



## ARTISTS SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

**ARTISTS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLES IN DEMOCRACY, IN CULTURE, IN ECONOMIES, IN COMMUNITIES – AND ARTISTS ARE THE HEART OF ARTS AND CULTURE.**

Whether your definition of artist is rooted in visual and performing arts or includes makers, innovators and creatives, we know that creativity helps humanity thrive. And we know that our culture needs the conversations that artists—sometimes only artists—can build.

That means we need thriving artists to have a thriving arts sector. And we need thriving artists for critical cross sector engagement.

### SO HOW CAN WE IMPROVE CONDITIONS SO THAT ALL ARTISTS THRIVE?

*Artists Thrive* is a “rubric,” a dynamic measurement tool that invites a holistic valuation of artists. It helps us see what we are doing now, and what we could do differently to improve conditions for artists. It is aspirational, not judgmental because it outlines a spectrum of performance to spur continuous improvement among artists, arts professionals, and others who work with—or want to work with—artists. Rubrics describe actions, levels of performance and success along a spectrum. This spectrum is applied then applied to a number of categories. The current *Artists Thrive* categories include things like artist practice, engaging with artists, advocacy, power, paying artists, etc.

With your help, *Artists Thrive* can be movement building fuel to raise the value of arts and creativity in every community.

### YOU ARE INVITED

We want you – as an individual, a funder, a community member, a business person, an academic, a person of faith, an elected official, a student, a teacher, a lover and/or maker of art – to help build this national assessment tool.

### NOTES

- The rows or categories are extensive, interrelated, and meant to underscore the overall ecosystem affecting artists.
- If a rubric row doesn’t apply to your work, ask: who else in my community might it apply to? And does the row allow me and them to thoughtfully and rigorously assess their work?
- We encourage you to start working with the rubric within your work, communities, organizations, public processes, practice, etc. The order of the rows can be changed based on your needs. You are welcome to modify the rubric for the task at hand.

# ARTISTS THRIVE

## Artist Self-Assessment Tool

PRACTICE			
ARTISTS GIVE UP	ARTISTS STRUGGLE	ARTISTS SURVIVE	ARTISTS THRIVE!
I have no time for my art practice.	I have sporadic time for my practice.	I prioritize my art practice and build it into my weekly and annual schedule.	I prioritize my practice with studio time, reflection time, collaborations, travel, and other activities that enrich my art.
I work in isolation, with no conversations about my practice.	I connect with other artists, but our conversations do little to feed my practice.	I feed my practice with rigorous, supportive conversations with artists, audiences, and other thinkers.	I build rigorous, supportive conversations around practice for other artists in my community.
I am always exhausted and stressed out.	I am exhausted and stressed out whenever my schedule gets intense.	I schedule down time into my day, week, and year.	I foster a culture of balance among those I work with, insisting on realistic timelines and time off.
I don't keep a calendar.	I keep a calendar of outside commitments and jobs.	I keep a realistic calendar that includes artistic work, administrative time, and a cushion in case projects take longer than expected.	I align project timelines with my larger plans and with relevant funding and presentation schedules.

POWER			
ARTISTS GIVE UP	ARTISTS STRUGGLE	ARTISTS SURVIVE	ARTISTS THRIVE!
In my art world, I allow assumptions and biases about cultural heritage, race, gender, class, and/or sexual orientation to silence my voice and curtail my impact.	I ensure my voice is heard in specific spaces by specific partners.	I ensure my voice is heard in all spaces that I and my work inhabit.	I work with others to raise up all artist voices and dismantle bias.
When I advocate or speak up, I do it alone.	I have a circle of artists and partners who sometimes advocate together.	I have a strong, growing network of artists and partners who gather regularly for dialogue and advocacy.	I advocate so thoughtfully and consistently that am sought out as a thought leader within and beyond the arts.
I have no resources or opportunities to share with other artists.	I share resources and opportunities with a small network of artists like me.	I share resources and opportunities broadly, with a critical awareness of inequities in the arts.	I help partners and gatekeepers share their resources and opportunities with all artists.

