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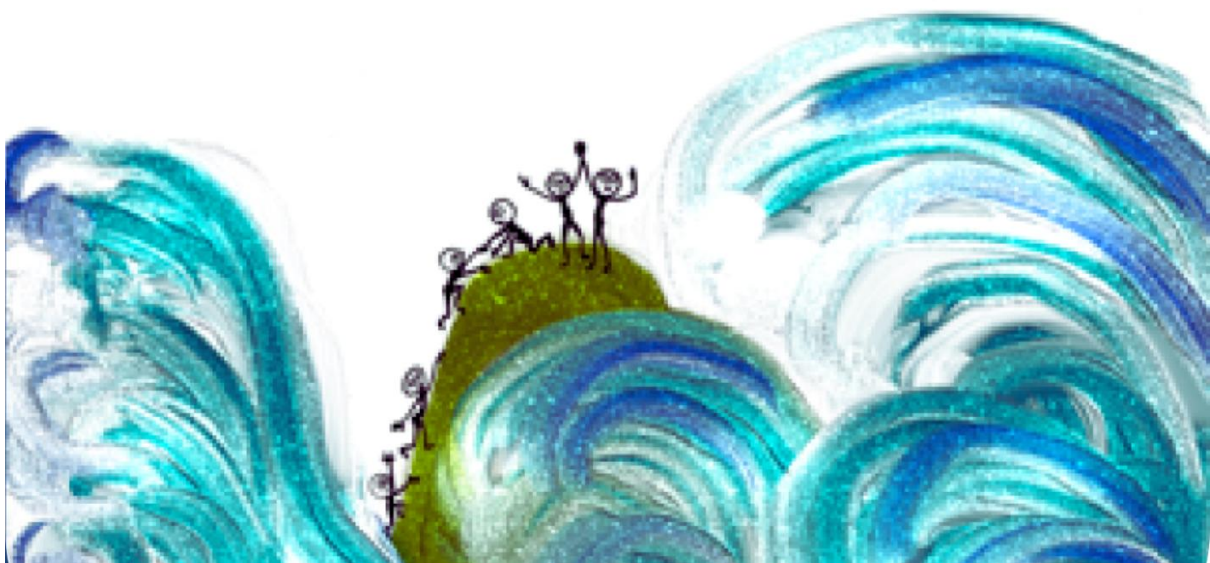
To investigate best practice museum programs sustaining wellbeing of people with dementia

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REPORT BY

DEBBIE BRITTAIN CHURCHILL FELLOW



Indemnity Clause

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Report by Debbie Brittain, Churchill Fellow

2023 Churchill Fellowship

To investigate best practice museum programs sustaining wellbeing of people with dementia

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Debbie Brittain

Date 19 /01/2025

Artwork (front cover)





Artist K.L (2025)

The artwork on the front cover represents the thousands of kilometres I travelled across many oceans to complete my Churchill Fellowship, to connect and learn from like-minded professionals and community members who put their hand out to share and exchange knowledge with me.

It also speaks to the almost 500,000 Australians currently living with neurodegenerative diseases causing dementia, and an estimated 1.6 million people caring for someone with dementia ¹ who may be battling tumultuous seas as they seek a caring hand.

The credit for this original painting is attributed to a very talented Australian who uses art as an expressive instrument to allow them to share and gain a greater understanding of their changing experiences due to neurodegenerative disease.

Itinerary

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA		
Dates	Place	Organisations, programs and people
9 - 11 Sep 24	Seattle, USA	<p>Frye Art Museum Alzheimer’s Café.</p> <p>Frye Art Museum ‘here: now’ program.</p> <p>The Memory Hub.</p> <p> Marigrace Becker and Julia Becke (The Memory Hub, University of Washington Memory and Brain Wellness Centre, MBWC); Sam Sanders and Lea Lovelace (The Frye).</p>
13 - 15 Sep 24	Milwaukee, USA	<p>Museum of Wisconsin Art (MOWA) ‘SPARK! Creative engagement program for people with memory loss and their care partners’.</p> <p>Milwaukee Public Museum ‘SPARK! Creative engagement program for people with memory loss and their care partners’.</p> <p> Ann Marie Craig (MOWA).</p>
16 – 21 Sep 24	New York, USA	<p>Museum of Modern Art ‘Meet Me at MoMA’.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Museum of Art ‘Met Escapes’.</p> <p>Intrepid Museum ‘Tea Dance’.</p> <p>Arts & Minds Program.</p> <p>New York University Steinhardt Symposium ‘The Art and Science of Social Connection’.</p> <p> Lara Schweller (MoMA); Emily Harr (The Met); Charlotte Martin (Intrepid Museum); Carolyn Halpin-Healy (Arts & Minds); Nisha Sajnani (Jameel Arts & Health Lab, NYU Steinhardt); Christopher Bailey, (WHO).</p>
CANADA		
22 – 23 Sep 24	Ottawa, Canada	<p>National Gallery of Canada (NGC) ‘SPARK!’ program.</p> <p> Andrea Gumpert (NGC).</p>

24 – 26 Sep 24	Oakville, Canada Hamilton, Canada	Sheridan Centre for Elder Research, Sheridan College Oakville. Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) ‘Artful Moments’. 👤 Kate Dupuis (Sheridan College/Research Institute for Aging, University of Waterloo), Laurie Kilgour-Walsh (AGH).
UNITED KINGDOM		
30 Sep – 3 Oct 24	Canterbury, UK Oxford, UK	The Beaney House of Art & Knowledge Canterbury ‘Sounds Beaney’; ‘Power of the Object’. Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) ‘Meet me at the Museum’. 👤 Mitch Robertson, Leanne Macdonald (The Beaney); Harriet Warburton, Sarah Levette, Susan Griffiths (Oxford University GLAM).
9 - 15 Oct 24	London, UK	University College of London (UCL). Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) ‘Cognitive Stimulation Therapy’. 👤 Helen Chatterjee (UCL); Holly Power (V&A).
16 - 19 Oct 24	Edinburgh, UK	National Museum of Scotland ‘Museum Socials’. University of Edinburgh ‘Prescribe Culture’. Luminate ‘Creative Ageing’. 👤 Ross Combe (National Museum of Scotland); Ruthanne Baxter (University of Edinburgh); Anne Gallacher (Luminate).
IRELAND		
4 - 8 Oct 24	Dublin, Ireland	Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) ‘Azure’ Programme. Creative Aging International. Azure Programme network.

		 Sheena Barrett (IMMA), Lucy Jorgensen (IMMA); Dominic Campbell (Creative Aging International); Caroline Orr (Azure).
DENMARK		
20 - 27 Oct 24	Copenhagen, Denmark Aarhus, Denmark	Frederiksberg Museums Copenhagen ‘See Listen Talk’. Den Gamle By – The Old Town Museum Aarhus ‘The House of Memory’ program.  Cecilie Monrad (Frederiksberg Museums); Anne Marie Rechendorff (Den Gamle By).

Keywords

dementia; Alzheimer’s disease; art and dementia; meaningful engagement; creative ageing; creative engagement; non-pharmacological intervention; psychosocial health; quality of life; arts, health and wellbeing; arts on prescription; museums on prescription; museums and wellbeing; social connection; access and equity

Glossary of Terms

Arts on Prescription: A prescribing initiative that refers participatory arts-based activities to improve health and wellbeing. A term often used in conjunction with ‘social prescribing’ (see below).

Community of practice: A group of people who share a passion or concern for a topic and regularly interact to learn and improve their skills.

Creative Engagement: Active and participatory engagement in creative and artistic activities that stimulate imagination, self-expression and collaboration. It leverages the arts to foster emotional, cognitive, physical and social wellbeing.

Cultural Prescribing: Connecting individuals to cultural and creative activities to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Dementia: A general term describing a range of progressive neurological conditions, of which Alzheimer’s disease is the most common. Symptoms include memory, planning, behaviour, and ability to complete normal everyday activities.

Experiential learning: Active learning through direct experience, reflection and participatory engagement, emphasising hands-on involvement to gain knowledge, skills and insights.

Green Prescribing: Engagement in nature-based activities to provide therapeutic wellbeing benefits to physical, emotional and mental health.

Interdisciplinary: Integrating and combining knowledge, methods and perspectives from two or more disciplines or fields to address a topic or create new insights.

Intergenerational (museum practice): Bring together different age groups to foster mutual understanding, collaboration, and connection between generations.

Non-pharmacological: Interventions, treatments, or approaches to address physical, emotional, or psychological needs that do not involve the use of medications or drugs.

Psychophysiological: Interaction between psychological and physiological processes, describing how mental states, emotions and thoughts influence physical functions, and vice versa.

Psychosocial: Interaction between psychological and social factors – influencing thoughts, behaviours, emotions and overall wellbeing.

Relational practice: A way of working that prioritises the development and maintenance of positive relationships.

Reminiscence Therapy: A therapeutic approach discussing and sharing memories about events, people or experiences from an individual's past, to stimulate cognition, foster social interaction and enhance emotional wellbeing.

Slow art: Viewing a single work of art for an extended period to encourage people to take time to appreciate and reflect, to relax and connect with their thoughts and emotions.

Social Prescribing: A holistic healthcare approach connecting non-clinical community resources, activities and services to improve physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

Trauma Informed Practice: Recognises, understands, and responds to the effects of trauma on individuals and emphasises creating safe, supportive, and empowering environments to promote healing and resilience.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS): A methodology using artworks to encourage critical thinking, observation and communication facilitated through group discussion, to allow participants to develop their own interpretations of visual art.

Younger Onset Dementia: Dementia diagnosis under the age of 65 – may also be referred to as early-onset dementia.

Acknowledgements

It is such an immense honour to be awarded a Churchill Fellowship. My sincere gratitude to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (Australia) for granting me the opportunity to fulfil Sir Winston Churchill's belief that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Churchill Fellows' Association of Queensland for seeing merit in my passion project, which ultimately launched this incredible journey as a Churchill Fellow.

I am thankful for the many people with dementia in my world who continually inspire me to learn more. These personal experiences and connections are the motivation that became my Churchill Fellowship.

Heartfelt thanks to every exceptional human being – educator, manager, facilitator, researcher, program participant, community member, expert, museum staff, community engagement professional who I met during museum visits, at programs and in various locations across the USA, Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland and Denmark.

