

DECEMBER 2022

'LETS MAKE A CIRCLE'

AN ARTIST-LED
RESEARCH PROJECT
ABOUT THE SOCIALLY-
ENGAGED ARTS SECTOR
IN AUSTRALIA

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY
HANNAH GRANT-DOLEV AND DEBBY MAZIARZ



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was created on the lands of the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation, and on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our respects Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise First People's ongoing custodianship of the continent now called Australia, and their 60,000 years' of continual culture and connection to these lands and waters.

Artists who participated in our research are based on Wurundjeri, Kurna, Gadigal, Barngarla, Yuin, Cameraygal, Ngarluma Ngurra, Darkinjung, Gunaikurnai, Wangal, Bidjigal, Bungandidj, Larrakia, Jerrinja, Jinibara, Jagera, Turrbul, Dja Dja Wurrang, Tharawal, Melukerdee, Dharug, Whadjuk, Nipaluna, Gundungurra, Ngunnawal, Ngambri, Lutruwita, Darkinjung, Miriwoong, Gadigal, Boon Wurrung, Woi-worong, Boonwurrung and Whadjuk Lands.

We recognise that terms like 'socially-engaged arts' have devolved from Western concepts of what the arts should be, and that the division of practice within the arts sector exists in Australia as a result of colonialism.

We would like to recognise and thank the First Peoples artists who have participated in this research. We commit to centring First Peoples' voices in our ongoing work.

We are immensely grateful to the 50 artists who completed our research survey and the 15 artists who participated in our focus groups. We know your time is precious and we are thankful that you could dedicate some of it to this research. We acknowledge your huge passion and commitment to socially-engaged and community-focused artistic practice.

We would like to thank the Australia Council for the Arts (AusCo) for their ongoing support of this project, particularly the Capacity Building & Sector Development and Research Teams. We are grateful to have received funding from AusCo Collaboration Fund to support this research project.

We are eternally grateful to National Arts Strategies (NAS) in the USA. We met as participants on the Creative Community Fellows Program in 2019/2020, and that experience has inspired this work. We are thankful for the ongoing connection to and support from the NAS Team, Fellowship Program Faculty and our fellow Fellows!

Finally, we are grateful to our families who support us around long hours and big projects with their love, encouragement, acceptance and time.

- Hannah & Debby, July 2022

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ABOUT US

DEBBY MAZIARZ



Debby is a Melbourne based creative entrepreneur committed to building the capacity of independent artists seeking to sustain their creative practices.

In 2010, Debby established Debby Maziarz Productions, an arts leadership incubator that combines a wellness, peer learning and social circus methodology to build a stronger creative community.

Debby's practice and approach are underpinned by a belief that sustainability in the arts can be achieved through a more self-aware arts ecology, that strives for equitable systems and processes, and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Debby is committed to supporting artists to design their own models, practices and ways of working.

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HANNAH GRANT-DOLEV



Hannah is the Founder and Director of Collective Impact Arts – an organisation which grows from her 20 years of experience in creative engagement and the Arts for Social Impact space. She combines a background in social work, education and the arts to deliver socially-engaged and participatory projects. She is driven by a commitment to social justice, influenced by her Jewish heritage.

Hannah works in Australia and globally, developing work in partnership with government, education, health and community organisations.

Hannah is passionate about the Australian socially-engaged arts sector. She leads capacity building and networking initiatives for artists running participatory projects. She works with arts and community organisations to support them with strategy development, program design and impact measurement.

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INTRODUCTION

We (Hannah and Debby) passionately believe in the socially-engaged arts sector - its processes, practices, artists and workers. We met in 2019, when we were selected to participate in the Creative Community Fellows program, run by National Arts Strategies in the USA and supported by the Australia Council for the Arts.

In 2022, we embarked on a research project to discover **how to make the socially-engaged arts sector thrive**, funded by the Australia Council's' Collaboration Fund.

Our research grows from our own experiences as socially-engaged arts workers. Our goal is to uncover actionable findings that will support the wellbeing and connectedness of arts workers, increase understanding of the sector's social value, and help create better systems for sector sustainability.

Our research methodologies:

PHASE	ACTIVITIES
PHASE 01 SECTOR SURVEY	<p>We developed an online survey with support from the Australia Council and its Capacity Building and Research Teams. The survey was designed to capture insights from socially-engaged arts workers on their experiences in the sector, and the advocacy they think is needed.</p> <p>The survey was disseminated through our personal networks, online forums and groups, and via social media.</p>
PHASE 02 SECTOR FOCUS GROUPS	<p>We held two focus groups with socially-engaged arts workers to explore and expand on survey findings, and to test our assumptions.</p>
PHASE 03 ANALYSIS	<p>We analysed the quantitative and qualitative data from the survey and the focus groups to compile this report, to offer insight into the current state of the sector and outline opportunities for its future.</p>
FUTURE PLANS	<p>We will circulate this research report within the sector and discuss outcomes with the Australia Council, Peak Bodies and Arts Funders.</p> <p>Together we will plan programs and initiatives to support arts leadership within the socially-engaged arts sector,</p>

This research project is a 'listening tour'. It is not an artist census or a comprehensive portrait of socially-engaged arts workers in Australia. Our activities were limited by the resources, skills and a short time-period due to our funding. We targeted individuals and organisations through our own established artist networks. This included First Peoples artists, artists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and artists based across urban, regional and remote locations.



Report Structure

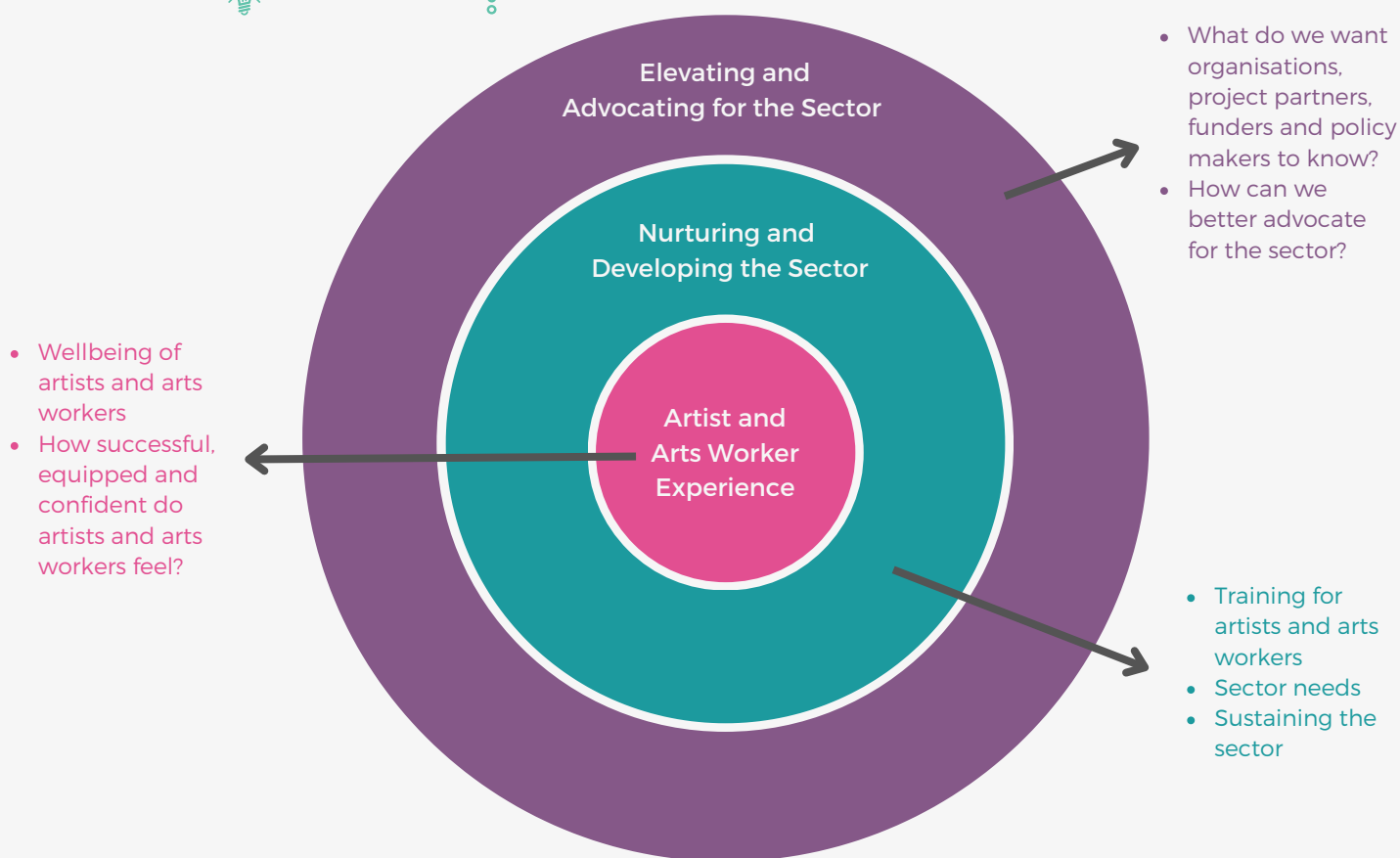
Our report begins with a look at the socially-engaged arts sector through the **voices of our survey respondents**. We outline who the respondents are, including where they are based, how they describe their work, and we explore how we can define socially-engaged arts work.

Following this, we explore our research and focus group data in three sections, the themes of which we envisage as concentric, interdependent circles.

These concentric circles reflect core questions within our research:

- **How we might better support socially-engaged artists and arts workers to thrive?**
- **How we might work together to nurture our sector?**
- **How we might better advocate for the way the sector works and the outcomes we achieve?**

Throughout these three sections of our report, we've included some of our data commentary as thoughts  and questions .



These concentric circles enable us to develop a holistic approach to exploring what the socially-engaged arts sector needs to thrive. We can also explore the relationship between each circle. For example, when artists are not supported, project outcomes can be limited, and the bandwidth artists and project partners have for advocating for the sector and for sustaining the work can be impacted. Similarly, when there is not strong advocacy for the sector, resources flowing down to projects and artists can become lacking. We need to explore each circle's theme and how they all connect as part of the sector's ecosystem.

We conclude our report with the **key takeaways and opportunities** discovered through our research, outlining what could be done for each 'circle' that can lead towards a thriving socially-engaged arts sector as a whole.

SECTION 1: SURVEY RESPONDENTS

50 people from across Australia who work in the socially-engaged arts sector responded to our survey between February - May 2022. Some respondents were sent the survey link directly by us, or by the Australia Council's Capacity Building team. Others participated in the survey because they saw posts on social media and via arts networking groups.

