

**Creative City Network of Canada**

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INTERMUNICIPAL  
COMPARATIVE  
FRAMEWORK  
PROJECT

*Phase One Pilot*  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

***The municipalities who responded to the pilot survey are:***

Banff, AB  
Brantford, ON  
Camrose, AB  
Edmonton, AB  
Fredericton, NB  
Grande Prairie, AB  
Hamilton, ON  
Kingston, ON  
Mississauga, ON  
Moncton, NB  
Nanaimo, BC  
New Westminster, BC  
North Vancouver (City & District), BC  
Ottawa, ON  
Port Coquitlam, BC  
Port Moody, BC  
Portage la Prairie, MB  
Prince George, BC  
Red Deer, AB  
Regina, SK  
Richmond, BC  
Saskatoon, SK  
Sooke, BC  
St. Catharines, ON  
St. John's, NL  
Strathcona County, AB  
Toronto, ON  
Vancouver, BC  
West Vancouver, BC

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Patrimoine Canadian  
canadien Heritage

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## Introduction

**A**t the heart of the Creative City Network of Canada is a membership that believes in the benefits a vibrant cultural environment brings to communities of all sizes. Arts and heritage create a fertile ground for developing the soul of a community and, as well, a lively, creative city is increasingly understood to be a key factor in economic development. But how can municipal cultural staffers best move forward from theory and value statements about culture to the implementation of sustainable support and programs? Tools and strategies, as well as a credible and comprehensive knowledge base, are clearly needed.

The Creative City Network's Intermunicipal Comparative Framework Project is designed to provide some of the ground-level information required. The project is a means to document and understand the infrastructure, scope, and nature of local government involvement and investment in Canadian cultural development, which is understood in an inclusive and broadly based sense. The topics addressed are wide-ranging, and include arts, heritage, facilities, civic art collections, public art, funding, non-monetary support, and much more.

The Framework Project is intended to be a structure – a framework – around which to organize and recognize the value of local government involvement in the cultural development of their communities, and to facilitate intermunicipal comparisons. To appreciate the full extent of government involvement, it is necessary to understand the broad context and comprehensive nature of this support, including the non-monetary aspects, before defining the portion that can be quantified with monetary values. Thus, the Phase One survey is the first of a three-phased approach:

### **Phase One: Qualitative Survey – Policies, Plans, Programs, and Practices**

The Phase One pilot survey included a section on the general administration of culture in municipalities, as well as 12 sections examining various areas supported by municipal programs and initiatives. In addition, a glossary of terms was an integral part of the survey in order to help develop consistency in reporting.

### **Phase Two: Quantitative Survey – The Numbers**

Phase Two, under development in 2006 – 2007, will expand the information gathered in Phase One. It will record the monetary value of direct and indirect municipal support for cultural development through funding programs, administrative costs, operational expenses, and other mechanisms.

### **Phase Three: More Details in Selected Topic Areas**

Every category included in the framework could be explored in more detail. Topics to be selected for further study will reflect growing areas of practice and priority needs for information. Topics and issues will be compiled on an ongoing basis for consideration, and methodologies will reflect the nature of the subjects being examined. A few areas of growing interest that have already been identified for consideration include the interrelated roles and models of regional and municipal government support for cultural development, details of heritage support strategies, and the role of libraries in local cultural development.

The long-term goal of the Intermunicipal Comparative Framework Project is to have an accessible source of baseline information about municipal planning, policy,

programming, and support in municipalities across Canada. Phase One is about designing the framework for storing and retrieving this multi-faceted body of information. The Phase One Pilot Report summarizes, in tables and commentary, what we learned about municipal involvement in arts, heritage, and culture in 30 municipalities across Canada.

## Phase One Pilot Participating Communities

The first invitation to participate was sent out to Creative City Network members over the Culture-L listserv in the spring of 2003. Thirty municipalities responded; however, since two of them are administered jointly and are counted in the report as one, the total number of respondents is referred to as 29. Participating municipalities, who were all involved in cultural development in some way, range in size from major urban centres such as Toronto to communities like Banff with populations under 10,000. They bookend the nation, from the recently incorporated Town of Sooke on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island to the heritage-steeped hills of St. John's, Newfoundland. For the purposes of this pilot report, we believe these 30 communities are a fair representation of the scope and diversity of Canadian municipalities.

