



CIRCUITWEST



# Community Theatre Manual



Department of  
Local Government, Sport  
and Cultural Industries

The background of the entire image is a complex, repeating geometric pattern of triangles and polygons in various shades of blue, creating a textured, crystalline effect.

**CircuitWest develops  
and connects performing  
arts so that WA has  
the quality cultural  
experiences it deserves**

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# STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY THEATRES

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**This resource details 5 possible components of Strategic Planning**

- 1 Why plan for change?
- 2 What is a plan?
- 3 Why you should get a plan?
- 4 Why you should not get a plan?
- 5 The questions to workshop to build your plan

## WHY CHANGE?

Strategic planning is to help an organisation change. So, why change? It will help to start off with a 'theory of change', a process of thinking through and documenting how something you want to do is going to work, why it will work, who it will benefit, and the conditions required to believe it is worthwhile.

For example, repertory clubs may want to lift their brand image to a high quality with a better venue, tech, sets and performances.

Whilst this is a fine goal, what does that really mean? It may mean hundreds of hours in fundraising, grant writing, brand development, talent search, and much more. How will the organisation benefit? With bigger audiences or maybe attracting more award nominations and therefore bigger casts and directors?

A theory of change help you think through what it is you want to do, why and how before you go through the more complicated strategic planning process.

Start with this – how do you want to change and to achieve what? Brainstorm where you want to go with your theatre team.

Here are some changes that theatres have planned in the past requiring strategic planning.

- Reinvent or reinvigorate the club
- Use the theatre as a business
- Improve income streams
- Make the transition to presenting modern work
- Transform to present shows for new audiences
- Become a development centre for aspiring artists
- Raise capital for renovations
- Attract new performers and directors



- Improve how the brand is perceived
- Present locally created work
- Increase and/or diversifying audiences
- Partner with other organisations
- Make the move to a new theatre
- Bring new creative ideas for our future
- Focus on fundraising and grants
- Develop ourselves as a community
- Be a learning centre for performers, tech people, front of house staff
- Rebrand

## WHAT IS A PLAN?

A strategic plan is a way to work out where your theatre wants to go and what actions you will take to achieve this.

Strategic planning done badly can become an unrealistic wish list of ideas that are beyond the capabilities of the theatre to achieve in the time you allow.

### A plan can have these elements

- Vision statement - a vision statement describes what a theatre desires to achieve in the long run  
*“To provide joy and entertainment to the people in the North of Perth”*
- Mission statements - is used by a theatre to explain, in simple and concise terms, its purpose for existing  
*“Providing opportunities for theatre people on all side of the stage in our city”*
- SWOT – an analysis of the theatre’s strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that it sees
  - Strengths are positive assets, e.g. a theatre, a talented group of volunteers, regular audiences.
  - Weaknesses are negative aspects, e.g. a shortage of performers, directors or audiences, lack of money, poor quality assets
  - Opportunities are positive elements like audiences available, possible grants, or untapped local talent
  - Threats are negative elements like declines in customers, other entertainment sources, nearby theatres, increasing costs
- Long-term goals – where you want to be in a set time period, say 3-5 years
- Short-term goals – what steps you need to achieve your long-term goals within each year of the plan

- Action plan of the steps to get to where you want to go
  - What must happen and who will do it to get to where you want to go?
  - Will there be enough resources to get you there? This is an example:

### Goal: To get the shire to upgrade the theatre with fund matching from theatre fundraising drive

STEPS	WHEN	WHO
Meet with the shire and understand details of application	May 2022	Fred and Wilma
Set up a fundraising plan	June- Dec 2022	Barney
Share the goals with the members and patrons	Jan 2023	Betty
Have goal charts in the foyer, websites and email with each new show	Jan	Betty
Publicise the new reimagined theatre to all members and patrons	Feb	Fred
Monitor and find new ways to promote	Mar- Nov	Wilma
Celebrate milestones with members and patrons	Mar- Nov	Wilma
Meet with shire at conclusion of fundraising period	Dec	Fred and Wilma
Share with members and patrons the upgrades that can happen based on the funds raised	Dec 2023	Betty

Spending time developing a strategic plan is a great way to get where you hope to go.

## WHY GET A PLAN?

If you want to get somewhere for the future different to where you are now, then you might need a plan to get you there.

Let's look at this scenario

A repertory club that has always programmed farce and musical comedy decides it wants to add children's work to its program and attract more families but also to continue to program what it always has. This is a strategic shift from what it has done for 30 years.

It develops a strategic plan with the goal of diversifying its program within 2 years to children's work. The goals along the ways include connecting with local parents, director training, school holiday talent program for local kids and script assessments by the programming group quarterly in the lead up.

### **It has several benchmarks**

- 1 Connecting with parents – by 2022 to have consulted with 100 parents in the local areas through surveys and conversations
- 2 Training the right people to run children's workshops by 2023 from existing casts
- 3 Seeing 4 children's works stage by amateur theatres by 2023
- 4 Develop a shortlist of children's works that are realistic and interesting down to a final list of 4
- 5 Seeking 2 directors experienced in family shows by 2023
- 6 Seeking shire funding to cover productions costs by 2023
- 7 Ensure there are 20 families with children interested in stage performance by 2023

### **WHY NOT TO GET A PLAN?**

Strategic planning is not for everyone. Many theatres are happy with what they do and where they are going.

#### **As a starting point consider these issues.**

- How much time does the theatre team have to commit to your change?
  - Don't commit to change that is beyond your capacity
  - If a committee of 6 commits 1 hour per month to this you have 72 hours in a year
  - Be realistic about what you can achieve (it can take that time to write one funding application)
- What are the implications of doing this?
- Does the theatre want to change?
- Will change take key members of the team away from other duties, directing, performing, etc?
- Are your plans achievable and reasonable?
- Is there demand for the things you want to achieve?
  - E.g. if you choose to add family work, is there an audience?
- Who will support you?
  - Local government, partners and supporters, audiences, regular members of the cast and crew?
- Are you already at capacity staging shows?
  - If you are struggling to get people to run your program will there be enough to run your plan?

### **THE QUESTIONS TO WORKSHOP TO BUILD YOUR PLAN**

Once you have decided you want to put together a plan these are the steps you should consider.

- Have a meeting or meetings based entirely on this plan
- Find someone who will manage or facilitate your planning and take the role of moving forward through all the steps
- Seek consensus on the big picture of what you want to achieve

- Set objectives
  - What specifically does your club want to achieve by the end of the plan?
- Make sure your objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have a timeframe.
  - An example of an objective may be, “to increase the number of people engaged in the theatre over 1 season by 15%”.
- Actions (what)
  - What needs to be done to achieve the objectives?
  - An example of an action to achieve the objective of doubling the number of people engaged might be, “to seek professional advice on marketing and branding and implement new strategies”.
- Responsibilities (who)
  - Who is responsible for completing the actions?
- Timeframes (when)
  - When do the actions need to be completed?
- Resources
  - How much is it going to cost in time and dollars

## THINK SMALL

Plans fail because they are too ambitious, or they lack the people to deliver on them. Theatres are often running at capacity, and everyone knows that just getting sets, costumes, performers, directors and audiences are already time-consuming work.

If you have very limited capacity, once you have identified all of the objectives you can, prioritise them and plan one objective at a time so the theatre team doesn't get overwhelmed

Make sure and plan a review during committee meetings or each quarter and see how you are going.

Great things are often achieved one goal at a time. Don't plan to fail, plan to get to where your theatre hopes in a realistic way.

Plans fail because they are too ambitious, or they lack the people to deliver on them. Theatres are often running at capacity, and everyone knows that just getting sets, costumes, performers, directors and audiences are already time-consuming work.

# TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

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## BASIC AUDIO CONCEPTS – SIGNAL FLOW

### **GAIN**

In audio engineering, ‘gain’ is the first point of control. The gain allows adjustments for the sensitivity of the microphone. Implementing the right gain structure is essential to avoid feedback.

### **PEQ (PARAMETRIC EQ)**

The parametric EQ allows for control over relative frequency levels according to a set of parameters. On most analog mixing consoles the parametric EQ will be separated into 3 frequency bands. HIGH, MID and LOW, with gain control over those three bands – allowing users to boost or reduce those parameters. In digital consoles the parameters of those bands are completely adjustable, meaning users can select the exact frequency, the frequency width (eg. 534Hz – 842Hz) and gain.

### **PAN**

The pan refers to the percentage of stereo placement for the outputted signal. If your console is outputting signal to MAIN LEFT and MAIN RIGHT then turning the Pan pot (knob) to the very left will send 100% of the signal to the main left speaker, the same 100% will be sent to the right speaker when the Pan pot is dialled all the way right. When the Pan pot value is centred 50% of the signal is sent to the left and 50% to the right speakers.

If your system is operating in MONO (both speakers are receiving the same single output) then you will have no Pan control. You may have discovered this when panning a channel to left or right and not hearing anything at all.

### **PHANTOM POWER (48V+)**

Phantom power refers to the 48V that some stage boxes and all condenser microphones require to function. Condenser microphones consist of two plates requiring charge (48V) for them to respond to soundwaves.

Wireless microphones headsets do not require phantom power from the desk as the units themselves have powered elements within the device (belt pack/ handheld)

## MICROPHONE PLOTTING AND SOUNDCHECKS

If your venue/ theatre group is working with an analog audio console, it can be difficult to provide a consistent ‘mix’ of the show if operating ‘on the fly’. During rehearsals try to pair characters/ actors with the same vocal range & response with each headset. Alternatively, making notes on the script for the microphone adjustments (eg. Mic1 – fader +5dB or -3dB) so the audio operator



can adjust the fader or PEQ on the microphones channel before the character is on stage – this will give the audio component of each performance consistency and stability. During tech rehearsals ‘soundchecks’ should be done with EACH character – delivering quiet, normal, and loud lines from the performance. Performers should also approach soundchecks as the live performance, delivering lines as they intend to when there is a seated audience. With the information from these soundchecks the operator will be able to make notes in the script for when quiet or loud sections of dialogue are approaching and can respond accordingly (eg. adjust compressor thresholds).

## USING HEADPHONES AND ‘PFL’ WHILE MIXING

The audio console, whether it be analog or digital, will have a ‘headphone’ output, this will be labelled as such and will require a  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” (6.5mm) jack adaptor for the headphones. This headphone output is assigned to the console’s PFL settings. PFL (Pre-Fade Listen) is a function that allows operators to listen to channel/s, inputs and outputs by selecting the PFL or CUE button of that channel or mix – the button is located just above the fader (not to be confused with the MUTE button) The Pre-Fade Listen function allows for operators to listen to microphones or mixes in live scenarios without affecting the signals going to speakers. For example, a channel’s fader can be all the way down but by selecting the PFL or CUE button the operator will be able to listen to that channel through their headphones. This is a great way to check microphone response and placements during a performance when there has been a microphone swap. Using the PFL function is also a handy tool for locating troublesome microphones that are causing feedback.

## WIRELESS MICROPHONE FREQUENCIES

In 2015 frequencies between 694MHz-820MHz, “the digital dividend”, was sold to be used by 4G services. The use of illegal microphones or transmitters operating within the digital dividend became illegal from January 1, 2015. The frequency range given for the legal use of wireless audio devices was, and still is, 520MHz-694MHz and 1790MHz-1800MHz. These two frequency bands were created as alternative options once the digital dividend started operation. If you have wireless microphones in your venue, you can check the frequency bands that they operate in. The frequency range can be found on the front of the receiving unit. If the units prove to be operating within the frequency range of 520MHz-694MHz or 1790MHz-1800MHz then your equipment is up to date with the latest regulations. If you have found your device to be operating within 694MHz-1790MHz, you should remove the equipment from use or service as it is operating outside of the legal bandwidths. Please read below to see the frequency bands available in your region;

[https://www.organicproductions.com.au/images/FAQ/wireless\\_mic\\_freq/Plug\\_n\\_play\\_Regional\\_and\\_Remote\\_Western\\_Australia\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.organicproductions.com.au/images/FAQ/wireless_mic_freq/Plug_n_play_Regional_and_Remote_Western_Australia_pdf.pdf)

If you have discovered that the wireless microphone system in your venue is operating in the digital dividend, you may have noticed interference or signal loss due to television and radio services. Using the link above or by searching ‘Plug n Play Regional and Remote Western Australia’ you’ll be able to see what frequency bands are available in your town/regional and purchase the appropriate equipment to upgrade. It is important for wireless microphone users to comply with current regulations, the arrangements can change though wireless microphone users are not protected from such changes. Follow the ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) for updates.

## IMPORTANCE OF SOUND (ACOUSTICS)

The acoustics of a venue/ space plays an importance role in how the ‘sound’ of the performance is received by audience members and people on stage.

**Issues with acoustics can be related to the following:**

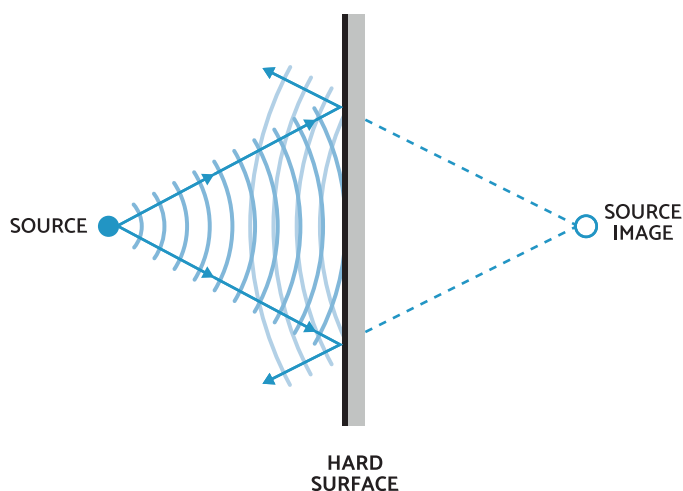
- Strong reflections from smooth ceilings, floors and walls
- Long reverberation times
- Sound diffusion

These issues can lead to poor speech clarity, making performances hard to hear and dialogue difficult to understand. The size of the venue will affect the acoustic experience of the space. Small and large venues each have their own acoustic advantages.

Large venues will present volume challenges – the volume needs to be greater in order to reach the end of the room. The size of larger venues will also cause longer and excessive reverberation times. Smaller rooms can make the room feel acoustically “dead” with shorter reverberation times.

### SHAPE OF THE VENUE

Square, narrow and rectangular venues with parallel walls can cause sound waves to bounce back and forth. This creates undesirable reverberations that ‘muddy’ the overall sound clarity. *Some auditoriums feature curved walls which help diffuse sound. Other architectural features (ceiling pitch, structure in the room) will affect how soundwaves react in the space.*

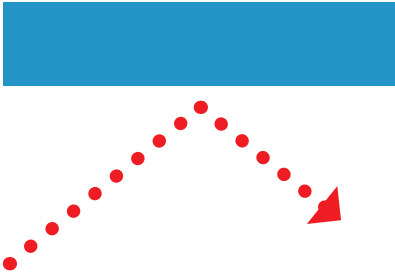


### MATERIALS IN THE VENUE

Reverberation is a common issue in auditoriums, particularly town halls. This is when the sound waves reflect off the surfaces and congregate. When soundwaves hit a solid surface, the energy can react in 3 ways. The texture of the material will cause the frequencies of the soundwave to respond in different ways.

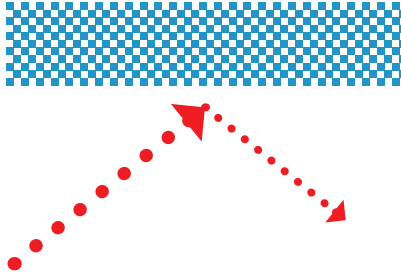
- **Reflection:** Concrete, metal, brick
- **Absorption:** Foam, rubber, upholstery, curtains and drapes
- **Diffusion:** Irregular surfaces (foam, carpet) that will cause soundwaves to disperse

## Reflection



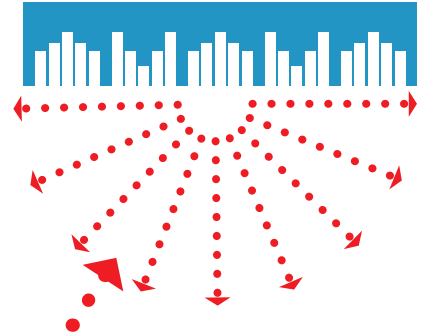
There are many types of room reflection: all affect the sound of your system. A reflection off a nearby hard surface may be almost as loud as the original sound!

## Absorption



The most common way of controlling unwanted reflections is through the use of sound-absorbing foam or fibreglass.

