

Racial Equity in the Panel Process

Instructions for Interactive Exercises

Privilege Bag Game

Set Up:

- A random assortment of small items, one for every participant
- A clear plastic bag large enough to both hold all the items and tape them on the side to display

Initial Instructions:

- The facilitator gathers everyone around in a circle and has them inspect each of the objects taped onto the bag - they can look but they can't touch
- Then have the group organize themselves according to any organizing principle - the more arbitrary the better:
 - Birth date in the western calendar
 - Height
 - Name (alphabet)
 - Birth city (alphabet)
- In the determined order have every person choose and take one item from the bag

For the next section we want to ask some open-ended questions that start to surface EDI observations that could be related to EDI and grantmaking:

- Encourage people to think about the work they do and ask some of the following questions:
 - Who got the item that was their first choice?
 - Why did they want what they wanted?
 - If they didn't get what they originally wanted, what did they settle for why?
 - Who did not get what they wanted?
 - How did it feel to see their desired item get taken by someone else?
 - Who has power in the process and what does it look like?

- What are some assumptions people had about the way the selection process had to run?
- What are some other ways we could have handled the selection process?
 - How might we better ensured everyone gets something they want?

To close the exercise the facilitator can synthesize the responses and draw connections to the following themes:

- Systems play a huge role in determining who gets access and how
- Privilege arises at the system level and is defined by who has access advantages, whether they want or acknowledge those advantages or not
- Everyone has unique values/desires/needs - how can our work better acknowledge these many differences without judgement?
- How can we work both within and outside of systems to disrupt inequity?

Group Agreements

Intro and invitation to generate group agreements:

As participants rejoin the larger group, they will be asked to suggest/shout out group agreements, which will be written and displayed.

Group agreements are communication parameters that allow for an honest and respectful environment encouraging the sharing of differing perspectives and opinions. Generating a specific and personalized set of group agreements has become a practice at the top of all NEFA panel meetings. Themes from the agreements established by spring 2018 panelists included:

- Openness to others' points of view, being present even if disagreeing
- Awareness of power dynamics
- Positive spirit, generosity, laughter
- Full attention to discussion, limiting distractions,
- Letting others speak, finish thoughts, deep listening
- Challenging ourselves to speak even when uncomfortable, using "I" statements

- Acceptance of multiple communication styles
- Staying grounded in the guidelines and criteria

Panel Nightmare- Boal-Inspired Exercise

Make it better...make it worse

Setup Notes:

You'll need five chairs in a semi-circle at the front of the room for the Panel Scene
Decide how much time you have and divide that for each of the sections:

Setup with participants (5 min)

Scene (6 min)

Make It Better (10 min)

Make It Worse (10min)

You'll want at least 10 minutes each for the Make It Better and Make It Worse sections to give time for trying different options.

Exercise Facilitator: Decide who will facilitate the exercise. The facilitator for the exercise should not be in the panel scene or in either of the groups responding to the panel scene. This person focuses on setting up the exercise, keeping time, and facilitating everyone through the different sections.

Panel Scene Moderator: Pre-assign someone from the Equity League to play the role of "Panel Moderator"

Panel Scene: 5 people from the workshop will need to volunteer to read the parts of the panelists—feel free to solicit people you know are going to be in the workshop to fill these roles or pre-assign some of the Equity League people present if there are enough. It is best to find these folks before the workshop begins, give them their assigned role and the script and ask them to read through it, familiarize themselves with their role, and to please not share it with anyone else.

Make It Better and the Make It Worse Groups: To use the entire workshop group, once you have your Panel Scene Participants, you can divide the rest of the people into two groups—the Make It Better and the Make It Worse. I suggest having at least one Equity League person in each of these two groups to help get things started, model the way the exercise works.

Bring 5 color copies of the script to distribute.

How to setup the exercise with the workshop participants:

Intro: This exercise is derived from Forum theater, which was developed in the 1970s by Brazilian director Augusto Boal based on Paulo Freire’s theories of popular education

In Forum Theater the audience first watches a scene in which oppression is taking place and then, on the second time through, gets to interrupt—changing the action or replacing people in the scene—in order to stop the oppression.

Setting the scene: We are going to apply this exercise to a panel scene that was created from the lived panel nightmares of a number of those on the Equity in the Panel Process team, who were involved in the development of RE-Tool.

We have scripted a short scene for the panel and we need 5 panelists, will the panelists please come to the front of the room and find your seat. Please note that the volunteers reading the script do not support the views and opinions in the script.

Now I want this half of the room to be the Make It Better Group and this half to be the Make It Worse Group.

Make It Better Group: Your job during the second run of the scene is to interrupt when you see something oppressive happening—literally say “Stop” and share a new way of doing the panel or interrupt something the panel is doing that makes it better in terms of equity and diversity values. Use your lived experience in making suggestions versus making up something.

Make It Worse Group: Your job during the third run of the scene is to say “Stop” and share a new way of doing the panel that makes it worse in terms of equity

and diversity values. Use your lived experience in making suggestions versus making up something.

Exercise:

What we are going to do is have our panel read the scene all the way through. Then we'll start the scene again and anyone in the Make It Better Group can say "Stop" and give direction for how to make the scene better in terms of equity and diversity goals—the panelists will then start again using the suggested new direction until someone say "Stop" with another suggestion for Making It Better. We have about 10 minutes for this.

