

# MAKE THE COMMUNITY THE CENTRE OF THE PROJECT

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

A community arts project is about the community's creativity, art, goals, aspirations and mana motuhake. So it makes sense that the community is at the very centre of every community arts project.

You can produce a high value project by:

- knowing the community and their aspirations
- supporting the community's self determination
- building strong and supported relationships between the community, you and other partners
- creating clear parameters and communication.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROJECT THAT HAS THE COMMUNITY AT ITS HEART

### 1. THE COMMUNITY FEELS EMPOWERED AND CAN SHAPE THE PROJECT

Projects with the greatest social, cultural and well-being results are usually community-led. The more genuine ownership the community has, the greater the impacts.

**Tip:** To build ownership of a project:

- involve the community in establishing and designing the project
- find out what is important to the community and build it into each part of the project
- create opportunities for leadership by community members
- explore ways to increase the community's ownership and responsibility – and do this at every stage of the project.

### 2. INTENTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE CLEAR

Being clear about the community's reasons for being involved builds a solid foundation for the project and helps to shape your approach. Be aware that people have different motivations; they don't have to be the same but it is important that they are heard and understood.

**Tip:** Make sure you:

- are clear about the community's purpose and intentions for this project
- ask questions to find out what's important and what they want to do
- acknowledge and incorporate the different voices wherever possible.

### 3. AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP IS ESTABLISHED WITH THE COMMUNITY

A relationship with the community built on mutual trust and respect will produce much stronger arts outcomes.

**Tip:** To develop strong and authentic relationships you need to:

- allow plenty of time
- recognise that learning flows both ways
- show genuine intent and act on it
- show commitment to the community and the project
- be curious, ask questions
- communicate clearly and regularly
- have necessary support in place. For example, this could be someone that speaks the language and knows the culture of the community. Use the support of people who are already working with this community.

### 4. VALUES, BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROJECT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED AND AGREED

Values, beliefs and principles important to the community should underpin the project. They support the creative process by guiding participants, artists and partners on how to behave and interact with each other. Establish and agree these boundaries early with participants. Apply and refer to them throughout the project.

**Tip:** You can do this by having a simple discussion, or capture it all in a written 'code of conduct'.



## 5. EVERYONE'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CLEAR

Let the intentions and aspirations of the community guide the allocation of roles and responsibilities within the project. It's important that everyone knows these from the start. They'll then know what is expected from them and what to expect from others.

**Tip:** Establish a simple 'contract' or 'manifesto' document. Outline expectations (this can include the values, beliefs and principles) and who will do what. Contracts or manifestos are best co-written.

### 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](mailto:website@creativenz.govt.nz)