



Culture Sector Training Report, March 31st 2013

Identifying the human resource, skills and professional development requirements of Prince Edward Island's multi-disciplinary cultural sector

Background

One of Culture PEI's primary roles as a sector council is to work with Prince Edward Island's arts and cultural industries, employers, organizations and self-employed artists, artisans and performers in identifying their training and skills and professional development needs. Culture PEI works with these partners to identify these skills' gaps, and also to design bridges or solutions for these gaps, such as development of the *Business of Crafts* short course with Holland College and the PEI Crafts Council in 2012, or the Digital and Media Arts workshops with the Island Media Arts Co-op.

In the fall of 2012, Culture PEI's board of directors and staff felt it was time to work and consult with representatives of and leaders within the sector to freshen and renew data as it pertains to training and skills requirements.

Methodology

Our organization sought input, feedback and research on the culture sector's training needs through two different processes: 1, we created an online survey which was distributed widely to and circulated within PEI's multi-disciplinary cultural sector. 2, Culture PEI staff met and held interviews with a variety of cultural sector organizational leaders, businesses, employers and self-employed workers. We consulted 22 individuals through this process.

The composition of PEI's culture sector

For the purposes of this report, we worked to identify training and skills needs in the following culture sector disciplines or sub-sectors: the visual arts, the handcrafted arts, the media arts, museums and heritage, writing and publishing, music and sound recording, and the live performing arts.

The sector's unique characteristics and composition are marked by the lack of one, single unifying cultural industry association, and also by a large percentage of self-employed cultural workers. The latest Statistics Canada census data (2006) and Culture PEI research suggest there are approximately 2,000 cultural sector workers on Prince Edward Island.

There is a small cluster of large cultural sector employers on PEI, including The Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown (60 permanent, full-time employees, rising to a number of 150 in the summer season), The PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation (a staff of 16 across multiple heritage locations and interpretative sites, tripling in the summer season), the College of Piping in Summerside (15 employees), and the Harbourfront Theatre in Summerside (nine employees). There are dozens of small-to-medium businesses that employ fewer than five workers, such as art galleries,

handcrafted art or artisanal studios and small performance halls, theatres or venues. In addition, there are several provincial arts organizations and groups (such as the PEI Council for the Arts, the PEI Crafts Council, Music PEI and the Island Media Arts Co-op), that, while operating as not-for-profit agencies or companies, provide employment and/or funding opportunities for Island artists, artisans, and performers.

The profile of PEI's cultural labour market is also punctuated by a large number of self-employed authors, writers, filmmakers, singer-songwriters, painters, photographers, potters, jewellers, sculptors, actors, dancers and arts educators. Culture PEI's *Labour Supply and Demand* research from 2008 found that 70% of our province's cultural sector workforce is self-employed. Many of these self-employed artists, artisans and performers find work on a project-by-project, exhibition-by-exhibition, contract-by-contract or performance-by-performance basis. Additionally, many work in other sectors or industries to supplement their income earned from culture-related work.

Our research for this report attempted to reflect and represent the diversity of our sector's multiple disciplines, genres, businesses, and types of employment.

The importance of training for PEI's culture sector

As emphasized above, the culture sector labour market features a high percentage of self-employed artists, artisans, performers and storytellers. The ability to identify and design solutions that meet the needs of these creators and innovators serves the obvious need to support the labour market entry and success of cultural workers. However, enabling self-employed cultural workers to pursue career success also supports Prince Edward Island's economy, and our province's ability to attract visitors and economic investment to our province. When other sectors or industries consider growing their footprint on PEI through the establishment or expansion of companies or employee recruitment, they can point to the Island's "quality of life" as an incentive. This precious quality, which includes a vibrant and robust cultural industry, is in no small part created by the artists, musicians and artisans who live and work here. The culture sector on PEI, as data from multiple studies suggest, yields between \$100 and \$150 million annually to Prince Edward Island's economy.

