

## SOUTH WEST CREATIVE INDUSTRIES STRATEGY 2020 to 2024: EVALUATION - JULY 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	2
CONTEXT .....	3
STRUCTURE & DATA .....	4
IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY .....	4
1. How effective was the implementation of the strategy? .....	4
2. What was the role of partnerships in achieving the outcomes in the Strategy? .....	6
3. What have we learnt? .....	7
IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY .....	10
4. To what extent were the seven objectives in the Strategy achieved? .....	10
5. What has been the growth in the creative sector across practices, organisations and geography? .	15
6. To what extent has the creative sector produced benefits to the region's economy, society and culture as a result of the Strategy? .....	15
7. What was the contribution of the Strategy to investment in the region? .....	16
8. What impact has the Strategy had on existing relationships within the region? .....	17
9. Has the Strategy resulted in new relationships or collaborations across the region? .....	17
10. Has the Strategy resulted in the development of new audiences? .....	18
11. To what extent has the creative sector become more sustainable in the South West as a result of the Strategy? .....	19
CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS .....	19

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal was to support beneficial and sustainable creative industries across South West Victoria. With input from community, government, peak bodies and audiences, the South West Creative Industries Strategy 2020 to 2024 (Strategy) has been remarkably successful and has brought about significant outcomes aligning with this goal.

The Strategy and associated projects have:

- Elevated the status, visibility, and influence of SW creative industries at local, state and federal levels, strengthening advocacy and providing structured access to the expertise and attention of state government
- Leveraged approximately \$12 million<sup>1</sup> in funding to individuals, organisations and local governments
- Contributed to the development of arts and culture strategies/frameworks by all 5 local government partners (4 adopted at time of Evaluation)
- Developed the capacity, confidence and connectivity of local creatives
- Facilitated a dedicated resource valued by stakeholders and community
- Developed relationships and partnerships with philanthropic organisations
- Fostered a degree of collaboration across silos.

We have learnt that:

- The success of the strategy hinges on the input and attitudes of strategic partners
- Ensuring stakeholder engagement and commitment to the opportunities and visibility offered by the Strategy is essential for achieving shared objectives and delivering a Strategy that is a shared commitment by all stakeholders.
- Balancing the advantages of collaboration with the internal priorities of each stakeholder is an ongoing challenge, alongside variable engagement by partners and staff turnover.
- The reductive focus on LGA-specific outcomes rather than broader regional wins is exacerbated by the inconsistency of financial opportunities available per LGA, although the Strategy has enabled major grants for region-wide initiatives employing a collaborative approach
- Opportunities for in-person connection are incredibly valued both partners and community.

Future challenges as we progress with a second iteration of the Strategy include changes to audience participation in the arts in the wake of the pandemic, limited resources and economic challenges including increased costs of living and of goods and services, and a competitive funding environment.

There is a feeling of rejuvenated momentum in the community and commitment from stakeholders to delivering a second iteration of the Strategy, and creatives have 11.6% more confidence in their careers over the next 12 months, with wants and needs that align with the Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Data has been gathered from RAV and stakeholders (RDV, Creative Victoria, LGAs) but activity goes on beyond our formal relationships that is difficult to capture. This figure may not include funding attained from organisations in the tourism and events sector e.g. Visit Victoria, Festivals Australia, from the health sector e.g. VicHealth, from industry bodies e.g. Music Victoria, Screen Australia, from not-for-profits e.g. FRRR, or from philanthropy, sponsorships or funding for sub-sectors e.g. multicultural community events, creative LGBTQIA+ initiatives etc.

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We are optimistic about working together to capitalise on initial success and deliver benefits to the southwest community and economy from 2025-2029.

## CONTEXT

This evaluation considers the impact of the *South West Creative Industries Strategy 2020 to 2024* (<https://strategy.rav.net.au/>) between November 2020 and June 2024.

In 2018 Regional Development Victoria's Great South Coast Regional Partnership identified the need for a creative industries strategy. In 2019 Creative Victoria supported its development. The resulting logic map identified three purpose statements for such a strategy:

- To identify a coordinated approach to support and promote Creative Industries within the region
- To develop a strategy that reflects the point of difference of the Creative Industries in the region
- To enhance the potential reach, impact, and sustainability of creative industries

Aligning with the initial brief and following the initiation of a Project Control Group (PCG)<sup>2</sup> and 12 months of strategy development, robust consultation<sup>3</sup> and the establishment of a Project Advisory Group (PAG), stakeholders agreed on a common goal.

**The Strategy's primary goal is to foster sustainable and beneficial creative industries in Victoria's South West.**

In this context, sustainable and beneficial means that creative industries thrive and contribute to local culture, economy, wellbeing, and liveability. The strategic partners pursue this goal by identifying opportunities, facilitating connections, and directly helping local creatives to access opportunities including State and Federal funding.

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<sup>2</sup> The Project Control Group (PCG) is a governance group consisting of representatives from State and Local government invested in the Strategy; Corangamite Shire Council, Glenelg Shire Council, Moyne Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council, Warrnambool City Council; Creative Victoria; First Peoples - State Relations (then Aboriginal Victoria); Regional Development Victoria /The Great South Coast Regional Partnership and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism.

RAV's Regional Manager acts as the lead to coordinate the delivery of the Strategy, with the direct support of the PCG and a Project Advisory Group (PAG) consisting of representatives from a range of sectors based in southwest Victoria. The PCG meets four times a year with additional meetings for special projects and working groups. The PAG meets between two to four times a year, twice as a combined meeting with the PCG.

<sup>3</sup> Expert policy development advice was provided by the Cultural Development Network, and Future Tense led a creative ecology mapping exercise to add significant analytic support to researching the Strategy. A robust consultation period included 72 individual or group consultations, 4 industry-expert led community events with over 250 attendees, 1 open survey completed by 139 people and the review of 124 existing policy or strategy documents.

