CLARIFYING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From an arts perspective

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Quick poll – experience in community engagement
3. Why community engagement?
4. What is community engagement?
5. The presenter's role
6. Quick review of artsengagecanada.ca
7. Undertaking a community engagement project
8. Next steps

Why the Need for Community Engagement?

- Increasingly need to find ways to understand and articulate the relevance of the arts to the broader public than in the past.

- To be able to justify public and private financial support.

- The need to find and develop relationships among currently unconnected groups in the community.

- How to communicate the value that the arts & culture bring to individuals and society – what is the positive impact on the community?

Levels of Engagement

PASSIVE	REACTIVE	PARTICIPATIVE	EMPOWERMENT	LEADERSHIP
Local residents and organizations are informed of issues by external organizations	Local residents and organizations provide input into the priorities and resource use of external organizations	Local residents and organizations influence the priorities and resources of external organizations.	Local residents and organizations work in shared planning and action with external organizations	Local residents and organizations initiate and lead, with external support, on issues.

LEVELS *of* ENGAGEMENT

Adapted From: Hashagen 2002 and Sydney Department of Planning 2003.

Audience Engagement

- 'Audience engagement' is the act of providing opportunities for people to access artistic experiences, whether those experiences are passive (watching or listening) or active (doing), and irrespective of the informing motive for the act.

- Our usual engagement strategy is focused on deepening the relationship with existing audiences, improving the quality of their experience, as well as expanding arts participation to new groups. Arts participation is the _end_; engagement strategies the _means_.

Community Engagement

- When we call it 'community engagement' we are generally referring to engagement strategies focused on increasing social cohesion, improving collective well-being, or encouraging political activism. These are achieved through engagement projects such as youth at risk, or an increase in awareness of a specific issue (domestic violence, bullying, homophobia) for a defined group.

- Here community engagement is the '_end_' and arts participation is the '_means_'.

Defining Community Engagement

- Unfortunately, in the arts sector there is no universally held definition of 'engagement' and adding 'community' to it doesn't make it clearer.

- More practical to move away from thinking of engagement as a particular program or project to viewing it as a **process of building deep relationships with community groups/members, from which new programing is generated**

Rethinking Our Role in the Community

- As presenters, connecting community input with the artistic programs the organization develops or presents helps allay the fears that the work may lack artistic excellence.

- Artists are still at the centre of this work, but are not necessarily the sole creators of it.

Curatorial Role - Facilitation

- Presenters are also beginning to redefine the nature of their expertise, now seeing their role in community engagement as more of a facilitator rather than a cultural authority.

- They are making the creative practice and artistic production of others possible and also finding ways for their artistic programming to exist in a dialogue with contemporary community priorities and concerns.

ArtsEngageCanada

Critical Elements

- Community relationships are vital and must be developed before programs are created – resource intensive work

- Partnering with community-based organizations – a bridging role - required to engage with communities that presenter doesn't have relationships with

- Demonstrating leadership commitment at all levels of presenting organization – essential to propel engagement to the core of organization

- Gaining broad staff participation – how they interact and communicate with the community

- More sustainable funding

Embedding Community Engagement as a Core Principle

Stages of development:

1. Testing the waters

One or more engagement-oriented programs developed as experiments, separate from core programming.

2. Building and Protecting

Engagement programming remains distinct but is increasingly valued and supported – though there may be some pockets of resistance to investing in it.

3. Integrating Engagement

Engagement strategies are viewed as an essential commitment; traditional programming takes on engagement properties

4. Embracing Engagement as Identity

Engagement is a central strategy, with no separation between this strategy and core programming

Standards for Engagement

It is important to establish standards for your community engagement project.

A useful set of standards have been developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre.

These can be found in the Community Places Community Planning Toolkit (available in the ArtsEngageCanada Resource Centre).

Standards for Engagement

Involvement:

- We will identify and involve the people and organizations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.

Support:

- We will identify and overcome barriers to involvement.

Planning:

- We will gather evidence of the needs and resources in the community and use this to the agreed purpose, scope, time line and actions to be taken.

Standards for Engagement

Methods:

- We will agree to the use of methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

Working together:

- We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.

Sharing information:

- We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.

Standards for Engagement

Working with others:

- We will work effectively with others who share an interest in the engagement.

Improvement:

- We will actively develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence of <u>all</u> the participants.

Feedback:

- We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and organizations effected.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

- We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement project met its purposes.

Undertaking a Community Engagement Project

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

- A clear <u>purpose</u> will help identify engagement objectives, anticipated outcomes and help determine the <u>scope</u> and depth.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

- Set 2 to 3 well defined goals for the engagement project to evaluate the impact.

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

- Develop an action plan with measurable targets and identify who is responsible for what?

How to Get Started

Develop an engagement approach by:

- Mapping the neighbourhood or community.
- Identifying the community or group you want to engage.
- Developing possible engagement tactics (how)
  - For each group - match the tactic to the goal.
- Determine ways to deepen the engagement.
- Create an engagement plan.

Mapping

CRITICAL TO GET OUT OF YOUR BUILDING AND INTO THE COMMUNITY

- Public meetings
- Workshops & focus groups
- Web based engagement
- Third parties-specialist agency
- Street stalls/foyer of theatre
- Round tables
- Walking the neighbourhood
- Community surveys
- Face to face
- Contact intermediaries e.g. schools/churches
- Radio – press – papers
- Passers by
- Local arts councils/arts organizations/artists
- Local shops and businesses

Identifying Potential Stakeholders

- Local residents/area based arts groups
- Communities of interest – social, heath, etc.
- Artists
- Indigenous, ethno-racial, cultural groups
- Local community and non-profit groups
- Faith based groups
- Web based or virtual groups
- Funders/municipality/schools
- Decision makers

Questions and Issues
to Help Plan and Design

- What level of participation to be achieved?
- How to identify stakeholders?
- Communications?
- Stage of the engagement process?
- Resources?
- Are there any limitations?
- Feedback – next steps
- Tools and methods?
- Other questions?

Identify Barriers to Engagement

Potential Barrier	Design Solution
Location/isolation	Community space/familiarity/transportation
Too busy/workload	Social event/research
Language	Translators

Documenting & Monitoring the Process

Documenting the community engagement project along the way is important tool for evaluation and promoting the project to your stakeholders and community.

Track the process:

- Keep a diary or journal to track the process
- Keep a log to record who was contacted/responded
- Use evaluation forms along the way

Capture the community's experience – in their own words/drawings, etc.

Record the project:

- Video/photography/storytelling/blogs, etc.

Evaluation Elements

- Principles
- Purpose
- Rationale
- Structure
- Types & Numbers
- What partnerships bring
- Establish baseline evidence

- Effectiveness
- Quality
  - Experience
  - Participants
  - Partnerships
- Potential - long term
- What changed
- Others your project affected

Other Considerations

- Time and resources
- Limitations
- Timely feedback and next steps
- Flexibility within the process
- Evaluation
- Quality standards
- Tools - website

Handy Hints – Community Engagement

- Built in – not bolted on

- Kill apathy as a concept

- Be clear about constraints

- It's a marathon – not a sprint

- Communication x 10

- Have a champion

- Make it meaningful

- Assess your principles & goals at every stage

- Be prepared to be unprepared – AND SURPRISED

- Have fun! Be Creative!

How Can We Support You?

- ArtsEngageCanada.ca
- Role of Ontario Presents
  - Forum/conference
  - Community of practice
- What else?