Your collective capacity to generously share your vast experience and knowledge while finding time to graciously host me is both humbling and deeply appreciated.

Above all, I am most grateful for the love, encouragement and unwavering support of Mark, Sophie and Jordan, and to those who have been by my side cheering me along.



Churchill Statue Parliament Square, London



Copenhagen, Denmark



Churchill Statue Toronto, Canada

Executive Summary

Art galleries, museums and creative arts organisations have a critical role in fostering inclusivity and providing enriching experiences for all members of the community. However, people living with dementia and their care partners are often an underserved audience segment in Australia’s cultural sector programming.

This report has relevance for museum and cultural sector professionals, healthcare and aged care professionals, policy makers, government and non-government agencies, philanthropic foundations and grant bodies, academics and researchers, dementia advocacy groups, carer networks and care organisations, and people living with dementia and their care partners.

Embedding dementia-inclusive arts programs can create equitable access while enhancing broader audience engagement and impactful wellbeing and quality of life outcomes.

PROJECT AIMS

Explore a variety of international program models, methodologies, and insights from leading museum practitioners in dementia programming.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Identify key similarities, differences, barriers, and opportunities across various museum programs to showcase effective and sustainable creative engagement approaches. By uncovering best practices and innovative ideas, the project seeks to help Australian cultural institutions build capacity for programs that support the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals living with dementia.

It serves as a call to action for enhancing dementia support through museum programming.

‘To investigate best practice museum programs sustaining wellbeing of people with dementia’ by exploring a range of international program models.

Countries and Cities Visited:

- **USA:** Seattle (Washington State), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), New York (New York).
- **Canada:** Ottawa (Ontario), Hamilton (Ontario).
- **Ireland:** Dublin.
- **United Kingdom:** Canterbury (England), Oxford (England), London (England), Edinburgh (Scotland).
- **Denmark:** Copenhagen, Aarhus.

Focus of the Fellowship:

- Investigating creative engagement models in museums, exploring how museums facilitate emotional, cognitive, and social wellbeing for people with dementia.

- Studying diverse approaches across art, history, culture, military, and maritime history museums.
- Understanding the importance of museum-community collaborations for dementia care.

Key Findings:

- **Collaborative Models:** Successful museum programs often involve collaboration between museums, healthcare institutions, and community organisations, allowing for broader community engagement and outreach.
- **Creative Engagement:** Programs that involve sensory-based engagement, such as art viewing, music, dance, and storytelling, enhance wellbeing by stimulating cognitive and emotional responses.
- **International Examples:** Programs such as the ‘SPARK!’ Alliance (USA), Azure (Ireland), ‘Museum Socials’ (Edinburgh), Frye Art Museum’s ‘here: now’ program, and MoMA’s ‘Meet Me’ are models of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative community and cultural sector programming.
- **Funding and Sustainability:** Many museum dementia wellbeing programs rely on a combination of philanthropic funding, grants, and community-based donations. Securing sustainable funding is a world-wide challenge but essential to ensure program longevity, quality and impact.

Implications for Australia:

- **Capacity Building:** Australian museums and the cultural sector can adopt a greater collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to creative engagement that draws on international best practices.
- **Community Impact:** By creating accessible, meaningful programs, Australian museums can foster greater social inclusion, improve quality of life for people with dementia, and provide opportunities for their caregivers.
- **Policy and Practice:** The report advocates for museums to be recognised as key players in the dementia care ecosystem, potentially influencing policy in the arts, health, education and community sectors.

This Fellowship underscores the value of experiential learning and the global exchange of knowledge to improve dementia care practices and wellbeing outcomes for people experiencing dementia and their families.

Each distinct museum wellbeing program investigated during this Fellowship is provided as a case study in the report. These case studies highlight the diverse approaches and innovative practices used by museums overseas to support the psychosocial wellbeing of people living with dementia.

The report examines:

- **Program Models:** Each museum’s unique approach to creative engagement, such as art viewing, sensory activities, music, movement, and storytelling.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** The role of partnerships with healthcare institutions, community organisations, and professional networks in delivering these programs.
- **Impact and Outcomes:** The observed benefits of these programs, such as improved social inclusion, enhanced cognitive stimulation, and emotional wellbeing for participants.

- **Sustainability and Funding:** Insights into how these programs are funded and sustained through grants, donations, and community support, ensuring long-term viability.

By presenting these case studies, the report provides a comprehensive view of successful models that can be adapted and implemented in Australian museums, to enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia and their caregivers through creative engagement.

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Introduction

CREATING A CULTURE OF CHANGE IN ARTS ENGAGEMENT: THE WHY

The practice of arts and health involves using arts-based initiatives to address health issues and promote wellbeing. As the arts provide expressive forms, they offer a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment for diverse populations, making them adaptable to various needs and abilities. Creative engagement through the arts fosters meaningful participation and enhances the overall health and quality of life for individuals.

Australia's [*National Arts and Health Framework*](#) (2014) and [*Measuring What Matters: Australia's First Wellbeing Framework*](#) (2023) highlight clear empirical evidence that arts and health initiatives significantly enhance health and wellbeing. The potential of arts engagement to reduce health inequalities and improve healthcare quality in communities across the nation is acknowledged by federal and state governments. These frameworks have been endorsed by different government departments and recognise the arts as a key contributor to the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

While progress is being made, there is still a slow pace in building strategic networks and creative engagement partnerships between the health and arts sectors. This is particularly evident in the integration of arts and health strategies within Australia's healthcare system, especially in addressing dementia, a leading cause of disease burden and death in the country.¹

Dementia is more common in older adults, but it is not a normal part of ageing and is also diagnosed in younger people. It affects individuals differently, with varying symptoms based on the type and stage of dementia. Early diagnosis and interventions can help manage symptoms, improve quality of life, and provide support for both individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

While the exact cause of dementia remains unknown, global research continues to explore effective treatments to slow or halt its progression. However, in the absence of disease-modifying treatments, psychosocial approaches such as creative arts engagement are increasingly recognised as a non-clinical way to provide tangible wellbeing benefits for those experiencing dementia-related symptoms.

A growing body of research in arts, health, and creative engagement has shaped programs like museum-based art and dementia initiatives. These programs offer composite wellbeing experiences by addressing emotional, cognitive, physical, and social aspects of health through creative activities. The 'bundling' of these positive interactions provides measurable benefits, enriching the lives of people with dementia and extending wellbeing outcomes to their care partners, who may also experience declining health due to caregiving responsibilities.

Research highlights the enhanced quality of life outcomes from meaningful participatory activities such as art viewing, painting, music, dancing, singing, and storytelling. These activities promote physical and cognitive stimulation, reduce anxiety, boost mood, increase confidence, and strengthen a sense of identity. Over time, creative engagement offers essential social connections and purposeful activity, counteracting the isolation many people with dementia face as their condition progresses.^{2,3}

It should come as no surprise that the arts have the power to help humans flourish, as our brains are inherently wired for aesthetic experiences. Engaging with art, music, or other forms of creative expression can evoke feelings of empowerment, autonomy, connection, happiness, or even a sense

of control. These social and emotional responses are not only felt by the general population but also by people with dementia. Despite the challenges posed by their condition, individuals with dementia often retain the capacity for higher human needs, including aesthetic engagement, meaningful activity, recognition, and social connection.³

The art and dementia program I developed over a decade ago at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) integrates non-pharmacological wellbeing strategies with contemporary dementia care practices, earning global recognition for its positive impact on wellbeing. Museum-based programs like this provide people with dementia meaningful opportunities for community engagement and intellectual stimulation. Drawing on 14 years of experience in the field, this work laid the foundation for my research project, supported by the Winston Churchill Trust (Australia).


With 86% of Australians with dementia living at home and numbers steadily rising¹, there is an urgent need for more accessible, community-based wellness programs. While there are excellent examples of museum initiatives for people with dementia across Australia, they often operate in isolation, are concentrated in major cities, or lack sustainability.

Australia is home to a wealth of museums and galleries that serve as vital cultural assets. These institutions, with their diverse resources, offer significant social, cultural, and economic value, as they are uniquely positioned to foster community engagement and inclusion, tailored to the specific needs and interests of local populations.

Is there potential for increased collaboration within Australia's cultural sector, involving museums, arts agencies, community networks, and across various geographical regions, to enhance the wellbeing of people living with dementia through meaningful creative engagement?

Dementia wellbeing programs in museums across the globe

Joining some dots between the arts, health and creative engagement

 Cultural institutions, particularly museums, are playing a growing role in enhancing the wellbeing of people living with dementia. By offering free, research-informed programs facilitated by trained educators and teaching artists, museums are becoming essential community pillars. These programs, often designed in collaboration with dementia specialists, provide significant quality of life benefits to individuals living with dementia, as well as their families and care partners.

Key points:

- **Dementia-Friendly Programs:** Museums are ideally positioned to create intellectual and social engagement opportunities for people with dementia, allowing them to live meaningfully in the moment and interact with others.
- **Creative and Cultural Engagement:** Museums offer creative engagement programs that go beyond simply being dementia friendly. They provide platforms for intellectual stimulation, social interaction, and participation in the community.
- **Collaborations:** Museums are increasingly developing meaningful collaborations with healthcare organisations, community groups, universities and dementia networks to provide impactful programs. These partnerships allow museums to reach wider audiences and build sustainable creative engagement.
- **Global Perspective:** The Fellowship involved visiting 14 cities across multiple countries, fostering opportunities to share, learn, exchange and observe best practices in dementia programming. This experience highlighted the potential for Australian museums and cultural institutions to collaborate as active contributors to the wellbeing of people living with dementia.

The Fellowship findings emphasise the opportunity for Australian museums to adopt similar strategies, using their unique capabilities and collections to enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia while fostering connections within the community.

Museum Programs | USA

SEATTLE

Frye Art Museum (The Frye) | [‘here: now’](#)

The Frye Art Museum’s **‘here: now’** program, facilitated by the Creative Aging Department, focuses on engaging older adults, including those with dementia. Led by the Associate Director of Creative Aging Programs, the small team works with casual teaching artists. The museum collaborates with the Memory Hub Community Center, a space developed by the University of Washington Brain and Wellness Center, which is in the same precinct as the Frye, to promote shared learning and cross-promotion of programs. The Frye, as a founding partner, attends monthly meetings at the Memory Hub, enabling broader community engagement and facilitating updates on new initiatives.

