# CURIOUSWORKS STRATEGIC PLAN

2024—
2028

CURIOUS WORKS

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CURIOUS WORKS

# 1. OUR VISION, PURPOSE AND PILLARS

## OUR VISION

Working with artists and communities in South West Sydney, we actively shape a future culture that is vibrant, democratic, generative, and relevant for Australia and beyond.

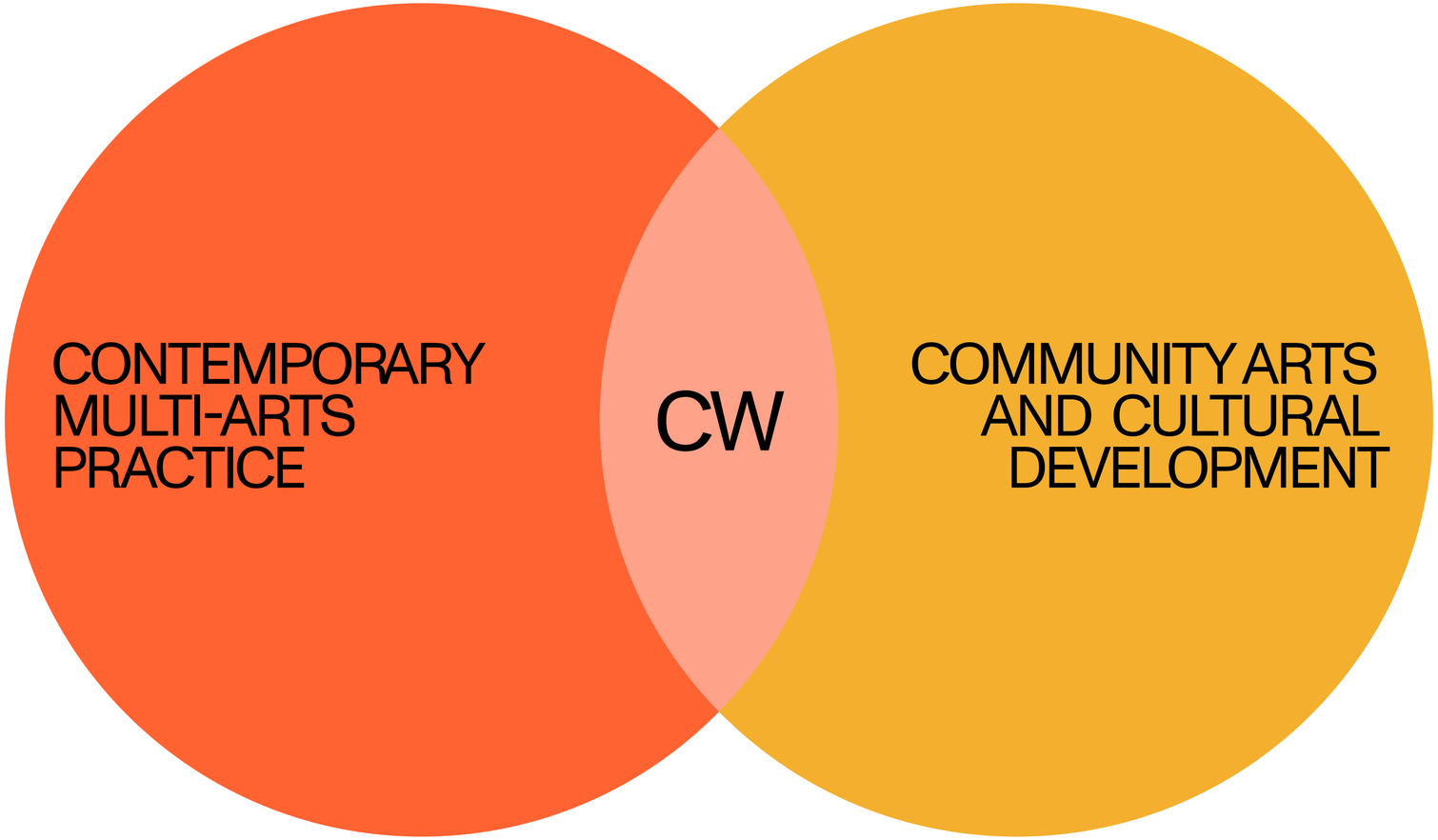
We want to see a fair, inclusive, equitable, innovative arts landscape that reflects the plurality and complexity of lived experience in contemporary Australia.

We want to see resources disseminated fairly and imbalances corrected. We want abundant opportunities and pathways in the arts for all and especially for historically marginalised and minoritized people and communities. We want a cultural landscape that is inclusive and expansive, where anyone can create, participate, enjoy, and feel belonging and agency to explore their potential through the arts.

We will play our part in creating this future culture from our base in South West Sydney.

## OUR PURPOSE

CuriousWorks exists at the intersection of contemporary multi-arts practice and community arts and cultural development. We work across art forms and disciplines, with a focus on screen works, digital media, and emerging art forms.

