

18 March 2013/Laura Kelly/Project Director, Flagstaff Cultural Partners

Workforce Development for the Creative Industries Flagstaff Arts Incubator

"The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but it is that we aim too low, and we reach it." ~ Michelangelo

The Premise

Art creates jobs, attracts visitors and injects fizz into our lives and our city.

Art is also a business that is essential to the health of our community, as quantified in 2012 by an economic impact study conducted by Americans for the Arts and endorsed locally by the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, Flagstaff Cultural Partners, Coconino County, the city of Flagstaff and Northern Arizona University's College of Arts & Letters. Of the enthusiastic statistics generated by the comprehensive study, two resonate roundly: In 2011 the art and science industries generated \$7.6 million in local and state tax revenues. And in 2011 the art and science industries supported 2,500 local jobs.

Many artists choose to live and work in our region, drawn to the proximity and inspiration of the natural world, and the humane scale and tenor of everyday life. The same qualities that make Flagstaff a compelling place to live also make it a difficult place for artists to make a living. They encounter isolation, a dearth of professional development opportunities, few resources to help with the transition from university art school training to the professional world and limited markets for work.

Artists, inarguably critical to the flavor of Flagstaff, struggle to make living wages. Arts organizations struggle to keep their doors open. Additionally, while many local artists make cutting edge work, the work that is most visible is tourist-driven and traditional in nature. We see the need for developing artists, arts organizations and by extension art audiences to allow them to feel more comfortable with a wider variety of aesthetics.

Art Box is a plan for workforce development in the creative industries. It is the working title for a series of initiatives that include offering immediate services and support for artists and organizations, and eventually securing artmaking and exhibition/gathering spaces that will be located in Flagstaff but have impact throughout Coconino County and draw visitors from around the state and the region.

The aim of Art Box? To enhance civic vitality, strengthen cultural depth and create economic impact by broadening the entrepreneurial skills of artists and arts organizations through training, mentoring, empowering and placemaking. Art Box will assist in creating, redefining, and sustaining creative careers in the new economy.

As with Northern Arizona Center for Emerging Technologies (NACET), the Flagstaff business incubator, economic development is the principle purpose of Art Box. Art Box will develop individuals and organizations toward more robust marketplace viability through business training. This realm of service providing can be fluid, portable and immediate, and its genesis does not depend on the acquisition of dedicated space. We foresee the immediate creation of entrepreneurial programs for artists as enhancing community buy-in and strengthening fundraising possibilities with concrete outcomes and success stories for eventual space acquisition and program expansion. Growth must be something we respond to rather than something we demand.

Phase 1: Art Toolbox Institute

Art Toolbox Institute is a nine-month, degree-granting, skills-based institute that recognizes artists as entrepreneurs and offers them the skills to help them succeed in the marketplace.

Creatives, like entrepreneurs, are innovators who work with risk and experiment and expression, making work unlike previous artists or designers, pushing boundaries, breaking ground with products, services, trends or fashions. Creatives require stimulation and nurturing. While their training often centers on their art form, what remains undernourished is their training in the skills needed to present their work to the public.

The Art Toolbox Institute is being created to develop the business savvy and skills of emerging and established artists working in any medium. It is a collaborative project, drawing on the resources and expertise of the City of Flagstaff, Flagstaff Cultural Partners, NACET, Coconino County Community Services, the Small Business Development Center of Coconino Community College and Northern Arizona University.

Art Toolbox Institute will be an application-admission program that facilitates the creation of art and the abilities of artists to market and sell their art by offering vital support to artists. The support will take three forms: 1) instruction (marketing, public speaking, grant writing, deploying social media, etc.), 2) reduced-rate professional services (health insurance, graphic design, printing, etc.), and 3) mentoring, community building and collaboration.

Art Toolbox Institute will be open to 24 artists, be partially funded by tuition fees (\$750 is the current working idea of the fees) and be presented in a culture where participants can discover and develop and exploit their own natural intelligences. The creation of an active and participatory cohort is critical to the success of the institute, as mentoring, peer review and collaborative projects are integral ingredients of the program. By establishing a group that is undergoing a process together, Art Toolbox aims to create a culture that values inter-learning, irreverence, the lively, the dynamic, the surprising,

the playful. And a culture that values, above all, curiosity and the ability to make connections and cognitive leaps.

