



ALLIANCE OF ARTISTS COMMUNITIES

BIG QUESTIONS FOR EMERGING RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

Choose Your Master

Who/what is the primary recipient of your program or organization? Why does it exist? For artists? For the community? To preserve the property? To honor a legacy? To explore a theme?

Example – Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Omaha, Nebraska)

The spirit and programs of the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts are based on the conviction that exceptional talent deserves to be supported.

Example – Grand Canyon National Park (Grand Canyon, Arizona)

Grand Canyon National Park's Artist-in-Residence Program seeks artists whose work is engaged in issues that are relevant to the Park Interpretative Themes, while also challenging the visitor to become an active participant in preservation and environmental and cultural advocacy.

Example – Center for Land Use Interpretation (Wendover, Utah)

The Center operates a residence program to support the development of new interpretive methodologies and ideas. The program is open to artists, researchers, theorists, or anyone who works with land and land use issues in an innovative and engaging manner.

Example – Elsewhere Collaborative (Greensboro, South Carolina)

Elsewhere invites creative individuals across disciplines to join us in building a living museum from a former thrift store that contains a 58-year collection of surplus. Residents create site-specific responses to the living museum, collection, and evolving community. Residents discover a creative process that is both immersive and responsive, challenging their practice with public parameters and critical perspective.

Example – Burlington City Arts (Burlington, Vermont)

Our vision is to fuse a dynamic relationship between art and community by integrating arts into education, business, and economic development and advocating for artists and arts enthusiasts.

“The health of our culture and the magnitude of our personal journeys require that we learn to tolerate ambiguity.”

- James Hollis

Personal Assessment

- (1) Why do **you** want to do this? What’s in it for you?
- (2) What assets and resources do you already have?
 - financial resources
 - property, facilities, etc.
 - business / nonprofit experience
 - community connections
 - artist and/or experience in the arts
 - others
- (3) How connected are you to your community? Do you live there, shop there, vote there, bank there? Are you viewed as an outsider or as an active citizen?
- (4) Are you the one to lead this project forward – in the short-term? In the long-term?

Community Assessment

- (1) What does a SWOT (strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats) analysis for your community look like? What are the implications for your program? E.g., How might your program play off your community’s strengths, take advantage of opportunities, and alleviate some challenges? How might your program add to community burdens and exacerbate threats and weaknesses?
- (2) Who do you need to engage in your community as an ally? Who might your adversaries be? Who have you already engaged and what has the response been – resistance or enthusiasm?
- (3) What assets and resources does your community have to support your organization?
 - funding base
 - cultural facilities
 - colleges/universities
 - government support for the arts
 - community of artists
 - artist services
 - policies that may positively impact your plans (e.g., historic tax credits for renovating old buildings, economic development grants, etc.)
 - other
- (4) What assets and resources does your community have to attract artists?
- (5) What arts / artisan / craft traditions and history are in your community? Will your program reflect these traditions or move in a different direction? What implication might that decision have?

“Complexity science reveals something that all of us know deep down, yet consistently betray in the design of our policies, programs, strategies, and interventions: Our world is not a machine. We can’t predict or control how it will unfold. But we are not passive travelers into a preordained future either. Our actions matter.”

- Plexus Institute

Programming Plans

- (1) What model of residency do you imagine – from isolated, solitary retreat to community-engaged arts center?
- (2) Are you developing a residency program as one component of a multi-programmatic arts center? It is THE primary program? One of several primary programs? An ancillary program?
- (3) How do you want the public to interact with your organization? What kind of programs for the public do you envision? How dependent are those on the artists-in-residence?
- (4) If money and space were no object, what would you want to provide (facilities, programming support, etc.)?
- (5a) Are you starting with a program or space in mind, and need to determine what artists will be a good match with that? Or are you starting with certain artists in mind, and need to develop a program that matches with those artists?
- (5b) If you are starting with certain artists in mind, who do you want to serve? How well will what you have to offer match with these artists?
 - local, regional, national, international artists
 - specific disciplines / artforms
 - career stage / age
 - aesthetic approach
- (6) What’s going on in the art world and how can your program respond to that? (e.g., artists working collaboratively, interdisciplinary work, etc.)
- (7) What’s expected of the artists? **If the artists just come and work, is that ok?**
- (8) What kind of engagement do you want with the artists, while in-residence and in the long term?
- (9) How much do you want your programs to be a reflection of your unique community? Could your residency program exist as-is somewhere else?
- (10) How important is it that the artists-in-residence become informed about and/or invested in the local community?
- (11) What other non-arts issues matter to you? And how might they impact your program and business practices? (e.g., environment, social justice, etc.)