THE BE wAy TOOLKIT

This BE wAy Toolkit has been published by Beyond Empathy in collaboration with the Westpac Foundation.

Notice and Disclaimer

Authors

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In writing the toolkit the authors have drawn on the experience and practice wisdom of the broader Beyond Empathy Team, in particular Phillip Crawford, Joshua Thomason and Nicola Speden.

INTRODUCTION – WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE BE WAY TOOLKIT?

What's this toolkit designed to do?

This toolkit has been developed to provide artists, community development and support workers with an understanding of how the arts can be used as a powerful individual and community development tool.

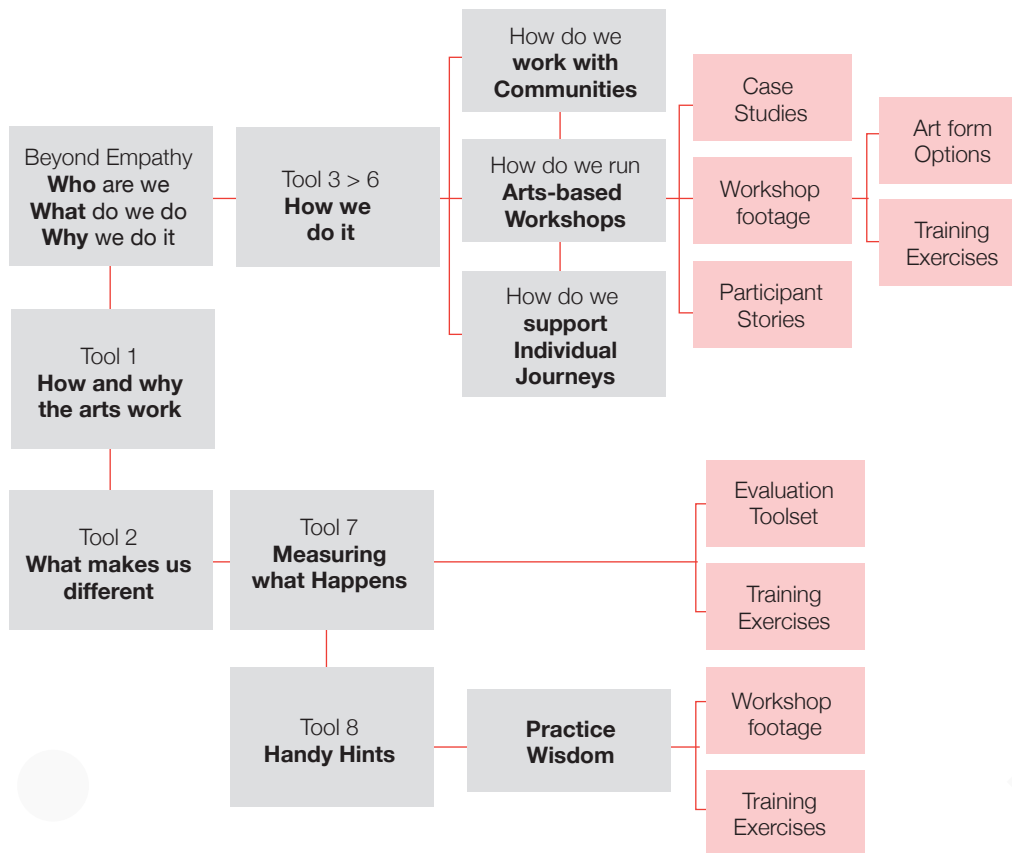Our intention is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of:

- What good community arts practice is
- How it is delivered
- How it can be used to support both individual and community development.

Phillip, Kim and Denni all have extensive experience working in the arts and community development sectors - Phillip as an award winning film maker and community arts practitioner, Kim as a community development worker who has run a range of community arts projects, and Denni as an artist and community arts practitioner.

The toolkit has been broken into 8 Tools:

Toolkit Map

Supporting Materials (under development)
Toolkit

Beyond Empathy **Who** are we **What** do we do **Why** we do it

Tool 3 > 6 **How we do it**

How do we **work with Communities**

How do we run **Arts-based Workshops**

How do we **support Individual Journeys**

Case Studies

Workshop footage

Participant Stories

Art form Options

Training Exercises

Tool 1 **How and why the arts work**

Tool 2 **What makes us different**

Tool 7 **Measuring what Happens**

Evaluation Toolset

Training Exercises

Tool 8 **Handy Hints**

Practice Wisdom

Workshop footage

Training Exercises

As far as possible, the BE wAy Toolkit has been written so that readers can choose to read the full document or just refer to the parts of the toolkit that interest them most. Having said that, we obviously think that the whole toolkit is worth reading and so recommend that you take the time to work through the whole thing!

We hope you find the BE wAy Toolkit useful and enjoy working through it. If you have any feedback please contact us at toolkit@beyondempathy.org.au.

BEYOND EMPATHY
WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

What's this section about?

This section gives you a brief introduction to Beyond Empathy - who we are, what we do and why we do it. How we use the arts to influence change and the philosophical perspectives that underpin our work are also introduced here.

We go into more detail about how we do what we do and the theory behind it in other sections of the toolkit.

Who are we?

Beyond Empathy (or BE as we are sometimes called) is an Australian community arts organisation.

It was set up in Armidale in northern New South Wales in 2004 by Phillip Crawford, Kim McConville and Denni Scott Davis with the objective of using the arts as an individual and community development tool to influence positive social change.

Phillip, Kim and Denni all have extensive experience working in the arts and community development sectors - Phillip as an award winning film maker and community arts practitioner, Kim as a community development worker who has run a range of community arts projects, and Denni as an artist and community arts practitioner.

Phillip, Kim and Denni met while working on a range of community arts projects between 1999 and 2003. They soon discovered that they shared a common belief in the value of the arts and its capacity to facilitate personal and community dialogue, development and change. In particular, they discovered that they had a common understanding of how arts practice can be delivered in a way that helps strengthen and leverage local support service networks and, in so doing, supports long term individual and social change.

In 2004 they set up Beyond Empathy to:

- Deliver high quality arts programs
- Demonstrate the capacity of the arts to influence change
- Promote the adoption of quality community arts practice as an individual and community development tool.

On reflection, it was a somewhat ambitious objective!

Since its establishment Beyond Empathy has been recognised as one of Australia's leading community arts practitioners. In 2008 Beyond Empathy was selected as one of ten (10) community arts organisations to receive long term funding from the Australia Council[1] as a Key Producer under its Community Partnerships Funding Program. Beyond Empathy has received awards for its community arts programs working with young Indigenous mothers to improve maternal and child health and promote healthy early childhood development. It has been approached by government to demonstrate how arts practice can be used to promote improved health and education outcomes and has been providing training to community development workers and artists in the delivery of community arts programs for the last five years.

At the time of writing this toolkit both Philip and Kim continue to be involved in the life of Beyond Empathy, Kim McConville as the Executive Director and Phillip Crawford as Film Director and Project Manager in the Illawarra.

Denni Scott Davis worked with Beyond Empathy as Program Development and Coordination Manager until early in 2009.

Beyond Empathy continues to grow. It has an established team of artists and community development workers as well as a dedicated office and administration team. At the time of writing, Beyond Empathy employs approximately 10 permanent staff and a pool of approximately 70 contracting artists. It runs community arts projects with a combined budget of approximately $1.9M per annum. Beyond Empathy's work is funded by a mix of government grants, philanthropic funding and individual donations.

In publishing this toolkit, Beyond Empathy is seeking to:

- Articulate how the arts can be used to influence change
- Share what it has learned about how to design and deliver quality community arts programs
- Promote the adoption of quality community arts practice as an individual and community development tool.

In many ways, this toolkit is an important part of delivering Beyond Empathy's original vision and promoting the use of the arts to influence positive social change.

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[1] The Australia Council is Australia's peak national arts funding body.

So … what exactly do we do?

Beyond Empathy runs arts programs in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities in Australia that aim to provide participants with a positive experience and help them build support networks that make positive changes in their lives.

We seek to go beyond empathy and work one on one, one by one with disengaged people and their communities to influence change.

Who do we work with?

Beyond Empathy usually works with young people who are disengaged from their community and local support and education services - the young people who are often described by government and the community service sector as being "at risk".

Young people who participate in our programs come from backgrounds of recurring and often inter-generational hardship. Many have dropped out of school, are unemployed or have never had a job, have an unstable home or home environment, have been in (or are highly likely to get into) trouble with the law, have multiple health issues and / or misuse drugs and alcohol.

Participants often have limited contact with local support agencies and health and education services and are distrustful or dismissive of them.

A significant proportion of the young people we work with come from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

As part of our practice, we also collaborate with local support workers and agencies that support the young people that we work with.

The dual focus of our work is an important part of what makes our practice different from many other arts-based organisations.

For simplicity, we tend to refer to the young people that we work with as "participants" and local agency staff as "support workers" throughout this toolkit.
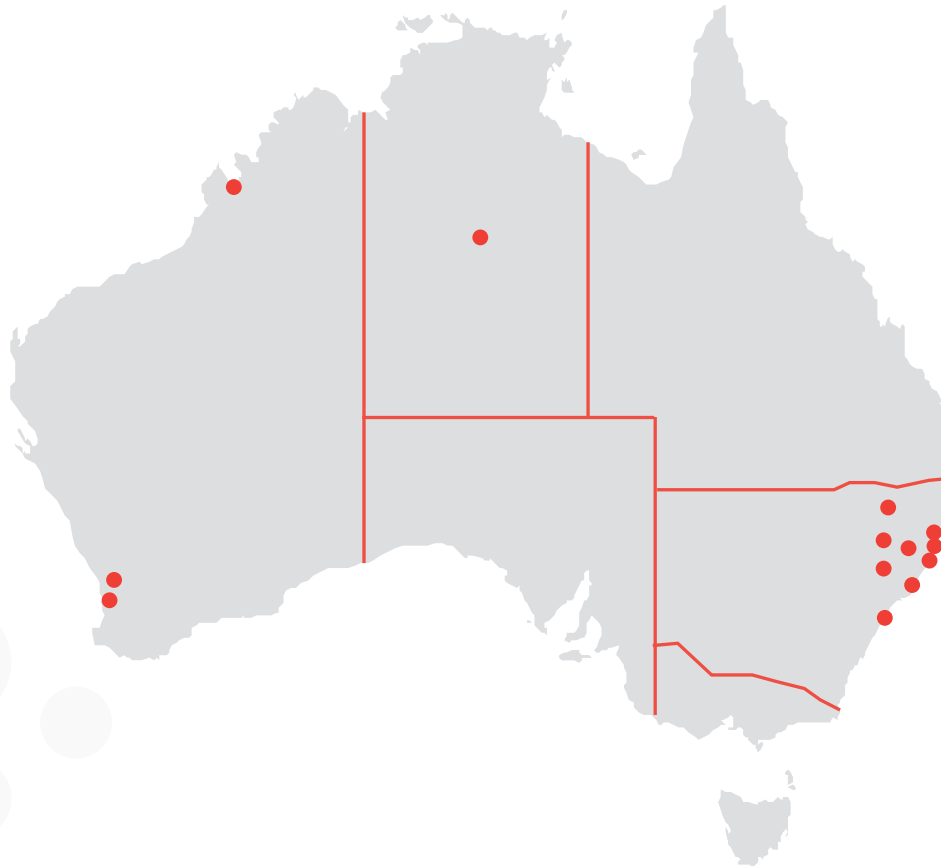
Where do we work?

Beyond Empathy currently works in disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Since its establishment in 2004, Beyond Empathy has worked with over 20 marginalised communities in New South Wales and the Northern Territory, including:

- Armidale, Moree, Tamworth
- Boggabilla, Toomelah, Mungindi, Inverell, Narabri, Walgett
- Macksville, Nambucca, Bowraville, Kempsey, Taree, Box Ridge, Coraki, Yamba, Mclean
- Sydney including Auburn and Granville
- Illawarra including Bundaleer and Berkley
- Tennant Creek
- Derby.

To date, Beyond Empathy has tended to establish long term relationships with the communities it has worked with.

Beyond Empathy has traditionally taken a project-based approach, collaborating with local support service providers on a repeat basis to run community arts programs.

Beyond Empathy is currently translating its project-based approach into a place-based model through the establishment of an Arts Led Social Enterprise Hub in Bowraville New South Wales.

The Better Factory

Beyond Empathy will partner with local Aboriginal, health, education, training and employment organisations to establish an innovative, Arts Led Social Enterprise Hub called the "Better Factory" in Bowraville, New South Wales. The Better Factory will use Beyond Empathy's proven arts practice model to engage, connect and support disadvantaged members of the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to access support services and participate in education, training and micro-enterprise based employment opportunities.

Art Influencing Change – A Model for Arts Led Social Enterprise
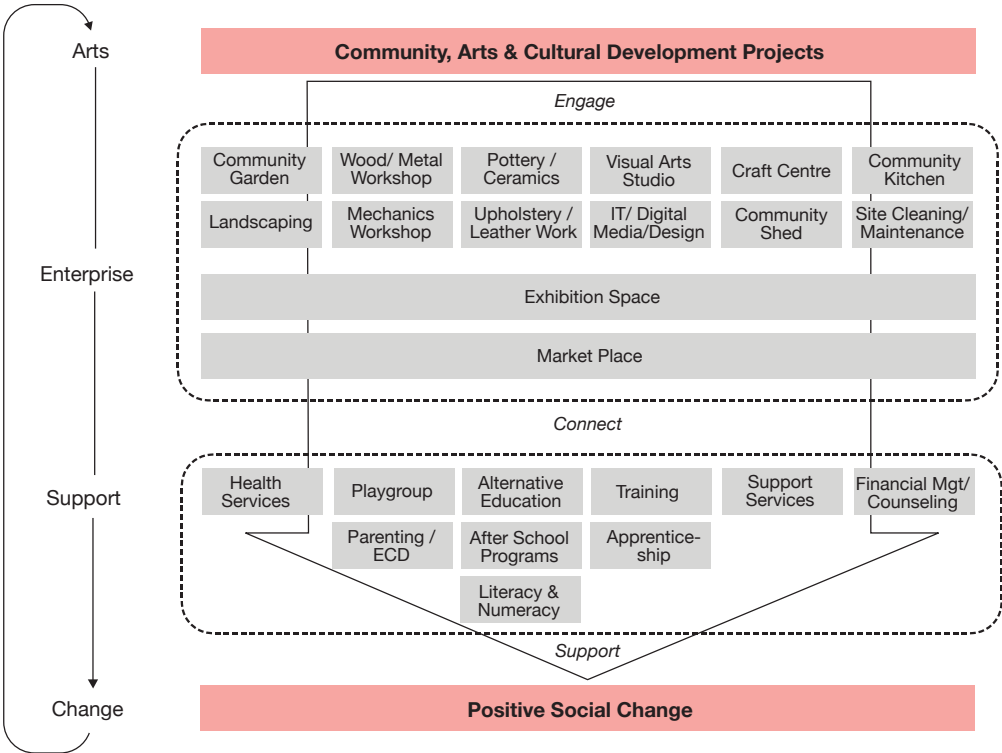
Local community arts projects will be used to engage participants. The projects will draw on creative enterprises conducted out of key Better Factory sites located across the community. Those enterprises will operate as informal learning centres where participants can build personal, general life management, artistic, vocational and enterprise skills. Accredited trainers and skilled volunteers will work side by side with participants helping them to develop skills. They will provide opportunities for participants to access accredited training in a safe, accessible and highly flexible learning environment and to engage in work / micro-enterprise activities.

Participants will be encouraged to work on their own projects or micro-enterprise activities. They will be able to use materials from "The Shed" to make things at the Factory. The use of those materials, Factory equipment and technical support from trainers and skilled volunteers will be available on a "Community Credit" system requiring participants to make an in kind or financial contribution to the Factory in return for those things. The above system will be used as a means of getting participants to value the Factory and to build a reward for effort culture within the Better Factory community. Volunteering, community credit and paid employment opportunities will also be available at the Factory to help participants build work readiness, vocational and micro-enterprise skills.

A Better Factory exhibition space will be used to exhibit and sell creative work and a regular community market will be used to provide an outlet for participants to sell their wares and encourage participants to establish their own micro-enterprises. Financial counseling, business management and advisory services will be available to help participants to do that.

Better Factory support workers will work one-on-one with participants to help them to engage in learning, development and micro-enterprise activities. That support will be delivered in an informal way and will be tailored to meet the needs of each participant. A range of health and support services will be provided through the site. A playgroup will also be run out of the site and will provide a forum through which to provide parenting and maternal and child health services. Wherever possible, opportunities will be found to link creative and micro-enterprise activities to support and capacity building programs.

The operation of the Better Factory will involve workers and volunteers from across the community and will include government, community, health and support services, education and training providers, businesses and community members.
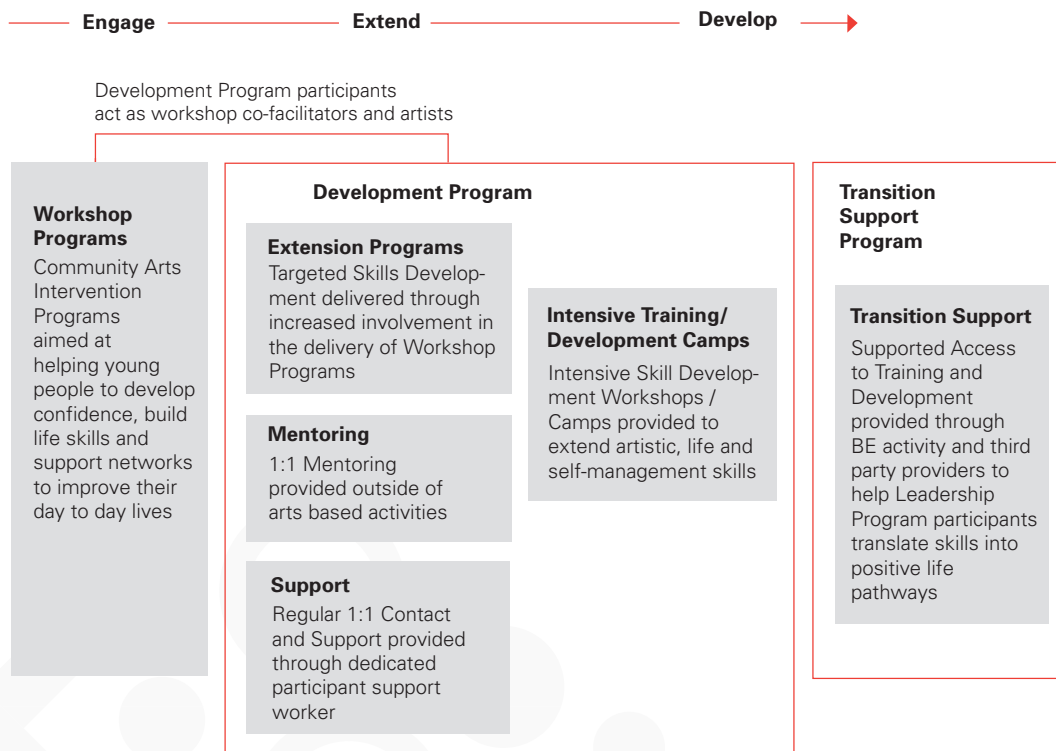
What types of programs do we run?

Beyond Empathy runs a tiered portfolio of arts-based programs that are designed to engage, extend and develop the young people and support workers that we work with.

Program Building Blocks

Engage ——————— Extend ——————— Develop ———→

Development Program participants act as workshop co-facilitators and artists

Workshop Programs
Community Arts Intervention Programs aimed at helping young people to develop confidence, build life skills and support networks to improve their day to day lives

Development Program

Extension Programs
Targeted Skills Development delivered through increased involvement in the delivery of Workshop Programs

Mentoring
1:1 Mentoring provided outside of arts based activities

Support
Regular 1:1 Contact and Support provided through dedicated participant support worker

Intensive Training/ Development Camps
Intensive Skill Development Workshops / Camps provided to extend artistic, life and self-management skills

Transition Support Program

Transition Support
Supported Access to Training and Development provided through BE activity and third party providers to help Leadership Program participants translate skills into positive life pathways

A. Workshop Programs

The Workshop Programs are structured to operate at a community or regional level. They're designed to help young people develop confidence and build life skills and support networks in order to improve their day-to-day lives.

