

10 Considerations as You Start an Artist Residency Program

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to artist residency programs, though many of the starting questions are the same even as the answers differ. To know where to start on this roadmap, consider what is not up for debate (at least for now) and let the other negotiables extend out from there. Each of these considerations are connected and can exist in harmony (or conflict) with each other. These considerations presuppose you have a strong sense of what your values in doing this work are, even as the vision and details of a plan are still taking shape. And remember, **you don't have to reinvent the wheel!**

1 WHO YOU SERVE

In some way, narrow down the kinds of artists you can or wish to support, based on:

- Discipline/genre
- Geography (local, regional, national, international)
- Demographics (age, race, gender, orientation, etc.)
- Career stage (emerging, mid-career, established)
- Internal considerations (resource constraints and opportunities, existing relationships, larger mission)
- Accessibility

2 HOW YOU SERVE

The resources and support you provide should reflect who you plan to serve and the kind of community you'll create.

- How long is the term of the residency?
- How many artists at a time?
- Do you offer living space? Work space? Opportunities to share work? Mentorship? Other resources?
- What do you provide vs. what do they bring vs. what's off the table?
- Who pays for what? Application, travel, food, lodging, stipends

3 FACILITIES

Whether you already have a property, you're starting from scratch, or you'll be partnering with other spaces, facilities are critical to the internal community, support you provide, and types of artists you serve.

- Living spaces
- Studio/work spaces: general purpose vs. specialized
- Community spaces (including cooking/dining)
- Equipment (kiln, press, sound recording, etc.)
- Exhibition, presenting, performance space
- Style (Spartan, posh, etc.)

4 FOOD!

How meals are handled has a major impact on the residents' experience, and should take into account your location, organizational culture, and goals for the community of residents.

- Who cooks?
- Who buys groceries?
- How do you handle allergies and specialized diets?
- Where do artists eat?
- Are there different approaches for different meals and different days?

5 ENGAGEMENT

Whether artists spend their residency in isolation, your program immerses artists in the community, or something in between, there are different best-practices and approaches to consider.

- Open studios or other low-touch public engagement
- In-depth community engagement
- Artist-to-artist engagement
- Artist-to-environment engagement

6 INTEGRATION

If your residency program is part of a larger institution, or connected to other organizations in your community, how does it integrate into the overarching culture, identity, and priorities?

- Distinct but related brands and reputations
- Building support within your organization
- Separate vs. integrated decision-making, governance, resources, etc.

7 SELECTION PROCESS

Designing a selection is one of the most important things you'll do, and it often evolves with the organization. The process can be simple or complex and costly, depending on your goals:

- Capturing demographic data from the start
- Open application vs. nomination or curation
- Staff-, advisor- or juror-determined selection
- Selection based on work alone or taking into consideration demographics, project plans, engagement with the community, etc.
- Re-applications from alumni vs. one-time-only residencies
- Presenting barriers (intentional or non-intentional) to application

8 EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

Setting and managing expectations starts long before the first residents arrive. Transparency and communication are key! Most residency programs provide a letter of agreement or a contract, to outline expectations and policies.

- Expectations of how artists will participate in the community of other residents and engage with the community
- Acknowledgement for work produced during or as a result of a residency
- Asking artists to donate work and/or contribute back to the organization as alumni
- Setting policies: non-toxic, studio safety, behavioral, community engagement, grounds for removal, etc.
- Evaluating: setting expectations in advance, checking in during a residency, getting feedback afterwards

9 ALUMNI RELATIONSHIPS

Your alumni can become valuable ambassadors, storytellers, and partners. How will you engage artists during a residency to build a positive relationship, and how will you engage them afterwards?

- Creating an archive of past artists and work created
- Building a sense of legacy and making artists feel they are part of the lineage of a place
- Keeping contact after the residency
- Engaging alumni as spokespeople, contributors, etc.
- Providing ongoing support after a residency (promotion, professional development, etc.)

10 THE BIGGER PICTURE

What else matters to you? How is your residency program a reflection of:

- Developments in the art world
- Connection to cultural/social/political values
- Other contextual impacts on your program