

COMMUNITY
CRIME PREVENTION

Delivering a public art or mural project to prevent graffiti vandalism

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Introduction

This guide provides information to support councils and community partners in delivering public art or mural projects to prevent graffiti vandalism.

Public art and murals can take many forms, including use of painting, aerosols, stencils, mosaic tiling and paper 'paste ups'.

When delivered well, public art and mural projects can provide a sustainable approach to prevent graffiti, improve amenity, proactively engage young people, strengthen community pride and improve local relationships.

This document outlines 10 key steps in delivering a public art or mural project, and recommended considerations based on the experience of previous Graffiti Prevention Grants projects. These steps are not mutually exclusive or even entirely sequential – for example, they may overlap.

The Ngatanwarr mural, led by Leadership Great South Coast Group and Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative, has become a focus for local story telling and community engagement in Warrnambool.



Step 1: Identifying the site and getting permission

Identifying the most appropriate location for a public art or mural project is an essential first step. Graffiti 'hot spots', or sites regularly affected by graffiti vandalism, can be identified by consulting with police, local councils, residents and graffiti removal contractors.

Before choosing public art or a mural as your crime prevention solution, an overall site and security assessment is required. The following questions should be initial prompts:

- What is the problem you are trying to address? Is graffiti the only offending at the site or are there other issues? What is the scale of the problem – is regular graffiti removal required?
- What is the impact for the community? Highly visible locations, for example, may have a more significant impact in terms of perceptions of safety and can make community involvement more likely.
- When is the problem occurring? Is there any pattern? What do your local police say?
- Is there any other way the problem could be tackled? Is the public art alone likely to address the problem, or is a combination of approaches required?
- Will the benefits of the proposed public art approach outweigh the costs involved (including installation and maintenance)?

Understanding the specific graffiti and other offending issues at the site, and in nearby areas, is critical in determining whether a public art or mural project is the best solution, and in identifying who may need to be involved and your overall approach.

Permission

Permission is fundamental to public art or mural projects addressing illegal graffiti. As a legal artwork, permission to mark a surface or wall must be granted by the property owner.

Councils must obtain in-principle written approval from property owners before submitting an application under the Graffiti Prevention Grants. Obtaining approval from a building tenant does not constitute approval to proceed.

If the preferred location is of cultural or religious significance, additional time may be required to undertake a longer consultation process with the property owners and tenants. Some projects may require permits or approvals, or there may be a heritage overlay on a property. These requirements should be thoroughly researched prior to a grant application, as without this the project is at risk of being unable to proceed.

Ensure that design principles, themes, styles, symbols and colours are discussed early with the property owner to establish whether there are any design restrictions. Regular discussion should continue with the property owner throughout the project to avoid potential surprises and rejection of the final mural design. The approval process for the final design should be clarified and understood at the beginning of the project.

Previous projects have found that obtaining a financial or in-kind contribution from site owners helps to promote ownership and commitment to the project outcomes.

Step 2: Defining your aim and objectives

What is the aim of your project and the end result that you would like to see? For example, is the project primarily focused on prevention of graffiti at a hot spot, or also about deterring offending by specific young people?

Clearly defining your aim will help shape the scope of your project, who needs to be involved and the type of artist required. It will also assist in keeping your project focused and reduce the likelihood of it going off track.

Objectives help to define the scope of activities you will undertake to meet your aim(s). You should keep objectives specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Progress against your aim and objectives will be key to evaluating your project – evaluations are required for all funded projects.

An evaluation strategy and performance measures should be considered and established from the very beginning. This will ensure that the project objectives are measurable and achievable and enable you to plan, report and show change as a result of your project.

Benchmark or baseline data should be collected and provided as evidence of project need within a grant application. This may, for example, include the cost of graffiti removal at the site, crime data, resident complaints or stakeholder views about their feeling of safety at the identified site. Other benchmark data may be collected immediately prior to delivery, such as the views of young people for a program where they may be the participants.

Knox City Council's Wall to Wall Mentoring Program engaged young people in professional artist workshops to develop their artistic and project management skills while addressing illegal graffiti.



Step 3: Identifying who needs to be involved

Identifying who needs to be involved in your project is determined by both your understanding of the problem and your project objectives.

