



ALMAGUIN
HIGHLANDS
ARTS COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN

Find art
in our
nature





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FOREWORD

A strategic plan is an important part of every organization. Without a clear mission, realistic vision, actionable objectives and a way to know when you've done your job, an organization is doomed to wander in circles. A strategic plan is a road map, a basic plan of where you're going, how you're going to get there, and what you'll need along the way. Of course there are detours and diversions, but a good strategic plan will give you the basic tools to deal with even the strangest side roads.

When we set out to create this strategic plan, we first started by getting to know the industry, the people, the practices, and the spirit and soul of art. We knew that this had to be something more than revenues, costs, profits, and losses. Art is something different, and the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council is its own unique creature. We built a team that would accurately capture the needs of this group and then recommend a set of objectives and actions that would support the spirit and intention of artistic development. We researched other Arts Councils to see what the rest of the province, country, and continent are doing. We worked closely with the Executive Team, meeting with that group on many occasions and sharing an abundance of correspondence. We met with members of the community, artists, art groups, representatives from municipalities, and community members. We sought input from everyone, because art is something for everyone to enjoy.

The end result, this strategic plan, is meant to be more than a collection of papers that will sit in a filing cabinet. We have built a living document that should be used as part of the regular activities of the Council. We have recommended a realistic vision and supported it with actionable objectives, a detailed action plan, and a way to measure the success of the organization. We have paid particular attention to the needs of key partners and interest groups and have sought ways to satisfy their needs. We have identified short-term deliverables that will pave the way for long-term success. In creating this plan, we took an action-oriented approach. Far too often, strategic plans are too abstract. They lay out the beginning and the end but forget that there is a process in between. Our road map shows the beginning, the end, the roads to take, the destinations in between, and the supplies you'll need along the way. It has been this guiding principle that has led to the action-oriented strategic plan for the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council.



Ben Farella
President

The **Ben Farella** Group



MISSION

To build and sustain a community of artists that is recognized for its excellence and innovation; and to provide support and leadership for all forms of the arts on behalf of the residents of the Almaguin Highlands.

VISION

Three year vision

To establish the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council as the primary source for support and information related to artistic activities in the Almaguin Highlands; to provide opportunities for artists and members of the community to interact, share, and learn; and to create a sustainable organization working toward the mutual benefit of the Almaguin Highlands and the artists within.

Five year vision

To continue to develop the artistic community as an integral part of the Almaguin Highlands; and to explore options and ideas that will give artists and members of the community additional alternatives for showcasing all types of artistic endeavours.

Positioning

Find art in our nature

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Almaguin Highlands Arts Council is a not-for-profit community group that is dedicated to promoting all artistic endeavours in the Almaguin Highlands. The Arts Council strives to be an inclusive, impartial community voice that works toward the benefit of all artists, regardless of medium and method.

Prior to autumn 2007, the Almaguin Highlands was one of the only regions in Canada without an Arts Council. After identifying this gap, a group of arts-minded individuals formed the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council. In February 2008, a 12-person volunteer executive board was formed and was tasked with guiding the Arts Council into the future.

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Arts Council worked with the Ben Farella Group to engage community groups, key partners, and interest groups to support the creation of a strategic plan. Through a series of community consultations, The Ben Farella Group has identified a number of opportunities and has recommended a course of action that will help the Arts Council to accomplish its mission.

PLAN OVERVIEW

A strategic plan is a unifying venture that will guide an organization in its decision making, allocation of resources, and various operations. This strategic plan is designed to be the guiding document for the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council. It provides:

- Short-term, results-focused, measurable action items that prepare the Council for the future;
- Short-term initiatives and activities that will help the Council grow and ensure financial stability; and
- Long-term strategies that will guide the Council's general activities for years to come.

The Almaguin Highland Arts Council will be required to pursue opportunities in five categories: Communicate, Advocate, Educate, Partner, and Fund.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Communicate

Communication is the single most important component of this strategic plan. Effective communication is an integral part of attracting and retaining members, collecting, organizing, storing and disseminating art-related information, forming partnerships, educating artists and community members, promoting events and otherwise accomplishing the Arts Council's mission.

Actions

Develop a brochure and supporting print tools

Printed materials give the Arts Council a tangible presence in many areas. Brochures can be made available through business partners, educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations, service groups and other interested parties. Printed "member of" stickers provide low-cost brand reinforcement and help identify artist members, business members, and association members. Printed materials will encourage readers to visit the Arts Council website.

