



Strengthening the Sector

**Resources and Best
Practices for the
Visual, Media and
Craft-Based Arts
Sector in Ontario**

**Regional
Forums
Report**
March 2013



CARFAC
ONTARIO

With assistance from Ontario Crafts Council, Artist-Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario, Media Arts Network of Ontario, the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective and the Ontario Association of Art Galleries

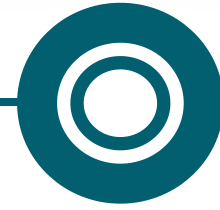


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1 Introduction



Strengthening the Sector: Resources and Best Practices for the Visual, Media and Craft-Based Arts Sector is a three-year project focused on researching and developing a range of resources and tools to support the visual, media and craft-based arts sectors. The ultimate goal of the project is establishing a set of best practices to advance industry standards through a consultative, consensus building process. The resulting ethical and practical professional standards and best practices developed will provide guidance in areas where regulation and agreements currently do not exist.

The first phase of the project focuses on building a solid base of information to inform subsequent phases of work. This knowledge base is being generated through focused research and an extensive community engagement process involving six regional forums and a province-wide survey. Over 130 attendees registered for these forums representing a range of disciplines and interests.

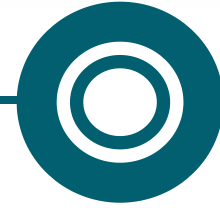
CARFAC would like to extend thanks to the following individuals for their assistance in organizing and hosting the forums.

- **Niagara/Hamilton Forum** – Stephen Remus, Natasha Pedros, Jeremy Freiburger, Jenny Gladish from Cobalt Connects and the Niagara Artists Centre
- **Thunder Bay Forum** – Sharon Godwin, David Karasiewicz and the Thunder Bay Art Gallery
- **Sudbury/North Bay Forum** – Clayton Windatt, Karen Tait-Peacock and the Art Gallery of Sudbury
- **Toronto/Mississauga Forum** – Stuart Keeler, Phil Anderson and Gallery 1313
- **London Forum** – Greg Ludlow, Brian Meehan, Jewell Goodwyn and Museum London
- **Ottawa Forum** - David Jones, April Britski, Melissa Gruber, Penny McCann, Laura Margita, Georgia Mathewson, Ottawa Art Gallery and Gallery 101

This report summarizes findings emerging from the forums. The results of the forums will inform the development of the province-wide survey to seek further input to the project.



2 Individual Forums



Niagara/Hamilton Forum

This was the first of the six forums, and a number of lessons were learned that refined the approach to subsequent forums. The first question as stated encouraged many participants to reflect on challenges they faced in their own communities, often related to challenges with lack of municipal support and other community-specific issues. While these are important concerns and challenges for participants, the next forum shifted the question to focus on challenges people faced working in the visual, media and craft-based arts sectors. This was intended to focus discussion on how the sector could support and strengthen itself through strategies and initiatives in their physical communities and on-line.

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in your community?

- Challenge finding the time and collective voice to advocate for the importance of the art and culture to the municipality and the community – too much time spent trying to defend and validating the importance of the arts
- The changing nature of “professional artist” – funding bodies definitions (Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council don’t work)
- Divided opinion within the group as to whether solutions lay in more money from government to support the sector and those who felt the onus was on artists and small arts organizations themselves to become more entrepreneurial and self-sufficient – partially through greater local partnerships and collaboration.
- There is a challenge related to professionalism when in the presentation of work in a variety of public venues; there is a need for standards (potentially best practices?) in this area – i.e.,
 - The library has no policy or standards
 - The municipality has no policy, standards or knowledge to manage presentation in municipal facilities and venues.
 - The Art Crawl Hamilton – it’s more important to drive as many people through multiple venues and the quality of both the art and the presentation suffers.
- Fragmentation of the arts community
- Challenge promoting and getting exposure for local artists and arts activities – limited coverage in local media
- Community perception of the arts as either entertainment or as amateur hobbies rather than professional practice
- Municipal government/ bureaucracy not attuned to the professional arts sector



