



Calgary



CALGARY CIVIC ARTS POLICY

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

PHASE ONE: INSPIRE

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Executive Summary

The City of Calgary is updating the Calgary Civic Arts Policy for City Council approval in summer 2025. The updated policy will clarify expected outcomes for municipal investment in the arts, provide direction on commitments designed to accomplish these goals, and the return on investment the arts contributes to Calgary. The proposed Policy was developed based on the current Civic Arts Policy that incorporated feedback from Calgarians in 2004, as well as other inputs including best practices, City of Calgary policies, Council priorities, economic considerations, and feedback from the arts community. The process of creating the updated Civic Arts Policy involves two phases of engagement. This report summarizes the feedback received during Phase 1: Inspire, which took place from October 23 to November 24, 2024.

The Goal

The goal of phase 1 engagement was to collect feedback from artists, arts professionals, and arts organizations that have received municipal funding through Calgary Arts Development (CADA) and City Administration. This phase aimed to gather insights on the proposed Guiding Principles and Council Commitments to ensure they reflect the values and needs of Calgary's arts community. Participants were invited to share further thoughts on what is working well in the current policy, areas that need improvement, and any gaps or missing elements. Their input will help shape a more effective and inclusive policy that supports both The City's goals and the evolving needs of the arts sector.

Feedback

Feedback on the guiding principles and commitments gave the project team further insight into the current state of the arts sector and their priorities, as well as what changes artists, arts professionals and arts organizations would like to see to ensure a vibrant and resilient arts community in Calgary. The feedback and considerations provided by respondents will be one input that guides the policies, along with best

practices, research, consultation with the Cultural Leadership Council for Calgary and other Council approved policies and plans.

Equity

Equity was a key focus of this engagement as the project team recognized that the original policy did not adequately address equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB), anti-racism, or Truth and Reconciliation. To address this gap, events were held with Indigenous and equity-deserving artists to identify which Guiding Principles were most important for the updated policy. These workshops also explored barriers faced by their communities and highlighted practices in the arts sector that have made them feel supported and valued. To further improve accessibility, a translation function was enabled on the portal, allowing information to be translated into up to 15 languages.

Tactics

Phase 1 engagement included: an online survey for targeted audiences on the portal page, which received 360 views, 221 visitors and 72 contributions. One open house was held for artists and a paper version of the survey was made available for those who experience barriers to accessing the portal; Three workshops were held, including an in-person workshop with representatives of arts organizations, a virtual workshop with equity-denied artists, and an in-person Sharing Circle with Indigenous artists from Treaty 7. Following the workshops, each group received an optional separate survey to provide further feedback regarding the questions discussed in each workshop.

Guiding Principles

Most respondents rated the Guiding Principles as either ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ showing that they felt the Guiding Principles accurately reflected the needs and priorities of the arts community.

Themes

The feedback collected during this phase of engagement confirmed that the Guiding Principles are comprehensive, with no major gaps identified. Data collected through the portal was analyzed using optional demographic questions to identify any themes specific to certain groups; however, no significant trends emerged.

Presented in no specific order, these key themes are:

- Affordable, accessible spaces
- Sustainable funding and resources
- Meaningful community engagement
- Increased resources and supports
- Authentic representation and visibility of artists
- Support for equity and inclusion
- Mentorship and career development opportunities

Tensions

Two areas of tension emerged during the engagement. The first centered on the prioritization of the Guiding Principles, with some participants questioning whether arts organizations would be expected to implement all the proposed principles. The second area of tension related to the definition of arts organizations, as participants indicated a need for greater clarity on who is included within this definition.



Project background

Project goals

The Civic Arts Policy is being updated for the first time since 2004 to better align best practices and ensure accountability for supporting the arts community in Calgary.

The Civic Arts Policy guides and governs all groups and individuals receiving arts funding from The City of Calgary, including the Arts & Culture division at The City, Civic Partners, and arts organizations and individuals receiving municipal funding through Civic Partners. The 2004 version of the Policy was the result of two years of consultation and research to improve leadership and communication structures, resourcing and accountability. One result of the 2004 Policy was the creation of Calgary Arts Development as a Civic Partner, to deliver arts granting and programming on behalf of the municipality.

The ideas in the new Policy will draw on the concepts in the existing policy, focusing on clarifying, simplifying and streamlining the content to ensure it aligns with current best practices and encourages accountability by clearly outlining roles and responsibilities. The policy is also being updated to better reflect Truth and Reconciliation, anti-racism, equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) principles.

Project decision

By summer 2025, The City of Calgary will finalize the Civic Arts Policy and present it to City Council for approval. The updated policy focuses on two main areas to guide municipal investment in the arts community: policy statements outlining The City's commitments and guiding principles for arts organizations receiving municipal funding. While The Civic Arts Policy does not determine day-to-day operations for arts organizations or direct funding decisions, it provides a framework to recipients of municipal funding to ensure accountability and value in The City's investment in Calgary's arts sector.

Engagement overview

The following section provides an overview of the project, and the objectives, strategy, and timeline for engagement process.

Project overview

At The City of Calgary, decisions are made that impact more than one million people. Input from Calgarians and other interested and impacted parties help The City better understand the perspectives, opinions, and concerns of people affected by City decisions. Public input is collected, where appropriate, and considered along with other factors (such as cost, environmental impact, technical limitations, and long-range plans/goals) before decisions are made.

Because of its open and accessible nature, engagement is virtually never positioned as the sole source of input into whether The City should do something but helps to ensure City decision-makers have access to a range of ideas and feedback. This feedback is not statistically representative of all Calgarians, and therefore in this report, participants will be referred to as respondents and not Calgarians. All the input collected for this project should be considered through the lens of what will work best in the Calgary context.

Engagement objectives

The intention for the following list of objectives is to develop a strong foundation for creating effective and publicly supported policies that reflect community priorities, promote equity, and support Calgary's cultural and artistic identity. By engaging with diverse interested and impacted parties, we aim to develop strategies that address the varied needs of Calgarians while supporting the growth of dynamic and inclusive spaces across the city.

- To inform Calgarians about the concepts carried forward from the original policy, how they informed the Guiding Principles, identify strengths and confirm that these principles still align with the values of Calgary's arts community.
- To identify if there are any gaps or areas of improvement in the Guiding Principles and Commitments and ensure they fully address the priorities and needs of Calgary's arts community.
- To explore and understand equity/inequity as they relate to Calgary's arts community and the Guiding Principles, and ensure that equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB), anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation are effectively addressed in the updated policy.
- To consult with internal City of Calgary Business Units to ensure the updated policy reflects current Council and City Administration standards.

Objectives for equity and accessibility-focused engagement

Equitable engagement was a priority for the project team to ensure that we heard from a wide variety of Calgarians, especially those who may experience limited access to arts funding, cultural representation, and opportunities for creative expression. The engagement process for this project was designed to better understand:

- Accessibility and inequity issues within the current arts community.
- Which groups of Calgarians are not experiencing the benefits that the Civic Arts Policy provides in the same way as others and why.

- Which groups of Calgarians are experiencing significant barriers or challenges in the current system.
- What practices have effectively helped Indigenous and equity-deserving groups feel supported and valued, and should be adopted more widely in the arts community.
- What supports need to be provided or changes to policy need to be made to help Indigenous and equity-deserving groups overcome the previous two bullets through the Civic Arts Policy.
- To engage with Indigenous and equity-deserving artists that have not received municipal funding to understand barriers to accessing municipal funding.

Strategy

Different groups have specific interests and can be impacted by the Civic Arts Policy to varying degrees. This engagement process acknowledges those differences and creates opportunities for the targeted groups to provide feedback in ways that are sensitive, appropriate, and effective. It recognizes that not all artists, arts professionals or arts organizations will experience or implement the Civic Arts Policy similarly and those most at a disadvantage will have unique insight. Hearing stories of lived experiences will help the project team better understand how to incorporate equity into the updated policy.

For this phase of engagement, it was important to examine the proposed Guiding Principles and commitments through the perspectives of artists, arts professionals, and arts organizations to get a holistic understanding of the impact and benefits of the Civic Arts Policy. Engaging with individuals and organizations embedded in the arts community was essential to ensure the updated policy reflects their knowledge, lived experiences, and insights, helping to create meaningful and lasting positive impacts on Calgary's arts sector.

Timeline

October – November 2024	Phase 1 Engagement: public feedback on Guiding Principles for Civic Arts Policy
December 2024	What We Heard Report for Phase 1 engagement published
January 2025	What We Did Report for Phase 1 engagement published
January – February 2025	Phase 2 Engagement: Circulation and public feedback on draft policy
March 2025	What We Heard Report for Phase 2 engagement published.
April 2025	What We Did Report for Phase 2 engagement published
Summer 2025	Civic Arts Policy presented to City Council for approval

Table 1 Engagement timeline

Communication and advertising

The City worked in partnership with Calgary Arts Development (CADA) to communicate this engagement opportunity to artists, arts organizations, and arts professionals who have received municipal funding.

The engagement reached a broad range of arts organizations, individual artists, and equity-deserving groups. Invitations were sent to 303 arts organizations that received grants from Calgary Arts Development (CADA) in

2023 and 2024, ranging from volunteer-run community groups to professional organizations with annual budgets of \$50,000 to \$16 million. These organizations represent all artistic disciplines, including community ethnocultural groups. Additionally, 1,276 individual artists and arts collectives were invited, all of whom received grants during the same period. Nearly half (48%) of these artists self-identified as belonging to an equity priority group, as defined by CADA's equity policies.

Outreach also included 130 Indigenous artists and arts collectives, identified based on eligibility as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit. Additionally, 81 equity-deserving artists and organizations were invited, including recipients of the ArtShare Program grants, members of the Community Working Group and Northeast Public Art project, Cultural Instigators, and other equity advisory groups. These participants self-identified as members of equity priority groups, though detailed demographic data is not collected for this group.

These communications efforts resulted in 221 visitors to the engagement portal page and 62 contributors leaving feedback on the portal page.

Audience and Methodology

The project team utilized different platforms and tactics to encourage participation among all groups and have their voices heard. The questions asked in this engagement process, for all tactics, were customized for each group and the specific objectives of engaging with that group.

Engagement was conducted with a targeted audience of artists, arts professionals, and organizational representatives who have previously received municipal funding through Calgary Arts Development (CADA), as well as Indigenous and equity-denied artists in order to understand barriers to accessing and participating in the arts.

Audience and tactic	Date	Participation numbers
Online portal page (www.engage.calgary.ca/civic-arts-policy)		
Arts professionals and funding recipients	Oct 23-Nov 24	55
Open house: In person		
Inglewood Bird Sanctuary Open House	Oct 19	24
Workshops with key interest groups		
In-person workshop with representatives from arts organizations	Nov 7	21
Virtual Workshop with equity-deserving artists	Nov 12	7
In-person Sharing Circle with Indigenous artists	Dec 2	3

Table 2 Engagement audience and tactic summary

What We Asked

Questions asked during Phase 1 Engagement fell into two keys areas. The demographic information is summarized in [Appendix A](#).

1. Guiding principles
 1. Supporting artists
 2. Collaboration
 3. Championing equity
 4. Promoting the arts
 5. Supporting resiliency and accountability
 6. Other considerations
2. Tell us about yourself (optional)

The main engagement page with the complete list of questions asked is located at www.engage.calgary.ca/Civic-Arts-Policy.



Portal and Open House

Guiding Principles

The City of Calgary is updating the Calgary Civic Arts Policy for City Council approval in summer 2025. The updated policy will clarify expected outcomes for municipal investment in the arts, provide direction on commitments designed to accomplish these goals, and the return on investment the arts contributes to Calgary. The proposed Policy was developed based on the current Civic Arts Policy that incorporated feedback from Calgarians in 2004, as well as other inputs including best practices, City of Calgary policies, Council priorities, economic considerations, and feedback from the arts community. The process of creating the updated Civic Arts Policy involves two phases of engagement. This report summarizes the feedback received during Phase 1: Inspire, which took place from October 23 to November 24, 2024.

Participants who provided feedback on the portal were given optional demographic questions to help analyze responses and identify whether certain themes were more prominent among specific groups. After analyzing the responses, no significant differences or themes were identified across the various demographic groups.

