Engagement Essentials

Definitions

Community

[This definition is exclusively intended to apply to community engagement work]

Any group of people with common interests or characteristics defined, for example, by place, tradition, intention, or spirit. (Based on a definition created by Alternate ROOTS) Or even simpler: A group of people with something in common.

Arts-Based Community Development

Arts activities designed to serve community interests. **Principal beneficiary of direct, intended outcomes: community.**

Audience Development

Activities undertaken by an arts organization as part of a marketing strategy designed to produce immediate results that benefit the organization: sales, donations, etc.. **Principal beneficiary of direct, intended outcomes: arts organization.**

Audience Engagement

Activities undertaken by an arts organization as part of a marketing strategy designed to deepen relationships with current stakeholders. The purpose is, over time, to improve retention, increase frequency, and expand reach through stakeholder networks. **Principal beneficiary of direct, intended outcomes: arts organization.**

Community Engagement

Activities undertaken by an arts organization as part of a mission strategy designed to build deep relationships between the organization and the communities in which it operates for the purpose of achieving mutual benefit. It is accomplished by developing trust and understanding through which reach can be expanded. This results, over the long term, in increased ticket sales and financial support as well as more arts-friendly public policy. The arts and community are equal partners. **Principal beneficiary of direct, intended outcomes: community and arts organization.**

Transformative Engagement

Community engagement that creates change in the arts organization–*e.g.*, in programming, organizational processes, and/or modes of thinking. The root of such engagement is community learning: learning about the needs, interests, even personality of the community with which the arts organization is attempting to engage. **If an organization is not *doing* anything differently as a result of its engagement efforts, it's not focused on the community. It's focused on itself. It is only transformative engagement that builds an arts organization's relevance**.

Evaluating Engagement Process Effectiveness

<u>Pre-existing relationship with identified communities (partners) built on respect</u>

How long-standing is the relationship with the participating communit(y)(ies)?

How deep is/are the relationship(s) with the participating communit(y)(ies)?

- #/% involved
- Enthusiasm for relationship on part of participating communit(y)(ies)
- Enthusiasm for relationship on part of the organization

<u>Mutual benefit (beyond or in addition to $ for community organization)</u>

[*Note: If there is no community-recognized benefit of the project, this is not a community engagement project*]

Is the only benefit to the community financial? (Yes/No)

If no:

- How well articulated/understood are community-selected goals for the project?
- To what extent does the project meet community goals?
- How well articulated/understood are the organizational goals for the project?
- To what extent does the project further organizational mission and meet project goals?

<u>Collaborative design, implementation</u>

At what point in the planning/development did the participating communit(y)(ies) begin to contribute to project design?

Was/were the communit(y)(ies) involved in:

- Selecting programming?
- Marketing efforts?
- Production/participation details?
- Developing post-event relationship maintenance plans?

<u>Relationship Maintenance Plan</u>

How clearly detailed are the organization's post-project plans for maintaining the relationships with the participating communit(y)(ies)?

For each of these questions, the response options and ratings as currently articulated can be found <u>here</u> [http://www.artsengaged.com/EngageEvalQs#CE]

Relationship Continuum

The Arts 1.0			
Sales	**Audience Development**	**Audience Engagement**	**Community Engagement**
● This is what's happening. ● Buy a ticket.	● This is what's happening. ● This seems like a reason you might be interested. ● Buy a ticket.	● This is what's happening. ● This seems like a reason you might be interested. ● Here's something *we think* is worthwhile/ relevant to you about it. ● Buy a ticket.	● Get a grant ● Find some poor people ● Tell them why what's happening is good for them ● Be surprised when they don't show up

The Arts 2.0			
Sales	**Audience Development**	**Audience Engagement**	**Community Engagement**
● This is what's happening. ● This is why it's going to be worth your time and money.* ● Buy a ticket.	● This is what's happening. ● This is why it's going to be worth your time and money.* ● This seems like a reason you might be especially interested.* ● Buy a ticket.	● This is what's happening. ● This is why it's going to be worth your time and money.* ● This seems like a reason you might be especially interested.* ● Here's something that might make this even more worthwhile/relevant to you.* ● Buy a ticket.	<u>Step 1</u> ● Pleased to meet you. ● Tell me about yourself. ● This is what we do. <u>Step 2</u> ● If we do [this thing**], will you help us make it better/be successful***? <u>Step 3****</u> ● Let's keep in touch.

*We know this because we listened to what you told us.

