

How to organize a candidate's forum on art and culture for your community.

A public forum on arts and culture is an important way for local candidates to speak about their party's policy, as well as to share their own views on arts and culture, and reflect on their particular riding or community. It is a non-partisan event. It aims to provide candidates with an opportunity to share policy and ideas, and for constituents to pose questions.

Here is a step-by-step guide to organizing one in your riding.

Organizing Committee

Ideally there will be an appropriate local partner to host the event, such as a local non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the arts (i.e. The Fredericton Arts Alliance), or other non-partisan organizations that are not in a conflict of interest, and whose mandate is to promote arts and culture, or community engagement.

Date & Time

- Choose several possible dates to offer candidates.
- Hold the forum in the evening – 6-8 or 7-9 pm works well.
- Make sure both the venue AND moderator are free on all dates before approaching candidates.
- Approach candidates via their campaign headquarters to check on availability.

Venue

- Identify a location that is available on all identified dates.
- Ideally, you will be able to find a free or reduced-rate space. If there is a rental fee, how will it be covered?
- Consider capacity: how many people can you reasonably expect to attend? Book accordingly.
- Accessibility: is the room accessible to people who use mobility aids?

Moderator

Line up someone who is articulate, credible and experienced in public speaking or moderating. They should feel comfortable enforcing speaker time limits and managing audience questions and candidate discussion. Bilingualism may also be important in your community. Make sure the moderator is available on all possible dates for the forum. Most importantly, the moderator must be scrupulous about fairness to all.

Candidates

Contact the election headquarters for each candidate to invite them to participate, and offer dates. Be sure to consider not just the major parties, but also any independent candidates. You can find local candidates for the upcoming Provincial election here:

<https://www.electionsnb.ca/content/enb/en.html>

Logistics

- A/V: Ensure that microphones, speakers, etc., are provided, or make arrangements to bring in equipment. A good set-up is one microphone for the floor, one for the moderator, and one for each of the candidates. Have an experienced technician handling A/V.
- Refreshments: Serve tea, coffee, water and light refreshments. Do not serve alcohol.
- Post-event: Allow for an hour of social time and mingling.

Promotion

- Identify at least one committee member or organizer who will be the spokesperson/people for media inquiries.
- Draft a press release. It should include all pertinent information, including date, time, candidates and their parties, moderator, location, etc. Include contact information for the designated spokesperson/people. Please see the press release issued by the Fredericton Arts Alliance as an example.
- At least a week before the event, send the press release to local media, including free weeklies.
- Share your event as a Public Service Announcement on CBC Radio and private stations.
- Send event details to local listings, such as those many municipalities have on their websites. Allow as much lead time as possible.
- Share your event with arts organizations such as ArtsLink NB, AAAPNB and **artsnb** to add to newsletters and social media and online promotion.
- Enlist committee members to use their own personal and social media networks to share.
- Send to local politicians to share on their networks.
- If you have the time and money, hard-copy posterage is a great way to promote.

The Event

- Seed a few good questions in the audience for the Q&A part of the program.
- Gather contact information for attendees to include them in invitations to future fora. A sign-in form at the entrance works fine.
- Questions: Do not share questions with candidates ahead of time as it produces dull, scripted replies.
- Format: Do share an outline of the event with candidates.
- Ask candidates to arrive 10 minutes early to get settled and draw names for speaking order of opening statements. Closing statements will be in reverse order of the opening statements.

Format:

Welcome and introduction from moderator. (One minute)

Opening statements –three minutes for each candidate (Approx. 15 minutes)

Candidates are asked to address their party's policies on arts and culture, with an emphasis on concrete actions that would move the policies from words to action.

Questions from the moderator: (Approx. 44 minutes)

There are four questions from the moderator. Each candidate will have two minutes to respond to one of the four questions, with the other candidates getting one minute each for rebuttal.

1. New Brunswick's *Report on the Status of the Artist* seeks to recognize the role of arts and culture in our daily lives by recommending policy changes that will provide greater security for the vital yet often precarious work of professional artists. What specific measures and funding do you support to fully implement this critical initiative?
2. Our cultural industries (film, performing arts, etc.) are significant economic drivers. How would you support their further strategic development?
3. The New Brunswick Arts Board (artsnb) is the provincial arts council providing funding to artists and thus encouraging them to live and create in New Brunswick. How would you support and enhance the ability of artsnb to provide adequate funding to this sector?
4. Public art brings the arts into the everyday lives of communities across the province. What percentage of public funds would you recommend be allocated to the creation of public art in new building projects? What other measures would your party propose to bring more art into the public sphere?
5. Many NB artists currently live below the poverty line because the nature of their work does not "fit" with current criteria for social programs and tax measures. How would you ensure that these programs acknowledge the specific character of creative work?
6. Evidence-based research demonstrates that arts education encourages creative problem-solving, collaboration, adaptability, and successful learning in other subjects such as math and science. What specific measures will you support to enable an outstanding K-12 arts education program?
7. The contribution of arts and culture to provincial tourism is widely recognized. What action would you take to further develop cultural tourism in NB?
8. What measures would you take to ensure that creators (writers, visual artists, composers, etc.) are fairly compensated for the use of their work in educational settings and elsewhere?
9. Many artists live below the poverty line. Promising young artists are leaving the province for opportunities elsewhere. More investment is needed, from support for arts education in the K-12 system to grants for artists to fiscal and other measures needed to recognize the professional status of artists. What is your vision for investment in arts and

culture funding in NB?

Questions from the floor (Approx. 45 minutes)

The moderator will ensure that these are distributed fairly. Questions may be directed to one or more candidates. Others will be invited to add comments.

Not every question will be addressed to all candidates. Candidates who do not have an opportunity to respond to a specific question will be able to address the issue in their closing statements if they so wish.

Closing statements three minutes for each candidate (Approx. 15 minutes)

Candidates can use their time to sum up or rebut comments that arose during the question period.

Refreshments:

Following the forum, there will be an opportunity for candidates to meet audience members, to address particular questions or to answer other issues that might arise, and to share some light refreshments.