The proposed Guiding Principles presented to the public for feedback are as follows:

- Arts organizations should support artists by:
 - Valuing a range of art practices.
 - Supporting creators at all levels of their careers.
 - Advocating for variety in artistic expression and experimentation.
 - Including national and international artists who bring mentorship opportunities for local artists.
- Arts organizations should collaborate by:
 - Partnering with the private sector, government, and others.
 - Advocating for resources that help artists live and work in Calgary.
 - Promoting local industries that support the arts.
- Arts organizations should champion equity by:
 - Reflecting Calgary's diversity in the arts.
 - Prioritizing investments in underserved communities.
 - Addressing barriers that limit participation in the arts for both artists and audiences.
 - Encouraging understanding of Indigenous Peoples, equity-deserving groups and diverse Racialized groups.
- Arts organizations should promote the arts by:
 - Celebrating the contributions of Calgary's artists and the arts community, including volunteers.
 - Recognizing the positive impact of the arts on inclusion, mental and physical health, and youth development.
 - Fostering a sense of belonging with audiences through promotion and education.
- Arts organizations should support resiliency and accountability by:
 - Helping funding recipients plan strategically.
 - Ensuring funding recipients report on success and outcomes.
 - Assisting artists in building the business skills needed to grow and succeed.
 - Seeking financial support from government and the private sector.

Arts organizations should support artists by:

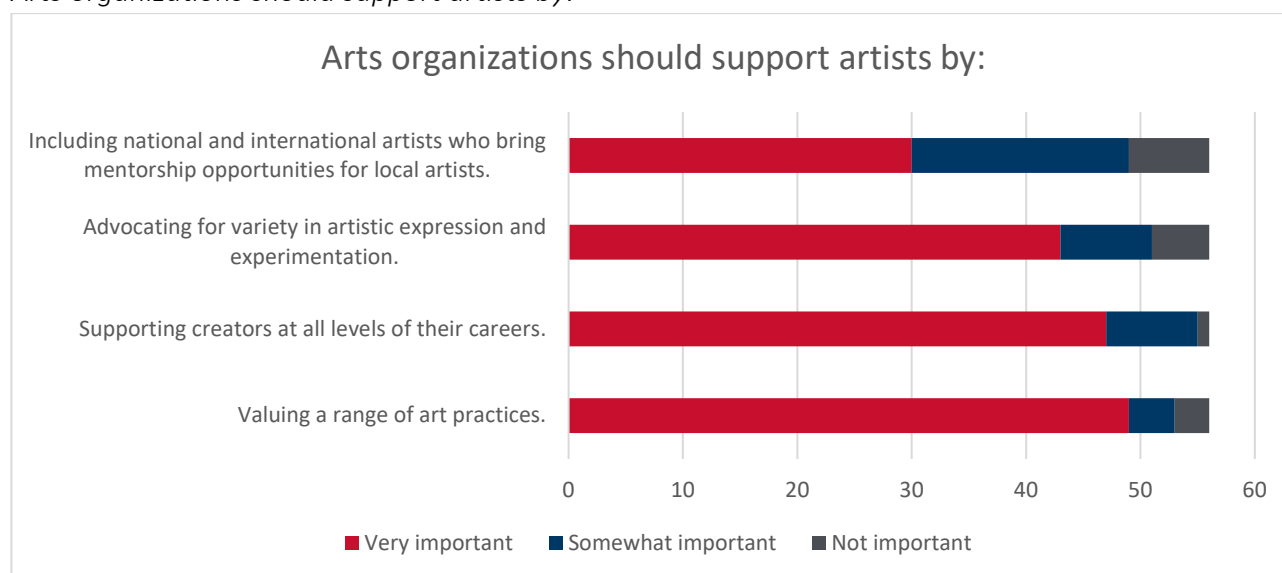


Figure 1 Arts organizations should support artists by

Are there any other ways arts organizations can better support artists that should be considered alongside these objectives?

PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Participants emphasized the need to expand programs and opportunities to support Calgary's arts community. Recruitment and mentorship programs are seen as key for helping artists in all stages of their career learn from experienced professionals. Greater knowledge sharing about the arts sector in general, with an emphasis on business skills, was also highlighted as important to give artists the skills they need to manage their careers and grow sustainably. Collaboration opportunities and networking events were suggested as a way to bring organizations, communities, and artists together to share ideas and resources. Finally, they emphasized the need for more opportunities for artists to create, perform, exhibit, or learn, ensuring all forms of art and voices are included and celebrated, especially innovative practices.

Verbatim comments

- *Well established arts organizations should offer opportunities to new emerging artists of all ages. This could be done under a mentorship or apprenticeship program that enables emerging artists to work with experienced artists.*
- *Fostering non-formal (ie. not 4 year art school, etc.) education about the practical / cultural / financial ecosystems of arts disciplines including knowledge about geographic centres of arts disciplines and how art is created, circulated, and cultural / financial value is created within these ecosystems. Particularly relevant to practicing in Calgary vs. the centres.*
- *Promote connections between different art communities (e.g. disability, Indigenous, cultural)*

FUNDING AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

Participants highlighted the need for stronger financial and resource support. Centralizing resources, such as legal advice, mental health support, Indigenous consultations, grant applications and shared spaces was suggested to make it easier for artists and organizations to access what they need and navigate the arts sector. Funding and financial support for all artists are important, with participants emphasizing the importance of grants and subsidies. Participants also highlighted the need for transparent processes with application and funding processes to improve their chances to receive funding and greater opportunities to connect with funders.

Verbatim comments

- *Having a centralized list of all resources available for yyc artists, including other organizations Focusing on education about business/admin side of music/art*
- *Provide funding to subsidize rental costs for performance space artists or encourage venues to lower rental costs. Often venues ask for rental amounts that are too high for artists to pay and make a profit or pay other artists what they deserve. [...]*
- *Organizations can do a better job when it comes to providing feedback. For instance, as an immigrant artist, its important for me to know the details when my work doesnt get selected when applied for a grant or an exhibition etc. Please dont just provide generic feedback saying sorry there were a lot of deserving applicants, but you didnt make the cut this time. Its difficult to understand how we were able to accomplish so much in our home country but struggle to get a footing here in Canada..*

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Participants stressed the importance of creating a more inclusive and equitable arts sector. They highlighted the need to better support underrepresented artists and art forms, ensuring that resources and opportunities are accessible to diverse groups, including Indigenous, Racialized, disabled, and emerging artists. Concerns were raised about how equity and inclusion are implemented, with some noting that not enough attention is paid to the ways that intersecting identities lead to inequity in the arts sector and how there is no one size fits all approach to equity when it comes to certain groups.

Verbatim comments

- *I think Indigenous art forms should also be 'very important' even if they might not be considered conventional art forms. For example, tattooing or quillwork.*
- *[...] disability is often left behind and this is true equity based on need thinking about the most vulnerable first [...] I find that also disability is mixed because a ramp or special equipment can make it that many people can then do full time work and travel and more, but complex disabilities that are trauma based like PTSD or complex like a mixture of CP and Autism and much more all result in people statistically being much more likely to be in poverty, not included to voice things or join in leadership, and also not included for funding that is really needed (please correct equity and make it about needs and including those who are continually left out with complex disabilities). [...]*



CONCERNS ABOUT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Participants noted that different arts organizations have unique roles and should not be expected to meet all the guiding principles. A balanced arts ecosystem with specialized organizations is needed. Concern was raised about phrases like “valuing a range of art practices,” which could lead to unrealistic expectations, such as supporting all art forms or artists at every stage.

Verbatim comments

- *Different arts organizations support artists in different ways. We should not be asking all organizations to achieve all of these goals, even though they are collectively important. In a balanced arts ecosystem, a range of specialized organizations would help achieve these aims.*
- *I am concerned about the framing of these principles, as they seem to not support the idea that an artist (or group of artists) might have a very specific practise, and that's vital. "Valuing a range of art practises"...does that mean that the CPO has to support painters? Does "supporting creators at all levels of their careers" mean an arts org must at all times engage artists who are both 20 years old and 70 years old? There is something in these questions that I am concerned about being interpretable in such a way as to cause harm if an org doesn't tick every single box on offer*

Arts organizations should collaborate by:

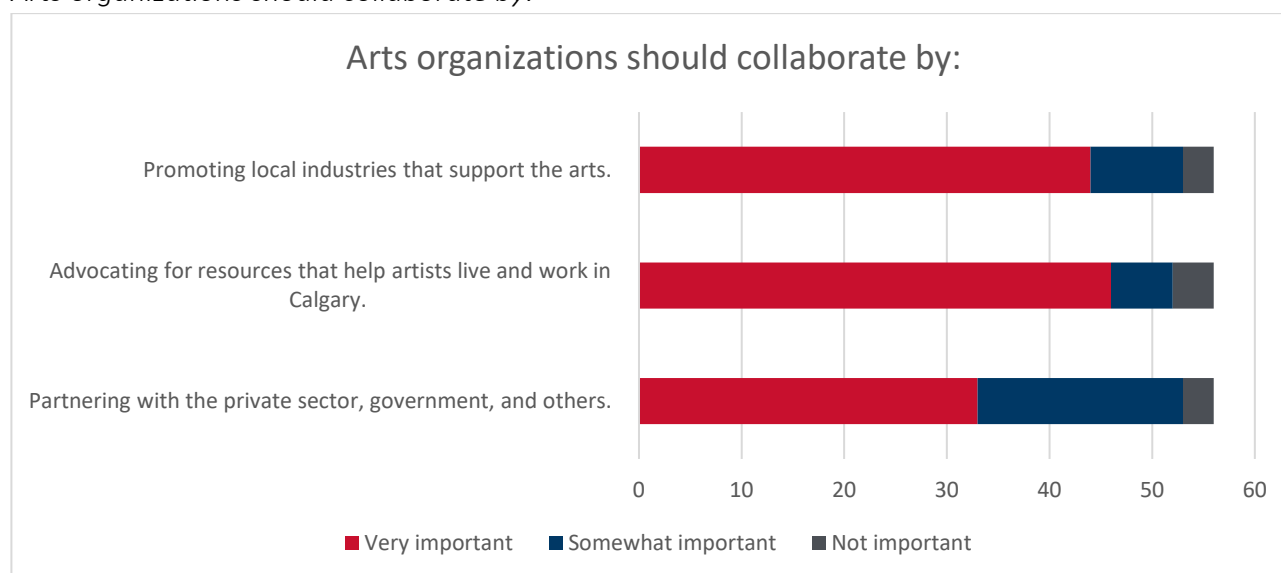


Figure 2 Arts organizations should collaborate by

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Participants emphasized the importance of engaging both artists and Calgarians in shaping the arts sector. They suggested that organizations collaborate with these groups through events to share the value of the arts, offer educational opportunities, and gather input on the types of art the community wants to see. Artists who actively connect with the arts community were identified as valuable resources for arts organizations, serving as liaisons and community connectors. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of promoting the economic and social impact of the arts, demonstrating how creativity strengthens local economies and enriches community life.

Verbatim comments

- *Speak directly with artists about what they need and reach out to the communities about the types of art they want to see*
- *I believe arts organizations can play a great roll in that, they have so much data and about what people want to see and develop in our city, also they can connect with wide range of artists and bring them together to make some effective decisions*
- *A healthy and vibrant arts sector draws more people and economic benefit to local industries and businesses. The relationship should be two-way, though, so that arts organizations aren't just beneficiaries, they are actually supporting the local industries and businesses as well.*

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Participants identified key industries where partnerships and collaboration could greatly benefit the local arts community. Responses highlighted academic institutions, the private sector, and government and healthcare organizations that could assist artists and arts organizations. Participants also felt that there is a need for greater collaboration between arts organizations to support the arts sector, increase audiences, share resources, and promote events to ensure that organizations thrive together.

Verbatim comments

- *Universities and healthcare! We all need to be advocating for a strong arts sector because the arts support health. Some studies show that participating in one session of art (e.g., attending a concert/show, a paint class) has equivalent impacts as using the gym, for example. This is one datum out of many.*
- *Arts organizations should work together when the opportunities arise in order to grow audiences and support a diverse arts sector.*
- *Provide marketing incentives for private sector businesses to acknowledge the parts of their org charts that rely on applied arts.*

SUPPORTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE ARTS

Participants emphasized the need to build a supportive and accessible arts sector. They highlighted the importance of inclusion and equity, ensuring that all artists, especially those from underrepresented groups, have equal opportunities to thrive. Transparency and accountability were also seen as crucial, with participants calling for clear processes and open communication, especially relating to jury selection. Access to resources, such as shared tools, spaces, and knowledge, was another priority to help organizations and artists succeed.

Verbatim comments

- *Inclusion and opportunities for those with disabilities to get funding and help for arts and more would make a difference to help the most vulnerable and create true equity.*
- *Is it possible to create a citywide/provincial/national level database for artists? Not just a pretty directory, but a forum through which private and public entities can directly reach out to the artist for paid work?*

CONCERNS ABOUT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Participants shared concerns about the guiding principles for improving collaboration, suggesting a need for clearer explanations of key terms and more detailed success measures. They also expressed uncertainty about whether arts organizations are expected to fulfill all the guiding principles and raised concerns about potential penalties for not meeting every objective.

