
Neighbourhood Arts Network

Community Consultations for the Creation of the Neighbourhood Arts Network

An overview of 26 in-depth interviews and 5 design meetings with community-engaged artists in Toronto on their challenges, successes, and the potential of a Neighbourhood Arts Network

“I’d say in one year to have a really up-to-date, interactive calendar - that would be really cool. Building it on the website is one thing, but to actually have enough members to actually keep it up to date, and have a lot of what’s going on, if not entirely representative – that would be a major indicator of success.”

-Evelyn Parry, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

A Project of



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Introduction

Between August and November 2009 the Toronto Arts Foundation consulted with over 150 artists and representatives of a wide variety of organizations involved in community-engaged art. The interviews and meetings were designed to assess challenges, successes and specific needs and to develop guidelines regarding membership, a directory of community arts activities, an interactive website, and more for the creation of the Neighbourhood Arts Network.

The importance of community consultation cannot be underestimated. Developing the Network in collaboration with its potential members has been a high priority, and as a result, the website, the Network launch party, and future Network planning have been created based on lessons learned from the two symposiums (2006 & 2008), the 26 in-depth client interviews, and the 5 design meetings. These findings will be used as benchmarks to be re-visited in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Network's activities and services. Evaluative measures will be consistent with member needs throughout the 3-year Network pilot, and members will be engaged at every step.

By engaging the artists in the development stage of the Neighbourhood Arts Network (NAN), the participants became invested in the project – through the interviews and meetings the “networking” began well in advance of the launch of the Network.

The Foundation's goal for healthy, vibrant, and creative neighbourhoods across the City of Toronto will be achieved through continued collaboration with Network stakeholders and members.

Part One: The Interviews

Process

Organizations were selected on the basis of providing arts programming to diverse populations in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods, or incorporating community outreach (beyond basic audience development) into their activities. Representing the best of theatre, visual/media arts, music, dance, literary, and of course community arts, each organization spoke about their challenges, successes, beneficial services the Network could provide, and their vision of the Network's future.

The organizations included:

Art Starts	Expect Theatre
Ballet Creole	Gallery 44
bcurrent	Lorraine Kimsa Theatre For Young People
Buddies in Bad Times	Mammalian Diving Reflex
Carlos Bulosan Theatre	Mixed Company
Children's Peace Theatre	Regent Park Focus
Clay and Paper Theatre	Sketch
dance Immersion	Soundstreams.
Dance Umbrella	Theatre Direct
Danny Grossman Dance Theatre	Theatre Passe Muraille
Diaspora Dialogues	Toronto Animated Image Society
Drum Artz Community Centre	Trinity Square Video
Dusk Dances	Vtape

All interviewees were asked the same series of questions:

- What is the most pressing problem you face?
- Where is your organization working at the neighbourhood level?
- How is your organization working at the neighbourhood level?
- Who do you connect to at the neighbourhood level?

- How do people connect to the locally-based activities you deliver?
- How could the Network assist you?
- What services would you like to see the Network offer?
- How should membership in the Network be structured?
- What would you like to see included in the website?

What is the most pressing problem you face?

“There will never be enough money, and there will never be enough time, that’s just one of those things. That’s why I find the Network so interesting – you know the old “if the dancer fell in the forest, would anyone care?” If there’s not a sense, not just of the need for community support, but of dance disappearing and nobody caring, that’s the biggest problem.”

-Christine Moynihan, Executive Director, Dance Umbrella

Participants were asked to describe the most pressing problems their organization is facing. The top three responses were:

1. Connecting to funders/attaining core funding (26)
2. Creating partnerships (25)
3. Advocacy (25)

Though each participant mentioned funding as a predominant concern – either the lack of core funding, operating project-to-project, or the difficulties in connecting to funders – almost all stated that the Network would be unable to assist them greatly with this issue, and that creating partnerships is in many ways as pressing of a concern.

This is not to underestimate or undermine how crucial financial sustainability is to these organizations, but rather to illustrate that most participants felt the Network would be more effective in helping organizations establish partnerships and advocating for community-engaged arts.

