Cultural Development Network

Arts indicators for local government: valuing, planning for and measuring the contribution of the arts in local government in Australia

PART A: LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

This paper presents a set of arts indicators for local government, developed particularly for Australia.   It includes a brief overview of the emerging international literature around arts and 'cultural' indicators, and focuses particularly on ideas that have informed the current project, especially the work of Maria Jackson and colleagues from the USA. This framework is underpinned by the values explicated in Hawkes (2001), that cultural vitality is as important a dimension of sustainable communities as the other dimensions of economic viability, social equity and environmental sustainability. The indicators framework has been developed to measure the contribution of the arts to the cultural vitality, economic viability, social equity and environmental sustainability of local communities. The framework has four major categories of indicators; presence of opportunities to participate in the arts, rates of participation, support arts activity and outcomes of arts activity. The first such initiative in Australia, this framework is undergoing extensive discussion and redevelopment throughout 2010.

Introduction

This paper proposes a set of arts indicators for local government in Victoria, Australia. This framework is the Cultural Development Network's response to requests from the local government cultural development sector for better ways to plan and measure their own activity in the arts, as well as a way of measuring the contribution of the arts to all dimensions of the work of local government; cultural vitality, economic viability, social equity and environmental sustainability of local communities. This draft framework was discussed by stakeholders in Australia during 2010 and a revised version was presented at the ICCPR Conference in Finland in August.

This framework draws on the international literature around arts, and more broadly, cultural, indicators, and the Cultural Development Network's own initiatives including the writings of Jon Hawkes and public discussions since 2007. This framework operates from the perspective that arts is one indicator of cultural vitality, and that cultural vitality is one of the four essential domains of public policy, along with economic viability, social equity and environmental sustainability (Hawkes 2001). Values underpinning local government's work in the arts, and more broadly, cultural development, reflected in this framework are;

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- encouraging creativity, (mostly about new ideas and the future, what can we make of our future)
- welcoming diversity, (more related to the present- what do we have now that we can celebrate), and,
- respecting heritage, (related to the past- how can we value the ideas and experiences of people and times past, to make sense of the present, and inform our future).

Four categories for measures of the arts are proposed;

- presence of opportunities to participate in the arts
- rates of participation in the arts
- support for the arts
- outcomes of arts participation, on cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions.

A detailed framework around these four categories is presented to assist local government to work out what aspects of their work in the arts should be measured, how these could be measured and what impact their activities could make towards desired outcomes.

Definitions of 'arts', 'culture' and 'cultural vitality'
There are many and contested definitions of the word culture. Cultural researcher John Holden, for example, defines culture as, 'the arts, museums, libraries and heritage that receive public funding' (2006). This definition corresponds with the primary concerns of arts bodies of state and national governments in Australia and in some countries internationally, particularly England. In the wider government context, and also in local government in Australia, the terms 'arts' and 'culture' are often used interchangeably.

This paper applies a much broader definition of culture, based on Jon Hawkes' description of culture as *the social production and transmission of identities, knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and understanding; as well as, the way of life, including customs, codes and manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, traditions and institutions. Therefore, culture is both the medium and the message – the inherent values, means and the results of social expression'* (Hawkes, 2001).

Arts are therefore, one aspect of the wider dimension of culture.   In this paper, arts will be defined as any form of visual, performing, media, literary or interdisciplinary arts, made by or for any members of any community at any level of skill and intention. However, in the article to follow, the terminology used by the author of each article is respected, even when the terms used conflict with this perspective.

This paper will assume Hawkes' very broad definition of cultural vitality, that it is *robust diversity, tolerant cohesiveness, multi-dimensional egalitarianism, compassionate inclusivity, energetic creativity, open minded curiousity* (2001, p. 23).

