

**RAISING
THE VALUE
OF ARTISTS
IN EVERY
COMMUNITY.**

**ARTISTS
THRIVE**



**ARTISTS
THRIVE**

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PART I

WHAT IS ARTISTS THRIVE?

What Is Artists Thrive?

Big picture, Artists Thrive is a growing initiative offering activities, practices, language, and visions and values of what it means to succeed and thrive as an artist – and what it means to have a thriving arts sector and, ultimately, thriving communities. More specifically, it is a set of interconnected and holistic resources that can guide us in improving our performance and, ultimately, the conditions in which artists can thrive.

With your participation, Artists Thrive can become movement- building fuel to raise the value of artists in every community, set conditions for improvement, and ensure that artists are thriving with support from all sectors.

Who Is Behind Artists Thrive?

Artists Thrive is driven by a leadership team of artists and organizers from across the country, plus a broad network of collaborators, with support from the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation. You can read more about the team at artiststhive.org/team and view a complete list of collaborators organizations at artiststhive.org/collaborators.

Since 2016, this team has spurred the creation of a field-wide suite of tools called Artists Thrive. This is a true work-in-progress that can only be successful with the entire community contributing, so we welcome your feedback!

COMMON
LANGUAGE



SHARED
VISION



COLLECTIVE
ACTION



SYSTEMS-WIDE
CHANGE



How Might Artists Thrive Be Useful to Me?

I WORK WITH ARTISTS:

- Self-reflection and improving how you work with artists
- Spark conversation with your board, partners, and artists you work with
- Measure impact
- Guide program evaluation
- Build effective collaborations
- Shape strategic planning, priorities, and values
- Advocate for artists in your community
- Spur change locally, regionally, and nationally!
- Read on for more ways you can use Artists Thrive in part 2.

I AM AN ARTIST:

- Self-reflection and improvement for your practice
- Achieve balance
- Measure personal growth
- Focus your decision-making
- Build effective collaborations
- Prioritize self-care
- Advocate for artists in your community
- Spur change locally, regionally, and nationally!
- Read on for more ways you can use Artists Thrive in part 3.

Tips For Using Artists Thrive

- Consider who your “we” is and how that might change when using the tool for different projects and contexts.
- Pick and choose what’s useful for you. Customize it and make it your own.
- Dive in where you want and don’t feel obligated to complete the whole tool.
- Bring a generous spirit to the process. This is a tool for growth and self- improvement, not judgment. You decide what matters to you.
- Think of Artists Thrive like a navigation system that helps us see where we are in our work, where we want to go, what is important to measure, and how we can improve in ways that benefit everyone involved.

Nation-wide change

Over time, and with your help, Artists Thrive can spur a movement to raise the value of artists in every community and ensure artists are thriving and have support from all sectors.

Go to
WWW.ARTISTSTHRIVE.ORG
to explore the tools and
complete the self-assessments.

PART II

I WORK WITH ARTISTS: HOW CAN I USE ARTISTS THRIVE?

Self-improvement

REFLECTION: Reflect individually and as a team on where your organization or group landed on the spectrum. Simply understanding where an organization lands on a national tool is itself a huge acknowledgement! What are some of the driving factors for areas where you thrive and struggle? Do you want to (or have the capacity to) move up the spectrum? Can the Artists Thrive community help with that?

FOCUS: Remember the tool is aspirational, not judgmental. Can it support strategic conversations about what you are doing well and what might need to be refocused? How might it build shared values among your team?

START THE CONVERSATION: This can be a way to start the conversation around funding, capacity, and need. What resources will make the greatest impact on increasing your capacity for this work? How might this process help you make the case for new sources of funding and support?

EVOLVE: As a work-in-progress, this tool can be used again and again to clearly articulate why you do the work you do and how you might strive to do it better. View this as an evolving conversation as your organization may also evolve.