'Here: now' at the Frye Art Museum offers seasonal, six-week sessions that engage adults living with dementia and their care partners in art exploration. Participants first view art in the gallery, where they engage in meaningful discussion facilitated by a trained museum educator. Afterward, they create art in the workshop studio using different mediums each week. The program emphasizes visual thinking strategies (VTS) and creative expression, with registration prioritised for new participants.



'here: now' program artwork viewing



Creative workshops explore different media



Participants engage with sensory rich materials

The 'how to' dementia resource cards developed by the Frye team provide a structured yet creative approach to engaging people with dementia. Offering one thematic activity per card, the easy-to-follow resource is designed for individuals or families to encourage exploration and experimentation. These cards include clear instructions and tips for looking at artworks, to help guide meaningful interactions and creative experiences.

The universal design of Frye Museum's Alzheimer's Café and 'Meet Me at the Movies' programs allows older community members to participate alongside adults with dementia. This inclusive approach helps expand the programs' reach, engaging a wider audience dynamic.

The Frye's monthly Alzheimer's Café, held at the [Memory Hub](#), features a facilitated discussion of one selected artwork from the Frye collection, alongside interdisciplinary creative activities like live music. During the September Café, Memory Hub Artist in Residence Julia Becke MD led a seated dance-making session, responding to the group's interpretations of the focus artwork *Septembre*. Inspired by the [Sharing Dance for Older Adults](#) program from Canada's National Ballet School, this inclusive approach fosters social interaction and demonstrates the therapeutic benefits of dance, such as reducing neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia.



Frye Art Museum Memory Cafe creative engagement

Choreographed dance sequences to curated music encouraged participants to engage in joyful movement. Julia Becke MD used the Frye's artwork as a visual resource, inspiring the group to participate in a dance sequence that incorporated fluid movements of each body part. The dance process allowed creative input from the group, fostering collaboration and discovery through improvisation. This collaborative activity generated unexpected positive feelings, as participants expressed their creativity, or simply observed one another.

'[Meet Me at the Movies](#)' is an outreach program by the Frye Art Museum designed for adults with memory loss and their care partners. Originally piloted with Aging Wisdom, a Seniors Care Management Service in Seattle, this one-hour program has been running for over a decade. It is held quarterly at the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, a 35-minute ferry ride from Seattle. The program uses four theme-based clips from classic or contemporary films to stimulate discussion. Facilitators unpack relevant topics in the clips, leading to open-ended audience conversations. This format encourages creative exploration and dialogue through moving images rather than static artwork. The program is also delivered at other cultural venues in Seattle.

The '[Bridges](#)' program is an outreach initiative by the Frye Art Museum, designed to offer one-on-one creative engagement for adults with more progressive stages of dementia. The program, which has been on hold since late 2019, brings the 'here: now' format into private homes and assisted living facilities. Participants engage with the same teaching artist each week, fostering continuity and individualised care. The Frye's Creative Aging team plans to expand their intergenerational and creative ageing offerings and hopes to revive the 'Bridges' program in the future.

The Frye Art Museum's Creative Ageing outreach program accounts for 20-30% of their overall offerings. This includes previously delivering professional and family caregiver workshops across Washington state, funded by foundations and grants. Through these outreach efforts, the museum has shared its knowledge and resources, leading to long-term impact. Notably, a non-profit organisation was able to develop its own successful creative ageing program for people with memory loss in remote Washington State, supporting individuals to age in place.

The Frye's Creative Ageing team has played an important role in training caregivers, sharing knowledge to help local communities. They aim to reignite an annual in-person creative ageing conference, which has previously attracted participants from across the country.

Frye Art Museum is widely recognised as a leader in dementia programming due to its community-focused approach. In addition to creating impactful wellbeing programs, the museum has built and nurtured long-lasting community networks. A key example of their success is their partnership with the Memory Hub, operated by the University of Washington Brain and Wellness Center. This collaboration highlights the potential of art museums to significantly enhance the quality of life for individuals living with dementia.



[The Brain Health Annual Block Party](#) in Seattle’s First Hill neighbourhood. Community organisations, including the Frye, facilitate their own brain-healthy creative activity station as part of a walking trail that promotes cognitive health and builds awareness of memory loss and dementia.

Individual ‘how to’ resource cards have been produced each with a specific theme with inspiring activities for encouraging creative exploration and experimentation with people living with dementia – includes instructions with tips for looking at artworks.



Limited staff and funding barriers can constrain the introduction of new ideas and outreach programs.

MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee Public Museum | ‘[SPARK!](#)’



Museum of Wisconsin Art (MOWA) | ‘[SPARK!](#)’

The [SPARK! Alliance](#) is a collaborative network of cultural institutions dedicated to creating and sustaining programs for individuals with memory loss and their care partners. Established in 2009, the Alliance began with 10 organisations, and its implementation model is designed to be flexible, adaptable to various cultural organisations across regions like Wisconsin, Iowa, and others. It aims to bridge the gap by extending dementia-friendly programs beyond US coastal areas, bringing them to the Midwest.

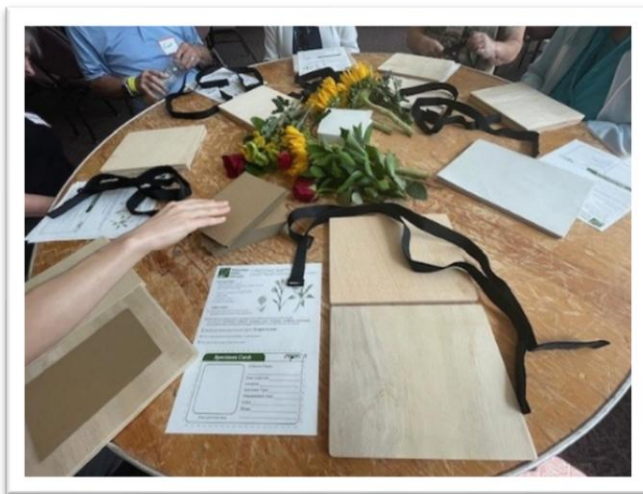
The SPARK! Alliance organises annual training and conferences for its members, rotating among venues. The SPARK! Creative Engagement Conference, held in November 2024 at MOWA, offered professional development sessions on topics like poetry for dementia, enhancing cognitive and emotional resilience, and the role of music in supporting creative ageing.

SPARK! programs are designed for individuals with early to mid-stage memory loss and their care partners, focusing on lifelong learning, quality of life, and creative expression through sensory engagement. Held at a range of cultural venues such as the Milwaukee Public Museum and MOWA on different days, these free programs promote collaboration through the SPARK! Alliance, offering diverse creative opportunities. Some program elements incorporate established methodologies such as Timeslips, a storytelling-based approach developed by Anne Bastings, to encourage meaningful interactions.

Milwaukee Public Museum | ‘[SPARK!](#)’

The Milwaukee Public Museum ‘[SPARK!](#)’ program Sunday workshop I joined was led by a museum educator and a museum conservator who specialises in botany. The program focused on the museum practice of pressing plant specimens to conserve samples in the museum’s natural history collection. The session was titled ‘Pressing Matters: Plant presses and why we make them’. It sparked inciteful discussions and new learning about local flora, wetlands, the role of museums and encouraged participants to exchange knowledge and experiences.

Museum staff demonstrated how to preserve botanical samples using a plant press. Participants then selected flowers, leaves, and plants to create their own plant press, which they could take home and open in two weeks.



Creating a plant press at SPARK! museum program

The therapeutic wellbeing benefits for people with dementia from being in contact with nature is known to induce positive psychophysiological effects. These include promoting sensory stimulation and creativity, improving mood and social engagement and reducing stress and agitation (Murrioni et al., 2021). The museum's SPARK! program offered a restorative and creative experience for both participants with dementia and their care partners, combining 'green prescribing', 'social prescribing' and 'arts on prescription' wellbeing concepts.

Museum of Wisconsin Art (MOWA) | **'SPARK!'**

The MOWA **'SPARK!'** program, part of the SPARK! initiative, takes place at the art museum twice a month (Wednesdays and Sundays) for up to 20 participants, including carers. The program is facilitated by a museum educator and supported by 2-3 volunteers. It is funded by a foundation grant, additional grants, and ad hoc public donations. Sessions begin with a social catch-up, followed by an ice-breaker activity, such as a "question of the day" or an exploration of one idea or topic.

The program often incorporates interdisciplinary creative approaches that engage the senses, such as inviting guest artists from different arts organisations. For example, musicians from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music lead singing and drumming activities, while the Florentine Opera and Milwaukee Ballet provide performances, often funded through grants.

The Milwaukee Ballet performance inspired by the colours of a selected artwork prompted participants to spontaneously dance, with the artwork serving as the central stimulus for improvised movement. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to explore ballet movements using a portable ballet barre, enriching the sensory and creative experience.

'SPARK!' reaches a broad community of people living with dementia through its extensive museum networks. The program not only serves existing institutions but also helps new cultural organisations begin and sustain their own engagement initiatives.



'SPARK!' provides the framework and support needed for these programs to be adapted to different venues and tailored to various audience preferences, ensuring flexibility and wide-reaching impact across diverse communities.



Museum programs depend on grants to fund innovative practices or implement new concepts and human resourcing, crucial for developing and sustaining 'SPARK!' initiatives.

The lack of dedicated museum spaces that are suitable for facilitating creative engagement activities specifically designed for people with dementia can hinder the ability to provide optimal environments for participants, affecting accessibility of the programs.

NEW YORK

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) | **'Meet me at MoMA'**

Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) | **'Met Escapes'**

Arts & Minds | **'Arts & Minds at The Met'**

Intrepid Museum | **'Tea Dance'**

New York City (NYC) serves as a central hub for museum dementia programs and creative engagement initiatives aimed at community members with dementia. Many programs have been in place for decades, reflecting a long-standing commitment to accessibility and inclusion. Some of these programs are bilingual (offered in both English and Spanish) to cater to a wider, more diverse community.

