

CULTURE CONNECTS: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURE IN TORONTO



2025 – 2035

Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto (2025 – 2035)

Prepared by the Economic Development and Culture Division, City of Toronto
October 2024

With special thanks to our project partners:



With community engagement funded by:



Cover Page Image:
Taste of Lawrence. Wexford Heights BIA, 2023. Photo Credit: Nick Wons.



Cast of *Spaciousness*. Produced by Ahmed Moneka and Nicky Lawrence.
Fort York National Historic Site, 2023. Photo Credit: Garcia Creative.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Toronto acknowledges that all facets of its work are carried out on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. These territories are currently covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

We deliver this Action Plan in support of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities past and present. Indigenous Peoples have lived on the land now known as Toronto for thousands of years, and this is reflected in their oral histories, arts and culture practices, and deep relationships with the lands and waters. This Action Plan acknowledges and celebrates First Nations, Inuit, and Métis arts and culture in its immense diversity. Indigenous leaders, artists, and makers have led creative practices on this land for generations upon generations, and we honour their tireless and ongoing work and support its vibrancy into the future.

We are grateful for the ancient and continuous Indigenous stewardship of these lands and waters through which culture and creativity can flourish today and into the future.

Chi Miigwetch, Niawen, Marsi, Nakummesuak, Quannamiik



Deanne Hupfield. Cultural Hotspot launch, 2019.
Photo Credit: Kat Rizza.

AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Toronto acknowledges that among Treaty peoples not all people came to these lands as migrants or settlers in this generation or in generations past. We acknowledge those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. In support of the City's ongoing efforts to confront anti-Black racism, we pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

This land's diverse Black communities have shared their artistic and creative gifts for centuries—and yet their art, histories, cultural contributions, and creative efforts have been more often than not pushed to the margins. This Action Plan will uphold the City's commitment to acting in support of and in solidarity with Black communities, seeking freedom and reparative justice to continue the work of celebrating and championing Black art, culture and creativity as part of forging the path towards equity, inclusion and transformational change.



Mural of Mary Ann Shadd Cary by Yung Yemi.
Mackenzie House Museum, 2021. Photo Credit: Andrew Williamson.

ARRIVALS

We are arrivals
arrivals but for our dreams
our voices crackling creeks
rustling echoes through trees
Culture springing eternal
In the eclecticism of our City, connecting
and interconnecting, visionaries, social labour
a community aflowering
with accents and ethnicities meshing
ancient and new, a land Indigenous
for a beat, a minute, a decade, a mile
centuries through time, we have
held our dreams together and apart
But the miracle is, we are present,
here, now, thus

Our hopes thread our tenderness like magic
mysteries floating on the soul's soundings
reaching to create tempos of belonging
Art heals, culture can cure. A city grows.
In our scrawling graffiti of footprints
we pull from a magic world
hearts aflutter, set alight to beam, make new
to be moved and touched by those we are not
beaming our lives, beaming into our lives
beaming to the world
Our stories, our City

By Lillian Allen, Toronto's Seventh Poet Laureate (2023 – 2026)



Still from *Reverence*, 2020 by Teaunna Gray.
St. Lawrence Hall. Photo Credit: City of Toronto.

ADVISORY PANEL

We would like to thank members of our Advisory Panel, who provided insight, guidance, and advice to City staff throughout the development of the Action Plan:

Shelley Carroll, co-chair

maxine bailey, co-chair

Mark Campbell

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Ravi Jain

Stephan Jost

Marta Keller Hernandez

Jacoba Knaapen

Lucie Lalumière

Sean Lee

Sariena Luy

Keziah Myers

David Norsworthy

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Rajni Perera

Michael Rubinoff

Devyani Saltzman

Celia Smith

Kerry Swanson

Cheryl Thompson

Councillor, Ward 17-Don Valley North,

Mayor's Economic Development and Culture Champion

Canadian Film Centre

University of Toronto

MUSE Arts

National Ballet of Canada (to June 2024)

Small World Music

WhyNot Theatre

Art Gallery of Ontario

Mural Routes

Toronto Alliance of Performance Arts

Interactive Ontario

Tangled Art + Disability

Flaunt It Movement

Advance – Canada's Black Music Business Collective

TOES FOR DANCE

Historian and Author

Artist

Producer

Writer, Curator, Consultant

Luminato

Indigenous Screen Office

Toronto Metropolitan University



THE HIVE by Kathleen Dogantzis and Will Cuthbert. Winter Stations 2022, Toronto.
Photo Credit: Chelsea Virginia.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

It is my great pleasure to introduce **Culture Connects**, a bold and inclusive vision for the future of culture in Toronto. I know firsthand the transformative power of culture. Culture gave me a way to express myself, and it taught me the importance of seeing the world through different lenses. Culture shaped me not only as a person but as a leader and advocate. Toronto's diverse, innovative cultural scene continues to inspire me, and I believe it is one of our greatest strengths.

For more than a year, the City has convened and listened to people committed to culture and creative industries in Toronto. We heard that people need cultural offerings and events close to where they live, that artists and creatives need more reliable incomes, that audiences struggle to find the type of culture they hope to connect with, and that there is a great need for investment and innovation.

This Action Plan is built on the belief that arts, culture and creativity belong to all of us. We are committed to increasing access to culture, supporting our local artists and creative industries, and investing in cultural spaces across the city. We want every Torontonian in every neighbourhood to have the opportunity to create, participate in, and benefit from culture.

Culture Connects outlines both urgent and long-term actions to deliver on this vision. As a first step, we will take immediate action to address the most pressing issues in Toronto's culture sector, including major new investment in the Toronto Arts Council and the network of Local Arts Service Organizations as well as a commitment to start indexing all cultural grants to inflation starting in 2025.

To everyone who shared their dreams for the future of culture in Toronto – thank you. It is your passion and commitment that has made **Culture Connects** possible.



Mayor Olivia Chow
City of Toronto

MESSAGE FROM ADVISORY PANEL CO-CHAIRS

On behalf of our fellow advisory panel members, we are excited to share **Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto** – a bold, forward-looking blueprint for our city’s cultural future. With this plan, we aim to celebrate and amplify Toronto’s creative voices, bringing people together through art, culture, and shared experiences that remind us of why we love living in this vibrant, dynamic city.

The challenges of recent years have tested the resilience of the cultural and creative sectors. But through it all, it’s clear that culture remains the lifeblood of our community. It is what draws us into public spaces, connects us to each other, and makes us proud to call Toronto home. **Culture Connects** is our commitment to nurturing this creative energy, making Toronto a place where culture thrives and uplifts us all.

Culture Connects is more than just a set of policies – it’s an invitation. An invitation to rediscover the joy of shared experiences, to engage with culture in all its forms, and to embrace the diversity of voices that make this city so unique. We believe culture has the power to light up our streets, fill our venues, and bring us all together in ways that inspire and rejuvenate. Working together, we can make Toronto a place where culture supports our greatest aspirations as a city. We have work to do, and **Culture Connects** is our roadmap.

Thank you to each of the 4,000+ community members, artists, and creative workers who helped to shape this Action Plan. The vision that you shared – a vision for culture everywhere, for all, for the future, and beyond our borders – will make Toronto a more creative, connected city in the years to come. We are honoured to launch **Culture Connects** and be your co-creators and collaborators in advancing this critical work.

With gratitude,



Councillor Shelley Carroll
Ward 17, Don Valley North
Mayor’s Economic Development and Culture Champion



maxine bailey
Executive Director, Canadian Film Centre

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Me, A Woman by Massoumeh Jian Javdan.
Photo Credit: Shiva Jian Javdan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto sets out a bold new vision for culture in Toronto – a vision for a city where everyone, everywhere, can discover, create, and experience culture, and where culture is valued and prized as an integral part of our daily lives.

Culture matters to Torontonians and is a force for good in our city. From festivals to film, music to museums, art to theatre, and poetry to food, culture brings people together, builds a shared sense of community, and supports innovation and creativity. It is through the art of Toronto’s creators that millions of people worldwide first become aware of our city.

Yet, we heard loud and clear: culture in Toronto is in a state of crisis. Cultural spaces remain at risk as development pressures threaten to displace cultural venues, artists’ homes, and creative workspaces. Rising costs and shrinking funding opportunities have put many artists and vital cultural organizations in a highly precarious state. And there remains a pressing need for cultural programming and creative workforces to become more inclusive of Toronto’s diversity, with greater support for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities.

In the creative industries, there has been a rapid evolution in both technology and business models, changing market

conditions, and audience patterns. Major global cities are competing against Toronto to attract creative enterprises and a highly mobile creative workforce. Industries such as film and television have grown to achieve unprecedented success – however, these industries are currently under pressure, and to retain Toronto’s market share, the significant challenges they face must be addressed.

But perhaps the biggest risk facing culture in Toronto is that communities are feeling disconnected and disengaged. We heard repeatedly in our engagement process that many felt that the city’s cultural scene was “not for someone like me” and that cultural offerings did not feel accessible. For Toronto to succeed as a creative city, it is critical that we understand and break down these barriers.

Despite these challenges, it is also a time of immense opportunity and potential. Toronto is a global creative and cultural hub and one of the most diverse cities in the world. The city’s cultural attractions delight local, national, and international audiences. Creative industries are a driving force for the local economy, and the city is recognized as a centre for technology and innovation, with a creative workforce brimming with emerging and established talent.

With collective action and investment, Toronto can secure a bright future for culture in this city. The time to invest in culture is now, to foster an environment that promotes creativity, sustainability, and connection.

Culture Connects identifies four priorities for the next ten years – culture everywhere, culture for all, culture for the future, and culture beyond our borders.

These priorities are based on the vision shared by over 4,000 residents who participated in our community engagement process, as well as comprehensive research on the state of the cultural sector prepared by the University of Toronto, and best practices from leading cities around the world.

