

ACT Community Arts Office

GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network Evaluation

September 2010

“...it’s more than something written on a screen...”

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Executive Summary

The GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network project of the ACT Community Arts Office, funded by Disability ACT, the Regional Arts Fund and ArtsACT, supports participation in the ACT arts sector by people with a disability or experiencing disadvantage. It provides a website and monthly face-to-face gatherings. The project managers have commissioned an external process evaluation from Simply Strategic.

The qualitative evaluation included nine interviews with individual artists (and in some cases their carers / support people) and one focus group with participants from government and community agencies in the arts, education and health sectors. It was conducted in August and September 2010. The evaluation used thematic analysis to clarify outcomes from the information collected from participants in the three main focus areas of experience of the program, professional impact and social connection.

The evaluation found that the strengths of the project as reported by the participants are:

- the website's potential to function as a hub and a promotional tool for artists with or without disabilities / disadvantage
- the creation of a sense of being a professional artist for participants and the associated sense of having a valued role in the community
- the creation of social connections for participants and the benefits this has in building self confidence, health and wellbeing and
- the development of skills associated with being an artist (both creative and non-creative) that foster their artistic practice.

The areas for further development identified by the evaluation are:

- the functionality of the website
- the level of promotion of the website, and
- the level of promotion of the opportunities that the project provides for arts, community and health organisations.

The project has strong community support for its potential and its current benefits to participants. It appears to require further development time before its full potential can be reached.

This process evaluation has shown that the project is well on the way to achieving its goals of supporting participation in the arts, enabling artists with a disability or experiencing disadvantage to participate more equitably and providing social and health benefits for artists. It has also shown that the project appears to be providing opportunities that are geographically, socially, financially and physically accessible and that these opportunities are resulting in self-reported increases in self-confidence, perception of self as an artist, perception of self as professional and social connection. Finally the evaluation indicates that, given sufficient resources and enough time for further development, the project has the potential to reach its goal of becoming a central, connective hub for artists with a disability or who are experiencing disadvantage.

Introduction

The GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network is a project conducted by the ACT Community Arts Office with funding from Disability ACT, Regional Arts Fund and ArtsACT. GENERATE is designed to support participation by people with a disability or experiencing disadvantage in the arts sector in the ACT through the provision of a website and a series of face-to-face gatherings known as AccessibiliTEAs. Disability ACT 2010 Innovation Grant funding included a budget item for an external evaluation. Simply Strategic was retained to conduct this evaluation.

The evaluation was undertaken as a qualitative, process evaluation looking at implementation to date and the level to which the project is achieving its goals and intentions. The evaluation included nine interviews with individual artists (and in some cases their carers / support people) and one focus group with participants from government and community agencies in the arts, education and health sectors. It was conducted in August and September 2010. The evaluation used thematic analysis to clarify outcomes from the information collected from participants.

This report provides:

- a short background on the project and its intentions
- a brief description of the methodology used
- a review of the outcomes of the input provided by participants sorted into themes under the three main focus areas of experience of the program, professional impact and social connection, and
- a list of the suggestions made by participants for the further development of the project.

This last has not been prioritised in any way. Implementation of many of these suggestions is already planned for in the project and the others will need to be prioritised by the project managers on the basis of size of demand, availability of resources and practicality of implementation.

This evaluation is intended for the use of the project managers. It has been written to allow them to assess progress to date on their project, to determine the value of sustaining the project activities and to look to future planning around its ongoing implementation. They will also be able to choose to what extent the report is made publically available or used to inform the development of other community arts activities.

The GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network

GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network is an innovative arts and disability pilot project. It is a forum for artists with disabilities to access information, be profiled, engage socially and make important connections for professional development. The project is designed to improve wellbeing and quality of life through building a sense of belonging and purpose in people's arts practice. GENERATE provides opportunities for artists to be seen, promote their works, demonstrate and be valued for their strengths and abilities as artists. The project maintains a focus on community participation and inclusion so it is available to artists of all abilities and regardless of their level of disadvantage.