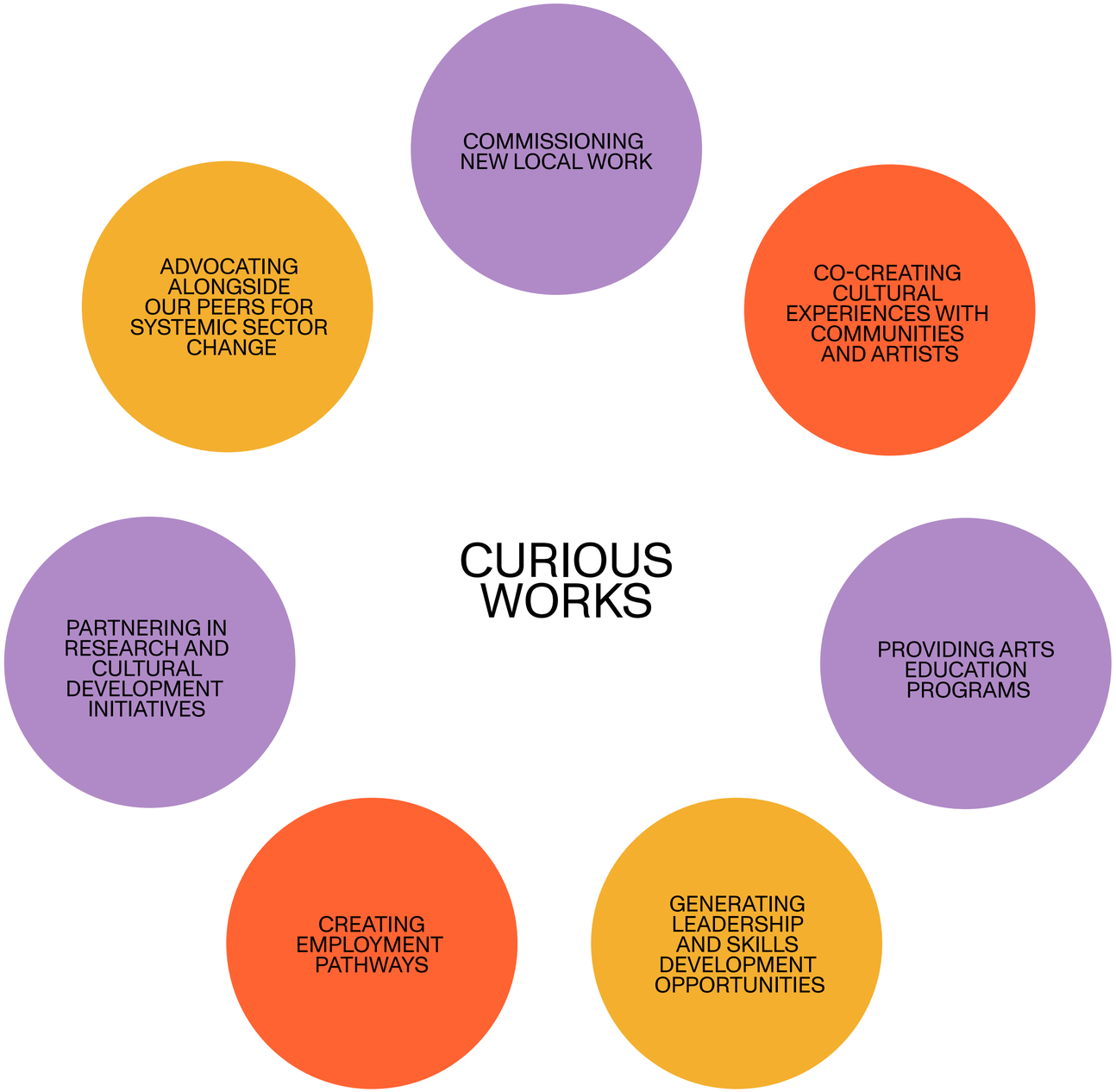


# HOW WE ACHIEVE OUR PURPOSE

We nurture the ideas and the potential of art makers and future cultural leaders, creating space for the next generation to play, learn and grow. We believe in ethical and self-determined storytelling, and in the integrity of process, engaging deeply and meaningfully with artists, audiences, communities, and collaborators to produce and present new Australian work and cultural experiences that speak to the hyper-local of our home grounds in South West Sydney, and resonate far beyond.

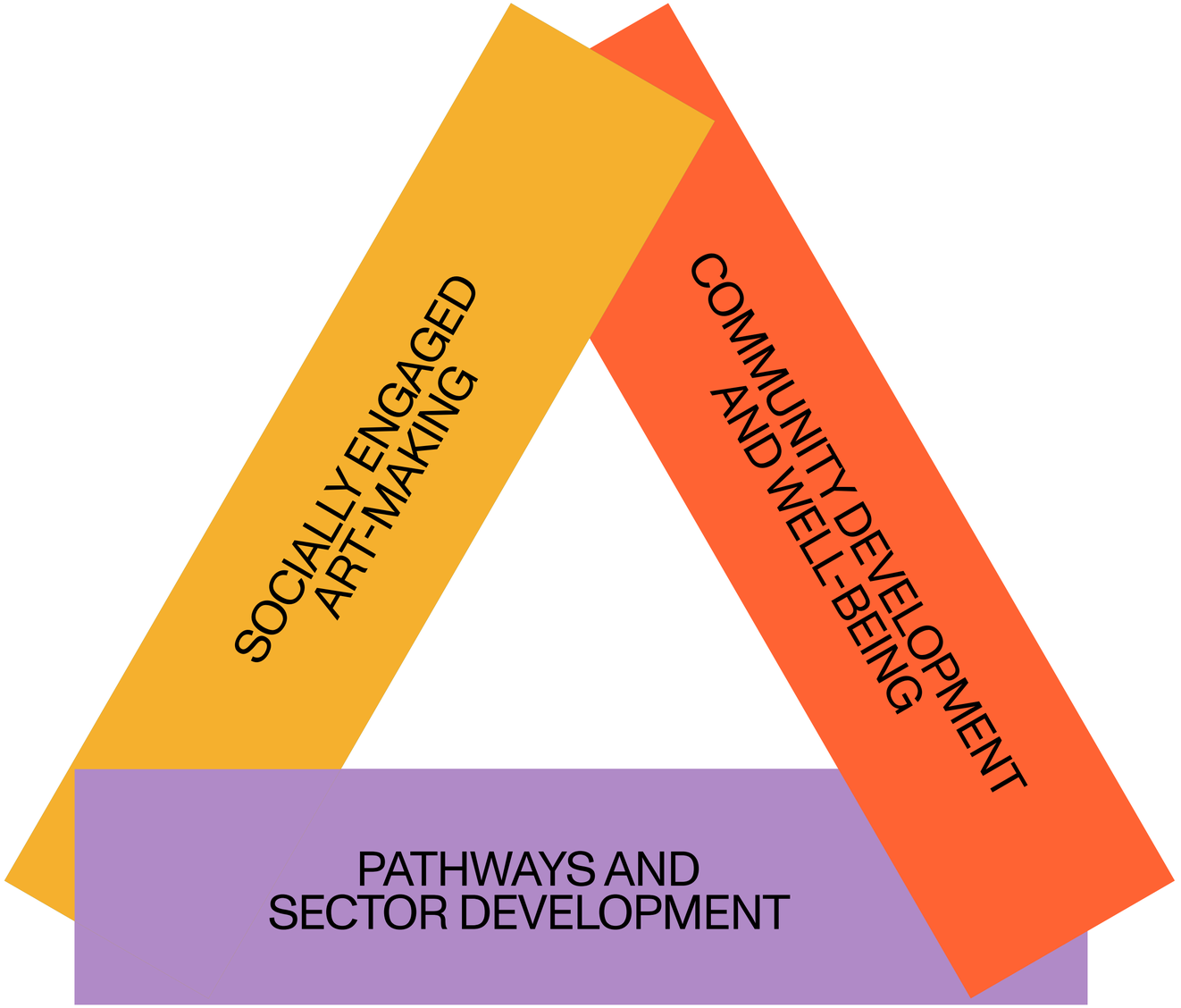
We do this through commissioning new local work, co-creating cultural experiences with communities and artists, providing arts education programs, generating leadership and skills development opportunities, creating employment pathways, partnering in research and cultural development initiatives, and advocating alongside our peers for systemic change.

Our communities of focus often intersect, reflecting the reality of the plural and complex lived experiences in contemporary Australia. They include people from Western Sydney, First Nations peoples of Australia and the world, culturally and racially marginalised people and people of colour, LGBTQI+, young people, older people, people living with disability, people who may be experiencing financial hardship, and people seeking asylum or those newly settled in Australia.



# OUR PILLARS

We have three overarching areas of focus that form the foundations of all our work



# 2. A LIVING PLAN—THE CASE FOR CHANGE

This is a living document, a living plan. We will revise it as needed in response to changes in our external and internal environments, consulting with our team, communities and collaborators along the way. We've taken care in writing this document to look inward and outward, to assess our strengths and challenges, and to find and focus on the potential and the opportunities ahead.

## LOOKING INWARD

**Connected to place—connected to the communities we serve**

CuriousWorks has strong foundations. We have a core staff with deep connections to the localities we operate within and the communities we serve. A number of our staff members have come through the organisation as young participants and have worked their way to leading the very programs that introduced them to the company. Most grew up in or currently live in the geographical areas we work within, in Western Sydney, over time developing expansive networks and a creative nous that is current and relevant.

**Established expertise in socially-engaged practice + emerging art forms**

Over the last two decades, CuriousWorks has matured into a collective of established practitioners and professionals in the areas of socially-engaged arts practice and community arts and cultural development. The company is known for experimenting and pushing the boundaries of what can be accomplished with accessible digital technologies. We have in-house film and documentary expertise and a keen interest in augmenting these linear works with interactive or immersive web and installation-based presentation modes.

**Art and culture with local relevance—universal resonance**

A deeply connected and committed team engenders trust in the communities we work within and fosters long and sustaining community partnerships. These relationships in turn nurture the development of community programs with broad reach and positive engagement. And this then holds the space for creativity to take root and to thrive. It's in this environment that CuriousWorks is able to produce powerful new Australian work that resonates with our communities of focus and far beyond.

