

Next Level Creative Mentorship Program: 2026 Guidelines

About the Program

The **Next Level Creative Mentorship Program**, run by [Accessible Arts](#) and [Access2Arts](#), will take place across New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA), Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Northern Territory (NT) in 2026. This initiative offers emerging and mid-career performing artists a unique opportunity to:

- Receive \$3,000 in project funding
- Participate in a mentorship hosted by leading performing arts organisations

The program will support 10 artists working in fields such as writing, music, dance, choreography, acting, directing, or producing. Participants will receive professional guidance to develop innovative new projects and gain the skills needed to pitch their ideas to industry professionals, including companies, venues, artistic directors, and producers.

Combining mentorship with hands-on project development, Next Level provides artists with a focused pathway to turn creative ideas into actionable opportunities.

Mentorship Structure

Over five months (May – October 2026), mentors will provide participants with 20 hours of professional guidance to:

- Assess your creative concept
- Develop your concept into a project brief
- Provide advice on drafting a detailed project outline, including budgets, timelines, deliverables, and key contacts.
- Provide guidance regarding potential pitch meeting opportunities with relevant companies, venues, artistic directors and/or producers

Sessions will include both facilitated sessions with your mentor and self-directed tasks. Your mentor will provide a total of 20 hours of support. Scheduling will be coordinated directly between you and your mentor to allow for flexibility, with support available from Accessible Arts and Access2Arts if needed.

As part of the Next Level program are required to attend two training sessions delivered by Accessible Arts:

- **Access Rider Training**
- **Creative Access Training**

You will also attend an online networking session midway through the program. Hosted by Accessible Arts and Access2Arts program coordinators, this session is a chance to connect, collaborate, and swap ideas with fellow mentees.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Reside in New South Wales, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory or Northern Territory
- Identify as being d/Deaf or a person with disability
- Be an emerging or mid-career writer, actor, musician, dancer, choreographer, director and/or producer
- Be over 18 years of age at the time of application
- Have previous experience at any level in the performing arts industry
- Demonstrate a proactive approach to completing the program

There are a limited number of mentorships available in each state and territory.

The allocation is as follows:

- **Australian Capital Territory (ACT):** 1 Mentorship placement
 - **South Australia (SA):** 4 Mentorship placements
 - **New South Wales (NSW):** 4 Mentorship placements
 - **Northern Territory (NT):** 1 Mentorship placement
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Partnering Organisations

Below is a list of our partnering organisations. Take note of their locations and visit their websites to learn more about the work that they do and how it may align with the goals of your project proposal. Mentors within these organisations will be assigned, you will not be able to select your mentor.

While our partner organisations will endeavour to meet participants' access needs, there may be some limitations in certain circumstances. We encourage applicants to reach out with any questions about access requirements before the application deadline.

Bangarra Dance Theatre – Metro Sydney, NSW

Bangarra is a company of professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers. As one of Australia's leading performing arts companies, they share their culture with Communities and audiences across Australia and the world. The company's contemporary dancers draw on 65,000 years of culture, creating powerful works of theatre that incorporate dance, music, poetry, and design. These works tell the stories of Elders, are often created on Country, and returned

to the place they were made. Every year, Bangarra tours a world premiere work across the nation and embarks on an international tour. The company also runs education workshops, programs, and special projects to nurture the next generation of storytellers.

Location: Wharf 4/5, 15 Hickson Rd, Dawes Point NSW 2000

Website: <https://www.bangarra.com.au/>

Bell Shakespeare – Metro Sydney, NSW

Bell Shakespeare is Australia’s national theatre company specialising in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Established by renowned Actor/Director John Bell, what began in a circus tent in Sydney in 1990 has grown into a theatre company with unrivalled reach and impact, delivering mainstage productions and an education and outreach program to every state and territory, ensuring classic theatre experiences are accessible to all Australians.

Location: 1/13A Hickson Rd, Dawes Point NSW 2000

Website: <https://www.bellshakespeare.com.au/>

Monkey Baa – Metro Sydney, NSW

Monkey Baa are a national Australian theatre company that creates extraordinary theatre for young audiences. For over 27 years, they’ve been creating productions that spark imagination, creativity and a lifelong love of the arts. For thousands of young people, a Monkey Baa production is their first experience of live theatre. Monkey Baa tours extensively across Australia and internationally, visiting more than 60 communities each year. Performances take place in major cities, with a strong focus on reaching regional and remote towns. Through partnerships with schools, local organisations, and charities, Monkey Baa works to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to experience the joy of theatre.

