GRAND FORKS

VIBRANCY PROJECT
ARTS & EVENTS

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

South Fourth Street, home of Browning Arts and You Are Here arts companies. Photo courtesy of GGFCVB

Contents

2 Overview

Membership 3
Work Plan 4
Inventory 5
Outreach 8
Funding 9

12 Findings

Arts 12
Events 14
Facilities 15
Access to Information 15

16 Conclusions & Recommendations

Grand Forks Art Fest.
Photo courtesy of GGFCVB

OVERVIEW

The Mayor's Vibrancy Initiative was launched with full recognition that Grand Forks IS a vibrant community. Grand Forks enjoys a diverse array of quality events, a rich cultural environment, and state-of-the-art venues that serve both residents and visitors. City funding that supports these "quality of life" elements underlines how important they are to a community's long-term economic health and success. Under the auspices of the Mayor's Vibrancy Initiative (MVI), the Arts & Events Group began meeting in April 2015 to **assess the community vision for arts and events in Grand Forks, define a more strategic approach to public funding, and set a course for the future.**

This report summarizes the work of the Arts & Events Group (A&E) as it unfolded over the next 15 months. The information presented begins with a general overview of the group's work. Recognizing the distinct elements that define arts and events in Grand Forks, the report then takes separate tracks to better reflect the needs, strengths and challenges facing the local arts and events communities.

A&E discussed and approved these findings and recommendations at its April and May 2016 meetings. The language in this report and the recommendations it contains were approved at the group's last regular meeting on June 10, 2016. This marked the conclusion of the group's formal work under the Mayor's Vibrancy Initiative; however, individual members will have a continued role as leaders and advocates of Grand Forks' growing and thriving arts and events communities.

MEMBERSHIP

While the Arts & Events group is part of the Mayor's Vibrancy Initiative, it was led by private-sector individuals who were – and continue to be – committed, knowledgeable, and willing to lead a community conversation on this subject. Members include arts practitioners, event organizers, leaders of key organizations, and concerned citizens. Representation was not meant to be a comprehensive cross-section of Grand Forks' arts and events community but rather to provide insight from multiple angles and perspectives throughout the entire community. Each member brought a particular background and affiliations but all agreed to "check them at the door." They recognized that their role was to represent the community's common interest, not any particular group or organization.

CO-CHAIRS:	Shawn Gaddie, AE2S
	Julie Rygg, Convention & Visitors Bureau
MEMBERS:	Dave Badman, Badman Design
	Nicole Derenne, Public Arts Commission
	Matt Fischer, Probitas Promotions
	Cassie Gerhardt , UND Student Affairs
	Keith Lund, Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corp.
	Jeannie Mock, City Council
	Emily Montgomery, Empire Art Center
	Bill Palmiscno, Park District
	Dyan Rey, Professional Artist
	Matt Walkowiak, The Ground Round
	Barry Wilfahrt, The Chamber
FACILITATOR:	Mark Schill, Praxis Strategy Group
STAFF:	Planning and Community Development Department

Scope of Work

The group agreed to the following work plan early on. While this was intended to be a "short term" effort, there were no set terms or deadlines -- the work of the group would require much discovery. Regular meetings were held on the second Fridays of each month from April 2015 through June 2016, and members participated in various public-oriented events throughout that timeframe. In general, the work centered on three core elements:

Vision and Outcomes

- **Develop priorities** for the arts community and event production based on the needs and wants of the community to create a vision of what Grand Forks should be
- **Create a set of community-vetted criteria** for a successful arts community and range of events

Inventory and Analysis

- **Inventory** arts and events programming/calendars and City funding history
- Assess the **structure** of organizations and relationships producing arts and event
- Identify **roadblocks and constraints** inherent in the arts community and event production process

Set the Course

- **Make specific recommendations** to enhance the future of the Grand Forks arts community and event production

A key element throughout the group's work was **communication**: reaching out to the local arts and events communities, getting input from individuals and organizations with a direct stake in these issues, using this process to build collaboration and trust, and advocating for the best interests of the community as a whole. Communication also extended beyond Grand Forks. Visits to Ft. Collins, CO, and Winnipeg, MB[1], engaged local leaders with each other and their counterparts in other communities, sharing successes and lessons learned, and bringing home inspiration and insight.

Another common thread running throughout the process was the City funding provided through **Special Events and Arts Regranting Programs**. It became clear that these programs are greatly valued and the importance of City support cannot be over-emphasized -- so much so that the key A&E recommendations revolve around City-funded programs.

Fort Collins research trip. Photo courtesy of GF CIty.

Concurrent with the MVI (which also included a group focused on downtown issues) was development of a community-wide public art plan, funded jointly by the City and Community Foundation. Development of "A Grand Vision: Convergence, Grand Forks Arts + Culture Master Plan" (ACMP) was guided by Forecast Public Art, an experienced consultant from Minneapolis. The ACMP and MVI were parallel and complementary, with overlapping interests, stakeholders and leadership. The ACMP and A&E teams communicated regularly,

[1] Summaries are available at www.grandforksgov.com/community/vibrant-grand-forks

with the ACMP consultant providing big-picture perspective and professional expertise and the support of a comprehensive arts planning process. Results of the ACMP included eight main focus areas, listed to the right[2]. A&E decided early that its best efforts could be spent focusing on existing institutions and the local funding, policy, and implementation strategies needed to advance their missions. Much of the efforts of A&E fit within the eighth of the master plan goal of "Governance, Policy, & Funding." The work of each group informed the other, yielding a mutually beneficial collaboration. Separately in the future, an overview and briefing of the ACMP will be presented to the City Council for review and consideration with specific action items.