Museum programs in NYC often rely on a combination of philanthropic donations, foundation grants, and other funding sources to sustain and expand their offerings. These funding streams support the development and operation of dementia-friendly programs, allowing museums to continue providing valuable cultural and creative experiences to individuals with dementia and their care partners.

MoMA | **'Meet Me'**

Creative engagement programs for community members with dementia in NYC, across the USA and the world have been inspired by the successful MoMA **'Meet Me'** model, including informing the program I developed at QAGOMA in Brisbane. It was MoMA's Alzheimer's Project, funded by a foundation grant (2007 – 2014), which launched their national and international outreach to share how to make art accessible for people living with dementia, using MoMA's 'Meet Me' teaching methodologies and approaches.

The *'Meet Me: Making Art Accessible for People with Dementia'* study, conducted in 2009 by the New York University Center of Excellence for Brain Aging, was groundbreaking. It provided the first formal evaluation of the 'Meet Me' model and demonstrated the many qualitative and quantitative benefits of art engagement for people with dementia and their care partners.

The 'Meet Me' program at MoMA is a monthly public event for people with dementia and their care partners. During the 90-minute session, participants engage in dialogue about four or five pieces of art on display in the gallery. The group of about 45 attendees is divided into smaller groups of approximately eight people, each facilitated by a specially trained teaching artist/educator who leads discussions about the artwork, exhibition, or theme. The program does not include creative making activities or a dementia café component.

The *Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure* (BOLD) Alzheimer's Act is a bipartisan US law that funds dementia intervention initiatives. BOLD grants are awarded to state and local recipients for five-year periods (currently 2023-2028) to address both medical and non-medical factors related to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The BOLD Public Health Center Advisory Council recently

invited MoMA's 'Meet Me' staff to join a diverse group of medical and non-medical experts who guide the BOLD initiative's goals and missions. MoMA is the sole arts museum representative to join the BOLD coalition, signalling a commitment to bridging the arts, health, and government sectors.

This collaborative work may empower creative engagement organisations and increase the visibility of museum-based dementia programs. Advocating for non-clinical initiatives as valuable components of public health infrastructure may generate potential museum funding to strengthen dementia care efforts.

The Met | 'Met Escapes'

The '**Met Escapes**' program is held onsite once a month and is managed by the Access team within the Education Department at The Met. The program hosts approximately 25 attendees, which includes community members with dementia or other neurological conditions (e.g. acquired and traumatic brain injury) and their care partners. The attendees are divided into four smaller groups, each led by a contracted teaching artist/ educator to engage exploration and discussion of four or five different artworks in the gallery.

The content and structure of 'Met Escapes' are developed by The Met's Program Associate (Accessibility) in collaboration with the contracted educators, who lead the facilitation. These educators have completed training with Arts & Minds, which is a non-profit organisation that offers training programs for museum staff to develop skills in working with individuals with memory loss in a museum context.

The specific program I observed focused on The Met's decorative arts display, including sculpture and tapestries, which provided an opportunity for rich, sensory engagement, thoughtful discussion and new learning.



'Met Escapes' program participants explore tapestries from The Met decorative arts collection

The 'Met Escapes' program enhances participant engagement by incorporating relevant props, such as artwork materials, which help deepen the connection between the artwork, discussions, and participants. These sensory elements support meaningful dialogue and foster a stronger connection to the art, enriching the experience for both individuals with dementia and their care partners.

While creative making activities are not part of 'Met Escapes' program format, sensory elements play a key role in enriching the participant experience.

'The Met Memory Café' monthly program was inspired by feedback from 'Met Escapes' participants and aims to create a social space for people with dementia and their care partners. Held in the gallery, the Memory Café fosters one-on-one social interactions, helping participants stay connected with each other and the broader community. The space is set up with creative making and interactive

participatory activities to stimulate cognitive function, accompanied by music (sometimes live) and refreshments in a relaxed, informal setting.

The 'Met Escapes' team actively collaborates with other cultural engagement organisations, including Lincoln Center's '[Moments](#)' performance-based program, to cross-promote their dementia programs. They view the NYC museum community as a valuable network for resource-sharing, enabling people living with dementia to access a wider range of creative programs that support their wellbeing.

Arts & Minds | '[Arts & Minds at The Met](#)'

Arts & Minds is a non-profit community organisation with 15 years of experience at the intersection of museums and dementia care. Co-founded by a New York artist-teacher/museum educator and a neurologist, it provides arts-centred activities for people with memory loss and their caregivers, delivering hundreds of programs each year.

Arts & Minds runs onsite programs at various NYC museums, offering community members with dementia and their care partners the opportunity to explore and create art together. The ideal group size is six or seven people with dementia, along with their care partners. These programs help participants engage with art, connect to museum services, and foster meaningful interactions.

Recently, Arts & Minds has expanded its focus to helping museums and care centres around the world establish their own creative engagement programs for dementia communities. The gap left by the expiration of MoMA's 'Meet Me' outreach training funding inspired Arts & Minds to develop a 12-week asynchronous online training course to continue advancing this work and support the growth of museum-based dementia programs globally.

'**Arts & Minds at The Met**' is a bilingual dementia program (offered in English or Spanish) facilitated by the Arts & Minds organisation. The program utilises The Met's vast collection and museum spaces to facilitate engaging and meaningful experiences for individuals living with dementia. In addition, Arts & Minds runs a caregiver support program at The Met, providing much-needed social connection and resources for families.

This collaborative partnership between The Met Museum and Arts & Minds allows The Met to expand its capacity, reaching a larger audience in the NYC community. By leveraging Arts & Minds' expertise and resources, the program enhances The Met's ability to offer specialised services, while showcasing its collection and deepening its impact on the local community.

Intrepid Museum | [‘Tea Dance’](#)

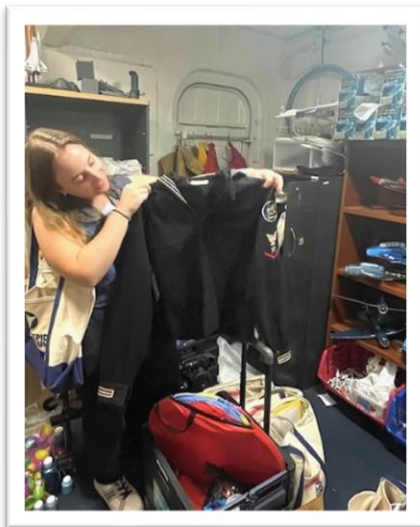
Intrepid Museum, located on the Hudson River aboard the decommissioned aircraft carrier *Intrepid* (which served in the US Navy from 1943 to 1974), is an American military and maritime history museum. Its ‘Stories Within’ initiative, supported by multi-year grant funding, is designed for individuals with dementia and their care partners, with a particular focus on engaging veterans.

The ‘**Tea Dance**’ program is part of this initiative. The creative engagement program is held onboard the museum to promote activity, connection, and inspiration among participants living with dementia. ‘Tea Dance’ is inspired by the *Intrepid* history of hosting tea dances for US Navy personnel, featuring onboard dancers and performances to entertain the crew during its years of service.

‘Tea Dance’ has been designed to address gaps in cultural enrichment for NYC communities with limited access to services. The program for veterans and others with neurodegenerative conditions incorporates creative ageing research and best practices drawn from other cultural and arts organisations. It highlights the interdisciplinary benefits of music and movement, fostering meaningful engagement and social interaction.



Outside Intrepid Museum, New York



The Intrepid Collection provides resources for ‘Tea Dance’ program

Developed by the Intrepid Access team, ‘Tea Dance’ is closely tied to the museum's collection, resources, and the ship's unique history. This connection enhances its authenticity, creating a distinctive New York museum wellbeing program that combines historical significance with purposeful activities. The program fosters social connection, inclusivity, and cultural enrichment for participants, offering a meaningful experience rooted in the ship's legacy.

The Intrepid Museum's ‘Tea Dance’ program draws on music from the ship's years of service to inspire dancing, social connection, and participatory interactions. Participants can explore the ship's history through hands-on activities, including handling artifacts, touching objects, viewing models, and examining historical cruise books (the *Intrepid* yearbooks). These elements serve as conversation starters and stimuli for interaction, fostering connections among participants, former crew member volunteers, and the ship's rich history.



MoMA has taken a leadership role in promoting dementia-inclusive programming by collaborating with the American Association of Museums. MoMA's role in the BOLD coalition advisory network further advances best practices and knowledge-sharing in dementia-focused arts engagement.

MoMA's extensive ['Meet Me' program resources](#), including tips and tools, art modules, practice guidelines, and research can inspire others to develop and implement similar programs to make art accessible to people with dementia.

Collaboration among NYC cultural institutions enables cross-promotion of creative engagement programs for individuals with dementia, maximising impact and fostering broader participation.

Intrepid Museum enhances accessibility through its 'Tea Dance' program by offering complimentary, wheelchair-accessible transportation for all participants, ensuring inclusive access to meaningful cultural experiences.



Transportation and parking costs can be a significant barrier for participants travelling to mid-town Manhattan museum locations.

Limited staff and funding barriers can constrain the introduction of new ideas and program reach.

Museum Programs | Canada

OTTAWA

National Gallery of Canada (NGC) | ['SPARK!'](#)

The NGC **'SPARK!'** program aims to provide an inclusive, stimulating, and enjoyable space for dialogue with individuals living with dementia and their care partners through engaging with art. Although not affiliated with the SPARK! Alliance in the USA, this Canadian program shares a similar mission with other museum dementia initiatives by offering couples a meaningful shared experience in a supportive museum environment.

The **'SPARK!'** program, launched in 2017, is facilitated by a museum educator from the Learning and Community Engagement team. Inspired by the **'Meet Me'** program at MoMA, **'SPARK!'** offers a bilingual (English or French) onsite experience every two weeks, providing individuals living with dementia and their care partners an opportunity to engage with art.

The **'SPARK!'** program accommodates up to 10 individuals with dementia plus their care partners, ensuring an intimate and accessible experience. Sessions take place in a single gallery zone to minimise transition time and focus on three or four artworks with relatable themes. The educator facilitates discussions using visual thinking strategies, drawing connections between the artwork and participants' experiences.