Each community responded to the survey as its own timeframe and circumstances allowed. When analyzing the information they provided, we discovered obvious distinctions between large and small municipalities. For instance, in larger centres there is often a greater number of staff with cultural development responsibilities who are therefore able to specialize. There are, however, no clearly definitive trends that distinguish commitment to arts, culture, and heritage according to population size alone.

## Highlights of Phase One Results

### General Administration of Culture

All responding municipalities reported having policy and legislation related to culture, and the breadth of the responses indicates that these are not the purview of large municipalities alone. As well, in the process of analyzing responses, the multidimensional nature of many municipal documents, which may serve as both policy and plan, was confirmed. Existing policy, by-laws, and plans for each of the 12 program areas reviewed are summarized by topic.

A section on cultural staffing in municipalities, general areas of staff responsibilities, and their position within the municipal structure provides a rudimentary body of information about cultural offices. In this evolving sector, the definitions, roles, responsibilities, skills, and knowledge base of cultural staff are emerging and fluid. The jobs are multidimensional and, in addition to the basic skill sets required, cultural portfolios need individuals with considerable flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and commitment.

### Special Initiatives for Cultural Organizations

A small number of urban centres reported their involvement in stabilization or sustainability programs. These programs are partnered and time-limited, and are designed to build the organizational capacity of larger organizations by encouraging sound practices in governance, strategic planning, and organizational effectiveness. Some municipalities reported special initiatives that include lines of credit, deficit-reduction incentive projects, or other programs operating outside the more formal cultural support programs.

### **Assistance to Major Institutions**

Local government may contribute to major exhibition, heritage, museum, performing arts, or training institutions directly and/or indirectly, with support administered outside of the general adjudication process for cultural operating grants. Support may include annual operating assistance, building maintenance, and/or other services. Examples of major institutions treated in this way include the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Maritime Museum of British Columbia, the National Ballet School, and the London Regional Art and Historical Museum. However, as one respondent indicated, a community's major institutions may be considerably smaller than these examples and the municipality's support may be in the form of substantial in-kind services and/or use of City-owned property.

### **Arts Funding Programs**

The survey examined the types of arts funding programs (e.g., operating grants or project grants), the types of organizations and activities they funded, and the means by which they were adjudicated. Because most funding programs at the municipal level support multiple artistic disciplines (e.g., dance and theatre), support was not identified by arts discipline in Phase One.

A full 90% of the responding municipalities provide funding support designed specifically for non-profit arts groups in the form of operating and project grants, or through other mechanisms such as theatre rental assistance grants, multi-year operating grants, fee-for-service agreements, or purchase of services. There is also some support for organizational development or training through municipal grant programs. As well, a variety of non-grant or in-kind programs were identified. In a few municipalities, a portion of the municipal arts funding is allocated to a mandated arm's-length non-profit organization to administer, adjudicate, and dispense as grants.

Survey results show that municipalities fund community and non-professional arts groups as well as professional arts organizations and arts service groups. Municipal funds are directed to artist fees for creation and presentation of their work, to incentive programs designed to encourage inclusive programming and audiences, to leadership development, and to youth. To a lesser extent, some municipalities support individual artists through a variety of strategies and programs.

Funding for the arts typically requires Council approval, based on the recommendations of staff or a citizen's advisory committee, which may or may not include a councillor or an artist. In a limited number of municipalities, grant applications are adjudicated through a discipline-specific jury process and final Council approval is not required, as a global budget for the responsible arm's-length agency has, in each case, already been approved.

### **Festivals and Special Events Support**

Festivals and special events present a good opportunity to consider the broader context of local government involvement in the cultural life of a community because they require the co-operation of numerous municipal departments and programs to succeed, including engineering and police departments for traffic management and road closures. Communities of all sizes report advisory, council, or staff committee structures to assist in the co-ordination of events and festivals.