Councils must partner with community stakeholders as part of the eligibility requirements for the Graffiti Prevention Grants (for example, not-for-profit organisations, schools, small businesses, trader associations and Victoria Police). This is because stronger partnerships lead to increased ownership of projects and more sustainable crime prevention solutions. Better decisions can be made about what you are trying to achieve by having a range of different perspectives brought to the table.

Some key considerations in identifying who needs to be involved in projects include:

- Involve a representative cross-section of agencies and community leaders early, as this will improve engagement of specific groups later in the project.
- Document roles and responsibilities with the partners and organisations directly involved in the project and ensure there is a shared understanding of these roles, the project objectives and key deliverables.
- Engage young people as early as possible if they are to have an active role with the project. Involving young people in project development, planning and design maximises their motivation to participate and their ownership of the end product.
- Ensure that the role and contribution of schools is supported by the school Principal.
- Involve local police in the project early as this can help to strengthen relationships, open up clear lines of communication between police and participants, and enhance the educational aspect of the project. Youth Liaison officers can be reached by contacting your local police station via the [Victoria Police](#) website.
- Ensure that there is commitment across council business units, such as those for community wellbeing, place management, youth services and waste/graffiti management; these areas contribute specific expertise and provide reach into different parts of the community.

Step 4: Planning your project

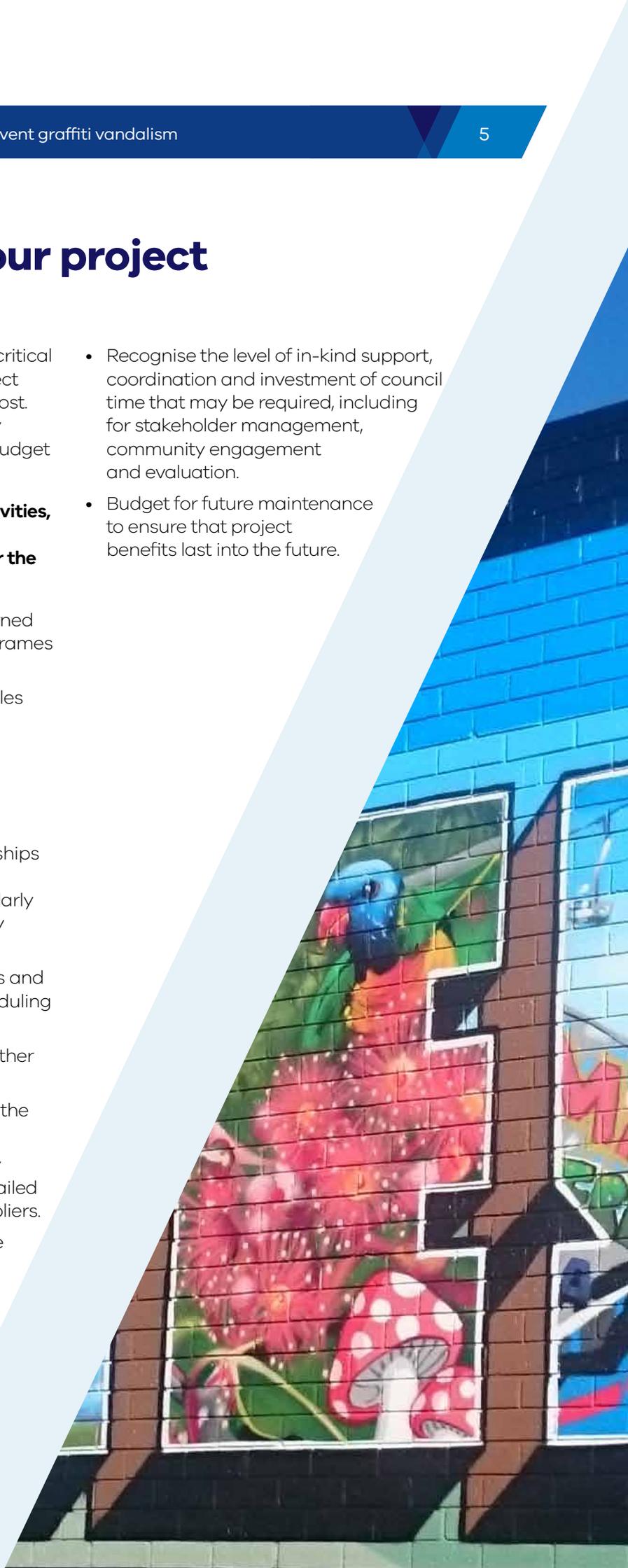
Good planning and project management is critical to the success of projects. Delays to the project due to poor planning will likely increase the cost. Lack of involvement of key stakeholders may undermine the effectiveness of the project. Budget overruns may compromise project viability.

