



This document is a collection of responses to the recent SAA Member Consultations conducted throughout April, 2014. Thank you for your generosity of time, thoughts, and opinions. Some of this compilation was presented to members of the SAA's 2014 Congress along with a questionnaire (also based on these initial consultations). Your responses – along with other members' feedback – will help shape our advocacy and advocacy resources. Any further comments are welcome. Please feel free to contact me: Ian McWilliams, Research Officer, Saskatchewan Arts Alliance; research@artsalliance.sk.ca; (306) 780-9385.

As an organization, are you experiencing any pressures delivering your programming?

The most often identified *pressures* were of **organizational capacity and resilience**.

Regardless of the size of the organization asked, the most often-mentioned pressures were related to **human resources** (the ability to hire, train, and retain staff). Given more resources, Arts Organizations would invest in infrastructure, human resources, programming, and excellence in general.

The question of “pressures” was often raised in connection to the **opportunities and challenges of project-specific funding**. The funding is welcome, but it cannot replace *core* funding (which builds and maintains organizational capacity). It was noted that *project-specific funding* (compared to core funding) can sometimes *drain* organizational resources, resulting in resources being directed away from core programming and infrastructure in order to access targeted-funds for specific projects. Increased resources for organizational development could lead to better implementation of all programming.

What government prioritiesⁱ are you addressing in your programming?

Arts Organizations feel that **not only are they addressing government priorities, but arts organizations are excelling at addressing these objectives – and they would have even better success if they were acknowledged as doing so**. One respondent observed that “creating an electric cultural climate relies on certain cultural pillars.”

Agreement that arts organizations are addressing government priorities was especially strong in the following areas: a creative arts and cultural community that is: vibrant, sustainable, internationally recognized and valued by residents; better quality of life; international outreach, engagement, immigration; innovation & education.

This discussion also often came back to the importance of core funding: **If you want to sustain growth and increase quality of life, you need to be able to plan long-term**. The same is true for arts organizations, or as a respondent suggested, “Let artists be the entrepreneurs that they are and always have been.” Several respondents also noted here that *directed* funding can drain organizational capacity, as each application process requires specific, targeted interaction.

Have priorities of governments and/or funders significantly affected what you do?

More organizations said “no” than “yes.” But an interesting clarification summed up the nuances of this question: “No, but it changes how I talk about it.”

What would you do if given more resources?

During initial consultations, this was presented as a “Blue Sky” question. The responses, however, were very practical. The language used focused on shoring-up and preventing backsliding, not “reaching for the sky.” Respondents most often identified core programming, human resources, and infrastructure as their target areas for any additional resources.ⁱⁱ One respondent succinctly touched upon all three areas by observing (in addition to mentioning that they would invest in core programming and fix the facility) that more resources would let them “break out of the critical mass of staff, funding, and fee shortages... staff are already cutting their own hours and cannot cut more.” The need to bolster core funding was often linked to project-specific funding. Even groups that have had success with project funding reported that the increased number project-based funding opportunities have led to a drain on organizational resources and core operational funding.

Infrastructure: In addition to physical facility repair and maintenance, respondents identified that more resources could be invested in organizational *stability*, for example: “We have no debt, but also no stability; Long-term planning and organization (a 5 to 10 year plan) could happen with more resources.” Another common response was that more resources could help organizations build and maintain more partnerships to better deliver programming.

Human Resources: More resources would allow for organizations to be more effective in training (professional development) and retaining staff, which would result in less staff-turnover and make organizations for efficient. Concerns expressed related to this point were paying wages that are closer to market value, hiring more staff, and increasing existing staff’s hours (in most cases replenishing hours already cut back).

Programming/Core Operations: Most groups indicated that more resources would allow for a bolstering of their core programming: e.g. delivering it to a wider audience (specifically being more inclusive of youth, newcomers, and First Nations groups); delivering even higher quality programming; and enabling links between artists and wider opportunities.

How much would you require to start realising some of those goals?

The follow-up question to this consultation asked: “How much of an increase (by percentage) in funding, if any, would you require to start realising some of those goals?”

The average among respondents was 22.33%. Once again, this question was answered in terms of maintaining current levels of programming, or bolstering waning core program funding. One respondent noted that, “even 5% would make a big difference especially if it went towards core, operational funding ... [it’s] required to continue to have a secure, balanced forward approach.”



ⁱ Government Priorities were identified in governmental publications and summarized as follows:

A creative arts and cultural community that is:

- Vibrant, Sustainable, Internationally Recognized, Valued by residents
- Conserves heritage resources (environmental, recreational, & cultural significance)
- Enhances Saskatchewan parks
- promotes/protect history and culture (a Provincial Capital Commission)

Better Quality of Life

- Broad/diverse cultural, recreation and sport activities
- healthy active families & activities
- vibrant and active communities
- Improved health care & education outcomes
- Protect the environment
- Make SK the best place in Canada for persons with disabilities

International Outreach, Engagement, Immigration

- Support multiculturalism & welcoming environment for new Canadians.
- international engagement for increased trade, investment & exports.
- Attract & retain more international students
- attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investment from international markets

Innovation & Education

- invest in human capital and knowledge: education, training, skills development
- citizens better able to realize their full potential
- build the next economy through innovation
- Lead the country in Grade 12 graduation rates
- Reduce the difference in graduation rates between Aboriginal and nonAboriginal students

Growth Plan

- 1.2 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2020
- 60,000 more people working in Saskatchewan by 2020
- sustain economic growth
- take action to address the challenges that accompany growth
- Investing in the infrastructure required for growth.
- Ensuring the ongoing competitiveness of Saskatchewan's economy

Sources:

Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks Culture and Sport, <http://www.pcs.gov.sk.ca/ministry-overview>;
Saskatchewan, *Growth Plan Summary*. saskatchewan.ca or gov.sk.ca, 2013.

ⁱⁱ Respondents answering core programming = approx. 2/3 of respondents; human resources and infrastructure = approx. 4/5 of respondents