

COVID-19 and Beyond NFP Recovery Collaboration Project

Final report on innovation in the arts sector during COVID-19 and beyond

26 March 2021

Introduction

Background to our work

The COVID-19 and Beyond NFP Recovery Collaboration Project (project) was established by the Sidney Myer Fund, the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation and Gandel Philanthropy (“The Foundations”). The purpose of this collaboration project is to help the Foundations:

- better understand the innovative ways NFPs in the social sector are responding to the pandemic, and
- identify opportunities to support organisations retool and re-equip to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The outcomes of this project will help inform future grant-making decisions by the individual Foundations.

To undertake this project, The Foundations commissioned dandolopartners (dandolo) as an external partner to conduct research into innovation in service delivery in the social and arts sectors. To do so, dandolo consulted widely across both sectors with not-for-profits (NFPs), social enterprises, peak bodies, and sector experts. We conducted consultations via workshops, surveys and one-way video interviews. In these consultations, we sought to determine:

- the specific challenges COVID-19 posed to organisations
- how organisations responded to these challenges, with a focus on particularly innovative responses, and
- what the sector needs to build innovative capabilities going forward.

Based on our findings, we produced three reports – one focusing on each of the sectors, and a third report covering both. This report presents our findings for the **arts** sector. It details how COVID-19 affected the sectors, how organisations responded, what innovation in service delivery during COVID-19 looked like, and how the sectors can foster a culture of – and capabilities in – innovation. It also identifies and briefly explores considerations for the Foundations going forward.

Important points:

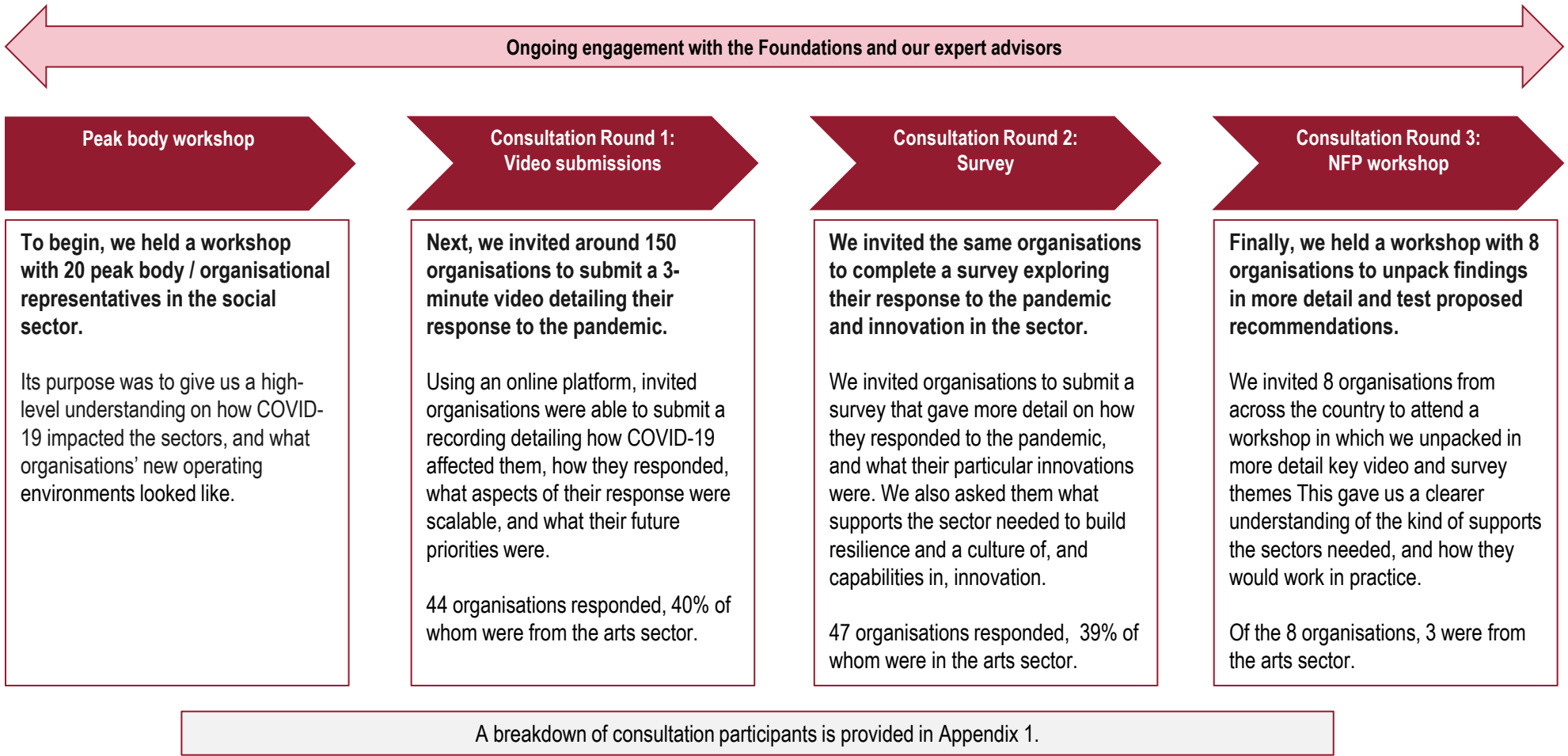
1. For the purposes of this project, we shall refer to NFPs and social enterprises **collectively as “organisations”**
2. It was not feasible in the scope of our work to engage with all organisations in the arts sector. Instead, to best capture a diverse range of organisations and views, we invited **a representative sample of approximately 150 organisations in both sectors to consult with us**. These organisations varied in size, scale, geographic location and mission, and were selected based on:
 - i. nominations by the Foundations, and
 - ii. recommendations by Expert Advisors and Peak Bodies.In total, 57 organisations engaged with us across our fieldwork activities, many on multiple occasions.

