

In Kind: Creating A Non-Cash Arts Assets Platform

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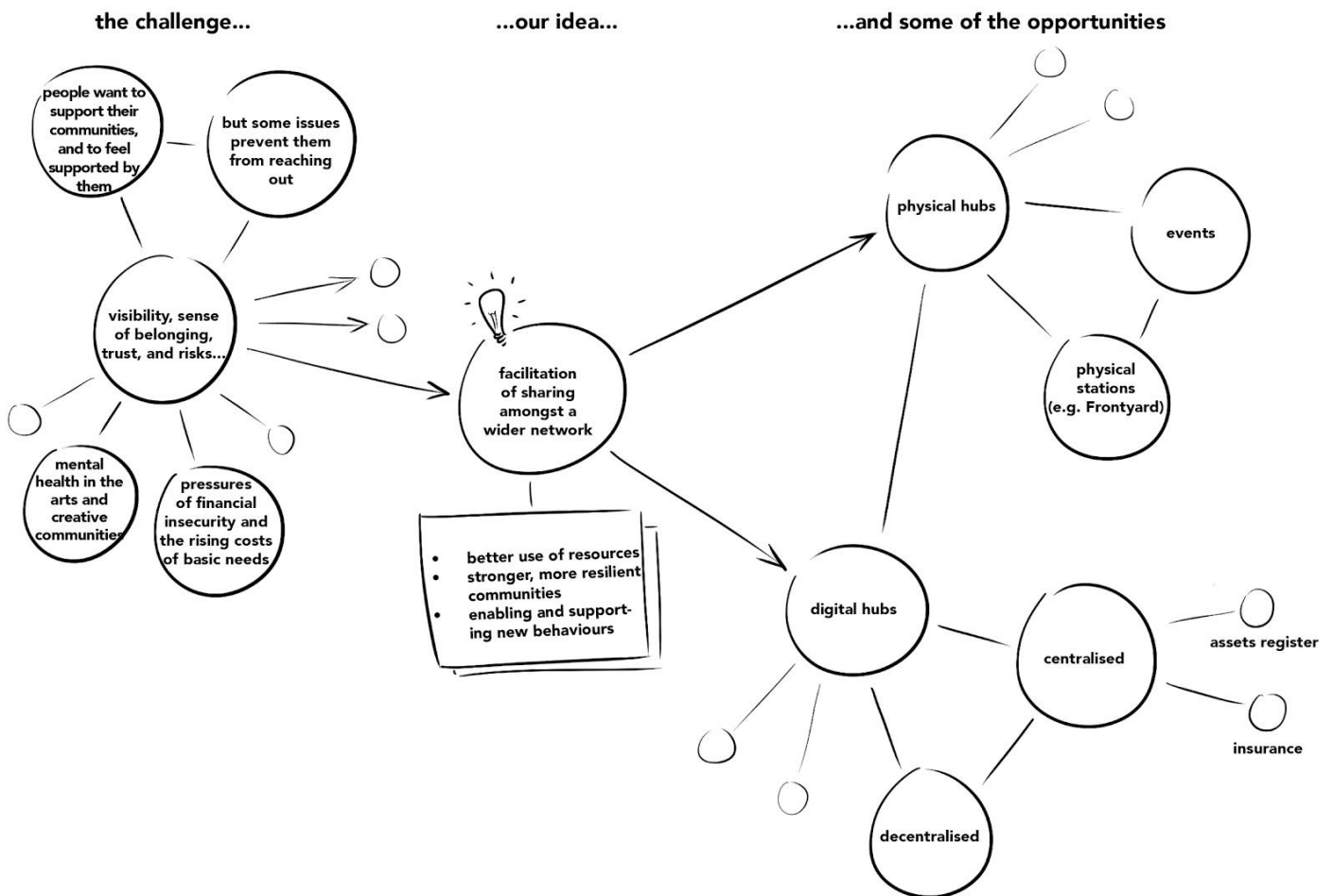
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Acknowledgements:

Frontyard meets on Aboriginal land - the Cadigal Wangal people of the Eora are the traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

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Executive Summary

People in the arts community are overstretched. The core idea behind this platform is to making connecting and creating *easier*. We are not suggesting that artists work harder, or make/present/perform *more*. The measure of this platform's success is not whether more "work" is made by the artists, but whether we feel connected, enjoy closer, long-standing connections to our community and peers through sharing skills and collectively consuming less.

When asking artists the limited pool of participants "*what are your non-cash obstacles to living and creating in Sydney?*" we are looking to connect people to people. We want the platform to assist with overcoming daily and weekly obstacles to reaching out to their community *through* the sharing of non-cash assets. With this in mind, perhaps another measure of success here is that artists will have more time to experiment with creating with a different, more expanded and supported sense of time, outside of the standard outcome-driven funding models.

A basic summary of listed “Needs” as at 26 Sept. 2016 have been informally categorised here for the purposes of this report. These can be found in the **appendix** of this report. To access current full listings of NEEDS and HAVES please visit the ever-expanding digital prototype here:

<http://www.whatchamacallit.space/>

- Material: Tools
- Material: Furniture and miscellaneous
- Transport
- Skills: Making and Repair
- Skills: Managing and Navigating
- Skills: Digital, Tech and Documentation
- Skills: Communication
- Spaces: Events and Exhibitions (one-off, short-term)
- Spaces: Studio, rehearsal, artist residencies (ongoing)
- Labour/skills for projects
- Collections, archives
- Health, energy, ephemeral

Among the sample group, required **materials** for making and learning were met several times over by the HAVES list in our pool of participants. We uncovered a bounty of digital and analogue equipment willing to be shared, loaned and given away. **Transport** needs were also met (in theory - as time and availability is in massive shortage) from within the community.

Required **skills** required fall into several categories: making & repair, tech & documentation, communication. Most participants are requesting to learn the skills/tools/trade, others are just requesting someone with the at-the-ready know-how to complete a task.. Some items sit across several categories. 90% of the listed NEEDS could be met by the listed HAVES within the pool of participants. The skills listed by this community are extraordinarily diverse. Skills such as web design and graphic design were in great demand. The HAVES list was overflowing with digital and sound design and editing-related know-how. Skills relating to managing and navigating life as an artist in Sydney were also met by those who listed HAVES in this platform.

Required **spaces** for making, rehearsing and exhibiting were met by HAVES listings within our limited pool of participants.

A category that we hadn’t anticipated was the NEED for skills or labour that would help to realise specific projects. Once again, many of these were met within the prototyper pool, but some (eg “skywriter”, “woman to lie on a rock in a bikini for 12 hours overnight”) are either incredibly expensive requests or morally ambiguous ones that were not addressed within the details of these listings. Project documentation (sound, video, photography) and grant and admin advice were requested and met, as was assistance installing shows.

