

Cultural Services Delivery and Governance Review

Stage 3 Draft Review

January 2025

Prepared for

City of Abbotsford

Prepared by

Nordicity



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1. Project Context

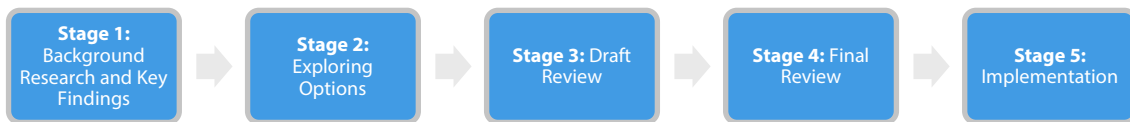
The City of Abbotsford engaged Nordicity to conduct a **Cultural Services Inventory and Delivery Model Assessment and Governance Review**. This project fulfils one of the [Culture Connect Strategy](#)'s 5 Big Moves – for the City to conduct a governance review of its service delivery model for culture services. Key objectives of this project included:

- Assessing municipal culture services and fee-for-service and community organization culture services in Abbotsford;
- Assessing the administration and organizational structure of municipal culture services;
- Reviewing governance structures between the City and Cultural Fee-for-Service partners (The Reach Gallery Museum, Abbotsford Arts Council, Heritage Abbotsford Society, and Fraser Valley Regional Library) to clarify roles and responsibilities, and;
- Developing recommendations on how the City can enhance investments in culture.

The project has considered cultural services in Abbotsford across the six major categories of culture: visual arts, performing arts, libraries and lifelong learning, heritage, festivals and events, and public art. The work was guided by existing strategies and frameworks, including Abbotsford's [Culture Connect Strategy](#), the **Culture for Life Model** and the **Benefits Based Approach**.

As defined in Abbotsford's Culture Connect Strategy, 'culture' or cultural resources refer to both tangible and intangible assets – from cultural heritage sites such as historic buildings to cultural festivals, spaces and facilities, to stories, customs, and oral traditions.

The project followed a five-stage process, as follows:



Nordicity and City staff presented the preliminary **Key Findings** report to City Council at the December 11, 2023 public Executive Committee meeting, which marked the end of Stage 1. This document presented the key findings from a range of background research, including an **inventory and assessment of cultural services in Abbotsford**, a **review of municipal organizational structure**, and a **governance review of fee-for-service agreements** with cultural partners.

Next, Nordicity and City staff developed an **Exploring Options** report, which was presented at the July 16, 2024 City Council meeting and marked the end of Stage 2. This report collected the primary needs identified in the Key Findings report and framed them in terms of **four "themes" related to service delivery**, each with **accompanying planned recommendations**.

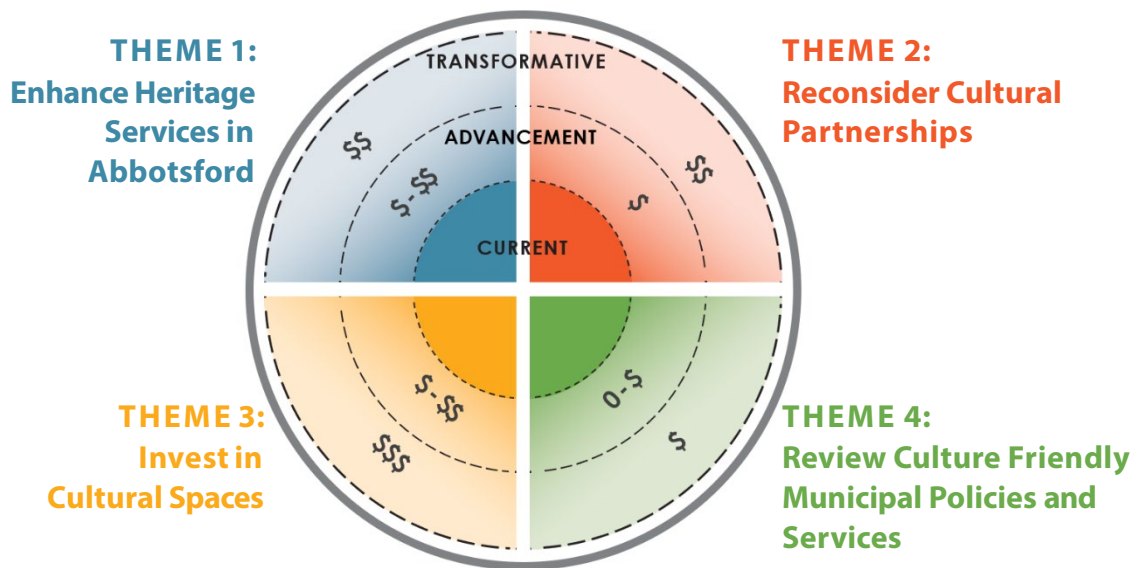
This report (Stage 3) builds upon the outcomes of the Exploring Options report and suggests a series of high-level strategic directions for the City to consider to fulfill the planned recommendations presented in the Exploring Options report and strengthen cultural services delivery in Abbotsford.

Selected materials from the background research and key findings can be found in the appendices of this report.

2. Strategic Directions

The recommended strategic directions outlined in this section are built upon the four themes that were the subject of Stage 2: Exploring Options, which respond to the needs identified through Stage 1: Background Research and Key Findings. Based on Council feedback during the Exploring Options stage, this report considers each of the four themes in terms of either an Advancement or Transformative level of City intervention, as follows:

1. **Enhance Heritage Services in Abbotsford** (Advancement Level)
2. **Reconsider Cultural Partnerships** (Advancement Level)
3. **Invest in Cultural Spaces** (Advancement followed by Transformative Level)
4. **Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services** (Advancement Level)



This report proposes that each theme be addressed through a series of specific projects. Each of the recommended projects included in this section contains a high-level summary of its proposed research and consultation, planning and design, approval, and implementation steps, complete with projected timeline and future Financial Plan considerations.

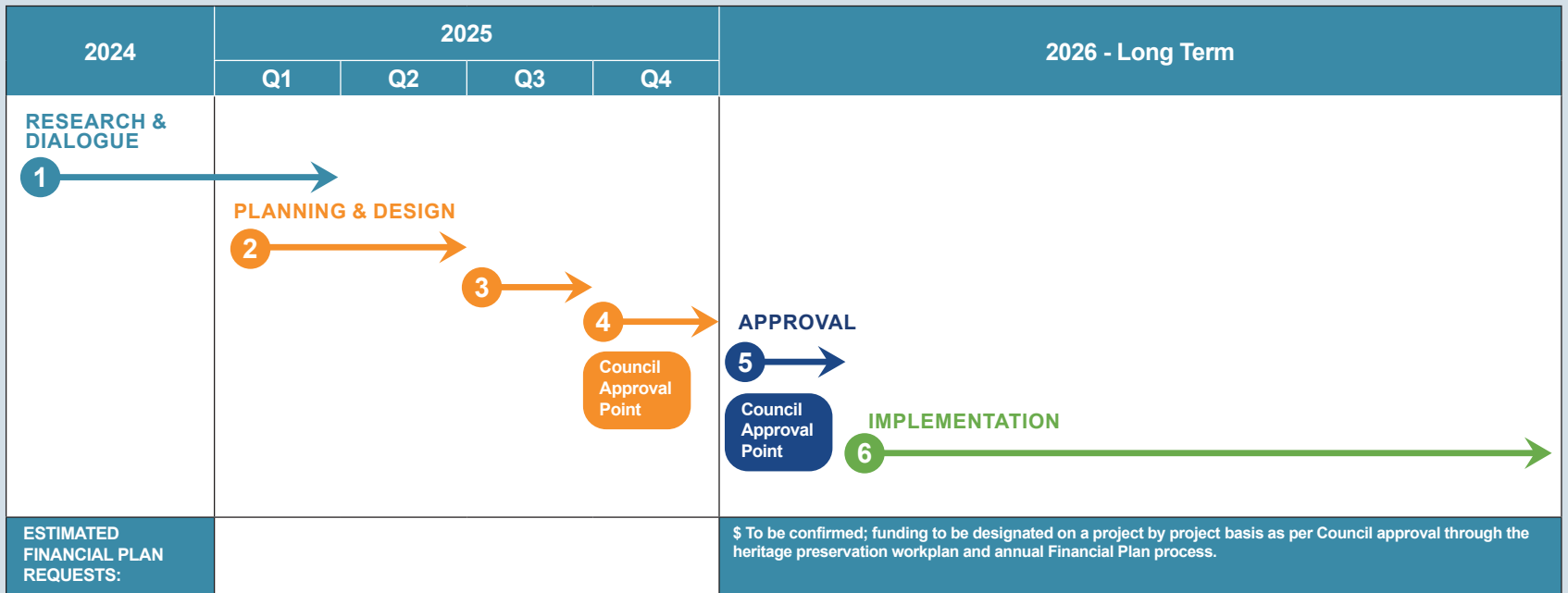
THEME 1: Enhance Heritage Services in Abbotsford

