

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funding the Rainbow:

Report on Informing Queer & Trans
Inclusive Funding Practices at SaskCulture



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTION



April 2024

About this Executive Summary

Provided by Ivy + Dean Consulting (i+d), this executive summary is an overview of a report of the same name that details the findings of a secondary research project commissioned by SaskCulture to provide a comprehensive report of promising and leading practices for meaningfully and authentically engaging 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

About Ivy + Dean Consulting

Based in Regina, Ivy + Dean Consulting (i+d) is a bilingual consulting firm specifically designed to support non-profit and public organizations in incorporating equity into their governance and programming processes. i+d's core team of consultants have over 50 combined years of experience in the non-profit, community sector, and corporate leadership, and have dedicated much of their careers to building capacity within the 2SLGBTQIA+ and the arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

i+d is a Certified LGBT+ Business Enterprise (LGBTBE) with the CGLCC: Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, meaning that we are certified by Supplier Diversity Alliance Canada as a business that is owned, operated, and controlled by a member of the LGBT+ community. At the time of writing, i+d is the only LGBTBE in Saskatchewan.

Acknowledgements

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Background

In February 2024, Ivy + Dean Consulting (i+d) was engaged by SaskCulture to undertake a secondary research project that would provide a comprehensive report of promising and leading practices for meaningfully and authentically engaging Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQIA+) communities.

Note on Language

Throughout this summary, the phrase “queer and trans communities” is often used. This phrase may be used interchangeably with acronyms (e.g. 2SLGBTQ+, 2SLGBTQI+, LGBTQI+, LGBT, LGBTQ2+etc.) to describe all people who may identify as gender or sexually diverse (GSD).

The phrases “queer organizations” and “queer and trans organizations” or similar variations will be used to describe organizations that are queer-led, queer-serving, and queer-focused. These should not be confused with organizations that may serve queer and trans people, but that are not led by 2SLGBTQIA+ people or that do not primarily centre 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

While we recognize the complexities of GSD language and terminology, i+d has chosen to purposefully use the phrase “queer and trans” as these are the terms that our researchers and team use to describe themselves and the communities that they have been a part of for over three decades.

It is important to acknowledge that every 2SLGBTQIA+ person chooses to use particular language to describe their own experiences and the communities that they belong to based on their own preferences. 2SLGBTQIA+ people are not a monolithic group, and this means that they may have different comfort levels with different terminology.

When determining which language or terminology to implement at an organizational level, it is imperative that an institution undertake intentional work to determine appropriate language that resonates with the people and communities they serve. As part of this research work, i+d has prepared a recommendation to SaskCulture about language that we would suggest is used in an interim context until this work can be undertaken.

To support SaskCulture in becoming more familiar with 2SLGBTQIA+ language, a glossary is included in the Appendix.

Process

Research Approach

When approaching research, i+d incorporates considerations of intersectionality, anti-oppression, community, queer and trans liberation, anti-racism, disability justice, and anti-colonialism in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.

The i+d research and validation team include individuals who are queer, non-binary, trans, disabled, neurodiverse, Indigenous, Two Spirit, and from rural communities.

Research Methodology

The research team applied feminist and queer research methodologies to this secondary research, using thematic analysis. This research was divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 - Environmental Scan, which included a review of reports, policies, and other documentation from funders or about funders in relation to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities
- Phase 2 - Literature and Material Review, which included an analysis of academic and scholarly literature about 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive funding.

The research focused on topics of the roles of funders in addressing the cultural needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, of barriers impacting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, organizations and cultural workers, of meaningful community consultation practices with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and of queer cultural formation.



Summary of Core Areas & Themes

Material in both phases presented discussion of a range of components of the funding landscape through a queer-specific or equity-informed lens.

