

Create NSW 2025-2028 Strategic Plan help guide.

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Why we ask for a strategic plan.

We ask for a strategic plan so that we can better understand your organisation.

Your strategic plan should be about your organisation. It should articulate the unique role your organisation plays in the wider NSW arts and cultural ecology. It should explain the purpose behind the organisation's activities and the impact or change your organisation will make across the period of the plan.

As part of the assessment process, your strategic plan will be reviewed to determine the likelihood of the success of your plan. Your organisation's role in the NSW arts and culture ecology, contribution to the sector, audiences, and demonstration of organisational sustainability will also be considered.

It is acknowledged that the disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact and inform current operations. As such your organisation may be choosing to consolidate and rethink your operational methods. While your vision and mission may remain consistent, your methods and strategies may adjust over the life of the strategic plan.

Why we asked for a strategic plan for 2025-2028.

As part of the application process, we have asked for a strategic plan covering the period 2025 till 2028. This is to enable you to talk about the immediate and short-term goals of the organisation. It also aligns with the period of the recent Creative Australia multi-year application.

What are the core elements of a strategic plan.

The strategic plan's core element of vision, mission, and goals provide a high level "roadmap" for an organisation. It outlines where your organisation currently is, where it intends to go in the next few years, how it intends to get there, and the resources required.

The organisation's vision should outline the desired future state—the "world" it aspires to create and encapsulates the ideal scenario or outcome the organisation ultimately wishes to achieve.

The organisation's mission should then outline its role and methods used in delivering that vision. It should describe how the organisation will actively contribute to making the envisioned world a reality.

The strategic plan should explain the current external and internal environments in which the organisation operates and how these factors shape the operations of the organisation.

It also clearly outlines the methods/strategies/pillars of operation used to achieve your goals over the period of the plan.

Business plan vs a strategic plan

Where a strategic plan gives a high-level multi-year view of your operations, a business plan provides the next level of detail of how your activities meet your strategic goals, generally for a 12-month period. A business plan will articulate more detailed information on personnel and budget, where the activities will take place and who will have responsibility for the actions.

Do I need to create a new strategic plan for my application?

If you have an existing strategic plan that covers the period 2025 to 2028, you can provide that with your application. We recommend you review your strategic plan to take into account changes in the funding and strategic environment such as the NSW *Creative Communities* policy. You may consider adding an appendix to outline how your activities deliver on at least one of the ACFP Strategic Priorities. Please check the guidelines for your programs requirements

The ACFP Strategic Priorities are:

First Nations stories and communities

Australia proudly acknowledges and holds the heritage of the oldest continuous living cultures, with a significant population of First Nations people living in Sydney and across NSW. "First Nations" is a broader term that is used when referring to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. It emphasises the diversity of cultures, languages, and nations, and it honours the original people of the land who have thrived here long before colonisation and endured through times of great dispossession and dispersion.

Within the Create NSW context, "First Nations NSW" in state-level funding is not exclusionary but rather prioritises and encompasses both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to support the cultural preservation and artistic expression that is specific to NSW. It ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of NSW receive focused support for their cultural continuity and artistic endeavours and is used to acknowledge and focus on the diverse Aboriginal nations within the state of New South Wales (NSW). It carries a lot of respect and recognition and should be used when specifically referring to the Aboriginal nations within NSW, Australia.

When collaborating and engaging with First Nations artists or organisations it requires a deep respect for and adherence to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights. It is essential that we respect First Nations peoples sovereign right to control how their creative expressions and traditional knowledge are used, shared, and celebrated.

Western Sydney and regional NSW

Western Sydney encompasses the thirteen local government areas of Blacktown City, Blue Mountains City, Camden Council, Campbelltown City, The City of Canterbury Bankstown, Cumberland Council, Fairfield City, Hawkesbury City, Liverpool City, The City of Parramatta, Penrith City, The Hills Shire, and Wollondilly Shire.

Regional NSW is defined as the areas outside Greater Sydney. Create NSW defines Greater Sydney as including the local government areas of the Northern Beaches and Hornsby Shire to the North, Hawkesbury City to the North-West, City of Blue Mountains to the West, Wollondilly Shire to the South-West and Sutherland Shire to the South.

Next generation of creatives and audiences

The next generation of creatives and audiences includes young people aged between 18-25. It also includes emerging artists, and arts and cultural workers who are generally in the first five years of their creative practice or profession, regardless of age. The creation of sustainable career pathways for both young and emerging artists, and arts and cultural workers is a key priority for the ACFP. The next generations of audience can include those who are yet to engage with your artform or practice.

Broad and inclusive communities and content

"Broad and inclusive communities" refers to the wide diversity of NSW people including First Nations communities, people of non-English speaking background, those from cultural and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, and those who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. It also refers to our regional communities outside the cities as well as the unique communities in our urban environments. You can also consider the diversity of audiences, artists, and arts and cultural workers.

