

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning

2023-2028
Strategic Plan



the tett

Centre for Creativity & Learning



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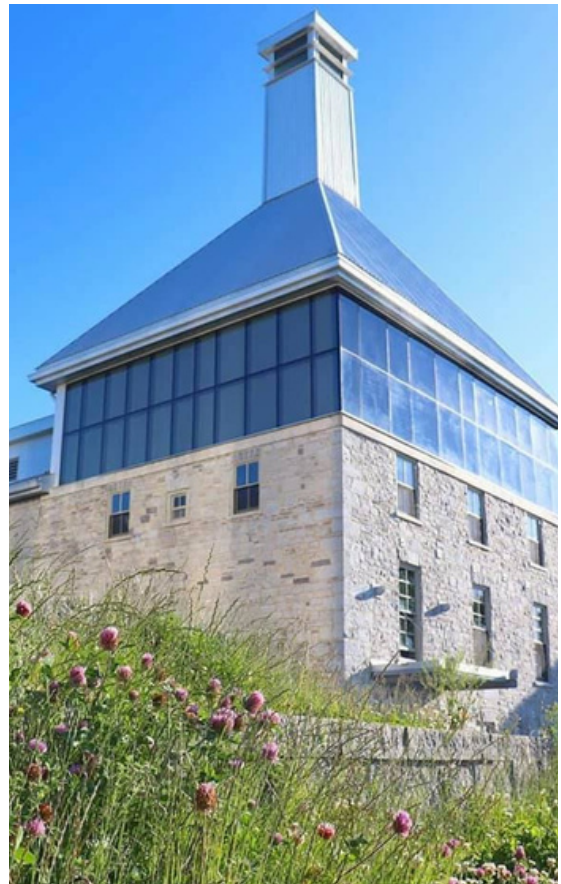
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PROLOGUE

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning (TCCL) is a not-for-profit, charitable arts organization that operates in the heritage building known as the J.K. Tett Centre on Lake Ontario's waterfront in Kingston, Ontario. The TCCL's strategic plan builds on the organization's history of community building focused on arts, culture, and access, while also looking to the future by developing capacity, increasing diversity, and reaching out to more people.

THE EARLY, FORMATIVE YEARS

The J.K. Tett Centre in Kingston, Ontario was originally part of the Morton Brewery and Distillery Company in the mid-19th century. It was expropriated in 1918 and served as a military hospital and army headquarters for Eastern Ontario. The City of Kingston purchased the property in the 1970s with a vision to create an arts hub. The building housed various cultural groups until the early 2000s when the City considered selling it. The existing tenants and broader arts community advocated for the building's continued use as an arts space, which resulted in a public consultation process and the development of a feasibility plan in 2005. In 2009, a business plan was approved that included renovating the building as a purpose-designed arts hub.



FOUNDING THE TETT CENTRE FOR CREATIVITY AND LEARNING

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning was incorporated in 2011 as the designated building operator following a tenant selection process facilitated by the City of Kingston. The original Board of the TCCL was comprised of tenant representatives who worked with the City to develop the interior design of the building. The building restoration was completed in 2014 and officially opened to the public on January 31, 2015, with over 16,000 visitors taking part in programming, tours, rentals, and partnership events in the first year of operations.

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS (2015-2020)

In its first five years, the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning (TCCL) became an established part of the local arts landscape in Kingston, Ontario. Eight core tenant arts organizations were established, along with eight individual artist studios and four short-term rental spaces. The TCCL's first strategic plan, developed in 2017, focused on operating the historical building as a vibrant arts centre, activating a welcoming arts hub, and sustaining operations. In 2018, a governance review resulted in a shift to a community-led Board supported by Kingston City Council as the organization's sole member. By its fifth birthday in 2020, the TCCL had become a thriving arts hub, providing space and opportunities for local artists alongside vibrant arts programming.



THRIVING HUB FOR ARTS, CREATIVITY AND LEARNING

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning continues to be a vibrant and important community resource for the arts in Kingston, adapting to shifts in the sector and remaining stable despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a well-regarded creative hub that, together with the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, forms a unique arts campus for a community of Kingston's size. The J.K. Tett Centre is now home to nine arts organizations including the TCCL, eight Creativity Studio Artists, and a variety of rental spaces, including the Malting Tower, Rehearsal Hall, Tett Gallery, and Activity Room. The new strategic plan, developed under the leadership of the community-led Board, supports the continued development of the TCCL as a responsive resource for the community and a thriving creative hub for all visitors. The TCCL offers many opportunities to engage with the arts, including classes, workshops, exhibitions, and open house events, and the fully licensed Juniper Café offers stunning views from a waterfront patio.

