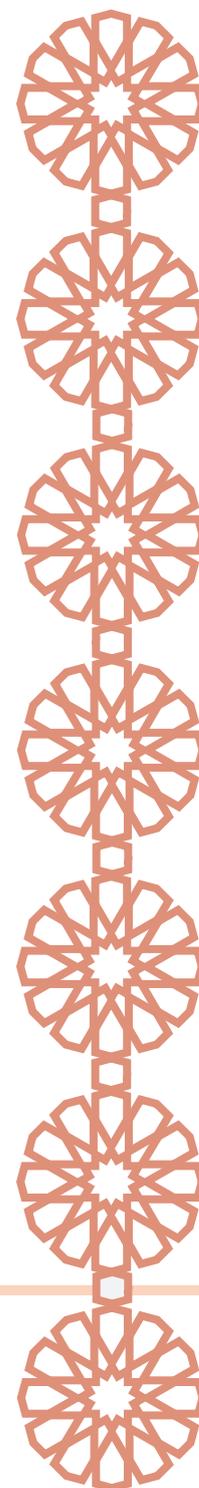
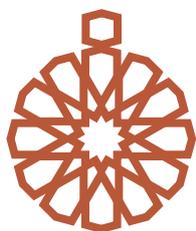


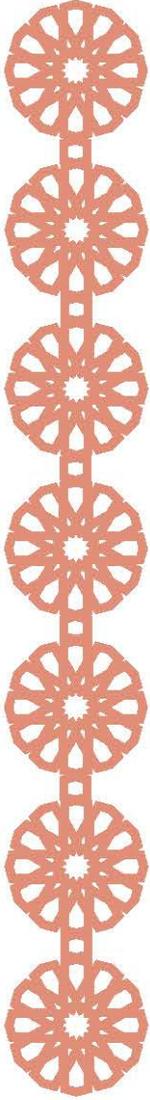
A Toolkit developed by  
Nexus Arts &  
The Research Nexus

# You're Welcome:

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A Guide for Arts Organisations to Increase  
Cultural Diversity in Our Audiences





## The Toolkit

Nexus Arts believes that the arts are nothing without audiences, and that all members of our community should be able to engage with artistic experiences. Thanks to the support of the Government of South Australia through a Multicultural Affairs Stronger Together Grant, we have spent the past two years exploring the barriers, drivers and trends that impact the participation of culturally diverse audiences in arts events in Adelaide. The result of this research is this Toolkit, designed to support Australian arts organisations to better engage with audience members from culturally diverse backgrounds.

As part of this research, Nexus Arts established a network of arts leaders from across the Chinese Welfare Services of SA, the Hispanic Women's Association of SA, the Arabic Language and Culture Association of SA, and Campbelltown Arthouse to facilitate our work. Aply supported by our research partners, The Research Nexus, we collected 56 online survey responses and conducted 4 focus groups targeting members of the Arabic-speaking, Mandarin-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities, in addition to offering participants comfortable using English the chance to participate in an intercultural session. From this, we were able to gather data from participants born in 24 different countries who reported speaking 22 languages in addition to English.

Informed by a global review of literature, our research partner, The Research Nexus, has analysed these local experiences, producing a rich research report: *You're Welcome: A Guide for Arts Organisations to Increase Cultural Diversity in Our Audiences* and this user-friendly Toolkit.

We are thrilled to share this with you, and to offer a roadmap to support arts organisations across the country to provide a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of our audiences.

# Welcoming Culturally Diverse Audiences To Your Events

Our research showed that the way that an event is formatted can create unintentional barriers to attendance for diverse audiences. Experimenting with the format of your events may increase attendance and engagement by diverse audiences.

“It’s like even observing only, right, just having a look, but if you were given a chance to try yourself and feel it for yourself, then you have an interest, yes, so kind of like, workshops.”

“Because our culture, you get to the shower at 10pm. And then at 11pm, you’re leaving.”

## Key Findings

Our research showed that one-off events were not as well received or as easy to engage with. Offering a range of start times across a season may increase attendance. Participants indicated that events with multiple elements were also more appealing, such as those which included food or workshops.