Other challenges include:

- Lack of time/staff
- Lack of venues/facilities
- Managing growth
- Professional development, including board development and succession planning
- Company profiling/branding
- Connecting to skilled volunteers
- Research on the benefits of community-engaged arts
- Community development and neighbourhood revitalization

Where is your organization working at the neighbourhood level?

Participants named the following neighbourhoods as locations where their work was taking place:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ 401 Richmond (Queen & Spadina) | ■ Lawrence Heights |
| ■ Alexandra Park | ■ Malvern |
| ■ Crescent Town | ■ North Etobicoke |
| ■ Davenport Perth | ■ Oakwood/Vaughn |
| ■ Dufferin Grove | ■ Regent Park |
| ■ Dupont/Lansdowne | ■ Rexdale |
| ■ Glendower (North Scarborough) | ■ South Etobicoke/Lakeshore |
| ■ Jamestown | ■ Villaways (North York) |

- Jane/Finch
- Kensington Market
- Weston Mt. Dennis
- Wychwood Barns

Geographic communities vs. identity-based communities

“We are able to define the neighbourhood based on who we work with, and that changes all the time – it’s not fixed or static, rather an anthropomorphic relationship to community.”

-Deirdre Logue, Development Director, V Tape

It is important to note that many groups work across geographic neighbourhoods in order to reach communities united around ethnicity, culture, and other factors. One example is Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, who offers several theatre-based programs for queer youth aged 15-25. “Because the queer community is geographically diverse, our program introduces the village for a lot of queer people,” said Evalyn Parry, Associate Artist for Buddies In Bad Times. Though Buddies is situated in the gay village near Church and Wellesley, Parry notes, “I don’t feel like our youth project is as connected to the neighbourhood as once perhaps it was, but more to community in the larger sense, wherever queer community is found in Toronto”.

How is your organization working at the neighbourhood level?

“We work at a neighbourhood level at three sites... at all of the sites; the artists we work with are partners as well. We are really conscious of trying to access artists from the neighbourhoods in which we work, and also program assistants. We hire program assistants strictly from the neighbourhood in which we are working, because they are trying to build sustainability in those neighbourhoods.”

-Liz Forsberg, Managing Director, Art Starts

Participants were asked to describe how they work at a neighbourhood level, either in their own neighbourhood, or in other neighbourhoods in Toronto, through partnering, providing services, spaces, programming and so on.

The types of community programming offered by arts organizations is typically responsive in nature; that is, depending on local needs and interests. This works in two ways: one, an organization has an overall concept with fluctuating elements; and two, an organization is completely open and responsive.

In the first type, the overall concept or structure will stay the same from project to project, with elements changing to fit the needs of the community. For example, Dusk Dances has a simple structure: to co-produce with a local partner five dance pieces in a park, with a host and an opening band.

In the second type, the programming is completely different from project to project and/or neighbourhood to neighbourhood. MABELLEarts, for example, have initiated a variety of projects at their site including a sewing room, a lantern garden, a seniors’ drop-in, and numerous other activities designed specifically for and with local residents.

Types of activities mentioned include:

- Poetry jams
- Community plays
- Training programs of all kinds
- Creative writing/journaling workshops
- Public showcases
- Dance performances
- Painting
- Drawing
- Sculpture
- Drop-in art/performance events
- Talking circles
- Play-writing workshops

- Dance training
- Film and video production
- Stilt-walking
- Photography workshops
- Movement classes
- Community gardens
- Cooking and sharing meals
- Printmaking
- Sound production, music creation & recording
- Community celebrations
- Art installations
- Mosaics
- Puppet-making
- Establishing local art councils
- Drumming workshops
- Facilitation training
- Mentoring

In the majority of these activities, the focus is on transformation - of neighbourhoods, of gang violence, of poverty, of self-worth, and of community participation.

“There is a real respect for Gallery 44’s education programs because they started at the same time as the production facilities and the exhibitions, so it’s always been very much a part of what we do. It wasn’t added-on later, it was always integral to our programs... it’s not like an exhibition is happening on its own, education is happening on its own, facilities are happening on their own – everything is discussed as a part of who we are.”