## Diffusion



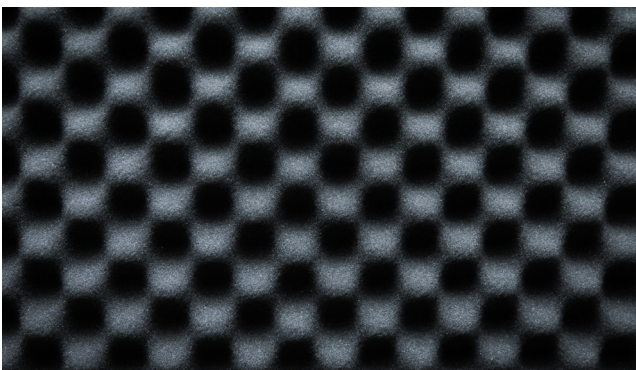
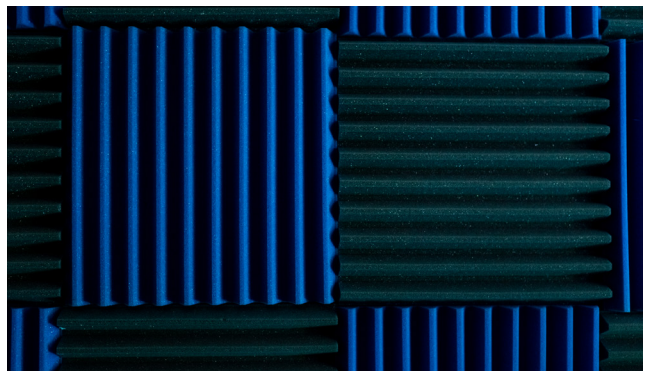
A diffusive surface doesn't directly reflect or absorb sound but scatters it in many directions. Recent diffuser designs use irregular surfaces based on mathematical number theory.

## HOW TO IMPROVE ACOUSTICS

### DIFFUSION

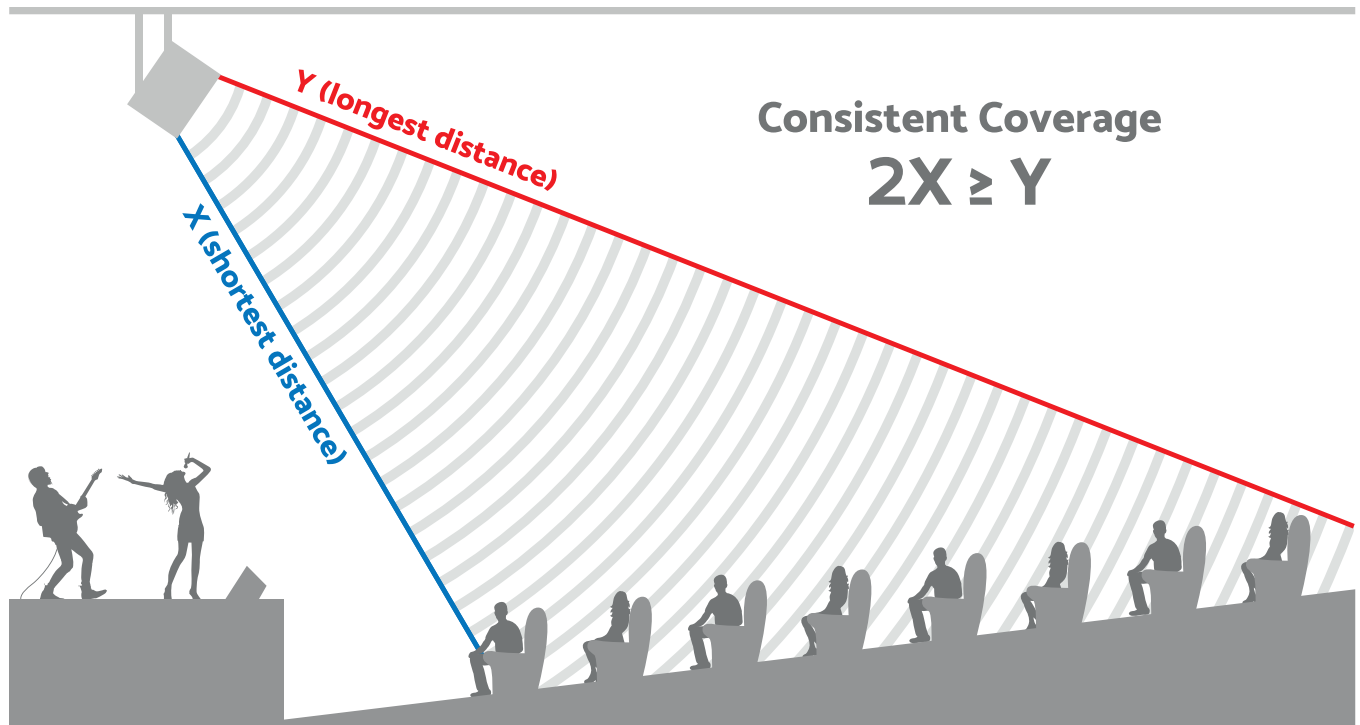
Irregular surfaces will diffuse soundwaves into multiple directions, lessening the power of those waves and the distance they will reflect into the venue.

QRD – Quadratic Residue Diffusion. Walls of different depths that are used to control reflections in the listening environment. The role of QRD's is to breakup directional soundwaves and reduce the power of first order reflections.



## SPEAKER PLACEMENT AND DIRECTION

Along with the material and shape of the room, speaker placement and direction is equally important in managing the acoustic experience of the auditorium.

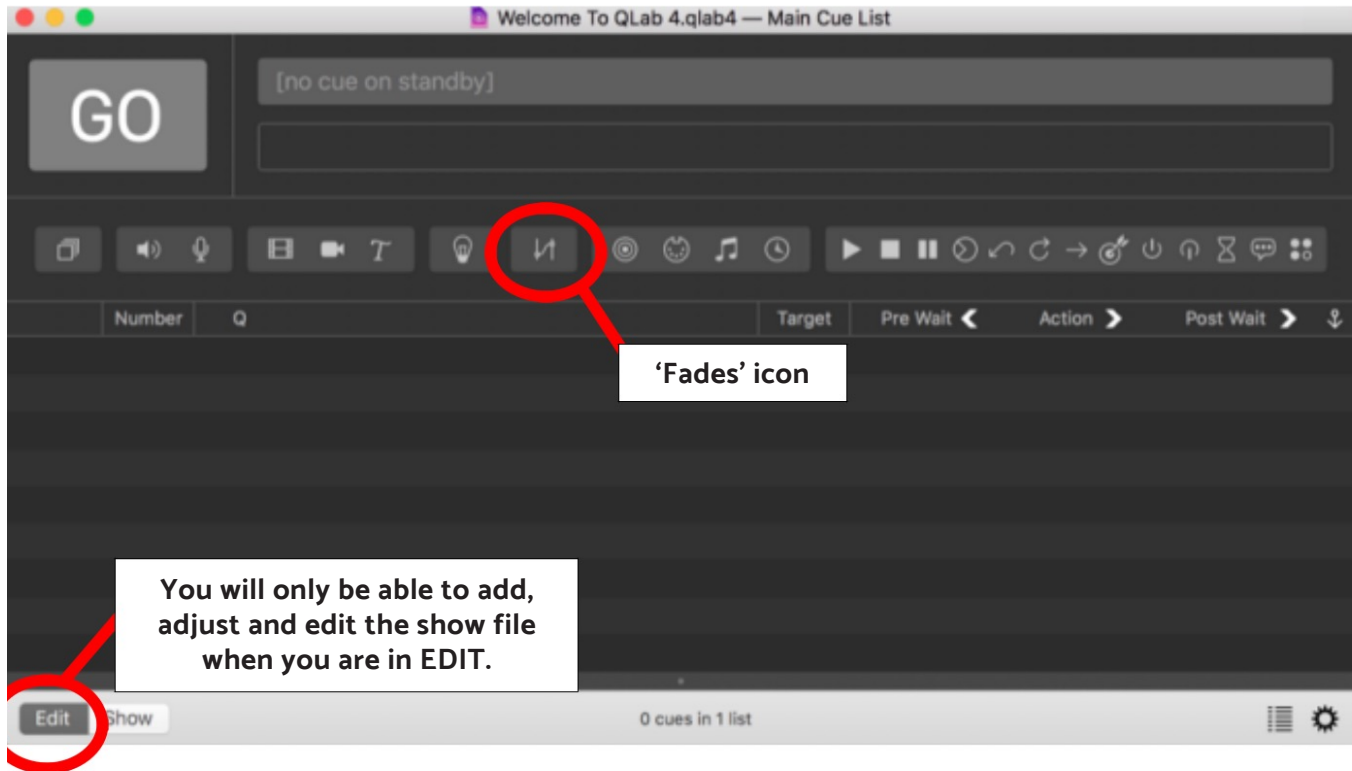


Ideally the top and bottom edge of the speaker will hit the front and back audience rows. If this is unachievable then the bottom edge of the speaker (blue line) should hit the front audience row. A 'mid hall delay' should then be installed to cover the remainder of the auditorium. The placement of the mid hall delay is determined by the Y-axis (red line). The bottom edge of the mid hall delay should be pointing at last row of coverage from the previous speakers.

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## AUDIO CUES - QLAB

Making an audio cue – click on audio cue in cue bar OR by dragging and dropping an audio file from the finder into your cue list



Updating cues

- Press **TARGET**

What types of audio files can be played?

- **AIFF/ AIF, WAV** – Uncompressed files. Little processing to play, no compression
- **CAF** – Apple only, uncompressed, no size limit
- **ALAC** – Lossless compression format, equal to wav/ aif – uses more processing to place than WAV/AIFF
- **MP3** supported – Low quality, compressed, required same amount of processing power as ALAC

NEW WORKSPACE 'edit' tab

Collect audio files for QLAB into one folder so they are easy to find. Import into cue list

- Press **PLAY** – First cue will play, will only play 1 cue when triggered (by spacebar)

Times & Loops

- Adjust start and stop point of cue



### Eg. Telephone ringing on stage

Cue 1 ring. Cue 2 cuts off cue 1

Stop cue – drag after cue 1

Drag cue 1 into stop cue (make cue 1 target of stop cue)

Continue: audio continues – with stop cue, will auto continue onto cue 2.

### Eg. Stormy night – thunder (cue 1) , rain (cue 2)

Auto continue cue 1 (runs to cue 2)

Create fade – set fade Cue 2

Master fader cue 4 audio level tab (fade) master to -inf (OdB)

#### General > Getting Started With QLab

##### Cue Status

The left-most column displays the status of the cue.

The playhead (a right-facing triangular pointer) shows you which cue is standing by.

Each cue might also display any of the following icons:

- ▶ A green triangle means the cue is **active**.
- ⦿ A yellow triangle within a circle means the cue is **loaded** and is ready to be triggered.
- ⏏ A grey slope means the cue has been stopped, but has an effect that is **ailing out**.
- ✗ A red X means the cue is **broken** and cannot be played. Hovering the mouse over the red X will show you a tooltip with a brief explanation of the problem.
- ⊘ A red circle with a slash through it means that an **override** is blocking the cue's output. You can learn more about overrides in the [Override Controls section of the documentation](#).
- 🚩 A flag indicates that the cue is flagged.
- No icon means... well, it means that none of the above is true.

This column also displays an icon depicting the cue's type; these icons match the cue icons in the toolbar.

## GROUP CUES

A 'group cue' is a type of cue that contains other cues. The keyboard default for creating a group cue is **⌘O**. You will be able to create a group cue while one or more cues are selected, these cues will then be placed inside the new group cue. Using the grey disclosure arrow (upper-left corner) you are able to collapse and expand the group cue to see or hide its contents.

QLab allows for the audio levels of individual cues to be adjusted. This means the QLab faders on the Audio console can remain the same – this is best practise!

Exporting a QLab Show file – 'Save' file. File → bundle workspace. It will create a folder, bundle all of the audio files and show file into that folder. This created show file/ folder can be transferred via USB or DropBox/ WeTransfer.

## LIGHTING DESIGN AND OPERATION

The process of lighting design can be broken down into multiple stages, which require different types of engagement with the production. There is the completely creative approach (reading the script and running through ideas with the director) to completely technical (drawing the lighting plan). When you are planning and designing your lighting, remember that it's all about enhancing the audiences visual experience for the performance. *Guiding their eyes around the stage, using colour to help the narrative of the performance.*

### **FIXTURE + COLOUR + POSITION + FOCUS + FLOW = LIGHTING**

Colour is used to help the narrative of the performance

## DESIGNERS AND DIRECTOR

Read through the script and look for the language used to describe the scene – this will help you gauge the palette (morning sunrise, forests) Write your ideas down, you can then give notes to the director for review. Alternatively, you can draw story boards, photos or use computer software or light lab to demonstrate your ambitions for the design to the creative team.

When reading through the script, note down exactly where you would like the lighting changes to occur.

A discussion with the set designer and what colours they are wanting to use will also help you determine the colour palette you would use.

## PALETTE

Find all the Lee and Rosco gel colours via the mobile app. (Lee and Rosco filters)

Download for iPhone


<https://apps.apple.com/app/id882232668>

Download for Android

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.leefilters.com&hl=en\\_NZ&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.leefilters.com&hl=en_NZ&gl=US)



When you are planning and designing your lighting, remember that it's all about enhancing the audiences visual experience for the performance.

	R01	Light Bastard Amber	Enhances fair skin tones. Suggest strong sunlight
	R05	Rose Tint	Good for light skin tones
	R13	Light Straw	Warm general wash
	R14	Medium Straw	Sunlight / effects
	R20	Medium Amber	Sunsets / Firelight / effects
	R21	Golden Amber	Sunsets / effects
	R26	Light Red	'Primary' Red
	R36	Medium Pink	Musicals / effects
	R339	Broadway Pink	Musicals / dance / effects
	R45	Rose	Scenery / backgrounds
	R48	Rose Purple	Pale evening. Good for backlight
	R52	Light Lavender	Neutral general
	R55	Lilac	Neutral general
	R57	Lavender	Neutral general
	R61	Mist Blue	Cold general
	R65	Daylight Blue	Moonlight
	R68	Sky Blue	Darker moonlight
	R89	Moss Green	Dance / effects
	R90	Dark Yellow Green	Dance / effects

## COLOUR MIXING

Lighting is used to set the tone and mood of events occurring onstage. Theatrical lighting is also an artform, playing a vital role in how emotions, reactions, and circumstances onstage are interpreted by the audience. Without a creative lighting design shows can come across as two dimensional and lack flow.

Using one colour to wash the stage can be striking but might give a two-dimensional effect to the stage picture. Using two similar colours can add interest to the stage, while contrasting colours can help create a different story.

If you have two fixtures focused onto the same area, try using two different or similar colours to create vibrance and depth.

The three primary colours mix to form white as do certain pairs of colours known as complementary colours.



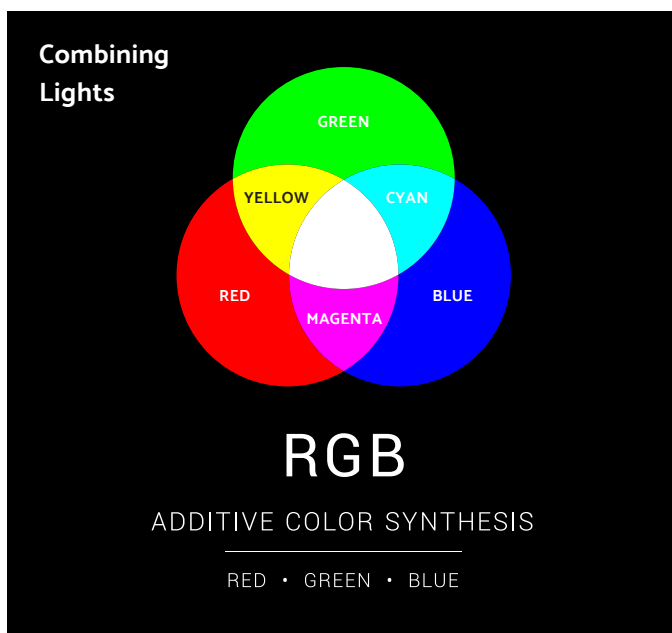


This scene from Spare Parts Puppet Theatre production, “The One Who Planted Trees” illustrates lighting design as well as use of colours and angles. Photo by Kaifu Deng. Lighting design by Kristie Smith.

