



Strategic Plan 2014-2016

Vision: Young people who have been part of Western Edge Youth Arts will be leaders; culturally and artistically articulate and astute. Through their contributions, communities will be made bold, healthy, environmentally sustainable, economically stable, connected and inclusive. The artistic landscape will be populated by people from diverse backgrounds.

Mission: To engage young people through high quality performance making in community and education settings; building their capacity to make meaning through powerful stories with their own authentic voice, and take their role as active citizens in their community, contributing to the artistic, social and economic fabric of the community.

Values:

Access – We are focussed on providing access for young people who face barriers to participation in the arts including socio-economic disadvantage and cultural marginalisation.

Authentic Voice – We seek to generate authentic youth and cultural voices through our practice.

Transformation – We aim to make art that is personally and socially transformative.

Partnership – We work in partnership with young people, communities, organisations and institutions to make high quality ensemble performance that embeds social and community outcomes.

Respect - We acknowledge that we are on traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung and Wurrundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands and, through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

*To see the world, Australia only needs to look within.
Chronicles is theatre as a powerful voice for cultural understanding, tolerance and social agency. It was also terrific fun'*

Cameron Woodhead, The Age

Executive Summary

Western Edge Youth Arts is a unique contributor to the arts in Victoria. It has been a leader in innovative, research-based youth arts for more than fifteen years. The company is internationally recognised for its practice and research and its unique capacity to engage difficult to reach communities. The company's focus is on those communities who are otherwise unable to participate in the arts due to socio-economic disadvantage or cultural marginalisation.

This is a mission-led company with a commitment to high quality artistic outcomes with young people and their communities. Western Edge engages with difficult, complex community contexts and takes an uncompromising approach to high artistic standards often working with complex material. The company embraces the principles of ensemble and works in collaboration with community partners across different settings to create innovative performance work that ranges from artistically vibrant interpretations of classics through to new stories with an authentic, culturally diverse youth voice.

In the triennium Western Edge will consolidate its new structure, enhancing and refining the organisation's capacity and growing resources for the company. It will engage new communities and audiences, bringing rich arts experiences to communities that have not previously known them. It will work towards the birth of two new organisations - Playback West and Flemington Theatre Group - as these emerging ensembles move from being projects of Western Edge to fully empowered organisations. They will be mentored and supported through the process.

The company will take advantage of opportunities to deepen practice and to create pathways through Western Edge's programs for participants. These will be fulfilled through the company's inaugural *Phoenix Festival* in 2015. The company's Artistic Program for 2014 will deepen its work in arts education, arts for young people in communities, professional development and intergenerational development and continue to foster a community of practice among culturally diverse new, emerging and professional artists.



Context

History

Western Edge Youth Arts was incorporated in 2005 and is now in its 8th year of creating outstanding theatre with young people, primarily in the west of Melbourne. Western Edge is committed to working in disadvantaged communities particularly with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD). The company's practice has been rigorously honed and is the subject of a significant body of peer-reviewed research that has identified Western Edge's prowess in engaging difficult to reach communities and young people, creating complex narratives that build genuine community development and cross-cultural community understanding.

The company works in long-term partnerships across education and community settings and has produced a significant body of innovative practice and new works. Western Edge commits to longstanding development, working with schools and communities over generations of young people. Western Edge has undergone several years of rapid growth which has been consolidated since 2009 with a home in the Phoenix Youth Centre (operated by Maribyrnong City Council).

Western Edge is the evolution of ten years of prior work under the auspices of Footscray Community Arts Centre in two separate programs: Y3P and SCRAYP. Y3P and SCRAYP evolved into Western Edge's community and education programs. They positively and effectively engage young people from CALD communities and have a reputation for addressing challenging local issues via complex art. Western Edge is highly regarded by young people, artists and educators alike.

The company has been key in the development of a suite of artists from diverse communities who have built reputations for their own practice. These include Dave Nguyen, Gerard Veltre (Phunktional), Flemington Theatre Group, Playback West, Chi Vu (playwright), Jo Trevathan, Miles O'Neil (Suitcase Royale) and Casey Nichols.

Today, Western Edge is known for innovative participatory projects with high production values. A commitment to high artistic standards is complemented by sophisticated processes for addressing diversity, access and the empowerment of young people. The program has delivered cutting-edge Applied Theatre projects such as *On the Radar*,

Performances



Black Face White Mask
Flemington Theatre Group
@The Malthouse. **SOLD OUT**

A play about Afro-Australian identity.

Skillfully directed and written, it confounds expectations by exploding myths and stereotypes and presenting multiple points of view with self-satirising humor and open-hearted performances. (Elly Varrenti, The Age)



Beagle Bay Chronicles -
Unique community performance bringing together CALD young people from Melbourne with Aboriginal people from the Kimberley to tell the story of the Beagle Bay mission in movement theatre and song.

Stories From Asia at Athol Road PS - Three epic stories from major Asian cultures told using masks, puppetry, young people's writing and live music, choral poetry-speaking and physical theatre.

developed to ease conflict between young people and police, and *Zamunda*, an intercultural community play about African-Australian identity. The company attracts large audiences and considerable media coverage, including recent features on SBS Television's World News Australia, the ABC's Art Nation and a documentary on NITV.

