



Promoting everyday creativity at a local level

VicHealth Local Government Partnership



This module covers:

Impact streams

- Increasing equity in creative strategies
- Embracing opportunities for children to inform creative programs
- Improving opportunities for young people to lead creative programs

Partners

We would like to thank our development partners for co-authoring this module:



We would like to thank our development partners for contributing to this module:



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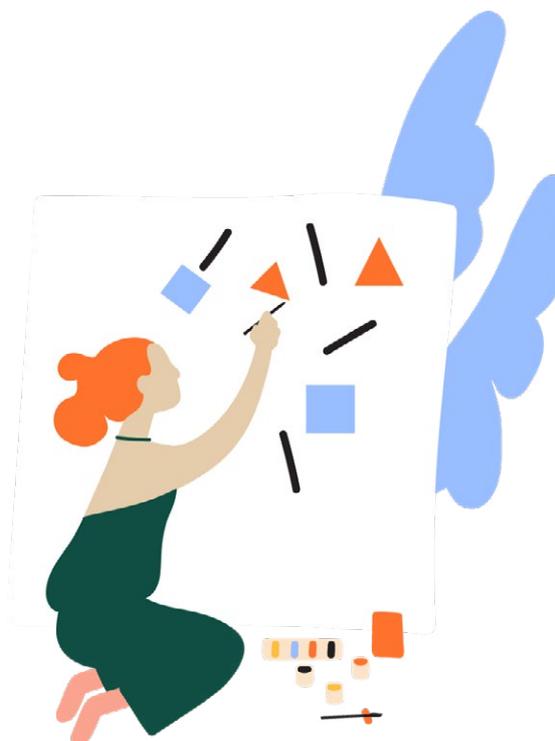
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Overview

Regular arts and cultural engagement has been shown to result in better health outcomes, with some research identifying that people require an optimum of 100+ hours per year to gain health benefits.¹

Unfortunately, opportunities to engage in arts, cultural and creative experiences are not evenly distributed, with many people in our community facing significant and complex barriers to participation. Local government plays a critical role in providing opportunities for everyday creativity to flourish among communities.



Increasingly, councils recognise the fundamental value of arts and culture at a local level and appreciate the role these play in creating liveable communities with positive reputations.² A vibrant arts and cultural environment plays a critical role in social improvement for an increasing number of councils³ and younger Australians are expressing the central role the arts play in their everyday lives.⁴

Children are natural participants of everyday creativity, with storytelling, singing, dancing, imagining and creating forming the foundation of their early learning experiences. Councils can use arts and creative experiences to provide meaningful sensory and language development experiences, and to connect with young children’s creative energy, curiosity and joy. Councils provide a wide range of spaces and services that are uniquely placed to harness how the arts and creative play can strengthen family relationships, supported play and learning, and social connection within the community.

Councils can build on existing investments across the creative sector by other levels of government and experts, through collaborative projects, by identifying opportunities to strengthen the arts and creative industries, and by facilitating positive social, cultural, economic, health and wellbeing outcomes.⁵

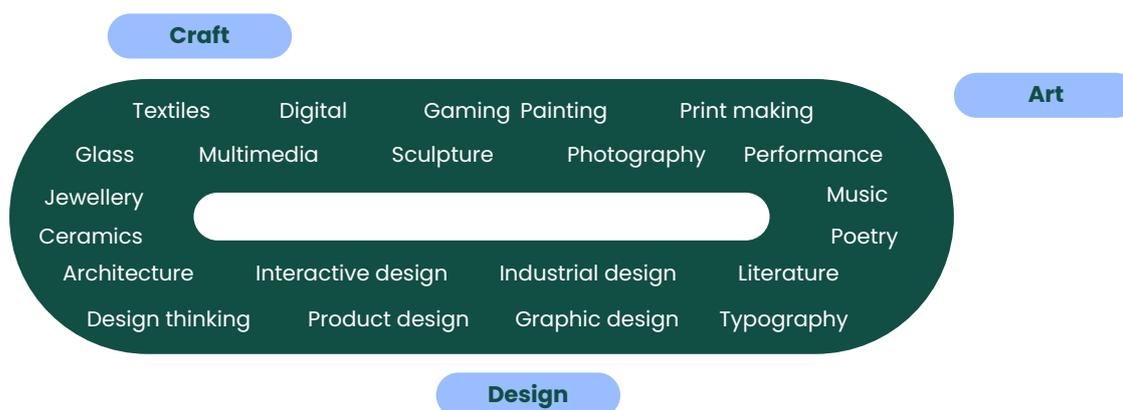


FIGURE 1: Some examples of creative practice: Adapted from City of Melbourne⁶

1. Municipal Association of Victoria: [‘Arts, culture and the creative industries are essential’](#)
 2. Municipal Association of Victoria: [‘Arts, culture and the creative industries are essential’](#)
 3. A New Approach (ANA): [Behind the Scenes: Drivers of Arts and Cultural Policy Settings in Australia and Beyond](#)
 4. A New Approach (ANA): [Next Generation of Voters: Young Middle Australians talk Arts, Culture and Creativity](#)
 5. Municipal Association of Victoria: [The Arts, Our Culture and Creative Industries](#)
 6. Adapted from City of Melbourne: [City of Melbourne Creative Strategy 2018–28](#)

Local government can inspire everyday creativity for children and young people through a wide variety of services, programs and strategies including music, dance, art, literature, arts facilities and urban design. This module is designed to support local governments to develop new tools and skills to ensure the benefits of creative participation can be enjoyed by more young people in their community. The focus of this module is on reducing some of the barriers children and young people face to active participation in arts, cultural and creative engagement.

Everyday creativity can happen anywhere, including libraries, arts, cultural and community facilities, open space, parks and playgrounds, and streetscapes. This module focuses on reducing some of the barriers children, young people and their families face to active participation in arts, cultural and creative engagement.

What are the benefits for councils?

This module will support your council to:

- have children, young people and their families drive, create and engage with creative opportunities in the community
- improve wellbeing, social connection, skills, leadership and employment options for people in the community who have previously been excluded from arts and creative systems
- contribute to a thriving, diverse local creative environment that fosters social connection
- tap into the potential of community strengths and council assets within the local community
- strengthen the local economy by increasing creative sector capabilities, employment and development of creative attractions and arts events for the community and visitors.

Hot tip!

Equity should be central to everything local governments undertake. The Australia Council for the Arts describes Equity as follows:

[“Equity simply has to be central](#) to how we think about, support and engage with arts and culture in this country. Cultural participation is a human right. Arts and culture have a particularly powerful role in generating empathy that embraces difference and bridges social divides. Our artists and creative workers can help us navigate rapid economic, social and cultural change and help enable all Australians to feel part of a shared civic community. And genuine engagement with diversity in all its forms makes our arts and culture more relevant, more just, more globally connected and, simply better.”

Impact stream:

Increasing equity in creative strategies

Implementation actions

To complete this impact stream, councils will select from:

Quick win: *Audit and promote councils' accessible and equitable creative programs*

Quick win: *Develop a 'Baby Choir' program*

Step up: *Deliver welcoming creative experiences for all families*

Step up: *Increase creative programs offered through local early childhood services*

Step up: *Establish a cultural creative careers hub*

Ambitious: *Increase creative spaces for Deaf and Disabled young people*

Ambitious: *Embed access and cultural equity through creative strategies*

Option A: *Develop a cultural equity plan*

Option B: *Review council strategies to improve strategic inclusion for children and young people with disabilities in creative programs*

Responding to diversity is critical to the relevance and sustainability of all types of cultural institutions and programming. Our communities need spaces for deepening understanding between different cultures and lived experiences that can provide creative possibilities to contribute towards a more equitable, cohesive and open society.

Councils are ideally placed to lead creative strategies to increase social cohesion in their communities. However, resources and opportunities required for participation in arts, culture and creativity are not equitably distributed.

Councils working through this impact stream will consider actions and strategies to enhance access to a full and vibrant life for all. A council-led equity approach to planning and change-making can highlight the abundant assets of diverse communities, develop creative content that reflects contemporary society, and provide fairer and richer engagement with arts and culture.

Councils can reduce systemic barriers to address equity in creative strategies by:

- ensuring diverse voices are included in planning, implementation and evaluation
- improving council staff and decision-makers' knowledge of cultural protocols and the needs and priorities of people with disabilities
- ensuring people and communities who are sharing personal, creative or cultural skills and knowledge are not expected to work for free or just for exposure
- not assuming that everyone reads and speaks English
- ensuring genuine and diverse representation and not assuming that having one person with diverse lived experience involved qualifies as engagement of an entire community.

Cultural equity key terms

Cultural equity explicitly values the unique and collective cultures of diverse communities. It supports their existence in physical spaces, in public policies and investment, and in expression in civic and spiritual life. Cultural equity aims to defend the right of everyone to have access to a full and vibrant life, by taking direct action or by changing systems and structures that may limit this access otherwise.

The Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance has adopted a [Definition of Cultural Equity](#) that expands on this concept.

Culture in this module has 2 meanings:

1. culture as an activity, pursued, for example, through books, galleries and music, and through appreciation and knowledge of the arts
2. culture as in the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people and their way of life.

That is, 'culture' in this module relates both to creative pursuits and to social understandings of culture.

Cultural diversity in this module describes the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups in a society, and the ways they find expression.

Cultural practitioner refers to someone who shares and/or interprets cultural practice to people from other cultures, mainly to preserve a culture.

Culturally diverse communities in this module describes people who come to Australia from other countries, may speak a language other than English, and may have different cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs. The term is used by government and services but is not generally how communities or people describe themselves.

Local government occupies a key role in the development and support of communities and fostering social cohesion. Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. This diversity makes our state a more interesting place to live in.

People from diverse cultures contribute language skills, new ways of thinking, new knowledge, and different experiences. A cultural equity approach to planning and change-making recognises the abundant assets that such rich diversity brings.

Australia's arts and cultural opportunities are not justly reflective of our population. The [2020 National Arts Participation Survey](#) found that respondents from culturally diverse communities are more likely to engage with the arts than those from the dominant Anglo Australian culture.

However, many of the communities who are most engaged with Australia's arts and culture are underrepresented, under-resourced or under-compensated for their work, and are unable to contribute to shaping its resourcing and decision-making. Australians from culturally diverse communities are underrepresented across every leadership role in every cultural sector, organisational type and jurisdiction.⁷

7. Diversity Arts Australia: [Shifting the Balance](#)

Research and evidence summaries

- Australia Council for the Arts, Towards Equity: [A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector](#).
- Bonet and Negrier: [‘The participative turn in cultural policy: Paradigms, models, contexts’, Poetics](#)
- ANA: [‘Insight Reports’ series](#)
- Taylor, Brook, Oman, Richardon, Steedman, Kennedy, Oakley, Reed: [Data, diversity and inequality in the creative industries](#)
- Australian Government: [Supporting Australia’s Creative Economy](#)
- Diversity Arts Australia: [Shifting the Balance](#)
- Australia Council for the Arts: [Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#)
- Australia Council for the Arts: [More than bums on seats: Australian participation in the arts](#)
- Australia Council for the Arts: [Making Art Work \(summary and response\)](#)

Planning tools

- Diversity Arts Australia and The British Council: [Creative Equity Toolkit](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission: [Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool](#) (registration required)

Cultural equity sample resources

- VicHealth: [‘LEAD summary report’](#)
- Victorian Government: [‘Multicultural Policy Statement’](#)

Promoting inclusion in creative programs for children and young people with disabilities

Arts and creative activities can allow young people with a disability to connect with others with similar interests, explore, test out and push personal boundaries, find and strengthen their authentic voice and develop a sense of belonging. Young people with disability say they simply don't have the same access to opportunities as their peers.⁸ Members of the disability community need an active invitation. Statements like 'Access for all' and 'Everybody welcome' do not necessarily attract everyone, especially if no further access information is listed or included.

Around 1 in 10 Australian children and young people have a disability, and reports show that participation rates in arts, cultural and music activities is higher for young people with disabilities (45%) than young peers without disabilities (43%).⁹ However, young people with disabilities experience significant barriers to their participation in cultural and community life due to limited accessibility, lack of inclusion and discrimination.

8. Mission Australia: [Young, Willing and Able: Youth Survey Disability Report 2019](#)

9. Mission Australia: [Young, Willing and Able: Youth Survey Disability Report 2019](#)

Disability key terms

Disability

Disability is sometimes viewed as a problem in a person's body requiring medical treatment. The social model of disability, by contrast, distinguishes between impairment and disability. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for people with disability.

In the module, disability describes interactions between a non-inclusive society and an individual. Defining disability as an interaction makes clear that disability is not an attribute of the person.

Disability can be visible or invisible, sensory, physical, neurodiverse, cognitive, intellectual or developmental. People with disability are diverse and have intersecting identities; they are never just 'disabled people'. The word 'disability' implies barriers and discrimination. The problem is not the individual. Identifying and removing barriers is everyone's responsibility.

Barriers can be found in the environment, in communication or in attitudes. Barriers can affect access to information, education, employment, appropriate housing or accommodation, or socialisation. Ability Links has [created a video](#) to explain the social model of disability.

People with disability

This module uses the term 'people with disability', consistent with the Victorian Public Sector Commission's use. The module encourages council-led action that addresses and removes barriers to participating in creative programs and opportunities in the community by ensuring these systems are designed for fair and optimal inclusion by all.

Deaf and Disabled people

The action 'Increase creative spaces for Deaf and Disabled young people' uses person-first language. This is consistent with terminology used by Arts Access Victoria to highlight the whole individual and the social worlds and experiences of Deaf and Disabled young artists, who are at the core of this action. The term 'Deaf and Disabled' is consistent with the [social model of disability](#).

Ableism

Ableism is the disability equivalent of racism. It describes prejudice and discrimination experienced by people with disability, directly or indirectly. It is the preferencing of people without disability over those with disability.

Disability-led

Disability-led means disabled people have creative control and make the creative decisions. In a community arts and cultural development model, disability leadership means establishing and holding spaces where people with disability can create bold and evocative art that connects across audiences. These are spaces where people can be brave, dream big and be their authentic selves.

Disability leadership is about building a culture where artists with disability are recognised for their creativity and the excellence of their work, are acknowledged and celebrated for the stories they tell, and are a vital part of the artistic landscape.

Creating accessible spaces

Many people with disabilities have extremely limited experience of the arts. People with disability regularly experience a lack of choice and autonomy. This is due to the limited consultation, information, knowledge and experience on the part of decision-makers. There is often a lack of awareness of the messages and markers that indicate to people with disabilities: 'You're not really welcome here'.

This includes things like wheelchair access being through a back door or a convoluted route that requires an escort; inadequate access to Auslan interpreters; one audio-described show throughout a 4-week run; lack of access information on websites or in brochures; and the lack of representation of people with disabilities experience on stage, screen or in creative teams.

Asking a few simple questions can massively change the way we work, interact and be in the

world, and can allow everyone in a space to feel accepted, valued and valuable. For example:

- What do you need for this to be the best experience for you?
- What do we need to know before we start working together?

Reluctance to ask these questions often comes from fear that we might not be able to deliver. But it's unlikely that anyone will ask for anything unreasonable or unrealistic. As leaders, teachers and facilitators, we need to build flexibility into our projects. It's a bit like having a contingency line in a budget. Whatever structures or systems we put in place need to have an element of flexibility too.

Recommended resources

- Municipal Association of Victoria: [Disability resources for councils](#)
- Commonwealth of Australia: [National Arts and Disability Strategy: Research Overview: Arts and Disability in Australia](#)
- Carroll, Witten, Calder-Dawe, Smith, Kearns, Asiasiga, Lin, Kayes and Mavoa: '[Enabling participation for disabled young people: study protocol](#)', BMC Public Health Journal
- Birds of Paradise Theatre Company: [Barriers to Access: Report on the barriers faced by young disabled and D/deaf people in accessing youth arts provision in Scotland](#)

Council-run creative programs can provide young children and their families with ways to connect with each other and the world around them. They can expand children's developmental opportunities and enrich the community offering that council provides as a public service.

However, families may not always feel arts spaces are 'for them'. Or, opportunities may be too expensive or hard to access. The resources and opportunities required for participation in arts, culture and creativity are not equitably distributed.

This impact stream focuses on strategies for councils to ensure the arts is for everyone – that programming is welcoming, accessible, celebrates creative and cultural knowledge and is representative of local families. Councils can highlight the value of the arts as a community offering, and strategically work to grow and diversify the arts workforce in the local area.

This highlights to children and young people the wonderful array of leaders, cultures and artists in the area they are growing up in. Seeing a place for everyone fosters a broader sense of connection, purpose and overall wellbeing.

Intended outcomes

Councils undertaking this impact stream can expect to:

- create more welcoming creative experiences for families
- increase their understanding of 'cultural equity' and/or equitable access needs for people with disabilities
- increase creative employment, participation, equality and leadership opportunities
- reduce systemic causes of discrimination
- strengthen council's economy by leveraging a wider diversity of cultural assets
- facilitate social cohesion for stronger communities within their municipality and beyond
- increase provision of accessible and welcoming creative programs for children and young people with disabilities
- embed accessibility principles across a broader range of council-led activities, events and programs
- increase participation by young people with disabilities across all council-led activities, events and programs.

Minimum deliverables

To complete the impact stream 'Increasing equity in creative strategies' councils will have:

- identified priority cohorts of children, young people and their families who face barriers to participation in arts, culture and creative programs or careers
- demonstrated activities to involve people representing the identified cohorts to inform improved access to creative programs
- demonstrated inclusion and promotion of access or cultural equity in creative programs through council communication channels
- demonstrated succession planning, outlining how the activity will contribute to the outcomes of current and future Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.





Quick win:

Audit and promote council's accessible and equitable creative programs

In this action, councils will use an equity approach to audit and promote council's creative opportunities for children and young people.

Councils undertaking this action will consider how creative and arts programs are included, funded, signposted and promoted to encourage participation by children and/or young people who could be more likely to be excluded from these spaces.

The how-to guide includes examples to help councils improve experiences in local creative programs by people with disabilities and those who are Deaf, as well as examples to better address cultural safety and equity. Councils may choose to focus on these communities or may focus on other members of the local community who would benefit from better inclusion in arts and creative programs. Councils are encouraged to identify a community cohort to focus on and work with closely in the first instance to establish inclusion and equity competencies alongside these communities.

The self-audit aims to identify and promote good practice and highlight perceived areas for improvement in policy, systems and structures. Publish the information or report to invite ongoing community awareness and contribution to improve the equity and access of creative programs.

Crossover opportunity ↻

See the *Connected and Supportive Communities* core module including related actions which may support your work in this action:

- Quick win: Undertake a cultural inclusion snapshot (RBD)
- Quick win: Learn about children and young people with disability and how you can support their access, inclusion and participation

Quick note

One of the greatest barriers to joining community activities and events for the disability community is determining what options are accessible. Often, people will start with an internet search and scour through activity and event websites searching for information on access, such as a venue's wheelchair access or whether an event will be Auslan interpreted, or to get an overview of what might happen in a session.



