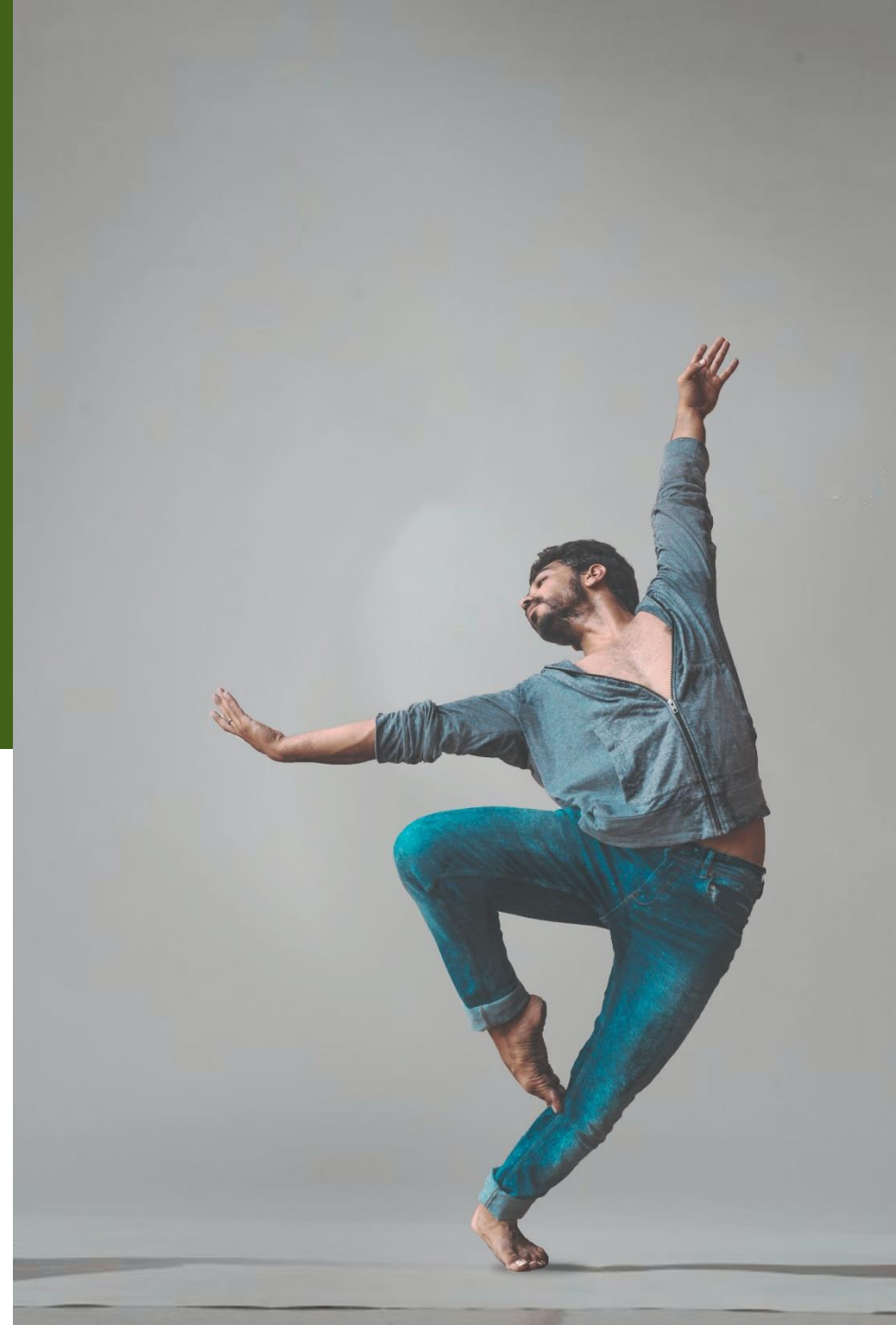


Research Study and Needs Assessment on Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario

Final Report

September 28, 2022



Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Department of Canadian Heritage, Ontario Arts Council, Metcalf Foundation, and the City of Toronto for providing financial support for this work.

Dance Umbrella of Ontario, Nordicity Group Limited ("Nordicity"), and Bridget MacIntosh and Associates are acknowledged for contributing to and carrying out the research and methodology.

We also acknowledge data provided by ArtsBuild Ontario and Canadian Arts Data / Données sur les arts au Canada (CADAC).



**Bridget MacIntosh
& Associates**

Executive Summary: About Dance in Ontario

- Ontario's dance sector is characterized by its **dynamic and diverse** mix of **independent dance artists, not-for-profit dance companies, presenters, arts service organizations,** and **for-profit dance studios and schools**. Some non-profit dance companies own their own spaces, but most do not.
- Different dance communities have **different needs for rehearsal spaces** depending on the structure of their operations (e.g., independent dance artist vs. dance company vs. dance presenter vs. school), discipline (e.g., tap vs. contemporary), culture (e.g., Indigenous, Latin, African Diaspora), and other characteristics which impact the dance creation process.
 - For example, dance communities practicing non-western dance styles frequently highlighted a need for **soundproof** spaces of **adequate size** to support live music, singing, percussive footwork, and props (e.g., drums, flamenco, cante, umbrellas). In addition, some cultural communities conduct cleansing rituals prior to a performance. Therefore, **fireproofing and smoke allowance** is needed in some spaces.
 - Survey respondents, who consisted of more independent artists, preferred short-term lease arrangements for their rehearsal needs, while more established artists/companies interviewed preferred longer-term lease arrangements. Dance artists are **eager to rehearse close to where they live** – and frequently connect with other dancers in their local dance communities.

Executive Summary: About Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario

- **Less than 5%** of spaces are **purpose-built dance rehearsal spaces**. Almost **half (47%)** of available spaces are operated as **dance schools/studios**.
- Dance **rehearsal facilities earn revenue from multiple lines of business**, typically from some combination of dance training, rentals to dance artists or companies, and rentals for fitness classes, events, and other non-dance uses. The **largest expense for facility owners/operators is labour** (57% of annual expenditure), and rent can make up nearly 35% of a dance company's expenses. Despite rising costs, facility operators are reluctant to raise fees given Ontario's lack of affordable spaces and the dance community's limited capacity to pay higher fees.
- The **research found few dance rehearsal spaces outside of the major hubs** (e.g., Toronto and Ottawa). This is indicative of low inventory of dance rehearsal spaces, or issues with the discoverability of these spaces. **Utilization data indicates that existing dance rehearsal spaces have availability, but affordability is by far the bigger issue.**

Executive Summary: Dance and Rehearsal Space Funding

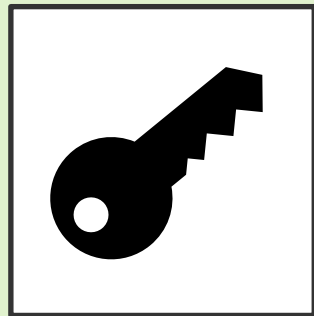
- In 2020-2021, approximately \$19.9 million was distributed to Ontario dance across Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council. Key facts include:
 - **Funding for dance has increased** since 2017, though most can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic government emergency.
 - However, the **number of grants** being awarded **dropped** across all funders. These results indicate that fewer dance community members have received funding, but those that have may have received more.
 - There has been **little growth in the amount of funding allocated to operating support**, suggesting operating funding amounts may not be properly adjusted for inflation year to year and may not be adequate to support dance expenses today. Public data indicated that requests for funding have also declined.
- There is **no funding specifically allocated to supporting dance groups with access to rehearsal spaces**, though broader operating or project funding may be used for this purpose.
 - As well, the **funding landscape does not support for-profit dance company structures**, despite their important role in supplying rehearsal spaces to the wider dance community.
 - Cultural space operations are also not well supported in the current funding landscape.
- While a variety of funding programs are available to dance artists and companies, there are **barriers to accessing this funding**. These challenges are not unique to the dance sector and will likely require high-level changes to the overall funding system.
- Programs catered to equity-deserving communities are increasingly being implemented to reduce barriers to funding for historically under-represented communities in the dance industry.

Executive Summary: Challenges with Dance Rehearsal Spaces



Affordability: The average hourly fee for spaces in Ontario is \$42 per hour, almost double the average fee the community says it can afford to pay (average of \$22 per hour).

- For dance companies, rent can make up 35% of annual operating expenditure. On the operator side, costs have increased through the pandemic, particularly for cleaning materials, ventilation, insurance, and utilities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic added costs to dance companies and rehearsal space operators to resume operations, reducing the ability to earn revenue.



Operational and Physical Accessibility: Dance rehearsal spaces are often not operationally or physically accessible. It is challenging for the dance community to seek out rehearsal spaces due to a lack of promotion and discoverability, and spaces often lack physically accessible features (e.g., entry ramps, elevators).

- This is particularly a challenge in regional Ontario dance communities, where there is a lack of dance-specific rehearsal spaces and more ad hoc spaces are used (e.g., basements, recreation centres, etc.).



Inclusivity: Ontario needs safe rehearsal spaces that can accommodate dancers with diverse needs and culturally diverse practices.

- Ontario needs more spaces that are home to the dance community and allow for diverse communities to feel comfortable practicing within the spaces.

Executive Summary: Recommendations

1 Rethink Public Support for Dance Spaces

The Ontario dance community needs more affordable rehearsal spaces.

- *Recommendation 1:* Introduce dance rehearsal space subsidies in grant programs.
- *Recommendation 2:* Offer incentives to non-dance facilities with appropriate infrastructure and amenities to open their spaces for dance rehearsals.
- *Recommendation 3:* Meet with funders to review funding programs for dance artists and cultural spaces, funding thresholds, and application processes.

2 Improve Discoverability

The Ontario dance community needs more support to find and access rehearsal spaces.

- *Recommendation 4:* Create a new model to promote and manage rehearsal spaces in Ontario.
 - Pursue a feasibility study to determine the capacity and scale of this model, defining the format, governance, and funding for such an initiative.
- *Recommendation 5:* Fund accessibility upgrades to rehearsal spaces.

3 Prioritize Relationships, Collaboration and Community

The Ontario dance community needs more inclusive rehearsal spaces.

- *Recommendation 6:* Formalize the dance sector to encourage relationship building and community development.
- *Recommendation 7:* Encourage wider resource sharing on culturally sensitive practices and engagement.

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1. Introduction

The *Research and Needs Assessment on Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario* project began during a challenging time for Ontario dance. This report explores dance sector dynamics, gaps, challenges, and needs around rehearsal spaces, and it makes recommendations to support the sustainability of dance within that context.



Naishi Wang and Lukas Malkowski by Jeremy Mimmagh



1.1 About the Project

This project **explored the realities facing professional dance companies and dance-specific space operators in operating, financing, and accessing rehearsal spaces.** Research and data was gathered to conduct a needs assessment on this topic to shed light on challenges impacting dance creation. One of the key objectives of this study is to present and respond to the challenges faced by equity-deserving professional dance artists and organizations.

This report **explores solutions and opportunities** for developing new creative policies, spaces, networks, and partnerships that support the artistic growth of professional dance creation in Ontario. These solutions and opportunities are proposed to enhance the sustainability and vitality of Ontario dance in the long-term.

1.2 Context for this Research

The need for this study stems from the **closure of some vital dance hubs** in Ontario – most notably, Dancemakers and Dovercourt House in Toronto. As well, the **COVID-19 pandemic** forced dancers and dance companies to shutter in-person operations and scale-down activities for nearly two years, precipitating additional issues for the use and operation of dance rehearsal spaces.

To enable some operations to resume over this time, the **dance community made investments and took on extra expenses** to meet government guidelines and protect public health. Actions included instating vaccine and mask mandates, mandating testing and/or temperature checks, implementing stricter cleaning policies, and conducting contact tracing.

As the economy continues to change and costs continue to rise in the emerging post-pandemic environment, Dance Umbrella of Ontario and its sector and government partners are seeking to **better understand the current dance rehearsal landscape in Ontario**. Such knowledge and insights should facilitate more effective actions to re-open spaces and address challenges related to discoverability and accessibility.

1.3 Approach and Methodology – Overview

A robust methodology was designed for this engagement, using a variety of data collection and research methods as presented below.



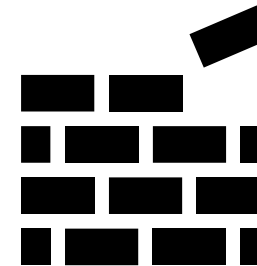
Community Consultations



One-on-One Interviews



Ontario Dance Sector Survey



Rehearsal Space Inventory



Desk Research and Analysis

1.3 Approach and Methodology – Research and Consultation

The research was carried out from January to July 2022. Nearly **200 members of Ontario’s dance community** were engaged through:

- **10 community group consultations with more than 60 Ontario dance artists** in different groupings based on cultural, regional, and discipline specific experience, including the:
 - African Diaspora Dance Community
 - Asian/East-Asian Dance Community
 - Contemporary Dance Community
 - Deaf & Disability Dance Community
 - French Language Dance Community
 - Indigenous Dance Community
 - Latin/Latino/Latina/Latinx Dance Community
 - Regional Ontario Dance Community
 - South Asian Dance Community
 - Urban Dance Community
- **17 one-on-one interviews** with **dance companies, dance rehearsal space facility owners,** and **regional funders and arts service organizations.**
- A sector survey reaching **110 dance artists, dance companies and collectives,** and **dance facility operators and owners.**
- The research team also conducted **desk research** to bolster the analysis. Activities included:
 - Compiling an **inventory of more than 300 dance rehearsal spaces across Ontario** and their rental rates.
 - Reviewing **public funding programs** and **disbursement data.**
 - Conducting a **regional, operating, and capital analysis** on gathered rehearsal space data.

1.3 Approach and Methodology – Notes on the Data

Different and sometimes conflicting information at times materialized through different data sources, so it is important to note that each data source represents slightly different audiences and perspectives. For example, the **Ontario dance sector survey** reached a larger individual/independent dance artist population. On the other hand, the **interview demographics** skewed towards larger, more structured dance companies, organizations, and other government and sector stakeholders.

Consultations were carried out during the last wave of physical closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Winter 2022. Therefore, the timing may have impacted the rehearsal space priorities identified during this time.

2. About Dance in Ontario

The Ontario dance sector is diverse, vibrant, and artist-driven. Dance companies operate in different ways, each of which impacts their relationship to rehearsal spaces.

The following section discusses:

- The composition and operating context of Ontario's dance community;
- The public funding landscape available to Ontario dance and facility owner/operators; and,
- The impacts of the pandemic on Ontario's dance companies and rehearsal space landscape.

