



Alberta
Foundation
for the **Arts**

Program Evaluation

FINAL REPORT

February 2009

Introduction..... 1

 Goals of the AFA Program Evaluation..... 1

 Changes in the Arts Funding Ecology During the Evaluation Period 2

 Legislation and Policy..... 3

 Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding..... 3

 Research Activities 4

Findings and Responses5

 1. The Role of the AFA..... 5

 2. Capacity of Arts Organizations..... 6

 3. Funding for Individual Artists 8

 4. The Cultural Industries 9

 5. Arts Programming for Young Albertans..... 10

 6. The AFA Art Collection 11

 7. The Granting Process..... 12

Appendix A Overview of Research Activities..... 14

Introduction

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) Program Evaluation has been a three year project (2006–2009) initiated to identify ways in which the AFA can most effectively support the growth and development of the arts in Alberta.

A Program Evaluation Steering Committee, formed in 2006 and comprised of members of the arts community, representatives from the AFA and the Arts Branch of Culture and Community Spirit, met quarterly to govern the evaluation process, which included extensively reviewing findings from all research commissioned by the AFA. The AFA would like to thank all members of the Steering Committee for the time and work that went into overseeing the research and consultation process and in making recommendations to the AFA Board:

AFA Program Evaluation Steering Committee:

Audrey Luft, Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Gregor Allan, Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Kristina Kowalski, Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Tony Lupino, Art Gallery of Alberta
Patti Pon, Paradox Consulting
Fred Stenson, Author
Alexandra Vissia, Performing Artist
Suzanne Lint, Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge

Alberta Culture and Community Spirit Staff:

Sue Bohachuk, Assistant Deputy Minister, Culture Division
Jeffrey Anderson, Cultural Policy Initiative
Kathleen Blake, Policy Coordination & Program Evaluation Unit
Steve Pritchard, A/Executive Director, Arts Branch
Al Chapman, Director, Arts Development
Paul Pearson, Director, Arts Services
Sonya Thompson, Arts Services

The Program Evaluation included client consultations, primary and secondary research about trends in the arts and arts funding, an internal process audit of the Arts Branch, and an overview of existing policy. External consultants were hired to complete individual projects within the larger program evaluation framework, ensuring objectivity in data collection and analysis.

This document sets the context for the three year program evaluation process, summarizes the findings from the AFA Program Evaluation, and lists the Program Evaluation Steering Committee's recommendations to the AFA based on the findings. The document was submitted to the AFA Board in February of 2009 for response. The AFA Board responded to the recommendations with the intent of planning for programming changes in 2009-10 and implementing changes in 2010-11.

Goals of the AFA Program Evaluation

1. Assess program strengths and weaknesses; identify both effective program characteristics and those that need improvement.

2. Give stakeholders a voice in shaping the direction of the organization.
3. Identify and understand how the AFA can most effectively support the growth and development of the arts in Alberta.
4. Identify and understand needs that may not currently be represented within the AFA's funding structure.

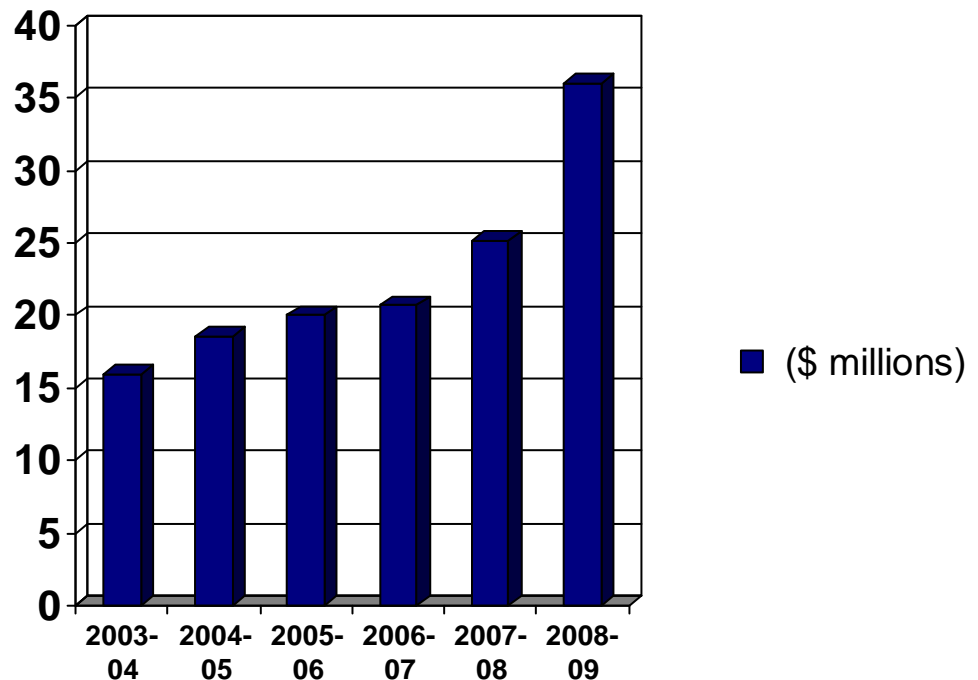
Changes in the Arts Funding Ecology During the Evaluation Period

