

ARTS COMMONS

Mission: To be an inspirational force where artists, community, and organizations celebrate cultural identities, experience the full breadth of human emotions, and ignite positive change.

One Calgary Line of Service: Economic Development & Tourism

Registered Charity

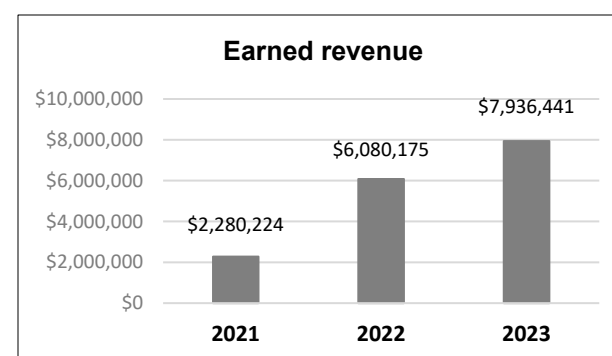
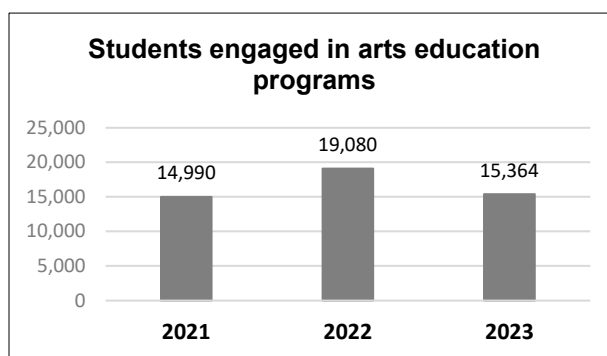
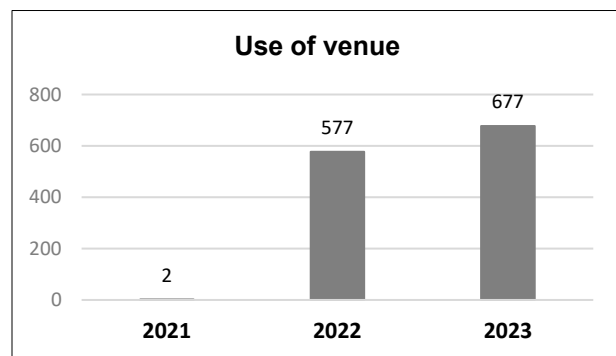
2023 City Investment

Operating Grant: \$2,817,826

Capital Grant: \$2,474,550

City owned asset

2023 Results



The story behind the numbers

- Growth in the use of the venue reflects the desire of Calgarians to return to live in-person experiences.
- The number of students engaged reflects the confidence that educators have in the Arts Commons Education programs including the National Geographic Live Student Matinees Series, ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning, One Day Arts School, and Artist-in-Residence.
- Growth in earned revenue reflects Arts Commons’s ability to leverage its assets to generate funds that support the sustainability of the Arts Commons ecosystem. Earned revenue is generated through venue operations, programming, ticket services, the facility.

Benchmarks

In addition to benchmarks articulated in its business plan that are monitored and measured, Arts Commons is an active member of a number of benchmarking peer-to-peer networks that assist in the evaluation and achievement of industry standards.

Looking ahead: 2024 highlights

The Arts Commons Transformation project continues to be a key focus in 2024. Through expansion, modernization, and revitalization, this project will play a key role in ensuring Calgary continues to be one of the world’s most liveable cities for generations to come, attracts visitors from around the globe and aids in the success of Calgary’s Greater Downtown Plan.



ARTS COMMONS
2023 Civic Partner Annual Report

Civic Partner Name: Arts Commons
Legal Structure: Non-profit entity (Part 9 Companies Act)
Fiscal Year End: August 31
Manage/operate a City-owned asset: Yes

Mission: To be an inspirational force where artists, community, and organizations celebrate cultural identities, experience the full breadth of human emotions, and ignite positive change.

1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2023 that contributed to:

a) one or more Council Strategic Directions - economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?

Economic resilience: In the 2022-23 season we built on the resources allocated to us for COVID-19 pandemic recovery and strengthened our business model, bolstering our staff and seeking new ways to fulfill our mandate to Calgary. This resulted in a return to traditional performances that saw sold-out and near sold-out performances in all venues in Arts Commons and was a strong demonstration of our value to Calgary. Despite these successes, ticket revenue fell 29% below projections as we were challenged to meet our ambitious targets.

Our venue utilization was also up \$1.8M (41%) year over year, exceeding both budget and pre-pandemic levels of activity. This is attributed to a more focused sales strategy including broadening both the type of events we hosted and our client base.

Our development office was highly successful in identifying and pursuing opportunities that lead to the team exceeding budgeted revenues by \$1.0M (20%), the majority of which came from additional project grants including support through the Government of Alberta's Stabilize Program, the City of Calgary's Arts and Culture Microgrant Tier 2, and ongoing support for employment and training from the provincial and federal governments. We attribute this grant success to strategic identification and delineation of available programs to existing Arts Commons activities. Philanthropic giving was also up 22% from our forecasted budget, another strong demonstration of our positive impact. This included the addition of five new sponsors: Cabra Consulting Ltd, MEG Energy, Servus Credit Union, Calgary Foundation, and the Calgary Downtown Association at a time when sponsorship investment has been generally stagnant overall. When compared to our 2021-22 season, contributed revenues increased 6.4% year over year.

We continue to feel the impact of cost increases and inflation with the expenses of operating the facility. Year over year this resulted in a 7.8% increase in operation costs, with programming costs increasing by 5% over last year.

During the 2022-23 season, we entered Phase 3 of the Emergency Resiliency Fund provided by the City of Calgary. Through this program, Arts Commons has been supported in our recovery from the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund enables non-profits, including the City's Civic and Community Partners, to continue to serve Calgarians through the COVID-19 pandemic event by ensuring adequate services are available, and to pursue partner capacity to support Calgary's social, economic and cultural recovery.