Programs are usually structured either as:

- **Long Term Interventions –** arts-based workshop activities are conducted regularly (weekly or fortnightly) in a community over an extended period of time (one to three years or more), or

- **Repeat Intensive Interventions –** periodic (monthly or quarterly) arts-based workshops and activities are conducted on a repeat basis in a community over an extended period of time (from one to three years or more).

Art Form Menu:

Circus

Dance

Digital media

Digital storytelling

Drama

Film

Graffiti

Hip Hop

Mosaics

Painting

Photography

Pottery

Physical theatre

Play writing

Screen painting

Sculpture

Song writing

Story writing

The bias towards longer term, repeat programs has been intentional, on the basis that a longer timeframe provides a better opportunity to build rapport with participants and to broker the relationships between participants and support workers that form the foundation for the personal and community changes Beyond Empathy seeks to support.

We draw on a range of different art forms when running these programs, selecting the form that is most likely to resonate with the group we are working with at the time.

B. Development Program

In addition to running the Workshop Programs, Beyond Empathy also runs a structured Development Program that targets young people who engage strongly with its Workshop Programs. The Development Program encourages participants to set positive life goals and aspirations and to build the capacity and capability to work towards them.

Beyond Empathy's Development Program is made up of a number of components that include:

- **Extension Program –** participants are gradually encouraged and supported to take on more of a facilitation role in the community workshops and assume responsibility for different parts of delivering those programs

- **Mentoring –** participants are linked up with individual mentors within (or sometimes outside of) the Beyond Empathy Team who then take responsibility for mentoring participants and helping them work through day-to-day issues and opportunities that come their way. The mentoring relationship provides an opportunity to help participants develop new skills, and to challenge assumptions they have made about themselves and the life options available to them

- **Personal Support –** a paid youth worker (who is part of the Beyond Empathy Team) keeps in contact with participants and helps them work through specific issues and opportunities that they face and links them to third-party support where appropriate. The worker also identifies opportunities for participants to join in other Beyond Empathy activities and helps them join in those activities

- **Intensive Training and Development Camps –** that specifically work with Development Program participants to help them hone their artistic and facilitation skills, as well as working with them to build the personal and general life management skills they need in order to take control of their lives.

C. Transition Support Programs

Beyond Empathy also runs a Transition Support Program. This Program helps participants who have been in the Development Program "graduate" from Beyond Empathy by helping them to move into more formal study or employment options based on the skills they have developed through their work with Beyond Empathy.

Although Beyond Empathy's Workshop Programs play an important role in engaging participants and connecting them to community support networks, it's usually the participants who get involved in Beyond Empathy's Development and Transition Support Programs that make the biggest changes in their lives.

How do we use the arts?

Beyond Empathy uses the arts as a **bridging, engagement and development tool.**

Our programs are designed to work at three levels:

- **With participants -** to build confidence, develop skills, facilitate access to support services and promote positive life outcomes

- **With local support agencies -** to develop support service networks, assist agencies to connect with disengaged young people and improve service access and delivery

- **With communities -** to build awareness of participant support needs and encourage community support for local programs to address those needs.

We often refer to what we do as providing the "glue" that allows support agencies and communities to work together more effectively to engage and support disengaged members of their community.

Beyond Empathy programs use art as a mechanism to engage young people and provide them with a fun, safe space in which to explore the issues that influence their lives and trial new ways of being.

We use arts-based activities and workshops to provide a forum through which to connect young people with local support workers and broker relationships between them. We help participants to develop skills, build a positive sense of what they are capable of, strengthen their support network and take responsibility for themselves and their future.

We use the involvement of local support providers in the delivery of our programs to broker relationships that help build and strengthen local support networks.

And, we use the public presentation of artistic products created in Beyond Empathy's arts workshops and activities to engage with the broader community and encourage an understanding of, and a dialogue about, issues facing young people and their communities.

What sorts of issues do we explore?

Through our programs we have used the arts to explore a range of individual and community issues including:

- Identity
- Place
- Difference and acceptance
- Drug and alcohol use / management
- Mental health
- Parenting and early childhood development
- Social space violence.

We work one on one with participants to help them explore how these issues impact their lives, their families and their communities. We do this through both the artistic process involved in the production of art and the discussion that goes alongside the artistic process, as well as through the mentoring and support frameworks we put in place as part of our Development Program.

The presentation of public exhibition and performance outcomes allows us to translate that one-on-one dialogue into a community discussion. It's through that broader dialogue that we try to influence community attitudes and encourage the community to see and engage with the young people we work with in a more constructive way.
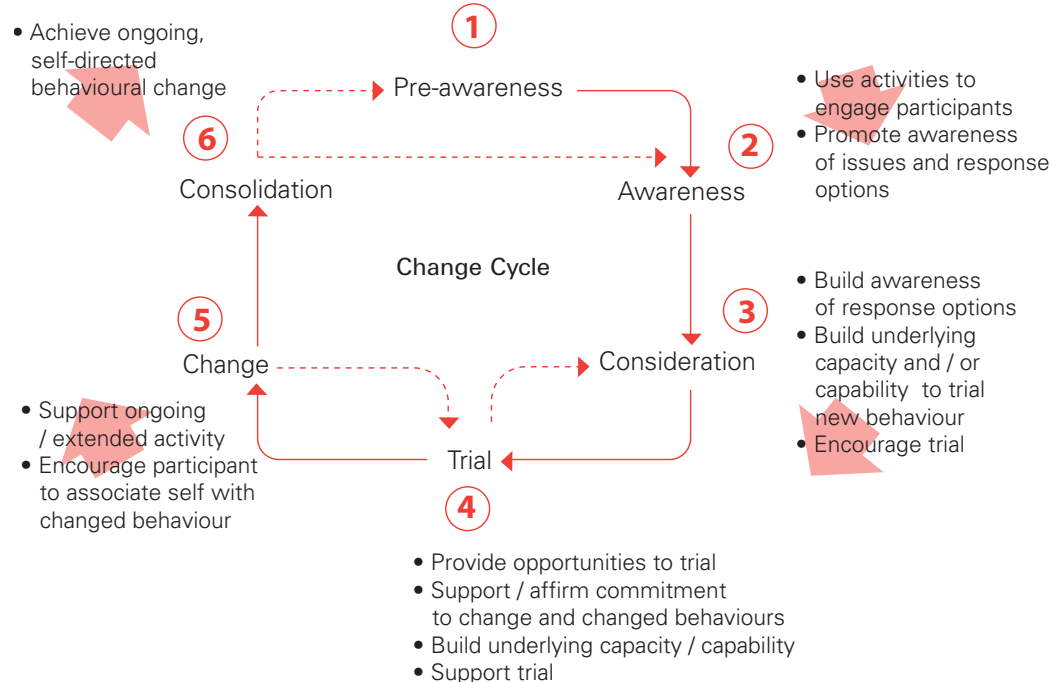
What do we try to achieve?

Through our work we seek to engage, connect with and support young people who are disengaged from their community and to help them build their support networks by linking them back into their family and community and to local support service providers. In this way we try to influence social change.

We try to encourage participants, support workers and community members to move around the "change cycle".

The longer we work in communities, the longer and deeper the engagement is with participants and support workers and the farther around the change cycle we can go.

We try to encourage participants to move around the 'Change Cycle'

- Achieve ongoing, self-directed behavioural change

1 Pre-awareness

6 Consolidation

- Use activities to engage participants
- Promote awareness of issues and response options

2 Awareness

Change Cycle

- Build awareness of response options
- Build underlying capacity and / or capability to trial new behaviour
- Encourage trial

3 Consideration

5 Change

- Support ongoing / extended activity
- Encourage participant to associate self with changed behaviour

4 Trial

- Provide opportunities to trial
- Support / affirm commitment to change and changed behaviours
- Build underlying capacity / capability
- Support trial

8

The deeper the engagement, the further around the cycle we can go

Taste (limited/one off participation)	Touch (repeat participation)	Translate (longer term involvement)
• Positive experience	• Positive experience	• Positive experience
	• Improved view of / feeling about self	• Improved view of / feeling about self • Improved view of future • Perceived capacity to influence future • Positive life goal / aspiration
	• Improved technical / creative skills • Improved personal / self-management skills	• Improved technical / creative skills • Improved personal / self-management skills • Improved capacity to manage
		• Improved attitude towards / relationships with others • Strengthened personal support network
• Increased awareness of support services	• Increased awareness of support services • Improved attitude towards / relationship with support workers	• Increased awareness of support services • Improved attitude towards / relationship with support workers • Increased preparedness to use appropriate support services • Increased use of appropriate services • Strengthened professional support network
	• Consideration of new ways of being (behaviours) • Trial of new ways of being	• Consideration of new ways of being • Trial of new ways of being • Change in behaviour

How do we set up our programs to meet those objectives?

Whenever we set up a program we start by completing a program brief that clearly sets out the program logic for what we're going to do. It covers:

- **What** we're planning to do
- **How** we're going to do it
- **What** resources we are going to need to make it happen
- **Who** the participants are going to be
- **Why** we're doing it and what outcomes we are going to achieve.

This helps us make sure we're clear, from the outset, about what we're doing and the objectives we're trying to achieve. (A copy of our standard Program Briefing Pack is provided the Appendix)

We've learned from experience that it's really important to be clear about what we're doing and what the objectives are so that we make sure everyone on the program team is on the same page and understands exactly what we're trying to do. It's also important so that we can set third party (funder) expectations and ensure that they understand what we are - and are not - proposing to deliver.

We have also developed a set of evaluation tools to assess the effect our programs have so we can monitor whether or not we're delivering on our objectives. (We talk about those tools in more detail in Tool 7.)

TOOL 1 – HOW AND WHY THE ARTS WORK AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TOOL

What's this Tool about?

This Tool seeks to articulate why the arts work as an individual and community development tool. It draws on behavioural theory and links it to the techniques that are used in quality arts practice. Because of that, this Tool is more "theoretical" than some of the other sections of the BE wAy Toolkit.

It might sound dry, but it's actually really interesting and articulates a lot of what we know as arts practitioners but often find hard to explain.

So take a deep breath and have a read!

Why do the arts work as an engagement, bridging and development tool?

Making art, in all its forms, is a creative activity that provides a unique medium through which to:

- Engage participants
- Explore and challenge (self) perceptions, assumptions, boundaries and behaviours
- Trial new behaviours and ways of being
- Encourage dialogue.

Through that, it can influence both individual and social change.

How does it do that?

The arts provide a safe, neutral space in which people can explore how they:

- See themselves and their lived experience
- See their world
- See and interact with others.

We are more open to insights from the unconscious mind in moments when we are not thinking of anything in particular.

It does that because:

Art is fun ... and because of that it works as a hook to engage participants, including young people who would not ordinarily engage in more structured support activities.

Art resonates in different ways with different people... and because of that it has the capacity to bring together different groups and provide a focal point through which they can engage with each other.

Art isn't structured ... and because of that it can flex to meet the capabilities, interests and needs of different groups and different members within a given group.

Art is based in an individual creative process ... and because of that it provides a safe, neutral space to explore different ways of seeing, experiencing and being in the world. It allows people to enter a detached space where they can stand apart from themselves and their current lived experience; it lets them suspend negative thoughts or experiences and can allow them to view things from a different perspective.

Art provides a mechanism for both internal and external dialogue ... allowing the identification and resolution of negative self-perceptions and behaviours.

Art redefines the relationship and power balance between support workers and participants ... making them co-creators in an artistic process rather than parties to a hierarchical relationship. In so doing, it provides participants with an opportunity to teach as well as to learn.

The creative process makes people feel "safe" because:

- It's free from defined norms – there's no right or wrong answer or one way of doing things

- It gives permission to try different things and to act out of character – you can distance yourself from your work and operate in the third person

- It's an intuitive process

- It allows participants to maintain control over how they participate - what they do, how they express themselves, what they create

- It provides a forum for controlled risk taking

- It's fun and because of that it removes your inner censor, it encourages playfulness and lets you explore

- It allows ideas to creep up on you – it can challenge self-perceptions and help you explore personal boundaries without you realising what you are doing

- It provides a forum for dialogue

- It provides a mirror – it allows you to look at yourself and see things that you don't or can't otherwise see or acknowledge.

Because of that, arts-based activities have the capability to take participants out of their day-to-day existence.

Arts-based activities can absorb participants - focus their attention and awareness - and take them into what Mihalyi Csíkszentmihályi has described as a mental state of "flow". Flow is a mental state in which a person is fully absorbed in what s/he is doing and has a feeling of energised focus, full involvement and satisfaction or success in an activity.[2]

The ability to see things in a fresh and different way is an important part of the creative process.

The power of creative activity is that it engages people at both a conscious and sub-conscious level.

In many ways, creative activity provides an "alternative lens" through which to see and explore things.

Arts practice can engage people - both participants and support workers – and take them out of their day-to-day existence. It can suspend awareness of the factors that impact their lives and the assumptions they make about themselves and their lived experience. It can reframe how people see things and enable them to think about things differently, to imagine and explore alternative ways of being.

The ability to leverage the creative experience and use it to assist people to revisit how they think about themselves and their lives and how they see and interact with others is what transforms traditional single loop arts practice into a double loop learning tool. And it's through that cycle the arts becomes a powerful individual and community development tool.

People engage in the creative activity in its own right as a creative or fun exercise. Well executed, however, they experience the activity at two levels:

- The physical experience of doing the activity and the skill-based learning that participants take from that (single loop learning)

- The reflective experience and the impact that has on the mental models that inform how people think about themselves, their lived experience and their view of the world, and how they see and interact with others (double loop learning).
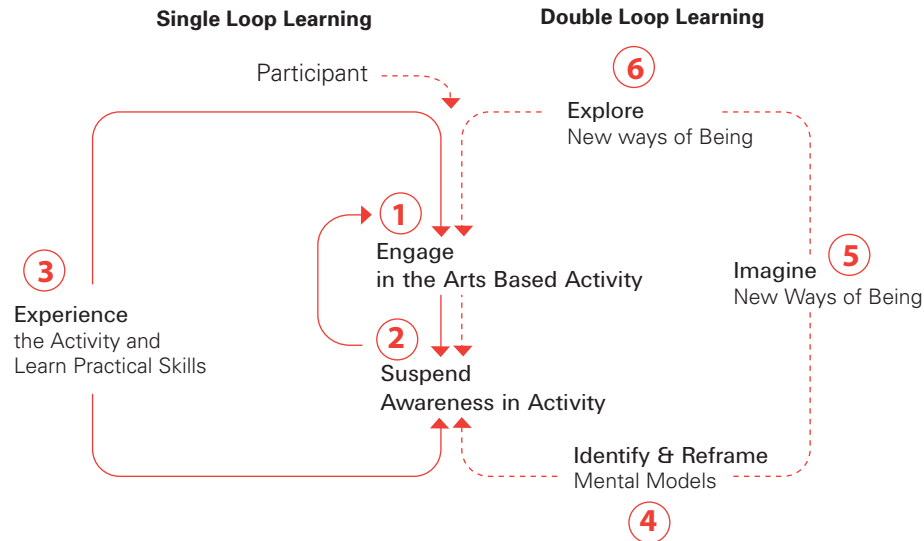
It's because the arts can do that that arts practice provides a unique medium through which to undertake individual and community cultural development.

[2] Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály (1990). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience'. New York: Harper and Row.

[3] Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály (1975). Beyond Boredom and Anxiety. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

What is double loop learning?

Double loop learning occurs when an individual not only reacts to the issue being faced, but also questions his or her actions and asks what s/he might be able to do to change the situation.[4]

Single Loop Learning   **Double Loop Learning**

Participant

6

Explore
New ways of Being

1

Engage
in the Arts Based Activity

5

Imagine
New Ways of Being

3

Experience
the Activity and
Learn Practical Skills

2

Suspend
Awareness in Activity

Identify & Reframe
Mental Models

4

Single versus Double Loop Learning

Single Loop Learning – a thermostat that automatically turns up the heat when the temperature in the room drops below 15 degrees.

Double Loop Learning – a thermostat that could ask why am I set for 15 degrees and whether or not automatically turning on the heating system is the most appropriate response to the drop in temperature. (Argyris 1991, p.100)

With single loop learning the room stays warm but you never realise that the reason why the heat needs to go on so often is because the seals around your windows are broken and need to be replaced to keep the warmth in and the cold out!

With double loop learning you fix the broken seals on your window, the room stays warm and you reduce your heating bill and your carbon emissions!

How does double loop learning work?

Each of us has a certain way of looking at the world.

We think about ourselves, our lives and those around us in certain ways. The way we do that is informed by our lived experience. Throughout our lives we build up sub-conscious mental models or frames of reference that we then use to interpret what goes on around us.[5]

Mental Models

Experience leads us to develop sub-conscious mental models that we use to 'filter' how we see and understand the world around us

External Event

See

Mental Model
(assumption)

Act
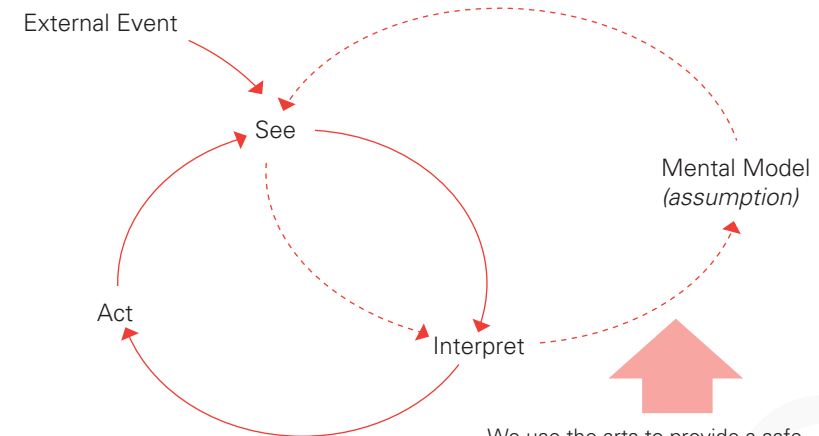
Interpret

Those mental models allow us to interpret what we see and help us to work out how best to respond to things that come our way.

We use the arts to provide a safe, neutral space in which people can Surface those mental models and explore how they :
• See themselves and their lived experience
• See their world and
• See and interact with others.

[4] C. Argyris., Teaching Smart People How to Learn, Harvard Business Review., Vol. 69(5)., May – June 1991., pp.99 – 109.

[5] R. Stacey., Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics., Pitman: London., 1993., p.153.

Our mental models can help us to fast track our decision making, but they can also trip us up.

Researchers such a Peter Senge and Chris Argyris have investigated the impact our sub-conscious assumptions or mental models have on us. They have noted that our mental models can "limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting"[6] and/or can lead us to make assumptions about ourselves - and others - that aren't true.

We can end up making assumptions that constrain our thinking and lead us to misinterpret what's going on around us.

If those assumptions go untested our sub-conscious mental models can lead us into a negative cycle of self-censorship, misunderstanding and/or defensive behaviour.

Often people fall into the habit of making assumptions about others based on their behaviour and what they assume that behaviour means.

A "negative attribution error" occurs when people observe and then judge the actions of others in a negative way without fully understanding the factors that have led to the behaviour (or the role they themselves might have played in generating the response).

What is an Attribution Error?

Social research has shown that most people have a tendency to explain negative things about themselves by blaming forces beyond their control (or situational factors), but they will explain other people's poor behavior by blaming it on the person demonstrating that behaviour. That is, people tend to make an "external" attribution of their own behavior and an "internal" attribution of other people's behavior. Social psychologists often refer to this as cognitive bias or as a Fundamental Attribution Error.

Why do we make them?

There is no universally accepted explanation for why we make these errors. One possibility is that they occur because of the perspective we take in interpreting behaviour.

When we observe other people, the person is the primary reference point.

When we observe ourselves, we are more aware of the forces acting upon us.

So, attributions for others' behavior are more likely to focus on the person we see, not the situation that they are in or the factors that are impacting them, which we may or may not be aware of.

How can we avoid them?

We can try to avoid making attribution errors when interpreting another person's behaviour by:

- Looking beyond the current situation for patterns in behaviour - if most people behave the same way when put in the same situation, then the situation is more likely to be the cause of the behavior

- Asking if you would be likely to behave in the same way if you were put in the same situation

- Looking for unseen causes

- Giving people the "benefit of the doubt" (more than once).