Image: Front page of our survey on Google Forms



The image shows the front page of a Google Form survey. At the top, there is a teal header with the text "SOCIALY-ENGAGED ARTS LEADERS' PROGRAM: AUSTRALIA" in white, surrounded by colorful confetti. Below the header, the main title "CALLING SOCIALY ENGAGED ARTS PRACTITIONERS!" is displayed in bold black text. The body of the form contains several paragraphs of text, including a welcome message, an introduction to the researchers (Debbie and Hannah), and a thank you message at the bottom.

**SOCIALY-ENGAGED ARTS LEADERS' PROGRAM:
AUSTRALIA**

CALLING SOCIALY ENGAGED ARTS PRACTITIONERS!

Welcome to the research survey for the 'Socially-Engaged Arts Leaders Program' development. Please take a bit of time to read our introduction below, and feel free to give as much time as you'd like/have to your answers. The minimum time it'll probably take is 15 minutes. There are 3 sections.

We are Debbie and Hannah (both she/her), two passionate arts leaders committed to challenging and reshaping the conditions and paradigms that artists engage and participate in. Between us, we have over 40 years' experience as socially-engaged arts workers. We met in 2019, when we were selected to be the two Australian fellows for the 'Creative Community Fellows' program run by National Arts Strategies in the USA, supported by the Australia Council. This experience gave us a lot of ideas for what we'd like to build in Australia, and we'd love for you to join us on this journey.

For now, this is an artist-led research project driven by a desire to improve the state of things for socially engaged arts practitioners in Australia.

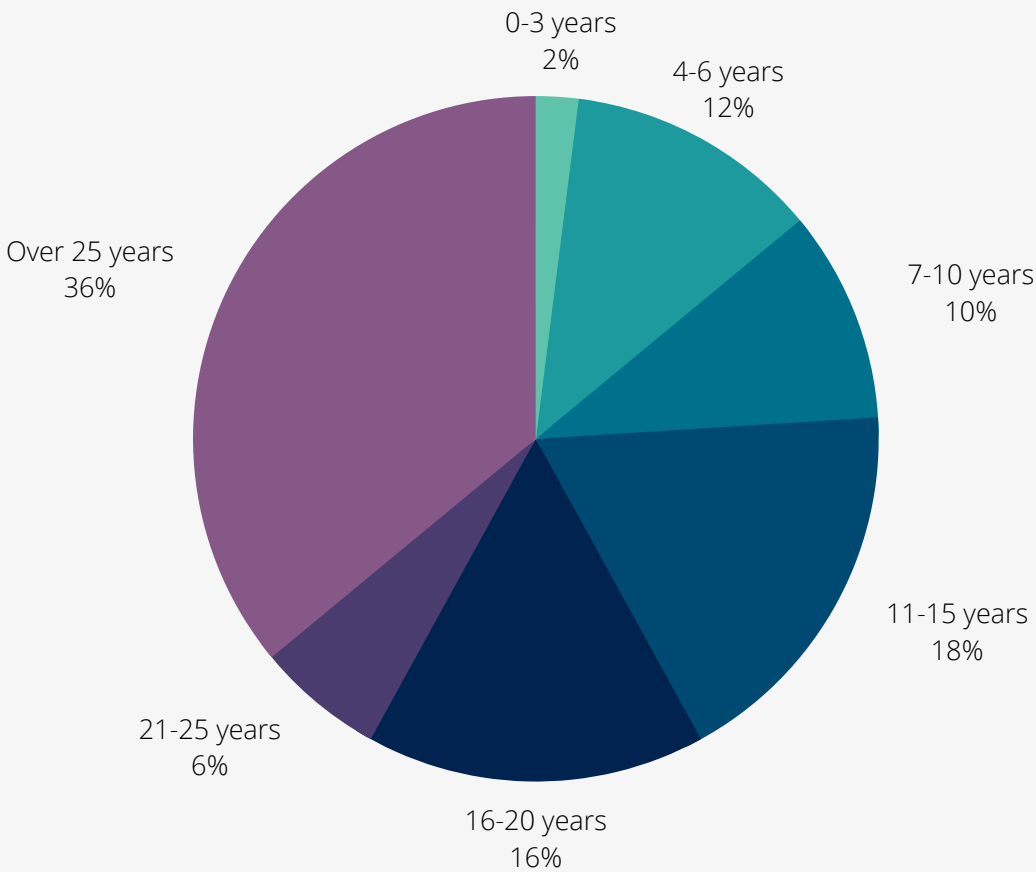
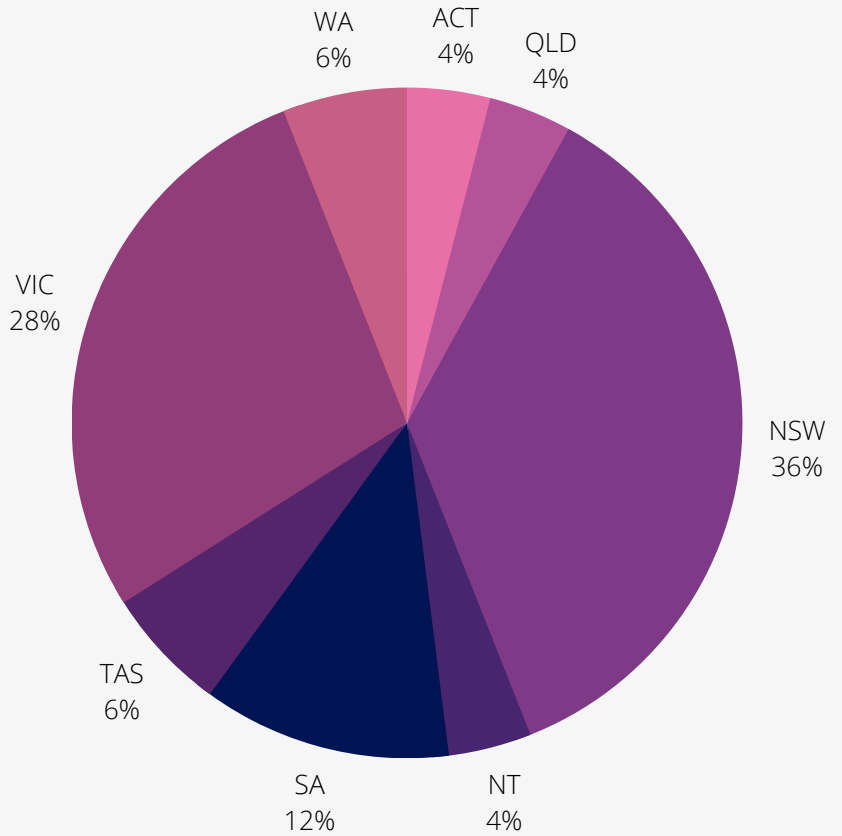
Our goal is to uncover actionable findings that our sector can use to build new programs and drive artist-led change.

We're grateful for the support from the Australia Council for the Arts for this research project.

This is not an artist census or a comprehensive portrait of socially-engaged artists (however you define yourselves!) We know that surveys can be painful and we don't want to diminish the complexities of an artists' experience with statistics. We understand that data is useful only when it is shared and in the context of embodied connections.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! We're excited to hear from you and work with you!

Where in Australia are survey respondents based (by State)?

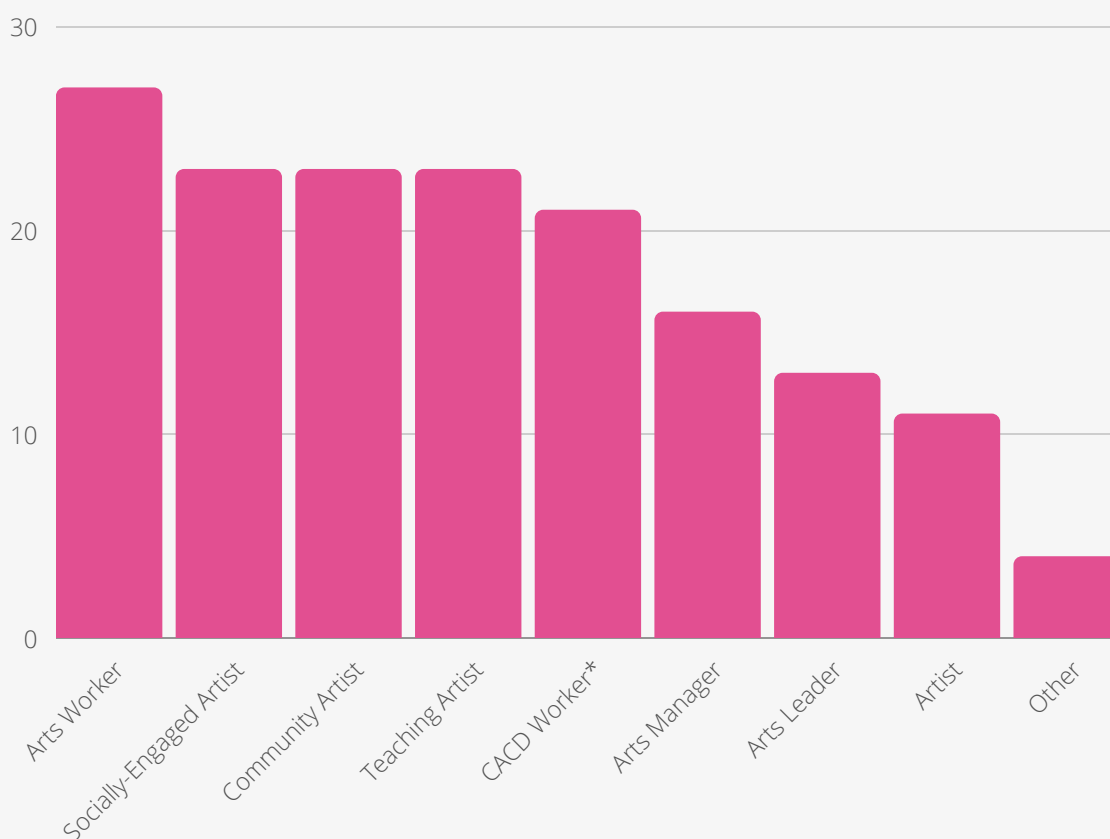


How long have respondents been working in the socially-engaged arts sector?

HOW WE DEFINE THE SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ARTS SECTOR

What terms do survey respondents use to define their work?