Each priority includes a set of actions to transform the way the City supports culture in Toronto, including **urgent actions** to address the pressing challenges facing culture today, and **longer-term actions** to drive systemic change and capitalize on the many opportunities for culture to thrive in the years to come. The actions are focused on where the City can have the greatest impact. But they are also an invitation to cultural organizations, creative businesses, other levels of government, local communities, and the private sector to work with us in partnership to achieve the best possible results.



Géléédé – Daughters of the Diaspora by Destinie Adélakun.
Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2022. Photo Credit: City of Toronto.

PRIORITIES:

ONE CULTURE EVERYWHERE

Actions to ensure that culture is an essential component of complete communities in every neighbourhood across Toronto.

TARGET: Over the next ten years, the City will support the development of one million square feet of new cultural space in Toronto.

TWO CULTURE FOR ALL

Actions to enable everyone to discover, create, and access relevant and engaging cultural experiences.

TARGET: Every resident will have access to at least one free cultural experience in their neighbourhood supported by the City each month.

THREE CULTURE FOR THE FUTURE

Actions to build a successful, innovative cultural sector that is prepared to lead now and into the future.

TARGET: The City will increase investment in culture by \$35 million over the next ten years to retain, rebuild and reimagine culture in Toronto.

FOUR CULTURE BEYOND OUR BORDERS

Actions to champion Toronto globally as a creative capital, with unparalleled cultural offerings, and as the best place to establish and scale creative projects, businesses, and careers.

TARGET: The City will enable 1,000 new creative export and artist exchange projects over the next ten years.

To achieve the change we want to see in ten years' time, we must first address the instability facing the cultural and creative sector, and connect people to culture, and creatives to opportunities.

The Action Plan will kickstart in 2025 with a focus on investing in culture and connecting audiences to art and culture. The City will deliver immediate targeted investments to support creatives, cultural organizations, and creative industries, with a focus on stabilizing and empowering vital, new and growing organizations, and organizations led by and serving Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. The City will also work to connect communities to culture and each other, with deeper and increased opportunities for residents to gather and engage with culture closer to where they live, all year round. This will include a focus on promotion and discoverability to make it easier for all Toronto residents and visitors to find and participate in cultural offerings.

Our work to implement the Action Plan will be informed by five guiding principles.

These principles, developed based on overarching values shared with us by the community, will shape every action we take to advance culture in Toronto – from the day-to-day support that City staff provide to residents, creatives and

businesses, to the development of long-term projects and plans. The guiding principles include:

- 1: Centre Indigenous Culture and Creativity
- 2: Prioritize Equity and Access
- 3: Champion Artists, Creatives, and Creative Industries
- 4: Attract and Build for Audiences
- 5: Foster Innovation and Enable Creativity

We know the road ahead is complex – and that's why **Culture Connects will grow and evolve as a living document, in partnership with the community, cultural organizations and businesses.**

To develop this Action Plan, we were fortunate to engage with artists, creatives, businesses, and residents from all corners of Toronto. We heard from many of these partners about the importance of continuing these conversations and coming together on a regular basis to share ideas, build new partnerships, and collaborate towards a stronger cultural sector.

To keep this momentum going, we will host the first Mayor's Culture Summit in 2025.

The Culture Summit will be an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning across Toronto's creative community, to report back on initiatives implemented by the City and partners to advance the objectives of the Action Plan, and to engage residents in their priorities for cultural investment.

We will hold ourselves accountable to the community and to City Council by regularly sharing the findings, progress, and impact of the Action Plan through a variety of methods. We will also share data about the health of the broader cultural sector and creative industries in Toronto to help artists and organizations access research and metrics to plan their operations.

At a time of such rapid change, it can be hard to imagine what culture in Toronto will look like in ten years' time. Recognizing this uncertainty, the City will conduct a review of **Culture Connects** every three years and use this opportunity to course correct, and introduce any new actions or initiatives required to respond to changing priorities and needs in the community.



Together, we can make this Action Plan's vision a reality and ensure that Toronto is a city where everyone can discover, create, and experience culture; a city that is recognized and defined globally for its unique, thriving cultural scene; and that we can all be proud to call home.

DEFINING TERMS

Culture is dynamic and evolves over time. It includes our heritage, stories, languages, customs, food, and artistic and cultural practices. It shapes our identities and influences how we interact with each other and the world around us. It drives economic prosperity, creates employment opportunities, builds social cohesion, and attracts investment.

At the City of Toronto, when we say ‘culture’, we mean:

- **A broad range of artistic work and practices** including community arts, dance, festivals, film, literary arts, media and digital arts, multi-media arts, museums, music, theatre and visual arts.
- **Creative businesses and industries** including film and television production, video game production, esports, the music industry, and creative technologies, such as augmented reality, virtual reality and immersive technologies.
- **Cultural heritage** including artifacts, objects, historic places, and intangible heritage, such as traditions and cultural practices.
- **The diverse heritage, knowledge, and culture of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities**, deeply rooted and interwoven in traditions, lived experiences, identities, spirituality, community, and land.

The Action Plan uses the terms ‘culture’, ‘creativity’, and ‘creative industries’ to encompass the various ways that we express, experience, and connect with creativity in our daily lives. Throughout the Action Plan, the term ‘culture’ is used when referring to the entirety of these sectors.

A Note on City vs city:

When ‘City’ appears with a capital ‘C’, it refers to the City of Toronto as municipal government. When ‘city’ appears with a small ‘c’, it refers to Toronto as a geographic area.

HOW THE CITY SUPPORTS CULTURE

The City of Toronto supports culture in many ways – including as a convenor, funder, landlord, planner, programmer, and regulator. Many of the core services to support culture are managed by the City’s Economic Development and Culture Division, and by the Toronto Arts Council, which serves as the City’s arms-length funding body for the arts. The table below provides a snapshot of these core services and related services provided by other City divisions, agencies, and corporations that support culture in Toronto.



Community Printmaking. Nia Centre for the Arts, 2023.
Photo Credit: Selina McCallum.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Arts and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards and honours • City-led cultural events • Cavalcade of Lights • Doors Open • New Years Eve • Nuit Blanche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Centres and Galleries • Assembly Hall • Clark Centre for the Arts • Cedar Ridge Creative Centre • Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery and Ascent Gallery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community arts programming • Community space tenancies • Cultural grants and incentives • Public art (commissions and conservation) • Support for festivals and events
Film and Entertainment Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative technology sector development • Film permitting • Film sector development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music sector development • Nighttime economy support • Trade missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor information services • Visitor economy sector development • Workforce development
Museums and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital projects and heritage facilities maintenance • Collections management and conservation • Community space rentals • Public programming, events and exhibitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto History Museums • Colborne Lodge • Fort York National Historic Site • Gibson House Museum • Market Gallery • Mackenzie House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montgomery’s Inn • Todmorden Mills • Scarborough Museum • Spadina Museum • Zion Schoolhouse

TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL

- Grant programs for:
 - Arts organizations
 - Youth arts organizations
 - Artists and collectives
 - Black artists and organizations
 - Indigenous artists and organizations
 - Newcomer and refugee artists
 - Community-engaged arts
- Strategic programs and partnerships:
 - Arts in school and libraries; parks; and historic sites
 - Sector and leadership development, mentorship supports
- Outreach and access supports
- Impact research and evaluation

OTHER CITY SERVICES SUPPORTING CULTURE

- Building permits
- Business licensing
- Civic theatres (TO Live)
- Civic squares
- Development reviews
- Event permits
- Facility rentals and leasing
- Heritage preservation
- Land use planning and zoning
- Libraries
- Intergovernmental relations
- Marketing and communications
- Parks and community recreation centres
- Policy development and research
- Property tax policy
- Small business support
- Sponsorship

STRATEGIC CONTEXT: OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE CULTURE SECTOR

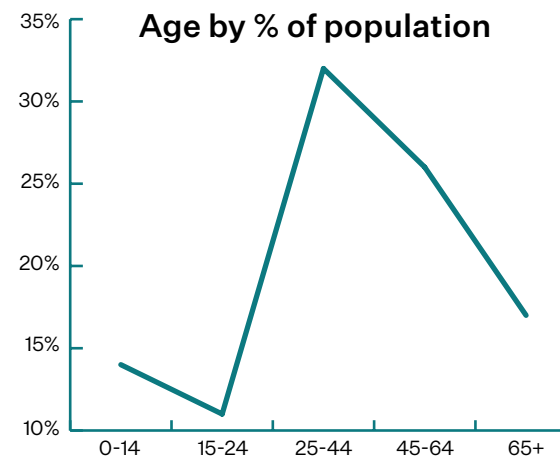
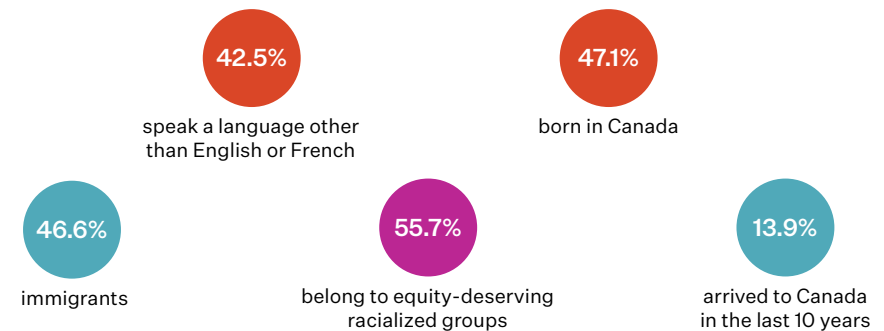
When we plan for the future of culture in Toronto, we need to reflect on who we are and where we are as a city. This section explores the strategic context for the Action Plan, including an overview of Toronto's current demographic profile, the economic impact and health of the sector, and key trends shaping culture in Toronto today and the near future. Understanding this strategic context, both now and as our city continues to change, is key to the success of the Action Plan, and how it is implemented and adapted over time.

WHO IS TORONTO?

