

YEARLY PLANNING GUIDE FOR ARTISTS



GOAL-SETTING
STRATEGY FOR
SUCCESS IN
THE ARTS

*will
will
will*



PLANNING AHEAD IS VITAL

So you're ready to begin building your arts practice. Legend!

One thing I've learned in my years working in the creative sector is the importance of planning ahead.

For some, this is easy. But if you're like me, and you find planning a chore (I'm a get in and do it kinda gal) then this guide is for you.

BUT THE ARTS ISN'T LIKE ANY OTHER INDUSTRY.

The thing is, unlike many other industries, effective planning in the arts requires an understanding of the sector you're working in.

Understanding the industry will help you know which organisations, programs, grants and networks will help you achieve your goals. And will help you devise a plan to show, sell, collaborate, earn or create more.

To add to that, as a business owner, I know that in order for your planning to be the most effective, you need to have a deep understanding of your practice first.

THIS GUIDE IS MORE THAN JUST A BIG TO-DO LIST.



WHAT'S IN THIS PLANNING GUIDE?

This guide follows a 5-step approach to planning. It's customisable to your creative practice, and designed to be used repeatedly. The examples in this guide are Australian, but you can substitute them with local ones as necessary.

Step 1.

Understand your practice: it's vision, purpose and point of difference.

Step 2.

Research the creative sector you work in and identify key partners.

Step 3.

Define what success means to you personally and professionally.

Step 4.

Define your goals, and the actions you'll take to achieve them.

Step 5.

Review your progress and readjust your goals and actions as needed.

BONUS!

I've created a public Trello board (link at end) that follows this methodology for you to copy and step through these exercises.

STEP 1. UNDERSTAND YOUR PRACTICE

Up until now, you might have been focused on refining your techniques, experimenting and defining your artistic voice and direction.

Now it's time to take stock of what you've done, and refine who you are as an artist, what you want your creative practice to look like, and how it will impact others.

So, before you start planning and goal setting, let's take some time to look inward.

DEFINE WHAT YOUR PRACTICE DOES

Let's define the 'what' and 'why' before we decide 'how' you're going to move forward. This will help you define goals that align with you, your practice and it's vision.

Start by answering these questions

- What kind of artist/creative are you?
- What's distinct and different about the work you create?
- What's the unique purpose of your work? Is there a message you're trying to share? Does it inspire action or make people feel a certain way? (see prompts on the next page)
- Who do you create it for? What do they love about your work?
- How do you create it? Is your process unique?
- What is your vision for the future of your art practice? Why?

PURPOSE PROMPTS FOR YOUR WORK

Need help defining your artworks's purpose?

This list gives a few ideas on how it might make your audience feel.

Circle as many as needed or add your own:

- See new perspectives
- Empathise with others
- Learn something new about the world
- Be an individual
- Feel/be creative
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Find comfort
- Make money
- Stop losing money
- Be in style
- Feel house proud
- Have fun
- Feel good
- Save time
- Avoid effort
- Attract the opposite sex
- Escape/avoid physical pain
- Prevent stress
- Gain praise/recognition
- Have peace of mind
- Prevent embarrassment
- Look good
- Be popular
- Satisfy appetite
- Avoid criticism
- Prevent legal trouble
- Feel like they're making a difference
- Help others
- Protect reputation
- Make work easier
- Be more productive
- Other (add below)

SUMMARISE THIS IN A FEW CLEAR SENTENCES

Time to put it all together so that you've got a summary of your practice to reference for your planning.

You can use this template to help you write yours, or feel free to change it to suit you. You'll find this template in the Trello board.

I am (brand/artist name)...

I create (this artwork/product) by...

For people who...

And they love what I do because...

My vision for my practice is...

Because...

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE

As an urban fantasy writer, I create books that explore modern, ethical problems in stories set in alternative worlds, and feature characters who are loosely based on real historical figures.

My readers are lovers of speculative fiction, who love feeling empowered to make positive change. Like them I believe stories have the power to influence and inspire by drawing parallels with our own world.

My vision is to build my reputation as an influential writer whose stories inspire people to become leaders who take bold action and make positive global changes.

YOUR TURN TO DEFINE YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

I am (brand/artist name)...

I create (this artwork/product) by...

For people who...

And they love what I do because...

My vision for my practice is...

Because...

Add this info into the Trello board.

