SECTOR BRIEFING: ARTS & CULTURE

The Social Impact of Australia's Arts & Cultural Sector

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FOREWORD

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the Nelson Meers Foundation (NMF) share a common vision for the arts and cultural sector, and core values around the power of arts and cultural organisations to realise positive social change.

UTS is committed to social justice and has made this central to who we are as a university. We believe that universities are public purpose institutions that have a critical responsibility to contribute to the community through research, education and practice. This commitment is reflected in a diverse set of institution-wide social justice initiatives that have only expanded in scope and depth over the years. A major new initiative is the UTS Social Impact Framework, within which UTS seeks to:

- contribute to increased public good, social mobility and equity;
- support the creation of enabling environments for communities to thrive; and
- positively impact the public, the individual and systemic forces that shape justice.

NMF's key objective is to foster innovative artistic and cultural expression, and to encourage greater engagement with the diversity, complexity and richness of the cultural sector. They support organisations that produce innovative, engaging cultural programs, and those that utilise creative expression to promote individual wellbeing or to create a range of social outcomes. They prioritise projects and programs that create positive social change, promote individual wellbeing, community cohesion and cultural tolerance and build the long-term capacity of organisations and the sector as a whole.

UTS and NMF believe it is crucial to value and promote Australia's arts and cultural organisations. These organisations enrich our personal lives and make a crucial contribution to building a vibrant and connected society. These common values have translated into this collaborative partnership to build the capacity of the Australian arts and culture sector to measure and communicate their social impact.

The UTS and Nelson Meers Foundation **Making a Difference: The Social Impact of Australia's Arts and Cultural Sector** project is about democratising access to social impact measurement expertise to empower our arts and cultural organisations to measure and demonstrate their social impact.

This report is part of the UTS Social Impact Toolbox. The Toolbox is a collection of resources that includes online courses with video, forums, questionnaires, interactive templates and a repository of reliable, verifiable and validated impact measures – all housed on an open digital platform at socialimpacttoolbox.com.

We hope this report and the UTS Social Impact Toolbox will help all Australian arts and cultural organisations, regardless of size or resourcing, to present methodologically robust evaluations of their activities to secure the support of funders while also informing better practice.

Together, UTS and NMF seek to ensure that funding for the arts and cultural sector is grounded not in an individual organisation's resourcing but in their capacity to make a difference.

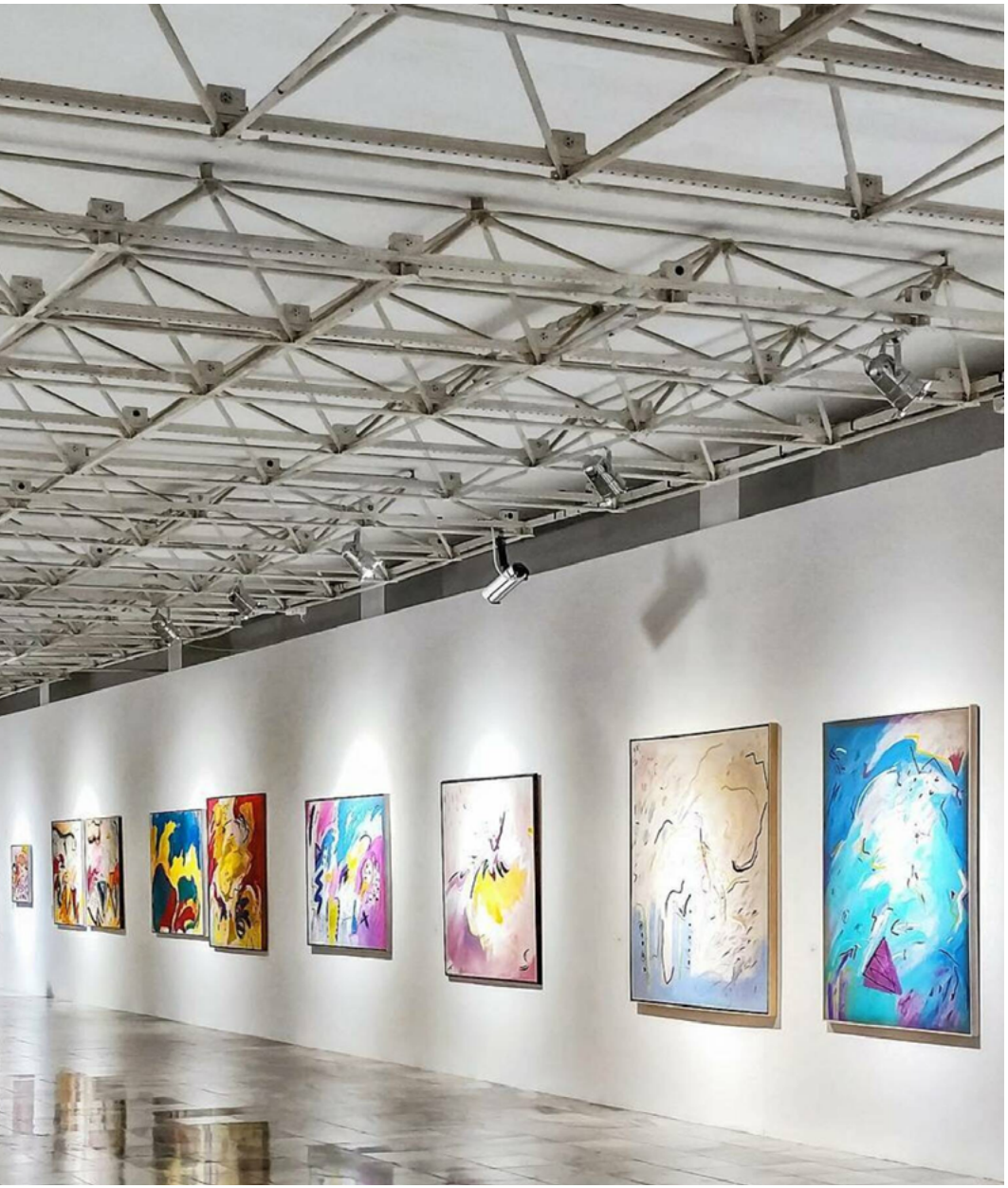
Professor Chris Earley
Dean
UTS Business School

Sam Meers AO
Co-Founder and Trustee
Nelson Meers Foundation

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural and creative activity contributed nearly $112 billion to Australia's economy in 2016-17, when it accounted for 6.4 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (GDP). At the start of 2020, the arts and cultural sector employed approximately 195,000 Australians.

