Monograph:
Glow, H., Kershaw, A., Johanson, K. et al. (4 more authors) (2024) Changing organisations to diversify arts audiences: summary of findings from the community of practice: Phase two report. Report. Creative Australia ISBN 9780730004240

Changing organisations to diversify arts audiences

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

2024

PHASE TWO REPORT

HILARY GLOW
Deakin University

ANNE KERSHAW
Deakin University

KATYA JOHANSON
Edith Cowan University

ABBIE TROTT
Deakin University

TRACY MARGIESON
Deakin University

MARK TAYLOR
University of Sheffield

WESLEY ENOCH AM
Chair, Industry Advisory Group

CONTENTS

INTERIOR PAGES:
ALL PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATE DYER

Executive Summary

Leading Change for Audience Diversification in the Arts was a national investigation of the organisational work needed for arts and cultural organisations to engage new and diverse audiences. With funding from Creative Australia and the Ian Potter Foundation, a team of researchers from Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, and Sheffield University investigated audience-centric practice in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations. This work aimed to shift the social profile of audiences to include more First Nations people, d/Deaf and Disabled communities, and those from a range of cultures, age groups, geographic locations, and sexual and gender identities. The project was supported by all state and territory government arts bodies as well as many peak and professional bodies.

This report presents findings from the second phase of research: a Community of Practice involving 11 case study organisations and 10 industry experts to explore different ways of working that enable the engagement of new and diverse audiences. This Community of Practice met throughout 2023 and 2024 to investigate the drivers and inhibitors of audience-centric practice in arts organisations. This work extended the insights gained from a national survey of arts organisations (Phase One of research) [National-survey-on-org-change-to-diversify-audiences-FINAL.pdf (deakin.edu.au)].

The Community of Practice found that audience-centric practice requires three organisational capabilities:

DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES: The ability to shift away from institutional expectations and constantly adapt, reconfigure, and innovate organisational practice;

SOCIAL NETWORKING: The capacity to work beyond organisational structures to gain new and valuable resources from external networks; and

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES: Strategic processes and business practices that commit staff and resources to audience diversification.

While many organisations could be described as Leaders of audience-centric practice (they embrace change and are focused on new audiences) there was also evidence of barriers or inhibitors to this way of working. In many cases the work needed to diversify audiences requires further organisational change.

Developing DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES requires arts organisations to:

> Focus on the audience experience rather than only adhering to professional standards or expectations.
> Make programming decisions in new ways, often through collaborative processes.
> Develop new skills and knowledge, particularly drawing from community and cultural development practices and principles.
> Work as multidisciplinary teams operating with the active involvement and support of senior management.

Developing SOCIAL NETWORKING capabilities requires arts organisations to:

> Participate in regular and ongoing partnerships and networks, particularly those that are based outside the arts and creative sectors.
> Develop excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to gain trust and respect from a wide range of community members and stakeholders.
> Prioritise a commitment to relationship management, understanding and acknowledging the motivations and values of external parties.

Developing BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES requires arts organisations to:

> Embed a commitment to audience-centric practice through a range of processes and procedures, including reporting mechanisms, budgets, and staffing.
> Experiment and innovate in the work they do, which allows for an acceptance of risk and ongoing learning.
> Commit to 'slow engagement' with longer timelines and longer-term objectives.

The value of these findings lies in building the capacity of arts organisations to diversify audiences, and creating systems and structures that promote audience-centric practice.

Valuable next steps for this work include investigations into:

> How to build the capacity of arts organisations to diversify their audiences.
> What audience diversification practices leading organisations undertake.
> The systems and structures that impact arts organisations with respect to audience diversification.
> The perspectives of audiences and the various partners in the creative ecosystem.

Background

In 2019, Creative Australia engaged Deakin University, with additional funding from the Ian Potter Foundation, to research the organisational practices needed to diversify arts audiences. We use the term 'audience-centric' to refer to the organisational work needed to engage new audiences, particularly from different social groups to those that customarily attend funded arts activities. Drawing on an eight-task model of audience-centric practice, this work included:

> **PHASE 1**: A national survey of more than 180 arts organisations to identify strengths and weaknesses in the work needed to diversify audiences [National-survey-on-org-change-to-diversify-audiences-FINAL.pdf (deakin.edu.au)].