A key feature is the **'turn and talk'** strategy, where participants engage in small-group conversations prompted by key questions, fostering meaningful interaction, engagement, and the sharing of diverse perspectives.

The 'SPARK' program lead has partnered with healthcare professionals and a local university to evaluate the efficacy of visual thinking strategies as a tool for enhancing wellbeing, contributing to evidence-based programming.



The 'SPARK!' educator has established an international Community of Practice with museum educators specialising in dementia programming, fostering knowledge exchange and innovation.

Post-program surveys provide valuable insights into participant experiences, creating a feedback loop that informs continuous improvement and ensures the program remains audience focused.



'SPARK!' program currently operates without a dedicated budget, relying instead on shared resources, partnerships, and existing institutional support to sustain its activities.

Growing a Francophone audience for the SPARK! program in Ottawa is challenging due to competing cultural program preferences of a bilingual community.

HAMILTON

Art Gallery of Hamilton (AGH) | ['Artful Moments'](#)

'Artful Moments' is an eight-week onsite program for up to eight participants with dementia and their care partners, hosted at a regionally located gallery. The program uses the museum's collection to inspire meaningful conversations, social connections, and creative engagement. Each session includes guided art discussions, hands-on creative activities, and take-home kits with supplies to encourage continued exploration at home. The program aims to promote cognitive stimulation, emotional wellbeing, and strengthened relationships while fostering community connections.

The 'Artful Moments' program is funded by project grants from sources such as the Ministry for Seniors, Public Health, Arts Councils, and city funding. Managed by the Lead of Wellness, the program recently expanded through a grant to develop '*Artful Moments: Shared Learning*'—a six-module eLearning program created in collaboration with dementia healthcare specialists. These modules aim to support peers in designing engaging and inclusive museum-based dementia programs. The impact of the eLearning modules as a public health tool is being tracked through online engagement and utilisation data.

'Artful Moments: Shared Learning' eLearning program has been further developed into a book publication, making the modules accessible in print format. Additionally, the program has inspired another AGH publication titled '*Artful Moments: Building Museum Experiences for People Living with Dementia*,' which provides insights and guidance for creating meaningful and inclusive museum programs for individuals living with dementia. These publications reflect the program's growing impact and its role in sharing best practices with the broader museum and healthcare communities.

The 'Artful Moments' program is expanding through a new outreach initiative that leverages the 'Artful Moments: Shared Learning' resources to guide other museums and cultural organisations in developing their own dementia-friendly programs. This consulting process aims to assist local civic

museums and arts organisations, such as the Philharmonic Orchestra, in adapting existing programs to be more inclusive for individuals with dementia.

To further enhance its impact, training multi-lingual program facilitators fluent in French, Italian, Portuguese, and Filipino, will support the wellbeing needs of Hamilton’s multicultural communities, including newcomers from African and Middle Eastern countries. This approach supports holistic public health outcomes by fostering inclusivity and accessibility for diverse audiences.



The AGH website invites people with lived experience of dementia to participate in advisory conversations and committees to inform the ‘Artful Moments’ program.

The AGH takes a community-focused view by supporting other museums and arts organisations, particularly local and smaller institutions. [‘Artful Moments: Shared Learning’ modules](#) provide resources for applying creative engagement approaches using non-prescriptive and fit-for-audience contexts.



Finding new audience members with dementia in regional locations who may benefit from creative engagement programs.

Museum Programs | Ireland

DUBLIN

Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) | [‘Azure’](#)

IMMA, Ireland's National Collection Institution for Modern and Contemporary Art, is housed in a historic 17th-century building that served as a home for retired soldiers for 250 years.

IMMA is a founding partner of the **‘Azure’** program, which aims to make art galleries and museums dementia-friendly spaces. The Azure approach is widely adopted by cultural arts institutions across Ireland to guide best practices in dementia programs. The Azure Museum network fosters a supportive community of practitioners through shared practices.

Azure at IMMA is part of the Learning and Engagement team’s *Horizons* suite of programs that promote art, wellness, and lifelong curiosity, informed by the long history of work focused on art and ageing.



Inspired by the ‘Meet Me’ program at MoMA, IMMA’s Azure program engages people with dementia and their care partners by exploring two or three artworks during a social museum experience. The program follows a semi-structured approach involving observation (taking time to look), description (focusing on texture and visual elements), interpretation (guided viewing), and connection (social interaction). It incorporates slow art, sensory techniques, and visual thinking strategies.

Participants at IMMA’s ‘Azure’ program discuss a sculpture A trained group of visitor engagement staff who work in museum front-of-house roles assist with facilitating the program at IMMA.

Age & Opportunity, a non-profit organisation in Ireland, promotes the availability of Azure programs across the community. The organisation partners with IMMA to run a four-day Azure training program for cultural institution staff, after which their gallery or museum joins the Azure network. IMMA provides the venue for onsite Azure foundation training, and Age & Opportunity arranges qualified freelance Azure Museum trainers to deliver the program to staff from various museums and galleries.



IMMA organises ‘trauma-informed practice’ training for staff to help mitigate the potential health impacts of grief or trauma that may arise from working with challenging topics or supporting specific audience groups.



IMMA’s ability to expand the scale of their dementia wellbeing programming is directly tied to the funding resources they can secure.

Museum Programs | United Kingdom

CANTERBURY, ENGLAND

The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge (The Beaney) | [‘Power of the Object’](#)

The Beaney is a pioneering therapeutic museum that draws from its art and museum collection to inform wellbeing programs. It is in a cultural venue in the heart of historic Canterbury, along with the library and visitor information centre.

The building is named after Dr. James Beaney, a local who made his fortune in Australia as a surgeon at The Melbourne Hospital (1860-1891). This small yet influential regional cultural institution is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation with a specific focus on health and wellbeing.



The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge

The Health and Wellbeing Program Coordinator incorporates the museum's wellbeing strategy into every aspect of its work. The team collaborates with the Collection Manager to select artworks for exhibitions and integrate them into programs that align with specific themes, audiences, or feedback from community advisory groups.

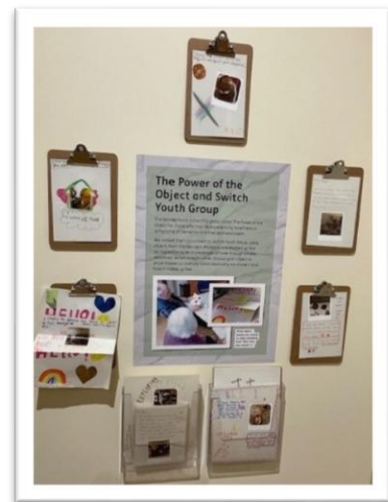
Their monthly dementia program, **'Power of the Object'**, is also designed for community members experiencing isolation. It includes a gallery visit, object handling, a creative making activity, and a cup of tea in the Learning Lab.



Using the Beaneys Collection to engage the senses

As an extension of this program, The Beaney developed an intergenerational project using the 'Power of the Object' model. Individuals living with dementia and young people from a youth organisation selected objects from the collection for one another and then wrote letters explaining why they chose those items.

This program drew from The Beaney's art and historical collection, serving as an example of how museums can engage the senses through tactile exploration and visual and creative expression, while validating identity and promoting self-determination.



The 'Power of The Object' program

Improved wellbeing for people with dementia through object handling in supportive museum settings⁵ demonstrates how group programs like 'The Power of the Object' can be part of a health promotion strategy in dementia care.

The letters served as a conduit for meaningful dialogue, fostering a sense of connection between people living with dementia and young people in the Canterbury community. Ultimately, 'The Power of the Object' project led to a museum exhibition, allowing visitors of all ages to engage with and learn from the selected collection pieces and the letters on display.

The Beaney Museum team plays a crucial role in supporting wellbeing within their community by identifying key health priorities such as dementia and social isolation. The programs they create, including **'Sounds Beaney'**—a singing and music intervention for people with dementia—are tailored to meet the specific needs of the local community.

The Health and Wellbeing Program Coordinator evaluates the museum programs by measuring their impact through surveys to identify wellbeing markers such as connectedness, sense of belonging, feeling valued and safe within the group, and enjoyment of stimulating activities.

A staff wellbeing survey is regularly conducted to monitor personal health and wellbeing, allowing for timely intervention on any emerging issues by investing in creative engagement opportunities for staff.



[The Beaney Health and Wellbeing Toolkit](#) – A downloadable ‘how-to’ guide for museum wellbeing programming, including methods for measuring and evaluating program impact.

The intergenerational program model is designed to support a diverse range of community members facing various health and wellbeing challenges, fostering resilience and social connection and promoting meaningful engagement.



Funding restrictions limit the ability to employ external artist contractors to support the delivery of creative engagement programs.

OXFORD, ENGLAND

The Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) | [‘Meet Me at the Museums’](#)

The Health and Wellbeing GLAM creative programs for people with dementia are offered both onsite and as community outreach, utilising a relational practice model. One of their outreach initiatives is the ‘Creativity for Wellbeing’ program, which takes place in prisons and uses museum collection objects to foster conversations and build connections with individuals. This program serves a diverse audience, including people with complex neurological and neurodegenerative conditions such as dementia, as well as veterans.

The **‘Meet Me at the Museums’** program at GLAM museums offers behind-the-scenes tailored tours and interactive activities for 16-20 people with dementia, their care partners, and older adults. The Community Engagement Officers have also facilitated a four-week creative activities pilot aimed at supporting people living with mild cognitive impairment to connect with others. This initiative serves as an example of early intervention in wellbeing, where museum programs can promote brain health and potentially slow the progression of neurodegenerative diseases causing dementia.

‘Time for a Cuppa’ is another GLAM social engagement wellbeing program designed to help older adults, including those with dementia, who may be feeling disconnected from the community. The program provides a space in the museum for participants to connect with others over a cup of tea, fostering social interaction and engagement.

The core GLAM outreach program model fosters ongoing engagement, offering opportunities to build relationships over many years. However, staff are frequently adapting to meet the evolving needs of the community. County-wide health assessment statistics provide a population health status profile, which helps museum staff pivot to community-centred GLAM wellbeing initiatives. These analyses help support grant applications for funding museum wellbeing programs that specifically target underserved communities with the greatest need.



The extensive collection of Oxford University's GLAM offers a rich and diverse range of cultural resources that inspire imagination and encourage meaningful interactions.