These sorts of numbers are often cited by the sector, politicians and researchers as a way to demonstrate the value of arts and cultural organisations, who are an important part of the not-for-profit (NFP) sector. But an emphasis on the sector's contribution to the economy and employment fails to fully capture the depth and breadth of the benefits of Australia's collective creative endeavour for individuals, communities and society as a whole. This report looks at other ways arts and cultural organisations improve our lives, in particular by helping to realise positive social change.

The aim of this sector briefing, and the UTS Social Impact Toolbox, is to contribute to the ability of members of Australia's arts and cultural sector to evaluate their programs by making accessible the evidence, methodologies and tools needed to measure and communicate social impact.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Social impact measurement is complex and highly contested. Experts do not all agree on which approaches are correct and valid, but stakeholders still expect providers to decide on an approach and allocate resources to it.

2. The impacts of arts and cultural programs extend from the individual to society as a whole, from improving individual health and wellbeing to building community cohesion and the cultural and economic strength of communities.

3. There is a growing preference among government and other funding bodies to express arts and cultural value in terms of the sector's contribution to the economy.

4. Instrumental value may be the main focus of government funders, but arts and culture proponents might want to accentuate intrinsic and institutional value as well.

5. While metrics-based approaches and the provision of a set of numbers is often expected, in many cases it is not feasible or methodologically valid or reliable to express impact in quantitative terms.

6. A range of qualitative methodologies are available to measure the change that has occurred for those in an arts or cultural program.

We start by discussing how to define 'arts and culture' and the different approaches to appreciating the value of arts and cultural organisations. We then explore the political and economic landscape and how this drives social impact evaluation practice within the sector in Australia. We review the literature on measurement of the social impact of arts and culture, and present brief overviews of the social impact across a range of arts and cultural programs, both here and overseas.

We envisage the main audience for this report will be designers, practitioners and managers of arts and cultural programs who want to be able to:

- *measure and track progress;*
- *inform strategies with evidence; and*
- *gain the confidence and support of funders.*

Other interested parties may include government and other funders, program evaluators in other fields and academic researchers who want to:

- *assess arts and culture-related grant applications and evaluations; and*
- *inform arts and culture-related government and philanthropic procedures and policies.*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At every stage of a program, identify what you are doing and why you are doing it. Having a clear understanding of the intended outcomes means that an evaluation can be designed to collect useful and meaningful data. This strengthens the program and enhances your ability to communicate its value to funders.

2. Given funders' preference for hard figures, it is often important for arts and cultural organisations to be able to measure their social impact and – if feasible and methodologically robust – express their social impact in quantitative terms.

3. Many program providers may have only limited understanding of specific, technical methods, especially economic evaluations such as Social Return on Investment (SROI). Provide key people the time and resources to learn more, so your organisation develops capacity to conduct its own evaluations – or make informed assessments of the quality of an external evaluation.

4. Metrics-based approaches are not always appropriate or feasible. It is critical – even as organisations improve evaluation practice – that they continue to educate funders and policymakers about the limitations of quantitative metrics.

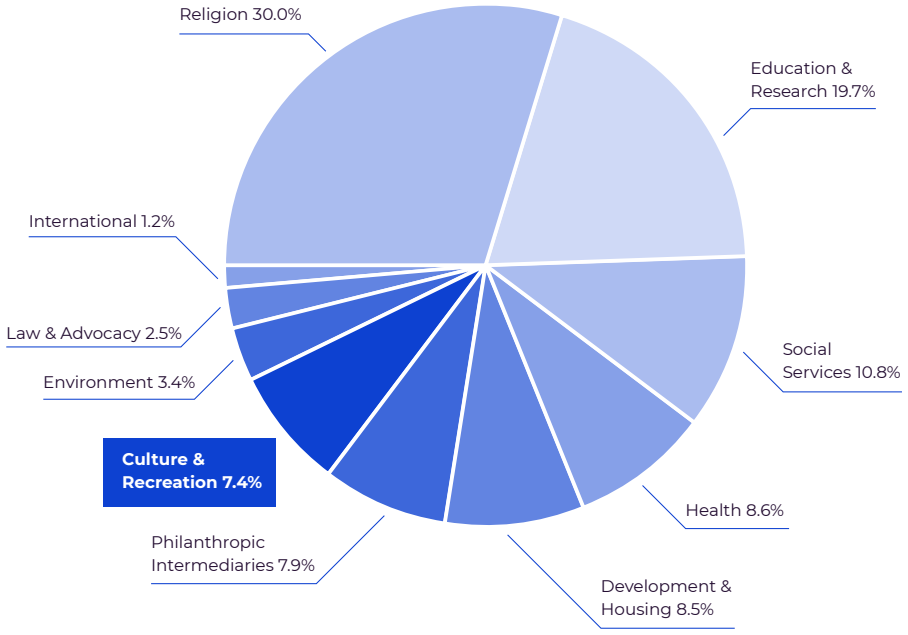
***Figure 1:** Key statistics*

Arts and cultural activity accounts for **$111.7b** which is 6.4% of Australia's GDP[1]

Arts and culture employ about **195k** people in Australia[2]

Among 48,000 registered NFPs **7.4%** have culture & recreation as their primary activity[3]

***Figure 2:** Australian Not-for-Profits by primary activity[4]*



1. Bureau of Communication and Arts Research, 2018.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020b.
3. Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, 2020.
4. Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, 2020.

INTRODUCTION

> Art is meant to disturb,
> science reassures.
>
> **– *GEORGES BRAQUE***

Unlike any other field of activity, arts and cultural organisations create experiences that have a deep and emotional impact on individuals, communities and society. At a personal level, arts and culture can illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. At the local level, they can be a source of social connection and community renewal. More broadly, arts and cultural organisations make a crucial contribution to creating shared experiences that build a sense of common identity and, by extension, a more vibrant and connected society.

The central role of arts and culture has never been more evident as we write this report during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people have been turning to arts and culture to cope – not just to pass time in isolation or while socially distanced but, fundamentally, to feel more connected.

Australians are aware of the importance of, and regularly participate in, the arts. According to a survey of 3,000 people conducted by the Australia Council, 95 per cent of Australians engaged in the arts in some way in the prior year. In addition, nearly half participated as creators in at least one art form. Some 85 per cent of people agreed the arts makes for a richer and more meaningful life.[5]

However, many arts and cultural activities need subsidy in the form of funds from government grants or donations. So governments and donors find themselves in a position of making judgements about whether arts and cultural activities are deserving of funds relative to other public goods and, if so, what kinds of arts and cultural programs merit support.

That leaves arts and cultural organisations under constant pressure to articulate their value to society. This extends beyond statements regarding the broader, less tangible notions of arts and culture enriching daily life. Increasingly, funders expect organisations to demonstrate their economic contribution as well as specific social impacts.