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## STRUCTURE & DATA

This report is structured around the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that form part of the Strategy's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MEL), a tool designed to assess implementation, and outcomes guided by the expertise of FutureTense, consultants involved in the development of the Strategy.

This evaluation is informed by quantitative and qualitative data and insights, including:

- KEQ consultations in 1:1 meetings with 5 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 3 Project Advisory Group (PAG) members in June-July 2024
- Results of Creative Confidence Indicator Polls surveying 74 local creatives in June-July 2024 and 60 local creatives in October 2023 – Attachment 1<sup>4</sup>
- 1:1 engagement with First Nations stakeholders in June-July 2024
- Discussions during a combined PCG and PAG Meeting in May 2024 - Attachment 2
- Comments from 3 PCG stakeholders on circulation of the SWCIS Refocus PDF in May 2024
- Discussions with PCG members during PCG Meeting in March 2024 - Attachment 3
- Community feedback on Build Up, Reach Out program March 2024 – Attachment 4
- The Mid-Strategy Review delivered November 2023 - Attachment 5
- KEQ consultations with three Project Control Group (PCG) stakeholders in March 2023
- The Progress Report to December 2022 - Attachment 6
- Commentary by Regional Arts Victoria's (RAV) team 'on the ground'.

## IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

### 1. How effective was the implementation of the strategy?

#### a. What worked well?

The structure and collectivism of a regional approach worked well in providing a framework and a network to support shared goals, with significant outcomes towards beneficial and sustainable creative industries.

*"It was goat tracks 10 years ago and now we're building roads. There has been a dramatic, fundamental shift since 2019." – Gareth Colliton, Warrnambool City Council*

The Strategy:

- Leveraged approximately \$12 million in funding to individuals, organisations, and local governments, including:
  - Approximately \$2.1 million in funding attained directly by strategic partners in response to funding opportunities, or that RAV applied for, assisted, gave advice towards, wrote a letter of support for, or managed directly.
  - Approximately \$9.9 million in funding attained by community, industry or partners using the Strategy as a tool to influence decision-makers, reference or attach to applications, or for projects that align with strategic objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> See [Dropbox folder](#) for all attachments

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- This includes approximately \$8.8 million in RDV funding for South West infrastructure and projects relating to creative industries.
  - Developed collaborative relationships with philanthropic organisations and led to funding of strategic initiatives, including:
    - Fletcher Jones Family Foundation
    - South West Community Foundation
  - Elevated the status, visibility, and influence of South West creative industries at local, state, and federal levels by:
    - Providing a tool to strengthen advocacy to Ministers and MPs, regional stakeholders and to South West communities themselves
    - Providing structured access to the expertise and attention of Creative Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, and other state government departments
    - The implementation and success of funded projects and activity, e.g. the Strategy itself, Creative Infrastructure Pipeline Report, MAAR Nation MADE, Creative Leaders Program, Building Blocks
  - Connected the region with a broader national ecology and other sectors, including:
    - Health - VicHealth
    - Tourism - Visit Victoria
    - Education – Department of Education
  - Allowed for connection to industry expertise through RAV's Regional Manager, Future Tense, and industry peak bodies / arts organisations, including:
    - Regional Arts Australia
    - Multicultural Arts Victoria
    - Screenworks
    - Arts Access Victoria
    - Writers Victoria
    - Australian Museums and Galleries Association
    - Public Galleries Association of Victoria
    - National Association for the Visual Arts
    - Australian Theatre for Young People
    - Design Institute of Australia
    - Australian Fashion Council
    - Circus Oz
    - Ausdance Victoria
    - Express Media
    - The Push
    - Arena Theatre Company
    - Melbourne Fringe
    - Auspicious Arts Incubator
  - Contributed to the development of local-level arts and culture plans, with all 5 local government partners developing their own strategies or frameworks between 2020 and 2024 (4 adopted at the time of this Evaluation) and 3 LGAs allocating resources to arts & culture officer/coordinator roles.
  - Provided regular in-person and digital opportunities to connect stakeholders, grow networks and foster collaboration, including between PCG/PAG and specific sectors such as LGA performing arts programmers.
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- Provided a dedicated resource to work with partners to deliver the strategy, support local creatives, activate networks, seed partnerships and collaboration, and advocate for the South West creative sector. This role is valued by most stakeholders and community members.
- Developed the capacity, confidence, and connectivity of local creatives of all ages, as evidenced through project acquittals, sector surveys and anecdotal evidence from communities.
- Enabled the creation of an online community and communication channel, with above-average frequency of industry-specific opportunities, updates, and information shared to 2,472 followers<sup>5</sup> at [facebook.com/RAVsouthwest](https://facebook.com/RAVsouthwest) – engagement increasing.
- Enabled a digital footprint for the work of the Strategy at [strategy.rav.net.au/south-coast](https://strategy.rav.net.au/south-coast) before migrating in July 2024 to include an updated timeline and FAQ at [rav.net.au/swcis](https://rav.net.au/swcis).