- St. Catharines challenges
 - Limited community engagement in the arts
 - Need more networking, mentoring and support from fellow artists
 - ‘Wiki based’ community calendar of events needed to promote and update events, etc.; can’t be centralized by any one body but open to contributions to all
- Hamilton challenges
 - No way of capturing/ documenting achievements (possible public portal needed)
 - Need standardized process for submitting applications to galleries (potentially a best practice)
 - Artists have made a huge contribution to civic rejuvenation – insufficient appreciation and acknowledgment by the City
 - Economic importance of arts and culture must be better understood and promoted
 - Get rid of hurdles and excessively bureaucratic processes City imposes
- Knowing how to find money, where to look for artist fees, grants, etc. – younger artists in particular don’t know where to start or who to talk to
- Need to educate audience/ consumers/ clients about copyright standards and the rights of the artist
- Difficulty locating material and supplies locally
- Much more effort needed to build audiences – and find *new* audiences
- Finding flexible venues
- Lack of commercial art galleries in St. Catharines
- Lack of an arts council in St. Catharines
- Lack of standard submission on fees
- Municipality not in tuned to the art sector
- Cultural workers remuneration is low across all practices
- Developing cultural sector workers who are responsive to their communities and no to institutions that have produced them

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

- A central website listing artist and arts activities that would support the arts sector itself in better networking and be a tool for building audiences and community support
- Website should also include professional development opportunities
- More funds to support marketing and promotion
- More people writing more often about the arts – in local papers and other places



- A local forum to support conversation and an opportunity for critical discourse – keeping track of emerging thinking and trends
- Better relationships between the education institutions and the community
- Mentoring programs and initiatives
- Need something like Americans for The Arts – connecting the arts community, business, policy, research, etc.
- Need for clear and concrete cultural plans/policies.
- CARFAC could recommend fees, requirements, standardized consistency
- Support in raising standards in curatorial practices
- Educate businesses and institutions that are potential venues for presenting local artists
- Support for writing grants – especially for younger artists
- An Artscape-like building – live/work spaces, studios and exhibition facilities and networking venue
- High school curriculum must educate and make students aware about what professional arts are about and potential make students aware of career possibilities.
- Possibly an awards system - as long as it's run in a legitimate and transparent way - who is awarding is important
- City policy that dedicates a percent of costs for new development to support public art
- Community work spaces for classes and workshops
- Contracts/ searchable database of contracts, fees, etc. - CARFAC has many of these resources but they are not easy to access
- Develop innovative means of generating revenue for the sector such as the new Toronto billboard tax
- Greater regional communication, networks, responsiveness

Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Something like Akimbo, but free
- LinkedIn for artists
- A platform for networking and collaborations
- Platform/portal should have 2 components
 - Public component – raising awareness and building respect/understanding
 - Private artists forum – to serve the sector
 - Ideally the ‘portal’ should enable connections to be made both locally and province-wide
- Publication of standards – a place to communicate and promote best practices - fees, presentation standards, etc.



- A portal to help find grants and funding opportunities.
- A searchable database for contracts - put valuable CARFAC publications and resources such as contracts publication on-line
- A rating system for galleries – artists should be able to communicate their experiences with both commercial and public galleries – both positive and negative
- Local mapping of where artists are located and details about their arts practice
- Web-based opportunities for professional development
- Some mechanism or support to help artists build their portfolios
- Mechanisms to support commercial collaboration

Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- Fee standards
- Question as to whether it is possible to have province-wide best practices given diversity of institutions, size of communities, etc. – possibly a need to be interpreted in local contexts
- Standard contracts and guidelines related to how artists approach and interact with galleries
- Even if best practices and standards are developed, will they be enforced?
 - Need to consult with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Chambers of Commerce – other important stakeholders in the development and promotion of best practices
- It is the community's responsibly to self-determine what standards and best practices should be – maybe there can only be a provincial framework best practice that is then interpreted locally.
- Standards or best practices for submissions – to commercial galleries, public art competitions, etc.
- Need some standards for 'non-traditional spaces' - cafes, corporate offices, restaurants; need to help define what kind of agreements are needed in these spaces, as well as more formal or traditional spaces
- Best practices for donating work, selling work, fundraising and fees, exhibitions
- Best practices for public art competitions and commissions

Thunder Bay Forum

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in the visual arts, media or craft-based arts sector in your community?