An unexpected category is the **health, energy, ephemeral** category. Every single participant in this prototype cited time and energy as their most precious and meagre resource. HAVers listed related responses such as “I can help you get in touch with your body again”, “interpersonal skills”, “can make you laugh” (x2), “emo/tech problem solver”, “attitude”, “chutzpah” and mentorship - none of which directly feed time and energy into the life of an artist, but perhaps lightens the load from time to time. These listings arguably could also sit comfortably into the **Skills: communication** category.

Drawing from our own observations and on the research of evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar, we concluded that to best facilitate sharing we would need to limit network size, providing different ways of building trust and ensuring security. For these reasons we believe a network of nodes structure, in both physical and digital forms, is the ideal. As our current prototype consists of only one node, we are yet to test this.

Introduction: the challenge



Methodology and Background

An asset is generally defined as any item of economic value, owned by an individual or organisation.

For this project, we borrow an arts-specific definition of an asset from the UK initiative Mission Models Money (MMM) that ran from 2004 until 2014:

‘An asset is any factor or resource, which enhances the ability of creative practitioners and organisations to build organisational and financial resilience.’

A great variety of assets are important to the arts sector from space and equipment, to intangible assets such as skills and knowledge.

The methodology of Asset-based community development (ABCD) is to build communities around their strengths and potentials is well established (Borup 2006; Kretzmann et al. 2005). It involves assessing the resources, skills, and experience available in a community; organizing the community around issues that move its members to improve their situation; and then determining and taking appropriate action. The Arts Assets project has this methodology at its core. However, it is also highly experimental.

As stated in the City of Sydney Cultural and Community Committee recommendation document relating to this project:

Changes in Federal funding brought about by cuts to the Australia Council for the Arts have significantly impacted on opportunities for individual artists and the small to medium cultural sector. [This project] provides an opportunity to increase the capacity of Sydney's creative community to remain resilient in an altered funding environment, (May 9, 2016)

The project operates from inside a community experiencing a crisis in funding and challenges it to share more, make its needs visible, and to be noisy.

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR ARTS ASSETS COME FROM?

ARTS FUTURING

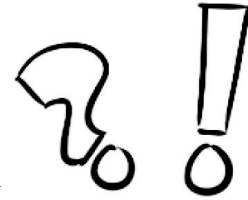
Sydney artist and designer Clare Cooper began hosting arts futuring sessions in June 2015, in response to the arts cuts announced in the Federal Budget. From the outset, it was to be an evolving, fluid project, not a short-term fix. The workshops facilitate and provoke creative and long-term constructively critical conversations for the arts sector. The sessions build resilience and encourage proactivity. Participants met in UTS studio spaces monthly to flesh out possible, probable and preferred futures for the arts. It was agreed that we would not move forward assuming that any of the support structures to date are sustainable or beneficial in the short or long term. We looked at a variety of social, technological, environmental, economic, creative and political hurdles. Suggested visioning from these sessions took the forms of sketches of spaces, festivals, simulations and pseudo-campaigns that highlight the possible hurdles and boons of/with/for the arts community. Key findings from these sessions were:

- Continue ongoing arts futuring sessions - a collective 10 year conversation with a variety of public provocations and outcomes
- Establish a community space where futuring for the arts and the projects that arise from these sessions are central to operations (see Frontyard).
- Develop digital arts futuring space so that those not based in Sydney can contribute to ongoing conversations
- Research digital non-cash resource sharing platform (see Arts Assets). Collate a live list of non-cash obstacles to creating work. Make visible how many skills, spaces and tools we have access to between us and to encourage radical generosity in our community - combatting the individualism and competition narrative dominant at present.
- Engage in resource waste mapping for/of/by the arts community
- Research projects concierge platform (grants, philanthropy & support attractor)

These collaborative, community-driven Arts Futuring workshops moved to the newly established Frontyard Projects in Feb, 2016 and have evolved to be facilitated by local Sydney artist Clare Cooper joined by Canberra-born designer Will Owen Scott-Kemmis.

What Is Futuring?

Participants are invited to share their projections of what the forces of change are in their futures - from there we engage in a futuring exercise around a set question or issue (independent arts, migration, economics). We teach a basic overview of futuring methodology, and go into greater depth regarding the tools depending on whether people are more focused on the method rather than the content or themes being explored. If it is possible to invite experts in a field, they may present their research or projects before we get stuck into the futuring (as was the case with Futuring Migration 1&2, August and September 2016).



Cooper was approached by the public programs curator for the [20th Biennale of Sydney](#) to host a series of public Arts Futuring workshops. These sessions were divided up into five evenings: Audiences & Context, Resources, Production and finally, Education. The fifth event was an exhibit where the projections from each session culminated at Frontyard (June 2 2016). It was on this night that we also hosted the first paper prototype of the Arts Assets “game”.

FRONTYARD

Frontyard Projects is a Not-Only-Artist Run Initiative established in Feb. 2016 and located at 228 Illawarra Rd, Marrickville. It is based upon the principle that the arts are embedded in everyday life.

Frontyard is a space where future scenarios and possibilities regarding reproductive labour in the arts are explored and tested out. The notion at play at Frontyard is that the arts emerge from unexceptional circumstances that are grounded, collective, diverse, and, above all, located in the everyday. They do not occupy a position excluded from other forms of cultural re/production. This is a response to current official regimes of funding and administration that conceptualise, and then reproduce the arts as exclusive labour and the space of the exceptional and the spectacularised. As the name Frontyard suggests, the arts form part of the everyday social and cultural fabric of homes, public spaces, communities, towns, and cities. They are neither marginal, nor extraordinary, and the value of the arts should not be understood or reproduced according to such narrow understandings or definitions.

(Seale, K., 2016, Frontyard researcher in residence)

