

Hello, we're Americans for the Arts. We are committed to addressing equity and inclusion as a critical component of the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 study (AEP6).

We Address Equity And Inclusion By...

- 01. Centering and representing** Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and African, Latine, Asian, Arab, Native American (ALAANA) identifying communities — a portion of the nonprofit arts and culture sector that has been underrepresented in past studies.
- 02. Transforming** the AEP6 study and committing to a full shake-up of the methodology to reduce systemic bias in survey design, data collection and analysis, community engagement and communications strategies, and the creation of new narratives based on the study results.

MAINTAINING & STRENGTHENING COMMITTED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WORKBOOK

This **digital workbook** is part of a series of Americans for the Arts community engagement resources intended to help local and statewide research partners identify, connect with, and maintain relationships with BIPOC and ALAANA arts and culture organizations in their community. It is a result of research, practitioner experience, and community engagement with our local and statewide research partners.

HOW TO USE THE ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY 6 DIGITAL WORKBOOK:

This guide aims to help our partners consider additional and effective approaches to building and maintaining authentic and mutually beneficial relationships with BIPOC and ALAANA organizations

Go your own way: You can scroll through this digital workbook in any order—workbook engagement is not linear.

Do the work: You can type out your answers in the interactive sections and download a PDF version of this site with your answers upon completion.

Privacy: This work is for your eyes only, unless you choose to share. We do not record answers or any information about your engagement with this digital workbook, even if you choose to download the PDF with your typed answers.

What we ask of you: This guide prompts our partners to be curious, acknowledge challenges, and push through those challenges thoughtfully.

Take what you need: We recommend that you use this resource as a “choose your own pathway” activity. Take what you need. This is by no means a required assignment for our AEP6 partners, and your engagement with this resource (or lack thereof) will not impact your ability to participate in the AEP6 study. However, we encourage each of our partners to review each section as they are published and consider how the content can inform and guide future steps in maintaining community relationships.

We are doing the work with you: We acknowledge that Americans for the Arts is striving to do better with maintaining and strengthening our own relationships. We are excited to do this work alongside each of our 400 participating communities.

Americans for the Arts believes that language and identity go hand-in-hand and are vital to how we name and organize any community.

We use the terms BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and ALAANA (African, Latine, Asian, Arab, Native American) to represent People of Color and Communities of Color. While these terms do not fully encompass or represent the complicated and multi-layered nature of indigeneity or ethnic and racial identities, they are commonly used terms in our work.

We invite and encourage you to examine and explore the terms used in your community and that are important and valued by individuals you interact with, support, and engage. Americans for the Arts has a **Language Bank** that we use to organize terminology related to our work. In addition, Americans for the Arts endorses and is working to uphold the actions and principles set forth in the **Cultural New Deal** to improve conditions for and with the priority communities listed therein.

Strategy 02.

ASK ABOUT UNMET NEEDS

Financial support is not the only type of support that organizations may need. Inquire about opportunities and challenges an organization is experiencing and consider how those opportunities and challenges might align with your organization's programs or services.

CONSIDER THIS

Take a moment to think through the below thought starters. Your awareness of these considerations could lead to the identification of possible solutions.



1. When you ask about unmet needs, there could be a variety of different reactions.

Never assume the response will be a positive one. Remember these reactions are rooted in experiences and acknowledge that experience shapes engagement.

Don't give up.



2. Intentional listening is a key component of building an authentic relationship.

The intention is to hear, to understand, validate, and affirm—not listen to, respond, and “triage.”



3. Avoid the assumption that you already know exactly what an organization needs.

This “savior” mentality can result in disengagement and distrust. Any interaction should start from the premise that the leader of an organization knows what their organization needs.

Especially consider that leaders of color tend to be questioned more than others on their knowledge and skills.



4. Build in the time to close loops.

When you ask about an unmet need, be prepared to receive a response and follow up on the action thereafter.

If you can't meet the need, work toward finding the organization or person who can.

CONSIDER THIS



5. Your organization can not boil the ocean.

One of the only things worse than failing to ask about unmet needs is promising to meet unmet needs before being confident in your organization's ability and capacity to do so.

Be intentional, transparent, and plan to successfully steward a need.



6. Celebrate the abundance that exists in a community!

Talking about unmet needs and opportunities should never minimize the great work already happening.

Take time to acknowledge successes and the effort it takes to do the work.

YOUR TURN

Let's start with some buckets. Build out this map and create connections!

During conversations with an organization, listen to its needs and see if you can put them into the buckets below. Use the empty buckets for needs that don't fit the ones that are already labeled.

This does not have to be a deep dive "needs assessment" - just a space for sharing and dreaming together. Remember, information about your interaction with this workbook is not recorded. You can download a PDF with your answers upon completion.