How-to guide to:

Audit and promote council's accessible and equitable creative programs

Involving people

In this action, councils should include the voices and experiences of local children or young people with disability, people from culturally diverse backgrounds or others who may experience exclusion from arts and creative programs. Aim to compensate them for their time and provide any adjustments required to invite their meaningful contribution.

Seek input from representatives from the group or groups whose access to creative programs is the focus of the action. Consider options to consult and involve young people from culturally diverse communities or with disability, or other relevant advisory groups in the local community.

Council teams that could lead this action include social inclusion, access and inclusion, arts, youth services and community development. Additionally, support and information could be sought from communications, human resources, sport and recreation, planning, parks, environment, economic development and finance.

Crossover opportunity

For guidance on including the voices of children and young people consult the *Leading the Way – Engaging young voices for change* foundation module.



Plan

Develop a brief project plan, identifying the community cohort you are focusing on, key people and groups to involve. Outlining the goals, scope and timelines for this project. Include a communication strategy outlining how to promote the creative programs identified in the audit. Depending on the scale of the creative programs at your council, consider convening a small working group of council staff and community representatives who could contribute to this project.

Consider focusing on a small number of arts and creative programs, projects or activities council is delivering for young people and study each aspect of access to see how access or cultural equity provision and information can be improved.



Assess

Review council programs, strategies and services to identify information, structures and processes across council that uphold equity for young people from the community cohort. For example, look for children, youth and creative programs that include artists or themes representing the community cohort and allocated funding towards inclusion in creative programs.

This information could be collected from council staff and by reviewing council's customer service, engagement activities, website, newsletters, communication channels and community planning (e.g. cultural and creative plans, recreational plans, diversity and inclusion plans, disability access plans).

Together with members of the working group, conduct a provisional review of how information about creative programs is presented to the community. Consider how the words, language, imagery, iconography and diversity of creative programs are received by members of the community with diverse needs or from different cultural backgrounds.

Desktop review for information about disability inclusion

One way to complete the 'Assess' stage is to conduct a review of your council's website and social media platforms used to promote arts, cultural and creative facilities, events and activities. A basic review could include searching key terms including 'Access', 'Disability', 'Children', 'Kids', 'Young People' and 'Diversity' and noting:

- what information is provided about arts, cultural and creative options
- which activities focus on children and young people
- which activities are identified through relevant councils' plans/strategies
- the types/number of activities relevant to young people from the target groups
- if information about access is included – such as about wheelchair access, Auslan interpreters, quiet rooms
- if [Universal Access Symbols](#) are used on the website.

[Undertake a self-assessment](#) to determine how accessible your website is.

Recommended resources

Standard icons

Councils can use these Universal Access Symbols or National Interpreter Symbols to help people identify accessible events at a glance:

- Arts Access: [Universal Access Symbols](#)



- Victorian Government: [National interpreter symbol and language assistance information](#)



Review structures, budgets and decision-making processes for creative programs

Determine if your council has any policies, statements and budget dedicated towards access or cultural inclusion in the arts and creative programs identified in the Assess step. Consider how this budget is allocated (e.g. per project or department).

Understanding this information assists in determining what targeted supports are already available for young people in your community through council. Structures, budgets or decision-

making processes that explicitly consider access, cultural inclusion and young people in them are more likely to succeed in reaching these groups.

Consider factors such as:

- how budget and resources for creative programs are allocated
- how creative programs are delivered and by who

- employment across council and council services that contribute to creative programs
- diversity in creative programming and development
- diversity in audience development activities
- representation in community and council leadership and volunteering
- racial justice and anti-racism
- council adoption of cultural safety practices
- equity practices in corporate planning, procurement and contracting.

Review council's relationships with community groups and organisations, and other government areas that have the potential to contribute to council's creative programs.

Consider:

- the nature of council's relationship with culturally diverse group/agencies, disability groups/ agencies (e.g. Is there a formal partnership? Are groups simply recognised as residents in the municipality?)
- which young people are represented
- the ways in which young people are included, their roles and opportunities for leadership or other decision-making contribution.

Recommended resources

A range of organisational self-assessment and/or cultural audit packages may be employed or adapted for this purpose, such as Diversity Arts Australia's [Equity and Inclusion Checklist](#).

Deliver

Prepare a summary report

Compile a report identifying any practices that should be celebrated and potential opportunities to increase equitable inclusion in creative programs for young people. Include recommendations about how access information can be promoted using standard protocols such as [Universal Access Symbols](#) and the [National Interpreter Symbol](#).

Outline:

- examples of creative programs with great inclusive practices
- gaps or opportunities for creative programs to reduce exclusion
- opportunities within council budgets, policies or protocol that could be harnessed to increase equity in council's creative programs for children and young people
- recommendations for change
- how you can strengthen an evidence base for action

- how you can strengthen internal and external buy-in for change
- training and development requirements.

Include an action plan in the report that outlines the key activities council will undertake to implement the changes.

Hot tip!

Ensure that council publications uphold the access and equity standards you are seeking to improve. Consider offering formats, translations, designs and standards that meet the diverse communication needs of your community.

Create and communicate changes

Work with council's communications team to promote and highlight ways council is providing service or programs for young people with diverse needs, abilities and experiences. Encourage all workers across all council departments to use imagery and symbols, explain programs and highlight services wherever possible.

Create a public communication campaign to promote how council presents access and cultural equity information as well as council's efforts to provide programs and spaces that are inclusive of people with diverse needs.

Establish processes that ensure that council staff are aware of available budgets, protocols or adjustments for access or cultural equity to support fairer, more inclusive creative program options for young people.



Review and embed

Monitor the completion and impact of the changes undertaken from the action plan. Consider using website and social media traffic data on related items. Use feedback surveys to ask program participants and website users about access information. Review how the access budget was used.

Report on the completion of actions to community members and council teams involved in the development of activities and seek opportunities to embed the provision of Access information consistently across all council programs.

Evidence from the self-assessment can be used to build a more detailed equity work plan to improve access to creative programs.

Recommended resources

- Edmonton Arts Council: [Audit of Programs & Offerings: Cultural Diversity in the Arts](#)
- VicHealth: [Review of audit and assessment tools, programs and resources in workplace settings to prevent race-based discrimination and support diversity](#)
- City of Portland Oregon: [Budget Equity Assessment Tool](#)
- Coalition of Communities of Color: [Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity](#)



Quick win: *Develop a Baby Choir program*

Using voice, touch, movement, music and mindfulness, Baby Choir helps babies forge their understanding of the world through their senses.

Baby Choir is a welcoming weekly arts-based program that develops intimacy, emotional connection and positive engagement between babies and their grown-ups. It creates an environment where grown-ups are guided to build intuitive bonds with their baby, make social connections with people from the wider community, and access health and social services provided by the hosting organisation.

The Baby Choir program is developed by Kids Thrive and has a set of evidence-informed activities and engagement processes. Councils can access program materials and activities through Kids Thrive and VicHealth. Singing and chanting rhymes, jingles and songs together, and positive adult-child interaction have been shown to benefit childhood development in terms of self-identity and communication.

The Baby Choir program uses a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach. This ensures that it is appropriate for all children, while giving councils an opportunity to focus on including children and families facing challenges.

The program is designed to:

- develop intimacy, connection and emotional attachment between the child and parent or carer
- develop positive parenting skills
- build social connections through fostering confidence, fun and friendships

- promote healthy lifestyles
- build positive pathways for less-engaged families to access health services, early childhood services and other children's services.

To deliver Baby Choir, councils create a relaxed space where grown-ups and babies are supported and can have fun. This is important in the early years of parenting, when there is heightened risk of social and emotional isolation.

The program is designed to be co-delivered by a creative professional (such as a music, dance, theatre or community development professional) and a children's professional (such as a maternal and child health nurse, children's librarian, kindergarten teacher or childcare worker). The children's professional provides community support and health and parenting advice during an enjoyable experience designed to develop intimacy, connection and emotional attachment.

In recognition of the challenges facing some families, Baby Choir is best operated as an ongoing, rolling, weekly drop-in program, without fixed time commitments or expectations of 'correct' learning outcomes.

Watch [the video](#) to find out more information about Baby Choir, and to gain a sense of the style of the program.



Important note

Baby Choir Licence

Baby Choir was developed by Kids Thrive, which owns the ongoing intellectual property for the program. Councils can access and use Baby Choir materials, videos and activities through a simple licensing agreement. Please contact VicHealth via lgp@vichealth.vic.gov.au for further information about the licensing requirements.



How-to guide to:

Develop a Baby Choir Program

Involving people

Council teams to involve include health planning and promotion, family and youth services, arts and culture, children and family services and community development teams. Councils could also partner with local community or health organisations to drive and promote this program.

Where possible, councils should engage a creative professional who represents the cultural groups the program is targeting, or at least engage artists from target communities as guests of the choir, to ensure cultural accessibility and safety.

Consider ways to include the voices of young children and parents and carers from families experiencing challenges. Aim to compensate them for their time and provide any adjustments required to invite their meaningful contribution.

To support the engagement of families with young children in both the planning process and the Baby Choir program, ensure you provide a relaxed, non-judgemental environment. Also consider providing:

- a venue within walking distance or that is accessed easily by public transport (or provide community transport)
- morning or afternoon tea as part of the program

- childcare if needed (note that all preschool-aged children are welcome to participate in the Baby Choir program).

Family-centred practices are crucial. This means:

- aligning program content with client values, addressing what the client sees as most important for them
- being attuned and responsive to the views and circumstances of the clients, and engaging with them as partners
- adopting a purposeful joint decision-making process with clients, to identify goals and strategies.¹⁰

In the consultation and design phase for this action, you will identify existing council or community venues or programs that could successfully host a Baby Choir program. Aim for spaces that are likely to be appealing and accessible to families you wish to include.

Baby Choir has been successfully run in partnership with community health organisations. There is scope for it to be aligned with the Early Years Plan, and Arts Plan, or an Equity Plan – depending on council's priorities and resources.

Quick note

Consider which existing local venues or activities could support delivery of a Baby Choir; for example, Community Health, Community Centres, Neighbourhood House, Supported Community Groups, libraries, playgroups or recreation centres.

10. Moore, TG (2015), '[Engaging and partnering vulnerable families and communities: The keys to effective place-based approaches](#)'



Plan

Form a working group of families of young children, council staff and external agencies who can support the action. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings, follow up on actions, and ensure the project aligns with other community partnerships modules and approaches being developed.

Develop a project plan including:

- a 'terms of reference' that details the role of the working group
- the goals of the project and work to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work.

Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project. This will ensure the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed.

partners that Baby Choir is a free, rolling, drop-in program – not a one-off, time-limited, user-pays model.

Consider ways to target priority locations by utilising local champions and members of the working group with existing relationships with organisations or programs where children and families experience greater inequity.

Contact VicHealth for access to the licensed materials. Become familiar with the structure and requirements of delivering Baby Choir as per the licensing requirements.

Delivery of Baby Choir in accordance with the licensing agreement may require professional development training for existing staff or recruitment of a creative professional. This professional should have experience working with young children and their families using a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach, and an appropriate understanding of cultural safety. Ensure there is scope for funding to cover the costs of this training.



Assess

Compile a list of locally delivered programs and sites that either have existing reach with families facing challenges, or that are looking to increase engagement and build relationships with families from this target population. Be sure to provide an accessible description of the Baby Choir program that recognises the underlying principles of building trust and relationships between families facing challenges and existing support services.

Request 'expressions of interest' from organisations wanting to partner with you to deliver an ongoing program. It is important to highlight to potential



Design

Circulate materials and provide an opportunity for discussion to ensure that all members of the working group understand the principles of Baby Choir and how it must be delivered to comply with the licensing agreement. Present the findings from the expressions of interest exercise to the members of the working group. If there is a lot of interest from facilities, use a priority-setting technique with the working group to select the setting or settings for your Baby Choir.

Priority-setting techniques

Prepare a program schedule, allocating time for professional development and/or staff recruitment, and for community-based promotion using a range of avenues to target families with young children facing challenges.

Evidence shows that good outcomes for families experiencing challenges relate not only to the quality of the program, but also to the processes used to establish and deliver it. Best practices include working in partnership with families to identify goals, priorities and actions, establishing good working relationships between service providers and families, supporting family decision-making, and respecting each other's knowledge and expertise.¹¹

Devise a comprehensive advertising and promotion plan that utilises evidence-informed active engagement strategies to maximise recruitment and retention of families.

11. Moore, TG (2015), '[Engaging and partnering vulnerable families and communities: The keys to effective place-based approaches](#)'

Techniques to facilitate priority-setting

Content adapted from New York State Department of Health: 'Priority-setting techniques'

Getting a group to decide on a single focus can be challenging. It is important to work with the group to agree on the criteria for setting priorities. For example, the criteria might be identifying the setting most likely to be successful, or the venue in the location with the most need. (See other examples of criteria that have been used for setting priorities). Once the criteria are agreed, there are 3 useful methods to facilitate group consensus: 'dot' voting, weighted voting, or consensus voting. (Your choice may depend on the time and resources available, and the nature of the group.)

'Dot' voting

Each group member is allocated 'votes' (coloured adhesive dots) equal to a quarter of the number of items or issues being considered. For example, if 16 possible venues are being considered, participants each receive 4 dots.

You can then clarify and sort the ideas in to 'like' groupings before voting. Or, you can postpone this until after voting, so time is not spent discussing low-priority items. Re-voting can be done several times as ideas are sorted and clarified.

Advantages: Simple and highly visual

Disadvantages: Seeks a majority opinion, not a consensus, so could alienate a minority group, affecting future group interaction

Weighted voting

Points are assigned to individual rankings. For example, if the goal is to rank the top 5 choices, 5 votes would be given to the first choice, 4 votes to the second, 3 votes to the third and so on. All individual scores for each item are then tallied and items can be ranked by total group score.

Advantages: More accurate than straight voting in measuring member preferences. Can also be conducted and tallied between meetings, preserving group time

Disadvantages: The process is not as immediately transparent to all members, so careful facilitation is required to ensure trust among the group is maintained.

Consensus decision

This is the most time-consuming method, but important if implementation will require the acceptance and commitment of all group members. Ground rules for building consensus are:

- Solicit all members in discussion.
- Avoid arguments.
- State all concerns (especially minority views).
- Listen to all concerns. (Ask clarifying questions; paraphrase concerns to check you have understood.)
- List 'pros' and 'cons' of each position on a chart.
- If 2 positions conflict, look for a third that will reconcile differences.
- Get an expression of support from all members before finalising decisions.
- Don't change your opinion to 'keep the peace'.

Active engagement strategies to increase participation by families facing challenges

Content adapted from Watson J., [Active engagement: Strategies to increase service participation by vulnerable families](#)¹²

Active engagement strategies aim to raise the rate of participation in, and completion of, effective programs by families identified as likely to benefit. These strategies aim to address low recruitment rates, participation rates and retention rates among families who may be facing challenges.

Strategies that increase recruitment or initial uptake of services:

- a prompt initial response (within 48 hours of initial referral) and follow up (within a week)
- frequent maintenance of contact (weekly) and follow-up if no response
- assertive community outreach accompanied by a worker known to the family
- allowing time for recruitment that allows for family-to-family, community-based and self-referral
- avoiding stigma (e.g. using terms such as 'support worker' rather than 'intervention')
- offering services during time of transition (e.g. new baby, child starting school).

To enhance retention of families, build trusting relationships by:

- adopting a supportive and non-punitive communication style and verbal encouragement
- offering practical, material support that focuses on skills (using financial incentives if appropriate)
- facilitating access to services through active community outreach, and by offering flexible timing, transport, free child care and refreshments
- maintaining contact by ensuring multiple contact points, sending pre-appointment reminders, offering multiple gateways into a service, and having easy-to-satisfy eligibility criteria.

Deliver

Promote the program

Promote your program according to the promotion plan, drawing on active engagement strategies in partnership with community organisations and local champions.

Deliver the program

Deliver the program as outlined in the plan, ensuring appropriate data is collected to assess how well families experiencing challenges have been engaged.

12. Watson, J (2005), '[Active engagement: Strategies to increase service participation by vulnerable families](#)', Centre for Parenting & Research, NSW Department of Community Services.

Celebrate

Support providers who successfully deliver the Baby Choir program, and acknowledge the families who participate. Consider creating a video that could be used to promote future programs.

Recommended resources

- Annie Maguire: [‘8 steps to creating a promotional video’](#)
- Higher Logic: [‘5 great examples of online community promo videos’](#)



Review and embed

Evaluate the program

Consider how to assess the satisfaction of children, their families and facilitators. This could include subsequent engagement in other health and social programs and their responses to interviews and focus group discussions (that are likely to be more appropriate than written surveys).

To ensure the program is flexible and meets the needs of families, evaluation after each session is strongly recommended. Monitor uptake of the program, ensuring you specify the uptake among children and families experiencing challenges. Also ensure ongoing compliance with the licensing requirements.

Report on completion of the program to community members and council teams involved in its development. Use evaluation to identify opportunities to improve how the program is promoted to historically underserved community groups.

Work with council's budget processes to secure annual allocation of resources.

Recommended resources

- Banyule Community Health: [Baby Choir Evaluation Report 2016](#)
- New York Department of Health: [‘Priority-setting techniques’](#)



Step up: *Deliver welcoming creative experiences for all families*

There are multiple benefits to engaging with the arts, and these benefits can be especially powerful for families experiencing structural inequities across social, cultural, economic and health domains.

We know these families are less likely to engage with museums, galleries, theatres and festivals. At the same time, they're more likely to experience poor mental and physical health.

This action requires councils to identify barriers for families with challenges to using arts and cultural facilities, and to implement strategies to overcome these barriers.



How-to guide to:

Deliver welcoming creative experiences for all families

This action requires councils to systematically explore the barriers to families to use arts and cultural facilities, and to identify and implement strategies to overcome these barriers. Knowing the barriers that families face is critical before determining how to best respond. Research with young people¹³ has identified three main types of barriers:

- **Attitudinal barriers:** A feeling that the arts aren't for 'people like me'. It doesn't matter what time the show is or how much the tickets cost, potential participants just feel like they don't belong. Overcoming this barrier requires diverse cultural programming, culturally safe spaces and venues, and strategies to build 'cultural confidence'.
- **Functional barriers:** Potential participants are not able to take part, regardless of how much they might want to, because the opportunity just isn't there.
- **Practical barriers:** Potential participants are unable to come along, or don't know that something is happening. Reasons include an inconvenient time or location, prohibitive pricing and lack of information.

Crossover opportunity ↻

This action links to '[Quick win: Audit and promote council's accessible and equitable creative programs](#)' in the Promoting everyday creativity at a local level module.

13. Tait, R. Kail, A. Shea, J. McLeod, R. Pritchard, N. and Asif, F. (2019), [How can we engage more young people in arts and culture? A guide to what works for funders and arts organisations](#), The Mohn Westlake Foundation.

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services and community development teams.

