



Art for Social  
Change Network  
**CALGARY HUB**

# **Art for Social Change in Calgary**

## **Outreach And Mapping Project**

*Presented by the Art for Social  
Change Network: Calgary Hub*

This project was made possible by the support of Calgary Arts Development, Trico Changemakers Studio and International Centre of Art for Social Change/Judith Marcuse Projects.



*We acknowledge that our work happens in Mohkínsstsis, in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Îyâxe Nakoda. The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation, Region 3.*



As the project lead for the Art for the Social Change Network (ASCN) in Mohkinstsis (Calgary), I have had the pleasure of meeting artists, art administrators, and art supporters who believe in the arts and its incredible power to inspire change. These individuals work among us in various capacities. They are teachers, museum directors, musicians, community organizers and volunteers, painters, students, corporate professionals, service professionals, and more. Through conversations with these individuals we found that art is valued, not only aesthetically, but as a tool to shift culture, invite wellbeing and connection, and challenge what the world is versus what it could be.

The act of using art to incite reactions, spark new ideas, challenge systems, or celebrate areas of life is not a new phenomenon. In most cases, the artist observes and responds using one or more artistic mediums. What happens when this idea is taken a step further, and the artist invites communities to collectively participate in the observation and response?

The International Centre of Art for Social Change describes this process of collective participation utilizing artistic processes as Art for Social Change, socially-engaged art, or community-engaged arts. It's a "diverse field, each with its own nuanced goals and practices." Other terms to describe the field are: "animation culturelle, community cultural development, cultural mediation, social (practice) arts, and participatory arts. In addition, arts education, recreational arts, creative arts therapies, popular education and creative leadership processes can be closely related." ([ICASC, 2023](#))

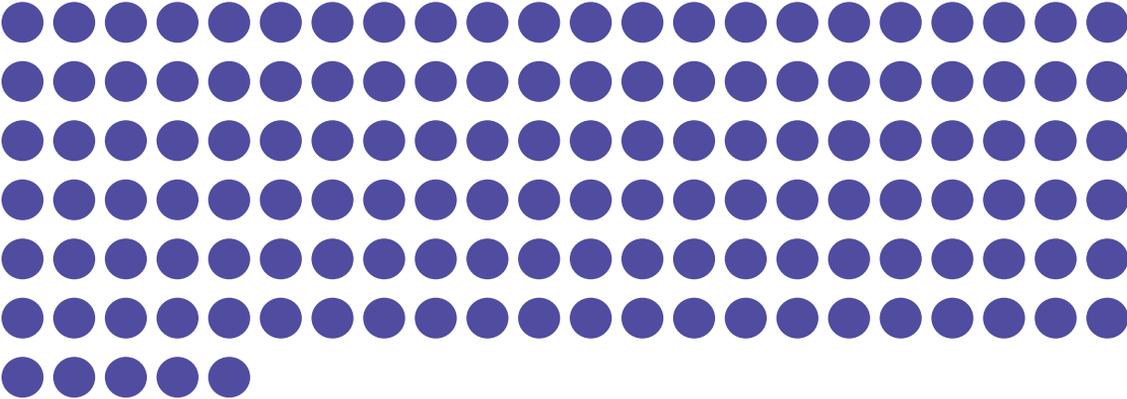
Appreciating the diversity of this field, we have investigated Calgary's existing landscape of Art for Social Change (ASC) through an outreach and mapping project. This report illustrates Art for Social Change practitioners in Calgary, who they work with, conditions enabling or inhibiting Art for Social Change in our city, and hopes for the future. Furthermore, I hope that this report is used as a starting point to highlight and unite the Art for Social Change community in Calgary in order to create more opportunities for the sector to grow and thrive.

Sally Njoroge

Project Lead, Art for Social Change Network: Calgary Hub

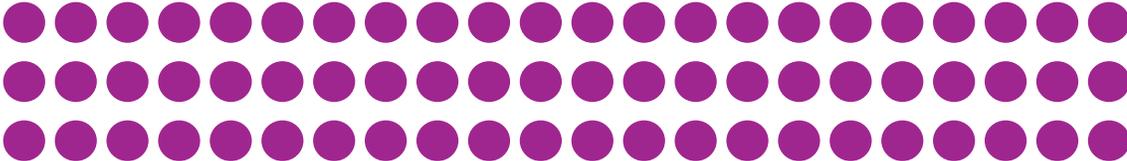
# Art for Social Change (ASC) Outreach and Mapping Project

