



**City of Kingston**  
**Report to Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee**  
**Report Number ARCP-25-007**

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|-------------------------|---|
| <b>To:</b>              | <b>Chair and Members of the Arts, Recreation &amp; Community Policies Committee</b> |
| <b>From:</b>            | <b>Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services</b>                          |
| <b>Resource Staff:</b>  | <b>Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts &amp; Culture Services</b>                       |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b> | <b>April 24, 2025</b>   |
| <b>Subject:</b>         | <b>City of Kingston Arts Fund Review – Recommendations</b>                          |

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 5.Drive Inclusive Economic Growth

Goal: 5.7 Foster culture, history, education, arts and recreation (CHEAR).

**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to present and seek Council endorsement of the final City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A). This reflects an in-depth review of the arts funding program and sets the direction for the CKAF for the future to ensure it supports the growth and sustainability of the sector. The CKAF Report was developed by Saffy Inc., working closely with City staff, and included broad consultation with the arts sector, grant recipients and applicants, the public and key partner organizations including the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) who administers the CKAF on behalf of the City.

The CKAF Report (Exhibit A) that is being presented for Council endorsement includes 15 recommendations as well as several strategic considerations for investment to the CKAF and to the KAC to support the implementation of the recommendations. The CKAF Report also acknowledges the financial challenges facing the City and that there are significant pressures ahead and includes options and investment scenarios for staff and Council consideration in the development of future City operating budgets.

This report also presents a new draft City of Kingston Arts Fund Framework (Exhibit B) based on the Recommendations developed through the review, for review and feedback. This

**April 24, 2025**

Page 2 of 9

Framework will be finalized prior to implementation of the CKAF recommendations begins and will be presented to Council for final approval in Q3 2025. This Framework will become the guiding policy for the CKAF in terms of its administration and governance and will supersede the KAC Plan for Administration of Arts Funding for the Corporation of the City of Kingston.

This report also includes a 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan (Exhibit C) which presents the plan to distribute funding during this transition year, ensuring that there is stable, continuous funding for organizations that receive an operating grant and/or a recurring project grant, and that there is a low-barrier grant application process available to organizations, groups and artists who do not have a CKAF grant. For new applicants, it's expected that funding in 2025 will be distributed no later than October 31, 2025. This Transition Plan assumes that all groups will need to apply to the new CKAF program and Framework once implemented, which is expected to begin in 2026.

The review of the CKAF aims to ensure continued success and impact of the City's direct investment in the arts sector and recognizes the need to strategically align the CKAF going forward with broader work of the City including the development of a new Culture Plan (Council Strategic Priorities, 2023-2026).

**Recommendation:**

**That** the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee recommend to Council:

**That** Council endorse the City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Report and Recommendations, attached as Exhibit A to Report Number ARCP-25-007; and

**That** Council direct staff to finalize the City of Kingston Arts Fund Framework, draft attached as Exhibit B to Report Number ARCP-25-007, and present to Council for approval by Q3 2025; and

**That** Council approve the 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan and distribution of grants, attached as Exhibit C to Report Number ARCP-25-007, and direct staff to report back to the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee in Q2 2026 on the implementation of the Transition Plan; and

**That** Council direct staff to explore increased investment to the City of Kingston Arts Fund and to the Kingston Arts Council, as included in the City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Report and Recommendations, attached as Exhibit A to Report Number ARCP-25-007, as part of the 2026 Arts & Culture Services operating budget, to be developed in accordance with the Mayor's budget direction, and report back to Council on feasibility through the 2026 budget process; and

**That** Council approve one-time transition funding for the Kingston Arts Council of \$80,000 to be funded from the approved and existing Arts & Culture Services capital budgets, to

**April 24, 2025**

Page 3 of 9

support the implementation of the recommendations included in the City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Report and Recommendations, attached as Exhibit A to Report Number ARCP-25-007, to be described through an Amending Agreement to the Kingston Arts Council's Service Level Agreement; and

**That** the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute an Amending Agreement to the Service Level Agreement between the City of Kingston and the Kingston Arts Council that identifies the services to be provided by the Kingston Arts Council and the associated funding to be issued by the City of Kingston for those services, in a form acceptable to the Director of Legal Services.

April 24, 2025

Page 4 of 9

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

Jennifer Campbell,  
Commissioner, Community  
Services

p.p. ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services                  | Not required                        |
| Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services                | Not required                        |
| David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston                           | Not required                        |
| Ian Semple, Acting Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services | Not required                        |
| Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**April 24, 2025**

Page 5 of 9

**Options/Discussion:**

**Background**

The City of Kingston has a long history of providing grants to local arts, culture and community based non-profit organizations, collectives and groups. Through these investments, the City recognizes the role that arts, culture, heritage and strong and connected neighbourhoods play in elevating the distinct characteristics of a city and in creating access to unique cultural experiences that reflect the lives and values of those who live in the city.

The CKAF was first established in 2007 and has been an important source of funding for arts in Kingston, and in turn, grant recipients have had significant impacts in the City by delivering public programming, engaging audiences and providing opportunities to participate in the arts, paying artists and employing staff, and contributing to cultural vitality. They have also been able to access other levels of arts funding with municipal support. Since the beginning, the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) has administered the CKAF on behalf of the City.

Based on community and Council interest, and to ensure the CKAF remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the arts sector as well as public interest and access to arts experiences and opportunities, staff have advanced the much-needed work to complete a formal and comprehensive review of the CKAF. The City enlisted the support of Saffy, a consulting firm specializing in city-building, culture, design and research, to lead the CKAF review. Saffy employed a human-centred, equity-informed approach to the project, focusing on collaborative research and inclusive methods of community engagement.

Staff have brought recent information reports to this Committee that provided additional background and context on the CKAF and the Review, at its meetings on December 12, 2024 ([Report Number ARCP 25-002](#)) and on February 27, 2025 ([Report Number ARCP-25-004](#)).

**Analysis**

This report includes three CKAF-related exhibits for Council's consideration and more information on each is included here for reference.

**City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A)**

This report provides an overview of the review of the CKAF, which was a multi-phase review process led by Saffy. This review process provided an assessment of CKAF's structure, effectiveness and impact, and includes a set of strategic recommendations aimed at modernizing and strengthening the fund.

The CKAF review identified several recurring themes and challenges across all engagement activities:

**April 24, 2025**

Page 6 of 9

- **Administrative Efficiency:** The existing grant structure has been in place since 2007 and requires modernization to reduce administrative burdens and barriers and improve clarity for applicants.
- **Access and Inclusivity:** The CKAF is seen as an important arts funding program for many arts organizations and in support of projects, but arts organizations and groups still face barriers in applying for funding, including perceived limited space within the CKAF for new groups, restrictive eligibility criteria and complex application processes, and while artists can apply for project funding, there is no direct support through the CKAF for individual artists creation and presentation.
- **Education and Outreach:** Many lack awareness of the CKAF and available funding opportunities, highlighting the need for expanded outreach efforts.
- **Strategic Growth and Alignment:** Kingston's population growth and evolving municipal priorities necessitate a more adaptive and forward-looking arts funding program.
- **Financial Sustainability:** The demand for arts funding through the CKAF significantly exceeds available resources, leading to increased competition and limitations for emerging organizations and projects.

To address these challenges, five pillars were developed, each accompanied by specific recommendations to guide CKAF's future evolution.

- **Pillar #1: Restructure and Realign the City of Kingston Arts Fund**
- **Pillar #2: Administrative Efficiency**
- **Pillar #3: Inclusivity and Access**
- **Pillar #4: Education and Outreach**
- **Pillar #5: Municipal Strategic Alignment**

The recommendations include expansion of eligibility criteria, diverse application methods, expanded support for grant applicants to support access, and the revisioning of the grant streams to move from two grant streams to four, including a more inclusive operating grant stream, a dedicated festival grant stream to support these recurring events and activities across Kingston, an updated project grant stream that supports new and creative arts projects, and a new grant stream that provides funding to individual artists for creation and development. Recommendations also include application of IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) principles across all grant funding streams.

As part of the implementation plan of the recommendations, strategic considerations have been developed in relation to investment to the CKAF, and to the KAC, for staff and Council's consideration when developing future City operating budgets. Within the report, proposed investment scenarios have been developed, which includes a proposed ideal scenario reflecting a more significant increased investment in the CKAF. The report also recognizes that any investment to the CKAF, to support the recommendations brought forward through this CKAF

**April 24, 2025**

Page 7 of 9

Review, needs to be considered within the City's annual budget approval process and within the corresponding Mayor's budget direction.

### **New City of Kingston Arts Fund Framework (Exhibit B)**

The need to develop a new Framework for the CKAF and its administration was identified through this review process. Staff developed a draft Framework, attached to this report (Exhibit B), for Council's review and feedback. The Framework was created in consultation with KAC staff and the Board of Directors and based on the CKAF Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A). The Framework will be finalized prior to implementation of the CKAF recommendations and will be presented to Council for final approval in Q3 2025.

The Framework provides guidance and structure to the City's investment of funding for organizations, collectives and individual artists through the CKAF. It also outlines how Kingston City Council, City of Kingston staff, KAC staff and the KAC Board of Directors contribute to and govern this work. Additionally, it identifies new goals and priorities for the CKAF; and outlines how the CKAF supports organizations, festivals and artists, artist groups and collectives, and it provides a high-level overview of eligibility, assessment and decision making, adjudication criteria and roles and responsibilities. The KAC will develop new CKAF guidelines, application forms, peer assessment forms and criteria, and all other required grant program materials, in alignment with the Framework, which will be made available to the public and to grant applicants.

This Framework intends to supersede and replace any previous policies and plans related to managing the CKAF, including the KAC Plan for Administration of Arts Funding for the Corporation of the City of Kingston (Plan for Administration). The Plan for Administration is a detailed administration document that has functioned as a policy and governance document, and every year this document comes to Council for approval. Overall, the annual changes to the Plan for Administration have often only included date changes in terms of when applications for the upcoming grant cycle are due and some language changes for clarity, which are more administrative in nature.

The Framework, as a policy and governance document, also clarifies authorities and approvals in relation to the CKAF which includes final authority of the approval of this Framework with City Council and administration of this Framework with the KAC Board of Directors, which aligns with how the Plan for Administration was developed, administered and approved.

