

Employee Engagement Workbook Series

Arts-Based Training

This series of workbooks centers on employee engagement, or using the arts to foster and improve the work environment in businesses. Written by practitioners in the field, this series will help arts groups gain inspiration and practical tips to guide the creation and growth of employee engagement in local communities.



About Americans for the Arts Business Volunteers for the Arts®: Employee Engagement

Business Volunteers for the Arts® (BVA), a national skills-based management consulting program created in 1975, has been overseen by Americans for the Arts since 2005. In recent years, we have seen a multitude of changes in the corporate volunteer environment, with shifting interests from both the employees who volunteer and the businesses in which they work. As a response to this shift, the Americans for the Arts Business Volunteers for the Arts® (BVA) Network now includes employee engagement resources on programs such as virtual volunteering, corporate arts challenges, skills-based volunteering, arts-based training programs, consultant events, mentoring, hackathon events, team-based volunteering, and more. This workbook on arts-based training in the workplace is one in a series written by practitioners in the field who have successfully designed and implemented such programs. Find out more at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/BVA.

Americans for the Arts recognizes that engaging business professionals and employees through the arts is key to fostering a desirable work environment, increasing efficiency and morale, and building the competitive advantage of a business. Employees can be engaged through the arts in a number of ways, and Americans for the Arts serves as a resource, guide, and hub for all the information needed to start, sustain, or transform a successful employee engagement program.

About Arts-Based Training Programs

This workbook focuses on one of the many ways arts organizations can work with businesses: arts-based training. This broad concept can be defined as employee engagement training or a cultural experience, delivered through various arts disciplines (music, visual art, drama etc.) with the goals of:

- developing trust;
- finding shared values;

- shifting perceptions;
- combining right-brain imagination with left-brain logic and analysis to increase the capacity for breakthrough ideas and insights; and
- teaching employees leadership and communication skills and high-performance teamwork.

Since the 1990s, businesses, hospitals, local governments, and community-based organizations have been using arts-based training to engage employees and reach business goals.

About This Workbook

Each workbook in this series is based on a specific organization's programs, philosophy, and tactics to generate positive employee engagement for the business community. This workbook features the work of the Arts & Business Council of Nashville (A&BC Nashville), an organization that leverages and unites the unique resources of the arts and business communities to create a thriving, sustainable creative culture in Nashville. A portion of the day-to-day work at A&BC Nashville is placing artists in unexpected arts and business partnerships. In some situations, artists are learning new skill sets from business experts and in others, they become the trainers—experts teaching members of Nashville's booming business community about innovation and creativity.

A&BC Nashville's WorkCreative program brings arts into the workplace by engaging employees in hands-on creativity to stimulate communication, build teamwork, and spark innovation for effective business growth. Spanning industries as varied as banking and healthcare, the in-office projects include music, visual, and performing arts and are customized by an A&BC Nashville staff consultant to meet each company's goals. Learn more about the Arts & Business Council of Nashville at <http://www.abcnashville.org/>.

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PROGRAM BASICS

The Arts & Business Council of Nashville's WorkCreative™ program brings arts into the workplace by engaging employees in hands-on creativity to stimulate communication, build teamwork, and spark innovation for effective business growth. Spanning industries as varied as banking and healthcare, the in-office projects include music, visual, and performing arts and are customized by an Arts & Business Council of Nashville (A&BC Nashville) staff consultant to meet each company's goals.

The WorkCreative program places artists in expert roles to create hands-on learning experiences with and for Nashville-based companies. These experiences take many forms, but one theme is true for all formats—a professional artist leads the experience and teaches skills that translate to and transform the business environment. As an example, WorkCreative placed improv leaders from Nashville StageCraft, a local theater company, in an intellectual property law firm for a 90-minute workshop. Picture high-energy actors inviting lawyers to participate in Who's-Line-Is-It-Anyway style games at the end of a long week. The business participants were certainly hesitant. But the



SONGWRITING WITH PATTERSON IP LAW FIRM

Leadership at Patterson IP Law Firm invited A&BC Nashville to program a monthly series of 90-minute arts workshops on the last Friday of each month. One session was a particular hit—songwriting.

Local singer/songwriter Rusty Tabor from Kid Billy Music, a music-based corporate consulting firm, quickly engaged employees and snapped them out of their Friday afternoon slump in a fun, musical setting. Innovation, creativity, humor, leadership, compromise, and identifying shared goals were

all part of the process of creating a company song. Rusty's energy and quick-wit sparked conversation and brainstorming as inhibitions melted away and ideas and themes were documented for posterity.

