

Skills planning for industry
growth: A case study of the
Katherine arts industry

CATHERINE CURRY

THE CULTURAL RECREATION AND TOURISM
TRAINING ADVISORY COUNCIL

NCVER NEW RESEARCHER AWARD RECIPIENT



Australian Government
**Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations**

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In 2008, NCVER awarded four New Researcher Awards. The recipients were:

- ✧ Annie Priest, Southbank Institute of Technology
- ✧ Catherine Curry, to The Cultural Recreation and Tourism Training Advisory Council
- ✧ Fiona Shewring, TAFE NSW, Illawarra Institute
- ✧ Mary Cushnahan, Kangan Batman TAFE.

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About the research

Skills planning for industry growth: A case study of the Katherine arts industry

Catherine Curry, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

One of the main research objectives of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is to build the research capacity of the vocational education and training (VET) sector. To assist this objective, NCVER has developed a program whereby new researchers are sponsored to attend its annual 'No Frills' conference. Four new researchers were supported to attend the 2008 conference in Launceston. One of these awards went to Catherine Curry. This paper is based on her presentation at the conference.

The cultural industries have the potential to contribute in significant ways to income-generation and to the sustainability of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Successful Indigenous arts and crafts industries in the regions have been shown to reduce the flow of migration to the cities by offering jobs and business prospects at a local level.

To this end, the Department of Employment, Education and Training in the Northern Territory commissioned a skills audit of the local cultural industries in the Katherine region.

The paper describes the skills audit process and offers some suggestions for the use of skills audits in similar contexts.

Key messages

- ✧ The cultural industries in the Katherine region are rich and diverse and, with the development of the proposed Katherine Cultural Precinct, have the potential to benefit the local community, both economically and socially.
- ✧ The skills audit showed that the skill sets of arts practitioners were strong, but that high-level managers will be required to support the development of the Katherine Cultural Precinct. Business skills, which are currently lacking in the community, will also be required to run a multipurpose cultural centre.
- ✧ A detailed training and employment plan should be developed as a matter of priority to meet the gaps identified by the skills audit.

Tom Karmel

NCVER

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Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
Arts NT	Manyallaluk Art & Craft Centre
Barunga Festival	Merrepen Arts
Beswick Cultural Centre	Mimi Art and Craft Aboriginal Corporation
Djilpin Arts	Ngukurr Arts
Flying Fox Festival	Nitmiluk
Gallop-Thru-Time Art Gallery	NT Film Office
Jawoyn Association	NT Rare Rocks
Jilkminggin	NT Writers Centre
Katherine Art Gallery	Nyirrananggalung Council
Katherine Books	Paperbark Women
Katherine Cultural Precinct Action Group	Regional Arts Australia
KCP Indigenous Action Group	Territory Craft
Katherine Film Society	Top Didj and Art Gallery
Katherine Regional Arts	Top End Arts Marketing
Katherine Region Harmony Group	Tourism NT
Katherine Show	Tourism Top End
Katherine Town Council	Yothu Yindi Foundation

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Introduction

This paper explores the findings of a cultural industries skills audit undertaken in Katherine in the Northern Territory in 2008. It will focus in particular on the practical challenges and implications of auditing skills in a diverse industry sector and consider the usefulness of such an audit in preparing an industry for predicted change.

The paper first describes the methodology of the skills audit and then analyses the findings in relation to other regional arts industries. It considers how a small regional town that is already feeling the impact of national labour and skills shortages can prepare for predicted industry growth. It provides recommendations on training and workforce development strategies to enable the arts industry to prepare for new developments—including the Katherine Cultural Precinct. These recommendations and strategies will be of interest to any industry or regional town considering how it might meet predicted industry change.

Context

There are several factors which make both the choice of the cultural industry sector and the Katherine region interesting to consider and these are explored first.

Cultural industries

Definitions of the ‘cultural industries’ differ and, as Brecknock (2004) notes, the term is often interchanged with the terms ‘arts industries’ and ‘creative industries’. This paper uses a definition from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) website:

Cultural industries are defined as those industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs, and which have a potential for wealth creation and income generation through the exploitation of cultural assets and production of knowledge-based goods and services (both traditional and contemporary).