> **PHASE 2**: A Community of Practice involving case study organisations from across Australia, organisational change consultants, and industry leaders, to identify the drivers and inhibitors of audience-centric practice.

This project aims to increase the engagement of those who are generally underrepresented in arts audiences: First Nations people, d/Deaf and Disabled communities, and those from a diverse range of cultures, age groups, geographic locations, and sexual and gender identities.

Audience-centric practice is not yet common throughout all arts organisations. For many organisations, the work needed to diversify audiences involves a change process. The capacity for change in arts organisations was therefore an aspect of this study.

Findings at a glance

Audience-centric practice requires **DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES**	**Programming decisions** are the organisational decisions **least likely to be influenced** by the aim of diversifying audiences	Audience-centric practice requires **SOCIAL NETWORKING**
Principles and values from community arts and cultural development **(CACD) practices can provide useful insights** into the processes of audience-centric work	**Adaptor behaviour was most evident** in the work currently done by arts organisations to diversify audiences (national survey finding)	Organisational change **requires risk-taking and trialling**, which need to be supported by internal systems and structures
Organisations can be **reluctant** or uncertain **to look outside** their organisational structures for new ideas, information, support, or collaborators	Audience-centric practice requires **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES**	**Staffing changes often interrupt** a commitment to audience-centric practice, particularly when a single staff member carries responsibility for working with communities

Model of audience-centric practice

Our research established a model of audience-centric practice for the work
arts organisations need to do to engage new and diverse audiences.
For many organisations, this way of working requires changes to their usual
practice. Our audience-centric model identifies eight tasks that lead to more
diverse audiences and demonstrates that organisations can be Leaders,
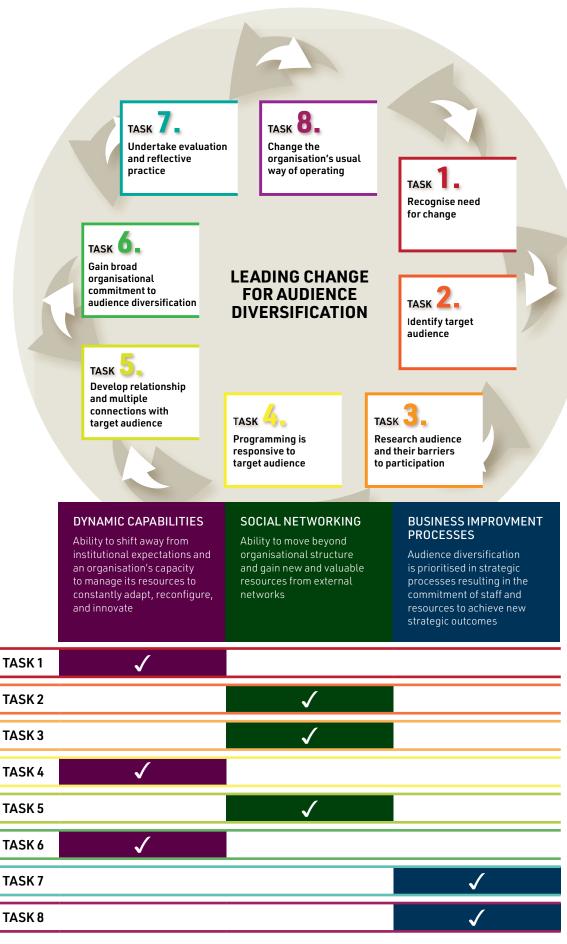Adaptors, or Avoiders of this work:

LEADERS: embrace change and are actively programming for new audiences while building
networks and connections outside their organisation

ADAPTORS: undertake partial change but have not yet made the changes needed to
diversify audiences, focusing instead on programming for known audiences and existing
stakeholders

AVOIDERS: ignore or resist change and maintain a commitment to creative production over
and above an interest in audiences, prioritising the existing audience to the exclusion of
other potential audiences.

