

Creating out Loud: Sustainability



Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to explore ways of improving 'sustainability' **through, in, and of** the arts and culture sector, by

- reflecting on and expanding how you think about **sustainability**, and
- learning with and from your fellow group members.

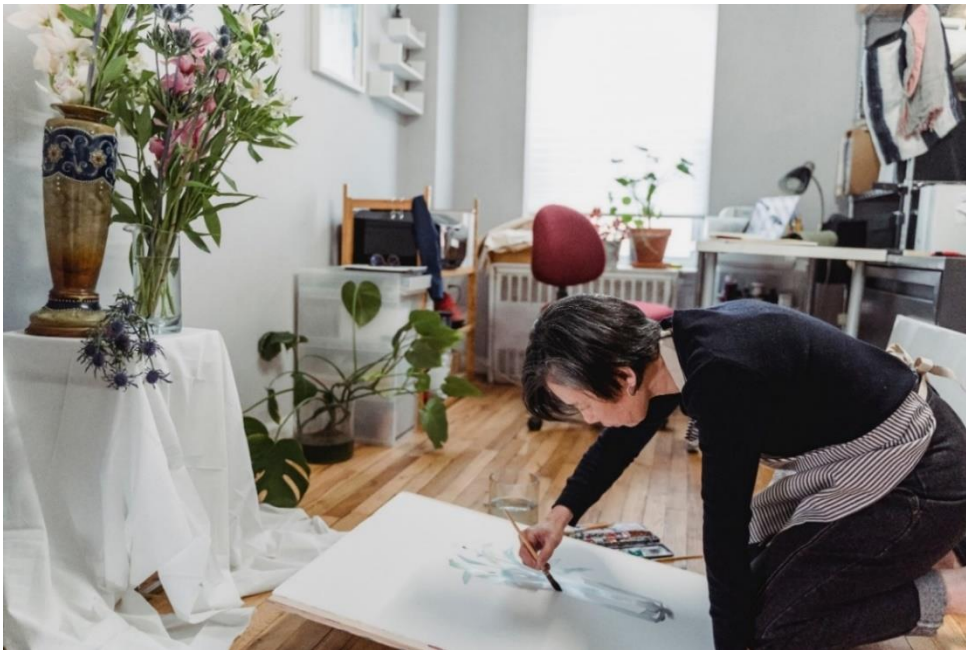
Agenda

Activity	Timing (60 minute meeting)	(75 minute meeting)
Being here	15 minutes	15 minutes
Individual exercise – Sustainable practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal reflection • sharing reflection 	5 minutes 15 minutes	5 minutes 25 minutes
Group discussion – Embedding sustainability	20 minutes	25 minutes
What next?	5 minutes	5 minutes

Being here

Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which you are meeting, and pay respects to their Elders – past, present, and emerging.	
If this is your first meeting...	If this is not your first meeting...
Share your name and how you are currently involved in the arts and culture sector...	Share what follow-up step(s) you have taken since your last meeting... If you did not take the step(s) you planned to take, share one thing you learned or one thing you enjoyed since the last meeting...
Briefly share with the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what comes to mind when you hear the word 'sustainability'? 	

TIP: Be as personal / detailed as you feel comfortable being. Resist commenting during someone else's turn.



Individual exercise – Sustainable practice

Sustainability

People working in the arts and culture sector often describe it as an ‘ecology.’

The arts and culture ecology includes ‘cultural workers, especially artists, and leaders of public, non-profit, and unincorporated community groups that produce, present, organise, guide, regulate, and serve the cultural economy.’^[2]

Recent research with the Australian arts and culture sector found seven different, but inter-related, types of sustainability are important to this ecology^[3]:

- **artistic sustainability** – the ongoing vibrancy and relevance of specific (particularly heritage) art forms
- **career sustainability** – the ability of individuals to make a living from their art, and to maintain their career over the long term
- **environmental sustainability** – practices to protect the environment
- **financial sustainability** – the financial viability of arts and culture organisations
- **organisational sustainability** – the capacity of arts organisations to operate successfully over time (including governance practices)
- **sectoral sustainability** – the health of the arts and culture sector as a whole, and of the subsidised arts in particular
- **socio-cultural sustainability** – social and cultural wellbeing, including arts-based community outreach and educational activities.



Sustainable development involves “meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [1]

Use one or more of these questions to reflect on what sustainability means to you.

TIP: Feel free to make notes in the space provided on the next page.

1. In what ways does your work in the arts and culture sector relate to different types of **sustainability**?
2. Which barriers to sustainability most affect your work? What are you currently doing / what could you do to overcome them?

TIP: There is a list of known barriers to sustainability in the arts on page 8. Feel free to select from and/or add to this list.

3. Whose ‘present needs’ are being met through your work in the arts and culture sector? Whose present needs are not being met?
4. What are you doing / what could you do to ensure that the needs of future generations can also be met?

Share your reflections with the group.

TIP: Be as personal / detailed as you feel comfortable being. Listen deeply to what your fellow circle members share. Ask questions for clarification. Look for commonalities between responses, and points of common interest or concern.





Group discussion – Embedding sustainability

Discuss one of the questions below. Choose the question that resonates most with your circle members.

TIP: Consider sustainability in both your own practice / organisation, and across the arts and culture sector. Feel free to discuss both questions, if time permits, and to make notes in the space provided.