## ONE SURVEY



**125**  
SURVEY RESPONSES

## ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE EVENT



**60**  
ATTENDEES

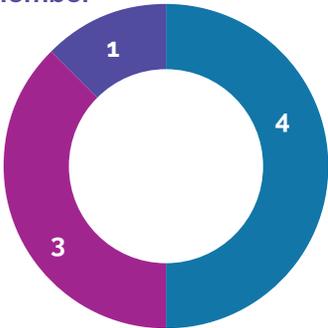


**8**

FOCUS GROUPS FACILITATED BY  
ARTIST AS CHANGEMAKER COHORT

## 8 INTERVIEWS

Community Member



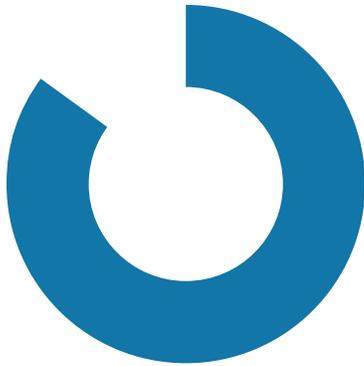
Independent Artists

Art-based Organizations

# THE SURVEY

## ARTIST RESPONSES

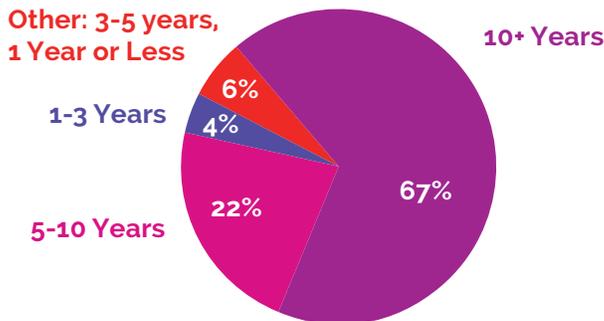
% = Percentage of responses from artists



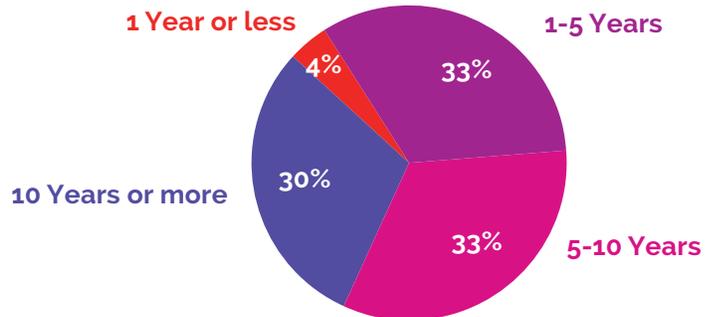
**85%**  
of the artists would describe their work as having an Art for Social Change lens.

ASC is defined as: collective art-making by groups of people (who may not self-identify as artists) about issues that matter to them. ASC is rooted in social, environmental, and political justice, and is a form of cultural democracy. ASC may include community-engaged art projects, often initiated by artists, but may also be initiated by community members or organizations. These projects engage individuals who aren't professional artists to actively participate in the artistic process, and the artistic process is considered as important as the final artistic product.

