

Artist Residencies: Impact + Assessment

How do we assess the impact of artist residencies? The question is more than simply an academic one. Residency programs want to ensure they are providing services most conducive to artists' creative practices. Funders want to be able to evaluate the quality and efficacy of the organizations they support. And as a field that is often invisible to the general public, articulating the impact we have is essential for encouraging greater investment in opportunities for artists to develop new work. But the nature of artist residencies – time and space for artists to develop new work and transform one's creative practice – eludes traditional metrics for assessing or demonstrating impact.

Evaluation and assessment are essential to understanding and articulating impact!



"I left Provincetown forever changed, forever marked as a person. I left with the certainty that I am a writer, with a commitment to the creative life that I have never since questioned or doubted."

- Jhumpa Lahiri

WHEN TO EVALUATE

Develop a cycle of design, monitoring, and adaptation

- Before (design) – Clarify your goals and design a program that reflects these goals. Communicate your intentions. Let potential artists-in-residence know what you envision.
- During (monitor) – Develop indicators to track/ judge. Have a willingness to change course or make adjustments mid-stream.
- After (adapt) – Develop tools to gather data, indicators to judge feedback, and plans for implementing. What do you need to know immediately after a residency? Six months or a year later? Three years later?

ASSESSMENT MODEL | CALDERA CASE STUDY

In order to assess its impact, Caldera first needed to define its intended outcomes against which to measure results. While its overarching goal is to provide artists with time, space, and freedom to take risks, the evaluation framework measures how artists grow and develop in relation to four domains that directly align with Caldera's mission and strategic plan. Each domain includes a primary goal, and each goal includes specific outcomes critical to the artist-development goals of Caldera's programs. These intended outcomes are directly linked to the support systems and activities carried out by Caldera staff, and are the basic building blocks of the entire framework:

DOMAIN 1. ARTISTIC ADVANCEMENT

GOAL: Nurture the creative process for visual, literary, and performing artists and artist groups from the critical early stages of project development through to completed artwork.



"By the residency's end, I had taken a frighteningly intense soul-searching journey that led to a new spiritual consciousness, heightened musical awareness, and new levels of creativity - and nearly two-dozen original compositions."

- Dr. Michael White



"Every moment is an opportunity to get work done, even when you're not actually working at all in an apparent way.... For that kind of sustained focus and to keep the level of engagement so high on an unconscious level as well as a conscious level, a residency is an incredible gift to me."

- Michael Chabon, author

OUTCOMES

- 1.1 Caldera artists are able to identify and effectively pursue their creative goals.
- 1.2 Caldera artists make significant steps forward in their technical skills.
- 1.3 Caldera artists experience a significant creative/artistic breakthrough.
- 1.4 Caldera artists complete significant work that advances their creative careers.
- 1.5 Caldera artists develop effective creative processes that have long-standing benefits to their practice.

DOMAIN 2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Support AiR Alumni in the development of their professional careers.

OUTCOMES

- 2.1 Caldera artists present their work so that audiences gain understanding and/or appreciation.
- 2.2 Caldera artists can talk about their work, answer questions, and invite others into their thinking.
- 2.3 Caldera artists collaborate with Caldera staff and artists around them to support the advancement of their career.
- 2.4 Caldera artists share and offer information within Caldera's AiR Alumni community, using this community as a resource for advancement.

DOMAIN 3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: Cultivate high-quality, consistent arts presentations for public audiences and youth to experience.

OUTCOMES

- 3.1 Caldera artists develop projects that connect their work with their own or others' communities.
- 3.2 Caldera artists share and/or teach their art form to youth, and specifically to underserved youth.
- 3.3 Caldera artists appreciate the value of using their art to benefit community.

DOMAIN 4. TRANSFORMATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

GOAL: Artists will be positively transformed by the time, space, and broader environment offered to them at Caldera.

OUTCOMES

- 4.1 Caldera artists value uninterrupted time in a creative space.
- 4.2 Caldera artists value working within a community of artists.
- 4.3 Caldera artists recognize the value of Caldera's natural environment and other natural environments.

Read more about assessment and impact, download evaluation tools, and hear from artists, at

www.artistcommunities.org/impact