Advancement Level:
\$10,000 - \$99,000

Project: Increased Heritage Preservation and Programming, provided by Heritage Abbotsford Society (HAS)

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
1 RESEARCH & DIALOGUE HAS to explore opportunities to expand heritage preservation and programming in the community through organizational strategic planning.			
2 PLANNING & DESIGN HAS and City to collaboratively create draft expanded heritage programming framework and draft multi-year built heritage preservation projects list highlighting potential external funding and partnership opportunities to maximize City investment.			
3 City and HAS to develop annual and 5-year heritage preservation project workplan process.			
4 City and HAS to negotiate service level increase as part of FFS revisions under Theme 2.			
5 APPROVAL Multi-year built heritage preservation plan presented to Council for review and direction with any associated budget requests through the Financial Plan process.			
6 IMPLEMENTATION Ongoing implementation of enhanced heritage programming and preservation.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



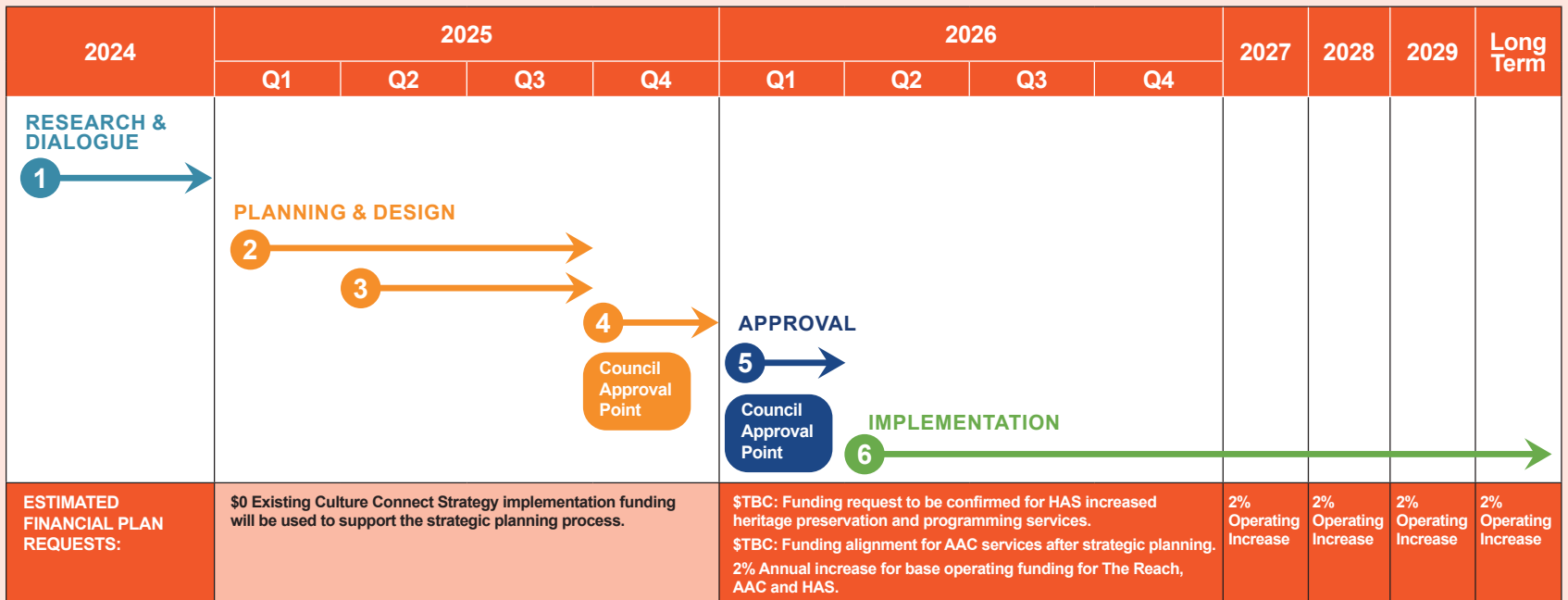
THEME 2: Reconsider Cultural Partnerships

Advancement Level:
\$10,000 - \$99,000

Project: Modernize Cultural Fee for Service Agreements

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
1 RESEARCH & DIALOGUE Cultural Fee for Service (FFS) agreement main revision focus areas identified through Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review.			✓
2 PLANNING & DESIGN Draft Cultural FFS Revision Outline collaboratively created between the City and Cultural Fee for Service Organizations. Draft will include the following focus areas: - Clarifying mandates and strategic planning requirements - Providing annual reporting standards and suggested mechanisms - Confirming annual in-kind City support - Providing a standardized annual operating increase in alignment with price index	🔄		
3 Abbotsford Arts Council (AAC) to work collaboratively with the City for organizational strategic planning. Strategic planning will include cultural sector consultation to gather data on the current and future needs and opportunities for the AAC to act as a resource for local artists while promoting the vision, creativity, and energy of the Abbotsford community through the arts.			
4 Cultural FFS agreements updated as per the Draft Cultural FFS Revision Outline and in alignment with AAC strategic planning and HAS expanded heritage preservation and programming mandate.			
5 APPROVAL Council approval of final revised cultural FFS agreements and associated funding through the annual Financial Plan process.	🔄		
6 IMPLEMENTATION Revised cultural FFS agreements are fully executed; annual direct reporting mechanisms are in place.	🔄		

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces

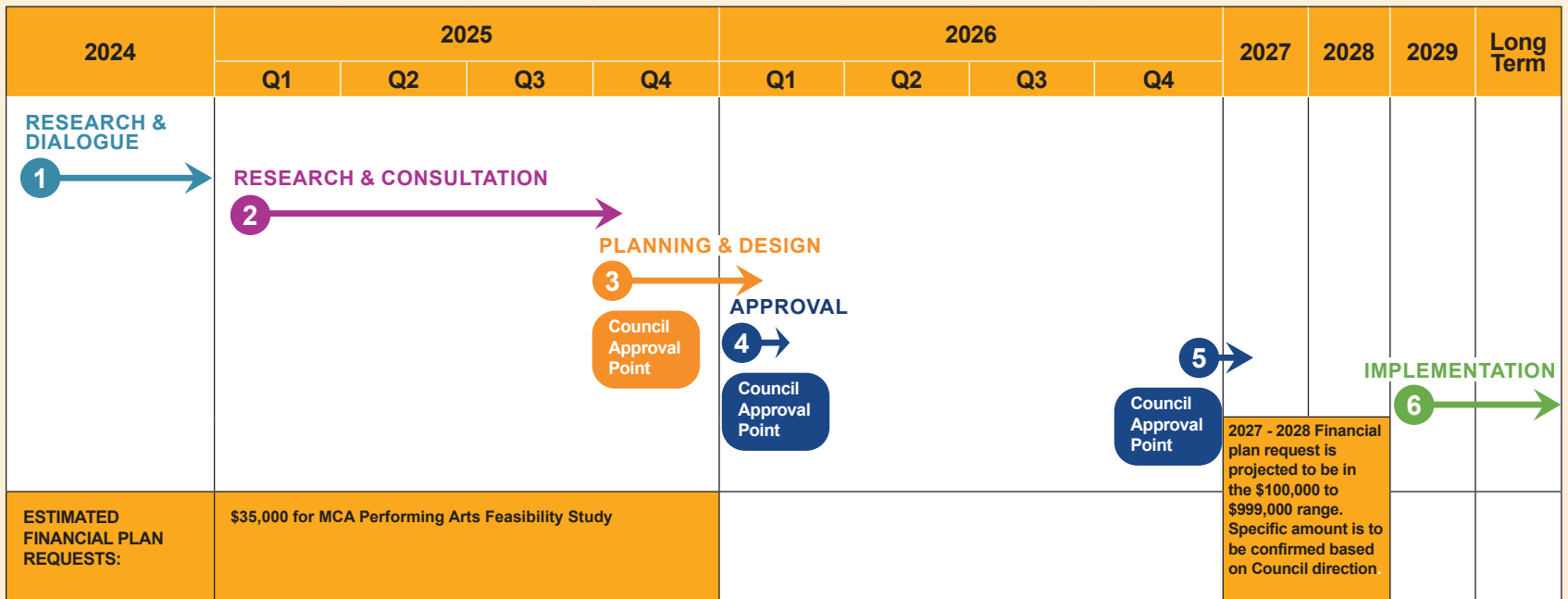
Advancement followed by Transformative Level:
\$100,000 - \$999,000