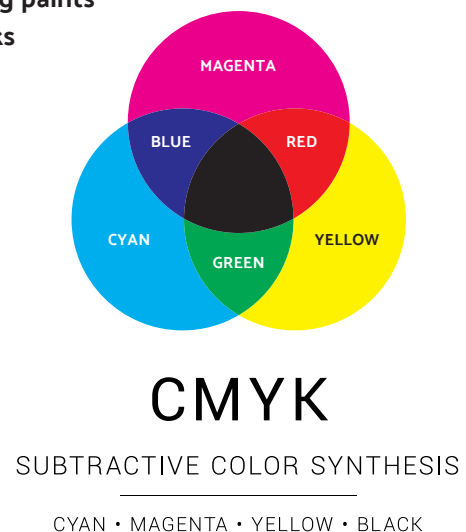


## HOT TIPS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

- Mixing colours is NOT the same as mixing paint (mixing colours with light ADDS, mixing with paint subtracts)
- Pale colours for front light (acting-area)
- Deep colours for side, back lighting or special effect
- Warm colours: yellows, oranges – happy times
- Cold colours: pale blues – sad times
- Neutral colours: lavender – can be used with warm or cold to enhance the palette's mood
- Tungsten fixtures (w bubbles/ globes) (O/W Open White, N/C No Colour) will appear warm due to the high colour temperature from the light's bulb
- Green shouldn't be used as a front light – unless to depict a witch or evil character
- When lighting the same space from 2 angles, using slightly different colours (or contrasting colours) can add interest to the set and depth
- Darker skin tones respond to colour differently. Lavenders & pinks work better than yellows/ warms



**Mixing paints or inks**



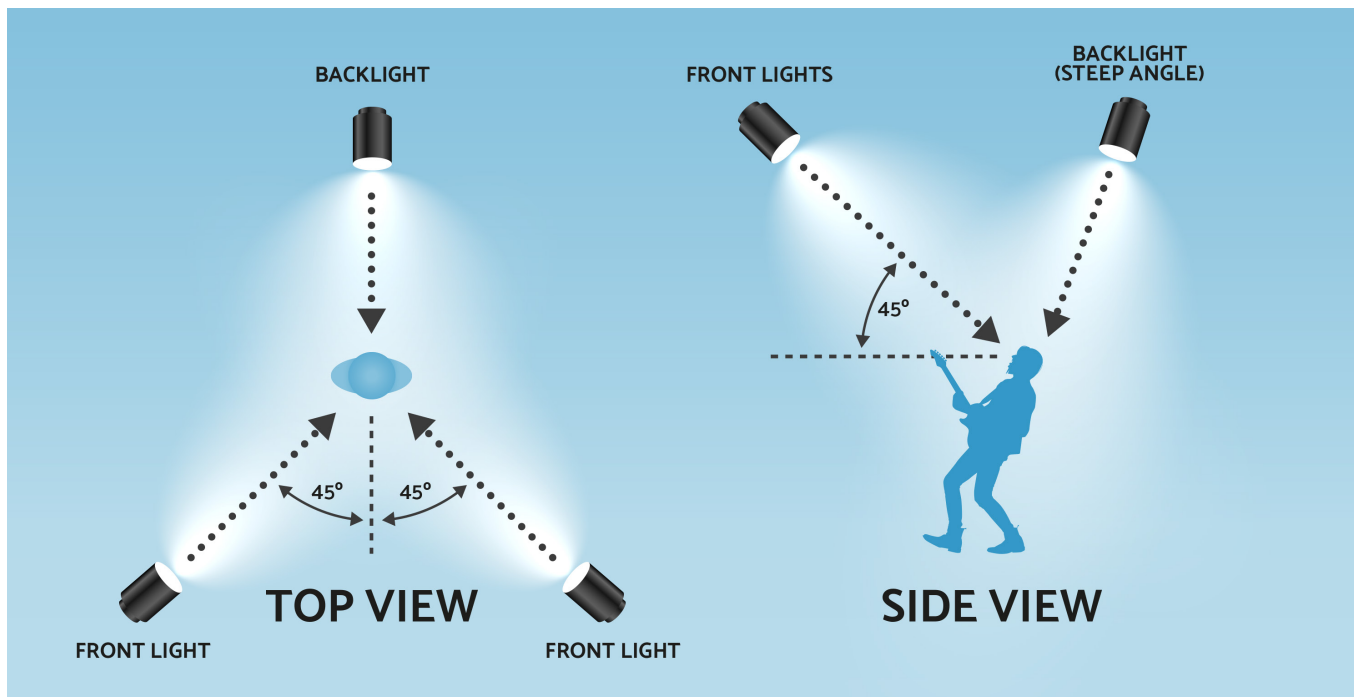
Monochromatic colour schemes – 1 colour of varying shades, brightness and saturations. Often passionate and moving.

Colour Complementary Schemes – opposite to each other on the colour wheel (green/red, yellow/blue, orange/purple, teal/amber) Often balanced, complementary colours don't provoke specific emotions as monochromatic colours would.

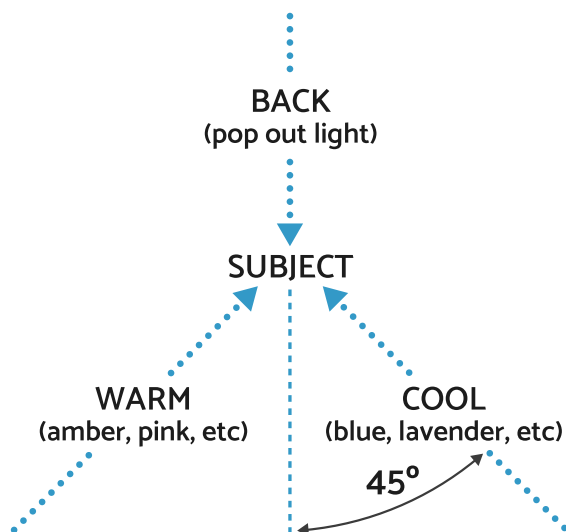




## LIGHTING ANGLES



## THREE-POINT LIGHTING



**Front Light** – Has a specific purpose to provide visibility (light) for the actors. Front lights are hung in the Front of House positions (catwalks, truss or bars) overhead of the audiences.

**Top/ Back Light** – Fixtures are hung above or behind actors on stage. Depending on how a design chooses to use these angles, it can create shape, depth and a sense of environment on stage.

**Side Light** – With lights often hung on vertical booms, side lighting is another useful angle to give shape to people or objects on stage. ‘High Sides’ are lights hung on overhead battens angles between 30-45 degrees – a hybrid system that provides good visibility and shaping.

**Up/ Foot Light** – Lights set at floor level on the stage’s most down stage edge. Often used to soften the heavy shadows from overhead lighting.

## WHAT IS DMX?

DMX (Digital Multiplex) is a protocol used to control devices such as fog machines and lights. A standard DMX network, referred to as DMX universe, consists of 512 channels. This offers 512 channels of dimmable control (512 tungsten fixtures). LED lights, Movers and Fog Machines have more than one controllable attribute. Unlike tungsten fixtures that just require one channel to control the dimmable venue 0 – 255 (0 – 100%), the new intelligent lights require one channel for each controllable attribute (beam, colour, intensity, direction, movement, mirror, gobo etc)

## HOW DOES DMX WORK?

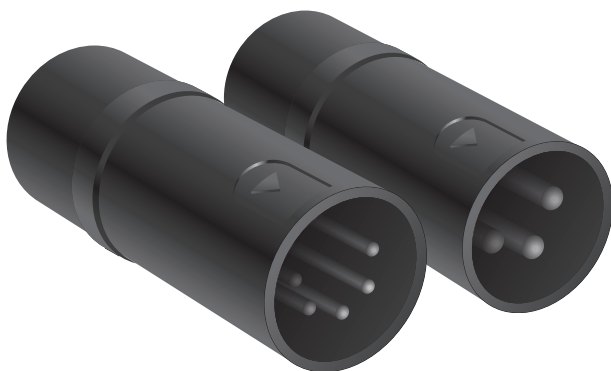
DMX sends a signal that travels in one direction (unidirectional) from the controller or first lights, to the last fixture.

## DMX ADDRESS

DMX address or “channel” is used to control multiple fixtures independently; each fixture must be addressed to a different starting address that is not in the group of channels for another fixture. A tungsten fixture will only require one channel, whereas intelligent lighting (LED, Movers and Fog Machines) will require a group of channels/ DMX addresses. The number of channels required is dependent on the fixture, the user’s manual will give an indication of how many addresses to assign to the fixture.

## DMX TERMINATOR

DMX terminators are connected to the last fixture in the DMX chain. This is to stop the ‘shadow signal’ from bouncing back through the lighting rig. If you have ever had issues with flickering lights, or the rig has stopped responding completely, it could be a shadow signal bouncing back from the last fixture. Longer cables increase the risk of signal bouncing back, though bounce back can occur in short cable lengths as well. Best practise is to terminate the end of a DMX chain. Plug terminator into ‘DMX OUT’ output of last fixture in DMX chain.



Examples of 5pin & 3pin DMX terminators.

## DIMMABLE VS. INTELLIGENT LIGHT SOURCES

LED Lights, Movers and Fog Machines (intelligent) are designed to be powered either fully ON or OFF. Using these devices on a dimmable circuit can cause damage to the device. New dimmer racks allow users to change the output settings of each circuit – for intelligent fixtures you would

use GPO settings, or alternatively run power from a GPO (general power outlet) to the intelligent units. The features/ attributes of each unit can then be individually controlled via DMX (colour, brightness, beam, angle, movement etc)

Dimmable fixtures, otherwise known as ‘generics’ or ‘tungsten’s’ give light through a globe “bubble”. These units only require one channel address of DMX in order to function. The DMX controller (lighting console) will send DMX (data) to a dimmer rack, which will then control the brightness 0-255 (0-100%) of each circuit (fixture).

## SAFETY CHAINS

Safety chains are a requirement when it comes to rigging/ installing lights in a public space. Lights that are hung above head height need to be safety chained to the bar or truss. The most used safety chain is a 3mm Steel Wire Rope with swaged loop and carabiner. If the fixture also has a barn door, then must be safety chained to the fixture.



Example of Safety Chain.

## OH&S COMPLIANCE

The phrasing and terminology used around safety can be daunting and overwhelming to say the least! But it is important to comply with current legislation and safe practise acts to ensure that the space and experience you are offering to others (workers, volunteers, audiences etc) is safe. The current roles and requirements under ‘Duty of Care’ can be found in the **Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 – Section 19**. In 2022 new framework will come into place, with the **Work Health and Safety Act 2020** replacing the OS&H Act 1984.

Under these new guidelines the definition of ‘worker’ has been extended to employees, subcontractors, contractors and their employees, volunteers, labour hire workers, apprentices and work experience students.

The next few pages are a summary of the changes, please find the **Work Health and Safety Act 2020** online for guidance.



## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT 2020

General:

- Replaces the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984
- General Workplaces will have different regulations to mines, oil, and gas
- Commenced in Jan 2022
- Transitional arrangements will be in place to give time for workplaces to adapt

### Change to Primary Duties:

#### OSH ACT 1984

An employer shall, so far as is practicable, provide and maintain a working environment in which the employees of the employer (the employees) are not exposed to hazards.

Replaced by

#### WHS ACT 2020

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of –

- a) workers engaged, or caused to be engaged, by the person; and
- b) workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the person,

while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking.

### New Definitions:

#### Employee is now worker:

- Employees
- Contractors/subcontractors and their employees
- Labour hire workers
- Apprentices
- Work experience students
- Volunteers

There is also a duty that as far as reasonably practicable other persons are not put at risk as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

#### Employer is now Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking:

- Corporations
- Partnerships (each partner)
- Sole Traders
- Government
- Unincorporated associations
- NFP orgs



Doesn't include volunteer orgs unless they have employees.

**Reasonably practicable:**

Must consider the following factors:

- the likelihood of the hazard or the risk concerned occurring
- the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or the risk
- what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or the risk and ways of eliminating or minimising the risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk; and
- after assessing the extent of the risk and the available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, the cost associated with available ways of eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk

Health includes both physical and psychological health.

**Officer's duty to exercise due diligence:**

**Applies to:**

Officer = Directors, Company Secretary, senior managers (same as under Corporations Act).

Includes a person who makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the business or undertaking of a corporation.

**What is it?**

If a PCBU has a duty or obligation under the Act, an officer of the PCBU must exercise due diligence to ensure that the PCBU complies with that duty or obligation.

**Due Diligence:**

Is a personal obligation. Officers must take reasonable steps to:

- acquire and keep up-to-date knowledge of WHS matters
- understand the business operations and the associated hazards and risks
- ensure the business has and uses appropriate resources and processes to manage or eliminate or minimise risks
- ensure the business considers and responds to hazard, incident and risk data and responds in a timely way
- ensure the business has and implements processes for complying with the PCBU's duties and obligations under the Act; and
- verify the use of company resources and processes in meeting the above obligations

Officers can be found guilty of breaching this duty even if the PCBU isn't found to have committed an offence.

## Duty to consult:

### 46. Duty to consult with other duty holders

If more than 1 person has a duty in relation to the same matter under this Act, each person with the duty must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, cooperate, and coordinate activities with all other persons who have a duty in relation to the same matter.

### 47. Duty to consult workers

- (1) The person conducting a business or undertaking must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult, in accordance with this Division and the regulations, with workers who carry out work for the business or undertaking who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by a matter relating to work health or safety.

## Notification:

PCBUs must ensure that the regulator is notified immediately after becoming aware of a 'notifiable incident'

## Notifiable Incident:

- Death
- Serious injury or illness
- Now includes 'dangerous incidents' including near misses

## Legal

Penalty	Individual	Corporation
<b>CATEGORY 1</b>		
(ie. Reckless conduct)	5 years imprisonment + \$340,000 (5years + \$680,000 for an officer)	\$3,500,000
<b>CATEGORY 2</b>		
(ie. Failure to comply and exposes individual to risk of death/ serious injury)	\$170,000 (\$350,000 for an officer)	\$1,800,000
<b>CATEGORY 3</b>		
(ie. Failure to comply with duty)	\$55,000 (\$120,000 for an officer)	\$570,000

- Enforceable undertakings now available as an alternative to prosecution (but not for Category 1 offences or industrial manslaughter)
- Time limit for the regulator to commence a prosecution now reduced from 3 years to 2 years, but serious offences can be prosecuted beyond this time limit if fresh evidence is available

- A member of the public may request that the regulator commences a prosecution after 6 months, but not after 12 months, of an incident occurring –The regulator must respond within 3 months

It is an offence under the WHS Act to engage in discriminatory conduct, or to request, instruct, induce, encourage, authorise, or assist a person to engage in such conduct, if the dominant reason for the discriminatory conduct is a prohibited reason.

#### **Prohibited reasons:**

- acting as or performing a function as a health and safety representative.
- undertaking a role or exercising a power under the Act
- raising an issue or concern about work health and safety; or
- taking action to seek compliance by any person with any duty or obligation under the Act

#### **Unique to WA:**

- Increased powers of WHS inspectors to resolve safety disputes
- Prohibition on insuring or indemnifying against WHS penalties – This is not workers compensation insurance. It is still a requirement to have Workers Compensation Insurance in the Act
- Duty of care imposed on WHS service providers

#### **New offence - Industrial manslaughter**

- Where a PCBU has a WHS duty and engages in conduct that causes the death of a person, knowing that the conduct is likely to cause the death of a person, and in disregard of that likelihood
- Maximum penalty – 20 years imprisonment and \$5 million fine for an individual, \$10 million fine for a corporation
- Officers of PCBUs can also be charged if the PCBU's conduct was attributable to the officer's neglect or was engaged in with the officer's consent or connivance

#### **What should businesses and organisations do?**

- Review current policies and procedures for compliance
- Make sure directors and other officers are aware and start preparing
- Set up consultation protocols with workers and other stakeholders
- Get professional advice

# MARKETING

**This is training resource for marketing community theatre.**

If you are not getting heard, not getting the audiences you want, or need to develop how your theatre is viewed out there in the world this marketing resource may help.

There is a training video that you can watch to help you more with this guide:

<https://vimeo.com/591315350>

These resources were made by people with experience in community theatre and repertory club marketing. They are based on real marketing experiences and things that are tried and trusted.

But remember marketing is not fact, and there are no guarantees. We will share strategies and tactics that have worked many times before. What's more, what works in Leonora may not work in Greenwood, so think about who your target audience is and what ideas here might work.

## 1. HOW DOES YOUR MARKETING WORK?

Write down the answers to these questions below

- 1 What are the marketing activities we always do?
- 2 Do we think aspects of our marketing are working? Which ones?
- 3 What marketing have we seen from someone else that you would love to do?
- 4 What are the marketing assets we have? (followers on Facebook, email/ticket records, sites for posters, organisations that help out, media outlets)
- 5 What marketing 'stuff' do we usually get when you buy the licence for a show?
- 6 How much time can we spend on marketing?
- 7 Who can do our marketing?
- 8 How much will we budget for marketing?
- 9 What would we change about our marketing?

At the end of this resource – review your list and see what you might change.

If you are not getting heard, not getting the audiences you want, or need to develop how your theatre is viewed out there in the world this marketing resource may help

## NOTES

[illegible]

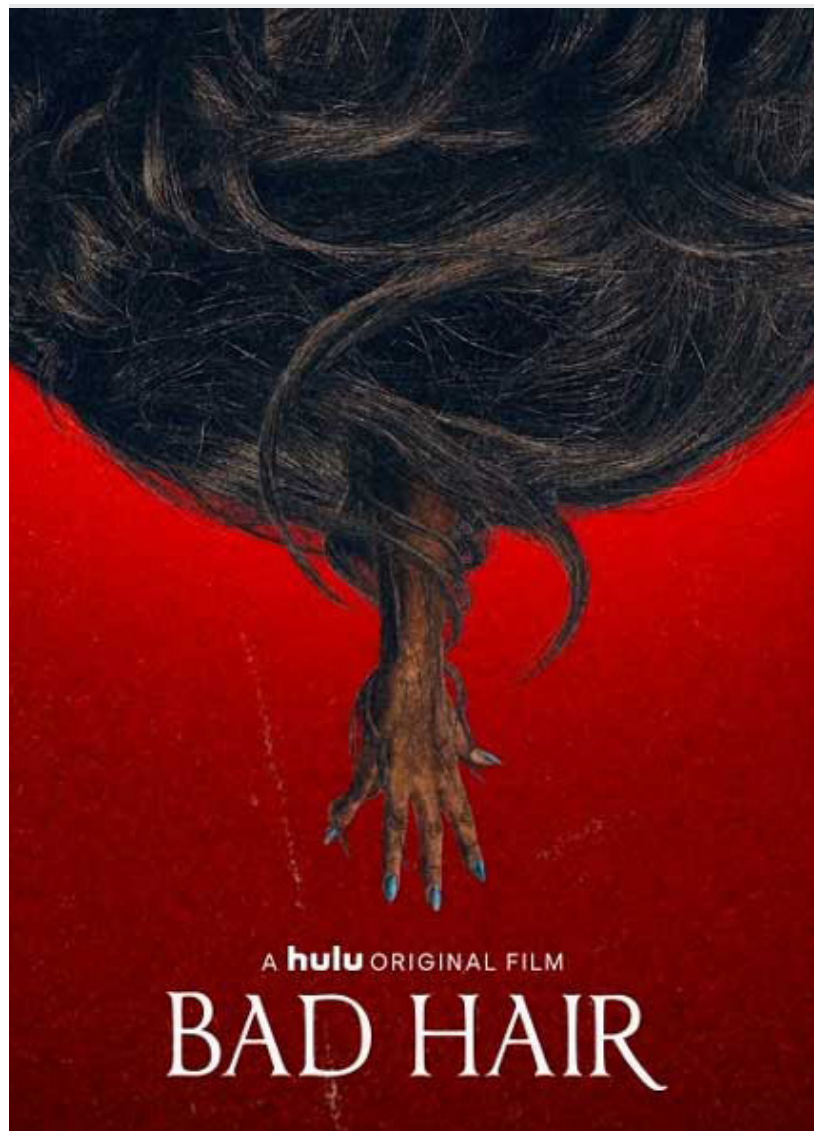
## 2. GETTING YOUR MESSAGE HEARD

Research says we see up to 5,000 marketing messages a day, between social media, billboards and signs, emails, TV, radio, internet, and all the other sources. Will your marketing be seen amongst 5000 messages or even 1000 messages?

