



*Atlantic Presenters
Association*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

Approved by the Board of Directors on September 20th, 2024



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Background

The Atlantic Presenters Association (APA) is a member-based arts service organization that connects a multidisciplinary network of not-for-profit performing arts presenters and offers programs and services to presenters across the Atlantic Region. APA members connect artists and audiences and bring live performing arts experiences to the Atlantic Region, including but not limited to performing arts centres, theatres, festivals, powwows, cultural centres, community and volunteer presenters, universities, symphonies, First Nations and municipalities.

Like the arts and culture sector generally, the APA was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, rendering its five-year Strategic Plan (2019-2024) irrelevant. In response to the global pandemic, APA shifted its operations to offer virtual conferences, gatherings, and professional development opportunities. It also provided much-needed support and information to organizations to navigate these challenges and advocated on behalf of the sector.

In January 2024, APA contracted SRL Solutions to lead the Strategic Planning process, which involved extensive consultation with members, funders, collaborators, interested parties, staff and board members, as well as a 1.5-day in-person planning process with the staff, board, and members of the Equity Action Advisory Committee. A summary of the process can be found on pages 2-3.

As a result, three Strategic Directions have been identified, along with activities and key success indicators, to serve as a starting place for the staff to focus their efforts. Flowing from this work, the Executive Director and team will create a series of time-bound work plans to map how the work will be completed.

This 2024 - 2027 Strategic Plan is a collaborative effort to take stock of where the APA currently stands and what needs to be done to ultimately position the APA as the industry leader it endeavours to be.

Summary of Consultations

SRL Solutions undertook an extensive consultation process to inform the creation of this Strategic Plan, ensuring a comprehensive range of input, experiences, and perspectives were included. This process involved actively engaging with funders, Indigenous presenters, large presenters, general members, APA staff, board members, and committee members, including the Equity Action Advisory Committee (EAAC), to gather valuable feedback and insights. By casting a wide net with many opportunities to participate, SRL Solutions created a robust, thoughtful, and inclusive plan that reflects the needs of members and the organization.

A summary of the consultation process is as follows:

- Meetings with the Strategic Plan Steering Committee to understand the goals of the Strategic Plan process
- Review of key APA documents
- Consultation with members including:
 - Membership survey (26 responses)
 - In-person member consultation in NL and PEI (11 participants)
 - Virtual member consultation (0)
 - Funder conversations (5)
 - Large presenters (5)
 - Indigenous presenters (2)
- Strategic Planning Sessions in Halifax over 1.5 days (15 participants representing staff team, board directors, and members of the Equity Action Advisory Committee)
- Staff consultations (4 individuals)
- Supplementary consultations with board directors and EAA Committee members (4 participants)
- Review of draft Strategic Directions with the Strategic Plan Steering Committee (6 participants)
- Review of draft Strategic Directions with APA Board of Directors (8 participants)

An overall summary of feedback is as follows:

- “Yes, and...” (While there are many things being done well, there is also a desire for improvements.)
- There is a strong sense of appreciation for the connections, relationships, and mentorship facilitated by the APA for presenters across the region.
- Membership is meeting the needs of some members in terms of events, connections, and professional development, but not for others.
- The advocacy work with the government is highly valued, as is the communication provided, such as the newsletter.
- APA leadership in EDIAR (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Reconciliation) efforts are appreciated and yet, some people indicate that they find expectations in these areas overwhelming and/or unforgiving.
- Block Booking is working well for some members but not at all for others and remains an untapped resource for many.
- There is a perception that the APA is doing a lot of valuable work, yet people are not fully aware of it.
- There is a significant opportunity for APA to improve efforts in communicating its achievements and telling its story.

For a more detailed summary of feedback, please see Appendix A.

APA Foundations

The APA completed a review and update of their Vision, Purpose, and Agreements in 2023. These serve as the foundation on which the three-year Strategic Plan is built.

Vision (why we do what we do)

A diverse, healthy, equitable and sustainable performing arts sector.

Purpose (what we do)

- To be a connector, helping performing artists and presenters bring a wide range of experiences into communities.
- To provide our members with opportunities to learn about accessibility, equity, and social justice and to support equitable, respectful, and engaging experiences and spaces.
- To provide our members with education and knowledge to assist in skill development.
- To connect members to support a respectful, equitable, innovative, and generous performing arts sector in the region.

Agreements

- Every person in the Atlantic Region deserves access to performing arts.
- Sharing meaningful experiences through live performances helps to build inclusive communities.
- Working together in a respectful, supportive, generous way strengthens everyone and allows for our members' development.
- We, the Atlantic Presenters Association (members, board and staff), agree that we commit to contributing to a space that is accessible and free from oppression, harassment, and discrimination. At our gatherings, we will treat ourselves and each other with respect and dignity, regardless of age, race, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religion and all our other diverse identities. We will not tolerate any acts of racism, white supremacy, sexism, heterosexism and cissexism, homophobia/queerphobia and transphobia, sizeism, ableism, ageism, or physical and sexual violence and harassment.

Looking Ahead

The 2024-2027 Atlantic Presenters Association Strategic Plan includes a comprehensive description of three Strategic Directions as follows:

1. **Telling Our Story:** by effectively communicating APA's work, achievements, and impact.
2. **Enhancing Membership Services:** by better meeting the needs of more APA members.
3. **Building a Strong Organizational Foundation:** by ensuring the APA is focused, intentional, and sustainable.

Supported by the Venn diagram on the following page, each Strategic Direction interacts with the others and creates outcomes that will contribute to achieving APA's overall Vision. An explanation of these outcomes is as follows:

When the APA focuses on **Telling Our Story** and enhancing **Membership Services**, the organization will achieve increased member engagement and support, leading to greater participation in APA initiatives, enhancing the value of membership, attracting new members, and meeting and exceeding funding requirements.

Focusing on enhancing **Membership Services** and building a **Strong Organizational Foundation** will result in a strengthened community of members, a convincing leadership position, and a lasting presence in the region's arts and culture sector.

Building a **Strong Organizational Foundation** and **Telling Our Story** will enhance financial stability by strengthening advocacy efforts with the government and by creating additional revenue generation opportunities through effective communications and marketing strategies.

By focusing on all three Strategic Directions, the Atlantic Presenters Association will be a **Trusted Partner**, setting the standards to achieve a diverse, healthy, equitable, and sustainable performing arts sector.

For each Strategic Direction, there are high-level activities and key success indicators that will be the focus for staff and board over the next three years. The Executive Director is responsible for identifying priorities and working with staff to operationalize the plan.

Not all Strategic Activities will be completed at the same time, but progress updates should be provided by the Executive Director at regular board meetings and an annual review of progress against the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Directions Overview



Strategic Direction #1: Telling Our Story

The APA is well-recognized and valued across the region for its role in connecting the arts and culture sector. However, there is often confusion about its specific purpose and focus. As one consultation participant aptly noted, “APA does a lot, but people don’t know it.”

Almost equally important as the work itself is the effort to effectively communicate the APA’s work, achievements, and impact. Telling the story of the APA’s work is key to enhancing understanding and appreciation of its contributions and will result in greater engagement all around.

To address this, APA will focus on three (3) key areas to tell its story:

1. **Operations Story:** Promoting the actual services offered by APA, including programs, events, and supports for new and existing members, funders, sponsors, etc.
2. **Advocacy Stories:** Including two approaches:
 - The story APA is telling government and funding agencies on behalf of the sector, including what they hear from members.
 - The communications and updates that APA is hearing from government and funding agencies that should be communicated to members.
3. **Member Stories:** Amplification of the voices and stories of member organizations, especially as they relate to APA’s Vision and Mission (i.e. EDIAR work, professional development, etc.).

