



ARTS

& CULTURE

IN PLANNING

HANDBOOK

October 2021



Atlanta Regional Commission



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LAND & LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Community Engagement and Arts team acknowledges that we live and work upon the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples, including the Cherokee and Muskogee,¹ from which the political entities comprising what is the present-day Atlanta region were established through acts of land dispossession and forced removals.²

Much of this region's culture, economic growth, and development would not exist without the forced labor of enslaved Africans,³ and the wounds caused by centuries of enslavement and white supremacy persist through today.

We commit to reparative practices including, but not limited to, dismantling any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services; centering the people, knowledge, cultures, practices, traditions, and values of Black and Indigenous people, and communities of color; amplifying, collaborating, compensating, and advocating for the artistic, social, cultural, and economic endeavors of these communities;⁴ and directing access, resources, and power through our work toward these communities.⁵

¹ Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT): Cultural Resources

² Lower Muskogee Tribe: Historical Overview

³ Diverse Issues in Higher Education: On Labor Acknowledgements and Honoring the Sacrifice of Black Americans

⁴Aguilera, M. (2019). Welcome and Land Acknowledgement. Environmental and Climate Change Literacy Project and Summit (EECLPS 2019). University of California Los Angeles

⁵ Internationalization of an Indigenous Anticolonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and Its Principles. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 14(2), 109–121

OVERVIEW



☆ MISSION

The Community Engagement and Arts Team at the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) reimagines community engagement within the ARC's Community Development Group by embedding arts and culture within our programs, practices, policies, and opportunities with Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color that have been historically marginalized and excluded to improve community outcomes and quality of life.

☆ VISION

Communities in the Atlanta region that have been historically and systemically marginalized and excluded are centered and supported as partners and co-creators in the planning process to express and fulfill their ideas and desires through their own social, artistic, and cultural practices.

☆ VALUES

- ☆ **Equity & Justice**
- ☆ **Collaboration & Co-Design**
- ☆ **Curiosity & Courage**
- ☆ **Reflexivity**

VALUES

☆ EQUITY & JUSTICE

Through our community engagement and arts and culture work, we commit to advancing social, cultural, economic, and environmental equity and justice for, by, and with people, especially artists and culture bearers, and organizations from vulnerable and under-served communities.

☆ COLLABORATION & CO-DESIGN

We affirm the knowledge, power, and joy within the communities we serve. We seek specifically to collaborate with communities that planning has historically and systemically excluded and often harmed by practicing the mindsets, methods, and conditions of co-design.

☆ CURIOSITY & COURAGE

We commit to taking risks, embracing curiosity and imagination, and acting with courage and resolve to navigate constant complexity and occasional conflict while challenging an inequitable and unsustainable status quo.

☆ REFLEXIVITY

We acknowledge our positionality, privilege, and power as employees in a regional planning agency tasked with designing and managing programs and policies that influence community decisions and outcomes. We commit to transparency and accountability, questioning our assumptions, and evaluating ourselves and our actions.

ARTS IN PLANNING

Principles

Our journey of amplifying arts and culture in community planning has revealed certain principles that we consider central to taking steps toward success. This handbook will elaborate on these principles and demonstrate how to fulfill them through exercises and case studies.

★ **CENTER LIVED
EXPERIENCE.**

★ **PRIORITIZE CREATIVE
INVOLVEMENT.**

★ **LEARN BY
(UN)DOING.**



**CENTER
LIVED
EXPERIENCE.**



☆ WHY?

Each community and its individual members has their own lived experience that varies based on geographical history, socioeconomic background, and identity. In honoring these experiences, there is power in storytelling and its ability to create empathy around the impacts of the past, present, and future.

☆ WHO?

Project participants include stakeholders and collaborators. A stakeholder is anyone that will be potentially impacted by a project, economically, socially, or otherwise. Collaborators are individuals, groups, and organizations that contribute ideas and resources to help make the project a success. Understanding who is impacted, to what degree, and how they may participate can aid in approaching equitable community outcomes.