**Opportunity to lead the sector**

The knowledge and expertise held by our core staff has the potential to impact the broader cultural landscape when shared beyond our communities of focus and our region. The opportunities presented by this are many and we will seek them out to position ourselves visibly as leaders in community and cultural development practice and in socially engaged art-making. This also presents an opportunity for the company to re-envision new programs for leadership and professional pathways development.

**Expanding income streams + deepening social impact through our Social Enterprise program**

Our Social Enterprise activities generate significant earned income while meeting our goals of talent and sector development through an on-the-job paired mentorship model. The success of the social enterprise is driven by our in-house production expertise, our tech and production equipment and assets, and our broad network of clients and connections in the region. This is a growing revenue stream for the company and presents an opportunity for further growth with targeted business development initiatives.

**Change management and focusing on the future—an artistic and operational refresh**

2023 presented the company with challenges and opportunities in equal measure, as the company is steered through significant change. In late 2022, both the artistic leadership and the operational leadership positions became vacant. A partial Management Committee refresh took place in April 2023, which saw the skillset of the Management Committee expand and deepen, bringing to the fold expertise in strategic planning, market development, social impact philanthropy, and diversity and inclusion.

A new CEO was appointed in March of 2023 who worked closely with staff to envision and develop a new framework through which to realise the company's future artistic direction. After much consultation and ideation, we see an opportunity in the model of an extended artists-in-residence program working symbiotically alongside a skills and development program for a collective of emerging arts leaders. This way, emerging and established local artists will inform the shape and direction of our programs, ensuring they are future-focused and grounded within the knowledge of and relationships with our communities of focus.

**A new community-facing home for the company**

Another significant challenge has been the need to find a new home, after enjoying many years of hospitality within a local government cultural facility. The team faced this challenge head-on, grasping it as an opportunity to reflect on our positionality and locality within the sector, and as an opportunity to dream up an ideal new home. We agreed unanimously that home for us is South West Sydney. And we sought to find a space with some non-negotiables: easy access to public transport, an accessible building, a space embedded within a busy community with lots of passing incidental traffic—easy for drop-ins, and a venue that is flexible in its use, tech-enabled and can host workshops and small presentations, and one that is a busy hub for small to medium enterprises allowing for new relationships to seed and grow. We're excited to be moving to Fairfield City HQ in September 2023.

# EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

## Taking a PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal) analysis approach to the external environment, below are some things that excite us and others that make us think more deeply and seek solutions:

**A hopeful sector—renewed government focus on the arts**

The political climate on the federal and state levels in relation to the arts is a positive one, as we see a renewed focus on the arts with Creative Australia's Revive policy being enacted and with Create NSW, at the time of writing, beginning sector consultation towards the development of a state policy that aligns with federal priorities. CuriousWorks will seek to play an active role in consultations.

**Opportunity to meet sector and audience needs**

Looking at the economy as a broad provocation for an external analysis, we see the long tail of Covid still impacting the arts through unpredictable arts and cultural consumption and attendance patterns, as well as through an undersupply of technical and production contractors, many of whom left the sector during the extended lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. CuriousWorks is fortunate to have these skills in-house and can be an asset to other organisations struggling to plug these gaps in their resources. Historically also, CuriousWorks has sought to make arts and cultural experiences free and therefore more accessible to a wider section of the community. This is part of our core values and we will continue to work in this way.

**Advocating for a fairer sector —addressing inequity in arts investment**

An economic analysis also brings into focus the stark inequities of arts investment by federal and state government bodies. Western Sydney Uni's State of the Arts Report (2023) found that even though Western Sydney is home to 10% of the national population, only 3.4% of federal arts funding went to the area between 2015 and 2023. And that in the same time period $227.9M went to Eastern Sydney from state arts funding, while $31.6M went to Western Sydney—seven times less. We will continue to advocate for fairness and for this balance to be redressed alongside our sector peers.

**Taking practical steps towards increasing diversity, access and inclusion in the arts**

An analysis of social trends places us again in a favourable position when considering the evolution of language and thinking around diversity and inclusion. The sector is moving away from tokenied diversity and virtue signalling and towards a more nuanced regard and treatment of addressing inequity. A much sharper focus on the representation of intersectionality and of "lived experience" informs programming, creative development, and new work. CuriousWorks is a driving force in this fast-paced development in best practices towards more diversity in the sector, especially in regard to culturally and racially marginalised people. However, a gap in our programming in recent years has been in the lack of focus on First Nations artists and new work. Although we are not First Nations-led and do not have First Nations staff members currently, we believe in a First Nations First approach to our work and will seek to build our relationships with local First Nations elders and artists to nurture new programs and activities led by First Nations artists and facilitators. This intention will be articulated and actioned in the development and implementation of an intersectional Equity Action Plan, drawing on the best practice research and resources provided by Diversity Arts Australia's Fair Play Program.

**Burnout and toxic hyper-productivity culture —addressing workplace well-being and safety**

One issue that sits across both economic and social analysis is the burnout that is rife in the sector, making well-being and workplace safety measures imperative. The establishment of Creative Workplaces as part of the changes to Creative Australia is a timely development. Anecdotal evidence points to organisations in the small-medium sector implementing slower approaches to programming and creative development with arts leaders advocating for integrity of process over forced outcomes, and for close alignment between the values that are espoused and those that are enacted both internally and outward-facing. CuriousWorks commits to prioritising well-being and workplace safety, welcoming a sector-wide focus on the same.

**Tech-enabled and focused**

Opportunities exist for CuriousWorks to expand creatively and artistically in the tech space. We have a strong knowledge and skills base in-house when working technologically and will seek to expand our partnerships into the tech sector to uplift and innovate our creative outputs in hybrid and digital works. Internally, we will seek to capitalize on recent new tech integrations in our customer relationship management platform, automating data capture and communications to enhance our capabilities in stakeholder relationship management.

**Environmental responsibility**

In a time of global climate crisis, we believe we have a social responsibility to make efficient use of resources. As a tech-enabled company and with our physical move to a co-working space, our impact on the environment will be reduced.

**The artist as worker is centered—supported by legislation**

The passing of the Creative Australia Bill in 2023 sees the establishment of Creative Workplaces. Along with this, the Creative Australia policy's strategic focus on the centrality of the artist and the artist as worker ensures a renewed focus on the rights of workers and artists. CuriousWorks will seek to contemporize our own policies and procedures related to workers' rights, well-being and workplace safety, updating as needed our intellectual and cultural property clauses, with indigenous cultural intellectual property treated as a priority area.

# 3. FUTURE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our programs range from new artistic work commissioned and presented to creative development programs that seed future work, and to leadership and sector development programs, social enterprise activities, educative and school's programs, through to research, evaluation and community development activities. Below is a snapshot of our 2024-2025 programs:

## NEW ARTISTIC WORK COMMISSIONED AND PRESENTED + CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

**Curious360** is an immersive documentary development program where emerging Western Sydney artists define their personal 'Western Sydney' identity through augmented reality, photography, film-making and 360-degree artworks. The end outcome will be four short documentary videos, paired with four augmented reality installations that allow audiences to interact in the lives of the documentary subjects.

**Utopia: Painting for Peace and Cultural Wellbeing** aims to explore possibilities for peace and well-being in our society through the eyes of young people. CuriousWorks partners on this project to deliver community engagement workshops in schools and to support the creation of new works by students to be showcased alongside new work by lead artist Emmanuel Asante. The lead partner is Western Sydney University.