The project consists of a website and a series of face-to-face gatherings known as AccessibiliTEAs. The site provides opportunities for artists to promote their work, make links with other artists and arts organisations and learn skills around the non-creative aspects of being an artist (for example marketing and promotion). It includes opportunities for arts, health and community organisations to promote their events and activities and has segments on current news, funding sources and other relevant information.

The AccessibiliTEAs are an informal gathering of small groups of artists who go to an art event or activity together and share morning or afternoon tea as appropriate. The events range in type to maintain interest across the diverse range of participants and, where appropriate, include opportunities to speak with the performing or presenting artists about both their work and their development as artists.

The projects purpose is to build an inclusive network which values, supports and promotes accessible and visible arts in order to create a hub for Canberra artists experiencing disability and disadvantage. GENERATE is about belonging and growth for emerging and professional artists who want to communicate about the creation, production and distribution of their arts practice and make new connections. The site has also been developed to support arts organisations, businesses and service providers who want to connect with artists, events and projects. It functions as a specialist, interactive communication and networking tool - specific to cultural industry - establishing a site of exchange to generate ideas and connections. The project can also facilitate community conversations between artists, key arts organisations, businesses and services to plan projects, develop ideas and support collaborations, partnerships and mentoring.

GENERATE's values are:

- Opportunities will be geographically, physically, financially and socially accessible.
- Fostering cross sectoral relationships, identifying and focusing on areas where community arts capacity needs developing
- Building bridges and supporting network members to establish sustainable community relationships and partnerships with the ACT arts community
- Supporting pathways for network members to expand audiences
- Assisting artists to generate independent projects or participate in supported projects, focusing on skills development experiences and professional practice opportunities

Methodology

This process evaluation of the GENERATE Arts Access Network was conducted using qualitative methods with a small sample group chosen by the Project Officer to include people who have been both more and less involved in the project. There were nine interviews with artists (and in some cases their support people) and one focus group. The artists included people with a range of different disabilities and levels of disadvantage, as well as a range of artistic genres. The focus group consisted of 6 people drawn from the disability, arts, mental health and community sectors. All participants signed Agreement to Participate forms.

The interviews were conducted by two researchers. Two of the interviews involved both researchers to ensure that they used a consistent approach to the material. All other interviews were conducted by one researcher. Audio recordings were made of eight interviews and the focus group with the permission of the participants. Both researchers attended the focus group with one facilitating and one recording notes of the session.

The information collected from the interviews and focus groups was sorted into like groups around 15 sub-sets in the focus areas of Experience of the Program, Professional Impact and Social Connection. Table 1 shows the sub-sets against the focus areas.

Focus Area	Experience of the Program	Professional Impact	Social Connection
Sub-sets	Individuals' experiences	Skills development	Communicate with other site users
	Opportunities are accessible	Expand audiences	Make connections between people
	Participant Desires and Capacities – the project matches what participants want and can use	Generate or link to arts projects	Foster sustainable community relationships
	Project acts as a hub	Fosters partnerships with and between arts organisations	Impact on belonging and growth
	Project model and aspects work for participants		

Table 1: GENERATE Evaluation focus areas and sub-sets

The sub-sets were determined before the evaluation was conducted by reviewing the website, identifying evaluable aspects of the project and in discussion with the Project Officer. The question guides for the interviews and the focus group gathered information against these agreed sub-sets. Once grouped, the information gathered during the evaluation was analysed for common themes using a Thematic Analysis approach (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The identified themes reflect both what the participants think about the project as they have experienced it to date and suggestions for its further development.

Consultation outcomes

The outcomes of the consultation are discussed in the three focus areas and include themes reflecting both the current experience of participants and any suggestions for further development of the project in each area.

This is followed by an overview of the outcomes of the consultation for the project as a whole.