The company's Education Program is highly respected within national and international education communities for its leadership in arts in education pedagogy. The Education team of artist-teachers have developed strong, long-term partnerships with more than ten schools and have delivered significant artistic as well as social and educational outcomes for large numbers of participants in disadvantaged state schools. The excellence of Western Edge's Education program was recognised in 2009 with triennial funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Internal Situation

The company has developed extraordinary practice supported by significant depth of research leading to highly successful outcomes. It is recognised for its strength and high artistic standards by peers and is operating at the forefront of community development and arts education practice. Projects are recognised by participants and audiences as having an authentic youth and cultural voice, reflecting the concerns and celebrating the creativity of their communities. It has a rigorous evaluation practice embedded within the company structure that uses a range of artistic and community development criteria.

This success has been sustained on a minimal core base. The company coalesced from two separate program streams and was formed into an organisation with two equal artistic directors. This had advantages of strong practice in each of the organisation's key delivery settings but built an internal dynamic that has been difficult, creating elements of internal competition and straining the management and administrative resources of the company.

The company has identified that this internal dynamic risks the ongoing success of the company and in 2013 is undergoing a transition to a single Artistic Director with a strong artistic team uniting the Company. Western Edge will

Research

2013 – *Drama, Cultural Leadership and Reflective Practice: taking the road to Zamunda* by Dr. Chris Sinclair (University of Melbourne) and Dr. Dave Kelman; (to be published in *How Drama Activates Learning*, a major new, peer-reviewed international book on drama education).

This research (recipient of the Vice Chancellor's Award 2012) explored the importance of emerging artists from African refugee backgrounds gaining a deep understanding of their own art-making. They describe this Western Edge project in the following terms:

A challenging and sophisticated practice that not only effectively engaged its cultural context but also allowed the young people to develop further as art makers and emerging leaders in their own community.

2013 – *Playing On The Great Stage of Fools: Shakespeare and Dramaturgic Pedagogy* by Dr. Dave Kelman and Jane Rafe (Deakin University). Accepted for publication in 2013 in the prestigious UK Journal *Research in Drama Education*

This article on the adaptation of Shakespeare for primary age students in a disadvantaged regional school is based on research conducted by Deakin University; it examines Western Edge artists use of dramaturgy and creative writing.

also focus on building its resources to more adequately support its

There are opportunities for Western Edge to develop stronger connections between the diverse strands of its core activities, improving pathways for young people as they move through the company's multi-faceted program. This will build Western Edge's sense of being a community of practice with experienced artists working across the whole organisation.

The company has developed relationships with philanthropic trusts who mainly contribute to the company on a project basis (six Philanthropic organisations regularly fund the company). The company now has a strong demonstrable basis of success and an opportunity to build bigger partnerships with more depth over longer periods and make the relationship management both better and more cost effective than running many small grant applications.

As Western Edge works with communities with a low socio-economic profile its capacity to earn income is very limited and results in the company being highly reliant on government and philanthropic support. The company has received triennial funding from the Australia Council Theatre Board for the first time since inception, as its work continues to be recognised on a national scale. This injection allows for better long-term planning and has strengthened organisational capacity.

What Young People Say

My western edge experience has been a major moment in my life. The emotions on the night were indescribable. All of William Shakespeare's words, I drank them up like lemonade, learning the meanings of them and using them. (Primary school participant, Geelong)

The show is the community...whoever is in the venue is the show – they can find the story in themselves. The work is a struggle because we are trying to decipher who we are – deciphering our identity in Australian society. (Community participant, Flemington)

External Situation

Western Edge Youth Arts is focused primarily in the western suburbs of Melbourne -both inner and outer suburbs and regionally. It works in communities with significant disadvantage. The local government areas in which the company works include Maribyrnong (where the company is based), Moonee Valley, Hume, Melton, Brimbank and Greater Geelong. Information tracked by Community Indicators Victoria shows these communities with significant disadvantage compared to the Victorian average. Maribyrnong's Self-Reported Health is 48.6 compared to the Victorian Average of 54.3. The Victorian Average for the indicator People with Enough Opportunities to Participate in Arts and Related Activities in Local Area is 73, in the north west of Melbourne it is 69.5 and in Maribyrnong it is 67.2. Across numerous measures the west has demonstrated disadvantage and these communities are entitled to high quality participatory arts experiences.

Western Edge itself observes a number of community issues in the region and works with partners to address them, sometimes driven by the company's own initiative and sometimes in response to requests from their partners. These issues include:

- Intercultural conflict
- Race-based discrimination
- Internal community transition in migrant communities, for example the changing roles for women
- Alienated young people and the interface with the justice system.
- Gender Issues

The preferences of young people: ,

- A growth in demand for audiences seeking interactivity in performance
- Consumers of high aesthetic value products
- Value complexity and their own power
- Lack of connection to the arts on offer for CALD communities
- Interest in contemporary popular culture – hip hop, digital arts
- The digital world meeting young people's need for entertainment and the reduced impetus to explore the physical world and engage directly
- Barriers to participation: perception of the arts as middle-aged and middle-class – 'Boring! Not for me'..

Changes in the funding environment

The philanthropic sector has recovered post-financial crisis and is returning to former funding levels. Philanthropic focus has changed and some funders have transformed their methods of funding. The Myer Foundation, which has been a particular leader in arts funding, has transformed how it funds the arts. Many philanthropic funders are focused on the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged communities and rural communities and there are opportunities for Western Edge to better engage and position the company's work in this sector.

