

**IMAA
AAMI**

Media Arts Advocacy Toolkit

2025

Overview

What is this?

The 2025 Media Arts Advocacy Toolkit outlines a set of value propositions and evidence—for multiple types of advocacy opportunities—on the importance of the national Media Arts sector.

Who is the intended user?

IMAA, its members, and the broader Media Arts community who want to engage in advocacy.

Who is the intended audience?

While the scope of this toolkit is national, the outlined propositions can be translated into provincial and local advocacy settings.

The intended audience is decision makers like...

- Funders (Canada Council for the Arts, Canadian Heritage, provincial & municipal funding bodies)
- Members of Parliament or Candidates

The toolkit can support advocacy situations like...

- In-person meetings
- Email correspondence, including cold emailing or fostering new relationships
- Grant writing

Summary

5 Values of the Media Arts

- **Education & Skills Development** - The training and skill-development opportunities provided by arts organizations fosters the careers of artists, both established and emerging.
- **Competitiveness** - Innovation in technology and technique flourishes through media arts centre programming and development opportunities.
- **Community Building** - Media arts organizations are a hub for gathering, learning, and creating that serve community members and artists across disciplines.
- **Cultural Preservation and Promotion** - Media arts organizations preserve and share our country's diverse cultural identity.
- **Job Creation** - Media Arts organizations catalyze economic activity and create job opportunities in Canada's cultural sector.

The arts sector as a whole is a complex and interdependent ecosystem.

Usually the big players come to mind first: Taylor Swift tours, foreign film and TV productions shooting in Canada, TIFF, and so on. But, just like the business sector, much of the labour force is employed by small organizations. Small arts non-profit arts organizations, festivals, and artist-run centres, as well as private galleries and small arts businesses, comprise a thriving arts ecosystem.

Although smaller community-based media arts organizations are often overshadowed, they play many critical roles in growing and sustaining communities of artists and art lovers alike.

And we have the numbers to prove it...

In 2024, media arts organizations reached

1 715 460 participants attending media arts presentations

37 026 members

596 477 participants through educational workshops and programs

10 685 volunteers

Value Propositions

1. Education and Skills Development

Core of the Argument: You don't get [Insert Canadian Filmmaker Here] without training and education provided by artist-run centres.

Filmmakers:

Deanna Bowen
Ashley McKenzie
Ann-Marie Fleming
Amanda Forbis & Wendy Tilby

Jacquelyn Mills
Stan Douglas
Atom Egoyan
Charles Officer

Guy Maddin
Matthew Rankin
Chandler Levack
Sarah Polley

Lisa Jackson
Graeme Ferguson
Clement Virgo
Sophie Deraspe

(The list goes on...)

Elevator Pitch: Media Arts organizations provide valuable education, skills development, and professional development opportunities outside college or university certificate and degree programs.

Sit-down Meeting: Collectively, media arts organizations across Canada act as a large training ground for visual and media artists with developing careers as exhibiting artists, as well as for those intending to move into mainstream film, television, and web-based content production. Media arts organizations bring the tools of media production and dissemination right into the heart of the community, and they do so effectively and efficiently. We provide an alternative route to career development for both those oriented towards the arts (visual artists, experimental filmmakers, etc) and those seeking a career in the cultural industries.

This means...

Affordable Access

- Technical training with professional-grade cinema cameras and lighting equipment through non-profit production centres.
- A diverse range of workshops that serve emerging and established artists and cultural workers.

Specialized Training and Mentorship

- Hands-on experience with the handling, collections management, restoration, and digitization of historical media works on analogue media such as 16mm film and analogue video, for early-career museum and heritage workers.
- Volunteer experience and work placements with film festivals, to understand how the festival system works and its role in the industry as a whole.
- Training and mentorship in producing, directing, and developing effective funding applications.

Knowledge you can't find anywhere else

- Access to specialized research materials and media collections that aren't available through public or academic libraries or collections.
- An enormous range of technical and creative workshops and courses that contribute materially to media artists' creative and professional development, including many aspects of production, post-production, and dissemination that are not taught at all in formal certificate or degree programs.

So what?

