

# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOLKIT 1: CREATE AN ARTS ORGANIZATION

Arts organizations can be effective platforms for developing, supporting, promoting, and coordinating the arts within a community, region, or even state. While big cities are often home to numerous established arts groups, many of our small, rural communities in West Virginia lack an organized voice promoting the arts at the local level.

As a result, this toolkit is designed to:

- provide an overview of different types of arts advocacy organizations, and
- offer practical steps for starting an arts organization in your community.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the first installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Form an artist cooperative
3. Host a pop-up art shop
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [tamarackfoundation.org](http://tamarackfoundation.org).

# WHY FORM AN ARTS ORGANIZATION?

**Picture this:** Your community is home to several artists who are looking for ways to make their work more visible in the community—perhaps by displaying their work in local establishments, teaching workshops or classes, or selling their wares at a local market or event. Or maybe you're a community member eager to see and interact with more art around town, but you're not sure how to promote the arts within your community.

Communities across the country have found great value in forming dedicated community arts organizations that promote the arts at the local level. In fact, effective arts organizations can be powerful tools in the overall cultural, social, and economic development of a community.

## TYPES OF ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

No two arts organizations are the same. Shaped by the communities they serve, arts organizations take many different forms to address their particular local objectives.

Community-based arts advocacy organizations are commonly formed in one of three ways:

### As a nonprofit

The majority of arts groups around the country are nonprofit organizations, meaning they are driven by their mission as opposed to making a profit. Some groups focus on showcasing the work of local artists through exhibitions or collective marketing opportunities that help artists sell their work at local events, markets, and businesses. Other groups promote educational opportunities such as trainings to help local artists further their skills or workshops to enrich the community as a whole. Still other organizations operate art centers, museums, or other brick-and-mortar locations.

### As a governmental entity

Some arts organizations, such as city or county arts commissions, may be housed within government agencies. These groups might form specifically to work with local government entities to promote and fund arts opportunities in the area. For example, the City of Charleston recently created an Office of Public Art and is in the process of forming a public art commission. The Office of Public Art is led by a paid city employee, and the commission will consist of members appointed by the mayor and the new public art director.

### As a cooperative

Broadly defined as enterprises that are jointly owned and controlled by their members, cooperatives are often used as platforms for artist-members to collectively operate a gallery, retail space, and/or studio according to agreed-upon rules. (See *Toolkit 2: Form an Artist Cooperative in this series for more detailed information about artists cooperatives.*)

**Arts councils vs. commissions:** Organizations that form as “arts councils” often have some association with local governments, though the councils themselves are typically organized as nonprofits. Entities formed as “arts commissions” are generally created by and fall under the umbrella of a city, county, or other governmental unit.

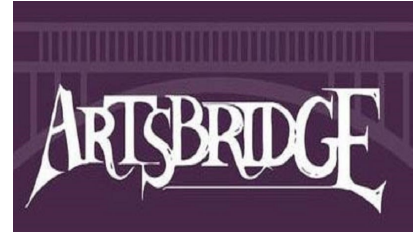
This toolkit focuses specifically on forming a nonprofit community arts organization.

# WEST VIRGINIA ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

There are a number of arts-focused organizations in West Virginia. Here are a few that serve specific communities and/or counties.

## **Artsbridge (Parkersburg)** [artsbridgeonline.org](http://artsbridgeonline.org)

Artsbridge is an arts council dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Mid-Ohio Valley by promoting and supporting the arts through financial and administrative support and arts education in our schools and community. The organization also promotes enrichment opportunities for communities, and technical trainings for arts organizations and individual artists.



## **ArtSpring (Thomas)** [artspringwv.com](http://artspringwv.com)

ArtSpring is a nonprofit collective of local artists and arts appreciators who believe in promoting, presenting, and supporting the arts in Tucker County. As the county's chief advocate and voice for the arts, ArtSpring hosts a number of events each year, including the annual ArtSpring Festival every May. The organization also offers direct support to artists, promotes Tucker County as an arts destination, and facilitates the engagement between the creative community and the public.

## **The Beckley Art Center (Beckley)** [beckleyartcenter.org](http://beckleyartcenter.org)

The Beckley Art Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the arts and encouraging artistic talent within the community. The organization maintains an art center in downtown Beckley where they host a variety of classes, art exhibitions, music events, and a gift shop.