Trends in Education

Internationally there has been an increasingly strong understanding of the role of the arts in achieving results across the curriculum. While this research is changing perceptions on the role of arts education, this has not been matched by resources being made available in the education sector. The NAPLAN testing regime and the push to teach to the test means that it is challenging to free up time and resources within the school environment. There is an increasing focus on using technology in education, creating opportunities for creative use of ICT in projects but also reducing the space for 'live' arts activities.

Markets/Stakeholders

Western Edge Youth Arts operates primarily in disadvantaged CALD communities of western Melbourne, including outer suburbs and Geelong. It works regionally and has worked nationally.

Please see the marketing plan for a detailed view of stakeholders and strategies.

Stakeholders

- Participants – children and young people aged 5-25
- Parents and families of participants
- Community and education partner organisations
- Research partners
- Interest stakeholders – communities
- Sector partners
- Philanthropic and government funding partners
- Individual supporters
- Audiences

Market

Western Edge Youth Arts works primarily in the market of community building through arts. It effectively brings new audiences from the communities together to share the stories and achievements of young people.

Brand

Western Edge Youth Arts is planning to review and develop its brand and communication tools in the period of the triennium, to refresh its imagery in line with its key markets of diverse young people and education/community/philanthropic/research partners

Goals, Strategies, Activities and KPI's

Goal	Strategies	KPI	Target
Create high quality theatre with disadvantaged culturally and linguistically diverse young people	Invest in engagement, process and craft Appoint highly qualified Artistic Associates Invest in high quality scripts Engage young people Partner with schools and community organisations	Number of new works Number of artists employed Peer review Media review Participant satisfaction	5 32 Non statistical Non statistical 85%
Generate high quality social and education outcomes for young participants and their communities	Build leadership capacity Support intergenerational dialogue in program and project design Support intercultural dialogue in program and project design Collaborative partnership with teachers to deliver knowledge outcomes above and beyond the school curriculum	Number of emerging artists employed Number of CALD artists employed Number of participants Participant satisfaction Research findings	20 15 450 85% Non statistical
Lead and contribute to evaluation and research	Foster a strong evaluation culture Build knowledge of artistic practice Build and maintain high profile research partnerships Ground practice in theory and continuously reflect and evaluate Contribute to sector conversation with evidence and learning	Number of presentations Number of publications Number of research partnerships Annual review of outcomes of reflective practice for company artists.	4 2 2 Non- statistical
Build a strong viable company	Develop partnerships that support and sustain the vision of the organisation Invest in staff to create a sustainable base for the organisation Develop staff capabilities Financial – meet budget – grow reserves	See financial plan and marketing and management section	See financial plan, marketing plan and management section

Artistic Rationale

In 2013-15 Western Edge plans to create complex, innovative new works that weaves together deep cultural narratives stories with stories based on community participants' experiences. This work will be generated through sophisticated processes and expressed through well-crafted scripts based on layered narratives;, sophisticated use of performance spaces, audience dynamics and design elements and employing a carefully integrated range of performance styles. The aim is to create artistically vibrant community performances that entertain, challenge and delight audiences, many of whom would not normally attend theatre. These performances create opportunities for disadvantaged communities to enter into deep reflection on identity and values. We will also continue to develop our leadership in arts led approaches to addressing social issues using Applied Theatre.

In the next three years Western Edge intends to strengthen its community of artists by bringing the principles of 'ensemble' into the heart of the company, creating more spaces for collaboration, experimentation and reflection and thus strengthening our work. There are two key strands of this ensemble approach:

1. Mentorship, knowledge sharing, support of young, CALD emerging artists by experienced specialist community artists.
2. The rigorous integration of reflective practice into the company, enabling all our artists to continually evaluate their work at a deep level and find new directions in it.

Western Edge will continue to support the development as autonomous artistic collectives of The Flemington Theatre Group and Playback West through mentorship, business and artistic support as they move towards full independence.

Western Edge will aim to work through new artistic collaborations strengthening our community of specialist expert artists by bringing them together with other leaders in their field such as Susie Dee (theatre director), Terry Yeboah (actor), Mary Q (hip hop musician) or Miles O'Neil (theatre maker). Our emerging artists will also grow through these links and will make their own connections to other emerging artists through the Flemington Theatre Group / MASSIVE hip hop choir collaboration on the 2013 *Fate* project for example. The 2013 and 2014 program lays the foundation for the 2015 *Phoenix Festival* that will bring together young artists from different geographic locations and cultural communities to share their work with large and diverse community audiences, generating new dialogues about what sort of art young people should be making to address the challenges of the times they are living in.

Program

2014

Underworld : Large-scale community theatre performance.

The main community performance project for 2014 (following a creative development phase in 2013) will be *Underworld* – directed by experienced guest director Susie Dee and written by Casey Nichols, working with 30 young people (aged 14-25) from Braybrook and Footscray and featuring strong leadership roles for emerging artists. This innovative promenade/ immersive installation performance project will explore the contemporary resonances of the Greek myth of Persephone in the Underworld using it as a vehicle to look at social inclusion and resilience. This is a partnership project with Melbourne City Mission, Maribyrnong Youth Services and Footscray Community Arts Centre.

Phoenix Youth Theatre – a new youth theatre led by emerging artists.

