

# Regional Arts Victoria Strategy 2024-2028



*Pictured: Appiah Annan (Assanti Dance Theatre) Photo: Rhiannon Poley*

# STRATEGY 2024-2029

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## Executive Summary

Regional Arts Victoria’s strategy cycle typically aligns with applications for multi-year funding from Creative Victoria. However, in May 2023, RAV’s Board and executive staff reviewed the strategy that was the basis of a successful application in 2020 for multi-year (2022-2025) funding.

This document sets out a revised strategy that responds to:

- Demographic and economic changes in regional Victoria.
- RAV’s current operational structure and financial capacity and the wider economic sector.
- Regional audiences and their behaviour as well as general economic conditions impacting our sector.

The organisation’s mission has been revised to centre our members, and the relationships among creatives and audiences in regional settings:

**VISION:** Regional creatives leading the way in diverse communities.

**PURPOSE:** RAV is the peak body for regional creatives. We **enable** regional Victorians to make, participate in, and experience creative practice. Anchored by our members, we activate our networks to inform public policy, identify resources and seek “a seat at the table” for creatives in the decisions that impact them.

**VALUES:** Leadership, care, transformation, equity and celebration.

This mission informs a theory of change that “creative expression in regional settings fosters the intrinsic benefits of arts and cultural activity, and generates positive, locally relevant, economic, wellbeing and social outcomes”.

We have articulated four strategic initiatives that we will pursue to deliver this mission:

1. Supporting nodes of capacity
2. Advocacy and membership
3. Participation
4. Strategic Growth and Equity for Good Governance.

The following pages describe this strategy in more detail, while also describing Regional Arts Victoria’s resources and goals for the future. A detailed plan for 2024 can be found in Appendix B and more detail for the years 2024 to 2028 will be developed as part of the 2024 commitments.

**Creative expression in regional settings fosters the intrinsic benefits of arts and cultural activity, and generates positive, locally relevant, economic, wellbeing and social outcomes.**

## Introduction

This document sets out Regional Arts Victoria’s strategy for 2024-2028 and the 2024 Program of Activities which deliver on Year 1.

Prior to May 2023, Regional Arts Victoria (RAV) articulated itself as follows:

*Regional Arts Victoria backs artists and communities across regional Victoria to make, participate in, and experience creative work.*

*Regional Arts Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation working in long-term partnerships with every level of government, fostering contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice. We advise and impact on decision-making across multiple portfolios and levels of government.*

*Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations, and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria.*

During 2022, the organisation articulated its values: leadership, care, transformation, equity and celebration and at its planning session in May 2023, the RAV Board refined the company’s vision and purpose:

**VISION:** Regional creatives leading the way in diverse communities.

**PURPOSE:** RAV is the peak body for regional creatives. We **enable** regional Victorians to make, participate in, and experience creative practice. Anchored by our members, we activate our networks to inform public policy, identify resources and seek “a seat at the table” for creatives in the decisions that impact them.

**VALUES:** Leadership, care, transformation, equity and celebration.

Review has informed a transition from business plan themes to four strategic initiatives, based on a theory of change that recognises RAV’s context, its role, how it will deliver and why. A table tracking the transition from themes to strategic initiatives can be found in Appendix B.

Our Theory of Change is that:

*Creative expression in regional settings fosters the intrinsic benefits of arts and cultural activity, and generates positive, locally relevant, economic, wellbeing and social outcomes.*

To do this we will:

1. Support nodes of capacity
2. Advocate for regional creatives and nurture our membership
3. Facilitate participation
4. Pursue Strategic Growth and Equity for Good Governance.

