



CVRD Arts & Culture Master Plan

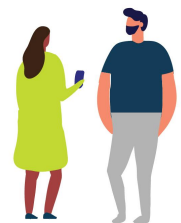
Engagement Summary Report: Round 2

September 2024



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Creative Quw'utsun

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has drafted the direction of its first Arts & Culture Master Plan, which aims to enhance arts and culture opportunities for locals and visitors across the region.

With a focus on building creative capacity, the new Arts & Culture Master Plan will guide arts and culture over the next five years. The Master Plan will provide practical support for existing assets and identify opportunities for new programming, physical spaces, funding opportunities, and public art. Recognizing that arts and culture are for everyone, the CVRD asked for input on community priorities. Recommendations will be built into the five-year Master Plan based on these community discussions and needs

Round 2 | Engagement

The second round of engagement for the Arts & Culture Master Plan included a series of pop-up events, an online survey, and three roundtable discussions—all with the goal of hearing from diverse and representative community members who live, work, and create across the region. Engagement spanned from mid-July to mid-August 2024.



Round 2 | Engagement highlights

615 community members shared their input to help shape the new Arts & Culture Master Plan



Community pop-ups

The CVRD popped up across the region at events in Lake Cowichan, Cowichan Bay, Cobble Hill, Chemainus, Ladysmith, and Duncan. Over **390 people** shared their ideas.



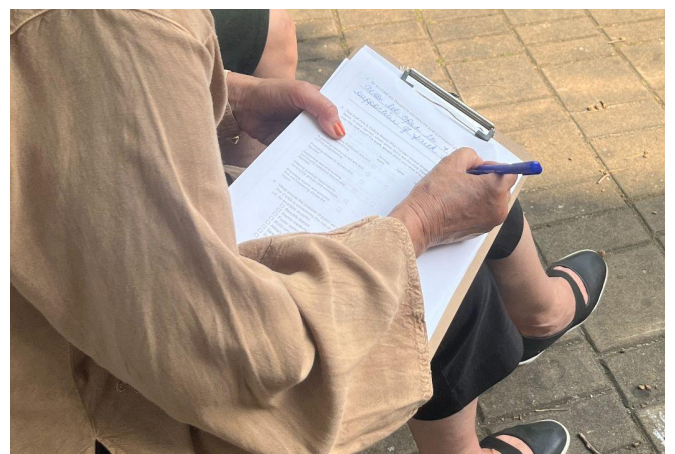
Farmers market pop-up

The largest community pop-up took place at the Duncan Farmers Market. Over **150 people** asked questions about the project and shared their ideas.



Round table discussions

Round table discussions hosted **40** government, community, and arts and culture representatives participating to explore the draft actions for the new Arts & Culture Master Plan.



Survey

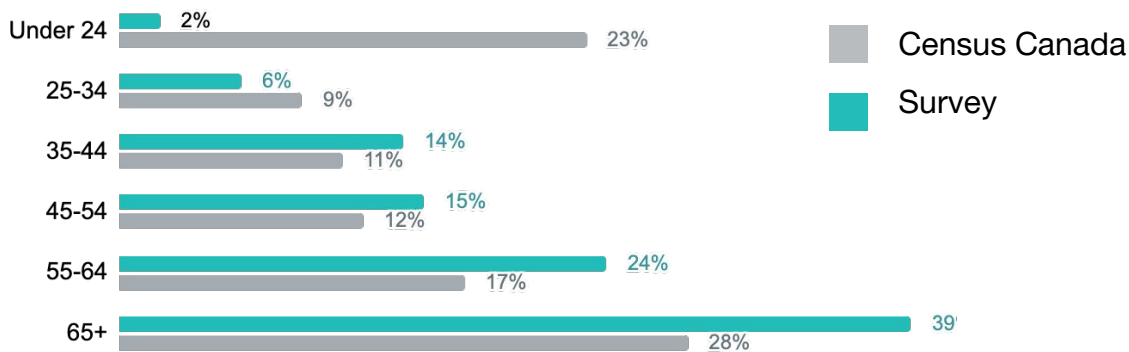
The survey (online and printed at the pop-ups) received **180 responses** from community members who live, work, and create across the region.