Participants were happy to learn that they didn't need to be a singer or have musical experience to contribute. There was truly opportunity for both introverts and extroverts to shine. By the time the song was complete, everyone was singing along and proud of the piece.

artists quickly elevated their craft and garnered engagement. Next, they connected the dots for the room full of attorneys. Openness, listening, creativity, and fast-thinking certainly translate to client meetings and the court room.

We currently offer two types of experiences spanning the genres of music, visual arts, and performing arts:

- **In-office workshops bring artists to a corporate office for half-day or 90-minute sessions.** Often, we find participants gathered around a conference table doing something completely out of the ordinary. Materials such as butcher paper and art supplies transform one of the company's everyday spaces into a place where creation can happen.
- **Community projects engage business teams as volunteers for existing projects such as a community mural or arts installation.** Participants find great value in working alongside artists and community members in non-business settings to create a piece that benefits the broader Nashville community. These projects also generally offer substantial marketing returns for participating businesses and can be tailored to reflect corporate values and social responsibility objectives.

Since launching in 2012, the WorkCreative program in Nashville has built a roster of 40 trainers spanning from printmakers, poets, actors, songwriters, and more. These artist partners have been key in establishing a base of successful projects. We now have models with dynamic visuals and examples to share in consultation meetings. Additionally, through board support and strategic relationships, we started our program at fairly well-known companies. When a bank sees its industry peer participate in WorkCreative, it is a much easier sell to the bank. Finally, press coverage has offered added value to participating companies, showcasing a managing partner of a top law firm hanging out the window of an up-cycled school bus with a paint brush in hand, for example.

“A&BC Nashville’s WorkCreative program offers a great way to expose our lawyers to the creative process used by artists. The project gave us the chance to use the right side of our brains.”

*Thor Urness, Partner
at Bradley Arant Boult
Cummings*

ORIGIN STORY

In 2012, A&BC Nashville celebrated its fifth birthday with a stated mission to drive collaboration between arts and business. Business as usual included a season of large-scale events and two year-round programs. Through the Volunteer Lawyers & Professionals for the Arts and Education programs, we served artists and arts organizations by providing professional services and trainings needed to make a living in the creative sector. Likewise, the large-scale events attracted a broad cross-section of the business community to enjoy an arts review and luncheon at our annual Bowtie Awards, tune up their guitars to compete at the Music City Corporate Band Challenge, and showcase their watercolors at the ArtWorks competition.

The spring of 2012 brought new blooms to Nashville and evaluation conversations to the A&BC Nashville office. As we started to seek feedback and reflect on the ROI of large scale events, the staff scribbled a challenge across a giant post-it note. How can we build long-term, meaningful connections between businesses and professional artists?

Our existing large-scale events connected employees with their inner creativity in a fun, casual way but did little to elevate the role and perception of professional artists to create lasting arts and business partnerships.

With limited staffing resources, we decided to replace ArtWorks, the annual visual art competition, with a pilot arts experience program. This allowed a single staff member to use all the time previously allocated to develop a new pilot program, WorkCreative.

In the press release announcing the program, Executive Director Casey Summar shared that A&BC Nashville “launched the WorkCreative program to leverage the considerable talent and creativity of Nashville artists as a catalyst for innovative thinking in companies. Many of our other programs are about building greater business acumen for the arts community. WorkCreative flips that on its head and helps businesses build greater creative acumen.”

We decided to begin with a research stage for six months. After that, we set out to pilot the WorkCreative program for a full fiscal year. We set the modest goal of working with six Nashville companies and earning \$3,000 in income to replace half of the income from the ArtWorks event.

Questions To Consider

- Are you ready to add a hands-on business engagement program?
- What’s the return on investment from your large-scale events?
- Does an arts-based training curriculum have the ability to enhance or expand a current program?
- If you have them, what’s the return on investment from your membership programs?
- Do your business partners have personal relationships with artists and organizations?
- How do you define long-term, meaningful connections between arts and business in your community?
- Are you sparking curiosity and innovation in businesses?
- Are you creating income opportunities for artists?
- Are you ready to try something new?

“Many of our other programs are about building greater business acumen for the arts community. WorkCreative flips that on its head and helps businesses build greater creative acumen.”

*Casey Summar,
Executive Director of the
Arts & Business Council
of Nashville*

RESEARCH & PLANNING

Upon deciding to pursue this pilot program, we set out to better understand the landscape of business training and to explore opportunities to activate artists as assets in building strong Nashville companies. We knew that CEOs reportedly considered “creativity” to be a top quality in hiring talent. We read in *Time Magazine* that 62 percent of those polled reported that creativity is more important to success in the workplace than they had anticipated it would be while in school. So where did art fit in? Were artists being successfully activated to unlock business creativity? We looked at two different models.