A Grand Vision: Convergence, Grand Forks Arts + Culture Master Plan Goals

- Build connections
- Public Art, Placemaking and Design
- Facilities and Institutions
- Creative Economy
- Festivals, Events and Tourism
- Arts Education
- Artist Career Development
- Governance, Policy & Funding

Inventory

The Greater Grand Forks Convention and Visitors Bureau's (CVB) events calendar was the basis of the initial inventory work. It provided a full-year snapshot that showed there is no basis for the statement "there's nothing to do in Grand Forks." The calendar was robust year-round; however, it was agreed that more events that "embrace winter" should be encouraged. Inventory efforts also included a review of five-year (2011 – 2015) funding and recipient data from the Special Events and Arts Regranting Programs. This reiterated the variety of arts and events programming available in Grand Forks, but highlighted several weaknesses in those programs' allocation process. A key concern noted with both programs was that nearly every request receives funding despite a so-called competitive application process, and many requests are funded year after year. This "culture of yes" was seen as potentially diluting the impact of the funding and inhibiting the programs' ability to create vibrancy in a more focused manner.

Special Events Program:

- Funding has been relatively stable for five years; 2016 budget is $127,118 (95% to grants, 5% to program administration)
- Funded 34 projects in 2015, up from 20 projects in 2011
- On average, 54% of requested funding is awarded per application but nearly 100% of applicants receive funds
- Funding is stable but more applications are being received: average grant is $3,744, trending down from about $5,800 per project in 2011
- 19 events received funding in each of the last 3 years

Arts Regranting Program:

- Funding has been relatively stable for five years; 2016 budget is $127,118 (85% to grants, 15% to program administration)
- Funded 12 organizations in 2015, down from a peak of 16 in 2013.
- 59% of requested funding is awarded per application but nearly 100% of applicants receive funds
- Average grant is $8,742, trending up from $5,500 in 2011

The last inventory element was a compilation of local arts organizations and the functions they provide (see following pages). This was initiated as a gap analysis to inform discussion about the role(s) of an arts-oriented support organization but proved to be much more than that. It provides a comprehensive summary of local arts resources and, if maintained and updated, it offers a valuable tool for ongoing communication and education on the resources that are available.

[2] Plan is online at http://www.grandforksgov.com/home/showdocument?id=9834
[3] Calendar summary and funding histories included in the Calendar & Funding Summary supplemental report.

Grand Forks Arts Groups

ACTIVITIES AND ROLES

	Targeted area of art			Venue					Funding			
	Focus on Performing Arts	Focus on Visual Arts	All art types supported	Display / Gallery space	Production space	Performing Space	Practice Space	Planning/ Meeting Space	Fundraising (assists with planning, development, etc.)	Fiscal Agent	Regranting Funds: Programming	Regranting Funds: Operational
NOVAC			X							X	X	
PAC		X										
The Guild		X		X		X						
Empire Arts Center			X	X		X	X	X		X		
Empire Theater Company	X					X	X					
Fire Hall Theater (GGF Community Theatre)	X				X	X						
ND Museum of Art		X		X		X						
Muddy Waters Clay Center		X		X	X							
River Walk Artists, LLC		X		X								
ArtWise		X										
SPA - Summer Performing Arts	X				X	X	X	X				
African Arts Arena			X									
Children's Choir	X											
Grand Forks Chorales	X											
ND Met: District Met Opera Auditions	X											
North Dakota Ballet Company	X						X					
Northern Valley Youth Orchestras	X											
River Forks Watercolor Society		X										
Sweet Adelines Twin Forks Chorus	X											
The Greater Grand Forks Symphony Orchestra	X											
The World's Smallest Gallery		X		X				X				
UND Writer's Conference			X									
Mary Weaver, *Browning Arts*		X		X								
You Are Here		X		X	X							
Third Street Art Gallery		X		X								
Northstar Council			X									
Lovely Dozen	X						X					
Conduit Theatre	X											
Grand Forks Herald								X				
Myra Foundation									X		X	X
GF Community Foundation									X	X	X	X
Impact Foundation									X			
ND Assoc. of Nonprofits									X			
Arts Midwest (regional arts council)			X								X	
ND Council for the Arts (state)			X								X	X
Clear Channel Communications												
Leighton Broadcasting												
CVB								X				
Chamber								X				
Alerus						X		X				
REA						X						
Chester Fritz Auditorium	X					X						
GGFYPs												
City				X								
UND				X	X	X	X	X				
School Dist					X	X	X	X				
Park Dist.												
East Grand Forks Performing Arts Center	X					X						
HB Sound & Light						X						
Downtown Development Assoc.												
The Ember						X		X				
GF Public Library								X				
EGF Public Library				X				X				