Round 2 | Survey snapshot

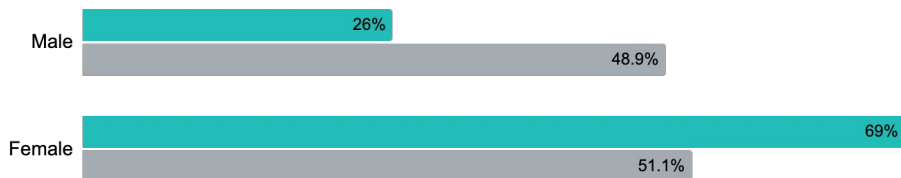
Below is a breakdown of survey participation and demographics (180 responses), with an age and gender comparison to data from Stats Canada (2021 Census). Reflecting the first round of engagement, women were more likely to respond to the online survey than men.

Over **19,180** community members heard about the survey (through social media posts, online ads, posters, and an ad in the Valley Voice)

Age

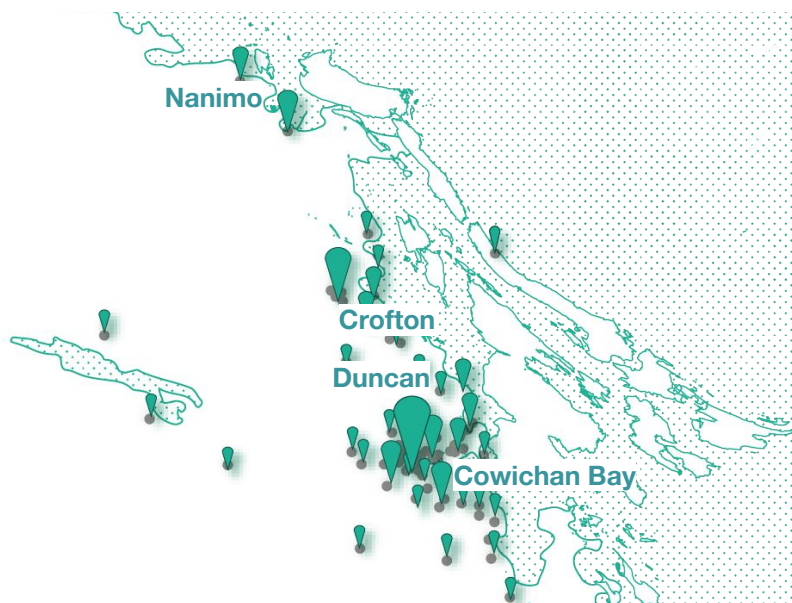


Gender



Postal codes

Survey responses came from all across the Cowichan Valley—from Lake Cowichan to Maple Bay, from Malahat to Valdes Island, from Ladysmith to Shawnigan Lake, and in between.



Round 2 | What we heard from the Cowichan community

The following pages share input and priorities from the Cowichan community on arts and culture, as per survey responses. Overall, in-person feedback from the pop-up events reflected the same sentiment and trends. A separate section details findings from focused engagement with government, community, and arts and culture representatives through roundtable discussions.

“The arts are not only important to our lives that affect us on a daily basis but also important to tourism and our economy.”

- Survey respondent

Guiding principles

During the first round of engagement, survey respondents shared what was most important for the CVRD to achieve through this Arts & Culture Master Plan. Most importantly, people felt that local artists and creative organizations need to be supported. Secondly, people shared that arts and culture offers an important way to celebrate diverse cultures and backgrounds across the region.