Models

Through our research of different models, we found two clear themes for successful employee engagement: either inside pre-existing organizations or as new, community-centered initiatives. First, we looked to models in which businesses had a clear, operational, or strategic goal. In the case of The Second City’s work with businesses, companies hoped to increase sales by empowering storytellers. An additional benefit to the employees was a fun, creative afternoon with a world-renowned comedy theater company. Second, we found models of arts and business collaborations for the purpose of placemaking and community improvement. In St. Paul, many small business owners offered space, resources, or hands-on help to the artist-led Irrigate projects.

MODEL #1: The Second City

Lead Organization: The Second City

Business Engagement Project: Improv Workshops in Storytelling, Communication Skills, Presentation Skills, and Innovation

How It Works: The Second City has produced improv comedy for 50+ years—but the application of the company’s expertise to business took shape about 20 years ago. It now directly applies improv to sales training and leadership development. When working with a sales team, The Second City leaders tailor experiential exercises to improve customer interactions. Sellers need empathy to build rapport, agility to respond to curveballs, and resiliency to bounce back from “no.” That’s improv in a nutshell, so the connections are easy to find.

Impact of Improv Workshops At-A-Glance

- Provides a safe, relevant way to practice the important skills necessary for team performance in today’s rapidly shifting world.
- The Second City’s high-profile client list includes Louis Vuitton, Heineken, Major League Baseball, and *The Economist*.
- The Second City now does more than 400 assignments a year for clients looking to spruce up customer relations skills, tap into collective creativity, and sometimes even get employees to play nicely together.

MODEL #2: Springboard For The Arts' Irrigate Project

Lead Organizations: Springboard for the Arts, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and the City of Saint Paul

Business Engagement Project: Irrigate, an artist-led creative placemaking initiative in construction areas of the Saint Paul portion of the Green Line (light rail transit)

How It Works: Irrigate was a nationally recognized artist-led creative placemaking initiative pioneered during the years of the light rail's construction. This community and economic development approach emphasized cross-sector collaboration with local private and nonprofit sectors to engage local artists, neighborhoods, and businesses in addressing opportunities and challenges associated with change in their communities. Through Irrigate, Springboard for the Arts mobilized and trained artists who live, work, and have a personal investment in the area to make positive physical, economic, and social impacts along the corridor.

Impact of Irrigate Initiative At-A-Glance

- 600 local artists participated in and generated more than 150 projects in partnerships with small businesses and neighborhood groups across St. Paul.
- Irrigate projects generated more than 30 million positive media impressions of an area that otherwise would have had a predominantly negative narrative.
- Groups in Cleveland, OH and Mesa, AZ used the Irrigate model for programs in their own communities.

We decided to create WorkCreative to include both types of arts and business experiences outlined in the two models. This directional choice allows businesses to work through the program options and curate their experiences to be cumulative. If they faced a major transition in leadership, we wanted WorkCreative to be a resource for that. If they hoped to engage with the broader community through volunteerism, WorkCreative was the place for them too.

Partnerships

We expanded the feasibility study from research and conversations with peer organizations to conversations with core business partners. These leaders had attended A&BC Nashville events and supported A&BC Nashville in its early stages of development. Many held seats on the board of directors or worked as volunteers in our programs. We interviewed willing participants to better understand their current HR needs and offerings and their view of creativity within company development and culture. We also asked about key discovery moments for them. Their feedback was invaluable in challenging us to tie arts experiences to company value statements and offer à la carte options for customization. Each project, thus far, has been fairly distinct as we work to tailor it to fit the participating company.

Conversations with businesses also gave us insight into their current perception of the arts. Many thought of the arts as something fun and decorative, but did not really think of artists as catalysts for collaboration, problem solving, compassion, innovation, or community improvement. As we offered examples of how similar programs have worked in other places, it became clear that businesses would be willing to venture into a new type of corporate training because they could rely on a trusted partner in A&BC Nashville to oversee the process. We cannot understate the value of our established relationships in the business community as we launched this new, and somewhat unconventional, program. We needed leaders willing to let us experiment and pilot programs. For example, a law firm invited us to offer a series of WorkCreative programs on the last day of the month to try out new presenters and techniques.

“ Many thought of the arts as something fun and decorative, but did not really think of artists as catalysts for collaboration, problem solving, compassion, innovation, or community improvement.”