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Methodology

22 arts organisations (out of a total of 57) engaged in our work by submitting either a video or a survey response, or by attending our NFP workshop. Throughout the project, we also engaged with our expert advisors and Foundations to inform them of our findings and test our hypotheses with them.



Executive summary

Executive summary

Many organisations countered COVID-19's challenges by increasing their use of digital platforms to reach their audiences, focusing on employee welfare, and collaborating with one another.



COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the sectors, particularly around employee welfare and demand for services.

Survey results showed that COVID-19 had a profound impact on all organisations. Of the challenges organisations faced, the most prominent were:

- employee burnout;
- increased operating costs;
- increased demand for services; and
- inability to continue pre-COVID service-provision in a COVID-safe way.



There were common themes in how organisations responded to COVID-19's challenges, particularly around technology use.

Organisations were forced to adapt to the challenges of 2020 and innovate in order to survive. The most common ways in which organisations responded were:

- innovating their service delivery models;
- collaborating with other organisations;
- strengthening employee welfare initiatives; and
- focusing on the short term.

While many organisations acknowledged 2020 was extremely challenging, it also forced greater innovation and 'thinking outside the box'. Organisations felt they had more 'freedom to fail' than before in trying out new approaches.

To foster innovation, organisations said revised funding models, more collaboration, and foundations leveraging their influence would help. We've identified financial and non-financial levers the Foundations may consider to support innovation.



While some organisations have demonstrated innovative tendencies during COVID-19, there isn't a widespread culture of innovation across the sectors.

Organisations said the three key enablers to foster greater and more sustained innovation were:

- greater collaboration among NFPs;
- revised funding models; and
- Foundations using their influence and experience to advocate for the sectors, mentor organisations, co-ordinate them where appropriate, and identify influential research.



To support innovation in the sectors, The Foundations may wish to make general operating support a priority, incentivise innovation, support purposeful partnerships and collaborations, and use non-financial levers. We recommend the Foundations considering doing this collaboratively.

The most meaningful ways the Foundations can support innovation are by:

- funding general operating costs;
- revising funding models to better incentivise / support innovation;
- encouraging purposeful and well planned collaborations between organisations; and
- using additional non-financial levers.

To achieve maximum impact, we recommend that the Foundations implement the above in partnership with each other, or other funders.

COVID-19: Challenges and responses

Summary of the most common COVID-19 organisational challenges and responses

Organisations struggled to address both increased demand for their services, and emerging challenges in service delivery. They moved quickly to respond by being innovative, partnering with other organisations, focusing on the short-term, and looking out for the welfare of their employees and volunteers.

Most common challenges

Employee / volunteer burnout

Increased operating expenses

Increased pressure on demand for services

Inability to continue pre-COVID service-provision in a COVID-safe way

Most common responses

Innovation in service delivery models

COVID-19 forced nearly all organisations to innovate quickly to find COVID-safe workarounds. Most innovation involved a move to more digital service delivery models. Many organisations moved their services online and / or created new digital content. Organisations also innovated by producing new market offerings in response to emerging consumer / community needs. Going forward, many organisations plan to use a "blended" (mix of both in person and online) service delivery model.

Collaboration with other organisations

Many organisations collaborated or partnered with others to pool resources, coordinate responses and collectively try to tackle COVID-19's many challenges.

Focus on the short-term / the 'now'

Many organisations deprioritised longer-term strategic plans / projects. This gave them the time and resources to focus on addressing the crisis at hand.