When the APA prioritizes these three areas, awareness of the organization's Mission will grow, resulting in heightened member engagement, increased event participation, and greater uptake of services. These efforts will also establish APA as a trusted intermediary between the government and the sector, ultimately advancing its Vision of being a trusted partner in the sector.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

1. Robust Communications Strategy

A robust communications strategy will be developed to guide APA's communication efforts in achieving the Strategic Directions. It will include goals, objectives, and an overall approach to communications. This will encompass defining audiences, developing key messages, identifying communication channels, and establishing the organization's overall positioning and tone. The strategy will ensure that all messaging aligns with APA's Vision, Mission, and Agreements and that efforts are ultimately in support of the APA's Strategic Vision.

The strategy should also provide a structured and consistent approach to advocacy efforts, reaching and engaging key collaborators and strategic partners, particularly existing and potential members. The strategy will differentiate between communications for internal and external audiences. The newsletter, identified as a positive communications tool for recipients, can be supplemented with additional tactics to share information and tell the APA's story effectively.

Success Indicators:

- 1-1** Completion of a skills audit and gap analysis to identify team strengths in developing a Communication Strategy
- 1-2** Source funding and create an RFP for the development of a comprehensive Communication Strategy
- 1-3** Flowing from the Communication Strategy, develop a comprehensive Communications Plan to focus on short to medium-term implementation of the Communications Strategy

2. Amplified Advocacy

The APA is recognized as a key advocate for the arts and culture sector in Atlantic Canada. During the consultation phase, government funders expressed a strong relationship with the APA, appreciating its openness and honesty about the challenges it faces. They value the opportunities the APA creates for the industry to connect with funders at its events. Moving forward, the APA will enhance relationship-building efforts with funders beyond funding discussions to foster a more collaborative partnership where funders consider the APA a trusted partner.

In support of the Strategic Direction of telling its story, the APA must consider both the narrative communicated to the government on behalf of itself as an organization and on behalf of the sector, incorporating feedback from members. Additionally, it must keep members updated on advocacy efforts and relay relevant information received from the government.

Success Indicators:

- 2-1** Create an advocacy calendar for regular meetings with key funders and government contacts. In addition to providing updates on behalf of the APA and the sector generally, provide value by sharing helpful resources and invitations to deepen involvement
- 2-2** Identify opportunities to offer value to funders and government contacts outside of funding conversations and proposals (i.e. sharing helpful resources, invitations to events, etc.)
- 2-3** Identify opportunities to connect Indigenous presenters with funders, in addition to the Indigenous Presenter Gathering at Contact East

3. Commitment to EDIAR

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Reconciliation (EDIAR) are at the core of the APA's mission, driving its commitment to fostering a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive arts and culture sector in Atlantic Canada. While being a leader in this area can be challenging, the APA embraces this role and actively pushes the status quo through its member services and operational practices.

The APA provides consistent guidance, setting a high standard for the sector, leading by example, and inspiring others to champion diversity and inclusion within their own communities.

Among the 100+ APA members, there is a wide range of awareness and action regarding the adoption of EDIAR policies. Considering the region's remote, rural, and urban communities, along with their diverse social and political histories, the APA is committed to meeting members where they are in terms of awareness, readiness, and capacity.

Meeting members where they are is as important for organizations and individuals who are more advanced in their EDIAR journeys as it is for those who are at the beginning stages. For some, EDIAR work may be seen as an aspect of the work, while for others, it is their lived experience and a reality from which they cannot disengage.

As an organization deeply committed to this work, it is essential for the APA to continuously assess the membership's response and engagement in the work.

Being on the cutting edge is not always a comfortable place to be, and there are increased risks. Risks of alienating membership (for doing too much or too little), falling into white saviour roles (patronizing behaviour towards marginalized groups), and navigating white fragility (defensive reactions to racial discussions), to name a few of the challenges.

For APA, this work needs to be a fine balance of patience, nudging, and making big leaps that lead the sector in new and deeper ways to address the intersections of colonization, capitalism, and systemic inequities. This also means that APA members, staff, and board alike will make mistakes along the way. Finding ways to be generous with each other while holding each other accountable is another tricky yet important aspect of this journey.

To advance this Mission, the APA will continue its commitment to EDIAR by embedding these principles throughout the organization. This means continuously and intentionally focusing on incorporating EDIAR values into events, membership benefits, policies, and the organizational culture as a whole.

Understanding that this work is never done, APA remains dedicated to nurturing and expanding this focus internally and externally. The organization will actively build strategic partnerships with other groups engaged in EDIAR-related work and support its members in their efforts to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and reconciliation.

Success Indicators:

3-1 Develop an evaluation tool (SRL Solutions to provide an example) to ensure EDIAR principles are aligned and practiced across all areas of the organization, including programming, operations, human resources, governance, partnerships, and communications

3-2 Research existing organizations and programs doing EDIAR-related work in the region and identify opportunities to partner (e.g. [Ripple Effect](#), bystander training for festivals)

3-3 Assess the organization's capacity and ability to enforce its Respectful Event Agreement. Revise if necessary

Strategic Direction #2: Membership Services

The APA is a membership association that unites not-for-profit presenters, theatres, community presenters, powwows, and festivals across Atlantic Canada. Membership is exclusive to not-for-profit organizations, with around 100 members currently participating under a 'one-size-fits-all' membership model.

One of the biggest challenges facing the APA is how to meet the needs of such a wide variety of organizations.

Considerations include:

- Small, medium, and large organizations
- Presenters, venues, and festivals
- Remote, rural, and urban locations
- French, English, & Indigenous presenters and organizations
- Seasonal and year-round
- Indoor and outdoor and effects of weather/climate change
- Volunteer-run or reliant, small staff, and large staff teams
- Visual arts and music
- Understanding of and desire for action with respect to EDIAR

APA offers the following membership benefits:

- Reduced registration fee for Contact East, APA's annual showcasing conference
- Reduced registration fee for ShiftChange, APA's annual professional development conference for presenters
- Comprehensive support ranging from professional development to welcoming artists to stages
- Access to the Arts Touring Connector Block Booking system, helping organizations put their dream artists on stage at an affordable rate
- Pitch Sessions for regional presenters to share their dream artists and be inspired by the pitches of others

- Professional development series throughout the year, covering a wide range of topics, including Block Booking, programming strategies, tax workshops, equity, accessibility and inclusion, fundraising, etc.
- Access to the Members' Resource Library, containing videos, PDFs, and more from APA's conference and professional development sessions
- Inclusion and representation in regional and national advocacy for the arts sector
- Consultation and assistance in navigating funding opportunities
- Biweekly Member Memo with info on upcoming events, opportunities, and workshop recordings
- Mentorship and networking opportunities

A detailed description of APA's member services can be found here:
<https://atlanticpresenters.ca/membership/>

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

4. Enhance Member Services

A common piece of feedback received during the consultation was a strong sense of appreciation for the connections, relationships, and mentorship facilitated by the APA for presenters across the region.

While membership services are meeting the needs of some members in terms of events, connections, and professional development, they need to meet the needs of others. For example, less than 20% of members use the Block Booking system, and large presenters report that APA events and programming don't always meet their specific needs.

As a membership association, the value of services offered is the foundation of the APA's existence. As such, APA will focus on enhancing the services offered to meet the needs of more existing members and to recruit new members.

Success Indicators:

4-1 Increase uptake and functionality of Block Booking service

4-2 Establish a Resource Library for members to serve as a cohesive and searchable hub, housing old webinars, training, resources, and supports (e.g., accessibility guide for events, HR policies, updated COVID protocols, etc.)

