EVOKE

Arts Network Ottawa/Ottawa Arts Council Merger
Community Conversations:
Designing a New Arts Organization through Collective Vision

Key Takeaways Insights Report
January 2024

Outline
- Context piece
- Key takeaways themes from each session
- Key takeaways from these presentations to inform our work as we merge these organizations
- How will these presentations inform our work going forward
- What should we be looking at

Introduction

Arts Network Ottawa and the Ottawa Arts Council embarked on a series of learning and engagement opportunities where the arts sector and community were invited to engage in crucial conversations.

The presentations shared insights, explored innovative ideas, transformative strategies, and visionary perspectives to spark your thinking and our collective work in the arts. Presentations were followed by a facilitated workshop led by Evoke and Associates.

Themes from these gatherings, along with your direct input, will shape Design-Thinking workshops, to be held in 2024, on the new organizational model—covering governance, operations, programs, and services.

This report will outline key takeaways participants identified following each community conversation to consider as we move forward.

Session 1: [Adapting to Change: Innovative Models with Owais Lightwala](#)

Context

How do we craft a thriving future for the arts in times of uncertainty and change?

Owais Lightwala led an interactive presentation and workshop on Design-Thinking methodology. He described it as, "Design-thinking is a problem solving approach that emphasizes user understanding, creative ideation, and iterative testing, and the goal of it is basically to solve problems that people have in the real world. Really responding to the need for more user centric human centred design approaches."

Key Takeaways

Sequential Engagement for Design-Thinking:
- Start with individual solo work, progress to small groups, and then involve a larger group for a comprehensive design-thinking approach.
- Simulate the user experience by imagining oneself as the beneficiary, ensuring a user-centric perspective is maintained.

Prioritize Capacity and Iterative Ideation:
- Ask the question, "What is 1% of change?" to encourage incremental progress and prevent overwhelming constraints.
- Prioritize ideation based on capacity, recognizing that constraints will determine the ideation priorities.
- Emphasize quantity over quality in the ideation phase.

Prototype, Experiment, and Learn:

- Prototype or experiment with minimal, viable ideas to test key assumptions.
- Test one element at a time, ranging from low fidelity to high fidelity.
- Focus on learning through experimentation, asking key questions about what was learned and how it informs the next steps.
- Emphasize speed over perfection and iterate based on community consultations, incorporating AI to test and gather indicators.

Session 2: [Adapting to Change: Innovative Models with Rudy Ruttimann, FLIP Foundation](#)

Context

How do we explore the decline of the old systems and models and the rise of new ones?

Rudy Ruttimann's presentation on the Berkana Institute's Two Loop Model is a narrative about how large systems can transform and create a sustainable new system. The Two Loops model is a valuable tool for addressing challenges and opportunities in the arts sector. It provides a fresh perspective on funding strategies and field building for transitions.

Key Takeaways

These recommendations aim to foster strategic thinking, community collaboration, and a mindful approach to addressing emergent systems and the transition between old and new paradigms within the arts and culture sector.

Strategic Planning and Core Challenges:
- View strategic planning as an ongoing, iterative process rather than a final step.
- Identify and articulate core challenges at the outset of strategic

planning.
- Foster a culture of adaptability and responsiveness to evolving challenges.

Creating Welcoming Spaces and Sharing Resources:
- Establish inclusive environments that foster a sense of belonging and peer support.
- Emphasize the importance of sharing resources among non-profit organizations, particularly in the arts and culture sector.
- Encourage transparency within organizations to support a culture of change.

Community of Practice and Networks:
- Cultivate and expand communities of practice and networks within the arts sector.
- Prioritize collaboration with like-minded individuals and organizations to drive systemic change.
- Harness the collective stamina for long-lasting change through community engagement and art-driven initiatives.

Addressing Emergent Systems and Hospice Role:
- Recognize the self-preservation mechanisms inherent in systems and understand red flags of collapse.
- Embrace the iterative nature of change and the necessity of emergent systems in addressing colonial structures.
- Clearly define the system that needs to change and articulate the reasons for change.
- Explore and understand the hospice role in caring for the 'old' system, including strategies and implications for individuals within that system.

