

CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

With the Arts and Culture Strategic Review (ACSR) Capability Development Fund of \$16.35 million, for 2012–2016, NAC expanded the scope of capability development initiatives which had, up to 2011, largely comprised scholarships and bursaries, training grants, music competitions and recognition platforms including the Cultural Medallion and Young Artist Awards. Previous capability development efforts had also focused primarily on art-making, i.e. artists and content creators (e.g. performers, directors).

New initiatives receiving support under ACSR sought to grow knowledge and skills beyond art-making, especially in areas where there were critical gaps (e.g. arts management, fund raising, technical production, arts education, curatorship). Both art-making and such management, production and ecosystem-development functions are necessary to enable the value chain of cultural content, from content creation, through to distribution and consumption. This ensures a thriving arts ecosystem.

At the time, the Pre-Employment Training (PET) landscape offered the most training at the diploma level. This was provided by the arts colleges – LASALLE College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts – and three polytechnics, with a few degree options offered in autonomous universities such as the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU). NAC worked to increase the number of Continuing Education and Training (CET) programmes and providers, in partnership with education institutions and arts organisations both in Singapore and overseas.

Such efforts were essential as Singapore’s arts and culture scene continued to mature. More training opportunities would ensure arts professionals had the resources to improve their skills, be equipped to move into related roles within the arts sector, or for others with non-arts-related skills to join the arts sector. In addition, funding support was reviewed to ensure that different ways of learning, initiated by both arts professionals and potential new entrants, could be supported. The new Capability Development Grant, launched in 2012 as part of the new grants framework, for example, also supports mentorship, apprenticeships and internships.

With ACSR support, the capability development work of NAC expanded to also include organisational capability development, leadership development for emerging and mid-career leaders, and manpower-related research. With ACSR support, there were 40 new CET programmes, attended by 10,000 people, between 2012 and 2016.

► ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATE

Opportunities for education and training in the arts at both PET and CET levels in Singapore have increased since 2012. Examples include SMU’s Arts and Culture Management second major programme, new undergraduate programmes in arts education by Singapore University of Social Sciences, and a new Masters in Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices by NTU. With proactive facilitation from NAC and partnerships with international organisations, arts professionals also now have access to numerous opportunities for overseas exposure and exchanges in a variety



of areas (e.g. creative producing, leadership development¹, arts education, teaching artistry). Arts professionals have responded positively to the availability of such training platforms².

As freelancing is growing in Singapore and internationally, a tripartite workgroup comprising members from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation was formed in 2017 to look into the needs of self-employed persons due to the growth of the gig or freelance economy across various sectors. There are now opportunities for the arts to ride on such a national movement to improve the employment conditions and retirement adequacy for arts workers. Guiding our work is NAC's Arts and Culture Employment Study (ACES) which has given us a better understanding of the employment conditions in the arts, paving the way for more proactive interventions by the government, arts companies and arts professionals. This is important work as ACES in 2016 estimated that 47% of those working in the arts work on a freelance basis, which presents various challenges.

Strengths

ACES in 2016 indicated that the arts workforce comprises highly educated people who are satisfied with their careers and passionate about contributing positively to society. Only 2% of arts workers surveyed intended to leave the sector in the next year, even though their median salaries are below the national median³. We have a strong pool of artists, many with international standing, and well-regarded cultural institutions. There is a base of Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) and training providers that provide training for skills at both pre-employment and continuing education levels.

Weaknesses

The skillsets required for a thriving arts ecosystem are diverse and wide-ranging. However, diversity (across art forms⁴ and occupational groups) in a comparatively small sector of approximately 20,425 people⁵ working in about 110 different occupations⁶, existing in a small market, poses significant challenges to the sustainability of PET and CET programmes. Opportunities for training across different areas can be uneven. While there are more training opportunities, the development pathways for some specific areas remain unclear

and pose challenges to the attraction, retention and development of talent.

With nearly half the sector comprising freelancers, there is a need to better equip and support them in sustaining a career in the gig economy, and to improve working conditions. In addition, the paucity of research on arts manpower generally poses challenges for policy- or programme-based interventions.