Underpinning the tasks identified in our model of audience-centric practice
are three organisational capabilities or areas of expertise. To be Leaders of
the work needed to diversify audiences, organisations will have strengths
in Dynamic Capabilities, Social Networking, and Business Improvement
Processes. Increasing audience-centric practice requires building these
capabilities in arts organisations.

LEADING CHANGE FOR AUDIENCE DIVERSIFICATION

TASK 7. Undertake evaluation and reflective practice

TASK 8. Change the organisation's usual way of operating

TASK 1. Recognise need for change

TASK 6. Gain broad organisational commitment to audience diversification

TASK 2. Identify target audience

TASK 5. Develop relationship and multiple connections with target audience

TASK 4. Programming is responsive to target audience

TASK 3. Research audience and their barriers to participation

	DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES Ability to shift away from institutional expectations and an organisation's capacity to manage its resources to constantly adapt, reconfigure, and innovate	SOCIAL NETWORKING Ability to move beyond organisational structure and gain new and valuable resources from external networks	BUSINESS IMPROVMENT PROCESSES Audience diversification is prioritised in strategic processes resulting in the commitment of staff and resources to achieve new strategic outcomes
TASK 1	✓		
TASK 2		✓	
TASK 3		✓	
TASK 4	✓		
TASK 5		✓	
TASK 6	✓		
TASK 7			✓
TASK 8			✓

Findings from Phase One of this research were published in the report, *Changing Organisations to Diversify Arts Audiences: Summary of findings from national survey* in December 2023. This report explores findings from Phase 2: Community of Practice.

Community of Practice

The Community of Practice (CoP) involved a group of workers employed by arts organisations with a shared interest in the challenge of audience diversification. Its purpose was to explore ideas and solutions to the problem of engaging new and diverse audiences. The CoP investigated the use of the eight-task model of audience-centric practice. It was an opportunity to test ideas, create new knowledge, and share best practice.

The CoP involved case study organisations, change agents, an organisational change consultant, and the research team. A series of one-on-one and whole group meetings was held to discuss the organisational work needed to diversify arts audiences. The CoP met online across 2023 and 2024. The meeting schedule included:

> Four Plenary sessions, hearing from a range of change agents who described their skills, practices, and experiences with audience diversification.
> Regular meetings with case study organisations, change agents, and an organisational change consultant to discuss specific ideas and challenges.
> Entry and exit narrative interviews with the research team.
> A focus group with change agents.

Case study organisations

Eleven arts and cultural organisations participated in the CoP. They were selected to represent a range of states/ territories, sizes, histories, locations, and art forms. Three staff or board members represented each organisation (with one smaller organisation represented by two staff). Each case study organisation investigated the use of one or two tasks from the audience-centric practice model, with the change agents and organisational change consultant providing advice and expertise.

Change agents

Change agents were selected to participate in the CoP on the basis of their experience in bringing diverse audiences to the organisations in which they work. Together they had all achieved success in working with diverse (and often marginalised) audiences, working across a range of artforms/practices, and with a range of small, medium, and large institutions across the country.

Some had focused on building bridges with culturally diverse audiences; some were skilled in issues related to d/Deaf and disabled audiences; and some were able to address the issue of building relationships with audiences from regional communities.
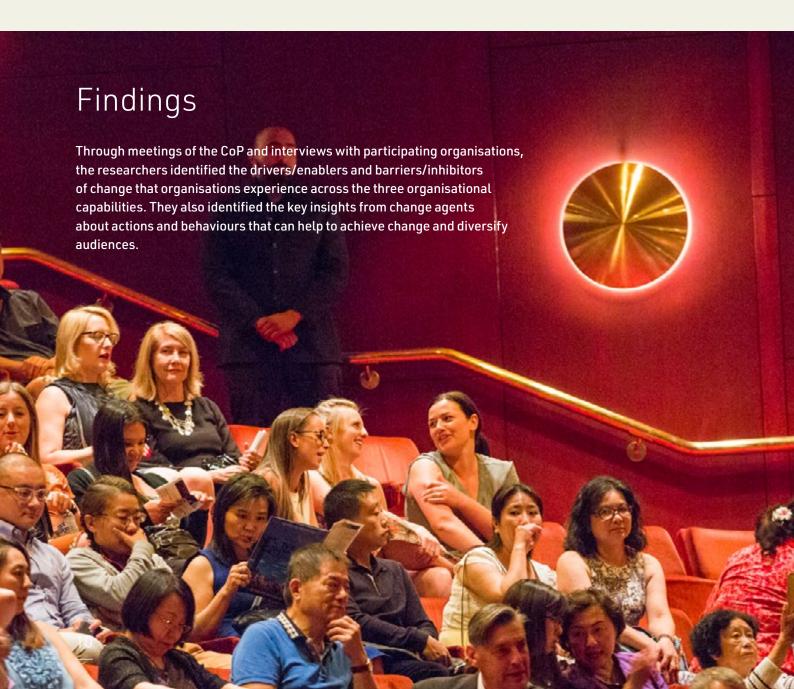
As part of the CoP, the change agents presented to the case study organisations an example of their work, an analysis of what it achieved in terms of new audience development, and an account of the institutional and management issues that arose in conducting their work.