Toronto is one of the most diverse cities in the world, with a population that has grown by almost 670,000 people over the last thirty years and is expected to continue to grow by more than 700,000 new residents, and more than half a million new jobs, by 2051.

As Toronto grows, our population will become increasingly more diverse with 71% of the population belonging to racialized communities by 2041.¹ Our changing city provides an opportunity to ask ourselves, “who is Toronto?” and challenge cultural organizations, producers, creators, and funders to broaden cultural offerings in order to support a deeper sense of community and belonging. Looking ahead, globalization and immigration will continue to allow for increasing exchange of ideas and cultural practices across borders, with more opportunities for creatives to collaborate internationally, share knowledge and experiences, and work on cross-cultural projects.

TORONTO TODAY²



¹ Statistics Canada. 2022. Canada in 2041: A larger, more diverse population with greater differences between regions. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220908/g-a004-eng.htm>

² Based on 2021 Statistics Canada Census data.

CULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

Toronto is Canada’s creative capital. Culture contributed \$8.4 billion to Toronto’s economy in 2023, representing 5% of the city’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).³

Toronto’s culture sector is a significant and growing economic driver, creating a wide range of jobs, and driving cultural tourism and spending. Its spin-off effects benefit other sectors, such as hospitality and food, by drawing more visitors to the city and encouraging them to stay longer. It also helps to make Toronto a more desirable place to live, work, and invest, and is key to attracting and retaining talent in the city.

While the overall economic impact of culture and the creative industries has returned to pre-pandemic levels, recovery has been uneven across sectors, with some still struggling to regain their footing. Targeted interventions and supports are still needed for the culture sector to reach its full potential as an economic driver for Toronto.

Toronto is home to the most cultural workers in Canada, but despite the overall economic impact of the culture sector, many creative professionals in Toronto are struggling financially.

Over 146,000 workers, or 15% of Toronto’s workforce, are employed in culture – more than any other city in the country.⁴ Yet many of these workers earn very little – especially artists, who had a median employment income of just \$15,700 in 2021. Income levels are somewhat higher for other types of cultural occupations, such as broadcasting, film and video, sound recording, design, libraries, museums, galleries, and publishing, with median employment incomes ranging between \$40,000 and \$50,000. As Toronto becomes a more expensive place to live, many cultural workers are also struggling to make a living in Toronto.

Many artists and creatives rely on precarious work, moving from gig to gig to get by.

69% of artists in the city describe themselves as being self-employed, compared to 15% of all other workers in Toronto.⁵ Inconsistent work opportunities and unstable income make it especially challenging to sustain a career in the city. Understanding how to support and empower this group of talented workers will be crucial to the success of the Action Plan in the years to come.

³ Statistics Canada. City of Toronto research and analysis.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ K. Hill. **More than 32,000 professional artists in Toronto.** Hill Strategies. 2023. <https://statsinsights.hillstrategies.com/p/artists-in-toronto-in-2021>

GROWTH OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

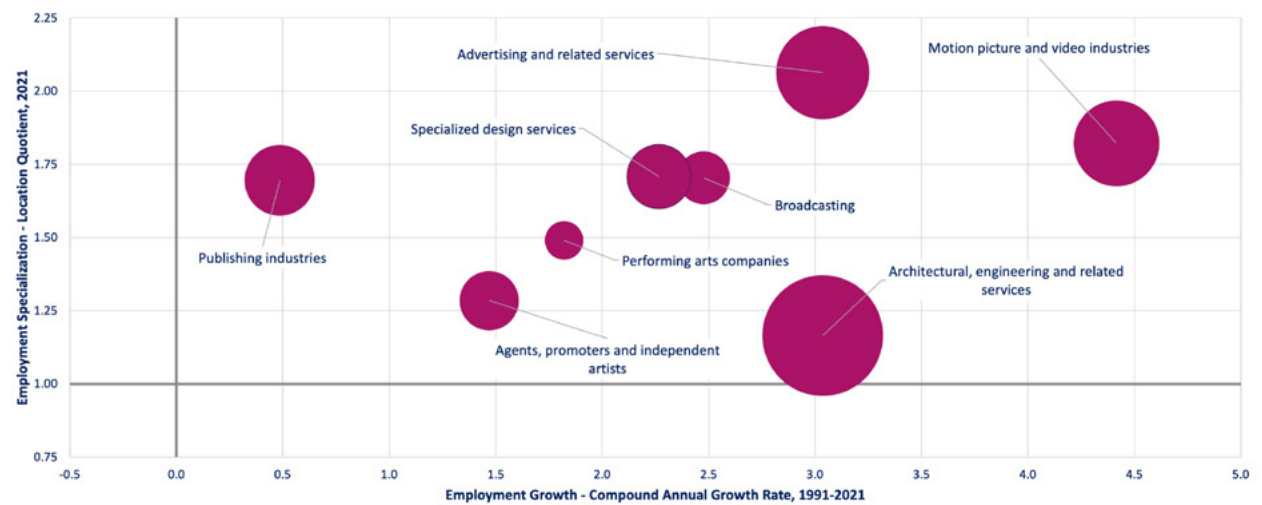
From 1991 to 2021, culture and the creative industries in Toronto grew at an annual rate of 2.5%. Their growth outpaced that of the overall economy, which grew at 1.7% annually over the same period. Culture and the creative industries grew faster than key sectors such as medical and biotechnology, and at a similar pace to information and communication technologies, finance and business services. Growth was especially strong in film and television, which expanded at a rate of 2.5 times greater than the overall economy.⁶

Figure 1 illustrates how growth has varied across individual creative industries.⁷ While each of these individual sectors has expanded since 1991, growth has been especially strong in motion picture and video industries. Figure 1 also demonstrates that Toronto is an important hub for creative industries within Canada given the higher concentration of these industries (and jobs) in Toronto compared to the national average.

ARTISTS INCOME

Artists⁸ income levels are below the poverty line in Toronto (\$27,000) and well below the living wage for the city (\$45,000). From 2016 to 2021, the median income of artists dropped by 28%, while other median income levels increased by 13%. Many artists rely on additional income sources to make a living. But even with additional income sources, artists' median income is only \$33,600 – which is still 32% lower than the median personal income for all Toronto workers (\$44,400).

Figure 1: Growth and Specialization: Toronto's Creative Industries, 1991-2021



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1991-2021 [Custom tabulations, Author's calculations]

⁶ T. Vinodrai, **Toronto's Cultural Sector: Economic Dynamics and Change, 1991 to 2021**, University of Toronto School of Cities. 2024. p. 5-6, https://schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/TO-cultural-sector-Economic-dynamics-and-change_Vinodrai_Aug-2024_FINAL.pdf

⁷ Figure 1 demonstrates the number of employees in each of the creative industries (indicated by the size of the circle); the average annual job growth rate on the horizontal axis; and the concentration of employment of an industry compared to the national average on the vertical axis. Circles above the number 1 on the vertical axis mean that a specific industry is more concentrated in Toronto compared to the Canadian average. Industries shown further to the right on the horizontal axis indicate a strong positive growth rate.

⁸ Artists are measured by Statistics Canada as those working a certain number of hours as a professional artist between January 2020 and May 2021. We recognize the limitations that this data presents, and it does not capture all artists in Toronto. For more information see K. Hill. **More than 32,000 professional artists in Toronto**. Hill Strategies. 2023. <https://statsinsights.hillstrategies.com/p/artists-in-toronto-in-2021>

WHAT'S SHAPING CULTURE IN TORONTO TODAY?

The past ten years have brought about profound changes to culture in Toronto, with shifts in awareness around vital issues such as reconciliation, social justice, climate change, and rapid developments in technology. Over the next ten years, we will continue to see culture evolve and change, with both positive and negative impacts. This section outlines some key changes and potential trends that have shaped and will shape culture in Toronto.

A STORY OF UNEVEN RECOVERY AND GROWTH

The effects of the pandemic have been varied across the culture sector and creative industries.

Different segments of the culture sector are experiencing different realities; some are showing comparative stability while others have struggled to maintain their operations post-COVID-19 pandemic, leaving some sectors and creatives in a profound state of precarity. The loss of artist studios, rehearsal, and performance spaces, rising costs of production, changing audience patterns, and changing work patterns are just a few of the impactful trends that the culture sector is having to adapt to post-pandemic. On the other hand, other segments of the culture sector, particularly creative industries such as film and television production, benefit from strong fundamentals in infrastructure, workforce, and tax

credits that create a base on which to build a stronger future. These multiple simultaneous realities emphasize the need for targeted actions to address the diverse needs for Toronto's cultural and creative landscape.

BASIC NEEDS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The high cost of living, congestion, unaffordable space, and the struggle for equitable access are barriers for creating and enjoying culture in this city.

Affordability, the rising cost of living, difficulty getting around the city, mental health, and well-being are ongoing issues faced by many Torontonians, including those working in culture. Many creatives and cultural workers, particularly emerging, younger and racialized creatives, are facing burnout, and experience significant challenges navigating these ongoing issues, and juggling multiple jobs to keep up with rising costs of living.

Unstable employment, short-term contracts, gig jobs, freelancing, and generally lower incomes are common for cultural workers. The changing nature of work post-pandemic may continue to shift employment in the culture sector leading to more freelance and contract-based work, job insecurity, and income instability. Across Toronto, policies and support will

be needed to help reduce these barriers for cultural workers to live, work, and succeed in the city.

CHAMPIONING INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

Indigenous culture and creativity can shape the future of our city.

The devastating impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples have been laid bare in landmark documents reporting on dark chapters of Canada’s history, its traumatic ongoing legacies, and clear calls for the action necessary to rebuild relationships with Indigenous Peoples. However, despite this increased awareness, reconciliation efforts have progressed slowly and unevenly in the culture sector.

Toronto is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in Ontario, the fourth largest in Canada. The community is diverse and growing. In 2022, the City published its Reconciliation Action Plan, a 10-year strategy with concrete actions (including many for the culture sector) developed by Indigenous Peoples to advance truth, justice, and reconciliation. The City aims to reduce barriers for Indigenous artists, creatives, cultural workers, and audiences through increased programming, placemaking and placekeeping,

workforce development, and investments.

