



## Public Art and Design checklist: Project initiation & development

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.

### Project initiation and development

How is a public art project initiated? Are there plans and strategies in place that will assist in instigating a project, or help inform a commissioning agency's response to community proposals? How will the project be developed and realised? Placing public art within broader planning and development processes, where it can complement urban and architectural design initiatives, and add value to existing developments, is a sound approach to public art planning.

There may be broader legislative requirements, Development Plans and other policies to consider when developing a project - those that impact on urban design decisions, public infrastructure, capital works, asset management, risk management and open spaces. Identify who should be included in the initial discussions, project planning and management.

What are the practical stages for the project development, such as approval processes and risk assessment? Who needs to be consulted in the early stages to inform your approach? Who needs to be part of the overseeing project development panel?

This checklist relates to the Developing an artist's brief checklist, and poses questions for consideration in the early stages of the project, which will inform the development of the brief. No two projects are the same and different considerations need to be addressed in the development of each project.

### Project initiation - preliminary considerations

- what is the motivation for considering a public art project?
- what will be achieved by commissioning an artist?
- is the artist required to exercise artistic expression and interpretation to create a work of significant artistic merit, or are they to create functional elements for the environment?
- is the artist to engage with the community in the design and realisation of the work?
- will they explore and interpret historical references through their work?
- what level of support is available from staff or elected members? How will this impact on the advancement of the project through budgetary bids and approval processes? How can the support base be increased?
- how can the particular political environment be addressed to ensure the successful advancement of the project?



Thorough planning, establishing clear objectives and ensuring that stakeholders' motivations are reflected within the brief will assist in achieving a successful outcome that is beneficial for all parties, including the commissioner, the artist and the community.

### **Policy and legislative environment**

What are the implications of the existing legislative and policy environment? Consider the influence of the following on what can be achieved in a particular location.

- Local Government Act 1999
- Development Act 1993
- Heritage Act 1993
- Native Title Act 1994
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988
- Construction Industry Training Fund Act 1993
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986
- Copyright Act 1968, incorporating moral rights for artists
- Australian Building Standards
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- anti discrimination legislation

Ensure the approach is consistent with the following provisions:

- management plans for community land
- contracts and tenders policy
- public consultation policy
- strategic management plans
- development plans
- significant tree legislation
- asset management
- risk management policy and framework
- occupation, health, safety and welfare.

What existing strategies, plans and policies are relevant? What existing parameters will influence the project? Consider the impact of the following potential policies:

- cultural
- economic
- social
- recreation
- environmental
- lighting
- financial
- signage
- open space
- consultation
- capital works
- public art.



Consider:

- What other requirements will impact on what is possible and how it will be achieved?
- Are there budgetary considerations, from a time, or policy perspective?
- Are there policy guidelines that enable an effective response to a project proposal?
- How does the project relate to the commissioner's capital works program?
- Will project evaluation be undertaken to inform future projects or policy directions?
- Which staff need to be consulted to gain further information?
- Should the commissioner's marketing and communications staff be involved from the early stages?
- How will the commissioner's risk management approach impact on the planning and development?

### **Identify public art opportunities**

- What are the parameters and opportunities for an artist's involvement?
- Is there scope to commission a significant stand-alone work of art, or is the opportunity restricted to smaller integrated elements?
- How will the resulting artwork be used or interacted with? What are the implications of this from a risk management perspective? For example, if interaction with the work is a desired outcome, does this include climbing on the work? How does this potential outcome and use impact on the engineering and structural requirements? Some public art outcomes pose greater risks due to their nature and materiality. This is particularly true for projects involving water and the interaction this may encourage.
- Identify the desired aesthetic, social, and community outcomes and objectives. Are they realistic? An artistic response may not solve urban design problems, for example.
- How can broader strategies and objectives of the commissioner be addressed through public art?

### **What is the project budget?**

- Where are the funds coming from? What are the requirements of funding providers?
- What funding related issues or criteria need to be reflected within the artist's brief?
- Is the funding sufficient to enable project objectives to be met? Ensure that the project will not be compromised due to inadequate funds.
- Does the scope of the project need to be modified to achieve a successful outcome in relation to the available funds?
- What will be the value of the artist's fee for the design stage and subsequent stages? Is this appropriate in relation to the requirements?
- Are potential avenues of additional funding being investigated - grants, sponsorship, in-kind support?
- Timing of applications to funding bodies for financial assistance may influence project development, as too may funding guidelines and criteria imposed by funding agencies.
- Diverse funding sources may be identified for staged project development.



## Thematic considerations

- What will the work communicate, explore, reflect, question?
- Can the project be developed without requiring specific thematic responses?
- Are there historical aspects, events or local stories relevant to the site or region that should be remembered and reflected in the brief and the work?
- Is the work to be celebratory, monumental, historical, interpretive, interactive, engaging?
- Consider what the work will say about the commissioner. Are there commissioning agency related issues that will contribute to the theme - its goals and objectives, history, public profile?
- Ensure that the brief is not overly prescriptive and enables the artist a great degree of artistic freedom. The thematic considerations can provide a sound starting point without defining what the outcome will look like.

