



A Guide to Impacting Communities through the **Arts**

This guide supports your efforts in community arts engagement with quick tips and considerations for approaching community arts initiatives. It is applicable to anyone with an interest in engaging communities meaningfully in and through the arts.



NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
SINGAPORE

Introduction

Engaging communities in and through the arts can bring communities together, bridge diverse groups and strengthen social networks. The arts encourage people to be open to the experiences of others, inspire them to consider their circumstances through a creative lens and to relate to their everyday environment in a new way.

According to the 2019 Population Survey on the Arts, Singaporeans are increasingly appreciative of the holistic benefits of the arts, particularly in creating a greater sense of belonging and identity (82%), as a source of pride (80%) and in improving the quality of life (78%).

Meaningful community arts engagement requires carefully structured creative processes for participants, and ground-up support from members of the community – be they volunteers, business owners, social service agencies, space owners, or families. Consider the 4Ps.

People

Take time to learn about the community to better understand their needs, priorities, and artistic interests.



Programmes

Customise arts programmes with inputs from the community to ensure relevance and encourage community decision-making.



Places

Embed the arts where people live, work and play to activate communal spaces and community places of interest.



Partnerships

Develop community relations to bridge creative collaborations and expand support networks.



Community

Defined by the people within it – where they are, what they do, what they are interested in, or how they identify themselves.

Community Arts Practice

Based on the belief that cultural meaning, expression and creativity reside within a community. It involves artists and community members in a collaborative creative process, resulting in a collective experience and public expression in and through the arts.

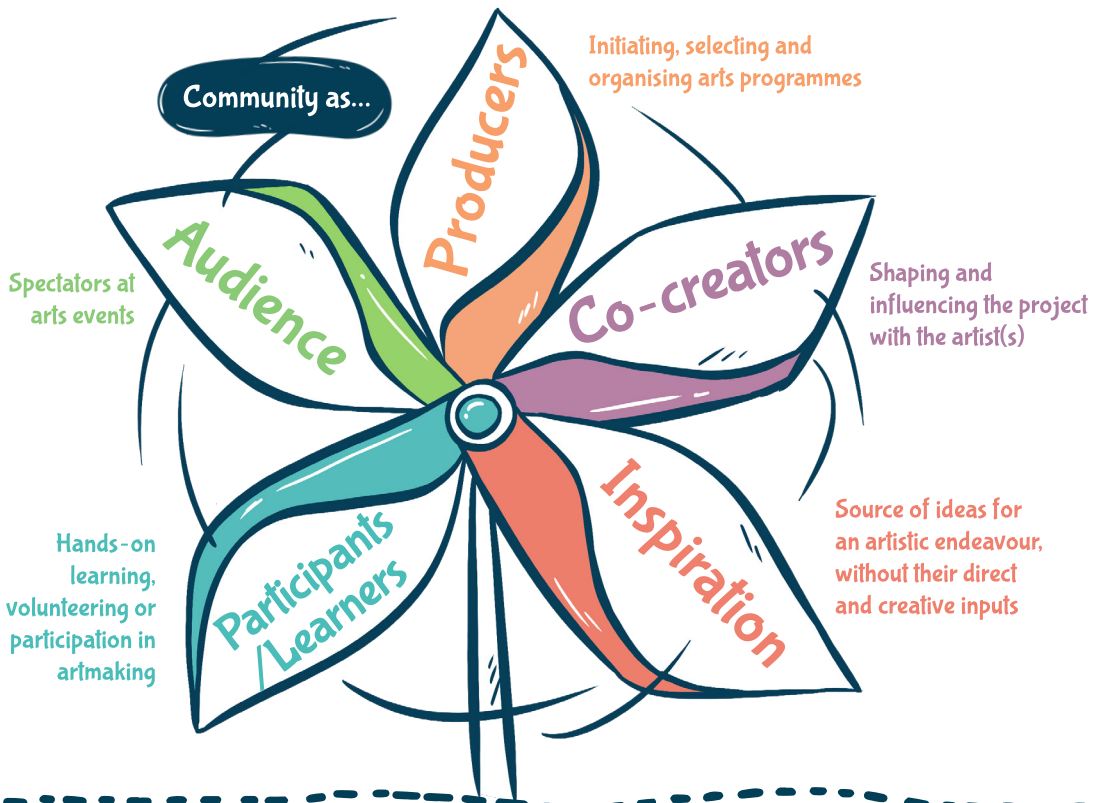
Social Outcomes

Community arts engagement can lead to positive social outcomes such as:

- A stronger sense of identity
- Livelier spaces
- Connections between people from diverse social groups and networks