We need to continue to work collaboratively and support Indigenous-led initiatives through improved funding access for Indigenous artists and creatives, greater presence of Indigenous cultural activities throughout the city, and support for the longstanding creativity, innovation and leadership of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. By honouring First Nations, Inuit, and Métis traditions and Indigenous-led innovation, Toronto will become a more diverse and inclusive cultural hub.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Over the past 10 years, movements such as Black Lives Matter have driven cultural organizations to reassess their practices and make deeper commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. But more work needs to be done.

Black and equity-deserving artists, creatives and communities still face multiple systemic and attitudinal barriers as well as the impacts of historical and ongoing exclusionary processes and practices. Progress on reducing these barriers has been slow.⁹ Though cultural offerings in Toronto have become more diverse, and the cultural and

⁹Canada Council for the Arts, Context Brief: Culturally Diverse Arts, Retrieved June 14, 2024, <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/funding-decisions/decision-making-process/application-assessment/context-briefs/culturally-diverse-arts>

creative sectors are making efforts to better engage Black and equity-deserving communities, equity and inclusion challenges persist within cultural organizations and creative industries, with few racialized people in leadership roles and decision-making positions. In our engagement process, we heard concerns about tokenism and burnout, and the need to meaningfully support racialized people to attain and succeed in leadership roles.

The COVID-19 pandemic's widespread shutdowns, as well as the steep rise in the cost of living, have worsened inequalities for Black and equity-deserving communities and cultural organizations. Targeted actions to accelerate efforts to confront anti-Black racism and support equity-deserving artists and creatives are still needed to help to reduce barriers faced by the community.

ACCESSIBILITY

One in five Torontonians has a disability¹⁰ and this rate is expected to rise. Yet significant barriers to accessing culture in Toronto persist.

While the culture sector has made progress on improving accessibility, from physical access, programming and policies

to accessible audience experiences and digital offerings, much of Toronto's culture scene remains difficult to navigate for creators, professionals, and audiences with disabilities. This includes discrimination, inaccessible venues, spaces, and grant application processes, to the lack of leadership opportunities, ableist timelines, and more. Left unaddressed, barriers undermine opportunities for self-determination and mean less representation of the disability community in the sector. Continuing to prioritize accessibility and centring the experiences of persons with disabilities will help to address systemic inequalities for everyone.

SPACE FOR CULTURE

Artists and creative organizations require reliable access to spaces in which to create, perform, produce, teach, exhibit, and operate their businesses.

Across the culture sector, the cost and availability of space continues to be a significant challenge. Escalating maintenance, capital and operating costs, the rising cost of land, reduced funding sources, and the lingering impacts of the pandemic have resulted in the loss of many important cultural and creative industry venues, production spaces, and places for creatives and community to gather. Development

¹⁰ City of Toronto, Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Annual Status Report, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/8f09-2022-City-of-Toronto-MYAP-Status-Report.pdf>

pressures, and the loss of employment lands and industrial spaces are further threatening the future of sectors such as film and television production.

Artists and creative entrepreneurs are tackling these challenges with innovative approaches, exploring “meanwhile” spaces and alternative land ownership models such as community land trusts. Further, exploring opportunities to expand cultural uses throughout the city, through zoning and land use planning, can enable creatives to produce and audiences to experience culture in new spaces. Protecting employment lands and supporting greater access to affordable housing for those working in these sectors will also help to further address this ongoing and progressively challenging problem for the city.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Available, reliable, and sustainable investment from a variety of public and private sources is the backbone of the culture sector.

Over the last ten years, the City has increased cultural grant funding by 49% - from approximately \$25.3 million in 2013 to over \$37.6 million in 2023. This significant increase

enabled the City and Toronto Arts Council to provide greater support for artists, cultural organizations and residents, including increasing the number of operating funding recipients by close to 30%, and introducing new funding streams to support cultural programming in public spaces. However, access to funding and investment in the culture sector remains a major challenge with declining financial support from corporate sponsorship and philanthropy, increased costs for programming and production, and the withdrawal of pandemic-era emergency funding. Artists, culture organizations, and creative industries of all sizes are expressing a need for more relevant, equitable, and accessible funding and financial supports.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Torontonians are feeling disconnected and disengaged from cultural offerings.

A key challenge facing culture in Toronto is that communities are feeling disconnected and disengaged. Prior to the pandemic, Toronto audiences were among the most active in the country, participating in 2.5 cultural experiences per month.¹¹ They were most attracted to activities that cultivated community and belonging, social connections, and lively and

¹¹Business / Arts, LaPlaca Cohen, Nanos Research. Culture Track Ontario, 2019. https://www.businessandarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Culture-Track-Ontario_103118-FINAL.pdf

new experiences. Today, Torontonians are more accustomed to staying home, have less disposable income, have less energy or time to commute across the city, and many are simply unaware of cultural happenings and events.

Through our community engagement process, we heard that many people felt that the city’s cultural scene was “not for someone like me” and that cultural offerings did not feel accessible. The need for cultural offerings close to where people live emerged in both research and public consultation. For culture to thrive in Toronto, it is critical that we understand and break down these barriers – because without people, there is no culture.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

Digital technologies and creative industries have radically transformed and reshaped how we live in and encounter the world around us, including how we access, share, and participate in culture.

The digital revolution has increased opportunities for participation in culture by lowering barriers, broadening access, and providing new modes of expression, networks, and forms of engagement. Technology has also made production more effective, facilitated collaborations, and

led to specialized and transferrable skill development. Creative businesses have been driving change locally and internationally, for example through the development of industry-leading 3D animation software and computer graphic applications.

Toronto’s strong creative technology sectors allow for opportunities to experiment, take risks, and diversify business models and creative offerings. These sectors have a crucial role to play in exploring and amplifying the potential opportunities, and risks, that new technologies offer to the culture sector’s productivity, innovation, and creativity, while protecting individual artists’ and creators’ livelihoods and prosperity.

CLIMATE CRISIS

The culture sector can be a key player in decarbonizing our future.

A decade filled with record-breaking temperatures, devastating wildfires, and intense rainfalls demonstrates the magnitude of the climate crisis. Many artists, cultural organizations and creative industries are deeply connected to environmental issues and have made environmental sustainability an important part of their work. The culture

sector is in a unique position to help address climate change by inspiring audiences, driving awareness, and decarbonizing through green production practices, as well as sustainable energy and materials use. The City can play a role in bringing stakeholders together to support cohesive and efficient action, and supporting engagement from multiple levels of government and the private sector to drive creative solutions that change our trajectory.

Planning for the future of culture in Toronto is a challenge when constant change – and even crisis – has become the norm. We know that culture and creativity will continue to be affected by disruptions, challenges, and innovations influencing all parts of society, the economy, and the environment. But the next ten years can be a time of opportunity and meaning for the cultural life of Toronto and for residents of the city. To achieve this, we must continuously monitor, anticipate, and adapt to future trends impacting culture in Toronto, and ensure that **Culture Connects functions as a living document, ready to evolve as these new challenges and opportunities emerge. Through ongoing engagement and evaluation, we will ensure the success of the Action Plan, for all, everywhere, for the future, and beyond our borders.**



Torontron, Toronto Games Week, 2023.
Photo Credit: Douglas Gregory.

CULTURE CONNECTS — AN ACTION PLAN

Culture Connects is a broad-ranging action plan that sets an ambitious ten-year vision for culture in Toronto. It provides a set of priorities and actions to address urgent needs to protect culture, drive systemic change, and capture opportunities to support the vibrant cultural fabric of the city.

resilience:
re-sil-i-ence • /rē-zil-yəns/
the ability to recover from or adjust easily with change.

Resilience exists in all of us. We see it in our neighbours, in our small businesses and shakers, in the cultural changemakers and creative instigators.

We see it in our neighbourhoods, from the small businesses to our healthcare and essential workers.

Resilience is what lives in our narratives and exists within our identity.

Our resilience as a community is stronger when we stick together. With it, we can overcome the challenges and build towards a better future.

The portraits you see as part of this public art installation represent the many faces that embody resilience. Pulling from both past and present works of Scarborough Made artists, we've created this exhibit for you to see and reflect on the humanity that exists within our communities.

**Resilience is us.
Resilience is you.
Resilience is Scarborough.**

Alex Narvaez x Sid Naidu

Scarborough Made: Resilience by Scarborough Made. Cultural Hotspot Signature Project. Cedarbrae Library, 2021. Photo Credit: Scarborough Made.

ABOUT THE PLAN



VISION

The vision articulates what we hope to achieve through **Culture Connects** once it has been successfully implemented.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles are overarching concepts and values that will help to inform how the Action Plan will be implemented.



PRIORITIES

The priorities are four organizing categories for the Action Plan and include objectives and actions under each.



OBJECTIVES

Each priority includes a series of objectives. The objectives represent the key goals that the City will set out to achieve for each priority over the next ten years.



ACTIONS

Each objective includes a set of specific actions to be implemented. Actions are categorized either as **urgent**, to address immediate needs over the first 1-3 years of the Action Plan's implementation period, or **long-term**, to be delivered over 3+ years and achieve lasting, systemic change. Implementation of the actions will be led by the City (Economic Development and Culture Division in partnership with other City Divisions and Agencies), the Toronto Arts Council, or other sector partners. Actions may evolve over the next ten years as new priorities emerge in the sector.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Culture is a driver of Toronto’s economic prosperity and goes hand in hand with economic development. The City’s Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy and the Action Plan for Culture in Toronto are aligned and linked through their shared vision of promoting economic and cultural vibrancy for a more equitable, liveable, and prosperous Toronto.