# ARTISTS THRIVE

## Artist Self-Assessment Tool

PLANNING AND CAPACITY			
ARTISTS GIVE UP	ARTISTS STRUGGLE	ARTISTS SURVIVE	ARTISTS THRIVE!
I see the future as scary, and I try not to think about it.	I make plans for projects I am working on.	I have a written plan with long-term goals relevant to my practice and mission.	I have a sustainable written plan that I revisit regularly and share with partners.
I believe I face insurmountable barriers and bias because of my cultural background, race, class, gender, and/or sexual orientation.	I regularly confront barriers and bias, and struggle to continue my work in an inequitable environment.	I have an expanding network of partners who understand me and my art, and I work to lower the barriers artists like me face.	I advocate for equity and inclusion, building community with like-minded artists and partners and pushing to change inequitable structures.
I believe success will either happen to me or it won't.	I define success according to what others think.	I define success and impact for myself, specific to my practice, my mission, and my communities.	I honor and celebrate the self-defined success of other artists.
I do everything myself.	I get help when I'm desperate.	I have a broad team of partners to support my art practice and my career.	I create systems of support for myself and other artists, building community and capacity.
If I don't know how to do something, I give up.	When I need a new skill, I try to figure it out myself.	I regularly learn new and relevant skills, and I know where to find resources and trainings locally and nationally.	I pass on to other artists the resources and skills that have helped me.
I wait for opportunities and resources to come to me, and I say yes to everything.	I pursue opportunities and resources that artists around me pursue, and say yes to almost everything.	I seek out new opportunities and resources and pursue only those relevant to my practice and mission.	I create and share new opportunities and resources for artists.

MONEY			
ARTISTS GIVE UP	ARTISTS STRUGGLE	ARTISTS SURVIVE	ARTISTS THRIVE!
I try not to think about money.	I think about money when it's an emergency.	I make long-term financial plans.	I make long-term financial plans and check in with my finances weekly.
I donate my art and my time constantly, and there is little or no discussion about it.	I am sometimes paid for my art, but I am uncomfortable discussing fees or prices.	I ask for a living wage, and can say no when offered less than that.	I am paid a living wage, I pay fellow artists a living wage, and I advocate for fair pay.
I have no idea what rates to charge.	I have a sense of what I can charge based on what others have told me.	I know what my life costs annually, and what an hour, day, and week of my time costs.	I know my rates, and I make strategic, mission-based choices to ask for more or work for less (or free).
I am in debt with no plan to get out of it.	I have a plan for paying off my debt.	I am paying off my debt and putting money into savings.	I have 6 months of living expenses in savings for emergencies or opportunities.

# ARTISTS THRIVE

## Artist Self-Assessment Tool

COMMUNICATING AND CONNECTING			
ARTISTS GIVE UP	ARTISTS STRUGGLE	ARTISTS SURVIVE	ARTISTS THRIVE!
No one follows my work.	I have a following of people who happened to encounter my work.	I intentionally cultivate specific audiences relevant to my work and mission.	I connect my audiences to broader issues and partners, building conversations beyond my art work.
No one presents my work.	I present my work when opportunities come to me, whether or not the presenter understands my work and my community.	I seek out opportunities to present my work, and educate presenters about my art and my community.	I regularly present my work, working consciously within existing presentation systems and creating new ones.
I have no partners.	I have a small circle of local partners; I communicate with them sporadically.	I cultivate organizations and individuals as partners, regularly sharing my work and mission with current and potential partners.	I connect other artists to strong partners.
I cannot overcome the assumptions people make about my work because of my cultural background, race, class, gender, and/or sexual orientation.	I struggle to communicate with biased partners and structures.	I choose my partners consciously and communicate clearly to ensure my work is seen on its own terms.	I confront and dismantle the biases artists face.
I have no language to describe my work and mission.	I reluctantly talk and write about my work when required to.	I cultivate language about my work, my mission, and each new project.	I connect my practice to larger conversations, with language relevant to other sectors and communities.
I don't communicate about my art.	I communicate with people who already know my work, mostly around events and projects.	I communicate regularly with a wide circle of audience and partners, bringing them close to my process.	With every project and event, I consciously expand my circle, connecting new audiences and partners to my work.
I have to choose between my community and what I consider my art world.	I move back and forth between my community and my art world.	I create connections between my community and my art community, challenging barriers and assumptions.	I redefine the place of art in my community, creating new structures and systems for meaningful engagement.