**Chosen based on what they told you about themselves.

***Funding, community support, ticket sales

****Post-event

Your Organization's Efforts/Practices In:			
Sales	**Audience Development**	**Audience Engagement**	**Community Engagement**

SAMPLE: *XYZ Arts Organization's Commitment to Our Communities*

XYZ Arts, in living out its mission commitment to "[portion of mission statement that supports community engagement]," sees itself as a resource for improving lives in and strengthening the civic fabric of [city/geographic region]. [Art form we support] *is, of course, valuable in and of itself; yet we also recognize its power as a tool for human betterment. Insofar as our resources permit, we seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with individuals and organizations to help us further the public good. We will approach these relationships as learners, understanding that our expertise lies in* [art form we support] *and that our partners are the authorities in their fields of interest. Out of these relationships we will develop experiences in which* [art form we support] *supports community goals. We aspire to be a contributor to all things of importance to* [city/geographic region] *and to be recognized as a reliable and flexible collaborator on projects that make* [city/geographic region] *a better place to live.*

Board of Directors
XYZ Arts
Date

The Engagement Process: Preparing, Planning, Partnering

Preparing

- Hearts and Minds
    - Preliminary
        - Engagement Working Group
        - Organizational Assessment
        - Engage the Core: Getting Internal Stakeholders on Board
    - Commitment
        - Individuals
        - Organization
            - Statement
            - Resources: Human, Financial, Organizational Structure
- Training [After some planning]
    - Community Learning
    - Working with Communities [This is a topic far bigger and more important to be covered in one workshop or handout]
        - What You Don't Know
        - The Pursuit of Equity
        - Necessary Skills

Planning

- Means of connecting
    - Via Content
        - Keep It Simple (at first)
        - Level of Community Involvement [Spectator/Participant] [http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/2017/04/doin-it-vocabulary/]
    - As Social Catalyst
    - As Community Citizen
- Identify communities (potential partners)
    - Minimize Degrees of Separation
    - Categories [Geography, Demography, Identity, Affinity]
- Finalize internal engagement structure
- Identify guides
- Identify ambassadors
- Re-vision Functions: Keep It Simple
    - Programming
        - As Social Catalyst
        - [As Community Citizen]
        - Via Content
            - Traditional offerings: Engaged Promotion
            - Engaged Repertoire Selection
            - *Eventually: Community Input on themes, ideas*
    - Marketing/Development
        - Process
            - First: KISS Marketing
                - 1st: Public-Oriented
                - Engaged Promotion of Traditional Offerings [West Side Story]
            - *Then Relationship-Based*

- ■ Divisions
  - ● Communications, Sales, Research: Interactions redesigned to enhance relationships
  - ● Fundraising: Re-imagine to access broader funding pools
- ○ Governance: Board members as resources for engaging communities
- ○ Evaluation

Partnering

- ● Develop/Enhance Relationships

Current Stakeholders	New Communit(y)/(ies)

● [Meet]
● Talk
  ○ Listen
  ○ Explain
  ○ Reassure
    ■ Continuity [Essential Gradualism]*
    ■ New Communities
  ○ Inspire
    ■ Future of art
    ■ Future of organization
    ■ Excitement re: new activities, new art
    ■ Expanded influence
    ■ Healthier community
● Work: Partners in the Process
  ○ Include in plans
  ○ Utilize as relationship builders
 	
*http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/2017/03/essential-gradualism/
	● Meet
	  ○ Identify Guides: Experts about the community to provide training in working with it
	  ○ Recruit Ambassadors
	● Talk [Questions: Listening to Serve]
	  ○ What about your community makes you proud?
	  ○ What is important to you about your community?
	  ○ What do you wish were different/better about your community?
	  ○ What do you wish people from the arts establishment that approach you would ask/seek to learn about your community?
	● Work
	  ○ Research examples, share them with the ambassador, the community
	  ○ Develop projects to address community interests

- ● Maintain Relationships
  - ○ Anticipation (FOMO: Fear Of Missing Out)
  - ○ Event
  - ○ Memory
    - ■ In the context of the event: artist talkbacks, story circles (audience responses to the work)
    - ■ Document event (catalogs, photos, blog posts, social media posts)
    - ■ Surveys (not just "liked/did not like," but questions around the meaning of ☐the work to the attendee and its impact upon them)
    - ■ Discussion groups on event topics
    - ■ Follow-up community events (dinners, coffees, mixers) ☐This is by no means a comprehensive listing of the possibilities. Each event supporting community relationships will be unique and should raise its own ideas about stimulating memory in the service of engagement.

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READINGS

Rationale [http://artsengaged.com/ensamples/systemic-challenges]

Myths [http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/2015/01/notes-from-st-louis/]

- The Quality Bugaboo [http://artsengaged.com/ensamples/quality-bugaboo]
- The Pandering Straw Man [http://artsengaged.com/ensamples/pandering-straw-man]
- **Excellence in Community Engagement [http://www.artsengaged.com/excellence]**

Readiness [http://artsengaged.com/ensamples/readiness-assessment-questions-appendix-vii]

ArtsEngaged

Engaging Matters: www.artsjournal.com/engage

Building Communities, Not Audiences: The Future of the Arts in the United States

[http://www.artsengaged.com/bcna]

Engage Now! A Guide to Making the Arts Indispensable [http://artsengaged.com/engage-now]

Email: info@artsengaged.com

Twitter: @DougBorwick

ArtsEngaged offers training for anyone interested in better understanding or furthering the work of community engagement in the arts.

> **Understanding Engagement** is designed for board members, upper level staff of arts organizations, anyone else wishing to better understand community engagement as it applies to the arts. It introduces basic concepts of and rationales for community engagement.

> **Community Engagement Training (CET)** is designed for anyone (organization-based teams or individuals) interested in helping arts organizations connect more deeply with their communities. It emphasizes the means of implementing a community engagement agenda.

For more information, contact info@artsengaged.com