The research for the Program Evaluation took place over a three year period. Some of the opportunities for changes to AFA programming that are evident in the reports from the stakeholder consultations have begun to be addressed while the evaluation was continued to be implemented.

Moreover, structural changes within government highlighted the political support for Alberta's strong arts and culture sector, while new AFA initiatives reflected the Foundation's responsiveness to arts community needs.

Some of the most significant changes in the arts funding ecology within the Government of Alberta between 2006 and 2009 included:

- Creation of the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit in March 2008.
- The Premier's Council on Arts and Culture was established in December 2008.
- Significant increases in funding to artists and arts organizations from \$16 million in grants in 2003-04 to just over \$36 million in 2008-09. (see graph)



- The introduction of Alberta's Cultural Policy, *The Spirit of Alberta*, in 2007, which makes explicit the Provincial government's support of fostering and supporting

excellence in, capacity for and access to arts and culture in Alberta, with specific support of the work of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

- The inaugural Alberta Arts Day was celebrated in September 2008.
- Establishment of new arts awards in 2008: *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Visual Arts Award*, *Grant MacEwan Literary Award*, *Grant MacEwan Literary Arts Scholarship*, *Tommy Banks Performing Arts Award* (totaling \$155,000 annually).
- The establishment of the *Alberta Creative Development Initiative (ACDI)*; a partnership between the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts, in collaboration with the Calgary Arts Development Authority and the Edmonton Arts Council. This \$2 million initiative will fund 90 artists and 24 arts organizations in Alberta towards development activities in 2007–08.
- The AFA’s capacity was expanded to provide effective and appropriate support to Aboriginal Artists and Arts Organizations.
- Posting *Juror Handbooks* on the Alberta Foundation for the Arts website.
- The CADAC system (common financial database for arts funding) was piloted in Fall 2008 to ease financial reporting for organizations accessing funding from multiple levels of government
- The process of digitizing the AFA Art Collection was initiated.
- The cap on project grants for individual artists was raised from \$10, 000 to \$15,000.

All of the AFA initiatives listed above are reviewed annually.

Legislation and Policy

Legislation was reviewed with the Steering Committee to ensure that the guidance provided to the AFA Board would align with existing government and AFA policies. The legislation and policies reviewed included: *The Alberta Foundation of the Arts Act*; *The Spirit of Alberta*, Alberta’s Cultural Policy; the *Ministry Business Plan for Culture and Community Spirit 2008–11*; and the *AFA Strategic Plan 2009–12*.

Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding

The *Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding* project sought to identify and explore trends and priorities in arts funding, various approaches to arts funding and general trends impacting the arts sector. The primary research project entailed 20 key informant interviews with 22 national and international leaders and current thinkers in the area of arts development and support. The secondary research project entailed an extensive literature review and thematic analysis of the funding portfolios of several major public arts funding agencies in Canada and abroad.

Key findings with strategic implications for the AFA include the following:

Trends in arts funding reflect societal trends and demonstrate attempts by arts funders to accommodate the rapid change and increasing complexity of the arts environment. Funding trends include the following:

- blurring boundaries between previously discrete grant categories;
- a move from single to multiple funding sources;
- a shift from operating to project support;

- a trend from professional practice to community or amateur activity;
- a move from organizational to individual support; and
- a change in programming from intrinsic to instrumental aims.

