CACD PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION PILOT

Professional Development and Supervision Recommendations

The Professional Supervision Pilot was established by Creative Recovery Network in partnership with Community Arts Network, in recognition of the gaps in support services and benchmarks of practice around supporting the achievement of excellence within the field of community arts and cultural development (CACD).

In encompassing the mental, physical, and emotional health of high performing CACD practitioners, it was assumed that professional supervision and wellbeing programs would support sustained excellence in high performance work environments as well as healthy work/life balance.

Federal and state legislation – including the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) – requires businesses to safeguard the physical and psychological health of workers. It is overtime that the CACD sector puts into place just such a responsive safeguard.

The Professional Supervision Pilot aimed to bring the experience and wisdom of our leading community arts and cultural development practitioners together so that we can grow a deeper understanding of the specific support needs for community-based practitioners and articulate a fluid professional supervision framework that can support the development of community art/engaged practice across Australia.

The recommendations for CACD professional practice from the Pilot, encompass three processes:

1. *Professional development*. High quality professional development contributes to:

   a. **High standards**: performance and practice frameworks   that are consistently and   overtly upheld by the sector.

   b. **Expectations:** meeting expectations of participants, community, and organisations in relation to quality and content of practice.

   c. **Culture**: developing a learning culture through education and experiential learning across the CACD sector.

2. *Professional supervision*. High quality professional supervision is a guided reflection on practice undertaken through a supportive relationship, that is safe enough to positively challenge thinking and CACD practice, and occurs in a time-protected setting. It is the shared responsibility of both the supervisor and CACD practitioner.

   Professional supervision is:

   a. **Formative**: enabling the practitioner development of expertise and skills.

   b. **Restorative**: enabling the practitioner to sustain effective work.

   c. **Normative**: ensuring the practitioner maintains established standards of care.

3. *Peer supervision.* High quality peer supervision includes:

   a. **The sharing and articulation of practice:** the provision for coordinated opportunities for ongoing discussion of best practice models, areas of interest, and shared concerns.

   b. **Growth of the CACD ecology**: builds a community of peers and information as a vital support for the CACD practitioner.

The following 6 recommendations have been formulated from the Professional Supervision Pilot program engagement with conversations across a broad cross-section of the arts sector involved in community participation, and best practice models in the health and social services sectors.

1. Establishment of CACD Practice Framework including Codes of Conduct/Ethics

WHY

Adequate professional practice is developed in accordance with organisation and professional standards. Currently the CACD sector does not operate under an agreed framework of practice. A practice and ethical guideline for CACD practitioners and organisations to support ethical and safe engagement with each other and communities is a long-identified need within the CACD sector.

Practice Frameworks define essential and aspirational elements of practice. Practice is understood to describe the way in which professionals work within their profession, in order to carry out the specified tasks or purpose. Best practice is the description of the best way of working based on the context and needs of the work scenario.

Codes of Conduct/Ethics outline the norms, rules and responsibilities of an individual or an organisation to ensure clarity of expectation for all engaged in the work scenario.

WHAT

A CACD Practice Framework will establish a vision for CACD practice that is grounded in the realities of community practice, supported by research and embedded in a set of principles and values that are essential to the work. It will provide a clear understanding of what underpins the work, and how this informs practitioners' engagement with communities. As a tool for CACD practitioners, it would provide a theoretically and practice-informed standard and set of principles and values to support best practice.

A CACD Practice Framework can represent and create an accepted, standard articulation of our CACD body of knowledge, the set of principles, terms, processes and activities that make up our professional domain.

This conceptual map, a broad approach to CACD practice, can then be consistently applied to ensure that processes and services are fit for CACD project/program purpose. It can be used by CACD practitioners and employers/organisations for the negotiation of contractual arrangements, terms and conditions of work, establishment of project/program protocols, and for the induction of CACD practitioners into the community and work context. It will work to ensure safe and best practice engagement and service provision by employers / organisations / contractors and independent practitioners presenting CACD programs.