As a continued part of our recovery, we were also able to grow and support our team's development with the support of the Government of Canada through Canada Summer Jobs and Student Work Placement and Government of Alberta through the Canada-Alberta Job Grant and Alberta Jobs Now.

Keeping our eyes on the future, key systems within both the Martha Cohen and Max Bell Theatres required replacement. In the Martha Cohen Theatre, this included replacing the dimmer system with new racks, modules, and fixtures. The Max Bell Theatre received a redesigned speaker system including a new centre cluster, left and right arrays, near field coverage, and surround systems. The electrical infrastructure was upgraded to support these new systems. This work was supported by The City of Calgary Civic Partners Infrastructure Grant Program.

Proof of concept work took place in the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby, testing and refining the Sennheiser MobileConnect+ Assisted Listening Device system and we are now ready to implement this technology throughout the building. This will make all events at Arts Commons accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community as well as to the Blind community by enabling audio description. Not restricted to venues, this technology can also be extended to the galleries and public spaces of the building, further removing both perceived and physical barriers. Along with improving our current building, this technology will be applied to the new Arts Commons facilities as part of ACT.

Social resilience:

With the expertise of the Arts Commons production, facilities, event services and ticketing teams, Arts Commons is a well-oiled machine that ensures every step from the initial booking of the venue to the final clean-up after the show goes according to plan.

In the 2022-23 season, our teams sought out new partnerships with different members of the community to gain input and guidance in our efforts of diversifying the offering on our stages to better reflect the cultural face of Calgary. We also conducted proof of concept work in the current building, testing, and validating the technological improvements that will allow for greater accessibility to live performance experiences in the new facilities that will be realized through the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project.

In one of our busiest years ever for venue bookings, Arts Commons maximized utilization of our venues and expanded our portfolio of clients by securing corporate, expo-partners, graduation, and townhall events.

An example of our expanded scope of events was the LaFontaine- Baldwin Lecture, which focused on helping Canadians re-evaluate the past, present and future of how Canada's first peoples and those of us who arrived more recently can forge a positive path forward. The event featured Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon. It is a strong confirmation of our values that prestigious events like this choose Arts Commons to partner with.

Another event that confirmed Arts Commons is on the right path of attracting a greater diversity of clients from all of Calgary's communities was our first-time hosting of the *Celebration for the Arts | Hosted by Mayor Gondek*. Previous Mayors' events took the form of a sit-down luncheon, but Mayor Gondek was in search of a new format that better aligned with her idea of how the arts should be celebrated. Moving to the Jack Singer Concert Hall provided an elevated backdrop to one of the arts community's most beloved events and the revelry spilled out into the lobby with a dance party that rocked the house.

Arts Commons was proud to be Venue Partner and After-Party Sponsor for this magical event that put the arts, artists, and arts administrators in the spotlight. Due to its success, the *Celebration for the Arts | Hosted by Mayor Gondek* has reserved dates for two additional years in the Jack Singer Concert Hall.

Another project to improve patron experience as well as discover new efficiencies was the shift to a shared service model for some of the bars in Arts Commons venues. By offering bar operations support, we've leveraged economies of scale to reduce costs and streamline processes. This has also supported our ongoing efforts to bring local providers into our bars, working with new Calgary-based breweries, distilleries and coffee roasters. In addition, Canadian company North Water was

chosen to supply reusable aluminum water bottles, allowing Arts Commons to step away from plastic bottles and towards greener alternatives.

b) Your own organization's strategy?

Fostering an ecosystem for our resident companies to thrive

In the 560,000 square feet that make up Arts Commons, the audiences of six vibrant resident companies attract thousands of attendees each year to collectively experience the powerful moments that are only possible in the live performing arts.

Alberta Theatre Projects (ATP) produced five shows in the 2022-23 season, including three world premieres: the long-awaited *Cowgirl Up* (originally programmed in the spring of 2020 before the COVID-19 shutdown), the holiday production of *The Jungle Book*, and the Betty Mitchell Award-nominated *The F Word*, a Downstage production presented by ATP in association with Handsome Alice and Theatre Calgary. The company also produced the Governor General's Award-nominated play *Bombay Black* and the wildly entertaining *Teenage Dick* (produced in association with The Shakespeare Company and Hit & Myth Productions). Alberta Theatre Projects concluded its season with the exciting appointment of artistic director Haysam Kadri, long-time Calgary theatre innovator and former artistic director of the Shakespeare Company.

This season, the Calgary Philharmonic presented 77 concerts featuring 27 guest conductors, 70 guest artists and groups, and five new commissions. A record-breaking 63% of the audience were first-time attendees — a testament that Calgary Phil is committed to have something for everyone. A highlight of Calgary Phil's collaborative presentations included the world premiere of Laura Hawley's *I Rise* with Pink Flamingo, performed by the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus alongside murals by artists from the Black Lives Matter Mural Project. Calgary Phil welcomed over 5,000 students into the concert hall and presented the much-anticipated live performance of *Napi and the Rock*, produced in collaboration with Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society. In continued support of young musicians, the Calgary Youth Orchestra joined the Calgary Phil in a side-by-side performance, *New World / New Generation*, bringing over 100 musicians together on stage. The season marked the Chorus's 60th anniversary, offering an opportunity to reflect on the 120-voice ensemble's legacy with an anniversary concert, *Let Voices Resound*, which featured the Chorus performing centre stage at the Jack Singer Concert Hall with Cantaré Children's Choir and special guest soloists.