Clearly identifying the proposed project activities, partners, participants, timeframes, cost estimates and budget is necessary to deliver the project well.

Councils have shared a range of lessons learned from previous projects about planning, timeframes and budgets. These include:

- Ensure the project activities and deliverables are realistic and achievable within the timeframes and budget.
 - Research any need for further permits or approval requirements beyond the property owner.
 - Allow adequate lead time to build relationships with key partners or stakeholders and for broader community engagement, particularly with young people and Koori and culturally diverse communities.
 - Consider school holiday and exam periods and other curriculum requirements when scheduling activities with schools.
 - Plan for time contingencies, including weather conditions (wet weather or extreme heat).
 - Ensure sufficient time for final approval of the design and any re-adjustments required.
 - Research past costs for similar projects by speaking to other councils and obtain detailed cost estimates from artists and other suppliers.
 - Include costs for anti-graffiti coating in the project budget.
- Recognise the level of in-kind support, coordination and investment of council time that may be required, including for stakeholder management, community engagement and evaluation.
 - Budget for future maintenance to ensure that project benefits last into the future.

Local community stakeholders in Scoresby agreed on this mural's themes and concepts in Knox City Council's Wall to Wall mentoring program.



Step 5: Identifying artists

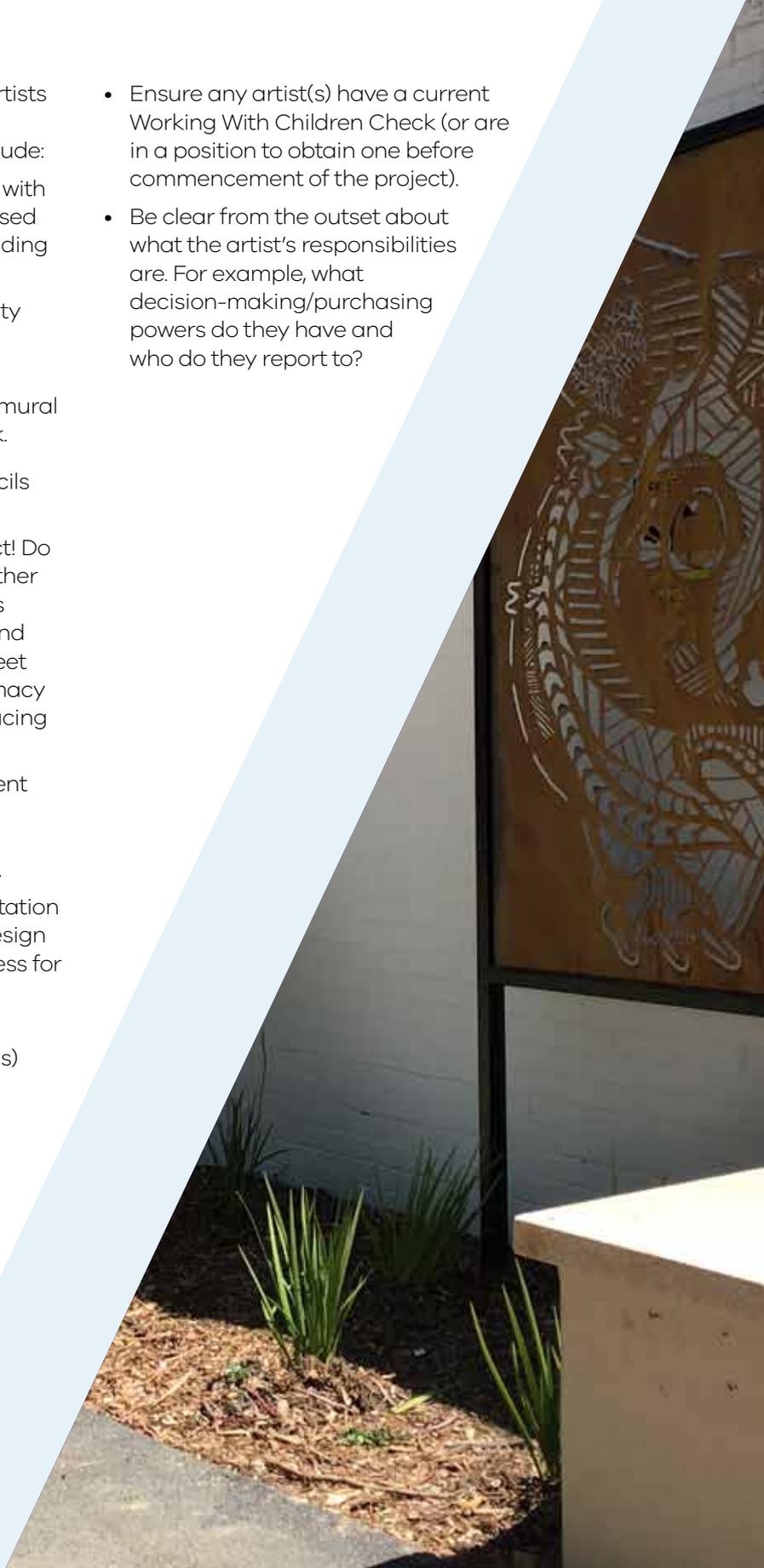
Public art and mural projects may engage artists in a number of ways depending on what the project is intending to achieve. Examples include:

- projects that are predominantly artist-led, with a professional artist completing the proposed artwork but involving the community, including young people, in the design process
- projects that actively involve the community and young people in both the design and production of all, or part, of the artwork
- projects where the lead artist outlines the mural and the participants complete the artwork.

When identifying and engaging artists, councils should consider the following:

- Get the right artist(s) involved in the project! Do your research and seek references from other councils, particularly in terms of the artist's experience working with the community and young people. Attracting an artist with 'street credibility' can support the ongoing legitimacy of the artwork and may be a factor in reducing future tagging.
- Ensure the artist(s) are clear about the intent and purpose of the project.
- Seek clear timeframes, deliverables and costings from the artist(s) and ensure they understand the level of community consultation and participation that is required in the design and art work, as well as the approval process for the final design.
- Clearly specify if there are any anti-graffiti education activities expected of the artist(s) as part of the project.
- Ensure any artist(s) have a current Working With Children Check (or are in a position to obtain one before commencement of the project).
- Be clear from the outset about what the artist's responsibilities are. For example, what decision-making/purchasing powers do they have and who do they report to?

Students were engaged in a Doncaster reserve upgrade with lighting, landscaping and an 'art wall' of etched and mounted plates.



Step 6: Involving young people

Involving young people in the design and creation of public artwork can have a positive impact on their motivation, confidence and sense of pride and belonging in the community. It can also provide a creative outlet and pathway for young people into legal artwork.

Many public art or mural projects endeavour to engage young people who are at risk of, or already involved with, graffiti offending. When engaging with these young people, councils should consider the following:

- Allow sufficient time for the engagement and recruitment of participants. Previous experience has shown that it takes longer than anticipated as this group may not be easily engaged.
- Confirm that referral partnerships are in place prior to the project's commencement, drawing on youth services networks, expertise across council, schools, community leaders and Victoria Police.
- Working with schools to target at-risk or disengaged students may also be a useful way of engaging young people who may otherwise be considered hard to reach.
- Ensure you have a plan in place early to seek parental or guardian consent, as this can also take time.
- Plan for and manage the risks in relation to grouping young people with an offending history with other vulnerable young people.
- Engage in a way that is inclusive and able to address the needs of young people, regardless of their cultural, social or sexual identity.
- Seek to involve specialist Victoria Police Youth Liaison officers and plan their involvement in the program. Involving Victoria Police may be valuable in improving relationships and perceptions of the police held by young people.
- Recognise that young people will have different skill levels, time constraints and interests in the project, and it is important that they have an opportunity to discuss this and know what role they are playing in the proposed artwork.

- Consider the location where the project activities will take place and the logistics as to how young people may attend.