Opportunities

There is room for training institutions, cultural institutions and government bodies to work more closely. Emerging and mid-career leaders, such as recipients of NAC's scholarships, for example, should have opportunities to work with cultural institutions in advancing the Singapore arts scene and growing their careers. In addition, as freelancing becomes increasingly recognised as a legitimate mode of work, the arts sector can ride on the various initiatives launched at the national level, including the recommendations of the Tripartite Workgroup⁷, to develop more opportunities for arts professionals. As NAC's efforts to nurture and profile our arts leaders gradually gain traction, there are also opportunities to work towards positioning Singapore as a vital collaborative partner in arts and culture development and leadership both in the region and beyond.

Threats

Our society continues to face declining birth rates. Possible implications include falling enrolment that could result in the discontinuation of training programmes and fewer training opportunities. Another threat is technological disruption, which affects industries and jobs all over the world, including the arts sector.

A lack of empirical evidence and understanding of the value of an education in the arts limits the potential contribution of arts graduates to the wider economic sector, restricting employability. There is a lack of understanding around the transferability of skills across the arts and areas such as tourism, design and media, as well as how the arts nurture individuals with the right disposition and mind-set to cope in an increasingly complex world, and have the empathy and capabilities to manage and collaborate with people with diverse perspectives.

► ENVISIONED STATE AND OUTCOMES

The ACSR phase has enabled a more holistic framework for growing capabilities in the arts sector. In the long term, NAC hopes the arts landscape will be characterised by innovative and self-reliant individuals, and organisations that are resilient and resourceful in identifying and maximising growth opportunities in various situations.

By 2022, NAC envisions that the arts sector will grow in its ability to attract, retain and develop individuals who can contribute to the development of Singapore’s arts and culture. As the global environment and Singapore society change, arts workers will respond swiftly to these changes and to new opportunities through upskilling and exposure. NAC will ensure that there is a base of strong arts organisations that have good management and governance capabilities, are financially sound, and have good employment practices.

To achieve this, there needs to be a pipeline of talents who can champion artistic development and lead organisations. In addition, a robust body of research and empirical data will inform NAC’s work by deepening our understanding of labour issues in the arts, and inform our policies on curriculum and training. Such research will also enable NAC to advocate for the value of an education in the arts, including the value it brings to other sectors and domains in the form of transferable skillsets, and attributes to thrive in an increasingly uncertain world.

In support of NAC’s strategic thrusts and the desired outcomes above, we will focus on:

- a Establishing a better support framework for arts freelancers to improve their employment conditions, through initiatives such as a resource centre for arts freelancers;
- b Facilitating closer coordination and collaboration across PET and CET providers to:
 - i. Ensure the industry’s needs for talent and skillsets are met without duplication of resources;
 - ii. Build necessary skillsets that enable arts workers to sustain careers (e.g. financial and career planning, fundraising)

and tap on new opportunities (e.g. digital technology, engagement and facilitation skills);

- iii. Articulate development pathways and skills frameworks for priority areas;
- c Growing arts organisations which have strong management and governance capabilities, are financially sound and have good hiring practices;
- d Identifying opportunities for leaders to inspire their peers and galvanise the scene, to further their practice, grow in their international networks and exposure, and contribute to the larger Singapore arts and culture sector;
- e Developing a robust body of research in areas such as employment conditions, career outcomes and contributions of arts graduates, and sizing of priority sectors (e.g. artist-educators and arts instructors).

1 NAC piloted programmes such as Lead the Way (with British Council), International Society for Performing Arts (ISPA) Fellowship and the NAC Cultural Fellowship (with LASALLE College of the Arts).
 2 2016, Arts and Culture Employment Study. 80% of the respondents intended to pursue training in the next 12 months.
 3 The media gross annual income for arts workers surveyed is \$42,000. This is below the national median gross annual income of \$47,388 (source: ACES in 2016 and MOM).
 4 Within each art form, there are genres and sub-genres that can have very different characteristics and needs. This is compounded by Singapore’s multicultural and multilingual make-up.
 5 2017, Singapore Cultural Statistics. This figure includes total employment for the Literary, Performing and Visual Arts only.
 6 Based on NAC’s scan of the occupations within the arts sector and does not account for specialisations within each occupation.
 7 <https://www.mom.gov.sg/~media/mom/documents/press-releases/2018/0222-tripartite-workgroup-report-on-self-employed-persons.pdf>





► **SUMMARY**

In summary, NAC's capability development efforts will go towards:

- a Establishing a better support framework for arts freelancers;
- b Facilitating closer coordination and collaboration across PET and CET providers to address industry's skill-needs across both practice and non-practice-based areas;
- c Growing arts organisations which are well managed and financially sustainable;
- d Leadership development; and
- e Building robust research on arts manpower.