The Idea: precedents, experiments and possibilities



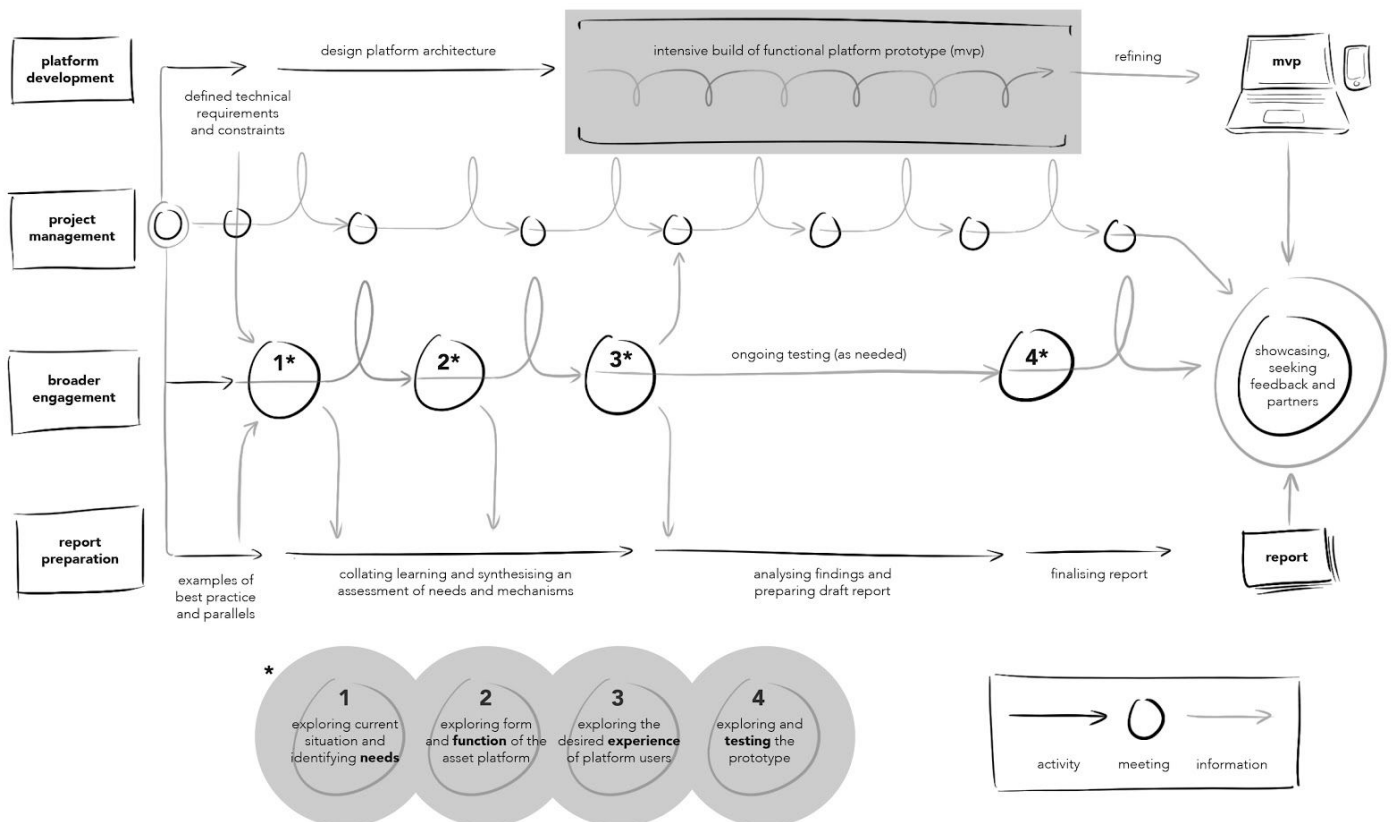
We researched a range of precedents where cash and non-cash asset exchange platforms are currently operating. These ranged from globally operating trading sites with general audiences such as ebay (<http://www.ebay.com.au>) and Gumtree (<http://www.gumtree.com.au/>) to specifically targeted co-working spaces with assets available to members for creative projects, such as the newly formed Melbourne Electronic Sound Studio (<http://mess.foundation/>), MakerSpace & Co. in Marrickville (<http://makerspace.org.au/>), and the Brunswick Tool Library (<http://brunswicktoollibrary.org/php/store.php?R=1>).

We also looked closely at match making platforms for specific audiences, such as the Australian start-up Collabosaurus, a platform for strategic brand alliance, (<https://collabosaurus.com/>) and the location-based “social search” service application Tinder, (<https://www.gotinder.com/>). Understanding these platforms helped us consider the scope of our project and to plan the design process.

Within the arts community, the most common ways people are sourcing assets for their creative projects are through informal networks, both online and offline, and through platforms which mobilise assets in one direction, without the expectation of them being returned. These include informal giveaway groups such as local Pay It Forward facebook groups (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/514077371970639/>) as well as stand alone systems such as the freecycle platform (<https://www.freecycle.org/>).

The platform with the closest ethos to our own intention is Street Bank (<http://www.streetbank.com/film?locale=en>), where there is no exchange of currency. Streetbank began in the UK in 2012 and is now ‘a movement of people who share with their neighbours’ as the website states. It was designed to help neighbours get to know each other, as well as sharing little used resources like drills, lawn mowers, etc.

The Method: Participatory Prototyping



Stage 1: Paper Prototyping

During the first stage, participants were invited to help us develop the functionality and interface of the platform through face-to-face paper prototyping sessions, focus groups and follow-up interviews.

The face-to-face prototyping was carried out through a game, designed and tested by the team and played at Frontyard. The first of the two face-to-face paper-prototyping sessions was held as part of the final public Arts Futuring event within the 20th Biennale of Sydney public program on June 2. The second was held on July 4, with participants unable to make it being followed up with phone interviews or written survey. The questions addressed during the playing of the game and in interviews examined how people currently shared space, skills and stuff, and built an understanding of any barriers to sharing. In addition, the research team was able to build a comprehensive map of "haves" and "needs" with the sample group.

Participants were asked ten questions such as 'Are there currently barriers to you sharing with people you know?' and 'How do you get what you need for creative projects right now?' Given the the busy lives of participants, it was impossible to collect this feedback in the same way for each participant and so there were two methods employed. Five responded through phone or email, via a structured, written interview. The others participated in one of two focus groups.

One round of the game took around half an hour with two people playing at a time. Dealers (project team members) introduced people to the concept using a variation of the script below.



We noticed that a lot of people are unable to do what they would like to do, simply because they lack the things they need to do those things they want to do. So, here at Frontyard we have created a simple service to help match people with things that they need.

Do you have anything that you need? (perhaps you need a skill, or a tool, or just a bit of space to complete a project, or something, anything). If you list them on these post-it notes we will add them to the pool of current needs and see if we can find another person in the community who currently has the thing you need. Be sure also to write on the back of each 'need', why you need the thing.

While we're at it do you have anything that you would be willing to share? Perhaps you could look at the list of 'needs' and see if you have any of the things that others need. If so, write them on these post-it notes, and we will add it the the pool of current 'haves'. Perhaps you could put the conditions of use on the back of the post-it note (eg: not on wednesdays, only for an hour, it's complicated but happy to discuss sharing).

If there is a match, we will get in touch with you over the next week and work to see if we can facilitate matching your needs!

The primary purpose of the game was to generate a list of HAVES and a list of NEEDs to work with. We collected 59 HAVES and 38 NEEDs, recorded on different coloured paper. From these lists we identified 40 potential matches.

Participants

At the outset of the project, we decide we would include all arts-interested and involved people, including those outside traditional funding streams (individuals and organisations who realise their creative ideas independently or with other sources of funds, other kinds of access to space, skills etc). Our sample size was

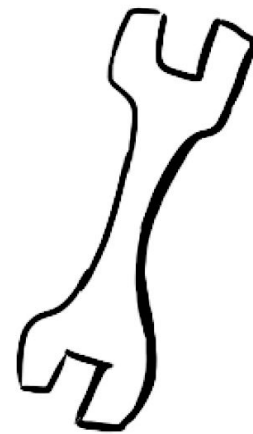
15, which was to be made up of 4 artists/makers (operating independent of gov. funding), 3 artists (regularly applying for and recipients of gov. funds), 4 organisations (non-arts related) and 4 organisations (arts-related).