We asked survey respondents to select the the terms they use to describe themselves from a list of multiple options.



**CACD stands for 'Community Arts and Cultural Development' - a term commonly used in Australia but not internationally.*



There is no one perfect or universal term for the work we do, and we do not believe that there needs to be. We think it is more important to communicate practice, demonstrate the value of our work, advocate for the wellbeing of and better conditions for arts workers.

How do survey respondents define 'Socially-Engaged Artistic Practice'?

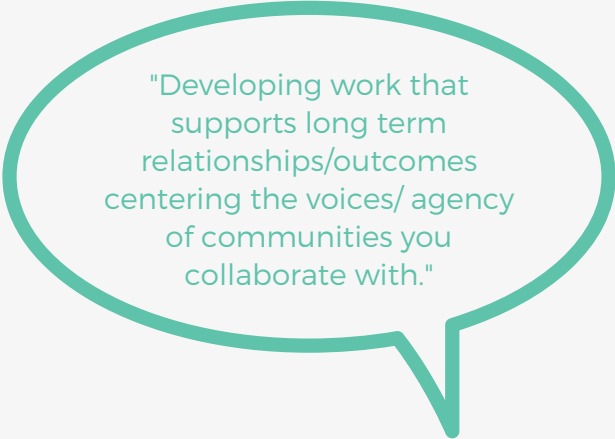
We asked survey respondents how they would define the term 'Socially-Engaged Arts Practice'. The word cloud below highlights the most common words and phrases shared in their responses:



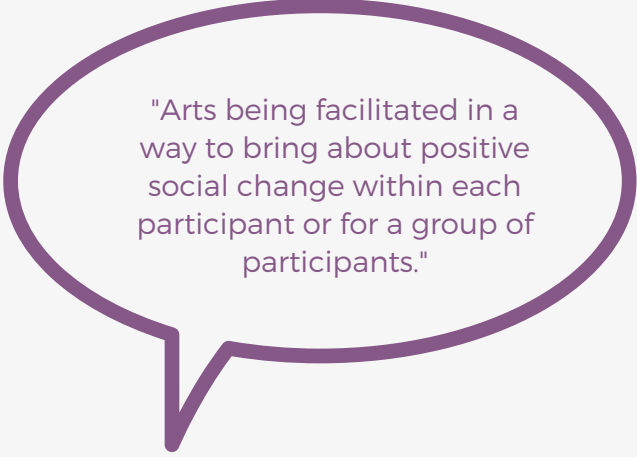
The majority of responses included the words 'community', 'people', 'connection' and 'social issues/social change'. Fewer responses focused specifically on art-making and artistic outcomes. This indicates a shared understanding of the 'people and community focused' nature of socially-engaged arts work.

Quotes from respondents:

"Socially-Engaged Arts Work is..."




"Developing work that supports long term relationships/outcomes centering the voices/ agency of communities you collaborate with."



"Arts being facilitated in a way to bring about positive social change within each participant or for a group of participants."



"Creating space for people through The Arts."



"Collaborations with community participants. Reciprocity. Critical engagement with social justice concerns, Supporting communities to be agents of change in contexts that have meaning for them. Creative exploration of urgent social concerns."



"The art we make is about building space - creating a framework - and in this space a community is formed around the work and the things we want to explore and share."

Challenging terminology:

"As someone whose 'socially-engaged' arts work is tied to my identity, I am not actually particularly comfortable with this term. I feel strongly that caring about others and bringing them along with my work is simply a civil responsibility that is intrinsically linked to my culture and upbringing. That said, the term itself paints the picture of an arts practitioner who puts other people and their needs first."

"Let's unpick this language, especially what we mean by 'community'. Let's not use 'community' as a synonym for 'people experiencing disadvantage'. Let's undo this colonial mindset."

"'Socially-engaged' is a term the contemporary art world has created to make CACD sound sexy! Although I would argue that some work that goes under this title has the aesthetics but not processes of CACD."

"Actually, we need to decolonise arts language. Why should participatory or community art have this different term? Socially-Engaged or CACD practice is what art making is, should be, and always has been - storytelling, collaboration, community, participation, partnership. Stop belittling what we do with terms that de-value."

'Socially-Engaged' is not a perfect term - although it has grown in popularity in recent years, and is used internationally (unlike 'CACD', which is principally used in Australia).



The need to define the sector can also grow from systems and structures (e.g. - funding) that require artists to choose terms that best suit their work.

No matter what terminology is used for this practice, it is always important to ensure ethical practice working with communities, and to always unpack and address our own biases and the social constructs we work in.

SECTION 2: ARTIST AND ARTS WORKER EXPERIENCE

In this section, we're focusing on our central concentric circle by looking at questions in our survey that relate to 'Artist and Arts Worker Experience' within the socially-engaged arts sector.



Artist and Arts Worker Experience

'Employee Experience' is a growing area within the field of Organisational Development which looks at what makes people feel positive and satisfied in their workplace. We've borrowed 'Employee Experience' themes to find out how socially-engaged artists and arts workers (who often work as sole traders or within small organisations without big budgets for staff culture initiatives) feel in their work and practice.

We want to explore what support artists and arts workers might need in order to thrive. This section covers:

- **What success can look like for survey respondents**
- **Artist and Arts Worker wellbeing**
- **How equipped and confident artists and arts workers feel in their practice and as arts leaders?**

By exploring Artist and Arts Worker Experience, we aim to build a picture both of the experiences of our individual survey respondents, and of collective experience across the sector based on common response themes.

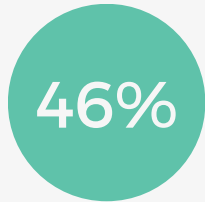
SUCCESS

We asked survey respondents to respond to tick-box options relating to their concept of 'success'. They could choose their top three from a list of eighteen options.

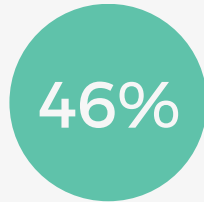
The most ticked options were:



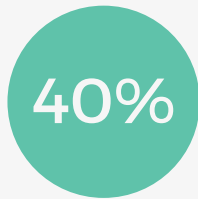
Community participants are engaged in the process



I can see and explain my project's impact



My project has legacy



I am inspired by my work



I am remunerated well



Community partners are satisfied with the project

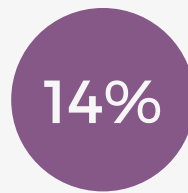
The least popular options were:



My project runs according to schedule



My project has the desired number of participants



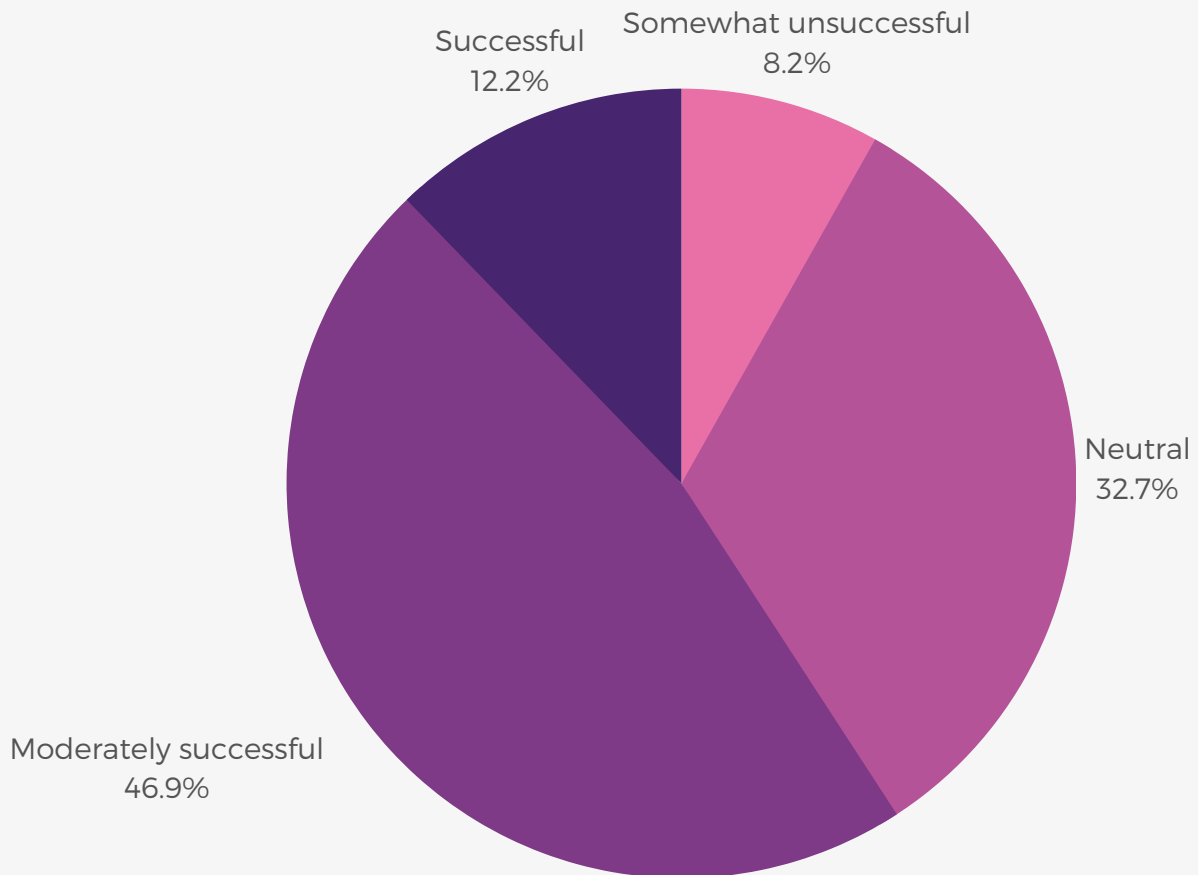
I am well-planned and have good administrative systems for myself



Success for socially-engaged arts workers is linked to the impact and experience of participants and community partners. Project management elements and administration are less important as markers of success, even though these can contribute to successful project outcomes.

What does success look like for survey respondents?

We asked survey respondents if they feel they are 'successful on their own terms'. This could be temporal and associated with a particular project or conditions they are working in at the time, or it could be cumulative success and a reflection of how respondents feel about their career journey overall.



How might we support socially-engaged arts workers to feel more successful on their own terms?

What skills and resources do socially-engaged arts workers need to define their own terms and conditions, and to advocate for these?

How might we 'capture success' in all of its complex and layered forms, and communicate these to peers, collaborators, funding bodies and policy makers?