Culture Connects has been developed to complement and support sector-specific strategies. These sector-specific strategies have been produced by the City’s Economic Development and Culture Division with the support of Council Advisory Bodies such as the Toronto Film, Television, and Digital Media Board, and the Toronto Music Advisory Committee. They are instrumental in shaping new policies, programs, and investments in growing industries including film, music, public art, the visitor economy, and esports, and will continue to guide City actions at a sector-specific level for years to come.

This Action Plan further aligns with broader City strategies including the Corporate Strategic Plan, the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and others. Together, this network of strategies and plans helps City staff to work together to build a more a thriving city for all.



DEVELOPING THE PLAN

PROCESS

The development of **Culture Connects** began in summer 2023 with the formation of an External Advisory Panel of 20 community leaders, who shared their advice and lived experience with City staff to help guide the creation of the Action Plan. The City and Toronto Arts Council and Foundation worked together to deliver an inclusive, city-wide engagement process, which gathered extensive feedback from the community, artists, and creative industries on key priorities for culture in Toronto. In parallel, the City partnered with the University of Toronto to conduct comprehensive research on the state of culture in the city, while also learning from best practices from cities around the world.

More information on the project and engagement process is included in Appendix A.

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



Over 4,000
People Engaged



13 Community
Conversations



5 Creative Facilitator
Led Sessions



1 Community
Conversation Toolkit



2 Online
Surveys



2 Virtual
Town Halls



External Advisory Panel
consisting of 20
community leaders

VISION

Toronto will be a city where everyone can discover, create, and experience culture.

This is a vision for a Toronto that will inspire and be inspired through culture; a Toronto where culture is valued and prized as an integral part of everyone's daily lives; and a Toronto where you can discover and engage with culture in ways and in places that are meaningful to you.

It is a vision for a future of culture and creativity in Toronto that is diverse, inclusive, innovative, sustainable, and entrepreneurial. It represents a Toronto where our culture defines the city on the global stage, and where artists and creatives know that they have the support they need to develop their practice and build a creative business.

Driven by this vision, **Culture Connects** sets out four key priorities for the next ten years, and five guiding principles by which to achieve them.



UNFOLDING, by the Community Arts Guild. Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2019.
Photo Credit: City of Toronto

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Five guiding principles will direct how the objectives and actions of **Culture Connects** are implemented over the next ten years. These principles, developed based on overarching values shared with us by the community, will shape every action the City takes to advance culture in Toronto – from the day-to-day support that City staff provide to residents, creatives and businesses, to the development of long-term projects and plans.

The guiding principles include:

1: Centre Indigenous Culture and Creativity

By celebrating diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis knowledge and knowing, culture, and artistic processes; and working to support the deepening of Toronto as a centre for Indigenous culture, creativity, and leadership.

2: Prioritize Equity and Access

By prioritizing opportunities and eliminating barriers to access for Indigenous, Black, disabled, and equity deserving communities to create and experience culture in neighbourhoods across the city, thereby ensuring we have a culture sector that is relevant and accessible to everyone.

3: Champion Artists, Creatives, and Creative Industries

By recognizing and promoting Toronto's creatives and cultural sectors as essential components to city building, shared prosperity, and community well-being.

4: Attract and Build for Audiences

By increasing opportunities for everyone to discover, create, and engage with meaningful and impactful cultural and creative programs and events.

5: Foster Innovation and Enable Creativity

By cultivating an environment that supports and encourages creative and technological innovation, financial sustainability, entrepreneurial thinking, and risk-taking.

PRIORITIES

Culture Connects has four key priorities that will help to support a healthy and sustainable culture sector and a vibrant culture scene:

ONE **CULTURE EVERYWHERE**, to ensure that culture and creativity are essential components of thriving communities across Toronto.

TWO **CULTURE FOR ALL**, where Toronto residents and visitors can discover, create, and access rich, meaningful, and fun cultural experiences engaging all kinds of creators and audiences.

THREE **CULTURE FOR THE FUTURE**, to ensure that Toronto will continue to have a successful, innovative cultural and creative sector, today and into the future.

FOUR **CULTURE BEYOND OUR BORDERS**, to solidify Toronto's recognition globally as a creative capital offering both unparalleled cultural experiences and an environment where creative businesses flourish.

Each priority area includes objectives, urgent and long-term actions, and impact measures.



OBJECTIVES represent high level goals to be achieved over the next ten years.



URGENT ACTIONS will be implemented in the short term (1-3 years) and help to advance each of the priority areas with immediate impacts. Each urgent action includes examples of how they may be implemented.



LONG-TERM ACTIONS will be implemented over a 3+ year time horizon to achieve lasting systemic change.

This structure will make it possible to take immediate needed action, while also ensuring flexibility to respond to new opportunities and challenges as they arise over the next ten years.

The Economic Development and Culture Division will guide and lead the implementation of these actions, in collaboration and partnership with City Council, City divisions, agencies, and corporations, the Toronto Arts Council and Foundation, and partners throughout the cultural community and creative industries.

ONE

CULTURE EVERYWHERE

Tepknuset by Jordan Bennett. Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2019.
Photo Credit: City of Toronto



CHALLENGE

Amid rising property costs and development pressures, Toronto has seen an increasing loss of cultural space in recent years. Since 2019, over 40 cultural venues have permanently closed their doors in the city. This includes the closure of an alarming number of live music venues, of which at least 13% closed between 2020 and 2023.¹²

Throughout our community engagement process, we heard loud and clear that cultural organizations and creatives are experiencing a space crisis, which in turn is felt by residents and audiences. Those working in the sector have less affordable spaces to live and work throughout the city, and those looking to experience and participate in cultural offerings have fewer places to go to.

We heard about the lack of access to cultural spaces in parts of the city, with most purpose-built cultural venues clustered in the downtown core, resulting in gaps in service for many Toronto residents. Consultation participants also spoke to the importance of experiencing culture in all kinds of public spaces, including parks, libraries, community centres and laneways, and called on the City to better enable this in

future. It is critical for cultural spaces to form part of complete communities across the city, so that no matter where residents live, they have access to culture close to home.

We also heard about the vital importance of protecting the places where creative industries cluster in Toronto. The City must protect its employment lands, endangered by development pressures. Production studios, particularly those located in industry-dense areas, are essential to the competitive positioning of Toronto's film industry and related industries such as post-production and VFX.

Ensuring a steady supply of affordable, sustainable cultural space is not a new challenge for Toronto – but without meaningful intervention, Toronto runs the risk of further displacement of artists, venues, cultural organizations, and creative industries. Action is needed now to protect existing spaces for culture, and support those who use and access them, while increasing the supply of dedicated cultural spaces in all corners of the city.

¹²University of Toronto School of Cities and Wavelength Music. **Reimagining Music Venues: Toward New Models of Conservation and Innovation for Ontario's Live Music Spaces**. 2023. https://hive.utsc.utoronto.ca/public/sociology/ReimaginingMusicVenues_FinalReport.pdf

TARGET

Over the next ten years, the City will support the development of one million square feet of new cultural space in Toronto.

To reach this target, we will:

- develop new spaces and places for culture throughout the city; and
- expand the use of and protect existing cultural spaces.





Film shoot for *Brother*. Toronto, 2022.
Photo Credit: Elevation Pictures.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Develop new spaces and places for culture throughout the city.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Identify cultural space needs to secure investments and prioritize space development in underserved neighbourhoods.

For example, the City will: conduct a Cultural Infrastructure Study to determine space needs across Toronto, set space targets by type and geography, assess City properties for their potential to be adapted for cultural use, and prioritize cultural space development beyond the core, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving creatives, as well as Francophone creatives throughout the city.


 **OBJECTIVE:** Expand the use of and protect existing cultural spaces.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Protect and expand existing spaces for culture to combat the displacement of creatives and industry in Toronto.

For example, the City will: expand the Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclasses to support a broader range of cultural spaces; as well as support solutions to develop and address displacement of cultural spaces and protection of employment lands.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Open City- and privately-owned spaces for short- and long-term cultural uses.

For example, the City will: develop a ‘meanwhile’ space program to support access to City-owned spaces; make it easier to access City cultural facilities as community gathering spaces; and help to facilitate connections between creatives and property owners.

 **LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Additional actions that will help to drive long-term strategic change include:

- working with Indigenous communities to steward and support self-determined cultural spaces;
- exploring and supporting alternative models for space ownership and operation, such as community land trusts;
- developing tools to protect and strengthen cultural districts across the city; and
- supporting artists and producers through streamlined and improved processes.



CULTURE FOR ALL



Shakespeare in the Park by Canadian Stage.
Photo Credit: Destination Toronto.

CHALLENGE

Access to culture plays an important role in building community connections, creating a sense of belonging and pride, and providing opportunities for people to engage around collective experiences. However, an overarching theme that we heard through our community engagement was that many Torontonians are finding it difficult to create and engage with culture. The impact of such limited access can be felt across organizations, neighbourhoods, and communities, from ensuring that creatives can continue to create and produce in the city, to supporting communities to connect with each other through cultural experiences where they live.

Torontonians are feeling isolated and lonely following the pandemic, while artists and creatives are feeling increasingly burnt out, trying to juggle multiple jobs to sustain their practices while struggling with limited access to funding. We heard that many residents simply do not know how to learn

about opportunities to engage with culture, and that many do not feel that they belong at cultural venues and events. Furthermore, we heard from the community about the need to expand the definition and understanding of ‘culture’ – acknowledging Indigenous knowledge, traditions and cultural practice, and supporting a broader range of diverse cultural experiences.

Ensuring that everyone, everywhere in the city has access to a range of opportunities to create, produce, and engage with culture is vital for the wellbeing of Torontonians, to develop deeper community connections, and to create a city that is a vibrant place to live, work, and play.

TARGET


Every resident will have access to at least one free cultural experience in their neighbourhood supported by the City each month.

To reach this target, we will:

- advance equitable funding opportunities;
- improve access for Torontonians to experience culture; and
- build and strengthen community and partnerships.



Nagata Shachu. Arts in the Parks, Toronto, 2021.
Photo Credit: Kat Rizza.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Advance equitable funding opportunities.