Verbatim comments

- *Define "Partnering" as in...what does it mean to say an arts org needs to partner with private sector, government and others? Does that mean that if an arts org does not receive any private donations from the private sector it is failing? Who are the others?*

Re the advocacy question - is it the job of arts orgs to make art or to be service orgs? Pick one, because our plates are already really full with making art. If you need us to start doing significant advocacy as well, we need more money to hire more people [...]

Arts organizations should champion equity by:

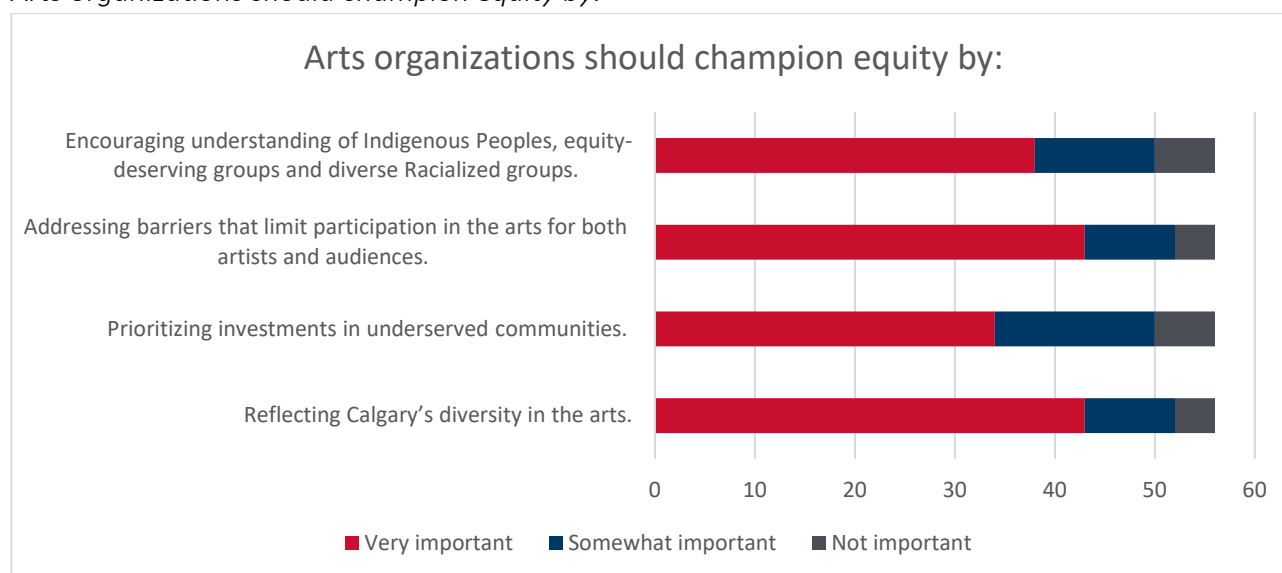


Figure 3 Arts organizations should champion equity by

Do you feel these objectives are the right areas to focus on for championing equity in the arts? If not, what would you add or change?

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Participants emphasized the importance of fair and transparent resource allocation to champion equity in the arts. They highlighted the need for funding and resources that go directly to equity-deserving groups that support arts organizations and individual artists, across all career stages, including emerging and underserved artists. They also called for greater support for diverse artistic practices, intergenerational collaboration, and artists working in various media. Transparency in how resources are distributed was seen as essential to building trust and ensuring equitable opportunities for all.

Verbatim comments

- Prioritizing investments in underserved communities is important, but because they are underserved, they tend to be more emerging kinds of practices. If we prioritize all investment there, you don't get a balance of serving artists at all stages in their career. (We have three programs right now all addressing underserved communities and all the artists are emerging or have never made an artwork. What happens to existing artists in this scenario?) Might be better to "prioritize emerging artist investments in underserved communities."*
- a lot of current initiatives are very performative and apart from stating the missions and visions do not do much for inclusivity of invisible minorities. open resource access and transparent funding policies are crucial.*

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Participants highlighted the importance of addressing infrastructure and accessibility to advance equity in the arts. They emphasized the need to use inclusive language that highlights key terms like "accessibility" and "disability". Financial barriers were noted as a significant challenge, impacting both artists' ability to create and audiences' ability to participate in the arts. Additionally, physical accessibility issues, such as venues that are

not accessible to individuals with disabilities or those who use public transit, were identified as critical barriers that need to be addressed to ensure the arts are inclusive for everyone.

Verbatim comments

- *While investing in underserved communities is important, it's equally as important that the infrastructure required for this investment is in place, e.g. a theatre or exhibition can be easily reached via transit.*
- The words/phrases "disability" and "disabilities" are clear and important in the main messages. We can use other indirect terms in the detailed description.
- Accessibility is key. Yet, the cost of participation is outrageous in many instances. Add in things like equity and inclusion, where spaces are often not accessible for those with assistive devices the problem becomes huge!

EQUITY AND REPRESENTATION

Participants emphasized the need for greater equity and representation in the arts. They highlighted the importance of diverse leadership and board memberships that reflect the communities they serve. Authentic and inclusive representation of artists was also seen as essential, ensuring that artists from equity-deserving groups are genuinely included and celebrated. These changes were viewed as key to building a more equitable and representative arts sector.

Verbatim comments

- *Calgary is a city of diversity. However, this diversity is not reflected in the Art sector. As an immigrant artist I would be glad to see this treasure (diversity) in Arts to prosper in our City. This why we need organization which will serve as a connector between the Artists and the diverse society we live in.*
- *Yes, I agree. But one step further would be ensuring research is done to ensure resources are going to these equity-deserving groups, not someone who is not part of a diverse group running an organization for diverse people.*

ROLE OF ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Participants discussed the role of arts organizations and emphasized that collaboration and sharing collective resources were valuable ways to champion equity. Some participants felt that the focus should be on artistic creation and raised concerns about the capacity of smaller organizations to take on additional responsibilities to advance these initiatives.

Verbatim comments

- *Also cultural associations and organizations should be approached to collaborate in promoting or participating in the arts.*
- *I think arts organizations should champion artists who encourage understanding of Indigenous peoples, equity-deserving groups etc. vs. having it be the stated purview of arts orgs themselves (Unless that is their explicit mission). As well, the biggest thing which would help all artists (equity-seeking and not) is ensuring basic needs are met, so I think the addressing barriers that limit participation objective is the most important one.*
- *[..] who is going to teach my small org, of 1 full time admin and 3 part time artists, how to encourage understanding of Indigenous Peoples, equity seeking groups or diverse racialised groups? Our job as an arts*

org is to make art. Why is the ability to do that being predicated on our ability to also act as a de facto service organization. (and this is coming from someone who works for an arts org who actively endeavours to support and promote all of these ideas, and who personally is active as a community member and ally to all of these groups...but I don't think that's the job of my arts org and to make that be the case is a terrifying thing)



Arts organizations should promote the arts by:

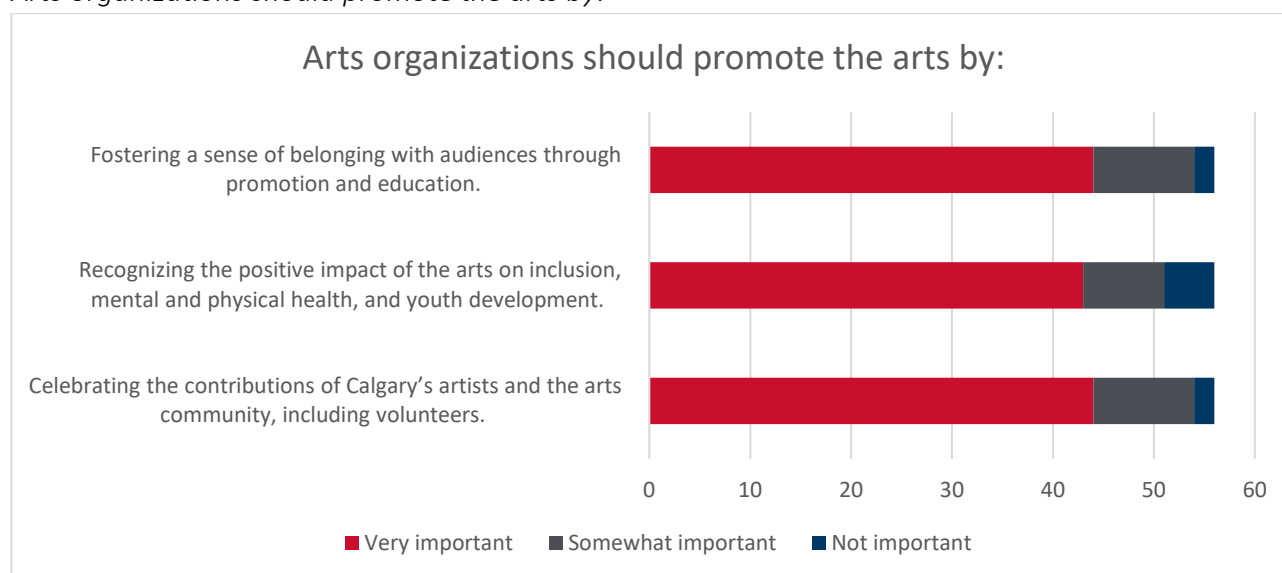


Figure 4 Arts organizations should promote the arts by

An error occurred with this survey question during the first two days the survey was live and the options above were duplicated from the previous question. This has been noted and addressed in our analysis and is being acknowledged in this report for transparency.

Are there any additional ways you think arts organizations could better promote the arts and its contributions to Calgary?

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

Participants emphasized the importance of community engagement and collaboration to better promote the arts and their contributions to Calgary. They suggested reaching out directly to all neighborhoods and audiences that may not currently engage with arts to understand their interests and remove barriers to participation. Cross-sector collaboration with non-arts organizations, such as private businesses and corporations, was highlighted as a way to create opportunities to reach wider audiences and foster greater community involvement.

Verbatim comments

- *Find a presence in a wide range of neighborhoods and, again, reach out directly to audiences that DON'T attend arts offerings to find out why and what they would like to see*
- *More cross over engagement and cross pollination with like minded non-arts community organizations*
- *Encourage private sector organizations to spotlight how creatives they've hired fir applied arts have helped their business thrive and evolve and connect with their community.*
- *Promote events through corporations? Ie, discounts to events for employees of organizations that are willing to promote through access to emailing their employees?*

TARGETED PROMOTION

Participants highlighted the need for targeted promotion tactics to better showcase the arts. They suggested focusing on youth and education by integrating arts education into schools and providing opportunities for young people to engage with the arts. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of using diverse media platforms such as journalism, social media, TV programs, and podcasts to promote local artists and their work.

Verbatim comments

- *The working artists should be introduced at the schools, institutions, local papers, TV programs.*
- *[...] The arts could be better promoted in Calgary by the support of independent journalism, arts reporting, and arts coverage. The lack of press for local artists is the biggest thing that an arts centre like Toronto or New York has over Calgary, and it's part and parcel of the death of traditional journalism and corporate consolidation in the press. We have to find ways to nurture local arts tastemakers somehow, and perhaps it means turning to new forms (podcasts, websites, social media accounts, whatever).*
- *Funding programs/artists/facilitators that share the common vision, ensuring awareness and creativity in future generations.*
- *Include more arts in the school curriculum.*

PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

Participants emphasized the need for stronger support for artists, particularly those who are underrepresented and don't receive adequate support, such as early-career artists and those from equity-deserving groups. They highlighted the importance of elevating independent and local artists, as well as promoting smaller, community-driven events. Providing dedicated resources and funding for these artists and initiatives would ensure they have the tools and opportunities needed to thrive in Calgary's arts sector.

Verbatim comments

- *is there a way to get more early career and diverse artists represented and independent events promoted instead of picking a few faces and showcasing them everywhere?*
- *alot of programs are geared toward the youth, I would like to see more support for 30 plus and 40 plus indigenous peoples who have went through residential schools and their traditional art forms.*
- *I believe that in order to promote Art we should promote local Artists. As famous art critic E.H. Gombrich mentioned in his work "The story of Art" there is no Art there are Artist. How many local artists do we know?*
- *Funding programs/artists/facilitators that share the common vision, ensuring awareness and creativity in future generations.*
- *Please have avenues, resources, people, and funding so that you can reachout to the artists directly, Right now, you have systems where there is a hundred page document should be filled out for a remote chance of getting a grant. In most cases, it seems like the actual impact of the work isnt that important as long as you have grant writing excellence to keep going.*



CONCERNS ABOUT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Participants raised concerns about the guiding principles, particularly around the resources needed and the capacity of arts organizations to implement them fully. There were also concerns about the disconnect between the guiding principles and the mandates of the arts organizations themselves.

