

**ARTS COMMONS (WERKLUND CENTRE)**

**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.

**Service Line:** *Economic Development & Tourism* *Registered Charity*

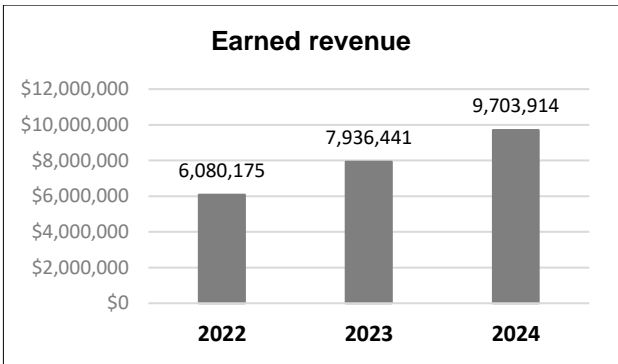
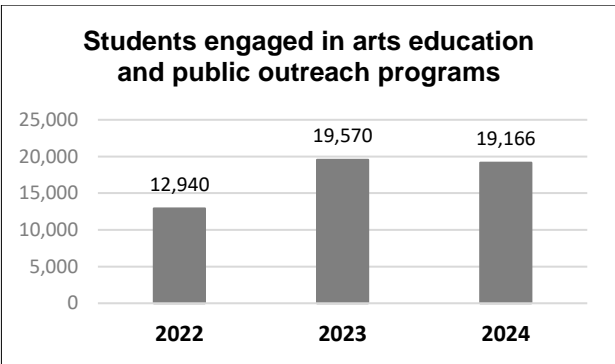
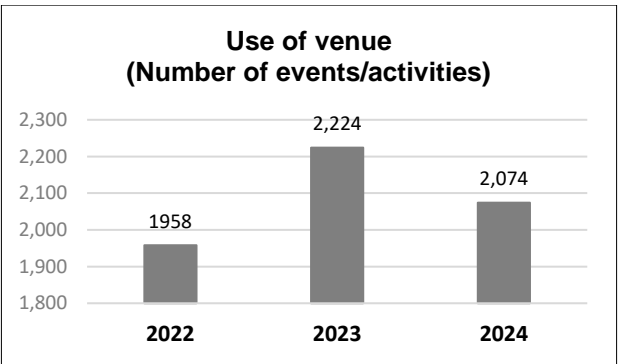
**2024 City Investment**

**Operating Grant:** \$2,969,226

**Capital Grant:** \$2,312,723

*City owned asset*

**2024 Results**



**The story behind the number**

- Arts Commons' resident companies attract thousands of attendees each year. In the 2023-24 performance season resident company activities reached over 184,000 audience members, and total ticketed audiences for all activities were over 290,000.
- 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.
- Arts Commons facilitated and executed over 2,000 activities throughout the building ranging from performances, rehearsals, graduations, education programs and lectures which drove an increase in revenues.

**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: 2025 highlights**

- Arts Commons will become Werklund Centre as of September 1, 2025, rebranding itself in recognition of Dave Werklund's \$75 million gift.
- Arts Commons Transformation & Olympic Plaza Transformation is underway with groundbreaking and site preparation for major expansion planned in 2025.
- Refining and growing Access Pass program strategy and access code engagement for the 25-26 season, collaborate with community partners to distribute tickets to new Canadians



**ARTS COMMONS**  
**2024 Civic Partner Annual Report**

**Civic Partner Name:** Arts Commons

**Legal Structure:** Non-profit entity (Part 9 Companies Act)

**Manage/operate a City-owned asset:** Yes

**Mission/Mandate:** 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 2024 that contributed to:**

- a) One or more [Council Strategic Directions](#)- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?

**Economic Resilience:**

Embarking on our mission to transform ourselves inside and out from a performing arts centre to a cultural civic hub, Arts Commons staff challenged many of our established precedents to discover new, more effective ways of giving the best possible experience to our stakeholders, patrons, donors, and sponsors. Taking on ambitious new concerts and presentations, including a world premiere with National Geographic, paved the way for opportunities in sponsorship. We fostered relationships with community partners to secure longer engagements, and by revisiting the way that we collectively manage our venues, we opened the door for greater utilization of our many resources. These efforts, combined with the efforts of our experienced and passionate team, have resulted in **an operational surplus of \$183,756.**

Our Venue Operations team facilitated and executed over **2,000 activities** throughout the building ranging from performances, rehearsals, graduations, education programs, and lectures which allowed us to increase revenues more than **\$323,000 (net \$132,000) over our original budget.** Some notable events included the Arab Canadian Theatre who brought their show Interrogation to the Engineered Air Theatre, as well as utilizing other spaces for various workshops. Young Women in Energy held their YWE Awards celebration here inspiring women to pursue careers in energy.

**Development exceeded budget by 17%** and welcomed new Arts Commons Presents season sponsors including Acera Insurance, EllisDon, and geoLOGIC Systems. Plaza for All generated excitement for the future of our campus evidenced by the generous support of the consortium of consultants working on the Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza Transformation projects. The team's successful grant application for the Civic Partner Community Safety Grant supported the expansion of our security strategy; this meant we were able to further our goal of working from a compassion-based model when interacting with vulnerable members of our downtown community.