# Regional Arts Victoria's Theory of Change:

*Creative expression in regional settings fosters the intrinsic benefits of arts and cultural activity, and generates positive, locally relevant, economic, wellbeing and social outcomes.*

Illustration 1: Theory of Change

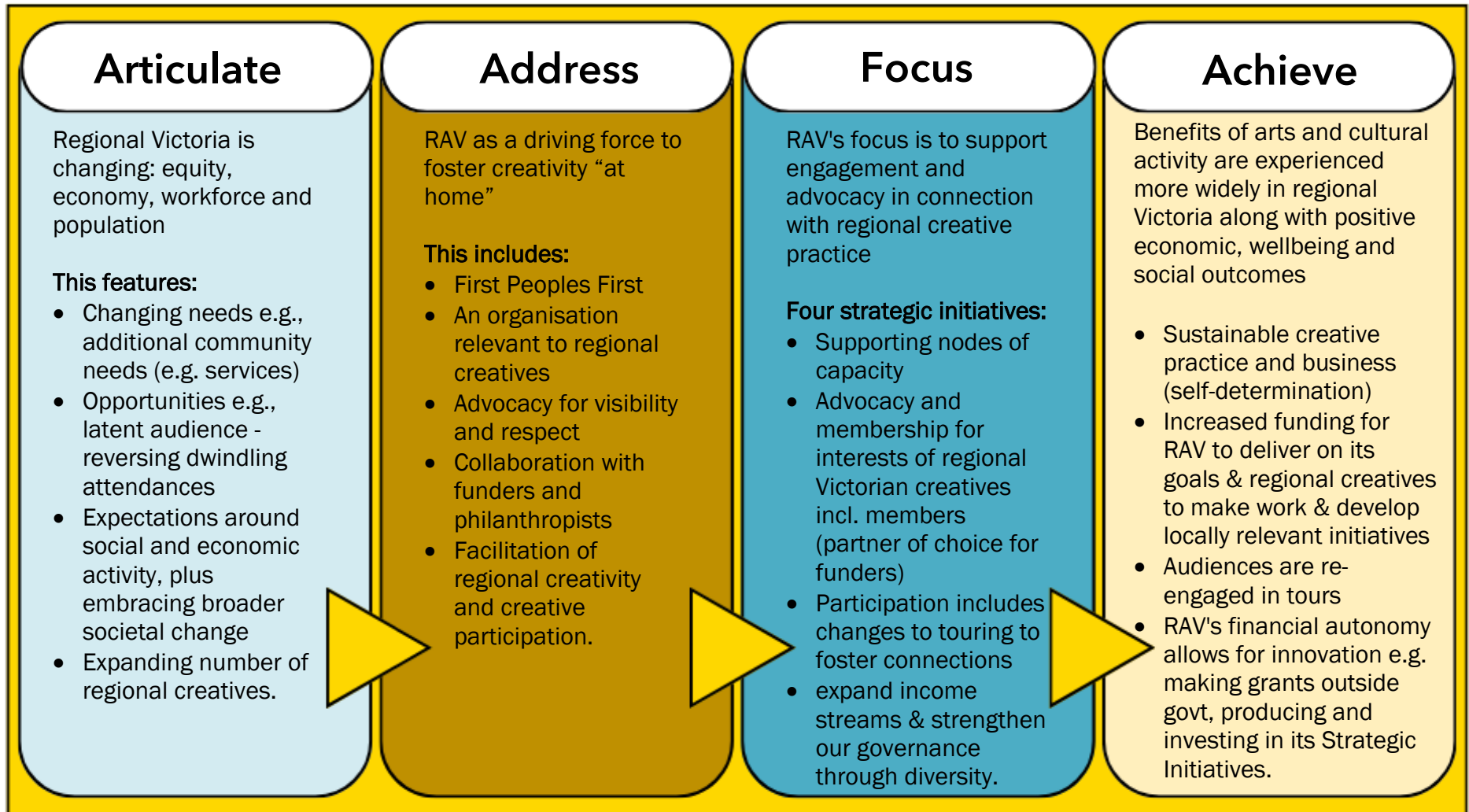
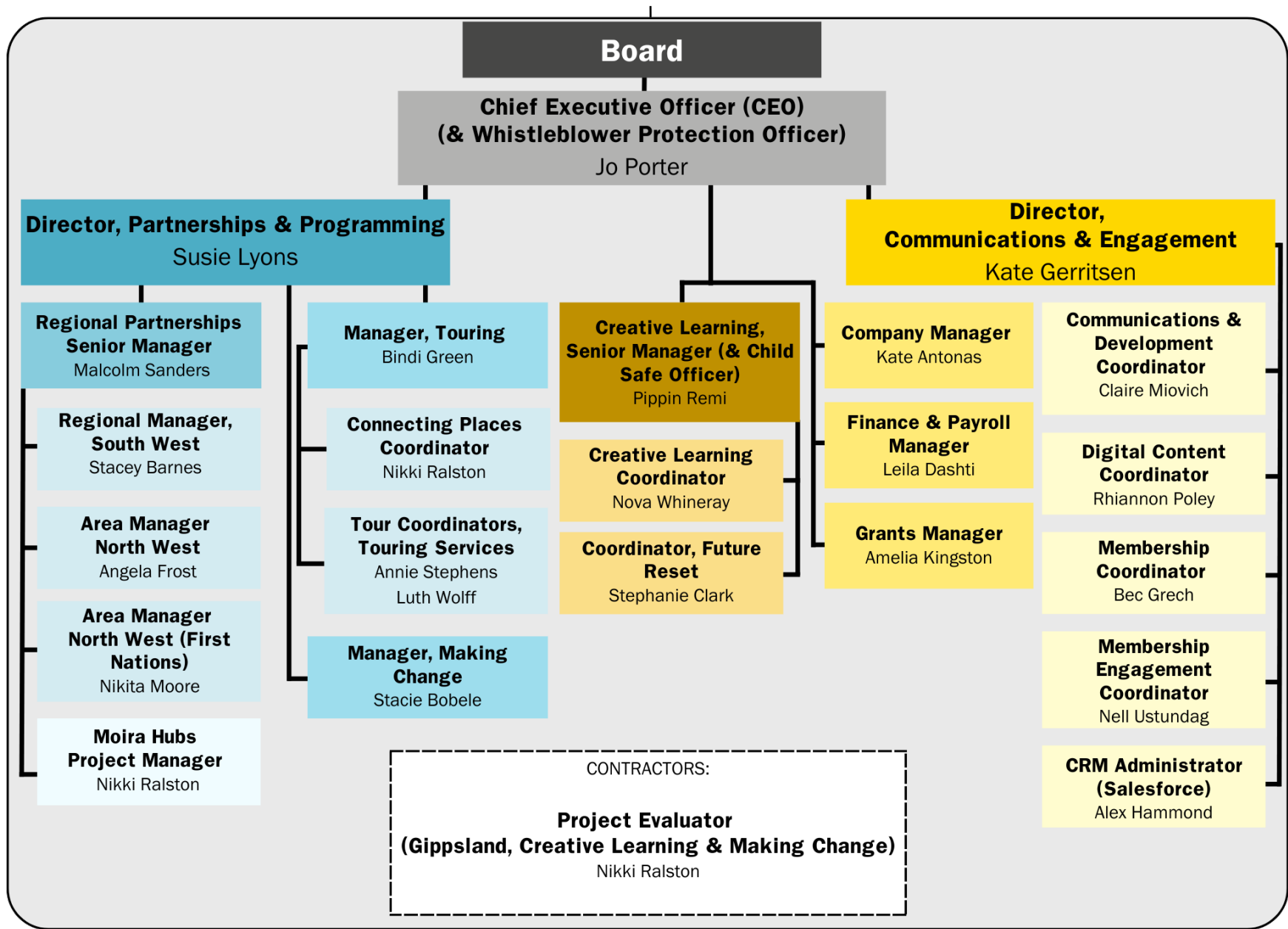


