NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

LOVE YOUR LOCAL

How visual artists, makers and designers can engage with local government

Cover: Laurel Nannup, First Contact, 2016. Five-metre tall cast aluminium sculpture, Perth's Elizabeth Quay waterfront precinct. Commissioned for the Perth Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) and coordinated by FORM and Urban Art Projects (UAP). Project managed and facilitated by FORM Building a State of Creativity. Photo by Robert Frith, Acorn Photo.

Always was.
Always will be Aboriginal Land.

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) acknowledges the Gadigal, Wangal, Dharug, Dharawal, Kaurna, Ngunnawal, Ngambri and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples as the Traditional Custodians and knowledge-holders of the unceded lands on which we live, learn and work.

The NAVA community is based across hundreds of sovereign Nations and unceded lands throughout the continent that has become colonially known as Australia. NAVA pays our deepest respects to all Custodians of Country to whom these lands belong.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first artists and storytellers on this continent, and pay respect to First Nations communities' Ancestors and Elders.

Sovereignty was never ceded.

Leya Reid, NAVA Advocacy and Communications Manager, Rhianna Pezzaniti, NAVA Code of Practice Project Manager and Emma Pham, NAVA Membership and Communications Officer. Photo by Jacquie Manning 2022.

About NAVA

The National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) is a Membership organisation which brings together the many voices of the contemporary arts sector to improve fundamental conditions of work and practice. We do this through advocacy, education and the Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design.

NAVA Membership

You are invited to join us as part of a bold national voice for the Australian visual arts and craft community. The more of us there are, the more ambitious we can be. NAVA Members enjoy professional development support, advice and guidance, a tailored insurance package, exclusive access to resources and opportunity listings, plus discounted entry to major galleries around Australia.

Membership is tax deductible. Join the NAVA community today: **www.nava.net.au/join**

South Western Times Art 2020 opening night.
Photo courtesy of Bunbury Regional Art Gallery.

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LOVE YOUR LOCAL

Local government authorities (LGAs) are among the strongest champions of the arts in Australia – and there are mutual benefits for artists collaborating with councils.

In this toolkit, we'll explore the many different ways that artists can build win-win collaborations with LGAs, from grants and studio space to professional development, marketing and brokering relationships with businesses. We'll also look at what councils need from you in return so they can deliver value to the communities they represent.

Toolkit acknowledgements

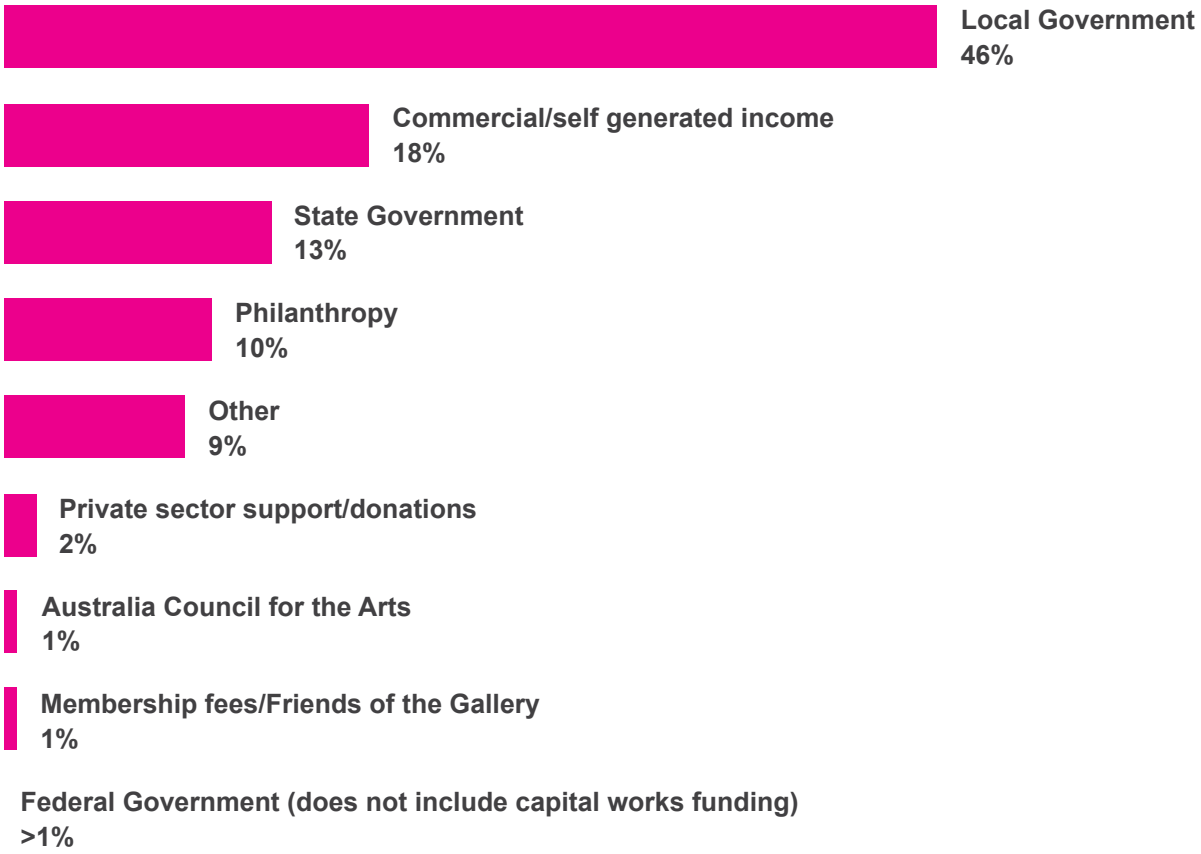
Author: Monique Choy, **Nettle Soup**
Design & accessibility: Kathryn Collins, **KC & the Graphics Bandwagon**.

Is it worth working with councils?

Definitely. Our LGAs – also known as councils, municipalities and shires – provide 26% of all government arts and cultural expenditure[1].

In the visual arts, they are even more important – local government provides 48% of all government funding for public galleries in Australia[2], while 66% of funding for regional galleries comes from local government.[3]