The involvement of the change agents in the CoP was multi-faceted involving a presentation to the whole group, followed by one-on-one meetings to delve deeper into issues, and finally they contributed to a focus-group evaluation of the project.
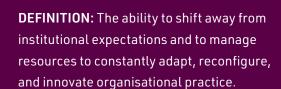
Organisational change consultant

Maz McGann was selected to participate in this project an organisational change agent due to her extensive experience in working with arts organisations. Maz was also employed in an earlier pilot project to test the organisational change model.

Maz worked individually with each of the case study organisations, meeting with them three times over the course of the project. This was an opportunity for the organisations to explore their ideas for building audience-centric approaches to their work with Maz working as an outside eye or critical friend. She was also able to offer practical advice about a range of issues such as gathering audience data, building a team approach, and keeping on task.

Findings

Through meetings of the CoP and interviews with participating organisations, the researchers identified the drivers/enablers and barriers/inhibitors of change that organisations experience across the three organisational capabilities. They also identified the key insights from change agents about actions and behaviours that can help to achieve change and diversify audiences.

DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES

DEFINITION: The ability to shift away from institutional expectations and to manage resources to constantly adapt, reconfigure, and innovate organisational practice.

Dynamic Capabilities are linked to:

TASK 1: Recognise need for change

TASK 4: Programming is responsive to target audience

TASK 6: Gain broad organisational commitment to audience diversification

What are the drivers and enablers of change?

TASK 1: Recognise need for change

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Understand that current practices are not driving the desired outcomes.

> Commit to making changes to core products and services, rather than focusing only on public programs, niche offerings, or special events.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Get specific about changes the organisation can make:
'The key is to be really, really specific and not to try to bite off everything before you can chew it.'

Identify the areas over which you have control and can make change:
'Go, "Right, that's outside of our control, but what can we pull out and try to engineer in a different way?"'

EXPERIENCES OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Need to change mindsets:
'It is a bit of a cultural mindset change here, but we need to do it. I think it's just the mindset between being visitor-orientated or collection-orientated, and just making that leap.'

TASK 4: Programming is responsive to target audience

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Focus on the audience experience rather than adhering to traditional professional standards. This may involve different collaborative program development processes and new indicators or measures of success.

> Share programming control and decision making with people other than an Artistic Director or Curator, aiming for programming that can be described as, 'by and for' audiences.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Take a whole-of-experience approach to programming:
'The audience experience in the venue or program - signage, food and beverage, front of house, who else is in the audience. Programming that is responsive to [the] target audience is best if it's a 360-degree whole-of-organisation project.'

EXPERIENCES OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Recognise the diversity in the community:
'A lot comes back to ... holding a mirror up to our community and being and telling the stories from our community. Our community is diverse, so therefore the stories should be diverse as well.'

Draw on principles from CACD practice: *'programming that is "for and by" communities'*

Aim for a diverse programme: *'*
[M]ake our programming more equitable for different community groups ... recognising that we can't take a one-size-fits-all approach.'

Shape the programme around the target audiences:
'You're talking about audience diversification, but you can't get that without programming that actually appeals to that audience.'

TASK 6: Gain broad organisational commitment to audience diversification

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Develop new skills and knowledge, particularly drawing from CACD practices.