“...also, musicians put a really beautiful piece together that will happen only once. And then, if there’s not enough promotion, no one can see it on social media, poof, it vanished...having a venue that is local, permanent they can say, “We’re curating this fusion between Indian and Chinese, and Singaporean artists. These three are doing a piece together. They are performing it every fortnight for the next few months.”

“So, whenever we go there it’s so easy for us to make friends and mingle and socialise. And it’s one of the main reasons why I was attracted to these events. Is because of the sense of community behind it.”

## Actions

- Consider investing in longer seasons, spreading performances out over a number of weeks, adding matinee sessions for the same performance, and changing gallery opening hours so they are more flexible.
- Offer an artist Q&A, a panel, a workshop, or social activity before or after a performance or exhibition, where possible, to give your audience a chance to learn more about the artists and the work, making the audience feel more included in the experience.
- Presenting showcase events of artists you will feature in your annual program gives audiences a taste of what is on offer and may increase the likelihood of future engagement.

“ So, let’s say, I work full-time, right, so if something is happening after hours, it’s like, first of all I really have to have enough energy to say, okay, I’m going to go drive to the city, for example, to go to that event, car park, things like that. ”

“ If you don’t live here, near the city, you don’t know what’s happening. ”

## Key Findings

Our research showed that taking art out of the city made experiences more accessible to audiences with diverse backgrounds. Our participants commented that events held only in the city, or marketed only through city venues, were harder to hear about and to attend. Keep in mind that many loyal arts attendees live and work outside the city.

## Actions

- Take a performance or exhibition into suburban areas, using community halls and venues, libraries, universities, and other spaces to increase accessibility.
- Co-hosting events with community organisations may make events more appealing, offering you access to new spaces and the support of their networks.
- Consider staging events in unexpected places, including pop-up events, in retail spaces, or in under-utilised public buildings.

“ The parking is tricky. If you’re not familiar with like, I guess, once you’ve come here a few times. ”

“ When I come to an art gallery and ask, what do you guys do? Do you have activities? And they are asking me why you are asking that? What are you – what are you looking for? I said I’m an artist. I’m interested. This is my interest. And I usually get that question. Like, why? Like what do you want? ”

## Key Findings

Our research showed that venue locations and access points were not always obvious to people, even when they were regular attendees of arts events. This was particularly the case for people who had recently arrived in a new city. Considered and detailed promotion of a venue’s location and access points, as well as directions to nearby parking and other transport options, was seen as an important way to attract and be inclusive of more diverse audiences. First impressions count, so welcoming and engaging front of house staff are essential.

## Actions

- Ensure staff are well-trained in making new audience members feel welcome. Friendly and inviting box office or other point-of-entry staff can make a big impression on new attendees.
- Invest in signage, lighting, and ushers to guide new audience attendees to your events.
- Provide a map to your venue as part of your ticketing process. You may also like to include nearby public transport options, information about taxi ranks, and nearby parking options.

## Key Findings

Our research found that arts organisations will appeal to broader audiences if they explicitly cater for different types of ticket buyers: solo attendees, families, couples, and social groups.

“ And I get discouraged. I'm not going to go on my own. It's not fun. ”

“ ...we have two small children. Back home we had a very big support network so we could leave the kids with my parents...and then go and do our thing. Here we're a little but more tied up...if there's something that we can have the kids with us. ”

## Actions

- If you have flexible seating options, consider reconfiguring chairs so that people attending alone feel welcome. Place single chairs in prominent positions, not just on the perimeters.
- Invite individual attendees to sit with staff or other single attendees, and advise them of these options on their tickets or at the box office.
- Consider presenting family friendly events within your program and promote these explicitly. If your budget permits, consider a creche, or marketing sessions as "children welcome", so that audience members who have difficulty accessing childcare are still able to enjoy your events.

## Key Findings

We know that consumers are restricted by their disposable income when it comes to attending arts events. Our research showed that audiences are very conscious of extra expenses when attending arts events, like parking or childcare.