### **2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan (Exhibit C)**

The final part of the CKAF Review is the 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan (Exhibit C) which provides strategic recommendations on the distribution of funding for this year. This Plan recognizes that 2025 is a bridging year between the existing CKAF program and the new CKAF program, pending Council approval, and proposes three approaches to distributing funding that reduces barriers for existing groups who receive annual, recurring CKAF grants,

**April 24, 2025**

Page 8 of 9

and includes a low barrier application process for new groups to access funding in 2025. All groups will have to reapply to the new CKAF program once its implemented. This approach enables staff and KAC to focus resources to support the major administrative changes that are needed to successfully launch the new CKAF. A draft Transition Plan was brought to this Committee at its meeting on February 27, 2025 ([Report Number ARCP-25-004](#)) for review and feedback.

### **Public Engagement**

The CKAF Review process included significant public engagement, which is outlined in detail in the CKAF Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A).

### **Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

The CKAF Review process and final recommendations prioritize Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA), which is described in detail in the CKAF Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A) and in the new CKAF Framework (Exhibit B).

### **Existing Policy/By-Law**

The CKAF aligns with the Kingston Culture Plan, approved by Council in September 2010, and it is anticipated it will evolve through this CKAF review and in relation to the renewal of the Kingston Culture Plan that has been included as part of Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities. The CKAF also aligns with additional arts-based strategies, such as the Kingston Music Strategy (approved in December 2023).

### **Notice Provisions**

None

### **Financial Considerations**

The 2025 CKAF Transition Plan (Exhibit C) includes recommendations on grant distribution based on the approved budget for the CKAF of \$612,790, which was included in the 2025 Arts & Culture Services operating budget and developed in accordance with the Mayor's budget direction. The Transition Plan also accounts for the interest earned on the CKAF in 2024, to be added to the available funds in 2025.

The one-time transition funding for the KAC of \$80,000 to support the implementation of the CKAF recommendations included in the Review is accounted for in existing Arts & Culture Services capital budgets, which was earmarked as part of the budget for the CKAF Review.

The CKAF Review Report and Recommendations (Exhibit A) propose a total increased investment of \$257,210 to the CKAF in 2026, which would increase the total available through



**April 24, 2025**

Page 9 of 9

CKAF grants from \$612,790 in 2025 to \$870,000 in 2026 and establish a new fund baseline moving forward. This report recommends that Council direct staff to explore increased investment to the City of Kingston Arts Fund, as part of the development of the 2026 Arts & Culture Services operating budget and in accordance with the Mayor's budget direction, and that staff report back to Council on the recommended approach to this investment through the 2026 budget process.

**Contacts:**

Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts & Culture Services, 613-546-4291 extension 1277

**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

None

**Exhibits Attached:**

Exhibit A - City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Report and Recommendations

Exhibit B – Draft City of Kingston Arts Fund Framework

Exhibit C - 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan

# City of Kingston Arts Fund Review Final Report

April 14, 2025





# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Part I - Introduction</b>                                       | <b>3</b>  |
| Executive Summary  | 4         |
| About this Report  | 6         |
| About CKAF   | 6         |
| Kingston Context   | 12        |
| About the CKAF Review  | 14        |
| Research, Engagement Process & Methodology                         | 15        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>Part II - What We Heard Findings</b>                            | <b>17</b> |
| What We Heard Overview   | 18        |
| Key Findings   | 23        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>Part III - CKAF Review Pillars + Recommendations</b>            | <b>26</b> |
| Overview of Recommendations  | 27        |
| CKAF Review Pillar #1 - Restructure the City of Kingston Arts Fund | 28        |
| CKAF Review Pillar #2 - Enhance Administrative Efficiency          | 29        |
| CKAF Review Pillar #3 - Enhance Inclusivity and Access             | 29        |
| CKAF Review Pillar #4 - Education and Outreach                     | 31        |
| CKAF Review Pillar #5 - Municipal Strategic Alignment              | 31        |
| Implementation   | 32        |
| Next Steps   | 36        |



# Part I

## Introduction



## Executive Summary

The City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) has played a pivotal role in fostering artistic excellence, supporting local artists, and strengthening Kingston's cultural landscape since its inception in 2007. As the city evolves, it is critical to ensure that CKAF remains responsive to emerging needs, enhances accessibility, and aligns with broader municipal priorities. This external review provides a comprehensive assessment of CKAF's structure, effectiveness, and impact, culminating in a set of strategic recommendations aimed at modernizing and strengthening the fund.

The CKAF Review process involved extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and comparative analysis of arts funding models in similar municipalities. Input was gathered through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and community engagement initiatives to identify gaps, opportunities, and areas for improvement. The findings highlight the need to streamline administrative processes, expand grant eligibility, improve access for underrepresented artists and align funding mechanisms with the city's long-term cultural objectives.

This executive summary outlines the key themes, findings, and final recommendations resulting from the review. The proposed changes aim to enhance transparency, equity, and the overall sustainability of Kingston's arts ecosystem.

The CKAF Review identified several recurring themes and challenges across all engagement activities:

- **Administrative Efficiency:** The existing grant structure requires modernization to reduce administrative burdens and improve clarity for applicants.
- **Access and Inclusivity:** Many artists and arts organizations face barriers in applying for funding, including restrictive eligibility criteria and complex application processes.
- **Education and Outreach:** Many artists and community members lack awareness of CKAF and available funding opportunities, highlighting the need for expanded outreach efforts.
- **Financial Sustainability:** The demand for arts funding significantly exceeds available resources, leading to increased competition and limitations for emerging artists.
- **Strategic Growth and Alignment:** Kingston's population growth and evolving municipal priorities necessitate a more adaptive and forward-looking arts funding strategy.



To respond to these challenges, 15 recommendations were developed under five key pillars. Each pillar includes specific actions to help guide the future direction of CKAF.

- Pillar #1 - Restructure and Realign the City of Kingston Arts Fund
- Pillar #2 - Administrative Efficiency
- Pillar #3 - Inclusivity and Access
- Pillar #4 - Education and Outreach
- Pillar #5 - Municipal Strategic Alignment

The recommendations are grounded in strategic considerations that highlight the need for increased investment in both CKAF and KAC to ensure their intended impact is fully realized.

The CKAF Review underscores the critical role that arts funding plays in enriching Kingston's cultural vibrancy, fostering innovation, and ensuring equitable access to artistic opportunities. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a clear roadmap for enhancing CKAF's effectiveness, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability. By implementing these strategic changes, the City of Kingston can reinforce its commitment to the arts, support a thriving creative sector, and build a more inclusive and dynamic cultural landscape for future generations.



## About this Report

This report summarizes the work completed as part of an external review of the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) and provides high-level recommendations for the arts funding program, which are intended to align with broader municipal priorities and be adaptive so that the CKAF can continue to have an impact over the next 10-20 years.

This review included research of best practices in municipal arts funding, a comparative review of other similar sized municipalities and their arts funding programs and models, a review of City policies and priorities, and broad community consultation. The feedback and findings reflect the diverse perspectives of Kingston's arts community, and underscores the critical importance of inclusivity in arts funding, funding stability, and community access to arts experiences, as well as the need to modernize grant processes, improve access to funding, and support a broader range of artistic endeavours. The research and feedback collected through this review, as well as the recommendations and framework, as outlined in this report, provide valuable guidance for the CKAF's ongoing development, ensuring it continues to effectively support Kingston's cultural landscape while fostering creativity, diversity, and community connections.

## About CKAF

Since 2007, the City of Kingston has directly invested in the local arts ecology of Kingston through the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF). To-date, the City has provided close to \$10 million to support arts organizations, collectives, and individual artists through Operating and Project Grants, fostering creativity and enriching how Kingston residents experience and engage in the arts. Through this investment, the CKAF aims to enhance cultural vitality, increase the capacity of the arts sector to create and present artistic work, engage residents, boost the city's cultural economy, and promote financial stability and sustainability.

From the beginning, the administration of the CKAF has been managed by the Kingston Arts Council (KAC). The KAC is a community-based arts service organization that promotes the creation, development and appreciation of the arts in Kingston. The CKAF is guided by a Plan for Administration that is approved by Council annually. The Plan includes a framework for the CKAF and its two existing grant streams, Operating Grants and Project Grants. The Plan also includes the assessment and adjudication processes, and the overall



governance structure of the management of the CKAF. Over the years, small administrative changes have been made to the Plan. However, the framework for the CKAF has remained the same since 2007. The only exception was a one-time funding adjustment during COVID. In 2021, two new funding streams were introduced: Resiliency Grants, which provided microgrants for artists, and Adapt Grants, which supported new projects that directly addressed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Operating Grants

CKAF Operating Grants support incorporated non-profit arts organizations based in Kingston that demonstrate excellence in arts programming and play a significant role in the community. Funding amounts range from \$10,000 to \$75,000 per grant, for a one-year period. On average, 70% of the total available CKAF funds are allocated to Operating Grants. Of this 70% allocation, 11 organizations receive annual, stable funding. Beyond these 11 organizations, since the program was first launched, fifteen new organizations have applied to enter the grant stream, and only three organizations have been successful and received funding. In 2024, the Operating Grants total request for funding was \$467,197 and the total of grants recommended was \$429,162.

## Project Grants

CKAF Project Grants support arts initiatives led by individual professional artists, collectives, and incorporated non-profit organizations that align with CKAF's objectives. Projects must demonstrate engagement with the broader Kingston community, involve professional artists, and ensure artist fees are paid. Funding ranges from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per grant for projects to be completed within eighteen months, and 30% of the total CKAF funds are allocated to Project Grants. On average, 17 project grants are distributed every year, and this program typically averages around 27 applications. The majority of Project Grants go to supporting recurring projects (i.e., festivals, event series). In 2024, Project Grants had 34 applications, an over 50% increase in the number of applications from 2023. The funding request totaled \$452,454 and the total grants recommended was \$183,926.





## COVID Funding

In 2021, Kingston City Council allocated \$200,000 in one-time funding to CKAF to support individual artists and non-profit arts organizations in recognition of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This investment was in addition to the City's annual contribution in support of the fund's Operating and Project Grants. This funding was made available through two new grant streams; Resiliency and Adapt.

Resiliency Grants supported individual professional artists to continue to work and work safely in their artistic practice. Total available funding for the Resiliency Grant was \$100,000. Applications were accepted from individual professional artists working in any artistic discipline; 263 applications were received, and 100 grants were awarded in the amount of \$1,000 each.

Adapt Grants supported individuals, collectives, ad-hoc groups, and non-profit arts organizations for new projects that directly addressed the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Total available funding for the Adapt Grant was \$100,000 and applicants applied for grants of \$4,000 to \$10,000. 22 applications were received, requesting a total of \$189,457; 15 Adapt Grants were awarded.

