

Evaluation of the Digital Strategy Fund and Sectoral Needs Assessment

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Delivered to



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada

Prepared by



Evaluation of the Digital Strategy Fund

The **purpose** of this evaluation and needs assessment was:

- To understand how the Digital Strategy Fund has supported digital transformation in the arts; and,
- To understand sector needs regarding digital transformation.

Our **approach** encompassed:

- A diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility lens in all activities and deliverables, informed by experts Vanessa Pfaff and Flavio Caron.
- Focus on engaging with a multitude of voices and perspectives across the Canadian arts sector (165 members engaged)
- Emphasizing respectful sharing of what was learned

Project Overview

1. Establish DEIA approach

- Engage DEIA partners
- Develop DEIA approach



2. Evaluation Design

- Document review and desk research
- Develop evaluation framework



3. Data Mapping & Data Collection

- Identify KPIs & develop data map
- Data collection and Stakeholder Engagement: Survey, Roundtables, and Interviews



4. Analysis and Evaluation

- Collate data
- Conduct evaluation analysis
- Conduct gaps analysis
- Develop recommendations



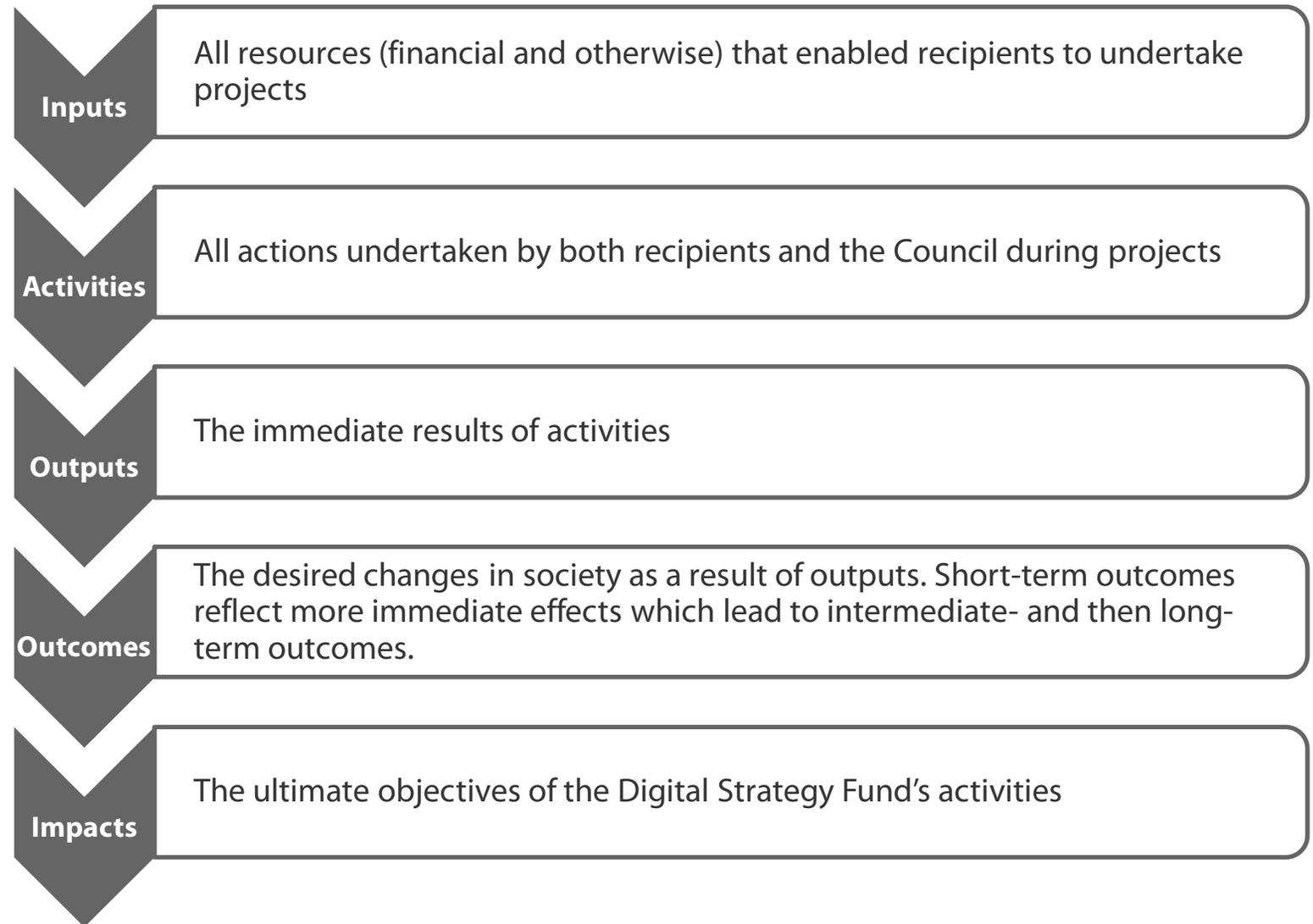
5. Reporting

- Prepare and deliver draft report
- Revise and deliver final report
- Presentation of findings



About the Logic Model

- This framework outlines the **cause-and-effect relationships** between various inputs, activities, their outputs, and the outcomes and impacts they support.
- **Short-term outcomes are expected to occur before intermediate outcomes, which are expected to occur before long-term outcomes and impacts.**