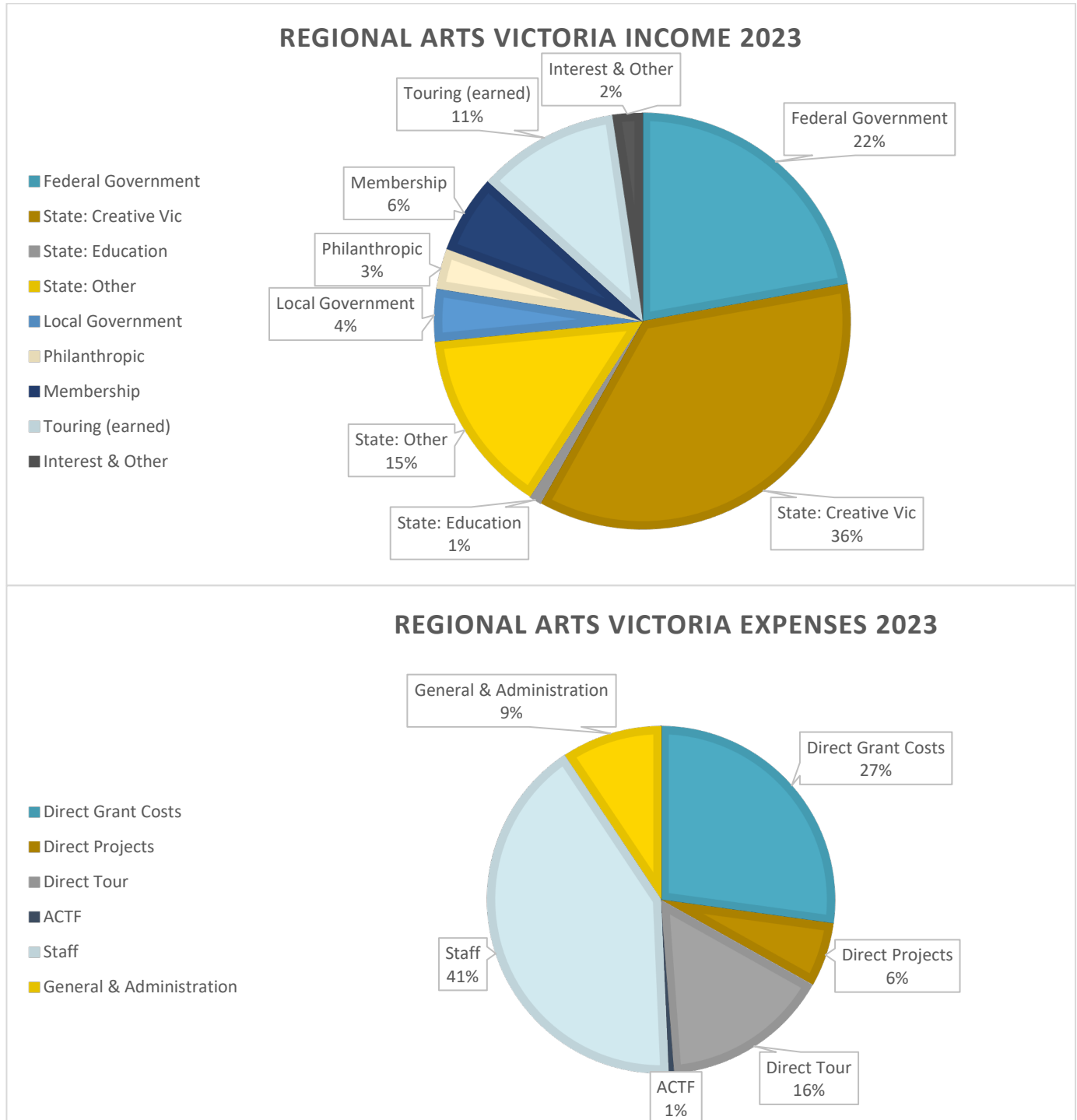
Illustration 2: Organisation Structure @ 4 March 2024



