

NERAM MARKETING STRATEGY

At its core, by 2020 NERAM aims to be recognised as an accessible and inspiring art centre with nationally significant collections in a memorable cultural precinct. The premise of NERAM's Audience Development Strategy is founded on the 2010-2020 Strategic Business Plan Objective 6: **Extend NERAM's audience through innovative and effective marketing.**

Our strategy as a first step is to develop NERAM's profile/ brand by re-igniting its partnerships with key stakeholders, particularly with the local community, with potential benefactors, with the regional economic development and education sectors.

1. BACKGROUND:

NERAM's Marketing Policy provides a clear, sustainable and forward-looking framework of objectives which contribute to the overall 2020 Business Plan.

NERAM's Position

By 2020 NERAM will be admired for its commitment to sustainability, known for the quality of its collections and exhibitions, valued for its dynamic educational and public programs and recognised for its engagement with the regional community. The Key Issues facing NERAM are: Sustainability; Consideration of our community – both as supporter and audience; Keeping NERAM dynamic and relevant; and Building our audience.

NERAM's strengths are in its Collection and the fervent community commitment to the growth of NERAM. Therein too lies NERAM's opportunities, together with strong partnerships with organisations in the Armidale region. NERAM's limited staff and financial resources make this a challenge. In realising the aspirations of the 2020 Strategic Plan, NERAM will be in a robust position to minimise its weaknesses and add value to its strengths.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The main focus of the 2011-2013 Marketing Policy is to raise awareness of NERAM's services amongst local and regional residents. In the absence of a dedicated Marketing/Audience Development Officer, a Marketing Policy needs to be implemented with current staff resources to identify marketing objectives, key selling points and messages, target audiences, the Marketing Mix and evaluation of the marketing strategy.

In a workshop held in April 2011, it was resolved that NERAM'S stakeholders would work collectively under the banner of SEED (Sustainability, Excellence, Engagement and Dynamism) to achieve the following objectives in the 2020 Business Plan:

- Objective 2 Harnessing resources
- Objective 5 Programming a dynamic regional cultural hub
- Objective 6 Marketing and building audiences

The Marketing Policy aims to:

1. Foster a culture of generosity that enables all direct stakeholders supporting NERAM (Staff, Board, Friends & Volunteers) to represent the organisation with positive energy and enthusiasm in all its endeavours;
2. Identify and prioritise the core user groups that promotional resources (human & cash) will be directed toward;
3. Increase the positive profile of NERAM as a whole above individual programs that are ephemeral in nature;
4. Reinforce the image of NERAM as an effective organisation of great integrity;
5. Foster a commitment to excellence, innovation and diversity consistent with the dynamic and experimental nature of contemporary Museum practice and its aesthetic and cultural significance;
6. Encourage and co-ordinate the active voice of Friends, Volunteers, Guides and Board as NERAM's principal marketing tool via word of mouth promotion;
7. Integrate NERAM's activities with wider community events;
8. Develop clear messages for targeted user groups, as well as a slogan for general community awareness;
9. Actively promote through all forms of media: digital, print, radio, television
10. Actively engage with the Armidale Tourism Strategy.

3. AN AUDIENCE DRIVEN POLICY

NERAM is valued as an arts facility attracting at least 26,837 per year. This is calculated to be over 2236 per month. This policy aims to meet customer expectations, to ensure positive word-of-mouth promotion, loyalty through repeat visitation and broadening their use of the facility's services.

According to the Audience Development Survey undertaken in 2010:

- NERAM attracts visitors from all age groups, although there is a large proportion of over 55s.
- 60% are from within 50km; 27% from NSW (outside 50km); 8% other states and 4% international.
- NERAM is successful in connecting with people who speak a language other than English at home (8% of the total audience which compares to 5% for general LGA population).
- NERAM attracts visitors from all household income levels and the distribution of household incomes is in line with the LGA and Statistical Division.

Visitation will be calculated as a total number of people using/accessing any part of the facility. Therefore, visitors will include:

- General admissions
- Café patrons
- School groups
- Event participants
- Outreach education program participants

Strategic marketing advocates the effectiveness of targeting specific audiences rather than a general city/region wide market. Given NERAM's resources, particularly in public relations, it is vital that no more than 3 audience groups be targeted for promotional purposes. This does not mean to exclude other groups from accessing NERAM's services, rather the efforts of core marketing staff and financial resources will be strategically focussed on three targeted groups. Additionally, promotion external to the Armidale region will not be prioritised as focus must be made on retaining and increasing current visitors to NERAM from the immediate local government area. This strategy is threefold:

- Confirm NERAM's commitment to ensuring an effective organisation;
- Regain the trust of the local community for NERAM's services; and
- Market trends do not suggest that visitors to Armidale are likely long term supporters of NERAM

This marketing strategy focuses on obtaining the support of three core audience groups. These audiences are to be developed further through various programs on offer:

- Retirees
- Families with Young Children
- Groups with Community Disadvantage

4. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships are critical to NERAM's ability to actively engage with its local and regional communities. Priority will be given to those partnerships that support NERAM's 20 Year Business Plan. The Director reserves the right to invite partnerships from selected government agencies and community groups, as well as encourage opportunities from other sectors of the community.

Priority will be given to those partnerships that engage with the University of New England, as well as those cultural institutions supporting local activity.

UNE is a major employer in the region, and the education sector accounts for 24.9% of Armidale Dumaresq LGA employment. NERAM has an important and significant role to play in connecting and adding value to this sector, providing an important resource for students, from pre-school to university.

Cultural institutions in the region including New England Conservatorium of Music, Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place, and the New England Writers Centre allow NERAM to plan and deliver a memorable experience, and relates to Objective 6 of the 2010-2020 Strategic Business Plan: Programming a Dynamic Regional Cultural Hub. Partnerships with these institutions provide opportunities for NERAM to expand and enhance its public program offerings

5. EVALUATION

As part of a Total Quality Management System, NERAM programs and projects are evaluated and assessed through a two-week sample of visitors in February/March; July/August and October/November as well as an online membership survey. Feedback is also sought from local stakeholders including Friends of NERAM, UNE, TAFE, NSW Department of Education, and regional artists. Comments are also made in the Visitors' Book and verbal feedback is given to Volunteers at the Front Desk and relayed to staff.

The survey results will be used to assist staff with artistic programming, audience development, marketing strategy, improving facilities and customer service.