Key informants identified several ‘good practices’ for arts funders, such as:

- peer assessment;
- flexibility;
- funding partnerships, including decentralization;
- ease of application processes;
- information sharing;
- cooperation;
- capacity building;
- multi-year funding; and
- applicant assistance and feedback.

In order to accommodate the rapid rate of change in the arts environment and offer effective support for arts entities, funding agencies must maintain a focus on the larger arts ecology and remain flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the sector.

Research Activities

Research for the AFA Program Evaluation was broad in scope and included:

- An Internal Process Audit of the administrative work that supports AFA programming;
- Primary and secondary research in trends in the arts and arts funding; and,
- Seventeen stakeholder consultations, including a general survey of self-identifying members of the arts community in Alberta.

Nearly 2,000 people were directly consulted in the evaluation process between 2006 and 2009.

Approximately 1,200 people responded to online questionnaires

- 1179 respondents participated in 7 online surveys

Just over 700 people were engaged in focus groups and interviews.

- 53 focus groups were conducted with an average of 8 participants in each session
- 301 in-depth interviews were conducted

These research activities were contracted out to professional research firms for data collection, analysis and reporting. These contractor reports are available on the AFA website (www.affta.ab.ca).

Research methods included focus groups, individual interviews, online surveys, site visits, paper and pencil questionnaires, and literature and document reviews (See *Appendix A* for detail on research activities).

One of the strengths of the research is the large number of individuals who participated in interviews and focus groups. One of the limitations of this research is a mean 38% response rate for 7 online surveys (which were complemented by other research methods in all but one case, the *AFA Program Evaluation General Survey*).

Findings and Responses

Findings from the three year consultation have been grouped in to seven key themed areas. The summary of findings for each themed area is followed by recommendations from the AFA Program Evaluation Steering Committee regarding the ways in which the AFA should structure its future programming to most effectively serve the Alberta Arts community.

The Program Evaluation Steering Committee was aware throughout the evaluation process that recommendations suggesting new initiatives or reallocation of funds will affect the finite pool of money that the AFA, and, in turn, artists and arts organizations, have access to each year. As such, the Steering Committee focused on how the AFA would work within existing resources and has focused on recommendations they believe will provide maximize access, flexibility, stability and communication for all Albertans.

1. The Role of the AFA

Unanimously, stakeholders reported being passionate advocates of the fundamental importance of the arts to quality of life in Alberta. This reflects the values of most Albertans—nine out of ten Albertans feel it is important that the Government of Alberta continues to fund and support the arts (*Survey of Albertans*, 2008) The stakeholders in these consultations feel that the Provincial government has a unique and essential role to play in supporting the vitality and sustainability of a vibrant arts sector in Alberta.

- Stakeholders want the government to continue to invest financially in the arts.
- Although the specifics varied, there was consensus among stakeholders that the AFA should function as an advocate and promoter of the arts, educating Albertans about both the impact of arts on community, quality of life and Alberta's economy, and the valuable relationship of the arts and culture with the importance of a vibrant and creative economy.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Continue to articulate its role in the arts community as the Government of Alberta’s lead funding agency for the arts.**
- **Support and promote the development of the arts by facilitating linkages within and between the diverse arts communities in Alberta.**
- **Promote the intrinsic value of the arts to encourage Albertans to access, participate in and support the arts.**
- **Consider ways of assisting the arts community in building capacity in advocacy.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA will:

- **Vigorously articulate its role in the arts community which is to:**
 - i. Be the province’s funding agency of the arts in Alberta**
 - ii. support, promote and contribute to the development of the arts in Alberta**
 - iii. to provide individuals and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta**
 - iv. to foster and promote the enjoyment of the arts**
 - v. to collect, preserve and display works of art by Alberta artists,**
- **Continue to support and promote the development of the arts by facilitating linkages within and between the diverse arts communities both within and beyond Alberta**

2. Capacity of Arts Organizations

During the evaluation process, new resources to support organizational capacity, such as the *Healthy Agencies Toolkit* and the *Fair Notice Policy*, were implemented by the AFA.

