

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Rooms is Newfoundland and Labrador's largest public cultural space. It is where the province's most extensive collection of artifacts, art and historical records come together to create meaningful experiences for our visitors. Every year we have experienced growth since we opened our doors in 2005.

As part of our ongoing community outreach, The Rooms engaged with its stakeholders in the Spring of 2017 to help guide us achieve our goals of growing revenue, increasing visitation and contributing to the government's overall tourism goals.

Participation

Public engagement was achieved through an in person session and an online survey with 187 stakeholders. Our topics were focused on helping us design more meaningful and memorable visitor experiences.

Specifically we explored tourist and resident motivators, new ways of presenting our stories throughout the province, the value of existing programs and services, volunteering and new hours of operation.

Summary of Input

Overall, stakeholder responses were thoughtful and their feedback was enthusiastic. We received a wealth of suggestions to help guide us in planning new ways to engage with residents and tourists alike.

Specific to cultural motivators for tourists, stakeholders responses centred around four key themes – sea, land, the people and our global context. They also suggested programming such as demonstrations, readings, performances, concerts, partnerships and more.

On the other hand, historical motivators for residents were mostly under one theme – major events. There were a number of interesting suggestions for programming that included documentary films, virtual reality, reenactments and recitations.

Outreach beyond St. John's was largely a provincial discussion. However, there were suggestions related to national and global opportunities. In terms of valued programs and services, stakeholder suggestions were mostly based on either passive or interactive experiences.

We were pleased to note significant support for volunteering, opening the building to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings and interest in dining at The Rooms Café on these evenings.

Finally, we are happy to announce that our 2017 Summer programming starts in late June and much of what we are planning is a reflection of feedback we received from our stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Rooms is Newfoundland and Labrador's largest public cultural space. It represents and showcases the province to itself and to the world.

Both a destination and a journey, The Rooms is where the province's most extensive collection of artifacts, art and historical records come together to create meaningful and memorable experiences that share who we are and how we came to be.

Since The Rooms opened in 2005 it has presented hundreds of exhibitions and more than 1,000 education and public programs, capturing the imagination of almost 1 million visitors — and the numbers grow every season.

CONSULTATION

Purpose

As a crown corporation of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, The Rooms business needs and outcomes must align with serving the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Therefore, and as part of our ongoing community outreach, The Rooms has engaged with its stakeholders to hear their thoughts and suggestions.

We use this input to help guide us in planning new ways to engage with residents and tourists alike. And ultimately to help us achieve our goals of growing revenue, increasing visitation and contributing to the government's overall tourism goals.

Participation

Stakeholder engagement was achieved through two channels.

The first was a public consultation session held on April 25, 2017 at The Rooms. In this session a total of 34 stakeholders, from varied backgrounds and interests, shared their views with us on a number of topics, as noted below.

The second was online with the general public and we received 153 responses.

Topics

Our topics were focused on helping us design more meaningful and memorable visitor experiences.

- I. The Tourist – explore unique and motivating cultural experiences and how to deliver
- II. The Resident – explore motivating events and stories in our history and how to deliver
- III. Beyond St. John's – explore new ways of presenting our stories throughout the province
- IV. Programs/services – explore programs and services that are valued the most and why
- V. Volunteering – explore willingness to serve as a volunteer 'cultural ambassador'
- VI. Hours of operation – explore interest in extending hours into Friday and Saturday evenings and having dinner in The Rooms Café at these times

RESULTS

I. The Tourist

- i. What are the unique aspects of the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador that The Rooms should focus on when welcoming tourists to our province?*

Most responses could be categorized within a handful of themes: Sea, Land, People and Global Context. Following is a high level view of the categories and a sampling of some of the more popular suggestions.

- Sea
The ocean rose to the surface as an important driver of our culture
 - Marine history including Basques and Portuguese, cod fishery and moratorium, women in the fishery, bounty of the sea including seafood/NL cuisine, icebergs, whales
- Land
There were a number of items related to our land and our physical place that were mentioned
 - Natural history, outports/resettlement, landscapes, isolation, natural resources, location, food
- People
This was a key theme and specifically included our creativity, our resilience, our talents and our personality
 - Arts, crafts, music, humour, humility, aboriginal peoples, Vikings
- Global Context
 - Our unique location, time zone, Gander, 9/11

- ii. What kinds of programs, services and activities could be created to reflect these unique aspects of our culture?*

There were many suggestions that included demonstrations, classes, readings, performances, conferences, concerts, speakers, seminars, partnerships and more.