-Lise Beaudry, Director, Gallery 44

It was particularly interesting to hear from practitioners working in disciplines outside Community Arts. These organizations deliver exceptional theatre, dance, literary, music and visual arts programming, but also partner with community centres, social service agencies, and other non-profits to create transformative, community-engaged work.

Who do you connect to at the neighbourhood level?

“Jane and Finch will be our next focused community, specifically Weston. This opens up a new demographic for us, because we’ve been doing families, which means usually parents and toddlers together – the parents are challenged and the toddlers are challenged at the same time. We’ve done kids aged 7-13. And now we are ready to move to youth, which is something we haven’t been ready for until now, because of staff, and because of experience. We’ve done this long enough that we are ready to move in that direction. That’s going to take a good few years to get a hold of – to find a way to reach those kids. Those are the kids who really need it, more than anything, to put them back in a good path.”

-Gili Gurvitz, Director, Drum Artz

Participants described a wide variety of individuals, who they are connecting with through the programming they deliver, including:

- families
- newcomers
- non-status individuals
- parents
- persons with disabilities
- queer-identified youth
- refugees
- second-generation immigrants
- seniors
- street-involved or homeless individuals
- youth (being defined anywhere from 0-29 years old)

How do people connect to the locally-based activities you deliver?

“That endorsement of a local resident to a friend is worth a billion dollars.”

-Lynda Hill, Artistic Director, Theatre Direct

Word of mouth and community-based partnerships are by far the most widely used, and most successful, methods of reaching participants. Other outreach strategies include:

- Email
- Posters, postcards and flyers
- Social networking (Facebook, Twitter)
- Referrals through partners (like Toronto Public Library)
- Community newspapers
- Schools and teachers
- Local artists
- Performances
- Radio and print ads
- Texting
- Being located in a community hub, like 401 Richmond or Wychwood Barns- people come for the farmers market and see flyers promoting work
- Storefronts and walk-through traffic
- Board members and staff
- Funders
- Youth leaders initiating workshops at other events and agencies
- Exhibitions and screenings
- Conferences
- Stakeholders
- Politicians

Partnering was discussed as a key to success.

“We learn, and are still learning, how to work with specific communities in complete partnership. When you find the right partner, there is incredible strength in the project, in bringing people together from downtown Toronto and the different neighbourhoods. It’s not just to go into a community and work with them, but to create those bridges, those links, between communities, between neighbourhoods, within the whole GTA.”

-Sylvie Bouchard, Curator/Festival Director, Dusk Dances

Partnering with local agencies (government or otherwise), non-profit groups, and professional artists is crucial to the success of community arts projects. Through partnering, organizations can share resources and learn from each other’s successes and challenges. Most importantly, having a local partner ensures that programming is responsive to local needs and will reach and engage residents.

Some of the partnerships mentioned include:

- Schools – elementary, high schools, universities, and colleges
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Libraries (for example, Art Starts programming at Oakwood/Vaughan is run out of the Maria A. Shchuka Library at Dufferin and Eglinton)
- Other community arts organizations
- Professional artists
- Community choirs
- City parks
- Local businesses and BIAs
- Community centres

- Festivals (like Images and Mayworks Festival)
- Social service agencies (for example, Sketch partners with Youthlink to provide services to street-involved and homeless youth)
- Health centres and hospitals
- Culturally-based community centres like the Kapisanan Philippine Centre
- Other non-profit groups working for social change, such as Action For Neighbourhood Change and Schools Without Borders
- Service-based organizations, such as Montage Support Services that works with people with multiple disabilities

How could the Network assist you?