**A Future Culture artist in residency and new work commissioning program** is a three-pronged annual program where new works are developed collaboratively by CuriousWorks artists in residence and CuriousWorks Future Culture emerging leader's artist collective. Our intention is to build our relationships with local First Nations artists and elders and to support First Nations artists to lead this program by setting a target of at least one First Nations artist in residence each season.

**My Australia** is a new works development program to support artists from a refugee or asylum seeker background to develop their practice, build their networks and access opportunities in their new homeland, pending the securing of funding.

**Testing Grounds** is a residency lab style, a one-on-one mentoring program for 3 x emerging artists per year to embark on creative development.

**Writer's Space** is an explorative storytelling and creative writing series of workshops for emerging writers to embark on creative development.

**Curiously West Film Club** ensures a safe and encouraging space for Western Sydney film-makers from culturally and racially marginalised, youth and emerging creatives to congregate and collaborate. This is a meet-up style fortnightly gathering for skills sharing and creative play-based skills development and networking. Collaborative new work to be developed pending funding.

**FunPark Festival 2024** is a long-running youth-led community event featuring Mt Druitt's diverse creative talent with the aim of nurturing community well-being and social cohesion.

# LEADERSHIP AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

**A Future Culture Artists Collective—Arts Leadership Development Program** is a year-long paid opportunity for 4 emerging artistic leaders to develop skills in arts programming, admin and management. They work alongside the Future Culture artists in residence to inform the artistic direction of the company.

**FunPark Youth Leadership Committee** is a youth-led committee and leadership development program that meets throughout the year in Mt Druitt to engage in arts-based community engagement and advocacy activities.

**Fat Chats—**bi-monthly professional development conversations with invited guests on topics crucial to best community arts and cultural development practice, recorded and shared with the sector.

**Open Door Policy**—CuriousWorks staff make themselves available quarterly for meetings with local creatives interested in learning more about opportunities and pathways in the arts. Local creatives can book a time to chat with staff.

**The Work of Safety—**A CuriousWorks staff and contractor development program includes training in trauma-informed community arts and cultural development practice, working with vulnerable young people, and self-care at work.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

**Our Social Enterprise Program** pairs experienced community artists and filmmakers with young, talented, aspiring trainee artists to deliver a range of professional community workshops, digital expertise and video production.

## EDUCATIVE AND SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

**ReFILL** is a flexible, multi-arts program with young people from Miller and Liverpool, pending the securing of funding.

**CuriousWorks Tool Kit** is a handy video and blog posted monthly and shared widely with our networks on topics related to community arts and cultural development and creative practice.

## RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

**Arc Linkage Project—**CuriousWorks acts as a community partner on this research project led by Dr Sukhmani Khorana, an academic at the University of New South Wales. The project investigates a case study of newly arrived migrant youth engagement and provides a conceptual framework for understanding and facilitating young migrant women's employability and entrepreneurship.

**Cultural Wellbeing Framework—**CuriousWorks acts as a community partner on this research project led by academic Karin Louise from Western Sydney University. The Cultural Wellbeing Framework offers a comprehensive and integrated approach to understanding and promoting well-being. It emphasizes the need to consider the complexities of human life and the interplay between cultural, social, and ecological factors. By recognizing the power of creative cultural practices and the significance of personal and communal expressions, the framework provides a valuable tool for fostering well-being in individuals, communities, and societies as a whole.

# 4. PRIORITIES 2024—2028

## 1

### FUTURE-FOCUSED

We will be future-focused, developing our social enterprise income stream and our capacity to attract philanthropic funding. We will focus on staff development and succession planning, on expanding the skill set and diversity of our Management Committee, and on advocating for a sector that is appropriately supported and scaffolded to give it the best chance to thrive deep into the future.

## 2

### ARTISTIC VIBRANCY

We will generate new work with and for our communities of focus that resonate far beyond our region. We will expand our reach, engaging our communities and audiences through new partnerships and collaborations. We will be technologically driven and innovative. Our participants and audiences will experience aesthetic enrichment, emotional resonance and social bonding. Our communities will feel heard and respected and experience agency, ownership and self-determination in their work. We will continue to demonstrate integrity of process and will share our experiences and learnings with the sector.

## 3

### CENTRE THE ARTIST AS WORKER

We will contemporise our HR processes, formalising collaborative job planning processes, performance reviews and incentive-based performance procedures. We will increase our internal staff development initiatives ensuring a focus on well-being and workplace safety. We will invest in the growth of staff roles internally. We will forge pathways and new opportunities for artists and arts workers that encourage new skills and network development. We will update our contract templates, with a focus on intellectual and cultural property ownership, in particular in regard to Indigenous content, to ensure we are adhering to best practices where artists' rights are centred.

## 4

### GROUNDED IN OUR COMMUNITIES—THINKING EXPANSIVELY

We will embed ourselves in our local community, becoming known for our open-door policy for all local creatives seeking advice and information. We will solidify our local partnerships and seek to expand our collaborations beyond the region, expanding our audiences, reach and presence. We will seek out opportunities to share our knowledge and learnings beyond our existing networks and to build new partnerships of exchange and reciprocity with diversity-led and First Nations-led organisations, recognising the innate intersectionality of identity, that is often not visible but compounds barriers to access and opportunity. We will continue to build our partnerships in research, evaluation and community development with tertiary institutions. We will seek to collaborate with our peer organisations in the region, advocating for greater investment by governments for all and highlighting the importance of scaffolding the sector to ensure viability and vibrance into the future.

# 5. KEY ACTIONS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

## PRIORITY ONE: FUTURE-FOCUSED

| KEY ACTIONS | PERFORMANCE MEASURES | 2024 TARGET | 2025—2028 TARGET | EVALUATION / DATA SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop Social Enterprise stream of earned income | • Attract pro-bono business development support<br>• Increased income each year<br>• The number of new clients increases year on year | • Support engaged<br>• 20k increase<br>• 10% increase | • Support cont'd<br>• 20k increase p.a.<br>• 10% year on year | • Internal records |
| Develop capacity to attract philanthropic funding | • Attract pro-bono philanthropic development support<br>• All staff engage in training to encourage skills growth and awareness of the philanthropic sector<br>• Management Committee members with expertise play an active role in philanthropic development<br>• All Management Committee members encourage philanthropic investment through their networks<br>• Increased number of applications and pitches per year<br>• Increased successful asks per year<br>• Increased philanthropic income year on year | • Support engaged<br>• 2 workshops p.a.<br>• Ongoing support<br>• Provide 1 lead<br>• 3-4 pitches<br>• Increased by 1<br>• 10% increase | • Support cont'd<br>• 3 workshops p.a.<br>• Ongoing support<br>• Provide 2 leads p.a.<br>• 4-6 pitches p.a.<br>• Increased by 2 p.a.<br>• 15% av. inc. p.a. | • Internal records |
| Improve staff professional development opportunities | • Co-design staff professional development plan as a team—The Work of Safety internal program<br>• Diversify and increase types of training for staff<br>• Incorporate individual staff-led professional development initiatives into annual performance reviews | • The Work of Safety Plan drafted and implemented<br>• 2 workshops p.a.<br>• Performance review process updated and implemented | • Plan updated annually<br>• 3 workshops p.a.<br>• Process implemented annually | • Internal records and staff feedback + satisfaction surveys |
| Co-design succession planning with staff and Management Committee | • CEO co-designs succession plans with staff interested in internal career progression<br>• CEO and Management Committee co-design succession plan for leadership roles | • Plans drafted and implemented<br>• Plans drafted | • Ongoing<br>• Implementation begins | • Internal records |
| Management Committee expansion and diversification | • Management Committee implements annual performance review and diversity matrix evaluation process to identify gaps<br>• Increase number of Management Committee members from 6 up to 10 to ensure knowledge transfer and Management Committee stability when members retire<br>• Recruit new Management Committee members with community arts and cultural development expertise, new members that are practicing artists, young directors (under 25), and new members with Western Sydney lived experience | • Update review and matrix templates<br>• 2 additional members recruited with target areas of expertise or lived experience<br>• Include diversity targets in organisational-wide Equity Action Plan to be developed | • Annual reviews implemented<br>• 2 additional members recruited with target areas of expertise of lived experience in 2025 + membership numbers retained | • Internal records and Management Committee feedback and performance surveys |
| Increased sector advocacy and knowledge exchange | • Number of public sector advocacy appearances/activities for the CEO increases year on year<br>• Staff attendance at sector advocacy activities increases year on year<br>• CuriousWorks leads an annual sector and knowledge exchange advocacy activity, inviting peers to collaborate | • 3 events per year<br>• 3 events per year<br>• 1 per year | • Increased by 2 p.a.<br>• Increased by 2 p.a.<br>• Ongoing annually | • Event invitations, programs, media mentions<br>• Sector surveys |