> Engage multidisciplinary teams to drive audience diversification, with active involvement and support of senior management and board.

> Manage resources to constantly adapt, reconfigure, and innovate.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Gain support of senior management:
'Ensur[e] at an executive level that everyone's invested. [There needs to be] enough collective goodwill for a project to survive beyond the planning stage. I suppose that's how you test whether an idea is good, right? If you can sustain interest collectively. But it does need executive support.'

Draw on Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD) practice:
'CACD practice is about collaboration. It's about grassroots activation of ideas that are already there. I feel like communities within the context of CACD practices, are always about 10 years ahead of the institution.'

Be accountable: *'It is important that everyone has ownership over these projects so that they can be accountable.'*

Make diversity a passion: *'Fall in love with diversity ... Why is it attractive? What excites you about it? What does a transformed sector look like and what will be your role?'*

EXPERIENCES OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Accept gradual adoption of diversity objectives:
"We do go slowly because the organisation is managing a lot at the moment. So, taking them on a gentle road is good for them and for testing [change].'

Involve all staff in the project of diversifying audiences:
'I had a meeting with one of our artistic directors recently to talk about how we're going to approach community engagement in the coming year.'

Make diversity a priority for the organisation:
'[In the past] we didn't have money for any of it and we were trying to juggle multiple roles, so it was never given a full focus. It is now.'

What are the barriers and inhibitors of change?

TASK 1: Recognise need for change

Participating in this research and contributing to the CoP is evidence of being a Leader in relation to Task 1. Our research therefore didn't gain insights into the barriers and inhibitors of work relating to this task.

TASK 4: Programming is responsive to target audience

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Resistance to changing programming:

'The hardest thing to change is the artistic programme-led structure, which determines everything else.'

'I think [codesigned programming] is great when we're talking about public programmes. I'm not so sure about appropriateness for being a gallery committee selection panel. I think having the visual arts expertise, there's a reputational risk for ... the panel.'

> Limiting or constricting program changes:

Audience diversification is positioned as the aim of ancillary programs, not core programming.

> Lack of control or influence over programming:

'If we buy a show that has activities, we would certainly roll with it, but we wouldn't actively seek out a programme ... and develop it ourselves.'

TASK 6: Gain broad organisational commitment to audience diversification

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Risk of siloing audience diversification:

'A former staff member wrote a policy around access and inclusion but it was largely done in isolation. It was the first for the organisation and a good start, but it didn't involve the rest of the organisation as much as it could have.'

> Limited internal support or commitment from leadership:

'Because what's happening at the moment is that everybody is so bogged down in the conversation about how they're going to do it. How do we do it? How do we do it well? How do we embed it? How is it community-led? Everyone is having a conversation in silo of each other.'

Recommendations:

Strengthen audience-centric practice in arts organisations by improving their **DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES** and ability to:

> Focus on the audience experience rather than adherence to professional standards or expectations.
> Make programming decisions in new ways, often through collaborative processes.
> Develop new skills and knowledge, particularly drawing from CACD practices.
> Engage multidisciplinary teams operating with the active involvement and support of senior management.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

DEFINITION: The capacity to work beyond the organisational structure to gain new and valuable resources from external networks.

Social Networking is linked to:

TASK 2: Identify their target audience

TASK 3: Research audience and their barriers to participation

TASK 5: Develop relationship & multiple connections with target audience

What are the drivers and enablers of change?

TASK 2: Identify target audience

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Move beyond organisational structures and networks to gain new and valuable resources from external networks.

> Articulate specific and nuanced profile(s) of current, emerging, and new audiences.

> Assume responsibility and accountability for identifying, accessing, and developing audiences.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Get specific about the audience:
'You have to be really specific about who the audience is. You don't have to be everything to everyone. I know our funding bodies tell us that we have to, but it's kind of impossible!'

Go to your target audience, rather than expecting them to come to you:
'Connect. Reach out, visit, and engage with your identified audience, and invite them to collaborate.'

Involve community representatives early:
'Work with someone from your intended audience from the earliest point possible. We make a lot of decisions early on that have enormous impact on reaching our intended audience. A person from your intended audience will add value to these decisions, for example, political sensitivity, timing, location, pricing.'

