

NOVA SCOTIA ARTS & CULTURE CONSULTATION REPORT

Horizons Community Development Associates Inc.

*Executive
Summary*

December 2010

THE BACKGROUND

The Government of Nova Scotia invests \$9.3M annually in arts and culture through a series of programs administered by the Culture Division of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. The Division receives advice and recommendations from the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council, formed in 2003.

Between 1997 and 2002, government invested in the artistic and creative communities (one element of the culture sector) through a provincial crown agency, the Nova Scotia Arts Council. That Council was disbanded in 2002, and the role of funding arts programs returned to the Culture Division.

Since that time, there has been ongoing debate and discussion about the re-establishment of an arm's length arts council, independent of government involvement. Some people support an arm's length council. Others support a government-sector partnership. There are also those who have not expressed an opinion about a particular delivery model, and are mainly concerned that public funding for arts and culture in Nova Scotia should not only be sustained, but also increased.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

In July 2010, the Government of Nova Scotia began a process to seek the advice and opinions of the arts and culture sector regarding its role and investment in supporting and fostering artistic and cultural activity in Nova Scotia. The purpose of the consultation process was also to gather input on governance and principles that would guide the public investment into arts and culture.

A three-pronged process to gather input from those involved and interested in the sector was designed and carried out in September and October 2010. To set the stage, 23 sector stakeholders were asked to share their views, through key informant interviews, about the Culture Division's mandate, its programs, and policy needs; they were also asked about the Nova Scotia Arts & Culture Partnership Council and for advice on the relationship between government and the sector.

A series of regional consultation sessions was held in Wolfville, Yarmouth, Halifax, Dartmouth, Tantallon, Truro, Antigonish, St. Anne's, Membertou, and Liverpool. A session was also conducted in French, via video-conference. Session participants provided input on:

- The current role of government in arts and culture;
- What the role of government should be in relation to arts and culture in five years; and
- The relationship between government and the arts and culture sector.

At the same time, a web survey with the same questions as the in-person sessions was conducted to expand the reach of the consultation process.

In total, 972 people participated in the Nova Scotia Arts & Culture Consultation:

- Key informant interviews: 23
- Consultation sessions¹: 284
- Web survey²: 665

The resulting report offers:

- A detailed overview of the methods used to the gather stakeholders' input;
- A description of the approach to analyzing the information;
- The limitations of the process used;
- A detailed summary of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the advice and input provided by the stakeholders;
- The consultants' reflections on the consultation process and considerations for the Culture Division as it moves forward to plan and act on the advice provided to it through this work; and
- Appendices that include the questions used in the process, the summaries of the consultation sessions, and the background document developed for stakeholders' review before participating in the process.

All information presented in the report comes directly from the consultation participants and reflects their understanding and perceptions of the work and role of government in and with the arts and culture sector. The consultants did not correct any inaccuracies within the responses.

¹ Consultation session participants were asked to complete a registration form, and most did. However, in some sessions, people arrived and left at different times and not everyone completed the form. By an unofficial head count, there were approximately 317 consultation session participants in total.

² Web survey participants had the option to provide their names and contact information.

THE RESULTS

The following **overarching themes**, presented in priority order below, emerged from the consultation process. They emerged as recurring topics or ideas in the interviews with key stakeholders, the consultation sessions, as well as in the feedback collected through the web survey. Within each theme, related sub-themes or threads arose.

1. An environment that fosters, values and supports arts and culture
 - Recognizing the value of the arts and culture to our society
 - Artists and a living wage
 - Education and the arts

2. Investment in the arts and culture sector
 - Increased financial support
 - Reallocation of funding
 - Recommended changes to taxation policy and other measures
 - Infrastructure development

3. Clarity regarding vision, principles, mandate and the role of the Culture Division
 - Clear mandate and principles
 - The role of the department/provincial government
 - Arts and culture and tourism
 - Arts and culture and the economy
 - Arts and culture and government leadership
 - Developing strategic plans and appropriate policies
 - Generating research, data, and information on best practices and models
 - Acting as a facilitator, catalyst and advocate

4. Communication and engagement
 - Communication between government and the arts and culture sector
 - Communication with respect to programs and services of the Culture Division

