



Cultural Careers Council Ontario

workinculture.ca

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR CULTURAL WORKERS

**SUMMARY REPORT
FROM
CULTURAL CAREERS COUNCIL ONTARIO**

**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

*This Employment Ontario
Project is funded in part by
The Government Of Canada*

March, 2008

Career Development for Cultural Workers

Summary Report

Career Development for Cultural Workers (CDCW) is a large-scale human resource project with multiple activities initiated by Cultural Careers Council Ontario (CCCO) in January 2007 and concluded at the end of March 2008.

The project was funded through two sources – The Sectoral Initiative Fund at Ontario’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), and the Labour Market Partnerships program at the federal department of Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD). Funds from the latter were subsequently devolved to the province of Ontario and are now part of Employment Ontario at MTCU.

The project consists of four distinct activities. Each addresses cultural sector skill gaps in the workplace as well as practical professional development strategies identified by CCCO in previous research.

CDCW is contributing to improving the skill base for the cultural labour market leading to better conditions in the workplace, improved capacity for the sector’s human resource planning and participation in the economy, and a leadership more able to engage with the workforce challenges of the future.

All four initiatives were documented in thorough and detailed reports attached to this paper; this report highlights the significant outcomes from each initiative and brings together all resulting recommendations.

1. *Enriching Our Work in Culture: Professional Development in Ontario’s Cultural Sector*

CCCO commissioned the international market research firm Ipsos-Reid to investigate attitudes, spending and practices in professional development across the cultural sector. In addition to gathering comprehensive data on artists and cultural organizations, the report also examined themes and trends elsewhere to compare Ontario to national and international standards.

The study, entitled *Enriching Our Work in Culture: Professional Development in Ontario’s Cultural Sector, a Qualitative and Quantitative Study*, was released to the cultural community, governments and others on March 31st 2008.

CCCO assembled a multidisciplinary steering committee to review the project. Ipsos interviewed 500 organizations and received more than 600 completed online surveys from individual artists in the province. The quantitative report provided evidence that illustrated the issues uncovered in the qualitative research.

Culture is a highly complex sector, with a multitude of sub sectors and disciplines, each with different characteristics, widely varying employment arrangements and work practices. Leadership and succession issues challenge organizations. Individual artists need non-art skills to handle a multiplicity of job responsibilities. The cultural workplace was specifically identified as having a “weak culture of human resources.”

The quantitative survey represented a wide spectrum of employment including self-employed individual artists and contract workers, as well as people working full-time or part-time in cultural organizations.

The research documents key features of the sector – extensive self-employment and few fulltime employees, high education and low income, gaps in business skills, modest budgets, etc. It compares spending by cultural organizations and artists to national data from the Conference Board of Canada.

On March 31st 2008, more than 60 people from 35 organizations as well as arts funding agencies and government departments from different jurisdictions attended the release of the research. This group also took part in a planning exercise in response to the findings.

Ipsos Reid highlighted a set of implications from the research:

1. Highlight the need for business-type training among professional artists in Ontario
2. Encourage both professional artists and Ontario's cultural organizations to budget a sum of money, however modest, for professional development.
3. Build the economic story for professional development.
4. Create a network of like-minded organizations in Ontario, Canada and internationally to develop a Best Practices literature for professional development in the cultural sector

CCCO's board then approved specific recommendations that flow from the report:

1. That CCCO engage with the Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Society of Training and Development to identify where and how culture could be integrated into and benefit from conference and research activities.
2. That CCCO lead relevant cultural partners in the development of a network to provide ongoing discussion of existing and proposed studies on cultural P.D. issues and in the development of a regular conference on professional development issues in

the cultural sector. The conference should bring together private training organizations, community colleges, ASOs, unions and guilds, etc. to share tools, models, best practices and strategies from around the province, the country and internationally.

3. That CCCO develop and promote learning strategies such as its Peer Learning Circles to facilitate appropriate in-career professional development for leaders in the cultural sector.
4. That CCCO explore partnerships with non-profit bodies outside the culture sector to implement leadership initiatives such as executive training and lecture-programs.
5. That CCCO pursue further research to identify the characteristics of best practices in cultural professional development in other countries.
6. That CCCO encourage the Ontario government to set aside dedicated funds to support the professional development needs of individual artists, whether employed or self-employed. These funds should support the different needs of artists at different points in their career and should be directed towards professional development needs for both artistic and business skills.
7. That CCCO encourage the Ministry of Culture and other appropriate Ontario government partners to continue to act on the professional development undertakings set out in The Status of Ontario's Artists Act, 2007, and to ensure that they are applicable to all artists, whether employed or self-employed.
8. That CCCO continue its cross-sectoral initiatives in the areas of career skills for artists, such as *The Business of Art: Career Skills for Artists* and the *Spotlight on HR workshops*, working with key cultural partners such as arts service organizations and unions, and with the Ontario Ministries of Culture, Small Business, and Training, Colleges and Universities. CCCO should ensure that its curriculum, initiatives and programs in this area support and complement existing professional development providers.
9. That CCCO communicate the results of the surveys and their sub sector-specific tables of information to existing ASOs, unions and other cultural organizations to assist them as they plan their own long-term skill development programming. CCCO should partner with these organizations to develop information, advice, train-the-trainer programs and other necessary support that will assist them in this area in the future.

