

A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

WHAT: A dialogue about the conditions for artists in your community and a way to generate ideas for how these conditions could be improved using the language offered by the Artists Thrive tools as a springboard.

WHO: 1-2 facilitators plus 5-25 attendees; Invite any members of your community with an interest in improving the conditions of artists living and working there.

WHERE: Select a convenient, neutral venue with minimal distractions and enough room and seating for the expected number of attendees.

TIME: 1.5-2 hours

SUPPLIES:

- Flipchart, whiteboard, screen/projector or full or blank rubric handout (available to print here: [insert links])
- Artists Thrive fliers (optional, can request quantity needed for free here: [Insert link])
- Pens/pencils for participants if using handout
- Nametags
- Markers for nametags (and flipchart/whiteboard if using)
- Refreshments or invite potluck

HOW:

1. *Prep:* Determine your goals for the gathering. Are you hoping to build new partnerships? Draw attention to a specific issue or issues? Generally raise awareness of the conditions for artists working in your community? This will allow you to focus the agenda accordingly.
2. *Gather:* Greet people personally as they arrive and make them welcome. Offer refreshments or invite a potluck. Invite each participant to make a name tag.
3. *Welcome & Introductions* (15 min): Invite a creative introduction such as each person sharing their name, what they do, and a favorite recent arts experience (1 min each).
4. *Share about Artists Thrive* (10 min): Explain why you decided to host this gathering and respond to any preliminary questions about Artists Thrive. Pass out Artists Thrive fliers (if desired).
5. *Focus the conversation* (5 min): Share the list of categories from the Artists tool and/or the I Work with Artists tool below. You could have them projected on a screen, written on a whiteboard or flipchart, or on a handout:

ARTISTS THRIVE

RAISING THE VALUE OF ARTISTS IN EVERY COMMUNITY.

I AM AN ARTIST	I WORK WITH ARTISTS
Practice	Engaging with Artists
Power	Services & Programs
Planning & Capacity	Paying Artists
Money	Community Connections
Communicating & Connecting	Advocacy
Self-Care	Funding Individual Artists
	Power
	Organizational Capacity
	Self-Care

6. *Identify strengths for your community in supporting its artists* (20-30 min): After reviewing the categories, invite participants to share which of the categories they think represent areas of strength for your community.
 - a. Prompt with questions such as: What do we do best? What unique knowledge, talent or resources do we have? What advantages do we have? What do others say we do well?

7. *Identify challenges for your community in supporting its artists* (20-30 min): Next, invite participants to share which of the categories they think represent areas of challenge for your community.
 - a. Prompt with questions such as: What could we improve? What knowledge, talent or resources are we lacking? What disadvantages do we have? What do other people say we don't do well?

8. *Brainstorm solutions!* (20-30 min): In reflecting on the strengths and challenges identified, what opportunities are presented to change conditions so that artists can thrive in your community? Invite participants to collaborate in coming up with ideas by prompting with questions such as: How can we turn our strengths into opportunities? How can we turn our weaknesses into opportunities? What could we do today that isn't being done? How is our community changing and how could we take advantage of those changes?
 - a. Collect these ideas on a flipchart or whiteboard if possible.

9. *Commitments* (10 min): Now that you've generated a list of potential solutions, invite participants to make commitments for how they will advance these initiatives. Encourage people to be specific and timely.
 - a. Write down any group commitments on a flipchart or whiteboard if possible.

10. *Gratitude & closing* (10 min): Thank the participants for sharing their brainpower and their commitment to raising the value of artists in your community. Go around in a circle and ask each attendee to share one word that captures how they are feeling after the session. Share any anticipated next steps or follow-up.

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TIPS:

1. For larger groups, split them up into teams for steps #5-7, allow them 15-20 minutes to generate ideas, then 10 minutes to report out to the full group.
2. If possible, recruit two volunteers to facilitate the meeting so that one person can steer the conversation while the other writes down the group's suggestions on a flipchart or whiteboard if possible. Have the scribe attempt to collect similar ideas together.