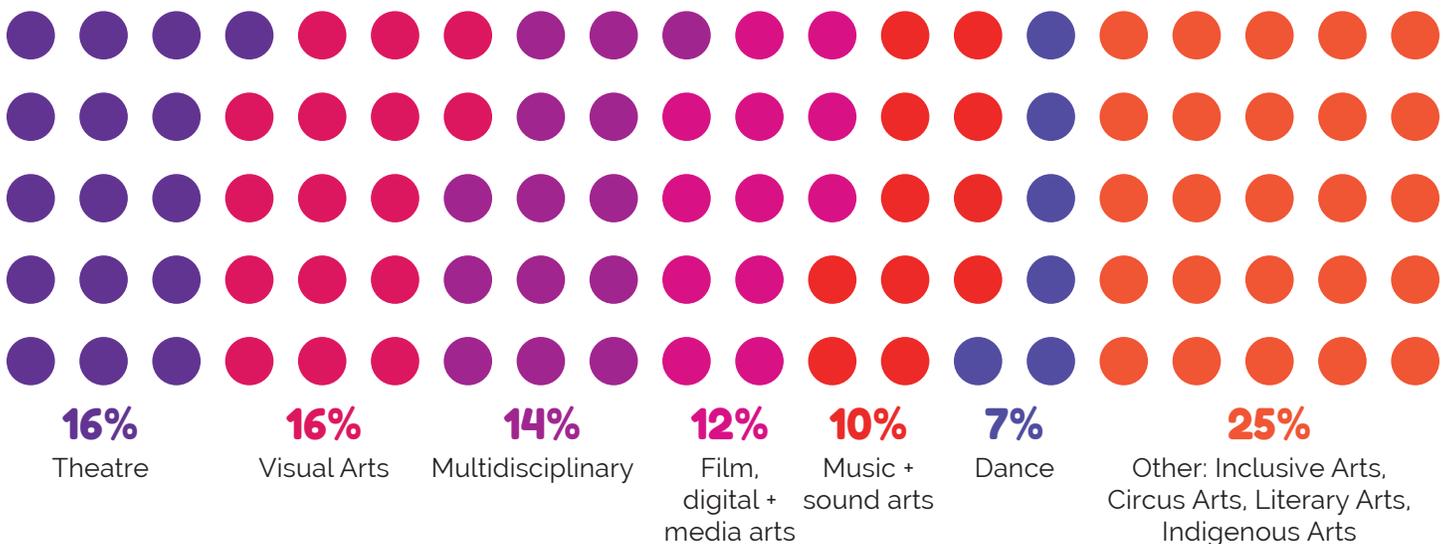
### Number of years artist has lived in Calgary



### Duration of time that artists have worked in the ASC field



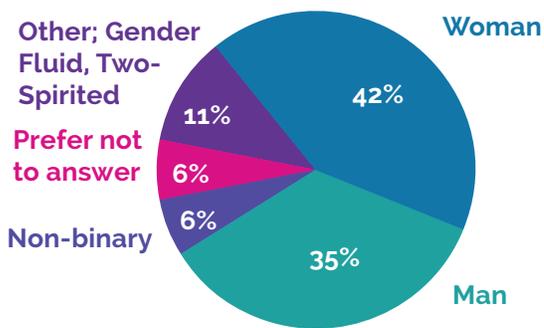
### The top artistic mediums



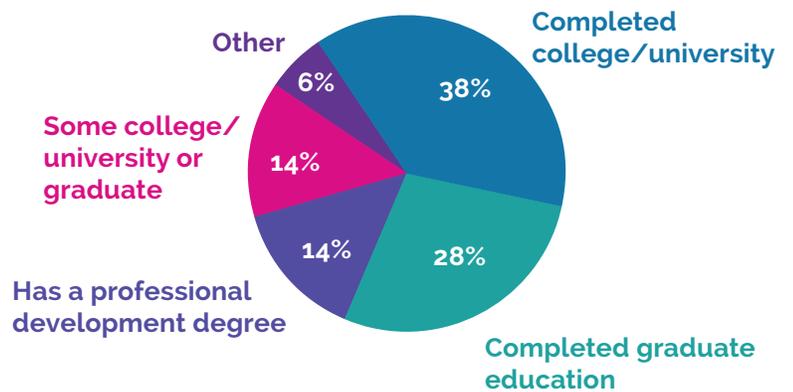
44

Average age of an ASC practitioner in Calgary is 44 years old

Most artists identify themselves as:



Level of education most artists have:



Income

69% of artists responded that their annual income in the past 12 months (2021), was between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

56% of artists responded that they receive a portion of their income as a result of ASC work.

