



Performing Arts Facilities Service

Service Plan 2026-29

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1. Overview

1.1 Division & Service Summary

WHY

Problems:

- Capital Regional District (CRD) funding frozen for Royal Theatre (1998-2025) and McPherson Playhouse (1999-ongoing), cutting public support by over 40% due to erosion of purchasing power through inflation. Bylaw restrictions constrain budgeting flexibility.
- Lack of coordinated regional approach to planning, funding, and development of performing arts facilities with regional impact.
- Theatre rental costs have become unaffordable for many local arts groups.
- Cost-sharing of performing arts facilities with regional impact not equitably distributed throughout the region, considering their widespread use and benefits.
- Lack of a regional theatre based in the West Shore area.

Opportunities:

- High quality presentations at performing arts facilities due to design, functionality, and theatre management professionals.
- Diverse and dynamic local arts sector with significant experience in producing and promoting performing arts presentations.
- Audience data shows strong and growing demand for arts experiences.

Additional issues and opportunities are identified below in Section 1.3 Key Service Trends, Issues & Risks.

WHAT

A sub-regional Performing Arts Facilities Service to Plan, Develop, and Fund performing arts facilities that have regional impact.

A performing arts facility with regional impact or Regional Performing Arts Facility (RPAF) is defined as a venue that:

- ▶ is located within the boundaries of the participating areas of the proposed service, in this case, all 13 municipalities and the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area;
- ▶ is designed for the primary purpose and function of performing arts presentation;
- ▶ attracts a majority of its audience from beyond its local area;
- ▶ functions as a roadhouse-style presentation venue that is available for bookings from a wide range of commercial and community user groups on a year-round basis;
- ▶ is not embedded as part of an educational, religious, or for-profit organization; and
- ▶ is owned and operated by a non-profit or local government (or combination thereof).

HOW

Table 1. Service functions and implications

| Function | Implementation | Service Implications |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Plan | Planning Grants Program to support feasibility plans, business plans, renovation or expansion plans, or construction plans. | Grants administered by CRD to non-profits or local governments. Unspent funds roll over into the next year's budget. |
| Develop | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minor Capital Funding Program (maintenance, renovation, accessibility). 2. Staff support to apply to provincial and federal funds for external grants. | Royal Theatre, McPherson Playhouse, and Charlie White Theatre |
| Fund | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operating Funding Program to existing RPAF to scale up support for operations based on current needs. 2. Theatre Rental Grants to subsidize RPAF rental costs to non-profit arts groups in participating jurisdictions. | Royal Theatre, McPherson Playhouse, and Charlie White Theatre for operating grants. Arts and educational groups for theatre rental grants. |
| Governance | CRD Board for first year. Governance review leading to new committee or commission model for some or all of the service. | Arts and Culture division provides administrative and meeting preparation support. |
| CRD operations | 1.0 FTE support in Arts and Culture division | Administers granting programs and applies for senior government capital funds. |

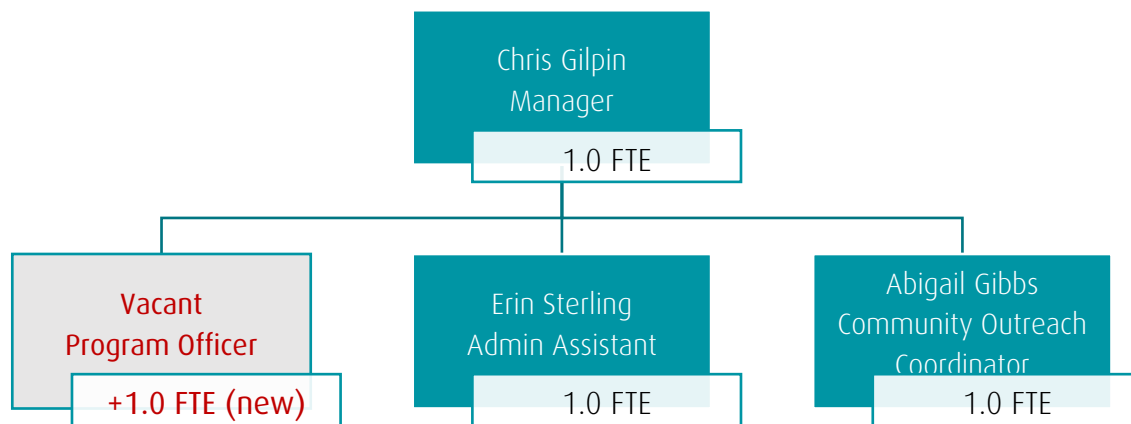
HISTORY

- On February 14, 2024, the CRD Board approved a recommendation to re-establish the Performing Arts Facilities Select Committee (PAFSC) whose main purpose is to "[p]rovide recommendations to the CRD Board on options related to scaling up regional support for performing arts facilities in the region."