 **URGENT ACTION:** Improve the distribution of the City's cultural funding and other resources, with a focus on deepening support to Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities, and communities outside the downtown core.

For example, the City will: partner with the Toronto Arts Council and other funders to increase and target funding to support culture in all parts of Toronto, while ensuring that Indigenous, Black, equity-deserving creatives, and underserved communities can access the support they require to meet changing community and sector needs.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Improve access for Torontonians to experience culture.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Enable creative, inclusive, and meaningful community-driven programming and experiences city-wide.

For example, the City will: deliver and enable meaningful, relevant and diverse cultural programming and experiences at City museums and cultural centres, reaching a broad range of communities and languages, including Toronto's Francophone community; collaborate with the Toronto Arts Council to strengthen programs and partnerships to provide access to arts experiences in public parks, historic sites, libraries, civic squares and schools city-wide; and embed dedicated City staff within communities across the city to connect creatives and audiences with opportunities, and support local cultural programming and capacity-building.


 **URGENT ACTION:** Grow audiences through investments in marketing, promotion, and discoverability.

For example, the City will: collaborate with the Toronto Arts Council and other partners to promote and share information, making it easier to find opportunities and experiences in your local neighbourhood; communicate and share stories and data to highlight the importance, impact, and value of culture and creativity to Torontonians; and explore incentives to engage the next generation of cultural audiences.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Build and strengthen community connections and partnerships.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to amplify Indigenous-led initiatives and programming.

For example, the City will: engage with Indigenous communities on an ongoing basis to identify opportunities for collaboration and co-development of programs; support the community in the ongoing operation of the Spirit Garden at Nathan Phillips Square; work with Indigenous communities to identify and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and culture into City cultural initiatives, programs, museums and cultural centres; and support Indigenous arts, culture and language initiatives through the Toronto Arts Council and other City programs.

 **LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Additional actions that will help to drive long-term strategic change include:

- helping people find relevant and accessible cultural experiences by expanding and increasing audience participation using creative technology; and
- prioritizing greater access and accessibility for cultural venues, events, and programs.



(UN)TOLD by Amplify Collective. Mackenzie House Museum, 2023.
Photo Credit: Andrew Williamson

THREE

CULTURE FOR THE FUTURE

Music Video Shoot. POV Film Production Assistant Training Program, Toronto.
Photo Credit: POV Film.

CHALLENGE

Toronto's culture sector is facing instability with a generation of artists and creatives who cannot afford to make a living in the city. Through our engagement, we heard about the challenges creatives are facing to access affordable housing and spaces, fair wages, and support services. And yet, we also heard about their hopes and dreams for a future Toronto that embraces, values, and prioritizes culture at its core.

While existing and new challenges may persist, Toronto's culture sector is also full of opportunities and possibility. For example, as technology rapidly evolves, Toronto's concentration of diverse creative industries and cultural organizations presents a unique opportunity to drive innovation, develop cross-sector partnerships, incubate new and emerging talent, ideas, and industry, and connect with audiences in new and creative ways. However, changes in technology can also lead to knowledge and skills gaps, and the risk of job loss through automation. For culture and creativity to thrive in Toronto, we need to chart a path forward to support sector sustainability and invest in the next generation of creatives and innovators.

Another key challenge faced by the sector today is limited data and research on the value and impact of culture. Sector leaders and policymakers need more reliable, real-time, evidence-based data to make informed decisions about how to best support culture and creative industries in Toronto. Improved data and research can also reach beyond the sector to better tell the story of the impact of culture for a broad public audience and demonstrate how culture contributes to other industries and city-building priorities.

Culture Connects sets a course to build for the future – a future where artists or creative workers can succeed, and where cultural organizations and creative businesses have the resources and tools they need to experiment with new ideas without worrying about their survival and sustainability.

TARGET


The City will increase investment in culture by \$35 million over the next ten years to retain, rebuild, and reimagine culture in Toronto.


To reach this target, we will:

- advance sector sustainability, and work with public and private funders to support adaptability and collaboration among cultural organizations;
- track, understand, and tell the story of the value of culture through robust research and data; and
- expand pathways to employment in culture and the creative industries.




Audio and laser light show by Karl Skene and Tom Kuo. Toronto, 2023. Photo Credit: City of Toronto.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Advance sector sustainability, and work with public and private funders to support adaptability and collaboration among cultural organizations.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Deliver improved and expanded grant and funding programs to support changing community and sector needs, and seed and scale new and growing organizations.

For example, the City will: work with the Toronto Arts Council to expand and create new grant programs addressing key community priorities; increase operating grant programs to better support vital, new and growing organizations; simplify grant application and reporting requirements; and review grant amounts available to individual artists through the Toronto Arts Council and adjust to reflect current costs for artists to create in Toronto.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Identify and invest in transformative sector-wide initiatives that enable experimentation, innovation, talent development, and sustainable business models.

For example, the City will: partner with the Toronto Arts Council to support vital existing organizations to adapt for sustainability, and investigate, plan, and implement substantive changes in their operations, through initiatives such as the Catalyst and Transformation Fund; incubate and support the development of new and growing organizations; invest in partnership initiatives to enable cross-sectoral collaboration; and host the **Mayor's Culture Summit** in 2025 to bring together creatives, industry, and investors from across sectors as an opportunity to connect, identify, and collaborate on innovative solutions and emerging ideas to support the culture sector.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Strengthen relationships with all orders of government and work with City divisions to advocate for essential supports for artists and creatives, such as affordable housing and support for the gig economy.

For example, the City will: advocate for the development of affordable housing, improved and expanded funding and tax incentive programs, and other sector needs; collaborate with other orders of government to jointly fund and scale sector initiatives.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Track, understand, and tell the story of culture through robust research and data.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Develop and collect robust cultural research and data on the value and impact of the sector.

For example, the City will: partner with the Toronto Arts Council and other organizations to develop an outcomes framework to measure the impact of cultural services and offerings; publish an online dashboard to share real-time data on culture and the creative industries in Toronto; and invest in and scale sector-led research initiatives, such as the new Cultural Policy Hub at OCAD University.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Over the long-term, the City will focus on expanding pathways to employment in culture and creative industries, including:

- working with employment, newcomer services, and settlement agencies to reduce barriers to employment in cultural sectors and creative industries, especially for emerging and racialized arts leaders;
- propelling the development and growth of creatives, organizations, and sectors through training, mentorship, upskilling, knowledge sharing, and gathering; and
- providing education, training and mentorship opportunities for creatives and organizations to grow and develop programs, services, spaces, and original Intellectual Property.



Colour of the Year by Meera Sethi. Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2022.
Photo Credit: City of Toronto.

FOUR

CULTURE BEYOND OUR BORDERS

Planes by Trisha Brown. Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2012.
Photo Credit: Zach Sloatsky.



CHALLENGE

Toronto is a city with incredible cultural experiences, where you can discover and learn from so many of the world's different cultures. However, we heard that we need to better tell Toronto's story on the world stage and 'claim our space' as a world-class cultural city, to be confident in our talent and industries, take risks and support more bold cultural offerings.

We also continue to hear that many artists and cultural workers feel the need to leave the city to 'make it' and find opportunities for career growth. While competing with large global content platforms remains a challenge for domestic creators, we're also seeing more pathways for Toronto content to succeed globally. By strengthening connections to global markets, we can retain creative talent in Toronto, and ensure that they have the support they need to be propelled into the global spotlight.

Partnerships, exchange, and export development and investments will play a crucial role in fostering Toronto's culture scene by expanding opportunities for artists and creative industries locally and beyond our borders. Engaging in regional, national, and international collaborations can

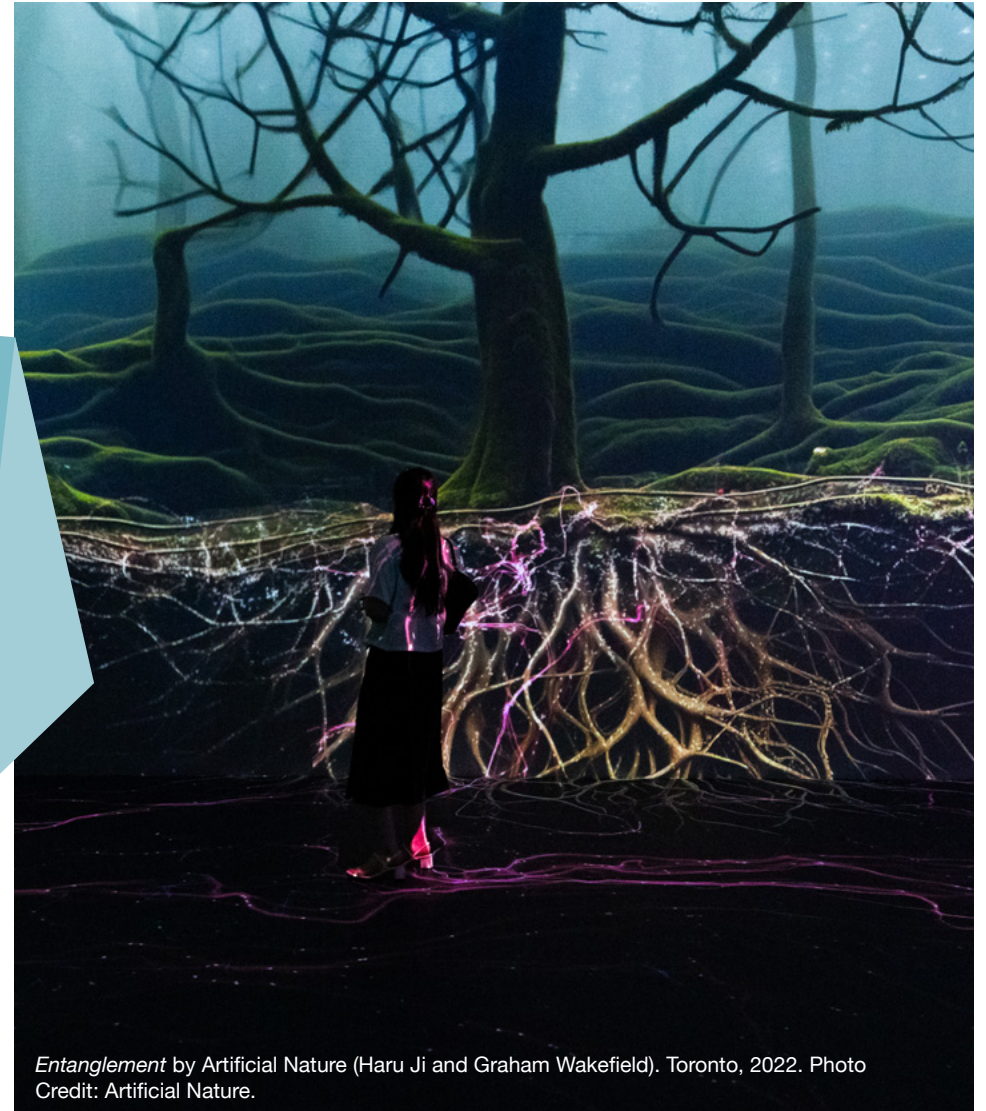
lead to touring exhibitions, performances, and projects, enabling artists to grow their networks and enhance their creative output. For the city's creative industries, promoting and connecting these sectors internationally leads to increased production, investment, and partnerships including co-productions, joint ventures, and resource-sharing, contributing to innovation, employment, and growth. Further, promoting and showcasing local talent will help Torontonians to celebrate home-grown talent, as well as attract visitors and tourists to partake in Toronto's bright cultural scene.