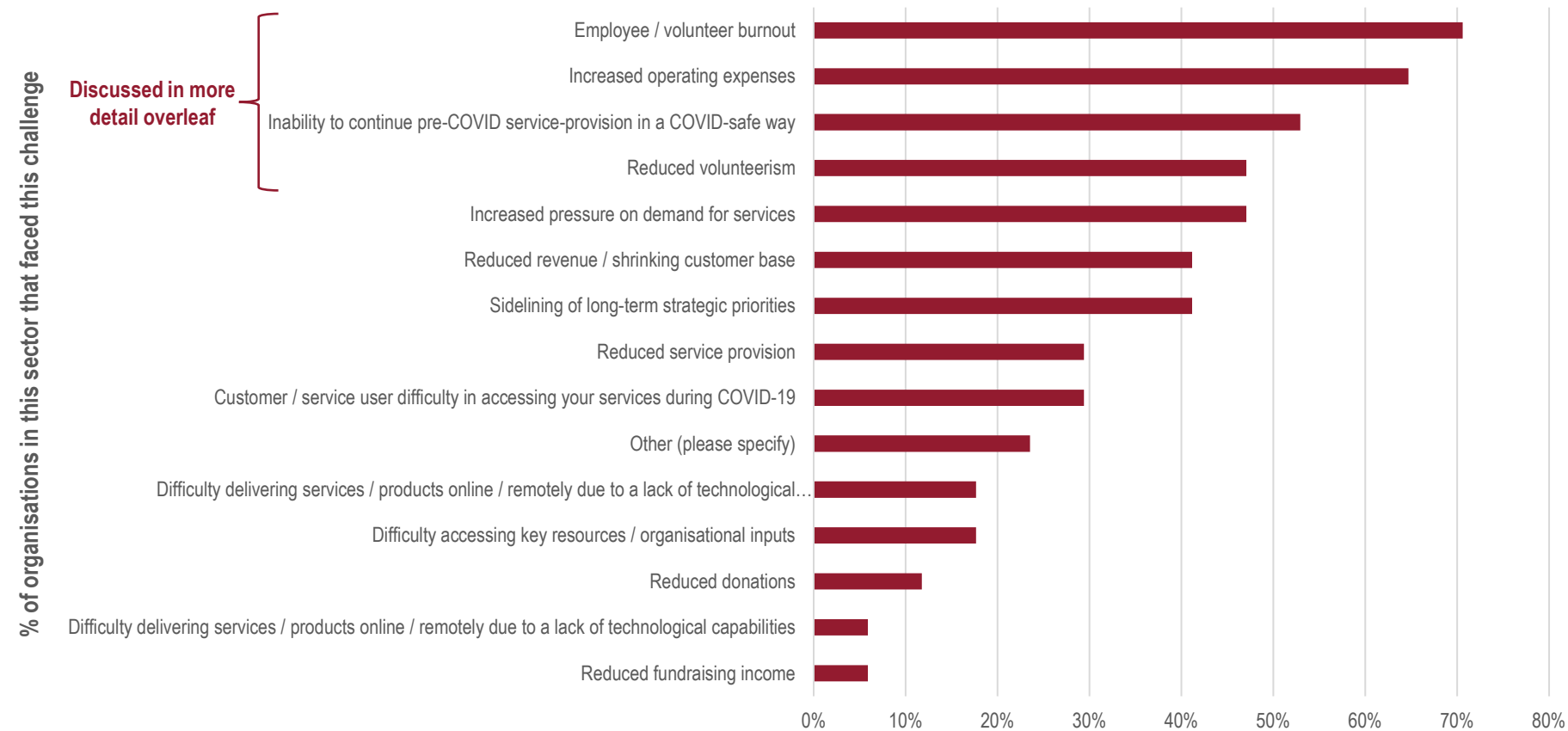
Strengthening employee welfare initiatives

Many organisations provided additional supports to their employees / volunteers during this challenging time.

Challenges posed by COVID-19 (1/2)

Organisations faced many challenges as a result of COVID-19. For arts sector organisations, employee / volunteer burnout was the leading challenge during COVID-19.

The most common challenges arts organisations faced as a result of COVID-19¹



¹ Source: dandolo analysis of 17 survey responses.

Challenges posed by COVID-19 (2/2)

Arts organisations battled employee / volunteer burnout while struggling to manage increased operating costs, social distancing requirements, and demand for their services.

Employee / volunteer burnout

Many organisations' employees and volunteers suffered burnout and mental health challenges during COVID-19 due to increased workloads, new ways of working, heightened anxieties, family pressures, financial worries, social isolation, exasperation of pre-existing mental conditions, ongoing uncertainty, and overall disruption to their lives. This left them more vulnerable to burnout, fatigue, exhaustion and mental stress. This risk was heightened for those working with already-vulnerable cohorts during COVID-19 (aged care residents, disadvantaged youths, those struggling with mental health, those living in poverty, First Nations Peoples, asylum seekers, refugees etc.), as witnessing their increasing hardships caused great distress to employees / volunteers.

Increased operating expenses

Many organisations faced increased operating expenses during COVID-19. Transitioning to COVID-safe operating models (either in-person or online), rapidly establishing remote working practices, and dealing with increased service demand all drove up costs for organisations.

Inability to continue pre-COVID service-provision in a COVID-safe way

Because of lockdowns, forced closures of non-essential travel, and social distancing requirements, many arts organisations couldn't deliver their services. They were either unable to have customers at all, or didn't have the physical space to ensure patrons could safely socially distance.

"We had a complete loss of income overnight."

Increased pressure on demand for services

Some organisations, faced increased demand for their services during COVID-19. They turned to the arts during lockdowns and reduced social contact to enjoy it, feel part of a community, feel less alone, and support the sector. Organisations met this demand by putting their performances / shows online where possible. This led to the emergence of new market niches, such as those in regional / remote areas.

It is worth noting that while many organisations acknowledged 2020 was extremely challenging, it also encouraged greater innovation and 'thinking outside the box'. Organisations felt they had more 'freedom to fail' than before in trying out new approaches.

How organisations responded to these challenges

Arts organisations largely responded by innovatively using technology and digital platforms to operate in line with public health orders and social distancing requirements. Many moved their services online and collaborated with other organisations.

Innovation in service delivery models*

Moving services / content online

Many organisations moved from in-person delivery to online delivery.

- The **Arts Wellbeing Collective** moved all its in-person workshops online.
- **Music NT** videoed local musicians delivering training on how to produce music at home.
- **Castlemaine State Festival** expanded and created digital engagement and education programs for the public, especially geared at school-aged children.
- Many organisations held online fundraising events, such as 'Melbourne Cup Nights'.

Finding new COVID-safe ways to perform

Many organisations in the arts sector found new ways to showcase artistic talent.

- In Shepparton, local artists organised a 'drive-by' socially-distanced garage concert to generate revenue for musicians and to perform for the community.
- **ACE Open** moved its physical exhibitions moved online.
- **Adelaide Fringe Festival** is using "digital balconies" for its 2021 festival, allowing individuals at home to view live in-person performances.
- **West Australian Opera** offered 15 minute standing performances for audiences.