In 2023 RAV's turnover was \$4.3 million. The illustrations below highlight RAV's reliance on the Victorian Government, which supports overhead, touring, education and other initiatives. Approximately 80% of Federal Government funding is passed through to Regional Arts Fund grant recipients. (See also Appendix A: Income Map).

Financial resources limit RAV's commitments, and a particular priority is addressing our lack of presence in Gippsland and the North-East.

**Illustrations 3 and 4: Financial Overview**





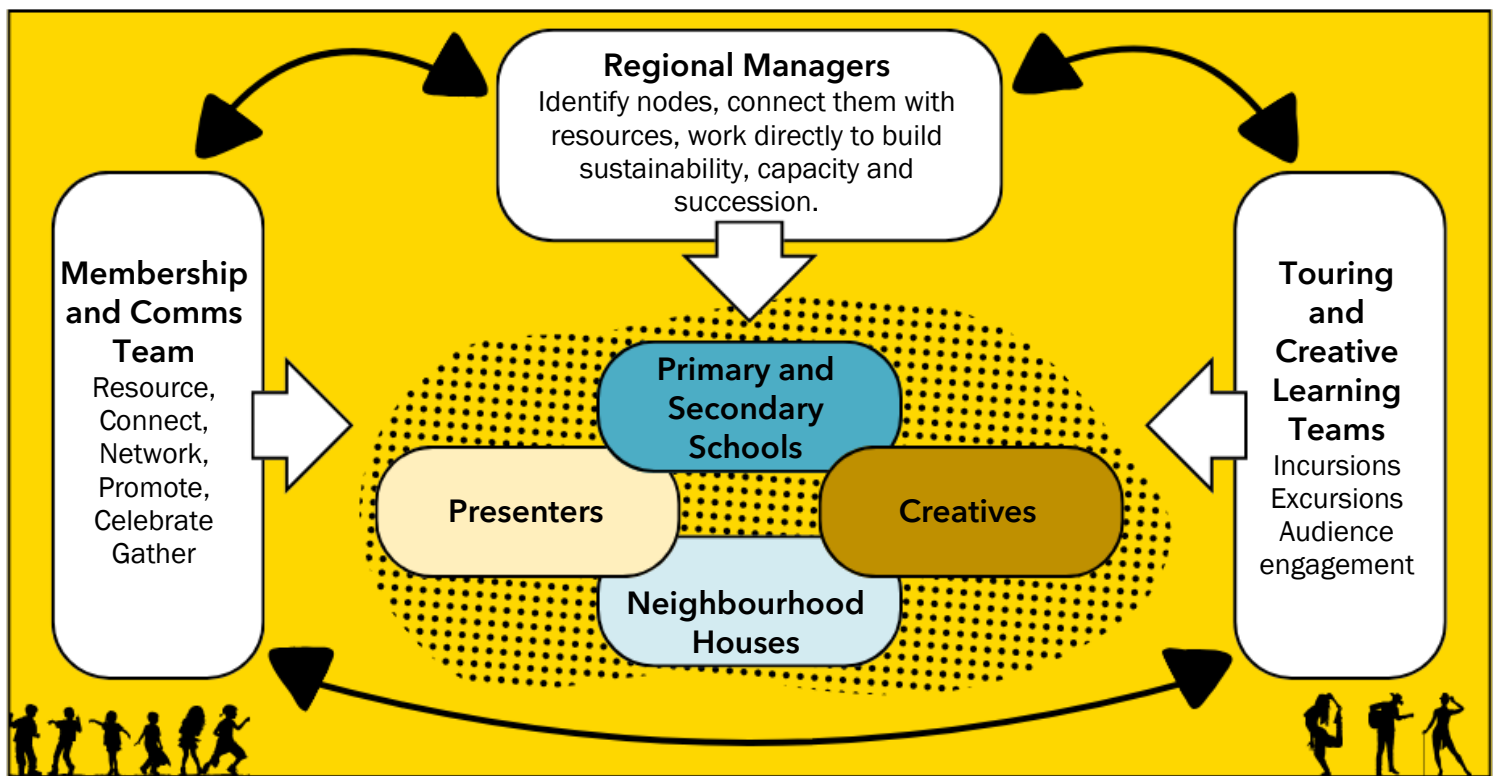
# Strategic Initiatives

The following Strategic Initiatives are interlocking and the work they represent is iterative. The priority initiatives for 2024 are set out in Appendix C.