Try this for 5 minutes. Get in the car, turn on the radio and then drive around town being aware of advertising and promotions. How many messages did you hear or see?

### The Trouble with Show Posters

Be aware that sometimes show marketing can look like this. Look at this poster - Does it make you want to see the show? What are the reasons you might see it?





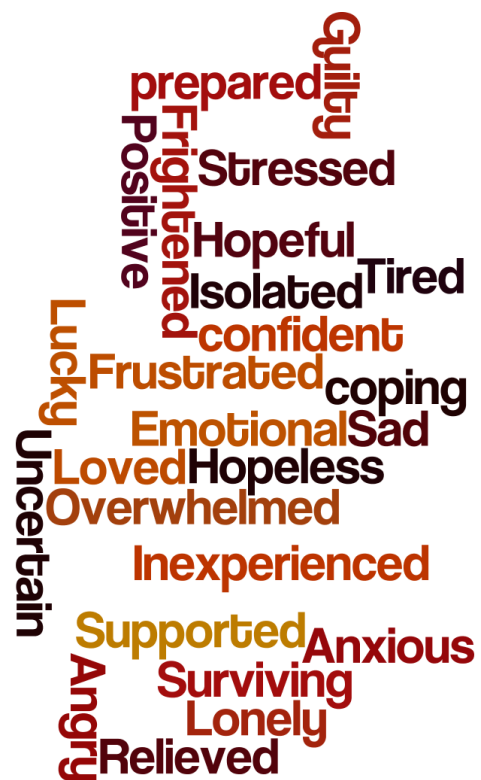
## NOTES - How can show marketing fail to get heard?

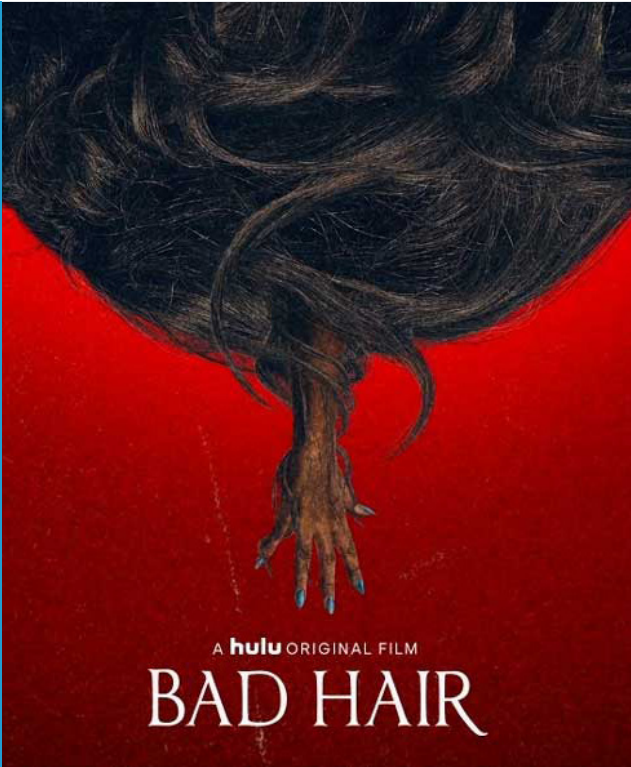
Think of audiences in 2 groups

- 1 Those who love you, love your work and come to every show
- 2 Those who have never heard of you and maybe never seen a show

You need to plan your message to get through to group 2. To get heard by group 2 you need to tell them what about the work will appeal. Don't trust a show poster

To be seen, your marketing needs to meet a need that person has ... and maybe that need is that they like to be scared out of their pants on a Saturday night and drink wine. Market what the experiences audiences love in live theatre, and they might just listen. How will this show make them feel?





## BAD HAIR SHOW POSTER

This was a horror comedy movie that originally opened in Sundance about a woman with hair that becomes possessed. And it is full of the dance grooves of the 80s and 90s.

Do you think any of this should have been included?

### 3. USED TO BE FAMOUS

In theatre, most of us know hundreds of shows we love. And we know choosing a well-known show is great for ticket sales. What shows would you think might lead to great ticket sales?

#### NOTES - Name a few famous shows you love

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What was famous once is not always famous. The world is changing.

- 1 Theatre has been disappearing from schools over the last 2 decades – that means adults under 33 are far less likely to know many of the well-known shows
- 2 Our cultural mix is changing – people from non-English speaking countries didn't grow up with our 'classics'. 21% of Australians are from non-English speaking backgrounds
- 3 Keep in mind the ages of some of the works we love. Everyone in theatre says, 'we never get young people at our shows'. Is this one of the reasons why?
  - *The Pirates of Penzance* (Written in 1879)
  - *Allo Allo* (made in 1982)
  - *Death of a Salesman* (1949)

Whilst shows like *Wizard* seem forever young, the classics are disappearing into history for many Australians. If you stage them, make sure you tell people what they are. Here's an example



## ALLO ALLO SHOW POSTER

This poster describes the work as – “It’s all sauce at the café of laughs”

Does that give unfamiliar audiences enough information to choose this show? Because if I am 35 and from the Netflix generation there is every chance, I have never heard of *Allo Allo*. Do you want me at your theatre?

Here are things we know about *Allo Allo*? It’s a hilarious comedy based on the award-winning British television series about the adventures of a hapless cafe owner in WWII occupied France.

Which of these things do we want to tell new audiences about this show? Don’t assume anything. In 2021, there is every chance your new targets won’t know some of the most well-known shows.

## 4. NEW TARGET MARKETS

Every theatre wants to bring in new audiences. You need to target different markets in different ways. Here are some tactics WA theatres have used to diversify audiences.

- 1 Contact aged care and retirement places and meet the social organiser. Invite them personally to every show
- 2 Tiktok is the tool for under 25s and its growing at a meteoric rate – get a tech savvy under 25 to be the tiktok marketer for your shows
- 3 Venues sometimes offer a ticket percentage to sporting and community clubs that are fundraising if they help with marketing. If the show is relevant, this can hugely amplify your marketing
- 4 Men's shed participants are rarely seen at venues, but some have been recruited to help with props and sets, then suddenly they become audiences
- 5 2019 research showed many men still believe theatres are no fun. Is yours fun? The beer and ballet promotion was one way ballet proved audiences have a fun night out as well as seeing a great show? How do new people know they will have fun at your theatre?
- 6 Look at a fundraising season for a well-known charity and see how you can market to their customers
- 7 Make sure no one gets left out –get a few tickets to your town charity so families who are struggling still get to attend
- 8 Fly a rainbow flag – show your theatre welcomes everyone





## 5. IS ANYONE READING YOUR EMAILS?

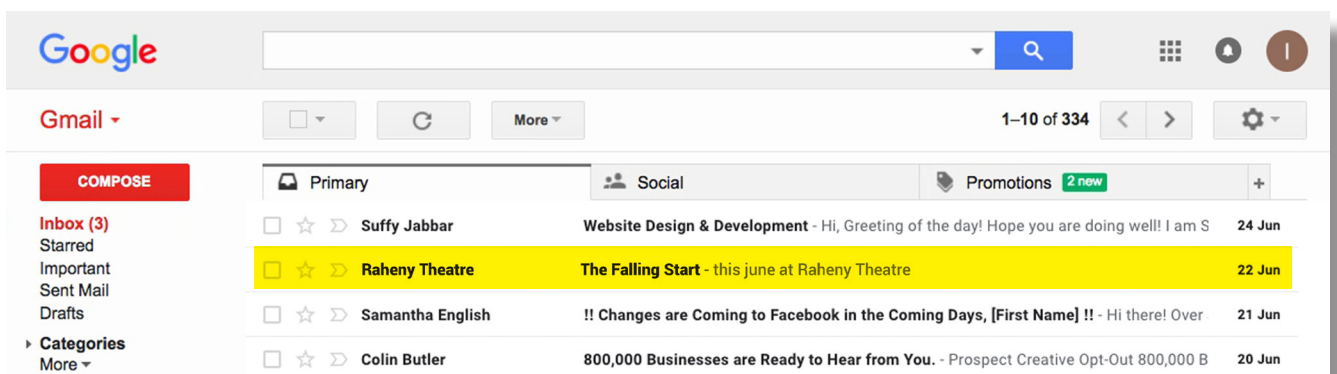
More than 90% of emails are deleted or go to spam.

Here are the reasons:

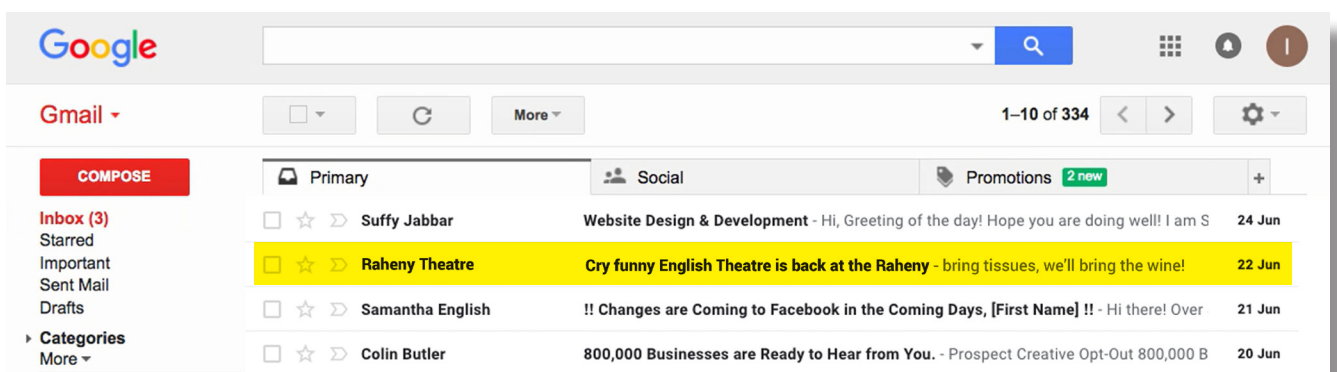
### ① Subject lines: are what screams out **READ ME** from a list of emails in an inbox

Did you ever open a newspaper, see a story not relevant to you and say, “I’ll read it anyway, I’m not busy”?

Subject lines are the key to getting your emails opened. Theatres often use the name of a show and the company in subject line. This is fine for your loyal regulars. Chances are most others will delete an email where the subject line gives them no reason to open it and read on.



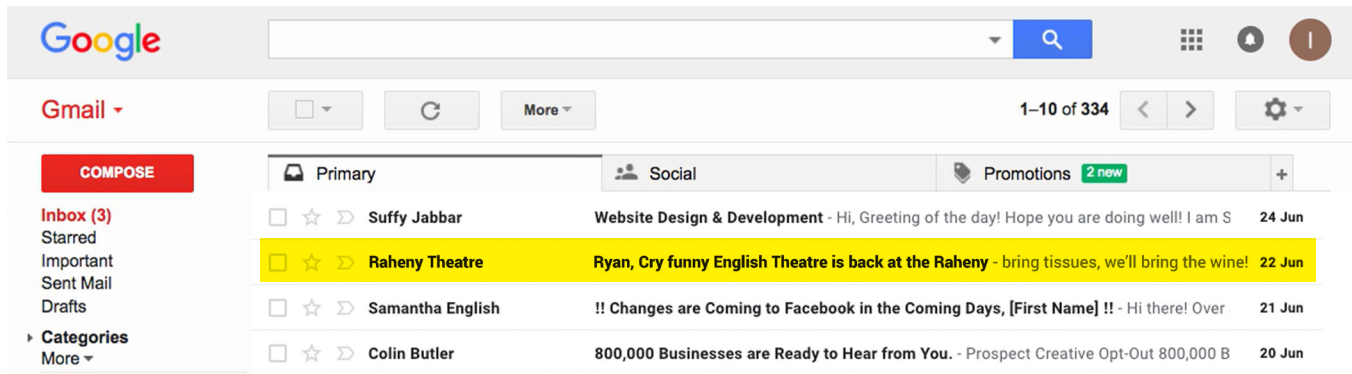
So, you are better to include something in the subject line about what’s in it for the reader, and maybe they will open it





## 2 Names

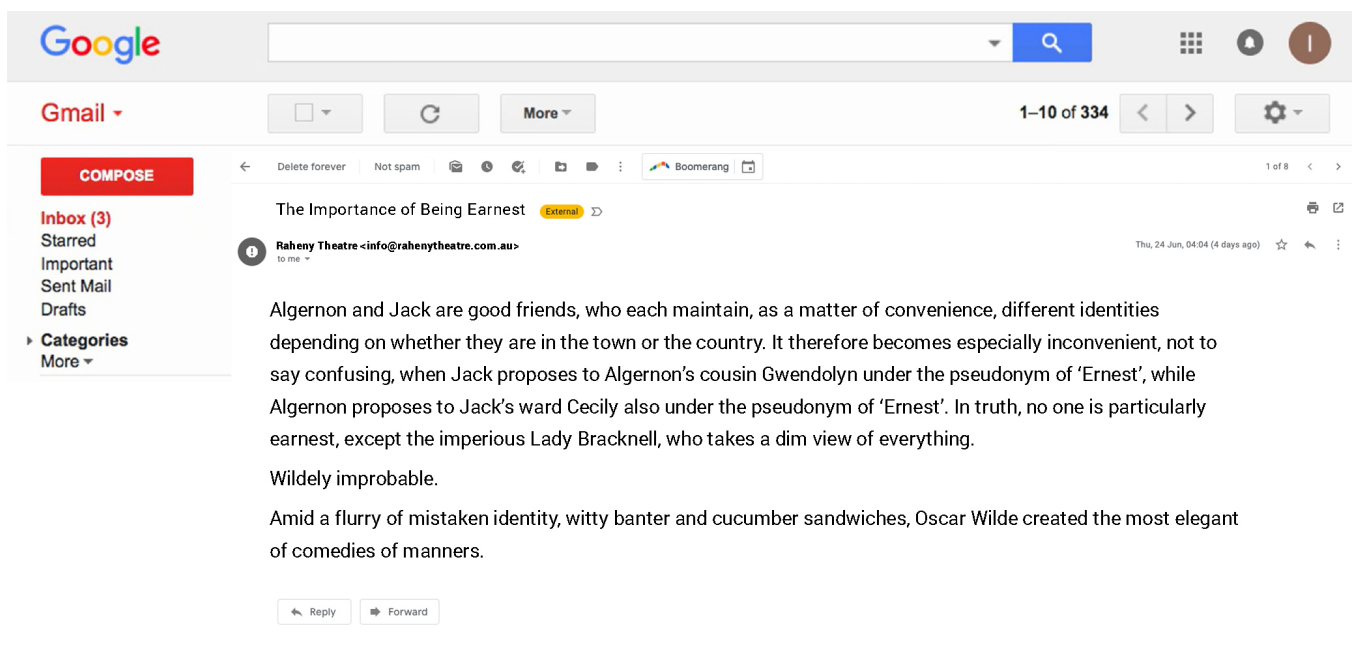
If your database gives you a first name, then use it. Most people like to see their name, it means it is from a sender that knows them. Most emailing systems allow you to add a name to the subject line.



