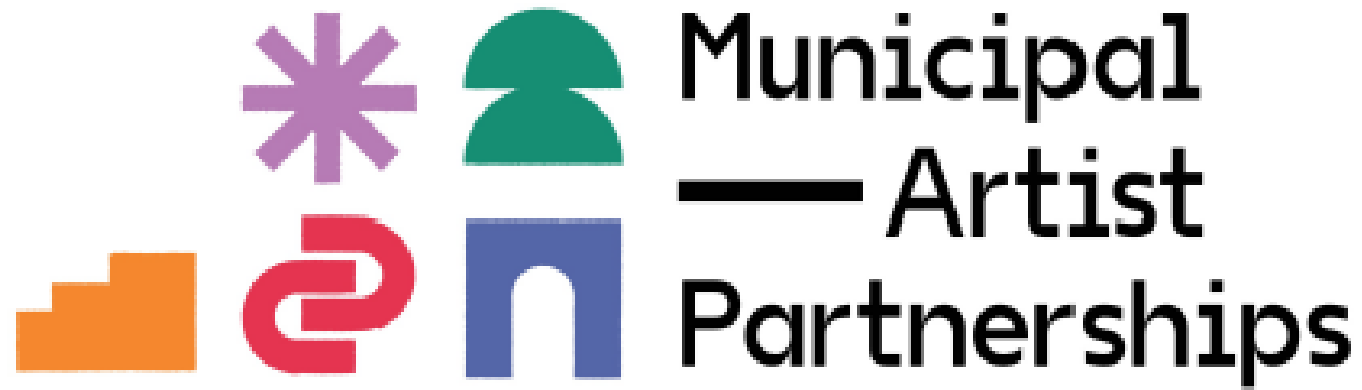


# When Artists & Municipalities Partner for the Public Good



[municipal-artist.org/](http://municipal-artist.org/)

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# Municipal — Artist Partnerships

A “relationship guide” to forging strong and sustainable creative partnerships between local governments and artists.

A BLADE OF GRASS

Animating  
Democracy  
A Program of Americans for the Arts



## Get Started

What is a Municipal/Artist Partnership?



## Nuts and Bolts

How to start and sustain a partnership



## Profiles

Case studies of M/A projects



## Tools and Resources

Sample documents, worksheets, readings, & more



## About

Who we are





A person with long dark hair is seen from behind, sitting on a white plastic lifeguard stand. They are looking out over a large outdoor swimming pool. The pool is filled with many children of various ages who are playing and swimming. A large white patio umbrella is open on the right side of the pool. The scene is captured in a monochromatic cyan-blue color scheme. The text "MY PARK, MY POOL, MY CITY" is overlaid in white, bold, serif capital letters on the right side of the image.

**MY PARK,  
MY POOL,  
MY CITY**

**PRERANA REDDY**  
**A Blade of Grass**



**KRISSIE MARTY**  
**Forklift Danceworks**



**PRESENTERS**



**PAM KORZA**  
**Animating Democracy**



**LYNN OSGOOD**  
**Civic Arts**





# Third Party Partners

*Love Letter to a Library*

STEVE LOCKE, Boston Public Library

BOSTON ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Office of Arts & Culture

# Third Party Partners

## LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES

**BOSTON:** Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture

**NEW YORK CITY:** Department of Arts & Culture

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES:** Dept of Cultural Affairs

**OAKLAND:** Office of Arts & Culture

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY:** Los Angeles County  
Arts & Culture

**PHILADELPHIA:** Office of Arts, Culture,  
& the Creative Economy

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Office of Arts, Culture  
& the Creative Economy

**PORTLAND, OR:** Regional Arts & Culture Council

**NASHVILLE:** Metro Arts

**SEATTLE:** Office of Arts & Culture

# Third Party Partners

## PUBLIC ART PROGRAMS



**NASHVILLE: Metro Arts**

**PORTLAND, OR: Regional Arts & Culture Council**

**SAINT PAUL: Public Art Saint Paul**

**PHILADELPHIA: Mural Arts Philadelphia**

*Annexation & Assimilation: Exploring the Archives, SABINA HAQUE*  
Portland Archives & Records Center (*intersections* program, RACC)



# Typical Roles and Responsibilities of Third-Party Partners

Municipal  
— Artist  
Partnerships

## Conceive

- \* With municipal government, construct ongoing programs or initiatives and projects including: defining purpose and goals, structure and staffing, policies, interfaces with municipal departments, etc.