## 1. Supporting Nodes of Capacity

**Objective:** RAV nurtures networks that facilitate sustainable creative practice and experiences so that creative individuals and organisations are “ready” for what comes next (economic changes, new opportunities, succession). This initiative is driven by RAV’s Regional Manager Team, but activities that support nodes of capacity are drawn from all strategic initiatives.

Illustration 4: Nodes of Capacity examples



### Assumptions and Notes:

- i. A ‘node’ is a person or organisation who/which strengthens a knowledge network. They are capable of supporting or influencing others via their own capacity, knowledge, resources and successors.
- ii. A representative organisation best serves its stakeholders if stakeholders are interconnected.
- iii. Creatives in regional areas need catalysts for development of networks, partnerships and rigour.
- iv. A “Creative Community” is a place-based collaboration among diverse partners who share an interest in generating the intrinsic benefits of cultural activity (self-expression, a sense of place, fun, learning and shared experience). Extrinsic economic, social and wellbeing benefits are also observed.



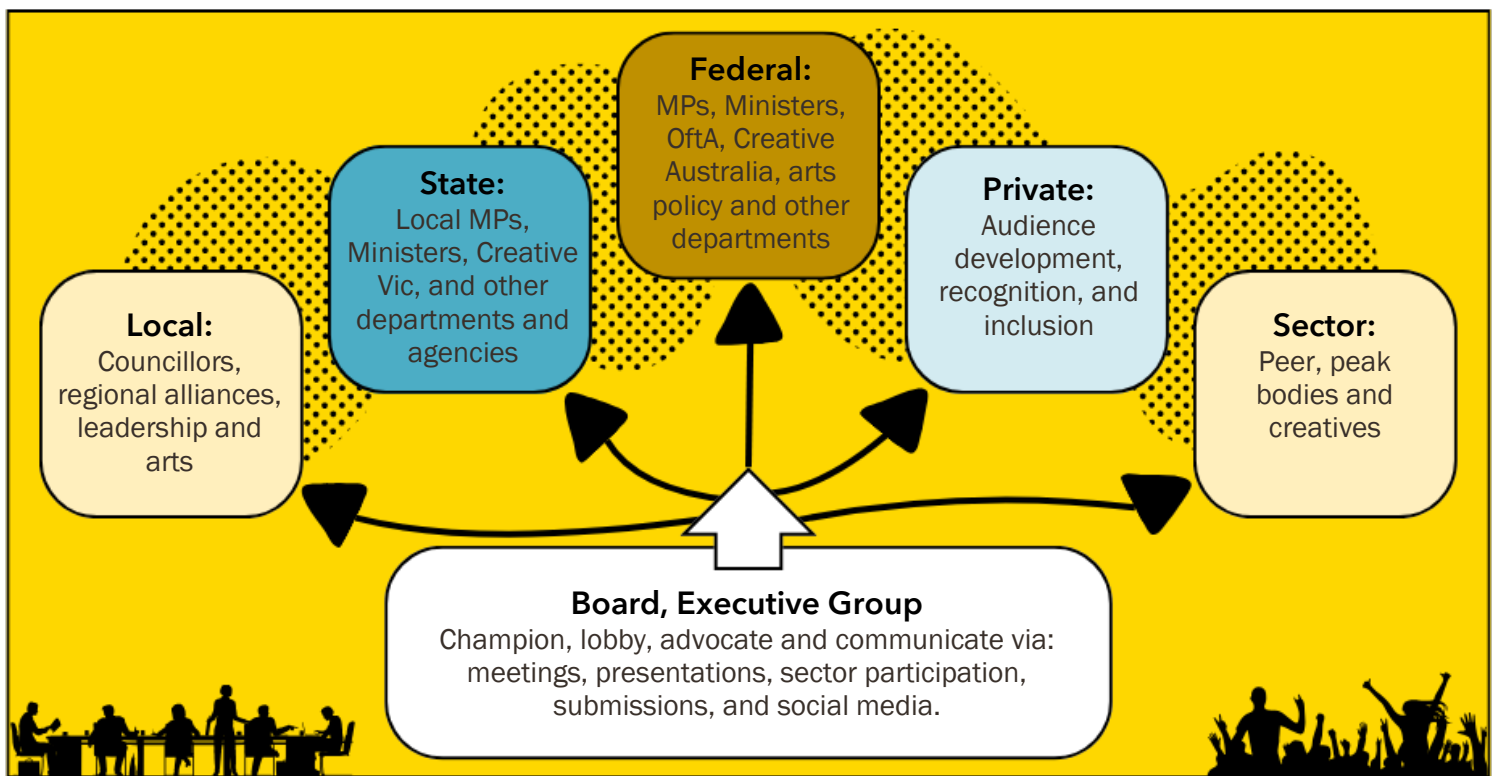
## Goals

- i. Regional Managers have a systematised approach that can be evaluated for effectiveness.
- ii. Regional Managers, Touring, Creative Learning and Membership staff collaborate purposefully.
- iii. RAV increases Regional Managers from 3 to 6 within 3 years (~\$350,000 p.a. requirement).
- iv. Membership team focus on building members' interests, capacities and connections.
- v. Nodes connect with RAV, each other and their networks for opportunities, planning and succession.

## 2. Advocacy and Membership

**Objective:** Represent regional Victorian creatives so that their interests are familiar to each other and to government and private sector stakeholders.

Illustration 5: Advocacy



### Assumptions and Notes:

- i. The regional creative sector is under-represented in local government priorities.
- ii. State and federal departments outside arts portfolios represent opportunities for regional creatives.
- iii. Specific needs of regional creatives are under-recognised by Creative Victoria and Creative Australia.
- iv. A healthy RAV membership can influence change for regional creatives.
- v. Relationships among RAV members will contribute to career and organisational sustainability.