In a groundbreaking 19th season, Downstage audiences experienced performances that were funny, brave, and ripe for conversation. Downstage presented a Tiny Bear Jaws Production of the fast-paced, provocatively queer sketch show *Gender? I Hardly Know Them*, co-created and performed by Elena Belyea and Sydney Campbell. Then came the massive success of the world premiere of *The F Word*, co-created and performed by Keshia Cheesman and Bianca Miranda, lighting up The Martha Cohen Theatre with a thoughtful and joy-infused celebration of — to quote the creators — fatness, in collaboration with Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Calgary. Finally, Downstage produced a wildly playful inaugural Stage It Festival which featured two new plays by emerging artists along with a bevy of music, drag, and improv performances. Tara Beagan's *Ride or Die* was produced by Downstage as part of the podcast series *Climate Change and Other Small Talk*, which won in five categories at the Positive Change Podcast Awards including Fiction and Social Justice.

One Yellow Rabbit was full of pent-up energy raring to go as they embarked on a full slate of activities for the 2022-23 season. The Rabbits started in October by presenting CBC Radio host and award-winning actor Diane Flacks in the Big Secret Theatre with her darkly comedic solo performance *Guilt*. This tour-de-force was followed by the 37th High Performance Rodeo, which ran from January 16th to February 3rd in 12 venues inside and outside the walls of Arts Commons. With 24 individual shows, three late-night cabarets, three open workshops and outreach activities reaching roughly 10,000 people over the course of three weeks, it was a roaring return to the

beloved long-standing festival. The spring saw One Yellow Rabbit produce an ensemble work, a musical called *Nightingale Alley*, and ended the year with a week-long presentation from their Beautiful Young Artists program — *She Sat Down and Wept*.

Theatre Calgary's 2022-23 season marked the return to its first full six-show season on the Max Bell Theatre stage since 2020, providing opportunities to more than 200 performers, creative artists, and members of stage crews. The season was highlighted by Theatre Calgary and the Arts Club Theatre Company's award-winning world premiere of Mark Sakamoto's *Forgiveness*, which won three Betty Mitchell Awards including Outstanding Production of a Play. Oscar Wilde's classic comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, also brought in two Betty Mitchell Awards, while the Calgary's Choice hit musical *Jimmy Buffett's Escape to Margaritaville* was a joyous conclusion to the season. Theatre Calgary also continued its long-time emerging artist Shakespeare by the Bow program as it once again went on the road as Shakespeare on the Go to numerous communities in Calgary and surrounding areas.

Arts Commons Presents embarked on an ambitious performance lineup highlighted in the signature series of BD&P World Stage, Classic Albums Live, Jazz, National Geographic Live, and PCL Blues.

Connecting local artists to peers, mentors, collaborators, and audiences

Creating opportunities for artists while providing space, resources, networking, professional development, and exposure to new audiences is at the heart of Arts Commons Connects. Under this umbrella falls the TD Incubator Program and the RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program (RBC EVAP).

RBC EVAP primarily focuses on supporting visual artists, giving exhibition opportunities in Arts Commons Galleries, and providing networking and professional development opportunities. This includes a yearly portfolio review by noted gallery owner and curator Vivia Mehr of VivianeArt gallery in Calgary. RBC EVAP alumni Nasarimba, (a collective of Calgary artists Mikhail Miller and Rachel Ziriada), was discovered through the portfolio critique process, becoming one of the curated artists in VivianeArt's gallery spaces.

RBC EVAP participating artist CHISH began his work with Arts Commons in the Ledge Gallery, setting up a studio to paint his vivid, beautiful works. After a trip to his home in Zambia, he became interested in the process of integrating textiles into his practice. Arts Commons Connects supported his curiosity, expanding his residency into the Lightbox Studio starting in September 2023. Through his connections in RBC EVAP, he has also started mentoring with Arts Commons Education staff and artist Anthony T. Russell, another program participant, to expand his practice into teaching artistry.

A key component of RBC EVAP is the quarterly receptions that invite the public to learn about exhibiting artists and their work, directly from the artists themselves. This season, Arts Commons increased promotion of the event through expanded marketing initiatives and shifted

the location to accommodate larger numbers and make for a better experience overall. The attendance nearly doubled as a result.

Entering its second season of facilitating invaluable mentorship, networking, performance, and exhibition opportunities for local artists, the TD Incubator program took a bold new step with Sargeant X Comrade. The R&B duo came on as Fellows for the 2022-23 season, guiding the artistic vision for the program, and leading the TD Amplify Cabaret series in a new eclectic direction. All four performances of the TD Amplify Cabaret series were reimagined as an irreverent talk show in outer space to match their "Lo-Fi Future" theme for the season. It was the perfect way to introduce audiences to local artists, local artists to one another, and to spark connections and collaborations that resonated beyond the framework of the program.

Alberta-based Sufi singer-songwriter and acousmatic composer Shumaila Hemani expanded her offering in the TD Amplify Cabaret performance of *Moon: Indigo Child* by connecting and

collaborating with fellow cohort member, musician James Watson. The success of this collaboration resulted in Shumaila and James opening for the Sun Ra Arkestra at Sled Island — an incredible opportunity to perform before the grandfather of Afrofuturism.

The connections created by TD Incubator continue to resonate well after the artists' time with the program has ended. Created by Lisa LaTouche and Jon McCaslin in the inaugural TD Incubator season in 2021-22, the performance piece *TapBassDrum* was awarded full funding from the Canada Council for the Arts to continue its development and is being adapted into a short film directed by inaugural TD Incubator Fellows Jae Sterling and Contra. The film will premiere at Decidedly Jazz Danceworks with a future remount planned for Fluid Festival in October 2023. TD Incubator also welcomed new support from Canada Council for the Arts, recognizing Arts Commons' role as a Sector Innovator.

The strength of these programs not only comes from Arts Commons, but importantly, from the artists' support of each other. This is true within the cohort, but also with touring artists from Arts Commons Presents. In February 2023, Arts Commons facilitated a private meet and greet for the TD Incubator artists with legendary blues and soul musician Booker T. Jones, who performed as part of the Arts Commons Presents Jazz series. He devoted time to connect with TD Incubator artists, offering advice and encouragement in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Special thank you to TD Bank group for their support of the TD Incubator program.

2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City's investment in a partner's operations and support continuous improvement for Partners. What performance measures reflect your organization's impact in 2023?

	Performance Measure Name	2021 results	2022 results	2023 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	Use of Arts Commons' venues (Arts Learning Centre, Big Secret Theatre, Engineered Air Theatre, Jack Singer Concert Hall, Martha Cohen Theatre, Max Bell Theatre, Motel, and The Hub	2 performances concerts with live audience presented by Arts Commons Presents in August 2021	577 performances, concerts, or events with a live audience in Arts Commons, inclusive of resident companies and third-party renters	677 performances, concerts, or events with a live audience in Arts Commons, inclusive of resident companies and third-party renters	This measure reflects the desire of Calgarians to return to live in-person experiences at Arts Commons.
	Number of students engaged in arts education programming, including participation in the National Geographic Live Student Matinees Series, ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning, One Day	14,990 students and educators that participated in live streamed online educational programming.	19,080 students and educators that participated in live in-person educational programming	15,364 students and educators that participated in live in-person educational programming	This measure reflects the confidence that educators with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District have in our Arts Commons Education

	Arts School, and Artist-in-Residence.				programs and initiatives.
How well did you do it?	Earned Revenue (venue operations, programming, ticket services, facility)	\$2,280,224	\$6,080,175	\$7,936,441	This measure reflects our capacity to ensure our assets are well utilized to generate funds to support the sustainability of the Arts Commons ecosystem.
	Contributed Revenue (public & private sectors)	\$6,482,903	\$7,062,259	\$6,552,991	This measure reflects the value and importance that the community (corporations, individuals, foundations and all three levels of government) places on the Arts Commons ecosystem.
How are Calgarians better off?	<p>Arts Commons Presents inspires thousands of Calgarians each year to gather for powerful and energizing cultural experiences that run the gamut of music, dance, spoken word, performance art, circus, storytelling, and sometimes even sing-a-longs.</p> <p>The fall of 2022 welcomed patrons back to Arts Commons Presents with <i>Choir! Choir! Choir!</i>, a completely unique live performance experience that recast the audience as the stars, turning the auditorium and all of the seats into a stage. Over a thousand voices filled the Jack Singer Concert Hall singing the familiar lyrics of “Mamma Mia” and “The Winner Takes It All” as cellphone lights illuminated the darkness.</p> <p>In celebration of Calgary’s love affair with the blues, the PCL Blues series recognized its 25th anniversary, opening with Judith Hill in the Martha Cohen Theatre — the first time the series had been presented in the larger venue. The season closed off with a sold-out performance of everyone’s favourite viral slide guitarist, Jack Broadbent.</p> <p>The BD&P World Stage series took audiences on incredible journeys, starting the season with YAMATO — The Drummers of Japan: <i>Hinotori</i>. Programmed during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was welcomed with a sold-out crowd and an enthusiastic standing ovation. After the show, the Consul-General of Japan in Calgary, Takahiko Watabe, came on stage to meet the cast and congratulate them on their fabulous performance.</p> <p>The Jazz series welcomed jazz, blues, R&B, and soul lovers from across Calgary when the legendary music-maker and frontman of Booker T. & the M.G.’s, Booker T. Jones, came to the Jack Singer Concert Hall with <i>Booker T: A Stax Revue</i>. By the halfway point, many audience members had abandoned their seats to dance along, calling it “The best Jazz show ever.”</p> <p>Classic Albums Live returned for a stellar lineup honouring music history through respectful recreations of beloved albums live on stage at the Jack Singer Concert Hall. The final performance of the season, <i>Pink Floyd: The Dark Side of the Moon 50th Anniversary</i>, was the best attended Classic Albums Live performance since before the COVID-19 pandemic. Fans of Classic Albums Live were eager to return with an unprecedented subscriber renewal rate along with new subscriptions to meet our highest goal ever set for the series. Special</p>				

	<p>thanks to the Government of Canada through Canadian Heritage and Alberta Foundation for the arts for their support of these Arts Commons Presents series.</p> <p>The wildly popular National Geographic Live series welcomed thousands of patrons to the Jack Singer Concert Hall to ignite their passion for science, conservation, exploration, and the natural world. Widely acclaimed photographer and National Geographic Explorer Ami Vitale shared her poignant experience of documenting the last male northern white rhino, Sudan, as well as the heroic efforts of Kenya's Ol Pejeta Conservancy to save the species. Powerful stories like Sudan's have immeasurable power in inspiring future change. National Geographic Live also hosted our pilot ASL interpretation program. Its success has resulted in an expansion to all National Geographic Live presentations in the upcoming 2023-24 season offering live ASL interpretation on stage. We want to express appreciation to all of our National Geographic Live sponsors, including our presenting sponsor, ConocoPhillips Canada.</p> <p>Arts Commons Presents expanded on our commitment to providing family-focused programming by presenting the ground-breaking <i>Leonardo! A Wonderful Story About a Terrible Monster</i>, an adaptation of Mo Willems' classic books from Manual Cinema. The multimedia performance integrated vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, and live feed cameras interwoven to mind-bending effect and was enthusiastically received by Calgary audiences with four sold-out performances.</p> <p>The 2022-23 season of Arts Commons Presents ended with a free celebration under the open sky with <i>Party in the Plaza</i> featuring Kiesza and Kardinal Offishall. Over a thousand people of all ages from Calgary and beyond flocked to Olympic Plaza enjoy the food trucks, dance on the plaza, and soak up the vibe of the wonderful evening outdoors. It was a celebratory send-off to a summer of concerts, festivals, and cultural activations, resulting in a record-setting amount of media coverage from all major outlets.</p>
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3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?

Uniting the power of arts and education in the classroom, studio, and on stage

Starting the 2022-23 season of arts education on a high note, 234 students filled the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby, Arts Learning Centre, the Hub, Jack Singer Rehearsal Hall, Motel Theatre, the Max Bell Theatre Lobby, and the Arts Commons Boardroom to experience everything from stage combat with Haysam Kadri to planet creation with teaching artist Paula Timm. It was part of Alberta Culture Days and marked the first time that the education departments of the resident companies of Arts Commons had collaborated on a single large event. One of those classes, from Notre Dame High School, was part of a pilot project that brought diverse learners who have complex, cognitive and emotional and behavioural needs into the building for hands-on, integrated arts experiences. This became the launching point for another class of diverse learners with complex and special needs to join us from Christine Meikle School and is now informing the way that we look at arts education accessibility. When Arts Commons says arts education is for everyone, we don't just mean all ages, we also mean all abilities and learning styles.

In the months following Alberta Culture Days, thousands of students attended Arts Commons Presents' National Geographic Live series and discovered a new way to look at art from touring performing artists. One of these artists, Kevin Burt from the PCL Blues series, sat down with a class of students to share his vast knowledge of the blues. By the end of the session, he had every student playing tunes on their very own harmonicas gifted to them by Arts Commons.

In a very different type of music genre exploration, *Strings for Peace* introduced students to a harmonious conversation between North American classical guitar and North Indian classical sarod played by world-famous masters in each field: Maestro Amjad Ali Khan and Juilliard School guitar department founder Sharon Isbin. Students swayed to the hypnotic melodies and were able to voice their questions in a once-in-a-lifetime chance to connect with musicians renowned for their legacy with their chosen artform.

In spring of 2022, Arts Commons sought viewpoints and a new approach to arts education. With the help of Stone-Olafson, a research consulting firm, and funded by Calgary Arts Development, Arts Commons developed an Arts Education Benchmark Survey, the first of its kind in Alberta. The learnings from this survey, which called for more direct support of teachers in the classroom, training for arts facilitators, and the education of parents about the practical benefits of arts education, has set a high bar for the education department at Arts Commons.

Launched in alignment with UNESCO's International Arts Education Week, Arts ReimaginED was the culmination of the learnings from the Benchmark Survey and the groundwork laid by Arts Commons Education throughout the 2022-23 season. Taking place over a week in late May, it offered free arts education experiences to schools and public workshops in YMCAs for a total of 148 free events, as well as hosted a world-class production of *Leonardo! A Wonderful Story About a Terrible Monster* in the Engineered Air Theatre at Arts Commons. For the free in-classroom workshops alone there were 928 requests for the 130 available spots, demonstrating the appetite for these high-quality arts education experiences. The launch week of Arts ReimaginED culminated in a Summit with a keynote address by arts education luminary Dr. Christopher Emdin. The Summit invited teachers, parents, and arts educators to come together to collaboratively imagine the future of arts education in our city.

To support this expansion of arts education initiatives, we launched a new Instagram page, @yycartsed. It gained over 500 followers in its first year who were eager to engage with the sense of wonder and curiosity shared by teachers, students, and our teaching artists.

This work wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our donors and sponsors, and we wish to thank the naming sponsor of the ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning, ConocoPhillips Canada, as well as the Norreen Baker Fund at the Calgary Foundation, the Harry & Martha Cohen Foundation, the Dinner Optimist Club of Calgary, and the Teatro Fund for Arts Commons Education.

Showcasing Calgary's visual artists in free, public exhibitions

Arts Commons Galleries offer a wide range of exhibition opportunities for local artists, from the working studio spaces of the Lightbox Studio and Ledge Gallery, to one of the few multichannel sound galleries in Canada, the +15 Soundscape. The galleries invite artists to share their vision in spaces that are free of charge for the public to visit.

In recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the 2022- 23 season of RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program (RBC EVAP) launched a partnership with the Colouring it Forward Reconciliation Society, a local Indigenous led non-profit dedicated to increasing dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The +15 Galleries featured the work of 12 different Indigenous artists sharing paintings, drawings, beadwork, sewing regalia and star blankets, leatherwork, and photography. The works reflected the paths of each artist in healing and growth and provided a vehicle for the public to learn about Truth and Reconciliation through the arts.

Also launching in September 2022, Anthony T. Russell's artistic process was showcased in Telus Sky's Art While You Wait gallery, a new digital space animating the Centre Street Ctrain platform followed by Mao Projects in early 2023. Since the launch of this new collaboration, five artists have been featured, allowing Arts Commons to extend the reach of our efforts further outside of our building and infuse the daily lives of Calgarians with artistic expression.

Showcasing the incredible talent of members of RBC EVAP, KC Bae's stunning cookie portrait exhibition, *Perishable* in the Lightbox Studio, caught the attention of not only the public, but also the media. Coverage resulted in Bae's crafting of two individual cookie portraits for the hosts of CBC Homestretch, Angela Knight and Loren McGinnis. They went on to be featured in the +15 Galleries and create food art pieces for Theatre Calgary's *The Mousetrap*.

Continuing to discover new spaces to exhibit art within our building, Arts Commons expanded on our partnership with VivianeArt exhibiting the work of emerging and mid-career Canadian artists in the reception area of Arts Commons and Calgary Philharmonic's administrative offices.

The Arts Commons Galleries continue to play a vital role in elevating the work of local, emerging artists so they can grow and reach new audiences with their work and be supported through paid exhibition opportunities. Special thank you to RBC Foundation for their support of RBC EVAP.

4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?

a) Examples of benchmarks:

Arts Commons compares our results against those articulated in the annual business plan. Arts Commons monitors inputs such as expenditures, and staff time on programs and core operational functions to ensure they are both cost effective and sustainable.

Arts Commons also monitors outputs of programs by measuring performance indicators that are quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (related to participant's perception or experience). These outputs demonstrate the work completed by Arts Commons and illustrate progress towards meeting its objectives.

Arts Commons is an active member of a number of benchmarking peer-to-peer networks that assists in the evaluation and achievement of industry standards. Arts Commons maintains membership with the following associations:

- CAPACOA - Canadian Arts Presenting Association
- APAP - Association of Performing Arts Presenters
- CAS - Canadian Arts Summit
- PACC - Performing Arts Centre Consortium
- ISPA - International Society of Performing Arts

The following are some examples of quantitative performance indicators we track:

- overall venue utilization, including resident company activity, third party rentals
- revenue and expenses compared to budget and forecasted results
- the number of visitors who purchase tickets to attend performances in each venue throughout Arts Commons
- the number of submissions Arts Commons receives from artists to participate in its artist programs
- the traffic and average length of time spent by visitors to Arts Commons website and social media platforms
- the number of students who participate in Arts Commons Education programs
- the number of teachers who participate the Arts Commons Education teacher training programs
- the number of students from low-income households that participate in any and all Arts Commons programs, free of charge
- the accumulated value of financial support provided by the community in the form of philanthropic gifts from corporate and individual donors, corporate sponsorships, and foundation partnerships
- the accumulated value of financial support generated from governments in the form of operating support and project support

- the accumulated value of financial support generated from governments in the form of grants for capital/lifecycle initiatives

The following are examples of qualitative performance indicators:

- feedback from resident companies
- responses of visitors who attend programming by Arts Commons Presents
- responses of artists participating in Arts Commons Community, Arts Commons Education, Arts Commons Galleries and Arts Commons Presents
- response from members of the community that engage with our various social media platforms
- responses of students who participate in Arts Commons Education programs
- responses of teachers who participate in Arts Commons Education programs
- responses of users who access Arts Commons venues
- feedback from donors (corporate & individual), corporate sponsors and foundation partners to the programs they align with at Arts Commons
- feedback from government funding agencies that provide operating and/or project support

b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?

Please see below for a selection of performance benchmarks from our 2022-23 season:

- Overall venue activity returned to pre pandemic levels, both from a utilization and earned revenue perspective, a 41% increase year over year.
- Steps were taken to increase shared and supported services through the provision of booking, front of house and bar operations support in the Max Bell Theatre and the Martha Cohen Theatre.
- Development Office (contributed) revenues exceeded target by \$1M (20%)
- A successful launch of Arts ReimaginED attracting teaching artists and a keynote speaker from New York, with the delivery of 148 free events throughout the City.
- 93 artists engaged in professional development, mentorship, and networking opportunities with Arts Commons
- Feedback from Exhibiting artist, RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program participant:
 - “It was VERY educational and gave me so many tools and direction to further pursue my artistic career path. I feel like I now have a more structured road ahead of me with confidence to carry forward my future as an artist in Calgary.”
- Feedback from event organizer:
 - “Events like this are only exceptional thanks to exceptional execution of every detail, and I cannot speak more highly of you and your whole team. You were at the heart of making this Lecture a success.”

c) How this information is being used to support continuous improvement?

Arts Commons is focused on how performance measure findings can be shared and utilized to learn about and improve service delivery throughout its operations.

Some of the ways we strive for continuous improvement include:

- Post-event debrief sessions
- Weekly meetings with events team members to review the past week's events, discuss challenges, and review upcoming events
- Use of teams chat platforms to track events, preparation and distribution of show reports for learning, process improvement
- Patron and client surveys
- Analysis of facility service requests including time to resolution, management of service level expectations

5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?

Using our facilities to elevate the work of our community partners has never been more critical. These efforts bring together communities, increasing dialogue and cultural sharing that make our entire Calgary community richer. It also allows us to learn and grow while offering our own expertise to assist in making their events the best that they can be.

On June 21st, Arts Commons partnered with Four Winds Indigenous Showcase and Market, co-founded by Tony Tootosis, to curate music and performances from some of the many Indigenous communities in Treaty 7 territory in celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day. It offered a low barrier entry point to anyone who is open to experiencing the cultural touchstone of a powwow. The event nearly doubled the previous year's attendance with over 300 people gathering outside of Arts Commons in both rain and sunshine.

Arts Commons and Casa Mexico have been collaborating since 2017 when Arts Commons hosted the first Día de Muertos, Day of the Dead Festival in the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby. Since that initial collaboration, the event has grown exponentially in scope and attendance, offering learning opportunities for both organizations to build on each year. Casa Mexico's goal of creating space for artistic expression within the city dovetails elegantly with Arts Commons' goal to support the diverse communities of Calgary. This partnership with Casa Mexico allows Arts Commons to exchange our expertise in production in an opportunity that allows both of our organizations to grow.

In a partnership with Teatro Ristorante, Arts Commons hosted the inaugural Raccolto Gala, a fundraising event for arts education at Arts Commons including the National Geographic Live student presentation series, the newly launched education program, Arts ReimaginED, and the ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning. This sold-out event generated \$302,000.

Over the holiday season, the brand and audience development team along with the programming team, initiated a new partnership with Cadillac-Fairview, bringing ArtsXpeditions to brighten those last shopping days before Christmas. With live performances from Calgary-based musicians Zenon and Natalia Chai at Chinook Centre, it was a wonderful way to continue to engage local artists to perform in diverse spaces across Calgary.

Illuminating the darker months with a mid-winter festival of arts, culture, and sport, Calgary came together for Chinook Blast. Though Arts Commons' involvement in Chinook Blast is not new, 2023 saw Arts Commons Presents take over Olympic Plaza with a full slate of ArtsXpeditions musicians on Saturday, February 4th in a more fulsome partnership with the City of Calgary than previous years. Starting with families skating to the music of Bubba B the MC and Splash'N Boots and ending with an evening concert featuring Tendavillage, Tanika Charles, and Low Down Brass Band this was a fabulous showcase of local talent that wouldn't have been possible without the partnership of the City of Calgary.

Working in one-on-one consultation with the exceptional Wunmi Idowu and Woezo Africa Music and Dance Inc., Arts Commons hosted a masterclass with the company dancers and community participants in connection with Arts Commons Presents' performance of Step Afrika!: *Drumfolk*. This included an in-depth article written by Wunmi around the roots and cultural significance of the dance

styles which was circulated to the nearly 60,000 subscribers of our Spotlight e-newsletter. To bring the collaboration to a close, the company dancers and community participants were invited to attend the show.

When the warm months returned, ArtsXpeditions once again brought musicians and arts education activities to outdoor spaces near and far. By working with Calgary's YMCAs and the Calgary Stampede Caravan Committee, ArtsXpeditions popped up at Stampede Breakfasts, bringing music, make-and-take crafts, and fun to this beloved Calgary tradition.

These outdoor cultural experiences culminated in *Party in the Plaza* featuring Kardinal Offishall and Kiesza. The evening opened with a showcase of ten local Hip-Hop artists, transforming the evening into a tribute to all things Hip-Hop, both within our local community and Canada as a whole. *Party in the Plaza* wouldn't have been possible without the support of The City of Calgary, Government of Alberta – Community Initiatives Program, Calgary Foundation, and the Calgary Downtown Association.

Proof of concept work took place in the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby, testing and refining the Sennheiser MobileConnect+ Assisted Listening Device system and we are now ready to implement this technology throughout the building. This will make all events at Arts Commons accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community as well as to the Blind community by enabling audio description. Not restricted to venues, this technology can also be extended to the galleries and public spaces of the building, further removing both perceived and physical barriers. Along with improving our current building, this technology will be applied to the new Arts Commons facilities as part of ACT.

6. **How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City's White Goose Flying Report](#))**

In 2021, Arts Commons began our journey towards Reconciliation, becoming more familiar with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, under the guidance of Dr. Reg and Elder Rose Crowshoe, respected Elders from the Piikani Nation. The Crowshoes introduced our team to the principles of Making Relatives, Ethical Space, and Sanctified Kindness, which ultimately became the cultural framework of our Reconciliation Strategy.

In 2022, building on our foundational knowledge and principles, Arts Commons hired Indigenous consultants Mahegun Tails Inc., who established an Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) made up of representatives from each Treaty 7 nation, to ensure the work was supported by leaders of these communities, including lead Elder Jackie Bromley from the Kainai Nation.

Approximately 25 recommendations were provided, and a structure was defined for executing the recommendations based on the teachings of Senator Murray Sinclair, former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. All work was done in Ethical Space, ensuring both Western and Indigenous ways were represented, with neither one being above the other.

In our existing facility, and in the new facilities that will be realized through the ACT project, we aim to put our learning into action, creating spaces where: we bring people together around a shared commitment to Sanctified Kindness, or respect for all existence; Making Relatives with one another is done in a way that transcends notions of allyships and partnerships; and Ethical Space is not only created on the stage, but—more importantly—embodied in the work we do behind the scenes.

Arts Commons leadership, including the Board of Directors, have made the initial commitment to move forward towards Reconciliation, recognizing that Building Awareness of the Past must happen in tandem and must be ongoing, for Leadership Commitment to be sustainable.

Arts Commons has, to date, focused on informal training and cultural immersion opportunities, which have been eye-opening and transformative. This includes our support of the Elders Story Project which takes direction from the Elders to assist in their healing process through storytelling and ceremony.

Over the next season, formal training is planned, and we will continue workshopping the recommendations to determine how we will integrate these into our day-to-day operations.

RESOURCES

7. Please estimate how The City’s operating funding was allocated in 2023.

%	Advertising and promotion
3%	Programs or services
%	Office supplies and expenses
%	Professional and consulting fees
%	Staff compensation, development and training
%	Fund development
10%	Purchased supplies and assets
87%	Facility maintenance
%	Evaluation or Research
%	<i>Other, please name:</i>

8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2023? (including board and committee members)

How many volunteers?	33
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	1,050

9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2023, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?

Arts Commons was awarded the Venue/Presenter of the Year for 2023 through the YYC Music Awards.

Arts Commons undertakes audience surveys following almost all performances delivered through Arts Commons Presents, in order to gauge the impact of all presenting activities. It’s not uncommon to receive a couple of hundred comments for a single performance. Here is a sampling (unfiltered) of the first 25 comments received for a performance by YAMATO - The Drummers of Japan that we hope will give you an indication of what we typically hear from members of our audience:

- *We both agreed this was one of the best shows we’ve ever seen! The performers were incredibly skilled and entertaining, we would 100% recommend this show! Outstanding experience.*
- *Unique cultural experience.*
- *I have always wanted to see Japanese drumming, and the experience was richer than anticipated. A balance of humour, showmanship, musicianship, athleticism and art.*
- *The show was out of this world, but you need to add another washroom for each sex and your underground parkade is a nightmare.*
- *Very entertaining performance.*
- *Very entertaining, amazing performers, comedy, precision drumming. Thank you.*
- *The Yamato drummers were very talented and engaged the audience in a way that added to the experience beyond what the outstanding drumming could provide on its own.*
- *The passion of the performers.*
- *The energy of Yamato transferred to the crowd.*
- *Just awesome, very talented entertainment.*
- *World-famous International music performance.*

- *Sound and energy were incredible!*
- *Great experience.*
- *Great visuals and entertaining performance.*
- *Terrific performance!*
- *Exotic and exuberant performance.*
- *The amazing talent and high energy that they brought to the stage.*
- *Tremendous show.*
- *High energy, fun, entertaining.*
- *Entertainment factor. It was not just drumming.*
- *It was a good performance. The drums were very interesting. Great to see such talented people. The level of physical fitness and endurance for such a physical performance is very impressive. Great performers and a great show.*
- *It was beyond words, if they will come again we'll be sure to buy tickets (better ones!) We were very sorry they couldn't come last year.*
- *The energy, environment and quality of the performers.*
- *This show WAS a feast for the eyes and wonder to the ears. Almost sensory overload! But my kids remain the best experience. Sorry.*
- *Captivating, energizing and inspiring.*

10. How did your organization address climate change in 2023, for example, operational or program changes that reduced greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City's Climate Change Program](#) including Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?

Arts Commons endeavours to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and air/water pollution on an ongoing basis.

We undertook the replacement of antiquated theatrical dimmer system in the Martha Cohen Theatre with new equipment, and replacement of existing incandescent stage lighting in the same venue with more versatile, and energy efficient LED stage lighting.

In addition, here are two substantive projects undertaken in recent years that continued to provide benefits during the 2022-23 Season:

- Replacement of inefficient and obsolete boiler infrastructure with environmentally responsible thermal energy technology from District Energy that is 35% more efficient, which reduces our annual greenhouse gas emissions by 1,198 metric tonnes. Over the 25 year life expectancy of the new system this is a total reduction of 29,950 metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, or equivalent to pulling 6,300 cars off the road.
- Replacement of all toilets and faucets throughout the facility, which is saving over 8,000,000 litres of water annually.

11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2024 that you want to briefly highlight?

As we prepare for the cornerstone of the City of Calgary's downtown revitalization efforts to break ground, Arts Commons is poised for a moment of transformation, both inside and out. The Arts Commons Transformation project will not only manifest in a new 200,000-square-foot space to meet the needs of Calgary, but also expand the way that Arts Commons serves its community. The Arts Commons team has gone above and beyond to test new technologies, expand existing relationships,

diversify our programming, and support greater accessibility on all levels all in preparation for this next step in our evolution.

This necessity to grow to serve the needs of our evolving community is also echoed by the City of Calgary who announced on June 6, 2023 that Arts Commons, the City of Calgary, and Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) would be driving the vision of the Olympic Plaza Transformation forward. The Olympic Plaza Transformation intends to honour Calgary’s 1988 Olympic legacy while revisiting it to increase accessibility and flexibility to host a wider diversity of events and activities. Once the Plaza has completed its renovation, Arts Commons will oversee its future activation, allowing Arts Commons to expand on its mandate of stewarding cultural assets in our city on behalf of the citizens of Calgary.

The integration of the Arts Commons Transformation project with the Olympic Plaza Transformation project also creates a unique opportunity to design the two spaces in conversation with one another. In this way, Arts Commons can embrace the outdoor community space to connect more artists to more audiences and foster a vibrant and resilient cultural presence in Calgary’s downtown core.

Together, these developments will create a new model for engagement that will be a template for other cities around the world. Through expansion, modernization, and revitalization, this project will play a key role to ensure Calgary continues to be one of the world’s most liveable cities for generations to come, attract visitors from around the globe, and aid in the success of Calgary’s Greater Downtown Plan.

We are excited to take the next steps in this process, unveiling the designs of Calgary’s newest cultural space that will draw inspiration from the landscape and history of our city and reflect the many voices of Calgary. At its completion, it will become one of the largest contiguous arts-focused spaces in Canada, a place for all to gather, share diverse experiences, and find inspiration in the arts.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset: *Insert Name of City owned asset managed or operated*

a) How did you use The City’s capital funding in 2023?

Project	City Funding (2023)	Benefit (service improvement, efficiency, improved condition)
MBT - Audio Phase 2	\$532,500	This is the second phase of Audio work started in 2022. Project scope contains installation of re-designed speaker system throughout the venue, which includes a new centre cluster, left and right arrays, near field coverage and surround systems. The new audio system also requires electrical infrastructure improvements to support the speaker hardware installed which include installation of Lyntec panels and a new company switch to allow for further system expansion and adaptation to a broader user group.
Venue Rigging	\$168,750	This season, we took a careful, tiered approach to address the upkeep of the Jack Singer Concert Hall canopy. A marvel of engineering, the all-wooden canopy dramatically frames the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage. Weighing over 56 tonnes, it is supported by a series of hydraulic lifts that allow it to raise and lower based on the needs of performers. This canopy is key to maximizing the acoustic potential of the Jack Singer Concert Hall, whether it’s for a single soloist or a wall-rattling rock band. Our contractor worked on installation of fasteners at locations prescribed by structural engineer throughout winter of 2023.
MCT - Dimmer Replacement	\$581,250	Existing dimmer system was at the end of life and in need of replacement, project scope is similar to the work already carried out in the Jack Singer Concert Hall and the Max Bell Theatre.

Stage lighting: Multiple venues	\$446,250	Scope of work included modules and fixtures along with stage lighting improvements in the Martha Cohen Theatre and the Max Bell Theatre. Installation of this system also required modifications and updates to the electrical infrastructure.
Mechanical Projects	\$300,000	Preparation work for upcoming replacement and modifications of the facility fire suppression panel; updating and modifications the Jack Singer Concert Hall HVAC system. Preliminary work includes defining of project scope along with accurate cost estimates associated with these projects.
Stage elevators - JSCH	\$75,000	Stage elevator brass gears and bearings were inspected and replacement as necessary in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, Martha Cohen Theatre, and the Max Bell Theatre.
Hearing Assist System	\$187,500	In an effort to enhance accessibility throughout our facility, Arts Commons was successful in obtaining a grant from a local foundation to undertake installation of an Assistive Listening System throughout the building. The intent of the project is to eliminate barriers of access to audio content throughout the facility. This system can also support delivery of audio description for visually impaired patrons and visitors.