Engage your board

Bring your board in on this national conversation in the field. Use the stories of real world examples that fall all across the spectrum to spark conversation about points of excellence and challenges within your own organization and how that might set your priorities for the future. Ready to take Artists Thrive into your organization? Check out part 6 for more tips and strategies.



Program evaluation

The rubric could lead to holistic program evaluation and assessment systems that allow organizations to report impacts qualitatively and quantitatively over time.

Strategic planning

This framework might inform a strategic planning process by creating alignment within your organization of the program priorities, decision-making, culture, resources, and activities with the values and practices that lead to artists thriving.

Measuring what matters

The spectrum offered by the rubric from [Artists Give Up to Artists Thrive](#) can serve as a reference point for identifying, prioritizing, and tracking your impact on artists in your community, as well as advancing justice and equitable outcomes.

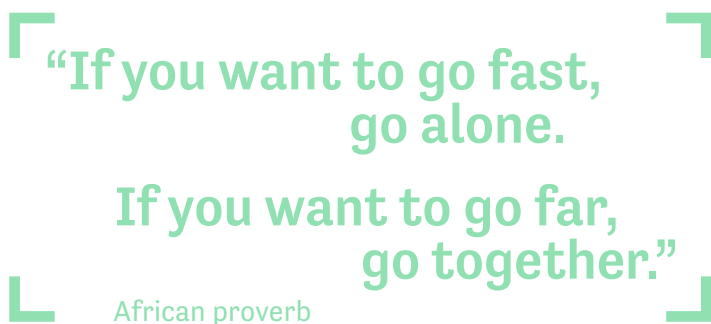
Dialogue with constituents

Use this tool to elevate and inform dialogue on the relationship between artists thriving and communities thriving. Remember this tool is aspirational, not judgmental. Offer it in the spirit of inviting insights, not passing judgment. Ready to take Artists Thrive to your artist communities? Check out part 6 for more tips and strategies.

Collaboration

CREATE THE FOUNDATION for more effective, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships based upon a shared vision of success and common values.

IDENTIFY GAPS: Each organization alone cannot (and need not) provide everything. Every row won't apply to your organization, but consider if you know who it does apply to. Does that resource exist in your community? If so, do you partner? If not, should that resource exist? Who could provide it?



Advocacy

RAISE AWARENESS: New tool to advocate for and raise awareness of the needs of artists in your community.

JUSTICE AND EQUITY CONVERSATIONS: This resource can support complex conversations by facilitating a dialogue and inviting multiple perspectives.

Increase participation: This democratic process can engage your community in creating a shared vision.

POLICY REFORM: Offer language and specific actions that could improve the conditions of artists in your community.

FUNDERS: Collaborate with funders in your community to identify potential for significant impact.

MEDIA: Invite your local media to join this national conversation. Tell a story, share a blog post, write an op-ed. Maybe even take out a billboard!

YOU TELL US!

Artists Thrive is meant to be customized, adapted, and applied to many situations to support your organization's and your community's goals. How will YOU use it? Please tell us at www.artiststhrive.org/contact.

Artists Thrive is a flexible tool that encourages you to define your “we” each time you complete the assessment. Your “we” may be your organization, agency or department, a community collaboration, a partnership, an artist collective... you name it and you can frame it within the tool!

I Work with Artists

CATEGORIES:

Engaging with Artists

Services & Programs

Paying Artists

Community Connections

Advocacy

Funding Individual Artists

Power

Organizational Capacity

Go to **WWW.ARTISTSTHRIVE.ORG**
to explore the tools and complete the self-assessments.

PART III

I AM AN ARTIST: HOW CAN I USE ARTISTS THRIVE?

Self-improvement

REFLECTION: You might begin very small with one key insight or inspiration. Remember the tool is aspirational, not judgmental. No one is (or need be) good at everything. This is a way to gain clarity on your strengths and needs.

FOCUS: These new insights may focus your energies and make decision-making clearer.

BALANCE: Look to the tool and stories from peer artists across the country at www.artiststhive.org/stories to offer perspective on how you balance your life and your artistic practice.

