

TOWNSHIP OF CENTRE WELLINGTON CULTURAL ACTION PLAN AND WORK PLAN

Prepared By:

Bridget MacIntosh



Contents

Land Acknowledgement	3
Executive Summary	5
Project Background and Objectives.....	8
Methodology	8
Analysis	9
Centre Wellington Context	9
Previous Township Culture-Related Plans.....	10
Previous Township-Led Culture Consultations	11
Culture Community Engagement – February 2023	11
Let’s Talk Culture Survey – February 2023	11
Fergus Grand Theatre - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges Report.....	11
Documents & Presentations Reviewed	11
Current Community Development: Focus Areas of the Township’s Culture Division.....	12
Consultations	12
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee Brief.....	12
Interview Summary.....	12
Key Projects Open House & Mayor’s Town Hall	13
Cultural Sector Trends and Opportunities.....	14
Municipal Comparators	17
A Culture Workplan for Centre Wellington	20
A CONNECTOR & FACILITATOR.....	20
ACTION AREAS	20
A FUNDER & INVESTOR.....	21
ACTION AREAS	21
A PROMOTER & ADVOCATE	21
ACTION AREAS	22
Acknowledgements	22
Appendices	24

Land Acknowledgement

The lands we know today as the Township of Centre Wellington have been home to Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We acknowledge that we are on the treaty lands and traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee.

With increasing encroachment by non-Indigenous settlers in the Township of Centre Wellington, the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee could not continue their traditional lifestyle and settled in their villages along the Credit River and in the Grand River Valley.

These Indigenous nations uphold their Treaty Rights within our jurisdiction.

Today, the Township remains home to Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to share and respect Mother Earth and are committed to building constructive and cooperative relationships with Indigenous nations.

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The Township of Centre Wellington's previous Cultural Action Plan, *Culture Matters*, was completed in 2013 and requires updating to reflect new realities and community priorities. To maintain momentum, a consultant was hired to assess Centre Wellington's current cultural environment, to identify sector trends, and to develop an updated Culture Workplan that identifies roles the Township can play to support culture and to guide strategic actions for Township staff over the next 1 – 7 years until a new Culture Plan can be developed.

The project was carried out in three phases:

1. Reviewing the Township's context and consultation data.
 - To understand the Township's operational context and the needs of its cultural community.
2. Researching the cultural sector.
 - To understand the current context of the cultural sector, including trends, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Developing a report and workplan.
 - Informed by the findings from previous phases.

Pending approval of the Culture Workplan by Township Council, the consultant will provide ongoing advisement to Township staff into 2025 to guide the implementation of the workplan.

The development of this report and interim workplan aim to:

- Build trust with the community by showing that their input is being acted upon.
- Demonstrate transparency and accountability in cultural development efforts.
- Offer updated information on challenges and trends in the cultural sector.
- Highlight the role of similar municipalities in cultural support.
- Allow staff to report progress annually to the Township Council and community.

The review of Centre Wellington culture-related plans and consultations both previously held and conducted as part of the development of this report identified the following challenges and needs such as:

- A need for increased financial and in-kind support to cultural groups and organizations.
- Better promotion of local activities.
- Stronger collaboration and communication amongst cultural groups and the Township.
- The need for greater event diversity and to engage with diverse and marginalized groups through outreach and inclusive programming.
- Lack of volunteer availability.
- A need for affordable performance/studio and storage spaces.
- The impacts of COVID-19 on local events were significant, leading to increased costs while experiencing reductions in sponsorship, vendors, and available labor.

Trends and issues facing the cultural sector include:

- Funding and Financial Stability
- Inflation and Lingering Impacts of COVID-19
- Improving Working Conditions and Compensation
- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Diverse and Intergenerational Experiences
- Increased Cultural Tourism
- Technological Shifts & Audience Engagement
- Climate Change and Sustainability

- Reconciliation and Indigenous Relationships
- Social, Economic, and Wellness Benefits of Arts and Culture

Considering these trends and similar issues facing cultural communities across Ontario, municipalities are increasingly adopting roles that emphasize collaboration, investment, and promotion to support the arts and culture sector. This approach aims to foster a vibrant cultural landscape, enriching communities, stimulating economic growth and improving overall community health.

To address the needs of Centre Wellington's culture community, the Culture Workplan identifies three key roles for the Township to play to support its culture community.

Connector & Facilitator

- Foster networking, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among artists, cultural organizations, businesses, and the community.

Funder & Investor

- Provide financial and non-monetary support to strengthen local cultural organizations and professionals.

Promoter & Advocate

- Advocate for the arts and culture sector and promote cultural events and initiatives within the Township.

Each role includes corresponding actions areas and tasks to ensure that culture continues to thrive in Centre Wellington. In total, the workplan includes 13 action areas and 33 tasks, with timelines and priorities aligned with the Township's Strategic Plan. Additional long-term tasks, (8+ years), that emerged as a result of the consultations and research but that are not included in the workplan's 7-year timespan have been provided to Township staff for future consideration. It should be noted that some of these actions and tasks represent work that is currently being done by Township Culture staff including the team at the Fergus Grand Theatre. In particular, the Township's ongoing cultural initiatives include projects that are focused on the following four areas:

- Connecting to Township Resources
- Networking
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Culture
- Communication and Marketing

To maintain momentum in these areas and to provide clarity on how the Culture Workplan can be seamlessly integrated into the Township's existing operations, the workplan identifies how each proposed tasks connects to each of these ongoing projects.

The Culture Workplan will build on the solid work of Culture staff and the Fergus Grand Theatre and aims to strengthen Centre Wellington as a place where culture thrives, is inclusive, and is integrated into the community, ensuring that culture remains a priority. A definition of culture is not provided as part of this project as this would be an outcome of a more fulsome Culture Plan.

Report



Project Background and Objectives

Centre Wellington's previous Cultural Action Plan, *Culture Matters, Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, 2013*, was completed in 2013 and requires updating to align with new Township realities and cultural community priorities. In the interim, Township staff have completed several community consultations and projects to maintain the Township's cultural momentum and to gather valuable insights from the Township's cultural community.

To bridge the gap until a new Culture Principal Plan can be created, the Township sought the services of a consultant with expertise in municipal cultural management and advisement. The consultant was tasked with contextualizing the Township's cultural milieu, detailing current trends in the cultural sector and providing strategic guidance to Township staff on actions and investments to best serve the community and leverage existing resources.

Project tasks took place over four phases:

- 1) Centre Wellington Context and Consultation Data Review
- 2) Cultural Sector Research
- 3) Report and Workplan Development
- 4) Ongoing Support and Project Debriefing

This report and workplan is a way for the Township of Centre Wellington to show its commitment to cultural development until a formal Culture Principal Plan can be created. The benefits of providing such a report and workplan are many and include:

- Building trust with the community by acknowledging that the information the community has shared with the Township to date regarding cultural development is being utilized. This also reassures the community that cultural development is important to the Township of Centre Wellington.
- Embodies transparency and accountability by showing how the information gathered from the community has been incorporated into an interim workplan to support cultural development until a Culture Principal Plan can be created. It also indicates how existing Township resources (i.e. staff time) are being used to support cultural development in this interim period.
- Provides up-to-date information on the issues, challenges and trends facing the wider cultural sector. This presents an opportunity for the Township to identify alignments, gaps and opportunities that will inform the development of an effective workplan.
- Provides details on the role similar municipalities play in supporting cultural development.
- Provides an opportunity for staff to report back to Township Council and the community on an annual basis on the progress made on workplan tasks.

Methodology

The following methodology was used to complete this project.

CENTRE WELLINGTON CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION DATA REVIEW

Understanding of the Township's current operational context and needs of Centre Wellington's cultural community.

- Initial meeting with the Client to review needs/expectations. All relevant Township documents, operational plans, and visioning documents connected to culture was reviewed as was the data collected from recent cultural community consultations.
- High-level research about Centre Wellington community and context.
- Interviews were held with representatives from the Elora Centre for the Arts, Riverfest Elora, Wendy's Favourite Things, Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Twilight at Templin Gardens, Fergus BIA, Elora Fergus Arts Council, Sensational Elora and the Elora Farmer's Market. (Note: some of the individuals interviewed represented more than one of the above noted organizations.)
- Review of the Elora Centre for the Arts' September 11, 2023, presentation to the Township's Committee of the Whole.
- Presentation at a Community Open House about the draft roles and actions the Township could play to support culture and gathering of community input into these roles and actions.