While we had great success in contributed revenue and most earned revenue streams, we did fall slightly under our ticket sales targets. There was continued inflationary pressure on expenses but we were able to keep facility operations expenses inline by renewing contracts at less than inflation and were able to bring administrative expenses in at \$50K lower than budgeted which helped bring our **year-ending surplus in at 33% higher than budgeted.**

### **Social Resilience:**

As Western Canada's largest performing arts centre, Arts Commons supports Calgarians at every step in their journey, from engaging students' curiosity through backstage tours showing them how the pullies in the fly galleries work, to giving teens and young adults a place to gather, sharing pizza as they Rap about life's challenges, and highlighting graduates on one of the greatest stages in the world as they accept their diploma. We offer lifelong inspiration and creative experiences in our spaces because we have a team of passionate experts who believe in this work and support every event and activation from start to finish.

During the 2023-24 season, we were proud to host **over a hundred community groups** and support their needs for venues to showcase their work, ensuring that our beloved venues were utilized to their full potential throughout the season. We welcomed Canadian interdisciplinary creative group, Bodycube Art Collective for 21 days of rehearsal in the Martha Cohen Rehearsal Hall and Kawalease ACT, Arab Canadian Theatre with their production of *Interrogation* in the Engineered Air Theatre.

In addition to keeping the building humming like a well-oiled machine, we continue to pioneer new technologies within our walls to **increase accessibility** and engage in proof-of-concept work for the new building as part of the Arts Commons Transformation project. During the 2023-24 season, we continued the installation work of the new **Sennheiser Mobile Connect+ Assistive Listening system** which will offer listening support in all our venues via any Bluetooth device. The system was made possible with the help the Campbell McLaurin Foundation and the City of Calgary

### **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. In 2023-24, the activities our resident companies **reached over 184,000 ticketed audience members**.

2023-24 was an exciting season for Alberta Theatre Projects (ATP), with newly appointed Artistic Director Haysam Kadri at the helm, and Executive Director Peita Luti joining the team in January. The company's season featured four shows, including the critically acclaimed *Made in Italy*, and new Canadian play *Selma Burke* (both presented in partnership with Theatre Calgary). ATP also produced W.O. Mitchell's devilishly funny *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* (an audience favourite both in 2023-2024, as well as when the company first produced the play in 1997), and presented the Arts Club Theatre (Vancouver) production of the hilarious and heartwarming, *The Birds and the Bees*.

"It's been a remarkably good year for the Orchestra," wrote the Calgary Herald's Kenneth DeLong in his review of Joshua Bell: One Night Only, the Calgary Philharmonic's final concert of the 2023-24 season. Whether they came for world renowned superstars such as virtuoso violinist Bell or emerging talents such as the brilliant young pianist Illia Ovcharenko, audiences seem to agree as attendance at the Jack Singer Concert Hall returned to pre-pandemic numbers. The Calgary Phil continued to demonstrate that the Orchestra is for everyone as a resounding 61% percent of patrons were first time ticket buyers – undoubtedly drawn to an incredibly varied season featuring 70 concerts, 25 guest conductors, 26 guest artists, and three new commissions. These included collaborations with: the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (the first in 20 years), Latin-pop Alex Cuba, soul phenomenon Capathia Jenkins, blockbuster films (Star Wars), symphonic fusion (*Beethoven X. Coldplay*), and Education Concerts which welcomed thousands of students to the world of orchestral music.

Downstage celebrated their 20th Anniversary Season in 2023-24. It was a dynamic season filled with a plethora of collaborations and innovations! The season opened with Downstage's sold-out production of *All Good Things Must Begin* in association with Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation and Climate Change Theatre Action. In February, Downstage co-produced *Beautiful Man* by Erin Shields with Handsome Alice and Verb Theatre. The run was sold-out, and audiences raved about this hilariously poignant comedy. *Magnetic Bodies* took the stage in March. This devised theatre piece was created and performed by University of Calgary Performing Arts students and marked the first collaboration of its kind between Downstage and the UofC. And finally, *GoGo Battles: OMG Someone Dies!* brought the season to a close with a sold-out run featuring a femme queer political theatre-meets wrestling throw down for the ages.

One Yellow Rabbit (OYR) proudly presented the 38th High Performance Rodeo (HPR) from January 15 to February 4, 2024. The festival featured an electric atmosphere with 25 live productions and over 90 performances, co-presented with nine partners across 13 venues. Curated by Artistic Director Blake Brooker and Producer Oliver Armstrong, highlights included new works from OYR Associate Artist Denise Clarke (*One Yellow Rabbit Salon*), as well as performances by OYR favorites Scott Thompson (*KING*), Bruce McCulloch (*Dark Purple Slice*), and Rebecca Northan and Bruce Horak (*Goblins: Oedipus*). Free activations by Dustin Harvey's *Secret Theatre* showcased local talent, while youth performers from Calgary Young People's Theatre enlivened public spaces in Arts Commons.

In March 2024, OYR hosted *A Lean Slice of Nighttime*, an intimate event featuring acclaimed American musician and songwriter Alejandro Escovedo. The Beautiful Young Artists (BYA) captivated audiences in April with their reinterpretation of the 19th century classic *Middlemarch*, offering a fresh perspective for the 21st century.