POETRY AT ST. THOMAS HOSPITAL

When asked to bring our new WorkCreative program to one of the largest hospitals in town, we called board member and artist trainer Stephanie Pruitt to help us create and lead a half-day poetry workshop. Stephanie is an award-winning poet and educator. Her background in marketing, business administration, and corporate consulting make for a unique approach to professional development and creativity.

Through a series of writing prompts and creativity games, participants got to know one another and identified the traits of effective group dynamics. Each person followed guided directions in drafting poems about topics including living in Nashville, food, weather, and even their shoes. Throughout this literary, creative time, Stephanie connected the dots between their poetry work and ways to strengthen day-to-day corporate culture dynamics. No writing experience or special preparation was necessary. The session brought lots of laughter, high fives, pats on the back, and constructive ideas.



Our next challenge was building a base of WorkCreative artists and organizations that would partner with us for this initiative.

WorkCreative artist leaders need to have:

- Teaching and/or corporate training experience
- Desire to help businesses find solutions to their challenges
- Passion for introducing new audiences to their craft
- Flexibility in project design
- Willingness to deviate from their style and aesthetic if needed

In the early stages of the program, we discovered that it served us best to be straightforward about the pricing and purpose of WorkCreative when talking with artists—stating clearly that leading a session rarely leads to selling work. Rather, WorkCreative can be a modest alternative income stream for artists, and may add some new names to their contact lists and networks.

Steps to Establish Business Partnerships

- Make a list of potential business partners drawing from your board and other “friends” of the organization
- Make contact to discuss pilot projects
- Plan an informational meeting (using consultation form included with supplemental materials)
- Share examples and program vision at in-person meeting
- Invite feedback, advice, and participation
- Follow up with an artist project proposal (see supplemental materials for a sample)

Steps to Establish Arts Partners

- Host an information session for artists (including a demo of hands-on arts experience)
- Reach out one-on-one to artists you know and trust for pilot projects
- Request one-page draft project proposals from interested artists (see supplemental materials for a sample)
- Request images and video from interested artists

Funding

We designed the WorkCreative program to be self-sustaining. Each project is priced based on length, number of business participants (which can sometimes inform the number of artists needed), and materials. Base program costs are as follows:

90 Minute Workshop - \$500
\$250 artist fee
\$250 A&BC Nashville consulting fee
Additional fees for materials as needed
Half-Day Workshop - \$1,000
\$500 artist fee
\$500 A&BC Nashville consulting fee
Additional fees for materials as needed
Community Project - \$1,000–\$3,500
\$500–\$2,000 artist fee (depending on scale of the project and prominence of the artist)
\$500 A&BC Nashville consulting fee
Additional fees for materials as needed
Additional fees for marketing and signage as needed

Each workshop fee for in-office programs is split with the artist leader, and we reimburse the artist for needed materials. Our portion of the fee is earned income for A&BC Nashville, which pays for program staffing and marketing. For community projects, A&BC Nashville keeps a \$500 program fee. This allows us to fairly compensate artists for their time and materials.

Staffing

Currently, A&BC Nashville has two full-time staff members. The Director of Programs is responsible for developing and managing all education and business engagement programs. In the case of WorkCreative, the Director of Programs led the research process, met with key community stakeholders to discuss the program addition, and implemented the program throughout the pilot year.

In selecting the Director of Programs, A&BC Nashville hired an individual with previous arts and programming experience as well as a strong ability to teach and facilitate. This competency is key for WorkCreative project development in order to meet the expectations of business participants and ensure a smooth flow. The Director works with artists to create meaningful discussion guides and materials to help connect the hands-on

arts making to an everyday business setting. Additionally, the Director of Programs acts as the liaison between businesses and artists to develop project objectives and translate these back to the artists.

A lead staff person for this program generally works an estimated 8–10 hours on each project. This projection includes the following:

- An initial meeting with a business to develop the project concept and objectives
- Subsequent meeting with the selected artist (or, as we share later, sometimes putting a call out to three to four artists to submit brief proposals)
- Project formulation and approval from a business
- Follow-up meetings as needed
- Attendance at the project session
- Post-project evaluation

An organization could incorporate these tasks into the responsibilities of an existing staff member or explore the option of paying an hourly coordinator to oversee projects as they arise.

Logistics

Space

A&BC Nashville does not have meeting or workshop space in its offices. As a result, we rely on companies and community partners to provide venues for WorkCreative projects. We also have great success offering “host partnership” recognition in exchange for the in-kind donation of space for workshops.