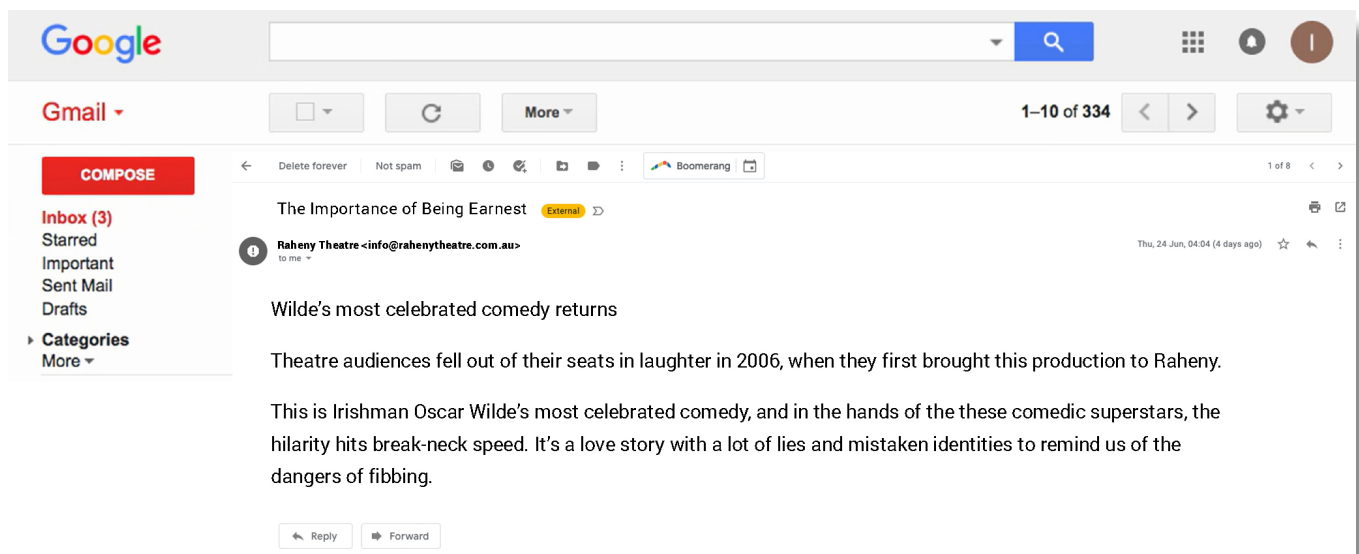
## 3 Give the reader more reasons to come in the email

In part 2, we talked about getting the message heard so the new audience has a reason to go. Tell them what the show is about, and why they would want to go. You have 2-3 lines at best, so hurry up but still be fascinating and compelling.

Here's an email example that works for people who know the show, the playwright, or the company.



This is an email for the same play but now it is for new audiences



The second example gave audiences 6 reasons to come, can you find them?

## 6. WORTH 1000 WORDS

Would you rather read or watch videos and look at pictures? Most of us like to read, but as internet research shows users are lazy and that interesting images and video get 80% more engagement on social media than text. On the downside, buying a licence to stage a show might give you a show poster design but no video and not many images.

Here's some solutions to help get video and images that will improve your engagement.

- 1 Search the web for good quality images and videos of other organisations putting the work on. Make sure you ask if you can use them. There is nothing wrong with saying, Here's the Raheny company version of the work in 2007 to give you a taste....
- 2 Get your phone cameras out. You have weeks of rehearsals, right? Have fun, publish much, don't be shy, don't use anything that reflects poorly on your work. Take the audiences on your journey...in pictures and video
- 3 Do cast bios, and include the people doing lighting, sound, costumes etc, and try and publish one a week

## 7. FACEBOOK RULES ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING

### Rule 1 – The rule of shares

We like to read posts our friends share because we trust them and love them, but we don't really like to read advertising – although we will, sometimes, if it fulfills a need.

This is the power of getting your cast involved in sharing.

- A typical club has 500-1000 followers
- A typical cast and crew of 10 in 2021 has 2000
- So, we increase our likely audience by 100% by getting the cast engaged in sharing to friends
- Even better, as people read shares 10 times more than ads so this increase in people is actually magnified much more

So, things to consider

- Recruit the cast and crew into marketing
- Take their photos in rehearsals and video if you can
- Why are they in the show? Share their stories
- Post, post, post
- Get the cast and crew to share, share, share

### Rule 2 – Memes

Social media users love memes more than most other posts because they are fun. They are not so hard to create. Here's an example of a post of a cast member who is in a show.



Here's my 2-minute meme made with one of the character's script lines with a free image that matched made in Canva at no cost.



Think about what gets your attention, be fun, be funny and be eye catching.

### **Rule 3 - Instagram**

Every few years someone in marketing suggests a new channel is “just for young people”.

*1st myth was the internet is only for the young*

*2nd myth was YouTube is only for the young*

*3rd myth was Facebook is only for the young*

*4th myth is now Instagram is only for the young*

Don't believe myths, there are 10 million Instagram users in Australia. Get an account and tell some stories. Connect your Facebook account and you only need to post once.

### **Rule 4 - Don't Bang On**

Theatres often make the mistake of reposting the show poster every few weeks with a ticket link. Most people become blind to the post repeated over and over, you need to diversify posts.

Every time you post to sell tickets remember to try and create 2-4 more posts with interesting things about the show, as has been covered in previous lessons images, memes, video.

### **Rule 5 - Boost posts**

Learn the targeting tool on Facebook and boost posts to your city, or town, age groups or interests. Make sure you do it when you think people will be free to check social media

## 8. GUERRILLA MARKETING

When the work is close to ready and the cast have costumes, get out into town, and get noticed in the community. If you have flyers, take them.

Practice some lines in a central place, send the cast to the pub, but don't miss the opportunity to get out of the theatre and be seen by all those people who skip your advertising.

When the work is close to ready and the cast have costumes, get out into town, and get noticed in the community. If you have flyers, take them.

## 9. COLLECT PEOPLE

Email and Facebook are the top 2 channels for marketing theatres across WA, despite this many theatres put more effort into posters. It is essential to focus on collecting emails and Facebook likes.

Most theatres have emails from ticketing, but these are only for the ticket buyer, which on any night is less than half the people who attend. One person is the ticket buyer for the group or couple, so if a new fan comes with a group to see a show, you need to try and gather their emails. If people like your work, most won't mind hearing more from you

This data is your marketing's life blood, so work to get all the email addresses you can. Provide free ticket draws at shows and run competitions on emails, but do everything you can to gather people. You need to make sure you comply with the Commonwealth's Privacy Act 1988, but this is not complicated.

You can also add email contacts to Facebook if you have their permission for marketing and this provides a whole new opportunity.

This is what getting this wrong looks like: A Perth venue had a regular group from a retirement village for 20-30 tickets at a time, 3-4 shows a year for a decade booked by their social organiser. Very sadly, she passed away. As that was the only email the theatre had for the group, they could not contact them. The village group never came again... they went from more than 800 ticket sales to zero because no one thought to collect some more people



## 10. WHAT DO YOU LOOK AT?

This the final and most important section You have to think back and recall what happened in your life yesterday?

- What were 3 emails you opened and why did you open them (not work emails)?
- What were 5 social media posts you looked at on social media – why did you look at them?

Think about your own behaviour in looking at emails and social media because chances are you are marketing to someone just like you. What gets your attention?

## 11. BACK TO THE START

Okay so time to go back to your list:

- 1 What are the marketing activities we always do?
- 2 Do we think aspects of our marketing are working? Which ones?
- 3 What marketing have we seen from someone else that you would love to do?
- 4 What are the marketing assets we have? (followers on Facebook, email/ticket records, sites for posters, organisations that help out, media outlets)
- 5 What marketing 'stuff' do we usually get when you buy the licence for a show?
- 6 How much time can we spend on marketing?
- 7 Who can do our marketing?
- 8 How much will we budget for marketing?
- 9 What would we change about our marketing?

Is there anything you might change?

# AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY THEATRE

**This resource provides 5 steps to audience development**

- 1 Essential Discussions For Boards
- 2 Brand Health
- 3 Research
- 4 Marketing
- 5 Deepening the Relationship

There are many definitions for audience development (AD) so it can be confusing. Simply, AD is about attracting new people or getting existing ones to attend more.

This resource is to help you take the first steps of audience development.

Audience Development is about attracting new people or getting existing ones to attend more.

## 1. DISCUSSIONS BOARDS SHOULD HAVE

These are the steps to ask your committee or board where you want to take audience development.

### WHAT ARE THE AUDIENCES YOU WANT TO DEVELOP?

Who currently attends work and who buys tickets? If you are in Western Australia, you are most likely to see four principal audiences

- Women over 50 attending with partners
- Women over 50 attending with friends
- Women and some men over 65 in groups from clubs and retirement villages
- Women under 40 with children (only if you program children's work)

There will be random people across many ages and genders, but which groups dominate the numbers? If you don't know, here are a few ways to check

- Ask your performers and volunteers to dominate the bar before and after the show
- Download a year in your ticketing system – are the names mostly female, or a mix? It's a basic test but it works for gender
- If you just don't know, go to resource 3 and do some research

Who do you want to attend? Who do you think will attend if you put in audience development effort? What types of work do you stage – who do you think it's for? What's your performing space like, is it a desirable location? Would you imagine people in the groups you want to attend will attend – would you attend if you were in their shoes?

Common new audiences that theatres often seek

- Families with school aged children
- Youth under 25
- Men 25-50
- Multicultural groups

Challenges to attracting these audiences

- Families with school aged children. This is a frequent group for theatres with family programming but outside of that type of show, logistics alone make a theatre trip complicated for parents of primary schoolers. Which is why theatres often see people reappear post 40 years old, when their responsibilities for children are reduced. If this is the theatre's target it really needs to have a programming strategy based around families. There are always people who are not having children so this is not a totally non-go group, but many people fall into the family demographic
- Single Youth under 25- think of what you were doing in your life before 25? Were you or people like you at a theatre? If not, why not? A strategy is needed for youth considering what programming might appeal. It needs to be realistic about the tendency of youth to gather at places away from those their parents attend
- Multicultural groups – people tend to seek people of a similar culture which means many people are unlikely to attend without strong connections to their ethnic group. Clubs that plan to target ethnically diverse people need a cultural strategy around that plan
- Men under 50 – a major study in 2021 showed that most men are not predisposed to going to theatres unless they have a partner doing ticket buying. Theatres need to be wary of pursuing a market that research shows are not largely predisposed to theatre

This is not to dissuade theatres from targeting other groups, but theatres should be realistic. Think through why target groups might come. A WA region's research with youth found they would come to a venue as long as it programs things for their age group, and that the venue was just for their age group at the time of events for them, i.e. become a youth venue exclusively for that event. This is a big strategic decision but it is possible.

## **SAFE TARGETS**

The low hanging fruit is the phrase for marketing to the easiest targets first. Don't rush to new targets until you have fully developed all of the audiences market most likely to buy tickets.

## **WOMEN OVER 50**

Most theatres believe they have women over 50 as major ticket buyers. So it makes sense to put effort into developing this market further. There is often clearly a link between women in this age group and theatre. If you haven't invited all the women over 50 in your catchment to your venue you are missing a prime opportunity. Where do you target them? Here are a few ideas to get you started

- Through existing ticket buyers who have friends
- Facebook targeting ads
- Beauty industry
- Facebook and meet up groups for this target

## **WOMEN AND SOME MEN OVER 65 IN GROUPS FROM CLUBS AND RETIREMENT VILLAGES**

This is a loved audience in community theatre as a guaranteed ticket buyer. If you have this group in your venue, that's great, but do you have them all? Good venues have the contact for every retirement village and aged living zone in their reasonable catchment. If you haven't got this, you are missing part of a great audience for theatres.

## **HAS ANYONE HEARD OF YOUR THEATRE?**

The number one reason for people not attending theatre events is the lack of knowledge of the theatre. Are you well known? The research in the next chapter will tell you this. Many theatres can attract new audiences simply by becoming better known in their surrounding suburbs. Don't expect that people in your venue catchment know of your existence because marketing research shows we see up to 5000 messages a day, so are they seeing yours?

## **TARGET PROGRAMMING**

Programming is a major decider on who is in your theatre. If you look at the theatres around the state the programming is dominated by 50s and 60's musicals and theatre and some 80s comedy. The late Stephen Sondheim was a huge contributor to theatres with *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, *A Funny Thing Happened*, *A Little Night Music* and *Sweeney Todd* to name a few. It is also a reminder that the newest of these works is over 40 years old. This is a good thing for audiences in their 50s and older and the lover of old musical theatre. Developing audiences means rethinking your programming. Who do you want to buy tickets and what do you think are the shows they might know and love? Audiences will never change if programming doesn't change to reflect the new audiences you seek to develop.

So, if you want 30-40 year olds think of the big musicals of the 90s included *Crazy For You*, *Miss Saigon* whilst *Cats*, *Chicago* and *Little Shop Of Horrors* from the 80s were big tours when musical theatre made its mark in WA and plays included *Out of Order*, *Time of my Life* and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*. Think about who you want to buy tickets and what was big on their stages when they were young? We are mostly all sentimental about the music we loved in our teens and 20s and it is the same for theatre. We are less sentimental about the music our parents liked, and this is even more true for theatre.

## 2. BRAND HEALTH

Many theatres will see audiences develop further if they solve the problem that impacts so many theatres. Negative brand perceptions impact the development of audiences more than any other factor in theatre.

This is truth telling. Have you been accused of being a bunch of amateurs? Are you in the same entertainment group as bingo?

Many people don't understand the quality of work that is delivering on stages all around WA. Repertory clubs are often stamped with a label of poor quality.

If you want to build audiences you should first do a brand poll. How do people who are in your catchment feel about you?

This can be done in a few ways

- The easy way – get your committee to do a sentiment poll over a few weeks with the people they know with one question; would you recommend a friend go to see repertory club theatre? Get those you know to ask as many people as they can if they know about your club, and what they think of it if they do. At the next meeting discuss what you heard
- The harder way – use the ad manager in Facebook to run a 1-question survey targeted to the people in your geographic area. Would you recommend a friend to go see repertory club theatre?
- The hardest way - go to a Facebook marketing company and get them to run a campaign for you, the same as 2

Every theatre should do all it can to build a great brand for all amazing work you do on stage. This is a list of dos and don'ts for improving the theatre brand over time -

### DON'T

- ✗ Publish images of your shows or rehearsals on social media that look amateur or are just badly timed
- ✗ Publish images that show an empty theatre or bar at your venue
- ✗ Have a poor looking venue exterior that reflects badly on what might be on stage inside – first impressions matter
- ✗ Have a brand or design that reflects amateur, old or poor quality
- ✗ Publish video to social media with poor vision and sound that is a poor reflection of your shows
- ✗ Use old show posters that don't reflect the quality of your performance
- ✗ Send emails that are badly designed and/or complicated to read
- ✗ Have media quotes in local media that reflect badly on the work
- ✗ Expect new people in your venue catchment to be aware who you are or what you do without telling them – on average 1/7 of people move annually



- ✗ Let people cease buying tickets without asking what you can do to improve
- ✗ Appear to cast the same people for every show
- ✗ Publish shows that are obscure

## DO

- ✓ Ensure your brand design looks as good as your theatre team
- ✓ Publish photos that are well thought through and staged that feature your show in its best possible light
- ✓ Share images of your beautiful sets
- ✓ Share cast and crew bios and their vast experience on stages
- ✓ Ask cast and crew to share your posts – they are part of the brand team too
- ✓ Learn how to take great video with reasonable quality sound and use it only if you are delighted it reflects the show
- ✓ Do exit surveys twice a year on how you did – ask for comments to get positive testimonials
- ✓ Look to how you can make the outside of your theatre match the inside.
- ✓ Ensure media quotes from cast members reflect an amazing show and their fantastic experience
- ✓ Work to improve poor show marketing and make sure the images shared will show a work people will wish to experience
- ✓ Tell the story of the show beyond the poster
- ✓ Share quality images of your theatre or your bar full of people having fun
- ✓ Ask your cast to be ambassadors for your brand using brand t-shirts or hats
- ✓ Publish group shots of the beautifully costumed and made-up cast
- ✓ Share images of any standing applause
- ✓ Ask your followers for social media reviews
- ✓ Get your cast to reflect on social media how the show was for them
- ✓ Publish a few words from the director about the upcoming work
- ✓ Be the brand police – don't let anything from the theatre be published unless it is of high quality and reflects the great company you are

### 3. RESEARCH

Gathering intelligence on how you are seen by those who visit gives you opportunity. It is 20 times more costly to get a new customer than it is to keep an existing one. So don't let a small problem cost you customers, everyone drops the ball sometimes.

Ask as many of these questions below as you can in a survey. This can be handed out at the bar after shows or emailed through one of the research software options. Electronic tools like Survey Monkey make this easy as you can see all the data and answers collated in one place without manual entry.

The idea of doing surveys is to build up the level of intelligence you have on audiences and plan for the future. It will tell you who is coming, who is coming back, what worked in marketing, what you might do in the future and what you might do better in the venue.