The “free to the public” component of festivals is considered an important element of the service provided, as well as a rationale for support, whether a festival is supported through a festival-specific program or a more general project or operating support program. Over half of the programs reported fund the free element of public festivals.

### **Public Art**

Public art serves as an expression of the community, and public sites provide an important and accessible venue for everyone to appreciate artwork outside the traditional museum or gallery setting. Community public art, which involves artists collaborating with communities, is a way to respond to neighbourhood needs, aspirations, or other community issues and may be sponsored by non-arts organizations.

Public art is a highly visible aspect of municipal involvement in art-making that is often an initial step into a comprehensive process of arts policy development. Municipal staff and Councils are very active in the development of legislation, policy, and plans for public art, and when these are clearly articulated through a rational process some of the contentious issues that may otherwise arise in public art acquisition are avoided. Approximately 72 percent of the participating municipalities commissioned public art in the previous five years.

### **Civic Art Collections**

Civic art, as distinguished from public art, refers to a collection of artwork held in trust by a municipality for the citizens of the community. The collection may be displayed in rotation in galleries, civic offices, or interior public venues. In some municipalities, the civic art policy covers heritage and art museum collections. Approximately half of the participating municipalities have acquired at least one work of art for their civic art collection in the previous five years.

### **Cultural Facilities Assistance**

All participating municipalities have existing policy and legislation regulating facility support and public use, and each has developed diverse and often unique agreements.

Large urban cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver report various mechanisms for supporting facility development. The development of cultural facilities by private interests may be encouraged through the easing of development cost charges or through amenity bonusing strategies (e.g., public amenity bonusing provisions), through the provision of City-owned land, and through capital grants.

In the most prevalent model of support to cultural organizations for facilities, the municipality contracts non-profit cultural organizations to operate a civic-owned public facility, such as a theatre or art gallery, for free or for a reduced annual fee. Other support such as operating grants or maintenance may also be available. Some municipalities also directly operate and manage programming for cultural facilities, rather than relying on non-profit cultural organizations and community groups to provide these community services.

As a second model, a municipality will support a wide range of cultural organizations by allowing them to use civic-owned buildings or land at no cost or at a reduced cost. In these circumstances, a municipal department manages the facility.

Finally, in a third model, the municipality provides operating grants to cultural organizations that own or lease their own facilities and additional support is reported through property tax permissive exemptions or other property tax relief.

Grants for facility planning or equipment acquisition, whether facilities are civic-owned or not, are reported by a small percentage of the municipalities.

### **Local Government-Owned Cultural Facilities Inventory**

This section of the survey resulted in a preliminary inventory of local government-owned cultural facilities. Some of these facilities are part of a community, recreation centre, or a school partnership; some are part of a cultural centre; and others are free-standing facilities, purpose-built primarily for cultural use. The library is the most common publicly owned facility, reflecting a century-old commitment by local government to ensuring access to information and the literary arts.

### **Heritage**

Heritage has been in the vanguard of cultural policy and legislation in municipalities across Canada since being given a welcome measure of credibility around the time of the country's centennial in 1967. At least one Council-appointed committee, commission, or board with a heritage mandate is reported in all the municipalities who responded. The majority of these include a member of Council on their governing or decision-making body.

A significant number of participating municipalities have heritage legislation, policies, and/or plans, and include heritage in community plans or their equivalent. A similar proportion of municipalities have legislation and policy regarding incentives for heritage preservation, registration, and designation.

Grants or other forms of incentives (e.g., relaxation of development cost charges and reduced fees) are available for heritage resources not owned by the local government in more than half of the responding municipalities. Designation or another form of legal protection (e.g., conservation covenant, heritage revitalization, or easement agreement) is generally required before an incentive is approved.

A general grants program, usually open to non-profit groups of various sectors, is one of a number of municipal programs or mechanisms through which heritage organizations are supported. Other programs reported include annual or multi-year operating grants, project funding, grants in lieu of taxes, and organizational development grants. In only one municipality is a portion of the municipal heritage budget allocated to an arm's-length non-profit organization to administer, adjudicate, and dispense as grants. The most common process for decision-making for heritage grants or support is a staff assessment and recommendation presented to Council for approval.