Broad and inclusive content refers to existing and traditional artforms and practice such as visual arts, museums, literature, performing arts as well as new and emerging digital and experimental artforms and practice.

Accessibility and Equity

Accessibility and equity refer to the inclusion of people with disability or who are d/Deaf. When considering equity, you may wish to include areas of accessibility (physical, financial, economic, and social inclusion and reach).

Do I need to match our strategic plan with the ACFP Priorities?

Your strategic plan should primarily serve and guide the operations of your organisation. It should be the filter that all new programs, partnerships, and core activities are viewed to check if they will help you achieve your vision and mission. Once you have set your organisation's priorities and goals, you may choose to provide an appendix that outlines how your activities will support and deliver on one or more of the ACFP Priorities.

What to include in a strategic plan

Vision and Mission

Between them, a vision and mission should explain the "why", "what", "how", and "who" of your organisation and its operations.

While vision and mission are often interchanged, and sometimes replaced with purpose, we would recommend that you think of your vision as a broader, external looking statement.

The vision should capture what the future world/ecosystem would look like for the things (and people) that your organisation cares about. In this future world, the problems or barriers that currently exist, would not exist.

A clear vision then enables your mission to articulate the tools and strategies your organisation will use to help achieve that vision. Using a basic idea of "change theory" can help. What is the problem you have identified? How can the problem be solved? What strategies/type of activities can your organisation do to address the problem, and what will the result be?

You may wish to include external or internal data to support the issue/s you wish to address.

Areas of operations

Your pillars of operation outline the areas where your organisation will focus its activities and resources. A key question to ask is how these activities will help deliver your mission and help solve the problem you have identified in creating your vision. They are the key activity areas, or the "what" your organisation will deliver or does. Broadly they could include your artistic/creative output, sector development, career pathways, and governance. Your artistic/creative output may include the presentation of visual arts and crafts exhibitions, or theatre productions or the delivery of skill development programs. It is recommended that you have no more than five of pillars of operation and include how your organisation operates as a business as one of these areas of operation.

Pillars of operation are not usually measurable but allow you to create specific goals that can be measured.

Audience and sector development

In your strategic plan identify who are your audience or customers. This may include geographic and/or demographic information about the people or organisations to whom you provide goods and services. You may wish to include how your programs meet the needs of your audiences, how you intend to consolidate, grow and/or diversify them.

You may also wish to consider how your organisation contributes to the growth and strengthening of your artform and the NSW cultural ecology more broadly.

Summary of achievements

Include a brief history of what your organisation has achieved to date. You may wish to consider how the direction of the organisation has changed, how the organisation has grown, and include key achievements that have set you up for the next stage of the organisation's journey.

Future programs and projects

This section is the opportunity to outline what you will do or deliver over the life of the strategic plan. You may wish to outline what is new or continuing over the period of the strategic plan. You may wish to highlight specific projects and programs in each of the strategic priorities of operation of your organisation. This information could be detailed for the first two years of the plan and be more general for the last two years. It is also the opportunity to talk about the uniqueness of products and program your organisation will deliver.

Analysis of the internal and external operating environment

There are several frameworks you may wish to use to describe your internal and external operating environment. You could choose to use a combination of them to ensure you have considered both internal and external environmental factors that influence your decision making. Consider including any stakeholder engagement and consultation in this section to strengthen your analysis.

You may choose to apply a **SWOT** (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity, Threat). This quick matrix allows you to identify areas within your organisation that may impact the delivery of your planned activities. Strengths and Weakness can be seen as internal factors with Opportunities and Threats as external factors. You can apply this framework to each element of your operations such as staffing, program delivery, governance, finances, etc.

A **PESTLE** (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) framework helps to identify and analyse the external factors that can impact an organisation's success. As part of the external analysis, you may wish to also consider stakeholders, audiences, customers, industry trends, potential collaborators and competitors, the operating environments in which your suppliers operate etc.

You could also apply a **NOISE** analysis. NOISE stands for Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, and Exceptions. This framework allows you to consider both internal and external factors that will assist and impact your planned activities and strategies.

Examples of past work and audience/stakeholder/customer responses

You may wish to include images, reviews, audience feedback, and/or customer responses throughout your plan to further underline or articulate how you are meeting a need expressed by your stakeholders. This could be from surveys, social media, or media reviews or articles. These can help to identify and reinforce your role within the NSW arts ecology and the value your organisation brings to your community and stakeholders.

Governance

An outline of the organisation's Board or governing body and staff

Include an organisational chart that shows the reporting lines across the organisation. You can include a brief description of key roles and responsibilities and a profile of the people who are currently in those roles.

Consider referencing your governance documents. This may include your constitution and information on the policies and charters that guide your organisation's governance processes.