Theatre Calgary's 2023-24 season took audiences through worlds filled with dreamers, murders, Italian meals, ghosts, martinis, Shakespearean wrestling rings, ground-breaking sculptors, and warm beaches. It was a season that not only had it all, but was a season for all! Their lineup was highlighted by the sold-out runs for both Farren Timoteo's *Made in Italy*, and the return of Calgary's holiday tradition, *A Christmas Carol*. They also presented the acclaimed world premiere of *Selma Burke* (in partnership with ATP, along with *Made in Italy*), and the international premiere of *Beaches the Musical*, which featured a lineup of much lauded local, Canadian, and Broadway talent. Perhaps the biggest success for Theatre Calgary this past season was the introduction of the Theatre For All \$39 campaign. More than 74,000 tickets were sold for this initiative alone. With price, flexibility, and an entertaining mix on stage, their 2023-24 season truly was an opportunity for all theatregoers to discover, return to, and embrace the experience of seeing a live performance.

### **Celebrating our Communities**

In addition to the resident companies, **hundreds of artists, organizations, and community groups brought their vision to life in our spaces.** Remaining accessible to the Calgary community is essential to our work in providing a safe, downtown gathering space for cultural sharing and dialogue.

On a joyful day in early September, Arts Commons and friends danced in the streets with the Calgary Pride Parade, showing off our colours and moves to jumpin' beats. The result? Our most successful organic video to date, shared by Calgary Pride across social and garnering over 30,000 views.

In November, Arts Commons embarked on a collaboration with Casa Mexico to celebrate Día de Muertos (The Day of the Dead) in the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby. The event received a record

number of RSVPs and attention from local media with the lobby operating at maximum capacity. Coloured banners and vivacious music, along with the smell of hot chocolate and freshly baked bread, filled the space with celebratory energy. During the holiday season, we uplifted the generosity of the season by inviting the Food Bank into our lobby during the sold-out double evening performances of A Jann Arden Christmas, made possible by first-time sponsor Lawson Lundell LLP, where a total of \$10,111 was donated.

Chinook Blast chased the winter blues away in a collaboration with Arts Commons Presents on Olympic Plaza with hosts Anthony Russell and CHISH, RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program alumni and current Arts Commons teaching artists. They were joined by brass theatre ensemble, Cowtown Collection, as well as spoken word and teaching artist, Priscille Bukasa, energizing the outdoor party, lit by the glow of light installations. Indoors, we celebrated Black History Month with two Arts Commons Presents shows, Queens of the Blues featuring Canadian JUNO winner, Dawn Tyler Watson, and American GRAMMY contender, Shemekia Copeland and the second TD Amplify showcase, Wakefield Brewster Pt. 2.

A beautiful blending of dance and live music from the GRAMMY Award winning Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra and Cuba's lauded Arturo O'Farrill, Malpaso Dance Company with Arturo O'Farrill & the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra came to Arts Commons Presents as part of a collaboration with Decidedly Jazz Danceworks (DJD). In addition to supporting the presentation, dancers from Malpaso Dance Company did a special masterclass with DJD's dancers, engaging in cultural and artistic sharing.

In April, we uplifted Ukrainian culture with the incomparable DakhaBrakha in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, local Ukrainian artist, Noble, in the Lightbox Studio, and Jack Singer Concert Hall duet stage performers Iryna Kalinovich and Khrystyna Kolodii. The world renowned DakhaBrakha blew audiences away, with comments like "one of the best shows I've ever seen" that was "deeply original" and "an evening of great import and purpose." Both of these Arts Commons Presents performances were made possible by our BD&P supporters, Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP, ALSA Road Construction, and SerVantage.

As the warm summer weather came into full swing, Arts Commons was thrilled to invite Garret C. Smith, proud member of the Piikani and Kainai Tribes of the Blackfoot Nation, and his family to raise a tipi together at Olympic Plaza in a free public event to commemorate National Indigenous Peoples Day. Tipi raising is an essential part of many First Nations cultures across Turtle Island and Garret shared the Blackfoot method using four foundational poles, while other Nations typically use three. The tipi raising was followed by storytelling with Elders and the collaborative dismantling of the tipi.

Relevance to our communities is key to the work we do, and core to that work is collaboration. Through partnerships we strive to serve our city, sharing creativity, arts, and culture on every level.

**2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City's investment in a partner's operations, and support continuous improvement. What performance measures reflect your organization's impact in 2024?**