Experience of the program

1. Individuals experiences

When asked about their general involvement with the project, participants in the evaluation reported both positive and negative experiences.

1.1 General

All except one of the comments made about the program in general were positive.¹ Respondents noted that programs to support people with disabilities are critical to their self-confidence and quality of life. This comment is supported by the discussion under *Social Connection* below. Respondents also noted that they enjoyed the diversity of art the program exposed them to, that the approach made people welcome, that it had enormous potential, is a great way to get people out and that the whole project was very impressive. People made more specific comments about the website and the AccessibiliTEAs.

1.2 Website

One third of the participants in the evaluation (5 of 15) had not accessed the website themselves. Of those who had accessed it, only one person reported using it regularly and frequently. Of the others, none had accessed it more than three times, including both artists and organisation representatives.

From an organisational perspective those groups that had received feedback from clients regarding the website had received positive feedback. Much of the feedback from participants in the evaluation was also positive. It highlighted the ease of access to the site, the benefits that it offers to people who are able to use it themselves, the opportunity to gather information on events and the chance to use the site for artistic inspiration.

The concerns highlighted by participants about using the site focused on being able to upload and update their own profiles. For some, this was a concern about not being computer literate enough to undertake this task without assistance while for others it was an expression of frustration at the site not allowing them to undertake the task themselves. Some people were concerned that a website might not be the most appropriate way to reach people with disabilities, particularly depending on the user's individual capacities. One artist wasn't sure whether or not the website was limited to use by visual artists and found it difficult to access a description of the services the website would deliver.

¹ One participant felt that her initial contact with the project was unsatisfactory because there was insufficient discussion of the type of assistance the participant wanted at the time.

A common theme in the responses was that the website had been recently launched when they had seen it and was not at that stage fully functional. The majority were looking forward to being able to access more services through the site, but few had so far made it a tool that they used regularly. There was a sense that the site required more promotion in order to reach its potential.

1.3 AccessibiliTEAs

Respondents felt that the AccessibiliTEAs were very educational and an excellent opportunity to link with others 'of like mind'. This particularly applied to the small number of respondents who don't use computers very often and for whom the website was therefore less relevant. All respondents noted that scheduling is difficult for people who work, that time and cost will always be issues regardless of which group you are working with and that some people with disabilities or dealing with disadvantage may require a longer lead time before an event in order to be able to prepare for it appropriately. One respondent thought that careful decisions regarding the content of material at the AccessibiliTEAs were required to manage any potential risk from that content, particularly in relation to participants who may have mental health issues.

2. Accessible opportunities

The evaluation gave respondents an opportunity to comment on whether or not the opportunities provided by the GENERATE project were geographically, physically, financially and socially accessible for them. These four parameters of accessibility are specified on the website as being a goal for the project.

2.1 General comments

The majority of respondents felt that it was easy to be involved in and to promote the GENERATE project because access could be either electronic or face to face. It was noted that the website is an excellent resource for those with the capacity to use it effectively. Many respondents noted no apparent barriers to participation, although further discussion indicated that different levels and types of disability and disadvantage do create barriers to the level or quality of that participation (see below for more detail).

2.2 Geographically accessible

Only one respondent reported that transport would prevent them from attending AccessibiliTEAs, though several find transport a major issue that impacts negatively on their capacity to participate in social activities. The focus group discussion suggested that mini-buses may be available from a number of community organisations, but that drivers would have to be provided for them. A few respondents suggested the possibility of car pooling to reduce transport difficulties. It was also suggested that GENERATE workstations could be located in libraries, galleries or community organisations to increase geographical accessibility. Given that any publically accessible computer with internet access can be used to access the site it was suggested that discussions could be instigated with these organisations regarding their capacity to provide ad hoc assistance to people accessing the site from the organisations premises.