This action requires co-design with families of young children. Aim to engage with families who are already participants or visitors at relevant sites and services, such as at arts and cultural facilities, community centres, early childhood services, kindergartens, libraries and disability services. Also, seek out ways to include families not currently engaged or using services.

Invitations and immediate opportunities to participate could be promoted at places that families with young children visit, such as parks, sport and recreation venues and shopping centres. In this action, councils should include the voices and experiences of families with young children with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and others who may face barriers to using arts and creative programs.

Consider ways to:

- compensate families for their time
- make adjustments to better invite families' meaningful contribution
- provide childcare
- consult with relevant advisory groups in the local community
- engage with grandparents and others involved in childcare.

Participatory design methods can be used to identify barriers and opportunities. For example, story books that map a family's journey to engaging with arts facilities can facilitate discussions with families, allowing you to understand their particular barriers and generate ideas.

[Participatory design blog](#) [SmallFire](#) has a useful [bibliography](#) of articles and papers that discuss or demonstrate various co-design and collaborative workshop techniques.



Plan

Establish a working group

Establish a working group, including the relevant council and community representatives to drive the project. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings and follow up on actions. Develop a brief project plan, identifying the community cohort you are focusing on, key people and groups to involve. Outline the goals, scope and timelines for this project. Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project, ensuring the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed.



Explore with families what needs to change to make creative programs better

Specific sub-groups who experience more barriers to engaging in the arts include those with poorer physical and mental health (including motivations to engage), those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and people experiencing loneliness.¹⁴

These barriers align with those reported by families involved in the Working Together for 3-Year-Olds (WT3) targeted preschool initiative in Tasmania. These parents reported barriers including cost of participation (or fear of cost), transport (cost, flexibility, family friendliness), lack of knowledge about service availability, and social anxiety, isolation, lack of confidence and depression.¹⁵

Confirm the key questions for consideration, for example:

- What are the key barriers and facilitators for families with young children accessing and engaging with local arts facilities and creative programs?
- What key sub-groups experience additional barriers?
- What exemplar activities have been shown to overcome these barriers?

Determine the most appropriate data collection and consultation method depending on the size and capacity of the council. This could range from a 'desktop audit' of relevant research and a simple survey collection tool through to a full creative strategy development exercise, such as the [South West Victoria Creative Industries Strategy](#), which uses a combination of focus groups, one-on-one interviews and community surveys.

Consider seeking out the involvement of:

- families with young children, through council and non-council channels
- council staff involved in the delivery of creative programs and programs for families with young children
- providers and community groups involved in creative activities in which young children are audiences or creators
- local disability support organisations.

[Kids in Museums](#) has practical recommendations for programming for families to overcome barriers to cultural activities, while [this article published at Art Museum Teaching](#) offers useful lessons to consider from museums and libraries that have successfully designed programs that enhance co-participation across generations.

Also worth reviewing are the [Family Arts Standards](#), a UK national accreditation framework for organisations committed to providing excellent family experiences. The standards are a good practice charter for welcoming families and consist of 12 guidelines accompanied by a family-friendly badge or quality mark, enabling an organisation to highlight that it recognises the importance of its family audience.

The standards can be used as both a learning tool and a marketing tool.

They offer guidance on how best to welcome families to arts settings and also help families looking for arts activities to participate in together.

14. Fancourt, D. and Mak, H.W. (2020), 'What barriers do people experience to engaging in the arts? Structural equation modelling of the relationship between individual characteristics and capabilities, opportunities, and motivations to engage', PLoS ONE 15(3): e0230487.

15. TASCi (Australian Centre for Social Innovation) (2019). Key learnings from co-design sessions with families and providers.



Case study

'Poverty proofing' the arts for families – North East Family Arts Network (UK)

To grow in cultural confidence and try new things families needed to:

- see recommendations from their trusted peers
- get honest and fast answers about the practical aspects of making a visit
- get help in narrowing down the options for days out.

To tackle these recommendations, the North East Family Arts Network:

1. created a Facebook Group community where families can share recommendations, ask one another questions and post curated recommendations
2. requested that local arts organisations network members sign up to the [Family Arts Standards](#) so families are assured of a good experience from visiting the places recommended
3. provided a regular e-newsletter and used a [website](#) that lists the key information families need to plan their visits
4. conducted training for key staff to enhance understanding and empathy for families suffering the effects of poverty, and to help staff start to understand and unpick the impact poverty may have on the accessibility of their work.

[Read a blog post by a project ambassador](#), who discusses bridging the divide with families.



Design

Prepare a summary report

Compile a report identifying any practices that should be celebrated and potential opportunities to increase equitable access to arts facilities for families with young children.

Outline:

- examples of facilities with great inclusive practices (consider the [Family Arts Standards](#))
- gaps or opportunities for facilities to reduce exclusion
- opportunities within council budgets, policies or protocol to increase equity in council's creative programs for families with young children
- recommendations for change
- training and development requirements, programs and events that encourage co-participation across generations,¹⁶ working with families experiencing challenges and children with disabilities.

Include an action plan in the report that outlines the key activities council will undertake to implement the changes.

16. Adams, M. and Margulies, M. (2014), '[Barriers to family engagement in museums](#)'.

Deliver

Create and communicate changes

Work with the council's communications team to promote and highlight ways it is providing services or programs for families with young children with diverse needs, abilities and experiences. Encourage all workers across all council departments to use imagery and symbols to explain programs and highlight services wherever possible.

Establish processes that ensure that council staff are aware of available budgets, protocols or adjustments for access or cultural equity to support fairer, more inclusive creative program options for families with young children.

Review and embed

Monitor the completion of the action plan and the impact of the changes. Consider using attendance data for related venues and programs. Ask families with young children to provide feedback using surveys.

Report on the completion of actions to community members and council teams involved in the development of activities. Seek opportunities to embed the strategies to overcome barriers for families consistently across all council programs.

Monitor and evaluate reach and success of the strategy

Monitoring and evaluation identifies activities that met work objectives, and those that were not as effective and need to be reconsidered.

Recommended resources

- Smallfire (participatory design blog): ['Co-design workshop resources: Techniques and methods'](#)
- Arts Council England: [Family Arts Standards](#)
- Sallyanne Flemons: ['Poverty Proofing: bridging the deepening divide in the North East's culture offerings for families'](#), published on the Audience Agency blog



Step up:

Provide early years creative and cultural programs through local early childhood services

In this action, councils identify arts providers and programs and help deliver these through council-run early childhood facilities. The focus is on priority locations where children experience greater health inequities.

Arts and craft activities are standard in early learning programs. However, there is scope for council-run early childhood facilities to build on this with professionally delivered creative and cultural programs. This will extend young learners' exposure to a range of creative activities.

In addition to being great fun for young participants, research shows that exposure to creative and cultural activities leads to increased empathy and a broader world view. Children who are exposed to a range of creative and artistic experiences are more likely to participate in creative activities throughout their lives. And people who participate in the arts are more likely to be in good health, go on to further education, volunteer, and donate to charity.¹⁷

There are a range of organisations that provide resources to support early childhood teachers and educators to enhance children's access to professionally developed, interactive programs, such as puppetry, music, and movement programs.



17. Tait, R. Kail, A. Shea, J. McLeod, R. Pritchard, N. and Asif, F. (2019), [How can we engage more young people in arts and culture? A guide to what works for funders and arts organisations](#). The Mohn Westlake Foundation



How-to guide to:

Provide early years creative and cultural programs through local early childhood services

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services and community development teams. Include families with young children and early childhood staff in your planning and design, including kindergarten teachers and educators, playgroup facilitators, and maternal and child health nurses.



Plan

Establish a working group of families of young children, staff (especially kindergarten teachers and educators, playgroup facilitators, and maternal and child health nurses), representatives of council teams and external agencies.



Assess

Compile a list of all council-run early years facilities (kindergartens, playgroups etc.) and request expressions of interest to participate in an embedded early years arts program. Consider ways to target priority locations using local champions and members of the working group who have existing relationships with kindergartens and playgroups that engage children of families facing challenges.

Collect information on barriers to an embedded early years art program with an equity lens. Consider:

- the professional development needs of early childhood teachers and educators on inclusive practices; for example, about children with disability, culturally relevant art practices, and strategies to engage with travelling art exhibitions and regional art facilities
- equipment and resources needed for specific art projects
- ways to include local independent artists from diverse backgrounds and communities, such as people with disability, people from diverse cultures, and LGBTIQ+ people.

Collate a list of possible local and statewide programs, workshops and/or performances, and the costs of each, if any. Prioritise activities that provide interactive experiences, and that provide resources to help teachers and educators integrate them with the curriculum. This could include, for example, activities that help introduce the topic before the performance/workshop and reinforce it afterwards.

Consider strategies to disseminate this list of relevant resources to your local community and to other services. For example, you might post the list on the council website or distribute it to local community groups.

Undertake a co-design activity with young children and their families to provide feedback on which activities are most appealing.

Organisations that provide creative programs for young children

- [ArtPlay](#) – On-demand and live online interactive creative encounters, developed and delivered by practising artists
- [Bangarra Dance Theatre](#) – A company of professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers
- [Choose Art](#) – National directory for accessible arts
- [Djirri djirri](#) – Wurundjeri women’s dance group
- [House of Muchness](#) – Live art performances, site-specific interventions, panels and forums, and other methods to creatively interface with the public and comment on the social, cultural and political spheres
- [Kids Thrive](#) – Offers a suite of music and visual arts-based resource programs that comprise a DVD plus related activities for children and early childhood educators; for example, [Postcards from Nanna](#), which explores cultural diversity
- [NGV Kids](#) (through the National Gallery of Victoria) – Year-round program of dedicated children’s exhibitions, free events and activities. Also allows virtual engagement via free online events, activity sheets and games
- [One Fire Aboriginal Dance Group](#) – Dances for Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups; also provides cultural talks
- [Polyglot Theatre](#) – Innovative and interactive theatre experiences for children
- [Regional Arts Victoria](#) (RAV) – Facilitates delivery of creative programs across the state and provides resources to teachers and group facilitators to support group activities before and after the performance or workshop. Programs change annually. An example of a previous program relevant to young children is ShadowTricks, an interactive shadow puppetry show. Some programs tour with set dates, others are available on request. Costs for non-metropolitan councils can be reduced by coordinating shows for several centres in a region; this also reduces travel costs for performers.
- [Soul Circus](#) – Specialises in aerial circus and acrobatics. Offers school holiday workshops and a Kinder Circus program for young children

Organisations that provide professional development on arts integration and/or inclusive practices

- [Arts Access Victoria](#) – Advice and disability-led training programs to enhance skills and tools to increase access, inclusion and representation of Deaf and Disabled people
- [House of Muchness](#) – Professional development for council staff and educators on co-design and consultation with children
- [Kids Thrive](#) – Training in engaging in Creative Child-led Consultancy and Community Change, and training to local councils, government departments and teachers and educators on creative, child-friendly approaches to consultation and collaboration with children
- [MAV](#) (Multicultural Arts Victoria) – Guidance on inclusive practices and access to a network of diverse artist practitioners
- [RAV](#) – Have previously provided professional development of student-centred art practices



Design

Present the members of the working group with the findings from the expressions of interest exercise, the scoping of resources, and the priority-setting activity. Prepare a program schedule in consultation with participating teachers and educators.

Consider:

- promotion of free, online programs to all interested teachers and educators
- provision of specialist training where required (e.g. to include young children with disability)
- covering costs of programs delivered by private providers for services with children of families experiencing challenges
- covering costs of excursions to local galleries with travelling exhibitions or that are offering programs suitable for young children for services with children of families experiencing challenges.

Deliver

Deliver the program as outlined in the plan.

Monitor and evaluate reach and success of the strategy

Monitor and evaluate to identify if activities met work objectives, and those that were not as effective and need to be reconsidered.

Celebrate

Support the providers who successfully embed the early years arts program. Consider:

- acknowledging successful completion with certificates for the organisation, as well as for staff and the individual child participants
- creating a video that could be used to promote future programs.

Review and embed

Evaluate the program

Evaluate the embedded arts program. Consider indicators of satisfaction from the perspectives of children, families, and teachers and educators. These could include engagement and completion data, and responses to satisfaction surveys. Consider innovative ways to collect satisfaction data from young children, such as RAV's idea of asking young children to draw a picture of their experience.

Collect data on the types of creative experiences delivered as part of the program; for example, visual arts, performing arts, circus skills and music experiences.

Monitor uptake of the program and the number of participating education facilities, especially by children of families experiencing challenges. Report on completion of the program to community members and council teams involved in its development. Use evaluation to identify opportunities for improvement.

Work with council's budget processes to secure annual allocation of resources by linking evaluation outcomes to engagement by priority equity groups and council strategic priorities.

Recommended resources

- Regional Arts Victoria (RAV): [Teacher resources to accompany performances and workshops for the 2022 Arts & Education Program](#)



Step up: *Establish a cultural and creative careers hub*

This action requires councils to establish a cultural and creative careers hub to encourage sharing of ideas and to build capacity and networks for young culturally diverse creative leaders and practitioners.

A cultural and creative careers hub is an online portal or physical space (including temporary space/s) by and for young people to access and to share information that will assist them in establishing or building a career in the creative industries. It will provide access to valuable skills that will further careers and give them opportunities to train others, including council employees.

There is great potential for councils to collaborate and deliver the hub as a joint regional project – to build a wider range of opportunities and options across a geographic region.

The hub should include a suite of training options for participants, for example:

- [youth-cultural equity plan training \(internal and external\)](#)
- cultural career resources for young people
- discussion on ideas and initiatives.

Councils undertaking this action should first complete the self-assessment steps outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote council's accessible and equitable creative programs' to inform the parameters of the cultural and creative careers hub.

Online hub examples

[Discover! Creative Careers](#) is an initiative by the UK creative industries to make it easier for young people to find careers.

The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre's [careers hub](#) offers information and tools to navigate study and careers pathways.



How-to guide to: *Establish a cultural and creative careers hub*

Involving people

Form a working group of young people who will lead the development of the cultural careers hub. The working group should comprise young people as well as staff and representatives of council teams and external agencies. Consider including:

- young, creative, cultural leaders and cultural practitioners
- council staff representing relevant services
- external providers with expertise in youth and cultural planning.

Involving people cont.

Involving the experts!

There are a wide range of groups, agencies and organisations who could guide or contribute expertise to the development of the hub. Consider:

Youth organisations

- [SYN \(media organisation\)](#)
- [Express Media](#)
- [The Push](#)
- [Outer Urban Projects](#)
- [Western Young People's Independent Network\(WYPIN\)](#)
- [St Martins Youth Arts](#)

Festivals, producers, venues

- [Footscray Community Arts Centre](#)
- [Melbourne Fringe](#)
- [Next Wave](#)
- [Cultural Infusion](#)
- [Phoenix Youth Centre, Maribyrnong](#)
- [FReeZA](#)

Peak bodies

- [Australian Theatre for Young People](#)
- [Multicultural Arts Victoria \(MAV\)](#)
- [Centre for Multicultural Youth](#)
- [Media Diversity Australia](#)
- [Arts Access Victoria](#)
- [Diversity Arts Australia](#)



Government

- [Australia Council for the Arts](#)
- [Multicultural Affairs \(Victoria\)](#)
- [VicHealth](#)
- [Creative Victoria](#)
- [Western Edge Youth Arts](#)

Networking and resource hubs

- [Creatives of Colour](#)
- [Arts Law](#)
- [Arts Hub](#)
- [Bendigo Cultural Exchange](#)
- [The POD-Shepparton](#)
- [Western Young People's Independent Network\(WYPIN\)](#)
- [Youth Development Australia](#)



Promote cultural equity training for council staff and community members

Identify needs and provide opportunities for council, young people and community organisation partners to build capabilities in inclusion, equity and cultural competencies.

A range of training packages currently exist that may be employed or adapted for this purpose such as [Multicultural Arts Victoria's Equity Planning in Culture \(EpiC\)](#) or [Diversity Arts Australia's Training](#). Partnerships may be established with an external organisation such as one of these agencies.

Design a continual 'train-the-trainer' model for young trainees to deliver cultural equity training within council and to external agencies.

Training modules would focus on challenging practices that marginalise people from culturally diverse communities as cultural practitioners and as audiences.

The training should highlight critical importance of cultural diversity, and transform the core structures of local arts and creative environments, enabling them to achieve relevance, sustainability and inclusion for the community.

The training program should:

- identify leaders within council and the community who are committed to enduring change that responds to the contemporary human rights challenges we currently face
- be based on a comprehensive international review of the literature on cultural equity, inclusion, evidence for strategies and best practice examples
- be developed and delivered by diverse young practitioners with lived experience using interactive and participatory processes; facilitators draw on their own professional and personal lived experiences, as well as those from the cohort, to enhance the learning experience
- be delivered over a number of days, with a set of planning tasks to be undertaken in the interim; small break-out groups may be used to reflect on personal experiences, issues and opportunities within organisations.

Crossover opportunity

See the 'Building proud and inclusive community practices' impact stream in the *Connected and supportive communities core module*. It includes how-to guides to build capacity in equity and inclusion of different community groups.

Collate cultural career resources for young people

The working group will research cultural training and mentorship opportunities and resources, including guides, funding opportunities and residencies.