Figure 1: Sources of Public Gallery Funding

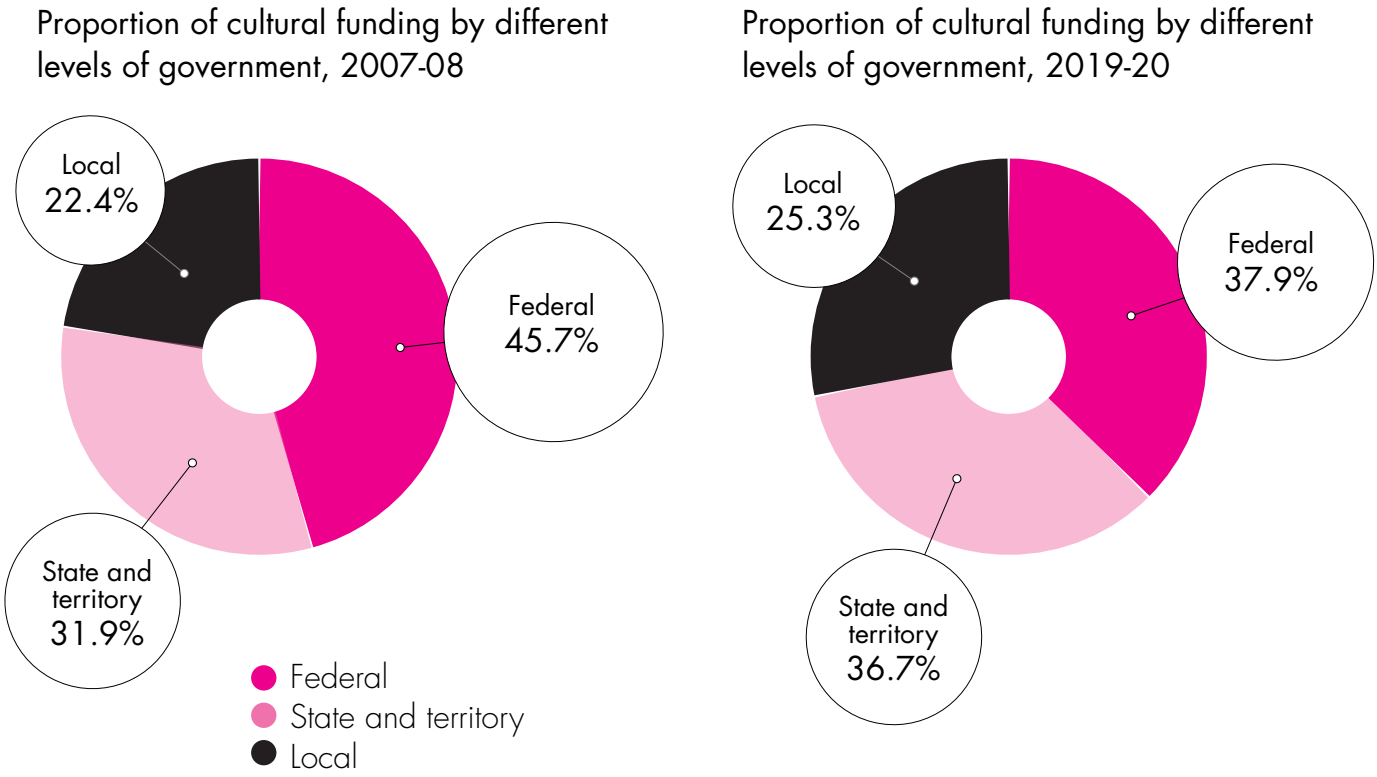


Source: Museums & Galleries Queensland and Public Galleries Association of Victoria on behalf of the National Public Galleries Alliance (2020), Australian Public Galleries Snapshot

1 A New Approach (2019) The Big Picture: public expenditure on artistic, cultural and creative activity in Australia, Australian Academy of the Humanities.
2 Museums & Galleries Queensland and Public Galleries Association of Victoria on behalf of the National Public Galleries Alliance (2020), Australian Public Galleries Snapshot
3 Rod Campbell, Cameron Murray, Sam Brennan, Jordie Pettit (2017), S2M: The economics of Australia's small-to-medium visual arts sector, National Association for the Visual Arts.

Before Covid-19, LGA arts funding was increasing. Between 2007 and 2017, the proportion of local government funding for the arts increased by 3.8%, while state and territory funding increased by 2.9% and federal government funding dropped by 6.7%. During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019-20, LGA funding for the arts slightly decreased by 0.9% and has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.[4]

Figure 2: Changes in government funding for the arts



Source: A New Approach (2019), **The Big Picture: public expenditure on artistic, cultural and creative activity in Australia**, Australian Academy of the Humanities.

While the contribution of local governments to total cultural expenditure by governments has recently plateaued or decreased[5], it's clear that LGAs remain important avenues of public support for the visual arts, craft and design.

Who is this Toolkit for?

This toolkit is aimed at visual artists, makers and designers, as well as visual arts organisations – though creatives of all kinds might find it valuable.

4 Dr Jodie Trembath and Kate Fielding (2022) **The Big Picture 2: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative activity in Australia in 2007-08 to 2019-20**. Produced by A New Approach (ANA).

5 Angela Vivian, Kate Fielding and Tim Acker (2023) **The Big Picture 3: Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative activity by governments in Australia in 2007–08 to 2020–21**. Produced by A New Approach (ANA).

How LGAs work

While it's sometimes joked that LGAs are all about the three Rs of 'rates, roads and rubbish', in reality, Australia's 566 LGAs serve the local community in many other ways. LGAs are involved in local culture, events, tourism and community wellbeing.

Service areas

In the past 50 years, there's been a huge expansion in the role of local government. It's gone from focusing on physical infrastructure (e.g. roads and building approvals) to delivering more services focused on people – things like cultural services (libraries, art galleries, public art commissions, events, performing arts centres and museums), social services (e.g. childcare, aged care and welfare), sporting facilities (pools and sports venues), environmental conservation, and tourism.

Funding

LGAs are funded by both local land taxes (rates) and grants, mainly from state governments. Often these grants have a specific focus, such as providing funds for councils to deliver arts and cultural projects or precincts.

Structure

Councils have an elected arm (councillors) and an administrative arm (staff). The local community elects councillors, usually every four years. These elected representatives form the council board, headed by the mayor or shire president.

The elected councillors appoint a CEO to ensure their decisions are implemented. The CEO manages the council's staff, who deliver services and projects to the community.

Different councils have different organisational structures. Some have dedicated arts and culture staff, while in others, these responsibilities are included in, for example, community development.

In the Australian Capital Territory, local government functions are handled by the territory government.

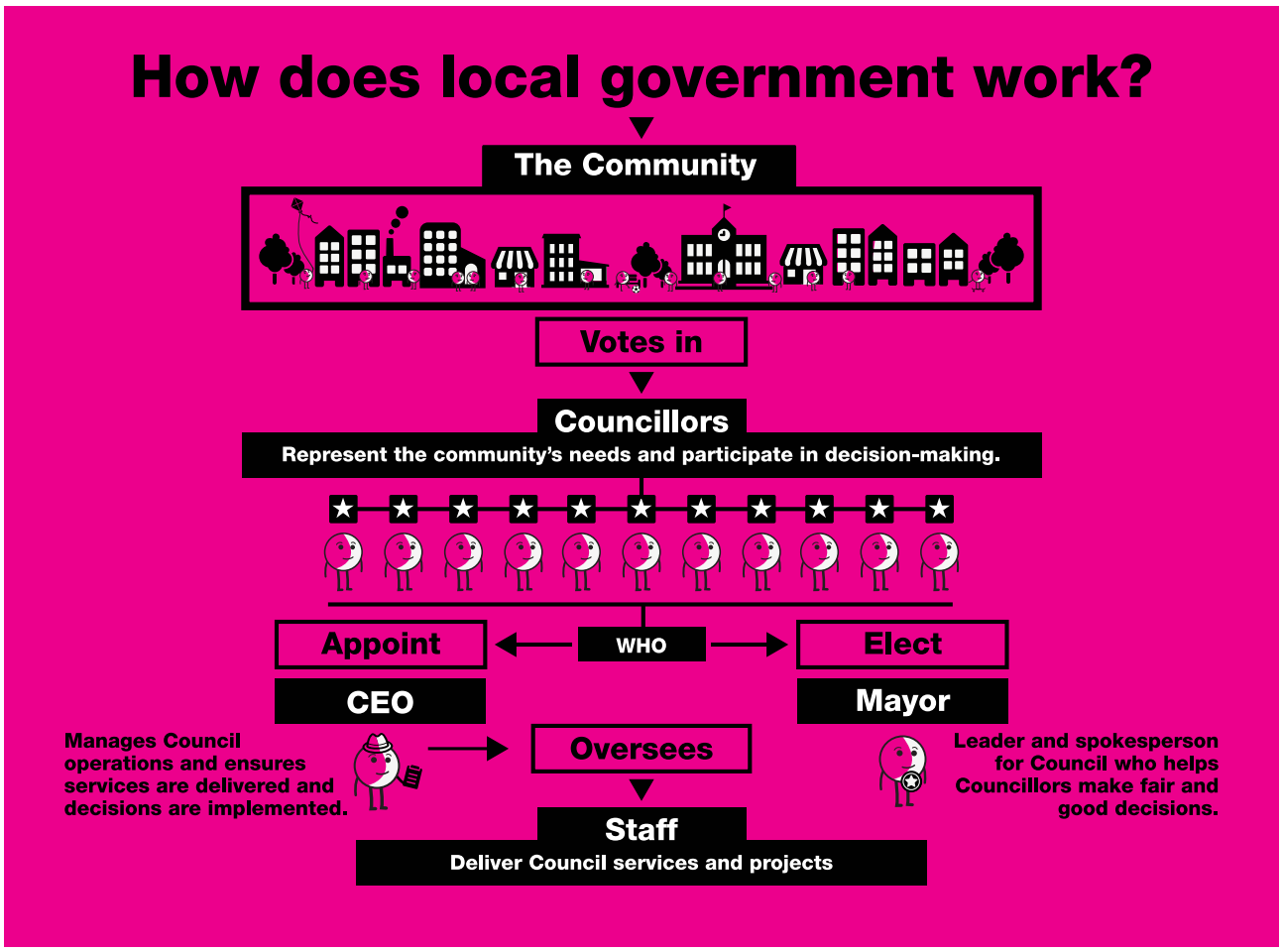
Policy

Elected councillors approve the council's strategic objectives – policies designed to benefit the community that voted for them. For example, a council might decide to increase opportunities for First Nations communities, promote tourism or rehabilitate a foreshore.