How might we ensure independent arts workers and artists are included in longitudinal evaluations and social impact measures of projects that are led by non-arts sector partners?

Quotes from respondents:

"What does success look like for you?"

"Success is when a work takes on a life of its own, beyond you the artist. When it means something to other people."

"When we can leave and the project continues without our input."

"Our ideas becoming an understood approach that can be adapted across all regions."

"Success to me is standing side by side with you building a better world. Building a future for children that are not ours and that we will never meet."

"Success looks like the decision making strategies/processes involving community members."

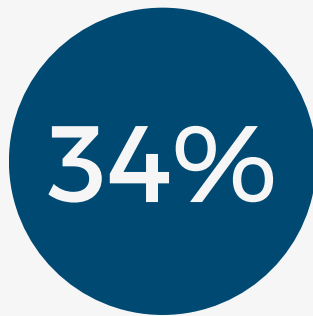
"Success is seeing positive outcomes for my participants. Seeing real changes occur in their mental health, confidence and self esteem."

WELLBEING

We asked survey respondents how balanced they feel in four areas - **social, emotional, physical and financial**. These survey questions were inspired by the 'Wheel of Wellbeing', created by Dr Daniel and Bonnie Sadigh, which explores a holistic approach to wellbeing.

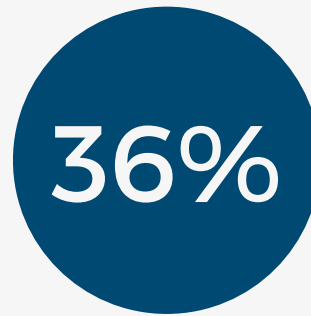
The most common responses for each area are below:

SOCIAL



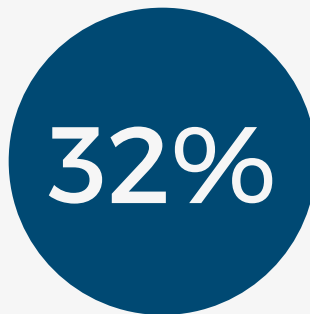
Of respondents feel
'moderately balanced'

EMOTIONAL



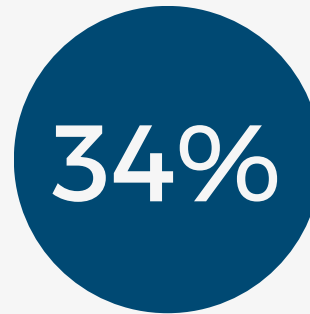
Of respondents feel
'moderately balanced'

PHYSICAL



Of respondents feel
'moderately balanced'

FINANCIAL



Of respondents feel
'unbalanced'

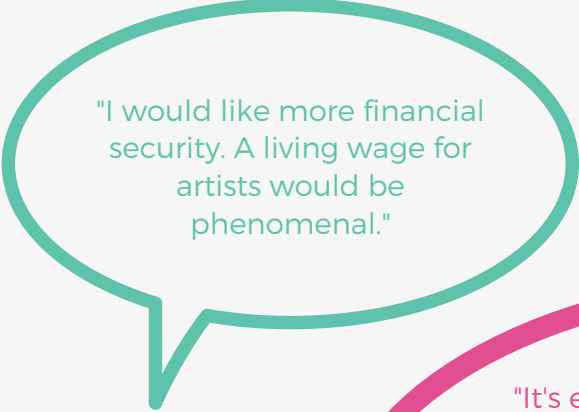


Approximately a third of respondents feel moderately socially, emotionally and physically balanced. How might we better support arts workers' wellbeing?


A third of respondents feel financially unbalanced. How might we better recognise arts workers' labour, and valuable contribution to building people, places and communities?

Quotes from respondents:


"Tell us more about how 'balance' feels for you, across the four areas"




"I would like more financial security. A living wage for artists would be phenomenal."



"It's like that meme where it says 'you can only pick two - money or sleep or socialising.'"



"It's extremely tough. Long term systemic socially engaged art is still not highly valued in most aspects of our society. I'm working on building my own capacity to advocate for the practice, but it's a lot of risk/ responsibility/ justification of practitioner to balance these competing priorities and make challenging decisions, usually at the expense of their own financial, health, social wellbeing."



"I feel well in my practice, However in 2021, I estimate that I worked in kind for \$30,000. This is due to project funding not being appropriate to the project, salaried workers in partner organisations not understanding the amount freelancers do for free, and myself as an artist working too much because I want the best for the community. I'm fed up of being asked to work on a project by theatre companies and being told 'we don't have much of a budget.'"

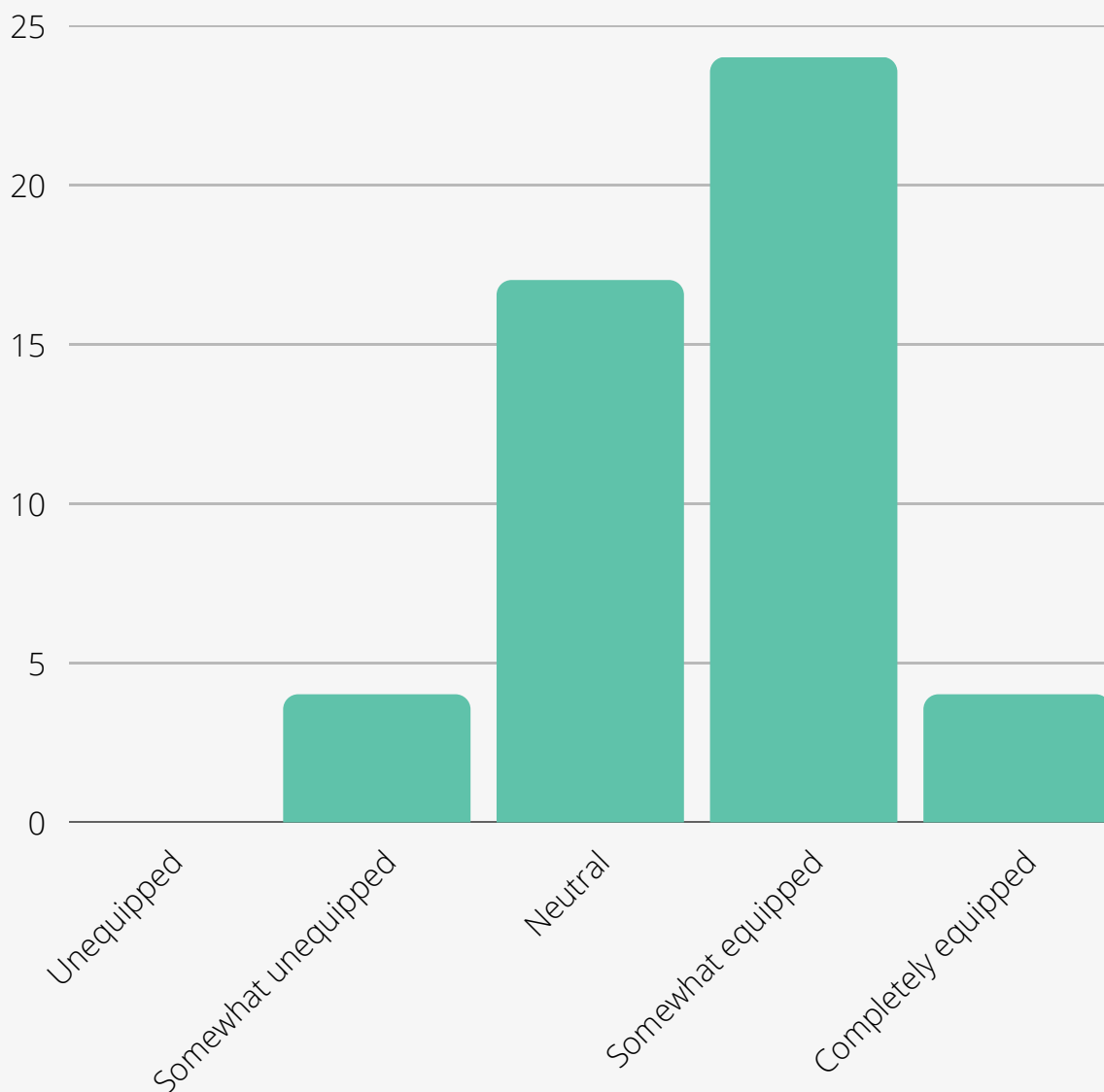
FEELING EQUIPPED AND CONFIDENT

How equipped do survey respondents feel in their work?

We asked survey respondees to share how 'equipped' they feel in approaching their day-to-day practice and projects.

'Equipped' could include the following:

- Skills
- Having a team/co-workers
- Financial support
- Community support
- Self-support (mental wellbeing, work boundaries)
- Anything else!



"Convincing non-arts workers and those who have no experience with the arts, that art is a legitimate educational and mental wellbeing program for offenders is a real challenge at times. It is often perceived as a 'soft' option, a bludge, so I would definitely say I am under resourced. Financial resources and human resources are a barrier."

"I feel like I have the skills to do my work and I am remunerated properly. But I am missing the community of like minded artists to riff off ideas and problem solve."