☆ HOW?

Identifying stakeholders, collaborators, and local creatives simplifies the process of finding projects that may align with your mission. Creatives who are members of or are connected to the most impacted communities likely have cultural knowledge that can help facilitate discussions and lead reflective exercises with stakeholders and collaborators alike while portraying their stories in a way that is representative of the community.

EXERCISE

Identifying Stakeholders

A stakeholder is anyone that will potentially be impacted by your project. Identifying and engaging stakeholders early in your process will help to build support and prevent potential problems down the road.

To identify stakeholders, ask yourself and others within the community:

☆ **Who would potentially benefit from the project?**

☆ **Who would potentially object to or be negatively impacted by the project?**

☆ **Who has the power and authority to make decisions regarding aspects of your project?**

☆ **Who has to grant their permission?**

☆ **Who is doing similar work?**

EXERCISE

Identifying Collaborators

Collaborators are individuals, groups, and organizations that help make the project a success by contributing ideas, time, money, materials, connections, and so forth. Collaborators can span the spectrum from a volunteer who helps organize an event, to a local business that supports your work, to a nonprofit organization or government agency that serves as a formal project partner.

To identify potential project collaborators, begin by asking these questions about the individuals, groups, and organizations you hope to work with :

☆ **Who do you need on board to make the project a success?**

☆ **Who has access to resources that are important for the project?**

☆ **Who has skills and connections?**

☆ **Who has a complementary or overlapping mission and programs?**

This exercise is adapted from The Handbook for Artists Working in Community. The Handbook was developed by Springboard for the Arts and made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts through the Our Town Knowledge Building grant.

OUR FIRST STEPS:

Artist Interviews

In March 2021, we conducted a regional survey of over 200 artists (see page 15). Analysis of the survey revealed a dramatic underrepresentation of people of color among the respondents. There was also a lack of LGBTQIA-specific data in both the data we collected and regional demographic data. Underrepresentation of these groups led us to work more closely with local artists who fit within these identities and had experience working in community.

We conducted one-on-one interviews with four local artists to amplify their experiences through the practice of listening, to build empathy, and create a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. Artists included photojournalist Jesse Pratt Lopez, drag performer Taylor Alxndr, visual artist Aysha Pennerman, and dancer Jacque Pritz—all of whom use their art forms to lead community initiatives. Each interviewee was compensated for their participation to honor their experience, time, and energy.

These conversations reiterated many of the themes revealed in the survey, including a call for an emphasis on supporting marginalized people through community work. They demonstrated a need for consistent support in the form of financial backing for resources, materials, community centers, leadership, and events. They expressed that they tend to work with others with similar intersectional and marginalized identities, as there is a shared understanding of inequities and the importance of building community amongst these groups.

CASE STUDIES

☆ HEALING THROUGH STORY

Artist: **Anu Yadav**

Community: **Los Angeles County**

☆ **Collaboration & Co-design**

☆ **Reflexivity**

Healing Through Story is a workbook on listening, storytelling, and community-driven solutions. It includes interviews, exercises, and facilitation tips that demonstrate how practices of listening can deepen our capacity to respond flexibly to new challenges. The exercises offer structures of shared listening, facilitation, and unlearning implicit biases that can be completed in person or virtually.

☆ AMERICA IS BLACK

Artist: **Tatyana Fazlalizadeh**

Community: **Oklahoma City**

☆ **Equity & Justice**

☆ **Curiosity & Courage**

America is Black is both a mural and national wheatpaste poster series that interprets conversations with Black residents of metropolitan cities and represents their stories through oil paintings, historical images, and wheatpaste portraits that reflect “the voices of marginalized groups who are challenging the acceptance of bigotry and white supremacy.”



**PRIORITIZE
CREATIVE
INVOLVEMENT.**



☆ WHY?

The existence and celebration of arts and culture is a foundation of community identity, and creatives have long played a central role in their communities in the context of public artwork and performance. Centering creatives as active partners in community planning and engagement initiatives can lead to a thoughtful, innovative, and successful implementation of project ideas that bring excitement and originality to the final product.