The Graffiti Prevention Grant Guidelines require that any project involving young people in the creation of a mural or public artwork must include a structured education component in relation to the impacts and consequences of illegal graffiti. This education component must be directed to the participants in the artwork, not to a separate cohort of young people. Further information is available in the following fact sheet: [Design an Effective Anti-Graffiti Education Program](#)

Further resources relevant to working with young people can also be found at: [Working with Young People](#)

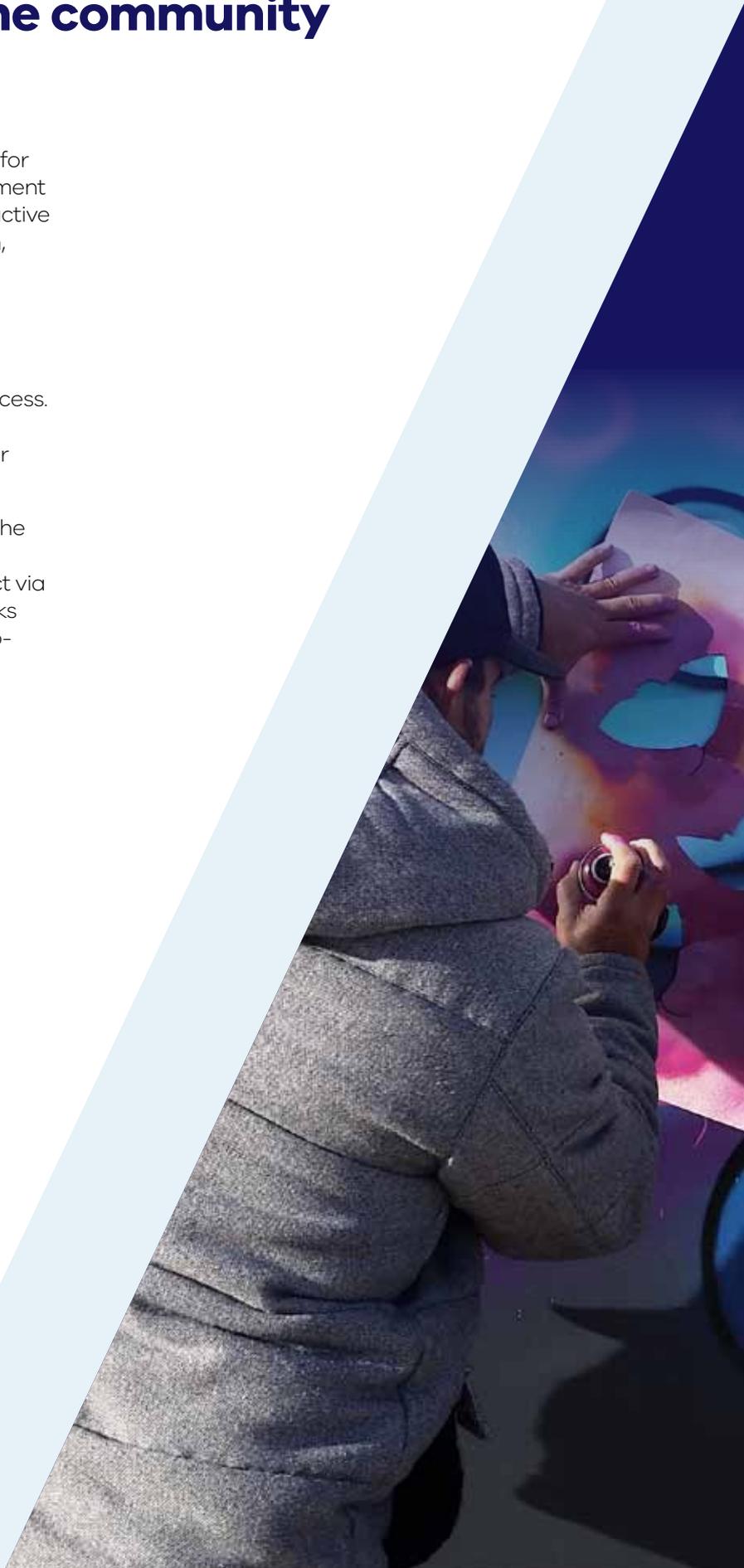
Step 7: Engaging the community

Engagement of the surrounding community (beyond just the property owner) is essential for public art and mural projects. Good engagement will help demonstrate that the council is proactive in managing and reducing graffiti vandalism, while managing any potential community concerns about the final artwork.

