



Alberta Foundation for the Arts
2019-22 Strategic Plan

Alberta 

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts acknowledges that the artistic activity we support primarily takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8, home of First Nations, Métis and Inuit throughout Alberta. We also acknowledge that our offices are located in Treaty 6 territory in Edmonton, known in the Nēhiyaw (Cree) language as amiskwaciwâskahikan (Beaver Hills House), and acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta who share a deep connection with this land.

We recognize and deeply respect that the land Alberta is situated on has been a meeting place for many Indigenous peoples with diverse histories, languages, and cultures, for thousands of years. We recognize the role of Elders and the knowledge-keepers in helping our communities better understand and foster our rich cultural heritage. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

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Message from the Chair

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) is the primary provincial arts resource and grant funding agency in Alberta. For more than 25 years, the AFA has helped the arts be essential to quality of life in Alberta.

With the 2019-22 Strategic Plan, the board of directors has recalibrated the AFA's strategies to promote and help develop the arts in Alberta, and to adapt to the changing cultural landscape of the province. The plan describes how the AFA intends to serve our creative communities – individual artists, cultural workers, and arts organizations – as well as the public, over the next three years. It also articulates the underlying beliefs and values that guide the AFA in its work and provides context for the pursuit of its strategic goals.

Under this new plan, the AFA will seek to encourage a healthy arts sector, to build meaningful and reciprocal relationships with the arts community, and to harness the capacity of the arts to connect communities and be a catalyst for positive change. The plan affirms the AFA's commitment to promoting equitable access in the arts and to building relationships with Alberta's equity-seeking communities, particularly with Indigenous artists, culturally diverse artists, Deaf artists and artists with disabilities, and francophone artists. Since the arts community deserves transparency and accountability from its arts funding partners, the plan also proposes building a stronger culture of performance measurement and evidence-based decision making within our organization.

While this plan outlines a clear direction for the AFA, it is also the platform upon which the AFA intends to respond to emerging issues and needs.

On behalf of the AFA board of directors, I am pleased to present the AFA's 2019-22 Strategic Plan.

Original signed by Liam Oddie

Liam Oddie, Chair

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Introduction

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) was established in 1991 as a crown agency of the Government of Alberta. The purposes of the Foundation, as stipulated in the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act*, are to:

- Support and contribute to the development of, and to promote, the arts in Alberta;
- Provide persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta;
- Foster and promote the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists;
- Collect, preserve and display works of art by Alberta artists; and
- Encourage artists resident in Alberta in their work.

The AFA reports to Alberta's Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women and supports outcomes and objectives outlined in the 2018-21 Ministry Business Plan, which was in place at the time the strategic plan was developed.

The AFA supports the outcome of having vibrant communities and diverse cultural opportunities that enhance Albertans' quality of life. Specifically, the AFA supports the ministry's key strategy to "provide support for artists and arts organizations to promote access, excellence and sustainability for the arts in Alberta."

The work of the AFA also contributes to these performance metrics: Performance measure 1.c: Percentage of adult Albertans who attended arts activities or events and Performance indicator 1.d: Percentage of adult Albertans who feel arts activities are important in contributing to the overall quality of life in their community.

AFA Vision

A vibrant arts community, embraced by all Albertans, that inspires inclusion, innovation, and creativity.

AFA Mission Statement

Encourage and support the arts as an essential contributor to the quality of life of Albertans.

Beliefs

We believe:

- The arts enable inclusive citizenship and are essential to the social and cultural fabric of Alberta.
- Access to the arts fosters creativity and is a catalyst for excellence, innovation, health, and well-being in our communities.
- The adaptability and responsiveness of the arts sector is crucial to the success of our local and global arts ecology.

Values

- Be transparent and accountable to the arts community, the government, and the public.
- Embrace diversity and strive to secure access to the arts for all Albertans.
- Act with integrity. Be fair and professional.

Strategic Direction

The following outlines five key goals of the strategic plan and the related strategic objectives.

Goal 1

Connect communities through meaningful relationship building and foster appreciation of, and participation in, the arts.

The AFA recognizes its ongoing role in encouraging engagement and dialogue within the arts community and beyond. The arts are essential to the social and cultural fabric of Alberta, and it is important that the AFA and the arts sector generate meaningful opportunities for artistic and cultural participation for everyone. This means ensuring that communities across the province feel connected to the arts and see their value.

It is important that the value of the government's investment of public funds in the arts be communicated to Albertans. The AFA will continue to promote a broader appreciation for the arts. We will create opportunities for in-person interactions, and use our digital communications to connect arts stakeholders to one another and to AFA programs. This includes enhancing Albertans' awareness and enjoyment of the AFA art collection, the largest provincial art collection in Canada.

Maximizing the investment into Alberta's arts community requires developing relevant engagement opportunities for diverse audiences. The AFA can support this development in part by focusing on building meaningful relationships between the AFA and its stakeholders. The AFA intends to also support and encourage opportunities for relationship building among artists, arts organizations, and audiences – both existing and potential.