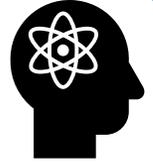
About the Evaluation

This evaluation considered the following components of the Digital Strategy Fund:

1. Digital Literacy and Intelligence;
2. Public Access to the Arts and Citizen Engagement;
3. Transformation of Organizational Models; and,
4. The Special Initiative for Core Grant Recipients.

- Evidence to conduct the evaluation was gathered via:
 - A **survey of recipients** who had completed their projects or 1+ phases of a multiphase initiative.
 - **Engagement** via one-on-one interviews and roundtables with 165 members of the arts community.
 - Analysis of the Council's **internal documentation and application data**.

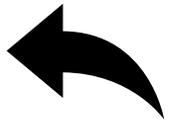
Core Values of the Digital Strategy Fund



Knowledge Sharing



Collaboration



Return to the Community

- The Digital Strategy Fund was designed to be **broad** to allow the arts sector to ideate.
- It was also designed to be **iterative**, allowing for the Council and recipients to research, observe, and adjust accordingly.
- These factors impacted the successful achievement of the Fund's key outcomes.

Key Outcomes

The Digital Strategy Fund supported around 900 projects that sought to explore digital topics, tools, and frameworks, and even build new digital solutions, frameworks and tools. The Digital Strategy Fund was particularly successful in:

- Improving **digital literacy** in the Canadian arts sector
- Increasing **research and experimentation** on digital topics
- Increasing **collaboration** in the arts and with other sectors both nationally and internationally
- Encouraging **digital transformation** for organizations

Key Outcome: Digital Literacy

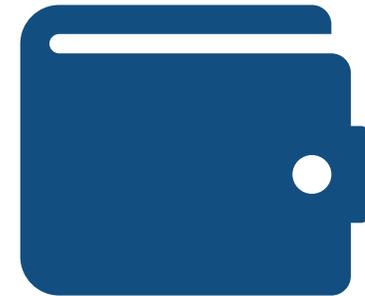
The Fund encouraged learning around digital topics – as well as sharing of project results.