- Lack of access to supplies – or supplies are only available south of the border (US)
- Networking opportunities and gatherings spaces for artists
- Media based equipment - none is available in Thunder Bay or in rural/ remote communities



- Limited exhibition space
- How do you promote your work outside your immediate community – what are the skills and costs involved; many artists in smaller communities simply can't survive on the basis of local markets
- The challenge of trans-border customs tariffs
- In the craft sector (and other sectors) artists must leave the community for education or professional training; many wish to return to their home communities but face communities suffering economically and non-supportive municipalities
- Large differences and challenges between urban versus rural and remote communities
- Must establish consistent procedures
- There must be greater respect for the professionalism of artists – public perception of hobbyists
- Public funding constraints threaten sustainability of projects and organizations – no core funding
 - Escalating demand by funders in terms of applications for funding – tremendous amount of paperwork for relatively few dollars
- In smaller and isolated communities, there is frequently repetition of the same projects – undermines vitality and interest in the arts

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

- Access to supplies - an A to Z rental for the arts
- Artist salons - venues for artist to talk, connect, share knowledge – a gathering place
- Strategies for strengthening relationships with other artists
- An eBay for artists
- Artists need to know more about social media for connecting and networking
- Need information on emerging technologies impacting on artistic practices
- Must build stronger relationships with the tourism industry – strategies that connect our own artistic practices with larger economic development agendas
- Online databases of individuals and organizations
- There is a need for best practices and 'how-to's' related to different areas of arts administration
- Kijiji for artists
- Greater intergenerational interaction



Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Must differentiate on-line information and resources – resources to support and serve the professionals very different from “best practices”; shouldn’t confuse the two
- A “Google-like” tool for locating resources/ expertise/ institutions, etc. – how do we make it easier for people to find one another and the institutions with whom they interact
- Kijiji type website for exchanging supplies
- A forum for conversations – nationally and internationally
- Easier ways of finding supplies on-line – or stores that are willing to ship even if they don’t have an online presence

Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- There may need to be separate codes of practice for different disciplines and institutions – visual arts and crafts, media arts, artist-run centres, public galleries, commercial galleries, festivals, artists co-op studios, etc. – not sure that one size can fit all
- Would prefer the terms “tool kits” and “guidelines” for artists and art organizations rather than “code of practice” or “best practices”, so it becomes a reference, checklist or negotiating tool for artists and art workers – in this way the ‘best practices’ will feel less imposed

Sudbury/North Bay Forum

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in the visual arts, media or craft based arts sector in your community?

- The community does not value artists as professionals
- No funding support for individual artists
- A challenge is that many municipalities do not have any kind of dedicated cultural office or department that could serve as a ‘first point of contact’ for many in the sector
- Community art councils need much clearer mandates and roles
- Professional development regarding business skills is needed across all disciplines – post secondary institutions fine art programs must place a higher priority on equipping artists with these skills
- Lack of resource sharing and access to information
- Lack of professional venues in the community
- In North Bay - there are huge challenges related to the lack of cooperation among arts groups and no financial support from the City



- In Sudbury - there are challenges of weak communication within the sector, animosity, fractured groups, splinter groups
- In Parry Sound – can't break free of ancient history of perceived grievances on the part of arts groups resulting in permanent culture of negativity; also face challenge of differentiating hobbyists vs. professional artists
- The arts receive no grants or funding
- There is a co-op gallery that has run for many years that struggles and has been sustained by the efforts of a very few number of dedicated people who cannot continue forever – no sign of a cultural centre of public gallery
- The challenge in the near north of geographically dispersed artists and arts organizations