“ ...because of the expense, I mean some of these performances are absolutely incredible in price...I think the cheapest ticket is about \$70. ”

“ When you're coming with children you need to put extra money in your pocket. ”

“ I can't even remember what event it was, but like there's been \$30 tickets for under 30s. That's something that I'm absolutely going to look at. And I won't even look at other events on because I already know those things will probably be out of my budget. ”

## Actions

- Ticketing tiers for events, such as discounts for youth, unwaged people, or families, are welcome. Tiered ticketing signals to a potential audience that your organisation is welcoming to all interested individuals.
- Consider additional costs, such as parking or other transport, as part of the picture when calculating appropriate pricing for your events.
- Consider, where possible, some free events in your spaces to welcome people from a range of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

# Marketing For Diverse Audiences

Our research clearly indicated that challenging the assumptions in your arts organisation's marketing and promotional strategies is key to reaching new audiences. Ongoing data collection is vital to evaluating the effectiveness of your marketing activities and will help you determine the best way to reach the audience segments that your organisation serves.

There's a story behind it. I can relate to it, so that's why I like it. I don't need to understand the technical aspects or anything.

1

## STORY-LED MARKETING

Our research strongly showed that audiences responded positively to story-led marketing approaches. Participants were primarily drawn to the work, content and themes, and information about the artist(s), above details about the technical or stylistic elements of a performance or artwork. Many claimed understanding the story behind any work helped them relate to it, resulting in them being more likely to attend.

...we have a couple of Australian friends and sometimes they invite us to things that we have no idea that are happening.

2

## WORD OF MOUTH

The most common mode of hearing about events reported by focus group participants was via word of mouth. For organisations wishing to harness this power, making strong connections via community engagement is vital in spreading the word about events. Building trust through community referrals, by ensuring your organisation has ties with key community figures, or to central meeting places such as community centres, schools, and libraries, will increase your reach.

I got so overwhelmed. I would wait for somebody to tell me: you should go try and see it.

3

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't rely too heavily on social media marketing to promote events. Whilst it is important to maintain a digital presence on your organisation's social media pages, our qualitative research found that many culturally diverse audience members typically accessed social media within their existing networks. Even though social media was shown to be the most common channel relied upon by respondents to hear about arts events, remember that it may be difficult for newer migrants to identify appropriate search terms or to know where to start looking to find you online. Making sure that content is shareable, and contains video, photos and story-led copy is likely to increase your reach.

# Marketing For Diverse Audiences

“

When you go to a pub, that corner full of flyers. I love to grab and you keep those little things, and you say: I'd love to go there one day.

”

4

## HARD COPY MARKETING

While our participants reported using digital sources to find information, they relied heavily on hard copy marketing material such as event flyers, posters, bus stop ads, venue programs, and postcards. Take-home material was often highly attractive to audiences when they were presented in workplaces, venues, pubs and cafes, schools and universities, community centres and libraries.

“

It was playing here and I found out like the same night. I was like, oh, I missed it. I didn't feel like there was enough marketing or, like, advertising about it.

”

5

## PAID ADVERTISING

Our research found that paid advertising and PR opportunities in mainstream media were effective in promoting events to broad communities. For audiences, seeing events promoted through these outlets validates quality, and takes events from the margins to the mainstream. Whilst paid advertising can be costly, strategically placed advertisements in local media, street press and on online cultural websites can increase reach and trust with a limited budget.

“

I would just put it in multiple languages. So I'd just make it easy. I'd just make it more inviting and easier for people. Without, you know, stereotyping in that sense.

”

6

## MULTILINGUAL MARKETING

Translating materials into different languages can show that your organisation is explicitly welcoming diverse audiences. It is worth noting though that translated materials may not reach the audience segment that is being targeted if the distribution strategy is not also tailored to reach the specific audience you have in mind.