You can use this section of your strategic plan to outline your board meeting frequency, governance structures, legislative compliance, delegation schedules for decision making and finances, and if you have procedures for complaint management and induction materials.

How the organisation supports, safeguards, and modernises workplace conditions and standards

Organisations should be mindful of their legislative requirements. These include state and federal awards, as well as legislation such as the *Fair Work Act 2009*, *Modern Slavery Act 2018*, *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*, and the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 No 48*.

In addition, organisations may choose to adopt industry policies such as the *NAVA Code of Practice* and the *Writers Guild payrates* in relation to payment in the absence of awards and agreements. They may also wish to adopt behavioural and employment policies such as anti-discrimination, anti-bullying and sexual harassment, time in lieu, social media use, conflict of interest and confidentiality policies.

Reconciliation Action Plans, Disability Inclusion Action Plans, and Cultural Diversity Action Plans can also assist organisations create specific programs and actions to support work in particular areas of focus.

While an organisation may not have all these policies, plans and procedures in place, as part of a strategic planning process, a timeline for review and implementation can be included if relevant.

Artist and arts and cultural worker career pathways

Successful organisations provide mentorship and/or training to their staff and boards. The contribution towards these pathways for artists and arts and cultural workers can help to identify the role an organisation plays within the arts and cultural ecology. These pathways may be of a formal or informal nature. In this section you may wish to outline how artists engage with your organisation at various stages of their career, how an arts and cultural worker can progress through the organisation as they take on additional duties, or perhaps how you provide opportunities for people to develop skills that they can use elsewhere in their career or the ecology.

You can consider the role your organisation plays in supporting emerging (generally in the first five years of their practice/career), mid-career and established artists, and arts and cultural workers.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment of the organisation can help identify areas of concern and identify ways to lessen either the impact or the likelihood. You should include a summary of your risk register, risk framework and key areas of concern.

Risks across five key areas can be identified, analysed, evaluated, and treated. These are:

- Financial,
- Governance,
- Operational,
- Strategic, and
- Legislation/Workplace Health and Safety (WHS).

Risks can be managed through implementing controls to lessen the impact or frequency of an event. You may wish to transfer the risk to an external party by contracting. You could choose to manage the risk through financing the eventual liability, or you could choose to avoid the activity.

Through this process you can develop a register of risks that outline the potential impact on the organisation.

A matrix where the likelihood of an event or activity (Rare, Unlikely, Possible, Likely and Almost Certain) is assessed against the impact rating (Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major, Catastrophic). Each of the impacts can be categorised according to its financial impact, the level of physical harm, reputational harm, disruption to normal operations and legislative requirements.

Table One – Risk Matrix

IMPACT	PROBABILITY				
	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Catastrophic	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME
Major	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME
Moderate	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	EXTREME
Minor	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Negligible	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM

Table Two - Example definitions for Impact for a small organisation

Negligible	no financial loss, no personal injury, no damage to reputation, no effect on operations, no contravening of legislation
Minor	small financial loss (up to \$5,000), slight injury that could be addressed by first aid, no damage to reputation, limited effect on operations, no contravening of legislation
Moderate	medium financial loss (\$5,000 to \$24,999), injury requiring medical/hospital treatment, limited damage to reputation, disruption of operations for more than 48 hours, no contravening of legislation
Major	significant financial loss (\$25,000 to \$50,000), injury requiring extended or ongoing medical/hospital treatment, residual damage to reputation, disruption of operations for more than 72 hours, contravening of legislation
Catastrophic	major financial loss (greater than \$50,000), death or permanent disability, residual damage to reputation, disruption of operations for more than 96 hours, contravening of legislation

The risk rating should consider the inherent controls that are in place to best ascertain an accurate risk rating. Generally, a risk can be reported with a rating of Low, Medium, High, or Extreme and the actions, and escalation that may result from each of the ratings are noted.

Table Three - Example of actions and escalation for a small organisation

RATING	Action	ESCALATION
EXTREME	Stop activity and do not proceed till risk is reduced or eliminated	Immediate action required by all personnel, including engagement by the Board.
HIGH	actions applied as soon as possible to reduce, control, transfer or eliminate risk	Senior management and Board notification required.
MEDIUM	take or maintain actions to reduce, control, transfer or eliminate risk where benefit exceeds the cost	Controlled by project/area management through routine and additional procedures.
LOW	Manage by routine and existing actions, policy, and procedures	Managed by all staff and volunteers through routine procedures.

Strategic goals and indicators

If you have four or five strategic priorities or pillars of operation, aim to have one or two goals related to each. When creating the goals, consider the available resources (physical, personnel, financial) and how they will impact what you can achieve. This is the way your organisation can measure its level of performance across the life of the plan.

Your goals should be “SMART”.