CULTURAL SECTOR RESEARCH

Understanding of current cultural sector context with respect to trends, challenges, issues, opportunities, and municipal roles.

- Research and synthesis of trends, challenges, issues, and opportunities in the cultural sector.
- Identification of inspirational approaches, resources, and case studies to support current and future work.
- Providing information on the various roles the Township of Centre Wellington could play with respect to culture. (i.e., Facilitator, Funder, Producer etc.)

REPORT AND WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT

Creation of a final report and workplan.

- Information gathered and discoveries made from the previous project phases were analyzed and synthesized into a final report and workplan.

Analysis

Centre Wellington Context

Centre Wellington is a Township in Wellington County, known for its picturesque landscapes, rich history, and vibrant community life. Formed in 1999 through the amalgamation of the Townships of Fergus, Elora, Nichol, Pilkington, West Garafraxa, and parts of Eramosa, Centre Wellington offers a blend of rural tranquility and small-town charm. The Township is located in the heart of southwestern Ontario on Treaty Lands and the Traditional Territory of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee. It is within easy driving distance of major urban centers like Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Toronto and is situated along the scenic Grand River.

With a current population of 31,093¹ Centre Wellington is expected to grow to 39,547² residents by 2033 and 58,200 by 2051.³

Centre Wellington is governed by an elected Mayor and 6 Ward Councillors. Cultural Services for the Township is

¹ 2021 Centre Wellington Census of Population Summary, Statistics Canada <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/search-recherche/productresults-resultatsproduits-eng.cfm?Lang=E&GEOCODE=2021S0504531>.

² 2023 Community Profile, Centre Wellington, Economic Development pg. 7.

³ 2051 Population, Household and Employment Growth Forecasts, Wellington County, [2051 Population, Household & Employment Growth Forecasts | Wellington County](#)

based in and delivered from the Community Development Division.

Cultural heritage is deeply embedded in Centre Wellington, with its historic downtown areas, particularly in Fergus and Elora, boasting well-preserved 19th-century architecture. Festivals and events, such as the Elora Festival, Riverfest Elora and the Fergus Scottish Festival & Highland Games, draw visitors from across the province and beyond, celebrating the area's artistic and cultural diversity. Township led events such as Culture Days provide opportunities to celebrate local architectural, historic, cultural, and creative assets. Centre Wellington's arts and culture scene features an array of organizations including the Elora Fergus Arts Council, Cogs & Clockwork Steampunk Festival, The Elora Singers, Elora Community Theatre, Elora Fergus Studio Tours and the Elora Centre for the Arts, which host a wide array of performances, exhibitions, and workshops. throughout the year. A cultural directory featuring Centre Wellington's cultural assets has also been created.⁴ Additionally, Centre Wellington is a hub for community engagement and activities, with various parks, trails, community centres, and sports facilities providing residents with a wide range of recreational options. The Elora Gorge, one of Ontario's most stunning natural attractions, is a focal point.

Of special note is the Township-owned Fergus Grand Theatre. The theatre serves as an essential cultural asset, enriching the community with an engaging mix of the best and brightest performing artists in Canada, and a plethora of incredible local talent from right here in Centre Wellington. As the cultural hub of downtown Fergus, the theatre showcases, plays, concerts, and a dynamic variety of other events, contributing significantly to Centre Wellington's economic, social, and cultural vibrancy. Its historic charm and accessible location provide a welcoming space for audiences and artists alike, and it is a deeply-treasured community asset, with special meaning for people of all generations. As a cornerstone of local arts and culture, the Fergus Grand Theatre strengthens community bonds and plays a key role in supporting Centre Wellington's cultural identity.

Previous Township Culture-Related Plans

Centre Wellington Council previously approved the report *Culture Matters, Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, 2013*. The outcomes of that report included:

- Engagement with the community about culture.
- The development of a cultural map.
- A plan to guide Centre Wellington's economic and cultural growth.
 - The plan outlined three theme areas - People, Places, and Potential and provided details on 7 goals with 33 recommendations to develop the vision of culture in Fergus.

In 2019, the *Centre Wellington Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan* was developed. The recommendations included in that report were:

- #13. Continue to implement the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, and annually report to Township Council and the public to inform them of progress and achievements.
- #14. An Update of the Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan should be undertaken by the year 2021. An economic analysis quantifying the benefits and costs of the local arts, culture and heritage sector should be integrated within the Update to the Cultural Action Plan.
- #15. Continue to create opportunities for Centre Wellington to provide direct and indirect support to cultural programs, services and festivals/events through allocation of resources (including the development of a sustainable Funding Strategy), marketing and communications, volunteer development and/or the provision of space.

⁴ Centre Wellington Cultural Directory, [Centre Wellington Cultural Online Directory - July 2024 \(breken.com\)](https://www.breken.com/centre-wellington-cultural-online-directory-july-2024)

Previous Township-Led Culture Consultations

Culture Community Engagement – February 2023

In February 2023, Township culture staff met with representatives of Centre Wellington’s festival and events sector. Takeaways from that consultation that helped inform the development of the workplan are detailed in Appendix 2 of this report and appear verbatim as they were communicated to Township staff.

Let’s Talk Culture Survey – February 2023

From February 14th – 28th, 2023 the Township conducted a Centre Wellington wide online survey to understand what culture means to residents.

“We want to hear from everyone in Centre Wellington about their ideas and thoughts on culture. This input will help us better understand how we can support the arts, creative, sporting, and social activities that help us build community.” Mayor Shawn Watters

This survey was promoted through the Township’s social media channels, through posters in community centres, promoted via an interview on local radio (Grand 101.1) and an article in Wellington Advertiser.

Between 260 – 264 responses were received (not all respondents answered all the questions).

Highlights from the survey responses that impacted the development of the workplan are detailed in Appendix 3 of this report.

Fergus Grand Theatre - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges Report

In the Fall of 2023, an analysis of the Fergus Grand Theatre’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges was conducted. As part of this work, a community consultation session was held and included the following representatives.

- Township of Centre Wellington staff
- Fergus Grand Theatre staff and volunteers
- Elora Community Theatre
- Elora & Fergus Tourism
- Freelance artists and musicians
- Local Arts Presenters
- Downtown Fergus Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- Dance + Heart
- Local businesses

Although the focus of the consultation was the Fergus Grand Theatre, the consultation revealed many insights into various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing the Centre Wellington cultural community. These insights, notably the need for greater funding, marketing, staffing and space support, informed the roles and actions outlined in the Culture Workplan.

Moving forward, the work of the Fergus Grand Theatre along with that of the Culture staff will be instrumental in supporting many of the actions detailed in the Culture Workplan

Documents & Presentations Reviewed

The following Township documents were reviewed as part of this project.

- 2023-2026 Strategic Plan Overview
- Center Wellington Economic Development Strategic Action Plan, 2019
- 2024 Corporate Business Plan
- Culture Matters, Centre Wellington Cultural Action Plan, 2013

- Cultural Action Plan Report Card, 2019
- Centre Wellington Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan, 2019
- Community Guide Spring / Summer 2024
- The Elora Centre for the Arts' September 2023 presentation to the Committee of the Whole
- 2023 Community Profile
- All content available on <https://www.centrewellington.ca/>

Current Community Development: Focus Areas of the Township's Culture Division

The Township's ongoing cultural initiatives are centered around four key focus areas:

1. **Connecting to Township Resources**
Initiatives such as the Special Events Guidelines and the Community Impact Grant Program support community access to Township resources.
2. **Networking**
Efforts include the creation of a Cultural Roundtable to foster collaboration and strengthen cultural networks.
3. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Culture**
Staff-led initiatives, like the Community Connect and the Diverse and Inclusive Programs, promote inclusivity by ensuring diverse voices are heard and equitable access to cultural opportunities is promoted.
4. **Communication and Marketing**
Exploring ways to enhance the visibility of local arts and culture through website management and strategic communications.

To sustain progress in these areas and ensure the Culture Workplan is integrated into existing Township operations, each task in the workplan is clearly linked to these ongoing cultural initiatives.

Consultations

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee Brief

A briefing about the development of the Culture Workplan was presented to the Centre Wellington Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) committee in March 2024.

The briefing provided an opportunity for the DEI Committee to learn about the workplan development and to share how they felt they could best support the work.

It also provided the Township with the chance to share their desire to be intentional in considering the diverse perspectives, experiences, and needs of individuals and communities to ensure fairness, equity, and inclusivity as the Township moves toward the eventual development of a Culture Principal Plan.

With this, a meaningful relationship could be built between Township staff and the DEI Advisory and establish reciprocal lines of communication to nurture and enrich the development of the workplan and future cultural initiatives.