“I see a real role for the Neighbourhood Arts Network to act as an advocate for community arts organizations and really publicize the type of neighbourhood building that we are doing, in an effort to secure greater pots of funding for organizations. These are things that ideally I would be involved in, but there’s just not enough time in the day.” -Liz Forsberg, Managing Director, Art Starts

While speaking to their pressing problems, participants were encouraged to think of ways in which the Neighbourhood Arts Network could assist them with these issues. Here are some of the ideas mentioned:

- Providing connections to funders and funding agencies
- Provide information about funding sources for community arts agencies
- Increasing participation in programming
- Professional development workshops
- Provide human resources information
- Advocating for community-engaged arts
- Audience development
- Accessing hard-to-reach neighbourhoods
- Accessing skilled volunteers
- In-person networking events connecting funders, artists, community arts organizations, social service agencies, politicians, non-profits, etc.
- Conducting research on developing healthy neighbourhoods
- Fostering spaces that communities feel they belong to
- Board development
- Succession planning
- Branding/company profiling
- Placing organizations who are not “community arts” but do community-engaged artistic activity within the spectrum of professional and community-based work
- Lobbying
- Providing a list of venues in the city
- Advertising events
- Helping to establish partnerships
- Sharing contact information for a multitude of organizations
- Conducting research showing how community-engaged work can generate actual dollars
- Connecting community arts research to urban planning in every neighbourhood

What services would you like to see the Network offer?

“Sometimes it can be difficult to access neighbourhoods, especially if your priority is to access the marginalized, the disenfranchised. They can be hard to get a hold of! Partnering with other organizations that already have participants is a great way of getting that started, but we also want to access people who aren’t connected to those resources.”

-Kayla McGee, former General Manager for bcurrent

Questions about Network services were broken down into four parts:

- 1) making connections
- 2) conducting/presenting research
- 3) advocating on behalf of members
- 4) providing administrative support on a fee-for-use basis (potentially the Network could become an arts service organization (ASO) for community arts)

Making connections: Participants were asked if making connections would be a useful service, and, if so, to name the types of connections and to whom they would have an interest in being connected. Twenty three respondents said this would be a useful service, with the remaining three stating that it potentially could, but this would depend on the diversity of Network membership. In one case, the organization spoke to a multitude of community partnerships and networks they would be interested in sharing with members.

Participants were interested in making connections with:

- Funders
- Other community artists and organizations
- Participants
- Skilled volunteers
- Social service agencies
- Libraries
- Politicians, including city councilors and provincial politicians
- Audiences
- Community health centres and hospitals
- Corporations and businesses who are interested in getting involved with community work beyond sponsorship
- Cultural organizations
- Social justice groups
- Schools
- Museums
- Key players in the community arts field
- Large institutions, like the National Film Board, CBC, and Toronto International Film Festival
- Media practitioners and journalists
- Individuals and organizations working in art disciplines outside of community arts

Research: Participants were less interested in accessing research on community arts, though many said they might access it if provided.

Advocating to funders, politicians, and the media about the value and impact of community-engaged arts was stated to be a priority by all participants (26).

Administrative Services: The potential for the Network to become an arts service organization (ASO) was thought by many to be an interesting project, though hard to manage, and possibly duplicating services provided by TAPA and other ASOs. Many participants stated that an ASO would be of greater benefit to fledgling community arts groups than to established organizations.

How should membership in the Network be structured?

Discussions about Network membership included:

- 1) types of membership (i.e. individual, organization, and associate);
- 2) levels of membership;
- 3) membership fees; and
- 4) application process.

Types of membership: individual vs. organization: All respondents (26) felt strongly that membership should include both individuals and organizations. However, some felt that this would depend on a) the strategic direction of the Network; and b) the professionalism of its membership, particularly for individual members.

Levels of membership: Participants were divided on levels of membership. Only three definitively said that membership and all services should be accessible to everyone. The rest felt that the appropriateness of levels

would a) depend on a membership fee structure – if the Network would be free of cost to access, then levels could be unnecessary; and b) whether administrative services would be part of the Network, i.e. established organizations and newer organizations could opt for varying levels of service depending on their needs.

Membership fees: Again, participants were divided:

- 6 respondents stated that the Network should be as open as possible, and free, in order to encourage a diverse membership, and not be prohibitive to small organizations or individuals who could not afford even a nominal fee;
- 7 respondents felt strongly that a membership fee would a) encourage a committed, active, and participatory membership; and b) encourage long-term financial stability for the Network;
- 8 suggested a sliding scale based on organization revenue, or access to varied levels of service;
- 5 respondents were undecided.