SELF-CARE: This reflection may offer awareness on areas where you're pushing yourself too hard and prioritize caring for yourself.



Measuring personal growth

As a work-in-progress, this tool can be used again and again as a reference point for measuring how you feel about your creative practice over time and how you are advancing toward your personal goals. View this as an evolving conversation as you also evolve.



Advocacy

- **RAISE AWARENESS:** New tool to advocate for and raise awareness of the needs of artists in your community.
- **JUSTICE AND EQUITY CONVERSATIONS:** This resource can support complex conversations by facilitating a dialogue and inviting multiple perspectives.
- **POLICY REFORM:** Offers language and specific actions that could improve the conditions of artists in your community.
- **FUNDERS:** Share these best practices in the field with funders to encourage collaboration with artists and identify potential for significant impact.
- **MEDIA:** Invite your local media to join this national conversation. Tell a story, share a blog post, write an op-ed. Maybe even take out a billboard!

Collaboration

You might use this tool to create the foundation for more effective, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships based upon common values, a better understanding of challenges, and a shared vision of success.

Create possibilities

The Artists Thrive resources and stories can offer inspiration for ways other artists nationwide are working with their communities. This might help open doors with non-arts organizations and other new partners to explore how you can work together.



YOU TELL US!

Artists Thrive is meant to be customized, adapted, and applied to many situations to support your work as an artist. How will YOU use it? Please tell us at artiststhrive.org/contact.

Who's an Artist? That's up to you! If you're reading this, you are probably an artist. The tool purposefully does not place constraints on defining an artist. This tool asks many questions that apply across disciplines, geography, experience, etc. Use the categories as they apply to your practice.

I Am an Artist

CATEGORIES:

Practice

Power

Planning & Capacity

Money

Communicating & Connecting

Go to **[WWW.ARTISTSTHRIVE.ORG](https://www.artiststhrive.org)**

to explore the tools and complete the self-assessments.

PART IV

WHAT IS A RUBRIC ANYWAY?

The suite of tools within Artists Thrive is built off of a “rubric,” which is a dynamic device that can be used to create shared language, spur individual and organizational growth, align priorities, fuel effective collaboration, and create possibilities. Rubrics are aspirational, not judgmental, helping us see what we are doing now, and what we could do differently to improve conditions for artists.

A rubric is a customizable “Formative Assessment” tool. It outlines a spectrum of performance from negative to highest impact that spurs continuous improvement—in this case, among artists, arts professionals, and others who work with or plan to work with artists.

The Social Profit Handbook by David Grant

- Foundational resource for this work that introduces rubrics as a tool for assessing impact to improve/change behavior rather than merely judging past performance.
- How to measure the “unmeasurable”: “If you can describe it, you can measure it.”
- Captures “social profit” created by nonprofits.
- Stories become the key drivers and data.
- Learn more at www.socialprofit handbook.com.

“Formative Assessment” is different than the “Summative Assessment” model most people are more familiar with. Summative Assessment judges past performance with tools such as tests and reports that look backward without offering a pathway forward to change behavior. A Formative Assessment rubric helps you assess your impact in order to improve future work by immediately integrating lessons and looking forward toward desired outcomes—think about the way a coach tries to improve performance.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Assessment OF Learning
Tool for judgment
Looks backward (to past performance)
When a critic reviews the soup
Focuses on quantitative measures

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Assessment FOR Learning
Tool for improvement
Looks forward (to desired end result)
When the chef tastes the soup
Integrates quantitative and qualitative measures

Benefits of Rubrics

- Spurs you to plan backward from a shared vision
- Transparent tool for sharing goals and vision
- Customizable – can be adapted and applied to situations from large-scale, multi-stakeholder efforts to small-scale projects
- Can be built together by a group
- Always a draft and a work-in-progress
- Integrates qualitative AND quantitative data
- Draws focus on stories that support the work; numbers matter less

Starting to love rubrics as much as we do? Create your own! A few tips:

- Focus on the process. Remember: A rubric is a path, not an end in itself.
- Create a team to support buy-in: Write it together– the process builds shared vision and language. You can start with a core team and add people as the process builds.
- Start with a vision of your desired future.
- Be specific! The more specific the better. The description is everything. What does your precise vision of success look like? What matters most to you? Add examples whenever possible.
- Dedicate time to the process– and return to the process, repeatedly. A rubric is not a one-time creation.
- Get inspired with sample rubrics and tools at www.artiststhrive.org/resources/rubric.