Develop a website and supporting web tools

A website and supporting web tools facilitate a major portion of communications. The website itself will provide viewers with general information about the Arts Council and the Almaguin Highland area. The website will also include a listing of members, calendar of events, details about workshops and events, links to artists' websites and galleries, information about studios and arts venues, funding resources and more. The website will allow for a large amount of information to be widely accessible.

Use social media platforms to reach younger audiences

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are widely used by younger people. To reach this audience, the Arts Council must engage them in their preferred medium. Social media platforms are an excellent way to reach large numbers of interested potential members. Instead of mass communication, social media will allow messages to be targeted to specific groups of people who are interested and engaged with the organization. This captive audience will be more likely to pay attention to and act on messages. Social media will also help keep artists and art groups connected to one another. Forum-style conversations, online community discussions, and shared images, videos, and other media will help to bring the group closer together.

Indicators of success

Website visitors

The number of visitors to the Arts Council's website is a good indicator of the degree to which people are aware of and are using the resources on the website. The number of website visitors directly impacts the dissemination of information through the events calendar.

Social media members

The number of "friends" that the Arts Council has on Facebook and the number of people subscribed to RSS feeds or other social media tools are good indicators of the success of such tactics. More friends and subscribers mean that more people receive updates; more people are involved in ongoing discussions; more people receive invitations to events; and more people are active members of the online arts community.

Update the events calendar

The events calendar is an important part of the website. Upcoming community events can be publicized to a wide audience. The events calendar will help overcome the issues that arise from having a fragmented arts community. This central events list will allow artists and art groups to reach larger audiences.

Build Almaguin Highlands artists database

An artists database will help in the dissemination of information. With a properly maintained and updated database, the Arts Council will have access to accurate contact information. This information will help recruit new members, promote upcoming events, and plan new events.

Distribute monthly e-newsletter and e-mail promotions

A monthly e-newsletter and similar e-mail promotions will help disseminate information. These electronic publications can provide information about upcoming events, give helpful information on a wide array of topics, share unique learning experiences with others, and otherwise share information with the community.

Indicators of success

Number of listings on the events calendar

The number of events listed on the events calendar is a strong indicator of the success of that specific tool. More events draw more website visitors, offer more options and alternatives, and indicate overall that the Arts Council is successfully drawing in individuals and groups.

Number of new members

Membership growth is a clear indicator of successful recruitment practices. Compared to the size of the complete artists database, the relative size of the Arts Council's membership will show how effectively the Arts Council has reached artists and arts supporters.

Number of E-newsletter subscribers

The size of the e-newsletter mailing list is a moderately effective indicator of success. Although not all recipients of the e-newsletter read all of the content, those who do are distinctly more aware of upcoming community events, and may even share their knowledge with friends and family.

Build Almaguin Highlands media database

A media database will help attract attention to the Arts Council, its events, and its members' events. With a properly maintained and updated database, the Arts Council will be able to quickly and effectively reach local media personnel.

Host a media launch event

A grand-opening-style media launch event will help garner initial attention for the Arts Council. This first big push will get messages to a large audience of potential members and set the stage for future communications. A media launch event will also demonstrate the legitimacy of the Arts Council and will help dispel myths. This launch will help the Arts Council communicate its mission and vision and, if artists and member groups are involved, will discourage the perception that the Arts Council is trying to exert control over the artistic community. It will reinforce that the Arts Council is a supporting body for all forms of artistic expression.

Notify media of upcoming events and initiatives

Using the media database will keep members of the media informed about upcoming events. When members of the media receive advanced notification of events, they will more likely announce and publicize the event through their medium. They will more likely attend the event and provide after-the-fact coverage.

Build a volunteer database

A volunteer database will help in the dissemination of information and in the recruitment and effective use of volunteers. With a properly maintained and updated database, potential volunteers will be quickly and easily connected to groups or associations seeking volunteer assistance. Having more information about each volunteer will help to link the right person with the right opportunity.

Coordinate volunteers

Using the volunteer database, connect volunteers with organizations that need assistance. By acting as a central coordinator, the right people will be connected to the right groups. Effective coordination will help retain volunteers and will help the Arts Council and its member organizations accomplish their respective missions.

Indicators of success

Frequency of media coverage

The number of events and initiatives covered by members of the local media is an indicator of the success of external communications. A complete and up-to-date media database is an important start; but a large number of stories, pre-event publications, and other similar coverage from media partners show that the media is truly engaged with the Arts Council.