5. Governance
 - Support for an arm's length council
 - Other models to examine
 - Potential approaches for government

6. Effective support for diversity
 - Emerging artists vs. established artists
 - Inequities across type of arts
 - Regional diversity
 - Ethnic and cultural diversity
7. Accountability and transparency
 - Accountability and transparency within the Culture Division
 - Accountability within the arts and culture sector

What is Working

Consultation participants identified strategies, programs, and services that they perceived are working well. These included:

- Operational and program funding, including support for industry growth, youth and the school based arts and culture programs; and prizes;
- A number of promotional initiatives;
- The Culture Division's link with Tourism (although others saw this as problematic);
- Working with Culture Division staff;
- The peer review jury and external assessment panels; and
- Support for diversity.

Summary of Results – Themes by Consultation Methods

Theme	Key Informant Interviews (Total – 23)	Consultation Sessions (Total – 11)	Web Survey Comments (Total – 2193)
An environment that fosters, values and supports arts and culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing the value of the arts and culture to our society Artists and a living wage Education and the arts 	23	11	1,321
Investment in the arts and culture sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased financial support Reallocation of funding Recommended changes to taxation policy and other measures Infrastructure development 	23	11	1,113
Clarity regarding vision, principles, mandate and the role of the Culture Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear mandate and principles The role of the department/provincial government 	23	11	810
Communication and engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between government and the arts and culture sector Communication with respect to programs and services of the Culture Division 	16	11	711
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for an arm’s length council Other models to examine Potential approaches for government 	17	11	480
Effective support for diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging artists vs. established artists Inequities across type of arts Regional diversity Ethnic and cultural diversity 	20	9	448
Accountability and transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability and transparency within the Culture Division Accountability within the arts and culture sector 	20	11	336

Understanding the Numbers

The data represented in the table above and within the report reflect the following:

- Key informant (stakeholder) interviews numbers refer to the number of respondents who discussed a specific theme or sub-theme;
- Consultation sessions numbers refer to the number of sessions in which a theme or idea was identified; and
- Web survey numbers refer to the number comments in the web survey that related to a particular theme or sub-theme.

Limitations to the Process

A number of limitations should be considered when considering the findings from this consultation process:

- Stakeholders did not receive much advance notice about the process, this may have limited some people's ability to participate;
- Many participants were not aware of or had not reviewed the background document developed for the process. As a result, all participants did not have a similar knowledge or understanding of the current role, programs and services of government;
- Some people provided input through more than one method; and
- Some people were expecting a different process (e.g., town hall meetings with an opportunity to talk with the Minister directly), and opted not to participate in the current process because they did not think it was worthwhile.

CONSULTATION PARTICIPATION

Consultation participants were asked to identify the sector and region they represented. Some people identified themselves with more than one sector or region, for that reason the total number represented exceeds the total number of participants. Some participants did not identify their sector(s) or region(s).

Sectors Represented

Sectors Represented Overall & By Consultation Method

Sector(s)	Overall		Key Informant Interviews		Consultation Sessions		Web Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Publishing	40	3.1%	1	3.2%	13	2.8%	26	3.3%
Visual Arts	106	8.2%	4	12.9%	102	21.7%	0	0
Music	134	10.3%	5	16.1%	47	10.0%	82	10.3%
Performing Arts	157	12.1%	9	29.0%	84	17.9%	64	8.0%
Literary Arts	26	2.0%	2	6.5%	24	5.1%	0	0
Crafts	81	6.2%	3	9.7%	39	8.3%	39	4.9%
Film & Video	65	5.0%	0	0	34	7.2%	31	3.9%
Cultural Infrastructure	89	6.9%	4	12.9%	46	9.8%	39	4.9%
Other	144	11.1%	3	9.7%	70	14.9%	71	8.9%
No Response	456	35.1%	0	0	10	2.1%	446	55.9%
Total	1298	100.0%	31	100.0%	469	100.0%	798	100.0%