# Things To Think About When Collecting Data

Every arts organisation knows that effective and consistent data collection empowers us to gauge attendance patterns and audience preferences. Start collecting data today—if you don't already—to help you develop a baseline understanding. Making data collection an annual activity, where analysis is undertaken and changes are made to practice based on your findings, is one of the best ways to make evidence-based decisions to help increase diversity. Data collection requires resources, but there are many inexpensive ways to start collecting meaningful data.



1

## TERMINOLOGY

It is imperative to give people the opportunity to identify themselves. When capturing data, ask questions inviting people to tell you where they were born, if they or any family members have migrated to Australia, which languages they speak or which cultural groups or religions they identify with. Our research showed that few people would identify themselves as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and some found the acronym offensive.



2

## LISTEN TO SILENCE

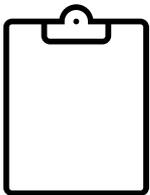
Take notice of silence. Data collection tells you a lot about your existing audience, but who is missing, and why? Consider expanding your marketing strategy using the tips in this Toolkit to reach segments of the population who are not currently engaged, especially if you have a particular event that you thought would generate interest. One-off attempts at connecting with new audiences are unlikely to work. Trust takes time to build, and persistence is the key.



3

## PHYSICAL DATA

To increase access and comfort for all, use multiple data collection methods both digital (surveys or online comments) and physical (paper surveys or feedback forms).



4

## ENTRY & EXIT POLLS

Valuable data can also be collected just prior to, or after, events and exhibitions using entry and exit polls. Don't underestimate the value of appropriately trained door staff to capture audience feedback. Providing staff with a mechanism to report on verbal feedback and establishing processes to evaluate and implement changes based on these reports may enable your organisation to more quickly respond to audience needs.



5

## QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS

Quantitative surveys help you get a static snapshot of information. Online surveys can appear at your venue (using QR codes or apps), be integrated within online ticketing platforms, or be sent to audience members on your social media channels or mailing lists. Try Survey Monkey or Google Forms and also paper-based surveys or feedback forms to increase your response rate.



6

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is more in depth and enables participants to explain what their preferences are, what drives their attendance patterns, and how you as an organisation can engage with them. This can be undertaken through focus groups, interviews and workshops. You may consider outsourcing this to a third party to maintain data privacy and confidentiality and uphold impartiality.

Once you've listened to your audience, review the Toolkit sections: Marketing For Diverse Audiences and The Story Is The Focus, for practical steps to welcome new audiences to your organisation.

# The Story Is The Focus: Understanding Audience Segments

Audiences are attracted to art that they relate to, and they seek connection to others through their arts participation. Cultural, ethnic and language groups are not homogenous, and our research clearly demonstrated that individuals within these cohorts are inspired to attend events by exploring and understanding the story behind the artwork or performance. These factors were more important drivers for attendance than the specific type of artform on offer, the prestige of the artist involved, or any particular cultural affiliation between artist and audience.

Whilst audiences reported wanting to know about the artist, and specifically what their intention was in creating the work, they more strongly sought ways to relate to the art based on their own individual experience. Undertaking detailed analysis of your target audiences, using demographic, psychographic, geographic, experiential, and behavioural indicators will better enable you to attract people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These terms are explained below.



## DEMOGRAPHIC

This includes demographic and intersectional factors such as age, gender, sexuality, location, race, religion, language, disability status, family status, income, education level, or ethnicity.



## PSYCHOGRAPHIC

This includes people's values, attributes, ambitions, personality traits, motivations, beliefs, and priorities.



## EXPERIENTIAL

This refers to experiences that have impacted someone's life, for example, migration, having children, not having children, a profession, living through a war, domestic violence, overcoming an illness, or experiencing isolation.



## GEOGRAPHIC

This includes data surrounding a participant's suburb, city and state of residence, and regional or urban location.



## BEHAVIOURAL

This includes attendance habits, preferences for particular artforms, spending habits, and lifestyle influences.

# Community Engagement: Key Principles

Our research showed that audiences from culturally diverse backgrounds often have strong links to community groups. Our focus groups confirmed the global literature review findings: that arts organisations with active community ties were more likely to reach and connect with diverse audiences, and to create welcoming spaces, programs and events.

