

***ENRICHING OUR WORK IN CULTURE: Professional Development in Ontario's Cultural Sector***

**Research Commissioned from IPSOS-REID by Cultural Careers Council Ontario  
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Professional development, a central priority for Cultural Careers Council Ontario (CCCO), has increasingly been identified as an issue for culture and was prominently featured in the Ministry of Culture's *Report on the Socio-Economic Status of the Artist in Ontario in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and in The Status of Ontario's Artists Act (2007).

Artists may be models for the way we will be working in the future – independent, entrepreneurial, and more reliant on individual networks than conventional organizations. CCCO believes:

- that the upgrading of workers' artistic and business skills is essential to the sector's long-term growth and continuing capacity in the Ontario economy;
- that artists, cultural organizations and governments must advocate for an investment in professional development;
- and that the costs of professional development should be shared by workers, employers and governments.

In 2007, CCCO contracted Ipsos Reid, the international market research firm, to undertake two studies to get accurate data about current professional development practices in the province:

- A qualitative report to review in-career skill building strategies elsewhere and to see how Ontario measures up to national and international standards; this phase included a literature search and elite interviews in Canada and internationally;
- A quantitative report which surveyed Ontario artists and arts organizations to determine actual professional development practices and spending in the province.

Ipsos and CCCO worked with a steering committee that represented the cultural sub sectors: Brian Topp (ACTRA), Anne McClelland (Book and Periodical Council), Kristian Clarke (CARFAC Ontario), Chris McDonald (Hot Docs), Pat Bradley (Ontario Arts Council) and Marie Lalonde (Ontario Museum Association). Margaret Eaton (CCCO vice-president, ABC-Canada Literacy Foundation) chaired the committee.

The two reports have been released separately; CCCO has also released an integrated report under the title *ENRICHING OUR WORK IN CULTURE: Professional Development in Ontario's Cultural Sector*.

## **Methodology**

The qualitative report involved a literature search and elite interviews at the national and international level.

The quantitative surveys concentrated on artists and on the organizations that produce artistic and creative content – for example, producing companies in theatre and film, galleries and museums, publishers and festivals. (The survey did not address organizations that mainly distribute art such as libraries and broadcasters.) The questionnaires employed the Ontario Arts Council definition of an artist. Individual artists – such as performers and visual artists, stage technicians, curators, writers – were solicited across the entire spectrum of the cultural sector. The research also relied on Statistics Canada data and North American Industry Classification System categories (NAICS codes) to produce survey samples that are representative of the target populations as a whole, according to recognized authority. These choices will also make it possible to replicate the research in the future.

Ipsos interviewed 500 cultural organizations and received over 600 completed questionnaires from individual professional artists. Both surveys covered the entire gamut of culture: performing arts, media arts, heritage, visual arts and crafts, and writing and publishing. The samples represent a population of 52,500 professional artists and 4,688 cultural organizations.

## **Findings – Leadership and Research**

As Ipsos reported in the qualitative research phase, “a growing body of literature takes the view that development of workers’ skills is a key factor in driving economic growth”. In Canada’s general workforce, employer expenditure on training rose to \$914 per worker in 2005 (according to the Conference Board of Canada). In 2005, Canadian firms spent 1.75% of their overall payroll on in-career training. Increasingly individuals themselves are recognizing the importance of upgrading their skills and investing in their own training.

The cultural workplace has been specifically identified as having a “weak culture of human resources.” 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.”

Ipsos research found that a government policy commitment to professional development was reflected in the support of cultural professional development. In the United Kingdom, support for cultural P.D. flows from the federal government’s policies. Another and important trend observed in the United States and in the United Kingdom was the development of small and local organizations focussed on cultural professional development and business skills.

There are a few cultural P.D. initiatives underway in the U.S.A. and the U.K. that could serve as models for Ontario. Most concentrate on leadership and business skills by offering programs that combine workplace and theoretical learning. There is a strong focus on administrators.

### **Findings – Individual Professional Artists**

Artists are evenly distributed across the 25-64 age range; seven in 10 have been professionals for 10 years or more. Artists receive low compensation from their artistic work – half receive less than \$20,000 annually – and most subsidize their artistic income through other employment. Three and a half times more professional artists than Ontario adults overall have a university or post-graduate degree.

The sector is characterized by a big emphasis on freelancers who are likely to have multiple jobs or positions:

- Half of professional artists are contract workers, freelancers or self-employed and another quarter describe themselves as sole proprietors or partners;
- Among cultural organizations, 86% also use the services of contract workers.

(Because current government-sponsored training, re-training and self-employment programs are E I-based, this makes the vast majority of professional artists ineligible for support.)

Other governments have recognized the importance of specific funding programs to support skills upgrading for individual cultural workers. Some examples of such programs exist in Quebec (through Le conseil Québécois des ressources humaines en culture) and in England.

### **Artists – Committed to Professional Development**

Individual artists are highly committed to their artistic practice and to their own professional development. Artists believe strongly in its benefits: more than two-thirds agree that professional development contributes substantially to enhanced creativity, career advancement and income growth.

The vast majority (84%) participated in professional development in this past year. Most artists pursue continuous training, most commonly to upgrade their artistic skills or to learn new artistic techniques. They are most likely to have gone to private trainers or mentors for professional development, spending a significant proportion of income on training.

### **Individual Artists Want Business Skills**

The practice of individual artists can be likened to micro-businesses: they require skills to research, develop and create products or services, and to promote, market, finance and manage their art. As Ipsos noted in the first report, “Not only do artists need to stay up-to-date with their technical skills such as singing or dancing, but they also need to possess business skills such as marketing, new technologies and human resources.” Three of the top four most common reasons to pursue professional development are related to artistic skills, yet most professional artists feel that to do the work they want in the next 1-3 years they need additional business-type skills.

### **Spending by Artists on Professional Development**

Overall professional artists in Ontario spent an average of \$1,442 out of their own earnings on professional development in the past year (median - \$500). Artists cited financial issues as the most pressing reasons for not taking part in more professional development. Three out of four received no financial assistance for their professional development.

That artists are primarily freelancers with no long-term formal employment with organizations may explain why two-thirds believe governments should do a better job of providing financial support for professional development. Fewer artists look to an organization they work for to provide them with support.

### **Cultural Organizations**

The sector comprises both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, half of them in operation for 20 or more years. It is important to recognize the issue of scale in the sector. According to *The Report on the Socio-Economic Status of the Artist in Ontario in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* the cultural sector contributed over \$1,700 in economic return for every resident of Ontario. Yet three in five organizations employ four or fewer full-time workers. These are small businesses and by overall corporate standards extremely small.

### **Organizations: Professional Development Not A Cost of Doing Business**

Cultural organizations also agree that professional development contributes substantially to enhanced creativity and income growth. However, in the past year, cultural organizations spent an average of \$43 per worker on professional development. (In contrast, according to the Conference Board, in 2005 Canadian business invested \$914 per worker.)

One of three organizations provides no financial support for training at all, and three of four do not have a fixed budget for professional development. This suggests they do not see investment in skills as a cost of doing business. Yet organizations see themselves as being supportive of professional development through various means and find financial barriers to be the top reasons they do not provide more financial support.

In theory, organizations believe they have a responsibility to foster the professional development of artists. But the financial realities they face and the fact that they contract a high proportion of freelancers may explain why they also feel that government must do a better job of providing financial support for professional development.

**Both reports and Cultural Careers Council Ontario's response and recommendations have been posted to [www.workinculture.ca](http://www.workinculture.ca).**

## IPSOS – IMPLICATIONS

1. Highlight the need for business-type training among professional artists in Ontario
2. Encourage both professional artists and Ontario's cultural organisations 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 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.