The self-employed workforce – themes and needs emerge

Culture PEI met with and interviewed approximately 10 self-employed culture sector workers to incorporate their perspectives into this report. This group included visual artists, filmmakers and artisans. Several other interviews were conducted with leaders or representatives of arts and cultural organizations or employers who deal with or

support self-employed culture sector workers. These organizations included The PEI Crafts Council, Music PEI, and The PEI Council of the Arts.

Culture PEI also created an online survey to hear firsthand from members of the culture sector on their training and professional development priorities. The 76 respondents represent the diversity of cultural disciplines and sub-sectors within PEI's labour market. 70 per cent of these culture sector respondents either identified themselves as "self-employed, part-time" or "self-employed, full-time". The remaining 30 per cent of respondents identified themselves as leaders of sub-sector industry associations or culture sector organizations, as part-time employees in other sectors (many self-employed culture sector workers find employment elsewhere to help supplement their culture sector income), or as employees of culture sector businesses or organizations.

The highest rate of survey response came from the following culture sector disciplines or sub-sectors: 1, visual arts, 37 per cent. 2, handcrafted arts *and* writing/publishing (both at 25 per cent). 3, live performing arts, 19 per cent. 4, arts administration, 13 per cent. 5, music *and* film/media arts, (both at 9 per cent).

The diversity of culture sector disciplines and types of employment notwithstanding, definite themes and preferred training priorities were expressed. These themes cross sub-sector lines. The categories which received the highest ranking in terms of training priority were: 1, Sourcing Sponsorships and Partnerships. 2, Grant and Proposal Writing. 3, Website Design and Management. 4, Writing for Marketing and Promotion. 5, Social Media Tools. These findings are consistent with conversations Culture PEI has had with aspiring and established self-employed culture sector workers and with arts and cultural organizations during the past several months. These training priorities align with the need for self-employed employees to learn the finer business arts associated with beginning and managing a career in culture.

Applying to culture sector grant and funding programs is competitive and yields uncertain outcomes for culture sector employees and employers: not everyone succeeds with grant and funding proposals or applications. Thus the ability to identify and source other revenue streams through sponsorships and partnerships has become increasingly important for the sector. It's also obvious from the survey results that artists and performers within all cultural disciplines possess a demand for skills associated with grant and proposal writing. As a direct result of the feedback to this training survey, Culture PEI incorporated two panel discussions into our March 12th, 2013 *Skills Exchange* forum to focus on sourcing sponsorships and grant writing. Feedback to these two presentations was very favorable, and there clearly is a demand for more information, resources and training pertaining to these specific skills.

Increasingly for self-employed artists, artisans and performers, their websites and their social media are their storefronts. Whether it's the illustration or presentation of portfolios or product inventory, or sourcing new audiences, markets or sales, the ability for self-employed culture workers (and culture sector businesses and employers) to manage and update their online presence is critical. Culture PEI's own Board of Directors has discussed and identified a need for self-employed workers to be exposed to and connected with artists and performers who have had success with online crowdfunding resources, tools and platforms to assist with career development, book publishing, album recording or the making of a movie.

In our individual consultations with self-employed culture sector workers, a need for skills in audience engagement, finding audience or customers, and the ability to market and promote their work surfaced repeatedly.

Writing and publishing tools and resources

Our survey respondents had the option of providing comments pertaining to "other" training needs not specified or addressed in the survey questions. We were struck by the number of respondents to this survey category who identified themselves as writers/publishers, and by how many expressed a desire to learn more about self-publishing tools and strategies.

Film and media arts

Like the writing/publishing sub-sector, many respondents from the film and media arts sub-sector used the "other" comments section within our online survey to outline specific training needs. These included the call for training for camera direction and lighting, for post-production after effects (such as colour correction), editing, and executive producer skills. This feedback mirrors what The Island Media Arts Co-op has identified as skill needs in previous consultations with Culture PEI and Skills PEI, in efforts to renew Digital and Media Arts Training provided for this industry in 2012.

