



CONSEIL DES
ARTS DU
MANITOBA
ARTS COUNCIL

Arts & Culture Everywhere

MANITOBA ARTS COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030



Land acknowledgement

The Manitoba Arts Council carries out its work on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge that northern Manitoba includes ancestral lands of the Inuit.

Our office is located on Treaty One territory, but our work extends throughout Treaties Two, Three, Four, and Five. We respect the Treaties made on these territories and remain committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

We recognize that Indigenous Peoples' knowledge of and relationship with the land, water, and air is key to a sustainable future for all.

At the Manitoba Arts Council we respect the distinct worldview and creative culture of Indigenous communities by prioritizing Indigenous artistic and cultural expression through our granting programs and initiatives.





A few words about arts, culture, and creativity

Arts and culture are central to how individuals and communities experience the world. They shape how we connect with one another, express ideas and emotions, and share the stories that define who we are.

In Manitoba, arts and culture are not only a source of expression, but a driver of community well-being, identity, and economic activity. They reflect the diversity of the province, connect generations, and contribute to vibrant, resilient communities across urban, rural, and northern regions.

Creativity lies at the heart of both arts and culture. It fuels innovation, invites new ways of thinking, and strengthens our ability to respond to a changing world. Together, arts, culture, and creativity enrich daily life and help build a province where people feel connected, inspired, and proud of who they are.





Introduction

The Manitoba Arts Council (MAC) has developed this strategic plan to guide its work over the coming years, ensuring it continues to respond to a changing environment and the evolving needs of Manitoba's arts and cultural community.

This plan builds on MAC's longstanding role as a funder, partner, and steward of public investment in arts and culture. It reflects both the strengths of the current system and the opportunities to enhance MAC's impact across the province.

The strategic direction outlined in this plan is grounded in engagement with artists, organizations, and communities across Manitoba, and is designed to strengthen the accessibility, sustainability, and visibility of the arts and cultural sector.

Consultation

The development of this strategic plan was informed by a front-end consultation process designed to better understand the perspectives, experiences, and aspirations of Manitoba's arts and cultural community.

Consultation included:

- 256 survey respondents, representing artists, organizations, and stakeholders across Manitoba
- 69 focus group participants, including diverse and equity-deserving communities, rural and northern representatives, individual artists, organizations, and MAC staff
- Two facilitated planning sessions with MAC's board and staff, grounded in the insights gathered through the front-end consultation

The survey provided a broad snapshot of perceptions and priorities, while focus groups explored key issues in greater depth and surfaced strategic tensions and future opportunities. The facilitated sessions created space to consider what was heard, explore options, and shape the strategic framework.

Overall, there is strong confidence in MAC with approximately 80% of respondents indicating that MAC is connected to the sector's needs and realities and can fulfill its purpose, alongside clear expectations for evolution to strengthen impact.



What we heard

Across both survey and focus group engagement, several consistent themes emerged:

Funding is not keeping pace with reality

Funding levels for both artists and organizations have remained relatively stagnant while costs have risen significantly. This is affecting sustainability, limiting artistic output, and contributing to sector fragility.

Strong demand for more accessible and transparent processes

Stakeholders described the granting process as complex and difficult to navigate. There is a clear call for simpler applications, clearer criteria, faster timelines, and more transparent decision-making and feedback.

Tension around equity and inclusion

While there is broad support for equity and inclusion, there is also a need for greater clarity in how these principles are applied. Stakeholders are seeking a more transparent and balanced approach that reflects diverse realities across the province.

Rural and northern communities face structural barriers

Participants emphasized inequities related to geography, including limited access to resources, higher costs, and barriers to participation. There is a strong call for more tailored approaches, increased outreach, and equitable regional investment.

Desire for stronger leadership, advocacy, and visibility

MAC is seen as a trusted and influential organization, with an opportunity to take a more visible leadership role – advocating for the value of arts and culture, strengthening partnerships, and increasing public awareness of the sector's impact.

Need for greater support for artists' careers and sector development

Artists and organizations are seeking more professional development, mentorship, and opportunities to connect, collaborate, and build sustainable careers within a stronger ecosystem.

Overall insight

MAC is valued, trusted, and central to Manitoba's arts and culture ecosystem, but there is a clear call for it to evolve its role, rebalance its approach, and increase its impact in a changing and increasingly complex environment.



What this means for MAC

The insights gathered through consultation point to several clear directions for MAC's future focus.

There is a need to rebalance how funding is distributed to better support sustainability, equity, and impact across artists, organizations, and communities. There is also a strong call to improve access to funding by simplifying processes and reducing barriers for applicants.