Project 1 of 3: Matsqui Centennial Auditorium (MCA) Modification

1/3

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
1 RESEARCH & DIALOGUE Consultation with local performing arts groups on current gaps and opportunities for the MCA as part of the Culture Services Delivery and Governance Review.			✓
2 RESEARCH & CONSULTATION City and Consultant to conduct MCA Performing Arts Feasibility Study including: - A space use study - Research into other comparable Council/performing arts spaces (e.g. City of Surrey and Port Moody) - Engagement with local performing arts leaders - Identification of external funding opportunities - Creation of final report with associated design renderings and high-level order of magnitude budget estimates			
3 PLANNING & DESIGN Consultant creation of MCA Space Use Modification Options Report .			
4 APPROVAL Council review of MCA Space Use Modification Options Report and direction on which space modification design option, if any, Council would like staff to pursue further.			
5 Funding requested for MCA modifications through the Financial Plan process. External funding opportunities pursued to maximize City investment.			
6 IMPLEMENTATION Implementation of MCA space use modification project.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



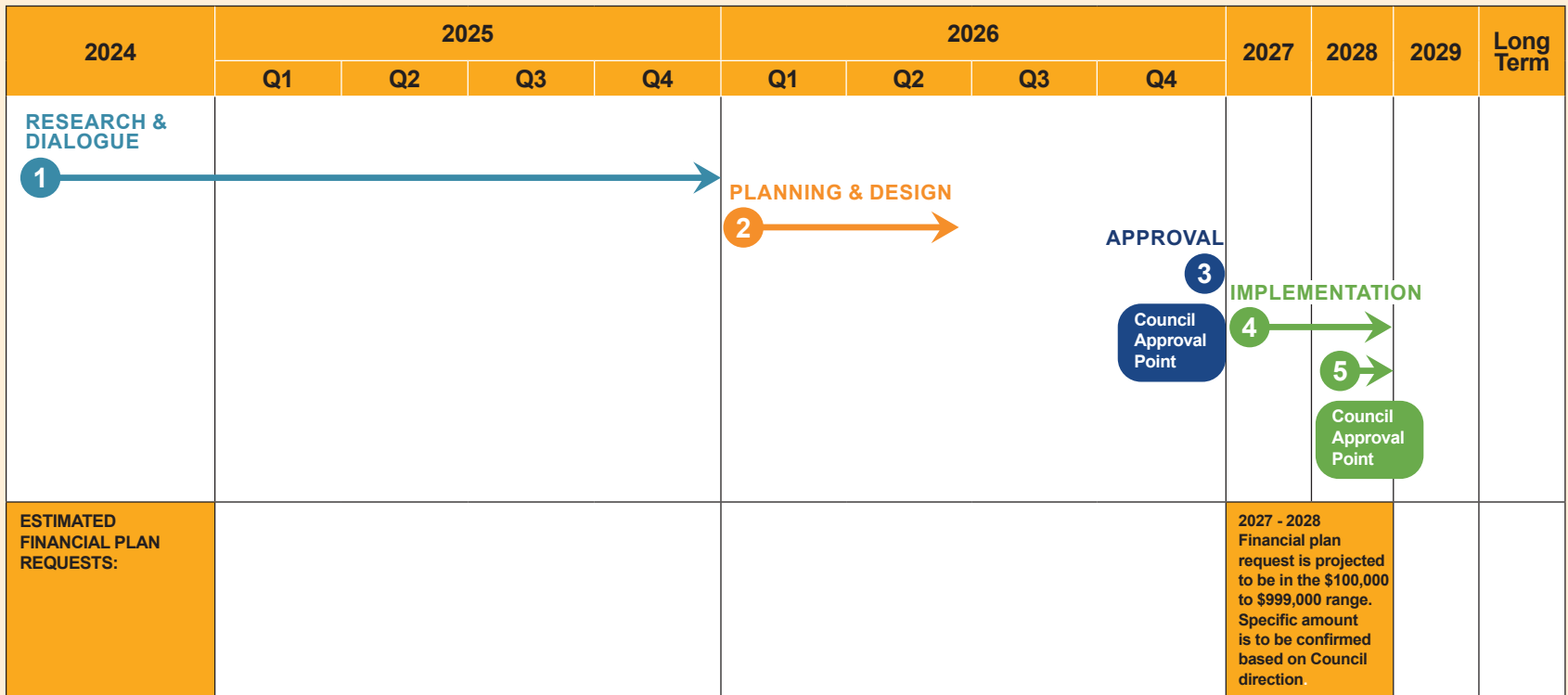
THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces

Advancement followed by Transformative Level:
\$100,000 - \$999,000

Project 2 of 3: Non-City Venue Partnership Program

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
1 RESEARCH & DIALOGUE Research and conversation with community for identification non-City cultural venue opportunities.			
2 PLANNING & DESIGN Creation of Cultural Venue Pilot Program Framework including identification of external funding and partnership opportunities.			
3 APPROVAL Council review and direction for Cultural Venue Pilot Program Framework.			
4 IMPLEMENTATION Implementation of Pilot Cultural Venue Partnerships Program as per Council direction.			
5 Pilot program evaluation and Council reporting.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces

Advancement followed by Transformative Level: >\$10,000,000

Project 3 of 3: Development of Purpose-Built Cultural Facilities and/or Outdoor Event Sites with Associated Infrastructure

3/3

THEME #3 includes an investigation of existing strategies and plans to identify opportunities for the development of purpose-built cultural facilities and/or outdoor event sites with associated infrastructure and the designation of preferred event sites as applicable. Identifying specific projects is beyond the scope of this Review as each plan/strategy has its own independent planning process. For the purposes of this Review the below projects have been identified for further investigation as possible opportunities to support future cultural spaces, pending each individual planning process. These include but are not limited to the: Mill Lake Master Plan, Arena and Aquatics Strategy, Sport Field & Sport Court Strategy, Abbotsford Exhibition Park Master Plan and the Clayburn Park Plan.

As an illustrative example the Mill Lake Master Plan has been included below as a potential opportunity to support future cultural spaces.

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
RESEARCH & DIALOGUE			✓
1 Community consultation for the Mill Lake Master Plan including opportunities for development of purpose-built cultural facilities and/or outdoor event sites.			✓
PLANNING & DESIGN			
2 Cultural Facility Feasibility Study for Mill Lake Park; study will include identification of external funding opportunities for cultural space development.			
APPROVAL			
3 Council review and direction for Cultural Facility Feasibility Study.			
IMPLEMENTATION			
4 Implementation of Council direction for the development of purpose-built cultural facilities and/or outdoor event sites with associated infrastructure within existing strategies and plans.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Project	2022 - 2024	2025 - 2026	2027 - 2028	2029 - 2030	Long Term
Mill Lake Master Plan	RESEARCH & DIALOGUE 1 Community consultation conducted in 2022 - 2023	Mill Lake Master Plan Approval Mill Lake Master Plan final community check in and Council endorsement 	PLANNING & DESIGN 2 	APPROVAL 3 	IMPLEMENTATION 4 Implementation for all projects will be considered in the long term 10+ year timeframe
ESTIMATED FINANCIAL PLAN REQUESTS:			Projected 2027 Financial Plan Budget Request Range: \$100,000 - \$125,000		The Review has identified long term Financial Plan requests for cultural space development as >\$10,000,000. Specific amounts will be confirmed based on Council direction.