Verbatim comments

- *While artists from Calgary are talented, important, and worthy of recognition, organizations should be free to feature the artists that best support their mandates, regardless of where they are from.*
- *Youth development should not be a requirement because not all organizations are set up to do this. (We are currently doing our first project with youth and it requires more money, more training, police checks etc.) [...]*

Arts organizations should support resiliency and accountability by:

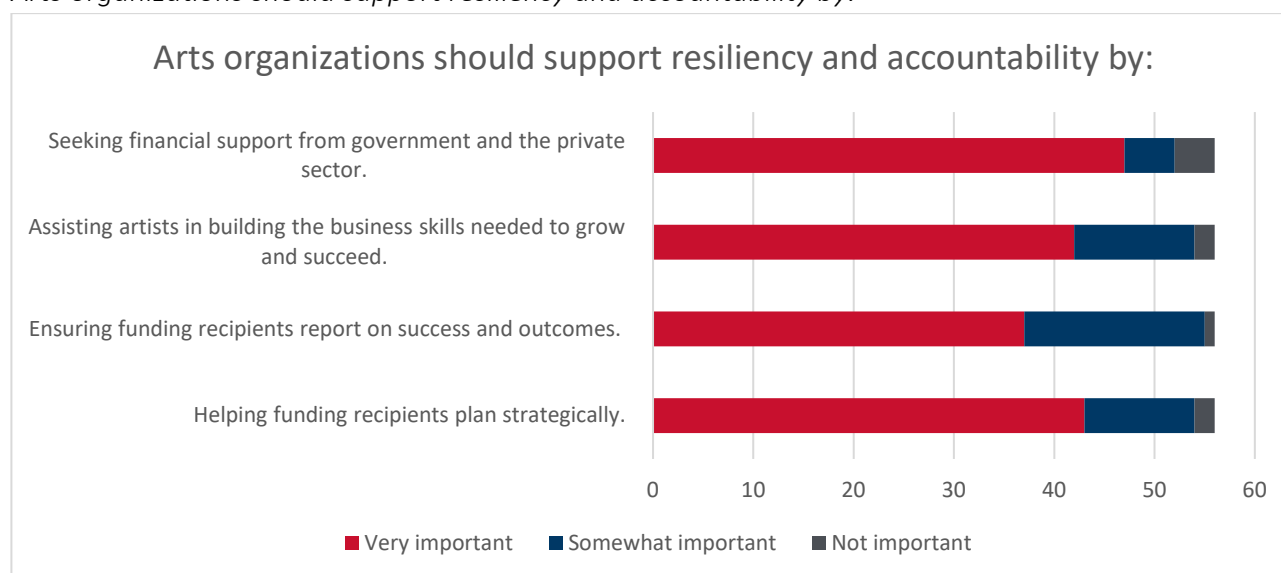


Figure 5 Arts organizations should support resiliency and accountability by

Are there any additional measures arts organizations should take to ensure resiliency and accountability?

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Participants emphasized the need for adequate support and resources to effectively implement the Guiding Principles. They highlighted the importance of clear guidance and direction, along with opportunities to learn best practices and collaborate with other arts organizations to learn and share resources. Specific support needs mentioned included mentorship, ongoing funding, training in data collection, business strategies, grant research and writing, and mental health resources. However, some participants pointed out that diversifying programming is necessary to ensure resiliency and accountability and that while these Guiding Principles may work well for some organizations, they may not be suitable for all arts organizations.

Verbatim comments

- *Daunting, confusing, and sometimes apparently non-existent, a lot of creatives would value from clear direction of where to ask, how to approach business strategies/funding.*
- *More needs to be more support for mental health to foster resiliency. [...]*
- *I would really love the opportunity to be mentored by others who have made their non-profits successful and self sufficient.*
- *Offering trainings on grant writing as part of the business skills needed as well as offering guidance on finding grants would be helpful*
- *These principles are important for Arts Service Organizations. Other organizations, such as presenting organizations, may not have the capacity to carry out these aims.*

REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants stressed the importance of balancing accountability and reporting requirements for arts organizations. They felt that accountability should focus more on the process of creating art rather than just

the outcomes, especially for new, innovative projects which are often difficult to measure at first but can have significant impact. Some participants expressed concerns about the extensive reporting demands, noting that the time and effort required for detailed data collection is overwhelming. They suggested that reporting should be proportionate to the grant amount and that qualitative data, such as stories and personal experiences, should be valued more than quantitative metrics.

Verbatim comments

- *I would like to see accountability be focussed more on process than outcome. Outcome is based too much on business models and less on creative research and process, which is necessary to build a rich and diverse art community*
- *The most important need is stable year-over-year funding and funding to support new project and ideas. The future focus initiative by Calgary Foundation, CADA, and Rosza Foundation is a good start. And while the competition is stiff, the notion that a program has small investment maximum impact is ambiguous and constraining. Some projects and programs don't seem impactful at first glance or on paper but yield tremendous results. For example, the Kantorei Choral Festival has impacted more than 800 choral students/volunteers and over 1200 audience members over 10 days (5 in 2022, 5 in 2023). It is the only festival of its kind in Western Canada providing in person educational components and performance opportunities in a non-competitive environment.*
- *We don't have the time to do reporting as it is required now and there is a huge push to do more. It takes me 1 hour to report on a \$60,000 Canada Council grant. They want a final budget and two questions answered. It took me a whole day to do my report for a >\$5000 grant for Alberta Culture Days. This does not include all the time tracking, and the development of surveys. I'm also concerned that our audiences will tire of our constant pestering for data. Data, data, data...*

1) reporting requirements should be in direct relation to the grant amount

2) qualitative data (stories) should be valued higher than quantitative data

3) train arts organizations in the collection of meaningful data (as opposed to vanity metrics).

COMMUNITY INCLUSIVITY

Participants emphasized the importance of involving the community and artists in decision-making processes. Ensuring that artists from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous artists, are supported and represented in funding opportunities was also noted as a key priority. Well-balanced committees, with diverse and inclusive members, were seen as essential for making fair decisions. They suggested gathering input from artists before starting projects and ensuring communication is ongoing, as different art disciplines require specific approaches.

Verbatim comments

- *I believe all the mentioned points will be achieved by knowing the artists and communicating with them, since, each art discipline will require specific approach.*
- *Well-balanced committee members are important for making fair, equitable, inclusive decisions.*

Is there anything else the project team should consider when updating this policy?

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES

Participants emphasized the importance of effective policy implementation and resource management to support the arts community. They highlighted the need for clear and equitable resource allocation to address the growing demands on artists and organizations. Affordable and accessible infrastructure, such as mid-sized art spaces, was seen as critical to fostering creativity and inclusivity.

Verbatim comments

- *Institute a more "we are all in this together" ideology rather than the competitive spirit for limited dollars that seems to exist now.*
- *Yes, art space is a crucial piece to the puzzle, especially the need to address the lack of mid-sized, accessible, reasonably affordable space. We need to acknowledge that the Arts Commons expansion does have some negative impacts, particularly the planned loss of the two small/mid-sized theatre's.*
- *All of the principles identified are important and could be supported by a diverse arts ecosystem. As mentioned above, not all arts organizations will be able to support all of these principles in a meaningful way due to the limits of their own mandates, capacity, and funding.*

ARTIST SUPPORT

Participants highlighted the need for greater support and stability for artists in Calgary. They called for long-term financial stability for artists through sustained funding and paid opportunities, allowing artists to focus on creating without constant financial uncertainty. Emphasizing Calgary's unique artistic identity, participants suggested policies that prioritize local talent and ensure representation for Indigenous artists from all Nations.

Verbatim comments

- *There should be provisions to support artist through longer term projects to provide financial stability to create. Say : three year long grants for instance. The present piecemeal/project based grants are something but do not create stability since an artist never knows if they will receive another grant in six months or in a year's time again. It would also be helpful to start thinking of ways to support older artists who did not and do not have the benefit of pensions in their careers. The present cost of living has highlighted the financial vulnerability of artists as we mostly live on the edge of poverty through most of our careers anyway. We have no safeguards in old age.*
- *I believe that one of the important aspects of the new policy should be aimed towards the specificity of our city and Art that is created and will be created in our city.*

Summary of themes from the portal and open house

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
Support programs and opportunities	Mentorship programs
	Business skills
	Collaboration opportunities
	Opportunities to learn and showcase talent
Funding and resource support	Centralized resources
	Funding and financial support
Equity and inclusion	Support for underrepresented artists and art forms
	Attention to intersecting identities
Community involvement and support	Engagement and education
	Artist involvement
	Promoting economic and social impact of the arts
Partnerships and collaboration	Academic institutions
	Private sector
	Healthcare
	Collaborations between arts organizations
Supportive and accessible arts	Inclusion and equity
	Transparency and accountability
	Resources
Resource allocation	Funding and resources for arts organizations
	Transparency in resource allocation

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
	Support for underserved and equity-deserving artists
Infrastructure and accessibility	Inclusive language
	Financial barriers
	Physical barriers
Equity and representation	Leadership and boards
	Authentic and inclusive representation
Role of arts organizations in championing equity	Collaboration and collective resources
	Primary focus of arts organizations
Community engagement and collaboration	Community outreach
	Cross-sector collaboration
Targeted promotion	Youth and education
	Promotion tactics
Promotion supports for artists	Underrepresented and equity-deserving artists
	Local artists and events
	Funding and supports
Support and resources	Clear direction and guidance
	Mental health support
	Mentorship and training
Reporting and accountability	Accountability
	Data collection
Community involvement	Inclusivity

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
	Engagement
Policy and resource demand	Policy implementation
	Resources and infrastructure
Artist support	Financial stability
	Inclusivity and focus on Calgary
Concerns about guiding principles	Clear priorities
	Capacity of arts organizations

Table 3 Emergent themes from Civic Arts Policy Engagement



Workshop with Arts Organization Representatives

On Thursday, November 7, 2024, the team met with representatives from arts organizations spanning all artistic disciplines, including ethnocultural organizations. These organizations ranged from volunteer-run community arts groups to professional arts organizations with annual budgets between \$50,000 and \$16 million. During the session, participants received a presentation on the Civic Arts Policy, including its background, the proposed Guiding Principles, and the goals for the updated policy. Following the presentation, participants were invited to share their feedback on the following questions to help shape the policy updates:

Do you feel the current policy commitments from Council/Administration accurately support the needs of Calgary's arts sector?

Do the current Guiding Principles reflect what is most important for Calgary's arts sector? Why or why not?

Are there any principles you feel are missing or that should be adjusted, clarified, or given more focus in the updated policy?

Are there practices or initiatives that your organization is currently doing that should be reflected within the updated policy, especially in relation to Truth and Reconciliation, EDIB, and Anti-Racism?

Facilitators were at each table to take notes of the conversations and members of the project team moved around the room to listen to conversations and answer questions. Below are the themes from the notes captured by the facilitators.

Do you feel the current policy commitments from Council/Administration accurately support the needs of Calgary's arts sector?

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Participants highlighted challenges to obtaining appropriate and sufficient funding and how this impacts the overall work of their organization and what types of initiatives they can take on with limited resources and capacity. They highlight that rising rent and operational costs are constraining, noting that short term rentals in specific venues are costly and unattainable, creating significant barriers for smaller organizations. Participants feel that there is a need for greater investment from different funding sources, including Civic Partners and government, to attend to these financial constraints.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Participants state that there is a need for flexible, affordable, permanent spaces for artists and arts organizations to use throughout Calgary, emphasizing that both non-profit and for-profit spaces are needed in the arts sector with clear distinctions between each. Participants feel that the number of rules imposed by larger organizations limit the type of programming they can conduct and at times, don't align with Truth and Reconciliation, Anti-Racism, and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB) principles. Some participants suggested there might be several vacant City-owned properties that could be repurposed to meet the growing demands of the arts sector. Additionally, the lack of places to create land-based art for Indigenous artists, which is a significant gap in addressing their specific cultural and artistic needs, was highlighted.

CITY POLICIES AND BUREAUCRACY

Participants felt that time-consuming and rule-driven processes prevent arts organizations from having an effective working relationship with The City and prevent internal business units from working together effectively. They felt The City has a greater role to play in the arts sector in relation to creating a collaborative environment, promoting and hosting events, encouraging engagement among City employees, long-term planning that will benefit the arts sector and increase accessibility, and ongoing commitments that make it easier for audiences to access the arts. Participants felt that privatization of the arts sector is an issue and that Toronto is a good example for Calgary to follow to improve arts and culture.

ARTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Arts organization representatives shared that they felt there needed to be greater efforts to integrate the arts and artists with the community, especially through the use of spaces that serve the community. They highlighted spaces that they think exemplify this, such as Eastside Culture Crawl in Vancouver and the space previously known as Uptown 7th in Calgary. They highlighted that collaboration is an important aspect of the arts despite the fact that there are barriers, such as the seasonality of the work and perceived disconnect between arts and development.

CITY COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Participants shared that they did not see The City's commitment to EDIB, Anti-Racism, and Truth and Reconciliation stated explicitly enough in the draft commitments. They emphasized that greater support is needed to empower youth to become involved in the arts and attract Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized artists to Calgary.

Do the current Guiding Principles reflect what is most important for Calgary's arts sector? Why or why not?

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Participants expressed concerns about inadequate funding for basic needs and smaller programs within the arts sector, highlighting that limited financial resources often constrain creativity and program delivery. There was significant reliance on private sector contributions and a focus on commercial value, which participants felt overlooked the broader cultural and social importance of the arts. They stressed the importance of operational support as a foundation for sustainable artistic development and the need for funding structures that better address the basic needs of artists. While acknowledging the availability of operating funds from some organizations, they noted that project funding often leads to funders assuming programming roles, which undermines the autonomy of artists and imposes philosophical priorities that cannot be easily integrated into ongoing operations.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Arts organization representatives emphasized the need for affordable and accessible spaces to support the arts sector, noting that the high cost of venues limits opportunities for artists and organizations to thrive. Concerns were raised about the maintenance and accessibility of existing venues, with participants highlighting the physical and financial barriers that restrict equitable use. Small organizations, in particular, reported struggling with the operational burdens associated with managing spaces, including maintenance costs and administrative responsibilities.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING (EDIB)

Participants highlighted the importance of championing equity year-round, rather than focusing efforts solely on set times such as Orange Shirt Day or Black History Month. They emphasized the need for sustained and meaningful action to ensure EDIB principles are embedded throughout the arts sector. A centralized approach to EDIB resources was seen to better support organizations in their efforts, providing consistent guidance and tools. Participants also pointed out the limitations of current reporting metrics, noting that they often fail to fully capture or convey the depth and impact of EDIB initiatives, underscoring the need for improved systems to measure and communicate progress.

DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Participants emphasized the role of data in demonstrating the impact of the arts and expressed a need for clear metrics and guidance on what data to collect and how to use it effectively to measure progress and impact. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of providing tools and sharing best practices to support consistent and meaningful data collection.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Representatives highlighted the need for more professional development opportunities within the arts sector, especially relating to the EDIB, Anti-Racism, and Truth and Reconciliation values outlined in the Guiding Principles. They emphasized the importance of accessible resources to support skill-building and career progression for artists at all stages of their career and noted that mentorship should be part of a broader plan that acknowledges the arts as a whole and provides comprehensive support.

PROMOTION AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Participants emphasized the importance of reaching new audiences and making the arts more accessible to diverse communities. They highlighted the need for education and programs designed to engage youth and

build future audiences. Social media was recognized as a powerful tool for promoting the arts, creating connections, and expanding reach.

IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Participants also highlighted challenges with implementing the policy. While the guiding principles are seen as a positive start, they emphasized the need for clear, actionable details on how they will be applied, and which principles should be prioritized and implemented, especially for smaller organizations that have limited resources or could be negatively impacted. They proposed restructuring the arts funding system to create a sustainable model that benefits a broader range of organizations. This new system would encourage The City to invest more in affordable infrastructure, rather than operating grants, and tie existing operating grants to how well-established organizations share their resources, particularly venues, with smaller, underfunded groups.

Are there any principles you feel are missing or that should be adjusted, clarified, or given more focus in the updated policy?

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARTISTS

Participants stressed the importance of focusing on local Calgary artists and ensuring their long-term sustainability through consistent support and separate funding streams. They emphasized the need for mentorship opportunities and support for those early in their careers, with the intended outcome of fostering passion and interest

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

Participants highlighted the need for infrastructure and resources to meet the growing demand of the arts community. They emphasized that both historic and new spaces are needed to support and showcase the arts, as well as increased involvement from the private sector. However, they also pointed out that while there are great spaces in the city, there are barriers to accessing existing spaces, such as high costs or limited equipment. They emphasized the importance of providing operational support to help organizations manage these spaces effectively, ensuring that artists don't leave Calgary for better opportunities.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Participants discussed the challenges of ensuring adequate representation within the arts, both in terms of the artists involved and the audiences reached. They emphasized the need to actively engage diverse audiences, provide stronger support for underrepresented groups in the sector that will lead to greater change in a shorter time. This includes addressing barriers through "blind auditions" and creating opportunities for those who have historically faced barriers to fully participate and thrive within the arts community. However, representatives also emphasized that EDIB goals need to not only be balanced with overall demand to ensure that niche or smaller organizations are sustainable, but also balanced over time as different seasons bring in different artists.

LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Participants suggested updates to the language in the Civic Arts policy. They felt there should be an emphasis on the economic benefits of the arts and encouraging greater private sector involvement. They recommended placing the importance of a healthy arts sector earlier in the policy and removing the mention of mentorship,

instead focusing on the value of a wide range of art practices and incorporating language about ensuring safe travel downtown. Finally, they expressed concern that none of the Guiding Principles focused on creating art.

Are there practices or initiatives that your organization is currently doing that should be reflected within the updated policy, especially in relation to Truth and Reconciliation, EDIB, and Anti-Racism?

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Participants highlighted the importance of reducing barriers to audience attendance and participation, noting the nuanced challenges that arts organizations face in attracting diverse groups. They emphasized the need for long-term strategies to foster arts and culture engagement across Calgary while ensuring financial risks for organizations are minimized. Respondents also stressed the importance of balancing audience preferences with showcasing diverse productions, cautioning against the pigeonholing of equity-deserving groups into specific narratives or roles.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents emphasized the need for training and support for boards, particularly in smaller organizations where members often lack relevant skills such as legal or financial expertise. Challenges in recruiting skilled board members and volunteers were noted, especially considering the aging population of volunteers and external economic pressures. Participants recommended education programs and initiatives to encourage volunteerism and improve organizational capacity, including addressing structural issues that limit the effectiveness of board governance.

COLLABORATION AND SHARED RESOURCES

Many participants called for greater collaboration and resource-sharing among arts organizations to overcome the challenges of limited infrastructure and financial scarcity. They advocated for centralized programs that provide legal, financial, and HR support, particularly for smaller organizations. Concerns were raised about the lack of effective collaboration under umbrella organizations and the need to foster meaningful partnerships through shared infrastructure and support systems.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Respondents noted the importance of advancing equity and representation within the arts sector through targeted programming and anti-racism training. They called for the creation of safe and secure spaces for underrepresented groups, particularly for women in male-dominated fields. Critiques of language and terminology, such as the use of “BIPOC” (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), highlighted the need for more human-centered, inclusive phrasing that avoids oversimplified categorizations.

RESOURCE AND FUNDING CHALLENGES

The high resource demands of local productions were a key concern, with participants noting the financial and logistical challenges of local productions compared to visiting productions. They called for financial support mechanisms, such as subsidies, to alleviate these pressures and ensure the sustainability of local shows. Respondents advocated for sustainable models that reduce the burden on organizations while enabling them to produce high-quality work that reflects Calgary’s local artistic talent.



Workshop with Equity-Deserving Artists

On Tuesday, November 12, 2024, the project team hosted a virtual workshop with seven self-identified equity-deserving artists representing various artistic disciplines. To ensure accessibility, the session was held online, and no demographic data was collected by Calgary Arts Development (CADA) or the project team.

The workshop began with a presentation that provided an overview of the Civic Arts Policy, including its history, proposed Guiding Principles, and goals for the policy update. A key focus of the presentation was to share the team's intention to strengthen the policy's emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB), anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation.

After the presentation, participants engaged in small group discussions within breakout rooms to provide feedback on the following questions:

From your perspective, what are the most important things the policy should focus on?

Can you tell us about an experience from your community that demonstrated a commitment to equity, anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation?

Can you tell us about an experience from your community where there is a challenge to accessing or participating in the arts?

Are there any other considerations we should have when updating the policy?

Facilitators and notetakers were assigned to each breakout room to guide discussions, capture insights, and address participant questions.

The themes summarized in this report reflect the feedback gathered during these conversations.

From your perspective, what are the most important things the policy should focus on?

INCLUSIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Participants emphasized the importance of creating a more inclusive arts community by ensuring genuine engagement, where feedback is actively incorporated into decision-making processes. They highlighted the need for equitable representation at all levels, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles. Participants also called for equity approaches tailored to the unique needs of different groups rather than a one-size-fits-all strategy. Fair distribution of resources and opportunities not only with individual artists, but around the city and in underserved areas, was underscored as vital to fostering a more inclusive and supportive arts sector. They also discussed the importance of transparency in the application and selection processes for funding and grants.

SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES FOR ARTISTS

Participants stressed the need for accessible tools, resources, and programs that ensure opportunities are provided to equity-deserving artists and help artists succeed in their work. They highlighted the importance of collective support, such as shared resources and collaboration opportunities, to reduce individual burdens, especially for emerging artists. Protecting artists' work and ensuring they have the business skills necessary to thrive and grow in their career were also seen as important. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of protecting artists' work and providing meaningful opportunities for artists, such as paid work, exhibitions, and mentorships.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants emphasized the importance of having accessible venues for both creating and showcasing art, especially in the Northeast quadrant of the city. Ensuring venues are safe and inclusive so that artists can safely and respectfully showcase their work was also highlighted as critical to fostering a supportive environment for artistic expression and community engagement. Collective venues and access to City spaces were brought up as potential solutions to this barrier.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Participants stressed the need for clear guidelines in the Civic Arts Policy to help arts organizations implement equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) principles effectively. They emphasized the importance of defining terms like "diverse" to ensure a shared understanding and setting clear success metrics to measure progress. They also felt that transparency around selection criteria should be built into the policy and that ongoing conversations with the community will lead to better outcomes and make the policy more inclusive.

Can you tell us about an experience from your community that demonstrated a commitment to equity, anti-racism, and Truth & Reconciliation?

INTENTIONAL AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Participants shared that deliberate and proactive efforts to increase inclusivity were important to show a commitment to EDIB, anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation. They emphasized the importance of intentionally creating policies and spaces that are guided by anti-racism and decolonization, where diverse voices are heard, supported and valued. Additionally, they highlighted the need for representation in decision-making roles, supported by training to ensure that those involved understand the importance of inclusivity and can effectively work with equity-deserving artists and promote these values within the complexity of their organizations and communities.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

Participants shared that community-led and culturally relevant initiatives that are meaningful to equity-deserving artists are important for advancing EDIB, anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation. These initiatives focus on allowing diverse artists and arts professionals to tell their stories and reach a wide range of audiences. For example, events that bring together various organizations and individuals to discuss anti-racism and share personal stories create powerful spaces where people can openly express their experiences. In addition, participants highlighted the importance of creating inclusive productions that reflect different histories and cultures, ensuring that marketing and outreach efforts target diverse communities. Language barriers were also addressed by providing accessible resources, like subtitles, to include everyone. These efforts help connect people from different backgrounds and ensure that art is meaningful and relevant to all.

STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC SUPPORT

Participants emphasized the importance of having strong structural and systemic support for artists in their communities. They highlighted the need for better resources and guidance, ensuring that all artists have the tools and support they need to succeed. This includes having guidance and networks that can help artists that are new to Canada or Calgary navigate their careers and connect with others in the arts community, especially in relation to funding, language and translation, marketing and communications. Additionally, targeted initiatives and opportunities were seen as crucial in creating space for underrepresented artists. These efforts help ensure that artists from diverse backgrounds have access to the same opportunities and support as others, fostering a more equitable and inclusive arts scene. Artists recognized that The City and Calgary Arts Development (CADA) can take on a greater role and be more pro-active about working with artists and advancing EDIB, anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation.

Can you tell us about an experience from your community where there is a challenge to accessing or participating in the arts?

GRANTS AND FUNDING

Participants shared concerns about challenges in accessing and participating in the arts due to issues with the granting system. They noted funding disparities and the limited promotion of available opportunities, making it hard for some artists to find the support they need. Many artists also mentioned that the criteria for grants can be too stringent or repetitive, creating unnecessary barriers for those who are eligible. Grants for newcomers was brought up to emphasize that someone may be in Canada for longer than the criteria states but may still need the support that's being offered depending on their own experiences. Additionally, the application processes were described as confusing, leaving artists uncertain about how to navigate them. There was a call for clearer guidance and targeted grant opportunities to help artists better understand how to apply for grants and succeed in the system, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to a wider range of people.