Recommended resources

- Creative Industries Federation: [Creative Diversity: The state of diversity in the UK's creative industries, and what we can do about it](#)
- Culture Amp: ['27+ diversity and inclusion workplace influencers to know'](#)
- [Equity in the Centre](#) website
- López, M., Hofer, K., Bumgarner, E. and Taylor, D. (2017), [Developing Culturally Responsive Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations: A Resource Guide for Community-Based Organizations](#)
- Mahdawi, A.: [The surprising solution to workplace diversity \(TEDx Talk\)](#)
- [Media Diversity Australia](#) website

Deliver

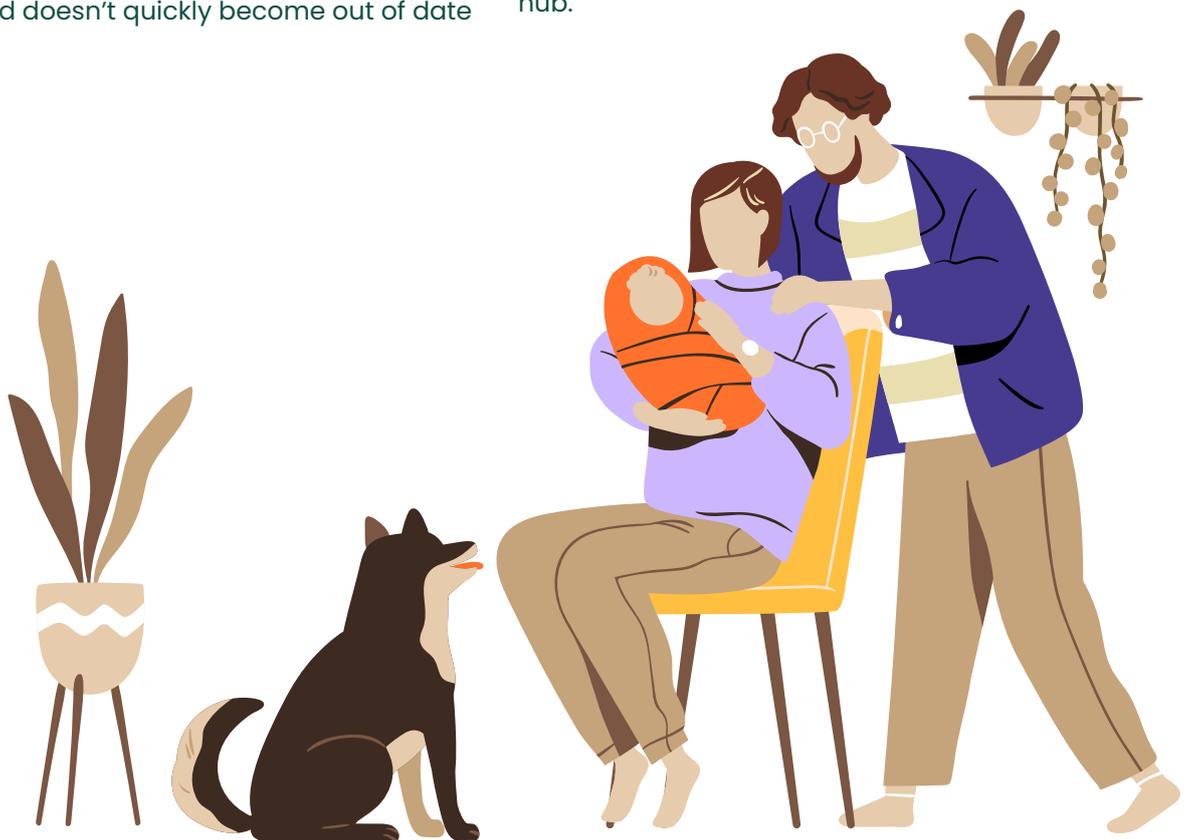
Develop a management plan

Having a management plan for the hub will ensure that the information you have collated is backed by a set of designated responsibilities to promote and update information and monitor young people's engagement with the content. This will ensure any content created doesn't quickly become out of date or irrelevant.

Promote the hub

Engage young people in the promotion and launch of the hub, seeking their advice on the design.

Ensure the cultural careers hub is well-promoted and that the community knows about and uses the hub.





Ambitious:

Embed access and cultural equity through creative strategies

Councils oversee a range of plans and strategies outlining how they will improve life for members of their local community. This action focuses on ensuring council plans are written and delivered to achieve equitable access and inclusion to arts, cultural and creative opportunities.

Depending on the planning hierarchy of the council, there are 2 options for completing this action:

- **Option A:** Develop a cultural equity plan
- **Option B:** Review council strategies to improve strategic inclusion for children and young people with disabilities in creative programs

The how-to guide outlines a general process for undertaking either of these options, noting where there are differences or additional considerations needed depending on the option chosen.

Councils undertaking this action should first complete the self-assessment steps relevant to the chosen option outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote council's accessible and equitable creative programs'.

Option A: Develop a cultural equity plan

A cultural equity plan provides guidance and resources for agencies and communities who would like to increase cultural equity in their neighbourhood, city or region. The plan should outline council's critical approach to remove legacies of institutional and structural discrimination of individuals and communities from culturally diverse communities in the arts and creative programs.

A successful cultural equity plan allows council to align the priorities of stakeholders who invest in public arts and culture and the communities who stand to benefit. It is therefore critical that there are creative collaborations when forming the plan, and that councils allocate time and resources for council and community representatives, data gathering and analysis, participatory research and co-design processes that incorporate community ideas.

The cultural equity plan should:

- challenge practices that marginalise people from culturally diverse backgrounds as artists, art workers and audiences
- recognise and amplify the abundant assets of diverse communities.

The development of a successful cultural equity plan requires a flexible and integrated process.

While it may be led by a cultural equity youth working group, it cannot be successfully completed without buy-in from council leadership and the individuals and groups that represent the interests of the diverse communities in your municipality.

The development phase has an important role in the impact and outcomes on cultural equity in the community. The working group should have a key role in determining the allocation of resources. Document the processes and impacts, and consider them in the evaluation.

Advancing cultural equity should not be solely limited to the area of your council that takes carriage of the arts. Areas of council responsibility such as planning, parks, housing, community development, youth services, sport and recreation, and economic development can also be considered through the cultural equity plan.

Option B: Review council strategies to improve strategic inclusion for children and young people with disabilities in creative programs

The [Young, Willing and Able Report](#) highlights that priorities for young people with disabilities are different to those of young people without disabilities. To ensure arts and creative programs are suitable for all children and young people, councils must ensure that the voices, needs and priorities of young people with disabilities are included across council's plans and strategies.

Councils undertaking this option will look for opportunities to improve alignment and synergy between the range of strategic plans of council.

Recommended resources

PolicyLink: [‘Building a cultural equity plan’](#) (US resource guiding cities how to take account of their cultural assets, strengthen economies, facilitate social cohesion and support vibrant communities by focusing on what makes them great in the first place)



How-to guide to:

Embed access and cultural equity through creative strategies

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action should build on those involved in the delivery of [‘Quick win: Audit and promote council’s accessible and equitable creative programs’](#). Teams that could lead this action include social inclusion, access and inclusion, arts, youth services and community development. Additionally, support and information could be sought from communications, human resources, sport and recreation, planning, parks, environment, economic development and finance.

Seek input from representatives from the group or groups whose access to creative programs is the focus of the action. Involve young people from culturally diverse communities or with disabilities, representing groups such as local ethnic community groups, youth groups, community development agencies, local arts and cultural organisations, funders and sponsors.



Plan

Convene a working group

Bring together young creative leaders and council staff to oversee the development of a strategic, phased approach across all council settings.

- communication and engagement process, including how young people in the community will be resourced and supported to play an active role in the process
- how council will monitor and evaluate the process.

Develop a framework to guide the plan development/review

The working group should develop a framework (using a council process or template if available) which sets out:

- resources and staff required for the process
- internal and external stakeholders (e.g. organisations, groups, creatives, communities, other government bodies)
- goals and scope for the plan
- policy context and opportunities to integrate the work into other plans and strategies within your council where applicable

Engage with champions to support change

Identify and build relationships with key people in the groups, services or facilities to work with early in the change process. Settings may include a local facility, or council area, or may cover a group of organisations with a common interest. This will involve meeting with relevant managers or community leaders with responsibility for areas you have identified.

Hot tip!

One of the great things about the arts is its portability. The arts happens in theatres, libraries and galleries – and also in schools, faith institutions, workplaces, public spaces and more. Focus on settings that are important to people in your community, frequented by children, young people and families, and that enjoy high visitation or offer immediate opportunities.

Assess

Option A:

Map creative and cultural assets in the community

Undertake a mapping process to determine the council and non-council assets that are most important to creative and cultural life in the community, including:

- physical assets (e.g. buildings and equipment)
- skills, qualifications and experience
- local associations, groups, institutions, networks
- perceived gaps and disparities in physical and social areas – where council investments are being made or are lacking.

The mapping process could be conducted through a targeted stakeholder asset audit, findings from community meetings, creative output, literature review or online surveys.

Identify priority settings, including council-owned/operated/managed settings as well as other public and private spaces.

Prioritise settings that are frequented by children, young people and families, major venues with high visitation or those where opportunities are immediate.

A tiered approach may include settings that have a high level of council oversight as well as a high level of complexity, including accountability, corporate responsibility, community safety and compliance.

Also consider settings with a lower level of council influence and complexity/risk, and those settings at arms-length of council and/or not under council jurisdiction.

Option B:

Complete a desktop review of council plans

Gather council's range of strategic plans that cover: disability; children's, family and youth services; and arts and culture.

Review the plans and identify relevant sections or actions where young people with disabilities are addressed within the plan/strategies. Take notes to assess if:

- youth creative activities are mentioned
- barriers to creative participation are adequately addressed
- the actual plans and strategies are presented in an accessible format
- a creative format could be developed (e.g. film or audio with appropriate captions or audio descriptions)
- the plans include disability-led awareness training for council staff
- the plans encourage employment of young people with disabilities in creative roles.



Design

Engage members of the community

Seek input from community members with an interest or concern in the plan/s. Engage contributions from young people through several creative mediums, including:

- film and video
- social media
- writing
- music and dance presentations
- forums, seminars and working lunches
- visual arts and design.

Invite their contribution to the development of the cultural equity plan, or revision of council plans, through workshops and community engagement.

include:

- their vision for what an equitable arts and culture sector looks like
- a central focus on access and equity

- a central focus on including children and young people, consistent with council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- consideration of the cultural and historical context of the region
- discussion of the notions of identity, development, cultural preservation and change.

Draft the plan, or revise existing plans

Incorporate the feedback, ideas and solutions provided by the group. Set flexible targets for the changes, actions or number of settings that council can address over time, relevant to the identified needs in your community.

Identify projected resources, policies, partnerships and outreach strategies required to achieve short/ long-term goals. Consider timelines, internal infrastructure and policies that need to be amended or added to be able to achieve your goals in a timely manner.

Hot tip!

In some cases, long-term plans may have been adopted recently, so scope for immediate change is limited. In this case, consider:

- whether the plan is flexible and can be changed
- if there are opportunities to create shared projects that contribute to goals set out in 2 or more strategic plans
- mapping out the planning and review cycles of all relevant plans and identifying when and how the working group could contribute.

Deliver

Once the plans have been created, commence delivery of them. Make sure plans have:

- adequate resources
- clear lines of responsibility for actions
- reporting milestones that allow for public outcomes to be reviewed
- clear timelines

Make sure you continue to involve people invested in the plan from the outset throughout the Delivery phase, for example, by convening them as an ongoing project reference or advisory group.



Review and embed

Feedback on the process to stakeholders

Establish measures, review dates, and key points when you can re-engage the group of young people. Collate information and share progress reports with council and community stakeholders. Incorporate feedback mechanisms into the plan as it evolves.

- how many young people have been involved in the plan's development and implementation (and how?)
- what have been the benefits to those involved (e.g. new skills, new connections, new opportunities)?

Monitor and evaluate

Ongoing monitoring and maintenance of changes is important to:

- determine whether the plan has been successfully implemented
- identify ways to improve the plan
- justify the use of resources
- understand the impact of the changes

Some indicators and questions used in the development of the evaluation for this action could be:

- how many partnerships/collaborations were formed as a result of this plan? What is the nature of the partnership (e.g. networking, programming, promoting, co-designing, funding)

Consider:

- what questions you need to ask to determine success
- the tools you will use to evaluate (e.g. focus groups, email surveys, observation, case studies, social media)
- who you survey (stakeholders)
- when and how often you survey (before, during, after?)
- the resources you have to evaluate.

Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity

VicHealth's [Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity](#) was seen as the first program of its kind in Australia focusing on local governments to help reduce race-based discrimination and promote cultural diversity.

A subsequent review was undertaken to audit the assessment tools, programs and resources in workplace settings used to prevent race-based discrimination and support diversity. This review highlighted the following actions to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity:

- organisational development
- communications and social marketing
- legislative and policy reform
- direct participation programs
- community strengthening
- advocacy and research
- evaluation and monitoring.

In particular, organisations are identified as playing a key role in reducing race-based discrimination by:

- implementing organisational accountability
- diversity training
- resource development and provision
- role-modelling
- serving as sites for intergroup contact.

Recommended resources for cultural equity

- Andersen, L. and Malone, M. (eds) (2013) [All Culture is Local: Good Practice in Regional Cultural Mapping and Planning from Local Government](#)
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation: [Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2018–2019](#)
- Australia Council for the Arts: [Engaged Communities resource](#)
- [Creatives of Colour website](#)
- [Creative Time Summit website](#)
- Diversity Arts Australia: [Creative Equity Toolkit](#)
- Grant Craft: [Grant making with a racial equity lens](#)
- Los Angeles County Arts & Culture: [‘Building your plan: A cultural equity and inclusion toolkit’](#)
- Nurture Development: [‘Asset Based Community Development’](#)
- PolicyLink: [‘Building a Cultural Equity Plan’](#)
- PolicyLink: [‘Planning for Equitable Development by Artistic and Cultural Advocates’](#) (Presentation slides)

Recommended resources for disability access and inclusion

- Australian Human Rights Commission: [Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans: A Guide for Business](#)
- Australian Network on Disability: [‘Access and Inclusion Index’](#) (Australia’s foremost benchmarking tool for inclusion of people with disability; helps drive access and inclusion outcomes across your whole organisation)
- Australian Network on Disability: [What is an Accessibility Action Plan?](#)
- Arts Access Victoria: [The National Disability Insurance Scheme’s Impact on Disability Arts Victoria](#)
- Victorian Council of Social Service: [Walk alongside: Co-designing social initiatives](#)
- Youth Affairs Council Victoria: [‘How to involve young people’](#)





Ambitious:

Increase creative spaces for Deaf and Disabled young people

Young disabled people deserve opportunities to meet and draw experience from disabled adult leaders in their community and in society. Councils can play a role in providing opportunities for young creatives in the community to access disabled leaders and promote the visibility of these leaders.

For councils to gain a clear understanding of the barriers that young disabled people experience in our communities we need to ask them about their experiences and create safe disability-led spaces where they can share openly.

Not all councils will have staff or policies that give them the experience and understanding of how to facilitate work with young disabled people. If you do not have anyone suitably qualified within your organisation, you should seek advice from any specialist agency to ensure that Deaf or disabled people genuinely have creative control of programs you seek to deliver. The aim of this action is to provide young artists with disabilities with safe space and time to build trust with each other and move beyond ableist fears or boundaries that may be imposed in other spaces.

Developing innovative and new ways of meeting, gathering and informing should become an everyday method of promoting creativity. In this instance, the development of a creative and safe sharing space should become the norm and not a new way of doing things.

Important note

Leadership and community-led practice

Visibility and presence of leaders with disability is a key component of the change process. Leaders with disability offer us the power of possibility. They have the potential to provide society with a regular 'reality check' and other people with disability (of any age) with role models. Expectations can rise. Myths and assumptions can be shattered.

If a community group with a specific lived experience (such as disability) is led by a facilitator with a similar shared experience, 'quick trust' can be established. This quick trust allows a facilitator to ask relevant and potentially braver questions, start further into a creative process and possibly produce faster, stronger and more interesting outcomes.

By having people with disability leading, being present and visible in society, there is less opportunity for them to be thought of as a group needing to be 'served' or 'dealt with', but rather as people who contribute and are leaders, colleagues, friends and lovers. Having leaders with disability at the decision-making table means access and inclusion is more likely to remain: in our minds and on our agendas.



How-to guide to:

Increase creative spaces for Deaf and Disabled young people

Involving people

Ideally, find a dynamic Deaf or disabled leader that could lead this session for you. Local agencies, Arts Access Victoria and other regional disability services, schools and programs may be able to assist in finding such a leader.



Plan

Prepare an event that invites young disabled people to come together from the council area to share creative ideas.

Promote it via social platforms, council newsletters, schools, specific disability services and council venues. Include information such as whether the venue is wheelchair accessible and has a quiet room (a room with a closing door with bean bags and pillows, dim lights and no external light, weighted blankets, and stim or stress toys). If required, provide Auslan interpreters and arrange accessible transport.

Identify what the barriers might be for the group members' participation. Barriers could be physical like stairs or a rail, or a barrier could be the way someone communicates or behaves.¹⁸ Attitudinal barriers could also prevent young people from feeling they can comfortably participate.



Design

Find out what type of creative activities, projects and programs young disabled people want to join. This session should focus on the creative priorities that are outlined for young people in your area.

Ask young people in the group to contribute creative ways to assist council in identifying and understanding barriers for participation in creative activities.

Ask young people to come up with creative methods for using the information gathered at this session. Embed this into all relevant creative and general council policies, procedures and practices.



Deliver

Based on the outcomes from your Design phase, you will have a list of things you can do to increase access to creative spaces for young people. These

may be simple things that involve changes to processes, language or scheduling, or more complex activities requiring investment of further resources or expertise to allow young people to participate in existing, or create new, accessible creative programs.

Using the creative methods developed by young people, your Delivery phase can be broken into a timeline of 'quick wins' and 'longer-term' opportunities. Get to work on the quick wins straight away, and begin planning for how you might address the longer-term opportunities.

Keep your invested people engaged. Young people involved in the Design phase may become an advisory group or reference committee to assist you in rolling out, and reporting on, the delivery of your program.



Review and embed

Depending on your delivery, you may seek to:

- review the success of changes to existing creative spaces or programs; or
- evaluate the impact of new creative programs developed through the design and Delivery phases; or
- combine both.

In assessing the program, review:

- what opportunities young people did or didn't have to participate as audience members
- what opportunities young people did or didn't have to participate as creatives
- what gaps remain in existing programs to improve access for both artists and audiences
- how young people can contribute to the design of future programs.

As for the Delivery phase, continue the involvement of young people in the evaluation and review.

18. Arts Access Victoria: [Social Model of Disability](#).

Case study

City of Port Phillip and Arts Access Victoria THRIVE Creative Grants program

The THRIVE Creative Grants program was established to enhance social and economic participation and contribution to civic engagement by Deaf and Disabled people. The City of Port Phillip approached Arts Access Victoria to partner on this funding program to manage the application process and give personalised, targeted support for artists applying for the program, and then auspice and provide support during the production of the arts projects. An Arts Access Victoria employee position was funded as part of this agreement along with the grant monies, to be executed by Arts Access Victoria. Nine artists have been funded in the first 2 years of the program.



The purpose of the program was to:

- assist and encourage Victorian Deaf and Disabled artists to develop professional skills and realise creative outcomes in the City of Port Phillip.
- increase the diversity of individuals accessing the council's arts programs and processes.

Grant specifications:

- Applicants could apply for up to \$10,000 per project with up to an additional \$1,000 towards access.
- Applications were open to Victorian Deaf and Disabled artists.
- Projects were required to have an artistic outcome in the City of Port Phillip.
- Arts Access Victoria supported all the applicants to apply to THRIVE, and auspiced successful grant projects, including meeting legislative requirements.
- A panel comprising council officers and independent Deaf and Disabled artists assessed the applications to THRIVE.

The program differed from previous council funding offerings in a few key ways:

- It was open to artists from all over Victoria, thereby increasing the pool of potential applicants and diversifying the arts programming of council.
- The funding had an additional amount for access costs (\$1,000), allowing artists to maximise their project funds (tackling the 'disability tax').

- The application and guidelines were offered in a range of formats, including Easy English. A hybrid information session was Auslan interpreted and captioned and applicants were offered the choice of submitting applications in video format. The application was submitted via email (online portals such as SmartyGrants are a barrier to some artists applying for opportunities).

Program outcomes

One artist held an exhibition at Gasworks Art Park and sold 5 artworks, an excellent economic outcome from the project. Another artist gained employment in an ongoing position, using their experience with THRIVE as evidence of their research and project management skills.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, a move to digital presentation and face-to-face programming has been initiated to present the work of the artists.

