



Case Study – Implementing Extraordinary Governance

Organization – Arts Commons (Commons)

The Commons was created in 1976 under the Companies Act of Alberta to build and manage Calgary’s premiere downtown performing arts centre. As a charitable organization with significant public and private funding, the Commons was accountable to both civic and provincial governments.

Members of the Commons included government representatives, private supporters, key personnel at performing arts companies and honorary appointees. The board, on the other hand, was fully independent from the performing arts companies that used the facility – even though several of those resident companies were key components in the growth and success of the Commons.

With plans being made to transform the Commons and add new companies, they took the unprecedented step of inviting representatives of the resident companies (either a key member of management or a director) to join the Commons’ board.

The Commons asked Governance Studio to help them revise their Articles to implement the new structure.

“I haven’t seen another arts organization anywhere in the world that has implemented such an extraordinary governance structure.”

~ Johann F. Zietsman, President and CEO ~

Project – Update Articles and put the new governance model into action

Objectives for the project were to:

- Redefine “members”
- Engage directors from resident companies and account for the built in conflicts of interest
- Remove historic provisions that were no longer needed
- Rewrite the Articles in plain language

Outcome

Centre members unanimously approved the revised Articles and resident company representatives were welcomed to the board.

“Governance Studio brought the critical thinking and imagination needed to create a framework that makes our innovative governance structure work for us.”

~ John B. McWilliams, Board Chair ~