



Accessible Arts Sector Consultation 2017

Introduction

Accessible Arts undertook a major sector consultation during June and July 2017. We did this to gain a clear picture of how we are currently perceived, how our services are utilised, the needs of our sector and how we can best support our stakeholders.

With a relatively new staff team in place and being faced with a changing funding landscape due to the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), this was a timely moment in our organisation's history to undertake this important research.

Methodology

Our research methods consisted of an online survey and detailed interviews. The survey, which received 154 responses over 18 days, was aimed at artists with disability, arts workers and other individuals and organisations who have interacted with Accessible Arts during the past five years.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 stakeholders during June and July. These included artists, representatives from arts organisations and funding bodies, arts workers in regional areas and representatives from the social services sector. They were encouraged to speak their mind freely with the assurance that their words would be presented anonymously in the report.

39% of respondents were people with disability, compared to 58.5% who were not and 2.6% who preferred not to say.

Key findings

Overview

The research highlighted the significant role Accessible Arts has played in the arts and disability sector over the years, while acknowledging challenges and areas of improvement to ensure the organisation remains relevant. The points below are a quick snapshot of some of the findings which emerged from our research.

The sector

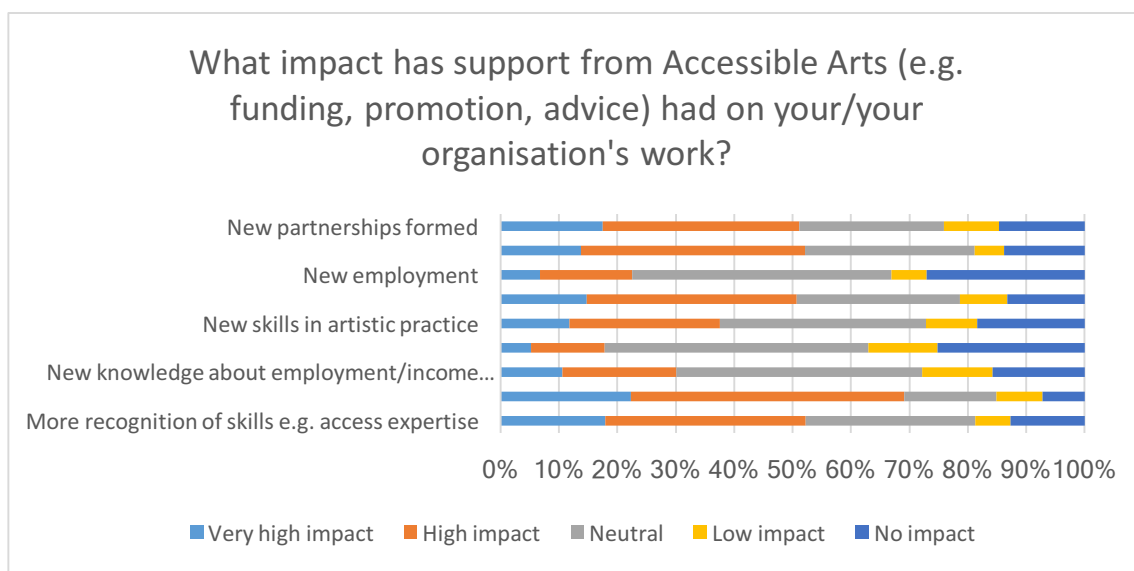
- Accessible Arts enjoys high levels of support in the sector, with around 80% of survey participants likely and very likely to recommend the organisation to their peers.



- The majority of interviewees also recognised the significant role that Accessible Arts has played in the development of the sector.
- However, some interviewees perceived a change in the relationship between Accessible Arts and the arts and disability sector compare to several years ago, resulting in inconsistencies in providing services and advocacy.