Application process: Twenty three participants felt there should be an application process to join, though many stated that the “application” should be a non-invasive way to glean information from members, rather than a vetting process, and that the application should not be overly time-consuming.

What would you like to see included in the website?

“There are a lot of organizations that are isolated as a result of this big city. There are a lot of organizations that need a lot of really basic information about what’s going on!” -Deirdre Logue, Development Director, V Tape

Participants were asked what they would like to see in an interactive website or database. Suggestions included:

Searchable database of member organizations and individuals

- Links to member websites
- Community arts project listings
- Photographs and video
- Media contacts
- Database of corporate, private, and public funders
- Job listings
- Calls for volunteers/volunteers looking for opportunities
- Resumes/bios of artists
- Listings of services for artists
- Event calendar
- Human resources information, such as benefit packages, confidentiality agreements, etc.
- Links to training opportunities
- Mentorship opportunities
- Venues, both free and rental

Part Two: The Design Meetings

Process

In October 2009 there was an open invitation to artists and organizations working in community-engaged art to attend one of a series of design meetings. Participants were invited to share their thoughts about membership, communication tools, training, creating and sustaining partnerships, support and mentoring opportunities.

Over 110 people attended the meetings held in 5 locations across the city hosted by Arts Etobicoke, Art Starts, Lakeshore Arts, Scarborough Arts Council and Urban Arts. The meetings were led by Margo Charlton, with break-out discussions being led by Leslie Francombe, Tamara Haberman, Frances Mahon, Susan Wright, all members of the NAN Planning Committee. The participants were separated into groups which rotated between discussions on the subjects of Services, Website and Membership. Each session began with an introduction from a representative of the host organization.

Attendees:

21 Independent Artists plus over 90 representatives from:

Action for Neighbourhood Change	Inspirations Studio Sistering
Agincourt Community Services	Jumblies Theatre
AGO Education Department	KKSA Music School
Art Bridges	Lakeshore Arts
Art City in St. James Town	Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People
Art Starts	MABELLEarts
art Works art School	McCauley Child Development Centre
ArtHeart Community Art Centre	Milkweed Collective
Artists Garden Cooperative/artify.ca	Mixed Company
Arts Etobicoke	Modern Batik Art
Arts for Children and Youth	Mural Routes
Arts Services, SCC	NIA Centre For Young People
Arts4All	North Toronto Group of Artists/ North York Visual Artists
Asian Arts Freedom School	North York Community House
Assembly Hall	Oasis Alternative School
Bcurrent	Ontario Ministry of Culture
BMM Urban Arts	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Cedar Ridge Creative Centre	Scarborough Arts Council
Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples	Sirius Theatrical Company
City of Toronto Cultural Services	Soundstreams
Clay and Paper Theatre	St. Boniface Catholic School,
Creative Works Studio	Theatre Etobicoke
Dance Immersion	Toronto Public Library
Drum Artz	Toronto Public Space Committee
DUO (Dance Umbrella Ontario)	TPL, Art Exhibits
East Scarborough Storefront	Turtle House Art/Play Centre
Elevated Grounds	U of T Geography Department
Etobicoke Community Concert Band	Urban Arts
Expect Theatre	Western Community Coalition
Fred Victor Centre	York University Community Arts Program
Harbourfront Centre	York Woods District Library
IMPACT	Youth Unlimited

Services

Advocacy

Most participants felt The Network can play an important role as an advocate for the field. By being able to represent a diversity of practice and being a voice for a variety of supporters and practitioners, the Network

can help foster a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of community-engaged arts. In general this will help raise the profile of “under the radar art.”

Some participants pointed out strong connections between community-engaged arts and community development work. They wished to connect with agencies and funders outside of the arts circuit and spoke of this work as part of a larger social change movement.

Many of the attendees expressed the complexity of their practice – combining principles of community development and arts – and the need for more people and organizations to understand the transformational power and value of their work. They called upon the Network to lobby and educate: the general public through the media; politicians at all levels; schools and school boards; BIAs and local businesses and funders.