Community indicators engagement with culture

Over the past decade, there have been significant developments with indicators of progress, addressing issues of well-being far beyond the traditional economic measure of the Gross Domestic Product. The OECD's 2009 World Forum in Korea, 'Statistics, Knowledge and Policy', discussed the development of paradigms to measure progress considering economic, social and environmental perspectives (www.oecdworldforum2009.org).   For those who consider the cultural dimension an

essential aspect of community progress, it is disappointing to observe that there is little or no focus on the cultural dimension in most of these indicator sets, reflecting a lack of valuing of all aspects of culture and within it, the arts, in public planning and policy. Jackson et al (2006) comment on this absence in most sets of community indicators in the USA, with exceptions including the National Neighbourhood Indicators Partnership in Seattle, Boston and Philadelphia and other projects in Chicago, Washington DC and California.

This lack of attention to the cultural dimension also occurs in Australian indicator initiatives. The inaugural Community Indicators Summit in 2009 attracted 170 delegates, indicating the significant and growing interest in the topic. Keynote speaker Jon Hall, Manager of the OECD Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, discussed a large range of indicators that participants were agreeing as important to measure. These include well-being, ecosystem conditions and governance (Hall, 2009). Within Hall's presentation the cultural dimension was considered as a subsection of the social dimension, but otherwise there was little consideration of the cultural dimension at the conference. No speaker listed it as a priority, nor was there any intention discussed to move forward with data or measurements. During discussion about this absence, one major limitation seemed to be the challenge of measuring the cultural dimension. The ABS summary, Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2009, includes no mention of the cultural dimension (ABS 2009)/

One current community indicator framework from Australia that identifies the value of the cultural dimension, including arts participation, is Community Indicators Victoria framework for community well-being in local government.

Community Indicators Victoria's engagement with culture

The Community Indicators Victoria initiative began in 2005 to facilitate stronger evidence-based decision making in local government, with a focus on community well-being. It provides data for the whole state of Victoria right down to a local level, on 75 indicators. These are divided into five major domains, social, economic, environmental, governance and cultural, with the cultural dimension delineated as 'Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities'. This data allows comparisons between councils or regions, and future versions will also allow comparisons over time for individual councils and regions. As CIV's scope is very broad, it includes a modest amount of focus on every topic. It does, however, contribute some valuable data for cultural planning, including questions under the heading of culturally rich and diverse communities about diversity, (community acceptance of diverse cultures), leisure and sporting opportunities. It includes data specifically about arts participation: perceived opportunities for arts participation in communities and the level of individual arts participation.

CIV data about the arts was gathered from responses to two questions in a statewide telephone survey:

a) *Do you agree or disagree that there are enough opportunities in your local area for you to participate in arts and related activities?*

b) *In the last month have you done any of the following activities?*
　　1. Painting or drawing
　　2. Other art or craft activities
　　3. Playing a musical instrument

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4. Singing
5. Other types of performing, for example acting or dancing, or
6. Creative writing
(Community Indicators Victoria, 2006)

There were some challenges with data about the arts gathered through the CIV project, include the limitations of a phone survey that included a large number of questions on diverse topics. As well, it is possible that definitions of the arts used may not have been sufficiently inclusive to cover all possible arts participation experiences. People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous people, for example, may not consider culture-based activities that include arts as 'arts or craft activities' as described above. Young people who use computer based programs to make music may not consider that they are 'playing a musical instrument'. Therefore it is possible that some respondents who do participate in the arts may not have answered '*Yes*' to the questions. Because of the large scope of the CIV project, its contribution to any one area cannot be comprehensive. There are many more questions about the arts that specialist practitioners might want to know that could not be covered in this broad survey.

A second survey to be undertaken in 2010 will include redeveloped questions on the arts. Improvements such as refined definitions of the 'arts' and 'participation' are likely to improve the quality of the data in a number of ways. Alignment of definitions of the arts with those used in other data collection strategies, such as ABS and arts funding bodies, should result in data that is more complementary and comparable with other existing data sets. Definitions of 'arts' that reflect contemporary community experiences, and definitions of 'participation' that include all possible participatory roles, may contribute to truly representative responses.