SAMPLE CURRICULUM

- **YOU ARE YOUR BRAND:** The moment you enter a room, people form an opinion about you. Only a fraction of your message is conveyed through the words you choose. What you wear, the energy and enthusiasm you convey, and how you engage others all affect how people respond to you. Corporations work exhaustively to calibrate and convey their brand; artists must do the same. Artists must know exactly who they are and what they want, and carefully sculpt the messages they send. You Are Your Brand is a series of exercises designed to help you discover what you project and how others perceive you.
- **VERBAL COMMUNICATION:** How to communicate what you do and why you do it in clear, effective terms. Deploying the power of story. Understanding the principles of public speaking. The Verbal Communication Workshop employs lectures, small group activities and hands-on exercises to improve interpersonal communications. Topics include how to be authentic and comfortable talking about your work in social situations like gallery openings and how to successfully pitch your work or ask for financial support from presenting venues and funders. This workshop helps participants identify their goals and objectives in order to more effectively and accurately represent themselves and their work.
- **PHOTOGRAPHY ESSENTIALS:** Photography is often the introductory tool for introducing artists' work to gallery owners, grantors, and competition judges. Learn the fundamentals of taking photographs that convey professionalism.
- **PROMOTING YOUR WORK:** In these workshops participants will hear from artists who have used techniques to increase awareness and gain wider media coverage. Participants will also hear from experts and learn about the necessary tools for promotion and how to communicate effectively with a wide variety of audiences. Potential topics include targeted marketing—an interactive, group brainstorming session to identify and reach new audiences; and Research, Resources, and Relationships, using the three R's to help artists think creatively and expansively about the available human and financial resources that can help promote your work.
- **WORKING THE WEB:** Whether an artist is technologically savvy or a novice, this workshop is designed to help all artists expand their online presence and harness the power of emerging technologies. Participants explore how online resources can expand audience size, improve marketing and communications, and optimize personal organization. Participants develop a strategy for using online resources to attain specific goals. Topics include best practices for social networking and media sharing, e-commerce, building and maintaining a website, promotional websites, blogs and increasing efficiency. The workshop will also help artists expand their thinking to quickly recognize and respond to the possibilities of new technologies as they develop.

- **STRATEGIC PLANNING:** Defining and crafting a plan related to your individual career path. Creating your roadmap with defined goals, aims and measures of success. Participants learn key business and management skills and hear first-hand from artists how these tools can be used to break the crisis management cycle and achieve success—as they define it. Topics include business management, goal setting, communications and negotiation. In addition to lecture presentations, participants participate in interactive exercises and have the opportunity to meet with leaders in small working groups.
- **FUNDING YOUR WORK:** This workshop combines nuts-and-bolts strategies with a broad-based empowering approach for integrating fundraising into your creative practice. Appropriate for artists of all disciplines, this workshop will help evaluate a wide variety of fundraising opportunities and explain how to tap these valuable resources. Topics include applying for grants and residencies; working with a fiscal sponsor; forming an advisory board; preparing the right materials for the right donors; making the tools of organizational fundraising efforts work for individual artists; partnerships with venues, donors and funders; and determining and communicating the real cost of your work.
- **FUNDRAISING FROM INDIVIDUALS:** This workshop helps artists of all disciplines understand how to tap this valuable resource. The workshop includes information on how to organize fundraising events, e-mail campaigns, cultivation and individual appeals.
- **PERFORMANCE DOCUMENTATION:** This workshop provides dance, theater and performance artists the opportunity to improve the documentation and preservation of their movement and time-based work. The day includes hands-on experience with video editing, camera placement, and cinematography, as well as discussions of best practices for different types of documentation, how to make a strategic plan and how to budget for the documentation process. Artists will learn techniques they can use themselves, or discuss with editors and videographers to create high-quality performance documentation for use in personal archives, work samples, marketing campaigns and beyond.
- **WRITING SKILLS:** Artists need to be able to communicate their message, their story, and their ideas in writing. This workshop will focus on the fundamentals of clear and effective business writing and storytelling. Additional topics include writing for grants and crafting a mission statement with snap. Professional writers and editors will evaluate work.
- **FINANCIAL LITERACY:** This workshop provides a crash course in bookkeeping, budgeting, tax preparation, and financial management and aims to raise participants' level of financial literacy regardless of their prior experience. The workshop is appropriate for individual artists working in any genre and at any point in their careers. Topics will include individual taxes for artists, segregating personal and artistic finances, budgeting for your life and your artistic projects (how to translate artistic narrative into line-item budgets for funders), tips for tracking deductible expenses (what can artists write off?), how artists can get

out of debt and start saving, a self-employment primer (answering the question “what’s my time worth?”), and whether and when to pursue forming a non-profit incorporation or other entity.

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