1. How can **sustainability** be embedded as ‘normal practice’ within the arts and culture ecology, rather than being seen as a special focus of attention?
 - What would **sustainability** look like in the arts and culture sector?
 - What could you do to help realise that vision?
2. How might the arts and culture sector contribute to achieving sustainability goals that are outside its direct control?

TIP: Try to avoid getting bogged down in talking about the barriers to sustainability. Instead, focus on identifying practical steps you can take, and/or changes you can advocate for – whether on your own, in this peer coaching circle, and/or with other people in the arts and culture sector.



What next?

Making the most of your peer coaching experience involves taking at least one step after each meeting, to consolidate and build on what you have learned, and/or to pursue your specific goals.

Possible steps after this meeting include, but are not limited to:

- reflecting further on your own work in the arts and culture sector, in relation to different types of *sustainability*
- discussing *sustainability* with friends, colleagues, and/or Elders
- setting sustainability goals for yourself and/or your organisation
- explore this resource mapping the presence of [fossil fuel in Australia's arts and culture sector](#)
- watching a TED talk, listening to a podcast, and/or reading news stories about sustainability and the arts, e.g.,
 - [Let's go all-in on selling sustainability](#)
 - [The Art Angle – Is the world a climate catastrophe](#)
 - [12 ways the arts can encourage climate action](#)
 - [The crisis of a career in culture: why sustaining a livelihood in the arts is so hard](#)
- looking up artists or arts organisations whose work addresses sustainability and the arts, e.g.,
 - [Climarte](#)
 - [Julie's Bicycle](#)
 - [Cultura 21](#)
 - [Creative Carbon Scotland](#)
 - [Artists and Climate Change](#)
 - [Ripple Effect Images](#)
- reading the United Nations' 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions:
 - [Unesco - The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)
- learning more about First Nations arts and culture in your region, e.g.,
 - [Common Ground](#)
- learning more about arts and disability, e.g.,
 - [Disability Arts International organisation database](#)

What one step will you take before the next meeting?

Barriers to sustainability in the arts and culture sector

Artistic	Art form perceived as elitist/inaccessible
	Threshold fear
	Shortage of rehearsal & performance space
	Negative impact of urban redevelopment
	Limited capacity for innovation
Career	Precarious public funding
	Limited career pathways (esp. for artists)
	Excessive workloads (artists & arts workers)
	Low and unreliable incomes (artists & arts workers)
	Extensive travel requirements (esp. for artists)
	Physical demands (artists & arts workers)
	Mental strain on performers (artists & arts workers)
	Lack of openness to diversity
	Socio-economic and geographic disadvantages (for artists)
Environmental	Touring requirements
	Pressure to accept unethical financing
	Large geographic region and remote populations
	Failure to resolve Indigenous land rights
	Reliance on print collateral marketing
Financial	Decreased public funding
	Declining corporate sponsorship
	Rising costs
	Limited appreciation of regional and Indigenous art
Organizational	Limited capacity
	Lack of sustainability planning
	Lack of succession management
	Rising ticket prices
	Ageing audiences
Sectoral	Reduced government funding of the arts
	Pejorative evaluation of the arts by government
	Negative media coverage
	Ideological differences within the sector
	Failed lobbying
Socio-cultural	Short-term funding
	Insufficient organizational resources

Sustainability relates to arts and culture in 3 main ways:^[3]

through

using arts and culture for sustainability goals

- environmental
- socio-cultural

in

measuring environmental footprint of arts and culture

- environmental
- socio-cultural

of

preserving arts and culture

- artistic
- career
- financial
- organisational
- sectoral

- **‘sustainability through the arts’** uses the arts and culture to achieve various ‘sustainable development’ goals, including economic development and positive social outcomes. It also uses the arts and culture to promote environmental awareness and behaviour.
- **‘sustainability in the arts’** measures the environmental footprint of arts and culture, including touring,^[4] and seeks to embed environmental and social responsibility within arts and culture policy and practice.
- **‘sustainability of the arts’** means recognizing the value of arts and culture, and seeking both to protect and preserve them.^[5]



References

1. Brundtland, G.H., *Our common future—Call for action*. Environmental Conservation, 1987. **14**(4): p. 291-294.
2. Markusen, A., *Organizational complexity in the regional cultural economy*. Regional Studies, 2010. **44**(7): p. 813-828.
3. Power, K., 'Sustainability' and the performing arts: *Discourse analytic evidence from Australia*. Poetics, 2021: p. 101580.
4. Julie's Bicycle, *Moving arts: Managing the carbon impacts of our touring*. 2010.
5. Throsby, D., *Culturally sustainable development: Theoretical concept or practical policy instrument?* International Journal of Cultural Policy, 2017. **23**(2): p. 133-147.

Additional Discussion Guides

Discussion Guides on other topics related to arts and culture can be found at [University of Queensland's Creating Out Loud](#) webpage



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The opinions in this Discussion Guide do not necessarily represent the views of The University of Queensland, funding / industry partners, or the individual members involved in the reference groups.

About Creating Out Loud

“Creating Out Loud” is an 18-month Industry Research Fellowship funded by the Queensland Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation, under the Advance Queensland Industry Research Fellowship program.

Creating Out Loud was developed to support Queensland’s artists and arts managers as they recover from and rebuild business, artistic, and cultural practices following the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information visit [University of Queensland's Creating Out Loud](#)



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This guide includes links to various web material. All links were working at the time of publication. Please note however that these links may become outdated over time.

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