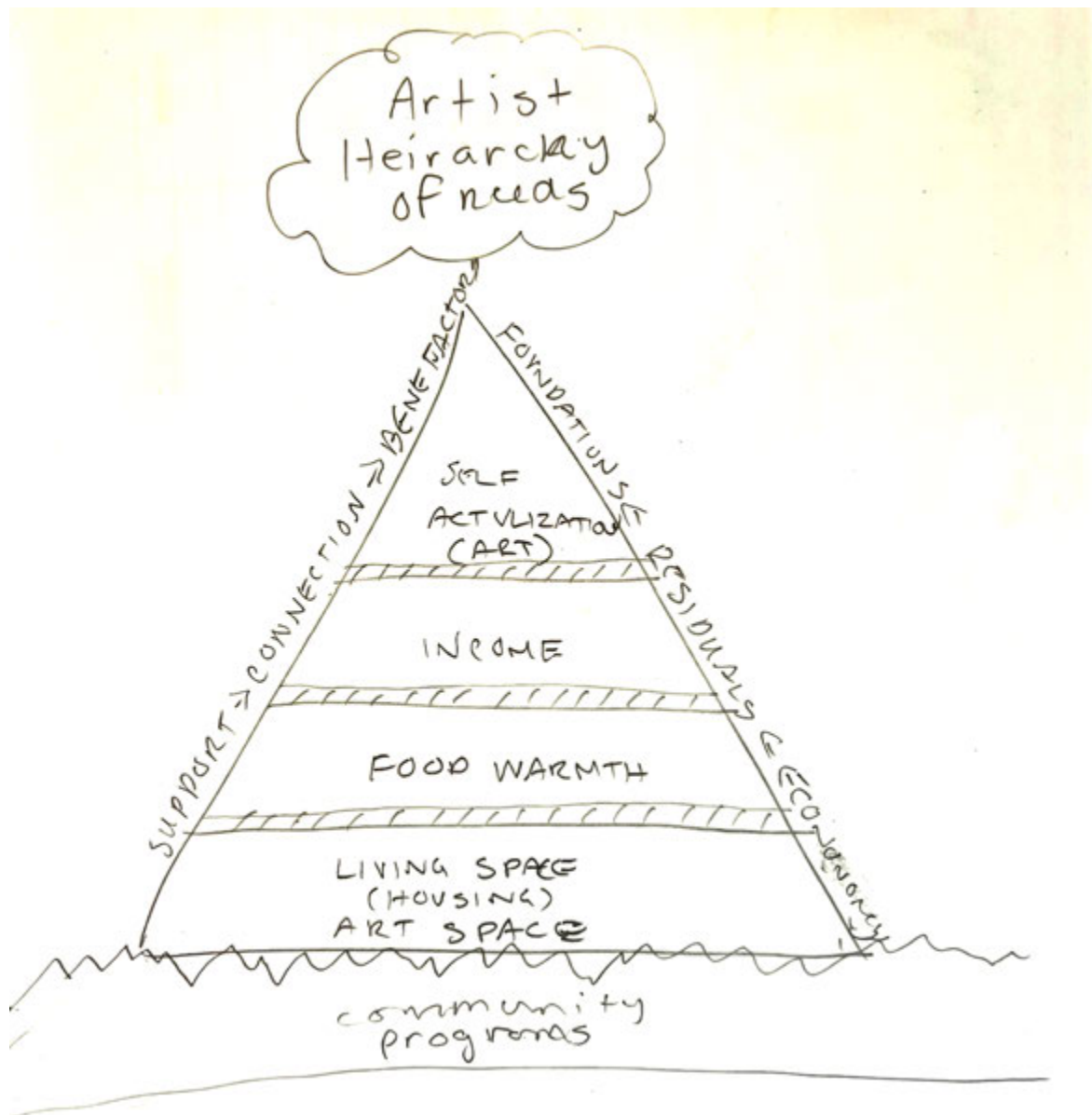
"Artist Hierarchy of Needs" Image was drawn by participant Chris Decorte during the Indigenous Creatives Community Conversation.

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
Arts for Social Change - Wed Nov 8, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the _Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector_ (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversations on _Arts for Social Change_. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Alex Rand
- Avalon Mott
- Carrie Perreault
- Evan Webber
- Faith Rajasingham
- Julian Diego
- Leila Refahi
- Leslie Ting
- Myia Davar

- Nadine Araksi
- Nam Hoang
- Paul Daniel Torres
- Sampreeth Rao
- Shannon Litzenburger
- Zaki Ibrahim
- Negin Sairafi
- Brigid Tierney
- Shad Kabango

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"In order to survive as an artists, universal basic income, housing, and space are the bare minimum that allow for real creativity"

"What we are seeing is the institutional commodification of culture... 'how do we compete on a global scale?' That language is embedded in capitalist structure.... How can artists be supported to know that art is a necessary part of life for everyone? "

"It scares me in our society that we can't have a serious conversation if it's not about economic efficiency"

"Where is there room to exhale?"

Participants shared concerns and challenges including:

- Most artists and creatives in Toronto are **unstable** in **survival mode**, struggling to meet their own basic needs given **high costs of living**. Many are burnt out; their **physical and mental health** has been declining significantly in recent years.
- The limited scope and understanding of the idea of **culture as "capital C culture" at the City of Toronto** i.e. artists, art, art-making, cultural products versus a more expanded approach to culture and spaces where culture gets made, shared, enacted and engaged with more broadly such as libraries, community centers, parks. "Other City spaces that should not be outside of this discussion on culture but central to it".
- The **value of art should be reframed**: the impact of the arts should not be measured by its **economic impact** and ability to be commercialized. (Art improves physical and mental health, builds community and connection, creates meaning, etc.) Toronto has a tendency to think about culture's impact in terms of economic impact, which is only part of the picture.
- **Resource distribution** between large organizations and smaller organizations/ independent artists is **inequitable**. There is a significant class issue within the arts, particularly between racialized and non-racialized artists.
- The need for **access to affordable live and work space** is dire. Toronto also has a significant amount of empty space that artists and creatives would benefit from. There is a desire as well to **transform libraries and Community Centres into more vibrant, welcoming cultural hubs**.

- Artists should help **shape policy beyond arts and culture** - whether policy related to health, policing, parks, etc. They can add significant value to these conversations, and are impacted by all of these decisions as well.
- It has become nearly impossible for artists to find **space of mind to think, reflect and experiment** in Toronto, impacting the caliber of the quality of art they can create, and social change they can inspire
- There is a need for more **centralized information-sharing** about opportunities, resources, etc (e.g. mentorship, funding, etc.) as well as **pooling of resources between organizations** (e.g. co-hiring). Newcomer artists particularly need more information about supports and opportunities
- Compared to other similar cities like Montreal and New York, Toronto feels **conservative, unimaginative and risk-averse**. There is an opportunity for Toronto to be more playful, supportive, etc. (e.g. by reducing red tape, etc). Permits, processes and paperwork in Toronto make producing culture challenging.
- Artists are craving more opportunities for **connection and community-building**
- Artists feel powerless and precarious when it comes to live and work space. They need **recourse** when they lose money or face injustices because of **landlords**.
- **Working remotely continue to pose challenges for many artists.** Remote work/ performances, etc. do not have the same impact, depth, encouragement, etc.
- The City feels more like an **administrator of the arts, versus a proud partner**
- There is a chicken and egg challenge of artists needing to create 'successful' art in order to prove they should receive funding to create successful art
- **Sponsors are supporting arts and culture less and less**, impacting artists negatively
- The City's aversion to risk means **we don't see spontaneity in our cultural landscape**, which is critical to a vital city
- Part of what Toronto can offer is the **cross pollination of incredible talent together with the public** in impromptu and atypical spaces and places, we need to nurture that

Participants shared needs and ideas including:

- Shift the culture at the City of Toronto **from risk aversion to a "why not" mentality**.
- **Predictability and supports are needed** (e.g. rent-geared-to-income, universal basic income, access to affordable cultural space, etc.) in order for creatives to create and contribute meaningfully
- The **funding model** needs to be overhauled. For instance:
    - Significant amount of **time and money is wasted** trying to apply, report and "fit into boxes".
    - How funders and sponsors **measure impact** is problematic - metrics like attendance and demographics do not indicate how successful or impactful a funded project was
- **Assess how funding is distributed**, and **redistribute funding more equitably**
- Consider **new models of distributing resources** e.g. Music Gallery's model for sharing space (lottery-based)
- Opportunities for artists to be involved in **policy-making, beyond culture**, need to be created.
- The City of Toronto should **fund cultural space**
- Find ways to **create opportunities for space from empty / under-used spaces**
- Consider **Land Trusts** as models to rethink space issues and support all artists in particular neighourhoods/ areas.
- **Increase funding** for arts and culture, including **operational funding, audience / market development and equipment**
- Develop a **central database** to increase information sharing (e.g. space availability, funding opportunities, resources and equipment, businesses that welcome cultural events, etc).
- Moving culture out of the **Economic Development department** could help reframe how arts and culture is perceived and valued
- The EarlyON model could be an inspiration for an "**ArtsON model**" i.e. a free, drop-in program that makes engaging with the arts easy
- **Evaluate processes and minimize bureaucracy** e.g. simplify permits for parks, processes to book libraries, applications for funding, etc. to make it easier for artists to create and share art and culture
- Create a means for local artists to connect with **artists from other cities**
- Create events or **opportunities for connection** (e.g. monthly socials) to enable artists and creatives to facilitate artists to share ideas, **build networks**, etc.
- Foster a **culture of care** in culture, like the one that was felt during the pandemic

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
Artists and Creatives from the Black Community - Thurs Nov 9, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:
The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversations with Artists and Creatives from the Black Community. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Darren Leu
- Ikeila Wright
- Jasmine Vanstone
- Joel Reid
- Kejo Buchanan
- Kira Allen
- Komi Olafimihan

- Micha Edwards
- Nikola Steer
- Onika Powell
- Paulina O'Kieffe-Anthony
- Rob Elsworthy
- Sedina Fiati
- Warda Youssouf

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The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes by participants.

"A lot of organizations feel like they are supporting BIPOC organizations, but the people who have been doing this for decades are losing money to some of those other established organizations that are starting to work with BIPOC artists"

"If you advocate for yourself, they don't want to give you the contract because you work in sustainable, transparent ways. So often the contract will go to someone else who was not as melanated because... I don't know... we're seen as Black and difficult. So you end up having to choose - to have work, or to be in an abusive relationship"

"We need preservation and recognition of our arts and culture. What more do we have to do? The glass ceiling feels concrete for our community here. And then people need to go and leave to L.A."

"There are so many closed storefronts. What if spaces were required to provide space for pop-ups. There are so many stores on Bloor street where we can uplift communities. When McDonalds or banks are closing, incredible spaces sit empty. Meanwhile people are scrambling to find space for a short time to rehearse. The City could help us figure out the insurance piece in case of liability. In other cities people have to pay more - a tax - for having vacant storefronts"

""VibeArts asks artists 'What do you need?' They don't try to force programs on them".

"A single conversation in the right space can mean everything for an artist! Getting an artist access to someone knowledgeable, like in artistic finances, can be everything!"

"I always worry about offering [other artists] minimum wage. I want to... but I struggle to get the funding. I look at the bottom line and I can't make it happen. I don't want to pay them any less, and actually I'd like to pay them more".

Participants shared several concerns and challenges facing Black Creatives in Toronto including:

- Various challenges with the funding system including:
    - **Inequity within the arts funding** - a disproportionate amount of resources are going to White / Eurocentric institutions.
    - **Navigating the system** - understanding what's available, how to apply, etc.
    - **Onerous process** - laborious and "requires jumping through three times the hoops necessary".
    - **Response time** - Waiting 4+ months to hear back from funders.

- **Funding Cycles** - 1-year funding cycles are challenging and limiting.
- **Limited funds compared to demand and need** - which leads to more competition, versus collaboration.
- **Explicit support for wellness** - lack of funding available for health and wellness (e.g. for therapy).
- **Misrepresentation of artists in grant applications by applicants** i.e. artists ideas are borrowed and proposed in grants by organizations. Often, those artists are unaware that their names and ideas have been used. Money is granted, based on those artistic ideas that were 'borrowed', and once funding is granted there is no guarantee those organizations will hire the artists.
- **Restrictions -** e.g. can't apply for operating and project, or for two different grants if the funder doesn't allow recipients to receive from both streams.
- **Lack of feedback -** unsuccessful grant applicants are rarely given feedback, which limits their ability to grow and get funding again
- **Lack of micro-grants in Toronto**
- **Lack of ample funding for experimentation and innovation**
- **Restrictions on eligible expenses**. Asking how artists *need* to spend funds would be more helpful.
- **Limiting eligible disciplines** - Certain art forms are not recognized by funders as eligible (e.g. Burlesque, culinary arts, etc.). The definition of "art" or "culture" is narrow and limiting.
- **Lack of dedicated funding opportunities for Black creatives** - Dedicated funding programs for Black artists are needed at other levels (OAC and CCA).
- **Transparency and integrity in paying artists**
  - **Delays with payments** by organizations/institutions hiring them. Many organizations take weeks and sometimes months to pay artists, who are living precariously, trying to make ends meet each month.
  - "It seems very **extractive** that folks want to hustle hard, but everyone takes time after to figure out payment. That can't stand when we're in a living wage crisis. The person taking the hit is the artist…".
  - **Lack of recourse** - nowhere for artists to complain when they are not paid on time
  - **Wages are often inadequate** and not aligned with the experience/labour
- **Physical and Mental Health**
  - **Burnout is a chronic challenge**, particularly after projects wrap up when rest is required, but artists need to continue making a living.
  - Artists struggle to **afford nutritious food**, which impacts physical and mental wellbeing
- **The definition of "professional"** is limiting for artists. Broader definitions of what is considered professional, what is included in "the arts" is necessary
- Various space challenges including:
  - **Finding affording space to live and work**

- Accessing affordable **ownership opportunities**
- Finding spaces designed to **meet the needs of different artistic disciplines** e.g. musicians need soundproof spaces, and want access to community centres, libraries, etc to be designed to support their work
- **Getting displaced** from Toronto because of high costs of living; then having to **commute long distances** to Toronto for work

- **Recognition of Black culture** - More acknowledgement, celebration and preservation of Black culture and stories
- **Meaningful inclusion** - Black creatives have to work hard to access conversations about equity, diversity and inclusion; and when in the room, they are often not listened to or taken seriously.
- **Meaningful community engagement** - a concern that the city and funders are not having enough conversations with Black artists, and particularly all the" niche Black artforms" who have unique needs e.g. Black gamers, etc.
- **Leadership** - concerns about the perspectives of senior leaders as "outdated, old and not innovative".
- **Valuing spontaneous, organic artistic events and experiences** - "Other cities like Berlin, Montreal in like Europe, Sweden... they value cool unexpected art and see it as a way to show off your City. I've been here for 20 years now and that kind of unexpected art is not valued"
- **Mentorship and business education** - challenges with awareness and access for mentorship programs, as well as difficulties getting mentorship programs off the ground

Participants share several needs and ideas facing Black Creatives in Toronto including:

- Re: funding:
    - **Close the equity gap** - **reduce funding of legacy organizations** to increase funding for Black arts and organizations
    - **Shift towards needs-based funding**
    - **Increase funding for Black communities and stories** - including funding for outreach to help bring arts to neighbourhoods in need and "populations in survival mode"
    - **Simplify application and reporting processes**, particularly for existing clients. Create "an express version of the final report"
    - **Fund health and wellness explicitly** - as an **eligible expense**
    - ○ **Offer micro grants -** which would allow funds to be disbursed more efficiently
    - **Provide Feedback** - "When I'm shortlisted, there's no information on where there might be room for improvement or how to succeed in the next round"
    - **Increase community engagement** versus "bare minimum consulting"
    - ○ **Review and update of the TAC Black arts fund**

- **Fund artists/ organizations for a minimum of 3-years**. "One-year projects don't breed sustainability. They very framework does not lend itself to the needs of the community".
  - **Fund more experimentation and innovation**
- **Expand eligibility criteria** for artforms that are not currently included such as culinary arts and Burlesque. Burlesque is "still considered a forbidden art by Municipal standards. The understanding of Burlesque is outdated...It is an artform that uses comedy, social critique, etc. to inspire audiences to reconsider social norms, current events, etc. The Burlesque scene in Toronto is active, and putting Toronto on the map.
- **Capacity-building and support** for navigating the funding system, learning how to apply, etc.
- **Best practices for paying Black artists** - Transparency and integrity (particularly from institutions) about hiring and contracting Black artists i.e. being clear with artists in advance about when they will get paid and paying them on time. A few concrete ideas shared:
  - **Deposits** - Treating artists the way caterers and other service providers are paid - 50% deposit down, and 50% upon completion.
  - **Arts escrow** - a middle agency that ensures artist are paid on time
  - **Accountability** - A process by which funders can assess if the organizations they are funding are paying artists on time e.g. funders checking in directly with subcontracted artists to assess how they were treated, paid, etc.
- Leadership and Influence:
  - Creating opportunities for more Black people in key places of **policy and decision-making**
  - **Tax incentives for hiring Black creatives**
- Space solutions including:
  - **Subsidized housing for artists**
  - **Artist coops**
  - **Creating awareness about underused or meanwhile spaces**
  - **Providing support** for Black artists to use meanwhile spaces for rehearsals, pop-ups, etc.
  - Creating **more free / financially accessible spaces that are designed for artists** needs e.g. visual artists need access to sinks
  - **Co-working spaces** e.g. City-funded 'Centre for Social Innovation'-type spaces
  - **Reducing barriers to rent city spaces** e.g. libraries and community centres
  - Incentives for developers who can share empty condos or storefronts with artists
  - **Increased investments** in spaces like NIA, Sketch, Career Education Empowerment - Centre for Young Black Professionals
  - **Dedicating commercial spaces** to sell to Black folks

- **Support to preserve existing Black-run spaces** that require significant ongoing operational support
- Audit and assessment of city-run spaces
- Education, Skills Development and Mentorship
  - **More arts and cultural programming for children and youth**
  - **More educational programs about Black culture**
  - **Mentorship and awareness about how to access it - for a variety of artistic disciplines, back of house opportunities** (e.g. music recording, sound and lighting, etc). . A success story shared is VibeArts Black artists mentorship program in which "everyone who applies gets something out of it. There are efforts to share information beyond the selected participants"
    - **Professional development and skills development** for careers in the arts, particularly support roles that are less known and understood e.g. back-of-house positions
  - **Raising awareness about opportunities to work in the arts** (e.g. outreach at elementary and secondary schools regarding roles available in creative fields
- **Data** - better research and statistics on Black-serving and Black-focusd organizations and ethical practices for handling data. "The data needs to be collected by and shared with the right people".
- **Opportunities for networking** and building relationships e.g. bringing service providers together with artists. *"What can the city do to help facilitate connections to other organizations?".*
- An **online hub or directory for Black artists and creatives** developed by the City
- More services for Black communities **outside the downtown core** as well as outreach and promotions outside the core
- **Access to public research spaces** such as Toronto Reference Library and their collections and services

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
The Need for Space - Nov 16, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:
The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the first of two Community Conversations on *The Need for Space*. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Aida Aydinyan
- Annie Wong
- Benjamin Valiquette
- Chiyi Tam
- Denise Fujiwara
- Dina Graser
- Hadley Howes
- Helen Ketema
- Himanshu Sitlani
- Jonny Dovercourt
- Julia Gonsalves

- LoriAnn Girvan
- Matthew Fava
- Mel Hague
- Oliver Pauk
- Pam Lau
- Ryan Andal
- Sally Lee
- Samuel La France
- Shenali Don
- Theresa Wang
- Robert Sauvey
- Shaina Agbayani

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The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes by participants.

"In the last year, we already lost six dance spaces so now it will be 10 total that we will have lost in the downtown core. It's a huge loss. Music is also losing spaces - it's all been converted to condos. I've been looking into data - revenues decline and expenses increase and so it makes it very difficult to keep the space; it's a problem beyond the space: companies cannot afford to keep the space…it's a huge concern. How do we keep them alive?

"The average hourly fee for spaces in Ontario is $42 per hour, almost double the average fee the community says it can afford ($22 per hour).

"Since the pandemic, the cost of presenting a show has gone up - for understandable reasons, venues can't take on the cost and this is being passed on to artists and presenters, which is why ticket prices are increasing. Need spaces to be affordable"

"The City really needs new tools for securing spaces beyond Community Benefits (section 37) wins from private developments. We need to move away from 'Creative City' rhetoric and the marrying of private development with arts and culture. The values are not aligned so when culture cannot generate profit, private partners abandon their stakes. New tools to generate income to secure and provide long-term and artist-run-owned spaces need to be the focus"

"There is an endless wealth of ideas and space… what is the root cause and crack? How do we finance it and sustain it? Protect entire communities and networks?"

"There are so many commercial spaces and City-owned spaces that are vacant – it would be valuable to have a thorough process to examine City properties that are unused and compile a database with physical attributes of space – maybe done by an outside group – towards a matchmaking service for space. There's not enough conversation between Economic Development and Culture and Corporate Real Estate Management".

"How do we create an ecosystem where everyone has a place and survives? We are one of the largest institutions but we cannot do much; we have a lot of budget pressures; we rely on ourselves; we are not eligible for film & TB or theatre tax credits. There are some other examples of tax credits in Alberta and abroad, but nothing available currently to us. We don't have any exemptions"

"We think of affordability as a solution - but as someone who has experienced precarity as an arts worker, I'm interested in how we make things sustainable"

"Why does the city maintain skate rinks but not music venues…the subwoofer ratio should be like the zamboni ratio, calculated per capita!"

"The waitlist for Akin Studios is 450 - Akin could double in size tomorrow and still fill spaces in months".

"A city is only as strong as it's most divested neighbourhood"

"If you don't have people who understand the arts involved in these discussions, it will very quickly become bureaucratic and focused on mitigating risk to the institution".

"I talk to a lot of international counterparts [in Community Land Trusts]. The real estate players fictitiously create value out of cultural work, and they make money out of community work that they don't do. A lot of appeal for real estate is arts and culture"

"We have so many cultural groups who never call themselves cultural groups; for example Kung Fu is something that is clearly culture, but they function as a vendor; it's similar to language schools, taiko schools; a lot of cultural production happens in commercial spaces - for example, creating new dishes in dumpling houses, stationary stores...they don't think of themselves as artists, but they are!

"The assertion of land trust movement is that you deserve permanence and have ownership and protection for cultural spaces forever because even a 40-year lease is very precarious... "I've worked on Kensington and the fight against Walmart - we won. It has to be fuelled by collective power"

"We need spaces that are open late that feed the creative spirit just by being around it"

"Our operational funding, along with our fundraising, is meant to cover both our staffing, artistic productions and our buildings...all of that money is coming directly out of the money that we're technically giving to artists...it's gonna sink us, it's gonna take us at one point"

"Going beyond the language of gentrification...there's something deeper that's happening and we don't have the language in this moment..."

What does the Need for Space Look Like to You?

- Affordability is the primary factor
- Musicians need jam space, rehearsal space and live music presentation space
- Visual artists needs are fairly flexible - TTC accessibility, natural light and tall ceilings are helpful
- Access to bikes and bike lanes
- Spaces where artists can make noise without disturbing others
- Accessible, affordable music venues of 200-250 person capacity for all users (music, community arts, etc.) ideally with ancillary spaces e.g. cafés, recording studios, galleries, etc.so it "feels like a space for creative arts not like going to the Horsehoe Tavern"

- For spaces outside the downtown core, venues that are walking distance for community members is valuable.
- Media Arts artists have needs but their space needs are less critical than the space needs of other disciplines
- Availability outside of regular business hours (9am-5pm)
- Access to quiet space to either be in community, or have solo time to reflect e.g. like at Gibraltar Point on Toronto Island
- Space that feels welcoming
- Spaces that serve a variety of artists that enable cross-pollination and intergenerational connection

Participants were asked if there are examples of spaces or initiatives that they have seen work that we need to invest in, scale and/or borrow from other places?

- The province of Alberta - zero property tax for non-profits.
- Arcadia Housing Coop - aims to provide a permanent arts community in Toronto where artists and arts-support (and their families) from all disciplines live in good quality, affordable housing.
- 221A - now a housing provider for BIPOC artists. The building is owned by the City of Vancouver and operated by 221A Artist Housing Society in collaboration with the Community Land Trust. It acquires, develops and stewards co0ops and community-led housing and spaces.
- Trans Europe Halles - an international NGO with headquarters in Lund, Sweden. A member-led force for change driven by a bottom-up, activist spirit that challenges conventions that has been at the forefront of repurposing abandoned buildings for arts, culture and activism since 1983.
- Tapestry Community Capital – a leading service partner in community bonds
- Rehearsal Factory - offers rehearsal space to Toronto and GTA musicians equipped studios rentals.
- C-Space in Calgary - A re-imagined historic creative hub and coworking space that provides affordable studio, presentation, gallery, and working space for creative entrepreneurs and artists of all disciplines and features retail and exhibition galleries, a theatre and an onsite café.
- Activate Space - a group working in church spaces
- Artist-run centres - legacy organizations and critical spaces for contemporary visual artists with grassroots origins
- 401 Richmond - a good example of co-location model
- LIFT and Trinity Square Video - spaces that are doing amazing work and require more resources invested (in part because their rent is high).
- Akin Collective studios - have 7 locations currently and studio membership fees are consistent across locations, which is intentional and important.
- Home Energy Loan Program (HELP), already under way by the City of Toronto. HELP makes it easy and affordable for homeowners to pay for home improvements over time and access rebates offered by utility companies and the Federal government. Once funding is approved, homeowners can hire the

contractor of their choice and complete their renovations
- [Parkridge / Quadreal](#) - offer an affordable approach to homeownership that is unique because it allows people to own a home, without buying the land – known as 'land lease'.
- [The Combine Space](#) -   a shared space by creative agencies Bensimon Byrne, Narrative, Onemethod and Folk. An ongoing experiment in transforming an office into a community-driven space for making, shopping learning and living
- Section 37 - "money now goes to the City at a flat rate, but some businesses do want to provide space"
- [CAST - Community Arts Stabilization Trust](#) in the US
- [Homecourt](#) - provides programming within and emerging mentorship for photographers
- [Scotiabank Dance Centre](#) in Vancouver - the community came together to find a corporate sponsor who donated an old bank building
- [Public Theatre](#) in New York - program across all boroughs, well-staffed by people who create a welcoming vibe.
- Toronto Island studio spaces with a 99-year lease
- [Rouge National Urban Park](#) - highly subsidized farmland

Participants shared examples of concerns and barriers including:

- Most artists and arts organizations are operating at maximum capacity, and have little time and energy to invest in devising creative space solutions
- Managing operational challenges (e.g. HVAC) is time-consuming and not a good use of time for artists and arts workers
- Affordability and scarcity of space - spaces have been closing across the City, and this was exacerbated by pandemic. The "fabric" of the city itself is shifting.
- Direct revenue doesn't cover operating costs of spaces
- Adapting to external changes e.g. rising costs, changes in audiences, etc.
- Lack of adequate maintenance by the City of city-run cultural spaces
- Digital shift has led to more people consuming art on their devices, and less demand to experience art in person
- Not enough capital funding for cultural space across government levels
- The City is organizing around different parts of the city in a way that is not actually serving the city, rather than clustering naturally or investing based on needs.
- Lack of partnerships with private companies
- Live-work spaces in Toronto are not legal
- Problematic metrics and evaluation in granting e.g. impact based on numbers reached, versus quality and depth of experiences created.
- Sustainability of space (currently very precarious)
- Community members don't believe that some community centres belong to them

- Spaces in Toronto close too early and there are not enough cultural activities available at night
- LASOs are outside of the core strategy
- Arts councils have combined funds for artists and building operations
- Suburban sprawl, "car culture" and lack of visible arts outside the core (e.g. in Scarborough) in the same way that it is palpable downtown (e.g. live musicians, stickers on mailboxes, etc).
- Limited space options for some artforms e.g. South Asian performing arts
- Developers are providing subpar spaces for artists, which result in significant operational costs (meanwhile they benefit from providing these spaces).
- Whether or not an organization pays their staff a living wage has no impact on how much funding they get. It does not 'pay' organizations to pay their staff well i.e. to support the "livability of its employees" who live and work in Toronto's cultural spaces.
- Building new cultural spaces takes time. And in the meantime, artists are losing access to meanwhile space left, right and centre.

What are some concrete actions we can take in Toronto to address the cultural space problem?

- Tax (or provide tax breaks) for landlords with vacant stores or homes
- Community Bonds model (which Sketch Working Arts and Centre for Social Innovation used). A model where community members buy into the property and then pay back their investment.
- A trusted broker/ 3rd party organization dedicated to supporting artists in using meanwhile spaces. The City would require developers holding onto space to open it up for temporary use. Tiered pricing would allow organizations to pay based on their ability. The broker would provide insurance (through a blanket binder) that covers users. (See Why Not Theatre Space Project for inspiration).
- Incentives for businesses to ensure their spaces are in use instead of lying empty because they don't have ample renters or because staff are working remotely. Explore opportunities in creative agencies that have office space lying empty e.g. Bensimon Byrne, Narrative, Onemethod, Folk, etc.
- Make Toronto Public Libraries more accessible to rent. The red tape to book them, curfews (e.g close at 6pm), security that polices   community members are all barriers
- Make stronger efforts to connect the dots between City departments, which are currently silod (e.g. housing, culture, reconciliation, Anti-Black racism, etc.)
- Multi-sectoral adaptive re-use
- Further extending the property tax class. Full exemptions would be ideal.
- The City of Toronto and Councillors could build bridges between the cultural sector and property owners who have expressed willingness to work with the arts.

- Leveraging derelict churches and other underused spaces for artists to use.
- As is the case with some other cities, require developers to not only provide space to arts organizations but also cover operational costs
- Encourage universities to make booking space easier - they often have ideal spaces for artists
- Community Land Trust partnerships with the City
- Increase opportunities for Meanwhile Leasing and supports / opportunities for organizations to work in meanwhile leasing
- Create a database of underused spaces in Toronto
- City could put requirements on developers who are holding properties to make them available for cultural use before they can redevelop them.
- Provide artists/ arts organizations first right of refusal before putting spaces on the market
- Share information from the City about how to create effective spaces
- Look into and learn from the Space Project pilot that Why Not Theatre did
- Fractional ownership model like shared vacation homes
- Create an Ombuds role for people to file complaints if the City is not being a good landlord.
- "Could the City use its convening power to coordinate and bring together back-end work?"
- Keeping needs and limitations of arts groups in mind, the City could dedicate some City-owned spaces that are authentic, usable, workable and not institutional.
- Move from a DIY (Do it Yourself) approach to DIT (Do it Together) approach: The City could provide support with red tape, processes and insurance to lighten the burden of booking City Spaces.
- Clear requirements from the City to developers that are providing space to artists about the quality expected of those spaces (i.e. so artists don't have to foot the costs of poorly built homes). Have a 3rd party inspect those homes to ensure the quality is adequate ("they give you a shell…and everything else is down to a nonprofit to foot the bill").
- Asset transfers where the group can also begin to create equity that they could then reinvest in.
- Develop partnerships across sectors to help move this critical space issue forward
- Work with developers to think of opportunities outside CIty-owned spaces. Create incentives (e.g. tax exemptions or other benefits) for developers to turn over space to arts non-profits
- Increase education and awareness with developers regarding the economic reality of artists who cannot afford commercial rent as well as the positive impact artists have on their business e.g. increased foot traffic, branding, attaining ESG [Environmental, Social and Governance] goals, etc.
- Explore opportunities for value exchange between developers and artists e.g. rent at 50% for a dance performance for stakeholders.

- Ensure a percentage of new developments is allocated to space for artists
- Provide protection for artists renting and leasing space
- Co-op ownership
- Through zoning, make land worthless or designate it as heritage in order to make it more affordable for people working in the cultural sector
- Lease-to-own opportunities
- Social purpose real estate – real estate owned by or operated by to advance a social mission, profit or not-for-profit community, dedicated in perpetuity
- Infrastructure Institute – run sessions for capacity-building. They are a training and advisory and interdisciplinary research hub at the University of Toronto's School of Cities, aiming to build local and global expertise in planning for civil and social infrastructure, decision-making, and delivery.
- SRO – single room occupancy - in which tenant rent a single room as opposed to a full apartment.
- Partnering with NFP – WoodGreen housing provider – "WoodGreen is Toronto's largest non-municipal affordable housing provider. We offer seniors, newcomers, youth, individuals with disabilities, psychiatric survivors and people with a long history of homelessness the opportunity to thrive in safe, affordable housing. WoodGreen owns and manages 28 housing sites in the city, where residents have access to the full basket of our supportive services."
- Downsview park – 30 year planning study – putting in new zoning
- Create community spaces within condos through maintenance fees
- Community benefit charge - secure space at the base of the condo
- There are opportunities outside the downtown core for land stewardship models and land sovereignty claims e.g. Rouge track land claim

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
Recovery & Economic Health - Wed Nov 22, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversations on *Recovery and Economic Health*. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Alana Traficante
- Casey Mecija
- Ginger Scott
- Hasheel Lodhia
- Jim Munroe
- Madeleine Brown
- Mitchell Marcus

- Morgan Norwich
- Nova Bhattacharya
- Magdalyn Asimakis
- Richa Baghel
- Rina Espiritu
- Sanjeet Takhar
- Tate Peacock
- Zanette Sing

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The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes shared by participants

"In moving on post-COVID, we need to recognize the way that long lockdowns have had impacts on our collective traumas. It's where art comes in too. It's connected to mental health."

"I'm embarrassed to be busting my ass but still under the poverty line."

" After Covid I was unable to have a sustained space and having to make the decision to close my personal gallery"

" Funding during COVID for arts was fantastic and then there were suddenly buckets of money to keep arts going during COVID gave us a teaspoon of stability to my dance company. It gave us a baseline to try to figure out how we can operate in a cost-effective and stable way but now that it's gone, it's back to trying to catch separate small grants here and there".