In undertaking the research, we sought to slightly increase the number of participants to 20 in order to capture feedback from a more diverse group, which would touch on important considerations for the prototype, such as accessibility and Indigenous perspectives. An increase in sample size also allowed for participants to enter and leave the process with more flexibility, a requirement we identified early in communications with potential participants who typically had many commitments.

Stage 2: Digital Prototyping

We simultaneously developed a live prototype of the online platform which is being temporarily housed at www.whatchamacallit.space. This process was also highly participatory but led by the design team, in order to produce a platform that could be used quickly as a needs assessment:

- host a list of NEEDs that continues to grow and informs needs assessment
- host a list of HAVEs that continues to grow and meets the needs list
- ability for admin to match HAVEs with NEEDs
- ability for anonymous users to discuss match inside platform before agreeing to go through with any giving or exchange



While we did consider a complete list of desired features, the minimum viable product (MVP) that was built prioritises the platform as a research tool to continue assessing the needs of the arts community in Sydney. This MVP was completed on September 8th and is explained in more detail in the following section.

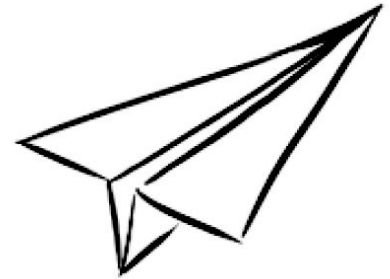
The participants were then given access to a basic working online prototype to add additional haves and needs for the next step of the prototyping process. An additional face-to-face session was offered to role play possible matches on the list of HAVEs and NEEDs on September 10th. Participants were emailed a possible match to role-play out the negotiation of that share, teasing out further functionality needs for the prototype.

Participants were invited to the soft launch of the Arts Assets platform (September 26), and most participants are committed to assisting in further development of Stage 3 of the prototype.

We have completed Stage 1 and are currently in Stage 2. We used the Agile project method for to manage the prototyping, design and build of the Asset Platform.

Results: What we made

We have made a basic prototype available for testing at www.whatchamacallit.space. This prototype is a live needs assessment for Sydney's arts community. This is how we have described it in the About section of the website:



"Arts Assets Platform" is the working title for a non-cash assets digital library and facilitator. We're currently developing this through conversations with you, our community, about what stands in the way of your creative ideas and realising them (aside from the need for cold, hard cash). We're researching how we currently find or share the skills, spaces and tools that we have and trying to build a space (digital and physical) that facilitates sharing particularly for the underrepresented and under-resourced artists among us.

The online prototype operates as two simple lists, populated by registered users. Users enter their 'haves' and 'needs' choosing the amount of detail they add. If a match occurs, the user's listed NEED and another user's HAVE (or vice versa) the "HAVER" is contacted by the team through a simple email, cueing the conversation with the user with the NEED. The negotiation and transaction is left to the matched users, who both receive the following message:

They're up for chatting about how to make it happen, you just need to let them know that you're INTERESTED and start a no obligation chat via the matches section of your profile.

Following a match being made, users are invited into an anonymous one-to-one conversation to 'start talking about the nitty gritty' within the platform.

It's now up to you to see if this match works and get to know each other a bit. It's a good idea to share some links about yourself, and say why you're interested in this match. This is a private, no obligation conversation that you can leave at any time.

Initial feedback from these exchanges includes the following:

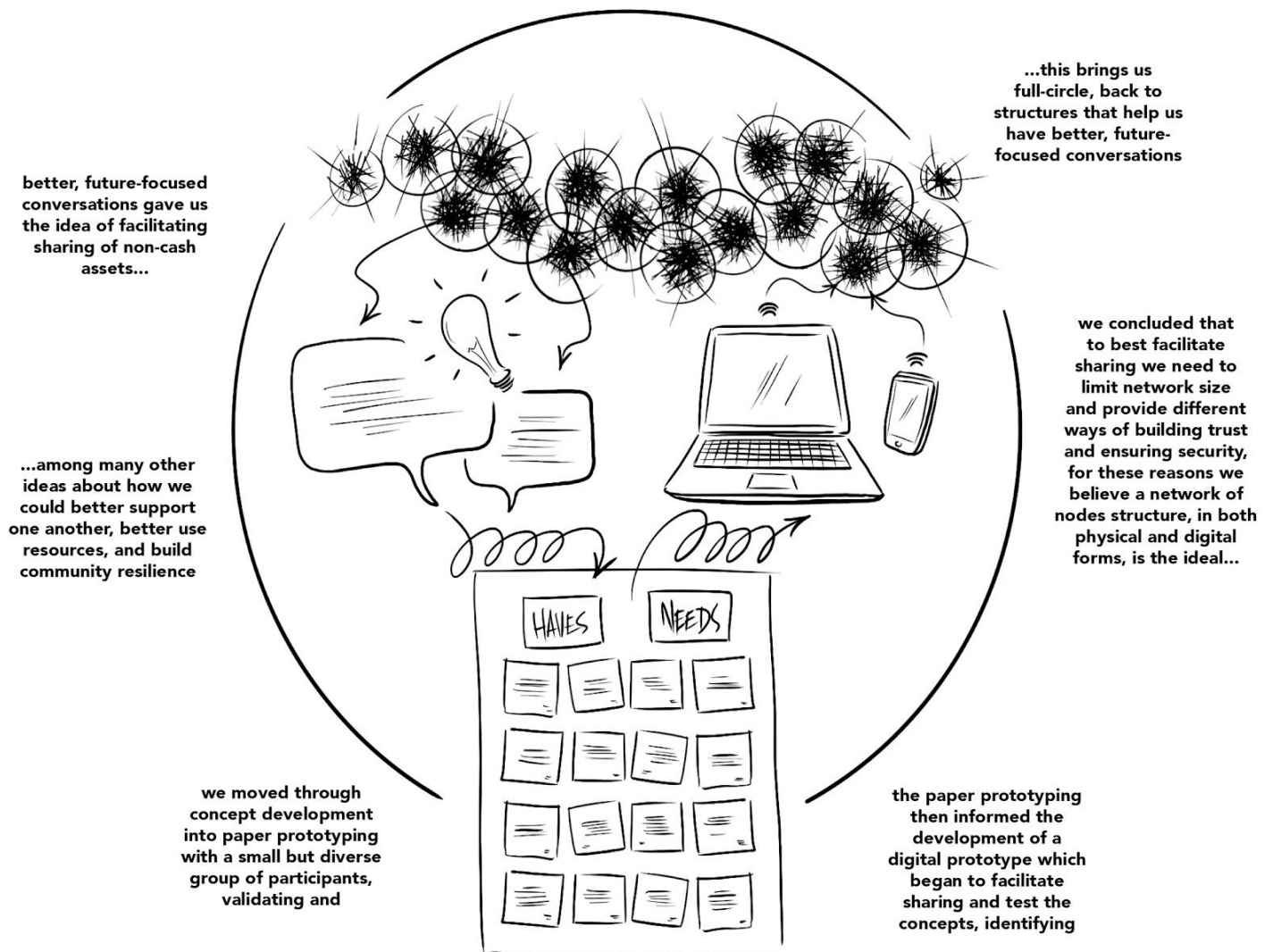
- users being so time-poor as to not even check in to the platform and asking for a direct email from the admin team
- users swapping phone numbers to discuss within 4 messages
- users taking up to 10 messages to nut out why the person needs the thing, influencing the likelihood of the HAVER to go out of their way to share it