In terms of the overall economic contribution, the statistics are impressive. In 2016-17, cultural and creative activity – referred to variously as cultural industries, arts and culture or the experience economy, and including activities related to the arts, media, heritage, design and fashion – contributed $111.7 billion to GDP, representing 6.4 per cent of economic activity.[6]

Even so, the sector must constantly fight for government support. According to Christopher Farrell “artists are significantly and vastly underestimated contributors and generators of local economic growth”.[7] That means it is critical to build capacity to make compelling, evidence-based cases for support – cases that go beyond economic statistics. This will require empowering the sector to work towards a stronger advocacy position and profile within the broader economy.

Now, more than ever, it is time to ask: What is behind the numbers? What do we need to know to be able to communicate the true depth and breadth of our social impact?

While the arts and cultural sector has been adept at shaping the national conversation around its economic significance, 2020 brings multiple and serious challenges. Weakened by successive years of government defunding, the sector now faces the enormous challenge of surviving the immediate consequences of COVID-19 shutdowns and social distancing on the ability to operate, as well as the longer term effects of an economic recession that is affecting the capacity of consumers to pay, and influencing government funding priorities.

It is in this environment that the sector and individual organisations must build a body of evidence demonstrating their social impact. It will not be enough to assume this contribution is self-evident, and it will require overcoming the challenge of measuring and articulating this sort of impact. Making a valid, reliable and rigorous case for the true value of their work will not only enhance organisations’ ability to secure government or philanthropic funds, but will also reinforce the sector’s broader social licence to operate.

5. Australia Council, 2014.
6. Bureau of Communication and Arts Research, 2018.
7. Farrell, 2005.

WHAT IS ART & CULTURE?

> Art is the only serious thing in the world. And the artist is the only person who is never serious.
>
> **– *OSCAR WILDE***

Some people think art and culture make life worth living, others think it frivolous. Eliciting only a slightly less fervent response is the question of how exactly we define the terms. Are they equivalent? Do we separate them and, if so, is that only to distinguish 'high art' from 'low culture'?

For some, art and culture are considered the preserve of the elite. Analysis of data from the *UK Taking Part Survey* found that the group most engaged in art and culture come from the top 9 per cent in income and education and is significantly less ethnically diverse than the broader population.[8] Conversely, an Australia

8. Taylor, 2016.

Council survey of 3,000 people found that 95 per cent of respondents had engaged in the arts in some way in the year before and nearly half were creators in at least one art form.[9]

These disparate findings suggest that whether people say they value art and culture depends on how the question is asked, and what people understand art and culture to be.

Why do definitions matter?

There is frequent public debate as to what really 'qualifies' as arts and culture. Further questions arise when we consider what falls within the scope of arts and culture. Can pottery be considered art? What about crafts like knitting or cake decorating? Is the Sydney Royal Easter Show a cultural event, an arts event, both or neither?

While it can sound like abstract navel-gazing, these are not abstract questions. This sort of taxonomy has an impact on the way oversight of activities is assigned at the government level, and on the ways programs are funded. Definitions and categories influence decision makers on what kinds of arts and culture are worthy of support.

Cultural researcher and writer John Holden noted – when referring to the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport – that government "definitions flow from administrative convenience, and do not match people's everyday understanding and experience of culture".[10]

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ART AND CULTURE?

'Art', to Picasso, was "the lie that reveals the truth". For Goethe, it was "the magic of the soul". Other definitions focus on artistic forms.[11] Philosopher John Dewey defined art as encompassing a range of human activity that creates modes of expression such as visual arts, literary arts and performing arts.[12] *'Culture'* is perhaps an even more contested concept. Anthropologists use the term to refer to the universal human capacity to classify experiences and to encode and communicate them symbolically.[13] John Holden defined culture in terms of institutions and funding: "the arts, museums, libraries and heritage that receive public funding".[14]

Problems with institutional definitions can arise when we try to distinguish cultural activity from the arts, however. For example, in Australia, the public institutions we generally refer to as state and national art galleries are in other countries such at the US generally referred to as 'art museums', to distinguish them from commercial, sales-focused galleries. While the content of 'art museums' remains visual art, the term itself raises questions around the motivations of visitors – are they there for the educational opportunity or to appreciate art?

These are important questions because the purpose and intent of a program within a cultural institution determines which measures of success should be evaluated – especially when the intent extends beyond art appreciation into achieving social outcomes such as education or social inclusion. A recent study by the think tank A New Approach found that people in their focus groups responded best to the term 'art and culture' as a single idea, concluding it side-stepped any elitist notions associated with just 'the arts'.[15] For the most part this report will treat arts and culture as intertwined and overlapping.

9. Australia Council, 2014.
10. Holden, 2006.
11. Ramachandran, 2004.
12. Dewey, 2005.
13. Ingold, 1994.
14. Holden, 2006.
15. Fielding & Trembath, 2020.

The value of art and culture

Much of the debate around defining art and culture very quickly turns to the debate about its 'value' – a debate that shifts between economic, social and aesthetic understandings of value. The arts are often perceived as luxuries worth supporting in good times but hard to justify when the economy turns down. This has been evident in the COVID-19 induced recession in Australia.

How best to challenge this attitude? One way is to change the question being asked from 'how much is this benefit worth?' to 'what is the effect of this?'.

It is clear that instrumental value is the main focus of government funders. However, arts and culture proponents might want to accentuate intrinsic and institutional value.

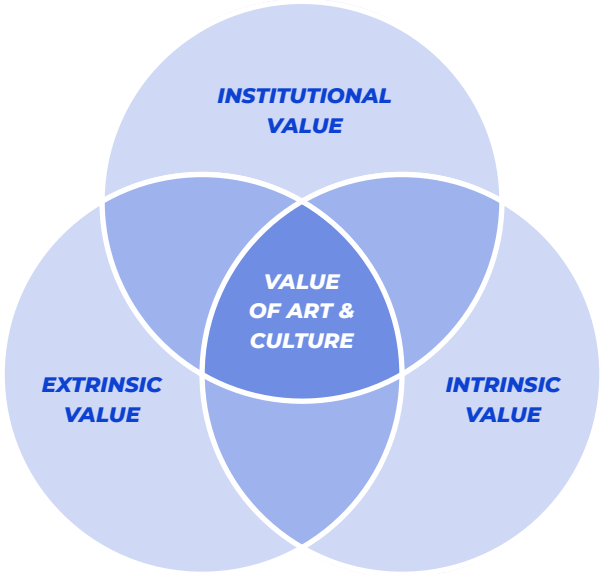
Organisations can make the intrinsic value of their activities less abstract by conducting methodologically robust evaluations evidencing a relationship between intrinsic value and tangible, beneficial outcomes such as improved education, mental and physical wellbeing and social cohesion – in a sense, making the intrinsic also instrumental.