This is particularly true where two people have had very different life experiences. They often view things and interpret behaviours in different ways. This can lead to cycles of misunderstanding that make it hard to establish rapport and build positive relationships.

This cycle of misunderstanding is something that often acts as a barrier to establishing strong relationships between disengaged young people and support service providers.

Highly disengaged young people have often had negative experiences with support services – so often view support workers skeptically – and frequently adopt a distant, defensive, non-compliant attitude towards workers as part of an inbuilt self-protection mechanism. For example, young people often exhibit confronting behaviour, requiring others to repeatedly "prove" their commitment to them before they open up and connect with them.

[6] Peter Senge., The Fifth Disciple: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation., Random House, Sydney., 1990., p.174.

Support workers are often inadequately resourced to meet their workload. They seek to provide assistance and feel worn down, frustrated, hurt and / or unappreciated when they're repeatedly rebuffed by those they seek to help, or when they see young people as not making an effort to take advantage of the support they offer.

The distancing and frustrated emotions on either side can often be interpreted as a lack of preparedness to engage and contribute to a failure to engage with one another. They perpetuate a power imbalance (hierarchical relationship) that impedes change.

What Actually Happened	Participant Interpretation	Support Worker Interpretation
The participant goes into a housing service to get help accessing housing support. It is full of people. He waits in line for his turn. He asks "How do I get a house?"	I hate having to come into places like this. What hope do I have in getting help if all of these people are here looking for help too. I'm wasting my time.	
The worker is busy and hands him a bundle of forms in a rushed way telling him to fill them in and give them back to her when they are done. The participant fills them in.	She is not really interested in helping me.	I can't wait for this week to be over - there is too much to do.
When he gives them back to her the worker flips through them, says that they will take a little while to process and throws them on a pile of other forms and tells him to come back in in a week if she hasn't called him.	I hate filling in forms like this. Why can't they just help me. I wouldn't be here if I didn't have to be.	Good - the form is all filled in - I have all the information that I need - it is just a matter of working that one through the system. Along with all of the other ones…
The participant comes back in in a week to check what is happening. He waits in line for his turn again. The worker doesn't seem to recognise him and takes a long time to find his file. When she does find it she says that it is still being processed and tells him to come back in a week if she hasn't called him.	She isn't even looking at them. I'm not going to get any help. I'll just be on the bottom of the pile again. She is not really interested in helping me.	
She throws it back on the pile.	This is going to be a waste of time	
He complains that he needs help now. He gets angry and says this is a waste of time. She says that unfortunately things take time - there are not enough houses available at the moment. She gives him the details of a local hostel that he could go to.	I was right, she is not interested in helping me. They can't even find my file. Nothing is going to happen. Great - send me somewhere else.	Doesn't he realise I am doing the best I can - things take time - it's not my fault.
The worker calls the client. She can't get through and leaves a message asking him to come in. He doesn't come in.	There is no point in going back - they're just going through the motions. People like them don't really want to help people like me.	What a waste of time. I could have guessed that he would disappear on me. You can tell with people like that.

In many ways, Beyond Empathy uses its double loop learning arts practice model to get people to surface and then challenge the mental models that act as barriers for them.

In effect, Beyond Empathy works with people to try to enable them to be double loop learners. It encourages them to question how they see themselves and how they see and interact with others, and through that it seeks to influence individual and social change.

Double loop learning works with:

- **Young people** - to get them to rethink negative assumptions they have about themselves, the resources and support networks available to them, their capacity to influence or take control of their future, their life goals and aspirations

- **Artists and support workers -** to get them to rethink how they engage with young people and what they can do to work more effectively with them

- **Communities and audiences -** to get them to rethink how they feel about and interact with disengaged members of their community and what they can do to reach out to and better support those people.

Why is double loop learning important?

Beyond Empathy believes that to be effective, artists, community development and support workers need to be double loop learners.

We need to be empathetic and be able to put ourselves in the participants' shoes. We also need to identify how the way in which we work with young people impacts the relationships we build with them

As artists and workers we need to look inward and be prepared to reflect on our own behaviour and how it contributes to the reactions or behaviour of the young people we are working with, for good or bad.

Through his research, Argyris identified that highly skilled professionals are often very good at single loop learning - identifying an issue, diagnosing it and dealing with it based on their professional expertise.

He also identified that that same expertise often limits skilled professionals' ability to engage in double loop learning.

The more skilled we are …
the greater the risk we run that we will not question what we are doing.[7]

Because many professionals are almost always successful at what they do, they rarely experience failure. And because they have rarely failed, they have never learned how to learn from failure. So whenever their single loop learning strategies go wrong (i.e. things are not working), they become defensive, screen out criticism, and put the 'blame' on anyone and everyone but themselves. In short, their ability to learn shuts down precisely at the moment they need it most.[8]

Defensive reasoning such as that described by Argyris can block learning, even when an individual's commitment to learning is high.

It's a big part of what makes it difficult for us to change ingrained patterns of behaviour.

Argyris identifies four factors that tend to drive people's defensive reasoning and behaviour, the (often subconscious) desire to:

- Remain in control

- Suppress negative feelings (usually about ourselves)

- Be as rational as possible (remembering that what's seen to be rational is based on our own mental model or frame of reference)

- Maximise being right (winning) and minimise being wrong (losing).

All of the above factors are ones that make us feel vulnerable – and they are all factors we need to be prepared to confront if we are to work effectively.

To be effective, artists, community development and support workers need to overcome defensive reasoning – in themselves and in the participants they work with.

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[7] Stacey 1993., p.177.

[8] Argyris 1991., p.100. Teaching Smart People How to Learn., Harvard Business Review., Vol. 69(5)., May – June 1991., pp.99 – 109 at p.100.

TOOL 2 – WHAT MAKES BEYOND EMPATHY DIFFERENT

What's this Tool about?

This Tool provides an overview of the things that we think differentiate Beyond Empathy from a number of other community arts organisations. It talks about the dual focus of our work - with both the young people who participate in our programs and the community support networks we involve in delivering them. It provides an overview of the way we structure our programs and introduces the distinction between single loop and double loop arts practice.

What makes Beyond Empathy different?

Like many community arts organisations Beyond Empathy uses art as a mechanism for creative exploration, dialogue and development.

Although there are similarities between our work and that of a number of other community arts organisations, we believe the intention we bring to our work and the way we work differentiates us from the others.

There are five main factors that we believe distinguish our practice from that of many more traditional community arts organisations.

One – We always collaborate with local support agencies and involve local support workers in the delivery of our programs.

Two – We design our programs to help improve coordination between local support agencies and to build and strengthen local support networks so that they're better placed to provide ongoing support to our target participant groups.

Three – We use the art-making process to develop participant skills and connect them with local support agencies and the services and programs they run.

Four – At the same time, we involve local support workers in the art-making process to educate and develop their skills, to influence how they perceive and interact with participants (and, in so doing, we seek to take them on a personal development journey similar to that being undertaken by the young people we work with).

Five – We run a portfolio of Workshop, Development and Transition Support Programs that allows us to work one-on-one with specific young people and help them move through a structured personal development journey.

Beyond Empathy combines quality art-making processes with learning and development processes aimed at helping participants engage in double loop (rather than single loop) learning.

Our programs are designed to support the individual development of the young people who participate as well as strengthen community support networks that can then provide ongoing assistance to those young people.

The activities we run are designed to develop the skills of both the young people and the support workers involved, and also to strengthen the capacity of both groups to engage with one another.

That dual focus, combined with the dialogue generated at a broader community level through the public presentation of the artistic products created in our programs, is the key to how Beyond Empathy uses the arts as an individual and community development tool.

Young people who engage strongly in Beyond Empathy workshops are encouraged to develop their skills by gradually evolving their role in activities from participant, to co-facilitator or emerging artist, to lead facilitator or professional artist. Mentoring, one-on-one support, and structured training and development camps are used to support that process.

A similar training, mentoring and hands-on learning approach is used to develop the skills of support workers and artists involved in Beyond Empathy activities, and also other workers interested in learning how to use arts practice as an individual and community development tool.

We intentionally try to get participants and support workers to engage in a double rather than a single loop learning process.

Single Loop Learning

Participant

(6)

Explore
New ways of Being

(1)
Engage
in the Arts Based Activity

(3)
Experience
the Activity and
Learn Practical Skills

(2)
Suspend
Awareness in Activity

Imagine
New Ways of Being
(5)

Identify & Reframe
Mental Models
(4)

Double Loop Learning

**We try to encourage participants
to move around the 'Change Cycle'**

• Achieve ongoing,
self-directed
behavioural change

(1)
Pre-awareness

(6)
Consolidation

(2)
Awareness

Change Cycle

• Use activities to
engage participants
• Promote awareness
of issues and response
options

(5)
Change

(3)
Consideration

• Build awareness
of response options
• Build underlying
capacity and / or
capability to trial
new behaviour
• Encourage trial

• Support ongoing
/ extended activity
• Encourage participant
to associate self with
changed behaviour

(4)
Trial

• Provide opportunities to trial
• Support / affirm commitment
to change and changed behaviours
• Build underlying capacity / capability
• Support trial

The longer and deeper we engage with participants and support workers, the better the chance we have of reframing how the participants see themselves, their world and those around them.

So, we encourage participants and support workers to move around the "change cycle". The longer and deeper the engagement, the further around the change cycle everyone goes.

Because of the intention underlying our work and the programmic approach we apply to it, we talk about our practice being a double loop arts practice to distinguish it from more traditional community arts practice.

What's the difference between single loop and double loop arts practice?

Before embarking on this section it's important to acknowledge that what follows is only our view. We understand and respect that other practitioners may have a different view.
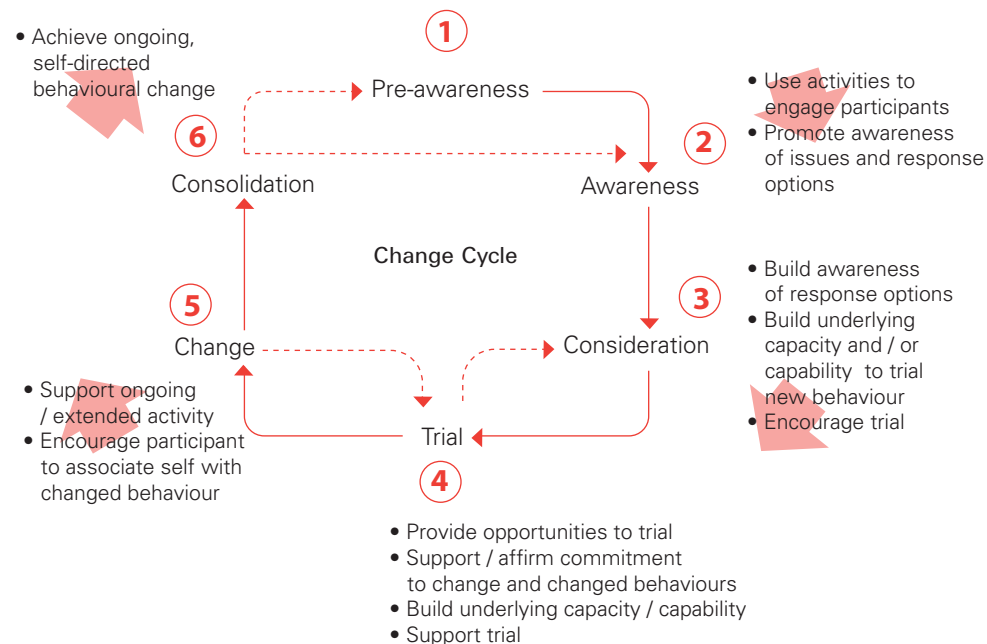
What's arts practice?

The term arts practice is usually used to describe the individual creative process by which artists produce their work.

Arts practice varies from artist to artist and across different art forms.

Community arts practices usually engage community members in the artistic or creative process by involving them in the conception, creation and / or viewing of the produced work.

Involvement in the process has the capacity to build participant skills and transform how people think about themselves and their world both through engagement in the creative process and through the artistic work produced. In doing that, arts practice has the capacity to act as an individual and community development tool and influence social change.

What's single loop community arts practice?

Single loop community arts practice occurs where the primary focus of the practice is on the production of an artistic product. The delivery of social change is an intended but ancillary outcome of the creative process.

In more traditional arts practice the focus is on the production of an artistic product. The delivery of social change is an expected but ancillary outcome of the creative process.

Art-making Process

Diversity of Art Form

Artistic Product

Use of Art Form
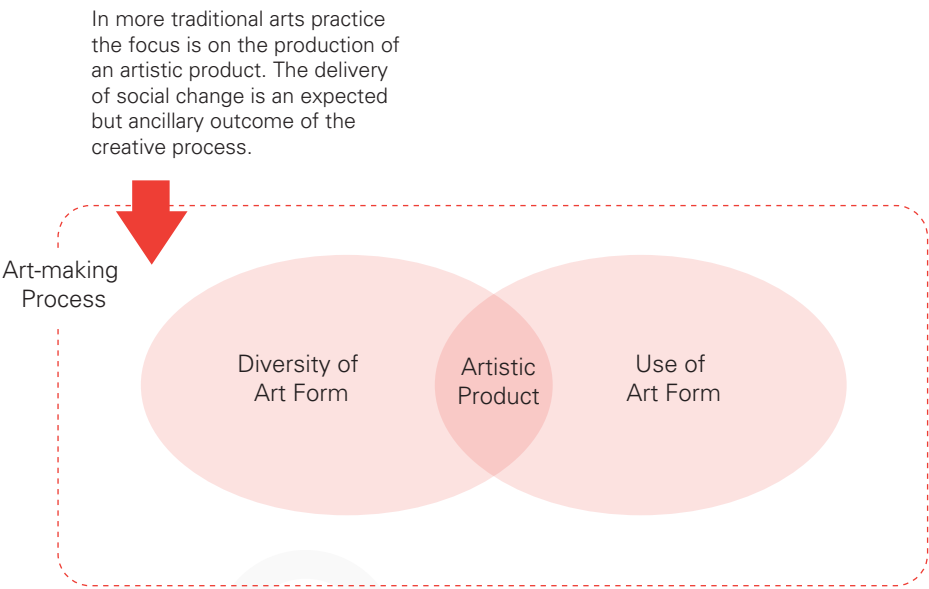
The practice relies on the inherent character of the creative process to provide participants with the opportunity to engage in second loop learning but does not incorporate specific program elements to guide and support that process.

Although double loop learning can and does occur, it tends to happen by chance rather than by intention.

- Focus is on the production of an artistic product
- Second loop learning is an intended but ancillary outcome of the artistic process.

Single Loop Learning

Participant

Double Loop Learning

6
Explore
New ways of Being

1
Engage
in the Arts Based Activity

3
Experience
the Activity and
Learn Practical Skills

Imagine
New Ways of Being **5**

2
Suspend
Awareness in Activity

Identify & Reframe
Mental Models

4

18
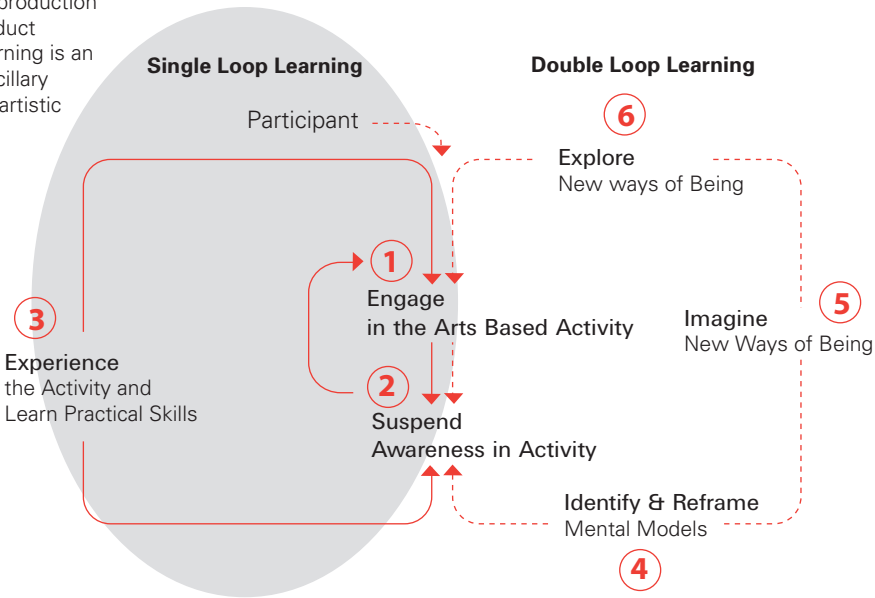
What's double loop community arts practice?

Double loop community arts practice occurs where the focus of the practice is the production of individual and / or community change, rather than an artistic product.

Double loop arts practice combines art-making processes with learning and development processes aimed at helping participants to engage in double loop (rather than single loop) learning.

The intention and process that we bring to work differentiates us from more traditional community arts organisations

Development Process

Intention

Art-making Process

Diversity of Art Form

Artistic Product

Use of Art Form

Process
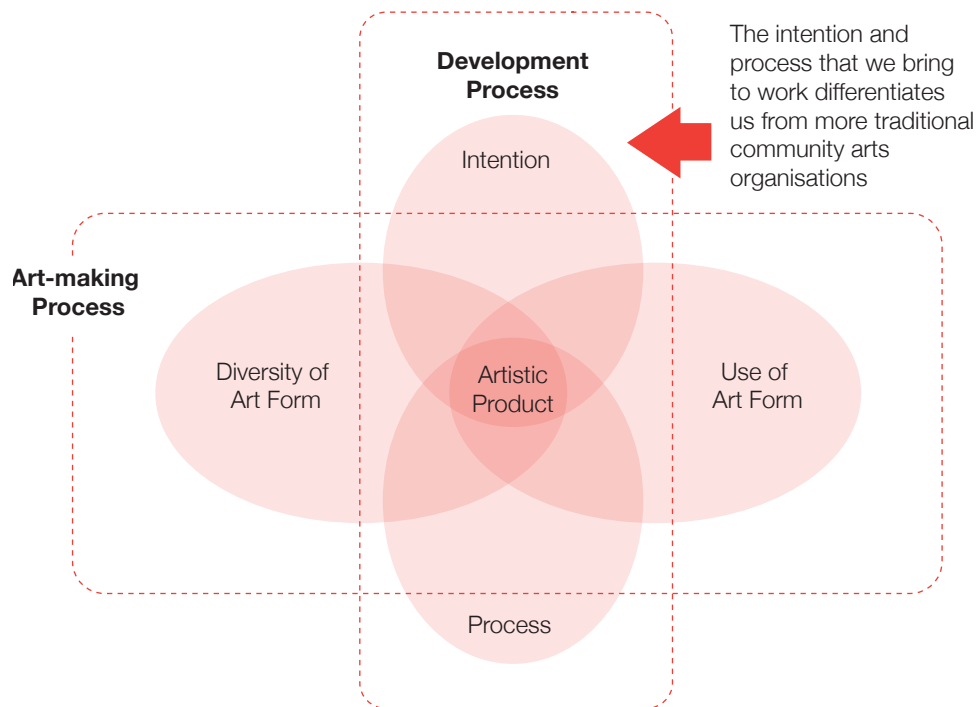
Double loop arts practice differs from single loop practice in:

- How activities are designed
- Who is involved in delivery
- How art is used.

Activities are usually delivered in collaboration with existing support service providers and have a specific (pre-defined) personal and / or community development objective. Art is used as a bridging, engagement and development tool.

The creative activity and the resulting artistic product are used as an enabler, rather than as the objective of the activity.

In double loop arts practice the art-making process is used to provide a forum through which to engage participants and explore issues impacting their life experience and the communities in which they live. The artistic product is used as a focal point for activity and as a medium through which to engage and connect participants into support services and / or the broader community.

The quality of the artistic product developed through the process can vary depending on the objective of the activity and the extent to which the artistic product is being used as a tool through which to engage the broader community in the change process.

In some cases the quality of the artistic product that's produced is less important, because the focus of the activity is on the participant's experience of the creative process and the learning that s/he takes out of that.

The focus here is on engagement and experience rather than output.

In other cases, the quality of the artistic product is more important because it's part of the process of challenging the participant to value and extend what they're capable of doing. It can also influence to the audience's reaction to the work – and therefore can play an important role in the participant's development process and the ability to use the work to engage the broader community.