- users identifying that the match didn't fit their NEED
- users abandoning the chat mid-way (with no feedback to the admin team)
- users feeling as though there was a point where they felt they should offer money or something in exchange, rather than just accepting the generosity of other user

The platform is currently online and continuing to be used and tested by the community. We are hoping to engage 100 people over Stage 3. We are collecting specific data sets from the following parts of the site:

	What we want to know
Searches	What are people looking for?
Listings- Haves	Quantity of Listings. What do people have to offer? How is what they offer on the site different to what they have said they would offer in person?
Listings- Needs	Quantity and range of Listings. What do people need? How is what they need or how they describe what they need different on the site to in person? If there are multiple needs for a certain skillset - could the platform suggest/facilitate a workshop?
Chat Space	How do people set up exchanges? What are the obstacles online?
Queries	What is unclear? What kinds of questions are users needing to ask us?

Results: What we found out



This sample section analyses the data gathered to date in order to assess the needs of our community. This analysis has helped us to answer what sharing means for different people in this community. The research undertaken has informed four distinct design decisions which we outline in the sections below.

Generosity is not in Shortage

While it may be a fair assumption that a sharing platform should be based on the needs of the community, our research has reinforced the idea that this project is assets-based. In other words, the design of the platform should be based on what people already have. Conversations in prototyping sessions and focus groups revealed that people were much more willing to participate if they felt they had something to offer, and much more comfortable talking about their excesses than their deficits. Participants expressed their generosity many times, as in these comments:

*"I have an amazing network. There is a constant flow of friends asking and giving I don't know what it's like to **not** have that."*

"I'm really keen to give a lot of my gear away and to share my skills. But one of the drawbacks for me is how long it would take me to list my non-cash assets. I could be sitting there for days!"

"I would be much more likely to use the platform if it is framed as a form of activism or altruism - as an established artist, I'd like to be doing something to help people just starting out sharing my contacts and skills. I haven't known where to put that energy yet, and protesting didn't seem to do much!"

"I'm excited about the possibility of sharing what I know with others I just don't have any idea where I would find the time "

We interpreted this as an inherent generosity within the community, as people are already used to sharing for art projects. Participants got excited about the opportunity to assist others, to contribute in various ways to the creative projects of others or just to share their helpful networks. This energy was felt in all our prototyping sessions, and left us wondering about how to match it with real needs of people who may be reluctant to make those needs public. We made a number of decisions about the platform based on these interpretations.

1. We designed around 'promoting generosity' rather than around 'meeting needs' - the platform notifies the user who listed the HAVE and prompts them to offer to the NEEDer, as opposed to putting the ball in the court of the NEEDer to hustle/hassle OR contacting both users by email.
2. The 'HAVES' list is anonymised
3. We recognised that a combination of physical and digital platforms would be key to the adoption of this as a useful platform for the community.

The Language of Sharing

At the outset of this project, we positioned non-cash assets as existing within 5 categories:

- Material (tools, objects)
- Social/Pedagogical (skills)
- Structural/functional (spaces)
- Collections/Archival (skills, tools, spaces)
- Communications/Media (skills, contacts and networks)



Early on in the project we agreed that we did not want to pre-define categories of needs as this language was potentially shaping, and limiting, the types of exchanges that the platform could support. Preparing for our first focus group we made the decision to be as open as possible with the way we described the platform and to find out what language artists themselves use

when articulating non cash assets. We knew that, as much as technically possible (i.e. there needed to be character limits in the digital platform), we needed to allow users to describe their own HAVES and NEEDs, in their own language.



During the paper prototyping stage, people described their HAVES, i.e. what they could offer, using a diverse range of language. Some used very specific descriptions such as '2x 2012 model macminis', 'Overhead projector', 'Risograph duplicator', 'translate Swedish for you' and 'How to read a beach for safe swimming'. Some offers were very vague such as 'Studio space', 'Design skills', 'Rehearsal space', 'Tripod', and 'Photography'. During this stage, the tension between detailed descriptions and more open ended descriptions became apparent, with one participant noting that 'sometimes there is skill that you don't even know you need because you don't know the language'.

With a few exceptions, which were very specific, such as '3 screens between 15-20 inches (uniform)', people tended to describe their NEEDs with less detail than their HAVES. While some needs were predicted from the outset (such as 'storage space' and 'rehearsal space' - both of which were articulated several times), many were surprising. Many needs were skills based, such as 'Tech/computer skills', 'to learn good personal accounting', and some of these were quite personal in the way help was requested, such as 'someone to help me articulate my ideas', 'a new perspective on how to manage and make more time' and 'Mess around with high end powertools, eg. Router, Band saw, etc'. These were not explicitly anticipated, nor easily categorised, which confirmed our inclination for a looseness of language when designing the platform.

From the first stage of participatory prototyping, we knew that since generosity was indeed the default mode of interaction, intervention from the team could and should be minimal, and simply encourage of sharing. We needed to be careful not to use any language that would close off or shutdown possibilities, and to avoid any unnecessary dialogue, leaving communication as much as possible up to the sharers.

"I'm wary of any language that perpetuates a project-driven or specific outcome-driven approach to art making. We're getting into market-driven habits when creating when we should be experimenting, risking, failing and learning. Please avoid listing things as project-based needs"

"I would be less likely to contribute to a project that looks as though it has backing from a commercial gallery - if the person lists their needs attached to an exhibition they're pulling together for, say, Prima Vera at MCA - I reckon I'd assume the MCA should be sourcing stuff for them. If it was a show for an ARI though, and I knew that the ARI supported good people, I might be more likely to assist"

These findings encouraged us to simplify the design of the digital platform by having two simple lists and waiting to find out how people categorise their assets by tracking their search terms.

The possibilities of Anonymity

As with all sectors, both formal and informal hierarchies exist. Pressures differ from people creating as professionals to “hobbyists”, from emerging to established, from artists creating for a commercial “arts market” to artists working primarily to protest and agitate. The platform aims to level the playing field of the arts as much as possible, so with the above concerns and feedback in mind, we encouraged users to use their initials or chosen pseudonyms during prototyping.



“I’m OK with listing the things I have, but I don’t want to be pressured to share them - or for people to assume that just because I list them, they should be ready and available whenever, especially my skills and time.”

“I don’t like asking for things from people who are more established than me. I often feel inferior or as though I haven’t earned the right to ask because I haven’t done the same amount of hard-yards.”

