



**arts  
sector**

**health  
sector**

**WORKSHOP REPORT**

OTTAWA ART GALLERY  
RADICAL CONNECTIONS  
**HEARTCARE SYMPOSIUM**

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PREPARED BY STEPHANIE NADEAU // NOVEMBER 2024  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides strategic recommendations for the HeARTcare Advisory Committee to coordinate efforts and drive actionable change in strengthening Arts & Health in Canada. The recommendations are informed by participant discussions during the HeARTcare Symposium Workshop, held on November 21, 2024, at the Ottawa Art Gallery in partnership with Radical Connections.

The analysis draws on key concepts from Dr. Daisy Fancourt's keynote address, highlighting: (1) the categorization of connections between the arts and health into two primary areas—prevention and treatment, and (2) the recognition that access to the arts is enabled by interconnected systemic levels, including individual, group, cultural, institutional, and societal contexts. The report also provides an analysis of the symposium's presentations and panel discussions, showcasing the diverse range of partnerships in arts and health.

The proposed roadmap emphasizes achieving early wins while building the foundation for broader, more dynamic collaboration to drive systemic change. To track progress, the following key milestones should guide the roadmap:

1. **Establish the National Steering Committee (Year 1):** Convene a diverse group of cross-sector leaders to coordinate actions, build partnerships, and drive initial efforts. This includes developing concise advocacy tools, such as a one-pager, to support early outreach.
2. **Engage Policymakers and Funders (Year 1–3):** Begin targeted outreach to policymakers and funders early to gather input, build buy-in, and align the national strategy with funding opportunities and policy priorities. Use this engagement to secure support for early initiatives.
3. **Develop National Strategy (Year 1–2):** Publish a comprehensive national strategy with measurable goals to integrate arts-based approaches into healthcare (treatment) and health-focused initiatives into the delivery of artistic services (prevention).
4. **Elevate Public Awareness (Year 2–3):** Launch public campaigns, informed by the national strategy, to shift attitudes, build momentum, and increase support for arts-based health interventions. Use targeted, systems-based messages to address specific audiences at various levels.

The report concludes with **a recommendation to reframe the partners' strategic collaboration to prioritize action and align with Sustainable Development Goal 3** (Good Health and Well-Being). By shifting the guiding question from "How do we strengthen Arts & Health in Canada?" to "How might we improve access to the arts as a pathway to achieving good health and well-being in Canada?" this reframing emphasizes access as a critical enabler of equity. It positions the arts as a transformative tool for delivering tangible health outcomes, while fostering collaboration across systemic levels and sectors, rather than focusing solely on strengthening the arts-health field in isolation.

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Daisy Fancourt's keynote address provided essential context for understanding the transformative role of the arts in health. As Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Arts and Health, her evidence-based insights highlighted both opportunities and barriers to integrating arts and health. She emphasized two key concepts: (1) the distinction between prevention and treatment, and (2) the systemic levels that enable or restrict access to the arts. These concepts underline the need for a multi-layered, equity-driven approach to strengthening Arts & Health in Canada.

**Prevention and Treatment:** the dual role of the arts in health, as outlined in the World Health Organization's 2019 report<sup>1</sup>:

- **Prevention:** Arts programs promote well-being and reduce the risk of illness, such as community-based initiatives that foster social connection and mental health.
- **Treatment:** Arts-based interventions support recovery, including music therapy for neurological disorders or dance therapy for trauma.

