



Public Art Policy

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1. Purpose

Public art contributes to vibrant, distinctive and welcoming places. It enriches everyday experiences, reflects local identity and culture, and creates opportunities for communities and visitors to connect with the stories, cultures and landscapes of East Gippsland.

East Gippsland is home to extraordinary landscapes, rich First Nations culture, diverse communities and unique local histories. Public art in East Gippsland is uniquely shaped by, and plays a distinct role in celebrating, the relationship between culture, nature and place, from waterways and forests to coastlines and mountains, town centres and communities.

This Policy establishes a shared vision and framework for how East Gippsland Shire Council (Council) supports public art across the region. It provides strategic direction for decision-making while recognising that public art may emerge through many pathways, including Council-led projects, community initiatives, partnerships and private investment.

The Policy seeks to:

- Articulate the value and role of public art in East Gippsland;
- Provide a clear and consistent framework for public art decision-making;
- Support high quality, place-responsive and culturally respectful public art outcomes;
- Encourage collaboration across communities, artists, Traditional Owners and diverse stakeholders;
- Clarify Council's role in supporting, commissioning, enabling and stewarding public art; and
- Create the conditions for public art to contribute to community wellbeing, liveability, environmental sustainability and the visitor economy.

Detailed operational processes, governance arrangements and lifecycle guidance are contained within the accompanying Public Art Operational Framework.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to public art activities where Council has a role in planning, funding, commissioning, approving, facilitating, communicating, managing or stewarding public art.

The Policy may apply to:

- Council-commissioned public art on Council-owned or managed land and assets;
- Public art integrated into capital works, infrastructure, open space, community facility, placemaking or visitor economy projects;
- Community-led or externally funded public art on Council-owned or managed land;
- Gifted, donated or acquired artworks proposed for public display or Council care;
- Partnerships involving other levels of government, Traditional Owners, First Nations communities, community organisations, businesses, private landowners or other land managers; and
- Public art initiatives supported through grants, sponsorship, advice, advocacy or other forms of assistance provided by Council.

The Policy recognises that public art occurs across a range of settings, ownership and governance arrangements. Council's role may vary depending on project context, land ownership, funding, risk, community interest and lifecycle implications. The principles of this Policy provide a consistent basis for decision-making.

Detailed procedures, governance arrangements and approval pathways are contained within the Public Art Operational Framework.

3. Context

The development of this Policy was informed by community and stakeholder engagement, Council staff input, review of relevant Council strategies and benchmarking of public art practice across comparable Victorian councils.

This process identified opportunities to support community-led and partnership projects, clarify roles and responsibilities, improve coordination across Council business areas, strengthen lifecycle planning and create clearer pathways for public art delivery.

This Policy supports the implementation of Council's broader strategic objectives and aligns with key Council strategies and plans, including:

- **Council Plan 2025–2029**, which seeks to foster community wellbeing, prosperity and vibrant places across East Gippsland;
- **Community Vision 2040**, which articulates a long-term aspiration for a thriving, connected and resilient region;
- **Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2033**, particularly its commitment to foster cultural and creative communities, support community-led initiatives and embed creativity into the fabric of East Gippsland;
- **Culture and Creativity Action Plan 2023–2027**, which identifies opportunities to expand cultural activity, advocate for new cultural outcomes and improve access to resources and spaces; and
- **Economic Development Strategy 2022–2032**, which recognises the contribution of arts, culture, heritage and visitor experiences to East Gippsland's prosperity and liveability.

This Policy is supported by an accompanying Public Art Operational Framework (Appendix 1), which provides detailed guidance on governance, commissioning, lifecycle management and operational processes.

4. Statement

4.1 Why Public Art Matters

Public art is more than artworks in public places.

Public art can transform everyday spaces into places of meaning and connection. It can celebrate local stories, cultural and social histories, strengthen community pride, foster cultural understanding and invite people to engage more deeply with the places they live in and visit. It can encourage people to stop, explore and spend more time in East Gippsland's towns and landscapes.

Across East Gippsland, public art already contributes to community life in many forms – from murals and projections, festivals and art trails, integrated design and temporary activations.