Sustainable Loop and Adaptive Models:
- Advocate for a sustainable loop that balances elements of the old and new systems.
- Promote the composting of positive aspects of the dominant system into the new one.
- Acknowledge the historical contingency and anticipate challenges in transitioning between systems.

- Emphasize the sustainability of adaptive models and the importance of understanding roles within both dominant and emergent systems.
- Strategically address the challenges of funding and power dynamics in the old paradigm.

Session 3: [Empowering Voices: Indigenous Relations & Self-Determination in Arts Organizational Development](#)

Context

Presenters Terry-Lynn, J.P. and Alex delved into the crucial intersection of Indigenous relations and self-determination in the context of arts organizational development.

Key Takeaways

Throughout the discussion on fostering Indigenous self-determination and meaningful collaboration, several key principles and strategies emerged. The focus is on respecting cultural autonomy, building alliances through allyship, and transitioning from transactional to relational engagement by deconstructing barriers for more meaningful and sustainable collaborations. By adopting these principles, it is possible to contribute to the empowerment and flourishing of Indigenous communities while fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Indigenous Self-Determined Projects:
- Encourage and support projects that empower Indigenous communities to determine their own path.
- Respect their autonomy in decision-making and ensure that initiatives align with their cultural values and aspirations.

Two Wampum Belt Lens and Allyship:
- Adopt the principles of the "2 Wampum belt" philosophy, emphasizing mutual respect and collaboration.
- Envision partnerships as an allyship, with two ships moving together while maintaining their unique identities.
- Recognize the importance of storytelling to reclaim cultural space and

emphasize the need for Indigenous communities to define their narrative.

Inuit and Indigenous Engagement:
- Engage with Inuit and Indigenous communities through a relational approach.
- Avoid homogenizing communities
- Actively map activities and organizations to understand their unique perspectives.
- Explore inner circles of decision-making within Indigenous and Inuit networks.

Deconstructing Barriers and Leaders Circle:
- Break down barriers through reverse integration by actively going to Indigenous communities like Zibi.
- Initiate conversations with a focus on creating an agreement (Wampum or treaties) that ensure long-term relationships without causing harm.
- Shift from the concept of an Advisory Circle to a Leaders Circle, recognizing that the term "Indian giver" is derived from the notion of sharing, where nobody owns anything.

Consider mapping looking at the 4 bundles:
1. Mapping the Land
2. Mapping the Spiritual and Physical Health of Community
3. Mapping the Acquisition of Essential Resources
4. Mapping Respectful Reciprocity to Reach our Destination

Session 4: [Adapting to Change: Innovative Models with Tatiana Fraser, Co-Director of Systems Sanctuary](#)

Context

Tatiana presented the significance of Scaling Deep as a complementary approach to achieving enduring impact alongside other scaling strategies.

Scaling Deep involves deep personal and cultural transformation to create lasting and sustainable change. It delves into inner work, community connections, and narrative exploration, demanding time, introspection, and personal growth while challenging biases and assumptions. Rooting in context, it recognizes and works with power dynamics.

Key Takeaways

These takeaways collectively highlight the integration of personal experiences, collective empowerment, gradual transitions, relational aspects, metaphorical thinking, and a holistic approach in fostering positive change in the context of arts and culture.

Recognition of Lived Experience and Holistic Thinking:
- The importance of recognizing agency and lived experiences is a common thread across all streams, emphasizing the need to center individuals in their entirety.
- The design-thinking process is highlighted as a means to embrace whole personhood, emphasizing a holistic approach to problem-solving.

Empowerment Through Collective Learning and Relational Work:
- Empowerment is seen as stemming from collective learning, involving training and knowledge exchange. This recognizes the value of inner work leading to collective progress.
- The emphasis on careful consideration of the time required for transitions indicates an understanding of the gradual and natural nature of change.
- The concept of relational work, mutual relationality, and understanding the self to foster empathy underscore the importance of relationships and emotional intelligence in the process of change.