Providing support

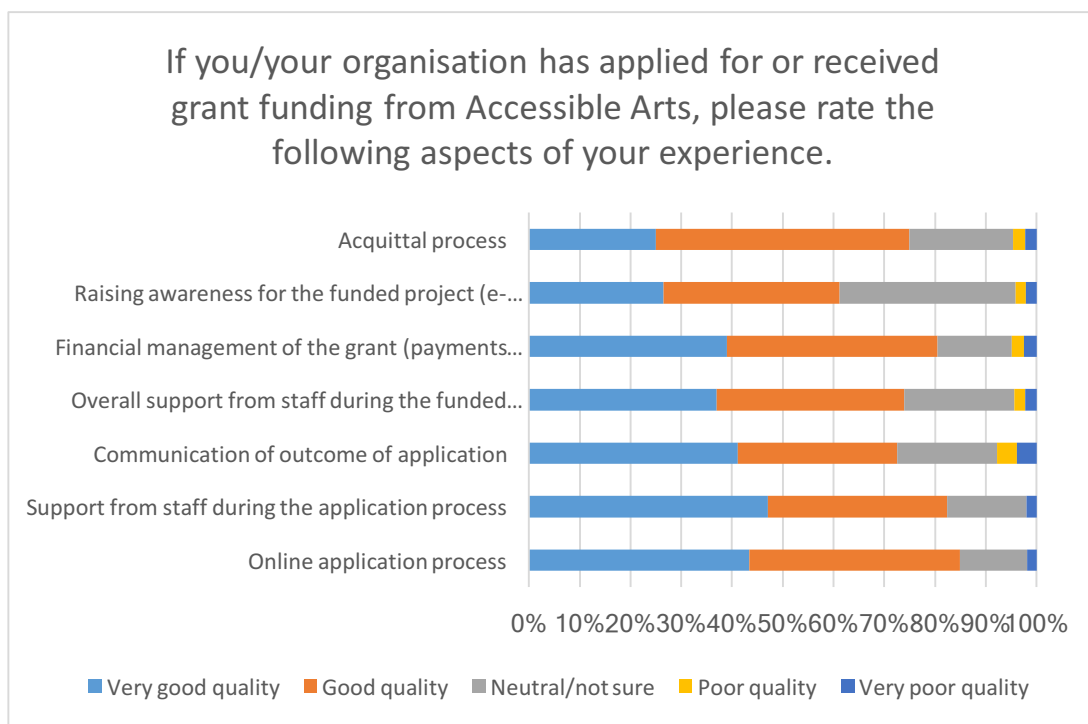
- When asked about the impact of support from Accessible Arts, survey responses were varied. While 'new knowledge about the arts and disability sector' was rated high at 70% (combined high and very high impact), 'employment opportunities' and 'new skills in business management' were rated the lowest.



- Some respondents expressed confusion about the level of support that Accessible Arts offers. Many arts organisations identified a desire for Accessible Arts to provide both informal consultation (in person or over the phone), as well as formal consultancy over for things like policy and project planning and the development of Disability and Inclusion Action Plans.
- Expertise, training and workshops delivered by team members from Accessible Arts were mentioned as positive experiences.

Programs and initiatives

- The four initiatives that survey respondents identified as most important for the future were: access initiatives (combined score of important / very important - 92%), training (90%), grant funding programs (89%) and Disability Inclusion Action Plan consultancy (87%).
- ‘Development of resources’ and ‘increased grant funding’ received the highest combined ratings (important and very important) when asked how Accessible Arts can effectively help individuals in the future.
- Around 40% of respondents identified as applicants or recipients of Accessible Arts’ funding. The rating of their experiences varied, but an average of 75% rated all elements good or very good quality.