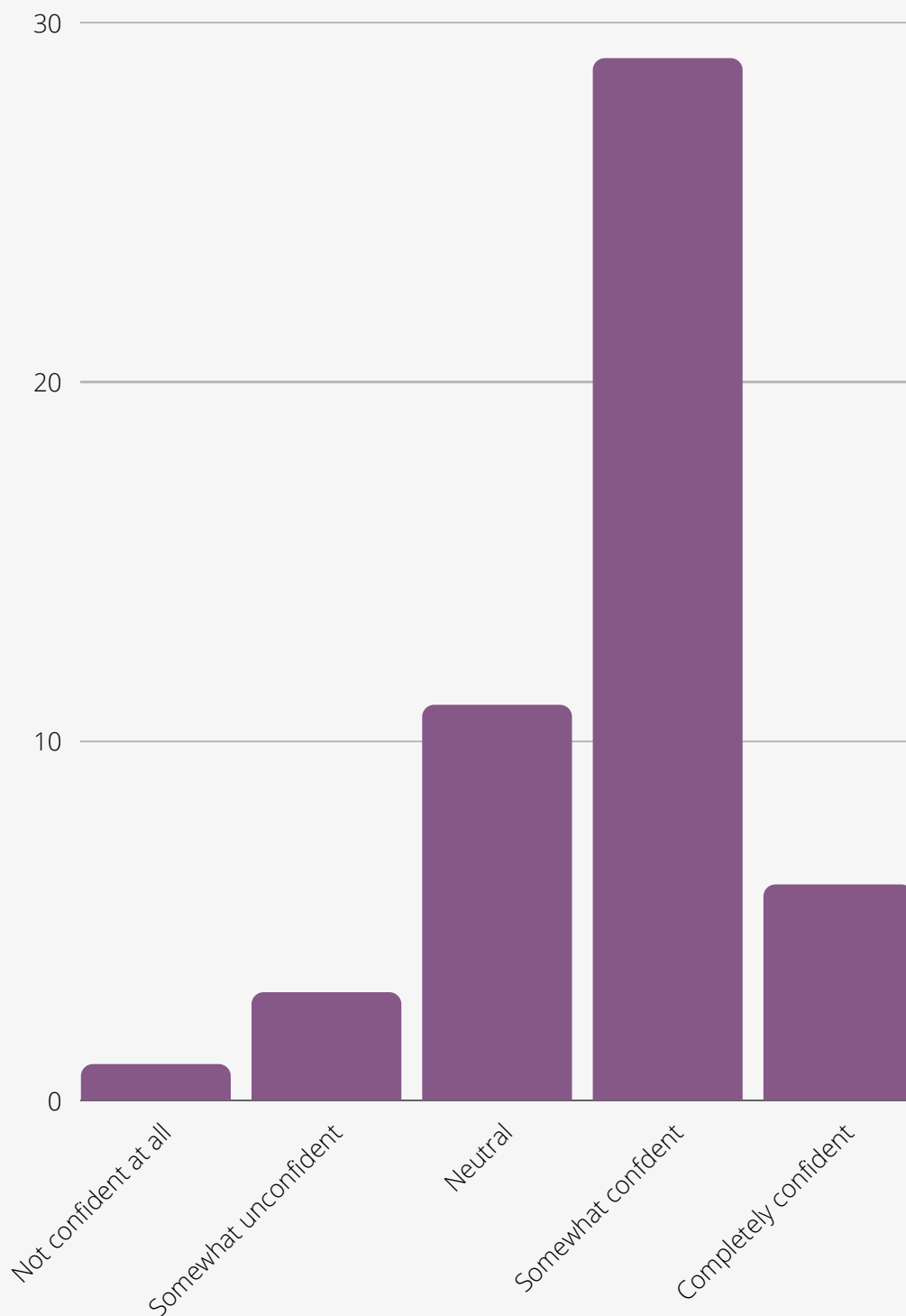
"The lack of peer support and sector development means I feel like I'm always hitting ceilings with my practice. I know I could feel more equipped if I could access communities of practice."

"I feel fairly equipped to pursue the work I want to pursue. But there are not local infrastructures around to support that work. There is so much time 'volunteered' into these projects that is unfunded."

"I have not found everything lines up in a consistent manner with community-engaged art practices. The projects I had considerable financial/team support (e.g. - in partnership with local government) lacked community support and thus I needed to invest significant time in building community trust, and projects that had strong community support lacked financial/team support."

How confident do survey respondents feel in their arts leadership?

We asked survey respondees to share how confident they feel in the own arts leadership. This could be interpreted as **self-leadership** as well as **leading projects, teams or organisations**.



"I have confidence in my ideas and the potential for the creative projects I imagine for my community. I have less confidence in my ability to take all the steps to make them happen."

"I have played myself in the middle as that is where I feel stuck right now. Wanting to grow and expand, but not quite having the skills set or financial capital to take that next step."

"I feel I naturally am driven and am currently exploring leadership through a Masters program to better equip myself to bring about the best in my leadership."

"I don't know how confident I can feel about leadership. I feel like I will always be emerging. While I'm happy with the work I create, I still feel like an imposter when anyone asks me about my work/suggests me for collaboration."

"I feel I am a good arts leader within my industry. I need to be considered more of a leader within my organisation."

Survey respondents shared a common theme: feeling equipped in their own work and skillsets, but experiencing gaps in value alignment, lack of resources and peer networks. These gaps contributed to a sense of being unequipped.



Whilst the majority of respondents felt 'somewhat confident', many shared that increased structural support and sector development would be supportive.

SECTION 3: NURTURING AND DEVELOPING THE SECTOR

In this section we look at the needs of the socially-engaged arts sector - our second concentric circle.

We move on from individual artist and arts worker experience to look more at collective experience, enabling us to explore how the sector can better support artists and what it needs to be more sustainable.

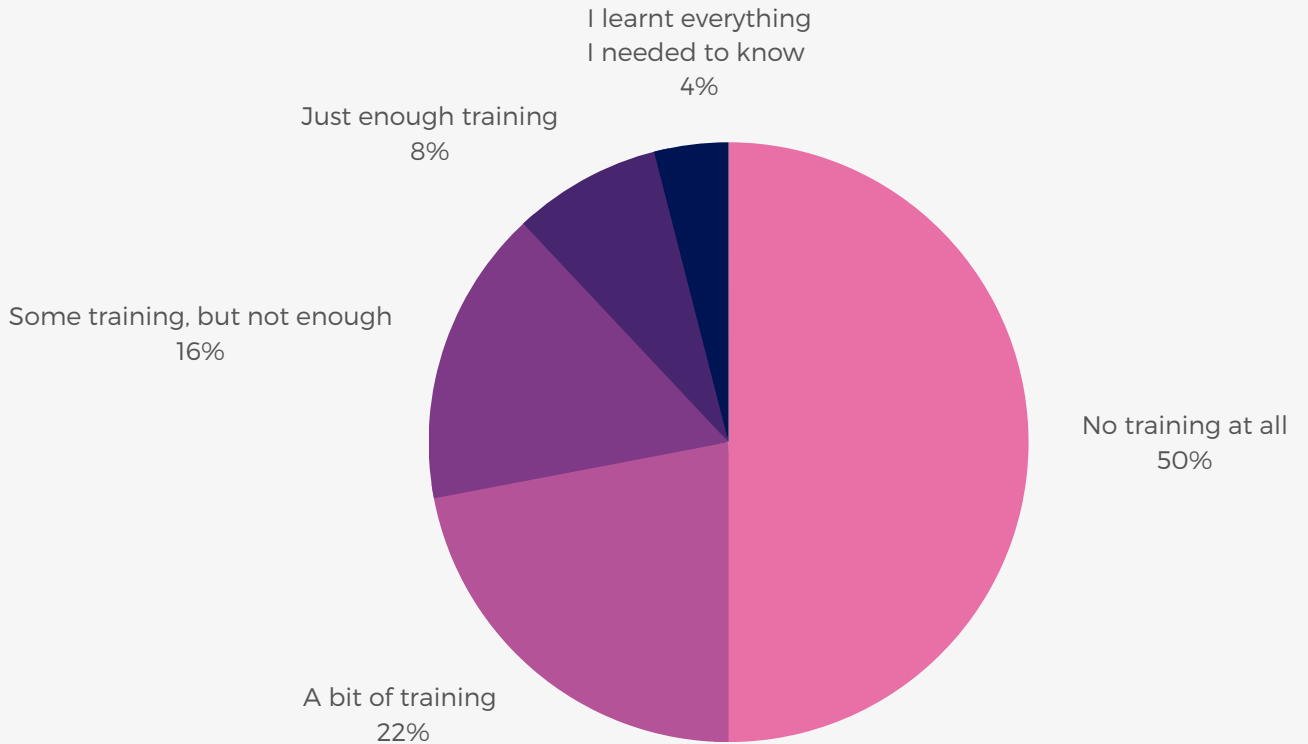


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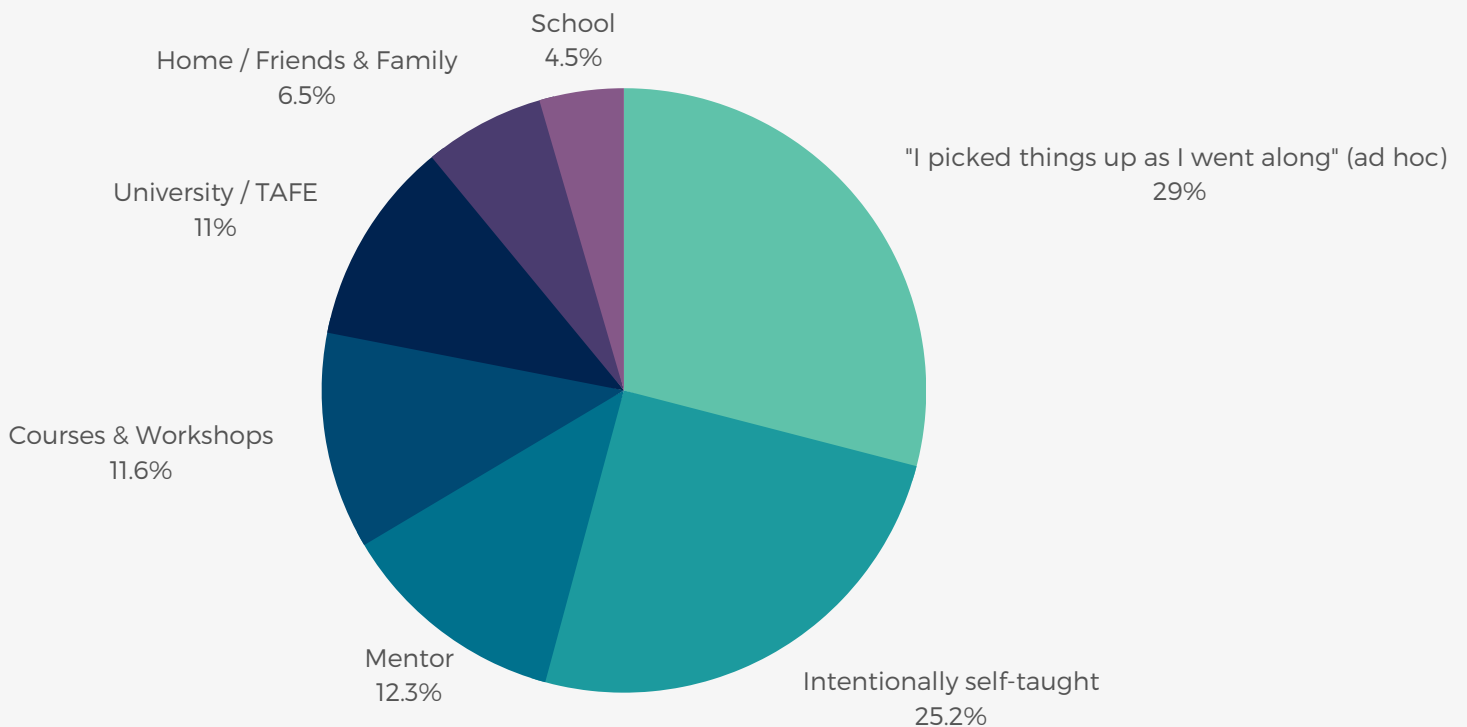
- **If and how survey respondents received training to support their lives as artists and arts workers.**
- **Sector needs - through the feedback and ideas of survey respondents.**
- **What artists and arts workers need to support them to thrive. This was an open question, and we coded responses to pull out the most common themes.**
- **Sector sustainability - what percentage of income are survey respondents able to make from their socially-engaged arts practice, compared with how much working time their practice takes.**

TRAINING

If survey respondents had training as an artist, did this training include practical skills on how to make a living? (e.g. financial, marketing, planning or funding application skills)



How have survey respondees learned about making a life as an artist?