4-3 Explore how APA can offer services that benefit large presenters and are revenue generation for APA

4-4 Develop a plan to better meet the needs of Indigenous presenters, including exploring funding for a full-time Indigenous Presenters Coordinator position staffed by someone who is well-acquainted with the communities in Atlantic Canada

5. Explore Membership Criteria & Benefits

Currently, APA's membership model is one-size-fits-all and exclusively available to not-for-profit organizations. To expand its membership, better cater to the needs of its current members, and enhance revenue generation opportunities, APA will explore a tiered membership model. This new approach would provide more tailored benefits and options for various types of organizations.

Some proposed ideas for differentiation include:

- Inclusion of for-profit presenters
- Different levels for large presenters compared to smaller organizations
- Dedicated tiers for Indigenous presenters and powwow organizers

Creating a tiered model could expand APA's membership, meet the needs of more organizations, generate more unrestricted revenue, and create a more inclusive and supportive community. This will better meet the needs of more organizations and further strengthen the APA's ability to be a trusted partner in the region.

Success Indicators:

- 5-1** Meet with other presenting associations to learn more about their tiered approach to membership (e.g. Ontario)
- 5-2** Convene groups of members to explore how a tiered approach could meet their needs (i.e. large presenters, outdoor festivals, seasonal venues, etc.)
- 5-3** Explore the possibility of including for-profit presenters in membership, including the potential implications and opportunities with government funding
- 5-4** Meet with Indigenous presenters to discuss how to better serve them as members and if a separate membership type would be desired

6. New Member Recruitment

In addition to enhancing membership services and providing value to existing members, the APA has the opportunity to market its membership benefits to more organizations across Atlantic Canada. Intentional efforts will prioritize diversity in recruitment to increase representation and participation from traditionally underserved communities and organizations.

To effectively sequence this work, the APA will be best positioned to begin new member recruitment once it has developed its narrative, strengthened current member services, and explored the expansion of membership criteria.

As part of this strategic planning process, the APA conducted initial research to identify regional not-for-profit and charitable organizations that are not yet members. This analysis provides a foundation for further exploration, offering opportunities to engage potential new members while also considering membership criteria.

Success Indicators:

- 6-1** Based on Strategic Direction #1: Telling Our Story, craft communications specifically to recruit new members
- 6-2** Develop a focused recruitment campaign that includes traditionally underserved organizations
- 6-3** Marketing and communications materials are developed to support recruitment and onboarding efforts (i.e. slide deck for new member orientation, one-pagers, email marketing, etc.)

Strategic Direction #3: Strong Organizational Foundation

To achieve its Vision of being a Trusted Partner in connecting the arts and culture sector and inclusive and equitable operations, the APA needs a Strong Organizational Foundation. This foundation will ensure that the work is focused, intentional, and sustainable.

Key activities include maximizing fund development, optimizing the board's purpose and functionality, and implementing succession planning to ensure organizational continuity.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

7. Finances & Fund Development

The APA currently receives the majority of its funding from provincial and federal government departments, with unrestricted funds generated through membership dues, Block Booking, and events.

This reliance on government funding makes the APA vulnerable to shifts in government policies and economic conditions, a common challenge for not-for-profit organizations. In response, many organizations aim to diversify their funding sources to ensure a more stable financial footing and better navigate a dynamic political landscape.

To build a Strong Organizational Foundation, the APA will focus on increasing and maximizing opportunities to grow unrestricted funds, exploring strategic partnerships, and expanding its membership base.

Success Indicators:

- 7-1** Increase membership base and ensure payment of membership dues
- 7-2** Maximize participation in Block Booking to increase annual revenues
- 7-3** Explore providing additional fees for service offerings to existing and new members (for example, Summit for Large Venues)

8. Clarification of Board Function

With a small staff team spread across the Atlantic provinces, having a well-functioning board is essential. An engaged board should provide strategic guidance, diverse perspectives, and valuable connections to support the APA's Strategic Directions.

The APA's current board consists of passionate leaders from presenting and festival organizations who are deeply familiar with the joys and challenges of the arts and culture sector. They bring lived experiences that span navigating the intricacies of remote communities and urban centers, managing government funding cycles, responding to climate change and unpredictable weather, and coping with the impacts of a global pandemic.

A key role of the board is setting the Strategic Vision for the organization. And in a member-based organization like APA, it includes championing the plan with members.

Strengthening APA's organizational foundation involves clearly defining the board's role, purpose, and responsibilities while ensuring that the board's expertise aligns with APA's strategic outcomes. This includes reviewing existing skills and expertise, identifying potential gaps, and engaging in strategic recruitment to build a board that is well-equipped to support the organization's goals.

To advance APA's strategic goals, the board also plays a crucial role in promoting, discussing, and engaging members in the Strategic Plan and its Directions. Board members should actively foster understanding and buy-in to the Strategic Vision across the membership, using their influence and connections to drive participation and support. This helps ensure that the plan is not only a guiding document but also a living strategy embraced by the entire APA community.

Success Indicators:

8-1 Create a board development strategy that includes reviewing the Terms of Reference, job descriptions, and an onboarding plan to ensure active participation and commitment from board members

8-2 Create a process for board members to actively promote and engage members with the Strategic Plan, ensuring it is understood and supported throughout the organization. This includes regular updates, member meetings, and other outreach activities

8-3 Ensure that the focus of existing committees (EAAC, Executive, Membership, Finance, and Nominations) for the next three years aligns with the Strategic Actions in this plan. Additionally, consider establishing a communications committee to support Strategic Direction #1: Telling Our Story

9. Organizational Continuity

The APA has a small and dedicated staff team with long-standing leadership. To strengthen the organization's foundation, it is essential to create a succession plan for scenarios such as a sudden departure (fondly referred to as being "hit by the lotto") or, more commonly and considerably less exciting, a planned change in leadership. Succession planning is important to maintain immense amounts of institutional knowledge, promote continuity, and support future leadership.

Another activity to support Organizational Continuity is to develop and implement an annual operational plan. This would be developed from the overall Strategic Plan and would inform APA's annual goals. It includes a calendar to illustrate when and where the APA is doing its work, including program offerings, in-person and virtual events, external events or conferences attended, etc.

Success Indicators:

- 9-1** A succession plan is created for the Executive Director role
- 9-2** A succession plan policy is developed and incorporated into the board policies
- 9-3** Develop and implement an annual operational plan based on Strategic Activities in the overall Strategic Plan

Recommendations for Implementation

This Strategic Plan aims to chart the path toward achieving APA's vision of being the industry leader in a diverse, healthy, equitable, and sustainable performing arts sector.

APA will work to engage and grow its membership by improving services and telling its story, ultimately strengthening the organizational foundation and ensuring its effectiveness and longevity.

This ambitious three-year Strategic Plan reflects the significant consultation of the membership, the board, and staff. This plan provides direction yet is built with the understanding that the landscape can change quickly, and the organization must also be nimble.

Some of these Strategic Directions can be 'checked off,' while others require additional resourcing to implement. Yet other Directions are routines, habits, and processes that will help drive a positive organizational culture.

To ensure successful implementation, we recommend APA maintains an intentional focus on the Strategic Plan. This can be done by:

1. APA leadership prioritizes Strategic Actions
2. APA implements an annual board and staff planning and training day
3. APA team implements 3x per year planning sessions with the team
4. APA refocuses their Team Meetings to align with their 90-day plans
5. ED Board Reports are tied to the Strategic Plan (template available)
6. The APA Board creates their own plan and accountability for prioritizing and executing its pieces of the plan

Prepared by:



SRL Solutions

Appendix A

Summary of Consultation Feedback

APA Strategic Planning Feedback: Your Input, Our Future

May - June 2024

In this deck...