"I think artists need to be essential, and we need to figure out where that essential-ness is. COVID in particular laid out how little artists matter in a society that needs artists the most. Something was illuminated. When push came to shove, society needed enjoyment and entertainment."

"If funding disappears, people not only lose jobs and art can't be made, but entire communities fall apart".

"How can we feel valued? Hanging by a thread and need support."

"In moving on post-COVID, we need to recognize the way that long lockdowns have had impacts on our collective traumas. It's where art comes in too. It's connected to mental health".

"Smaller organizations are looking for mentorship and opportunities to partner with bigger organizations like universities. We need to think about long-term capacity building".

"Universal basic income - would begin to address patriarchal and colonial economic systems that currently force certain artists - particularly women and BIPOC

communities - to remove themselves from the traditional workforce in order to be primary caregivers. Universal basic income would work to alleviate the gendered role of the workforce. This is the world's equity project".

"I dread that folks are moving further out from downtown due to precarity in housing and financial stability. With in-person events being an important intersection for creation, they have less and less access to events".

"The City should treat the arts as the essential part of society that it is, much like hospitals are known to be essential. No one questions the need for hospitals, so why should the arts be any different?"

"One thing I noticed during COVID personally, as a creator, I was used to going to things and describing my projects and getting little doses of affirmation. I wasn't aware of this until it didn't exist anymore, where I was just at home talking to myself".

"Growth does not feel like the right answer right now to me, nor does sustaining trying to keep it as much as possible. Everybody is trying to keep what they were doing before but with less resources...We have to be unafraid to let something die that is not working, and look to rewarding innovation and risk".

"I did a full fine-arts degree. I don't have OSAP anymore, I need money, I need a job to survive. I don't have capacity to be an artist outside of my full-time job. Many grants require you to be a practising artist for x amount of the year, which means x amount of shows. The guidelines are pretty strict..."

"There are so many storefronts sitting empty. We need to use what we have better".

"Artists are the magicians of the city...[They] promote interconnectedness. Everyone needs art."

"The reforms in Grant Distribution are long due. The participants who have applied several times should be given priority. The short reviews by the grant committee will help a lot in making better proposals. The process should be more transparent and accessible to artists on every level of arts practice. The strength of the proposed project should be kept in mind while making final decisions and not on how well the grant application is written. "

"Artist and community interaction has to be encouraged. Artists can empower the community with soft and hard skills. For example, the wonder of making art, learning to paint etc. We should foster healthy and happy environments to work and create."

"An Artist is part of the community, happy artists bring love, light and life to the whole community."

Participants share several concerns, challenges, and barriers as individuals working in arts and culture in Toronto, including:

- Issues around artist wellbeing:
    - **Burnout is widespread**, due in part to funding pressures - particularly the loss of COVID relief funding and the rising cost of living. Artists are exhausted and operating precariously.
    - **There is a mental health crisis in the city** with disconnection, disassociation, and fear, which needs to be combatted through community, social connection, and cohesion.
- Issues around mindset and valuing the arts:
    - **There is a pervasive attitude in the city that is detrimental to arts and culture** – "a complain-y, capitalist, neo-liberal mindset that is conservative on how we use public spaces and how we invest in arts".
    - A sense of conservatism and NIMBY (not in my backyard) in Toronto, particularly about outdoor spaces. In other cities e.g. Oakland, artistic expressions are visible everywhere, and spilling onto the streets. During Covid, people were in the streets, on outside patios, in parks, under bridges! Restrictions, permits, constant complaints from neighbours, etc. make this challenging. "What is the culture of the city that is complain-y?"
- Issues around staffing:
    - **Challenges protecting contract staff in the arts** due to the precarity of funding and lack of reliable operating funds
    - **A lot of artists are gig workers and deal with a culture of undercutting in how little they can get paid**. Many do not know how to ensure they are being compensated fairly for their work.
- Issues around space:
    - **Lack of affordable housing**.
        - There are artists currently being evicted due to the **rising cost of housing.**
        - Concerns about **artists leaving Toronto** and the various **impacts** this has on their practice, community connections, opportunities, etc.
        - Concerns that when artists who leave Toronto return, there "won't be room for them" when they return.

- There is an abundance of **empty and under-used space** in Toronto.
  - ○ **No landing space for emerging BIPOC artists** once they finish school, start their own practice and need space to gather, access supports, etc.
  - **The city has empty spaces but it's difficult for artists to access them**, and different artists have different space needs (larger spaces for sculptors)
  - Lack of **space that is useful to artists**, particularly flexible, "blank canvas" space.
  - Artists often move to low-income areas, bring life and vitality to them, and making them appealing to others and developers. It is unpaid labour that often results in them getting displaced.
  - There is a lack of spaces available for artists that are not bars.
- Issues around sharing information and resources, building skills, and fostering connection:
  - ○ **Lack of sustainability of arts - particularly for BIPOC artists**
  - **Need for intergenerational community among artists** and connections across artist networks. Older generations of artists have so much knowledge that would benefit young and emerging artists but there is a disconnect.
  - **Toronto Employment Services is not equipped with pointing emerging artists to opportunities for the arts**. They are not able to appropriately find opportunities and mock interview questions weren't the right questions that an artist might expect to receive.
  - Artists and organizations working in the culture sector need to come together to **better share resources and break down silos**
- Issues around leadership, power and censorship:
  - **Established arts institutions need to give up power**, especially with their advocacy groups. "There are people in the city who could do better advocating for BIPOC artists".
  - **Arts institutions are censoring artists and culture workers**. "Artist censorship and artist fear of reprisals is real".
  - "There needs to be different leadership – community- and ethics-centred leadership."
- Issues around funding:
  - **The funding system is not working** well and should be redesigned. "do we have the energy to dream of a new system?"
  - **BIPOC artists and arts organizations are not funded adequately or equitably**

- The leadership of many arts organizations do not represent and support BIPOC artists adequately
- Major, established cultural institutions are attempting to 'do equity' rather than brokering real conversations for equity sector organizations
- **Not all artists are aware of funding opportunities or struggle to navigate the funding system**..
- Despite frozen (or decreased) levels of funds, artists are expected to **produce the same levels of programming** despite many challenges - inflation, increased challenges and mental wellness post-pandemic, etc.
  - **Project funding is precarious** and fuels artist anxiety around **needing to always be producing** (and not all artists are able to constantly produce).
- **Funding processes:**
  - Unnecessarily **formal and complicated**.
  - Grant and funding jargon forces artists to **reframe and self-censor**
  - Requires to consider how to **sell their work and quantify its value**, which sometimes results in artists altering their projects / art to be palatable or conventionally fundable.
  - **Response times** need to be decreased; need more of a sense of urgency in getting back to applicants.
  - **Applications are unnecessarily time-consuming. Artists and organizations waste already limited time applying for funding.**
- **Funding councils do not have a good enough understanding of BIPOC artists**, who often spend time and energy educating funders in applications. "When I talk about 'spirit', will they know what I'm talking about"?
- **Accessing private funding** is hard
  - Knowledge gap in terms of how to access these funds
  - Challenges in providing hard metrics to private donors, who often care about traditional measurement and impact.
  - **Competition for limited funds -** applications for funding have doubled and tripled but supply of funding has not kept up.
- **Decreases in funds** has posed challenges e.g. Canada Council for the Arts canceled a fund that support media arts equipment.

Participants spoke to some specific ways that COVID has changed and impacted their practice and work, including:

- **Space**: Impacts on space including the **closure of cultural venues** like galleries
- **Staff:** Many artists and cultural workers have not only left Toronto, but also left their industries.
- **Audiences:**
    - are making more **last-minute decisions** regarding arts and culture programming, which impacts subscriber-based institutions. More ticket sales are happening at the door.
    - Have **decreased** post-pandemic
- Donors - with COVID and rising costs, the **ability to access donations has changed**, putting some institutions in crisis. Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra shuttered.
- **There is a growing need for third places** outside of school, work, and home.
- Impacts on artist time and priorities such as **social media fatigue.** There is an increased pressure to keep up with social media trends as the primary way to market work.

Participants spoke to solutions and strategies they would like to see, including:

- Solutions related to funding such as:
    - **Reallocate funding priorities from the majors to smaller organizations and individual artists** – these institutions currently get the majority of donors, legacy, funding, etc. despite having challenges of relevance, dwindling audiences, etc. *"Ultimately, it is about leadership and giving up power. [Established arts institutions] have to give up power."*
    - **Universal Basic Income** - consider UBI that is tied to a loose definition of artistic practice and the broad range of ways that artists contribute to society (e.g. education and awareness, entertainment, mental wellness, etc.)
    - **Use and seek plain language in funding processes**. "Grant speak" forces artists to 'other' themselves and presents a huge barrier to artists who need to feel encouraged to "be themselves".
    - **Provide financial support for grant writing**
        - Calgary Arts Development pays for grant writers to write grants for artists and communities, which helps level the playing field for applicants.

- Calgary for the Soundoff Summit (music conference) pays for grant writers for artists and communities with the aim of providing everyone with a fair chance at getting arts grants. Funds for grant-writers should not come out of existing funding budgets.
    - Investigate and consider **alternatives to the current funding model for artists.**
    - **Increase funding for accessibility** for cultural spaces and programming.
  - **360 Reviews across organizations** - A review system designed to gather feedback between parties involved with providing, applying/receiving, managing funding. Community organizations review funders, funders review organizations, team members review both. Capturing this data could shed light on areas of support that are lacking against the way in which decisions are made, offering an opportunity for each party to better understand what they are accountable for, with the aim to restore trust between participants and institutions.
- Solutions and strategies about space:
  - **Incentivize the use of empty storefronts and windows** either to showcase local artists' work or to provide temporary working space for artists.
  - **Require or incentivize developers to dedicate space for arts and culture**. We are seeing condo development but not the development of the creative spaces we also need. The same can be done for shopping malls, many of which have empty spaces that could be prime arts spaces.
  - **Use business spaces that are currently only occupied from 9-5pm for other arts and culture in the evening** (e.g. barbershop by day, venue by night)
  - Encourage more programs like [Options for Homes](#), a **program designed to make home ownership more affordable**. The non profit organisation in partnership with the city helped me get into the property market which I otherwise never would have been able to. Wish models like this are all over the city. Artscape has something similar. Something that is focused towards the artists.
  - Provide **dedicated, subsidized housing** for artists.
- Solutions about programming such as:

- ○ **Create more free or City-subsidized arts programming and increase the capacity for City-funded recreation programs** – these book up early and are very difficult to get into (e.g. adult woodworking programs).
  - **Support and incentivize more arts incubators like SKETCH**. These types of organizations offer artists more stability and flexibility, and are a crucial part of arts infrastructure in the city.
  - **Use community centres as a site for marketing and promoting opportunities in the arts** – where the impact will be focused, local, and more engaging.
  - **Increase opportunities for young people to engage with arts and culture**.
- Solutions about artist supports and City levers such as:
  - **Support and facilitate partnerships** e.g. between smaller and larger arts organizations.
  - **Expand on CARFAC protections / update and expand the scope of standard artist rates**. The City should help with regulating fees and ensuring artists are paid fairly. The City should also look at working with other artist protection groups and guilds (e.g. writers guild).
  - **Provide tax breaks for artists**
  - **Incentivize artist collectives and provide education about their benefits.** Topics could cover what artist-run centres look like? How artists can work together to create interesting and innovative models, etc.
  - **Set up and fund a peer-to-peer mentorship program**, where artists, creatives and cultural workers are also paid to participate as mentors.
  - **Increase opportunities for artist residencies** to nurture the development of artists.
  - **Incentives** for non-artist organisations to hire artists.
  - **Leverage convening and facilitation power** to bring artists together to continue these kinds of conversations. It is exhausting for artists to continue being artists, while trying to dismantle and rebuild broken systems.
  - **Advocate to increase funding per capita again.** Toronto was able to bring it from $17 to $25 in the past. More funding is needed still.
- Solutions and strategies specific to the City of Toronto:
  - **The City needs to address silos between departments.**
    - City departments do not speak to one another as much as they should.

- There is money available in other divisions that should incorporate funding for the arts.
- **Arts and Culture needs a seat at every table and to be involved in every conversation** about departments/ areas outside of the arts, but which affect artists and where artists can help find solutions.
- **The City needs to have an artist on every City trades mission**
- **The City needs to address issues of censorship**, ensuring artists know they will not face any repercussions from the City (e.g. removal of City or TAC funding, etc.) for calls for human rights.
- Ensure **Toronto Employment and Social Services** knows how to support emerging artists and point them in the right direction for opportunities.
- Solutions related to shifting how we approach arts and culture:
  - **Fund and foster a spirit of experimentation** that allows the City, arts organizations, and artists to try new things and see how they work, given many existing models are not working. Support experiments and evidence-based testing. "Really invest in those who want to try things differently and not just feel we need to sustain things because it feels right".
  - **Investigate and support banking solutions for the arts** e.g. ATB arts branches in Alberta, which program performers, commission work, provide bookable space, and have representatives (e.g. mortgage brokers) that understand artist incomes/ finances and can provide support accordingly.
  - **Raise awareness about the transferability of skills developed in the arts** e.g. doing a theatre course can help with public speaking; a dance class can teach participants about their bodies and promote health, etc.
  - **Implement and foster a culture of "social prescription"**. Find ways to encourage health practitioners to encourage patients, clients, etc. to explore arts and culture as a way to support mental health challenges.
  - **Incorporate art and mental health in education**, through school programs that leverage the arts to help students through mental health struggles.
  - **Leveraging AI** to decrease burdens (e.g. administrative) on artists and cultural workers.

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
Technology and the Future of Arts, Culture, and Creative Industries - Thurs Nov 23, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversation for *Technology and The Future of Arts, Culture and Creative Industries*. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Adam Meghji
- Ahmed Sagarwala
- Biju Pappachan
- Brittany Channer
- Christie Wong
- Elli Raynai
- Emily Fitzpatrick
- Karen Vanderborght
- Kestin Cornwall
- Menon Dwarka
- Michael Awad
- Priam Givord
- Robert Bolton
- Tristan Cezair
- Vladimir Kanic

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The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes by participants.

"I worry that the western world is viewing arts through digital platforms, NFTs, etc and lowering the essence of Indigenous art forms. I worry that some of the new artforms coming up will be trendy, and may not stand the test of time. My biggest concern is the digital world being taken over, and a very western lens being put on top of arts and culture as we aim to digitize it."

"Technology has made me think about the way information impacts the ability to access and tech can take down some of the existing barriers."

"I was making digital films. Then I got to a point where I felt like things were very saturated to break-through. So I needed to find another way. So I relied on exploring technology to help me leverage that. It changed my career entirely… VR gave me a niche to start over".

"Everybody should learn HTML and try to better understand machines because they are part of our lives. A lot of times you realize it's not all that. Algorhythms existed thousands ago…we can empower people. With new AI tools it can become a bit easier for people".

"There has to be a rebalancing. The traditional arts are so heavily funded and the media arts are under-funded".

"Having a laptop isn't enough - it's the apps, the software, access to facilities, etc. We need lifetime access and it must be highly subsidized".

"I'm here to identify a lack of leadership in digital arts in Toronto. Complete lack. In the cities digital strategies report (2022), digital culture and digital art was never mentioned. Infrastructure, transformations to digital practices were mentioned within the City bureaucracy. I'm trying to get digital culture on the City's radar".

"I'm now mid-career, and we're not all Drake. Not all artists' work can be super lucrative. We keep on working and show things in big festivals. But showing it doesn't mean getting paid. I still have to rely on grants."

"We're still phasing out analog. Many organizations are not serving either (analog and media arts) well. No matter how you look at the future, digital arts are the future. All the arts are moving to the digital realm".

Participants share several concerns, challenges, and barriers as individuals working in arts and culture in Toronto, including:

- Issues around technology:
    - **Cybersecurity and the threat of cyberattacks**, notably the Toronto Public Library cyberattack and putting sensitive and personal data at risk
    - **A lack of information around the rise of artificial intelligence** – how should artists interact with AI?
- Issue with leadership and policy:
    - Digital technologies and arts are **not prioritized in cultural policy**
- Barriers with tech equipment:
    - **Emerging technologies are expensive and resource-intensive**, making access difficult
    - **The range of tech equipment is broadening**, with some artists wanting older analogue tech and others wanting cutting-edge tech (e.g. cinema packages). Arts hubs and community centres struggle to stay on top of equipment, as there are issues of tech equipment acquisition and upkeep. Having to keep up with both analogue and digital often means doing neither well.
    - **Lack of understanding how to use new tech** – once new tech is made available, artists need to learn how to use it in order to further their drives to continue using it.
    - **Lack of access to physical fabrication labs** – which are very expensive and should be funded by the City for artists and creatives to use.
- Issues around funding:
    - **The disproportionate allocation of TAC funding to traditional arts versus media arts**, and the lumping together of visual arts and media arts
    - **The insecurity of funding** as well as the **insecurity of the business of the arts**
- Barriers with arts and culture in Toronto:
    - **Community, City, and Industry are working in silos**, making spaces, funding, and opportunities complex and difficult to navigate – a feeling of needing to be in the right place at the right time
    - **Limitations due to scarcity mindset**, as opposed to a risk-taking, free-market mindset elsewhere

- **Colleges and universities are not properly creating career pipelines**, leading industry giants like Netflix to create their own training programs
  - **Lack of coordination of who is doing what between the City and the sector**
  - **The demise of human-curation and decline of the critical editorial scene**
- Issues around space:
  - **The availability of space**
  - **The need for a social/professional network to access space**, as it's hard to know where to look for space. You need to know someone to get access to space.
  - **Location of space** is critical to who and how many people will use it
- Issues around information and opportunities:
  - **Identity crisis between pursuing creativity versus viability.** When students leave school, they realize how challenging and expensive it is to create without free equipment and supports. Many pursue different careers soon after.
- Issues around politics and silencing:
  - **Censorship of artists and culture workers in cultural institutions**. Now there is a fear of retaliation over expressions of solidarity.

Participants shared examples of how technology has changed and impacted their practice and work, including:

- Impacting audience and access:
  - **Allowing for remote audiences and online programming**
  - **Increased access for those with accessibility needs** e.g. closed captioning and audio description software.
  - **Technology can help in reaching broader audiences** e.g. small record labels gaining prominence.
- Impacting artist time and priorities:
  - **Tech as extractive of data and time**, the pressure to be on Instagram or Tiktok.
  - **The need for better tech hygiene** around managing time on social media and ensuring physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Impacting creativity and creation:

- **Tech, particularly AI, has reduced some barriers to entry in the arts**, allowing novel interactions with tech that produce co-created works. There are a lot of drag-and-drop tools.
- **An increasing number of hackathons and workshops** to use tech for creativity.

Participants spoke to solutions and strategies they would like to see, including:

- Solutions and strategies about tech:
  - **Residencies to use platforms and programs**
    - **Self-serve spaces with tech equipment** – given the high cost of tech, these would allow people to experiment and experience new technology. **Employ the library model to share tech equipment**.
    - **More media rooms at libraries** – these work really well but they are challenging to book.
    - **Fund libraries with the express intention of expanding media/ makerspaces** with equipment, media tools, studio space, and art supplies.
    - **Support for journalism, particularly arts journalism and the critical editorial scene** which appear to be fading away in the age of AI.
- Solutions and strategies about funding:
  - **Separate TAC funding for media arts and visual arts**
  - **Reallocate funding from large institutions** (e.g. Canadian Opera Company, CanStage, National Ballet, etc.) – these institutions should be able to cover their costs through ticket prices.
  - **Increase funding for the arts, particularly for media arts**
    - **Adjust expectations of funders given rising costs**. Arts institutions cannot do the same or more programming with less funding.
    - **Adopt an investment mindset with the arts** – policy needs to see art as a long-term investment.
    - **Fund grant writing time**, or where this already exists, increase awareness about it.
  - **Conduct an audit of how infrastructure dictates funding.**
  - **Funding should go to disseminating information to communities**, giving them the tools to act on the funding and prioritizing smaller organizations.
  - **Reduce redundancy and obsolescence in TAC funding**
- Solutions and strategies about space:

- **Create spaces for artists and creatives to meet**, come together, create, connect, and network.
  - **Repurpose office spaces and work with landlords to provide space to artists**
  - **Bridge artists collectives with real estate agents**, facilitating artists co-renting space together more easily
- **Require developments to have cultural spaces** – we do not need another Shoppers or Starbucks but do need more cultural spaces
- **Invest in neighbourhood cultural centres** – community spaces that are multifunctional and can support performances (which are very common in Montreal). These can be connected to public libraries, can host film screenings, and exhibit local art.
  - **Establish artist housing**
- **Prioritize providing space**, especially for smaller organizations.
- **Highlight existing public cultural spaces and connect local artists with these spaces**, facilitate neighbourhood cultural expression
- Solutions and strategies about arts and culture organizations:
  - **Consider blockchain organizations**, which combine for-profit business with a parliamentary or other democratic system.
  - **Consider alternative models to arts organization structures**. Look at collective models and make sure to support these alternative models by raising awareness of them (e.g. lack of understanding of how to access banking services as a collective).
  - **Abolish boards** – which are a requirement for certain organizations (such as charities) but they often are not in touch with the operations of the organization and have so much power.
- Solutions and strategies about wider arts and cultural activation:
  - **Incorporate arts and culture in high school education**, allowing opportunities for youth to engage in arts and advocating for STEAM rather than just STEM
  - **Connect students to mentors in arts and culture**
  - **Communicate the importance and value (social, economic, etc.) of arts** – the City has a PR problem when it comes to arts and culture
  - **Foster a curiosity in the arts**
- Solutions and strategies about programs:
  - **Ensure programs are not exclusive of those with different initial tech knowledge**, and not taking for granted that people know how to use the internet

- **Ensure programs have multiple outcomes and can support individuals in different ways**, accounting for their range of knowledge and experiences.
- Solutions and strategies about other artist supports:
    - **More opportunities for artist interaction**, including more conversations such as this community conversation. **There is a real desire for connection**, whether directly for projects and opportunities or for social connection.
    - **Facilitate artist education around intellectual property rights**
    - **Facilitate artist education around organization structures** – what is an artist collective and what forms can they take? (For-profit, non-profit, etc.)
    - **Facilitate artist education on business and marketing**, including how to pitch innovative art in an economic/financially minded way
    - **Facilitate artist education on the transferability of skills** through customized training programs
    - **Super-connectors** – great super-connectors are able to connect artists and creatives to one another and to individuals and groups in other sectors. The City should encourage super-connectors and have a top-down approach of champions at the City-level advocating for individuals and opportunities.
    - **Foster a culture of collaboration and sharing rather than competition.**

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation
The Need for Space - Fri Nov 24, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:

The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the second of two Community Conversations on *The Need for Space*. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Layne Hinton
- Alycia Doering
- Andrew Tay
- Chico Togni
- Farnoosh Talee
- Hima Batavia
- Javid Jah

- Jennie Suddick
- Kendra Fry
- Masani Montague
- Monica Esteves
- Nadine Villasin
- Rebecca Harrison
- Anjuli Solanki
- Nevine Sedki

The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes by participants

"There are lots of artists who have had to either leave the arts or leave the city and so the group of people here today are different from those who might have been here if the arts was a sustainable field for people in Toronto."

"It's frustrating in a city that has so much underused space that artists can't access those spaces"

"Space is disappearing because of development – we can't tell students who are graduating that they will have studio space – I don't know how students can even afford to live here."

"I feel bad complaining because I can buy food and I have shelter, but I can't do the thing I grew up wanting – my art practice."

"Space is changing dramatically. How do we shift the culture? We always think in terms of financial incentives. We should not have vacant space. If you have vacant space, you should be thinking about how to rent it."

"Rethink sharing. Schools are looking to fundraise and have empty space half the time. Why not rent for community events?"

"If not section 37, then what? What comes after section 37? Section 37 was land, time, and leverage. It was recognized at the provincial and federal levels".

"I own a house and am about to open a restaurant – when we applied to rent the space, it was like a bidding war and we had to prove that we would make enough income to pay the rent no matter what... If my husband had to show 20 years of records to show he had a business model, what hope does any young emerging artist have who will never be able to prove income?"

"It's largely racialized communities and artists being displaced from their spaces and having to move back to their parents' place in Brampton and running an art studio out of their garage."

"I would love to co-own a space and run it with others. That would be the dream!"

"The City needs to support Cultural Community Land Trusts"

What is your top concern in the Arts and Culture Sector?

- <u>Space</u>
  - **Lack of affordable performance space**
  - **Precarity of cultural and living space, including leased spaces**– landlords can sell, raise rent, or evict.
  - **Concerns about policy changes**, such as the change from **Section 37** to Community Benefits Charges for developers. What new tools can we use?
  - Creating **spaces that are safe and foster a sense of belonging**
  - **Purpose-built spaces.** Spaces aren't being built or designed with artists in mind at the outset. Lack of large, messy production and creation spaces.
  - **Attracting audiences outside the downtown core**. *"Audiences aren't coming if it's not in the downtown core."*
  - Finding suitable spaces for art practices e.g. large messy space to create
  - **Racialized communities are impacted more than non-racialized communities when it comes to space challenges.**
  - **Ownership -** which is better than renting for some artists and especially for longterm arts organization: less precarious, enables deeper community connections, can put holes in the walls and make significant changes required for arts practices
  - **Making decisions about event capacity** – whether to run a big studio or a big festival or to do a more manageable-sized studio or festival.
  - **Space for storage** (e.g. for materials, props, generators, chairs, combustible materials, kilns, welding equipment, etc.).
  - Adequate ventilation for certain kinds of art-making and production.
  - **Accessing Toronto Public Library spaces**. Now you have to pay for it. "Every City division is trying to monetize space and makes it harder to access".
  - **Bureaucratic processes** that make **street parties** challenging to organize.

<u>Insurance</u>
  - **Insurance is a huge barrier** – it is challenging for artists to get insurance;
    - Many insurance providers won't cover artists
    - Some insurance providers want artists to commit for a year

- **Grants & Funding**
  - **Burdens of applying for grants:**
    - **Feeling compelled to spend time writing grant applications rather than make art.**
    - Having to **defend and justify our art to the bureaucracy**
      - "If you make bread, you don't need to make statements about making bread. After making art for 20 years, I don't need to keep justifying my art."
    - The grant system here is pressuring artists to try to sell themselves in ways they don't know how to e.g. "What's the social impact of your art?" – artists don't alway know how to advocate for themselves and their practice.
  - **Funding cuts and changes:**
    - **Post-COVID cuts** while artists still require support
    - **All funding levels seem to be drying up** e.g. StArt.
    - Changes at Ontario Trillium Foundation related to charitable status.
  - **Risk of getting defunded by an arts council** – this opens artists up to issues of censorship.
  - **A strict granting system**
    - "You have to meet certain requirements and fit into buckets. **You have to put yourself into a box and every few years they change. Other countries' grant systems are more open and wide".**
    - "Non-mainstream" artists face particular challenges navigating and accessing grants
    - Artists who aren't citizens or permanent residents can't apply for grants. "I'm an American living in Canada and paying taxes and yet I cannot apply for these grants"
  - **Limits of eligible expenses**
    - **"Most grants don't allow you to spend on core operational costs.** I couldn't buy furniture because it was a permanent (asset) instead of temporary. We wanted to buy it so we could make it better for the project, but only temporary expenses were permitted."
  - **Mental wellness and balance** - grants, exhibitions, travel, residencies, etc. "It feels like trying to do three hundred different things as an artist"

What are your needs (and your community's needs) when it comes to space?

- **Affordable spaces on transit lines** that artists and audiences can easily reach
  - Need parking at these spaces or they need to be very accessible by the TTC (less than 10 minute walk from a station)
  - "I have to be mindful of when street parking is free so that I put my performances after 6pm so that attendees can park for free. So parking becomes a barrier to my art."
- **Spaces for healing and recovery**
- **Multidisciplinary spaces** – flexible gathering spaces to bring communities together (e.g. It's Okay), which can be inherently healing
- **Community hubs** –to allow for community and collaboration by sharing space and enabling **resource-sharing and mentorship**
- **Safe spaces for artists -** where safety is defined by the people within a space
  - Art spaces, especially institutions, need to be **more friendly and welcoming.**
    - "My space (gallery) is fully accessible, free, and everyone gets a tour about the exhibition – you don't see this in other galleries because you're not a buyer, familiar, or important. Being kind and individually caring makes a space safe and welcoming. And I'm a commercial gallery."
  - **Artistic and political censorship makes places unsafe**
    - Censorship at major cultural institutions is an increasing problem. "It happens over and over. You're seeing communities boycotting spaces… What is happening in the arts right now in Toronto and Canada is sobering and it's affecting my career, if minority groups are censored".
    - Art and activism are inherently and deeply connected.
    - "Artists are also not just artists – some work 9-5 jobs and then also work in the arts. If they lose their 9-5 for speaking about human rights, then their art is also jeopardized".
  - **Censorship is a huge issue**
    - Murals can be so muted, lacking any political messages. Anything critical is not permitted or funded.
    - "Very challenging to get public art funded without it being sanitized. We just don't see much political art."

What is your ideal scenario for having or using space?

- **Public space**

- Not having to apply for grants from City Hall for the space if it's City space.
- **Cooperative space** and co-ownership. "A large space is difficult to maintain individually but sharing that space with other artists is a good solution".
    - The Plum (Dufferin and St Clair) is a good example of this – 15 artists renting one space and it's an artist-run centre. If they owned it as a large group, maybe as a land trust, this is an amazing example!
    - **The City should facilitate a matching program** for artists to find one another and collectively rent/own a space.
- No precarity of renewing grants to try to gather operational funds for space. There needs to be operational funding for emerging groups.
    - "Trying not to rely on grants. It's nice to have but not good to depend on. When there's no grant, there's nothing."
- Spaces being used all the time
    - Daytime economy + nighttime economy = spaces not going unused when there is real need for space.

What are some examples of successful cultural spaces or models that you've seen work either in Toronto or elsewhere?

Models:

- **Community Land Trusts**
    - "We need an entity that can acquire space that is in trust and not on the market ever" e.g. 221A in Vancouver and Vancouver's Chinatown
- **Cultural hubs designated for cultural use** that use **collective decision making** on how space is used.
- **Theatres are effectively larger arts space organizations** - they share space, partner, co-produce, rent. Many types of relationships in order to cover costs. "Theatres can't afford to program year-round so they partner".
- **City-owned space for nominal leases.** Some exist, but more are needed. "There are still major operational and capital costs, accessibility costs, utilities, cleaning, etc. and these are still expensive but removing monthly rent is a different ballgame".
- **Adaptive reuse of old buildings, including faith spaces** which are very conducive to the arts.
- **Using schools for cultural space during off-hours** (they also need new revenue).

Examples:

- **Community Land Trusts**
  - **[Artist Space Trust (Northern California)](#)** – a true CLT. Works with aging artists to care for them in their final years. Facilitates estate transfers, using bequests to acquire artist housing. Housing is leased at affordable rates to low-income BIPOC artists.
  - **[Creative Land Trust (London, UK)](#)** – a sector-based land trust (not a CLT) initiated by the City of London and philanthropists. Holds land through long-term leases, as well as freehold ownership, for the purpose of supporting London's many studio providers. Leases to studio providers, such as ACME, who rent to artists are affordable rates.
  - **[Community Arts Stabilization Trust (San Francisco)](#)** – acquires land then works with nonprofits to build capacity until they are ready to transition ownership in a rent-to-own program. Not a CLT but a unique type of land trust.
  - **[Community and Cultural Spaces Trust (CCST) Toronto](#)** – New cultural land trust born out of the [Build a Better Bloor Dufferin](#) activist group fighting for affordable housing and community space. Holds financial assets to be used to support non-profit arts space in Ward 9.
  - **Parkdale**, as a neighbourhood, has been very successful in fighting gentrification and displacement. One of the only areas of the City that has successfully organized against eviction, displacement, and protected small business, neighbourhood identity, affordable housing, community space, artists space.
    - **[PNLT (Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust)](#) and Parkdale People's Economy** are leading this work.
    - "What could the City do to better support? Parkdale People's Economy needs funding for staff - that's how the City could support it. The City can provide better incentives and facilitate".
- **401 Richmond -** Originally a live-work space with market and below-market rates. It works because the Ziegler family pays for it (i.e. the owner absorbed the taxes to protect the tenants). A change in tax rules helped 401 Richmond.
- **Long Winter** – exchange program thinking about DIY Spaces in Europe – giving space cheap or free for 1-3 years with the intention of "being a springboard for users, to help them build up, professionalize".
- **Akin** - a great model but a temporary solution as some developers decide they can no longer afford it, and can stop providing space which leaves artists scrambling. "Temporary solutions are better than nothing but not enough".
- **STEPS** - Section 37 space that is shared with organizations.
- **Dedicated Arts Spaces**

- Yorkdale – ArtStarts
- TMU – Eaton Centre exhibition
- Cloverdale – Nuit Blanche
- Commerce Court
- **Artscape Launchpad** – provided artists with access to tools and equipment.
- **STEPS Reclaim residencies** – upscale materials to new art pieces, work with developers to collect materials.
- **Artists Materials Fund** (Suzanne Cart) – recycle sets and art materials and make these materials accessible to low-income artists. They have a space at Evergreen Brick Works but need a bigger space.
- **The Bentway** – great local programming and activation, thinking outside the box.
- **Stackt Market** (if it was used for nonprofit purposes) – temporary spaces, pop-ups
- **Dream in High Park** – amazing program and use of space, but the city has made it difficult with the High Park Accessibility Plan and significant bureaucracy to propose alternative solutions to the ban on car access (e.g. using golf carts for accessibility).
- Flick the Switch Collective
- **Art Spin** – got short-term space because of persistence in swaying developers
- **Crow's Theatre -** "BUT we need a system and a formula and can't try to recreate the Crow's Theatre model on a one-time basis over and over again".
- **Clark Centre for the Arts**
- **Cedar Reach**

What are some solutions you think the City should pursue?