Participation in arts activities and experiences with local institutions not only generates greater awareness, but also a sense of shared ownership. By connecting communities in this way, our desire is to strengthen Albertans' value of the arts in an intrinsic way, so that our unique cultural outputs are better recognized as core to our shared identity as Albertans.

Strategic Objectives:

- Create and support public engagement opportunities in the arts.
- Expand audiences in the arts by building relationships.
- Build greater awareness of the value of artists and the arts.
- Foster awareness and appreciation of Alberta's visual arts through the AFA art collection.



Did you know?

According to the 2018 Culture Track Report, Canadians value arts experiences that nurture belonging, empathy, and perspective. This report also concludes that attending arts activities is not just about enjoyment; the activities must be relevant to audiences.

Glossary

For the purposes of this plan, the AFA defines these terms as follows:

Arts Ecology

The relationship between the different components of artistic and cultural life in the province, including creators, audiences, institutions, and organizations.

Capacity Building

Capacity building refers to activities that build an individual's or an organization's ability to adapt, respond, and grow within Alberta's arts sector

Goal 2

Encourage a healthy arts ecology by supporting artists and by stimulating the sector's creative development and sustainability.

For more than 25 years, the AFA has played an important role in building and maintaining a healthy and vibrant arts ecology in Alberta. Direct and indirect funding support for artists has been a core part of our work since the Foundation's inception. During the last quarter century, the AFA has cultivated a community of funding clients and partners that have, in turn, nurtured and grown the thriving arts scene that we enjoy today.

Alberta's arts ecology has never been static, and continues to evolve in exciting and sometimes unpredictable ways, along with the rest of the world. Our diversity is growing and becoming more visible, new artists and arts organizations are emerging and challenging the status quo. Innovation – in artistic practice, as well as in administration to support these changing practices – is the only constant and must be embraced for the growth of Alberta's arts sector.

The AFA has a history of supporting the arts community's efforts to adapt and respond to shifts in society as well as complex challenges within the sector. We recognize that to fully support the community's capacity to adapt

to change, we need to not only enhance our funding mechanisms for artists in Alberta, but we need to also support, encourage, and reward innovative and inclusive practices in the arts.

We recognize that investments made towards stimulating responsiveness and adaptability in the arts sector not only benefit today's artists and cultural workers. They also forge pathways for a new generation of artists to grow and develop, and prepare the sector for the next cycle of artistic innovation.

Strategic Objectives:

- Support innovation and inclusive practices in the arts.
- Promote access to the arts for children and youth and support a new generation of artists.
- Strengthen skills, build capacity, and share knowledge within the arts community.
- Respond to the needs of the arts community through advocacy and continuous evaluation.



Did you know?

In 2014, the AFA partnered with Calgary Arts Development, the Edmonton Arts Council and the Edmonton Community Foundation to support approximately 40 arts organizations to participate in the *New Pathways Program*. Led by EmcArts out of New York, this program aims to develop a learning community to strengthen and advance organizational innovation and adaptive capacity.

Goal 3

Affirm and revitalize relationships with Indigenous peoples.

In 2016, there were more than a quarter million people residing within Alberta who identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuk (Inuit). It is one of the largest, youngest and fastest-growing Indigenous populations in Canada. Indigenous artists in the province are diverse and multi-faceted, practicing a variety of art forms, including customary and contemporary artistic practices.

The AFA recognizes the vital role of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in shaping the artistic landscape of Alberta. More than twenty years ago, the AFA began to develop dedicated programs for Indigenous peoples. The AFA 2019-22 Strategic Plan rearticulates long-standing practice as a strategic priority, reaffirming the AFA's continued commitment to supporting Indigenous communities.

Efforts to support Indigenous peoples should be continually adapted and improved upon to ensure that Indigenous artists and organizations in Alberta are able to access adequate support for artistic and cultural activities. We seek to involve and support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples across the province to build relationships, better understand their diverse perspectives, and adapt to their needs.

Artistic practices have often been integral to communicating the richness of Indigenous cultural heritage. Through AFA funding and programming, we wish to stimulate a healthy and thriving community for Indigenous artists, foster more opportunities for representation and engagement, and to promote greater awareness of the contributions of Indigenous artists in Alberta.

Strategic Objectives:

- Invest in artistic creation and development by Indigenous peoples.
- Promote community partnerships and collaboration to strengthen support to Indigenous artists.
- Enhance representation of Indigenous artists in the AFA art collection and promote sharing Indigenous works with Indigenous audiences and the broader public.
- Enhance responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous peoples through learning, relationship building, and evaluation.

Glossary

Indigenous

For the purposes of this plan, the term includes First Nations, Inuit, and Metis of Canada. The AFA recognizes the rights, diverse cultures and worldviews of Indigenous peoples, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Glossary

Equity

Equity is a principle recognizing that all people have the right to be treated equally, but not all people experience equal access to opportunities.