These experiences enrich public spaces, support local artists and create opportunities for creativity to be visible and accessible to all.

Public art also contributes to broader Council priorities by:

- Strengthening local identity and sense of place;
- Celebrating First Nations culture, stories and connection to Country;
- Enhancing liveability, community wellbeing and environmental sustainability;
- Supporting tourism, visitation and local economies;
- Supporting placemaking, renewal and heritage interpretation;
- Activating town centres, landscapes, waterways, trails and public spaces;
- Encouraging creativity, participation and cultural expression; and
- Contributing to vibrant, inclusive, resilient and connected communities.

As East Gippsland continues to evolve, public art can help communities navigate change, celebrate local character and identities, and create places that people are proud to call home.

4.2 Vision

Public art in East Gippsland celebrates the stories, cultures, creativity and landscapes that shape the region. It strengthens connection to place, fosters community pride and creates opportunities for people to engage with diverse perspectives and experiences. Through public art, Council supports vibrant, creative and connected communities while enhancing the liveability, character and identity of East Gippsland.

4.3 Objectives

This Policy aims to create the conditions for public art to flourish. This aim can be expressed through the following objectives:

Celebrate East Gippsland's Identity

Support public art that reflects the distinctive stories, landscapes, histories and cultures of East Gippsland's communities and places.

Support Our Creative Communities and Industry

Create opportunities for artists, communities, organisations and creative practitioners to contribute to public life through creativity and cultural expression.

Foster Vibrant, Welcoming and Liveable Places

Enhance public spaces, strengthen community pride and contribute to attractive, inclusive, engaging and liveable places.

Enable Partnerships and Participation

Support collaboration between Council, Traditional Owners, First Nations communities, artists, businesses, community groups, land managers and other stakeholders.

Promote Quality and Good Practice

Encourage public art that is thoughtfully planned, appropriately resourced and responsive to context.

Support Sustainable Outcomes

Recognise the importance of lifecycle planning, stewardship, environmental sustainability, safety, accessibility and long-term maintenance in public art decision-making.

Strengthen the Visitor Economy

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Leverage public art to enrich visitor experiences, strengthen destination appeal and support local economic development.

4.4 Defining Public Art

For the purposes of this Policy, public art refers to creative works, experiences or interventions that are accessible to the public and contribute to the cultural, social and physical character of a place.

Public art may be permanent, temporary or ephemeral, and can take many forms, including:

- Sculpture and installations;
- Murals and street art;
- Integrated artistic elements within buildings, landscapes and infrastructure;
- Functional artworks, such as pavilions, seating, lighting or play elements;
- Digital, projection, sound and augmented reality experiences;
- Temporary activations, artist-residencies, and festivals;
- Performance-based works; and
- Placemaking, interpretation and storytelling that creatively express local histories, cultures, places and identities.

Public art is not limited to stand-alone artworks. It may be integrated into the design of places and infrastructure, creating experiences that enrich everyday life.

Public art in East Gippsland is uniquely shaped by the relationship between culture, nature, communities and place. It can reflect the region's landscapes, waterways, histories, industries, cultural aspirations and living cultures while creating opportunities for communities and visitors to connect more deeply with place.

What Public Art Is Not

While broad in scope, not all visual treatments or infrastructure constitute public art. Artworks presented as part of formal exhibitions within galleries, museums or internal exhibition spaces are generally not considered public art for the purposes of this Policy, unless they are specifically commissioned or presented as publicly accessible works in the public realm.

The following are generally not considered public art for the purposes of this Policy unless developed through an artistic process:

- Standard signage and wayfinding;
- Advertising or commercial branding;
- Decorative landscaping without artistic intent;
- Temporary event infrastructure;
- Routine building finishes or embellishments; and
- Artworks presented as part of formal exhibitions within galleries, museums or internal exhibition spaces.

4.5 Public Art Principles

Public art supported by Council should be guided by the following principles.

Place-Based

Public art should respond and contribute to the unique landscapes, histories, cultures and aspirations of East Gippsland's communities and places.