Alternative Educational Opportunities

Not everyone interested in a career as a media maker will have the option of attending a full-time post secondary program. Nor is formal education always necessary for someone who wants to make work and get it out there! For many young people, participation in a workshop or exposure to works at a festival screening can spark the idea of making their own work for the first time.

Reaching Communities

Opportunities at artist run centres significantly increase access to media production for communities that are poorly represented in commercial industries.

Efficient public investment

Modest amounts of funding to artist run centres serve large numbers of people.

Raising the Next Generation of Canadian Artists

Our giants and icons of Canadian film and media art history didn't emerge from nowhere. Media Arts organizations are integral to raising up the next generation of Canadian media artists, and we've been doing so for more than half a century.

Media Arts organizations provide on-the-ground training for professionals entering the job market, ensuring that Canada's cultural labour force is skilled and nimble.

2. Competitiveness

Core of the Argument: The trailblazing work of media arts centres have paved the way for Virtual Reality (VR), experimentation with AI, and other innovative technologies to reach your home.

Elevator Pitch: Innovation in technology and technique flourishes through media arts centre programming and development opportunities.

Sit-down Meeting: From artists working with virtual reality since the 1990s to the use of artificial intelligence, the Canadian media arts sector has always been at the forefront of new digital and emerging technologies, with media arts centres acting as a catalyst for artists to research and develop these technologies. Media Arts organizations nurture artists through programming and development opportunities, fostering experimentation with emerging technologies. This creative experimentation not only pushes the boundaries of artistic expression but also contributes to research and development in digital and media technologies.

This means...

Experimenting with new technologies and creative approaches

- Media Arts Production centres offer workshops in VR, AR, Projection Mapping and other cutting edge technologies.

Developing intellectual property that can be commercialised

- Due to their technical know-how, Media Arts organizations develop software such as membership management tools and Video-on-Demand platforms.

Supporting technological upskilling of other sectors

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Media Arts organizations stepped in to assist in the digital transition for the cultural sector at large.

So what?

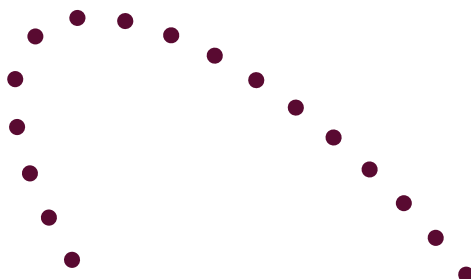
Incubating innovation

By acting as incubators for technological and intellectual innovation, media arts centres help Canada maintain its global edge in the digital media landscape.

Fuelling creative industries

They generate intellectual property and skilled expertise that fuel creative industries, attract investment, and contribute to a thriving cultural economy.

Investing in these centres strengthens Canada's ability to lead in a rapidly evolving technological future, ensuring its relevance in the global marketplace.



3. Community Building

Core of the Argument: Media Arts organizations aren't just for media artists— they're for *everyone*.

Elevator Pitch: Media Arts organizations are a hub for gathering, learning, and creating that serve community members and artists across disciplines.

Sit-down Meeting: In metropolitan centers, festivals and production centres create accessible opportunities for people to connect through affordable cultural programming and educational workshops, enriching community engagement and fostering personal and collective well-being in alignment with the Canadian Index of Well-Being (CIW).

In rural regions, artist-run centres are often one of a limited number of social spaces where community members can engage in shared cultural experiences and participate in public life.

As community spaces, exhibitors, and learning environments, media arts centres also serve artists in all disciplines in the arts sector who utilize centres' resources to create multimedia works and archival documents.

This means...

Community Vitality

- Festivals and production centres promote social connections, fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement.
 - Over the course of a year, Media Arts organizations across the country see over **1.5 million people** as audiences, people engaging in workshops and exhibitions, students and youth coming to participate in events and build community.

Leisure and Culture

- By providing affordable access to cultural programming and workshops, these centres enhance opportunities for leisure and cultural participation.

Education

- The educational workshops contribute to lifelong learning, skill-building, and personal growth.

Living Standards

- Low-cost access to meaningful activities helps reduce financial barriers to participation, promoting equitable access and enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals across socio-economic levels.

So what?