Frequency of Volunteer participation

The number of regularly active volunteers is an indicator of the degree to which volunteer recruitment and retention are successful. An extensive database is a starting point, but the number of people who are actually involved with artistic activities is a better indication

OBJECTIVES

Objective 2: Advocate

The Arts Council is required to advocate on behalf of its members. Greater success is achieved when the Arts Council acts as a unified voice for the arts to key interest groups and strategic partners. While the success of a single member or group is limited, the Arts Council acts on behalf of the arts community to pursue mutual benefits for all involved groups and individuals.

Actions

Develop inclusive membership structure

An inclusive membership structure is essential to the development of the Arts Council and arts in the Almaguin Highlands. Ensuring all groups and categories are represented within the Arts Council, diverse membership will increase the opportunity for collaboration, sharing, and interdisciplinary endeavours. Exposing community members to a wide variety of artistic activities will increase the likelihood that they become engaged in the artistic community and contribute to the cultural well-being of the region.

Establish agreements with municipalities

Working with municipalities will create mutually beneficial agreements that will give the Arts Council access to additional resources, venues, communication channels, and funding opportunities. Strong relationships with municipalities will simplify the process of using municipal facilities for workshops, events, or members' events. Acting on behalf of the arts community, the Arts Council will save its members and city officials time and money.

Address buildings and facilities through a taskforce

A taskforce, made up of a large cross-section of interested parties, will address concerns related to buildings and facilities. This taskforce will discuss the long-term goal of building an arts-specific centre where all types of art can be exhibited and produced.

Indicators of success

Scope of agreements with municipalities

Measuring the effectiveness of agreements with municipalities is difficult. In general, increasing access to more municipal facilities, access to more communications channels and information distribution networks, access to more funding opportunities, and access to more support for initiatives and activities can benchmark the effectiveness of agreements with municipalities.

Taskforce activity and progress

Measuring the success of a facilities taskforce is also difficult. Progress is likely to be slow, especially when considering the number of other initiatives currently being undertaken. Initially, simply ensuring that the taskforce is meeting on a regular basis will be sufficient. As time goes on, looking to see if concrete deliverables or helpful reports are being produced is a way of measuring success.

Liaise with other Arts Councils

Being connected with other Arts Councils increases the amount of information that can be shared. Other arts councils can be a great source of knowledge and learning for the board of directors and the general membership. When the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council encounters a problem, it is likely that another Arts Council has encountered a similar problem and will be able to offer advice, information about best practices or other resources.

Liaise with arts groups and artists in the area

Artists and art groups in the region are a vital source of information. Artists and art groups are the primary members of the Arts Council, so being aware of their needs will help guide the Council's decision making. These groups and artists can also offer support, resources, mentoring, and guidance.

Indicators of success

Collaboration with other Arts Councils

The more information that is being shared with other Arts Councils, the stronger the support for the industry. Learning of best practices, upcoming funding opportunities, legislative changes, and other relevant opportunities are all considered successes.

Collaboration with arts groups and artists

The more information that is being shared with artists and art groups, the stronger the support for the industry. The more engagement from member groups, more information flowing between the artists, groups, and Arts Council, and more events being planned are indicators of success.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 3: Educate

Education is an essential component of long-term artistic development. Education supports the development of current artists, and also recruits and trains future artists. Through involvement with schools, ongoing workshops, and summer camps, the older generations can impart their knowledge to the young and learn from the process.

Actions

Plan and deliver summer workshops

Summer workshops are a way for artists to share their achievements, expertise, and knowledge with members of the community, particularly younger people. Workshops will earn money for the artists and for the Arts Council, and will give members of the community a culturally enriching summer opportunity. For parents, it will create a fun and educational alternative to babysitting or daycare. The Arts Council will act as an intermediary, connecting artists with an audience and a venue.

Plan and deliver ongoing series of workshops and events

Ongoing workshops and events provide community members of all ages with additional recreational opportunities. Acting as an intermediary, the Arts Council will connect artists with an audience and a venue that will allow them to share their knowledge, expertise, and experience. These events will earn money for the artist and for the Arts Council. Beyond revenue, workshops and events will contribute to cultural growth and development within the community.

Plan and deliver after-school programs

After-school programs are a specific set of workshops and events targeted at school-aged children. For many families, work schedules and school schedules do not overlap perfectly. There is often a small gap between when children finish school and parents finish work. As such, children are often left unsupervised. After school programs are an alternative to babysitters that will offer a culturally enriching, fun, and educational experience. After-school programs will create opportunities for artists to make money, and will also generate revenue for the Arts Council.

Indicators of success

Attendance at workshops

The number of attendees at workshops is an indication their success. Initially, it is likely that attendance will be relatively low. As time goes on, the expectation is that attendance will grow. Monitoring growth is helpful and identifies which communications and promotions tactics are working.