- **Leverage and support** the amazing collaborative network of those working on **Community Land Trusts.**
- **Facilitate access to unused and underused spaces for artists**
  - **Make connections between artists and developers and support the development of those partnerships**. Artists often lack the relationships, capacity and experience to do this.
  - **The City should acquire empty retail spaces (even temporarily) and make them arts spaces**. There's currently no incentive for landlords to do this.
  - The City should **create a directory of spaces** and play a matchmaker role to those spaces, even for pop-up events, rehearsals, etc.

- **Create a match-making program to match artists with each other and with spaces**
  - Push developer companies to do the matchmaking or pay for it. (Note: different views were shared about whether developers should do the matchmaking or just provide space/ fund artists).
- **Assist artists with creating business plans to rent spaces.**
- **Incentivize or require the development community to provide cultural space** – if they want to define a project, they have to give space to artists.
  - Consider zoning benefits - e.g. less parking in exchange for having artists use the space.
- **Reduce bureaucracy and cut red tape** for applications, permits, etc.
- Provide **rent subsidies**
- **Increase funding for libraries**, specifically for **renting tech and arts equipment**
- **Reduce administrative burden on artists and arts organizations to work with City departments e.g.** Art Spin wanted to do a project in a public pool and had to approach and liaise with multiple city departments - Parks, Forestry, & Recreation. "There should be a person, role or department to do this match-making and facilitation".
- Create a **grant specifically for artist living expenses**

Culture Plan Engagement Community Conversation

Disability Arts - Thurs Dec 7, 2023

Key Takeaways

Context:
The City of Toronto's Economic Development and Culture Division, in partnership with Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, is developing a new culture plan, the *Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector* (working title), to guide the sector at a critical time to recover and rebuild following the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Action Plan will identify recommendations to address ongoing challenges and set an ambitious vision for the culture sector over the next ten years. The City of Toronto has engaged Monumental to engage a broad spectrum of people from the arts and culture, cultural heritage and creative industries, as well as adjacent industries and the general public. Through Community Conversations, a survey, virtual events, and other engagement initiatives Monumental is creating opportunities for people to share their challenges, needs and hopes regarding culture in Toronto.

These notes reflect key themes and ideas shared during the Community Conversations on *Disability Arts*. We have intentionally done our best to capture comments as they were shared, versus edit or paraphrase them.

These notes will help inform the development of the draft recommendations. Monumental will also share all raw notes from each session with the City.

Attended by:

- Adam Cohoon
- Angela Sun
- Ben Wood
- Courage

- Danielle Hyde
- Dev Ramsawakh
- Hanan Hazime
- Jack Hawk
- Jess Lea Flemming

- Maryam Hafzirad
- Michael McNeely
- Peter Owusu-Ansah
- Sophie Lyons

The following quotes were shared during this Community Conversation, and capture some of the key concerns and hopes by participants.

"Disabled artists play a fundamental role as caretakers in Toronto's arts ecosystem. Supporting disability justice supports everyone in flourishing".

"Almost 30% of all Canadians have a disability of some kind, and that is increasing significantly. The question is about why any public funds are spent without considering accessibility at the granting stage. Every project funded should be asked who the people are making it available to, and should be assessed by a disabled person."

"...the Culture Plan cannot just focus on the curation of artistic projects or the delivery of resources to larger artistic organizations but that artists ESPECIALLY DISABLED - NEED HELP TO LIVE. Any sort of meaningful Culture Plan needs to be holistic and think about who is making the art and how we can create conditions where they are able to make the art. Artists are human beings and citizens, not just producers of art. You cannot give a couple more million to a theatre organization or festival. You need to offer more funding and

*financial/ medical/ housing resources directly to artists...The City of
Toronto culture plan needs to include how it plans to take care of
artists AS A WHOLE. We are sick, we are marginalized. We cannot
make art if we are trying to survive".*

*"It's rare for the disability arts community to come together to speak
broadly about the state of our sector...We don't have a Toronto
Disability Arts Alliance the way that other arts disciplines do, so
there's no one to facilitate us to have these regular gatherings. It's so
hard for us to figure out for ourselves what our priorities are...There is
no dedicated group to advocate for disabled artists."*

*"I want virtual technology activities brought to me. I realized during
the pandemic, I had more spoons than knives. Could do opportunities
from the safety of my own home, with virtual technology to connect to
culture".*
> [Note: Spoon theory is a way to illustrate the energy limitations
> that can result from living with a chronic illness. Using spoons as a
> unit of energy, spoon theory estimates how many spoons
> individual tasks require. It also helps people coping with chronic
> illnesses visualize their total daily energy].

*"It's important for able-bodied people and hearing people to do more.
We [Deaf people] are learning from them, but I think it should go the
other way as well. We are just as creative, and just as able."*

*"It's hard to engage creatively when you're living in survival mode
because of poverty. Because of the 'crip tax"*
> [Note: Crip tax refers to the hidden costs of living with a disability].

*"I cannot emphasize how important having a stable income is to our
experiences. I believe it is something the City of Toronto can advocate*

for. I am so tired because I work multiple jobs, and I have the privilege of working multiple jobs but it is literally killing me and making it hard for me to manage my chronic illness…. I need to have my basic needs met. How can we thrive when we're just surviving? I am being paid so much less than I am worth, and less than my industry standards. Even more harmful to me because I have more needs as a disabled person. I have medical appointments. I have particular therapeutic needs. I have family members with injuries or disabilities that need to be taken care of. This is so achievable, looking at what we were able to do with CERB [Canada's Emergency Response Benefit]… The City of Toronto and other government systems need to work on this".

"To be an artist, someone engaged in the disability community, I would fight to always get myself out whether booking rides, booking attendant care, booking it all. Things work better virtually. As a City, we've got to realize that most of the people - even the people without disabilities - that don't understand the concept of spoons, may want more culture on their smart screens or smart TVs or apps. And that they can digest at home. But Toronto is still this FOMO-powered city. They want you to go out to these cultural events. And culture is still thought of as almost ephemeral, and you have to go out to watch Toronto sports teams… I can usually stream all those games. They aren't losing audiences because they are adding streaming options. If anything, they are more popular. Not saying that all the events have to be live streamed, but maybe I'm able to get a cheaper discount for the play that ran last week, maybe I'm able to enjoy it from home. Or maybe I can enjoy the TSO from my home. Knowing that the arts culture is going to be an evening, an after-dark based thing, then having more virtual options… maybe I want something nicer to watch than re-runs of what's on the streaming big services. Maybe I want something uniquely Toronto".

"These works and projects are going to the same groups of people. I'm consistently seeing the same able-bodied representation. There's consultation with Deaf or visually impaired people but they're not leading a project, not the curator, not designing or executing that artwork. "

"I'm an art critic first and foremost because I'm fighting for a way for us to experience art... Many times people don't realize disabled people can be art intuitors, not just art creators. "

"Artists are leaving the community everywhere. What will happen to our 'arts industry' when there is no one left to make the art? We are at a crisis point after the pandemic... how will the Culture Plan address this?"

"How are we being and seeing the world, and ensuring we are all welcomed, safe and elevated in the spaces that we make but also those who will come after us?"

Here are some examples of themes and principles we heard

- Basic needs must be covered before artists can create art.
- Access is always contextual - needs shift depending on the venue, location, time of day, time of year, etc.
- Disability needs evolve as awareness and education evolves. The conversation needs to keep going and be adaptive.
- Disabled people require more time than able-bodied people to engage in activities and work.
- Design for the margins and everyone gets included (make things accessible and people beyond the Deaf, Mad and disabled community will benefit).

Participants shared several concerns and challenges facing Deaf, Mad and disabled artists in Toronto including:

Basic Needs and Social Support
- **Housing support** is a fundamental prerequisite in order for artists to be able to create art.
- Universal **mental health care** is needed.
- More **flexibility with ODSP** is needed - the program is limited and can impact disabled artists negatively e.g. if disabled artists earn even $10 more than allowed, their access benefits are jeopardized; they are limited in taking on additional work
- "**CERB … has been inaccessible for IBPOC Deaf artists**"
- "Give us grocery bursaries, housing susbsidies, cover our medical supplies and then maybe you can throw another million to Mirvish or AGO but only contingent upon them hiring IBPOC, Queer, Deaf, Disabled artists"

Invisible labour and costs

- **Organizing accessible logistics to attend in-person events is taxing** e.g. transportation, accessibility supports, etc. The burden to coordinate this also falls on the disabled people. Virtual platforms are preferred for many disabled individuals for many reasons, such as the mental and physical labour involved, cost of booking accessible transportation, etc. **Not enough people understand "spoon theory"** when designing cultural events. [Note: Spoon Theory is the idea that people living with chronic illness, chronic pain and disability have limited energy resources and expend more energy on everyday tasks than people without illness and disability. In spoon theory, spoons represent both the physical and mental load required to complete tasks].

- While funding applications may include accessibility line items, the amount of time and energy invested into coordinating accessibility measures often goes unrecognized.
- **"Crip Tax"** is a burden - **the additional cost of living with disabilities** (e.g. pre-cut food, food delivery, etc.)

Tokenism and Limited Opportunities in Arts & Culture
- **Work environments are often ableist in design**. For instance, a tech booth that is not designed with accessibility in mind prevents people with disabilities from taking on those roles.
- **Disabled critics are important,** under-represented and face barriers to critiquing art and advocating for accessible art. They deserve to review and interpret art on their own terms, which is challenging when art is not made accessibly.
- The Deaf, Mad and disabled community is **under-represented from power and leadership positions** and there is a **lack of pathways and mentorship into these opportunities**. Many opportunities require a level of experience / caliber that make applying challenging.
- Art by disability artists is often **perceived as "charity work", "not real" and art therapy**
- Disability artists are often consulted but **rarely given central roles** developing, leading and creatively executing artwork
- Artists are often **required to have credentials that are unattainable** because of the ableist ways in which they are assessed
- Some disabled artists have to **'sell' their identities** and intersectionalities in order for people to be considered
- The **glass cliff phenomenon** exists in that people facing multiple barriers get pushed into leadership roles without

being given the opportunity to gain experience and develop their leadership skills. They are **set up to fail or burnout**.
- When hired, disabled artists are often **removed from roles for sharing their perspectives** and speaking their truths.
- Finding **accessible opportunities for acting** is challenging

Missing from the Table
- Artists from Deaf, Mad and disabled communities invest significant **time and energy negotiating and renegotiating timelines, budget, pay schedules, access needs**, etc.
- **Expectations of delivering results quickly** is not accessible by design. The disability community has been a leader in terms of **slowing down and adapting for everyone's benefit**. (If we design for the margins, everyone gets included and other communities benefit too).
- **Disability art should be in large public spaces** e.g. on big stages, in big galleries versus small, independent spaces.
- By not having multiple sessions to discuss disability needs (as a distinct group, and in a mixed setting with other non-disabled artists), many voices are not being heard and included. **Additional engagement is important.**

Universalization of Disability Access Needs
- **Not all spaces or groups have the same resources or abilities.** Not all are held to the same standard. It is difficult for grassroots, marginalized groups to provide different spaces, events or programs for multiply marginalized disabled folks.
- "As a person of colour with a disability, I find sometimes rooms like disability rooms are very uncomfortable because a lot of white disabled folks conflate their experience with my experience… I'm both racialized and disabled and obviously

there are some experiences that are intersecting, but they're not the same things".

Ableist Timelines, Expectations and Event Design

- The expectation of **doing things quicker and faster within a tighter timeframe is fundamentally ableist** at its core and does not allow for access needs, a safe work environment, and appropriate and proper recognition of artists who are differently abled. Standardization and assumptions make it challenging for disabled people to be fairly included.
- When public art installations require quick execution, they only allow for certain kinds of artists. "The barrier is structured into the project itself".
- Participating in engagements and consultations of this nature are important, and they require labour.

Erasure and Standardization

- Disabled people are **under-represented in leadership and positions with creative control** (e.g. public art projects).
- **Erasure** results when disabled artists are not involved in the rendering of public spaces including **under-representation and commemoration in public artwork** (because they are at the decision-making table)

Discrimination Within the Disability arts Community

- Spaces designed for the disability community are not always safe for all attendees. Within the disability arts community, many people experience racism, transphobia, queerphobia and other forms of discrimination and harm.
- Universalizing disability access neglects diverse needs and challenges faced by marginalized groups.

Not all disabled folks identify as disabled
- **Not everyone has the same *ability* to identify with disability.** Some racialized people live with intergenerational trauma as descendents of indentured labour, enslavement, etc.. There is an undervaluing within the medical system in which health issues are often minimized and internalized, leading to disabled folks from those communities not believing their own disabled experiences. "**When we focus on the identity label, we're still leaving a lot of folks out** of the conversation"

Barriers to Funding
- **Funding is often inadequate to meet accessibility needs**.
- TAC funding is not flexible enough to meet unforeseen access needs (e.g. sometimes the costs are only known after registration for a funded program / project is complete and participants have communicated their access needs).
- Getting adequate funding to support a collaborative project with artists who are multiply barriered is challenging.
- Limited funding results in competition for resources and opportunities, and has negative consequences on the community at large - particularly racialized people, who used to work more harmoniously.

Censorship and Safety
- There is no formal **process for filing complaints of harassment** for safety issues, which impacts all artists, and particularly disabled artists.
- There is no flexibility in funding for **managing safety issues**, which cannot be anticipated in advance and put disabled communities at further risk.

- There is an interconnectedness between disability justice and Palestinian justice. Disabled artists are being censored from speaking out about genocide in Palestine, when working to raise awareness or create art. It has been traumatic for people to witness the genocide, and also traumatic not being able to discuss it publicly.

Legal Concerns

- "Under the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) and the Accessibility Canada Act, **we will increasingly see legal consequences** for folks who fail to consider accessibility in their work moving forward into the future and even already under our existing human rights laws, there is potential liability that all artists, not just disabled artists, should be aware of"
- **Accessibility statements are important** and should be required for any artists showing their artwork through a formal channel
- Non-disabled artists should have accessibility statements explaining why people with disabilities were excluded

Participants shared ideas and needs including:

- Inviting Deaf, Mad and disabled people to participate in the design of programs, policies, etc. so that **accessibility is baked into the pie intentionally**.
- Supports for **basic, fundamental human needs** e.g. affordable and accessible housing, health supports, income supports (e.g. UBI).
- Resources invested into **advocacy for Deaf, Mad and disabled artists**, particularly because of the mental, physical and access barriers that many face advocating for themselves.
- **Ongoing, meaningful consultation** of disabled artists by funders and other decision-makers - especially when disabled people are implicated in the decisions Made

- A mechanism for complaining about safety concerns
- Stronger adherence to legal **accessibility requirements**
- **Meaningful employment and creative opportunities** that are designed with disabled applicants in mind
- **Representation** of Deaf, Mad and disabled artists in leadership positions, public art, monuments, etc.
- Greater **flexibility in funding** to meet full access needs and unforeseen access costs

Participant Reflections share by email after the session ended:
- Accessibility measures can enhance creative work - they are often perceived as an added piece of labour for organizers, producers and other collaborators however they also provide tremendous creative opportunities for deepened expression e.g. a video with captioning can choose colour, movement, font, and other effects to emphasize the action / dialogue taking place on screen. Accessibility measures can be reframed from a hindrance to an entirely new palette with which to paint.

_____

Shay Erlich - disability artist and facilitator for this Community Conversation - shared this poem about the event after it concluded.

Can a Zoom Call Change the World?

Invited Protectors and Caregivers
Thank you for your courage and vulnerability

There is a sacred duty in caring
Future gazing while cradling the past

Looking around the corner
To a room full of noses pressed against the glass
Asking us to help them find the entrance

Taking hammers to the walls themselves
No structure can contain what we hold
Every creation requires us to conceive anew
What it means to have space
What it means to be alive

No more cutting off parts of who we are
Wholeness beyond labels
We rise, thrive, and twinkle
Brilliant stars
Look up and notice

We have been here all along

Appendix B: Summary of
Key Findings from Town Hall

APPENDIX B: Culture Plan Virtual Town Halls Summary

Prepared by Monumental

Overview

On February 15 and February 22, 2024 Monumental, in collaboration with the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council hosted two virtual town halls. The purpose of the town halls were to:

- Share information and answer questions about the Culture Plan and the culture planning process (including what we heard to date);
- Invite attendees to provide input on the culture plan;
- Connect with other people on the calls and learn about different experiences in the city.

The Presentation Slides are included on the [project website](.).

Who Engaged

Approximately 900 people RSVPd and 500 participants attended the virtual town halls. This included a mix of artists, creatives and cultural workers and members of the general public.

Facilitated Discussions

Team members from Monumental, the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council staff facilitated small breakouts. Participants were asked two main prompt questions:

1. What's on your mind regarding culture in Toronto?
   (What's hard or not working well? What's keeping you up at night?)

2. Let's dream about Toronto's future. Imagine the year is 2034. If the culture plan addresses your challenges, what would Toronto look like in 10 years?

After the town halls, the facilitators debriefed and shared detailed notes from their discussions. These notes have been interpreted and summarized by themes below.

What We heard

Below are the key messages from the town halls, categorized by the following:
- Themes (including challenges and solutions)
- A vision for 2034

Themes

The topline: **It's a struggle to survive, let alone thrive.**

" We're tired of trying to survive."

"We need basic survival and beauty / imagination - they are both required."

The main takeaway from the town halls was that the basic survival needs of artists, cultural workers and creatives needs to be addressed as part of this culture plan.

What we heard from artists, creatives and cultural workers:
- On an individual level, it is a struggle for artists, creatives and cultural workers to survive, let alone pursue creative and artistic practices. Many of the discussions centered on the need to prioritize basic survival needs for individuals, such as healthcare, mental health resources, stable and competitive wages (or universal basic income), and affordable places to live and work.
- The sector as a whole is also struggling to survive, with major institutions, festivals and organizations fighting to keep their doors open. Some suggested this worsened since COVID-19.
- Universal basic income was raised in many discussions as a solution to deal with the increased cost of living in the city.

"If artists cannot live and sustain themselves in this city, they will leave."

"Poverty is on my mind. I'm frustrated it's normalized that so many artists continue to subsidize their work...We have a unicorn apartment in the city. If it goes, I don't know how our organization will continue."

"We are never NOT working – working other jobs to afford doing our art jobs. These are "passion industries"."

"People should be valued. We shouldn't work for free. This shouldn't be a 'labour of love.'"

General Public:
- In general, it is difficult to live in this city and afford or find time to participate in arts and culture. To support a thriving arts and culture sector, participants recommended

discounted or free programming that is easily accessible for diverse members of the public.
- In addition, there needs to be more opportunities to participate. This includes virtual and hybrid program offerings as well as decentralizing arts and culture events and programs across the city (in different neighbourhoods and/or transit accessible).

"People don't have time to sit down to a family dinner let alone regularly attend music or dance performances" - Town Hall Participant

While there was grief and exhaustion in many of the breakout groups as people shared their struggles and cynicism, many shared a sense of optimism for gathering together and providing input on the culture plan.

"Attending something like this gives me great hope and optimism"

In addition to the topline takeaway above, below is a high-level summary of key challenges and some specific solutions or ideas recommended in the town halls. Please note, that while the content of what we heard is categorized by themes, there is overlap between all of them.

1. Equity and Access

We need an equity lens, not equity policy… We need an equity lens on everything.

The importance of ensuring equity and accessible lenses throughout the plan was emphasized, as the needs of equity deserving communities should be prioritized. Specific challenges identified are included below:
- **Representation:** There is a **lack of representation and recognition** of equity deserving arts and cultural workers e.g. Indigenous, Black, racialized and Deaf, Mad and disabled folks. While there were discussions on the need for increased representation, there were also calls to ensure this is done in a meaningful and authentic way, to avoid **tokenism** and understand **intersectional identities**..
- **Equitable distribution of funding:** There are inequalities in funding especially with regards to "anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism." There were references to the amount of funding that is allocated to major institutions, located in the downtown core and serving white and upper-middle class audiences. There were calls to decentralize funding - "to allocate more funding to grassroots initiatives, and at the very least, make space for grassroots organizations within larger institutions."
- **Accessibility:** Existing supports for Deaf, Mad and disabled communities - even with ODSP and housing supports - are inadequate. Artists from these communities are living on the absolute margins and can barely make ends meet. There are real concerns that the city doesn't understand their needs. Some specific challenges include:

- Government buildings and cultural facilities are often not fully accessible;
- Not everyone is able or feels comfortable going to in-person events. There were requests to incorporate more hybrid options. During lockdowns, galleries and institutions provided many virtual programming opportunities, which have not been maintained since reopenings.

Specific solutions/ideas identified include:
- Establish platforms and resources to amplify underrepresented voices in the arts community
- Prioritize equitable funding processes "based on artistic merit rather than social cachet"
- Promote pay equity for marginalized artists
- Understand and integrate accessibility standards that are up to date and aligned with ends of community
- Increase funding for Deaf, Mad and disabled artists and supports (including in-house ASL and other interpreters at the City of Toronto)

"I want to be able to enjoy local arts and culture from my home."

"Being Black is not a monolith."

"Art by Indigenous artists is not always the same as what people think of as Indigenous Arts …We've been stereotyped, slotted in this weird place where we are pigeonholed as 'tourist' art"

"Toronto needs a deaf cultural centre where ASL poetry, Deaf performance, Deaf art can all be shared and celebrated, where Deaf artists can foster connection and deaf youth can get involved."

2. Space availability and affordability

Many participants expressed concerns about the lack of available and affordable spaces for working, collaborating, building community and performing. Specific challenges identified include:

- **There are limited affordable housing options** in the city, and many artists, creatives and cultural workers are moving out of Toronto because of this. This is also tied to the urgent need for a living wage for artists and cultural workers. The affordable housing crisis is also impacting everyone in our city, and there is less spending budget for arts and culture for the general public.

    "I had to leave the city during COVID and thought I would be able to move back but it's hard."

- **Arts and cultural spaces are not dispersed throughout the city**. They are primarily located within the downtown area and are not easily accessible via transit, for many

people living outside the core. The cultural spaces that do exist outside the downtown core, are at risk of being lost (due to high costs, displacement, etc.)

"We in Scarborough are always left out."

"If we can address transportation issues, we can address access to culture (like London!). Toronto is a great city, there are places and opportunities but people can't get to them."

- **Cultural space is at risk** of being lost as artists are being displaced and galleries, venues etc. are closing down. Participants mentioned the disappearance of cheap studios and venues and "the city being taken over by developers" as major concerns. Protection of existing spaces, including **public space** (such as Ontario Place), should be a priority. People who are cautious of indoor cultural offerings (due to health and safety risks) have few outdoor spaces to experience arts and culture.

"Art galleries that rent space are subject to eviction -we developed this whole neighborhood with culture and we don't benefit"

"Cultural infrastructure hasn't improved much over the past few decades...We need enhanced public spaces to come together to celebrate, grieve, meet."

- **Unwelcoming spaces:** In addition to the need to protect and build new cultural spaces, there are also calls to make these spaces more inclusive, accessible and welcoming. For instance, we heard that museums and art institutions are often inaccessible and unwelcoming for many people.

Specific solutions/ideas identified include:
- **Explore alternative spaces and policy solutions:**
  - Partner with developers and landowners to repurpose underutilized buildings (such as offices) into affordable workspaces and rehearsal spaces.
  - Implement temporary cultural uses in laneways to provide more affordable spaces for artists.
  - Explore community land trusts and co-op models to ensure artists have stable and affordable spaces to work in. Learn from existing land trusts and co-ops.

"Office buildings are seeing a huge decrease in occupancy, can we use some of these spaces for community and arts buildings?"

- **Decentralize arts and cultural spaces**, ensuring there are opportunities to engage across the city . There was a suggestion to create "cultural districts" across the city to ensure accessibility and representation in all neighborhoods.
- **Invest in public infrastructure:**

- Retrofit unused and underused city-owned spaces into cultural and community spaces, and/or open up existing City-owned venues and galleries.
- Consider incorporating arts and cultural activities within public libraries and community centres.
- Improve transportation in the city.
- Invest in public art and public spaces that can host events and festivals.

3. Funding supports:

Specifically, we heard that funding is inadequate, inaccessible and inequitable:

- **Funding is inadequate:** Participants highlighted the need for more funding and support. As one participant put it *"There's not nearly enough money."*.
- **Funding is inaccessible:** Participants expressed frustration with the current funding system, including restrictive granting programs and the need for more operational and project funding. Some indicated that they don't even know how to access funding.
- **Funding is inequitable:** There were specific concerns about the lack of resources and support for marginalized artists, such as those who are poor, disabled, living with mental illness, etc. and the inequity of how funding is distributed to larger institutions that do not adequately serve a diverse community (See Theme 1: Equity and Access above).
- **Everyone is impacted:** Artists, cultural workers, creatives and audiences are negatively impacted by the lack of funding. Audiences often cannot afford to attend arts and cultural events and programs. We heard this is specifically the case for equity deserving communities and youth.

Because of the proximity to Budget announcements, there were many participants who spoke to arts and culture funding in relation to the rest of the City's budget, with many referencing the Toronto Police Services budget. Specifically, there was much discussion of the need to better advocate for the value of arts and culture (and to showcase the impact), so that the City (and other levels of government) properly invest in the esctor.

In addition to these challenges to funding, there were some positive comments about how funding is administered at the Toronto Arts Council (TAC):

> *"I Appreciate TAC's work. The funding is administered with so much integrity. So much of the art world doesn't work that way – so much is unpredictable, competitive, about being a star. Everyone should have access. TAC is helping so much. It feels accessible. It feels possible."*

> *"We need a major arts funding increase to the TAC. We are furious that this was ignored."*

Specific solutions/ideas identified include:

- Review the funding and granting system, and simplify the process, to make it more accessible and less burdensome for artists and organizations to apply.
- Prioritize resources and support for marginalized artists, including those who are poor, disabled, or living with mental illness.
- Provide discounted/free access to cultural institutions for equity deserving communities.

4. Advocacy and Promotions

As mentioned above, many participants were disappointed by the limited increase in funding for arts and culture within the City's budget. Many breakout groups discussed the "inadequate" increase and determined that "art and culture has a PR problem in this city." There is little awareness in the public about the incredible impact arts and culture has on our wellbeing, communities, and GDP.

"If we can't value arts and culture, we aren't going to get the funding, or supports."

One participant shared their experience working with a coalition of 100+ artist groups to petition the city for a Beautiful City Billboard Tax approximately 15 year sago, with the aim of taxing advertising agencies and reinjecting those revenues into local arts and culture. They highlighted the "collective power" that helped to serve the cause, and there was an overarching positive feeling of being able to have a say and power in a major policy change. They share that this kind of collective energy and momentum has dissipated since then, in part because artists and cultural workers are exhausted and struggling to survive. Many do not have that level of energy to put into advocacy.

You can't just put it on us to advocate more – we're doing as much as we can – we are so tired.

Participants also shared that the lack of value and advocacy for arts and culture is connected to low visibility and "how complex and how fragmented arts and culture may feel in the city, especially if you're new to it...It's hard to know where to go to pursue things, access resources, get training, etc."

With NOW magazine and other small publications gone, it's too difficult to find out what's going on.

Specific Ideas/Solutions identified include:
- A centralized person/organization to create a database / website to coordinate promotions and information sharing "in a seamless way so it doesn't feel like we have to navigate several different institutions to find services."
- Collect data and share the impact of arts and culture, including and beyond economic impact (health and wellness, liveability, community, etc.)

5. Connection and Community

We heard the need for broader and more meaningful connection and community to fight increased loneliness and social isolation, support broad advocacy efforts within the city, and support one another as artists and cultural workers (through networking, training, mentorship opportunities that are both formal and informal).

"Social isolation is far worse for people who work at home like artists...We need an in-person outlet, spaces for gathering, networking, and collaboration."

"We have lost the ability to build community – to be in community. We are alone so much of the time."

Specific ideas identified include:
- Develop more formal and informal opportunities for mentorship and training, etc.
- Establish free and accessible cultural and community spaces where communities can congregate, share, and co-create. This can be in traditional and nontraditional settings like bars, coffee shops, music venues etc.
- Break down silos within cultural groups and encourage collaboration among artists and arts organizations.

"When there's no place to unify, it becomes tricky to build community."

6. Collaborating with the City and Toronto Arts Council

"If we need to think beyond the budget and funding increases, then we have to look at the opportunity for the City to collaborate with other services.
But is there the political will to make this happen?"

There was a lot of discussion about how the City departments and Toronto Arts Council can better collaborate to ensure that the culture plan is actually given the attention it deserves and to ensure actions outlined in it are implemented.

Many participants spoke to the need for City departments to work together and break down internal silos in order to better respond to the community. This includes the needs to revamp city processes such as parks permits, vendor licenses, insurance requirements, etc. One non-profit organization based in Scarborough helped illustrate the lack of communication internally - the Program Director indicated that their project proposal received funding from the City (from Economic Development and Culture) and then their by-law application was rejected by the City (the City's by-law office). This example of how the different divisions struggle to collaborate negatively impacts small organizations, who often have little time and resources to invest in applying for grants.

Additionally, there were calls to ensure that the voices of artists and cultural workers are not only heard but also actively included in decision-making processes within the City of Toronto. In General, there were requests for greater transparency in how the City engages with the public and makes decisions.

"The City needs to help us – to make it easier for us to do what we need to do."

Specific ideas identified include:
- Set up committees or working groups composed of artists, cultural workers, creatives to support decision making efforts and policy development - both cultural policy and policy in other departments that could benefit from creative thinkers.

Participants Also Shared

These following comments were also mentioned in the sessions, yet not as prevalent as the themes above:

Defining Culture in the plan

There were a few questions about how the City is defining 'culture.' Following comments are included below:
- The arts scene is too "Eurocentric" in Toronto.
- Culture means more than just the arts, and includes food, fashion, and general creative expressions. Some artistic genres don't feel as represented such as poetry and literature.
- How will the various disciplines, fields and industries that make up 'culture' be responded to in the culture plan? How will the City strike a balance between a a cohesive high-level vision while bringing in nuance and specificity for the different groups implicated to respond to the divergent needs of the various sectors.
- Several participants alluded to the previous directions outlined in the last culture plan (2011-2021). They emphasized the need to progress beyond the 'creative city' or Richard Florida era, pointing out the correlation of that approach with increased gentrification and displacement.
- The need to ensure this culture plan is a living document and that city officials continue to engage with the culture sector and the general public.

"Will the culture plan be a living doc?
How do people feed into it in the years ahead? Things change!"

Embrace new technologies

The arts and cultural industry is evolving quickly. We need to embrace new technologies (like AR and immersive experiences) to broaden access and redefine traditional art forms.

Create a Space for Risk and Innovation

- Cultivate an environment where artists feel safe to take risks, knowing they will be supported even if they fail, to foster innovation and creativity.
- There is a desire for more spontaneity and messiness in the city, which comes from an ethos of experimentation and risk.

Support and foster a holistic arts ecosystem, starting with youth

We need to support an ecosystem of art and culture, starting with youth. This includes addressing the barriers we face in accessing arts and culture at a young age (for instance, at the library or at school), and later on, with training and workforce development opportunities.Additionally, we heard concerns about seniors being left out of arts and culture, and that meaningful engagement and participation is needed for all ages. We also heard about the need to support mid-career artists and cultural workers.

> *"We need support for mid-career equity seeking folks as well. And senior artists too. So many don't make it. It's only the most privileged that make it to mid and late-career."*

> *"Arts education is so sorely needed. Our schools are lacking arts education. It was gutted a long time ago and never fully returned... Arts should be in every school. Kids should be introduced to arts careers."*

Intersection of the arts, activism and social services provision

- Many arts organizations are stepping in to fill gaps, offering support and resources to communities in need (partnering with social service organizations or just taking on this role).
- There are major concerns related to censorship of artists and cultural workers who are expressing their political and social views through their art and social media,
- There is a need to prioritize a climate change lens in our work and minimize environmental impact in artistic practices and events.

Notes on the 2034 vision

"Toronto has an identity crisis – who are we? Who do we want to be? Do we want to be a homogenous landscape of condos, or a diverse city known for its art scene? Politicians are giving up. They don't care about us."

While many of the ideas for a future cultural city have been referenced in the themes and comments shared so far, some additional visions for Toronto 2034 are included below.

Toronto in 2034 is a place where:

Arts and culture is valued in Toronto.
- We have a strong vision for culture in the city, backed up by the appropriate support system to achieve it.
- Government and members of the public understand the meaningful impacts of arts and culture including the financial, emotional and social benefits.
- "Culture is as popular as sports."
- Arts and culture are funded appropriately.
- There is an arts and cultural ecosystem that is supported - from getting the public involved at a young age, to supporting artists and cultural workers at every stage of their career (including mentorship).

"How do we keep believing in the vision when nothing is being done to support it? We keep showing up to these meetings and sharing our hopes and dreams. But they keep getting dimmer each year".

Artists, creatives and cultural workers are properly supported.
- Basic needs are met. People have living wages, healthcare and housing supports, as well as mental health support. There is universal basic income.
- There is a culture of care and self-care, recognizing the importance of mental health and wellbeing, as well as accessibility needs.
- Funding models exist that trust creatives, rather than restrict them.
- Toronto is an affordable city.

"Artists will have time, energy and focus to practice rather than being completely exhausted from surviving day to day."

'Diversity our Strength' is embraced and practiced / We are proud of Toronto-made arts and culture

- Toronto's diverse cultural heritage is embraced and promoted in every corner of the city. This includes "cultures" and cultural offerings that have historically been traditionally marginalized and not sufficiently supported financially.
- Both local and international talent is showcased, attracting local and global audiences, and putting Toronto on the map.

Culture is ingrained in Toronto's everyday life and fabric of the city

- There is a bold vision of how to ensure arts and culture is everywhere in this city, highlighting the need for more spontaneity, messiness, and general artsy and creative vibes.
- Culture is accessible, either because it's free, nearby, available online and in-person, and is free of accessibility barriers (and hopefully all!)
- Art and culture is integrated into our everyday experiences.
- Public spaces (subway, street signs, street corners, parks) are used for spontaneous performances.