While there has not otherwise been a strong focus on the cultural dimension in community indicator frameworks, there has been progress regarding cultural indicators nationally and internationally over the last decade.

Cultural indicators from Agenda 21 for Culture, United Cities for Local Government
Agenda 21 for Culture, the Commission for Culture of United Cities for Local Government, the international peak body for local government, published a discussion paper on cultural indicators in 2006. This document, taking the broadest definition of culture, noted that there is much work to be done on local cultural indicators and that current initiatives lack consensus. However it posited that development of an indicator framework is essential if culture is to be consolidated as one of the pillars of development. A framework to help local government clarify the conceptual bases of cultural policies was proposed to become a first step in the progress towards local cultural indicators. Topics proposed for consideration were;

• description of municipality: organisational structure and budget (%) for culture.
• cultural infrastructure and cultural practices
• culture and social inclusion
• culture, territory and public areas
• culture and economy
• governance of cultural policies
(Agenda 21 for Culture, 2006, p. 5).

UCLG's Committee for Culture has committed to a development of this preliminary framework into a set of indicators over the next few years, although is, as yet, not able to report on progress.

Canadian initiatives about cultural indicators in local government

Canadian local government researcher Nancy Duxbury's 2006 paper provided a comprehensive international perspective on cultural indicators for local government. Duxbury addresses an issue that is common with development of indicator frameworks; the relative prioritisation of inputs, outputs, and outcomes. She comments that inappropriate emphasis is often placed on the *quantity* of inputs, with insufficient assessment often made about the *quality* of those inputs. The need to measure outputs and assess outcomes (outputs are short-term only; outcomes relate to the results of providing those outputs) using both quantitative and qualitative data was discussed. Duxbury advises against developing too many indicators; a smaller amount of more useful information being more effective for ongoing success. Her article also included a comprehensive report on a national initiative to develop local level cultural indicators for Canada. While this project generated much interest in indicators for Canadian local government and a strong direction, as yet no particular strategy or well developed practice seems to have emerged.

Cultural indicators in New Zealand

Local government in New Zealand has been working with a four pillars approach since 2002; focussing activities around four aspects of 'well-being'; economic, environmental, social and cultural. A document on *Cultural Well-being indicators*, (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2006) details indicators developed by councils across the nation. This framework takes a broad view of culture, with much attention focussed on Maori cultural issues, including language, heritage and education. Many of these indicators are relevant to the current discussion and ideas have been included in the framework to be presented below.

New Zealand's national government has taken a leading role internationally with the release of its second set of National Cultural Indicators (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2009). This framework identifies the cultural dimension as a vital aspect of all public policy, with 'cultural aspects of development…(sitting) alongside the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability'. It also identifies the value of growth and development in the cultural sector for its own sake, as well as the 'positive social and economic side effects'. These indicators also have a strong focus on culture, in a nexus between its aesthetic and anthropological definitions, with many indicators reflecting Maori cultural concerns.

Indicators are organised around outcome themes of;

- engagement
- cultural identity
- diversity
- social cohesion and
- economic development , through the arts

The indicator framework described in this paper aimed to
> provide high-level measures of the effectiveness of government policy interventions in the cultural sector, enable linkages to be made with indicators in other sectors of the economy, provide measures of the contribution of cultural activity to the social, environmental and economic well-being of New

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> *Zealanders, provide a benchmark against the 'status' of cultural activity in New Zealand which can be monitored over time and contribute to meaningful debate about the role, value and function of culture.*

This 2009 document is a significant development of the first iteration from 2006, as more data fields are populated and the second phase provides the opportunity for comparison over time, with results form 2009 being comparable with those from 2006.

While this framework provides some inspiration for Australian local government, the situation is not directly comparable, particularly because of the emphasis on Maori cultural issues; Indigenous people comprise a much smaller percentage of Australia's population than do Maori in New Zealand, while the population percentage of people from other 'cultures' (anthropological) is much higher in Australia, leading to a significant diversity of 'cultural' (aesthetic) interests.   It does however, match the direction taken by the framework to be presented in this paper.