In 2014 Western Edge will establish a long-term, open-access youth theatre based at Phoenix Youth Centre in Footscray and run in collaboration with Maribyrnong Youth Services. At its centre will be a company of emerging CALD artists engaged in all aspects of the company from board level to schools workshops. These emerging artists, mentored by Dave Kelman and Casey Nichols, will lead the youth theatre. Key leaders amongst this group of emerging artists are: Rex Pelman, Piper Huynh, Mazna Komba and Abraham Herasan. In the first half of 2014 the *Phoenix YT* will be engaged in *Underworld*. In the second half of the year they will create work that is their own artistic response to *Underworld* that they will perform at Phoenix Youth Centre. Embedded in this project will be the development of the leading emerging artists' reflective practice: working with Dave Kelman they will collect and analyse data on their artistic practice at *Phoenix YT* that will enable them to extend themselves and grow as emerging artists. In the second half of the year visiting artists – Susie Dee, Terry Yeboah and musicians from the MASSIVE hip hop choir – will run guest workshops to bring new artistic thinking and art forms into the group. Dave Kelman and Casey Nichols will run a script-writing group for members of the group in the second half of the year. An existing relationship with the Malthouse, Melbourne will provide opportunities for CALD young people to attend theatre performances, introducing them to mainstream theatre work.

Towards autonomy: Flemington Theatre Group and Playback West.

Western Edge will continue to support the semi-autonomous ensembles **Flemington Theatre Group** and **Playback West** helping them to become fully independent, developing their own artistic practice. This process will happen gradually over the next three years and will be driven by the members of these companies who will decide if and when they wish to become fully independent or if they prefer remain in a formal relationship with Western Edge. In this development period we will help with mentoring artistic leadership within the groups; writing and auspicing funding submissions; employment of guest artists to develop the practice of the companies; and training –

particularly in the area of developing management/ marketing skills. We will also help them to develop their own *revenue stream* since their ability to operate successfully in the arts industry into the future depends on this. Both emerging companies have had considerable success selling their work to schools and community organisations in 2012 / 2013 and we see a strong opportunity for them to gain a level of financial independence through marketing their work more widely.

Learning On The Edge

The Education Program will continue its long-term, transformative partnership with Mount Alexander SC. This school is strongly committed to working collaboratively with Western Edge allowing us to experiment and develop new collaborations in the areas of music education, creative IT and in the development of Teacher Artistry (based on recent research partnerships with University of Melbourne and Deakin University). We will continue our innovative work on classic texts, developing creative contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare and other world literature.

At Mount Alexander SC a vibrant after-school youth theatre group called **Flemington Youth Theatre** will be led by members of the FTG working with Dave Cuong Nguyen; this will link to the *Phoenix Youth Theatre* leading to a double-bill performance in Flemington Community Centre and Phoenix Youth Centre in the second half of 2014. This work will take mythology from young people's background cultures and re-tell it in contemporary contexts. The emphasis will be on youth artistic leadership.

Integrated Arts Projects in Primary Schools

Based on innovative research carried out by Dave Kelman and Dr. Marnee Watkins at the University of Melbourne, Western Edge's work in primary schools will employ music specialist Karen Kyriakou and visual artist Katherine Branch working alongside Western Edge education specialists Jane Rafe and Jo Trevathan to develop new processes in our primary school work, based on dialogues conducted in artistic languages. These processes will be integrated into performance projects at Tate Street PS in East Geelong (*Gilgamesh*) and Athol Road PS in Noble Park (*Mahabharata*). Both projects will lead to large-scale, high quality public performances reaching out to disadvantaged communities. In Geelong this is a community of economically disadvantaged mostly Anglo-Australians and in Noble Park it is a community of people mainly from newly arrived South East Asian migrant communities.

Leading Edge - Cultural Leadership Project with CALD young people in Geelong

In 2013 we will launch a new project in Geelong based on the **Flemington Model**: this involves developing CALD emerging artists from refugee backgrounds as cultural leaders in their communities and led to the development of the Flemington Theatre Group. We will work in a new partnership with Geelong North SC, and *Diversitat*, an organisation supporting newly arrived migrants and refugees in Geelong. The project will target newly arrived/ refugee young people (but include others) and will develop stories exploring

race, culture and identity in a framework of inclusiveness. This project will be led by Dave Kelman and Dave Cuong Nguyen.

Arts Access - SOS

In 2014 we will be developing our partnership with Arts Access and City of Wyndham, building a disabled youth theatre group, primarily for young people with intellectual disabilities, linked to Phoenix Youth Theatre. This group will work collaboratively with the emerging artists from Phoenix Youth Theatre and there will be opportunities for the group to both develop its own practice and to work within the mainstream youth theatre group. This project will be directed by Casey Nichols.

2015 The Inaugural *Phoenix Festival*

2015 will be the year of bringing the whole Western Edge community together to build a unique, mass participation festival of innovative youth-driven performance. Based in Footscray, and in partnership with Footscray Community Arts Centre, Maribyrnong Youth Services, Big West, Richmond Community Health and Barkly Arts Centre, the festival will take place over a week, culminating in an intensive two days of theatre, live music (through Phoenix Youth Centre projects), film, food and debate about what young people want to say through the arts. Youth driven this festival will be the focus of the entire 2015 Western Edge program and will involve significant inputs from the ensemble of experienced artists.