## **Morgan Arts Council (MAC) (Berkeley Springs)** [macicehouse.org](http://macicehouse.org)

MAC, a nonprofit, is the official arts council of Morgan County. MAC coordinates a number of programs including school art programming, several concert series, community theater productions, literary festivals, gallery shows, visual arts classes for adults and children, public art projects, media classes on videography, broadcasting and film, dance and movement classes, storytellers, and festivals.

## **Pocahontas County Arts Council (PCAC) (Marlinton)** [pocahontasarts.org](http://pocahontasarts.org)

PCAC's mission is to promote the visual arts in Pocahontas County through a variety of classes for individuals and groups. PCAC operates the Little Yellow House in Dunmore, the Durbin Art Center, and the Green Bank Art Center, through which they offer art classes and exhibition opportunities. The council also partners with other organizations to provide community activities including art shows and events.



## **The River House, Inc. (Capon Bridge)** [theriverhousewv.org](http://theriverhousewv.org)

The River House, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that operates the River House, a community art and music center in Capon Bridge that emphasizes active community participation, affordable access, and multi-generational education. The River Center offers live musical performances, art classes, community gatherings and open work space and also features a cafe onsite.



# WHERE TO START?

Think your community might benefit from having a local arts organization? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Oftentimes groups or individuals know from the start what they want their organization to do or accomplish. Nevertheless, initial planning is important for setting your organization up for success. Answering these fundamental questions can help shape the direction for your arts organization.

### What does your community need?

Successful local arts organizations respond to the needs of their community. Start by talking to artists and other community members to understand both their needs and desires for the community. For example, do artists in your community have the tools, opportunities, and markets they need to thrive? Do students and community members have opportunities to learn about art and crafts? Does your community currently feature any public art? And most importantly, what do local residents want to see, and what ideas or opportunities do they get excited about?

### What groups already exist?

Are there existing organizations in your community related to the arts? If so, what needs are not currently being met by those organizations? Could any of these organizations potentially take on arts programming that is currently lacking? members appointed by the mayor and the new public art director.

### Who are the key players that should be involved?

Are there key stakeholders from other organizations or local government officials who have relevant knowledge or expertise to lend?

Start by posing these questions with your immediate circle of contacts. Then think about ways to reach out to a wider audience in your community, such as by attending community meetings, posting to local social media pages, or sharing an informal online survey. Once you have an understanding of these issues, you can better strategize about how a community arts organization could provide value to your community.



### Lessons from the River House:

When volunteers in Capon Bridge realized that their community needed a central gathering place to feature and promote local artists, they started by floating the concept for a community arts center among local leaders, including artists, business owners, teachers, and other leading citizens around town. Many of these leaders joined on as a “board of advisers,” who helped shepherd the concept for the River House from an idea to a reality.



## GATHER YOUR TEAM

Next, assemble a team of individuals in your community who are interested in your cause and might help you in forming an organization. Specifically, you will need a handful of individuals to serve as a core planning team for your organization. (Tip: If you decide to incorporate your group as a nonprofit, you'll need at least four members who will serve as officers of your organization.)

Having prior expertise with community organizations is a huge plus to look for, but even an inexperienced individual with some time, interest, and a willingness to learn can be a great asset to your team. While some arts groups are made up entirely of artists, it's not a bad idea to think about widening your circle to include community members from other walks of life who might contribute valuable skills and expertise to your organization.

At the same time, look for examples of existing organizations in other places who are doing the kind of work your organization aspires to. Most groups are open to helping other communities follow in their example. Reach out to these groups to ask questions about what lessons they have learned in running a community-based arts organization.

## MAKE A PLAN

Regardless of the organizational structure you decide to pursue, your organization will need a solid plan for what it hopes to accomplish and how it plans to operate to meet its goals. Creating a basic business or strategic plan (whether formal or informal) from the start will set your organization up for success. A basic plan should take the following questions into consideration: *What kind of money will it take to fulfill your goals? Will you have paid staff, or just volunteers? Where will funding come from to sustain the group?*

## DETERMINE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Most arts organizations forming with the purpose of advocating for and/or promoting the arts opt to form as nonprofit organizations. Just as the name implies, nonprofits are considered to be "mission-driven" organizations rather than profit-driven businesses.

If the main objective of the arts group centers around making money for artists through increased sales, then forming as a business or a cooperative may be a better fit. To learn more about the cooperative model, check out Toolkit 2: Form an Artist Cooperative.

**A nonprofit-run business?** It is possible for a nonprofit to operate a business. In fact, some organizations use this business model to provide a sustainable source of revenue to fund the nonprofits mission-based programming. However, keep in mind that any profits from nonprofit-run businesses must go straight back to the nonprofit.

