

8 Touring your product

Going on Tour

Touring creative products in any art form takes a good deal of advanced planning and funding. The benefits in terms of new and expanded audiences can be worth the initial investment in time and resources.

Touring venues, circuits and agents

Whatever your art form or product you're going to need a venue of some sort to present it in. Galleries and concert halls are often booked up well in advance, some with a waiting time of 2 – 5 years. So you will need to think of where you want to tour and book in as soon as you can. The touring circuit will save you money and time if each venue logically follows the other in terms of geographic location and if there is not too much waiting time in between.

With a rough idea of where you want your tour to go, consider whether you want to organise it all yourself or have it organised by an agent or touring organisation (for example Museum and Gallery Services Queensland).

The venue will need to be a good match for your product, both aesthetically and in terms of the type of audience it will be able to attract. Research existing touring circuits. What have others done before you? See our list of links and resources to contact relevant organisations to work out who you need to talk to or meet – it could be an Indigenous adviser, a local with local knowledge of the area or Austrade who can assist with linking with countries that might have an interest in Australia at the time you want to tour. They can help with advice about potential Australian corporate sponsors that have a vested interest in that country or region.

Visual: Who will install and mount your exhibition in each venue? Will this be gallery staff or will you need to travel to each venue to do this yourself. Will you have specific lighting and multimedia equipment requirements or installation instructions that will need to travel with each work? Will equipment be supplied or will you need to hire it for each venue? Will the work be well cared for at each venue and if anything is damaged how will repairs or insurance be managed? Do you plan to give workshops or artist talks at each venue and will the gallery organise and promote this for you?

Music and performances: Do you need to take technicians with you or will each venue provide them? Will you have specific lighting and multimedia equipment requirements? Who is going to manage publicity, ticketing and bookings? Do you plan to give workshops or master classes or cultural discussions on protocol and process? Will you need to source local artists in the same medium to participate?

Showgrounds and public spaces: Usually these will be Council owned, so check compliance regulations in terms of opening and closing times, and what sort of additional equipment may be needed if it is outdoors. Will you need things like 3 phase power outlets, all weather cover, suitable dressing and marshalling areas?

Storage: What are your storage requirements? If work/costumes/props arrive early will there be somewhere to store everything or will you need to consider off-site storage? Do you need storage areas for immovable aspects?

Project planning

Complete a project plan, outlining all the stages you intend your product/event will move through.

Time considerations: Research the best times for delivery of your product/service in your chosen locations, taking into account factors like seasonal weather, school terms, public holidays.

Geography: Touring venues in a logical geographic sequence will save time and money.

People: Who will you need for your tour? Consider technical and support crew, a promotions person, a good production manager to assist with on-the-road decisions.

Travel: The more lead-time you allow, the better chance you have of securing good cheap flights and accommodation.

Insurance: How will your work be covered by insurance? Will this responsibility belong to you, the venue or the freight company?

Funding: There may be grants available to fund a component of your touring program. Research these well in advance and consider deadlines and project commencement dates relevant to each grant. Arts Nexus can provide assistance in preparing your grant application. If your tour is able to offer high profile community engagement and benefits, there may be sponsorship opportunities if you partner with the right matching company.

Reporting and evaluating: How are you going to capitalise on the tour when you return? It's a good idea to complete effective follow up work after your tour. Take time on tour to evaluate. Compile all in a tour de brief. Touring venues may provide you with attendance figures at the end of each show, and may keep records of local media coverage. Make sure you get these figures at the close of each show or develop a simple system of obtaining this information yourself. The data can be useful for reporting back to funding bodies and for future funding and sponsorship applications.

Audience: Generating public awareness and interest takes time. Give your touring agent enough lead in time to adequately promote your tour.

Contract Agreement

Once you have secured your funds, it's essential to have a signed contract in place between yourself and your lending venues or locations, regarding the nature and details of your tour. Think about things like condition reports, standards of care and insurance if you have works of art or costumes that are freighted to each venue. Have some systems in place in case items are damaged, lost or stolen during transit or while on display, and need replacing.

Transport costs

Decide who will be responsible for covering the cost of transport of your work from your base to the touring locations. Factor this into your grant application if you need to cover these costs as a component of your project budget.



If you are planning an extensive tour of visual art or precious objects you may need to have freight boxes custom made for your work. These are usually wooden crates designed specifically for the work, and with high-density rubber built in to protect the contents. Freight companies may be able to make these up for you or if you contact your local council or gallery they may be able to recommend a specialist. Costs of making crates may also be included in some grants. Note that transporting work in such boxes can add to the transport cost due to the additional weight. If you are touring internationally, consider visas, quarantine requirements. See our list of links and resources to research accordingly.

Marketing and promotion

How will you promote your project? Who will fund marketing costs? Consider:

- Catalogues
- Invitations,
- Flyers
- Posters
- Merchandise
- Web site
- Email
- Radio
- Official Opening

Links and resources

- ArtsHub www.artshub.com.au
- Arts Queensland www.arts.qld.gov.au/funding/
- ArtsYakka www.artsyakka.com/
- Australia Council www.australiacouncil.gov.au/
- Brispop www.brispop.com/
- Contemporary Music Touring www.arts.gov.au/arts/contemporary_music_touring_program
- Contemporary Touring Initiative www.arts.gov.au/arts/contemporary_touring_initiative
- Events Queensland www.qldevents.com.au/
- Museum and Gallery Services www.magsq.com.au
- Playing Australia www.arts.gov.au/arts/playing_australia
- Queensland Music Network Inc. www.qmusic.com.au
- The JB Seed Fund www.thejbseed.com
- Visions of Australia www.arts.gov.au/arts/visions_of_australia

Checklist

- Do you know the venues you want to tour to?
- Do you have enough lead time?
- Have you got a realistic idea about the logistics involved in touring your product?
- Have you got a sound project plan that is ready to implement?
- Have you got a team in place who can help manage your tour?
- Have you contact your tour locations ahead of team and set everything in place?
- Have you got the right contract agreements in place?
- Have you implemented your marketing plan in advance to attract audiences?

Telephone Advisory Service

Got a creative idea? Looking for help to grow it? Arts Nexus can assist you to develop your creative ideas into real ventures, find funding, write grants and manage your project. Contact us today on 07 4051 4433 or admin@artsnexus.com.au