

Community Engagement Discussion Handout

Instructions

For each of the scenarios below:

- ✓ Identify the issue/s surrounding equity, access and belonging present in this scenario.
- ✓ Reflect on how this situation may, or may not, be present in your own chorus.
- ✓ Brainstorm a range of possible responses to the scenario. In your chorus, whose responsibility is it to speak up and challenge, or support, the issue presented?
- ✓ Record your conversations and responses for reporting back to the larger group.

Scenarios for Discussion

1. Your chorus is collaborating with Mayuri, an east Indian Dance Ensemble, and throws an outdoor bar-b-que at the first joint rehearsal in order to encourage conversation and mingling between your organizations.
2. Rainbow LGBT chorus is performing a new setting of four Langston Hughes poems set by Eric Whitacre for chorus and strings. They send an email to 5 local African American churches offering free tickets to the concert, but no one shows up for the concert. What happened? What could have been different?
3. Your gay men's chorus has just begun a collaboration with a Hispanic church choir in the neighborhood who will perform 3 songs on their upcoming holiday concert. The church choir invites your chorus to sing at their church service in two weeks. What steps do you take to make sure that this performance is a positive one?

Action Steps

What are some concrete steps your chorus could undertake to better address community engagement?

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:
 - provide greeters at the door
 - prepare nametags
 - think about the food and drink you are providing. Is it appropriate for your guests?
 - 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 for people that don't know each other.
8. **Select and prepare music thoughtfully.** See *Preparation & Performance Practice* (page 19).
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 equity, access, 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.

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Transformative Community 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! The partnership must be of benefit to all collaborative partners. 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?