- On July 2, 2025, PAFSC received a report for information, which provided a full cost-benefit analysis of options for a Performing Arts Facilities Service. The report, prepared by the consultant Nordicity, analyzed five options for a new sub-regional or full regional service that could scale up support for performing arts facilities with regional impact in a way that provides value to all participating jurisdictions. PAFSC endorsed the primary recommendation of the report, Option C, and advanced that recommendation to the CRD Board for consideration.
- On July 9, 2025, the CRD Board approved the recommendation from PAFSC with an amendment to add the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area as a participant. The approved motion was “[t]hat staff draft an establishing bylaw and *service plan* for a new performing arts facilities service based on the primary recommendation of the Nordicity report, Option C, with the addition of the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area, and provide these documents to the Select Committee for review” (italics added).

1.2 Organization Chart

Proposed staffing for both existing Arts and Culture Support Service and new Performing Arts Facilities Service (new required capacity in red).



Arts and Culture Division would require 1.0 net new FTE to deliver the Performing Arts Facilities Service:

► **+1.0 FTE new position – Program Officer**

Rationale: four additional funding programs require a dedicated program officer to support applicants, adjudication process, and evaluate outcomes, and to draft CRD applications for provincial and federal funding to major infrastructure programs in collaboration with local governments and/or non-profit clients.

The new Performing Arts Facilities Service will also receive staff support from existing roles in finance, information technology, corporate services, and other cross-departmental administrative areas.

1.3 Key Service Trends, Issues and Risks

In 2021, a study commissioned by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Regional Arts Facilities Select Committee titled, *Stage One: A Public Conversation about Performing Arts Facilities in the CRD*, proposed a unified decision-making framework for planning, development and funding of regional performing arts facilities. The report highlighted the economic and social value of investing in the arts and confirmed community support for CRD funding and leadership with a priority on a more coordinated regional approach to performing arts infrastructure.

In 2025, PAFSC commissioned a second study, *Analysis of Service Options to Support Performing Arts Facilities*, which analyzed five options to create a new performing arts facilities service, as well as analyzing each initiative within those options. This report, produced by the consultant group Nordicity, identified several trends, issues, and risks.

TRENDS

- › In terms of usage rate, total performances at Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse are nearing pre-pandemic levels, indicating a steady recovery in audience demand and theatre operations.
- › Local arts groups are interested in putting on more performances at the Royal Theatre, McPherson Playhouse and Charlie White Theatre, but affordability barriers make these presentations not financially feasible.
- › With targeted outreach and scheduling support, regional theatres could play a larger role in supporting schools and youth-focused programming, further extending their community impact.

ISSUES

- › The conversation around regional equity has also brought attention to underserved areas in the region.
 - The West Shore – which includes Colwood, Langford, View Royal, Highlands, Metchosin, and Sooke – has seen rapid population growth and increased demand for arts and cultural programming, yet lacks a large-scale, dedicated performing arts venue.
 - Charlie White Theatre, while serving a strong local base in Sidney and North Saanich (current funders), also draws audiences from broader parts of the Peninsula and other communities.
- › Current funding frameworks for Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse that were established in 1998 and 1999 present significant limitations:
 - The lack of inflationary growth in the funding provided to the Royal and McPherson over the last 25 years means that the purchasing power of this funding has declined by approximately 40%, while the costs of operating these venues have continued to rise at a similar rate.
 - These limitations have resulted in increased costs for presenters through rental rates, which impact access to regional theatres by non-profit local arts groups and educational presenters.
 - The trickle-down effects of these rates also impact audiences due to rising ticket prices.

RISKS

- › Recent efforts by the CRD to amend existing services to be more equitable, particularly Bylaw No. 4561 for the McPherson Playhouse, have stalled, which continues to jeopardize the operational sustainability of this theatre and the health of the performing arts ecosystem.
- › Without updated service models or inflation-adjusted funding, the current service structure risks further restricting venue capacity, operational flexibility, and presenter access, ultimately limiting the development of both existing and potential future regional performing arts facilities.

The proposed Performing Arts Facilities Service responds to these trends, issues and risks in its service design. The proposed service provides a more coordinated approach to regional performing arts facilities with planning grants to advance new theatres to construction, theatre rental grants to enhance affordability for local arts groups, and scaled up support for operations and capital improvements at the three existing regional performing arts facilities (Royal Theatre, McPherson Playhouse, Charlie White Theatre) with greater cost-sharing through a sub-regional design with 14 participating jurisdictions.

1.4 Link to Board Strategic Priorities

At the May 8, 2024, annual CRD Board Strategic Priorities check-in, the Board directed staff to: “Re-establish a Select Committee to determine options and recommendations related to “scaling up” regional support for performing arts facilities in the region”.

Furthermore, the establishment of a regional performing arts facilities service fulfills Initiative 10b-2 of the *CRD 2023-2026 Corporate Plan*:

“Scale up regional support for performing art facilities within the region.”