**200+ Digital
Literacy Projects**



**640+ members of
the Canadian Arts
Sector participated
in digital training**

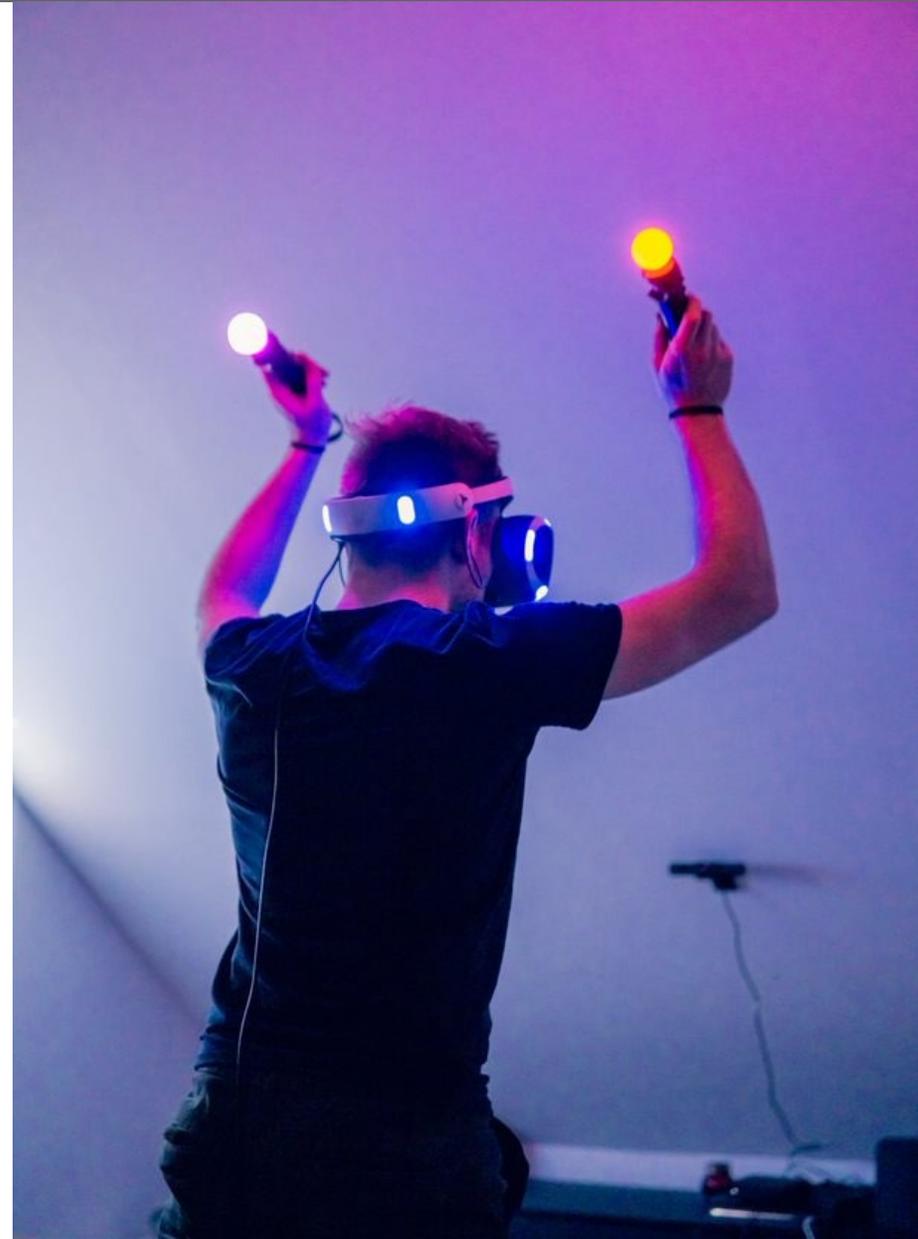


**More than \$16
million invested**

Key Outcome: Research and Experimentation

The Digital Strategy Fund **encouraged and de-risked experimentation in the digital space.**

- Recipients engaged in more digital experimentation as a result of completing their project(s).
- The Fund supported arts organizations in their pivot to virtual engagement through the pandemic.
- Revisions to the Fund (for example, adding smaller up to \$50K grant sizes) also enabled support for smaller-scale exploratory activities.



Key Outcome: Research and Experimentation Cont'd

Research topics included:

**Science, Technology,
Engineering, Arts, and
Mathematics (STEAM) in
the arts**

Strategic data analysis

Data safety and privacy

**Digital methods of artistic
presentation**

**Digital platform
development**

**Digital maturity
assessments**

**Digital technology's
impact on policy
frameworks**

**Discoverability (Incl. SEO
improvement, web data
structures)**

Connectivity

**Accessibility and
inclusivity in digital
contexts**

**Organizational digital
maturity**

**New technologies in
visual arts, live
performance, music, film,
circus arts, literature, and
other artistic disciplines**

Key Outcome: Increased Collaboration

The Fund has helped to break down silos and initiate a **shift towards greater collaboration**.



79% of recipients surveyed indicated partnering with 1+ members of the **arts sector**



66% partnered with 1+ members of **other sectors**



77% were **new connections**



32% were from **other countries**

76% of respondents indicated **continuing their partnerships in some form after completing their projects**

Key Outcome: Organizational Digital Transformation

The Fund resulted in the **development of digital strategies, tools, operational frameworks, and policy guidelines to guide organizations' transition to more digital ways of working.**



- 90% of respondents had a **digital strategy** in place at the end of their projects.
- 100% of respondents who completed their projects reported **adopting the technologies used in their projects** into their operations.
- Organizations now view digital roles, strategies, and business models to be more central parts of their operational frameworks as a result of their digital strategy fund project activities.