The **Phoenix Festival** will bring together Western Edge's Flemington Theatre Group, Playback West, Phoenix Youth Theatre, Flemington Youth Theatre, the Arts Access group SOS, Geelong Cultural Leadership Group (*Leading Edge*) as well as primary school groups from Geelong (Tate Street PS), Noble Park (Athol Road PS) and Debney Meadows PS (Flemington – mainly the Somali community). In addition to these groups, there will be youth performances from Richmond, work based on Dave Cuong Nguyen's groundbreaking *Zombies* Project and The MASSIVE Collective from Barkly Arts. The Arts Access SOS group will feature strongly both with its own place on the program and with its members integrated into larger works.

Artists

Dave Kelman: Festival Director; Casey Nichols: Associate Director.

Each youth group will be directed by an emerging artist working closely with one of the Western Edge core artists: Dave Cuong Nguyen, Jo Trevathan, Casey Nichols and at least one guest artist.

Designers Katherine Branch and Jane Rafe will work across projects to bring a strong visual element to the work.

Lighting designers Jeany Lee and Matt Fabris will provide quality lighting designs, also mentoring emerging artists in this work.

The primary school projects will be directed by Jane Rafe and Jo Trevathan.

The Artistic Concept of the Festival: youth-led but with an emphasis on deep cultural stories with contemporary relevance. The leading emerging artists from Western Edge and the other collaborating organisations will work with Directors Dave Kelman and Casey Nichols to plan and deliver the festival. Guest artists, including alumni of Western Edge such as Miles O’Neil (Suitcase Royale), Gerard Veltre (Phunktional), Joel Ma (TZU) and Chi Vu will be invited to run workshops that bring new ideas and approaches into the festival. New-media artists Hoang Tran Nguyen and Nick Scott, designer Katherine Branch and lighting designer Jeany Lee will collaborate with young people to create design elements; leading indigenous artist Glenn Romanis who has worked extensively with the company in the past, will be invited to create a central sculptural set element that will be used in different ways by many of the works.

Another strand of the festival will be *Innovations in Participatory Theatre*, drawing on the company’s expertise in Playback and other interactive forms (process drama, forum theatre and hybrid variations used in *Black Face White Mask Interactive*). This work will be led by Kelman/ Nichols.

The ***Phoenix Festival*** will be authentically led by CALD young people, drawing on the skills of emerging artists who have developed their practice over years working with Western Edge. The work will be vibrant, innovative, digitally connected, youth-focused, authentically intercultural and engaging with a young person’s aesthetic. It will aim to break down barriers to young people’s involvement in theatre outlined in the Australia Council’s *TheatreSpace* Research and will aim to build on Western Edge’s ground-breaking work in bringing CALD and Indigenous young people together through the arts.

The *Phoenix Festival* program will showcase the excellence of CALD young people’s performance making and Western Edge will devote all of its resources to ensuring that the festival, staged in November 2015, has the time, resources, artistic expertise, quality production values and venues/ technical elements to ensure its success.

The *Phoenix Festival* will be run in partnership with the *Big West Festival* and will complement their programming. It will be based at Phoenix Youth Centre and Footscray Community Arts Centre, but will also involve performances toured to outer suburban venues and Geelong.

In addition to the performances there will be youth-led forums with invited speakers that will encourage emerging artists to deepen and develop their practice and explore its contemporary relevance. Western Edge emerging artists leading Phoenix Youth Theatre will conduct research into the participants' and community members' experience of the festival which will be analysed and presented at a follow-up event early in 2016.

Towards 2016

The youth-researched evaluation of the 2015 Phoenix Festival will feed directly into the major performance project for 2016. This project will focus on giving opportunities for emerging artists to develop work of a high calibre that can be toured to regional centres on a limited basis in the second half of 2016.

Western Edge will continue to develop its core business of generating exceptional practice in applied theatre and arts education. Existing school partnerships will be further developed, and new ones formed including partnering with Footscray Community Arts Centre to develop formal certification for Western Edge emerging artist training programs.

Research

In 2013/14 Western Edge will launch a new research partnership with University of Melbourne, developing our existing investigation into CALD cultural leadership through the arts. This project will investigate whether the **Flemington Model** of developing youth leadership through the arts using reflective practice is an effective model for building social inclusion and cohesion and addressing race-based discrimination when applied to Geelong (2015).

Longitudinal studies

In collaboration with Deakin University, Western Edge will follow consenting young people who were participants in extended school residencies in Tate Street PS in 2011-13 as they enter and progress through secondary school. Young people who have been involved with Western Edge in the Flemington area over the previous decade will be contacted through school/family contacts and social media. The study will examine what impacts participants think their experience with Western Edge has had on their lives (if any)?

Evaluation, Reflective Practice and Emerging Artists as Researchers

Led by Dr. Dave Kelman, Western Edge will work to develop new ways to effectively evaluate our programs against artistic and cultural vibrancy and social benefit indicators, using qualitative and quantitative research methodology.

Emerging artists will be trained in becoming their own researchers – exploring innovative participatory research methodologies to explore their own practice and how it impacts on young people. The focus of this study will be how barriers to engagement in the arts for ‘hard to reach’ young people – particularly from CALD backgrounds – can be broken down. What do CALD young people want from the arts?