Education			Support		Marketing/ Coordinating			Public art	
Advocacy (community education efforts)	Youth education	Adult education	Professional Development (business skills training)	Support Services (grant writing support, technical services, peer support, etc.)	Communications / Advertising	Networking (private to public connections)	Calendar of Events		
X				X	X		X	X	NOVAC
X						X		X	PAC
X			X	X					The Guild
X				X		X	X		Empire Arts Center
		X							Empire Theater Company
	X	X							Fire Hall Theater (GGF Community Theatre)
X	X	X						X	ND Museum of Art
		X							Muddy Waters Clay Center
						X			River Walk Artists, LLC
X	X							X	ArtWise
X	X								SPA - Summer Performing Arts
X	X	X							African Arts Arena
	X			X					Children's Choir
		X							Grand Forks Chorales
		X							ND Met: District Met Opera Auditions
	X	X							North Dakota Ballet Company
	X								Northern Valley Youth Orchestras
		X							River Forks Watercolor Society
		X							Sweet Adelines Twin Forks Chorus
		X							The Greater Grand Forks Symphony Orchestra
									The World's Smallest Gallery
X									UND Writer's Conference
									Mary Weaver, *Browning Arts*
									You Are Here
	X								Third Street Art Gallery
X	X								Northstar Council
		X							Lovely Dozen
									Conduit Theatre
					X		X		Grand Forks Herald
									Myra Foundation
X									GF Community Foundation
			X	X					Impact Foundation
X			X	X					ND Assoc. of Nonprofits
X									Arts Midwest (regional arts council)
X				X					ND Council for the Arts (state)
					X				Clear Channel Communications
					X				Leighton Broadcasting
X					X		X		CVB
			X			X	X		Chamber
									Alerus
									REA
									Chester Fritz Auditorium
			X			X			GGFYPs
X									City
X		X	X	X					UND
	X								School Dist
	X	X							Park Dist.
									East Grand Forks Performing Arts Center
				X					HB Sound & Light
X					X				Downtown Development Assoc.
									The Ember
	X	X							GF Public Library
	X	X							EGF Public Library

Outreach

Public outreach ranged from very casual awareness-building at an Alley Alive event to giving a "mid-term report" at a City Council work session. Stakeholder outreach by A&E was initiated through a targeted **online questionnaire**[4]. While the group agreed it was important to engage directly with arts and events stakeholders, they recognized that individualized meetings were not feasible due to sheer numbers. The questionnaire provided a means to establish baselines for next-level outreach. Response by event organizers vs arts organizations was roughly even, but showed distinct differences between arts and events respondents' perspectives, as summarized below.

Stakeholder Input from Sports/Events and Arts Groups

Issue	Sports and Events Groups	Arts Groups
Constraints	• Marketing/Advertising • Volunteers	• Fundraising • Marketing/Advertising
Funding	• Entry fees • Donations • Ticket Sales • Little mention of grants	• Private Grants • Public Grants • Donations • Ticket sales • Membership/dues
What do you need from community?	• Attend events • Events are generally functioning very well	• Marketing and advertising, professional development • General awareness
What would you change about arts/event support?	• Support systems and assistance programs are currently functioning well • Indoor facilities for winter sports	• Centralize information, support, and scheduling • Integrate arts and business • More coordination, dialogue and promotion
Key Partners	• Nearly unanimous in listing CVB as main partner • City agencies for logistics	• Tended to list other arts groups • Local and state advocacy agencies • City of Grand Forks

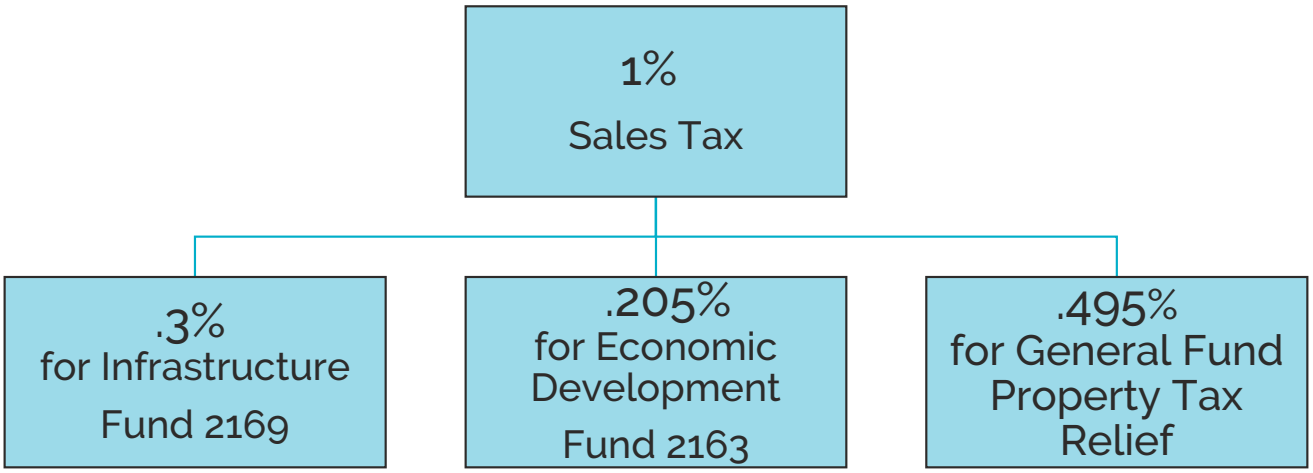
These findings formed the basis for a series of **listening sessions**. This approach offered a common public format but with content and participants tailored to the differing issues identified in the questionnaire, allowing a more complete and nuanced exploration of them. Three listening sessions were held in early 2016: the CVB hosted one for events stakeholders, the Empire Arts Center hosted arts organizations, and The Guild hosted one targeting individual artists. The listening sessions utilized a facilitated Q&A format, with audience response captured via clicker and shared with the group in real time. This provided a "safe" environment to ask thought-provoking questions, explain A&E's purpose in asking them, and hear differing opinions. Each listening session had a specific target audience but was open to the public and media; press covered the sessions at the CVB and the Empire. Attendance ranged from 25 to 50+ per session. Feedback received from the session, as detailed in following sections, was instrumental in formulating the findings and recommendations of this group.

