

BUSINESS PLAN 2019 – 2022



Photo: Dean F. Ellis

ENGAGE, INSPIRE, LEARN, COMMUNICATE, SUSTAIN

Sanderson Centre Business Plan 2019-2022

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Today's Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts is a product of the community's long history. Its construction in 1919 reflected optimism in the future and a belief in Brantford's role as a leading community in the Province. This post first world war period was a time of growth and industrial leadership. In the newspaper stories when the theatre opened, the theatre was "Brantford's Supreme Playhouse". It placed Brantford on the prestigious Keith Vaudeville Circuit with the best performers and first-run films of the day.

After a period of decline, the historic interior was restored in 1990 along with upgrades and expansion of the backstage facilities. Since then, Brantford's economy has changed gradually to include a downtown University campus and a more diverse business and service economy. The downtown area now has a seasonal population of post-secondary students alongside a long-term local mix of low income and professional residents.

As an urban area surrounded by a rural county, Brantford is the primary location for cultural events for a large area including all of Brant County and Norfolk County to the south. The proximity to the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit means that an audience of Indigenous peoples including an urban population in the City is a part of the audience served.



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RANGE OF PROGRAMS

- Audience development efforts include school and family programming to encourage and inspire young audiences with the experience of live entertainment. Consultation with the educational community will help to focus efforts on serving the curriculum and educational practice in elementary and secondary schools.
- The theatre's role in a community with a large Indigenous population will be to include Indigenous artists and content to both serve this audience and showcase this rich culture and history to a broader audience.

- Matinee presenting and rental programming serves both Brantford's local aging population as well as attracting cultural tourism revenues in the form of coach day trips from throughout southern Ontario.
- Community co-productions and partnerships leverage the theatre's marketing and production resources to enable local theatre and music producing organizations to produce events on stage and in the lobby.
- School events such as arts week events and Sears Drama Festival provide a means for students to perform in a professional setting and provide their parents with cherished memories they associate with the theatre.
- Post-secondary events including orientation week and guest speaker events improve engagement and a sense of ownership among the temporary student population of downtown.
- The lobby performance space provides an intimate setting for smaller audiences and expanded programming possibilities including artist outreach programming and audience development efforts.
- As an historic theatre in the community with inspiring architecture and history, the theatre serves as the focal point of the arts community. The physical space is a part of the experience.
- Commercial rentals including concerts, comedy and tribute concerts attract different audiences to the venue and provide awareness and marketing value to the theatre's programs.
- Community rentals allow local dance schools, not-for-profits and other community organizations to make use of the theatre and strengthen a sense of belonging for their participants and supporters.
- Dance competitions are a seasonal staple for the theatre and represent an opportunity to engage students from throughout Ontario as well as deliver cultural and sports tourism revenues to the local economy.
- External community events at other City-owned venues are supported by the production group by providing stagehand labour and technical expertise.
- Promotion of community cultural organizations or special events primarily through social media using the theatre's established reach in the community supports these events and organizations.
- Participation in the Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's co-operative education program has been responsible for encouraging several students to pursue careers in the arts. Five current stagehand staff are former co-op students.
- Engaging the entire community including those with limited financial means is done through partnership with the United Way and their member agencies where free or discounted tickets are provided to residents in targeted areas of the community.
- Advertising and sponsorship programs provide revenue to the theatre and value to local businesses.
- Volunteers have an opportunity to stay active and engaged in the community.

PROFILE: OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION

Brantford's historic destination of choice for entertainment, cultural, artistic, and special events.

MISSION

The Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts serves and develops our community by delivering a balanced program of engaging entertainment, education, and cultural experiences that foster artistic growth.



VALUES & BELIEFS

- This building is a part of Brantford's heritage. Its care is entrusted to us and its place in the life of the community is our responsibility to preserve and grow.
- The theatre's presenting events must deliver a high standard of quality and engagement with the community in order to retain and build the level of trust the theatre's programming has with audiences in the community.
- Encouraging a sense of ownership among Brantford's residents and children through audience engagement and direct participation on our stage and in this space builds the community and strengthens our theatre.
- Whether an event is casual or formal, the audience experience is the focus of our efforts from the marketing, ticket buying experience, their visit and interactions with staff, and the quality of the performance and production we put on stage.
- We serve a broad array of users with a wide range of knowledge and experience. Our role is to communicate effectively with all clients at their level of understanding and to use our expertise to provide them the best experience and outcome possible. We ask the questions they may not know to ask.

