

Research Report

Ontario Association of Art Galleries

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Consulting Matrix

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Research Goals

The goals of our research were to:

- Measure how aware Ontario Association of Art Gallery (“OAAG”) members were regarding the Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project (“the Project”)
- Measure the opinions of OAAG members in regards to the Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project, its goals, and similar mentorship programs
- Determine what programs and obstacles are present at Ontario public art galleries as they relate to cultural pluralism and diversity
- Understand how mentorship and cultural pluralism and diversity relate specifically to gallery boards, collections, and exhibits
- Collect opinions regarding how OAAG can help galleries grow cultural pluralism and diversity
- Collect opinions regarding how OAAG can help grow cultural pluralism and diversity in the next generation of artists and art leaders

Operating Definitions

In order to avoid confusion, Consulting Matrix worked closely with OAAG to ensure that consistent definitions and clear explanations were used when referring to certain terms or programs. These definitions were provided to research participants, and were used as the operating definitions throughout the course of the research.

- Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project
 - “The OAAG's Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project was designed to pair new Canadians and emerging art leaders who self-identify as racialized, with established visual art professionals to develop a viable mentoring-for-leadership professional

development program to strengthen the capacity, diversity and growth of Ontario's public art galleries. The OAAG wanted to benefit individuals, organizations and the public gallery sector with improved ability to integrate culturally diverse values and principles in the processes of public galleries, and improved skills (e.g. in cultural pluralism, governance, HR, partnership development, board relationships, personal skills)."

- Cultural Pluralism
 - "Cultural pluralism can be said to be a state in which diverse practices, opinions and representations are acknowledged and embraced. It brings engagement of various communities rather than a single homogenized group. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds share their perspectives, making others aware of their realities."

Research Methodology

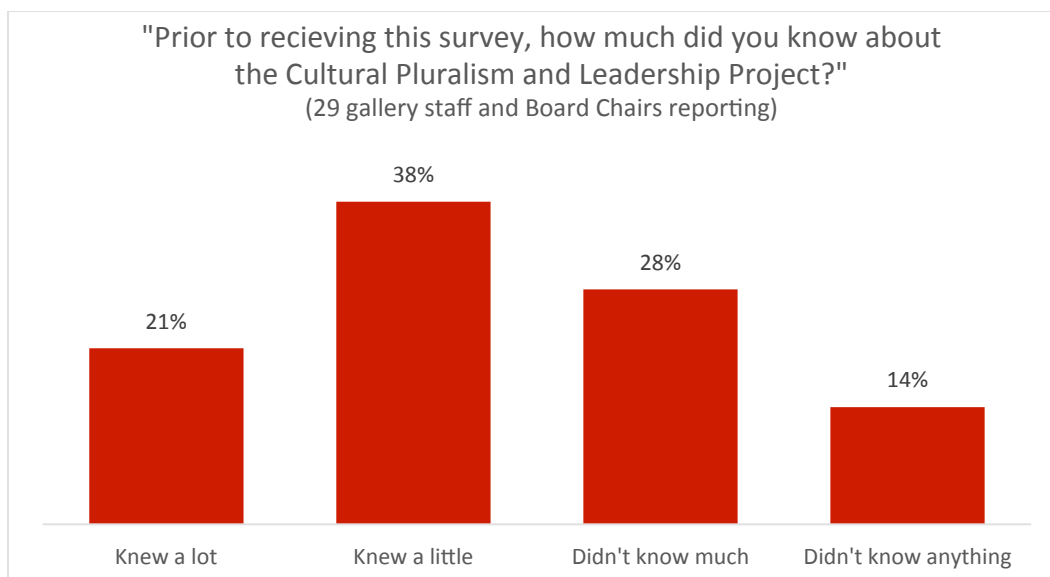
Consulting Matrix collected the opinions and viewpoints of OAAG members through an online survey which was online from September 20 to October 7, 2016. The survey consisted of multiple choice questions and open-ended response questions where respondents could expand on their views. Some specialized questions were presented respectively to Chief Curators, Executive Directors, and Chairs of Boards, in order to obtain each position's unique perspective. Each participating gallery was requested to complete the survey twice, once with a Chief Curator, and once with an Executive Director or Chair of the Board. 30 individuals from 26 galleries began the survey, with 20 individuals from 18 galleries answering the survey to its completion.