"Wouldn't it be awesome if you walked through the city in the summertime and people are just jamming. Public pianos! Violins and cellos!

Appendix C: Summary of Key Findings from Creative Facilitators Engagements

Appendix C: Culture Plan Creative Facilitator Summary

Prepared by Monumental

Overview

A Culture Plan for Toronto must have artists, cultural workers, creatives and communities at the heart of the conversation. We asked five creative facilitators to host conversations in their neighbourhoods across the city, with the goals to:
- Engage with folks across the city who may not have access to Zoom or online surveys;
- Encourage different (creative) methods of engagement; and
- Share resources and build capacity with different creatives and artists in the city.

How We Engaged

The Monumental Projects team put out a 'Call for Creative Facilitators' in September 2023. We received 148 applicants and selected 5 creative facilitators of different disciplines who could facilitate engagements in different parts of the city.

Monumental Projects hosted an introductory session with the creative facilitators to share the objectives and overarching questions for the engagements. The creative facilitators were then invited to design their engagements using whatever creative methods best fit their practices and the communities they were working with, as long as they provided context on the culture plan and asked questions about current experiences and future experiences of culture in the city. Our team provided support to team members to design the various sessions.

After the engagement sessions, the Monumental Projects team, City of Toronto and create-facilitators came together for a collective 'sensemaking session', where we reflected on what we heard and discussed opportunities for the Culture Plan.

Who Engaged

The creative facilitators, their engagement events and participants are included below:

- **Johl Whiteduck Ringuette** is an Anishabee and Alongquin chef and co-founder of Minikaan and Red Urban Nation Arts Collective. Johl, along with the Monumental Projects team, led a walking tour of Red Urban Nation Collective's Bickford Centre murals and facilitated a discussion about hopes and dreams, and how grassroots

community groups, entrepreneurs and the City can better work together to support Toronto's cultural future.

- *Note on attendees:* **Approximately 30 participants** attended this session, which included active community members from the Bickford neighbourhood, artists and general public.
- **Leila Fatemi** (b. 1991, Milan) is a contemporary visual artist currently based in Tkaronto/Toronto. She led a community conversation and art gathering using the practice of Islamic geometry and weaving, to create sacred geometric art while also weaving together the community's visions, stories, and perspectives. The event took place at a home studio run by [Tahsine](#) called Hausa in east end Toronto.
  - *Note on Attendees:* **Approximately 15 people** participated, largely consisting of IBPOC artists and creatives.
- **kumari giles** is kumari giles is a multi-disciplinary artist, movement storyteller, curator, and producer. They led a discussion on culture and care around a backyard fire and artmaking workshop in North York.
  - *Note on Attendees:* **15 people engaged,** which included queer and IBPOC artists and communities.
- **Kevin Ramroop** is an experimental musician, writer, and community arts facilitator from Scarborough. Along with WaveArtCollective, he hosted a panel discussion centered on the future of arts and culture in Scarborough. He also had further conversations with the Super Collective in Scarborough, a collaborative network comprising 20 to 30 artists, academics, mobilizers, and change-makers. The collective's ultimate goal to shape the identity and policies of Scarborough's artistic and cultural development.
  - *Note on Attendees:* **Approximately 50 participants**, largely artists and creatives from Scarborough.
- **Sarah St-Fleur**, a local comedian and founder of SistaGotJokes Productions hosted a comedy "Roast" of Toronto and open discussion about experiences and hopes for Toronto's culture sector at Assembly Hall in Etobicoke.
  - *Note on Attendees:* **Over 70 participants** attended, largely local residents from Etobicoke, Mississauga as well as comedians.

In total, approximately 180 people engaged from different parts of the city through the creative facilitator engagements!

What We heard

Not only did we learn from the Torontonians these creative facilitators engaged, we learned from the creative facilitators themselves. We learned about their work, their various challenges and what they've been able to do, create and share in this city.

Note: Detailed summaries from the Creative Facilitators have been shared with the City.

Below are some of the top takeaways:

Expand the definition of 'culture'

- "The institutional definition of culture is too narrow."
- Culture to many people is not about the arts, but about their cultural backgrounds, traditions, family celebrations etc.
- For many Indigenous peoples, culture is connected to land, which should be considered in the culture plan. There needs to be a reframing in how we think about culture in our spaces and our city, to look more holistically at rituals, spirituality, land, and diverse aspects of culture. Johl, one of the creative facilitators who led a tour of Red Urban Nation's murals at Bickford Centre, shared that the centre is so significant to the Indigenous community because of its connection to parkland. He has been working to transform the building into an Indigenous Hub, through art, gardening, food and hopefully programming.
- Comedy is often left out of definitions of 'culture' for the City.

Integrate art and culture in our everyday experiences

Participants shared positive experiences engaging in a variety of cultural activities, such as shows, food, dance, museums, theater, comedy shows, and parks, as well as restaurants, bars, and natural attractions in Toronto.

To better integrate with everyday experiences, ideas shared include:

- Expanded after-hours programming beyond bars, offering non-alcoholic spaces and nighttime events that cater to a wide range of interests and demographics.
- Opportunities for spontaneous interaction and participation in cultural events and rituals. Explore initiatives like ritual markets and recurring cultural events to create a sense of connection and continuity within communities.
- Increased events and programming outside the downtown core
  - *"A notable barrier mentioned was the perception that cultural events are primarily centered around the downtown core, highlighting the need for more diverse event locations."*
- Predictable and recurring art presence in neighbourhoods, similar to initiatives like the Hamilton Art Crawl, to enhance community engagement and cohesion.
- Reduced ticket prices:
  - *"The high cost of tickets emerged as a barrier, particularly for students. This raised concerns about affordability and the potential discouragement of attendance due to financial constraints."*

Decentralize arts and culture / Prioritize programming and supports outside the downtown core

- We heard the need for more programming, spaces and resources outside the core, within local neighbourhoods.
- At Sarah St Fleur's comedy show in Etobicoke, many attendees came because they saw a posting on Facebook or on Eventbrite and were excited that there was an event happening in their area at a low cost, where they didn't have to drive or transit downtown. People were really excited about the free parking too.
- *"LASOs outside the downtown core are well-liked but they can't be everywhere. There is a lack of local hubs and cultural connections in 'suburban' areas creating barriers to community building and cultural resource sharing."*

Support informal gathering and creative spaces, both indoor and outdoor, with an emphasis on accessibility

- We need less formal and institutional spaces.
- Provide accessible and underused spaces for cultural activities, such as public gardens, community centers, and school facilities. Encourage stewardship of public spaces by empowering individuals and organizations to initiate and lead cultural initiatives and have ownership of the spaces.
- Hyper-surveillance disproportionately impacts Black and Indigenous folks and those who are queer and trans. This includes outdoor gathering spaces, communally shared studios, public and private studios/galleries/workshop spaces. There need to be safe, inclusive spaces.
- There is a need for more accessible (for multiple disabilities, neurodivergence, transportation ease) and modular spaces that are free/low cost for artists to access/ This includes space that is easily accessible to reserve or book through multiple means.
- Specific considerations shared at kumari giles' event include:
    - Studio space for slow arts, Crip organizing, intergenerational places to gather
    - Gathering spaces outdoors or indoors for community building that isn't connected to a service or medical facility
    - Covid-19 cautious gathering spaces as we continue to navigate a global pandemic

Basic needs need to be met

- Across all engagements, we heard that artists and cultural workers need to have appropriate housing, food security, basic income and dignified work to thrive.

Invest in Connection and Community Building (formal and informal)

- Foster connection and community building (not just limited to formal mentorship programs, 'networking' events) but in more informal ways
- "Connection over transaction:
- Kevin, one of the creative facilitators, shared that the fellowship he ran provided not only professional guidance but also a sense of community.
- We need capacity building/mentorship and network strengthening to invest in grassroots initiatives, collectives and artists to skill build, receive sustaining resources and have the networks to break gate kept resources.
- At Johl's event, tagging on murals came up as a major challenge. Suggestions for how to deal with this focused on fostering a sense of community connection and ownership, potentially through designated spaces for graffiti and murals.

Embrace process and experimentation, as well as consistency and commitment
- We need space for experimentation and access to different spaces to try new things. We heard the need to increase access to pre-production and research funding, where funding isn't tied to an outcome.
- "Process is an outcome."

Need for sustainable support
- Provide consistency and sustainability in funding as much as possible.
- "Move beyond the pilot phase."
- Foster collaboration among cultural organizations and funding bodies to create cohesive and sustainable arts opportunities.

Make it easier to make things happen!
- "It's so difficult to get things done."
- For years, Johl has been trying to work with the TDSB and the City to permit Ojibikaan, an Indigenous-led nonprofit offering land, food and culture based programming, a space to lead programs, but it hasn't happened.

Improve information sharing, promotions, storytelling
- Improve storytelling and promotion of cultural initiatives to highlight the impact of community engagement and participation.
- Create platforms to showcase the contributions of local stewards and cultural leaders, celebrating their efforts and inspiring others to get involved.

Visions for the future

Participants also shared thoughts on a visions for the future:

- Spaces for laughter, warmth, alternative and accessible ways to participate in programming that are run by folk connected to communities and are deeply skilled in hosting that not going to disappear after a funding round

- Reciprocity in the arts and culture sectors
- Food, care, stable housing and stable space (commitment from city for basic income for artists, to reduce cost of spaces for marginalized groups to rent, gifting physical space to be operationally run by groups or collectives
- Pay artists a living wage
- A future where artists can grow old and still make art (thinking about dancers, but applies to all)
- Mentorship networks that nurture QT/BIPOC/Disabled cultural connectors and leaders in decolonial, circular mentorship
- More intergenerational spaces to knowledge share, culture build - gathering space and commitment/investment in programming
- Black and Indigenous education through slow arts (ex: quilting) Led and curated by us
- More rest and crip spaces in the city, throughout the entire city
- Places to explore accountability in theory and in practice - what does this look like to be led by the city?
- Reimagining Safety - Divesting from police into culture building and strong communities
- Public Art activations - more opportunities to engage with the land, each other, civic engagement and creating together
- Recognize shifting culture of institutions
- More creative opportunities for sharing of information, events, advertising, etc. all over the city

Appendix D: Summary of Findings from Public Survey

Appendix D: Online Survey Summary

Prepared by Monumental

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Methodology

As part of the broad public engagement to develop the City of Toronto's next Culture Plan, Monumental Projects, the City of Toronto (also sometimes referred to as 'the City'), and Toronto Arts Council and Foundation (also sometimes referred to as 'TAC') distributed an online survey that was open to responses between January 24th to March 3rd, 2024.

Branching logic

The survey included a branching logic to collect specific insights for two audience categories:

- **Branch 1**: Respondents who self-identify as artists, creatives, arts administrators, or volunteers
- **Branch 2:** Respondents who self-identify as primarily audience members or participant, as well as people who do not engage with Toronto's arts and culture events, programs and activities altogether.
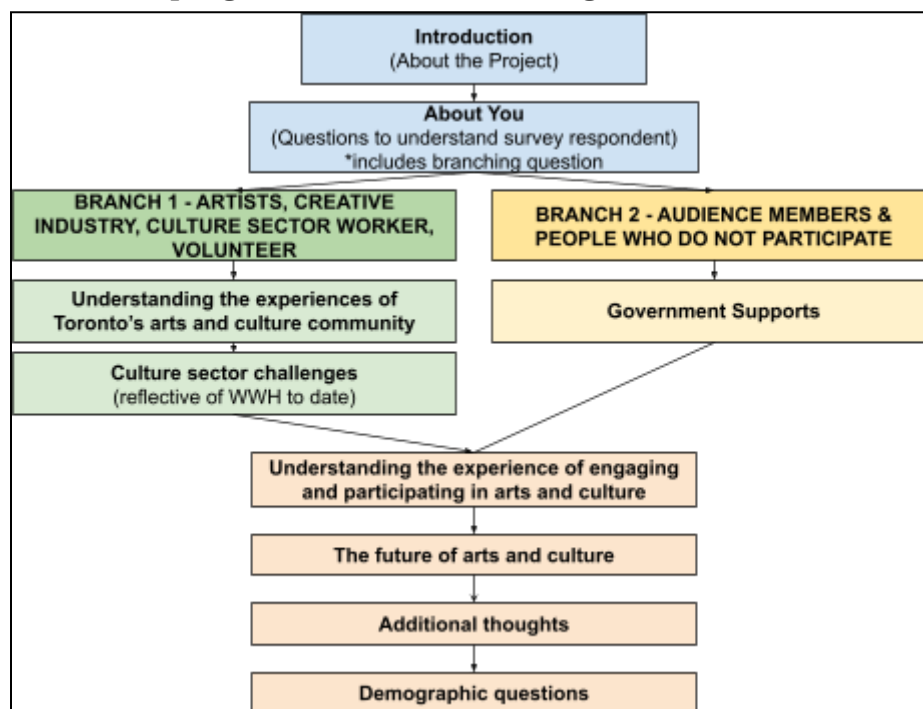
Figure 1. Online survey branching logic.

Due to the branching methodology, the online survey was able to ask Branch 1 targeted questions around funding, and challenges and solutions geared to those experienced working and volunteering in the arts and culture ecosystem. Branch 2 prompted more general questions about government supports and the role of the City and TAC in supporting arts and culture in Toronto.

Reporting & Analysis

This survey summary reports on findings per question. The report includes an analysis of all data received including incomplete responses.

For quantitative data, all responses have been considered and reported. In addition, our team disaggregated data from the the following respondent groups to better understand their needs and priorities:
- Indigenous respondents (First Nation, Inuit, Métis)
- Black respondents
- Deaf, Mad, and disabled respondents
- Respondents who primarily work or practice their art outside the Downtown core
- Respondents who primarily work or practice their art inside the Downtown core
- General Public

For qualitative data, the data was analyzed through an open-ended data coding process. We developed a codebook and purposeful sampling method to guide this work. Purposeful sampling refers to the non-probability sampling technique which selects units based on the characteristics needed for the sample[1]. 800 rows of qualitative data were coded and analyzed. Aligned with the overarching approach to the Culture Plan engagement process, Monumental prioritized analyzing responses from those typically underserved and underrepresented in planning processes as part of our sample dataset, including:
- All respondents who self-identified as First Nation, Intuit, or Métis
- All respondents who self-identified as Black
- All respondents who self-identified as Deaf, Mad or disabled
- All respondents who self-identified as 2SLGBTQIA+
- Some respondents who did not self-identify at any of the demographic intersections listed above

All qualitative data was also analyzed anonymously through askCSV. This was integrated to validate findings uncovered from the codebook and compare insights from the entire data set versus the sample data set.

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[1] [What Is Purposive Sampling? | Definition & Examples](#)

Who We Heard From

The survey received a total of 2,670 responses with 1,857 fully completed. Additional demographic insights are included in the table below.

Characteristic/ descriptor	Information
Primary location for work and/or art practice	• Downtown core (64%) • North York (6%) • Etobicoke (5%) • Virtual (5%) • East York (4%) • Scarborough (4%) • York (3%)

Relationship to arts and culture
  • *Branch 1 total: 1,773 respondents*
  • *Branch 2 total: 722*
	• Practicing artist and creative (38%)
	• Culture sector worker / creative industries (24%)
	• Culture sector volunteer (5%)
	• Audience member or participant (29%)
	• Non-participant (3%)

Representation of organizations and businesses	• 18% of respondents indicated that they were completing the survey on behalf of an organization or business including:
	  • 203 not-for-profit organizations or businesses
	  • 129 for profit creative industries, cultural organization or business
	  • 29 collective or cooperatives
	  • 19 educational institutions
	  • 2 foundations

Age	• 30-39 years old (20%) • 40-49 years old (20%) • 50-59 years old (16%) • 60-69 years old (15%) • 20-29 years old (12%) • 70 years old and over (11%) • 10-19 years old (1%) • Prefer not to answer (11%)
Newcomers	13% newcomers to Canada (moved to Canada 5 years or less)
Indigeneity	2% Indigenous, Inuit, or Métis
Racial or ethnic background	• White (59%) • East Asian (7%) • Black (6%) • South Asian or Indo-Carribean (6%) • Latin American (4%)

Characteristic/descriptor	Information
	• Arab, Middle Eastern, or West Asian (3%) • Southeast Asian (3%) • First Nation, Inuit or Métis (2%) • Not listed (8%) • Prefer to note answer (11%)
Disability	20% identified as disabled
Gender	• Woman (61%) • Man (25%) • Gender non-binary (4%) • Not listed (1%) • Prefer not to answer (7%)
Sexual orientation	• Heterosexual or straight (58%) • Bisexual (8%) • Queer (7%) • Gay (4%) • Lesbian (2%) • Pansexual (2%) • Asexual (1%) • Questioning (1%) • I don't know (1%) • Not listed (2%) • Prefer not to answer (14%)
Employment status	• Full-time employed (44%) • Retired (15%) • Part-time employed (13%) • Casual, temp, seasonal (8%) • Unemployed (5%) • Student (5%) • Stay-at-home caregiver (2%) • Unable to work (2%) • Not listed (13%) • Prefer not to answer (5%)
Household income before taxes)	• $70k-$99k (15%) • $100k-$149k (15%) • $150k+ (14%) • $30k-$49k (12%) • $0-$29k (11%) • $50k-$69k (10%) • Don't know (2%) • Prefer not to answer (22%)

Characteristic/ descriptor	Information
Household make-up	• 2-person household (40%) • 1-person household (22%) • 3-person household (16%) • 4-person household (11%) • 5-person household (3%) • More than 5-person household (1%) • Prefer not to answer (8%)

Discipline breakdown

Which of the following best describes the field or discipline you work, create or volunteer in? If your practice is interdisciplinary, select all that apply.

	Count	% of responses	%
Performing arts (including theatre, opera, orchestras, circus, etc.)	551		32%
Visual and applied arts (including painting, sculpture, photography, crafts, etc.)	548		32%
Arts administration	466		27%
Music (including composition, publishing, live performance, sound recording, promoter, live music venue owner, distribution such as streaming, radio etc.)	399		23%
Community arts (including Local Arts Service Organizations)	389		23%
Festival and events	357		21%
Film and television (including production, post-production, VFX, animation) and distribution (including streaming, broadcast, theatrical).	352		20%
Education and training	282		16%
Galleries (including public art galleries, artist run centres)	273		16%
Dance	222		13%
Literary arts (including print, written arts, poetry, spoken word, etc.)	205		12%
Design (including graphic design)	178		10%
Cultural heritage (including archives, artifacts, collections, historic sites and buildings, etc.)	162		9%
Creative technology / interactive digital media (including interactive technology, e-sports, gaming, immersive, etc.)	157		9%
Museums	144		8%
Accessibility/ Disability arts	120		7%
Business development	118		7%
Other (please explain):	77		4%
Fashion	70		4%
Tourism	68		4%
Culinary arts	39		2%
I'm not sure	14		1%
Prefer not to answer	8		0%

N 1.7k

Figure 2. Breakdown of self-identified disciplines.

The survey also allowed Branch 1 respondents to self-identify discipline(s). Results indicated the top seven represented groups include:

1. Performing arts (32%)
2. Visual and applied arts (32%)
3. Arts administration (27%)
4. Music (23%)
5. Community arts (23%)
6. Festival and events (21%)
7. Film and television (20%)

What We Heard

Survey insights are reported out by question, see [methodology](#) for more details. Direct quotes from survey responses are included to illustrate or emphasize emerging themes. Some terms are defined throughout the document to help provide the reader more context. This section does not report out on demographic and self-descriptor data already shared in [Who We Heard From](#).

Throughout the report, the reader will notice call-outs identifying when isolated respondent groups share insights that were similar or differ from the overall findings.

Question: What type of physical space(s) do you or your organization / business use (for artistic activities, administrative functions or as a public venue)? Select all that apply. [Branch 1]

What type of physical space(s) do you or your organization / business use (for artistic activities, administrative functions or as a public venue)? Select all that apply.

	Count	% of responses	%
Rental space(s) (separate from where I live)	864		52%
Residence/dwelling space(s) (in my house/condo/apartment, etc.)	685		41%
Shared space(s) within other individuals or organizations	428		26%
Owned space(s) (separate from where I live)	334		20%
I don't have a space	164		10%
Other (please explain):	101		6%
I don't need a physical space	54		3%
Prefer not to answer	24		1%

N 1.7k
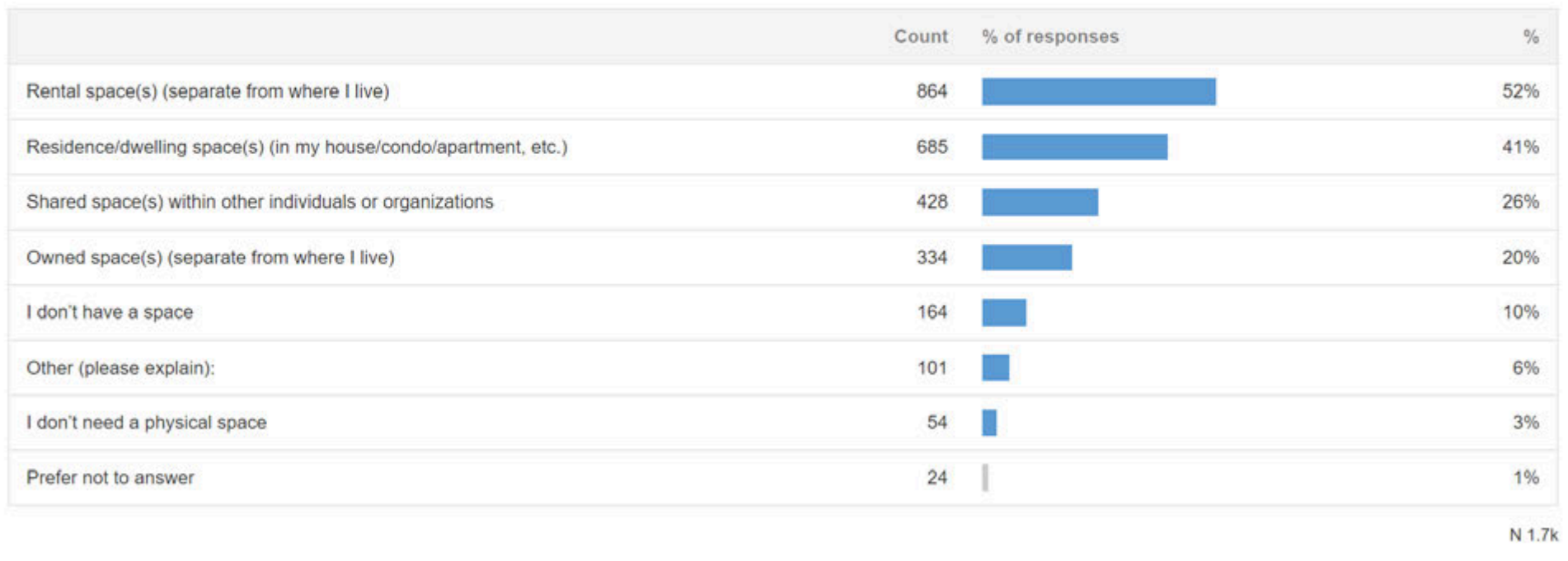
Figure 3. Types of physical spaces for arts organizations and businesses.

Types of physical spaces for arts organizations, businesses, and artists break down as:

- Rental space(s) (separate from where they live) (52% of respondents)
- Residence/dwelling space(s) (in my house/condo/apartment, etc.) (41%)
- Shared space(s) with other individuals or organizations (26%)
- Owned space(s) (separate from where they live (20%)
- They don't have a space (10%)
- They don't need a physical space (3%)

When given the option to identify other types of spaces, recurring types of spaces include:

- Public spaces (e.g. community centres, parks, etc.)
- Online workspaces
- Schools

Question: How do you fund your work or organization/business? Select all that apply. [Branch 1]

How do you fund your work or organization/business? Select all that apply.

	Count	% of responses	%
Product sales or fee-for-service work (example: selling your product or licensing rights to your product, ticket sales, commissioned work, subscriptions)	779		48%
Provincial / Federal grants, loans, or equity investments	677		42%
City of Toronto / Toronto Arts Council grants	578		36%
Donations	510		31%
Funding from independent funding bodies (for example The Bell Fund, Metcalf Foundation) or philanthropic organizations	410		25%
Sponsorships	387		24%
Other (please explain):	338		21%
Facility rentals and events	223		14%
Not applicable / prefer not to answer	196		12%
Venture capital or other investments	72		4%

N 1.6k

Figure 4. How organizations and businesses are funded.

Funding sources for arts organizations, businesses, and artists break down as:

- Product sales or fee-for-service work (48% of respondents)
- Provincial / Federal grants, loans, or equity investments (42%)
- City of Toronto / Toronto Arts Council grants (36%)
- Donations (31%)
- Funding from independent funding bodies or philanthropic organizations (25%)
- Sponsorships (24%)
- Facility rentals and events (14%)
- Venture capital or other investments (4%)

When given the option to identify other funding sources, the following categories of funding were shared:

- Self-funded (undescribed or work outside of art and cultural sector)
- Supplemented by employment or non-creative/artistic contract work with arts organizations
- Supplemented by client work/commercial art works

Question: What best describes your experience with applying for or receiving grants available from the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council? Select up to three options. [Branch 1]

	Count	% of responses	%
Staff are helpful and supportive in answering questions.	261		49%
The application process is clear, accessible and easy to complete.	246		46%
Funding is available for my discipline.	184		34%
Reporting is simple and straightforward.	98		18%
Other (please explain):	96		18%
None of the above	86		16%
Grant amounts meets my needs.	24		4%
Funding is equitably distributed.	20		4%
			N 534
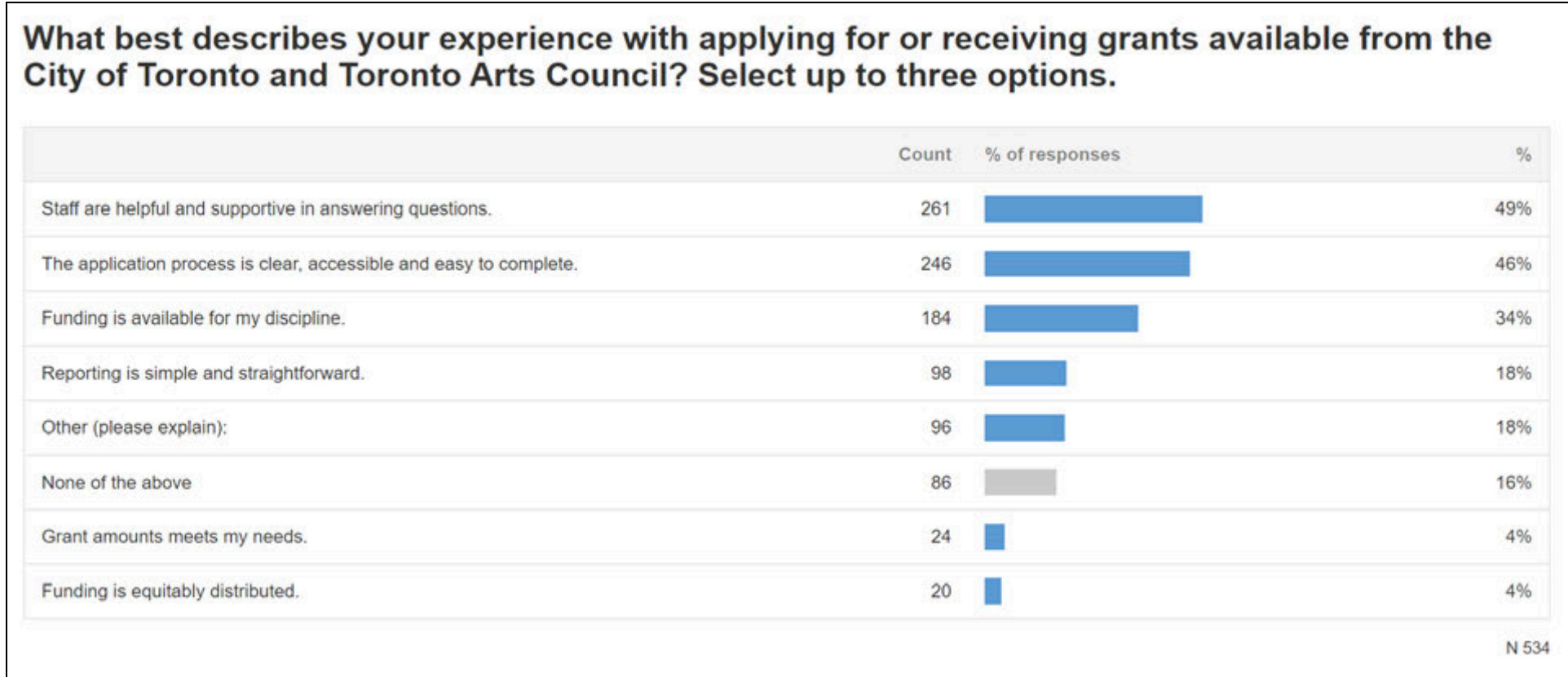
Figure 5. Funding application experiences.

When asked to describe their experience applying for grants or funding with the City of Toronto and/or the Toronto Arts Council, the top 3 descriptions were:

- Staff are helpful and supporting in answering questions (49% of respondents)
- The application process is clear, accessible and easy to complete (46%)
- Funding is available for my discipline (34%)

When given the option to describe funding experiences, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents shared that funding is insufficient to create desired impact, cover staff salaries, volunteer support, and the capacity needed to submit grant applications.
- Some respondents shared that funding excludes some user segments including smaller organizations, women over 45, and people with limited English language skills.
- Some respondents shared that grants are competitive and application processes are time-intensive. With this in mind, some respondents say that the funding amount is too low to take the risk to spend time applying for grants or the funding is not worth the effort altogether.
- Many respondents shared that they have not applied for a grant.

"Funds either focus on new creations or on longstanding institutions that also have significant donors and venue access. Not enough is accessible to those trying to produce existing pieces (even by Canadian playwrights) and to small indie companies." - Survey respondent

"The application process uses a language that artists do not speak, and therefore many artists are excluded. And when we advocate for this change in accessibility, we are punished for it." - Survey respondent

"The application process is clear, accessible, and easy for me to complete, however technicalities and red tape have caused delays in the distribution of funds. I find the TAC's Program staff excellent, but have received unclear communications from other administrative departments." - Survey respondent

Question: What are the main challenges you face in your work? [Branch 1]
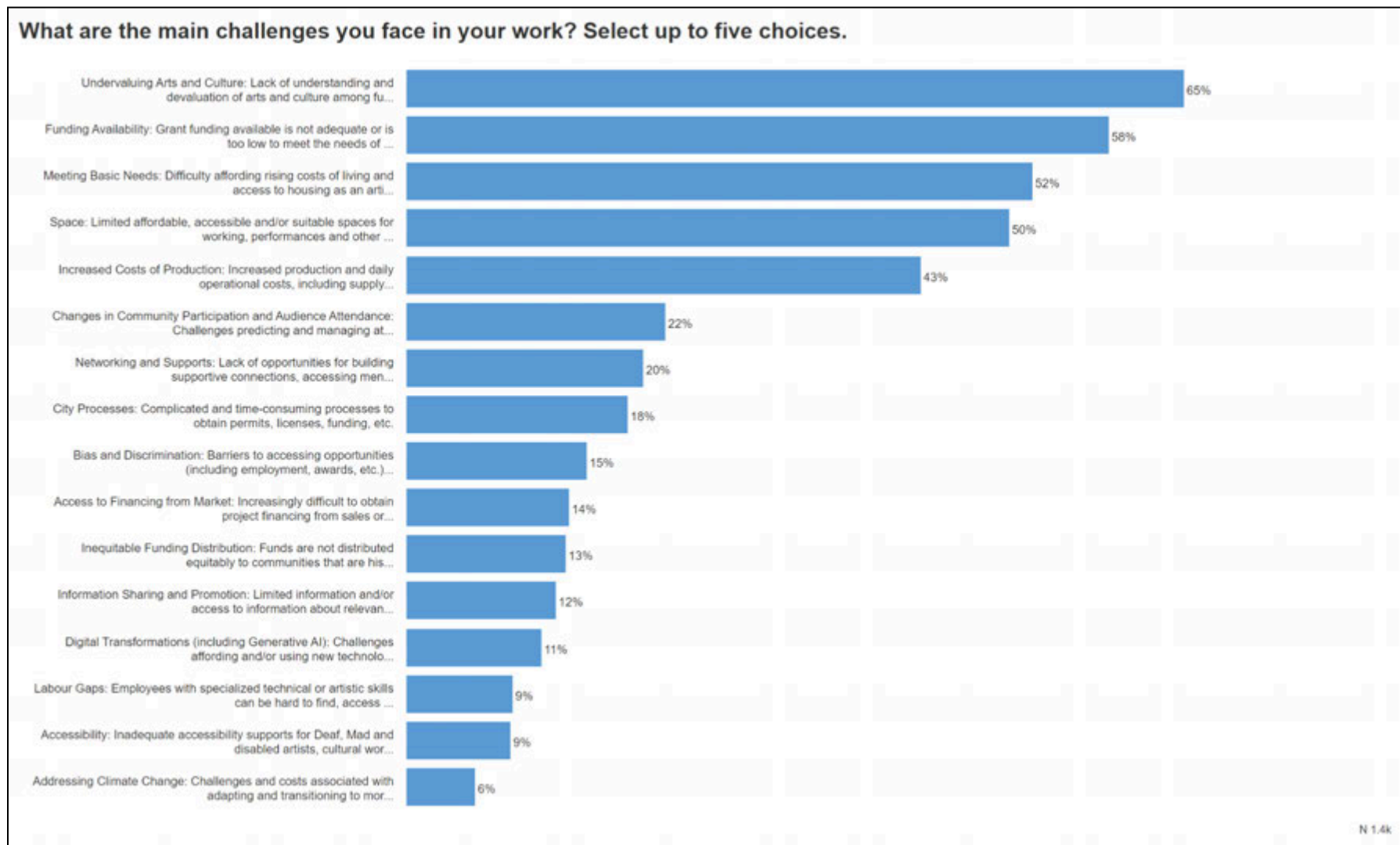
Figure 6. The main challenges facing the arts and culture community ranked from most selected to least selected.