The Steering Committee recognized that there may be ways for the AFA to increase its own capacity in helping to build connections between, and build leadership in, arts organizations by supporting capacity building opportunities. The Steering Committee based its recommendations on the following key findings from stakeholder consultations:

- Stable operating funding is a priority.
- Multi-year funding would enhance planning.
- Concurrent access to operational and project funding would support innovation *and* organizational capacity.

- Grants for strategic investments in specific areas such as touring, audience development, strategic planning, new programming and human resources would support organizational capacity.
- Peer review, in addition to formulas for funding, would encourage accountability in areas other than financial status, such as artistic merit.
- Increased flexibility in categorizing funding programs and in criteria for specific funding programs would be preferable to the current categories.
(AFA note: this issue is addressed in the granting processes section)
- Organizations are seeking support in the following areas: human resources management (attracting and retaining volunteers; staff and volunteer burnout; succession planning; and rising artist fees); marketing; audience development; and professional development for organizations and artists.
- Stakeholders report experiencing difficulty obtaining/maintaining spaces for making and exhibiting art.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Support the capacity for arts organizations to contribute positively to the communities in which they operate by using a combination of operating and project funding.**
- **Support access to capacity-building initiatives such as human resources, volunteer recruitment and training, and financial management, et cetera.**
- **Consider multi-year funding models for financially and artistically healthy organizations.**
- **Recognize the importance of competitive artist wages and the rising costs of living in Alberta when delivering grant programs.**
- **Refer the support of capital initiatives to another agency. The AFA recognizes the current challenges experienced by arts organizations around obtaining and maintaining spaces, however, it is beyond the mandate of the AFA to support capital initiatives.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA is not responsible for the capital funding of physical spaces. AFA funding is intended to support arts programming.

The AFA will:

- **Support the capacity for arts organizations to contribute positively to the communities in which they operate by using a combination of operating and project funding.**
- **Support access to capacity-building initiatives offered by the AFA and other organizations such as human resources, volunteer recruitment and training, and financial management, et cetera.**
- **Consider multi-year funding models for financially and artistically healthy organizations.**
- **Acknowledge the importance of reasonable compensation for artists when creating and delivering grant programs.**

3. Funding for Individual Artists

During the evaluation process, the AFA raised the cap on project grants for individual artists from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and created prizes to individuals totalling \$155,000. However, findings from stakeholder consultations showed that in addition to financial concerns, flexibility and access to development opportunities were also important.

- Stakeholders wanted additional flexibility concerning application limits; the limits of one application per deadline and one grant per year, in particular, should merit consideration.
- Generally, there was agreement among stakeholders that the amount of funding awarded tends to be inadequate to fulfill the requirements of projects.
- Mentoring, residency and professional development opportunities are valued and often under resourced.
- Stakeholders valued AFA support for emerging *and* professional artists.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Commit to excellence in artistic practice, supporting artists throughout the continuum of their careers with project grants and prizes.**
- **Increase flexibility in how grants can be applied to mentoring, residency and professional development opportunities.**
- **Consider further flexibility with timing of applications and number of grants that can be accessed by an individual.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA has recently created new awards/prizes for individuals in the literary, performing and visual arts.

The AFA will:

- **Commit to excellence in artistic practice, supporting artists throughout the continuum of their careers, from emerging to established artists, with project grants and awards/prizes.**
- **Increase access to, and flexibility in how, grants can be applied to mentoring, residency, professional development opportunities and the costs of maintaining a professional practice.**
- **Consider further flexibility with timing of applications and number of grants that can be accessed by an individual.**

4. The Cultural Industries

The key message from stakeholders in the Cultural Industries was that they perceived past support from the AFA as vital to the continued survival and growth of the sector. Book and magazine publishers and sound recording companies have indicated a desire for more consultation and have made clear that they need a consistent relationship with a provincial funder.

The cultural and economic significance of this sector is acknowledged in the specific strategies for working with Cultural Industries stakeholders in the *Business Plan for the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit (2008–11)* and the prominence given to supporting the Cultural Industries in *The Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy*.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA does not have the capacity to fund all sectors of the Cultural Industries to a degree that would support excellence in the sector. A funding model external to the AFA will better support the ideal for the sector as outlined in the *Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy*.

