



CREATING IMPACT

Phase 1 Report : Current State of Impact Measurement

Exploring current impact measurement
across the community engaged arts space

June 2024

Hosted by Milk Crate Theatre
Prepared by Social Ventures Australia (SVA)



SVA Consulting

Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

Cover Photo

Milk Crate Theatre and
Box of Bird's: SOLACE 2023
Photo by: Robert Catto

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This report has been prepared by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) Consulting

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We influence systems to deliver better social outcomes for people by learning about what works in communities, helping organisations be more effective, sharing our perspectives and advocating for change.

SVA Consulting is Australia's leading not-for-profit consultancy. We focus solely on social impact and work with partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to more than 15 years of working with not-for-profits, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve Australia's most pressing challenges.

This report has been authored by Emily Adams, SVA Consulting, Emily Adams with input from Jessica Pantano and Jodie Wainwright, Milk Crate Theatre.

For more information contact us: consulting@socialventures.com.au

Executive Summary

Milk Crate Theatre, in partnership with a range of organisations operating in the community engaged arts space, are undertaking a multiphase project to develop a shared outcomes framework to measure the social impacts of creative practice and then pilot the framework across a range of organisations. As part of phase 1 of this project, we explored the current state of impact measurement across this space, seeking input from funders and service delivery organisations.

Australian arts organisations – particularly those working in community engaged practice – are delivering a wide range of social outcomes both at an individual and societal level. However, these organisations face a multitude of challenges in measuring and articulating the impact of their programs.

Organisations often are not equipped with sufficient resources to appropriately measure their impact, both in terms of staff and finances. There is also a notable skills gap around impact measurement in the sector; whilst many organisations know what impacts they are making, they still struggle with the skills and knowledge required to measure and articulate these outcomes effectively. Importantly, organisations are keen to ensure that this measurement be done in a way that does not reduce individuals' nuanced experiences into simple numbers and statistics. Concurrently, organisations are also juggling the disparate measurement requirements of different funders which impacts on available resourcing.

Milk Crate Theatre identified an opportunity to address many of these challenges through the development of a shared outcomes framework. For community engaged arts organisations, which are often smaller organisations that work with diverse groups of individuals and communities, development of a shared outcomes framework could leverage the strengths and experiences of several organisations, reducing the resourcing requirements on each individual organisation and promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing across the sector.

At a macro level, a collective approach to impact measurement will provide community engaged arts organisations the opportunity to demonstrate their tremendous capacity and ability to create real change in people's lives.

Context

This report captures the outcome of the first phase of the broader CREATING IMPACT project which brings organisations together to develop and pilot a shared outcomes framework, specifically for arts organisations working in community engaged practice. It should be noted at this stage that whilst we recognise that the arts broadly deliver on social outcomes, we are focused on community engaged practice for this project.

These organisations work specifically within communities which offers an opportunity for clear articulation of outcomes and pilot measurement. Once we have this framework in place, there will be opportunity to broaden the scope in future iterations.

In phase 1, Social Ventures Australia, in partnership with Milk Crate Theatre, engaged with key community arts funders and a cross-section of arts organisations to understand existing funder priorities, learn more about current practices, and identify opportunities and aspirations for future phases of the project.

Prior to phase 1, Milk Crate Theatre hosted a roundtable in February to investigate the current state of outcomes measurement and assess the appetite for developing a shared outcomes framework. The roundtable uncovered initial insights into organisations' current outcome measurement practices and the challenges they face in measuring their impact. The roundtable confirmed that organisations and funders alike were excited by the prospect of developing a shared outcomes framework and that such a project should improve collaboration and knowledge sharing between organisations to overcome many of the challenges that they currently face. A summary of the insights from the roundtable is available on Milk Crate Theatre's website [here](#).

As part of phase 1, SVA and Milk Crate Theatre conducted several funder and organisation interviews and facilitated a three-hour workshop with a range of community engaged organisations. This workshop allowed an in-depth sharing and exploration of organisations' current practices, priorities, and any challenges they face.

Subsequent phases of the CREATING IMPACT project will focus on the co-design and piloting of a shared outcomes framework.

We will continue with the collaborative approach, engaging a broad cross section of arts organisation and funders throughout the development of the framework. The number of organisations directly involved in co-design will narrow to ensure we are able to deliver a working framework within the timeframe and to cater to the resourcing restrictions of various organisations. We have incorporated broader sector consultation at key development milestones across the project timeline to ensure we capture a wide cross section of voices and capabilities.