Practitioners, busy with the day to day work of delivering and planning programs, are not able to focus on advocacy. If the Network could develop clear and simple tools about the value of community arts these could be used by members in their own communication and outreach efforts. A common message delivered by the members will be an effective tool.

Participants saw the Network as a way to capture the health and development of the field. They asked for compilation and analysis of statistics which in turn would be used to make a case for increased support for the field.

Network can help distribute information that impacts the field – changes in policy, budget cuts or special initiatives such as Beautiful City Bill Board Campaign. When necessary the Network could speak out for its members on important issues.

The Network could provide community arts practitioners with the kind of advocacy available to other disciplines through groups such as TAPA and CARFAC. Participants called upon the Network to link with other networks and advocacy groups to strengthen the arts and community development. There was a suggestion to link to Arts Vote.

Network

In addition to the website, which was seen as a very important networking tool, participants felt in-person networking opportunities could assist them. Networking events requested included: city-wide symposiums, festivals of community arts, workshops, forums, speaker series and simply “time to just talk and connect to inspire and inform each other about our work.” The time frame for networking events varied from monthly meetings to yearly events. There was a suggestion to hold events for networking at a neighbourhood level to better connect local artists, groups and agencies.

The Network was asked to identify best-practice models and have a bank of speakers for presentations on various aspects of community-engaged art-making. Participants spoke of a need for mentoring and professional development. The following was suggested: project open houses; city wide tours of community arts locations; skills exchange to assist community arts groups to build infrastructure; workshops to share techniques and approaches to working with different populations.

Participants requested links to non-arts groups and agencies interested in using the arts. e.g.: groups working in settlement, housing, mental health. Although this information might be available on the Network website, the Network could take a more active role by running meetings to bring arts and non-arts groups together.

Access

Participants listed a multitude of groups and individuals they wished to access: volunteers, city councilors, funders, artists, media, interns, mentors, consultants and experts (lighting designers, book keepers, etc.).

The Network was called to provide links and information about:

- Spaces and venues for the arts
- Housing for artists (Artscape)
- Permits and local service (City of Toronto departments)
- Health services for artists (Arts Health Network)

- Alternative financial sources such as micro-credit lending
- Translation services
- Job opportunities (Work in Culture)

It was suggested that the Network research and secure privileges for members e.g.: discounts from suppliers, use of Arts Junction, and insurance coverage. These would be good incentives to join.

Community arts groups and artists are concerned about financial support and funding and there were many calls for access to information about fund raising, grant writing and grant program deadlines.

Community arts groups want access to information that will assist them in their growth and stability; information such as how to incorporate as a not-for-profit and examples of by-laws

The participants were interested in finding out about the range of activities happening at a local and city level. They requested involvement in and access to mapping processes. There was also a call to capture the history of the field as it is emerging and to profile key figures in the community arts field (now and in the past),

Values

The following values were identified as being important for the development of Network Services:

- Create a united strong voice
- One-stop shopping
- Privacy – who gets access to member info
- Timely, useful, and up-to-date
- Link community arts to social change, community and economic development work
- Recognize different challenges faced by different practitioners
- Be able to talk to a person not just the website
- Show the work is inspiring and engaging
- Multilingual
- Responsive
- Celebratory
- Quick and easy – informal meetings
- Don't reproduce what already exists

Website

Connect

There was an overwhelming consensus that connecting to arts organizations, individual community artists, government agencies, funders, and social service agencies is of utmost priority. However, due to the large amount of information this would generate, it is essential to categorize this information in a way that will be easy and fast to search.

Some of the suggestions for categories include:

- Organizations looking for artists to partner with
- Artists looking for organizations to partner with
- Arts Disciplines
- Volunteers, interns
- Types of social service agency- working with newcomers, seniors and so on
- Funders
- Toronto Public Libraries
- Toronto District School Board
- City of Toronto
- Politicians
- Media contacts

Other suggestions for connection were to provide research and statistics on community arts in downloadable documents, to potential venues, and to professionals i.e. consultants, lawyers, grant-writers, event planners, etc. who might offer their services at a discounted cost (or not), but they would need to understand the

particular needs of a community arts organization. Professionals could also be rated and commented on through the website.