# PRIORITY TWO: ARTISTIC VIBRANCY

| KEY ACTIONS | PERFORMANCE MEASURES | 2024 TARGET | 2025—2028 TARGET | EVALUATION / DATA SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| New work commissioned and presented that demonstrate relevance | • Increased number of works created<br>• Introduce new commissioning and development programs that are responsive to need and environment<br>• Develop relationships with local First Nations elders and artists<br>• Increase number of projects that are technology-enabled and innovation-driven | • 16 new works<br>• Source project funding for A Future Culture, My Australia programs + others<br>• 1 residency opportunity for a First Nations artist<br>• 1 new project and tech partnership<br>• Include diversity targets in organisational-wide Equity Action Plan to be developed | • 20 new works p.a.<br>• Programs continue annually<br>• Annual targeted residency cont'd<br>• 2 new projects and partnership p.a. | • Reviews + sector response<br>• Artist and collaborator feedback<br>• Partner feedback |
| Expanding our reach and engagement | • Forge new artistic partnerships beyond the region<br>• Forge new partnerships with disability-led and First Nations organisations<br>• Deepen partnerships in research and community development with tertiary partners<br>• Educative and schools' programs are recurring<br>• New audiences reached<br>• CuriousWorks public profile increases | • 1 new partnership<br>• 2 new partnerships<br>• Project activities increased by 10%<br>• Source funding for ongoing programs<br>• Benchmark previous average<br>• Develop comms plan and evaluation framework | • 1 new p.a.<br>• Maintain new partnerships<br>• CW partners in publications<br>• Programs continue annually<br>• Set targets, design and implement audience survey<br>• Implement comms plan ongoing | • Internal stats collated<br>• Partner feedback<br>• Participant feedback<br>• Audience feedback |
| Measure impact on audiences, participants and communities of focus | • Develop CuriousWorks impact and evaluation framework reflecting audience, participant and communities' experiences<br>• Work with partners in the sector to understand broader social impact of CACD orgs<br>• Actively engage in the research of tertiary partners that demonstrates and articulates impact | • Framework researched and drafted<br>• 1 new sector partnership<br>• CW becomes a case-study for 1 new tertiary research project | • Framework implemented<br>• Sector trends and learnings shared broadly<br>• As above | • Framework document<br>• Collective data, case studies, and trends collated and analysed |

# PRIORITY THREE: CENTRE THE ARTIST AS WORKER

| KEY ACTIONS | PERFORMANCE MEASURES | 2024 TARGET | 2025—2028 TARGET | EVALUATION / DATA SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Contemporise HR processes | • Staff co-design job plans and succession plans with CEO<br>• Performance review process formalised and implemented<br>• Incentives scheme developed<br>• Staff satisfaction survey designed and implemented | • New processes designed and implemented | • New processes continue and improve iteratively based on staff feedback | • Internal documents<br>• Ongoing staff feedback |
| Increased focus on well-being and workplace safety | • Wellbeing plan is updated and implemented<br>• Regular wellbeing days co-designed by staff are implemented<br>• Annual Employee Assistance Plan is bought and implemented for staff and contractors<br>• Well-being learnings and initiatives are shared with the sector | • New processes designed and implemented<br>• 1 sector sharing event per year led by CuriousWorks | • New processes continue and improve iteratively based on staff feedback<br>• 1 sector sharing event per year led by CuriousWorks | • Wellbeing plan<br>• EAP plan<br>• Documentation of sector sharing activities |
| Invest in growth of staff roles | • 2025-2028 multi-year funding (federal and state) secured<br>• Staff contracted as per individual professional development plans co-designed with CEO<br>• Staff retention remains high | • 1 new role in 2024 for marcomms<br>• FTE of staff increases from 3.8 in 2023 to 4.4 in 2024 | • Staffing capacity increases from<br>• FTE of staff increases from 4.4 in 2024 to 5.6 in 2025 onwards | • Internal documents and records |
| New pathways for artists and arts workers forged | • New partnerships within and outside of the arts for staff placements/secondments are developed<br>• A Future Culture artists collective development program and residency program is implemented<br>• Support participants of A Future Culture development program to find paid employment in the arts after the program | • 2 new partnerships<br>• 2 new paid residencies and 4 new paid development opportunities per year<br>• 50% of Future Culture participants secure paid employment after the program | • 2 new partnerships p.a.<br>• Ongoing<br>• 75% of Future Culture participants secure paid employment after the program | • Partner feedback<br>• Future Culture participant feedback<br>• Internal stats collated |
| Increased focus on artists rights | • Update contracts to reflect best practice in treatment of IP and ICIP as needed | • Contracts updated | • Ongoing | • Internal documents |

# PRIORITY FOUR: GROUNDED IN OUR COMMUNITIES—THINKING EXPANSIVELY

| KEY ACTIONS | PERFORMANCE MEASURES | 2024 TARGET | 2025—2028 TARGET | EVALUATION / DATA SOURCE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Embed ourselves in local community | • Establish ourselves in our new venue as a drop-in space through the new Open-Door Policy initiative<br>• Solidify local partnerships and actively advocate together for the need of funders to scaffold our orgs for greater impact and viability<br>• Attract more investment into local orgs | • Design and implement Open-Door Policy initiative<br>• Initiate a local alliance of South West Sydney arts orgs<br>• Scope funding for local alliance of orgs | • Ongoing<br>• Alliance of South West Sydney orgs is formalised<br>• Funding is attracted for ongoing joint projects | • Sector feedback<br>• Emerging creatives feedback<br>• Funder/sponsor feedback |
| Thinking expansively...<br>Expanding our reach and engagement (as seen above also in Artistic Vibrancy) | • Forge new artistic partnerships beyond the region<br>• Forge new partnerships with disability-led and First Nations-led organisations<br>• Deepen partnerships in research and community development with tertiary partners<br>• Educative and schools' programs are recurring<br>• New audiences reached<br>• CuriousWorks public profile increases | • 1 new partnership<br>• 2 new partnerships<br>• Project activities increased by 10%<br>• Source funding for ongoing programs<br>• Benchmark previous average<br>• Develop comms plan and evaluation framework | • 1 new p.a.<br>• Maintain new partnerships<br>• CW partners in publications<br>• Programs continue annually<br>• Set targets, design and implement audience survey<br>• Implement comms plan ongoing | • Internal stats collated<br>• Partner feedback<br>• Participant feedback<br>• Audience feedback |
| Increased sector advocacy and knowledge exchange (as seen above also in Future-Focused) | • Number of public sector advocacy appearances/activities for the CEO increases year on year<br>• Staff attendance at sector advocacy activities increases year on year<br>• CuriousWorks leads an annual sector and knowledge exchange advocacy activity, inviting peers to collaborate | • 3 events per year<br>• 3 events per year<br>• 1 per year | • Increased by 2 p.a.<br>• Increased by 2 p.a.<br>• Ongoing annually | • Event invitations, programs, media mentions<br>• Sector surveys |