Interview Summary

- In May 2024, 6 interviews were held with a total of 9 individual stakeholders represented. As noted in the Methodology section of this report, the stakeholders represented were the Elora Centre for the Arts, Riverfest Elora, Wendy's Favourite Things, Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, Twilight at

Templin Gardens, Fergus BIA, Elora Fergus Arts Council, Sensational Elora and the Elora Farmer's Market. Interviewees were selected by Township cultural staff.

The objectives of the interviews were:

- To gain an understanding of the strengths, challenges and opportunities facing Centre Wellington's cultural community as shared through key stakeholders.
- To understand from key cultural stakeholders the role the Township should play to support culture in the community.
- Ensure alignment between the Culture Workplan for staff and the perspectives shared through the interview process and revealed through related context research.

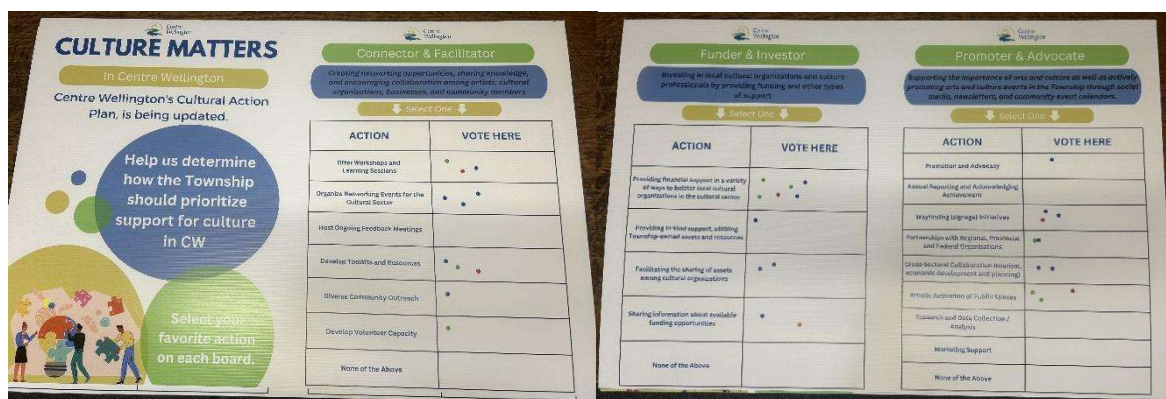
All interviewees were asked the same standard questions:

- Please briefly tell us about yourself and your connection to Centre Wellington's cultural community.
- In your opinion, what role should the Township assume to support culture in Centre Wellington?
- How can the Township effectively collaborate with cultural community leaders and organizations to fulfill that role?
- In your opinion, what are the key cultural needs and priorities within Centre Wellington that should be addressed in a municipal cultural workplan?
- What strategies would you recommend for the Township to continue to engage with underrepresented or marginalized cultural groups in its cultural programs and initiatives?
- What measures can be implemented to evaluate the impact of cultural programs and initiatives outlined in the workplan?
- What potential challenges do you think the Township could encounter while implementing the cultural workplan, and how can they be addressed proactively?
- How can the cultural workplan foster collaboration and synergy among cultural organizations, community groups, and municipal agencies?
- What opportunities do you see for leveraging local assets, such as heritage sites or artistic talent, to enhance the cultural vibrancy of our municipality?
- Are there any inspiring best practices, partnership and programming approaches, people, comparables or model organizations we should investigate and connect with to enrich the workplan development?
- Do you have any final thoughts or advice for the Township as it develops this workplan?

A summary of key takeaways and themes that factored into the development of the workplan are attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

Key Projects Open House & Mayor's Town Hall

On May 30th, 2024, a Key Projects Open House & Mayor's Town Hall was held. Attendees were presented with three roles and associated actions the Township could assume to support culture in Centre Wellington as informed by consultation data and desk research to date. Attendees were invited to vote on the actions they thought were the most important for supporting culture in Center Wellington to help prioritize workplan actions. 175 people attended the event. The results are captured below.



Cultural Sector Trends and Opportunities

Understanding current issues and opportunities facing the arts and culture sector on a larger scale (provincial and federal levels) is key in developing an informed and effective culture workplan. These trends both directly and indirectly influence and impact Centre Wellington's creative community.

Funding and Financial Stability:

Funding in the arts sector is lacking and not keeping pace with inflation. There have been cutbacks in funding at various government levels while competition for existing funds has increased. For example, in 2023 the Ontario government reduced Ontario Arts Council funding by \$5,000,000 reducing support for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives; to Indigenous arts organizations and other marginalized or minority groups; and for innovative artistic approaches. The OAC's baseline grant from the province, excluding some one-time programs, has sat at \$59,937,400 for each of the past three fiscal years, according to its audited financial statements.⁵ Federally, both the *Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage* grant program and *Canadian Arts Presentation Fund* are set to return to their 2007 funding levels in April 2026⁶. Donations and sponsorships have also become increasingly competitive and require dedicated time and resources to prospect, research and pitch.

Inflation and lingering Impacts of COVID-19:

The culture sector is still recovering from the impacts of Covid-19 and is still fragile and dependent on support from local governments to build sustainability and resilience within the sector. Increased operational costs, including those for venues, materials, insurance, staffing, and security (especially to ensure safety at outdoor events and other public gatherings) can exceed available funding and revenues. There is also increased precarity being experienced by the creative sector. Increased real estate prices and gentrification are impacting cultural venues and across Canada, particularly in Ontario, there is also an affordability crisis with increased housing and food costs. In a recent Hill Strategies survey commissioned by the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC) a "key finding of the survey is that many cultural workers are facing severe affordability challenges. Indeed, most are financially stressed and dissatisfied with the affordability of their homes. For both indicators, the situation of cultural workers is much worse than other Canadians."⁷

Improving Working Conditions and Compensation for Arts and Culture Professionals:

In the same survey noted above, the analysis also revealed that many artists and cultural workers face precarious employment, often with limited benefits and job security and that "Unpaid work is a very common practice in the arts, culture, and heritage. Most cultural workers with an employment position (69%) reported doing extra unpaid work, including 30% who do extra work 'very often'."⁸ Fueled by this and other inequalities in the sector, many arts organizations have begun to explore how to improve

⁵ "Ford government to drop \$5-million one-time arts grants but maintain Ontario Arts Council base funding", Globe & Mail, March 17, 2023.

⁶ Canadian Association for the Performing Arts (CAPACOA), News, April 16th, 2024.

⁷ Severe affordability challenges for cultural workers in Canada, Hill Strategies, June 18 2024, [Severe affordability challenges for cultural workers in Canada \(hillstrategies.com\)](https://www.hillstrategies.com/severe-affordability-challenges-for-cultural-workers-in-canada).

⁸ Ibid.

working conditions and compensation for arts and culture professionals to create welcoming and equitable spaces, mitigate abuses of power and harassment and to implement more living wage compensation models to prevent expertise from exiting the sector. Examples of this work include Industry's *Safer Spaces Project*⁹, Theatre Direct's *Balancing Act*¹⁰ and the City of Hamilton's *Musicians Fair Payment Policy*¹¹.

Accessibility and Inclusion:

There are various barriers to participating in arts, culture and events. Economic, geographic, and physical barriers can limit access to arts and cultural events for diverse populations. Actions that arts organization are taking to mitigate this include considering social inclusion and cultural equity to create welcoming spaces and places, in promotional strategies to ensure relevant demographics are being reached, and in program planning to integrate equity and anti-racism within all activities and initiatives.

Resources such as venue access guides to provide detailed descriptions of physical venues and amenities to support people with disabilities and toolkits such as STEPS Public Arts' *Accessible Art and Placemaking Toolkit*¹² are also being created to guide the creation and implementation of accessible and inclusive art.

Diverse and Intergenerational experiences:

With Canada's ageing population¹³ arts and culture organizations are considering more intergenerational experiences and support to avoid aging in isolation. The anticipated diversification of demographics and population increases also has arts organizations responding by providing opportunities for increased cross-cultural experiences with an aim to enhance community cohesion and understanding through diverse cultural exchange.

Increased Cultural Tourism:

A report commissioned by the Ontario Arts Council identified cultural tourism as one of the fastest growing tourism industries, with tourists tending to stay longer and spend more, than for example sports tourists.¹⁴ Spending in Canada's arts and culture sector is expected to trend upwards for 2024, with one national study finding that one in five culture-goers plan on spending more this year to attend arts and cultural events.¹⁵ The same national study cited above also shows that one in five culture-goers look for arts and cultural experiences for learning new things and a change of scenery.

