

# Alberta Dance Alliance

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NEEDS AND PREFERENCES EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Karen Ball & Patricia Glenn  
SEPTEMBER, 2018

## Overview

Alberta Dance Alliance (ADA) is a provincial service organization that exists to foster and promote the appreciation and practice of dance in Alberta. Created in 1984, ADA provides education, awareness, and advocacy through programs, events, and services. After 34 years of operations ADA is re-examining its services to ensure it is maximizing its resources for positive impact on, and benefit to, the dance community. To this end, a needs assessment was conducted that includes voices from across the province of Alberta and nationally within Canada.

A separate document, the Needs and Preferences Study, represents what has been shared about the need for services and the types of services that are most important for the dance community in Alberta, as well as recommendations based on the research findings. What follows is a summary of the Needs and Preferences Study, identifying key findings and recommendations.

## Executive Summary

### 1. Mandate Review

ADA considers its mandate as a PASO to represent all disciplines of dance across the province of Alberta. This mandate is broad as there are many communities of dance within the sector with a vast range of needs including professional, pre-professional amateur, individual, non-profit and for-profit communities. Given the resources currently available, ADA cannot effectively meet the needs of all of these diverse groups.

**Recommendation:**

It is time for a shift in how ADA identifies and meets the needs of the community. ADA doesn't have to offer a broad slate of services reach their mandate, they just have to do be clear about who they are serving and how.

### 2. Activities and Operations

Advocacy

Survey respondents felt that ADA was doing an average job of advocating for the dance community and that improvements could be made to increase advocacy efforts and transparency. Many individuals that were interviewed felt that the ADA's advocacy efforts were, for the most part, conducted in a personal and informal way that does not allow the sector to build an understanding of what key issues are being advocated for and in what way.

**Recommendation:**

Advocacy needs to be a central part of ADA's operations as a PASO. Done right, ADA will be seen as a trusted advocate and a voice for the dance sector that is responsive, strategic and influential.

Membership

Of the 100 survey respondents, less than 1/3 were ADA members. This implies a low level of current member engagement. ADA services are not highly valued by the membership with many members having low awareness of the breadth of services available to them. Over 2/3 of respondents were

non-members with knowledge about ADA programs and services, which would imply that dance artists use the services but do not feel there is any additional value in membership.

**Recommendation:**

Explore possibilities to enhance membership benefits and retain, engage, and attract more members.

FEATS Festival

FEATS Festival is the flagship event offered by ADA. It is one of the primary focuses of the organization and a large portion of the annual budget. FEATS is intended to provide performance, workshop and education opportunities, create visibility for the dance community, raise awareness about the impact of the arts, and encourage people to become participants in dance. Currently FEATS does not meet the needs of the broader dance community strongly enough to warrant the amount of human and financial resources required.

**Recommendation:**

Move away from delivering an annual festival with consideration for maintaining desired festival outcomes such as training, presentation opportunities, and network building through different mechanisms.

Other Programs or Services

- Community Workshop Grant
- eNewsletter & DanceLink Calendar
- Workshops

**Recommendation:**

Focus on digitizing all material that is currently produced by ADA and building strength and visibility of the website. Re-invest funding for the Community Workshop Grant and promote On The Move and Keep On Moving.

**3. Resources**

Funding

Collaboration may be key to securing funding in the future. Canada Council has stated that it is interested in funding organizations that come together to offer more services and create more work, rather than single vision organizations. Other funders are following Canada Council's example. Both the EAC and AFA are more flexible than may be presented by administration and are supportive of the ADA focusing its mandate and services to a smaller sub-section of the dance community.

**Recommendation:**

In order to resource its future activities, ADA should review its current mandate and activities and ensure they are aligned with the needs of the sector and then focus on engaging current and new funders.

Capacity

ADA already does a lot with very tight resources and if the current structure and use of resources remains the same it will continue to deteriorate services and increase already apparent capacity gaps in the organization.

**Recommendation:**

Review the current employee engagement, capacity, and model to ensure ADA is adequately staffed to meet the strategic objectives going forward. Ensure consistent operating hours for administrative support in the office on a regular and ongoing basis to provide timely and efficient response to the membership and funders.

