

# Arts Council of Indianapolis

## Public Art Tool Kit



Patrick Manning. *Speak/Spoken*, 2005. Digital rendering of final video installation. Located under West Street at Canal level.

“The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.”

--Frances Bacon

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***What is Public Art?***

In cities across the country, public art takes a variety of forms. Historically, art that is accessible to the public has been in the form of freestanding pieces of work or objects that occupy a public space, such as sculptures or memorials, or architectural embellishments such as carved facades. Art may also be integrated into the way the city is built. Functional objects such as benches, trail markers, tree guards, or manhole covers can be commissioned works by artists. And now, in a growing number of cities, artists are working with architects, engineers, and landscape designers to create visually rich public spaces. These include pedestrian and vehicular bridges, streetscapes, and canal banks. All of these forms of public art make cities more interesting and unique places to live, work and visit.

***What is Public Art Indianapolis?***

Public Art Indianapolis is a program of the Arts Council of Indianapolis supported by the Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission ([www.culturalindy.com](http://www.culturalindy.com)). The program's mission is to bring art to the city's public spaces. Public Art Indianapolis benefits the community and its visitors by increasing access to art, broadening our cultural institutions' reach beyond their campuses, and providing artists with opportunities to expand their artistic practice and market. Our commitment is to work with both emerging and established artists and arts organizations and to produce high quality, innovative, and creative displays of art throughout Indianapolis.

***Who is This Tool Kit Intended to Help?***

This Tool Kit is intended to assist artists, arts organizations, and community organizations that wish to administer a public art project. The Arts Council of Indianapolis seeks to outline a guide of best practices for those creating public art projects in Indianapolis. The Tool Kit contains descriptions of typical public art processes including a general overview of artist selection processes, writing calls to artists, legal issues, and maintenance concerns. The information is based on the practices and challenges that Arts Council staff has encountered over the last two years.



## ***Before you begin....***

Consider the following:

- **What is the role of a public art project administrator?**  
The administrator of the project is charged with making decisions that ultimately complete the project on-time, on-budget, and within the outlined goals producing the best project possible. The project administrator IS the glue that keeps the project together.
- **How do you, as the project administrator, help ensure the project's success?**  
COMMUNICATION and COLLABORATION! And a lot of it... Without it, even the best and most well-intentioned projects have seriously faltered or failed. As the project administrator, you are like a great conduit or translator and you must keep the key stakeholders in the loop and on the same page. These stakeholders may include the artist, the architect and engineer, the funder, the property or site owner, the city, and the public.
- **Who is the “public” in your public art project?**  
It is amazing how many people don't seem to seriously consider this question prior to beginning their project. It is critical to know what public may be most impacted by or interested in your project. Typically this is the public located directly around the project's site but depending on the subject matter or permanence of the project, the interested public may be much broader. You must define early in the process how to best engage the public DURING your project's development. If the public immediately surrounding a project site or the public most interested in your project's content is not communicated with prior to a project being well underway, this can cause delays and ill-will.
- **Who are your advisors?**  
Establish an advisory group to help you define the project and establish buy-in and credibility. This group should be comprised of empowered members of the “public” you just defined, creative and technical professionals who may bring expert oversight (like architects, engineers, artists, or art professionals), and perhaps a city official. However, be clear from the beginning that advisors that help you define and oversee the project MAY NOT compete for the project! From this advisory panel you may also begin to define members of your project's selection panel.

**Lastly, no two projects are EVER the same.** This toolkit is a resource that contains suggestions and explains best practices within the industry. However, you and your advisors must look at your project and decide what is going to work for you.

And now, you may begin!

### ***What is an Artist Selection Process?***

An Artist Selection Process is established at the outset. As you begin to define the project, the Artist Selection Process you choose will greatly affect the amount of administrative workload as well as the project's overall timeline.

In general, there are three types of selections processes.