Technological Shifts & Impacts on Audience Development and Engagement:

There is an increased adoption of digital platforms and techniques for production, distribution, and marketing, requiring investment in technology and skills. Technology also poses challenges to culture and creativity with needs to support increased digital literary and protections of intellectual property and copyright as the influence of AI increases. With these technological shifts, there are changes in how people consume art and culture, with more digital and on-demand options playing a prominent role. There has also been difficulty in attracting and retaining audiences, particularly among younger demographics considering increased digital offerings. Audiences are also making decisions about attending arts and culture events closer to the actual event date which has impacted how arts and culture groups plan and budget for their operations.

⁹ Industry Safer Spaces Project, <https://www.industrypresents.com/safer-spaces>.

¹⁰ Theatre Direct's Balancing Act, <https://theatredirect.ca/balancing-act/>.

¹¹ Fair Wages for Musicians at City of Hamilton Events, Invest Hamilton, July 26 2021, <https://investinhamilton.ca/blog/2021/07/26/fair-wages-for-musicians-at-city-of-hamilton-events/>.

¹² Arts' Accessible Art and Placemaking Toolkit, STEPS Public Art, 2024, <https://stepspublicart.org/project/accessible-art/>.

¹³ Canada's seniors population outlook: Uncharted territory, Canadian Institute for Health Information, [Infographic: Canada's seniors population outlook: Uncharted territory | CIHI](https://www.cihi.ca/en/infographic-canada-seniors-population-outlook-uncharted-territory).

¹⁴ Arts and culture tourism in Ontario has triple the economic impact, Ontario Arts Council, November 16th 2023, [Ontario Arts Council - New report: Arts and culture tourism in Ontario has triple the economic impact](https://ontarioarts.ca/news/arts-and-culture-tourism-in-ontario-has-triple-the-economic-impact).

¹⁵ Arts Response Tracking Study, Business / Arts/NAC/Nanos, February 28 2024, [Culture-goers feel joy, comfort and excitement when thinking of attending art and cultural events – Expected spending in 2024 is now a net positive of +10 after a net negative of -6 in 2022 \(Business / Arts/NAC/Nanos Research – Nanos Research\)](https://www.nanosresearch.com/press-releases/arts-response-tracking-study-culture-goers-feel-joy-comfort-and-excitement-when-thinking-of-attending-art-and-cultural-events-expected-spending-in-2024-is-now-a-net-positive-of-10-after-a-net-negative-of-6-in-2022).

Climate Change and Sustainability:

There is a growing recognition of the impacts that climate change has on arts and culture. Notably, the intangible cultural heritage of many communities including values, oral traditions, performing arts, and social practices, is at risk.¹⁶ Also, the effects of climate change on the severity of weather patterns and temperatures have impacted many outdoor events requiring additional investment and creating additional uncertainty in their execution. To help mitigate these impacts, arts and culture organization, such as the Hillside Festival are examining their carbon footprint and are attempting to integrate sustainable practices in their policies, production and execution of their programs, especially in the festival and event sector.¹⁷ Gatherings such as the Tri-City Series also explore ways for the arts sector to come together to generate climate hope, nature and water stewardship, and build community resilience.¹⁸

Reconciliation and Indigenous Relationships

Reconciliation and Indigenous relationships are increasingly central to the arts and culture sector, reflecting a broader societal shift towards upholding the calls to action of Truth and Reconciliation and acknowledging and honoring Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions. Examples of this include the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in museum exhibitions, the commissioning of Indigenous artists for public art projects, and investing time to build relationships with and to collaborate with Indigenous communities in cultural initiatives. Additionally, organizations like the Canada Council for the Arts have prioritized funding for Indigenous-led projects, fostering a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape.

Growing Understanding of the Social, Economic and Wellness Benefits of Arts and Culture There is a growing understanding of the significant social, economic, and wellness benefits of arts and culture, that collectively contribute to the development and health of communities across Canada. Research consistently demonstrates that engagement in the arts can improve mental health, reduce stress, and enhance overall quality of life. For example, art therapy and arts-focused social prescribing has been widely adopted in healthcare settings to support patients' emotional and psychological healing processes. Economically, the arts and culture sector is a vital contributor to job creation and economic growth.¹⁹ Statistics include:

- Arts and culture in Ontario directly contribute **\$27 billion** annually to the provincial economy, representing **3.4%** of Ontario's GDP.²⁰
- There are more than **254,985 culture jobs** in Ontario or **3.8%** of total Ontario employment.
- According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, "arts, culture and heritage improve the ability of municipal governments to influence local economic development by attracting and retaining a skilled and talented workforce."²¹

On a social front:

- **93%** of Ontarians believe that arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives.
- **90%** of Ontarians agree that an active local arts scene helps make a community a better place to live.²²

¹⁶ Cutting Edge | Culture: the ultimate renewable resource to tackle climate change, UNESCO, January 4 2021, [Cutting Edge | Culture: the ultimate renewable resource to tackle climate change | UNESCO](#)

¹⁷ Green Initiatives, Hillside Festival, [Green Initiatives - Hillside Festival](#)

¹⁸ Tri-City Series Arts Sector to Address Climate Anxiety, Waterlution, [Tri-City Series Arts Sector to Address Climate Anxiety - Waterlution](#)

¹⁹ Impact of Arts in Ontario, Ontario Arts Council, [Ontario Arts Council - Impact of the Arts in Ontario](#)

²⁰ *Provincial and Territorial Culture Indicators, 2020* (product perspective), Statistics Canada, June 2022.

²¹ *Policy Statement on Social-Economic Development*, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, March 2016.

²² *Impressions of the Impact of the Arts on Quality of Life and Well-Being in Ontario: Ontario Arts Council Survey Findings*, by Nanos Research for the Ontario Arts Council, March 2017.

- **88%** of Ontarians believe that if their community lost its arts activities, people living there would lose something of value.²³
- **92%** of Ontarians agree that exposure to arts and culture is important to individual well-being.²⁴

As part of this understanding, arts organizations, funders and municipalities continue to gather qualitative and quantitative data to keep illustrating how arts and culture enrich both individual lives and society as a whole.

Municipal Comparators

Considering these trends and to best respond to the needs expressed by their respective cultural communities and stakeholders, many municipalities are increasingly adopting roles that emphasize collaboration, investment and promotion.

This strategic shift involves partnering with local artists and cultural organizations and strengthening relationships, providing financial support and investment in diverse arts and culture projects, actively promoting cultural activities to enhance community engagement and cultural vitality and integrating culture into all aspects of municipal planning. By embracing these roles, municipalities aim to foster a vibrant cultural landscape that not only enriches the community but also stimulates economic growth, social cohesion and ultimately creates great places to live, work and play.

Collaboration

Collaborative municipalities recognize the opportunity that exists within leveraging the strength of local cultural assets by seeking connections and facilitation.

In their Culture Plan, *A Catalyst for Culture 2014-2024*, the City of Waterloo explains their role in supporting culture, *“The city does not need to develop cultural content. That talent already exists within the community. Rather the city must embrace responsibility for creating an enabling environment where the community’s cultural vision can be achieved.”*²⁵

Similarly, Milton, Ontario, a municipality that has and that is expected to continue to experience rapid population growth, shares in their culture plan “Milton uses a networked convener model to accomplish cultural work. This collaborative model breaks down silos within the community and creates stronger relationships between the municipality and the community it serves. This approach requires collaboration within and across municipal government and with the wider public, private and non-profit sector. Through collaborations, there are opportunities to share responsibility and pool resources in a more impactful way.”²⁶

Other collaborative approaches include hosting ongoing gatherings between the municipality and culture community to identify opportunities, discuss challenges, share resources and to strengthen relationships amongst culture groups. Examples of this include Minto, Ontario’s Cultural Roundtable.

The Roundtable aims to:

- Support community led solutions to issues identified by the Cultural Roundtable or the community at large.
- Encourages leadership and innovation.
- Facilitates networking and information exchange.
- Serves as a sounding board for ideas and actions.
- Reviews policies related to culture.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Waterloo’s Culture Plan: A Catalyst for Culture 2014-2024, pg. 6.

²⁶ Here to Stay: Milton Culture Plan 2021, pg. 10.

- Supports the integration of cultural development plans into related Town plans (i.e. Official Plan and Strategic Plan)

Another example is Richmond Hill, Ontario's annual Culture Summit for artists, creative industry professionals, cultural organizations, students, volunteers and culture lovers to network and learn more about arts and culture in Richmond Hill.