The focus here is on engagement, experience and output, and the quality and authenticity of the artistic product is critical.

Why does the distinction matter?

The distinction between single and double loop arts practice is relevant because it helps to articulate the way that Beyond Empathy works.

The distinction is not intended to imply that one process is better than another – just that they are different.

TOOL 3 – HOW WE WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

What's this Tool about?

Although we tailor what we do to fit the different communities and people we work with, there's an underlying process that we follow. This Tool describes that process and provides an overview of our approach. It looks at how we build relationships with communities and how we set up programs together.

In this Tool we focus on the community engagement and development aspects of what we do, rather than the specific ways we run workshops and work with participants - that's covered in more detail in Tools 4 - 6.

How do we approach our work?

Although things can get complex in the "real world" there's an underlying process that we follow when we begin our work with communities.

At its most simple, we follow five basic steps.

Basic Steps:

1. **Start by setting some boundaries -** think about what you can - and can't - contribute and set some boundaries for what you can commit to before you begin. It's important to do that because you don't want to promise what you can't deliver

2. **Spend time learning about the community:**

   • Talk to local authorities, support agencies, community members and potential participants

   • Try to understand what's going on in the community. Look at what is and isn't working for the community, who's working with whom and what opportunities and challenges people are facing

   • Stand back and think about whether or not you can make a useful contribution in the community - and if you can't move on

   • Think through what is possible and what the best starting point might be

3. **Build a consortium of interested parties and agree on a "general" plan** to guide what you do

4. **Start doing "stuff" -** start small and tweak it to fit as you go. It's amazing what you can "learn by doing" and how much credibility and trust you can build in the process

5. **Step things out in line with the "pulse" of the community.**

Writing down the process we use to work with communities – and condensing it into five steps - makes the steps sound quite distinct and simple. In reality, in most cases, the steps are not so clear cut or distinct. They tend to blur together at the edges. The process is often an iterative one, and we tend to move back and forth between the different steps.

For simplicity we have written things down as if it's a more linear process.

In the communities that we work with on an ongoing basis we "cycle" through steps one to five with both the participants and the support agencies involved - gradually stepping things out and expanding the group of people we work with each time we run through the process.

The basics are simple, but like so many things in life, the devil's in the detail … and the doing.

We have provided a more detailed description of how we work through the five step process below. Before running through those steps; however, it makes sense to reflect on why we take this approach.

Our expertise is in being able to use the arts to engage and connect with participants, support workers and the broader community. Our model of arts practice means that we use the arts to connect participants to support agencies and the services and programs they run. We use the arts to facilitate and support those activities. It is the combining of the arts with existing support services that makes our practice successful.

This has three important implications:

One - We can't use our expertise effectively if we don't understand what's happening in the communities where we work and what role - if any - there is for us to play.

Because of that we spend a lot of time talking to people during each of the steps in our process. We talk to local support agencies about what they do, the opportunities they see and the challenges they face in their work. We talk to community members about what is – and isn't – working in their communities. We talk to the young people we work with to understand what is - and isn't - working for them and why.

Two - We always (always!) work in collaboration with support agencies and the community. We never come into a community and run things on our own.

Three - We always try to work with local support agencies and community members to help them achieve **their** goals rather than impose our own.

With local support agencies this means positioning ourselves so we're seen as wanting to help them do what they do rather than compete with them. To do that we need to understand what they do and what they want to achieve and then look at how we can help with that. The same applies to the community members and young people we work with.

Our philosophy of working with rather than in communities is at the center of what we do. It influences where we work, who we work with, what we do and how we do it – and is an important part of why we have been successful in running programs in a number of highly dysfunctional or fragmented communities.

We work with, not in, communities. We build relationships with the people living and working in the communities where we work and collaborate with them. We do not come into communities and run stand-alone projects.

How do we work with communities?

This section provides a step-by-step guide to how we go about setting up a project.

Step 1 - We start by setting some boundaries for ourselves…

Like most (if not all) community arts organisations, we have limited staff and funding, which means – as much as we might like to – we're not able to work with all of the communities or agencies that approach us. We have to prioritise.

To help us to do that we have:

- A three year Strategic Plan that defines the type of work we seek to do and the objectives we seek to achieve as an organisation

- An Annual Operational (or Activity) Plan and Budget that sets out the specific programs we are committed to delivering in any given year to meet those objectives.

Those documents provide us with a set of guidelines (or decision rules) that allow us to work out which ideas and opportunities we pursue and which ones we don't.

They define the:

- Type of communities we work with
- Type and number of programs we run
- Geographic areas we work in
- Outcomes we seek to achieve in terms of both community and individual participant development.

So … when we have an idea (and we have a lot of them!) or we are approached by a community or agency to start a new program, we use those documents to decide what to do.

If exciting opportunities come up, then we can be flexible and adjust our activity plan and run with them but only if the projects:

- Fit with our strategy and
- Can be resourced and funded effectively.

The latter criterion is important because it means that we don't set the program up to fail or put the stability of our organisation at risk!

We can't be all things to all people. We work hard to stay true to our vision of who we are and what we do - and don't do - and we focus on what takes us closest to our goals.

So … when an opportunity comes up … we start by working out whether or not the idea or opportunity fits with our priorities.

Like most things it sounds simple, but sometimes it can take a lot of effort to stay focused and not stretch too far when we have to let good ideas and opportunities go!

If we have an idea for a new program – or are approached by a community or agency to start a program – we begin by working out whether it fits with our strategy and what resources (if any) we have to contribute.

If it doesn't fit, then we don't do it – no matter how good an idea it is!

If it does fit, then we get clear about what we can commit to before we get too far into discussions about it.

Before we do anything on the ground in a community, we start by thinking about what we can - and can't - contribute to a new program given our existing work commitments. Being clear about what we can't commit is often as important as being clear about what we can! If we don't have sufficient staff or funding to take on another program then we won't start to work with a community unless we think we are likely to be able to get sufficient funding to be able to resource the program down the track.

If we are in a position to take on a new program (or at least have enough confidence that we probably can get sufficient funding) we make sure that, as a team, we understand what our internal constraints are and we set some boundaries around the type and timing of any involvement that we could potentially have in the community. We do that before we get started. After all, there's no point talking about running a series of intensive workshops over six months from January if we know that we can't have someone on the ground in the community until October!

Experience has taught us that it's always better to under-promise and over-deliver than the other way around!

Expectation setting is important – it's part of building rapport and trust – and it starts from the moment you start talking to people in the community.

By thinking through those things first we are less likely to set expectations or make promises we're unable to deliver on when we're there.

We always try to be up front and honest about what we can and can't do. That doesn't mean we always get things right first up – or that things don't change – but when we do make mistakes or things do change, we talk about them. We try to make sure people always know where we stand and understand what's happening and why.

Step 2 - we spend time learning about the community…

If we're looking at working with a new community then we start by spending time there.

We talk to lots of people - local authorities, support agencies, community members and potential program participants. We try to understand what's happening in the community and what role (if any) there is for us to play.

Some people call this "community consultation". The term "consultation" can often bring with it the image of someone coming into a situation with some sort of authority or power, creating an implicit power imbalance between the "consulter" and the "consulted".

For us, it's less about consultation - which sounds more like a one-way process - and more about learning and relationship building - which sounds more like - and by definition needs to be - a two-way process.

Although there are things we clearly want to understand when we're trying to determine if we should work with a community, we try to find out in a way that doesn't make people feel like they're being interviewed or "consulted". We try to make it feel more like we're having a conversation about what's happening in the community and what possibilities there are for using the arts in a constructive way.

The key for us lies in focusing on wanting to understand and learn rather than to consult. Because of that, we tend to talk about "community engagement" rather than community consultation.

What's community engagement?

Community engagement takes time.

We might wish that it didn't – but it always does! Although we tailor our approach to suit the different communities we work with, there's an underlying four step community engagement process that we follow:

1. **We talk** - to local authorities, support agencies, community members and potential participants

2. **We try to understand** what's going on in the community – what's happening in the community, which support agencies are working with which groups, what opportunities and challenges the community and support agencies are facing

3. **We think about what role** (if any) we can play and

4. **We figure out what** the best starting point might be.

We try to stick to some guiding principles while we do that (PTO).

As we go, we ask if there's anyone else in the community we should talk to and follow a trail of referrals.

Like so many things, the basics are simple, but the devil's in the detail and the doing.

How do we do community engagement ….what does it actually look like?

Community engagement can be done in lots of different ways.

It can be done informally through a series of casual one-on-one conversations or, more formally, through a series of structured discussions, group meetings or forums.

We tend to start with a more informal approach and structure things as we go along.

Getting started…

In effect we start by introducing ourselves. And we do that with deference and humility.

When we're thinking about working with a community the first thing we do is introduce ourselves to the different support agencies there.

Sometimes we'll call and introduce ourselves and set up a meeting – but more often than not we'll visit the community and just go to the agency's office and introduce ourselves to the workers involved with the participant group that we are thinking of working with and their families.

We introduce ourselves and explain what we do. We then either have a chat with the workers about what they do on the spot, or schedule a time to have a chat about it later.

We'll often take short examples of work we've done on other projects with us to show the sort of work we do. That seems to help make it easier

for the support workers to get a handle on what we do. It also helps us establish credibility based on the quality of our work and can demonstrate the potential for using arts practice with young people.

It's a balancing act. Although we let people know about what we do in order to establish our credentials and explain why we're keen to talk, we focus on getting the people we meet with to talk about what they do. In most cases people are happy to talk about what they're doing … you just have to get them started.

This stage of the process usually involves a lot of talking and – more importantly – a lot of listening. We will usually meet with:

- Family services
- Youth and recreational services
- Community health services
- Drug and alcohol services
- Local schools and TAFE colleges
- Local authorities
- Police
- Centrelink and Job Network providers
- Community groups …

If in doubt, we talk to people.

Wherever possible we try to meet with local support workers on site where they are working with the groups that we are looking at working with so we can get a sense of what's happening on the ground - and can also meet the young people that might become participants in our programs.

At the same time we'll spend time in the community - driving around, getting a feel for it and talking to community members. We talk to people on the street and in the different places we visit.

As we talk with local support agencies and community members, we try to get a sense of who the local leaders are, and we talk to them.

We also talk to the target participant group (usually young people) we're thinking of working with. That means heading out and talking to them "on their own turf". Often we'll set up "grap hook" activities designed to appeal to the group that we want to talk to. We use the activities to draw participants in (which is why we call them grap hook activities) and while they're there we introduce ourselves and have a chat.

In many cases this is as simple as starting to make music in the local park and encouraging people who are around to join in.

Because we're often trying to get traction with disengaged young people, we often "target" the local trouble makers and try to get them onside. We try to get a sense for who they are, and where they hang out – and we try to connect with them.

23

Building a "map" of the community …

In the first instance our focus is on trying to get the lay of the land and build a mental map of what's happening in the community.

In particular, we try to:

- Build a picture of how things are working
- Identify any gaps, challenges or opportunities
- Identify potential collaborators.

More specifically, we start by trying to build a picture of **who's doing what, with whom.**

We try to find out:

- What agencies or organisations are working with what groups
- What they're doing
- Which agencies or organisations are working together and what they're doing together
- Which agencies or organisations are not working together - and why.

We also try to get a sense of whether there are any **gaps, challenges or opportunities** in terms of how things are working. We try to understand:

- What is and isn't working well
- What are the main opportunities and challenges that support agencies are facing in delivering their programs
- Who are they engaging in their programs – and who are they not connecting with effectively
- What community issues are and are not being addressed effectively and
- What people think is needed in the community.

It's by working through these questions – and mapping out what is and isn't happening – that we often identify what role there is for us to play.

We use a stakeholder mapping tool to help us to do that. A copy of the Tool is provided in the Appendices.

Working through who's working with whom lets us see "gaps" in support networks and / or identify opportunities to build connections between different support agencies and organisations working with young people in the community. We can then design activities that provide an opportunity for different groups to come together.

We also try to identify potential collaborators. In particular, we try to identify:

- What agencies (if any) have experience using arts-based activities.
- What attitude local workers have to trying / using the arts as part of their programs
- Who's interested in what we can offer
- What sort of capacity they have to engage
- Whether they are running any activities we could link in with or have the capacity to collaborate on something new.

Working out whether or not there's a role for us...

We can work in lots of places … the question we need to keep asking ourselves is not where can we work but where should we work – and on what?

Having built a map of the community and identified potential collaborators, we stand back and ask ourselves a series of questions in order to work out what we should do next.

In particular, we ask ourselves:

- **Should we engage with the community?**
  - Is there a useful and constructive role for us to play?
  - Do we have the capacity to deliver on that role?
  - Is there interest in the community in working with us?
  - Do the people / agencies who are interested in working with us have (or could they get) the resources and capacity to work with us effectively?
- **If so, how should we engage?**
  - On what basis would we engage and what would we seek to achieve?
  - What would we do over what timeframe?
  - How would we get started?
  - What is our exit strategy?

These are not always easy questions to answer, and sometimes we don't have all of the answers to them when we start to work with a community. But we've found that they are important questions to ask.

They're important to ask because they help us make sure we make thoughtful decisions about what work we do – and what we don't.

As noted earlier, we have limited money and resources, so we need to make sure that when we choose to work with a community we set ourselves up to succeed rather than to fail.

How do we choose whether to work with a community?

There are a number of factors we consider when we are working out whether we should start (or continue) working with a community, including:

- The target participant group profile – the size and need profile of the participant group we are looking at working with
- The community profile – the size and profile of the community
- The local support network structure – the size and composition of the local support service network
- Support network interest – the interest of members of that network in trialing or using arts intervention practice
- Our capacity to serve – our capacity to deliver a program of the sort that is required.

Working through the above factors helps us to assess:

- The potential impact that we can have - how big a contribution we think we can potentially make
- The delivery risk we face - how likely we think we can deliver on that contribution.

Balancing those two things helps us make an informed decision about whether or not we should work in a community - and, if we do - what sort of effort it's likely to take and what sort of outcomes we're likely to achieve.

We've developed a checklist to help us to think through the above factors.

Please see the appendices on the main Beyond Empathy website for a copy of the checklist.

A few questions from the checklist

- How large is the local target group?
- How significant are the needs of the target group?
- Are those needs currently being addressed effectively?
- How large is the community?
- Is the community socio-economically disadvantaged?
- Is it a well functioning, cohesive community?
- Has the community demonstrated an interest in the target group or taken ownership of the issue(s) adversely impacting that group?
- Are local agencies likely to take ownership of / drive the resulting program over time?
- How strong are Beyond Empathy's relationships with support agencies in the community?
- Do we have the resources and skills to deliver a program of the size and scale required to make an impact?

We use the process of working through the checklist criteria to help us think through the opportunities and challenges associated with any given project and to make a balanced decision about whether to commit to a project or not.

In general, the bigger the impact we can potentially make, the higher the delivery risk we're likely to be prepared to take when undertaking a project.

Because we seek to influence change at both an individual and a support network level, we will not commit to work in a community unless we think we can:

- Make a positive contribution to the community and help strengthen / improve coordination across the local support network
- Get enough local support to make a program work
- Deliver the program with the resources we have available to run it
- Train up members of the local support network so they can take on the responsibility of delivering the program independently over time (usually within a one to three year window).

The last requirement is important because that's what ensures that the work we do in a community has an ongoing impact and is not reliant on Beyond Empathy on an ongoing basis.

When we are trying to choose between different projects we will sometimes run through the questions in the community assessment checklist, "score" the answers low, moderate or high and then map them on a "spider diagram", like the one shown below.

Example Community Assesment

Target Group Size (Large)
Target Group Need Profile (High)
Internal Capacity to Deliver (High)
Adequacy of Support Responce (Low)
Strength of Engagement with Support Network (High)
Community Size (Large)
Length Involvement with Community (Long Term)
Community Need Profile (High)
Community Accessabilty (High)
Community Cohesion (High)
Local Agency Ownership
Issue Ownership (High)
Preparedness to Trial Arts Practice (High)
Support Network Size/ Breedth (High)
Support Network Capability (High)
Support Network Cohesion (High)
Worker Turnover (Low)
Resource Availabilty (High)

◆ Community A   ■ Community B

We can then compare the two diagrams and use the information to have a "fact based" discussion about the pros and cons of proceeding with one project over another.

Once we have completed our community assessment and determined it's a community that we think we can and should work with then - and only then - can we start to build a plan.

How do we work out what to do next… with whom?

The next step is for us to build a more formal plan for what we will do with the community. To do that we think through:

- What activities to run
- With whom, both in terms of which support agencies and participants we might work with and how we might go about getting them on board
- How we set up and run the activities
- Where we locate them
- When we hold them, including when we'd start and how often we'd run them over what period.

We use the answers to those questions to put together a high level plan. Sometimes we come up with a number of options as to how we could go forward.

It's at this point that we move into a more targeted "consortium building" and joint planning mode – to test and translate all the information we've gathered into a common vision and plan.

How long does community engagement take?

There is no simple answer to how long the community engagement process takes.

In some cases we can have discussions in a community and get a sense for what's possible - or not possible - very quickly and complete an initial assessment in one to two weeks. In other cases it can take much longer, requiring us to make multiple visits to the community.

In general, we will spend at least two weeks talking to people in a community before making an initial decision about whether or not we think we should actively look at setting up a program there.

Once we've decided that we think we can make a contribution, that we're likely to get enough local support to make a program work and that we'll be able to deliver with the resources we have available to run it, we'll start to work with agencies in the community to put the program together.

Having said that, it is important to note that community engagement is not a one off event. It is an ongoing process. We are always trying to learn more about the communities we work with and build relationships with different people in the community.

Step Three – We build a consortium

Once we have a sense for what we think is possible we start to test the idea by trying to put together a group project.

We go back to a sub-set of the people that we talked to earlier in the community engagement process. We talk to them about our ideas and ask them for their views on whether or not what we're thinking of makes sense and - importantly - whether or not they think there's likely to be support for it.

We usually float ideas for a potential project activity as "what if" options rather than presenting them as a formal project proposal. We use this as a way of starting a discussion about what we could do together. Sometimes we'll end up using this process as a way of coaching communities to look in different ways at issues they face .

We find that floating ideas and asking "what if" – rather than tabling a more formal project proposal – allows us to put some structure around the discussion without sounding like we're coming in as outsiders and telling people what and how things should be done.

We choose who to talk with at this stage based on who we think are likely:

- **Program partners** - interested in collaborating in the program
- **Program champions** - strong supporters of the program
- **Key influencers** – people whose actions encourage others to become involved.

It's important to note here that key influencers can include both people who are likely to support us and those who may be opposed to having us set up a project.

Experience has taught us that the people who you start off thinking are likely to be your strongest opponents often:

- Know things you don't that influences their thinking
- Take a while to see how what's being proposed will work and / or how it'll fit with what they're already doing
- Given time, can become our strongest advocates.

We spend time talking about what to do and how to do it. In particular, we try to find answers to these important questions:

- **What activities will we run**
- **How will we set up, coordinate and run the activities**

  Where we will run the activities

  When and how often we will run them, over what period

  Who will do what

  What resources do we need and are they available

  How will decisions be made

- **How will we fund the activities -** what will things cost and how we will pay for them.

We then use the answers to formulate a plan.

Writing things down …

At this stage, we make a point of writing the plan down and documenting who is committing to what. Writing things down helps in lots of different ways:

- Ensures that everyone is on the same page and that, as far as possible; there's a clear and common understanding of what's going to be done. This helps avoid confusion down the track
- Helps identify things we've missed in the planning process
- Helps us – and the agencies we work with – obtain formal approval (sign off) for the program from the appropriate people
- Gives us a document that we can take to funders and potential supporters if we need to access additional funding or in kind support for the program
- Gives us a document that we can refer to over the course of the program if questions come up about what we are trying to achieve or who is responsible for what.

Exactly how we go about documenting a project depends on its size.

For smaller projects (one off projects that run for only a short period and cost less than about $50,000) we will often use a letter of agreement. For larger projects (that run for longer or cost more than that) or ones we think are likely to be more difficult or risky to manage, we use a more formal contract or memorandum of understanding.

How long does consortium building take?

Like community engagement, there is no simple answer to the question of how long it takes to agree on what we should do and then set up and kick off a program.