Flexible and Innovative

Public art should encourage creativity, experimentation and diverse forms of artistic expression. It should stimulate dialogue and debate, recognising that temporary and ephemeral works can be as valuable as permanent commissions.

Community-Focused

Public art should create opportunities for connection, participation and shared experiences that strengthen community pride, identity and belonging.

Culturally Respectful

Public art should recognise and respect First Nations cultures, knowledge, cultural authority and connection to Country, while supporting culturally safe and inclusive processes.

Enabling and Collaborative

Council seeks to enable public art by creating clear pathways, supporting partnerships and assisting artists, communities, project teams and stakeholders to navigate opportunities.

High Quality and Context-Sensitive

Public art should be thoughtfully conceived, appropriately sited and responsive to its physical, social and environmental context.

Sustainable and Responsible

Public art should consider environmental sustainability, lifecycle costs, maintenance requirements, accessibility, public safety, asset information and long-term stewardship.

4.6 Council's Role

Public art occurs through many pathways and partnerships. Ideas may be initiated by Council business areas, artists, community groups, Traditional Owners, First Nations communities, businesses, land managers, external agencies or project partners.

Council's role will vary depending on the nature, significance, scale, location, ownership and lifecycle implications of a project. Depending on the context, Council may act as:

Commissioner

Initiating and delivering public art projects on behalf of the community, including through capital works and place-based initiatives.

Facilitator

Providing advice, coordination and support to artists, cultural and community groups, businesses and partners navigating public art opportunities.

Advocate

Championing the value of public art and seeking opportunities to attract funding, investment and partnerships.

Communicator

Sharing information with communities, Council teams and partners about public art opportunities, engagement processes, project outcomes and installed works.

Regulator

Supporting compliance with relevant legislative, statutory, land management, heritage, planning, building, risk, safety, procurement and asset management requirements.

Steward

Supporting the ongoing custodianship, asset information, maintenance, conservation, repair, relocation and lifecycle management of public art within Council's care.

Partner

Working collaboratively with Traditional Owners, artists, communities, cultural organisations, government agencies and other stakeholders to deliver shared outcomes.

Council recognises that public art often involves multiple custodians, land managers, funding sources and stakeholders. A collaborative and proportionate approach will be applied, recognising that Council's level of involvement may differ depending on project context.

4.7 Public Art Pathways

Public art in East Gippsland occurs through a range of pathways involving different initiators, land managers, funding sources and stakeholders. Council recognises that no single model will suit all circumstances and that its role may vary depending on project context.

The following pathways provide a framework for understanding how public art may occur across the region.

Council-led Public Art

Council may initiate, commission or deliver public art projects on Council-owned or managed land and assets.

Examples may include:

- Public art integrated into civic buildings, parks and open spaces;
- Place-based initiatives and revitalisation projects;
- Public art associated with capital works and infrastructure projects; and
- Strategic commissions that contribute to community, cultural or visitor outcomes.

Externally Led Public Art on Council Land

Community groups, artists, businesses, Traditional Owners and other organisations may seek to deliver public art on Council-owned or managed land.

Council may provide support through:

- Permits and approvals;
- Advice and coordination;
- Technical review and risk management;
- Facilitation of partnerships; and
- Ongoing stewardship arrangements, where appropriate.

Public Art Beyond Council Land

Public art may occur on private, Crown or other public land beyond Council's direct control.

While Council may not have a formal role in all projects, it may support initiatives that contribute to community, cultural or visitor outcomes through advocacy, advice, partnerships and connections. Council may also have a role where proposals intersect with Council

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responsibilities, including landowner consent, planning, heritage, building, risk, safety, asset, event, environmental or other regulatory requirements.

Partnerships and Multi-Agency Projects

Some public art projects involve multiple land managers, funding partners or agencies, and collaborative partnerships involving Council.

These projects may require collaborative governance arrangements and coordinated decision-making to support successful delivery.

Gifts, Donations and Acquisitions

From time to time, artworks may be proposed for acquisition, donation or transfer into the Council’s care, custody or ownership.

Any such proposals will be assessed against Council’s strategic priorities, maintenance implications, cultural considerations and lifecycle costs.