When asked to identify the main challenges facing the arts and culture community, the top five challenges identified include:

1. **Undervaluing Arts and Culture (65% of respondents):** Lack of understanding and devaluation of arts and culture among funders, decision-makers and the public.
2. **Funding Availability (56%):** Grant funding available is not adequate or is too low to meet the needs of artists, creatives and cultural workers.
3. **Meeting Basic Needs (52%):** Difficulty affording rising costs of living and access to housing as an artist or creative in Toronto.
4. **Space (50%):** Limited affordable, accessible and/or suitable spaces for working, performances and other cultural uses (such as for office use, events, production, and creation).
5. **Increased Costs of Production (43%):** Increased production and daily operational costs, including supply chain disruptions and insurance coverage complexities.

While the top five challenges resonate across all isolated demographic groups, Deaf, Mad, and disabled respondents ranked **Meeting Basic Needs** as the primary challenge (63% indicated this as a challenge).

Further, Black respondents overall indicated **Bias and Discrimination** as one of the top challenges (37% of Black respondents indicated this). This is over double the amount compared to the 15% indicated when analyzing all survey data.

When given the option to elaborate on their top five choices, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many people are unable to meet basic needs. Many say that the increase of living overall (e.g. food, housing, transportation, etc.) is heightened with the increased cost of production (e.g. materials, promotions, shipping costs, insurance, etc.)
- Many people shared that the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council has a vital role in increasing the value of arts and culture in society. In the next few years, the City and TAC should focus on demonstrating the societal and individual social, health, mental, emotional, and physical benefits of arts and culture.

- In addition to increased funding overall, some expressed an interest to continue and *expand* funding for historically underserved communities.

"Being a black multidisciplinary artist is increasingly difficult with costs of living, costs of training and access to opportunities within the workforce due to discrimination. Lowering the barriers to maintain my craft would be the biggest help, but putting forward incentives to hire BIPOC[2] for talent agencies and event talent coordinators." - Black survey respondent

"Meeting basic needs is a big one for me. I work as a glass artist, and as you can imagine, the costs of materials alone has increased. This coupled with the cost of living in the city make it really difficult to thrive and have creative freedom. I end up taking a full-time job to meet my basic needs, leaving little to no room left for time to work on my art." - Deaf, Mad, and/or disabled respondent

"Meeting the access needs of a Disabled population can be costly and it is hard to find affordable venues with upfront information about their facilities' accessibility, but it's also difficult to plan and build events for a Disabled audience when non-disabled populations don't regularly support disability arts." - Deaf, Mad, and/or disabled respondent

As an actor with a physical disability, roles are rare. I have begun creating my own work but funding opportunities are very competitive with only a few projects realizing funding. This year, I put in 600 hours of work towards a project that did not win funding. As a creative/ actor, it is impossible to sustain one's basic needs without a second income. As an actor with a disability, maintaining an avenue of income while working on a project is impossible. I live below the poverty line. - Deaf, Mad, and/or disabled respondent

I have to work to support my family. I don't have the luxury of free time to create. Struggling with mental health and physical health means my life is very unpredictable. Never mind the economy. I wish it were easier to find grants that might allow me to take a year off, support myself, and explore my art. - Survey respondent

"[The] cost of living makes it difficult for people in my industry to truly thrive. It often means working a second job not in the industry just to make ends meet. It also means more time spent working to pay bills and less time to focus on art. I cannot find time to create my own work or pitch my own ideas when I'm too busy trying to make ends meet. Cost of production often presents a challenge in allowing productions to reach full potential." - Survey respondent who works in festivals, events, film, and television

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[2] BIPOC is an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and/or person (or people) of colour.

Question: Are there other key challenges not captured in the previous question that you would like to highlight? [Branch 1]

When asked to share other or additional challenges that were not captured in the previous question, the following themes emerged from the open-ended responses:

- Many respondents feel apathy and a sense of hopelessness in the grant process. Artists feel that grants are very competitive and feel like there is a slim likelihood of being successful in getting funding.
- Many respondents indicated that grant values, processes, and systems need to better accommodate and consider the "soft" costs of arts administration including day-to-day operations, space costs (studio space, rehearsal space, venues, etc.), compensation for the grant writing process itself, and meeting basic needs such as affording health and dental care.
- Many respondents said there is little support for new artists including:
  - Young emerging artists
  - Middle-aged or senior emerging artists that have switched to a new creative profession
  - People new to Toronto (both newcomers/recent immigrants and those relocating from other parts of Canada)
- Some respondents indicated an overreliance on project-based funding and not enough operating funding options/availability.
- Some respondents feel that current grant options are inundated with criteria. Some feel that they need to try to fit within certain boxes, identities, and art forms/outputs.
- Some respondents feel that funding and opportunities hinder creativity by prioritizing commercialized product within the art sector. Other cities have been touted (Montreal, New York, San Francisco) as being imbued with culture and seeing it everywhere, as opposed to here.
- Some respondents elaborated on space issues in the city. Not only do respondents feel that space is lacking overall (particularly artist spaces), there is a desire for "third spaces" and community hubs that allow artists and arts workers to come together, create, and collaborate. Suggested solutions include stipulations on private developers to make space or allow for unused spaces to be used for arts and culture spaces.
- Some respondents elaborated on the undervaluing of arts and culture in Toronto. Suggested remedies include increased government funding and

embedding an appreciation for the arts through greater public programming and through early education.

What is a "third space?"

The [Third Space Network](#) defines a "third space" as a term to call communal space, as distinct from the home (first space) or work (second space). The third space has been defined as a nightclub or sports arena or museum where the individual can experience a transformative sense of self, identity and relation to others.

"Now our cultural life is restricted by lack of appropriate spaces." - Deaf, Mad, and/or disabled respondent

"This is also a career that builds in an uneven income -- you can have a year close to six figures right before a year below the poverty line, just because of the nature of royalties, advances, and basically freelance work -- and our financial system is just not built to cope with that. Artists live with this fundamental structural friction in dealing with finances and it hobbles our security: credit, mortgage lending, outward planning." - Survey respondent

"I'm frustrated that you don't have current art-makers in every meeting, at every table. I'm frustrated that buildings go empty while artists can't produce work. Parking spaces need activation not cars. We need green space and art - not adding to the overly inflated police services budget. I'm seriously disturbed by the city budget." - Survey respondent

"Cost of living in the city for an arts manager and the wage range is not sustainable, especially if you are a newcomer/immigrant with no one else to rely on. Right now I'm trying to make my way out of this industry because I don't see any viable future. Especially with the global economic crisis and the rising cost of living, I don't have hope that things will get any better in the future." - Survey respondent

"Toronto has always had potential, but I've been living here for 24 years on and off and I've given up hope. The city is mired in red tape, is slow, and the people working with the city in the arts are often lacking in energy and innovation. I want a city to be fresh and energizing, not a Debbie downer. I want to live here, but I feel like it doesn't want me to be here." - Survey respondent

Question: What key solutions or recommendations would help to address your top concerns? [Branch 1]

When asked to share solutions the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents shared that arts and culture need to be made a priority. Some ideas on how this can be demonstrated are through:
  - Increased funding
  - Increased public education on the value of arts and culture
  - Improved public programming quality
  - Improved communications and promotion of arts and culture activities
- Many respondents shared policy solutions to support arts and culture in Toronto including:
  - A recurring idea to develop policy to incentivize and support developers, private companies, and private galleries to provide arts and culture spaces. This includes providing a creative solution to leverage private unused or underused spaces to host pop-up shows, act as venues, and host productions.
  - A recurring idea to develop policy to encourage businesses to consider integrating arts in culture activities through tax incentives or subsidies to engage with artists and creatives.
- Many respondents indicated a need for more opportunities to highlight arts and culture and connect artists including resource sharing, peer networking, and peer support.
- Many respondents shared ideas to make granting systems more flexible including:
  - Allowing arts producers to apply for grants on behalf of artists
  - Lowering the criteria for entry to grant applications
  - Expand priority funding streams (e.g. develop a newcomer and refugee grant stream/option)
  - Integrate anonymous application and evaluation processes
  - Integrate lottery system style to some grant selection processes
  - Encourage diversity in juries and granting officer personnel
  - Improve transparency in grant application processes
  - Introduce rolling deadlines for grant applications
- Some respondents shared ideas to transform funding or grant models including:

- Reallocate funding away from city-produced events, festivals, and programs towards local arts organizations to produce diverse, community-led events, festivals, and programs.
- Ensuring adequate support for independent artists
- Increase funding to the TAC to help ensure broader and more equitable distribution of funds.
- Increase City investments in funding for public and street art.
- Some respondents said that the City and TAC could consider ways to support not just artists but the industries and organizations around them including publishers, curators, preservationists, and critics.
- Some respondents indicated a need for a significant restructuring of the City's budget more broadly to focus on affordability and meeting basic needs. Some solutions to support this include:
  - Development of a "universal basic income" system
  - Community land trusts and cultural land trusts
  - Rental support programs for artists
  - Improved rent control systems
  - More co-operative housing

"Support individuals who have ideas and demonstrate innovative approaches. It is exhausting constantly trying to convince others who do not wish to be agile and respond to change. Innovation requires easily accessible funding so that you can 'just do it'. This is what can take TO to become the new Hollywood of the future of film. TO: the future city." - Survey respondent

"There are no more affordable studio spaces in Toronto. What there was has been gentrified and artist have become exiles leaving a cultural desert behind." - Survey respondent

"Feed the roots and not the crown. I'm sorry that not all TO theatres are seeing a return of audiences. SOME OF US ARE, HOWEVER. Some of us, at the community level, are seeing a HUGE demand in alternate spaces (like parks) that we CANNOT SATISFY because of the lack of funding & capacity." - Survey respondent

"Include rehearsal space rental and lessons for artistic development (not just for conferences and workshops, but for things like instrumental lessons) an aspect of grant applications. Even creating grants for these just these things alone would be monumental for artists in Toronto - often rehearsal space is the sole limiting factor to artistic development." - Survey respondent

"Make facilities that exist available to local artists. Event spaces like the Brickworks, that receive government funding should be required to offer inexpensive rates for use of their facilities by art organizations, especially not for profit organizations. The city should allow the operation of their facilities like Todmorden Galley, even while they do their seemingly endless internal re-evaluations. While they evaluate, the facilities sit unused." - Survey respondent

"to put simply, invest in the youth and the youth will have a return on your investment that is worth it. Growing up in toronto, it always felt like no one cared and if anyone did they sure were not in toronto. its time to change that narrative by reassuring marginalized individuals that we actually care and are here to help them. the world is listening, we have to help the youth project their voices in different channels via our own networks." - Survey respondent

Question: Do you have ideas or feedback on meaningful ways to prioritize equity in the culture plan? [Branch 1]

When asked to share ideas or feedback to prioritize equity in the plan, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Some respondents say funding and support could be prioritized for smaller organizations actively supporting artists from marginalized and equity-deserving backgrounds. Specific grants or funding models for this purpose should be conditional on equity actions with reviews or evaluation processes to create accountability.

- Many respondents said the City and TAC should continue to actively listen to, amplify the voices of, and advocate for those from marginalized communities. This includes hiring individuals from equity-deserving communities and providing them with the necessary resources and power to make change. Using creative tools, the City and TAC could consider cultivating and incentivizing diversity both internally (e.g. staff, funding panels, juries, etc.) and externally (non-profit Boards, private sector companies, etc.) This diversity must include intersecting socio-economic factors including race, gender, economic status, ability, etc.).
    - A few respondents shared the issues with Indigenous identity fraud linked to access to prioritized funding asking The City of Toronto and TAC to find ways to verify identity.
- Some respondents said an increased focus on Deaf, Mad, and disabled artists and Disability Arts is needed including:
    - Specific and increased funding streams for Disability Arts
    - Improved accessibility for neurodivergent communities when interacting with the City and TAC and applying for funding
    - Improved physical access accommodations in arts and culture venues
- Some respondents discussed equity in arts spaces including a need for free or deeply affordable space for artists to practice, connect, share, and collaborate.
- Some respondents discussed equity in educational opportunities and professional development including a need for free or deeply affordable resources and training (including university-level arts education) for anyone who wants to explore a career or practice in the arts.
- Alternatively, a few respondents expressed concerns about or opposition to identity-based equity efforts in funding and decision-making. For instance, a few participants shared a desire for a balance between equity-focused grants and strictly 'merit-based' grants.
- A few respondents also shared concerns of having to perform one's own identity or to out oneself to have a better chance at an opportunity.

> **What is Disability Arts?**
>
> The Canada Council for the Arts defines Deaf and Disability Arts as "artistic practices in which disparate, collective cultural experiences of being Deaf or having a disability are central to the exploration of narrative, form and/or aesthetics."[3]

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[3] Deaf and Disability Arts | Canada Council for the Arts

"To ensure money set for Indigenous 'Canadians' is actually given to Indigenous 'Canadians' the claims of Indigenous Nationhood must be verified. I have seen too many false information and harmful practices by people falsely claiming Indigenous Nationhood. Let's be real it's fraud. The City needs to sit down with Indigenous Leaders, artists, Knowledge Keepers and draft a policy for vetting claims."- Indigenous survey respondent

"It seems to me that the broader lack of funding in the sector a) prevents institutions who want to meaningfully invest in historically marginalized artists and audiences from doing so meaningfully b) scares institutions into programming Eurocentric work that is considered a safe bet and c) creates a situation where marginalized artists have to compete against each other for extremely limited resources. Again, we need a transformational increase in funding across the board if we want to meaningfully fund a wealth of voices and communities in the arts." - Survey respondent

"To prioritize equity in the culture plan, the government should engage in more extensive consultation with historically marginalized communities, seeking their input on their specific challenges and needs. ... Additionally, investing in educational initiatives to raise awareness about systemic barriers faced by these communities and providing resources to facilitate their access to funding opportunities is essential. Simplifying application processes and offering targeted financial support or grants tailored to their unique circumstances can also help level the playing field." - Survey respondent

"Lack of understanding and care leads to people being treated as burdens and pushed out for having differences under a myriad of excuses. Lack of flexible arrangements overall harms people regardless of ability levels and skills." - Deaf, Mad, and/or disabled survey respondent

"Working at an arts non-profit ... all of our staff are BIPOC and you can feel the way we're treated so differently from organizations that are predominantly non-racialized in terms of how we are surveilled and specific reporting structures as well as the fact that we don't receive nearly as much funding (for doing work with supposedly priority neighbourhoods and populations). This can be very demoralizing to staff and to the communities we serve." - Survey respondent

Question: Which of the following activities have you participated in the most, over the past 12 months in Toronto? Select up to five answers. [Branch 1 & 2]

Which of the following activities have you participated in the most, over the past 12 months in Toronto? Select up to five answers.

	Count	% of responses	%
I attended a live performance (such as a concert, comedy show, theatre, etc.)	1.3k		63%
I engaged with art and culture in my day-to-day life (such as listening to podcasts, music, etc)	1.1k		51%
I watched a movie (at the cinema or at home)	988		48%
I visited an art gallery	929		45%
I attended festivals and/or cultural events	921		44%
I visited a public library and/or community centre	819		39%
I saw public art outdoors (including sculptures, murals, etc.)	756		36%
I visited a museum	737		35%
I participated in an art class, workshop, and learning activity	510		25%
I attended an artist talk, reading or panel event	465		22%
I purchased art, a cultural product or service	442		21%
I was involved with a cultural community group	326		16%
I participated in an activity relevant to my own cultural background	276		13%
Other activities not listed (please explain):	116		6%
None of the above	25		1%
Prefer not to answer	11		1%

N 2.1k

Figure 7. Most participated arts and culture activities in the past 12 months prior to the survey.

The top five Toronto activities that respondents participated in the most in the 12 months prior to completing the survey are:

- Attending live performances (such as a concert, comedy show, theatre, etc.) (63% of respondents)
- Arts and culture in day-to-day lives (such as listening to podcasts, music, etc.) (51%)
- Watching a movie (at the cinema or at home) 48%)
- Visiting an art gallery (45%)
- Attending festivals and/or cultural events (44%)

When isolating Branch 2 (those that self-identified primarily as audience members or participants), the top 5 activities were:
- Attending live performances (70%)
- Watching a movie (52%)
- Culture as day-to-day life (48%)
- Visiting a public library and/or community centre (48%)
- Attending festivals and/or cultural events (47%)

When isolating Branch 1 (artists, creatives, cultural works, cultural industries, and volunteers), the top 5 activities were:
- Attending live performances (63%)
- Culture as day-to-day life (48%)
- Visiting art gallery (46%)
- Attending festivals and/or cultural events (45%)
- Watching a movie (44%)

When given the option to share other activities not listed, the following types activities were shared:

- Making their own artworks
- Visiting public art
- Artist markets
- Fireworks

Question: Has your participation in cultural events and activities changed since before the start of the COVID- 19 pandemic (before 2020)? [Branch 1 & 2]

Has your participation in cultural events and activities changed since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (before 2020)?

No: 39%

Yes: 61%

N 2k
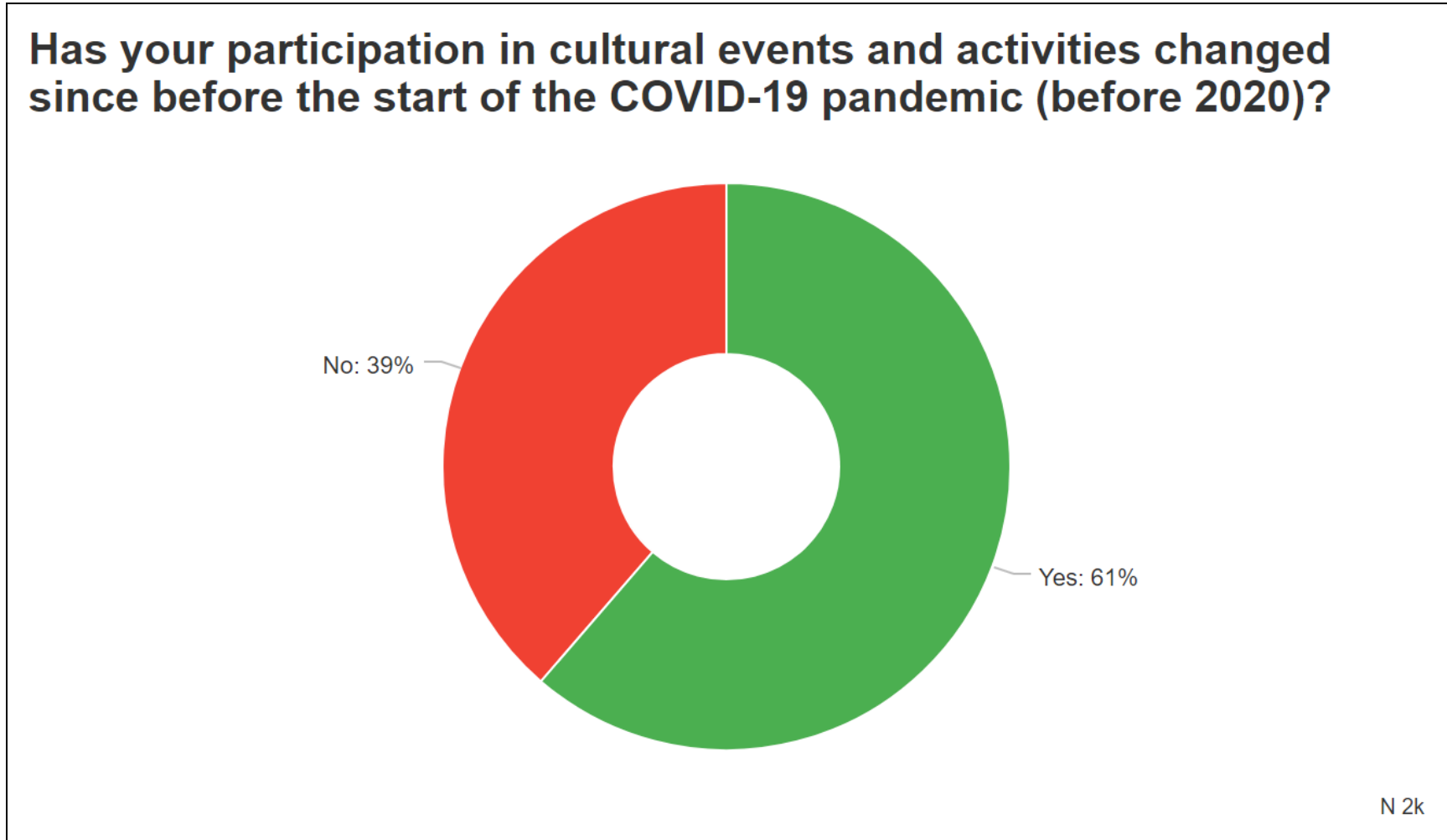
Figure 8. Participant patterns changing since before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When asked if participation patterns have changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 61% of respondents indicated "yes"
- 39% of respondents indicated "no"

Question: Please explain how your participation has changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Branch 1 & 2]

When prompted to explain how experiences have changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents shared that they now tend to participate less in arts and culture activities in general.
- Many respondents discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic saw a reduction of opportunities to participate, work, and volunteer in-person with a simultaneous increase for virtual opportunities.
  - Despite the increase of virtual opportunities, some respondents shared that virtual activities are not adequate substitutions for in-person experiences.
  - Some respondents express a desire for more incentive and support for in-person arts and culture activities.
- Some respondents discussed continued concerns around COVID-19 safety protocols (e.g. ventilation, masking protocols, etc.) Some respondents shared that they are now more inclined to attend outdoor activities over indoor activities for the foreseeable future.
- Some respondents shared a decline in audition, casting, and other artist opportunities through the pandemic. Respondents infer this decline to overall decrease in audience participation and venue closures.
- Some respondents shared that with the increased cost of living, meeting basic needs through other economic ventures (e.g. employment outside the arts) has limited their ability to produce and participate in the arts.
- Some respondents shared that in-person participation is gradually increasing but not at the rate that is need to sustain the sector.
- Some respondents shared a decline in health conditions and increase in access needs through the pandemic causing increased limitation to participate in arts and culture activities.

- Some respondents shared that increased in-person arts and culture activities will require increased physical and non-physical accessibility in arts venues and programming as well as better and easier access to information. Alternatively, a few respondents shared that all in-person programming should be coupled with a virtual/hybrid option to participate moving forward where possible.
- Some respondents shared emotional and mental health challenges like isolation and loss of social connection through the pandemic.

"I do not attend indoor performances to avoid contracting SARS-Cov-2, I have restricted my own performance work and now WFH and always wear a mask in any circumstance which limits what I can do as an artist" - Survey respondent

"I can no longer attend in-person events because of my risk level for COVID-19. I have gone from attending live music, theatre, galleries, films, and several other forms of artistic events *several times a week* to essentially *zero* over the last four years." - Survey respondent

"Covid-19 affected my income. Projects were cancelled or delayed, materials delayed, and galleries and businesses closed. My ability to participate in cultural events went away and took a lot of time to get back into the flow of things. Mental health and physical health issues were also a negative impact." - Survey respondent

Question: What are some of Toronto's greatest strengths when it comes to arts and culture? Select up to five options. [Branch 1 & 2]

What are some of Toronto's greatest strengths when it comes to arts and culture? Select up to five options.

	Count	% of responses	%
Toronto is home to many diverse cultural groups and traditions	1.3k		66%
The city is full of unique neighbourhoods with lots of creative energy and cultural history	1.0k		51%
Toronto offers a range of unforgettable live performances, including music, theatre and dance	946		48%
Toronto has a one-of-a-kind food scene that lets you discover food from all over the world	917		46%
Festivals and events help me to discover cultures and neighbourhoods across the city	739		37%
There are plenty of cultural activities to enjoy all year-round	714		36%
There are lots of options for cultural programming, activities and events that are inspiring, engaging and entertaining	628		32%
You'll find interesting public art all around, including murals and sculptures	488		25%
Toronto is a great place to discover history, through historic museums and neighbourhoods like the Distillery District	332		17%
A growing creative industries sector is fostering innovation and economic opportunities	304		15%
Toronto gives a lot of support to local artists and cultural organizations through grants and programs	190		10%
Other (please explain):	147		7%
I don't know	40		2%

N 2k

Figure 9. Toronto's greatest strengths when it comes to arts and culture.

The five most identified strengths of Toronto's arts and culture scene are:

- Toronto is home to many diverse cultural groups and traditions (66% of respondents)
- The city is full of unique neighbourhoods with lots of creative energy and cultural history (51%)
- Toronto offers a range of unforgettable live performances, including music, theatre and dance (48%)
- Toronto has a one-of-a-kind food scene that lets you discover food from all over the world (46%)
- Festivals and events help me discover cultures and neighbourhoods across the city (37%)

From the "other" responses, the majority of responses were focussed on challenges and barriers which are reflected in the following question.

Question: What are some challenges or barriers you face when experiencing arts and culture in Toronto? Select up to three options. [Branch 1 & 2]

What are some challenges or barriers you face when experiencing arts and culture in Toronto? Select up to three options.	Count	% of responses	%
The costs to participate are too high	1.1k		57%
I have a hard time finding information about cultural activities and events	666		36%
Cultural activities are too far to travel to or too hard to get to by public transportation	510		27%
Other (please explain): Please do not provide any personal information about yourself or other individuals (such as: name, address, telephone number, email, etc.) in your response.	302		16%
I have other commitments that are more important	273		15%
I find it hard to attend in-person	264		14%
The types of arts and culture activities in Toronto don't reflect my preferences including content, type of activity, venue, technology etc.	235		13%
I find events, activities and programs inaccessible (physically or mentally)	167		9%
I don't feel represented in Toronto's arts and culture scene so I don't participate	129		7%
I don't feel welcome at arts and culture activities, venues, events etc.	101		5%
I don't know	84		4%
I'm not interested in any of the arts and culture activities in Toronto	28		1%
I don't feel Toronto's arts and culture scene represents my culture or my cultural preferences	0		

N 1.9k

Figure 10. Top challenges and barriers for arts and culture experiences.

The three most identified challenges or barriers to experiencing Toronto's arts and culture scene are:

- The costs to participate are too high (57% of respondents)
- I have a hard time finding information about cultural activities and events (36%)
- Cultural activities are too far to travel to or too hard to get to by public transportation (27%)

From the "other" responses, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents shared that due to inadequate income coupled by high living costs, they are unable to participate or attend arts and culture experiences. Some suggest continuing to identify ways to provide affordable participation options.
- Some respondents shared that a challenge they face is that the timing and scheduling of activities do not align with their schedules. A few shared that this is related to having to take on precarious work or second jobs to meet basic needs.
- Some respondents shared that arts and culture experiences are inaccessible (both in terms of venue and programming).
- A few respondents shared that arts and culture activities are not located where they live (citing Scarborough specifically). There is a lack of options outside the downtown core of Toronto.

"I often have to work extra shifts to support living in this city and the rising cost of living, which leaves less time and money for experiencing arts and culture." - Survey respondent

"I am often too tired from work to go out." - Survey respondent

"I found many of the newer or smaller budget organizations have a hard time to promote their events. Either found out about the events too late or just a few people there even if I go there somehow. Often many of these events have great content." - Survey respondent

Question: What would motivate you to get more involved in arts and culture activities in Toronto? Select up to three options. [Branch 1 & 2]

What would motivate you to get more involved in arts and culture activities in Toronto? Select up to three options. Please do not provide any personal information about yourself or other individuals in your response.

	Count	% of responses	%
More low-cost or free options	1.2k		63%
More events and cultural experiences that are in my local neighborhood	871		46%
Better advertising/information on events taking place	811		43%
Opportunities to meet new people and get involved	474		25%
Cultural activities for all ages (including families and kids)	279		15%
More hybrid/online options to experience culture	229		12%
Cultural experiences that are more reflective of my culture or background	213		11%
Programming that I care about (please explain):	187		10%
Other (please explain):	178		9%
I don't know	60		3%
			N 1.9k

Figure 11. Top motivators to get more involved in arts and culture activities.

The three most identified motivations to get more involved in arts and culture activities in Toronto are:

- More low-cost or free options (63% of respondents)
- More events and cultural experiences that are in my local neighbourhood (46%)
- Better advertising/information on events taking place (43%)

From the "other" responses, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents shared increased accessibility would increase motivations including:
  - Venue accessibility (e.g. wheelchair access, accessible washrooms, low-sensory times or spaces, venue access guides, etc.)
  - Programming accessibility (e.g. ASL, low-vision accommodations, audio descriptions, autism-friendly tours, etc.)
- Some respondents shared location near public transportation is a motivator.
- Some respondents shared stronger and more enforced COVID-19 prevention protocols is a motivator.
- Some respondents shared an increase in the "quality" of arts and culture programming and offerings.
- A few respondents shared more arts and culture activities in their local neighbourhood would be a motivator.

"The downtown core has a lot of good quality cultural programming, the rest of the city has very little." - Survey respondent

Question: How do you hear about arts and culture activities in Toronto? Select all that apply. [Branch 1 & 2]

How do you hear about arts and culture activities in Toronto? Select all that apply.

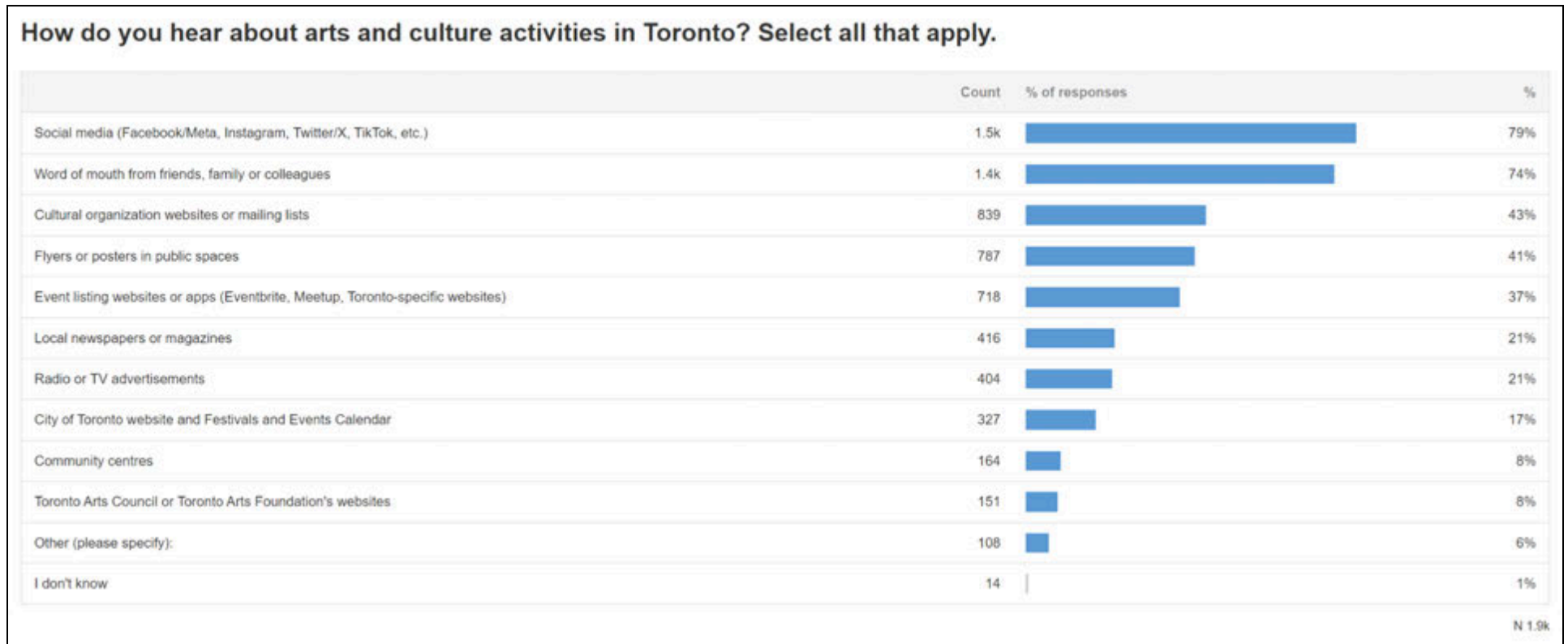|	Count	% of responses	%
Social media (Facebook/Meta, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, etc.)	1.5k		79%
Word of mouth from friends, family or colleagues	1.4k		74%
Cultural organization websites or mailing lists	839		43%
Flyers or posters in public spaces	787		41%
Event listing websites or apps (Eventbrite, Meetup, Toronto-specific websites)	718		37%
Local newspapers or magazines	416		21%
Radio or TV advertisements	404		21%
City of Toronto website and Festivals and Events Calendar	327		17%
Community centres	164		8%
Toronto Arts Council or Toronto Arts Foundation's websites	151		8%
Other (please specify):	108		6%
I don't know	14		1%
			N 1.9k

Figure 12. How people hear about arts and culture activities in Toronto.

The five most common ways people hear about arts and culture activities in Toronto are:

- Social media (79% of respondents)
- Word of mouth from friends, family or colleagues (74%)
- Cultural organization websites or mailing lists (43%)
- Flyers or posters in public spaces (41%)
- Event listing websites or apps (37%)

From the "other" responses, the following mediums were recurringly shared:

- Akimbo
- BlogTO
- TTC advertisements
- LinkedIn

> When isolating respondents from Branch 2, general audience members and participants hear about arts and culture activities more often from local newspapers or magazines (26%) and radio or TV advertisements (26%) than the overall averages (21% respectively).

Question: Imagine Toronto in 2034. What does your ideal city look like, from an arts and culture perspective? Consider cultural activities, events and experiences you wish were available in the city, or that you'd love to see in the future. Feel free to share any examples from other places around the world! [Branch 1 & 2

When asked to envision Toronto in 2034, the following recurring themes were shared:

- **Diversity and inclusion in the arts.** There is an interest in having Toronto's diversity reflected in the make-up of arts organizations and teams, arts programming/conent, and performers/artists. Through the diversification of the arts, more diverse audiences would be interested in participating or attending arts and culture activities bolstering the economic outlook of the arts and culture sector while emphasizing the positive social and health value of arts.

