

# MANAGE YOUR PROJECT WELL AND COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Community arts projects can be complex with a range of needs. This is most true in larger projects. But even small projects need to manage relationships, objectives, expectations, roles and levels of participation.

Good project management:

- provides clarity for all involved
- helps to deliver projects effectively
- supports stronger relationships, artistic processes and outcomes
- allows for flexibility and responsiveness when new challenges and opportunities come up.

On a small project the project management may sit with the artist or with the commissioner. But in larger projects the project manager is often a dedicated role. Either way the project manager maintains an overview of the project. This includes managing:

- timelines
- budgets and resources
- relationships
- risks
- health and safety
- contractors and stakeholders
- presentations and communications
- documentation and evaluation.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

### I. DECISION MAKING PROCESSES ARE CLEAR

Agree who will make decisions on different aspects of the project, e.g. artistic, financial, partnerships. This information can go into simple contracts.

#### Tips:

- Record any decisions made in meetings. Share these back with meeting participants. People can come away from a conversation with a different understanding and it's worth double checking.
- Make sure you address any issues as soon as they come up.
- If in doubt go back to your project intentions – this will help guide you.

### 2. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ARE WELL MANAGED

It is important to effectively manage all relationships relevant to the project. These relationships might include community participants, arts practitioners, funders, stakeholder groups, audiences (where relevant), other contractors.

Complex projects or those that have large groups of participants need more time to nurture relationships and communicate well. It's important that this responsibility doesn't only sit with the arts practitioner; if it does, it'll often mean that they have less time to spend on the creative processes which is their most important role.

Make sure participants:

- understand what is being asked of them
- know how they can engage with the project
- are kept up to date with what's happening in the project.

#### Tips:

- Communication should be timely, positive, honest and open. As a project leader you are a role model. Therefore, how you communicate and treat others will set the tone for the project.
- Take care that you don't build expectations beyond what can actually happen.
- Make sure your communication with the community is regular, clear and consistent. Ensure that the organising team know how and when to communicate. Who has responsibility for each communication channel?
- Communicate the successes of the project as they happen.

- *If you are planning a public event, develop a promotion or marketing plan. It can be a simple breakdown of:*
  - *the different groups you are communicating with*
  - *when you are going to communicate with them*
  - *the communication channels used, e.g. local newspapers, social media.*
- *Use the right communication channels. Examples:*
  - *For projects on the go with tech savvy participants choose mobile friendly communication. For example, this could be Messenger, Viber or WhatsApp.*
  - *Discussions can also be had through closed Facebook groups.*
  - *Make broadcasts to large groups through email or text, but remember they are less suited for having discussions.*
  - *For smaller groups you can use free video conferencing websites like appear.in or zoom.us.*

### 3. TIMELINES ARE CLEAR

Having clear timelines helps you to work out what needs to happen, by whom, and in what order – and whether this is achievable. When you're establishing your timeline, be aware that community arts projects need time to:

- build relationships
- find appropriate partnerships
- establish clear project intentions
- develop the project concept.

Taking this time will give you good foundations to deliver the project.

#### **Tips:**

- *Create a thorough timeline. It's a good idea to work backwards on this.*
- *Complete the project properly. Include a wrap up time in the timeline – and make sure that you use it. This is for report writing, sharing information back to the community and partnerships.*

- *Maintain space for the creative process. Don't allow it to get swamped by practicalities.*

### 4. BUDGETS ARE WELL DEVELOPED AND CLOSELY MANAGED

It can be tempting to rush into a project and hope that the resources will follow. But not having a proper budget or funds in place will have negative effects. For example, the project might not live up to the community's expectation, or the artist(s) and other staff might end up having to spend hours volunteering resulting in stressed leadership and burnout.

#### **Tips:**

- *Establish a clear budget at the start of the project. Wherever possible, make sure you have the funds in place before you start.*
- *Budgets often need to be updated as a project gets underway. Make sure you keep a close eye on your budget and address any gaps immediately.*
- *Pay people appropriately. Artists often work well beyond what is expected of them and are unfairly expected to volunteer their time.*
- *Don't drop the documentation and evaluation out of the budget to make ends meet. These are the things that will support the next project.*

### 5. THE PROJECT IS COMPLETED WELL

Finishing your project well is one of the most important parts of the project. A project doesn't finish with the performance or exhibition. It finishes when there has been space for the community to reflect on:

- the journey that they have been on
- what they have achieved
- where they would like to go next.

Finishing can include feedback discussions, opportunities for reflections, and celebrations with shared kai and stories.



**Tips:**

- *Let the intentions of the community guide what finishing the project will look like.*
- *Consult with your community about how they would like to end the project.*
- *Take your time getting this part right.*

## MORE INFO

For more resources on project management and communication, see our Community Arts Toolkit > [Tools to develop your project](#)

Is something missing from these tipsheets? Email us: [website@creativenz.govt.nz](mailto:website@creativenz.govt.nz)