[4] The questionnaire was sent to 39 recipients and 28 responses were received; see Questionnaire Summary supplemental report.

Public Funding

Grand Forks is unique in providing long-term City funding dedicated specifically to arts and events grants – no peer cities in the region offer similar programs. This "quality of life" funding is provided via local sales tax proceeds dedicated to economic development (see graphic below). Providing quality-of-life programming from sales tax dollars dedicated to economic development recognizes the important role that a vibrant community plays in a city's economic health and growth.

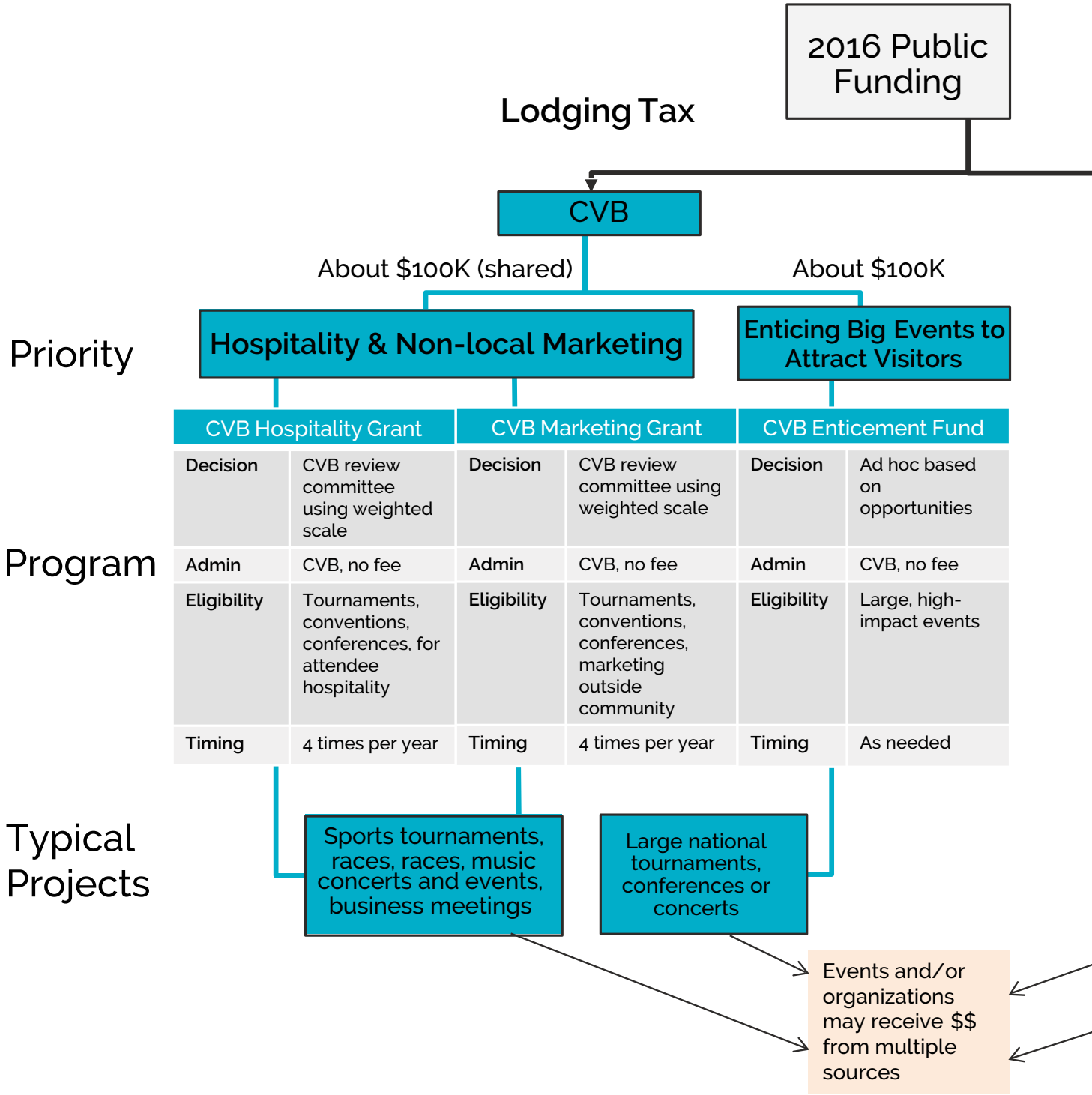
The A+E group agrees that making an investment in an appealing and culturally rich environment pays economic development dividends in the form of enhanced business development, tourism opportunities, resident satisfaction, and employee recruitment and retention. This gives Grand Forks a competitive edge under any circumstances, but becomes a necessity in the current workforce situation. Ultimately, business will only operate where people are. And people increasingly will go only to interesting and attractive cities. This broader perspective – arts and events as economic development infrastructure – provides important context to budget discussions.