**b. What challenges were encountered and how were these responded to?**

- COVID-19 significantly disrupted the sector, though funding, industry and 1:1 support helped to mitigate long-term damage, recovery is ongoing.
- Confusion about the Strategy being “RAV’s work” versus a shared commitment by all stakeholders. A culture shift is required that will benefit the sector from a regional level, acknowledging that strong synergies exist between regional and local-level strategies and that outcomes may not be deliberately delivered due to any one document.
- Confusion between the Strategy, the Creative Infrastructure Pipeline documents and the purposes of each.
- Variability in opportunities available per LGA through the partnership, and at times a reductive focus on LGA-specific outcomes rather than broader regional progress.
- Variable engagement by partners as staff changed roles and left organisations requiring ongoing induction and advocacy, with consequent low profile of the Strategy within LGAs.
- Confusion over the roles of the PCG vs PAG – requires reclarification.
- Inconsistent attendance of PCG members to meetings due to distance, other commitments, prioritisation and perhaps the availability of funding to allocate.
- Slow take-up of the opportunities offered through RAV’s role in the partnership, which includes bespoke advice to local governments and the creatives in their areas.
- Maintaining good relationships, regular communication and in-person connection continues to be paramount in overcoming the challenges of collective work, including personality differences and at times poor communication.
- Stretched resources led to the dissolution of the South West e-news list, refining focus on communication via the RAV South West Facebook Page.
- RAV staff changeover and loss of historic knowledge following the departure of long-standing Regional Manager, Jo Grant, though there’s renewed energy from the current Regional Manager.
- Tight funding climates, limited resources, increased event/insurance costs and rising costs of living will continue to be challenging for the sector.

**2. What was the role of partnerships in achieving the outcomes in the Strategy?**

**a. How have people across the sector been connected to resources and opportunities?**

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<sup>5</sup> Facebook page followers as of 1 July 2024 – see additional insights in [Attachment 7](#).

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- As a partnership, the region communicates a sophisticated approach to its creative industries in a manner that is unique in Australia but that became a model for other similar regional strategies e.g. the G21 region's 'Making Change' Strategy.
- The governance structure and membership of the PCG and PAG has strengthened relationships between local, regional, and state level organisations and individuals and reduced work in silos. This includes structured, regular connection to Creative Victoria, RDV and the State Government First Nations department, regional oversight with a tourism lens from Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism, peer-to-peer opportunities for LGA partnerships alongside industry-specific input from on-the-ground creatives.
- Local creatives have benefitted from access to industry expertise, learning resources, mentoring and employment opportunities, grants, and funding, 1:1 advice and networking opportunities to build connection and seed partnerships and ideas. Profiles have been raised and resources increased e.g. \$299,500 in state-level funding resulting from 12 months of focused mentoring for Find Your Voice Collective, described by co-founder, Tom Richardson as "pivotal to our growth".

**b. Have new partnerships been produced?**

- The Strategy has enabled new partnerships, including with philanthropic organisations such as Fletcher Jones Family Foundation and South West Community Foundation. Both organisations funded creative applicants for the first time as a direct result of the Strategy.

*"We have observed an elevation of the work on a regional sector level beyond an LGA to LGA mentality. We really liked that and wanted to support and learn from this approach, to investigate how we can replicate this in our own practice and find ways of working across the region more effectively" – Annabel Cussen, South West Community Foundation EO*

- LGAs have worked more collaboratively over time on projects and sub-networks have organically arisen e.g. LGA-owned performing arts venues sharing programming, and community theatre companies sharing resources. Similar networks could be better connected to foster peer-to-peer collaboration, learning and partnerships e.g. community-run galleries, writing/literary festivals, live music venues.

**3. What have we learnt?**

- The willingness and capacity to collaborate at a regional level, leads to an effective voice for and by creative industries, greater visibility of the sector, deeper understanding of creative potential, and results in more leveraged funding.
  - Government departments rely on regional networks to aid understanding of what's happening outside of Metro areas, and Creative Victoria's understanding of regional Victoria is critical to the sustainability of statewide creative industries.
  - State Government awareness of activity in the region is important but funding is required particularly for capital works to move forward.
  - The Creative Infrastructure Pipeline report identified assets, opportunities and articulated rationalised need which LGAs could respond to, though priorities have evolved since the time of the report. Subsequent successful Regional Collections Access Program applications led to
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over \$1 million in funding for Hamilton Gallery, Portland Arts Centre, Warrnambool Art Gallery, and Flagstaff Hill.

- This report also enabled all 5 LGAs to be eligible for the invitation-only Creative Neighbourhood Infrastructure Support Program – a Creative Victoria initiative to provide support to LGAs to fit out or redevelop spaces to improve availability and quality of creative facilities. For example, Hamilton Performing Arts Centre attained \$150,000 for seating refurbishment.
- Strong links to regional networks e.g. Great South Coast Regional Partnership Board, community organisations and social media pages are important to ensuring opportunities are communicated.
- LGA partners appreciate having an on-the-ground resource to support their teams, act as an objective third party with strong local networks and intel, and to connect to the broader industry across Victoria and Australia, e.g. support for Corangamite to benchmark, develop and promote their first artist-in-residence program for Light-Up Camperdown.
- PAG members value the opportunity to develop their networks, connect with opportunities and be ‘in the loop’ through Strategy involvement, but can be better utilised.
- Local community members value access to an impartial industry expert to provide 1:1 guidance and mentoring, share opportunities, support growth, and facilitate connection.
- Strategic priorities need a re-focus for the next iteration, alongside improvements across implementation and group culture to enable more clarity, collaboration, and participation.
- Data, tangible evidence, and local stories are invaluable in demonstrating the effectiveness of the strategy and need to be captured by all stakeholders, but the tools to capture data are disparate.
- There is a strong appetite for visual storytelling and promotion of creatives, projects, economy- and tourism-driving arts and culture experiences from stakeholders, community, and audiences.
- Creatives yearn for access to more funding, affordable/paid opportunities to exhibit/perform, skills and knowledge development, and opportunities to collaborate within the sector.
- In-person opportunities to connect the sector are valued more than ever post-COVID, but online opportunities should also be in the mix to reduce barriers to participation.

