



Public Art and Design checklist: Developing an artist's brief

The following information is an extract from *Public art making it happen: a commissioning guide for local councils*, produced by formerly Arts SA (now Arts South Australia) with support from the Local Government Research and Development Scheme in 2006.

A copy of the booklet can be obtained from Arts South Australia upon request.

Developing an artist's brief

An accurate and thorough project brief is crucial to achieving a successful outcome. The brief should be easy to read and address potential issues and questions that are likely to be raised by the artist undertaking the commission. Generally, the briefing paper becomes an attachment to the contract entered into with the artist commissioned to develop a design proposal and therefore the requirements within the brief become part of a legal agreement.

Ensure all the relevant considerations, including the background, objectives and any restrictions or legislative impediments, are detailed. This will enable the artist to design a work of art that meets the requirements and responds appropriately to all the identified issues. Consider the following in the development of a brief and include information where relevant.

1. Background

Commissioning agent or organisation

- provide details regarding the commissioning agency
- issues relevant to the commissioner's history
- objectives of the commissioner in relation to the artwork commission
- any commissioning partners

Relevant district and community information

- population
- history
- geography
- industries
- the future

Background information

- development of the project
- contributors to the brief including stakeholders and community representatives

Include any other specific historical, industrial, cultural or anecdotal information considered important, or of interest, that will provide insight into the motivation to undertake the project.



2. Site for the commission

Description and characteristics

- location
- history, cultural heritage considerations
- purpose, thematic considerations
- usage, visitation, audience
- how publicly accessible
- environment, surroundings
- attach site maps, photographs, aerial photographs, topographical surveys, as relevant

Limitations in relation to the site

Consider the physical and practical limitations imposed by the selected site, for example, limitations in relation to services or traffic and pedestrian movement and access. Is another location more appropriate, where the demands on the work and the artist will be lessened, enabling a more open approach?

Address the following:

- legal regulations and restrictions, planning and development requirements, permits, implications of other legislative requirements
- access issues and restrictions
- obstructions (power cables, telephone cables, underground pipes, etc) - provide plans
- scale, design, colour, texture, material, thematic considerations
- structural and engineering considerations, mountings, fixings, footings
- climatic conditions including exposure to wind, rain, sun, chemical pollutants
- possible restrictions during installation, special safety requirements
- any other planned work for the site or the existence of a master plan for the area

Alternative site (if applicable):

- information as above
- comparative advantages and disadvantages

Include details of site plans, photographs, drawings and elevations, relevant historical materials, reports and evaluations and other relevant material, as attachments to the brief.

3. The work of art

Concept:

- motivation for the commission
- commissioner's broad vision (with care not to limit the artist's response)
- thematic requirements and considerations
- commissioner's and stakeholder's broad aims and objectives for the commission
- desired project outcomes



Target audience:

- general, wide ranging or specific
- local, tourist or both

Ambience:

- functional issues including the use of the space for other purposes
- exciting, peaceful, contemplative, thought provoking, humorous, etc
- intimate, monumental, memorial, etc
- size, scale, single or several elements
- to be viewed from long distances, short distances or both
- to be viewed, day, night or both, special lighting requirements
- relationship with site and surroundings
- colour, textural considerations

Materials:

- environmental conditions which will affect the materials - impact of wind, rain, UV, etc
- durability of materials - ageing, life span
- compatibility of materials
- vandal resistance, robustness
- maintenance, conservation, cleaning issues
- possible relevance of local industries, any in-kind support with materials
- safety requirements in relation to materials
- relationship of the work to other surfaces and finishes, colours and textures
- conservation implications of interaction of materials in the work to other surfaces
- recycling of existing relevant and available materials

Practical considerations:

- standards or building codes that are applicable or relevant. How will this vary depending on scale, material and function of the artwork?
- accessibility for the artist during design and installation, and for the public, including disability access issues
- site specific climatic conditions that will impact on the work
- structural and engineering requirements
- site maintenance and cleaning routines that will impact on the work, for example, lawn watering and mowing, street sweeping and graffiti response with associated equipment and access requirements
- risk management and safety considerations and requirements
- insurance requirements for fabrication and installation, including required insurance for sub-contractors
- desired life of the artwork



4. Stakeholder consultation

- is consultation with any stakeholders or community representatives required? If so, who?
- what are the objectives for community consultation?
- are formal community consultation workshops desired/required? If so, what role will the commissioner play in facilitating these?
- have stakeholders been consulted in the preparation of the brief? If so, who? Are there any specific concerns and issues they want to see addressed?
- is there a separate budget available to undertake any required consultation?