Detailed pathway guidance and processes are contained within the Public Art Operational Framework.

4.8 Governance and Decision-Making

Council is committed to transparent, collaborative and proportionate governance, community engagement and specialist input that support high-quality public art outcomes.

Governance arrangements should be scalable and responsive to the significance, size, complexity and risk profile of individual projects.

Scalable Governance

Not all public art projects require the same level of oversight.

The governance approach for each project should be proportionate to factors such as:

- Cultural significance and cultural authority;
- Scale and budget;
- Complexity and risk;
- Stakeholder and community interest;
- Land ownership and approvals;
- Public safety and accessibility;
- Asset ownership and maintenance implications; and
- Permanence, lifespan and decommissioning expectations.

Smaller and temporary projects may require streamlined processes, while larger or more complex projects may require additional governance, community engagement and specialist input.

Project Working Groups

Where appropriate, project working groups may be established to support the planning and delivery of public art projects.

Where public art forms part of a broader capital works project, public art and curatorial expertise should be integrated into existing project governance arrangements wherever possible.

This may include representation from relevant Council teams and external stakeholders, including artists, curators, Traditional Owner representatives, First Nations knowledge holders

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or storytellers, design professionals, technical specialists and community representatives, depending on project scope and requirements.

Role of Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important component of many public art projects, supporting local relevance, shared ownership and connection to place. The nature and scope of engagement should be carefully considered and proportionate to each project.

Community input may inform project context, local stories, site considerations, community aspirations and desired outcomes. However, engagement should not constrain artistic expression, override the role of the artist, or replace appropriate cultural authority, technical assessment or Council decision-making.

Public art is inherently interpretive and may generate differing perspectives within the community. Engagement approaches should support dialogue and understanding while maintaining respect for creative independence and the intent of the work.

Specialist Advice and Advisory Panels

Council may convene specialist advisory groups or expert panels to provide advice on public art projects.

Panels may be established on a project-by-project basis and may include:

- Artists and curators;
- Traditional Owner representatives, First Nations knowledge holders or cultural advisors;
- Design, placemaking, landscape architecture or urban design professionals;
- Community representatives;
- Asset, engineering, maintenance, planning, building, safety or risk specialists;
- Subject matter experts relevant to the project; and
- Relevant Council officers.

This approach recognises that different projects may require dedicated and diverse expertise and perspectives.

Decision-Making

Final decision-making authority will remain with Council in accordance with delegated authority, governance arrangements, relevant legislation and statutory requirements.

Public art proposals may require permits, approvals or consent depending on the site, land tenure, form, scale, permanence, materials, delivery method and potential impacts.

Relevant requirements may include landowner or land manager consent, planning permits, building permits, heritage requirements, Aboriginal cultural heritage considerations, road reserve or traffic safety approvals, event permits, environmental requirements, risk and OHS requirements, procurement processes, public liability insurance and asset management requirements.

This Policy does not replace statutory, regulatory or Council approval processes. Where permits, approvals or specialist advice are required, proposals must be assessed through the relevant process and with input from the responsible Council team or external authority. Council will seek to balance artistic integrity, community aspirations, cultural considerations, public safety, asset stewardship, regulatory requirements and practical constraints in decision-making.

4.9 First Nations Cultural Protocols and Respect

East Gippsland includes lands and waters of First Nations peoples and communities with continuing connections to their Country and Culture.

Council acknowledges the importance of First Nations cultures, knowledge, stories, languages, creative practice and connection to Country in public art. Council also recognises that cultural authority may vary depending on the project location, subject matter, community, story or cultural knowledge involved.

Public art projects should:

- respect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property;
- recognise First Nations cultural authority, expertise and self-determination;
- support opportunities for First Nations artists, creatives, knowledge holders and storytellers;
- support culturally safe engagement processes;
- ensure First Nations stories, histories, cultural knowledge and language are shared only with appropriate permissions, endorsement and protocols; and
- recognise that projects involving country, cultural landscapes or places of significance require early engagement with relevant Traditional Owners, First Nations knowledge holders, storytellers or cultural authorities.