Regions Represented

Regions Represented Overall & By Consultation Method

Region(s)	Overall		Key Informant Interviews		Consultation Sessions		Web Survey	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Cape Breton	66	6.4%	5	20.0%	39	12.2%	22	3.2%
Eastern Nova Scotia	63	6.1%	3	12.0%	34	10.6%	26	3.8%
Halifax Regional Municipality	198	19.1%	2	8.0%	88	27.5%	108	15.7%
Western Nova Scotia	131	12.7%	3	12.0%	78	24.4%	50	7.2%
Provincial	111	10.7%	12	48.0%	65	20.3%	34	4.9%
Other	20	1.9%	0	0	0	0	20	2.9%
No Response	446	43.1%	0	0	16	5.0%	430	62.3%
Total	1035	100.0%	25	100.0%	320	100.0%	690	100.0%

CONSULTANTS' REFLECTIONS

When the consultation process was complete, *Horizons* was asked to provide reflections for the Culture Division as it moves forward to plan and act on the advice provided to it through this work. The following reflections are offered for consideration.

- We think it important to note that there were clear themes that emerged from the consultation process. While the process was not designed to develop recommendations or consensus on the how or the what, these themes can be turned into clear high level strategic outcomes:
 - To create an environment that fosters, values and supports arts and culture;
 - To invest in the arts and culture sector;
 - To ensure there is a clear vision, mandate and roles for the Culture Division, including leadership and research;
 - To enhance and increase the level of communication and engagement between government and the arts and culture sector
 - To determine the most appropriate system of governance, that builds on best practices, includes a role for government, as well as an arm's length agency;
 - To more effectively support the rich diversity of the province; and
 - To ensure accountability and transparency with the Culture Division and to expect and require the same from the sector;
- It is obvious that this is a very complex and complicated sector, and that while it is essential to develop high level general outcomes, care will have to be taken to determine which strategies and actions are appropriate to what part of the sector.
- The scope of the suggestions offered by stakeholders reflects the belief that there is opportunity for the Division to engage other departments and levels of government in supporting the arts. There is an opportunity to provide both financial and non-financial support.
- There is an opportunity to try new ideas and approaches, including looking to promising practices in other parts of Canada and internationally.
- While there is recognition with respect to the current budget situation of the province, many of the participants felt that the financial situation of artists and arts organizations is even more dire, and that if arts and culture diminishes or fades away it will an inestimable long term loss to society.
- There is a willingness on stakeholders' part to recognize what currently works, and so there is room to understand more specifically, what is working well and to build on that.

- The fact that government has accepted all the recommendations of the Creative Nova Scotia cultural development plan is either not known, or if it is, it does not allay a fear of potential “government interference”; this is one of the drivers behind the call for an arm’s length body.
- Regardless of the way in which participants participated, there is an urgent call for the need to elevate the status of arts and culture in our society. There is a clear belief that a vibrant arts and culture sector plays a key role in creating healthy communities and is a driver of economic gain. This goes far beyond a call for a marketing and promotional advertising campaign.

Horizons would also like to offer the following reflections on the consultation process itself:

- The fact that there were three different ways that people could participate in the consultation, and that it was the most comprehensive and systematic undertaken by the Division were strengths of the process.
- Despite frustration with the process it was clear that people are very committed to arts and culture, that they care passionately about the role arts and culture play and can play in our society, and so they were willing to participate, despite their misgivings. Conversation was very lively in all the sessions and those who participated in the interviews were very engaged and well prepared.
- People generally enjoyed the small group work and many commented on the fact that it was a very good opportunity to meet and hear about the work of others.
- The fact that the responses were confidential appeared to be a strength, although a few participants wanted their names released.
- It appeared as if many people had not read the background materials as there seemed to be a high level of misunderstanding about what the Nova Scotia Arts & Culture Partnership Council and the Culture Division actually do.
- Much disappointment was expressed at each session on the fact that neither the Minister nor Culture Division staff were present for any part of the proceedings; some compared this process, negatively, to the participation of the Minister in the Back to Balance consultations.
- There is some cynicism that this is simply another consultation and that not much will change. It is important for timely action in response to people’s input.
- The openness of the senior division staff was appreciated.
- There is a tremendous passion among the arts and culture sector and in the Culture Division, and that is a good foundation for what comes next.