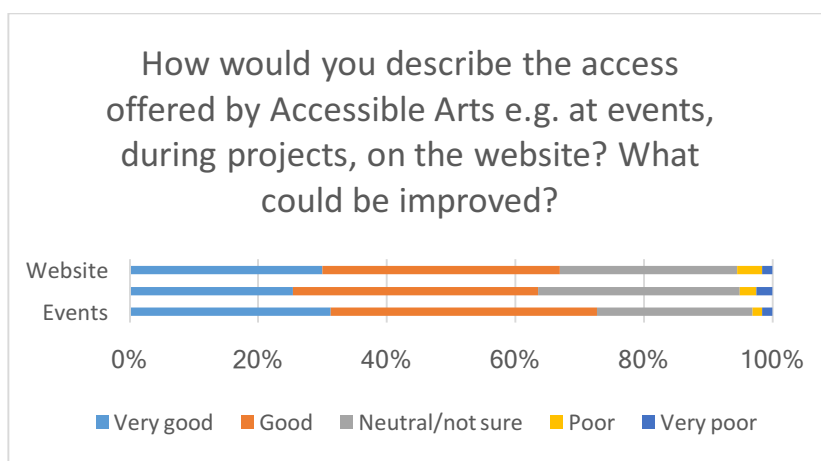


- Successful grant recipients commented that they experienced a very positive relationship with Accessible Arts, with good access to advice and informal consultation and they felt celebrated and valued as individual artists and groups.
- Pathways to employment and skill recognition were among the highest rated positive outcomes for successful grant recipients.

- The Arts Activated conference was considered by the majority of interviewees as very useful for gaining new knowledge about the sector. However, some mentioned that they found the large number of sessions offered overwhelming and that the attendees and presenters could be more diverse.

Accessibility

- The majority of survey respondents 67% rated the quality of access across the Accessible Arts website, projects and events as good or very good.



- However, some cited negative experiences including limited availability when calling by phone, not enough Auslan videos as an alternative to text and the Accessible Arts office being situated far from public transport.
- Artists and arts organisations expressed a desire for Accessible Arts to continue to promote and elevate accessible events in order to build audience sizes and educate new audiences.
- Access to expertise, training and group workshops delivered by team members from Accessible Arts were viewed favourably.

Additional research

Parallel to conducting our own sector consultation, we worked with design agency ThinkPlace to develop a deep understanding of the arts and disability sector in NSW, broader than just Accessible Arts. In consultation with us, their team of researchers interviewed artists with disability and representatives from arts organisations and peak arts organisations in NSW, Western Australia and the ACT. These were open conversations, ethnographic in style and often held in the context of workplaces and studios.



Below is a summary of the key themes and opportunities for the sector identified in their research. We'll use the full findings to ensure that we continue to add value in the arts and disability sector as we develop a sustainable business model for the future.

1. Purpose and connection in making art

Disability is deeply personal, it affects an artist in a variety of ways both positively and negatively. Art provides a sense of purpose both by connecting with fellow artists and exploring new and emerging art forms. How might we foster connectedness between people in the arts and disability sector?

2. Communication and developing a shared understanding of accessibility

One of the biggest barriers for artists with disability is knowing how to communicate their access needs and for arts organisations to understand them. How might we support arts organisations in developing a broader understanding of access?

3. Accessing audiences

Some artists are looking for more support and guidance accessing audiences and prefer disability-led environments to showcase their work. In contrast, some artists do not want disability to influence or impact on how their art is perceived by mainstream audiences. How might we develop and diversify mainstream audiences?

4. Training and professional development

Artists have a deep desire to hone their skills and develop as a professional artist. Some have indicated a desire for disability centric tertiary qualifications as a means to 'legitimise' their practice and the work they do in the sector. How might we play a role in the professional development and accreditation of artists with disability?

5. Mainstream perceptions and barriers facing artists with disability

Artists and organisations all reported that industry perceptions, stigma and rhetoric present major obstacles for the future development of arts and disability. How might we help to remove the stigma surrounding the work of artists with disability?

6. Funding challenges and navigating the NDIS

The introduction of the NDIS has left artists and organisations with disability feeling mostly disempowered and anxious about their future. There is a sense that the funding arrangements are not equitable and that the types of services that are supported by the NDIS are not what they are wanting. How might we assist artists with disability & arts organisations navigate the NDIS?

7. Partnerships and delivering programs



Arts organisations are increasingly looking for new ways to deliver programs in partnerships and that more and more 'going it alone' is proving to be a failing strategy. If Accessible Arts were to focus on delivering programs, how might we do this? And what would it look like?

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey and gave their time to be interviewed. The insights and suggested directions gathered from this research have been incredibly valuable and are helping us to determine our focus as we develop our strategy and programs for the next few years.

We are also forming approaches to address the issues raised through this consultation and look forward to becoming even more relevant and accessible in the future.

We value your feedback at any time, so if you have any comments, concerns or ideas please get in touch.

Morwenna Collett
CEO
Accessible Arts