Location: The Arts Exchange, Level 4/10 Hickson Road The Rocks NSW 2000

Website: <https://www.monkeybaa.com.au/>

Merrigong Theatre Company – Wollongong, NSW

Merrigong Theatre Company is a not-for-profit company operating the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre (IPAC) and the Wollongong Town Hall. Merrigong is also a vibrant theatre company – producing, presenting and touring exciting contemporary theatre and supporting the development of a wide range of theatre makers. Merrigong presents a diverse annual season of theatre, dance and children’s programming, including work sourced from Australia’s finest performing arts companies, self-produced work, acclaimed international productions, and innovative contemporary work from new companies.

Location: 32 Burelli St, Wollongong NSW 2500

Website: <https://merrigong.com.au/>

PYT Fairfield – Western Sydney, NSW

PYT Fairfield is the only professional theatre company in Western Sydney focused on the development and engagement of local young and emerging artists as core practice. PYT has a reputation as a brave and transformative theatre company who make urgent work that explores the critical issues of our times, challenging the conventions of traditional theatre and responding to the needs and aspirations of the next generation of artists. They do this by creating innovative performance and social artistic experiences in theatre spaces and across diverse urban sites of Fairfield, Western Sydney and beyond, and with a key focus on cultural diversity. From its inception, PYT has been intrinsically engaged with the diverse communities and cultures across western Sydney.

Location: 19 Harris St, Fairfield NSW 2165

Website: <https://pyt.com.au/>

Australian Dance Theatre – Metro Adelaide, SA

Since 1965, Australian Dance Theatre has been at the forefront of contemporary dance, performing both nationally and internationally. As the country’s oldest

contemporary dance company, it has spent nearly 60 years pioneering new works that continuously redefine the artform. The company is deeply committed to presenting works that reflect Australia's diverse voices, landscapes, and histories. At the heart of its mission are collaborative relationships and a strong dedication to community engagement.

Location: The Odeon, 57a Queen Street Norwood 5067 Kaurua Yerta, SA

Website: <https://www.adt.org.au/>

Gravity & Other Myths – Metro Adelaide, SA

Gravity & Other Myths is an Australian circus company pushing the boundaries of contemporary circus. GOM's work utilises an honest approach to performance to create shows with a focus on human connection and acrobatic virtuosity. Formed in 2009 by a group of young Adelaide artists with a passion for circus and physical theatre. The past 12 years have seen GOM steady growth across the arts sector with six critically acclaimed main stage works and global success having toured to 38 countries.

Website: <https://www.gravityandothermyths.com/>

State Theatre Company South Australia – Metro Adelaide

State Theatre Company South Australia is the flagship theatre company of South Australia and is a resident artistic company of the Adelaide Festival Centre. We commission, perform and tour theatrical productions of new and existing, classic and contemporary, Australian and international work. From a rich legacy of visionary theatre makers and landmark theatrical productions, we strive to make, present and promote phenomenal, transformative, and inclusive theatre that enriches South Australian and Australian culture.

Location: Level 1, Fowlers Building, 73-78 North Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000

Website: <https://statetheatrecompany.com.au/>

Patch Theatre – Metro Adelaide, SA

Patch Theatre creates visually captivating performances for 4–8 year olds, exploring how children see the world. Patch Theatre places children at the centre of the performance, promoting imagination, wonder and discovery.

Founded in South Australia in 1972, Patch has produced over 100 unique works and won countless awards. Patch performances have been presented across Australia and the globe, capturing the imaginations of children worldwide.

Each year, Patch provides inspirational, design-rich theatre experiences to over 50,000 children.

Location: 63 King William St, Kent Town SA 5067

Website: <https://www.patchtheatre.org.au/>

Canberra Theatre Centre – Canberra, ACT

Canberra Theatre Centre is Canberra’s premier performing arts venue, providing world class performing arts and entertainment to the people of Canberra and surrounding regions.

The Canberra Theatre Centre supports a diverse selection of entertainment from around the country including theatre, drama, dance, cabaret, circus, comedy, all genres of music, musicals, puppetry and physical theatre. Through the use of The Courtyard Studio, it also provides a performance space for many local theatre companies and performers.