Collaboration with other organisations

2020 saw increased collaboration as many organisations galvanised to overcome shared challenges. Organisations partnered with one another, governments, philanthropists and sectoral bodies to try counter COVID-19's challenges synergistically through shared resources, risks, and expertise. Examples of this are:

- **West Australian Opera** partnered with the City of Perth to develop 'Cooking with Opera', which supported both the Opera Centre and local restaurants.
- **Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)** partnered with overseas performance organisations in Singapore and Berlin to present a bespoke digital online performance for audiences.
- **Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)** commissioned 67 Australian composers who had reduced work due to COVID-19 to write pieces of work for their students.

Focus on the short-term / the 'now'

Many organisations deprioritised longer-term strategic plans / projects to focus on addressing the crisis at hand. For example:

- **The Arts Wellbeing Collective** fast-tracked initiatives that would provide the most meaningful support to the sectors.

Organisations said innovation will continue to be a big priority for them going forward. Many intend to use a **blended delivery model**, which will see them integrate new innovations and digital approaches into their previous operating model.

*Please note that the organisations listed above are an indicative sample of a much larger number of organisations who demonstrated innovative responses. Due to the large array and volume of responses, it was not possible to list every organisation's response. However, these responses have very much informed other aspects of our report. For detailed case studies of some organisations, please refer to Appendix 2.

Looking forward

What the sectors say they need to foster sustained innovation

Organisations said greater collaboration, revised funding models, and philanthropic organisations expanding advocacy and co-ordination work would boost innovation in the sector.

Based on our survey insights and workshop findings, the most-requested supports by organisations to foster sustained innovation were:



Greater collaboration



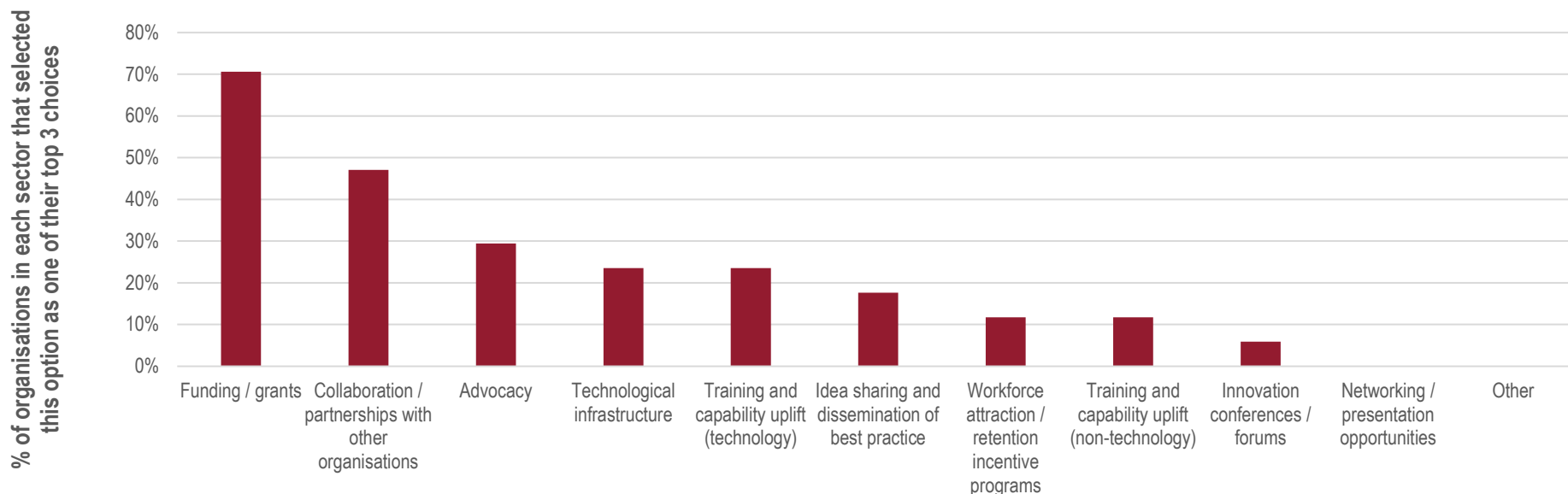
Revised funding models



Leveraging Foundation influence

In our NFP workshop, organisations said that not just more funding, but *revised funding models*, would enable greater innovation. They also commented that philanthropic organisations leveraging their influence and power for advocacy and co-ordinating purposes would foster innovation in the sectors.

Survey respondents' views on what supports / activities would foster greater and more sustained innovation in the arts sector¹



¹ Source: dandolo analysis of 18 survey responses.



Greater collaboration

Organisations said greater collaboration with other organisations, governments, peak bodies and for-profit companies would foster innovation and have synergetic benefits.

Organisations are keen to collaborate more, but face barriers doing so.

Organisations often cannot afford the initial upfront investment required for collaboration

Collaboration requires an initial investment of time, energy and money. Many organisations already have lean budgets and stretched resources trying to support their communities. They often don't have resources left over to cover upfront collaboration costs.

Collaboration requires a long-term commitment, but organisations are generally focused on the short-term

Building effective partnerships and collaborative practices takes time, as organisations adjust to working with each other. However, many organisations don't have the capacity to think beyond the immediate future due to the reactive nature of their work, diverse and ever-changing client needs, and uncertain cash flows.

