

Making a living as a craft artist: More complex than an hourly wage

This document is intended to outline the complex nature of income for craft artists. While we are directly addressing the discipline of craft, we recognize that this outline can be applied to artists across all disciplines.

Primarily self-employed, craft artists derive income through diverse revenue streams. It is extremely rare for a craft artist to have only one source of revenue, as rarely does a single source provide enough income. It is a common practice for artists to perform a number of roles, including but not limited to: creation, sales, instruction, mentorship, consultancy, artist talks, curation, writing, and working for art institutions. This leads to a mixture of fees paid, sales, and wages from additional part-time jobs, such as teaching in universities or working for galleries.

The following chart breaks down a variety of the income streams that feed into a single career in craft.

Income Types		Description	Timeline of Payment
Retail Sales*	Consignment	Artists are paid a percentage of the retail value for their work that sells in shops and galleries. Typically this ranges from a 40 - 60 to 50 - 50 ratio with the hosting institution. Work is only paid for if sold.	30 - 60 days after sale
	Wholesale	Artists are paid in full for their work, which is then sold at a premium with a shop or gallery.	Percentage upon order and balance on delivery
	Festivals/Markets	Artists sell their work directly to the public during special event-based activities such as summer festivals, holiday sales, or pop-up venues.	Immediate during sale
	Online Sales	Artists may sell their work directly to the public through their own online shop (on their personal website, through services like Etsy or Shopify, or even through social media), or through consignment and/or wholesale with a shop or gallery which sells the work online on their behalf.	Immediate for direct to customer sales, otherwise see wholesale terms.
	Commissions	Artists are commissioned to create custom pieces, from work as small as a piece of jewellery to large-scale architectural installations such as stained glass windows or blacksmithed gates. There are multiple stages to the development of custom work, from design throughout production.	Depending on the scale and complexity, the project may include a deposit to offset costs of materials and labour. Final payment issued upon completion.
<i>*It is important to know that revenue from sales is not equivalent to income. Income is derived once associated cost of sales, such as commission payments, materials, labour and overhead, is deducted from gross revenue.</i>			

Artist Fees	Exhibition Fees	Often in alignment with CARFAC fees, artists are paid a flat rate for the presentation of their work in galleries and public spaces or their work as a curator. This is income unrelated to sales and is a fee for the presentation.	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Reproduction Fees	Often in alignment with CARFAC fees, artists are paid for the reproduction of their work, whether in print or online, in catalogues or in advertising, etc.	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Service Fees	Often in alignment with CARFAC fees, artists are paid to give lectures, participate in panel discussions, provide their expertise as a juror or consultant, for the publication of written work, or preparation and installation of artworks on-site, etc.	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
Teaching	Self-run Courses	Artists often design, host, teach, and administer courses for amateurs and professionals alike, for short and long term courses, such as a weekend-long course or weekly night class. These courses range wildly in content and material depending on their design. Artists often provide the location, studio equipment and tools, materials, and instruction.	Course and material fees collected upon registration
	Guest Instruction / Demonstration	Artists are regularly contracted to design, host and teach courses on behalf of arts organizations such as galleries, guilds, co-ops and councils. Sometimes this includes no-cost, drop-in, hands-on instruction with the public, pre-registered classes with paying participants, or demonstration based performances of the artists skills where they interact with the audience but do not teach hands-on.	Ranges from full fee paid at event, 30 - 60 days after, or in stages throughout a program.
	Educational Institution Instructor	Artists teach an extremely wide variety of courses at universities, colleges, CEGEPs and private schools across Canada. This may include part or full time instructors in arts programs at the instructor or professor level, guest lecturing, workshop/demonstration style courses or academic programs.	Ranges from a typical salary or per/hour rate on an institutions payroll to one-off fees paid at or 30-60 days after courses are complete
Side-gigs	Arts Related	Artists often take on part-time or temporary arts positions or contracts with galleries, schools, or any number of institutions. This may include part-time payrolled positions (such as docents at an art gallery, or childrens' art program instructors).	Typically paid on salary or per/hour rate from an institutions payroll
	Non-Arts	These positions could cover any part-time, full-time positions, contract or one-off income sources, in any sector.	Typically paid on salary or per/hour rate from an institution's payroll or on a contract basis.

Case Study:

For example, we provide a singular case study: a board member of the Canadian Crafts Federation / Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art (CCF/FCMA) and the Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC), David Freeman, owner/operator of Timeless Instruments.

David is a luthier - an artist who makes or repairs stringed instruments such as cellos, violins, guitars, mandolins, dulcimers and banjos. His income is derived from:

- Running a guitar-making school which is a licensed Private Vocational School (including residential facilities for students) offered four times a year for seven weeks;
- Selling luthier supplies, materials and finished instruments from his online store and brick and mortar shop;
- Building and repairing guitars and other stringed instruments;
- Accepting commissions;
- Sales at markets, festivals and conferences; and
- Artist fees for leading workshops and lectures throughout the world.
- David is also a jeweller and musician, deriving income from these related artistic practices.

Recommendations:

As demonstrated in this document, craft artists' incomes are not easily categorized. They do not fit into typical employment structures with a straightforward hourly wage or salary. In order to ensure that new exemptions or programs avoid the unintentional disqualification of craft artists - either through direct policy or through the impression given by the language of the eligibility - we encourage the government to:

1. Allow for exemptions of the sale of art, or any proceeds of the sale of art.
2. Implement a cap, such as a \$2000 limit for additional income, while remaining eligible for the CERB.
3. Clarify when income is counted by the program: is it in the month that the work occurred (which matches accrual accounting) or the month the payment is received? (This is a very important point to clarify for craft artists.)
4. Consider implementing a basic income program. This could be tailored to artists (using previous years' activity or current year activity as the indicator for eligibility) or expanded to support a broader basic income for all Canadians. A long term crisis requires long term solutions.

This document was prepared in partnership between the Canadian Crafts Federation/Fédération canadienne des métiers d'art and the Saskatchewan Craft Council on behalf of the following provincial and territorial craft councils: Yukon Art Society, Craft Council of British Columbia, Alberta Craft Council, Saskatchewan Craft Council, Manitoba Craft Council, Craft Ontario, Consiel des métiers d'art du Québec, Craft NB, Prince Edward Island Crafts Council, Craft Nova Scotia, and the Craft Council of Newfoundland & Labrador. Content developed by: CCF/FCMA Director, Maegen Black and SCC Executive Director, Carmen Milenkovic, published April 9th, 2020.