## Adjudication

Applications to the annual grants, Operating and Project Grants, are assessed in three key areas: Artistic Contribution, Community Benefit, and Administrative Viability. A jury of artists and arts professionals, selected for their expertise and standing in the arts community, reviews the applications. The jury is also chosen to reflect the gender, demographic, and cultural diversity of Kingston. Additionally, Councillors sit on the juries as ex officio members, as do City staff.



## Grant Recommendations

After the jury determines funding recommendations, the KAC develops a report that provides information on the applications received, the assessment process, and the proposed funding allocations that is shared with the KAC Board of Directors, City staff and Council. This report goes to the Board annually in June for approval, and then to Council in July for ratification of the grant recommendations. This schedule allows Council to review and endorse funding in alignment with the Plan for Administration, ensuring transparency and accountability in how public funds are utilized through the CKAF.

## Strategic Alignment

The CKAF was included in the City's Culture Plan (2010), which spoke to recommendations on strategic growth such as increases in funding to the CKAF as well as a per capita funding goal for investment in arts funding. The goal was \$5 per capita, which at the time and based on the population, totaled \$585,000. Today, based on the 2021 City of Kingston population of 132,485 (Statistics Canada, 2021 Census data), the total investment to the CKAF would be total closer to \$670,000, which is approximately \$57,210 more than what is available through the CKAF in 2025. Kingston's population has grown since 2021, so this investment level would likely need to be higher today to meet the \$5 per capita goal for arts funding.

In addition to the CKAF, the City of Kingston Heritage Fund (CKHF) was established as a recommendation of the Culture Plan, providing Project and Operating Grant support for museums, heritage projects, cultural groups and historical societies to improve how Kingston's stories are told locally and to the world. This grant program has various intersecting points with the CKAF – in 2024-2025, the CKHF focused one of its grant streams on Indigenization, inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility, as well as placemaking projects. The CKHF has four grant streams, ranging from small and large operating grants, community cultural heritage projects, and cultural heritage development projects, providing funding to community museums, historic sites, art galleries and cultural heritage projects. In 2024-2025, the available grants through the CKHF totaled \$376,449.



These two cultural funding programs have been essential in growing Kingston's cultural vitality, and today, totals just over \$1 million in funding for the local arts, culture and heritage sector, bringing the total cumulative per capita cultural spend in direct investment through arts and heritage grants closer to \$7.5 based on the 2021 population.

When looking at per capita spend in arts and culture in other similar size cities like Barrie (\$1.40 per capita), St. Catharine's (\$3.03), and Thunder Bay (\$19.9), all of which were referenced as comparable cities to Kingston in the 2010 Culture Plan, and larger urban centres like Toronto (\$25 per capita), Hamilton, Ottawa (\$11), Winnipeg (\$5.2), Calgary (\$9.6), and Edmonton (\$0.42), there are significant disparities in per capita funding levels, total funding amounts, what is tracked as part of per capita investment in culture, and overall levels of municipal commitment to the arts. In a 2012 study, [\*Municipal Cultural Investment in Five Large Canadian Cities\*](#), developed by Hill Strategies Research, it was determined that while per capita spending determined via the Hill Strategies methodology can be used as an internal measure of increased investment in cities, it no longer offers an ongoing benchmarking against relevant jurisdictions. It should also be noted that in this study, the municipal cultural investments that were reviewed included operating, grant and capital expenditures related to the performing arts, visual and media arts, crafts, design, museums, heritage, special events, multidisciplinary activities, creative and cultural industries, city-owned cultural facilities, cultural districts, public art, and other art purchases.

Kingston's arts and culture industry, assets, festivals, experiences, and more make it a distinct city, where the arts are leveraged for economic development, tourism, and community building. Across Ontario, cultural investment varies; while some cities prioritize cultural investment, others lag in per capita spending. The data suggests that cities with strong cultural identities (e.g. Toronto, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Kingston) tend to maintain higher arts funding, and should continue to advance investment in the arts to maintain this and see it grow, especially when considering population growth and changing demographics.

The 2010 Culture Plan also re-emphasized the City's longstanding partnership with and investment in the KAC to continue to support the CKAF, recognizing this as a well-established model for arts funding administration, leveraging the organization's expertise and community connections to support the arts sector effectively. This partnership has continued to be supported through a Service Level Agreement between the City and the KAC. This model distinguishes Kingston from other cities of similar size with arts funding programs, such as Barrie, St. Catharine's, and Thunder Bay, which lack dedicated arts



councils, and Hamilton, Ottawa and Vancouver, which manage funding in-house through larger municipal arts departments. Kingston's model of working with the KAC to manage and administer arts funding to the community is comparable to major cities like Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg, who all partner with their local arts councils, and is also aligned with arts funding programs at the provincial and federal level.

Since the CKAF was first established, additional municipal arts and culture strategies, awards, and investment programs have been developed, and supported through arts and culture operating and capital budgets, including the Public Art Master Plan (2014), the Creative Industries Strategy and Profile Sector Report (2021), and the Kingston Music Strategy (2023). Kingston tourism and downtown activation strategies are also based around promotion of strong, active and dynamic arts and culture scene and experiences. New arts spaces like the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning have been created, and municipal programs like the Mayor's Arts Awards, the Local Arts Residency, and various public art projects and commissions, all which provide funding and/or space to local artists, have been established. Other broader community services funding programs are also in place, including the CKHF as previously described, as well as the Community Investment Fund, the Neighbourhood Activation Fund, and the Waiver of Fee Policy.

A new Culture Plan is set to be developed for Kingston, with work starting later in 2025 (Council Strategic Priority) and completed in 2026. The Plan will set out a new vision for arts and culture in Kingston, and the CKAF will be considered as part of its development as a tool for building and strengthening sector capacity and improving access to residents to experience culture. The Culture Plan will also review, assess and recommend per capita spending on culture, considering population growth and municipal priorities, and the full cultural investment portfolio including arts, culture, heritage and community grant programs, as well as other cultural investment areas.

## Kingston Context

Kingston, Ontario, is a city renowned for its rich cultural heritage, with its active and vibrant arts and culture sector playing a central role in shaping its identity and providing quality of life to residents. Home to a diverse community of artists, musicians, and cultural institutions, Kingston has established itself as a regional hub for creative incubation and artistic excellence. The presence of respected arts institutions, alongside numerous independent galleries, performance spaces, and a significant number of festivals for a city of Kingston's size, reflects the city's deep commitment to fostering artistic innovation and



community engagement. Annual events and organizations attract artists and audiences from across the province, enriching the city's cultural economy. Local initiatives are increasingly focused on inclusivity and accessibility, reflecting broader societal shifts toward equity, diversity, and community participation. As Kingston continues to grow, investing in its arts and culture sector will play a crucial role in enhancing the city's quality of life, driving economic development, and ensuring that a strong and dynamic arts and culture scene is central to its identity.

While Kingston, like all other cities, faced major challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, its recovery has been strong, demonstrating a resiliency of the sector and support from arts audiences. However, there are still many challenges the arts sector faces: access to provincial or federal arts funding has stagnated, inflation and rising costs have placed further strain on the sector, and housing affordability and lack of access to creative spaces makes it increasingly difficult for artists to live and work in Kingston.

Kingston City Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 focuses on addressing housing affordability, environmental stewardship, and climate action, while building an inclusive community that prioritizes innovation and economic growth. There is also the City's projected population growth, that is expected to increase by as much as 32% by 2051, with a planned growth to 220,000 residents, including students. Currently, population growth is outpacing development.

This population growth will significantly impact Kingston's infrastructure, housing, and services. The demand for housing, transportation, healthcare, and educational facilities is expected to increase sharply. The city's ongoing housing crisis and rent prices going up, which already pose difficulties for residents, may worsen unless efforts are made to develop affordable spaces to live and work. Additionally, the strain on infrastructure and public services could challenge Kingston's ability to maintain its high quality of life.

On the other hand, this population boom could present valuable opportunities for Kingston's arts and culture sector. A larger and more diverse population will bring fresh perspectives, new audiences, and heightened demand for cultural programming. To fully capitalize on this growth, the City of Kingston will need to invest in expanding cultural venues, supporting local artists, innovating and exploring new models such as public-private partnerships, structures and systems to strengthen the sector, and ensuring that arts organizations can adapt to a more dynamic and populous community. With strategic planning, Kingston's growing population could fuel a thriving arts scene, making it an even more attractive destination for visitors and a desirable home for creative professionals.



Balancing growth with sustainability will be key to keeping the arts central to Kingston's evolving identity.

Additionally, the City of Kingston, like many municipalities in Ontario, faces significant budget pressures. In 2024, Mayoral direction to staff on the development of the budget included a requirement that operating and capital budgets include a property tax increase that is among the lowest of other large cities in Ontario. The Corporation is tasked with developing budgets in-line with this directive and in consideration of sustainable City operations, necessary infrastructure investment, and the advancement of Council's strategic priorities. The strategic growth of the CKAF, and the implementation of recommended changes to the fund, will need to be appropriately scaled to the fiscal realities of the City budgets.

These opportunities and challenges highlight the urgent need to identify strategic actions to support the arts sector and highlight the critical role of strategic investments in the arts to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience within the arts community.

What all this means is that a lot of change is already underway and there is more to come. This review of an integral arts funding program has come at an important time, allowing the CKAF to prepare for and keep up with the changing landscape of Kingston, ensuring that the future of arts and culture reflects what Kingstonians truly desire.

## About the CKAF Review

To ensure that the CKAF continues to effectively support local arts organizations, projects, artists, and the public, the City initiated a comprehensive review of the granting program. The CKAF Review examined the program's mandate, outputs, reporting, and evaluation mechanisms. It also explored potential changes, such as expanding beyond the current focus on Operating and Project grants or streamlining existing grant streams.

The City enlisted the support of [SAFFY](#), a consulting firm specializing in research/evaluation, culture, city-building and design to lead the CKAF Review. SAFFY employs a human-centered, equity-informed approach, focusing on alternative methods, community engagement, and collaborative research to create meaningful change and develop impactful solutions.