Marketing

Images, video, and provocative descriptions have been key in garnering interest from the business community during initial meetings. It is incredibly important to document the pilot projects well in order to have examples to use in sales conversations as you grow your program.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

We implemented the WorkCreative program over a period of 12 months beginning in July 2012. The goals for the first year were:

- Create a program brand identity and supporting materials
- Build a roster of 12–15 artist trainers in visual arts, performing arts, and music genres
- Pilot projects in six companies that were “friends of the family,” mostly board member companies

We set the modest goal of working with six Nashville companies. If we hit this objective, we would generate \$3,000 in artist fees and \$3,000 in earned income for A&BC Nashville.

In order to accomplish these goals, the Director of Programs worked with the Board of Directors Program Committee to craft a compelling selling proposition and start a short list of company targets. Interns provided branding support and helped to create dynamic images to use in company outreach. Finally, the Director of Programs created a list of potential artist trainers. She approached each artist on the list for an introductory conversation about joining the WorkCreative roster.



MURAL PAINTING AT FIRST TENNESSEE BANK

First Tennessee Bank charged A&BC Nashville with its first large-scale project that started with a workshop and culminated in a permanent piece for its downtown branch. We worked with facilitator Kelly Dillon of Fear No Art and local artist Todd Greene to work with 42 employees. Todd Greene designed a beautiful, original painting of Nashville's skyline. Kelly Dillon photographed the piece, enlarged it, and cut the image into small

painting prompts. From there, the First Tennessee employees rolled up their sleeves, switched on their right brains, and became artists for the day. Sixty individual canvases were painted and then pieced together to create one huge mural.

Randy Houston, Executive Vice President at First Tennessee Bank, shared the following about his experience: “Sometimes you could make out objects of what you were painting. Other times it looked as if you were painting random shapes and colors. All pieces were necessary to complete the project. In life you are not always able to understand what part you play in contributing to ‘The Big Picture’. Even if you are not able to see what the end product will be in the beginning, with a little teamwork and a lot of concentration, the end result will be well worth the wait.”



TIMELINE OF FEASIBILITY STUDY

January 2012

Annual Bowtie Award
Luncheon

March 2012

Annual Music City
Corporate Band Challenge

April & May 2012

Program evaluation and
planning for next fiscal year

June 2012

Board approves a feasibility
study for WorkCreative

January 2013

Board approves a pilot
year for WorkCreative

February & March 2013

Staff meetings with
business community

April & May 2013

Staff meetings with artist
community

July 2014

Launch of pilot program year

Step 1: Selecting the Artist Trainers

It was critical to find the right group of artists for our pilot projects. We started the list with artists who had participated in our intensive professional development programs. Artists who had expressed interest in training or working with the broader community were ranked as “top priority.” Most often, the meetings took roughly an hour and involved brainstorming hands-on ways to engage business groups with the making of art. For some artists, this came easily. Others found it to be a welcome challenge. There was a final group that pushed back against the idea of creating “extra” work just to give business people a “fun” afternoon. This is a valid point and, quite honestly, helped us narrow down the list of potential trainers. As a result, we decided to focus on visual arts, music, and performing arts.

The Director of Programs requested a tool kit from each artist in order to best “pitch” his or her program to business contacts. This also provided the artists who expressed interest in the program with the “homework” of preparing a proposal that illustrated how they would translate their medium into a WorkCreative project. If they followed through in providing materials and successfully completed an interview with the Director of Programs, they were added to the artist roster.

In reflecting on our pilot year, Executive Director Casey Summar shared that A&BC Nashville staff was “constantly amazed by the unique experiences our poets, artists, and musicians create for the businesses.” For artists who welcome the challenge of creating a WorkCreative project, the experience offers ample inspiration and reward.

Step 2: Matching Artists and Businesses

After we select the artists, we use an ongoing process for matching them with businesses. The WorkCreative process requires patience from the artists, and we are careful not to overpromise. We end our preliminary discussion by informing them that they’ve been added to the list of trainers. Then, we ask that they wait for a future project. They only hear from the Director of Programs if a project is a potential fit for them.

The process for creating a project is initiated by business interest. We have begun including WorkCreative as an engagement option in all sponsorship proposal packages and meetings, which are usually initiated by the executive director or a board member. If a company expresses interest, we set up a WorkCreative consultation meeting with the company contact, usually a human resources director. Through trial and error, we have crafted a consultation guide with a series of targeted questions to be used in this meeting. It is included in the supplemental materials portion of this workbook. In the conversation, we cover logistical needs, company culture, and project goals. Logistical needs might include determining the group size, time of day, and preferred location. The question about company culture requires a bit more introspection on the part of the company contact, as the goal is to determine how “advanced” a company is in terms of its participation in and consumption of arts and culture activities, as well as their openness to innovative learning strategies. Finally, we work to identify key HR topics or milestones that might help us better target the session to meet company

needs, and work diligently to make sure sessions are relevant. Company contacts also express their genre preference at this meeting.