It's then up to council staff to deliver services designed to meet these objectives. Council objectives are captured in a written plan which is endorsed by the elected councillors.

The takeaway from all this? Get your hands on the council plans. They explain exactly what the council wants to achieve with its resources.

Figure 3: How does local government work?



Source: City of Greater Dandenong, Role of Local Government

Your project should have benefits for the community - identify the multiplier effects of your project e.g. for local businesses.

Wagga Wagga City Council, NSW

Engagement goals

Councils and artists work together in many different ways. Below are some examples of successful collaborations which may spark ideas for your own engagement goals.

Remember: the goal needs to be a winning proposition for you and the council.
Be clear on the benefits to both parties before you make your pitch.

Grants & in-kind support

Many councils offer a grants program for creative projects that align with their priorities.

LGAs also provide in-kind support for creative projects. In-kind support is non-monetary support, things like materials, equipment, insurance or labour.

Examples

LGA's provide grants to artists, including for the production of new work. Visit the arts and culture or grants section of LGA websites to find out what is on offer.

Councils may purchase infrastructure and equipment for use by community artists. For example, Sunshine Coast Council has two high-resolution data projectors available for artists for use in public art projection installations.

Councils are often generous with in-kind support for events, such as exhibitions or open studios. Western Downs Regional Council runs an In Kind Assistance Program.

Benefits for artists

- Provides financial support and in-kind support
- Provides access to equipment, tools, expertise and materials

Benefits for council

- Contributes to local culture, identity, community and economy
- Shares community resources and council assets
- Increases opportunities for local creative participation and activation

The expectation with larger grants is that they will deliver measurable outcomes to the broader community.

City of Busselton, WA

Space

Council-run galleries are a key support to visual artists. Many councils operate galleries in purpose-built or heritage buildings or provide exhibition space in libraries and other council-owned facilities.

LGAs also make venues available to visual artists for use as studios, exhibition space, retail space and workshops, or waive venue fees for arts projects. For more information on Hiring a Gallery Space, Selling Work in Publicly Funded Galleries, Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) or Exhibiting, visit NAVA's Code of Practice.

Examples

City of Sydney provides artists with studio/living spaces in one-bedroom apartments and makes council-owned property available to artists between commercial leases via its short-term creative spaces.

Huon Valley Council runs the mobile ARTBOX space in a converted shipping container. City of Casey's Art Spaces Program offers subsidised spaces and workshop venues.

Benefits for artists

- Provides space to develop, create and exhibit work
- Generate income through delivery of workshops, commissions and sales of artwork (including gallery retail)
- Supports networking and collaboration
- Provides in-kind support

Benefits for council

- Increases opportunities for community engagement and participation in the arts
- Provides community access to underused council assets
- Boosts visibility of local creative sector and local tourism
- Activates local spaces

> An LGA is not an arts funding body, the outcomes, outputs and actions from our investment are to activate the city and encourage and support creatives to work within certain boundaries.
>
> City of Melbourne, VIC

Events

Councils support a wide range of events involving artists and creatives, including exhibitions, festivals, markets, talks, workshops, art fairs and pop-ups.

Examples

The City of Bunbury's Bunbury Regional Gallery hosts the annual Noongar Country exhibition for local Indigenous artists, the Iluka Visions annual high-school exhibition, the South West Art Now visual arts biennale, as well as workshops and arts markets.

Many councils support open studio trails, such as City of Busselton's Margaret River Region Open Studios, or public art markets, such as the Moonee Valley City Council's Artists & Makers Market. Councils like Rural City of Murray Bridge and City of Rockingham host art workshops offering creative outlets for the community and employing local artists.

Benefits for artists

- Provides opportunities to engage with audiences
- Provides opportunities to sell work
- Provides employment opportunities in workshop facilitation

Benefits for council

- Increases community engagement in the arts
- Supports local tourism
- Increases community wellbeing and connection
- Strengthens sense of pride and local identity
- Boosts local economy
- Creates liveable communities

Be relevant and link with existing programs, events, and programs. If there is an annual event, suggest an art show or a commission. If the local government is building a pathway or upgrading a playground, suggest including art and engaging artists. LGs are always open to celebrating their community.

Lake Macquarie City Council, NSW

Commissioning and acquisitions

Council-run art galleries are a key engine for acquiring and commissioning the work of visual artists, but many councils also maintain a separate art collection.

Local councils also commission public works, such as sculptures, murals and art trails, and commission works for council-owned spaces such as libraries, care facilities and sports venues.

Examples

Kentish bills itself as 'Tasmania's Outdoor Art Gallery' with over 200 murals celebrating local heritage and identity. The council's Public Arts Committee Kentish (PACK) streamlines the commissioning of public art.

City of Joondalup has billboard space on the City Library and Joondalup Courthouse exterior walls on which it hosts the bi-annual Inside-Out Billboard Program featuring large scale commissioned artworks.

The City of Albany displays its art collection at council buildings and loans works to organisations such as the Albany Hospice and Albany Airport. Many councils, such as Logan City Council, support public art trails.

Lake Macquarie City Council commissions local artists to make ceramic and glass trophies for their business and community awards.

Benefits for artists

- Offers financial benefits
- Provides opportunities to engage communities
- Increases profile and reach

Benefits for council

- Increases sense of community pride, identity and place
- Celebrates local heritage and culture
- Creates community landmarks
- Promotes tourism
- Adds vibrancy to local region leading to place activation
- Creates liveable communities

Funding is always tight but we seek to support artists in other ways including by showcasing their work in exhibitions and via community grants.

Shire of Manjimup, WA

Professional development

Councils support artists' skills development via exhibitions, residencies, commissions, workshops, courses, internships and mentoring opportunities.

These can include skills development in creative practice, or in areas like marketing, grant-writing or social media promotion, aimed at individual artists and local arts organisations.

Examples

Sunshine Coast Council runs a **professional arts development** program for local artists and arts organisations. City of Ballarat runs an extensive **professional development program** for creatives. Scenic Rim Regional Council hosts **Arts Dinners** that offer professional and community skill development.

As part of its Public Art Masterplan, Alice Springs Town Council has recognised the need to skill up more local artists to produce long-lasting and large-scale public art works. It has committed to training and mentorship programs to support artists to make public art successfully.

Benefits for artists

- Develops artistic practice
- Improves business sustainability
- Provides networking opportunities

Benefits for council

- Increases sustainability and professionalism of local arts industry
- Improves capacity for local artists to undertake ambitious arts projects
- Improves networks of local creatives

Many Councils do not offer funding programs. They do offer professional development opportunities to local artists through commissions and exhibitions.

Bathurst Regional Council, NSW

Artists-in-residence

An artist-in-residence program brings an artist to work in the community, providing workspace and sometimes financial support and exhibition space. There is often an interaction between the artist and the community via workshops and events. There may also be an exhibition or presentation outcome, though this is not always the case.

Examples

Bathurst Regional Council supports the Hill End Artist in Residence Program, offering accommodation and studio space in historic cottages that have inspired artists since Jean Bellette, Russell Drysdale and Margaret Olley began visiting in the 1940s.

Benefits for artists

- Provides space and time to work, reflect, research and explore ideas in a new environment
- Provides accommodation, financial support and/or exhibition space
- Provides opportunities to engage with audiences

Benefits for council

- Supports the production of works that respond directly to the local area
- Promotes and defines local identity and pride
- Offers opportunities to engage the community with talks, open studios, workshops and events
- Supports tourism

For good practice recommendations, see Residences and Studios in NAVA's Code of Practice.

You don't have to be a local to apply for local government grants or opportunities. Demonstrating a high quality outcome for the community is also a priority for councils.

Moonee Valley City Council, VIC

Art prizes

Council art prizes are often acquisitive to build the local art collection, or create an art trail.

Art prizes and competitions are also great ways for a council to create awareness and engagement around its strategic priorities outside of the arts or increase the profile of an arts venue.

Examples

Many councils develop prizes in a specific medium, for example, the **Clarence Prize for Furniture Designers**, or the **Experimental Print Prize**, supported by Mount Alexander Shire Council.