In some cases – particularly where resources and funding are already available – we can move quite quickly and get things rolling within 4 - 6 weeks. In other cases, it can take 12 - 18 months to design and fund a program.

The key to progress is being very clear about what you're trying to achieve, keeping the lines of communication open … and remembering that patience is a virtue!

Remember, there's real power in the saying that "if at first you don't succeed then try, try again."

It's also important to note that, like community engagement, consortium building is not a one-off event. It's an ongoing process.

The quality of the work we do relies on the strength and openness of the relationships we have with the people we collaborate and work with. Because of that, we work hard to maintain and grow the relationships we have with the people we work with.

Step 4 – We start doing stuff

We always try to tailor what we do on the ground to suit who we're working with and what we're trying to achieve. That means what we do, and how we do it, can vary from place to place.

We usually start small – both in terms of the size of the group we initially work with and the scale of the activity we take on.

We think big … but we start small.

Starting small allows us to get things happening on the ground quickly. It allows us to learn about the support agencies, the community and the young people we are working with by doing – and it lets them learn about us.

Start Small:

- Limit complexity
- Demonstrate capability and commitment early
- Learn about the community, participating agencies and young people by doing
- Try different things out
- Minimise the risk and investment involved in getting started
- Make it easier for agencies to get involved

Although situations vary, as with most of what we do, there's an underlying process or cycle that we follow when we start working on the ground with communities.

Underlying Process For Starting Up Arts Based Activities
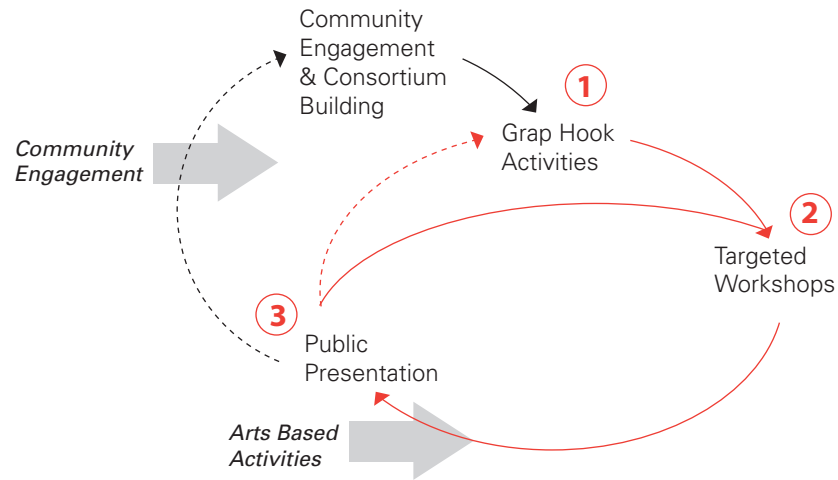
Grap Hook Activities

Grap Hook activities are used to get potential participants involved, build rapport and interest them in doing more.

Often we'll run some small grap hook activities in parallel with the community engagement and planning process, and in collaboration with one of the local support agencies.

Grap Hook activities are designed to be engaging and fun. We use them to get participants in the door so we can talk to them and they can take a look at what we're doing and give it a go.

We don't rely on participants just dropping in. We get out there and spruke the activity.

We use the local media to advertise the activity, we ask community members to encourage people to come along, we're out there ourselves and personally inviting young people and support workers to attend, we provide transport to and from the venue if we need to, and we always provide food.

We try to connect with potential participants, work out what interests them most – what will "hook them" into the program – and what they'll need in order to participate.

We do that so that we can tailor the design of the ongoing program to line up with their interests and needs. That includes what we do as well as where, when and how we do it and who gets involved.

The activities in effect act as "tasters" both for the agencies we're looking at working with – so they can get a feel for what we do - and potential participants.

We use these activities to figure out what sorts of things seem to work best in terms of getting the target group engaged – and we use that knowledge to design a more structured workshop program.

Targeted Workshops

We then move into a more structured program of activity.

We use intensive or repeat arts-based workshops and activities to provide participants with an opportunity to:

- Develop self confidence and skills
- Connect with other people including support workers
- Investigate issues that are affecting them and/or their community while they work towards an individual and/or group artistic outcome.

Workshops are structured to operate on a community or regional level. They usually fall into one of two categories:

- **Long term interventions –** where arts-based workshop activities are conducted regularly (on a weekly or fortnightly basis) in a community over an extended period of time (from one to three years or more)

- **Repeat intensive interventions –** where periodic (monthly or quarterly) arts-based workshops and activities are conducted on a repeat basis in a community over an extended period of time (from one to three years or more).

In some cases, we'll run a series of community programs and then we'll roll them all together into a broader regional program.

We draw on a range of different art forms when running these programs – selecting the form(s) that is most likely to resonate with the group we're working with at the time.

Public Presentation

At various points in a program there'll be some form of public presentation of the artistic outcome(s) produced by the participants. Often we build a sequence of presentations that build one on the other.

We use the presentation to:

- Provide a forum for participants to show off what they can do and connect / engage with their community
- Encourage community dialogue in relation to issues reflected in the work
- Reset community perceptions of the participant group and their capabilities and encourage the community to re-think how they see and engage with them.

These presentations form an important part of what we do and allow us to expand our impact beyond the participants and support agencies into the broader community.

Step Five - We step things out in line with the "pulse" of the community

In communities we work with on an ongoing basis we "cycle" through steps one to four on a rolling basis – gradually expanding the group of people we work with and deepening the experience of repeat participants each time we run through the process.

Whenever we work with communities we always try to:

- Be responsive rather than reactive to what is going on around us

- Take time out to reflect on what's happening as we go and revisit the "plan" wherever that makes sense - flexibility is important. We treat our plan as a guide not a straight jacket. If there's a good reason to, then we change things, but if there isn't, we stick to the plan

- Keep people informed – we let people know about what we're doing and why (especially when things change)

- Be inclusive – look for opportunities to widen the net of agencies, workers and participants we work with.

How program outcomes evolve and deepen with engagement over time

It's important to note that the outcomes we seek to achieve will vary depending on where we're up to in a program.

The further we move through a program, the deeper the engagement that we seek to have with the participants and the stronger the outcomes that we try to achieve with them are.

Because of that, when we set up and run our programs, at each stage we try to be clear about where we are in the activity cycle and what we're trying to achieve with participants, support workers and the broader community.

Program Outcome Spectrum - Taste, Touch, Translate

Taste (limited/one off participation)	Touch (repeat participation)	Translate (longer term involvement)
• Positive experience	• Positive experience	• Positive experience
	• Improved view of / feeling about self	• Improved view of / feeling about self • Improved view of future • Perceived capacity to influence future • Positive life goal / aspiration
	• Improved technical / creative skills • Improved personal / self-management skills	• Improved technical / creative skills • Improved personal / self-management skills • Improved capacity to manage
		• Improved attitude towards / relationships with others • Strengthened personal support network
• Increased awareness of support services	• Increased awareness of support services • Improved attitude towards / relationship with support workers	• Increased awareness of support services • Improved attitude towards / relationship with support workers • Increased preparedness to use appropriate support services • Increased use of appropriate services • Strengthened professional support network
	• Consideration of new ways of being (behaviours) • Trial of new ways of being	• Consideration of new ways of being • Trial of new ways of being • Change in behaviour

Case Study - Moree, New South Wales

Community Overview [9]

Moree is a country town in northwest New South Wales, 640 kilometers from Sydney and 480 kilometers from Brisbane. It has a population of approximately 10,000 people of whom just under 10% identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. Moree's major industry is farming and farm-related enterprise. Labour force participation is relatively low compared to other areas in Australia and un/under- employment rates are relatively high. A number of families are experiencing financial stress and median individual, household and family incomes are all below the national average.

Aboriginal community members in Moree fare worse than their non-Aboriginal counterparts on all of the above measures. Racism is an ongoing issue in the community and there are high rates of youth crime, social space violence, family and domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse.

Beyond Empathy's Engagement with the Moree Community

Beyond Empathy staff have worked on community arts projects in Moree since 1994.

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9 2006 Census Quickstats: Tamworth NSW Statistical Division.

Moree Activity Timeline

Year	Activity
1994	Various community arts projects
1995	Festival of the Ibis
1996	Festival of the Brolga
1997	Festival of the Brolga
1998	Festival of the Brolga
1999	Hurt*
2000	Hurt*
2001	kNot@HOME*
2002	kNot@HOME*
2003	Handle with Care*
2004	Media Corroboree, Mubali
2005	Mubali, Message in a Bottle (MiaB), Deadly Dads, Lullabies in Lingo
2006	Mubali, Connections, MiaB
2007	Mubali, Connections, MiaB
2008	Mubali, Connections, 6 x 6
2009	Mubali, Connections, GULA GAMA-LI Embrace Exhibition

* Big hART Project

Kim McConville started to use arts-based projects to engage students at risk of leaving school early in Moree in 1994. Back then she used the arts purely as an engagement tool to try and get school non-attenders and students at risk of leaving school early engaged in constructive activities that might (re)connect them with or keep them connected to school.

Between 1995 and1998 she was involved in the set up and coordination of a local community arts festival in Moree. It was while she was doing that that Kim started to use the arts more consciously as both an engagement and a bridging tool, to connect disengaged young people and the broader Moree community through projects linked to the Festival.

In 1999 Kim joined big hART, a community arts organisation that runs workshops using different art forms to develop issue-based film and theatre projects with community members, helping them to tell their own stories and share them with the broader community. Between 1999 and 2004 Kim coordinated a number of projects for big hART:

- **HURT –** a film project that explored young people's experiences of violence
- **kNot @ Home** – an eight part television series and theatre project that explored young people's experiences of grief, trauma and family pain
- **Handle with Care –** a performance and multi-media project that explored young people's experiences of violence and alcohol and other drug misuse.

All of those projects used more traditional, single loop arts practice to engage and work with disengaged young people in the Moree community.

Since setting up Beyond Empathy in 2004, Kim and the Beyond Empathy team have continued to work in Moree running a number of arts-based programs in the community. It's through those programs that Beyond Empathy has developed its dual focus, double loop arts practice model.

In 2004 Beyond Empathy started the Mubali Program which used arts-based activities to encourage young Aboriginal mothers to attend ante-natal and peri-natal health services in Moree. The project used belly and hand casting and decoration to connect young Aboriginal mothers with health staff and older Aboriginal women in the community. The activity was

conducted in the local health centre. Art-making worked as a mechanism to encourage community members to come into the health centre. It provided a safe, comfortable forum in which to discuss issues relating to pregnancy and maternal and infant health. Health staff were also able to conduct maternal and peri-natal health checks while mothers attended the arts workshops.

In 2005, in recognition of its success, the Mubali Program received the NSW Baxter Health Award for Consumer Participation.

In 2005 Beyond Empathy developed the Mubali Program further to include activities involving young fathers through its Deadly Dads Program which developed a series of Lullabies in Lingo.

In 2006 Beyond Empathy expanded the program again to include activities to help Aboriginal families connect with and participate in play group and parenting skill development programs through its Connections Program. In order to do that, Beyond Empathy started to collaborate with a broader range of local service providers involved in providing early childhood development and family services in Moree.

As the Connections Program got traction, Beyond Empathy then started to work with a number of local education services to broker the development of relationships between Aboriginal parents and local schools to support the transition of children in the play group into preparatory school (which is also referred to as prep or kindergarten in different places) and primary school.

In 2008 Beyond Empathy brought seven nationally renowned non-Aboriginal visual artists together to spend six hours a day for six days in Moree, working alongside seven local Aboriginal visual artists in its 6 x 6 Artists in Community Project. The artists' brief was to produce a work based on the theme, 'New Horizons: Indigenous Families and Children within the Moree Landscape'.

The works produced as part of the "6x6" Artists Community Project then formed part of the GULA GAMA-LI embrace exhibition at the Moree Plains Art Gallery in September 2009. GULA GAMA-LI embrace was a series of paintings, drawings, photographs, objects, film and mosaics and told the 5-year journey of the Moree community embracing its children and families through Mubali, Connections and 6x6.

The expansion of the Mubali Program evolved logically and the work Beyond Empathy has done in Moree has been translated into an integrated pre- and early parenting service engagement model that's now being used in other communities.

This model incorporates activities based around three core program areas:

- **Youth Engagement and Support -** aimed at engaging young people, before they become parents, as well as young parents, and working with them to address risk-taking behaviours (including drug and alcohol use and sexual health) and to promote positive life choices
- **Maternal and Infant Health -** aimed at increasing Aboriginal access to ante-natal, peri-natal and maternal and infant health and education services
- **Early Childhood Development, Parenting and Transition Programs -** aimed at increasing Aboriginal access to parenting skills development and playgroup and other early childhood development programs supporting Aboriginal engagement with the education system and encouraging attendance at pre-prep, prep and primary school.

The coordinated delivery of the above services has meant that Beyond Empathy and the support agencies it has partnered with have been able to work across the full range of risk and protective factors that impact maternal, infant and child health and development outcomes in the community.

Integrated Parenting and Pre-Parenting Support Model

Employment

Youth Engagement & Support Programs

Post-school Education

Individual Wellbeing

Early Adulthood

20 - 24

Secondary Education

Adolescence

15 -19

Maternal & Ante-natal Health

Early Adolescence

12 -14

Ante-Natal Development

Maternal & Infant Health Programs

0
↓
1

Birth

Primary School

5 -11

Infancy

Childhood

2 - 4

Maternal & Infant Health

Kindergarden (transition to school)

Early Adulthood

Networked Play Groups & Parenting Skills Programs

School Transitions programs

Play Group & Parenting Skills Development
(early childhood development, family stability and function)

Pre-parenting   Parenting & Early Childhood Development

Changes in Beyond Empathy's Engagement Approach Over Time

Beyond Empathy's engagement in Moree has, in effect, mapped the evolution of Beyond Empathy's dual focus, double loop arts practice model.

In effect, Beyond Empathy's work in Moree has evolved from using art as a simple engagement tool, to using the arts as a more traditional, single loop engagement and bridging tool, to its current dual focus, double loop arts practice model.

The approach Beyond Empathy adopted in Moree is reflective of the way it works in communities in general. It demonstrates the way Beyond Empathy:

- Starts small - by working with a particular group of participants and a small number of support agencies and then expands outwards, drawing in a broader range of community members and support agencies over time in a logical way
- Uses program activities to provide an opportunity to:
  - connect participants with support services and
  - strengthen and build connections between local support services
- Consciously works to encourage local agencies to take responsibility for the design and coordination of program activities over time in order to ensure the ongoing viability and sustainability of arts practice within the community.

The Evolution of Beyond Empathy's Practice Model in Moree
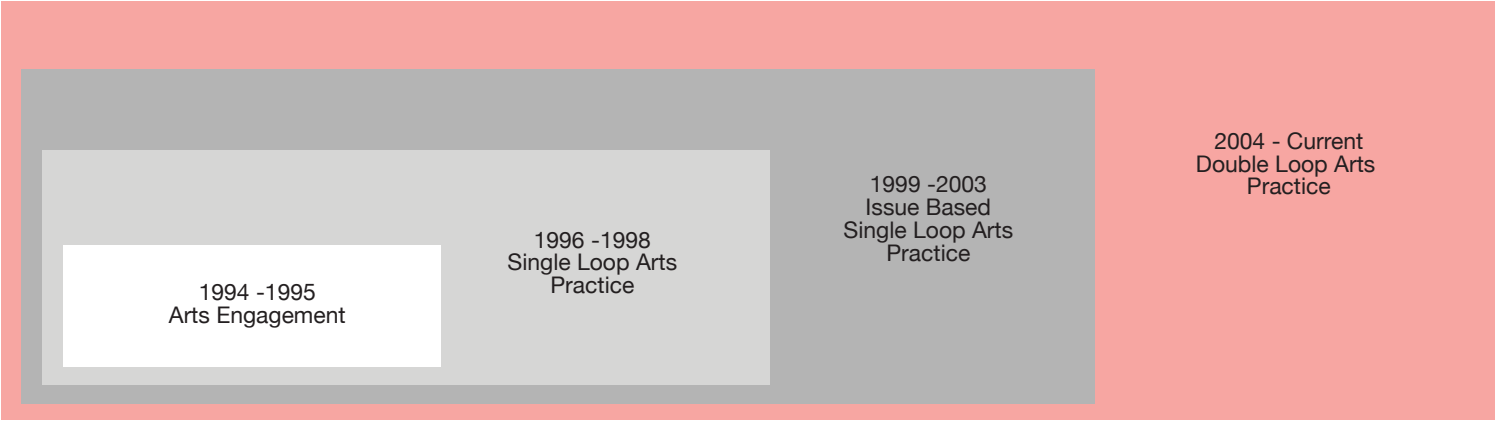
Practice		Arts engagement	Traditional single loop arts practice - general community engagement focus	Traditional single loop arts practice - issue based focus	Double loop arts practice
Program Focus		Engagement	Engagement & Bridging	Engagement, Bridging & Development	Engagement, Bridging & Development
Description		Art used to engage participants in constructive activity	Art used to engage participants and (re) connect them with the community through a community based project	Art used to engage participants and (re) connect them with the community through a community based project and explore social issues	Dual focus approach adopted to engage, connect and develop both participants and support workers and strengthen maternal, infant and child health and early childhood development outcomes
Programs		Various arts based projects Festival of the Ibis	Festival of the Brolga (1996-98)	Hurt* kNot@Home* Handle with Care*	Mubali (2004 - current) Connections (2006-09) Message in a Bottle 6 x 6 collaborative arts project
Target Group & Age Profile	**Agencies**	-	-	-	Local support agencies
	> 25 years	-	General community	General community	General community
	16 - 25 years	-	Disengaged young people	Disengaged young people	Disengaged young people
	13 - 15 years	School non-attenders / at risk	School non-attenders / at risk	School non-attenders / at risk	School non-attenders / at risk
	6 - 12 years	-	-	-	Primary school transitions
	0 - 5 years	-	-	-	Infants / children

* Big hART Project

Since starting to work with the Moree community, Beyond Empathy has gradually expanded the breadth of participants it has worked with.

It started by working with young people who are not attending or are at risk of disengaging from school. It expanded its involvement with disengaged young people across the community and then worked to draw in young Aboriginal mothers and fathers and their families.

At the same time it worked to gradually increase the exposure the broader community had to those groups through its public exhibition and performance work.

Beyond Empathy has also expanded the network of support agencies it has worked with and, in doing that, it has helped to strengthen and build connections and collaborations between agencies across that network.

This has allowed Beyond Empathy to help participants move between different support services – helping them to negotiate the pathway from peri-natal health, through mid-wifery and ante-natal health services, into play group and early childhood development and then into prep and primary school.

In many ways, Beyond Empathy has acted as the "glue" that has linked services together and helped participants to build relationships with those different services over time.

Expanding Support Network Involvement - Moree

Legend:
- New Relationship
- Strengthened Relationship

Nodes and labels:
- Hunter New England Health Service (Hospital)
- Gamilaroi Community Health Service (Aboriginal Heath Service)
- PiUS 10 Health Service (Aboriginal Heath Service)
- Gwada Disability Service
- Moree Community Health
- Centrelink
- Moree Plains Shire Council
- Moree TAFE
- Police
- Links to Learning
- Probation & Parole
- The Christian School
- St. Vincent de Paul
- St. Philamina Primary School
- Centacare
- Moree East Primary School
- Anglicare
- Moree Primary School
- Schools As Community Centres (Department of Education & Training)
- Benevolent Society
- Playgroup
- Smith family
- Roy Thorn
- Drug & Alcohol Rehab
- Parents as Teachers (Department of Education & Training)
- Department of Community Services
- Family Day Care
- Courallie High School
- Miyay Birray Youth Service
- Moree Technical High School
- Gwada Day Care
- Moree Library
- Moree Preschool
- ABC Learning
- Moree Art Gallery
- Moree family Support
  - Young Parents Program
  - Youth Program
- Mehi Mourri Art Co-operative
- Moree Family Vilolence service
- Moree Housing
- The Grannyators

Over the last five years Beyond Empathy has also gradually shifted the role it plays in the development and delivery of arts based programs in Moree. In particular, it's moved from being the organisation that develops and coordinates the arts led programs in the community to the one providing specialist art-based skills to support the delivery of activities designed and coordinated by support agencies in the community. In that way, Beyond Empathy has positioned itself so that it can gradually exit the community over time, while ensuring that the work it has helped to initiate continues.