The level of First Nations involvement should be proportionate to the nature, location and context of each project.

Projects involving First Nations stories, histories, cultural knowledge, language, Country or places of significance should be developed with the relevant Traditional Owners, First Nations knowledge holders, storytellers or cultural authorities as appropriate to the project context.

Detailed guidance is contained within the Public Art Operational Framework.

4.10 Public Art in Capital Works and Place Projects

Public art can play an important role in creating vibrant, distinctive and welcoming places. Council encourages consideration of public art opportunities in the planning and delivery of capital works, open space, community facility, placemaking, visitor economy, township, trail and infrastructure projects.

Early consideration of public art can:

- Improve project outcomes;
- Enable integrated design approaches;
- Strengthen local identity, storytelling and cultural expression;
- Support community engagement and connection to place;
- Enhance community experience, amenity and liveability;
- Identify approvals, asset and maintenance implications early; and
- Reduce delivery and lifecycle risks.

Council recognises that public art may not be appropriate for every project. Consideration should be proportionate to project objectives, community benefit, cultural context, budget, site conditions, lifecycle implications and strategic priorities.

Guidance on integrating public art into project planning and delivery is provided in the Public Art Operational Framework.

4.11 Implementation and Review

This Policy establishes the strategic framework for public art in East Gippsland. Successful implementation will rely on collaboration across Council, Traditional Owners, First Nations communities, artists, community groups, businesses, land managers, cultural organisations and partner agencies.

Council recognises that public art practice, community aspirations and organisational capacity will continue to evolve over time. As such, implementation of this Policy will be supported through an accompanying Public Art Operational Framework, which provides detailed guidance on governance, processes, roles and responsibilities.

The Public Art Operational Framework may include guidance on:

- public art pathways and workflows;
- opportunity identification and whole-of-Council initiation;
- governance arrangements, community engagement and decision-making;
- commissioning and procurement processes;
- artist engagement, remuneration and creative independence;
- First Nations cultural protocols and respect;
- risk management, permits, approvals and regulatory requirements;
- asset information, handover and registration requirements;
- lifecycle management, maintenance, repair, relocation and decommissioning;
- gifts, donations and acquisitions; and
- templates, agreements and supporting resources.

Council will continue to advocate for opportunities to strengthen public art outcomes through partnerships, capacity building, external funding, integrated planning and collaboration across the organisation.

This Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains aligned with community aspirations, emerging practice, organisational capacity and Council's strategic priorities.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The following teams or positions have direct responsibilities associated with this Policy:

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Council	Policy adoption and major approvals where required under Council decision-making processes
Executive Leadership Team	Strategic oversight and support for cross-Council implementation
Culture and Creativity	Policy owner responsible for implementation, monitoring, review and continuous improvement of the Public Art Policy. Provides strategic leadership and coordinates the Public Art Operational Framework.
Initiating Business Area / Project Sponsor	Responsible for identifying public art opportunities and ensuring projects are planned, funded, and delivered in accordance with this Policy and the Public Art Operational Framework.

Implementation of this Public Art Policy requires coordinated involvement from stakeholders across Council teams. Detailed and indicative roles and responsibilities associated with different public art delivery pathways and lifecycle stages are set out Council's Public Art Operational Framework.

6. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Artist	A person or collective engaged in creative practice, including visual artists, public artists, designers, makers, performers, digital artists, First Nations artists and other creative practitioners.
Artwork	A creative work, experience or intervention developed through an artistic process. For the purposes of this Policy, an artwork may be permanent, temporary, ephemeral, integrated, digital, performative, participatory or functional.
Commissioning	The process of engaging an artist or creative practitioner to develop, design, produce or deliver a public artwork. This may include artist briefing, selection, procurement, contracting, design development, fabrication, installation and handover.
Community	People who live in East Gippsland; people and organisations who are ratepayers in East Gippsland; and people and organisations who conduct activities in East Gippsland.
Community Engagement	The process of involving communities, stakeholders or affected groups in a project or decision-making process. In public art projects, engagement may inform local stories, values, aspirations, site context and desired outcomes, but does not usually determine final artistic decisions.
Contractor	A person or company engaged to undertake works for Council, including service providers and service partners.
Council	East Gippsland Shire Council.
Council-led Public Art	Public art initiated, funded, commissioned, delivered or managed by Council, including where the opportunity originates from a Council business area, capital project, open space project, community facility, visitor economy initiative or place-based project.
Deaccessioning / Decommissioning	The formal process of removing, relocating, transferring, disposing of or otherwise ceasing to maintain a public artwork, following appropriate assessment and decision-making.
Externally led Public Art	Public art initiated by an artist, community group, business, organisation, landowner, Traditional Owner group, government agency or other external proponent. Council's role may vary depending on land ownership, approvals, funding, risk, partnership arrangements and lifecycle implications.
First Nations Cultural Authority	The authority held by relevant Traditional Owners, First Nations communities, knowledge holders, storytellers, artists or cultural representatives to speak for, approve or guide matters relating to their cultural knowledge, stories, language, Country, cultural heritage or creative practice.

Term	Meaning
Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property	The rights of First Nations peoples to their cultural heritage, knowledge, stories, language, cultural expressions, creative practice and other cultural materials. This includes the right to determine how cultural knowledge and material is used, represented, shared or interpreted.
Lifecycle Management	The planning, documentation, maintenance, conservation, repair, relocation, decommissioning and stewardship considerations required across the life of a public artwork.
Maintenance	The routine or responsive care required to keep a public artwork safe, accessible, legible and in appropriate condition. Maintenance may include cleaning, inspection, minor repairs, conservation advice, graffiti removal, safety works or other agreed actions.
Public Art	Creative works, experiences or interventions that are accessible to the public and contribute to the cultural, social or physical character of a place. Public art may include sculpture, murals, integrated design elements, digital works, projections, temporary activations, performance, interpretation, functional artworks and other forms of creative practice in the public realm.
Public Realm	Publicly accessible places and spaces, including streets, parks, town centres, trails, civic spaces, public buildings, community facilities, waterways, landscapes and other places accessible to the community.
Stewardship	The ongoing care, custodianship and decision-making required to responsibly manage a public artwork over time. Stewardship may include maintenance, interpretation, conservation, asset records, risk management, artist liaison, relocation and decommissioning decisions.
Traditional Owners	First Nations peoples who have traditional connections, rights, responsibilities and cultural authority in relation to Country, including lands, waters, cultural heritage, stories and knowledge.

7. Human Rights

Council is committed to upholding the Human Rights principles as outlined in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter). This Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Charter.

8. Gender Equality

This Policy has had an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) completed and is compliant with the objectives of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

9. Risk Reference

This Policy is implemented as a control to mitigate risks in the following categories:

Risk Category	✓	Risk Category	✓
Community	✓	Governance and Reputation	✓
Financial	✓	Environment	
People and Property		Service Delivery and Projects	✓

10. References and Supporting Documents

10.1 Applicable Legislation:

Depending on the context of the commissioning or engagement of public art, some or more of the following pieces of legislation may apply:

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Building Act 1993*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- *Heritage Act 2017*
- *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

10.2 Applicable Policy and Procedure:

- Asset Management Policy
- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Vision 2040
- Council Plan 2025–2029
- Councilor Gift Policy
- Culture and Creativity Action Plan 2023–2027
- Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2033
- Economic Development Strategy 2022–2032
- Procurement Policy
- Reconciliation Action Plan or relevant reconciliation commitments
- Relevant planning, building, events, risk, asset, procurement and land management procedures
- Risk Management Policy
- Staff Gift Policy

10.3 Supporting Documents:

Appendix 1 — Public Art Operational Framework.

11. Review and Revision History

Version Number	Date Approved	Approved By	Review Summary
1	17/09/26	Council	New Policy

11.1 Administrative Updates

Minor amendments to this document may be required from time to time. Where amendments do not materially alter the intent of a document, they will be made administratively and approved by the Document Owner.

11.2 Document Control Disclaimer

Printed copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Please refer to the Corporate Document Register on Council's intranet to access the most current version of this document.