

FOUR AREAS OF INQUIRY FOR ANIMATING DEMOCRACY LAB PROJECTS

What impact does the intent to stimulate dialogue have on artistic work and its creative or aesthetic development?

What are the impacts of doing arts-based civic dialogue work on the cultural organization?

What are the civic impacts of an art-based civic dialogue project?

What are the impacts of creating art-based civic dialogue experience for audiences?

These four questions formed the basis for inquiry around the Animating Democracy’s funded Lab projects. Lab project leaders could use them to reflect on the impact of their work for their own analysis and for Animating Democracy reporting. Additionally, each Lab site was required to collect and analyze data to assess the impact of its projects in at least one of these focus areas. The supporting questions below each of the four main areas of inquiry offered additional fodder for thinking and analysis.

What impact does the intent to stimulate dialogue have on artistic work and its creative or aesthetic development?

- What impacts have the intent for dialogue (or actual dialogue) had on artistic process or product?
- What, if any, artistic or programmatic changes or innovations have resulted?
- Was the linking or transitioning from art to dialogue on the issue successful? What methods and strategies were effective? What methods and strategies were not?
- What roles did artists* play in dialogue design and/or facilitation? How effective were they in this role? (From their own perspective? From others’ perspectives?)
- What was the nature of critical attention to and critical reviews of the work?
- What were the artist’s* goals for engaging community in creative process and/or product?
- How did audience/community involvement influence the art? What was the artist’s experience with audience/community involvement in the creative process?
- What has changed, if anything, in the artist’s* beliefs about, philosophy of, or attitudes towards art making?
- Are the artist’s* artistic or programmatic interests, artistic/curatorial process, or arts-based civic dialogue intentions likely to change as a result of this experience? If so, how?

- What aspects of the project and the association with Animating Democracy did the artist* find beneficial to his or her capacity for creating and presenting work with the intent to stimulate dialogue?

* Includes artists, curators, and other creative persons.

What are the impacts of doing arts-based civic dialogue work on the cultural organization?

- How has the capacity of the organization to do arts-based civic dialogue and civically engaged work changed in areas of:
 - Skills and knowledge of employees, new training, documentation
 - Commitment of board and/or executive leadership
 - Resources allocated
 - Staffing or work redefined, restructured; job descriptions
 - Approaches to marketing
 - Approaches to planning and evaluation
- What has changed or is expected to change in the organization’s approach to or maintenance of community partnerships (new partners, organizational trust, greater understanding of how to work more effectively in partnership)?
- What has changed or is expected to change in the organization’s approach to working with artists?
- Have new intersections, relationships across fields, or disciplines within community been established?
- Has the organization’s philosophy about its role in civic dialogue been clarified in terms of:
 - The institution’s perception of itself in relation to civic dialogue
 - Ability to identify and assess opportunity
 - Approach, e.g., integrating civic dialogue throughout programming vs. in relation to selected programs or opportunities
- Has the field’s or artistic discipline’s perception of the organization and its work in arts-based civic dialogue been altered?
- Has there been a change in the community recognition and perception of the organization?

What are the civic impacts of an art-based civic dialogue project?

- How was this arts-based civic dialogue effort connected to ongoing or other dialogue efforts on the issue?
- What community gains were made through this project?
 - Neutral space for civic dialogue
 - More people engaged in dialogue (new voices, less likely participants engaged)
 - Enhanced or changed relationships between people in a community
 - Stakeholders engage in dialogue
 - Public officials engaged
- What has been the contribution to existing discourse on the issue?

- An alternative starting point, entry point, or platform for civic dialogue on an issue
- Change in visibility of the issue
- Change in understanding of the issue
- Change in quality of civic dialogue on an issue (depth, complexity, duration, different/new information or language, new perspectives)
- Movement toward action or change on the issue
- Change in media coverage, representation of the issue.

What are the impacts of creating art-based civic dialogue experience for audiences?

- What groups and/or individuals are targeted for participation? What is the organization doing differently to promote and engage?
- How did the relationship of the audience to organization and the issue evolve through the project?
- How did approaches to dialogue differ for different audiences?
- How did approaches to art differ for different audiences (choice of art; interpretation required or approach taken)?
- How did perceptions of the cultural organization’s audiences evolve through the project?
- How were audience members changed by the art-based civic dialogue experience?
 - Ability to draw meaning from artistic experience
 - Understanding of the issue
 - Inclination to action