# 6. OUR CAPABILITIES AND POTENTIALITY

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND GOVERNANCE

CuriousWorks is a non-profit Incorporated Association formed in 2005. We are also a registered charitable organisation with the ACNC and a registered cultural organisation with DGR status. CuriousWorks is governed by a voluntary Management Committee, currently comprised of six members with expertise in governance, legal and financial management, as well as partnerships, fundraising, philanthropy and strategic planning.

This strategic plan acknowledges the need to address current gaps in expertise and lived experience on the MC, notably in Community Arts and Cultural Development, specifically in the Western Sydney context, as well as expertise in new media innovation and multi-arts, and most importantly to have First Nations people, youth and practising artists represented on the committee also.

Our Management Committee demonstrates leadership and ensures the solid foundations of good governance, management and oversight of the organisation are maintained. They are responsible for the oversight of processes, compliance and strategic performance and ensuring the integrity of our finances.

# OUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Amy Noble, Chair**

Amy Noble is an experienced legal and commercial consultant working primarily in the Film and Television Industry. Until May 2023, Amy was the Chief Operating Officer of Flying Bark Productions where she oversaw the expansion of the business into the US as Flying Bark secured appointment as the production partner for Netflix's animated remake of Stranger Things and Paramount's Avatar: The Last Airbender. Amy has also been the Director of Business Affairs and Legal and Company Secretary at FremantleMedia from 2014-2021 and served as a council member for Screen Producers Australia from 2018-2021. Prior to this Amy was lawyer for Screen Australia, Clayton Uz and DLA Phillips Fox (now DLA Piper Rudnick) specialising in Film Financing and Intellectual Property matters. Amy has a Masters of Law from the Queensland University of Technology and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

**Easha Ranasinghe, Treasurer**

Easha has more than 18 years experience in accounting and auditing in Australia, The Cook Islands, New Zealand, Botswana & Sri Lanka. Over this time she has worked as Finance Manager for some of the largest and well respected companies in the world—AON, Lloyds International, Westpac, Ernst and Young and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Easha brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in governance and financial management to CuriousWorks.

**Ashley Gray, Public Officer**

Ashley Gray is a Partner at growth strategy consulting firm, GNG Partners, and has strong experience in strategy, brand, marketing, sales and digital. This experience has been gained in executive and consulting roles in both public and private companies.

Ashley grew up in New Zealand and has lived and worked in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, US and Europe. Ashley began his career as a transportation engineer in NZ, advising clients on major infrastructure projects. He then joined L.E.K. Consulting in Australia where he built his strategy skills.

After a number of years working with clients around the world, Ash returned to Australia and joined the Westpac Group. Over a ten-year period, Ash held several customer-oriented leadership roles including Head of Brand & Marketing, Head of Youth & Millennial Acquisition and Head of Digital Sales Transformation.

Ash has also had the honour to run the St.George Foundation and Bank of Melbourne Foundation, both which focus on helping disadvantaged children.

**Elizabeth Grady, Secretary**

Elizabeth Grady is the Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships at Australia for UNHCR, an international aid agency that raises funds to support the humanitarian operations of the United Nations Refugee Agency, and leads all aspects of philanthropy within the organisation. Prior to joining Australia for UNHCR, Elizabeth was the Development and Donor Relations Officer for Mercy Works, a development organisation with projects in Papua New Guinea, Australia and Timor-Leste. Prior to working in international development Elizabeth worked in the film and television industry for Columbia Tri Star Pictures and Working Title Films.

**Julie Kalceff, General Member**

Julie Kalceff is an Emmy award-winning writer and director. Her film and TV credits include First Day (Seasons 1 and 2), which she created, wrote, directed and co-produced, winning an International Emmy Award, a Rose d'Or, and a GLAAD Media Award; feature film Here Out West, which opened the Sydney Film Festival in 2021, PM's Daughter Season 2, and Starting From Now, the global hit digital drama series she created, wrote, directed and produced. Julie is currently in development on a slate of projects as well as working as a director on episodic television.

**Ameer Ali, General Member**

Ameer Ali is a senior executive, Chartered Accountant, and certified translator with over 18 years' experience. Ameer started his career at the Australian National University followed by ten years of management consulting in the private and government sectors. He is a Strategy Manager at the ABC, leading large and cross-divisional projects across the organisation. Ameer is passionate about creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds and he brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in corporate strategy and planning.

# RISK MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

CuriousWorks foresees two key areas of risk for the organisation—financial and operational. Strategies to address these key issues are outlined in the tables below.

| RISK (FINANCIAL) | LIKELIHOOD | IMPACT | RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |
|---|---|---|---|
| Failure to attract Operational Funding | MID | HIGH | Build reserve base and diversify revenue base; MC leadership in fundraising and profile building; Broker partnerships and alliances with a wide range of funding bodies including philanthropic and corporate CSR Programs. Risk Mitigation Budgets developed |
| Failure to attract project-based funding | MID | HIGH | Present innovative dynamic projects; Have a strong rationale for the project and match with funding body; Meet or exceed all funding requirements and guidelines for previous projects; Projects & Programs expand and contract in response to funding. |
| Social Enterprise targets do not reach income projections | MID | MID | Considered researched market projections; Business development and marketing plans are developed. |
| Coalition Partners are no longer able to contribute/ participate (financially or otherwise) in programs | MID | MID | • Ensure the project/ CuriousWorks is well supported by various Coalition partners<br>• Allow flexibility in the program to adapt to change (ie: alternative venue options, amend activities etc)<br>• Where financial or in-kind contributions are impacted, reduce scope of affected program areas.<br>• Ensure clear communication channels are established between partners.<br>• Coalition MOU between all parties is signed, with clear lines of responsibility and fair termination clause. |
| Pay rates too low to hire suitable replacement staff for key positions | MID | HIGH | Allow budget for professional development/ additional training for existing staff or emerging leaders; prioritise key positions and allow enough budget for these; reduce the scope of the role and FTE accordingly. |
| Financial irregularities | LOW | HIGH | Implementation and adherence to financial procedures and organisational policies; Timely financial reporting including monthly financials provided to the MC; Two signatories required for all payments and external annual audit of financials. |