THEME 4: Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services

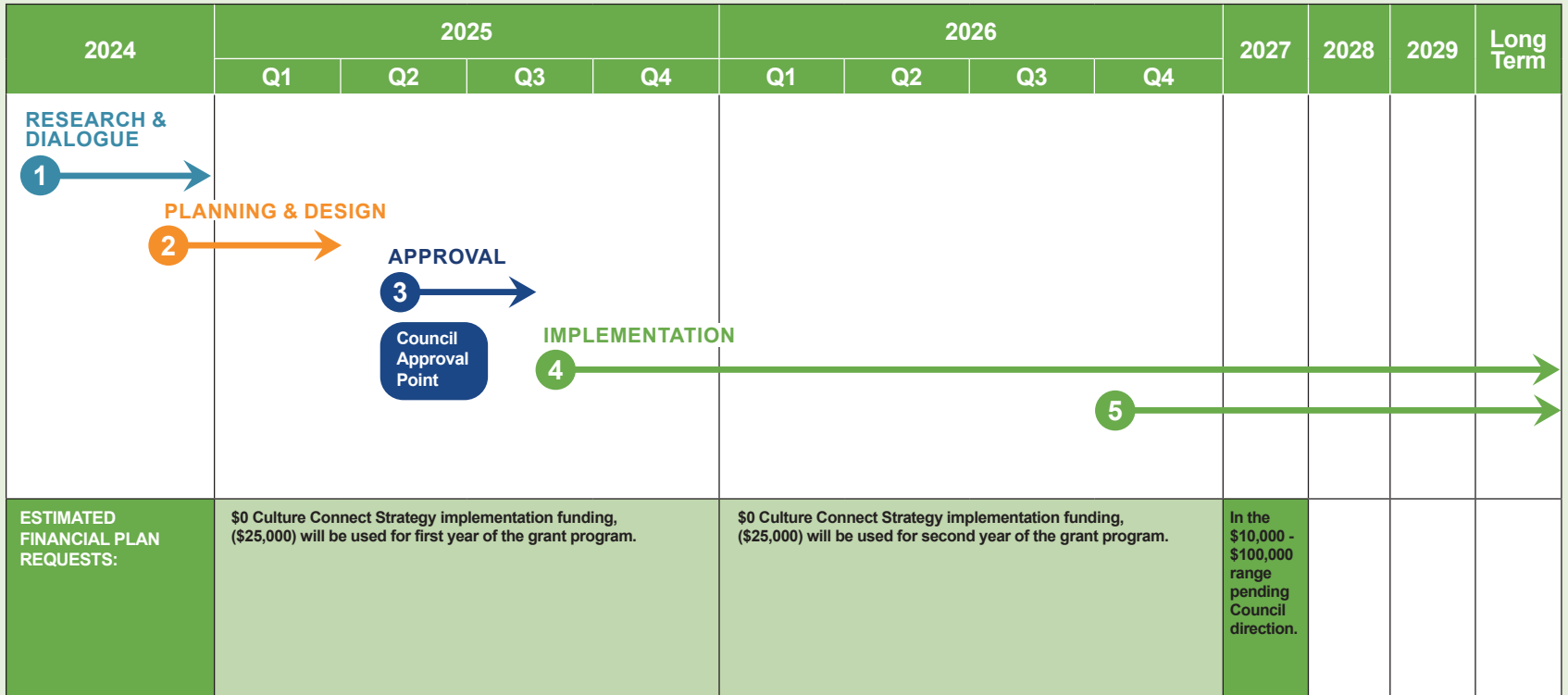
Advancement Level:
\$10,000 - \$99,000

Project 1 of 2: Create an Ongoing Cultural Grant Program

1/2

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
RESEARCH & DIALOGUE			✓
1 Research and identify best practices in municipal cultural grants and the best methods to maximize the impact of funding and increase cultural service delivery for the community.			✓
2 PLANNING & DESIGN Design grant program and all related materials and processes for Council review and direction.		⚙️	
3 APPROVAL Cultural Grant Program Framework presented to Council for review and direction.	🗳️		
4 IMPLEMENTATION Launch and implementation of Cultural Grant program.	🔄		
5 Ongoing reporting out on grant program service level and impact.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



THEME 4: Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services

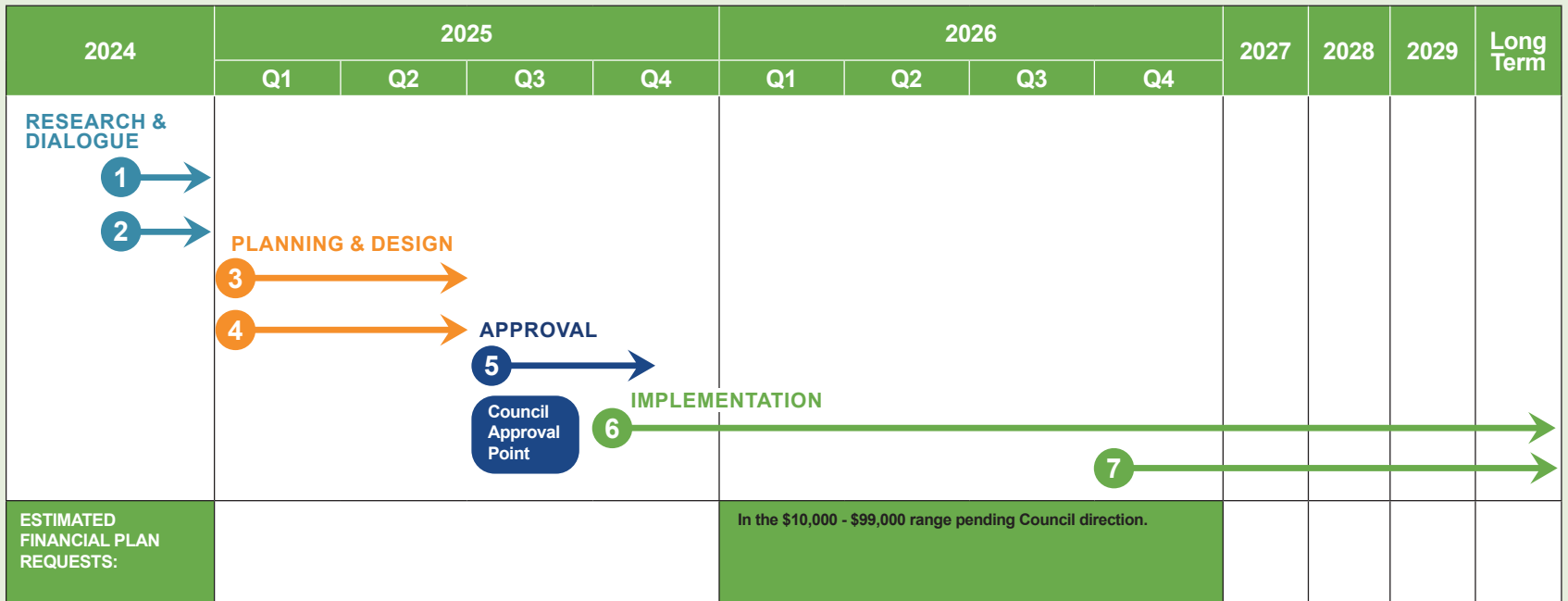
Advancement Level:
\$10,000 - \$99,000

Project 2 of 2: Expand existing event-based grants and incentives

2/2

	Pending	In Progress	Completed
RESEARCH & DIALOGUE			
1 Outreach to local event organizers and Tourism Abbotsford to gather feedback and input on the City's existing event grant program.			✓
2 Research and identify best practices in municipal event grants, cash support, incentives and in-kind support, and identify methods to maximize funding impact and foster capacity and sustainability for community events.			✓
PLANNING & DESIGN			
3 Revise the <i>Grants for Significant Events Policy</i> .		⚙️	
4 Design event support program and all related materials and processes.			
APPROVAL			
5 Revised event grants and incentives program and policy presented to Council for review and direction.	⏳		
IMPLEMENTATION			
6 Implementation of new event grants and incentives program.	⏳		
7 Ongoing reporting out on grant program service level and impact.			

ESTIMATED TIMELINE



SUMMARY

Summary of Annual Estimated Financial Plan Requests

	2025	2026	2027 - 2028	2029	Long Term
THEME 1: Enhance Heritage Services in Abbotsford	\$0	\$10,000 - \$99,000 Range Heritage preservation funding to be designated on a project by project basis as per Council direction	\$100,000+		
THEME 2: Reconsider Cultural Partnerships	\$0 Existing Culture Connect Strategy Implementation Funding will support AAC strategic planning	2% Operating Increase The Reach, AAC and HAS \$TBC Funding request to be confirmed for HAS increased heritage preservation and programming services \$TBC Funding request to be confirmed for AAC services after strategic planning	2% Operating Increase	2% Operating Increase	2% Operating Increase
THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces MCA Modification Project	\$35,000 MCA Performing Arts Feasibility Study	\$0	\$100,000 - \$999,000 Range Estimated range, pending Council direction		
THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces Non-City Venue Partnership Program	\$0	\$0	\$10,000 - \$99,000 Range Estimated range, pending Council direction		
THEME 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces Development of Purpose-Built Cultural Facilities and/or Outdoor Event Sites with Associated Infrastructure	\$0	\$0	\$100,000 - \$125,000 Range Estimated range, pending Council direction		>\$10,000,000 Estimated order of magnitude cost, pending Council direction
THEME 4: Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services Create an Ongoing Cultural Grant Program	\$0 Existing Culture Connect Strategy Implementation Funding will be used for the first year of the grant program	\$0 Existing Culture Connect Strategy Implementation Funding will be used for the second year of the grant program	\$10,000 - \$99,000 Range Estimated range, pending Council direction		
THEME 4: Review Culture-Friendly Municipal Policies and Services Expand existing event-based grants and incentives	\$0	\$10,000 - \$99,000 Range Estimated range, pending Council direction			
TOTAL ESTIMATED FINANCIAL PLAN REQUESTS	\$35,000	\$20,000 - \$198,000 Range	\$320,000 - \$1,422,000 Range 2% Operating Increase	2% Operating Increase	>\$10,000,000

**Amounts are included for illustrative purposes only. All project funding is subject to annual Financial Plan processes.*

3. Next Steps

The upcoming project stages are as follows, in line with the workplan agreed to between the City of Abbotsford and Nordicity.

