

12 Tips for Transformative Community Engagement

1. Seek out partnering community organizations and movements that address issues which are important to, and have personal connections to, your singers.
2. Identify a community partner, organization, or individual to be your **guide and advisor** to guide your chorus with internal education, cultural awareness and communication with your collaborative partner.
3. **Participate** in events and projects hosted by your collaborative partner in *their* space. Ask how your chorus can support their mission and work in the community.
4. **Listen** more than you talk.
5. Make sure your **internal training** and chorus conversations happen *before* collaborators are invited as guests into your space. Explore issues of power and privilege, cross-cultural dynamics, language sensitivity, etc as recommended by your community guides.
6. **Anticipate** ways to help your collaborators feel comfortable when they are in your space:
 - a. provide greeters at the door
 - b. prepare nametags
 - c. think about the food and drink you are providing. Is it appropriate for your guests?
 - d. ask in advance what things would help your collaborators feel welcome in your space.
7. **Serve food**. Always food! There is no better conversation generator among people that don't know each other.
8. **Select and prepare music thoughtfully** and carefully.
9. **Balance** creative process and flexibility with written expectations. A written contract is a must for any collaboration, especially if it involves significant time and/or finances. If a new work of art is created through this collaboration, be sure to clarify in writing in advance who owns the on-going rights to that new work. If collaborative partners participate in a concert, **compensate them financially** for their time and expertise.
10. Ensure that any event or project **advertising** and promotion is agreed upon by all collaborators.
11. Find meaningful ways to **stay in touch**. Especially if the collaboration stirs a lot of emotion or vulnerability for your collaborators or your chorus, offer follow-up support and continue building trust rather than dropping the connection immediately after the collaboration is officially finished.
12. Collaboration is trendy but proceed with humility. **Embracing the possibility** that this community partnership might just transform your life, your chorus... and the world!

Remember...

- "Outreach" is not the same as inclusion or engagement.
- True collaboration involves a willingness to let go of control. Know that the outcome of the collaboration may take a completely different form than you originally envisioned.
- If you feel uncomfortable, this might just be the perfect collaboration for your chorus.
- Any true collaboration takes time, patience, creativity, willingness to adapt and lots of listening. Be realistic about the time that true, transformative partnership may take.

Transformative Engagement Planning Grid



Project Title & Chorus	
Collaborative partner	
Community Experts	Who are the experts in your community that can bridge between your two organizations, help with training or facilitate conversation?
Internal Training	What kind of internal training will your chorus need? What does your collaborative partner suggest?
Listen & Experience	How/where will your chorus participate in an activity hosted by your collaborative partner?
Message	What is the simple message you want to convey through this artistic project?
Goal Setting	Create up to 3 basic goals for the partnership – together! 1. 2. 3.
Challenges	What challenges do you anticipate for the project in general?
Barriers to participation	What barriers /challenges does your collaborative partner anticipate in terms of getting their community members involved in the project? How can you address these?
Planning & Decision-making	How will your collaborative partner be engaged in decision-making, or not? Selecting repertoire, where they stand on stage, concert order, etc...
Project Description	What will the project and/or performance look like, sound like, feel like? What will people experience, hear or see as soon as they walk in the space? How will they feel welcome and engaged?
Audience Development	How will you engage community members to be involved? How will you get them there? Free tickets are NOT enough - be creative. This will take time. What do your collaborators suggest?
Evaluation & Transformation	Who will be involved in the evaluation? What form will it take? How has your chorus community changed through this collaborative partnership? What have you learned?
On-going Engagement	How will you continue to stay connected with your collaborative partner over the next 12-24 months?