| RISK (OPERATIONAL) | LIKELIHOOD | IMPACT | RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY |
|---|---|---|---|
| Failure to execute Strategy | LOW | MID | Quarterly review of Strategic KPI's and SWOT; Annual measurement and review of performance against Strategic Plan; Strategic KPI's built into staff employment contracts. |
| Overcommitment / Burnout of staff | MID | HIGH | Implement company Wellbeing Policy including purchase of Employee Assistance Plan; monitor workloads; make work plans sustainable and realistic; review job descriptions and respond where appropriate. |
| Loss of MC/key staff knowledge and stability | HIGH | HIGH | Professional development and internal succession planning is co-designed with staff; excellent handover procedures; a flexible working environment with co-designed work plans. |
| Governance/ Conflict issues amongst MC and/or Management and/or Staff and/or young people | LOW | HIGH | Grievance Procedure with clear steps in place; staff trained in conflict procedures; Risk Management Plans for specific projects in place. |
| Failure to comply with relevant laws and regulations | LOW | HIGH | Risk Management Plan and Insurance Register regularly updated; Ensure all Staff & MC are inducted to organisations Policies & Procedures; Ensure all core admin and financial<br>Processes are well documented with checklists. |
| Conflict over/ failure to protect Intellectual Property | LOW | MID | Legal IP expertise/ advice available through MC/ Networks; robust Intellectual Property Policy in place; IP register updated regularly. |
| Disruption of services due to system failure/ natural disaster | LOW | HIGH | Data management plan in development; insurance cover in place; server based in the cloud and accessible remotely; remain responsive to community and situation. |
| Technology, gear and online channel misuse, including reputational risk due to negative online publicity | LOW | MID | Media Policy in place with clear procedures for breaches; ongoing moderation of online materials by staff; personnel restrictions in place for all online platforms and technology; insurance cover in place. |

# CURRENT KEY STAFF AND CONTRACTORS

**Kiriaki Zakinthinos, CEO**

Kiri Zakinthinos is an arts professional and writer whose driving purpose is a desire for a fairer, more inclusive, more democratic cultural landscape, which reflects our plurality of cultures and lived experiences.

As a child of migrants and having grown up in West and South-West Sydney navigating two cultures and pursuing a path in the arts, she's passionate about making space for and supporting others on similar journeys.

Kiri has worked in the creative industries in diverse roles within local government and the small-medium non-profit sectors for organisations such as Utp (Urban Theatre Projects), the Think + Do Tank Foundation, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Cumberland Council's Peacock Gallery and Arts Studio, new music outfit Ensemble Offspring, Diversity Arts Australia, and anti-racism social change organisation, All Together Now. As an independent producer, Kiri has presented concerts, cultural workshops, and a children's music and storytelling show in key venues across Sydney.

She maintains a writing practice alongside her work in cultural projects, self-publishing commentary and review pieces on the theme of cultural diversity in the arts on her blog www.culturalomnivore.blog, with a focus on new music, occasionally also reviewing theatre and performance works. Her essays and creative non-fiction pieces have been commissioned by Sydney Living Museums (*The Factory Floor*) and published by Sydney Review of Books (*The Paper Trail*).

Kiri holds a Graduate Diploma in Creative and Cultural Industries Management from the University of Technology, Sydney, and a Bachelor of Music from the University of NSW.

She is a current Australia Council for the Arts Peer.

**Miranda Aguilar, Creative Producer**

Miranda Aguilar is a queer Filipinx writer, creative producer and community arts worker. Miranda first joined CuriousWorks back in 2014 as a participant, working on projects including *Riz* (2014), *Las Rosas* (2017) and the first *Urban Stories* (2016). They now run creative programs for emerging artists, working to give back the same opportunities CuriousWorks gave to them, including *Testing Grounds* and *Handle with Care*.

**Diego Murillo, Social Enterprise Manager**

Diego Murillo is a Peruvian Australian filmmaker born and raised in Western Sydney. Growing up in a culturally diverse community, Diego believes filmmaking can be used as a powerful tool for representation, and he strives to engage audiences with different perspectives from all walks of life.

After working across different Social Enterprise contracts with CuriousWorks, Diego has stepped into a staff position as the Emerging Social Enterprise producer.

**Andrea Nealy, Finance and Administration Officer**

Andrea grew up in Western Sydney and has a Bachelor of Communications & Media from the University of Notre Dame.

She majored in film and screen production, and joined Curious-Works in 2012 to pursue her ambitions of being a filmmaker.

**Daisy Montalvo, FUNPARK Program Producer**

Daisy Montalvo is a Mount Druitt community artist with a focus in film-making and community & engagement. She started her career in the Arts as a performer for the Mt Druitt Press Conference at the 'FUNPARK' Sydney Festival in 2014.

Daisy completed a Journalism degree in 2015 and went on to make a documentary called *Broadening Horizons* (2017) following the stories of six young women from Bidwill on a six day hike in Tasmania. From there she has gone on to direct short films *El Baile* (2018) and Sydney Festival short film *Prone to the Drone* (2019). Daisy has also been involved in other film projects as a producer for feature film *From All Sides* (2023) and short film *Tony's Dream* (2023).

In 2019 Daisy went from a participant in FUNPARK to its lead coordinator and is still within this role on a two-day a week basis & is also working three days at PYT Fairfield as their Creative Producer—Community & Engagement since 2022.

She is a passionate storyteller who believes in the importance of sharing and giving voice to the stories of young people in Western Sydney and has practiced that daily in her two jobs and in her art.

**Neda Taha, FUNPARK Creative Producer and Communications and Social Media**

Neda Taha is a Tongan-Iraqi interdisciplinary artist hailing from Western Sydney with core practises in dance, theatre and community engagement. From her street hip-hop roots with The Pioneers dance crew to her captivating performances in Sydney's prestigious venues like the Sydney Opera House, Neda's talent knows no bounds. As a creative producer and advocate for the arts, she is dedicated to empowering young people from Western Sydney and encouraging their involvement in the vibrant arts community.

**Robyn Hardge-Scott, FUNPARK Community Engagement**

Robyn has been involved in FUNPARK since its launch in 2014 as a participant. She went on to participate in the Mount Druitt Press conference before beginning work as the Community and Youth Liaison officer. She is a young person passionate about creating change and giving young people a voice.

**Elias Nohra, Senior Artist and Mentor**

Elias Nohra is a digital artist with over 17 years of experience using old, new and emerging technologies to tell stories in innovative ways. Primarily a filmmaker with experience directing, editing and shooting in both corporate and non-profit contexts, Elias has also utilized his skills in digital media and storytelling to produce works in theatre, art installations, web & interactivity development, and videogames.

Formerly the Community Director and Head Educator at CuriousWorks, Elias has worked with hundreds of young and old people from culturally diverse backgrounds from all across Australia, building their capacity for sustainable self-expression through diverse digital media forms. He brings a passion for a more diverse and representative media and arts landscape to all of his work.

Elias is an accomplished digital artist with recent works including 宿 *STAY* (2022) which involved a 14 screen video presentation for a Sydney Festival theatre show, *Laka* (2018) a feature film which Elias edited in collaboration with S. Shakthidharan and CuriousWorks, and *Snowflake Moon: A Paperville Mystery* (2017) a videogame he developed and produced with Studio A artist Skye Saxon. He has also worked with CuriousWorks and Bus Stop Films to innovate in the fields of VR, AR and 360 degree interactive storytelling.

**Saarah Hanif, Social Media Officer**

Saarah Hanif is an Australian-born Fiji-Indian from Western Sydney and holds photography as her main creative practice.

She resides and creates art in Western Sydney that implements both South Asian and Australian influences, her most recent work *Whispers and Tea* delves into the complex identities of the Queer and South Asian communities. Saarah joined CuriousWorks in 2021 as an artist and has been a participant in the Artistic Directorate Program and *Handle With Care*.

After taking up work as an artist she has now taken a role as Social Media Officer for CuriousWorks. Saarah has completed a diploma in Photo Imaging and is currently undertaking a Bachelor Of Business in Marketing.