Then we'll start the scene again and anyone in the Make It Worse team can say "Stop" and give direction for how to make the scene worse in terms of equity and diversity goals—the panelists will then start again using the suggested new direction until someone say "Stop" with another suggestion for Making It Worse. We have about 10 minutes for this.

Panel Scene

Panel Moderator: Thank you all for pre-screening the applications for the Organization grant. Our task today is to review the finalists. We will now go through and discuss each application and come up with the winners.

Instead of alphabetical order, we did a random sorting of the applications . . .

Panelist 1: Excuse me but I don't think that's a good idea. I have been on this panel for 3 years, I know you're new to the foundation and want to try new things, but I think we should go in order of the scores. This is how we've done it before and it works really well--spending time on those with high scores.

Panel Moderator: Thanks for that suggestion, but we did things differently this year. If you'll remember, all of the organizations in this finalist pool were scored highly by reviewers. We will discuss all of these thoroughly—allowing 10 minutes per organization. Any more questions before we dive in?

Panelist 2: How should we address the differences in these applications—I mean it is clear that some organizations don't have development staff-- there are typos, rambling narratives ...and the budgets—some of these organizations have annual budgets under a \$500,000

Panelist 3 I did not redline every application for spelling errors—the criteria is whether the organization is serving their stated audience (big or small) for at least 10 years and are successful presenters. Am I right?

Panel Moderator Yes. Budget size is not a criteria. This program is open to all budget sizes. We are asking you to assess the value that these organizations bring to the arts community. Okay let's start with the first organization on your list, Big City Arts

Panelist 2: Pulls out phone and starts reading texts—gesturing that they'll just be a minute, but continues reading and typing.

Panelist 4: I have a concern about Big City's . . .

Panelist 1: (Interrupts Panelist 4—talking over) This Big City has a great reputation and has been around for 30 years. There's no doubt about the excellence of their work. Just look at their funding history—grant after grant. That speaks to their excellence. Think of how many people they employ! Why that alone is the reason to increase their grant.

Panelist 4: (trying to interject) I hear what you're saying about size, but that isn't
....

Panelist 5: (Interrupts Panelist 4—talking over) I know someone in here is going to bring up the fuss over the oriental play—and I have to say it makes my blood boil. I mean I went to see Swan Lake last week and there were black dancers in the ballet. But you don't see white people marching up and down about cultural appropriation in ballet.

Panel Moderator: Okay I am going to stop you right there (Panelist 5). First of all, we are way off-track in our discussion of this organization in terms of

the criteria. So, I want to ask everyone to take a breath and let's re-focus.

Just briefly, I want to remind us that cultural appropriation is the adoption of elements of a minority *culture* by members of the dominant *culture*.

Now let's focus on Big City Arts in terms of the criteria. In accord with our agreements about not interrupting and making space for all, I want to ask someone who hasn't spoken to take the floor.

Panelist 4: Thank you Moderator. In terms of diversity on Big City's board, I don't see any indication of diversity and I know this speaks to the criteria of impact. The organization is serving only the white majority in this community.

Panelist 5: I know they've tried but this is a give-get bored and it is difficult to find people of color. And they always reach out to minorities, but the people just don't come.

Panelist 1: Just to play devil's advocate, you could say that funding should be distributed in proportion to places that have big audiences and where thousands instead of hundreds of people go. That speaks to impact. Big City shouldn't be penalized because their budget is \$50 million a year.

Panel Moderator: Again, I want to emphasize that the SIZE of the organization's budget is not a criteria for this program. Please focus on how the organization's work is impacting the community.

Panelist 3: I see a disconnect around value and community impact given that Big City's programming and audiences only support the white community. The protest around the production of Miss Saigon is a great example. Big City has presented this work multiple times in its history and it has been met with protest each time. So why keep doing this and alienating the

Panel Moderator: We are out of time for this discussion, does anyone have additional comments? Panelist 2 we haven't heard from you?

Panelist 2: (Putting phone down guiltily)
Sorry, I just had to deal with something for work. But I've been paying attention and agree with what's been said.

Panel Moderator: Okay, go ahead and score Big City Arts and we'll move on to the Tubman Cultural Center.

Panelist 1: I am not familiar with this one. They have a low profile, small staff. If we're talking impact, I don't see how to even compare them to Big City. But to be fair, maybe a smaller grant should be considered. I mean a little goes along way for small organizations.

Panelist 4: Tubman is doing incredible work in the Northside community—they don't have the staff capacity to keep up with all the requests they get—I think support for this group would greatly expand the powerful work they have been doing for 40 years.

Panelist 2: (putting phone down)
I'm sorry which application are we on?

Panelist 5: But if it is only supporting the Northside community, how is that having an impact for the whole city?

Panelist 1: (interrupting) Exactly, that's like reverse discrimination. Look I could get onboard with some funding for this place as long as someone can vouch for the quality of the work.

Panelist 3: Why are you bringing up the quality of the work? That's not a criteria—you didn't say anything about quality when you were talking about Big City?

Panelist 5: Well it goes without saying with Big City. I watched the work sample for Tubman and it looked like an outdoor party—you know there was some kind of drum and dance thing happening. I didn't really get it, but people there seemed to be enjoying it.

Panelist 4: That was a Juneteenth Celebration with a nationally recognized choreographer that worked over the last year with local drum and dance groups to create a participatory community event. I can't believe the lack of cultural competency on this panel . . .

-----**End scene!**-----