THE PLAN

While the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts has been experiencing positive trends in usage, attendance and financial results, we recognize that we are in a challenging environment with significant competition for the audience's limited time and resources.

The Sanderson Centre is currently able to attract a sizeable audience for its performing arts presenting season. Earned revenues in 2017 were 65% of the total department revenue with presenting season ticket sales responsible for 36% of that amount. Achieving this level of user supported revenue involves risks inherent in presenting the performing arts. For all performing arts presenting organizations this risk entails making commitments to artists and their work, audiences, and the community. The internal support structures – human resources, mission statement, volunteers, relationships among work units and a clear articulation of the vision and mission of the organization are all critical to managing this risk.

The theatre's leadership team possess a thorough knowledge of the facility, the presenting and performing arts industry, and the community. A shared vision of community and artistic engagement creates an environment where artists, community stakeholders and the audience can flourish.

Like many arts organizations, the Sanderson Centre is challenged by a human resource deficit. The Centre has been fortunate to have retained core staff for many years, all of whom have a tremendous institutional knowledge as well as broad networks into the Brantford community. Unfortunately, a number of these long serving staff members, who make up the core leadership team, are approaching retirement age and will likely leave the organization within a few years of each other. Replacing these people will be difficult as there are very few people with the required skill sets and extensive knowledge of the community. It will also require an increase in the staffing complement as over the years each of them has absorbed additional responsibilities into their portfolio.

The following plan identifies goals for the organization in support of the department's mission. These goals are established by the need to be fiscally responsible, while at the same time leveraging opportunities to integrate live performances with learning, engagement and participation that can inspire people through experiencing the performing arts.

STRATEGY STATEMENT

We are committed to engaging all of the citizens of Brantford and the surrounding area in reciprocal relationships to contribute to their social, cultural and creative well-being through shared cultural experiences.

STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

The department's strategic intentions align with a main pillar of the City's Strategic Action Plan 2014-2018 - High Quality of Life & Caring for all Citizens.

The long-term desired outcomes include

Brantford citizens and visitors will enjoy a full range of well-supported and maintained arts, heritage, culture, sports and recreational facilities and programs

The Sanderson Centre strategic intentions are:

- Ensure the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts is regarded as the heart of our community's cultural life.
- Offer opportunities for youth to be inspired to make the arts a part of their life.
- Provide everyone in the community a chance to experience and enjoy live performing arts.

This plan complements Principle 4 & 5 of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Principle 4: Age-friendly and Accessible Recreation

Principle 5: High-quality, Integrated Services and Progressive Partnerships



OPERATIONAL GOALS

The operational plan sets six priority goals to achieve over the next five years:

GOAL 1:

Engage the community in meaningful arts experiences through vital curatorial and programming choices

GOAL 2:

Build and strengthen important community relationships

GOAL 3:

Develop diverse revenue streams to achieve a healthy balanced organization

GOAL 4:

Sustain and strengthen the organizational capacity, human resources and infrastructure of the Sanderson Centre

GOAL 5:

Strengthen internal and external communication

GOAL 6:

Support efforts to increase capacity and suitability of cultural resources within the City

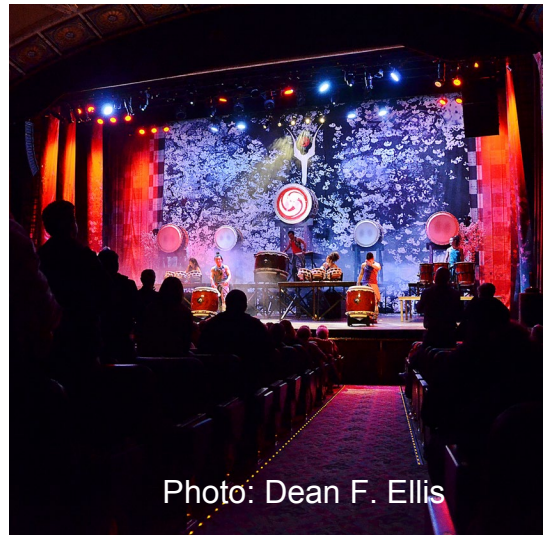
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