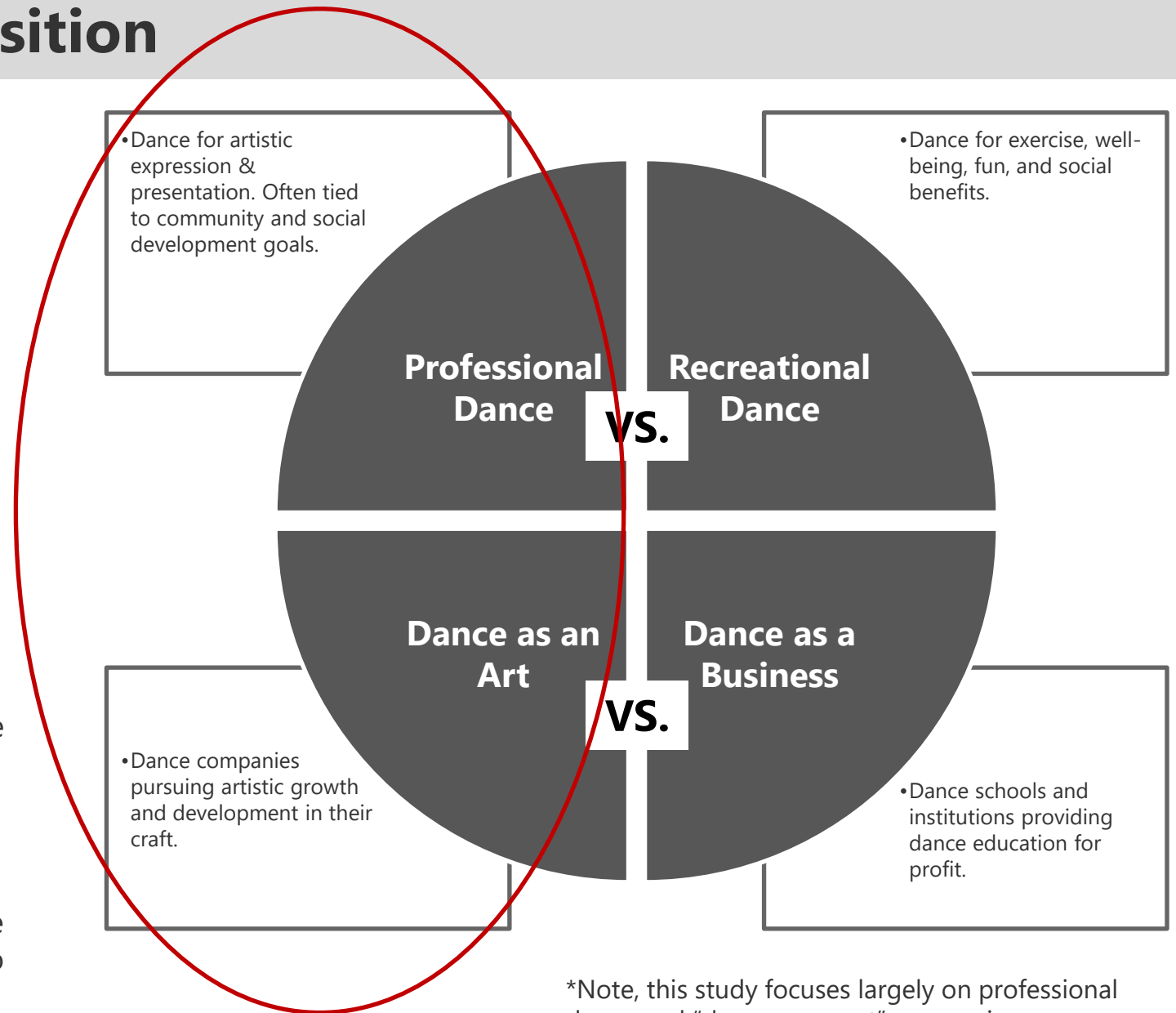


2.1 Community Composition

Ontario is home to a lively dance community that tends to operate informally. Dance communities tend to connect in networks determined by their geographic affiliation, discipline, and other identifiers. In the past, it has sometimes been challenging to bring all these communities together.

The Ontario dance sector is organized in different ways that underscore community dynamics. The community consists of companies and artists that focus on:

- **Professional Dance vs. Recreational Dance:** These groups have different operating structures, revenue sources, and activities and rental rates for rehearsal spaces in some cases.
- **Dance as a Business vs. Dance as an Art:** The latter group does not often have consistent revenue streams which makes it harder to maintain access to rehearsal spaces on a consistent basis.



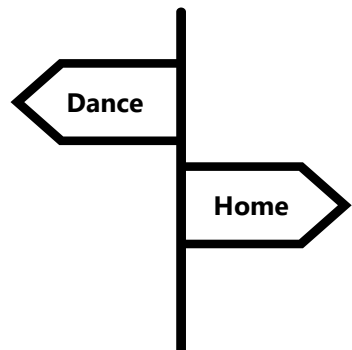
*Note, this study focuses largely on professional dance and "dance as an art" companies.

2.2 Operating Context

- **Most professional dance companies rent** the spaces they rehearse in through long- and short-term arrangements and at varying hourly, daily, or monthly rates. Few dance companies own the spaces in which they operate, but most that do also operate as for-profit dance schools or training studios.
- Some dance companies have looked to **for-profit, hybrid, and collaborative operating models** to address company sustainability, access to income and proper facilities. However, **not all dance artists aspire to work in the dance sector full-time.**
- As such, public funding has had to balance support for full-time and part-time professional dance artists, each with their own unique operations.

2.2.1 Operating Context – Rehearsal Space Considerations

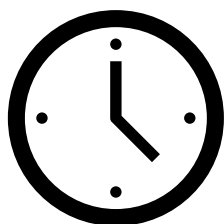
Location & Motivation



Most Ontario dancers surveyed rehearse in the city/town where they live and either never rehearse elsewhere or do so only a couple of times a year. In fact, the survey results revealed that one of the most desirable features of a rehearsal space is when it is located in the user's neighbourhood.

The main reasons for which dancers indicated rehearsing outside of their community included for **work relationships, collaborations/partnerships, and outreach/community engagement purposes.**

Rental Arrangements



Hourly

Hourly or ad-hoc lease terms work best for most survey respondents (62%), followed by weekly (23%) and informal/casual leases (21%).

Short-term rental arrangements were largely preferred by survey respondents. In contrast, **consultation participants indicated a stronger interest in long-term arrangements***.

Few survey respondents indicated they own the spaces they practice in (~5%).

*Consultation participants tended to be established dance artists/companies with more defined operating structures, whereas the survey population included more independent artists.

2.3 Funding Landscape

Funding for dance in Ontario is available: at the **federal level** through Canadian Heritage and Canada Council for the Arts, at the **provincial level** through Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, and at the **municipal level** through the Toronto Arts Council and other municipal councils. Some private funders like the Metcalf Foundation also fund dance activity, as displayed in the chart below.

Canadian Heritage (PCH)	Canada Council for the Arts (CCA)	Ontario Arts Council (OAC)	Toronto Arts Council (TAC)	Other/Private Funders
<p>While none are directly targeted towards dance, several PCH programs are still open to and relevant to dance artists and groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In particular, the Canada Arts Presentation Fund, the Canada Arts Training Fund, and the Canada Cultural Investment Fund. <p>Most relevant to rehearsal spaces is the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. It supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation and construction projects; The acquisition of specialized equipment; and, Feasibility studies related to cultural spaces. 	<p>CCA offers many project-based and operating funding programs that support artists and artist organizations in a variety of ways. While none of the programs are directly targeted towards dance, several are still open to and relevant to dance artists and groups.</p>	<p>OAC offers both operating (annual and multi-year) and project funding to dance. Portions of this funding may be used for accessing and using rehearsal spaces.</p> <p>OAC also has other programs that support dance artists' activities (e.g., touring) but are not dance specific. Examples include the Chalmers Award and the Artist Presenter Collaborations.</p>	<p>TAC offers both operating (annual and multi-year) and project funding to dance. Portions of this funding may be used for accessing and using rehearsal spaces.</p> <p>TAC also has other programs that dance artists can access that encourage innovation and experimentation but are not dance specific. For example, Open Door.</p>	<p>Ontario Trillium Foundation offers a variety of grants, but most relevant to dance artists and organizations is its three types of community investment grants: Seed Grant, Grow Grant, and Capital Grant, as well as its Community Building Fund – Operating Stream Grant.</p> <p>Metcalf Foundation provides regular funding to dance organizations through its Performing Arts and Discretionary (General Fund; Board Directed) programs.</p>

2.3 Funding Landscape Continued

- **There is no funding that is specifically allocated to supporting dance artists and groups in accessing rehearsal spaces.** Instead, many dance artists and groups use a portion of their operational and project funding for this purpose.
 - As a result of the lack of funding available to access rehearsal spaces, it is unsurprising then that **nearly half (44%) of surveyed dance companies had not received any form of public funding to access or rent rehearsal space specifically.** Rather, they used portions of funding from grants received across levels.
- Each main dance funder offers different **programs that range** from small project grants of a few thousand dollars to large grants of several hundreds of thousands for one-off, short-term projects to large, multi-year initiatives. **Operating funding for Ontario dance companies comes primarily from the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.***
- Programs catered to equity-deserving communities (e.g., Black Arts Program (TAC), Indigenous Arts Projects (OAC), etc.) are increasingly being implemented to reduce barriers to funding for communities historically under-represented in the industry.
- Dancers engaged through this research indicated that there is a feeling within the Ontario dance community that **there is not sufficient public or other funding available**, and that **existing funding is becoming increasingly difficult to access.**

*refer to the next slide for more detail

2.3.1 Funding Landscape – Canada Council for the Arts

While the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) does not have funding programs allocated to the dance sector specifically, they are a major funder of dance in Canada as displayed through the data below:

- In 2021, CCA provided almost **\$30 million in funding** to dance, or **10% of their total funding** awarded that year.
- Circus arts, a form that some dance artists practice, received another **\$2.3 million**.
- Of all recipients in 2020-2021 with dance as a field of practice, 36% were from Quebec, 29% from Ontario, and 21% from BC.
- Of the total recipients with dance as a field of practice in 2020-21, more than 4 in 10 (**44%**) **self-identified as belonging to one or more of the designated priority groups** with the majority identifying as culturally diverse and/or an official language minority community (OLMC).

Note: The analysis of public funding did not disaggregate funding allocated to ballet, dance training organizations, or other multi-disciplinary project programs that support dance activity. These types of organizations are often supported disproportionately higher than other genres and therefore may drive up the results.

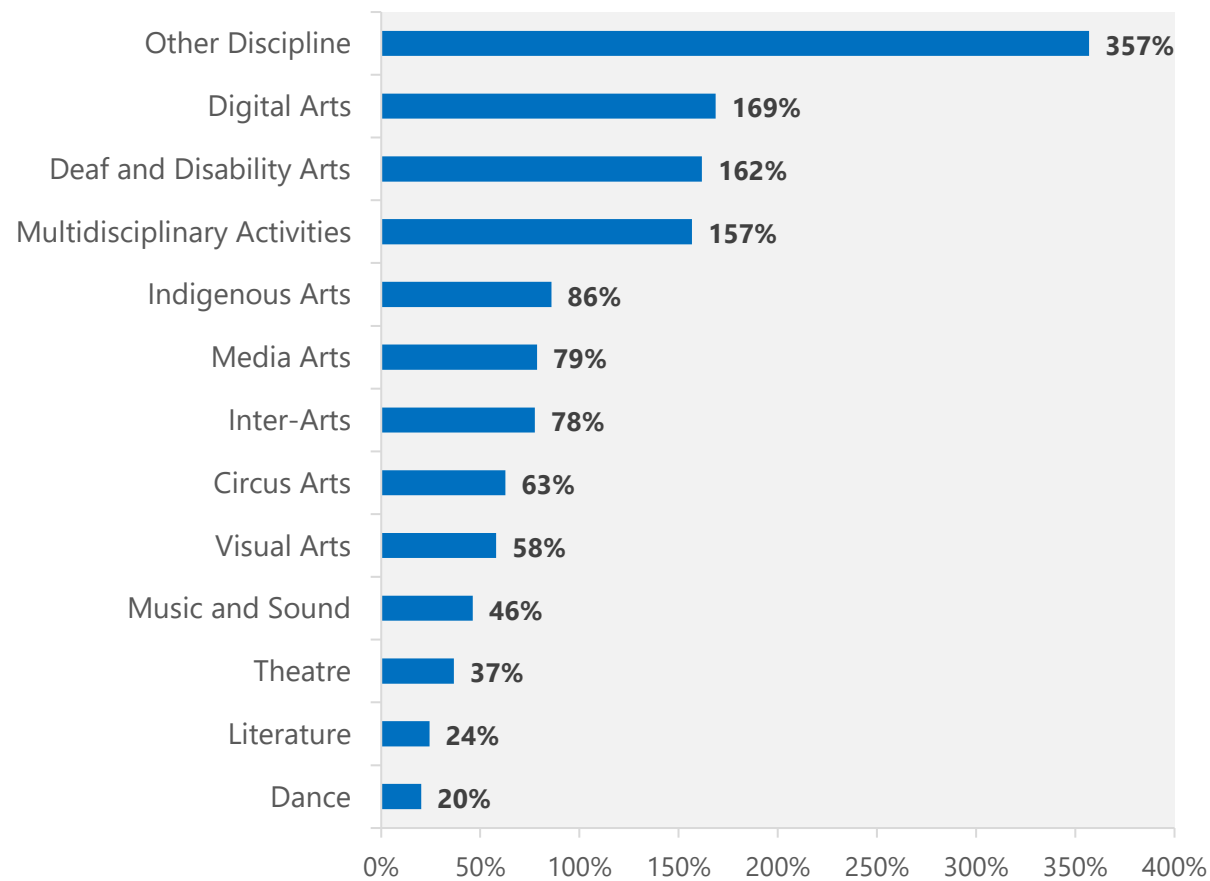
Field of Practice	2017-18	2020-21
Music and Sound	\$ 39,245,368	\$ 57,381,555
Theatre	\$ 39,698,163	\$ 54,240,061
Visual Arts	\$ 29,747,301	\$ 47,013,749
Literature	\$ 27,919,722	\$ 34,741,094
Media Arts	\$ 18,296,668	\$ 32,675,340
Dance	\$ 24,896,339	\$ 29,925,016
Multidisciplinary Activities	\$ 7,498,675	\$ 19,248,639
Indigenous Arts	\$ 10,156,853	\$ 18,875,484
Inter-Arts	\$ 3,490,043	\$ 6,195,201
Deaf and Disability Arts	\$ 1,609,225	\$ 4,212,809
Digital Arts	\$ 1,191,454	\$ 3,201,294
Circus Arts	\$ 1,430,948	\$ 2,327,281
Other Discipline	\$ 236,726	\$ 1,081,907
Canadian Commission for UNESCO	\$ 25,000	
Engineering	\$ 100,000	
Health Sciences	\$ 170,000	
Humanities	\$ 310,000	
Interdisciplinary	\$ 77,723	
Natural Sciences	\$ 590,000	
Social Sciences	\$ 220,000	

*These figures exclude federal emergency support funds (e.g., COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund delivered by the Council).

2.3.1 Funding Landscape – Canada Council for the Arts, cont'd

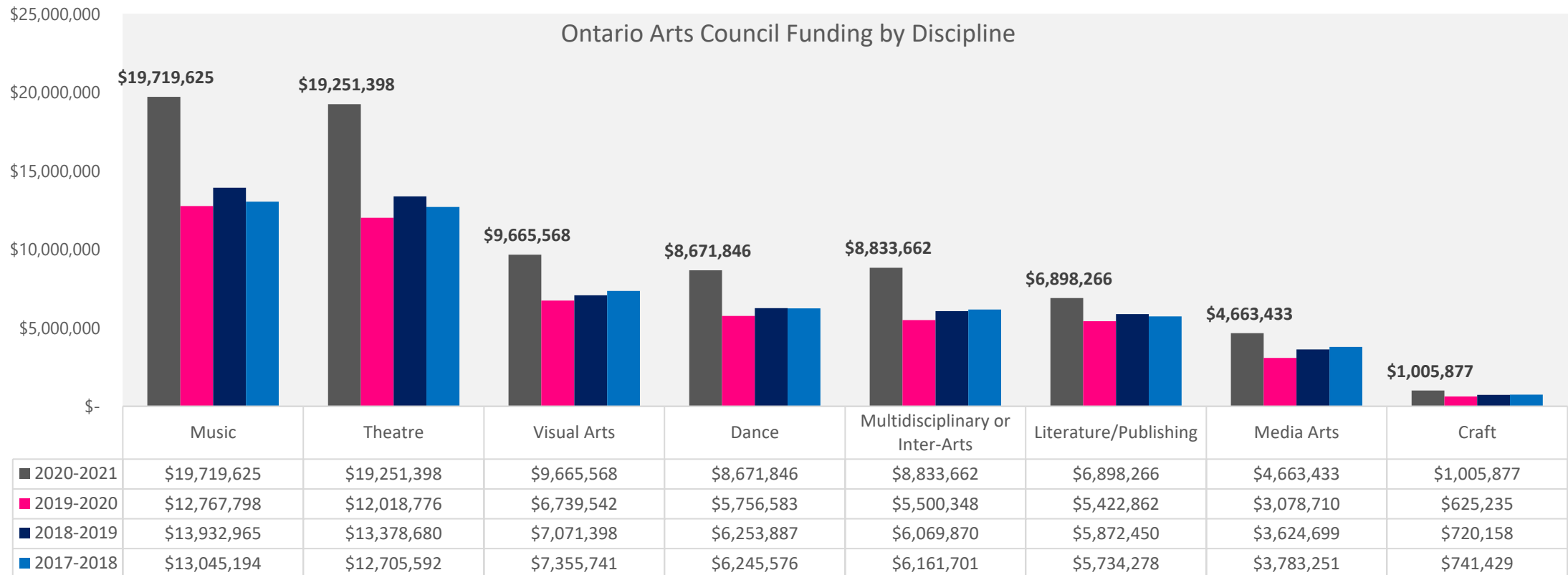
- Between 2017 and 2021, **Canada Council for the Arts funding for dance increased by 20%**. However, **the number of grant recipients decreased by 2%**.
- As displayed in the chart on this page, of all of the arts sectors that experienced increases in CCA funding between 2017 and 2021, dance had the smallest increase at only 20%. However, dance was the 6th most funded field of practice by the CCA, as shown on the previous slide (slide 21).