Organisations lack the necessary skillset for collaboration

Some organisations said they struggle to allocate resources for collaboration, identify appropriate collaboration opportunities, source and approach suitable collaboration partners (particularly for-profit companies), and figure out what effective collaboration looks like.

Research can be complex, contradictory and overwhelming

Organisations said that there is so much research on collaboration that they often do not know where to begin or which source to trust.

Organisations said more funding, capability uplift and being matched with suitable organisations would make innovation much easier.

Provide specific funding for collaborative projects

Organisations said they would be incentivised to identify and pursue collaborative opportunities if there were specific funds dedicated to innovative collaborative ideas. These funds would entice and enable organisations that are currently unable to cover upfront costs to pursue it in the future.

Upskill organisations in collaborative skillsets

Organisations said they would benefit from training and guidance on collaboration. Specifically, they said training on how to strategically plan for collaboration, identify and approach potential partners, decide on a suitable collaboration, and negotiate and manage collaborative projects effectively would be most useful.

Match suitable organisations

Organisations said a matching service, where they were paired with suitable potential partners, would enable greater collaboration.



Revised funding models (1/2)

Organisations found programmatic funding constrained their ability to innovate. They said more long-term funding with less defined parameters would boost innovation – i.e. funding for project ‘frames’ with flexibility for emerging KPIs; for operational costs; for exploring innovative ideas; and for capacity building.

Current funding models allow organisations to implement new programs that they otherwise mightn't have been able to. However, they're not quite suited to fostering ongoing innovation.

Philanthropic funding tends to be programmatic. This allows for innovations, but only incremental ones

There is always an opportunity to be innovative in implementing a new program. However, innovation is not the core focus in implementation – it is more of a ‘byproduct’ or additional benefit. This means innovations tend to be incremental.

Organisations said they needed more funding for operational costs, capacity building and exploring innovative ideas

Many organisations had a clear appetite for innovation, but just didn't have the time, space or resources to pursue it. Others wanted to be innovative but lacked a well-defined idea. Organisations said that without having the ‘thinking space’ and skills to be innovative, and financial safety nets to experiment with new approaches, they were constrained in their ability to be innovative.

Being accountable to their application for funding can constrain organisations' ability to be pursue new innovations

When granted funding for a specific project, organisations must usually deliver what they said they would in their original grant application. While this serves an important purpose in ensuring organisations use funds as intended, it means they cannot ‘change tack’ if they uncover new and better ways of doing things, or potential opportunities to explore. Some organisations said they have had to ignore opportunities in the past, as they couldn't use allocated funding to explore them.

Organisations said that access to funding to operational funding, funding for idea frames, and additional funding to pursue emerging innovative opportunities would better support innovation.

Provide operational funding to organisations

Funding standalone projects is beneficial – but not sufficient – to solve entrenched societal problems. Organisations asked for operational funding (i.e. funding for core / backbone activities) to support indirect costs and raise their organisation's innovative capabilities across the board.

Fund an idea frame, not a specific project

Organisations said moving from funding projects with pre-defined objectives to funding a project ‘frame’ and allowing KPIs to emerge over time would really foster innovation. This is because it would give them more breathing space and autonomy to ‘pivot’ towards new opportunities or try out new innovative approaches that emerged in implementation. In this instance, funders would commit funds to organisations who could:

- articulate a broad vision of what (but not how) their proposed project would achieve, and
- demonstrate that it fit cohesively into a robust strategic plan.

Build contingency funding into funding models

Organisations said that if current programmatic funding models remain in place, ‘contingency funds’ would greatly encourage innovation. Contingency funds are standalone and can be granted to an organisation that identifies an innovative opportunity outside the scope of their original funding agreement. This would encourage organisations to explore opportunities as they arose, and potentially pursue them.



Revised funding models (2/2)

Organisations said other innovation constraints were lengthy grant processing times and a lack capital-works funding. To reduce the barriers to innovation, they called for more proportionate compliance and acquittals processes and specific innovation funds with fast turnaround times.

Lengthy grant application processing times and the absence of funding for capital works act as barriers to innovation for many organisations.

Organisations said that access to funding for capital upgrades - and to funds with rapid turnaround times – would also boost innovation.

Lengthy grant application processing times prevent many organisations from pursuing time-bound opportunities

Organisations often wait many months from submitting their grant application to receiving the funds in their bank accounts. This time lag means sometimes organisations miss the chance to 'strike while the iron is hot' and pursue new innovations, as by the time they receive funding, the window of opportunity has passed.

Establish innovation funds with short turnaround times

Establishing ring-fenced innovation funds with rapid-turnaround times would allow organisations to pursue innovative opportunities in real-life. These funds would be open to all organisations who identified a really innovative opportunity, but could only pursue it if they got immediate funding. It was access to this type of funding that allowed the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall* to establish itself in just 10 days in response to theatre closures in March 2020.

Organisations need funding for capital upgrades

Current funding models don't tend to provide for capital works. A key enabler for innovation is access to proper technological infrastructure, especially with the increase in digital delivery spurred on by COVID-19. Many organisations have the ambition or innovative ideas, but not the necessary infrastructure, to pursue these. Without an ability to fund these technological upgrades, many organisations simply don't have the supporting infrastructure needed to implement innovations.

Consider funding for capital upgrades

Providing funding for capital upgrades would enable many organisations to go from having innovative ideas, to having the infrastructure to implement them. Funders could consider providing grants for specific capital works to organisations who:

- had adequately scoped proposed works, including cost and timeframe for delivery;
- had estimated and could articulate the expected benefits (both tangible and intangible, long and short term) of the capital upgrades; and
- could demonstrate how the works aligned with their organisational vision and fit into their strategic plans.