The perspective of culture sector employers

The feedback from representatives of culture sector businesses or employers was diverse, with the following key themes emerging: 1, Large culture sector employers, such as the Confederation Centre of the Arts and the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, expressed a need for succession planning processes or programs to support the replacement of expertise and knowledge lost with the imminent retirement of some of its staff. 2, Small-to-medium sized businesses, such as artisanal and

handcrafted arts galleries and studios, cited a need for university/college school of business programs to take the time to help students understand or learn the nuances of working in a retail culture sector business. As an example, one pottery studio owner suggested that artisanal business owners or representatives could present or speak to a business school class. A fine glass artist business owner said there are lessons in retail skills and customer relations and engagement that could be learned from other sectors or businesses (As an example, could a business specializing in front line customer care, such as The Gap or Home Hardware, be of help to a culture sector business?).

Additionally, presentation and marketing skills pertaining to product, booth or retail display were identified as priorities. The PEI Crafts Council has expressed an interest in the renewal of a *Business of Crafts* short course at Holland College, based on the outcomes of the 2012 pilot course. 3, The theme of cross-sectorial assistance or training surfaced in our discussions with the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation. The Foundation annually employs summer students to be museum site interpreters. They need skills in artifact interpretation and audience/visitor engagement. Perhaps workers skilled in public performance and communication could be employed to help? 4, One interviewee, who possesses the unique perspective of being a culture sector employer, the operator of a sponsorship development business in the performing arts, *and* a member of a music group, discussed the need for performing bands or groups to be exposed to career planning and leadership training. This training would support bands with specific objective-setting goals to answer questions such as “where do you want to be as a band” and “how do you get there?”

Mentorship

Culture PEI’s past research and consultations with the culture sector yielded an appetite for mentorship opportunities for arts and culture workers. We posed this question in our online training survey, to gauge current demand for a mentorship program or opportunities: “would you benefit from a mentorship program?” Overwhelmingly, of the 22 survey participants who chose to answer this question, the answer was “yes”. Reasons that were cited included: the opportunity to learn from successful cultural entrepreneurs or businesses, the need for business coaching for artists and artisans, and a demand for peer-to-peer support within the Island’s culture sector.

Conclusion and summary of key findings and themes:

1. There remains a strong demand for mentorship opportunities and/or a mentorship program for aspiring culture sector entrepreneurs and workers.
 2. In our online survey, aspiring and established self-employed culture sector workers and culture sector businesses have identified, in this order, their top training and professional development needs: A, identifying and sourcing sponsorships. B, grant and proposal writing. C, website design and management. D, writing for marketing and promotion. E, social media tools.
 3. One large culture sector employer, The Confederation Centre of the Arts, sees one of its biggest human resources challenges being the replacement of staff expertise lost to retirement and in identifying resources to support staff skills' transition or succession planning.
 4. There is clearly an appetite for training and resources pertaining to the writing and publishing sub-sector, specifically as it relates to self-publishing.
 5. Small-to-medium sized culture sector businesses and employers, notably those in the "gallery/studio" category, see a need for a variety of training priorities such as retail management, customer relations, and product and booth display.
 6. The film and media arts sub-sector has identified training needs to support the development of specific technical and production skills on PEI.
 7. The PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation sees a role for culture sector workers such as live performing artists to support the museum and artifact interpretation and visitor engagement skills.
 8. The identification and sourcing of new audiences, markets, funds and customers – and tapping into tools and resources to reach them – is an overarching priority that has been identified by arts and cultural organizations, employers and self-employed culture sector workers from all disciplines.
- Note: Our surveying of the industry also yielded several, specific, individual comments detailing training needs such as "learning French" or "learning Cloud computing" or "hazardous materials management for artists". For the purposes of focusing on key themes and findings, we have not referenced nor included many of these comments in this report.