The core areas and affiliated themes are:

- Funding Approaches,
 - *Themes include: Participatory funding, Shifting power, Trust-based philanthropy, Creating sustainability, Commitment to transparency, and Embracing living wages*
- Funder Responsibility & Accountability
 - *Themes include: Building relationships, Role of funders in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, Willingness to learn, Importance of internal work, Role of funders in increasing accessibility to arts, heritage, and multicultural spaces, 2SLGBTQIA+ staff, board & leadership, and Coordination between funders*
- Application Practices
 - *Themes include: Targeted support, Simple and accessible applications, Recruitment of under-the-radar organizations, Accountability, and Content-focused*
- Barriers to Accessing Funding for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities
 - *Themes include: Limited access to resources, Influence of politics on 2SLGBTQIA+ priorities, Hetero- and homo- normativity,*
Neoliberalism and the non-profit industrial complex, and Homophobia, transphobia and discrimination
- Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
 - *Themes include: Intersectionality, Challenging colonialism, Disrupting exploitative and extractive practices, and Dismantling whiteness*
- “Ideal” Projects & Grantees
 - *Themes include: Eligibility of organizations, Long-term impact, Core funding, and Exploratory projects*
- Community Guidance
 - *Themes include: Guided by community knowledge, Representative grant juries, Community-defined challenges*
- Evaluation Practices
 - *Themes include: Reciprocal evaluation, Reduced reporting, and Flexibility for shifts in projects*
- Formation of Queer Culture
 - *Themes include: Understanding queerness, Unintelligibility to mainstream culture, Shared history and visibility, Community care and relationality, and Chosen family and kinship*

These themes can be explored more in depth in the full report.

Funding Approaches

The overarching message in this area was the necessity for funders to be open to shifting power and embrace innovative approaches to funding. This theme focused on the ways that approaches like participatory funding and trust-based philanthropy can contribute meaningfully to the success of queer and trans communities, while also referencing a shift in approach to create sustainability across grantees, embracing living wages, and being committed to transparency.

Funder Responsibility & Accountability

This area included themes surrounding the importance of building relationships, the role of funders in increasing accessibility to arts, heritage, and multicultural spaces, the willingness to learn, the importance of doing internal work, having diverse staff and leadership, and the value of coordination between funders.

Application Practices

It is clear from both the environmental scan and scholarly research that a major way that funders are developing more inclusive programs for queer and trans organizations and artists is through shifting application processes that reduce barriers to access while also protecting queer and trans communities. This can happen through a wide range of practices including offering intentional help for queer and trans groups, simplifying application requirements, enacting accountability measures, and other similar initiatives.

Barriers to Accessing Funding for 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities

Queer and trans organizations have limited access to funding and resources compared to other groups and demographics. Reasons for this limitation are varied, and are generally tied closely to political and social realities. Political realities and the non-profit industrial complex often influence whether 2SLGBTQIA+ issues are prioritized by funders, while social forces like heteronormativity, homonormativity, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination impact how queer and trans organizations can access funding.

Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

For funders looking to improve their funding programs, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) are often at the forefront of their minds. Intersectionality, particularly the acts of challenging colonialism and dismantling whiteness, is necessary for building better programs. However, there's a balance to be struck by funders between creating space for queer and trans communities to access funding without being exploitative, extractive, or tokenistic.



Saskatoon's YXE Drag Collective. 2021.

“Ideal” Projects & Grantees

Practices across funders and granting agencies are often similar, based on what is typical or standard within the non-profit and charitable sector. These practices include setting guidelines around what kinds of organizations can access funding, around prioritizing short-term annual grants, funding operating costs, and setting unrealistic expectations around clear anticipated outcomes. All of these practices contribute to obstacles for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations in accessing funding.

Community Guidance

Funders must build and maintain relationships with communities that represent the demographics of their grantees. Community can offer guidance to funders around developing more inclusive funding practices, particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and people who aren't being adequately served by mainstream programs. Generally speaking, this guidance is offered through advisory groups, through representative peer assessment, and allowing community to define the challenges that funding addresses.

Evaluation Practices

Just as funders are shifting their application practices to reduce barriers for applicants, material suggests that funders are making meaningful strides to support queer and trans communities by evolving their evaluation processes through inviting feedback, reducing reporting requirements, and allowing flexibility in projects.