Cultural indicators for Australia
In Australia the publication of a set of national cultural indicators is pending. The Statistics Working Party of the Australian Cultural Ministers Council has been developing a framework that may be available in 2010. These, however, may not be particularly relevant to local government, being concerned more with national 'high-level' rather than local indicators (Morton 2009). No other information about this initiative is available publicly at the current time. There seems to be no other currently accepted and operational indicators frameworks for the arts within local government in Australia.

Hawkes' approach to indicators for Australian local government
Hawkes (2001) investigated international developments in cultural indicators, particularly those that shared his values around the prioritisation of cultural vitality in public policy and planning and the importance of citizen participation in the making of culture .   Based on this investigation, he devised a long list of arts indicators 'to track progress towards a desired future' (p. 57). The main focus of these is the connectedness of the arts community to the wider community and the development of opportunities for active engagement in arts practice. Hawkes developed these concepts further in 2006, in response to an invitation to comment on arts indicators being developed for the Community Indicators Victoria well-being framework. He proposed that indicator frameworks include a grid, of categories; *infrastructure, opportunities* and *action* considered against categories of means of arts engagement; *learning skills, actual making, public presentation and observing others (*Hawkes 2006).   Hawkes' work has strongly informed the framework being presented in this paper.

Jackson's framework for cultural vitality, USA
A framework of cultural indicators that has much in common with Hawkes' conceptualisation is Jackson et al's *Cultural Vitality in Communities: Interpretation and Indicators* (2006). This developed out of an earlier project, *Culture Counts in Communities* (2002) by researchers from the Washington DC based Urban Institute. Jackson et al do not distinguish arts from culture in their definitions, and consider participation in its broadest sense, in the multiple ways people participate in arts and

cultural activity— as practitioners, teachers, students, critics, supporters, and consumers.

This group's work is concerned with measuring cultural vitality, described 'as evidence of creating, disseminating, validating, and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life in communities' (2006, p. 4). The framework considers active and receptive participation in the arts as important aspects of culturally vital communities, and that cultural vitality should be considered for its own sake, rather than only for its contribution to other agendas: 'a *healthy place to live includes opportunities for the arts, culture and creative expression'* (2006, p. 4).

 The framework includes four domains of cultural activity to provide a comprehensive picture of community cultural vitality:

- the presence of opportunities to participate
- participation in its multiple dimensions
- support systems for cultural participation
- impacts of arts and culture (2006, p. 14).

Jackson presents these first three domains to be used as indicator measurements that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of impacts of arts and culture (the fourth domain). These indicators are comparable across communities and over time.

This project also discusses issues with data collection and provide solutions for the American context. Jackson's indicators are based on quantitative data that is publicly available, free or at minimal cost. Possibilities for data sources for future developments are discussed, especially data that is qualitative or pre-quantitative documentation of phenomena of interest. She suggests that this might be available from anthropological and ethnographic studies of arts and culture in communities.

This framework seems very useful to the Australian local government context, as it has been successfully applied in several communities in the USA, resulting in sets of comparable data that have not traditionally been part of cultural indicator considerations; particularly those about active participation in the arts.   It operates from values similar to those of the Cultural Development Network, as explicated in Hawkes (2001), that cultural vitality is as important a dimension of sustainable communities as the other dimensions of economy, society and environment. Categories used by Jackson et all correspond closely with those proposed by Hawkes, and they provides a framework to measure outcomes against values espoused by CDN and shared with many local government cultural development programs in Australia; that,

- the making of art be an everyday activity amongst communities
- the value of making art together be embraced by agencies and organisations that work with communities
- all spheres of government develop policy and resources to support independent community cultural activities

What are indicators for?
In order to develop a useful set of indicators, it is essential that the purpose of these be clear. Most of the established indicator frameworks discussed above share an intention to develop data about culture, including the arts, that allows consideration of

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change over time or comparative change. The New Zealand government describes indicators as

> *high-level, summary measures of key issues or phenomena that are used to monitor positive or negative changes over time. The evaluative nature of indicators distinguishes them from the descriptive nature of statistics. One of the key purposes of indicators is to reduce the large volume of statistical information available to a small number of key measures that allow trends to be monitored'* (2009 p. 4).