The next steps are to make a clear case that art and culture can change lives and communities for the better and that they are needed more than ever during economic downturns.

John Holden argued for a broadening of how we value the arts. He highlights three areas of value:

- **intrinsic value,** being the subjective effect arts and cultural experiences have on someone;
- **instrumental value**, including outcomes such as employment, tourism, education or wellbeing for individuals and communities; and
- **institutional value**, placed on arts and culture by society as a whole and reflected in how arts and cultural institutions interact.

Figure 3: *Value of art and culture*



THE SECTOR

Creativity takes courage.

– HENRI MATISSE

Shape of the sector

Arts and cultural organisations assume many organisational forms, from collectives and co-operatives through to companies limited by guarantee. They may be incorporated as public, private or not-for-profit entities. Government-run institutions include national galleries, libraries, war memorials, sites of historical importance and local government arts programs. Arts and cultural organisations in the private sector include for-profit commercial galleries, theatres and music venues. Not-for-profit (NFP) entities include Opera Australia, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Ballet.

***Table 1:** Top 10 arts and culture Not-for-Profits by revenue*[16]

Name	Total revenue ($m)
Opera Australia	115.3
Library Council of NSW	101.4
Victorian Arts Centre Trust	95.9
The Australia Ballet	76.3
Queensland Performing Arts Trust	67.5
Sydney Symphony Orchestra Holdings Pty Ltd	44.2
Australian Museum Trust	43.0
Sydney Theatre Company Ltd	42.0
The Trustee For Andrew Thyne Reid Charitable Trust	40.8
The Sovereign Hill Museums Association	38.3

Australian statistics are difficult to unpack because the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification describes "Arts and Recreation" very broadly, including creative and performing arts but also sport and gambling. At the same time, it does not include publishing, broadcasting, film and sound recording, library and other information services or heritage activities, as these fall into the Information Media and Telecommunications classification.[17] According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2019 there were 40,822 arts and recreation businesses, representing 2 per cent of all businesses. But given the broad classification the percentage that are arts and cultural organisations is not clear.

An arguably more reliable set of statistics is held by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission, which includes a category for organisations whose activity involves "advancing culture". In 2018 there were 1,208 organisations registered with the stated purpose of "advancing culture", including theatre groups, orchestras and charities promoting Australian Indigenous culture and customs, among others. These organisations had a combined revenue of $1.13 billion.[18]

Between January 2017 and December 2019:

- $300 million was cut from the Federal Government's cultural budget;
- 65 arts organisations lost Australia Council funding;
- the Book Council lost $6 million in funding; and
- national broadcaster the ABC lost $100 million a year in direct and indirect funding.[19]

16. Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, 2020.

17. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013.
18. Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, 2020.
19. Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2019.

State of the sector

The arts and cultural sector has been hit by successive years of significant cuts to its government funding.

Other policies have had an indirect but serious negative impact – from the decision in 2014 to no longer fund the Australian Bureau of Statistics to collect arts and sport data, through to the virtual exclusion of arts and cultural workers from the JobKeeper program.[20] Aimed at supporting people during the COVID-19 pandemic, JobKeeper was problematic for the sector because its structure focused on traditional forms of employment.

Impact of COVID-19

The Australia Council has described the impact of COVID-19 on the Australian arts community as "catastrophic".[21] Venues had to shut their doors with little or no notice and organisations had to cancel programs and activities. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of arts workers suffered significant negative effects on their immediate and future livelihoods.

Artists are the original 'gig' workers. According to the *Making Art Work Study* the vast majority (81 per cent) are self-employed or freelancers, mostly relying on contracts for fixed amounts (43 per cent) along with royalties and advances (35 per cent).[22]

A national, cross-industry survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in March 2020, as COVID-19 shutdowns took hold, showed that more than half of all arts and recreation businesses had ceased trading – the highest proportion of the 17 industries analysed. Some 73 per cent of arts and recreation businesses reported their business had been adversely affected by COVID-19 in the previous two weeks, second only to accommodation and food services businesses (78 per cent). The most common adverse effect was reduced local demand (93 per cent of those affected) followed by staff shortages (49 per cent) and reduced international demand (32 per cent).[23]

In April of this year the Morrison government announced a $27 million emergency relief fund for the arts.[24] The package targeted regional and Indigenous organisations and included the "repurposing" of $5 million of the Australia Council's existing pool for small, quick-release grants.

After intense lobbying from the sector, in July the government announced a further $250 million that included $90 million in government-backed concessional loans for new productions.[25] There have also been initiatives at local, state and sector levels, such as the ABC's Fresh Start Fund to support Australia's production industry.[26] This may go some way to ease the pain but, at the time of writing, thousands of arts and cultural organisations are struggling to survive.

Many of the issues organisations are facing are not new. Organisations are familiar with lack of funding, the true value of their work being underestimated and the assumption that art and culture will always be there. The fallout from the pandemic has intensified a longer-term pattern of decline in support for the arts in Australia. COVID-19 has been the great accelerator.

20. Darcy & Dalton, 2014.
21. Australia Council, 2020.
22. Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017.
23. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020a.
24. Minister for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, 2020b.
25. Minister for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, 2020a.
26. ABC, 2020.

THE LANDSCAPE

> We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth.
>
> ***– JOHN F. KENNEDY***

The policy landscape

Most social impact measurement occurs because it is required by government funders. That makes it important to understand government structures and motivations. Governments have a long history of intervention in the field of arts and culture, and a propensity to exert influence through levers ranging from taxation policy to price signals on wages for the sector's workers. Another mechanism of intervention is the individuals that the government places in charge of art and culture, and where the portfolio sits within the assigned ministry.

After a ministerial reshuffle in 2019, Arts was demoted to an "office" within the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications – a portfolio title that provides no indication the arts might be found there. Many in the field, including the Australian Writers' Guild, Live Performance Australia and the National Association for the Visual Arts, argued strongly that this showed the Government assigned little importance to arts and culture.[27]

In state and territory governments, the location of the arts and culture portfolio varies. For example, in Western Australia it falls into the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, while Tasmania's Cultural and Tourism Development division is part of the Department of State Growth.

Demand for accountability

In this neoliberal age there is an impulse among governments and management to emphasise accountability. At its simplest, this can be an accounting for dollars spent. More broadly, there is pressure to be able to explain the benefits of funded programs and to establish the legitimacy of particular approaches to specific problems.