10. That CCCO develop a statement on the importance of professional development to the sector that includes the principle that professional development is an investment, not a cost.
11. That CCCO offer a "Train-the-Trainer" program to encourage organizations to develop their own expertise in delivering in-house professional development programs.
12. That CCCO promote the policy of establishing dedicated budget lines for professional development; organizations should aim to spend 1% of the total of fees and salaries for workers they employ or contract.
13. That CCCO encourage the Ministry of Culture to implement employer incentives for training and re-training, as recommended in *The Report on the Socio-Economic Status of the Artist in the 21st Century*.

2. The Business of Art: Career Skills for Artists

Previous research had noted the dearth of business skills for artists. This was validated in *Enriching Our Work in Culture*: when asked what skills they would need for their future, artists indicated business skills far more than artistic skills.

CCCO proposed to develop and test a cross-sectoral, arts-centered course of basic business skills for professional artists.

Working in partnership with five cultural membership organizations (from visual arts, music, theatre and dance), CCCO created a five-module course on goal setting, market research, marketing and promotion, financial planning and controls, and small business management. A curriculum consultant and subject matter specialists from culture used adult education principles to develop the modules. The course culminated in a 'graduation' where participants presented their business plans to colleagues and guests.

All participants were experienced artists from across the sector – video and film, electronic music, crafts, book-making, visual arts, popular music and recording, theatre, dance, stage design, writing and publishing. Most artists said that they actually worked in several fields and across sub sectors.

Each participant had take-home assignments as preparation for developing a business plan to guide his/her career, an exercise that differentiated this course from others. Sixteen participants out of 21 attended the final event; two-thirds (14) wrote and presented business plans.

Evaluations were administered for each individual session and the whole course. The curriculum coordinator also provided a report on his activities.

The course was over-subscribed; there was also a waiting list. Word got out and applications came from individuals who belonged to other arts bodies. CCCO continues to receive inquiries about it. Professional artists are clearly ready for this type of learning.

The course offers an efficient cross-sectoral approach to basic business literacy for artists. Although other organizations offer some workshops in business skills, there is no other course like this – oriented towards business planning to sustain a long-term career. Responses to the course and to cross-sectoral learning were both very positive.

CCCO has had inquiries from other artists and from other arts organizations about participating in the program or expanding it to other centres. There is interest in Thunder Bay, London and Hamilton. In addition, the Directors Guild of Canada is interested in seeing how the program could be adapted to its members. However, before there is any widespread distribution of the curriculum to other potential partners, CCCO should hold a second pilot to integrate suggestions by participants and to add other elements that would strengthen the course.

These suggestions include identifying Ontario-based successful cultural entrepreneurs as role models for the course, expanding its written materials and guides to business planning, and developing appropriate adult learning training for any potential instructors.

Recommendations from the final report are:

1. That CCCO hold a second pilot to strengthen and refine both the curriculum and accompanying materials according to the evaluation comments.
2. CCCO should research successful cultural entrepreneurship models that exemplify the skills required. These models or case studies should be incorporated into course content and handouts.
3. CCCO should develop a brief business planning handbook relevant to the Ontario cultural sector to accompany the course
4. As part of a second pilot, CCCO should develop more in-depth opportunities for instructors to become more comfortable with strategies to facilitate adult learning.

5. CCCO should develop a *Train-the-Trainer* workshop for the cultural sector that would provide instruction in adult learning techniques for cultural subject matter specialists.
6. CCCO should work with potential partners such as YES Employment Services – Thunder Bay, Arts Hamilton and the Directors Guild of

Canada to run pilot programs with them in order to determine the issues and challenges of rolling out the program on a provincial basis.

3. Peer Learning Circle Pilot Project

The issue of leadership skill development is important in culture. But how best to support that with so few formal professional development opportunities? Are there other learning formats that can stimulate ideas and build skills in our cultural leadership?

In a previous study, CCCO identified the peer learning circle – where a group of people form an articulated, formal and sustained partnership around a topic of common interest – as a model used elsewhere for continuing professional development.

Cultural service organizations and their executive directors have a critical responsibility for the long-term health of the sector. Improving the skills of these workers and leadership staff supports the capacity and sustainability of the sector as a whole. CCCO decided to explore the effectiveness of the peer learning circle on the professional development of mid-career executive directors in small to medium-sized cultural service organizations.

A consultant facilitated and documented the process. Nine participants (from Toronto, Muskoka, Hamilton, Ottawa, London and Burlington) came to five monthly meetings in Toronto. The circle was focused on strengthening the individual's capacity. Whether the individual's goal was for the organization, career-related or personal, the action had to be the participant's to take and be accountable for. At the meetings participants set and reported on specific goals, discussed Tools and Tips, did small group coaching and shared new goals with the entire group.