Key Outcome: Organizational Digital Transformation Cont'd



50% of respondents adopted new digital business models



10% of annual revenue came from new digital revenue streams



82% of respondents who developed new revenue streams see them as somewhat or very essential

Key Challenges And Needs

Although there was wide recognition and appreciation for the Fund and what it has done for the sector, stakeholders did highlight several common concerns, frustrations and limitations in the Fund's structure and implementation. Key themes include:

- Accessibility, equity, and inclusion
- Capacity and knowledge sharing
- Sustainability

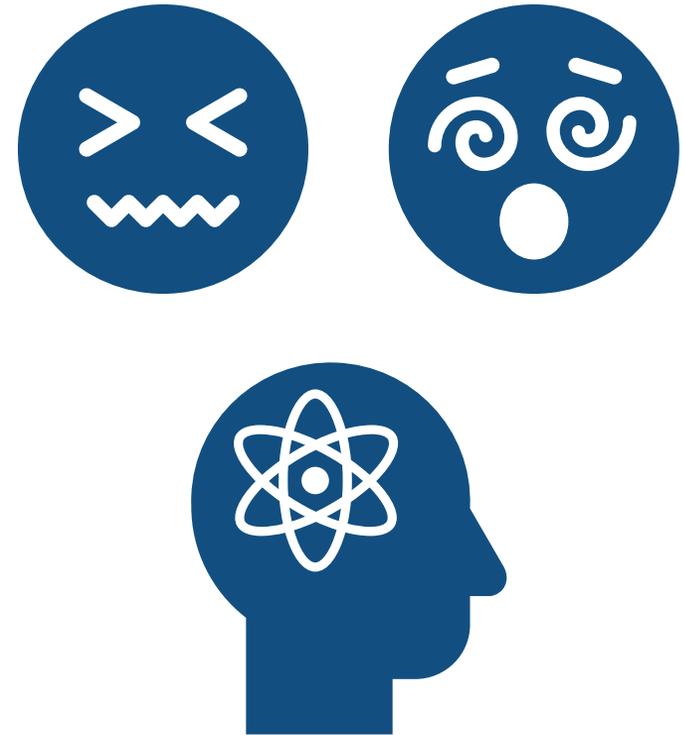
Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion

- The **digital divide** posed challenges to participation, particularly:
 - Poor existing digital infrastructure in rural communities
 - Difficulty accessing partners and service providers.
- Further work is needed to **ensure that programs or initiatives and application processes are accessible equitable.**



Capacity & Knowledge Transfer

- **Capacity and resource scarcity** are perceived as key barriers/challenges to accessing the Fund and successfully implementing projects.
 - Capacity concerns impeded some individuals and organizations from submitting applications.
 - Managing the project and relationships with multiple partners required a great deal of time and resources.
- Capacity limitations also **impacted knowledge transfer.**



Sustainability & Sector-wide Coordination

- **Sustaining initiatives once the funding is complete**, was cited as a key challenge.
 - Strong emphasis on early development and testing over **scaling and “operationalization”** of initiatives.
 - Gaps in **planning project ownership or governance**
- There was some **overlap** with multiple groups pursuing similar initiatives.
 - These presented missed opportunities for **sharing knowledge, collaboration, coordination and iteration.**



Key Considerations

While much progress and powerful work has been done towards achieving digital transformation in the arts, **further support is needed as the technological and digital environment continue to evolve.**

There are ways the Council can support this evolution as:

- An Investor
- A Facilitator and Amplifier of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA)
- A Nurturer

Key Considerations

- 1. *The Council should be an Investor*** in digital transformation as a key piece of fostering innovation and an inclusive and sustainable rebuilding of the arts sector
 - Operationalize sustainable digital transformation
 - Support capital investment in infrastructure and equipment
 - Offer rapid approval micro-granting
- 2. *The Council should be a Facilitator and Amplifier of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)*** to ensure equitable access to digital infrastructure and elimination of discrimination in the arts.
 - Understanding the unique needs of our diverse population to support culturally specific capacity building
 - Improve accessibility practices
- 3. *The Council should be a Nurturer*** of collaboration and cross-sectoral partnerships to continue digital transformation in the sector.
 - Build a centralized, searchable knowledge hub
 - Play the role of matchmaker in the arts community
 - Work with other funding partners across Canada