Here's some examples of things to consider

- 1 If age and gender statistics show consistent trends, then look to the highest numbers of people – these are your core market. Nurture them and seek more of this audience
- 2 If a lot of people say they would not recommend you, this is a quality problem you might need to address. This research technique is used around the world to see how good theatres are faring with ticket buyers
- 3 What are the little things that you can fix? You can sometimes stop customers moving on with better locks and a coat of paint and new toilet seats in the lavatory. The best example is the venue is who solved its coldness issued by inviting ticket buyers to bring their favourite blanket to winter shows
- 4 Look at where the postcodes are – look for high concentration in specific areas and make sure you market in those suburbs and the ones next to them

Question	Why ask this	What will you do with it
Is this your first show?	To see how many first timers came to the show	Measure the growth
Did you buy the ticket to the show?	To find out about your ticket buyers	To allow context for the next questions
Gender	To find out about your current customers	Understand your audience for future targeting
Age	To find out about your current customers	Understand your audience for future targeting
Would you recommend this theatre to another person?	To find out how good the performance was – this is the best measure	Understand your quality
What is your postcode?	To find out how far people travel to your work	Understand the size of your venue footprint
Are there any shows you would like to see in the future?	Get programming ideas	Gather ideas
Is there anything we could do better?	Get improvement ideas across the theatre – find out if it was a great show but a bad toilet that impacts people	Understand anything that might need attention in your venue
Are we marketing well enough for people like you – do you think other people know we are here?	Get an idea of the potential market size	Understand market dynamics, and if future marketing you should incentivise ticket buyers to become advocates
Where did you hear about us?	Gather marketing wins	Plan what marketing works

**Thanks for helping us out. I hope we see you next time**

## 4. MARKETING

Most theatres find a small improvement to their marketing plan will develop audiences further. This is the hit list for marketing your theatre to develop audiences of the target group that are already attending

- In theatre we deliver the emotions of the world – laughter, sadness, hope, joy, love, hate and everything in between. We have people in costumes, beautiful sets, songs, dances, fights, love scenes, deaths, and heart break – make sure anyone who receives your communications knows what they will feel by attending
- Don't expect show posters to work for anyone who does not know the show. Does your marketing tell people who don't know what the show is about – will they laugh, will they cry? Why are they coming? Is it a comedy, is it a love story? Will I cry, will I see someone I like? Is this going to scare the pants off me? Will it take me back in time? Will it challenge my very being? Will I cringe, shout at the screen? Will I be unhinged by it? Will I relate to it? Is it about people like me? Did it win awards? Is it Australian?
- Contact aged care and retirement places and meet the social organiser. Invite them personally to every show. They are often our best ticket buyers in theatre
- 2019 research showed many people still believe theatres are no fun. Is yours fun? How do new people know they will have fun at your theatre? Does your marketing show buying a ticket is for a fun experience, can I see pictures of that fun experience – no new customer goes on a cruise unless they have seen people having fun on a cruise
- Fly a rainbow flag – show your theatre welcomes everyone
- More than 90% of emails are deleted or go to spam. These are the 3 things you can do
  - Subject lines are what screams out READ ME from a list of emails in an inbox. Make sure to say something in the line which makes people know what is good about the show
  - Images and/or video are must haves. If the show licence gives you none, use image of your great theatre and cast
  - Write a great description of the show for someone who has never seen it. Do it in 3-4 lines – why is this a great show?
- Do cast bios, and include the people doing lighting, sound, costumes etc. Try to publish one a week
- We like to read social media posts our friends share because we trust them and love them, but we don't really like to read advertising – although we will, sometimes, if it fulfills a need. Get your cast sharing your social media. They are on the theatre team too.
- Theatres often make the mistake of reposting the show poster every few weeks with a ticket link. Most people become blind to the post repeated over and over, you need to diversify posts. If you are a theatre, take some great shots of your cast to use
- Learn the targeting tool on Facebook and boost posts to your city, or town, age groups or interests. Make sure you do it when you think people will be free to check social media
- What are the new audiences you want to develop? They are unlikely to see you on Facebook if they don't follow you. Seek social media groups amongst the people you target and ask to share their posts (start with Mum's groups, or residents pages for your suburb)

- When the work is close to ready and the cast have costumes, get out into town, and get noticed in the community or take a show reel of photos for social media
- Email is a top 2 channels for marketing theatres across WA. You need to try and gather emails as everyone who comes to your theatre does not but a ticket so you can't contact them. This data is your marketing's life blood, so work to get all the email addresses you can. Provide free ticket draws at shows and run competitions with entry forms or do business card drops but do everything you can to gather people. (You need to make sure you comply with the Commonwealth's Privacy Act 1988)

Refer to page 26 for more details on marketing.

## 5. DEEPENING THE RELATIONSHIP

In audience engagement we often overlook our existing customers and what will increase their engagement whilst we seek new audiences.

Every theatre has people that they consider to be their regulars who come to many or most show. The goal of every theatre should be to try and deepen the relationship so these people come to almost every show.

There is more to this because loyal customers are most likely to recommend you to friends, to donate, to volunteer, and maybe even end up on your stage one day.

How do you foster loyalty – here are 11 ideas to get you started

- 1 Check your ticketing data, see who buys a lot of shows. Send these people a thank you email and offer a free drink or a ticket
- 2 If you have a ticket box – put free drink vouchers in envelopes for your regulars on ticket collection with a thanks for coming again note
- 3 Create a club feeling and have bumper stickers or something to give to regulars to make them feel part of something bigger eg. Ardath Theatre Lover
- 4 Survey your regulars and make sure they are happy
- 5 Have a show suggestion box for regulars
- 6 If you have older regulars release your matinees exclusively to them first
- 7 Invite regulars to be part of the team before a show – “calling all painters, dress makers, carpenters, electricians, make up experts etc”
- 8 Once you have chosen a show – email a heads up to your regulars that it is coming up later in the year as a courtesy
- 9 Consider an annual gathering for cast, crew and the regular ticket buyers annually
- 10 Ask regulars to review the show
- 11 Create a theatre club and invite your regulars

There is cost and time to all of these so keep in mind it may cost you 20 times more to get a new customer than to retain an existing one



In any year, someone just might join a club or find an interest that means they don't come to you anymore. With that in mind, do things that deepen the relationship with your regulars and see if you can make them come more often, or even get involved in the theatre in other ways.

In audience engagement we often overlook our existing customers and what will increase their engagement whilst we seek new audiences.

# PROGRAM PLANNING FOR INCREASED AUDIENCE AND VOLUNTEERS

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You might be wondering what we mean by ‘programming’ in the community theatre context. Programming refers to the decisions you make about what events and shows you will offer your community.

The best programming decisions are made within a framework that sets out the aims of the program over a multi-year period (usually 3 to 5 years), outlining the types of events that will be programmed, and the different community segments for which those events are chosen. This framework is known as a Program Plan.

A Program Plan helps you grow your audience, because the process of developing the Plan encourages you to program events for the types of audiences you want to attract.

If you’re managing a community theatre venue, your community of interest is probably largely determined by the local government boundaries. This means that your primary focus when you’re making decisions on what to program will be your local community. Keep in mind, though, that not everyone will want to come to your events. Some people just don’t think of themselves as the type of person who attends arts events. Don’t waste your time trying to convert people who are uninterested; focus on those who are open to the idea of attending.

A Program Plan helps you grow your audience, because the process of developing the Plan encourages you to program events for the types of audiences you want to attract.

Before you consider what you should program, take account of what is already available in the local area.

Unless you’re starting from scratch with a new centre or a new program, you will have historical records to use to build a picture of what events attract what types of audiences. You may already have established program streams for older people and families and want to supplement them with streams, such as work for younger people. There are no community theatres in this space and the indigenous community.

If you have a segment within your audience that has attended regularly over several years, they are probably a bit more adventurous in their tastes than people who come rarely or haven’t been

before. You'll need to program a bit more adventurously to keep them interested. You could also consider working with them to discover the types of events they're interested in, involving them in the selection process.

People who have attended music in the past will probably attend music in future, and so on within each art form or genre.

You may feel driven to see your community tread a more adventurous artistic path: you may take pride in hosting higher profile artists or events; your frequent audience members may need something more interesting to maintain their interest and deepen their engagement; it may just be your personal mission. Whatever the impetus, be careful to plan your program to take your audience, your community, and your organisation into consideration.

Your artistic goals will be unique to your situation and should ideally reflect your community. Is there a particular interest in dance in your region? Or comedy, or jazz? Take this as a cue for developing one or more of your programming goals, relating to those artforms or genres, or taking a more exploratory approach within a particular genre.

People who have attended music in the past will probably attend music in future, and so on within each art form or genre.

## SO, WHAT DO WE WANT TO PROGRAM?

By working through each of these questions and considering how your answers might affect your programming choices, you will systematically build the picture of what you want to program. Make a note of your answers as you work through, so that you'll have notes to refer to later, when you come to writing up your Program Plan.

### **Are we exploring any artistic themes?**

If we have an artistic policy, does it focus on artforms or genres? Are we specialising in types of art, or themes? Themes could relate to situations relevant to the local/regional community, or not. We could become known for types or events, genres or artforms, which might help define our brand and build an audience. What would be relevant to our situation, our community, our existing and potential audience?

### **If we have one, is our artistic vision/policy aimed at a particular audience?**

Does our artistic vision have a particular audience in mind? Does it assume a context, background information, or familiarity by our audience? If we program work that assumes audiences have previous experiences in that artform, we'll need to offer opportunities for our audience to learn some of the background before they experience the work, like links to excerpts on YouTube, or interviews with the director or performers. Do our artistic policy and programming choices encourage or alienate potential audiences? If you are programming challenging work for an

interested subgroup within your audience, try to target your communications for that subgroup. It's better to describe the experience accurately and attract a smaller more enthusiastic audience, than to pretend everyone will enjoy it and have half of them leave at interval, disappointed.

### **What are our longer-term artistic goals? Where are we heading?**

What do we want to be programming in 5- and 10-years' time? Is there a longer-term vision?

### **What are our venue's physical limits: what is it inherently suited to, or not suited for?**

What is our venue good at? What can we present well? What isn't suited to our venue?

### **What does our current program look like? What do we imagine future programs will look like?**

How does our current program differ from what we'd like to be programming, or what we'd like to be programming in the future? Can we plan a path to the kind of programming we want to be doing, which will help us build the type of audience we want to attract?

## **WHO WILL OUR PROGRAM ATTRACT?**

By working through each of these questions, and considering your answers, as for Step 3, you will systematically build a picture of the type of audience your programming will probably attract. Make a note of your answers as you work through, so that you'll have notes to refer to later, when you come to writing up your Program Plan.

### **Are we looking for a new audience?**

Will the type of programming we're considering attract audience not currently attending?

### **Are we looking to consolidate existing audience attendance?**

Will the type of programming we're considering attract our existing audience, or alienate them?

### **Are we focussing on a local audience?**

Will it help us attract a local audience? What do we define as 'local', and what do we define as 'regional'? Local might be from within say 1 hour's drive (this will depend upon where you are located), and regional might be from more than 1 hour's drive away.

Are we looking for more people like our current audience, or different cultural/socio/economic profiles? Will it help us attract people from different backgrounds? Do we have target groups we'd like to attract? What are their cultural backgrounds? What are they interested in? Can we program for their interests?

## **Do we know what types of people it will attract?**

How do we know who will be attracted by types of programming? The best indicator of future enjoyment is previous experience with similar events: those who have attended similar events are likely to enjoy similar future events. Those with the most previous arts experiences are likely to be the ones with the most adventurous tastes.

## **DEVELOPING TRUST**

Over time, through repeated attendances, your audiences develop trust in your ability to choose programs they find rewarding, stimulating, engaging or enjoyable. This is one reason why consistent programming is important. The more they experience pleasant surprises, enjoying events they weren't sure about, the more they'll trust your programming choices in the future. If you develop a Program Plan and stick to it, choosing slightly more adventurous works each year within the range you've identified as relevant to your community the more you will develop an audience for those events. In this way, over time, it is possible to take an audience on a wonderful journey through a range of quite adventurous experiences.

How long does this process take? If your population is subject to high turnover, as is the case in some rural and remote communities, the segment you're focussing on to develop this trust may be smaller than in communities with more stable populations. For people who are shorter-term residents, say 3 to 5 years, you may only provide one or two experiences before they move on. If we assume that most longer-term residents attend only once or twice a year or less (which is most likely given our knowledge of ticketing databases), this process can probably take 2 or 3 years to begin to affect audience attendance decisions, and 5 to 7 years to really consolidate trust. It's a medium to longer-term outcome.

## **WHO ELSE DO WE WANT TO ENGAGE?**

### **Your Wider Community**

You will already be developing an idea of what you want to program. The next step is to ask yourself, if you haven't before, who might be interested in these events you're planning? And who else do you want to see included in your audience? Are there any groups within your community missing, who you think should be catered for and encouraged to attend?

Before we start zeroing in to look at who might attend future events, and who currently attends, it will be useful to consider the character of the wider community – those who don't currently attend, as well as those who do. Does your local government provide area population data from the last Census that you can access? Can you get information about who attends other arts venues and events?

When considering whom you want to engage with your programming, it's wise to consider the trends affecting your local and regional population. (You may already have done this, but if not, it's a wise thing to do.) How is it changing? How fast is it changing? Will there be more or less of types of people in 5- or 10-years' time? Since it usually takes a minimum of around 3 to 5 years to



grow a new audience, you need to be looking ahead to who will be around 3, 5 and 10 years from now. Are young families increasing? Are older people increasing? Are people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds increasing?

## **YOUR EXISTING AUDIENCE:**

### **Audience research**

Ideally you will undertake some audience research every couple of years to understand not only the socio-demographics of your audience, but also and perhaps more importantly, their responses to the experiences you offer them. How does it make them feel? What part does it play in their lives? What sort of emotional or intellectual impact does it have? How do they describe their experiences – what language do they use? This is not only valuable information when considering future program choices, but also when writing copy for marketing materials and estimating box office revenue for future shows.

### **Ticketing database analysis**

In the absence of any audience research information (although if you don't have any you may wish to plan some in the future), you can use analysis of your ticketing data to deepen your understanding of audience behaviour. Apparently, 80% of people on most performing arts ticketing databases have only attended once. How often, on average, do your audience members attend events? The average time between performing arts attendances is around 18 months. If you have a subscription or membership package which expects people to attend 3 or 4 times per year, how likely is the 'average attender' to think that's a great idea? Collected ticketing data also shows the following repeat attendance patterns: 14% of first timers go on to become second timers; 26% of second timers go on to become third timers; 34% of third timers go on to become fourth timers. And once someone has been four times, apparently 45% of them go on to attend 5 or more times.

14% of first timers go on to become second timers; 26% of second timers go on to become third timers; 34% of third timers go on to become fourth timers.

### **Recency and frequency: predicting future attendance**

Looking at attendances for past events is one of the best ways to predict future attendances: what shows can you program in the future, that are like events you programmed in the past? The audience for those past shows is the people most likely to attend future, similar shows. Recency and frequency are two of the best predictors of future attendance: the more recently someone has attended, and the more frequently they've attended, the more likely they are to attend in the future.

### **Developing your audience by leading through programming**

Remember the discussion about artistic policies or plans, and your more frequent attenders.

Are we looking for an audience for programming the kind of programming you want to achieve? Do you want to be proactive in your programming, not reactive? You can respond to existing community/audience interest where you need to, but you should aim to lead where you can. **Your community can't tell you they'd like to see what they don't know exists, so to keep them engaged you need to program one or two steps ahead of their developing interest. They need you to be out there finding what's available and surprising and delighting them with new experiences.**

### **Programming for your community's changing needs and wants, audience gaps**

If you're familiar with the current trends in population growth or change for your area, you'll have a sense of which segments of the community are likely to grow, stay the same, or decrease. This should be kept in mind when considering what type of audience, you want to build for the future. This might be culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and/or recent arrivals; it might be local indigenous populations; it might be younger people, or older people. Community engagement principles might need to be followed for certain segments: you need to program events which will be relevant and of interest to them, invite them in, and reach out to make connections to their community networks. You might want to identify gaps and try to fill them: your current audience may be dominated by older people, and by women (that's the performing arts cliché) – you might want to develop a program strand specifically aimed at men. If so, try comedy. Who you target to build for future audiences should be determined by your local and regional circumstances, and consider the requirements of the funding bodies to whom you apply for grants? *Whoever you're targeting, your program plan will be a key part of the strategy for engagement.*

### **What events will engage them?**

How do we know what events will engage target audiences, or who will be attracted by programming streams?

One of the best ways to begin to understand the links between programming and audience engagement is through audience research and database analysis. Once you begin to understand the audience responses to what you've programmed in the past, you develop an appreciation for how your audience might respond to future events.

### **What do we and don't we know about our audience?**

The simplest measurement of audience engagement is ticket sales or attendances. The shows with the most ticket sales have the widest audience engagement, based on just numbers. But what about depth of engagement? And chances of future, repeat attendance? Which shows will result in more people wanting to attend again in the future, and more often? And which shows might attract people who don't currently attend?

**Ticketing database analysis** can help you answer the last question about shows that might attract new people. If you run your own box office, you can do a 'first timer' analysis on your performing arts events which shows have attracted the most 'first timers'? Programming more similar shows and tailoring your marketing to new attenders should increase first timers. But once

you've got them in, what is going to make them want to come back? One of the keys to repeat audience attendance is the degree of individual **satisfaction** with the experience. Many different aspects of the experience can impact on satisfaction, including the friendliness and knowledge of your staff, and cleanliness of the venue. But one of the most important keys to repeat attendance is the **impact** the event itself has on your customers.

**Simpler audience research** can be done very cost effectively using online questionnaires, provided you have a good cross section of your audience responding to online communication. It is advisable to engage an experienced researcher to design the questions, based on what you hope to find out, and to help you analyse and interpret the findings. (For example, you need to check how representative your responses are of your whole attendance database, and weight the answers accordingly. Otherwise, your picture of your audience could be skewed towards the profile of more frequent attenders, because more frequent attenders are more likely to answer the questionnaire.) Asking audience members through a questionnaire how likely they are to re-attend and to recommend the experience to others can be a good way to measure satisfaction.