However, a tension exists between accountability, resourcing and program delivery. Whitney Watriss, director of Smithsonian Organization and Audience Research, the central planning, research and evaluation office of the Smithsonian Institution in the United States, made an observation that will be familiar to many in the arts and culture sector:

> *The two major measures right now are audience numbers and fundraising, and right now [this museum] has very little capacity to raise money. Instead, what should be measured is: What has changed as a result of what you are doing? Is the world a better place? Have you inspired people? When they leave do they continue to research the exhibition or follow up on things they want to know about? Do they have a different perspective on how they see the world?*[28]

For many, the things more easily measured do not necessarily tell you much about what is important. There is a sense that not only are the impacts of art and culture greater than the economic, but they are also more meaningful.

With this increased demand for accountability and reporting, an opportunity exists for government to shape measurement by providing standardised frameworks and guidance on measures for social impact evaluation. Initial forays encountered resistance, however, with organisations saying the frameworks were too prescriptive, resulting in a poor fit for measures. One solution government funders are exploring is the use of broad, generalised frameworks within which specific, often bespoke, measures can be used.

It is an area where the Cultural Ministers Council, now known as the Meeting of Cultural Ministers, has been developing policy. Early on, the Council established a statistics working group to work with state and national bureaus of statistics to establish common indicators of output. The framework they produced can be divided into three major themes: economic development, cultural value, and engagement and social impact. These indicators are set out in Table 2.

27. Watts, 2019.

28. Francis, 2018.

***Table 2:** Common indicators of output*[29]

Economic development	Cultural value	Engagement and social impact
• Cultural employment • Household expenditure on cultural goods and services • Visitor expenditure on cultural goods and services • Government support for culture • Private sector support for culture • Voluntary work in arts and culture • Economic contribution of cultural industries	• Cultural assets • Talent (human capital) • Cultural identity • Innovation (new work/companies) • Global reach	• Cultural attendance • Cultural participation • Access • Education in arts and culture

The annual meeting of cultural ministers has also influenced some well-crafted policy frameworks from individual state and territory ministers. For example, in 2019 Western Australia's Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries published Social Impacts of Culture and the Arts WA, which refers back to the Council framework and provides a guide to measuring social impact in arts and culture.[30]

Sector response

In this environment, arts and cultural organisations have dual motives for measuring impact. On the one hand, they have a sense of the importance of their work to society and seek to demonstrate this to facilitate greater exchange and play a more integrated role in the community. On the other hand, measurement often comes down to the very practical need to convince funders, especially government, to continue supporting this work.

As the authors of one paper put it somewhat cynically: "What the cultural sector really wants from research is the killer evidence that will release dizzying amounts of money".[31]

The sector should be careful, however. Assuming that proof of social impact will secure funding can have unhelpful consequences. It validates and perpetuates the argument that arts and culture need to have a larger social impact to be worthy of funding, Belfiore and Bennett argue, and it tends to focus organisations on the hunt for proof of assumed or desired impacts rather than on understanding what the impacts really are.[32]

These drivers for economic validation have led to arts and culture evaluation being steered towards financialised metrics of success. Governments value and encourage this approach, but it results in practitioners neglecting the opportunity to measure impacts beyond financial contribution.

29. Cultural Ministers Council, 2010.

30. Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries WA, 2019.

31. Scullion & García, 2005.

32. Belfiore & Bennett, 2007.

Economic measures

It has been suggested that, even for economists, the conviction that arts and culture improve society is "visceral as much as analytical".[33] While economists often acknowledge the positive externalities of arts and culture, they still find it difficult to explain the sector's impact on society beyond economic terms.[34]

Funders may advocate a holistic assessment of the benefits of arts and culture that goes beyond the economic to encompass the wellbeing, societal and educational value of culture. But, even then, the consideration of the wider contribution of arts and culture investments becomes a cost-benefit analysis of sorts, because it weighs the cost of something against the benefits. To compare 'apples with apples' the units of measurement tend to be standardised into monetary terms, which can lead to the assigning of a dollar value to aspects of arts and culture that can be incomplete at best, crude and damaging at worst.

It could be argued that, in agreeing to describe the impact of a program in economic terms, organisations acknowledge the validity and priority of economic concerns, which are not always aligned with a program's goals. One study examined figures from the Cultural Data Project, which contains records from around 5,000 NFP arts and cultural organisations, to assess the use of financial measures in evaluating program success. It found that financial attributes are indeed linked to program outcomes, but that some of the factors that contribute to financial stability and efficiency have no or even negative relationships with program outcomes.[35]

An Example: Monetary methods

Western Australia's Department of Local Government, Sport and Culture published a study of cultural value, with an emphasis on economic valuations. It classified the various monetary methods into:

1) preference methods, which survey people through direct or indirect questions to discover how much they are willing to pay for something; and
2) subjective wellbeing approaches, which measure the impact on wellbeing then assign a figure to how much that wellbeing would otherwise cost to improve by the same amount.

There is keen interest from governments in these approaches, and some have even issued guides on how organisations should best commission them.[36]

Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies have also become relatively popular over the past decade, in part due to the economic ratio that can be presented at the end (for example, "$3.40 SROI for every $1 invested"). An SROI approach takes a range of intangible outcomes and assigns proxy financial values to them, producing a dollar value that can be used to advocate to funders.

33. Goodwin, 2005.
34. Belfiore & Bennett, 2007.
35. Kim, 2017.
36. Lung et al., 2017.

The SROI method is complex, and thus expensive to complete. It typically involves the articulation of a program's theory of change and program logic, compilation of data available to the program, followed by stakeholder interviews to establish the program outcomes. Proxy costs are then assigned to these outcomes to be able to estimate an overall valuation ("How much would it cost the state to achieve this using its own apparatus? How much would it cost the state were this intervention not made?").

Perhaps ironically for a method prized for its ability to put a number on a project's value, much of its method is rich in qualitative depth, with practitioners ideally taking a long time to understand programs. One SROI that was reviewed was commissioned because the organisation wanted a dollar figure to use for advocacy with funders, but the qualitative results ended up being much more useful for that purpose.[37]

Given the diversity of the arts and cultural sector it is no surprise there are a variety of motivations for, and approaches to, evaluation. These motivations shape who, what and how we evaluate. By understanding the nuances of political and economic drivers, as well as the benefits and limitations of various reporting methods, organisations are better equipped to navigate an evaluation in a way that is appropriate and meaningful for the organisation and the community.