UNESCO considers the cultural industries to include: advertising; architecture; crafts; designer furniture; fashion clothing; film, video and other audiovisual production; graphic design; educational and leisure software; live and recorded music; performing arts and entertainment; television, radio and internet broadcasting; visual arts and antiques; and writing and publishing.

The cultural industries are experiencing a rapid and exciting growth. Recent estimates suggest that the creative industries are worth \$US 2.25 trillion (AUD \$3.0 trillion) worldwide and are rapidly growing (Howkins 2001). The potential for development in the Asia-Pacific Region has been recognised by UNESCO’s Jodhpur Initiatives for Promoting Cultural Industries in the Asia-Pacific Region. In addition, the Jodhpur Initiatives program recognises the potential in developing cultural industries ‘as a strategy for poverty reduction and community vitalization’ (UNESCO 2007).

The cultural industries are highly competitive, yet all countries and regions have their own unique advantage, based on history, culture and style. In some regions, the cultural industries have been able to invigorate even the most socially disadvantaged communities and create global economic impacts.

International experience has highlighted the fact that cultural industries may contribute in significant ways to income-generation and to the vitalisation and viability of local communities. Due to their small size and their close links to the community, 'cottage' cultural industries offer a particular opportunity to stem the tide of urban migration by offering jobs and business prospects at a local level.

Katherine region

Katherine is a small town of 3125¹ people approximately 320 km south of Darwin. Its surrounding region covers an extensive area of 336 674 km², incorporating the Katherine township, Elsey, Victoria River and Gulf statistical areas. These represent approximately 25% of the Northern Territory's land mass.

The Northern Territory Government has approved in-principle support for the development of a multimillion-dollar Katherine Cultural Precinct. A report on the precinct (Innes 2006) has been prepared and the precinct's feasibility and associated issues are being considered by the Katherine Cultural Precinct Regional Action Group. This precinct will create many new employment opportunities and increase the opportunities for existing artists and performers in Katherine and surrounding communities to promote their work.

Indigenous community cultural festivals are growing significantly in number and size in the region. For example, the Barunga Festival, Merrepen Arts Festival and Walking with Spirits Festival at Beswick Falls have grown substantially, strengthening the communities' own cultures and attracting more tourists to the region.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response and sweeping reforms to the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) will impact significantly on the cultural industries in the region. Prior to the changes in the Community Development Employment Program the Katherine region had the highest participation rates in these programs in the Northern Territory and a significant amount of this activity took place in art centres. Finding realistic and viable employment opportunities for those unemployed or moving off the program make this a region of strategic economic importance.

The promotion and support of the cultural industries in the region has the potential to increase the cultural tourism economy and directly contribute significant social benefits to Katherine and surrounding communities. The development of the sector may also promote the use and protection of traditional knowledge and intergenerational learning and participation.

Approach

The NT Department of Employment, Education and Training commissioned the Cultural, Recreation and Tourism Training Advisory Council to do a skills audit of the industry to consider current and future skills and training needs.

¹ Based on the 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing

The cultural industries skills audit aimed to do an audit of the industries' current skills and consider these in light of predicted industry change. It was hoped that analysing the gap between the industries' current skills and the skills they would need for the cultural precinct, would help the Katherine region proactively anticipate, prepare and therefore take advantage of the proposed changes. The challenge for the Katherine cultural industry was how to achieve this to enable full participation in the cultural boom.

The research process followed a relatively standard set of stages as follows:

- 1 Sampling
- 2 Environment analysis and desktop research
- 3 Primary data collection: skills in the region
- 4 Data analysis: training needs
- 5 Gap analysis: skills available versus skills required
- 6 Recommendations: gaps prioritised by benefit and malleability.

Stage 1: Sampling

Due to the region and industry being relatively small, the project aimed to include everyone in the Katherine town area who wanted to participate and who identified with being part of the cultural industries, rather than rely upon a particular sampling methodology. Staff from identified cultural organisations, complementary businesses, arts organisations that serviced the Katherine region and individual artists were interviewed and/or participated in an online skills audit.

Stage 2: Environment analysis

An analysis of the requirements of the precinct was conducted through desktop research of published material and through a review of interview transcripts with key stakeholders, including the reference group. This stage sought to determine the critical business functions planned for the precinct and, from this, derive the critical skills required to ensure success.