### Systemic Levels of Arts Access

Access to the arts is shaped by interconnected systemic levels, each influencing engagement with arts-based health interventions:

- **Micro - individual level:** Personal interactions and experiences, such as individual relationships, personal habits, or one-on-one communication.
- **Meso - group or community level:** Interactions within and between groups, such as families, workplaces, schools, or organizations, and how these affect individuals.
- **Exo - external environment influences:** This refers to systems that indirectly affect individuals, such as local government policies, neighborhood characteristics, etc.
- **Social - relational and network-based influences:** This focuses on social networks, community connections, and relationships that impact individual and collective behaviors.
- **Macro - societal or cultural level:** This involves broader social, cultural, and institutional forces, including economic systems, cultural norms, and national policies.
- **Chrono - politics, media, and time-based changes:** Changes and influences over time, such as historical events, media trends, or political shifts, and how these shape

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<sup>1</sup> Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. Accessed here: <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/329834>

societal or individual behaviors.

### PANELS & RAPID-FIRE PRESENTATIONS

The following table provides an overview of the initiatives presented, highlighting their focus areas, partnership structures, target audiences, and the systemic levels at which they operate. The initiatives demonstrate a wide range of partnership models, from collaborations between arts organizations and healthcare providers to partnerships with local governments, research institutes, and community organizations. These insights provide a critical foundation for the roadmap recommendations, which aim to scale local successes and align cross-sectoral collaborations toward national-level change.

Initiative Name	Focus Area (prevention/treatment)	Partnership Structure	Target Audience	Systemic Level
<b>Going Home to Die</b> Sarina Isenberg	Treatment (patient support - end of life)	Healthcare Lead + Designers	Patients, caregivers, general public	Micro, Meso, Macro
<b>Voice Alignment</b> Anna Zumbansen et Charlotte Gagnon	Prevention	Arts Lead + Research Partner	Trans women seeking vocal alignment and empowerment	Micro, Meso
<b>H.E.A.L. Healthcare</b> Nicole Halbauer	Prevention (addresses systemic determinants)	Arts Partner (HARC) + Health Partner (NCCIH)	Healthcare educators, professionals, and practitioners	Meso, Macro, Chrono
<b>On Track Program</b> Sean Dallaire Meg Rowat Stephanie McHugh	Treatment	Healthcare Lead (The Ottawa Hospital) + Arts Partner (OAG) + Community Partners (e.g., CMHA, Salus)	Individuals aged 16–35 experiencing psychosis	Micro, Meso
<b>Community Healers</b> Zarina Laalo	Prevention (fosters mental enrichment)	Arts Lead (City of Ottawa Museums, artists)	General public, local communities	Meso, Macro
<b>Ottawa Mission</b> Aileen Leo	Prevention	Community-Based Health Lead (Ottawa Mission) + Local Artists	Shelter guests and community clients seeking independence and recovery	Micro, Meso

<b>CMHA Mural Initiative</b> Patrick Jodoin Melissa Bridle	Prevention	Community-Based Health Partner (CMHA Ottawa) + Professional Artists	Community members across various marginalized groups	Micro, Meso
<b>Roger Neilson Children's Hospice</b> Olivia Lourenco	Prevention	Healthcare Lead + Arts Facilitation	Siblings of children with long-term illness	Micro, Meso
<b>Artist in Residence in Government (ANO)</b> Olivia Onuk	Prevention (indirect support of community well-being)	Arts Partner (Olivia Onuk) + Government Partner (City of Ottawa)	Vulnerable communities, municipal policymakers	Exo, Macro
<b>Island of Listeners</b> Kim Kilpatrick & Rachel Gray	Treatment (using storytelling and art to provide emotional support)	Healthcare Lead (Bruyère Research Institute) + Arts Partners (OAG, Kim Kilpatrick, Rachel Gray) +	Palliative care patients, care partners, healthcare providers, general public	Micro, Meso, Macro
<b>Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)</b> Andrea Gumpert	Prevention (to enhance healthcare staff's soft skills)	Healthcare Partner (CHEO Neurodevelopmental Health) + Arts Partner (NGC)	Interdisciplinary healthcare staff (~150 participants)	Meso, Macro
<b>ArtsCare</b> Susan Durnin	Prevention	Arts Partner (Mississauga Arts Council) + Community Organizations	Individuals with mental health issues and broader community	Micro, Meso, Macro
<b>Awesome Arts</b> Gerald Dragon Valerie Fenske	Prevention	Arts Partner (MASC) + Community Organization (SHCHC)	Participants of all ages, local communities	Micro, Meso
<b>Concerts in Care &amp; La SAMS</b> Debra Chandler Charlotte Cumberbirch	Prevention	Arts Partner (Professional Musicians) + Healthcare/ Residential Care Providers	Residents of healthcare and residential care facilities	Micro, Meso

