

Make the Case:
Advocate For Your Project
Using Social Cohesion

Two-Part Workshop, July 2026

Meet the Team



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Workshops Overview

Part 1 (Today):

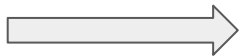
- What is social cohesion?
- Sector Research: *Artworks Report*
- Connecting the Dots
- Brief Template

Part 2 (July 23):

- Advocacy Templates

Our Goal

- You'll leave today's session with **a two-page brief** that:
 - **Describes** a specific project you have completed in the recent past
 - **Confidently uses** the language of social cohesion
 - **Explains** how your project contributed to social cohesion in your community
 - **Connects** your organizational story to statistics from the Artworks report
 - **Creates a unique and reliable basis** for conversations about social cohesion with investors and decision-makers



Temperature Check: Poll

Social Cohesion: *Definition*

Social cohesion refers to the level of :

- trust
- connection
- support between individuals and groups

A socially cohesive society is one where people **feel they belong and care about one another.**

Recent evidence suggests that social cohesion is **declining around the world,** including in Canada.

Where Arts and Culture Come In

- Connect with others
- Build relationships
- Develop a sense of belonging
- Amplify different voices
- Highlight diverse experiences
- Foster inclusion
- Reduce social isolation
- Strengthen trust
- Individuals engage more actively in their communities

All of which helps to build more connected, resilient, and cohesive societies.

Artworks Report

Artworks is a national research initiative developed through a partnership between Business / Arts, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canada Council for the Arts. **It highlights the significant contributions that arts and culture make to communities across Canada**, not only as drivers of economic activity, but also as catalysts for social cohesion, community vitality, and quality of life.



How You Can Observe It in Your Communities

Behaviours that demonstrate social cohesion in your community:

- trust
- belonging
- identity and pride
- co-operation
- connection
- dialogue
- inclusion
- strong intergroup relations
- reduced social isolation
- increased participation in civic and socio-cultural activities



Where does this show up in your work? Time for a poll!

Connecting the Dots

Social Cohesion



Canadian
Chamber of
Commerce
Chambre de
Commerce
du Canada



Business
Data Lab
Laboratoire de données
sur les entreprises

Business/Arts



Canada Council
for the Arts
Conseil des arts
du Canada

Let's align the definitions of Social Cohesion with supporting research from the *Artworks report*

Keyword: **Feeling of belonging**

- **Definition:** A feeling of belonging is the **sense of security and support derived from being accepted, included, and having a sense of self** within a group or community.
- **Synonyms:** Identity pride, identity formation

Supporting Research:

- “75% of Canadians believe that attending arts and culture events positively impacts their **sense of belonging** in Canada.”

—*Artworks Report, Page 5*

Keyword: **Active Participation (Political and/or socio-cultural)**

- **Definition:** the **active involvement of individuals** within their communities and broader society.
- **Synonym:** Civic engagement

Supporting Research:

- Arts improve other aspects of the economy and society such as:
“Changes attitudes towards **community participation.**”

—*Artworks Report, Page 6*

Keyword: **Social Equity**

- **Definition:** Social equity refers to the principle of **fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, opportunities, and burdens across all members of society**, regardless of background or identity.

Keyword: **Inclusion**

- **Definition:** the practice or policy of **providing equal access to opportunities and resources** for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

Supporting Research:

- “Builds social cohesion, community, and **integration of newcomers**”
—*Artworks Report, Page 6*
- Spotlight of Kent Monkman: ...**reclaims space for Indigenous narratives and identities**. Monkman’s artworks confront viewers with the history of the residential school system and have generated increased focus and attention on **Truth and Reconciliation**
—*Artworks Report, Page 28*

Keyword: **Strong Communities and Social Networks**

- **Definition:** A strong community is one where people **feel connected to each other and are willing to work together** for the common good. Social networks are the connections between people that allow communities to function and support one another.
- **Synonym:** Strong relationships

Keyword: **Cooperation**

- **Definition:** an act or instance of **working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit**; joint action.
- **Synonym:** Collaboration

- “Gensler’s City Pulse 2025 finds that the strongest predictors of staying include **emotional connection** and a **sense of belonging**, both powerfully shaped by arts and cultural life. Cities that create engaging cultural experiences, nurture an authentic local identity, and foster urban vibrancy are more likely to **retain people over time**”
- “Cultural participation builds belonging and attachment, especially for equity-seeking groups. Cohesive, engaged communities are more resilient and **better able to collaborate**, which supports business growth and investment attraction.”