Participants in Phase 1

Milk Crate Theatre utilised networks and recommendations/introductions from key funders to invite arts organisations working in community engaged practice to participate in phase 1 of the project. The project was promoted through Creative Australia's CACD network meeting, Performing Arts Australia Network and direct invitations. All organisations involved in phase 1 of the project opted in to provide information about their current impact measurement practices.

A diverse mixture of organisations and funders across all levels of government have been involved in phase 1.

Funders that were interviewed include:

- Create NSW
- Creative Australia
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Western Australia
- Healthway
- Lottery West
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Besen Foundation
- Minderoo

There were also a range of organisations that participated in the May workshop:

- Arts and Cultural Exchange (ACE), Parramatta NSW
- Brand X, Sydney NSW
- Community Arts Network, WA
- CuriousWorks, Fairfield NSW
- Empire Youth Arts, Toowoomba QLD
- Improv Theatre Sydney, Redfern NSW
- Milk Crate Theatre, Sydney NSW
- Outloud, Bankstown NSW
- Shopfront Arts Co-op, Carlton NSW
- Studio Artes, Sydney NSW
- Think + DO Tank, Fairfield NSW
- The Push, Collingwood VIC

There were a few organisations who were unable to attend the session but provided information around their impact measurement practices including Beyond Empathy, Regional Australia, Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, NT and JUTE Theatre Company, Cairns Australia.



Photo credit: Milk Crate Theatre and Box of Bird's: SOLACE 2023, photo by Robert Catto

Scope of This Paper

This paper summarises the high-level trends and insights relating to outcome measurement across the sector gleaned from phase 1 of the project. While we acknowledge that this report primarily reflects the perspectives and experiences of the organisations that participated in this phase of the project, we believe these organisations provide a strong variety of views and experiences that can be extrapolated across the community engaged arts space. Where required, a more comprehensive exploration of existing frameworks, tools and resources will be included in future phases of the project.

The body of this report is split into two main sections:

1. **Sector trends.** This section describes the high-level trends that characterise the sector, including funders' priorities.
2. **Experience of participating organisations.** This section explores in greater depth the experiences of individual organisations as they seek to measure their impact. This section is divided into three sub-sections:
 - a. Pre-measurement foundations
 - b. Data collection
 - c. Developing and using insights

Sector Trends

Interviews with funders and input from participating organisations provided an overview of the current context and key trends involving impact measurement in the community engaged arts space.

Community engaged arts organisations are facing increasing financial constraints, and many are working in a cross-portfolio funding environment which has placed a growing need to invest in impact measurement to meet funder requirements as well as to make strategic program decisions.

Sector Trends

Community engaged arts organisations create a range of critical social outcomes for individuals and communities, but many services have extremely limited resources at their disposal.

Community engaged arts organisations are usually small to medium arts organisations. The nature of their work, which bridges arts and social impact, has not always been valued by previous government arts portfolios. Many of these community engaged arts organisations receive lower levels of organisational funding as compared to organisations of a similar size in other practice areas. There are no Community Arts and Cultural Development organisations funded through the National Performing Arts Partnership which has been established to provide significant investment into Australian performing arts for the benefit of Australian audiences.

Photo credit: Jesse, 2023, photo by Studio Artes



The Commonwealth Government, Arts Ministry REVIVE policy and NSW Government Arts Ministry CREATIVE COMMUNITIES policy have been released in the last 12 months. Both policies reference the impact of the arts on social cohesion and community health and wellbeing. Both policies also reference the opportunity for cross-portfolio funding, where arts organisations can more easily access funding from other government portfolios including Health, Social and Education. This presents an opportunity for arts organisations working in community engaged practice as they play a key role in delivering on cohesion, health and wellbeing measures. However, we are only just seeing the early stages of implementation of these policies and are yet to see how these goals flow through to funding decisions. Cross portfolio funding may provide increased funding opportunities to organisations. Some organisations are already accessing cross portfolio funding to deliver community engaged arts programs. However, to secure this funding, organisations need to effectively demonstrate they are achieving the social outcomes the agency in question is prioritising. This project would support organisations to demonstrate and report on how they deliver against priority outcomes.

Impact measurement is top of mind for funders, and there is an increasing push for organisations to demonstrate evidence of their impact.

Funders want to understand the impact of their investments to ensure they are funding organisations that are making true change; therefore, there is an increasing pressure on organisations to evidence the impact they claim their services create. Though funders noted that there has been significant thought and consideration given to how best to align their requirements with the needs of the organisations themselves, reporting in its current form is still often experienced as burdensome to resource constrained organisations in this space.

