

RESEARCH

Research studies are critical to provide robust empirical evidence regarding Singapore’s arts and cultural landscape for policy and programme development. To facilitate the use of these findings, the NAC Research unit also contributes to building research and data analytics capabilities for the Council and the arts and culture sector. The potential exists for us to further optimise big data, and expand research and documentation in artistic practices and processes, as well as in the social impact of the arts.

► ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATE

Strengths

NAC seeks to ensure empirical evidence supports the development of our policies and strategies. Industry data from ticketing agents, performing arts centres and other sources, for example, are regularly compiled to glean insights. Existing studies, including the Population Survey on the Arts, Singapore Cultural Statistics and the Arts and Culture Employment Study (ACES), enable us to evaluate the impact the arts have on Singaporeans, and the state of the sector.

Weaknesses

Assessment of a sector’s health and outlook depends on the availability of data. While there is data on the arts and cultural sector, the scope of this information may cover professionals, programmes and activities which have little to do with the primary concerns of the arts sector because of how broadly the arts can be defined. In addition, due to the small size of the

sector and the diversity within it, insights may not be as useful to the individual artist or company as they are not representative of their specific interests. The effective application of research findings also requires stronger capabilities in data analytics and data visualisation on the part of the arts community and policy officers.

Opportunities

There are opportunities for NAC to collaborate with the cultural institutions and national companies – Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Arts House Limited, the Singapore Symphonia Company Limited and the Singapore Chinese Orchestra – to undertake audience research. There is also growing interest, both locally and internationally, in the wealth of knowledge and experience in artistic practice and processes held by our Singapore artists. Much of this has yet to be documented comprehensively. This is important work to recognise the achievements of our Singapore artists, as well as to provide the basis for further artistic growth and innovation. In addition, new areas of arts and culture research around social impact and how technology can be integrated into art-making provide added impetus for non-arts agencies and institutions to explore collaborations with our sector.

Threats

Due to quickly evolving consumption habits and trends, the time lag between the start of research studies and the production of findings may affect the relevance of insights and NAC’s ability to respond effectively.



► ENVISIONED STATE AND OUTCOMES

By 2022, NAC envisions a research landscape that produces robust data and international benchmarks to inform policy-making and programme review, as well as demonstrate the impact of the arts. Research interests will be furthered by partnerships that feed into a larger research network enabling the sharing of data and insights. Arts research will expand from quantitative data collection to new areas comprising qualitative and behavioural studies. The arts sector will have adequate statistical knowledge to appreciate and interpret data, and to conduct their own research and documentation projects. Links between academics and practitioners, and between NAC and other public agencies, will be strengthened towards producing research that is relevant to the cultural sector and across government.

Such efforts should result in the availability of more evidence-based resources to inform programme review, audience development strategies, capability development initiatives and how we evaluate success in the arts sector, as well as support arts advocacy when engaging potential funders and partners, and the wider public. Documentation of the work of our Singapore artists will also be a source of national pride, as the research is shared internationally, and positions our Singapore practitioners on the global stage. In addition, such research material will also help our artists to more deeply reflect on their own practice, potentially advancing innovation in the creation of uniquely Singapore content or new practices in arts education and community arts.

To grow the quantity, quality and relevance of research, these following shifts will be made:

Working Closer with Industry Partners to Drive a National Arts Research Agenda

To strengthen the research ecosystem for arts and culture, NAC will work more closely with the cultural institutions, universities, and arts colleges on research projects relevant to the sector. These include research into artistic processes, how the arts can contribute to well-being, health and

personal development, as well as behavioural insights to how different profiles of audiences engage with the arts. Another area of interest is how technology can contribute to the creation, presentation and promotion of the arts. Potential partnerships with agencies beyond the arts sector will be explored as well.

Strengthening Capabilities and Collaborations Within the Arts Research Ecosystem

Enlarging the body of arts and cultural research will require NAC to cultivate deeper interest in research among academics and practitioners, and foster collaboration. NAC intends to build on its current research portal, for example, to increase awareness of and access to existing research studies and research resources both in Singapore and from around the world. NAC will also expand its arts and culture research symposium launched in 2017, to enable researchers from a range of disciplines and arts practitioners to network, generate new research ideas, and explore new methods of documenting and studying arts and culture practices. We will also take the lead in commissioning academic-practitioner research projects to tap the specific knowledge and skills of both groups. In addition, NAC will actively engage arts companies with deep expertise in specific art form practices, to embark on documentation and research, either independently if they have the capability, or in partnership with external research specialists. Over time, we envision the emergence of arts intermediaries dedicated to arts and culture research and strategy consulting as their core practice or work.

Translating Research to Digestible and Actionable Items

As part of engaging the wider arts community and advocating arts and culture research, NAC will work towards producing reports, infographics and dashboards that are accessible to all. This will help the industry apply research findings more effectively. To encourage more data-driven strategies

being developed by the sector, NAC will customise available data for different stakeholders, and tap on specific platforms which allow researchers/academics and artists/arts groups to share ideas, so that research output can be better translated into action. We will also explore how more granular data can be provided to the arts community and interested members of the public to improve research resources.

Articulating Priority Areas

The following considerations were used to identify NAC's research priorities for the next five years in alignment with our strategic thrusts:

- a Measuring the impact of the arts
- b Understanding what excellence means in the arts sector
- c Assessing the adequacy of infrastructural, human and organisational assets needed to drive the development of our arts scene

Strategic Thrust 01 Inspire Our People

NAC will expand on existing ways of articulating the value of the arts through a deeper understanding of measurements of success. This will cover art form-specific attributes of excellence, alternative indicators for funding, effectiveness of arts education and community arts efforts, and the impact and value of arts exposure.

Sectoral plans to develop a body of distinctive content that resonates with Singaporeans will require artistic content and practice to be properly documented and archived, digitally or otherwise. Practice-based research is also needed to inform understanding and encourage further innovation. In a crowded international market of arts and culture offerings, it is essential for Singapore to be able to articulate who we are in a way that celebrates our multiculturalism and diversity as a unique value proposition to both local and

international audiences. Research can also inform how technology can be optimised for art-making.

Research should also build on ACES to help NAC better understand labour supply in the sector, capability gaps, career opportunities, and the needs and aspirations of the arts ecosystem. This will support NAC's Capability Development Plan for the training of arts professionals, especially in terms of developing the skills required to meet future challenges, and ensuring the financial sustainability of key arts organisations, businesses and the overall industry.

NAC will work with partners such as the National Heritage Board, the cultural institutions and land agencies, as well as community organisations to understand the role and effectiveness of place-making. These findings will inform NAC's community engagement and infrastructure planning, including our framework for arts spaces.

Strategic Thrust 02 Connect Our Communities

Strategies need to be developed to cultivate new audiences. This will be guided by data on the evolving needs and interest of specific audience segments. New data sources such as big data and in-depth ethnographic studies to understand new consumption patterns, drivers and impact will provide deeper understanding for audience development plans in each art form. Increasingly, engagement strategies for the arts need to also consider new research questions, such as how digital methods of arts engagement complement the live experience, as well as volunteerism in the arts. Findings from these research areas are key for NAC's art form sectoral plans, Capability Development Plan, as well as the Community Engagement Plan which calls for research on how the arts sector can better tap on volunteers as another resource to not only supplement the manpower needs of the sector, but also groom new advocates and supporters of the arts.

The role of the arts in community bonding will be better understood through studies on the impact of arts activities on identity, social trust, integration of disadvantaged segments, and other whole-



of-government outcomes. At the individual level, studies on how the arts impact individuals in terms of wellness and personal fulfilment, personal attributes such as confidence, creativity, etc. will also inform our efforts in arts advocacy.



Strategic Thrust 03 Position Singapore Globally

Research into our Singapore voice and identity in the field of the arts needs to continue, especially around intercultural practice. We will also conduct research on international perceptions of Singapore arts and artists to inform our approach to internationalisation, such as the type of content to promote to different markets. In addition, understanding the role that the arts play in the lives of cities is important. There is potential for Singapore to establish itself as a leading liveable city celebrated for its vibrant culture.

Singapore's geographical position presents opportunities for us to work with our neighbours on cultural exchanges as part of relationship-building. Research to better understand and articulate Singapore's role in Southeast Asia will be beneficial.

► SUMMARY

Effective policy-making and programme development depends on timely and insightful analysis of data. The Research plan will:

- a Support more evidence-based evaluation of policies and programmes,
- b Broaden the circle of academics and practitioners interested in arts research, and
- c Cultivate a data- and research-savvy arts community.

These will reinforce the foundations of an arts community that will inspire and connect Singaporeans, and place Singapore on the international stage.