5. Budget

Total allowable cost:

- outline the total artwork budget and detail whether it is GST inclusive or exclusive
- detail all costs to be incorporated within the allowable budget including materials, engineering, fabrication, site preparation, transportation, installation and clean-up, lighting, acknowledgment plaque, artist's fee, insurance, maintenance, etc. Many of these issues will be further detailed in the contract.
- outline costs which are to be borne by the commissioner
- assess whether or not the budget is sufficient to satisfactorily meet the project objectives
- detail sources of funding, as relevant

In-kind assistance:

- outline available in-kind assistance such as potential in-house technical support and engineering advice, installation and site works assistance, materials available, etc

6. Management and the advisory panel

Project management:

- determine how the project will be managed on a day-to-day basis
- outline who the key point of contact will be
- consider what the reporting relationships will be

Project advisory panel:

- consider who will be represented - from where, their interest in the project
- ensure all relevant and appropriate stakeholders are represented
- ensure appropriate arts representation and expertise
- list members names, positions, organisation, contact number, if relevant

Role of all parties in the project:

- outline who will undertake what tasks
- determine who is the point of contact for specific information



What is the role of the following parties:

- selection panel/advisory panel, if different
- artist
- consultant/project manager
- community
- the project commissioner
- project architect
- contacts within the commissioning agency such as the project manager, other
- other stakeholders, participants

7. Commissioning process and time schedule

Commissioning process - overview:

- the process to identify artists - advertise, database, other
- applicable eligibility criteria for artists (e.g. level of experience, practising professionals, SA residents, other)
- the number of artists to be short-listed
- expression of interest details - outline what is required, when, where
- detail the selection criteria for assessing expressions of interest

Design proposals commissioned:

- number of design proposals commissioned
- when commissioned - design proposal contracts signed
- requirements of the design proposal stage - concept paper, budget, cost estimates, time schedule, rough drawings or detailed drawings, maquette and its scale
- fee payable for this stage
- submission timeline, concept presentation deadline
- concept design assessment criteria - essential and desirable, and criteria ranking
- risk assessment of the preferred concept - by whom, when in the approval process
- outline who will approve the final design proposal
- proposed timeline for acceptance of the concept and notification of the artist
- subsequent stages - design development, timeline, fee, approval process

Commission for work of art:

- anticipated commission date
- budget (restate total budget) and scope of work within this figure
- desired completion date and launch date
- issues relating to site access and installation resolved
- schedule for payment of fees, if relevant

Project evaluation:

- outline any formal project evaluation to be undertaken - by whom, issues to be addressed, artist's role in this, if any



8. Further information

Contacts:

- names and phone numbers of people to contact for further information

Other:

- any other information considered relevant

*This checklist is not definitive and elements should be expanded or disregarded as they are appropriate to a particular project. Use this checklist in tandem with the other checklists to inform the development of a project.

See also the **Example artist's briefing paper**.

To assist artists responding with an expression of interest, or for those engaged in developing a concept and preparing a budget, information is contained in the following:

Checklists for artists involved in public art commissions

- Checklist for artists making an expression of interest
- Budget preparation checklist

Arts South Australia's Public Art and Design staff provides guidance and support in the development of innovative public art projects. No liability is accepted for projects commissioned with the assistance of Arts South Australia.

Street address:

Level 16 Wakefield House
30 Wakefield Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Tel: +61 8 8463 5444

Postal address:

GPO Box 2308,
Adelaide SA 5001, AUSTRALIA

Email: artssa@sa.gov.au

Web: www.arts.sa.gov.au