* Please refer to Appendix 2 for a case study on this organisation's innovative response to the pandemic.



Leveraging foundation influence

Organisations said philanthropic bodies could boost innovation by advocating for the sectors, mentoring and upskilling organisations, matching potential collaboration partners, and using common grant application forms and contracts.

Organisations want to be innovative, but need a supporting force behind them

Many organisations have the appetite – but not the 'know how' to innovate

To many organisations, innovation is daunting. They're not sure how to approach it, how to know if it's working, and when to try a different tack.

Organisations find the administrative burden of grant applications, contracting, and compliance and acquittals processes reduces their ability to be innovative

Governments, funding bodies and philanthropists use different processes, platforms and requirements for grant applications, monitoring and acquittals. Organisations say this is a drain on their already-scarce time and resources, meaning there is less left over for innovation.

Organisations feel the value of their sectors isn't recognised

Some organisations feel their overall value (especially their benefit to society) isn't recognised by those outside the sector. This means for-profits, government and other organisations are less likely to commission them to do work or approach them for partnerships.

"We spend weeks every year just filling out application forms, saying largely the same thing but in different ways."
- Arts sector organisation

Funding organisations can foster innovation in the sectors by leveraging their influence and 'setting an example' of working together

Provide mentors and guidance on how to be innovative

Organisations said access to mentors and expertise on how to pursue innovation effectively would really help them be more innovative and make it less daunting and risky for them.

Use common application and contracting processes

Organisations called for funders to use a single common application and contracting platform which stored prior submissions and contracts (saving organisations from saving to resubmit in the future). This would free up many hours of staff time for more value adding activities.

Reduce the burden of compliance and acquittal process

Similarly, organisations said that standardised and proportionate compliance and acquittal processes would free up valuable organisational time by reducing the administrative burden.

Advocacy

Organisations said they need greater advocacy on their behalf from governments, senior policy makers and philanthropic foundations. They want this advocacy to not only highlight the valuable work that they do, but also advocate for greater procurement from social enterprises.

Centralise best practice research

Organisations said access to a single, simple 'source of truth' on how best to approach innovation would be extremely useful.

Where to from here?

Funding considerations for the Foundations

To best support sustained innovation in the sectors, philanthropy can consider focusing on funding operating costs, incentivising innovation, and encouraging meaningful collaborations. To achieve maximum impact, we recommend Foundations implement these actions collaboratively.

The most impactful actions Foundations can take to support innovation in the sectors are to:

1. Make general operational financial support a priority in grantmaking



Use 'an earned autonomy' to allocate some / all of a grant's value to an organisation's operational costs

Allow organisations you trust and have worked with before to spend a certain proportion / full proportion of the grant value on core business / backbone activities. This supports their sustainability and growth. In return for greater flexibility, NFPs would need to demonstrate a well-planned strategy, vision, and financial management capabilities.

2. Redesign funding structures to more explicitly encourage innovation



Fund an idea frame, not a specific project

Commit to funding the 'frame' of an idea, and allow KPIs to emerge over time. This will allow organisations the time and space to 'think outside the box' and pursue innovative opportunities.



Build contingency funding into funding models

Set aside funds that can be released to a particular fundee(s) if they recognise a compelling innovative opportunity outside the scope of their original agreement with you. This ensures they won't "miss" an unexpected innovative opportunity.



Require a certain proportion of all grants be spent on a post-project evaluation

Require an end of project evaluation using a certain proportion of funding. This prompts organisations to reflect on what worked well / didn't work well, where there were opportunities to improve, and how these lessons can be brought into future projects.

3. Encourage, enable and support purposeful and well-planned collaborations between organisations



Commit to funding organisations that have demonstrably 'thought their collaboration through'

Support organisations that have demonstrated a clear commitment to and plan for collaboration, and have approached it with rigour and purpose. Organisations who fit this profile will have identified collaboration opportunities that align with their values and goals, can articulate a clear purpose for and expected benefit from this collaboration, and have thought the logistics of it through. They will also have built collaboration into their strategic plan. You may wish to support these organisations financially, through endorsement / promotion, or other appropriate means.

To achieve maximum impact, we recommend that Foundations implement these actions collaboratively, including with other funders



Working as a group will to collectively brainstorm how best to support innovation will allow you to realise synergetic benefits, reduce overlap and use resources most efficiently. Some examples of the ways in which you may wish to consider working together include:

- Collectively funding operational costs and build it into grant-making.
- Establishing a collective fund for idea frames with emerging KPIs, or contingency funds for emerging innovative ideas.
- Working with other organisations to redesign funding models to incorporate contingency funding.
- Collectively fund collaborations that are considered, well-designed and support innovation.
- Work with other funders to make meaningful post-project evaluations a standard element of all grants.

Non-funding options for the Foundations

In addition to the three core category actions, there are some other complementary yet standalone actions you may wish to consider to support greater innovation.



Use common application, contracting and acquittals processes and systems

Work with other funders to streamline / standardise application processes and forms, contract structures, and develop standard acquittals processes so they are proportionate to the size of the grant. Consider using a single common application and contracting platform where organisations' submissions could be stored in a databank. This would greatly free up more time for organisations to spend helping the communities they serve.



Create a scalable mentoring program

Create a scalable mentorship program that matches experienced CEOs / industry figures with newer / less experienced organisations to guide them through their innovation journey. [Westpac Foundation](#) and [Kilfinan Australia](#) currently offer similar programs to NFPs and social enterprises.



