

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

**ARTISTS
THRIVE**

www.artiststhrive.org



**ARTISTS
THRIVE**

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PART I

WHAT IS ARTISTS THRIVE?

Artists Thrive is a growing initiative offering activities, practices, language, 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, eventually, 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. The goal of Artists Thrive is to change the narrative in the field and raise the value of artists in every community.

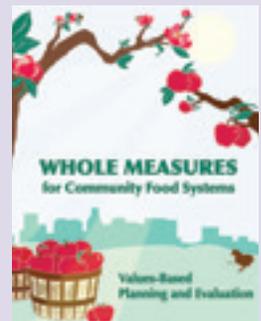
Think of Artists Thrive Like a Navigation System

Artists Thrive 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. Artists Thrive is meant to be customized, adapted, and applied to many situations to support your work. These tools can also be used again and again as a reference point for measuring how you, your organization, agency, department, community collaboration, partnership, or artist collective is advancing toward your goals over time.

COMMON LANGUAGE → SHARED VISION → COLLECTIVE ACTION → SYSTEMS-WIDE CHANGE

To understand what could be possible with Artists Thrive, consider this 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. They wanted a holistic approach to food access, food producers, and the various impacts of food production and consumption. 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. More details about the Whole Measures suite of tools can be found at: www.wholecommunities.org/resources.





Who Is Behind Artists Thrive?

Artists Thrive started in 2016 when a group of arts professionals and artists produced the first draft of this field-wide assessment rubric. Through multiple rounds of feedback, Artists Thrive was publicly launched in 2017. Artists Thrive is driven by a leadership team of artists and diverse collaborators from different sectors and communities across the country and is supported by the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation. You can read more about the team at www.artiststhive.org/team and view a complete list of collaborating organizations at www.artiststhive.org/collaborators.

Artists and organizations nationwide are now beginning to put these tools to practice and continuing the feedback loop. This collective action will lead to future iterations of the tools and, with your help, systems-wide change. This is a true work-in-progress that can only be successful with the broadest network of caring and committed people contributing, so we invite your feedback!

Who is an Artist?

That's up to you! If you're reading this, you are probably an artist or someone who supports artists. This tool purposefully does not place constraints on defining an artist. It asks many questions that apply across disciplines, geography, experience, etc.

PART II

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 needs to be) good at everything. This is a way to gain clarity on your strengths and needs.

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

FOCUS: These new insights may focus your energies and make decision-making clearer. Define success for yourself or your organization and work backwards from there—use this tool to help along your journey.

FUNDING: 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? How might this process help you make the case for new sources of funding and support?



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 diverse individuals and groups in creating a shared vision.
- **POLICY REFORM:** Offers language and specific actions for policy changes that can 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 rent a billboard!

JUMP INTO ARTISTS THRIVE

- **Pick and choose what's useful for you.** Every row may not apply to you and you should feel free to customize it to make it your own.
- **Dive in where you want and don't feel obligated to complete the whole tool.**

Organizational Improvement

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: The framework might inform a strategic planning process by creating alignment within your organization of the program priorities, decision-making, culture, resources, and activities 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.

CONSTITUENT DIALOGUE: Use this tool to elevate and inform dialogue on the relationship between artists thriving and communities thriving. Offer it in the spirit of inviting insights, not passing judgment.

Collaboration

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

FILL IN GAPS: No single individual or one organization can go it alone in changing conditions for artists to thrive. You can use the tools to identify the categories that you might lead on and those where you may need partners for support.

DEVELOP CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS: Many of the categories within the tools call for experience and expertise outside of the cultural sector. Artists Thrive can help you prioritize and spark interest across different fields.



THE ARTISTS THRIVE TOOLS

THE ARTISTS THRIVE SPECTRUM

The Artists Thrive tools are framed around a spectrum of performance that can guide improvements in conditions from a low end of artists give up to a high end where artists thrive.

ARTISTS
GIVE UP

ARTISTS
STRUGGLE

ARTISTS
SURVIVE

ARTISTS
THRIVE

STEP 1 SELECT A TOOL

www.artiststhive.org

THE
ASSESSMENT
TOOL

I WORK WITH
ARTISTS
I AM AN ARTIST



STEP 2 TAKE A SURVEY

Practice
0 of 4

- 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 an
- I prioritize my practice with studio time, reflection time, coll
- I work in isolation, with no conversations about my practice.
- I connect with other artists, but our conversations do little t
- I feed my practice with rigorous, supportive conversations w
- I build rigorous, supportive conversations around practice f



STEP 3 SEE YOUR SPECTRUM



STEP 4 SAVE RESPONSES

BOOKMARK YOUR RESULTS



REPEAT AND REVISIT YOUR RESULTS OVER TIME



STEP 7 TAKE ACTION!