Now, during the second round of engagement, survey respondents shared strong support for the drafted guiding principles:

1. Support local artists and creative organizations in practical ways.
2. Celebrate the region’s diverse cultures, backgrounds, and histories through arts and culture.
3. Promote equitable access and inclusion to a broad range of creative opportunities.
4. Create vibrant community spaces across the region.

Survey respondents shared additional open-ended comments on the guiding principles. Themes from these comments included that arts and culture should uplift other existing initiatives (ranging from community planning to youth outreach, parks, and more), the importance of supporting community-led initiatives that can unfold organically, giving intentional space for Indigenous artists and initiatives that challenge colonial narratives, and the need for financial support to ensure the success of future arts and culture initiatives.

A few respondents suggested more clarity on the guiding principles, in particular the last two.



Guiding principles (continued)

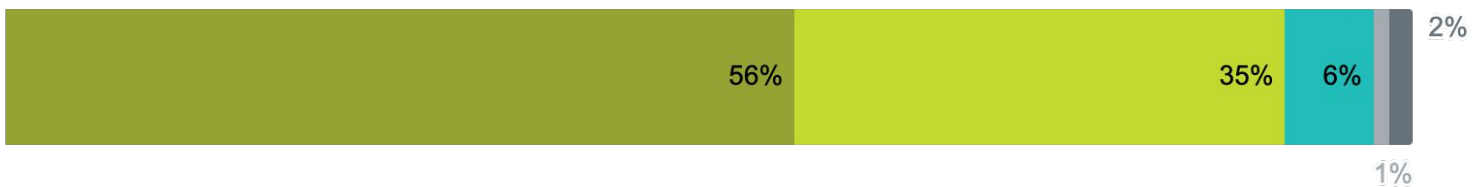
Survey respondents shared their level of support for each of the draft guiding principles. Notably, each guiding principle received at least 90% support (combining 'agree' and 'strongly agree').



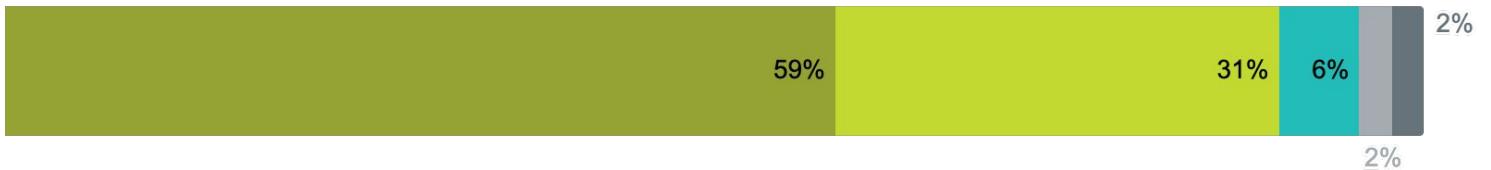
1. Support local artists and creative organizations in practical ways:



2. Celebrate the region's diverse cultures, backgrounds, and histories through arts and culture:



3. Promote equitable access and inclusion to a broad range of creative opportunities:



4. Create vibrant community spaces across the region:



Strategic areas for action

During the first round of engagement, participants shared their priorities for new and ongoing support from the CVRD towards arts and culture—for example, by organizing arts and culture programming or by sharing an online calendar.

Now, during the second round of engagement, survey respondents ranked the importance of the following strategic areas for the CVRD to focus on over the next year. Notably, there was strong support for each of these areas (combining percentages of responses where the strategic areas were ranked as ‘priority’ and ‘high priority’):

1	Supporting community-led arts and culture programming	88%
2	Promoting events and activities that are happening across the region	87%
3	Supporting new and existing community-operated spaces and facilities	86%
4	Offering practical resources for community groups and individuals	85%
5	Providing access to spaces and facilities	85%
6	Organizing new CVRD-led arts and culture programming	65%

Survey respondents under the age of 35 ranked ‘providing access to spaces and facilities’ and ‘promoting events and activities that are happening across the region’ as their top two highest priorities.