In Hamilton, Ontario both the Creative Xchange a free quarterly, casual meet-up with a focus to bring together Hamilton-based music, film, fashion and other creative industries and the Special Event Advisory Team (SEAT), a team made up of staff from various municipal divisions who ensure that events have all the necessary permits, permissions, and insurance in place to help keep events healthy and safe for all concerned, are initiatives that encourage collaboration and position the municipality as a facilitator to ensure that arts and cultural activity originating from the community is supported.

Investment

It has been demonstrated through numerous studies that investing in arts and culture contributes positively to the community on a myriad of social, economic and wellness levels. Recognizing this return on investment and how a robust arts and culture community is essential to business and resident attraction strategies, many municipalities have and continue to assume funder and investment roles to bolster cultural projects, events, and institutions that enrich the community's social fabric, enhance quality of life, and drive economic development.

The funder and investor roles are especially important for municipalities to play as obtaining support on a local level is a necessary step for artists and organizations to demonstrate to access funding on provincial and federal levels. When municipalities invest locally, it also deters creative talent and industries from relocating to other municipalities with established systems of investment.

Many municipalities have established arts and culture funding programs. Highlights to note include the City of St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program that is "designed to support the creative sector and strengthen the overall cultural ecosystem in the City of St. Catharines. The program invests in arts and cultural activities to enhance our public life in the community." The program "is funded through a diverse range of sources, which include the Tax Levy, Civic Project Fund, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Ticket Surcharge, Mayor's Fundraising, and Special Events Parking Fee Redirect."²⁷ Also, Greater Sudbury's Arts and Culture Grant program that "stimulates the growth and development of this important sector, increases its potential to attract and retain a talented and creative workforce, and is an investment in the quality of life for all residents."²⁸

Cities such as Kelowna, British Columbia offer different types of grants to support their arts and culture community: general operating grants, project grants, organization development grants, community art grants, professional operating grants plus grants that specifically support events.

In Brampton, a range of grants are offered through its Advance Brampton Fund for small or new projects, to develop existing projects, or amplify established large projects with a goal to encourage grantees to move towards project strength and sustainability by enhancing their ability to lead well-managed and meaningful work in the local non-profit sector and Brampton community.

The City of Barrie recently conducted a review of their Cultural Grants Initiative to highlight the gaps, inconsistencies and limitations in the existing program to make the program more comprehensive, fair and in line with the City's strategic goals and priorities. As a result of that review, Barrie renamed their cultural grants program the Barrie Arts & Culture Investment Program - leaning heavily into the trending concept to position arts funding as a strategic municipal investment. "This positions the grant program as one that strategically invests in

²⁷ Cultural Investment Program, St. Catharines, [Cultural Investment Program - St. Catharines \(stcatharines.ca\)](https://www.stcatharines.ca/cultural-investment-program)

²⁸ Celebrating Arts and Culture in Greater Sudbury, Greater Sudbury, [Celebrating Arts and Culture in Greater Sudbury](https://www.greater-sudbury.ca/celebrating-arts-and-culture)

Barrie arts and culture at all stages of the creative life cycle. As such, it provides multiple points of entry into the program and builds Barrie's identity regionally, provincially, nationally and internationally through continued investment in the development and sustainability of its arts and culture sector."²⁹

Promotion

The August 2023 report, *Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile* findings revealed that "the average arts and culture trip has nearly triple the economic impact of non-arts and culture related trips³⁰ [and that] analysis demonstrates that the economic impact of arts and culture tourism ripples out beyond artists and arts organizations into local economies, job creation and growth. It also shows that arts and culture activities are an important factor in why travelers choose to visit Ontario."

In the 2021 the Canadians' Arts Participation, Health and Well-Being report conducted by Hill Strategies, the analysis shows that "There is a strong connection between cultural participation and overall health." and "There is solid evidence of a connection between cultural participation and mental health."³¹

Buoyed by this and many other such studies, it is no surprise that municipalities are also embracing promoter and advocacy roles to highlight the breadth, depth, uniqueness and impact of their arts and culture community. This promotion is not just geared towards external stakeholders but also includes strong internal promotion to support the growing trend of cross-sectoral collaboration to holistically integrate arts and culture into all aspects of city planning.

An example of this role is exemplified by Halton Hills, Ontario. A municipality with a population of 62,951³² Halton Hills serves as a strong comparator to Centre Wellington in that their population size is slightly above what Centre Wellington is expected to grow to by 2051 and hence, can serve as a good roadmap to follow. Halton Hills also owns and manages a municipal theatre, a unique cultural characteristic shared with Centre Wellington

The Halton Hills Cultural Services division works under the "Create Halton Hills" brand, developed in collaboration with the Town's Communications division.

As part of their promotion and advocacy efforts, Halton Hills produces an annual *State of Culture* report that includes engaging infographics and statistics. "It articulates the value of culture, the strong community support for cultural programs and opportunities, and provides an overview of the Cultural Services division and its programs to strengthen the creative sector by providing professional development, funding supports and new opportunities for programming and public engagement. Community partnerships and collaborations are vital to the successful delivery of Cultural Services."³³

In Port Moody, British Columbia the municipality assembled the Mayor's Arts and Business Coalition Task Force (MABCTF) "with a mandate to identify opportunities to strengthen the City of Port Moody's branding as 'City of the Arts' and to make recommendations to Council on the same."³⁴

²⁹ Barrie Arts and Culture Investment Program – 2022 Program (Implementation of Recommendations – Cultural Grant Program Review, City of Barrie (Report ECD011-21115 November 22, 2021)

³⁰ Arts and culture tourism in Ontario has triple the economic impact, Ontario Arts Council, November 16th 2023, [Ontario Arts Council - New report: Arts and culture tourism in Ontario has triple the economic impact.](#)

³¹ Canadians' Arts Participation, Health, and Well-Being, Statistical Insights in the Arts, Canada Council, March 15 2021, [Canadians' Arts Participation, Health, and Well-Being | Canada Council for the Arts](#)

³² Statistics Canada, [Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Halton Hills, Town \(T\) \[Census subdivision\], Ontario \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

³³ State of Culture 2022-2023, Create Halton Hills, https://www.haltonhills.ca/en/explore-and-play/resources/Documents/StateofCulture2022-2023AODAFINAL_May8.pdf

³⁴ New Mayor's Task Force to help strengthen Port Moody's branding as City of the Arts, City of Port Moody, March 30 2023, <https://www.portmoody.ca/en/news/new-mayor-s-task-force-to-help-strengthen-port-moody-s-branding-as-city-of-the-arts.aspx>

Port Moody has a comparable population to Centre Wellington of 33,535³⁵ and is also projected to have strong population growth relative to the comparator areas from 2021 to 2041. This growth will be at a rate of 28% to reach a total population of 50,000 people by 2041³⁶.

Nearby, Vancouver offers multiple promotional opportunities to its arts and culture groups ranging from poster and brochure distribution to its community centres to transit shelter advertising.

In partnership with Arts Network Ottawa, the City of Ottawa has created an Artists in Residence in Government program, “a paid opportunity for artists that aims to address unique civic challenges and reframe traditional approaches and solutions by connecting artists with municipal government staff and community.”³⁷

Finally, many municipalities such as Barrie have created culture specific social media channels – *Creative Barrie* - to highlight the work of local arts and culture groups while also serving as a needed forum to connect arts groups to the community and to each other.

A Culture Workplan for Centre Wellington

Centre Wellington’s Culture Workplan details the roles the Township can play to support culture and the actions it can take to achieve successful outcomes.

- **A Connector & Facilitator**
- **A Funder & Investor**
- **A Promoter & Advocate**

These roles were identified through a combination of reviewing consultation data, trends and opportunities in the arts and culture sector but also by looking at the roles other municipalities have assumed to best support culture in their communities to align with good practice.

Ultimately, the Culture Workplan is a unique Centre Wellington specific approach that includes 3 roles, 13 action areas and 33 tasks with a goal of strengthening Centre Wellington as a place where culture thrives, where it can include and be experienced by all and where culture is kept top of mind until a new standalone culture plan can be created. Some of the tasks included the plan includes work that is already being worked on by Township staff using existing staff resources.

Explanations for each role and action area are provided below. The detailed workplan with information on specific tasks, outcomes, timelines (1-3 or 4-7 years), and alignment with the Townships’ Strategic Plan and ongoing project work being done by Township staff is attached as an Appendix to this report. Additional long-term tasks, (8+ years), that emerged as a result of the consultations and research but that are not included in the workplan’s 7-year timespan have been provided to Township staff for future consideration.