Christopher Madden, in his report on cultural indicators for IFACCA (Madden, 2005), cautions that data of itself can be meaningless without a context; the task of indicator framework is to provide a context through which data can be made meaningful.   So, for example, as estimation of the numbers of people employed in the cultural sector is not an indicator, because it does not tell us whether the level of employment is high, low or about right; it needs further information. Similarly, statistics that compare people employed in culture in one country with that of another is also meaningless if no account is taken of population differences and other factors. Data trends that show increases or decreases over time are also incomplete unless the changes are compared with the rate of growth or reduction in employment generally in the country.

Indicators are vital for effective planning, as Colin Mercer comments:

> *For governance to develop its own system of notation and therefore a responsive particularity, there is a real need for a new suite of specifically cultural benchmarks, objective (how many museums) and perceptual (do we want to go, feel comfortable and included there?) which can be assessed by stakeholders and act as publicly-owned performance indicators for government programmes (2009, p. 201).*

Community Indicators Victoria discuss local government's need for indicators that are responsive, can tell them what is changing and provide early warning signals, and help local government and communities to know what is working and what isn't (CIV 2009).

Duxbury (2006) provides a list of possible practical uses of cultural indicators suggested by Canadian local government participants in a workshop process. These can be summarised as;

Advocacy and policy uses;

- raising the profile and understanding of an issue (inside local government and in the community)
- a tool for community mobilisation, especially if indicators can be accessed by community organisations
- defending the culture budget
- demonstrating need; for example with cultural infrastructure, to recognize need for space, place, and access
- providing a tool for leveraging funds from other levels of government, private and philanthropic sources
- enabling benchmarking among different municipalities; comparative discussion points for further investigation/actions

Planning and practice uses;

- developing business cases for initiatives/proposed actions
- determining budgets, reallocating budgets, setting expenditure levels
- program development (e.g., indicators based on artist incomes and rising housing costs helped argue the need for affordable space for Vancouver's artists if the municipality wished to keep them in the city, which led to re-zoning to create work live space for artists, among other initiatives)
- program evaluation – assessing effectiveness of initiatives. However, because indicators generally provide a long-term view of what's going on, how much can be attributed to government programs?
- accountability – public accountability for dollars invested, reporting program result
- profiling and tracking economic and social impacts, such as of neighbourhood revitalization.

Indicators can also be used as part of regulatory frameworks. The recent Inquiry into Local Government Performance Measurement conducted by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) sought to develop a new performance monitoring framework for local government in Victoria. In their response to the ESC"s public submission process, Community Indicators Victoria argued that community indicators, which include arts questions, should be included in such a framework, because they are measures of outcome effectiveness that are critical for local governments in the 21st century (CIV 2009). CIV argue that what is measured is more likely to be achieved. The Municipal Association of Victoria, on the other hand, opposed the inclusion of additional dimensions in a performance monitoring framework, arguing that the extra work for councils in reporting about non-essential activities would outweigh the benefits (MAV 2010). In its final report, the ESC has advised that cultural measures ought not to be included in a regulatory framework because the range and diversity of cultural activities varies widely across councils (ESC 2010).

In summary, arts indicators for local government can have numerous functions. They can support the work of local government in advocacy, policy making and evaluation and program planning and evaluation, by;

- ensuring that culture, and the arts can be measured, and therefore considered in broader regulatory or measurement frameworks
- making data meaningful; reducing statistical information to key measures that allow trends to be monitored over time and or compared between contexts
- providing benchmarks, objective and perceptual, to measure performance of programs
- monitoring of trends over time to assist governments and communities to know what is working and what isn't
- allowing comparison between contexts, which in turn can assist with understanding performance of programs .