STEP 2. RESEARCH THE CREATIVE SECTOR

The arts industry is full of peak bodies, organisations, publications, funding bodies, philanthropists, programs and networks that can help you learn new skills, exhibit and share your work, promote and build your reputation.

It's time to identify those who can help you build your creative career. Of course there are many outside the sector as well, but we'll start here.

PEAK BODIES

Government bodies and arts organisations across disciplines:

Some Australian examples:

- Australian Council for the Arts (all disciplines)
- Arts Access Australia
- National Indigenous Arts & Cultural Authority
- National Association of Visual Arts
- AusDance
- Screen Australia
- Australian Society of Authors
- The Music Council of Australia
- Arts Law Centre of Australia
- Australian Copyright Council
- Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance
- National Trust of Australia
- State Government & Local Councils
- and more

More examples available here:

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/Quick_Guides/ArtsCulture

Make a list of both national and state bodies in your discipline and add them to the Trello Board.

MAKE A LIST OF ORGANISATIONS WHO CAN HELP YOU

ORGANISATIONS

What organisations are set up to help you?

Some Australian examples (based in Queensland):

- Flying Arts Alliance
- Queensland Writers Centre
- Queensland Poetry Festival
- CIRCA
- QMusic
- Indigenous Arts Centre Alliance
- Blak Dance
- Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre
- Judith Wright Arts Centre
- Various galleries
- Various independent film, theatre, dance and performing arts groups
- and more

More examples available here:

<https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/programs-and-resources/list-of-key-organisations>

Make a list of both national, state and local organisations in your discipline and add them to the Trello Board.

TIP: Now you've identified peak bodies and organisations, go back to check if they offer any arts funding or development programs.

Make a list of any funding opportunities, or programs that align with your arts practice.

Do any of these organisations run networking events, workshops or public programs that you might be able to get involved in? Write those down too. We'll narrow this list down next.

NARROW DOWN YOUR FUNDING OPTIONS

By now, you might have a broad list of grants and funding programs that might suit you. It's time to narrow them down.

As a general rule, grants sources such as those from local council will be less competitive than those from state-wide or national funding bodies. If you're new to grants, start local.

GRANTS

What funding is available to help you?

Some Australian examples:

- Local council (community, events and arts grants)
- State government (business, innovation, digital grants and mentorship programs)
- Australian Council for the Arts
- State Arts Body (such as Arts Queensland)
- and many more

More examples available here:

<https://www.artshub.com.au/grants/list>

<https://business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs>

Narrow down your grants using the tip below, and add them to your Trello board and your calendar for the year.

TIP: To choose the right grant for you, look at the grant's

- **purpose**
- **guidelines**
- **eligibility**
- **funding amount and**
- **criteria**

to make sure you're a good fit.

Make a note of when the grant is due, and contact the funding body with any questions early, and if you get stuck while putting together your application.

STEP 3. DEFINE WHAT SUCCESS MEANS TO YOU

Say it with me: Success is different for everyone.

It's so liberating to know that you can choose your own path. You don't have to conform to any expectations, or do things the way other people are doing them.

The best part is, when you understand this, you'll see that there's no point comparing your arts practice with someone else's.

So, let's take some time to ask ourselves what "success" really means for you.

PERSONAL VS PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Personal success is your driver for shaping a practice you love working in.

This is defined by you, and you alone. The danger is, that if we don't pin down what this means to us, we'll never feel happy or successful personally.

So, when you're experimenting and planning projects, take note of the things you did that made it easier and more enjoyable.

Build this self reflection into each project, so that it becomes a habit - even if you've done something similar before.

Professional success is defined by factors in and outside your business.

Some of these factors you have no control over.

Often, when we try to define professional success, we think of our reach, recognition, impact and financial goals. And while we can take action to help find success with these things, we can never guarantee them.

Our actions can and will influence the outcomes, our happiness will come from personal success as well, as this is usually tied to our "why" or the reason we do what we do.

WHAT DOES *PERSONAL* SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

Take some time to reflect on what makes you happy in your creative business. Here are some prompts:

- I'm connecting and working with people who inspire and challenge me
- I'm learning and growing as an artist/creative
- I'm pushing my work in new directions and refining my style
- I'm developing processes that make it easier to get more quality work completed for sale
- I'm contributing to my community in a positive way
- I have worked to overcome some barriers that were holding me back (such as fear, procrastination, comparisonitis, etc)

Your turn

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Or add them to the Trello Board.