Organisations are keen to move from ad-hoc, retroactive end of program outcomes measurement to more strategic outcomes management.

Funders and organisations alike are focused on transitioning from outcomes measurement, where organisations simply measure the impact of their work at the end of project, to outcomes management, where organisations proactively use the data they collect to make strategic decisions about their programs and activities. Many community engaged arts organisations noted that their approach to impact measurement was reactive, responding to grant acquittals at the end of a funding period. This often took the form of retroactive data collection and generating reports to meet funder requirements. There was a desire and interest in having a more cohesive approach, but this was held back by resourcing and knowledge gaps.

Funders, particularly government funders, experience a tension between their own priorities and what is helpful for the organisations they fund.

Funders have their own priorities and areas of focus around which they make funding decisions. Therefore, the organisations they fund often need to collect data in a way that demonstrates alignment with funders' priority areas as opposed to developing a customised impact measurement approach that matches the organisation's unique context. Further, many government funders have to advocate for funding themselves and use the data they collect to demonstrate significant benefit to the population. This can create a tension between the data required by funders to meet their needs and the data required by organisations to support programmatic and strategic decisions. Private funders and philanthropists tend to have more flexibility in what they request from organisations, as they are not beholden to government reporting requirements.

There is an interest from funders in being led by the organisations doing the work on the ground.

Despite this tension, where possible, funders want to give organisations choice in which outcomes they measure. Multiple funders expressed a desire to better understand what effective impact measurement could look like in this space, noting that their impact measurement requirements could be informed/influenced in some way by the outcome of this project. It will be important to get funder buy-in to the outcomes identified in future phases of this project as to not add another layer of reporting onto already overstretched organisations.

Photo credit: Now Sounds Hedland, photo by Amelia Blanco, courtesy of Community Arts Network



There are a range of frameworks and tools in place, though not all are fit-for-purpose, and there is a lack of integration across various frameworks.

There were a range of existing frameworks and resources that were discussed in interviews with funders, each with varying levels of applicability for community engaged arts organisations. There were two existing tools that were mentioned regularly by participating organisations throughout the workshop – Culture Counts and TAKSO. We have undertaken some investigation of these tools, as well as speaking with users, to gain an understanding of how they might be included in a potential solution developed in future phases of this project.

Culture Counts

Developed in Western Australia, Culture Counts is an online survey and analytics tool that supports organisations, practitioners and philanthropists to craft evidence-based stories about the value they create. Over 800 organisations use Culture Counts, and member organisations span a range of areas, including government, libraries, funding bodies, and arts organisations.

Culture Counts costs \$3,500 for new users, with an ongoing cost of \$1,500 per annum. Membership includes:

- Initial consultation and set-up
- A list of standardised outcome metrics
- A question bank of pre-defined survey questions
- A library of pre-defined event survey templates
- An integrated analytics dashboard which summarises data over time through graphs and charts.¹

Several of the organisations participating in the workshop used Culture Counts or leveraged components of the tool. For example, many participants leveraged the question bank, noting questions were developed thoughtfully, ethically, and were appropriate to their context. While a useful foundation for their work, many organisations required more flexibility in a tool to meet their impact measurement needs (e.g. work with certain populations required surveys to be heavily modified, such as people with intellectual disability or youths), and others noted that the cost of the tool was prohibitive.

1. <https://culturecounts.cc/>

TAKSO

Developed by the Cultural Development Network, TAKSO is an online outcome planning platform specifically designed for cultural or arts related organisations. The platform is built on three frameworks developed in consultation with the sector and government.

TAKSO costs \$4,000 for new users, with an ongoing cost of 0.15% of the organisation's budget per annum.

The platform:

- collects and builds a library of evidence-based activities and research to support a theory of change approach to delivering an activity that will directly address the identified goal of the organisation;
- provides users/managers with an initial set of 28 accessible and consistent evaluation methods, that go beyond the usual emailed questionnaire; and
- aggregates data from across the system or within any program or organisation to provide consistent monitoring and governance.²

TAKSO has undertaken significant research to establish a set of appropriate measures that have been ethically reviewed and can be benchmarked.

Similar to Culture Counts, most smaller organisations noted that they couldn't afford to shoulder the cost of this platform, precluding them from using these tools.