There is a gap in audience engagement with male and older male participants in the Oxford University GLAM programs.

Limited staff resources and the uncertainty caused by dependence on grant funding for dementia wellbeing initiatives affect the long-term sustainability of GLAM programs.

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

National Museum of Scotland | [‘Museum Socials’](#)

The **‘Museum Socials’** program is a monthly initiative of National Museums Scotland designed for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. It offers interactive activities such as object handling, creative crafts, and themed explorations, fostering engagement and connection. Hosted by four partner organizations—the National Galleries of Scotland, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh Zoo/St Cecilia’s Music Museum, and the National Museum of Scotland—the program rotates venues, ensuring accessibility every Friday morning at one of these cultural sites in Edinburgh.

This collaborative approach allows participating institutions to share resources, cross-promote each other’s programs, and strengthen community ties, providing a consistent and enriching cultural experience for the dementia community.

I participated in the ‘Animal Adaptations’ themed ‘Museum Socials’ dementia program at the National Museum of Scotland. The program focused on how changing habitats impact nature. It began with a social engagement session over morning tea, followed by a discussion on the theme, facilitated by the

Community Engagement Officer from the Learning and Engagement team.



‘Museums Social’ activity, National Museum of Scotland

Small groups engaged in an activity focused on how animals adapt to their habitats, which encouraged the use of observational, decision-making, and fine motor skills. Participants were invited to touch various sensory props, such as animal skins and smell aromas of animal scents, to foster connection to the present moment and encourage active participation.



Tactile and sensory props enable meaningful connections

The program also included related objects from the museum's collection, such as taxidermy birds, insect and butterfly displays, and animal skeletons, offering opportunities for new learning, conversation, curiosity, and extended social interaction. ‘Museum Socials’ program adopts a co-design, consultative approach by actively seeking input from participants to shape future themes and topics.

Collaborative creative engagement with organisations like the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, as part of the Museum Socials program at the National Museum of Scotland, taps into the

orchestra’s funded outreach initiatives, helping to reduce funding constraints while creating synergy for multiple wellbeing outcomes.

The museum sector’s access to cultural, historical, and heritage objects—such as musical instruments, decorative pieces, and fashion items—provides a unique opportunity to integrate live music, movement, drama, storytelling, and more into dementia wellbeing programs. By "unlocking" museum collections, these programs offer participants with dementia a socially and intellectually stimulating cultural experience that promotes engagement and presence.

The ‘Museum Socials’ partnership approach strategically shares human resources and program budgets among several of Edinburgh’s cultural institutions and organisations.



This audience-centric program fosters meaningful engagement, two-way dialogue, and a sense of ownership among participants, ensuring that the program reflects their preferences and needs while enhancing their connection to the museum experience.

This collaborative model not only optimises resources but also fosters a community of practice, enabling institutions to share expertise, support one another, and enhance the overall impact of their programs.



The demand for museum outreach programs is increasing, putting pressure on institutions such as the National Museum of Scotland, which has reached its current resource capacity.

Museum Programs | Denmark

COPENHAGEN

Bakkehuset, Frederiksberg Museums | Younger onset dementia ‘Artful Interventions’

Bakkehuset (The Hill House) is a cultural heritage museum set amidst lush gardens and is one of four venues that make up Frederiksberg Museums near Copenhagen. The museum’s intimate and calming spaces create a perfect environment for helping vulnerable individuals feel safe. This authentic historic house, dating back to the Danish Golden Age, was once a creative writing hub for Hans Christian Andersen.

The museum works closely with community members under 65 who are in the early stages of younger onset dementia in ‘Artful Interventions’. Individuals join the program through a local community activity centre. Some participants may be experiencing dementia-related symptoms, such as depression and anxiety, and the museum's therapeutic, calming spaces help improve their mood and sense of wellbeing.

Throughout the program, the facilitator employs various wellbeing strategies, including guided slow art looking, shared reading, and mindfulness, to engage the participants' senses.



Outside Bakkehuset Museum with Cecelie Monrad, Art and Health Manager

Embodied practices such as movement, writing, and drawing are incorporated with slow art looking to encourage participants with dementia-related symptoms to focus on connecting with their thoughts and emotions in the present moment.

This group also collaborates to co-create memory and reminiscence boxes, curating content that offers meaningful aesthetic engagement for other community members with dementia. These dementia-friendly resources can be borrowed free of charge from the museum by care centres and other dementia support organisations. The wellbeing benefits for individuals with dementia involved in this project help them maintain a high quality of life by staying active, socially engaged, and utilising skills that positively contribute to their community.

The Bakkehuset Museum places a strong emphasis on community engagement. Another wellbeing initiative is the museum's 'social networking groups' program, designed for adults aged 75 and older. This biannual 12-week program blends cultural history, art, literature, storytelling, and social inclusion, drawing from the museum's diverse collection to spark conversations and connect isolated older adults. The aim is to enhance their psychosocial wellbeing. This program serves as an example of early intervention, as research suggests that reducing the modifiable risk factor of loneliness may lower the risk of developing dementia by 31%.⁶



The cultural heritage collection – embedded in art, music, drama and literature is being used effectively as a therapeutic tool to support individuals with younger onset dementia, particularly through guided wellbeing strategies like slow art looking, shared reading, mindfulness, and embodied practices - movement and drawing. Younger audiences with mental health conditions engage in the museum's *See Listen Talk* wellbeing program, which is adapted from the dementia program model.



Private funding models are limited in Danish museums, as most funding comes from the state. This places a greater responsibility on museum practitioners to actively seek out grants to support wellbeing program initiatives.

The concept of Arts and Health, or 'cultural prescribing,' as a wellbeing intervention for people with dementia is still in its early stages in many countries, including Denmark. However, there is already a substantial body of evidence demonstrating the positive impact of museum programs on the psychosocial wellbeing of vulnerable populations, such as those living with dementia-related diseases.

AARHUS

Den Gamle By (The Old Town) | ['The House of Memory'](#)

Den Gamle By, the third-largest museum in Denmark, hosts '**The House of Memory**' program for people with dementia. This program takes place in a replica 1950s Danish flat, designed to evoke strong memories from the participants' past.

Sessions begin with coffee and cake served in a traditional setting in the furnished dining room, followed by the handling of historical household objects from the 1950s, which sparks storytelling and reminiscence. After about two hours, the session concludes with music from the era, singing, and



Den Gamle By Museum

sometimes dancing. Participants leave with an improved mood, confidence, and a renewed sense of identity, demonstrating clear wellbeing benefits.



'The House of Memory' 1950s flat- Dining Room with traditional Danish morning tea



'The House of Memory' 1950s flat – Lounge Room activity includes music, singing and dancing from the era

'House of Memory' program model has informed similar reminiscence therapy-based wellbeing program in several museums in Europe and the UK.

Educational institutions across Denmark are partnering with Den Gamle By museum to provide students with an onsite learning experience at 'The House of Memory.' This collaboration integrates healthcare/nursing education with cultural engagement, allowing students to train in a real-world setting, enhancing their understanding of dementia care through cultural practices and museum-based interventions.

Education sessions are held for healthcare students who are training to work with people with dementia in aged care homes. The sessions cover the theory behind the program, and students observe it in practice, learning communication strategies to engage individuals with dementia.

Aarhus University has collaborated with the museum to evaluate the 'House of Memory' program, noting positive wellbeing outcomes such as improved quality of life, better memory recall, and enhanced communication skills, which persisted for weeks after regular participation. Research findings highlight the positive impact of reminiscence-based museum programs on both individuals with dementia, their families, and care professionals.

[The research paper](#) references positive wellbeing outcomes relating to museum reminiscence therapy-type programs that were evaluated at 'The House of Memory' and other institutions, plus evaluation of the educational course for professional care staff and evaluation of an educational workshop for family members.

The Open Air Den Gamle By museum hosts 'The House of Memory' program outdoors during summer, offering participants the opportunity to engage with the museum's beautiful gardens, flowers, and vegetable patches. Gardening activities are incorporated, with the added wellbeing benefits of being in nature ('green prescribing') to improve mood.⁷ The program also includes visits to a 1970s flat, which

stimulates preserved memories for individuals with younger onset dementia (under 65 years), connecting them with their past in a meaningful way, relevant to their age.



Collaboration that integrates dementia care education with cultural engagement allows students to gain practical, real-world experience in museum-based interventions that may inform their future practice to support people with dementia in meaningful ways.



As people with dementia age, the 1950s flat will become redundant as a setting to engage in reminiscence therapy and meaningful engagement - the interior design, objects in the flat and program content will need to be updated to represent a more recent era.

Conclusion

This Churchill Fellowship underscores the opportunity for Australian museums, the cultural arts and health sectors to play a more active role in the specialised field of creative engagement, offering non-clinical wellbeing interventions for dementia-related diseases. Through collaboration, these institutions can become key contributors to enhancing the quality of life for individuals living with dementia, fostering meaningful experiences outside of clinical settings.

Drawing from international research conducted at more than 16 museums and cultural organisations with many expert practitioners across 14 cities in the USA, Canada, Ireland, UK, and Denmark, this report highlights the importance of museums in enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals with dementia, offering both direct benefits to those with the condition and support for their families and caregivers. This is a strong foundation for advocating the role of museums in dementia care, showcasing how cultural institutions can play a pivotal role in fostering community wellbeing.

By collaborating and sharing best practices, Australian museums and cultural organisations can enhance their ability to develop impactful and sustainable creative engagement programs. This non-clinical approach can help bridge health services gaps across metropolitan, regional, and remote communities, ensuring that people with dementia, regardless of location, have access to enriching cultural experiences that support their wellbeing.

This Fellowship has underscored the importance of experiential learning in exploring international, cross-disciplinary approaches in a specialty field - dementia programming in museums. Taking a global perspective on the positive impact of creative engagement programs for people with dementia and their families can challenge and transform existing practices. The insights gained have the potential to inspire new initiatives and inform policy across Australia's arts, health, and cultural sectors, creating more opportunities to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia in our communities.

Many museum-based dementia programs face challenges related to funding and human resources, which hinder their ability to innovate, scale, and sustain their impact. However, educators and creative ageing managers in North America, Ireland, UK and Europe who oversee these programs actively seek and apply for grants to fund their initiatives, and foster collaborations, ensuring continued operation and growth.

