Doing the HOMEwork

Community Engagement in Creative Placemaking Projects

Reflections from the NEA Our Town Program
Artists, Designers, Culture Bearers ....

Illuminate

Energize

Imagine

Connect
**OUR TOWN:**

**Logic Model**

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** American communities everywhere face a distinctive set of local economic, physical, and/or social challenges. Yet community leaders are often unaware of solutions that stem from the successful adoption and integration of arts, design, and cultural strategies.

**OUR TOWN GOAL:** Sustained support and recognition of arts, design, and cultural strategies as integral to every phase of community development across the United States.

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**Project Community Contexts**

Local Our Town projects respond to and are shaped by community type, existing social and human capital, existing policies, local assets, and other community development activities.

**Project Inputs**

Our Town projects require:

- **Leadership**
- **Cross-sector partnerships**
- **Financial resources**
- **Community buy-in**

**Project Activities**

Creative placemaking strategies strengthen local communities by:

- **Envisioning**
  - Artist residencies
  - Arts festivals
  - Community co-creation of art
  - Performances
  - Public art
  - Cultural planning

- **Connecting**
  - District planning
  - Creative asset mapping
  - Public art planning
  - Artist/designer-facilitated community planning
  - Design of artist space

- **Illuminating**
  - Design of cultural facilities
  - Public space design
  - Creative business development
  - Professional artist development

- **Energizing**

**Project Outputs**

Increased integration of arts, design, and cultural strategies among local, cross-sector partners, leading to economic, physical, and social change.

- **Economic Change**
  - Local business and job growth
  - Professional development/training

- **Physical Change**
  - Beautification
  - New construction

- **Social Change**
  - Civic engagement
  - Social cohesion
  - And more

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**Innovation/Systems Change Outcomes**

Project activities as well as local community change lead to:

- Sustained cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration
- Replication or scaling of project activities
- Long-term funding streams and policies that enable creative placemaking

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**Arts tactics advance creative placemaking strategies through:**

- Illuminating
- Connecting
- Envisioning
Objective: Strengthening Communities

**Economic Change**: Economic improvements of individuals, institutions, or the community including local business growth, job creation/labor force participation, professional development/training, prevention of displacement, in-migration, and tourism.

**Physical Change**: Physical improvements that occur to the built and natural environment including beautification and/or enhancement of physical environment, new construction, and redevelopment (including arts, culture, and public space).

**Social Change**: Improvements to social relationships, civic engagement and community empowerment, and/or amplifying community identity including civic engagement, collective efficacy, social capital, social cohesion, and community attachment.
**Ultimate Goal – Drive Systems Change**

**Systems Change**: Improvements to community capacity to sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes including partnerships with other sectors, civic and institutional leadership, replication or scaling of innovative projects, long term funding, training programs, and permanent staff positions.
QUESTION: Describe substantive and meaningful engagement with the intended community (e.g., residents and other stakeholders) in the development of the shared vision for your project and its implementation. If you have worked with this community in the past, discuss your previous engagement. Also, discuss your planned process to engage the community going forward, and as appropriate, how you plan to be inclusive of underserved populations.
Evidence of thoughtful engagement throughout the application:

• Budget
• Project participants
• Organizational partners
• Letters of support
• Composing grant panels with those that have unique expertise in community engagement (including those beyond the arts/culture fields)
• Political environments change
• Partnership projects that are centered on community needs/desires aren’t easy and often take longer than you might expect
• Project activities can change dramatically throughout project period

Key is for funders to offer flexibility and emphasize the importance of engagement and “table setting” up front in creative placemaking work
Technical Assistance Offerings for Grantees

*Offered in partnership with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (our cooperator), TA is offered to grantees in following areas:*

- Developing partnerships and identifying shared values
- Crafting inclusive community engagement methods & techniques
- Designing a creative placemaking evaluation plan
- Documenting your project and communicating success
- Utilizing calls for artists, contracts and agreements in your work
- Securing resources for creative placemaking
Photo: Pre-Enactment Theater