TARGET


The City will enable 1,000 new creative export and artist exchange projects over the next ten years.

To reach this target, we will:

- promote and advance Toronto talent and industry, locally, nationally, and internationally;
- facilitate greater engagement, export, and international collaboration for culture and creative industries; and
- position Toronto as a global hub for creative technology.




Entanglement by Artificial Nature (Haru Ji and Graham Wakefield). Toronto, 2022. Photo Credit: Artificial Nature.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Promote and advance Toronto talent and industry, locally, nationally, and internationally.


 **URGENT ACTION:** Bring the world to Toronto and Toronto to the world through international residencies, creative exchange, and exhibition opportunities.

For example, the City will: collaborate with the Toronto Arts Council and other cultural and creative industry partners to enable sector-led touring, exchange and exhibition projects; work with partners to build recognition of local talent and industry; and convene sectors across local, national and international networks to create opportunities for connection and collaboration.


 **URGENT ACTION:** Foster partnerships with large-scale events to offer cultural experiences and programming to drive local, regional, and international cultural tourism.


For example, the City will: engage the arts and creative sectors to stage special programs and events to amplify the impact of hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2026 and use culture as a defining element of Toronto's hosting efforts; enhance strategies for major event bidding and hosting; and increase collaboration with Destination Toronto to promote key cultural tourism offerings.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Facilitate greater engagement, export and international collaboration for culture and creative industries.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Increase foreign direct investment through trade missions and outreach.

For example, the City will: expand creative industry-focused trade missions and identify opportunities to feature culture and creative industries as part of other City-led missions; leverage the City's partnerships with export development agencies such as Toronto Global and the Toronto Region Board of Trade to ensure that culture and creative industries are promoted as part of their offerings; identify new opportunities for market development.

 **OBJECTIVE:** Position Toronto as a global hub for creative technology.

 **URGENT ACTION:** Establish Toronto as a host and incubator for major international events on creativity, technology, and innovation.

For example, the City will: support those working at the leading edge of creative technology and work with partners to develop major local events and platforms best able to showcase Toronto's incredible talent.

 **LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ACTIONS**

Additional actions that will help to drive long-term system change include:

- convening national and international partnerships to advance sector development; and
- partnering with industry leaders to showcase creative and emerging technologies, and explore the intersection and impact of AI and creativity.



Soft Spoken by Olivia Brouwer. Tangled Art Gallery, Toronto, 2023.
Photo Credit: Felicia Byron.

YEAR ONE: INVEST AND CONNECT

Year 1 investments will kickstart progress on the Action Plan’s vision and demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that Toronto is a city where culture is valued and prized as part of our daily lives. We will act immediately to protect, retain and build up culture and creative industries in Toronto, with a focus on stabilizing and empowering vital, new and growing organizations, and organizations led by and serving Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities. And we will work to connect communities to culture and to each other, with deeper and increased opportunities to gather and engage with culture close to home, all year round.

INVEST IN CULTURE

- Increase funding to the Toronto Arts Council to expand strategic programs and enhance the support it provides to artists and cultural organizations across the city.
- Index all cultural grants to inflation.
- Expand funding programs for festivals to manage rising costs while delivering high-quality, community-engaged events.
- Enable non-profit organizations to investigate, plan and implement substantive changes to their operations through the Catalyst and Transformation Fund, administered by Work in Culture.
- Increase funding to creative industries and promote these sectors to attract international partnerships and investment.
- Provide mentorship and guidance to non-profit organizations to secure private sponsorships through artsvest Toronto, delivered in partnership with Business / Arts.

CONNECT WITH CULTURE

- Connect artists and creative businesses to opportunities and to each other by hosting the inaugural Mayor’s Culture Summit.
- Launch programs that offer a cohesive approach to cross-sectoral collaboration and capacity building for creative businesses.
- Connect people to culture by working with promotional partners to help residents across the city discover and participate in culture.
- Create more and deeper opportunities to engage in culture at a neighbourhood level through a new Cultural Districts Program.
- Deliver more locally focused, responsive programming by increasing resources for Local Arts Service Organizations.
- Animate the City’s civic squares with accessible cultural experiences for people across Toronto.



Chasing Red by Bekah Brown. Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2019.
Photo Credit: City of Toronto.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The actions identified for each priority area will be implemented over the ten-year duration of the Action Plan. Implementation of these actions may vary and change in order to be responsive to community and sector needs.

Throughout the ten years, we will monitor and evaluate the success of the Action Plan through a variety of ways:

- **Key performance indicators and metrics** that will be regularly tracked to gauge progress towards achieving the objectives of this plan.
- **Results-based outcomes framework** to identify the impact and outcomes of the Action Plan and ensure there is meaningful change for both residents and the sector.
- **Launching a new online culture sector dashboard** that will provide updates on the Action Plan's actions and share real-time metrics and data about the state of culture in Toronto.
- **Developmental evaluation** that will allow for ongoing improvement of Economic Development and Culture's services and offerings to ensure that we are supporting changing sector needs and reducing barriers to access.
- **Ongoing community engagement** to share back with the community on progress of the Action Plan and gather feedback on emerging challenges and opportunities.

Mayor's Culture Summit:

The City will engage the community and sector in the implementation, successes and challenges of the Action Plan on a regular basis through a newly proposed Mayor's Culture Summit.

The Mayor's Culture Summit will be a bi-annual opportunity to bring together creatives, industry, and investors from across sectors to share back on implementation of the Action Plan, gather feedback, and collaborate to identify solutions to ongoing and emerging challenges as well as innovative and emerging ideas.



Montgomery's Inn. Toronto.
Photo Credit: Jonathan Gazze.

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

TARGETS:

EVERYWHERE: Over the next ten years, the City will support the development of one million square feet of new cultural and creative space in Toronto.

FOR ALL: Every resident will have access to at least one free cultural experience in their neighbourhood supported by the City, each month.

FOR THE FUTURE: The City will increase its investment in culture by \$35 million over the next ten years to retain, rebuild and reimagine culture in Toronto.

BEYOND OUR BORDERS: The City will enable 1,000 new creative export and artist exchange projects over the next ten years.

The Economic Development and Culture Division will work with the Toronto Arts Council and other City divisions, agencies, and corporations, and in collaboration and partnership with the community and the culture sector to implement the actions of this plan.

The Action Plan table indicates various City divisions and agencies as partners. These include: City Planning (CP), Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM), CreateTO, Development Review (DR), Environment and Climate (EC), Financial Planning (FP), Housing Secretariat (HS), Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO), Legal Services (LS), Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS), Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR), Revenue Services (RS), Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA), Strategic Public and Employee Communications (SPEC), Technology Services (TSD), Toronto Building (TB), Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS), Toronto Public Library (TPL), and Transportation Services (TS).

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMELINE (SHORT: YEAR 1 – 3; MID: YEAR 3-5; LONG: YEAR 6+)	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	POTENTIAL SUCCESS INDICATORS
Everywhere	1.1 Develop new spaces and places for culture throughout the city.	URGENT ACTION: 1.1.1 Identify cultural space needs to secure investments and prioritize space development in underserved neighbourhoods.	Short Term	CP, DR, TPL, PFR, SDFA, CREM, CreateTO, TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year over year change in square footage of cultural and creative space. Geographic distribution of cultural and creative space across the city.
		1.1.2 Explore and support alternative models for space ownership and operation, such as community-led ownership and land trusts.	Mid to Long Term	CP, LS, FP, CREM, SDFA, CreateTO, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and impact of new land trusts and other ownership models in Toronto.
		1.1.3 Work with Indigenous communities to support self-determined cultural spaces.	Ongoing	IAO, PFR, TPL, CP, DR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and impact of self-determined cultural spaces.
	1.2 Expand the use of and protect existing cultural spaces.	URGENT ACTION: 1.2.1 Protect and expand existing spaces for culture to combat the displacement of creatives and industry in Toronto.	Short to Mid Term	CP, DR, LS, FP, CREM, CreateTO, RS, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of properties supported through the Creative Co-Location Facilities Property Tax Subclass.
		URGENT ACTION: 1.2.2. Open City- and privately-owned spaces for short- and long-term cultural uses.	Short Term	CREM, SDFA, TPL, PFR, TS, LS, CreateTO, CP, TB, SPEC, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of organizations accessing spaces through meanwhile space programs.
		1.2.3 Develop tools to protect and strengthen cultural districts across the city.	Mid Term	CP, DR, SDFA, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of neighbourhoods designated as Cultural Districts. Impact of community placemaking projects.
		1.2.4 Support cultural producers leading events, festivals, and public programming through streamlined and improved processes.	Short to Mid Term	PFR, TPL, CREM, CP, TB, MLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of creatives and organizations supported.