The CKAF Review was rooted in community engagement, prioritizing equity, diversity, and



inclusion. The City's IDEEA lens (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) was applied throughout all phases of this project, with a commitment to conducting equitable and inclusive consultations that reduced barriers to participation. Alternative research and engagement methods were also employed to surface new insights and ensure intersectional perspectives. The CKAF Review followed this structure:

- Establish the context for a City of Kingston Arts Fund Review by examining all relevant background materials.
- Reviewing and analyzing other municipalities' investment in the arts and culture sector levels and measurements, to benchmark Kingston's investment.
- Consult broadly with groups and individuals invested in CKAF and arts funding.
- Prioritize engagement with artists, arts workers, and residents from equity-deserving groups.
- Engage with various City Committees and Working Groups
- Evaluate CKAF's impact, effectiveness, management, and administration based on the current context, research and consultation findings.
- Develop recommendations for CKAF's evolution, addressing the program's mandate and objectives, grant streams, investment levels, reporting and evaluation frameworks, administrative governance, and processes. This also includes consideration of other City grant programs that intersect with arts and culture.
- Present the final report and recommendations to the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee and City Council for review and approval.

## Research, Engagement Process & Methodology

In collaboration with the City of Kingston, SAFFY developed a collaborative, community-informed approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a framework through which to evaluate CKAF.

### Project Phases

The CKAF review was conducted in three phases:

#### PHASE 1: January 2024 - February 2024

**Preparation and Project Vision:** This phase involved establishing the framework for the CKAF review. It included a thorough analysis of all relevant background materials and





conducting discovery interviews with City staff and key CKAF partners, such as the Kingston Arts Council, other funders, and key arts organizations, to set the vision and context for the project.

## **PHASE 2: May 2024 - September 2024**

**Consultation and Public Engagement:** Over the course of seven (7) months, broad consultations were held with individuals and groups who have a vested interest in CKAF and arts funding in Kingston. This included CKAF recipients, applicants, jury members, community and cultural organizations that have not applied to CKAF, as well as artists, arts workers, cultural producers, arts supporters and residents. Special attention was given to ensuring participation from equity-deserving groups.

## **PHASE 3: October 2024 – March 2025**

**Analysis and Reporting:** In this phase, draft recommendations for CKAF were developed, with input from City staff and key partners to assess feasibility, including required staffing and resources. The final report will be presented to City Council review and approval.

## **Evaluation Activities**

For PHASE 2, an evaluation framework was designed to balance strategic learning with measuring impact, while gathering valuable feedback from interested parties. Through informed conversations with the following groups, we gathered invaluable perspectives on CKAF, which informed the recommendations in our final report.

**Project Champions:** selected through an equitable and democratic adapted civic lottery process, became an extension of our team, ensuring that diverse and intersectional experiences were represented in the process. Eight (8) Project Champions engaged various Kingston publics, artists and supporters of the arts through art-informed gatherings. Project Champions submitted final reports with their findings.

**Community Pop-ups:** led by the Project Champions and City Staff created the opportunity to meet people where they are and capture the perspectives of the broader community who may not otherwise have been part of the process.

**Interviews:** six (6) interviews with key stakeholders that represent influential arts and





culture organizations in Kingston formed a strong foundation of CKAF's current context and informed our research.

**Online Public Survey:** capturing a broad selection of public voices for both qualitative and quantitative data was built through careful research and distributed through online avenues including the City's Get Involved page, and community pop-ups. The survey had 273 respondents.

**Focus Groups:** three (3) focus groups of interested parties participated in a discussion to help us better understand CKAF experiences and surface new insights.

Part II of this report is a summary of the key takeaways, themes and recommendations that came from the CKAF review's engagement process.



# Part II

## What We Heard Findings



## What We Heard Overview

Throughout this process, we heard from a diverse representation of both the Kingston arts and culture community, as well as the public.

## Public Engagement Summary

Below is a comprehensive overview of the key insights and takeaways that were gathered through the public engagement, that included interviews, focus groups and a public survey. Participants highlighted the need for modernizing grant processes, improving accessibility to funding, and supporting a broader range of artistic endeavors. These insights underscore the necessity for CKAF to evolve in response to the changing needs of Kingston's vibrant and diverse arts community.

Similarly, these groups identified several challenges within the current CKAF framework, such as administrative burdens, unclear application criteria, and limited support for emerging or marginalized artists. The feedback collected through this engagement offers valuable guidance for the ongoing development of CKAF, ensuring it continues to effectively support Kingston's cultural landscape while fostering creativity, diversity, and community connection.

## Interviews

From the six (6) interviews we conducted, the recurring themes were:

1. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Across the board, there is a strong emphasis on the need for greater inclusivity and representation in the arts. This includes incorporating marginalized voices, challenging dominant narratives, and making arts programming more accessible to diverse communities. Ensuring that all community members, regardless of background or ability, can participate and see their stories reflected is a common priority.
2. **Funding and Financial Support:** The challenge of securing stable and adequate funding is a recurring issue. This includes the need for more flexible and responsive grant programs, streamlined application processes, and innovative funding mechanisms. Organizations and individuals highlight the importance of both



operational and project-based funding to sustain their work and support artistic endeavors effectively.

3. **Community Engagement and Impact:** Engaging with the community and addressing local needs is frequently highlighted as a priority. There is a call for arts organizations to play an active role in community building, educational outreach, and addressing social issues. This includes enhancing public engagement, expanding audience reach, and integrating arts programs into broader community initiatives.
4. **Support for Artists:** Retaining and supporting artists is a significant theme. The interviews reveal concerns about the challenges artists face, including talent retention, career development, and financial stability. There is a push for strategic planning and resources to help artists thrive within the local cultural ecosystem.
5. **Modernization and Innovation:** There is a clear desire for modernization in grant processes and arts funding administration. This involves updating systems, adopting best practices, and being open to innovative approaches to better support and adapt to the evolving needs of the arts community.
6. **Cultural Preservation and Storytelling:** Preserving and interpreting Kingston's rich and complex history and stories is a critical theme. This includes efforts to integrate Indigenous histories and knowledge, hidden narratives, and diverse cultural stories into creative and cultural programs, projects.

These themes reflect a broad consensus on the need for a more inclusive, well-funded, and community-focused approach to arts and culture in Kingston.

## Focus Groups

Three (3) focus groups were held as part of the public engagement phase, one (1) virtual and two (2) in person. Attendees were made up of arts organizations and festivals who have received CKAF grants, artists within the community, and other cultural groups and organizations. The recurring themes gathered during the focus groups were:

1. **Funding Structure:** There is a need for a more dynamic grant structure that continues to include both operational and project grants, as well as multi-year options, dedicated funding for festivals and recurring events, and funding for artists.



2. **Administrative Burdens:** High costs and extensive paperwork for smaller grants are a barrier, suggesting a need for streamlined application and reporting processes and to reduce administrative load.
3. **Criteria and Support Gaps:** Rigid funding criteria and perceived lack of support, suggesting a need for enhanced resources for individual artists and smaller organizations trying to navigate the CKAF.
4. **Future Preparation:** Suggestions for improving arts support include better promotion of arts events, exploring partnerships and reduced-cost space options, and addressing real estate issues affecting arts organizations.
5. **Staff and Process Challenges:** Despite broad support for the Kingston Arts Council staff and their accessibility and dedication to supporting the arts sector through the CKAF, there are concerns about the levels of operational funding levels for the KAC, salary wages and levels, and turnover of staff, which impacts the funding process and applicant experience. These are similar challenges facing many arts organizations across the sector.
6. **Increased investment in overall funding:** Inflationary increases of 2% to the CKAF have been an annual practice, but the program is oversubscribed in that the number of applications is greater than can be supported through the available funds, and there is a perception that there is not enough funding available to support the community needs. While the expectation isn't that all requests for grants are awarded funding, there is a need for a larger investment in the arts to support growth and new opportunities.

## Project Champions Summary

The CKAF review's eight (8) Project Champions were selected through an equitable and democratic adapted civic lottery process. The Project Champions were an extension of the review team, helping to ensure that diverse voices and intersectional experiences were represented in the process. The Project Champions engaged over 110 members of the public, artists and supporters through a variety of art informed gatherings and submitted final reports with their findings. The following themes came from these reports.

### 1. Application Challenges

- Issues with the application format and administrative burdens.
- Lack of awareness about the jury process and eligibility criteria.



## 2. Accessibility and Resource Support

- High costs related to venues and resources.
- Limited access to affordable and accessible spaces for artists.
- The need for financial support and accessibility enhancements for marginalized groups.

## 3. Outreach and Awareness

- Increased education and awareness about the CKAF to groups/artists who don't have the history of engaging in this program is needed.
- Challenges in reaching and engaging underrepresented, marginalized, and non-English-speaking communities to increase diversity of who the CKAF supports.

## 4. Artist Compensation and Fair Practices

- Greater advocacy and support needed for local artists
- The need for measures/requirements to ensure fair compensation for artists involved in CKAF-funded projects

## 5. Support for Diverse and Experimental Art Forms

- Encouragement of intercultural dialogue and unique art forms.
- Desire for support for experimentation and innovative artistic projects.
- Need for dedicated funding streams or prioritization within a grant stream for marginalized and underrepresented artists.

# Public Survey Analysis

The CKAF review online survey was designed to gather feedback about the CKAF from the public. It was posted on publicly accessible websites, accessible for two months and had 273 respondents.

## Respondent Demographics

There was at least 4% representation from each electoral district of Kingston.

- The districts with the most survey respondents were King's Town (13%), Sydenham (12%) and Williamsville (10%).
  - 19% volunteer in the arts and culture sector.
  - 17% are part-time artists.
  - 16% work in the creative sector.
  - 14% are full-time arts administrators/arts workers.
  - 10% are full-time artists.



- 9% are established artists (with 10+ years of experience).
- 7% are emerging artists (with less than 5 years of experience)
- 5% are mid-career artists (with 5-10 years of experience).
- 5% are part-time arts administrators/arts workers.
- 5% are other types of arts and culture workers.
- 2% are post-secondary art students.
- 1% are high school students interested in pursuing the arts.

The creative discipline of arts and culture workers: *(this was a “select all that apply” and some of the “Other” answers fall into these disciplines)*

- 42% Visual arts
- 36% Music and/or Sound
- 23% Theatre
- 24% Multi- and inter-arts
- 15% Literature
- 13% Media Arts
- 12% Film
- 7% Dance
- 3% Other

12% of arts and culture workers indicated they were a juror for a previous CKAF grant.