After meeting with a business contact, we cross-reference their input with our list of trainers. Generally, the Director of Programs picks two to three trainers to “pitch” to the company. These artists provide a brief description of a potential project and a budget including the artist fees and materials, which is passed on to the company contact. Please find a sample project proposal from Placetone Printing in the supplemental materials. From the proposals, the company contact selects the program that most piques their interest.

Step 3: Building Training Modules

Once the artist is selected, the Director of Programs schedules a meeting with the artist to map out his or her WorkCreative session or project. For community projects, the training module piece is generally the secondary priority. The in-office sessions often center on traditional HR goals, while the community projects center on the artist’s project needs, with HR goals of teambuilding and creative thinking as secondary goals. Even if the company has not specified goals, we create a discussion guide rooted in the arts discipline and connected to the company’s identity and culture.

At a recent songwriting workshop with SunTrust Bank, we used the following questions and themes:

- What surprised you about the process of constructing a song?
- Please talk about the SunTrust principle of being “one team.” How is the relationship between songwriters similar? How is it different?
- Share any takeaways for collaboration.
- SunTrust states “trust” as a core value. What can we learn about trust from the songwriting process?
- SunTrust states “precision” as a core value. Did you see precision in the song you studied? Were there sloppy sections? How does this impact the overall piece? How does this relate to life at SunTrust?
- SunTrust states “courage” as a core value. What does songwriting teach us about daily courage? About daily curiosity?

Step 4: Ongoing Outreach to Arts and Business Partners

In addition to scheduling and managing WorkCreative projects, the Director of Programs is primarily responsible for telling the stories of business participants. And there is no shortage of stories! As divergent paths cross, bankers learn from poets, lawyers write songs, and administrators mold clay. The dynamic pictures and heart-warming quotes are ample, so collecting and sharing them through social media and press relationships is a must. We also find this program to be a fantastic source for blog and newsletter content.

CHALLENGES & ADVICE

Building buy-in with the Nashville business community was critical to the program's pilot year. We made a special effort to transition previous company relations with our ArtWorks program to the WorkCreative program through monthly outreach and special discounted programs.

Additionally, we looked to board members for opportunities to work with their companies as a way to build a track record for our organization and WorkCreative. These sessions provided a much-needed opportunity for critical feedback on the program as board members talked with their peers, offered insight from their experiences, and gave us video and images to use in marketing the program.

CHALLENGES

Reaching New Businesses

In our current staffing model, we don't have a staff member pursuing new companies or contacts for WorkCreative on a regular basis beyond our regular fundraising efforts. Without this consistent cultivation, it is challenging to grow the pool of participating businesses in the WorkCreative program. An ideal model would include a staff member with the capacity to cultivate leads for new WorkCreative participants outside the immediate circle of companies that already participate in A&BC Nashville programs. WorkCreative could be a great entry-point for A&BC Nashville's other programming, and we aren't currently leveraging this opportunity to its greatest potential. With staff time dedicated to this cultivation, an arts-based training program can grow to a consistent earned-income opportunity for your organization.

Collecting Feedback

It has been challenging to gather feedback via e-mail from project participants. It seems that once employees are back to office life, a short, online survey is not a top priority for them. We are currently distributing and collecting paper evaluation forms at the end of each WorkCreative program in the hopes of getting a higher response rate. Encouraging participants to provide feedback about long-term changes in behavior is even more challenging.

Making Community Impact

We highly value the larger impact of our WorkCreative program on both the arts community and the broader Nashville community. As we seek to better understand our outcomes and impact, we see that businesses value the good that this program brings to their teams. We hope to expand that impact by catalyzing positive change for artists and needy Nashvillians as well. Our program committee is researching the viability of a one-for-one WorkCreative model. If we move in this direction, a business would purchase a hands-on WorkCreative session for their team *and* gift one to a school or

community group that could not otherwise afford it. Additionally, as mentioned above, we are pursuing issue-based arts projects that focus on causes, such as environmentalism and affordable housing, to broaden the community impact of WorkCreative.

ADVICE

Kick Off at a Friend's Business

Friends always make for the best test runs. From the initial consultation to the evaluation, there's no better place to work out the bugs of a new program. It also makes business allies feel "in the know" as they take the lead in trying an innovative program and help with the organization's future.

Start with a Series

Our series at local law firm Patterson has allowed us to test out new artist trainers in a low-risk environment. We've learned how to best prepare artists and structure the sessions. It's also a consistent way to build trust and move a business from 101-level arts experiences toward more in-depth opportunities.