In addition, given that the precinct is still in its planning stage, the analysis was supplemented by a desktop review of similar cultural precincts around Australia.

Stage 3: Primary data collection

- ✧ 46 interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed and collated into key theme areas.
- ✧ Of those interviewed, 26 also completed an individual online skills audits

Interviews were conducted with a wide cross-section of people in the arts sector, ranging from practitioners in craft, dance and beading, to artists, producers, council festival managers and town councillors. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and included key research questions about the skills of the Katherine cultural industry, as well as the opportunity to elaborate on perceived issues. Each individual was also offered an opportunity to participate in an individual online skills audit to build up a picture of the current skills in the industry.

The *Competency Navigator*® was used to undertake the skills audit. The tool is directly linked to all the competencies in the national training system and provided a consistency for comparisons across this diverse industry. The online system filtered peoples' selections and they chose the skills they used in their job and they self-rated the importance of these skills and their own performance.

Stage 4: Data analysis

This stage involved matching the findings of the skills audit of the cultural industries in Katherine to the skills requirements of the proposed Katherine Cultural Precinct.

The gaps were then reviewed in order to prioritise them, according to the critical success skills required for the precinct.

Stage 5: Recommendations

Strategies and recommendations were developed for meeting the predicted skills needs. These have been provided in two contexts: firstly, through the pragmatic analysis of supply versus demand in relation to the precinct and, secondly, with a deep understanding of skill development issues in both the Indigenous cultural sector and industry development more generally.

Limitations

Detailed statistics on the actual number of people involved in the cultural industries in the region are not available due to the complexity of the industry which includes volunteers, artists, contract workers, and part- and full-time employees. To ensure that everyone was given the opportunity to be involved, the methodology applied to this research attempted to be inclusive of as wide an audience as possible.

As documented in the report, the data ranged from qualitative semi-structured interviews to quantitative training needs analysis. The mix of approaches created a level of complexity with gathering the data; however, it did allow for some skills analysis to be made between people from different backgrounds and employment structures.

Research into the cultural sector brings its own unique set of limitations, not least being the definition of a cultural worker (paid or otherwise). Similarly, research involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations is subject to volatility in question response due to the inability to control for differences in understanding and interpretation.

What is presented in this report therefore is a best-effort, point-in-time view of the current stock of skills and forecast requirements of the cultural precinct.

Current skills and strengths of the region

The findings of the audit showed Katherine to have a strong and vibrant cultural industry. There was a diverse range of people who identified themselves as being part of the cultural industries and involved in areas ranging from working with gemstones, to film, theatre and the visual arts. Artists rated their art practice skills very highly and people from the cultural industries who weren't practising artists confirmed that the quality and range of art practice was a strength of the region. As two interviewees noted:

Strengths are diverse, lots of artists with diverse mediums, hence a large pool to support the precinct. (Interview ID 14)

The cultural precinct will be a regional nexus for cultural events. There is great diversity in nature and range of artistic and cultural content. (Interview ID 43)

These reflections match the evidence collected from the individual skills audits, where people selected skills that were relevant to their jobs. Table 1 clusters selected skills into categories.

Table 1 Skills audit—profile of skills amongst arts practitioners

Category	Functional profile	
	Number of selected competencies	% of total of selected competencies
Information, culture, society, the arts and entertainment	686	55.2
Business, information, technology and professional services	469	37.8
Manufacturing and engineering	21	1.7
Construction and property	16	1.3
Government administration, justice and law	15	1.2
Employability skills	13	1.0
Occupation and workplace safety skills	7	0.6
Wholesale and retail services	5	0.4
Computer programming and engineering skills	4	0.3
Communication services	2	0.2
Education and training	2	0.2
Finance and banking	1	0.1
Hospitality and tourism	1	0.1
Total competency selections	1242	100.0

Source: Competency Navigator®.

It is interesting to note that arts activity only makes up 55% of the skill sets identified by participants. This is a common finding in skills audits, in that the technical skill associated with a vocation is rarely more than half of the skill requirements.

Most artists were not able to practise their art/craft full-time and many supplemented their art with other work. This is also represented in the table above, where almost 38% of the skill set of the arts practitioners belongs to the functional area of business. In effect, the remaining skill sets convert creativity into economic activity.