Engaging with audiences indirectly through community bodies such as schools, places of worship, and community centres, were seen as useful activities that built trust amongst participants and encouraged them to learn more about arts organisations and their offerings.

Community engagement can be resource intensive, but has significant potential reward. The following pages break down community engagement activities into those requiring low, moderate and high levels of resourcing, helping you to build long term relationships with diverse audiences.

“...think long term, think organisation-wide commitment, think existing audience and potential audience, think ongoing process, not short term projects, think plan, evaluate, review.”  
-Cogman, *Audience Development Toolkit* (2013) UK.

## BUILD A PRESENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Low Level: See and be seen**  
Find ways for arts workers and leaders in your organisations to consistently attend community run arts events, venues, and activities programmed by other organisations. This includes, but is not limited to, artistic performances and exhibitions, cultural festivals and religious events. This will enable your organisation to move beyond one way delivery of programs to establish a reciprocal relationship with your audiences.
- **Moderate Level: Co-brand events with your community**  
Co-brand work presented either in your venue or in outreach community spaces. This will support you to build trust and connections with audiences already engaged with community groups.
- **High Level: Co-curate events with your community**  
Co-curate events with community members in your venues and spaces, and in venues in the community. Consider consulting with community leaders when commissioning works and developing public programming, such as workshops and artist talks.

# Community Engagement: Key Principles

## RAISE AWARENESS

- **Low Level: Gain understanding**  
Raise your own awareness of key cultural, political, religious, or historical events that are important within your community, for example, Ramadan, Diwali, or Hanukkah. Consider the timing of your programmed events in relation to these dates.
- **Moderate Level: Support your community**  
Have a visible presence at special events that commemorate or celebrate important cultural dates. Support communities where possible as sponsors, stallholders, or advocates. Curate your programs with an awareness of these events, not in competition with them.
- **High Level: Open your doors**  
Actively invite diverse community groups to use your venue or space to host their cultural events, and consider subsidising these events if your budget allows. This builds trust and demonstrates your commitment to inclusion and diversity. Actively consult with community members when you are commissioning pieces to avoid appropriation, tokenism, and stereotypes.

## CREATE UNDERSTANDING THROUGH EDUCATION

- **Low Level: Self-educate**  
Create a culture of self-education within your organisation. Encourage staff to develop their knowledge of critical issues affecting certain communities and individuals, and accept that this is an ongoing process. Seek to understand that culturally diverse audiences are not a homogenous subgroup. Recognise that all culture is continuous and that expression evolves.
- **Moderate Level: Cultivate your organisational culture**  
Cultivate a culture of education by sourcing cultural awareness training for staff across all layers of your organisation, from Board members through to artists. Understand your position of power and privilege as a leader in the arts and act to create positive change.
- **High Level: Invest in people**  
Fund arts ambassadors from the communities you are seeking deeper engagement with. Invest in engagement, capacity building, and dialogue which centres around listening and learning.

# Community Engagement: Key Principles

## MAKE CONNECTION YOUR GOAL

- **Low Level: Actively seek connection**

Identify and connect with key community leaders, groups, influencers, and individuals in your community. Invite them to special events (Annual General Meetings, program launches, premieres) and make your venue a welcoming, accessible place for them.
- **Moderate Level: Create open dialogue**

Seek dialogue with, and feedback from, community leaders and individuals about issues of importance in their community. Recognise that these may be different and diverse as a result of intersectional factors, length of migration time, and language barriers. Respond to feedback openly, and acknowledge areas for improvement.
- **High Level: Host community consultation**

Host formal events, symposiums, conferences, surveys, focus groups and curatorial consultations with people from the community to understand their barriers to engagement and better ways to connect with them.

## ACT TO EMPOWER

- **Low Level: Change your practice**

Open up public expressions of interest or call outs when programming in order to discover new, different and potentially overlooked artists to support. Work to expand networks and actively seek out culturally diverse artists.
- **Moderate Level: Dedicate and hold space**

Dedicate program segments to professional artists from within culturally diverse communities, in partnership with key communities, arts development bodies, venues and forums. Quantify your progress by setting quotas for diverse artists, and promote these processes widely.
- **High Level: Commission diverse works**

Actively commission, present, and promote works from diverse communities. Seek guidance from a variety of sources including arts ambassadors, community associations, arts educators, and advocacy bodies, on artistic quality, understanding your own limitations when assessing excellence.