Development of the TCCL Strategic Plan

The TCCL underwent a strategy development process that began in October 2020 and involved multiple planning sessions, consultations with invested groups, and an online survey to gather input from the community. The plan was approved by the Board in December 2022 and highlights the TCCL's continued role as a key service provider in the arts and broader communities it serves, even amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

KEY THEMES

Insights emerged from a variety of strategy development and planning workshops along with consultations and conversations with staff, volunteers, the City of Kingston, sub-tenants, partners, artists, and community organizations. Several themes stood out:

- As an arts hub, **the TCCL is a complex** of collaborative relationships and behaviours, diverse dynamics, community interests and brand perceptions.
- **Social connection** through the arts delivers real value. Arts exploration and artistic development/expression thrive in a diverse, socially connected context.
- **Accessibility** is a highly valued priority, shared broadly. Barriers can range from physical and logistical challenges to financial and social impediments.
- **Multiplicity** is a critical principle for planning. The TCCL supports multiple forms of art and creation, and multiple avenues for participation.
- **Decolonization and Indigenization** is a crucial goal for arts and community organizations, and is an area requiring focused attention by the TCCL.

Development of the TCCL Strategic Plan

THEMES FROM THE ONLINE INPUT:

- **Collaborative Programming:** The goal is to make the building an active hub for creativity and learning by creating opportunities for artists and tenant organizations to work together. Partnerships with external organizations, especially those focused on diversity and equity, will also be pursued. Cross-promotion through partnership programming is also being considered.
- **How Visitors Experience the Facility:** Improving the building's "feel" to make it more welcoming for visitors was a common suggestion. Some recommended promoting drop-ins and meandering while also improving way-finding and navigation within the building.
- **Accessibility:** The feedback on this topic covered various aspects of access, such as physical accessibility, accessibility for Deaf individuals and those with disabilities, access to programming, and financial accessibility.
- **Communications:** Online feedback emphasized the need to improve advertising and promotion of the TCCL, including its identity, current offerings, and the individuals and organizations present. Others suggested reaching out to new, underserved audiences. Some recommended identifying actionable ways to promote the brand identity and achieve the vision for the TCCL.

Development of the TCCL Strategic Plan

INSIGHTS FROM COMMUNITY AND TENANT FOCUS GROUPS:

- **Outreach**, marketing, communication, engagement, and participation in programming/events were identified as critical for achieving the TCCL's goals. Some feedback noted a lack of awareness and understanding of the arts hub, while others emphasized the importance of community connection. Other related issues included accessibility, diversity and inclusion, decolonization, overcoming isolation, and addressing the lack of affordable space for artists.
- Feedback also spoke to the TCCL's positioning as an arts hub, the impact of the building's appearance/architecture and location on **perceptions of the TCCL brand**, and functional/programming influences on its profile.
- Opportunities exist to **increase visitor traffic** to the building through targeted marketing and collective coordination of cross-referrals with sub-tenants who attract visitors from different demographics.
- There are opportunities (and some challenges to be resolved) in terms of **visitor experience in the building** — outreach and attraction, feeling welcomed, wayfinding/navigation, signage, accessibility, pathways, traffic flow, washrooms, best use of spaces, communications and technology, events and activation of spaces, social interactions, the need for “third spaces”, and confusion about areas that are “public” spaces vs. “private”.
- The tension between **safety** and a desire for **open access** were noted and a variety of ideas were suggested in response.
- Rental pricing, supporting services and ways to **leverage un-booked spaces** were discussed.
- Organizations located in the TCCL identified increasing challenges in attracting, onboarding and retaining **volunteers**.
- Sub-tenants also noted **service demands** and pressures on the limited capacity of a small Tett staff to manage a busy building and many programs.

Vision, Mission, and Mandate

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The Tett Centre for Creativity & Learning (TCCL) is a not-for-profit corporation governed by an independent, community-based board, which is accountable to its membership: the City of Kingston as represented by Mayor and Council.

OUR VISION

A thriving hub of artistic creation, learning and exchange that engages and inspires every part of our community.

OUR MISSION

To make space for arts exploration, artistic development and creative incubation in Kingston. We do this through a welcoming community hub that brings together spaces, people, ideas and tools that support creativity and learning experiences.