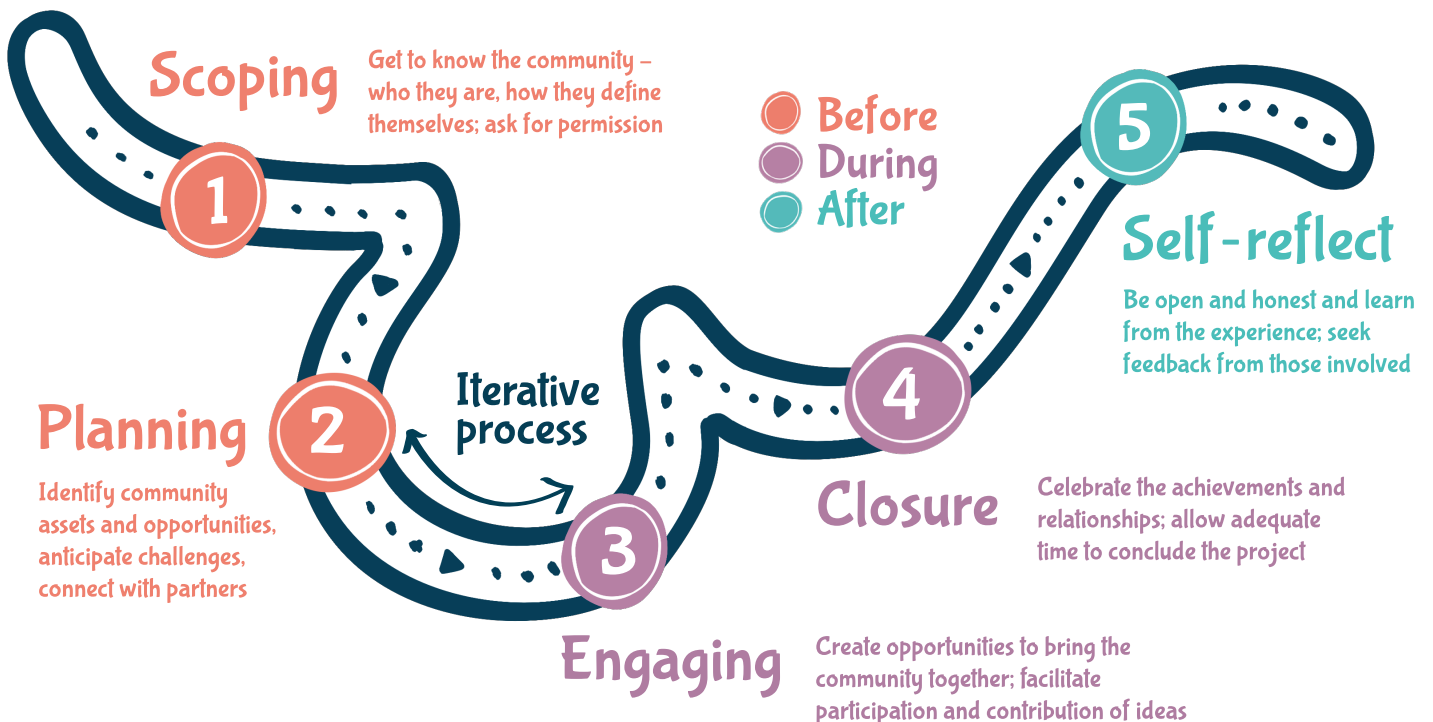
Creative Connections

The arts can inspire and empower the community to take on different roles and responsibilities. Explore varying levels of community engagement to determine what works best; consider how arts activities may forge social connections and cultivate a strong sense of belonging, identity, and pride in the community.



Co-creating the Journey

Co-creation is an iterative process. Engage the community from start to end of the journey; make it easy for them to learn about the project, contribute their ideas and offer support. Regular interactions are key to building familiarity and relationships.



The complex nature of community relations requires constant communication, adjustment, and learning as one collaborates with multiple stakeholders. Community engagement also requires one to embrace mess, paradoxes, and uncertainty as part and parcel of the process.

Meaningful Community Arts Engagement



Building strong relationships

- Apply principles of trust, empathy and respect towards various stakeholders in the project
- Help the community understand the processes involved, and seek their informed consent to participate

Ensuring accountability & safety

- Ensure a conducive environment for sharing and exchange, especially when vulnerable groups are involved
- Develop the necessary capabilities to navigate and manage differences in perspectives, abilities and identities

Developing artistic concepts

- Be open to creative possibilities and scaffold the process to inspire the community to make artistic choices
- Have confidence in the community's creative potential



Co-creating a shared vision

- Focus on building the community throughout the process
- Partner the community in developing a shared purpose and discuss clear expectations of the project

Designing evaluation

- Determine the measurements and survey questions at start of the project
- Consider artistic, social, and other outcomes (e.g. well-being, place-making) that impact the community



Facilitating inclusion

- Ask questions and listen actively to the community
- Anticipate physical, social or cultural barriers when creating shared experiences for everyone



References

National Arts Council. (2018). *Impacting Communities Through the Arts: 12 Case Studies of Arts Engagement in Singapore*. National Arts Council. (2019). *Impacting Communities Through the Arts II: 12 More Case Studies of Arts Engagement in Singapore*. Trivic, Z., Mascarenhas, N., Duong, Q., Tan, B. K., & Padawangi, R. (2019). *Bringing Arts into the Neighbourhoods: Choosing the Right Space and Strategy*. National Arts Council.