# Community Engagement: Key Principles

## INVEST IN SUCCESSION

### ● Low Level: Recognise biases

Recognise biases within hiring practices and programming. Collect data on the demographics of your current workforce and acknowledge areas for improvement. Ensure that language used in advertisements and call outs is simple, inclusive, and welcoming.

### ● Moderate Level: Create pathways

Create programs and pathways that genuinely encourage diverse applicants to apply for positions within your organisation. This can be done through internships, training programs, and partnerships with external organisations.

### ● High Level: Drive participation

Using your relationships with arts ambassadors, community leaders, and community members, actively source and recruit artists and arts workers from outside the organisation. Activities could include hosting information sessions as part of your recruitment process, creating roles within your organisation that function solely to drive diverse participation, and investing in targeted advertising that explicitly invites diverse candidates to apply for arts worker roles.

# Governance Boards & Leadership

Arts organisations operate over four interconnected tiers: governance and leadership; arts workers; artists; and audiences. Inclusive practice and building connections with culturally diverse audiences requires governance and leadership structures to commit to promote, resource, and evaluate positive operational change.

Our review of the global literature in this space suggests the following six steps to begin this process. To further develop your capacity, be sure to visit Diversity Arts Australia's *Cultural Equity Toolkit* (2020) [www.creativeequitytoolkit.org](http://www.creativeequitytoolkit.org)

## BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

*Self-reflect, critique, and acknowledge who is missing from the conversation.*

- Self-reflection is the most powerful first step to prepare an organisation to become more diverse and inclusive of a range of voices. Ask questions like: Does the Board reflect the community? Who is missing at the boardroom table? Who do we serve?
- Consider an independent audit of governance practices to identify blind spots, and diagnose less visible barriers to participation.
- Prepare to commit energy and organisational resources to create change.

## LEADERSHIP ROLES

*Recruit diverse leaders, and those committed to diversity.*

- Ensure recruitment processes are unbiased. Ask yourself: Who sits on executive appointment channels? Who screens applications? How are executive advertisements worded?
- Look to your community to source candidates for leadership roles. Relying on close referral networks stifles diversity and means existing capability and skilled leaders are overlooked.
- Create leadership programs for members of diverse communities so they have the capability and confidence to step into leadership roles in your organisation.

## POLICY

*Develop policies to achieve diversity objectives.*

- Widely consult and construct clear policies that promote diversity in HR, appointment, induction, and conflict resolution, and commit to enforcing them.
- Review policies regularly, consult widely before changing policy, and make policy accessible to all employees and the general public to enhance transparency and demonstrate your commitment to diversity.

# Governance Boards & Leadership

## STRATEGY

*Develop a framework to initiate change.*

- Create targets, quotas, Key Performance Indicators and other metrics as appropriate to measure organisational performance.
- Establish set timelines to achieve change. Improving diversity is a long term process, and requires a suitable time commitment to see real change.
- Work to align the entire organisation with these strategic goals to build diversity. This includes leaders, managers, programmers, curators, marketing, administrative and technical staff.

## PRACTICE

*Action is key.*

- Share power. Actively seek out different voices and invite them into your organisation. Step out of the way when others have something to contribute to the organisation.
- Recognise that removing systemic barriers to access is not theoretical, it is practical and requires conscious daily action.
- Increase the likelihood of success by allocating sufficient resources to action and inclusion.

## EVALUATION

*Assess, improve, transform.*

- Imperfect action is better than inactivity from perfectionism. Increasing diversity and inclusion is a process.
- Transparency and honesty is essential to confront biases. It is ok to make errors. It is not ok to ignore problems.
- Commit to continuous improvement. The world around us is constantly changing, and arts organisations must continue to reflect this.