☆ WHO?

Within every community is its own unique creative community with a wide array of talents that can be applied to any project. The term “creatives” in this context refers to any working individual or group who uses original or traditional ideas as a form of expression in their work, and especially those who use that expression to lead and inspire social change.

☆ HOW?

Considering the role of creative partners as early as project ideation leaves appropriate time to evaluate the extent of their involvement, creative freedom, necessary materials, resources, and compensation. Creatives often juggle multiple projects at once, so demonstrating interest and support early can help foster a strong relationship and foundation of trust. Approach creatives with ideas on how you can mutually benefit each others' missions and a plan as to how they will be supported along the way.

EXERCISE

Spectrum of Collaboration

For each aspect of a project, mark on the spectrum where the ideal balance between the artist and community falls. Answer the reflection questions afterward.

☆ **Ideation.** Who dreams, brainstorms, creates the vision, comes up with the ideas?

Artist ☆.....☆ Community

☆ **Project Plan.** Who makes the decisions about project activities, timeline, budget, project evaluation, etc.?

Artist ☆.....☆ Community

☆ **Artistic Design.** Who makes decisions about the design of the artistic product?

Artist ☆.....☆ Community

☆ **Implementation/Creation.** Who makes decisions related to creation and implementation? Who is involved in creation of the final product?

Artist ☆.....☆ Community

EXERCISE

Spectrum of Collaboration

Reflection Questions:

☆ **Are you comfortable with your role? Is it a stretch for you, or those you're working with?**

☆ **Is there conflict between what you are comfortable with and what the project needs?**

☆ **Will you need to bring others on board to help with aspects of project collaboration where you are less comfortable?**

☆ **If your team or community has a greater decision-making role, how do you support them to take that role?**

☆ **How do you move from one point on the spectrum to another?**

This exercise is adapted from The Handbook for Artists Working in Community. The Handbook was developed by Springboard for the Arts and made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts through the Our Town Knowledge Building grant.

OUR FIRST STEPS:

Metro Atlanta Artist Survey

As we launched our reimagined community outreach initiatives, we partnered with local government, planning, and arts organizations to develop the Metro Atlanta Artist Survey. The survey was created and shared via Public Input, a virtual platform with tools to curate public engagement strategies for community projects.

The goal of this survey was to identify local artists who were interested in civic work and gather recommendations as to how we can best support them as we work toward integrating arts and culture into our agency's programs, practices, and policies.

The survey was live for three months, the same duration as our Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta (ALMA) class (see page 21), to leave an ample amount of time for ourselves and our partners to share the survey with local networks and collect a thoughtful first round of responses.

At the close of the survey, we analyzed the practices and experiences of artists who responded, themes within the responses, and the demographics of respondents. The analysis revealed the extensive variability of the practices of artists within our region, showing the potential of working with experienced civic artists. The demographics of respondents showed an underrepresentation of certain areas of the population including communities of color and LGBTQIA+ participants, so we sought out to fill these gaps by conducting one-on-one interviews with carefully selected community members (see page 10).

CASE STUDIES

☆ **SIDEWALK POETRY**

Artist: **Marcus Young**

Community: **City of St Paul**

☆ **Collaboration & Co-design**

Sidewalk Poetry re-imagines St. Paul's annual sidewalk maintenance program by inviting local curators, a panel of professional poets, and local government partners to create an annual public art installation of poetry printed into 10 miles of sidewalk that is co-designed by members of the community through their individual submissions.

☆ **REGIONAL IMMIGRANT STORYTELLING PROJECT**

Artist: **Daphne Xu**

Community: **Quincy, Massachusetts**

☆ **Equity & Justice**

☆ **Curiosity & Courage**

In response to existing and unprecedented community challenges, Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) initiated a regional storytelling project that focused on stories of resilient Asian immigrant entrepreneurs. MAPC partnered with filmmaker Daphne Xu to create "Quincy, from a distance," a series of short films documenting the lived experiences & strength of three Asian small business owners in Quincy, Massachusetts.