The essential qualities of indicators, as described by the New Zealand government, are that they must be;
- relevant to the outcome of interest
- grounded in research
- statistically sound
- able to be disaggregated
- timely
- based on broad support and interest and
- consistent over time.

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Challenges in the progress towards arts indicators
There are many challenges in the progress towards useful arts indicators. IFACCA's 2005 international review reported many difficulties with existing frameworks (Madden 2005). These included confusion about what indicators are, lack of quality data, unwieldy frameworks and vague policy objectives, questions about relevance to policymaking and program delivery, differences in approach and lack of contact between agencies developing them.

While most of these frameworks are called 'cultural indicators', in fact, they are most only measuring arts, rather than 'culture', or culture in its narrowest definition, as per Holden's previously mentioned definition (2006). For indicators to be truly 'cultural', they would need to be much broader than measures about arts.

As discussed earlier, there is a lack of consideration of the cultural domain in broader public policy, and correspondingly, in community indicator projects.   There is also a lack of data about arts and arts participation from which indicators could be drawn (Mulligan and Smith 2007, Dunn and Koch 2006), and until recently, data collection has been concentrated much more around receptive participation in the arts (as measured by attendance at institutions such as museums and art galleries), than active participation.

In contrast, professionals working in other state or local government sectors base decisions on well established data sets and agreed parameters of community needs. For example, community planners have extensive data provided through the CIV initiative, and sport and recreation planners are well served by state government Sport and Recreation departments who prioritise participation, that is, 'active 'playing' participation which does not include coaching, refereeing and spectating' and value this as one of their primary goals. These departments develop strategies and resources and collect data about community participation in sport (Australian Sports Commission 2010).

Dwyer (2008) discusses challenges with collection of data about the arts, particularly in relation to people outside the sector for whom statistics provide assistance with decision making. Her research indicated that the values of economic planners and community developers are so different, from each other, and from those in the arts sector, that they require different data about the arts. And both groups are sceptical about the value of data that doesn't relate to their identified goals. Dwyer recommends aiming for collection of arts related data that can be used for dual purposes, so that it can be useful for sectors of local government with different agendas.

Data about arts from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australia Council
Despite the challenges with data availability, there is much data about arts participation that could be used in the development of indicators.   In addition to the CIV data about participation mentioned earlier, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, through the National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, working with the Cultural Ministers Council, has developed a substantial body of data about culture, including participation, attendance, expenditure and the activity of businesses operating in the fields.   The ABS 2006 survey *How Australians Use Their Time* (ABS 2006) measured average time spent on selected culture and leisure activities. However as 'arts and crafts' were not differentiated from games and hobbies this data is not particularly useful about arts participation. The ABS survey *Attendance at*

Selected Cultural Venues and Events also provides data about attendance at cultural venues and events, including libraries, museums, various categories of music and performing arts performances and cinemas (2005-06).

Other relevant ABS data sources includes *Survey of Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities* (2006), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: Involvement in Arts and Culture* (2008), *Work in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities* (2007), *Employment In Cultural Occupations By Cultural Industries* (2006), *Voluntary Work* (2006), *Cultural Participation by Persons with a Disability and Older Persons, 2003, Cultural Funding in Australia – Three Tiers of Government* (2004–05) . This data is available at a local government level and even smaller divisions, collector areas of about 300 responses making it useful for within and between LGA comparisons. This data does not include any measures of social impacts of arts participation, other than economic.

The Australia Council's new *Participation in the Arts* report (2010) provides nationwide data about participation in the arts, focussing on both receptive (attending and consuming arts as an audience member) and creative participation (active making of arts). Topics for data collection in this nationwide survey include attitudes towards the arts, community's support for the arts, interest in indigenous arts and use of internet as a tool for the arts. However the sample size for this study is relatively small (less than 400 respondents in Victoria), so no breakdown by LGA is possible. This makes it interesting but not very useful for local government wishing to consider locally specific issues.

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