A more detailed and in-depth examination of the research topics, in the form of a group interview via conference call with OAAG board members, took place on October 11, 2016. This call was facilitated by Judy Wolfe of Consulting Matrix, who used a prepared interview schedule to provide prompts for conversation and probing questions in order to explore the issues. OAAG Executive Director Zainub Verjee was in attendance to provide facts and information as needed.

Findings

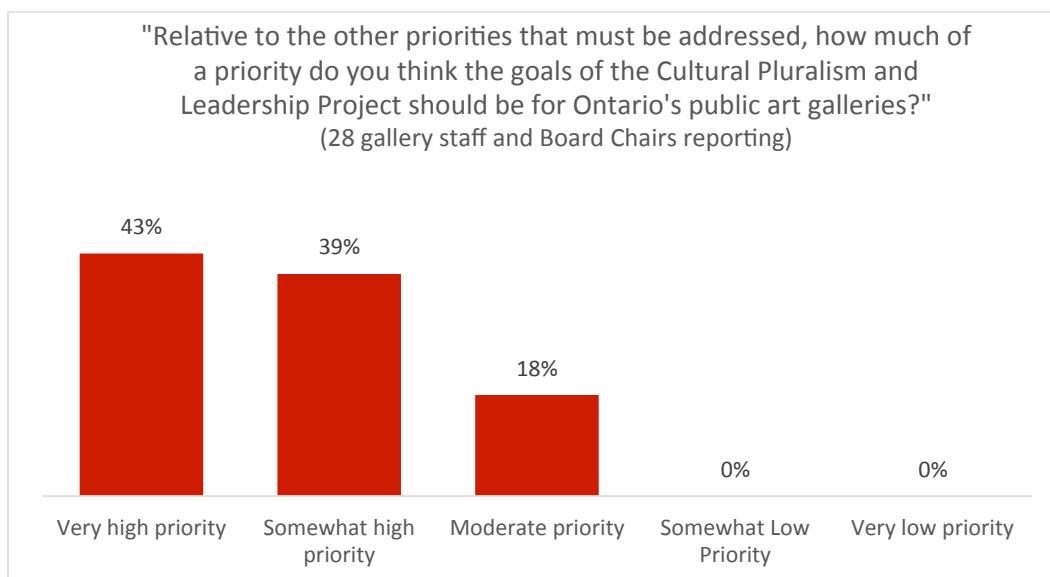
Awareness and Feelings about the Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project and its Goals

Responses were varied when gallery staff and Board Chairs were provided with the definition of the Project and asked about their previous level of knowledge about it. Answers ranged from a fifth (21%) who said they knew "a lot" about the project, to 14% said they didn't know "anything" (14%) about it.



Participants in the group interview told us they would have liked to have known more about the progress of the Project, the achievements of those involved, and “how they’re doing.” One person said that sharing news of project successes was like “dynamite,” serving to create energy, demonstrate value, and encourage the embrace of diversity.

A majority of gallery staff and Board Chairs said that the goals of the Project should be a priority for Ontario’s public art galleries. No one felt that the Project goals should be of a low priority; there was a consensus that Ontario’s public art galleries should approach the goals as at least a moderate priority. Over two fifths of gallery staff and Board Chairs (43%) felt they should be a “very high priority,” and an additional two fifths (39%) felt they should be a “somewhat high priority.”