## Administer

- \* Identify possible opportunities and help determine which departments have suitable projects and readiness to take on artist partners.
- \* Serve as liaison within the hierarchy of municipal government to ensure accountability, communications, as well as necessary collaborations.
- \* Promote/help develop policies and procedures that uphold the integrity of the work, values of equity, inclusion, and diversity.
- \* Buffer the artist from having to contend with administrative functions of projects so that they may focus on artistic aspects.

## Facilitate Partner Relations

- \* Keep interests of both partners in mind and provide a bridge to ensure both sides are considered.
- \* Translate and foster understanding across differences of language and ways of working.
- \* Facilitate the ups and downs of partnership dynamics, power relations, and inequities.

## Educate

- \* Work closely with municipal department heads to build understanding about working with artists and readiness to participate.
- \* Educate other consultants and contractors working on municipal projects about the role of artists in a municipal project.
- \* Develop or facilitate training for artists and partners to build skills.

## Advocate

- \* Advocate on behalf of artists for fair professional level compensation, intellectual ownership, creative choices that may require championing, and challenge bureaucratic obstacles that may be counterproductive to the desired results.
- \* Advocate on behalf of the agency liaison for the time release and other conditions necessary to support the partnership, and to help the artist understand government's structural parameters.

## Sustain

- \* Establish documentation and evaluation to support internal learning and improvement.
- \* Set up systems as well as processes for adaptive change that help programs continually improve processes, ownership, leadership
- \* Work with municipal leaders toward allocation of public funds to support the sustainability of programs, including intermediary staff time and expenses, and departmental dollars to support partnerships and projects.
- \* Seek ways to build artist partnerships into an agency so they can continue to happen without the intermediary.
- \* Build visibility and evidence of the value add of artists in municipal agencies' work and for the public good.

# Understanding Difference to Find Common Ground

Municipal  
— Artist  
Partnerships

## EXCERPT

<https://municipal-artist.org/pdfs/010-understanding-difference.pdf>

	What a Municipal Agency Needs to Know About Working with an Artist	What an Artist Needs to Know About Working with a Municipal Agency
Ways of Working	<p>Socially engaged artists tend to engage laterally across structures or groups, and/or bottom up.</p>	<p>Even the most benevolent government effort carried out by the most compassionate staff is structurally top-down.</p>
	<p><i>Wait, don't hurry!</i> Artists work in iterative ways; often exploratory, organic, reflexive, nonlinear. Managing a project may require greater flexibility, longer timeline, more process and making sense of things, when artists are involved.</p> <p><i>Can we move this along?</i> Artists may be ready and need to act or respond in a timely way to opportunity or crisis, but feel hamstrung by city systems and protocol. Sometimes municipal agents need to figure out ways to avoid unnecessary delays or expedite approvals, processes so as not to lose momentum or timeliness.</p>	<p><i>Hurry up and wait!</i> Municipalities set up formal systems and procedures for reasons of accountability or safety that may dictate steps and approvals, require meetings, protocols, and documentation, and take time. In addition, politics of the work, construction delays, funding issues can hold up projects.</p> <p><i>Also... Just Hurry!</i> Lots of things can happen quite quickly too. Municipalities are often time-bound, set up for efficiency, cost effectiveness, solving timely problems fast, or to meet interrelated deadlines. Partnering with municipal agency means knowing what these realities are, where there is wiggle room, and where there is not.</p>

# Understanding Difference to Find Common Ground

Municipal  
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Working with and through differences is paramount to being good partners. Here are ways of working in which municipal agencies and artists often (but not always!) differ in their orientation. The intention is not to perpetuate stereotypes, but rather to acknowledge differences that are often in play so that they can be discussed and honored when they serve good purpose, and challenged when they might jeopardize best results.