BICYCLE BUS COMMUNITY MURAL

In 2013, the owner of a Nashville bicycle shop approached A&BC Nashville seeking corporate support for his creative idea: to paint an old school bus with a community mural and repurpose it as a bicycle hub. We invited the Nashville offices of two law firms—Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell, & Berkowitz and Bradley Arant Boult Cummings—to contribute some time to mural painting. Through this partnership, we hosted a creative lunch-break for businesses to join in painting the up-cycled school bus alongside local artist Andee Rudloff.



This particular collaboration between the law firms and A&BC Nashville offered a unique set of benefits for the parties involved. For the law firms, these benefits extended beyond what is gleaned from traditional philanthropic efforts like pro bono work and financial contributions. Employees of the firms had the chance to awaken their creative sides in a project that stimulated innovation and interpersonal communication, which are invaluable in a business setting. Most importantly, the law firms benefited from the positive community relations and brand recognition that developed through their support of Nashville's artistic community and the bike shop, which is a beloved member of the local economy.

Be Up-Front with Artists

“They aren’t planning to buy your work” is a hard thing to tell artists. It could happen, but it’s better to be up-front with artists that this is not the objective of the program. The business is most likely working with a gallery to curate its in-office art collection. This program falls within its Human Resources or “company culture” budget, so purchasing fine art is not top of mind for our project coordinators. Rather, WorkCreative is part of a larger effort to convince businesses that artists of all genres have special expertise and community value. Of course, we hope this means that businesses will go to more arts events, donate, and buy work. WorkCreative is often a first step, but it’s not a pitch meeting for artists.

EVALUATION & MOVING FORWARD

Evaluation

In 2012, the Arts & Business Council of Nashville became a nonprofit-in-residence on the campus of Belmont University, a southeastern college with an emphasis on music business and entrepreneurship. Through this relationship A&BC Nashville works with student teams to advance its programs and community service. A team of senior honors students helped create an outcomes-based evaluation tool for our WorkCreative program. In the pilot year, we collected only basic feedback and testimonials. The next step is to implement a thorough evaluation system to measure how the WorkCreative program changes perceptions of artists and leads to greater business engagement in the arts community.

Desired WorkCreative outcomes include:

- Engage employees in hands-on creativity
- Develop business skills
- Create employment opportunities for artists
- Mobilize artists as leaders for innovative business solutions
- Build lasting relationships and partnerships between artists and businesses

These outcomes will be tracked throughout each fiscal year for both in-office and community projects in order to better measure our impact on artists, businesses, and the broader Nashville community. Our success rate with online surveys has been fairly low. Once employees return to their desks, their focus is elsewhere. As a result, we are now using a 10-question paper survey, available in the supplemental materials, based on the tips provided by the team from Belmont University. It is handed out at the end of each WorkCreative project. In just a short time, the paper survey has drastically increased participation.

The Belmont honors team compiled these helpful tips for creating your own survey tools:

- 1. KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Avoid convoluted sentences and stick to straightforward language.
- 2. AVOID DOUBLE-BARRELED ITEMS.** These are items that ask two questions at once. For example, “The project brought me out of my shell and I enjoyed it.” If a participant provides a high ranking for this statement, we do not know which part she is agreeing with—did it bring her out of her shell or did she enjoy it? Break these into separate items.
- 3. USE A RANKING SYSTEM.** It is generally accepted that Likert-type items should be on a five-point scale (usually from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). For more detailed responses, a seven-point scale is also acceptable. The most important thing is that the scale must have an odd number of options. This gives it a midpoint to serve as a “neutral” ranking.
- 4. REVERSE-SCORE SOME ITEMS.** In order to account for patterns in answering (such as nay-saying), researchers often include questions whose scores are reversed at the time of data analysis. For example, if we wanted to assess the effectiveness of an improvisation program, the questions should not all be positively stated. A reverse-scored, or negatively stated, item might be, “I would not want to do improv again.” A high score on this item would indicate a low level of effectiveness.
- 5. A HIGH SCORE SHOULD MEAN MORE OF THE THING YOU’RE MEASURING.** It seems intuitive, but this simple step makes data analysis much easier. If we want to measure participant enjoyment, the survey should be designed so that a higher score means more fun.
- 6. AESTHETIC IS EVERYTHING.** Cluttered pieces of paper, long sentences, and too many options can all lead to decreased response rate. Participants are overwhelmed and shut down. Use lots of white space, larger font, and one-page assessments.
- 7. DON’T OVEREXTEND ONE SURVEY.** Each survey should address one specific subject or issue. Cramming multiple agendas into one questionnaire doesn’t just make data interpretation more complicated later—it is cognitively difficult for the participants.
- 8. OFFER AN INCENTIVE.** If responses are few and far between, provide a reward for completing the questionnaire. It is important that this incentive be offered before/as the survey is administered. Promised incentives achieve a significantly lower response rate.
- 9. MAKE IT QUANTIFIABLE.** Results should be easy to code or put into numerical form in order to run statistical analysis. While responses to open-ended questions may provide interesting information and insight, they are rarely usable on a larger scale. Raw numbers allow you to observe trends toward desired outcomes over time.
- 10. KEEP IT CLOSED.** In order to encourage responses and increase visual appeal, it is best to utilize close-ended questions in surveys. To account for all possibilities, it may be wise to include an “other” blank that provides a space for responses not included in the original question.

Moving Forward

The WorkCreative program now runs as a year-round business engagement program. The goals for the first fiscal year after the pilot year are:

- Grow the program brand identity and supporting materials
- Program in-office projects in six companies
- Program community projects in partnership with two companies
- Develop a more significant issue-based WorkCreative project

If we accomplish these goals, we will generate \$8,000 in earned income for A&BC Nashville. An estimated 50 percent of this earned income will be paid to artist leaders. With a strategic focus on selling the program to potential business clients, we believe it can continue to experience similar growth year after year.

As a result, A&BC Nashville has added WorkCreative to its permanent list of program offerings. Year-round, it connects and engages businesses of all sizes with the arts in a memorable, hands-on way that is much more meaningful than participation in an arts showcase or a gala-style event. It also allows us to coach artists as they find alternative revenue paths that put their art skills to work. We plan to grow the program by serving more businesses, adding social and civic component, and offering various in-depth tracks.

First, we will seek to engage new businesses with in-office WorkCreative workshops. Using the dynamic archive of images and videos from the pilot year, our staff is equipped to pursue consultations with larger Nashville companies. We will also work with partners like the local chamber of commerce and press contacts to help raise awareness for the program.

Second, we are developing an in-depth issue-based WorkCreative project with local company Piedmont Natural Gas. This direction builds on the Community Projects track to tackle a civic or social issue through art. The Bicycle Bus Mural project set nice ground work in this direction by promoting healthy, active living in Nashville's downtown core. The up-cycled bus now serves as a community bike hub. Through a WorkCreative project with Piedmont Natural Gas, we will commission an artist to design and build a temporary sculpture of recycled pipe material using the unique talents of a team of pipe-fitters from Piedmont. This piece will serve as a community talking point and symbol at several functions devoted to promoting sustainable business practices, green space in the urban core, and environmentalism. These are fundamental values for Piedmont. As the WorkCreative program grows, we plan to intentionally connect with companies on their values and seek out issue-based projects to spotlight these values and build a more equitable Nashville.

Finally, the long-term goal is to develop an in-depth track to work with companies that are ready to take their arts engagement to the next level. Through this track, an artist would become a temporary artist-in-residence at a company. His or her commit-

ment would include working on his or her practice at the business, hosting hands-on arts workshops and topical conversations, and participating in company meetings as a respected consultant. In order to find success with the artist-in-residency track, our partner business would be required to provide space, financial support, energy, and open-mindedness. On the artist side, we will seek an established self-starter who enjoys sharing “works in progress” with community members. This artist would have the opportunity to be a powerful ambassador for the arts community.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Available on the Business Volunteers for the Arts® page at www.AmericansfortheArts.org/BVA

- PLATETONE PROJECT PROPOSAL
- CONSULTATION FORM
- SURVEY TEMPLATE
- IMAGES

Other Americans for the Arts Resources

For more information on engaging employees through the arts and partnering with the business community:

Visit the [pARTnership Movement](#), an initiative from [Americans for the Arts](#) to reach business leaders with the message that partnering with the arts can build their competitive advantage.

View our pARTnership Movement tool-kits, [Bringing the Arts to the Workplace](#) and [Employee Engagement and the Arts](#).

Watch our on-demand webinars, including one on [Engaging Business Employees Through the Arts](#).

Send us an e-mail with any questions: privatesector@artsusa.org

Endnotes

- 1 pARTnership Movement. “Building Partnerships with Business.” Accessed April 2, 2015. http://www.partnershipmovement.org/upload/web-files/downloads/Arts_Based_Training.pdf.
- 2 Jeffrey Kluger, “Assessing the Creative Spark,” *Time Magazine*, May 9, 2013, <http://business.time.com/2013/05/09/assessing-the-creative-spark/>.

Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. With more than 50 years of service, we are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.



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