

Cultural Safety & Inclusion **in Exhibition Touring**

First Nations engagement

If your exhibition involves First Nations peoples, stories, objects, Country, or cultural content of any kind, the companion First Nations Engagement in Exhibition Touring guidance document should be your primary reference before working through the cultural safety and inclusion prompts in this document. That guidance sets out the principles, practical guidance, and minimum standards that apply to First Nations engagement across all touring projects. It is available through NETS Australia.

What is Cultural Safety?

A culturally safe environment is one where people feel their cultural, ethnic, or religious identity is respected. In most cases this form of safety challenges inherent power imbalances, and directly references people or groups who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, culturally and/or linguistically diverse, or as a member of the global majority. These identities have historically been marginalised or misrepresented in arts and cultural organisations. Cultural safety is maintained through ongoing practice, listening, and accountability. Practicing cultural safety includes asking people for their requirements and openly discussing how they can be met in ways led by the individual/group and achievable by the organisation/space. Considering aspects of cultural safety from the onset of a project places value on diverse perspectives and can assist with creating better experiences for everyone involved.

What is Cultural Inclusion?

Creating a culturally inclusive environment is connected to nurturing a sense of ownership and belonging for people from diverse backgrounds, with an emphasis on celebrating lived cultural experiences and knowledges. Cultural inclusion encourages ideas to be accessible to more people, and for both display and engagement content to be made *with* cultural groups rather than about them.

Applying Cultural Safety & Inclusion Principles

For the Tour Organiser, applying principles of cultural safety and inclusion allows for meaningful consideration of whether the needs of staff, artists/creatives, consultants, and others involved have been incorporated into the touring project from the outset. This approach considers how cultural safety is reflected in project documentation, examines how the organisation's internal aims are being met, introduces strategies for responding to concerns, identifies individuals or organisations contributing to safe and inclusive practices, and encourages questions around respectful engagement with local communities throughout the tour.

For the Tour Host, a focus on principles of cultural safety and inclusion supports clear communication on how these considerations have been embedded within the touring project. It also invites reflection on whether additional support is needed to ensure respectful, welcoming, and positive engagement for staff and volunteers, the local community, and those represented in the exhibition.

Applying principles of cultural safety and inclusion can create opportunities for the needs, values, and requirements of people to be purposefully included across all stages, materials, and experiences connected to a touring project.

Considerations for Cultural Safety & Inclusion in Touring Exhibitions

Below are some prompts that both the Tour Organiser and Tour Host can ask themselves and of each other at the outset of a tour. This is not an exhaustive list, and we encourage all parties to go further in response to local context, relationships, and community direction. Please consider the list below alongside the First Nations Engagement in Exhibition Touring resource.

1. What internal policies or approaches exist in your organisation to ensure cultural safety and cultural inclusion are integrated in a meaningful way? This could include ICIP clauses in contracts, consultation commitments, exhibition collateral authorship, advice from reference groups, or embedded organisational practices
2. If concerns surrounding cultural safety or inclusion are raised during the touring project, what strategies do you have in place to allow these concerns to be heard and addressed? This could include cultural advisors or committees to seek advice from, clear reporting pathways and processes to ensure appropriate treatment of issues, or designated contact people to refer to should an issue arise.
3. Are there opportunities for the collaboration or co-creation of touring exhibition content with cultural communities? This could include the employment of people with diverse experiences across the entire project, partnerships with individuals and organisations, or utilising existing relationships with groups and communities. With any engagement, fair remuneration is essential. Consultation without proper payment is exploitative.

4. Are there people or groups tied to this project that have specific cultural needs that should be facilitated during engagement? This could include dietary considerations, spatial requirements, traditional practices, or language preferences.
5. Are there any cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups referenced in the exhibition that should be consulted or engaged with at each venue? These references could be within the artworks or objects, linked to the artists/creatives included, or within established/new community relationships connected to the host venue locations.
6. Are there any areas of training or information available to staff/ volunteers to ensure their own cultural safety, as well as the safety of the cultural groups represented? This training and information could exist within interpretation materials, public programming possibilities, engagements with creatives, staff experiences, or local collaborations with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups referenced within the touring project. Consider if there are any concerns over the content of exhibitions creating an unsafe cultural environment for the local community or staff/volunteers.