## Survey Response Summary

Survey responses reveal that Kingston residents highly value arts and culture for personal enjoyment and the city’s identity, tourism, and economy. While participation in arts activities like concerts, local festivals, and art purchases is widespread, public awareness of the CKAF is limited, with only half of respondents familiar with it. Despite this, there is strong public support for CKAF’s goals, especially those focused on engaging local artists, fostering creativity, and making the arts more accessible. In contrast, the arts sector and arts organizations and event organizers are well-acquainted with the CKAF and express enthusiasm for the CKAF’s objectives of fostering creativity, professional growth, and expanded arts access.

The arts sector shared challenges within the CKAF application process, such as technical issues, limited accessibility for individual artists, and complex requirements. Concerns were also raised about grant allocations for newer or individual artists, while there was also a clear desire and advocacy to continue supporting and fund established arts organizations. Many arts workers advocated for more free public programming, multi-year grants, and simplified eligibility requirements. Suggestions included aligning CKAF grants with other



municipal funding programs, enhancing individual artist support, and creating an online portal to improve access to funding opportunities.

Feedback from successful CKAF grant recipients was generally positive, with 91% affirming that the grants helped expand arts access, foster inclusivity, and encourage partnerships. However, concerns emerged about the emphasis on larger projects and various burdens that limit feasibility for new ideas and projects. There were also concerns about limited growth opportunities within the grant program, that would enable organizations have greater impact. Unsuccessful applicants expressed frustration over insufficient feedback, feeling excluded from the process, while non-applicants cited a lack of awareness or eligibility uncertainty as reasons for not applying. Many believe additional funding could foster inclusiveness, creativity, and more opportunities, especially for emerging artists in Kingston.

## Key Findings

Below is a summary of what we heard from across all the areas of engagement, focusing on the key recurring themes and community recommendations.

### Enhanced Communication

Continued enhancement of information and insight into the CKAF application and assessment process is needed to support applicants. Providing clear and concise information online and through increased information sessions and workshops would help ensure that information is being received. This would help potential applicants better understand the intricacies of the process, from submitting applications to the criteria used by the peer assessment jury to evaluate proposals. Continuing to provide clear information to applicants about the reasons for funding decisions would help to build trust and foster greater transparency between grant bodies and applicants.

### Spaces and Places for the Arts

The high costs associated with securing venue spaces for programming, projects, events, exhibits and more, create significant challenges for artists and organizations. Many participants expressed concern that these costs not only limit the availability of spaces but also affect ticket prices and artist compensation, making it difficult for creators to sustain their work. The City should ensure that funding through the CKAF continues to be available to support venue rentals and look at creative ways to reduce costs to City spaces for the





CKAF grant recipients. By reducing the cost of accessing venues, the City can ensure that art spaces remain affordable and accessible, which in turn promotes fair compensation for artists and makes cultural events more financially feasible for both creators and audiences.

### **Diversity and Inclusivity in the Arts**

There is a strong and consistent call for greater inclusivity and diversity within arts funding and programming. Participants emphasized the importance of supporting marginalized voices, challenging dominant cultural narratives, and ensuring that art is accessible to a broader range of communities. A key recommendation is to prioritize funding for emerging and underrepresented artists, particularly those from marginalized groups, and/or organizations. It was noted that larger, established institutions tend to receive a disproportionate share of available funding, leaving smaller, community-based initiatives struggling to secure support. Addressing these disparities and ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources will be essential to fostering a vibrant and inclusive arts ecosystem.

### **Challenges with Criteria and Support Gaps**

Many participants highlighted the challenges posed by the eligibility criteria for the CKAF, which can be difficult for individual artists and smaller organizations to navigate. The complexity of the application process and/or limited professional development opportunities makes it difficult for those without extensive grant-writing experience to compete for funding. Recommendations include simplifying application requirements and offering more assistance to ensure that artists and smaller organizations have a fair chance of accessing funds. Creating a more user-friendly application process would lower barriers to entry and encourage a broader range of applicants.

### **Flexible Funding Structures:**

Participants emphasized the need for a more flexible funding structure that better accommodates both ongoing operational needs and specific project-based initiatives. There is strong support for the introduction of multi-year funding options, which would provide organizations with greater financial stability and allow for more sustainable long-term planning. Additionally, there is a call for grants to be structured in a way that supports a wider range of activities, including both artistic production and the administrative tasks necessary to sustain such projects. A more adaptable funding structure would help organizations grow and continue contributing to the local arts scene.

### **Administrative Burdens:**

The administrative load associated with applying for grants, particularly smaller grants, was



identified as a major obstacle for many applicants. Participants noted that the amount of paperwork and the high administrative costs relative to the size of the grants can be prohibitive, particularly for smaller organizations and individual artists. Streamlining the grant application and reporting processes, as well as reducing unnecessary bureaucratic requirements, would ease this burden and make grants more accessible to a wider range of applicants. Providing technical support and guidance throughout the application process could also be beneficial in reducing these barriers.



## Part III

### CKAF Review Recommendations and Implementation



## OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Part III of this report outlines high-level recommendations for CKAF, organized under five pillars, to support the City's continued commitment to fostering a vibrant arts and culture sector that serves all residents.

- Pillar #1: Restructure and Realign the City of Kingston Arts Fund
- Pillar #2: Administrative Efficiency
- Pillar #3: Inclusivity and Access
- Pillar #4: Education and Outreach
- Pillar #5: Municipal Strategic Alignment

Access to arts and culture is vital for enhancing the overall quality of life in any city, fostering creativity, cultivating critical thinking, encouraging social interaction, and driving economic growth—essential elements of a vibrant community. The CKAF plays a key role in this, helping to support participation in community arts programs and facilitating cultural engagement that is linked to increased civic pride and a strong sense of community identity. Through two grant streams established when CKAF was formed in 2007, the City has provided essential funding for galleries, festivals, events, performances, and operations. This municipal support has not only nurtured a robust arts sector but has also enabled organizations to leverage additional funding from provincial and federal sources. Over the past 17 years, CKAF has become a cornerstone for Kingston's creative ecosystem, supporting a range of initiatives that enrich the cultural fabric of the city for residents and visitors alike.

Proposed structural changes to CKAF will not only enhance access and equity but also enable grant recipients — whether organizations or individual artists — to engage in long-term planning, strategic growth, and expanded outreach. These changes can seed innovative creation and presentation opportunities, allowing artists to produce work that resonates more deeply with diverse audiences. Supporting those who face financial instability will help retain creative talent and safeguard Kingston's cultural vitality for generations to come.

A more dynamic CKAF will also be responsive to the unique and evolving needs of grant recipients, that includes artists, small-scale community projects to large arts organizations. This responsiveness can help to promote and celebrate Kingston's cultural identity and foster greater collaboration across diverse communities; CKAF can help position the city as a leader in arts and culture. Residents and visitors will enjoy increased access to artistic experiences and programming that not only entertains but also connects, inspires, and strengthens the community.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Pillar #1: Restructure and Realign the City of Kingston Arts Fund

1. Re-define and restructure CKAF grant streams (**see Table 1**) to provide more sustainable and inclusive funding for arts and community-engaged organizations and festivals, including through multi-year grants, introduce dedicated grant streams, and nurture new creative projects that help increase access to the arts and reflect the cultural diversity of Kingston.
2. Introduce a net new grant stream to directly fund individual artists and collectives for creation of new work, experimentation, or research activities and/or skills and career development.
3. Establish new grant ranges per grant stream (**see Table 1**) based on historical average grant sizes to increase equitable distribution of existing funding and continue to evaluate on an ongoing basis to ensure that the grant ranges support the continued sustainability of the sector.

**Table 1: Proposed updated Grant Streams and Grant Ranges**

| GRANT STREAM                    | DESCRIPTION   | GRANT RANGES  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Operating Grants                | Annual and multi-year grants supporting operations, programs and services for not-for-profit arts organizations (professional, semi-professional and emerging organizations) in all artistic disciplines, as well as community-engaged organizations implementing strategies to reduce or eliminate barriers to public participation in the arts. | Grant Range<br>\$10,000 - \$65,000<br><br>Approximately 45% of total available fund |
| Festival Grants                 | Annual and multi-year operating grants and annual project grants for production and presentation of established and emerging arts festivals and recurring event series' that have a City-wide impact.   | Grant Range<br>\$10,000 - \$55,000<br><br>Approximately 35% of total available fund |
| Creation and Development Grants | Grants for artists, duos and collectives for the creation and development of new artistic work, that could include creation, experimentation,   | Grant Range<br>\$3,000 - \$10,000   |



| GRANT STREAM   | DESCRIPTION  | GRANT RANGES  |
|----------------|--|---|
|                | research activities and/or skills and career development.  | Approximately 10% of total available fund                                       |
| Project Grants | One-time funds for creative projects, capacity building, partnerships, increasing access, presentation of new work, collaboration between arts and other sectors and industries, and community engagement through the arts. Open to artists, collectives, and organizations. | Grant Range \$3,000 - \$12,000<br><br>Approximately 10% of total available fund |

## Pillar #2: Administrative Efficiency

4. Update and simplify applications and reporting for all grant streams, focusing on key information including project goals, target audience, and anticipated, measurable outcomes as well as IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) priorities.
5. Streamline the peer assessment process by clarifying roles and responsibilities, prioritizing the development of diverse juries for artistic review and application assessment. The KAC should continue to support financial and administrative reviews, while the City of Kingston's role should focus on approving policies, determining the total annual funding allocation, and endorsing grant recommendations (Council), with staff providing high-level context and background as needed.

## Pillar #3: Inclusivity and Access

6. Expand eligibility of CKAF across all grant streams to support incorporated professional, semi-professional, and emerging non-profit arts organizations, community-engaged arts organizations, collectives, and individual artists, across all artistic disciplines.



7. Apply IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) principles across all grant funding streams, offering application assistance and including additional evaluation criteria points to help increase funding for organizations, festivals, events, projects and artists that reflect and support equity-deserving groups that include Indigenous Peoples and Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and Deaf and Disability communities.
8. Provide funding support to applicants who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or live with a disability and need support and assistance from service providers to complete their grant applications.
9. Establish alternative submission methods for certain components of an application, through audio or video recordings, enabling greater access for a diverse group of applicants.
10. Review insurance requirements for CKAF recipients to reduce barriers where possible and explore opportunities for the Kingston Arts Council to secure group liability insurance coverage for grant recipients for individual artists and collectives.
11. Continue to provide sustained investment to the CKAF on an annual basis to ensure access to the CKAF for new applicants, and to support growth and sustainability of the sector.