Metaphorical Approach and Holistic Thinking:
- Consider a metaphorical approach by likening the process to tending to the soil before planting seeds of change.
- Scaling Deep is metaphorically tied to soil quality and resiliency,

emphasizing the importance of a strong foundation for sustainable change.
- The positive reception of thinking outside the box and embracing holistic approaches indicates an openness to innovative and comprehensive thinking in addressing challenges.

OUR WORK TOGETHER

The participants emphasized the need for a comprehensive systems change strategy and highlighted the role an organization can play in supporting artists to thrive. Here are several recommendations based on the key themes present in the data:

1. Develop a Coordinated Systems Change Strategy:
- Analysis: Acknowledge the importance of interconnectedness among isolated changes. A coordinated systems change strategy can enhance visibility and collaboration.
- Recommendation: Establish a comprehensive systems change strategy that aligns and integrates various initiatives, ensuring they complement and reinforce each other.

2. Define the Organization's Role in Artists Thriving:
- Analysis: Clarify the organization's role in fostering an environment for artists to thrive.
- Recommendation: Conduct a thorough assessment to define and understand the organization's unique contributions. Communicate and align roles with the broader goal of artist well-being.

3. Implement Transparency and Communication Practices:
- Analysis: Recognize the importance of transparency and communication in community building.
- Recommendation: Reframe transparency practices with a focus on community care. Develop clear communication strategies that support community building and engagement.

4. Embrace Holistic Work and Embed in Arts and Culture:

- Analysis: Holistic work has been emphasized, and it needs to be integrated into the organization's practices.
- Recommendation: Embed holistic approaches in the organization's work around arts and culture. Consider holistic values in decision-making and program design.

5. Address Funding Realities and Holistic Financial Strategies:
- Analysis: Funding restraints are acknowledged as a challenge.
- Recommendation: Develop holistic financial strategies that align with the organization's goals. Explore diverse funding sources, partnerships, and creative financial models to address constraints.

6. Prioritize Relational Strategies and Collaboration:
- Analysis: Collaboration and love are identified as essential for making dreams happen.
- Recommendation: Prioritize relational strategies in collaborations. Foster a collaborative culture, emphasizing patience with the pace of change and inner work in the industry.

7. Community-Centric Integration:
- Analysis: Community integration is highlighted as crucial.
- Recommendation: Establish practices that integrate the organization into the community, using relational strategies. Strengthen values that support community well-being.

Session 5: **Building an Inclusive Arts Ecosystem**

Context

The presentation by Carla, Sharif and Sharon addressed the imperative of creating an inclusive arts environment, emphasizing the need for an organizational model that reflects and serves diverse voices within the community.

Key Takeaways

These recommendations collectively focus on building trust, fostering inclusivity, purposeful data collection, embracing collaboration, and centering artists and communities. Implementing these actions can contribute to a more equitable and sustainable arts ecosystem.

Move at the Speed of Trust:
- Prioritize relationship-building and trust-building initiatives.
- Invest time and resources in building authentic connections within and outside the organization.
- Actively listen to and address concerns of underrepresented groups.

Prioritize Belonging and Inclusivity:
- Create and maintain spaces that foster a sense of belonging for all individuals.
- Implement a Pay What You Can (PWYC) structure to ensure financial inclusivity.
- Prioritize DEI work that identifies and eliminates systemic barriers.

Data Collection with Purpose and Care:
- Ensure purposeful and safe data collection practices.
- Establish a structured knowledge-sharing framework and provide clear guidelines.
- Share collected data between arts organizations to foster collaboration and avoid duplication.

Nodes Not Hubs - Embrace Reciprocity:
- Encourage intergenerational collaboration and mentorship.
- Foster cross-sectoral and intergenerational thinking.
- Shift from silos to a unified approach for ongoing change and collaboration.

Community-Centric Collaboration:
- Collaborate across organizations rather than consolidating everything into one entity.
- Emphasize co-creation and collaboration as essential for positive impact.
- Explore diverse communication methods and support cross-sectional

collaboration for resilience during challenges.

Artists-Centered Approach - Not Org-Centered:
- Center the artist and community rather than prioritizing the organization.
- Acknowledge and address potential harms caused by arts organizations to the ecosystem.
- Prioritize creation over curation, recognizing the power dynamics inherent in curation.