City-funded grant programs shifted after the 1997 flood but support has been relatively stable for the past 15 years. In 2006, budgets for Beautification, Special Events and the Arts Regrant Programs were each allocated $100,000 per year, from sales tax proceeds as noted above. In recent years, annual budgets for these programs have been set based on the projected increase (or decrease) in sales tax proceeds. This has meant 3% annual increases since 2012; however, the recent downturn in sales tax receipts means this trend is not likely to continue. The CVB, which is funded from City lodging tax proceeds, also offers event-oriented grant programs. A&E did not attempt to similarly analyze private funding sources; however, it was noted that arts organizations are generally much more reliant on grants than are local events. The following chart illustrates this flow of public funding in 2016.

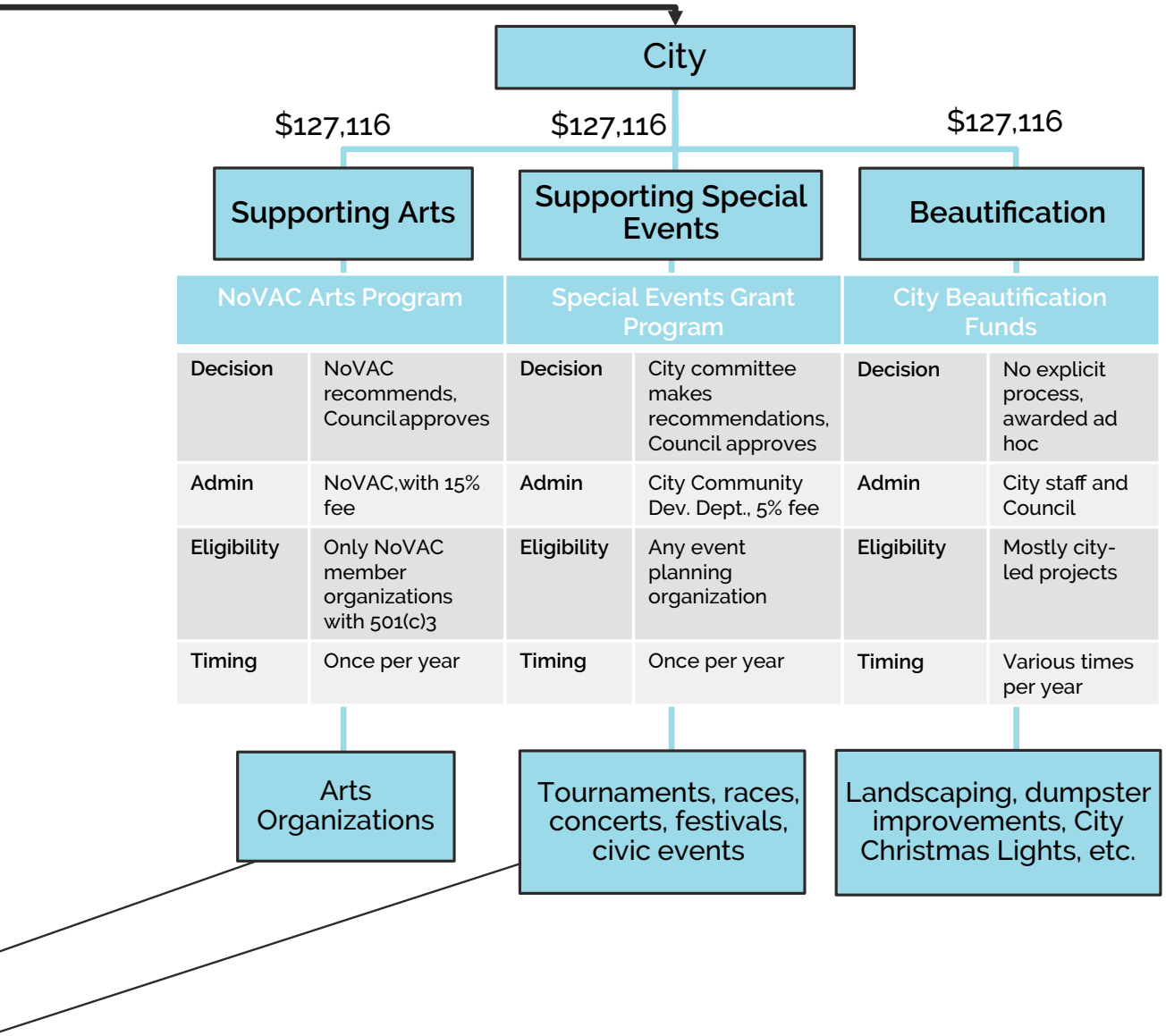
Wild Hog Marathon. Photo Courtesy GGFCVB.