- **Open**; in which case the opportunity, or call to artists, is broadly advertised and any artist who meets the published eligibility criteria may submit. Since this process is the most inclusive, it is generally considered the most fair and results in the most diverse submissions. It may be preferred in projects whose primary budget comes from public taxpayer dollars. However, this process typically takes the longest to administer and is the most labor intensive for administrators and selection panelists so be sure you have allotted time and resources to adequately run an open competition.
- **Invitational**; in which case the project administrator, advisory and/or selection panels decide on a qualified pool of artists and invite them to apply. In this scenario there are a limited number of artists to communicate with and less time is taken up with paperwork and meetings with the selection panel.
- **Direct Selection**; in which the selection panel decides on a specific artist and approaches that artist about a commission without a larger competitive process.

### ***What is a Call to Artists?***

Writing Calls to Artists is a standard practice within the field of public art.

A Call to Artists is a document that is produced by administrators of public art projects. It outlines the scope of a project and serves as a notice to artists of an opportunity.

### ***How do you Write a Call to Artists?***

#### **RFQ vs. RFP**

First, decide which type of call you are preparing. There are two types of Calls to Artists: a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and a Request for Proposals (RFP).

- An RFQ asks artists to send in their qualifications to be reviewed by the selection panel but does not ask for a specific proposal to be submitted. This is typically used to reach a broad pool of artists. From this broad pool the selection committee will find a smaller pool of artists, from which they select one or more finalists.
- An RFP is sent to artists whose qualifications are already known and are of interest to the selection committee. This kind of call is typically

produced as a result of an RFQ process, inviting the finalist(s) to go on to produce proposals, or it is used when running an invitational or direct selection process.

## ***What Information do you Include in a Call to Artists?***

### **Project Overview**

Discuss the overall scope of the project. Items you outline may include but are not limited to:

- **The artist's scope of services:** Is it a design-team project where an artist will be working along side an architect, engineer or other design professional, a commission of a new artwork that they will need to fabricate, deliver and install, an artist residency, a purchase of an existing work, or another type of opportunity?
- **Goals of the project:** Tell the artist what you are trying to achieve. The more specific you can be, the more the artist can understand what kind of deliverable you are looking for. Are you creating a functional community gathering space? Is this more of a drive-by experience or gateway? Do you desire a singular iconic object or a multi-sensory experience?
- **Stakeholders:** Include a brief description of the organizations involved mentioning their missions and relationship to the project.

### **Site Description**

*Before you publish a Call to Artists, know who owns the site you desire to use and have permission to use it.*

The description of the site should include engineering or architectural information about the location's structure including how much weight the site can hold, maximum dimensions, materials already being used at the location, visibility, access and lighting. Describe the site's function, including what activities will happen there and who uses it. Include whether or not the site is open to the public, or if the public can see the facility but not enter the site.

Attach or make available via a website a site plan and any other renderings that will give the artist a better understanding of the structural, functional, and aesthetic aspects of the site.

If the location has not been predetermined, you should state whether or not the artist will be able to participate in selecting it.

### **Budget**

Clearly state the budget and the aspects of the project that it must cover, as not all projects have the same costs allocated within the budget. For example, a design-team project's budget might cover only the artist's fee and travel. However, a budget for permanent artwork may have to cover such items as the

artist's fee, travel, the fabrication, delivery, installation, and documentation of the artwork itself. In addition, indicate whether the artist's budget must cover other costs such as those for insurance, lighting, and signage.

*If the budget for the project has not been set, clearly state this. You may want to indicate the budget that has been obtained and what amount you realistically intend to raise and allocate for the project.*

### **Artist Eligibility**

Define and publish the criteria that an artist **MUST** meet to be eligible for the project. This is different from the section outlining Selection Criteria. Selection Criteria should be reflective of the goals you have for the project and each artist's submission can be judged subjectively based on these goals. Eligibility criteria are mandatory specifications.

When defining your eligibility requirements some questions you may want to consider are:

- Do you want artists from one certain geographic area? (Ex. Artists must be residents of Indiana.)
- Must artists be above a certain age? (Ex. Artists must be 18 years of age or older.)
- Do you want professionals who have completed similar kinds of projects? (Ex. Artists must have completed a public project before.)
- Do you want art students to apply?
- Are teams eligible?

If you are seeking a particular kind of artist, such as artists who work with children or emerging artists, you may want to include a sentence encouraging those artists to apply.