37. Jackson & McManus, 2019..

MEASURING SOCIAL IMPACT ▸

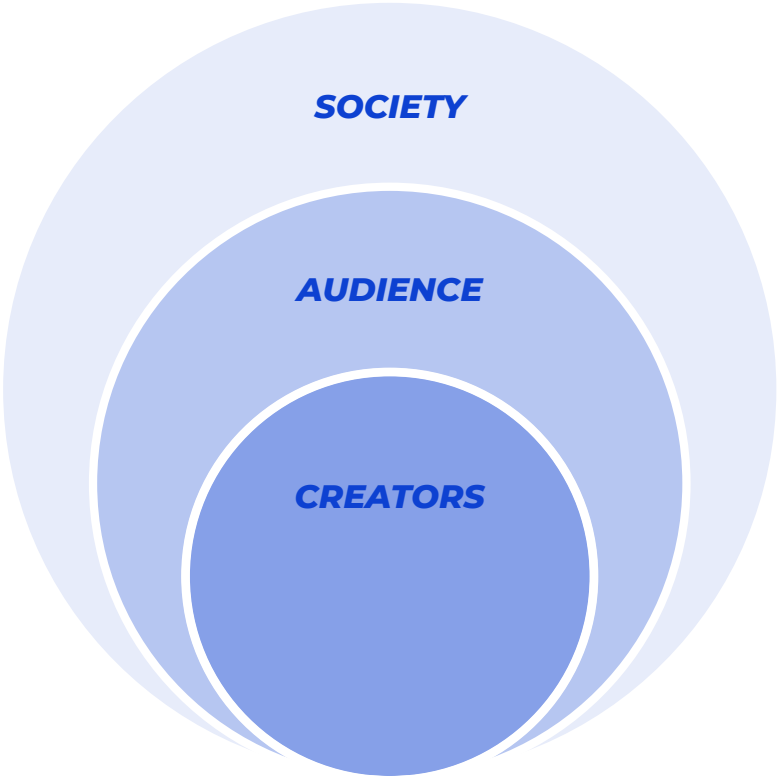
> The purpose of art is
> washing the dust of daily life off our souls.
>
> **– *PABLO PICASSO***

Having a clear understanding of the intended outcomes of a program is the starting point for designing an evaluation that will collect useful and meaningful data. What are you doing and why are you doing it? The aim is to produce an evaluation that both strengthens the program and enhances your ability to communicate its value to funders.

Who is being impacted?

When we speak of the value and impact of art and culture it is vital to be clear about who is being impacted and how. This allows us to refine our evaluation scope and target our evaluations appropriately. When considering the impact of arts and cultural programs, stakeholders can be segmented into three categories: creators, audience and society.

Figure 4: *Arts and Cultural Organisations' Stakeholders*



Creators

First, let us talk about the people who participate in creating arts and culture. They could be an artist, actor, curator, arts teacher, museum guide – someone who has played a role in producing the end result. We will call this group the *Creators* and consider them separately because the effect that creating a work has on them will be different and much more personal than for the audience. A creator might be referred to as an 'artist', as they contribute directly to the production of art. But professional staff, who might be referred to as 'facilitators' to distinguish their role, can also be considered creators, in helping to deliver the overall experience.

Audience

Next, we can consider the impact on the *Audience*, the people who attend an event, visit a venue, view a film, and so on. This segment captures those who are present to consume arts and culture – those who are in the theatre audience, visit a museum or attend a festival. It should be noted that these first two segments can become blurred when we consider program participants who may fall into creator, audience or both. This will depend on the intended program outcomes.

Society

Finally, we can consider the impact of a program on *Society* at large. This segment is much harder to define but very important when considering social impact which is, by definition, concerned with larger, longer-term effects and which is usually of interest to government funders who want to know the instrumental value. While scope may need to be limited in some way, impact could range from a consideration of the effect on very local areas all the way up to state and national outcomes such as the contribution to economic activity, employment and tourism.

An Example: The ABC

One way of thinking about these segments is to use an example from the work of Australia's public broadcaster, the ABC. In 1987 the then managing director famously announced that the ABC costs each of us 8 cents a day, a value everyone was able to understand and generally willing to pay (although after years of swingeing cuts, the ABC's chief financial officer recently put it at the equivalent of half that in 2018).[38]

Now consider a report by its current affairs program, Four Corners, on live-baiting in the greyhound racing industry. It can be seen that one piece of art and culture output had wide-ranging impacts across these three segments, the effects of which are still being felt today.

- **The Creators** of the story 'Making a Killing' included the journalists, crew and interviewees, all of whom were directly impacted by the story – some receiving the Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism.[39]

- **The Audience** who watched the program were moved by the animal cruelty portrayed in video evidence and recounted in interviews.

- **Society** was impacted by the ensuing public debate and political to-and-fro, as NSW first banned greyhound racing then backflipped to reinstate it after intense lobbying by the industry and intervention by talkback radio host Alan Jones.[40]

38. Thomsen, 2018.
39. Burrowes, 2015.
40. Kembrey, 2016.

How are they being impacted?

Researchers break down the impacts of arts and culture in a number of ways but Matarasso's early and comprehensive list is still useful, with 50 impacts in six domains.[41]

In the domain of personal development, improvements to self-esteem and related psychological constructs are often cited in relation to arts and cultural programs, as well as to employment and education – but be careful when attributing cause to effect.[42] With regard to social cohesion, we have already touched on inclusion in general, but there are studies that focus on particular aspects, such as criminal justice,[43] community development,[44] and urban renewal.[45] It could be argued that what Matarasso categorises as community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, and imagination and vision are just different aspects of social cohesion.

Wellbeing is an umbrella term used to encompass everything from happiness to physical and mental health but is more theoretically defined as including hedonic wellbeing, or "feeling good" and eudaimonic wellbeing, or "functioning well".[46] This is usually measured subjectively by asking someone how they feel and relying on their answer. There are a number of issues with this but it is still considered useful and some iteration of wellbeing will appear in nearly every social impact assessment.[47]

One study sought to prove a causal link between cultural engagement and physical health. Researchers asked a large pool of Swedes questions about their cultural engagement and health, then followed up with them after about a decade to measure any variance in perceived health. Controlling for things such as income and education, they found an increased risk of impaired health for those who decreased their cultural engagement.[48] Other studies have considered the impact on participants of health[49] (Staricoff, 2004), with some focusing on mental health.[50] Needless to say, it is important not to mistake correlation for causation.

41. Matarasso, 1997.
42. Winner & Cooper, 2000.
43. Hughes, 2009.
44. Kay, 2000.
45. Evans, 2005.
46. Meeks et al., 2017.
47. Wheatley & Bickerton, 2017.
48. O'Neill, 2010.
49. Staricoff, 2004.
50. White & Angus, 2003.