WHAT DOES *PROFESSIONAL* SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

Take some time to reflect on what professional success looks like in your creative business. Here are some prompts:

- To create XX new pieces/completed X projects each month/year
- To successfully apply for a grant from XXXX to coordinate and execute a project to XXXX
- To grow my audience from XX to XX
- To have my work accepted as part of this event/exhibition/festival
- To have my work featured in XXXX publication/media, which has helped me raise awareness about XXXX
- To grow my professional network which has led to X more opportunities
- To earn XXXX this per month/quarter from sales of XX artworks

Your turn

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Or add them to the Trello Board.

STEP 4. DEFINE YOUR GOALS & ACTIONS

It's time to make things real! Now you have a better understanding of who you are, what you want to achieve and why, it's time to start defining your big (and small!) goals.

Then we will write down the steps you need to take to reach them. There are three types of goals you might want to consider.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

Goals that have an immediate impact on your creative business and help you achieve medium to long-term goals:

- Income and expense tracking
- Marketing and social engagement goals
- Project completion and process goals
- Engagement with creative network goals

MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

Goals that have an short to medium impact on your creative business and help you achieve long-term goals:

- Quarterly income and expense tracking
- Project management and completion tracking
- Marketing goals (brand awareness/tracking SEO on your website, audience growth, promotion in publications/media)
- Grant application goals
- Exhibition acceptance goals

LONG-TERM GOALS

Goals that have a long-term impact on your creative business:

- Brand awareness, impact and audience growth
- Yearly income and expense goals
- Grant project completion
- Project completion goals
- Exhibition/festival/event acceptance goals

STEP 4. DEFINE YOUR GOALS & ACTIONS

This template will help you create meaningful goals. I've added these as columns in a spreadsheet to help you track them.

GOAL CREATION TEMPLATE

My goal is to...

Because it will help me to... (add a personal or professional outcome)

I'll know I've achieved it when... (add a measurable outcome)

These peak bodies/organisations/publications/partners/networks are available to help me by... (obtain funding, provide resources or support, reach new audiences, etc)

This is a [short/medium/long-term] goal and needs to complete this by... (add due date)

These are the steps I'll take to reach this goal:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Add them to the Trello Board.

STEP 5. REVIEW YOUR PROGRESS

A necessary part of your success is reviewing your progress and the impact those actions/outcomes are having on your creative business.

How often you do this will depend on your practice, and on how many other factors outside your control (like COVID) have impacted how you're able to tick off your tasks.

- Smaller, more immediate goals can be reviewed each month
- Medium term goals can be reviewed each quarter
- Big, long-term goals can be reviewed bi-annually or yearly

GOAL REVIEW TEMPLATE

Goal name:

Goal due:

Review frequency and reason:

I have/haven't completed tasks mostly on time:

I am/I'm not on track to complete this goal:

Recommended actions: (change of due date/expectations/review tasks/get more support, etc)

Find these questions in the Trello Board in your Goal Template card.

BONUS TOOLS TO HELP YOU MAKE, TRACK AND REACH YOUR GOALS

There are thousands of goal setting and project management tools out there to help you make, track and reach your goals. I've tried more than a handful and have wasted a lot of time switching between them over the years.

Save time by starting simple with basics like spreadsheets and calendars. You'll have a better idea whether you need something with more features once you've been doing this for a while - and will be able to make a better judgement about bigger and better tools to help you.

ESSENTIAL PLANNING TOOLS

Focus and time tracking

Avoid procrastination by using the Pomodoro timer to help you focus

<https://pomofocus.io>

<https://tomato-timer.com>

Track your time and get to know how long tasks take you so you can plan your day:

<https://toggl.com>

<https://www.rescuetime.com>

Goal tracking and task scheduling

Goal tracking

[Google Sheets or Excel](#)

[Trello](#)

Task scheduling

[Google calendar](#)

[Outlook or mail](#)

**WANT ACCOUNTABILITY?
JOIN MY FREE FACEBOOK GROUP**

CREATIVE ALLIES

Join my growing group of like-minded creatives who are committed to building their creative businesses.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/creative.allies>



Connect with me on
FB: @AliStrachanWrites
Insta: @AliStrachanWrites
www.alistrachan.com
0415 272 150

Get access to the free Trello Board here:
<https://trello.com/b/01nuKXY6/please-copy-first-goals-planning-template-for-artists>