WORKING WITH 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 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.

NOTES

• The questions here are a sampling of the complete tool found online.
• The rows or categories are extensive, interrelated, and meant to underscore the overall ecosystem affecting artists.
• “We” in the rubric can refer to any group, organization, or network that works—or wants to work—with artists. We invite you to define your own “we” in the way that seems most generative for your work.
• 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.

QUESTION FROM “COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS” CATEGORY

We work in ways where...

☐ connections among artists, communities, and organizations are governed by hierarchies, lack of mutual understanding, and inequitable resources. Community projects reinforce inequities and barriers.
☐ artists, communities, and organizations have limited mutual understanding or shared power. Community projects perpetuate inequities and barriers.
☐ artists, communities, and organizations have tools to generate dialogue and mutual understanding. Community projects challenge inequities and barriers.
☐ artists, communities, and organizations partner consciously and ambitiously from a base of shared power, self-determination, and mutual learning. Community projects begin to shift inequities and barriers.
QUESTIONS FROM “ENGAGING WITH ARTISTS” CATEGORY

Artists...
- do not seek us out.
- only seek us out as a last resort.
- call us for guidance and to share their insights, successes, and challenges.
- actively engage us as their partners in all aspects of their practice.

Outreach Mechanisms
- We have no outreach mechanisms for artist input.
- When we do seek input from artists, it often lacks full intention or purpose and/or it is likely to be with an exclusive or limited group of artists.
- We utilize an array of informal and formal outreach mechanisms for getting artist input on projects.
- We partner with artists to craft a full array of outreach mechanisms and feedback loops for ongoing input on all projects, processes and organizational development.

QUESTION FROM “SERVICES AND PROGRAMS” CATEGORY

Connecting/Coordinating with others
- We just do what we do, never coordinating or linking our programs to other resources.
- We are aware of local programs that are relevant to our work and we avoid duplicating services (e.g., small business association offerings, financial literacy programs, etc.).
- We connect our programming to resources locally and nationally and try not to duplicate or offer conflicting programs. (e.g., small business association offerings, financial literacy programs, cross sector offerings, etc.).
- We coordinate our work locally and nationally, within and across sectors, to build a comprehensive and responsive network of resources (e.g., peer networking with small business associations, financial literacy providers, cross sector professional development, etc.).

QUESTION FROM “ADVOCACY” CATEGORY

Awareness
- We assume that we are aware of artist issues.
- We do not have mechanisms for fully understanding artist’ issues and perspectives.
- We have some mechanisms for seeking and understanding artist’ issues and perspectives.
- We have robust outreach and mechanisms for seeking and understanding artist’ issues and perspectives.

QUESTION FROM “POWER” CATEGORY

The racial, gender, and sexual orientation diversity of the community...
- is absent in our leadership, and there is no accountability to equitable outcomes.
- is rarely reflected in our leadership, and there is minimal accountability to equitable outcomes.
- is beginning to be reflected in our leadership and there is growing accountability to equitable outcomes.
- is reflected in our leadership and there is full and shared accountability to equitable outcomes.