“I create for fun, it’s my down-time, not my core work. I feel weird about asking full-time artists for assistance, skills or tools. I don’t think our motivations match up”

[during digital prototyping] “I can see how what I need and have sit amidst a community, rather than a hierarchy of specific NEEDers and HAVers”

Several participants raised the concern that they did not want to feel coerced into sharing. Attempting to avoid the trend on social media platforms to show off their achievements or generosity, we removed this opportunity by creating a platform without identifiable user profiles. We think the advantages of anonymity are greater than those of flouting. With anonymity, different types of exchange are made possible and opportunities for the network to broaden are created.

Hybrid Forms: Connecting online and sharing in person

A significant finding of the research is that artists are best left to determine their own modes of reciprocity, and that sometimes this is best done in person.

For instance, in Stage 1, one of the players of the games pointed to a space they had that others could potentially use for rehearsal. But the space needed to be

cleared out, requiring labour, which meant the HAVE was also a NEED. The arrangements for such a transaction are personal and difficult to mediate. So it was decided best left to modes of interaction outside the platform, online through email, or in person. Another instance of this was a participant who owned theatre drapes. The drapes had been out of circulation and needed to be dry cleaned. This was expensive, and impossible for the owner of the drapes, but less expensive than purchasing new drapes. When an artist and gallery needed the drapes, they borrowed them and dry cleaned. The transaction was not a simple HAVE and NEED exchange. Rather a suite of HAVEs and NEEDs were addressed.

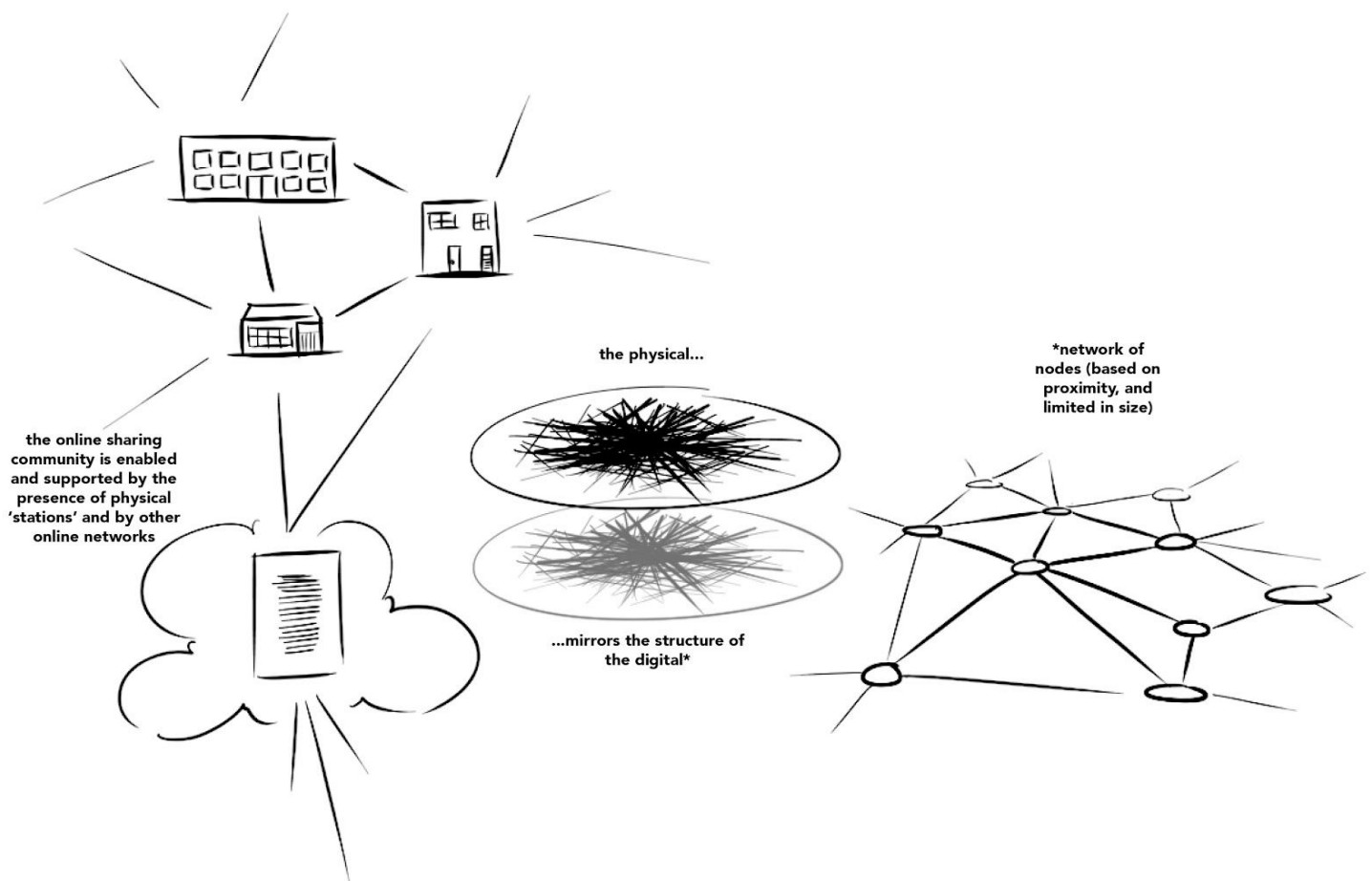
While there were some ideas at the outset of this project that a digital assets platform could exist as a facilitator of creative projects, independent to the arts infrastructure of the city, ARIs, galleries, studios etc., we are sure that this project will only be successful if it is a combination of a digital platform and face to face events in existing and future arts spaces in the city.



Making opportunities for physical interactions that build and maintain this online community are essential.

A Network of Nodes

Network size and proximity appeared to be an issue for both the digital and physical manifestations for a number of reasons - from an ever-expanding list of needs and haves (growing in difficulty to navigate) to the assumption of geographically-specific needs and limitations. In light of these, the node-network structure is being suggested as an alternative to any centralised development. The open-source nature of the prototype (addressed below) lends itself to replication, co-authorship, pivoting and forking to address the needs of a specific group, community or locality.



Multiple, localised entry points offer access to non-cash assets (e.g. tools, skills, resources), the ability to contribute to and build a community, but also – through participation in community – increased personal and network resilience. Our idea is that these nodes will have the capability of communicating with one another - this is yet to be tested.

Technical Decisions are Politics

Early on, we decided that [the software component of this project](#) should be transparent and available for reuse and remixing by anyone anywhere. As we try to help people share resources, we're setting an example by sharing the

infrastructure we build. To achieve this we licensed the prototype as open source using the popular [GNU Affero General Public License](#).

We're following the lead of open source civic technology projects like the OpenAustralia Foundation's [PlanningAlerts](#) which helps people participate in local planning around Australia. The code for PlanningAlerts is open source. It was originally written in the UK in 2007, but after a few years was shut down there. It was taken freely 7 years ago and adapted for Australia and has been running here ever since. Because it's free to adapt and reuse, local councils in the UK have since taken the updated version from Australia and made new projects there. This is the kind of efficient sharing between communities that open source licensing affords.