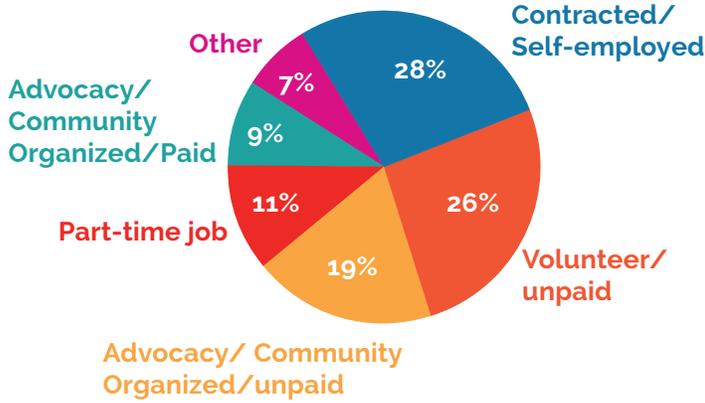


44%

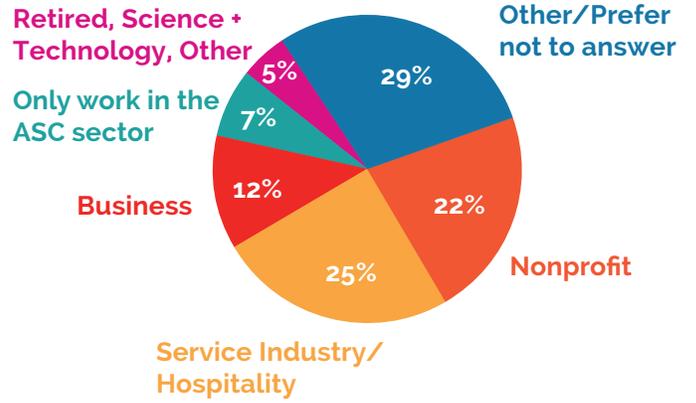
Of the 56%, 44% of the artists responded that 10% - 30% of their annual income comes from ASC

## Work Status of Artists

Most artists working in ASC describe their status as:



Outside of ASC, artists are working in the following area:



**84%**

of artists responded that their work in Art for Social Change involves partnerships or collaboration with organizations

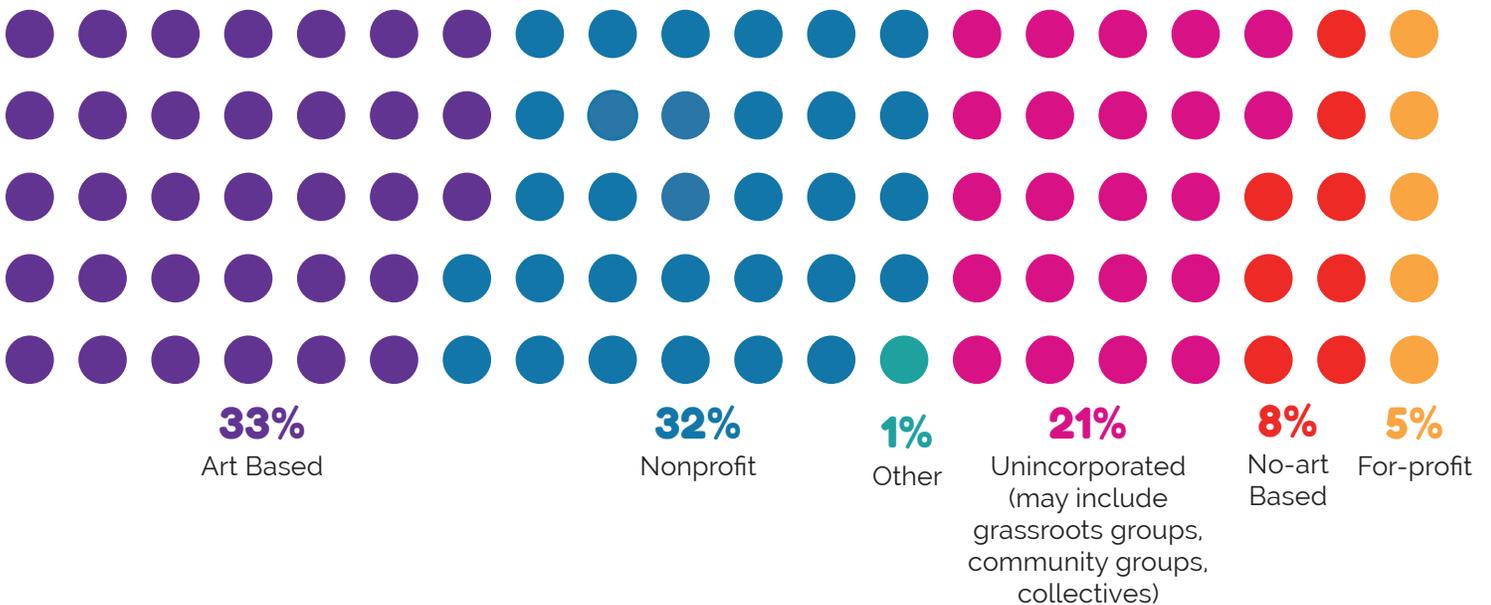
**83%**

of the artists responded that their work in Art of Social Change involved partnerships or collaborations with community members

**83%**

of artists would describe themselves as belonging to the communities they work with

## Types of organizations artists work with in ASC



**In ASC work, artists choose the communities they want to work with based on the issue they are interested in/exploring. Some examples mentioned are:**

- Aging and older adult communities
- Anti-racism communities
- Disability communities
- Migrants, refugees and newcomers
- Indigenous communities
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Culture and heritage
- Mental Health
- Homelessness
- Small business owners

**50% of the artists responded that organizations they typically work with are small, having between 0 to 10 staff members.**

- Small to Medium: between 10 - 50 staff members (27%)
- Unsure of the size (16%)
- Medium to large: 50 and above staff members (7%)

**60% or artists responded that organizations they typically work with are poorly resourced (reduced financial capacity to take ASC projects).**

- Moderately resourced: medium financial capacity to take ASC projects (36%)
- Well resourced: high financial capacity to take ASC projects (4%)

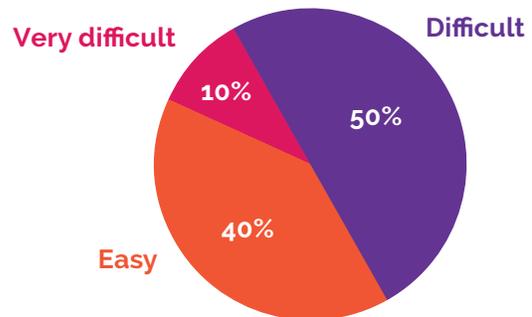
**59% of artists stated that they have received training or mentorship. Places where artists are receiving training and mentorship:**

- Formal education
- Nonprofit organizations
- Community organized groups
- Art based organizations
- Cultural organizations
- The City of Calgary public art department
- Peer to peer

**Artist mentioned the following training would be helpful to contribute to their Art for Social Change work:**

- Networking and Relationship building
- Peer to peer learning
- Organized events (workshops, conferences, webinars, courses)
- Financial (accessing funds, grant writing)
- Issue specific learning (anti-racism, decolonization)

**How easy/difficult artists find it to network and connect with others working in ASC in Calgary**

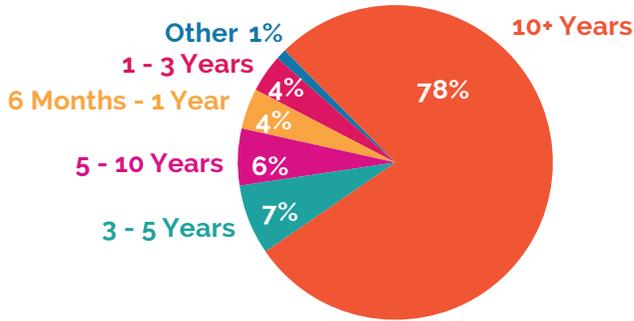


# THE SURVEY

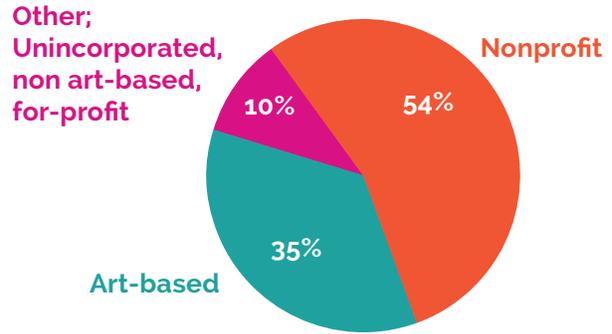
## ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES

% = Percentage of responses from organization representatives

Number of years organizations have operated in Calgary



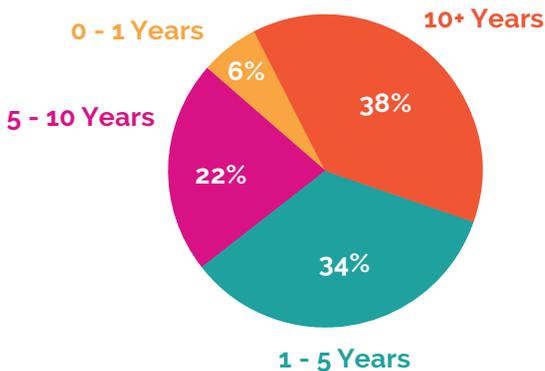
Representatives classify the organization they work in as



100%

of organization representatives responded that they work with artists

Number of years the organization has been working in ASC



54% of the organization representatives responded as having approximately 0-2 full-time staff members in the organization.

41% of the organization representatives responded that their organization operational budget in the past 12 months (2021) was between \$0 - \$50,000.