Centralise all research and evaluation findings in one place

Work with other foundations / funders to centralise evaluation findings and the most influential research on does and doesn't work in innovation. This would help organisations approach to innovation and help ensure it's informed by best practice.



Advocate for – and pursue – greater social procurement practices

Commit to using social procurement practices, such as contracting social enterprises, and encourage others to do the same.



Consider sharing this report to disseminate research

Consider publishing this report – or a version of it – to help organisations learn from one another's innovations, and identify suitable collaborative partners. To do so, you may wish to share this report with Philanthropy Australia, A New Approach, and on your centralised research platforms.



Do a pulse check in 18 months

Check in with organisations in approximately 1.5 years' time, to see how they have adjusted to, and are operating in, the 'new normal', how they have innovated, and if / how their current needs have evolved over time.

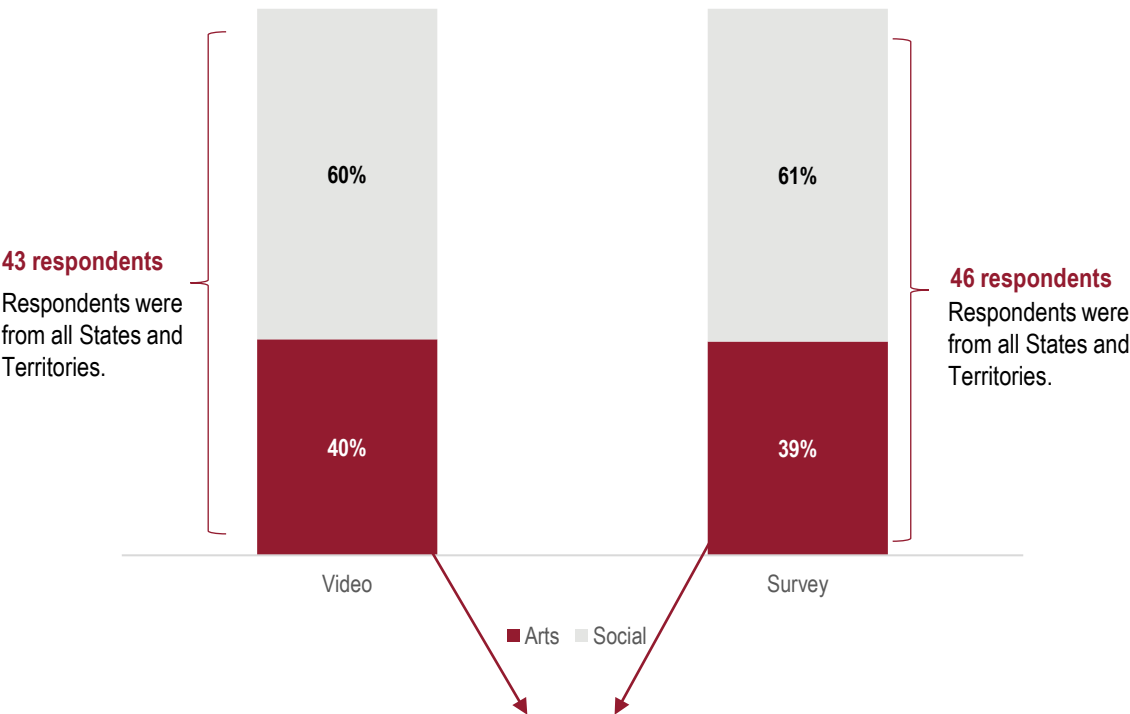
Appendices

Appendix 1: Breakdown of consultation participants

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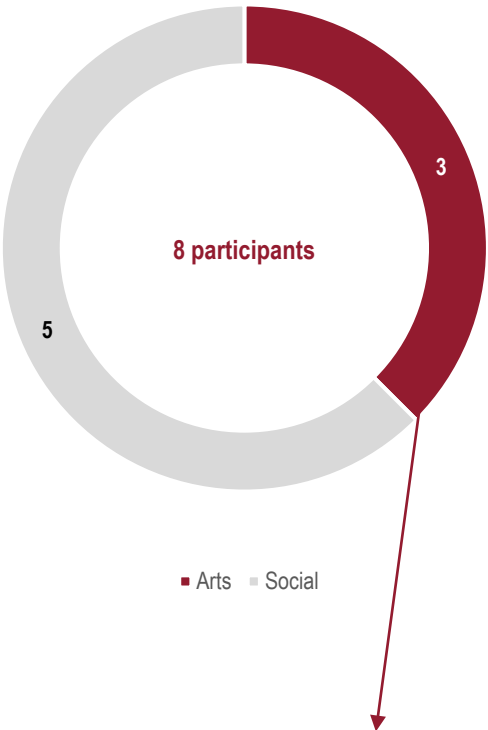
22 arts organisations engaged with us across all three fieldwork activities. 59% of these engaged in both the survey and video submission process. One third of our workshop attendees were arts sector organisations.

Breakdown of participants in video submission and survey process by sector



- Participation by **arts** sector organisations:
- 22 arts organisations participated in either our survey or video submission process.
 - Of this 22, 59% (13) participated in both.
- Participation by **both** arts and social sector organisations:
- Overall, 57 arts and social organisations participated in either our survey or video submission process.
 - Of this 57, 56% (32) participated in both.