Table 3: *Domains impacted by arts and culture*[51]

Personal development	Social cohesion	Community empowerment	Local image & identity	Imagination & vision	Health & wellbeing
• Increase people's confidence and sense of self-worth • Extend involvement in social activity • Give people influence over how they are seen by others • Stimulate interest and confidence in the arts • Provide a forum to explore personal rights and responsibilities • Contribute to the educational development of children • Encourage adults to take up education and training • Help build new skills and work experience • Contribute to people's employability • Help people take up or develop careers in the arts	• Reduce isolation by helping people to make friends • Develop community networks and sociability • Promote tolerance and contribute to conflict resolution • Provide a forum for intercultural understanding and friendship • Help validate the contribution of a whole community • Promote intercultural contact and co-operation • Develop contact between the generations • Help offenders and victims address issues of crime • Provide a route to rehabilitation and integration for offenders	• Build community organisational capacity • Encourage local self-reliance and project management • Help people extend control over their lives • Be a means of gaining insight into political and social ideas • Facilitate effective public consultation and participation • Help involve local people in the regeneration process • Facilitate the development of partnership • Build support for community projects • Strengthen community co-operation and networking • Provide reasons to develop community activities	• Develop pride in local traditions and cultures • Help people feel a sense of belonging and involvement • Create community traditions in new towns or neighbourhoods • Involve residents in environmental improvements • Provide reasons to develop community activities • Improve perceptions of marginalised groups • Help transform the image of public bodies • Make people feel better about where they live	• Help people develop their creativity • Erode distinction between consumer and creator • Allow people to explore their values, meanings and dreams • Enrich the practice of professionals in the public and voluntary sectors • Transform the responsiveness of public service organisations • Encourage people to accept risk positively • Help community groups raise their vision beyond the immediate • Challenge conventional service delivery • Raise expectations about what is possible and desirable	• Have a positive impact on how people feel • Be an effective means of health education • Contribute to a more relaxed atmosphere in health centres • Help improve the quality of life of people with poor health • Provide a unique and deep source of enjoyment

51. Matarasso, 1997.

EXAMPLES OF MEASUREMENT ▶

> Art enables us to find ourselves
> and lose ourselves at the same time.
>
> **– *THOMAS MERTON***

In this section we break down arts and culture into 10 sub-divisions and give examples of social impact evaluations in each. These examples may provide inspiration, or prompt caution, when investigating social impact in arts and culture.

Note that when developing an evaluation plan, it is helpful to have an understanding of what has and has not worked in the past. Reviews of past programs can provide insights into the types of outcomes you might consider measuring, and possible methods for collecting data.

Visual arts

A study of the Turner Contemporary art gallery in Margate in the UK evaluated the social impact of three of the gallery's activities: exhibitions, its work with schools and colleges, and its evening classes, workshops and drop-in arts education events. This was a social return on investment or SROI study, involving interviews with staff and practitioners, a focus group with six learners, and a series of surveys designed using insights from the focus group. The study found the social return on investment for the program was between £2.67 and £5.08 for every £1 invested.[52]

Another study used an SROI method to evaluate a visual arts program for aged-care residents.[53] Activities assessed were:

- a guide to art galleries using iPads;
- a series of visits to arts venues to view and discuss exhibitions;
- an exploration of mixed-media art through digital technologies;
- theatre co-produced by residents with families and staff; and
- live streamed piano recitals and events.

The results showed improved community inclusion and decreased social isolation, improved mental and physical health and improved cognition. Staff experienced improved skills in caring for older people and increased confidence in using arts interventions. Facilitators improved their knowledge of dementia and their confidence in using arts for older people, and the provider's reputation was enhanced.

52. Jackson & McManus, 2019.
53. Bosco et al., 2019.

Music

Sing Your Heart Out in Norfolk, UK, provides singing workshops for the general public but also for people who have experienced mental health conditions. It grew out of an intervention at a psychiatric hospital. Researchers conducted interviews, focus groups and observation and used the World Health Organization's Quality of Life (WHOQoL) measure. They found the program was beneficial to participants' mental health and wellbeing, and improved inclusion and social capital. Participants emphasised the lack of pressure to discuss their mental health, and the absence of explicit therapy was regarded as key to maintaining engagement.[54] An earlier study of choral singing found impacts including feeling more positive, increased control over breathing, feeling more alert, feeling spiritually uplifted, improved lung function and breathing, improved mood, stress reduction, mental health, and facilitated meeting new people.[55]

A very different study sought to capture the value of the Sydney Opera House. Using data from the Opera House's financial reports, public statistics and a survey assessing Australians' stated preferences about the Opera House, the authors derived a total social asset value of $4.6 billion and an annual economic contribution of $141 million. The evaluators considered the much wider impacts of the Opera House, including its value as a cultural 'brand' and the interest in it among people around the world – whether they physically visit or not.[56]

54. Shakespeare & Whieldon, 2018.
55. Clift & Hancox, 2001.
56. Simes et al., 2013.

Heritage

In Zaragoza, Spain, a medieval fort was restored and revived as a museum. Researchers used a life-cycle assessment approach to measure both the environmental and social impact of this project, with the social impacts considered separately for each stakeholder group. For the workers performing the restoration, impacts included health and safety, wages, social benefits, working hours, discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, the employment relationship, training and education, work-life balance, job satisfaction and engagement. Consumers experienced impacts around health and safety, wellbeing and cultural development. The impacts on the community and society were health and safety, access to tangible resources, local capacity building, community involvement, employment, wellbeing, engagement and cultural value.[57]

A study of parents taking their children to a cluster of museums at a heritage site in Hangzhou, China, used a questionnaire to determine the perceived benefits. The long list of outcomes identified were grouped using factor analysis into family bonding, community attachment, cultural awareness, wellbeing and personal growth.[58]

Festivals

The Mangaung African Cultural Festival (or 'Macufe' Festival) in Bloemfontein, South Africa, includes music, comedy and fashion, sports competitions and an arts and crafts market. It attracts 140,000 visitors over 10 days and is important for tourism but puts a lot of pressure on local residents. This study sought to consider both positive and negative social impacts by asking questions developed in tourism studies. The 33 questions about the festival's impact were later grouped into four main categories using factor analysis: community enhancement, community degradation, tourism growth and increased public spending and interaction. On balance, the researchers found that negative social impacts were considered roughly equal to the positive social impacts.[59]

The Love Arts Festival runs for several weeks in Leeds, UK, and includes a range of participatory performances, screenings, exhibitions and events. This study used an informal ethnographic approach (described as "deep hanging out"), where five researchers were paired with festival participants for a series of conversations about cultural value. Notably, the researchers took part in activities and the participant partners ("co-researchers") contributed to the research design. The study found that participants both do and do not know the value and impact of the arts – a paradox that stemmed from a misplaced focus on knowledge. Instead of striving to understand and rationalise the value of the arts, people should instead aim to feel and experience it, they concluded. The study ultimately tried to turn the question of the value of culture back on to the asker, and why they want to understand its value.[60]