### **Selection Process**

Outline the process you will administer to review submissions and ultimately select the artist that will complete this project. Include the number of finalists that may be selected and expectations you have of the finalists. Those expectations might include the production of a formal project proposal, presentations and interviews, and travel. If there is a budget to cover travel, the amount of travel that will be paid for should be included. Include the composition of your selection panel (e.g., community representatives, art professionals, government and funding representatives) and any additional project advisors that may be available to the artist.

### **Selection Criteria**

Listing the criteria for selection establishes, for the artist, the priorities of the selection panel and goals of the project. This disclosure helps the artist decide whether or not they would be a good fit for the project and whether they should apply. Additionally, publishing the selection criteria allows the artist the

opportunity to tailor their application materials in a way that demonstrates their understanding of and ability to produce a project that meets your goals.

### **Application Requirements**

You want to provide artists with a standardized list of materials that **MUST** be submitted to be eligible for consideration. It is critical that you provide this list and that it is applicable to every artist who submits. This helps guarantee a fair and equitable process where the administrator presents materials that allow the selection panel to compare apples to apples.

Items you may want to require include:

- Letter of Interest
- Professional Resume
- Three Professional References
- Slides or digital images of previous artwork
- Annotated description list that corresponds with the images of previous artwork
- A self-addressed and stamped envelope, if the artist wants their materials returned to them
- Project proposal (\*\*if applicable\*\*)

Indicate if items should be of a certain length or number (resumes may be no more than three pages and you may submit no more than 10 images) or format (only digital images in .jpeg format are acceptable).

You may also want to consider requiring the artist to submit a certain number of unbound copies of their materials to make disseminating collated binders of information to selection panelists more efficient. (Ex. Artists must submit a total of 5 unbound copies of all printed materials and CDs)

Finally, include the mailing address where all materials must be delivered. Be sure to indicate whether materials may be hand delivered, sent via U.S. mail, Federal Express, etc.

### **Deadline for Submission & Project Timeline**

This section should clearly state the submission deadline and outline the benchmark dates or time periods for panel review, finalist notification, and the estimated completion/installation of the artwork.

This information is essential for artists not only in helping them apply, but also for giving them a rough idea of the extent of the project.



Martina A. Nehrling (b. 1907, American)  
*Arrows of Direction*, 1989  
Stainless steel; 3 sections  
Approx. 84 x 60 x 39 inches, each section  
Located at North Central High School, 1801 E. 86<sup>th</sup> Street

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso

### ***How do you Disseminate an Open Call to Artists?***

In an open competition, a call to artists is broadly advertised and any artist is eligible to submit materials for consideration according to the guidelines established in the call. Here are a few resources to consider when disseminating a call to artists:

1. **Arts Council of Indianapolis**; Publishes opportunities and announcements weekly and maintains an on-line and in-office database of visual artists living and working in Central Indiana. Visit [www.indyarts.org](http://www.indyarts.org) for more information.
2. **Public Art Network Listserv**; connects colleagues and acts as a research engine, newsletter, and stage for critical dialogue. To join Americans for the Arts and learn more about the listserv, visit [www.AmericansForTheArts/PAN](http://www.AmericansForTheArts/PAN) or email [membership@artsusa.org](mailto:membership@artsusa.org)
3. **Public Art Review**; Published by Forecast Public Artworks, opportunities and some article are posted online. Visit [www.forecast.org](http://www.forecast.org) or [www.publicartreview.org](http://www.publicartreview.org)

4. **Milestones**; A monthly online public art newsletter, produced by the Phoenix Arts Commission, lists artists opportunities. Visit [www.Phoenix.gov/arts](http://www.Phoenix.gov/arts).
5. **NYFA Source / NYFA Current**; The New York Foundation for the Arts' NYFA Source is an extensive national database of awards, services, etc. Visit [www.nyfa.org](http://www.nyfa.org)
6. **ArtsOpportunities.org**; Free online classifieds bank offers employment information, internship opportunities and connects arts related organizations with artists. Visit [www.artsopportunities.org](http://www.artsopportunities.org)

**If the call is an invitational or direct selection...**

- The Arts Council of Indianapolis has an online database and in-office library. Visit [www.indyarts.org](http://www.indyarts.org) to view database.
- The Western Federation of Artists
- Galleries and Museums
- Other slide registries

**How long do you keep a call open?**

- At least 8 weeks (Public Art Network Issue Paper, March 2004)
- If the call is open to non-local artists, travel time should be a consideration.