*“It would be good to have an opportunity to connect with local creatives as a hub to brainstorm, collaborate and encourage community participation and connections.” – Survey respondent*

**a. What innovations or adaptations were produced through implementation of the Strategy?**

- Obvious adaption through the pandemic aside, there has been an organic shift in how we understand strategic objectives over time, with more intersectionality and nuance:
    - Creative Hubs came to have a metaphorical meaning beyond physical locations and infrastructure involved in a formalised Hub program. Connected communities, networks with potential, “nodes of capacity” and sector-specific sub-networks are creative hubs in and of themselves.
    - The South West Story was distinctly linked to a pilot storyteller project and LGA strategies, but the stories of local creatives continue to be understood, developed, and elevated throughout the work of the Strategy and local-level strategies, not specifically under one objective.
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- Testing Grounds sought resources for a specific project that was not funded, but innovation is an inherent part of the creative industries embedded throughout the strategic approach.
- The Strategy has matured enough to need a review and to refine strategic priorities, but the environment has not changed enough to warrant a dramatic diversion from the overarching goal.

**b. What new knowledge has been produced about the region’s creative sector?**

- We have a better understanding of the creative sector gleaned through the Strategy, including the original consultation, the Creative Infrastructure Pipeline Report, project surveys and acquittals, insights from 2 Creative Confidence Indicator Polls and the ear-to-the-ground work of the Regional Manager.
- We can now more confidently assert that southwest Victoria is a vibrant creative industries region backed up by extensive qualitative data and tangible examples, although no baseline data was able to be captured from which to measure cultural, social and economic impacts.
- 2024 Creative Confidence Poll results and stakeholder insights differ in opinions on support for emerging vs established artists, with early career creatives either feeling supported or overlooked, and a handful of organisations receiving substantial funding whilst others feel neglected. The top 10 themes emerging as priorities align with Strategy Objectives, most notably Creative Hubs, South West Story, Professional and Enterprise Development and Youth:

*Table 1*

<b>Theme / Priority:</b>	<b>Mentions:</b>
Funding / grants / subsidies	22
More creative spaces / affordable opportunities and spaces to exhibit	14
Networking / connection / opportunities to gather & share	12
Promoting arts / local artists / showcasing assets & what's on / tourism	10
Opportunities to learn and develop / affordable classes and workshops / education about the industry e.g. grant writing, governance, lobbying, funding	9
Collaboration/ working with other creatives	8
Increased engagement / communication	8
Youth programs / investing in young creatives / teen opportunities / school resources and experiences	7
Access to more performance spaces / paid performance opportunities	6
Advocacy / educating government & public about validity / benefits of sector	4
Access & inclusion	4

*“I am grateful of all the support I have had in getting my career off the ground in SW Victoria! Please continue supporting more artists and creatives locally and organise more networking and performing opportunities” - Early career survey respondent*

**c. What conditions are required to support the effective development and execution of the strategy?**

- We need a culture-shift towards shared delivery and reporting, including celebrating outcomes driven by community as well as by stakeholders through their own aligned plans and strategies.

- It's timely to update Terms of References, re-define roles and denote who sits on the PCG vs PAG, noting that it's more effective for the Regional Manager to act as a conduit rather than to expect a volunteer PAG member to represent the group in every PCG meeting.
- PCG and PAG members have largely been invested in the success of the strategy and supportive in 'spreading the word' on the ground, but we need to re-engage Councillors and Executives alongside community for better understanding of the work.
- Clearer purposes for meetings and more agenda-setting by stakeholders is required to lead discussion on more collaborative work.
- We should continue to host both combined and group-specific intimate meetings with more time for informal discussion and clearer language.
- As a region we need to be prepared to respond to funding opportunities that may arise through federal and state-level governments.
- To support community members to achieve their goals, we must continue to prioritise developing community capacity and elevating the sophistication of funding proposals, seeding partnerships and fostering collaboration, alongside investing in our own capacities to support the sector through this work.

## IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY

### 4. To what extent were the seven objectives in the Strategy achieved?

ACHIEVED	ONGOING	NOT YET ACHIEVED
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OBJECTIVE	PROGRESS
1. First Nations	Achieved and ongoing
2. The South West Story	Achieved and ongoing
3. Data Collection	Not achieved - funding bid unsuccessful
4. Testing Grounds	Not achieved as a singular objective but embedded across the strategy
5. Professional and Enterprise Development	Achieved and ongoing
6. Creative Hubs	Achieved and ongoing
7. Youth Programs	Achieved and ongoing

We can gain a better understanding of the extent to which the objectives have been achieved by noting the key projects, outcomes and success stories, and by considering the reasons for ongoing and not yet achieved objectives.

OBJECTIVE	DETAIL
1. <b>First Nations:</b> increased recognition of First Nations culture and	? 1.1 Match existing regional priorities of First Nations groups to the resources needed to deliver them
	✓ 1.2 Support local emerging practitioners with mentoring from Elders and/or other First Nations artform leaders
	✓ 1.3 Showcase projects featuring established and emerging artists