Individual artists should continue to be funded by the AFA in literary arts, film and sound recording.

AFA RESPONSE

Some cultural industries grant programs are currently being offered outside the AFA. This includes the Alberta Film Development Program. Alberta Culture and Community Spirit is currently conducting additional research and consultation around the cultural industries.

The AFA will:

- **Work with Alberta Culture and Community Spirit to transfer support to cultural industries to a body external to the AFA.**
- **Continue to fund individual artists in literary arts, film and sound recording.**

5. Arts Programming for Young Albertans

Almost every AFA program affects young Albertans in some way, whether through direct participation, audience development or enriching the cultural life of the community. There was consensus among stakeholders that access to experiences with the arts for young people is vital to personal development, citizenship and to the cultural fabric of Alberta. In recognition of the importance of capturing the unique and valuable perspective of young Albertans, the AFA Board is currently recruiting for a new Board member from the “youth” demographic.

- AFA Programs that make formal arts education experiences directly accessible to young people (Future Leaders Arts Camps, Summer Schools) are highly valued by stakeholders and highly evaluated by youth attending the programs.
- Stakeholders want to see more effective use of arts programming within existing education systems (including post-secondary) to strengthen access to arts programming and experiences for children and youth and the post-secondary community.
- Stakeholders report a desire for the AFA to articulate a strategic vision and a long-term plan for the Summer Schools, Alberta’s Future Leaders-Arts Camps and Arts in Education programs.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Continue to support programming for youth.**
- **More clearly communicate how all of its arts programming benefits young people.**
- **Reaffirm that AFA funding is NOT a substitute for core arts programming in existing education systems.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA believes that arts programs should be included in K-12 curricula and post-secondary studies.

The AFA will:

- **Continue to support programming for youth.**

- **More clearly communicate how all of its arts programming benefits young people.**
- **Reaffirm that AFA funding augments - and is NOT a substitute for - core arts programming in existing education systems.**

6. The AFA Art Collection

The AFA has initiated the process of digitizing its art collection in a purposeful effort to increase access, awareness and appreciation of the AFA art collection. The collection is accessible through loans to galleries and through Art Placement in government and non-profit spaces, as well as through the Travelling Exhibition program. However, the Steering Committee recognizes that for the value of this collection to be recognized by Albertans, the value of the collection needs to be emphasized and shared, and the collection needs to be more accessible.

- Stakeholders want to see communication from the AFA about the value, vision, purpose, criteria for selection and accessibility of the AFA Art Collections.
- The Traveling Exhibition Program is highly valued for its provision of access to the AFA Collection in rural venues but some stakeholders report being under resourced to effectively staff and market exhibitions.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Review its collection strategy and policies including deaccessioning and recognition.**
- **Communicate to Albertans the value, vision and purpose of the AFA Art Collection.**
- **Prioritize increased physical and digital access for Albertans to the AFA Art Collection.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA will:

- **Review its collection strategy and policies including, deaccessioning and recognition.**
- **Ensure that the selection criteria for acquisitions by jury, donation and curatorial processes result in the highest quality collection possible.**
- **Communicate to Albertans the value, vision and purpose of the AFA Art Collection.**
- **Prioritize increased physical and digital access for Albertans to the AFA Art Collection.**

7. The Granting Process

During the evaluation period, some changes were made to the granting process. These include a common financial form for organizations, a financial fair notice policy, a jury diversity policy, a *Jury Handbook* on the AFA website and the inclusion of general jury comments in letters to unsuccessful project grant applicants. The Steering Committee has made recommendations about the granting process based on the key findings listed below:

From the *Internal Process Audit: Grant and Operational Procedures* (2007):

- Formulas need to be standardized and simplified.
- Implicit goals and objectives of the programs need to be made explicit.
- Peer review should be considered as an element for operating grants. Through peer review, the AFA could access external expertise to assist in implementing governance disclosure, fair notice and other elements of arts sustainability.
- The AFA should review its strategic planning process and the content of its strategic plan. Currently, most of the performance indicators are activity focused rather than numerically focused program impacts and effects.