Larry Endicott. *Arturos Dreamlet*, 2006. Backlit photograph. Temporarily located in a window box in the Chase Tower as part of the *Picture Windows* program.

## ***How do you Run a Selection Process?***

### **Establish a selection panel**

- **The balance of various viewpoints should be carefully considered when assembling a selection panel.** The panel should include diverse members who are familiar with or have a stake in the project site, artists, architects, and other creative professional who are knowledgeable about public art, engineers, and others whose perspectives can add further dimension or expertise to the deliberations. *Diversity does not only include ethnicity but also age, experience and profession.*
- It is critical to ensure strong representation of arts professionals who are familiar with contemporary art and public art, who have the ability to comment on the qualifications and appropriateness of the artists that are being considered.
- Always remember to have an odd number of people panel so there are never any “ties” during a voting process.
- Sometimes certain stakeholders who may not have significant areas of knowledge that lend to the formal decision making process, such as funders or property owners, should sit as advisors who can provide feedback to the selection panel but may not vote.
- After the receipt of the artist submissions for the RFQ, it is necessary to organize the submission materials into a user-friendly binder or packet.

In organizing the submissions you may want to think about issues like dividing the binder based on whether the artist submitted digital or slide images, or you may want to organize the submissions alphabetically, or in the order in which they were received.

- It is not recommended that digital and slide image submissions be combined as having to switch between the equipment for presentation is not an efficient use of time.
- Include a letter to the panelists reminding them of the review process you have outlined and of any group meeting date(s) and time(s).
- The submission binders and any other printed materials should be delivered to each member of the selection panel, and any advisors to the panel, weeks before the adjudication so that they may read and review the materials in advance. It is not realistic nor an efficient use of time to expect the panelists to read the materials during a selection panel meeting.
- Include **conflict of interest forms, confidentiality agreements, and honorarium forms** in your binders. It is important to offer your panelists a fee for their service. Fees offered depend on the number of hours a panelist may have to give of their time outside of their job. It is also

critical that the panelists' discussion remain confidential and that conflicts of interest are declared and avoided. Any panelist that declares a conflict, whether financial or personal, should leave the room when that artist, team, or artwork is under discussion. Samples have been provided on your Toolkit disk.

### **Going Digital vs. Using Slides**

Most commissioning agencies are "going digital", meaning they no longer accept slides during the selection process. Slides require a significant investment of time and money for artists and equipment to project them is becoming increasingly difficult for project managers to find. In this day of increased access to digital technology, you may want to consider "going digital" for your selection process.

### **The Adjudication Process**

To adjudicate the submissions means to formally judge them. On the day of adjudication, or selection, you will meet with the selection panel and advisors as a group to review visual materials and facilitate a final decision making process.

#### Sample Process:

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Review of process
- Collect confidentiality, honorarium, and conflict of interest forms.
  
- Preview - If you have accepted several mediums, such as slides, digital images, video, etc., the selection panel will not have had a chance to review the visual materials in advance. Therefore, it may be preferable to conduct a run through of all the visual components to give the panel an overview of the breadth of the submissions.
  
- Round 1 – Immediate Elimination Round  
Each panelist votes "yes" or "no" about whether the submission moves on. This is where having an odd number of panelists is critical as majority rules unless someone can make a compelling argument to keep a submission in. The more decisive your panel can be in this round, the more time they have to focus on discussions about submissions that they are very interested in.
  
- Round 2 – Numerical Scoring (basic sample score sheet provided)  
Review each remaining submission, allow a limited time of discussion among the panel, and ask each panelist to score the submission based on the criteria published in the Call to Artists. As the administrator you can collect scores, entering them into a spreadsheet, and immediately sort to obtain the panel's top choices.
  