2. Services

2.1 Service Levels

Table 2. Timeline for Delivery of the Performing Arts Facilities Service

| Initiative | Base Year | Year 1 (2026) | Year 2 (2027) | Year 3 (2028) | Year 4 (2029) |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| Plan: Planning Grants Program | n/a | Design Planning Grants Program | Launch new Planning Grants Program | Revise based on 1 st year learning and deliver 2 nd year of Planning Grants Program | Deliver 3 rd year of Planning Grants Program |
| Develop: Minor Capital Funding Program | Regular 5-year capital plans for Royal Theatre Service and McPherson Playhouse Service (standard annual budgeting) | Design Minor Capital Funding Program. Plan transition from current services funding Royal & McPherson | Launch new Minor Capital Funding Program Integrate capital planning for Royal & McPherson | Revise based on 1 st year learning and deliver 2 nd year of Minor Capital Funding Program | Deliver 3 rd year of Minor Capital Funding Program |
| Fund: Operating Funding Program | Regular operating funding for Royal Theatre Service and McPherson Playhouse Service (standard annual budgeting) | Design contribution agreement for Charlie White Plan transition from current services funding Royal & McPherson (2587 & 2685) | Launch new Operating Funding Program Integrate operational funding for Royal & McPherson | Revise based on 1 st year learning and deliver 2 nd year of Operating Funding Program | Deliver 3 rd year of Operating Funding Program |

Table 2. Timeline for Delivery of the Performing Arts Facilities Service

| Initiative | Base Year | Year 1 (2026) | Year 2 (2027) | Year 3 (2028) | Year 4 (2029) |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Fund: Theatre Rental Grants | n/a | Design Theatre Rental Grant program in consultation with venue operators and interest holders | Launch new Theatre Rental Grant Program | Revise based on 1 st year learning and deliver 2 nd year of Theatre Rental Grant Program | Deliver 3 rd year of Theatre Rental Grant Program |
| Committee Support | Provide support to Performing Arts Facilities Select Committee (dissolved by year end if new service is approved) | Report to CRD Board Undertake governance review, including transition from Royal and McPherson Theatres Services Advisory Committee to new committee or commission | Provide support to committee or commission responsible for oversight of service | Provide support to committee or commission responsible for oversight of service | Provide support to committee or commission responsible for oversight of service |
| Information Resource and Data Collection | Consultations and updates to venue operators and interest holders, as necessary | Privacy Impact Assessment conducted as part of grant program design | Application form information and data collected by Arts and Culture Division | Application form and final report information and data collected by Arts and Culture Division | Application form and final report information and data collected by Arts and Culture Division |

2.2 Workforce Considerations

Table 3. Workforce – Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)

| Service | Base Year (2025) | Year 1 (2026) | Year 2 (2027) | Year 3 (2028) | Year 4 (2029) |
|--------------|--|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Total | 0.0 FTE (Support from Arts & Culture Division) | 1.0 FTE Program Officer Total for half-year | 1.0 FTE | 1.0 FTE | 1.0 FTE |

2.3 Scope of Service

Performing Arts Facilities Supported

- The list of facilities that qualify as a “performing arts facility with regional impact” or Regional Performing Arts Facility (RPAF) are included in Schedule A in Bylaw No. 4704. Only these facilities will be supported through Operating Funding, Minor Capital Funding, or Theatre Rental Grants.
- Non-profit organizations or municipalities located in participating CRD jurisdictions that are planning to develop a new RPAF can be supported by Planning Grants.
- A specific motion of the CRD Board would be required to modify the list of facilities eligible for support through this service.

CRD Responsibilities Related to Operations and Capital Planning

- In the case of RPAF owned by the CRD (or where the responsibilities of ownership have been assigned to the CRD), those RPAF would be supported through CRD capital planning and operational agreements (currently the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse).
- In the case of RPAF not owned by the CRD (or where the responsibilities of ownership reside with a non-profit organization or municipality), those RPAF would be supported through contribution agreements with reporting requirements on an annual basis. Responsibility for operations and capital planning would remain with non-profit organization and/or municipality that owned the RPAF.

3. Goals and Performance Indicators

Table 4. Service goals and measures

| Year | Service Goals | Performance Indicator |
|-------------|---|---|
| 2026 | 1. Design four new programs (guidelines and application forms) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Grants Program Minor Capital Funding Program Operating Funding Program Theatre Rental Grants Program | 1. Guidelines and application forms for new programs endorsed by CRD Board. 2. Privacy Impact Assessment completed. |
| 2027 | 1. Merge existing Royal Theatre service and McPherson Playhouse service into new Performing Arts Facility Service. 2. Launch four new programs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Grants Program Minor Capital Funding Program Operating Funding Program Theatre Rental Grants Program 3. Research provincial and federal granting opportunities for capital funding support. | 1. Funding levels to RPAF are scaled up through increased funding with no disruption to funding support in the transition from previous funding arrangements. 2. At least two applicants to Planning Grants Program. 3. Design funding indicators for capital improvements based on asset management plans. |
| 2028 | 1. Deliver four programs. 2. Apply to provincial and federal granting opportunities for capital funding support. | 1. Two or more applicants to Planning Grants Program. 2. Equal or greater number of applicants to other three programs. 3. Secure at least \$250,000 in senior government funding for capital improvements. |
| 2029 | 1. Deliver four programs. 2. Apply to provincial and federal granting opportunities for capital funding support. | 1. Two or more applicants to Planning Grants Program. 2. Equal or greater number of applicants to other three programs. 3. Secure at least \$500,000 in senior government funding for capital improvements. |