## **PLENARY WORKSHOP GOALS**

1. Provide participants with a space to reflect on key insights they are committed to integrating into their work.
2. Foster collaborative thinking to identify key priorities for scaling positive change through arts and health in Canada.

## **THEMES/TOPICS DISCUSSED**

The recurring themes and topics discussed by participants were:

### **1. Collaboration and Relationship Building**

- Participants stressed the importance of breaking down silos, fostering partnerships, and building relationships across sectors to integrate arts and health.
- Key insights included: “Take down the silos,” “Connections yield more solutions and funding,” and “Cast a wider net to engage the arts community.”

### **2. Advocacy and Valuing the Arts**

- A recurring theme was the need to position the arts as essential to health and human well-being, advocating to organizations, policymakers, and the public.
- Key insights included: “Reposition the arts as a valued element of human existence” and “Act on the great data showing the value of the arts in health.”

### **3. Knowledge Sharing and Education**

- Participants emphasized the need for increased awareness and communication to share programs, research, and developments in the field of arts and health.
- Key insights included: “There are so many programs we’re not aware of” and “Need a way to stay up to date.”

### **4. Research, Evidence, and Evaluation**

- The importance of research and data to demonstrate the value of arts interventions was a strong focus, with participants calling for better evaluation practices to secure funding and influence policy.
- Key insights included: “Data validating the arts as necessary” and “Connect evidence-based practices to achieve funding.”

## GAPS AND CHALLENGES

The main capacity challenges mentioned by participants were:

1. **Limited Resources:** Participants noted the ongoing challenge of insufficient funding and resources, emphasizing the need for more efficient use of existing assets and collaboration to address resource gaps.
2. **Knowledge Gaps:** There was a clear need for better awareness of existing programs, research, and funding opportunities, as well as more training opportunities to strengthen skills and understanding in both the arts and health sectors.
3. **Collaboration Barriers:** Participants identified siloed policies and practices as a significant barrier, calling for greater cross-sector collaboration and shared efforts to address common goals.
4. **Advocacy Challenges:** Participants noted the lack of recognition of the arts' value in healthcare, emphasizing the need to advertise outcomes, use evidence to demonstrate impact, and influence policy.
5. **Time and Energy:** Several participants implied the challenge of balancing existing workloads with the need to engage in additional advocacy, research, and relationship-building efforts to drive meaningful change.
6. **Evaluation and Impact Measurement:** Participants highlighted the need for better capacity to evaluate and communicate the outcomes of arts-based interventions to influence policy, secure funding, and validate their efficacy.

## OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Participants expressed a strong desire to take concrete steps and actively engage in further discussions and expand the dialogue to include more voices and sectors. Key themes:

- **Advancing Advocacy:** Raising awareness and generating public and policy support for arts and health initiatives.
- **Strengthening Collaboration:** Building partnerships across sectors and fostering ongoing dialogue to share knowledge and ideas.
- **Driving Policy Change:** Aligning arts and health priorities with government and organizational strategies to secure sustainable, long-term support.
- **Building Capacity:** Establishing leadership roles and frameworks, such as a national steering committee, to drive systemic change and innovation.

