

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Topics for in-depth discussion for cultural organizations can include:

Program design/project development: How do you establish civic goals? How might choice of art inhibit or encourage civic engagement? How do you structure engagement opportunities around artistic process and product?

Civic dialogue basics: How do you create meaningful civic dialogue through art? Who facilitates and what is the role of the artist? How do you consider cultural differences, power dynamics to build trust and foster participation?

Working in the civic realm: What internal and external perceptions may challenge or support arts organizations to work in the civic realm and how do you navigate these? What are issues that may arise around “ownership” of civic issues among stakeholders and partners?

Institutional concerns: What strengths do you bring and what capacities and skills are needed by organizations to do this work effectively? How do you ensure leadership and staff buy-in? What are common obstacles and pitfalls that challenge organizations in doing and sustaining arts-based civic engagement programs?

Ethics: What are your responsibilities to various stakeholders? As an arts organization, what is your responsibility to sustain attention around a civic issue?

Impact: What is success and who defines it? How do you gauge civic impacts, particularly less tangible outcomes such as shifts in understanding of a civic issue? What evidence do you look for? What are the effects of civic intent on art and artistic investigation?

Topics for in-depth discussion for artists can include:

The artist’s role: Who are the various civic and cultural players; what are their roles and yours? Who is initiating and driving the project and what are related concerns for artists? What are the pros and cons of working as an independent artist or within/through an organization?

Civic and cultural contexts: What do you need to know about civic issues related to your project? How do you identify and access stakeholders? How can art and culture be employed in different cultural contexts to expand and enhance civic engagement and dialogue?

Artistic and civic goals: How do you set and balance artistic and civic goals? What are the dynamics of being an insider or outsider to a community in terms of clarifying goals and addressing them?

Creative authority: What are the dynamics and politics of community voice in artistic process and product? What are the ethical concerns in using community members’ stories in artistic work? How do you negotiate issues of creative control with project partners or sponsors?

Dialogue related to creative process and product: What are the ways that your art can engage people in dialogue? How can you help cultural or community partners to use your finished work more effectively as a catalyst for dialogue? What role should you play as dialogue facilitator? How can you improve your facilitation skills?

Issues unique to civically engaged art: How do you consider your own position on civic issues in the context of projects with civic goals? How do concerns for engaging multiple stakeholders and perspectives affect your artwork or how it’s presented? What if your work is provocative or has a point of view?