Attendance at after-school programs

The number of attendees is an indication of after-school program success. Just as workshops are likely to start off small, so too will after-school programs. Communication and promotion helps to increase the number of people involved in these programs.

Host and attend networking and mentorship events

Networking and mentorship events help community members connect with one another, form relationships, share experiences, and teach each other. Networking events connect people from different disciplines or artistic backgrounds and open the door to collaborations, interdisciplinary endeavours, and other forms of sharing. These events will help with recruiting new members, identifying new opportunities, and staying in touch with current members.

Indicators of success

Attendance at networking and mentorship events

The number of mentors and mentees attending events provides an informal measure to determine how well the events are going. Simply talking to participants to see what they think gives excellent insight into the successfulness of mentorship events.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 4: Partner

Partnerships are a pivotal element of the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council's strategic plan. As a not-for-profit, the Arts Council needs to work with a number of interest groups, service organizations, municipalities, business partners, and other not-for-profit organizations to stretch resources and maximize the impact of a number of initiatives. Partnerships allow the Arts Council to do more with less.

Actions

Find local business and corporate sponsors

Local businesses and corporate partners contribute to the Arts Council in a number of ways. First, advertising or sponsorship revenue will help cover operating costs and allow the Council to plan and execute a more robust set of services. Next, business and corporate partners will provide additional benefits for members, including retail discounts, group purchasing options, and other special promotional offers. Businesses will also act as yet another way to disseminate printed and electronic information. Each business will offer a slightly different set of potential benefits.

Build a venues and facilities database

A venues and facilities database helps in finding physical spaces for members. A number of venues will become available for use through partnerships with groups, associations, companies, municipalities, and other strategic partnerships. Having information about each venue recorded in one central place will simplify the process of finding a venue.

Indicators of success

Sponsorship and advertising revenue

The Arts Council can measure sponsorship and advertising revenue. Comparing revenue from one period to the next and by tracking the number of sponsorship and advertising agreements from one period to another determines if sponsorship and advertising activities are successful.

Number of retail discounts or special offers available to members

The Arts Council can compare the number and relative value of discounts and member-exclusive promotional offers from one period to another. If discounts and offers grow over time, then the Arts Council is likely performing well. If discounts and offers shrink or stay the same for a long period of time, then the Arts Council should examine and adjust its tactics.

Establish agreements with service organizations

Similar to not-for-profit organizations, service organizations and volunteer associations can work with the arts council toward mutual objectives. Many service organizations work toward the mutual benefit of their communities and their members, which will create collaborative opportunities for the Arts Council. Collaboration with service organizations can be as mundane as cross-promoting events, or as extensive as joint events, collaborative workshops, and sharing resources and facilities. The nature of the agreements with these groups will depend on the number of mutual interests and goals.

Establish agreements with not-for-profit organizations

Working with other not-for-profit organizations is likely to bring about mutual benefit for all parties involved. Sharing information, resources and facilities, volunteers, and communications channels are all ways the involved groups will benefit. The nature of the not-for-profit and its specific mission and goals will determine the extent to which the two parties can work together.

Partner with local educational institutions

Educational institutions are vital partners to the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council. Strong relationships with educational institutions will be essential to offering after-school programs and will be a major driving force behind summer camps and workshops. Most educational institutions have facilities and resources that the Council or its members will be able to use. Also, schools are a great place to recruit volunteers, attract new members, and inspire new artists.

Indicators of success

Scope of agreements with not-for-profit organizations and service groups

Measuring the effectiveness of agreements with not-for-profit organizations and service groups is difficult. In general, access to more facilities, access to more resources, more shared information, and more frequent collaboration are indicators of success.

Scope of agreements with educational institutions

Measuring the effectiveness of agreements with educational institutions is difficult. In general, an agreement is more successful if the Arts Council and its members have access to school facilities, the ability to communicate with and promote upcoming events to students, and have reliable access to volunteers.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 5: Fund

Funding is important, not only for the Arts Council but also for its members. Many artists engaged in cultural development rely on funding from government agencies, municipalities, special interest groups, or other funding agencies. The Arts Council needs to look to these sources to fund its major initiatives. The Arts Council is required to search for funding sources for itself and its members.

Actions

Build funding opportunities database

A funding database helps the Arts Council and its members. First, the Council will be able to use the database for its own initiatives – paying for an administrator, intern, or other personnel, buying necessary equipment, renting spaces, promoting events. Next, the database will be used to refer members to potential funding opportunities. Providing this value-added service will encourage artists to join the Council and will support the development of the arts as a contributor to the local economy.