Stage 4: Final report: Nordicity and City staff will compile feedback on the draft report from City Council and City of Abbotsford staff committee to produce a final report to City Council.

Stage 5: Implementation: Following Council approval, City staff will refine the high-level implementation steps provided in the final report and begin to implement the approved strategic directions.

Appendix A. Overview of Cultural Services in Abbotsford Today

As described in the Culture Connect Strategy,¹ Abbotsford is home to a variety of rich natural and arts and heritage assets, and one of the most ethnically diverse communities in Canada. Many successful community initiatives and events contribute to Abbotsford’s cultural vibrancy, including the Nagar Kirtan parade, Taste of Abby, and the Wac’ipi C’ante Was’té Yuhapi (“With a Good Heart Pow Wow”). While the breadth of culture in Abbotsford is wide, the primary focus of this Cultural Services Assessment and Governance Review is on ongoing cultural services delivered by the City of Abbotsford, and by cultural organizations that receive operational funding from the City.

The City of Abbotsford delivers the majority of its cultural services through funding agreements with four local culture organizations: The Reach Gallery Museum (Abbotsford Culture Centre Society), Heritage Abbotsford Society, Abbotsford Arts Council, and Fraser Valley Regional Library. These are longstanding arrangements that the City has generally sustained year over year with minimal funding changes.

The City also has a dedicated Cultural Services team. Following City Council’s approval of the Culture Connect Strategy, the City of Abbotsford employed a dedicated full-time Cultural Services Manager to coordinate service delivery with the support of the existing Coordinator role, and to help build a sustainable and vibrant culture scene in Abbotsford.

The City’s Culture Connect Strategy sets out a series of goals with clear objectives to support the cultural sector. These goals touch on providing **municipal leadership** to support a vibrant cultural sector; **developing spaces and places** that encourage creativity and participation; creating an **inclusive and connected community** where diversity is embraced and residents feel welcome; and creating **awareness and increased cultural offerings** to get people engaged in cultural activities.

In support of these goals, the Cultural Services team is working through the 5 Big Moves from the Culture Connect Strategy, including this project as well as the development of a Public Art Policy and Plan and the creation of the “One Stop Shop” cultural marketing strategy. The City’s Cultural Services team also delivers a number of arts and culture programs including events such as Culture Days Celebration, Artists in Residence and Culture City: Program Series.

¹ Culture Connect Abbotsford (2022), page 9. <https://www.abbotsford.ca/sites/default/files/2022-04/2022%20Culture%20Strategy.pdf>

Appendix B. Future Considerations

The findings of the cultural services assessment and governance review highlighted several future considerations which were explored further during Stage 2 – Exploring Options. The strategic directions outlined above in this report are built upon these considerations. This section first presents the overarching cultural services opportunities that were identified, followed by specific considerations for updated agreements with the fee-for-service cultural service providers.

3.1 Cultural Services Opportunities

The following list of opportunities summarizes the findings of the cultural services inventory, assessment, and interview research.

- **Expand cultural services and programs through local partnerships and collaborations:** The City should consider expanding its partnerships beyond fee-for-service agreements for cultural service delivery. The city is home to numerous local arts organizations and community groups who can be supported through funding opportunities (e.g., community grants) and in-kind support (e.g., capacity building, grant writing, etc.). Overall, in engagements, there did not appear to be a demand for the City to be delivering more cultural programming directly itself so much as creating a supporting and enabling environment for creatives and arts organizations.

Performing Arts Partnerships

- City support for performing arts in Abbotsford is a particularly significant gap, as highlighted in the Cultural Services Assessment (Section 3.4). It is also notable that none of the City's fee-for-service agreements are with performing arts organizations. The City could consider partnering intentionally with a performing arts organization to increase the focus on and visibility of performing arts in Abbotsford.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored through the Culture City: Program Series.*

Partnerships Embracing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Many participants said that they would like to see more diverse programming in Abbotsford supported by the City, particularly relating to Indigenous, Black and Brown, and 2LSGBTQI+ communities. One way of supporting diverse groups is through partner agreements, which would provide an arms length service flexibility not always available to the City.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored through the Culture City: Program Series.*

Partnerships with heritage organizations to better highlight cultural heritage offerings

- There is an opportunity to partner with heritage organizations in Abbotsford to deliver expanded heritage programming, and to better promote existing cultural heritage sites. For example, the City could potentially create space for programming at the Turner House in Clayburn Village, and/or explore using the Centennial building for programming delivered in collaboration with community partners.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored through Theme 1: Increased Heritage and Preservation Programming.*

- **Help compile and raise awareness of the wide range of arts and culture activities and programming already happening in Abbotsford.**

- The City could consider enhanced collaboration with Tourism Abbotsford to expand their existing events calendar and make it up-to-date and inclusive with the range of arts and culture offerings in the city. As the Tourism Abbotsford calendar is more about events, the City of Abbotsford website could either link to that calendar or embed it within a City webpage, while also maintaining a calendar of regular arts and culture programming (to publicize activities such as arts and culture classes, opportunities for artists and local organizations etc. hosted by community organizations).
- The City could raise awareness of arts programming for youth by collaborating with the School Board – e.g., by sending newsletters and information through the school system on available opportunities for youth as and when they become available.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored through the “One Stop Shop” project as one of the 5 Big Moves from the Culture Connect Strategy.*
- **Provide different streams of culture grants:** Abbotsford as a city houses numerous arts organizations of various sizes, but currently most do not have ways to access funding from the City of Abbotsford.
 - Funding streams should be developed to accommodate distinct arts organizations, with a focus on small and medium sized organizations and emerging/young artists. Financial support should be dedicated to both operational support and programming support.
 - The City of Abbotsford could host an arts and culture granting information session every year to create awareness on grant opportunities available to individuals, emerging and existing local organizations. This is a process that is currently used by the City of Richmond, where the City Council holds an arts and culture granting information session every year to explain the application process and opportunities that exist for local groups.
 - The City could expand its current grant program to support event organizers, non-profits, and local arts organizations to access City-assets at affordable or discounted rates. For example, as noted in Section 4.2.4, the City of North Vancouver offers a Community Facility Grant to local organizations that work to reduce social, economic and physical disadvantage, as well as those that offer activities to improve the quality of life of residents (including cultural activities).
 - Beyond specific granting streams, the City can offer avenues for local arts organizations to make direct requests for funding support to the City Council. These requests can be made during Council meetings and accommodate one-off grants, grant adjustments, partnerships, and sponsorship support. Section 4.2.4 provides an example from the City of Coquitlam where organizations interested in making such requests are encouraged to engage with the City's Grant Coordinator to discuss their application and funding needs, and to complete a request form to attend Council meetings to make their request.
 - *This finding is currently being explored through the development of a one-year Pilot Arts and Culture Grant Project as one of the 5 Big Moves from the Culture Connect Strategy.*
- **Develop additional strategies and policies to address gaps in the City's support of arts, culture, and heritage.** Specific policies required include:

- An Indigenous Relations strategy or framework for the City of Abbotsford, developed and agreed in partnership with the neighbouring First Nations and local Indigenous communities. Although this framework is broader than arts and culture, it would support meaningful arts and culture partnerships in Abbotsford.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored by staff.*
- Review and expand the Community Heritage Register to become a full register, i.e., with a system to review and monitor proposed changes to properties of heritage value, leading to formal heritage designation which includes legal protection. Such a Register would lead to a Heritage Designation By-law, a Heritage Revitalization Agreement or a Heritage Restrictive Covenant within the register, offering heritage assets full designation and protection.
 - *Heritage Planning has been identified as a key objective in Planning and Development Services.*
- An events strategy to support cultural events in the community.
 - *The City is currently undertaking an event procedures review.*
- An expanded City diversity, equity and inclusion strategy that outlines how the City consistently supports diverse cultural programming, and how it engages and builds relationships with diverse community groups. Such a policy expansion should be developed in consultation with underserved groups including IBPOC, 2SLGBTQI+ and youth communities to ensure that all voices are captured in the policy development process.
 - *The City is currently working on an updated public art policy and process.*
- **Engage the community on a regular basis:** The City should consider regularly seeking input from local arts organizations and groups to identify the cultural sector needs towards enhancing service delivery, especially when it comes to policy development.
 - *This key finding is currently being explored through the Arts and Culture Roundtable.*
- **Remove barriers to hosting events including by expanding City capacity and resources available to community organizers.** Permitting and approval procedures need to be streamlined wherever possible, with a focus on clear communication of which permits are required and from whom, to help local events organizers to overcome real and perceived barriers.
- **Expand grants for events** to be more easily accessible to community organizers.
 - Expand the amount and applicability of the Significant Events grant and bolster the outreach of communications about the grant to overcome the common misconception that it is dependent on the organizer having a Parks, Recreation and Culture booking contract.
 - Develop a Recovery Grant for significant events so that the organizers can recuperate their expenses.
 - Develop incentives (e.g., local events grant) to encourage community organizations to take on the risk of organizing events.
 - Review fees to book park spaces for local organizations hosting public/community events. This could take the form of a complete fee waiver, or a pricing schedule that

adjusts/reduces fees based on type and size of event (e.g., community public vs. private commercial, under vs. over 1000 attendees).