**4. Board Governance and Leadership**

Board members are leaders who steer an organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies, as well as making sure the organization has adequate resources to support its mission. – National Council of Non-Profits

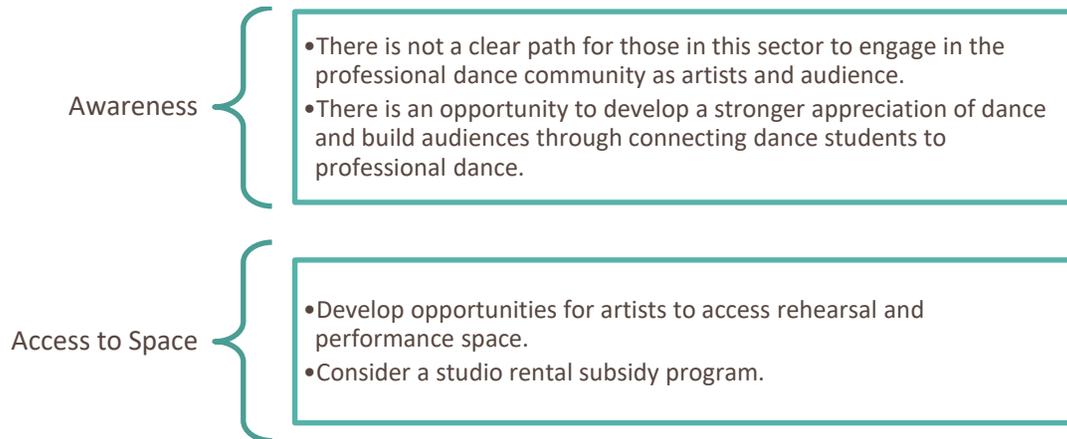
**Recommendation:**

The Board of Directors is critical to the success of ADA. It is time to develop Board Governance policies that are transparent to the membership and continue to implement the strategic plan through ongoing collaboration between the Board and employees.

## Additional Considerations

Research provided a variety of responses from various sectors of the dance community. Additional concerns or needs are shared here.

### Recreational and Amateur Dance



## Regional Divide

Provincial Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a divide between Calgary and Edmonton, with greater support and awareness in Edmonton. Calgary feels a lack of support or engagement with ADA.</li><li>• Consider what it would look like if Calgary was better represented via a virtual office, more Board representation, or new leadership with connection to Calgary.</li><li>• Other PASOs split their attention: 1/3 Edmonton, 1/3 Calgary, 1/3 rest of the province. Some hold their most visible program in Red Deer – halfway between the two major centres.</li></ul>
Division in Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The professional dance community feels underrepresented by ADA.</li><li>• There is a lot of division in the dance community in Alberta. ADA should continue to place efforts on being informed by a broad perspective.</li></ul>

## Professional Artists and Organizations

Creation of New Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine avenues to support the development and presentation of new work</li><li>• Develop support for touring provincially and nationally</li><li>• Develop a presenting network for dance</li><li>• Documentation of work</li><li>• Support independent artists to produce and present new work</li></ul>
Access to Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop opportunities for artists to access rehearsal and performance space</li><li>• Develop studio rental venue</li></ul>
Audience Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marketing and communication support to develop new audiences</li><li>• Workshops to build skills in marketing, social media, and sponsorship</li><li>• How To guides</li></ul>
Training & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher Training for those in recreation / amateur system</li><li>• Mentorship for emerging artists - as well as incubation and training to develop work</li><li>• Training in the area of production and presentation</li><li>• Entrepreneur skills: health plans, financial literacy, subsidies</li></ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the capacity to raise funds and access grants</li><li>• Decrease the gap between funding commitment and payment</li><li>• Revise the formula for funding workshops to make it more accessible</li></ul>
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create opportunities for Alberta artists to connect with artists nationally and internationally</li><li>• Build networking opportunities throughout the province and online</li></ul>

## Conclusions and Future Considerations

The research reviewed in this document demonstrates that Alberta Dance Alliance can produce significant positive impact for dancers, particularly when it is combined with supportive programming. Based on the findings from the research, the following recommendations for ADA are put forward:

1. Reflect on ADA's mandate and consider opportunities to refine and focus.
2. Continue to build on advocacy efforts to position ADA as a strong voice for dance in Alberta and nationally.
3. Focus on building a meaningful membership platform and a robust community of engaged supporters.
4. Pause the FEATS Festival and consider how those resources would be best deployed to provide training, performance, and networking opportunities.
5. Build an online presence to increase engagement in ADA's activities.
6. Increase internal capacity to ensure communication and services are timely and efficient.
7. Focus on developing strong Board Governance and Leadership capacity.