A couple of focus groups run by an experienced focus group moderator can lead to significant insights into what your audience thinks and how they react to the experience of attending different shows. Together, focus groups and online questionnaires can deliver extremely valuable information, which is very useful when planning programs, designing marketing campaigns, and writing marketing copy. It is also possible to engage a research consultant on a shared basis between several venues, to run the same or similar questionnaires and compare results. This reduces the cost to each venue.

Take a moment to think about the audience data you have available. If you have existing audience research, what have you learned about your existing audience's program preferences? What shows have the greatest impact? OR What audience research could you do to help deepen your understanding of your audience and their programming preferences? Could your programming, marketing and audience development be made more effective by some simple audience research? Could you analyse your ticketing database differently to provide more insights into customer buying behaviour?

## **WRITING UP THE PLAN: LET'S START WRITING NOW.**

Taking a basic 'planning model' approach, the three sections of a Program Plan could be:

### **Section 1. Goals:**

What do you want to achieve through your Program?

- Goals should be high level, and limited to three or four at most
- For example, 3 or 4 of these could be considered as goals:
  - To provide a range of high-quality arts and entertainment experiences for the people of our community, while:
    - Increasing depth of audience engagement
    - Increasing frequency of attendance

- Build trust and loyalty
- Engage more younger audiences
- Develop a community engagement program for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Achieve budget box office revenue

## **Section 2. Activities:**

What shows will your Program Plan result in each year?

Outline your approach to programming, derived from your artistic vision, research into your community, your audience and considering your goals above.

For example, programming each year, to achieve the above goals, could include:

- 3 or 4 plays of a certain type and genre
- 3 or 4 musicals of a certain type and genre
- 2 shows that target certain demographics.

Please note that the shows do not need to be different. You may find plays of a certain type that speak to a certain target demographic that will also appeal to your usual audience. It might also be useful to include information about the size of shows you're able to program, the amount of money you have available to do so.

## **Impacts: What impacts are you anticipating?**

How will the program affect your community, your Council, your audience and participants, and your financial situation in the longer term?

- Audience/Community impacts:
  - Changes in diversity
  - Changes in depth of engagement
  - Longer term engagement of key targets
  - Diversity of participants and volunteers.
- Financial impacts
  - More predictable box office revenue
  - Stronger support from Council
  - Strengthened partner/funding relationships

Now that you've worked through all the considerations in developing a Program Plan, it's time to write it down. Gather up all the notes you made working through this Guide and start thinking in detail about the Goals you want in your Program Plan.

What are you aiming to achieve in your Programming? What overall long-term goals will shape the decisions you make each year about what to program? These might be related to audience development, attracting more audience members from groups within your community, rounding out the program with a greater variety of genres, or aiming to increase audience attendance

What are you aiming to achieve in your Programming? What overall long-term goals will shape the decisions you make each year about what to program?

This short template is provided to get you started:

## THE XYZ THEATRE PROGRAM PLAN

### Introduction

Write an overview of your Program Plan aims here. Write it last, so it acts like an Executive Summary and sets up the reader for the details to come.

#### NOTES

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### Artistic Vision or Policy

Quote the main points or goals of your Artistic Vision or Policy here if you have one. You don't have to have one of these.

#### NOTES

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### Programming Goals:

Write your Program Plan goals here. You might want to include goals relating to community (perhaps from your Council Plan), artistic, audience development, and financial outcomes.

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2

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3

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4

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(Try to limit this to no more than 3 or 4, high-level goals)

### **Program Strategies:**

You might want to develop a set of strategies to achieve your Program Goals, such as programming to encourage the purchase of packages of 3 events or more, or to link in with the school curriculum in various subject areas so that you can offer workshops with the performances. Developing partnerships with producers over several years, to ensure you can offer their work every year over a period, to help build an audience, would also be considered as a strategy. Also calling out for certain types of shows or directors to be submitted for your season.

### **NOTES**

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### **Program Activities:**

Include an overview of your season, describing the types of shows you've chosen and the rationale behind your choices. Then list each show for the coming year. This section, the activities, will change annually, but your goals will probably remain the same across 3 to 5 years. You should review your goals against your progress in achieving them, every couple of years, and adjust as required.

### **NOTES**

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## Outcomes:

Describe the outcomes you hope to achieve through this program of activities. Like the goals, try to limit the number of outcomes you're trying to achieve to higher-level things – these can work like KPIs for your goals, so you might match each goal with a specific outcome you're going to measure. Limit these outcomes to things that you can measure easily, and that will be useful to you when assessing the achievements of your programming for any one year.

## NOTES

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## MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

How are we measuring the success of our Program Plan? Box Office revenue? Number of visitors? Number of first-time audience or visitors? Audience from geographic areas? Depth of impact of the experience?

### **What measurement tools will we need: database analysis? Audience/visitor questionnaires?**

However you choose to measure and evaluate the success of your Program Plan, remember that it must be practical. The less tangible impacts can be difficult or expensive to measure. It can be better to keep it simple, and measure things that are relatively easy to measure, rather than dreaming up a very complex evaluation system that is too time consuming to manage.

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# GRANT WRITING

Everyone has the capacity to learn, and like all skills Grant Writing is a skill that can be taught. Our aim is to empower artists, arts workers, and arts organisations to access the multiple funding opportunities that exist for them and give them the skills to successfully apply for funding, manage funding, and acquit funding, as a way of strengthening the arts community.

This guide is intended as an introduction to grant writing and will cover some of the basics including:

- What is a grant and why do they exist?
- The different kinds of funding available
- Where to find grants?
- How are grants assessed?
- How to write a grant proposal?
- Support material
- Letters of support

## WHAT IS A GRANT AND WHY DO THEY EXIST?

Understanding the purpose of grants is the first step in successfully applying for grant funding. There is a misconception that grants are “free money” that organisations and philanthropists give away. This is not true!

Grants are funds given out by private, public and not-for-profit organisations for a range of purposes that help the organisation to achieve its objectives.

These organisations are referred to as “funding bodies”. The funding they provide is carefully curated money that helps the organisation to achieve its goals and objectives without the added administrative and organisational cost that running the project directly would cost.

Most grants will have an objective. This is the overarching reason for why that grant exists. Here are some examples of grant objectives:

- **Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) U15K GRANT:** The program supports the development and growth of a vibrant sector that promotes the participation and active engagement of Western Australian communities in high quality arts and cultural experiences.

- **Australia Council International Fund:** Our vision is for Australian arts, culture and creativity to be thriving and known globally for its innovation, sustainability and diversity.
- **Regional Arts WA YCulture Drug Aware:** Drug Aware YCulture Regional is a funding and development program for youth arts and culture projects developed by young people living in regional Western Australia. Funded projects will have a focus on skills development, community engagement, and promotion and education of Healthway's key health messages

Once you understand the objective of the grant, you can then examine if you or your organisation's values align with the funding body and align with the funding objectives.

## WHAT CAN BE FUNDED?

Not all grants are suitable for all needs and it is important to understand what can and cannot be funded. Nearly every grant will have a set of conditions attached to it. This will outline not only who can apply but what the funding can be used for, so it is important to always **read the conditions of the grant before you commence your application.**

Below is an example from the DLGSC U15K Grants Program guidelines outlining what activities are ineligible for funding.

Example:

What can't I apply for?

- Projects or activities that do not involve or benefit Western Australian practicing artists, creatives, or arts or cultural workers
- Purchase of capital equipment including instruments, equipment, software, computers and/or uniforms
- Capital works such as construction or purchasing of studios, work spaces or gallery spaces
- Activities already funded by the department through any of our funding programs
- Activity relating to radio broadcasting
- Display, restoration or conservation of cultural and/or historical material
- Costs of manufacturing and/or producing prototypes

## HOW TO APPROACH A GRANT

There are two different thoughts around how to approach a grant:

- 1 Have a bunch of ideas always running in the background, ideas that would help your organisation to achieve its objectives, and when a grant comes along that matches an idea you apply for funding.
- 2 When a funding round is announced your organisation develops an idea that aligns with its organisational objectives while also matching the funding conditions.

Each way of approaching a grant is acceptable and has both its strengths and weaknesses. It is up to you and your organisation to decide what is the best approach or whether you will use a mix of both.

At the end of the day the important thing is to ensure that your idea fits the grant criteria and is eligible within the grant conditions.

## **WHERE TO FIND FUNDING**

Grants are offered by a range funding bodies, and they will vary based on your area of expertise, your regional location, the level of your career, and your art form. That is why it is always important to read the grant conditions to ensure you are eligible before writing your application.

Below are the most common places to find information about different funding bodies and the grants they offer.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Nearly every local government has public funding available. This funding almost always needs to be applied for by someone or an organisation who resides in that LGA to benefit the residents of that LGA. Check with your LGA to find out what is available.

### **STATE GOVERNMENT**

Each department of State Government has a funding body. The range of funding varies from department to department. In WA the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries handles arts funding.

### **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

Most Federal funding comes either from federal departments or partner organisations. The Australia Council is the Australian Government's principal arts investment, development and advisory body.

### **ORGANISATIONS**

Organisations with specific interests will fund projects and ideas that help them deliver on their core objectives. This includes everything from local businesses to Australia wide organisations, banks, and mining companies. E.g. Australia Post, Synergy, Terry White Chemist.

### **PHILANTHROPY**

Philanthropy funds often have very strict guidelines on what they will and won't fund and are often tied to the personal interests of the person funding. Examples include the Ian Potter Foundation, Minderoo Foundation, and Creative Partnerships Australia.

## OTHER PLACES

Directories including:

- GrantsHub
- GrantConnect
- CommunityGrants.com

Newsletters from arts organisations such as Regional Arts WA, Performing Lines, Circuitwest will list funding opportunities.

Local members of Parliament.

## WHERE TO START

Before you start your application download or find three things:

- The guidelines
- The application form
- The closing date

## THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines outline everything you need to know about the grant. They will give you the objectives of the grant, eligibility criteria, what the funds from the grant can be used for, who can apply, how much you can apply for, how your application will be assessed, and the contact name and phone number or email of someone you can talk to for help also called a Grant or Project Officer. If anything in the guidelines confuses you, call or email for help. It is better to spend five minutes on the phone than spending weeks completing an application which is ineligible.

## THE APPLICATION FORM

This is where you complete your application. Most applications are now submitted online through grants portals, although some local government grants and small organisation grants still use PDF documents. Most application forms take the form of a series of questions aimed at determining what your project is, who is involved, what the budget is, and supporting documentation.

## THE CLOSING DATE

Knowing the closing date and time is incredibly important as once applications close you cannot submit it late. Write down the closing date and time in your diary a full 24 hours before it is due. That way if anything goes wrong you have an extra day for fixing things and dealing with any technical issues.



## HOW ARE GRANTS ASSESSED?

Grants are assessed by something called an assessment panel. Assessment panels are made up of peers and aim to represent a variety of art practices, regional diversity, and career diversity. Depending on the funding body, assessment panels are made up of between 3 and 8 members. They are nearly always not employees of the funding body but rather consultants engaged to represent the best interests of the funder.

Assessment by the panel is undertaken in three stages:

### INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

Each member of the panel reads all applications submitted to the funding round and grades them according to the guidelines of the grant. They will often make notes on each application and order them from most likely to least likely to be funded.

### GROUP ASSESSMENT

Next, all members of the panel come together either online or in person, and discuss each grant one by one. During the discussion the panel members aim to come to an agreement about how the applications should be ordered to determine which applications will and won't receive funding.

### RECOMMENDATION TO FUNDING BODY

Once the panel has met and had their discussion they then make their recommendations to the funding body. The majority of the time the funding body will go with what the panel recommends and will then inform all applicants of the outcome.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Understanding the process can help you to undertake writing your grant application. It also helps to understand that it isn't just one person deciding if your application is successful or not.

It is also important to note that panels change from grant round to grant round so your application will very rarely be read by the same group of people each time.

## HOW TO ANSWER CORE QUESTIONS

Core questions are the questions you answer in your grant application. They cover things like "What is your project?", "Who is involved in your project?", "What outcomes are you hoping to achieve?", and "How will you evaluate if your project is successful?".

Core questions aim to help the assessment panel to understand what your project is and why you should be given funding. Therefore it is essential to answer core questions effectively. Some quick tips for approaching core questions include:

## DO

- ✓ Use simple plain English
- ✓ Be clear and detailed about who you are and what you want
- ✓ Treat the reader as someone who knows nothing about you, your organisation or your project
- ✓ Keep to the word limit
- ✓ Be professional
- ✓ Explain what the grant will do (and why it won't happen without it BUT don't write for pity)

## DON'T

- ✗ Use abbreviations or acronyms
- ✗ Use jargon, flowery, or buzz words like “silos”, “synergies”, “value exchange” etc.
- ✗ Assume the reader has background knowledge on you, your organisation, or your project
- ✗ Go over the word limit
- ✗ Make false claims but also don't be too modest

## WRITING A GRANT PROPOSAL

Grant proposals should be short and to the point. It is very similar to an elevator pitch. An elevator pitch is a short, pre-prepared speech that explains what your organisation does, clearly and succinctly, or in the case of your grant proposal explains what your project is and hopes to achieve.

It should be interesting, memorable and succinct. It also needs to explain what makes your project unique and why it should be funded.

**Example:** *La traviata in Concert is a professional development and community capacity building project bringing together local and interstate professional artists, with significant community participation, to perform the most popular opera in the world, Verdi's La traviata, at the Albany Entertainment Centre (AEC). The project will be led by local arts organisations, the Albany Chamber Orchestra and Albany Choral Society, building on 7 years of experience of delivering exceptional arts experiences for the Great Southern Community.*

Most grant proposals are short but should have the following elements:

- Name of the project
- Goal of the project or objective you want to achieve
- Who you are and what you do
- How this project will fulfil the objectives of the grant

Don't get bogged down in too much detail. This is a short succinct paragraph that outlines exactly what you want to achieve.

## WHAT ARE SUPPORT MATERIALS?

Support materials are crucial to a successful grant application and are essential for assessors to fully gauge the value of your activity and its potential for success. They can take many forms but all have one thing in common, they support your grant application making it stronger. The better your support material, the stronger your application for funding will be.

Support material can take many forms including:

- Letters of support
- Artist CVs
- Signed contracts
- Quotes
- Photographs
- Videos
- Audio recordings
- Marketing plans
- Evidence of past work
- Reports

The type and quantity of support material you provide will depend on the type of grant you are applying for, the type of project you are developing, and the people involved in the project.

Examples:

- A project involving musicians will most likely require audio recordings of the musicians to help illustrate their skill and talent for the project being developed.
- An infrastructure project will most likely need copies of plans and quotes from tradesmen.

Also keep in mind the support material limits that will outline how much support material will be accepted by the assessment panel. Remember, support materials only support the application and you still need to ensure your application is complete without them. Make your support material relevant, easy to read, and suitable to your application.

## WHAT IS A LETTER OF SUPPORT?

You will often get asked to either provide a letter of support for a project or obtain letters of support to attach to your own project. Think of these as references for your work.

A letter of support should outline how the person knows you and examples of past work, outline any cash, service or in-kind contributions and their dollar value, the name of the funding round, and a statement of support. Letters of support come from industry leaders, experts, key organisations, trusted individuals, and others involved in your project.

## WHAT NEXT?

You can always get help – Many LGAs provide grant writing assistance, there are also private companies that will help with grant writing. You can also reach out to arts organisations or individuals in the arts who can point you in the right direction.

Ask the project officers for help (check the guidelines for their contact details). You need to at least contact them before you start your application to make sure you are submitting to the right funding round with an eligible project idea.

Proofread and polish your application and ask someone who knows nothing about your project or organisation to read your application and explain it back to you. This is your opportunity to see if there are any glaring mistakes or things you have missed.

Submit it ahead of time and allow for any last minute technical issues or mistakes.

Never type your application directly into the online application. Instead open up a Word document and write your application in there and save it periodically. Online portals are notorious for deleting entire applications or not saving correctly. You don't want to lose all your work because the form didn't save correctly.

Celebrate or commiserate – but be prepared for either. Grant writing is a process and it is very difficult to be successful all of the time. It can be hugely exciting to receive grant funding and discouraging when you don't receive funds after spending so much time and effort on your application. Have a plan in place for what you will do if you do or don't receive the funding you applied for.

Don't be afraid to ask for help and talk to others about your project. You may find people that can help you with your project and you may find support without the need for funding. It always pays to talk to others in the arts community so we can help one another.

Celebrate or commiserate – but be prepared for either. Grant writing is a process and it is very difficult to be successful all of the time.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**‘It’s like a family’ - Building and sustaining Community Theatre through community engagement.**

The Community Theatre sector in Western Australia is a passionate and highly skilled sector that wants to secure its future. This document aims to provide inspiration and support to the sector by providing examples of practical actions that will improve the sustainability of clubs through community engagement and community building.

## SETTING THE STAGE: THE BASICS

### WHY COMMUNITY THEATRES MATTER

Community Theatres are important parts of our community. They are meeting places. They create valuable social networks by creating shared experiences. They enable members of a community to be linked by a common bond. Connections, friendship and a sense of community are powerful reasons to become involved and remain active in Community Theatres. Your Community Theatre exists for, and because of, the people and communities who engage with it.

