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# Art Works

Employment In The Arts For  
People With Disability:  
Current Status, Barriers And  
Strategies

KEY FINDINGS





## WHAT IS THE ART WORKS REPORT?

This document provides a short overview of the full Art Works report, which captures the results from national research into employment levels, barriers and strategies around employment in the arts for people with disability. The report was produced in response to one of the key focus areas of the National Arts and Disability Strategy, released in 2009.

An initial review of existing literature looked at research and reports on general employment and arts-specific employment for people with disability. The review showed low employment levels for people with disability, including in the arts.

Online surveys were then developed and sent to three key groups: arts and cultural organisations (238 responses); artists and arts workers with disability (141 responses); and disability employment services (51 responses).

The research was funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport. The project was managed by Arts Access Australia, with the research undertaken by DADAA Inc.

## WHAT ARE ITS KEY FINDINGS?

### Recruitment

- Overall, arts and cultural organisations are well placed to be inclusive employers.
- Just over 55% of arts and cultural organisations report that they actively encourage people with disability to apply for employment.
- Approximately 60% of arts and cultural organisations report that they have interviewed and appointed a person with disability for a job.

### Employment of people with disability in arts and cultural organisations

- 69 out of the 202 arts and cultural organisation respondents did not employ a person with disability (34.2%).
- 48 out of the 202 arts and cultural organisation did not know if they employed a person with disability (23.8%).
- Of those organisations who were aware they employed a person with disability:
  - 34 employed one person with disability (16.8%)
  - 21 employed two people with disability (10.4%)
  - 8 employed three people with disability (4%).
- Some organisations chose to list unpaid volunteers and workshop/studio participants as 'currently employed'.

### Representation on boards, committees or peer assessment panels

- Almost one-third of the arts and cultural organisations had a person with disability on their board, committee or peer assessment panel. The remaining two-thirds did not or did not know.
- 15.2% of respondents with disability are on a board or committee of an arts organisation.

### Access requirements

- Arts and cultural organisations said that the most common access requests for employees with disability are job design and/or workplace modifications.
- Approximately two-fifths of people with disability have no access requirements to work.
- People with disability said that their most common access requirements are job design, workplace modifications and transport.
- Just less than 40% of cultural organisations had a Disability Action Plan (DAP) or Disability Access Inclusion Plan (DAIP).

## **Declaring disability**

- Half of the arts and cultural organisations said that they do not expect someone to declare their disability – with results showing that they prefer to know if it affects the person’s ability to do the job.
- However, people with disability reported an unwillingness to disclose their disability to potential employers.

## **Arts employment for people with disability**

- Arts employment for people with disability involves a combination of working for an employer or being self-employed:
  - Just over half are working for themselves and have an Australian Business Number (55%)
  - One-third receives a wage or salary for their arts involvement or work for an employer.
- Respondents receive various forms of income or payment for their arts involvement (41.2%) and/or going unpaid (40.5%).
- Just over half work part-time.
- There is a wide range of roles that people with disability occupy in arts and cultural organisations and independently.
- Most of the arts-related work that people with disability do is a combination of ‘creative and support roles’.

## **Commitment to the arts and creative practice**

- Most respondents have been working or volunteering in the arts on a long-term basis.
- Some have been working in the arts for well over five years, reflecting the commitment people have to working in the arts in various forms of employment as well as in unpaid creative practice.
- Approximately one-third participates in the arts as a hobby or for recreation, and/or identify as a professional or an emerging artist.

## **Strategies for people with disability looking for arts employment**

Overall, the preferred strategies to find arts employment by all three groups are:

- Graduate recruitment programs, internships, residencies and apprenticeships for artists with disability.
- Mentors, role models and case studies about artists with disability or about people with an arts career.
- Financial assistance to develop arts practice, such as grants and accessing arts education.
- Disability awareness training and education for arts employers.
- Government incentives to promote arts employment for people with disability.

People with disability find arts employment in three main ways:

- Most look for jobs through self-promotion or get help with self-promotion from an agent, friends or support people who ‘understand the arts’.
- The second most used method is through friends or relatives.
- Networking with other artists and being visible is another important strategy.

Volunteering can be a double-edged issue, for the following reasons:

- The second most common way of recruiting a person with disability is through a volunteer program (15.1%).
- Results indicate that 18.1–28.6% of respondents with disability volunteer for an arts organisation or arts-related work.
- As a strategy to gain paid arts employment, artists or arts workers with disability often go unpaid or volunteer to gain experience and demonstrate their abilities to potential employers.
- Disability Employment Services (DES) responses show that although it is difficult finding people with disability paid employment in the arts, some volunteer positions are available. However, there is an expectation by some potential employers that people with disability should accept employment in an unpaid capacity.

### **Barriers for people with disability looking for arts employment**

Overall, the three groups ranked these barriers as:

- Limited job opportunities in the arts for people with and without disability.
- Disability support services not promoting a career in the arts for people with disability.
- Discrimination.
- People with disability not always recognised as having artistic talent.

Feedback that support these barriers include:

- Arts and cultural organisations feeling under-resourced to employ people with disability.
- The unwillingness to disclose disability to potential employers for fear of negative attitudes or missing out on work.
- Although some arts and cultural organisations use DES to recruit a person with disability (11.6%), it is the lowest ranked strategy used by people with disability to find a job.
- People with disability report a lack of success finding arts employment using Disability Employment Networks (DEN) or DES. Some feel that these services do not understand or consider a job in the arts for people with disability and, in some cases, are discriminatory.
- Only 6% of respondents with disability are registered with government employment services, including a DEN.
- DES staff identified limited job opportunities, competitiveness and systemic barriers, such as benchmarks and work-hour restrictions, to finding people with disability arts employment.

### **Disability Employment Services (DES)**

- One of the limitations of our research is the small sample of respondents from DES.
- Of the 50 DES organisations that responded to our survey:
  - Only 8 were able to give feedback about their experience working with arts and cultural organisations.
  - Only 6 could confirm that they did assist in finding an arts and cultural sector job for a person with disability.

## WHAT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE MADE?



The full Art Works report makes policy recommendations with regard to the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy, particularly in the follow areas:

- Improving disability employment services
- Supporting and encouraging employers in recruiting and providing access to people with disability in the workplace
- Improving public sector employment of people with disability to address the limited job opportunities available in the arts and cultural sector
- Pursuing innovative strategies to employment of people with disability

The Art Works report also makes policy recommendations with regard to the National Arts and Disability Strategy, particularly relating to:

- Artists and arts/cultural workers with a disability having greater access to mentoring and professional development opportunities
- Strengthening pathways into the creative sector and employment opportunities for artists and arts/cultural workers with a disability

## WHAT OTHER ADVOCACY WORK WILL RESULT FROM THE REPORT?



The report will be distributed widely to arts and cultural organisations, Disability Employment Services (DES), and local, state and national government bodies. In addition, findings will be presented at national arts and disability conferences and through arts and disability organisational networks.

Arts Access Australia will continue to promote the arts as a viable career path to DES, and to collaborate with arts and cultural organisations to identify pathways for artists, arts workers, arts managers and administrators with disability.

We also plan to seek additional funding to enable ongoing benchmarking of both levels of, and attitudes towards, employment of people with disability in the arts and cultural sector.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

To view the full report, go to one of three websites:

[www.artsaccessaustralia.org](http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org)

[www.disseminate.net.au](http://www.disseminate.net.au)

[www.dadaa.org.au](http://www.dadaa.org.au)

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