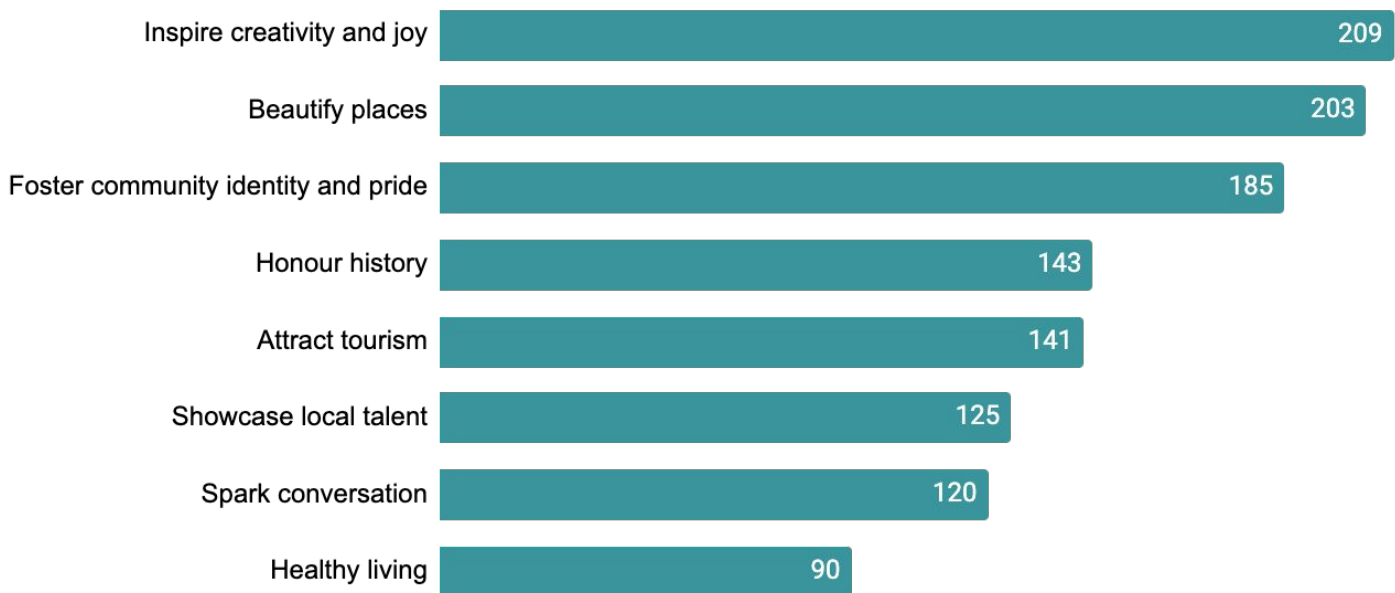


Public art

Through the survey and at the pop-ups, people were asked about the purpose of public art in the Cowichan Valley. The top three responses were:

1. Inspire creativity and joy
2. Beautify places
3. Foster community identity and pride

Each participant was asked to identify the top three purposes of public art, with the following total number of votes for each. Additional open-ended comments emphasized that public art should: showcase youth work, create jobs, promote mental health, expose the community to new and international ideas, and inspire local tourism.



Top priorities by location

From data collected at the pop-ups, the following communities noted a unique top priority, when weighed against total responses:

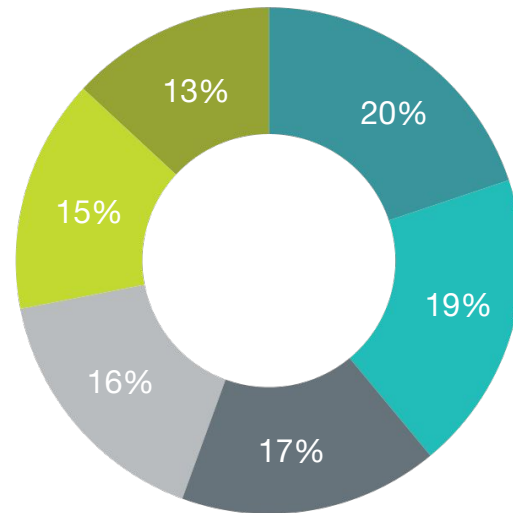
- Chemainus: Honour history
- Cowichan Bay: Build community identity and pride
- Cobble Hill: Beautify spaces; promote healthy living
- Ladysmith: Attract tourism