EXPERIENCES OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Gain insights into audience engagement:
'We have time now to collect information on our current audience, which we don't have, and then we can kind of do the research on what are the barriers for engagement, and then I can carry that through to next year.'

Look for gaps in your audience:
'One of the goals … is actually finding out who our audiences are, understanding gaps in our audience and putting in measures to … just gain some basic understanding of who we don't have coming into the venue or interacting with us.'

TASK 3: Research audience and their barriers to participation

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Collaborate, partner, network and engage with, people who are not in the arts, cultural, and creative sectors.

> Commit to respectful and transparent relationship management, with an open curiosity towards understanding the motivations and values of external parties.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Collect data about people's experience, not just their demographics:

'Look at the kinds of questions that you want to ask that reveal to you the way that those audiences are travelling through an experience with you, what is the nature of their experiences in softer terms than just the demographics?'

Experiment with research methods:

'There are so many other ways to gather information that doesn't have to just be statistics and numbers or "We had 70 per cent this or 60 per cent this". It's about the experience and those experiencing it.'

Have discussions with potential audiences:

'We went and got those focus groups together, I asked them every kind of question I could think about from ticket prices to what the marketing images look like. But really, a lot of the things that came out was that people don't find enough content that they can take their parents to… which was like a huge lightbulb for us in terms of what kind of ticket offers we would put out there.'

EXPERIENCES OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Be open to criticism:

'We had a meeting with the community. Members of the community came and expressed their frustration but also their experience. Then we talked about what we could do to better support them … Out of that meeting, there was the idea of potentially looking at people joining the organisation maybe in a casual role.'

Respond to feedback:

'[T]here's been over 1,500 pieces of feedback, and the team has rounded back on every single piece [explaining] if it goes ahead, great; and if it doesn't, why it didn't.'

TASK 5: Develop relationship with target audience and build multiple connections

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Share relationships across organisations (particularly outside the arts and culture sector) and develop multiple touchpoints for stakeholders.

> Focus on making the arts organisation porous, moving away from hidden and impermeable structures and processes.

> Demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills including the ability to gain trust and respect, use appropriate language, and empathise with different values and approaches.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Be genuine:

'It's about communicating. It's not about apologising for what might not be there, but it's really being clear about what is there, as much as you know. Because what it then allows people to do is make really informed decisions.'

Consider a sense of community ownership as a sign of success:

'One of the things for me that becomes a telling gauge [that] the relationship is happening is when communities themselves start to suggest what kind of projects they might want to do with you.'

Understand the importance of belonging for audiences:

'We go to see things that we know our people are in. We go to see things that our kids are in. We like to be in a foyer where we're going to bump into people. It's a community. It's a feeling that the theatre is a place for me and that it's my community in the theatre.'

Make it a long-term commitment:

'The relationship starts before the project or the season or the programme, and continues way after it finishes. So we're building long-term relationships here.'

Involve multiple staff from your organisation:

'Because we have a lot of rotation in terms of staff, we want to make sure that the relationship stays with the organisation, not with the person. So if we're creating programmes for community … it is important that it always comes back to the organisation and what the organisation has to offer that community.'

EXPERIENCE OF THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Work with community leaders:

'We reached out to [a local community organisation] because they are community champions with their own areas of expertise. They've been quite engaged in wanting to do more. … They've sort of become my brains trust as well. If there are questions around different programming areas that I'm not an expert in, or I need more information on, I can easily reach out to any one of them.'

What are the barriers and inhibitors of change?

TASK 2: Identify target audience

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Limited audience insights:

Organisations lacked meaningful data on target audiences, especially data that accounts for the complex nature of identity and communities.

> Perceptions of competition between different audiences:

'If we get really specific about audience groups then we are not delivering a programme which has been designed to have a broad reach and appeal. How do we balance this without 'defaulting to whiteness'?'

TASK 3: Research audience and their barriers to participation

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Difficulty gaining information about non-attendees:

'How to gauge which audiences aren't coming. Because it's a really difficult thing to get data on.'