- **Affordable and accessible arts and culture activities.** Respondents are imagining a Toronto where both the production and experience of arts and culture activities are deeply affordable and accessible. Some ideas for improving affordability and access include:
    - Subsidized ticket programs for arts and culture events
    - Encouragement of partnerships between arts organizations and local businesses to deliver arts and culture experiences
    - Creating community-based arts initiatives that are funded either publicly, privately, or through a public-private partnership to reduce the financial burden on individual artists and groups
    - Low-cost, free, or pay-what-you-can arts and culture activities and events
    - Create more accessible spaces and venues (e.g. wheelchair access)
    - Improving the public transportation options/availability to arts and culture experiences
    - Prioritizing the development and programming of lively arts and culture hubs in local neighbourhoods that reflect the local community profile
- **Community engagement in the arts.** Respondents shared a dream for more community-engaged arts. One recurring idea to do this is to have continued and transparent engagement of the arts and creative community in city-wide initiatives and processes.
- **Focus on the quality of arts rather than the quantity.** A few participants indicated that the quality of art in Toronto is not strong, and that the City should prioritize this over quantity.
- Other locales shared as good examples were Berlin, Detroit, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Some qualities/reasons why respondents cited these places include:
    - The arts and culture scene feels inclusive and accessible.
    - Arts and culture activities are well-funded and remain affordable to the public cultivating a low-risk environment for artists and creatives to take risks.
    - Artworks and communities are diverse in offerings and feel welcoming and community-oriented.
    - Artists feel respected. Their role in society is valued and recognized.
    - A prioritization to support local artist and creatives and fostering a specific creative milieu unique to the city.
    - Independence on a reliance on the private secure to fund the arts.

"In 2034, Arts are a non-negotiable part of what makes Toronto a thriving city. We derive our sense of pride and identity through the variety of offerings. Things that are uniquely Toronto and feature Toronto artists." - Survey respondent

"I don't ever have to ask myself "Can I participate in this". Information is freely provided and abundant. There are more access features as standard. We can have complex conversations through art and cultural sharings about who we are as people and what we need to thrive. We live in a responsive city where these conversations lead to change and a provision of resources. There is enough for us all. We rise." - Survey respondent

"In 2034, Toronto has a vibrant cultural scene. This ranges from large outdoor events to smaller local neighbourhood gatherings. Arts and culture are important on a local scale. Torontonians are deeply connected to the arts activities in our communities. Artists and arts professionals are our neighbours and city councillors. Torontonians are creative people and many of us have our own creative practice, with no expectation of being a professional. Just because we like it." - Survey respondent

"In 2034, Toronto thrives as a global arts hub. Interactive street art festivals like those in Berlin and vibrant night markets inspired by Taipei create a dynamic cultural landscape. The city embraces immersive technology, hosting augmented reality art installations and virtual reality performances. A diverse range of cultural events, from traditional Indigenous celebrations to futuristic digital art showcases, foster unity and understanding. In this ideal future, the city celebrates its multicultural identity through a kaleidoscope of artistic expressions, making Toronto a beacon for creativity worldwide." - Survey respondent

Question: There are many ways that the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council and Foundation can support artists, the creative industries and cultural sector. We heard some important recommendations through our community conversations. Which of the following are most important to you? Select your top three answers. [Branch 2]
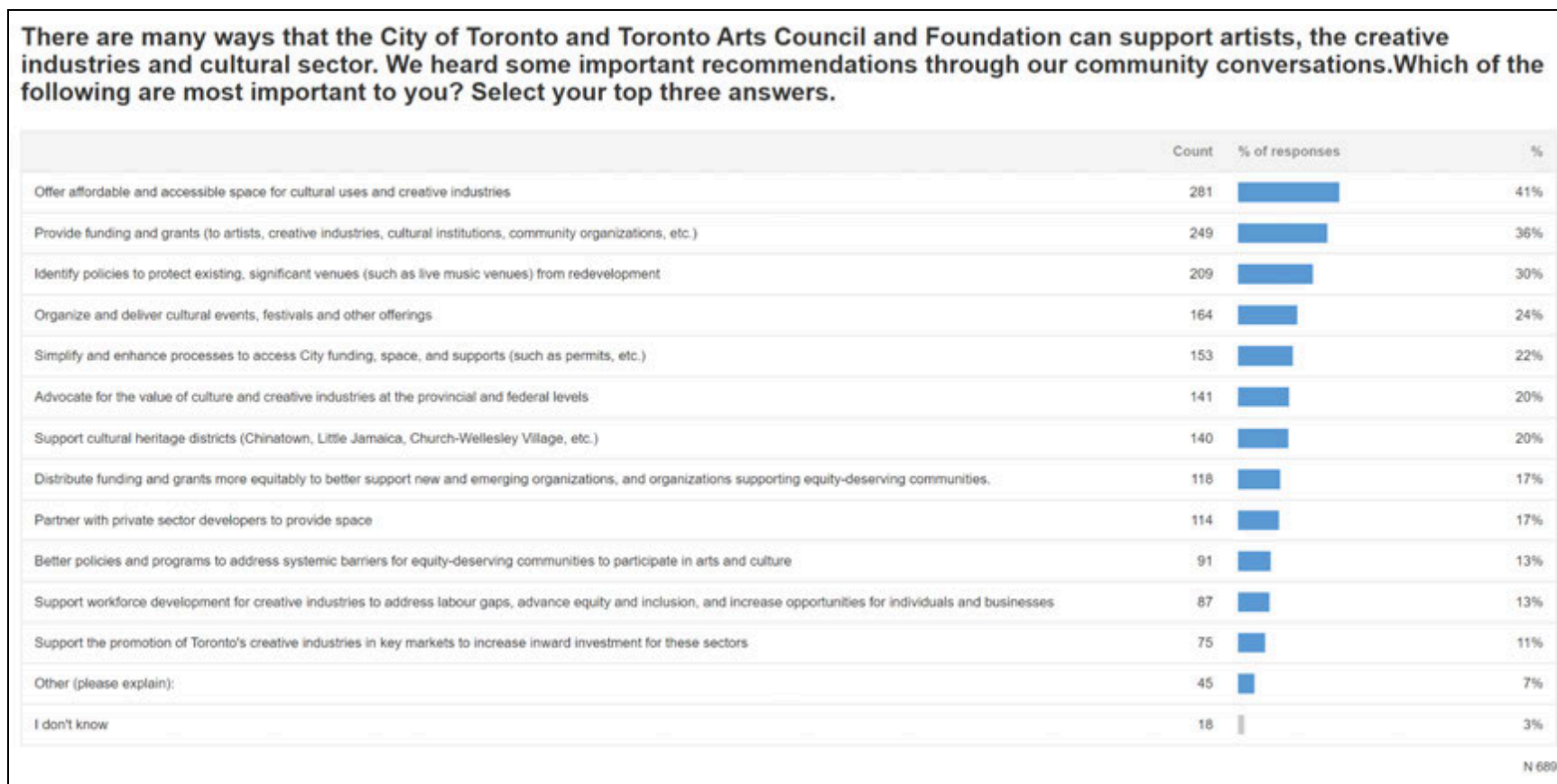
There are many ways that the City of Toronto and Toronto Arts Council and Foundation can support artists, the creative industries and cultural sector. We heard some important recommendations through our community conversations.Which of the following are most important to you? Select your top three answers.

	Count	% of responses	%
Offer affordable and accessible space for cultural uses and creative industries	281		41%
Provide funding and grants (to artists, creative industries, cultural institutions, community organizations, etc.)	249		36%
Identify policies to protect existing, significant venues (such as live music venues) from redevelopment	209		30%
Organize and deliver cultural events, festivals and other offerings	164		24%
Simplify and enhance processes to access City funding, space, and supports (such as permits, etc.)	153		22%
Advocate for the value of culture and creative industries at the provincial and federal levels	141		20%
Support cultural heritage districts (Chinatown, Little Jamaica, Church-Wellesley Village, etc.)	140		20%
Distribute funding and grants more equitably to better support new and emerging organizations, and organizations supporting equity-deserving communities.	118		17%
Partner with private sector developers to provide space	114		17%
Better policies and programs to address systemic barriers for equity-deserving communities to participate in arts and culture	91		13%
Support workforce development for creative industries to address labour gaps, advance equity and inclusion, and increase opportunities for individuals and businesses	87		13%
Support the promotion of Toronto's creative industries in key markets to increase inward investment for these sectors	75		11%
Other (please explain):	45		7%
I don't know	18		3%

N 689

Figure 13. Ways the City and TAC can support artists, creative industries, and the culture sector.

The three most resonating ways people believe the City of Toronto and TAC could support artists, creative industries, and the culture sector:

- Offer affordable and accessible space for cultural uses and creative industries (41% of respondents)
- Provide funding and grants (to artists, creative industries, cultural institutions, community organizations, etc.) (36%)
- Identify policies to protect existing, significant venues from redevelopment (30%)

From the "other" responses, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Some respondents shared the need to emphasize the importance of arts and culture education for children and people exploring careers in creative fields.
- Some respondents shared that the City and TAC can better support or keep accountable artists and organizations that receive funds for social impact so that the desired impact and return-on-investment is achieved.
- Some respondents shared the need to meet basic needs specifically supporting with affordable or subsidized housing for artists and creatives.

For Black respondents, **support cultural heritage districts** (41% of respondents) was their second most resonating way the City and TAC can support artists, creative, industries, and the culture sector after **offer affordable and accessible space for cultural uses and creative industries** (48%).

For Indigenous respondents, **simplify and enhance processes to access City funding, space and supports** (29%) was the second top choice whereas this ranked fifth in the overall data set.

Question: Are there other solutions not captured that you would like to highlight? [Branch 2]

When prompted to share other solutions not previously captured, the following themes emerged from the open-ended data:

- Some respondents shared the increased need to help promote and raise awareness of arts and culture activities in Toronto. Some specific ideas include:

- A centralized platform for arts and culture event listings
- A centralized platform for funding opportunities
- Some respondents shared the City and TAC has a significant role in providing and increasing programs to bring arts and culture activities into schools, daycares, and city-operated spaces.
- Some respondents shared the need to improve venue accessibility.
- Some respondents shared the need to improve transparency on funding and how public funds are being allocated.

Question: Is there anything else you'd like us to know? [Branch 1 & 2]

When prompted to share anything else, the following recurring themes were shared:

- Many respondents reiterated key themes shared throughout the survey insights including:
    - More promotion and outreach of arts and culture activities, experiences, opportunities, and funding.
    - More funding and support for artists and arts organization altogether.
    - Rooting in meeting the basic needs of artists so they can practice their art or explore creativity.
- Some respondents highlighted transportation and mobility issues as a barrier to arts and culture production and activities. Some shared a need to improve the public transportation system and provide more transportation services for disabled people.
- Some respondents shared a desire more arts and culture activities overall. A few shared specific call-outs like more diversity in art offerings and more year-round events.
- Some respondents took the opportunity to thank the City and TAC for engaging artists through the survey.

Appendix E: Summary of Findings from Community Toolkits

APPENDIX E: Culture Plan Community Toolkit Summary

Prepared by Monumental

Image series. *Photos from the Cultural Policy Hub at OCADU hosted this Community Conversation with Emerging Artists.*

Overview

Monumental developed a 'Host-Your-Own' Community Toolkit so Torontonians can host conversations about the culture plan on their own time - with friends, over family dinner, at work, or anywhere really.

Who Engaged

10 groups organized Community Conversations using the toolkit, and 140 people participated.

- **Arts groups, large and small**: Five of the conversations were hosted by and with a series of arts and cultural organizations and collectives, including artist-run centres, collectives and a group of artists. The disciplines included mural and street art, visual art, theatre. Named groups include: Bad Dog Theatre Company, Don Valley Art Club, Red Head Gallery Collective and The Theatre Centre.
- **Ontario College of Art and Design University Cultural Policy Hub** facilitated workshop for emerging artists from different disciplines.
- **High school students:** A teacher of École secondaire Toronto Ouest, élèves MHS en Arts et Culture engaged high school students in the conversation.
- **General Public**: Councillor Malik's office engaged with participants at an event at the Bentway.

What Was Asked

Overall, participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. How do you experience culture in Toronto today?
   (ie. Where are your favourite places to engage with culture in the city? What communities are you a part of? How do these communities express culture in the city? What gets in the way of you participating in and enjoying culture?)

2. How would you like to experience culture in Toronto in the future?
   (ie. In 10 years, what should Toronto's cultural sector and scene be like? What is one big hope, idea or dream you'd like to share? Share your top three ideas for how the City can support culture in Toronto. How do we get there?)

What We Heard

Detailed verbatim notes have been shared with the City.

Experiencing Culture Today:

Diverse cultural experiences: Of the 140 participants engaged through the toolkit, only a handful were general members of the public (participants of arts and culture). These participants largely appreciated the city's diverse cultural offerings, including street festivals that showcase various traditions and cuisines. They value opportunities to learn about different cultures and

communities through events like these. Some members of the public said they watch movies and see live performances as well.

"I love 'Caribana'! The creativity and the opportunity to teach people about Caribbean culture!" - Participant, member of general public

"More representation of Franco-Ontarian culture and language please!"

Artists, creative and cultural workers:
Many of the artists, creatives and cultural workers engaged, said they experience arts and culture by making art and culture, and that while they would like to participate in other ways, they often don't have the time or money to do so.

Many discussed the importance of engaging with and supporting grassroots and local arts organizations, including arts collectives and artist run centres. Other artists, creatives and cultural workers, especially emerging artists, shared that they prefer to engage in cultural experiences through mentorships, educational opportunities and general connections (parties, sharing food, informal gatherings). Others suggested that they experience art and culture at home.

"As comedy arts workers, we are often balancing our own arts practices with our day jobs in the arts, so we only have enough time to watch productions that we are involved in, either directly or tangentially. There isn't much capacity to go out and see other forms of art or cultural experiences, it is either to do this or to rest..."

"A lot of culture experiences are financially inaccessible to us arts workers. Often the theater or cultural experiences we see are due to the availability of arts workers priced or comps through connections."

Challenges identified:
Artists, creatives and cultural workers who participated in community conversations shared a number of current challenges in Toronto including:
- A loss of or limited studio and cultural spaces
- High cost of living in Toronto
- Lack of adequate funding as well as barriers to granting systems
- Labour precarity and undervaluing of artist work
- Limited opportunities to connect, learn and engage about arts and culture in the city, including mentorship opportunities
- Equity, inclusion, cultural redress and accessibility issues are often not prioritized or meaningfully addressed
- Increased loneliness and isolation, especially for seniors
- Disconnect between City departments and the public
- Artists and cultural workers leaving Toronto en masse
- Lack of transparency from the City e.g. how decisions are made - particularly regarding funding and supports for arts and culture.

"There is a real lack of transparency and a disconnect at the City level [among City staff]. Who is curating arts opportunities? Why are staff on the front lines of arts and culture orgs unaware of what's going on at a high level of decision making at the City like with Section 37 funding disappearing?"

"Senior artists feel pushed out and in some cases even driven to suicide as they reach the point where they cannot afford to keep going and so many programs are for "emerging and/or next gen" artists"

Experiencing Culture in the Future

Feedback below is separated by the general public and artist and cultural worker responses:

General public:

Affordable and accessible community spaces (to experience different cultures, to dance, festivals, etc.) Some specific ideas include:

- Affordable community dance spaces e.g. for lindy hop, swing, contra
- More Caribbean art and dance and food
- More festivals dedicated to different cultural groups
- Restoring the planetarium near the museum
- Support for community theatre that can be co-created with neighbours

Artist, creative and cultural workers on where they would like the City to be in 10 years:

- Trust is built between the City and communities it serves
- There are enough resources to afford to live and have basic needs met
- Artists, creatives and cultural workers are recognized for the value they bring to the city, beyond economic impact / Arts and culture are thought of essential services
- There are more community-driven and grassroots cultural activities

Participants also shared:

- There are creative and innovative ideas and solutions being shared to support new alternative funding models and economic systems, ways to engage communities and take risks.

"The most pressing issues of artists in Toronto are not likely to be resolved by The City of Toronto's Culture Plan (poverty, affordability crisis, lack of housing/astronomical rent, high levels of mental illness including suicides in senior arts population, etc.). While the culture plan won't resolve these issues, these issues need to be deeply considered at the core of the plan – as we create a cultural policy, we're thinking deeply about the state of the artist trying to live in this city."

Specific solutions, actions and ideas shared by participants:

"Advocacy and connection-making should not be a "nice to have" from the City, rather it's the City's role to play"

Advocacy and connections
The City should have a prominent role in advocacy and "connection-making", including:

Advocacy
- Advocate at all levels of government "for not only a living wage but a thriving wage"
- Play a major leadership role in how Canada and Ontario approaches the future of culture and cultural funding moving forward:
    - Lead a discussion on whether Canada needs a new "Massey Commission"
    - Push Ontario government to increase per capita arts funding
- The City needs to re-think what it values/prioritizes:
    - Allow for Section 37/Community Good funds to be used for programming and operations, not only capital budgets (outdoor film programs in parks, community liaison positions, etc.)
    - Look beyond 'economic impact' of arts and culture and share how arts and culture impact our daily lives
- Develop campaign about arts and culture as essential services

Connections
- Incorporate Cultural policy into every City department (Community & Social Services, Infrastructure Services, Development & Growth Services, Corporate Services, Finance & Treasury Services) rather than an action plan that lives outside these departments as its own 'special project':
    - Artists bring unique perspectives and creative thinking, and it's important to have an artist at the table of every major conversation. This is about impact on City policies and practices.
    - Expand the Artist in Residence program in City's Urban Forestry team and look at other precedents in North America where artist in residence programs take place.
- Model work that can happen collectively and not in silos
- Connect artists with prospective private partners for potential space, collaboration, etc.

- Support independent artists build relationships (For example, Develop city-led mentorship program)

Space needs
- The Office of Cultural Space needs to develop a master list of accessible spaces in the city for workshops, performances, community connections, etc.
- Invest in artist housing and facilities (co-op housing. land trusts, etc)
- Advocate for policies and partnerships around affordable space, including:
    - Rent control and inclusionary zoning
    - Property tax subsidies (401 Richmond as example)
    - Remodel Community benefits (focus on creative living and community spaces, instead of public art sculptures)
    - Cultural space grants
    - Sharing policies and partnership opportunities (ie. leasing empty storefronts or event spaces with artist opportunities)
- Consider specific opportunities for public spaces:
    - Ease regulations/red tape for accessing public spaces for events and cultural practices
    - Provide cultural protection for community-identified places of significance (cultural district studies)
- Learn from other cities protecting cultural spaces (London, England)

Funding and other supports
- Introduction of a basic income guarantee, or something akin to CERB
- Cost/sales tax subsidy for artists
- Stop funding cuts to the arts
- Increased funding for the existing model
- Redistribute funding away from large-scale arts organizations towards emerging artists
- Open ended grant application, less evaluation on what is "feasible". Right now there's a lot of criteria on what would actually be "successful"

Note on funding and fear of censorship / freedom of expression
- Courage of funders to support work that is critical of the systems (of power)
- Connect artists and arts organization through a matching system (see Business Arts South Africa as an example)
- Increased access and connection to private funding could be helpful when trying to fund more critical work
- One participant expressed the desire to be able to self-fund projects to not have to feel like their project is being dictated by someone else

Equity, Access, Inclusion, Cultural Redress

- Support programs in place to support senior/aging/disabled artists to retire and programs for caregivers (childcare, artists caring for senior parents, family, community)
- Advocate for calls to defund police
- Support artists organizing around human rights
- Redistribute power
- Develop arts and equity strategy that is measurable

Appendix F: Summary of Findings from City of Toronto-led Engagements

APPENDIX F: City-Led Community Conversations

Prepared by City of Toronto

Overview

In addition to engagement activities led by Monumental, the City also hosted some supplementary community conversations about the Culture Plan.

Who Was Engaged

5 additional community conversations were hosted by the City, engaging over 150 participants. These conversations included members from:

- **Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs):** including executive directors from North York Arts, Arts Etobicoke, East End Arts, Lakeshore Arts, North York Arts, Scarborough Arts and UrbanArts.
- **Post Secondary Institutions:** in partnership with York University, a discussion with members across post-secondary institutions including York University, OCADU, George Brown, Humber, University of Toronto, Seneca, Toronto Metropolitan University and Dance Arts Institute.
- **Museums and Heritage Sector:** in partnership with the Ontario Museum Association, including executive directors from across organizations including Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Museum of University of Toronto, Art Gallery of York University, Bata Shoe Museum, Black Creek Pioneer Village, Campbell House, Casa Loma, Gardiner Museum, Hockey Hall of Fame, Little Canada, Myseum, Royal Ontario Museum, Textile Museum, Toronto's First Post Office, and Toronto's Holocaust Museum.
- **Creative Industries:** two virtual engagement sessions were hosted with members working in creative industries, broadly defined as industries based in creativity and skill, leading to job creation and revenue generation through the production and distribution of intellectual property. Some examples of sectors this includes are film and television, animation, music, and creative technologies including video game development, immersive, VR/AR and e-sports.

City staff also presented to Council Advisory Bodies to share about the Culture Plan and gather additional input, including:

- Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (2SLGBTQ+) Advisory Committee
- Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Confronting Anti-Black Racism Advisory Committee
- Toronto Music Advisory Committee

- Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board
- Toronto Francophone Affairs Advisory Committee

What Was Asked

Participants were asked to share feedback and ideas related to the following discussion questions, adapted slightly depending on the community conversation:

1. What are key challenges faced by the public (audiences, students and communities), artists, and organizations looking to access and deliver services and programming?
2. What are potential opportunities, solutions or ideas that can help address these challenges?
3. What is one big hope, idea or dream for the future of arts, culture and creative industries in Toronto?

What We Heard

Across all engagement activities, participants shared the following feedback about challenges they are facing as organizations/institutions, and challenges faced by their audience members and the artists/communities they serve. They also shared their ideas on potential solutions and ideas for consideration as the City and TAC develop the Culture Plan.

Challenges Facing the Sector Today:

Affordability and rising costs: affordability and cost to operate and maintain cultural spaces is a key challenge, including struggling to maintain operating costs and financing new programming, technology and new media initiatives. Further, participants shared about the continued cost of living and housing affordability challenges for residents, artists and students alike. Participants shared feedback that increasingly, their staff and students are moving further out of the City and commuting long hours for work or school. This in turn is putting pressure on remote work options and the ability for creatives to live and work within the city.

Broader city-wide challenges: in addition to cost of living challenges, participants shared feedback about broader city-wide challenges that are impacting the sector, including transit and transportation challenges, access to healthcare, better benefits, access to / improved childcare, and accessibility supports, all of which are making it more and more challenging to attract and retain a talented workforce in Toronto. Additionally, it is harder to access cultural services and programming with limited transit options not only within neighbourhoods and outside the core, but also across the downtown with increasing transportation challenges in the city.

Job opportunities and security: participants shared feedback about the difficulties of working in the creative industries and culture sector, including challenges with

gig-economy jobs, resulting in income instability, lower wages, lack of benefits programs and employment uncertainty. While some gig-workers may have good salaries, participants shared about the challenges with precarious employment in offering stability in their lives (i.e. harder to get a mortgage). Participants also shared about the drawbacks of hybrid work arrangements, such as not having access to places to work and often relying on free public spaces and libraries; and feeling isolated and disconnected from other cultural sector workers.

Career pathways, growth and talent 'drain': we heard from participants about the need for career and workforce development opportunities in Toronto. Specifically, the need for education, training and re-training opportunities for creative industries, supporting women in gaming and VR/AR industries, workforce development support for youth and emerging artists and creatives but also mid-career professionals and managerial level professionals. Toronto is facing challenges with losing talented creatives to other cities within Ontario, Canada and abroad. Creatives are leaving mid-career positions for higher paying jobs, and it is becoming increasing challenging for youth and emerging creatives to enter the sector.

Communications and data collection: participants shared feedback about the challenges to effectively communicate the value of arts and culture sector to the public, which includes the need for greater cultural data collection.

Challenges and limitations of existing cultural spaces: we heard from those in the museum and post secondary sectors that they would like open their spaces for more community use, however there are many challenges to make this possible, including that many cultural spaces are not equipped for expanded uses (i.e. state of good repair back log) as well the need for alternative operating models and systems to support opening up existing spaces for community/alternative uses.

Pressure on domestic cultural producers: participants shared feedback about how it is becoming increasingly difficult for local and independent production to take place in the city due to rising production costs and limited support available for domestic producers.

Competing priorities: participants shared feedback about how competing priorities in the city are making it difficult for cultural workers. For example, film production relies heavily on employment lands and surface parking lots/parking spaces, large trucks, cars, generators etc. Film productions often require a lot of space and it is becoming harder to film in Toronto when these spaces are being redeveloped, or there are road closures for construction projects. The challenge to work around these barriers and cost to produce in Toronto, especially the downtown, is coming prohibitive.

Funding and revenue challenges: we heard from participants across the engagement sessions about challenges associated with limited funding availability and revenue streams /

sources, including dependencies on grants and tuition sources. Participants also shared feedback that current and existing grant sources do not necessarily support the types of innovative projects they are seeking to do. We also heard from participants that grants do not often align with the sector's needs, for example grants may be available for product-based companies working with Intellectual Property, but not available for those in the service sector. Additional feedback gathered is that it takes a lot of investment to build an audience to a point where ticket/service/product-based sales can become a viable revenue stream. As a result, grants and other funding sources are very critical and consistent support to ensure the growth of creative industries and cultural organizations is lacking.

Cultural space needs outside the core: participants shared feedback about how spaces need to be designed differently outside the downtown core, with consideration for co-locating services for ease of access, as well as consideration for design and location, and ensuring spaces are designed to feel welcoming, foster community interaction and not feel policed. Similarly, public art projects should be designed to reflect the geographical realities outside the core (i.e. consideration for how public art is experienced for those driving as that is more likely than walking in the suburbs; lack of downtown infrastructure such as laneways or alleys and thus limited eligibility for associated public art grants).

Accessible and affordable cultural spaces: we also heard from participants about the need for more cultural spaces throughout the city, including accessible cultural spaces, and safe spaces for the 2SLGBTQ+ community, youth, Elders, Black and Indigenous communities. Artists, creatives, cultural workers and organizations are struggling to find (and pay for) cultural spaces, for example those working in video games and creative technology industries are facing challenges finding large enough venues to showcase their work, for gaming summits and conventions.

Audience retention: performance venues and cultural organizations are facing challenges to draw audiences to their venues, which have declined significantly and not returned to pre-COVID 19 pandemic levels. As the cost to produce cultural events continues to rise, ticket prices are also increasing, discouraging audience attendance.

Support for additional sectors: while Toronto has a diversity of cultural sectors, we also heard from participants about the challenges that 'smaller' sectors are facing. Declining industries not only can result in a loss of technical skills but also impact other supporting sectors. For example, participants shared that as Toronto's fashion industry declines this may also have a secondary impact on the film and television sector. Further with the loss of this industry, Toronto 'fashion high-streets' are declining, which impacts the visitor economy. The loss of non-culture sector related businesses also has an impact on the culture sector, such the decline of mainstreets which support key cultural activity and act as key vibrant locations within neighbourhoods.

Expanding the understanding and value of arts and culture: organizations providing arts and culture programming go beyond what is considered to be strictly 'arts and culture' by providing community service support, afterschool programs as a means of day care, service and support for seniors etc. The value of arts and culture goes beyond to encompass community building and it is often challenging to convey this value in meaningful way to the public, investors, donors and funders.

Collective healing: we heard from participants that we haven't figured out how to collectively heal, and more generally, how to process the traumatic events of the COVID-19 pandemic as a community and sector.

Limited support available for new and emerging organizations: new and growing organizations are struggling to access funding and resources to expand and stabilize their operations. Participants spoke to the difficulty new organizations face in learning about and securing operating funding for the first time from the City, Toronto Arts Council, and other public funders.

Understanding the impact of AI: participants shared concerns about the unknowns of Artificial Intelligence and the impact it may have on creative industries, the labour market and 'human-based' cultural production. Participants recognized the power of AI however expressed concerns about copy-write protection and the need to protect 'human creativity'.

Potential Solutions:

Identify new business models: provide business development and organizational capacity development support to cultural organizations so they can identify new business, revenue sources and operating models. Participants expressed that while there is interest in sharing and opening up their spaces to provide artists and the community for free or reduced costs, they need support identifying new business models. Furthermore, there needs to be greater collaboration with developers and private landowners to identify solutions for arts and culture space development.

Expand affordable housing options: support the need for artist housing and alternative housing options such as artist co-ops, co-operative housing, land trusts, as well as financing programs for artists (i.e. support for mortgage options, rent-to-own options, etc.).

Recognise the value of arts and culture as a key economic driver: need to emphasize the value of cultural tourism and the broader impact that culture has on driving local, regional and national GDP. This can be partially achieved through more robust cultural data collection and information sharing about the value of arts, culture and creative industries.

Drive cultural tourism and build around experiences: leverage large-scale events that draw people to the city and offer supplementary cultural experiences for audiences. For example, this could include creating offerings for audiences to experience other cultural activities, programs and spaces in the city when they visit Toronto for major events (i.e. FIFA, TIFF, Pride Parade, Toronto Caribbean Carnival, etc.).

Redefine museum spaces as places to go to experience shows, culture, programming etc. not just to view 'artifacts'. Similar to library spaces and how they offer different types of uses and spaces for everyone – need to make museum spaces relevant to the community.

Allow for more dynamic and flexible funding: provide greater flexibility in funding to support experimentation and risk taking; examine funding and grant requirements to better support new and emerging artists and organizations; provide micro-grants or smaller grants with lower eligibility criteria to help support innovation as well as help new and emerging artists and creative gain access to seed funding.

Explore incentives and alternative funding and financing options: explore options to support cultural production, organizations and creatives in the city through tax incentives or reductions. Explore ways to encourage participation/reduce the cost to participate in arts and culture (i.e. youth culture pass).

Build connections: facilitate connections and intersection between cultural and creative industry sectors and institutions, as well as non-cultural sectors (i.e. medical, technology, etc.), to build opportunities for networking, career advancement, but also to facilitate unlikely partnerships, innovation and collaboration across sectors (i.e. pairing museums with local software developers). In addition, participants mentioned the need for more opportunities to come together and gather to discuss how to continually support each other and share resources.

Create an enabling environment: the City doesn't need to define what 'culture' is but instead help to create an enabling environment that supports culture (i.e. infrastructure, cultural spaces, partnerships, networks, connections, making it easier to do the work in the city and to navigate City processes etc.). The City should assist in cultural production rather than dictate what should be produced.

Support local and domestic production: explore opportunities to support domestic cultural producers, for example with programs to lower the cost of production for local producers (i.e. a 'Toronto rate' for domestic film permits, and support for smaller industry organizations to access space).

Support connected sectors and services: in addition to directly supporting arts, culture and creative industry sectors, the City should support connected industries that have an impact

on cultural experiences and production (i.e. hospitality industry - offering lower rates during large cultural events to encourage cultural tourism; support with accessibility needs, caregiving and childcare outside typical work hours to support arts workers needs etc.

Support international economic opportunities: expand trade missions to include growing creative industries including video games, esports, immersive technology among others; additional, support local creatives and cultural organizations to showcase their work and talent nationally and internationally.

Increase support and resources for equity-deserving communities to get access into the sector as well as providing opportunities 'closer to home'. Help to make connections in the industry and provide more resources to these creatives to help build access and 'level footing'. Further, support organizations who are already doing this 'scaffolding' work.

Support Black-led cultural initiatives and spaces: provide dedicated support to Black-led cultural initiatives and infrastructure projects, while recognizing the broad diversity of Black communities.

Continue to provide pathways into the industry/sector: build partnerships with post secondaries, organizations and training institutions; build leadership training programs including support for youth and emerging creatives as well as mid-career professionals; support women to enter into the creative industries, especially in gaming and VR/AR; support with education, training and re-training opportunities especially as technology and AI advances; provide connections and greater access to education for equity deserving communities; offer accreditation programs to help validate foreign experiences and help set up Canadian experiences.

Collaborate with schools and post secondaries to help reduce barriers for youth to participate in arts and culture sector. Youth programming is really important to ensure that we're supporting young creative talent enter into the sector, especially all aspects of creative industries (i.e. back of house, production positions etc.) Raise awareness and promote arts and culture career paths, and advocate for arts to be included in STEM education approaches (with the inclusion of Arts, the education approach would be 'STEAM' (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics)).

Explore the use of underused spaces, including exploring greater community use of spaces within post secondary institutions.

Support organizations with space challenges: support small businesses and cultural organizations navigate challenges associated with acquiring, operating and managing cultural spaces (i.e. negotiating lease agreements).

Embed cultural needs within city infrastructure: support cultural needs through infrastructure projects such as allowing for load/unload zones in front of venues as well as supporting the development of accessible and safe cultural spaces.

Embed arts and culture through City processes: explore opportunities for artist-in-residency programs to be embedded throughout the City, in different service areas; encourage this approach in other industries as well.

Provide programming outside the core: more and more people are seeking cultural activities within their local neighbourhoods, especially where people are already gathering (i.e. animating local malls). Hyper-local programming will also help to address transportation issues and longer commutes to the downtown core.

Continue investing in Toronto: Toronto has a strong and diverse workforce, which attracts creative industries to locate here. Continue investing in creative industries, the workforce and partner organizations.

Celebrate each other's victories: create more opportunities to connect and celebrate each other's victories - promoting the really great work that we're doing here. We have great talent and great success stories to share but we don't talk about it or promote it.

Support emerging industries: be at the forefront of supporting growing and emerging industries, such as e-sports which is a rapidly growing sector and changing the way cultural producers create and audiences interact with the medium.