	Performance Measure Name	2022 results	2023 results	2024 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	Number of Events & Activities in 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	1958	2224	2074	<p>This measure demonstrates that on average we have more than five events or activities taking place in any given day in the facility. These represent a combination of events that serve the public (through ticketed or invitational means) as well as activities that support public events, such as rehearsals.</p> <p>All in all, this measure demonstrates that our current facilities are well used by multiple users, including our Resident Companies, and ourselves, and we can have a demonstrable impact as a public gathering space for artistic experiences.</p>
	Attendance at Arts Commons Presents Programming (Arts Commons produced events only)	29,250	37,668	38,415	Although not representative of every person that engages with activities in the building, these numbers give a good indication of the number of patrons that Arts Commons directly reaches through our programming, demonstrating the true impact of how far reaching the activities that we support are.
	Number of Students Reached through Arts Commons Education/Outreach Programs (Arts Commons-produced events Only)	12,940	19,570	19,166	Arts Commons works diligently to provide artistic experiences and create critical thinkers in our next generations. Arts Commons can support these initiatives directly through the Arts Commons Education department. All in all, these measures are part of our overall strategy of fostering a vibrant arts community and increasing quality of life, with particular emphasis on younger generations.
How well did you do it?	Earned Revenue (venue operations, programming, ticket services, facility, support services)	\$6,080,175	\$7,961,787 (restated)	\$9,703,914	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)	\$7,062,259	\$6,552,991	\$6,104,118	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.
<b>How are Calgarians better off?</b>	<p>Arts Commons' activities help satisfy two principal needs for Calgarians, consequently improving quality of life for residents of the city:</p> <p><b>Need: Central Cultural Gathering Spaces for Calgarians</b></p> <p>This need is embedded within Arts Commons' mission:</p> <p>To be an inspirational force where artists, community, and organizations celebrate cultural identities, experience the full breadth of human emotions, and ignite positive change.</p> <p>Any well-run city needs communal gathering places where citizens can come together for shared experiences. This creates a well-balanced society, allows for emotional referencing, creates cultural understanding and empathy within a population, and ultimately increases quality of life for citizens.</p> <p>To satisfy this need, Arts Commons welcomes over 600,000 people annually from diverse backgrounds to experience arts and culture through hundreds of events. The facility features six cutting-edge performance venues—five theatres and a concert hall. In addition to providing technical support, workshop and rehearsal spaces, and meeting rooms, Arts Commons houses office space for resident companies and our own administration, a box office, and a public atrium with a bistro. We also subsidize venue costs for resident companies and community groups, offer essential administrative support for arts and cultural organizations, and accommodate third-party venue rentals for meetings and ceremonies.</p> <p><b>Need: Fostering a Vibrant Arts Community</b></p> <p>Arts and culture are foundational to our social cohesion, shared humanity, and cultural identity. They unite and strengthen communities, inspire creativity, nurture our sense of belonging, build connections, and foster cultural understanding and acceptance. The transformative power of the arts promotes community building by embracing diversity, discovering common values, and creating meaning together.</p> <p>To satisfy this need Arts Commons has been programming and presenting diverse genres of music, dance, contemporary circus and scientific exploration of our planet for almost forty years. We do so through several presentation series that reached over 26,000 thousand Calgarians in our 2023-24 Season. We partner with local community groups to offer programming opportunities to under-represented-communities, equity-seeking groups, special interest groups, and schools from across the city reflecting the cultural makeup of our city. Furthermore, we run crucial education programs.</p> <p>Arts Education is a powerful tool that helps young people develop the vital skills that help build compassionate and bold communities. In 2023-24, we reached over 19,000 students in Calgary through Arts Commons Education initiatives, inspiring them to become critical thinkers through an artistic lens.</p> <p>When it comes to artist development, we also satisfy a critical need of bridging the gap between formal educational programs, and real-life experiences. Through both our Incubator and Emerging Visual Artists Program (EVAP) we reach a community of artists that are often overlooked through traditional means and give them to tools to enhance their careers. This in turn increases their chance of establishing a successful career and increases their chances of calling Calgary home for the long term.</p>				

### 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?

#### Energizing with the Power of Live Performance

The 2023-24 season of Arts Commons Presents set out to push the envelope with a gravity-defying circus performance, a Ukrainian cultural phenomenon, a world premiere presentation of an Emmy Award winning series, and a sold-out holiday celebration with Calgary's own Jann Arden.

The longstanding BD&P World Stage series celebrated the opening of its 24th anniversary with The Triplets of Belleville: 20th Anniversary Film in Concert, the first ever orchestral concert for Arts Commons Presents. This beloved Oscar-winning film brought out Francophiles and cinema lovers alike, as Arts Commons worked closely with Alliance Française, Quickdraw Animation studio, and Calgary International Film Festival among other partners to reach as many Calgarians as possible.

Making for an extra special holiday season, we celebrated with Canadian talent The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas and A Jann Arden Christmas, who brought cozy cheer to the Jack Singer Concert Hall. The performance was full of laughter and smiles, with both shows ending in resounding standing ovations.

The spring was a hotbed of activity with pulse-pounding concerts, mesmerizing dance performances, cabaret-style showcases sharing Calgary's best local talent, and speaker presentations enthralling our sense of curiosity and wonder. A stand-out was the world premiere of National Geographic Film Concert: Secrets of the Whales, a spectacular fusion of stunning underwater footage, live orchestration with international conductor Anthony Parnter, and on-stage narration by Jann Arden, made possible by Swiftsure Foundation.

Our season of Classic Albums Live came to an absolute stellar close with the sold-out performance of Eagles: Their Greatest Hits. The Classic Albums Live crew belted out everything from "Hotel California" to "Life in the Fast Lane" to an overjoyed audience of audiophiles and classic rock fans. This season, we welcomed new Classic Albums Live season sponsors Acera Insurance and EllisDon.