Councils often link prizes to issues of strategic priority, such as the environment (City of Salisbury's **Watershed Creative Prize**), heritage (Forbes Shire's **Heritage Art Comp**), or youth (Hobsons Bay City Council's **Woods Street Youth Art Prize**). For more information on art prizes, see **Awards, Prizes and Competitions** in NAVA's Code of Practice.

Benefits for artists

- Generates media coverage
- Provides networking opportunities
- Provides opportunities for community engagement
- Builds artist's profile, CV, opportunities and exposure for sales and commissions
- Provides a potential cash prize or the opportunity to be acquired

Benefits for council

- Generates positive interest and media around the council's strategic priorities
- Supports community engagement in the arts
- Provides an opportunity to celebrate local artistic vibrancy and creativity

Focus on relevance, opportunities, benefits to and engagement with local community is often a priority.

Rural City of Murray Bridge, SA

Brokering relationships

Councils broker relationships that bring artists together with other sections of the community in areas such as tourism, kids, seniors, environment, heritage, mental health and wellbeing.

Many councils support Community arts and Cultural development (CACD) programs, which offer community members opportunities for artistic expression, often with training and support from professional artists.

LGAs also support artists through letters of support, auspicing and connecting artists with state and territory arts agencies, industry bodies and philanthropists. Often councils advocate for fair payment for artists.

Examples

Inner West Council's Perfect Match street-art project matches artists, and property owners to transform walls into works of art and counter unwanted graffiti. Over 100 works have been produced through the program.

Regional Victoria's 200km Silo Art Trail celebrates local identities through giant portraits, a partnership between Yarriambiack Shire Council and others, including GrainCorp, who donated the silos.

The City of Onkaparinga's Place of Courage project partners with non-profit Spirit of a Woman to commemorate the traumatic impact of family and domestic violence through public art.

Benefits for artists

- Opens doors and consolidates relationships
- Extends artist networks and audiences
- Offers financial benefits
- Offers employment opportunities

Benefits for council

- Connects community groups and businesses with creative practitioners
- Promotes community cohesion and networks
- Increases profile of the arts and council
- Builds the confidence and skills of the community for future projects

Marketing

Marketing and promoting the work of local artists, designers and makers benefits artists, the community, the local economy and local tourism.

Councils offer marketing support through publicity, training, the development of digital platforms, events and strategic support.

Examples

Blue Mountains City Council has developed the MTNS MADE creative industries brand that profiles, promotes and markets the work of over 500 local creatives.

Many councils, such as the Illawarra Regional Directory (including Wollongong, Kiama, Shellharbour and Wingecarribee Councils), have created digital directories that profile and showcase local artists.

Benefits for artists

- Offers increased profile and reach
- Provides in-kind support
- Provides networking opportunities

Benefits for council

- Supports local economy
- Increases local reputation as a hub of creative practitioners
- Supports local tourism

Local Government is here to help and is often the first point of call for artists, musicians and creatives to talk through concept or ideas, gain support, make connections and promote their practice.

City of Holdfast Bay, SA

Arts policy

An LGA's arts policies might include arts and cultural strategies, streamlined approval processes, consultations with the local creative community, or policies that generate private-sector support for the arts.

Policies can also support improved arts access and inclusion for marginalised artists.

Examples

Many councils have a 'Percent For Art' policy, inspired by the WA government scheme. This requires major development projects to make a contribution to public art, usually 1% of the project budget. Examples include City of Yarra and City of Wanneroo, which shares its public art through its Discover Wanneroo app.

City of Perth gives developers three options around how to meet their public art requirements, including providing cash-in-lieu to the City's Public Art Fund. In NSW, some councils enable developer contribution levies to be used for public art.

Many councils such as Flinders, Merri-bek and Yankalilla have arts and culture advisory committees that meet throughout the year to provide guidance, advice and specialist knowledge on the commissioning, acquisition and management of public art and cultural projects. Members of the advisory committees are often independent experts in the area of arts, culture and heritage, placemaking, architecture and the built environment, and tourism.

Benefits for artists

- Provides opportunities to consult and engage on council policies
- Encourages more equitable distribution of resources

Benefits for council

- Provides systemic support for artists
- Supports a vibrant and inclusive community
- Increases community consultation and engagement
- Delivers services and facilities that are responsive and fit-for purpose
- Create vibrant spaces and places
- Confirms value of art in the community

Bureaucracies can be tough to work with - it can take resilience and perseverance. You never know when it might be the right time for your idea or project.

Rural City of Murray Bridge, SA

Engagement tools

Tips, tricks, templates and tools to increase your chances of building a successful collaboration with your LGA.

The lobbying lowdown

How would you like to collaborate with your LGA? If your engagement goal is not yet on the council's agenda, you will have to lobby for it. Lobbying means advocating for a person, project or policy through relationship-building.

Here's the plan

1. Connect with decision-makers
    a. Download the council plans, follow your LGA on social media and get on the council's arts and media mailing lists to get a feel for their interests and priorities.
    b. Find your councillor or council staff responsible for arts, tourism or regional development. Who would you like to meet? You might also like to contact your local federal government member.
    c. Ask them for a meeting or, better yet, invite them to your studio or gallery (for an email template, see 'Tools for Relationship Building' on page 35).
2. Make your pitch
    a. Do your research
    b. Present your idea one-on-one or at a council meeting, or write up your proposal in a document
    c. Be clear on what you want from your LGA and how it aligns with their plans"
3. Follow up
    a. Email a week later to ask if they've thought about your ideas
    b. Keep building the relationship

Pro tips for effective meetings

- Be clear and concise – have 'three killer points' you want to make
- Show how your idea will benefit the community
- Be prepared to listen – for many councillors and council staff, it's a very exciting thing to meet an artist, and so there's a lot that they may want to tell you
- Don't attack council policies – nobody responds well to insult! But offer clear accounts of the impacts of their policies, and opportunities for improvement
- Be relevant – know what's top of mind for them, know the buzz in the community, and draw clear connections to what's important for you

Instrumental benefits

LGAs are often most interested in the 'instrumental' benefits of the arts. In other words, the ways that the arts can be 'instruments' for achieving the council's strategic goals, such as creating public awareness on an issue, increasing tourism or improving mental health.

Artists are often most interested in the 'intrinsic' value of the arts, such as providing aesthetic pleasure or captivating audiences. Ideally, a collaborative project can tick both boxes.

More info

- NAVA's Advocacy Toolkit 2019, aimed at federal government, is chock-full of advice and ideas for effective advocacy and lobbying.
- Country Arts WA's Advocating and Lobbying: Your Local Government Authority has great tips on setting goals and lobbying local council.

> The personalities within the Chamber can be diverse and there are lots of competing areas – [it's] important to know the Councillors and understand what makes them tick.
>
> Barossa Council, SA

Get your hands on the plans

The work of LGAs, and the use of LGA funds, must align with the priorities and objectives endorsed by the elected councillors.

LGAs publish their priorities and objectives in their planning documents and post them on their websites. All council staff need to demonstrate that the projects and services they deliver are in line with these documents.

Council plans may be called different things, like the Strategic Plan, Corporate Plan, Strategic Community Plan or Regional Plan. A council may also have more focused strategies, such as an arts and cultural strategy, or a public art plan. Whatever they're called, they're a treasure trove of detail about council priorities, i.e. what the council plans to support and fund over the next few years.

LGAs publish their financial information in their annual reports. This is where you can check how the LGA spent its budget over a particular year (and whether this aligned with its objectives).

Using the plans

- **Align** If you propose a project that aligns with the priorities in the council plan, you are set up to succeed.
- **Advocate** If there are gaps or inequities in your LGA's objectives, you can identify this in the plans.

Look beyond arts and culture

As an artist or arts organisation, the most obvious place to search for relevant strategies are in the council's arts and culture plans, but it's worth checking the other strategies too.

For example, visual arts are a natural fit with tourism objectives, community arts promote health and wellbeing, and arts can be deployed to raise community awareness around any issue important to councils, such as heritage, youth or environment. Some councils are also increasingly aligning their arts and tourism portfolios with economic development portfolios.

Find success stories in other LGAs

It's well worth researching arts and cultural plans delivered in other local council areas for inspiration. A project idea that's already proved successful somewhere else will be more attractive to most LGAs.

More info

NAVA's Matchmaking for Project Development fact sheet offers great tips on working with partners outside the arts, including local councils.