Only a small number of skills were identified in the area of retail services, education and hospitality. This can perhaps be partly explained by the more generic skills that fit easily into both industries. The emphasis here on the skills utilised in the arts sector may have influenced the choices made by the practitioners.

The analysis identified a set of competencies common to the majority of participants (that is, participants who believed they possessed these skills). These are listed in table 2.

As part of the skills analysis process individuals were asked to rate each of the competencies they possessed against three criteria:

- ✧ the importance of the skill to the output of the overall job (low, medium, high)
- ✧ their performance level of that skill (not so good, OK, strengths)
- ✧ the perceived training need (need training, competent, could train others).

The individual's rating allowed for an analysis and prioritisation of training need to be aggregated across the whole group.

Table 2 Skills audit—common skills

Code	Unit title	Percentage
MNCG1009A ²	Communicate information	56
CULMS010A	Contribute to the preservation of cultural material	56
THTFTG08B	Interpret aspects of local Australian Indigenous culture	56
CUEMAR01B	Assist with marketing	56
CULMS001A	Work with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural material	56
CULMS003A	Move/store cultural material	52
BSBATSIC403A	Maintain and protect culture	52
CUVCRS11A	Select and prepare work for exhibition	52
CUVPRP03A	Develop and apply knowledge of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural arts	52
THTSMA02B	Create a promotional display/stand	52
CULMS005A	Research and generate ideas for exhibition concepts	48
CULMS008A	Conceive, develop and realise exhibition designs	48
CUVADM13A	Research and critique cultural work(s)	48
BSBSLS302A	Identify sales prospects	48
THTFTG06B	Prepare and present tour commentaries or activities	44

Source: Competency Navigator®.

Table 3 Skills audit—‘position fit’ of the group

Position fit	Core job requirements	Strengths	% fit	% total of core job required
Government administration, justice and law	1	1	100.0	0.2
Business, information, technology and professional services	213	186	87.3	48.4
Information, culture, society, the arts and entertainment	182	153	84.1	41.4
Total	396	340	85.9	90.0

Source: Competency Navigator®.

Table 3 shows summary data for all individual skills reports. In total 454 different individual units of competency were identified by participants. Of the 454 units chosen, 396 were identified as of high importance to the achievement of work outcomes. The basic premise of a training needs analysis is that, to perform at an optimum level, an individual requires strength in the critical skills required of their job. Training and skill development in areas outside key job skills is an ancillary need.

Of the 396 important competencies, the group in aggregate believed they were strong in 340 (86%). Therefore, at the time of the analysis, it is evident that this is a well-skilled group with few immediate skill needs. Whether or not these skills match those required by the precinct is the subject of further analysis.

The final column in table 3 provides a weighting to the overall skill needs, the rationale being to weight effort in areas of weakness by areas that form the larger component of the overall role. As shown, there is only a marginal difference in position fit between the functional areas of ‘business’ and ‘arts’. There is also a marginal difference in the percentage that each of these

² Individuals also chose a very similar competency unit MNMG327A

functions comprises in the overall job role. Therefore the analysis needs to go further by examining smaller skill sets. This is shown in table 4.

It is evident in table 4 that skill development areas fall into two areas, business and arts, with a slightly higher emphasis on the functional area of business. However, it is also apparent that the two skill sets are not mutually exclusive. Business skills are required to assist in the promotion and development of artistic output.

Table 4 Skills audit—skill development required by functional area

Development required <i>Only top 11 competencies shown</i>	Number of competencies	% of total	% total of core job required
Information, culture, society, the arts and entertainment	29	47.5	41.4
Contribute to the preservation of cultural material			
Interpret aspects of local Australian Indigenous culture			
Work with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural material			
Move/store cultural material			
Maintain and protect culture			
Select and prepare work for exhibition			
Develop and apply knowledge of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural arts			
Create a promotional display/stand			
Research and generate ideas for exhibition concepts			
Conceive, develop and realise exhibition designs			
Research and critique cultural work(s)			
Business, information, technology and professional services	32	52.5	48.4
Communicate information			
Assist with marketing			
Identify sales prospects			
Prepare and present tour commentaries or activities			
Prepare workplace documents			
Write reports			
Market services and products to clients			
Supervise staff			
Communicate on the telephone			
Plan for and participate in a media interview			
Develop and manage marketing strategies			
Total	61	100.0	89.8