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

- Examples of successful funding applications
- Tools and opportunities for artists that support professional development
- The province or federal government must define clearer expectations of municipalities regarding the arts and culture
- Tools to help educate municipalities about the arts
- More spaces for artists
- Better inventories and information on municipal resources that may be available – such as access to municipally owned space
- Professional development seminars related to issues such as incorporation, effective boards, managing annual general meetings, accounting, etc.
- Sharing positive success stories
- Education and promotion of the importance of the arts/culture to local economies and to the survival of some communities
- More mentoring opportunities – Thunder Bay has a good model and could extend it and outreach to other communities
- Each community needs an identified leader and lobbyist to provide a focus to advocacy efforts

Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Artist run centres, public galleries, community art councils communicate and share information with clear roles and responsibilities identified
- Centralized information-sharing
- Hotlines and single websites with links to many other sites – a portal providing one-window point of entry to much wider range of websites, institutions, resources, etc.
- Professional development or tools related to writing resumes, grants, by-laws for organizations



- A mentoring database that facilitates communication and connections
- Information and resources to support advocacy – a source for data, arguments, etc. to support advocacy at the community level.

Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- A best practice that supported (or advocated) the Provincial government to request municipalities to identify culture as a budget line entry
- There must be a strong focus on communicating about the best practices initiative to municipalities
- Standards related to boards of governance
- Guidelines related to commercial galleries, public galleries, artist-run spaces, co-ops, etc. related to
 - How many exhibitions per year?
 - How many calls for submissions for shows?

Toronto/Mississauga Forum

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in the visual arts, media or craft based arts sector in your community?

- Artists work from home and no communication between artists – this is specific to Mississauga
- Access to markets and audiences
- Mississauga remains a “satellite of Toronto” – the tendency is to go to Toronto instead of building a career or arts organizations in Mississauga
- Knowing who and what to ask to find resources
- Need for access to information across the GTA - not necessarily only Toronto
- In Toronto, access to space is very expensive – artists move in and development and gentrification follow pushing artists out
- Accessing funding/grants is an incredibly complicated process that many younger artists and new organizations don't understand
- Artists tend to be isolated
- For galleries the challenge is meeting the expectations of the new demographics- new audience is more sophisticated than before
- Divide between artists in different disciplines
- Lack of awareness of artists' rights, payments, etc.
- Lack of education for potential partners on new business models
- Geographic service boundaries for the different government bodies and funding agencies can cause problems – often they don't align
- Advocating challenges



- Perception of differences and tensions between younger artists and art forms and more mature artists
- Perception and reality of separation and lack of cross-over between disciplines and sectors
- More support and education for new (young) artists - how to present work, how to get commission, organizations that can help new artists, etc.
- Apprenticeships and networks
- Silent art community - more communication is required
- Success stories
- Lack of open house and gathering places for artists
- Art fairs and charities to promote collections and borrowing rights
- Consistent payment in a timely manner
- Challenge of transportation costs in agreements with public or commercial galleries – also clear policies relating to damages to art
- Fixed price agreement on all auctioned work

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

- Post-secondary institution should have courses on how to run a business – all artists must be equipped with these skills

Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Web based forums and ability to tag topics for search purposes
 - Show related questions, topics on sidebar
- Recommend groups on LinkedIn that artists can join
- Teaching resources
- Tools to support peer to peer links and networks
- Access to instructional videos
- Job boards
- Links directing you to other related websites
- Professional development webpage to post seminars, workshops that are being offered (but which are not well known or promoted)
- Educate clients, public galleries, visitors, etc. about those institutions committing bad practices (e.g., galleries that don't pay artists)
- Wikipedia for best practices that everybody can work on – do we need to develop entirely new best practices or could we begin with work already done in other jurisdictions and invite input
- Comprehensive guidelines to submission and deadlines
- Form a curators' perspective forum



- Tools for running a business, FAQ page
- Access to legal information, taxes, etc.
- Survey of artists and survey results
- Fees schedules for professionals and other services
- Information on penalties, standards and standard fees
- Central database that has all galleries/ resources in one spot
- For curators - networks and database with information on artists
- Success stories of artists that illustrate how to develop careers and assist new artists
- Mentoring program, peer networks
- Tools for running a business model
- Access to legal information - CARFAC, list of standards and standards fees
- Comprehensive guide for submissions and deadlines
- Teaching resources
- Workshops online
- Mobile app for curators to find artists
- Need for some structure or regulated/facilitated website
- Communicating more frequently to stakeholders and one-stop shop for all disciplines in all regions

Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- How do we regulate best practices once they are developed?
- Must engage galleries in developing best practices – must articulate and strengthen relationships
- Best practices related to
 - Art fairs
 - Donating works of arts to charities –recent change in legislation presents challenges
 - How artists should deal with private collectors/collections
 - How to determine sale prices - and bargaining
 - Contracts
 - Consistent payment of artists in timely manner
- All galleries should have information on their websites about submissions
- Artists and educational institutions
 - What teachers can/ cannot show while teaching
 - What can we expect of artist educators and what do institutions give back
 - Payment for senior teachers - are they paid more?



- Private galleries - clearer policies related to submissions and other policies or specifications
- Best practice in all aspects of administration
- Submission calls (by region) and artists residencies

London Forum

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in the visual arts, media or craft based arts sector in your community?

- Affordable studio space
- Direct link to people who want to buy art – how to connect artists and potential buyers and collectors
- Lack of knowledge in city administration
- Lack of resources - no place to go in London to connect with other artists, yet it has one of the highest per capita number of artists
- Lack of a strong collective voice – without this it is hard to influence the municipality
- Lack of awareness of the value of visual arts in the city
- Recognition of the sector within the community
- Stereotypes of artists
- Education about small business practices must be incorporated in fine art schools and curriculum
- Operational funding - cannot keep relying on grants
- Overcoming perception that culture is elitist

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

- CARFAC – online monthly cafes and info sharing sessions
- Unified dissemination of information – locally, regionally, nationally
- Kijiji for art
- On line galleries
- Must find ways of dealing with accessibility
 - Disability arts and deaf arts
- Pairing artists with different skills (i.e., those who are strong in their disciplines and forms of expression with those with strong writing skills and success in accessing grants)
- Skill based portal- connecting artist or cultural sector with people who don't know how to get involved with arts sector (i.e.: high school kids need to complete volunteer hours)



- Working with consumers to change people's perspective about buying art (i.e.: people buying from big box vs. work artists) – perception problem that people don't think they can afford real art
- Diversifying and communicating the arguments related to the roles and contributions that art fulfills in society – it is about economic benefits but not only about this

Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Monthly topics for focused discussion
- Education/ communication
- Sites for resources/ education for collectors
- Tools for artists, curators, collectors – how to provide consistent information that creates 'even playing field'
- Promotional tools or advice, best practices or success stories
- Business practices and education
- Standardized forms
- Strong marketing campaigns with positive messaging about art
- Creating a website for submissions
- Website creation or place to upload images and information so new artists have a place to show their work
- Include practices that include commercial galleries as well as public galleries and artists
- Municipalities creating interactive maps of the city locating galleries and art shops and links to current info
- Develop a plan of how community groups can work together to share resources in order to grow

Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- Effective advocacy for influencing municipalities
- Leveraging work that has already been done regarding codes of practice
- Professional practices for the artists

Ottawa Forum

Question 1: What are the challenges you face working in the visual arts, media or craft based arts sector in your community?

- Have visual artists accepted as “professionals” and remunerated accordingly



- A glossary of terms used in the visual arts field so that we all speak the same language – this could be a valuable part of a web based portal or resource
- Access to information that supports you making the ‘big leap’ from the “education part” of your life to turning professional with all the skills, expertise and networks needed
- Connection with other artists to creating a vibrant art community and networks
- Keeping up with current issues
- Challenges finding working/ studio space
- Weak coverage in local media of local artists and arts activity
- Emerging artists need more support and workshops and knowledge
- Best practices in standards of presentation
- More venues
- Greater recognition of media art practice – still not well understood or appreciated
- Gap in knowledge between emerging and established artists
- Audience outreach and development in urban and rural areas

Question 2: What resources would help address these challenges and make your practice better?

In Ottawa this discussion was collapsed into discussion on Question 3.

Question 3: What web-based tools and resources would you like to see on a final project website?