II. The Resident

- i. What events and stories in our history should The Rooms highlight in its exhibits and programs that would be of interest to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?*

Most responses could be captured in one theme – Major Events. There were also a handful of suggestions that were common to many. Following is a high level view of Major Events and a sampling of some of the more popular suggestions.

- Major Events

- Most of the ideas were focused on the major historical events that defined and shaped us
- First World War/Beaumont Hamel, World War Two, Titanic, Sealing Disaster, Resettlement, Beothuk, Great Fire, Confederation, Ocean Ranger
 - o Some of the other common/popular suggestions included
 - Mummering, traditional music, women's contribution
- ii. *What kinds of programs, services and activities could be created to reflect these historical events and stories?*

Similar to the first topic there were many suggestions such as partnerships, outreach, interactive exhibits and readings. There were also unique suggestions based on the 'history' theme, including documentary films, virtual reality, reenactments and recitations.

III. Outreach Beyond St. John's

- i. *How can The Rooms expand its outreach beyond St. John's and surrounding areas?*

There was a significant amount of input on a provincial view of outreach with examples below. Interestingly there was also commentary related to national and global outreach, also summarized below.

- o Provincial
 - This topic was primarily divided into two large groups – physical and digital outreach
 - Mobile museum that travels to communities, cross promotion/partnerships with Historic Sites and Arts and Culture Centres throughout the Province, travelling Road Show of experts, schools, virtual exhibits, live streaming, apps, etc.
- o National & Global
 - More touring exhibitions, national promotion of up and coming artists, work with Canadian consulates, partner with MUN Harris Centre in England

IV. Current Programs and Services

- i. *What programs and services offered by The Rooms do you value the most and why?*

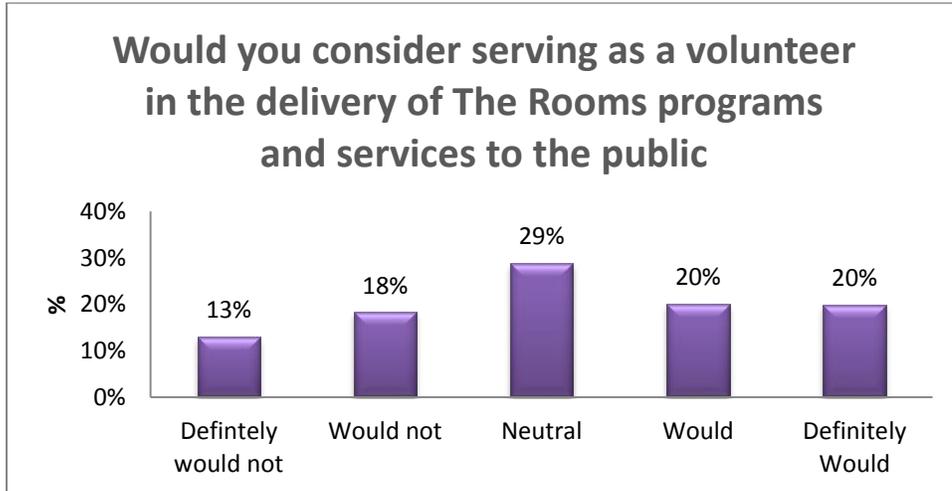
There were two dominant categories for programs and services that are valued the most - Passive and Interactive.

- o Passive
 - Exhibitions, lectures such as Coffee and Culture, curatorial talks, archives/genealogy, film series, free admission
- o Interactive
 - Family program such as Big Fun for Little People Tots, 120's, opening receptions, behind-the-scenes, interaction with people such as staff and experts

I. Volunteering

i. Would you consider serving as a volunteer in the delivery of The Rooms programs and services to the public?

Forty percent of the stakeholders would consider serving as a volunteer at The Rooms.