Public Funding For Arts and Events



Making an investment in an appealing and culturally rich environment pays economic development dividends in the form of enhanced business development, tourism opportunities, resident satisfaction, and employee recruitment and retention.

Sales Tax



Summary, Synthesis, & Findings

A&E took a comprehensive look at how the City supports arts and events in our community, acknowledging the need to honestly answer the question, "How are we doing?" Asking that question produced a lot of data: inventories, survey responses, listening session comments, plus the feedback that each of those generated. This section attempts to organize that data by category and synthesize it into relevant findings.

The short answer to the question of "How are we doing?" is "Pretty well." The following findings expand on that answer, and the recommendations that flow from them offer suggestions for doing even better.

ARTS

It is a time of growth and change in Grand Forks' arts community. The first master planning process was recently completed. Art installations are popping up. Systemic transformations are being discussed. New organizations are forming. This is an exciting, dynamic time but that sometimes translates as messy and uncertain. A key question of the work of this group was "How do we harness this momentum while managing the inevitable tensions?"

The Arts + Culture Master Plan highlighted this and it was an important element in the A&E process. With a nationally recognized consultant tasked with developing an overall plan, A&E could focus on 1) the institutional structures already in place and 2) the partnerships and communication networks needed to move them forward, especially in regard to the Plan's strategies for governance, policy and funding. This launched an extended **conversation about the needs and wants of the arts community**, the value added by an arts council-type support organization, sustainability, and how to build consensus around these ideas. This conversation is still under way and, as the following findings indicate, it will continue to reshape local arts structures in the coming months and years.

- ***The arts community does not speak with one voice***. There are significant differences in the needs, wants, goals and priorities of performing arts vs. visual arts, individual artists vs. arts organizations, producers vs. consumers, donors vs. audiences.
- ***New groups are emerging . . .*** The Guild, Public Art Commission (PAC), Alley Alive – these did not exist three years ago. This growth is a great positive indicator of the energy and vitality within Grand Forks' arts community, but it is a community in flux.
- ***. . . so roles and responsibilities are still evolving.*** In both new and long-standing organizations, roles are evolving, missions are being redefined, and budgets are uncertain. The ACMP recommends a strong, centralized arts umbrella/support organization for a number of reasons, especially the capacity-building value it could add. The value that this type of organization can provide is recognized but the concept has not been embraced by local stakeholder groups or individuals. Listening sessions and subsequent feedback have shown that there is no consensus on this recommendation and that no organization -- old or new -- has demonstrated support across the full spectrum of arts stakeholders[5].

[5] Recently and after the conclusion of A&E, PAC and NoVAC have begun a process to formally integrate the organizations with the purpose of becoming a comprehensive arts support organization.

- ***The arts regrant program is crucial to local arts organizations but stakeholder support is for the funding more than the process.*** The North Valley Arts Council (NoVAC) has administered this program for the last 15 years, and many successes and positive outcomes have resulted from it; however, feedback gathered by A&E identified areas ripe for improvement. Along with the "culture of yes" concern cited previously, other issues with the current process were raised:
  - » NoVAC is an arts group but is ineligible for grants due to its administrative role.
  - » Grants are available for events/programming only– operational support and capacity building are needed but not funded.
  - » It doesn't fund individual artists.
  - » Eligibility for arts regrant funding vs. Special Events funding can be unclear.
  - » City Council approval of individual funding recommendations politicizes the process
  - » The funding allotted to program administration is a significant percentage of the overall budget.
- ***Sustainability is a common concern.*** Arts organizations rely heavily on grants and donors, and many feel they are all chasing the same limited dollars. Budgets are tight, so any loss of funding means programs are cut. Additionally, individual artists often feel undervalued, that there is an expectation they should work for free. But donated work can't sustain professional artists who make a living from it. There is concern that the funding necessary to support a centralized umbrella organization, as outlined in the ACMP, will come at the expense of existing arts programs, organizations and artists. And as public art becomes a new priority, a mechanism not only to create it but also to maintain it long-term must be developed.

Blues on the Red. Photo Courtesy GGFCVB.

EVENTS

Grand Forks has an abundance of events throughout the year that offer something for everybody. While these events include many that are arts-oriented, this ***Events*** section focuses on the **non-arts** events – tournaments, races, youth sports, community-oriented festivities. This separation recognizes how distinctly different the needs are, as are the circumstances of the two communities: while the local arts community is in a time of transition, recent years have seen event planners coalesce around the CVB as a leading partner and clearinghouse for event support and information. These findings reflect that.