Secure funding to pay for an administrator

Using the funding database, apply for funds that will help pay for an administrator. The administrator is responsible for performing many essential duties, and without funding, many of the actions described in this strategic plan will be much more difficult to do.

Indicators of success

Amount of funding

Consistent funding for an administrator and other initiatives is an indication that funding campaigns are successful. Looking at the number of successful funding applications compared to the number of unsuccessful applications will be a strong indicator of the Arts Council's funding performance. The Arts Council can also measure the number of strategic partners contributing funds, and the impact that these funds are having on programs, workshops, and events. If all funding is from one source, then there is a lot of risk associated with losing the sole funder. However, if funding comes from a large number of sources, then losing one funder has less of an impact. The Arts Council can also consider how different funds are contributing to sustainability and overall organizational growth.

Assist artists with funding applications

Using the funding database, notify members of funding opportunities when they arise. Some funds have application deadlines, while other are open to submissions at any time. Ensure that members are aware of deadlines and fund requirements prior to submitting their proposal.

Find additional funding sources or revenue streams for the Arts Council

Remain open to new revenue generation ideas, cost saving measures, and funding opportunities. Explore different models for workshops, events, and programming that will best balance benefits for members and the Arts Council.

Indicators of success

Number of members applying for and receiving funding

Similar to the Arts Council's own funding, more is better. More members applying for grants is a good starting point, but the real indicator of success is the number of members receiving funding. The Arts Council can track the number of successful applications and compare it to the number of unsuccessful applications. Over time, the success rate should be increasing. If not, then the Arts Council needs to evaluate and adjust its funding policies.

Amount of revenue from other sources

The Arts Council can track revenue from memberships, sponsorship, advertising, workshops, after-school programming and other initiatives. Comparing these revenues to previous performance shows growth or decline, and based on that information the Arts Council can evaluate and adjust tactics as necessary.

KEY PARTNERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

Current artists

Artists form the backbone of the Arts Council's membership, either as individual members or as part of a member group, and are the primary audience for the Arts Council's initiatives. The Arts Council will be unable to satisfy the needs of any other key partners or interest groups without a large, stable group of artists. The Arts Council must consider the needs of this group as a central part of any decision.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance with funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a funding database and provide assistance with writing grant applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance finding venues, galleries, or facilities to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help artists find venues through strategic partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for learning and development• Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer workshops, networking and mentoring events, and opportunities to do collaborative work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to coordinate activities with other groups or associations• Ways to attract more customers, increase promotional activities, and cut costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate media coverage for events• Coordinate volunteers• Provide a calendar of events, e-newsletter, and other communication tools• Give members access to retail discounts and special promotional offers from business partners

KEY PARTNERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

Future artists

Future artists are the next generation of artists. When presented with the right opportunity, this group of students, art enthusiasts, hobby artists, and newcomers will join the art community. New members bring new perspectives, new ideas, new inspiration, and new techniques. New artists also create an opportunity for workshops, mentoring, educational events, and more. Future artists are the future of the Arts Council.

Needs

- Opportunities for Learning and development
- Access to information regarding artistic opportunities

- Opportunities to meet and learn from established artists
- Ability to connect and collaborate with artists

Addressing Needs

- Offer workshops, networking and mentorship events, and opportunities to do collaborative work
- Provide access to listings on the events calendar, e-newsletters, and other communication tools

- Develop after-school programs for students

Art supporters

Art supporters are those individuals who do not create art, but appreciate it and support the artistic community. These people are the non-artists who attend shows, buy paintings, sit in on workshops, meetings and events, and otherwise contribute to the artistic community without actually creating any art. This group is considered a primary end-customer for artistic products and services.

Needs

- Information and access to artistic events and activities
- Access to increased artistic variety, in terms of types of art, events timing, and event location
- Opportunities and special offers exclusive to Arts Council supporters

Addressing Needs

- Allow access to listings on the events calendar, e-newsletters, and other communications tools
- Offer workshops and after-school programming
- Provide increased media coverage of events to raise public awareness

KEY PARTNERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

Municipalities

The municipalities have an interest in the success of the Arts Council. Many of the activities performed by the Arts Council positively impact the economy and culture of the Almaguin Highlands, and thus support the host communities. The success of the Arts Council contributes to the success of the entire region. Especially now that the communities are faced with substantial changes, most notably the changes to Highway 11 and the potential negative impact this will have on tourism, the Arts Council and the municipalities need to work together. Both groups will be able to realize economic, cultural, and other societal benefits if a strong working relationship is established.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives for more cultural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and assistance for artists applying for funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancement of more economic development • Revenue from tourists and tourism to offset the Highway 11 bypass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer better communication and media coverage for events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to improve to communities' profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support cultural development through artistic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create buildings and facilities taskforce

