

**CITT/ICTS
Strategic Plan
2012-2015**



This is Our CiTT

Facilitated by

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Background

Then

CITT arose from the existing Canadian membership of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) when Canadian members recognized, back in the late eighties, that their work environment was changing and that they were about to enter an era of labour laws, safety regulations and electrical codes that would be restrictive and impractical in their working environment. It was determined that the best approach would involve active participation in the development of such laws and regulations. To do so would be far more effective from within a Canadian organization. This organization would reflect the differences in culture and practices between the two countries that range from equipment (such as a Robertson screwdriver) to membership.¹

The new organisation that became CITT allowed the membership an opportunity to work within the USITT models but adapt as necessary to reflect the working environment within this country, which included the recognition that in Canada, many members work in different parts of the country throughout their careers. A significant development by CITT was Callboard. An electronic means of connecting the live performance community in Canada, Callboard was the ancestor of today's Facebook and other social media networks. Without this innovative communication software, CITT would not likely have been able to sustain itself and the theatre industry in Canada would have suffered greatly.

Now

The need to review its mandate to make certain that the Board is able to address the concerns of membership led to a Strategic Planning process that took two years to develop. In Year One (2011), the Board met with consultant Sandra Thompson to talk about the organization and what were their individual visions. A SWOT² analysis was undertaken and a series of values identified and later taken to the membership for refinement.

Using this work as the basis, in 2012, Cheryl A. Ewing Consulting was brought in to help the Board develop a Strategic Plan that would guide CITT over the next three to five years.

Current Environment

The performing arts environment is faced with increased opportunities for home entertainment, ranging from movies delivered on your computer to YouTube videos. Funding for the arts is increasingly competitive and expectations for funding have to be realigned. National funding agencies experience their own cuts and strive with increased competition. The live performance community is struggling to remain relevant within this environment.

CITT members are impacted by the change in entertainment sources, but there are some specific challenges facing the organization as a whole:

¹ Captured from the History of CITT written by Paul Court 2009, <http://citt.org/history.html>

² Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

- CITT is not subsidized by any government program; therefore it is solely dependant on revenues from membership, sponsorship and conference registrations. In that respect, government cuts do not affect CITT directly but they affect the membership. As a result, when discussing operating budget cuts, members are faced with justifying CITT membership, attending the CITT annual conference and sponsoring CITT events over more direct expenses. This trend has also been experienced by other networking organizations throughout the country.
- Callboard, once the nexus of CITT, is becoming a mere nostalgic artifact. CITT has now found an ally with the online social media networks.
- The increased opportunities for new and easily accessible conferences and trade show, on-line professional development, virtual forum and websites of on-line organizations providing similar content, as those offered by CITT are becoming significant competitors.

In short, CITT has to redefine who it is and what it offers, as well as how to better promote itself to the live performance community and entertainment industry, notably on the value of being a member of CITT and supporting the organization.

Working Principals

Mission Statement

CITT is a national arts service organization that actively promotes the professional development of its members and works for the betterment of the Canadian live performance community.

Mandate

- Promote safe and ethical work practices.
- Organize workshops, conferences and other professional development opportunities.
- Encourage the development of industry standards.
- Advocate at the local, regional, national and international level.
- Disseminate information and facilitate communication.
- Encourage research and the publication of the results.
- Promote and recognize work of excellence.
- Encourage the membership to take an active role in fulfilling CITT's mission.

Core Values

Potential core values were identified in August of 2011 and then shared with the membership resulting in agreement with the following:

- Best Practices
- Professional
- Communication
- Education

As part of the strategic planning, a survey was conducted in January 2013 and members were asked to identify the three things they value most about CITT. They are:

- Networking
- Sharing of information from within the sector
- The Annual Conference

CITT provides unique opportunities to its members to communicate, network and expand their knowledge and skills through workshops, conferences, electronic forums and publications, in the areas of technology, management, design, architecture and education for live performance in Canada.

It was agreed that the membership served by CITT is extensive. However, all are served if not directly, indirectly through the networking and advocacy provided by the organization as well as the ability to make change. As a membership driven organization, it is important that the members identify and address areas of concern actively rather than be passive and wait for CITT to always take the lead.

This is Our CITT

Success looks like...