2.3 Physically accessible

One respondent noted that some venues, particularly when crowded, are difficult to negotiate in a chair and can mean that participants get separated from the group very easily, which some find distressing. It was also noted that access issues for people in wheelchairs are about much more than ramps, door width, lifts and disabled toilets. Issues such as size of kitchens, access to boiled water (if in a built in urn on the wall), capacity to see through crowds and height of tables all impact on capacity to participate fully in an event.

Several respondents noted that it would be necessary for a carer or support person to attend social functions with them in order to overcome some of these physical access issues. A number of others commented on the effort and consideration that the GENERATE project officer puts in to ensuring that access issues are addressed.

The majority of respondents had no difficulty with accessing the website, with those who did not have access to the internet at home reporting use of computers at libraries, family member's homes and community groups. One respondent felt that this reduced the frequency of their connections to the site. Issues around the use of the workstation in the ACT Community Arts Office are discussed under *Project Aspects that "Work"* below. One respondent noted that the size of the font on the website may need to be increased to be consistent with Vision Australia guidelines and that issues around compatibility with voice recognition software may need to be considered, especially in relation to completing forms. The focus group highlighted the need to keep operation of the site as simple as possible, with as few clicks required as possible.

2.4 Financially accessible

All of the artists involved in the consultation were happy to pay an event and/or refreshment cost for participation in the AccessibiliTEAs, although many noted that it would need to be small. The feeling of participants was captured by one respondent who said that a small cost was not a problem because of the benefits gained from participation.

One suggestion was that cost could be determined on the basis of income, which would be indicated by the receipt of a pension from Centrelink (not a health care card, because these are available to people with higher incomes as well). The focus group discussion suggested that a one-off membership fee may be more appropriate for three reasons:

- a single payment may be easier to manage for participants and administratively
- introducing a cost runs the risk of reducing participation, particularly by the more disadvantaged members of the community, and
- having 'membership' implies that there is a group / community to be a member of, which may increase participant's sense of belonging and thereby increase their social connectivity, which is demonstrated to have benefits for health and wellbeing (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, pp. 78-79).

The focus group also noted that it may be possible to seek sponsorship for a series of AccessibiliTEAs rather than imposing a cost at all, especially as free food is seen to increase participation. Sponsorship may allow for the provision of “a cuppa and a bite to eat” without any impost on participants.

2.5 Socially accessible

There were a very limited number of comments about concerns in this area. The majority of people found the AccessibiliTEAs particularly beneficial socially (see *Social Connection* below). Some suggestions were that:

- it may be helpful to have some pamphlets available or information on the website about ways to communicate with people with particular types of disability (eg: guiding a vision impaired person; talking to someone who lip reads; etc)
- extra support may be required for some participants to overcome aspects of their conditions (eg: agoraphobia), and
- time of day and day of the week affects people’s ability to participate, but differently for different people (some need time to get going in the mornings, most are too tired by late afternoon / evening, those who work or study have time limitations, days when carers are available, peak hour traffic is a problem and so on).

Generally however respondents felt that the AccessibiliTEAs in particular were very socially accessible, that they were welcoming and inclusive.

3. Participant Desires and Capacities

3.1 Website

The respondents indicated that their primary uses of the website were to find out about events, view other people’s art and find funding information. The two main themes in this area relate to communication with participants.

The majority of participants felt that an online newsletter would be a good idea (especially for those who can’t turn pages) while those who use computers less frequently or have RSI issues indicated that short information ‘grabs’ provided regularly was a better option. One respondent felt that they used the computer so rarely that they wanted to be notified (by text) when a newsletter was uploaded. Discussions in the focus group indicated that providing information on the website fulfils the same function as a newsletter and could be a simpler option.

In relation to invitations to and reminders about AccessibiliTEAs, seven respondents preferred email notifications, three preferred text messages and one preferred a phone call. One other suggestion was that invitations could be personalised and delivered by post for two reasons. The first is that personalised invitations tend to increase participation as they indicate the importance of that person’s involvement in the activity. The other is that the hard copy gives people something tangible to refer back to as a reminder that the event is coming up.