The program has given many grassroots and emerging artists an accessible entry point into the funding landscape. Many applicants have been motivated to apply for future funding programs and have continued to engage with Arts Access Victoria and the City of Port Phillip.

The project serves as a strong example to encourage councils to offer programs to enrich their arts and cultural programming.



Impact stream:

Embracing opportunities for children to inform creative programs

To complete this impact stream councils will select from:

Quick win: *Audit and promote creative programs for children*

Quick win: *Audit and promote creative opportunities for young children*

Step up: *Work with children to develop a vision for a child-friendly, creative community*

Ambitious: *Co-design creative play programs with young children and their families*

Ambitious: *Appoint children to supported decision-making roles about creative programs*

Children are valued citizens in every community, and councils are working to include opportunities to hear children's voices and co-design with them. When working with young children, councils employ a range of creative engagement techniques to ensure that children can express their needs, and their ambitions and priorities for the community they are growing up in.

Creative co-design processes can provide a connection between young children and adults to share meaning and dream up new possibilities together. This impact stream focuses on bringing council together with local families to utilise imaginative co-designing techniques to strengthen and diversify community engagement.

Quick note

This impact stream and included resources and examples focus on children around 0 to 12 years old. Some actions are suitable for young children (around 0-5 years) if they are supported by their families or their educator.

The ambitious action 'Appoint children to supported decision-making roles about creative programs' is better suited to children in the upper primary years – around 9 to 12 years old. We acknowledge that councils may have differing definitions for 'children', or may prefer to focus on a specific age range within the 0 to 12-year-old group.

Arts and culture help children to:

- enhance their self-esteem
- find new ways to express themselves
- build social and intellectual skills
- prepare for the future – both socially and in terms of their career opportunities.¹⁹

Children are enthusiastic attendees and participants in creative programs, highlighting the potential demand for these types of activities to be made widely available in local communities. Children aged 5 to 14 are more likely to attend creative events in their leisure time than adults, according to a 2017–18 survey-based report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, with 94 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 attending at least one cultural venue or event in the period.²⁰ In addition, 96 per cent of children in the same age bracket participated in a cultural activity outside of school hours.²¹

This impact stream focuses on embracing opportunities for children to inform the way creative programs are developed by, or supported through, council. Giving children and young people a voice to contribute to and lead programs ensures that activities are focused on, and designed for and by, young people. This shows young people respect and increases the success rate for their participation.

Intended outcomes

Councils undertaking this impact stream can expect to:

- increase children’s input to the development of council’s creative programs
- increase opportunities for children in their community to creatively participate outside of school hours
- strengthen networks with key partners working with children in the community
- reduce barriers preventing children from attending or participating in creative events
- showcase and support the creative endeavours of children in their community.



19. A New Approach (ANA): [A view from middle Australia: Perceptions of arts, culture and creativity](#)

20. ABS: [Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events, Australia](#)

21. ABS: [Participation in Selected Cultural Activities](#)

Minimum deliverables

To complete the impact stream 'Embracing opportunities for children to inform creative programs', councils will have:

- identified existing council and council-supported programs that support children as audiences or creators
- adopted policies that allow for children to be involved in the development of creative programs
- supported the delivery of creative programs that involve children's voices during selection or development
- demonstrated succession planning, outlining how the activity will contribute to the outcomes of current and future Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans

Creative organisations working with children

- [ArtPlay](#) (City of Melbourne) is a program for children and families that is challenging, creative and meaningful. Children explore their creativity and self-expression and share unique artistic experiences with professional artists.
- [100 Story Building](#) is a unique organisation for young writers in Footscray, Melbourne. It uses storytelling as a tool to foster imagination, creativity and confidence in children and young people.
- [Kids Thrive](#) partners artists with specialists in children's education, health, welfare and social justice to create ground-breaking programs promoting child-led change, including cultivating children's local social action, leadership and positive celebrations of diversity in schools and other child-friendly locations. Kids Thrive can help with evidence-based approaches to engaging children aged 0 to 12 in decision-making, community engagement and child 'voice', so that you can co-design with children and adults for creative solutions to community issues

Recommended resources

These additional resources may be useful when designing creative projects for children and young people.

- Arts Law: '[Children in the creative process](#)' (information sheet)
- Australia Council for the Arts: [Children in Art Protocol](#) (for working with children in art)
- Australian Early Development Census: '[User Guide: Local Government](#)'
- NAPCAN: '[What role can local government play?](#)'



Quick win: *Audit and promote creative programs for children*

In this action, councils will audit local provision of council’s creative and non-creative activities within the community and identify opportunities to promote or increase creative strategies.

Knowing where you are starting is critical before determining what you want to do. An internal review of your existing programs, funding initiatives and strategy documents will assist in identifying gaps that require attention. For example, your council may lack policies and/or programs that are tailored for, engage or appeal to children.

Some common children’s programs at councils include:

- [storytime at libraries](#)
- [council gallery workshops](#)
- [‘cushion concerts’](#)
- [school holiday ‘hang outs’](#).

There may be an overlap between this audit and audits your council may be undertaking for other VicHealth community partnership modules. This is a good thing, as we are aiming for the benefits of creativity to be included throughout your community programs and services, not just in arts contexts.

Crossover opportunity

The [Connected and supportive communities](#) core module includes implementation actions that outline baseline audits of council practice to support and include a number of priority cohorts. The following are included under the ‘Building proud and inclusive community practices’ impact stream:

- Quick win: Undertake a cultural inclusion snapshot
- Quick win: Assess Rainbow readiness
- Step up: Conduct a disability inclusion audit from a children and young people perspective.

The steps outlined below are similar to those outlined in ‘Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for young people’. You’ll need to consider the changing needs and interests of children and young people over different stages of life and include different activities and communications in your creative programming.



How-to guide to:

Audit and promote creative programs for children

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services and community development. Other teams who may be well placed to embed creative programs in children's activities include: economic development, tourism, libraries, parks, and sport and recreation.

This action requires co-design with children. Aim to engage with children who are participants or visitors at the sites and services identified in the audit, including arts and cultural facilities, community centres, early childhood services, kindergartens, primary schools, sports clubs, libraries and disability services.



Plan

Form a working group and appoint a project champion

Establish a working group including the relevant council and community representatives to drive the project. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings, follow up on actions, and ensure the project aligns to other community partnerships modules and approaches being developed.

Develop a project plan outlining:

- terms of reference detailing roles of the working group
- the goals of the project and work to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work.

Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project, ensuring the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed.



Assess

Develop an auditing tool

The audit should include creative and non-creative activities, strategies and programs in which children are the focus. Some examples include community or health services such as maternal health, child health and wellbeing, education and sport.

Confirm the questions for consideration to determine public-facing programs that council already delivers which are accessed by children as audience members or participants, and the community-based programs, organisations and projects that are engaging with children. This detail will: inform programs that can be highlighted and celebrated; and identify gaps in internal programs for children and programs that are being delivered externally that could meet council objectives if adequately supported.

Consider:

- identifying council and community-based programs and organisations that currently have children as confirmed or potential audience members or are the focus of services
- programs that currently have children as confirmed or potential creators or participants
- strategies or policy documents that mention children
- any council support being provided to other community-based programs involving children
- the types of content being developed and shared on council communication platforms that children and families use
- how engaging and appealing these are for children
- any noticeable gaps in services or creative programs.

Determine the audit method depending on the size and capacity of the council. This could range from a simple survey collection tool through to a full creative strategy development exercise, such as the [South West Victoria Creative Industries Strategy](#) using a combination of focus groups, one-on-one interviews and community surveys.

Consider surveying:

- council staff involved in the delivery of creative programs
- children and their families
- providers and community groups who are involved in creative activities where children are part of an audience or a participant.

Collate the results

Collate findings. Prepare a complete list of existing creative programs and strategies that explicitly target or mention young people. The list can be broken down into:

- programs or activities that explicitly target children as audiences or participants
- programs or activities that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, children as audiences or participants (e.g. family focused creative festivals or events).

Also prepare a complete list of existing 'non-creative' programs, services and strategies that explicitly target or mention young people, broken down into:

- programs or activities that explicitly target children as the focus of or participants in services
- programs or activities that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, children.

Create a 'highlights' summary that can inform the Design step and showcase the existing highlights for children from programs delivered by your council. Highlights could include children-led programs or programs where children actively participated.

Case study

Gannawarra Shire Council – ReSpark the Park!

Children were central to the redesign of a local community park in Gannawarra Shire. Consultation with the local community took the form of a festival where children were encouraged to dream up a new future for their under-utilised park in Kerang.

All activities on the day – from the fun creative play activities to the casual chats with the parents and carers over food – added to the understanding of what was important to the local community and how they wanted to use their park in the future.

Council kept residents updated about the progress of improvements via their newsletters, website and Facebook page.

The park is now a thriving community asset and a place that will bring joy for many years to come. The rejuvenation also achieved Australia-wide recognition at the National Awards for Local Government.





Design

Present the findings to children for feedback

Prepare a presentation focused on gaining children's responses to, and recognition of:

- which existing programs and events in the highlights summary are attended by children and what they like about them
- other programs they participate in or like to attend in their community
- creative programs they wish they could see more of in their community
- gaps, programs that are missing, what the children want to have access to

Work with the children and working group to determine the next steps. This might involve promoting existing programs or noting the feedback from children on new programs which might be developed.



Deliver

Publish a creative, child-friendly report to promote the findings and highlight creative programs

Prepare a public version of the summary report based on the audit findings, highlights report, children's preferences and ideas.

Promote existing creative policies and strategies targeting children, and a contact point should people like more information, and any actions to be taken next.

Produce a visual, child-friendly report and circulate it among the children who have participated. Effective child engagement treats children as equals and honours them with access to the knowledge they have been party to creating.



Review and embed

Review the activity

Use the report to guide, update or write internal policies, strategies, plans and processes to ensure children's priorities are included in creative planning, strategies and processes across council departments.

Hot tip!

Co-designing with children

Confirm council's protocols for working with young people or children if under the age of 18. Use a guide such as that developed by the [Australia Council for the Arts](#) to ensure that any engagement follows appropriate guidelines.

Engage with children in their familiar and safe spaces, with their trusted adults present. The aim is to ensure you garner responses from the breadth of your children's community, considering social demographics, cultural and gender mix, mixed abilities, educationally engaged and disengaged. This way you will develop an audit that is truly reflective of the children in your community. By creating this broad opportunity, you will be surprised by the responses and ideas children bring!

It is highly recommended that your council engages an experienced, child-focused, creative professional or organisation to lead these consultative and engagement processes with children, with the experience to create safe, fun, creative atmospheres and environments fostering children's trust, curiosity and honesty.

Children's consultation is NOT about asking children to behave as adults – expecting them to sit around a table and respond to information. This may result in getting the responses you want or expect but will not give you what you might need.

Consider adapting the resource provided in the [Kids Co-designing Healthy Places](#) toolkit to create a co-design workshop.



Quick win: *Audit and promote creative opportunities for young children*

In this action, councils will explore ways to integrate creative opportunities through existing council offerings at venues that families attend, but that do not historically include creative activities.

This might include music or play-sculptures at playgrounds, participatory arts in public spaces (soundscapes, contributing to art works), including creative materials in library collection (supplies, costumes, instruments), and ensuring creative components are available in community festivals.

It's important to 'know where you are starting' before determining what you want to do. An internal review of your existing programs, funding initiatives and strategy documents will assist in identifying gaps. For example, your council may lack policies and/or programs that are tailored for, engage or appeal to young children and their families.

There may be an overlap between this audit and audits your council may be undertaking for other VicHealth community partnership modules. This is a good thing, as we are aiming for the benefits of creativity to be included throughout your community programs and services, not just in an arts contexts.

The steps below are similar to those outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for young people' and 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for children'. You'll need to consider the changing needs and interests of young children and their families and include different activities and communications in your creative programming.



How-to guide to: *Audit and promote creative opportunities for young children*

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services, and community development teams. Other teams that may be well-placed to embed creative programs in young children's activities include economic development, tourism, libraries, parks, and sport and recreation teams.

This action requires co-design with young children and their families. Aim to engage with children who are participants or visitors at the sites and services identified in the audit, including arts and cultural facilities, community centres, early childhood services, kindergartens, libraries and disability services. Co-design with babies and young children and their families is possible; however, the younger the child, the more important it is that a parent, carer or family member also participates. Expertise is needed to ensure children are equal contributors, rather than having their contribution 'done for them'.

With co-design, it is important to go to children in their own environments, rather than expecting them to come to you. It is also important to design appropriate processes so children can have meaningful input.

Traditional approaches to consultation with families, such as inviting input from families already engaged in council activities, risks only reaching those families educated and resourced enough to participate. Consider ways to include the voices of young children and parents and carers from families experiencing challenges. Aim to compensate them for their time and make any adjustments required to invite their meaningful contribution. Availability of childcare for non-participating babies and children will be key in engaging families with young children in the planning process.



Plan

Form a working group and appoint a project champion

Establish a working group to drive the project, including the relevant council and community representatives. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings, follow up on actions, and ensure the project aligns to other community partnerships modules and approaches being developed.

Develop a project plan outlining:

- terms of reference detailing roles of the working group
- the goals of the project and work to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work.

Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project, ensuring the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed. Review relevant strategic plans to determine if this action is best led by early years programming leaders or by creative arts programming leaders.

Consider other external factors such as program champions and upcoming events (such as community festivals) and infrastructure initiatives (such as new playgrounds).



Assess

Develop an auditing tool

The audit should include creative and non-creative activities, strategies and programs focused on young children. Some examples include community or health services such as maternal and child health, education and sport.

Confirm the questions for consideration to determine public-facing programs that council already delivers that are accessed by young children as audience members or participants, and the community-based programs, organisations and projects that are engaging with young children and their families. This will identify programs that can be highlighted and celebrated. It will also identify any gaps in internal programs for young children and programs that are being delivered externally that could meet council objectives if adequately supported.

Consider:

- identifying council and community-based programs and organisations that currently have young children as confirmed or potential audience members (or that are focused on young children)
- programs that currently have young children as confirmed or potential creators or participants
- strategies or policy documents that mention young children
- any council support being provided to other community-based programs involving young children
- the types of content being developed and shared on council communication platforms that young children and families use, and how engaging and appealing these are for children
- opportunities for intergenerational creative programs
- any noticeable gaps in services or creative programs.

Crossover opportunity

Guidance on including children and young people's voices is provided in the [Leading the way – Engaging young voices for change foundation module](#).

Intergenerational creative programs and co-participation

Intergenerational arts and creative programs are those in which multiple generations engage in the same learning experience. Intergenerational arts programs offer benefits to older adults, youth and the broader community. Older adults benefit from increased socialisation, reducing their sense of isolation and increasing their emotional support.

Young people experience improved academic performance, enhanced social skills, decreased negative behaviour, increased stability, more positive attitudes towards ageing and the elderly, and increased empathy towards those with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Finally, the community benefits from these programs, as they have been found to inspire collaboration, encourage cultural exchange, and strengthen community.

Creative programs involving young children can be designed so that parents or carers 'hand over' the experience to the program facilitator. The adult may simply become an observer – or activities can be explicitly designed to encourage intergenerational co-participation. Explicit communication with the adults about expectations of interaction is important.

The British [Kids in Museums](#) initiative recommends the following to engage family audiences:

- Be positive and do away with the word 'No'. Tell visitors what they can do at the door, rather than pin up a list of things they can't.
- Share stories with each other. Listen. Families are experts too!
- Don't say 'SHHHH!' If children are being noisy, ask yourself 'why?' Is it because they're excited? Great! Then capture that excitement. Is it because they're bored? Then give them something meaningful to do.
- Say 'Please touch!' as often as you can. Everyone finds real objects awesome! Direct children to things that can be handled, teach respect and explain why others can't.
- Give a hand to adults as well as children. Sometimes it isn't the children who are shy – parents and carers need your support too. Produce guides, trails and activities so everyone can join in.
- Be aware of different families' needs. Use your imagination with signs, symbols and words that are understood by all. Design everything you offer to be equally accessible to disabled and non-disabled visitors.



The audit method you choose will depend on the size and capacity of the council. This could range from a simple survey collection tool through to a full creative strategy development exercise. An example of this is the [South West Victoria Creative Industries Strategy](#), which uses a combination of focus groups, one-on-one interviews and community surveys.

Consider surveying:

- council staff who help deliver creative programs
- young children and their families
- providers and community groups involved in creative activities where young children are part of an audience or are participants.

Collate the results

Collate your findings, then prepare a comprehensive list of existing creative programs, activities and strategies. This list should have two sections, comprising:

- programs, activities and strategies that explicitly target young children as audiences or participants
- programs, activities and strategies that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, young children as audiences or participants (such as family-focused creative festivals or events).

Also prepare a complete list of existing 'non-creative' programs, services and strategies. This list will also have two parts, comprising:

- programs, services and strategies that explicitly target young children as the focus, or as participants
- programs, services and strategies that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, young children.

Create a 'highlights' summary that can inform the 'design' step and showcase the existing highlights for young children from programs delivered by your council. Highlights could include children-led programs or programs in which young children actively participate.

Design

Present the findings to young children and their families for feedback

Prepare a presentation focused on gaining the responses and recognition of young children and their families about:

- which existing programs and events in the 'highlights summary' are attended by young children, and what they like about them
- other programs they participate in or like to attend in their community
- creative programs they wish they could see more of in their community
- gaps, programs that are missing, and what the young children want to have access to.

Design actions

Work with the children and working group to determine the next steps. This might involve promoting existing programs or noting the feedback from children on new programs that could be developed.

Deliver

Publish a creative, child-friendly report to promote the findings and highlight creative programs

Prepare a public version of the summary report based on the audit findings, highlights report, and children's preferences and ideas. In the UK, the Leeds Council – Children and Youth team state emphatically that any robust change model must fit on one page so everyone can see it and 'action it' at a glance. Longer documents can be ineffective and are rarely implemented.

Promote existing creative policies and strategies targeting young children. Also promote a contact from whom people can seek more information, and any actions to be taken next.

Produce a visual, child-friendly report and circulate it among the young children and families who have participated. Effective child engagement treats children as equals and honours them with access to the knowledge they have helped create.

Review and embed

Review the activity

Use the report to guide, update or write internal policies, strategies, plans and processes to ensure young children and their families' priorities are included in creative planning, strategies and processes across council departments.

Monitor and evaluate reach and success

Monitoring and evaluation identifies activities that met work objectives, and those that were not as effective and need to be reconsidered

Recommended resources

- Kids in Museums (UK): [Manifesto](#) (guidelines for museums, heritage sites and cultural organisations created with children, young people and families)





Step up:

Work with children to develop a vision for a child-friendly creative community

Children’s instinctive creativity is a powerful resource to help councils imagine new ideas for their community.

This action is designed for councils who already have an insight into the opportunities and gaps for creative programs, such as those outlined in the quick win [‘Audit and promote creative programs for young children’](#)

Once you have identified creative and non-creative child-focused policies, programs, organisations and artists in your community, this action requires councils to find out what children might want in their community and what they can bring through their creative participation.