- **Specific** with a defined outcome. It answers the question: “What exactly do you want to achieve?”.
- **Measurable.** You should be able to measure your goal in a quantifiable way to enable tracking.
- **Attainable.** Your goals should be attainable within the available or planned resources. If the goal appears to be too ambitious you may need to break it down into more achievable steps
- **Relevant** Each goal should be relevant and support your strategic priorities and
- **Time-based.** The goal should include a timeframe in which it will be obtained.

Table Four – Guide for strategic goals

Area of Operation 1	<i>e.g., artistic output and impact</i>					
	Description of Goal	How it will be measured	Year 1 indicator	Year 2 indicator	Year 3 indicator	Year 4 indicator
GOAL 1						
GOAL 2						
Area of Operation 2	<i>e.g., sector development/contribution to ecology</i>					
	Description of Goal	How it will be measured	Year 1 indicator	Year 2 indicator	Year 3 indicator	Year 4 indicator
GOAL 1						
GOAL 2						
Area of Operation 3	<i>e.g., career pathways</i>					
	Description of Goal	How it will be measured	Year 1 indicator	Year 2 indicator	Year 3 indicator	Year 4 indicator
GOAL 1						
GOAL 2						
Area of Operation 4	<i>e.g., governance</i>					
	Description of Goal	How it will be measured	Year 1 indicator	Year 2 indicator	Year 3 indicator	Year 4 indicator
GOAL 1						
GOAL 2						

Financial summary

A strategic plan should include a topline analysis of income and expenditure and the resulting changes in assets, liabilities, and equity over the life of the strategic plan.

You could use this section to explain your business model (primary sources of income and areas of expense). You can also include the underlying assumptions of any financial modelling that you have used to project future years results such as changes in external environments, audience/customer growth, changes in activity. You may also wish to include elements from a reserves policy such as the strategic use of reserves, how you intend to build your reserves, and the impact of any major capital investment.

Topline categories of income you may wish to consider are government grants divided by government type, earned income, philanthropy and sponsorship, and other comprehensive income including changes in fair value and revaluation of assets. (Table four)

Topline categories of expenses you may wish to consider are wages and fees including on-costs, program expenses, marketing and communications, administration and occupancy costs, and other expenses. (Table four)

You may wish to use your last audited accounts as the base year for your budget projections.

Table five – Statement of comprehensive income and expenditure (Profit and Loss)

	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Income					
Government grants - Federal					
Government grants - State					
Government grants - local					
Earned income					
Philanthropy and Sponsorship					
Other comprehensive income					
Total Income					
Expenditure					
Wages and Fees including on-costs					
Program expenses					
Marketing and communication					
Administration and occupancy costs					
Other expenses					
Total Expenditure					
Result					

For your statement of financial position (Balance Sheet) include Assets - cash and cash equivalents, other current assets, non-current assets; Liabilities - current liabilities, non-current liabilities; and Equity - retained earnings and any special purpose reserves. (Table six).

You may wish to use your last audited accounts as the base year for your balance sheet projections.

Table six –Statement of financial position (Balance Sheet)

	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Assets					
Cash and cash equivalents					
Other current assets					
Non-current assets					
Total Assets					
Liabilities					
Current liabilities					
Non-current liabilities					
Total Liabilities					

	Base Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Equity					
Unrestricted reserves					
Restricted reserves					
Total Equity					

Marketing and communication

Though marketing and communication plans tend to be more detailed in a business plan, a strategic plan will usually include a topline strategic approach and the communication channels and method you will employ. You may wish to include information on which communication channels you will use to connect with particular segments of your audiences or customers, content creation, the role of social media, use of digital and non-digital collateral, accessibility of messaging, timing, frequency of communications, and how you will measure the success of your communications.

Table seven - Audience segmentation/Channel matrix

Audience Segment	Communications Channel	Strategic purpose	Frequency	Content guidelines

Appendix

While your strategic plan is focused on your organisation, you may wish to provide an appendix to show how your areas of operation align with the objectives of your key stakeholders. This may include alignment with [Creative Communities](#) – the NSW Government's 10-year integrated policy for arts, culture and the creative industries 2024-2033 or [Revive](#) - the Federal Government's arts and cultural policy, or your Local government's relevant community engagement and arts policies.

Appendix A - Alignment with ACFP priorities

To ensure clarity you may wish to outline how your pillars of operation and activities will deliver on at least one of the ACFP priorities depending on the guidelines for your round.

The ACFP priorities are:

- First Nations stories and communities
- Western Sydney and/or regional NSW
- Next generation of creatives and audiences
- Broad and inclusive communities and content
- Accessibility and equity

A further description of these priority areas can be found above and in the glossary of terms.

This document has been created by Create NSW staff with reference to support material from several sources including Creative Australia, Australian Institute of Company Directors, and the Institute of Community Directors Australia.

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