Businesses and corporate sponsors

Businesses and corporate sponsors have less of a stake in the success of the Arts Council, unless they are tied in some way to the group. Businesses and corporations seeking to reach large groups or artists in the Almaguin Highlands can work with the Arts Council to help distribute their promotional materials or otherwise promote their goods and services. In return, the Arts Council can earn revenue from sponsorship or advertising and can pass on value to their members through discounts, special offers, or other promotions.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional opportunities that are cost-effective, high-impact, targeted, and aimed at increasing the number of customers, increasing volume per customer, or attracting new markets to ultimately improve profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide listing on the Arts Council website • Allow ability to offer promotions specifically to artists through Arts Council communications • Offer other advertising and promotional opportunities through various sponsorships

KEY PARTNERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

Service groups and not-for-profit organizations

Service groups and not-for-profit organizations have a stake in the success of the Arts Council if there is a direct or an indirect overlap in objectives. Direct overlaps are a mutual interest in creating art or hosting artistic events. A church, Legion, or community group may be interested in hosting such an event that provides the Arts Council with an opportunity to interact with the group. Indirect overlaps are as mundane as seeking new activities for members. A community service group seeking cultural activities for its members can offer its members an artistic opportunity through the Arts Council. Opportunities for partnerships with service groups and not-for-profit organizations are plentiful, as long as both the group and the Arts Council understand that the overlap in objectives does not need to be so explicit and direct.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to shared resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning collaborative events that benefit all parties involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities to do collaborative work toward the mutual benefit of all involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allowing access to shared resources and shared communications channels
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ways to provide more options for their members or customers	

Media and communications partners

Media and communications partners have an interest in the Arts Council because of its ability to collect, organize, and distribute information related to the arts in the community. Community stories are an important part of any credible local newspaper, radio station, website, or television broadcast. The members of the media will be willing to provide free coverage of events, pre-event publicity, and other communications services when provided with timely, accurate, and concise information about arts events.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to community stories as a way to increase their number of subscribers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform media of upcoming community events through e-newsletter, events calendar and other communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer mutual promotion through advertising or in-kind style agreements

KEY PARTNERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

Educational institutions

Educational institutions have an interest in enhancing the quality and availability of educational opportunities in their community and beyond. Through mentorship, workshops, summer camps, and other activities, the Arts Council supports the needs of the educational institutions. This clear overlap in objectives means that the two should work collaboratively toward these objectives.

Needs	Addressing Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities for additional learning for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform media of upcoming community events through e-newsletter, events calendar, and other communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs that offer additional extra-curricular opportunities for students• Opportunities for after-school programs that use artists instead of teachers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer mutual promotion through advertising or in-kind style agreements

Ontario economy

The Arts Council has a relationship with the broader Ontario economy. The municipalities in the Almaguin Highlands are a piece of the Ontario economy. As pieces of the economy grow, the entire economy grows. As pieces struggle, the rest of the economy must work harder. The positive impact on the municipalities in the Almaguin Highlands trickles down and has an eventual positive impact on Ontario as a whole. The same holds true for cultural development and for the other societal benefits that the Arts Council brings.

Need	Addressing Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of business and economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide support for artists that enhances their chance of commercial success

The objectives and related actions described earlier in this strategic plan support the Arts Council in the short- to medium-term, and set the foundation for future successes. Of course, there will be unexpected changes; though the objectives and actions are meant to provide a buffer or hedge against uncertainty. Many of these objectives will still be relevant in the long-term, while others will be started and finished within the span of a year or two. Looking beyond three years, the Arts Council will need to examine a number of areas in detail. These are areas that are difficult or impossible to tackle without first setting the stage through the short- and medium-term actions .

Facilities

Through partnerships and relationships with strategic partners, the Arts Council will gain access to potential facilities that can be used for a variety of events and activities. In the short-term, relying on partners for facilities is adequate; though in the long-term the Arts Council should endeavour to provide a more permanent solution. The establishment of a facilities taskforce (as described under the “Advocate” objective) will begin dialogue and planning for such an activity.

Large scale multi-community events

In the short-term, workshops, summer camps, and other similar activities will help to support the artists and attract tourists. In the long-term, the Arts Council should begin planning larger events that will act as a flagship of community artistry. Many communities become destinations by offering unique conferences, conventions, festivals, or gatherings; and the entire community benefits as a result. An “Art in Nature” festival or travelling Highlands Arts festival would leverage the natural beauty of the Almaguin Highlands while showcasing the artistic talent of the region. Based on the initial workshops and events, the Art Council’s Board should begin laying the foundation for such an event.