Skill gaps and issues

In Katherine the skills needs and associated issues are in constant flux due to the small and transient nature of the population. Many current and future issues identified in individual interviews could be attributed to labour market issues, attraction and retention of staff and knowledge management. As indicated above, the skills audit analysis of the cultural industry as a whole identified the group as well skilled, with few immediate urgent skills needs. However, this is not to say that there are not individual needs, and it should also be noted that the analysis is based upon a point-in-time self-perception of skills. The development of the cultural precinct will stretch the capacity of the region, thus requiring development effort now to ensure the success of the initiative.

Cultural heritage and maintenance

Indigenous culture and heritage was one of the most commonly selected skills in the online skills audit. It was identified as an area of great importance and one in which the region holds a significant strength. In general there is a lack of curatorial skills in the community. Having a skilled industry that can maintain, protect and share cultural information and material is important for the industry's development, and consideration needs to be made for training and mentoring in this area. As one interviewee commented:

Need staff who have skills in: professional packing, archiving, frame making/cutting canvas etc., storing/maintaining art and tools. Understanding quality control and maintenance.

(interview ID 33)

Business and marketing

This was an interesting and important area of data. Sixty-four per cent of those who completed the skills audit saw marketing as an important skill and 59% identified it as an area of training need. Nearly everyone interviewed identified marketing as an issue. There was a clear demarcation between those that believed that all artists needed to have their skills in self-promotion, business and marketing upgraded and those who considered that more support should be made available for artists to enable them to concentrate on their art, as the following comment confirms:

Artists lacking resources hence sustainability of a project as it loses momentum due to lack of support and resources. People taking responsibility for the management of the project so artists can focus on what they are good at.

(Interview ID 09)

Another interviewee identified the following 'artistic business training' needs:

Training for Indigenous artists to market themselves and their businesses and how to protect reputation and future prospects. Support to write proposals and grants. Mentoring and role models for success.

(Interview ID 04)

Either way, marketing is a clear and immediate skill need that is currently limiting the growth of some sectors of the industry. The requirement for skills in this area will become more pronounced with the proposed future development and growth. There is also a perceived gap in marketing support, with the closure in 2007 of the Katherine Regional Tourism Association.

Within the functional area of business, information, technology and professional services, the skills of communication and customer service were also identified as skills training needs, along with writing grant proposals and managing projects.

Knowledge transfer and training

This was a repeated theme throughout the interviews and was linked closely to the high turnover of staff, the transient nature of the region and the high participation of volunteers. Two main areas were identified as significant issues:

- ✧ corporate governance within arts organisations
- ✧ the transmission of cultural art practice from elders to young people and from artists to others.

The following comments confirm the critical nature of the second of these two issues:

The transfer of the art and craft skills from the older people/elders to the younger people—sustainability of art forms.

(Interview ID 10)

Training is needed in the township for residents that stay here, in order to sustain the transfer of skills; in particular, sewing, jewellery making and craft skills. (Interview ID 15)

Several participants highlighted the need for informal skills and formal qualifications in training and assessment. It was identified that this would assist with transfer of knowledge and could open up potential income streams for artists in training.

One interviewee noted the following in relation to the transient nature of the town:

Need to learn basic delivery skills so knowledge can be passed on. Succession training is vital as no one lasts in their job a long time. (Interview ID 07)

Technicians

The issue of trained lighting and sound technicians was raised by a large percentage of those interviewed. These skills were not identified during the online skills audit, as none of those who completed the audit had skills in those areas. The skills shortage in this area was highlighted in the interviews:

No qualified sound technicians in Katherine. (Interview ID 34)

Need for technical training in lighting, PA etc. People in the community need to learn how to run festivals themselves rather than always getting outside people in. (Interview ID 11)

Information technology

General information technology skills were identified as a training need, with an emphasis on multimedia. Taking and editing digital photos and video footage, maintaining websites and graphic design capabilities were the most commonly listed skills needs.

Volunteers

Generally the skills of volunteers were highly valued and rated by both the volunteers during their skills audits and other participants during interview. However, the actual skills identified were extremely diverse and tended to relate to the volunteer's occupation. Communication and administration were rated highly.