SECTOR NEEDS

What Support do Socially-Engaged Arts Workers Want & Need?

We asked survey respondents to share what they need to support their work. We asked them to choose their top three options from a list of eleven. These options are shared below in order of popularity:

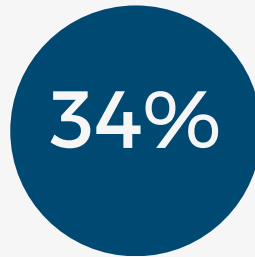


What support do socially-engaged artists need to help them thrive in their arts practice?

This was an open question in our survey. We coded the responses of all 50 respondents, and the most popular themes across all responses are as follows:



Of respondents say they need a **team or collaborators**



Of respondents say they need a **workspace** (including office, studio and alternative working spaces)



Of respondents say they need **more time to be able to nurture ideas and develop practice**

"I need a team! So much work and not enough support people."

"I think most of all I need is time and community - in the form of networking opportunities."

"Quiet ergonomic space to write, research and make, structure (through project partners and collaborators or programming contexts) and deadlines, connection with peers."

"I need ideas. Opportunities to interact with artists and change makers. A nice, workable office. Privacy from the rest of the family when working from home. Clarity around my value and pricing structure as I am asked to 'quote' everyday."

"I could stand to block out more time for my own personal artistic practice rather than working with others, but that's not realistic right now unfortunately."

"Lots of autonomy, visionary leadership/management (if I'm not the instigator of the project). Lots of time to think, dream, plan, act, do, reflect. I make wherever and whenever - but I do love access to indoor/outdoor spaces and internet/phone/computer."

"I need legitimate support with 'administrivia'! I need to be trusted to run my project and sufficient funding. I need to be able to convince non-arts workers that the project is relevant and effective.."



It is interesting that more than half of survey respondees are 'self-taught'. What are the gaps and barriers in current training, education and mentoring opportunities?

How might we package up and co-design a new peer learning experience/model by learning from the arts leaders who are predominately self taught?

SECTION 4: ELEVATING & ADVOCATING FOR THE SOCIALLY- ENGAGED ARTS SECTOR

In this section, we move onto our outer concentric circle, and consider what advocacy areas need to be highlighted to elevate the socially-engaged arts sector.

The wellbeing of artists, arts workers and the sector can be impacted by a lack of understanding of the work, proper financial and peer support structures, and project sustainability. In this section, we share what survey respondents think will help advocate for these things - within the sector to fellow artists, to organisations and project partners, and to funders and policy-makers.



Our survey included open questions around what respondents think arts-workers, organisations, funding bodies and policy makers should stop, start and continue doing. We coded all responses to pull out the key themes listed in each section.

ADVOCATING WITHIN THE SECTOR

What do socially-engaged arts workers need to **STOP, START** and **CONTINUE** doing in order to achieve success and impact?

'START' - Key themes across all responses

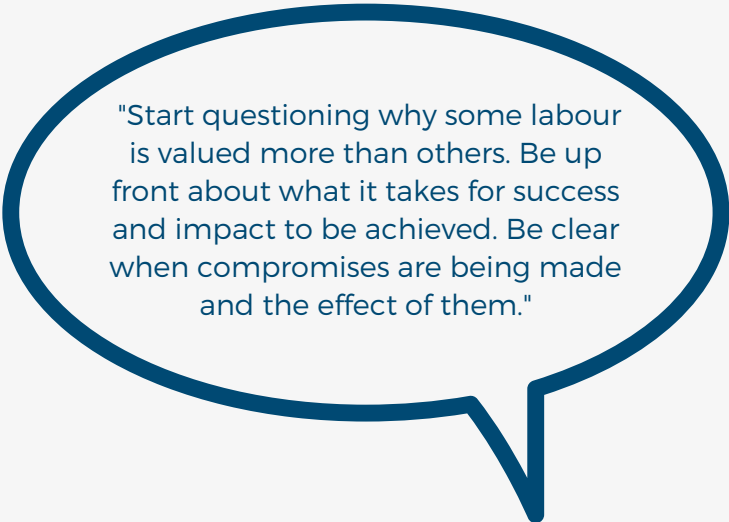
- Advocating for what it takes for success and impact to be achieved:
 - Be clear about scope-creep
 - Ask to be paid fairly
 - Be honest about voluntary time that is going into a project
- Working together to share practice and language:
 - Develop shared understanding of the terminology we use
 - Collaborate to share practice and research
 - Connect with each other more: build networks
- Prioritising access and inclusion:
 - Ensure all projects can be accessible (e.g. Auslan interpretation, wheelchair access)
 - Ensure project teams include - and have leadership roles for - First Peoples, people of colour and artists with disability
 - Pay participants - they become artists in our projects too
- Cross-sector collaborations:
 - Establish more partnership projects
 - Advocate for the role of the arts in non-arts projects and engagements

'STOP' - Key Themes


- Looking for recognition and acceptance - know and communicate our value instead.
- Stop working for free, communicate all the layers that go into making a project happen with integrity.
- Stop doing it all ourselves - don't be a silo, stop burning ourselves out by compromising boundaries.

'CONTINUE' - Key Themes


- Continue working at the grass roots level, working with communities, keep listening.
- Continue offering hope of a better future.
- Embracing difference and uncomfortable spaces.
- Keep strong values around socially-engaged arts processes.
- Putting the participants as the highest priority in their projects, and building strong and collaborative relationships.




"Start questioning why some labour is valued more than others. Be up front about what it takes for success and impact to be achieved. Be clear when compromises are being made and the effect of them."



"Start building your own programs that you own copyright too. Create reports and data that can demonstrate the value of your work."



Let's work on our collective confidence - the work we do matters. Artists to the front!



"Start looking outside our creative networks for professionals with the skills we lack, but the values we hold dear."

ADVOCATING TO ORGANISATIONS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

What do organisations and project partners need to **STOP** and **START** doing in order to support the sector to achieve success and impact?

'START' - Key Themes across all responses

- Ensuring there are First People/POC/artists with disability are in leadership positions and/or on boards.
- Investing in long-term projects and co-developing outcomes, measurements and evaluations with artists/arts-workers and community.
- Trusting artists and investing resources.
- Living the values stated in Strategic Plans.
- Building thorough communication strategies between staff and artists - ensuring whole-of-organisation awareness and approach to contribute to collective vision. Include artists at the beginning of large complex projects, and pay artists for this planning time.
- Properly documenting and advocating for processes, projects and outcomes.
- Learning and understanding more about how socially-engaged practice works.

'STOP' - Key Themes

- Undervaluing Artists
 - Asking artists to work for free
 - Not investing in the development of new projects
 - Relying on projects that will only lead to marketable/ticketed outcomes
 - Not paying artists for preparation/debrief/project administration time
 - Treating artists as expendable
- Undervaluing Practice
 - 'Flying in and flying out', 'Consulting and Engaging' without actions and outcomes
 - Having projects only to 'tick a box'
 - Reinforcing inequalities, e.g. 'sending buses from outer suburbs areas to city centres to see shows and calling it social impact'
 - Not understanding socially-engaged artistic practice, including not valuing facilitation and understanding that this is artistic practice.

"Stop being grant-driven, being ego-driven."

"Start seeing what we do. When project partners or organisations only focus on the 'end results', they're not seeing our practice as artists. Our practice is in the making and how we make space for our participants. See us as artists, and see our artistic practice as the way we work with participants."

"Start handing over control to community. Start distributing resources to support community arts. Start opening the doors."

"Start putting value in arts and arts workers that is reflected in policy and language. Add more processes of diversity and inclusion."

"Start collaborating with social researchers. Start measuring impact and doing evaluation."




How might we advocate for better working conditions for independent arts workers?

How might we better advocate for socially-engaged arts practice?


WHAT DO WE WANT FUNDERS TO KNOW?

Key themes across all responses:

- Fund groundwork and all stages of a project.
- Invest in project sustainability and follow-up.
- Fund research for artists to measure outcomes and explain practice.
- Listen to artists throughout a project, hear the success stories, support when projects need to change direction, allow for processes to grow and develop.
- Fund mentorships, and pay both the mentor and mentee.
- Fund 'employee experience' and wellbeing – but for independent artists.
- Provide more hands-on feedback, especially for artists who are new to funding applications.
- Create more diverse and equitable processes for applying for funding. Successful funding should not rely on literacy level, ability to communicate well in the English language etc.
- Include funding for mid-career/established artists to develop projects and practice.
- Fund impact measurement tools that are accessible to all organisations and artists.
- Create dedicated funding rounds dedicated to socially-engaged practice, open to individual artists.
- Let artists outline why projects need to happen, instead of forcing them to tick boxes to determine outcomes/'target groups'.
- Explore the feasibility of a Universal Basic Income for artists in Australia.



"Reduce the red tape. Come out and SEE the work. Make applications more accessible - or change the whole process completely!"




"Value this work as a mode of artistic practice - join up thinking between arts councils and government strangers, health and education."


WHAT DO WE WANT POLICY MAKERS TO KNOW?

Key themes across all responses:


- Support for artists:
 - Universal basic income for artists
 - Develop policies to support artists' rights as workers, e.g. workplace inclusion and experience policies
- Support for the arts sector:
 - Ensure that cultural policy centres First Peoples artists, and outlines equity and access for all
 - More processes to enable people to see artistic work (e.g. give Job Seekers free tickets as part of their allowances)
 - Link the arts sector to other sectors, and the value of the arts across multiple sectors (e.g. health, tourism, community development etc)
 - Listen to artists
 - Enable artists to work directly with researchers and policy makers
 - Explore and expand current understanding of what 'socially-engaged artistic practice means



"Establish consultations with artists, but please remember, or address that you are paid for your time, we are not."