> Uncertainty as to how to translate information and learnings into action:

'Look, we did an audience survey which has just closed. That's the very first teeny tiny step. But I feel ... like we are possibly slightly stuck on what the next step is.'

> Its easier to work with existing audiences.

Due to financial or time constraints, organisations may be inclined to avoid risk and focus on the audiences they already attract.

TASK 5: Develop relationship with target audience and build multiple connections

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Audience diversification is not prioritised:

'We're happy to play and we're happy to work together, it just hasn't happened.'

> Prioritising relationships with existing audiences:

'Subscribers are our major audience, and they are really engaged, and events are dominated by season ticket holders. This may be off-putting for other potential audiences.'

> Overreliance on an individual team member to build and maintain relationships:

'It's the people in the organisation that have the relationship, and obviously, they change.'

Recommendations:

Strengthen audience-centric practice in arts organisations by improving their **SOCIAL NETWORKING** capabilities and ability to:

> Participate in regular and ongoing partnerships and networks, particularly those that involve working outside the arts and creative sectors.

> Develop excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to gain trust and respect from a wide range of community members and stakeholders.

> Prioritise a commitment to relationship management, understanding and acknowledging the motivations and values of external parties.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

DEFINITION: Strategic processes and business practices commit staff and resources to prioritising audience diversification.

Business Improvement Processes are linked to:

TASK 7: Undertake evaluation and reflective practice

TASK 8: Change the organisation's usual way of operating

What are the drivers and enablers of change?

TASK 7: Undertake evaluation and reflective practice

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Work closely with funding partners and stakeholders to (re)define success and change institutional expectations.

> Allow for longer timelines than may have been previously acceptable, recognising that the most valuable outcomes are often long-term objectives.

INSIGHTS FROM CHANGE AGENTS

Listen closely to feedback:

'Be an active researcher: listen, ask questions, learn, share ideas, collaborate, go with the flow, experiment, let things go, change direction.'

Use evaluations to change organisational practice:

'We get asked a lot about the outcomes – nothing changes as a result of that. I'd be really interested to know how does that [outcome] impact your practice? How does it impact what actually happens? And is that going to be an ongoing thing or is that a one-off?'

Find ways to test new programming:

'We're really going to experiment and we're going to try some things. Some of them aren't going to work, but some of them will, and that will really help us - we'll evaluate those and collect the data that we need and talk about what worked, what didn't.'

Use evaluation to test new ways of working:

'Forty-four kids came to that show and they're in the right age group, the same age group as the character on stage and they loved it … So they came back and said we want to do that again because what it did was it gave the students an opportunity to talk more about the work and kind of feel like they had a voice within the work I suppose.'

Make evaluation a process of continuous improvement:

'I wrote down the four points and measured them against the programme that we're running: one of them was having a strategic approach, two was drive for long-term change, three you talked about reflective practice and four, evaluation. Out of those four measures, it is a strategic approach … this is for the long haul and that is by virtue of it's not just tied to one program … it's like an [organisation-] wide [engagement program].'

Commit to ongoing evaluation:

'Keep asking the hard questions … we are painting a relatively rosy picture, but at the same time, how can we do better? What are some other things that we could be and should be looking at and measures, please. … Where should we be thinking about how we evaluate the change in our audiences or our participants et cetera?'

TASK 8: Change the organisation's usual way of operating

Undertaking this task requires organisations to:

> Undertake a process of systemic change, focusing on developing an organisational culture of experimentation and innovation, which allows for an acceptance of risk and ongoing learning.

> Prioritise audience diversification in strategic processes, ensuring ongoing commitment of staff and resources to achieve outcomes.

> Embed audience-centric practice through reporting mechanisms, budgets, staffing, and policies and processes.

Change the organisation's sense of its purpose:

'Think of our roles as serving the community in the arts and cultural space.'

Make the goal of diversity a habit:

'How do you embed it so that it becomes habitual and the thing that all of your exhibitions are accessible, it just becomes part of what you do.'

Give the goal of achieving greater diversity time:

'I think it's really great when an institution can give a project space and time. To ensure that the institution has the right narrative that doesn't feel rushed or unresearched. The mindset that if you want to develop new audiences, that the story has to be right.'