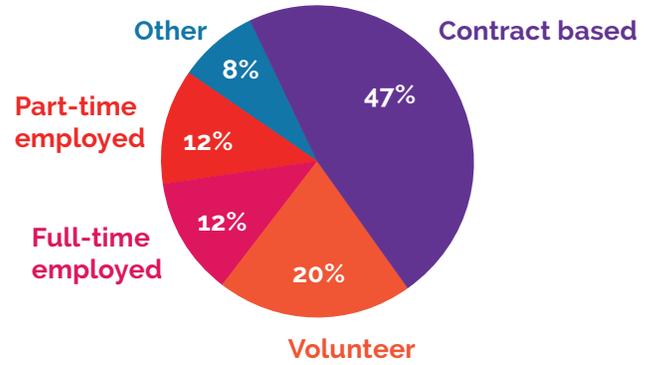
26% organization representatives responded that their organization allocated 0% - 5% of their operating budget in the past 12 months (2021) towards ASC work.



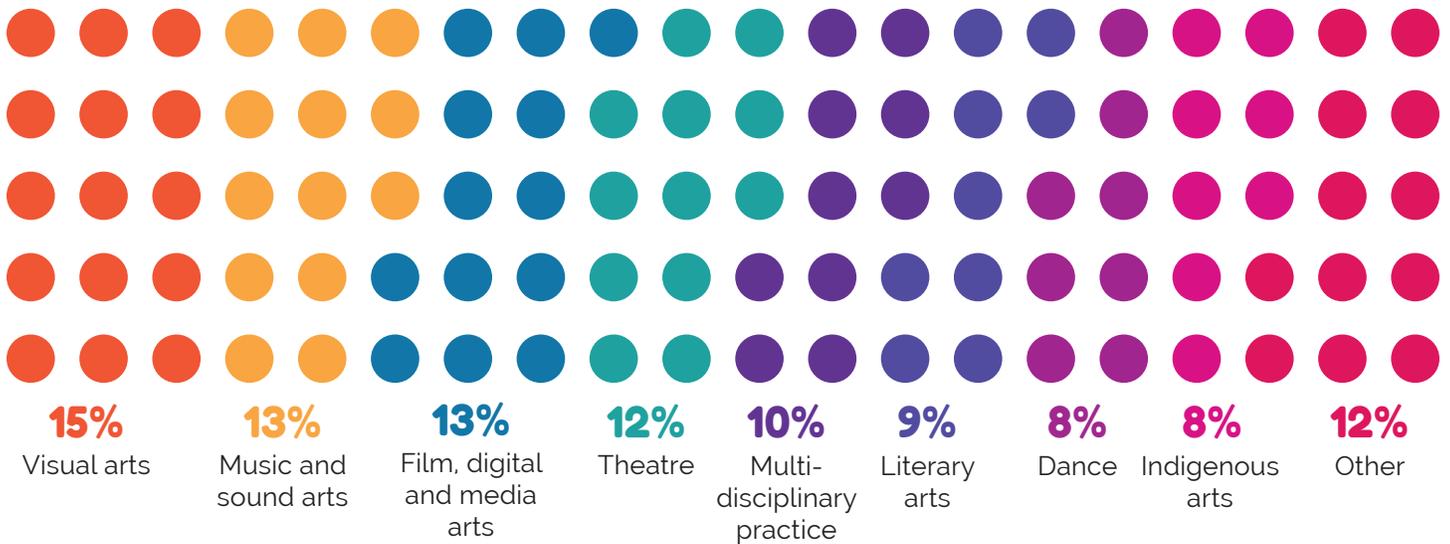
**64%**

of organization representatives would describe their organization as having an Art for Social Change lens

Capacity in which organization work with artists



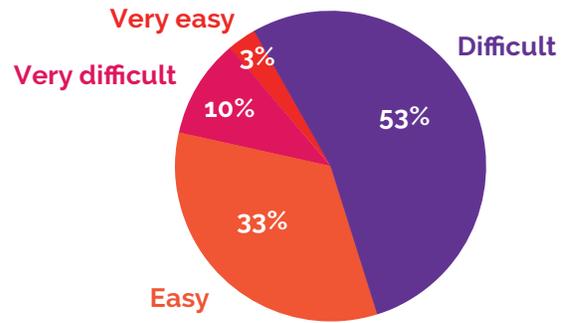
Of the artists that have been involved in the organization the following are the top artistic mediums