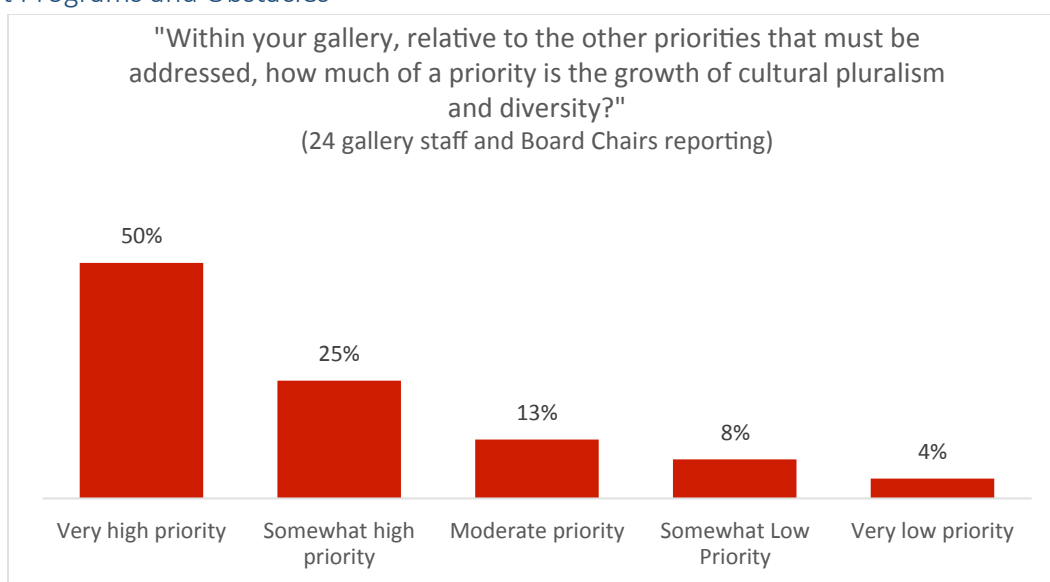
The broad agreement that the goals of the Project should be a high priority for Ontario’s public art galleries, in combination with the varied levels of awareness about the Project, means that there were

some gallery staff and Board Chairs who indicated that the goals of the Project should be a high priority but also felt that they did not have a great deal of information about the Project.

Section Summary

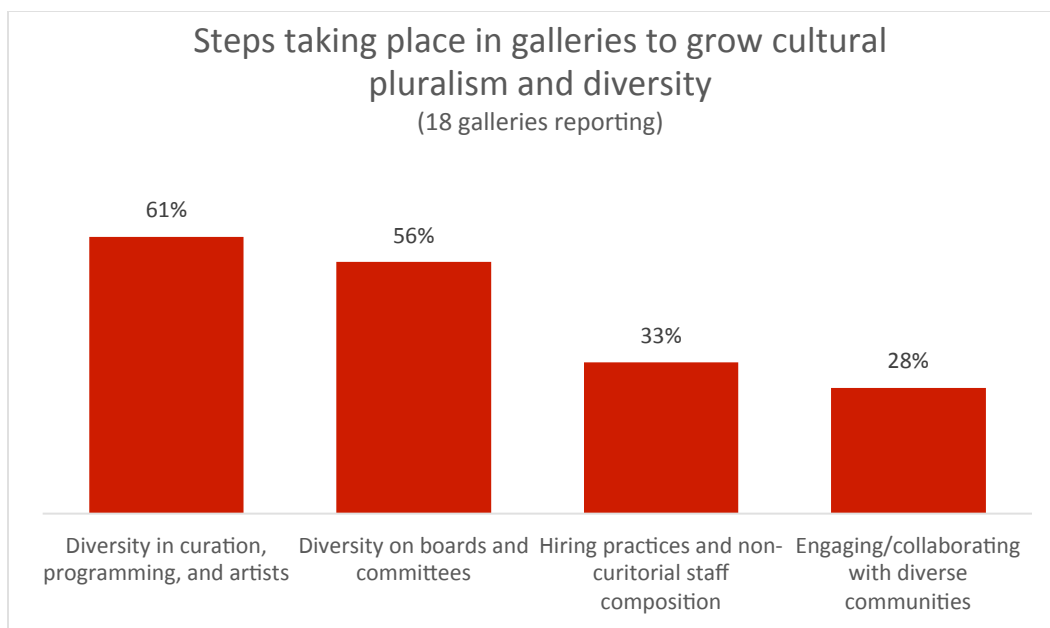
- Levels of knowledge and awareness about the Project was varied
- There was broad agreement that the goals of the Project should be a high priority for Ontario's public art galleries
- The progress of the Project, the achievements of those involved, and "how they're doing" were raised as being of particular interest