Work on developing trust:

'Our CEO always talks about 'working at the speed of trust'…. The results that you're expecting from this audience-centric practice are long term, rather than short term gains.'

Change is a long-term commitment:

'I feel that probably within the last 15 years, there's been dramatic change towards acknowledging and recognising the need for diversity within the company…. Our knowledge of how best to do that, how best practice has developed in the entire country, has changed. I think [we] do a really good job of trying to keep up with that, trying to stay on top of conversations that are happening nationally, the issues that are being raised so that we're constantly evolving.'

What are the barriers and inhibitors of change?

TASK 7: Undertake evaluation and reflective practice

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> A lack of relevant data to enable effective evaluation.

'From the database we get info about postcodes but not much else.'

> Evaluation that is not useful and/or used to inform practice:

'My managers don't see what we're doing. They don't see the visitors coming in and being really happy with what we're doing. They just see the numbers.'

TASK 8: Change the organisation's usual way of operating

The CoP found the issues that make this task difficult for organisations include:

> Resistance to new ways of working and the reallocation of resources:

'Yes, it's absolutely possible and we have been trying to free up one of the team to be able to do this.'

'Being a really traditional organisation, which we are … [we] like that you've picked up on some of the new and good directions we're taking, but we do have a lot of stubborn and old directions as well.'

> Unwillingness to learn from other sectors and artforms:

'I think [the Change Agent] has come from a very strong performing arts background which is not necessarily this venue.'

Recommendations:

Strengthen audience-centric practice in arts organisations by improving their **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES** and ability to:

> Embed a commitment to audience-centric practice through a range of processes and procedures, including reporting mechanisms, budgets, and staffing.

> Experiment and innovate in the work they do, which allows for an acceptance of risk and ongoing learning.

> Commit to 'slow engagement' with longer timelines and longer-term objectives.

Dissemination of research

We presented on this Community of Practice research at a number of industry events including:

> ACMI: Digital Board's workshop: 2022

> Symphony Orchestra Network: 2022 (John Nolan)

> Tessitura conference workshop and presentation: 2022, 2023

> Culture is Bad for You. Conversation at ACMI: 2022

> PAC Australia monthly seminar series presentation: 2022

> Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres monthly seminar series presentation: 2023

> Australian Performing Arts Forum workshop: 2023

> British Academy of Management conference paper: 2023

> Australasian Association of Theatre and Performance conference paper: 2023

> ARM Architecture/ Open House/ Geelong Arts Centre conversation: 2023

> Future of Arts, Culture and Technology (FACT) symposium, ACMI: 2024

> Regional Galleries Association of South Australia Forum: 2024

Next steps

The value of this research lies in building the capacity of Australian arts organisations to undertake audience-centric practice and engage new and diverse audiences. Embedding audience-centric practice into arts organisations would benefit from further investigation into:

> How to build the capacity of arts organisations to diversify their audiences.

> What audience diversification practices leading organisations undertake.

> The systems and structures that impact arts organisations.

> The perspectives of audiences and the various partners in the creative ecosystem with respect to audience diversification.

GLOSSARY

Audience diversification

Shifting the social profile of arts audiences from a traditionally narrow and privileged demographic.

Audience-centric practice

Work done by Leader arts organisations that enables them to engage new and diverse audiences. This work brings attention to audiences across all aspects of an organisation's practice and sees the engagement of new and diverse audiences as a key indicator of success.

Community Arts and Cultural Development (CACD)

Community Arts and Cultural Development refers to community-based arts practice that is generally shaped by three principles:

> The activity is by, with, and for communities

> The artists and project facilitators are highly skilled

> Activities reflect the energy and qualities of the community

Change agent

Arts worker with lived and/ or professional expertise in the diversification of audiences. These practitioners were experts in both audience-centric practice and change processes in arts organisations.

Community of Practice

A group of people who share a common concern or challenge and come together to explore ideas and solutions to their problems. A Community Practice is a way to create new knowledge and share best practice.

Organisational Change Consultant

An expert in change management processes. Brings an external perspective and guides organisations and their staff through periods of transition. Their role is to support organisations as they adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS