Arts, Cultural and Creative Industry RAPAD Region

Workforce Development Plan

RAPAD
REMOTE AREA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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ROYAL
THEATRE
OPEN AIR PICTURE SHOW
THE ROYAL
MUSEUM

Grow Your Own Regional Workforce program

The Queensland Government collaborates with industry, business, community and government stakeholders to build a strong, skilled workforce that supports the state's economic prosperity. Given the distinct industry profiles and workforce challenges across Queensland's regions, applying a regional perspective to workforce planning and capability development is essential to address local needs and opportunities.

Jobs Queensland (JQ) is working alongside regional and industry partners to support locally driven workforce planning through its Grow Your Own Regional Workforce program (GYO). GYO is facilitating the development and implementation of codesigned, place-based workforce strategies. These projects focus on locally driven solutions, led by regional stakeholders.

Jobs Queensland's research suggests that connection to family and community is important to Queensland workers. Having a strong connection to their region often motivates individuals to stay living and working locally.[1] This creates a solid basis for the GYO Regional Workforce program model, which motivates regions to enhance their local population's skills and abilities to retain essential skilled workers that meet the present and future demands of local industries.

Grow Your Own is facilitating the development and implementation of co-designed, place-based workforce strategies. These projects are focusing on locally driven solutions, led by regional stakeholders.

[1] Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Supporting individuals in the transition to future work framework*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/supporting-individual-transition.pdf

Introduction

We live in a world of constant and increasingly rapid change. Global connectedness, economies and politics influence the types of skills demanded in the global economy. Recognising that community resilience is built from the ground up, the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) region is committed to anticipating and planning for that future.

Queensland's *Time to Shine: a 10-year Strategy for Arts and Culture* outlines the state government's commitment to the industry and showcasing Queensland unique cultural heritage and stories.[2]

Through a community and industry-led approach, Jobs Queensland partnered with RAPAD to co-design a pathway forward specifically for the arts, cultural and creative industry in the RAPAD region. Implementing the actions within this workforce development plan will support the industry by considering existing workforce supply and demand and improving workforce diversity, attraction and retention; supporting business capability; enhancing training and education pathways and opportunities and future skills needs.

This plan acknowledges the strong sense of place that people have in Central Western Queensland (CWQ) and explores how arts, culture and creativity reflect and shape life in the region, celebrating the diversity, impact and sense of belonging of cultural practices and creative contributions provide across our communities. Broadening the concept of 'arts and culture' to include creativity will help ensure the workforce development plan is accessible and inclusive of a wide range of practices and people.

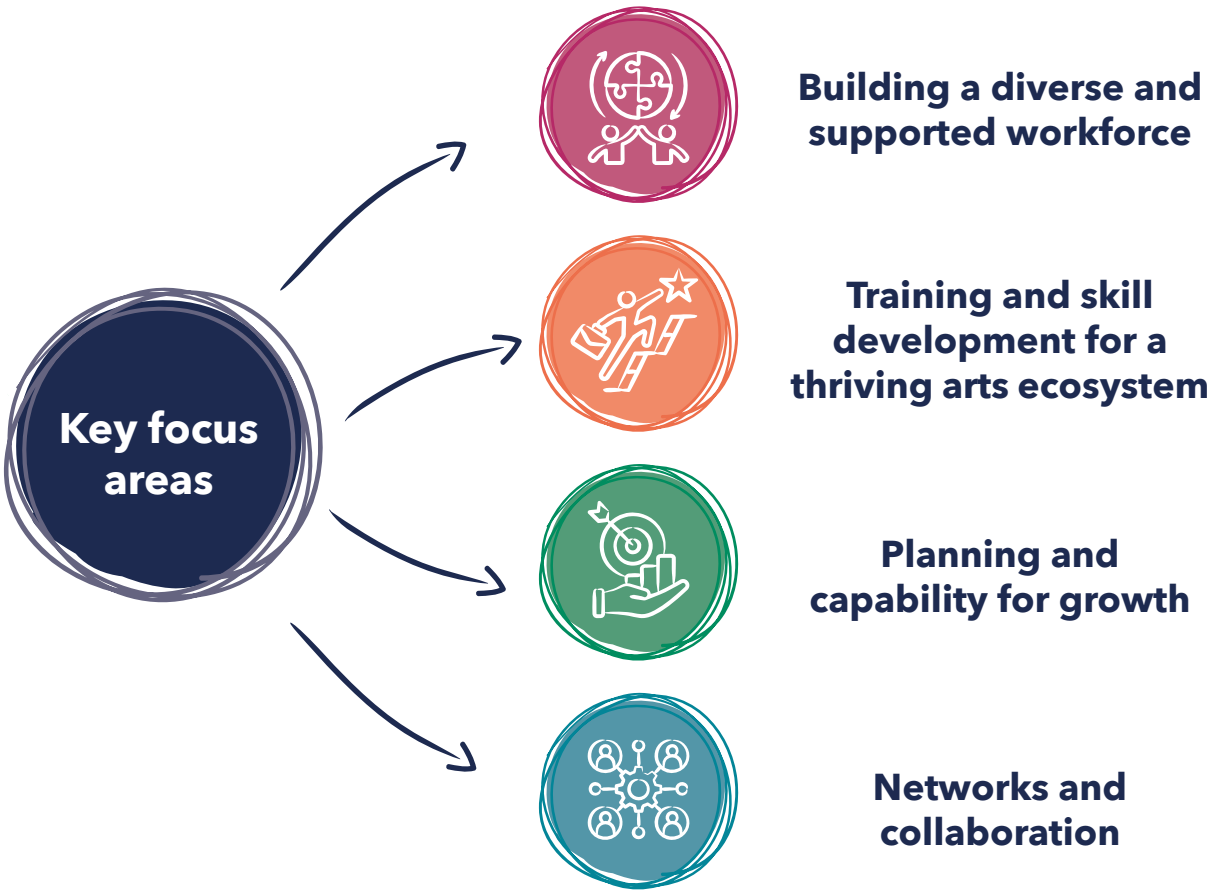
Figure 1 Developing the RAPAD Region Arts, Cultural and Creative Industry Workforce Development Plan

[2] Queensland Government. (2025). *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10 year strategy for arts and culture 2025-2035*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.arts.qld.gov.au/images/documents/Qld%20Time%20to%20Shine/Qlds-Time-to-Shine.pdf

Led by RAPAD, in partnership with the arts, culture and creative industry, other industries, businesses and other levels of government, this workforce development plan is a commitment to deliver a strong pathway forward for the region's creatives and outlines priorities to build their skills and capabilities, connect them with one another and with global markets.

The RAPAD Region Arts, Culture and Creatives Workforce Development Plan provides 27 industry-led local strategies, focused across four themes (Figure 2), detailing the actions that the region's arts, culture and creative industry identified as priorities for them as they build a brighter, more visible and viable future.

Figure 2 Key areas of focus



Overview

The arts, cultural and creative industry are adaptive community-driven and strongly aligned with the region's identity and resilience. As the industry continues to evolve alongside digital, social and economic trends, it presents new and expanding opportunities for the region. Ensuring communities are equipped to embrace change and adapt to workforce challenges and opportunities, while maintaining cultural authenticity is essential for long-term success.

While most employment in the region is concentrated in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, health care and social assistance, public administration, construction and education and training industries, arts and recreation services are an emerging growth industry and a focus for the region.

Notably, creative occupations and activities are often underreported, as they are frequently undertaken part-time, as a second job or through unpaid or voluntary work.

Volunteering is particularly high in the region; 28 per cent of people volunteer, compared to 14.1 per cent across Queensland.[3] Many of these volunteers are engaged in arts, cultural and creative activities, groups and organisations.

Given that many arts, cultural and creative activities are undertaken in part-time or casual capacities, there is an opportunity for the region to explore ways to create more full-time roles to expand the industry and increase workforce participation for underreported groups who also contribute to the region's economic activities, such as women and volunteers.

By 2027-2028 arts and recreation services are projected to be the sixth fastest-growing industry in Queensland.[4] However, in CWQ, projections are mixed. In Statistical Area 3 (SA3) Outback South, an initial 11.2 per cent increase projected between 2021-2022 and 2025-2026, has been revised, suggesting a small decline in employment by 2027-2028.[5] [6] This aligns with broader employment trends and slower regional growth.

[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census Population and Housing, 2021 General Community Profile G23, RAPAD region and Queensland*. Australian Government: Canberra.

[4] Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Anticipating Future Skills Data Portal: Employment by industry – Change percentage 2027-2028*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal

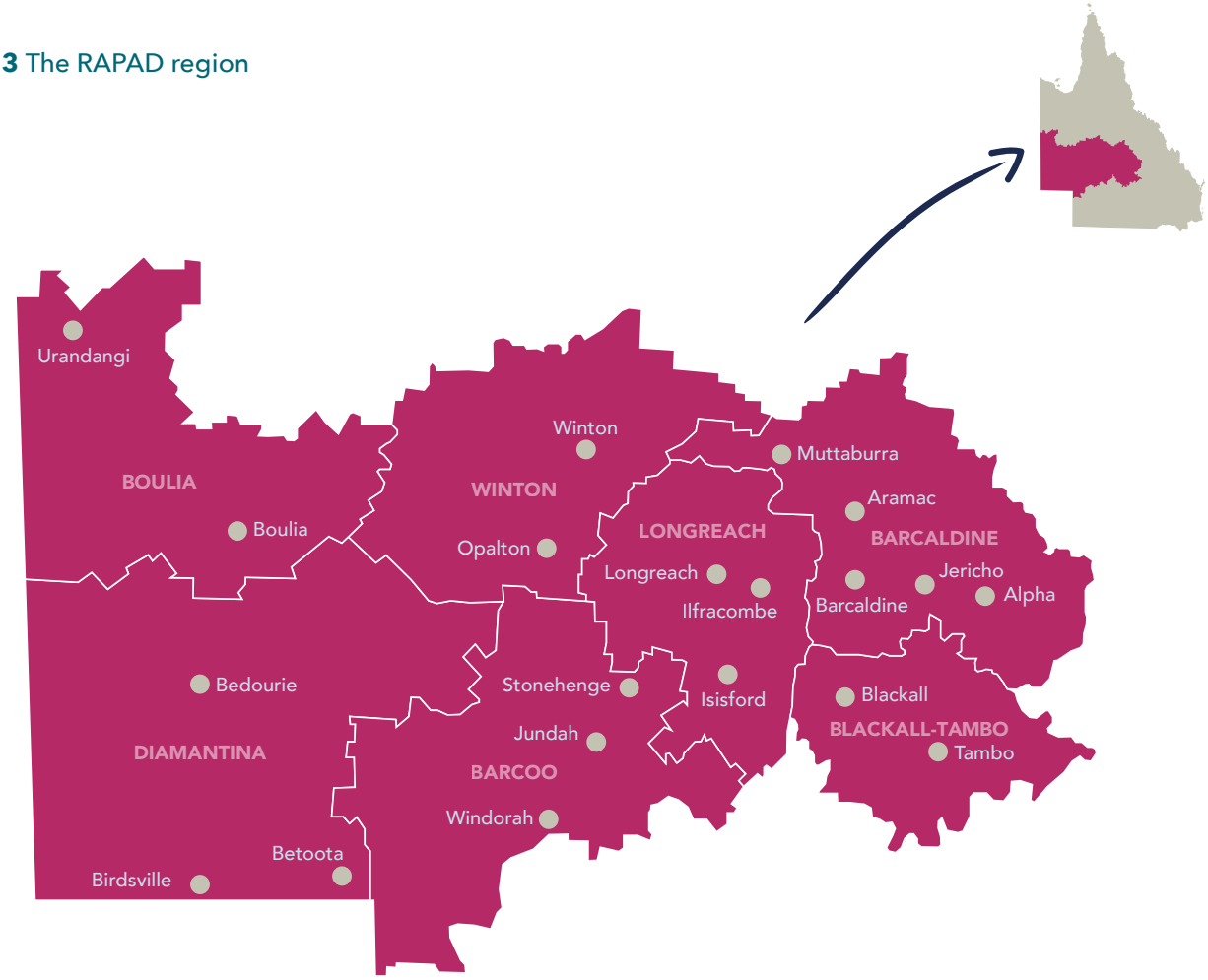
[5] Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Anticipating Future Skills Series Outback South Region - Workforce projections 2025-2026*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal

[6] Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Anticipating Future Skills Data Portal: Employment by industry for Arts and Recreation Services, employment change by industry 2027-2028*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal

Defining the RAPAD Region and industry

The RAPAD region comprises the Barcoo, Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach and Winton local government areas and covers approximately 396,000km², or 23 per cent of Queensland.[7] The region is home to 0.2 per cent of the state's population; despite this, its people are one of its greatest assets.[8]

Figure 3 The RAPAD region



There is no single classification for the arts, cultural and creative industry within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Industries (ANZSIC). Instead, these industries span multiple sectors and subsectors, including arts and recreation services, manufacturing, information media and telecommunications and other services from a range of classifications (Appendix 1).

[7] Queensland Reconstruction Authority. (2020). *Central West Regional Resilience Strategy: Championing resilience and prosperity across Central West Queensland*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/0516_Central%20West%20Regional%20Resilience%20Strategy_January2020_LR.pdf

[8] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Regional Population: Estimated resident population*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Population

The RAPAD region is home to one of the most geographically dispersed populations in Australia. With a total population of 10,789, the region comprises a network of small communities spread across a predominantly rural landscape.[9]

Extensive livestock grazing across the region contributes to the highly dispersed settlement pattern, with many residents living in remote areas between towns. Despite the low year-round population, all central western communities experience seasonal population increases driven by both international and domestic tourism.

Attracting and retaining residents is a key priority for the RAPAD region. When residents are able to find and retain meaningful employment, there is reduced likelihood of relocation and keeping talent within the community, creating a more stable workforce. Furthermore, workers who live and work locally are more likely to support local businesses and stimulate economic growth.[10]

Equally important is the provision of services that meet the evolving needs and expectations of the community, particularly in relation to health care, education and social amenities. Local governments are actively collaborating with communities to enhance services and infrastructure, with a strong emphasis on improving liveability across the region.

Research suggests regions who invest in placemaking features such as cultural attractions, vibrant public spaces and social amenities to support a place to gather and connect can benefit through drawing talent to a region and encouraging locals to stay longer-term. Through strategic placemaking, a well-designed region can enhance economic activity by attracting tourism and investment, further stimulating additional job creation and workforce growth across a variety of industries.[11]

Supporting the local arts, culture and creative industry extends beyond the workforce itself for the RAPAD region. It is also a critical economic amplifier and population attraction and retention strategy.

Population growth

Over the past 10 years, the region experienced a gradual population decline (-0.8 per cent), which has since stabilised.

A sharp decline in population between 2012 and 2017 coincided with a period of severe and prolonged drought across the region. Since then, the region has experienced a steady increase in population.

[9] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Estimated resident population by LGA and RAPAD*. Canberra: Australian Government.

[10] Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Workforce planning for regions guide*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/3833_JQ_Workforce_Plan_for_regions_V6web.pdf

[11] Ibid.

10,789 people
just 0.2% of Queensland's population

5299
women

5255
men

396,000km²
around 23% of the area of Queensland

The RAPAD region has a highly dispersed population with most residents living in the key townships of:

Alpha
Aramac
Barcaldine
Bedourie
Birdsville
Blackall
Boulia
Ilfracombe
Isisford
Jericho
Jundah
Muttaburra
Stonehenge
Tambo
Urandangi
Windorah
Winton
Yaraka

8.1%
Indigenous

30.1%
Highest Indigenous population: **Boulia**

4.6%
disability

6%
born overseas

41.7 years
median age

45-64 years
largest cohort

46.7 years
highest median age:
Blackall-Tambo

37.2 years
lowest median age:
Boulia

Employment

The RAPAD region has low unemployment and high levels of full-time employment, with over 76 per cent of the working population employed full-time.[12] Workforce participation reflects broader national trends, with more males in full-time roles and over 70 per cent of part-time roles held by females.[13] This is often due to care responsibilities and the lack of locally accessible childcare, which is a well-documented issue in the region.

Due to remoteness, many young people leave the region for education and training, contributing to a decline in the 15-25 age cohort. However, the recent establishment of eight Country Universities Centre (CUC) hubs across the region is expected to increase participation in post-school education, including in creative industries, where local enrolment remains lower than the Queensland average.

There is also a significant skills gap in technical and specialised professions, for example, sound and lighting, resulting in costly fly-in support. Building local expertise in these areas represents a major opportunity for growth and sustainability.

The region's active tourism industry is closely tied to cultural heritage and the growing eco-tourism opportunities linked to the beautiful natural landscapes the outback offers. Attractions and events celebrate the region's unique character, reinforcing the link between creative industries and economic vitality.

[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Working Population Profile – W03*. Canberra: Australian Government.
[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Working Population Profile – W11*. Canberra: Australian Government.

6611 working people
representing
61.3% of the region's total population

1.3% unemployment rate

Qld and national rates = 4%

This low rate reflects **high demand for workers**, with many job vacancies remaining unfilled

Top five employing industries

As of 2021, the top five employing industries in the RAPAD region were:

1. **26%** Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
2. **12.4%** Public administration
3. **10.2%** Health care & social assistance
4. **7.9%** Construction
5. **7.9%** Education & training

By comparison, Queensland's top employing industries in 2021 were:

1. Health care and social assistance (15.4 per cent)
2. Retail trade (9.3 per cent)
3. Construction (9.1 per cent)
4. Education and training (8.8 per cent)
5. Accommodation and food services (7.2 per cent)

Arts, cultural and creative industry

Note: All data referring to the 'arts, cultural and creative industry' workforce in the RAPAD region is based on the Project Scope for this report, using multiple selections of data, across a range of industries at three digit 'Group' level.

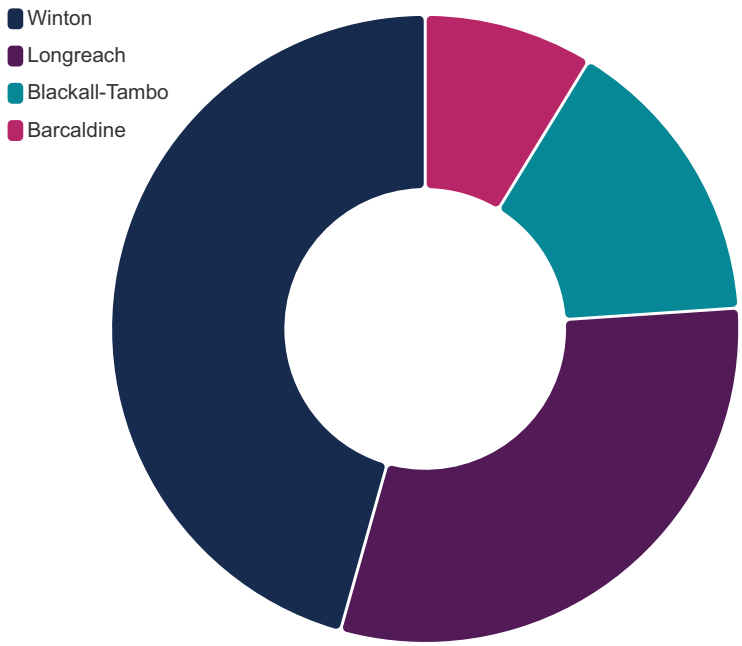
The RAPAD region's arts, cultural and creative workforce is diverse and often atypical compared to traditional industries. Creative work is frequently seasonal, freelance-based or undertaken alongside other forms of employment. As such, capturing an accurate workforce profile using standard Census classifications is challenging, with many roles underrepresented or not clearly defined in official datasets.

Closer investigation of industry subsectors through ANZSIC data (Appendix 1) and Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) demonstrates a broad collection of industries facilitating diversified roles within occupation groupings. As such, relatively modest industry Census data for the region does not reflect the broader creative ecosystem, including unpaid contributors/volunteers, multi-jobs workers and those in areas related to functions within other industries.

Despite this, the arts, cultural and creative industry are the heartbeat of the region, connecting community through a tapestry of originative events and initiatives.

The distribution of this workforce across the RAPAD region is concentrated in a few key LGAs. Winton Shire accounts for the largest share, with 42.9 per cent of creative employment underscoring its growing reputation as a screen and arts hub. Longreach Regional Council represents 28.6 per cent of the workforce, reflecting its role as a regional centre for cultural institutions and heritage attractions. Blackall-Tambo Regional Council contributes 14.3 per cent and Barcaldine Regional Council 8.2 per cent. No arts and creative industry employment was recorded in Barcoo, Boulia or Diamantina LGAs in 2021.

Figure 4 Creative workforce distribution RAPAD region



[14] Service and Creative Skills Australia. (2025). *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers.* https://sacsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Creative-Workforce-Scoping-Study-%E2%80%93-Full-Report-ForWeb-1.pdf

[15] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census of Population and Housing. Employment, income and education, 4-digit level, Industry of Employment by LGA.* Canberra: Australian Government. https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools/community-profiles

Arts, cultural and creative workforce demand

Employment projections for the arts, cultural and creative industry in the SA3 Outback South region reflect a mixed outlook, with some areas showing modest growth while others are projected to experience decline between 2023–2024 and 2027–2028. These trends mirror broader regional workforce patterns influenced by population size, economic diversification and limited local industry scale. It is important to note that the RAPAD region is only part of the much larger Outback South region and there are distinct regional variations across this vast area. These projections also involve computer modelling and scenario planning to understand what the future labour market might look like. Regional intelligence suggests the outlook is more positive.

Projected growth sectors

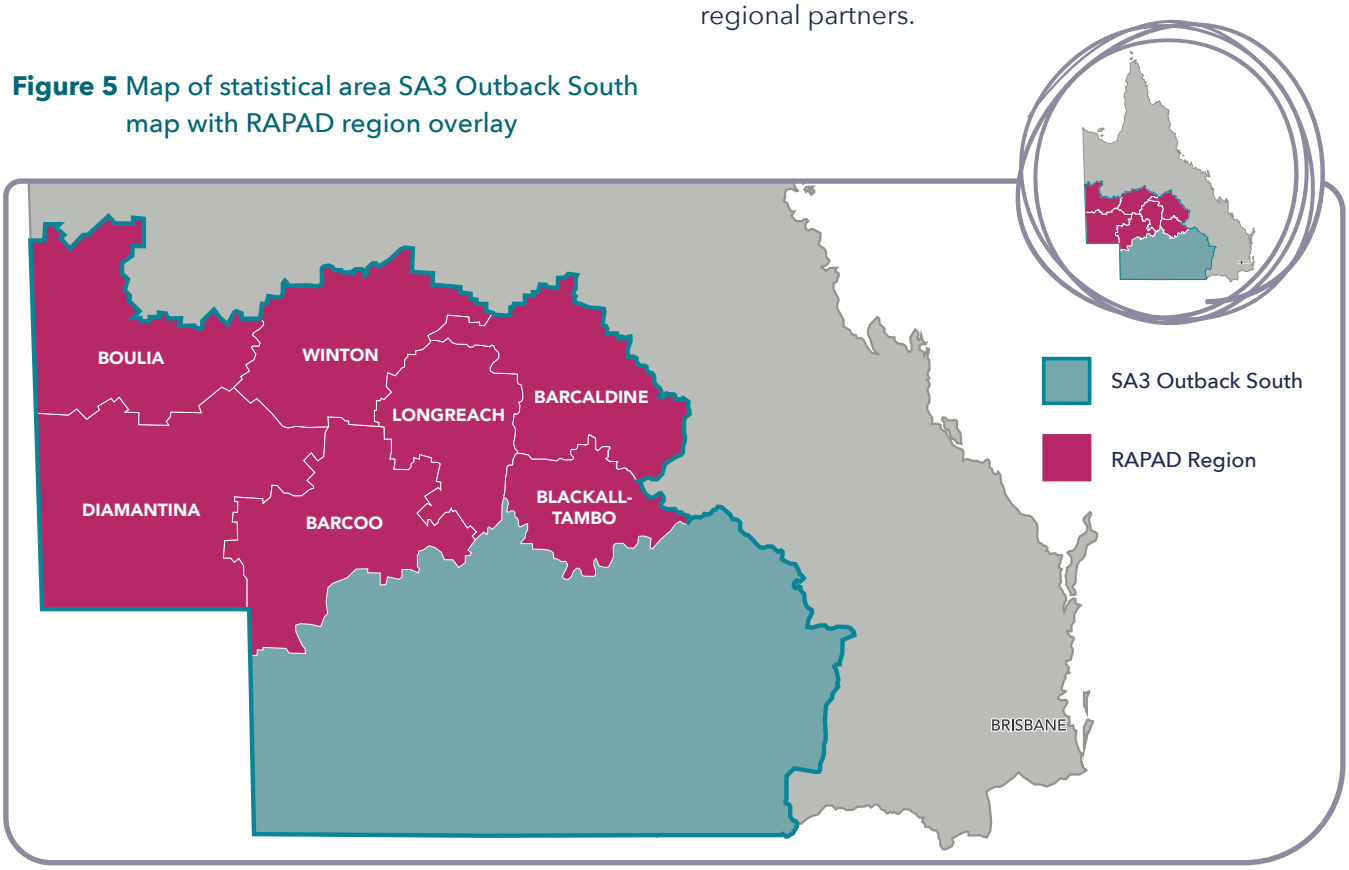
The museum operation sector is forecast to grow by 2.2 per cent, driven in part by the region's strong tourism economy and a growing focus on cultural heritage and visitor experiences. This aligns with local economic development strategies that leverage unique regional stories, heritage assets and creative place-based experiences.

Other sectors within the creative economy expected to see modest growth include:

- Other manufacturing (3.1 per cent) – this may include niche or artisan production relevant to creative enterprises (e.g. handmade goods, visual art production).
- Other professional, scientific and technical services (1.6 per cent) – which may include freelance and consulting services often undertaken by creatives.

While total employment growth is arts, culture and creative industry in the region is limited there are opportunities for niche growth, especially where creative activities intersect with tourism, heritage activities, education and manufacturing. Workforce development strategies should focus on supporting creative entrepreneurship, expanding digital capabilities and diversifying income streams for regional partners.

Figure 5 Map of statistical area SA3 Outback South map with RAPAD region overlay



Source: QGSO, *Queensland Statistical Areas, Level 3 (SA3) - Outback South*

Arts, cultural and creative industry workforce supply challenges

The arts, cultural, and creative industry in the RAPAD region face a complex set of labour challenges that reflect both industry-specific dynamics and broader regional workforce issues. The *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report* highlights significant recruitment and retention difficulties in regional and remote areas, particularly for skilled workers.[16] These challenges are amplified in the RAPAD region, where access to specialised training, infrastructure and support services is limited.

The creative industries face distinct workforce challenges, including shortages in technical and production skills such as sound, lighting and event management, alongside high levels of self-employment and portfolio work that mask the true size and needs of the sector in official data. Seasonal and inconsistent employment opportunities contribute to the outmigration of professionals seeking stable, long-term work, while limited career progression pathways, particularly in niche areas like film and screen production, which are often project-based and transient further restrict growth. Together, these factors create a feedback loop in which limited opportunities drive outmigration, reducing the local skills base and constraining industry development.

Many of the workforce challenges facing the creative industries mirror broader structural and demographic issues across the RAPAD region. Limited housing availability and affordability, driven by high construction costs, builder shortages and restricted housing stock, constrain both population growth and workforce mobility. A lack of accessible childcare reduces participation, particularly for parents and carers, while an ageing population and shrinking workforce place added pressure on labour supply and service delivery. The higher cost of living and business operations in rural and remote areas further affects profitability and growth, compounded by climate variability, drought and extreme heat, which impact the regional economy and reduce discretionary spending.

Water security remains a critical concern for economic stability and liveability, while geographical isolation increases freight and travel costs, limits access to services and reduces professional networking opportunities. Inconsistent digital connectivity hinders participation in online training, remote work and e-commerce, all increasingly vital to creative careers. At the same time, low unemployment and limited numbers of jobseekers mean employers across all sectors face strong competition for talent.

The combination of industry-specific barriers and wider regional challenges means a coordinated approach is needed to address labour shortages. Possible solutions include targeted upskilling in technical and event-related fields, investment in digital infrastructure and flexible training delivery, the development of regional career pathways and mentoring opportunities to retain talent, stronger advocacy for housing, childcare and transport to improve regional livability and greater support for creative entrepreneurship so practitioners can build sustainable careers without leaving the region.

[16] Service and Creative Skills Australia. (2025). Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers. Service and Creative Skills Australia. https://sacsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Creative-Workforce-Scoping-Study-%E2%80%93-Full-Report-ForWeb-1.pdf

Workforce diversification

The Department of Trade, Employment and Training provides a suite of programs to ensure all Queenslanders have the opportunity to participate in the workforce, while also helping employers and industries to strengthen workforce diversity. The RAPAD region has an aging population and unlike many other industries, arts, cultural and creative industry attract this older demographic, who bring a lifetime of experience from a range of professions into the industry, often combined with the time to increase participation. Other age groups, for whom arts, cultural and creative work is a secondary occupation, often face greater challenges in finding the time to participate. Community consultations revealed the need to increase the number of men and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participating in the industry.

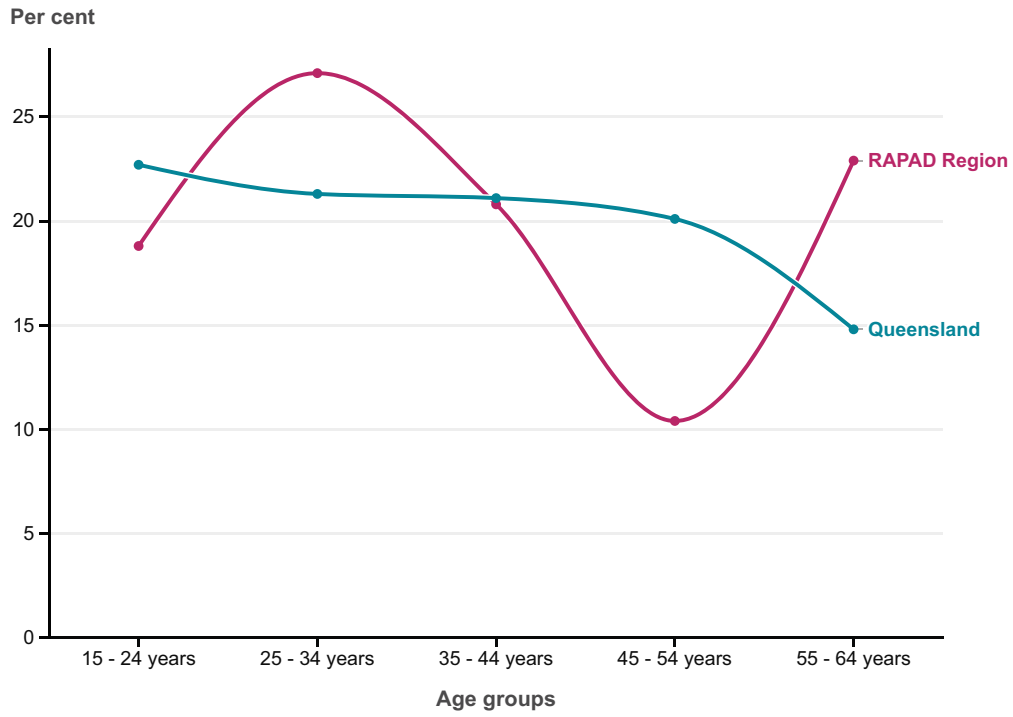
Jobs Queensland's research, delivered through the Supporting Individuals in the Transition to Future Work framework, provides valuable insights alongside industry-led strategies. It highlights priority and underutilised cohorts, including women, people with disability, mature-age workers, Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait peoples and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Mature-age workers

The age of the arts, cultural and creative industries workforce in the RAPAD region reveals key trends in participation. The largest cohort is workers aged 25 to 34 years, reflecting early to mid-career engagement with the industry. There is a noticeable dip in the 45 to 54-year-old age group, followed by a resurgence in participation among those aged 55 to 64 years.

This increase among older workers reflects broader national trends, with workforce participation rates for Australians aged 55 to 64 at historical high levels.[17] Contributing factors include a strong passion for creative work, the sense of identity and purpose it offers and opportunities for social connection. Flexible working arrangements, a desire to supplement income, better health in later life compared to previous generations and the ability to apply accumulated skills and life experience also support continued workforce engagement in this age group. Employers may need to consider more flexible work arrangements, such as job sharing or part-time options for mature-aged workers, many of whom may have health concerns or carer commitments. Self-employed workers, however, may risk loss of income and industry exposure.

Figure 6 Age distribution of arts, cultural and creative industry workforce for RAPAD region and Queensland



Source: ABS, *General Community Profile, 2021*

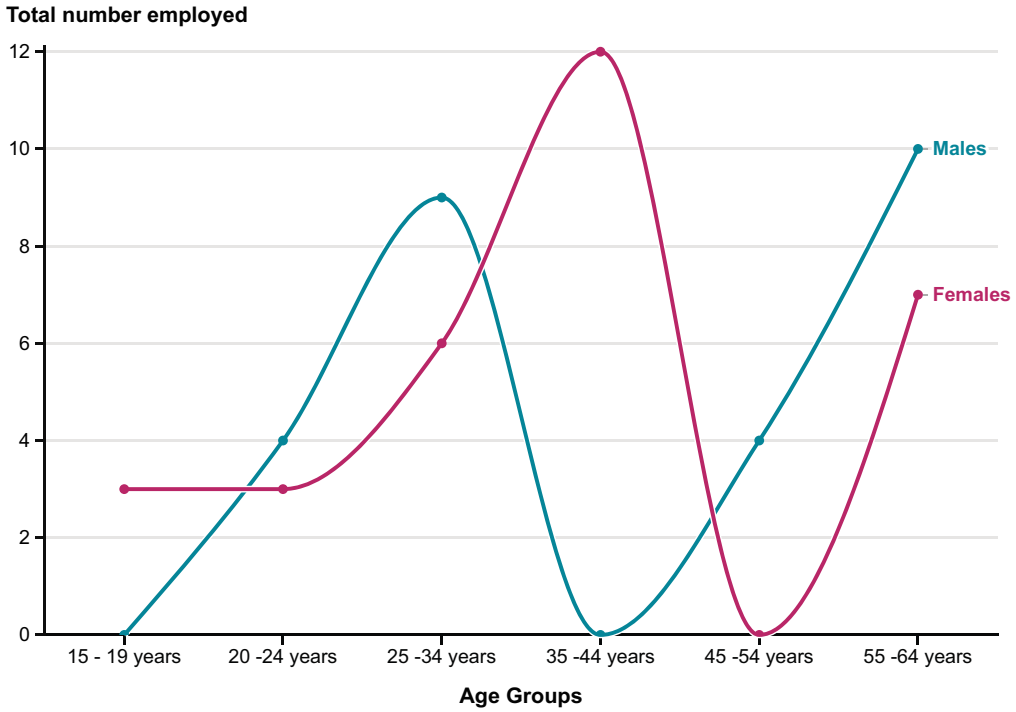
[17] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Older Australians*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australians

Gender dynamics in the workplace

Within the RAPAD region's arts and recreation services workforce, females slightly outnumber males, comprising 53.4 per cent of workers compared to 46.6 per cent male representation. It is important to note that this data only reflects a portion of the total arts, culture and creative labour force. However, gender representation varies across age groups, with some cohorts showing more marked imbalances. Regional data also acknowledges that women are more likely to participate in a part-time capacity in the workforce.

Nationally, women dominate artistic and creative occupations, making up 65 per cent of workers, except in specific fields such as music composition and performance, where men are more prevalent.[18] The opportunity for the RAPAD region is to increase the number of men actively participating in the arts, culture and creative workforce, especially in the 35 and 55 year old age group while creating expanding options for women to meaningfully participate in a full-time capacity in a way that is economically viable for them.

Figure 7 Employment in the arts and recreation services for the RAPAD region by age and sex, 2021



Source: *ABS, General Community Profile - G54, 2021*

[18] Creative Australia. (2024). *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-Australia/files/documents/2025-03/Artists-as-Workers-An-Economic-Study-of-Professional-Artists-in-Australia-2%20%281%29.pdf

People with disability

In rural and remote areas like CWQ, community-led initiatives and flexible service models are key to success. Many employers are beginning to recognise the value of a diverse workforce and are working to create more accessible job opportunities, addressing challenges such as limited awareness, uncertainty about workplace adjustments and concerns about role suitability and costs. Continued investment in training, transport and digital infrastructure will be essential to ensure people with disability can fully participate in the region's economy and contribute to its social and cultural fabric.

Culturally and linguistically diverse

Central West Queensland has a small CALD population that enriches the region's social and economic life. Census data from 2021 indicates 6 per cent of people from the RAPAD region were born overseas and 2.8 per cent speak a language other than English at home. Many are transient workers, fulfilling obligations to extend visas by working in regional areas.

Common workforce participation barriers include employers having limited understanding of cultural differences, uncertainty around communication styles and a lack of confidence in managing diverse teams. In the RAPAD region, these issues may be compounded by fewer support services and training opportunities. The Queensland Government funds a range of other support programs to assist employers to recruit and retain workers from within the CALD community. Creativity is not bounded by language and the arts, cultural and creative industry is enriched by diversity and new perspectives.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples play a vital role in Queensland's workforce, yet significant disparities in employment outcomes persist. The Queensland Government is committed to supporting thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, creative professionals and businesses.[19] Despite higher participation in government-funded training programs compared to non-Indigenous Australians, employment outcomes remain disproportionately low.[20] Efforts are underway to address systemic barriers and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led workforce solutions, with a focus on self-determination, cultural competency and community-driven job creation. These strategies are essential to closing the gap and fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce across Queensland. For example, the Queensland Government's new 10-year arts and cultural strategy outline a range of actions that support and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists by expanding commercial opportunities, ensuring creator recognition, and growing culturally led arts and experiences.[21]

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent 8.1 per cent of the RAPAD population, well above the state average of 4.6 per cent. The highest proportion is in the Boulia Shire, where Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprise 30.1 per cent of the population.[22]

The 2021 Census of Population and Housing recorded no Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples as formally employed in arts and recreation services across the RAPAD region. However, this data underrepresents the true extent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and contribution within the sector. Community insights and anecdotal evidence point to a vibrant presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creatives working across diverse disciplines throughout the area.

Several businesses and organisations within the industry are leading the way to actively support locally-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and cultures. Recognising and fostering opportunities for these local creative talents will deliver meaningful economic, cultural and social benefits, not only for individuals but for the wider community. Enhancing workforce participation and representation will be a key focus during ongoing engagement with the region's creative sector.

[19] Queensland Government. (2025). *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for the arts and culture 2025-2035*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.arts.qld.gov.au/images/documents/Qld%20Time%20to%20Shine/Qlds-Time-to-Shine.pdf

[20] Queensland Social Enterprise Council. (2025). *First Nations Training Strategy.* https://www.qsec.org.au/first-nations-training-strategy

[21] Queensland Government. (2025). *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for the arts and culture 2025-2035.* Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.arts.qld.gov.au/images/documents/Qld%20Time%20to%20Shine/Qlds-Time-to-Shine.pdf

[22] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021.). *Indigenous status by LGA, for RAPAD region and Queensland*. Canberra: Australian Government.

RAPAD region arts, cultural and creative industry

Industry overview

Heritage activities
involve preserving, promoting and celebrating cultural and natural heritage, including both tangible elements (buildings and artefacts) and intangible heritage (traditions, stories and knowledge).

Creative arts
span visual arts, crafts, music, dance and theatre, providing outlets for self-expression and cultural reflection.

Performing arts
are typically live performances such as music, dance and drama.

Motion picture and sound recording
includes production, distribution and exhibition of films and music, including associated post-production services such as film editing, dubbing and sound recording services.

The industry also includes
support for sectors such as jewellery making, photography, sound engineering and arts education.

Occupations within the sector are broad and include:

- production and technical roles
- performers and creatives
- front of house staff
- managers
- business and administrative support personnel.

Queensland's central west is a region shaped by deep histories; ancient, pioneering, natural and creative. The landscape is both beautiful and challenging and the resilience and adaptability of its people have helped to cultivate a rich and diverse arts, cultural and creative sector.

Despite the vibrancy and breadth of activity, participation in the industry is significantly underreported, many roles are unpaid, voluntary or considered secondary to primary occupations. This results in a workforce that is larger and more engaged than official statistics suggest.

The sector plays a vital role in the social and economic life of communities in the region. In areas affected by prolonged drought and economic volatility, particularly agriculture reliant communities, arts and culture have provided not only creative expression and social cohesion but also economic diversification.

Snapshot: Arts, cultural and creative industry analysis in the RAPAD region

1. Workforce composition

- **Workforce under-representation:** Activity within the arts, cultural and creative industries in the RAPAD region does not match the workforce profile, which is consistent with findings across Australia. Creative work may be project based, seasonal and very often undertaken alongside other forms of employment and thus under-reported in census data.
- **Indigenous representation in the workforce:** Census data indicates there are no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in arts and recreations services in the RAPAD region. This data is contrary to what is anecdotally reported where we know artists are actively working within the industry.
- **Volunteer trends:** Volunteerism is common within the sector, with reports that unpaid creative work takes as much time as paid work, that work that is undertaken for little or no financial gain and that education and training is ongoing but undertaken in time outside of paid employment. The industry relies heavily on volunteers who are significant contributors to the arts, cultural and creative landscape across the region

2. Education and skills development

- **Path of lifelong learning:** Creative workers nurture talent and career opportunities through education and training. Increasingly, many people turn to alternative forms of learning and beyond formal qualifications in fine arts, performing arts or cultural management of more traditional pathways.
- **Entry level training pathways:** The arts, cultural and creative industries provide multiple entry points into careers, often based on passion, talent and practical experience. Entry-level pathways include school-based programs, self-directed learning, on-the-job experience, mentorships and volunteering, community participation and early-stage funding for creatives such as the Regional Arts Development Fund.
- **Vocational education:** Certificates and diploma qualifications in creative fields are available through TAFE and RTOs, though access can be limited in regional areas.
- **Tertiary pathways:** Range from undergraduate to doctoral programs in arts, design, media and performance, often complemented by cross-disciplinary study, with specialist training available at institutions. Census data indicates that often more formal qualifications are the basis of lifelong learning.

3. Challenges in vocational and tertiary education

- **Dispersed regional population:** There are opportunities to strengthen pathways between people within the sector and education providers and to look at innovative and tailored models of delivery.
- **Leakage of skilled labour:** Competition for skilled workers may attract workers to other regions offering more consistent and regular work opportunities. This trend may extend to students who leave the region to undertake studies and are attracted to other regions rather than returning to the RAPAD region. Many skills are transferrable between industries; people move people occupations, often the most financially rewarding, consistent and meaningful work.

4. Labour market dynamics and challenges

- **Growth sectors:** With a mixed outlook for the industry as a whole, growth is anticipated in museum operation based on the regions strong tourism industry. Other growth areas are in manufacturing including niche or artisanal production and in professional, scientific and technical services often in a freelance or consultancy capacity.
- **Specific labour shortages with the industry:** The region lacks technical and production, staging and event management expertise that is

costly to import.

5. Future directions and skills needs

- **Workforce development focus:** Future workforce strategies should focus on creative entrepreneurship, leveraging digital technologies and diversifying income, technical skills, cultural competency and storytelling and community engagement expertise.
- **Pathways:** Future workforce planning should include development and support of career pathways including mentoring opportunities and linkage to hands-on experience at regional events and festivals to support training.

Arts and recreation services =

1.4% of the regional workforce

slightly below Queensland's 1.5%

Top five employment areas

In terms of subdivisions, in 2021 the top five employment areas in the RAPAD region were:

1 **24.5%** Agriculture, forestry and fisheries

2 **10.9%** Public administration

3 **7.9%** Preschool and school education

4 **6.1%** Hospitals

5 **4%** Construction

These five subdivisions account for

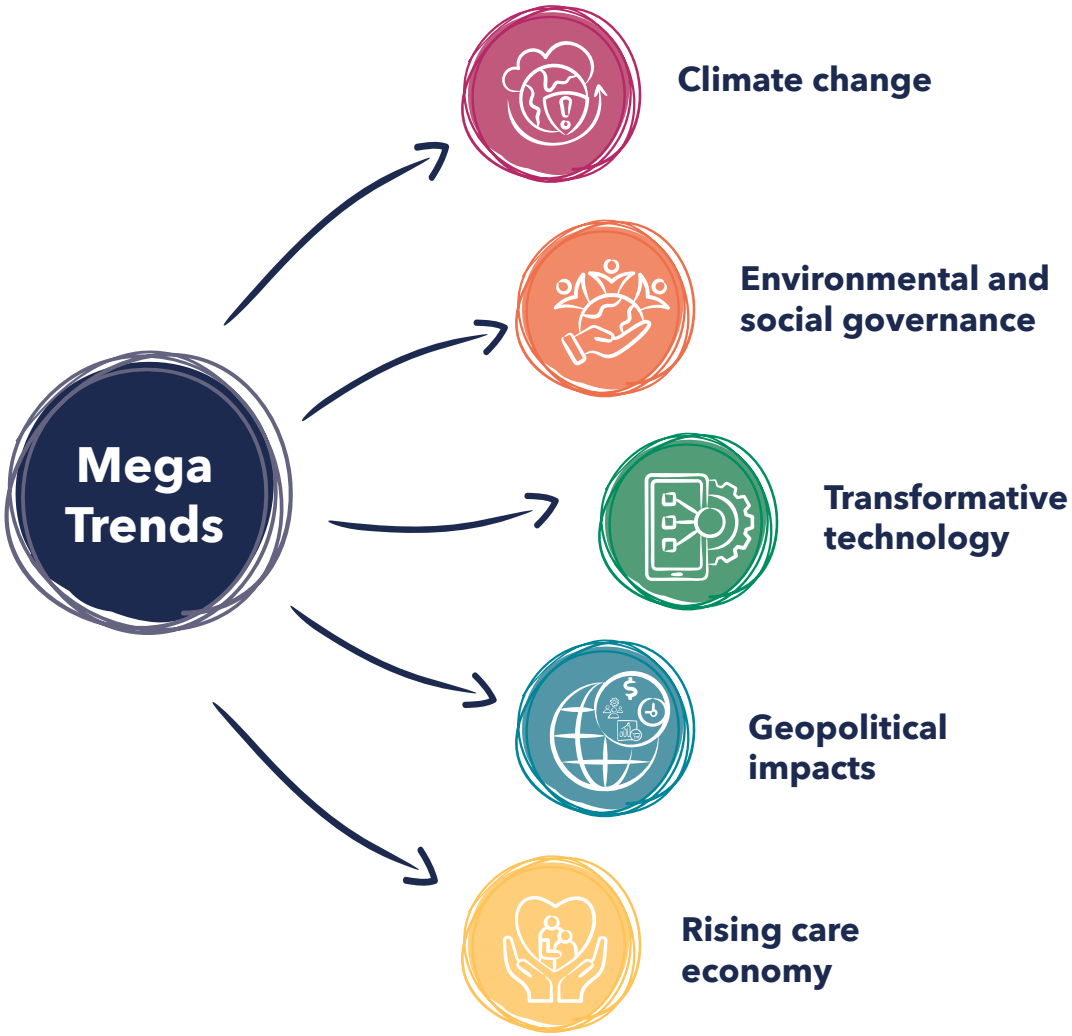
52.7% of all employment in the region

[11] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Community Profiles: Census data tools and products*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/about-census-tools/community-profiles

[12] Ibid.

Megatrends

Megatrends have the potential to substantially impact a region, creating transformative change, occurring over years or decades and varying in scale depending on the region and industry of focus.[23]



Stakeholders within the RAPAD region suggest the arts, culture and creative industry may be impacted in the following ways:

Climate change

Weather in CWQ is highly variable and increasingly influenced by changing climate, the long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. It is predicted we will see more periods of higher temperatures (and heatwaves), more frequent and intense storms in some areas (with risk of flooding) and less rain in others (increased risk of drought).[24]

Communities in CWQ will need to consider and plan for climate change impacts in the arts, cultural and creative industries such as extreme weather affecting festivals and events and damaging artworks, energy consumption requirements, impacts on health due to extreme heat events, water quality and availability and the impact on infrastructure in climate extremes.

[23] CSIRO. (2022). *Our Future World: Global megatrends impacting the way we live over coming decades*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://www.csiro.au/en/research/technology-space/data/Our-Future-World

[24] Queensland Government. (2024). *Central West Queensland Regional Drought Resilience Plan 2024-2030*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/central-west-queenslandrdr-plan.pdf

Environmental and social governance

The Queensland Government has set a legislated target of zero net emissions by 2050 with interim emissions reduction targets of 30 per cent by 2030 and 75 per cent by 2035 from 2005 levels.[25] Creative industries can have a considerable environmental footprint and there is an opportunity to adopt 'greener' practices across the industry and region and promote discussion and social responsibility through artworks and creative projects.

Moving forward community, organisational and individual creative and cultural activities and projects will require consideration of environmental impacts such as resource use, manufacturing processes, waste generation, transportation and impact on the environment. There are opportunities to adopt more sustainable creative practices, raise awareness and develop policies to promote sustainability and advocate for change.

Transformative technology

Advances in technology have revolutionised the way we live, work and create. Digitisation and editing of art can make art more accessible regardless of location or other barriers, impacting on the way we share and interact with art. Digital creation, across different mediums and styles, offers unique opportunities to create and experience art. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) presents new possibilities for artists and creative practice.

Technology is rapidly advancing and ensuring reliable internet connectivity is critical for CWQ communities to be part of the revolution and maximising the opportunities it will present.

Communication strategies, marketing and social media all play new roles is expanding audience participation and purchasing opportunities, when combined with e-commerce. Technology will help transform artistic hobbies into careers and open experiences in cultural tourism. This level of interaction is game-changing for many creatives in the region.

Critical to these changes are intellectual property protection for artists and the management of data and ownership of generative AI so that creative practice is fair, ethical and transparent.

Geopolitical impacts

Geopolitical impacts resulting from political events and relationships between countries influence the arts, cultural and creative industry.

While RAPAD creative and cultural communities indicate the need for increased and continued funding within the sector, funding priorities of government and private investors are often determined by broader geopolitical priorities and agendas. Cultural tourism in the region is impacted by geopolitics and actively contributes to the regional economy, as evidenced by the increase in visitors to the region during the COVID-19 pandemic. Arts, cultural and creative industry also contribute to building social capital and resilience in the region especially during times of crisis such as flood and drought as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Geopolitical factors, like the growing global recognition of First Nations arts and culture, influence how Australia is showcasing its Indigenous heritage and engages with Indigenous communities.[27] This is a growth area for CWQ.

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[25] Queensland Government. (2025). *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Environmental Protections Act 1994*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. https://www.detsi.qld.gov.au/policies?a=272936%3Apolicy_registry%2Fera-gl-greenhouse-gas-emissions.pdf

[26] Australian Government. (2025). *Generative AI and creative work: Creative Australia Principles*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-04/Generative-AI-and-creative-work-Creative-Australia-Principles.pdf

[27] Australia Government: Australia Council for the Arts. (2022). *Towards a national cultural policy.* Canberra: Australian Government. https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-04/National-Cultural-Plan-Framing-Submission-1.pdf

The rising care economy

Social and economic determinants of health, such as education, income, access to services and social supports, directly influence health outcomes and shape demand for care services.

In the RAPAD region, health care and social assistance is the third biggest employer and will become increasingly important as the population continues to age, with the region already older on average than Queensland as a whole.

The region faces additional challenges related to remoteness including availability and distance to access health and specialist services and treatment and delay and underdiagnosis of illness.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare mortality data by Primary Health Network (PHN) area shows Western Queensland has the second highest age standardised mortality rate, premature death (50.5 per cent) and potentially avoidable premature death (56.6 per cent) across the 31 Australian PHNs in 2023.[28]

Research suggests becoming involved in meaningful and creative activities such as music, dance, painting, drawing or storytelling—can boost wellbeing by enhancing the lives of residents and staff within an aged care setting, promoting positive mental wellbeing, reducing stress, improving mood and helping people feel more connected.[29]

Social prescribing linked to creativity and culture brings people together, combats loneliness and support recovery, highlighting the arts, cultural and creative industry as an important part of healthy and aging communities.

[28] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). *Mortality Over Regions and Time*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-deaths/mort-books

[29] Dadswell, A., Wilson, C., & Bungay, H. (2024). *Sustainable Creative Practice with Older People: A Collaborative Approach between Arts and Care Sectors*. Sustainability, 16(9), 3587. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16093587

Regional training profile

"To encourage a lifelong learning mindset, you need to make learning feel like an ongoing journey rather than a one-off event or qualification. In creative industries especially, the work itself changes so quickly–new technologies, new platforms, new cultural expectations–that the only way to stay relevant is to keep evolving. The trick is to frame this not as a burden but as part of the identity of being a creative worker... embedding curiosity as a cultural norm. This means valuing experimentation, rewarding people who try new things, and treating mistakes as part of the process."

- RAPAD Arts, cultural and creative industries survey respondent

Training profile

Education and training in the arts, cultural and creative industry are central to nurturing talent, developing sustainable careers and supporting innovation in the RAPAD region. Training offers span formal qualifications, informal learning opportunities and ongoing professional development. Creative workers often pursue a path of lifelong learning, including self-directed learning, micro-credentials and peer-to-peer training.[30]

Employee development

Cultural organisations, community arts groups and creative enterprises in the RAPAD region actively foster employee development through a diverse range of learning opportunities.

These include on-the-job training to build essential workplace skills, comprehensive workplace inductions that help new employees understand their roles, expectations and compliance requirements and health and safety training to meet regulatory and insurance standards.

Additionally, informal mentoring and tutoring allow experienced creatives to guide emerging practitioners, while exposure to residencies and workshops, often delivered through festivals or community-led events enhances professional growth.

This blend of structured and informal learning is particularly well-suited to the region's predominantly project-based and freelance creative workforce, ensuring ongoing skill development and adaptability.

Formal training uptake

While formal education, such as degrees or diplomas in fine arts, design, performing arts or cultural management continues to serve as a key entry point into the creative industries, many practitioners are increasingly embracing alternative forms of professional learning.

These include micro-credentials and short courses, workshops and peer learning groups, residencies and practice-based training, as well as online and blended delivery formats. Such flexible approaches not only support ongoing skill development but also foster valuable networking opportunities both within and beyond the RAPAD region.

Artists in this area often work across multiple disciplines and frequently extend their creative expertise into sectors like tourism, hospitality, design, media and broadcasting, education and digital technology, reflecting the dynamic and interconnected nature of their professional landscape.

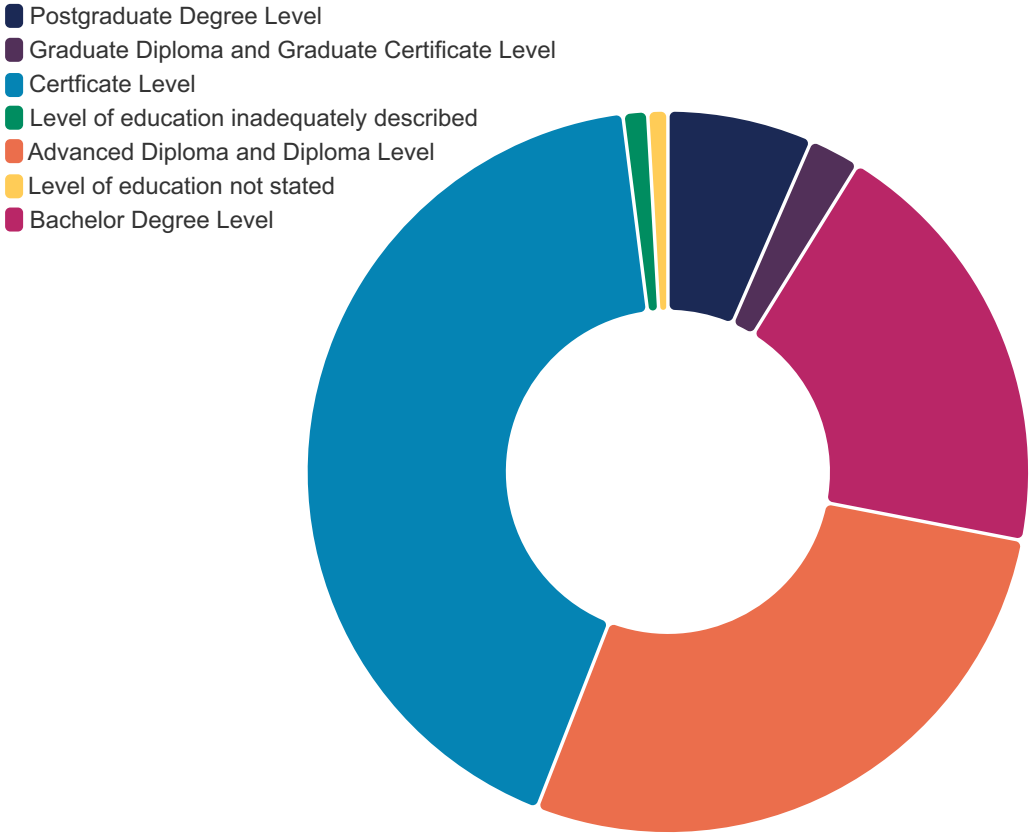
[30] Creative Australia. (2024). *Artists as Workers: A summary and response by Creative Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/3654_Creative-Australia_Companion-Report_V6_0.pdf

Qualifications and training profile

According to the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, the RAPAD local government areas demonstrate a solid foundation of qualifications in creative disciplines and in society and culture.

These credentials are not only utilised within the creative industry but also play a valuable role across the wider regional workforce, where the skills acquired are highly transferable between industries.

Figure 8 Level of qualifications for non-school qualifications for Creative Arts and Culture and Society fields of interest in the RAPAD region, 2021



Source: ABS, *Census of Population and Housing, 2021, TableBuilder*

Relevance of training packages

Training data resources provided by the Queensland Government offer valuable insights for aligning educational programs with the specific needs of regional industries. In the RAPAD region, training packages like CUA Creative Arts and Culture, BSB Business Services, and CHC Community Services are especially relevant due to the strong interconnection between creative practice, community development and small business activity.

There is significant potential to enhance pathways between local talent and further education providers through initiatives such as TAFE collaborations, university outreach and regionally delivered accredited courses.

To better serve the geographically dispersed population, flexible delivery models, such as block scheduling, remote learning and mobile training could play a crucial role in expanding access and participation.

Training pathways

The arts, cultural and creative industry offer a wide range of pathways into employment and professional practice, shaped by individual interests, evolving technologies and non-linear career trajectories. Entry into the sector is frequently driven by passion, talent and practical experience rather than formal qualifications alone, with success often defined by the quality of work, adaptability and ongoing creative development.

Entry-level opportunities arise through various routes, including school-based programs that build foundational skills and foster early interest; self-directed learning and informal practice, where individuals develop their craft through experimentation and community engagement; and on-the-job learning, which provides hands-on experience in roles such as cultural and heritage work or community theatre. Mentorships, internships and volunteering offer vital exposure and networking opportunities, while community-based participation can reveal talent and inspire transitions from recreational involvement to professional practice.

Funding and development initiatives, such as the Queensland Government's Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF), delivered in partnership with local governments play a key role in supporting emerging creatives with seed funding for skill-building and project development. These varied entry points highlight the inclusive and flexible nature of career progression within the creative industries.

Vocational and tertiary pathways

Formal education and training play a significant role in professionalising creative practice, with data from Creative Australia indicating that approximately three-quarters of creative professionals have undertaken some form of formal training.[31]

Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways offer certificates and diplomas in disciplines such as visual arts, music, graphic design, screen and media, live production and cultural heritage. These qualifications are delivered through TAFE Queensland and registered training organisations, though access in remote regions may depend on distance or block-mode delivery. While apprenticeships and traineeships are less common, they may be available in fields like printing, design technology or event production. Relevant training packages include CUA Creative Arts and Culture, BSB Business Services for arts administration and CHC Community Services for roles intersecting with cultural development and community arts.

At the tertiary level, universities across Australia provide bachelor, honours, postgraduate and doctoral programs in creative arts, cultural studies, design, media and performing arts. Many students also pursue cross-disciplinary studies, applying knowledge from fields such as education, journalism, marketing or science to enrich their creative practice. For specialised training in music, dance and drama, students often relocate to metropolitan centres to access institutions such as the Queensland Conservatorium (Griffith University), Queensland University of Technology, the National Institute of Dramatic Art and the Australian Ballet School. These educational pathways foster both technical mastery and conceptual development, equipping creatives to work across diverse industries.

[31] Creative Australia. (2024). *Artists as Workers: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. https:// creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-03/Artists- as-Workers-An-Economic-Study-of-Professional-Artists-in-Australia-2%20%281%29.pdf

Training and education

While the RAPAD region does not have any university campuses or major training institutions located locally, residents have access to a range of formal training opportunities through distance education, online learning and community-based support services. The industry's strong culture of life-long learning complements these formal training options with informal learning experiences such as workshops residencies and peer-based knowledge sharing.

To support remote learners, the region benefits from the Country Universities Centre, which operates learning hubs in eight central west communities. These centres serve as vital local hubs for students enrolled in universities and training providers, offering study spaces and reliable internet access to support learning. In addition to academic and administrative assistance, they provide an essential connection point for students helping bridge geographic gaps and foster a sense of belonging within broader educational networks.

In addition to formal training pathways, many communities across the region host active arts and cultural organisations that support ongoing skill development. These organisations offer short courses, workshops and weeklong residencies and regularly host visiting practitioners across disciplines such as circus arts, music, dance, visual arts and singing. Creative professionals also maintain and expand their skills through self-education, micro-credentials, peer learning, mentorship and active participation in conferences and industry forums.

This commitment to continuous learning reflects the dynamic, evolving nature of the creative industry and the importance of adaptability and lifelong development across the breadth of the industry.

Skills and training requirements

The arts, cultural and creative industries are constantly evolving, influenced by advancements in technology, community and cultural expectations and global trends. Within the region, industry faces distinctive challenges and opportunities, particularly due to its reliance on volunteers, geographical remoteness and a need for multi-disciplinary skill development.

To build a resilient and sustainable creative industry, the emphasis must be on growing our own workforce, developing local skills and capabilities supported by accessible training opportunities and expertise. This includes both immediate and mid-term skill development.

Strategies will need to acknowledge and value the diversity of the workforce, including an ageing population and the entry of young people into the industry.

Immediate to mid-term skill and training needs identified through community consultation

Arts, cultural, creative and community leadership and management

To support a thriving, innovative creative sector, we need to strengthen leadership and management capabilities that drive collaboration, growth and real-world impact. This includes:

- Strategic planning and governance that's responsive, forward-looking and grounded in community needs.
- Stakeholder and community engagement to ensure creative initiatives reflect diverse voices and local priorities.
- Audience development that builds participation, deepens cultural connection and enhances public value.
- Partnership building and collaboration across government, industry and community to unlock shared outcomes.
- Change management and innovation to lead through complexity, adapt to shifting conditions and spark new ideas.
- Cultural competency and First Nations leadership to ensure Indigenous artists are supported while cultural protocols are generally understood across the sector.
- Foster mentoring and intergenerational knowledge exchange to strengthen programs and practitioner skills.

These capabilities underpin a thriving creative ecosystem and help creative leaders shape a sector that's resilient, inclusive and well-positioned to contribute to economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

Digital literacy and emerging technology

Improved digital capabilities are critical across the arts, cultural and creative industries, with growing demand for:

- Basic digital literacy which includes file management, cloud-based collaboration tools and device navigation as essential for efficient workflows and remote connectivity.
- Software proficiency to support high-quality design, branding and content production across diverse media.
- Social media and digital marketing involve the strategic use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok to engage audiences, deliver campaigns and foster community connections.
- Content creation involves developing skills in video production, podcasting and digital storytelling, enabling practitioners to craft compelling narratives and connect with broader audiences.
- Web and e-commerce development involves building and managing websites, online stores and digital portfolios to enhance visibility, generate income and enable direct engagement with audiences.
- Artificial intelligence applications in creative practice are reshaping workflows and expanding artistic possibilities through tools that enable generative design, automated editing, audience analytics and personalised content creation.

Access to funding and grant literacy

Securing funding in the arts, cultural and creative industries requires a blend of creative, administrative and financial skills. Targeted training and support are needed to build capability across the following areas:

- Grant writing and application processes require the ability to interpret guidelines, align proposals with funding priorities and clearly articulate project outcomes.
- Budgeting and financial literacy are essential for developing realistic budgets, managing resources and demonstrating value for money.
- Project planning and management skills ensure that initiatives are delivered on time, within scope and with measurable impact.
- Marketing, communications and reporting capabilities support stakeholder engagement, transparency and accountability throughout the funding lifecycle.
- Networking and inclusive practice foster collaboration across sectors and ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources.
- Individuals and organisations need strong strategic communication skills, a clear articulation of impact and values alignment and the ability to cultivate trust through relationship-building, storytelling and sector-savvy engagement to access philanthropic funding opportunities and build meaningful connections.

Cultural planning and policy

Strategic cultural planning is essential for ensuring the longevity, relevance and responsiveness of the arts and creative industries. Key capabilities include:

- Community consultation and stakeholder engagement involves actively listening to all community voices, including across different age groups and ability groups to shape inclusive cultural strategies and program design and delivery.
- Cultural asset mapping and research identifies and documents local cultural resources to inform planning and investment.
- Strategic and policy development creates frameworks that guide sector growth and align with broader government priorities.
- Writing, reporting and evaluation communicates outcomes clearly and supports transparency, learning and continuous improvement.
- Program and event design aligned to policy frameworks ensures initiatives reflect strategic goals and deliver measurable impact.

Business and entrepreneurial skills

All creative practitioners require core business capabilities to manage their careers, projects or organisations effectively and sustainably.

- Financial management and income diversification enables practitioners to budget, forecast, invest and build resilient income streams across multiple sources.
- Strengthen capability in product development by embedding skills in creative concepting, audience insight, prototyping, intellectual property management and market readiness to define, refine and position products for licensing, export and sustainable enterprise.
- Marketing and branding helps creatives communicate their value, grow audiences and position themselves strategically in the marketplace.
- Legal and intellectual property knowledge ensures practitioners understand their rights, protect their work and navigate contracts with confidence.
- Contract negotiation equips creatives to advocate for fair terms, manage risk and build professional relationships.
- E-commerce and digital sales platforms provide tools to monetise creative work online and expand market reach.
- Strategic business development and project leadership supports long-term growth, innovation and the delivery of impactful creative initiatives.
- Business planning, feasibility studies and start-up knowledge equip creative practitioners to assess viability, structure sustainable ventures and navigate early-stage development with confidence.
- Human resources management helps creative organisations hire the right people, support their teams through induction and training and build strong, inclusive workplaces.
- Customer service skills support businesses to connect with clients, understand their needs and deliver meaningful, professional experiences.

Specialist industry skills

The region hosts a diverse range of festivals, events, galleries and museums, all of which require specialist skills to deliver high-quality cultural experiences.

- Sound and lighting operation is essential for creating immersive environments at performances, exhibitions and public programs.
- Event planning and delivery ensures cultural activities are well-organised, accessible and aligned with audience expectations.
- Technical production supports the setup and execution of complex creative presentations, including multimedia installations and touring exhibitions.
- Stage management coordinates live performances and public programs, ensuring smooth delivery and artist support.
- Safety and risk management for events and exhibitions protects staff, audiences and artworks while meeting compliance and accessibility standards.
- The expansion of cultural tourism, along with galleries require specialist skills in exhibition design, storytelling and heritage interpretation, curatorial practice, collection care and audience engagement and experience design as well as artist and cross sector collaboration to deliver meaningful and professionally presented experiences.

Considerations for children and young people

Children and young people are the future of arts, cultural and creative industries. Investing in the arts and culture delivers exceptional value, expanding opportunities for every child regardless of background or experience. The outlay is modest, while the rewards are profound, not just for the children but also our communities.

Research by Sue Giles AM and Simon Abrahams on behalf of Creative Australia highlights the benefits of arts and culture for children and young people including:[32]

- **Value of the arts:** From birth, the arts help children and young people express identity, belonging and imagination, giving deep personal meaning to their lives.
- **Civic capacity and cultural citizenship:** Arts engagement fosters resilience, empathy and active citizenship, helping young people connect across cultures and contribute to their communities.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Participation in the arts enhances mental, emotional, physical and social wellbeing, building resilience and protective factors for health.
- **Society and community:** Arts strengthen community cohesion, promote cultural identity and provide safe ways for young people to navigate complex social challenges.
- **Learning and development:** The arts improve academic outcomes, engagement and skills like creativity, problem-solving and collaboration.
- **Artistic value:** Children and young people are significant cultural creators, shaping artistic practice and contributing to the vibrancy of the arts sector.
- **Economic impact:** Investment in youth arts offers high value, reducing barriers to potential and supporting long-term social and economic benefits.

[32] Andersen, J. (2025). *Next Generation Now: Benefits of the arts for children and young people. A discussion of selected research*. Sydney: Australian Government. https://creative.gov.au/sites/creative-australia/files/documents/2025-05/Next-Generation-Now-Related-research-publication-250425.pdf

Delivery considerations

Reducing the need to travel to larger centres for training would significantly improve accessibility and uptake. Opportunities include:

- Expanding regional delivery through short courses, micro-credentials and residencies, supported by follow-up or structured progression alongside recognition and accreditation.
- Leveraging Country Universities Centre and other hubs as learning access points and utilising hybrid and digital models of delivery.
- Building local capacity to share skills and resources across the region, including local government capacity..
- Embedding Indigenous knowledge systems and practices in formal training frameworks.

Key priority roles for training and employment to meet future demand include:

Employment focus	Examples of activities	Training opportunity examples
Creative producers and project managers	Plan and deliver exhibitions, residencies, events and tours	Arts management, logistics, budgeting, stakeholder engagement
Arts administrators	Manage funding applications, scheduling and operations	Grant writing, budgeting, project reporting
Marketing and communications specialists	Build visibility and revenue for creatives and events	Social media, content creation, branding, public relations
Technicians and event crew	Deliver technical elements for events and performances	Audio/visual production, safety, sound/ lightning engineering
Educators and workshop facilitators	Lead programs in schools and community settings	Workshop facilitation, curriculum design, education support
Gallery/venue/studio managers	Operate creative spaces and liaise with public and artists	Curation, customer service, business operations
Curators and programmers	Shape exhibitions and performance lineups	Curatorial studies, interpretation, research
Digital content creators	Build portfolios, websites and online shops for creatives	E-commerce, photography, search engine optimisation, basic coding
Creative business/finance/ legal advisors	Helps creatives with tax, intellectual property, pricing, contracts and business structure	Accounting, creative lase, business mentoring
Tourism and arts integration roles	Design experiences that link culture and tourism to support artist visibility and income	Destination marketing, cultural tourism strategy, tour design

Building the business ecosystem

The arts, cultural and creative industries play a vital role in shaping regional identity, fostering innovation and contributing to economic resilience and sustainability. Beyond artistic skills and talent, a thriving business ecosystem has a strong foundation rooted in a collective vision for the industry, collaboration, education, infrastructure and policy support. In the RAPAD region, creative practice intersects with community development and small business activity and the demand for skills and capability development will vary. A more tailored approach will be key to unlocking the full potential of local talent and creating opportunities to shift from an industry reliant on volunteers to one offering potential for paid employment and business development.

Effective leadership in the arts, cultural and creative industries in the RAPAD region recognises the importance of place and the uniqueness of every community and each part of the industry. Fostering leadership capability is integral to empowering communities, acknowledging the past and moving into the future for lasting impact. From small to significant ways, developing a diverse skill set and willingness to foster collaboration will help drive growth and innovation, contributing to regional resilience and problem solving. Building leadership skills and using opportunities to combine strategic thinking with community engagement will help the industry thrive and contribute meaningfully to the region. There are a range of leadership focussed professional development opportunities across multiple levels and areas of practice that are available for people within the region delivered by different organisations and through experience and practice.

Cultural planning will support building a business ecosystem at an organisational, community and regional level. Having a clear and inclusive vision that reflects the region's cultural heritage, creative aspirations and social values is foundational. This shared identity can be cultivated through regional storytelling, place-based branding and community engagement. Mapping existing assets—such as creative practitioners, cultural venues, festivals and educational institutions will provide a deeper understanding of the industry and help identify gaps and opportunities for growth.

Collaboration is central to business development. Cross-sector partnerships between creatives and industries like health, tourism, education, technology and hospitality can spark innovation and expand market reach and impact in new and different ways. Establishing creative hubs, whether physical or virtual, enables co-working, networking and resource sharing among artists, designers and cultural workers. Informal mentoring and peer networks further strengthen community ties and facilitate knowledge exchange, especially in regions like RAPAD's with a dispersed population. More structured mentoring opportunities, including beyond the region and across industries will further enhance industry development and collaboration, which benefits everyone.

Flexible options for education and skills development will need to be more responsive to industry needs. Micro-credentials, short courses, residencies and workshops offer accessible pathways for professional growth. Online and blended delivery formats are particularly valuable in the RAPAD region, allowing creatives to upskill without relocating. Aligning training programs with regional priorities and expressed community needs will ensure relevance and impact. Available data on current training could be leveraged to fine-tune skill development opportunities and meet emerging workforce demands. Strengthening pathways between local talent, industry bodies and further education providers supports lifelong learning and career progression. Cultural tourism, driven by local stories, heritage and festivals, offers additional opportunities to showcase creative work and build community pride.

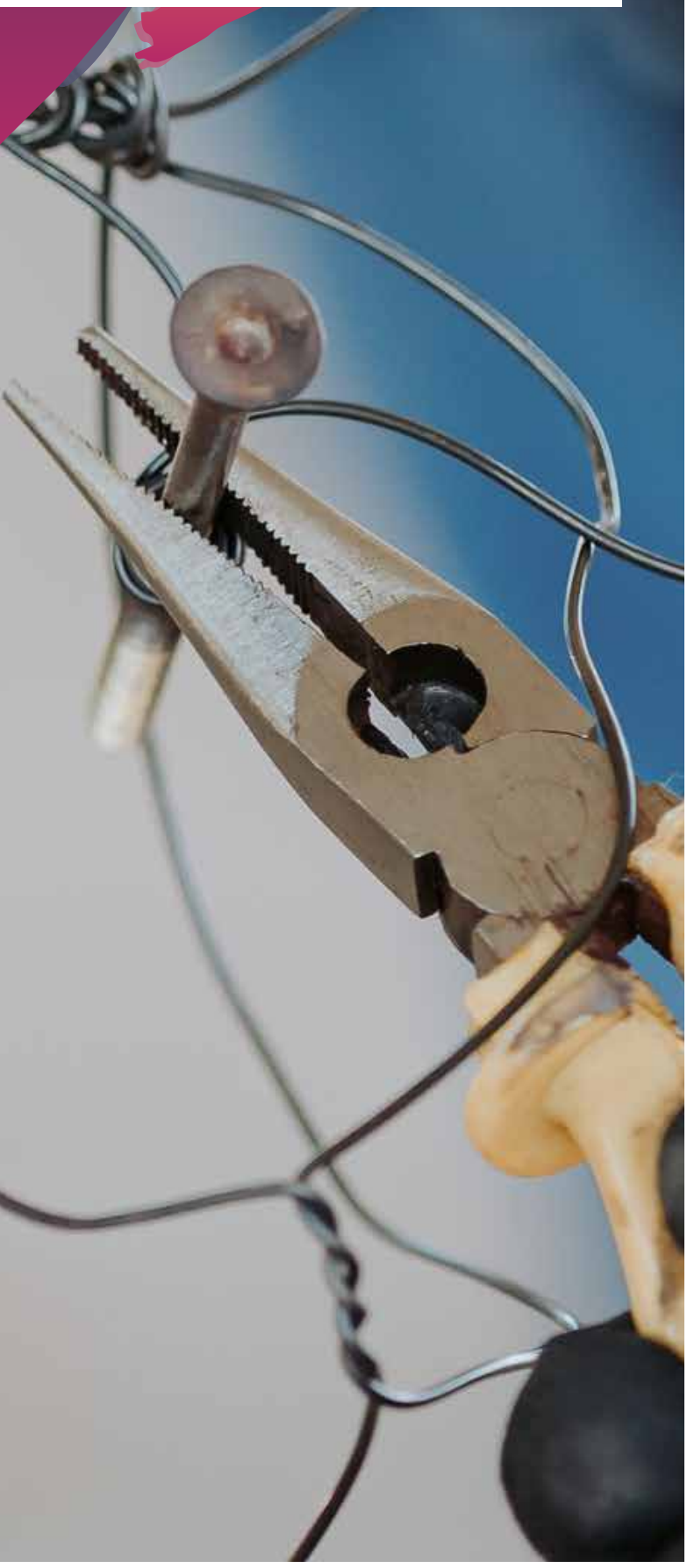
Business support and infrastructure are increasingly essential for sustaining creative enterprises. Access to funding through grants, seed investment and philanthropic pathways allows artists and entrepreneurs to launch and scale their ideas. Tailored business services and planning - including legal, financial, marketing and digital support - will help creatives navigate the complexities of running a business. Digital platforms that connect individuals with audiences and clients will enhance visibility and contribute to commercial viability, while also fostering collaboration between communities and more broadly.

Policy and advocacy efforts will reinforce the value of arts and culture within broader economic and social frameworks, even within the region. Partnerships with all levels of government will continue to embed creative industries into regional development strategies and secure investment in cultural infrastructure. Developing frameworks that promote fair pay, diversity and inclusion ensures that the ecosystem remains equitable and sustainable. Keeping track of how advocacy efforts are landing supports staying flexible and responsive with change and more in-tune with real-world impact.

Cybersecurity is an essential but frequently underestimated issue for arts, cultural and creative industry businesses, which depend heavily on digital technologies and sensitive data to operate and expand. Safeguarding digital assets, meeting regulatory requirements and preserving the confidence of audiences and partners requires strong cybersecurity practices. These include data encryption, secure networks, effective access controls, regular staff training and well-defined cybersecurity policies and procedures.

Building a resilient and inclusive business ecosystem in the arts, cultural and creative industries requires a holistic and locally informed approach. By investing in collaboration, education, infrastructure and policy alignment, regions like RAPAD can cultivate vibrant creative economies that enrich both cultural life and economic prosperity.

Opportunities and challenges



Labour shortage and recruitment challenges

The arts, cultural and creative industries in the region face a complex set of labour challenges that reflect both industry-specific dynamics and the broader regional workforce environment. The *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report* highlights significant recruitment and retention challenges in regional and remote areas, particularly for skilled workers.[33] These challenges are amplified in the RAPAD region, where access to specialised training, infrastructure and support services is limited.

Key industry-specific challenges include:

- Shortages in technical and production skills, such as fabrication, sound, lighting and event management.
- High rates of self-employment and portfolio work, which obscure the true size and needs of the workforce in vacancy and employment data.
- Inconsistent or seasonal employment opportunities, leading to outmigration of creative professionals seeking reliable or long-term work.
- Lack of career progression pathways in the region, especially in niche industries like film and screen production, which are project-based and transient by nature.

These challenges create a feedback loop: limited opportunities lead to outmigration, which in turn reduces the local skills base, further constraining industry growth.

[33] Service and Creative Skills Australia. (2025). *Creative Workforce Scoping Study Report: Addressing the challenges with critical skills and sustainable careers*. Sydney: Australian Government. https://sacsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Creative-Workforce-Scoping-Study-%E2%80%93-Full-Report-ForWeb-1.pdf

Examples of additional region-specific challenges identified during workforce planning community consultations and a broader survey include:

- Lack of skilled trainers and advanced training locally or pathways for those with skills to share them.
- The need to attract people with experience in museum and gallery management, that are supported through programs like the Museum Development Officer Program, through Queensland Museum.
- The need for motivated drivers to coordinate visual and performing arts that are supported with the skills they need to pass on their knowledge to others.
- Volunteer overcommitment and burnout.
- Arts can be undervalued and underpaid compared to other industries, however, will become increasingly important to the regions aging population.
- Business skills including basics like customer service as well as communication and marketing are key skills for the future workforce.
- Pathways for regional students in Year 11 and 12 interested in the industry are limited or expensive through VET.
- Training and education packages need to be tailored to suit people regardless if they are casual employees, fulltime or anything in between.
- Lack of funding available for courses and materials.
- Factor in support for more men to participate in creative industries.
- A lot of time can be spent mastering craft with little financial return.
- Lack of connection between isolated artists and in some cases within communities.
- Lack of local industry support services such as framing and printing.
- Time limitations to upskill as a volunteer.
- Local arts are not always valued or considered the same calibre as urban offerings.
- Community perceptions that there is no future or no work in arts.
- The rapid speed of change and impact of technology in the industry and limited opportunities to keep pace with changes.
- Peer to peer support is valuable.
- Infrastructure is critical to provide creative spaces
- Conflicting income priorities for people in 20–40 year age group raising families, prioritising work outside the industry for financial reasons.
- Lack of opportunities to showcase local talent and skills.
- Lack of exposure to arts, cultural and creative activities especially for some young people, to spark interest and practice.
- Income stability is critical in maintaining the workforce.
- Supporting creative entrepreneurship helps people set up businesses, access e-commerce platforms and expand markets to make staying in the region more viable.
- Reframing the way we view funding through an investment and expense lens to consider it as an activity, initiative or person that adds value and produces tangible outputs for the community ‘not just an artist subsidy but as a regional development strategy.
- Seasonal economic fluctuations and tourism dependence create a need to extend the tourism season.
- Locally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate in the industry but they are not strongly profiled.
- Diversity within the industry could be driven locally.

Broader regional labour challenges

Many of the workforce constraints facing the creative industries are common across all industry in the RAPAD region. These broader challenges are acknowledged below, however are generally beyond the scope of this workforce development plan:

- Housing availability and affordability: high construction costs, builder shortages and limited housing stock restrict population growth and workforce mobility.
- Childcare access: a lack of suitable childcare impacts participation, particularly for parents and carers seeking employment of training opportunities.
- Aging population and shrinking local workforce: demographic shifts place additional pressure on labour supply and service delivery.
- Higher cost of living and business operations: rural and remote living increases household and business expenditure, affecting profitability and expansion potential.
- Some communities are significantly impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence and other social issues that overshadow and take precedence over concerns around workforce or participation in creative or cultural activities.
- Climate variability: flooding, drought and extreme heat events affect the broader regional economy (particularly agriculture), which in turn impacts communities in a range of ways including time for participation, discretionary spending and creative industry viability.
- Water security: a major concern across communities, with implications for economic stability and liveability.
- Geographical isolation: long distances to major cities increase freight and travel costs, reduce service accessibility and limit professional networking.
- Digital connectivity: inconsistent internet and telecommunications access hinders participation in digital training, online work and e-commerce, all increasingly critical to creative careers.
- Low unemployment and competition for workers: with few jobseekers available, employers across all sectors face strong competition for talent.

Opportunities

The arts, cultural and creative industries are adaptive, community-driven and strongly aligned with the region's identity and resilience. As the industry continues to evolve alongside digital, social and economic trends, it presents new and expanding opportunities. Ensuring the region's communities are equipped to embrace change while maintaining cultural authenticity is essential for long-term success.

Key opportunities

1 Strengthen regional cultural identity through innovation

- Ongoing support to adopt emerging technologies and explore new creative practices is essential to ensure regional practitioners can remain competitive and innovative.
- Balancing tradition with innovation will help preserve regional identity while inviting new ways of storytelling and engagement.

2 Growing cultural tourism and heritage arts

Cultural tourism is a natural growth area for the RAPAD region, offering opportunities to:

- Showcase local stories, First Nations culture and history.
- Develop heritage trails, artist residencies and interactive exhibitions.
- Align with tourism strategies to attract broader audiences and diversify local economies.
- This industry provides an ideal platform to upskill local artists and communities in interpretation, storytelling and event management.

3 Linking arts and health

Arts are increasingly recognised as valuable in health, mental wellbeing and aged care settings. Opportunities include:

- Arts in health partnerships, such as residencies in hospitals or aged care.
- Programs in mental health and social connection through creative expression.
- Professional development in community arts and health facilitation.

4 Educational pipeline development

Strengthening the education and training ecosystem by:

- Creating more place-based training pathways
- Supporting lifelong learning and micro-credentialling.
- Encouraging return pathways for creatives who leave the region to study, enabling them to bring back skills and ideas.

This fosters a circular economy of knowledge, where local creativity is continuously cultivated and expanded.

5 Transitioning skills from declining to growth industries

With projected declines in sound recording, music publishing and adult education services, there are opportunities for workforce transition to growth industries such as:

- Museum operations, where storytelling, curation and cultural knowledge are transferable.
- Cultural tourism, requiring skills in communication, event management and heritage interpretation.
- Digital content creation, with potential for retraining in photography, video editing, podcasting and design.

6 Leveraging major projects and infrastructure developments

Future major projects in tourism, regional placemaking and community infrastructure will demand:

- Skills in creative placemaking, public art, community engagement and event coordination.
- Digital skills for project documentation, marketing and digital storytelling.

Addressing current gaps in technical and business skills will be vital to ensure local creatives can participate in and lead these projects.

To maximise future opportunities, the region has identified key enablers to success:

- Continued funding to sustain creative initiatives and innovation.
- Access to broader markets and networks for regional artists and organisations.
- Expansion of community infrastructure and multipurpose spaces as creative hubs such as affordable studio and rehearsal spaces, production facilities, storage and reliable digital infrastructure.
- Continue to advocate for improved infrastructure such as housing, transport and internet connectivity.
- Support for collaboration and cross-sector partnerships, especially with tourism, health and education.
- Exploring industry growth beyond traditional tourism seasons.
- Developing and supporting industry leaders to drive activities and share skills.
- Exploring the potential of job-sharing opportunities and attracting men to the workforce.
- Promotion of availability of local support though CUCs.
- The current community, organisational and regional culture planning that is underway
- Providing both informal and formal training opportunities across communities will reach more people of all ages and levels of experience.

Cultural planning is a purposeful approach to weaving in a community's diverse values, lived experiences and heritage into its infrastructure and services. It reflects people and what matters to them and builds a cultural identity that reflects and strengthens the character of place.

RAPAD region industry workforce plan

Our creative workforce is resilient, adaptable and exceptionally talented. They are the social fabric of our community, creating opportunities for individuals to connect through a variety of mediums, attract visitors to our region and showcase the unique beauty of our local landscapes and character to a global audience.

This workforce plan is a culmination of the collective voices of our arts, cultural and creative community who actively contributed to the plan to develop the industry led and government supported recommendations as a blueprint for the future.

During consultation, key themes emerged around education, training and skills development to meet current and future needs, supporting diversity, attracting and retaining the workforce, considering business capability, collaboration and networks, cultural planning, funding and advocacy.

The recommendations and actions listed have been endorsed by the project Workforce Advisory Group, who represent industry and communities across the region. Actions have been classified into high, medium and low-priority categories to support prioritising implementation activities.

"The sector doesn't just need more artists – it needs creative entrepreneurs, technically trained locals and digital savvy operators who can position the region's unique cultural identity in a competitive, globalised landscape."

- Survey contributor

Theme: Building a diverse and supported workforce

Objective

To foster a thriving, inclusive arts, cultural and creative workforce, embedding diversity, strengthening workforce attraction and retention and advocating for workforce sustainability across the sector.

This strategy aims to strengthen the arts, cultural and creative industries by cultivating a workforce that is inclusive, resilient, and well-supported. It prioritises diversity across all roles and career stages, especially for underrepresented groups.

Leaders on boards, committees, advisory groups and festival programmes should reflect the diversity of the communities they represent to influence policy and investment.

By enhancing attraction and retention through visible career pathways, funding and income stability, adequate operational funding and flexible development opportunities, the strategy positions the sector as a viable and rewarding place to work. Advocacy to highlight workforce needs through policy and funding ensures people in the industry are recognised, valued and supported.

By aligning workforce development with broader cultural, economic and community outcomes, the strategy ensures that the sector is not only vibrant and innovative, but also fair, supported and representative of the communities it serves.

Strategy: Embedding diversity

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Address gender balance and increase workforce participation	• Promote flexible employment arrangements such as job sharing to support gender equity and talent retention but also strengthen organisational resilience by broadening the pool of skilled professionals able to participate fully in the sector. • Investigate opportunities to transition part-time and casual roles, currently held mostly by women, into sustainable full-time employment. • Conduct an audit to identify roles or disciplines with low male representation. • Develop targeted outreach campaigns that challenge stereotypes, showcase diverse male role models and partner with community groups to increase male participation in underrepresented creative roles. • Advocate for fair and competitive remuneration across creative roles to attract and retain diverse talent, including men who might otherwise pursue higher-paying careers in other industries, by positioning the arts as a financially viable and respected professional pathway. • Advocate for competitive salaries to encourage people to move to the region to participate in the creative economy		Medium
Strengthen First Nation workforce participation and workforce	• Promote training and employment pathways for First Nations communities within the industry, that include mentoring and leadership pipelines and opportunities for employment. • Collaborate with government and industry to access mentorship and advisory support that builds the capacity and entrepreneurial skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creative practitioners. • Continue to advocate for investment to develop new creative works, projects and experiences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative practitioners. • Contribute a CWQ regional perspective to the development of Creative Australia's *First Nations Creative Workforce Development Strategy*. • Identify and learn from existing models that foster meaningful intergenerational exchange, particularly those that support young people and Elders to share cultural knowledge, lived experience and community history in ways that are locally grounded and respectful. • Establish identified roles that support First Nations participation in the creative sector, offering competitive salaries. Ensure these roles respect cultural and community obligations by providing appropriate leave and flexibility for First Nations employees.	- Time to Shine 3.3, 3.4 - Australia's Cultural Policy Pillar 1 - QRA Central West Resilience Strategy S4.1 - QGovt CW RDRP Economy Pillar 1	High

Increase accessibility and inclusion in the workforce for d/Deaf and disabled people	• Audit spaces and programs to identify and address accessibility gaps. • Embed reasonable adjustments and support provisions into funding and employment policies within the industry including offering flexible work arrangements to engage disabled artists and cultural workers. • Partner with disability-led organisations to review and improve workplace practices including ensuring accessible opportunities for mentoring, training and workforce participation. • Create opportunities for d/Deaf and disabled people in the arts, cultural and creative industries to lead planning activities, gets jobs in the sector, learn skills and get experiences and are supported to connect with others.	- Australia's Cultural Policy Pillar 2 - Equity: The arts and disability associated plan Priority 1	High
Support industry leadership from people of diverse backgrounds	• Seek funding and opportunities for targeted activities that support leadership development for underrepresented groups. • Celebrate diverse leaders through media and storytelling. • Collaborate with disability-led organisations and regional stakeholders to co-design sustainable inclusion pathways, such as advisory roles, leadership positions and embedded networks that strengthen disability representation, inform workforce strategy and build long-term capability across the arts and creative industries. • Ensure representation from diverse leaders in decision making not just consultation to drive policy and investments. • Advocate for equitable funding allocations for the region to prioritise fairness, inclusivity and impact.	- Creative Workforce Scoping Study 3d - Equity: The arts and disability associated plan Priority 1	High
Supporting children and young people	• Partner with Education Queensland to enhance existing strategies and look at the ways arts, culture and creativity can be meaningfully shared through learning experiences and curriculum to engage children and young people. • Explore opportunities for children and young people to experiment and participate in a variety of arts, cultural and creative experiences within the community. • Seek funding to support the immersion of children and young people in arts, culture and creativity to make it accessible and affordable, for example, music programs, performing arts and other creative practices.	- Next Generation - Now – Creative Australia	High

CASE STUDY

Dirty Feet Outback Dance Festival

The Dirty Feet Outback Dance Festival (DFODF), hosted by Branches Performing Arts in Longreach, is a transformative regional initiative that gives young people aged three to 17 meaningful exposure to the performing arts. Held during school holidays, the festival offers three days of workshops and masterclasses led by experienced dance educators across multiple genres, followed by a performance and optional three days of competition.

For many participants, DFODF offers their first opportunity to engage with structured dance training, sparking new interests and uncovering untapped potential. Younger dancers observe and learn from older peers, building aspiration and confidence in a supportive, community-driven environment.

In 2025, over 50 dancers engaged with five professional teachers, culminating in a showcase that celebrated growth, creativity and regional talent. Now in its seventh year, DFODF continues to demonstrate that exposure is a catalyst for learning, especially in communities where access to performing arts is limited and potential often lies just beneath the surface.

Strategy: Strengthening workforce attraction and retention

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Proactively participate in careers and education pathway planning	• Contribute to the development of the Queensland Government's arts education plan and creative careers roadmap with government and the tertiary sector. • Organise work experience, internships and hands-on experiences for students and individuals interested in pursuing careers in the arts, cultural or creative industries. • Pursue new partnerships with training and educational organisations and collaborators not currently working in the region to establish new training pathways.	- Time to Shine 4.1	High
Investigate opportunities to transition more volunteers, part-time and casual roles into sustainable, full-time employment, particularly for women, who currently hold most part-time positions in the industry	• Design and implement a workforce audit to collect and collate data for the region. • Explore flexible work arrangements (job shares, remote working, compressed work weeks etc). • Link to training options to create pathways and progression into more permanent roles. • Identify pathways to recognise prior learning and experience for volunteers.	- Australia's Cultural Policy for the next five years Pillar 4	High
Advocate for activities and initiatives that promote the region as a place to live and work	• Explore place-based initiatives that focus on the unique creative and cultural character and brand of each community.	- QRA CW Resilience Strategy E3.1	Medium
Explore opportunities for workforce income stability	• Investigate effective funding models that will support artists, cultural workers and creative practitioners to stay in the region, for example multi-year funding agreements or embedding creative roles into other industries such as education, health or tourism to blend artistic work with other steady employment.	- Time to Shine 5.1	High
Supporting the arts, cultural and creative ecosystem	• Explore funding models for helping groups and individuals access venues and creative spaces. • Explore funding models to help individuals, community groups and businesses meet production labour costs to underwrite risky and expensive work. • Explore funding models that are successfully supporting arts, cultural and creative businesses and individuals meet operational costs, for example the Gold Coast Council's Arts Development Fund providing a range of funding opportunities from individual projects, professional development to large scale, multi-year projects. • Explore philanthropic options and links to the region. • Identify government incentives, sector-specific grants or philanthropic programs that underwrite full-time positions.	- Time to Shine 5.1	Medium

Strategy: Advocacy for workforce sustainability

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Build a sustainable, diverse and supported arts, cultural and creative workforce	• Establish clear diversity targets for the arts, cultural and creative industries as baseline for accountability, monitoring and reporting workforce diversity against targets. • Explore options and source funding for professional development and mentoring to support people with diverse needs to stay in the workforce. • Use cultural and creative mapping to develop a register of artists, cultural workers and creative practitioners, including volunteers, to make diversity within the current workforce 'visible' for future advocacy.	- Time to Shine 4.1	Medium
Support for regional arts workforce pipeline	• Advocate for continued support and funding for tertiary arts programs at regional universities that develop arts professionals with formal training and a deep understanding of regional communities.	- Creative Workforce Scoping Study 3d	High
Support for regional arts workforce	• Advocate for sustained funding and continuation of programs delivered by peak government agencies and industry bodies that enhance work being done in the regions, for example, the Museums Development Officer Program.		High

Theme: Meeting future skills needs to support a thriving arts, cultural and creative environment

Objective

To build an adaptive, inclusive and future ready arts workforce through training and skill development, ensuring that artists, cultural workers and creative practitioners can thrive and contribute meaningfully to a resilient industry.

Investing and prioritising in skills and training will strengthen and grow a capable and future ready arts, cultural and creative workforce. Engaging with communities through regional consultations sent a clear message that technical and transferable skills will support industry sustainability.

Access to skills and training will help artists, cultural workers and creative practitioners adapt their practice, find opportunities and build their careers. Life-long learning will help industry evolve in an ever-changing landscape.

Strategy: Meeting regional demand and future needs for artistic, cultural and creative skills

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Work with training providers and employers to increase training engagement in the region	• Link with schools to organise industry awareness campaigns to foster interest and exposure to the range of occupations and the broad scope of work available within the industry.	- Creative Workforce Scoping Study 1b - Time to Shine 4.2	Medium
Create new opportunities for training and skills development within the region	• Seek funding to invest in training and micro-credentials that are responsive to need and can be leveraged by all communities. • Facilitate residencies and placements or extend existing programs that embed regional artists and creative practitioners within arts organisations and industry partners beyond the region building skills, networks and cross-sector experience to strengthen career pathways and sector innovation.	- Time to Shine 4.1	High

Strategy: Meeting regional demand and future needs for digital and technology skills

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Work with training providers and employers to increase training engagement in the region	• Link with schools to organise industry awareness campaigns to foster interest and exposure to technical and production expertise such as lighting, events staging, sound engineering and fabrication, through government and industry partnerships. • Partner with major cultural events in the region, such as Opera Queensland, Vision Splendid Film Festival and the Outback Festival to create opportunities for work experience, internships and industry placements. • Link with schools to organise industry awareness campaigns to emerging roles in the arts, cultural and creative industries based on digital roles such as digital storytelling, website and e-commerce development, online ticketing, social media and online marketing, creative and cultural technologists and roles related to emerging technology such as AI and digital design tools. • Advocate to ensure digital literacy and creative technology are included in school curriculum and promote training pathways. • Collaborate with peak bodies such as Museums and Galleries Queensland and RASN to promote training opportunities and support community upskilling.	- Creative Workforce Scoping Study 1b - Time to Shine 4.2	Medium
Create opportunities for training and skills development within the region	• Co-design regionally focused training programs with training providers and industry and prioritise linking to region events and programs where possible, for example, practical experience in technical skills at local festivals and events. • Work with CWQ Registered Training Organisations and other providers to offer short courses and micro-credential courses. • Promote free digital skills and training to help build a tech-ready creative workforce.	- Time to Shine 4.2	High

Strategy: Meeting regional demand and future needs for business and entrepreneurial skills

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Build business and entrepreneurial skills across the creative workforce through targeted training, mentoring, peer learning and regional enterprise support	• Co-design a Regional Creative Business Toolkit as a practical and accessible resource tailored to artists, creatives and cultural businesses in the RAPAD region. • Support artists, creatives and cultural businesses to connect to peer led forums and online communities to build capability and reduce isolation. • Develop a creative enterprise hub – linking artists, creatives and cultural businesses with mentors, business advisors, funding pathways and incubator support (similar to the FRRR Expertise Pool concept). • Seek funding and opportunities for paid placements and residencies that place artists and creatives within business, government or community settings to foster entrepreneurial thinking, engagement between sectors and real-world experience.	- Time to Shine 4.2	High

Theme: Planning and capability for growth

Objective

To advance sustainable growth in the RAPAD region's arts, cultural and creative industries by building business capability, growing funding options, boosting advocacy and investing in spaces and infrastructure.

Sustainable growth in the arts, cultural, and creative industries will require more than creative talent, demanding strategic planning and capability, building across multiple dimensions. Strengthening the 'business' of arts, culture and creativity will ensure that artists and organisations can operate sustainably, manage resources effectively and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. Access to diverse funding streams, from grants to private investment will support long-term viability and innovation. Advocacy will help raise the industry's visibility and influence in policy, planning and discussion. Cultural planning will help align future growth with community values, heritage and aspirations while investment in infrastructure will help create a space for the industry to thrive.

Taking a macro approach to cultural planning by identifying regional patterns, strengths and gaps across communities, industries and infrastructure will connect what is happening locally to regional, state and national priorities, ensuring planning is strategic, inclusive and future focused, aligning with regional development strategies and reflecting CWQ communities and broader systems.

"The future success of the creative sector in the RAPAD region depends on growing capabilities while ensuring collaboration with health, tourism and education to broaden the impact of arts and culture across the region."

- RAPAD Art's cultural and creative industries workforce planning survey respondent

Strategy: Build business capability

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Define size and features of the arts, cultural and creative workforce	• Conduct a regional survey to address significant data gaps in existing information about the industry workforce, promote understanding of workforce dynamics and capacity and confirm priority areas for future development and future funding.	- Australia's Cultural Policy for the next years – Pillar 4	High
	• Explore entrepreneurial support and development programs for new and emerging businesses and link local people to these programs.		High
	• Explore other business models to build business capability that may be transferrable to the arts, cultural and creative industries.		Low
	• Explore options for increasing local supply of goods and services relevant to the industry and/or freight subsidies to address affordability challenges.		High
Advocacy for investment to build and sustain arts, cultural and creative businesses	• Advocate for continued investment in growing sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses through operational and strategic development funding and define target audiences.	- Time to Shine 3.1	Medium

Strategy: Expand funding options for sustainable industry growth

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Diversify and strengthen funding pathways to grow CWQ's arts, cultural and creative industries	• Advocate to expand regionally focused funding options to support locally led arts, cultural and creative initiatives. Prioritise flexible grants, multi-year support, and co-investment models that strengthen workforce development, cross-sector collaboration and community impact. • Undertake a local audit of existing funding opportunities across local government, state, federal, and philanthropic sources to identify what's available, where the gaps are and how accessible current programs are for regional creatives. Use the findings to guide future funding applications, build partnerships and advocate for more targeted support that reflects the needs and strengths of CWQ communities.	- Time to Shine 4.3 and 5.1	High

Strategy: Take a macro view of cultural planning

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Map regional cultural assets to inform planning and investment	• Undertake comprehensive cultural asset mapping of creative practitioners, cultural venues, festivals and events, and educational institutions to identify and update existing information, creating a geocoded database.		High
Support local and regional cultural planning	• Support cultural planning led by local communities and groups and use their insights to shape regional cultural strategies. • Encourage and support RAPAD region local governments to develop and deliver cultural strategies that strengthen workforce opportunities and align with community priorities, both now and into the future.		High

Strategy: The importance of local arts, cultural and creative infrastructure and spaces

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Support regional capacity building through creative and cultural infrastructure	• RAPAD region audit of existing arts, cultural and creative infrastructure to look for gaps and local opportunities to utilise local spaces. • Seek funding and/or local government, industry and community support to create community spaces as accessible and inclusive venues that support local creativity and culture by providing affordable spaces for artists, community groups, and events. • Foster collaboration, skill development and social connection through exhibitions, workshops, festivals and shared resources. • Explore infrastructure programs and funding to develop cultural hubs and creative spaces that can link and partner with each other, share resources, expand communication and partnerships between communities and different sectors within the industry.	- Time to Shine 5.7	High
Support mobility of creatives and artists across the region, especially those with skills or training to share, with accommodation so they can relocate to different communities	• Invest in fit-for-purpose accommodation infrastructure including portable and transitional housing to support creative workforce mobility, regional project delivery and cross-sector collaboration. This enables artists and cultural workers to participate in residencies, festivals, education programs and health partnerships, particularly in areas with limited housing access.	- Time to Shine 5.7	Medium

CASE STUDY

Blackall Cultural Precinct

The museum in Blackall's new Cultural Precinct will be a garden museum set within a walled landscape, designed as an open-ended, immersive experience that weaves together geology, geography, local history, art and storytelling.

Complemented by a gallery, library, and history room, it will showcase Blackall's rich and interconnected stories, from its First Nations heritage, world-renowned Indigenous art and links to the Great Artesian Basin, to the sheep industry, the union movement, world-champion shearer Jackie Howe, and the Perry Brothers Circus. Located on Blackall's Main Street along a popular tourist route, and set within a temperate, tree-lined oasis, the museum will combine artefacts, multimedia, oral histories, and the landscape itself to create a "choose-your-own-adventure" style of exploration.

At the same time, it is designed as a community space where locals can gather, connect and celebrate their shared stories, with opportunities for cultural programs, workshops, performances, and social events. By highlighting diverse perspectives and offering both structured activities and informal use, the precinct will serve as a vibrant cultural hub for Blackall while also becoming a major tourism drawcard for the region.

Theme: Networks, partnerships and collaboration

Objective

To strengthen networks and collaboration across the arts, cultural and creative industries to build capacity, foster innovation and support sustainable sector growth in the RAPAD region.

Strong networks and collaboration are vital to the growth and sustainability of the arts, cultural and creative industries, particularly in Central West Queensland, where a small and dispersed population lives across a large geographical area. They enable communities, industry and local government to share skills, resources and knowledge, fostering innovation and building collective capacity.

Collaboration also amplifies visibility, connects artists with new audiences and opportunities and strengthens advocacy across sectors. These relationships will help create a more resilient cultural and creative landscape that supports long-term development, cultural expression and economic impact.

The RAPAD region could lead workforce change and become a model for other regions. This approach directly supports the Queensland Governments *Time to Shine 2025-2035 Arts and Culture Strategy* to help grow a resilient creative economy, integrating arts and culture into everyday life and celebrating Queensland's cultural identity.

Strategy: Building workforce pipelines

Recommendation	Actions	Alignment	Priority
Build partnerships and networks to support sector growth and community impact	• Collaborate with industry partners and all levels of government to expand commercial opportunities for creative businesses and securing projects in the region.	- Time to Shine 4.3	High
	• Develop partnerships to co-develop a regional cultural strategy for RAPAD based on established regional cultural planning priorities.		High
	• Work with industry, local organisations, industry bodies and local governments to build pipelines between, within and beyond the region to help connect local people with mentors, peers, markets and collaborators as communities of practice to share, learn and connect.		Medium
	• Co-design and launch small pilot partnership projects that can be used as models and/or upscaled.		High
	• Collaborate with regional partners to strengthen cultural tourism and promote it through an 'Arts and Creative Roadmap'.	- Time to Shine 2.3	High
Embed artists, cultural workers and creatives across the health, education and tourism industries to drive innovation, wellbeing and community resilience.	• Develop a cross-sector workforce initiative that integrates artists, cultural practitioners, and creatives into collaborative roles across health, education and tourism settings. This approach would enable the creation of interdisciplinary positions such as creative health facilitators, cultural educators, and experience designers who work alongside sector professionals to co-design programs that improve wellbeing, enrich learning and enhance visitor experiences. • Review training examples that incorporate arts-based units within other health based professional training, for example, developing a Cert IV in community support that includes units delivered by a regional arts organisation.		High
	• Use examples from the NDIS sector to establish a cross-sector Arts Health Connector role to broker arts-based services into health, aged care and disability settings building workforce capability, fostering inclusion and embedding creative practice in regional care models.		Medium

Appendix 1

Arts, cultural and creative industry subsectors

ANZSIC division	Subdivision	Group	Class
R Arts and Recreation services	89 Heritage Activities	891 Museum Operation	8910 Museum Operation
	90 Creative and Performing Arts Activities	900 Creative and Performing Arts Activities	9001 Performing Arts Operation 9002 Creative Artists, Musicians, Writers and Performers 9003 Performing Arts Venue Operation
S Other Services	95 Personal and Other Services	953 Other Personal Services	9532 Photographic Film Processing
J Information Media and Telecommunications	55 Motion Picture and Sound Recording Activities	551 Motion Picture and Video Activities	5511 Motion Picture and Video Production 5512 Motion Picture and Video Distribution 5513 Motion Picture Exhibition 5514 Post-production Services and Other Motion Picture and Video Activities
		552 Sound Recording and Music Publishing	5521 Music Publishing 5522 Music and Other Sound Recording Activities
C Manufacturing	25 Furniture and Other Manufacturing	259 Other Manufacturing	2591 Jewellery and Silverware Manufacturing
M Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	69 Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (Except Computer System Design and Related Services)	699 Other Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	6991 Professional Photographic Services
P Education and Training	82 Adult, Community and Other Education	821 Adult, Community and Other Education	8212 Arts Education

Source: ABS, *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification*

Acknowledgement

Workforce Advisory Group

The Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board in partnership with Jobs Queensland would like to acknowledge the support of the 'Grow Your Own' Workforce Advisory Group. The WAG was established to support the delivery of this industry-led workforce plan as a blueprint for the industry to address workforce challenges into the future.

The primary objective of the WAG was to provide RAPAD and JQ with advice to help guide the project and provide industry endorsement of project deliverables to best meet industry's needs and expectations. The WAG provided RAPAD and JQ with access to their networks, so consultation was maximised.

Workforce Advisory Group members and their proxies who represented CWQ communities and interests within arts, cultural and creative industry through their organisation and as individuals included:

- Barcaldine Regional Council
- Winton Shire Council
- Red Ridge (Interior Queensland)
- Qantas Founders Museum
- Country Universities Centres RAPAD CWQ
- The Right Grant
- Barcaldine Arts Council Inc

The WAG identified and endorsed the region of focus as the Local Government Areas which comprise the RAPAD region and developed Appendix 1 as a reflection of the local industry.

We thank them for their time and industry expertise.

RAPAD

REMOTE AREA PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT BOARD