



ARTISTS IN COMMUNITIES

PROJECT TOOLS

CULTURAL INVENTORY / CULTURAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CULTURAL INVENTORY

Purpose

A Cultural Inventory helps identify what you already have in your community for the purposes of planning for cultural and creative opportunities, and identifying gaps or needs that future arts programming can address. For example, if there is a concentration of resources in one discipline, that discipline or art form might become the focus of your cultural activity if the community wishes or you could concentrate on undeveloped and unrepresented arts forms.

Guidelines

A Cultural Inventory is a list of the resources that exist in your community, both professional and non-professional, organized by category of organization or group. For example:

- Arts organizations – producers, theatre companies, book publishers, dance groups, etc.
- Arts presenters – festivals, individuals, galleries, museums, libraries, in some cases arts councils.
- Arts venues and outlets – auditoriums, stages, halls, stores, selling co-ops, cultural centres, churches, school gyms.
- Arts facilities – production facilities such as film and video co-ops, studios, pottery kilns, office spaces, rehearsal spaces, warehousing, studios.
- Arts service organizations – clubs, guilds, associations, unions.
- Resource persons – teachers, mentors, elders, coaches, editors.
- Training opportunities – post-secondary programs, courses, workshops.
- Communication resources – newsletters, internet, public bulletin boards, community radio stations, PSA services, web sites.
- Individual artists – grouped by discipline or individually according to level of practice.
- Funding sources – municipal, provincial, federal, foundation, corporate.

CULTURAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Purpose

The purpose of a Community Cultural Needs Assessment for an Artists in Communities – Community Development project or for designing an Artists in Communities – Residencies project is to:

- Identify what type of creative and cultural programming the community needs
- Get public opinion to help set creative and cultural programming goals and objectives
- Evaluate existing cultural programming in the community
- Establish the need for an Artists in Communities – Residencies project
- Increase awareness of community planning.

Selecting a Needs Assessment Technique

The quality of the information about a community is only as good as the techniques used to gather the information. Using only one technique may provide too little information and using too many may be too costly in terms of time, financial and human resources. In order to determine what will get you the information you want and need, try asking these questions:

- What is your community like, i.e., what are the types of organizations, groups, values, attitudes, goals, concerns, and problems?
- What is unique about your community?

Then select several techniques that will work with your community, budget and timeline. For example:

- Community meetings (invite the whole community).
- Advisory or focus groups.
- Surveys (telephone, personal interviews, written, email).
- Research of existing information.
- Key people (those who know the community very well).

Needs Assessment Process

The following is a process that you may use in conducting your assessment:

1. Brainstorm session with key players to discuss your central research question to see if it still makes sense for the community. Key players will include the lead partner, the artist or artist partners, and other organizational and community partners. The brainstorm session also will serve as an opportunity to identify any other issues and questions that the project should explore. In this way, you will be able to determine what is and isn't known about the cultural community and work to fill in the gaps.
2. Agree on the central research question (knowing that your research may result in this changing).
3. Outline the available resources (i.e. funds, spaces, equipment, etc.) and volunteers to carry out the work.
4. Draw up a plan that includes a timeframe and information gathering techniques.
5. Explain and promote the Artists in Communities – Community Development project to the community, emphasizing long-term benefits.

Needs Assessment Process *(continued)*

6. Gather information according the most appropriate methods (i.e. surveys, workshops, meetings, etc.) for your community and resources.
7. Compile and analyze the information.
8. Draft a report of the findings and distribute to partners.
9. Discuss the findings of the survey and the other information gathered with the partners and the artist.
10. Draw up a list of needs identified by the community and put in order of priority. Discuss how this relates to your original research question. You may have to re-frame the question in light of what you now know.
11. Conduct any additional community workshops, focus groups and meetings to finalize the needs and priorities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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