

# Public Art Administrators

## What is a public art administrator?

A public art administrator manages the development and implementation of public art in their communities.

They do this through the management of public art programs and the facilitation of public art projects and artworks. They work with artists, community members, local decision-makers, representatives of municipal agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure public artworks are designed, installed, and maintained.

They play a key role in each stage of a project's lifecycle and are responsible for the administrative and management tasks within public art programs.

## What is a day in the life of a public art administrator?

Each day is different and can range widely depending on the projects they are working on.

Their days may include site visits to understand how an artwork may be installed in a location, project meetings to go over details of artworks in progress, interest meetings with community members, public relations events, and engagements with artists, among others.

Throughout their day, public art administrators may interact with artists, representatives of municipal agencies, local politicians, community members, private developers, media, and more. No two days look the same for most public art administrators.

## What are the responsibilities of a public art administrator?

### Program & Policy Management

- Short term and long term planning.
- Budget management and development.
- Create opportunities for artists.
- Oversee staff.
- Build and maintain relationships.

### Research, Planning, & Evaluation

- Research to develop programs.
- Research to assist with any artist needs.
- Long term program planning.
- Evaluate completed projects.

### Collection Management & Conservation

- Review artwork donations.
- Process deaccessions.
- Manage maintenance and conservation of the collection.

### Contracts & Legal Issues

- Author and track artist contracts.
- Keep consistent and accurate records.

### Community Engagement

- Work with community engagement campaigns.
- Respond to public inquiries.

### Marketing

- Implement marketing campaigns.
- Manage public communication.

### Funding for Programs & Projects

- Manage a variety of public and private funding sources.
- Fundraising and grant writing.

### Project Management

- Manage selection panels.
- Manage call for artists.
- Conduct site visits.
- Coordinate and facilitate meetings.
- Provide project updates to stakeholders.
- Run public galleries.

## What are the qualifications for public art administrators?

### Hard Skills

- Facilitation
- Organized
- Time management
- Creative problem solving
- Conflict management
- Project management
- Detail oriented
- Critical thinking
- Public speaking/communication

### Soft Skills

- Sense of empathy
- Dedication to community service
- Ability to focus on the bigger picture
- Strong sense of teamwork
- Risk taking
- Can see different perspectives
- Curiosity
- Patience
- Interest in visual arts
- Ability to manage criticism
- Sense of accountability
- Willingness to work with people
- Mature, even-temperament
- Willingness to learn

### Education

Americans for the Arts conducted a [Baseline Demographic Survey of the Local Arts Field](#) in 2017. Among Public Art Administrators:

- 51% have a master's degree
- 35% have a bachelor's degree
- 4% have some college
- 2% have an associate's degree

The field generally asks for a Bachelor of Arts in a related field such as:

- Fine Arts
- Art History
- Architecture
- Landscape Architecture
- Arts Administration
- Urban Planning/Design

However, experience can potentially replace a degree.

### Experience

Positions generally ask for at least 3 to 5 years of related experience, which can include:

- Project management
- Arts fundraising
- Local community work

Experience in a related field:

- Practicing artist
- Art history
- Anthropology
- Curation
- Construction management
- Landscape architecture
- Placemaking/creative placemaking

Being knowledgeable about the following areas is also beneficial:

- Visual arts
- Government financing
- Placemaking

## What are the salary ranges for public art administrators?

Salaries vary depending on the location in the country as well as full time or part time status. These ranges are based on a [2018 Local Arts Agency Salary Report](#) by Americans for the Arts.

### Public Art Managers and Directors

\$30,000 - \$132, 678

### Assistants, Associates, and Coordinators

\$35,000 - \$63,000

## What are some observations from the field?

The work is a privilege and a responsibility, it's something that connects deeply with people.

It is a self-supporting field, so don't be afraid to ask for advice or for lunch with people who work in public art.

Learn as much as you can about the field and be open to continued learning while working in the field.

Have the stamina to juggle projects and see them all the way through—it will be rewarding in the end!

Develop a thick skin! It can be a challenge to work with many stakeholders and interest groups on one project.

## What is the outlook for public art administrators?

There is an increase in demand for public art administrators and their skills with the growth of interest from communities across the country to include public art in their public spaces.

In a 2001 report, Americans for the Arts estimated 350 public art programs across the United States whereas a [2017 survey](#) identified twice as many. The growth comes from inside the arts and culture sector as community engagement with art created in public places grows, as well as the rapid development of the creative placemaking field, which began in 2010.

Creative placemaking and the ongoing growth of engaging artists early on in planning and community development projects is also encouraged as non-arts sectors such as transportation include artists in the design of civic enhancements and infrastructure. The skills of a public art administrator easily adapt to working with artists in large and complex projects that span different sectors.

# Resources

## Americans for the Arts Online Tools

- [ArtsU: Public Art Professional Development](#)
- [Public Art Resource Center](#)
- [Public Art Network](#)

## Other Online Tools

- [ArtPlace America](#)
- [Forecast Public Art](#)
- [National Endowment for the Arts' Creative Placemaking](#)
- [The National Consortium for Creative Placemaking](#)

## Higher Learning Opportunities

### Certification Programs

- [Public Art Certificate of Achievement from the Berkeley City College](#)
- [Public Art and Placemaking Undergraduate Certificate from the University of Cincinnati](#)

### Master Programs

- [Master of Planning and Master of Public Art Studies dual degree program from the University of Southern California](#)
- [Master of Art, Design and the Public Domain from Harvard University](#)