**Samantha Barahona, Creative Producer**

Samantha Barahona is an Australian-born Salvadorian filmmaker from Western Sydney. She recently finished her Bachelor of Screen Media (arts and production) degree at Western Sydney University in 2019.

A Liverpool-based artist, Samantha joined the ReFILL team in 2020, and in 2021, has stepped us as the ReFILL and Generate2168 Program Producer.

**Huy Nguyen, Graphics and Web Designer**

Huy Nguyen is a graphic designer based in Western Sydney. Since his graduation in 2020, Huy has disembarked on a parallel journey working for internationally recognised agencies such as DesignStudio and M35 on ambitious global rebrands and running his own hyperlocal practice engaging with socially responsive clients on projects that represent and empower diverse voices and underrepresented communities.

**Andrea Lim, Creative Producer**

Andrea is a creative producer living and working on Bidjigal, Darug and Tharawal land. She cares about arts-based initiatives for social outcomes, and is particularly passionate about access to information. Her work spans grassroots community arts as an organiser and performer exploring the multifaceted layers and complex relationships to identity.

She has a strong interest in the reimagining of our relationships to self, and with each other as persons of colour. Aligned with that vision, Andrea launched—a mentoring program for emerging artists of colour to access information needed to grow, heal and thrive in the arts.

She has worked in cultural development and planning within the Fairfield area for the past 3 years producing community programs and the FLAME Festival. Prior to that, she produced Storefronts Uncontained—a BIPOC residency program with the Centre on Contemporary Art Seattle.

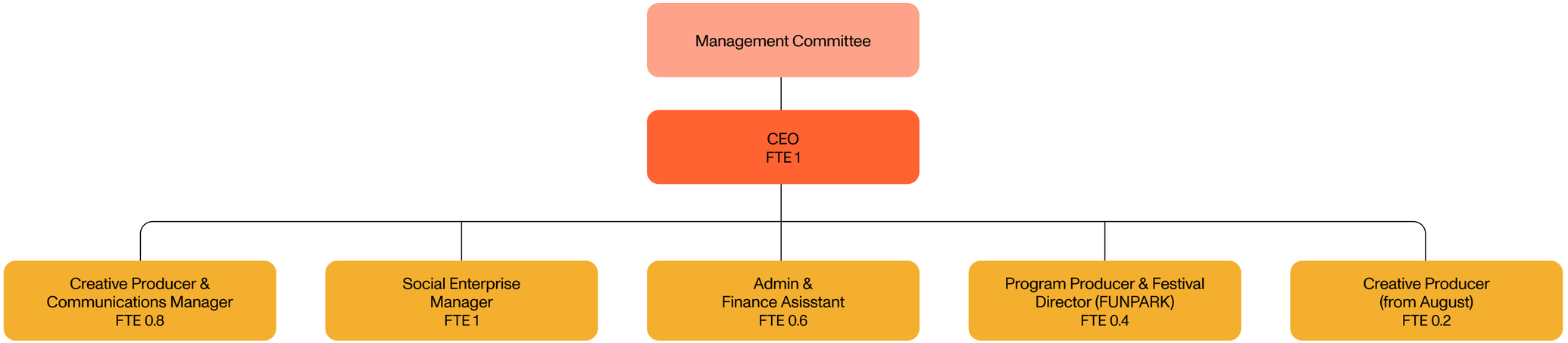
Andrea holds a Masters in Arts Leadership from Seattle University and a Bachelors in Music from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

**Mark Taylor, Creative Producer**

Mark graduated from the Australian Film and Television Radio School as a documentary filmmaker and has been working closely with Australian Indigenous communities and people from culturally diverse backgrounds since 2006. As an educator and workshop facilitator, Mark has sought to build the capacity for sustainable self-expression through digital media with every group and individual he has worked with, including marginalised communities, other not-for-profit organisations, school students and passionate individuals..

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

CuriousWorks employs a number of core staff on an ongoing basis as well as key contractors across our projects. Our intention is to grow the salaried positions in number and FTE hours as per the plan below.




## 2023 CURRENT

**Salaried Positions (total FTE 4.0)**

CEO (from March)
Kiriaki Zakinthinos (FTE 1)

Creative Producer & Communications Manager
Miranda Aguilar (FTE 0.8)

Social Enterprise Manager
Diego Murillo (FTE 1)

Admin & Finance Assistant
Andrea Nealy (FTE 0.6)

Program Producer & Festival Director (FUNPARK)
Daisy Montalvo (FTE 0.4)

Creative Producer (from August)
Samantha Barahona (FTE 0.2)

## 2024 PLAN

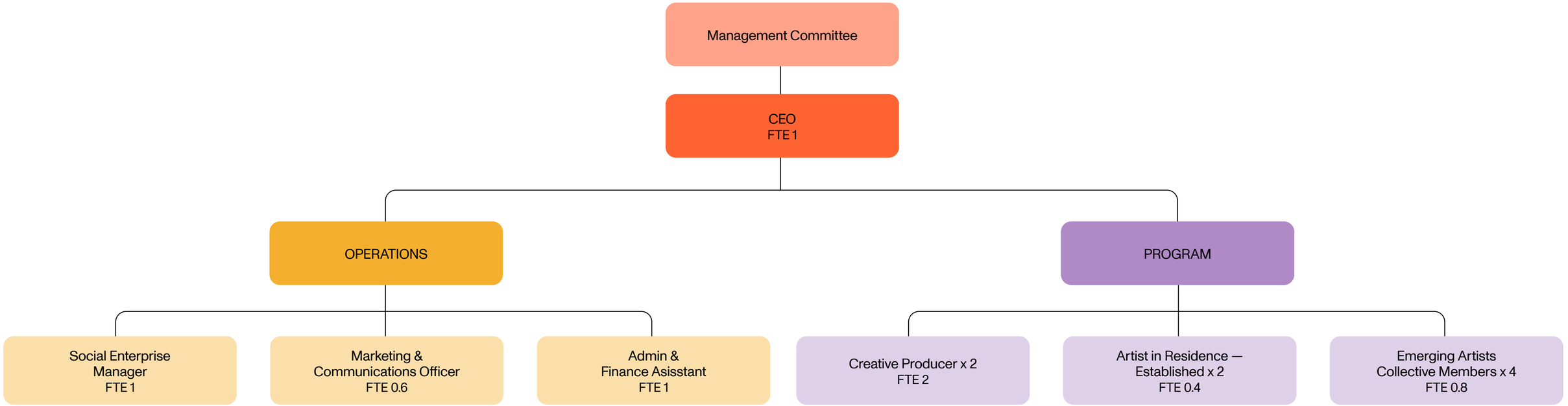
**Salaried Positions (total FTE 5.6)**

| | |
|---|---|
| CEO | FTE 1 |
| Creative Producers x2 | FTE 1 |
| Social Enterprise Manager | FTE 1 |
| Admin & Finance Assistant (increased FTE) | FTE 0.8 |
| Marketing and Communications Officer (new) | FTE 0.6 |
| Artists in Residence—Established x2 (new) | FTE 0.4 |
| Emerging Artists Collective Members x4 (new) | FTE 0.8 |

## 2025 PLAN

**Salaried Positions (total FTE 6.8)**

| | |
|---|---|
| CEO | FTE 1 |
| Creative Producers x2 (increased FTE) | FTE 2 |
| Social Enterprise Manager | FTE 1 |
| Admin & Finance Assistant (increased FTE) | FTE 1 |
| Marketing and Communications Officer | FTE 0.6 |
| Artists in Residence—Established x2 | FTE 0.4 |
| Emerging Artists Collective Members x 4 | FTE 0.8 |



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