Roaring onto the stage in May, we welcomed new audiences to the Jack Singer Concert Hall with Dinosaur World Live. The life-like puppets had parents in awe, and children squealing with glee, especially when the 10-metre-long T. rex puppet made it's show-stopping appearance.

National Geographic Live didn't disappoint as we hosted Kilili Yüyan, National Geographic's first Indigenous Explorer, with his powerful message of resilience and cultural understanding for the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic in Life on Thin Ice. His commitment to sharing these important messages was clear as he worked tirelessly with our Brand and Audience Development team to create impactful social media pieces to reach far and wide.

We bid a heartfelt send-off to not only the 2023-24 season, but summer on Olympic Plaza in its current form as Kyle McKearney opened for Emerson Drive, braving the weather to deliver their farewell tour performance, at the public celebration, *Plaza For All*. Rain and cold didn't keep back the ardent fans who danced in the drizzle and were rewarded with a stunning sunset rainbow as the rain took a backseat to one of Canada's most beloved country music groups.

### **Unlocking Endless Potential Through Education**

The paint flies everyday with Arts Commons Education as students, teachers, and parents tap into their creative imaginations in the best possible way. The ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning expanded from 18 weeks to **25 weeks of student engagement**, continuing to broaden our reach to fill the needs of our community. This was made possible by a 3-year commitment from the Werklund Foundation.



The year started off with Culture Days, a building-wide celebration of arts and culture that welcomed **eight classes and over 200 students** to dance, paint, tell stories, stage fight, and beatbox. Throughout the day, each class was engaged in four 40-minute activities led by a teaching artist with a unique creative discipline.

Arts Commons Education recognizes that along with fostering students, teaching artists also need opportunities to grow into the type of instructors that will change the lives of their students. This season, we were delighted to mentor RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program alumni, Anthony Russell and CHISH. They worked alongside our experienced teaching artists to hone their craft and develop their own methods. They even had the opportunity to host an evening of performance at Chinook Blast! Training teachers how to incorporate the arts into their classroom is another key element that Arts Commons Unlocking Endless Potential Education undertakes. On February 15 & 16, with the support of Calgary City Teachers' Convention, teachers came out in full force to experience a wide spectrum of workshops designed to add new tools to their toolbox. During this time, luminary and inspirational educator Dr. Christopher Emdin delivered his keynote, "Education is not memorization. It is the activation of the imagination and the path towards liberation" to **350 teachers, parents, and arts professionals**, bringing his infectious passion to the work of arts education.

In its second season, Arts ReimaginED brought arts activations to schools across Calgary and hosted four public events that gave parents and youth the room to get creatively messy, supported by Calgary Arts Development, Government of Alberta's Ethnocultural Grant Program, and the City of Calgary. Over **4,000 students in 20 different schools** engaged in storytelling, dance, visual arts, and music with 27 teaching artists. We also offered four days of professional development for our company of teaching artists, identified as a need by the Stone-Olafson Benchmark survey of spring of 2022

#### **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 is an active member of several benchmarking peer-to-peer networks that assists in the evaluation and achievement of industry standards. Arts Commons maintains membership with the following associations, many of which provide recurring reports on industry metrics and qualitative trends:

- CAPACOA - Canadian Arts Presenting Association
- APAP - Association of Performing Arts Presenters
- CAS - Canadian Arts Summit / Business Arts
- ISPA - International Society of Performing Arts
- CLMA – Canadian Live Music Association
- AFP – Association of Fundraising Professionals

Key metrics and qualitative trends that we seek through industry reports, and use to compare to our own sets of data include:

- Usage rates of venues at other multi-venue and single-venue facilities
- General audience trends for live performing arts, numbers of patrons renewing subscriptions and other ticket buying trends

- includes specific performance of our series that take place in other cities as well (National Geographic Live)
- Trends for corporate sponsorship and individual giving for arts organizations

Arts Commons compares our results against those articulated in our annual business plan.

In addition to qualitative metrics, Arts Commons monitors outputs of programs by measuring performance indicators that are qualitative. These outputs demonstrate the work completed by Arts Commons and illustrate progress towards meeting its objectives.

The following are examples of qualitative performance indicators Arts Commons tracks:

- Feedback from resident companies and third-party users about Arts Commons venue utilization
- Responses of visitors who attend Arts Commons Presents programming
- Responses of artists participating in Arts Commons Community, Arts Commons Education, Arts Commons Galleries and Arts Commons Presents programming
- Response from members of the community that engage with our various social media platforms
- Responses of students and teachers who participate in Arts Commons Education programs
- 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 2023-24 season:

- Venue usage in 2023-24 remained consistent with that in 2022-23, and consistent with pre-pandemic levels
- Corporate Sponsorship reached an all-time high for the organization, (946K, 20% above budget)
- 109 artists engaged in professional development, mentorship and networking opportunities with Arts Commons (up from 93 in 2022-23)
- Arts ReimaginED was expanded, reached over 160 classes (up from 148), and over 4,000 participants
- The ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning expanded by 40%, delivering 25 weeks of programming (up from 18 weeks)
- Feedback from a participant in TD Incubator, one of Artist Development Programs:
  - *"The TD Amplify Program gave me the confidence to pursue arts in the city I grew up in - it connected me with fellow artists, revealed gate kept knowledge and put me in positions to perform in buildings that my ancestors touched. Just one year later, I am seeing successes I couldn't have imagined but became real because of TD Amplify and the team at Arts Commons."*
- Feedback from a teacher who attended one of our National Geographic Live Student Matinees in 2023-24
  - *"The presenter looks like me." - Representation matters, and seeing someone who looks like them or comes from the same place as them representing an amazing career, is so important!*

**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?**

### **Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity**

Arts Commons' commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, is embedded in Our Belief that "equitable access to the arts is a human right." This commitment will be achieved when we are bringing the arts to life for everyone.