Working within a Code of Conduct/Ethics that provides clear guidelines and a strong ethical framework is essential in a sector that works with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of people in our society. A Code of Conduct/Ethics will set the tenor for exemplary work practice and lay down the expectations of professional work within the CACD sector.

Given the diversity of learning approaches and the variance of practice across the CACD sector, a Code of Conduct/Ethics for the sector which guides communication, negotiation and establishment of projects and programs is a necessity for clear, safe and ethical future growth.

2. Establishment of effective professional development programs, specific to the various levels of experience and need across the sector. Include direct training and opportunity for a mentoring/apprentice model of engagement.

Professional development

CACD practitioners need specific knowledge and awareness about entering and engaging with communities, and they need support in dealing with what they may face when working in and with diverse communities. Whilst there is a limited range of one-off opportunities for professional development there are no coordinated approaches to understanding and unpacking the role of a CACD practitioner.

Professional development through training, experiential learning, and knowledge acquisition must address the specialised knowledge and experience required of CACD creatives.

Formal mentoring

Formal mentoring as an active professional development needs to be designed to support the identification, development and networking of CACD practitioners to work within the community context within Australia.

Mentoring or shadowing opportunities need to be identified, supported and costed into project funding as a recognised necessary cost.

3. Establish a professional supervision network with appropriate training and remuneration for supervisors

The primary aim of professional supervision is to promote optimal care, safety, and well-being for practitioners in accordance with organisation and professional standards. Supervision is one aspect of a wider framework of professional development activities that are designed to support workers, and manage and monitor the delivery of high-quality services and effective outcomes for project communities/participants. It provides a forum for workers to assure those to whom they are accountable that they are acting responsibly whilst developing effectiveness, professional growth and the ability to cope with the demands the work entails.

Key to effective supervision is a trained supervisor. This role in the context of CACD would focus on wellbeing and practice support, therefore the supervisor needs bring a background of psychological understanding and an understanding of the context of CACD practice. With a Practice Framework a supervisor with a clinical background may be inducted to work within the CACD context. There is no specific supervision training available for an experienced CACD practitioner who might wish to take on a supervision role, a mandatory supervision training course should be available to those wishing to become supervisors.

Professional supervisors should:

- be trained in basic skills to fulfill their role (such as listening skills, psychological first aid, information about referral options);
- meet specific standards in that training before commencing their role; and participate in on-going training, supervision and review.
- Be remunerated for their agreed contribution

CACD Supervisor responsibility:

- Maintain knowledge about CACD practice frameworks, the established Code of Conduct/Ethics and other relevant guidelines or standards, that may be applied to the CACD sector.

- Establish clarity about the purpose of supervision, the parameters of confidentiality, and the appropriate mechanisms for addressing any difficulties or concerns about the supervision process.
- Work with CACD practitioners to agree on goals for supervision sessions, and put in place processes for regular reviews of progress
- Facilitate a safe and trusting environment for supervision sessions
- Validate good practice and provide constructive feedback
- Challenge practice that is inappropriate and facilitate the development of sustainable skills and ethical practice

Professional supervision should normally be offered as the initial point of contact after exposure to a high-risk incident unless the employee/contractor requests otherwise. In other situations, employees/contractors should be able to self-select their supervisor from a pool of accredited supervisors.

4. Wellbeing Plans and Professional Supervision embedded via a Community Engagement Protocol and funded through all CACD projects and programs.

Funding Body Recommendation

National and state government arts sector bodies and philanthropic organisations have a role to play in supporting and funding professional supervision and specific wellbeing training for CACD practitioners and organisations. As key funders for the presentation of CACD programs and projects they are central to developing an extended scope of practice to address the needs of an increasing population of   CACD practitioners working in current and emerging community settings. It is recommended that:

- all funded projects engaging communities are supported to include a budget line for professional supervision processes
- professional supervision is promoted as best practice for all CACD projects and programs
- That a Community Engagement Protocol is established by Australia Council for the Arts in collaboration with the CACD sector, to highlight the need for alignment to Code of Conduct/Ethics, specialist practice knowledge and the provision of a pathway for safe and healthy work processes for CACD practitioners and communities. Complying with this protocol guide should be a condition of funding.