Municipalities also reported innovative heritage projects such as a heritage building material recycling program and an awning and signage grant program for heritage buildings in the downtown. Other programs include community loans from a Heritage Fund and a tax incentive program for downtown commercial heritage buildings that convert to residential use, offering a tax holiday of up to 10 years for conservation projects.

### **Civic Awards**

Civic awards appear to be quite common, but formal legislation and adopted policies to govern them are less so. Generally, persons are nominated for a civic award rather than applying for one. However, awards such as those for books and heritage are adjudicated through an application process. The majority of the awards reported do not include a monetary reward.

The titles of a selection of the awards identified give a sense of their scope: Business and the Arts Award presented by the Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Achievement Awards for various criteria, Honour in Culture, Quill a Quatrain (Poet Laureate Award), Artist Studio Award (rental opportunity), and Design Excellency Award.

### **Public Libraries**

Public libraries are lively centres for cultural activity in communities of all sizes. Their intrinsic role in the life of our communities and their history in ensuring the accessibility of both information and the literary arts may sometimes be taken for granted and yet, as reported in the survey, their activity level is high. The top six activities reported are (in descending order): author readings, visual art exhibitions, writing workshops, heritage or historical exhibitions, book fairs, and theatre productions. The section on public libraries in the Phase One pilot survey is nominal, and will be expanded in later phases of the project.

### **Cultural Industries**

Limited legislation or formal policy on cultural industries has been developed to date. Only two municipalities reported having a strategy or mention of cultural industries in a cultural plan. Municipal support to commercial cultural industries (broadcasting, film, interactive media/games, publishing, and sound recording/music) is mostly in the form of logistical assistance (rather than financial).

### **Other**

Not all resources for culture (arts or heritage) can be easily identified and inventoried. A final section of the survey gave municipal staff an opportunity to describe areas that are particularly difficult to account for in local government. The comments indicate a general lack of inter-departmental procedures and policies, which results in minimal information sharing among departments that “share” responsibility for culture. Difficulty in accounting for and valuing internal transfers of funds and in-kind services, and in quantifying the arts/cultural portions of “general budgets” (maintenance, office administration, etc.) within broader departments, were also indicated.

Importantly, the critical work in development by cultural staff is generally difficult to document and is under-reported, with its value to the community not adequately recognized. This includes initiatives such as developing neighbourhood arts projects, encouraging partnerships between neighbourhood associations and arts organizations, and providing advisory support to community organizations and volunteers.

## **Conclusion**

A comprehensive project of this nature, which is national in scope, has not been done before in Canada, and at each stage of its iterative development we have been aware of the complexity and subtlety of this rapidly evolving sector. From the beginning, the collaboration of staff in municipalities across the country was crucial.

However, many municipalities do not yet have key community, organizational, or service data easily available within their existing departments or information systems, and the foundation of a consistent, systematic data collection and reporting system needs time, patience, networking, and communication. As well, there is no common vocabulary across Canada for municipal structures and functions, nor for arts, heritage, and cultural concepts. We hope the Framework Project will contribute to resolving these issues.

In 2006, additional municipalities will be added to the Framework Project database, and further analyses will be conducted. As well, ways to improve upon the survey are being investigated, particularly to make it more user-friendly. Finally, we acknowledge the survey's length and want to thank every busy municipal staff member who took the time to complete our 95 questions.

We look forward to developing the Phase Two Quantitative Survey.



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## Creative City Network of Canada

The Creative City Network of Canada is a national non-profit organization that operates as a knowledge-sharing, research, public education, and professional development hub in the municipal cultural planning field. Through its work, it builds the capacity of municipal cultural planning professionals – and by extension their municipalities – to take effective and proactive roles in the cultural development of their communities. Its members are municipalities across Canada.

More information is available at [www.creativecity.ca](http://www.creativecity.ca)