We approach community engagement through formal partnerships with organizations that directly serve the needs of equity seeking groups, and partnerships that connect equity-seeking groups to Arts Commons, prioritizing engagement with sexually diverse and gender-variant, Indigenous, and deaf and disability communities. We offer outreach programming to ethno-cultural communities, special interest groups, and schools from both school boards across the city. Arts Commons uses our facilities to elevate the work of our community partners to bring together communities, increase dialogue and cultural sharing.

Our teams seek out new partnerships to gain input and guidance in our efforts of diversifying the offering on our stages to better reflect the cultural face of Calgary and reflect the (Census 2021) population statistic indicating Calgary is comprised of 41% visible minorities.

Arts Commons presentations reflect our cultural diversity through performances featuring talent that spans diverse cultures. As an example, 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.

### **Accessibility**

To further audience development we provide free tickets to Arts Commons Presents programming through the City of Calgary Access Pass and the Institute of Canadian Citizenship Canoo program for new Canadians.

In addition to keeping the building operational, we continue to pioneer new technologies within our walls to increase accessibility and engage in proof-of-concept work for the new building as part of the Arts Commons Transformation project. As an example, we recently installed a new Sennheiser Mobile Connect+ Assistive Listening system which offers listening support to those who are hard of hearing in all our venues and public spaces via any Bluetooth device.

**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](#))**

Maya Angelou once wrote, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better."

Most of us were educated about our history from a single perspective. Today, we know better and although it can be uncomfortable it is necessary to build a better future for all. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), "Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Reconciliation requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours."

As Arts Commons continues down the path of reconciliation, we remain committed to building awareness of the past and understanding the impacts of colonialism. This requires a long-term commitment and openness to listen and learn, accepting the discomfort of not knowing the answers, and having the humility and strength to make mistakes. And as we learn and know better, we commit to doing better.

While Arts Commons engages with Indigenous communities and artists in a variety of ways, there are two experiences that stand out as moments of active reconciliation.

On September 30th, 2023, in commemoration of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we invited the community to Arts Commons, for free, to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. We held an Indigenous Makers Market and Pow Wow Showcase in the Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby (curated by Four Winds YYC), which recorded 1,367 people in attendance; screened films (provided by the National Film Board) by and about Indigenous peoples, for approximately 100 people in the Engineered Air Theatre; and hosted over 770 people at the Elders Story Project in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. We were heartened to know that there was an appetite for learning and change in our community and celebrated the success.

As mentioned on previously, Garret C. Smith, a proud member of the Piikani and Kainai Tribes of the Blackfoot Nation, and his family accepted Arts Commons' invitation to raise a tipi together at Olympic Plaza in a free public event to celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day. It was joyful, meaningful, respectful, collaborative, and awe-inducing to see this tipi raised in the heart of this city.

As we continue down the path, we invite you to join us in connecting with the land, ourselves, and each other with respect, compassion, humility, and kindness. It is a long journey ahead filled with rich opportunities for personal and societal transformation.

## RESOURCES

**7. Please estimate how The City's operating funding was allocated in 2024.**

%	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 2024? (including board and committee members)**

How many volunteers?	80
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	938

**9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2024, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?**

Arts Commons undertakes audience surveys following almost all performances delivered through Arts Commons Presents, in order to gauge the impact of all presenting activities. Here is a sampling (unfiltered) of comments from the 2023-24 Season:

About the world premiere presentation of National Geographic Film Concert: Secrets of the Whales, April 21-23:

- *Very beautiful. The combination of the film, music and top-notch narration made the experience soothing as well as beautiful and educational.*
- *I liked the new experience of having the [Orchestra] play the music while getting to watch one of the documentaries that the explorers often talk about. It was great getting to see the Secrets of the Whales, I've wanted to see it since Brian Skerry came and talked about it.*
- *This was the best documentary I have ever watched. The sheer beauty of these magnificent beings and their world was astounding. I learned so much. Thank you.*

About our National Geographic Live Series:

- *National geographic presentations are always phenomenal and this one was no exception. My daughter and I loved everything about it. Keep up the great work.*
- *This type of presentation is totally my jam! I loved everything about it, the story telling accompanied by photos and short films is brilliant.*
- *The National geographic series is an exceptional series that makes science accessible, informative and entertaining. The imagery is always phenomenal as well.*

About *The Barra MacNeils: An East Coast Christmas* on Friday, November 24, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

- *Exciting, upbeat, entertaining evening that sent us away feeling great. What a great way to kick off the Christmas season.*
- *The whole concert felt alive with the music they presented and their interaction with the audience.*
- *The type of music performed was wonderful and joyful. What made it even better was the atmosphere created by the down-to-earth, friendly approach that the Barra MacNeils had with the audience.*
- *Amazing home-grown talent, Celtic culture, personal anecdotal style, Christmas being celebrated as Christmas - not the Holidays!*