1. Belonging. EX: Not included in emails, not being able to attend events because schedules weren't flexible, etc.

2. Marketing. EX: Media connections, partner promotions, event marketing, etc.

3. Technical Support. EX: Software, permits, space, equipment, etc.

4. Networking/Connections. EX: Who are the major change-makers, advocates, philanthropists, etc.

5. Skill/Capacity Building. EX: Trainings, support staff, volunteer engagement, etc.

Empty Buckets

Empty Buckets

HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

Think of how beneficial it could be for a less visible arts organization to sit with a more prominent organization or other major change makers who are open to sharing space and thinking big on behalf of the community. Being together to envision a shared impact and build relationships could be more valuable than a one-time financial grant. These connections can lead to new collaborations, shared audiences among organizations, increased visibility for unknown artists, leadership opportunities to influence decisions, and access to more resources.

Start making connections now. Who are the stakeholders you can lean into to support mutual needs? Using the buckets above, identify stakeholders that can help. You may not be the only source to fill all needs. Make a list of contacts and potential connections. Keep track of what other organizations say to develop a list of mutual needs and identify patterns.

GET CURIOUS: LET'S TAKE A DEEPER DIVE

The following can help you dive into some resources, root causes, drivers, and examples of how this intentional work can be pushed forward to break disconnection, distrust, and disinvestment cycles.

Saviorism

Have you ever had an experience where you intentionally had an event, created a program, or made a suggestion and were frustrated because no one showed up? Was there a lack of engagement or a reaction that shocked or disappointed you? This can happen when the intended attendees are not a part of the process or have been historically excluded.

Giving gifts or being a “life savior” can feel good. It activates 3 out of the 4 happiness hormones. But the “charity” driven support comes from a deficit mindset that can support a supremacy mindset. **Saviorism happens when the assumption is made that we think we know better than the people we are giving to, and we disvalue what the real need is based on the assumption.**

Engagement Zones: Stress & Anxiety Responses

There have been communities around the nation that have shared moments of engagement with BIPOC and ALAANA organizations that have been less than positive. If your organization perceives a level of anger, distrust, or abruptness during a conversation, progress may have halted in these circumstances. Note that BIPOC and ALAANA organizations may have experienced blatant discriminatory acts or have not been consulted or compensated for their work. It's possible that these types of experiences have impacted their perception of engagement. Use emotional intelligence and increase engagement through empathy and compassion.

Imagine hearing, “Quick run! A bear is on the loose and they are right behind you”. If this was happening in real time, your brainstem, also known as your survival and emotional brain, would take over the logical part of your brain.

There are three zones of engagement: comfort zone, stretch zone, and stress zone. In the last zone of engagement, the stress zone, the emotional/survival brain takes over and makes connection almost impossible. Based on certain lived experiences, some people of color and the institutions that serve those communities can quickly land in the stress zone. **Building authentic connections over time will support comfort levels and the ability to connect outside of the stress zone.**

Need help? Check out the resource list at the end of this section.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Check your assumptions.

2. Listen intentionally.

3. Acknowledge the variety of reactions.

4. Gauge all communication forms as an asset perspective versus a deficit perspective.

5. Utilize stakeholders to build connections and support needs mutually.

**Save your
work...and
show it off**

(but only if you want to)

If you want to share your work, feel free to post your downloaded PDF or share a story about this experience on the AEP6 Slack Channel. If you aren't yet a part of the Slack Channel, please reach out to **AEP6CommunityEngagement@artsusa.org** for support or access.

If you do not wish to share your work, please know that we do not save, record, or attribute the answers you have typed here or downloaded into your PDF. Your work here is completely private unless you choose otherwise.

RESOURCES

Local Arts Agencies & Resources

Maintaining Connections: Ask About Unmet Needs with Monica

https://youtu.be/4X_vp6wM9ws

Maintaining Connections: Ask About Unmet Needs with Elisheba

<https://youtu.be/DsHqHzrbSs0>

Maintaining Connections: Ask About Unmet Needs with Sally

https://www.jeromefdn.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Re-Tool_2018.pdf

Deepening Relationships with Diverse Communities: State Arts Agency Strategies

https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/equity-choice-points/

CREATIVE ECONOMY: We envision a country where artistic and cultural creativity is embraced as a human-based, primary driving force towards impact, empowerment, and economic and social justice in lives across the country.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/creative-economy>

The Brain, Heuristics & Cognitive Bias

The Happy Brain Chemicals That Make You Feel Good

<https://www.mindmypeelings.com/blog/daily-dose-of-happiness-chemicals>

Your Brain When You're Anxious

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/your-brain-when-youre-anxious>

Sympathy vs. Empathy in UX

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/sympathy-vs-empathy-ux/>

Emotional Intelligence

<https://www.mindtools.com/ab4u682/emotional-intelligence>

Equity & Justice

Seek Solidarity, Not Charity

<https://the-ard.com/2020/11/10/seek-solidarity-not-charity-anti-racism-daily-bt62d/>

Individualism

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/characteristics.html>

Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared About Results, (Robert D. Lupton, 2015) Harper One.

The Bias of 'Professionalism' Standards

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_bias_of_professionalism_standards

New Nonprofit Leaders of Color Bring Change but Also Face Hurdles

<https://www.philanthropy.com/article/new-nonprofit-leaders-of-color-bring-change-but-also-face-hurdles>

The Black Experience at Work in Charts

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/the-black-experience-at-work-in-charts>