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Participants expressed challenges in accessing the arts due to a lack of support programs and information sharing, which create barriers for artists at different stages of their careers. Many felt that there is not enough support available for all artists, particularly emerging or underrepresented ones who don't do "traditional" art forms. There were also concerns about gaps in mentorship programs, making it harder for new artists to gain guidance and grow their skills. Some shared that facing repeated rejection without sufficient support can be

discouraging, leading to feelings of frustration and a lack of motivation to continue pursuing their artistic careers.

ACCESSIBILITY AND AUDIENCE INCLUSION

Participants highlighted challenges related to both accessibility and audience inclusion in the arts. Many noted the importance of creating a stronger connection with audiences, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and included in arts events. Language barriers were also mentioned as a significant issue, making it harder for some communities to fully engage with the arts. In addition, digital and physical barriers, such as limited access to online platforms or difficulties with transportation to venues, prevent people from attending events.

REPRESENTATION AND PROTECTION OF ARTISTS

Participants shared concerns about the challenges of authentic representation and the protection of artists in the arts community. They pointed out that some efforts to include underrepresented groups can feel like tokenism, rather than genuine representation. Artists expressed the need for more meaningful inclusion, where their voices and cultures are truly reflected and valued. Intellectual property protection was also mentioned, with artists needing better safeguards to protect their work. Additionally, the importance of co-creation and having clear intentions from funders and leadership was highlighted, ensuring that the support given to artists is done with respect and purpose, rather than as a checklist or afterthought.

Any other considerations we should have when updating the policy?

Participants highlighted several considerations to improve support for the arts community. They emphasized the need for templates and resources to address legal barriers, such as contracts that protect artists' rights. Effective communication of the policy was also stressed, with a focus on ensuring it is accessible and reaches communities directly. Additionally, participants noted a lack of information sharing, particularly about funding opportunities, and called for better systems to inform and connect artists with available resources.



Sharing Circle with Indigenous Artists

On Monday, December 2, 2024, the project team hosted an in-person Sharing Circle with three Indigenous artists to gather their feedback on the Guiding Principles of the Civic Arts Policy. The session began with a smudge and blessing led by an Indigenous Elder with experience in the arts. The presentation provided participants with an overview of the Civic Arts Policy, including its background, the proposed guiding principles, and the goals for the updated policy, with a particular emphasis on advancing Truth and Reconciliation.

After the presentation, participants were invited to share their feedback in a group discussion guided by the following questions:

From your perspective, what are the most important things the policy should focus on to advance Truth and Reconciliation?

Can you tell us about an experience from the arts community that demonstrated a commitment to Truth and Reconciliation?

Can you tell us about an experience from your community where there is a challenge to accessing or participating in the arts?

Are there any other considerations we should keep in mind when updating the policy?

The discussion was facilitated by a representative from the Indigenous Relations Office, with notetakers present to document key points. Below are the themes identified from the notes captured during the Sharing Circle. Due to the way the conversation took place, these themes have not been separated into questions like previous feedback.

INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION

Indigenous artists highlighted the importance of equity and inclusion for artists from all Treaty 7 Nations to advance Truth and Reconciliation, drawing attention to Blackfoot artists since Calgary is located in traditional Blackfoot territory. They emphasized the need for authentic representation by Indigenous artists that genuinely reflects their unique identities and experiences, avoiding pan-Indigenization. Concern about the appropriation of Indigenous identities or art forms was discussed and artists felt that more measures should be put in place to prevent this from happening in the future, especially in relation to funding which already has challenges getting to the Nations. Participants stressed the importance of increasing the visibility of Indigenous arts and normalizing their presence in the broader arts community, while being careful to not limit or single out Indigenous artists because of their identity. The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity was identified as a successful example of an organization that provides opportunities for Indigenous artists to be represented. Barriers such as the prioritization of written traditions over oral ones, especially in grant writing, and feelings of intimidation in navigating arts spaces for artists from the Nations were identified as challenges.

ACCESSIBILITY AND RESOURCES

Indigenous artists shared that accessibility and resources are crucial to creating an equitable arts community. They emphasized the need for affordable resources, spaces and opportunities to ensure participation from all artists, regardless of their financial situation. Equity in accessing opportunities was highlighted as a priority, with a focus on breaking down systemic barriers that limit participation. Artists also stressed the importance of practical applications of the arts policy, ensuring it addresses real-world needs and challenges faced not only by Indigenous artists, but by the greater community. They identified the role of art as healing and felt that providing art materials to Indigenous Peoples who are unhoused or incarcerated would be one way to advance Truth and Reconciliation with opportunities to exhibit their art. These measures were seen as essential for fostering inclusivity and ensuring Indigenous voices are valued and supported. They also called for improved access to arts education and training for all artists who live on reserve, but especially children, to empower Indigenous artists and support their artistic growth at all stages of their career. They identified that there is an opportunity for The City and arts organizations, like CADA, to have liaisons that work with the Nations and provide artistic programs to youth. However, they identified that there are opportunities for all forms of programming, especially addiction programs that are needed by families.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRUTH-TELLING

Indigenous artists emphasized the importance of cultural identity and truth-telling in the arts. They called for greater focus on truth-telling and reconciliation through education, especially with children, ensuring the history and experiences of Indigenous Peoples are shared accurately and respectfully, noting that people shut down when the topic of Truth and Reconciliation comes up. Artists highlighted the need for cultural and historical recognition, particularly of practices that are not traditionally considered art, such as ceremonial pieces, but benefit from funding opportunities that allow them to create and share with others. They drew attention to the oppressive nature of neo-colonialism and how personal identities are shaped by the colonizer and encouraged a broader understanding of art from an Indigenous perspective, including traditional and contemporary forms, to celebrate the full spectrum of Indigenous creativity and expression.

CONNECTION TO BROADER POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS

Indigenous artists emphasized the importance of connecting the Civic Arts Policy to broader frameworks, such as the White Goose Flying Report, the Social Wellbeing Policy, Housing Strategy, and the 96 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They also shared that arts organizations that receive municipal

funding should understand the 96 Calls to Action and impacts of colonization in order to receive funding. They highlighted that aligning the policy with these frameworks would strengthen its impact and relevance. Artists also encouraged collaboration with other sectors, such as education and social services, to ensure that the arts contribute meaningfully to reconciliation, community well-being, and social equity.

Next steps

The next steps for the updated policy include internal reviews, The City is collaborating with Civic Partners, Calgary Arts Development, and the Cultural Leadership Council to ensure feedback from Phase 1 engagement is addressed. In February 2025, the draft updated policy will be shared with the arts sector as part of Phase 2 engagement to gather further feedback. Following this, the policy will be finalized and proposed to the Community Development Committee for consideration. If supported, it will proceed to City Council in summer 2025. If the policy is approved by City Council, its content will inform the upcoming update to the Cultural Plan for Calgary (2016-2025), with that report expected to be presented to Council in early 2026.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographics

The graphs below reflect demographic data collected from 55 unique surveys including participants who engaged through the Portal Page and the Open House. If participants chose to complete the survey, all demographic questions were also optional.

Note on Responses Outside the Targeted Engagement

A few responses were received from individuals who self-identified as not being eligible to provide feedback due to the targeted nature of the engagement. While their responses were excluded from the analysis in this *What We Heard Report*, they are reflected in the first demographic graph below as “other” for transparency. They are not included in other demographic questions.

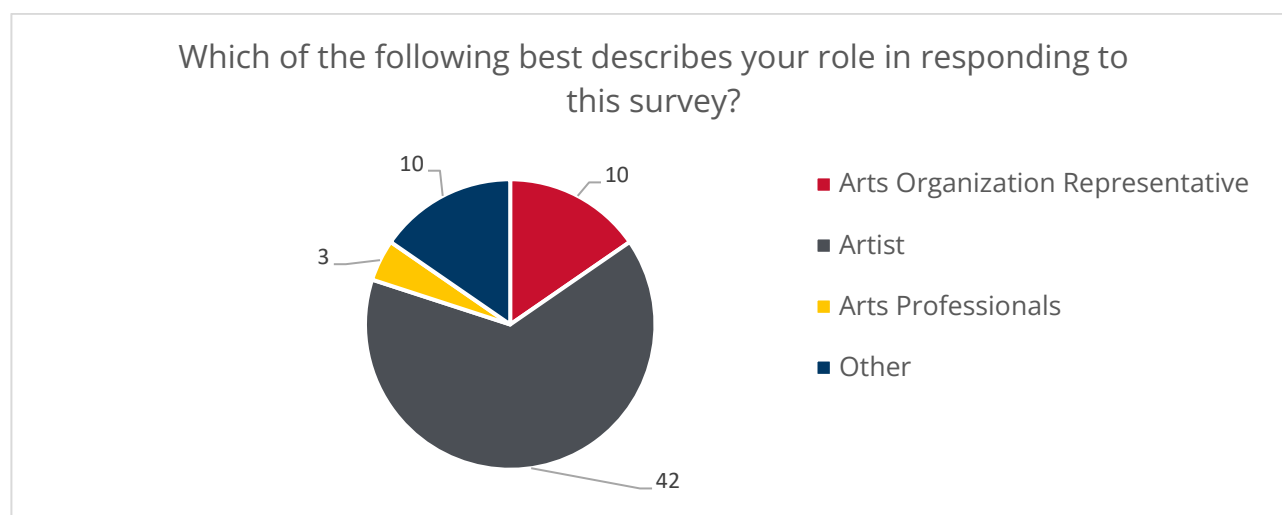


Figure 6 Role of respondents

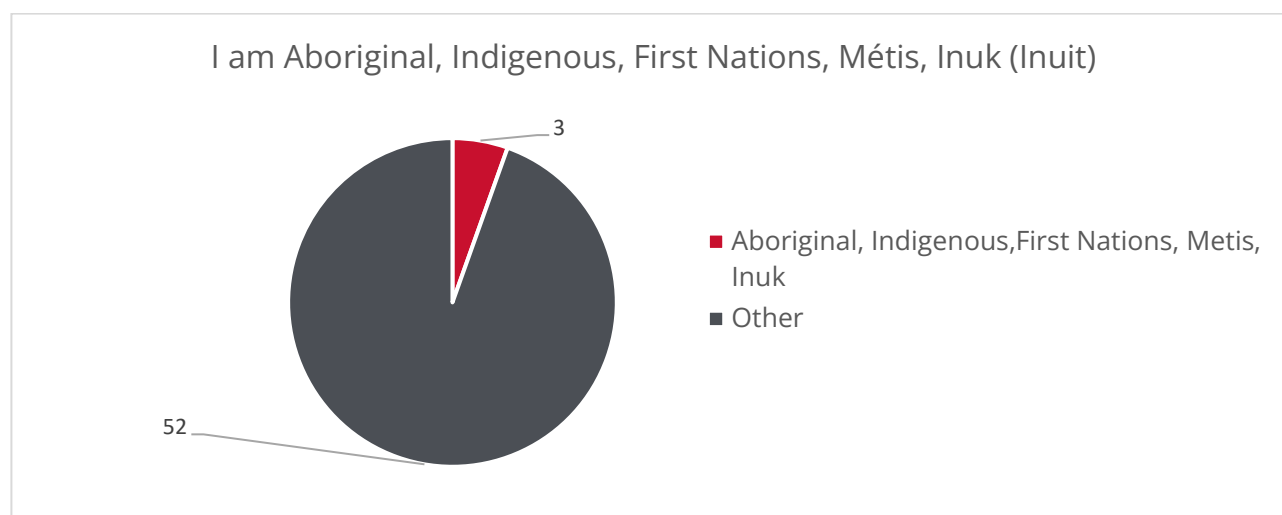


Figure 7 Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, Metis, Inuk (Inuit) demographics

