

Community Engagement Ladder

Successful community engagement practice by arts providers is key to realizing the IAC's 2017–2021 strategic plan priority: to position the arts as central in the lives of Indiana's citizens. Through community engagement, arts providers deepen their role, relevancy, and value while cultivating a thriving community that values their work.

Recognizing community engagement comes in multiple forms (and interpretations), 2017's benchmark year helped us develop the Community Engagement Ladder to identify: where are we now, where do we want to go, and what does it look like when we get there? Right now, our field is largely working at the first two rungs. But over the next few years we will collectively move up the ladder...one rung at a time. **We are currently asking our grantees: Where are you on the ladder? What will it take to get to the next level?**



Arts Are Central to Community

- Arts provider fully recognizes its role in the community and capacity to meet the community's needs. There is improved understanding of intersections between the arts and different for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors.
- Arts provider is asked to the table to help address the community's critical issues and opportunities
- Community seeks and advocates for arts because it believes the arts are essential, relevant, and vital to quality of life.
- Arts provider further realizes its mission by increasing its contribution to public benefit.
- Arts provider generates a "sense of community" through interactive arts experiences that lead to enhanced civic engagement, personal growth, and social bonding.

Arts Establish Lasting Relationships with Community

- Arts provider enjoys a substantial, sustainable relationship with the community and the community is proud of that relationship.
- Arts provider responds to the community and the community responds to the arts provider (e.g. programs offered meet needs of community and the community wants to be part of it).
- Arts provider programming and actions directly reflects community involvement in planning, participation, and evaluation.

Arts Develop Intentional Collaborations with Community

- Arts provider forms strategic partnerships that are long-lasting and more than conventional programmatic collaborations.
- Arts provider develops a deeper relationship with the community and finds common ground and trust is gained.
- Community sees arts as transformative and meaningful to quality of life.

Arts Seek to Involve the Community

- Arts provider seeks to better understand what the community finds relevant or needs (e.g. starts conversations with individuals, organizations or groups; sends out surveys/collects evidence).
- Arts provider develops outreach activities that take the arts programming outside the organization and into the community (e.g. in-school artist residency or convocation, arts activity at retirement home).
- Arts provider develops one-time or short-term conventional collaborations that expand audience (e.g. partners with another arts organization to produce a concert in the park as a one-time event).
- Community appreciates arts experiences but may not still see it as vital to quality of life.

Arts Opportunities are Available to the Community

- Arts provider develops arts and cultural activities, programs, and events that they think are relevant to the community but haven't gathered their ideas, input, or feedback.
- Arts do not consistently involve the community. Audiences observe and do not participate in arts activities or offerings.
- Community isn't involved in the planning process but acknowledges the opportunity to attend or participate in an activity.
- Community may not see the arts as relevant or vital to quality of life.