CCA Funding Change by Sector from 2017-2021



2.3.2 Funding Landscape – Ontario Arts Council

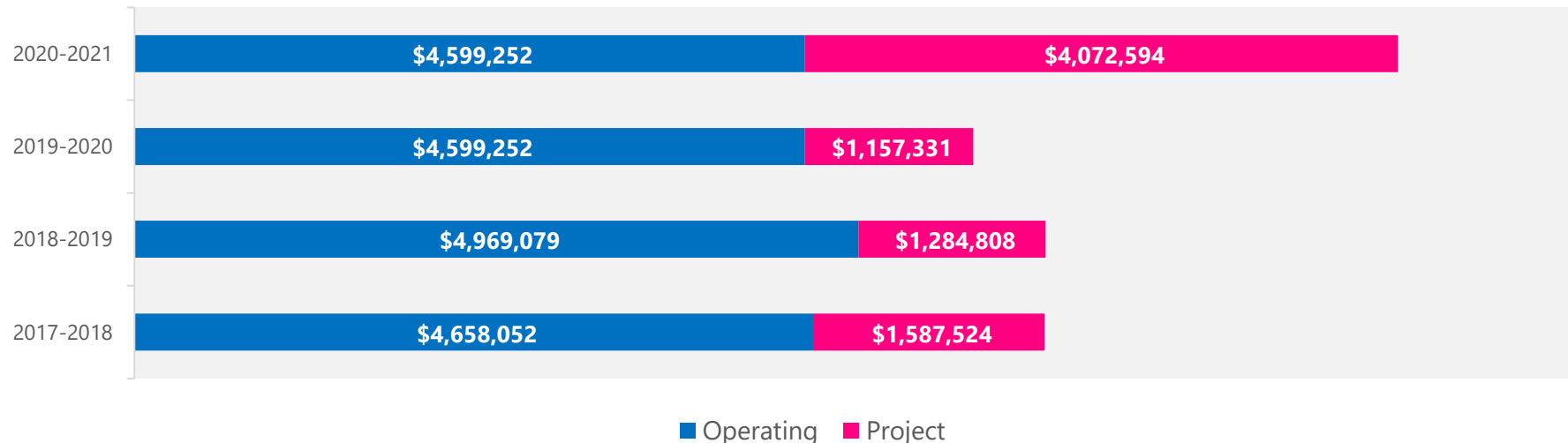
- In 2020-2021, the **Ontario Arts Council provided over \$8.5 million in funding** to Ontario’s dance sector, representing a **39% increase** since 2017. The increase is likely due the COVID-19 pandemic. Before this time, funding for dance and all arts sectors largely remained stagnant. The recent increase in funding was driven by a 157% increase in project funding and a 1% reduction in operating funding. The same trend can be observed across the arts disciplines funded by OAC.
- The **number of Ontario dance artists, companies, and organizations funded by OAC has decreased by 16%** since 2017, dropping from 178 to 149.



2.3.2 Funding Landscape – OAC Dance Funding

- Nordicity analysis of Ontario Arts Council funding data found that **dancers in Toronto receive the largest number of grants and the most funding for dance from the Ontario Arts Council (OAC)**. In 2021, Toronto received almost \$8 million in funding from OAC. This was followed by “east Ontario” (approximately \$337,000) and “southwestern Ontario” (approximately \$189,000). No funding was allocated to “far north” or “northwest” regions between 2019 and 2021. It is unclear if the reason for this is a lack of dance communities in those regions or barriers to accessing funding preventing dancers in these communities from applying.
- In 2020-2021, approximately **\$4.6 million was awarded in operating funding** to dance in Ontario. This was the same amount awarded in 2019-2020 and was relatively consistent with previous years. In the same time period, over **\$4 million was awarded for dance through project funding**. This was a huge increase from 2019-2020 (approximately 251%) and previous years. While in previous years, project funding only made up 20%-25% of total funding awarded, it doubled in 2020-21, reaching almost 47%. This was likely driven by the impacts of COVID-19 that increased the need for project-based support.*

Funding Awarded for Dance – Operating vs Project

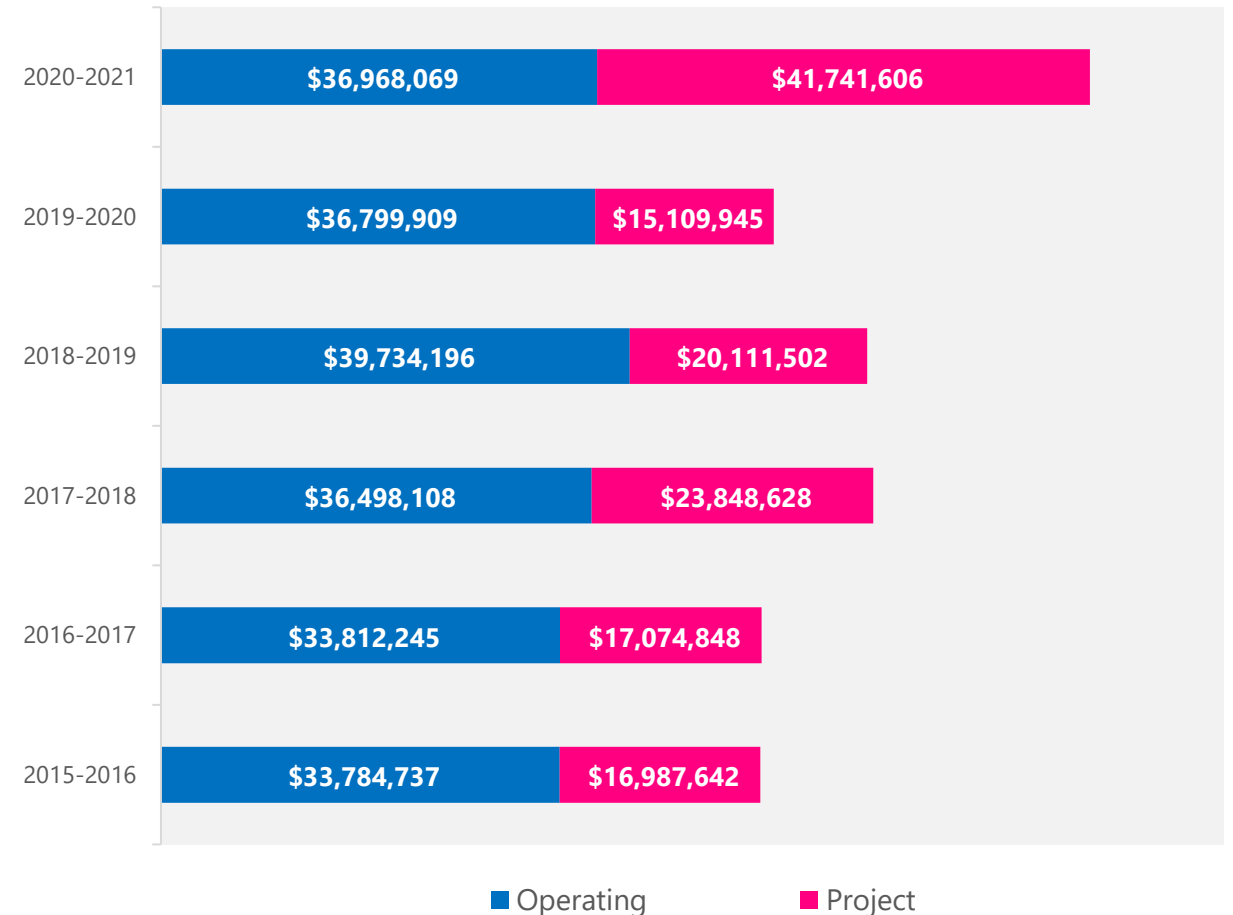


*The analysis of public funding did not disaggregate funding allocated to ballet, dance training organizations, or other multi-disciplinary project programs that support dance activity. These types of organizations are often supported disproportionately higher than other genres and therefore may drive up results.

2.3.2 Funding Landscape – OAC Total Funding

- In alignment with the dance funding trends seen on the last page, **the majority of Ontario Arts Council’s overall funding (between 67% - 71%) is typically allocated towards providing operating funding.**
- However, **in 2020-2021**, operating funding made up only 47% of total funding awarded, with **project funding making up a larger portion at 53%.** Again, the increase in project-based funding was likely in response to COVID-19 shutdowns which saw many arts organizations shut down their operations for some time. Hence, they had extra capacity to take on project-based work and needed more funding to make up for lost revenue.
- The **increase in project funding** from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 was about 176%. Over this same time **operating funding amounts remained relatively the same.**

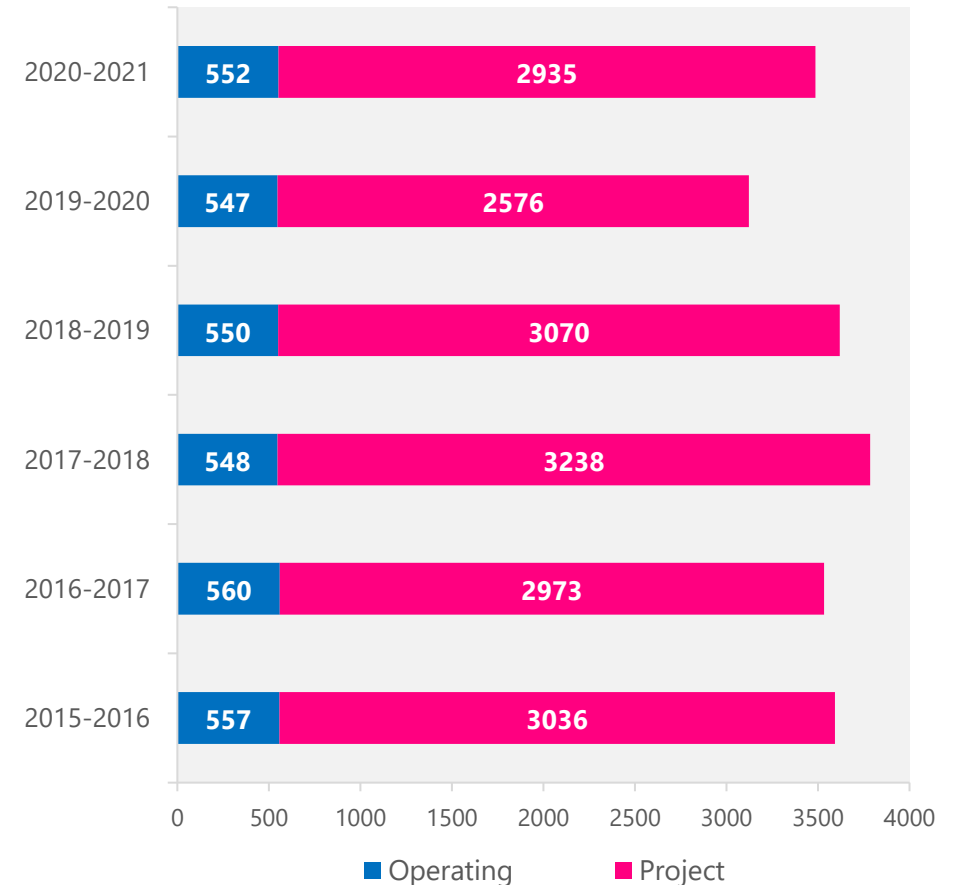
Total Funding Awarded – Operating vs Project



2.3.2 Funding Landscape – OAC Total Grants

- For the same time period between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the number of grants awarded by OAC followed a similar pattern.
 - The **number of project-based grants awarded increased by 14%, while the number of operating grants remained relatively consistent with previous years.**
 - However, the relative increase in the number of project funding grants (14%) was significantly lower than the relative increase in total funding awarded through these project grants (176%). This indicates that **several larger project grants were awarded.** Although the data does not indicate what the nature of these grants is, it is likely that they were related to some form of COVID-19 relief.
- The relative stability in operating funding grants shows us that, despite significant changes in the way OAC is funding the sector, operating funding has been a sustainable source of funding for the Ontario arts community.
 - However, the light growth in operating funding amounts suggests these grants may not have been properly adjusted for inflation year to year, and therefore may be inadequate to support dance companies operating costs in the present day.