Formation of Queer Culture

In anticipation of implementing arts, heritage, and multicultural funding programs that are more inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, funders should develop an understanding that queer and trans people are a distinct culture. Queer culture is complex, and is described differently by queer theorists and cultural scholars. Queer culture is generally perceived as simply a counter-culture to what is perceived as the norm across heteronormative and homonormative spaces. Shared culture across queer communities can include a shared history of discrimination, connection to shared cultural signifiers such as particular styles of dress, certain hairstyles, or cultural symbols (such as a rainbow flag), and an interpretation of family as chosen kin.

References

A full list of references and citations is available in the full report.

Recommendations

Based on these findings and our own professional and lived experiences working within the 2SLGBTQIA+ and arts, heritage, and multicultural sectors, recommendations focus on three pillars: (1) Centering Queer & Trans Community, (2) Improving Internal Capacity, and (3) Mitigating Homophobia & Transphobia.

Additional details and context about these recommendations are found in the full report.

Centering Queer & Trans Community

- Ensure minimum requirements for 2SLGBTQIA+ people on all peer assessment groups. Invite and compensate queer and trans organizations and cultural workers to offer consultation on funding program development and allocation, ensuring community leadership informs these practices.
- Undertake the consultations required to implement a participatory funding initiative with queer organizations and cultural workers in Saskatchewan.
- Prioritize 2SLGBTQIA+ led, centered, and serving organizations as recipients of funding from SaskCulture.
- Recruit 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, particularly those serving Indigenous and Two Spirit people, disabled queer people, and queer people of colour, to apply for SaskCulture funding.

Improving Internal Capacity

- Implement continued training and professional development education within SaskCulture around 2SLGBTQIA+ competency, with a particular focus on Two Spirit and queer cultural communities and identities.
- Incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ people as a designated equity group for hiring at SaskCulture.
- Establish a 2SLGBTQIA+ grants or a funding liaison to take on responsibility for collaborating with queer and trans organizations.
- Undertake an audit of funded projects over the past five years to determine how many queer and trans projects have been funded by SaskCulture. Identify future targets, based on this baseline, to improve representation.
- Implement and perform reciprocal evaluation on new projects, and seek out insight from previously funded projects or activities with 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural workers and organizations to understand the experience of accessing funding at SaskCulture.
- Coordinate with other funding bodies to discuss what they're funding in Saskatchewan in order to identify gaps and opportunities for SaskCulture's funding priorities in serving 2SLGBTQIA+ people and cultural communities.

Mitigating Homophobia & Transphobia

- Develop mandated requirements for all SaskCulture funded projects and organizations to ensure 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion at an organizational level.
- Undertake a review of data collection requirements, and identify queer-informed reporting practices.
- Develop clear guidelines around funding allocation that isn't impacted or interfered with by homophobic and transphobic political ideology.
- Integrate a Gender Based Analysis Plus approach into policy and programs.

Conclusion

This research project has provided a comprehensive foundation for SaskCulture to begin engaging meaningfully around 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion within the organization and its' practices.

SaskCulture plays a vital role in the success and vibrancy of the arts, heritage, and multicultural sector in Saskatchewan, and their commitment to queer and trans inclusion will contribute to improved feelings of safety, representation, community, belonging, and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Saskatchewan.

Considerations & Limitations

When interpreting these findings, it is important to consider potential limitations of the research and recommendations:

- i+d lacked context around the internal capacity at SaskCulture on 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and issues;
- a condensed timeline contributed to less time for seeking out and analyzing data;
- a dearth of Saskatchewan specific data and research on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive funding practices, queer arts, heritage, and multicultural practices, and queer culture.

Areas for Future Research

In reviewing all of these findings, we'd recommend a number of areas for future research and consultation for SaskCulture. These areas include:

- Seeking out community input about the language used by 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural organizations in Saskatchewan and the Prairies.
- Identifying needs that exist for non-2SLGBTQIA+ arts, heritage, and multicultural organizations to be more culturally inclusive of queer and trans people.
- Determining gaps or barriers faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural organizations and cultural workers in Saskatchewan and the Prairies in undertaking their work.
- Exploring the relationship between SaskCulture, funded or potentially funded organizations or initiatives, and the non-profit industrial complex.
- Inviting information on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural workers and artists in Saskatchewan.