AccessibiliTEAs and other events

Some people's capacity to participate in the AccessibiliTEAs is limited by their physical abilities, other commitments and the need to plan ahead. For these reasons the majority of respondents thought that a regular day and time for the AccessibiliTEAs would be good, but with the option to have one-off gatherings to align with special artistic events in Canberra if necessary. Only one respondent preferred ad hoc times. Most wanted two weeks notice of AccessibiliTEAs and thought a calendar of events would be useful.

Respondents also wanted the content of the AccessibiliTEAs to be of a sufficiently wide variety to suit different age and interest groups. A strong theme was that respondents want to keep learning through the AccessibiliTEAs, so they would appreciate continued opportunities to talk with artists at the events they participate in. In addition, it was suggested that some AccessibiliTEAs could be workshops on skills related to the non-creative aspects of being a professional artist (eg: photography so they can create a portfolio of their works and show them to their best advantage).

3.2 Other activities

A few respondents were interested in gaining forms of support that are not currently part of the GENERATE project, such as finding an assistant / helper for artistic practice, getting support for organising performances, finding groups to paint with and so on. It may be appropriate to consider how some of these desires might be met by providing appropriate links on the GENERATE site, thus increasing its functionality as a hub of artistic practice in the ACT.

4. Artistic Hub

The primary theme under this sub-set was that artists, either individually or as groups, wanted assistance with establishing their own websites and would like those sites then to be linked to the GENERATE site. One felt that a profile of a small group of artists with some of their works displayed on the GENERATE website could act as an alternative to establishing their own site. It was suggested that the GENERATE site could contain links to organisations who can help artists to establish their own websites. Similarly it was suggested that the site could contain links to other organisations that can assist participants with the non-creative aspects of being an artist, such as creating performance opportunities, financial and time management and so on.

It was also suggested that a forum or chat option would help in creating the perception of the site as a hub for artists, as would increasing the number of links to other organisations and establishing a 'friends of' page.

Respondents felt that the project still required quite a lot of development before it would be seen as a 'hub' of artistic endeavour by artists in the ACT (with or without disabilities or disadvantage), primarily because the website was not yet fully operational and required much greater promotion. However respondents felt that the site had the potential to be an effective hub if the development and promotion impetus is maintained.

5. Model and Project Aspects 'Work' for Participants

The GENERATE model appears to 'work' for both the artist and organisational representative respondents to the evaluation, because it offers both electronic and face to face contact. All of those who indicated that the website was less relevant to them because they don't use a computer very often indicated that they really appreciated the AccessibiliTEAs. Only one person indicated that the GENERATE project overall doesn't really work for them because they require one-on-one assistance for all activities (including using a computer, artistic practice, social activities and so on). Their participation is therefore dependent on a carer / support person and is limited by the time constraints imposed by their condition. The focus group felt that the project is an excellent tool to support any artist to be seen as professional and for those artists then to be more effectively promoted.

5.1 Website

5.1.1 Profiles

All except one of the artist respondents indicated interest in having a profile on the site. Many also indicated a need for assistance with developing and uploading a profile to the site, while a few felt that they needed more control over this function themselves. Assistance with developing and uploading a profile is already provided through the project. One suggestion was that the site could include an 'instructions' page to enable the sufficiently computer literate to manage their own profiles.

5.1.2 Workstation

The majority of artist respondents did not need a centrally located workstation to access the site, even when they did not have internet access at home. However, five of the nine interviews highlighted the fact that they would appreciate the opportunity to use it, particularly if assistance in accessing the site was available at the time. Similarly the focus group felt that people would use the workstation if they were in the city and were aware of its availability.

