

ARTS COUNCIL BEST PRACTICES

C2.
Communication
Creative and Cultural Industries
Advisory Committee – June 11, 2025
Item No. 2



Taste of Lawrence. Wexford Heights BIA, 2023. Photo Credit: Nick Wons.

Presented by Economic Development and Culture, City of Toronto

Background – Toronto Arts Council (TAC)

- Established in 1974 to distribute arts funding on behalf of the City of Toronto.
- At the time, federal and provincial arts funding bodies existed, but there was a gap at the city level.
- Unlike the federal and provincial arts councils, which are agencies of the government, the City of Toronto chose to fund TAC as a non-profit, arms-length organization.
- TAC operates independently, guided by peer assessment and community input; ensuring transparency and artistic integrity.
- TAC's initial budget in 1974 was \$315,000, with funding provided to 14 organizations.



Reverence, 2020. A film by Teaunna Gray. Toronto History Museums.
Image: City of Toronto.


How the Toronto Arts Council Operates Today

- Administers over \$25 million annually in grants to artists and arts organizations across Toronto.
- Grants are distributed through a variety of streams, including discipline-based programs (e.g., dance, theatre, community arts) and strategic project grants.
- Principle of arms-length peer assessment, informs the composition of TAC's Board of Directors, which includes 20+ professional artists and arts leaders.
- In 1995, Toronto Arts Council established the Toronto Arts Foundation to complement public funding with private sector support. The Foundation continues to support the work of the TAC.



UNFOLDING by the Community Arts Guild, Nuit Blanche, 2019.
Image: City of Toronto

Scope of Toronto Arts Council Funding

In scope...	Out of scope...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides project and operating grants across disciplines• Offers targeted support for youth, newcomer, and community-engaged arts• Advocates for arts funding and support• Offers outreach and information sessions, supporting access and knowledge around grant applications• Plays a role in amplifying the visibility of Toronto's arts sector through awards and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not fund for-profit ventures or commercial arts enterprises.• Does not provide support for capital projects (e.g., building renovations, equipment purchases).• Doesn't provide long-term or multi-year grants to individuals — reserved for organizations.• Doesn't act as a presenter or curator• Doesn't fund educational institutions• Cannot act as a union or collective bargaining body for artists.

What Would We Do Differently?

- The City and Toronto Arts Council are currently developing a collaborative framework to guide how we work together on shared priorities. The framework will articulate how both parties will work together on:
 - **Shared funding objectives**
 - **Clear articulation of roles and responsibilities**
 - **Research and evaluation**

Establishing this shared understanding early in the establishment of a new arts council will help to ensure collective impact.
- Other observations include:
 - Prioritize co-governance with communities beyond artistic peer assessment, including greater representation of equity-deserving groups.
 - Ensure that the structure and funding model of the arts council gives the Council the ability to respond to emerging trends, opportunities and needs.
 - Consider broader wraparound supports for artists including health and wellness supports



Thank You

Questions?