- ***Event organizers have more similarities than differences in their needs and wants***. Event organizers (non-arts) feel more self-sustaining. While they also put a high value on City-funded grants, they are better able to rely on generated revenue and are less dependent on grants and donations. Other than a desire for greater attendance, they feel that their needs are generally being met.
- ***As with the arts, there is more support for Special Events funding than there is for the current process.*** Along with the "culture of yes" issue,
  - » It lumps widely disparate types of events (Christmas in the Park, Potato Bowl Parade, Wild Hog Marathon, Special Olympics) into a one-size-fits-all process.
  - » City funding is available only once a year.
  - » City Council approval of individual funding recommendations politicizes the process.
- ***Many event organizers operate in a hub and spoke structure with the CVB at the center.*** CVB functions as something of an events umbrella organization now -- event planners trust the CVB and the know-how it provides. Non-arts responders to the questionnaire

Empire Arts Center. Photo Courtesy GGFCVB.

reported that they view the current support structure positively.

- ***The City's Public Info Center is a "one stop shop" for public events permitting,*** including sharing data with the CVB events calendar. A user survey gave it high marks for being efficient, helpful, and comprehensive; however, some prospective and first-time event organizers were not aware it existed.
- ***Embrace winter.*** While event calendars show activities year-round, more events that encourage outdoor winter activity are needed. Winnipeg has shown that even harsh winter weather need not preclude successful outdoor events and festivals.

FACILITIES

Grand Forks has a wide array of venues-- public and private, indoor and outdoor, large and small -- for arts and events. They run the gamut from the intimate setting at the Firehall Theatre to the world-class facility that is the Ralph Engelstad Arena, and everything in between.

- ***The facilities available to present arts and events in the community are a strength but there is a lack of venues for creating, displaying and selling visual art.*** NoVAC led development of a downtown Arts Creation Center through design and demolition phases, but further fundraising efforts have stalled. This type of "maker space" has been mentioned as an option for inclusion in a new library, and a municipal gallery was cited as a niche that the community should consider filling. Affordable studio/live-work space options are limited – garages make a poor substitute. While an art gallery as a commercial/retail endeavor is different, public buildings offer ample opportunities for gallery-like display of the work of local visual artists.
- ***Grand Forks has top-notch facilities but they are too costly for smaller local events.*** It was noted that the old Civic Auditorium used to serve these smaller events, and nothing similar now exists. A&E also heard that this is especially an issue for events that are reaching out to under-served/under-privileged audiences. However, this is a budget issue, not a facilities issue. Quality facilities come at a cost, and operating "in the black" means those costs must be passed on to users. Rather than attempting to address this through special pricing or discount policies, A&E feels that existing grant programs offer a means to fill this funding gap.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

A&E found that Grand Forks has a healthy number of events going on throughout much of the year, adding to its overall cultural vibrancy. Having so many options is certainly a good problem for a community to have, but communicating their existence to all parties can be a challenge. This challenge was repeatedly heard by A&E through its listening sessions and was thus identified as an area where the community can do better.

- ***Where's our sports page?*** The traditional newspaper approach to sports reporting was used as the analogy for the media coverage wanted. Better public awareness -- especially pre-event exposure rather than just after-the-fact reporting -- was desired by both arts groups and event organizers. Complementary to that, better public awareness of existing event information resources is also important.
- ***Why are there so many scheduling conflicts?*** The abundance and variety of events gives plenty of options but can translate into fewer attendees per event – and this diluted audience means diminished proceeds. Reliable communication about event scheduling is important, but events should not be afraid to compete.
- ***Grand Forks DOES NOT need another calendar of events.*** The issue is improved communication and information sharing, along with better marketing of the existing calendars. A central point of contact for coordinating events was identified as a need by some survey respondents; however, the CVB already dedicates staff time to this, and their website provides a wealth of information of this type already, as does the Grand Forks Herald and NoVAC. An inventory compiled by A&E (page 6-7) yielded information that could bolster such a point of contact for events as well as boost awareness of various arts groups.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Grand Forks is fortunate for its one-of-a-kind venues, the variety of arts and events they support, and the unique flavor, character and identity they give the community. This IS a vibrant community, and Grand Forks proudly supports the local artists, events and culture that make it vibrant. This support takes many forms, both public and private, including local tax dollars that go directly to those who produce the art, events and culture that make Grand Forks Grand Forks.

In terms of private support, A&E found that generous donors will always be valued and appreciated, but better attendance and participation are recognized needs. In terms of City support, more grant funding would obviously be desirable to recipients, but A&E findings did not indicate that current funding levels are inadequate to sustain Grand Forks' arts and events communities. The findings did, however, highlight several flaws in existing programs – the mechanism for distributing City funds – and indicated they are overdue for review and revision. The recommended changes are therefore incremental rather than monumental, and represent important, achievable steps in improving the impact of and access to those funds.

Based on these findings, A&E submits these recommendations and following descriptions as a catalyst for positive change.

1. **The Convention and Visitors Bureau should administer the Special Events Program.**
2. **City staff should administer the Arts Regranting Program on an <u>interim</u> basis until City Council authorizes another organization to adminster it.**
3. **Beautification Program funds should be directed to public art.**
4. **Use visitor-oriented spaces in public buildings to display the work of local artists**
5. **More effective communication and collaboration at all levels must be encouraged and facilitated.**

We need to do a better job about celebrating what we have going on here. We're a humble and modest community of doers. We're doing a good job. It's time to recognize that.

We look at other communities not to copy them, but to stretch ourselves. We need to be able to take some risks.