The following were suggested as ways to connect through the website:

- Tags that will easily allow you to navigate through different categories, i.e. you are interested in newcomers, so you click on the tag “newcomer” and it shows you everything with that tag.
- An easy-to-search database with parameters, i.e. you could search by location, discipline, and age group, to narrow it down quickly.
- Member profiles that have at least the following: contact info, neighbourhood, discipline, and the types of people they work with (or are interested in working with).
- Links to member websites and member email addresses, as well as to their Facebook, Twitter and so on.

Inform

People want to know about each other’s work! Listings of past, present and future projects, calls for submission, calls for participants, as well as “lessons learned” (a.k.a. best practices) so that we may assist each other.

Also on the hotlist is helpful information:

- What is community arts? What does the field look like in Toronto? How can we support community arts and/or get involved? Who are the key players?
- Neighbourhood demographics and information about underserved communities
- Downloadable administrative documents (contracts, photo/video release, job descriptions, pay scales, etc.)
- Evaluation tools (could also be a downloadable document)
- Anti-oppression and diversity guidelines

The following were suggested as ways to be informed through the website:

- An interactive events calendar. This could be organized in a few ways: a traditional Google-style calendar, or listings like LiveTO, or as a map showing locations of events/activities. Grant deadlines could also be incorporated into the calendar. The calendar could alert you through an automatically generated email based on your stated interests/preferences.
- Regular (weekly or bi-monthly) emails sent out by coordinator profiling different projects, people, organizations, events and so on. This could include the “lessons learned” piece, inspirational stories, or dissemination of the community arts toolkits.
- Blogs written by coordinator or community people
- Links to other useful websites, like Work In Culture and CARFAC

Interact

Interactivity through the website is very important and will facilitate the collaboration that is at the core of our mandate. This was stressed over and over in all design meetings.

The following were suggested as ways to interact through the website:

- Craigslist-style message board to post items for sale, bartering, mentorship opportunities calls for volunteers, submission, resource sharing, etc.
- Map showing locations of organizations, activities, projects, events, funders, demographics, etc. You could click on a neighbourhood, choose some parameters if you wanted, and zoom into the organizations etc. that fit those parameters and immediately contact them- easy, visual, fast.
- Match-making service: website automatically connects you to what you are looking for. You need a skilled volunteer events planner for a two-week job promoting your community music festival? A skilled events planner with some time on their hands wants to get involved in community arts? Match made!
- Suggestions: you like this organization? Then you might be interested in these ones too! .
- Chatrooms, forums, webinars, web-based projects, podcasts
- Q & A section where you can get advice from those working in the field

- Live feeds of symposiums & events
- Videos, music, photos
- Audio component for the visually impaired
- Use symbols as much as possible to aid those for whom English is not a first language
- Advocacy section where people can report on policy, politicians, supportive campaigns
- Members can give feedback to the Network about what's working and what's not working, suggestions for improvement, etc.

Values

The following values were identified as being important for the development of the website:

- Useful
- Active
- Easy-to-download formats
- Simple
- Easy to search
- Representative of the entire community
- Comprehensive
- Up-to-date
- Visually appealing

Membership

Process

Participants felt it was important to develop terms of use, mission statement and values so potential members know what they are joining. Some felt there should be “a gatekeeper” and potential members should demonstrate a commitment to community-engaged art making (a screening process); others asked for members to define their own interest and share their expectations of the Network; others suggested it be open to all.

Participants called for a non-intimidating, easy process in order not to scare off potential members. An application form was suggested where members contribute their own information; a contact person could assist applicants in uploading their information. Payment, if there is to be a fee, should happen when signing up.

The success of the Network depends on an active and involved membership. Members must maintain their own profile but some worried that members would not enter information needed to be useful for networking. Suggestions to help with this problem included: reminder emails and profiles deleted if not updated.