Locations for public art

Survey respondents were asked where they would like to see more public art, with top responses including parks, unexpected places (such as alleys), commercial areas and local businesses. Additional open-ended comments emphasized that public art should be located along the highway through Duncan, walking trails, parking lots, new development, and private property.

- Parks
- Unexpected places (such as alleys)
- Commercial areas and local businesses
- Community centres
- Neighbourhoods
- Highly visible roadways



Types of public art

Through the survey and at the pop-ups, people were asked what types of public art initiatives they would like to see the CVRD support—recognizing that there is a limited budget. At the pop-ups, participants were invited to distribute \$100 of board game money to vote. Overall, types of public art were ranked in the following order:



1. Creative community-led projects
2. Large scale events and festivals
3. Neighbourhood beautification



4. Functional items (e.g., bike racks, benches, or signs)
5. Hands on activities or interactive installations
6. Outdoor theatre



7. Murals and sculptures
8. Memorials and monuments

Additional open ended suggestions for public art included: Light installations, seasonal festivals, youth-led public art, and support for the Cowichan Public Art Gallery.

Exploring heritage

Currently, heritage is not included within the CVRD Arts & Culture Division's mandate or scope of work for the Arts & Culture Master Plan. However, the CVRD was interested in understanding the public perception of heritage and to explore the role that they may play at a future time in recognizing and supporting important work that is being done across Cowichan Valley to highlight diverse heritage and historical narratives.

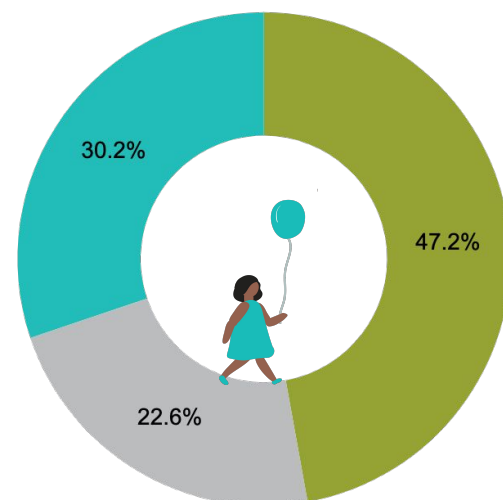
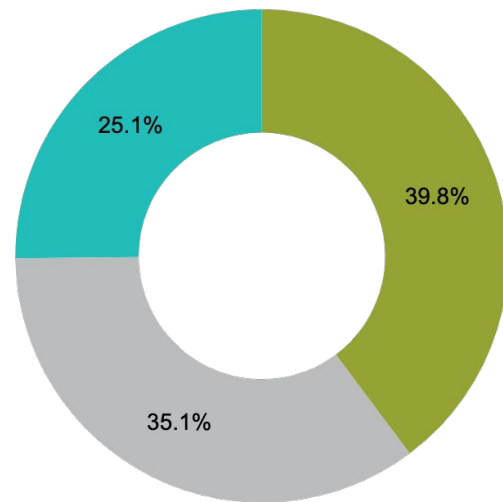
Do you consider heritage as a key part of arts and culture?

Survey respondents were asked if they considered heritage as a key part of arts and culture. Notably, open-ended comments framed art as an opportunity to share history and tell stories— including of the local First Nations and other diverse cultures—for example through wayfinding and public art.