Checklist for getting started

- Explore www.artiststhive.org
- Complete the relevant survey
- Share your findings with others
- Start a conversation
 - List of 5 people to share Artists Thrive with
 - _____
 - _____
- Develop your action plan
 - List 3 actions to take that can be completed within a week:
 - _____
 - _____
 - List 3 actions to take that can be completed within a month:
 - _____
 - _____
 - List 3 actions to take that will require more time:
 - _____
 - _____
- Join the growing network
 - Submit your survey results on the site
 - Follow Artists Thrive on social media
 - Take part in a local or national conversation



STEP 6 CHECK OUT THE RESOURCES

www.supportingartists.org

supporting
artists



STEP 5 EXPLORE PEER STORIES

www.artiststhive.org/stories

SEE ALL STORIES

ARTISTS THRIVE

ARTISTS SURVIVE

ARTISTS STRUGGLE

ARTISTS GIVE UP

PART IV

PUTTING ARTISTS THRIVE INTO PRACTICE

ARTISTS & PRACTITIONERS

nationwide are starting to utilize the Artists Thrive tools. The examples shared below show Artists Thrive in action and provide ideas and usage tips. The next question is how will YOU put Artists Thrive into practice? Tell us at www.artiststhrive.org/contact.

OFFER CONSULTS

- **ARTISTS THRIVE IN ACTION:** Organizations are inviting artists to take the I Am an Artist self-assessment, then offering one-on-one meetings to discuss their takeaways and connect the artists to resources to support their journey.

Tips

PERSONAL REFLECTION, NOT DATA: This is a national tool drafted by fellow artists, arts service organizations and other allies to support artists in reflecting on and improving their own practice—it is not about gathering and manipulating data on artist practice. Unless you choose to share your responses, your data will remain private.

ARTIST-CENTRIC APPROACH: This is an artist-centric resource. If you are a service or program provider, you might invite artists to share their survey insights. Be curious, listen deeply, and ask questions that help them focus on what works, what the imagined future looks like, and how they might begin to envision taking steps in that direction (using the Artists Thrive resources and stories as supports).



SELF-ORGANIZE PEER GROUPS

- **ARTISTS THRIVE IN ACTION:** Artists are self-organizing into pairs and groups to share their results from their surveys and hold each other accountable as they start to make incremental shifts in their practice.

Tips

START SMALL: Work with one or two categories from the I Am an Artist Tool that are most important to your practice right now. Find others with the same priorities and begin to take ownership of the descriptors, including adding new language and examples that fit your experience.

BRING A GENEROUS SPIRIT: This is a tool about growth and self-improvement, not judgement. Try using the tools to coach and incentivize yourself and your peers. Help each other reach the next level of improved performance.

READ & VIEW STORIES FROM YOUR PEERS: Check out stories and videos from peers across the country for comfort, fellowship, inspiration and guidance at www.artiststhrive.org/stories.



INVITE FEEDBACK

- **ARTISTS THRIVE IN ACTION:** Organizations are modifying and/or using portions of the Artists Thrive survey to collect external assessments of how they are serving artists and how they can improve their performance.

Tips

SAVE TIME WITH OUR SURVEY TOOL: The Artists Thrive team has created a SurveyMonkey template for inviting feedback from your constituents. Request it from info@artists thrive.org.

INVITE A CONVERSATION: Surveys may tell you what people say. Only conversation can tell you why. Consider how the survey could be an invitation to a robust conversation as opposed to a tool for passing judgement.

CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS: Invite out-of-the-box ideas about conditions under which artists will thrive. What are the leapfrog innovations worth testing?

ENHANCE PROGRAMMING

- **ARTISTS THRIVE IN ACTION:** Administrators are kicking off everything from professional development workshops to year-long classes using sections from the tools to ground and advance the conversation.

Tips

START WITH A PRESENTATION: You might want to share more about Artists Thrive initiative before jumping in. You can find a sample presentation for you to customize at: www.artists thrive.org/resources/rubric

SHARE THIS GUIDE: Share copies of this guide with artists, staff, and board members to support their ongoing exploration, answer questions, and equip them to be Artists Thrive ambassadors.



