What’s in the Guide?

The Guide allows for the generation of flexible FIELD STUDIES v2 programs depending on a number of parameters, which are covered under the broad headings:

- goal setting
- context
- logistics
- management/coordination

The first two set the scene building up to the rollout of FIELD STUDIES v2. The last two focus more on conducting FIELD STUDIES v2.

The Guide provides step-by-step activities to be undertaken in implementing a FIELD STUDIES v2, and flags key issues to be considered at each step.

The Guide will be an evolving and dynamic product that will be revised and updated as further research and evaluation is conducted.

Invitation to Contribute

We invite those interested in this Guide to download it from the website. We are keen to have it tested and critiqued. The Guide is intended to be evolving, modified, improved, and expanded according to how well it works on the ground in a variety of situations and organisations. We welcome feedback and suggestions. They can be submitted via the contact details below.

The Engaging Visions Research Project

The primary goal of this research project was to configure a model procedure for visual artists to participate in, and/or engage with, Murray Darling Basin catchment communities to help address environmental concerns.

The project took place from 2007 to 2010 and focused on four locations in the Murray-Darling Basin:

- St George (Queensland)
- Tumut (New South Wales)
- Riverland (South Australia)
- Benalla (Victoria)

For detailed project activities, field trips, and exhibitions conducted including free downloadable project publications see:
http://cpas.anu.edu.au/engagingvisions

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The guide is available as a dynamic e-version at cpas.anu.edu.au/engagingvisions
Background
This brochure provides an overview of the Engaging Visions Guide. The Guide is the result of an evaluation by the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science of four Field Studies programs conducted by the ANU School of Art between 2007 – 09.
Field Studies provides logistic and academic assistance for artists to travel to a field location and engage with the community for the purpose of producing visual art about the environment. Multiple field trips allow for a mix of field experience and studio development. In the field, artists can immerse themselves in the local environment and consult with community members. Back in the studio, the artists develop a body of work for exhibition to the field community. This process has benefits for participating artists and communities alike.
The Guide previewed here refers to FIELD STUDIES v2, the evidence-based ‘best-practice’ procedure resulting from the three year Engaging Visions Research Project.

Field Studies v2 Procedure
The FIELD STUDIES v2 procedure proposes a 12 month, convenor/coordinator supported program in the first instance — with a way-forward for maintaining structure and support after the 12 month period is over. The core elements of the FIELD STUDIES v2 is presented in the diagram and described at right.

Pre-planning
Pre-planning focuses on goal-setting, which would at least include:
- Setting the brief for the Study (e.g. curriculum and educational requirements, requirements pertaining to an external funding agency or host community).
- Identifying a topic, or topics (e.g. focusing on environmental issues in general or on one specific to the location).
- Incorporating the interests and requirements of the participants in the FIELD STUDIES v2 (e.g. environmental matters, artistic medium, connection to a specific place or community, and curriculum obligations for enrolled students).
- Identifying resources, both available and required.

Site survey
During the survey the site is scoped for its:
- Potential for creative and intellectual stimulation,
- Professional practice experience opportunities, and
- Logistical opportunities such as field accommodation and exhibition venues.

Field trips, artist briefings and field-studio interactions
A minimum of two sustained field trips provide the opportunity for field/studio interaction. During field trips artists stay in the field location and are briefed by community representatives and experts – particularly on issues of environmental concern – and conduct their own research. Briefings predominantly occur on the first field trip. The second and any subsequent field trips focus on art production.

Exhibition and transitional stage
Midway through the program, an exhibition of the artworks produced in response to artist experiences in the area is held in the field location. At this stage, participant-artists can consider the nature and extent of their continuation and further artistic development, capitalising on the impact of the exhibition or their interest in the area and community. It is also a decision point for communities regarding their interest in ongoing artist engagement.

Post exhibition
After the exhibition, the nature of a Field Study opens up to cater more to the interests of, and opportunities for, an individual or a group of artist pursuits, rather than the whole Field Study continuing as a single cohort. A critical feature of the post-exhibition phase is the likely increase in participant interaction and engagement with communities in ways driven by individual artist interests, and opportunities for collaboration.