57. Mohaddes Khorassani et al., 2019.
58. Zhou et al., 2019.
59. Scholtz et al., 2019.
60. Walmsley, 2018.

Social and Cultural Inclusion

A study in San Jose, USA, examined whether participating in a multicultural cooking class had any effect on university students' cultural competency. A secondary question was whether fruit and vegetable consumption would increase. Using a measure known as the *Diversity of Contact Subscale*, the researchers studied two groups, one of which attended a multicultural cooking class and another that attended a "basic" (that is, American) cooking class as a control group. The study found an increase in cultural competency, but no increase in fruit and vegetable consumption.[61]

In Melbourne, researchers investigated whether attitudes to parks and gardens differed by ethnic identity. Using a questionnaire that included measures of motivations to garden, the importance of parks and trees, and standardised wellbeing metrics, the study found differences in reasons for attachment to green spaces. For respondents from diverse ethnic identities, community gardens provided food, a sense of community and security. They also had a slightly different appreciation of trees in urban settings, prizing them for their aesthetic, natural and biodiversity contribution, rather than the sociocultural importance attributed by respondents who identified as being Australian or European.[62]

Dance

Ausdance WA's Future Landings is a regional contemporary dance program that combines dance, visual art and music in community-created performances. It seeks to develop regional choreographers through mentorship, a training residency and shared learning. An evaluation employed pre- and post-project participant surveys, an audience survey and participant focus groups, using questions based on evaluation data from a previous Ausdance WA project. It revealed perceived personal impacts that included greater confidence, increased inspiration and motivation, deeper understanding and increased skills. The broader impacts on society were strengthened networks and relationships, new audiences and participants, and shared experiences and stories with community.[63]

61. Tsuji et al., 2016.
62. Egerer et al., 2019.
63. Anwar-McHenry et al., 2018.

Theatre

A study of audiences of the Actors Theatre of Louisville, USA, used surveys to measure their involvement with the theatre, satisfaction, social engagement, wellbeing and sense of belonging while attending the theatre. The study found that theatre involvement was related to satisfaction and enjoyment of the theatre, wellbeing and social functioning, as well as the psycho-social benefits of "flow" (complete absorption in an activity), social engagement and belonging. Involvement was more strongly related to benefits in the case of younger participants. From focus groups, the evaluators learned that theatre contributed to a sense of community and pride of place.[64]

Writing

A Western Australian study looked at poetry as part of speech therapy for people with multiple sclerosis (MS). One common consequence of MS is dysarthia, a motor speech disorder which is usually treated by speech pathologists using oral exercises such as reciting lists of words or speaking tongue twisters. Patients had previously reported feeling uncomfortable or "foolish" performing these exercises, so a pilot program incorporated poetry as a part of therapy.[65] Through mainly observation and interviews, outcomes were found to include patients gaining perspective on their condition, being distracted from their condition, increased motivation and increased confidence, and having a "safe space".[66]

64. Meeks et al., 2017.

65. Brady et al., 2011.
66. Balchin et al., 2020.

Craft

A Canadian study of a municipal pottery program characterised craft as among the “leisure arts” and used participant interviews to reveal the program’s benefits. These included having a creative outlet, building social connections, opportunities for self -care and personal growth.[67]

A US study of a program using craft as occupational therapy for homeless women employed interviews to uncover benefits such as reduced stress, increased creativity and opportunities to engage in crafting with their children.[68]

Libraries

As important public spaces, libraries often play a role much bigger than as lenders of books. They are so important to Finnish culture that they are dubbed “citizens’ living rooms”.[69] They also play a role in public welfare around the world. A survey of Pennsylvania library directors found that, rather than just literacy and education outcomes, much of the libraries’ work addressed health and welfare concerns. This included helping people who were seeking employment and information on nutrition and exercise, as well as assisting with government benefit claims. Dealing with acute emergencies such as drug overdoses was also not uncommon.[70]

67. Genoe & Liechty, 2017.
68. Schultz-Krohn et al., 2019.

69. Court, 2020.
70. Whiteman et al., 2018.

CONCLUSION

A picture is a poem
without words.

– HORACE

Just as the arts and cultural landscape is dynamic and constantly evolving, so too is evaluation theory and practice. Social impact measurement is a relatively young field and, as such, it is complex and highly contested. Experts do not all agree on which methods are valid, but stakeholders still expect providers to decide on an approach to measurement and allocate not inconsiderable resources towards it.

Research supports the crucial role arts and cultural organisations play in our communities. The impact of programs extends from the individual to society as a whole – improving individual health and wellbeing, building community cohesion, and contributing to our collective cultural and economic strength.

Evaluation of arts and culture often responds to political and economic drivers, with the current trend of financialised methods of analysis being championed by government and funding bodies. Social impact measurement is important, not just because it is expected by government and philanthropic funders, but also because it is a way to be transparent with your participants and your staff.

Organisations need to make more informed choices about social impact measurement. We hope this *Sector Briefing* encourages you, and your organisation, to be clear about:

- what you are doing;
- why you are doing it;
- whether it works (and how it might work better); and
- how can you use meaningful metrics for measurement.

Having a clear understanding of the intended outcomes of your program, and of evaluation itself, empowers you to collect useful and meaningful data, avoid wasting resources, enhance your ability to communicate the value of your program to funders and improve program outcomes. When these align, social impact measurement can help programs realise deep and lasting positive social change.

RESOURCES

The global arts and culture community has a number of online resources for both novice and experienced researchers. These include a large number of open access resources (including evaluation reports, datasets and lists of indicators). Some of these include:

- Arts Alliance Evidence Library
- Arts Council England
- Australia Council Electorate Profiles
- Better Evaluation
- Cultural Data Online
- Cultural Development Network
- Global Value Exchange
- Pew Cultural Data Project
- Repository for Arts & Health Resources

SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLBOX

The UTS Social Impact Toolbox is empowering organisations to evaluate their social impact in a way that is reliable, accessible and free. It aims to build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector through democratising access to the validated tools, resources and methodologies needed to evaluate and communicate social impact.

The UTS Social Impact Toolbox is empowering organisations to evaluate their social impact in a way that is reliable, accessible and free. By building the capacity of the sector we can develop a common language of evaluation, empower small to medium organisations, and take the anxiety and expense out of mastering the practice of evaluation. It aims to build the capacity of the not-for-profit sector through democratising access to the validated tools, resources and methodologies needed to evaluate and communicate social impact.

UTS Open Taster Courses

- Measuring Social Impact
- Evaluation Methods
- Outcomes Based Funding

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