Would you like to see the CRVD include heritage as a part of arts and culture?

Survey respondents were also asked if they would like to see the CVRD include heritage as part of a future mandate around arts and culture. Responses were fairly evenly split, which—when given the current capacity of the Arts & Culture Division—indicates that it is not an immediate priority for the CVRD.

■ Yes ■ No ■ No opinion



Defining culture

During the first round of engagement, a number of survey respondents asked about the definition of culture. Based on this feedback, the CVRD's Arts & Culture Division has noted the need to define culture within the upcoming Arts & Culture Master Plan. To help create a definition of culture that reflects the Cowichan Valley, community members were asked to share their definition of culture.

Through the online survey, 86 respondents shared their definition of culture. A number of themes were commonly noted, including:

- An expression of community values
- The creation of a worldview
- Something created through human interaction
- Shared commonalities
- A reflection of ancestral ideas and place
- The practice of the arts
- Traditions of a specific group
- A reflection of diversity in one place

Additional priorities

As an open-ended question, the CVRD also asked survey respondents if there was anything else they would like to share. Seventy-four people commented, with top themes including:

- The need for more spaces to host arts and culture (such as an arts centre in the south end, a public art gallery, and a mid-size indoor performance space).
- Support for more arts and culture tailored to youth and young adults as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- General support for community-led programs and initiatives.
- Support for more resources, programs, and spaces that cater to rural areas.
- Concern that not enough money is available to support arts and culture, including facilities that the community would benefit from.
- Concern that taxes should not be used or increased to support arts and culture.

Definitions of culture from survey respondents:



“Community with all its quirks and our shared experiences.”

“Traditions and ways of being that enrich life and are particular to a group of people.”

“Culture works as a binding force that signals what a communities values are. Culture is how we express ourselves.”

“Culture is the collective identity of a community through the expression of individual experience.”

“The transmission of knowledge, beliefs, values, and information between individuals.”

“Shared language, symbols, norms, values, Customs and Traditions of a people or place. A shared core identity.”

“All the ways of life.”

“Inspiration created by the celebration of the arts on every level.”

“Culture is how we make sense of our lives, how we assign meaning to places, experiences, activities, and forms of expression.”

“The community and practices that structure the story you go out into the world to tell.”

“The celebration of one's beliefs, background, family and all the ways in which that can be expressed and appreciated”

“It is important, it grounds, enriches and expands our lives.”

“The creative, historic, and present DNA of a region.”

“Culture is identity and bridges past and future.”

Round 2 | Discussions

A snapshot from arts and culture organizations

Earlier this year, during the first round of engagement, the CVRD's Arts & Culture Division hosted the first ever Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit. The purpose of this space was to convene key voices, representing the creative community and regional decision makers, to capture priorities and guide the direction of the Arts & Culture Master Plan. The summit received positive feedback from participants around the value for creating space to connect with other individuals and organizations from across the region.

Building on the success of this summer, a number of key voices were invited to roundtable discussions to explore the draft actions for the new Arts & Culture Master Plan. In total, forty government, community, and arts and culture representatives participated in these discussion sessions. There were three round table discussions (each with the following attendees). Each group was able to explore and share feedback on specific draft actions from the Arts & Culture Master Plan that were relevant to their work and field of expertise.

1. Government



Attendance included the CVRD, City of Duncan, Municipality of North Cowichan, Town of Ladysmith, the Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation, and several Electoral Areas.

2. Key community voices



Attendance included Vancouver Island Regional Library, Valley Voice, School District, Our Cowichan Communities Health Network, CVRD community centres, and more.

3. Arts and culture groups



Attendance included the Cowichan Folk Guild, Mercury Players Society, Film Cowichan, Cobble Hill Events, Society, Public Art Gallery, Clay Hub Collective, sub-regional arts councils, and more.



In total, participants at the round table discussions were able to share feedback on over 30 draft actions from the Arts & Culture Master Plan. These actions fell under a number of categories that were initially explored at the Arts & Culture Summit earlier this year.