**63% of the organization representatives mentioned that their organization provides training/mentorship in ASC. How does this happen?**

- Workshops, social issues curriculums, webinars, discussion groups
- Internship, employment, and volunteer opportunities

**How easy/difficult organization representatives find it to network and connect with others working in ASC in**



**78%**

**of organization representatives responded that their work involves partnerships or collaborations with community members**

**88% responded that their work in ASC involved partnerships or collaborations with other organizations. How does this happen?**

- To share what is happening (the work the organization has done or will do) and extend reach
- For collaboration on events
- For collaboration on similar issues or themes
- Collaborations with other art based organizations who use Art for Social Change
- Partnerships with non-profit organizations, small businesses, cultural organizations, community associations, schools (elementary to high school), social service organizations
- Partnership for grants opportunities

**The types of communities that organizations typically work with on ASC projects vary. Some examples given are:**

- 2SLGBTQIA communities
- BIPOC communities
- Indigenous communities
- Multi-Cultural Associations and Performance Groups
- Aging, Senior, Older adult populations
- Youth groups
- Refugee, Newcomer and Immigrant communities
- Persons with disabilities
- Art based groups, collectives or organizations
- Women
- Community associations
- Persons experiencing health illness

**LISTEN TO THE SHAREBACK THE ASCN:  
CALGARY HUB DELIVERED TO THE COMMUNITY**



SCAN ME OR [CLICK HERE](#)

# ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE CONVERSATIONS

On November 25, 2021 a virtual event was curated. The event gathered Art for Social Change organizations and artists, community leaders, and interested individuals for dialogue about why Art for Social Change matters. We discussed the challenges and opportunities that exist in Calgary. We showcased the Artist as Changemaker Program as one example of

this work in Calgary, and invited participants to share other examples. The event was held over Zoom and had 8 focus groups, with each group containing 6-10 participants. Furthermore, to build on the survey results and the focus group conversations, we conducted key informant interviews to explore the experiences and narratives of the ASC field in Calgary.

## ABOUT THE ASC WORK HAPPENING IN CALGARY

Much of the Art for Social Change work happens through artistic facilitation. The artist facilitator brings people together in response to a particular topic. People are guided through an artistic process as they collectively uncover attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs. The work is centered on conversation and making with art. The processes created by artists are unique to the topic they are addressing. Environmental constraints such as the COVID-19 pandemic have led artists to be innovative with their approaches. The work is happening in community association halls, and within

non-profit organizations and art based organizations. Furthermore, the work takes place because of opportunities available to artists. Meaning, artists take the ASC opportunities that become available to them (paid/unpaid) through various mediums (in organizations, collectives, community associations) and adjust accordingly to fit the requirements needed for that opportunity. Artists also play a connector role, connecting various individuals, groups and organizations together to discover what is possible in support of a common goal.

## PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ASC FIELD IN CALGARY

Practitioners believe that art and socially engaged art is important to society because it helps us imagine what is possible. It reveals the capabilities of others, connects people and communities meaningfully, unveils the truth, shares stories to aid transformation, adds layers to issues to help people understand, relate

and be open. There is optimism about what the field could be because of how practitioners choose to see the world; that positive change is possible. On the other hand, practitioners lament the challenges associated with communication, funding, and accessibility to ASC and arts in general.

## KEY INSIGHTS



# MOTIVATION

## *What's the MOTIVATION?*

- Artists have a desire to change how things are for a better future
- Art helps to address big social questions
- Art can challenge existing narratives
- Art can bridge the gap between what the 'world is' versus 'what the world could be'
- Art supports wellness
- Art brings creative ways to talk about issues. These creative approaches resonate with people in a way that need not be explicit
- Collaboration with others to make the unknown known and highlight experiences and voices that are not always heard
- There is a desire to have multiple and diverse voices present in imagining a new future
- The artists' interest or passion in specific issue(s) and theme(s) drive their work

# ENABLERS

## *Identified by practitioners*

- The ASC sector is growing. There is vibrancy in the city when it comes to community arts. There is a desire for different communities to make connections and work together
- Mentorship is increasing; Other artists that have figured it out are looking back and lending a hand by sharing knowledge
- Artists and organizations are playing the connector role to encourage collaboration
- Each project is unique. When an approach works in one community, it doesn't mean it will work with the next community. Practitioners spend time understanding the community to determine the process that can work. Enables creativity for artists, organizations and communities
- The timing feels right; Attention to various social issues is driving awareness about ASC
- People are becoming interested and wondering how they fit in the field and how they can contribute.
- Having clear language about the field will attract more people, and allow practitioners to connect and belong to a community
- Traditionally trained artists are becoming more involved in community engaged arts