Demers and Third downtown. Photo Courtesy GGFCVB.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau should administer the Special Events Program.

a. **The CVB board will submit to the Mayor and City Council a proposal for administering the Special Events grant program, subject to an annual report and re-authorization.**

b. **City funding for 4th of July fireworks should be set aside through an annual $10-15,000 line item in the Special Events budget.**

c. **Events that embrace winter should be prioritized.**

A&E sees this recommendation as a "no brainer." While CVB's mission is to attract visitors to Grand Forks, expanding their process to events that are oriented to residents would be relatively seamless. The CVB's expertise already supports community-oriented events: it houses key know-how about event planning; event planners trust the CVB and value it as a partner and resource; the CVB currently provides publicly-funded grants quarterly, and through criteria-based programs that address many of the shortcomings identified in the current Special Events program. This approach streamlines the process for event organizers and also depoliticizes it: City Council sets the annual budget for the program but individual grant awards will be finalized by the CVB. Regarding fireworks, it was agreed that Grand Forks residents appreciate and expect a community fireworks display on the 4th of July. Funding for this should therefore be explicit.

City staff should administer the Arts Regranting Program on an <u>interim</u> basis until City Council authorizes another organization to adminster it.

a. **The "interim basis" will extend until an organization develops a proposal that shows widespread support from the arts community and is acceptable to the Mayor and City Council, but at least through the 2017 regrant process which will begin in October of 2016.**

This recommendation recognizes the importance of regrant funds within the arts community as well as concerns with the current process that were expressed to A&E. The Arts + Culture Master Plan recommends an umbrella-type arts council and it is logical that any arts-related grant programs should be administered by it; however, Grand Forks' arts organizations are in transition. This recommendation acts as a holding mechanism that ensures regrant funds are distributed during this transitional period. It also provides a level playing field as longstanding (NoVAC and the Empire) and developing (PAC and The Guild) organizations build their constituencies and solidify their missions within the community. The one-year minimum is meant to ensure that these and other local groups take sufficient time to network, build consensus, and develop a well-planned approach that sustains community expectations and, over time, builds overall capacity. City Planning & Community Development staff anticipate working closely with the arts community to establish interim processes as well as facilitate the regrant program's transition back to the private sector.

Beautification Program funds should be directed to public art.

a. **Starting in 2017, dedicate at least 30 percent of the annual Beautification Program budget to a public art fund, targeted (but not limited) to infrastructure costs associated with art installations along the "Grand Loop."**

Conceptualized as a public-private partnership, the Grand Loop identified in the Arts + Culture Master Plan uses public art to create community identity and connections. Public art certainly qualifies as "beautification," and this recommendation establishes an ongoing source of public funds to help implement the Grand Loop on a project-specific basis. Even assuming most projects will be done as a public-private partnership, establishing a dedicated fund that can build year-by-year facilitates large-scale

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installations. Note that this recommendation is limited to concept and funding level intentionally. A process for approving public art projects, awarding funds, and long-term maintenance must be developed (see ACMP) but that is beyond the scope of A&E's timeframe or expertise. As the city completes future community infrastructure projects, such as transportation and water handling, it should incorporate public art elements into those projects as appropriate.

b. **Dedicate some or all of 2017 Beautification Program carryover funds (±$500,000) to upgrades to Town Square that will establish it as Grand Forks' signature outdoor venue for performers, events and public art. In addition, direct 5% annually to a Town Square reserve for replacement account and to maintenance/operations.**

Beautification Program funds were originally allocated annually on a competitive basis, similar to the arts and events regrant programs. That was discontinued about ten years ago, and funds have since been expended on an ad hoc basis (e.g., holiday lights, Gateway Drive/ Hwy 2 entry feature). Over the years, this has resulted in a substantial unexpended balance. This recommendation directs that carryover to a project that clearly supports arts and events, that beautifies Grand Forks, that is needed and overdue, and that does not have a designated source of funds. The annual set-aside is meant to establish that designated source of funds going forward.

Use visitor-oriented spaces in public buildings to display the work of local artists

NoVAC's "Mayor's Choice Program" in City Hall offers a model that could be replicated to expand access to and visibility of local art and artists in publicly owned buildings throughout Grand Forks. Increasing available display space in turn increases access to the art and its visibility in the public eye. It is recommended that public buildings with visitor-oriented spaces (e.g., lobbies, main halls, atriums, etc.) be utilized, through a curated process, as areas for artists to showcase their work and raise the profile of art in Grand Forks.

More effective communication and collaboration at all levels must be encouraged and facilitated.

Communication mechanisms already exist to facilitate collaboration and awareness of events in the Grand Forks community. The CVB's website, for example, lists a vast array of information ranging from event schedules to facility descriptions. The City should update its website to add a frequently asked questions page and links to the CVB and other organizations' websites as part of the effort to create a more intuitive, collaborative communication network. A clear point of contact for both organizers and the general public could also help alleviate scheduling conflict and attendance issues mentioned previously. In order for those effects to manifest, however, a greater emphasis on open communication and collaboration among all involved parties, especially between organizers and information sources, must be encouraged.

Arts & Events

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GRAND FORKS
VIBRANCY PROJECT