A CONNECTOR & FACILITATOR

Creating networking opportunities, sharing knowledge, and encouraging collaboration among artists, cultural organizations, businesses, and community members.

ACTION AREAS

Workshops and Learning Sessions

Offer workshops, training sessions, and educational opportunities tailored to the scale and needs of artists

³⁵ Statistics Canada, Port Moody 2021, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=port%20moody&DGUIDlist=2021A00055915043&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

³⁶ Development Growth Projections, City of Port Moody, [Development Growth Projections - City of Port Moody](#)

³⁷ Artists in Residence in Government, <https://www.artsnetottawa.ca/artistsinresidence>

and cultural organizations to enhance their skills and capacity. (e.g., Grant Writing, Marketing, Board Management etc.)

Establish Networking Events

Organize regular informal and formal networking events to bring together artists, cultural organizations, businesses, sponsors, potential investors and community members to foster connections and collaboration with the Township, art service organizations and each another.

Development of Guidelines and Resources

Create toolkits, resource documents, and checklists to support cultural organizations and their activities.

“One-Stop Shop” - Centralized Services

Assist cultural organizations in navigating relationships with Township divisions by providing a single point of contact for all culture-related matters.

Diverse Community Outreach

Build relationships with diverse communities in the Township (includes both ethnic diversity and geographic diversity i.e., all communities in Centre Wellington) to ensure inclusivity and representation of diverse communities in cultural programming and events and to foster a sense of community engagement and belonging.

Volunteer Development

Develop volunteer capacity, connect volunteers to various arts and culture opportunities and encourage arts and culture groups to do the same.

Ongoing Feedback Meetings

Host ongoing meetings, “pulse checks” and feedback sessions with arts and culture groups throughout the year to understand their needs, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

A FUNDER & INVESTOR

Investing in local cultural organizations and culture professionals by providing funding and other types of support

ACTION AREAS

Financial Support

Providing financial support in a variety of ways to bolster local cultural organizations in the cultural sector. This can include but is not limited to:

In-Kind Support

Providing non-monetary support and utilizing Township-owned assets such as venues, equipment and/or resources to aid cultural organizations in their endeavors.

Other Supports

Facilitating the sharing of assets among cultural organizations, such as equipment like water carts and other resources such as information about available funding opportunities, to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

A PROMOTER & ADVOCATE

Supporting the importance of arts and culture in local government and pushing for policies and initiatives that help the arts and culture community as well as actively promoting arts and culture events in the Township through social media, newsletters, and community event calendars.

ACTION AREAS

Promotion and Advocacy

Advocate for the importance of cultural investment and its benefits to the community through public awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts.

Marketing Support

Providing marketing assistance to promote cultural events and initiatives, enhancing their visibility and reach within the community.

Creative Activation of Public and Private Spaces

Engaging local artists and residents to beautify and activate public spaces such as parks through art installations, events and performances, contributing to placemaking efforts.

Acknowledgements

Thanks is extended to the many people who contributed to the development of this report including Centre Wellington Township staff – Kristen Bettiol (Manager of Community Development) and Paula Sealey (Community Development Coordinator). Appreciation is also extended to all the community leaders and stakeholders who generously donated their time to be interviewed, to those who attended and shared their insights at all culture related community consultations and those who continue to contribute to the vibrancy of Centre Wellington's art, culture and event sector.

Appendices



Appendices

- Appendix 1: Culture Work Plan
- Appendix 2: Culture Community Engagement – February 2023 (Detailed)
- Appendix 3: Let’s Talk Culture Survey – February 2023 (Detailed)
- Appendix 4: Interview Summary

Appendix 1: Culture Work Plan

Role 1: CONNECTOR & FACILITATOR	Task Details	Timeline (Years)	Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Alignment	Project Alignment
Action Area 1.1 - Workshops and Learning Sessions				
1.1.1 - Conduct Funding Workshops	Collaborate with RTO4 To offer funding workshops with representatives from various local, provincial and federal funding agencies for CW arts and culture groups	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Networking
Action Area 1.2 - Establish Networking Events				
1.2.1 - Establish Cultural Roundtable	Create a Cultural Roundtable To host regular informal arts sector meet ups (i.e. quarterly or biannually) to foster and strengthen relationships amongst CW arts and culture groups	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking
1.2.2 - Host Reoccurring Culture Summit	Host reoccurring “Culture Summit” To provide an opportunity for shared learning and connection amongst CW’s arts and culture groups	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Networking DEI and Culture Communication and Marketing
1.2.3 - Foster Business-Arts Collaborations	Connect with the CW Chamber of Commerce, Elora BIA and Fergus BIA To identify opportunities for networking and collaborations between local businesses and CW arts and culture groups	4 to 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking Communication and Marketing
1.2.4 - Build Arts Networks	Connect with various arts service organizations. To identify networking opportunities for CW arts and culture groups	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking Communication and Marketing
Action Area 1.3 - Development of Guidelines and Resources				

1.3.1 - Streamline Event Planning	Create a Special Event Guideline and Parks Information Guide to help CW arts and culture groups navigate municipal processes to produce festivals and events	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Managing growth while enhancing the community's unique character. · Championing environmental stewardship. 	Connecting to Township Resources
Action Area 1.4 - "One-Stop Shop" - Centralized Services				
1.4.1 - Centralize Arts Resources	Create and promote a centralized arts and culture section on the Township website to provide links to all arts and culture related resources, tools, FAQs and contact info for arts and culture related inquiries	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing

1.4.2 - Facilitate Event Communication	Ensure Township staff and event affected divisions are provided with timely and complete information to provide details on all permitted festival and events as well as the Township's Special Event Guidelines	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking Communication and Marketing
Action Area 1.5 - Diverse Community Outreach				
1.5.1 - Update DEI Committee	Communicate with the Township's DEI Advisory Committee to provide updates on Township culture initiatives	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking DEI and Culture Communication and Marketing
1.5.2 - Engage Diverse Communities	Connect with and maintain ongoing relationships with diverse and marginalized cultural groups to ensure they are aware of Townships arts, culture and event opportunities and to identify collaboration opportunities	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking DEI and Culture Communication and Marketing
1.5.3 - Cultural Calendar Programming	Should the DEI Committee create a cultural calendar, identify opportunities for the Township and other groups to provide programming opportunities and experiences in recognition of noted holidays and observances	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	DEI and Culture Communication and Marketing
Action Area 1.6 - Volunteer Development				
1.6.1 - Create Volunteer Info Kit	Develop an Arts and Culture Volunteer Info Kit to outline CW arts and culture volunteer opportunities and benefits	4 to 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
1.6.2 - Community Volunteer Outreach	Collaborate with local high school teachers, guidance counsellors, Township recreation staff, community developers and local service clubs to outline the various arts, culture and event volunteer opportunities available in the community	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	NetworkingCommunication and Marketing
1.6.3 - Host Volunteer Recognition Events	Continue to host volunteer recognition events at the Theatre and Victoria Park Seniors Centre. Also to research the development of volunteer databases and benefits for volunteers	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Networking Communication and Marketing
Action Area 1.7 - Ongoing Feedback				

1.7.1 - Conduct Event Follow-up Assessment	Continue to follow up with CW arts and culture groups, after major activities take place to understand how activities unfolded and to identify and track success, issues and patterns in the community	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Managing growth while enhancing the community's unique character. · Provide innovative and sustainable governance 	Networking Communication and Marketing
1.7.2 - Enhance Community Communication Strategies	Establish new methods and leverage existing methods to foster ongoing communication and feedback with the community	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Provide innovative and sustainable governance 	Communication and Marketing
Role 2: FUNDER & INVESTOR	Task Details	Timeline (Years)	Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Alignment	Project Alignment
Action Area 2.1 - Financial Support				
2.1.1 - Community Grant Program	Continue to deliver the Community Investment Fund Program. Also review the program it to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the needs of CW arts and culture groups	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Provide innovative and sustainable governance 	Connecting to Township Resources
Action Area 2.2 - In-Kind Support				
2.2.1 - Identify Cultural Spaces	Work with Township staff to Identify Township owned spaces for cultural use. These spaces could be used for storage, rehearsal, performances and / or other arts and culture related activities at a reduced or in-kind cost	4 to 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
2.2.2 - Integrate Facility Utilities	Identify opportunities to integrate hydro, water, washroom, and storage facilities into existing and future parks, plazas and other outdoor event spaces. To support arts, culture and event activity	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Managing growth while enhancing the community's unique character. 	Connecting to Township Resources
Action Area 2.3 - Other Support				