# INHIBITORS

## *Identified by practitioners*

**Having to describe to others what social practice is, how it works, and why it matters**

- Challenge also lies in having various definitions of ASC; there are many ways to describe the field which can cause confusion and perhaps a lack of unity in the field
- ASC has a complex systems lens; it's difficult to focus on only one issue at a time, as one issue affects multiple other issues within a system
- Challenge in communicating value of the work; The value of ASC is felt among practitioners and participants, but difficult to explain on paper

**Art for social change work is devalued and discounted, especially in comparison to other art fields.**

### **Competition for resources**

- In general, competition for resources in the arts is high. ASC practitioners are faced with another challenge as they compete with artists in different fields, as well as artists in ASC
- Also there are limited places to acquire funds and grants, especially with ASC work which creates challenges for on-going projects
- Access to other resources such as space and art supplies is a challenge. The process itself of finding resources to support the work is not easy

**Feeling alone and not knowing where to get support, artists feel that there is lack of guidance in the ASC field.**

**Sharing the work that is happening beyond the artist and organization's immediate network is difficult which makes it difficult for community members to access opportunities to participate in community engaged arts.**

**ASC artists and organizations are not aware of other ASC practitioners which makes networking, and finding partnerships and connections difficult.**

### **Granting and funding processes**

- Granting and funding processes not taking into account that ASC takes place in a facilitated environment, where (in most cases) work belongs to the people and not the artist. Makes it difficult to access funding because artists might not have physical artistic outputs/products to share at the end of the project, and/or documentation of the work cannot be shared easily due to privacy policies
- Grant writing takes time and effort with little to no return on investment.
- Funding models need to be updated
- Funders and decision makers may be unaware of ASC practices, which causes practitioners to lack confidence in the granting system around ASC work

**There are barriers for artists to get the right people in the room. At times the people artists are trying to reach for a specific project are not easily accessible. There are many unpaid opportunities for artists in ASC. Artists are willing to take this on but are faced with the challenges of time and have to prioritize other work outside ASC for income.**

### **ASC not yet a movement in Calgary**

- Feels like a small community and feels exclusive
- Communities doing ASC growing separately, and doing work in silos

### **Dealing with social issues is an on-going battle**

**Difficult to be sustainable in ASC as a full time artist Sector is vulnerable to environment changes**

#### **(COVID-19 pandemic)**

- The pandemic challenged collaboration due to things being suspended/on hold as well as low resources

**Lack of recognition of cultural organizations' role in ASC. These organizations are not valued and this is demonstrated through funding levels.**

## **PRACTITIONERS IDEAS ON MOVING FORWARD**

To elevate the ASC sector in Calgary, practitioners share their thoughts of what we need more of.

### **INCREASE**

- In events and opportunities for gathering to help practitioners connect, for example conferences
- ASC is growing in Calgary. It needs more attention and nurturing
- Show more community members the value of ASC
- Artists and groups need to see themselves as part of a bigger purpose and collective
- More public engagement with ASC to show practitioners in the midst of community

- More collaborations within the ASC field and with other sectors
- More children participating in the arts
- Re-evaluation of granting process to aid ASC
- Public education and advocacy around ASC
- Funding to sustain on-going ASC projects
- Bridging the gap between research projects and on the ground work so they are more aligned
- Community building opportunities
- Diversity to include people of various backgrounds
- Collective effort to further build the sector
- Knowledge sharing

## **WHAT'S NEXT**

As part of our ongoing partnership with Calgary Arts Development, the Trico Changemakers Studio has launched the Art for Social Change Network: Calgary Hub as a way to connect and engage the Art for Social Change community in Calgary. Our focus is to:

- To share the work that is happening to a wide audience demonstrating the value of Art for Social Change
- To build connections with artists and art-based organizations that narrow the gap between and within them
- To create a platform where ASC practitioners and those interested can easily find on-going projects,

connect with an ASC practitioner, start initiatives and invite partnerships, and share resources and lessons learned from work with different communities.

- Work in collaboration with the ASC National Network in areas of advocacy and community-engaged arts research. Additionally, work in collaboration with other hubs across Canada to share information and resources.

With the launch of the Hub, we hope it will be a space to connect, collaborate, and celebrate the power of arts in addressing social challenges and in building thriving communities.