The backbone of the community

Painters, sculptures, architects, textile artists, theatremakers, dancers, poets, musicians, filmmakers, photographers, teachers, and nonprofits come together in our organizations. We make it possible for creators of all disciplines, at all stages of their career or interest to learn new skills, access equipment at a reasonable cost, and gather with other community members and artists at screenings, workshops, and events.

A weakened Media Arts sector has an impact on the entire arts ecosystem in Canada. A strengthened Media Arts sector uplifts and sustains everyone.

4. Cultural Preservation and Promotion

Core of the Argument: From the gallery to the big screen, media arts organizations care for and champion uniquely Canadian stories.

Elevator Pitch: Media Arts organizations support bringing Canadian stories to life and ensure they're passed down to future generations.

Sit-down Meeting: Media Arts organizations help preserve and share our country's diverse cultural identity. Through film, video, audio, and new media, they make sure Canadian stories and voices are heard, especially those that don't often get attention in mainstream media. These organizations support the creation of unique Canadian content, connecting local and international audiences and helping people around the world understand Canada's culture and stories.

This means...

Documenting diverse cultural heritage

- Media Arts organizations have represented Canada's diverse cultural heritage through thousands of films, videos, and digital works, from Indigenous languages and traditions to the immigrant experience.
- These organizations also serve as archives, preserving culturally significant works and maintaining Canada's artistic heritage in the face of a rapidly changing media landscape.

Direct engagement with artists & producers

- Presenters bring their work to public audiences directly, while distributors work with presenters in Canada and internationally, amplifying their reach and cultural impact.

Canada on the International stage

- Films and media works created by Media Arts organizations have been featured in global festivals, exhibitions, and educational contexts, ensuring Canada's stories resonate beyond our borders.

So what?

Reflecting Canada

When Canadian artists create and share work that reflects our unique perspectives, experiences, and histories, we're all enriched. It's also about preserving our stories for future generations. Media Arts organizations capture the spirit of communities across Canada, showcasing a range of experiences that bring us closer to one another and help others understand who we are.

Building a Cultural Legacy

While big media focuses on global hits, it's these local organizations that keep our stories and unique perspectives from disappearing. When Canadian artists make films, videos, and media that reflect our lives, it builds a cultural legacy, reminding us—and showing others—what's special about our communities and our country.

By supporting this sector, Canadians ensure that our stories continue to be told, seen, and appreciated—not just here but around the world.

5. Job Creation

Core of the Argument: Media Arts organizations catalyze economic activity and create job opportunities in Canada's cultural sector.

Elevator Pitch: Media Arts organizations create jobs directly and indirectly, employing staff, supporting artists, and driving economic activity through festivals, workshops, and community programming.

Sit-down Meeting: Media Arts organizations provide employment opportunities for staff and contractors while also supporting the careers of independent artists and cultural workers. These organizations generate additional economic activity by hosting festivals, workshops, and exhibitions, which involve local businesses and create jobs in related industries like tourism, hospitality, and technology. By fostering early-career development and providing access to resources, media arts centres play a key role in building a sustainable cultural economy.

This means...

Strengthening the entire sector

- According to Kelly Hill, the “Film and video sector is the second largest arts domain in Canada, behind visual arts, generating \$11.3 billion in revenue in 2023, or 33% of all arts revenues”. Media arts organizations employ staff in roles such as technical coordinators, programmers, curators, educators, and administrators contributing to the sector’s strength.
- Hands-on training and career development opportunities provided by media arts organizations prepare participants for employment in the broader cultural industries.

Stimulating local economies

- Festivals and public programming organized by media arts centres contribute to local economies by driving tourism and creating temporary employment for event staff, technicians, and vendors.

Sustaining creative careers

- Media arts centres support artists by funding and showcasing their work, directly contributing to the sustainability of creative careers.
- Despite challenges, 70% of cultural workers expressed satisfaction with their principal occupation in arts and culture.

So what?

Investing in people

Investing in media arts organizations isn’t just an investment in culture—it’s an investment in people. By providing stable jobs, supporting artists, and driving local economies, these organizations ensure a thriving cultural sector that benefits everyone.

Strengthening the media arts sector not only supports those working directly in it but also creates ripple effects in related industries, helping build a vibrant and resilient cultural economy in Canada.