A report by the ABS in 2006 on Australians working in the arts shows approximately 2.9 million people—more than one in five Australians over the age of 15—were involved in some form of paid or unpaid cultural work in 2004. Almost one million of these had some paid involvement in culture or the arts. One interview noted the stressful nature of volunteer work:

There is too much pressure on volunteers to keep things going. They become burnt out and lose enthusiasm, leave and knowledge is lost. (Interview ID 07)

Attraction and retention of staff

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled people in the region, which reflects a current national trend in the regions. Work in the arts is often complex and challenging and remuneration low, when compared with other industries. Comments included:

Finding and maintaining staff is a problem. Region can be quite transient. (Interview ID 21)

High staff turnover. Lack of ongoing relationships with industry advisors due to turnover in jobs. (Interview ID 43)

Preparing for change

Cultural precinct

The development of the Katherine Cultural Arts Precinct has been on the agenda since 1996. The key focus of the precinct is a significant multi-use cultural centre. Progress has been hampered by the fact that most work towards the project has been volunteer-based and there has been significant dissent associated with the selection of the development site.

There are likely to be three full-time paid positions for stage one of the Katherine Cultural Centre, with many part-time, casual and seasonal positions available. The Innes report (2006) anticipates a full-time arts centre manager, a full-time arts administrator and part-time marketing and events positions. The report also considers that the café outlet is likely to be leased (meaning available jobs) and there would be casual employment for ticket sales and technical staff as required. Current skills and labour issues in the industry will be exacerbated by the development of the precinct and will need to be considered now.

The Innes report on the cultural precinct (2006) identified the following areas critical to the function of the centre:

- ✧ galleries and associated storerooms
- ✧ utilities areas: plant room, toilets and kitchen
- ✧ retail outlet
- ✧ café outlet: alfresco seating
- ✧ wet studio area
- ✧ welcome area/foyer.

In several interviews for this project it was noted that the role of centre director will be critical to the success of the precinct:

A strong curator/director in initial stages who can mentor a new position. Important to have training in high-level business management skills. (Interview ID 43)

This research and the Innes report (2006), which included information on 17 other regional art centres, identified that highly skilled arts managers would be essential to the key roles associated with the running of the centre. Such people are difficult to attract and retain in the region and there is a high turnover due to stress and burnout and the availability of opportunities elsewhere. The precinct will also need property management and maintenance skills.

Note that the precinct concept will require functions that are not recognised in this group's skill set; for example, in hospitality, retail, food preparation, cleaning and laundry. As all questions and skills audits were based on the cultural industries, we have not included these industries. However, as hospitality and retail are experiencing significant skills shortages in the region already, they should be considered as part of the overall plan.

Community festivals

Community festivals and the associated area of cultural tourism are growth areas. Nine major festivals are to be held in the Katherine region during 2008 and many more are being developed. The potential for cultural tourism growth linked to festivals is significant and should be considered in relation to the cultural precinct. The cultural precinct could provide a hub for skilled people to support and mentor community festivals or a place to extend the role and marketing of festivals.

Indigenous art centres

Significant research has already been conducted into the skills and training needs of Indigenous arts centres. This research supports the strength in cultural and art practice existing in these centres, but recognises the need to develop business, communication and marketing and information technology skills. Specific training needs identified for art centre workers through this research included the following.

Some young workers in Indigenous arts centres have little or no computer skills and are keen to be trained in this field.

Indigenous arts centres are highly dependent on the skills of the arts centre managers; these are the best paid positions and are usually held by external non-Indigenous staff.

Some Indigenous artists are limited in their scope as they have not been trained in the use of materials, self-promotion and marketing, and how to develop their art practice. Their need for immediate payment hinders their future development; for example, they are often forced to sell to carpet baggers and to use inferior-quality paints and canvas to save money.

Training has a role to play in addressing these issues and will help artists prepare for displaying and selling art in the Katherine Cultural Precinct. Developing corporate governance structures and training was also seen as a high priority and significant need.

Discussion

While the skill sets of existing practitioners are currently strong, the capacity of the region's human capital is untested and, given the transience and small size of the local labour pool, the development of the Katherine Cultural Precinct will require immediate skills planning in order to realise the expected benefits.