- *The City is currently undertaking an event permitting business process review to identify opportunities to improve the permitting process, and developing new “Organizer Resources” guides, resources and information to better support event and activity organizers as part of the “One Stop Shop” initiative. This opportunity is also currently being explored through Theme 4: Review Culture Friendly Municipal Policies and Services.*

- **Invest in cultural spaces:** There are inadequate cultural spaces to support the delivery of and participation in cultural activities across the different forms of cultural services.

Flexible presentation space

- Cultural sector participants commonly described a need for more access (and more consistent access) to affordable cultural spaces and venues. Key types of facilities mentioned include a blackbox theatre space, and flexible space that could be used for film screenings, live music performances and/or events (i.e., spaces with adjustable infrastructure such as movable seating). Both small (i.e., 75-100 seats) and medium size venues (i.e., 100-200 seat capacity) are desired. Some events and music sector participants also described a need for outdoor spaces for live music performances.

Affordable space for artistic creation and rehearsals

- Participants from the performing arts sector commonly described a need for more affordable spaces for performing and rehearsing that can be used by performing arts groups.
- Visual arts participants noted a need for more affordable studio space for visual artists to use to create and exhibit their work.
- Research findings suggest that there is a high demand for visual arts classes. There is an opportunity for the City to meet this demand by developing studio spaces that can be rented and utilized for visual arts classes including ceramics. Regarding this last point, one participant cited a good example from the City of Delta; the municipality has made a ceramics studio available to the Delta Potters Association, with the association using the studio, paying a portion of the costs, and offering public programming.

Potential tools to provide funds for cultural spaces:

- **Community Amenity Contributions for Arts and Culture Development:** Community Amenity Contributions can serve as a valuable tool for securing sustainable funding for arts and culture development, facilities, and associated expenses, in exchange for development rights for land developers through preferential rezoning. This policy area has a track record in other jurisdictions of providing essential resources to foster creative growth within a community. With Council having approved the new Community Amenity Contributions and Density Bonus program on September 11, 2023, Culture Services should work with the City

planning department to identify opportunities to invest in priority recreation and cultural amenities. Given the recurring feedback regarding access to space, the creation of below-market arts programming space could be a useful area of priority.

- *These opportunities are currently being explored through Theme 3: Invest in Cultural Spaces.*

3.2 Fee-For-Service Agreement Opportunities

Overarching Opportunities

As intended, this project revealed some specific changes that are needed to update agreements between the City of Abbotsford and the fee-for-service cultural service providers. As the agreements were developed between 2007 and 2009, they no longer reflect the working relationship between the City and fee-for-service partners nor the current operational context of these service providers.

Opportunities pertaining to all the fee-for-service organizations include:

- **Creating clarity** on the roles and responsibilities of each party. This adjustment includes clearly articulating the mandate of each and the wide scope of what each organization does to support delivery of cultural services in Abbotsford.
 - Highlighted in this definition of roles and responsibilities should be a discussion of **facility standards and maintenance**, including how the City can support each organization in ensuring that the particularities of their facility needs are adequately addressed.
- **When creating new agreements, consider developing ‘Partnership agreements’** rather than ‘fee-for-service’ agreements. A partnership agreement recognizes the strategic role that the organizations are already playing in supporting cultural services in the City, and can help uphold and shape that role over time.
 - The agreements should state that the partners are aligned with and helping to achieve the strategic aims of the City of Abbotsford’s cultural department.
- **Introducing a reporting mechanism to Council** such that these organizations have an annual forum by which to demonstrate their successes, be held accountable for existing funding and propose new funding requests. This would serve to build a richer understanding, to allow the organizations to advocate, to supplement accountability mechanisms alongside annual financial reporting, and to enable staff to provide fulsome reports for Council.
- **Creating a sustainable, predictable, indexed funding mechanism** so that each organization can deliver on their existing mandates, as well as engage in medium- and long-term strategic planning with an enhanced level of understanding of their future resources. Operational funding levels should also be reviewed annually and increase in line with inflation, which has not been the case in previous years – effectively meaning that operational funding has been decreasing.

- *These opportunities are currently being explored through Theme 2: Reconsider Cultural Partnerships.*

The Reach Gallery Museum

Future considerations for revising The Reach Gallery Museum’s agreement include:

- **Clearly articulate the scope of The Reach Gallery Museum’s mandate and role** in the community. For example, as one of the most prominent cultural organizations in Abbotsford

and the biggest recipient of municipal funding, they **could play a more strategic role** in the development of the city's arts and culture sector and its ambition to become the cultural hub of the Fraser Valley. As an arms-length, non-profit association, The Reach Gallery Museum can have more flexibility and independence in the type of cultural initiatives it pursues.

- **Create a clearly articulated facility agreement** that details, respectively, The Reach Gallery Museum's responsibility and City responsibility – as although day-to-day both the City of Abbotsford and The Reach Gallery Museum staff have an idea of the working relationship, it is not currently clearly documented.
 - This is especially pertinent where it relates to communication around facility maintenance. For example, currently, the City may fix a facility issue at The Reach Gallery Museum, but the Gallery staff may be unaware that the maintenance has been carried out.
- **Increase The Reach Gallery Museum's operational funding** to enable the hiring of more staff, and to support wage increases for existing staff. Such a move would respond to current challenges that the gallery faces in recruiting and retaining talented staff with the appropriate skills.

Heritage Abbotsford Society

Future considerations for revising Heritage Abbotsford Society's agreement:

- **Consider entering into an operating agreement** for Trethewey House, whereby HAS would function as a tenant that operates the site and absorbs certain current City responsibilities (e.g., repair management, preventative maintenance, landscaping of heritage garden). This would give HAS more flexibility in terms of programming and activities on site as opposed to the current constraints of the fee-for-service agreement, and it would facilitate a more responsive capital repair and maintenance program than currently exists.
- **Develop a new partnership agreement with HAS** that recognizes that their mandate and support for heritage in Abbotsford is greater than stewarding the Trethewey House building. Consider reviewing the opportunity for HAS to take on a more strategic role in Abbotsford in relation to heritage protection, programming, inventory and directory maintenance.
 - Consider delegating certain authorities to HAS, in the absence of existing staff resources at the City. The organization has inclination and expertise, if resourced appropriately.
- **Establish clear boundaries for the Trethewey House site** to delineate where the heritage site ends and parkland begins. This will facilitate more barrier-free programming by reducing the need for park permits for programming that might accidentally extend onto parkland, and clearly delineating the boundaries between City horticulture displays and the heritage gardens.
- **Increase HAS' operational funding** to enable the hiring of more staff, and to support wage increases for existing staff (as with The Reach Gallery Museum). While the Society has been extremely proactive in attracting more funding via grants, additional financial support from the City is required to strengthen the Society for the future, and especially to fund an expanded role in supporting strategic heritage protection in Abbotsford.

Abbotsford Arts Council

Future considerations for revising Abbotsford Arts Council's agreement:

- **Clarify the Abbotsford Arts Council's organization mandate in the agreement**, delineating their roles as stewards of Kariton Art Gallery and more broadly as a primary

community arts resource. AAC currently feels confined largely to visual arts in the way they allocate their limited resources, and there is an opportunity for them to more fully realize their agency as a community leader across the arts.