## Goals

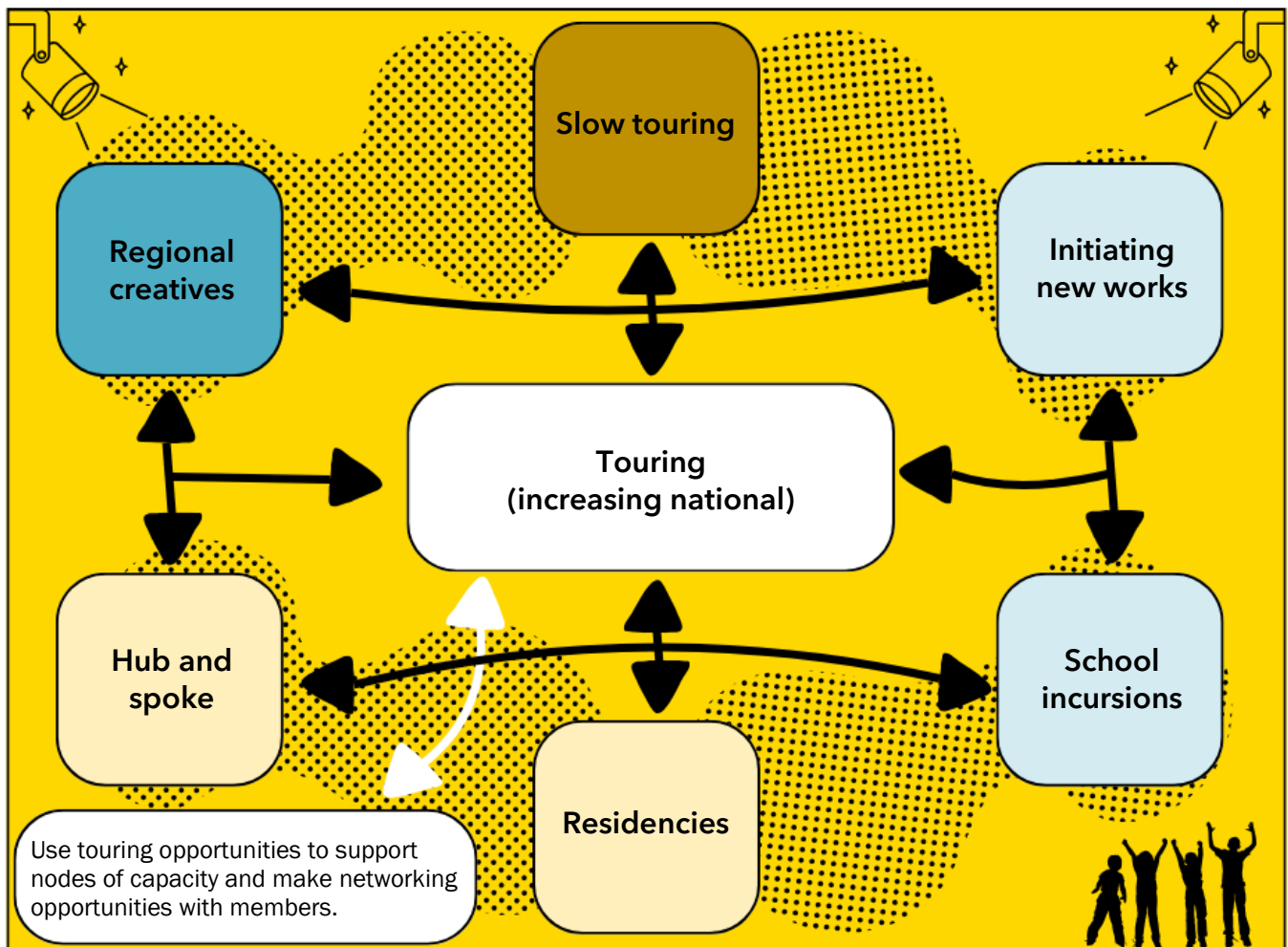
- i. Increase in financial support for regional creatives.
- ii. Increase opportunities for regional artists e.g. touring, targeted funding for regional creative organisations.
- iii. Increase regional creative representation in the media and in opportunities e.g. awards/prizes, media coverage, prestige.
- iv. Increase RAV's contact with members and the resources offered to them.
- v. Increase engagement in RAV's digital presence.
- vi. Continue RAV's presence in sector bodies (e.g. Arts Industry Association of Victoria; Live Performance Australia) and collaborations with like-organisations (e.g. Arts Access Victoria).

## 3. Participation

### Objectives:

Facilitate, make and tour projects so that we enhance the diversity of regional creative experiences: collaboration, attendances, capacity and participation.

### Illustration 6: Participation



## Assumptions and Notes:

- i. The number of works on tour will decrease so resources can be dedicated to audience development.
- ii. Relationships with certain nodes of capacity e.g. community presenters and schools will seed touring opportunities and stronger regional creativity.

## Goals

- i. Increased audiences for “unfamiliar” works e.g. via residencies (ongoing).
- ii. Increase regional creatives on tour incl via small transfers in regional areas (2025).
- iii. Increase earned income from national tours and producing for specific purposes (2026).
- iv. Develop visual arts tours (2026).
- v. Broker relationships or co-produce for works with appeal for touring (2027).

# 4. Strategic Growth and Equity for Good Governance

## Assumptions and Notes

- i. RAV’s funding is inadequate to achieve its mission.
- ii. Just as regional Victoria is diverse, so should RAV be diverse as to its members, staff and Board members.
- iii. Cultural Safety means a workplace has a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrates behaviours, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable all employees to work effectively without assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience. In a culturally safe workplace, all workers, clients and visitors feel comfortable, supported and respected. A culturally safe workplace features respectful communication; two-way dialogue; an environment that values all contributions; recognition and avoidance of stereotypical barriers; and shared knowledge.

## Goals

- i. Appropriate compliance with regulatory environment.
- ii. Develop new income streams to enhance independence from government funding.
- iii. Strengthened diversity so that RAV is an equitable organisation.
- iv. Continuous improvement of policies and procedures.