In this action, councils will plan and deliver a creative process program in which children are invited to contribute to developing a vision for a child-friendly, creative community, including creatively sharing their ideas for new programs or projects in your community based on the gaps you’ve previously identified.

With children’s input, develop a vision and ideas for a child-friendly, creative community. You can take inspiration from how others have done this. There are a range of programs and organisations that run creative projects that support children to develop and pitch their ideas. Some outline actual programs while others explain ways in which to engage children effectively. These include:

- [Art Attack](#) – film projects
- [100 Story Building](#) – student-led writing programs
- [Rebel Stepz](#) – art and dance classes for kids of all ages
- [Finglesin](#) – visual arts projects for kids, from comic art to sculptural woodwork
- [Kids Thrive](#) – community arts and cultural development projects





How-to guide to:

Work with children to develop a vision for a child-friendly creative community

Involving people

It is recommended that councils undertaking this action continue to build on the working group, project champion and governance structures established through the delivery of 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for children'.

Depending on available resources, it is recommended that councils engage services from practitioners in child-led creative processes or from local creative facilitators, community development artists, child-focused arts organisations or creative teachers.



Plan

Plan the creative process to create the vision

Prepare a project plan outlining:

- the goals of the project and actions to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work
- processes for working with the creative facilitators
- council's protocols for working with children
- resources required to deliver the creative vision design process
- resources available to deliver creative programs and ideas to achieve the vision.

Prepare a project brief to engage services from creative facilitators who can lead the design process with children in line with the goals of the project.

Prepare a communication strategy

Include:

- questions that will help develop a vision (e.g. 'What would you like in our child-friendly, creative community?')
- an outline of council networks you can use (e.g. schools, libraries, childcare centres).
- strategies required to engage with children of different ages, locations and interest groups.



Design

Work with the creative facilitators to develop a fun, engaging advisory process that honours children's experience, wisdom and creativity. This might take the form of a creative program advisory/working group comprising children, artists and parents and carers – or another creative idea or process might emerge.



Deliver

Run the creative vision process

Implement the creative program, inviting children to participate in an advisory capacity or provide submissions, noting protocols in 'Quick win'. Ensure you give children a range of ways they can engage and submit ideas if this is not able to be done face-to-face. For example, you can ask their teachers and carers to run a simple drawing or writing project with students to elicit ideas via drawings, stories and poems.

Deliver your program or project. Make your creative, child-friendly vision and plan public.

Deliver cont.

Establish a pitch process for program ideas

Once you have determined the creative vision, consider how children might submit their ideas for programs and activities that achieve the vision.

Based on the children's vision, submissions and project plan, deliver a public outcome or component of the children's creative visions and ideas for a child-friendly, creative community. This might, for example, feature:

- a publication of children's creative responses
- videos featuring children's responses
- drawings
- songs
- games.

Invite members of the community, council and community leaders to the public outcome or event. Invite discussion of the children's creative vision and how creative strategies can be supported and amplified across other areas of community life.

Review and embed

Evaluate your program

Create a children's evaluation tool. With support from your creative expert and children who have participated in your project, develop some creative tools for children to share what they thought about their participation and outcomes.

[Regional Arts Victoria's Arts & Education program](#), for example, asks children to rate performances out of 5 by colouring in a number of stars, and allows them to draw their favourite part of the performance.

Kids Thrive uses simple questions including coloured bubbles and comparative drawing sheets: 'Before this project I saw my community like this.' 'After this project I see my community like this.'

Create a public version of the evaluation report. This should clearly demonstrate how the creative ideas from children have been incorporated in existing, or led to new, programs for children.

Identify next steps and embed in council practice

Identify opportunities to embed the vision through council work, for example, by updating existing programs or using the ideas from children for new programs or projects which might be developed.

Include children's creative ideas in council's broader child-focused programs. Creativity is an excellent way to engage children in informing your other children's services.





Ambitious:

Co-design creative play programs with young children and their families

Creative play inspires fun and engaging community-based development opportunities that offer incredible benefits for young children and families.

In this action, councils and families co-design dedicated, immersive creative play programming for children aged 0 to 5 years across a range of arts domains including visual art, stories, song, and creative movement.

Councils will use co-design processes, partnering with artists and creatives. The programming activity can bring new life to council-owned facilities.

‘Creative Play’ includes play-based experiences to provide age-appropriate activities for children through arts, imagination, creativity, music, movement, language and culture. The focus should be on cultural safety, inclusion, fun and family involvement.

Priority is given to having facilitators who are from diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ families, people from diverse cultures, or people living with a disability. Stories should also be promoted with characters with a diverse range of lived experience.

The aim of this action is to move beyond ad hoc, one-off creative play activities to include young children and their families in the design, and engage artists and creatives in the development and delivery of programs.

The ArtPlay model – comprehensive, integrated programming with embedded child co-design

[ArtPlay](#), managed by the City of Melbourne, is based on an Irish program ([The Ark](#)), which has also been adapted for use in Singapore ([The Artground](#)) and Korea (Art Play, Jeonju Cultural Foundation).

ArtPlay (Melbourne) caters for babies to 13-year-olds with dynamic and diverse opportunities for social engagement and cultural expression. A key feature is the emphasis given to artist-guided practical programs and the integration of co-design with children.

The ArtPlay program comprises:

- online programming of on-demand and live creative offerings developed by artists
- in-venue programming, including [‘New Ideas Lab’](#) (artists submit expressions of interest and a panel of adults and children select projects to be co-designed with children), [‘By kids, For kids’](#) (children generate ideas for creative projects and work with artists to develop these), and one-off interactive workshops (with a focus on early years, embedding creative ways to capture feedback from babies and young children)
- integration of activities across council services and external activities. For example, partnering with festivals (both mainstream and disability festivals) and partnering with parenting services to engage families of young children experiencing challenges in the co-design of creative products at ArtPlay.

Principles of co-design and equity are embedded throughout ArtPlay.

Case study

Comprehensive kids' arts program in which families and children help identify activities, themes and locations (City of Melton)

The City of Melton offers a comprehensive [Art for Kids](#) program with an ongoing, rolling combination of workshops and events. These are both in-person activities delivered by artists, and online workshops and resources. The focus is on artist-guided practical programs and integrating the perspectives of children and families.

How-to guide to: *Co-design creative play programs with young children and their families*

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services, and community development teams. Co-design with babies and young children and their families is possible; however, the younger the child, the more important it is that a parent, carer or family member also participates. Expertise is needed to ensure children are equal contributors, rather than having their contribution 'done for them'.

With co-design, it is important to go to children in their own environments, rather than expecting them to come to you. It is also important to design appropriate processes so children can have meaningful input.

Traditional approaches to consultation with families, such as inviting input from families already engaged in council activities, risks only reaching those families educated and resourced enough to participate. Consider ways to include the voices of young children and parents and carers from families experiencing challenges. Aim to compensate them for their time and make any adjustments required to invite their meaningful contribution. Availability of childcare for non-participating babies and children will be key in engaging families with young children in the planning process.

Co-design is relevant at 3 levels in this action: co-design input designing the overall program structure, embedding co-design in the ongoing processes of selecting activities to be delivered, and young children co-designing and actively participating in the creative play activities (Figure 1).

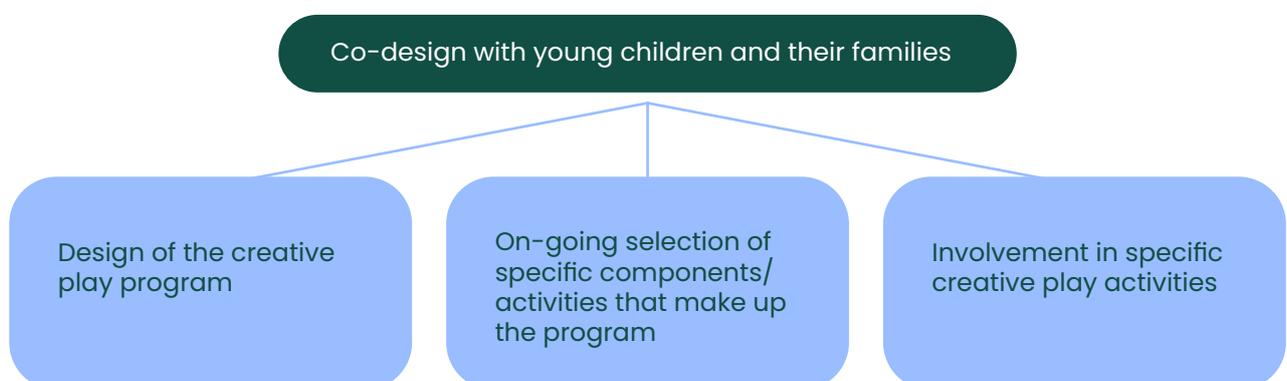


FIGURE 1: Integration of co-design throughout the development and delivery of the creative play program

Co-designing with young children and their families

Confirm council's protocols for working with children. Use a guide such as that developed by the Australia Council for the Arts to ensure that any engagement follows appropriate guidelines.

For guidance on including children and young people's voices, use the foundation module [Leading the Way – Engaging young voices for change](#).

Engage with children in spaces that are safe and familiar to them, with their trusted adults there for at least part of the activity. Children can be supervised without their trusted adults present, as appropriate, depending on their age and the activities being undertaken. The aim is to ensure you get responses from the breadth of the children's community, considering social demographics, and the mix of cultures, genders, abilities and levels of educational engagement.

It is highly recommended that councils engage an experienced, child-focused, creative professional or organisation to lead these consultative and engagement processes with children. These professionals or organisations should have the experience to create safe, fun, creative atmospheres and environments that foster children's trust, curiosity and honesty.

[Kids Thrive](#) and [House of Muchness](#) offer training to local councils and government departments on creative, child-friendly approaches to consultation and collaboration with children. Consider adapting the resource provided in the Kids Co-designing Healthy Places toolkit to create a co-design workshop.

Children's consultation is not about asking children to behave as adults – for example, by sitting around a table and responding to information. Such approaches may mean you get the responses you want or expect, but not necessarily what you need.

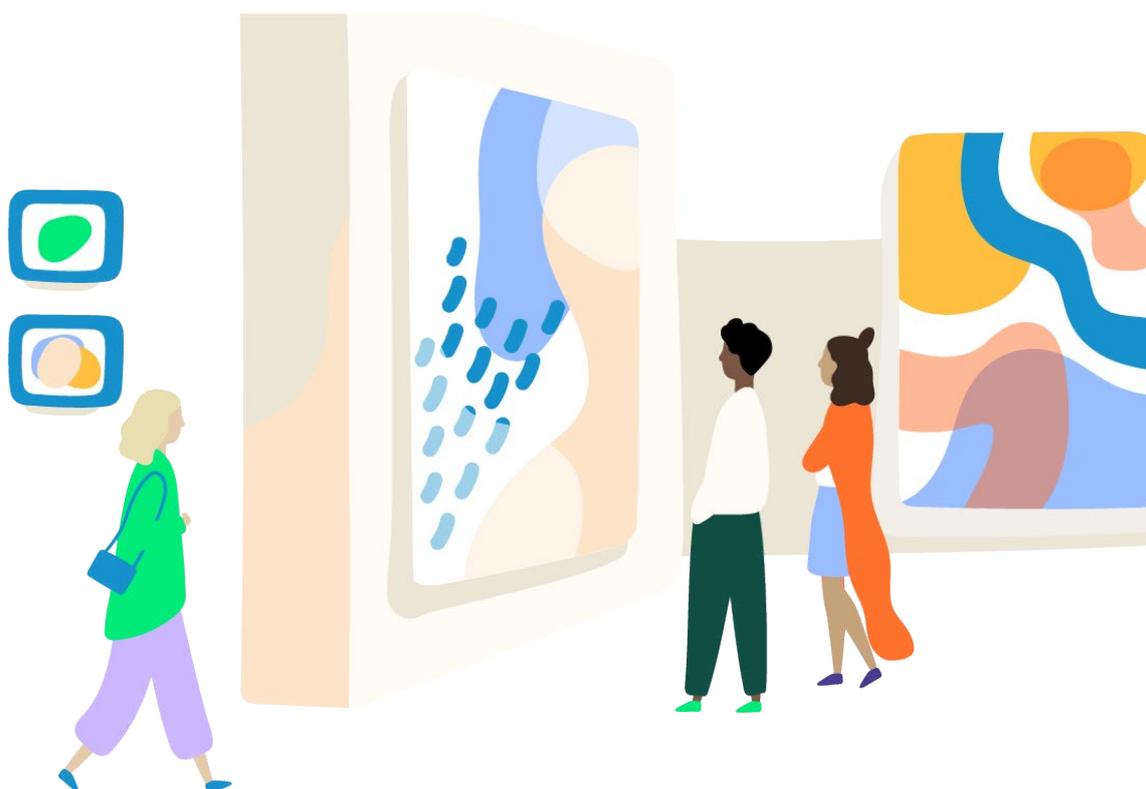
Co-designing and consulting with your cohort of children requires additional considerations.

A recent academic paper '[Look Who's Talking](#)', identifies 8 factors to ensuring the voices of young children are heard:

- Definition of what constitutes 'voice'. When working with young children any definition of voice will be, by necessity, broader and more inclusive of a greater range of communication strategies beyond words and cannot exclude: behaviour; actions; pauses in action; silences; body language; glances; movement; and artistic expression.
- Consideration of power dynamics. When considering how to facilitate young children's voices, the power imbalance that exists between young children and adults needs to be acknowledged. Consideration needs to be given to disrupting the ways in which young children are socialised into accepting the authoritative positions of adults, especially in settings such as schools and preschools where adults are perceived to hold positions of power when compared to children. A culture needs to be created which is both supportive and enabling in age-appropriate ways for all children. Similarly, adults in the same context must be alert to their own assumptions about this power relationship and should be aware of how they position children in relation to themselves.
- Inclusivity. There may be some groups of children whose voices are not as equal as others. For example, these groups might include children with additional support needs that are both physical and cognitive, those with cultural and ethnic differences to the dominant group around them, and often those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In an inclusive setting, all voices and forms of voice are valued. The challenge for practitioners is to seek out the means by which they might facilitate and listen to all voices and have equal regard for those voices and the influence they may have.

Co-designing with young children and their families cont.

- **Listening.** Listening is vital in endeavouring to support children's voice. The listener should be supportive of different ways of expression and be ready to facilitate speaking and listening in creative ways. This is arguably more important with those learning to develop their voice.
- **Time and space.** The design, practice and review of a setting's formal and informal structures should allow space and time for children's voices. Places need to be flexible and adaptable to context and actors; they can be abandoned if unused, or elaborated and extended if valued. It is useful to recognise and cherish the spaces and places carved out by children for child-child voice.
- **Approaches.** It is worth noting that deciding not to participate is an expression of voice and that the approaches adopted in practice should be open to this. The decision not to speak is also a form of voice, as is going away and sitting under a table. Approaches ought to be flexible and meaningful for all participants, but especially for the young children whose voices are to be heard. In determining approaches to eliciting and facilitating voice, practitioners need to be reflective about their practices and be strategic in designing approaches for the most positive impact.
- **Processes.** It is important, in eliciting young children's voices that trust and respect are cultivated. This culture should include opportunities for strengths-based dialogue and shared, accessible language for group conversations. Bearing in mind the broad definition of voice offered above, the processes must take account of language in its varied forms, particularly for the pre-verbal child and for those whose spoken language is developing.
- **Purposes.** It is important that children's capacities for involvement in decision-making are recognised in facilitating children's voice and broader participation. Tokenism can be avoided by having a clear purpose or goal for the promotion of children's voices.





Plan

Form a working group of families with young children, and staff representing areas such as maternal and child health, libraries, community health workers, early childhood educators. Also include independent artists and local creatives. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings, follow up on actions, and ensure the project aligns with other community partnerships, modules and approaches being developed.

Develop a project plan outlining:

- terms of reference, detailing roles of the working group
- the goals of the project and work to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work.

Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project, ensuring the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed.



Assess

Compile a list of local providers of activities across arts domains; for example, visual arts, stories, song, and creative movement. Ensure you consider providers that can reach or have existing relationships with families experiencing challenges.

The creative activities you list should promote stories with characters with diverse lived experience, so it is important to prioritise engaging young creatives from diverse backgrounds (including those who are culturally diverse, living with a disability, and LGBTQIA+). Seek feedback from artists and creatives on their level of interest in participatory models that are both artist-initiated and child-initiated ([see City of Melbourne – ArtPlay](#)).

Put together a list of potential council-run venues, facilities or public spaces to deliver programs, with an emphasis on ensuring the venues are likely to be appealing and accessible to families experiencing challenges.

Consider non-traditional venues such as parks and playgrounds, children's birthday party venues, and sport and recreation facilities. Also consider ways to integrate programs into existing services, with council staff helping to recruit families and supporting them to access creative play programs. For example, the City of Melbourne's [ArtPlay](#) program partnered with parenting services to engage parents and carers experiencing challenges in co-designing creative activities for their young children, resulting in publication of a book 2.

A key principle is ensuring that young children are included in the ongoing design of the creative play activities (see descriptions of '[New Ideas Lab](#)' and '[By Kids, For Kids](#)') and how to successfully facilitate the inclusion of artists and creatives in the development and delivery of the programs.



Design

Use a co-design approach

The aim of the co-design process is to create dedicated, immersive creative play programming for children aged 0 to 5 across a range of arts domains (such as visual arts, stories, song, and creative movement) for delivery from council-owned facilities. Programming should move beyond one-off, ad hoc creative play offerings and incorporate ongoing opportunities for young children to participate in co-design of the activities.

Expertise is needed to co-design with young children and their families age-appropriate creative activities.

Appoint an expert facilitator to undertake a comprehensive co-design process with young children and their families that allows children to make a meaningful contribution. Aspects of the design might include seeking feedback on:

- the types of activities that appeal to young children and their families
- venues that are accessible and appealing to families experiencing challenges
- the balance between child-initiated ideas and artist-initiated ideas.

Consider bringing in external expertise to facilitate this process or to conduct professional development with council staff to ensure appropriate in-house expertise.

[Kids Thrive](#) and [House of Muchness](#) both provide support for work with young children and families to facilitate and 'scaffold processes' that embed best practice.

Prepare a summary report

Compile a report summarising:

- the findings of the co-design process
- diverse local providers of activities across the range of arts domains (such as visual arts, stories, song, and creative movement)
- potential council-run venues, facilities and public spaces for delivery of programs, with an emphasis on ensuring the venues are likely to be appealing and accessible to families experiencing structural inequity
- opportunities within council budgets, policies or protocol that could enhance sustainability of funding.

Include an action plan in the report that outlines the key activities council will undertake to implement the integrated program.



Deliver

Communicate and promote the new program

Consider creative ways to present and promote the key findings such as a video, performance, or animation. Work with council's communications team to promote the resulting integrated creative play program to families with young children and to local artists and creative professionals.

Publish a creative, child-friendly report to promote the newly developed integrated co-design creative play program

Produce a visual, child-friendly report and circulate it among the young children and families who have participated. Effective child engagement treats children as equals and honours them with access to the knowledge they have been party to creating.