About *DakhaBrakha* on Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

- *The sound and visuals were incredible, and the music was so inspiring I was on a high for days!*

- *The music was amazing. Saw Dakha Brakha in Ottawa last year and loved it, so decided to see them in Calgary as well. It was nice to see that they performed quite a few songs that were not included in the previous concert.*
- *What a show - emotion invoking, tasteful, humble. It was a fantastic evening, largely due to the quality of the performance.*
- *Attending the concert of the Ukrainian folk band Dakhabrakha was an unforgettable experience that left me mesmerized and deeply inspired. What I enjoyed most about the presentation was the sheer passion and energy that radiated from the stage throughout the entire performance. From the moment they started playing, it felt like a journey into the heart of Ukrainian culture, filled with rich melodies, haunting vocals, and captivating rhythms.*

**10. How did your organization address climate change in 2024, for example, operational or program changes that reduced green house 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 endeavors to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste, and air/water pollution on an ongoing basis.

As reported for 2022-23, we replaced the 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. Although it was installed previously, the efficiency gained from the system applies to our 2024 year.

Over the past few years, we have replaced antiquated theatrical dimmer systems in our main venues with new equipment, and undertaken replacement of existing incandescent stage lighting in the same venues with more versatile, and energy efficient LED stage lighting. We are still reaping the benefits of the energy efficiency in regard to total building energy usage.

Further energy efficiency has been gained from the installation of a more efficient hot water tank system in 2024, and the design of a new HVAC system for the Jack Singer Concert Hall, which when installed 2025, will also improve efficiency in air supply and distribution.

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

- ***Arts Commons Transformation Updates***
- ***Artist Development Programs in 2024***
- ***Infrastructure Projects in 2024***

**Arts Commons Transformation Updates**

It was a frosty morning in November when the Olympic Plaza phase of the Arts Commons Transformation project took its next significant step forward. To a crowd of eager arts supporters and queued cameras, the design team for the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) was announced, creating a ripple of excitement over the exceptional expertise of the creatives involved. This team would undertake the exciting task of redesigning a space to be in conversation with the Arts Commons Transformation with the goal of creating a complete cultural campus for all Calgarians to enjoy.

Led by development manager Calgary Municipal Land Corporation, the Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) project is a collaboration between gh3\* Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, CCxA Landscape Architecture and Urban Design, and Belleville Placemaking.

A significant city-building and cultural initiative, Olympic Plaza Transformation (OPT) will see the 35-year-old Olympic Plaza transformed into a modern, innovative and flexible space for Calgary's downtown core. The alignment in planning and design of Olympic Plaza's transformation, with the adjacent \$270M modernization of Arts Commons, will allow for design synergies, construction efficiencies, and coordinated leadership, supporting Arts Commons' vision for a larger, more integrated campus.

Another major milestone took place in March of 2024, when the Alberta Government announced a commitment of \$103 million to support the Arts Commons and Olympic Plaza Transformation projects. This substantial commitment paved the way for an even bigger funding announcement in June of 2024.

But first, after two years of meticulous planning and design work, Arts Commons, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), and its partners at The City of Calgary were thrilled to reveal the architectural design for our expansion, which will feature a 1,000-seat theatre and 200-seat studio theatre. Behind the expansion's modern and striking design is a team of internationally recognized architects and designers from Toronto's KPMB Architects, Calgary's Hindle Architects, and Calgary-based Tawaw Architecture Collective. In discussion with Indigenous consultants including a mix of artists, Elders Knowledge Keepers, and other community members, the expansion building's curved form, exterior cladding, and interior finishes are inspired by Alberta's dramatic landscapes and regional lodge.

### **Artist Development Programs in 2024**

Arts Commons Connects is the hub that combines artists, arts organizations, and opportunities. At the forefront is the TD Incubator program, which entered its third season of creating essential supports for Calgary-based multidisciplinary artists. This year, the program made a monumental leap, engaging Calgary Poet Laureate Wakefield Brewster to lead as program Fellow. Wakefield was a member of the TD Incubator program in its inaugural year, and to have him return to lead after gaining the civic recognition of poet laureate, is nothing short of a pure demonstration of the value of the program.

Under Wakefield's leadership, 44 participants were coached through professional development workshops, elevated on stage and through exhibitions, and afforded future opportunities through networking with artists and arts professionals. The season launched with the Summit, a three-day intensive designed to immerse the TD Incubator artists in a learning excursion, setting the stage for the rest of the season. Over the course of the year, we witnessed the multidisciplinary artists of the program make powerful connections and further their craft. Highlights include participant Bruce Miller's short film CONVICTION being programmed as part of the Calgary International Film Festival after being selected for the Special Jury Prize as part of the NBC Universal Alberta Short Film Devon Bolton Memorial Award. This was screened alongside inaugural TD Incubator Fellows Jae Sterling and Contra and the presentation of Kamika Bianca Guerra-Walker's spoken word poetry. Similarly, Thomas Dundas' incredible performance in Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 1 inspired the inclusion of Cowtown Collection – a cow-themed brass marching band – as the resident fanfare band for Arts Commons Presents, so expect to see Thomas again in 2024-25.