Total Grants Awarded – Operating vs Project

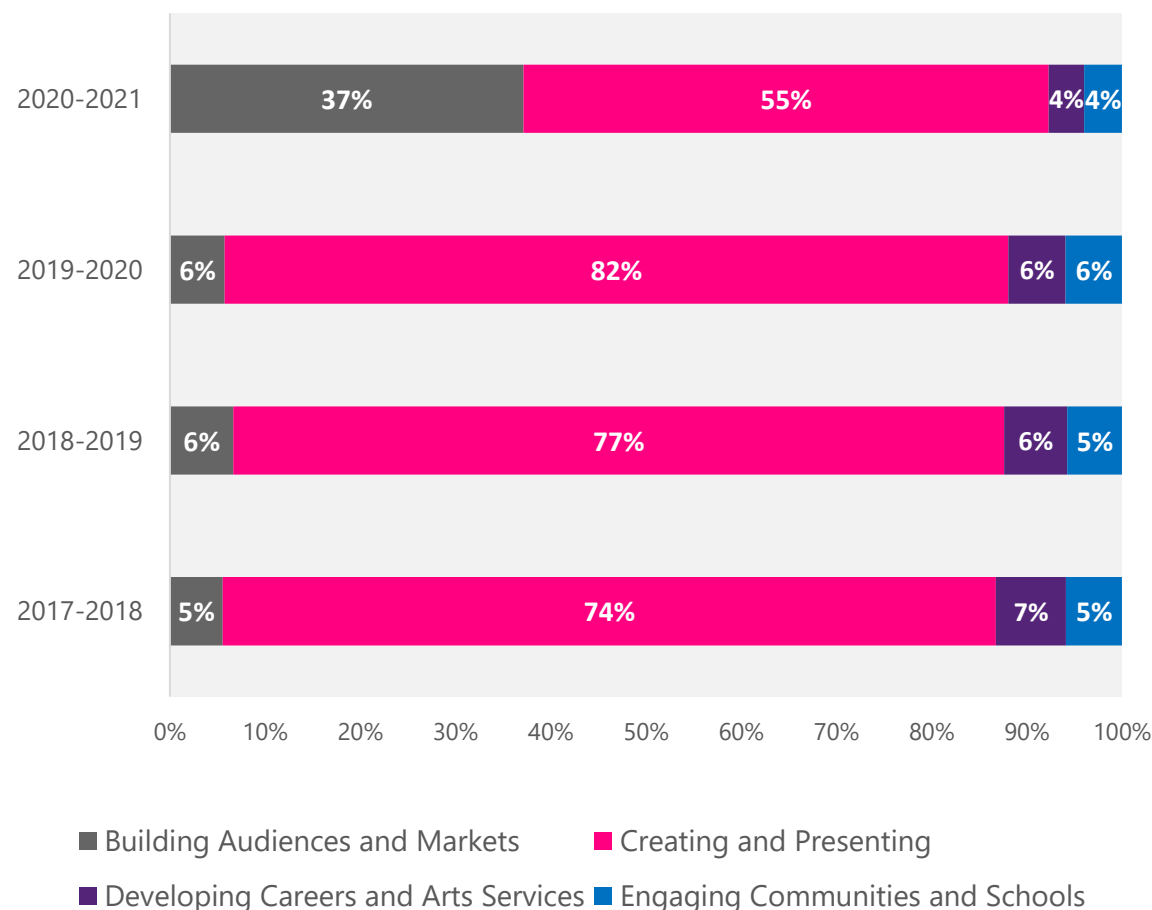


2.3.2 Funding Landscape – Shifts in Ontario Arts Council Funding

In 2020-2021, there were **several shifts** in the way funding was allocated through the Ontario Arts Council's **programs**. For example:

- In the past, the vast majority (74%-82%) of OAC funding was allocated towards creating and presenting activities, and only 5-7% was allocated towards other uses.
- **In 2020-2021, a significantly larger portion (37%) of funding was allocated to building audiences and markets.** This led to a large reduction in funding allocated to creating and presenting, the activities that typically require renting/accessing rehearsal spaces. This trend was likely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic that shifted the focus of funding from rehearsal and presentation to audience retention during lockdowns.

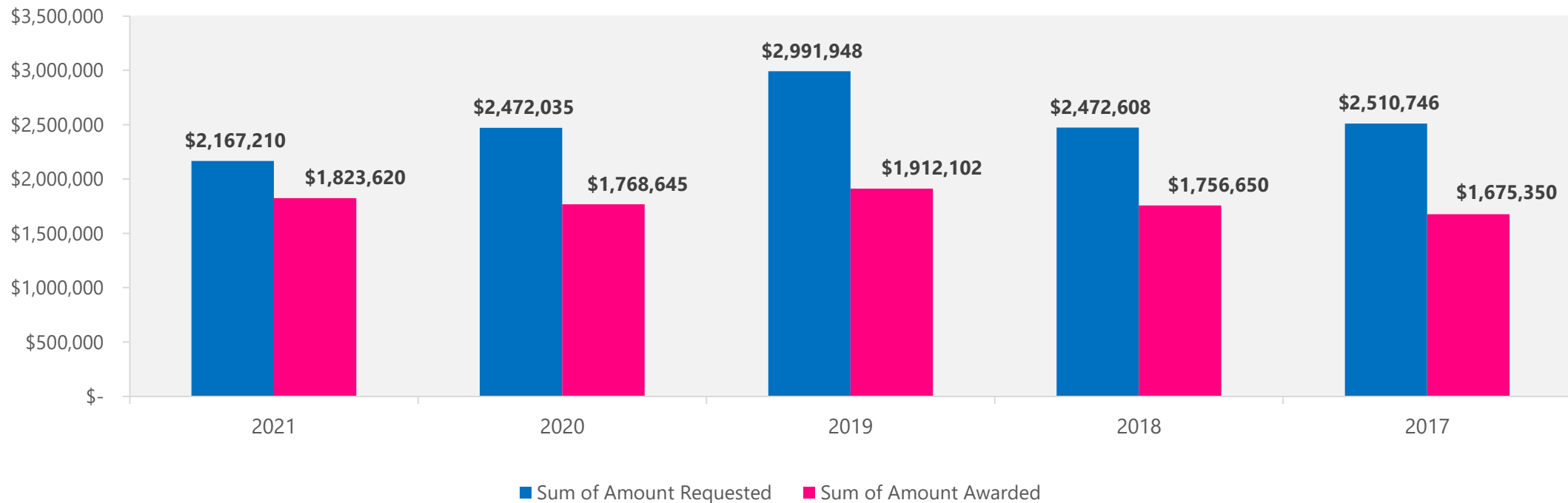
Total Annual Allocations by Funding Stream



2.3.3 Funding Landscape – Toronto Arts Council

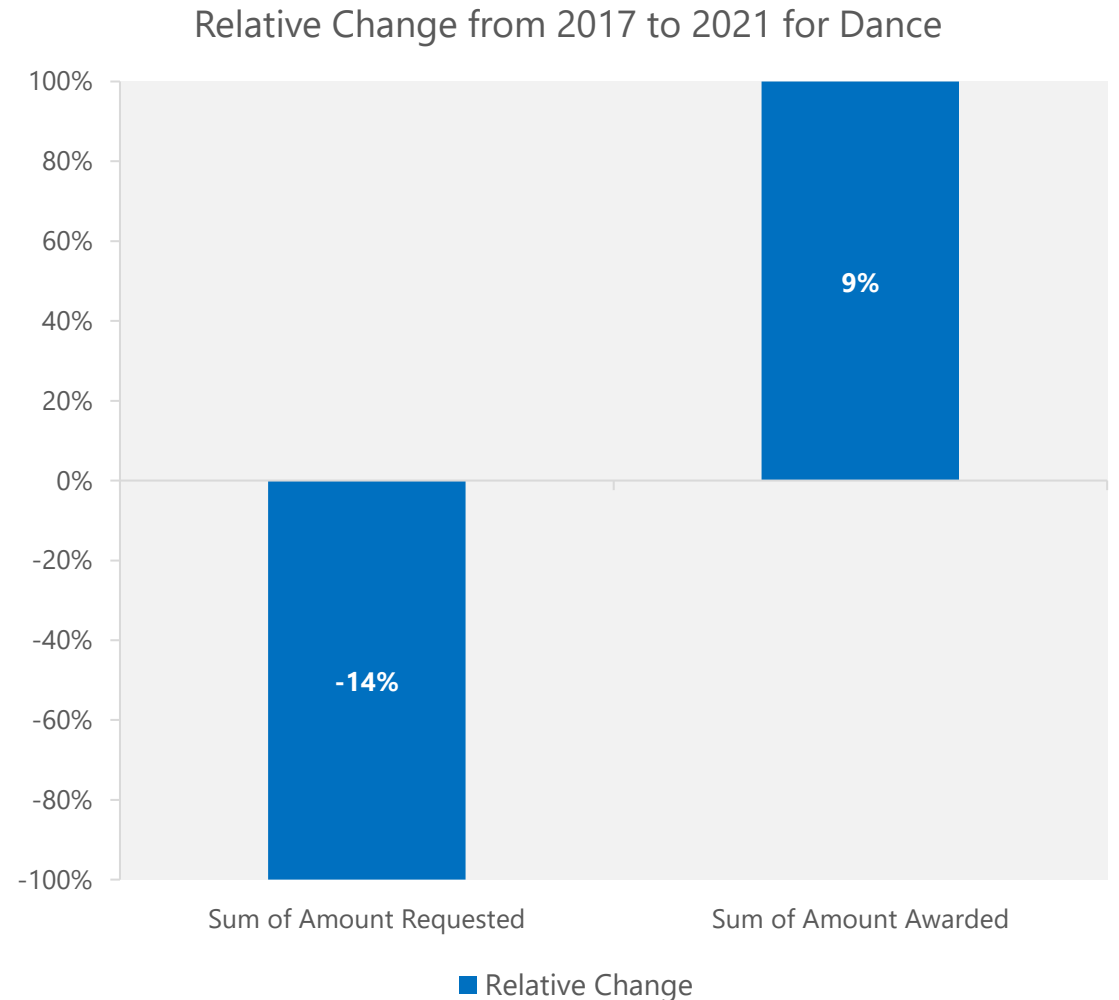
In 2021, over **\$1.8 million** was awarded to dance by the Toronto Arts Council. This was approximately \$55,000 (3%) higher than the amount awarded in 2020, but lower than the total amount awarded in 2019. In 2021, the amount funded made up **84% of the total amount of money** that was requested, representing a sharp increase from the 67% that was awarded in 2020. After peaking in 2019, the total amount requested in applications fell to close to \$2.17 million in 2021.

Distribution of Funding for Dance – Amount Requested vs Amount Awarded



2.3.3 Funding Landscape – Trends in TAC Funding for Dance

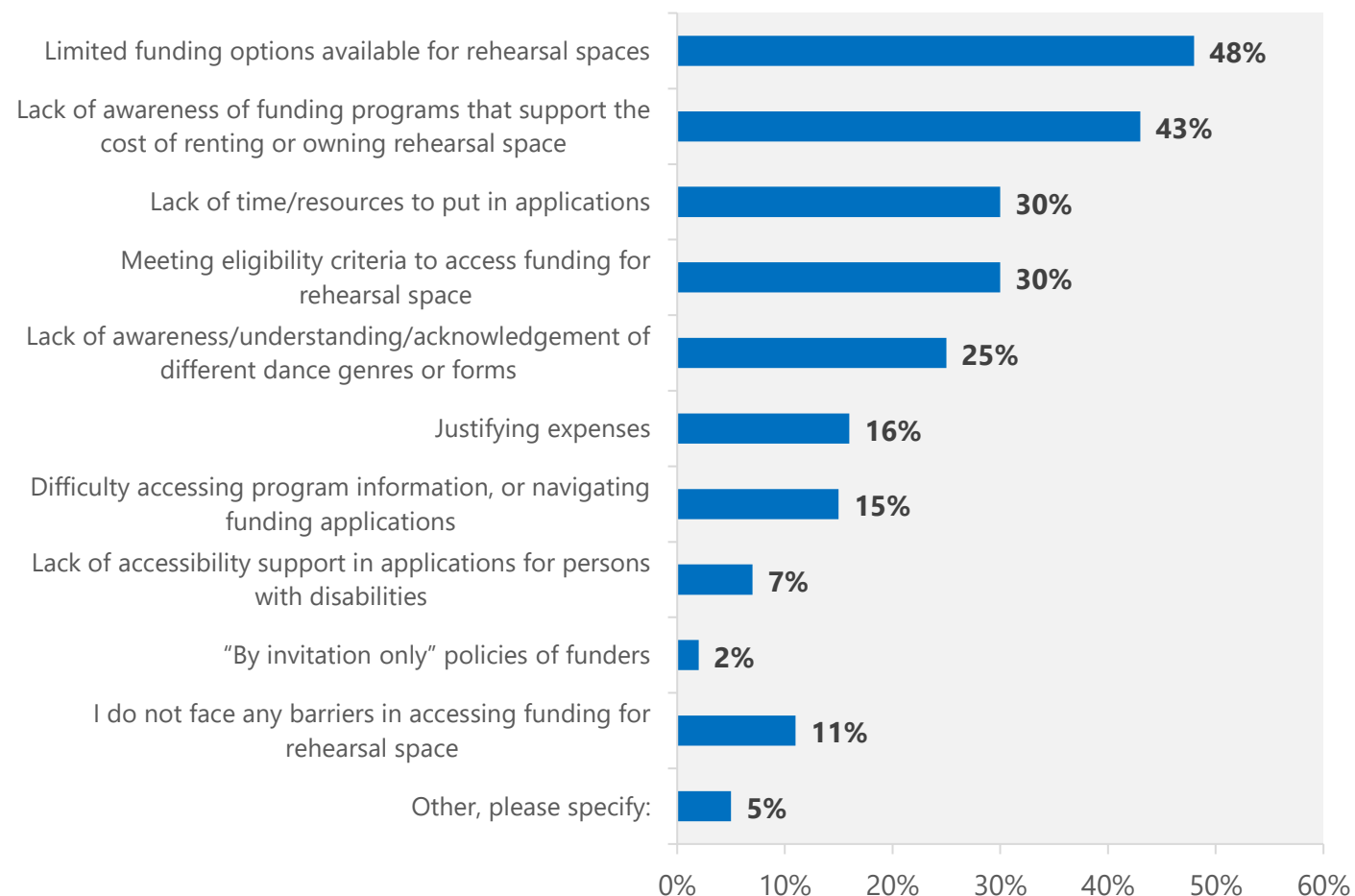
- Between 2017 and 2021, the amount of money requested for dance decreased by 14%.
- At the same time, the amount awarded for dance increased by 9%. However, the number of grants being awarded has dropped by 6%.



2.4 Barriers and Challenges to Accessing Funding

- There are several challenges and barriers to accessing funding for rehearsal spaces. Many funding programs available to Ontario dancers are not specific to dance, meaning **dance applicants are subject to highly competitive cross-sector selection processes and application requirements that are not necessarily understanding of the way dance companies operate**
- When asked what barriers exist in accessing funding for dance rehearsal spaces, Ontario dance sector survey respondents most frequently reported **limited funding options available for rehearsal spaces (48%), lack of awareness of funding programs that support the cost of owning rehearsal space (43%), and lack of time/resources to put in applications (30%).**

Barriers to Accessing Funding (n = 61)



2.4 Barriers and Challenges to Obtaining Funding Continued

Other challenges and barriers to obtaining funding for dance and rehearsal practices in Ontario include:

- **A lack of funding programs specifically for accessing or renting rehearsal space.**
 - Dance artists and organizations must **rely on broader operating or project funding programs in support of other primary activities** that have strict eligibility criteria.
- A **disconnect** between informal operating structures held by smaller dance companies who often operate under short-term, evolving artistic visions and goals and **funding applications** that ask for detailed information that may not be available.
 - Dancers engaged during this process sometimes feel there is a chicken and egg scenario of needing funding to obtain rehearsal spaces but needing infrastructure and defined operating plans in place to obtain funding.
- **A lack of funding and/or subsidies supporting for-profit spaces** serving dance community rehearsal space needs.
 - While the rental of rehearsal spaces is an eligible expense in most operating and project funding programs, the purchase of a facility is ineligible.
- **High standards to meet criteria for funding.**
 - Operating programs from CCA, OAC, and TAC require that dance companies have an active board of directors/governing body; demonstrate sustained, regular, ongoing programming; have received previous grants through same funding body; and put limits on the number of grants that can be applied for.
 - Moreover, they may **require audited financial statements** that are expensive to prepare (often between \$3,500-\$8,000). While this requirement is sometimes limited to budgets/grant amounts over a certain threshold, significant portions of grant money often goes towards the paperwork needed to obtain the funding.
- **A lack of accounting expertise** in the sector and in specific dance communities.

2.5 Pandemic Impacts

- In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and forced the closure of in-person operations and scale-down activities across many traditional arts sectors, particularly impacting dance and live performance.
- There was a lack of performance opportunities during this time and therefore reduced income. Some dance companies pivoted to virtual operations, frequently on Zoom and Instagram Live.
- When allowed to reopen, the **dance community took various steps to meet government guidelines**, including instating vaccine and mask mandates, mandatory testing and/or temperature checks, and contact tracing. This **increased their costs**, while they were already trying to cope with decreased revenues from shutdowns.
- Dance studios started the **Dance Safe Ontario** movement started during the pandemic. Recognizing there is no formal industry association for dance and the performing arts, dance studios were feeling unsupported during public health closures and looked for more formal support from the Government of Ontario around re-opening dance and performing arts spaces. As of July 2022, it is unclear if this initiative is still ongoing.