	What a Municipal Agency Needs to Know About Working with an Artist	What an Artist Needs to Know About Working with a Municipal Agency
Basics	Arts & Civic sector 101 – What artist-municipal partnerships look like and how they function in other civic contexts and settings. What is happening nationally	Civics 101 – How municipal/county government works. How this differs from working with nonprofits.
	Nature of the artist's work, past projects, intentions, skills.	Nature of the Agency/Dept – Mission, goals, aspirations, what it does, who it represents/ serves, and how these often are embedded in a hierarchy of larger municipal goals
	History - relevant past or current experience; artist's knowledge of community and knowledge gaps; agencies, partners artist has worked with; history of relationships, successes, challenges, etc.	History – What has come before that is relevant to the project at hand; agency's efforts, community context, successes, challenges, relevant partners, relationships, experience working with other artists, etc.
Language & Meaning Making	Vocabulary and language specific to artistic work (jargon, technical, discipline- specific).	Vocabulary and language specific to the municipal agency's work (jargon, technical, discipline-specific, acronyms).
	Artistic liberty to explore dilemmas. Artistic practices allowing for blurred lines, ambiguity.	Municipalities are charged with analyzing dilemmas and straight forward solving problems. They tend toward clear and sharp definitions.
	What artist means when using certain common terms, e.g., "community engagement."	What municipality means when using certain common terms, e.g., "community engagement."
Ways of Working	Socially engaged artists tend to engage laterally across structures or groups, and/or bottom up.	Even the most benevolent government effort carried out by the most compassionate staff is structurally top-down.





Profile

## Art At Work

Portland, ME



Artists used printmaking, photography and poetry to engage employees in Health and Human Services and the Police Departments

# EVALUATION IN ACTION PROFILE

## Theory of Change

AAW leverages the creative intelligence and talents of the city's own workforce as well as the communities it serves. Through art-making, AAW advances public understanding of what government workers contribute to society, fosters reflection that improves municipal operations, and strengthens awareness of municipal workers' significance to the community.

<https://municipal-artist.org/profiles/profiles/art-at-work/>

# Gauging Readiness for Partnership

Municipal  
— Artist  
Partnerships

Passion, creative possibilities and aspirations for meaningful outcomes can be hugely motivating for municipal and artist partners. However it's hard work to get there, and often stretches partners' human, financial, and time resources. Use these questions to help gauge if you and your potential partner are ready to work together. Ask these early on in the process.

## Questions for Municipalities

1. What core strengths, knowledge, sensibilities, and resources can we (as people and professionals) bring to the partnership?
2. What are the gaps? What more do we need to learn to help us imagine and define opportunities to work with artists in our community and/or agency?
3. To what degree are we able to allow aspects of the creative work to evolve through collaboration with the artist?
4. How open are we to new ways of working that may disrupt our usual practices? What is our risk threshold? Where can we bend and what are our risk limits? Can we be critically reflective of our work in order to pave the way for new ways of working?
5. Is the timing right to embark on this? What internal and external factors might propel or impede this work?
6. Do we have buy-in? Who are the champions in the city and in relevant departments? Who are the skeptics? Where are the barriers in the system that will require preliminary work to ensure buy-in and assistance?
7. Can and will we commit time and resources to pay artists fair compensation and provide space, access to staff, and other resources as needed?
8. How will we think about incorporating this work within staff roles and responsibilities, and

## Questions for Artists

1. What core strengths, knowledge, sensibilities, and resources can I bring to the partnership?
2. What are the gaps? What more do I need to learn that will help me imagine and define opportunities to work with the agency and to effectively engage community?
3. How will I handle working in the context of bureaucratic systems, timelines, and procedures? How will my practice need to bend to work within these parameters?
4. To what degree am I able to allow aspects of the creative work to evolve through collaboration with municipal partners and/or community members?
5. Am I the right artist for this context? What is my connection to the cultural context, issue, community, population and/or how will I assure credibility, authenticity, and integrity in the way that I work?

thoughts  
questions  
comments  
dilemmas



# BLOG SALON - Inside Artist-Municipal Partnerships

[blog.americansforthearts.org/2019/05/15/inside-artist-municipal-partnerships](http://blog.americansforthearts.org/2019/05/15/inside-artist-municipal-partnerships)

## ARTISTS

Elizabeth Hamby  
Carolyn Lewenberg

## LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES

Diana Falchuk, Seattle  
Jacques Liu, Philadelphia  
Pauline Kanako Kamiyama, L.A.  
Olusola Tribble, Nashville

## MUNICIPAL AGENCIES

Jenn Erickson, **Metropolitan  
Area Planning Council**, Boston

Josh Silver & Sakina Khan  
**D.C. Office of Planning**



[municipal-artist.org/](http://municipal-artist.org/)