**LEARN
BY
(UN)DOING.**



☆ **WHY?**

Unlearning and undoing is a practice of identifying harm and questioning power structures that can result in economically and socially accessible community spaces. Equity is not attainable without revealing and tackling the injustices that persistently affect the most vulnerable populations.

☆ **WHO?**

The most vulnerable populations are those proven to be at higher risk for poor quality of life as a result of the limitations of social, economic, political, health, and environmental resources. While this may not be the reality of everyone with marginalized identities, the stigmas that accompany these identities are a powerful factor that influences how they interact with the world. The practice of undoing means working with them, in their favor for the opportunity to approach an improved quality of life.

☆ **HOW?**

Acknowledging histories of oppression and amplifying the stories, cultures, and traditions of our most vulnerable communities can lead to the development of safe spaces that uphold these cultures and traditions while celebrating historically and presently marginalized people. This can be realized through co-design with those whose lives we have the capacity to improve and by investing, redirecting resources, and exchanging knowledge with them directly.

EXERCISE

I am From Poem

The *I am From Poem* will give you (and your community) a chance to reflect on who you are, share with one another, and also help you feel comfortable being creative.

The end result of this exercise is a poem that will be beautiful, entertaining, revealing, provocative, and profound. It will serve as a symbol of your personal journey that can be reflected upon for your own work or shared with others who want to learn about your community.

Take a few minutes to fill in the blanks. Don't think too hard about it, and if you can't think of anything, just write down the first word that comes to mind.

After your first draft, take another few minutes to read over your poem and make any changes.

When everyone is done with their poem, share a few of your favorite lines with the group.

This exercise is adapted from The Handbook for Artists Working in Community. The Handbook was developed by Springboard for the Arts and made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts through the Our Town Knowledge Building grant.

EXERCISE

I am From Poem

I am from _____
(specific ordinary item)

From _____ and _____
(product name) (product name)

I am from the _____
(community description)

_____, _____, _____
(adjective) (adjective) (sensory detail)

I am from _____,
(plant, flower, natural item)

(description of above item)

I'm from _____ and _____
(community tradition) (community trait)

From _____ and _____
(name of community member) (another member)

I'm from the _____ and _____
(description of community tendency) (another one)

From _____ and _____
(something you were told as a child) (another)

I'm from _____, _____
(representation of religion or lack of) (further description)

I'm from _____
(place of birth and/or ancestry)

_____, _____
(a food that represents your community) (another one)

From the _____.
(specific community story and detail)



OUR FIRST STEPS:

Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta

Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta (ALMA) is an annual leadership program offered by the ARC that has traditionally gathered regional arts leaders, administrators, and elected officials deemed to be supportive of arts and culture to learn about key issues and opportunities of the arts community, both locally and nationally. For over 20 years, its primary purpose was to encourage networking and learning among influential arts administrators and policymakers. Furthermore, each participant paid a program fee, which significantly limited who was able to attend.

This year, we redesigned the ALMA admission process and the program itself to encourage cross-sector teams to develop arts and culture-centered proposals to address community challenges. The class comprised artists and creatives (not just administrators), planners, and local government officials. Working artists and creatives were provided a stipend for their participation. We intentionally considered applicants' racial, ethnic, and gender identity in the recruitment and admission process to ensure that the class more accurately reflected the demographics represented within the region.

Group projects were added to the curriculum to encourage actionable, interdisciplinary, arts-centered problem solving. The 2021 ALMA program serves as a model for the cross-sector arts and culture-focused planning we want to aid and promote as we strive for inclusive, equitable community development. We continue to refine this model to better serve different community needs throughout the region.