Beyond Empathy's shifting role

Time

Special Arts Practice

Beyond Empathy

Program Coordination

Local Support Agencies

Program Set Up

Beyond Empathy starts by seeding ideas and coordinating program activity

Over time Beyond Empathy's role shifts to providing arts based services for programs that are designed and run by local support agencies
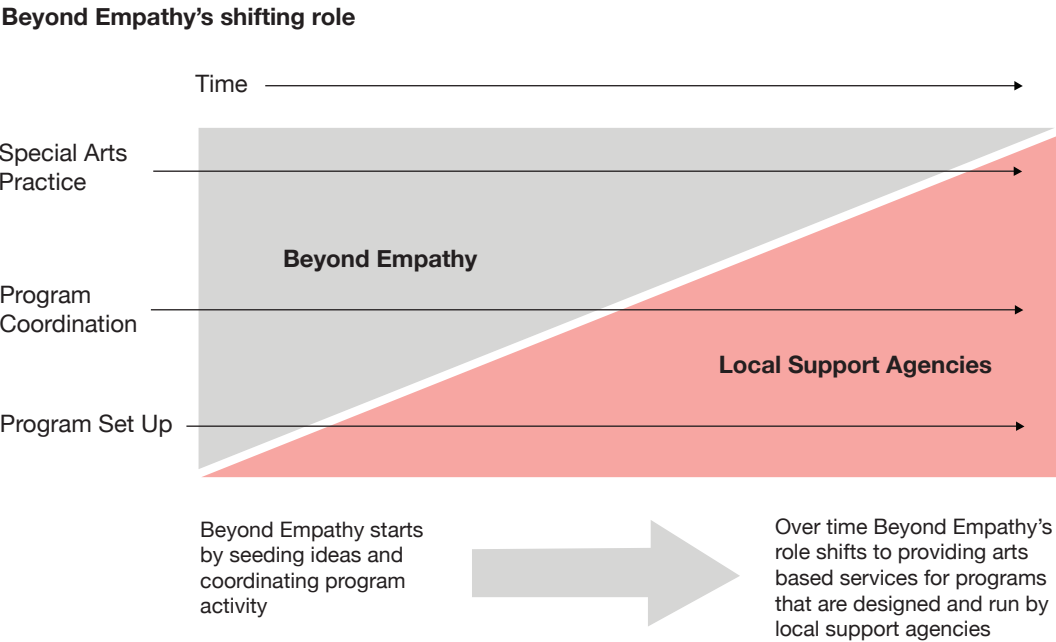
TOOL 4 – HOW WE RUN ART-BASED WORKSHOPS

Beyond Empathy works to support change one-on-one, one-by-one

What's this Tool about?

This Tool looks at how we set up and run arts-based workshops. It looks at how we go about establishing a safe, neutral environment that allows participants to feel comfortable and how we work to engage, connect and support participants so that they can build new skills and trial new ways of being.

How do we set up the right environment for our workshops?

Double loop arts practice relies on being able to establish a supportive space where participants feel safe to explore themselves, build relationships and trial different ways of being.

Setting up the right environment for a workshop involves more than picking the right location. It's essential to create a safe physical and personal space that allows participants to feel comfortable enough to try new things and explore how they:

- See themselves and their lived experience
- See their world
- See and interact with others.

There are a number of factors that underlie Beyond Empathy's approach to creating a safe space for participants:

Getting the physical location right

We start by making sure we set up our activities in a way that makes participants feel comfortable.

That means meeting participants on their terms.

To do that we go to where participants already are and use a space they're familiar with.

We pick a neutral space that isn't "owned" by any one group.

We pick a space that participants have some shared sense of connection with and that's easy to get to. If transport or access is an issue we help participants to and from workshops by providing transport.

We pick spaces that are easy to move in and out of – usually where there's access to both the inside and outside.

Getting the timing right

We make sure we hold activities at a time when participants are likely to be around and interested in participating. This can mean holding workshops before, during or after school – it just depends on the participant group(s) we're working with.

And we stay flexible – and respond to the pulse of the community. After all, there's no point holding a workshop at the scheduled time if no one's going to come.

Making it easy to participate

We make it easy for participants to join in.

We keep registration and enrolment paperwork to a minimum (in most cases we will not have any formal registration or enrolment process for our workshop activities. We still collect information - we just do it in an informal and creative way through observation and conversation rather than forms and paperwork).

We don't set many rules and basically we allow people to participate so long as they're not putting themselves or others at risk through their behaviour.

We set activities up so that participants can easily come and go and don't have to participate in every workshop to be able to get something out of the activities we're doing.

Helping participants feel safe

We work hard to build rapport with participants and to establish genuine, trusted relationships with them that make them feel comfortable enough to try new things and explore new ways of being.

Building those relationships isn't a simple task – and it's not easy to articulate all of the elements that go into building those relationships. The mental models we bring to our work and how we work with participants are both important in establishing those relationships.

We seem to be successful in establishing those relationships where we work in a way that reflects that we are:

- Interested in and value the young people we work with
- Trustworthy
- Committed to the participants involved

Being prepared to persevere in the face of challenging / testing behaviour and to share of ourselves is critical.

What matters most in building relationships with participants

Genuine relationship *based on:*

- **Interest in young person (not obligation)**
  - Not Judge
  - Value young person
    - Map to Young Person (not the other way around)
    - Invest in Young Person
    - Expose Self
  - Value young persons Contribution
- **Trust**
  - Openness
  - Understanding
  - Mutuality
    - Mutual Respect
    - Mutual Responsibility
    - Positive Expectation
  - Reliability
- **Proven Commitment**
  - Persistence
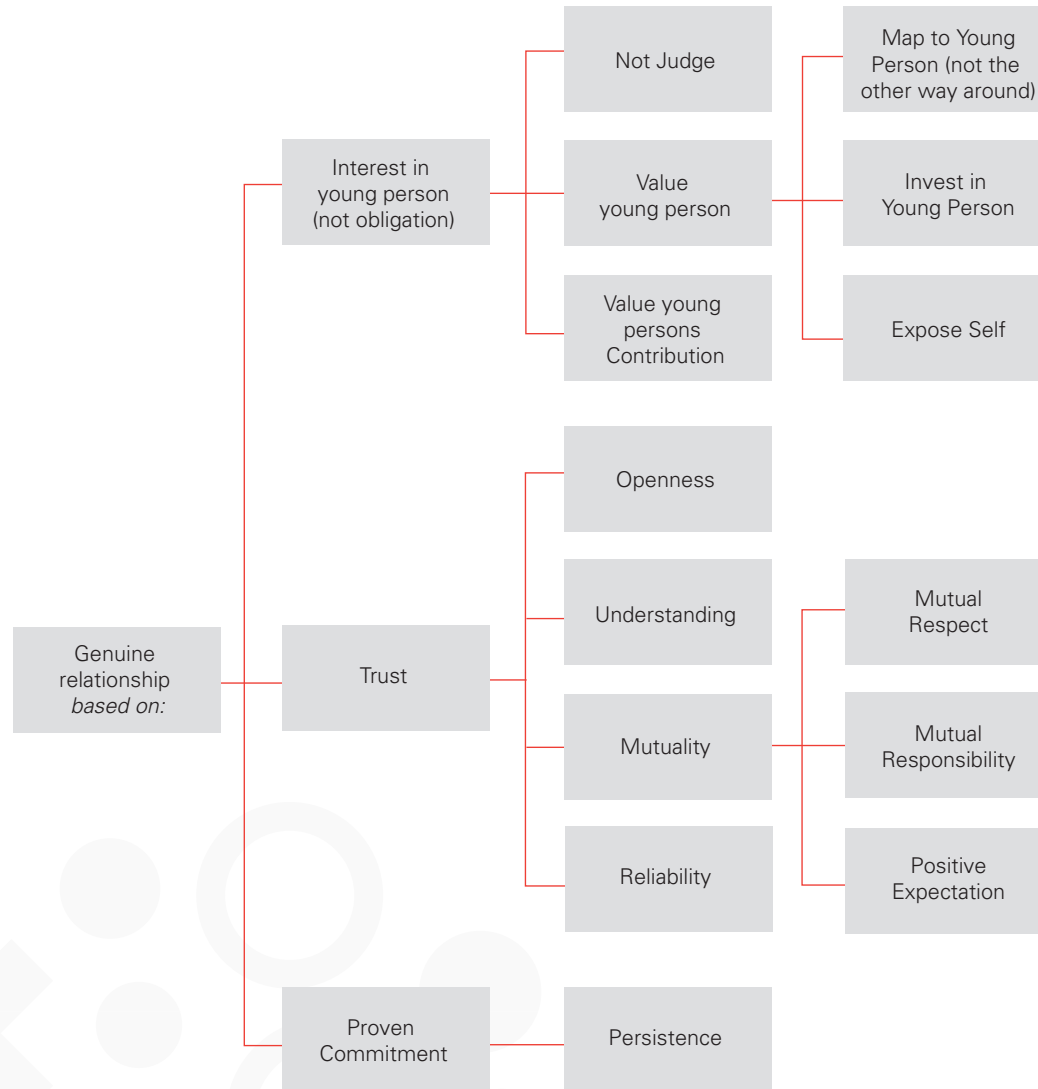
How do we run arts based workshops?

How do we start?

We don't wait for participants to turn up at our workshops before we get started. We start doing stuff as a way of encouraging participants to come along. Sometimes that means working on our own or one-on-one with only one or two participants.

As people turn up we encourage them to join in. We do that in simple ways - by saying hello, by watching people's body language and inviting them to join in if they look like they'd like to but are unsure about whether or not they can or, making it clear that they're welcome to just hang around and watch.

Often we'll provide food as a way of encouraging people to come along and we encourage participants to invite others along.

How do we structure our work?

Initially we keep things fairly simple.

We tend to work one-on-one and focus on short, discrete activities that enable participants to try different activities and accomplish things quickly.

How do we work with participants?

We consciously try to avoid establishing a hierarchical (teacher – student type) relationship.

We do that by working beside rather than in front of participants. We show them how to do things by working on activities together. By working together in this way we establish a one-on-one relationship with participants and make sure we tailor what we're doing to their skill level.

How do we focus activity around a specific workshop outcome?

Over time we start to introduce more complex activities that get participants to work together more.

We read the pulse / vibe of the room to determine when to make this shift. We tend to (re)focus activity when we've reached a point where:

- There's strong engagement across the participant group and there's an opportunity to start to focus activity on a more structured exercise or
- Engagement appears to be dropping off and there's a need to (re)engage participants around a new activity.

In both cases we move to (re)focus activity by:

- Acknowledging the skills that are being demonstrated by the group
- Identifying a possible next step
- Inviting the group to make a decision about what they'd like to do
- Working with the group to agree on an approach for how to do that.

Often we'll do this by finding a relevant example from work that has been done so far and saying "what about …".

The above process is used (in effect) to seek permission to guide the activity of the group and agree a structure through which to facilitate the group.

We then guide the activity of the group towards the agreed outcome by continuing to work alongside the participants – breaking down the steps that need to be worked through and then working one-on-one to complete each step.

That same process is repeated over time to gradually build the skills of the group. In some cases it leads to a public outcome of some kind; in others it leads to a less formal artistic outcome.

How do we decide what to do and when to do it?

What we do one-on-one and/or with the group at any given point in time is guided by a number of factors:

- **Vibe of the room –** which is reflected in the activity level and the dynamics in the room, whether participants are engaged in the activity or are distracted, involved in disruptive behaviour or drifting away
- **Vibe of the participant(s) –** whether they're comfortable engaging in the activity, which is reflected by where in and around the space they've chosen to locate themselves, how they're engaging with people, whether they're making eye contact and talking to people and what they're doing
- **Opportunity for engagement –** whether there is an opening (or the ability to make one) to engage a participant(s) in an activity.

The secret is to try to match what you do to the vibe of the person or group that you're working with.

The skill lies in being able to read the vibe and see or create opportunities for connection.

How do we encourage self-reflection and development?

As we work with participants we're always learning about them - and identifying ways to support them.

We use workshop activities to provide participants with opportunities to build skills in a way that gradually challenges them to move beyond their comfort zone. In doing that, we try to challenge their personal mental models and encourage them to trial new ways of being.

We use reflective listening and coaching techniques to do that. We also provide direct assistance to help participants build relationships and access support.

In many ways, we work with participants to explore their comfort zone - to learn where the edge of that zone is - and to encourage and nudge them to trial new things just outside their comfort zone.

We do that by helping participants look for safe options to trial, by providing examples of what or how they could do something and reducing perceived risks of having a go.

We support participants to have a go and acknowledge, affirm and celebrate the steps that they take.

We work in small steps

We focus on the doing rather than the notion of success or failure

And we often share something from our own experience so that they understand

what is happening and feel encouraged to try new things

We use a process of active facilitation – we both encourage and nudge. We tend to

encourage > challenge   > let be

By cycling through that process at a pace in tune with the participant we can often help them move step by step outside their comfort zone and explore a different way of being.

How do we manage disruptive behaviour?

The young people we work with often exhibit disinterest and confronting, disruptive and/or self-sabotaging behaviour.

It's important to recognise that participants do this – it comes from their lived experience and is usually a defensive mechanism against getting hurt or shamed. It's important to remember that and interpret and respond to the behaviour accordingly.

We always have a support worker at our workshops (in addition to the lead facilitator or artist) who can take responsibility for working with particularly challenging participants when necessary, but we do expect all of our workers - artists included - to play a role in managing participant behaviour.

There are a number of techniques we use to try and manage behaviour issues. Which technique(s) we use depends on what we think will be most effective in getting through to the participant and whether or not his / her behaviour is likely to put other participants at risk or not.

The techniques we use include:

- Role modeling – we role model appropriate behaviour
- Encouragement – we encourage and cajole the participant to behave in a different way
- Mirroring – we selectively copy (or mirror) the disruptive behaviour in our interactions with the participant to bring attention to the effect his/her behaviour has on other people
- Direct intervention – we intervene directly with the participant to address inappropriate behaviour.

Where we intervene with a participant we are careful to:

- Focus on the inappropriate behaviour (not the person)
- Identify the specific behaviour of concern
- Explain why the behaviour is not appropriate
- Identify options for other ways the participant can behave and
- Specify the penalty that will apply if the behaviour happens again.

If a penalty involves stopping an activity or exiting a workshop, we make sure the penalty is for a limited time or tied to the inappropriate behaviour (so that it's clear that the participant is welcome to return to the workshop at a later time).

TOOL 5 – HOW WE CHOOSE WHAT ART FORM TO USE AND WHAT TO DO WITH IT

What's this Tool about?

This Tool looks at how we work out what art forms to use and how to use them when we're setting up our projects.

How do we choose what art form(s) to use and what to do with them?

Whenever we start working with a community we need to work out what art form(s) to use. In doing that, we need to take into account the staff we have available, the timeline and budget we have to work with and the capabilities, interests and skills of the participants we wish to involve in the project.

We often use more than one art form; by doing that we give ourselves a broader range of options to work with. We're able to engage participants in a range of different ways to produce an artistic outcome.

In choosing what art form(s) to use, we intuitively take into account a number of different things:

- **Resonance –** we look at the sorts of activities potential participants have been involved in and which of those seem to resonate most strongly with them. We don't just look at what arts-based activities they have been involved in; we take a broader look at the sorts of things the young people we're wanting to work with generally tend to enjoy and do

- **Skill –** we look at the natural abilities and skills they demonstrate (linguistic, spatial / visual, musical, kinetic, intra-personal, inter-personal and environmental) and we take into account things like literacy skills and how technologically savvy they are

- **Learning style –** we try to understand what types of activity are likely to fit best with their natural learning styles

- **Appropriateness –** we take into consideration cultural, age or other factors that might influence what is or isn't appropriate for the participant group or their community

- **Accessibility –** we think about how those things might influence the ability and inclination of participants to try different art forms.

We think about how to use the art form(s) in a way that will provide the best platform to engage participants, let them get a sense of achievement early on in the process and provide a range of activities that can operate like building blocks to help participants to develop skills step-by-step over time.

If a particular project has been funded to work with participants on a specific issue we'll also think about how best to engage participants to address that issue. In particular, we think about whether or not we want the end artistic product to reference the issue or not. In some cases we'll structure the project so that both the artistic process and the artistic product reference a specific issue. In other cases we'll use the artistic process to engage participants on the issue (for example, by using the artistic process to connect participants to particular support services) but we won't directly reference the issue in the end artistic product.

The Art of Art Form Selection
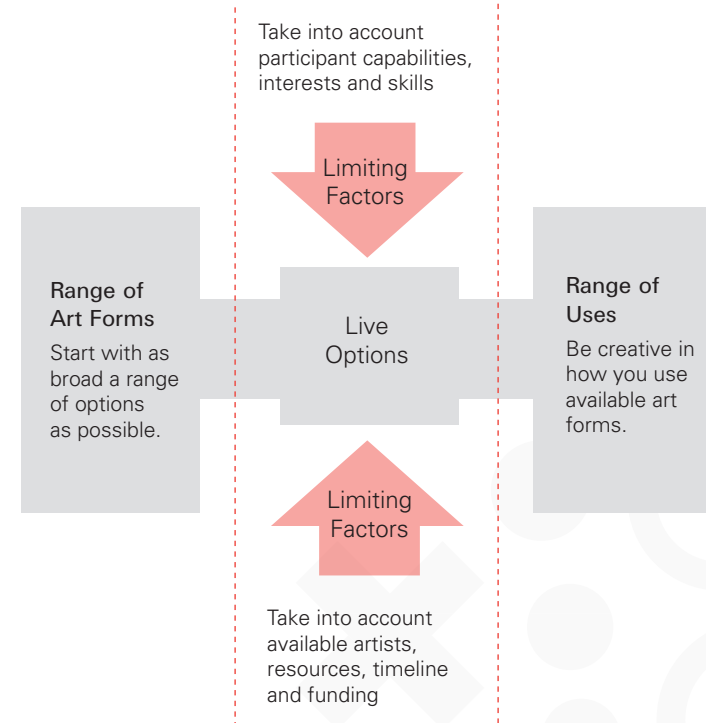
Throughout this process our focus is always on mapping the art form(s) and the activity to the participants (rather than the other way around).

We make sure that we select art form(s) that resonate with participants and we then use them to provide as many opportunities as possible for them to engage, try new things and build skills.

The key to success lies in picking the points of resonance and then being creative to make the most of any opportunity for engagement.

Take into account participant capabilities, interests and skills

Limiting Factors

Range of Art Forms
Start with as broad a range of options as possible.

Live Options

Range of Uses
Be creative in how you use available art forms.

Limiting Factors

Take into account available artists, resources, timeline and funding

Although the above process may sound complex, it's one that tends to happen intuitively in our community engagement and artistic development process.

Throughout our community engagement process we try to get a sense for the type(s) of art forms that might be of most interest to the participants we're seeking to work with. We pay attention to the sorts of things they're doing. We talk to them about what their interests are, what they enjoy doing and what they'd like to do.