PART V

SPARKING CONVERSATIONS WITH ARTISTS THRIVE

Holding Space for 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.

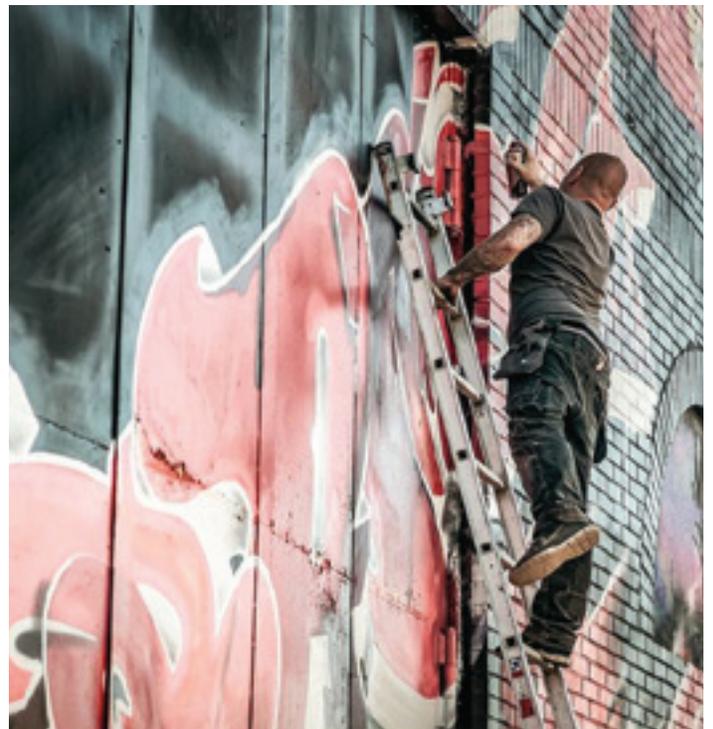
➤ **CREATE THE RIGHT SETTING.**

- 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.
- Learn from and share stories that provide examples, context, connections, and insights. There is a growing collection of stories from artists and other practitioners from across the country at www.artistthrive.org/stories – and we invite your stories too!

➤ **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 adapt and be flexible.

➤ **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 for the conversation you've started. Commit to a long-term process, not a one-off.
- Understand that some of the implementers of next steps may come from your convening. Also share what you learned, plus any decisions points that flow from the input.





Tips for Facilitating 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 willing to follow where the conversation goes
- Be prepared to hear (and value!) the unexpected
- Keep questions succinct, relevant, and open-ended

Key Points to Share: Artists Thrive...

- Is a 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 for individuals and within organizations
- Supports professional development for individuals and within organizations
- Encourages input from the field with opportunities to submit your feedback at www.artiststhrive.org/tool-feedback

“If you want to go fast,
go alone.”

If you want to go far,
go together.”

African proverb

PART VI

CHECKLIST FOR GETTING STARTED

- Explore www.artiststhrive.org
- Select a tool
- Take a survey (all or just the relevant categories)
- See your spectrum
- Save responses
- Explore peer stories
- Check out the resources
- Share your findings with others
- Start a conversation

List of 3 people to share Artists Thrive with:

- Develop your action plan**

List 3 actions to take that can be completed within a week:

List 3 actions to take that can be completed within a month:

List 3 actions to take that will require more time:

- Join the growing network**

- Submit your survey results on the site
- Share your story on the site
- Follow Artists Thrive on social media
- Take part in a local or national conversation
- Become an Artists Thrive ambassador

P.S. Why a Rubric?

The Artists Thrive tools are built off of a “rubric,” which is a dynamic, customizable “Formative Assessment” process. 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 how a chef tastes the soup to improve it as they are cooking, as opposed to a critic who only tastes the finished soup and judges the final outcome.

➤ **THE SOCIAL PROFIT HANDBOOK BY DAVID GRANT**

This is the foundational resource for this work that introduces rubrics as a tool for measuring impact to improve/change behavior, rather than merely judge past performance.

➤ **LEARN MORE & CREATE YOUR OWN RUBRICS!**

Starting to love rubrics as much as we do? Get inspired at www.artiststhrive.org/resources/rubric where you'll find sample rubrics, and a handy tool for creating your own.

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

「 David Grant, author of *The Social Profit Handbook* 」



Tremain Foundation