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FutureNow Response to the DCA Arts Leadership Group Strategic Directions Framework 2015-2030

1. Introduction

In the current economic climate, Western Australia faces both challenges and opportunities. In order to deliver the sustained growth referenced in the strategic directions framework for Arts and Culture, we will need to embrace shifting economies and the national innovation agenda. The creative industries are well positioned to benefit from this cultural shift and contribute to its success, and this framework provides a welcome lens through which to focus collective efforts.

The broader benefits of a vibrant arts and cultural offering are well recognised but worth reiterating. The framework highlights WA’s poor performance in global liveability indexes and the broadly supported view that arts and culture are essential in attracting international talent. FutureNow notes that long term education and training strategies aimed at growing a skilled workforce in Australia for a range of innovative economies, will need to be supported by immigration in the short to medium term and with working visa applications in a number of STEM fields on the decline, initiatives likely to increase WA’s liveability should be supported.

1. FutureNow Position

**FutureNow** is the Western Australian Training Council for the Creative and Leisure Industries, working in partnership with Government, industry leaders, registered training organisations and other stakeholders to achieve quality education and training and assessment outcomes. The Department of Training and Workforce Development charges **FutureNow** with the task of preparing workforce development strategies for the creative and leisure industries, and advising it on critical areas of skills shortage and future training needs.

2.1 A skilled workforce

The cultural infrastructure referenced on p17 of the framework includes the people, skills and talents necessary to achieve its aims. As with other factors, a skilled workforce is a necessity and targeted investment in training, education and professional development can ensure the people have the capacity to deliver the plan.

Several overarching targets addressed in the framework will need support in the form of sector training, and several reference skills which have been identified by the sector as areas of broad skills shortage. This has been appropriately recognised in Goal 17: “Identify and invest in appropriate skills training across the sector”. FutureNow has worked with the sector to identify a broad need for digital and information technology training as well as collaboration and partnerships, business development, crowdfunding and other new sources of finance, people management, leadership and business management, amongst several others. A full assessment of the current workforce planning needs of the creative industries can be found in our [2015 Workforce Development Plan](http://www.futurenow.org.au/uploads/2/3/0/4/23042550/futurenow_cultural_and_creative_workforce_development_plan_2015.pdf).[[1]](#footnote-1)

2.2 Identifying skills gaps

In our response to the initial strategic directions discussion paper, FutureNow applauded the intent to model the DCA’s approach on the successful plans delivered by the Department of Sport and Recreation and we would reiterate that here. In particular, the DSR’s project with JGC Group delivered workforce development training to small-to-medium organisations, *enabling them to assess their professional development needs accurately* and ensuring the success of a value add, targeted approach to the funding of further training and professional development. FutureNow would strongly recommend this practical approach to the building of a skilled workforce, especially given current funding constraints.

2.3 The broader value of arts and cultural training and education

FutureNow supports the recent pre-budget submission by the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA with its focus on support for small to medium organisations. We would add that the vocational education space is an essential link in the chain that will deliver a sustainable, thriving sector.

Access to work placements for students and emerging creatives are challenged by the current state of the small to medium ecosystem. Concurrently, the introduction of VET Fee Help has served to reduce the availability and accessibility of arts and cultural vocational education. Albany has recently lost its Visual Arts offering from the Great Southern Institute of Technology and the 2014 closure of Polytechnic West’s Midland studios and visual arts qualifications was lamented owing to its position as a hub for the hills arts community.

Arts and cultural education and training, if accessible, supports social and cultural inclusion and has a place in enhancing a number of stated goals of the framework including broadening our understanding of aboriginal culture and heritage and deepening community engagement in the arts and making.

FutureNow research supports the framework’s assertion that regional centres need to attract (and retain) skilled and talented people and in this area also, access to vocational training supports accessibility and sector sustainability. Regional artists need investment and targeted programs to develop capacity – including residencies and exchanges. The work placements associated with vocational qualifications provide another avenue into sector exposure and are well utilised where accessible.

Support for the entire ecosystem will be necessary to create a thriving self-sustaining sector and to meet the goals of the framework and this must necessarily include the training and educational sphere. FutureNow recommends encompassing clear strategic goals within the framework to support and promote the availability of learning opportunities across the community and creative industries workforce.

2.4 Barriers to access

Against a backdrop of rising fees for university and vocational arts and cultural education and training, access to professional development for the existing workforce is equally constrained. FutureNow research indicates time pressure as the leading barrier to accessing training for arts and cultural organisations, in particular small to mediums. A recent report by the Productivity Commission identified the Arts & Recreation industries as the most productive in Australia.[[2]](#footnote-2) This statistic may be viewed in a positive light but also points to the overly long, unpaid hours much of the sector commits to in order to achieve its goals. Cost and distance also prevent institutions and individual practitioners from accessing appropriate training.

In planning to achieve the goals set out in this framework, a clear strategy should be put in place to assist the sector in overcoming these barriers in order to access appropriate skills development.

3.0 The Chamber of Arts and Culture WA Pre-Budget Submission 2016-17

The Chamber’s recent pre-budget submission for the financial year 2016-17 seeks a continued investment in projects offering a sound return on investment and pursues an arrest to declining government investment overall. FutureNow supports this position and in particular the request to invest $2m ‘pump priming the small to medium sector’.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The capacity of the creative industries to contribute to the delivery of new economies for WA will be supported by sound investment in people. As addressed in the Chamber’s submission;

Capacity building and building human capital is a critical aspect in building a vibrant creative State. Lack of investment in people, training and systems in the arts sector is constraining the ability of the arts sector to thrive. The capacity of the Small to Medium sector is being hampered by the lack of professional development opportunities for those who provide the support framework for the sustainable creation and presentation of arts and culture.

4.0 Conclusion

FutureNow is working closely with the national body responsible for developing vocational qualifications in the creative industries to ensure they meet the needs of the WA sector and with WA creative industries to promote the importance of capacity building and investment in people. We appreciate this opportunity to contribute to the long term planning of the sector and look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Culture and the Arts in delivering this vision for the sector.

Ensuring the delivery of a vibrant, world-class arts and cultural offering for WA, as targeted to 2030 in the framework, will require strategic investment in capacity building for the state’s institutions and individual practitioners. WA hosts a tremendously dedicated and talented sector and with careful planning, targeted investment will go a long way to achieving the goals set out in this framework. FutureNow recommends that greater and more explicit articulation of a strategy to develop the creative workforce be incorporated into the framework in order to support appropriate action and investment targeted towards capacity building. A skilled creative workforce will form the core of the successful delivery of the vibrant, world-class arts and cultural offer for WA that this framework seeks to achieve.

1. <http://www.futurenow.org.au/uploads/2/3/0/4/23042550/futurenow_cultural_and_creative_workforce_development_plan_2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/productivity-update/pc-productivity-update-2015/productivity-update-2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.cacwa.org.au/documents/item/416> Accessed 11.12.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)