—*Artworks Report, Page 8*

Keyword: **Intergroup Relations**

- **Definition:** Intergroup relations refers to **how people from different social groups perceive, think about, feel about, and interact with each other**. These interactions can range from positive (e.g., friendships) to negative (e.g., conflict), and are influenced by factors like prejudice, group identification, and the effects of contact between groups.
- **Synonym:** Reconciliation

Keyword: **Trust (In society and in institutions)**

- **Definition:** **Social trust** (relationship of all members), **trust in institutions** (relationship with institutions).
- **Synonyms:** Social trust, trust in institutions

- Cultural participation builds belonging and attachment, **especially for equity-seeking groups**. Cohesive, **engaged communities are more resilient and better able to collaborate**, which supports business growth and investment attraction.

—*Artworks Report, Page 8*

- Business / Arts, through their quarterly Arts Response Tracking Survey (ARTS), examine Canadian “culture-goers” attitudes and behaviours, finding that people are drawn to participate in arts and culture for several key reasons. These include **fostering connections with others, gaining new perspectives**, and building a sense of belonging within their communities. Previous releases have pointed to arts’ ability to help reduce stress and enhance well-being.

—*Artworks Report, Page 5*

Keyword: **Solidarity**

- **Definition:** unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.
- **Synonyms:** Common good, **common goals**

- From the We Live Up Here Festival in Sudbury : “This partnership highlights storytelling and brings new life to the city’s narrative through creative placemaking. The artworks belong to the community, **reshaping Sudbury’s identity beyond mining to showcase innovation and urbanity, while boosting tourism and local business.**”

—*Artworks Report, Page 7*

Social Cohesion: Sector Context

In the Canada Council for the Arts' 2021–26 Strategic Plan:
Social cohesion was one of the Council's **top priorities**

- Central to the goal of "Amplifying the benefits of the arts for society"

The Council identifies the arts as a tool to:

- Strengthen communities and quality of life
- Reduce discrimination and promote equity
- Support Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination
- Improve access, inclusion, and fair compensation for artists

— *Canada Council for the Arts' 2021–26 Strategic Plan, Page 18*

The arts sector has tremendous potential for contributing to **social cohesion**, community vitality, and the quality of life of people of all backgrounds and circumstances in Canada. To fully realize this potential, the Council will support the arts sector in its work to **eliminate discrimination** in all forms, including that based on gender identity, race, and ability, to respond to climate change, and to recognize and promote the role of youth in the arts. It will support efforts to advance **Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination**, as well as the Indigenous-led decolonization of the arts and culture sector. It will champion **fair compensation** for artistic and literary creation, the economic protection of artists, and **equitable access** to digital infrastructure and resources for artists and people across Canada. — *Canada Council for the Arts' 2021–26 Strategic Plan*,
Page 18

Why Social Cohesion Matters

Key challenge:

- It's clear that our government and funders value social cohesion, however we lack a clear definition
- This presents us a shared concern: How can we demonstrate that social cohesion is understood, measured, and achieved through the arts?

Case Study: Traditional crafting as a catalyst for Indigenous women's intergenerational cohesion and wellness

1. Intergenerational Cohesion

- Connects Elders, teachers, and youth
- Facilitates the transfer of cultural teachings across generations

2. Reduced Social Isolation

- Encourages participation and relationship-building

3. Connection & Belonging

- Creates shared spaces for learning and participation
- Strengthens social and cultural connections within communities

4. Identity Pride

- Reinforces Indigenous identity and cultural knowledge
- Inspires pride through engagement with traditional practices

5. Healing & Resilience

- Promotes wellbeing for both learners and teachers
- Contributes to healing from historical trauma

MAKE THE CASE

“Advocacy for busy people”

- We want to help you make the case for **the value of arts and culture**:
 - **more often**
 - with **greater success**
 - in **less time**
- We offer:
 - **Hello, Case-Maker! Sessions** to complete one advocacy action in under an hour
 - Five-Step **Guides**, **Cases** on Sector Success, **Research** + Theme **Context**
- The **entire site** is built to help you move from **Awareness** → **Action**
- So that you can build a **compelling case** to maintain or increase investment

MAKE THE CASE

“Advocacy for busy people”

- Hello, Case-Maker! Sessions
 - Actions people want to take
 - Templates, Guides, and Info
 - Coaching Support
 - Peers moving through together

- Hello, Case-Maker! Sessions
 - Not a webinar w Q&A
 - No expert presentation
 - No recording

- Three types of coaching help → Social Cohesion 101, Voice, Pitching
- Next steps and action planning

So that you can **develop your organizational voice**, based on your unique position in your community and in the sector, and **use it right away**

Quick Exercise: Your Unique Contribution

- Connect with others
- Build relationships
- Develop a sense of belonging
- Amplify different voices
- Highlight diverse experiences
- Foster inclusion
- Reduce social isolation
- Strengthen trust
- Individuals engage more actively in their communities

→ Help to build more connected, resilient, and cohesive societies.

Your organization does this in **particular ways**, with **specific partners**, in a **municipality or rural service area**. → **In your situation.**

Step 1: Project Snapshot

Step 2: Social Cohesion Outcomes

Step 3: Resources Used

Step 4: Impact → What difference did it make?

Step 5: Evidence for the Future

Step 6: What Would Make This Easier?

Step 1: Project Snapshot

Project title:

Project location:

What was the project?

Who was involved? (participants, partners, artists, volunteers, staff, etc.)

What need, gap, or opportunity were you responding to?

Step 2: Social Cohesion Outcomes

Looking back, what changed as a result of this project? Consider both intended and unintended outcomes.

What increased?

- Participation
- Connection
- Trust
- Dialogue
- Collaboration
- Sense of belonging

What decreased?

- Isolation
- Barriers to participation
- Misunderstanding between groups
- Feelings of exclusion

Step 3: Resources Used

What resources were needed to achieve these results?

Resource type	What was needed?
Humans (staff, artists, volunteers)	
Informational (research, outreach, communications)	
Physical (space, equipment, materials)	
Intellectual (expertise, training, creative knowledge)	
Financial	

Step 4: Impact – *What difference did it make?*

What signals, feedback, or observations suggest the project had a positive impact?

- Participant comments
- Repeat attendance
- New relationships formed
- People stayed longer than expected
- Increased engagement
- Partner feedback

Step 5: Evidence for the Future

If someone asked you to prove these outcomes, what could you put in place next time to collect stronger evidence?

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Attendance Tracking
- Testimonials
- Observation Notes
- Photos (with permission for use)
- Follow ups/Check-ins

Step 6: What Would Make This Easier?

What would help you achieve these outcomes and contribution to social cohesion more intentionally next time?

What contribution from an investor, funder, sponsor, or partner would help?

- More volunteers
- Additional funding
- Better location
- Longer timelines
- Transportation support
- Marketing assistance
- Evaluation tools

Step 7: One-Paragraph Summary

Using your answers above, write a short paragraph (3–5 sentences) that explains:

- What the project was
- Who it served
- How it contributed to social cohesion
- What evidence or observations support that claim
- What you would need to increase evidence or effectiveness in the future

Next Session

In a week, you will use the paragraph you just developed in the Brief Template and adapt it for at least one of three real-world situations where you need to communicate the impact of your work and maintain or increase support:

- Granting
- Reporting
- Talking Points

Each situation uses the content you just created but changes the **tone, level of detail, and purpose depending on the audience.**

Questions

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- Questions
- Suggestions
- Experiences