There was also some discussion around the accessibility and appropriateness of online survey tools for some communities as well as a tension around the sophistication of language used in indicators that have been scientifically validated. These issues are not specific to either TAKSO or Culture Counts but speak to a need for accessible design in the framework tools and data collection methodology. There may be opportunities to leverage this existing work in future phases of the project and/or to work with these platforms to build the framework into their set of tools available for broader application.

2. <https://culturaldevelopment.net.au/takso/>



Photo credit: Milk Crate Theatre's: Manifesto Installation, photo by Jessica Saras

Despite a range of challenges, there are pockets of brilliance and an appetite to do more.

Despite a range of structural and practical challenges faced by organisations working in the community arts space, it is important to highlight that there are pockets of excellence and innovation across the sector. Organisations like Milk Crate Theatre, Beyond Empathy, Outloud and The Push all have sophisticated frameworks in place and have embedded measurement across their programs. They are all using data to report to funders and to inform program design – moving towards the outcomes management concept identified as best practice. However, even at this level, there is still recognition of challenges around resourcing, benchmarking and articulation of their impacts.

There are also multiple examples of organisations undertaking periodic research projects, sometimes through third parties or universities, that bring great insights to the value of the work. It was noted by the group that these research papers are often hard to find and not well shared across the sector which can lead to replication.

There is a strong appetite from organisations to keep improving their approach to impact measurement and collaborate with other organisations in the space, evidenced by the open information sharing and discussion in the roundtable and workshop hosted by Milk Crate Theatre.

Experience of Participating Organisations

The May workshop brought together twelve organisations from across the country. Each of the organisations shared their current impact measurement approach, including an overview of their current practice, what they do particularly well, what challenges they face, and their aspirations for future measurement practices.

While participating organisations were at various stages in their outcomes measurement journey, there were some common themes across the group including the need for thoughtful data collection, the challenge of turning data into practical and useful insights, and the opportunity to use data to drive more strategic decisions.

Photo credit: Gudskul Kolektif Exchange at Lumbung Western Sydney, Think+DO Tank Foundation, 16 November 2023, photo by Jeyne Wayde.



Pre-measurement foundations

In many cases, funder reporting expectations are more burdensome than beneficial to organisations.

Participants discussed at length the challenges and tensions created by various funder requirements. The measurement and reporting requirements of funders aren't always useful to the organisations themselves, making acquittals a time and resource intensive activity that doesn't necessarily contribute to the effectiveness of the organisations.

For many funders, there is still a heavy emphasis on outputs and economic implications rather than the depth of social outcomes achieved. This focus can make reporting reductive and detract from the true depth and diversity of individuals' experiences.



A significant value is placed on large numbers of participants as opposed to the depth of impact made. Our work is often about working with smaller groups of young people over long periods to produce significant change. We try to communicate to funders that we could spend two hours with 200 children, but the difference that will make is negligible. Spending 12 weeks with 15 kids and making something that thousands of people will see - the impact they can then create within their communities is huge.

— Finn O'Branagáin, Outloud



Further, organisations noted that while cross-portfolio funding did pose an opportunity to bring more funding into the sector, this opportunity comes with complexity. Engaging with multiple government departments for funding means that organisations are required to adhere to the vastly different reporting frameworks and requirements of each agency. Each agency has its own priorities and focus areas, meaning organisations often need different measurement at a project level to align with funder priority areas. Some funding contracts also come with their own platform requirements, such as Department of Social Services Data Exchange platform, which requires data to be provided in a specific format. This can create further administrative burden on organisational resourcing with time diverted to reformatting data as opposed to analysing meaningful change.



Ultimately, it's about finding ways to articulate your impact that honours the depth of these individuals' experiences. Not being reductive is tricky, especially when some funders expect us to tick certain boxes.

— Kiriaki Zakinthinos, CuriousWorks



There needs to be a clear purpose and use associated with impact measurement to warrant the resourcing required.

As noted above, organisations in the community engaged arts space are often struggling to identify and maintain sustainable funding, and there is rarely funding dedicated to measuring the impact of programs and activities. For this reason, there needs to be a clear and compelling reason for organisations to invest in impact measurement. While some of the participating organisations have dedicated resourcing for measurement and evaluation, in many cases, this task falls to program staff who are already overextended. Many organisations shared that impact measurement was only successfully embedded into their work when there was clear commitment and buy-in from the Board and Executive. Getting that kind of commitment from across the organisation requires impact measurement be purposeful and practically useful.