- Collaboration and partnerships
- Funding and grant writing opportunities
- Technical skills and resources
- Facilities and spaces

Feedback is summarized below. In general, there was support for the draft actions and a number of helpful suggestions shared (in particular around implementation). Each of these conversations ultimately helped refine the draft actions within the Arts & Culture Master Plan.

Collaboration and partnerships

A number of the draft actions aligned closely with the current goals of local and regional organizations. For these actions, participants explored what additional collaboration (from the CVRD or other groups) could look like. For example, the Vancouver Island Public Library (VIPL) had previously tried to launch a regional culture pass program, but that was cut during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There was support (widely across all participants but especially those representing local jurisdictions) for the draft actions to engage youth in arts and culture by identifying youth programming and space-related needs. There was also encouragement to highlight and support existing initiatives that are successfully empowering youth (such as Cowichan Valley Arts Council's summer camps, the school district's youth advisory committee, and Art in the Park) and to give space and resources for youth to pursue their own goals. The need to remove barriers for youth (around cost, transportation, registration processes, and training) was also shared as a top priority.

There was support for the draft actions that encourage cross-jurisdictional collaboration across municipalities and electoral areas. Participants agreed on the need to reduce silos across jurisdictions to facilitate these opportunities and build a shared approach to strategies, for example around community amenity contributions and public art policies. There were a number of examples given, such as intercultural programs at schools, as well as new opportunities identified, such as an art program rotating across jurisdictions.



Funding and grant writing opportunities

In conversation around funding and economic development, discussion around draft actions explored the benefits of partnership with Tourism Cowichan in branding Cowichan Valley as a destination for arts and culture offerings. Additional non-funding-related support from partnerships with Tourism could include marketing and bundled passes.

Another supported draft action explored the opportunity to build funding for arts and culture grants into Area Director budgets or to pursuing shared resources such as grant writing for regional bids (e.g., BC Healthy Communities or BCM's Community Grants).

There was general agreement from jurisdictions around the need to develop financial incentives towards arts and culture, including community amenity contributions, and support for the CVRD in providing guidance and support where possible.

Facilities and spaces

With regards to future facilities, there was deep conversation around the importance of understanding the needs of the arts and culture community, as well as the economic impacts of new facilities. Specific gaps were reiterated (especially around mid-size theatre space, the cinema, a makerspace, and satellite CVRD facilities in smaller communities), as well as partners who may be interested in future collaborations (such as the school district with the new black box facility, Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL), and potentially Vancouver Island University).


There was also support for the CVRD (as a facilitator working at the regional level) to connect artists with spaces. For example, this could happen informally as opportunities arise (e.g., with temporary art exhibitions).

A number of funding related conversations reflected themes from the first round of engagement, including around storage space needs. It was generally recognized that funding was the main concern and limitation around facilities and spaces (both for the CVRD and community at large).

Technical skills and resources

Participants supported the direction of the CVRD in taking on an active role facilitating conversations around the region around programming needs and to provide regional coordination and marketing support. There were suggestions to work closely with existing collaborators (such as the VIRL, Tourism Cowichan, Cowichan Tribes) due to strong networks with the community. Practically speaking, this role could support a regular newsletter, meetings with the *Valley Voice*, and an events calendar. It would require a designated and responsive point of contact at the CVRD.

Access to shared resources (notably, trained staff and volunteers, for example to support with bookkeeping) for community groups and organizations would also be financially beneficial.



“We need to brand the Cowichan Valley as a destination for the arts.”

- Round table discussion participant

Moving forward

Thank you to everyone who participated in the second and final round of engagement! This input from the community will help formalize the Arts & Culture Master Plan. The Arts & Culture Master Plan is anticipated to be finalized and presented to the CVRD Board in Fall 2024.

For additional and current information, visit: cverd.ca/2089/Arts-Culture