- Directory/ database plus forum for discussions about visual arts with the visual arts networks and peer groups
- Geographic map of important addresses (i.e., galleries, material stores, other necessary businesses and resources)
- Access to important and relevant information and research not duplicating existing information available on the internet
- Cross border contacts - best practices on international exhibitions
 - Information on shipping, application, etc.
- Dispute resolution advice and services
- Information on taxes - e.g., income tax for self-employment
- Advice of starting-out as an artist + professional development resources and opportunities
- CARFAC calendar on line
- What businesses have best practices, companies that may exist in other sectors that may have relevance and application
- Information on best practices/ curriculum for students and universities

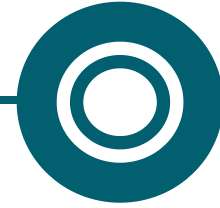


Question 4: What should be the priority topics for Best Practice Development?

- Must be consideration of the enforcement of standards of practice
- Go on the road to educate in “Standards of Practice” topics to individual artists, institutions (e.g., commercial and public galleries to build consensus and ensure we are all on the same page
- Code of conduct leading to “ standards” on relationship between artists and commercial galleries and public galleries
- Best practices must address on line exhibitions/ galleries, etc. as well as traditional venues and distribution channels – ‘welcome to the 21st century’
- Professional gallery associations (i.e.: ADAC, CMA) must somehow enforce their standards and principles on their members
- Artist resale rights
- Give code of practice for dispute resolutions
- Recommendations on how things should work so that artists and galleries understand the processes
- Ensure diverse representation from the sector are involved in best practice development to build support and buy-in
- Rights and responsibilities when you sell your work to a public collection
- Process for artists to donate to charities, public institutions or private collectors
- Copyright standards on the internet
- Public art commissions



3 Forum Themes



Challenges Working in the Sector in Communities

Weak Networks – the absence of strong networks of individuals and organizations both within and across the three sectors was identified at all Forums as a major challenge. Weak networks undermine sustainable arts practices for individual artists; particular attention was drawn to the challenges facing young artists entering the field. While organizations or institutions were less represented at Forums, weak connections among arts organizations and between these organizations and individual artists was also raised.

Lack of Mentoring Opportunities – closely tied to networks was a frequent call for more structured or coordinated mentoring opportunities linking senior artists with emerging or younger artists. The call for mentoring focused less on specific arts practices than on the ‘business’ side of the work – increasing knowledge of funding programs, business skills, where to look for information, connections to other individuals in the community with shared interests or needs, etc.

Challenges Accessing Information and Resources – this challenge had less to do with the lack of information than with accessing information and resources that did exist. The message was ‘we don’t know where to start looking.’ A related point was the call for municipalities to have at least one staff person that could serve as a first point of contact for individuals. In some communities, local arts councils do play this role. A wide range of information and resources were identified including:

- Funding sources
- Opportunities for professional development
- Success stories
- Local and regional contacts – related to networks
- Access to information (and potentially forums for discussing) important emerging issues and trends in the sector

Differing Needs in Urban and Rural Areas – attendees from rural or remote parts of the province noted the serious challenges they faced generating support in their communities for artistic activities. The lack of networking opportunities and challenges accessing information and resources were more acute in communities.



Opportunities for Professional Development – a perennial theme in consultations across all sectors, individuals identified the need for access to professional development opportunities or resources. Professional development opportunities spanned a range of topics but again most focused on the business or operational side of sustaining artist practices either as individual artists or small businesses. It was acknowledged that instructional videos and other kinds of on-line professional development did exist, but needed to be identified and better promoted.

Lack of Physical Gathering Places – connected to many of the themes identified above was a call for physical gathering places where artists could connect with one another and with local organization, exchange knowledge, explore opportunities for collaboration, etc.

Lack of Understanding of Professional Artists – in communities large and small a consistent message was a lack of understanding and appreciation for the skills and knowledge of professional artists. This was manifest in a lack of differentiation between professional artists and ‘amateurs’ or hobbyists. This same lack of understanding and respect was felt to be linked to low levels of remuneration. It also manifested itself in things such as artists being asked to donate works for things such as fundraising events. A specific point raised at several Forums was the special challenge faced by media artists which it was felt were less understood than visual arts and crafts.