By being transparent with how our system works, we open up the potential for sophisticated debugging, design and security contributions from programmers interested in the project. In theory it also provides a way for the people using our project to inspect and confirm that it works as we say it does. Currently this would require them to have a good knowledge of programming, but in Stage 3 we could make this aspect more accessible creating a simply written test suite.

By sharing our code we also get the added benefit of using crucial online infrastructure like the code collaboration platform [Github](#) which is free for open source projects. In the future we could move our project tasks list and bug tracking into GitHub as well so more people could participate in directly developing the platform.

A software service, like this project, requires ongoing maintenance at a minimum. To be successful it also needs to adapt and be developed in collaboration with its community to meet their needs. Making the project open source allows us to minimise the costs of hosting and infrastructure and maximise the potential for participation.

Future Directions



We are sure that a combination of a digital asset library, like the one we have made, with community events that link to the dynamic register by temporarily making visible the exchanges it facilitates, will provide the resources, skills, capacity building, equipment and facilities needed for artists in Sydney to create, produce new work, and facilitate longer term sustainability and resilience.

Proposed Next Steps - Stage 3 scoping

We have completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the project. Considering Stage 3, we have identified some potential barriers to the success of the platform:

- people need to know their stuff will be safe and secure (insurance)

- people may say they will share assets and when it comes to the exchange, back out for various reasons and are reluctant to give feedback
- sharing of physical assets in Sydney has limitations of geographical scope and we are not exactly sure what these are
- ownership of assets may not be simply tied to an individual, they may be tied to an organisation. Our platform is designed for individual login and decision making.

The digital platform prototype hosted at <http://www.whatchamacallit.space/> is the minimum viable product version of this concept. The following are recommendations for next steps, as informed by our observations and direct feedback from participants:

- Funding a platform agitator/aggregator and researcher
- Enhancing usability and functionality (technical summary of stage 1&2)
- Grouping in, Brokering and Looping in
- Non-cash Physical Stations & Events
- Assets Register for organisations
- Insurance opt-ins
- Councils introduce Arts Assets/non-cash budget line for grants
- Geographical Scope - other Councils

Funding a platform agitator/aggregator and researcher

Approx 6h/week at \$350/week for 6 months (approximately \$8000).

These 2 roles would entail:

- further observation of users
- connect with ARI's and arts orgs to expand user database
- liaise with stations regarding regular events for the platform
- design and implement geographic and temporal search functions as well as backlog

Enhancing usability and functionality (technical summary of stage 1&2)

In developing this prototype we used an Agile development process called MSCW (Must, Should, Could, Won't) to identify the absolutely core functions and prioritise those features which should and then could be implemented later. Throughout research and development we have kept a growing list of possible features and functions which could be pursued in the next stages of this project. These range from relatively trivial things, like being able to change your user name and delete listings, through to the more ambitious functionality, like allowing organisations use the platform as a private asset register, and ordering NEEDs and HAVEs geographically.

We have a long list of features that could be added to the platform. Assets are currently represented only by a title and a description text field.

User suggestions:

- Add temporal details and list needs by urgency (need this month VS would like to have access to X ongoing, or learning Y skill to benefit overall practice)
- Search by time/date availability calendar
- Search by location or Resource map?
- Ask for more information about an asset without engaging in exchange dialogue
- to "+1" an asset or "Group-in" to indicate demand for a particular asset - with special attention to skills listings, as workshops may be arranged/organised as a potential feature of the platform in association with Frontyard
- Buddy-up system - pull people/team together to make it worthwhile to learn/teach a skill or work on a project
- Collate matches to avoid email flooding
- Flag interest in an item
- A tutorial or video about how the non-cash asset platform operates.
- option to view/share photos of a thing (words fail)
- recommend a friend to join
- suggest a match between items as I browse
- reorder my view of things based on use, time added, last shared
- seeing questions people have asked about an item, I want to be able to rank them, say they are useful
- I want to see how many items someone has shared and received
- I want to be able to look at my previous matches, successful or not
- Search with a range of terms that are inexact
- Set special lending conditions
- Compare options
- I need to know that everyone here is over 18
- User: be easy to share need as a post of FB/Insta/Twitter/Snapchat
- Update on assets monthly/weekly
- Mystery search - lucky dip option
- Download my listings
- How do I do complex transaction eg: find an html teacher, assemble enough people, book a space for the day...
- Narrow search by location
- Preset replies to people asking: eg "\"Hey, it's not available until end of the year\" or \"sorry, I don't feel comfortable lending this at this time etc\""
- Program recognises similar terms - eg: photography, video, camera etc.
- Add a 'how this works' section to the about page to explain what happens

User Motivations:

- EDM update email on events with featured (or urgent) needs, assets monthly/weekly and/or exciting activity/offers/haves this week - piques interest & clicks - encourages users to update
- Admin to prompt to skills listers - would user be willing to host a group workshop to share skill? If yes - what \$/trade? And/or is user willing to mentor others?
- User: I'd like to see if my skills are in demand
- User: I want to see/track project progress through mailout or somewhere on the page that tells me about the project history
- I want to know that I am sharing for a good cause. I need stories.

User Concerns:

- What happens if the user I've lent tool to doesn't give it back (on time)? DO they get blocked? Banned?
- Where am I going? Picking up form?
- How do I cancel/contact user if things change?
- Allow admins to easily remove false/bad listings
- I need to trust things I share will be cared for - assurance/ insurance? No scary creepers? [ratings]
- Add user reviews
- test a points system where "\"givers\"" accrue points as opposed to something like the LETS system where you can accrue debt if you don't give. Another way that our platform is focusing on changing the culture to focus on the giving...
- What private info do I give you the platform?
- Spelling mistakes - I need auto correct
- English second language - translation options?
- As a user, let me remove an item I no longer need
- Allow user to reset password

Financial data/audit:

- Admin: would user apply for a grant for this and if yes, how much? How many days labour etc (data collection)
- would like to understand how much money people would otherwise be spending on the thing. Environmental audit as well as financial.

Grouping in, Brokering and Looping in

We identified multiple listings for skills such as basic accounting, web design, writing, video and sound editing.

As suspected from the outset, many of the NEEDs of independent artists in City of Sydney LGA overlap. Our first recommendation regarding this point is that the platform could monitor the overlapping requests (**Grouping In** for a skillset) and propose workshop opportunities involving community members willing to share their skills to a group (perhaps hosted by Frontyard). Another form of Grouping In would be in crowdsourcing/crowdfunding assets. For instance, if the list identifies unmet needs within the community that cannot be sourced without cash.

Our second recommendation is regards multiple listings for tools or rental spaces, although we did not collect the specific collective volume or spending on storage space, artists are spending a great deal on renting space either short or long-term. Rather than offer cash grants for artists to spend on storage space rental, we suggest that local councils could play a role in **brokering** bulk deals with storage space companies specifically for artists use.