It's worth highlighting that when organisations have been able to allocate funding for impact measurement activities (e.g. Milk Crate Theatre has a dedicated social impact role), the additional resourcing has allowed them to dedicate sufficient time and energy to data analysis and more strategic use of data. Many of the funders interviewed for this phase of work acknowledged the need to fund impact measurement as an activity in its own right, though this isn't consistent practice.



Photo credit: Bridget, 2024, photo by Studio Artes

Having an organisation-level Theory of Change can be a critical foundational element of impact measurement.

Much of the work in this space is programmatic, so impact measurement is often conducted on a program-by-program basis. Having an organisation level Theory of Change can be used as a “linchpin” to tie together outcomes achieved across a portfolio of programs and to make strategic organisation level decisions. A Theory of Change can help organisations consider the outcomes they hope to achieve, enable them to tell their story of change to stakeholders, and ensure staff are aligned around priority areas of focus. In many cases, a Theory of Change is the foundation of an organisation’s strategic plan. Many of the participating organisations had a whole-of-organisation Theory of Change, and some had also developed Theories of Change for each of their key programs.

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We love how we’ve defined outcomes. It’s flexible to the work that we need to do and our theory of change is a perfect touch point. For producers, especially those that haven’t worked in evaluation or social impact before, they can get their head into the theory of change and understand what we mean when we’re talking about measuring the impacts of our projects.

– Miranda De Baughn, Community Arts Network

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While a unifying Theory of Change is an important tool in defining and communicating the change an organisation aspires to create, there is sometimes an inherent tension in using this as a tool to frame organisational purpose. A Theory of Change starts with a deficit base, assumes an intervention which then leads to a change or outcome. Many community-engaged arts organisations work within a strengths-based ethos and their processes can be non-linear. There are also inherent challenges around language in the social sector which is due in part to the fact that funders are often looking to “solve a problem”. This project has the potential to not only develop the framework but also to establish a set of shared principals and language that honours the organisations and individuals contributing to creative projects.

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It’s important to acknowledge that often times the social system is deficit focused. For example, many theories of change start out with an issue or a challenge, and the focus is how to fix a problem. That is a challenge as artists because we don’t go into a room looking for the deficit. We appreciate the people we are working with and acknowledge the many strengths they bring to the space. We want our approach to impact measurement to reflect that.

– Jodie Wainwright, Milk Crate Theatre

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Photo credit: Milk Crate Theatre’s DUST photo by Robert Catto



Collecting data

Participating organisations universally acknowledged the importance of engagement with the individuals and communities in which they work, both in defining their priority outcomes and in informing their approach to impact measurement.

Where possible and appropriate, organisations have established ongoing lines of communication with the individuals and communities impacted by their programs. In some instances, this engagement was less formal and part of the day-to-day interaction with program participants. In other instances, organisations had set up structured advisory panels to ensure the diverse voices and perspectives of stakeholders were embedded into all of their work, including impact measurement. All of these efforts aim to ensure programs remain person centred.

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We have paid advisory panels, including an LGBTQIA plus panel, one for people with disabilities, one for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals, one for young people, and we're setting up a First Nations advisory panel. The information these groups bring to the Shopfront team is so useful, including identifying the outcomes we should be aiming for.

– Natalie Rose, Shopfront Arts Co-op

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Photo credit: Noongar Lullabies Belmont, photo by Cassandra Edwards courtesy of Community Arts Network



It's critical to be mindful of data collection approaches and methodologies, particularly when engaging with vulnerable cohorts.

Participating organisations work with a broad range of individuals and communities, including individuals in vulnerable situations and/or living with multiple disadvantages. It is critical that data collection be considered in this context, and that the methodologies used to engage program participants are ethical and appropriate. Organisations mentioned the criticality of using appropriate language and being considerate around the age and accessibility needs of participants. For example, many common data collection tools that include the use of technology to capture insights from participants may not render a successful result in this context.



A challenge that we've felt is how to collect data without being extractivists. We want to understand the impact of our program without inappropriately mining our participants for information.

– Cale Bain, Improv Theatre Sydney



The activity of data collection contributes to the impact of the programs, so it must be thoroughly considered. Excessive data collection can become a barrier to participation, particularly for community members who are already regularly asked for excessive amounts of information through our social systems. Timeliness and appropriateness of data is key to the experience in a program.