Case Study: Navigating Operations of Facility Owners

The **Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre (CCDT)** is a dance company that **owns and operates its own rehearsal and performance venue – 509 DANCE – in Toronto**. Having started the non-profit dance company in 1980, a for-profit training institution, the School of Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, was created in 1983 so co-founders Deborah Lundmark and Michael deConinck Smith could derive sufficient income to make dance their full-time occupation. The two organizations are still led by the founders in the roles of Artistic and Managing Directors.

Purchased and renovated in 1994-95, 509 DANCE has become an important dance community hub in the centre of the Cabbagetown neighbourhood. In a typical year, they see around 5,000 hours of not-for-profit arts-related use, in addition to some commercial rentals.



Facility-Specific Considerations

Dance companies that operate facilities are tasked with managing the general maintenance and administration of the space in addition to their artistic practice. General costs for facility owners include mortgage/rent payments, administration, insurance, utilities, cleaning, repairs, and occasional major capital costs. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, costs related to cleaning and building maintenance rose significantly alongside rises in utilities and insurance. Insurance rates alone have nearly quadrupled, according to Michael deConinck Smith. A portion of these increased costs is passed on to the dance artists who rent the space.

Despite these increased costs, the CCDT has kept rental rates low for professional dance artists. Their rates currently start at \$18/hour plus HST.



Case Study: Navigating Operations of Facility Owners Continued

Funding the Building

"Although there are limited capital programs for purchasing and renovating facilities, the problem comes later with operating the building. There's currently a lack of dedicated support for those organizations willing to assume the elevated risk involved," Michael mentioned.

Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre has primarily accessed funding for capital expenses and upgrades through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. While other public funders also offer capital support programs, their **application and accounting processes** are quite **intimidating** and **less accessible** to small-scale dance facilities. The programs seem catered to larger operations.

Funding the Company

Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre's hybrid model, which combines artist development for dancers under 19 years with professional-standard creation and presentation of their work, has made it **challenging to access public funding** due to the members' age. The CCDT company is currently receiving funding through both the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council, in addition to revenue earned from touring their repertoire.

With rising maintenance and facility costs and limited access to funding, mid-size dance facility owners often feel under supported. *"The Ontario dance community cannot afford to pay \$30-\$40/hour for a professional space, but facility operators need that amount, at minimum, to keep a space running,"* Michael explains, *"and so we're seeing places close."*

About Dance in Ontario – Conclusions

- **A one size fits all approach is impossible to support the dynamic and diverse practices and nature of Ontario's dance sector.** For example, survey respondents, who included more independent artists, preferred short-term lease arrangements for their rehearsal needs, while more established artists/companies preferred longer-term lease arrangements.
- Dance artists are **keen to rehearse close to where they live.** Interventions and support for the sector must consider this.
- In 2020-21, approximately **\$19.9 million was distributed to Ontario dance** across the three funders analyzed. Over the last 5 years:
 - Funding for dance across Canada Council for the Arts (CCA), Ontario Arts Council (OAC), and Toronto Arts Council (TAC) has **increased considerably** (20%, 39%, and 9% respectfully). Some of this increase can likely be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, that encouraged funders to increase support and adjust the way they allocate funding for the sector.
 - However, the **number of grants being awarded dropped** across all three funders, dropping quite significantly at OAC (16%) and TAC (6%). These results indicate that fewer dance community members have received funding, but those that have may have received more.
 - There has been **little growth in the amount of funding allocated to operating support**, suggesting operating funding amounts may not be properly adjusted for inflation year to year and may not be adequate to support dance company operations today.
 - Funding data from the TAC and OAC suggests that requests for funding have also declined. This may be an **indication of a shrinking dance community**, although further research is needed to substantiate this claim.

About Dance in Ontario – Conclusions Continued

- While a variety of funding programs are available to dance artists and companies, there are **barriers to accessing this funding** including competitive, complex, and costly application processes. These challenges are not unique to the dance sector and will likely require high-level changes to the overall funding system.
 - In addition, there is **no funding that is specifically allocated to support dance artists and groups access rehearsal spaces**, although broader operating and project funding may be used for this purpose.
 - The **funding landscape does not support for-profit dance studios**, despite their significance in supplying and providing dance rehearsal spaces.
 - Cultural **space operations are also not well supported** in the current landscape.
- Programs catered to equity-deserving communities are increasingly being implemented to reduce barriers to funding for communities historically under-represented and supported in the sector.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic added costs** to dance companies and rehearsal space operators, reducing their ability to earn revenue. In particular, insurance costs skyrocketed during the pandemic.
- The Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre's story highlights the challenges dance companies that operate dance facilities face in the current environment.

3. About Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario

Dance rehearsal spaces are used by professional dance companies and artists for the creation of artwork, freedom of expression, and the development of work for performance purposes.

The following section discusses:

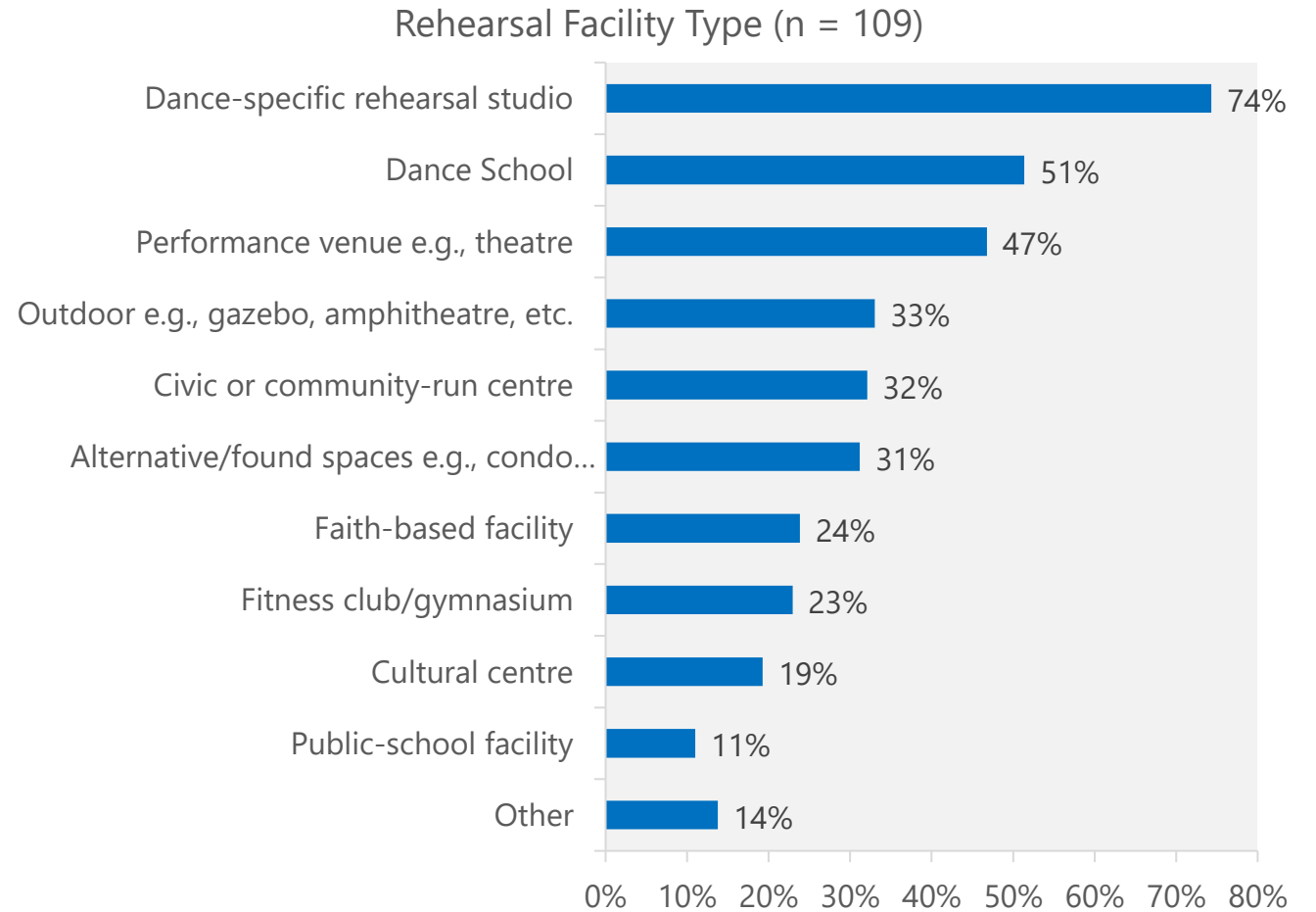
- Rehearsal space composition and design needs, both generally and as they relate to specific dance communities;
- A regional analysis of dance rehearsal spaces in Ontario reviewing supply, rental rates, utilization, and accessibility; and,
- The costs and operating realities faced by dance facility operators.



3. About Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario

The Ontario dance community rehearses in a variety of spaces including **dance studios, dance schools, theatres, yoga and fitness studios**, as well as more **atypical spaces** such as church basements, empty warehouses, and outdoor spaces.

- Survey respondents indicated most commonly using dance-specific rehearsal spaces for creation activities.
- Consultations revealed that it is more common for **dancers in regional communities to use atypical rehearsal spaces** due to a lack of affordable and accessible rehearsal spaces.



3.1 Rehearsal Space Composition and Design

The Ontario dance community members engaged during this project identified the following necessary elements of rehearsal spaces as it relates to features, and amenities:

Features

- **Larger spaces in general**
- **Flooring:**
 - Hardwood, marley dance floor, sprung flooring.
 - Smooth surfaces for barefoot dancing.
- **Lighting:**
 - Preference for natural lighting.
- **Sound**
- **Sound-Proofing**
- **Digital Infrastructure**
- **Ventilation**
- **Mats**
- **Barres**
- **Mirror**
- **Rigging Ability**
- **Water**
- **Tables and Chairs**

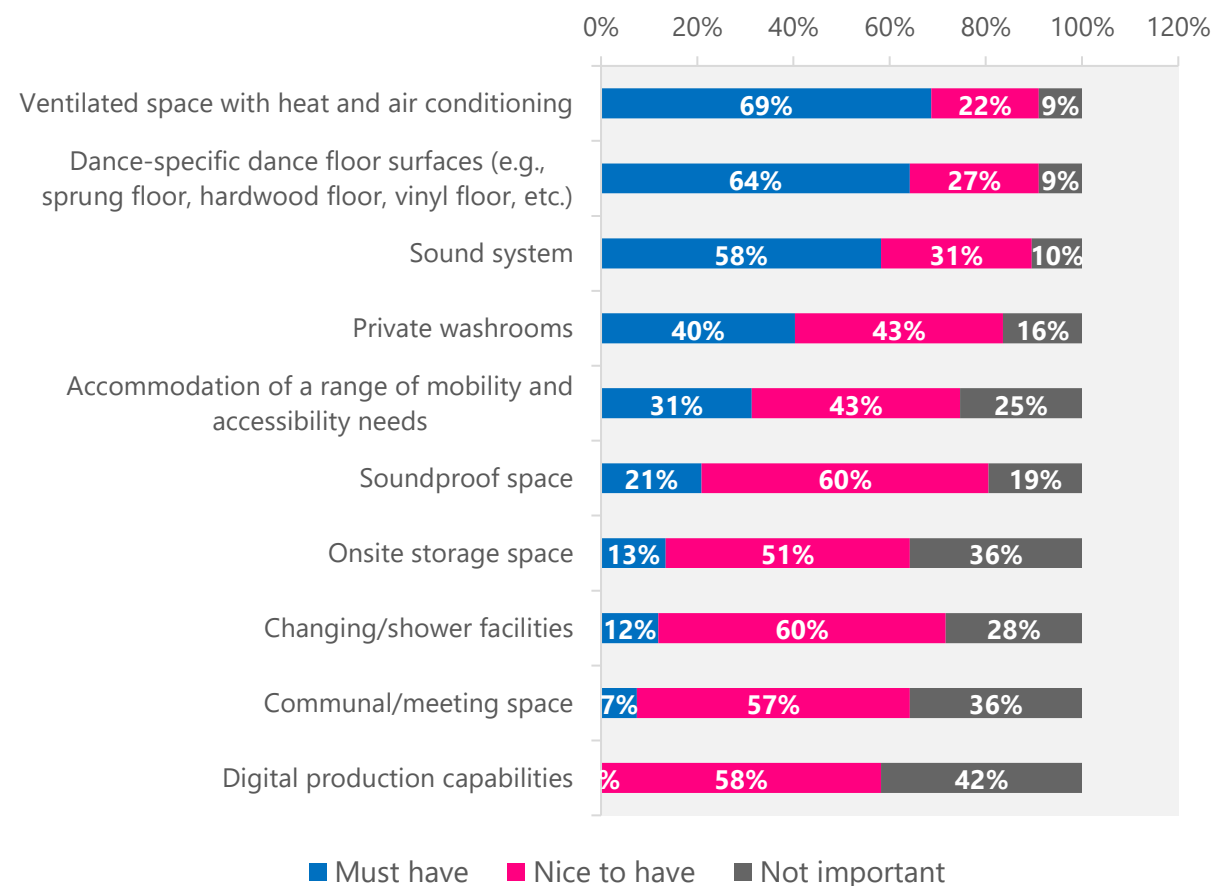
Amenities

- **Storage:**
 - To hold props and costumes.
- **Kitchen**
 - To eat/break bread together and build bonds among company members and cast.
- **Locks & Security**
- **Change Room**
- **Washrooms**
- **Loading Dock**
- **Child Care**
- **Parking**
- **Lounge Area**

3.1 Rehearsal Composition and Design – Prioritized

- When asking survey respondents to rate the importance of these features, the majority of respondents indicated that **ventilated space with heat and air conditioning, dance-specific dance floor surfaces, and sound systems** were must haves. **Private washrooms and accommodation of a range of mobility and accessibility needs** were also highly valued features.
- Consultations revealed that **soundproofing** is of particular concern for dance forms that require more percussive footwork, although this was selected to be a nice to have feature for the majority of survey respondents who answered this question.
- Common “other” survey responses included **Wi-Fi, mirrors, high ceilings, and “adequate space.”**

Importance of Dance Rehearsal Space Features (n = 67)



3.1.1 Rehearsal Space Composition – Community-Specific Needs

Dance forms vary by discipline and culture, and so do the needs for rehearsal spaces. Common needs identified through community consultations included:

- **Soundproofing** – Spaces that allow for live music, drums, tap dancing, percussive footwork, deep bass sounds, singing, ceremonial vocals, cante, and other sounds that accompany the creation process.
- **Adequate size** – Different communities use different props and materials in their performances, so spaces need to be large enough to accommodate rehearsals with these materials. For instance, high-ceilings, adequate size, wing spaces, etc.
- **Fireproofing/smoke allowance** – Certain communities cleanse the space before a performance by burning different minerals/materials. The type of materials and process used depends on the culture/tradition being practiced and is not necessarily specific to a particular dance form.

The next page presents a non-exhaustive list of specific needs highlighted by participants in the community consultations.