We also talk to other members of the community and support workers to get a sense for the sorts of things that have been done before that have appeared to resonate with the potential participants.
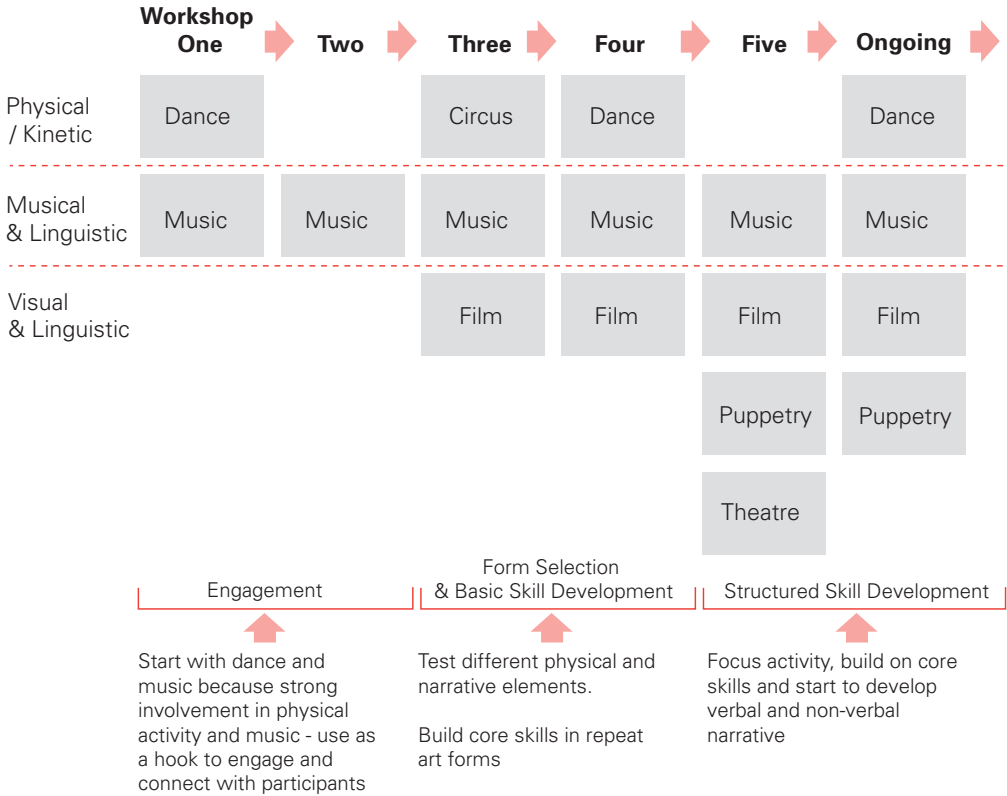
We trial activities using the art forms we think might work in order to test interest and figure out how best to structure a workshop program for the target participants .

Then we take the art forms that resonate most and start to work with them.

We often spend some time experimenting with those art form(s). We mix them up and use them in different ways to explore what works best to engage particular participants. We also explore how the different art forms can be used to develop artistic products or elements that feed into a larger scale artistic outcome.

Through that process we gradually hone the focus of our work and develop an artistic product that fits with the style and skills of the participant group.

The experimentation process in action - Tennant Creek example

	Workshop One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Ongoing
Physical / Kinetic	Dance		Circus	Dance		Dance
Musical & Linguistic	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music
Visual & Linguistic			Film	Film	Film	Film
					Puppetry	Puppetry
					Theatre	

Engagement

Start with dance and music because strong involvement in physical activity and music - use as a hook to engage and connect with participants

Form Selection & Basic Skill Development

Test different physical and narrative elements.

Build core skills in repeat art forms

Structured Skill Development

Focus activity, build on core skills and start to develop verbal and non-verbal narrative

How do we use different art forms?

There are a few basic elements that characterise how we structure our work.

We usually **break things down into small steps,** so that participants can start to see the outcome of what they are doing quickly and get a sense of success and achievement early on.

We try to **make sure that there's always a range of activities** available and various roles to play so participants can choose what they do and how they participate.

Making sure there are lots of different options for involvement makes it easier to engage participants, and keep them engaged. It allows participants to start where they feel comfortable and gives us the flexibility to encourage them to take small - rather than large - steps outside their comfort zone by trying new and different things. It also means that there's a range of artistic products / elements to feed into the artistic outcome.

We try to **layer the work** we do so that everything stacks one on top of the other like building blocks, allowing participants to gradually develop their skills.

And we **manufacture opportunities for participants to try new things** and encourage them out of their comfort zone.

For example, when we use hip hop we break the art form down into its component parts and focus on each part in turn to engage participants and build up their skills over time.

Each step along the way is structured as a separate activity that has an immediate outcome and can provide the participant with a positive experience and a sense of achievement, whether it's perfecting a dance move, getting a short break dance routine together or developing or building on a beat.

We start with very simple activities and then gradually build on those activities by combining different elements as participants build up their skills. Over time, we start to focus activity and work towards short track and internal performance outcomes and eventually we transition that work to feed into a public performance outcome.

The key is being flexible and looking for the opportunity to gradually step participants through the artistic development process.

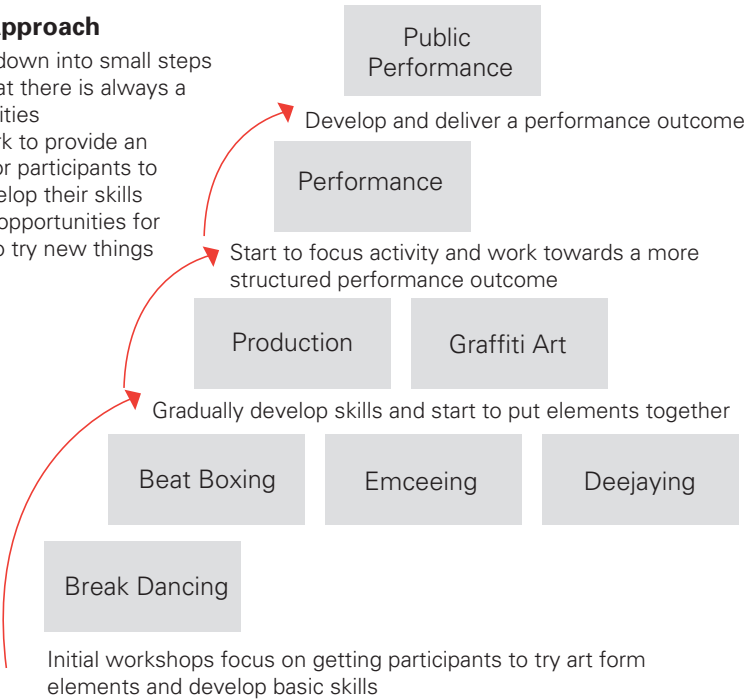We use a similar approach with all the art forms we use.

Building block approach - hip hop example

Basic Elements

Break Dancing

Beat Boxing

Emceeing (Lyrics)

Deejaying

Graffiti Art
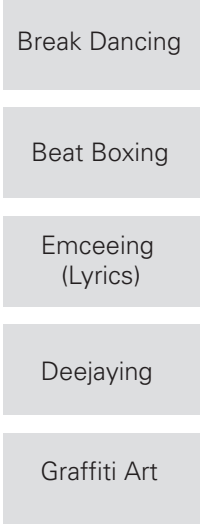
Structured Approach
- Break things down into small steps
- Make sure that there is always a range of activities
- Layer the work to provide an opportunity for participants to gradually develop their skills
- Manufacture opportunities for participants to try new things

Public Performance

Develop and deliver a performance outcome

Performance

Start to focus activity and work towards a more structured performance outcome

Production   Graffiti Art

Gradually develop skills and start to put elements together

Beat Boxing   Emceeing   Deejaying

Break Dancing

Initial workshops focus on getting participants to try art form elements and develop basic skills

How do we make sure that we deliver quality artistic outcomes?

Beyond Empathy is committed to using the arts to support individual and community development. We always aim to produce quality, "authentic" community art.

By authentic, we mean that the artistic products produced through our projects are both inspired by and developed in collaboration with the community with whom we work.

Their "authenticity" is derived both from the way participants are involved in the creative process and the way the artistic product reflects the story the participants want to tell.

For us, high quality authentic community art:

- Is created in collaboration with the community (rather than just being inspired by it)
- Is connected with and owned by the community through the context or place within which it is set and / or the story that it tells
- Is able to initiate or inform a dialogue around the work or the issues raised within or by it
- Reflects the technical aspects of the art form(s) used.

In order to deliver high quality authentic community art outcomes we need to make sure that our community engagement is strong and that the artistic skills we bring to that practice and the way in which we use them to structure and guide the work are of a consistently high quality.

We structure and run our projects based on that. We always try to make sure that the teams we employ for projects have a balance of skills. We select and train staff so that they develop a mix of skills. We also try to make sure that all of our internal processes, policies and procedures reinforce the importance of both the community engagement and artistic aspects of our work.

Dual Aspects of High Quality, Authentic Community Art Production

Quality Creative Process — High Quality Authentic Community Art — Quality Artistic Product

TOOL 6 – HOW WE SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT JOURNEYS

Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; but directly involve me and I'll make it my own. (Confucius)[12]

What's this Tool about?

This Tool looks at how we use our programs to support individuals along a personal development and change journey. It includes examples of the ways participants have worked with Beyond Empathy and how they have transitioned from participating in workshops to playing a more active role in the delivery of Beyond Empathy programs.

How do we work with participants?

We try to work one-on-one with participants as much as possible.

When young people engage with our workshop programs, Beyond Empathy workers try to make sure they spend time working one-on-one with each of them.

When young people connect more strongly and become involved in Beyond Empathy's Development Program, the level of one-on-one support we provide is much higher.

Young people who "float to the top" in our workshop programs, who keep coming along and show real interest in becoming more involved, are encouraged to help set up workshops and show other participants how to do things. When that happens, the Beyond Empathy staff working on those programs begin to build stronger relationships with them.

There's a dedicated support worker on all program teams who makes a point of getting to know the participants. That support worker works with the rest of the Beyond Empathy team to identify and / or manufacture opportunities for participants to get more involved in the program.

As the relationship builds participants are invited to come along to Beyond Empathy's Leadership Camps, where they get to know other Development Program participants and members of the Beyond Empathy team.

At those camps participants are again given the opportunity to explore different art forms and develop new skills. They also participate in a series of focused personal development sessions aimed at helping them to think about how they view themselves, their world and the people around them and to recognise their potential, look at the things that hold them back and think about ways of working through those barriers.

Based on the relationships they build at those workshops, participants are usually paired with an informal mentor; someone (usually a member of the Beyond Empathy team) who touches base with them periodically to check up on how they are going.

As those relationships develop, participants often start to reach out to their mentor for help when they need it.

It's through that mentoring relationship that participants tend to become involved in Beyond Empathy activities in more formal ways, such as being peer mentors, co-facilitators and / or emerging artists. By taking on a more formal project role participants are able to develop a range of personal, general life management and basic employability skills, as well as develop their artistic skills.

As participants' skills develop Beyond Empathy often invites them to work with the organisation as contracted workers or artists. The structure that goes with making the transition from a volunteer to an employed worker is an important part of the development process.

As well as providing participants with pathways to develop skills and access employment opportunities within the organisation, Beyond Empathy also works with Development Program participants to help them connect with support services, education, training and employment options elsewhere. For example, participants have been provided with computers and helped to re-enroll in school or TAFE (vocational education) training, and also linked to work experience opportunities.

It's important to realise that the path Beyond Empathy's Development Program participants follow is rarely smooth or linear.

Participants often cycle in and out of involvement with Beyond Empathy depending on what's happening in their lives.

And, Beyond Empathy mentors often find themselves providing participants with practical advice and support to get the help they need to deal with a range of issues, such as managing drug and alcohol use and dealing with unstable accommodation, family breakdown and dysfunction.

Allowing participants to move in and out of involvement with programs and the provision of (at times intensive) one-on-one coaching and support are an important part of how the Beyond Empathy program model works.

Using arts practice to engage participants and help them develop skills is one thing, but Beyond Empathy programs also ensure that participants are able to identify and access other forms of support so that they can make the most of the opportunities presented.

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[12] R Kegan & L Lahey., Seven Languages for Transformation: How the Way we Talk Can Change the Way we Work/., USA., Jossey-Bass., 2001., p.10.

What are some examples of how participants have engaged with Beyond Empathy?

The following examples are representative of the sorts of journeys participants have experienced with Beyond Empathy.

Amy:

Amy became involved with Beyond Empathy in May 2007. Her partner had recently died. She was a single mother and she was struggling to cope. She had a history of drug and alcohol misuse, self-harming and risk taking behaviour.

Amy attended a Leadership Camp in May 2007. Following that camp she became involved in projects with Beyond Empathy in the Illawarra, as a co-facilitator and artist. Over the next two years she helped run a series of activities and was an active member of the Development Program. In 2008 she enrolled in a Business Course at TAFE. She has remained in contact with Beyond Empathy and has periodically been involved in workshop and exhibition activity.

Timing	Activity
Mar 2007	***Partner dies***
May 2007	Meet BE worker
	Participates in local dance and circus workshops
	Participates in Leadership Camp
	Helps run local hip hop program
	Helps run local dance workshops
	Helps coordinate local hip hop performance
	Moves home
Oct 2007	Participates in Leadership Camp
	Helps run local workshop program
	Runs local dance workshop
	Participates in BE exhibition and performance program in Armidale
	Moves home
May 2008	Participates in Leadership Camp
	BE buys computer
	Commences Business Administration course at TAFE
	Participates in BE exhibition and performance program in Illawarra
Oct 2008	Participates in BE Leadership Camp
	Quits drugs

Valerie:

Valerie became involved with Beyond Empathy in Easter 2007. She had recently returned to live with her family in country NSW after living in Sydney. She had lived in foster and kinship care for a number of years and had been involved in violent relationships. When she met Beyond Empathy she was living with her family and was dealing with her partner's recent murder.

Valerie attended a Leadership Camp in May 2007. She then went to Tennant Creek to help run a workshop there before returning to help run a series of programs in northern NSW. For the last two years she has been involved with Beyond Empathy as a community development worker and an emerging artist. In 2009 she enrolled in TAFE and is currently balancing study and ongoing work with Beyond Empathy.

Timing	Activity
	Partner murdered
	Moves home
Apr 2007	Meets BE worker
	Participates in local playgroup
May 2007	Participates in Leadership Camp
	Helps run workshop in Tennant Creek
	Contracted to help run local playgroup program (6 months)
	BE arranges work with a local youth centre as a mentor
	Attends youth centre camp as a mentor
	Speaks at BE event at NSW Parliament House
Oct 2007	Participates in Leadership Camp
	Contracted to help run playgroup program in Moree
	Speaks at BE event in Sydney
Jan 2008	Works with BE artist on a commissioned art work
	Contracted to help run workshop in Tennant Creek
May 2008	Participates in Leadership Camp
	Contracted to help run workshop in Tennant Creek
Oct 2008	Contracted to help run BE Leadership Camp
	Participates in 6 x 6 program as an emerging artist

TOOL 7 – HOW WE MEASURE WHAT HAPPENS

What's this Tool about?

This Tool provides an overview of how we keep track of what we do and who we work with, and how we measure - or evaluate - the effect our programs have on the individuals and communities we work with.

Why measure things?

Beyond Empathy strongly believes in the power of the arts to influence individual and social change. That belief underscores everything we do.

We're committed to demonstrating how arts practice can be used as an individual and community development tool. To do that we need to be able to show how what we do makes a difference in the lives of the individuals and communities we work with.

We have to evaluate our programs.

To do that we've developed a set of measurement tools that lets us assess how what we do affects participants, artists, support workers and communities.

We've developed and piloted some of the above tools as part of a collaborative project funded by Social Ventures Australia. We're extremely grateful for Social Venture Australia's support for the work we do and for their assistance in helping us to develop a set of measurement tools.

Social Ventures Australia and the "Future Builders" Project

The Future Builders Program is a three year project coordinated by Social Ventures Australia. The project commenced in 2007 with the objective of working with a range of not for profit (NFP) organisations in the Youth Sector to develop and implement a set of user-friendly evaluation tools to validate program outcomes and to identify what works and why.

Over the last few years Social Ventures Australia has worked with Beyond Empathy and approximately ten other organisations to develop and pilot a set of evaluation tools.

We have also developed some other tools on our own.

Talking about measurement and evaluation can sound a bit confronting for some people. However, we believe that it's really important. We like to think about evaluation as a process of reflection, where we look at what we've done and think about what has and hasn't worked, what we want to keep the same and what we want to change next time around.

Our measurement tools help us to understand:

- What changes participants, artists and support workers experience through the work they do with us
- What impact the artistic products produced through that process have on the people who experience them.

They help us to understand whether or not we are making a difference. They hold us to account and ask us to be honest with ourselves about whether or not we're really doing what we say we do. In many ways, our evaluation tools ask us to look at our own mental models and assumptions about what works. They challenge us to step outside our comfort zone and to look at things in a different way. They're our tool to make sure that we don't get caught in single loop learning but move instead into a deeper, double loop learning process.

How do we work out what to measure?

Whenever we set up a project we start by completing a program logic (sometimes also referred to as a log frame) for what we're going to do. The program logic covers:

- What we plan to do
- How we're going to do it
- What resources we need to make it happen.
- Who the participants are
- Why we're doing it and what outcomes we hope to achieve.

If you're interested in finding out more about the program logic framework you can learn more by visiting the Westpac Foundation website.

Working through the program logic framework helps Beyond Empathy in a number of ways. It helps us:

- **Stay on mission –** by making us think about what we are doing the project for and checking that the outcomes that we hope to achieve through the project line up with our overall organisational objectives
- **Plan –** by making us think through what we are going to do, how we are going to do it and what it's going to take
- **Manage projects –** by defining the resources, timeline and deliverables that we need to meet in order to complete the program
- **Evaluate projects –** by defining want we are seeking to achieve and how we will measure it.

What do we keep track of and measure?

We try to keep track of four things:

- What we do
- Who we work with
- What benefits the people that we work with take away from our programs and
- What works well for them about what we do and how we do it – and what doesn't.

How do we do that?

We try to keep things as simple and straightforward as we can.

Keeping track of what we do:

We keep a record of what we do in each of our programs. In particular, we record how many workshops we run in each community.

For each workshop we track:

- What art forms we use
- Who runs them
- How many artists and facilitators are involved.

We also keep track of the number and type of artistic outcomes we produce in each workshop program.

We collect all of that information internally as part of the day-to-day process we use to manage what we do. We basically just track things as we go in an excel database. We set up the database at the beginning of the year when we develop our activity plan, listing what we expect to do, and then we track our progress against that plan as the year progresses.

You don't need a complex system – you just need to make sure that you keep track of things as you go and don't let things get out of control!

Keeping track of who we work with:

Because of the nature of the work we do it can be difficult to document the names and details of all of the people that come to our workshops. In some cases, taking a formal "roll call" of some sort would actually undermine what we're trying to do.

As a result, we generally focus on just tracking the number of participants that attend each of the workshops. We have a recording sheet for that purpose, where the lead facilitator records how many participants, artists and support workers attended.

But, we keep specific track of the young people participating in our Development Program so that we have a more detailed record of what activities they participate in and what roles they are playing in the workshops.

The recording sheets get sent to Beyond Empathy's office where the data is entered into the same database we use to track what we do.

It's simple really but the trick is making sure people remember to fill in the recording sheets and then send them in to the office.

Evaluating our programs:

At the end of our programs we usually collect two types of feedback so that we can understand what the people who participated in the program took away with them and what audiences thought of our work.

We collect feedback from participants, artists and support workers who participated in the program. We usually talk to a sub-set of the participants and to as many of the artists and support workers as we can.

What we ask depends a bit on the type of program they participated in.

We always ask:

- Whether or not they enjoyed the program
- What (if anything) they took away from the program
  - In the case of participants, we usually ask them if the program had any influence on how they feel or think about themselves, others, what's going on in their lives and what they want to do going forward.
  - In the case of support workers and artists, we usually ask them if the program had any influence on how they feel or think about themselves, others, how they will go about doing their work in the future.
  - We ask everyone what they liked about the program, what they didn't like about it, what they would have changed if they could.

If the program targeted a specific issue – for example, alcohol management – then we also ask them specific questions about whether or not the program has influenced how they think about that issue.

Sometimes we also use the most significant change question set which is covered in more detail later in this chapter.

We work out how we're going to evaluate a program when we first set it up and we make sure there's a plan in place for who and how we're going to ask the questions early on.

We have some simple survey forms that we use to meet the needs of each program. The basic questions always stay pretty much the same – it's only the questions relating to the specific purpose of the program that we need to adjust.

Please refer to the appendices on our website for the survey template.

In most cases, we only hand out the questionnaire in written form to support workers and artists. We'll usually run through the questions verbally with participants and write the answers down either during or immediately after we speak to them.

In the case of support workers and artists, we either hand out and collect the completed questionnaire at the last workshop or, email or post it to them following the program. (It usually works better if we do it in the last session though or through follow up telephone interviews.)

In the case of participants, we usually follow up with them one-on-one throughout the program to get feedback in an informal way. We also follow up after the program or hold a BBQ or some sort of event at the end of the last workshop where we can chat with them and get their feedback. We usually have a Beyond Empathy worker that the participants know and feel comfortable with collect the feedback. That way we're more likely to get a full, more honest assessment of the program.

The completed questionnaires are sent back to the office and responses are collated into a database that allows us to analyse:

- Whether people enjoyed the program
- What type of things they took away from the program
- What worked well and what didn't
- What they would change if they could.