Marketing Engagement Plan

Western Edge has undertaken very modest marketing activities in the past. Recent strategic planning has highlighted the need for a more dynamic and robust marketing strategy. This is very interesting terrain for Western Edge, who, as stated above, operates in an incredibly diverse environment: 8 to 22 year old people and their extended families and communities; predominantly CALD communities from incredibly diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds; widely varying degrees of literacy (both computer, written and reading), and whose preferred communication methods often fall outside of usual approaches (word of mouth for some communities; exclusively social media for others). The review has identified committing additional resources for marketing. In the triennium the company is allocating additional resources and has identified a new marketing role for the company.

Western Edge Youth Arts operates primarily in the geographical market of the western suburbs of Melbourne, including outer ring suburbs and Geelong. Its programs do extend regionally and nationally on occasion. Within that geographical market, the company is working primarily in marketing to young people to engage participation, into the education and community sector for partnerships, philanthropic and government support. The company is mission driven and responds to identified community need.

Stakeholders

Participants

- Young people from CALD communities
- 60% recent migrants including refugees
- 40 national backgrounds
- High proportions of children with learning difficulties (estimated at 25%)
- 20% young people at risk

Project Delivery Partners

- Youth services organisations
- Local government
- Local arts festivals
- Health organisations
- Multicultural organisations
- Schools
- Other community partners.

Sector Partners

Some are also competitors but the sector cooperates together particularly to pursue audience development and marketing initiatives and is currently working together as a marketing cooperative under a new initiative funded by Arts Victoria, the Western Arts Alliance Collaborative Arts Marketing Initiative based on developing shared services for audience development.

- Footscray Community Arts Centre

- Big West Festival
- Women's Circus
- Ausdance Vic
- The Substation
- Snuff Puppets
- Barkly Arts Centre

Western Edge will develop its partnership with Maribyrnong Youth Services using their resources to distribute marketing materials.

Philanthropic and Government Funding Partners

Government resources are shrinking at the moment – although much arts funding seems to have been maintained with only small cuts. The philanthropic sector is recovering post GFC. The issues that the company are keen to address are shared by both the government and philanthropic sectors.

Individual Giving

Currently the organisation attracts minimal individual giving having averaged about \$2000 per year for the last two years

Audiences

Western Edge has been measuring audience response through surveys and has consulted audiences consistently since the company was founded. Western Edge audiences for the most part:

- Are not regular theatre goers
- Come from hard to reach communities
- Have lower than average purchasing power
- Often are not first language English-speakers

Market

In the participation market, the company targets partner community and education organisations to host activities in their community. To reach this market Western Edge utilises reputation, word of mouth, established distribution networks and markets supported by web information and personal contact and response to enquiries.

To sell performances, the company utilises, online, print, social media, marketing partnerships with other companies, PR and paid advertising distribution channels, strategies that support the development of word of mouth and activate the communities around the project.

Many small to medium arts companies' models rely on selling work to presenters who then take the risk on the production and they have greater capacity to sell the same product over years. This structure allows companies to concentrate on making work and reduces their exposure to box office risk. The pricing of Western Edges service delivery is inelastic, particularly in the education market, and the capacity to charge for attendance is also limited as it would act as barrier to access that conflicts with the company's core values. Western Edge is reliant therefore on forging government and philanthropic partnerships to create community opportunities. This sector is very competitive and Western Edge's experience has been on average a 70% success rate.

Market Development:

Western Edge has under its wing two fledgling organisations, Flemington Theatre Group and Playback West, and will work with them to develop markets into the education, arts, corporate and community sectors as they move towards independence.

Please see the competitor analysis on the following pages.

Competitor/Collaborators

Competitor	Established date	Size	Value to customers	Strengths	Weaknesses
Footscray Community Arts Centre		13 core staff plus projects	A hub for community arts practice	Long established reputation Infrastructure	Capacity to change and refresh.
Barkly Arts Centre			In school workshop based delivery	Health organisation relationship	Artistic focus reduced - quality not as high A bit hidden inside health organisation
Platform Youth theatre		1.5	Creating pathways for the work of young artists, theatre made by young people.	Quality emerging young artists	Community practice weaker
Creativity Australia	2008	5 management, 10 creatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deliver choral programs to encourage social inclusion and community wellbeing - choirs all around the city - connect people in their workplaces - create performance opportunities for participants to encourage participation and inclusion - encourages diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - large organisation, well funded and resourced - focuses on one form of musical activity - focuses on one client demographic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Melbourne based, so only focuses on one city - limited by only focusing on choral music - not necessarily creating pathways to careers in the arts

The Song Room	2012	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national program providing free music programs for disadvantage children - not for profit organisation - large number of students involved across the country - offers individual programs tailored to students needs -covers a range of musical styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focuses on children - works within school communities - has an online facility - engages with the broader community too - proven educational benefits- - large funding support base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited to music programs only with children in a certain demographic - broad artistic focus, not specialising in any particular genre for future study - does not produce new work
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Brand

Western Edge Youth Arts will review and refresh its brand during the triennium, to align it with how young people identify visually and aesthetically. The brand must also speak to Western Edge's partners and audiences.

Digital Marketing

The company is continuing to improve and refine its use of digital media, the function of its website, Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and developing memes and content to support its physical presence. Western Edge is particularly interested in exploring how dialogue from the organisation's many different project participants can feed each other, bringing physical communities and communities of interest together in virtual space: This exploration links directly with Western Edge's core intent of building a community around the organisation, providing platforms for the voices of young people, while also ensuring a safe and engaging environment for young people.

The company will also use digital channels for project marketing and profile building.

Pricing

The company is committed to accessible pricing so that price is not a barrier for people to participate in or to attend Western Edge Projects.

Building Relationships

Investigate the capacity of the organisation to manage a regular social media presence.

Much of the company's relationships rely on person to person relationships and networks and the company continues to foster those relationships.

How will we measure success?

Reaching audience targets for projects

Quality of online dialogue and level of drive by young people

Reaching financial targets for projects

Growing subscribers to our email list, 'likes' to our Facebook page, Twitter followers.

Financial Plan

In 2012 Western Edge had expenses of \$560K this was balanced with earned income, grants and philanthropy of \$563.

The current equity position for the company is \$34K.

The company works in areas of high disadvantage and its model of long term relationships and in depth engagement is not congruent with a high earned income at box office. Earned income from schools is also inelastic as school budgets are very tight. As is reflected in the company's mix of income it is attractive to government and philanthropy particularly.

Financial Strategies

Increase Income

Grow philanthropic and government funding into Western Edge programs to recognise and cover the full costs of programs including core infrastructure.

Invest in a development role to improve long-term relationship with philanthropic funders with the intent to increase the size of grants and the length of investment.

Assess the possibility of an individual giving program.

Manage Expenditure

Maintain strong budget controls.

Grow reserves for the company with an annual target of 2.5% of turnover contribution to reserves.

Financial Reporting

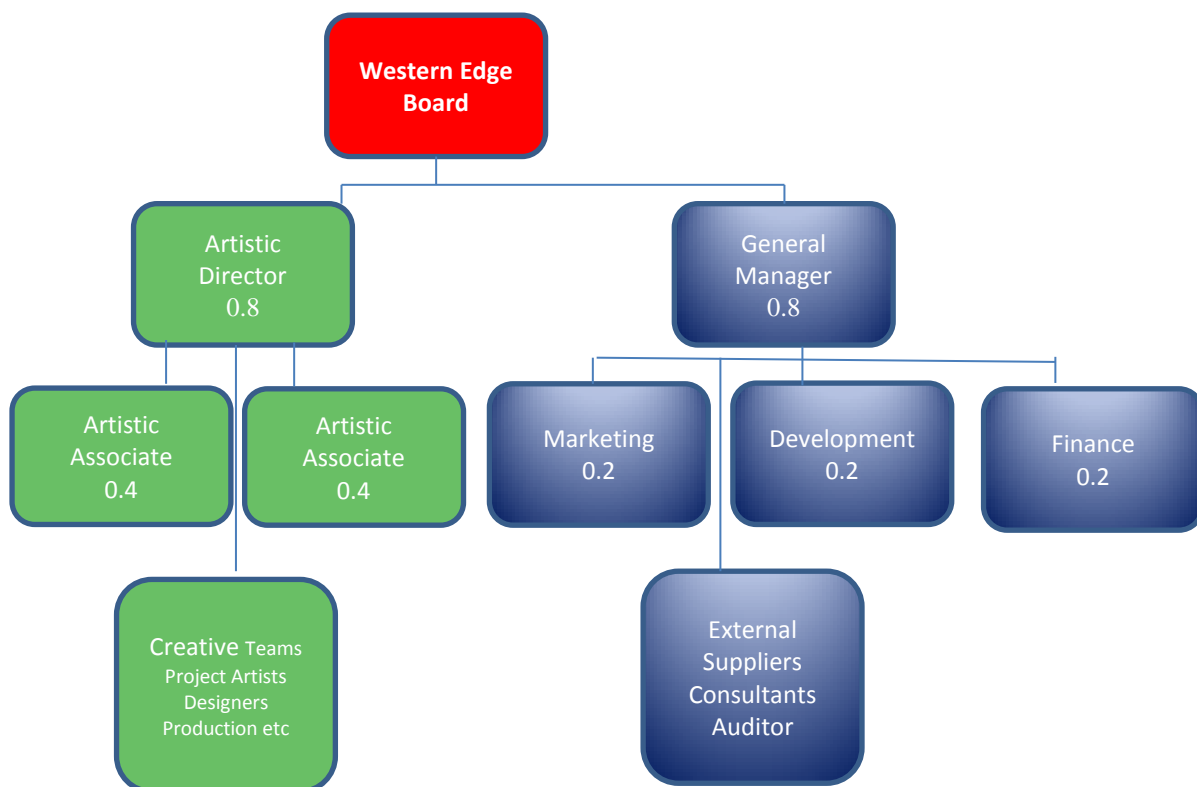
- Through its recent strategic planning and analysis process, Western Edge has identified the need for a more streamlined, focussed and deeper artistic program. This new direction will ensure that the organisation is operating within rather than outside its resource capacity, and that it uses available resources more intelligently. A more focussed program also reduces the number of applications required to fund a project - an issue which has negatively impacted on Western Edge staff and resources in the past.
- The implementation of robust budget tracking systems across organisation.
- Western Edge recently brought its book keeping inhouse, resulting in a more efficient and frequent financial reporting system.
- Developing and securing recurring funding from government and philanthropic sources

- Developing the Western Edge board to include members from a corporate, financial and development background who can bring contacts and new funding opportunities to the organisation (much like the American model of boards in the USA).

- Continue regular financial reporting to the board, and implement meetings with the Treasurer before each board meeting to discuss budgets.