2.3.1 - Coordinate Resource Sharing	Create a system that enables CW arts and culture groups to coordinate tasks, share resources, and consolidate small, short term contracts into larger contract engagements	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Networking Communication and Marketing
2.3.2 - Review and Guide Fergus Grand Theatre Business Plan	Submit the Fergus Grand Theatre business plan to Council for review, seeking feedback and strategic direction for incorporating initiatives into future Business Plans. This will include a follow-up discussion on the findings from the SWOC Analysis conducted in December 2023	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. · Provide innovative and sustainable governance 	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
Role 3: PROMOTER & ADVOCATE	Task Details	Timeline (Years)	Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Alignment	Project Alignment
Action Area 3.1 - Promotion and Advocacy				
3.1.1 - School Community Engagement	Continue to connect with local schools and school boards to share local arts, culture and event opportunities	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Networking Communication and Marketing
3.1.2 - Celebrate Local Achievements	Recognize the achievements of local arts and culture groups via social media posts and other public awareness campaigns	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Communication and Marketing
3.1.3 - Create Image Library	Continue to develop an image library of CW arts and culture activity. Including parameters on image use permission and image acquisition	4 to 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Communication and Marketing
Action Area 3.2 - Marketing Support				
3.2.1 - Distribute Marketing Procedure	Finalize and distribute a marketing procedure and communications resource guide for CW arts and culture groups to follow to have their info shared on Township social media and for them to use that includes strategies and a media contact list	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
3.2.2 - Evaluate Banner Program	Review the current Township banner program to ensure the timely changeover of banners to provide effective promotion for local events	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness 	Connecting to Township Resources

				of our community.	Communication and Marketing
3.2.3 - Promote Arts Tourism	Continue to provide CW arts and culture information to potential tourists and tourism influencers to foster greater interest in and visitation to Centre Wellington	1 to 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.	Networking Communication and Marketing
3.2.4 - Evaluate Cultural Directory	Review CW's cultural directory is up to date. Encourage arts, culture and event groups to add or update their entry and highlight on Township website	4 to 7		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity. Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
3.2.5 - Enhance Wayfinding Strategy	Expand the CW arts and culture wayfinding signage strategy to cohesively highlight a greater number of arts and culture assets. Work with RTO4 to develop up-to-date and engaging maps and guides to help residents and visitors discover a variety of CW arts, culture and event experiences	1 to 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.· Managing growth while enhancing the community's unique character.	Communication and Marketing
Action Area 3.3 - Creative Activation of Public and Private Spaces					
3.3.1 - Develop Placemaking Toolkit	Research placemaking best practices and create a Cultural Placemaking Toolkit to identify activations suitable for and to implement in Centre Wellington and to provide a resource to assist arts and culture groups in creating placemaking activations	4 to 7		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
3.3.2 - Promote Artist-Led Design	Explore opportunities for artist-led design of Township street furniture, utility boxes, play structures and other amenities	4 to 7		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing
3.3.3 - Integrate Artwork Design	Explore opportunities to incorporate artwork in the design of new municipal buildings, facilities and public spaces (parks, streetscapes, etc.).	1 to 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Create the conditions for economic prosperity.· Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community.	Connecting to Township Resources Communication and Marketing

3.3.4 - Honor Indigenous Histories	Work with Indigenous communities to deepen understanding of the origins and histories of spaces throughout the Township. Explore opportunities to honour these histories through artistic and creative activations	4 to 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Create the conditions for economic prosperity. · Improve the activity, health and wellness of our community. 	Connecting to Township Resources Networking DEI and Culture Communication and Marketing
------------------------------------	--	--------	---	---

Appendix 2: Culture Community Engagement – February 2023 (Detailed)

Why do organizers choose to host events in Centre Wellington

- Connectivity, Community Building, Love for community, quality (world class), tourism, creativity, inclusion and diversity (opportunity to participate {guest, volunteer, organizer}), accessibility, mentorship, passion & energy, personal attachment, collaboration and respect, appreciation, small town feel, forward thinking without forgetting the past, making a difference in people's lives, variety of social outlets for everyone, interesting places (Bissell Park, Templin Gardens), Cultural Resource Centre – Sharing Resources.

How do you define Culture?

- Festivals are currently in silos – need to find ways to connect.
- Is all of the different creative and artistic pursuits.
- Is new cultural citizens to the community.
 - how do events overcome any language barriers?
- Is a way to reach out to everyone.
- Is to become of what we are all (collective culture).
- Is growth through inclusiveness (How can we improve this without simply “ticking the box”).
- Is how we live everyday.
- Is individual and community.
- In Fergus is often described as a quaint Scottish Town by history and definition but that excludes 90% of the population.

Who in our community influences culture?

- Citizens (demands, requests as consumers).
- Tourism – people visiting the events.
- Youth.
- Festival and Event Organizers.
- Council and Municipal Staff.
- Business Owners.
- Funders.
- Location – proximity to Toronto.

What were the impacts of Covid on your event?

- Lack of volunteers.
- Lost vendors over the years.
- Increased costs.
- Sponsorship dollars are down (not as available).
- Forced creative thinking (provoost patio).
- Disconnect with Funders (Grants).
- Decreased availability of labour.
- Vendors are requesting money upfront.

How can the Township Support / What are the current hurdles / How can we collaborate?

- Lack of Spaces.
 - not enough 500 seat areas suitable as a concert hall.
 - churches and theatre are 250 max.
 - Studio space.
 - Storage space.
 - Accommodation – lack of does impact attendance.

- Municipal requirements for running events are different from previous years.
 - Washrooms.
 - Parking.
 - Logistics (emergency lane for first responders).
 - Garbage/recycling.
 - Shuttle program to support Festivals in Fergus.
- Availability of Storage Space.
- Some sort of forum to discuss.
 - I.e. Chat group, festival classroom, app.
- Collaborative opinion on Cultural Resource Centre items (voting process).
- Parking – enforcement communication.
- Marketing Support to locals and tourists.
- Kiosk – cross pollination.
- Calendar of Events to make sure we are not crossing over.
- Promoting other events at your event.
- Have festival and event organizer meetings throughout the year.

Appendix 3: Let's Talk Culture Survey – February 2023

Culture can mean many things. Which of these activities do you think of as cultural? (Check all that apply)

Attending a festival/community event (i.e., Riverfest, Canada Day, Farmers Market)	244
Performing arts	230
Visiting a museum/art gallery/heritage site	229
Visual arts (drawing, filmmaking, painting, photography, sculpting)	202
Literary arts (fiction, drama, poetry)	195
Outdoor recreational activities (trails, parks, river activities)	190
Eating in a restaurant	163
Social justice activities (attending cause-based events, fundraisers)	158
Going to the library	142
Going to the cinema	141
Organized sports	129
Using or learning a language	122
Cooking at home (traditional/international cuisine)	118
Practicing your faith	112

What cultural activities do you participate in?

Attending a festival/community event	152
Cooking at home / eating at restaurant	82
Outdoor recreational activities	75
Organized sports	68
Theatre	64
Museum	61
Visual arts	54
Going to the library	48
Art Gallery	47
Music	37
Participating in Local Service Groups / Events	37
Local Markets	31
Going to the cinema	23
Practicing your faith	21
Social justice activities	19
Fundraisers	18
Volunteering	15
Heritage	11
Supporting Local Shops	10
Literary arts	9
Using or learning a language	9

Environment	6
Dance	5
Community Engagement	4
Family History / Traditions	4
Municipal/Council Meetings	2
Schools	2
Seniors Centre Activities	2
Agriculture	1
LGBTQ	1
Travel	1

How does Culture Support a Thriving Centre Wellington?

Not at all	2
Very Little	5
Average	30
Somewhat	66
To a Great Extent	158

How would you rate the availability of the cultural events in CW?

very poor	2
below average	17
no opinion	10
average	141
above average	91

Where do you learn about what is happening in our Community?