If there has been some form of public outcome attached to the project, then we also conduct a survey of the people who saw that outcome to understand what they took away from that experience.

In particular we try to understand whether the performance or exhibition resonated with audience members, what the audience thought of its artistic quality and whether it caused them to think about things differently.

We have a special questionnaire that we use for that. Please refer to the appendix for the questionnaire.

With performances we put copies of the questionnaire on the seats and ask people to fill them in before they leave the venue. With exhibitions we put questionnaires in conspicuous places and collect them at the door as people leave. Also, we often have one or two "roving interviewers" who roam around after performances collecting audience feedback information using the form.

The completed questionnaires are sent back to Beyond Empathy's office and responses are collated into a database that allows us to analyse how people rated the performance and their general feedback.

Tracking personal change journeys:

We work with approximately 20 young people each year in our Development Program and because we work with them intensively over a long period of time and get to know them quite well, we're able to talk to them to get a detailed understanding of their experiences in our programs and what they have taken out of that experience.

In effect, we're able to have an ongoing discussion with them about what's going on in their lives and the role their involvement with Beyond Empathy is playing in their lives and impacting their ability to manage the challenges and opportunities that come their way.

In order to do that we use a couple of specific discussion tools that allow us to ask participants the same questions again and again over time.

General Status and Capacity to Manage Assessment

Most of the young people participating in Beyond Empathy's Development Program come from difficult backgrounds. They often face significant challenges in their day-to-day lives that are reflected in their feelings about themselves and life experiences.

One of the measurement tools we use is called the General Status and Capacity to Manage Assessment (GS&CM). It monitors Beyond Empathy Development Program participants over time across three areas:

- General status - how the participant is going generally
- Life context - what life has been like, how easy or tough things have been
- Ability to manage - how well the participant feels they have dealt with what's come their way.

Please refer to the appendix for a copy of the GS&CM Assessment tool.

Although we don't work directly with participants to change their underlying life context (ie housing, home environment, employment status) we do seek to improve both the participants' capacity to manage what comes their way and their general sense of self and wellbeing. During the course of a participant's involvement with Beyond Empathy, we use the GS&MC to track this.

In particular we look at whether participants see themselves as being better able to handle what comes their way and feel better about themselves over the duration of their involvement in the Development Program.

We incorporate the GS&CM assessment in the mentoring and support work that we do with participants in our Development Program. Each month the Beyond Empathy support worker runs through the assessment questions with each of the participants and records their answers.

Those answers are collated into a database that allows us to analyse:

- What has changed for each of the individual participants over time
- Whether we can see any patterns in the sorts of changes that have occurred across the participant group as a whole.

Most Significant Change Assessment

Another tool we use to measure change and effect is one that has been derived from the Most Significant Change Evaluation Methodology[13] developed by Jessica Dart.

In effect, we ask a simple set of questions to try to:

- Encourage participants to articulate the changes that have occurred or things they have learnt through the course of their involvement with Beyond Empathy
- Test the extent to which those changes/ learnings are linked to their involvement with us.

These questions help us identify:

- What change (if any) the participant has noticed in themselves / their life
- What factors have contributed to that change
- To what extent any changes are related to their involvement with us
- What features of the program have been important contributors to any changes.

Please refer to the appendix for the MSC Survey.

We incorporate the MSC assessment in the extension work that we do with participants in our Development Program. We usually run one or two Extension Training and Development Camps each year. At each of those, the Beyond Empathy support worker runs through the assessment questions with each of the participants and records their answers – often we will do this on film.

Those answers are collated into a database that allows us to analyse participants' responses.

By categorising the types of changes experienced by participants and analysing them, it's possible to look for trends across participant groups to identify the sorts of changes the program is supporting and how it does that. We can:

- Confirm whether participants have experienced a change in their lives
- Identify whether or not they link that change to their involvement with Beyond Empathy
- Assess the relative importance of the role we have played in contributing to the change
- Understand what elements of our programs supported that change
- Learn from the analysis and strengthen what we do!

All of the work we do on measurement is aimed at trying to understand the personal change journeys experienced by participants in Beyond Empathy programs and how effective Beyond Empathy has been in facilitating positive changes.

Measuring takes time, but we think it's worth it because it's important to document the process and we also learn much about where and how to effectively improve our programs along the way.

If you would like to find out more about how we evaluate our programs or train-the-trainer sessions that we run on how to do arts-based evaluation please contact us at toolkit@ beyondempathy.org.au.

Things to remember when "doing evaluation"

There are a number of things you need to remember when conducting an evaluation, especially when interviewing young people.

We have prepared a Quick Reminder Checklist to help make sure we act appropriately when we are conducting interviews. A copy of that checklist is provided in Appendices on our website.

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[13] R Davies and J Dart., April 2005. The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A Guide to its Use.

TOOL 8 – HANDY HINTS FOR HOW TO MAKE THINGS WORK

What's this Tool about?

This Tool differs from the earlier Tools in that it isn't structured to tell a story about what we do or how we do it. It is a compilation of handy hints and things that we keep in mind when delivering arts-based projects. We've tried to group similar ideas together. For simplicity, we've listed the tips below.

List Of Handy Hints

Setting up Workshops

- Staff and resource projects properly
- Be clear about your objectives
- Make sure that staff are appropriately trained and briefed
- Set reasonable expectations
- Establish good project management and reporting structures

Running workshops

- Keep rules and regulations to a minimum
- Avoid bureaucracy
- Plan for chaos … and be flexible
- Learn by doing
- Work one on one, one by one
- Target the problem child (or adult)
- Be aware of group dynamics
- Be careful of putting people on the spot
- Work at both an explicit and an implicit level
- Think about the language you use
- Share rather than teach
- Encourage and value participant contributions
- Recognise effort … as well as achievement

Building relationships

- Work on the basis of informed acceptance
- Set a positive expectation
- Take a strengths-based approach
- Map to the young person (not the other way around)
- Focus on engagement rather than problem solving
- Be on the alert for the tendency to self-sabotage
- Be prepared to invest in the relationship
- Don't let participants take advantage of your generosity
- Be prepared to share something of yourself or your own experience
- Remember that you're a worker not the participant's friend
- Be yourself
- Look for opportunities to demonstrate trust
- Be prepared to prove yourself
- Remember that passion is contagious

Managing challenging behaviour

- Expect to be tested
- Set clear boundaries and be consistent
- Put yourself in the participant's shoes
- Focus on the person not the behaviour
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Always try to keep the end in mind … and look for the opportunity not the challenge
- Remember to question your own behaviour

Setting up workshops

Staff and resource projects properly

As community artists we rarely have as many funds as we'd like to run a project.

The key is to make sure that you design what you're going to do so that it suits the size and composition of the group that you're working with and is within your budget.

In order to do that, you need to think about how many participants you're likely to have and what sort of space(s) you're going to be able to work out of and then decide on an art form and an activity that works with the participant group in that space effectively.

If you're not sure exactly how many participants you'll get then you need to make sure that the approach you use is flexible and can be adjusted to handle both smaller and larger groups.

You need to make sure that you have the right number of staff and enough equipment to run the activity effectively.

As a general rule, we try to make sure that we maintain a staff (adult) : participant ratio of about 1 : 4.

If the ratios start to go above that then we look at how we can bring in other support workers or change how we structure the activity to make it more manageable.

Because of the dual nature of our work, we often get support workers from other organisations to participate in the workshops we run and so can manage staff (adult) : participant ratios in that way.

Be clear about your objectives

Make sure you know what you're trying to achieve for each project. Think through and document:

- Who you're aiming to work with
- What you're aiming to do
- What outcomes you're trying to achieve
- How you'll know whether you have achieved them.

Things may shift during the course of a project, but it's important to make sure that what you're aiming for is clear at the start and that you adapt to any changes as they occur.

Make sure all staff are appropriately trained and briefed

It's important for staff to be properly trained and briefed so that they're set up to succeed (rather than to fail).

Arts-based workshops may be somewhat unpredictable but that doesn't mean they can't be properly scoped and planned.

It's important to make sure that all staff – program managers, artists and support workers – understand the structure, timeline and objectives for the project(s) they are working on.

We have a standard staff induction and briefing pack which we use to make sure that staff have the information they need when they start on a project.

Roles should be clearly defined and processes should be put in place for regular meetings during the course of the project for staff to debrief what's happening, monitor project progress and coordinate activity.

We try to have team meetings at the beginning of each day to review what happened the day before, plan for the day ahead and make sure that we're all on the same page as to what we're trying to achieve and how we're going to go about doing it.

Set reasonable expectations

When designing and fundraising for programs remember that by nature, arts-based workshops with highly disengaged groups are not predictable:

- Often participants don't turn up when you want them to
- They come in fewer or greater numbers than expected
- They don't stick to age limits – and often bring along friends or siblings who are older or younger than the group planned for
- They come without appropriate clothing or are hung over or hungry
- They don't bring the right equipment (in fact, usually they don't come with anything at all)…

Plan projects, build budgets and set outcome targets that take that unpredictability into account. And remember to educate partner and funding organisations and manage their expectations from the very beginning.

Put in place good project management and reporting structures

Put in place good project management and reporting structures to make sure you don't get consumed by the chaos.

Managed chaos in a workshop is one thing – poor project management is another.

Running workshops

Keep rules and regulations to a minimum

Most of the participants we work with come from backgrounds of recurring hardship. They have often dropped out of school, are unemployed or have never had a job, have an unstable home or home environment, have been (or are highly likely to get into) trouble with the law, misuse drugs and alcohol and/or have multiple health issues.

As a general rule, they don't work well with rules or routine. One of the fastest ways to stop them from participating in activities is to have too many rules or regulations. However, it's important to make sure there are some rules in place to keep participants and staff safe.

At Beyond Empathy we set basic rules around participation based on principles of mutual respect and responsibility.

We don't let people participate in workshops if their behaviour puts themselves or other people at risk or if they consistently fail to demonstrate respect for the rights of other people to participate in a safe and constructive environment.

Beyond that we keep rules about participation and behaviour to a minimum.

Avoid bureaucracy

As with rules, bureaucracy is also a big disincentive for participation.

To deal with that, we keep (visible) paperwork to a minimum. That doesn't mean we don't collect information or evaluate our programs –

it just means that we need to be very clear about exactly what information we need to collect and be creative and efficient about how we collect it.

When we are collecting information we're careful not to ask too many questions, too often.

Plan for chaos … and be flexible:

By nature, the arts-based workshops we run are not predictable. Although we always have a broad plan for what we'll do with participants, it's not until we are actively working with them that we get a sense of how they'll respond and what will and won't work.

The key is to plan for chaos and be flexible – and creative.

It's important to set up the workshop space and plan the activity in a way that mitigates potential risks and makes it easier to respond to what happens during the course of the workshop.

That means thinking about the likely composition of the group before you begin, identifying the sorts of issues that might arise and thinking about how you might handle them.

It means working in a responsive way with participants and dealing with issues as they occur. You need to be prepared and able to change what you plan to do to meet the needs of the group you're working with on any given day.

It also means knowing when to pull the pin and bring an activity to an end. If the wellbeing of the group is being undermined and the work is being compromised and you can't bring it back in under control then stop and come back and start again another time.

Learn by doing

Keep trying different things until you find something that works.

Work one-on-one, one-by-one

Arts practice works because it provides a medium to engage participants and build trusting relationships through which they can access support.

Building trusting relationships is the key to supporting individual development and change.

In order to build those relationships you need to take the time to get to know participants. Although most activities are run as group workshops you still need to work one-on-one, one-by-one. That means always taking time to work with each participant.

"Target" the problem child … or adult:

Getting the natural leader in a group on side can be a powerful thing.

We often "target" the problem child (or adult) in a community or group when we're setting up and running a program to try to get them on board.

Experience indicates that if you can get through to them and get them on board then they often act like the pied piper – and draw others into the program.

The natural leadership skills they demonstrate (albeit often in unconventional ways) also mean they often get a lot out of the program and act as strong role models for other participants.

Be aware of group dynamics:

You need to be aware of both the good and the bad side of group dynamics.

It's important to read the group and make the most of the good dynamics and manage the bad dynamics.

If a participant is leading the group astray, it's important to try to harness that leadership ability in a positive way, by getting them to take on a role in the activity that can bring things back under control.

Be careful of putting people on the spot:

Remember to think about what you say and ask of participants in a group environment in order to avoid putting them in an awkward situation or one where they might lose face.

Work at both an explicit and an implicit level:

It's important to work at both an explicit and an implicit level.

That means you need to look for and read both verbal and non-verbal messages.

It also means that you need to send consistent verbal and non-verbal messages. What you do is as important as what you say.

Think about the language you use:

Language is important. Always try to use positive, strengths-based language.

Share rather than teach:

It's important to avoid establishing a hierarchical relationship.

You can do that by focusing on sharing what you know with participants and working together rather than trying to teach them.

Doing that makes it easier to maintain a more balanced (commitment- rather than control-based) relationship .

The dynamics of a relationship - control versus commitment model

Control Model	Commitment Model
Power is derived from position	Power flows from lived experience, expertise and contribution, not position
People are motivated by the task at hand	People are motivated by their commitment to the relationship
People respond most to short term rewards in relation to task achievement	People respond most to long term rewards or objectives
Control dynamic, control vested in one party, discourage collaborative input	Cooperative dynamics, mutual control, encourage collaborative input

Adopting a commitment-based model means that relationships are built on the participant's terms. The participant has a sense of ownership or control over the relationship - rather than being subject to, or dependent on, it - and so, as a result, often feels more comfortable engaging with workers.

Encourage and value participant contributions

Encourage participants to be involved in deciding what and how workshops are run.

If you ask for the participants' input then respect and value it.

That doesn't always mean you necessarily have to act on that input – but it does mean that if there's a reason you don't act on it then you need to explain why.

Recognise effort … as well as achievement

Recognise, affirm and celebrate what participants do.

Focus on the value of trying, not just succeeding at, things.

Building relationships

Work on a basis of informed acceptance

We try to work on the basis of informed acceptance.

The adoption of this approach doesn't mean we act in ignorance of a participant's background – but rather we reserve judgment and engage with the participant for who s/he is rather than what s/he has done or how s/he has behaved in the past. In effect, we focus on the person not the past behaviour.

By focusing on the person and what they bring to an activity, rather than on their past behaviour, we implicitly put ourselves in a positive relationship space with them which makes it easier to avoid falling into the trap of negative stereotyping or negative attribution error.

Set a positive expectation

We set a positive expectation for the participant – in terms of both how they'll behave and what they're capable of.

It's worth noting that many young people coming from backgrounds of recurring hardship often don't have the ability to see outside of their lived experience – many often don't even register themselves as being disadvantaged.

Take a strengths based approach

We focus on the strengths that participants have and what they have taken from their lived experience (rather than the experience itself).

Often that means working with participants to reframe their past experiences from being sources of difficulty to being sources of potential strength or assets (when you are marginalized sometimes your only asset is your story).

The adoption of a "strengths- or asset-based approach" is common to most arts practices – and reflects what research has identified that generally constitutes good practice in the delivery of support services.

The conscious adoption of a strengths-based approach helps us to:

- Separate the participant from behaviour
- Shift the focus from the past experience to what the participant has taken from his experience
- Set a positive expectation of the participant
- Challenge the participant to focus on his/her positive traits and skills.

Map to the young person (not the other way around)

Don't expect participants to map to your world - because they won't.

You need to map to the participant's(s) world. That may mean stepping outside your comfort zone!

Mapping to where the participant is means working in places and ways that they are comfortable with.

It means starting by focusing on the participant's interests (rather than focusing on what you are trying to achieve) and letting them set the agenda and pace for what you do.

Focus on engagement rather than problem solving

We focus on working with participants on a particular activity rather than solving a specific issue or achieving a specific outcome.

That helps us maintain a balanced power dynamic and avoid falling into attribution error.

Be alert to the tendency to "self-sabotage"

You need to remember that young people often consciously or sub-consciously "self-sabotage" and put up barriers. It's important to persevere - to demonstrate your commitment to the young person in the face of opposition - again and again and again.

Be prepared to invest in the relationship

You need to be prepared to invest in the relationship.

You can do that by spending time and effort getting to know the participants individually and working with them on something that interests them.

It's worth noting that young people often see themselves as doing us a favour when they initially participate in our workshops and as a result they look to us to contribute something to the relationship that makes it worthwhile for them.

Don't let participants take advantage of your generosity

Resist buying or lending things to participants or giving them money.

Be prepared to share something of yourself /your own experience

Be prepared to share something of yourself and your lived experience to help connect with the participant.

It's important to recognise that this does not mean you should become the participant's friend – your relationship with the participant should still always be that of a professional worker and a client.

What it does mean is that you should be prepared to draw on your lived experience to communicate an understanding of and an empathy with the participant.

Remember that you're a worker, not the participant's friend

Whether you're an artist or a community development or support worker it's important to remember that you're working with the participant in a professional capacity.
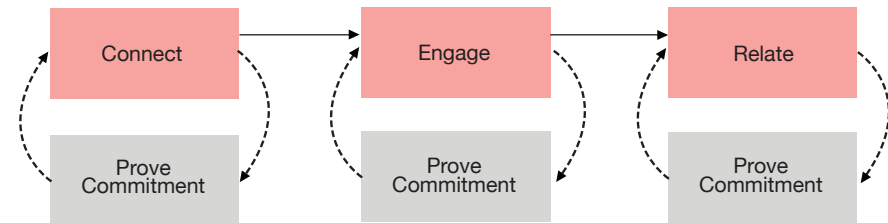
Be yourself

Make sure that you stay true to yourself and don't try to take on a style or way of being with participants that's not true to your own personal style.

Young people know when you try to be something you're not – and they won't engage with you if they think you're not genuine.

Look for opportunities to demonstrate trust

You should actively look for opportunities to communicate trust in the participant.

The dynamics of proving commitment:

Be prepared to prove yourself

Young people often exhibit disinterest and confronting, disruptive and / or self-sabotaging behaviour – challenging you and requiring you to "prove" yourself.

It's important to recognise that participants do this – that it comes from their lived experience and is usually a defensive mechanism against getting hurt or shamed. It's important to interpret and respond to behaviour with that in mind – and to persevere.

Be prepared to prove your commitment to the participant … again and again and again.

Remember that passion is contagious

Your passion for an activity can provide a point of resonance and harmony from which to build a relationship with the participant.

We share our passion for the art forms we work in and use that shared passion to connect with participants and engage them in the activities that we are working on.

Passion power charges the ability to build rapport.

Managing Challenging Behaviour

Expect to be tested

Young people will often exhibit disinterest and confronting, disruptive and / or self-sabotaging behaviour – often as a defensive mechanism.

It's important to interpret and respond to behaviour with that in mind.

If you understand why a person is acting in this way you are less likely to make an attribution error or be (as) frustrated by their behaviour.

In most cases, the best response to defensive (testing) behaviour is to remain calm and not rise to it – to try to let it wash over you – and to prove your interest and commitment in the participant by not being put off by their behaviour.

Set clear boundaries and be consistent

It's important to set clear boundaries for what is – and isn't – acceptable and be consistent in terms of how those boundaries are defined and enforced.

Put yourself in the participant's shoes

It's important to try to step outside of how you are experiencing (and interpreting) a participant's behaviour and remember to ask yourself what factors might be driving that behaviour.

Doing that can sometimes give you a better understanding of what's happening – and give you more options for dealing with it.

Focus on the person not the behaviour

When managing a participant's behaviour you should always try to put yourself in their shoes and try to understand what factors might be driving their behaviour.

If you understand why a person is acting in this way you are less likely to make an attribution error or get (as) frustrated by their behaviour.

Keep the lines of communication open

It's important to try to keep the lines of communication open.

That doesn't mean you have to be free to talk to participants all the time – but it does mean that you have to make it clear through what you and your body language says that you're happy to talk and then make sure you set clear and consistent boundaries for when you can do that.

Always try to keep the end in mind … and look for the opportunity not the challenge

Try to keep the end goal in mind when you're working in any given situation.

Look for the opportunity to use the situation to help the participant work towards that goal.

This is important because it can help you step back from the intensity of the situation – and when things get tough, reminds you that there's a bigger picture.

Remember to question your own behaviour

It's important to be prepared to reflect on your own behaviour and how it may (inadvertently) contribute to the reactions or behaviour of the young people you're working with.