Management

Organisational Structure



During 2013 the company is in transition from a model of two artistic directors to the co-CEO model with a GM and a single Artistic Director that is outlined above. The company is also investing in the marketing and development capacity of the company to increase the depth of partnerships and grow the resources of the company, and to keep its brand relevant and active for young people and engaged through social media platforms.

Governance and Management

In 2012 Western Edge undertook a review with Board Connect. The report identified a number of strengths of the organisation and some areas to work on.

Strengths

- Clear and accurate financial reports and adequate discussions regarding the annual budget prior to approval.
- Board member attendance at Western Edge Youth Arts events.
- Well managed board meetings, including the Chair's encouragement of all board members to contribute to discussion and high attendance at board meetings.

- A high level of trust between Board and CEO and a good working relationship between the Chair and the CEO.
- Valuable skills and knowledge provided to the organisation by board members.

Areas to work on

- A strategic plan, marketing plan and risk management procedure.
- Board member recruitment to increase the size and skills composition of the board.
- Succession plans for the Chair, board members, CEO and other key staff.
- Up-to-date role descriptions for the CEO and board members, including delineation between governance and management responsibilities.
- A review of organisational structure to enable cohesiveness and streamline reporting to board.
- Processes to ensure programming does not exceed the resources available.
- Clear decision making delegations.
- Regular opportunities to reflect on board strengths, challenges and/or mistakes.
- Terms of reference for subcommittees.

In late 2012/ early 2013 Western Edge undertook a strategic review process. The key features of this review include transitioning the company to a new structure that integrates the strengths of the company under one Artistic Director, expands the marketing and development capacity of the organisation increasing overall organisational capacity. The company will form an advisory committee of CALD emerging artists with Board representation.

Staff

2013

Name of staff member (list all members)	Position	Years in current position
Dr Dave Kelman	Artistic Director - Education	8 years
Debbie Pearson	Acting General Manager	3 months (5 years with company having previously acted as GM)
Casey Nichols	Acting Artistic Associate	2 months (And four years with the company, having previously acted as AD- Community)

2014

Name of staff member (list all members)	Position	Years in current position
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Dr Dave Kelman	Artistic Director	8 years
TBA	Artistic Associate	
TBA	Artistic Associate	
TBA	General Manager	
TBA	Marketing Officer – Social Media	
TBA	Development Officer	
Debbie Pearson	Finance Officer	5 years

Following the significant strategic review the company has undertaken and is now moving through the planned re-structure and growth of the company.

The transition of staffing structure is underway. The role of General Manager will be filled by July through an open recruitment process with other roles to follow all will be in place by 2014.

Board

Name of Director or committee member (list all members)	Special responsibilities, qualifications and experience	Years on Board
Bernadette Fitzgerald	Chair, expertise in CCD, programming and arts management.	7 years since 2006
Associate Professor Angela O'Brien	Barrister, Academic with specialist expertise in the Arts	2 years
Narelle Sullivan	Arts Management, Marketing,	3years
Marcus Hughes	Program Manager Kultour – Indigenous Producer and Arts Manager	new
Sue Russell	Director Nexus Arts, Arts in Education	1 year
Rex Pelman	Young Person/ Emerging Artist	New

Risk Management Plan

This plan identifies the key potential risks or barriers to Western Edge Youth Arts achieving its goals. It summarises their level of impact and probability (low, medium, high).

Key Risks & Control Measures/Strategies

Below are identified key risks with suggested control measures and strategies.

Dimension	Identified Risk	Level of Risk	Control Measures/Strategies
Financial	Funding policy changes.	High	Ensure we participate in consultation on any changes to funding policies and play a leadership role in setting the agenda
	Narrow funding base.	Medium	Diversify income streams from philanthropy, sponsorship, donors and partner fees
	Poor management of funds.	Low	Seek professional financial management support and improve company financial systems
Audience and Particants	Lack of interest from CALD communities	Low	Develop creative collaborative processes that are informed by artists from the community. Present works that are relevant to the community.
	Emerging artists "failing" in challenging community contexts	Medium	Rigorous support from experienced artists at all times. Peer to peer training within company.
	Competition for audiences and participants	Medium	Ensure distinct and reputable brand. Build loyalty amongst audiences. Build presentation relationships with major arts festivals and theatres to raise the profile of the company and its work. Ensure extensive media coverage as well as online marketing strategies.
Organisation	Board governance inadequate.	Medium	Undertake regular Board reviews – yearly evaluations and skills audit and work closely with specialised advisors on key issues.
	Lack of succession planning, affecting	Medium	Develop leadership skills within the

	sustainability of the company.		company's staff. Provide mentorship opportunities.
	Creating an environment where the job is too big to succeed	Low	Overview of organisation's plans assessing working hours, conditions and job requirements. Assessing the need for mentorship or development as required.
Artistic	Lack of relevance to the community and/or causing offence without meaning to	Low	Invest in the team's cultural awareness. Employing artists with required skills Having ethical standards at the heart of the company.
	By working with an ensemble of artists the risk that the company becomes insular and stale	Low	Employing other artists from outside the company Using reflective practice,
	Working with at risk communities, other factors including social and cultural dynamics compromise the work and its effectiveness.	Medium	Employing and developing artists who have the right skills and capacities and support each other. Ensemble engage in reflective practice to manage difficulties
Marketing & Reputation	Change in perception of the credibility of the company	Low	Ensure excellent production values in all performance, presenting a high quality product. Further develop relationships/partnerships with major arts organisations, giving credibility to the company and its programs.