If you measure what
you value,
people will value
what you measure.

David Grant



Go to
WWW.ARTISTSTHRIVE.ORG
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PART V

HOW CAN I TAKE ARTISTS THRIVE INTO MY ORGANIZATION?

Spark Your Board's Interest in **Artists Thrive**

- **National tool** that can change conditions so artists thrive
- **Introduces shared language and standards** for organizations doing this work
- **Imagines the world we want**, then aligns our goals and coaches our performance to get us there
- **Sets the stage for a conversation** about points of excellence and challenges within the organization
- **Supports professional development** within organizations

Jump into the Assessment Tool

- **PICK THE RIGHT SETTING.** Consider conducting the assessment as part of a planning process or board retreat where there will be time for reflection and discussion.
- **START WITH A SMALL GROUP.** You might ask a working group to test drive the tool and invite others in.
- **START SMALL.** Choose a relevant category or row of the rubric that captures the energy of the board. You don't have to engage with the whole rubric – everything in it may not apply to your situation. Focus the conversation. Perhaps assess one program or project rather than the whole organization.
- **CUSTOMIZE THE APPLICATION.** How you use the tool might change depending on your audience, scale of the program or project, partners, etc.
- **CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS.** Invite out-of-the-box thoughts and feelings about conditions under which artists will thrive. What are the leapfrog innovations worth testing?



Kickstart the Dialogue

- **Read the Social Profit Handbook** by David Grant as a group and discuss the takeaways around measuring what matters, rubrics, mission time, and more: www.socialprofithandbook.com.
- **Start with a Presentation.** You can find a sample presentation with an overview of formative assessment, rubrics, and the Artists Thrive initiative at www.artiststhive.org/resources/rubric.
- **Use the Real-World Stories** from Your Peers that touch on the spectrum of performance (from “artists give-up” to “artists thrive”) to prioritize improvements your organization will undertake: www.artiststhive.org/stories.
- **Create Your Own Rubric.** Use Artists Thrive as a jumping off point to create other rubrics that could be useful for your board. Start with something fun and lighthearted to engage the whole board in the process. Check out sample rubrics and a handy tool for creating your own at www.artiststhive.org/resources/rubric.
- **Create a Survey** using language from the rubric and ask the board to place the organization on the spectrum. Have a conversation about the results.
- **Share This Guide.** Supply board members with copies of this guide to support their ongoing exploration, answer questions, and equip them to be Artists Thrive ambassadors.



A Story of Systems-Change

In 2009, the Community Food Security Coalition created Whole Measures for Community Food Systems as a national, field-wide planning and evaluation framework (the growing suite of Whole Measures tools served as the model and inspiration for Artists Thrive). This framework helped the sector identify its core, shared values, and expanded their measures of success beyond outputs. By including measures such as justice and fairness, strong communities, healthy people, and thriving economies, they underscored the complex and interconnected nature of their work. As more and more organizations used this Whole Measures tool, improved practices started to go to scale and perceptions of what was important to the field began to shift. Over time, this tool gained momentum and became a true driving force for the sector, even ultimately being embraced by the USDA as a framework for working in communities and schools across the U.S. As pioneers of Artists Thrive, what systems shifts do you have your sights set on?

PART VI

HOW CAN I SHARE **ARTISTS THRIVE** WITH ARTIST COMMUNITIES?

Start with the “I am an Artist” Self-Assessment Tool

PUT IT IN CONTEXT as a national tool drafted by fellow artists, arts service organizations and other allies to offer new insights for self-improvement, personal growth, collaboration, advocacy, prosperity and ultimately, sector-wide change.