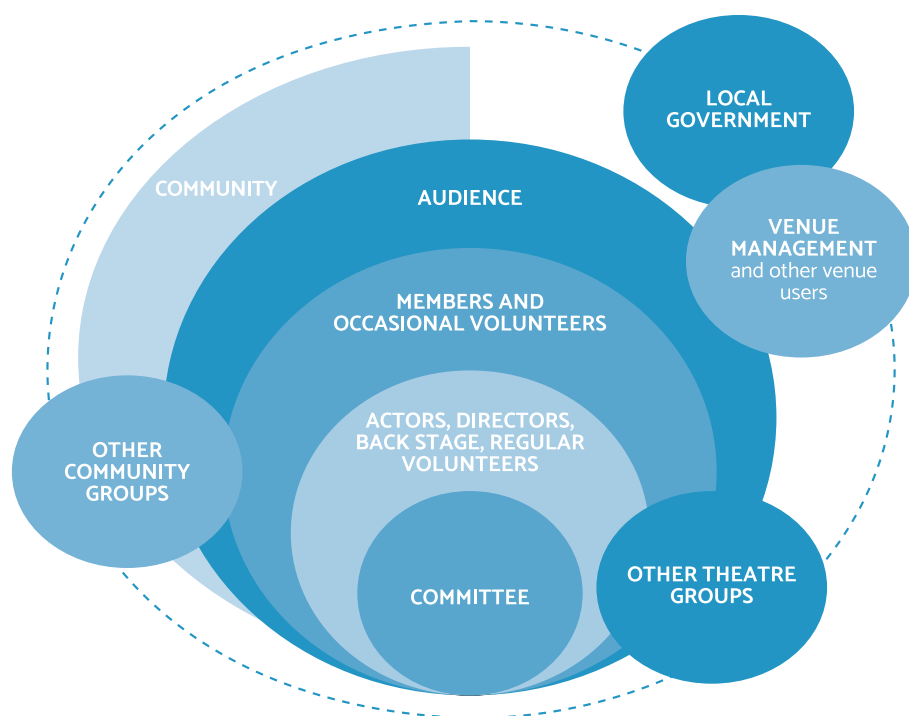


Figure 1. Community Theatre Ecosystem

This section has been prepared by Consultants Annette Carmichael and Dr. Carl Heslop as part of Circuitwest's Professional Development Program for Community Theatres funded by Lotterywest. It relies on information gathered from interviews, workshops, observation and feedback with the Community Theatre sector across 2021-22.

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## **SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS**

Sustainability is a critical issue for all volunteer clubs. It is important to step back from the everyday business of running a club to think about the bigger picture. Clubs are places full of creative, passionate and generous people. They are their own vibrant communities and are often described as feeling like a family. Keeping your family happy, healthy and heading forwards together is important work.

## **FINDING SOLUTIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS**

Fresh injections of enthusiasm and energy are important for any club. Ensuring that your club has a strong understanding of your community and the ecosystem you exist in (*see Figure 1*) will help you identify potential new members, volunteers and opportunities. It is important to note that a community is not always defined by geography and that while individuals may live in one place, they may connect with other places and other communities. Individuals might be a part of a number of clubs or communities - this is a sign of a healthy, interconnected sector.

## **COMMUNICATE WITH MEANING - NOT JUST STYLE**

Many clubs think the solution to attracting new members, volunteers or audiences is to simply spend more time and money on marketing. Visibility is important and getting your name 'up in lights' can help bring attention to your club, but unless you understand your members and offer an experience that meets their needs, keeping them engaged and involved will be a challenge.

## **DEMONSTRATE YOU CARE**

Demonstrating your commitment to volunteer development can lead to a greater sense of engagement and value by the volunteer. After bringing volunteers into your club, it is very important to identify their goals, any immediate, or long-term training and development needs and why they think you matter. Make sure people know they are important to how your Community Theatre operates. Partner new and enthusiastic volunteers with a mentor whose behaviour matches the values of your club. Provide opportunities to succeed through support.



## ACTION: PRACTICAL STEPS

### HOW TO CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY THEATRE CLUB.

There are a number of ways you can improve the sustainability of your club through community engagement.

- A. CREATE VALUE STATEMENTS**
- B. ATTRACT AND WELCOME NEW PEOPLE**
- C. BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY**



#### A. CREATE VALUE STATEMENTS

We want to take care of the family within our club - but we also want that family to grow and become more vibrant. To successfully invite people into our club we need to be strategic, we need to act within and live our values, and we need to be authentic.

#### Four ways to keep our 'theatre family' happy, healthy and heading forward together

- 1** As a committee or working group, decide on your club's key values.  
*Value statements help express what is at the very heart of our club and help guide committee decisions and the behaviour of members and volunteers.*

*For example:*

*We will:*

- I. Create a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome.

- II. Act with courage and find new ways to grow and support each other.
- III. Acknowledge First Nation custodianship of Country and express our respect for Elders.
- IV. Be humble and be willing to continually learn and improve.
- V. Celebrate our achievements.

**2** Communicate these values to members

*Values need to come to life - and the best way to start breathing life into them is to speak them. You believe in these values - so communicate that belief and pride regularly in many different ways.*

*For example:*

- I. Make sure your values are visible to members when they arrive.
- II. Include your values in each performance's printed program.
- III. Weave your values into presentations and speeches.
- IV. Display your values clearly on your website and social media - post about them regularly.

**3** Review these values every year and be willing to change them

*Successful organisations evolve, change and adapt. Take time each year to consider how well your values reflect your organisation and ask what is missing?*

*For example:*

- I. Review and discuss your values statements twice a year during committee meetings.
- II. Ask members for feedback on your values.
- III. Ask other organisations that you work with regularly if your values reflect their perception of your theatre - are you saying one thing and doing another?

**4** Refer to these values when making decisions (especially around programming, selecting Directors and resolving conflict).

*Whether it is a decision about a script, a director, a partnership, a venue change or a purchase - it is important to consider your values and if your decision matches those values.*

- I. Have your values visible during Committee Meetings?
- II. Ask out loud - does this match our values - talk through the decision as a committee.
- III. If something doesn't match our values - why are we doing it? Is there someone else that should be doing it instead?

## **B. ATTRACT AND WELCOME NEW PEOPLE**

Once we are ready to invite people to join our theatre family - we need to get out and do it. Engaging with people takes time and energy - but seeing a new member of your community find a place where they can be themselves, have fun and connect makes it all worth it.

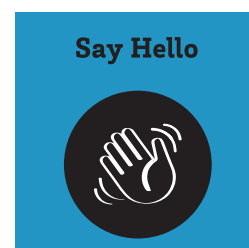
## Five ways to attract new people to your club by connecting with the community around you:

### 1 Say Hello - You need to say hello to the people you are trying to reach

Communities are just groups of individuals connected by a common bond - be that interest, geography, demographics or anything really. We all sit as part of multiple communities. What communities are you a part of?

If you want to connect with a “community” you need to talk to the individuals in that community. Go say hello. We recommend talking to the people you want to communicate with to find out what works best for them in terms of being involved in your club, as performers, volunteers or audience.

*Communities are collections of individuals - so start with an individual approach. Go say hello.*

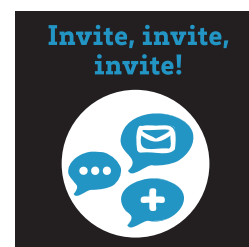


### 2 Invite, invite, invite! Invite them many times in many different ways

Sometimes we need to invite people many times, in many different ways, before they come along. Don't give up if your first invitation didn't get someone through the door. Think about other ways you can personally invite them to be involved.

What motivates one person may not motivate another. People have different expectations on involvement, different levels of availability and different passions. Why are you involved in your club? What motivated you to get involved in the first place? Who brought you along? What keeps you coming back? What is motivating your current members to be involved?

*Create multiple and different entry points into your club and new ways of inviting people in.*



### 3 Be welcoming - Providing positive experience is key to retaining people

If someone is new to your club - you need to welcome them warmly and in person. Start a conversation about what has brought them along and what they want to gain from being in your club. A common motivation is simply the enjoyment of taking part, watching or being around a theatre environment. A major part of what keeps people involved in clubs is a sense of community and belonging, a sense that they matter and share the same values as people around them.

Ways to make new members feel welcome

- Include a statement on the club's website and marketing material 'New Members Welcome' (*this really does make a difference*)
- Have a 'buddy' system where new members are paired up with an experienced member
- Officially welcome new members in the club's newsletter
- Have a dedicated 'new members' taster workshop for people that want to find out more about your club



Make the activities you provide fun and enjoyable with a friendly atmosphere. Offering lower commitment options is critical in ensuring people can come and try your club out without the pressure of a major commitment. Offer the chance to come in and see what you are like.

*With the right opportunities, levels of commitment and culture - people will stay.*

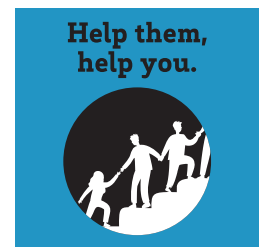
#### **4 Help them, help you**

People seek connection with your club for a variety of reasons from the desire to participate, make friends or be entertained - be it acting, backstage or directing or simply watching a show. They may wish to be a part of your club for a long time, or perhaps just a brief time. That's ok.

If we look again at Figure 1 we can see that there are multiple layers within Community Theatre clubs. A sustainable club needs people at all layers of engagement. What are the ways you can encourage people to flow between the different layers? How do Community Members become Audience? How do Audience become Volunteers? How do people know that you need their help?

People are looking for different levels of participation and different ways of contributing to their community. Some people may feel overwhelmed by having to commit to a full rehearsal schedule or to volunteer all the time, other people love it! Successful clubs have lots of different ways for people to contribute, big and small and pathways for people to change their level of commitment and effort over time.

*Give people many different ways to be involved with your club.*

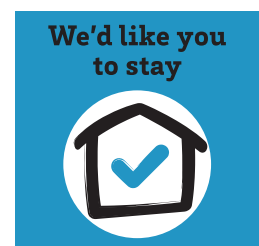


#### **5 We'd like you to stay - Invite them to stay or come back**

Ask people to stay involved. Your club's ability to attract and keep members and volunteers will partly depend on how well you understand why people are keen to be a part of your club. Whether they are looking to make new friends or want to give back to their community, it's important that the opportunities you are offering can fulfill these motivations.

Ask them what they are hoping to gain from being part of your club, and talk to them about which opportunities may be of most interest to them. Providing your members, participants and volunteers with a positive experience is key to retaining them; from the moment you first engage with them, through to the training, ongoing support and recognition for their contribution, it's really important the experience is a good one. There needs to be a reason to come back, and importantly, an invitation to return.

*With the right opportunities, levels of commitment and culture - people will stay involved and committed as they become more attached to your club.*



## C. BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Fun is important in building a sense of community. Clubs can sometimes get bogged down in the 'hard work' of running a Community Theatre but your theatre family needs to have some fun too! There needs to be moments of connection. There needs to be a focus on building and nurturing the community within your club, while also considering how you connect with the communities that sit around it. These considerations need to be regular conversations at committee level.

### Four ways to build the sense of community in our club

- 1 Once more, share your value statements with everyone - speak them in meetings, rehearsals and demonstrate them in our actions. Communities are built based on a shared understanding of what's important.
- 2 Distribute responsibility for the many tasks that are required for the club's success. Is it sustainable for one or two people to be doing the bulk of the work? Delegating tasks to other members and holding them accountable for delivering them, builds community and helps people feel like they belong.
- 3 Inject moments of fun and celebration into meetings, rehearsals or newsletters (eg: celebrate members 'good news' like birthdays, work promotions and achievements outside of the club). Making time for a cup of tea during rehearsal really builds connections.
- 4 Get together from time to time to just have fun. Building social and personal connections helps people feel more connected to our club and make them more likely to contribute.

## IN SUMMARY

Ensuring that your values are clear and communicated, and that you authentically act within and live your values is important as you look to invite people into your theatre family. Attracting and welcoming new people is critical to the long term sustainability of Community Theatre clubs. It can take time to find and encourage people to come along, sometimes it takes an extra little bit of effort to train and mentor people new to a role and sometimes the 'business' of theatres can get in the way of having fun - but committing to shared goals, welcoming communication and creating moments of fun, bring people together and build a sense of community.

We know that communities are groups of individuals connected by a common bond and a shared understanding of what is important. The more an individual feels like they belong to a community, the more likely they are to stay involved. The more we work with our members to build a sense of community and a shared understanding of our values, the more connected, nurturing and alive our theatre family becomes.

The more an individual feels like they belong to a community, the more likely they are to stay involved.

# CONNECTING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## Staying on Script - Communicating well with your Local Government

The Community Theatre sector in Western Australia is a passionate and highly skilled sector that wants to secure its future. This section aims to provide inspiration and support to the sector by providing examples of practical actions that will improve the sustainability of clubs through engagement with Local Government.

Speaking regularly with Local Government and using the right language is important in making sure your club get the support it deserves. Being strategic in your communication, ensuring you communicate with the right people at the right time and making sure that you tell them about your achievements, will increase their understanding of your value to the local community.

Speaking regularly with Local Government and using the right language is important in making sure your club get the support it deserves.

## VALUES - LOOK FOR ALIGNMENT

- What are the values of your club? What is important?
- Where are they written? How do you communicate them?
- If you can't find them (or don't have them in a formed way) do you need to spend some time as a committee working on them as part of strategic planning?
- What are the values of your Local Government?
- What are the stated objectives in your Local Government's strategic community plan?

Place your club's values and the objectives of your Local Government side by side. Where are the points of intersection? What do you have in common?

## MAKE IT EASY TO SEE YOUR ALIGNMENT

Whoever you are communicating with – keep it concise. If you can't get your point across in a single page letter, keep trying to refine it.

This section has been prepared by Consultants Annette Carmichael and Dr. Carl Heslop as part of Circuitwest's Professional Development Program for Community Theatres funded by Lotterywest. It relies on information gathered from interviews, workshops, observation and feedback with the Community Theatre sector across 2021-22.

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## LANGUAGE MATTERS

It is important that you adjust your language so that it matches the language your Local Government is using in their strategic community plans. Words like connection, reducing isolation, vibrancy, collaboration, diverse, engaged, sense of community are common. They can align with the work your club does – so ensure that you make it clear and obvious.

You can also “reference” the exact objectives you are talking about, e.g. The Blue Water Bay Theatre Club works with the local community and collaborates with aged care providers to reduce isolation of local elderly residents (Blue Water City Strategic Community Plan, Objective 2.3, 2.5).

Focus on community or economic impacts that your theatre delivers – they are the key areas that your Local Government is going to be focussed on. The artistic merit of your more recent work will mean a lot to you, your peers, or arts organisations – but the Project Officer in your Local Government is going to be looking for how your work aligns with theirs. Make it easy for them to help you. Eg. Blue Water Bay Theatre Club gains \$xxxx revenue from ticket sales annually while generating \$xxxx in other income while paying the Blue Water Council \$xxxx in rent and utilities and \$xxxx to paid as professional fees to technical staff. Annually the Club manages to maintain a surplus of \$xxxx which we reinvest into future programs.

## TALK TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE ABOUT THE RIGHT THINGS

This is where thinking about who you are communicating with becomes important. Not all communication could or should go through the Community Development Officer – sometimes you need to target your communication to the Director of Finance, the Mayor, the CEO or someone else.

If you are speaking to the Director of Finance - talk about the financial impact your organisation has had while directly linking it to the LG’s Community Strategic Plan. Every Community Strategic Plan will have a section on the economy. Given specific details of your economic impact. This can feel a long way away from the artistic aspirations of your Theatre – but you need to demonstrate your value to the local economy.

If you are communicating with the Community Development Officer, link your language and communication to suit their goals. Eg. The Blue Water Bay Theatre Club partners with stakeholders to deliver programs that directly target isolated members of our local community.

## TELL THEM ABOUT HOW GREAT YOU ARE

Your communication needs to paint your club as a positive and important part of your local community. Your Local Government needs to know about the great things you are doing – as well as the things you need support or assistance with. If every piece of communication is an ask or a complaint, you can start to be seen as a challenge rather than an asset. We’ve included a really simple tool to help frame up your next piece of communication so it aligns with what your Local Government needs to do, while also telling them how great you are!

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### WHAT DO WE NEED AND WHO FROM?

**What we need assistance with in two sentences**

**Recent wins**

*How have we been successful in the past six months? Think about economic and community impact.*

**Who are we communicating with and how?**

*What is their job title, contact details and connection to our club? When was the last time we saw them at our theatre? Should this communication be face-to-face, email, phone call?*

**What are their goals? What are their departments goals? Where can we find out?**

### VALUE PROPOSITIONS

**What are our values?**

**What are the Local Government's values?**

**What objectives in the LG Strategic Community Plan aligns with our work?**  
*(Record numbers)*

**What are the key words our Local Government uses in their plans?**

### BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The [theatre name] has been working in the [community] since [date] to increase the [community strategic plan key works: vibrancy/connection/sense of community] through [what you do]. Recently we [insert wins] while also [insert information about impact] which aligns with the [city name] community strategic plan objective [insert objectives]. To continue our work [insert community strategic plan key works] the [theatre name] needs [insert your ask].

From here continue to explain your request or need – but keep it short, always link it to the community strategic plan and use language that is in that plan.

## NOTES

[illegible]

## NOTES

[illegible]

## NOTES

[illegible]

## NOTES

[illegible]



The background is a solid blue color with a subtle, repeating geometric pattern of triangles and squares in varying shades of blue. A thin white vertical line is positioned to the left of the text.

**CircuitWest stands  
for inclusive, thriving  
communities, enlivened  
with rich cultural  
expression and  
engagement.**

