

Community Arts Projects –

getting started - Tips for individuals and community based groups.

What is a Community Arts Project?

Arts projects are a great way to engage communities and foster arts practice. They also provide alternative opportunities for learning and positive change.

Community Arts Projects are sometimes referred to as community cultural development CCD projects. The idea is that The Arts; making art and experiencing art acts as an engagement point that enables communities to connect. Art offers a chance to express ideas and explore issues in new ways. Art encourages a greater understanding of and value for the things that make a community unique. Art projects provide community activity and social interaction.

Ultimately good community arts projects deliver and expose people to good art. Along the way they create pathways and links and sometimes even complete solutions to real issues that affect communities.

What makes a good project?

The key to a successful arts initiative is devoting time to the development of ideas, researching themes, designing and planning. Take the time to identify and secure resources and select the right people to implement and manage the project.

Human resources are critical to ensuring the success of Arts projects....you can have the best concept in the world but without the right people it will not work.

So you have a great idea for a project....

Exploring your idea

Write down all your ideas on paper so you can see them. Sometimes it's called "brainstorming".

It's good to do as a group, but if you don't yet have a team, do it solo.

It's a great starting point

Questions to think about ...

What is your project?

Who is it for?

Why is it needed? i.e. does it provide a solution or address an issue that is relevant to the target audience?

Where will it take place?

Who can help to make it possible?
Where will I get the money/resources to make it happen?
What outcomes will the project deliver?

Don't be afraid to write down things that seem ridiculous at the time, sometimes these ideas turn out to be the key to the success of the project.

Keep your brainstorm paperwork and add any new ideas as they come up. Sticky notes can be handy to add ideas as the project concept develops.

Develop a file where you will store all your project related documents.
Using a computer as your filing system is great but it's still a good idea to print out a copy of your documents just in case of technology issues.

Talk with people about your idea

Don't rush the early stages of your project. Often we can be so excited about our idea that we can miss some of the potential pitfalls or opportunities.

Tell people about your idea. You can learn so much by the type of questions people will ask you.

Sometimes we make assumptions and it is not until our beliefs are challenged that we see things from another perspective.

Make use of the advice services in your area:

A good place to start is the
ACT Community Arts Office
manager@actartsofficers.org.au
Ph: 0450 960 903
Level 1, North Building
180 London Cct, Civic
ACT 2608

Arts centres, Community centres, youth centres and other community based services can be a great place to get advice and information about arts projects.
The ACT Citizens Advice Bureau produces a community information handbook with the contact details for organisations and services in the ACT. www.citizensadvice.org.au

You don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Very often you will find that an idea like yours has been done before. That's not a bad thing. If someone else has done or is doing something similar find out. Their experience could make things easier for you.

It's worth taking some time to explore what others have done. A good place to start is the Internet, books, arts magazines etc

If you can, try and find out:

Where, why and how was it done?

Was it successful?

What kind of budgets did they have and where did it come from?

Comparing your ideas to others will help you to work out exactly what you want...and more importantly exactly what you don't want to do.

Who will be part of your project?

What's your target?

It is really important to know who the participants and/or audience for your project will be ...what are their interests, what are their needs and how do you make contact with them.

Important issues to consider for your target group

- Is your project relevant or at the very least interesting to the target group.
- Cost and ability to pay
- Cultural appropriateness
- Accessibility eg transport
- Individual support needs
- Safety
- Communication and marketing. What is the best way to distribute information (mail, text message, social networking online, radio, television, posters, word of mouth)

Do you provide free projects and events for less advantaged community groups? (I say yes, every time.)

Write a project summary

The project summary is an important document. It contains the essential outline that will help you to plan and keep your project on track.

A project summary is a clear and concise way to explain to others what you want to do as well as a way to focus your idea into something achievable.

A good project summary should include:

- ⇒ A brief description of the project
- ⇒ Objectives – what you want the project to achieve and why it is important.
- ⇒ List of stakeholders – key people and groups involved in the project:
Participants, partner organisations, sponsors, and audiences.
- ⇒ Human resources – people working on the project and their key role:
Project team and subcontractors.
- ⇒ Basic budget
- ⇒ Basic timeline
- ⇒ A list of (measurable) outcomes / outputs that can be linked to the projects objectives