In relation to the business operations and management of the Katherine Cultural Precinct, there are skills gaps in facility management, hospitality and retail.

The business skills needed to run a multipurpose cultural centre that will be utilised by a number of organisations are significant. Regional towns are already experiencing difficulty in attracting and retaining executive-level staff and this will need to be considered in the recruitment and position-packaging strategies. The option of training existing arts industry managers and executives to increase current local arts business skills and to take a lead role in the new precinct should be considered. There is also an opportunity for potential managers to be mentored by managers in other cultural precincts such as the Araluen Cultural Precinct.

The Department of Education, Science and Training's 2006 *Workforce Northern Territory* report identifies food, hospitality and tourism as the most advertised job vacancies in the 2005–06 financial year in the Katherine region. This shortage, combined with a growth in cultural tourism, will stretch the retail and hospitality industry. Training in customer service and communication needs to be considered across the whole industry and specific training given in retail and hospitality to address the gaps.

As far as the technical operations of the Katherine Cultural Precinct are concerned, there are skill gaps in light and sound design and operations. High-level technical skills will be required by the precinct, as well as being critical to the burgeoning festival industry. Work of this nature is often episodic and reliant upon a pool of casual contract labour. This labour market dynamic needs to be factored into a training response.

There are two schools of thought in relation to this area of skill development in the cultural community. The first is the linear view that artists require small business and commercialisation

skills. Certainly, for executive officers and managers of community-based arts businesses this is likely to be the case. The second is that creative businesses need to work with brokers who are sympathetic to artistic endeavour while also being able to straddle the world of commerce. The answer will be guided by the business model of the proposed precinct, specifically the nature of the relationship that it wishes to nurture with practising artists in the region; that is, to act as a broker or to engage directly with them on a commercial basis.

Cultural maintenance and curatorial skills were identified as being in short supply. Since these skills relate to the preservation, protection and maintenance of the assets/competitive advantage of the region, this area is considered a priority.

Community festivals, as noted previously, are a growing sector of the industry in the Katherine region and in the Northern Territory more broadly. Without additional training support, further growth (along with the precinct) will stretch the capacity of the industry. Accordingly, event management training (via a mentoring model) is recommended.

From an industry development perspective there is a need to focus on skills for volunteers. They are an essential part of the arts industry in Katherine and will become even more vital with the predicted growth of the industry. It will be important to have a highly skilled volunteer force, particularly in the areas of compliance training, cultural interpretation and front-of-house/customer service. Lessons can certainly be learned from the Araluen Cultural Centre and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, both of which have strong volunteer programs. Recognising, rewarding and training volunteers will need to be an important part of the overall strategy.

The ability to better facilitate the transfer of knowledge was a recurring theme in the research. As noted earlier, the Katherine labour market is highly transient, with a small number of established, resident professionals. The region (and the ongoing success of the precinct) is highly reliant upon the maintenance and ongoing development of corporate and cultural knowledge. It is therefore important from both a risk-management and forward-development perspective that existing stakeholders are supported by the provision of skills to facilitate the passing-on of knowledge to others. Again opportunities exist for the key players from the Katherine Cultural Precinct to learn and be mentored by professionals from other cultural precincts.

Recommendations

This paper uses a case study from the Katherine Arts Industry to demonstrate the value for an industry sector in taking stock of its current skills. It shows how this skills information can be used to help prepare an industry workforce for current and predicted skills shortages and significant industry change, such as the development of the Katherine Cultural Precinct. It identifies the risk involved in planning for infrastructure development without considering people and human resource needs. Information that can be gleaned and developed from analysing current and future skills needs include:

- ✧ current and predicted skills gaps
- ✧ developing training and workforce development plan to meet specific individual and industry needs
- ✧ potential for industry growth
- ✧ opportunities for enterprise development.

The research identified the complexities and challenges of auditing skills across a diverse industry sector with a wide range of participants. It demonstrates the importance of finding the right balance between having a consistent approach to gathering data and enough flexibility to capture rich information. In this paper the detailed skills audit was done through an online skills audit

program, which allowed for a direct comparison and analysis against the national training system. This quantitative data was complemented by semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a deeper analysis of information and issues in some areas and was a preferred method for some participants.

With consideration and planning an industry can develop a range of training and workforce development strategies that can be implemented to prepare for the future.

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