Pre-circle, mid-circle and post-circle questionnaires were administered by the facilitator; the mid-circle evaluations and final recommendations were sent directly to CCCO as a check.

The executive directors acknowledged a lack of training and professional development opportunities, the lack of a clear path to senior positions and a resulting "fraud" syndrome. Although the issues they identified (such as increasing demand for services without corresponding resources) are sectoral and systemic, participants successfully set goals within issues they considered priorities.

Specific learning and knowledge outcomes included:

- Identification of key issues
- Application of new skills
- Application of new tools, techniques and technology
- Development and use of a peer network
- Enhanced personal reflection and awareness

- Positive changes in behaviour
- Increased risk-taking

The impact of more confident and more skilled executive directors could be seen on organizations and on individuals in their ED roles:

- One ED successfully led her board through a succession planning discussion that furthered the organization's governance
- Another participant tied all goals directly to a step-by-step implementation of a workplace-based major project
- One ED increased delegation to staff and changed the frequency and nature of staff/ED meetings
- Another circle member reported being more assertive and taking increased control of the setting of work priorities and time

The pilot raises a number of questions about peer group composition, the transferability of the process and facilitation skills in the community.

Based on the outcomes of the pilot, input from participants and the facilitator, CCCO recommends further tests on three types of circles:

1. That the pilot group be supported to continue for a second six-month term. As some of the group have new positions, it is important to track whether there is sufficient commonality to function effectively and support each other over the long-term.
2. That a second peer circle be formed targeted to executive directors with over five years of experience to see if the outcomes are consistent and the exercises and worksheets appropriate for a different group of participants.
3. That additional peer learning circles with other target groups be formed to test the extent of the model's transferability to other segments of the cultural community and the appropriateness of the exercises and worksheets. (Other segments may include early career workers and targeted positions such as curators or artistic directors).

Neutral facilitation was considered the key to managing the circle's time and maintaining focus. Other options such as rotating facilitation responsibility inside the circle or having volunteer facilitators were unlikely to meet expectations of participants, especially senior-level members.

Effective facilitation requires preparation and skills. In order to ensure future circles are effective, CCCO requires a pool of experienced facilitators to draw from as needed who are familiar with the objectives of peer learning circles and have credibility within the cultural sector.

Recommendations in this area are:

1. That an outside facilitator continues to be used for Peer Learning Circles.
2. That CCCO develop a workshop to train a core of facilitators to support future circles.

4. HR Online Project

CCCO's *Tips and Templates* Section on its website (www.workinculture.ca) is the first inventory of HR cultural materials available online and free to the whole cultural community. The section had 40 items taken primarily from CCCO'S existing *HR Tools*, booklets on HR topics written for culture.

The goal of this project was to expand this limited human resources information in a way that would be easy to locate, easy to understand, and identified with sources from the cultural community. This would enable cultural managers, cultural workers, boards of directors and self-employed artists to educate themselves on human resource topics that help create functional, effective, efficient and harmonious teams and organizations.

Working with an advisory committee and with CCCO, a consultant reviewed CCCO's website information for gaps and improvements and solicited sample HR materials from organizations across the whole sector.

CCCO added **62** items to the *Tip Sheets & Templates* section of www.workinculture.ca, including **45** samples, **16** templates and **1** tip. Downloads of this section have tripled to 6,500 a month. The 62 new documents covered **ten** new topics including:

1. Alcohol and Drug Use
2. Confidentiality and Privacy
3. Conflict of Interest and Ethics
4. Creative Compensation
5. Employment Standards
6. Independent Contractors
7. Organizational Performance
8. Professional Development
9. Work-Life Balance
10. Working with Your Board

The Committee reviewed hundreds of pages of documents. Their attention to detail and commitment to legal and ethical concerns for this project ensured that the final documents chosen are up to standard and relevant to culture.

The project also added **49** links to the website. Viewers can now access information on compensation, employment standards, career development, health and safety, terminations, and working with volunteers. The 49 links and 62 new samples make a grand total of **111** additions to www.workinculture.ca.

It is clear that there are some areas of human resources where the cultural sector is lacking:

- Professional development opportunities and policies
- Career skills, including leadership training and development and managing employees
- Short-term and long-term disability policies
- Work-life balance and stress reduction policies
- Succession planning policies including those to address high attrition

Access to the Tips and Templates section has dramatically increased from 2000 to over 6,000 monthly. It is also clear that the project pushed the limits of CCCO's website: the site has no search capability. At best, the site could only be cross-referenced to remind viewers of relevant information in other sections. The technical requirements for other changes proved too costly and without an index or search function, further expansion will not be possible.

There were two recommendations from this study:

1. CCCO should take this opportunity to collaborate with the cultural sector to determine what roadblocks are preventing cultural organizations from pursuing these topics.
2. In order to meet the demands of the cultural sector and serve the needs of visitors who download and view samples from the website each month, CCCO must consider a technical re-design of www.workinculture.ca. A search function on the website is essential as well as an index organizing information into well formatted lists allowing viewers to quickly locate exactly what they are looking for. This type of website will require a built in database and will be costly, but the final product will be the only one of its kind in Ontario and Canada.