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMELINE (SHORT: YEAR 1 – 3; MID: YEAR 3-5; LONG: YEAR 6+)	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	POTENTIAL SUCCESS INDICATORS
For All	2.1 Advance equitable funding opportunities.	URGENT ACTION: 2.1.1 Improve the distribution of the City’s cultural funding and other resources, with a focus on deepening support to Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities, and communities outside the downtown core.	Short to Mid Term	Toronto Arts Council, IAO, SDFA, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track distribution of funding, including demographics of recipients and geographic distribution.
	2.2 Improve access for Torontonians to experience culture.	URGENT ACTION: 2.2.1 Enable creative, inclusive, and meaningful community-driven programming and experiences city-wide.	Ongoing	PFR, TPL, IAO, Toronto Arts Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track access and usage of cultural sites and events. Collect feedback on experiences and programming to monitor relevance and impact.
		URGENT ACTION: 2.2.2 Grow audiences through investments in marketing, promotion, and discoverability.	Mid Term	SPEC, Toronto Arts Council, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track attendance rates at City-supported cultural sites and programming, with demographic information.
		2.2.3 Expand and increase audience participation using creative technology.	Mid to Long Term	External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative technology projects implemented. Track attendance and engagement for virtual events, with demographic information.
		2.2.4 Prioritize greater access and accessibility for cultural venues, events, and programs.	Mid Term	CREM, TESS, PFR, SDFA, TPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track accessibility measures implemented, including community feedback on access.
	2.3 Build and strengthen community and partnerships.	URGENT ACTION: 2.3.1 Collaborate with Indigenous communities to amplify Indigenous-led initiatives and programming.	Ongoing	IAO, Toronto Arts Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of Indigenous-led initiatives supported.

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMELINE (SHORT: YEAR 1 – 3; MID: YEAR 3-5; LONG: YEAR 6+)	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	POTENTIAL SUCCESS INDICATORS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES
For the Future	3.1 Advance sector sustainability, and work with public and private funders to support adaptability and collaboration among cultural organizations.	URGENT ACTION: 3.1.1 Deliver improved and expanded grant and funding programs to support changing community and sector needs, and seed and scale new and growing organizations.	Short Term	Toronto Arts Council, SDFA, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of funding and grants distributed, including sociodemographic information. Number of organizations supported
		URGENT ACTION: 3.1.2 Identify and invest in transformative sector-wide initiatives that incubate and enable experimentation, innovation, talent development, and sustainable business models.	Short to Mid Term	Toronto Arts Council, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects, events, or initiatives supported and funds invested, including sociodemographic information.
		URGENT ACTION: 3.1.3 Strengthen relationships with all orders of government and work with City divisions to advocate for essential supports for artists and creatives, such as affordable housing and support for gig economy.	Short to Mid Term	HS, CP, DR, CreateTO, SDFA, CMO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track number of artists and creatives living in Toronto, by sociodemographic information. Track changes to employment in culture sector and impact of policy interventions.
		3.1.4 Advance sustainable development and the fight against climate change through culture.	Short Term	EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track climate change cultural efforts supported.
	3.2 Track, understand, and tell the story of culture through robust research and data.	URGENT ACTION: 3.2.1 Develop and collect robust cultural research and data on the value and impact of the sector.	Short to Mid Term	Toronto Arts Council, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather feedback and stories on impact of cultural experiences. Develop a Culture Dashboard to track progress and share data about the health of Toronto's culture sector.
		3.2.2 Support and collaborate with partners to advance cultural data and research objectives.	Ongoing	Toronto Arts Council, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of research projects and partnerships to advance cultural data.

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMELINE (SHORT: YEAR 1 – 3; MID: YEAR 3-5; LONG: YEAR 6+)	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	POTENTIAL SUCCESS INDICATORS
For the Future	3.3 Expand pathways to employment in culture and the creative industries.	3.3.1 Work with employment, newcomer services and settlement agencies to reduce barriers to employment in cultural sectors and creative industries.	Mid to Long Term	SDFA, TPL, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track employment outcomes with cultural sectors and creative industries, including sociodemographic information.
		3.3.2 Propel development and growth of creatives, organizations, and sectors through training, mentorship, upskilling, knowledge sharing, and gathering.	Mid to Long Term	SDFA, TPL, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track impact of training, mentorship, and knowledge sharing programming, including sociodemographic information.
		3.3.3 Provide education, training and mentorship opportunities for creatives and organizations to grow and develop programs, services, spaces and original Intellectual Property.	Mid to Long Term	External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track impact of education and training programs, including sociodemographic information.
Beyond Our Borders	4.1 Promote and advance Toronto talent and industry, locally, nationally, and internationally.	<p>URGENT ACTION:</p> <p>4.1.1 Bring the world to Toronto and Toronto to the world through international residencies, creative exchange, and exhibition opportunities.</p>	Short to Long Term	SPEC, Toronto Arts Council, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track Toronto artists' career growth and opportunities locally and beyond, by sociodemographic information. Track location and growth of creative and cultural businesses.
		<p>URGENT ACTION:</p> <p>4.1.2 Foster partnerships with large-scale events to offer cultural experiences and programming to drive local, regional, and international cultural tourism.</p>	Short to Long Term	SPEC, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of large-scale events offering cultural programming and experiences. Increase in percentage of visitors to Toronto for cultural experiences.

Beyond Our Borders	4.2 Facilitate greater engagement, export and international collaboration for culture and creative industries.	URGENT ACTION: 4.2.1 Increase foreign direct investment through trade missions and outreach.	Short to Long Term	SPEC, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in culture sector GDP contribution and cultural employment. • Number and impact of trade missions. • Number of international creative companies establishing offices in Toronto. • Production volume.
		4.2.2 Convene national and international partnerships to advance sector development.	Short to Long Term	External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in culture sector GDP contribution and cultural employment. • Number of national and international cultural exchange programs.
	4.3 Position Toronto as a global hub for creative technology.	URGENT ACTION: 4.3.1 Establish Toronto as a host and incubator for major international events on creativity, technology, and innovation.	Mid to Long Term	External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of creative technology events and partnerships.
		4.3.2 Partner with industry leaders to showcase creative and emerging technologies, and explore intersection and impact of AI and creativity.	Short to Long Term	TPL, External partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track impact of programming and partnerships.

APPENDICES



Pause IRL by The Sun IRL. Todmorden Mills, 2023.
Photo Credit: Andrew Williamson.

APPENDIX A – ACTION PLAN PROCESS

PROCESS:

The Action Plan project followed a three-phase process:

- Phase 1: the project kicked off in the summer of 2023 with research and analysis to better understand sector challenges and opportunities, as well as conduct a jurisdictional scan to see what other cities and organizations were doing to address similar challenges. This phase continued throughout 2023 and into 2024.
- Phase 2: community engagement took place in phase 2, from fall 2023 to spring 2024.
- Phase 3: the Action Plan was developed from spring 2024 to fall 2024 based on the feedback gathered throughout the engagement process and the research and analysis from Phase 1.

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY:

The community engagement process was delivered through a variety of activities, both virtually and in-person, engaging over 4,000 people. 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.

The engagement activities included:

- **13 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.
 - **5 sessions** based on key issues and trends facing the sector
 - **5 sessions** with members from specific cultural sectors
 - **3 sessions** with equity-deserving groups facing disproportionate barriers in the culture sector. These included Indigenous artists, creatives and communities, Black artists and creatives, and the Disability arts community.
- **5 Creative Facilitator Led Sessions:** Toronto creatives led engagement sessions across the city using artistic methods.
- **Community Conversation Toolkit:** a toolkit was created for any interested residents and organizations to host their own community conversations.
 - **8 organizations and resident groups** led their own discussions using the toolkit.
- **2 Online Surveys:** an online survey was used to gather feedback from those working across culture sectors and the broader public on sector priorities and audience experiences; and another survey was used

to gather feedback on the draft direction of the Action Plan.

- **2 Virtual Town Halls:** Two online town halls were held to engage the public, share emerging themes from the community conversations, and gather feedback and ideas.

External Advisory Panel:

In addition to the engagement activities organized and hosted throughout Phase 2, we also worked closely with an Advisory Panel throughout the development of the Action Plan. The Panel consisted of a group of leaders from across sectors and industries, sharing their insights, guidance and feedback into the development of the Action Plan.

Council Advisory Bodies:

We also engaged with various Council Advisory Bodies on the Action Plan and to 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



Still from film *Rosa's Flowers* by Jesse Marcelo Sarkis. Toronto, 2022.
Photo Credit: Jesse Marcelo Sarkis.

FEEDBACK ON DRAFT PRIORITIES

From August 14 until September 12, 2024, the City invited residents, and culture sector members to provide feedback on the Action Plan's draft priorities through an online public survey. 457 responses were received, confirming that the Plan's four priorities resonated strongly with the public.

- Priority 1: Culture Everywhere
 - 90% of respondents said this was very important (67%) or important (23%).
- Priority 2: Culture For All
 - 86% of respondents said this was very important (57%) or important (29%).
- Priority 3: Culture For the Future
 - 78% of respondents said this was very important (50%) or important (28%).
- Priority 4: Culture Beyond Our Borders
 - 72% of respondents said this was very important (41%) or important (31%).

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (SEPT 2023 TO SEPT 2024) – SUMMARY

Engagement Activity	Number of People Engaged
Community Conversations (including those led by Monumental and the City)	330
Creative Facilitator-Led Sessions	180
Community Conversation Toolkit	89
Online Surveys	3,127
Virtual Town Halls	380
Council Committees	85

CULTURE CONNECTS: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURE IN TORONTO

2025 – 2035