Location: Civic Square, London Cct, Canberra ACT 2601

Website: <https://canberratheatrecentre.com.au/>

Tracks Dance Company – Darwin, NT

Tracks Dance is a highly acclaimed centre of excellence and a hub of expertise in community dance, built on a long history of trusted collaboration within the community. As an innovator, Tracks values and utilises diverse dance practices, creating locally inspired works that advance Australian dance. Located in

Garamilla (Darwin) on Gulumerrdjin (Larrakia) Country in the Northern Territory of Australia, Tracks Dance produce original and contemporary dance performances that celebrate the place and the people who call the Northern Territory home.

Location: Harbour View Plaza, Ground Level G03/8 McMinn St, Darwin City NT 0800

Website: <https://tracksdance.com.au/>

Access

Accessible Arts and Access2Arts will provide access support for the partnering organisations and program participants throughout the mentorship. To help ensure each participant's access needs are met, applicants will be asked to outline any access supports they require as part of the application form.

This helps to ensure you can fully engage in the program and get the most out of your mentorship. Where appropriate, participants will be encouraged to use their NDIS package (if available) to support their participation in the program. While in-person mentoring is preferred, hybrid and online sessions can also be arranged.

How to Apply

Applicants will be asked to provide the following information:

- Contact Details
- Applicants must identify as being d/Deaf or a person with disability
- An outline of any access supports you require
- Identify the field of your practice
- A CV and short bio – including examples of relevant work, volunteer, studies and/or qualifications

- List the top three organisations that you are interested in working with.
- Describe your career goals and why this is an important opportunity for you at this stage in your career.
- Describe the project you would like to develop during the Mentorship Program

NOTE: In the application form, you will be asked to select your top three preferred organisations. While every effort will be made to match you with one of your top choices, applicants may not be paired with their first-listed organisation.

Applicants can only apply for mentorships within their state

Application Form

Applications can be submitted online via Survey Monkey here:

[Next Level Application Form](#)

Alternative formats such as audio, or video submissions are also accepted with prior approval. Please reach out to Accessible Arts before submitting the application in an alternative format to ensure your application is received.

When to Apply

Applications will open from **Tuesday 3 February 2026** and close at **11pm on Sunday 15 March 2026**.

Application assessment

Applications will be assessed by Accessible Arts & Access2Arts. We will consider how well the applicant, and their project align with the partnering organisation, as well as relevant work experience and commitment to the program. Partnering organisations will be consulted during the review process to ensure cultural safety and access requirements can be met for the program participants.

Timeline & Key Dates

- **Applications open:** Tuesday, 3 February 2026
 - **Applications close:** 11pm Sunday 15 March 2026
 - **Outcome Notifications:** Monday, 30 March 2025
 - **Announcement:** April 2026
 - **Access Rider Training:** April
 - **Create Access Training:** June
 - **Mentorship Period:** May - October 2026
 - **Next Level Mentee Networking Event:** July 2026
 - **Final Program Report:** October 2026
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Marketing & Contract

Successful applicants will need to sign a contract that includes additional terms and conditions based on Accessible Arts and Access2Arts' policies. Applicants must also give permission for Accessible Arts and Access2Arts to promote and share the outcomes of the Next Level Creative Mentorship Program. This may include agreeing to participate in interviews, filming, and other social media opportunities for promotional purposes.

Program Fee

Each participant within the Next Level program will receive a \$3000 artist fee inclusive of superannuation. This payment will be paid throughout the mentorship. The payment schedule will be outlined at the start of the program, and participants will be informed of the due dates for each instalment.

Program Requirements

- **Access Rider Training:** All participants must complete Access Rider Training
- **Creative Access Training:** Participants must complete Creative Access Training
- **Program Completion:** Participants are required to complete the full program, including the 20 hours of mentorship as well as attend training workshops and networking session
- **Regular Communication:** Maintain regular communication with Accessible Arts/Access2Arts and the partnering organisation throughout the program
- **Mid-Program Report:** Submit a mid-program progress report
- **End-of-Program Report:** Submit a final report at the end of the program
- **Documentation of Participation:** Provide at least one photo or reel showcasing your experience during the program

Enquiries

If you have any questions about your application or the Next Level Creative Mentorship Program, please email Accessible Arts or Access2Arts:

Accessible Arts

Email: info@aarts.net.au

Call: (02) 9251 6499

Our team is available 10am - 5pm on Tuesdays & Thursdays for phone enquires.

Access2Arts

Email: hello@access2arts.org.au

Call: (08) 8463 1689

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Accessible Arts – Principal Funder



Access2Arts – Principal Funder