Wakefield Brewster Presents, presented in four parts, shared spoken word, dance, music, stage projections, poetry, and comedy throughout the season, with audiences praising it as “a rich inclusion of culture, identity, and expression” that is “beyond expectations” and “phenomenal!” The underground TD Amplify afterparty took that energy to the next level with the launch of SCRATCH, the coolest party you’ve never heard of.

This season also saw The Mix, a new format of networking event for artists that engages professionals working in their fields. This format encourages creatives across disciplines to intersect in new ways – entrepreneurs, technologists, and artists of all types were brought together through games and an atmosphere of collaboration.

RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program (RBC EVAP) shared the work of 65 artists, primarily through the Arts Commons Galleries but also through the TELUS’s Sky Art While You Wait digital exhibition space, which entered its second year of sharing the creative processes of RBC EVAP artists through a stunning city block long screen on TELUS Sky, located on the 1st Street C-train platform.

One outstanding contribution to Art While You Wait was a short film, conceptualized and produced by FOREIGNERZ, an art and production house focused on pushing boundaries in film, music, art and culture. The film was supported by TELUS and Arts Commons as a companion film to artist Mikayla Martin's (Itsooaakkii) Ledge Gallery installation, NDN Girlhood. Using Mikayla Martin’s acrylic painting VISITING as a source of inspiration, this film moves from a reclusive state to a defiant, Indigenous future that the artist desires.

These programs are supported by RBC Foundation, TD Bank Group, and Canada Council for the Arts.

### **Infrastructure Updates for 2024**

As our beloved and hard-working venues reach 40 years old, our team carefully prioritizes the replacement and refurbishment of safety and infrastructure systems. During the 2023-24 season, the fire panel for the building was replaced to adhere to contemporary safety regulations, bolster reliability, and optimize system functionality. The hot water tanks had also reached end of life and were replaced over the summer months.

In the venues, the counterweight rigging systems in Max Bell Theatre and Martha Cohen Theatre had reached end of life and were converted to a new state-of-the-art system that is more efficient, ergonomic, and safer for staff to use. These projects were made possible by the City of Calgary’s Civic Partners Infrastructure Grant program. Another key upgrade to the venues took place in the Front of House where a new Clover point of sale system gave us new tools to improve customer service in our venues and improve the efficiency of our bar staff. It also has an intuitive user platform, greatly enhancing usability by staff.

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

### **12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**Asset:** *Arts Commons Facilities*

#### **a) How did you use The City’s capital funding in 2024?**



<b>Project</b>	<b>City Funding (2024)</b>	<b>Benefit (service improvement, efficiency, improved condition)</b>
Fire Panel Replacement	<b>\$382,500</b>	Full system replacement including Fire Alarm Initiating with Fire Panel changeout. Existing fire alarm system has been operational for over two decades with panels and peripheral devices reaching end of life and requiring replacement. The new system will guarantee adherence to contemporary safety regulations, bolster reliability, optimize system functionality and mitigate issues arising from the scarcity of replacement materials. Panel replacement was required as existing systems were at end of life.
Facility Mechanical work	<b>\$300,000</b>	Smoke exhaust fans were at end of life. Two cyclone circulation dust collection systems in loading bay and B2 level shop required upgrades. Addressment of exhaust fans and air circulation were be part of this effort. Jack Singer exhaust HVAC Investigation included design of new HVAC system replacement which is to occur in 2025.
Venue Rigging	<b>\$491,250</b>	Equipment was at end of life and required replacement. Counterweight rigging systems in Max Bell Theatre and Martha Cohen Theatre were converted to front loading arbours as existing were at end of life and required replacement. Replacement of system benefits of being more efficient and user friendly due to being more ergonomic in operating. Repairs to headblocks in theatres occurred at the same time. Review and documentation for the structural capacity of the fly system was also be produced with the front-loading arbour installation. Installation of new systems revealed additional work required due to existing conditions from original install which should be corrected to improve the overall functionality of systems.
Structural Concrete, Steel decking, Stairs and Masonry Veneer	<b>\$230,250</b>	Repairs required to concrete, steel decking, masonry and steel reinforcements, fire proofing in multiple locations. As per Building Condition Assessment 2021. Parkade and lower levels of the facility are experiencing efflorescence from wall and ground seepage. Parkade underwent a full review by structural engineer and a report on condition was produced. BCA noted corroded metal stairs in need of re-painting and potential re-welding where applicable. Structural steel requires recoating of fireproofing in select locations. Repair work occurred throughout 2024 inclusive of sealing and repair of parkade concrete floor decking.
Thermal and Moisture Protection	<b>\$199,500</b>	Sealanats and replacement of moisture protection materials in multiple locations as per Building Condition Assessment 2021.
Mechanical - Hot Water Tank Replacement	<b>\$126,750</b>	Domestic hot water tanks in the building had failed. Project focused on replacement of tanks with more efficient system and included replacement of expansion tanks.
Escalator Repairs	<b>\$360,000</b>	Crucial repairs required to repair work on Jack Singer Concert Hall Lobby escalators, work begun to identify issues, and cordon them off from the general public at the end of 2024.