Looping In is the working term for pulling friends into the platform when you know they HAVE the thing that someone has listed as a NEED, replicating what we already do informally, but with the benefit of anonymity in the platform, expanding the community and network.

Blue-sky Idea #1: Non-cash Physical Stations & Events in Sydney

We recommend that for this platform to have maximum impact on the facilitation of creative projects, there be physical stations around the city. A few central recommended stations are **Frontyard, Waterloo Library, Firstdraft** and **Alaska Projects**. We propose that a related “meet-up” events is held monthly and circulates between these stations. These events would introduce people into generous and well-equipped networks, by artists, for artists. These events would playfully illustrate the effective collaborative consumption and waste reduction enabled by a listing specific to artists who are often engaged with similar resources, production and presentation models. A physical listing of the NEEDS and HAVES could tour each site, growing and evolving at each event.

Blue-sky Idea #2: Assets Register (possible “product” option)

Offering the platform as an Assets Register to organisations (eg Alaska Projects, NAVA, Firstdraft, Frontyard) could encourage asset-rich groups to “buy-in” to the platform in that they would be able to keep track of the location and condition their assets, share and loan readily from other organisations and easily make items/things/skills/spaces and opportunities “visible only to the organisation” or “public” and therefore shareable.

Blue-sky Idea #3: Insurance opt-ins (possible non-gov funding source)

Both NEEDers and HAVers identified that if the platform offered insurance they would be more likely to share and to ask. Several participants have lived and worked in Germany where artists are obliged to insure their tools and spaces through the Künstlersozialkasse (Artist Social Fund, established in the late 1970s), resulting in a highly reciprocal sharing economy in the arts community. This possibility raises ethical issues and requires more consideration.

Councils introduce Arts Assets/non-cash budget line for grants

We propose that Council introduces a budget line in arts grant applications that feeds into this specific project - not only prompting creators to get into new habits when thinking about sourcing materials and skills for new projects, but also for council to gain insight on the platform's ongoing traction. For example In-Kind specifically relating to Non-cash Assets platform.

Geographical Scope - other Councils

We propose that City of Sydney encourage other councils to activate a "node" of this platform in their LGA.

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APPENDIX

A basic summary of listed “Needs” on <http://www.whatchamacallit.space/> as at 11am 26 September 2016:

Loose Category	Listed as “Need”	Listed as “Have”
Material: Tools	tripods LED studio light floor paint copper pipe digital projectors microscope cameras power tools (sand blaster) pottery wheel projection screens	tripods LED studio light CD player + amplifier vocal recording studio (with all gear) pottery wheels (free usage) ceramics firing and clay, equipment portable dance floor large video projection screen risograph printer power tools (drills, grinder, drop saw and more) interesting books and academic texts zoom audio recorder floor fan 2012 model macminis canon camera 5D tripod media players projectors TV screens VHS tapes VCRs CRT monitors Keyboard amp PA system w/ mixing deck equipment, green screen cameras, tripod, sound equipment
Material: furniture and misc.	indoor plants outdoor benches mannequin parts display cabinets	violin harp guitar Analogue synth theatre drapes spare and assorted fabrics marquee
Transport	Bikes A large van Cars	Bikes (and bike repair skills) A large van Cars Trailer
Skills: making and repair	tune and string guitar bookbinding skills English tailoring skills	cooking dance teaching nerdy pop-culture expert

	foraging skills Blacksmithing skills Leather working skills Bow and arrow making skills camera skills woodworking skills garden design skills welding skills power tool skills carpentry skills screen printing skills installing skills	sewing tools and accessories knife/axe/sword sharpening and restoration costume and prop making leatherwork comedy training advice on flowers and leaves beginners ceramics courses photography casting dance class (freeform) coffee making/teaching fabrication production repair hat blocking yoga teaching laser cutting what to cook building carpentry sewing (and industrial) crochet financial skills permaculture design skills soldering writing how to make lampshades bike repair skills
Skills: managing/navigating life/career	mentoring re arts business accounting skills DAs for art spaces time management skills financial advice, basic accounting marketing skills exercise skills cooking skills	mentoring presentation skills, public speaking how to drive the internet how to read a beach for safe swimming info about small artist grants tour management requesting docs from government proofreading, editing
Skills: Digital/Tech/Documentation	website design skills graphic design advice on tech speakers programming skills web design, web development web scraping video editing skills data analysis skill	electronic music production workshops video/photo documentation video editing soundtrack creation sound design sound producing online privacy online privacy web scraping logo design ambisonic audio recording audio recording, editing, mixing electronics advice tech advice

		sound engineering radio making sound editing and mastering online advertising e-commerce store setup graphic design photoshop "agile" development training
Skills: communication	learn second language french lessons art history tutoring	programming HTML, javascript, python, C++ arduino vietnamese (and fake spanish) german esperanto speaking/writing german language performance feedback creative consulting talking people through concepts consultation around arts and politics Admin skills Grant writing skills tour management promoting, cross-promoting professional development public programs publicity marketing interpersonal skills can make you laugh (x2!) emo/tech problem solver attitude/chutzpah advice/mentorship
Spaces: events and exhibitions	Space for monthly meetup storage space for large art project	studio and event space warehouse space for events a big yard
Spaces: studio/rehearsal, artist residencies	Photography studio space large dance rehearsal space Studio Residency	studio space (for ceramics artists) dance class space yoga studio gallery space small studio space (shop front) soldering station studio space sound studio artist residency desk-share work space in newtown residency space workshop space in marrickville vocal recording studio (with all gear) space for a harpist to practice performance rehearsal space drums and space to practice

		studio/garage space photoshoots space
Labour/skills for projects	Hand Model Proofread a document (urgent) merch seller babysitting videographer marching band session musicians plumber interns people to help put on gigs in Melb. website design marketing graphic design woman to lie on a rock in a bikini sanding and painting shoot short films for website decorate a studio apartment install sound system project help transport cleaner install toilet sky writer web design, web development web scraping feedback for ideas translation research and local planning video editor transport and help storage arts reviewer arts writer sound engineering sound producing sound recording videographer photographer	performance feedback creative consulting art installation pet sitting affectionate cat web hosting large van + transport photography translate swedish facilitation capabilities cooking/catering video editor (many) ambisonic audio recording proofreading text editing german translation russian translation spanish translation installation support project advice marketing advice graphic design proposal writing performance acting talking people through concepts consultation around arts and politics Admin skills Grant writing skills tour management sound engineering sound producing sound recording videographer photographer
Collections, archival	Experimental music library	Experimental music library arts resource library (ex-Ozco)
Health/energy/ephemera 1	Time and Energy x100 excuses to socialise information exchange time sleep holiday house "employment"	get in touch with your body again interpersonal skills can make you laugh (x2!) tour de france interest (and crepe making) emo/tech problem solver attitude/chutzpah

		advice/mentorship
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To access current full listings of NEEDS and HAVES please visit the ever-expanding digital prototype here: <http://www.whatchamacallit.space/>