5.2 AccessibiliTEAs

Respondents thought the AccessibiliTEAs were excellent. They found them interesting, reasonably easy to access, educational and socially beneficial. The average preferred frequency for the TEAs was monthly, on a regular day and time to assist with planning, but with additional gatherings as required to take up special artistic opportunities. One person thought organising the TEAs around smaller arts events (which would be less crowded and offer more opportunity to talk to artists) would be beneficial. It was felt that the TEAs needed to have a variety of content to suit the range of participants.

*The TEAs are good stuff... The artists talking about their work... I really liked it!
Absolutely fantastic....*

Professional Impact

1. Skills Development

Respondents noted that the ‘best bit’ of the project was in the learning that they gained about art, the social connection and the opportunity for skill development. Three additional themes arose in relation to skills development through the project.

The first was that people were interested in learning more about art and the development of artists from the AccessibiliTEAs and through talks by artists.

The second was that people were interested in using some of the time at AccessibiliTEAs to build skills in the non-creative areas associated with being an artist, such as computer skills, making sales, setting developmental goals, managing the process of exhibiting internationally and so on. While this may be outside of the scope of the current project it may be appropriate to provide links on the website to organisations that provide relevant training programs.

The third theme was the artists expressed desire for support in developing their own websites. Again, this may fall outside of the scope of the project, but could be supported through the provision of appropriate links on the site. It was also felt that this type of support would assist in increasing audiences for the participating artists and contribute to them being part of the mainstream art community in the ACT.

2. Expand Audiences

The capacity of the project to support increased audiences for the art of participants was clearly important to the respondents. The focus group noted that the project needs to make the achievement of this outcome simple by ensuring that it is easy for artists to place their material on the site. Several artists noted that the site is already their main promotional tool and others demonstrated that their audiences had grown directly as a result of using the site. One respondent felt that the site was not yet assisting at this level because it hadn’t been operational enough when they accessed it and another felt that support to organise live performances would be a more useful way of increasing audiences. Otherwise all the respondents felt that the website provided an excellent vehicle for supporting the promotion of artists and thereby increasing their audiences.

3. Generate / Link to Projects

Again, respondents felt that the project provided excellent opportunities for artists to be linked to existing projects or to generate new activities for them. Several reported getting ideas from the site for new activities and a few noted that they had already experienced additional involvement in the arts scene as a result of the opportunities provided through the project and other work of the ACT Community Arts Office. All artists who felt they had sufficient energy to take on additional activities were interested in the potential of the GENERATE project to support this form of development.

4. Foster Partnerships With and Between Arts Organisations

The common theme in relation to this sub-set was that the project is not yet creating strong partnerships between arts organisations or between arts organisations and participating artists, although it is seen to have a great deal of potential in this area. Again, the comments from respondents indicated that the project requires further development and particularly further promotion before this outcome can be expected.

Many positive early steps to this outcome were identified, including:

- the project breaks down barriers and helps artists to be incorporated into the mainstream
- the project gives people experience of arts locations in Canberra, making it easier for them to return to them on their own behalf
- the project officer is helping to create connections through her direct advocacy work on behalf of individual artists
- artist respondents felt that the project would be likely to create partnerships if they were using it to its full potential, and
- organisation representative respondents felt the project could create good networks between arts organisations if this aspect of its functioning was adequately resourced.

Social Connection

1. Communicate with Other Site Users

There was no direct indication of any form of connection between site users, other than through looking at the art works displayed on the site. The AccessibiliTEAs, however, were highly praised specifically for the connections that they created between people.

2. Make Connections between People

The majority of comments made in response to this sub-set highlighted the need for social connection and the enjoyment that participants get out of this part of the project. The themes were that:

- people in the group understood the limitations and frustrations so participation was easier
- the group assisted with accessing locations and meeting like minded people
- the social engagement was important to people, and
- the process links people to the arts community as well as to each other.

I think... having face to face conversations is rather important because then you realise that this is more than something written on a screen... there's actually somebody there who cares.