Breakdown of workshop participants by sector



The 3 participating arts organisation were from Victoria and the Northern Territory

Appendix 2: Case studies of innovative organisations

Case Studies (1/3)

Melbourne Digital Concert Hall

Created a digital concert hall in 10 days in response to COVID-19

Introduction

Melbourne Digital Concert Hall (MDCH) did not exist prior to the pandemic. They rapidly responded to COVID-19's lockdowns by establishing the MDCH on 17th March 2020 to support mental health and sector sustainability. Nearly all proceeds of live streams went to the artists and in their first broadcast on 27th March, they raised \$18,000 in the first 24 hours.

How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

In past 9 months, they have engaged well over 500 Australian musicians, and generated \$1 million in revenue for the sector. They did so by:

- Live-streaming 230 concerts and events into homes.
- Hosting multiple world premieres.
- Hosting multiple festivals.
- Offering subscription programs.
- Forging partnerships with venues and ensembles nationally to support their post-COVID recovery.

Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ They rapidly responded to an emerging and uncertain problem with an innovative idea.
- ✓ Got themselves 'live' very quickly – they went from establishment to live events in 10 days.
- ✓ They effectively collaborated with many partners.

Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

West Australian Opera

Created a comprehensive 'Ghost Light Strategy' in response to COVID-19

Introduction

West Australian Opera was established in 1967 and is Western Australia's only full-time, professional opera company. It presents operas from the mainstream operatic repertoire and is involved in the commissioning and development of new work.

How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

They rapidly responded to COVID-19 in March by rolling out an innovative initiative and accompanying action plan. Some of the content included:

- Arias filmed the day of shutdown.
- Online digital content (podcasts, Spotify series, etc.).
- Cooking with Opera (partnership with City of Perth to support local restaurants).
- 'Standing Room Only' (short 15-minute standing performances with rotating audiences).
- 'Quick Response Fund' (support for singers).
- Virtual singing classes.
- Commissioned new work in Noongar language.

Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ It was a rapid, robust, and documented response.
- ✓ They were innovative in identifying collaboration partners.
- ✓ They worked around social distancing requirements.
- ✓ It created new revenue streams.

Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

Case Studies (2/3)

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA)

Developed innovative new ways to continue engaging overseas / interstate audiences.

Introduction

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) is a contemporary visual and performance arts venue located Perth, WA. It is both a producing and presenting institution that runs a year round program of changing exhibitions, seasons in contemporary dance, theatre and performance and a range of interdisciplinary projects. When COVID-19 struck, it meant artists and audiences couldn't travel to and from Perth (pre-COVID 35% of their audiences come from overseas or interstate), and they were no longer able to provide professional development programs to all artists.

How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

To overcome these challenges, they developed a suite of digital engagement activities including professional development programs, online exhibitions and performance, real time digital experiences, and mixed live performance with digital components. Examples include:

- Partnering with Dance Nucleus (Singapore) and Something Great – Performing Arts Collection (Berlin) to present a bespoke digital performance by Choreographer / Director Daniel Kok and visual artist Miho Shimuzu for an online audience through Zoom.
- Establish Shifting Terrain: Online Professional Development Forum for Emerging Artists
- Developing artist self-recorded interviews, virtual exhibition walkthroughs and learning activities

Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ Found a way to continue engaging a large segment of their consumer base (interstate / overseas)
- ✓ Saw an opportunity to collaborate with overseas organisations to augment their offerings.

Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

Arts Centre Melbourne

Moved all content online in response to lockdown, and delivered COVID-safe training to external venues

Introduction

Arts Centre Melbourne (ACM) is a performing arts centre consisting of a complex of theatres and concert halls in the Melbourne Arts Precinct. Lockdowns in Melbourne forced the centre to close, leading to a loss of income, reduced ability to showcase artistic wares, and loss of employment for a large cohort of casual staff. The prolonged closure of venues lead ACM to increase its digital capability.

How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

To overcome venue closures, ACM:

- Producing significantly more performance content for streaming on online platforms, delivering creative mentoring, technical training and other programs online
- Developing more online resources for the Arts Wellbeing Collective to support mental health and wellbeing during a challenging time for the industry.
- Extended their existing leadership role in technical training to incorporate COVID Safe venue training for suburban and regional venues
- Developed a Response and Recovery Plan which encouraged stronger cross organisational collaboration, elevation of emerging leaders to positions of greater responsibility and development of greater agility.

Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ Moved all content online to overcome strict lockdown restrictions.
- ✓ Expanded technical training to address new market needs

Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

Case Studies (3/3)

Australian National Academy of Music - ANAM

Identified evolving mental health needs of their students, and provided work to composers struggling during COVID-19

Introduction

The Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) is a classical music performance training facility in Melbourne, Victoria. It is a national organisation with students from across Australia and New Zealand. When COVID-19 struck, they had two challenges: managing the disruption to students' learning, and supporting the mental health of students.

How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

To overcome these challenges, they:

- Moved all their training online.
- Deployed a staff member to provide extensive counselling and support to students. They were conscious that many students were high performers and already under stress prior to the pandemic. Supporting students' mental health was a core priority for the organisation.
- Enlisted 96 leading performers globally to teach their program online.
- Commissioned 67 Australian composers to write an individual piece of work for each student to perform post-COVID, as something to look forward to.

Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ Focused not just on moving their educational services, but meeting the evolving mental health needs of their students.
- ✓ Seized the opportunity to approach international performers and ask them to teach the program.
- ✓ Provided employment to 67 composers while offering optimism to 67 students.

Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

Thank you

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