

CREATE A STRONG CONCEPT AND PROJECT PLAN

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Before a project is delivered, the concept should be well developed and project fully planned. This helps identify and explore the project's areas of potential and weakness.

The planning and development phase includes:

- research
- identifying and establishing relationships with participants and other partners
- concept development
- clarifying aims and anticipated outcomes
- engaging the artist(s) and others responsible for delivering the project
- setting budgets
- finding funds
- securing other resources
- assessing risk
- health and safety planning
- developing appropriate timelines.

Projects often change once they are underway. There are many variables when working with communities. Flexibility is vital for the success of the project, i.e. having the capacity to change and respond to new ideas and challenges.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG PROJECT PLANNING

I. THOSE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT – AND WHAT THEY WANT TO ACHIEVE – IS CLEAR

Anyone can initiate a project: an artist, community member, group, organisation or local council. Each project has a different starting place and a different focus depending on who initiates the project.

Regardless, the first steps are always the same:

1. Identify the participants and key partners
2. Find out what they want to do
3. Align everyone's intentions.

Community arts projects can involve a wide range of people. These include:

- the community of participants
- partners
- artists
- advisory groups
- support people, e.g. other people from the community, social workers, kaumātua
- project managers
- publicists
- other staff and advisers
- volunteers
- businesses.

People will have different reasons for being part of a project. For example someone may want to be involved to:

- share stories
- learn new creative skills
- connect with other people
- build self-esteem and confidence
- tackle a community issue
- promote social harmony
- foster a sense of local pride and identity.

Tips:

- *Get clear about the intentions and values of your community and key partners (see tipsheet: 'Make the community the centre of your project'). What are the outcomes they want to achieve. Knowing this will help guide and shape the rest of the project.*
- *Look at barriers to participation – these might be physical, financial, social or cultural. How can these barriers be overcome? How can these be considered as you design the project? Are there specific support people that need to be involved or keep the project safe?*
- *Identify all your project partners and consult with them (see tipsheet: 'Grow strong partnerships')*

- Establish how decisions are going to be made – are you going to have a steering group or reference group?
- Be clear, from the start, on how you will know if you have achieved the projects outcomes. How will you capture information that tells you whether you have achieved these outcomes. This will feed into your evaluation (see tipsheet: ‘Build effective documentation, evaluation and reporting’).

2. THERE IS A STRONG FIT BETWEEN THE INTENT OF THE PROJECT, THE ARTFORM AND FRAMEWORKS USED

Some artforms and project types will be more suitable than others to help you realise the community’s intentions. Performing arts are often immediately collaborative and interactive. Visual arts and writing often begin with a more reflective and personal process. Different amounts of resource and time are needed for a stand up poetry workshop, a long-term whakairo project or a large-scale outdoor theatre production.

Tips: When you are developing your project concept:

- consider what sort of project and artform is needed to achieve the aims of the community and partners
- be clear whether there will be a public presentation and make sure planning and resources incorporate this
- consult experts (artists, technicians, other contractors). Do this early to check that what you are planning is achievable.

3. THE LOGISTICS HAVE BEEN WELL THOUGHT THROUGH

You’ve identified the community and key partners. The project is taking shape. But now you need to check that it is achievable and start lining up your ducks.

Tips:

- Be clear about the length of the project. Always allow more time than you think you will need. Put together a simple timeline. Work back from your end point, so that you know if you have enough time to do what you want.
- Write up a realistic budget. Which items will you need to pay for and which can you borrow or get donated. Consider where to get funding and other resources from

(see [Find funding and resources](#) page). Your budgets and resources need to be confirmed before you begin delivery.

- If you don’t get the resources you need scale back the project or think outside the box. Trying to deliver large projects on sparse budgets will place stress on the delivery team. This will reduce the quality of the process and outcomes. Make sure everyone understands what resources are available.
- Make sure you have an appropriate venue lined up and book this early if you can.
- Complete health and safety and risk assessments (see tipsheet: ‘Keep your project and people safe’).
- Develop a simple communications plan. This will include considering who needs to know what, and when and how. This plan can go into your timeline.
- For a good project planning template see [‘Making art with communities’ \(Creative Victoria\)](#)

MORE INFO

For more resources on project planning, see our Community Arts Toolkit > [Tools to develop your project](#)

Is something missing from these tipsheets? Email us: website@creativenz.govt.nz