II. Extended Hours

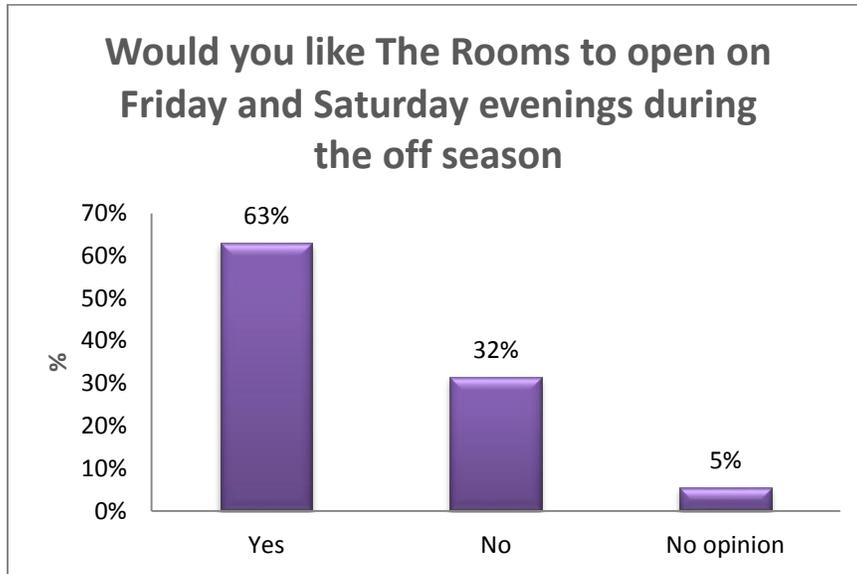
i. Would you like The Rooms to be open on Friday and Saturday evenings during tourist season?

Over three quarters of stakeholders would like to have the building open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings during tourist season.



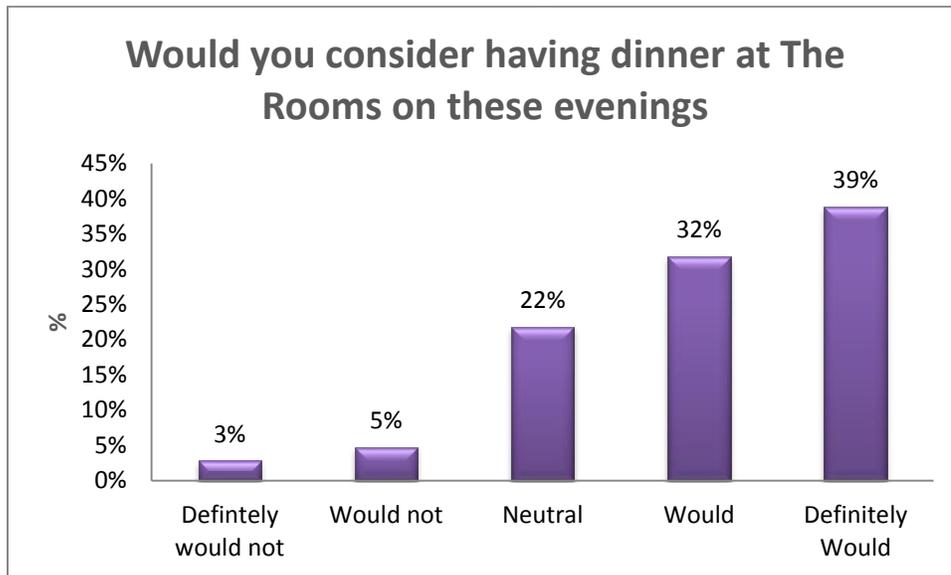
ii. *Would you like The Rooms to be open on Friday and Saturday evenings in the off season?*

Almost two thirds of stakeholders would like to have the building open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings during the off season.



iii. *Would you consider having dinner at The Rooms on these evenings?*

Over 70% of the stakeholders consider having dinner at The Rooms on these evenings.



III. Additional Recommendations

iv. *Do you have any additional ideas and comments on programs and services?*

There were a number of additional recommendations that stakeholders shared with us.

- Accessibility
 - Expand hours of operation, increase access to Rooms expert staff, reduce fees for certain segments of the population (ie. community groups)
- Membership
 - Augment offerings/benefits, more communication/better contact
- Outreach
 - Expand province-wide reach, expand partnerships within the community, explore mentorship with other cultural institutions

CONCLUSIONS

In the Spring of 2017 The Rooms engaged in public consultation with 187 stakeholders.

The stakeholders responses were thoughtful and innovative and their feedback was enthusiastic. We have received a wealth of suggestions to help guide us in planning new ways to engage with residents and tourists alike.

We are very pleased to advise that our 2017 Summer programming starts in late June 2017 and much of what we are planning is a reflection of feedback we received.

We are grateful to our stakeholders for sharing their time and thoughts to help The Rooms achieve its goals of growing revenue, increasing visitation and contributing to the government's overall tourism goals.