Stable funding

The Arts Council will need to find a steady and reliable source of funding or revenue that will allow it to accurately and effectively predict income and expenditures. While short-term funds are helpful for projects and initiatives, long-term funding is necessary to ensure the stability and sustainability of the organization. Funding agencies and grants are a potential source of such funds, though more often than not, these groups provide funds for a specific period of time or for a specific amount. The Arts Council should look to memberships, sponsorship and advertising, municipalities, and large-scale multi-community events for such a source of funds.

APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

Membership Categories

MEDIA Still & Motion Photography • Graphic Design • Web Design • Multimedia
Sound • Animation

VISUAL Painting • Drawing • Sculpture • Crafts

PERFORMING Dance • Vocals • Acting • Theatre • Production • Direction • Music

LITERARY Fiction/Non-Fiction • Poetry • Journalism • Creative • Copywriting

OTHER..... Building and Engineering Arts • Body Art and Body Modification
Culinary and Hospitality Arts • Fashion

Membership fees

- Supporters: \$20/year
- Students and seniors: \$20/year
- Individual Artists: \$30/year or \$50/year with a website profile
- Not-for-profit art groups and associations: \$50/year or \$100/year with a website profile
- Businesses and corporate sponsors: Sponsorship opportunities available

Membership benefits

Supporters:

- Listing on the Arts Council website (Supporters page)
- Up-to-date information about arts events in the Almaguin Highlands
- Retail discounts with selected business partners
- Discounts at selected Arts Council events and workshops

Students, seniors, and individual artists

- Listing on Arts Council website (Artists page) with link to the artist's website
- Access to artists database
- Up-to-date information about arts events in the Almaguin Highlands
- Option to have events added to the Events Calendar
- Retail discounts with selected business partners
- Discounts at selected Arts Council events and workshops
- Option to present, host, or otherwise participate in workshops and events
- Option to participate in the development of new workshops and events
- Access to information and support for grant and funding opportunities

Not-for-profit art groups and associations

- Listing on Arts Council website (Artists page) with link to the artist's website
- Access to artists database
- Access to volunteer database
- Up-to-date information about arts events in the Almaguin Highlands
- Option to have events added to the Events Calendar
- Option to present, host, or otherwise participate in workshops and events
- Option to participate in the development of new workshops and events
- Access to information and support for grants and funding opportunities

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Almaguin Highlands Arts Council Board Meeting, July 28th 2008

The Council discusses priorities and establishes a list of objectives. The list of objectives is meant to offer initial guidance and to provide a basis from which other decisions will be made.

- 1) To act as a coordinating body for all forms of art expression in the community.
- 2) To develop and encourage educational programs in the arts in the Almaguin Highlands area.
- 3) To provide a range of support services for all disciplines including (but not limited to) brochure development, volunteers, website and other technical services.
- 4) To partner with artists and other organizations in the marketing and promotion of their arts and service in the community and abroad.
- 5) To raise funds through memberships, donations, and various projects to assist artists and groups with education and program development.
- 6) To create a cultural community that all residents of the Almaguin Highlands area can participate in and enjoy.

Almaguin Highlands Arts Council Board Meeting, March 23rd 2009

The Council discusses the need for information to be collected in a database in order to accomplish a number of functions. The Council also identifies the need to enhance communication and dissemination of information, possibly using an events calendar or other online tools. The importance of strategic partnerships is also discussed, identifying high schools and municipalities as important partners. Using the facilities of these partners is a potential course of action. The Council also emphasizes the importance of funding opportunities, for itself and for its members.

Burk's Falls Arts and Craft Club, May 13th 2009

During this meeting, representatives from the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council, The Ben Farella Group, and the Burk's falls Arts and Craft Club discuss what the Arts Council should consider priority. First, the Arts Council should provide information and support related to funding opportunities. Next, the Arts Council should help with communication, dissemination of information, and promotion. The Arts Council should act as a liaison between different community groups, to ensure each group is aware of the activities of other groups. Under communication, a listing or database of artists was also listed as a priority.

Next, the group discusses the importance of education and providing artistic opportunities for youth. Partnering with high schools can be an option to help accomplish this objective. The high schools, among other partners are also identified as potential sources of volunteers. The group also discusses funding opportunities and commercial viability of certain projects. Finally, the group discusses the importance of inclusivity, ensuring that all forms of arts are recognized equally.