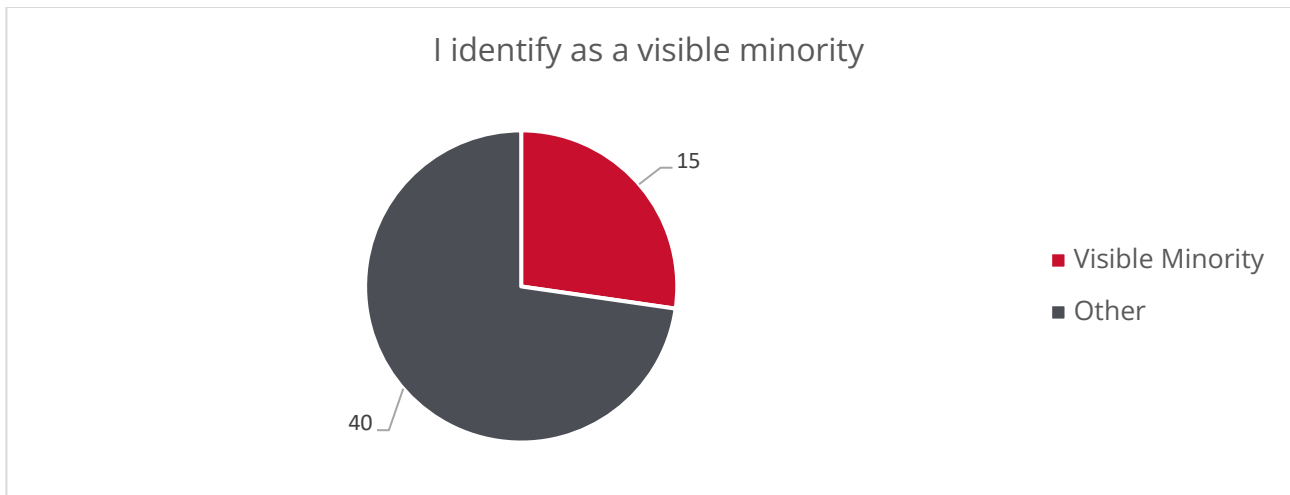


Figure 8 Visible minority demographics

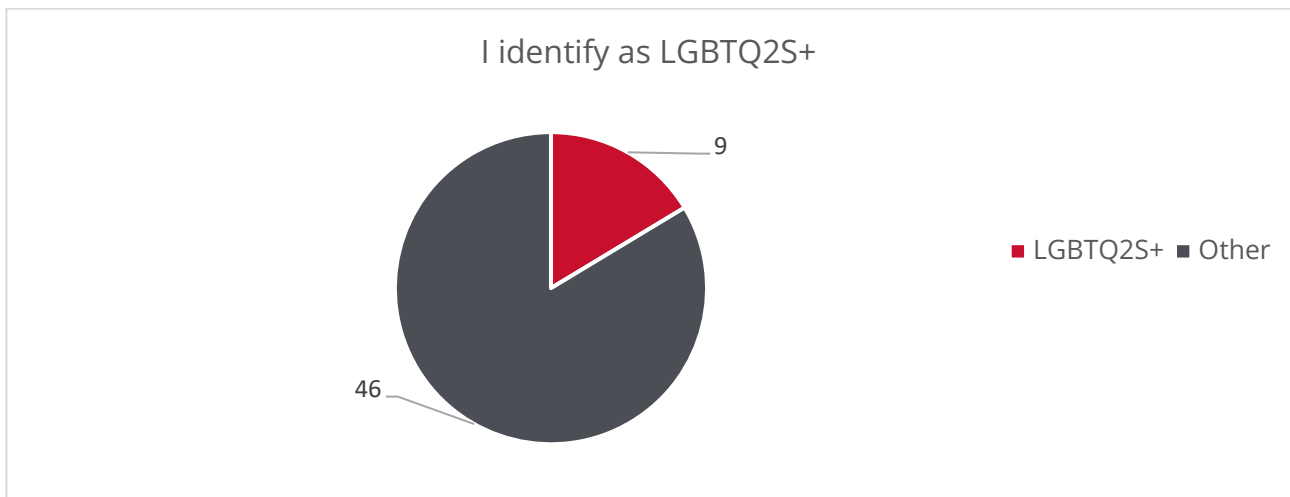


Figure 9 LGBTQ2S+ demographics

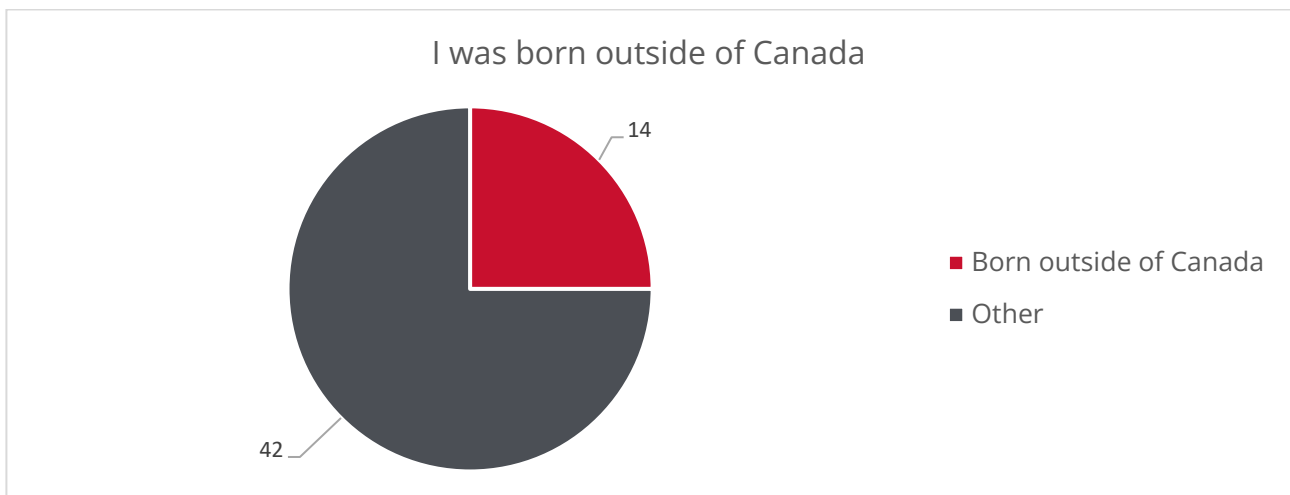


Figure 10 Born outside Canada demographics

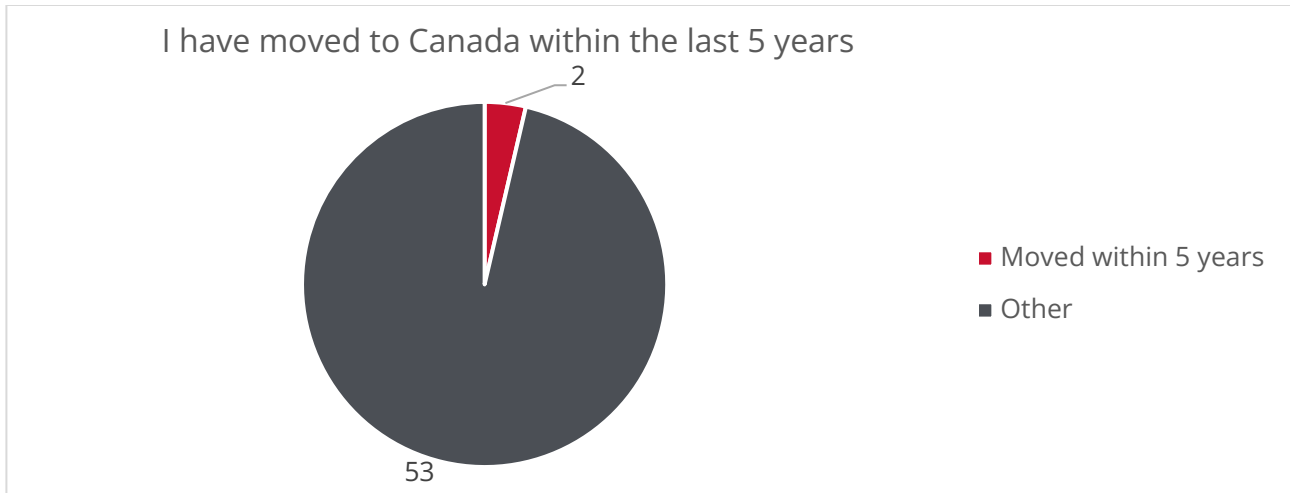


Figure 11 Moved to Canada within the last 5 years demographics

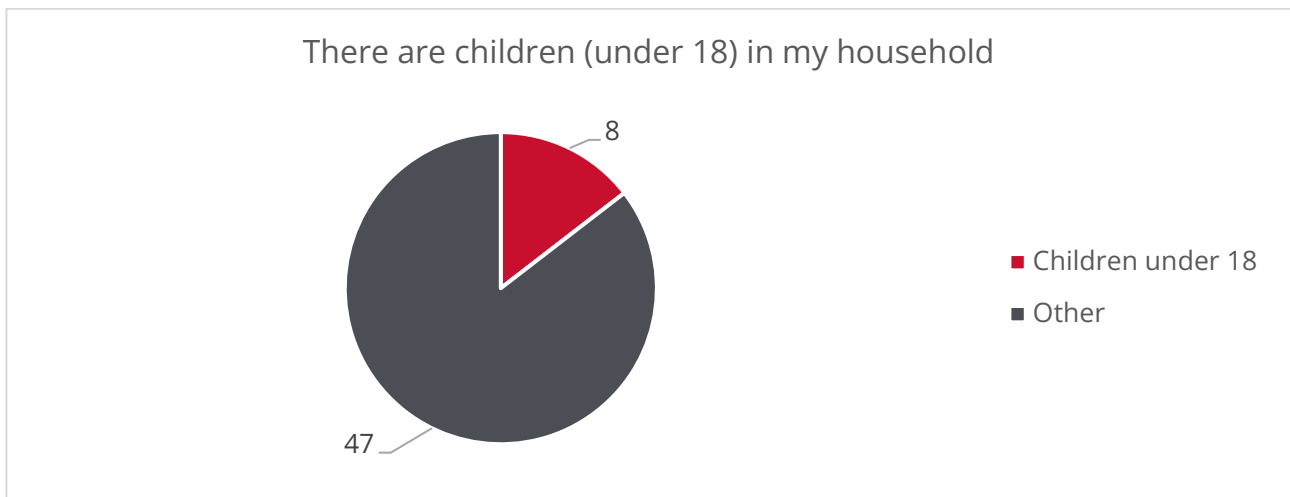


Figure 12 Children demographics

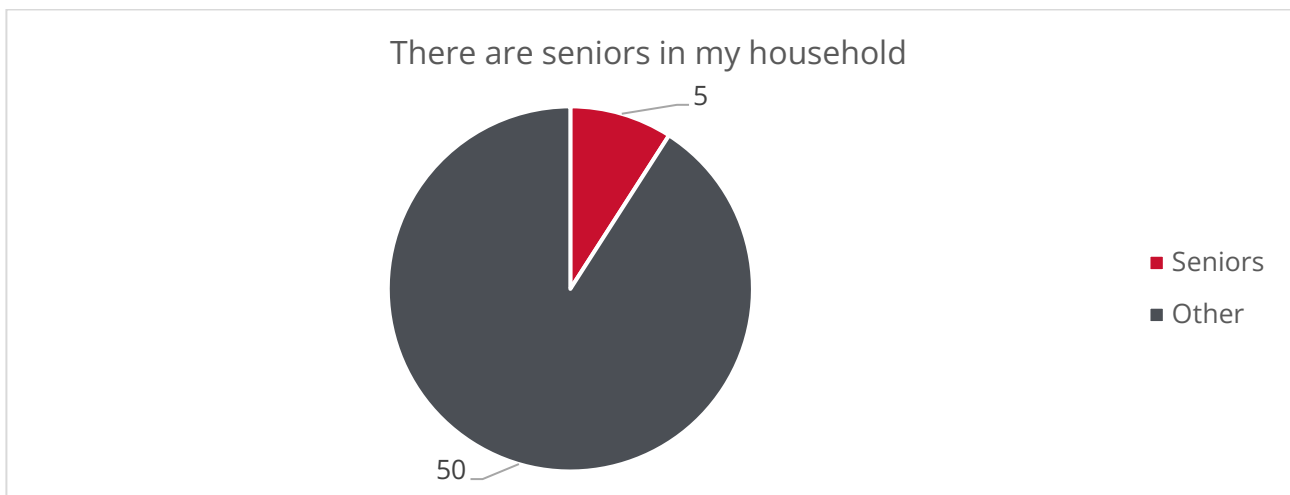


Figure 13 Seniors demographics

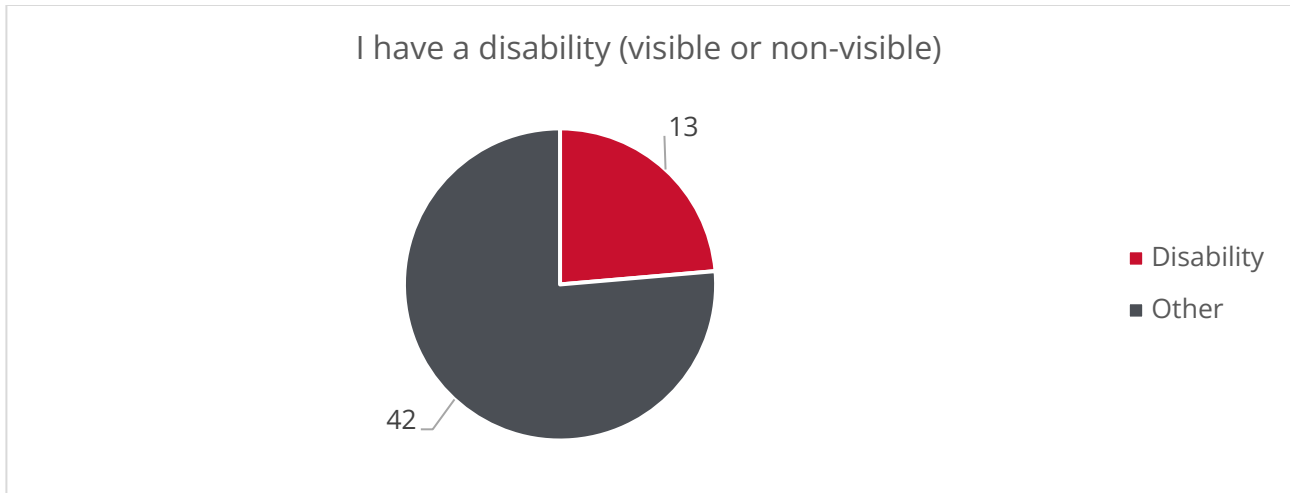


Figure 14 Disability demographics

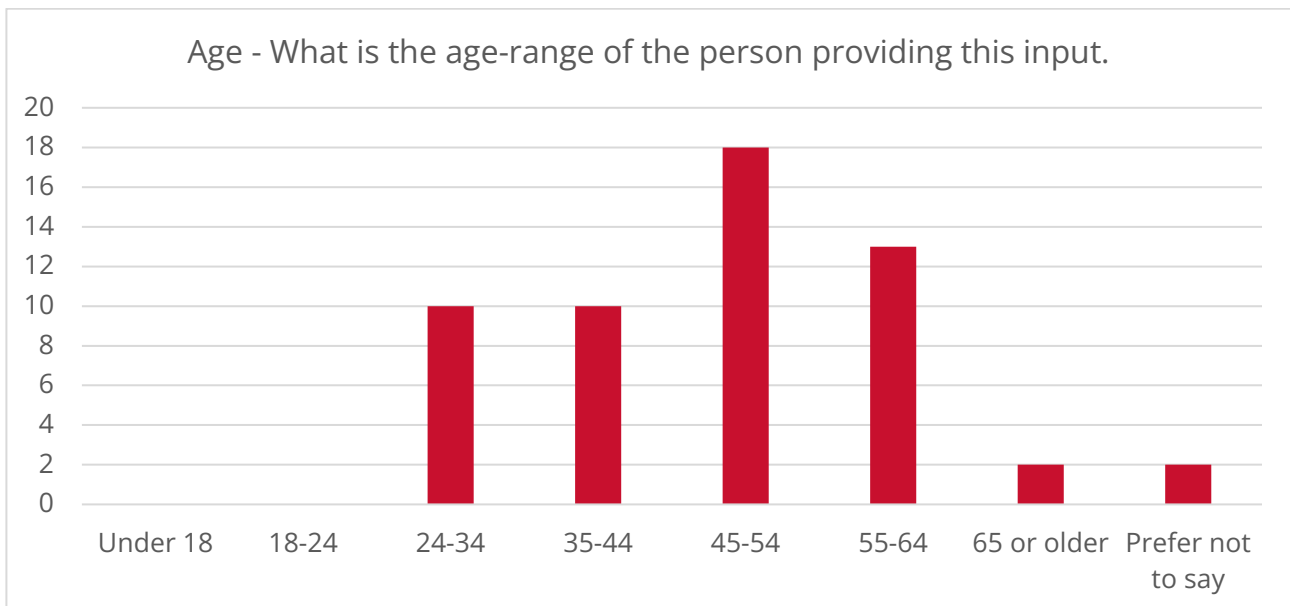


Figure 15 Age demographics

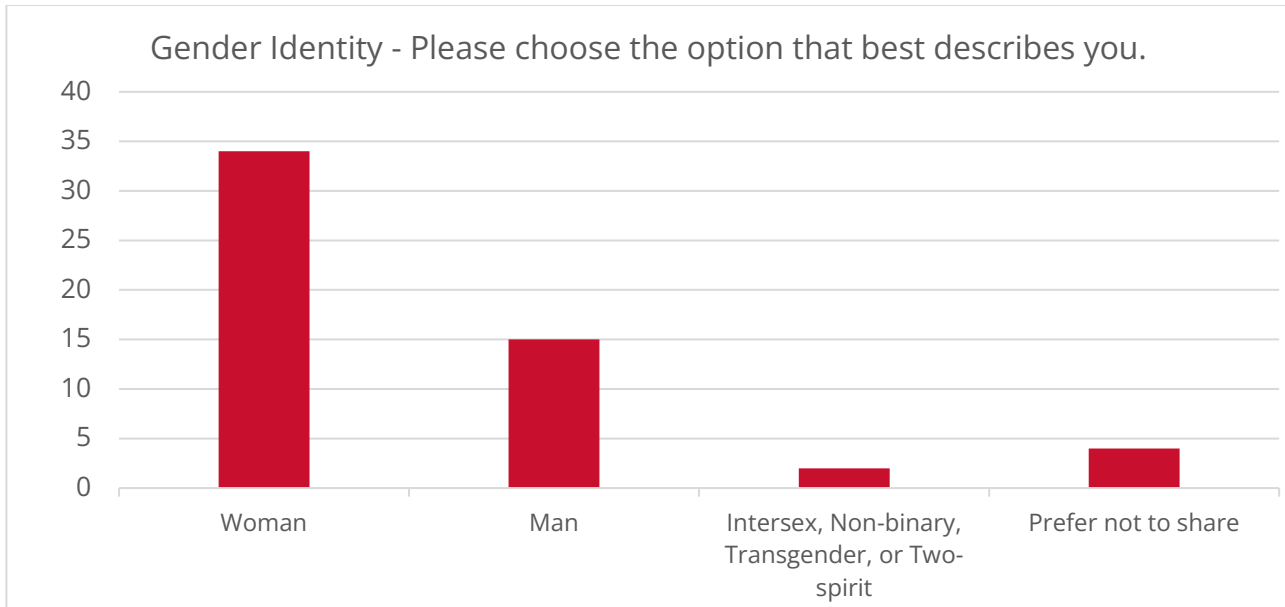


Figure 16 Gender identity demographics

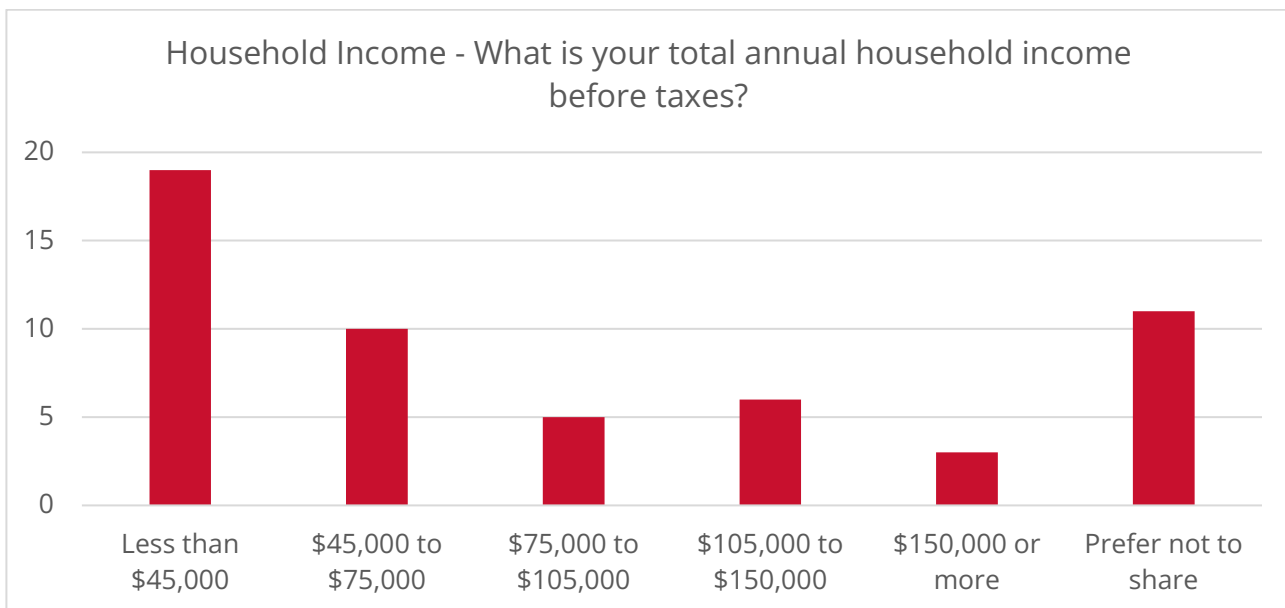


Figure 17 Household income demographics

Appendix B: Explanation - Verbatim comments and quotes

Verbatim comments and quotes presented in the attached document include all feedback, suggestions, comments and messages that were collected online and in-person through the engagement described in this report. All input has been reviewed and provided to Project Teams to be considered in decision making for the project.

Any personal identifying information has been removed from the verbatim comments presented here. Comments or portions of comments that contain profanity, or that are not in compliance with The [City's Respectful Workplace Policy](#) or [Online Tool Moderation Practice](#), have also been removed from participant submissions.

Wherever possible the remainder of the submissions remains. No other edits to the feedback have been made, and the verbatim comments are as received. As a result, some of the content in this verbatim record may still be considered offensive or distasteful to some readers.

Note on Responses Outside the Targeted Engagement

A few responses were received from individuals who self-identified as not being eligible to provide feedback due to the targeted nature of the engagement. While their responses were excluded from the analysis of this *What We Heard Report*, they have been included in the verbatim document for transparency.

Appendix C: Explanation – Engagement at The City

"Engagement" at The City of Calgary is defined as: Purposeful dialogue between The City and citizens and interest-holders to gather information to influence decision making.

Engagement is:

- **Citizen-centric** - focusing on hearing the needs and voices of both directly impacted and indirectly impacted Calgarians.
- **Accountable** - upholding the commitments that The City makes to Calgarians and other interested and impacted parties by demonstrating that the results and outcomes of the engagement processes are consistent with the approved plans for engagement.
- **Inclusive** - making best efforts to reach, involve and hear from those who are impacted directly or indirectly.
- **Committed** - allocating sufficient time and resources for effective engagement of citizens and interest-holders.