The SPARK! Alliance in the USA, 'Azure' in Ireland, and 'Museum Socials' in Edinburgh among others, represent forward-thinking, collaborative models that connect various types of museums with dementia program networks. These initiatives promote cross-institutional cooperation and facilitate access to creative engagement programs, helping to expand the reach and impact of dementia support services within the museum and cultural sectors. This approach, alongside excellent examples of the collaboration between museums, arts, and community organisations in New York, highlights the value of collegial networking to share resources and cross-promote programs. By offering programs across different arts and cultural venues on varying days of the week, this model increases access to a wide range of meaningful activities and social opportunities, catering to diverse participant preferences.

'The House of Memory' in Aarhus exemplifies a successful multi-disciplinary approach, integrating arts and history, healthcare, and culture sectors through its museum wellbeing program. This initiative not only offers therapeutic benefits for people with dementia but also serves as a valuable educational platform, bridging learning across multiple fields to enhance dementia care and cultural engagement.

The findings from this Fellowship have drawn on best practices from a selection of international leaders in the field. This report is intended to guide development or inspire similar creative engagement programs in Australia's cultural sector.

In summary, the project has addressed these specific Fellowship project aims and objectives:

Exploration of International Program Models & Methodologies: This exposure to different models and methodologies enabled a comprehensive understanding of how creative engagement programs are structured and implemented in different cultural contexts.

Identification of Key Similarities, Differences, Barriers, and Opportunities: The Fellowship identified common themes, barriers to innovation (such as funding and resourcing challenges), and opportunities for growth. The study uncovered how different regions approach the development and sustainability of programs, shedding light on the challenges and innovative solutions implemented by museum professionals.

Showcasing Best Practices & Innovative Ideas: The report highlights successful programs like SPARK! in Wisconsin, 'Azure' in Ireland, and 'Museum Socials' in Edinburgh, which provide examples of forward-thinking, collaborative approaches that could inspire Australian institutions. These examples, along with other key insights, serve to illustrate the best practices and innovations in museum-based dementia programming.

Call to Action: The report calls for Australian cultural institutions to take a more active role in supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals living with dementia through creative engagement. It emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between museums, arts organisations, and healthcare sectors to strengthen the support systems for people living with dementia, aligning with the goal of building capacity within Australian museums and cultural institutions.

The findings from the Fellowship could be applied to enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia and their care partners, while also fostering stronger connections between museums, cultural organisations, primary health networks and the wider community.

Recommendations

These recommendations summarise top level opportunities to sustain wellbeing of people with dementia using non-pharmacological creative engagement approaches based on emerging themes from museum programs that were investigated.

- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Establish partnerships between museums, healthcare institutions, and educational bodies to create multidisciplinary programs that blend cultural, healthcare, and educational expertise. This could involve joint programs with museums and universities, healthcare providers, and community organisations to increase accessibility and ensure the longevity of dementia-focused museum programs.
- **Museum-based Wellbeing Programs:** Expand the reach of museum programs for people with dementia across Australia by creating more museum spaces that facilitate sensory and creative engagement, using historical objects, art, and sensory experiences to improve mood and stimulate memory recall.
- **Incorporate Nature and Outdoor Spaces:** Develop museum programs that integrate outdoor and garden-based activities, as seen in the Open Air Den Gamle By museum 'The House of Memory' program. Creating nature-based programs or utilising outdoor spaces within museums could have positive effects on wellbeing by engaging participants with the environment, incorporating activities that stimulate cognitive function.
- **Educational Programs for Caregivers:** Use museum programs as educational tools for healthcare (nursing/aged care students, undergraduate health faculty students), as demonstrated at 'The House of Memory'. Training caregivers and healthcare professionals in dementia-friendly communication strategies within a museum setting can increase awareness and enhance care provided for people with dementia, and reduce stigma associated with the condition.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Encourage the development of research partnerships between museums and universities to evaluate the effectiveness of museum programs in supporting the wellbeing of people living with dementia. Examples from the Fellowship include 'The House of Memory' program where wellbeing impact from reminiscence type approaches were evaluated by researchers; the National Gallery of Canada's partnership with a local university to evaluate effectiveness of visual thinking strategies used in wellbeing programs as a method to stimulate creative engagement. There is already a large body of existing published evidence to draw from to help inform evidence-based museum program practices and policy development in both healthcare and cultural sectors.
- **Community-based Outreach:** Expand the reach of programs like the SPARK! Alliance and other successful initiatives to regional and remote areas, bringing museum programs to communities outside Australia's major cities. This would ensure that the benefits of creative engagement and cultural participation are accessible to a wider audience, particularly those who are often underserved in terms of access to health services, clinical and non-clinical care support. By expanding these programs beyond urban areas and integrating them into community healthcare frameworks, museums can help bridge gaps in service delivery and

provide inclusive interventions for people living with dementia and their families that are fit-for-context and responsive to population needs.

- **Cultural Prescribing:** Promote the concept of ‘cultural prescribing’, where healthcare professionals prescribe museum visits as part of a holistic care plan for people with dementia.

By implementing these approaches, Australian museums can build capacity to support more people living with dementia, enhance the quality of life for participants and care partners, and foster deeper community engagement with existing cultural resources.

Some dementia program models explored in this Fellowship have already been successfully adapted for museum programs aimed at supporting the health and wellbeing needs of other community groups. This approach not only has the potential to attract funding for a broader demographic but could also provide valuable data to measure the wellbeing benefits across diverse community groups. Examples from the Fellowship include program initiatives for incarcerated individuals (Oxford GLAM), veterans (Intrepid Museum), people experiencing mental health conditions and social isolation (Bakkehuset Museum), and intergenerational youth-focused programs (The Beaney Museum).

Dissemination and Implementation

Key Stakeholders

- Distribute the published report to stakeholders, including Australian museum, gallery and cultural institutions, dementia support organisations such as Dementia Australia - including the policy team, museum wellbeing and access program practitioners, contacts in the arts and health sectors and academic institutions, people with lived experience of dementia and care partners, dementia advocates and dementia care organisation networks.
- The report may activate collaboration between Australian museums, galleries and relevant arts bodies and representative associations, dementia support and community organisations, cultural and health sectors and policymakers, primary health networks (PHNs), academic institutions and social prescribing advocates such as Australian Social Prescribing Institute of Research and Education (ASPIRE) who are primarily focused on non-pharmacological wellbeing interventions through the Arts.

Present Findings and Discuss Recommendations

- Share insights from this Churchill Fellowship project to build knowledge and advocacy, focusing on the benefits of creative engagement for people living with dementia. Target audiences include museum practitioners, dementia advocates, policy influencers, local community organisations, organisations with older age groups (e.g. Probus Clubs, urban and regional art galleries), tertiary institutions, health sectors, arts sectors, cultural institutions, potential funders or donors, people living with dementia, care partners, families, dementia alliances and support networks.

Dissemination (to date)

- In-conversation community presentation with panel of museum dementia program practitioners, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ontario (Canada) Sep 2024.

- Round table presentation Oxford University GLAM department (UK) Oct 2024.
- Probus Club Brisbane Annual General Meeting (QLD) March 2025.
- Oxford Social Prescribing Network webinar (UK) May 2025.
- Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) Members (QLD) May 2025.
- Caloundra Regional Gallery cultural arts and wellbeing presentation (QLD) 2025.
- ABC Radio and other media platforms (QLD).
- LinkedIn network.
- Blog article British Society of Gerontology's Creative Ageing Special Interest Group, Feb 2025.
- International museum arts and health practitioner networks and affiliations, university and research sectors, connections made with cultural organisations through this Churchill Fellowship project.
- Arts, health and culture policy influencers.

Collaborate with relevant local, state or federal government departments to advocate for creative engagement funding

- Advocate where possible for support to fund creative engagement museum programs for people living with dementia. Relevant departments: health, culture, communities and ageing, the arts, or social services.

Secure funding to create a resource toolkit for Australian museums to implement dementia programs

♡ Passion Project

- Develop an accessible toolkit containing program models, step-by-step guides, and funding strategies for Australian museums/other cultural sector organisations.
- The toolkit will include different program models adaptable for museum context and local audiences, along with guidance on logistics, facilitation, tips and tools for evaluation.
- Completed toolkit could be distributed to museums and cultural organisations across Australia for use by museum staff and cultural program managers. Resource dissemination focuses on regional cities such as Townsville, Queensland, and other underserved regional communities that may benefit from museum-based creative engagement as a non-clinical health and wellbeing intervention, especially younger people living with dementia.

Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration Workshops and Networking Opportunities

- Advocate for workshops to bring together museum wellbeing practitioners, dementia support organisations, and community groups, family members, include people with dementia as expert advisors, to discuss collaboration and inspire new program implementation.

- Break down barriers to support museums to realise their potential as engaging existing community assets that can support wellbeing of their community members by unlocking their collection resources and spaces.

Publish Articles in Industry Journals and Media Outlets

- Summarise the findings and share them with industry publications, such as the *British Society of Gerontology's Creative Ageing Special Interest Group*, *Creative Aging Journal*, or *Dementia Australia Newsletter* and website blog articles to target museum professionals, dementia advocates, health and cultural arts sectors and policy influencers.

Advocate for Policy Changes in the Arts, Health, and Cultural Sectors

- Advocate for recognition of museums as health assets in dementia care policy and programs by presenting the Fellowship research findings to relevant policy makers.
- The advocacy could target departments of health, culture, ageing, and social services and arts sectors to discuss integrating evidence-informed museum programs into national dementia care strategies.

Potential Benefits | Australian Context

- **Improved Quality of Life for People with Dementia:** More quality museum wellbeing programs will provide meaningful engagement, social inclusion, and creative expression for individuals living with dementia.
- **Stronger Museum Communities:** Museums will be empowered to offer more inclusive, accessible programming, attracting wider community involvement.
- **Support for Families and Care Partners:** Caregivers will benefit from support networks and resources, improving their own wellbeing and coping skills.

