

Ways to get to know communities

This worksheet provides advice for artists/cultural practitioners on how to get to know communities at the beginning of a residency.

Start by trying to get a better understanding of the community:

Talk with the project manager to identify a link person who can show you around and introduce you to key people.

Talk to key people in the community to gather their knowledge and experience.

Make yourself familiar with your surroundings by visiting local shops, cafés, faith organisations and other places where people gather.

If you are going to live in the area, consider staying with a host family in the community rather than a hotel or guest house.

Look for community classes, activities and events that you can join or attend, or opportunities to volunteer on an existing community project.

Don't rush things at the start. Take some time for the community to get to know you before you start on arts activities.

Be prepared to share information about yourself and your project and be open with people.

When you start to plan your activities, try to take these activities out to people where they naturally meet.

Make the first few activities fun and easy to engage with.

Include food and drink if you can. You might even start a regular coffee morning that includes community arts cultural animation activities.

Make sure you publicise your first activities well. (See the resources on publicising your residency in Book 3, pages 7-9).

Tools & resources

For background research on the community, look at the websites for national statistics. Some property search engines also have useful information about area statistics and local information.

Help & advice

Local community members, educators, social workers, health professionals and religious leaders can give you information and advice on how to get to know the local community.

Research the demographics of the community (looking at factors such as age, education, nationality, religion and ethnicity).

Look for community websites or social media groups, join them and contribute to them.

Read local newspapers, community newsletters or magazines.

Think about...

... how you will build listening into your first few activities? If you can, provide lots of opportunity for participants to tell you how they want to engage in arts activities, or try a few different arts activities to see which are most popular. Try to be flexible in your plans, so that you can respond to feedback.

Top tips

Don't start by photographing people and places in the community without their permission. This can make you seem like a tourist or an intruder in the community.

Do start by connecting with people on a personal level and taking the time to explain who you are and what your residency is about.

The Community Toolbox has a very good set of information, tools and case studies for assessing community needs and resources:
www.ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment

A quick guide to participatory appraisal

Top tips

- Get to know the local service providers as funding and support might come from them.
- Choose a topic or issue that people feel strongly about.
- Be flexible and willing to change your project plans as you go along.
- Give the appraisal process time and enough resources.

Participatory appraisal involves the community in gathering information as part of the plan, do and review project cycle. This worksheet provides guidance on the key things to consider in this process.

Identify project partners and team members who have skills in working with communities and consultation.

Identify people from the community who are willing to help gather information and form a community consultation group.

Offer the community training and support to do this task – provide the group with tools and templates and make it fun.

Plan different kinds of appraisal activities for variety.

Gather the results and put together the key findings.

Share the information with the community and the project steering group as part of the plan, do and review project cycle.

Help & advice

NGOs, public services, community workers, local councils or universities may be able to provide training or leadership on appraisal activities.

Think about...

... **what information you want to gather**, and how this will help you in the plan, do and review project cycle. This might be:

People's attitudes or opinions on a particular theme or issue that affects them.

Monitoring information such as what activities were carried out and how many people were involved in your project.

Evaluation information such as feedback from people about how they felt about the project or how it influenced them.

Finding work as a community artist/ cultural practitioner

This worksheet provides information on how to look for work as a community artist/ cultural practitioner, including employment or a commission for a residency.

Talk to any community artists/cultural practitioner and local organisations you know. Ask them where they search for job and contract opportunities. They often have small work teams – so be patient. In exchange for information, you may be in a position to volunteer your services or support to their organisation (voluntary work often leads on to paid work or commissions in time).

Be active in the communities where you would like to develop a residency.

Do some background research on residencies that are relevant to your interests. Look at how and where contracts were advertised. Enquire whether local universities have been involved in developing any public engagement work with communities.

Allocate regular time to search online, sign up for newsletters (and bookmark any useful information).

Be active on social media sites – and *connect with people*. Regularly check the websites for State supported arts organisations such as the ministries responsible for arts, culture and communities.

As well as searching for work, you can also make your own opportunities:

Top tip

Remember to search for jobs or commissions that are about civic engagement that might not have "community arts" or "cultural animation" in the title. You could use search terms like "civic engagement", "community consultation", "community engagement".

Look out for

Job listings for arts work/cultural animation websites.

Professional associations and networks for community work/ community arts work and cultural animation.

Get to know people, share examples of your work and become familiar with the formal and informal networks in operation: information, links and opportunities advertised by organisations connected to civic engagement. These might not mention the arts – but you could propose the use of the arts to help address issues, which they are broadcasting about.

Think about...

- ... establishing yourself as a self-employed/ freelance contractor and making suitable arrangements for tax, insurance, finance and other practical issues. Many of the jobs or commissions offered will be fixed term or short term contracts for self-employed people.
- Government and charity websites often provide information and advice on being self-employed.

Help & advice

National & Regional Arts Councils, Universities with Community Arts and Cultural Animation courses, and professional associations can all provide information, help and advice on where to find work.

Consider the communities that are of interest to you, where they are, and what shared interests define the community.

Do some background research on these communities and consider what you can learn from this.

Identify people who have an interest in the arts who live or work in the community.

Approach these people and ask them for advice on where you could find voluntary work, paid work, or a commission.

Finding a community artist/cultural practitioner

This worksheet provides information on how and where to search for a community artist/cultural animator when you are planning a residency.

(This might be described as community, socially engaged or arts with a social impact).

Start by finding a community arts/cultural animation organisation that works in or near the area where your project is planned.

Talk with them about how they can help. This might be:

If you cannot find an organisation involved in community arts or cultural facilitation. Look for a cultural centre, museum, theatre, gallery or other arts organisation nearby and approach them for this kind of support.