- 1. Overview of APA Survey**
- 2. Focus Groups: General APA Members**
- 3. Focus Group: Indigenous Presenters**
- 4. Focus Group: Large Presenters**
- 5. Interviews: Funders**

Survey Results

Survey Duration: April 10 - May 6, 2024
26 Responses

Q1: Is your organization currently a member of APA?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100%	26
No	0%	0
TOTAL		26

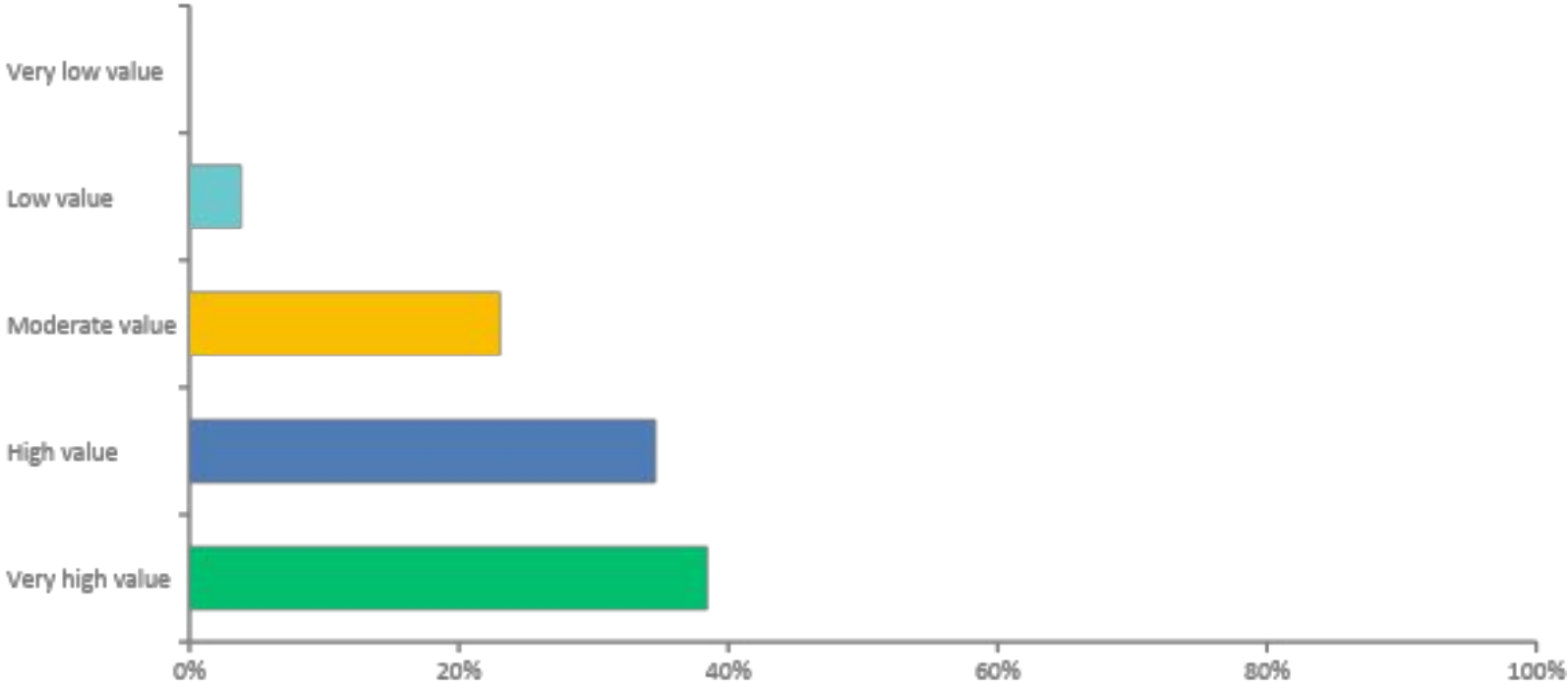
Q2: How long has your organization been a member of the APA?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 1

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 year	0%	0
1-3 years	8.00%	2
4-6 years	16.00%	4
7-9 years	24.00%	6
10 years or more	52.00%	13
TOTAL		25

Q3: How would you rate the value of your APA membership?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



Q4: How familiar are you with the benefits of your APA membership?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very familiar	50.0%	13
Familiar	46.15%	12
Somewhat familiar	3.85%	1
Not at all familiar	0%	0
TOTAL		26

Q5: Which APA member services have you used in the past year? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 26

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Reduced registration fee for Contact East	50.0%	13
Reduced registration fee for ShiftChange	57.69%	15
Arts Touring Connector block booking system	50.0%	13
Participation in Pitch Sessions	50.0%	13
Professional Development series	65.38%	17
Consultation for funding opportunities	15.38%	4
Biweekly Member Memo	61.54%	16
Mentorship and networking opportunities	53.85%	14
Other (please specify)	7.69%	2
TOTAL		107

Q6: Of the services and benefits that you used in the past year, how satisfied were you with each of them:

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	DIS-SATISFIED	VERY DISATISFIED	N/A	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Contact East	39.13% 9	26.09% 6	4.35% 1	0% 0	0% 0	30.43% 7	23	1.5
ShiftChange	38.46% 10	11.54% 3	15.38% 4	0% 0	3.85% 1	30.77% 8	26	1.83
Arts Touring Connector block booking system	33.33% 7	14.29% 3	28.57% 6	4.76% 1	0% 0	19.05% 4	21	2.06
Participation in Pitch Sessions	13.64% 3	27.27% 6	22.73% 5	0% 0	0% 0	36.36% 8	22	2.14
Professional Development series	20.83% 5	41.67% 10	12.50% 3	4.17% 1	4.17% 1	16.67% 4	24	2.15
Consultation for funding opportunities	13.64% 3	13.64% 3	13.64% 3	4.55% 1	0% 0	54.55% 12	22	2.2

Q7: What challenges do you face as a presenter in Atlantic Canada?

1. **Financial constraints** including decreased government funding, corporate sponsorships, and multi-year funding agreements, rising costs of production and of bringing artists to the region, and funder priorities not aligning with what 'sells' in the market
2. **Audience engagement** including keeping programming affordable while managing rising costs, inconsistency of audiences, and in rural areas impacting revenue and ability to offer better compensation for artists, difficulty in developing audiences for lesser-known artists/art forms
3. **Lack of suitable venues** for dance and theatre (particularly in NS) and access to qualified technical professionals
4. **Operational challenges**, such as overly bureaucratic and time-consuming grant application processes, absence of succession plans, staff retention and burn-out (due to absence of multi-year funding agreements), and reliance on volunteer support for festivals
5. **Market demand**, such as balancing high programming expectations with what actually sells in the market, compounded by funder priorities not always aligning with market demands
6. **Competition for funding** between nonprofits and charitable organizations, and perception that the Arts are not as important as other causes

Q7: What challenges do you face as a presenter in Atlantic Canada?

“Growth in funding has been slow yet expectations on programming are extremely high. Funder priorities don't always align with what 'sells' in the market, so it is a challenge to find a balance. With inflation, high costs etc... funding feels tighter than ever. We are worried about staff burn-out. Post-pandemic, there is a lot that has improved, however audiences remain somewhat inconsistent.”

“Our lack of multi-year funding puts a big strain on our human resources. (Though we're cautiously optimistic that we will get multi-year funding from OACO.) We also don't have a succession plan. We have a few key people who do the majority of the work and they are getting burnt out. If they walk away we could be in jeopardy. In our rural area we sometimes have a hard time getting people out to see lesser known artists. Part of our mandate is to present emerging artists but it can be hard to market those shows.”