Equity can also be described as the process of promoting fair conditions for all persons to fully participate in society.

Inclusion

Promoting an environment that values diversity, supports active engagement of individuals and communities, and sustains a sense of belonging.

Culturally Diverse

Culturally diverse artists are defined as those who correspond to “visible minorities” under the federal *Employment Equity Act*. These are individuals of African, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern or mixed heritage that includes at least one of these groups.

Deaf Artists and Artists with Disabilities

Artists with disabilities include those with visible or hidden physical, mental, or learning conditions with varying impacts.

Goal 4

Encourage equity and inclusion, both in the arts and through the arts.

Alberta’s diversity is an essential part of our province and contributes to our rich cultural fabric. Our art, our artists, and our audiences should be reflective of this diversity. The AFA recognizes that all Albertans deserve equal opportunity to participate in the arts. We also acknowledge there are historical and ongoing inequities that have prevented access to the arts for everyone. Certain communities have historically faced systemic barriers to participating in the arts and accessing arts funding.

These inequities run counter to the values of our Foundation. As the provincial funding agency for the arts in Alberta, we are obligated to address this issue. This work begins at home. The AFA is committed to enhancing access to our funding and programs, to better understanding the systemic barriers that may be preventing access for some communities, and to promoting inclusion of diverse communities in our processes. We will lead by example.

We also want to provide our funding clients the same opportunity to address these issues within their own communities. We will develop opportunities to support artists and arts organizations to increase their capacity to promote equitable access and inclusion within their own unique systems of practice. We will also promote the value of fostering a more inclusive society through the arts.

Through our collective, ongoing efforts to build inclusive practices in the arts and addressing issues of equity, we are better positioned to promote an arts sector that truly reflects the diverse cultural fabric of our province.

Strategic Objectives:

- Provide equitable access to funding and other AFA programs, particularly for artists and arts organizations that have faced systemic barriers.
- Support capacity building for artists and arts organizations facing systemic barriers.
- Reduce barriers to participation for artists and arts organizations.
- Enhance capacity within the arts sector to understand and address equity and promote inclusive practices.

Priority groups of focus

Priority groups are identified in order to set evaluation criteria and to help guide operational decisions. The AFA is committed to ensuring equitable access for all Albertans, particularly:

- Indigenous artists;
- culturally diverse artists;
- deaf artists and artists with disabilities; and
- francophone artists.

Goal 5

Build a performance measurement culture at the AFA to improve service delivery.

The AFA board of directors is committed to evidence-based planning for our organization. The board will focus on expanding performance measurement and management practices so they are embedded in our decision making for effecting future performance.

The development and measurement of key performance indicators will be integrated into operational planning, and progress shared through AFA reporting. The capacity to measure success within years, between years, and between initiatives will allow the AFA to evaluate its work and ensure ongoing improvement.

The strategic objectives outlined in this goal correspond with the previous sections of this plan. A performance measurement framework, including benchmarks, will be developed for each objective as part of the AFA's operational planning.

Strategic Objectives:

- Evaluate and enhance the impact of the AFA's communication and engagement activities.
- Evaluate and enhance the impact of the AFA's support to individual artists and arts organizations.
- Evaluate and enhance the impact of relationship-building initiatives to better support Indigenous communities.
- Evaluate and enhance the impact of initiatives promoting equity and inclusion to better support equity-seeking groups.



Did you know?

The AFA Annual Report provides an overview of our yearly operations. Information includes accomplishments, summary of grants awarded, financial statements, and the AFA board's membership and responsibilities. All of our Annual Reports can be viewed on the AFA website.

The AFA website "Impact of Funding" page provides an interactive overview of how our funding is distributed across all of our funding programs.

The AFA also publishes funding data on the Government of Alberta's Open Data portal. This portal allows you to browse through grant recipient lists and learn more about the projects that have been funded by the AFA.

Relevant External Website Links

These website links are provided to give additional context and reference to concepts and terms listed throughout this plan. External links are current as of March 2019.

A PDF copy of the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act* is available online through the Queen's Printer at www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/A19.pdf.

Goal 1

Culture Track: Canada is a study of the attitudes and behaviours of Canadian cultural consumers. The latest Culture Track report can be found on Business/Arts website at www.businessandarts.org/culture-track-canada.

Goal 3

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the General Assembly on September 13, 2007. An overview and PDF versions of UNDRIP can be found on the United Nations' website at www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html.

Goal 4

The purpose of the Canadian *Employment Equity Act* is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability. The full text of the Act can be found on the Justice Laws Website at <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401>

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) is a non-profit organization that provides services, products, and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health, and promote equity for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. CHS's glossary of terms can be found on their website at www.chs.ca/glossary-terms.

Goal 5

The Government of Alberta open government portal is a collection of datasets and publications by government departments and agencies. The public can use and access this data freely to learn more about how government works, carry out research, or build apps. More information can be found on their website <https://open.alberta.ca>.