East Parry Sound Steering Committee, May 28th 2009

Representatives from thirteen municipalities from the East Parry Sound District, members from the Ben Farella Group, and members from the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council attend the meeting with the East Parry Sound District Steering Committee. The meeting primarily revolves around community development. Opportunities and issues related to economic development, infrastructure, tourism, and the changes to Highway 11 are discussed. There is significant discussion around enhancing community profile and creating economic activity.

The group also discusses ways to promote communication between communities and ways to enhance artistic educational opportunities for youth.

Highland Players and community members, June 9th 2009

This meeting includes local artists and representatives from the Highland Players, The Ben Farella Group, the Almaguin Highlands Arts Council, and several other community groups. The meeting is called to help steer the Arts Council in the right direction. The group discusses ways to increase the overall quality and success of the various member organizations without interfering with the independence of those members. The group discusses the possibility of joint ventures or collaborative efforts that would benefit all groups involved. The group also discusses ways to enhance the effectiveness of communications to community members and to community groups. Members feel that it will take time to accumulate a "critical mass" of members. Once reached, the Arts Council will be able to communicate and educate the public much more effectively.

The group also discusses the history of the communities and how leadership will be important. Internal leadership is identified as a key priority. Next, the group addresses the importance of education. Workshops are mentioned as a way to reach people of all ages, and provide a way for artists to teach one another.

Finally, the group discusses the need for space. There is a brief discussion about using the facilities of strategic partners or investigating other existing buildings in some of the communities.

APPENDIX 3: SIMILAR OPERATIONS REVIEW

A review of numerous Arts Councils and similar groups was conducted to identify major trends and industry norms. A focus was placed on Ontario Arts Councils, though several other Canadian and American examples were examined. The major trends are as follows:

Mission- or goal-based trends

Inclusivity

Nearly all similar organizations expressed that inclusivity is important. These associations seek to promote all forms of art and artistic expression, whether traditionally defined as art or not. Though the categories of art as defined by each group vary significantly, both traditional and newer forms of art are listed. Some Arts Councils also identify including visible minorities, people with disabilities, and youth as priorities.

Community network

Similar organizations are seeking to create a network of artists, art supporters and businesses . Emphasis is placed on creating a positive atmosphere that stimulates and encourages creativity and allows for members of that network to share with each other.

Education

Providing, encouraging, and supporting art education initiatives are common goals for many Arts Councils. Other Arts Councils work to identify, promote, and sometimes host a variety of educational opportunities. Some Arts Councils collaborate with local educational institutions.

Awareness

Other Arts Councils work to inform their members and the public of existing art initiatives. They use websites, newsletters, e-mail, social media platforms, and traditional media to increase community awareness. Raising awareness helps not-for-profit organizations to increase the number of people using their services and helps artists sell their work.

Financial impact

Many Arts Councils work to increase the positive economic impact of art. Many Arts Councils actively seek to support and develop their local economy by helping artists sell their work, promoting art to attract tourism, supporting local businesses, and otherwise supporting economic activities in their communities.

Membership trends

Membership fees

Membership fees are typically lowest for youth and students, low for individuals or groups and higher for businesses.

Typical annual membership cost for students is \$10 to \$20

Typical annual membership cost for a supporter or benefactor is \$10 to \$20

Typical annual membership cost for individuals is \$20 to \$40

Typical annual membership cost for groups is \$40 to \$60

Businesses normally act as partners or sponsors and pay substantially more than members.

Membership benefits

Members are normally offered a package of benefits. First, they are listed on the Arts Council's website, normally with a link to their own website. Members receive newsletters, e-mails, or other correspondence to inform them of upcoming events and to provide information about ongoing projects, recently completed projects, and events. Free publicity for events is normally available. Local websites, radio stations, newspapers, and television stations often work with the Arts Councils to promote upcoming member events. Members often have access to discounts from local art-related businesses.

Partnership and sponsorship trends**Government funding**

Most Arts Councils receive funding and support from municipal governments and provincial agencies. Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, FedNor, Ontario Arts Foundation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and other similar governmental agencies are often listed as supporters, sponsors or funders.

Other not-for-profit organizations

Many Arts Councils are supported by local service organizations such as Rotary Clubs or Lions Clubs, or other not-for-profit groups unique to each area. Strategic partnerships with groups with similar interests or goals allows for resources and information to be shared.

Local Media Outlets

Most Arts Councils are supported by a number of local media outlets that provide free publicity, information, and events coverage. Media partners are sometimes listed as sponsors and often have their logo displayed on the Arts Council's website or other promotional material.