The second theme reinforces the first. A small number of respondents highlighted the fact that they were seeking more social contact and wanted to form more connections with like-minded people. This hadn't been achieved for them yet through the project, but they were clear that the AccessibiliTEAs in

particular provided opportunities to create such links. One respondent noted that the opportunities to make these connections are especially important for young people with a disability.

3. Foster Sustainable Community Relationships

While the individual relationships that are formed through participation in the AccessibiliTEAs part of the project seem strong there is no evidence from this evaluation that the project is, as yet, creating sustainable community relationships. The strongest feedback in relation to this area from the respondents was that the project needs to be more widely promoted to achieve this outcome.

4. Impact on Belonging and Growth

Three main themes emerged from the discussions regarding the impact of this project on the artists.

The first was that the project helps to build their perception of themselves as an artist, to link them to mainstream arts practice and increase their profile and exposure all of which develops their credibility as an artist.

I think the very first time I ever exhibited it was at the Belconnen Arts Centre and I got the prime spot. And I went out and cried... because I was being taken seriously and it was awesome. It made me stop thinking of art as a hobby and started me thinking about myself as an artist.

The second is that participation in the project builds people's confidence, courage, self-esteem and sense of being valued. The focus group discussion highlighted the importance of people being seen as artists rather than as a person with a disability who is in an art group. This validation of their role in the community, linked with experiences of success, bolsters confidence in their ability and therefore their self esteem. Respondents saw this as being beneficial for the participants' health.

The third theme was that the project has contributed to the artistic learning and repertoire of participants, thus improving their skills and likelihood of success as an artist.

The responses in this area of the evaluation were particularly consistent, implying that these positive outcomes apply across the range of participants.

Overview

From the evaluation outcomes identified above the strengths of the project appear to be:

- the potential that the website has to function as a hub and a promotional tool for artists with or without disabilities / disadvantage
- the creation of a sense of being a professional artist for participants and the associated sense of having a valued role in the community
- the creation of social connections for participants and the benefits this has in building self confidence, and
- the development of skills associated with being an artist (both creative and non-creative) that foster their artistic practice.

The major concerns raised through the evaluation are:

- the functionality of the website
- the level of promotion of the website, and
- the level of promotion of the opportunities that the project provides for arts, community and health organisations.

The remainder of the themes identified in the evaluation provide suggestions for the further development of the project, the majority of which are quite specific (for example, the timing and content of AccessibiliTEAs).

Overall it appears that the project has strong community support for its potential and its current benefits to participants. It appears to require further development time before its full potential can be reached.

Further development of the program

Overall project goals

Respondents did not suggest any changes to the overall project goals. Analysis of the information collected during the evaluation suggests that:

- for the majority of participating artists, the benefits of social connection are currently largely experienced as a result of face-to-face interactions, rather than through the site. Further work will be required to generate connections between artists through the website, such as inclusion of a forum / 'chat' space or other such strategies. Only one artist appeared to be using the site to its full potential indicating that further work is required to make access to the functions of the site as easy as possible
- the project is not yet achieving its goal of creating links between arts organisations, although focus group members believed both that it has the potential to do so and that it is an appropriate mechanism for this. Achieving this goal will require both further promotion of the project and its possibilities to those organisations and more thought about their needs and ways to respond to them. This may include contemplating ways in which the project may assist other (non-arts) organisations to further develop their involvement in and provision of services around the arts, and
- the project requires further promotion in general (ie: that it exists) and in specific terms (focussing on what the project does, functionality of the website, and potential benefits for artists and arts, community and health organisations) in order for it to achieve its goals of being a hub for arts practice in the ACT.