It was suggested that organizational and individual profiles indicate the following:

- arts discipline
- size of organization (if applicable)
- programming focus
- years of practice
- locations of work
- services provided
- examples of work

Network should recruit through active outreach including:

- using the media (local papers and TV and radio)
- booths at festivals
- links on website of like-minded groups
- create flyers and stickers
- Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- general word of mouth between practitioners

Cost

The call for a free network was equal to the call for a fee “in order to create a sense of value.” If there is a fee, participants felt it should be fair in order to make the Network accessible (tiered or scaled system).

It was suggested that the Network be:

- Free to all for all time
- Free as an introductory offer for limited time
- Free membership but charge for services
- Free for students
- Bursaries for individuals
- Waive fees in some cases
- Make it possible to pay through volunteering or bartering
- Make it low for everyone – individual and organizations (amounts suggested varied from \$10 to \$100)
- Charge according to level of operation or need
- Pay What You Can (PWYC)
- Organizations pay more than individuals and according to size of their budget
- Members of organizations who are members get a reduced membership
- Founding members might get “special rates” into the future
- “Pay for as much as you use” system
- Pay through bartering

It was suggested that what is charged depends on what is offered and the benefits must be well articulated. At this point value is not proven.

The Network should not plan on sustaining itself through membership. Other sources of revenue suggested include:

- Fees for services
- Fees to attend workshops and symposiums
- Revenue through advertising but careful of contact info privacy
- Patrons of arts groups
- Sponsorships
- Grants

Types of Membership

There were many suggestions that the Network be open to all –“everyone working, living and interested.” There should be two sections to the website: member only pages and a public section accessible to all.

Suggestions for membership types fell into five broad categories:

- Individual artists (could include art therapists)
- Organizations (for profit and not for profit arts groups)
- Organizations (Community groups, agencies working with the arts, cultural centres)
- Associate (for supporters)
- Student (for students studying community-engaged arts or community development)

There was a suggestion that other Networks become members. The Network could explore how connection to other networks could provide partnering, resources and support. This could also apply to Professional Associations.

The question of schools and teachers becoming members raised the topic of the difference between community arts and arts education. It was suggested that professor and university/college students in programs connected to community development, cultural studies, etc may be interested in joining.

Values

The following values were identified as being important for the development of membership structure:

- Accessible and affordable membership.
- Secure and confidential

- Fair and reasonable
- Easy sign up process
- Momentum (Network will be valuable only if there are enough members)
- Relevant and up to date services and information

Conclusion

As a result of the consultations, the Neighbourhood Arts Network was established with a mandate to provide the following:

Services:

- Networking opportunities (in-person and online)
- Showcasing projects, news, opportunities, and upcoming events
- Professional development workshops and training sessions
- Promoting best practices through our resource guides
- Advocating for greater investment in community engaged art making in Toronto

Website:

- News and opportunities
- Upcoming events
- Member profiles
- Project profiles
- Project and member maps
- Discussion forum
- Resource guides
- Templates
- Case studies
- Reading room

After much debate, it was determined by the Planning Committee that Membership would be free for the first year. The decision whether or not to continue with free membership will be once again open for debate after the first year is complete. Members would consist of organizations and individuals. Other membership categories, such as friend, associate or supporter, could be added when it becomes relevant.

Members include:

- Arts organizations
- Arts festivals
- Community planners
- Arts councils
- Community animators
- Social service organizations
- Individual artists and facilitators
- Program developers and coordinators

As this is a member driven network, membership comes with responsibilities. These include:

- Maintaining a member profile with project information
- Updating the member profile on a regular basis; minimum of once per year
- Display a sign identifying membership in the Neighbourhood Arts Network
- Create a link between the member's website and the Network website
- Take an active, participatory role in the Network

The effectiveness of the Network will be evaluated on an on-going and annual basis.

Notes:

This report was compiled by Margo Charlton and Frances Mahon with assistance by Leslie Francombe.
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More extensive notes on the interviews conducted are available on request.

For more information on the Network visit the website at: www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org

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For information on all the programs of the Toronto Arts Foundation, visit our website at:

www.torontoartsfoundation.org



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