- **Recommend an organizational strategic planning process** as a function of the City's ongoing partnership with Abbotsford Arts Council. By providing guidance and funding, the City could help AAC realize its organizational vision, mission and goals toward delivering on its mandate in a sustained way, as well as contributing to staff development. This process should include consultation with the cultural sector to ensure AAC is responding to needs and opportunities in the cultural sector. Grounding a strategic planning process in consultation will help ensure the organization's work is aligned with community need. Support for this strategic planning process would be beneficial as the Abbotsford Arts Council has not received the same funding history as the Reach Gallery Museum or Heritage Abbotsford Society and therefore would not be in the same position as the other organizations to report out annually to council.
- **Introduce new targeted investments** based on prescribed (specific) desired functionalities and outcomes. AAC is currently the least resourced FFS organization and cannot sustain current programming or meet their organizational goals at their current funding level. Targeted funding increases can create a mechanism by which to sustainably increase the organization's capacity and ability to achieve desired goals and outcomes as developed through the strategic planning process. An example of such a project would be their partnership with the City on the development of the draft cultural grant framework.
- **Clarify City and Society facility roles and responsibilities** in relation to facility maintenance. For example, their wooden deck is frequently vandalized and redress by the City does not always meet the organization's timing needs, limiting their outdoor programming capacity. Other persistent issues include interior repairs, exterior repairs and garbage removal.

Fraser Valley Regional Library

The relationship between the City of Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) is governed by the BC Library Act, which limits the degree to which the City can modify the nature of the operating agreement. The following future considerations are suggested with this dynamic in mind:

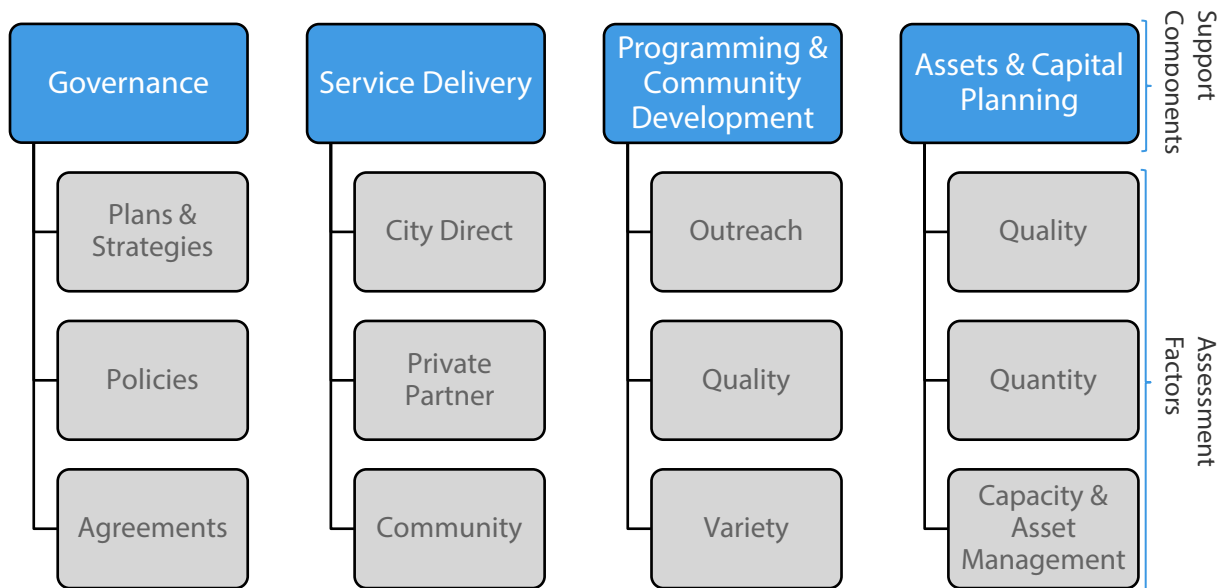
- **Formalize long-term knowledge sharing processes** in order to mitigate the impact of staff turnover on institutional knowledge loss at both the City and the library. Currently the relationship between the City and FVRL relies heavily on existing personal relationships, which could create future challenges.
- **Consider asking FVRL if they can fill gaps** identified in other areas of the cultural services review – particularly in areas in which the City is less directly involved. For example, where and when available the library could (and in some cases already does) serve as a stopgap for space to accommodate community arts programming (e.g., theatre rehearsals, art classes). Likewise, the library could support community partners with diverse programming, like the Gurmat Centre's educational programming in Punjabi and Sikh studies.

Appendix C. Summary of Cultural Services Assessment

3.3 Summary of Assessment Methodology

Recognizing the subjective nature of many assessment processes, this assessment was designed to minimize that subjectivity through several months of primary and secondary research. The Cultural Services Assessment draws on primary and secondary research findings from the **Cultural Services Inventory**, the **document review** (of City, fee-for-service cultural providers and community organizations' documents) and **interviews**. These focused interviews were conducted with the City of Abbotsford's fee-for-service cultural partners as well as representatives of the different cultural service areas (i.e., organizations and individuals working across visual arts, performing arts, libraries and lifelong learning, heritage, entertainment and festivals, and public art).

Drawing from an assessment model used previously by the City of Abbotsford's Parks, Recreation, and Culture department, the assessment rated each cultural service area (i.e., Visual Arts, Performing Arts, etc.) across four support components: *Governance*, *Service Delivery*, *Programming & Community Development*, and *Assets & Capital Planning*. These components were then broken down further into three assessment factors.



Each assessment factor within a cultural service area (i.e., Visual Arts, Performing Arts) was assigned a rating, as follows:

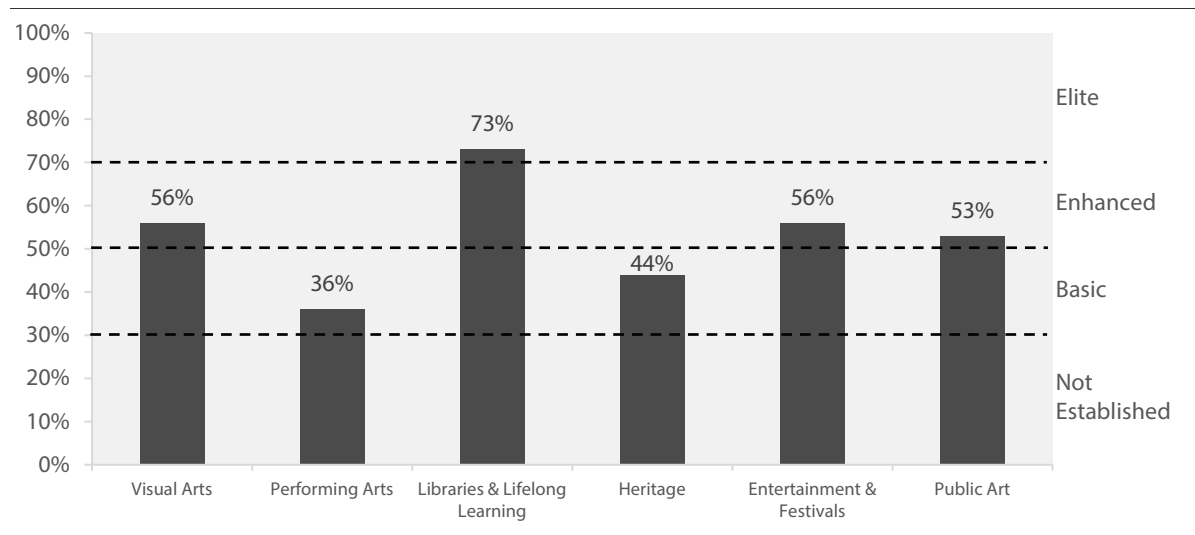
- **Not Established** level of service means the service area or the supporting components *do not meet* basic services standards outlined in the assessment framework.
- **Basic** level of service means the service area or the supporting components *meet* the basic services standards outlined in the assessment framework.
- **Enhanced** level of service means the service area or supporting component *exceeds* the basic services standard in several areas.
- **Elite** level of service means that the service area or supporting component provides a *leading, innovative, or exclusive* level of service.

3.4 Cultural Services Assessment

The following figures indicate the results of the assessments for the six cultural services subdomains, communicated in weighted percentage scores. The Cultural Services Subdomains Assessment Score Chart visualizes the six scores side-by-side, while the Overall Assessment Findings table below provides a high-level summary of the key findings that informed the scoring.

Note: these scores can and should be considered in comparison with one another and as illustrative of the state of culture service delivery. However, the weighted scores for each cultural subdomain should be viewed with the underlying scoring rubric in mind. We would therefore caution the reader against considering these numbers through a traditional academic grading lens. To illustrate, a service area with a strong “enhanced” rating across all components would still achieve a score below 70%.