Organisation Recommendation

Contracting organisations need to lead by example. To do this arts and community organisations presenting CACD programs/projects need to ensure professional supervision and wellness support are embedded into all CACD activity. This includes:

- Having a transparent commitment, plan and process for achieving CACD Practice Frameworks, upholding Code of Conduct/Ethics and supporting professional supervision.

- Adequate funded time for reflective practice across the project/program team

- Adequate funded time for personalised professional supervision for CACD practitioners

- Assistance for all CACD practitioners to manage their time effectively in conjunction with existing workloads and resources in order to participate in professional supervision

- Appropriate funding for agreed levels of professional supervision for contracted CACD practitioners pre, during and post the period of the project/program
- Appropriate detailed CACD practitioners/team analysis to design and implement tailored professional supervision servicing in collaboration with the individual CACD practitioners/project team.

- Prompt, appropriate attention by organisations to issues raised by practitioners during CACD work, including any issues requiring investigation or disciplinary action

- Organisational knowledge of and access to appropriately trained professional supervisors who can be matched with CACD workers

5. CACD practitioners create and maintain appropriate professional development, supervision and self-care plans in alignment with the current and future needs of CACD practice

CACD practitioners have an individual responsibility to maintain their own level of professional competence and each must strive to improve and update knowledge and skills through the life of their career. Independent CACD practitioners have an imperative to ensure they are building short- and long-term professional supervision and wellness programs for themselves and in conjunction with developed or contracted CACD programs

Responsibilities of CACD practitioners participating in CACD projects/programs include:

- Engage in at least 20 hours of professional development each year. This included taking action in relation to any developmental needs identified through professional supervision or lack of knowledge in practice area.

- Engage in at least 5 hours of professional supervision each year. This includes negotiating arrangements for supervision and working with the supervisor to agree on the goals of supervision, and agree on ways of working together

- Ensuring adequate time for reflective practice across all CACD project/programs that they develop and are contracted to.

- Develop self-care contracts

- Managing their time effectively in conjunction with existing workloads and resources in order to participate in professional supervision

- Maintaining any records related to profession development and supervision sessions as set out in Practice Frameworks.

6. Establishment of a supported avenue for peer-to-peer support and an ongoing Community of Practice

Peer support is a process where practitioners with similar amounts of experience work together to reflect on practice, learn from each other and grow professionally through the relationship. Peer support is not designed to be a substitute for supervision.

It is recognised that experienced workers may benefit from a non-supervisory link with other workers and that relatively new workers may feel more comfortable problem-solving professional issues and grappling with their transition to the workplace with other workers. Peer support programs are becoming more common as part of an overall approach to psychological health and safety in the workplace, especially growing as standard practice in high-risk organisations.

The provision of a coordinated opportunity for ongoing interaction around areas of shared concern or the sharing and articulation of practice, discussion of areas of interest and building of a sense of community is a vital support for the continuation and building of best practice and supported growth through the CACD ecology.

Given the weight of work on individual CACD practitioners it is seen as a role that can and should be supported through established organisations support and coordination.

Funding Body Recommendation

As a functional support for the CACD sector in maintaining best practice government and philanthropic organisations, as key funder of CACD programs/projects, need to encourage and support the addition of specific budget to develop peer-to-peer support programs.

Organisation Recommendation

Ensuring a culture of growth and depth of practice across the CACD sector is an imperative for organisations responsible for the development and presentation of CACD projects/programs. Supporting CACD practitioners working across the sector through opportunities to meet, share practice and grow connections to sustain themselves across their career needs to be part of the organisations mandate.

This includes:

- Having a transparent commitment, plan and process for growing long-term peer-to-peer support programs
- Adequate funded time for reflective practice across the project/program team
- Supported safe spaces for peers to come together to share practice

These recommendations are part of a larger research report to soon to be released.

**If you have any thoughts or reflections on these recommendations, or would like to be kept in touch with the development of this project, please contact us at
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