

Step 4: Engage the Right Team

After establishing the initial goal of the facility, its overall feasibility from a financial and market-driven perspective needs to be tested. Extensive objective data must be gathered and specific space/program utilization plans must be created. An outside specialist can play a vital advisory role in leading the group of experts that the project requires, such as architects, theater planning consultants, museum planners, acousticians, fundraising counsel, project cost consultants, real estate developers and brokers, operational/capital cost analysts, or site planning, zoning, traffic, engineering, and landscaping firms. A cultural facilities and program planning specialist can provide an objective and comprehensive analysis as to whether the project should proceed and how to best achieve the desired results through effective timing and stakeholder engagement strategies. Using such a structured, team-oriented approach in the early planning stages will effectively launch the project while strengthening its credibility with major prospective donors, government agencies, and community leaders.

Step 5: Mobilize Fundraising and Financing

Cultural facility projects are rarely accomplished without a major fundraising efforts, such as a capital campaign with a goal far higher than the current annual operating budget. Inviting major donors to join a special task force early in the planning stages can formalize their involvement, answer questions, address concerns, and encourage early consensus. In the case of newly formed organizations or groups whose primary focus is the cultural facility project, it is critical to develop relationships that also attract financial and community support. Including prospective donors and community leaders at this early stage helps them understand and support initial project investments that are required beyond post-opening annual operations. It will also pay dividends when the time comes for the campaign planning study and eventual facility capital campaign. Their investment will create broader community ambassadorship and advocacy by all involved in the facility, program, and fundraising planning process.

Step 6: Conduct a Needs Assessment

An objective inventory of program utilization and space needs is fundamental to cultural facility planning. It is essential to accurately project the number of productions, performances, rehearsals, exhibitions, classes, rentals, meetings, and other events that a facility needs to accommodate in future years. A pro forma annual schedule takes that one step further. Itemize the number of square feet each of the proposed uses needs, as well as other requirements like special equipment, HVAC, parking, guest services, concessions, and administrative and storage space. Outside organizations that plan to use the facility will need to be interviewed (preferably by an objective source) to determine their needs and aspirations. Those discussions may result in a list of overlapping or conflicting space needs, demands, and desires that must be addressed early in the planning process. A facilities specialist can conduct this assessment and advise on how a new space can balance and accommodate multiple uses that best serve community needs. In the end, not all the space, equipment, and calendar requests will make the final cut, as no cultural facility can meet every need.

Step 7: Analyze the Market and Engage the Community

Objective analysis of the audience market area, census data, population trends, economic forecasts, tourist figures, seasonal residents, and a host of other demographic factors can provide quantifiable data to demonstrate the need for new, renovated, or larger arts and culture spaces. An analysis of like-sized communities and their cultural spaces can be an effective way to save time and money in the long term. It may also signal the need to scale back plans or redefine the goal. How can potential audience attendance be projected accurately? Involving the community in focus groups, surveys, and town hall meetings can provide valuable insights on topics such programming, ticket pricing, and willingness to support new building plans. A survey provides an opportunity to share organizational vision, communicate potential impact, demystify the planning process, and spark excitement.

Step 8: Benchmark the Competitive Environment

Once the organization, municipality, or community has confirmed its facility needs, it is equally important to understand how the new, expanded, or renovated venue will be viewed from an external stakeholder perspective. Are there other facilities with competing visions and program offerings? An in-depth inventory of similar or neighboring facilities and spaces can ratify the need for a new facility project and avoid creating duplicate spaces. Such a gap analysis can also inform adjustments to the original vision for the proposed facility. It is also important to consider the business and governance models of similar facilities in comparably sized communities.

Step 9: Commission a Preliminary Facility Concept

Using all this information, the project planning committee and a design team, typically led by specialists in cultural facilities and program planning, are now ready to prepare a preliminary facility concept. At this time, a basic building program itemizing the net square footage of each space within the venue should be created. The architect then

Stage in Toronto, Executive Director of the Vancouver Playhouse and Vancouver Playhouse Acting School, and Vice Commissioner and Producer for the Canadian Pavilion and Expo '92. Mr. Bragg has held various management roles at the Stratford Festival, National Arts Centre, Theatre New Brunswick, Vancouver East Cultural Centre, and many theaters in Toronto. Working both in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, he has been responsible for creating innovative partnerships with companies in Canada, the United States, England, and Ireland. Mr. Bragg has a long history of volunteerism and community service, including serving as President of the PACT Communications Centre, Vice Chair of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, and National Chair of the Equity Negotiating Committee for two successful collective agreements. He was also a founding member of the Minister's Advisory Counsel for Arts and Culture for the Province of Ontario.

Douglas R. Clayton, Senior Vice President

Douglas R. Clayton joined ACG in 2019, bringing more than 20 years of experience in the arts and culture industry, specifically within opera, theater, and arts service organizations. Passionate about innovative business models in the arts and culture sector, he leads ACG's Planning & Capacity Building area, guiding strategic planning and community engagement, facilities and program planning, organizational benchmarking studies, board governance summits, team building retreats, and a variety of services that strengthen nonprofit organizations, universities, government agencies, and the communities they serve. Mr. Clayton has an extensive background in cross-sector collaboration in public-private partnerships and the dynamic relationships that exist in the creative industries. Prior to joining ACG, Mr. Clayton served in various roles at Chicago Opera Theater, ultimately becoming General Director. He has also served as Director of Programming and Operations for LA Stage Alliance, as Chair of the Host Committee for the record-breaking 2011 Theater Communications Group national conference, and as a member of the Directors Lab West's steering committee. Mr. Clayton has worked artistically as a stage director, playwright, and performer and has hands-on experience as both an artist and producer with a range of theatrical unions in the United States, including the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Actors' Equity Association, American Guild of Musical Artists, and United Scenic Artists. Mr. Clayton holds a bachelor of science from the University of Southern California and earned a master of business administration from the Anderson School of Management at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 2018 he was named to Crain's Chicago Business 40 under 40 list as a leading innovator in the business of culture.

Peter Mraz, Associate Vice President

A classically trained pianist, Peter Mraz brings a unique combination of strategic insight, leadership, artistic sensitivity, and business acumen to all his consulting engagements. Since joining ACG in 2016, he has been an integral part of several teams that have completed projects in a wide variety of functional disciplines, including executive searches, board summits, organizational management assessments, audience and community surveys, competitive market analysis, audience demand estimates, extensive benchmarking studies, and programming and financial pro forma plans for new arts and culture facilities. His varied background and experience allow him to provide a global perspective, identify tailored and innovative solutions that build consensus, incorporate best management practices, and deliver practical and enduring results that enhance the mission and sustainability of ACG's clients. Mr. Mraz began his career with the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bratislava and KPMG in Prague. He later joined the London Symphony Orchestra and Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. A native speaker of Slovak, Mr. Mraz is fluent in English and Czech and has a working knowledge of Russian and French. A former Slovak and Irish folk dancer, Mr. Mraz completed his piano studies at Košice Conservatory of Music in his native Slovakia. He holds a bachelor of science in business administration from City University of Seattle and a master in public policy from Harvard Kennedy School.

**Contact ACG for more information on how we can help your organization
achieve new or revitalized cultural facilities.**

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