## Stakeholders

- Consult with potential partners, stakeholders, staff and elected members for input, feedback and support to inform the project brief. What restrictions might they impose?
- What support, skills and connections might the stakeholders may bring to the project?
- What involvement should stakeholders have in the commission, for example, a role in writing or endorsing the brief, involvement in the project advisory panel?
- Are there community members or groups, or users of the proposed site, who should be consulted to enhance their sense of ownership of the project? How will this be undertaken? Will the artist be involved? Will another professional facilitate consultation?
- Which external stakeholders should be represented on the project advisory panel - representatives of the community, funding organisations, project sponsor, other?

## The site

- What factors influence the selection of the site?
- What implications and restrictions are imposed by a particular site, for example, underground services, site access, land ownership and control?
- How publicly accessible is it? Who are the users of the site? Is it the only site? Is it the most appropriate site? Are there other sites for consideration?
- How can the siting of the work enhance the way people use the space?
- What are the relationships between the public you are addressing and the selected site?
- Does the site impact on the long-term ownership of the work?
- What will be the relationship between the work and the site?
- Are there any master plans for future development that need to be considered?
- Does the site impact on the ability of the project to meet broader objectives?
- Are there any site related issues that will impact on what is achievable through the work - climatic, risk, social, other?



## Management

- How will the project be managed on a day-to-day basis?
- Identify project management tasks, including writing the brief, sourcing and selecting the artists, undertaking the site briefing, evaluating and selecting the concept proposals, notifying successful and unsuccessful artists, contract administration, construction and installation supervision. The level of experience the successful artist brings to the project may impact on the project management requirements and how this is undertaken.
- Will a project manager be engaged or are staff resources and skills available?
- Who will be responsible for commissioning the work within the broader structure of the agency? Within which area will the project management sit? Is this the most appropriate place for it to be managed? Is an internal management committee needed to ensure appropriate liaison and support for the project implementation stage?
- Will the artist be required to assume a project management role?
- Who should participate on the project advisory panel to represent the stakeholders and undertake the artist selection? Ensure adequate representation of those with arts expertise - this will make the task easier and provide credibility.
- Who will be the point of contact for the project within the commissioning agency?

## Advisory panel

- The tasks the project advisory panel will be required to undertake may influence its membership and the way it operates.
- An advisory panel may be appointed for the purpose of gathering experts in the area of public art who can provide professional advice to the commissioner and to assist in selecting a concept and an artist to proceed to the commission and fabrication stage. Consideration needs to be given to stakeholder representation on the panel.
- If the commissioning agency is a local Council, and in circumstances where the Council wants to provide greater powers to the advisory panel, such as the ability to make a selection of the artist, endorse the artist's brief or to make decisions on behalf of the Council rather than provide advice to it, then the advisory panel should be a formal 'Council committee' in accordance with Section 41 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (SA). In these circumstances the Council needs to prepare the appropriate terms of reference with the view to describing the parameters of the advisory panel's functions, duties and powers, including its membership.

## Timeline

- What is the timeline available for all stages of the project including brief writing, artist selection, concept development and approval, fabrication and installation?
- Is the timeline adequate? Will the project be compromised by insufficient time?
- Are there other factors that will impact on the available time, such as potential delays in the approval processes, industry down times, site works and access to the site.



## Planning and approval

- What is the approval process? Understand the implications of this and consider the impact it will have on the implementation stage, including timeline and budget.
- Is there a need for an urban planner to endorse the brief, or to participate as a member of the advisory panel?
- How will the concept be assessed for potential risks? What is the impact of this on the brief and the project? How will all relevant staff undertake risk assessment?
- Are there staff who should join the advisory panel, or contribute to the development of the brief, regarding these issues?
- Consider establishing a reference group to examine the concept from a risk management perspective before design development is commissioned. This group may include a planner, building inspector and those responsible for the management of assets, cultural development and maintenance.
- How does the commissioner's asset register impact on insurance and maintenance requirements and the associated requirements placed on the artist and the commissioner's ongoing budget?

## Resolving the artist's brief

- The framework contained in the Developing an artist's brief checklist will inform the development of the project brief.
- Anticipate questions an artist will ask and address these. Provide relevant information but avoid being prescriptive about the artistic outcome. Provide the parameters within which the artist will work but do not specify what the resulting work of art should be.
- Ensure relevant stakeholders contribute to the development of the brief.
- Have all legislative, regulatory and policy issues been addressed?
- If engaging a consultant or project manager, they will also require a brief.

## Project evaluation and monitoring

- Will the project be evaluated against any number of objectives, from a range of perspectives? If so consider how this will be undertaken and the aspects to be evaluated and plan for this to be undertaken as the project develops.
- How will the artwork be monitored in regard to risk management? Who will report on accidents and incidents associated with the work? Who will observe and report on how the artwork is interacted with and used?
- How will the project be assessed to inform maintenance and conservation issues? How will the condition of the work be assessed on an ongoing basis?

**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.**

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