heritage in the region	
<p>Objective not entirely met but progress can be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships developed with Traditional Owners, First Nations creatives, state government representatives and local organisations/groups</li> <li>• Direct alignment with Strategy objectives in Council Plans, Reconciliation Action Plans, Aboriginal Participation &amp; Engagement Action Plans etc</li> <li>• Individual creatives developing and achieving success (e.g. Sherry Johnstone, Amelia Bell, Emma Stenhouse, Kelly Frankland-Saunders, Mel Steffensen, Staycee Charles etc)</li> <li>• Individual mentoring, advice and career development opportunities through connection with PAG</li> <li>• Ongoing <a href="#">MAAR Nations Gallery</a> within Warrnambool Art Gallery, won AMaGA Award, presenting local First Nations artists in Maar Nation MADE</li> <li>• Confidence and entrepreneurship fostered through mentoring by female First Nations role models for emerging artists in <a href="#">Ngatook Collective</a>, e.g. Aliza Johnstone leading Maar Day Out / Blak Markets</li> <li>• PAG connections led to First Nations-informed Deakin Hycel design, becoming case study for architecture students and influencing courses</li> <li>• Strategy influenced successful application of infrastructure funding (\$900k) for Traditional Owner celebration space in Portland</li> <li>• Cultural protocols and performances more integral to events e.g. Welcome to Countries, smoking ceremonies, Koondoom Yarkeen Karweeyn Dancers</li> <li>• More First Nations events endorsed by stakeholders e.g. MAAR Day Out, Miura Matsuri, First Nations exhibitions and performances, events for culturally significant dates/reconciliation.</li> <li>• Development of significant new event focussed on First Nations culture; Graze the Day, and associated EOI with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation for Eastern Maar artist to develop branding – successful applicant was PAG Member, Sherry Johnstone</li> <li>• Integrated Art by Dr Vicki Couzens critical element of Port Campbell revitalisation project</li> <li>• Lake Pertobe Pirtup Meereengeeye meeting place embedded local artworks</li> <li>• Indigenous Song Writing and pilot choir project</li> <li>• Budj Bim won 2024 Victorian Premier’s Design Award</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. The South West</b>  <b>Story:</b> greater understanding of South West creative industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 2.1 Pilot a storyteller-in-residence program to creatively profile the region through existing platforms</li> <li>✓ 2.2 Support local government areas in the region to develop and review local-level strategies and plans</li> <li>✓ 2.3 Review outcomes of pilot project</li> <li>✓ 2.4 Launch local government strategies</li> <li>✓ 2.5 Support local governments to incorporate creative industry goals into Council Plans</li> </ul>
<p>Objective achieved and ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storyteller-in-Residence program delivered and reviewed, including the creation of 2 local films that share the stories of local creatives</li> <li>• All 5 LGAs have developed own strategies / economic development frameworks (Warrnambool’s Strategy due for adoption late 2024/early 2025) centred on creative industries, and creative industry goals included in all 5 Council Plans.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGAs invested into improving online arts &amp; culture presence e.g. Warrnambool City Council's website development, Southern Grampians Shire Council's tourism campaigns leveraging events</li> <li>• Council business &amp; community development support programs specifically supporting creative industries e.g. Corangamite Business Assistance Scheme Stream 2: <i>Creative Industries and Placemaking</i> and Stream 3: <i>Community Enterprise</i></li> <li>• Presented to Great South Coast Regional Development Board – South West Alliance</li> <li>• Local creatives celebrated through Facebook page with rising community engagement</li> <li>• Significant events contributed to regional creative reputation and developed new audiences e.g. Festivals, record crowds at State-funded major gallery exhibitions</li> <li>• State- and federal-level funding success and relationships strengthened with organisations who raise profile of region e.g. Creative Victoria, Visit Victoria, Screen Australia</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Data Collection:</b> Valuable regional cultural and economic data is collected and used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× 3.1 Pilot data collection for impact with selected institutions across region</li> <li>× 3.2 Establish sample baseline data for southwest Victoria</li> <li>× 3.3 Review sample data and data points</li> <li>× 3.4 Create an 'open access' portal for local organisations to access measurement tools</li> <li>3.5 Publish aggregate data for region</li> <li>× 3.6 Review and revise data portal as required</li> </ul>
Not yet achieved - funding application unsuccessful for regional data project, however: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some baseline data exists in region through LGAs collating own data to inform strategies, benchmark industry and be used as advocacy tools e.g. Warrnambool's Creative Industries Data Summary</li> <li>• Significant data relating to cultural tourism captured through events funded by Visit Victoria's Regional Events Fund e.g. major exhibitions at WAG and HG, and through Creative Victoria-funded institutions.</li> <li>• There's an appetite to trial consistent acquittals and data-sharing across philanthropic organisations (FJFF/SWCF) which could be extended beyond social change partners</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Testing Grounds:</b> Greater recognition of SW Vic as an innovative creative industry region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× 4.1 Seek resources for a regional-level program that allows for two-entry points:  'Test It': support for new initiatives or projects  Follow-Up': to extend opportunities for existing projects and initiatives</li> <li>× 4.2 Deliver the regional-level program</li> <li>× 4.3 Showcase projects progressed through 'Follow-up' stage</li> </ul>
Not achieved as a singular objective but the ethos of testing new initiatives and projects is inherent in the work of delivering a regional Strategy. Additionally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Strategy has enabled a flourishing of creative activity, with SW Victoria increasingly recognised as an innovative creative region</li> <li>• Communicating local stories aids in championing the innovative spirit of regional creatives, which continues to be an inherent part of the sector</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Creative Hubs:</b>	5.1 Design a regional hub program to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Build capacity for existing spaces and facilitators</li> </ul>