"Understand this sector creates happiness and prevents a lot of costly social problems in the long run by supporting communities"



"Encourage and advocate for other industries to engage and engage with artists."

SECTION 5: A DEEPER DIVE

Following our research survey, we held two focus groups with socially-engaged arts workers to discuss themes from the survey results, test our assumptions and delve more deeply into the experience of working in the sector.

In this section we summarise some of the key takeaways from both the research survey and focus groups. We've looked at takeaways from each of our concentric circles themes, and how these can come together as a whole to help build a thriving socially-engaged arts sector.



We have also shared our responses and ideas as Hannah and Debby, as we propose our solution for building a thriving socially-engaged arts sector: 'Learning from the Self-Taught'.



Artist and
Arts Worker
Experience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Success

Our survey outcomes suggest that success for socially-engaged arts workers is mainly linked to the outcomes achieved for participants and community partners. Related to this, success 'markers' include:

- Participants are engaged and inspired in the process
- Community partners are satisfied by the project process and outcomes
- Being able to demonstrate and explain the impact of a project
- Project legacy

We explored this further with our focus groups, discussing how elements of socially-engaged practice that contribute to a sense of success can feel invisible. In our focus groups, we looked at the concept of an **iceberg (see next page)**, sharing what we feel is visible and invisible in practice.

All art-making has 'invisible' or 'hidden' work, but according to focus group participants, this can feel different for socially-engaged arts workers because:

"The practice is so often invisible - making space, building relationships, creating frameworks for participants to feel seen - the better you are at this, the more effortless this deep practice looks!"

"The work is responsive, it's connecting dots - the practice becomes the glue. It's not driven by my vision as an artist, but the skills I have as a socially-engaged arts worker to continually adapt and respond to what comes up with participants as we make work together."

"It can look like I'm doing nothing... because I'm actually facilitating really well!"



Answering our Questions - Thoughts from Hannah & Debby

Based on our consultation data, the following questions emerged for us around defining, documenting and leveraging success in order to improve the state of things for the socially-engaged arts sector:

- **How might we support socially-engaged arts workers to feel more successful on their own terms?**
- **What skills and resources do socially-engaged arts workers need to define their own terms and conditions, and to advocate for these?**
- **How might we 'capture success' in all of its complex and layered forms, and communicate these to peers, collaborators, funding bodies and policy makers?**
- **How might we ensure independent arts workers and artists are included in longitudinal evaluations and social impact measures of projects that are led by non-arts sector partners?**

Existing initiatives and our expertise:

This is not a comprehensive and fully researched list, but rather an indication of the work that's already happening around 'success':

- Debby (Debby Maziarz Productions) provides one-to-one mentoring in creative business and creative life design with the goal of empowering individuals to define their own success based on needs, wants, opportunities and personal circumstances.
- Debby Maziarz Productions has approached Business Victoria to include creative business mentoring as part of the Business Victoria Small Business Bus Program.
- Hannah (Collective Impact Arts) is developing support and resources for art workers to set the parameters for their success and the success of their projects through evaluation mapping and using equity-centred program logics.
- There are many artists who embody creative life design principles, such as Christy Flaws and Luke O'Connor from 'Asking for Trouble' and Simon Spain and Victoria Ryle from 'All That We Are'.
- There are arts coaches and mentors, such as Kath Melbourne, who support small arts organisations and their artists to explore what success means for them.

Gaps and opportunities:

Our research indicates that artists already have tacit knowledge that they can draw on to focus on defining their own success and achieving it. What is often missing is the time, privilege and/or discipline to focus on their business and the way they want to live.

Wellbeing

In our research, we felt it was important to explore 'wellbeing' through a framework of how 'balanced' socially-engaged arts workers feel in their work. This enables us to take a more holistic approach to wellbeing.

In our experience, the wellbeing of artists in the socially-engaged sector can fluctuate due to:

- The impact of working with participants in severe need/experiencing disadvantage.
- 'Scope-creep' and the amount of unrecognised time and skill it takes to build projects.
- Lack of financial security.
- Lack of structural support for the work.
- Lack of understanding of the work by funders/project partners/the general public.

We asked survey respondents and focus group participants what self-care strategies they have to support their own wellbeing. After codifying responses, we can see that they break down into two categories - **'in-practice' strategies** that arts workers use on projects, and **'individual self-care'** outside of work.

Here is a summary of responses, listed under the two categories:

In-practice self-care:

- Talk to/debrief with team
- Collaborative relationships with peers
- Not accepting any unpaid or underpaid work
- Making time to chat with artists who need advice
- Setting boundaries, and communicating them successfully
- Professionalism in the space and with the participants/artists/collaborators/partners

Individual self-care:

- Walks
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Counselling
- Journaling
- Time with family and friends

However, many respondees lack self-care strategies:

"I have few house boundaries... art has oozed into every room of our house, and phone calls, zoom meetings"

"I don't think I do much of this at all. I put all my effort in to making sure the participants feel safe/comfortable and forget I need to do the same for myself."

"I'm just not good at this at all."

Feeling Equipped and Confident

Survey responses indicate that socially-engaged arts workers could feel more equipped and more confident in their work and practice if there was:

- Better structural support (funding, infrastructure for socially-engaged arts work).
- Stronger peer networks.
- Sector development specifically for the socially-engaged arts sector.

Answering our Questions - Thoughts from Hannah & Debby

The following questions and thoughts came up for us around wellbeing, and feeling equipped and confident:

- **Approximately a third of respondents feel moderately socially, emotionally and physically balanced. How might we better support arts workers' wellbeing?**
- **A third of respondents feel financially unbalanced. How might we better recognise arts workers' labour, and valuable contribution to building people, places and communities?**
- **Whilst the majority of respondents feels 'somewhat confident' in their work and practice, many shared that increased structural support and sector development would be supportive.**

Existing initiatives and our expertise:

- Initiatives such as The Arts Wellbeing Collective and the Hey Mate Project are examples of government, industry and community working together to address poor mental health in the creative industries.
- The Creative Recovery Network are developing 'A Practice Framework' including a Code of Conduct for CACD practitioners and organisations to support ethical and safe engagement with each other and communities. Hannah and Debby have expressed interest to join the advisory group working on this initiative and we look forward to seeing how this work can be expanded nationally.
- Organisations such as Beyond Empathy and Outer Urban Projects have incorporated Professional Supervision for artists into their organisational work practices. We would like to unearth and share best practice examples of how arts and non-arts organisations are embedding safety and wellbeing into their induction, project development, staff development and community engagement activities.

-
- During the Australia Council Creative Community Fellows Program, Debby incubated a project called 'WholeTraders' - a traveling wellbeing clinic for artists working in communities. WholeTraders brings selfcare, pampering and health and wellbeing services to artists in situ. The financial model for the initiative is currently being developed.
 - As Collective Impact Arts, Hannah is modelling 'in practice self-care' in how she runs community arts project with her teams.

Gaps and opportunities:

- We know the links between financial insecurity and poor mental health. A gap in our research was that we didn't ask our respondees if they accessed any of the support services that are available to them and/or what their barriers are to improving their wellbeing.
- It will be useful to further understand the effectiveness and outcomes of wellbeing initiatives, and to identify gaps for artists in accessing these.
- Exploring opportunities for more in-practice and organisation-led wellbeing initiatives would be useful. ·
- One idea we have is to encourage artists to include 10% of cash income towards artist wellbeing in all funding application/project budgets, the same way evaluation is included. This could include ensuring that project resources can support arts workers to cover the costs of their time for peer debriefs and wellbeing activities.
- We would like to see a 'Guide for Organisations' to ensure wellbeing is incorporated into a project design and accounted for, and a 'Guide for Artists' on how to negotiate artist wellbeing into the life of a project. In our focus groups, we discussed how 'artists matter too' and what this could look like.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Sector Need and Sustainability

Our survey asked socially-engaged arts workers what support they most need (page 24). The most popular responses were around funding and financial support - common themes across the whole of the arts and community sectors. However, the next most popular responses were around peer connection within the sector; including mentorships, being able to build networks and teams, and opportunities for collaboration. Skills and practice development were the next greatest need, with project management support/administration being the least needed.

Based on the responses to our survey on sector needs, and discussions in the focus groups, we have put together a 'Pyramid of Sector Needs' (next page) for the socially-engaged sector. This pyramid can help us develop opportunities for meeting needs and supporting the sector,

A Pyramid of Sector Needs: -



**Project
planning,
administration
and marketing
skills
development.**

**Artists can continually develop skills
in their practice. Artists have the
tools, internal and external conditions
to support their mental and creative
wellbeing'.**

**The sector is connected - communities of practice,
peer support, mentorships and networking. Artists
can develop a trajectory through their work and
create momentum around practice by learning from
each other and combatting isolation.**

**The sector is properly resourced. These resources are accessible and
reflect the wants and needs of artists. The work is valued by everyone.
We have a thriving and sustainable socially-engaged arts sector.**

Peer Connections

Respondents share that they need networking, mentorships, co-working pathways and camaraderie with other socially-engaged arts workers. These peer connection related responses were more popular than the need for ongoing training and capacity building. In fact, respondents shared that they would like to learn from each other and seek out sector mentorships, rather than attend courses.

19% of survey respondents shared that they had sought support through mentorships or from friends and colleagues. **46%** said that mentorships was something they needed, along with **66%** who want a sense of camaraderie with artists doing similar work and **42%** who want networking opportunities.

We explored this theme further with our focus groups, and participants shared that working in the socially-engaged arts space can be isolating, because:

- Socially-engaged arts workers often straddle multiple sectors, across the arts/community/settlement/health/education etc. Talking about the work can be challenging, as arts workers feel like they are always having to re-frame what they do in order to feel that the value of projects can be understood.
- Socially-engaged arts workers working as part of larger arts organisations (e.g. in community, outreach and education roles) can feel like their work is seen as an 'extra' within these organisations, and the value of community collaboration is rarely centralised.
- Many socially-engaged arts workers find themselves working alone, without support and infrastructure. Arts workers are not only responsible for their own practice, but the experience of the communities they collaborate with. The practice carries a lot of responsibility and can be isolating and unsafe.



Peer networks already exist (e.g. Community Arts Network in Western Australia, and the Creative Recovery Network Taskforce) but are location and/or artform specific.

How might we ensure artists are connected to networks, and bring together successful peer network learnings?