At the same time, there is a need to strengthen MAC's connection to communities across Manitoba, particularly in rural and northern regions, through more tailored approaches and intentional engagement.

Stakeholders are looking for MAC to play a more visible and proactive role in strengthening the arts and culture ecosystem through advocacy, partnership development, and increased public awareness of the value of arts and culture.

These insights have directly informed the strategic framework and desired long-term outcomes.

Desired long-term outcomes

These outcomes describe the broader changes MAC is working toward through its investments in arts and culture.

Manitoba is Canada's arts and cultural capital

Manitoba's thriving arts and cultural landscape is a major point of pride for its residents and an essential part of what defines the province.

Artists thrive

Artists can build sustainable and meaningful careers within a strong arts ecosystem.

Arts and culture are everywhere

Arts and cultural experiences are accessible in communities throughout Manitoba.

Arts and culture are catalysts

Arts and culture are recognized as powerful drivers of community well-being, creativity, and the economy.



Strategic framework

This framework outlines MAC's strategic direction over the next four years.

Vision

A vibrant Manitoba where arts and culture are embraced by everyone, fueling creativity, connection, and provincewide prosperity.

Purpose

MAC invests so that all Manitobans benefit from arts and culture.

Values

MAC strives for:

Equity

Funding, programs, and policies that are equitable for all. We recognize that some groups face barriers and that achieving equity for these groups may require targeted measures.

Collaboration

Partnerships to make efficient use of resources, achieve common goals, and maximize impact. We value a collaborative approach in our work and the work of funding recipients.

Diversity

The diversity of Manitobans to be represented in work we support, within our organization, and through our partnerships.

Accountability

Transparent decision-making on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba, informed by actively hearing stakeholders.

Creativity

Supporting the original expression of ideas in our work and through our investments.

Stewardship

Maximizing benefit for citizens through our investment in arts and culture.



Pillars

The pillars describe the core areas of work through which MAC fulfills its purpose. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Cultivate and celebrate artists

Supporting artists at every stage of their careers through funding, development, and recognition opportunities.

Strengthen the arts and culture ecosystem

Supporting organizations, partnerships, and sector development that elevate Manitoba's arts and cultural life.

Amplify the value of arts and culture

Championing the value of arts and culture in shaping communities, fostering cultural expression, and strengthening Manitoba's economy and identity.

Strategic priorities

These priorities identify where MAC will strengthen its effectiveness and impact.

Strategic priority 1: Enhance access

MAC will expand opportunities for all Manitobans to access meaningful arts and culture experiences across the province.

Key actions will include:

- Identifying more opportunities to support artists and organizations beyond Winnipeg's perimeter
- Partnering with communities to support locally driven initiatives
- Piloting new approaches to support arts and culture in priority communities
- Working with Indigenous Peoples to acknowledge and support their unique artistic and cultural expression





Strategic priority 2: Rebalance funding

MAC will realign funding to better support artists, organizations, and communities.

Key actions will include:

- Ensuring investment maximizes creativity and broadens the reach of arts and culture across Manitoba
- Creating funding opportunities for previously excluded artists, communities, and organizations
- Supporting artists throughout their careers, from emerging to established

Strategic priority 3: Shift role and reach

MAC will expand its role as a connector and catalyst to strengthen the visibility and impact of arts and culture across Manitoba.

Key actions will include:

- Creating opportunities for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective action
- Building strategic partnerships that enhance Manitoba's arts and culture ecosystem
- Exploring public and private fund development opportunities

Foundational priority: Enabling our impact

MAC will strengthen organizational effectiveness and align operations with desired outcomes.

Key actions will include:

- Improving accessibility and efficiency of the granting process
- Clarifying grant criteria and decision-making and strengthening accountability
- Strengthening and realigning operational structures and processes
- Inviting, learning from, and incorporating Indigenous ways into MAC's structure and processes



Conclusion

This strategic plan sets a clear direction for the Manitoba Arts Council, grounded in the voices of the arts and cultural community and focused on strengthening impact across the province. It reflects both a commitment to what is working well and a readiness to evolve in response to emerging needs, opportunities, and challenges.

Progress on this plan will be supported through ongoing planning, monitoring, and reporting. Each year, MAC will develop an annual plan aligned with this strategic framework, to be approved by the Board of Directors alongside the annual budget. Regular reporting to the Board will track progress on key priorities and indicators, ensuring accountability, transparency, and the ability to adapt as needed over time.

Through this approach, MAC will continue to learn, respond, and refine its work – strengthening its role in supporting artists, organizations, and communities and contributing to a vibrant Manitoba where arts and culture are embraced by all, fueling creativity, connection, and provincewide prosperity.