<p>Centres connected with infrastructure, industry and each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify opportunities for other suitable spaces</li> <li>✓ Examine the potential for 'pop-up' networking opportunities</li> <li>✓ 5.2 Consolidate creative infrastructure requirements at a regional level</li> <li>✓ 5.3 Match hubs with relevant state or national industry bodies</li> <li>✓ 5.4 Develop MOUs with hub spaces formalising community access protocols</li> <li>✓ 5.5 Create 'Hub Exchange' residency program across hubs to support short-term intensives between regions</li> <li>✓ 5.6 Review hub program and membership and revise program accordingly</li> </ul>
<p>Creative Hubs objective became less formalised than a program with MOUs, but the strategy has connected centres of creativity with infrastructure, industry and each other, alongside connecting pockets of potential to funding and capacity building opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative Infrastructure Pipeline Project assessed 50 projects to inform needs, priorities and opportunities, strengthened research and knowledge and gave visibility of opportunity and potential to State Government and influenced Creative Neighbourhoods funding approaches</li> <li>• 4 creative institutions improved through the Regional Collections Access Program</li> <li>• Glenelg Shire Council allocated funding to support the development of an Investment Logic Map (ILM) for Glenelg Shire Council's Museum development project</li> <li>• LGAs invested in improvements to key creative infrastructure e.g. Camperdown Theatre Revitalisation Project, Hamilton Performing Arts Centre Auditorium upgrades.</li> <li>• Funding from philanthropists to support organisations and individuals to carry out projects; Port Fairy Literary Festival, MAAR Made, Find Your Voice Collective,</li> <li>• Recovery funding from Australian Gov to support 2 events</li> <li>• Strategy identified and engaged numerous creative organisations and spaces, contributing to a region-wide list of creative organisations and contacts, though this is constantly evolving</li> <li>• Support for community-led nodes of capacity activating local creative communities e.g. Alderwood Manor, F Project, Julia St Creative Space, Off The Rails Dunkeld, MUD Gallery etc.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Professional and Enterprise Development:</b> increased capacity to grow the creative industries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 6.1 Launch annual professional development program for residencies and information sharing from within and outside the region</li> <li>✓ 6.2 Develop an enterprise support program for advancing business skills and marketing opportunities for creative professionals</li> <li>✓ 6.3 Review, revise and deliver professional development program</li> <li>✓ 6.4 Review and revise program for enterprise support</li> </ul>
<p>Development opportunities delivered through programs as funding allowed and via ongoing work of Regional Manager rather than through a set annual program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67 creatives connected, developed and supported in Building Blocks program (\$9,150) inc. 9 venues connected with industry experts</li> <li>• \$63,514 in Regional Arts Fund grants supported 15 creative projects including professional development activities</li> <li>• 12 months of focussed mentoring for Find Your Voice Collective led to \$230k in successful grant applications and improved long-term prospects</li> <li>• 21 Industry figures in Creative Leaders program gained mentor experience sharing skills and expertise</li> </ul>	

- Supported One Day Studios to tour Mabel & Switch to regional schools and Strategy used to secure funding for roles assisting organisational sustainability
- 4 1:1 industry sessions for presenting spaces with RAV experts
- A.D.A.P.T.D – 3-year program of theatre training opportunities at Portland Arts Centre with Melbourne theatre company, Lab Kelpie
- Regional Manager connection to touring team enabled Find Your Voice Collective to develop and perform with RAV Touring Show, ‘Sound of Your Town’ with musicians, Mama Kin Spender
- Supported growing and established events e.g. Port Fairy Literary Weekend, Dunkeld Writers Festival, Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, Port Fairy Folk Festival
- Music Chats meetup with 60 regional musicians
- Business of Music Masterclass funded by Creative Victoria
- PCP/PAG members and broader industry connected; ongoing

**7. Youth Programs**  
greater mentoring, education, career pathways opportunities

- ✓ 7.1 Build connections between major institutions and young people in the region
- ✓ 7.2 Pilot a ‘creative leaders’ program to mentor young people to devise and deliver creative programs
- ✓ 7.3 Create skills-based placements across region
- ✓ 7.4 Support delivery of projects or initiatives identified by creative leaders

- [Creative Leaders Program](#) (\$150k) enabled mentoring of 24 participants from 21 artists and mentors, tours to 20 artist studios/organisations, funded 9 youth-led projects and 5 partner projects. Increased social connections, industry knowledge and skills, confidence and wellbeing, with participants developed e.g.:
  - Flynn Gurry received Regional Arts Funding to create EP and is supporting Pierce Brothers on 2024 national tour
  - Leyland Jones studying at the Melbourne Conservatorium, touring internationally with Melbourne’s Choir of Trinity College, commissioning new works from Australian composers with support from RAV, and performing at the Victorian Opera, for Port Fairy Spring Music Festival and Rising Festival.
  - Evie Mae was supported with a mentorship to learn engineering skills as employment sideline, then spotted at Port Campbell’s Crayfest mixing desk.
  - Levi Parker is studying dance at Patrick School of Arts in Melbourne
- LGA focus of FReeZA and Council’s youth programs largely creative e.g. Moyne’s Future Folk Program mentoring youth in creative career pathways, 3D projection projects developing creative skills, Girl Power (connection, sharing & learning) Nidra Yoga & Crystal Sound Bowl Meditation, JAM music Collective etc
- FReeZA stages at events e.g. Tracks and Terang Colour Festival
- Pathways to the Performing Arts industry day provided career guidance for young creatives at Hamilton Performing Arts Centre
- Partnership between F Project, Brophy, FReeZA and Warrnambool City Council youth created an active exhibition and meeting space
- VicHealth funded Playground murals to create welcoming spaces, with art by Shaun McIntyre, Lauren Green and emerging youth artists Olive Adams, Lucy McLaren and Chelsea Crawley-Walsh

- Find Your Voice Collective supporting emerging artists to launch careers e.g. Jacob Paton-Lee preparing to launch a touring tribute show, Grace Kenny (GK) writing, recording and performing her own hip hop music in front of festival crowds.
- Creative Workers in Schools program saw artists work for 6 months in southwest schools
- Partnerships with Neil Porter Legacy e.g. 200+ youth advised on creative careers at Creative Arts Industry Day & LGA collaborations
- 3 youth sessions held across region to consult re: LGA strategies

## 5. What has been the growth in the creative sector across practices, organisations, and geography?

Growth is difficult to measure due to a lack of baseline quantitative data across the region and the lack of progress around strategic objective 3 - Data Collection.