OUR MANDATE

Within its broader mission, the TCCL is mandated (and funded in part) by the City of Kingston to operate the City-owned J.K. Tett Centre as an accessible multi-use arts centre that supports cultural vitality throughout the region.

Strategic Values

COLLABORATION

Collaboration, exchange and social interaction are critical ingredients for arts creation and learning. These principles reflect respect for achievement at all levels of experience and have a place in all programs and services of the organization.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

We recognize that equity, diversity, decolonization, Indigenization and accessibility are critical aims that must be woven into decision-making; program and service design; use of spaces, time and financial resources; hiring practices; outreach; relationships and influence/advocacy.

SUSTAINABILITY

We respect and attend to the wellbeing of the natural environment, human resources, and cultural heritage, and to stewardship of healthy relationships. These values are also concerned with climate change as it affects social demands, economic capacity, technological innovation, political agendas and public values.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



BUILD CAPACITY TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This priority involves a multifaceted approach to expand limited resources and provide a buffer against future constraints on funding and weakening economic conditions affecting other sources of financial support. The TCCL will explore new sources of revenue, upgrade tools for fundraising to meet the needs of its mandate, carefully assess impact in the allocation of its resources, and leverage assets in the community.

OBJECTIVES

- **Grow revenue from existing channels**, for example, by building fundraising capacity, streamlining rental processes and increasing efficiency to maximize rental revenue.
- **Develop new revenue streams** to enable increased staffing levels.
- Implement a **longer planning horizon** and **impact-based measurement** to guide decisions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



REACH OUT, REDESIGN AND CONNECT TO ENHANCE ACCESS TO SPACES, PROGRAMS & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

This priority involves a comprehensive review of potential enhancements to reanimate the space, improve experiences in the building and online, reposition the TCCL brand with key community groups, and pursue a strong marketing communications plan with outreach, engagement and social connection.

OBJECTIVES

- **Improve accessibility in all its facets** in both the facility and TCCL programs. Continue to learn about and respond to access needs and create an environment in which access is prioritized.
- **Animate the Tett Centre** and make both the facility and organization more welcoming. Optimize space use to attract visitors and reflect the TCCL and broader Kingston communities.
- **Improve social interactions** within and beyond the Tett Centre community. Engage more levers to expand participation in the arts and facilitate creative incubation for a broader range of community members.
- **Clarify and refine the TCCL brand.** Communicate and market this brand to improve audiences' understanding of the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning and our role in the community.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



ACTIVELY ADVANCE EDII IN THE FACILITY AND IN PROGRAMMING

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization (EDII) — these issues are of concern are not only in the arts but to all our society today. This strategic priority identifies ways for the TCCL to respond with initiatives in programming, representation and collaborations that centre the principles of EDII.

OBJECTIVES

- **Embed the values** of EDII in TCCL policies and practices.
- **Establish a programming framework** that incorporates and emphasizes the values of EDII. Adapt existing programs to emphasize these values, and develop programs and initiatives that centre them.
- Undertake concrete steps to **enhance Indigenous representation** at all levels of activity at the TCCL.
- **Prioritize community collaborations** to better support and foster connections with diverse and equity-seeking communities.
- **Broaden the range of arts and cultural offerings** at the Tett Centre. Include culturally-specific events within TCCL programming.

2023-2028 Strategic Plan Implementation

OUTCOMES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

While measures of success at a high level would be focused on progress towards achieving the TCCL's vision and fulfilling its mission/mandate, more detailed metrics or key performance indicators will be incorporated into the annual workplans that support these strategies.

Reporting mechanisms and tools for monitoring progress will also provide board and staff with ongoing updates, insight and oversight for implementation of the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

In response to the TCCL's future challenges and opportunities, the staff team working with Board volunteers will translate and implement these strategies and achieve related objectives through tactical initiatives, projects, and action plans.



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Centre for Creativity & Learning

Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning

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TettCentre.org

J.K. Tett Centre Resident Organizations:

Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning
Joe Chithalen Memorial Musical Instrument Lending Library
Kingston Arts Council
Kingston Handloom Weavers and Spinners
Kingston Lapidary and Mineral Club
Kingston Potters' Guild
Kingston School of Dance
Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre
Theatre Kingston
Tett Creativity Studios
Juniper Café

The Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning is grateful for the ongoing support of the City of Kingston and the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



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