## ROADMAP FOR NEXT STEPS

Milestone	Objective	Key Actions
1. Establish the National Steering Committee (Year 1)	<p><b>Coordinate cross-sector actions, build partnerships, and develop a foundation for systemic change.</b></p> <p>Include leaders with expertise in provincial healthcare priorities and cross-sector experience in the arts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Convene diverse leaders from healthcare, arts, policy, community, and private sectors.</li> <li>- Develop concise advocacy tools (e.g., one-pager).</li> <li>- Create a governance framework to ensure inclusivity and transparency.</li> </ul>
2. Engage Policymakers and Funders (Year 1–3)	<p><b>Build input, buy-in, and alignment with funding opportunities and policy priorities, ensuring coordinated action across interconnected systems and key focus areas.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tailor fact-based presentations for policymakers and funders.</li> <li>- Engage key organizations (e.g., Public Health Canada).</li> <li>- Organize arts and health speakers for medical and funding symposiums.</li> </ul>
3. Develop National Strategy (Year 1–2)	<p><b>Publish a strategy with measurable goals for embedding arts-based approaches into healthcare and health-based approaches into arts service delivery.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leverage existing data to establish baseline metrics.</li> <li>- Include pilot initiatives to inform impact measurement and evaluation priorities (Partner: Mass Culture?)</li> <li>- Outline a clear timeline and resource plan.</li> </ul>
4. Elevate Public Awareness (Year 2–3)	<p><b>Shift public attitudes and build momentum for arts-based health interventions, emphasizing their dual role in prevention and treatment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop systems-based messages for specific audiences.</li> <li>- Showcase success stories from existing initiatives.</li> <li>- Use creative campaigns to amplify outreach.</li> </ul>



## CONCLUSION

The roadmap outlined in this report provides a practical framework for transitioning from discussion to implementation. From establishing a national steering committee to engaging policymakers and funders, developing a national strategy, and launching targeted public awareness campaigns, these steps are designed to ensure early wins while building the momentum needed for long-term systemic change.

To unlock the full potential of arts and health in Canada, these efforts must move toward embracing a broader, systems-based approach. By reframing the guiding question of the partners' collaboration from "How do we strengthen Arts & Health in Canada?" to "**How might we improve access to the arts as a pathway to achieving good health and well-being in Canada?**", we shift the focus toward action, equity, and systemic change. This perspective positions access to the arts as a critical enabler of well-being, with the power to address health disparities and foster resilience across communities.

This new framing invites a broader coalition of collaborators, drawing in voices from sectors such as community development, education, social services, and the private sector. By aligning efforts with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), this strategy situates Canadian arts-health collaboration within a global context that resonates with diverse stakeholders.

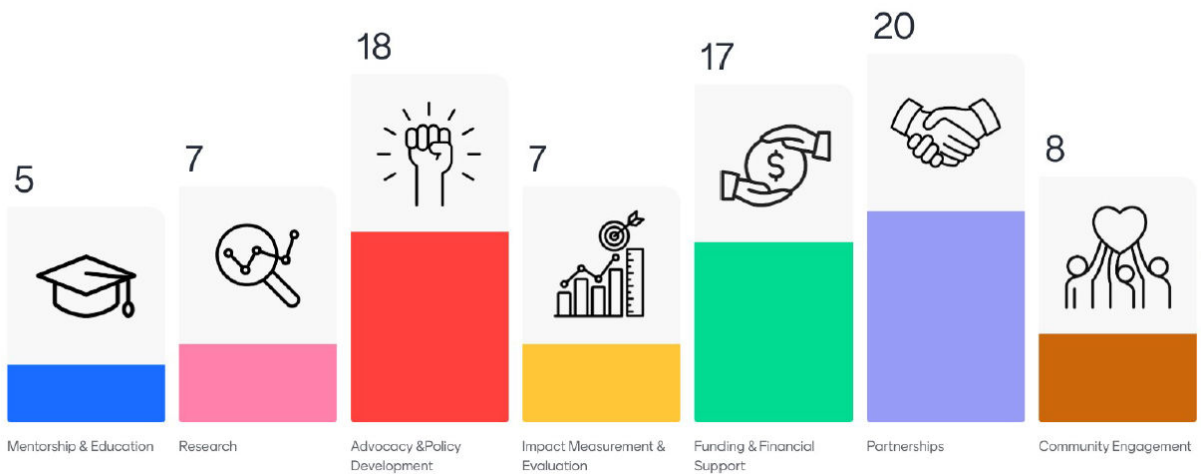
For private sector actors, whose Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) priorities often align with SDG 3, it creates a compelling entry point for partnership and investment. By positioning the arts as a **pathway to achieving health outcomes**, rather than as a field in need of support, this approach opens doors for cross-sector partnerships and resource mobilization on a larger scale.

