

# CREATE STRONG ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Artists lead or co-lead community arts projects with skill, compassion and artistic flexibility.

An authentic and high-quality creative process will produce the strongest artistic results which will impact on other social, health and education outcomes.

Quality arts processes consider:

- the community's needs
- the community's skill levels
- which formats and processes will help express a community's identity and important issues
- what's possible within the resources and time available
- how to present the work in a cohesive way which maximises the success for the participants
- how to maintain the work if it is a permanent or semi-permanent feature.

"An artist will encourage and challenge people to explore new ways of thinking, feeling, doing and being and can often open up social structures and perceptions...Using a professional artist will bring creativity, experience and artistic merit to the project." – ['Making art with communities – a work guide'](#) (Creative Victoria)

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROJECT THAT HAS STRONG ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP

### I. ARTISTS ARE SKILLED IN THEIR AREA OF PRACTICE

A professional or experienced artist:

- understands their artform and how to apply this in a community project
- has a wide range of artistic skills and tools that they can adapt as needed
- is able to think on their feet to support participants' learning and creativity
- takes responsibility for ensuring the artistic outcomes are high-quality.

**Tip:** Wherever possible involve the artist from the beginning of the project.

### 2. ARTIST(S) HAVE EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING AND FACILITATING GROUPS

The lead artist(s) should have a range of teaching and facilitation skills that they can call upon as situations demand. Using these, they'll weave the creativity of participants into a cohesive artistic result.

**Tip:** Choose an artist you know can:

- steer groups towards their own creativity and purpose
- draw out ideas from the group
- support the group to be self-ruling
- create safe, fun and appropriately challenging environments
- know when to lead and when to let the community lead
- manage the varied needs, skill levels and expectations of participants
- communicate clearly
- plan and pace a project
- celebrate and value the creativity of the participants
- bring compassion, kindness, curiosity and adaptability to the project.

### 3. ARTISTS KNOW THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR ROLE WORKING WITH THAT COMMUNITY

The lead artist(s) should be familiar with the community. They should have the necessary skills to work with the specific community. If they don't, there must be strong support in place from others who know the community, especially where it has specific needs or is vulnerable.

The artist(s) have to be clear about their own role. It's not their job to act as a social worker or therapist to participants (unless, of course, they are a qualified social worker or therapist and have been contracted for these skills).

**Tip:** Put appropriate partners and support services in place. Artists can then refer any issues that are beyond the scope of their role to that support.



## MORE INFO

For more resources on working with artists on community arts projects, 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)