Current Programs and Obstacles



The large majority of views were that cultural pluralism and diversity are being considered with seriousness as priorities, with three quarters of gallery staff and Board Chairs (75%) saying that they are at least a "somewhat high priority" at the gallery they are responding from, and a further 13% describing them as a "moderate priority." However, there was not consensus on the matter, as some felt that the growth of cultural pluralism and diversity are a "somewhat low" (8%) or "very low" (4%) priority at their art galleries.

In terms of specific steps to grow cultural pluralism and diversity, galleries most often reported striving for diversity in curation, programming, and artists, as well as attempting to increase diversity on boards and committees.



Some gallery staff and Board Chairs wrote in detail about their efforts towards diversity in curation, programming, and artists, saying that:

- “My fundamental belief is that an organisation receiving public funds must reflect the public! ... When I learn what exhibitions have been confirmed, I work with the Director, lead Curator of each exhibition, and my team... to select a broad range of presenters taking into account their profession (from the arts and other disciplines); gender; level of experience; and cultural diversity. I look over the long-term... to our previous year's worth of exhibitions/presenters. And I try to project ahead through the next year's worth of exhibitions/presenters. This is to avoid repeating presenters, unless there is good reason to do so; but also to ensure many voices and opinions from mainstream to divergent, from art to non-art, from scholarly to quotidian, and - always - with cultural diversity in mind.”
- “Culturally diverse exhibitions and programs, including artists of colour, LGBT, and First Nations and differently-abled individuals.”
- “At this point supporting the hiring of people marginalized in the gallery system(s) who are supportive of creating new platforms and exhibition practices that reflect and engage multiple perspectives is key.”

Regarding diversity on boards and committees, one survey participant described how at their art gallery there was:

- “A focused effort to be inclusive of cultural pluralism and diversity in the context of our Programming Committee activities and make-up. This effort and a renewed focus was front and centre during our recent strategic planning processes.”

Gallery staff and Board Chairs also reported many challenges in their efforts. Funding was consistently mentioned as holding progress back in staffing, collections, and exhibits. Gallery staff and Board Chairs wrote that:

- “I would love to say we are doing more or that this is a higher priority but the reality is that while I personally feel that this is important, with a small staff I am forced to focus on keep our existing programs funded and operational.”
- “... a lack of resources in both staff and funding makes it difficult to change or add programs that we would like to consider.”
- “Lack of funding for new acquisitions and costs associated with exhibiting artists from other cities/countries, including artist travel, shipping of works of art.”
- “Resources are a major challenge - both financial and staff...”
- “... the same challenges that all galleries face: money”

Gallery staff and Board Chairs also discussed difficulties in connecting with diverse applicants for job and board openings, as well as diverse artists:

- “Applicants are not always diverse”
- “Because it is often the direct personal network of board members and staff which is tapped for potential new candidates, the pool and diversity of the board can be limited”
- “From a staffing perspective, not sure individuals from different cultural backgrounds see themselves at the Museum, and am not sure that job postings necessarily reach them”
- “While we have launched a performance art initiative that is predicated on inclusivity, and our exhibitions program is gender balanced, it has been a challenge to connect with contemporary artists and cultural producers with diverse backgrounds.”

Some suggested that stronger connections to communities would be a useful step:

- “Need to improve our communications; new website and on-line tools to increase awareness of our programming and to bring cultural diversity to greater substance in our mission statement. We are being tasked with writing a new mission statement to communicate our relationship to the community.”
- “... community engagement programs and professional development”

Slightly over a quarter (28%) of galleries reported already engaging and collaborating with diverse communities to try to grow cultural pluralism and diversity.