## **Pillar #4: Education and Outreach**

12. Increase workshops and webinars for grant applicants, hosting regular sessions to educate artists and organizations about available grants, application processes, and best practices for project development. Host an annual series of information sessions, designed for newcomers and equity-deserving groups, providing essential resources, professional development opportunities, and support.
13. Continue to report to City Council and the public annually about CKAF grant recommendations, information about the evaluation process, and impact of the grant recipients and CKAF on the community.



## **Pillar #5: Municipal Strategic Alignment**

14. Review partnership opportunities between CKAF and other municipal grants including the City of Kingston Heritage Fund (CKHF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) and explore opportunities to develop a centralized online platform where groups can apply for various municipal grant programs and explore how this could be most efficiently and effectively managed.
15. Leverage the CKAF grant streams to advance approved arts and culture strategies, which could include identifying a percentage of grants within project-based grant streams to support priority areas and/or specific grant funding requests to be distributed through the CKAF in support of priority areas. For example, the Kingston Music Strategy is a Council-approved Strategy, and the CKAF could be leveraged to dedicate a percentage of grants to be awarded to musicians, music festivals and music organizations.





## IMPLEMENTATION

An implementation strategy is needed to identify the resources and steps required to successfully deliver on the 15 CKAF recommendations in this report. The recommendations in this report are intended to be implemented within two (2) years of endorsement from Council, starting in 2026.

### Investment

Continued and increased financial investment from the City needs to be considered to effectively implement all recommendations identified through this review and support the growth of the local arts sector. This includes both to the CKAF itself, through grants distributed to the local arts sector, and to the KAC through its operating grant and programming budget in support of the CKAF recommendations.

The total increased investment required for CKAF will depend on a range of factors and must balance the goal of strengthening the arts sector—including providing direct funding to local artists, supporting the sustainability of arts organizations, and encouraging vibrant arts activities, festivals, and events—with the financial pressures faced by all municipalities, including the City of Kingston. This Review has identified the need to develop investment strategies and funding scenarios for CKAF, which should be explored ahead of the 2026 municipal budget process. It also recommends reviewing the City's broader cultural investment and grants portfolio to ensure the most effective and impactful use of municipal funds.

At a minimum, implementation and transition funding will be required for the KAC to support the work needed to update the CKAF in line with the recommendations and to launch the new grant streams and initiatives outlined in this report. This represents an expansion beyond the program's previous administrative structure. Looking ahead, and in tandem with any further expansion or changes to CKAF, the City will need to review its ongoing operating support for the KAC to ensure the organization remains sustainable and adequately resourced to deliver these expanded services.



## Strategic Investment Considerations

The following strategic considerations have been identified and are intended to assist in the assessment of future investment opportunities and in the prioritization of implementing the recommendations. To support these considerations, proposed investment scenarios have also been developed.

- **Strategic Consideration #1:** Increase funding to the CKAF to meet at minimum the \$5 per capita goal in the 2010 Culture Plan. Based on data available through Statistics Canada (2021 Census data, population of 132,485) this would increase the total CKAF from \$612,790 (2025 CKAF investment) to \$670,000, which is a \$57,210 increase in funding.
- **Strategic Consideration #2:** Invest an additional \$200,000 in the CKAF to support the creation of a new grant stream (Creation and Development) and to create greater access and opportunity for new applicants and growth for existing grant recipients within the other grant streams (Operating, Festival and Project). This would bring the total investment from \$670,000 (as outlined in strategic consideration #1) to \$870,000, which would bring the investment in the CKAF to approximately \$6.5 per capita (based on the 2021 Census data).
  - These two strategic considerations would be the foundation of a new baseline investment level for the CKAF, which would then be an ongoing investment for the City with annual inflationary increases.
- **Strategic Consideration #3:** Consider the capacity of the KAC and the need to increase their operational funding to sustainably support any changes to and expansion of the CKAF with a focus on ensuring the continued professional administration and delivery of enhanced services, programming, and processes in support of the CKAF.
- **Strategic Consideration #4:** As part of upcoming strategic work to develop a new Culture Plan for Kingston (Council Strategic Priority 2023-2026), explore and propose broader per capita goals for municipal cultural investments including operating, grant and capital grants related to the arts, museums, cultural heritage, special events, multidisciplinary activities, creative industries, city-owned cultural facilities and artist residencies, public art, and more.

To support the strategic considerations on increased investment to the CKAF, the following investment scenarios have been developed (see **Table 2**).



**Table 2: Proposed CKAF Investment Scenarios**

| Scenarios  | Description   | CKAF Investment Level | Funding Increase |
|--|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| The scenarios were developed using the 2025 CKAF investment of \$612,790 as a baseline and are intended to consider the impact of additional investment beyond this. |   |                       |                  |
| <b>Scenario 1</b>  | The ideal scenario includes a new investment in CKAF that meets the \$5 per capita funding target set out in the 2010 Culture Plan and an additional investment of \$200,000 support access for new applicants and to minimize the impact of a new funding stream on the resources available to existing streams. | \$870,000             | \$257,210        |
| <b>Scenario 2</b>  | Modified ideal scenario, with an investment to the CKAF to reach the per capita goal but a reduced additional investment of \$100,000   | \$725,049             | \$112,259        |
| <b>Scenario 3</b>  | An increase to the CKAF to achieve the 2010 Culture Plan \$5 per capita goal only.  | \$670,000             | \$57,210         |
| <b>Scenario 4</b>  | Inflationary increase to the CKAF fund only—consistent with the historical approach since the program’s inception—that typically ranges between 2% and 2.5%. This is in line with the Mayor’s 2026 budget direction for municipal operating and capital budgets.  | \$625,046             | \$12,256         |
| <b>Scenario 5</b>  | Reflects the CKAF held at the 2025 investment level.  | \$612,790             | \$0              |



## Breakdown of Investment Scenarios across Grant Streams

**Table 3** shows all five investment scenarios identified in **Table 2** and provides a breakdown of available funds per CKAF grant stream, based on the restructuring of the CKAF grant streams.

**Table 3: Breakdown of Investment Scenarios across Grant Streams**

| Grant Stream  | 2024*     | 2025**    | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 | Scenario 3 | Scenario 4 | Scenario 5 |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Investment  | \$612,790 | \$612,790 | \$870,000  | \$725,049  | \$670,000  | \$625,046  | \$612,790  |
| Interest Earned and/or Unawarded, Returned Grants   | \$298.34  | \$37.06   | TBD        | TBD        | TBD        | TBD        | TBD        |
| Operating Grants (45% of total fund)                | \$429,162 | \$313,555 | \$391,500  | \$326,272  | \$301,500  | \$281,270  | \$275,555  |
| Festival Grants (35% of total fund)                 | N/A       | \$181,190 | \$304,500  | \$253,767  | \$234,500  | \$218,766  | \$214,476  |
| Creation and Development Grants (10% of total fund) | N/A       | \$0       | \$87,000   | \$72,505   | \$67,000   | \$62,505   | \$61,279   |
| Project Grants (10% of total fund)                  | \$183,926 | \$118,045 | \$87,000   | \$72,505   | \$67,000   | \$62,505   | \$61,279   |

\*2024 column shows the grant allocations within the existing CKAF grant structure (Operating and Project Grants).

\*\*The 2025 column outlines grant recommendations and available funding, incorporating some realignment of grant recipients within the proposed new grant streams. For instance, festivals—previously split between the Operating and Project Grant streams—are now consolidated under the new Festival Grant stream. The 2025 figures do not include the Creation & Development Grant stream, as it has not yet been launched. However, the Operating, Festival, and Project Grants have been updated and realigned in accordance with the current CKAF grant structure.



## Next Steps

All recommendations outlined in this report—across Pillars 1 through 5—are administrative in nature and require significant effort to update or establish. As such, the provision of implementation funding to the KAC represents a critical first step. This funding, anticipated and included within the City's existing capital budget for the CKAF review, will enable the KAC to begin the necessary work to support program updates. This includes the development of revised grant guidelines and application forms, adjudication and assessment criteria, recruitment of juries, program promotion, and the delivery of information sessions, workshops, and webinars to raise awareness across the arts sector.

To ensure accountability and clarity, this implementation funding and its associated deliverables should be reflected in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and/or amending agreements between the City of Kingston and the KAC, enabling work to proceed without delay.

Following this, City staff should develop investment strategies to assess and, where fiscally appropriate and aligned with the Mayor's budget direction, propose increased baseline funding to the CKAF. Scenario 1, as outlined in **Table 2** and **Table 3** of this report, is presented as the ideal funding model to achieve the goals set out in the review and as outlined through the recommendations. Staff would report back to Council and the arts sector on the status of this investment as part of the 2026 municipal budget process.

While the City's ability to enhance investment in the CKAF is central to realizing the full scope of the recommendations, investment levels and timelines must be considered in the context of broader economic conditions and the City's overall financial capacity. Should additional investment be limited, the recommendations in this report may require prioritization and a phased or delayed implementation of the proposed four grant streams.

With ongoing investment in the CKAF, the phased implementation of the report's recommendations, and attention to the strategic considerations outlined, the City of Kingston can continue to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable arts and culture sector—one that remains integral to Kingston's identity, livability, and economic prosperity.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Title</b><br>City of Kingston Arts Fund Framework - Draft   | <b>Draft Presented:</b> April 24, 2025<br><b>Approved:</b> TBC<br><b>Next Review:</b> TBC |
| <b>Type</b><br>Governance  |   |
| <b>Approvals and Authority</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approval: Kingston City Council</li><li>• Ownership/Administration: Kingston Arts Council, Board of Directors</li></ul> |   |

## **1. Preamble**

The City of Kingston has a long history of investing funds directly into the local arts sector, through the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF). These funds are administered by the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) on behalf of the City. Since 2007, the CKAF has been focused on supporting arts organizations and arts projects, as outlined in a Plan for Administration developed when the CKAF was first established. Given the growth and evolution of the arts sector, in 2025, the City has completed a review of the CKAF to determine how it can continue to support the arts in Kingston and this Framework is the outcome of the review.

## **2. Purpose**

This Framework provides guidance and structure to the City's investment of funding for organizations, festivals, collectives, and individual artists through the City of Kingston Arts Fund. It also outlines how Kingston City Council, City of Kingston staff, KAC staff and its Board of Directors contribute to and govern this work.

## **3. Scope**

This Framework applies to work the KAC undertakes in managing the CKAF, on behalf of the City, and distributing grants across the sector. This Framework supersedes and replaces any previous policies and plans related to managing the City of Kingston Arts Fund, including the Plan for Administration.

