Minister’s Creative Council survey on arts funding during the covid-19 pandemic

In response to the substantial impact of COVID-19 on the ACT’s arts community, the Minister’s Creative Council devised and commissioned a sector wide survey.

This examined the immediate impacts of COVID-19, but focussed on recovery during the short, medium and longer term.

The Council examined the results collaboratively and with the assistance of Arts ACT, was also able to access data analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

- A total of 330 respondents completed the survey, the vast majority from Canberra.
- All age groups were covered by the survey, but the 36-50 years cohort accounted for over a third of responses, with a 62% female skew.
- Only 4 respondents identified themselves as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander but over 50 people associated themselves with a specific community of Australians (e.g. cultural, linguistic).
- 1 in 10 respondents were living with a condition that affects their ability to access resources, make creative work and/or connect with community.
- Full time/part-time/casual employees made up half of the survey sample and a fifth stated they were self-employed.
- Visual art, music and dance were the top three most represented art forms and over half of all respondents had been involved with their practice for 15 years or more.
- 1 in 3 had accessed support provided through the Australian Government for COVID-19 and of these, two-thirds had received it.
- 23% of people had applied for ACT Government support released as a result of COVID-19 but of these, only 30% had received it.

The survey asked: “What are the gaps in the current arts specific ACT Government assistance? During this period, and looking into the immediate post-crisis period, what are the key elements not being provided, or not being adequately provided?” question. Three key areas emerged:

- Increased diversity in funding and allowances.
- Need for clearer and more detailed information that is directly related to the arts industry
- Financial support to focus on shoring up the future as well as short-term economic survival

The survey asked “What actions or initiatives can the government and community take that will be most useful to you in the longer-term recovery phase?” The need for “ongoing financial support” was reinforced but other key opportunities were identified:
‘Doing things differently’ whether this be investment in innovation or new technologies or a reorientation of funding
Increased engagement with the community at large and collaboration amongst the arts sector
Assistance in raising the profile of Canberra’s artists and creatives through PR, events and other promotional activities.

NEXT STEPS:
The Creative Council formulated a series of recommendations drawing on survey responses:

*Deliver training and communications package about COVIDSafe practices to support sector to comply and innovate: Sector needs further clarity and guidance, and additional support for artists with reduced capacity to comply and innovate in these circumstances.

*Extension of Homefront grants program and/or development of associated short term funding program. The overwhelming demand for HOMEFRONT grants program indicates there was and still is, need within the community especially when JobKeeper/Seeker ends.

*Targeted support for events, production and design professionals working in arts and cultural sector. Targeted support for producers, technicians, events professionals to maintain and develop their tradecraft, skills and infrastructure.

*Develop and deliver ‘share the risk’ packages to support small organisations and independent creatives. Many don’t have existing capital to present new projects, are wary of the risks of limited capacities and can’t plan confidently for restrictions changes.

*Focus allocatable funding to align with Recovery Plan and Creative Recovery strategies: Direct/create allocatable funding and grants towards projects and events that are responsive to restrictions and adaptable to short term changes in restrictions. Also consider enabling community engaged projects to support recovery/endurance

*A creative recovery forum for local creative sector to share skills, knowledge, experiences and define future needs and possibilities for sector: Bushfires and COVID have resulted in trauma and innovation and a need to connect, share, collaborate and grieve

*Fast-track the cultural mapping/impact project, to understand COVID’s impact on community arts and cultural needs and understand where those needs are and are not being met, ACT-wide, ensuring resources can be targeted most effectively in future.

*Invest in Mobile biosecurity washroom Infrastructure for Canberra. Mobile Biosecurity Infrastructure supports harm minimisation. Outdoor events are a fertile area for the ACT. Events work better with economies of scale and it's safer for biosecurity. These events need toilets/hand wash/showers/decontamination facilities.