Big Ideas:

Toronto needs a large-scale creative industries event: similar to FIFA World Cup or the Pan Am Games, participants shared an interest to create large scale cultural events that not only provides entertainment but also drives cultural impact. What is Toronto's South by Southwest homegrown event?

Build Toronto's cultural community: Toronto needs to come together as a community, as a sector, to share a vision for how we'd like the culture sector to grow, change, adapt and evolve; and identify ways we can support each other.

Look outwards, not inwards: ask the community what culture means to *them* and what do they need culture to be. The sector should look outwards and let the community lead, which in turn will help drive the value and impact of culture.

Leadership roles need to be organized differently: leadership positions in the culture sector have not adapted to fit people's needs. These roles require a level of privilege and resources to make the job work. Without systemic change, it will be hard for leaders from equity deserving communities to fill these positions. Leadership roles should be redefined to support people's needs (i.e. support for people with disabilities, with young children, etc.).

'Creative entrepreneurship' is not a dirty word: arts and culture should not be thought of as 'charity work', instead participants shared about the importance of new models of thinking to allow organizations to thrive - including new business models and validation of entrepreneurial ventures within traditional not-for-profit arts sector.

Claim our space on the global scene: to be a world class city, Toronto needs to be confident in itself and we need to do more bold things. Participants shared about the need to invest, celebrate, promote and build moments of 'greatness' in the city, which in turn will have positive ripple effects to keep and attract talent to the city, as well as attract companies and organizations to invest and relocate here.

Keep Toronto futureproofed: in addition to creative technology sector, Toronto has some of the best research and tech industries. The future of culture is going to include collaborations and partnerships across industries - technology, culture, science, manufacturing, research etc.

Toronto is a gateway: there is a maturity in Toronto's culture scene and sector that doesn't exist in other areas of Canada. In addition to the many training institutions, there is a community that wants to build opportunities and experiences, collaborate, support and also compete with each other. What's possible here just isn't the same elsewhere given the diversity of food, languages, community and cultural experiences. Toronto is a gathering place and a gateway, and this needs to be further cultivated.

Appendix G: Demographic Data from the Online Survey and the Town Halls

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Survey - DEMOGRAPHICS ONLY

Respondents

2.7k

Reached end

1.9k

70%

Response timeline

N 2.7k
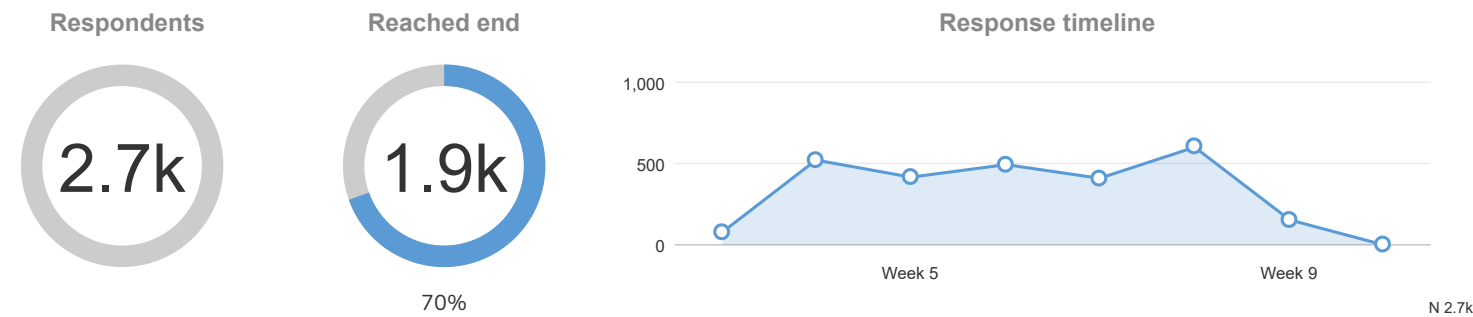
General

Do you live in Toronto?

	Count	% of responses	%
Yes, I recently moved here (in the past 5 years)	282		11%
Yes, I have lived here for over 5 years	2.1k		78%
No, I left the city in the past 5 years, but still visit/attend cultural activities in the city	81		3%
No, I left the city more than 5 years ago, but still visit/attend cultural activities in the city	65		2%
No, I have never lived here	40		2%
Other (please explain): (please do not provide any personal information about yourself or other individuals, such as: full mailing address and/or full postal code, etc., in your response)	111		4%

N 2.6k

Respondent Category

Which of the following best describes your connection to arts and culture or creative industries in Toronto?

	Count	% of responses	%
I'm a practicing artist or creative	1.0k		38%
I work in the culture sector / creative industries	634		24%
I volunteer in the culture sector	136		5%
I participate in or attend arts and cultural events, programs or activities (mostly as an audience member)	759		29%
I don't participate in arts and cultural events, program or activities	88		3%

N 2.6k

Are you completing this survey on behalf of an organization/business or are you a business owner?

Yes: 18%

No: 82%
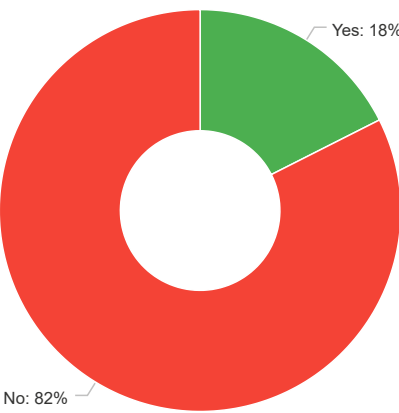
N 2.6k

OrgType

Please identify the type of organization or business.

	Count	% of responses	%
Not-for-profit cultural organization or business	203		45%
For-profit creative industries, cultural organization or business	129		28%
Collective or Cooperative	29		6%
Foundation	2		0%
Educational Institution	19		4%
Other (please explain):	56		12%
Prefer not to answer	15		3%

N 453

B1 - S1 Sector Specific Questions

Which of the following best describes the field or discipline you work, create or volunteer in? If your practice is interdisciplinary, select all that apply.

	Count	% of responses	%
Performing arts (including theatre, opera, orchestras, circus, etc.)	551		32%
Visual and applied arts (including painting, sculpture, photography, crafts, etc.)	548		32%
Arts administration	466		27%
Music (including composition, publishing, live performance, sound recording, promoter, live music venue owner, distribution such as streaming, radio etc.)	399		23%
Community arts (including Local Arts Service Organizations)	389		23%
Festival and events	357		21%
Film and television (including production, post-production, VFX, animation) and distribution (including streaming, broadcast, theatrical).	352		20%
Education and training	282		16%
Galleries (including public art galleries, artist run centres)	273		16%
Dance	222		13%
Literary arts (including print, written arts, poetry, spoken word, etc.)	205		12%
Design (including graphic design)	178		10%
Cultural heritage (including archives, artifacts, collections, historic sites and buildings, etc.)	162		9%
Creative technology / interactive digital media (including interactive technology, e-sports, gaming, immersive, etc.)	157		9%
Museums	144		8%
Accessibility/ Disability arts	120		7%
Business development	118		7%
Other (please explain):	77		4%
Fashion	70		4%
Tourism	68		4%
Culinary arts	39		2%
I'm not sure	14		1%
Prefer not to answer	8		0%

B1 - S1 Where is Work?

Where is the primary location of your work or art practice (such as studio, gallery, museum, office, home studio, etc.)?

	Count	% of responses	%
Downtown Toronto	1.1k		64%
Etobicoke	76		5%
East York	59		4%
Scarborough	67		4%
North York	96		6%
York	52		3%
Virtual (my work or art practice is not tied to a geographic area in Toronto and primarily serves a digital audience)	76		5%
I don't know	7		0%
Other (please explain):	158		9%
Prefer not to answer	20		1%

N 1.7k

What type of physical space(s) do you or your organization / business use (for artistic activities, administrative functions or as a public venue)? Select all that apply.

	Count	% of responses	%
Rental space(s) (separate from where I live)	864		52%
Residence/dwelling space(s) (in my house/condo/apartment, etc.)	685		41%
Shared space(s) within other individuals or organizations	428		26%
Owned space(s) (separate from where I live)	334		20%
I don't have a space	164		10%
Other (please explain):	101		6%
I don't need a physical space	54		3%
Prefer not to answer	24		1%

N 1.7k

What is your age?
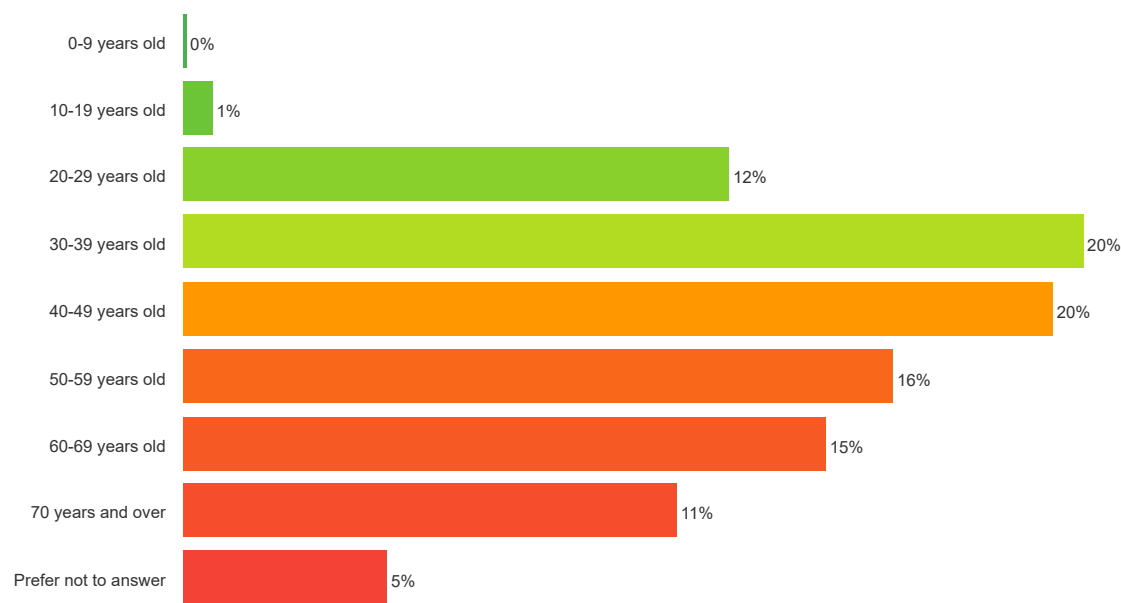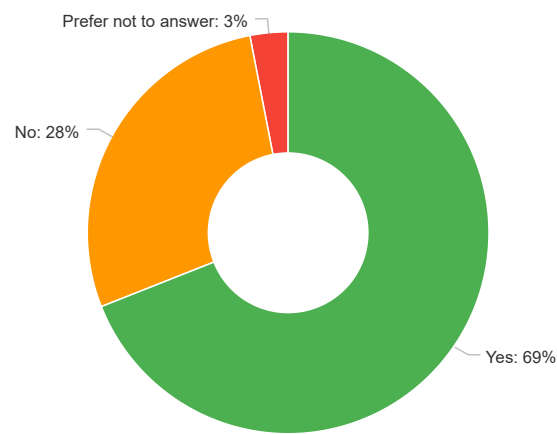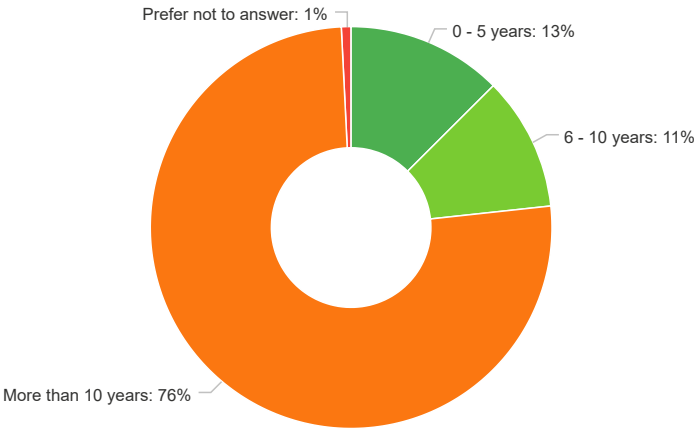
Age	Percentage
0-9 years old	0%
10-19 years old	1%
20-29 years old	12%
30-39 years old	20%
40-49 years old	20%
50-59 years old	16%
60-69 years old	15%
70 years and over	11%
Prefer not to answer	5%

N 1.8k

Were you born in Canada?

Prefer not to answer: 3%
No: 28%
Yes: 69%

N 1.8k

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Survey - DEMOGRAPHICS ONLY

How long have you been in Canada?

Prefer not to answer: 1%

0 - 5 years: 13%

6 - 10 years: 11%

More than 10 years: 76%

Indigenous people from Canada identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada?

Prefer not to answer: 6%

Yes: 2%

No: 91%
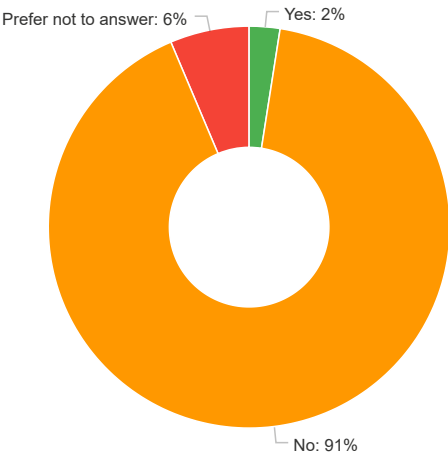
You indicated that you identify as Indigenous to Canada. Please select all that apply.

Category	Percentage
First Nations (examples: Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq)	52%
Inuit	5%
Métis	39%
Other (please specify):	11%
Prefer not to answer	5%
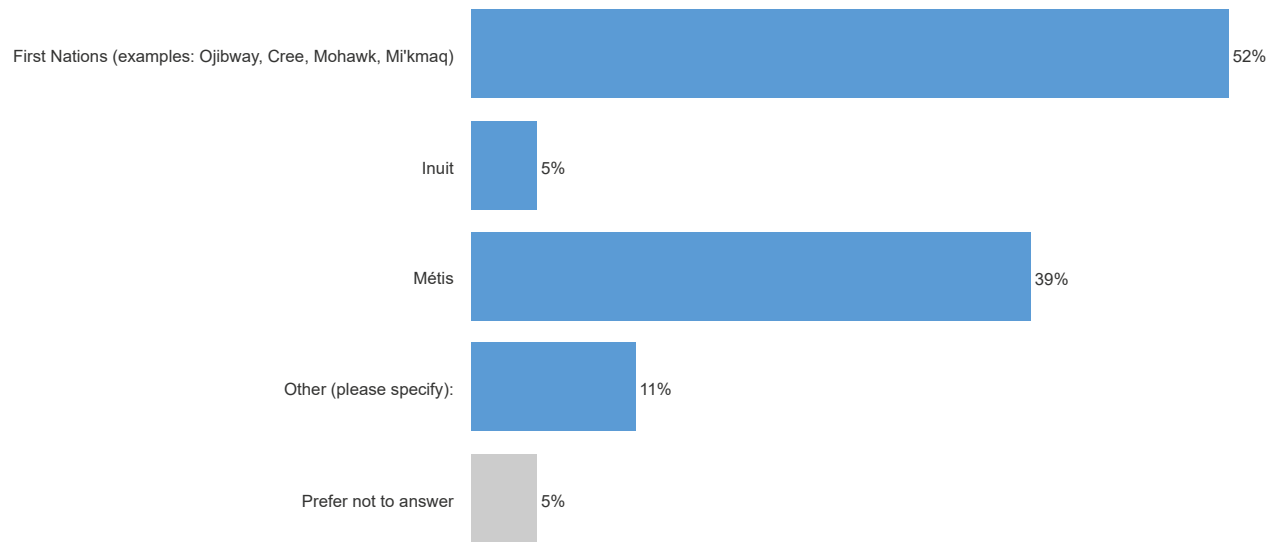
N 44

Do you identify as Two-Spirit?Two-Spirit is a term some Indigenous people use to describe their overall identity, gender and/or sexual orientation.

Prefer not to answer: 14%
Yes: 32%
No: 55%

N 44

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Survey - DEMOGRAPHICS ONLY
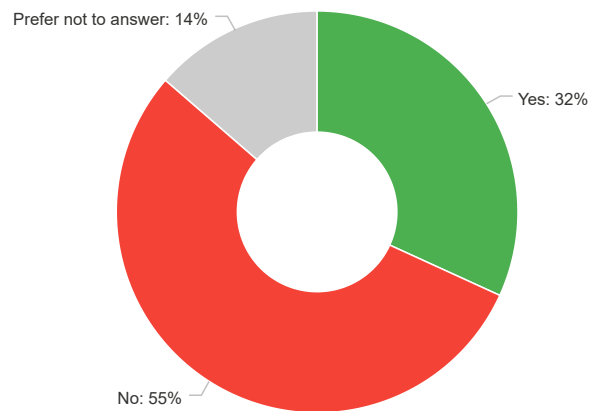
People often describe themselves by their racial background, for example some people consider themselves "Black", "East Asian", or "White". Which racial category best describes you? Select all that apply.

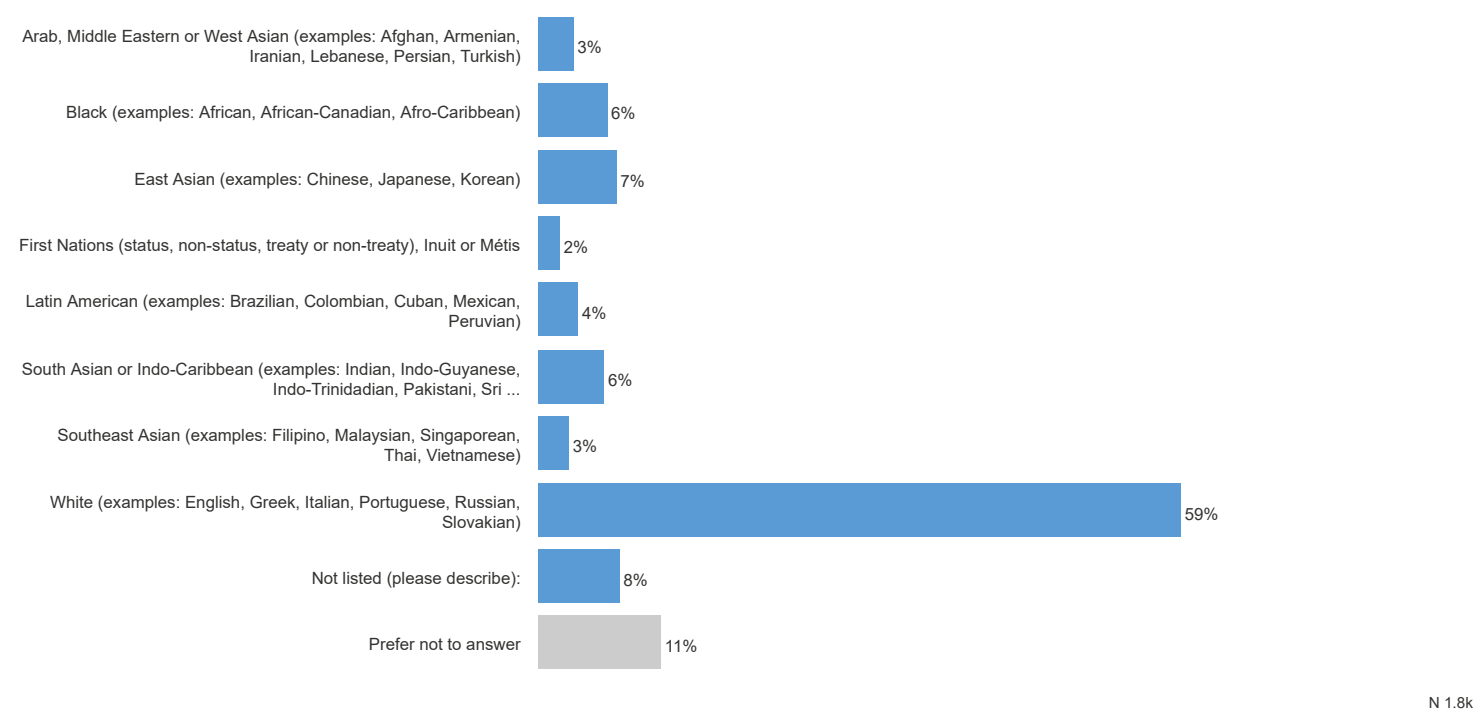|	
Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (examples: Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish)	3%
Black (examples: African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)	6%
East Asian (examples: Chinese, Japanese, Korean)	7%
First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit or Métis	2%
Latin American (examples: Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian)	4%
South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (examples: Indian, Indo-Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri ...	6%
Southeast Asian (examples: Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese)	3%
White (examples: English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Slovakian)	59%
Not listed (please describe):	8%
Prefer not to answer	11%

N 1.8k

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

Prefer not to answer: 9%
I don't know: 3%
Yes: 20%
No: 68%

N 1.8k

Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their sex assigned at birth. What best describes your gender?
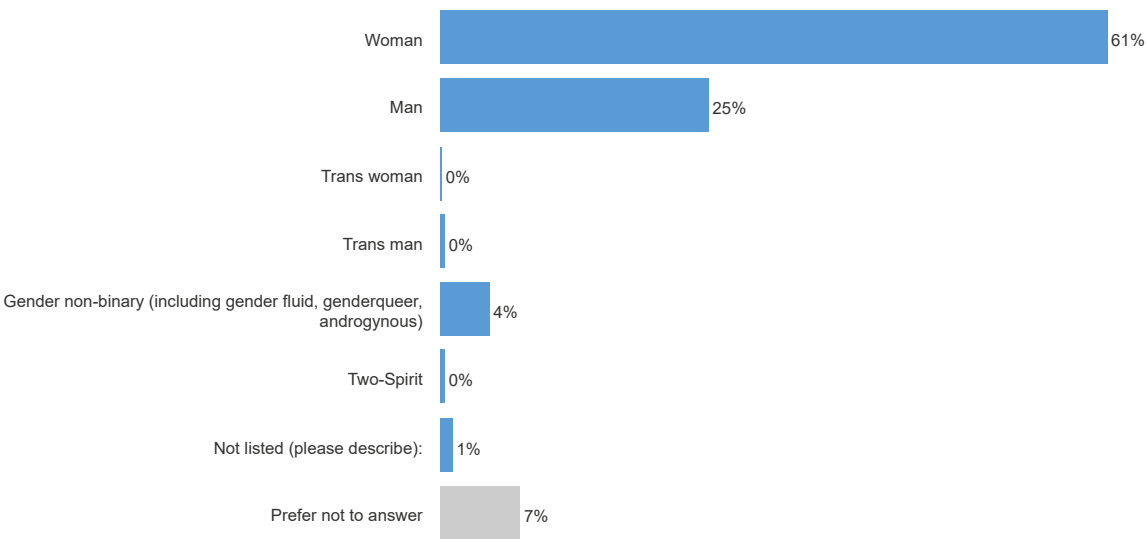
Response	%
Woman	61%
Man	25%
Trans woman	0%
Trans man	0%
Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)	4%
Two-Spirit	0%
Not listed (please describe):	1%
Prefer not to answer	7%

N 1.8k

What best describes your sexual orientation?

Response	%
Heterosexual or Straight	58%
Asexual	1%
Bisexual	8%
Gay	4%
Lesbian	2%
Pansexual	2%
Queer	7%
Questioning	1%
Two-Spirit	0%
I don't know	1%
Not listed (please specify):	2%
Prefer not to answer	14%

N 1.8k

Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Please select all that apply.

Employment Status	Percentage
Employed - full-time	44%
Employed - part-time	13%
Employed - casual, on-call, temporary or seasonal	8%
Unemployed or looking for a job	5%
Stay-at-home caregiver	2%
Student	5%
Retired	15%
Unable to work	2%
Not listed (please describe):	13%
Prefer not to answer	5%
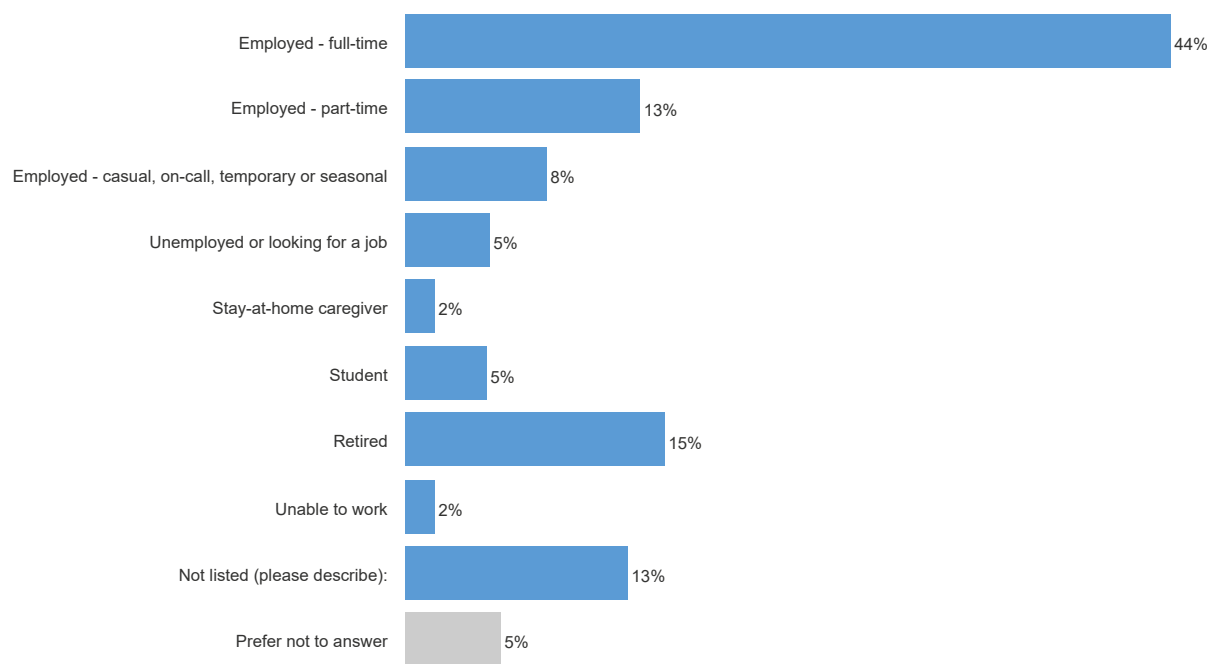
N 1.8k

What was your total household income before taxes last year? Your best estimate is fine.

Income	Percentage
$0 - $29,999	11%
$30,000 - $49,999	12%
$50,000 - $69,999	10%
$70,000 - $99,999	15%
$100,000 - 149,999	15%
$150,000 or more	14%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to answer	22%
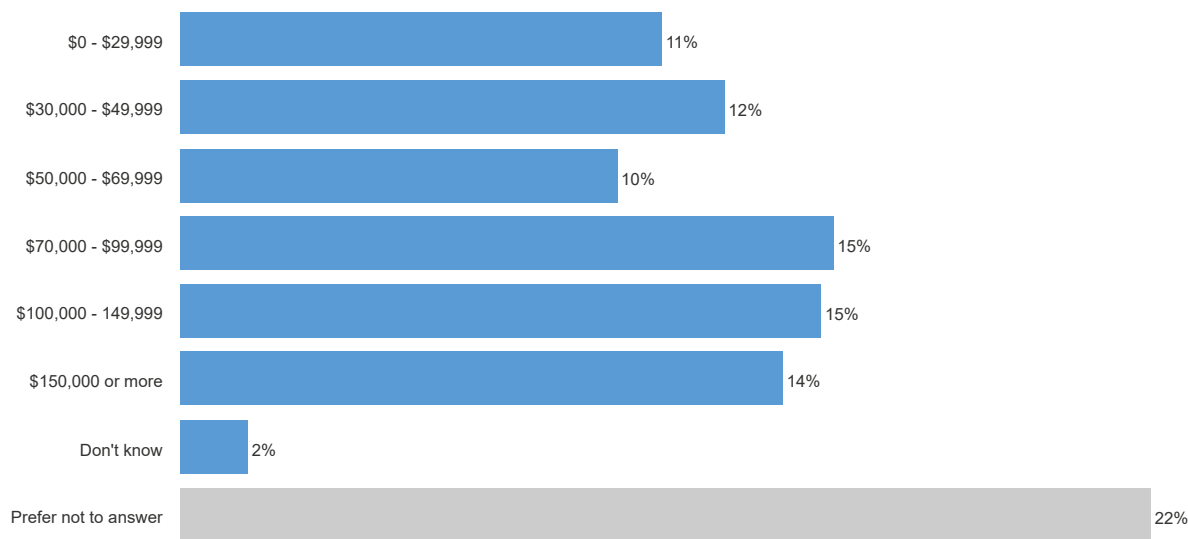
N 1.8k

Including yourself, how many people live in your household on a regular basis?
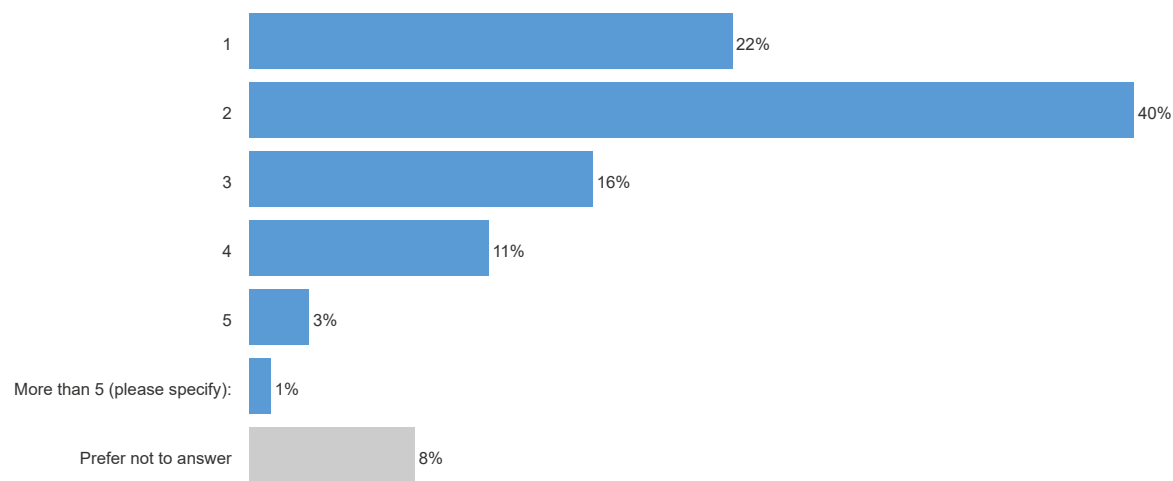
- 1 — 22%
- 2 — 40%
- 3 — 16%
- 4 — 11%
- 5 — 3%
- More than 5 (please specify): — 1%
- Prefer not to answer — 8%

N 1.8k

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

Respondents

317

Reached end

300

95%

Response timeline

N 317
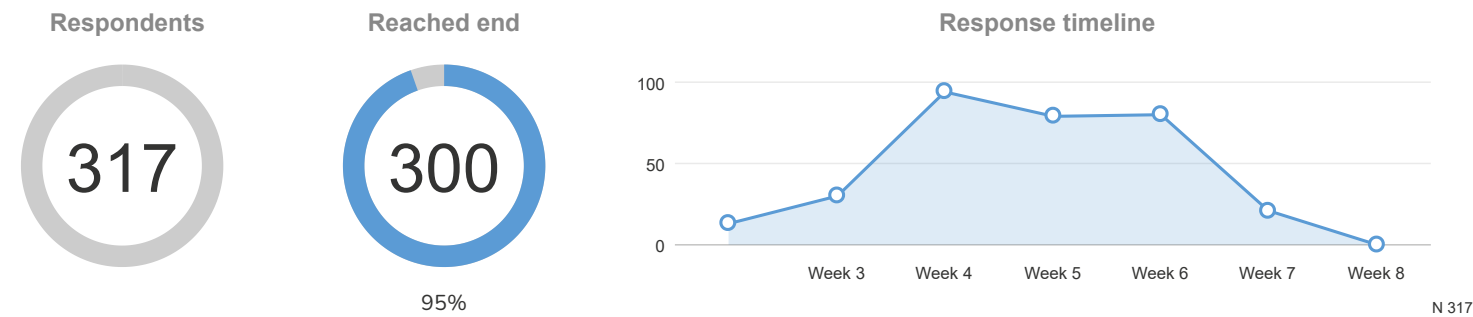
Tell us about yourself

Which of the following best describes your connection to arts and culture in Toronto?