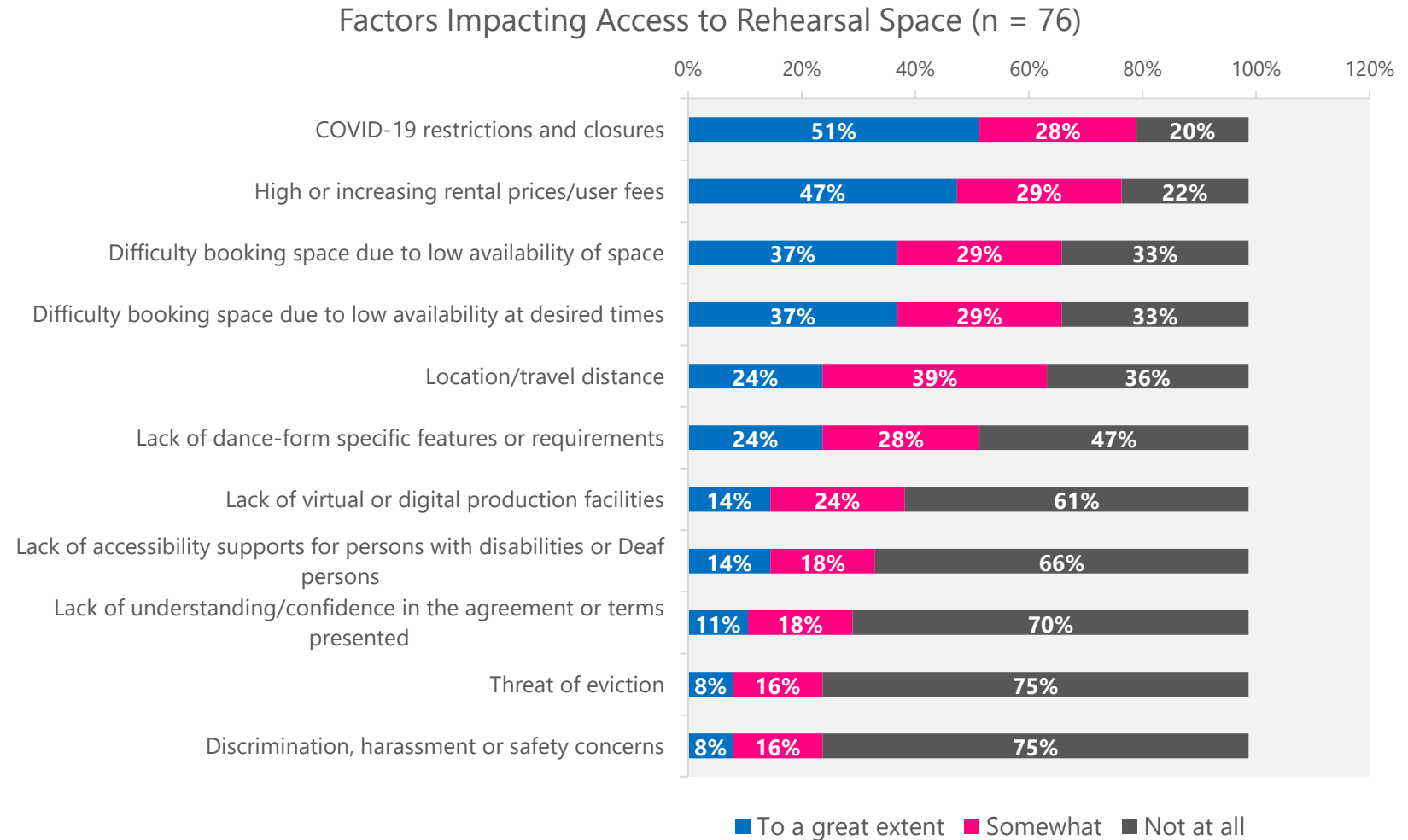


DJAA (La Secheresse | The Drought) by Lua Shayenne Dance Company

Dance Community	Affinity Group Needs
African Diaspora Dance	<p>Soundproofing: to enable use of drums, percussive footwork, singing, ceremonial vocals, live music.</p> <p>Fireproofing: to enable space cleansing rituals using incense, fire.</p> <p>Flexibility to use different materials in dance creation: experimentation using materials such as clay and sand in the dance work.</p>
Asian/East Asian Dance	<p>Storage: facilitate use of colourful costumes and props such as umbrellas, ribbon.</p> <p>Large spaces: allow for dance with umbrellas and movement of props around during rehearsal.</p>
South Asian Dance	<p>Soundproofing: to enable percussive footwork, ceremonial vocals, jumping, bells, live music.</p> <p>Carpets: for live accompanists often sit on the floor.</p> <p>Flooring: floors should be clean, smooth, and made of a comfortable material to perform dance without shoes.</p> <p>Heating: to prevent feet and ligament damage and discomfort.</p> <p>Mirrors: to see how body and hand movements work.</p>
Latin, Latina, Latino, Latinx Dance	<p>Soundproofing: to enable use of drums, percussive footwork, singing, cante, live music.</p> <p>Fireproofing: to enable space cleansing rituals, smudging</p> <p>Large spaces: accommodate for more experimental art forms, allow adequate space for dance with feathers, drums, and move materials around during rehearsal.</p>
Deaf & Disability Dance	<p>Physically Accessible: enable ground-level access, access by transit, entry ramps, large elevators, large rehearsal spaces, bathrooms with fully accessible features, brail and/or other features to define and delineate the space, allow guide dogs/support animals.</p>
Indigenous Dance	<p>Soundproofing: to enable use of drums, percussive footwork, singing, ceremonial vocals, live music.</p> <p>Fireproofing: to enable space cleansing rituals including smudging using herbs/plants, fire, tobacco.</p> <p>Large spaces: accommodate for more experimental art forms, allow adequate space for dance with Indigenous regalia, drums, and to move materials around during rehearsal.</p> <p>Inclusive, safety: sovereign space led by Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Natural land: dance directly on the land, need support to clear it and work with the government to access certain natural spaces.</p>
Regional Dance	<p>Large spaces: prevalence of atypical spaces such as basements being used without high enough ceilings. Perceived lack of spaces available in regional communities.</p> <p>Better infrastructure: better flooring, more change rooms, green rooms, bathrooms, etc.</p>
Urban/Street Dance	<p>Soundproofing: enable use of loud music with deep bass, high energy.</p> <p>Flooring: flooring to accommodate dancing with shoes.</p>

3.1.2 Factors Impacting Access to Rehearsal Space

- Survey responses revealed that **COVID-19 restrictions and closures, high or increasing rental prices/user fees, and difficulty booking space have impacted the Ontario dance community to a great extent.**
- It is unclear whether the impacts were driven by the COVID-19 pandemic which was raging on during this time, and whether these impacts may diminish in a post-COVID world.



3.2 Regional Analysis of Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario

Types of Spaces

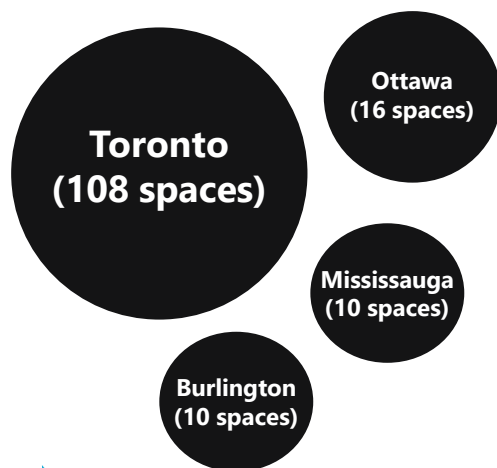


65% of rehearsal spaces are dance studios

In most regions of Ontario, more than half of spaces available are **dance studios** conducting recreational or professional dance training. **Ottawa** appears to be an anomaly in that dance studios form only a quarter (25%) of spaces available, and **multi-purpose spaces are more common (46%)**.

Second most common are multi-purpose spaces, typically housed in **community or cultural centres or performing arts venues** and can be rented for arts or non-arts related purposes.

Regional Considerations



Dance hubs or purpose-built dance rehearsal-only facilities are primarily found in **Toronto and Ottawa**.

Ottawa is also unique for having the highest percentage of charitable organizations operating dance spaces at more than one-third (39%) of spaces, compared to 4% in Toronto and 3% in Peel.

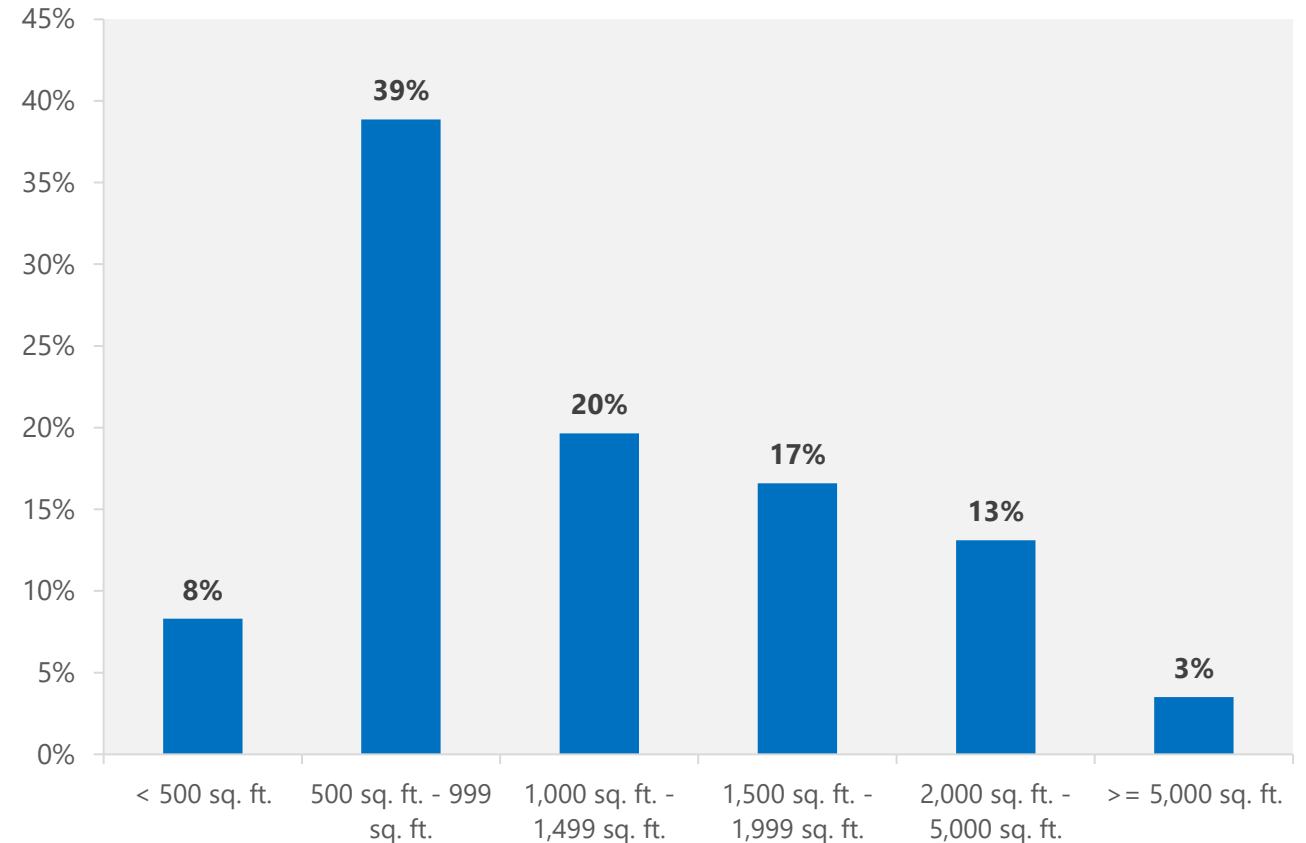
Over a quarter of available spaces in **Peel** (25%) and **Ottawa** (28%) are **operated by the municipality** in cultural centres or performance venues.

3.2 Regional Analysis: Size of Dance Rehearsal Spaces

Digging deeper into the **size** of Ontario's available dance rehearsal spaces:

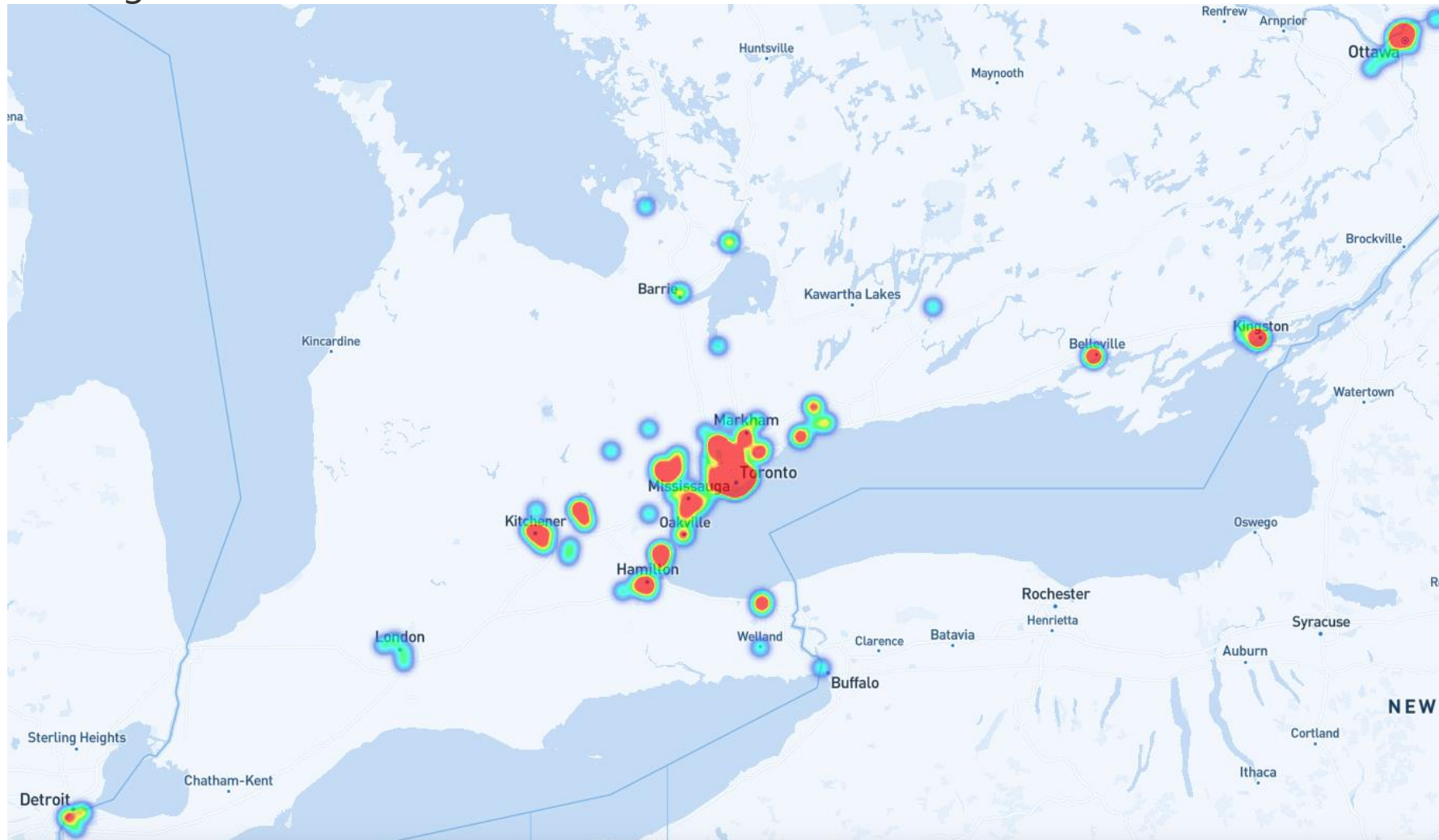
- Spaces range from 225 sq. ft. to over 15,000 sq. ft.
- About 60% of spaces in Toronto and York region are **smaller** than 1,000 sq. ft.
- Over 70% of spaces in Peel region are **larger** than 1,000 sq. ft.
- Median space area is 1,000 sq. ft.
- Multi-purpose and performance venues tend to be larger (>2,000 sq. ft.).

Average Size of Ontario's Dance Rehearsal Spaces (n=228)



3.2 Regional Analysis: Clusters of Rehearsal Spaces

Clusters of dance spaces exist in Toronto and York region, Peel (Mississauga, Brampton), Kitchener-Waterloo, Burlington-Hamilton, and in Ottawa.