Katherine Gailer AKA Katira working on a mural for The Big Picture Festival, Frankston Vic, March 2023. Photo by Neda AKA Virusfreak79.

We are always open to ideas for collaboration and they can take shape in many different ways.

City of Busselton WA

Make your case

Most LGAs know the value of the arts, but it doesn't hurt to remind them – in clear, evidence-based terms, as often as possible.

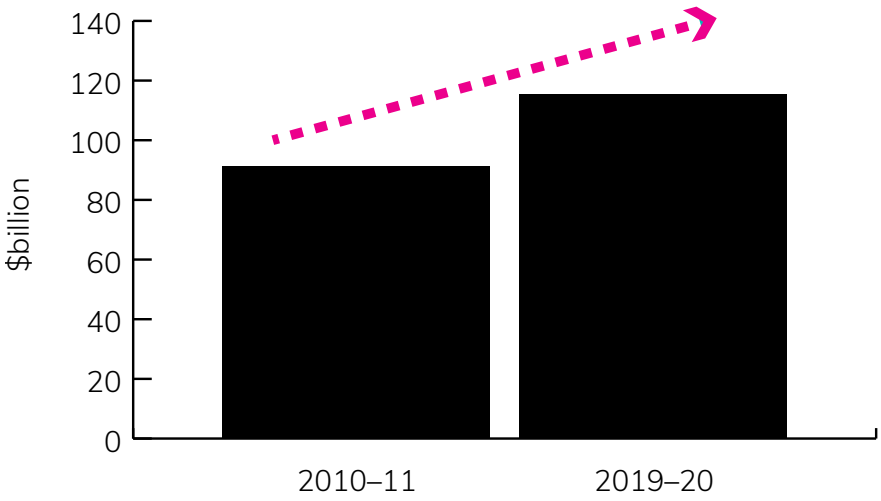
Economic value

Culture and creative activity play vital roles in the economy

Cultural and creative activity in Australia:

- $122.3 billion (6.2%) of GDP[6]
- 27.1% increase in activity over the last 10 years.[7]
- 41% of Australians believe arts bring customers to local businesses.[8]

Figure 4: Cultural and creative activity 2010-11 and 2019-20



Key changes

Cultural and creative activity plays an important role in Australia's economy, growing to $122.3 billion in 2019-20, and increase of $26 billion (27.1%) over the last 10 years.

Source: Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (2022), Cultural and creative activity in Australia, 2010–11 to 2019–20.

6 Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (2022), Cultural and creative activity in Australia, 2010–11 to 2019–20.

7 Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (2022), Cultural and creative activity in Australia, 2010–11 to 2019–20.

8 Australia Council for the Arts (2020) Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

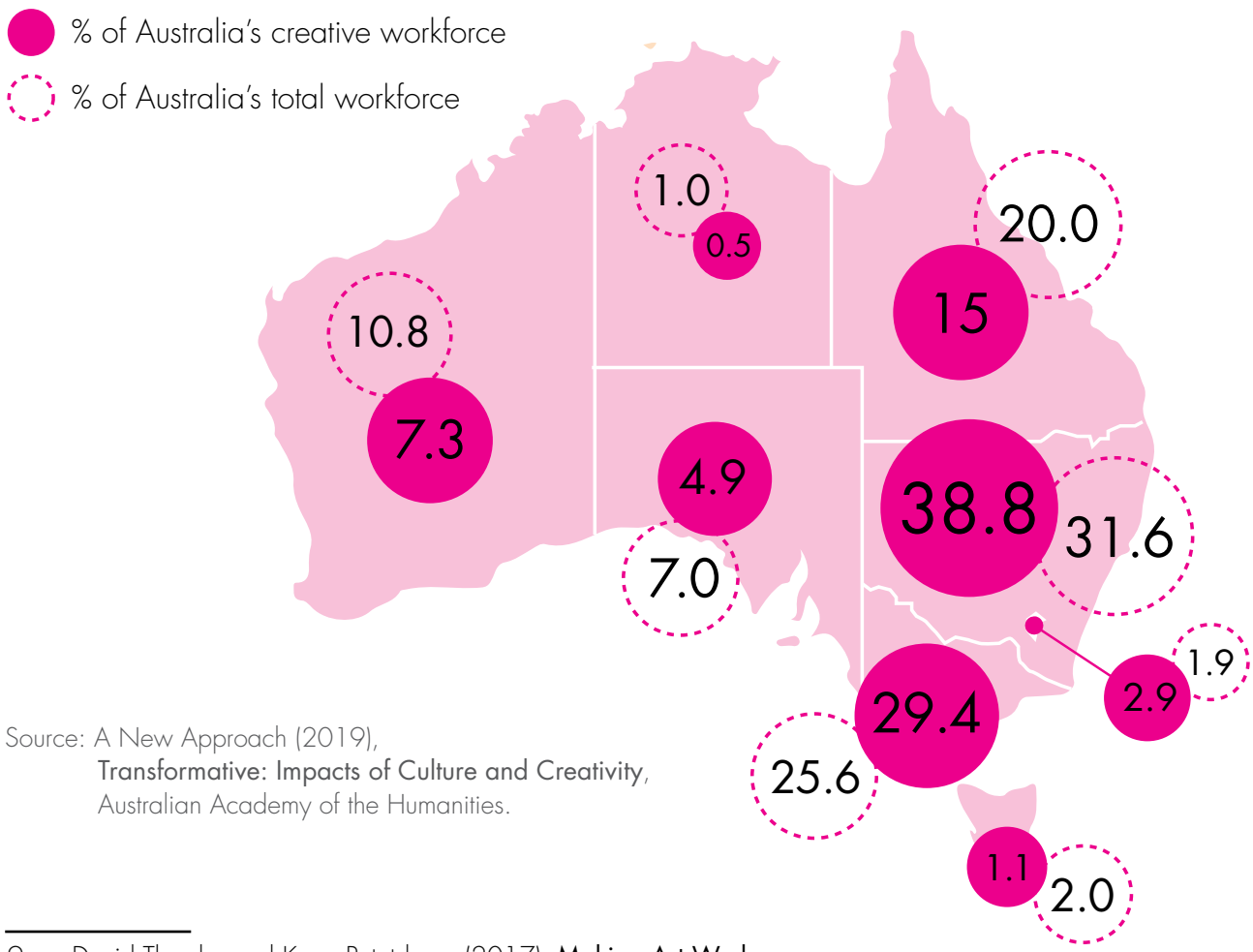
Employment

The arts drive employment

Australia has:

- 48,000 practising professional artists[9]
- 600,000 workers in creative industries[10]
- 2000 people employed in the small-to-medium visual arts sector[11]
- 6% of the workforce employed in cultural and creative industries (that's three times the mining industry).[12]

Figure 5: Per cent share of creative workforce per state, compared to the share of the total Australian workforce per state, 2016.



Source: A New Approach (2019), Transformative: Impacts of Culture and Creativity, Australian Academy of the Humanities.

9 David Throsby and Kaya Petetskaya (2017), Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia, Australia Council

10 SGS Economics and Planning (2013), Valuing Australia's Creative Industries Final Report, Creative Industries Innovation Centre.

11 Rod Campbell, Cameron Murray, Sam Brennan, Jordie Pettit (2017), S2M: The economics of Australia's small-to-medium visual arts sector, National Association for the Visual Arts.