Deliver the program

Deliver the program as outlined in the plan. Consider the principles of active engagement (link back to earlier call out box) and be sure to integrate best practices that enhance engagement and retention of families experiencing challenges, including:

- staff using communication processes that demonstrate respect and build trust
- facilitating access to services through active community outreach, and by offering flexible timing, transport, free child care and refreshments
- maintaining contact by ensuring multiple contact points, pre-appointment reminders, multiple gateways into a service, and reduced eligibility criteria.



Review and embed

Evaluate and monitor

Evaluate the embedded creative play program. Consider indicators of satisfaction from the perspectives of children, families and artists. These could include engagement and completion data, and responses to satisfaction surveys. Consider innovative ways to collect satisfaction data from young children, such as RAV's idea of asking young children to draw a picture of their experience.

Collect data on the types of creative experiences delivered as part of the program (e.g. visual arts, performing arts, circus skills and music experiences).

Monitor uptake of the program, especially by children of families experiencing challenges. Report on completion of the program to community members and council teams involved in its development. Use evaluation to identify opportunities to improve elements of the program. Work with council's budget processes to secure annual allocation of resources by linking evaluation outcomes to engagement by priority equity groups and council strategic priorities.

Celebrate

Support the providers who successfully participate in the creative play program and acknowledge the families and children who participate. Consider creating a video that could be used to promote future programs.

Recommended resources

- Smallfire (participatory design blog): [‘Co-design workshop resources: Techniques and methods’](#)
- Collective Impact Forum: [Community Engagement Toolkit \(resources to promote community engagement\)](#)
- Orygen: [Co-designing with young people. The fundamentals.](#)
- Author/organisation: [Participation and consulting with children](#) (practical tips for engaging children and families in consultation activities)
- Researching ArtPlay and SIGNAL: [This report provides a description of the ArtPlay program and a comprehensive evaluation of the activities.](#)
- City of Melbourne: [‘ArtPlay Resources for organisations and artists’](#)





Ambitious:

Appoint children to supported decision-making roles about creative programs

'Quick win' and 'Step up' actions under this impact stream involve decision-making around budgets and program design that ultimately rests with adults alone.

In this ambitious action, councils will relinquish some of this control in a supported environment by appointing children to roles as decision-makers, such as through funding or programming panel appointments within council's existing or new creative programs.

The collaborative, creative and engaging nature of creative programs provide a strong opportunity for councils to place trust in and empower children as active citizens who can make decisions with and for their peers.



How-to guide to:

Appoint children to supported decision-making roles about creative programs

Involving people

It is recommended that councils undertaking this action refer to the steps to build a working group, project champion and governance structures established through the delivery of 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for children'.

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, children and family services, and community development. Other teams who may be well placed to embed creative programs in children's activities include: economic development, tourism, libraries, parks, and sport and recreation.



Plan

Prepare a project plan outlining the rationale, goals, key timelines and success measures for this project. If available, refer to any strategic or policy commitments already in place (e.g. commitments to children's participation and child-friendly city statements). Seek in-principle support from relevant council leaders for the rationale and goals of the work.

Crossover opportunity

This action requires the inclusion of children. It is recommended that councils are familiar with the steps and resources outlined in the foundation module 'Leading the Way: Engaging young voices for change to build council's capacity in empowering and amplifying children's contributions'.

Assess

Identify opportunities to increase children's decision-making roles about creative programs

Identify council programs that directly target children. This could be done by reviewing and completing the relevant steps outlined in 'Quick win' and 'Step up'.

Review the decision-making methods applied within these programs. Determine what opportunities exist within decision-making processes – for example, are programming or funding panels formed to review programs or decide outcomes?

Hot tip!

Ensure children consent to participate in panels or other decision-making processes as equals alongside other key community members.²² It is more empowering for children to engage as equals with key adults in the community, rather than being relegated to a separate process. Ensure the adults participate in the child-friendly approach – rather than vice versa.

Update your project plan with your recommended approach and highlight how this approach will contribute towards the goals of the project. Get endorsement from relevant council and department leaders.

Deliver

Pilot and test

Some examples of how this could be done:

- run the decision-making process you identified for a targeted grants program
- ask children to review an element of the program for a community festival
- have young people curate programs/workshops for your council's performing arts centre or gallery.

Review the pilot with the children and others in your working group. Evaluate what worked and what didn't.

22. [Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People: Consent](#)

Design

Research approaches that are used to engage children in decision-making processes. Some examples include:

- [ArtPlay](#) in the City of Melbourne invites children to participate as assessment panel members
- [100 Story Building](#) have children as part of their editorial panel
- [Kids Thrive](#) uses evidence-based approaches to engage children in decision-making.

Draw on the skills and experiences of creative expert partners to ensure the model you develop is conducive to children's participation and is not simply expecting children to slip into a (boring) adult model.

Develop a policy to support the approach

Develop a children's decision-making policy to support the implementation of these roles over the long term. Use information from the pilot activity to define when, how and which programs might draw upon children as decision-makers. Adopt the policy in line with council's processes.

Update relevant program guidelines and celebrate the work of children who have contributed to the process through public celebrations. For example, invite children to be formally recognised for their work through council meetings or plan a community BBQ to share and celebrate the children's work.



Review and embed

Review the approach annually through evaluations to allow for continual improvement to the program.

Impact stream:

Improving opportunities for young people to lead creative programs

To complete this impact stream councils will select from:

Quick win: *Audit and promote creative programs for young people*

Step up: *Co-design creative programs with young people*

Step up: *Build the capacity of young creatives in relation to early childhood creative programs*

Ambitious: *Appoint young people as creative leaders*

Young Victorians aged 15–24 years recognise the positive impacts of arts and creativity and participate in arts events at a higher rate than other age groups.²³ Like any group, young people will be more likely to attend and participate in events that are designed with and by their peers.

As the arts can assist young people to obtain and maintain good health, especially good mental health, approaches to improve arts engagement for this priority group are important.²⁴

Arts and creative programs are important platforms for councils to strengthen the health and wellbeing of young people, and it is critical these programs are designed to attract and welcome young people with a wide range of interests and needs. Younger Australians recognise that arts and culture are embedded in and inseparable from everyday life.²⁵ Creative activities not only provide ways for councils to engage with young people; they also contribute to the growth of skills such as logic, concentration, communication and decision-making.

Quick note

This impact stream, and its resources and examples, focuses on young people, generally meaning people aged 13 to 25 years. We acknowledge that councils may have different definitions for 'children' and 'young people', or may prefer to focus on a narrower age range within this group.

23. Australia Council for the Arts: [Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey](#)

24. VicHealth: [The arts and creative industries in health promotion \(evidence review\)](#)

25. A New Approach: [The Next Generation of Voters: Young middle Australians talk Arts, Culture and Creativity](#)

When young people are given the opportunity to experiment with a range of art forms, self-esteem, together with individual and societal wellbeing, can be enhanced. When such artistic and cultural activities take place in a community rather than a formal education setting there is very considerable potential to build local social networks. Social capital not only improves local relationships for the individual young people participating but also benefits the local area more widely. It is therefore critical that we do everything we can to unleash the full creative and artistic potential of our young people.²⁶

Young creatives have a great deal to offer young children in their community. They can offer perspectives from shared generational experiences with the world around them, with technology and with broader culture. Young creatives who are developing their crafts and mediums can also benefit from connecting into the imagination and exploration that form children's early experiences with the arts.

This impact stream focuses on embracing opportunities for young people to lead the way in how creative programs are developed by or supported through your council.

Creative organisations working with young people

- [SYN](#): Media organisation run by a community of young people that provides training and broadcast opportunities for young Australians
- [Express Media](#): National organisation providing support and development opportunities for young Australian writers
- [The Push](#): Australian youth music organisation and registered charity, based in Melbourne and delivering programs that are responsive to Australia's future music industry leaders, artists and audiences
- [Australian Theatre for Young People](#): Integrates professional theatre practice with supportive youth theatre process, working with all levels of the arts industry and supporting young people from their first theatre experience to their first professional production
- [Youth Affairs Council Victoria \(YACVIC\)](#): Training and support, including youth participation frameworks

Intended outcomes

Councils undertaking this impact stream can expect to:

- secure input of young people in the development of creative programs that target them
- improve access to opportunities for young people in their community to develop and deliver creative programs for their peers
- increase opportunities for young people to attend creative events developed by their peers
- strengthen networks with key partners working with young people in their community
- reduce barriers preventing young people from attending or participating in creative events
- showcase and support the creative endeavours of young people in the community.

26. National Youth Council of Ireland: [The Value of Youth Arts in Youth Work](#)

Minimum deliverables

To complete the impact stream 'Embracing opportunities for children to inform creative programs', councils will have:

- identified existing council and council-supported programs that support children as audiences or creators
- adopted policies that allow for children to be involved in the development of creative programs
- supported the delivery of creative programs that involve children's voices during selection or development
- demonstrated succession planning, outlining how the activity will contribute to the outcomes of current and future Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.





Quick win: *Audit and promote creative programs for young people*

Knowing where you are starting from is critical before determining what you want to do.

An internal review of your existing programs, funding initiatives, programs and strategy documents will identify programs that are worthy of celebrating but will also assist in identifying gaps requiring attention.



Case study

Examples where young people have been in the driver's seat of the design and delivery of creative programs:

- Youth centres: Hume City Council – [Hume FReeZA](#)
- Council-run libraries: Wyndham City Council – [Book to Movie Club](#)
- Performing arts centres: [Hell's Canyon](#) (included on the VCE Drama and Theatre Studies Playlist)

The steps outlined below are similar to those outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for children'. Councils should consider the changing needs and interests of children and young people over different stages of life and include different activities and communications in their creative programming.



How-to guide to:

Audit and promote creative programs for young people

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this action include arts and culture, youth services and community development.

This action requires consultation with young people. Consider inviting young people who are involved in council services (e.g. youth advisory panels, FReeZA, youth services, clubs or performing arts) and via creative programs at schools or tertiary institutions. Surveys could be promoted at locations popular with local young people (e.g. shops, theatres, music venues, events).



Plan

Form a working group and appoint a project champion

Establish a working group, including the relevant council and community representatives, to drive the project. Appoint a project champion who will lead meetings, follow up on actions, and ensure the project aligns to other community partnerships modules and approaches being developed.

Develop a project plan outlining:

- terms of reference detailing roles of the working group
- the goals of the project and work to be completed
- timelines and milestones for completing the work.

Determine how you will engage and seek an authorising environment from council leadership for the project, ensuring the project champion has a mandate to deliver and respond quickly when needed.

Assess

Develop an auditing tool

The audit should include creative and non-creative activities, strategies and programs in which young people are the focus.

Confirm the questions for consideration to determine which public-facing programs council already delivers that are accessed by young people as audience members or participants and the community-based programs, organisations and projects that are engaging with young people. This detail will inform programs that can be highlighted and celebrated. It will also identify gaps in internal programs for young people and programs that are being delivered externally that could meet council objectives if adequately supported.

Consider:

- identifying council and council-supported community-based programs and organisations that currently have young people as confirmed or potential audience members or the focus of services
- programs that currently have young people as confirmed or potential creators or participants
- strategies or policy documents that mention young people
- any council support being provided to other community-based programs involving young people
- the types of content being developed and shared on council or other community communication platforms that young people use
- how engaging and appealing these are for young people in the local community
- any noticeable gaps in services or creative programs.

Determine the audit method depending on the size and capacity of the council. This could range from a simple survey collection tool through to a full creative strategy development exercise, such as the [South West Victoria Creative Industries Strategy](#) using a combination of focus groups, one-on-one interviews and community surveys.

Consider surveying:

- young people through council and non-council channels
- council staff involved in the delivery of creative programs
- providers and community groups who are involved in creative activities where young people are audiences or creators.

Collate the results

Prepare a complete list of existing creative programs and strategies that explicitly target or mention young people, broken down into:

- programs or activities that explicitly target young people as audiences or participants
- programs or activities that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, young people as audiences or participants (e.g. family-focused creative festivals or events).

Also prepare a complete list of existing 'non-creative' programs, services and strategies that explicitly target or mention young people, broken down into:

- programs or activities that explicitly target young people as the focus of or participants in services
- programs or activities that do not explicitly target, but still benefit, young people.

Create a 'highlights' summary that can inform the Design step and showcase the existing highlights for young people from programs delivered by your council. Highlights could include youth-led programs or programs where young people actively contribute to the creation or delivery of the activity.

Present the findings to young people for their feedback

Invite young people and other community partners to the working group to review the results. A range of ages will be beneficial to ensure a broad range of voices and needs are heard.

Consider:

- drawing on existing youth advisory groups or programs in your council
- running a dedicated Expression of Interest process
- inviting students from local schools with creative programs.

Provide a safe and fun space to ensure that the young people feel comfortable and want to participate. If possible, consider remuneration for young people for their time through an honorarium for any consultation work done with them.

Prepare in advance what your response might be if creative ideas are out of scope or budgetary possibilities of your council, or if project funding could be sought externally. Young people should be informed at the start of the process of potential resources available so they don't feel disappointed if an idea is not possible.

Hot tip!

Confirm protocols for working with young people if they are under the age of 18. Use a guide such as that developed by the [Australia Council for the Arts](#) to ensure that any engagement follows appropriate guidelines.

Prepare a presentation or report focused on gaining young people's responses to, and recognition of:

- what existing programs and events in the highlights summary are attended by young people and what they like about them
- their ideas for adapting or improving the promotion of existing creative programs to increase awareness and participation by other young people
- any other programs they participate in or like to attend in their community and whether there are barriers that will obstruct their inclusion (e.g. physical, cost, access, lack of interest, not age-appropriate)
- ideas for creative options they wish they could see more of in the community.

To inspire young people who may not have strong ideas for creative activities, provide examples of programs and events being held outside of the council area or by external organisations.

Design actions

Work with young people and working group to identify the next steps. This might involve promoting existing programs or noting the feedback from young people on new programs that might be developed.

Recommended resources

Examples of some current local government youth programs, strategies and events:

- Central Goldfields Shire: [Youth Leadership Group](#)
- City of Casey: [Youth Writing Festival](#)
- Greater Dandenong: [Youth Showcase](#)
- Greater Shepparton City Council: [Youth Strategy](#)
- Mildura Rural City Council: [Youth Art Prize](#)

Deliver

Create a youth-friendly publication to promote the findings and highlight creative programs

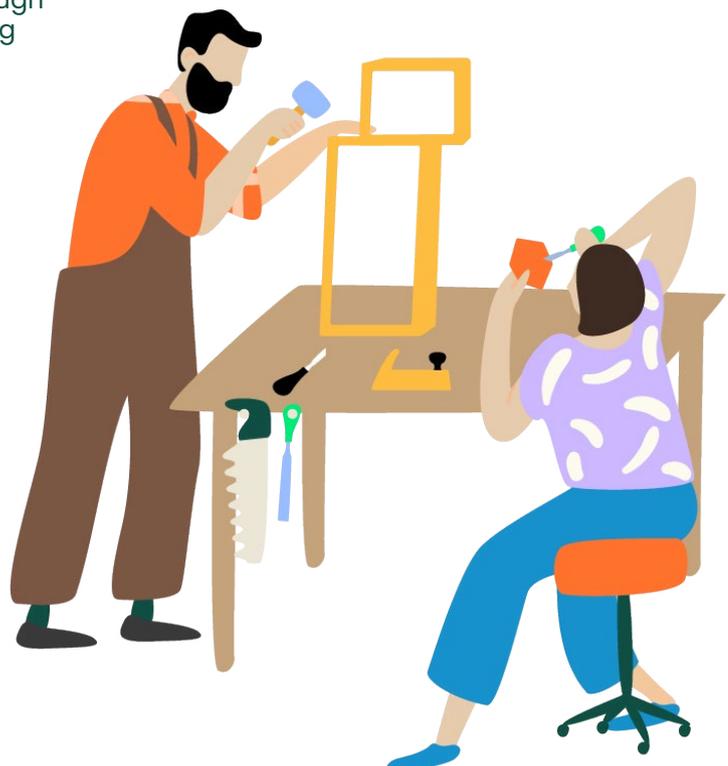
Prepare a public report, webpage or campaign that incorporates the preferences, feedback and ideas from the young people about the activities identified through the audit. Include the young people's ideas and contributions for the design or medium of the publication (e.g. intersperse a written report with creative items such as drawings and poems).

The publication could promote existing creative policies and strategies targeting young people (provide a contact point should people like more information) and any actions to be taken next.

Promote the report on council digital and public communication platforms, at events and through the mechanisms originally used to invite young people to participate.

Review and embed

Use the findings and publication to guide, update or write internal policies, strategies, plans and processes to ensure young people's priorities are included in creative planning, strategies and processes across council departments.





Step up: *Co-design creative programs with young people*

Young people have a great deal to offer the community through their creative ideas and empowering them through co-designing creative programs can build their self-confidence as young leaders.

To complete this action, councils should first have a good understanding of the opportunities and gaps in their community, such as by completing the steps outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for young people' to identify the opportunities for council to deliver and support creative programs, activities, strategies and plans.

In this action, councils will partner with young people to plan and deliver a creative program where young people are given responsibility to creatively pitch ideas for new programs or projects. The creative programs are then delivered in partnership with young people.



How-to guide to:

Co-design creative programs with young people



Plan

Establish an advisory group with young people or draw on existing groups to guide the development of the project.



Design

Run a brainstorming session to determine approaches for planning the delivery of creative programs. Consider inviting a guest to speak at or facilitate this session to generate ideas, or share previously delivered programs. A good example is Express Media's [6x6x6 initiative](#), where 6 young speakers (from different backgrounds and with varied expertise) pitched 6 big ideas in 6 minutes to an audience featuring community, government and other stakeholders.

Decide on a creative project idea the group is most passionate about

Creative projects can take many shapes and forms – events, books and comics, games, visual arts, music recordings. The Design phase will help you gather ideas.

Deciding on what project the group is most passionate about can be as simple as hosting a meeting with your advisory group or it might be more involved with voting, assessment and a panel meeting. You will likely have existing processes for determining grant or project outcomes within your council which you can draw upon.

Hot tip!

The decision-making process is a great opportunity to offer training for the young people you are working with. Many will not have been involved in a process like this, so you might invite council staff to meet with them to guide their project management skills in areas like managing conflicts of interest, reading applications and setting key selection criteria.

Design cont.

Identify project requirements

Determine if any additional expertise is needed. Local Elders, technicians, artists, organisations or a teacher who has experience developing creative projects for young people are an invaluable asset at this stage. For example, a music project will require technical expertise; a project with First Nations or cultural content will require advice from Elders; projects that concern mental health may require health professionals to be on hand.

Create a project plan. Include event dates, resource needs, timelines and key personnel.

Develop a communications strategy to launch the ideas process

Draw on existing networks such as schools, libraries and sports clubs within the council area. The most effective communications network will be the young people involved in the advisory group's peer network.

Support participants to determine and prepare creative content and collateral (e.g. articles, posters, social media posts) for the project.

