

## Economic Conditions of Nelson and Area's Arts, Culture, and Heritage Sectors

In summer 2021 - in partnership with the Nelson and District Arts Council, Community Futures Central Kootenay, and the City of Nelson's Cultural Development Committee - Selkirk Innovates conducted a study of the arts, culture, and heritage sectors in Nelson and Area. Surveys and interviews with sector members aimed to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the sectors, describe the sector's economic conditions, and identify opportunities for support.

[The Economic Conditions of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector Study](#) (Arts, Culture, and Heritage Study/the Study) reports the findings of the research and provides a high-level assessment of impact of the sector on the local economy and identifies recommendations to support the sector moving forward.

## Supporting the Arts and Culture Sectors

The Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership (NAEDP) identified supporting the arts and culture sectors as a strategic priority for 2022. As a first step in learning how to best support the sector, two roundtables were held to better understand the findings from the Arts, Culture and Heritage Study and to identify opportunities for partnerships between the arts and culture sectors and the local business community.

## Arts and Culture Roundtable #1

The first roundtable, held on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, aimed to follow-up on the low uptake of COVID-19 business supports by the arts and culture sector, as reported in the Study, and to better understand housing and workspace challenges that the sector faces.

Participants in the roundtable attributed the low uptake of COVID-19 supports to eligibility, grant availability, and a difficulty navigating the application process.



Some examples included:

- Eligibility for supports
  - Artists are often not aware of available funding and/or if they are eligible;
  - Most artists do not see themselves as *entrepreneurs* or *businesses*, so they assume they are ineligible for business supports;
  - Most artists are self-employed/contractors, so are not eligible for wage supports;
  - Arts events were ineligible; and
  - Organizations in rural communities are often ineligible due to small audience size and/or a lack of diversity in the community.
- Support availability
  - Grants are more often available for organizations rather than individuals, and
  - Grants are often awarded to better known artists and organizations (rural issue) and/or those who have received funding before.
- The funding applications are hard to navigate, and artists often lack the necessary skills for grant writing.

## Arts and Culture Roundtable #2

The second roundtable, held on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, engaged individuals from the arts and culture sectors and those from the business community to discuss opportunities for businesses to support local artists.

Discussed opportunities for support include:

- Creating an endowment fund that small businesses contribute to for the purpose of supporting the arts and culture sectors in Nelson. A committee would be set up to determine how to disburse the funds. This could be a Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce led initiative.
- Creating a development policy through the City that requires any new development to allocate one of their retail spaces for artist spaces.
- Connecting the top 20% of employers in the community with the arts & culture sector to discuss how they can support each other.
- Incentivizing supporting the arts.
- Providing grant writing support.
- Expanding the Nelson & District Arts Council and/or Craft Connection's role to include packaging together local arts products and selling them in bulk (e.g., corporate gift contract).

## Opportunities for Support

The findings from the arts and culture roundtables identified ways in which NAEDP can support the arts and culture sectors. These include:

- Identify and prioritize support of sub-sectors of the arts and culture sectors that have been most negatively impacted by the pandemic, and that continue to struggle;
- Drive uptake of business supports by the sector;
- Support the creation of a collective vision or strategy for the arts, culture, and heritage sector in Nelson and area to ensure it includes an economic development focus;
- Facilitate peer mentoring within the sector;
- Support the creation of an endowment fund that small businesses can contribute to for the purpose of supporting the arts and culture sectors in Nelson and area;



- Advocate to the City of Nelson for a development policy that requires new development to allocate one of their retail spaces for artist space;
- Facilitate an arts and culture roundtable with members from the top 20% of employers in the community; and
- Use future *Support Local Grants* to focus on corporate gifting of local artists' products.

## Next Steps

The NAEDP is focusing on two strategies to support the arts, culture, and heritage sector in Nelson and area: facilitating a peer mentorship group and exploring the creation of an endowment fund.

First, in partnership with WeBC, Community Futures Central Kootenay is facilitating a peer mentorship group for women in the arts. The [Peer Mentor Group for Women Business Owners](#) will target women in arts, culture, and heritage sectors who are in early stages of operating their businesses. The program will help build competence with decision making, help improve business knowledge, increase productivity, and provide opportunities for peer support.

Second, the NAEDP is facilitating further discussions with members from the business community to determine next steps in setting up an endowment fund with the purpose of supporting the arts and culture sectors in Nelson and Area. This fund will allow small businesses to contribute funds that will go directly to the artists in the area.

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