Observations from RAV and the PAG alongside Creative Confidence Poll results suggest that artists feel more supported, connected, networked and visible because LGAs are paying attention to creative industries. This is supported by the increased number of local governments with arts and culture strategies:

- Glenelg Shire Arts and Culture Strategy adopted in 2022
- Corangamite Shire creative industries part of a Grow and Prosper framework developed in July 2023
- Southern Grampians Shire Council Arts and Culture Strategy adopted June 2024
- Moyne Shire Council's Arts and Culture Strategy adopted July 2024
- Warrnambool City Council Arts and Cultural Strategy due for adoption late 2024/early 2025.

Resources have increased at an operational level through the creation of 1 FTE Arts & Culture Officer in Moyne, 1 FTE increase in arts marketing roles in Southern Grampians, and an 0.8 FTE Cultural Development Coordinator in Warrnambool. Two arts Manager roles have been removed in restructures at Glenelg and Southern Grampians, though the overall shift is towards additional support for the sector.

*"I didn't think we'd have our own strategy and a dedicated Arts & Culture Officer when we started" – Jacquie Anderton, Moyne Shire Council*

Participation in arts organisations has ebbed and flowed with variable community energy. New organisations like Terang Artist's Gallery and South West Makers have emerged, some have fluctuated e.g. Off The Rails Dunkeld has re-ignited with creative events and a new pop-up cinema 'Off Beat Film Club', and some organisations like Balmoral's Chameleon Arts Collective have gone into hiatus due to leading individuals leaving the region.

## 6. To what extent has the creative sector produced benefits to the region's economy, society, and culture as a result of the Strategy?

Community-led arts organisations are experiencing varying levels of success, with some struggling to attract/retain volunteers and funding, and others growing at a dizzying speed.

In October 2023, newly formed South West Makers opened 'Glyph Gallery' in Port Fairy with exhibition and retail spaces, 5 artist studios and a space rented for art therapy.

*"We have amassed an engaged cohort of 130 members (45 selling works in our retail space) in our first 8 months. We used the Strategy as background research and evidence for the need of such a facility. We're shocked at sales – we budgeted to earn \$1,000 in commissions each month but are currently averaging \$3,000-4,000 and are looking to expand."* – Marion Matthews, South West Makers.

Impact without baseline data is difficult to measure, but benefits can be assumed considering the economic flow-on benefits from cultural tourism, creative employment and funding success alongside qualitative data from creatives

## 7. What was the contribution of the Strategy to investment in the region?

- a. Have levels of investment in the creative sector increased across the region?
- b. How were investments distributed across, practices, organisations, and geography across the South West?

Investment in the creative sector has been substantial throughout the duration of the Strategy, though COVID recovery initiatives meant unprecedented levels of funding we are unlikely to see throughout 2025-2029.

The Strategy has increased the visibility and value of creative industries in the region, leveraging approximately \$12 million between November 2020 and June 2024.

Note-worthy funding attained directly through the Strategy includes:

- Creative Victoria - \$160,000 – Creative Infrastructure Pipeline Report, which elevated the case for funding the projects in italics below:
- *Creative Victoria - \$1,004,079 – Regional Collections Access Program funding for 4 key facilities*
- *Australian Government - \$183,000 – Camperdown Theatre Royal*
- *Creative Victoria - \$150,000 - Hamilton Performing Arts Centre*
- Vic Health - \$150,000 – Creative Leaders Program
- Fletcher Jones Family Foundation - \$29,000 – community projects
- Australian Government - \$13,500 – Covid recovery support for two south west festivals
- *Glenelg Shire Council - \$13,000 – Investment Logic Map for Glenelg creative infrastructure*
- Australian Communities Foundation - \$10,000 – community projects

Additionally, the Strategy influenced further investment into the region, including:

- \$400,000 for First Nations integrated art within \$15m Port Campbell Infrastructure Project
  - \$320,000 from the Regional Arts Fund, Creative Victoria, the Dept. of Education and Fletcher Jones Family Foundation to support One Day Studios
  - \$299,500 from Creative Victoria to Find Your Voice Collective to support long-term projects.
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The work of the Regional Manager in supporting southwest artists led to successful funding for projects, including \$265,324 in Regional Arts Funding through Project Grants and Quick Response Grants (\$63,514) and Recovery Boost Funding (\$201,810). This includes:

- Support for events and arts projects, including MAAR Nation MADE at Warrnambool Art Gallery; Wallawar (Glow) Festival; True Faces of Creative Activism (Accessibility & Advocacy); Storyclub; Julia St Creative Space; Find Your Voice Collective / Snuff Puppets.
- Support for local, state, national and international professional development, including for Xan Coleman/Dining Room Tales; Studio A with artist, Caroline Healey; writer, Shelley Knoll-Miller; musician, Nigel Weane; poet/writer, James Laidler; musician, Karien Sinclair; musician, Flynn Gurry; and playwright, Megan Twycross.

Approximately \$9.9 million in funding influenced by the Strategy includes approximately \$8.8 million in RDV funding for infrastructure and projects relating to the creative industries, including Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, Theatre Royal, Koroit Theatre, Port Fairy Goods Shed, Portland Foreshore, Alderwood Manor, Two Rivers Gallery, Julia St Creative Space, Light Up Camperdown, Dining Room Tales and other creative projects.

In terms of dispersal, all LGAs have benefitted, though there exists a larger concentration of artists living in Warrnambool and Moyne who are active in submitting funding applications. Funding from local philanthropic organisations has been concentrated towards these areas due to the unusual concentration of philanthropic trusts and charitable organisations in this part of Victoria and their individual funding parameters.

## **8. What impact has the Strategy had on existing relationships within the region?**

PCG/PAG members are feeling more connected to their peers and each other through the work of the Strategy, for example in the strengthening of relationships through regular in-person meetings and event attendance.

Community members are also showing signs of developing relationships within the region because of introductions through strategic partners and sector-led events and projects, with a sense of greater connection alongside tangible examples as seen in table 2 and throughout the examples in this document.