	Count	% of responses	%
I'm a practicing artist and creative	99		31%
I work in the culture sector / industry	115		36%
I volunteer in the culture sector (including Board or advisory roles)	22		7%
I participate in or attend arts and cultural events, programs or activities (mostly as an audience member)	47		15%
I don't participate in arts and cultural events, program or activities	6		2%
Other, please specify:	28		9%

N 317

Which of the following best describes your connection to arts and culture in Toronto? - Other, please specify:

Other, please specify:
Investor
I teach Early Childhood Educators Creative Expression in a local College. Interested to add to future possibilities within the City of Toronto
I have worked in the cultural sector and apply my academic background to research/community engaging art
Donor and moral supporter
Author
I teach arts and culture related courses in the university
We are involved with the Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan
I am looking for volunteer in the sector
I am an artist, a board member of a non profit arts organiation and do my best to get out to shows and performances.
retired....worked in industry 40+ years
Volunteer
A visual artist and active member of the Hispanic Community

Other, please specify:
I am disabled as a result of a workplace accident and use visual arts and ballet as therapy. I belong to a visual arts club where I volunteer and workout with the national ballet instudio. I am also an audience member for live theatre-ballet, opera etc
You need to allow multiple options here. I am both a practicing artist AND I work in the culture sector, AND I am a frequent participant. Why only choose one?
I'm an artist & educator that creates and facilitates monthly art workshops at CAMH Patient & Family Learning Space
Practise, volunteer, participate and interconnect with the sector
Practicing creative and audience member
City staff with interest in this topic
I work, I volunteer, I attend
There are cross-connections when organizing, promoting and other wise fostering and engaging folks.
I am a PhD candidate (York U) researching Toronto's cultural spaces with an emphasis on film and media festivals.
Numbers 1, 3 and 4, equally (the question should probably have been, 'check all that apply')
media
Healthcare and Arts
Artist, worker, and researcher of the culture sector
I'am Colombian Artis. I live in Bogotá Colombia
I help new immigrants come to Canada and establish themselves culturally to the Canadian Cultural norms.
I am a working artist, I volunteer and I participate in other arts outside my genre

Part 1 of 2

N 28

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

Which of the following best describes your field or discipline? (Select all that apply):

	Count	% of responses	%
Arts administration	69		27%
Performing arts (e.g. theatre, opera, orchestra, circus, etc.)	64		25%
Visual and applied arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, photography, crafts, etc.)	60		24%
Festival and events	58		23%
Community arts (including Local Service Arts Organizations)	56		22%
Education and training	50		20%
Film, television and broadcasting (e.g. film, animation and live action, radio, podcasting, online and streaming content, producer, agent etc.)	47		19%
Music (e.g. composition, publishing, live performance, sound recording, promoter, etc.)	47		19%
Galleries (e.g. public art galleries, artist run centres)	33		13%
Cultural heritage (e.g. archives, artifacts, collections, historic sites and buildings etc.)	30		12%
Other, please specify	26		10%
Business development	24		9%
Creative technology / interactive digital media (e.g. interactive technology, e-sports, gaming, etc)	24		9%
Dance	24		9%
Literary arts (e.g. print, written arts, poetry, spoken word, etc,)	24		9%
Museums	21		8%
Accessibility/ Disability Arts	15		6%
Design (e.g. graphic design)	13		5%
Fashion	13		5%
Tourism	12		5%
Culinary arts	8		3%
I'm not sure	1		0%
I prefer not to answer	0		

N 253

Which of the following best describes your field or discipline? (Select all that apply) - Other, please specify

Other, please specify
Culture planning
Multiple, including music (live production, recording) and theatre (operations and administration)
Site based art
Retiree
intercultural music
Multidisciplinary Art Collective & Media Production, Arts Advocacy, Arts Education

Other, please specify
Commercial sales
Visual, literary and culinary arts
Employment
Multidisciplinary Arts Service Organization
Founder of manyblackhistories.com
Politics
STAND UP COMEDY
Culture hub operator
Note: none of these are my paid work / professional career - but it seems that maybe that's not what the question refers to
I see that visual art is the last square to choose. Where would graphic illustration go? Into that bucket? Book works, zines? I don't think zines fall into poetry or written arts but okay
Live events producer, music & creative industries equity consultant
socially engaged art practices, arts based methodologies in research
Builder
Canadian Immigration
Cultural planning and public art
Media…we're a Broadcaster
Arts philanthropy
Digital Journalism/Multimedia Content Creator/Producer/Writer/Editor/Publisher
Arts journalism
I own a commercial media production company in the city

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

Which of the following fields or disciplines interest you the most? (Select all that apply):

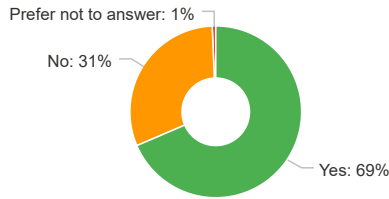|	Count	% of responses	%
Festival and events	36		77%
Performing arts (e.g. theatre, opera, orchestra, circus, etc.)	35		74%
Galleries (e.g. public art galleries, artist run centres)	33		70%
Music (e.g. composition, publishing, live performance, sound recording, promoter, etc.)	33		70%
Museums	31		66%
Visual and applied arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, photography, crafts, etc.)	31		66%
Community arts (including Local Service Arts Organizations)	28		60%
Cultural heritage (e.g. archives, artifacts, collections, historic sites and buildings etc.)	26		55%
Film, television and broadcasting (e.g. film, animation and live action, radio, podcasting, online and streaming content, producer, agent etc.)	24		51%
Dance	22		47%
Literary arts (e.g. print, written arts, poetry, spoken word, etc,)	22		47%
Tourism	18		38%
Creative technology / interactive digital media (e.g. interactive technology, e-sports, gaming, etc)	17		36%
Education and training	17		36%
Design (e.g. graphic design)	14		30%
Fashion	14		30%
Arts administration	12		26%
Culinary arts	12		26%
Business development	10		21%
Accessibility/ Disability Arts	8		17%
I prefer not to answer	0		
I'm not sure	0		
Other, please specify	0		

Which of the following fields or disciplines interest you the most? (Select all that apply) - Other, please specify
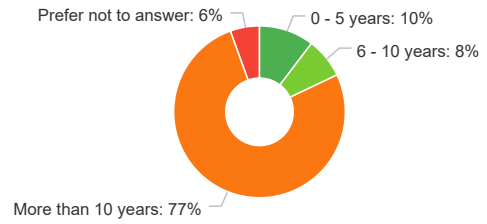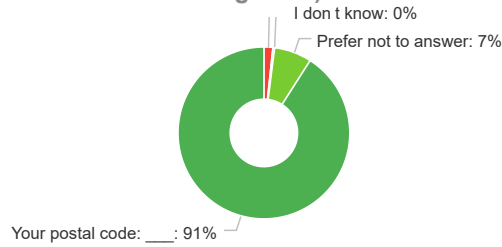
No data found

Were you born in Canada?

Prefer not to answer: 1%

No: 31%

Yes: 69%

If no, how long have you been in Canada?

Prefer not to answer: 6%

0 - 5 years: 10%

6 - 10 years: 8%

More than 10 years: 77%

Please provide your postal code (first three characters only, e.g. M5H)

I don t know: 0%

Prefer not to answer: 7%

Your postal code: ___ : 91%

Please provide your postal code (first three characters only, e.g. M5H) - Your postal code: ___

Your postal code: ___
m6g
M4P
M6H
M4C
L9T9M3
M1c
M5V 0V4
M3J
M6K
M1T
M5R
M5R
M5A2E1
M4R
M5A0P2
M6G
M6R2B2
M5A
M5P

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

Your postal code: ___
M6M
M6s
M5V
M5J
M6G
m4x1n9
M9V
M5A
M6H2T3
M6H
M4G
L4J
M4K
M6R
m9c 4x5
M6J
M6C 2C9
M4K
M6N
m6h
L5j 2e3
M2N5X8
m5v
M2N6X8
M5R
M6H
M5A3R6
M6G
m4m 3n6
M6H
M8V

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

What age group are you in?

	Count	% of responses	%
0-9 years old	0		
10 - 19 years old	0		
20 - 29 years old	20		7%
30 - 54 years old	158		53%
55 to 64 years old	68		23%
65+ years old	53		18%

N 299

Indigenous people from Canada identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada?

	Count	% of responses	%
No	250		89%
Other, please specify	13		5%
Prefer not to answer	10		4%
Yes, I am First Nations (examples: Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq)	9		3%
Yes, I am Métis	4		1%
Yes, I am Inuit	0		

N 280

Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector - Town Hall - Voluntary Demographic

Indigenous people from Canada identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada? - Other, please specify

Other, please specify
MIC 4X6
pijao descendent
adoptee
Condor Island
Serbian
I'm old.
Mexican Canadian
Latvian
Caribbean
African Canadian
Mixed Indigenous, European
No but I work for an Indigenous-led organization serving Indigenous artists and creatives.
Pijao decendet. Ancestral aborigen people of south central Colombia

Please select the ethno-racial or cultural community that best describes you?

	Count	% of responses	%
White (examples: English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Slovakian)	147		49%
Black (examples: African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)	29		10%
More than one race category or mixed race, please describe: _____	21		7%
South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (examples: Indian, Indo- Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	18		6%
East Asian (examples: Chinese, Japanese, Korean)	15		5%
Prefer not to answer	15		5%
Latin American (examples: Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian)	11		4%
Not listed	11		4%
Other, please specify	10		3%
Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (examples: Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish)	8		3%
First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit or Métis	7		2%
Southeast Asian (examples: Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese)	7		2%

Please select the ethno-racial or cultural community that best describes you? - More than one race category or mixed race, please describe: _____

More than one race category or mixed race, please describe: _____
Chinese and white
Adoptee - infant supply chain survivor Jewish - all of these disappeared when I was stolen as newborn Catholic church
Jewish
My Organization that represents all of the above culture and former nationalities in our membership
Other, please specify
afro-celtic
Deaf
Inter-racial Canadian black and White
Jewish
Indigenous, white
Scottish French Italian Jew Lebanese Romani
Venezuelan-Colombian
Burmese British
Eurasian
4 ethnicities: russian, ossetian, armenian, polish
Combo of the above
White, east and southeast asian, middle-eastern
Chinese and White
Hongkonger
Jewish
I am white, my family Canadian black
White, black
More than one race category or mixed race, please describe: _____
More than one race category or mixed race, please describe: _____
Black(Caribbean) and White (European)
Ashkenazi
Jewish
mixed (indo-afro-carribean) and european descent
Born in the States, raised here in Toronto - my background is Scottish Newfoundland with African American and probably roots in the North Eastern parts of Africa and/or the Middle East - alas, so much of my ancestry has been erased.
White & Latin American
Southeast Asian and White

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

	Count	% of responses	%
Yes	66		22%
No	204		69%
I'm unsure / I don't know	8		3%
Prefer not to answer	13		4%
Other, please specify	4		1%

N 295

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Do you identify as a person with a disability? - Other, please specify

Other, please specify
I am a short-sighted person and I also have tinnitus acquired as a result of working in harmful conditions.
I have a learning disability from birth and acquired a permanent physical disability as per the Federal Governments criteria due to a workplace accident
Wear hearing aids as my hearing is not the greatest.
I'm not disabled but have the normal limitations of the elderly

N 4

Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their sex assigned at birth. What best describes your gender? Please select one only.

	Count	% of responses	%
Woman	180		60%
Man	94		31%
Trans woman	1		0%
Trans man	1		0%
Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)	2		1%
Two-Spirit	5		2%
Prefer not to answer	16		5%
Not listed, please describe:	1		0%

N 300

Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their sex assigned at birth. What best describes your gender? Please select one only. - Not listed, please describe:

Not listed, please describe:
I'm several - your categories are limiting my identity :)

What best describes your sexual orientation? Please select one only.

|	Count	% of responses	%
Heterosexual or Straight	202		68%
Prefer not to answer	33		11%
Bisexual	22		7%
Queer	15		5%
Gay	10		3%
Lesbian	5		2%
Pansexual	3		1%
Asexual	2		1%
Don't know	2		1%
Questioning	1		0%
Two-Spirit	1		0%
Not listed, please describe	1		0%

What best describes your sexual orientation? Please select one only. - Not listed, please describe

Not listed, please describe
Straight

Arts and Culture Survey Count By Postal Code Boundary

Postal Code Boundary Count

- 0
- 1 - 4
- 5 - 17
- 18 - 39
- 40 - 71
- 72 - 127
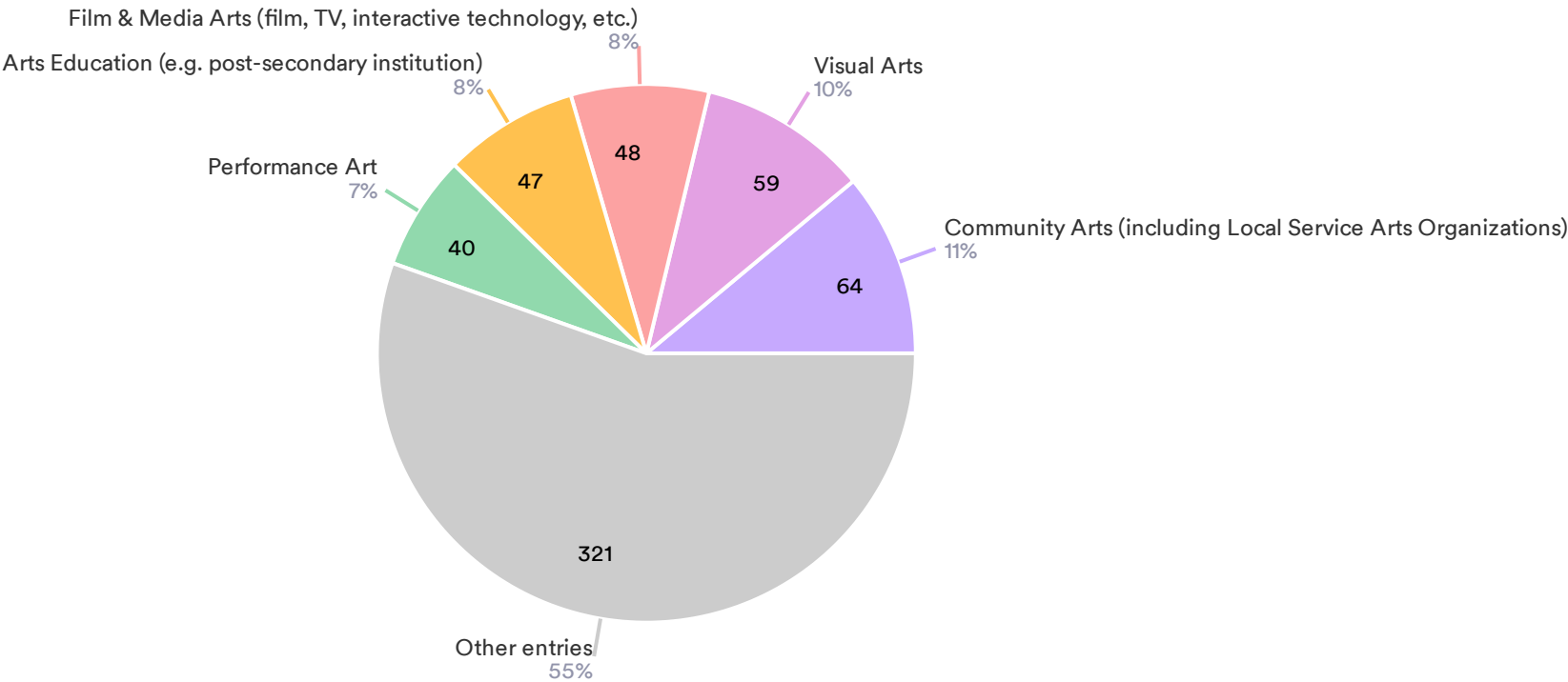
N

3 1.5 0 3 6 9 12
Kilometers
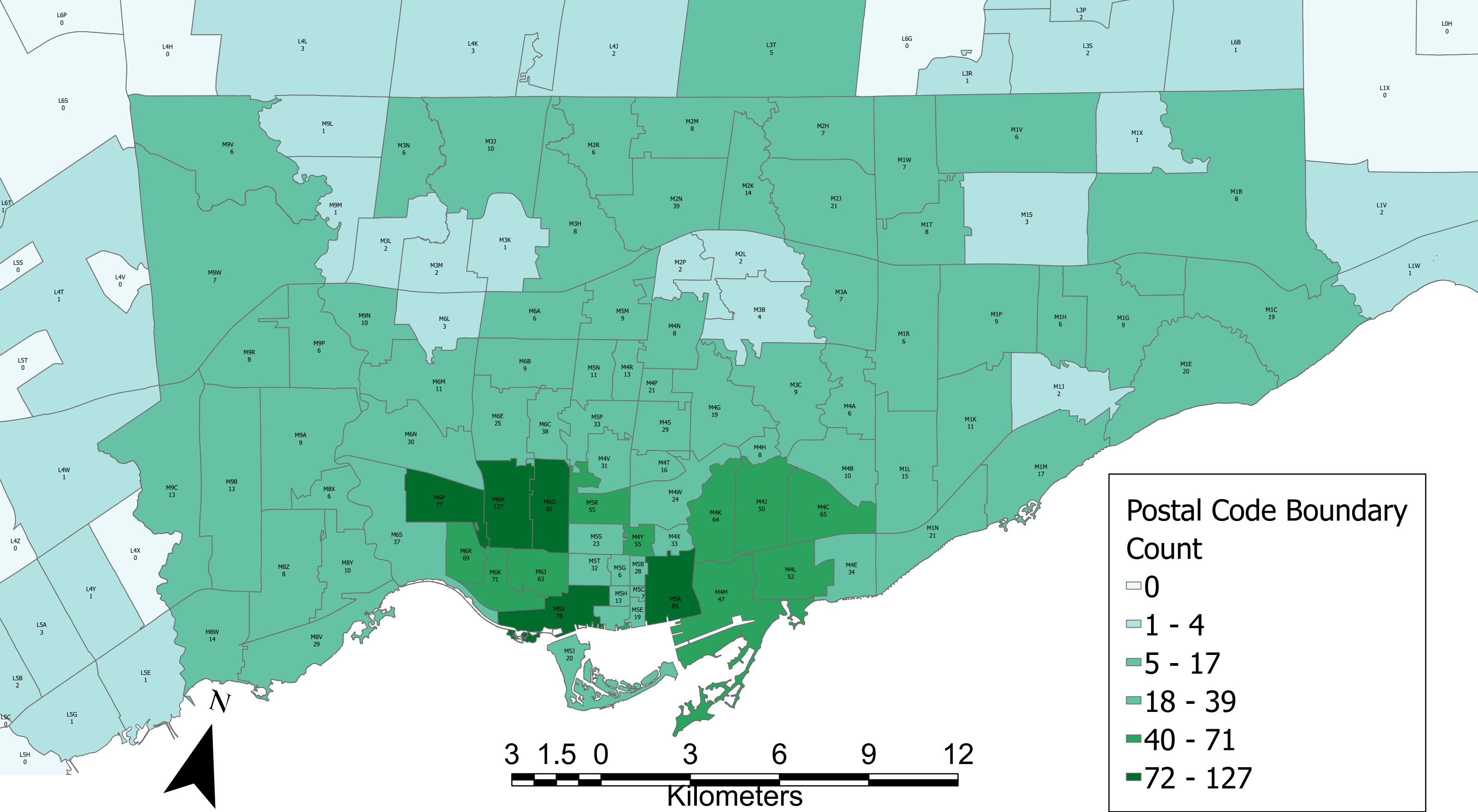
Community Conversations RSVPs

Demographic Info at a Glance

Community Conversations RSVP Form

Which of the following best describes your field or discipline? Select all that apply.

579 Responses- 2 Empty

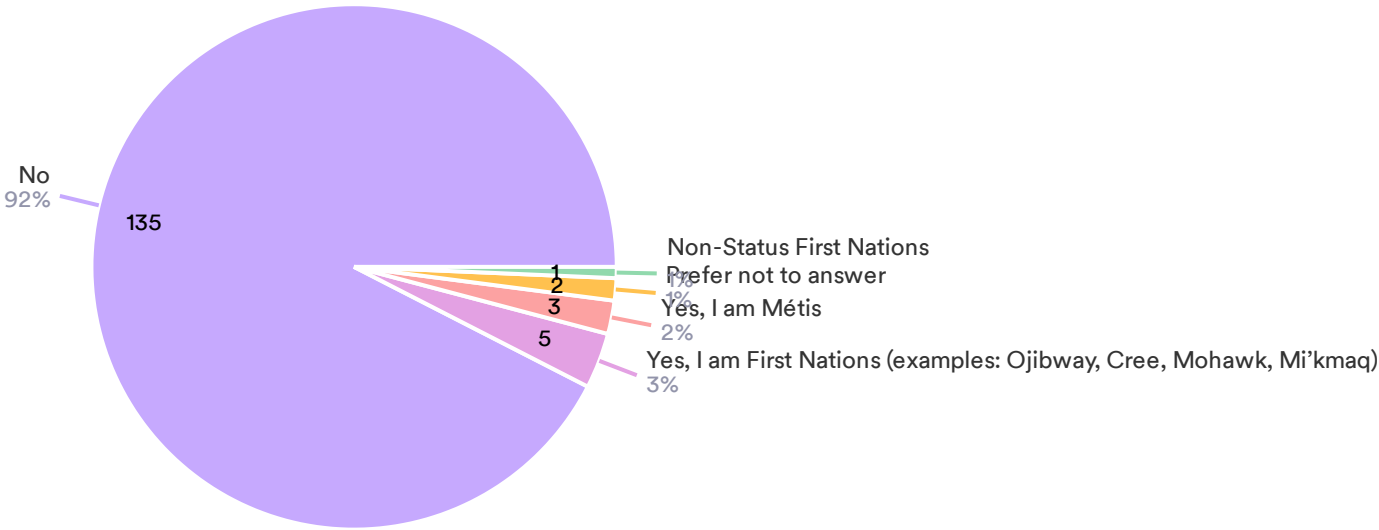- Film & Media Arts (film, TV, interactive technology, etc.) 8% — 48
- Arts Education (e.g. post-secondary institution) 8% — 47
- Visual Arts 10% — 59
- Performance Art 7% — 40
- Community Arts (including Local Service Arts Organizations) 11% — 64
- Other entries 55% — 321

What age group are you in?

151 Responses- 2 Empty

35 to 44 years old
44%

67

Other entries

65+ years old
0%

1

2

8

55 to 64 years old
5%

42

25 to 34 years old
28%

31

45 to 54 years old
21%

1%

Community Conversations RSVP Form
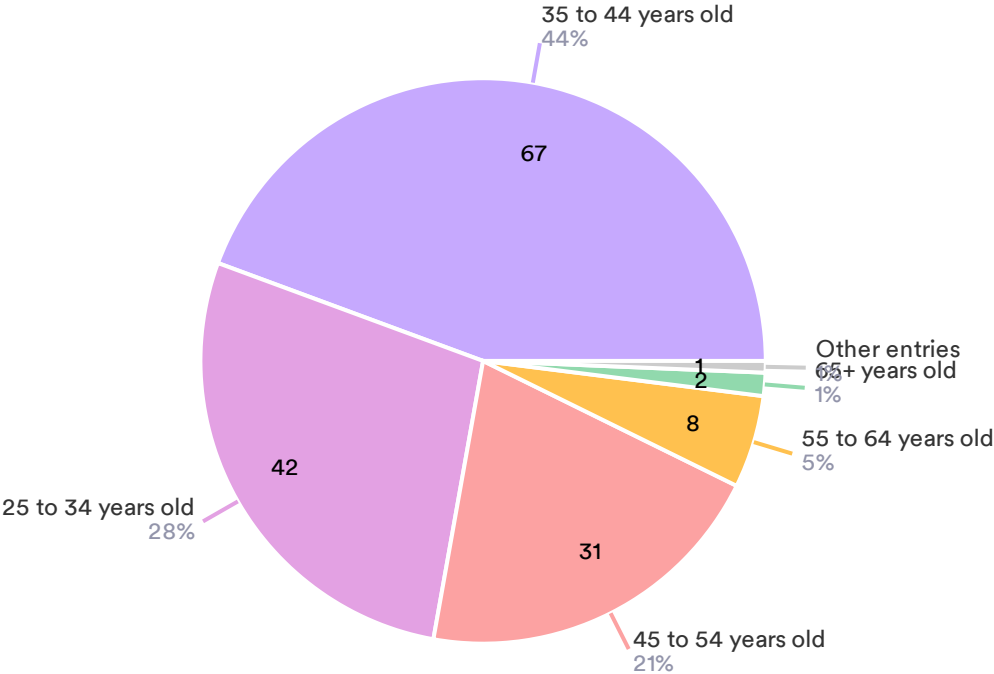
Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada?

146 Responses- 7 Empty

No
92%

135

Non-Status First Nations

1

Prefer not to answer
1%

2

Yes, I am Métis
1%

3

2%

5

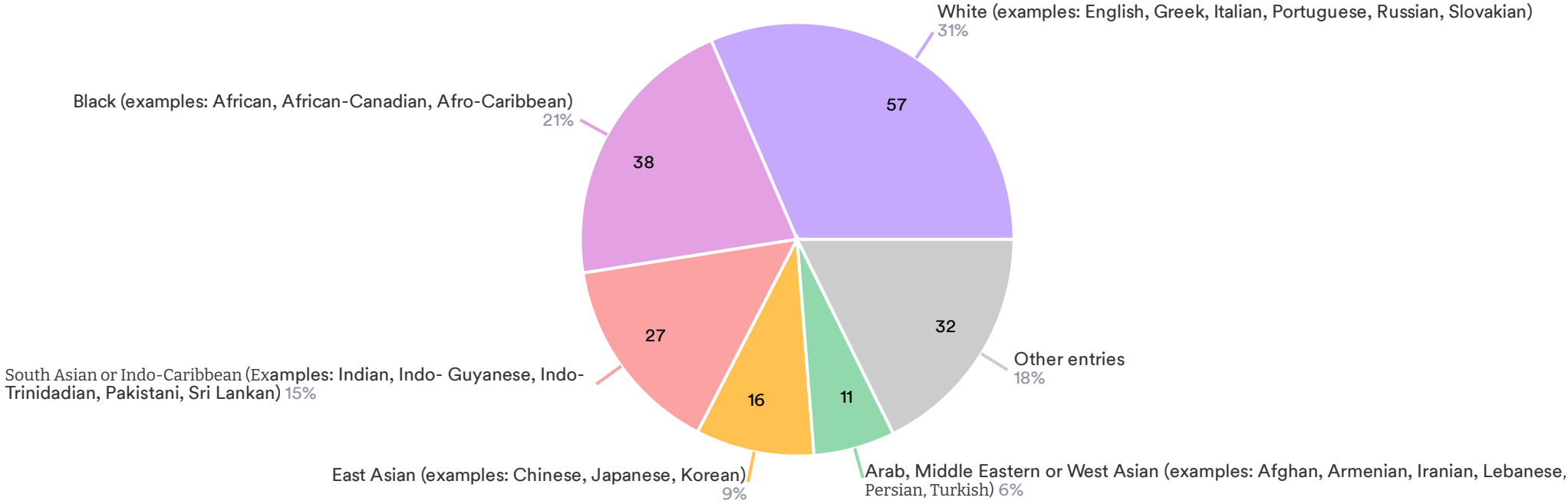Yes, I am First Nations (examples: Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq)

3%

Note: this does not include the Indigenous attendees that came to the Indigenous-specific conversation circle.

● No ● Yes, I am First Nations (examples: Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq) ● Yes, I am Métis ● Prefer not to answer ● Non-Status First Nations

Community Conversations RSVP Form

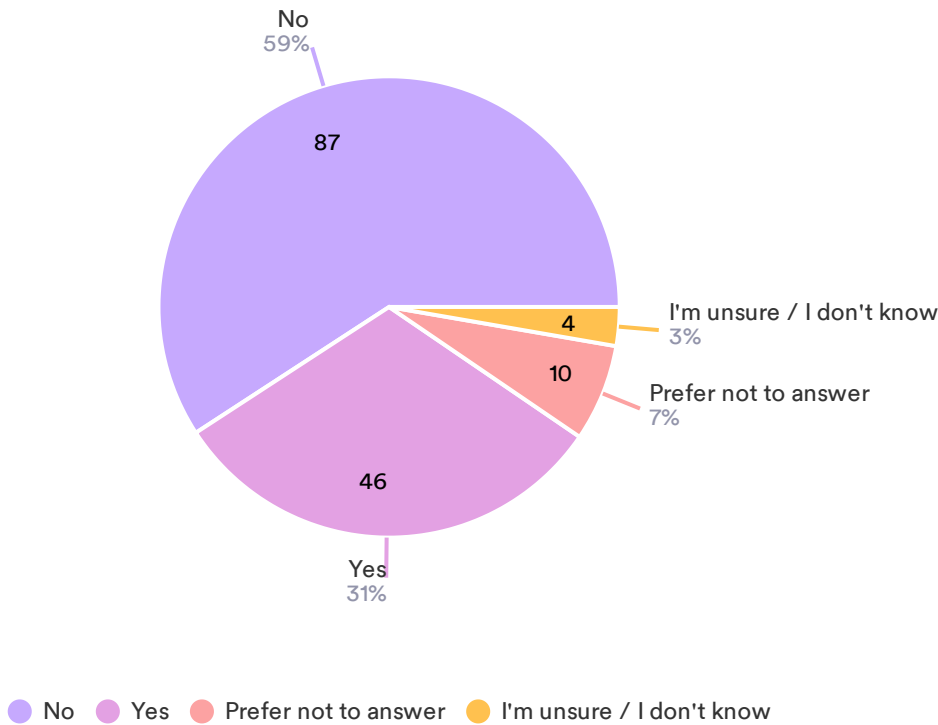## Please select the ethno-racial or cultural community/communities that best describes you?

181 Responses- 5 Empty

White (examples: English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Slovakian)
31%

Black (examples: African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)
21%

Other entries
18%

South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (Examples: Indian, Indo- Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan) 15%

East Asian (examples: Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
9%

Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (examples: Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish) 6%

57

38

27

16

11

32

Community Conversations RSVP Form

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

147 Responses- 6 Empty

No
59%

87

I'm unsure / I don't know
3%

4

10

Prefer not to answer
7%

46

Yes
31%

● No   ● Yes   ● Prefer not to answer   ● I'm unsure / I don't know

Do you identify as a newcomer? (e.g. Did you move to Canada within the last 5 years?)
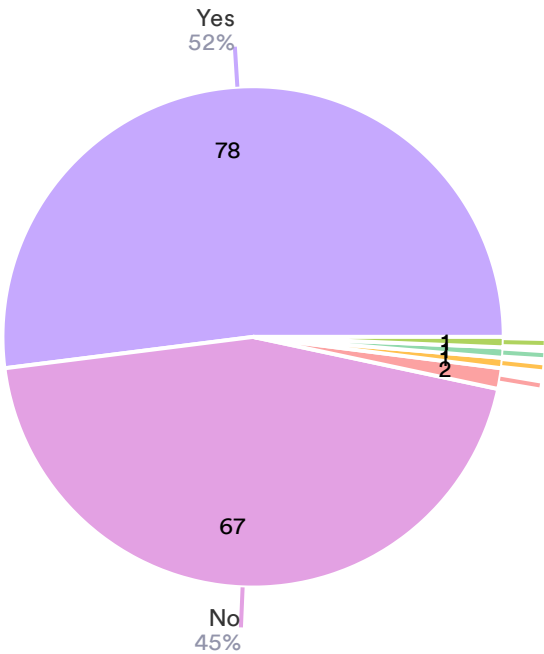
146 Responses- 7 Empty

No
94%
137

1

7

Yes
5%
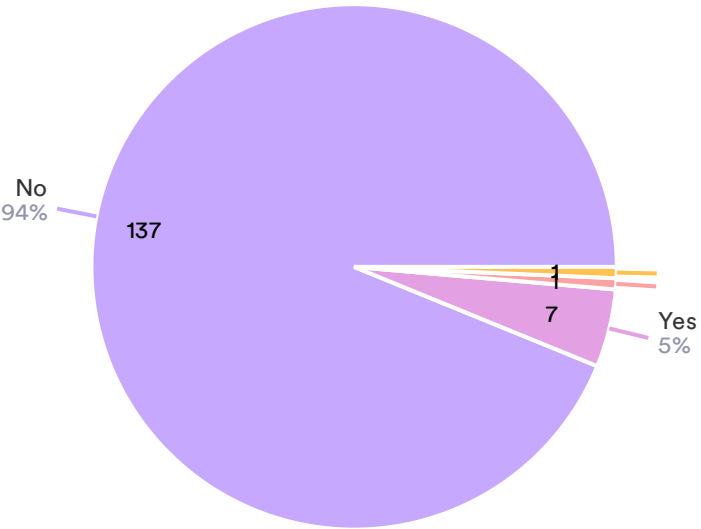
● No ● Yes ● Prefer not to answer ● First moved to Canada 5.5 years ago but spent time during covid outside of the country.

Do you live outside the downtown core? By downtown core, we mean between Bloor, Lakeshore, Bathurst and Jarvis.

150 Responses- 3 Empty

Yes
52%

78

1
1
2

67

No
45%

- ● Yes
- ● No
- ● I'm unsure / I don't know
- ● Currently downtown, most community involvement in Scarborough where I grew up
- ● Downtown core and abroad
- ● just barely, at Bloor & Ossington

Community Conversations RSVP Form

Is your practice/organization based outside the downtown core? By downtown core, we mean between Bloor, Lakeshore, Bathurst and Jarvis.

150 Responses- 3 Empty

No
47%

71

Other entries

4
1
1
1

I'm unsure / I don't know
6%

9

61

Yes
41%
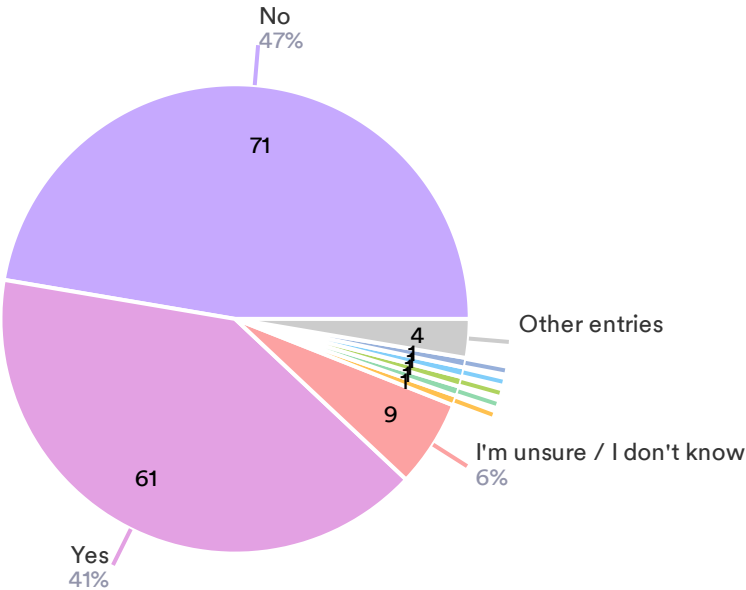
● No ● Yes ● I'm unsure / I don't know ● Primarily downtown, with some projects outside the downtown core ● Multiple venues, including inside and outside the downtown core
● Sometimes ● Downtown and beyond. ● Sometimes yes, sometimes no ● Other entries