Training & Practice Development

Our survey data tells us that **50%** of respondents had not received any formal training in how to make their lives as artists and arts workers. **54%** of respondents shared that they are self-taught. This sentiment was echoed by focus group participants.

Survey respondents and focus group participants shared training opportunities that they are aware of (but had not necessarily undertaken). These include arts sector-specific programs such as:

- Bachelors and Post-Grad degrees (e.g. MFA Cultural Leadership at NIDA)
- TAFE Community Arts Programs
- Australia Council Leadership Programs and training events
- Courses with Creative Plus Business
- Seminars with Arts Law Centre, SAMAG, NAVA and other peak bodies/regional arts bodies
- International residencies for teaching artists (e.g. Arquetopia, self-directed residencies)
- International trainings (e.g. Lincoln Centre, National Arts Strategies)
- Trainings through relevant conferences
- Mentorships

There are great initiatives that already exist to support artists with administrative skills (e.g. Creative Plus Business), and many programs to support the development of artistry (e.g. Teaching Artist Training with various institutions). However, these are not always accessible and do not necessarily speak to the base needs in our 'pyramid'.

Respondents have also engaged with non-arts trainings to support their socially-engaged arts work, such as:

- Programs with Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)
- Community Development Evaluation Training
- Courses in working with children with special educational needs and disability
- Non-arts focused business, marketing, event management and finance courses

Socially-engaged arts work can straddle multiple non-arts sectors, and it is rare to find trainings that enable artists and arts workers to look more specifically at how and why the arts can generate positive community outcomes. Some respondents shared that they seek this from mentors and fellow artists - **"[I get my training from] immersing myself in the social realms of creatives willing to freely share their own blunders for learning"**.

We have a sector made up of highly committed, experienced and innovative artists. Creating structures to bring us together for mutual support and collaboration will enhance the momentum of socially-engaged arts work.

Answering our Questions - Thoughts from Hannah & Debby:

Based on our consultation data, the following questions and thoughts emerged for us around sector need, training and networking:

- **It is interesting that more than half of survey respondees are 'self-taught'. What are the gaps and/or barriers in current training, education and mentoring opportunities?**
- **How might we package up and co-design a new peer learning experience/model - learning from the arts leaders who are predominately self taught?**

Existing initiatives and our expertise:

- Debby and Hannah have completed a desktop review of the current leadership offerings in Australia to better understand the opportunities and gaps for socially engaged arts workers. A goal of this research was to uncover the wants, needs and desires of socially engaged arts practitioners for themselves, their practice and their work with communities.
- Debby Maziarz Productions recently delivered a professional development training series called 'Sustaining Your Arts Practice' to 140 University of Melbourne VCA students who have completed their training and are exiting the institution. The majority of participants commented on a knowledge gap in 'running a practice' and felt this was a gap in their formal arts training. 94% of students took up the follow-up mentoring opportunity to explore the next steps from training to practice, demonstrating a need for one-to-one facilitated exploration of practice design and development.

Gaps and opportunities:

- From our research and personal experience, we've discovered that it is rare to find training and professional development opportunities that are experiential, self directed, artist-led and peer focused. We have a sector made up of highly skilled, experienced and nuanced socially-engaged arts workers who are leaders in self determination, practice development, creative life design, creative entrepreneurship and designing their own business/practice models. We would like to explore how this sector knowledge can be harnessed to support arts workers to learn more from each other.
- When we explored 'Sector Need', it was no surprise that 'funding and financial support' continues to be the number one thing that arts workers want and need. A way of unearthing arts workers' successful business models could be explored so these can be shared for collective impact.

Peer networks - opportunities:

- **How might we ensure artists are connected to networks, and bring together successful peer network learnings?**

Our data confirms that socially-engaged arts workers are seeking more opportunities for networking, collaboration, peer connection and support, and that they are often isolated (especially outside the cycle of a project). Cultivating and supporting 'peer networks' would enable artists to develop mutual wellbeing structures, learn from each other and in-turn support them to feel more equipped and confident, leading to feeling more successful and balanced etc.

Potentially, every organisation that engages socially-engaged arts workers/independent artists could sign them up to local peer networks, and cover the cost of their membership for one year.

Opportunities to learn from each other and build communities of practice

Feedback from our surveys and focus groups suggests that arts workers are keen to learn from each other (for example, through mentorships and peer networks). There is a shared recognition of the huge amount of knowledge and experience within the sector, and an overwhelming desire to find opportunities to collaborate, incubate ideas and develop practice. Currently this happens as unfunded and 'invisible' work.

We believe that building communities of practice through tailored training, exchanges and peer mentorships will support and strengthen the socially-engaged arts sector.

Opportunities for connecting socially-engaged artists to existing trainings and developing cross-sector training

Our survey data demonstrated that many arts workers have not been able to access training that meets their specific needs. There is also a lack of training that ties together practice from across sectors, with arts workers undertaking training in health, settlement and social services etc.

There is an opportunity to build cross-sector training offerings that enable arts workers to explore their practice more deeply and examine how it intersects with outcomes for other sectors.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

'The Cycle'

In exploring advocacy, and what to tell funders/project partners/each other, survey respondents and focus group participants talked about an endless cycle of socially-engaged arts projects - meaning that arts workers often feel like their work can stall or endlessly go 'back to square one':



In order to break this cycle, we explored 'advocacy' with focus group participants. They were asked to think of a slogan for a t-shirt, that states something they might feel devoted or disgruntled about with regards to their arts work (*inspired by the 'Devoted and Disgruntled' theatre community movement created by Improbable in the UK*).

Some of the t-shirt slogans from the focus groups are below. The slogans speak to the need for:

- Advocacy and understanding
- Awareness and appreciation of practice
- The need for partnerships and to challenge industry gatekeepers
- The values underpinning socially-engaged practice (e.g. everyone can be an artist)
- Challenging assumptions and stereotypes



front



back

Answering our Questions - Thoughts from Hannah & Debby:

The following questions emerged for us during our research:

- **How might we advocate for better working conditions for independent arts workers?**
- **How might we better advocate for socially-engaged arts practice?**

We've considered a how we can improve working conditions and wellbeing for independent arts workers in the previous section, but we think ongoing advocacy and resources to support better conditions are needed.

Here are a few other opportunities we have been thinking about:

Frameworks for evaluation and impact measurement

Many of our survey respondents and focus group attendees shared that they want more guidance in building strong evaluation and impact measurement processes as part of their practice.

We have research and impact measurement specialists working within the sector. Learning from each other to create shared frameworks would enable arts workers to share the story of their work and talk about why and how the arts can have social impact.

We can maximise on existing resources and ensure they are accessible. For example, Cultural Development Network have developed an 'Outcomes Schema' to measure the impact of artistic projects. Hannah (as Collective Impact Arts) is building a series of resources and trainings to enable arts workers to plan how to measure impact and evaluate their work, using a equity-centred approach. She is developing ways of making this practice accessible and to enable artists to embed it into their existing ways of working.

Working together to embed arts workers in policy and research

Socially-engaged arts workers who participated in our research and focus groups talked about the need for artists to be involved in policy making, and to have a 'seat at the table' in areas such place making and town planning, education and social policy planning. Artists bring a unique set of skills and knowledge to social outcomes, but are often not remunerated or valued in these processes. Hannah is exploring models for embedding 'artistic thinking' into policy through her work as Collective Impact Arts, building on her experience working in state government policy and across multiple sectors.

We think that involving arts workers in policy development will help break 'the cycle' (page 47), as artistic thinking and process will be embedded in social strategy earlier and not seen as an 'add-on' or temporary project.

Ultimately, we believe that the world would be a more equitable place if artistic thinking and the skills of socially-engaged arts workers could inform social policy.

Sector Mapping

In addition to peer network building for mutual support and expertise sharing, we think it is important to explore how we can build a sector map that captures the people and projects around Australia who are working in the arts for social impact space. This will contribute to advocacy and stronger cross-sector work, and platform practice that has depth and intentionality in community engagement.

Feral Arts in Queensland have models for this, through 'PlaceStories' and other mapping projects. Hannah has been building a network map with arts workers who define themselves as Teaching Artists through her work building the Australia-Pacific Teaching Artist Network. We would like to explore how to connect mapping initiatives to advocate for the incredible work of artists achieving impact across multiple sectors with communities all over the continent.

'LET'S MAKE A CIRCLE: LEARNING FROM THE SELF-TAUGHT'

A RESPONSE FROM HANNAH & DEBBY

To address the takeaways from our sector research, we have developed an idea:

'Let's Make a Circle: Learning from the Self-Taught'

('Let's Make a Circle' was shared as a t-shirt slogan during one of our focus groups. We think circles evoke socially-engaged arts practice - projects often start with everyone coming together in a circle, and gathering in a circle can symbolise equality and community-building.)

What?

A co-designed leadership program specifically for socially-engaged arts workers, which will include a retreat and ongoing networking and sharing.

We will create and hold space, alongside building a program of 'learning from the self-taught' honouring sector expertise.

Program participants will run sessions to share practice alongside invited facilitators/speakers.

We are interested in collaborative learning models that enable arts workers to learn from and with each other. This is 'capacity building from the inside'.

Why?

We believe this will address many of our research outcomes, including:

- Harnessing the expertise of the sector, building space for 'sector community building' through peer networking and mutual learning.
- Providing facilitated and supported opportunities for artists to come up with their own definitions of success and a tailored plan to achieve it. The concept of 'self-care' is often put onto the individual, but we see this as a collective and structural responsibility. We want to cultivate space for building self-care practice into project plans, and advocate for the need to fund and recognise the importance of debrief time and strong exit strategy plans for projects - which support both the artists and participants.
- Co-exploring opportunities for artists to embed in-practice wellbeing into their projects and practice. This is also an important component of creative business/creative life-design enabling everyone to define their own terms and conditions.

-
- Building unity to support advocacy – exploring shared language, how we talk about the work, and how we can advocate collectively.
 - Address training gaps together, sharing mutual expertise across the many cross-sector specialities that can go into socially-engaged arts practice.
 - Discuss and create shared processes for evaluation and impact measurement that are cultivated for arts workers to measure arts work.
 - Building a shared networking map of the socially-engaged arts sector.

We are looking forward to discussing our idea with the Australia Council for the Arts and other partners and funders, and to building on our shared expertise to bring 'Let's Make a Circle' to life.

Thank you for taking the time to read our report. We're looking forward to the next steps in supporting the socially-engaged arts sector and its incredible and dedicated arts workers to thrive in their lives and in their practice, and so...



Please get in touch if you would like to explore this work with us further or collaborate in any way!

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