Q8: How can APA better support your work as a presenter?

1. **Continued advocacy and funding support**, including a need for funding to support a reduction in artist fees, as well as more assertive and proactive advocacy and communications
2. **Programming and booking**, including the need for booking system to better align with specific programming needs of different festivals and organizations, seasonal differences, and urban versus rural audiences
3. **Networking and collaboration**, particularly between festivals and theatres or those running in different seasons. One respondent questioned the relevance of the APA network when artists can be contacted directly on a range of platforms
4. **Clear communication**, emphasis on concise and direct communication with all necessary information for booking shows, and responding to booking opportunities in a timely manner to facilitate efficient scheduling and planning
5. **Professional development** opportunities to include practical or hands-on tools in addition to ideological PD offerings. One respondent expressed that while feeling supported they sometimes felt preached to

Q9: What additional support or services would you like APA to offer?

1. More online sessions/meetings throughout the year to allow greater participation
2. A marketing network to support event promotion across the region
3. Clear instructions and letter templates for advocacy efforts
4. Positive feedback on professional development opportunities and the Spring Retreat with request for online options, as well as business management training or sponsored pitch sessions
5. Suggestion for APA to house an arts job bank on the website related to jobs in the region
6. Positive feedback to APA for their advocacy and championing of EDIA with suggestion that APA to negotiate a new funding program to incentivize presenting shows that support EDIA artists

Q10: Other industry associations to which your organization belongs:

Answered: 18

PEI	NB	Regional/National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music PEI(1) • Tourism Industry Association PEI (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RADARTS(2) • Music NB(1) • ArtsLink NB(1) • NBMA(1) is thisMusic NJB? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAPACOA (10) • ECMA (4) • PACT (3) • PARC (2) • PGC (1) • APAP (1) • MICC (2) • Atlantic Moves (1) • CLMA (3) • CanDance Network (1) • Canada Dance Assembly (1) • Folk Alliance International (1) • Folk Music Canada (1)
NS	NL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music NS(5) • Theatre NS(2) • Cape Breton Partnership (1) • Cape Breton Chamber (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music NL • Arts NL 	

Q11: How do you like to receive information from APA? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Email newsletters	100%	24
Social media updates	25.00%	6
Facebook	12.50%	3
Instagram	4.17%	1
X/Twitter	0%	0
Direct mail	12.50%	3
Phone calls	12.50%	3
TOTAL		40

Q12: Any other comments or suggestions for APA:

Answered: 10 Skipped: 16

“You folks are amazing and work so well as a team! You are the main reason working in the Atlantic region feels so collegial!”

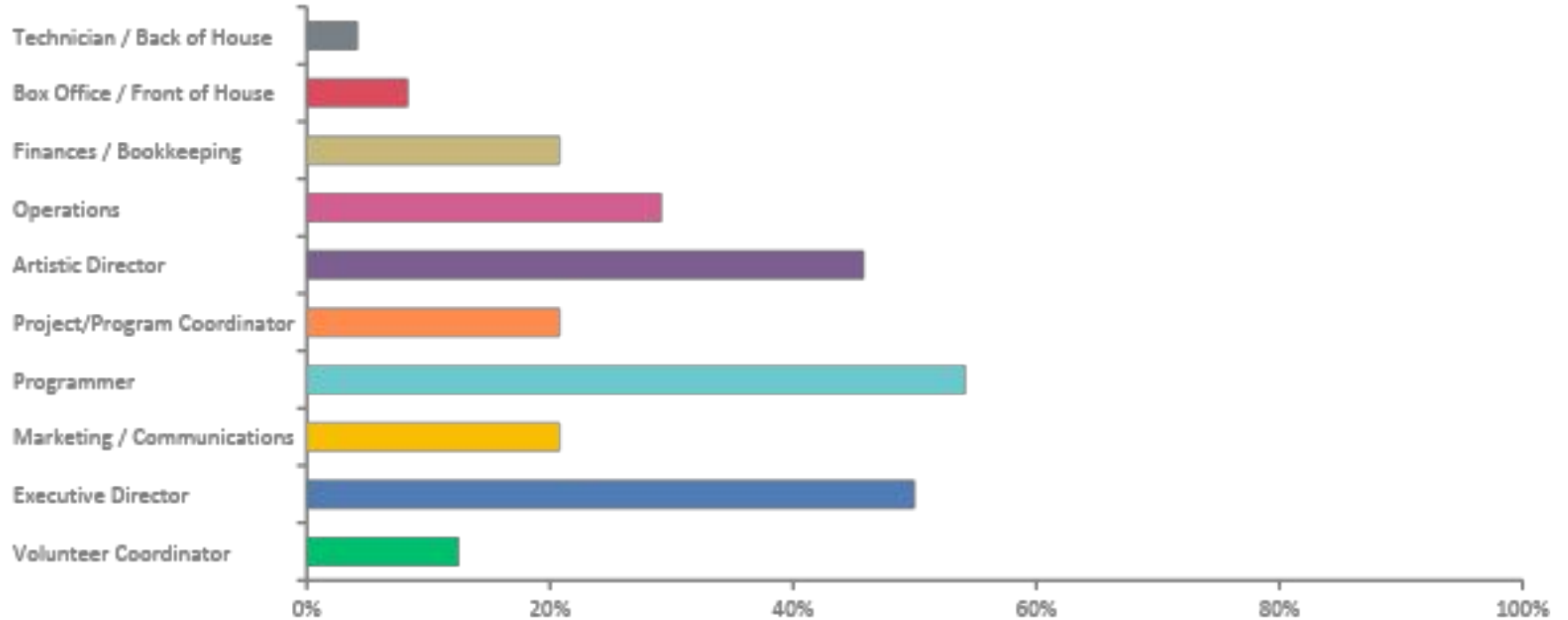
“Thank you for all you do - I know you work your butts off!”

“Great work, amazing events, strong EDIA mandate.”

“Contact East is one of the best conferences of its kind, and Shift Change is also excellent. APA member meetings are a joy. Block Booking is a very valuable service. APA’s efforts to bring presenters together and build relationships among members is invaluable. APA’s championing of EDIA is producing tangible results in the presenting world. If APA’s PD offerings can focus more heavily on tangible tools (i.e. how to do a split settlement) than philosophical ones, I think it will continue to attract new members who are perhaps overwhelmed and need support. The more established members will always seek out opportunities to network, which is provided well at events like Contact East.”

Q27: Are you (choose all that apply):

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2



Q27: Are you (choose all that apply):

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Volunteer Coordinator	12.50%	3
Executive Director	50.0%	12
Marketing / Communications	20.83%	5
Programmer	54.17%	13
Project/Program Coordinator	20.83%	5
Artistic Director	45.83%	11
Operations	29.17%	7
Finances / Bookkeeping	20.83%	5
Box Office / Front of House	8.33%	2
Technician / Back of House	4.17%	1
TOTAL		64

Q28: Is your organization a:

Answered: 21 Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Volunteer Run Venue	4.76%	1
Volunteer Run Festival	19.05%	4
Venue with at least one full-time Paid Staff	61.90%	13
Festival at least one full-time Paid Staff	14.29%	3
First Nation Community	0%	0
University/College	0%	0
Municipality	0%	0
TOTAL		21

Q30: Where are you located?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
New Brunswick	20.83%	5
Newfoundland and Labrador	4.17%	1
Nova Scotia	62.50%	15
Prince Edward Island	12.50%	3
TOTAL		24

Q31: What is the population of your organization's community?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 500	8.33%	2
500 - 999	8.33%	2
1,000 to 4,999	25.00%	6
5,000 to 19,999	16.67%	4
20,000 to 49,999	0%	0
50,000 to 99,999	4.17%	1
100,000 to 199,999	16.67%	4
200,000 and above	20.83%	5
TOTAL		24

Constructive Feedback

1. Consider organizations who serve rural areas versus urban audiences
2. Provide programming and services that meets the needs of larger organizations
3. Work with presenters in all seasons for block-booking
4. More support for dance organizations
5. Stronger advocacy and more assertive communications
6. Feeling of being preached at or having 'extreme political correction' forced on them, cancel culture and allowing space to make mistakes and learn
7. More practical, hands-on professional development opportunities versus philosophical or ideological (i.e. business planning, how to do a split settlement, etc.)