3.2.1 Regional Analysis – Hourly Rental Rates



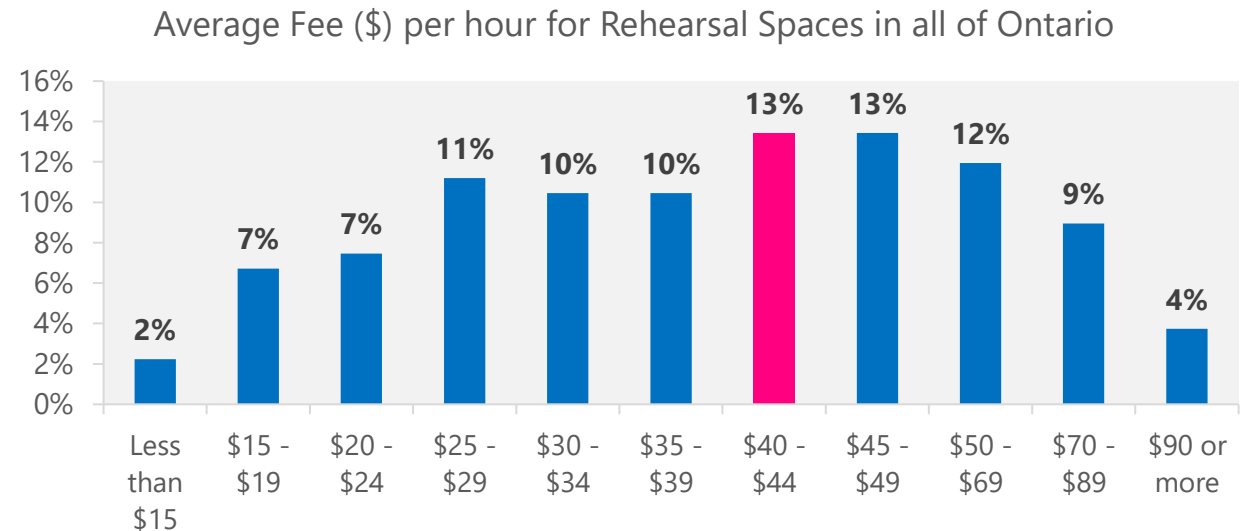
3.2.2 Regional Analysis - Affordability

The average ad hoc rental rate for dance spaces in the province is \$42/hour, which is 91% higher than the average fee the community can afford to pay (\$22/hour), as indicated by survey respondents. The majority (62%) of dance rehearsal spaces identified charge upwards of \$35/hour. The **City of Toronto has the highest average fees** for ad hoc rentals at \$47/hour.

Non-profit organizations and municipality-operated spaces charge lower rental fees per hour compared to other types of organizations including charities.

Many spaces – especially municipality-operated spaces and academic institutions but also some independent companies – provide **variable pricing** based on who is using their space. Most common price tiers were non-profit and commercial uses, with **non-profit users** receiving a reduced rate. At academic institutions, **students** would see a **reduced rate**.

Type of Organization	Average Cost per Hour
Non-profit	\$20
City/Municipality	\$29
Charity	\$33
University/College	\$33
Privately Owned/Operated	\$46



3.2.2 Regional Analysis – Availability and Affordability

Based on utilization data self-reported by some facilities, there appears to be **availability at dance schools** (professional and recreational schools that are not purpose-built for ballet), but these spaces charge an average of **\$45/hour** (which is more than double what the Ontario dance community has indicated it can pay).

Many municipality-operated spaces include **performance/black box theatres** that could be made available to the dance community when the spaces are not being utilized for performance. Another area of opportunity is **fitness studios**. They were included in the analysis if they specifically advertised that their space could be rented as a dance rehearsal space, so there are likely to be many more facilities not captured in this work that could be used as dance spaces. According to Industry Canada, over 1,600 fitness and recreational sports centres operate in the province. However, the relative availability of these spaces would need to be explored.

In conclusion, **spaces do have availability, but affordability is by far the bigger issue.**

Type of Company/Organization	Average Cost per Hour	Type of Company/Organization	Average Cost per Hour
Ballet School	\$53	Purpose-built Dance Rehearsal Facility	\$31
Multipurpose/Event/Faith-based Organizations	\$51	Performing Arts Companies with Own Space	\$27
Performing Arts Venue	\$48	Fitness Studio	\$25
Dance School	\$45	Arts/Cultural Centre	\$24
Recreation/Community Centre	\$36	Overall	\$42

3.2.3 Regional Analysis – Discoverability

- In creating the inventory database for this project, **a few patterns** emerged with respect to how dance rehearsal spaces are advertised or publicized online:
 - It could not be independently verified that the owners of the spaces identified rent their spaces to the public, implying that **companies with available rental space may not be widely sharing the presence of their rental spaces.**
 - Particularly in the Greater Toronto Area, there are a number of spaces listed for rent that do not have a studio/business name attached to the listing, including many established companies. Only through cross-referencing addresses and postal codes did it become clear what each of these spaces were. This discrepancy could indicate that **companies and studios are reticent about advertising that their space is available to rent.**
- While these factors point to a discoverability issue in general, spaces were particularly difficult to find outside the major hubs (Toronto and Ottawa).
- Contrary to expectations, **very few atypical dance spaces arose in this research** (e.g., church basements, museum rooms, classrooms, community halls, etc.), which could be due to the informal ways these spaces are used by third parties. **Those that did arise were most often outside of the Greater Toronto Area** where the stock of purpose-built spaces was smaller.

3.3 Operating & Capital Analysis – Operating Models

- **Almost half (47%) of available rehearsal spaces are operated as dance schools (studios)**, and about 13% are housed in performance venues. While all of these spaces rent to the dance community, under 5% of spaces are purpose-built dance *rehearsal* spaces (spaces that operate as dance hubs and rent exclusively to dancers and dance companies for rehearsals). The majority of dance schools primarily operate as for-profit organizations.
- About **half (53%) of Ontario’s dance rehearsal spaces are privately owned or operated**. Further, about a quarter (25%) of spaces are registered charities and another 15% of spaces are operated by municipalities.
- A large **majority (85%) of facilities earn revenue from multiple lines of business**, typically from some combination of dance training, rentals to dance artists or companies, and rentals for fitness classes, events and other non-dance uses.

Type of Organization	% of Spaces
Dance School (Professional and Recreational)	47%
Performing Arts Venue	13%
Ballet School	8%
Community/Recreation Centre	7%
Performing Arts Company (Dance/Theatre/Multi)	6%
Arts/Cultural Centre	5%
Multipurpose Space/Event Space/Faith-based Organizations	5%
Fitness Studio	4%
Dance Rehearsal Facility	2%
Activist/Community Cooperative/Friendship Centre	1%
Artist/Creative Collective	1%

Ownership Structure	% of Spaces
Privately Owned/Operated	53%
Charity	25%
City/Municipality	15%
University/College	5%
Artist Collective/ Partnership/ Cooperative/ Non-profit	3%

3.4 Operating & Capital Analysis – Expenditure

Dance rehearsal facilities tend to operate one of two ways:

- **The owner/operator of the space rents it out directly to the dance community:** These facilities have **operating budgets of more than \$200,000**. This model is typically seen in large performance venues or established dance companies.
- **A dance company/organization operates a space on behalf of an owner, and they then make the space available for rent to the dance community:** Facilities that lease their space tend to **have annual budgets of less than \$100,000**. They are typically dance studios or small dance companies. **Rent can make up to 35% of their annual expenditure.**
- **The largest expense for facilities is labour for salaried employees,** and contract or freelance workers (which makes up on average 57% of annual expenditure). The most concerning expenses identified by owner-operators are repairs and renovations, as well as **growing insurance and pandemic-related utilities and sanitation costs.**

Expenditure Category	Leased Spaces	Owned Spaces
Labour (Salaried Employees and Contract/Freelance)	41%	55% - 59%
Event Expenses (Booking, Marketing, Equipment Rental, etc.)	5%	2%
Rent/Mortgage Payments	35%	1% - 4%
Insurance	3%	3%
Property Maintenance	0%	7%
Marketing	5%	2%
All Other Expenses (Accounting, Legal, Office Supplies, etc.)	10%	27%

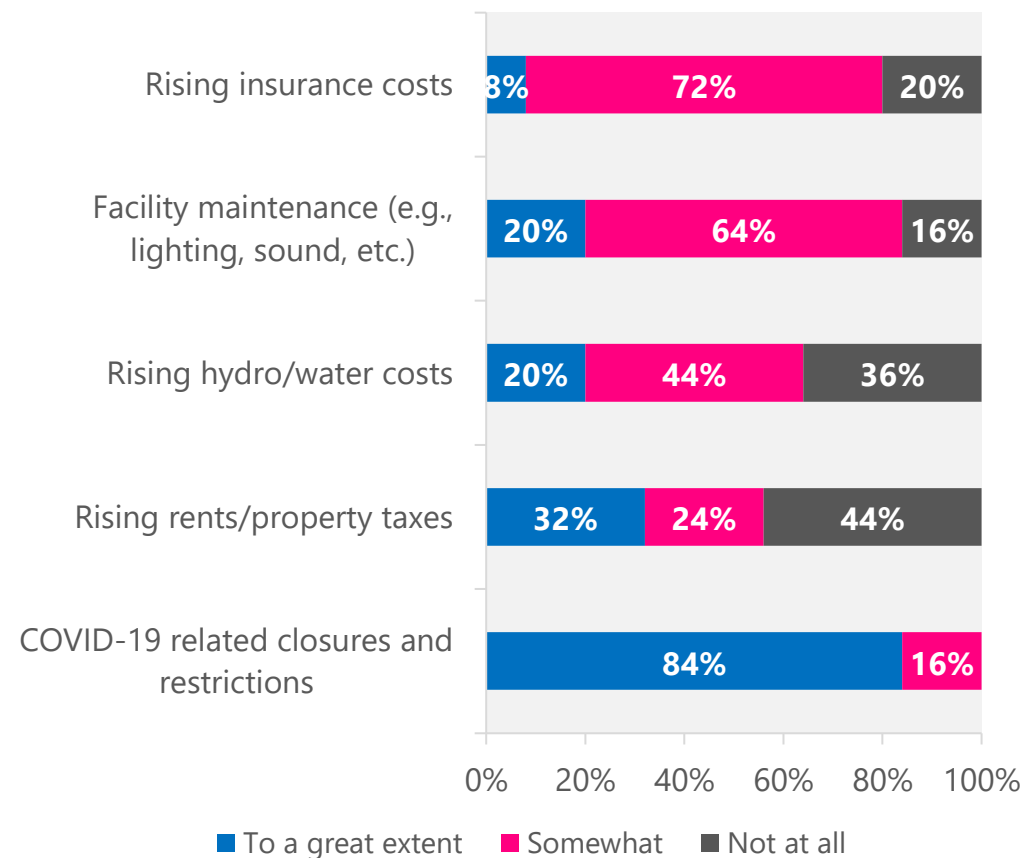
3.5 Operating & Capital Analysis – Financial Sustainability

Some operators have expressed frustration about the dance community’s **lack of understanding of the challenges faced by facility operators** in large cities:

- While there are funds available for capital improvements at the federal (e.g., Department of Canadian Heritage) and provincial levels (e.g., Ontario Trillium), there is **limited funding support** for operating facilities.
- Capital funding is also limited for smaller companies and for-profit operators.
- With **rising operating expenses** like rent, insurance, and utilities, as well as pandemic-related impacts, operating a facility has gotten more difficult for both large and small facilities. Indeed, facility operators who responded to the survey indicated that COVID-19 related closures and restrictions and rising rents/property taxes negatively impacted them to a great extent (84% and 32% respectively).

Facility operators are **reluctant to raise fees** to cover rising costs, given the lack of affordable spaces and the dance community’s limited capacity to pay higher fees.

Factors Affecting Financial Sustainability (n=25)



About Dance Rehearsal Spaces in Ontario – Conclusions

- Different dance communities have different needs for rehearsal spaces that are inconsistently met. Some dance companies own their own spaces, but most do not.
- The average hourly rental fee for spaces in Ontario is \$42 per hour **which is almost double the average fee the community says they can afford to pay** (\$22 per hour). For dance companies, rent can make up 35% of annual operating expenditure.
- The research did not reveal many dance rehearsal spaces outside of the major hubs (e.g., Toronto and Ottawa). This is indicative of a low inventory of dance rehearsal spaces, or issues with the discoverability of these spaces. **Utilization data indicates that existing dance rehearsal spaces have availability, but affordability is by far the bigger issue.**
 - Regional communities are particularly challenged by a lack of dance-specific spaces.
- Under **5% of spaces are purpose-built dance rehearsal spaces**. Almost half (47%) of available spaces are operated as dance schools (studios).
- Facilities earn revenue from multiple lines of business, typically from some combination of dance training, rentals to dance artists or companies, and rentals for fitness classes, events and other non-dance uses.
 - The largest expense for facility owners/operators is labour/staff (57% of annual expenditure), and rent can make up nearly 35% of a dance company's expenses. Despite experiencing increased costs through the pandemic, **facility operators are reluctant to raise fees to cover rising costs** given the lack of affordable spaces and the dance community's limited capacity to pay higher fees.

4. Rehearsal Space Challenges

Ontario's professional dance artists are facing several challenges in this evolving pandemic environment, which has exacerbated existing challenges accessing rehearsal spaces.

The following section discusses the 3 key challenges facing Ontario's dance community as it relates to rehearsal spaces:

- Affordability;
- Operational and Physical Accessibility; and,
- Inclusivity.



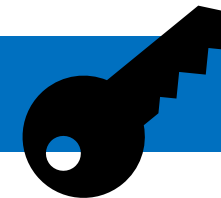
4.1 Challenge – Affordability



Existing dance rehearsal spaces in Ontario are financially out of reach for emerging dance artists and small dance companies, while rising rents and other costs are making it difficult for facility operators to stay open.

- This research found the **median income of Ontario’s dance artists hovers around \$5,000 per year**. This number is lower than data shared by the CCA showing the average median income of an individual dancer being \$15,800. However, it is consistent with Statistics Canada data indicating that the annual income of a typical gig worker is only \$4,303. Regardless, income from dance is low, further highlighting the challenges of rising rental rates and affordability. Public policy must address this issue if the financial accessibility of rehearsal spaces for dancers is to be improved.
- The **average rental fee for rehearsal space in Ontario (\$42/hour) is almost twice the fee dance artists can afford to pay (\$22/hour)**, as self-reported by dance artists and companies. Almost two-thirds of rehearsal spaces identified in this research (62%) are charging upwards of \$35 per hour, which is above the rate that dancers say they can afford, and very costly considering artists’ low reported income.
- The review of public grants available to dance facility owners and operators revealed there is **limited support for financially sustainable operations and offering affordable space rental rates**.

4.2 Challenge – Operational and Physical Accessibility



There is a lack of affordable, adequately constructed dance rehearsal spaces, particularly in regional communities of Ontario, which has encouraged the use of atypical and shared multi-purpose spaces, many of which are not fully accessible.

- Consultation participants indicated that dance rehearsal spaces are often inaccessible in the following ways:
 - **Operationally:** Professional dance artists are not able to efficiently seek out, identify, and access spaces at necessary times (often evenings/weekends).
 - **Physically:** Professional dance artists find it challenging to easily commute to and make use of the critical amenities within rehearsal facilities in Ontario.
- This research found that rehearsal spaces are generally hard to find and, as a result, some spaces may be underutilized.
- The administrative requirements for finding and accessing spaces (e.g., identifying spaces for rent, submitting rental applications, applying for public grants to finance rehearsal activities) are a barrier to access for some under-resourced dance communities.