We have a slight allergy to survey. We're really trying to break the experience of being a client or beneficiary of government support where there is a strong focus on filling out forms. We try and use processes that are more based in dialogue – shared conversation – that don't feel as rigid. We use case studies to that effect, and we use a lot of observational data and reflection. We try to embed evaluation into the activity that people are taking part of to trigger deeper conversations about what the activity has opened up, or enabled at both the individual and collective level.

– Jane Stratton, Think+DO Tank Foundation





Photo credit: *Utopia: Painting for Peace and Wellbeing*, CuriousWorks 2024, photo by Samantha Barahona.

Developing and applying insights

Though many organisations are collecting a significant volume of data, most organisations felt there were opportunities to use the data more strategically.

Across the board, organisations involved in phase 1 identified that they are collecting a large volume of data. Many noted that their key challenge was what to do with the data once it was collected and shared that they found it difficult to analyse and use the data in a way that was useful for both the organisation itself and funders.

Both funders and participating organisations expressed a desire to move the sector from outcomes measurement to outcomes management. In many instances, organisations were currently using the data they collect to drive operational improvements across their programs, but all noted an opportunity to use outcomes data to inform their overarching strategy.

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The data we're capturing is often influencing how we do our work on a programmatic level, but we'd like to consider how we might better use impact measurement to influence our strategic direction. We continue to consider how we can make data collection most practical and useful – both to inform funders as well as informing our work.

– Brian Whittaker, Studio Artes

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Effective data storage, knowledge management and skill building are critical to embed consistent impact measurement into an organisation.

Having a secure, centralised approach to data storage means that all relevant information is held in one space; insights from impact measurement can be accessed by a range of team members, knowledge is not lost if a key team member departs the organisation, and an organisation's impact can be viewed over time. Some of the participating organisations have a secure drive where all impact data is shared and can be accessed to serve a range of purposes including writing grant applications, developing key reports (e.g. annual reports) and reporting to funders.

One participating organisation had captured and stored impact data over a nineteen-year period, allowing them to analyse and learn from trends over time. This kind of consistent collection, analysis and storage allows for longitudinal analysis that can provide insights into how an organisation's impact is changing year over year.

Another critical point raised by both funders and participating organisations is the need for ongoing capacity building around impact measurement. It was universally acknowledged that effective impact measurement is a skill that needs to be taught, practiced and developed, and that this knowledge gap was a key issue across the sector. To do this work effectively, teams require skills and know-how in both appropriate data collection and data analysis/reporting. In an attempt to address this issue, many funders are developing resources and tools to bridge this knowledge gap. In some instances, organisations are engaging external consultants to support development of evaluations. Though this can help bridge a skill gap in the organisation over the short-term, engaging consultants can be costly and means the knowledge sits outside of the organisation.

Looking forward, organisations are seeking flexible, cost-effective solutions that allow them to use the data they collect in a more sophisticated manner.

When discussing the possibility of developing a shared outcomes framework for community engaged arts organisations, participants stressed the importance of modularity and flexibility, noting that an outcomes framework and outcomes measurement tools would need to be adaptable to the particular program and context. Any tool or platform used would also need to be cost effective, given the limited resourcing available for this work.

Organisations also expressed a desire to set clear targets and goals as a next step in their impact measurement journey. Alongside the ability to define and set target key performance indicators, organisations were interested in the ability to benchmark their data across similar organisations and to continue to share information and learn from one another around what makes an effective program.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Milk Crate Theatre strongly believes that community engaged art programs have the ability to transform lives, and that the arts often represent innovative approaches to achieving deep and meaningful social outcomes. We see this project as an opportunity to evidence this narrative and prove the tremendous and complex impact possible through our collective work.

To put this vision into action, Milk Crate Theatre will first identify and liaise with organisations that are interested in participating in the next phase of the work. The aim is to have approximately 5 to 8 organisations directly involved in the co-design of the shared outcomes framework, with a handful of other organisations forming part of the broader project team that is consulted regularly at key development milestones.

Once a project group is finalised, phase 2 will include the co-design of a shared Theory of Change, an outcomes framework and initial consideration around potential tools to be leveraged. In 2025, the organisations participating in the pilot will begin collecting data, and the framework will be iteratively improved through the lessons learned and feedback shared by organisations.

If you have any further questions or would like to get in touch, please email Jessica Pantano, Impact Manager at: jessica@milkcraetheatre.com



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture



Milk Crate Theatre and Social Ventures Australia would like to acknowledge the funders that made this work possible - Creative Australia, Create NSW, and the City of Sydney. We would also like to thank all participating organisations for generously sharing their practices and contributing to the shared knowledge base for this report.