## **4. CKAF Goals and Priorities**

The CKAF serves as a catalyst for a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient arts sector in Kingston. By fostering creativity, accessibility, collaboration, and capacity building, CKAF strengthens Kingston's cultural fabric and supports the professional growth of local artists, festivals, and arts organizations, and helps provide access to arts experiences to the broader Kingston community.

The CKAF's goals reflect a commitment to addressing the evolving needs of the sector, while maintaining its focus on inclusion, equity, diversity, accessibility, and long-term

sustainability. Together, they provide a Framework for impactful investment that aims to inspire broad participation in the arts and enrich the lives of Kingston residents.

- **Increase Access and Inclusivity:** Expand access to the arts through inclusive activities that reflect the diversity of Kingston's artists, audiences, and cultural landscape and address systemic barriers to ensure all residents can engage in meaningful artistic experiences.
- **Support Kingston Artists:** Ensure Kingston artists receive professional opportunities with equitable, fair compensation, and support artists' creation and experimentation within their practice.
- **Foster Creativity and Community Engagement:** Support projects that nurture creativity and inspire engagement with the arts among residents. Ensure there is a diverse offering of programs that reflect the needs, values, and interests of the Kingston community, emphasizing inclusivity and cultural relevance.
- **Build Capacity and Resiliency:** Strengthen the organizational capacity and promote resilience of arts organizations and the industry at large through sustained and expanded support.
- **Encourage Collaboration and Partnerships:** Support partnerships within the arts sector and across public and private sectors to: drive innovation and shared resources, support multidisciplinary collaboration, and enhance the reach and impact of arts programming.

## 5. Framework Goals

- a. The CKAF seeks to understand the Kingston arts sector maximizing the impact of distribution of available funds towards the ambition of a thriving, sustainable, and supported industry.
- b. The CKAF has the ability year over year to be adaptive to emerging needs in the local arts sector and based on arts and culture strategies and plans approved by City Council, with the goal to continue to maintain sustainable funding for arts organizations, festivals, and artists.
- c. The KAC manages the available grant funds through a portfolio of funding streams which respond to the wide range of artists and organizations that pursue their own artistic visions and organizational goals.
- d. The CKAF broadly defines the sector it supports through this Framework as any combination of:
  - Kingston-based artists and arts organizations working in all artistic disciplines and their various cultural forms including: music, drama, dance, Indigenous arts, Deaf and Disability arts, visual arts, literature, theatre, film, media arts, multidisciplinary, storytelling, fine craft, performing arts, and combinations thereof. and combinations thereof.

- Creation, production, presentation, or dissemination of artwork in any of those forms.
  - Services that support artists, an artistic community or similar group.
  - Production and presentation of festivals and events that engage with the community and celebrate an artform or a subject of public interest.
- e. When investing in artistic creation or development, the CKAF values artistic freedom, without predetermined limits on creativity or content.
- f. When considering investment in any organization or project, the CKAF values the fair compensation of artists and arts workers.
- g. The CKAF is based on published guidelines that define factors such as deadlines, funding cycles, program goals, eligibility, assessment, funding amounts, priorities, and decision-making.
- h. In any year, any unawarded funding in a CKAF grant stream can be rolled into another grant stream or into the following year's available funds, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are maximized in terms of impact and intent to support the arts community.
- i. Based on regular assessments of applications received, investment levels to the CKAF, funding amount requested, funding amount allocated, and needs of the arts sector, allocation percentages and maximum and minimum grant ranges can be reviewed for adjustment and for Council approval.
- j. The KAC strives to be transparent when communicating about the CKAF programs, funding choices, processes, and outcomes, including published reporting annually on all funding activities.

## **6. Grant Stream Structure**

The CKAF has four grant streams, accessible to individual artists, collectives, and organizations.

| <b>Grant Stream</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Allocation % of Total CKAF and Grant Ranges</b>                               |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Operating Grants    | Annual and multi-year grants supporting operations, programs and services for not-for-profit arts organizations (professional, semi-professional and emerging organizations) in all artistic disciplines, as well as community-engaged organizations implementing strategies to reduce or eliminate barriers to public participation in the arts. | Approximately 45% of total available fund<br><br>Grant Range \$10,000 - \$65,000 |



|                                 |  |   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Festival Grants                 | Annual grants, which can include an operating grant or project grant, for production and presentation of established and emerging arts festivals and recurring event series' that have a City-wide impact.   | Approximately 35% of total available fund<br><br>Grant Range<br>\$10,000 - \$55,000 |
| Creation and Development Grants | Grants for artists, duos and collectives for the creation and development of new artistic work, that could include creation, experimentation, research activities and/or skills and career development.  | Approximately 10% of total available fund<br><br>Grant Range<br>\$3,000 - \$10,000  |
| Project Grants                  | One-time funds for creative projects, capacity building, partnerships, increasing access, presentation of new work, collaboration between arts and other sectors and industries, and community engagement through the arts. Open to artists, collectives, and organizations. | Approximately 10% of total available fund<br><br>Grant Range<br>\$3,000 - \$12,000  |

The grant lifecycle, once the Framework has been fully implemented, will be:

| <b>Application</b>   | <b>Assessment</b>                             | <b>Council Approval</b>  | <b>Reporting</b>       |
|--|---|--|------------------------|
| Communications, outreach, professional development, information sessions | Staff and peer assessment review and meetings | Report to Council on grant recommendations for approval and distribution of grants to recipients | Final report on impact |

## **7. Support of Organizations**

The CKAF seeks to support organizations:

- That work to the benefit of the Kingston arts industry, specifically their impact(s) on communities, audiences, artists, and artforms.
- That are structured, managed, and governed with practices that align with the level of public support that they seek or receive from the CKAF.
  - This normally means that the organization is registered and governed as a nonprofit, but other structures may be considered to facilitate Indigenous agency, or other cultural structures in support of emerging groups or collectives, at the discretion of the City and the KAC.
- Through a balance of programs and streams of support that respond to different activities and types of organization.
- Through operating grants and investments that are:

- Available to organizations with mandates and goals related to work and impact in and on the Kingston arts sector including community development through the arts.
- Intended to directly support the organization's work in pursuit of their mandates, which could include programming, governance, and management.
- Not available to organizations that receive grants (or equivalent support) from other City of Kingston sources. Examples include those supported through the City's Community Investment Fund or the City of Kingston Heritage Fund, through Service Level Agreements, or receiving funding from another CKAF grant stream.
- Usually expected to be renewable, based on this Framework's assessment and decision-making provisions.
- Not necessarily renewed at the same level, especially for organizations that do not meet reasonable standards based in relation to governance or the delivery of arts-related programs, activities and services.
- Organizations seeking funding through project grants through the Festival Grant stream and/or Project Grants are intended to support specific work within a specific period.

## **8. Support of Individuals and Collectives**

- The CKAF seeks to support Individuals:
  - With a history of demonstrated commitment to their artistic or cultural practice;
  - That seek to advance their practice and share their work with others;
  - That are 18 years of age or older, as of the application deadline.
  - That are residents within the City of Kingston; to facilitate Indigenous agency, residents or nearby First Nation or Indigenous communities may be supported at the discretion of the KAC in consultation with City staff; and the intent is to support individuals who live in Kingston, and contribute to Kingston's arts community, as opposed to other descriptions of residency.
- The CKAF seeks to support collectives, when they:
  - Consist of a majority of individuals who would otherwise be eligible;
  - Are based on a shared artistic input, shared workload, shared risks, and rewards amongst a group of individuals that works together regularly.
- Individuals and Collectives through projects that:
  - Have designated timelines and activities.
  - Prioritize their creative work and the impact of that work on their practice or artform.
  - Are intended to fund creation, experimentation, production, presentation and/or professional skills development.

- Are intended to fund any of a wide range of artistic project expenses such as studio costs, supplies, venue rentals, professional fees, and minor capital expenditures.

## **9. General Exclusions**

Funding is not normally approved for organizations, individuals or projects:

- For significant capital purposes such as purchase or renovation of buildings and/or major equipment purchases.
- Based on fundraising or building awareness for a third party, such as a charitable cause or political movement, focused on religious practice or the goal to change religious belief.
- That directly delivers a curriculum-based education (such as a school) or based on the pursuit of a postsecondary diploma or degree.
- That do not commit to or demonstrate best practices for organizational management, including providing safe and inclusive workplaces.
- That are demonstrably not in good standing with the City of Kingston, or the KAC, due to outstanding reporting as an example.
- That are currently receiving another grant from the City of Kingston.
- If the arts organization is situated within a multi-purpose institution (i.e., library, university, museum, etc.) the applicant must clearly demonstrate their independence by being able to fulfill all eligibility requirements separately and distinctly from the multi-purpose institution. This includes a fully segregated and itemized financial statement specifically for the revenues and expenses of the organization separate from the multi-purpose institution. Arts organizations within a multi-purpose institution must be governed by a board of directors or an advisory body solely responsible for the arts organization. Levels of funding for organizations associated with and supported by a multi-purpose institution will be determined based on need and maximizing the impact of municipal funding.

## **10. Assessment and Decision Making**

The CKAF will employ a variety of assessment methods and use all information available to:

- a. seek to understand the arts sector and local community;
- b. seek to understand any one artist or organization that it may support, relative to the CKAF's published assessment criteria;
- c. to make decisions that direct available funds where they will have the most impact aligned with this Framework, and any current arts and culture strategy adopted by City Council.

- d. The CKAF is committed to peer assessment, overseen by the KAC, as the primary tool to evaluate the creative work of artists and the impact(s) of artistic work.
  - The KAC actively seeks the engagement of a wide range of peers, which may include artists/arts workers from outside of Kingston, as one way to pursue inclusive and equitable assessment.
  - The KAC commits to engaging different assessors over time to pursue diverse knowledge and viewpoints.
  - The assessment of non-artistic factors, such as finances, planning, management, or governance, may be pursued through peer assessment alongside the KAC's own internal expertise and evaluation.
  - Records of past assessment and feedback may inform current assessment of organizations and festivals.
- e. The outcomes of the peer assessment process are final.

### **11. Assessment Criteria**

Assessment criteria will be published online through the Kingston Arts Council website and will be part of specific publicly available guidelines for all grant streams. The general assessment criteria for the CKAF, in alignment with the CKAF goals, includes artistic merit and/or artistic and/or service quality, impact and benefit to Kingston residents, viability (administrative/financial), support for artists and arts workers, and commitment to IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility).