4.3 Challenge – Inclusivity



There is a perceived lack of safe rehearsal spaces that can accommodate dancers with diverse needs and culturally diverse practices in Ontario.

- The research identified that Ontario’s rehearsal spaces lack inclusivity in terms of:
 - **Physical Safety:** Managing access to the space (through automatic locks, reception staff, etc.), conducting background checks, ensuring buildings are well-maintained, featuring proper flooring/ventilation.
 - **Emotional safety:** Artist-led spaces, featuring inclusive design/artwork, relationships between artists and facility owners/managers, avoiding reliance on religious centres.
 - **Culturally diverse practices:** Ability to practice non-euro-centric customs and traditions such as smudging and live drum playing.*
- The prevalence of short-term rental structures affects the ability for dancers to build relationships with space owners and develop comfort and trust using spaces.
- For this engagement, rehearsal spaces databases from 2-5 years ago were reviewed. The research revealed that a significant proportion of spaces were no longer active or available, illustrating the volatility in the rehearsal space landscape. Coupled with the recent loss of some of Ontario’s major dance hubs, there is a perceived lack of space available that is “home” to the dance community.
- Moreover, the prevalence of using atypical spaces such as churches and other religious cultural centres in regional communities can be traumatizing and inaccessible for some communities.

*A more comprehensive list of culturally diverse practices/space needs is included in Section 3 of the report.

5. Case Studies: Unique Models

Ontario's professional dance artists have sought out various ways to address challenges related to the sustainability of their practice and relationship with rehearsal space.

The following section discusses some case studies of different operating models, and past and present initiatives to address rehearsal space challenges in the dance community, including:

- Partnerships & Collaboration;
- Collectives; and,
- SpaceFinder.



5. Introduction to Unique Models

- The evidence presented in the previous sections confirms that there is a **lack of affordable, accessible, and inclusive rehearsal space** for the Ontario dance community (but not necessarily a lack of spaces) – and hints at the challenges and needs that result from this reality.
- Some members of the Ontario dance community have sought to address these rehearsal space challenges through **relationship building and collaboration** with a variety of stakeholders. They have also created **new partnerships and new hybrid operating models**.
- **Collaborative facility partnerships** and **collective models** are described below. Additionally, an innovative service offering – SpaceFinder – is described and discussed.

5.1 Partnerships & Collaborations – Municipal

The **Ottawa Dance Directive (ODD)** was started in 2011 to support the development of dance through education, creation, presentation and outreach under a hybrid dance company structure.

- The ODD operates out of **Arts Court**, a municipally-owned building in Ottawa. Arts Court is run in collaboration with a **Residents Steering Committee** which works towards proposing solutions and processes that build a fair and progressive arts centre. The Committee strives to benefit the collective best interests of the centre and the cultural community.

Another municipal model can be found at **44 Gaukel**, which was designed and operated as a shared creative workplace in the core of downtown Kitchener. The **City of Kitchener** operates this creative community through a partnership with anchor tenants **ArtsBuild Ontario** and the **Accelerator Centre** (a technology incubator).

- 44 Gaukel is an example of an innovative, community driven space that **offers affordable, below market rental costs with basic office amenities** as a result of their partnership. 44 Gaukel features 10,000 sq. ft. of space shared between ArtsBuild Ontario, local arts and culture organizations, and the tech makerspaces of the Accelerator Centre, all of which operate in the Waterloo Region.



5.1 Partnerships & Collaborations – Education

Ballet Jörgen was founded in 1987 to support the development and dissemination of Canadian choreography. Ballet Jörgen travels coast to coast to remote and underserved communities each season performing a repertoire of full-length ballets and shorter contemporary works.

- Their **relationship with George Brown College** started over 30 years ago. The Artistic Director of the company at the time was teaching at the college and was in the process of taking over leadership of the dance program.
- **Ballet Jörgen has materials and facilities donated to them in kind by the College and in return they administer the dance programs at the school.** They are wholly responsible for program delivery, so they hire the faculty and program administrators. The College manages the building operations and studio upkeep and Ballet Jörgen has access to additional administrative support from the school.

Ballet Jörgen's relationship with George Brown College extends beyond just space and education. They **collaborate with the College and its students on many artistic and strategic projects.** Most recently, Ballet Jörgen partnered with George Brown College's Centre for Arts, Design and Information Technology to produce "This is Ballet: Dancing Anne of Green Gables", a documentary chronicling the challenges of creating a new full-length ballet.

- They have **4 studios, a vocal room, changeroom facilities, and office space.**
- They rent studio space when requested (pending availability) but do not publicly advertise it due to administrative challenges. Their rental rates range from \$15/hour - \$45/hour with the cheapest rates offered to George Brown students and alumni and their other community partners.



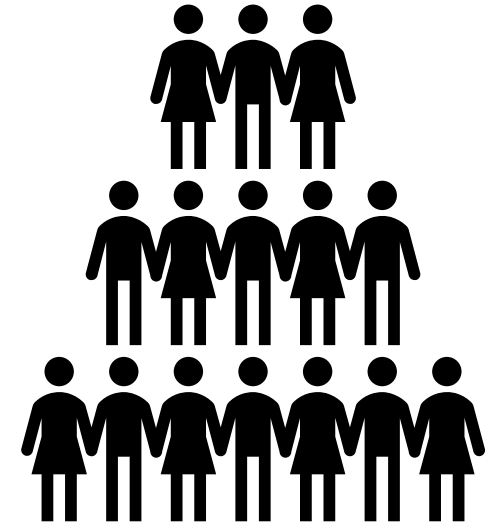
Credit: Canada's Ballet Jörgen

Canada's
Ballet JÖRGEN
du Canada



5.2 Collectives

- Ontario's dance artists have embraced collaborative models to make the process of obtaining rehearsal space more feasible. **Intergalactic Arts Collective (IGAC)** started as a group of individual movement artists who wanted to find an alternative to the rising cost of studio space in Toronto. **The collective was formed to lease a space, divide the rental cost, and share the administrative responsibility of managing the space.**
- To that end, Intergalactic Arts Collective (IGAC) utilizes a non-hierarchical cooperative structure in which decisions are made through discussion and consensus. Currently, the space supports 7 resident artists who pay a monthly fee for unlimited use of the space. They also support over 50 associate artists who rent the space out for a small hourly fee. IGAC is used as a dance studio, event venue, film set, and performance space. Located at the Artscape Youngplace on Shaw Street, they lease the space in five-year increments.



5.3 SpaceFinder

[SpaceFinder](#) was a platform launched by American arts organization, Fractured Atlas, in 2011. Discovered by **ArtsBuild Ontario** a couple years later, the organization brought this platform to Canada to address the need to find and access creative spaces for rehearsal, performance, and office use. SpaceFinder allowed users to both find spaces and submit rental applications to secure them.

To support the initiative, ArtsBuild partnered with **WorkInCulture** and the **Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)**. The initiative received funding from the **Metcalf Foundation**. Together, they brought in municipal partners and arts councils to provide financial support to cover the platform's operating fee.

How did it work?

SpaceFinder Toronto was launched in 2014. The initiative was later expanded to British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario including smaller communities such as Sudbury, Ottawa, Mississauga, York Region, Hamilton, and Simcoe County.

- ArtsBuild was responsible for inventory gathering. It was largely a boots on the ground operation with many representatives from different communities identifying spaces to add to the database. It was free for facilities to list their spaces on the website.
- To add to the sustainability of the initiative, the platform charged a small fee for booking payments that went through the website. The fee was meant to provide some revenue to SpaceFinder to bolster support provided by public funders – but it was not substantial.

ARTSBUILDONTARIO

WorkInCulture

theatre
dance
opera
toronto alliance
for the
performing arts

 SpaceFinder Toronto
BY FRACTURED ATLAS

5.3 SpaceFinder Continued

Challenges

Just over 5 years later, the SpaceFinder initiatives in Canada were put on pause due to operational challenges that made it hard to sustain them:

- **Limited Capacity:** Arts organizations are often under-resourced and stretched thin with existing responsibilities. The organizations managing SpaceFinder found it challenging to sustain the initiative in the long-term.
- **Keeping up with Inventory:** Keeping stock of regional facilities was labour intensive.
- **Technical Glitches:** Technology needs regular maintenance to address glitches as they arise. Since ArtsBuild did not own the platform, it was out of their control how the website glitches were addressed. Technology management was both costly and time consuming.
- **Financing:** SpaceFinder relied heavily on inconsistent public support, and the revenue earned through transaction fees was not adequate to sustain the operation.

In October 2020, the SpaceFinder application in the USA, from which the SpaceFinder Canada software originated, was also de-activated.

Current Context

ArtsBuild recognizes that a need for SpaceFinder-style infrastructure still exists in Ontario's arts sector. They are looking to explore the feasibility of launching a similar initiative in the future with a wider group of cultural partners in place to manage its scope and sustainability.

Conclusions

- **Partnerships, collaboration, and relationship-building** between different dance and non-dance stakeholders have been used to address challenges related to sustainability of rehearsal space access.
- **Each partnership is unique, complex**, and points to the importance of striking the right combination of financial, infrastructure and human resources.
 - Nevertheless, they show that ingenuity and leadership have evolved solutions to rehearsal space access.
 - More work is likely needed between funders and dance to be flexible and open to new arrangements, as well as to financially support innovative organizational solutions.
- **Initiatives to help address the challenges** of securing creative space in Ontario have launched and failed in the past due to a lack of capacity in the arts sector.

6. Needs and Recommendations

Ontario's professional dance community needs sustainable solutions to address challenges related to dance rehearsal spaces.

The following section discusses the Ontario dance community needs related to rehearsal spaces and recommendations to address them, including:

1. Rethink Public Support for Dance Spaces;
2. Improve Discoverability; and,
3. Prioritize Relationship Building, Collaboration, and Community Development.



Rethink Public Support for Dance Spaces

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more affordable rehearsal spaces.

Recommendation 1: Introduce dance rehearsal space subsidies in grant programs.

- The rising costs of operating dance facilities as a result of COVID-19 health and safety requirements and global economic instability is having an impact of rental rates and the income of dance artists is not sufficient to cover these costs.
- Rehearsal facility operators are largely unsupported by public funding, and the inability of dance artists to pay the current market rate for rehearsal spaces is causing these facilities to decrease operations or shut down entirely.
- Introducing subsidies for rehearsal space rentals for dance artists and companies will support dance artists in accessing the spaces they need for rehearsal, without jeopardizing the operational sustainability of facilities.

Recommendation 2: Offer incentives to non-dance facilities with appropriate infrastructure and features to open their space for dance rehearsal.

- The dance community has successfully partnered with non-dance communities and facilities in the past. For example, Adelheid Dance got their start through a long-term residency at Factory Theatre. As well, municipal and educational partnerships often lead to further community benefits.
- The research identified that facility operators (both specific to dance and not-specific to dance) sometimes have rentable space available, but the administrative burden required to rent the space is a barrier preventing operators from doing renting. Public incentives could help address this challenge.
- Timeshare models could be incentivized for municipal/provincial public infrastructure including culture centres and schools. A timeshare model would ensure the wider community can access public spaces.

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more affordable rehearsal spaces.

Recommendation 3: Meet with funders to review funding programs for dance artists and cultural spaces, funding thresholds, and application processes.

- Through this process, the dance community shared concerns that public funding for Ontario dance as it is presently structured is not effective, both in terms of funding thresholds and application requirements. As well, little support for cultural space operators is a challenge that leaves them susceptible to affordability challenges coming out of the pandemic. Space providers are increasingly feeling the pinch of economic disruptions and high administration costs. Dance rehearsal space providers are concerned about their sustainability.
- Funders should engage in further conversations with the Ontario dance community to review funding structures, maximum amounts, and application questions. Solutions discussed should represent the interests of all dance community members, including independent artists, companies, rehearsal space operators, and for-profit studios.

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more support to access rehearsal space

Recommendation 4: Create a new model to promote and manage rehearsal spaces in Ontario.

- The SpaceFinder initiative of 2014 is ever more relevant today as the rehearsal and creation space landscape in Ontario continues to change. However, SpaceFinder's case study highlights the challenges the arts community faces implementing and sustaining such initiatives due to limited capacity and access to infrastructure.
- Therefore, it is recommended that Ontario's dance service organizations and government partners explore new models to help identify, rent out, and manage rehearsal spaces. The scope of such an initiative should be expanded beyond dance rehearsal spaces to include facilities used by other arts, culture, and creative organizations. This process should include:
 - **Conducting a feasibility study** on the capacity for different industry associations, arts service organizations, and other community groups to collaborate on a new space finding initiative. **The feasibility study could explore the costs, responsibilities, and processes that would make such an initiative sustainable in the long term.**
 - Preliminary consultations could be held with public funders in Ontario to emphasize the need for **sustainable funding commitments** to such an initiative. Operation partners could include ArtsBuild Ontario, Dance Ontario, Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA), and Craft Ontario and other regional arts service organizations and industry associations. Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Metcalf Foundation, and other municipal governments and funders should also be involved, especially personnel from municipal building departments.
 - Canada Council for the Arts' new Innovation Fund could be considered to support this initiative in the near term.

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more support to access rehearsal space

Recommendation 5: Fund accessibility upgrades to rehearsal spaces.

- Consultations revealed that many dance-specific rehearsal spaces are physically inaccessible, particularly in regional communities.
- Current public funding programs aimed at infrastructure upgrades should prioritize funding upgrades to the physical accessibility of arts-specific spaces to ensure the breadth of the dance community is able to access adequate rehearsal spaces.

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more inclusive rehearsal spaces.

Recommendation 6: Formalize the dance sector to encourage relationship and community development.

- Those consulted through this engagement suggested that, in the absence of dance-specific industry associations, **arts service organizations should play more active roles in encouraging networking, mentorship, and relationship building** among different dance communities.
- Dance artists expressed that different dance communities can at times be siloed along regional, community, or other lines. As displayed in Section 5 of this report, **collaboration and partnerships can be impactful ways to address current space access challenges** and include equity-seeking groups in sector activities.
- **Relationship-building and education** around cultural and discipline-specific uses of rehearsal spaces can help combat hesitancy among dance space providers in allowing for certain activities to take place (e.g., cleansing, smudging, incense).*
- Dance arts service organizations should explore their capacity to engage in more advocacy and networking activities to improve relationship and community-building among the different members of the Ontario dance community.

*A more comprehensive list of culturally diverse practices/space needs is included in Section 3 of the report.

Need: The Ontario dance community needs more inclusive rehearsal spaces.

Recommendation 7: Encourage wider resource sharing on culturally sensitive practices and engagement.

- The Ontario arts sector is growing and there is an **increased interest in engaging with a diversity of cultural communities** and **designing inclusive public programming and spaces**.
- Many arts service organizations, including the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, have created resources to help the arts community properly engage with artists of different cultural backgrounds.
- Building on recommendation 3.1, dance arts service organizations should stimulate wider **research and resource sharing** in the community to address culturally safe spaces and engagement practices, including information around rehearsal space rentals and operations.

Needs and Recommendations – Conclusion

- This study marks a foundational step in the effort to provide critical support to the Ontario dance community when it comes to accessing rehearsal spaces.
- Through in-depth research and analysis, including consultation with dance community members across the province and at all level of the industry, this study identified key challenges and needs for dance rehearsal spaces and the broader dance community in Ontario. These challenges relate to affordability, accessibility, discoverability, inclusivity, and sustainability in the dance sector.
- The recommendations in this report consider the current profile of public support available to dance artists and dance space operators and propose feasible immediate next steps to address the challenges identified. However, a longer-term, multi-pronged strategy is needed.
- The Ontario dance community should follow-up on this study by examining its priorities, developing a roadmap for change, and creating an implementation plan and corresponding performance indicators to monitor and evaluate progress in achieving this change.

The End.

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