Focus Groups: General APA Members

Summary of Input

Q1: What are some challenges your organization is facing?

1. High workload, not enough capacity
2. Unreliable government funding, one-off funding agreements, government subsidies dried up, and federal funding requirements being out of scope (i.e. tail wagging the dog)
3. Large organizations are seeing philanthropic side of business struggling
4. Cost increases across the board, including cost of living, housing, gas, insurance, plus price increases on ticketing systems
5. Audience tastes have changed and there is a strong demand for big names
6. Challenge finding qualified staff in rural areas
7. NL has its own challenges including geography, weather, travel & accommodation costs, rural or remote locations

Q2: What's working well with your APA membership?

1. Professional development and learning opportunities
2. Networking and relationships building across the sector, provinces and region, particularly beneficial are face-to-face gatherings
3. The space for collaboration and potential for increased revenue / to be in better financial positions
4. Block booking is helpful for smaller theatres

Q3: What are some challenges with the APA membership?

1. Block Booking: not being used extensively, is not useful for summer presenters, needs more member engagement to be successful, people feel obligated to use it, 10% fee, challenges using platform, and lack of clarity around details (i.e. profit sharing)
2. Equity, Inclusion & Reconciliation: the sentiment that APA's desire to be inclusive can end up excluding others, the feeling of being judged, being told to do more or that they aren't doing enough, and challenges with required land acknowledgement and appropriateness for every community/situation

Q4: What would you like to see different / Ideas?

1. Debating live streams of performance or conferences. Uptake has been slow but allows greater accessibility
2. An anti-harassment plan for respectful spaces and events
3. Mentor or buddy system to encourage more to attend APA events
4. Suggestions for Shift Change topics: climate change, HR pay scales
5. Idea to engage with presenters of all types, not just non-profits
6. Professional development needs are different for larger organizations and significant funds are being spent on PD by larger organizations every year, which could be directed towards the APA if there was differentiation between smaller and larger organizations

Focus Group: Indigenous Presenters

Summary of Input

Indigenous Presenters: Summary

- APA facilitates the connection between Indigenous presenters to come together, talk about what they're doing, what's working and what's not
- APA appropriately manage events that Indigenous people attend. Indigenous presenters “are given unique but not special treatment”
- Need for improved outreach to Indigenous communities and better connectivity among Pow Wow organizers
- Suggestion for an Indigenous liaison who is local and can engage directly with communities and events
- Issues with block booking, which could interfere with the authority of drum groups, leading to a preference for direct booking with artists
- Desire for APA to leverage their national recognition to better connect events with funders and provide greater access to financial resources

Focus Groups: Larger Presenters

Summary of Input

Focus Group: Larger Presenters

Q1: What are the challenges you face within your organization?

1. **Staffing and Training:** Difficulty finding and onboarding experienced staff, time & effort required for proper training leading to staff burnout, need for experienced technical staff for bigger acts
2. **Market & Operational Changes Post-COVID:** positive market and operational changes since pandemic, and challenges to rise and meet new expectations and ways of operating
3. **Competition and Venue Pressures:** in francophone-anglophone communities, pressures to serve both audiences but competition with larger venues (i.e. casino) for anglophone artists
4. **Volunteer Reliance and Recruitment:** Heavy reliance on volunteers for operations, challenges in recruiting the next generation of volunteers, financial strain of potentially moving from volunteer to paid model
5. **Work Culture and Expectations:** Differences in expectations re: work experience between staff and artists, changes in work culture and a rise in mental health issues post-pandemic
6. **Aging Infrastructure:** issues with outdated infrastructure and maintenance needs
7. **Expectations of Larger Organizations:** Increased pressure on larger organizations to set standards and address industry issues
8. **Long-Standing Tenants:** Difficulty evolving business due to long-standing anchor tenants

Focus Group: Larger Presenters

Q2: What's working well with your APA membership?

1. **Connection and Knowledge Sharing:** direct peer-to-peer contact, helping presenters find one another, relationships building, and sharing of experiences across the region
2. **Regional and Political Importance:** Sentiment that the APA is important to the region and represents the arts community politically
3. **Investment and Support in the Region:** A strong acknowledgement that larger presenters are a minority in the APA and there is considerable gratitude and appreciation for the APA's work, that they are having a positive impact, are servicing the membership, and are doing a great job of bringing invested people together who want to bring art to their community

Focus Group: Larger Presenters

Q3: What are some challenges with the APA membership?

1. **Different Challenges:** The issues or challenges that larger organizations navigate are often different the majority of APA members (i.e. labour relations, season to season versus multi-year planning, infrastructure challenges on a larger scale, relationship with the commercial/rental world, numbers of guests)
2. **Fit of Services:** APA has aimed to offer services that benefit the majority of its members. However, these services may no longer meet the needs of larger presenters, who are a smaller subset of the group
3. **Block Booking:** Now less utilized by larger organizations as it suits smaller organizations better and requires significant time. It is less effective due to smaller shows, slower progress, and incompatible deadlines. Larger organizations can efficiently manage programming, unlike smaller ones that lack staffing support. While arts touring has not been relevant for larger venues, there is interest in making it work

Focus Group: Larger Presenters

Q4: What would you like to see different?

1. **Brainstorm / Blue-Sky Session:** Interest to make time for leaders of large presenters to convene and brainstorm solutions for some of the challenges unique to larger presenters, and discuss the potential for a tiered system. Suggestion that this take place during Contact East
2. **Potential for Reallocation of Resources:** One organization shared that they currently invest significant money on professional development or Summit participation, but would be willing to put extra funds into an event that would support larger organizations and allow for larger numbers of staff to attend