From consultations with client groups:

- Communication with Arts Branch staff is a highly valued and essential aspect of the granting process for many applicants.
- More detailed explanation of reasons for declined grants was desired by many stakeholders in order to enhance the potential success of subsequent applications.
- Many stakeholders perceived poor communication and a lack of transparency regarding the jury process.
- Satisfaction with the granting process varies according to program and complexity of application and reporting requirements.

STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The AFA should:

- **Commit to ongoing reviews of granting categories and processes to continually improve stability, transparency, flexibility and accessibility for all stakeholders.**
- **Build performance measures and evaluation mechanisms into all grant programs.**

AFA RESPONSE

The AFA currently reviews its Strategic Plan on an annual basis.

The AFA will:

- **Ensure grant programs are aligned with the AFA strategic plan and that the plan is reviewed annually.**

- **Commit to ongoing reviews of granting categories and processes to continually improve stability, transparency, flexibility and accessibility for all stakeholders according to established board priorities and strategic plans.**
- **Monitor financial health of organizations to ensure that AFA funding is used appropriately and effectively.**
- **Build performance measures and evaluation mechanisms into all grant programs.**

Appendix A Overview of Research Activities

Area Evaluated	Methods					Sample
	Focus groups	Interviews	Online surveys	Online survey response rate	Other methods	
Legislation, policies and processes					workshops with the Program Evaluation Steering Committee	Manager-Arts Grants, Research and Communications Administrator, and Supervisor Administration, grants administrators and consultants
Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding: Primary Research		20				Leaders in arts development and support, in AB, Canada and internationally
Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding: Secondary Research					Literature Review	
Community Support Organizations	5	9	n=18	15%		Representatives of community support orgs who are involved in the granting process
Art Acquisition by Application		11	n=113	55%		Successful and unsuccessful applicants to program, jurors, art collectors, and gallery representatives
Public Art Galleries		16	n=12	n/a	site visits (3 Galleries)	Gallery directors, managing directors, executive directors, and curators, board members at public art galleries
Post Secondary Institutions	6	10				Coordinators for PSI project funding
Traveling Exhibition		5	n=63	49%	site visits (4 community venues)	Gallery managers and curators, venue organizers

Area Evaluated	Methods					Sample
	Focus groups	Interviews	Online surveys	Online survey response rate	Other methods	
Performing Arts Companies	10	25	n=97	81%		Representatives of Alberta Major Performing Arts Companies, Professional performing Arts Companies, and Community Performing Arts Organizations
Summer Schools	12	9			Ethnography (observation) Paper and Pencil questionnaire Students n=457(88% response rate) Parents n=212 (43% response rate)	Summer School camp and program coordinators, instructors, Students in programs, Parents of students in programs
Individual Artists	8	9	n= 654	25%		Successful and unsuccessful applicants to project funding for individual artists, program jurors
Provincial Arts Service Organizations	1	18				Individuals who are directly engaged in the direction, development, and administration of PASOs
Artists in Education		59			File review of AFA documents (228 final reports from schools) Site Visits (3 schools)	School administrators, teachers and artists
Arts Festivals	5	15	n=61	n/a		Festival representatives engaged in the development and administration of arts festivals (e.g., festival directors, marketing or volunteers) and artists
	6	10				Organizational representatives

Area Evaluated	Methods					Sample
	Focus groups	Interviews	Online surveys	Online survey response rate	Other methods	
Community Presenting						from community presenters who are responsible for the grant applications
Cultural Industries		37				Representative from each AB book publisher Representative sample from sound recording, magazine publishers and filmmakers
Cultural Component of AB Games		9				Internal Government stakeholders Cultural participants
Cultural Relations		10				Cultural Relations grant recipients
Visual Programs		24				Artists who have received grants from the AFA Art Donors to the AFA Collection Art placement program art recipients
Alberta Future Leaders—Arts Camps		5				Community members, program staff
General Survey			n=161	5%		Self-identified members of Alberta's Arts Community, AFA Newswire subscribers (4000 individuals)
Total	Focus groups 53	Interviews 291	Online Survey Responses 1179	Mean response rate 38%		

*an average of 8 participants attended each focus group