Ultimately, this reframing creates an opportunity to **redefine the value of arts in Canada's health and social systems**. It challenges stakeholders across sectors to see the arts not only as an expressive or cultural activity but as a **transformative mechanism for advancing equity and improving health outcomes**. By bringing together diverse collaborators, aligning with global priorities, and fostering meaningful action, this initiative has the potential to create a healthier, more equitable, and connected Canadian society.

## APPENDIX A – Broader Themes and Action Areas Identified by Participants

This slide highlights the key themes and action areas prioritized by participants during the workshop, showcasing their collective vision for advancing arts and health in Canada. These include advocacy & policy development, funding support, partnerships, research, and Impact measurement.

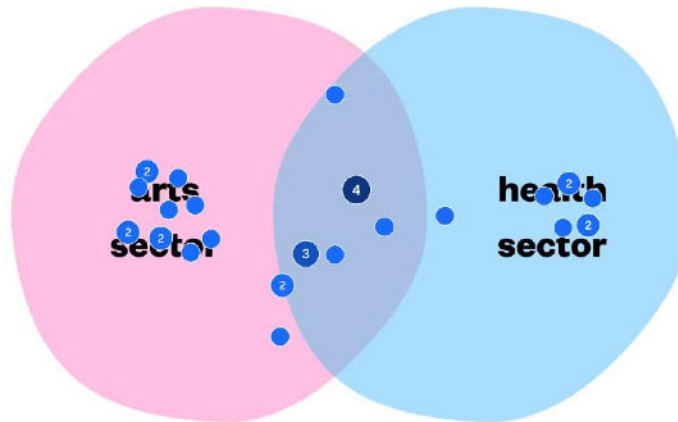
### Which broader theme or action area does this challenge intersect with?



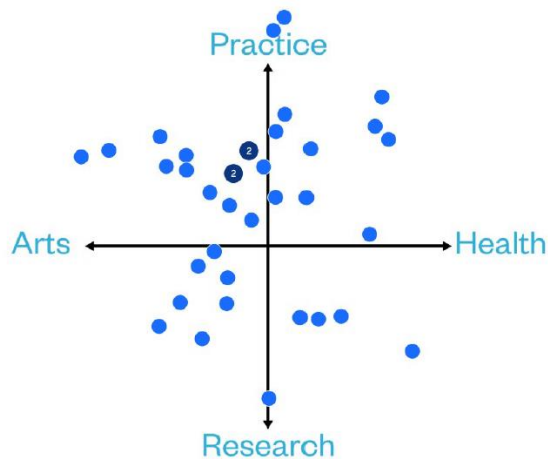
## APPENDIX B: Diversity of Participants in the Workshop – Professional Backgrounds

These slides visualize the professional diversity of workshop participants, illustrating representation across healthcare and the arts.

### Where Does Most of Your Work Sit? Arts, Health, or the Intersection?



### Plotting Your Work Across Arts, Health, Research, and Practice



Based on participant feedback, the workshop's participation could have been broadened to include more diverse perspectives and stakeholders. To address this, the roadmap for next steps focuses on achieving early wins while laying the foundation for dynamic cross-sector collaboration, engaging policymakers, business leaders, and other stakeholders to strengthen access to the arts for improved health and well-being.