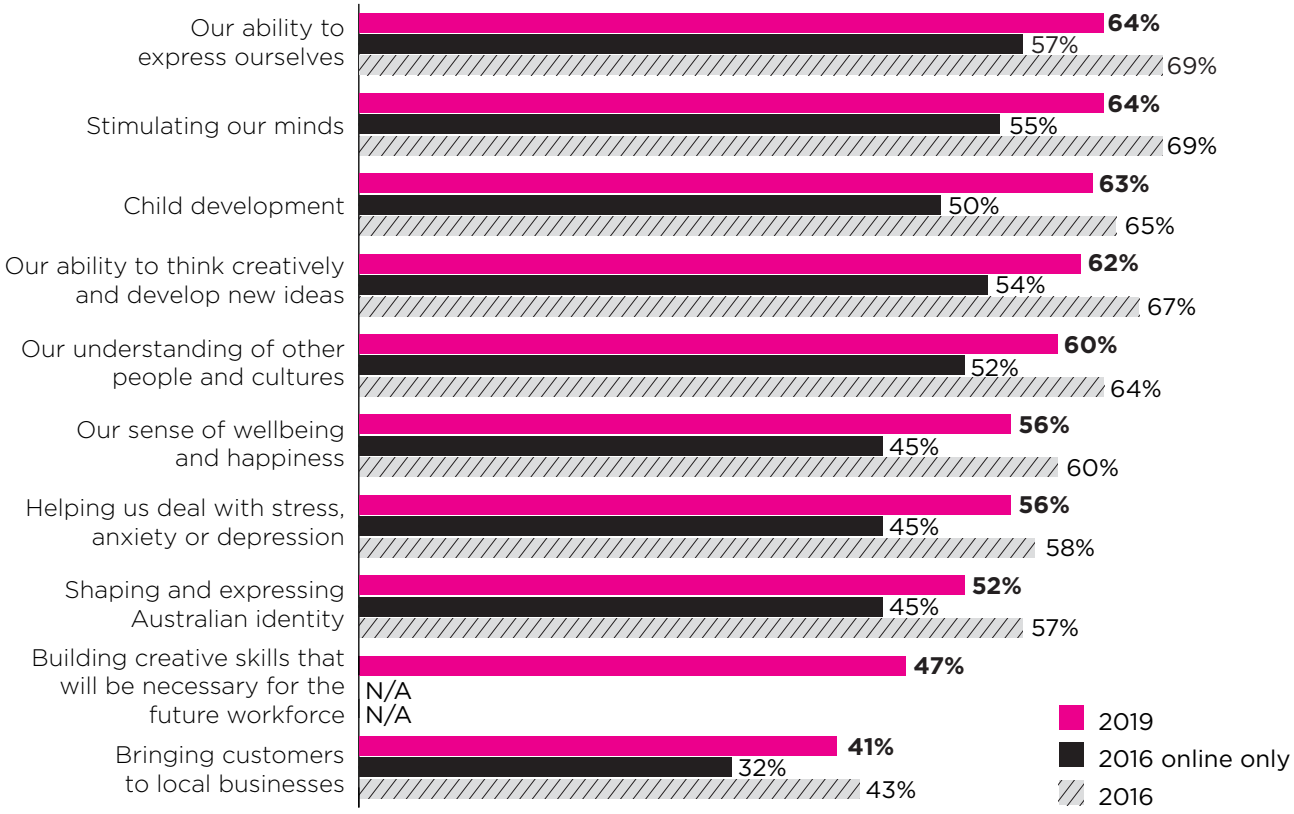
12 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Submission to the Select Committee on Covid-19 Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Health & wellbeing

Australians believe the arts supports health and wellbeing

- 84% believe arts and creativity have a significant positive impact[13]
- 56% believe arts and creativity impact our sense of wellbeing and happiness[14]
- 73% believe the arts improved their mood and quality of life during the pandemic.[15]

Figure 6: Proportion of Australians who felt arts and creativity had a 'big' or 'very big' impact on various areas 2016 and 2019



Base: General population 15+ (n=8,928).

Source: Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

13 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

14 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

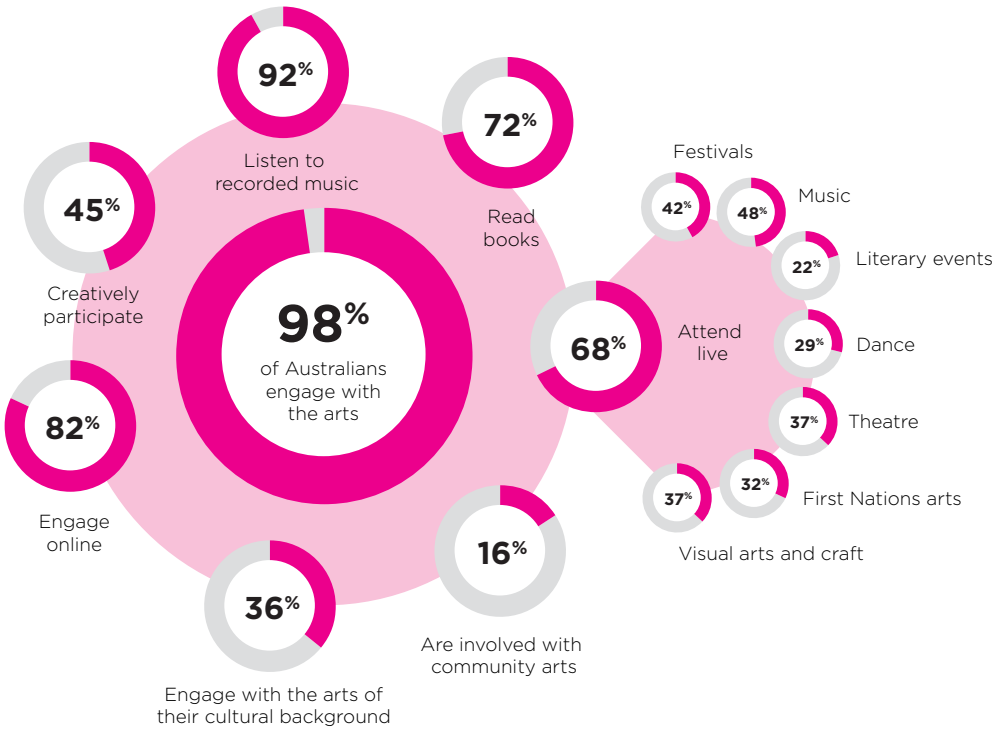
15 Polling – Lockdown and the arts (2020), The Australia Institute.

Community engagement

Australians love experiencing and making art, especially visual art[16]

- 98% of Australians engage with the arts.
- 37% attend visual arts and craft events:
  - 19% attend painting, drawing, printmaking or street art events
  - 13% attend photography events
  - 12% attend sculpture, installation or light projections events
  - 12% attend craft events
- 23% of Australians create visual art (it's the most popular artform for Australian creators):
  - 11% make paintings, drawings, prints or street art
  - 10% make photography
  - 10% make craft
  - 5% make digital or video art
  - 3% make sculpture, installations or light projections

Figure 7: Australians' arts engagement 2019



Source: Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

16 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

Audience at Sustainability of Practice, a participatory forum for artists with Vernon Ah Kee, Donna Davis, Hamish Sawyer, Jo St Baker, and facilitated by Katie Edmiston. Hosted by NAVA in partnership with Moreton Bay Regional Council and Generate Festival at Caboolture Regional Art Gallery 2018. Photo by Rachel Burke.

Tourism

Arts tourists spend more and stay longer[17]

	Domestic arts tourists taking in First Nations arts	**Domestic arts tourists**	**Other domestic tourists**
Average amount spent on an overnight trip	$1558	$1068	$685
Average length of stay for overnight trips	7.5 nights	5 nights	3.5 nights

Visiting museums and art galleries is the most popular arts activity for domestic visitors.[18]

17 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country, Australia Council for the Arts.