### **12. Accountability Measures and Impact Reporting**

The following accountability measures and impact assessment requirements outline a clear and practical approach for evaluating CKAF's success. These measures prioritize streamlined reporting, equity-focused metrics, and regular evaluations to assess the effectiveness of funding programs. Together, they aim to highlight CKAF's support of the local arts sector and the positive impact of this investment on Kingston's cultural and economic landscape.

Grant recipients will provide concise reports detailing how funds were used to achieve their proposed goals. These reports will include:

- Key accomplishments.
- Metrics on community engagement and impact.
- Artistic outcomes, such as works created or performances delivered.

A tiered reporting system will be implemented:

- Project and Creation & Presentation Grants: Require brief financial summaries and short narratives on project outcomes, as well as reporting on key metrics or impact statistics.
- Operating and Festival Grants: Require comprehensive financial documentation and detailed reporting on outcomes, alignment with CKAF goals, and measurable community impacts.

The KAC will produce an annual impact report summarizing:

- Total funding distributed.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs), such as attendance, funds paid to artists, number of activities/programs delivered, economic impact, and diversity of funded projects.
- Testimonials and success stories from grant recipients and community members.

Metrics will be developed to measure progress on equity and inclusion, including:

- Number of new applicants to grant streams.
- Representation of equity-deserving groups among grantees.
- Accessibility of funded projects to underserved communities.
- These metrics will be included in annual reports to demonstrate CKAF's commitment to IIDEA principles (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility).

The KAC and the City will also conduct periodic evaluations to assess the long-term impact of CKAF funding on:

- Artist retention and development within Kingston.
- Strengthening cultural infrastructure and community partnerships.
- Benchmark Kingston's performance against similar municipalities to track progress and identify opportunities for growth.

The KAC and the City will also conduct outreach to the local sector to collect input from grant recipients and applicants, artists, organizations, peer assessors, and more on CKAF's effectiveness and areas for improvement. This feedback will guide refinements to the CKAF going forward. Any significant changes made to this Framework will be shared publicly for input and with Council for approval.

### **13. The Role of the Kingston Arts Council**

The KAC roles and responsibilities in relation to the CKAF, which are outlined in a Service Level Agreement with the City, include:

- a. Administration of the CKAF, that includes managing the application process, communications and professional development, peer assessment process, distribution of funds, and reporting.
- b. The KAC Board of Directors are responsible for governance of the KAC and therefore oversee the implementation of this Framework and engage with and approve any new or revised Framework or strategy related to the CKAF, before it's presented to City Council.
- c. The KAC Board of Directors will review and approve final grant recommendations, before presented to Council.
- d. Submit quarterly reporting to the City on the relevant actions of the KAC but not limited to:
  - Activities and work that falls under this Framework.
  - Financial statements that show the status of distribution of the CKAF to grant recipients.
  - Data and analysis about how recent work and outcomes reflect the state of the arts sector and the impact of the funding portfolio.
  - Planning and recommendations on any relevant factors.
- e. Present final grant recommendations to Council.
- f. Receive timely and regular updates from grant recipients about activities and outcomes of the CKAF investment.
- g. Oversee the expenditure of the KAC resources to this work through its usual budgeting and auditing processes.
- h. Require final approval of funding decisions that:
  - Commit the KAC and the City to multi-year support of any organization.
  - Provides operating investment to any organization based outside of the Kingston region or with significant activities that fall outside their impact on the Kingston arts industry.
  - Are, in the informed opinion of the KAC staff and in consultation with City staff, controversial and therefore impact the reputation of the KAC or the City, including but not limited to proposed reductions to operating grants that may impact the viability of the applicant.

#### **14. The Role of the City of Kingston**

The City's roles and responsibilities in relation to the CKAF include:

City Council members are responsible for approving any Frameworks, strategic plans, or policies related to the CKAF; the annual investment in the CKAF as determined through the approval of the municipal operating budget in Arts & Culture Services; and the final grant recommendations as determined by the peer assessment jury and approved by the KAC Board of Directors.

City staff are responsible for management of the partnership with the KAC and its Service Level Agreement, to ensure the work and activities that fall under this Framework are completed, and by supporting and providing City context within the peer assessment process as needed but not participating in any assessment conversations.

## **15. Authorities and Approvals**

Authorities and Approvals related to the CKAF are:

- Approvals: final authority for the approval or revision of this Framework rests with Kingston City Council.
- Ownership/Administration: The KAC Board of Directors is responsible for receiving and engaging with plans and reporting arising from this Framework and the associated approvals. KAC staff are responsible for the actions defined in this Framework, including approvals not specifically reserved to the Board, and delegation of specific work to specialized staff. This work is to be done in consultation with City of Kingston staff.

## **16. Related Information**

Council's Strategic Plan and the KAC's Service Level Agreement with the City of Kingston are relevant to this Framework. Existing arts and culture strategies and plans, as well as new strategies to be developed, including a new City Culture Plan and a new Strategic Plan for the KAC, will be considered and integrated into this Framework.

## 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Transition Plan

The City's investment in the CKAF in 2025 totals \$612,790. Interest earned on the CKAF in 2024 totaling \$37.06 will be applied to 2025. A returned grant of \$10,500 from a recipient due to a withdrawn project in 2024 could also be applied to available funds in 2025 or carried forward into 2026 available funds. The below Transition Plan accounts for the City's 2025 investment level and 2024 interest earned only.

### Sustaining Operations of Arts Organizations

Groups that currently receive an annual City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) Operating Grant, within the current CKAF program, generally receive the same grant level year over year with inflationary increases. All groups have submitted an Interim Report to the Kingston Arts Council (KAC), which reports on activities, progress and budget. Upon review and approval of Interim Reports, it's proposed that all organizations will be awarded a 2025 Operating Grant with an inflationary 2% increase to their 2024 Grant Amount, except for those at the current maximum grant level. This funding is to be distributed no later than June 30, 2025.

Below is a breakdown of the proposed 2025 CKAF grant distribution:

| Organization                | Grant Amount | Description  |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
| Single Thread Company       | \$10,200     | Creates immersive theatre experiences in Canada and internationally                                      |
| Centre cultural Frontenac   | \$14,229     | French art centre presenting shows that celebrate Francophone arts and culture                           |
| Union Gallery               | \$14,679     | Gallery space that blends Queen's University students and professional artistic programs and exhibitions |
| ReelOut Queer Film Festival | \$24,480     | Annual LGBTQ film festival established in 1999 by a local queer artist                                   |



|                                 |          |   |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|
| Cantabile Choirs of Kingston    | \$31,620 | Providing musical education for choristers and performances for audiences   |
| Theatre Kingston                | \$38,767 | Produces theatre work, including the Fringe Festival and educational engagement activities  |
| Kingston WritersFest            | \$45,710 | <p>Literary festival ceased operations in January 2025 but has since resumed after raising sufficient funds to close out all owed payments. Plans are now being put in place to deliver programming in the summer and a literary festival in September 2025.</p> <p>The CKAF funding in 2025 is dependent on successful receipt by the KAC of a report and financial statements from the WritersFest.</p> |
| Kingston Canadian Film Festival | \$51,000 | Largest festival in the world dedicated exclusively to Canadian film  |
| Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre   | \$54,060 | Non-profit organization facilitating the presentation, interpretation and production of contemporary visual, time-based and interdisciplinary arts  |
| Agnes Etherington Art Centre    | \$75,000 | Professional art centre that serves a dual mandate as a leading, internationally recognized public art gallery and as an active pedagogical resource at Queen's University  |
| Kingston Symphony Association   | \$75,000 | Professional orchestra founded in 1953 that is made up of 50 musicians  |

|                                      |                  |  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>TOTAL Funding Awarded in 2025</b> | <b>\$434,745</b> |  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|

### **Project Grants**

Various groups were awarded CKAF Project Grants in July 2024 which must be applied to projects that occur after that timeframe and before December 31, 2025, meaning events can be completed at any time over 2025. Recipients that are delivering new and/or one-time projects will complete their projects within this timeframe and will be eligible to apply within the new CKAF Framework, pending Council approval, in 2026.

There are also recurring/annual festivals that receive Project Grants year-over-year. While this is not classified as operational support, the grants by default have functioned this way in practice. These festivals apply their 2024 Project Grant to 2025 programming, based on when they receive their CKAF grant, but they also anticipate receiving CKAF funding in July every year to help initiate planning for the following year. It's proposed that recurring, annual festivals will each be awarded a \$15,000 grant in 2025, to be applied to their 2026 Festival. This funding is to be distributed no later than June 30, 2025.

Below is a breakdown of the proposed 2025 CKAF grant distribution:

| <b>Organization/Festival</b> | <b>Grant Amount</b> | <b>Staff Comments</b>   |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Festival of Live Digital Art | \$15,000            | 2025 is the eighth year of this live digital arts festival which takes place in June                |
| Juvenis Festival             | \$15,000            | 2025 is the eighth year of this youth theatre and performing arts festival which takes place in May |
| Skeleton Park Arts Festival  | \$15,000            | 2025 is the 20th anniversary of this multidisciplinary arts festival which takes place in June      |
| GroundUP Dance Festival      | \$15,000            | 2025 is the fourth year of this dance festival which takes place in July                            |

|  |          |  |
|--|----------|--|
| Potential TOTAL Funding<br>Awarded in 2025 | \$60,000 |  |
|--|----------|--|

### New Applicants

Recognizing that many groups who do not currently have a CKAF grant, or grant recipients who received a 2024 grant and who have completed their project, may be looking to access arts funding in 2025. There will be an opportunity for arts organizations, collectives and individual artists to receive a one-time grant (maximum \$10,000) to support delivery of arts programming or projects that has clear community benefit, provides an inclusive opportunity for participation, and provides funding to local artists and/or to support operations.

A brief call for applications will be launched and a small peer assessment jury will be formed for this to review applications and determine grant allocations. Prioritization of funding will be given to groups that have not received a CKAF grant in the last two years. This approach is intended to be low barrier to both groups seeking funding and to the KAC to administer this one-time funding.

Funding for new applicants in 2025 is expected to be approximately \$118,082, which could provide funding for up to approximately 11 groups and projects if funded at the maximum amount. This funding is to be distributed no later than October 31, 2025. Any unawarded funding will be rolled into available funding in 2026. Any unawarded funding will be rolled into available funding in 2026.