INVITE CONVERSATION, NOT DATA. The tool is designed to provide artists with personal reflections on their practice, and not to collect data for organizations. Make it an artist-centric conversation. Be curious and listen deeply to artists’ insights about their responses.

SHARE OUR TIPS FOR ARTISTS on using Artists Thrive from part 3 of this guide.



Sharing the “I Work with Artists” Tool with Your Artist Constituents

PUT IT IN CONTEXT as a complement to the “I am an Artist” tool, and as a national tool aimed at improving conditions so artists thrive.

MAINTAIN THE SPIRIT OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. If you invite artists to help assess where the organization (and/or its initiatives and projects) are currently situated using the “I Work with Artists” tool, encourage them to step into the role of service-provider instead of considering it only from the role of service-recipient.

START SMALL. Choose one category or row of the rubric that is most critical to discuss with your artist community. Focus the conversation.

INVITE CONVERSATION. The tool supports conversation on how the organization can improve its performance rather than judgment on its current performance. Surveys may tell you what people say. Only conversation can tell you why. Don’t assume a conversation will happen. Take some action to close the loop on self-assessment and ensure a conversation starts. See tips below on how to have a great conversation.

Having a Great Conversation

➤ DETERMINE THE PURPOSE. What do you hope to learn?

How will you use what you learn?

➤ INVITE THE RIGHT PEOPLE. Who has insights into the topic you hope to discuss? Artists you currently serve? All artists? Others impacted by the work?

- Gather together artists who share a common experience, interest, or need. Host multiple meetings to help give voice to various perspectives.
- Be inclusive in who you invite, not just your usual suspects.
- Consider dynamics around hierarchy and power to create a gathering where people will feel comfortable sharing.

➤ CREATE THE RIGHT SETTING.

- Choose a setting with ample time for discussion such as a retreat, strategic planning session, focus group, or community forum. Underscore the voluntary nature of the engagement (the process is not meant to feel obligatory).
- Select a convenient, neutral venue with minimal distractions.
- Get close... literally. Create a casual, comfortable, intimate space.
- Provide food! Break bread with your artist community to build relationships.
- Craft ground rules together to create a safe space for conversation.
- Use storytelling to depersonalize. Share stories from national peers collected on the website at www.artiststhive.org/stories. Invite participants to share their own stories.

➤ **CHOOSE THE RIGHT FACILITATOR.** Be thoughtful about their background. Ensure they have strong respect for participants, ability to empathize and effectively communicate, exceptional listening skills, cultural competence, plus a sense of humor and ability to wing it.

➤ AFTER THE CONVERSATION:

- Build time in for synthesizing and reflecting on what you learned.
- Summarize key insights to be shared with your board, staff, partners, etc.
- Be accountable to the conversation you've started. Commit to a long-term process, not a one-off.
- Share what decisions you've made or what you learned as a result.

Tips for Facilitating Great Conversations:

- Remain neutral and LISTEN actively
- Be comfortable with silence
- Be mindful of power and privilege imbalances
- Ensure that all voices are heard
- Probe to clarify insights and learn more
- Encourage alternate viewpoints
- Be spontaneous and follow where the conversation goes
- Be prepared to hear (and value!) the unexpected
- Keep questions succinct, relevant, and open-ended

THANK YOU!

Thank you for the valuable work you do, as both artists and people who work with artists, to foster a thriving arts sector, and, ultimately, thriving communities!

How can I connect with others who are using Artists Thrive?

- Explore stories from your peers on www.artiststhive.org/stories, then add your own!
- Share your responses, rubrics, and more with colleagues and other Artists Thrive community users.
- Offer your input on the work-in-progress suite of tools at www.artiststhive.org/tool-feedback.
- Join this growing initiative of diverse people all across the country exploring this work at artiststhive.org/contact.

**Explore the tools and complete the self-assessments
at www.artiststhive.org**