Functionality of the website

It appears to the evaluators that all the suggestions that were made to improve the functionality of the website are already planned for later implementation in the project. The suggestions made during the evaluation were:

- Links to and information about art groups, including both established arts organisations and small groups of artists (eg: BEAN, painting groups, etc), including promoting projects they are undertaking that other artists may be able to participate in
- Promotion of events and activities on behalf of other organisations and small groups of artists
- Providing links to organisations or services that can assist artists to create and maintain their own websites
- Providing links to artists existing websites, potentially as part of their profile
- Expanding profiles to function as a web page for the artist to use as their primary promotional tool (functioning as a 'quasi-site' for that artist or for a small group of artists such as BEAN)
- Providing links to art organisations, entrepreneurs or support services that can assist artists to set up live performances as well as exhibitions, tours and so on

- Including information on exhibiting overseas and how to manage this, including areas such as funding, travelling with carers, supportive / community arts organisations contacts and so on
- Links to support services for or information on skill development in the areas of goal setting, developing plans, managing time and monitoring implementation as well as other non-creative aspects of being an artist
- Information on how to make sales of artwork
- Inclusion of a calendar of events on the site, along with regular updates of information which may be presented as an online newsletter
- Enabling people who have the capacity to upload and update their own profiles, in the first instance by including a page of instructions on how to do this (noting that profiles could be moderated before being made public on the site)
- Inclusion of interactive aspects to the site such as a forum, 'chat' room, blogs, "friends of..." page and so on
- Increasing the standard font size on the site to increase readability for people with vision impairments (Vision Australia apparently recommends 14 point as the minimum)
- Providing an 'unlocked' version of PDF forms (as well as a locked one) so that voice recognition software can be used to complete online forms
- Ensuring that the range of art forms and artists talked about on the site demonstrates its inclusiveness
- Ensuring that information about what the site does is obvious and easy to access

Project managers will need to identify what is possible given the capacity of the technology, funding and time constraints and prioritise any inclusions from the above list. As noted above, many of these suggestions are either already available on the site or are planned for inclusion as the project develops.

A small number of respondents indicated that carers may need education in how to use the website in order to improve access for those with limited capacity to use the site independently. This may require additional funding or addition of a new 'stream' to the project.

Ongoing nature of the AccessibiliTEAs

Respondents were particularly supportive of the AccessibiliTEAs and made a few suggestions about frequency, regularity, notification and sustainability.

Frequency

The majority of respondents felt that holding AccessibiliTEAs monthly would be sufficient. One respondent suggested every two months would be sufficient.

Regularity

Most respondents felt that having a regular day and time for the AccessibiliTEAs would make planning ahead for participation and scheduling around other commitments easier. Only one respondent suggested that ad hoc dates would be preferable. Of those who preferred a regular day and time, the

majority also felt that additional events could be organised to allow for participation in one-off arts activities that the regular TEA would miss.

Notification

The majority of respondents wanted two weeks notice of AccessibiliTEAs (or other events) in order to be able to organise their participation effectively.

Sustainability

It was suggested that the project could consider asking arts organisations to host the AccessibiliTEAs as a way of building and fostering partnerships (as is currently done with ANCA Gallery) or that the project could seek sponsorship for a series of TEAs through larger businesses.

Conclusion

The GENERATE Canberra Arts Access Network project has been operational for approximately one year. The project includes the development of a new, highly interactive, informative website designed to enable artists to promote themselves, their art and their events, learn more about the arts in Canberra, increase their independent participation in the arts community and provide links between arts, community and health organisations. In addition the project provides individual support for participation by artists who have a disability or are experiencing disadvantage. The project also includes face-to-face events known as AccessibiliTEAs at which artists, carers and representatives of arts, community and health organisations meet, share and experience arts events in the ACT.

This process evaluation has shown that the project is well on the way to achieving its goals of supporting participation in the arts, enabling artists with a disability or experiencing disadvantage to participate more equitably and providing social and health benefits for artists. It has also shown that the project appears to be providing opportunities that are geographically, socially, financially and physically accessible and that these opportunities are resulting in self-reported increases in self-confidence, perception of self as an artist, perception of self as professional and social connection. Finally the evaluation indicates that, given sufficient resources and enough time for further development, the project has the potential to reach its goal of becoming a central, connective hub for artists with a disability or who are experiencing disadvantage.



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