GOAL 1 Engage the community in meaningful arts experiences through vital curatorial and programming choices

Context:

Curating programming choices requires a process of exchange among the audience, the community and arts professionals. It is a process that helps communities to celebrate, interrogate, participate and reflect on being part of a vibrant civic culture.

Applying a curatorial lens to our activities allows us to engage in long term planning, engage in more meaningful and relevant ways to our audiences, and to be more connected to our community.



Priorities/Intentions:

- Centennial programming (2019-2020 season)
- Growth of Community engaged programming
- Offer programming that makes the theatre a preferred entertainment choice compared to Toronto and GTA venues.

Strategies:

Centennial programming (2019-2020 season)

- Celebrate the theatre's centennial and historical role in the community's entertainment and cultural life through commemorative events in the Centennial 2019-2020 season.
- Identify and secure funding from other levels of government and the private sector to support special centennial programming

Growth of Community engaged programming

- Include professional programming with a focus on outreach and engagement with community organizations and audience segments.
- Identify additional partner organizations in the community.

Offer programming that makes the theatre a preferred entertainment choice compared to Toronto and GTA venues.

- Program a well-balanced season including high profile performers, emerging artists, and a variety of disciplines.

Outcomes:

- Expanded community sense of belonging to the theatre.

- New patrons attending and an overall increase in attendance.
- Improved awareness and understanding in the community of the value and impact of performing arts.

GOAL 2 Build and strengthen important community relationships

Context:

A performing arts centre has a number of potential mutually beneficial relationships with organizations within the community.

Brantford's Municipal Cultural Plan (2014) identifies this in its Strategic Action 3G which states "Recognize and enhance the leadership capacity of City-owned cultural institutions (Brantford Public Library, Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts, and Bell Homestead National Historic Site) to support grassroots cultural programming and maximize their use for local or neighbourhood programming."



Photo: Dean F. Ellis

Priorities/Intentions:

- Coordinate with School Boards on education programming choices to support their curriculum needs and strategic objectives.
- Work with other cultural organizations in and near the community to mutually support program objectives (Woodland Cultural Centre, Museums, Galleries)
- Support community development initiatives (Neighbourhood Hub family and school ticket program)

Strategies:

Coordinate programming with education community

- Build on and expand existing relationships with consultants and leaders in both local school boards to identify program and curriculum needs that can be supported through performing arts programming through all grade levels.
- Coordinate with post-secondary partners for larger-scale academic programming like speaker series and special interest programming.
- Apply staff industry knowledge and networks to identify specific programming opportunities.

Support community cultural organizations

- Identify cross-promotional and support opportunities based on planned programming initiatives among all community cultural organizations.

- Use the departments existing social media reach to assist in promoting cultural events presented by local organizations and performing arts groups
- Support development of smaller local organizations through support for the new mid-sized venue

Support community development initiatives

- Continue and expand partnerships like the SC Johnson Community and Family Series that provide free tickets for selected events through the City’s Neighbourhood Hub Program schools and Brant United Way member agencies.
- Find connections between local organizations and their services and objectives to performance and event opportunities that support them.

Outcomes:

- Increase exposure to and engagement with the performing arts for students in the community.
- Reduce barriers to access the performing arts.
- Use entertainment and the performing arts to further the objectives of local community-based organizations.

GOAL 3 Develop diverse revenue streams to achieve a healthy balanced organization

Context:

It is important to be a sustainable organization. An organization that is vital, that delivers on our mission, creates public value for our community, and can develop the resources to adapt and change.



The key to future sustainability is the ability to develop revenues from activities and the community, the strength of community partnerships and organizational capacity.

Priorities/intentions:

- Diversify and increase earned revenues.
- Increase contributed income from sponsorship and grants.

Strategies:

Diversify and increase earned revenues

- Increase level of activity to increase rental revenue, ticket revenue, and secondary revenue including merchandise, concessions, and box office fee revenue.

- Invest resources in increasing sale of advertising revenues through current and newly developed channels.

Increase contributed income

- Invest resources in increasing sale of sponsorship and retention/ growth of existing sponsors.
- Continue to identify grant opportunities that are consistent with department priorities and invest resources in pursuing this funding.

Outcomes

- Diversified revenue sources will allow the department to better respond to future economic downturns and potential loss of existing sponsors or reduction in ticket sales.
- Increased earned and contributed income will allow for a reduced proportion of department operating funding coming from tax supported municipal contributions.
- Grant revenues for capital projects will permit municipal capital funding to be leveraged to better address infrastructure deficits.

GOAL 4 Sustain and strengthen the organizational capacity, human resources and infrastructure of the Sanderson Centre

Context:

A Performing Arts Centre is dependent on a mix of availability of well-trained personnel, rapidly evolving technology, specialized equipment, and relationships developed within and beyond the community. Like many theatres, the Sanderson Centre struggles with maintaining the level of resources necessary to effectively deliver the level of service and volume of service required of it.



Photo: Heather Cardle Photography

Priorities/Intentions:

- To operate at the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness and build financial and organizational resources that promote adaptability and vitality.

Human Resources:

- Continue to work with Human Resources to adapt corporate hiring policies to reflect distinct HR needs and business processes of a municipal performing arts centre.
- Adjust staffing structure to better achieve department objectives within current operational demands.

- Ensure a unified working culture throughout the organization (rather than a compartmentalized structure).
- Increase investment in professional development and succession planning.

Operations:

- Excessive overtime among the Production Manager and Technical Director impact the level of direct supervision staff are receiving.
- Productions using the theatre are often not appropriate to the limitations of the venue. This requires extensive logistical and planning efforts to achieve the needs of the event within those limitations.

Strategies:

- Improve streamlining of hire and training process for casual stagehands to take advantage of their industry experience and comparable training received from other municipal employers.
- Hire Part-time Assistant Technical Director to relieve time pressures due to high level of operational activity and support of other City departments.
- Continue broader department leadership discussions to improve level of familiarity with the department's operations as a whole.
- Identify and take advantage of opportunities for professional development from performing arts networks at the regional and provincial level.

Outcomes

- Improved levels of staffing in event operations will ensure employees are being effectively managed and expectations for delivery of services and customer service to users, renters and audiences will be improved.
- Best practices and innovations learned from the broader performing arts industry can be used to further improve operations of the department.

GOAL 5 Strengthen internal and external communication

Context:

The department operates based on two varying schedules. Administration functions are primarily centred on standardized weekday schedules with occasional evenings and weekends required. Production and guest services operations are geared toward event-based schedules where hours of work change to suit the needs of the event calendar. The box office exists in both these structures with standardized hours in addition to event schedules. Additionally, the majority of staff in production, box office, and guest services are part-time employees with varying hours on weekly and seasonal cycles.

In this environment it is challenging to ensure all employees are engaged and kept informed as changes to event requirements and building operations occur.

Priorities/intentions:

- Establish consistent standards across work units for determining appropriate levels of information sharing.
- Develop tools to provide information as appropriate to staff
- Improve timeliness and completeness of communications with returning renters including information required by different work units.

Strategies:

- Develop department level procedures for identifying information to be shared and with who while ensuring privacy standards are maintained.
- Revise and extend the information provided to renters and performers along with streamlining how incoming communication is managed with external stakeholders.
- Secure improved technological capability to allow on-demand access to relevant information to staff in addition to the capability to push information to staff where appropriate.
- Improve staff scheduling capability to work within collective agreement requirements and changing availability of part-time staff.

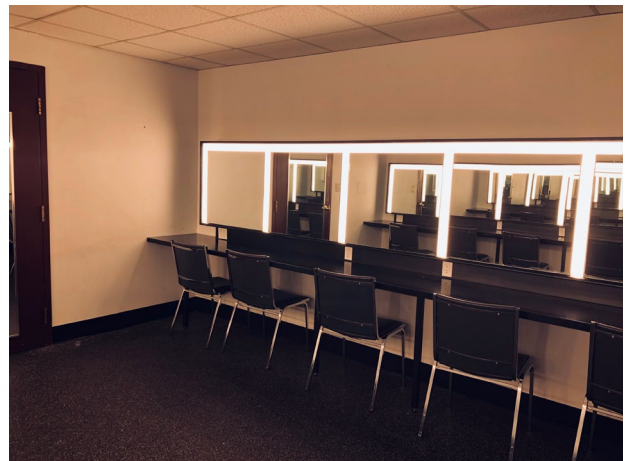
Outcomes:

- Improved efficiency dealing with external event personnel to limit duplication and delays in receiving information.
- Shifting communication and interaction with staff to a multi-channel and reliable means of incoming and outgoing communication.

GOAL 6 Support efforts to increase capacity and suitability of cultural resources within the City

Context:

The Sanderson Centre already operates at capacity during high demand periods and is not available for discounted local rentals such as multi-day installations for plays or single day weekend events that conflict with the theatre's commercial operations. The theatre does not have the support facilities often required by producing arts organizations such as storage/construction space or rehearsal space. The size of the venue is also an obstacle for smaller events better suited to an intimate performance space. These limitations restrict the events the theatre can present as well as efforts to support local arts organizations.



Priorities/Intentions:

- Support efforts to secure the resources for a small venue.
- Position this new space as a community project space to better serve the local arts community.
- Continue to include a “Community Series” featuring local performers and organizations as part of the theatre’s presenting season.

Strategies:

- Continue contributions to the Task Force to Investigate Mid-Sized Performance Space and any projects that are formed out of that process.
- Support efforts by local performing arts producing organizations to develop the capacity to participate in the theatre’s “Community Series”.
- Encourage community rental of the Sanderson Centre in off-peak times.

Outcomes

- Local organizations positioned to effectively utilize a new smaller performance space.
- A new properly equipped and appropriately sized performance space with a focus on local performing artists.
- A new venue more suited to events that are too small to justify presenting at the Sanderson Centre.

EVALUATION

- Develop a more systemic evaluation process to capture and measure economic, cultural and community impact.
- Utilize culture economic impact analysis tools being developed for the City through the Arts & Culture Impact Study
- Track existing key performance indicators (Financial, usage, attendance) for short and long term trends
- Refine and more extensively deploy post show audience opinion surveys
- Track trends in relevant City surveys (Budget priorities)
- Track renter retention and satisfaction



Photo: Heather Cardle Photography

PROCESS

Over the past year the leadership team of the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts met regularly to:

- Examine and reaffirm the vision, mission, values of the organization;
- Establish a rigorous planning process to ensure the Sanderson Centre can achieve its mission and at the same time be able to make necessary changes to stay healthy in a volatile environment;
- Develop clear action plans with measurable targets or objectives to achieve key goals;
- Assess all the elements of Sanderson Centre's infrastructure in order to strengthen its organizational capacity;
- Develop a planning document to provide all internal and external stakeholders an understanding of the strategic direction of Sanderson Centre over the next five years.

To achieve this we:

- Reviewed and utilized the existing planning documents and grant applications;
- Undertook a knowledge based self-assessment;

- Thoroughly examined the programmatic and resource centres of activity to establish priorities, set goals and measurable targets/objectives with detailed action plans.
- Completed an environmental mapping process.

This business plan was developed by the Sanderson Centre Leadership Team:

Glenn Brown, Theatre Manager
Liz Oden, Marketing Supervisor
Carol Woods, Office Administrator
Scott Brohman, Front of House Manager
Betty Jo Cox, Box Office Manager
Robert Dallaway, Production Manager
Michael Poole, Technical Director
With: Jane Marsland, Facilitator, Ontario Presents

For more information, please contact:



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