- Round 3 – Consensus Building

Numerical scoring is a good way to decipher the pool of top submissions. However, it is important for the panel to make their final selections in a consensus building round where they can each discuss the merits and shortcomings of the top submissions based on the selection criteria.

**Finalize the selection panel's recommendations and if necessary, obtain approval of the panel's selections with the commissioning agency.**

### **Artist Notification**

Prior to making any public announcements, the project administrator should draft letters of congratulations to the finalist(s) and letters of regret to the applicants who have not been selected. Also, remember to return submission materials to those artists who have included self-addressed stamped envelopes.

### **Contracting with an Artist**

Accompanying this toolkit you will find copies of the Provision for Public Art contract that was created by the city's legal team in 2004 as well as the annotated public art contract published by the Public Art Network of the Americans for the Arts. This longer annotated contract is an industry standard, and our recommendation as a good resource to provide to the legal counsel who will be drafting your contract with the artist you've just selected. Remember, every project is different so contracts will have to tweak and renegotiated for every project you do. No two will be alike.

Some, but not all, of the legal issues to which you want to pay close attention as the commissioning agent are:

- **Artist's scope of services, their compensation, and payment schedule** – Be CLEAR about what the artist and his/her budget is required to cover. Are they responsible for design, fabrication, delivery, and installation or do they also need to cover services and costs associated with site preparation, site restoration, lighting, etc? This will all be dependant on what kind of project you are completing.
- **Insurance** – Who is responsible to have what kind of insurance when and for how much? It is important to have liability insurance as well as property insurance.
- **Copyright & the Visual Artist's Right Act of 1990 (VARA)** – Typically, the copyright on an artwork and all the artist's preparatory work (drawings, models, etc.) remain copyrighted by the artist. Should you desire to own copyright, or to license certain uses of the artist's copyrighted work, be sure to clearly articulate those requests and relationships in our contract. VARA is a law above and beyond copyright law which protects an artist's moral rights and rights of attribution. Be sure you and your attorney have research this law.

### **Conservation and Maintenance**

A conservator should be consulted, and work with the artist and fabricator, to address any potential conservation issues with the art. A conservation plan should be developed in the design and fabrication process to ensure the safety of the art against the elements. Special considerations should be given to environmental concerns (i.e., severe weather or extremes of temperature).

Based on the conservation plan, it is important to develop a maintenance program for the art project according to its intended life span. Through language in your contract, require that the artist prior to final acceptance of the project and final payment provide a conservation and maintenance plan. Regular maintenance will protect and preserve the art for the length of the project.

### **Installation, Permitting, and Dedication**

The artist, fabricator, and other project experts (e.g., engineers, architects, and public art consultants) may all need to be involved in the installation process. It is also essential to consult city and utilities officials. Some installations may require traffic diversions, utilities shut-off, or any of a whole host of other issues. Be sure that you have pulled all the necessary city or state permits to do work and/or to use space in the public right-of-way. On your Toolkit disk you should have files of many of the various permit applications that may be required by the City of Indianapolis as well as a presentation about how to be sure you are in compliance BEFORE you install your project.

Also remember to Call Before You Dig (IUPPS/Holey Moley 800-382-5544).

A dedication ceremony helps bring a positive and definitive conclusion to the selection, design, and fabrication phase and an introduction to the public's enjoyment and stewardship of completed project.

### **Lighting and Signage**

Proper signage recognizes the artist's authorship and contribution and provides permanently accessible information the public. A standardized format for a basic description of an art project:

*Artist Name (b-d, nationality)*

*Title, Date of execution*

*Materials*

*Dimensions (Height x Width x Depth feet/inches/cm, etc.)*

For example:

Robert Indiana (b. 1928, American)

LOVE, 1973

Painted aluminum

6 x 6 x 3 ft

*Additional info listed after could include site/location, budget or cost and other annotated or descriptive info.*

Equally important is adequate and appropriate lighting. This serves a dual purpose; on one hand, it allows the art to be enjoyed at all times, and on the other it provides a security factor that will help prevent damage to the art.

**Congratulations! You have successfully completed a public art project in Indianapolis.**

**For More Information, please contact:**

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