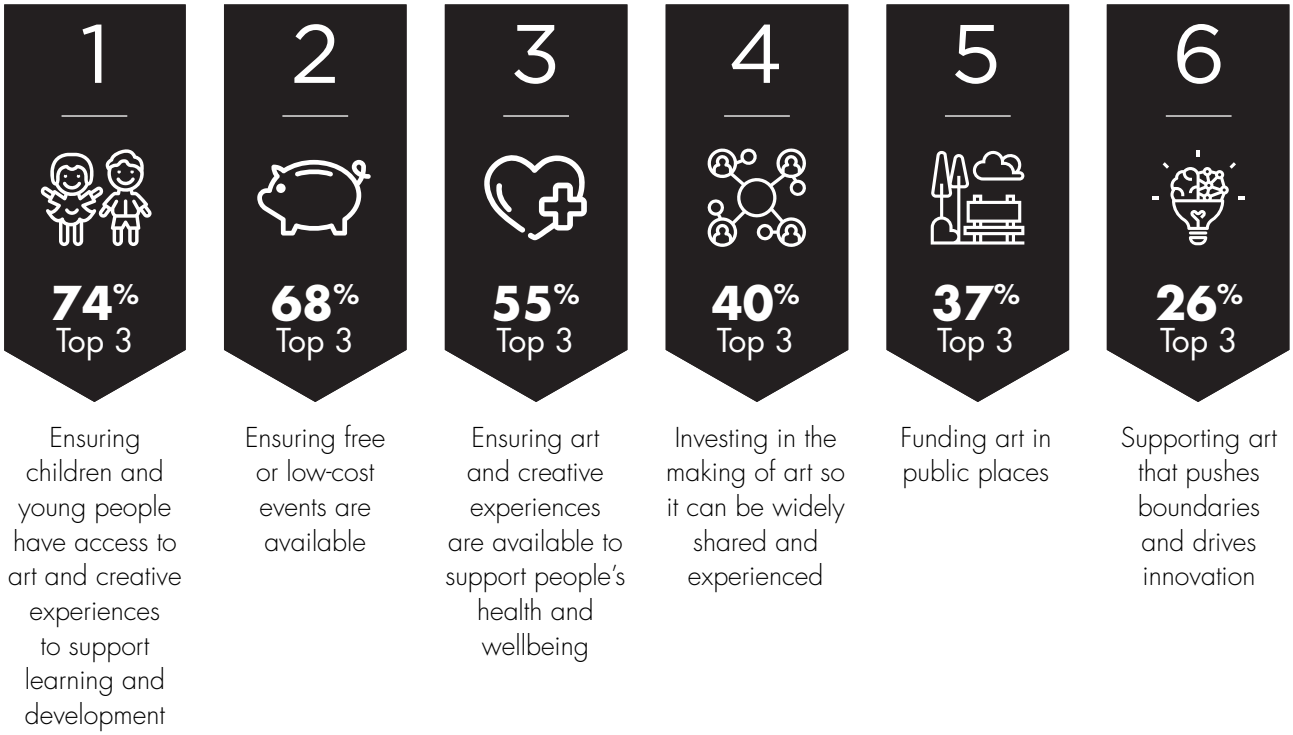
18 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country, Australia Council for the Arts.

Government Support

The arts need government support

- 63% of Australians believe arts should receive public funding.[19]
- Professional artists, on average, earn only 62% of other working Australians.[20]
- 98% of Australians engage with the arts.[21]

Figure 8: Allocation of arts funding in order of importance to Australians 2019



Source: Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.

19 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey.
20 David Throsby and Kaya Petetskaya, Making Art Work: An economic study of professional artists in Australia, Australia Council
21 Australia Council for the Arts (2020), Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey

Local Government can help emerging artists tap into creative networks and make positive connections. LG can also assist individuals and groups to navigate red tape to get their desired outcome where possible.

City of Holdfast Bay, SA

Locust Jones, Aleshia Lonsdale and Harrie Fasher participating in CEL: The Artist as Animator, a five day residential intensive in Hill End in January 2021. Photo by Joel Tonks.

More info

- For more on the strong connection between arts and tourism, see the Australia Council for the Arts' **Domestic Arts Tourism: Connecting the Country**.
- For more on the value of the arts see the Australia Council for the Arts' **Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey**
- NAVA's **Access, Health & Wellbeing page** has information and research on the intersection between arts and these important areas.
- For other great research, see **NAVA's Arts research references**.

Get granular

It's useful to know the national stats on the importance of the arts, but LGAs are very focused on local communities, and it helps to do your research locally as well. LGAs must represent the local community, provide relevant services, and deliver them equitably.

They have a responsibility to provide services and opportunities for marginalised groups, such as First Nations communities, people of colour, d/Deaf and Disabled people, people from different age groups, as well as queer and gender-diverse communities.

Local arts data

One of the best tools for local arts data is the Australia Council's Electorate Profiles. This tool provides information on your local electorate's particular engagement levels with the arts.

Get data on things like:

- How many locals visit art galleries, compared to the national average
- The percentage of the local population accessing arts locally, as opposed to going somewhere else to access arts
- The number of creatives living locally
- The number of local arts venues

Local community data

If you are an artist or organisation from an under-represented group, you may be able to help the council provide services tailored to your community. First get some data behind you to demonstrate the size and needs of your community.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Data by Region app has demographic data, searchable by LGA. The SBS Census Explorer offers information about linguistic diversity by LGA. You can also conduct your own research in the community with a survey.

More info

- South Australian Cultural Impact Guide
  A guide used by LGAs to consider the impact of cultural projects – these can serve as arguments for your proposal.
- Regional Arts Impact Australia | That's a fact!
  Data on arts impact in regional and remote Australia.
- Victorian Local Government Cultural Dashboard
  An app with info by region on the impact and value of LGA cultural programs and facilities.

Manage expectations

Working with councils, just like working with anyone else, requires clear communication and effective planning. Make sure you understand the scope of the project, and that everyone is clear on who is responsible for what.

Paperwork

Councils are dealing with public funds, so they need to have sturdy and transparent processes in place. That means paperwork.

Very often, the LGA will need you to register as a supplier or vendor. Many LGAs recruit and manage contractors through portals such as Tenderlink and Conserve. If there's a project brief, you need to respond to it, addressing the selection criteria and requirements.

You may need to have an ABN and public liability insurance (NAVA can help with that). Your project may also require a detailed work health and safety risk assessment to identify risks and outline ways to mitigate them (NAVA can help with that too).

Before the project starts, you'll usually need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, contract or agreement, outlining the responsibilities of each party. You may also need to issue invoices to the council in a particular format. For more information on the recommended responsibilities of each party, visit these sections in NAVA's Code of Practice: Residencies and Studios, Festivals, Publicly Funded Galleries Selling Work, Hiring a Gallery Space, Exhibiting, and Commissioning Art in Public Space.

Scope

Before signing the contract, it's important to be clear on the scope of the project in terms of time, money and resources.

- Time
  Allow time for LGA approval processes, which can be much longer and more complex than most people anticipate. Also be aware that council arts programs are often focused on community engagement and the LGA may expect you to engage with the community through talks, workshops or studio visits in addition to other parts of the project.
- Money
  It's important to have a realistic budget in place before you commit to a project and ensure you have included a fair rate and a realistic allocation for your own time, as well as covering all equipment and materials. Also make sure you're clear on the council's payment terms and timeframes, which will affect your project's cash flow.
- Resources
  Ensure everyone is clear on who is supplying infrastructure such as transport, installation, marketing, waste disposal, etc. Often, it's easier for the council to supply these sorts of inputs than to increase the budget.

More info

- Head to the NAVA website for:
  - Code of Practice – Packed with information on NAVA's recommendations for ethical conduct when working with visual artists. Includes everything from recommended rates of pay to intellectual property rights, workplace health and safety and superannuation. The Code is endorsed by the Australian Government as part of National Cultural Policy, and referred to by most LGAs.
  - NAVA Guides [Members only] – Information for artists on professional practice in a wide range of areas, including:
    - Project Management Template
      A simple, four-page template to allocate responsibilities and plan your timeline, budget and marketing.
    - Public Art
      Useful information and resources including a public art commission agreement template, tips on completing expressions of interest, and tips on developing a project brief.
    - Residencies, Workshops & Education
      Information on everything from developing a stock inventory, to a community workshop contract checklist.
    - Insurance advice and assistance
      How to access NAVA public liability insurance.
    - Risk Management
      Pithy advice and a sample risk assessment.
- Working with Council – The City of Ballarat's Creative Ballarat guide offers fantastic advice on expectations from councils working with creatives, from sample invoices to the difference between a 'request for quote' and an 'expression of interest' – plus samples of each.

Councils need to adhere to their procurement policies. These are designed for procurement of all goods and services, so are not tailored to arts professionals. This can mean the application/response process for an artist can be lengthy and bewildering.

City of Nedlands, WA

Organise & connect

Connect with your council

Join your council's mailing list and follow it on social media. Connect with council, councillors and units within council. Very often councils have arts-specific channels where they publicise opportunities and grants. Get on them.

Many LGAs have an arts advisory committee. A seat at this table offers you an ongoing opportunity to consult with the council, learn its processes and further your engagement goals. Put yourself forward if you get the chance.

Councils usually also offer community consultation opportunities when they are developing long-term arts and cultural plans. This is when they are listening most closely to community views and you have a chance to influence the priorities and direction captured in the council plans.

More ways to build relationships with council:

- Send invitations
  Invite councillors and council staff to speak to your group, attend your events, visit your studio, attend your openings. Send a personal invitation, not a bulk mailout.
- Offer to present
  Ask if you can make a presentation to councillors or staff about your work and/or organisation.
- Attend council meetings
  Try to discover who are the arts champions on the council.
- Request a standing meeting
  A chat with the arts and cultural officer and/or your favourite councillors.