You might also find a university or college that provides community arts/cultural animation courses and who can support you in this process.

Prepare a brief and a person specification with input from the community.

Circulate details of the opportunity as widely as you can.

Allow at least 2 weeks and up to 6 weeks between advertising the opportunity and the deadline for responses.

Provide contact details so that an artist/cultural practitioner can approach you for further information.

Think about...

... how the artist will demonstrate their suitability and skills in the selection process. Rather than an interview, try to provide an opportunity for the artist to provide illustrations of their work or their experience of working with communities.

Top tips

When writing a brief for your residency:

Provide background information about the residency and the community. This can be a film or written document.

Describe what you want to achieve in a set of clear objectives.

Consider all the practical issues and describe these clearly. Include all the essential requirements that the artist/cultural practitioner must meet (for example insurance or permission to work with children).

Keep an open mind on artform – you might be surprised by the creative ideas that artists provide in response to your brief.



Selection process checklist

- Project managing the residency for you.
- Using an artist/cultural practitioner that they know or employ who has suitable skills and experience.
- Recruiting an artist/cultural practitioner on your behalf.
- Supporting you in the advertising and selection process.
- Providing advice and guidance.

Including

- Job listings websites for artists/cultural practitioners and community work.
- Send details to members of the community and ask them to publicise it.
- Post the opportunity on community websites, social media sites and notice boards.
- Send details of the opportunity to local arts organisations, community organisations and local service providers.

(See the worksheet on How to design a participatory Selection Process).

Designing a participatory selection process

This worksheet provides information on how to involve the community in the selection process when you are recruiting a community artist/cultural animator.

Participation Works Partnership has a good website and toolkit for involving communities (especially children and young people) in recruitment/selection: www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/workforce-development/recruitment-selection

Help & advice

Think of professionals that you know with recruitment experience and invite them to join your selection panel.

Think about...

... how you can involve the community in welcoming the artist/cultural practitioner? For example, could they show them around the neighbourhood and introduce them to key people once they are recruited?

Top tip

Host an informal lunch as part of the selection process that gives artists/cultural practitioners a chance to meet with members of the community informally. You can observe how they engage with members of the community. This also includes the wider community in the process.

Talk to the community to gather their views about what they want to achieve from the residency.

Focus on the impact of the residency on the community. Try to avoid focusing on the artistic outcomes – it will be better if you allow the applicant scope to be creative with these.

Gather their views on what qualities they think the artist/cultural animator should have, for example skills in listening or empathy.

Also, collate information from the community that will be relevant and helpful for the artist/cultural practitioner.

Summarise this feedback and include it in the brief that you develop.

Create a selection panel that includes members of the community.

During the resuitment process identify someone who can answer questions from artists/cultural practitioners and provide their contact details in the brief.

Encourage the community to publicise the opportunity and circulate the opportunity.

Choose a selection process which suits the needs of the community and the project. It could be an interview or artists/cultural practitioners could be observed delivering a short workshop or activity.

Once you have selected an artist, invite them to any special community events or activities before the project starts.

How to plan a communication strategy

This worksheet provides a guide to creating a communications strategy for your residency.

Why do you need a communications strategy?

- To become better known in the community?
- To recruit participants or volunteers to the project?
- To raise money.
- To educate people about the issues your project raises.
- To promoting the outcomes of the project.

Who you are trying to reach?

Knowing your audience helps you to plan your communications.

Summarise the key messages that you want to communicate to each audience.

Next, choose how you will communicate this information.

Put this information together in one document – this is your communications plan. It includes:

Think about how you will monitor your progress against the plan on a regular basis.

Think about...

... what barriers members of the community might face when finding out about your residency, for example lack of internet, language or literacy barriers.

Top tip

Build good relationships with local media organisations. They are always looking for interesting stories and content. Talk with local media organisations and think creatively about ways you can involve them in your activities.

- Posters, leaflets and brochures.
- Newsletters or other reading material.
- Promotional materials (like T-shirts, caps or mugs).
- Websites and social media sites.
- Presentations local events, fairs or other gatherings.
- Word of mouth.
- Exhibitions, plays, film screenings or other arts activities.
- Local, regional or national media.

Information on your target audiences.
Key messages you want to communicate to them.
What channels of communication you will use.
The budget for each key communication task.
Practical details of who will do what and when.

Get some ideas from this guide:
www.ucl.ac.uk/project-comms/comms_planning

Session planning tool

This worksheet provides you with a framework for planning a community engagement session.

Top tips

Plan the format of the session to include

(even if it is a 'drop in' session, all of these things should still be covered):

Welcome

Introductions

Setting the scene

An "ice breaker" activity

Opening and delivering the session

Regular breaks and refreshments

Gathering feedback from participants

Reflecting and sharing what has been achieved or learned

Closing the session, explaining next steps, and thanking participants

Think about...

... how you might overcome potential barriers to engagement. Barriers might include the capacity and abilities of different people, community isolation or gaps in information, literacy levels or cultural factors. Ways to overcome these might include organising transport or childcare, designing visual publicity materials and engagement activities with less text or involving interpreters or community advocates in delivering the session.

Scope

What themes or issues are included in your project?

What is beyond your area of influence or excluded from your project?

Purpose

What do you want each session to achieve? Do you want to gather opinions, develop skills or help people express themselves?

Participants

Who is each session for? Consult with people at the planning stage about how they want to be involved.

Be clear about your target audience and plan your session with their needs and interests in mind.

Context

What skills and resources can participants bring and how can they help?

What are participants' previous experiences of the issue you are working with?

Follow up

What will happen after the session?

How will you reflect back the outcomes of your session to participants?

How will you inform participants of the outcomes?