Social media	208
Neighbours/friends	172
Events and activities I attend	169
Word of mouth/friends or family	169
Newspaper	166
Radio	92
Township website	63
Other	17
I rarely or never receive information on local cultural events and activities	8

How can we strengthen Culture in Centre Wellington?

funding and other support	55
encourage/increase/welcome diverse programs and events	49
increased advertising/promotion	34

more events and programs for community	30
Inclusive events (\$\$)	29
events for all ages	14
find ways to promote local involvement and shop local (local discounts, "CW dollars")	8
keep existing and add more greenspaces	4
create a transit system	4
improvements to trails	4
more financial / mental health support for citizens in need	4
create a safer bike system	3
more initiative from local businesses and more local businesses and restaurants	3
Encourage volunteerism	3
reopen the cinema	3
more events in Fergus	3
continue to have surveys/host community engagements	2
new arena/indoor walking track	2
encourage environmental initiatives	2
downtowns to be pedestrian friendly	2
improve parking	1
stop funding the same people	1
free advertising for organizers	1
more welcoming to LGBTQ and Indigenous Groups	1
shoulder season events	1

Survey respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments. These comments are summarized below (in no particular order).

Downtown Decline and Greenspace:

- Concerns about downtown areas deteriorating.
- Loss of greenspace is a significant issue.

Support for LGBTQ Community:

- Increased support for Pride and LGBTQ initiatives is needed.

Inclusivity and Event Diversity:

- Improvements seen but more inclusivity is needed.
- Lack of events during the winter.
- Need to promote local tourism to Elora and Fergus.
- Desire for more cultural diversity beyond the Scottish Festival.

Community and Nature Engagement:

- River access should be available to all.
- Encourage local participation in events, showing local pride.
- More biodiversity and nature-related activities.

Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- More inclusive activities for children.

- Support for homeless and mental health services.
- High costs of events and activities are a barrier for attendance.
- Need to focus on the entire Township, not just Elora.

Event Promotion and Offerings:

- Improve advertising of events.
- Increase film/music offerings and bring back the cinema.
- More cooking classes and Township funding.
- Support for religious and cultural festivals.

Appendix 4: Interview Summary

- **Key cultural needs and priorities**

- Arts and culture funding should be on par with sports/recreation and not compete with other causes.
- Financial support from the Township is important for cultural groups to sustain operations.
- The Township needs to allocate a dedicated budget line for culture, recognizing its importance alongside parks/recreation. Currently culture is an afterthought with limited grant funding.
- Provide low-barrier micro grants for grassroots cultural events/groups.
- Lack of affordable, suitable performance/studio spaces is a major challenge for arts groups.
- Major festivals/events need dedicated funding streams and support that recognizes their significant economic/cultural impact.
- Support for the Fergus Grand Theatre, Elora Centre for the Arts, Seniors Centre, Youth Hub.
- The Township needs to commit to truly supporting culture.
- Making programs accessible to marginalized groups through funding/affordability.
- Focus on preserving and enhancing natural and cultural heritage, as well as supporting cultural festivals and events.
- Concern that there is no dedicated budget line for culture - it gets tagged onto parks/recreation.
- Need for fixed, mindful allocation (of budget) recognizing culture's importance for it to thrive.
- Current grant funding model is inadequate and treats culture as an afterthought.
- Lack of affordable, suitable performance and studio spaces with good acoustics/sprung floors.
- Intentional outreach and programming for the growing diverse population.
- Importance of being more inclusive of diverse cultures and providing programming/facilities for different cultural activities.
- Emerging recognition (for culture) to be more integrated across divisions.
- Overcoming siloed approach within the Township administration to foster cross-departmental collaboration.
- Implementing measures to evaluate impact of cultural programs/initiatives.
- Recognizing the importance of arts to community wellbeing, social connection, and employability.
- Recognizing mental health benefits of arts, especially for youth.
- The Township should explore ways to make cultural programs more accessible, especially for youth, recognizing the mental health benefits of the arts.
- Volunteer burnout
- Ongoing collaboration and communication between the Township and cultural groups is crucial for effective planning and implementation.
- Improve communication, follow-through and inclusivity between Township and cultural groups.
- Foster more collaboration and relationship-building among cultural organizations.

- **Role of the Township in supporting culture**

- Build cultural infrastructure, not just sports facilities, as the community grows.
- Provide accessible spaces for people to engage with arts and culture.
- Continuing to support existing cultural facilities/events while planning for future growth.

- The Township should actively support local theatre, festivals, and events to enhance cultural offerings, community pride, and economic benefits. Cultural tourism has a significant economic impact, generating substantial revenue for Ontario.
- Offer funding to support the work of existing arts and cultural organizations.
- Provide financial support through grants, loans to key cultural groups and startups.
- Offer more focused grants for heritage, arts, galleries, and artists.
- Dedicated funding streams for major festivals/events based on economic impact, separate from smaller community grants.
- Provide in-kind resources (e.g., equipment, promotion) to support cultural events.
- Funding for economic impact studies to quantify cultural/tourism value.
Facilitate communication between cultural groups and Township staff/council.
- Maintain online listing of upcoming cultural events.
- Need a centralized point of contact/department to connect community groups.
- Township marketing support for major events to promote regionally/provincially.
- The Township can play a leadership role in fostering collaboration between cultural groups.

- **Collaborating with the cultural community**

- Leverage the expertise and spaces of arts organizations to deliver Township programs.
- Take a leadership role in connecting cultural groups and facilitating collaboration.
- Effective collaboration with cultural leaders and organizations can be achieved through regular meetings, workshops, and partnerships at local, regional, and provincial levels.
- Potential challenges include communication issues and community consultation. Proactive measures include clear communication strategies and collaborative projects to ensure community involvement.
- Foster synergy by including collaboration criteria in funding programs, encouraging co-presentations at events, sharing resources, and acting on input from cultural organizations and community groups.
- Maintain strong communication between cultural groups and Township.
- Establish committees with Township and cultural group representatives.
- Township can take the lead in convening groups.
- Provide guidance on grants, funding sources, volunteer recruitment.
- Encourage collaboration by creating opportunities to work together.
- Single point of contact to streamline communication with Township.
- Comprehensive event planning guide/checklist to clarify requirements upfront.
- Open dialogue - get stakeholder input before launching new programs/initiatives.
- Follow-through on commitments (e.g., banner rotation program).
- Don't isolate/exclude smaller groups but have separate peer forums for major festivals.
- More informal meetups to build rapport among cultural leaders.
- Developing strong ties with the Arts Council is key to collaboration.
- Need for ongoing conduits, not just one-off consultations - share results, follow through.
- Collaboration between the Township and arts organizations is key to effectively supporting and promoting arts and culture.
- Improved communication and collaboration between the Township and cultural groups is needed.

- Provide clear guidelines/checklists for events to navigate municipal requirements.
- **Engaging underrepresented groups**
 - The DEI committee can help ensure inclusive policies and practices.
 - Equity, diversity and inclusion should be a priority, with intentional outreach to engage diverse groups.
 - Go to where the people are (e.g., newcomer cafe) to understand their needs.
 - Collaborate with arts organizations who have connections to diverse communities.
 - Building relationships with marginalized groups, training staff to understand their backgrounds, ensuring accessibility to programs, and incorporating their feedback into future initiatives.
 - Recognize and create partnerships with Indigenous communities.
 - Provide inclusive facilities (e.g., cricket fields) and programming (e.g., yoga, crafts).
 - Incorporate diverse cultural elements in Township-led events like Canada Day.
- **Measuring impact**
 - Track quantitative data like attendance, social media reach, volunteers engaged.
 - Capture qualitative data through stories, anecdotes, participant feedback.
 - Report on new cultural spaces/assets created and relationships facilitated.
 - Measure through resident and visitor satisfaction surveys, economic impact assessments, the number of partnerships formed, the diversity of community amenities, and regional/national recognitions.
 - Potential for annual evaluation reports highlighting initiatives, partnerships, contributions.
 - Gauge sense of community belonging and inclusiveness.
 - Township to highlight successes of major festivals to council.
 - Surveys and open-ended feedback channels are starting points.
 - Hard numbers are tricky but qualitative impacts should be captured.
 - The Arts Council did a COVID impact survey which could be a model.
- **Leveraging Local Assets**
 - Raise awareness of underutilized sites like Templin Gardens.
 - Incorporate public art/murals to highlight history and significance.
 - Highlight heritage buildings with plaques noting original owners/uses.
 - Develop self-guided tours of heritage sites.
 - Support established arts events like studio tours.
 - Use unique heritage sites/spaces for special cultural activations.
 - Collaborate with local artists/performers for distinctive programming.
 - Dedicated municipal billboards/advertising for promoting local events.
 - Leverage local assets/talent in creative ways to enhance cultural vibrancy.
 - Leveraging local assets like heritage sites, artistic talent, community groups to enhance cultural vibrancy.
 - Leverage natural assets like the Grand River for tourism/attractions.
 - Leverage existing collaborations between community groups.