Cultural Services Subdomains Assessment Score Chart



Overall Assessment Findings

Service Area	Score	Key Findings
Visual Arts	56% (Enhanced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City supports two major exhibition assets: The Reach Gallery Museum and Kariton Art Gallery. The Reach Gallery Museum has received acclaim through awards and a high level of resident satisfaction. Other community groups supplement City-sponsored offerings, including the University of Fraser Valley. Though exhibition programming is strong, gaps remain in creation space, educational programming and programming for certain mediums (e.g., creative filmmaking, pottery). Funding for the operating organizations (The Reach Gallery Museum and Abbotsford Arts Council) is not adequate to maintain the current service level; both organizations are struggling to retain staff and maintain programming. Fee-for-service agreements require revision, especially as it relates to facility standards and maintenance.
Performing Arts	36% (Basic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City has two major, high quality indoor performance spaces: Abbotsford Arts Centre (700 capacity – operated by the School District) and Matsqui Centennial Auditorium (386 capacity –

Service Area	Score	Key Findings
		<p>operated by the City). The Abbotsford Centre (7000-8500 capacity) and Tradex also serve as a larger concert venues. However, there is a gap when it comes to small performance or flexible spaces that can be used for smaller scale programming and performances. Additionally, although the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium is a high quality venue, it can not necessarily accommodate theatrical productions that run across several consecutive weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outside of funding the Abbotsford Arts Council the City is not active in delivering performing arts programming, though there is a high volume of community groups and private entities independently filling this service without City support. ▪ The City has little in the way of strategic planning, policies or agreements pertaining specifically to performing arts.
Libraries and Lifelong Learning	73% (Elite)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The City enjoys a strong working relationship with the Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL), who provide library services at Clearbrook Library, Abbotsford Community Library and Mount Lehman Library. There is a high level of community satisfaction with the library. ▪ Municipal funding is steady and adequate, as per the BC Library Act, and the current agreement between the City and FVRL captures the relationship well. ▪ Abbotsford libraries are currently dealing with capacity constraints both for daily use and for programming, and the eastern part of the city does not have a library branch. ▪ Non-library-based lifelong learning programming happens primarily through community organizations.
Heritage	44% (Basic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abbotsford is home to several heritage sites, including Trethewey House, Clayburn Heritage Conservation Area, Gur Sikh Temple, the Abbotsford Sports Hall of Fame and Turner House. ▪ The City's current strategic planning and policy framework for heritage is lacking as the current Heritage Register does not include a process to legally protect heritage assets, and there is not a heritage planner at the City.. ▪ The City's fee-for-service agreement and funding arrangement with Heritage Abbotsford Society around Trethewey House requires significant revision, including facility maintenance/conservation standards and possible delegation of responsibilities. ▪ Heritage programming is abundant at Trethewey House, and other cultural community groups run some programming.
Entertainment and Festivals	56% (Enhanced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entertainment events and festivals are the most highly subscribed cultural service area in Abbotsford; the City runs Canada Day events and supports many other community-led events and festivals. ▪ Abbotsford Centre provides a venue for major touring acts and other major indoor events. ▪ City facilitates and supports a diverse range of community-level events through community-level events resources like grants and the event toolkit; however safety requirements and event permits continue to be a barrier for organizers

Service Area	Score	Key Findings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultations with entertainment and festivals stakeholders indicated several gaps, including: no major signature music festival, little permanent festival infrastructure (indoor and outdoor), dearth of event spaces compared to comparator municipalities.
Public Art	53% (Enhanced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abbotsford has a Public Art Policy, which is currently under review, as well as a Public Art Capital Reserve Fund Bylaw. These mechanisms facilitate a strong level of publicly funded, and some privately funded, public art installations. ▪ The City operates an Interactive Culture Map, which shows 29 pieces of public art. This is a significant number for a community of its size. ▪ Private partners are involved in public art initiatives, such as CITI/SEEN. However, the percent for art policy is voluntary for private developers, which is less aggressive than similar policies in other jurisdictions. ▪ There are currently few Indigenous public artworks (as compiled on Abbotsford's Interactive Culture Map; the majority of the Indigenous artworks are located at the University of the Fraser Valley). <i>Note; this subject will be topic of Indigenous consultation during public art policy process.</i>

Appendix D. Comparative Municipal Spend on Arts and Culture

City of Abbotsford's Spending on Arts and Culture

The City of Abbotsford places a strong emphasis on promoting and nurturing its cultural vibrancy through a range of activities and administrative services, supported by a dedicated budget. A significant portion of this budget is allocated to fee-for-service arrangements, including for facilities owned by the City, ensuring that cultural organizations and events have access to suitable spaces.

The Public Art Policy and program are funded to encourage the proliferation of art in public spaces, enriching the community's visual landscape. Currently, there is no dedicated funding for public art nor public art maintenance outside of the public art reserve fund (1% per City capital project up to a maximum of \$300,000). Additionally, the City of Abbotsford supports cultural endeavors through grants and new cultural services-led public programming, promoting diversity and inclusivity. City-produced community events also receive budgetary support, helping to support a sense of community engagement and celebration.

The City of Abbotsford has also approved a new Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) and Density Bonus Program (and policy) which will have a huge impact in funding of arts and culture for the community.² City Council recently passed an amendment to the CAC to assign 25% to recreation and culture facilities for the next 10 years. Such an approach can have a significant impact on funding of arts and culture and reflect Abbotsford's commitment to the long-term sustainability of its arts and culture sector.

In terms of expenses, amortization and debt makes up a significant portion of expenses for the City of Abbotsford (\$800k that will be paid back by 2028). This ongoing expense is important to note in terms of recognizing future funding sources for future priorities. Of some \$2.2M, over \$836k is going towards debt and interest re-payment for the building loan for the Abbotsford Cultural Centre (The Reach). It is anticipated that the debt will be repaid in full in 2028.

How Comparators Fund Arts and Culture

As the organizational structure of each of the comparative municipalities differ, their budget structures do as well. For example, arts and culture funding is housed under different City departmental divisions and there can be differences in how a municipality reports on culture spending in publicly available budgets. As such, it is not possible to conduct a direct comparison of culture spending between Abbotsford and the comparable municipalities under review. However, this appendix draws a comparison to the extent possible using available information, including data obtained directly from the municipalities.

Maple Ridge

The City of Maple Ridge dedicates approximately \$5.3M to arts and culture annually, which amounts to approximately \$58 per capita. Delivery of arts and culture at the City of Maple Ridge falls under the wider department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture, but the subdivision of Arts, Culture, and Events. In terms of grants, the City offers festival grants with both in-kind and cash contributions. This grant program is broken down into two streams called the Grassroot Grant and Festival Support Grant (to support festivals and community events). Approx. \$46k is dedicated to support different events

² Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) and Density Bonusing are urban planning and development tools used by municipalities to leverage increased density in real estate development projects to benefit the community.

throughout the year. On average, groups receive approximately \$1k - \$2.5k each. These grants are reviewed by an Interdepartmental Committee.

Kelowna

The City of Kelowna dedicates approximately \$2.75M to arts and culture annually or approximately \$19 per capita. Note, this does not include library services, which, unlike Abbotsford and Maple Ridge, are not included in City services, as they are managed by the regional district. Funding decisions in the City of Kelowna depend on the grant program. For example, the Cultural Services Branch administers all the City's grant programs, and award decisions depend on the program and amount of funding requested. Some decisions are made by community panels, others by staff and others (i.e., Facility LOAs) by City Council. Even within a program a return applicant, asking for the same as prior year, may be reviewed by staff in some cases. The City of Kelowna has six grant streams totaling over \$380k a year including: Community Arts Grants (\$15k), General Operating Grants \$110k, Project Grants (\$55k), Professional Operating Grants (\$165k), Adaptability and Sustainability Program, Organization Development Grants, and Heritage Grants (\$35k).

Cariboo Regional District

All arts and culture funding provided by the District's role as the 'function' to the CCACS is approved by the Regional District Board, on the recommendation of the Central Cariboo Joint Committee. The CCACS uses funding provided by the function to administer the fee-for-service agreements and grants. The Cariboo Regional District dedicates approximately \$3.2M to arts and culture in the Central Cariboo or approximately \$51 per capita. The fee-for-service agreement provide stable, multi-year funding to groups and organizations who "provide well-established, quality events and offerings of arts and culture to the region." Currently, 10 organizations are approved to receive this funding totaling \$84,500 annually to provide quality offerings in the Central Cariboo. In terms of other funding, grants are distributed by the Society through four main grant streams: Project Grants, Capital Acquisition Grants, General Program Support Grants, and Community-based Support Grants. Again, these are approved by the Regional District Board but overseen and administered by the Society. Other organizations may apply for grants in amounts between \$500-\$3,000.