Case study

Greater Shepparton City Council: Your Move – graffiti prevention short film.

This [short film](#) was produced by the council in partnership with students of Wanganui Park Secondary College and Victoria Police Shepparton. The 5-minute film is aimed at 10–18 year olds and is intended as an educational tool to raise awareness of the possible consequences of graffiti vandalism by highlighting some possible alternatives. The project was part of the Victorian Government's Community Crime Prevention Program.



The students involved gained a lot from the experience during filming and working with Shepparton Police and were proud of the end product.

DVD kits were circulated to schools and included student surveys providing an opportunity for them to make suggestions for possible future council or community activities.

Deliver

Invite submissions

Once you have determined the creative idea and proposal, consider how young people might submit their ideas to the program. Young people may wish to make a short film, have a story slam, paint a mural or run an art competition. They may wish to collaborate with adults or others to join an existing project or, where resources are slim, collaborate with other organisations to reduce costs and increase people power.

Deliver the program

Implement the creative program. Based on the plan and submissions, deliver the public component of your creative idea. This might, for example, feature a publication, videos, drawings, songs or games. Create a public platform to profile and celebrate the ideas.

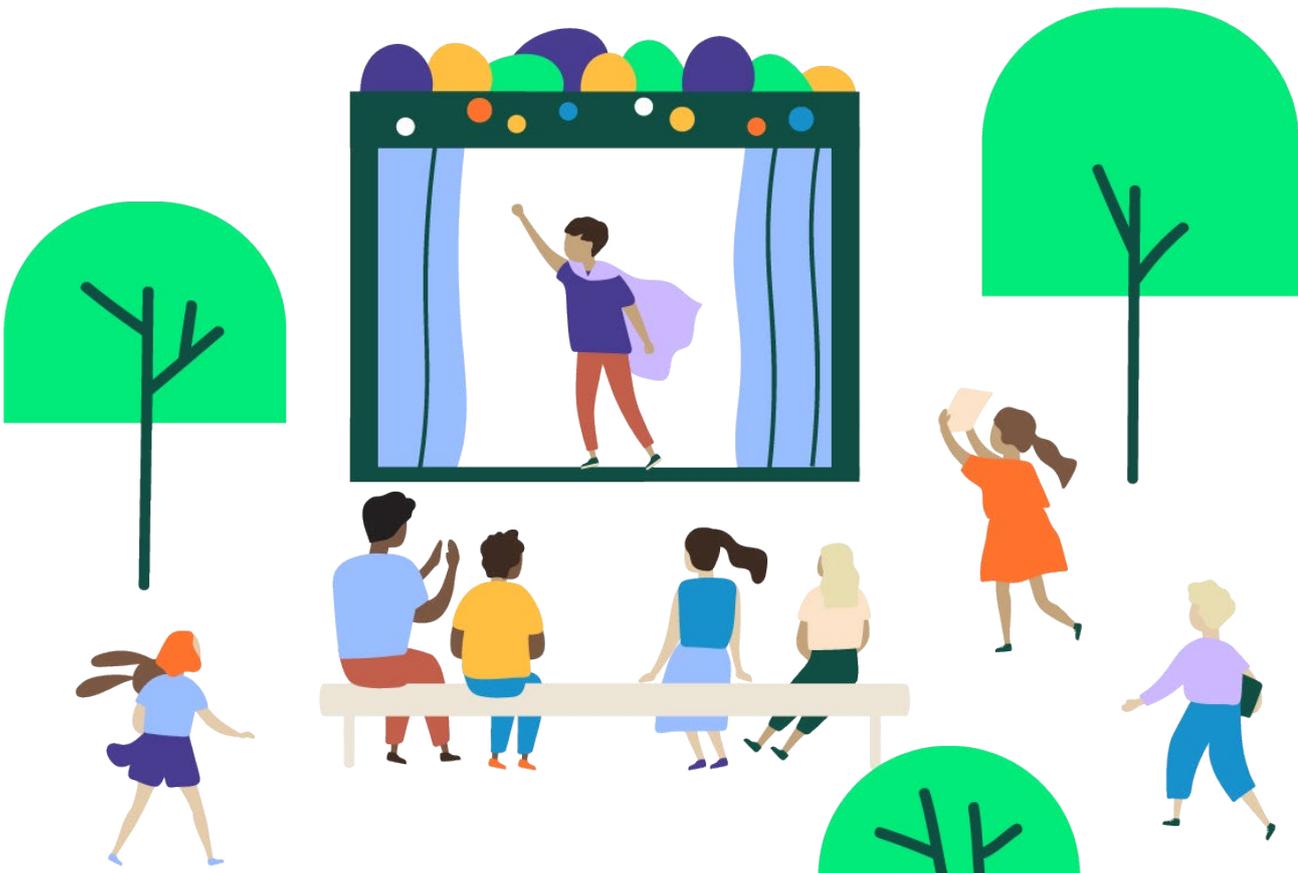
Review and embed

Evaluate your program

Develop a brief survey for participants, with questions to be reviewed by the youth advisory group. Think of ways young people might be able to share what they thought about their participation.

Run a focus group session after the event with the youth advisory group to run through what worked and what didn't.

Identify next steps. This might involve updating existing programs or using the ideas from young people for new programs which might be developed.





Step up: *Build the capacity of young creatives in relation to early childhood programs*

This action requires councils to develop a program of professional development opportunities for young creatives and cultural practitioners to improve their knowledge of early childhood development stages, and how creativity can benefit young kids.

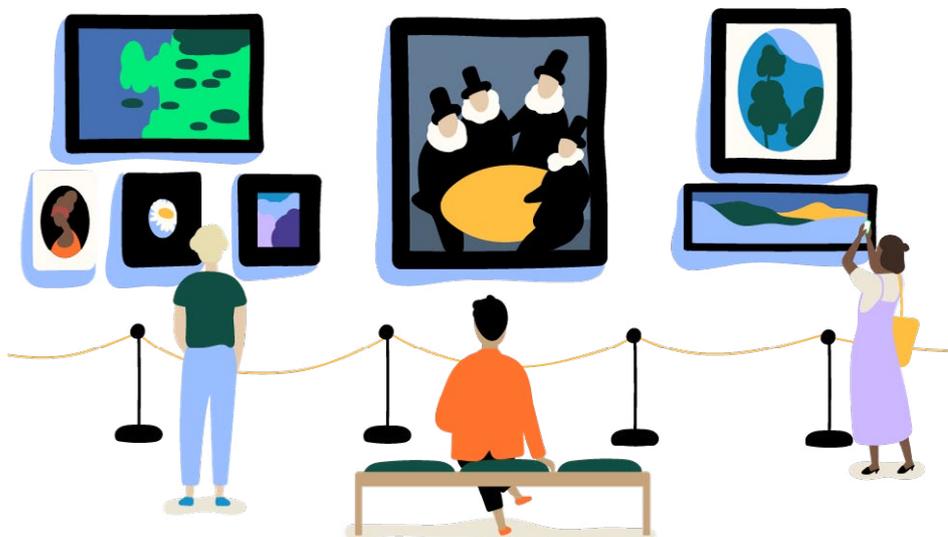
Upskilling young creatives in working with children and in child-centred practice can increase their employability. At the same time, it can also help to ensure that young children are exposed to diverse role models and diverse creative programming.

In-line with the impact stream of increasing equity in creative strategies, there should be a focus on having facilitators or artists who have diverse lived experiences, and on bringing perspectives from those with disability, from LGBTIQ+ people and from people from diverse cultures.

People with disability face a range of barriers to arts attendance and participation including a lack of accessible and affordable transport, accessible information about the arts, and digital access. These barriers are worse in regional and rural communities.²⁷ Involvement of young creatives living with disability promotes positive role models and the development of accessible cultural experiences.

Crossover opportunity

Councils that have undertaken the implementation actions 'Increasing equity in creative strategies: Step up: Establish a cultural and creative careers hub' a 'Ambitious: Appoint young people as creative leaders' could deliver this action in combination to add value.



27. Commonwealth of Australia (2018), [Research Overview: Arts and Disability in Australia](#), Meeting of Cultural Ministers, 2018. Department of Communications and the Arts.



How-to guide to:

Build the capacity of young creatives in relation to early childhood programs

Involving people

Form a working group of young creatives who will lead the development of the professional development strategy. The working group should comprise young creatives from a diverse range of backgrounds including from diverse cultures, people with disability, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. It should also include families of young children, and representatives of council teams and external agencies.



Plan

Planning your program

Identify needs and potential opportunities for council, young creatives and community organisation partners to build capabilities in working with young children, knowledge of early childhood development, how creativity can benefit kids, and best practice in working creatively with young children.

Determine the scope of the needs assessment depending on the size and capacity of the council. This could range from a simple survey through to a full creative strategy development exercise. For example, the [South West Victoria Creative Industries Strategy](#), which uses a combination of focus groups, one-on-one interviews and community surveys.

Consider strategies to include the perspective of:

- young creatives and cultural practitioners
- council staff involved in the delivery of creative programs
- young children and their families
- providers and community groups who are involved in creative activities where young children are part of an audience or a participant
- providers and community groups involved in supporting young children with disability, families experiencing challenges, and families from diverse cultures with young children.



Assess

Collate the results

Collate your findings. Prepare a complete list of professional development workshops, courses and expert facilitators. This list will have two parts:

- one-off or time-limited initiatives, such as a workshop or online courses
- ongoing programs that incorporate professional development content with practical, supervised experience and/or ongoing mentoring.

Scope is available for funding for professional development.

Organisations that provide relevant professional development

[Art Access Victoria](#) – Offers a range of training in accessible arts practice, cultural safety in a disability context and creating welcoming environments for people with disability

[ArtPlay](#) – Provides a series of guides for artists working with children

[Emerging Minds](#) – Offers a range of online courses on child-focused and family-focused practice with children with disability, and strategies for supporting positive mental health

[House of Muchness](#) – Can provide bespoke training on working with children using an inclusive practice approach

[Kids Thrive](#) – Delivers professional development on working with children and on co-design with young children and their families

[Polyglot Theatre](#) – Is working with the Victorian College of the Arts to provide experience in working with children to art students

[RAV](#) – Delivers professional development on student-centred art practices

[Shifting and Stirring](#) – A national initiative that brings together experts in children and family arts programming delivery from across Australia for a series of online reflective practice learning exchanges

Design

Involve young creatives and families with young children in the design

Present the findings from the needs assessment and the professional development scoping exercise to the members of the working group. Together, match potential professional development opportunities with the needs and preferences expressed by those who provided key information in the needs assessment.

Prepare a program schedule taking into consideration a range of options, including access to one-off training with external professionals, a series of professional development workshops that integrate opportunities to practise working with children under guidance, structured mentoring opportunities, internships for alumni of the professional development training, and development of a directory of qualified creatives for the council to draw on for future initiatives.

Prepare a communication plan

A communication plan is an essential component of this professional development program. The communication plan should cover how council will promote the program to the community in the lead-up to the event to generate awareness and excitement.

When developing your communication plan, consider:

- planning for opportunities to involve young children and young creatives in your promotion. Work with them on key promotional messages, and seek young ambassadors who can promote the program on local radio, news and other publicity opportunities
- advice from art facilities on ways to promote and support the initiative
- integrating the promotions into activities of the cultural creative careers hub

Deliver

Deliver the series of professional development events as outlined in the plan.

Monitor and evaluate reach and success of the strategy

Monitoring and evaluation identifies activities that met work objectives, and those that were not as effective and need to be reconsidered.

Celebrate

Support the young creatives who successfully complete the training. Consider acknowledging successful completion by distributing certificates, by creating a video that could be used to promote future programs, or by engaging successful graduates of the program with future council-run creative events and programs.



Review and embed

Evaluate the program

Evaluate the professional development program. Consider indicators of satisfaction from participants, such as engagement and completion data, and responses to satisfaction surveys. Consider indicators of impact, such as whether those who successfully complete the program become involved in facilitating creative programs for young children.

Embed the professional development program in the cultural and creatives careers hub

Consider options to embed the professional development training in the funding and activities of the cultural and creatives careers hub:

- Seek a commitment from hub working group to continue the professional development program each year, aiming to improve participation, knowledge and awareness.
- Use evaluation to identify opportunities to improve elements of the program.
- Work with council's budget processes to secure annual allocation of resources.

Recommended resources

- Australia Council for the Arts: [Arts and Disability: A Research Summary](#)
- ArtPlay (City of Melbourne): [Guides for artists on participatory arts practice with children](#)



Ambitious: *Appoint young people as creative leaders*

Young people are capable and active citizens who can contribute meaningfully to the decisions made by council, particularly in relation to programs aimed at young people.

This ambitious action requires council to relinquish control in a supported environment by appointing young people to formal creative leadership roles in which they are supported to deliver projects they devise.

To create a foundation for this action, we recommend that councils undertaking this action first review and complete the steps outlined in 'Quick win: Audit and promote creative programs for young people' and 'Step up: Co-design creative programs with young people'.



How-to guide to:

Appoint young people as creative leaders

Involving people

Council teams to involve in this step include those who provide services and programs, particularly with a potential creative focus, to young people. These could include youth services, arts and creative programming, placemaking, libraries, festivals and events, community development, grants, neighbourhood houses, tourism, urban planning and economic development.

Gaining support from relevant council leaders early in the process is important for this activity to ensure a supportive governance and authorising environment that respects the contributions of young people and empowers their meaningful involvement.





Plan

Create creative leadership roles for young people

Develop a position description and draft terms of reference for a creative youth leadership group in your community. Think about what might be required from the young people so that the position description matches the need and attracts relevant applications. This can be based upon existing youth advisory groups in your council or may draw on models of creative youth leadership.

For example:

- [Regional Victoria – Creative Leaders Program](#)
- [The Push | Youth Music Organisation – FReeZA](#)
- [Express Media – Voiceworks journal](#) featuring new writing and art by young Australians

Advertise creative leadership roles

Create a public application process to attract young people who are interested in sharing ideas and working as part of a team. Ask young people to submit their interests and skills. Aim to have applications from a broad range of ages, skills and creative genres (e.g. music, literature, visual and performing arts).

Promote the opportunity to join the initiative. Use platforms that young people use. Ensure all promotion is accessible and allows for various abilities and cultures.



Assess

Assess applications

Consider appointing young people from other program areas and of varied abilities and cultures to assist in assessing applications from their peers.



Design

Provide creative upskilling opportunities for applicants

Based on the application processes, identify what training (e.g. guest speakers, mentors, coaching) young creatives would benefit from to assist them in developing project ideas. Mentors who can provide ongoing feedback and support can be invaluable.

Develop projects

Work with council staff or other non-council professionals to assist young people to develop small projects in the community based on the work they have completed through the upskilling process, or interest areas they have identified. By working with mentors or other creatives, young people gain the confidence to step forward for further creative opportunities to expand their own skills or encourage others.

See also 'Step up' for tips on what to include in project plans.



Deliver

Support creative leaders

Ensure adequate support is available for young people to realise creative projects in their community, including any connections to relevant professional staff.



Review and embed

Review the approach annually through evaluations to allow for continual improvement to the program. Provide opportunities to celebrate the contributions of young people.

Extra implementation support resources

The Arts Industry Council of Victoria

The Arts Industry Council of Victoria is the state's independent voice for the arts. It [lists](#) a range of peak body arts organisations in Victoria that might assist you in furthering your ambitions for everyday creativity. Many have existing resources, templates and programs you can immediately tap into.

A New Approach – Insight series

[A New Approach](#) (ANA) is Australia's first think tank dedicated to arts, culture and creativity, and was established in 2018. ANA's vision is for an Australia that celebrates, benefits from and invests in arts, culture and creativity for all Australians. ANA's [Insight Series](#) provides research and analysis into arts and cultural policy topics.

Arts Access Victoria – Art for Everyone: An inclusive practice guide

[Arts Access Victoria](#) is the state's peak body for arts and disability. As a disability-led arts organisation, Arts Access Victoria is at the forefront of innovative disability arts practice, access and inclusion. [Art for Everyone: Approaches to Inclusive Practice in Arts and Mental Health](#) is a workbook for people and organisations who wish to develop inclusive art programs in a meaningful and respectful way.

Diversity Arts Australia – Voice, Agency and Integrity Report

[Diversity Arts Australia](#) is Australia's key organisation for cultural diversity and racial equity in the arts. Diversity Arts Australia provide advocacy, research, brokerage, knowledge exchange and projects, underpinned by a human-rights ethic, social justice principles, and the belief that a truly diverse spectrum of creative expression and participation is fundamental to a democratic, inclusive and sustainable creative sector, and society. The [Voice, Agency and Integrity Report](#) compiles issues, direct experiences and potential solutions to entrenched barriers which can inform council practice in the promoting everyday creativity actions.

Multicultural Arts Victoria – Diversify Your Arts

[Multicultural Arts Victoria](#) champions the development of artists and artform practices, build the case for diversity as one of our greatest cultural assets and create systems of cultural production and participation that uphold equity and self-determination. The [Diversify Your Arts](#) resource outlines 10 tips for organisations to demonstrate support for diversity and commitment to anti-racism within strategic arts plans.

Regional Arts Australia – Collaborating with Regional Communities

[Regional Arts Australia](#) is a not for profit peak body that is the national voice for arts in regional Australia. [Collaborating with Regional Communities](#) is a set of guidelines and tools to assist those working in regional communities achieve a more rewarding level of involvement in cultural activities. They aim to show how to strengthen decisions, build productive partnerships and develop positive outcomes for both local hosts and visitors to rural, regional and remote Australia.

OF/BY/FOR ALL – Tools and resources

[OF/BY/FOR ALL](#) is an independent non-profit organisation, sharing and spreading innovative practices for community-driven institutional change. OF/BY/FOR ALL provides a range of [free tools and resources](#) to support self-assessments and conducting respectful audience surveying.

VicHealth – Audience Access Standards

VicHealth encourages arts organisations to incorporate health promotion as a core component of their work, rather than being confined to a single event or one specific activity. The [Audience Access Standards document](#) outlines a set of standards that arts organisations can use to measure and monitor their progress towards making their organisation as accessible, diverse and inclusive as possible.



Community of Practice

A Community of Practice will be provided to fast-track councils working through the health promotion modules, giving them the opportunity to share with, learn from and support each other through implementation.

Together, councils with expert partners and young people will share experiences and insights about the suggested activities within the stretch modules. They will also look at topics related to the VicHealth Local Government Partnership more broadly and the development and adoption of Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans 2021–25.

Council staff interested in finding out more about participating in the Community of Practice and the VicHealth Local Government Partnership health promotion modules can get in touch with our team at lgp@vichealth.vic.gov.au.



Further Information

Stay up to date with the VicHealth Local Government Partnership.

Visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/local-government-partnership

For further information or enquiries, contact our Local Government team at lgp@vichealth.vic.gov.au or phone on 03 9667 1333.



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VicHealth acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

© VicHealth 2022

November 2022

<https://doi.org/10.37309/2021.P01033B>

VicHealth acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to all Elders past, present and future.



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