In three to five years CITT:

- Will have an Engaged & Empowered Membership
- Will be a Recognized National Resource & Connector
- Will have a Clear Consistent Identity
- Will have Dynamic Growth on a Sustainable Foundation
- Will provide Professional Development & Mentorship

The Challenges

The following were identified as the significant obstacles holding CITT back that must be addressed:

- Large Mandate: How to ignite the passion
- Need Alternate Sources of Funding
- Lack of Focus
- Need for Directions & Accountability to Members & Regional Sections
- Don't Understand Tools & How to Interpret Them

The Strategies for Success

In order to move the organization forward, CITT will be:

- Clarifying Mandate
- Establishing Operational Framework
- Establishing Action Plans
- Developing Communication & Listening Strategy
- Pursuing Outreach Development
- Finding New Funding Initiatives
- Developing Stakeholder Relations
- Developing Tangible Policies & Procedures
- Celebrating CITT Past, Present & Future

Moving Towards the Future

The Strategies for Success can be grouped into three Strategic Directions that will guide CITT in its planning processes over the next three years. Specific strategies might be adapted to accommodate to internal and external changes, but overall CITT will work on:

- **Moving Towards Organizational Values**
- **Moving Towards Shared Identity**
- **Moving Towards New Funding Initiatives**

Action Plans

Moving Towards Organizational Values

Goal: **Establish Operational Framework**

1. Clarify Mandate.
2. Develop annual report template
3. Set Action Plans annually.
4. Develop toolbox for consistent reporting.
5. Develop event report form for consistent statistics gathering.
6. Develop tools for communication with and for the membership.
7. Put new Regional reporting structure in place for AGM.

Moving Towards Shared Identity

Goal: **Develop Communications around Mandate**

1. Establish what needs to be communicated.
2. Find communication tools that work.
3. Communicate around Mandate.
4. National programming to spin regional programming.
5. Associate with organisations sharing common goals.

Moving Towards New Funding Initiatives

Goal: **Identify possible funding opportunities**

1. On an ongoing basis – research and apply for additional funding as appropriate.
2. Understand what we offer.
3. Recognize and focus on what is selling and sell that (*refer to survey*).
4. Increase membership.
5. Increase opportunities for generating revenue & sponsorship at conference.
6. Target related businesses for sponsorships.
7. Give value to membership through providing incentives i.e. charge more to non-members to attend CITT activities.

Appendix: The Process

To bring the vision of the organization into focus and provide a guideline for moving forward, the CITT Board of Directors and National Coordinator developed **Practical Visions** describing how they see CITT in three to five years. This exercise helps build a common and compelling vision of what is possible to achieve, and creates a common vision that is clearer and deeper but not different for each individual. Describing practical visions creates intention, describing where you will be when you arrive at your goal.

The final Practical Visions provide goals for the organization to work towards over the next three years. In 2011, Board and staff had worked with a Consultant and described how they each saw the organization in the future.

The 2012 strategic planning work was based on **Technology of Participation**, a consensus driven process that leads to effective and creative solutions. The process consisted of a series of workshops held in a day, followed by a teleconference to outline the Action Plan process and a final consensus. The workshops were:

- Determining Practical Visions
- Identifying Obstacles
- Determining Strategies
- Developing Action Plans



Strategic Planning Retreat in London, August 19, 2012

The working group consisted of the National Coordinator and the Board of Directors. Within the Board, there was a mix of new Board members with board members that are more experienced and those with a long-standing relationship to the community with those bringing life experiences from other parts of the country.



We worked with the outcomes of the previous discussions. Each thought was put on a single card, read to the Board and Staff and then posted on a wall. We discussed anything was out of date, or no longer relevant and removed any cards that no longer fit. We also checked to make certain that nothing was missing and added those thoughts. The collected thoughts were then clustered in order to identify where there might be synergy created as a result of looking at items that have a similar thought process behind them. The final clusters were named with a descriptor that would illuminate what CITT would look like in 3 to 5 years time.

The same approach was used to identify underlying obstacles working from the **SWOT** analysis undertaken the previous year. The threats and weaknesses discovered through this process were presented to the Board, once again confirmed and then clustered so the Board and Staff could identify underlying obstacles and name them.

The next step was to do some individual brainstorming to come up with **potential strategies that would address the underlying obstacles and move the organization towards the identified**



Strategic Planning Retreat in Calgary, February 2, 2013

visions. After the brainstorming, these ideas were shared with the group and then, working together, the ideas were clustered, named and regrouped into **three Strategic Directions** that were also named.

The above process **brings clarity to the organization.** There are specific statements that tie all of the ideas together in a powerful way. Rather than a large list describing what the organization will look like, there are **five statements clearly defining what the Board and Staff want to accomplish.** The obstacles have been studied to determine what is actually the block rather than the symptom. Strategies are designed to address the obstacles and move the organization towards achieving the Practical Visions defined for it.

The final steps of collecting the strategies into Strategic Directions make the work manageable and encourage Board and Staff to work in ways that will address more than one obstacle with each of their actual Action Plans.

The **Action Plans are the final process.** As teams, Board and Staff work together to identify what can be done in the next 12 to 18 months **to move the organization towards its goals.** Resources and financial costs are considered and identified. The final step is to bring all of the Action Plans together to put on a timeline allowing the organization to adjust each plan so that no one is overburdened at any time of the process and each plan works with the others.