Weak Business and Entrepreneurship Skills – participants expressed two solutions for addressing low levels of remuneration and the sustainability of not-for-profit organizations in the sector. The first was the need for increased public sector funding. Many others (particularly younger artists in attendance) felt strongly this was not a realistic expectation and solutions must be found through increasing earned income through stronger business and entrepreneurial skills in addition to resource sharing and collaboration. At several forums, there was a call for new business models to sustain organizations and arts activity.

Difficulty Accessing Supplies – particularly in smaller communities, a frequent challenge identified was difficulty accessing arts supplies.

Lack of Municipal Support and Understanding – one of the most consistent messages at all forums was the challenge those in the arts community face due to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of local municipalities. This lack of understanding translates into a lack of appreciation of the arts and arts activity to the community and to the local economy.

Audience Development Needs – participants noted the lack of media coverage in their communities that translates into a barrier to raising awareness and growing audiences or supporter for individual artists and arts organizations.



Local Resources Needed to Address Challenges

Responses to this question (naturally) focused on ideas or initiatives to address those challenges described above.

A ‘Point Person’ in Each Community – in the absence of a dedicated municipal staff person or a local arts council, a designated ‘point person’ or first point of contact is needed to help people begin the process of building networks and accessing information. A full-time manager at an ‘anchor’ arts or cultural facility could play this role in some communities. The role of this person would not be to serve as the source or repository of information but as a ‘referral agent’ directing people to contacts or organizations able to provide information and support.

Regular Information Sharing Forums – hosting such forums could rotate among local cultural groups or organizations. In many communities, these forums work best if they are a combination of networking and professional development event with a speaker or individual with expertise on a specific topic. Many potential topics for such gatherings were identified at the forums and were summarized in this report. Information forums could potentially also act as a vehicle for establishing mentoring opportunities. Convening of forums was closely tied to the challenges of lack of access to professional development.

Marketing and Promotion – to address low levels of awareness and support/participation in local arts activity forum participants called for a variety of mechanisms or tools to raise awareness. Although stronger media attention was felt to be one solution, more people pointed to the need for stronger and better coordinated online promotion. ‘Cultural portals’ providing ‘one-window’ access to a wide range of local arts activity was identified at many forums as a means of building awareness about the wide range of activity occurring in all communities.

Curriculum Change in Post-Secondary Arts Programs – acknowledging the challenges associated with influencing curriculum in post-secondary institutions, many expressed the need for programs affiliated with the visual, media and craft-based disciplines needed to incorporate a much stronger focus on teaching the business and entrepreneurial skills needed for individual artists to survive and pursue a career in their chosen field of practice following graduation.

Dispute Resolution Advice or Services – while not well defined, it was felt that in cases where disputes arose between individual artists and arts institutions (of all kinds), some neutral process or mechanism was needed. It was felt that the development of best practices that more clearly defined the mutual expectations of individual artists and the institutions that exhibit or distribute their work would serve as a proactive means of avoiding conflicts before they arose.



Online Resources Needed to Address Challenges

Searchable Databases - one of the ultimate deliverables for the project is the creation of a web portal or platform, one component of which would be a searchable database of organizations. The current phase of the project is building a database of institutions and organizations across the visual arts, media and craft-based arts sector that will eventually form the basis of such a tool. There was some excitement expressed at the possibility of such a database taking the form of an interactive web-based map that would not only enable searching by category of institutions or key words, but provide the opportunity to ‘drill down’ to search for organizations in a particular community or region.

On-line Contract Templates – while there was much praise for the critically important CARFAC Ontario publication on contracts, the resource would be more valuable and reach more people if it were available and modifiable on-line. An extension of this idea was that actual templates related to different types of contracts be accessible on-line that people could simply fill in

On-line CARFAC Ontario Calendar – the same basic suggestion was made related to the print-based CARFAC calendar which was again praised, but which could be more useful and accessible if it were available on-line.

Rating System for Public Galleries and Commercial Galleries - this suggestion focused on enabling individuals to communicate their own experience dealing with a specific gallery (both positive and negative) as a guide for other artists. This tool would parallel other sites inviting consumer feedback on a wide range of products, facilities, services, etc.