CASE STUDIES

☆ THE FOLDED MAP PROJECT

Artist: **Tonika Lewis Johnson**

Community: **City of Chicago**

☆ **Equity & Justice**

☆ **Reflexivity**

Geographical maps visually connect residents at corresponding addresses on the North and South sides of Chicago, revealing the perspectives of these "map twins" on urban segregation and its impacts. The ongoing project invites audiences to begin a dialogue and question how we are all impacted by social, racial, and institutional conditions that segregate our cities.

☆ REMEMBRANCE AS RESISTANCE

Artist: **Charmaine Minniefield**

Community: **Oakland Cemetery, City of Atlanta**

☆ **Equity & justice**

☆ **Curiosity & Courage**

The over 800 unmarked graves within Oakland Cemetery's African American Burial Grounds are honored through the multimedia installation of a Ring Shout, a traditional African American worship and gathering practice with West African origins, within the Praise House. The practice of ancestral tradition allows participants to celebrate its endurance in contemporary dance, music, and spoken word as testament to the resilience of a people.

REFLECTIONS

In the process of repairing and uplifting communities that have been disproportionately impacted by local and global events, it can help to reflect on community-wide and personal connections to land, people, past, present, and future. Refer to these reflections when conceptualizing projects that center on community healing.

☆ **Where are your people from? When did you come into this community?**

☆ **Who inspires your work? Someone who has passed on? Someone who is doing important work today?**

☆ **What is a favorite memory within your community? How does this inform your vision for the future of your community?**

☆ **Where are the safe spaces, gathering spots, healing places within your community?**

GRATITUDE

COMMUNITY

Atlanta Regional Commission
Community Development Group

City of Atlanta

Department of City Planning

Fulton County Department of
Arts & Culture

Atlanta BeltLine

Boston MAPC

Southern Fried Queer Pride

Impactful Brush

Trans Housing Coalition

DanceATL

Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta
2021 Class

MEMBER(S)

Samyukth Shenbaga
Marian Liou
Josh Phillipson
Rachel Will
Tatiana Bell

Charmaine Minniefield

Sonia Sequeira
Dorian McDuffie

Alex Francombe

Miranda Kyle

Jennifer Erickson
Annis Sengupta
Emma Boast
Daniel Koff
Claudia Zarazua

Taylor Alxndr
Jesse Pratt Lopez

Aysha Pennerman

Jesse Pratt Lopez

Jacquelyn Pritz

(designed by Tatiana Bell)



SOURCES



Adaptation, Community, and Identity: Elevating the Stories and Presence of Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs across the Region (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/regional-immigrant-entrepreneur-storytelling-project/>)

Aguilera, M. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement. Environmental and Climate Change Literacy Project and Summit (EECLPS) 2019 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hr4jW3zYUQ4>)

Diverse Issues in Higher Education:

On Labor Acknowledgements and Honoring the Sacrifice of Black Americans

(<https://www.diverseeducation.com/demographics/african-american/article/15108677/on-labor-acknowledgements-and-honoring-the-sacrifice-of-black-americans>)

Flux Projects *Remembrance as Resistance: Preserving Black Narratives*

(<https://fluxprojects.org/productions/remembrance-as-resistance-preserving-black-narratives/>)

Folded Map by Tonika Lewis Johnson: The Project (<https://www.foldedmapproject.com/>)

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT): Cultural Resources

(<http://www.dot.ga.gov/IS/Environment/CulturalResources#tab-4>)

Healing Through Story: About (<https://www.healingthroughstory.org/about>)

Lower Muskogee Tribe: Historical Overview

(<http://lowermuskogee.com/historicaloverview.html>)

Oklahoma Contemporary: Oklahoma is Black by Tatyana Fazlalizadeh

(<https://oklahomacontemporary.org/exhibitions/prior/2019/recent-tatyana-fazlalizadeh-oklahoma-is-black>)

Public Art Saint Paul: Sidewalk Poetry (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/regional-immigrant-entrepreneur-storytelling-project/>)

Rigney, L.-I. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous Anticolonial Cultural Critique of Research Methodologies: A Guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and Its Principles.

(<https://doi.org/10.2307/1409555>)