Section Summary

- A majority of gallery staff and Board Chairs reported that their gallery was treating the growth of cultural pluralism and diversity as a high priority
- In terms of specific steps to grow cultural pluralism and diversity, galleries most often reported striving for diversity in curation, programming, and artists, as well as attempting to increase diversity on boards and committees
- The most mentioned obstacles to growing cultural pluralism and diversity were:
 - Funding for new hiring and programming
 - Connecting to diverse applicants for job and board openings, as well as diverse artists

Potential Steps Forward

When gallery staff and Board Chairs were asked what would help “ensure that the next generation of art professionals and art leaders will be more diverse than we see today,” they mentioned involving and mentoring youth more than any other theme. They wrote that:

- “I think it starts with engaging young people in the arts and providing programs for them to get involved in cultural institutions... I think summer student or intern grant programs are important to get young people involved and interested”
- “We operate a decade long mentorship program for youth in underserved neighbourhoods... we believe this is important to developing our future cultural leaders. Galleries need to work with young people to develop, administer, curate and orchestrate programs through which both parties learn”
- “Mentoring and training programs are of huge value, and recognize the challenge of achieving change while building robust skills for the health of the arts sector.”

Gallery staff and Board Chairs also discussed how they could learn and improve if more opportunities to gather, and share advice, best practices, and training were present. Staff and Board Chairs wrote that what would help was:

- “Perhaps offering programs for the mentorship of art professionals and leaders -- an annual workshop/ colloquium that moves from province to province to gather professionals/leaders together precisely to ask questions of how accurately their organizations reflect cultural diversity and pluralism.”
- “Developing resources for regional public art galleries (mini councils or summits to examine the roles of the next generation of arts professionals.)”

When asked how OAAG specifically could help “grow cultural pluralism in art galleries today, and diversity in the next generation of art professionals,” gallery staff and Board Chairs continued to focus on engagement with young people. They most frequently mentioned how OAAG could continue to mentor and train young people, with some writing that:

- “The recent program is a great example of an effective multi-faceted project that brought targeted support to a group of emerging professionals, while contributing to wider understanding and awareness re: emerging forms of expression and issues/obstacles.”
- “Continue the mentorship program”
- “New programmes for mentorship and opportunities”

Funding issues were also commonly mentioned, alongside the continuing theme of how OAAG could provide or facilitate gatherings and the sharing of advice, best practices, and training regarding cultural pluralism and diversity. Some wrote that:

- “With programs and gathering opportunities such as this mentoring program and previous symposia”
- “Awareness and sensitivity training for boards and senior management could assist in shedding light on hiring practices”
- “Hosting anti-oppression training”

The idea that OAAG could have a useful role in future gathering, learning, and training opportunities also emerged during the group interview. There was a concern that “awareness might not match the capacity to enact change,” with gallery staff and leadership aware of issues but unable to address them. OAAG, by “facilitating networking,” was said to potentially serve as a “point of dissemination for methods” as well as having resources available to gallery members. In that way, participants said, OAAG could “build capacity for change through things like introductions, conversations, participation in projects.” In succinct terms, one group interview participant described the role of gathering, sharing, and learning as taking people from “we must do something” to “here’s how.”

Section Summary

- Involving and mentoring young people was the most frequently mentioned way to ensure that the next generation of art professionals and art leaders will be more diverse
 - Mentoring and training young people was also the most commonly mentioned way for OAAG to be involved
- Opportunities for gallery staff and board members to gather and share advice, best practices, and training, was also commonly mentioned as a way to help ensure that the next generation of art professionals and art leaders will be more diverse
 - OAAG was discussed as having a role in organizing or facilitating such opportunities

Conclusions

Gallery staff and Board Chairs connected well to the Project. The achievements of those involved, and “how they’re doing,” were identified by group interview participants as being especially interesting information.

Galleries are frequently attempting to increase diversity in curation, programming, and artists, as well as attempting to increase diversity on boards and committees, but they are facing serious challenges in these efforts. Facilitating opportunities to gather and share advice, methods, and training, was raised as a way for OAAG to help galleries become better equipped and more capable in their efforts.

Recommendations

- Continue to involve and mentor young people, as was done in the Cultural Pluralism and Leadership Project
- Explore the possibility of facilitating more opportunities for gallery staff and board members to gather and share advice, best practices, and training