Neighbours, local traders and community members likely to be affected by the artwork should be engaged as part of the design process. What may be acceptable as a design in one community might be very different in another community.

Produce flyers or pamphlets to distribute to the community and encourage feedback via an email address or surveys. Promote the project via local and social media. Use available networks and community leaders to engage harder-to-reach groups.

Young Aboriginal students developed artistic skills and cultural knowledge before working with trainers, mentors and Aboriginal artists to create this colourful mural in Nicholson Street, Bairnsdale, inspired by the history of the Gunaikurnai people.



Step 8: Preparing the site and completing the work

The artwork site should be properly prepared and any required insurance or permits should be obtained before works begin.

A comprehensive risk assessment must be undertaken prior to works commencing and appropriate occupational health and safety measures implemented for all participants and passers-by. When preparing the site, councils or their contractors should consider the following:

- provision of appropriate safety equipment such as approved eye protection, painting masks and gloves
- training for participants in relation to occupational health and safety
- familiarisation with the Material Safety Data Sheet for products being used
- cordoning off the target site from the public while works are occurring and providing adequate signage and public notice about the activity. A Traffic Management Plan may be required in some sites (for example if pedestrians are forced onto the road)
- secure storage and monitoring of all equipment (particularly aerosol cans) to ensure these cannot be accessed outside of the project operation hours. Under the Victorian *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007* it is an offence for any person to possess a graffiti implement with the intention of marking graffiti (further information on this legislation can be found at: crimeprevention.vic.gov.au/home/graffiti/).

When the artwork is underway, ensure the process is well documented by video or photography and that key stakeholders and the surrounding community know what's happening.

When painting is complete, the artwork should be protected with anti-graffiti coating to enable easier cleaning in case it is tagged.

It is important for those directly involved in the development of the public art or mural and for the community to celebrate the completed work, as this supports community pride and ownership of the space. Participants, artists, partner organisations, local media and the broader community should be invited to celebrate its completion.

Step 9: Evaluating the project

After completion of the project you should use, and if necessary refine, the evaluation strategy developed earlier to complete the evaluation – measuring the success of the project against the aim and key objectives. Post-completion data will need to be collected to compare this to baseline information collected at the beginning of the project to show what change has occurred.

Feedback is important from those involved in the project. This includes encouraging the participants, artists and stakeholders to take part in surveys both pre- and post-project, and assessing if their views and attitudes to graffiti have changed; what they learnt from participating in the project; evidence of improved participant self-esteem and engagement; new skills or experience gained; and community views on the impact of the project.

The evaluation should note the project's strengths and challenges, what worked well and what didn't. Sometimes things do not go to plan or a new approach does not achieve what was intended. Understanding what has worked and not worked is especially important for rolling your project out more broadly, or for other communities who wish to adopt the strategy. Even if your evaluation does not show that your project was successful, the lessons learned may still contribute to the broader evidence base. A quality evaluation may also be used to demonstrate success in meeting other council aims, such as those in plans or strategies for health, wellbeing, youth and community safety.

Students learned about the impacts of illegal graffiti and vocational pathways to brighten Braybrook with this City of Maribyrnong GreenWORKS! artscape.



Step 10: Maintaining the site and project benefits

Councils should work closely with property owners to seek clarification and agreement on the costs and responsibilities of any identified maintenance requirements (short, medium and long term) before commencement of the project. Agreement may be required across various business units of council where a council owns facilities.

Community and crime prevention benefits from the project risk being undermined if the site and surrounding area are not properly maintained.

If an artwork is tagged, this should be rapidly removed. Applying an anti-graffiti coating will make this easier.

To extend the impact of the project for the participants and the local community, project managers should consider continued further use and celebration of the new site, as well as additional activities for young people to engage in following the project's completion.

Councils are encouraged to develop an overall graffiti strategy, where one does not exist, which outlines the council's approach to graffiti prevention and removal and the role of public art and murals.

Public art can be paired with the redesign of public places to make them more accessible and reduce opportunities for crime.

