Using Arts and Culture to Advance Equity and Inclusion

A resource highlighting communities utilizing arts and culture in multiple sectors to advance equity and inclusion.
ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

Inclusive Dubuque is a local network of leaders from faith, labor, education, business, nonprofit, and government dedicated to advancing justice and social equity in our community.

The network has formed sector groups to understand and tackle equity-related challenges in education, economic wellbeing, transportation, safe neighborhoods, health, housing and arts and culture. Community members have joined these groups and are utilizing the results of the equity profile to take action.

The Arts and Culture Sector Group believes all activities within other Inclusive Dubuque sector groups can be enhanced by using the arts and culturally-engaging activities to connect residents more closely to their community. Creative, arts-based interventions can energize residents and activate them to get more involved in community affairs. Residents from all backgrounds can be drawn into conversations about housing, the economy, safety, or health through thoughtful, interactive artistic interventions.

This toolkit highlights successful examples of how arts and culture was utilized in multiple sectors in equity initiatives. Examples from communities both far and near provide a resource for how Dubuque could engage the community through arts and culture to make a more welcoming, inclusive community.

The Arts and Culture Sector Group will provide guidance and tools for anyone in the community who would like to utilize arts and culture interventions to connect with the community and make programs more inclusive and relevant. To connect with the Arts and Culture Sector Group, contact Jason Neises at jason@dbqfoundation.org or 563.588.2700.

Arts & Culture Sector Group Members

The Inclusive Dubuque Arts & Culture Sector Group has a wide range of expertise and skills that can assist organizations using arts & culture interventions to solve problems, make programs more effective, and get stronger buy-in from residents and clients.

Katrina Farren-Eller  
  Equity and Inclusion

Alan Garfield  
  Creative photography, interfaith conversations

Duane Hagerty  
  Historic preservation, architecture, adaptive reuse of buildings

Ellen Henkels  
  Arts education, creative economy

Ali Levasseur  
  Multidisciplinary arts advocate, creative collaborations, event planning

Frank McClain  
  Theatrical production

Jason Neises  
  Community engagement, creative place-making, cultural tourism

David Schmitz  
  Public art, museums, community arts

Geri Shafer  
  Arts administration, art history, philanthropy

Gina Siegert  
  Publishing, communications

John Stewart  
  Spoken word, media narration

Danielle Stowell  
  Live events, logistics coordination
**Dubuque, Iowa**

Using the arts to infuse innovation, creativity and collaboration into educational curriculum.

Matter: A Learning Playground is a nonprofit organization that fuses art, science and technology into adventures that inspire creativity among people of diverse ages and backgrounds. Matter’s learning adventures are carefully and deliberately designed around the belief that education should facilitate authentic learning experiences that embrace the interconnectedness of the real world and promote fluid exploration of science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics. Programs prepare individuals of all ages to be 21st-century innovators by integrating creative, conceptual, collaborative and problem-solving skills. It teaches through hands-on, inquiry-based activities that promote deep conceptual understanding by doing, making, and experiencing, and promoting divergent thinking by helping visitors explore the world around them through a wide array of lenses.

For more information visit: [http://www.matteradventures.com](http://www.matteradventures.com)

**St. Paul, Minnesota**

Artists create increased visibility and interest in businesses during disruptive construction projects.

“Irrigate” is an artist-led creative placemaking initiative pioneered by Springboard for the Arts, an economic and community development organization for artists and by artists. The program engaged the arts to offset the negative impacts of street construction, which often hampers activity and local businesses, by activating artists as community leaders and developing partnerships between them and local business owners. The project team created a toolkit that clearly lays out how the arts can help turn a ubiquitous challenge into positive outcomes. Businesses that participated saw increased visibility and interest within the community during this time. “Irrigate” involved over 600 artists in over 180 collaborative projects and generated 50 million positive media impressions in lieu of what would have otherwise been a predominantly negative public narrative.

For more information visit: [http://www.artplaceamerica.org/library/irrigate-toolkit](http://www.artplaceamerica.org/library/irrigate-toolkit)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Pop-up art events engage residents in creative discussions about neighborhood safety.

The predominately African-American neighborhoods of Saunders Park, West Powelton, Mantua and Mill Creek in West Philadelphia are experiencing rapid changes in their populations, physical landscapes and real-estate markets. To address decades of neglect and issues of public safety, the People’s Emergency Center CDC (PECCDC), partnering arts organizations, and the 16th Police District will host a series of pop-up events, such as play structure builds, large-scale puppetry projects, and digital street art, that will engage neighbors in dialogue and creative exchange to make a safer neighborhood.

For more information visit: http://pec-cares.org

Nashville, Tennessee

Culturally-relevant art projects make connections along transportation corridors.

The Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) dedicated staff time to engage a local Latino services organization in planning a corridor with a new bus line. The MPO partnered with Conexión Américas, a nonprofit that aims to integrate Latino families in all aspects of life in Middle Tennessee, to connect with Nashville’s growing Latino community. Conexión Américas has long integrated arts and culture in its outreach work in order to reach more immigrants, refugees, Latino families and individuals in Nashville. Artists Jairo and Susan Prado, developed a vision for a colorfully painted, bilingual crosswalk to connect the community center with the local bus stop and solidify the corridor as a home for the Latino community.

For more information visit: http://bit.ly/2eK7g2v
Loveland, Colorado

Innovative live/work spaces for artists become a catalyst for neighborhood development.

In 2015, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper formally announced Space to Create Colorado, the nation’s first state-driven initiative for affordable housing for artists. Artspace will develop affordable housing and workspace for artists and arts organizations in nine rural Colorado communities. Space to Create Colorado will advance a total of nine mixed-use projects that blend affordable live/work space for artists and their families with non-residential space for creative enterprises and nonprofit arts organizations in eight regions of Colorado. This innovative initiative combines affordable housing with creative workspaces and community-use facilities to create catalysts for economic development in Colorado’s rural communities.

For more information visit: http://bloom.bg/IMGjMM

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Performing arts help connect foreign-born residents to critical healthcare services.

The Mixed Blood Theatre is located in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood, which boasts 42% foreign-born residents with a majority of the newcomers hailing from Somalia. Among the many adjustments that immigrants make, one that is particularly difficult to navigate is the American healthcare system. Many newcomers are left in the dark when it comes to making decisions about their health because of economic hardship, fear that cultural norms will be misunderstood, or even Islamophobia. The Mixed Blood Theatre artists engage community residents using documentary theatre, non-traditional health fairs, and intergenerational storytelling to become advocates for their health.

For more information visit: http://mixedblood.com
Des Moines, Iowa

Public art is celebrated while promoting walkability, health and wellness.

Art Route Des Moines unites 87 pieces of public art with an access path via artful city sidewalks and intersections. Think, “Follow the Yellow Brick Road,” where the sidewalk is painted with circles and chevrons leading to world-renowned sculptures, murals and architecture—free for all to enjoy. The Downtown Des Moines painted trail is 6.6 miles long and includes six vibrantly painted intersections for a total of 14 crosswalks. Art Route was formed by a committee of volunteers, with the support of local corporations, to create a unique experience for locals and visitors. The Art Route vision serves to unite public art, increase economic development and promote walkability, health and wellness throughout the region. Greater Des Moines is the first city to create an artful pathway connecting both painted sidewalks and painted intersections to public art.

For more information visit: www.artroutedsm.com

Boston, Massachusetts

Artists deploy into communities to use fun, interactive displays to gather feedback and ideas.

Department of Play (DoP) creates opportunities for residents to step out of their everyday lives and have collective experiences of play in public spaces—taking a break to reflect on their relationship with the city and with one another. DoP served as a creative resource for the Boston Creates team and engaged a broad cross-section of the public through community engagement activities. Using the Boston Creates logo, DoP designed jumbo, interlinking foam blocks for building structures. They used blocks at public festivals and youth meetings, inviting people to build their visions for the future of Boston’s arts and culture. DoP worked with the Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics adding an “I imagine something here” tab and icon to the asset map on Boston Creates’ website. Using text and/or images, people could pin ideas for art amenities to specific locations on the map.

For more information visit: http://plan.bostoncreates.org/process
Collinwood, Ohio

Art projects are used to obtain feedback from the community and guide the city budgeting process.

The Ballot Box Project is Ohio’s first arts-based participatory budgeting effort. The project will give Collinwood residents a direct voice in arts investment in their neighborhood; engage them and local officials in candid discussions about citizen-led placemaking; and leverage arts activity to increase civic education and engagement. Artists were asked to propose creative solutions to improve four community issues: Collinwood history, vacancy, healthy eating and youth engagement. Collinwood residents voted on the artists’ projects to determine how to spend $120,000 in creative placemaking funds. The project engaged more than 500 people in voting, 100 of which were under 18 years old.

For more information visit: http://ballotboxproject.org

Kansas City, Missouri

Artists turn data into works of art that tell a story about the city.

The Art of Data exhibit began with the notion that charts and graphs, which are used to visually communicate important information to City leaders, are striking and artistic in their own way. The exhibit showcased ten artists who humanized city datasets into works of art. They took a specific, dedicated dataset such as life expectancy by zip code and the city’s homicide rate, and translated it into tangible and provocative beauty. The exhibit combined the strategic talents of Kansas City’s Office of Performance Management with the creative and economic inspiration from the Office of Culture and Creative Services. This partnership resulted in an exhibit that sparked awareness of and connection to City services, while attracting input on City priorities. An exhibit of the art drew more than 3,000 people.

For more information visit: http://kcmo.gov/citymanagersoffice/creative-services/art-of-data