Funding Strategies | Australian Context

- **Government Grants:** Programs could be funded by existing grants for arts, health, and ageing. Partnerships with health and community services could also leverage funding for collaborative projects.
- **Philanthropic Support:** Engaging with philanthropic organisations focused on dementia or cultural initiatives that support wellbeing may help secure additional funding.
- **Cross-Sector Collaborations:** By collaborating with healthcare providers, local councils, and other sectors, museums can access more diversified funding streams.

Building a Community of Practice

- Build a community of practice amongst Australian museum practitioners and international experts in the field who facilitate creative engagement programs for people with dementia to share knowledge, create networking opportunities, support learning and develop/ sustain best practice and innovation.

Develop opportunities to collaborate between museum programs, local healthcare institutions/allied healthcare and professional/tertiary sectors that are relevant to dementia care and specific to a geographic location.

Benefits of Enhanced Holistic Support for People with Dementia

- Collaboration between museums and healthcare providers will offer a more comprehensive, person-centred approach to dementia care, addressing both the psychosocial and physical aspects of wellbeing.
- People with dementia will have access to a broader range of support services, including non-pharmacological creative engagement, to support them to live well with dementia and improve their quality of life.

Interdisciplinary Knowledge Sharing

- Partnerships with professionals from diverse fields (e.g., medicine, occupational therapy, social work, behavioural sciences) will foster the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and evidence-based strategies.
- Museum staff and healthcare professionals will gain valuable insights into how creative engagement can complement clinical care, leading to more innovative and effective program design.

Improved Program Design and Evaluation

- Involving experts from healthcare institutions and universities can help museums better understand the needs of people living with dementia and tailor programs accordingly.
- Museum programs will be more evidence-based, and effective in achieving positive outcomes for participants. Collaborative evaluation with experts in the research sector will also provide deeper insights into program impact.

Capacity Building for Museums and Cultural Institutions

- Collaborating with tertiary institutions and healthcare networks can provide museums with access to additional resources, expertise, and funding opportunities.
- Museums will then be better equipped to develop sustainable programs, increase their reach, pitch for funding grants and create long-term, impactful interventions that support the dementia community.

Increased Awareness and Advocacy for Dementia Care in the Arts

- Partnerships with professional and tertiary sectors can raise awareness about the importance of creative engagement in dementia care, helping to advocate for its inclusion in national dementia policies and healthcare programs and university courses e.g. medicine, psychology.
- These collaborations could influence policy change, funding priorities, and the integration of arts-based approaches into dementia care across Australia.

Career Development and Professional Development Opportunities

- Students and early-career professionals in fields such as social work, medicine, behavioural sciences, and museum studies will gain hands-on experience working in the interdisciplinary space of dementia care and creative ageing.
- Collaboration can lead to the development of internship programs, placements, and mentorship opportunities that will help train the next generation of professionals in their specialised field, as well as offer cost-saving volunteer opportunities to support program delivery.

Community Engagement and Social Inclusion

- Collaborative programs between museums, local healthcare institutions, and academic sectors will increase community involvement by creating more inclusive, accessible spaces for individuals with dementia and their families.
- A more connected community, where people with dementia are actively included in cultural and social activities, helps to reduce stigma and promotes social cohesion and community resilience.

Cross-Sector Funding Opportunities

- Joint initiatives between museums, creative organisations in the arts sector, healthcare institutions, and universities can open new funding avenues, particularly through grants focused on healthcare, arts, and social inclusion.
- These funding opportunities will allow for the expansion and scaling of museum-based dementia programs, ensuring long-term sustainability and broader outreach.

Stronger Research and Evidence Base

- Collaborating with academic sectors (particularly in behavioural sciences and healthcare) can enhance the research and evaluation components of museum programs.
- By generating more robust data on the impact of creative engagement on dementia care, museums can demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs, leading to greater recognition and support from policymakers and funders.

By fostering collaborations across arts, health, cultural and education sectors, museums can significantly enhance their capacity and profile to support people living with dementia, build sustainable and impactful programs, and contribute to a broader cultural shift towards a more inclusive and integrated approach to dementia care in Australia.

REACHING REGIONAL AREAS – A PERCEIVED BARRIER FOR ARTS, HEALTH AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

The following strategies could be implemented to engage audience members with dementia in regional locations.

Partner with local community organisations: Collaborate with regional healthcare providers, dementia support groups, aged care and senior support centres to identify and connect with individuals who might benefit from the program.

Community Outreach: Host informational sessions or workshops in local community centres, libraries, or senior living facilities to introduce the program and its benefits.

Leverage Word of Mouth: Encourage participants and their care partners to share their experiences, helping to build trust and spread awareness within the community.

Use Local Media: Advertise through regional newspapers, radio stations, and social media platforms to reach a broader audience.

Accessibility and Transportation: Provide information on transportation options, directions and parking arrangements to make it easier for participants in rural areas to attend the program.

Free Trial Sessions: Offer complimentary or trial sessions in the region to allow potential participants to experience the program firsthand.

Workshops for Caregivers: Host workshops for caregivers and families to show how the program can benefit their loved ones and provide them with opportunities for respite.

Tailor to Regional Interests: Customise aspects of the program's opportunity to reflect regional history, culture, or art, creating a stronger local connection.

Collaborate with Regional Councils, Museums and Galleries: Expand the program through partnerships with local councils that administer local cultural institutions, to create accessible options closer to the audience.

Measure Impact and Share Success: Document and share stories or testimonials that highlight the positive effects of creative engagement to attract more participants.

HOW TO:

Build Community Partnerships

- Partner with regional dementia support groups, local Dementia Australia and other dementia support services, and healthcare providers to identify potential participants.
- Collaborate with seniors' community centres, CWA, assisted living facilities, and care homes, that have connections with people with dementia.
- Engage local community organisations that focus on healthy ageing, or wellness such as community pharmacies.

Raise Awareness

- Host free informational sessions or open days in the community to introduce the program.
- Use local media outlets, such as community radio, newspapers, or newsletters, to promote the initiative.
- Share posters and flyers in pharmacies, libraries, clinics, and places of worship.

Leverage Caregiver Networks

- Connect with caregivers through support groups or local caregiver networks.

- Offer sessions or workshops that engage both caregivers and people with dementia to demonstrate the benefits of participation.

Use Digital Outreach

- Share stories, photos, or testimonials about the program on social media platforms and community Facebook groups.
- Create simple, accessible online materials, such as videos or brochures, that explain the program's value.

Offer Accessible Trial Sessions

- Organise pop-up sessions in accessible locations within the region to give people a taste of the program.
- Offer a museum program session in collaboration with local organisations and their staff to attract interest and showcase the approach.

Tailor to Regional Context

- Incorporate elements of regional culture, art, or history into the program to make it relevant and appealing.
- Highlight local artists or collections to foster a sense of familiarity, identity and connection to community.

Provide Accessibility

- Ensure that venues are dementia-friendly, with appropriate signage and a calm environment. Staff could access free dementia online training (e.g. Dementia Australia).
- Offer transportation solutions, such as where to park, access to local transport services, free carparking, to make attendance easier.

Empower Local Champions

- Train local staff as ambassadors who can become champions for the program and spread awareness.
- Encourage current participants or caregivers to share their experiences and invite others.

Collaborate with Regional Cultural Institutions

- Partner with smaller museums, galleries, or community art spaces and artists with wellbeing expertise in the region to expand the program's reach.
- Use shared spaces to host sessions and introduce the program to new audiences.

Measure and Share Success

- Collect feedback and stories from participants to highlight the program's impact.
- Share these success stories with potential participants, caregivers, and community organisations to build positive associations, trust and interest.

Creative Funding Solutions for Museum Dementia Programs

To better serve underserved audiences, such as those with dementia, **allocate a line in exhibition budgets specifically for dementia programs**. Integrating this funding into the exhibition schedule fosters social equity and ensures sustainable funding for inclusive initiatives.

Key Points:

- **Inclusive Funding Model:** Embedding dementia programs into standard budgets redefines funding allocation and emphasizes inclusivity as a priority.
- **Universal Design Benefits:** Funding programs for minority audiences like those with dementia can enhance experiences for broader audiences by adopting universal program designs.
- **Intergenerational Integration:** Programs designed for both youth and older audiences, including those with dementia, can maximize creative engagement, improve wellbeing, and strengthen community social connections.
- **Maximized Budget Efficiency:** This approach ensures that resources are utilized for multifaceted benefits, offering value across demographics while promoting access and engagement.

Create the Case for Dementia-inclusive Programs at Your Institution

Highlight the need for **inclusive programming** in cultural institutions, emphasising the importance of serving a diverse community audience, such as people with dementia.

Outline the broader impact of inclusive initiatives on community wellbeing, audience diversity, and institutional social equity goals.

- **Social Equity:** Demonstrates a commitment to underserved or excluded audiences, ensuring equitable access to cultural experiences.
- **Enhanced Audience Engagement:** Universal program design benefits a wide range of audiences, enhancing overall exhibition outcomes.
- **Community Impact:** Dementia-focused programs foster intergenerational and community connections, benefiting participants and caregivers alike.
- **Budget Optimisation:** By embedding dementia programs into the exhibition schedule, the institution ensures efficient use of resources while addressing diverse audience needs.

Program Design Principles

- **Universal Design:** Develop activities that engage both dementia participants and broader audiences, making programs inclusive for all.
- **Intergenerational Focus:** Incorporate programs that bring together youth and older adults, fostering cross-generational understanding and creative engagement.
- **Sensory and Slow Art Techniques:** Enhance engagement through tailored activities that benefit dementia audiences and appeal to others seeking meaningful, reflective experiences.

Outcomes

Increased Wellbeing: Participants experience improved social, cognitive, and emotional wellbeing.

Broader Engagement: Programs designed for a dementia audience inspire inclusive practices that benefit a larger demographic.

Community Impact: Strengthens relationships between cultural institutions and the community, building social connections and enhancing institutional reputation.

Sustainability: Establishes a respected, replicable and scalable model for inclusive programming in cultural institutions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

How to track program success:

- Participant feedback (surveys, testimonials).
- Attendance and demographic data analysis.
- Case studies highlighting personal and community impact.
- Comparative analysis of audience engagement before and after program implementation.

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<https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/project/to-investigate-best-practice-museum-programs-sustaining-wellbeing-of-people-with-dementia/>