Connect with other councils

There are many opportunities to engage with LGAs outside your local area. Programs such as artists-in-residence, public art programs, commissions, community engagement and professional development programs frequently seek to bring local communities together with professional artists from outside the area. Connect with councils with strong arts programs to hear about opportunities.

Connect with community

Your voice will carry more weight with councils if you are part of a group. If you can't find a local group to support your goals, why not form one? Whether you call it an arts organisation, studio collective, quilting circle or street-art posse, forming a group will vastly improve your persuasive powers. Councils are usually very keen to work with artist run initiatives (ARIs).

ARIs can form around a medium (e.g. photography), a physical space (e.g. a ceramic workshop or a town), a demographic (young artists, or artists of colour), a cause (artists supporting refugees or protecting a wetland) or anything else that tickles your fancy.

Also connect with organisations relevant to your practice, such as arts organisations and peak bodies. Reach out to local businesses, community groups and clubs to support your project. Your idea will have more credibility and get more traction if you can attract a groundswell of support.

More info

- NAVA's Guides on Artist Run Initiatives [Members only] – Everything you need to know about starting or managing an ARI.
- NAVA's Guide on Advisory Groups [Members only] – Critically examines issues relating to advisory groups, including a case study on local government arts advisory groups.

Be organised.
Local government are much more likely to do business with an affiliated association or a legal entity than with an individual.

City of Joondalup, WA

Tools for relationship building

Following are templates for connecting with council – but don't feel you have to copy them verbatim!

Tips for success:

- Make it yours
  Describe your work in your own words. Personalised letters get noticed.
- Make it local
  Use local data and reference community concerns.
- Be passionate
  What does your practice mean to you? What does the local contemporary arts scene mean to you? Write with clarity and passion.
- Don't risk being ignored
  Offensive or abusive messages don't get taken seriously and completely undermine your efforts.

Artists should know that each LGA serves a specific set of communities, and sits in a geographically unique location. The more an artist has tried to understand the specific nature of our communities, and made a case for how their work is relevant to those communities or to our locations, the easier it is to match them with opportunities.

Melton City Council, VIC

Sample meeting request letter

Dear [Mayor/Lord Mayor/President/Alderman/Councillor/Staff Member],

As one of many artists [living/working in your LGA], I'm writing to request a meeting to brief you about my practice and propose an opportunity for collaboration. I believe that in [your LGA] we need [engagement goal] to [main benefits of goal].

My practice is [this] and [that]. I work mostly from my [studio] but I also support my practice by [doing this other thing maybe]. Making and showing new work is important to me [because of these reasons].

The arts support community wellbeing, connection and pride. They are also great for business. The Australian culture and creative industries contribute $115.8 billion to the economy, or 6% of GDP, and employ 6% of working Australians. And the arts provide a proven boost to local tourism. According to Australia Council research, arts tourists travel further, stay longer and spend more than other tourists. Arts tourists spend an average of $400 per person more than other overnight tourists, or $900 more if they are taking in First Nations arts on their stay.

In the local federal electorate of [your electorate info from] Australia Council Electorate Profiles Tool, [XX] people in the local community engage with the arts. There are [XX] cultural and creative businesses, and [XX] people are employed in cultural and creative fields.

However, local artists, like artists everywhere, were extremely hard hit by the global pandemic, with 53% of arts and recreation businesses forced to close early in the pandemic, compared to 10% of other businesses.

The creative community in [your LGA] needs council support through [engagement goal]. This would entail:

- Dot points of what you want

This is in line with the Council's strategic objectives to [name strategic objectives outlined in council plans]. It would benefit the local community by:

- Dot points of the benefits for council (see engagement goals section)

A program like this has been successfully implemented in [examples of success in other LGAs (see engagement goals section earlier)].

I would appreciate the chance to discuss this with you in more detail – I know we're going to have a lot to talk about. I very much look forward to meeting you – either at my [studio/exhibition/event, at local fave gallery], or online.

Yours faithfully

[Your signature]

Sample invitation to an opening

Dear [Mayor/Lord Mayor/President/Alderman/Councillor/Staff Member],

I'd like to invite you to my [studio/exhibition/event] which is about [details] on [date]. I welcome you to say a few words at the [opening] where you'll also meet [artists/community members/leaders/media] from our LGA.

There's a strong and vibrant creative community in [your LGA]. According to the Australia Council, [XX] people engage with the arts in the federal electorate of [your electorate info from] Australia Council Electorate Profiles Tool. There are [XX] cultural and creative businesses, and [XX] people are employed in cultural and creative fields. We would love to have a greater engagement with council to support community wellbeing, boost the local economy, bring visitors to our area and build our sense of local identity.

I believe council can support the arts by [engagement goal]. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this in more detail. This would be a great opportunity for our local artists to collaborate with council to improve outcomes for our community.

I'm attaching some more information about me and my practice. I am happy to meet with you to discuss this event – either at my [studio/exhibition/event], at [local fave gallery], or online.

Yours faithfully

[Your signature]

Sample tweets

- Hi @localcouncillor! I'm an artist who works in [your LGA]. Let's invest in creative skills, arts tourism, and the jobs and opportunities that power the [your LGA] economy by [engagement goal]. Let's talk.
- We need an arts-led #COVID19au recovery in [your LGA] – @localcouncillor I'd love to meet you to talk about how to tap the creative community to promote tourism, boost mental health and remind our community what matters. Let's talk.

More info

- NAVA Advocacy Handbook – Advice for advocating at the federal level that is also applicable at the local level.
- NAVA's Networking 101 [Members only] offers simple tips and tricks on effective networking.
- NAVA's Your Local Community factsheet [Members only] offers links to finding connections in your backyard.
- Australian Government Style Manual – Details the correct (and sometimes-fiddly) style required when addressing mayors and councillors.

Evaluation & monitoring

LGAs are accountable to the local community. If the LGA supports your project with community resources, it will need to demonstrate how your project has benefited the community. You need to give it the data to do this.

What is evaluation & monitoring?

Simply put, evaluation aims to figure out if the project met its goals. From the council's point of view, the goals will usually be related to its strategic priorities, outlined in the council plan. You will also have your own goals for the project to evaluate (e.g. increasing your audience or gaining coverage in local media).

Monitoring is the collection of the data you need to make an evaluation.

How do you do it?

Keep records of all aspects of your project – and if it runs for a long period, take records at regular intervals. This includes things like event attendance, media clippings and social media mentions.

One of the very best ways to gather data for an evaluation is to conduct a survey. This can be done live (e.g. at an opening with an iPad, or by handing around a paper survey) or via an online survey. Get some quotes and testimonials while you're at it and ask if respondents would like to go on your mailing list.

What kind of data?

You should be able to clearly articulate your connection with the community, your reception from audiences and your accountability to any special groups you represent – in other words, your 'relevance' and 'impact'. Keep a record of:

- Audience numbers (event attendance, mailing list, social media followers)
- Comments and quotes (in writing or recorded interviews)
- Photos and videos (audiences interacting with your work)*
- Funders and commissioners (those who have supported or purchased your work)
- Partners (community organisations, businesses and groups you've worked with)
- Outcomes from any programs or workshops that you have run

*If you plan to capture photos and videos, make sure you get permission from the people being photographed, or display a sign to notify audiences that they may be photographed and offer the chance to opt out.

More info

- **Google Forms** is a free online survey option.
- Creative Victoria's **Audience Research Toolkit** has survey templates, advice on conducting on-site interviews and more.
- Diversity Arts Australia's **Creative Equity Toolkit** has information on creating meaningful and measurable evaluations.
- Australian Local Government Association Arts and Culture Policy Position
- **Culture Counts** offers resources and articles on visualising data and storytelling with data.

> [Councillors are] very invested in the instrumental value of arts - i.e. not arts for art's sake but what it can provide in terms of economic development, tourism, health education etc. [They] will want data to support their investment but it is important to be able to tell a good story.
>
> Barossa Council, SA

Back cover: Steffie Yee, 爱心水果 / Fruit From The Heart, 2022. Installation for Neon Playground festival led by Haymarket HQ and Soul Of Chinatown. Photo courtesy of the artist.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE VISUAL ARTS