- **Responsive** - acknowledging Calgarian's and other interested and impacted parties' concerns; and
- **Transparent** - providing clear and complete information around decision processes, procedures, and constraints.

The City's commitment to transparent and inclusive engagement processes is outlined in the [Engage Policy \(CS009\)](#).

Appendix D: Explanation – Research versus Engagement

Engagement is a professional discipline that incorporates a variety of methodologies to gather people's opinions and views on specific issues or topics, to provide information for decision making. Engagement often involves two-way dialogues or conversations with the objective of gaining a deeper understanding of the issues.

Unlike Research, Engagement opportunities are inclusive and usually open to all interested parties who would like to have a say about the issue or topic at hand. The outputs of Engagement activities are descriptive and provide a deeper understanding of the views and sentiments of the participants. The nature of these inclusive techniques mean that information collected is directional and, as with qualitative research, cannot be generalized to the larger population.

Engagement at The City of Calgary is defined as purposeful dialogue between The City and interest-holders to gather information to influence decision making. More specifically, the Engage Resource Unit works with project teams at The City to meet project needs and ensure citizens have their say about those projects.

The City has a six-step process for engagement with citizens:

1. Assess the need for engagement.
 2. Develop a plan – determine engagement roadmap and budget.
 3. Tell the story – create content to inform and educate interest-holders.
 4. Raise awareness – promote opportunities for interest-holders to participate.
 5. Connect – open opportunities for interest-holders to provide input.
 6. Report back and evaluate – loop back to share what was heard and what was done with stakeholder input.
-
- Unlike Research, Engagement opportunities are inclusive and usually open to all interested parties who would like to have a say about the issue or topic at hand. The outputs of Engagement activities are descriptive and provide a deeper understanding of the views and sentiments of the participants. The nature of these inclusive techniques mean that information collected is directional and, as with qualitative research, cannot be generalized to the larger population.
 - Engagement is not meant to be a representative sample of interest-holders while quantitative Research methodologies are designed so that the data collected from a randomly selected sample of individuals is considered to be statistically representative of the larger population.
 - Research seeks answers to questions that are important to The City and looks to represent the views of Calgary's population using analytical and statistical methods. Engagement seeks feedback on issues that are important to citizen groups and looks to reflect perspectives of those citizens that are most interested or impacted by City activities.