Focus Groups: Funders Summary of Input

Funders: Summary

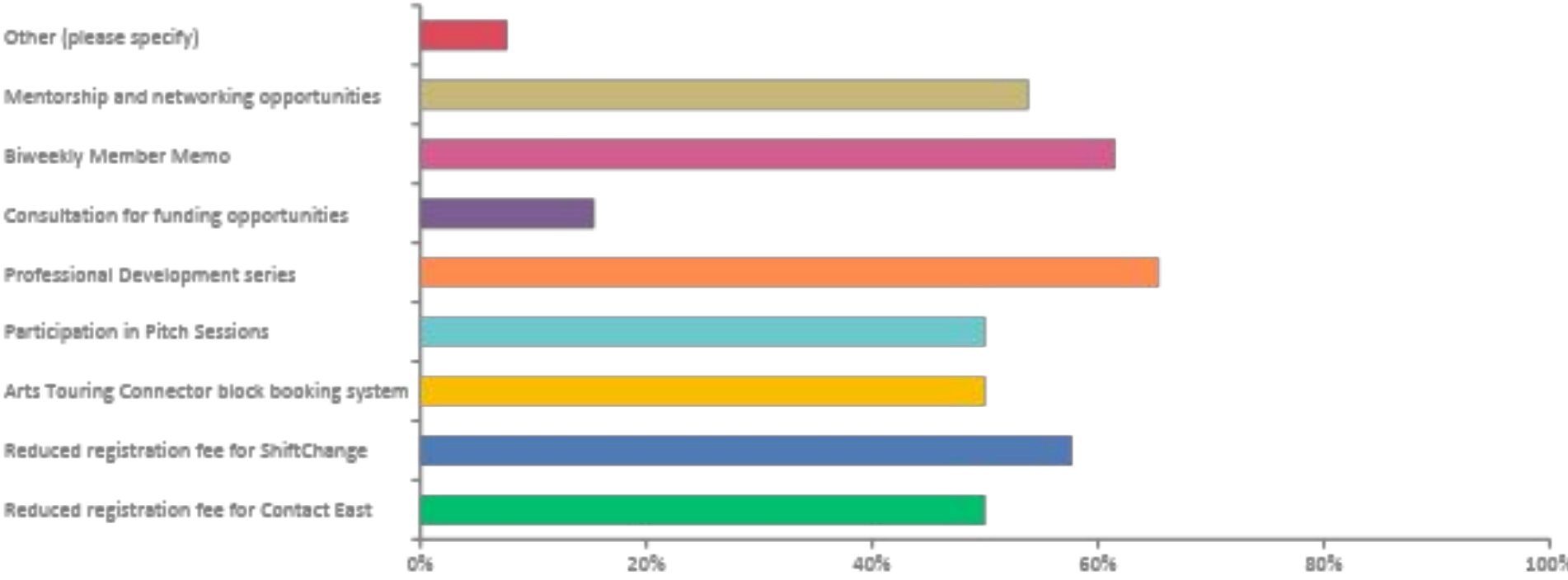
- **Positive Impact:** APA effectively represents the sector and fosters community collaboration
- **Event Management:** Excels at organizing events and engaging the industry
- **Local Engagement:** A desire to see APA connect with local organizations, including those who are currently ineligible for membership, and ensure diverse representation
- **Funding and Attendance:** Needs to increase attendance and demonstrate value to secure funding
- **Communication:** Reliance on newsletters limits outreach to non-subscribers
- **Advocacy:** Encourage collaboration among government and ecosystem partners to lead change effectively
- **Enhanced Outreach:** Broaden awareness and involvement, especially among equity-deserving groups
- **Engagement with Funders:** Strengthen ongoing relationships with funders

Back-up Survey Data Slides

April 10 - May 6, 2024
26 Responses

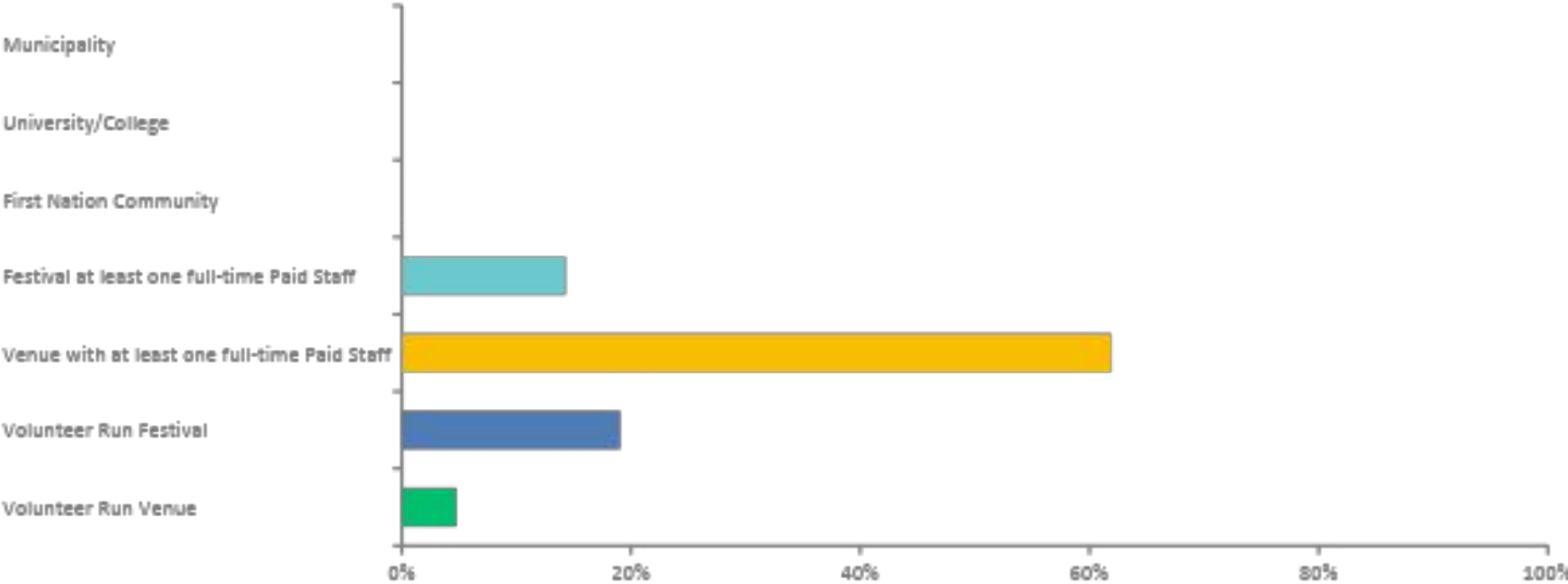
Q5: Which APA member services have you used in the past year? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



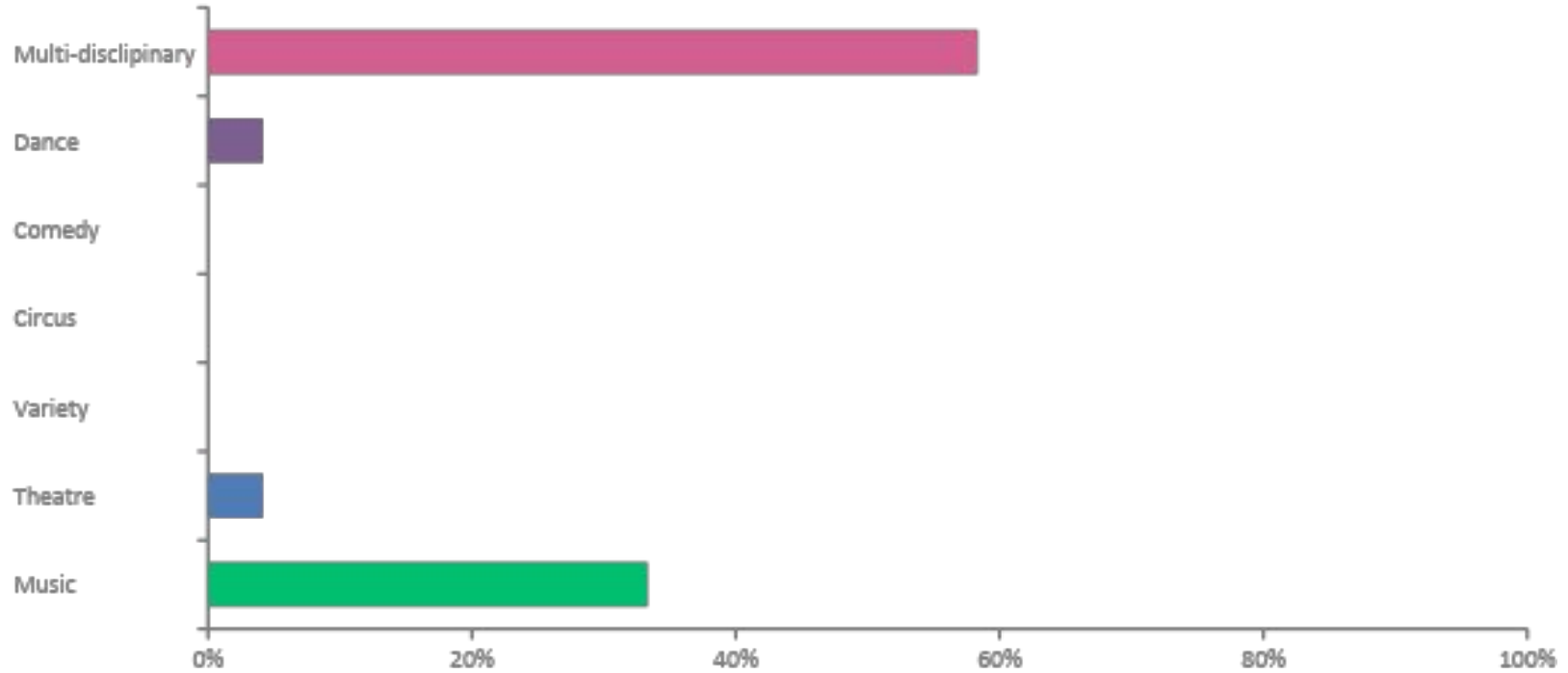
Q28: Is your organization a:

Answered: 21 Skipped: 5



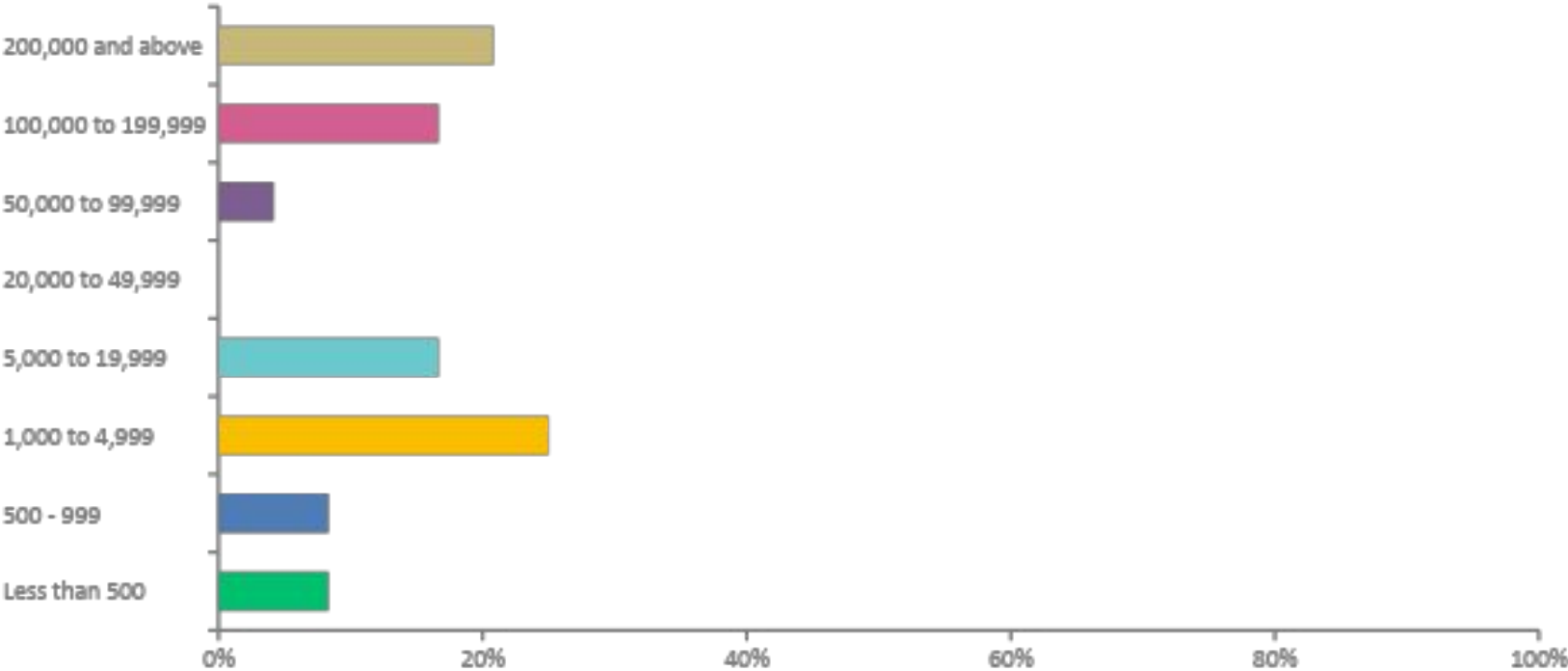
Q29: Is your organization:

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2



Q31: What is the population of your organization's community?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2



Appendix B

SWOT Analysis

APA SWOT

Strengths

- Resource Management well but needs...?
- Reputation!!!
- An exceptional staff, thoughtful leadership (Laurie!) (like-minded, open to change)!!!
- Intentionality, caring, listening,
- Communication - referring to?
- Forward-looking perspectives
- Office/work culture of caring*
- Inclusion
- Knowledgeable
- Accountable
- Leaning on and welcoming diverse/underrepresented voices into leadership and decision-making conversations
- Progressiveness and commitment to social justice/EDIA
- Builds trust
- Membership is a big strength
- Set to follow an example - practice what we preach - industry leader
- We mentor each other
- We inspire support and care about each other
- Collaborative, constructive and caring/not competitive
- Supportive funders
- Longevity
- Trust
- Involved and engaged Board
- Sustainability of the work
- Generous/open-minded, fantastic supportive Board,

Weaknesses

- Trying to be one for all
- 75% of APA membership did not participate in the survey. Why? Prioritization - industry run on a shoestring - many things with higher priorities
- Membership succession planning and retirement - balancing seasoned pros versus newbies
- Different scope and scale of member organizations - how to meet needs of such diverse organizations
- NF is so different based on scale of geography - Labrador even more.

- Challenges of rural and urban are different **
- Some members feel judged and unsafe in APA - progressive, but how to ensure people are not left behind? How to ensure people are aware of inclusion work?
- APA's priorities do not always align with the priorities of all members
- Chasing dollars/financial uncertainty
- Limiting membership requirements (NFP have to have presented already)
- Methods of communication - newsletter/emails versus magic of in-person.
- New members might feel left out

Opportunities

- All-encompassing resource for Atlantic arts sector - modeling care or “best practices”
- More collaboration with national associations* (ex New Brunswick-Quebec) - Partnerships with other regional organizations
- More year-round opportunities for artists working in collaboration with other organizations
- Opportunity for larger members to anchor
- Increase outreach to rural venues and partners with tech to up engagement for venues and APA opportunities - currently on good track, could help/attract other members even more
- Growing future arts workers (admin/planning) - succession
- Atlantic Canada's amazing presenting venues/organizations - opportunity to celebrate and advocate
- Work with Indigenous presenters and artists, build opportunities and collaborate to grow the sector (offered support HAS TO BE what they seek out)
- Main calendar of events around Atlantic Canada

Threats

- For-profit organizations, i.e. CBMF capitalist,
- Shifting/changing government priorities, exclusivity/radius clauses for artists
- Still recovery mode
- Miscommunication or lack of between regions
- Weather
- Disengagement to understand why folks don't engage/respond or negative constructive responses (to survey)

- 'Live Nation' is threatening the industry, buying up independent venues and...
- Crash of sector in general (funding, inflation, lack of artists)
(without members, there is no need for structure, organization)
- (Leaving sector because of lack of opportunities)
- Crossover organization/competition/redundancy
- Live performance being devalued or (overvalued)
- People have less money to spend