Database of Mentors – such a database would require mentors to self-nominate and identify disciplines or areas of expertise but such a tool would greatly expand and facilitate making mentoring connections. These mentoring relationships could occur in the same community or could be implemented through telephone and email exchanges across communities.

Replication of Existing On-line Tools – three existing tools were identified at several of the forums that it was felt could be replicated in some way to address sectoral needs. These included a Linked-In for artists, a Kijiji for artists, and an Akimbo for artists. The Kijiji for artists was often raised in the context of exchange of purchase of supplies. None of these suggestions were discussed or explored in any detail as to feasibility or if the existing tools/platforms could be better used to address sectoral needs.



Access to Success Stories – topics identified here included strong grant applications, marketing strategies, business plans, among others.

Jobs Board – a ‘one-stop’ place for posting and searching for jobs in the sector across the province and potentially across Canada.

Central Hub for Relevant Websites – rather than forcing individuals to search for relevant websites, a central ‘hub’ with links to a wide range of websites would enable more efficient and focused searches. The websites could be categorized and clustered based on different information needs.

Glossary of Terms – while the vocabulary of the sectors is well known and understood among more established artists or organizations, a simple glossary of frequently used words would be of assistance to those entering the field.

Forums on a Range of Issues – forums or threaded discussions initiated by any interested individual or organization would help to connect people with shared interests and contribute to knowledge building in the sector. It was suggested that discussions be tagged to support searching.

On-line Access to Legal Information – this suggestion was somewhat ill defined as to specific types of legal information. Among those topics identified were information in incorporation of a business, copyright, and issues related to filing taxes for individual artists.

Priority Best Practice Topics

General Observations

Before summarizing feedback on specific priority topics, a number of more general observations can be made regarding discussions related to best practices for the sector.

Across all six forums, there was considerably more interest expressed in the ‘resources component’ of the project than for the ‘best practice component’. There was in fact resistance to the idea at a number of forums. Issues or factors raised included the following.

- Skepticism about the ability to create best practices on any topic given the diversity of the size and sophistication of institutions; differing needs and capacities in different communities; a feeling that best practices would be interpreted as imposed standards rather than useful and practical guides, among others



- There was considerable discussion related to the language of “best practices”. Other language suggested included Codes of Practice or Guidelines.
- Individual artists were better represented than institutions at all forums. The result was that discussion focused more on the needs and interests of individuals than institutions. Based on experience in other jurisdictions that have undertaken similar projects, success has depended on the co-creation of best practices by individual artists and institutions such as public or commercial galleries, etc. Underrepresentation from institutions also suggests that the province-wide survey must be designed in a way that seeks meaningful input from institutions.
- ‘Why not take a Wikipedia approach to the development of best practices?’ – the idea here was that Ontario need not start from scratch but rather build on the work of other jurisdictions but potentially adapt and refine these practices by inviting suggestions and input from the community.
- **Enforcement** – when attendees asked about issues of enforcement the response of the consultant was to point to approaches in other jurisdiction which placed the emphasis on education and ‘moral suasion’ than enforcement by some kind of oversight body. This is true of the internationally acknowledged leader in the field – the National Association for the Visual Arts in Australia (NAVA) who produced the ‘bible’ of best practice work *Codes of Practice for the Professional Australian Visual Arts, Craft and Design Sector*. Now in its 3rd edition, NAVA’s focus for the first decade was one of communication and education related to the body of work. It is only recently that discussions related to enforcement have begun to be engaged. The process in Ontario (and work completed in Saskatchewan by CARFAC Saskatchewan) marks the beginning of this process of raising industry standards.

Priority Best Practice Topics

The following were the most frequently identified topics for an initial set of best practices in Ontario. They are presented in no order of priority as no single topic emerged as an overwhelming priority.

- Professionalism of presentation/display
- Standardization of call for submissions
- Charitable donations of work to public institutions or charities
- Resale rights
- Public art commissions and competitions (with municipalities as a primary target audience)
- Relationships between individual artists and public galleries
- Relationships between individual artists and commercial galleries