*“I am excited at the growth and connection of people in the Southwest” – Survey respondent*

The Strategy has facilitated stronger relationships between funders and funding recipients. E.g. In 2023, FJFF donated \$8,500 to Warrnambool College’s Indigenous Garden project led by PAG member, Anthea Rafferty. A re-connection at a 2024 RAV ‘Friendraising’ event triggered a further \$5,000 grant and future conversations around big-picture thinking.

*“I am grateful to collaborate with passionate people in a fantastic organisation that places creativity and opportunity at the centre of its practice.” – Anthea Rafferty, Warrnambool College*

## **9. Has the Strategy resulted in new relationships or collaborations across the region?**

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In-person events have connected community members and resulted in organic new relationships and collaborations, often facilitated by creative hubs. For example, Tempo Jazz Duo formed when new residents saw a performance at Alderwood Manor and decided to collaborate. RAV's 'Build Up, Reach Out' professional development program connected 67 creatives and seeded new relationships, with 83% saying they grew their professional networks and build relationships.

*"Have made several connections, one resulting in hopefully gaining a young volunteer, another in planning for a future community workshop and the possibility of a collaboration between F and Warrnambool Theatre company on a small project."* – Workshop participant

*"I've received a number of LinkedIn connections, and email connections with plans to meet in the future."* – Workshop participant

## **10. Has the Strategy resulted in the development of new audiences?**

Viewing audiences as participants and consumers of creative events and initiatives, it's challenging for producers and venues to keep up with changing audience sentiments towards attending arts events and initiatives, with the pandemic causing new and heightened access needs<sup>6</sup> and audiences being more selective about what they choose to attend, in part due to cost and location<sup>7</sup>.

*"Just trying to be resilient and resourceful to keep things exciting and accessible for our community, but it's so hard doing it without funding for programming. I can see the impact it's having, but people just don't have the expendable income they had even a year ago and so paid ticketed events are just not getting the numbers to rely on tickets as income stream for staffing to keep us going strong."* – Chelsea Hatherall, Alderwood Manor

Creative practitioners have leveraged opportunities to tap into new audiences. Through the connection of RAV's touring arm to the Regional Manager, the Find Your Voice Collective choir performed with professional touring artists Mama Kin Spender for RAV touring show, 'Sound of Your Town'. A record 258 Find Your Voice Collective singers also performed at Port Fairy Folk Festival and are preparing for future metropolitan performances and world class collaborations. Some events are also adapting to attract new audiences e.g. The Robert Burns Scottish Festival broadening to include Celtic programming.

Media coverage, video stories, and viral social media posts of creative endeavours may have developed new audiences e.g. Commercial Hotel Terang's ABC feature, ambitious marketing campaigns for major exhibitions by Hamilton Gallery and Warrnambool Art Gallery etc.

The Strategy itself has also enabled the development of a local creative audience consisting of program participants, event attendees, survey respondents and the Facebook community alongside the broader RAV eNews list. In addition, philanthropists are more aware of the strategy and creative industries as a legitimate economic sector.

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<sup>6</sup> [Patternmakers Research](#) 'How the pandemic has changed audience accessibility', Jan 2023

<sup>7</sup> [Creative Australia Research](#) - 2022 National Arts Participation Survey Results

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## 11. To what extent has the creative sector become more sustainable in the South West as a result of the Strategy?

Relief funding to volunteer organisations and artists during the pandemic helped to sustain creative careers, though the festivals and events sector has not recovered from pre-COVID highs, with a perfect storm of social and economic factors contributing to wavering financial sustainability despite strong groundwork.

*“Every year, we run a better festival with more cost saving infrastructure for future years. The site is incredibly unique and is large enough to host a Glastonbury-sized event, but it's a horrendous time for regional festivals. It's difficult to plan long-term, and I currently don't see a sustainable future.” - Jayden Bath, Loch Hart Music Festival.* - Jayden Bath, Loch Hart Festival.

However, some organisations are becoming more sustainable, with more funded strategic plans, consideration of governance structures, varied strategies for income-generation and financial management. For example, Warrnambool Theatre Company has gone from relying on Box Office sales to fund their annual production to developing a 3–5-year funding strategy that diversifies revenue sources (adding revenue from membership, non-recurrent and philanthropy etc.), alongside investigating banking structures to support their financial future (DGR status, term deposits, ethical investing etc.) - monumental for a community-based, not-for-profit regional theatre organisation.

In some cases, we can see a dramatic increase in resources. For example, One Day Studios has grown from 3 volunteers to 10 employees (.1 to .8 EFT), 1 specifically focussed on business development for future sustainability, and has extended work across the state as part of RAV's 2024 Creative Learning program<sup>8</sup>.

Community-run exhibition spaces at the F Project, Julia St Creative Space, Glyph Gallery and Camperdown Courthouse have exhibitions scheduled up to 12 months in advance, indicating demand and forward-planning.

There continues to be a strong demand for capacity building, not just projects, which speaks to a maturity of the industry to think beyond a 'hand to mouth' mentality and to invest in the development of the individuals driving the sector.

## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The Strategy has facilitated local and community activity to operate at regional level, lifting visibility of the creative industries and showing that the South West is a creative region with great potential for growth.

There is a feeling of rejuvenated momentum in the community and a commitment from stakeholders to delivering a second iteration of the Strategy, so we are optimistic about being able to work together to deliver benefits to the South West community and economy in the coming years.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rav.net.au/events/mabel-switch/>

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The next step is to develop the 2025-2029 Strategy, progress through stakeholder consultation and public feedback, alongside formalising commitment from stakeholders towards funding the partnership. In 2025 we will be updating terms of reference and seeking expressions of interest for PAG membership, then advancing with delivery of the strategy and seeking funding to deliver on priority programs.