## TYPES OF NONPROFITS

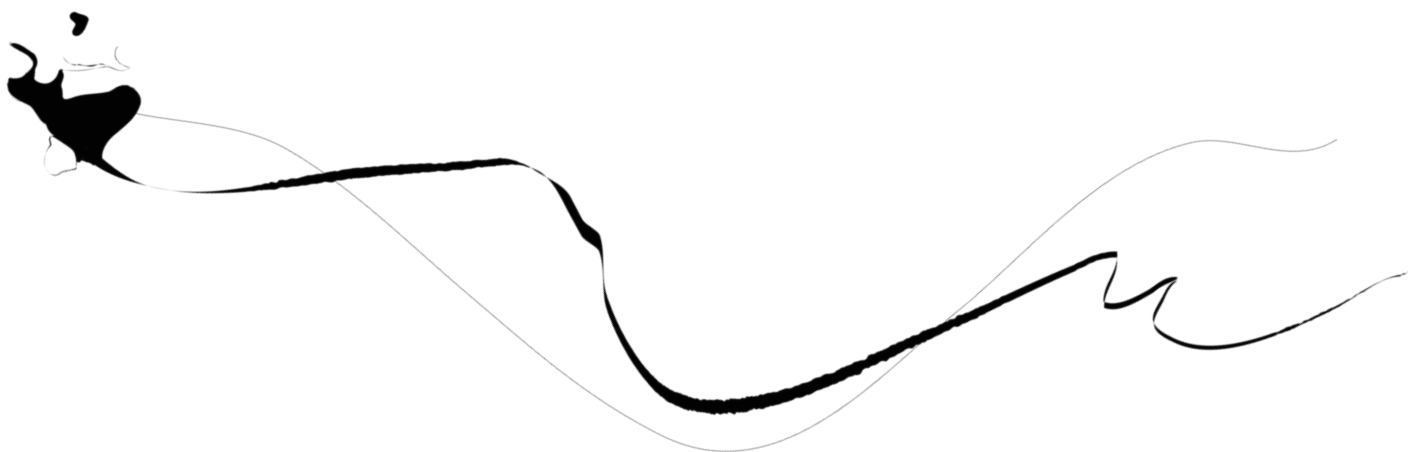
There are two broad categories of nonprofits: those that incorporate, and those that do not.

Any time two or more people decide to work together for a common purpose (raising funds for a local cause, etc.), they technically form an *unincorporated nonprofit* association (Wong, 2019). While the West Virginia recognizes unincorporated organizations (WV Code Section 36-11), it is important to note that most of the benefits we associate with nonprofits—including tax-exempt status and liability protections—only apply to organizations that legally incorporate with the state and federal government as a nonprofit corporation.

**“Incorporating” is the process through which an organization legally becomes a corporation.**

The basic steps for incorporating a nonprofit in West Virginia include registering a business name and filing articles of incorporation with the West Virginia Secretary of State’s office. Additional steps are then required to legally register your nonprofit with the state and U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Incorporating is a good idea for most arts organizations. A formal structure gives credibility to your organization, plus the nonprofit corporate structure limits the liability of the group’s board members. (Grant Space, 2019)



While the IRS offers many different kinds of nonprofit designations, the most common for independent charitable organizations is the 501(c)(3) designation as a public charity, which grants tax-exempt status to the organization. This designation allows the organization to apply for and receive grants and allows donors to claim a tax deduction on charitable donations to the organization.

## WHY FORM A 501(c)(3)?

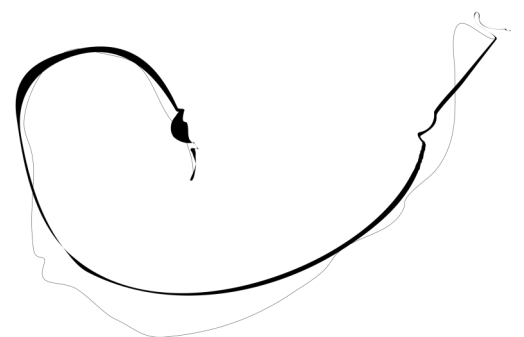
### Advantages:

- **Tax exemption:** Organizations with 501(c)(3) status are recognized by the IRS as tax-exempt entities.
- **Donations:** 501(c)(3) status allows an organization to accept donations that are tax-deductible to the donor.
- **Legitimacy:** 501(c)(3) certification acts as a seal of approval from the IRS and gives your organization more authenticity in the eyes of donors or partners.
- **Grants:** Most funders limit their grants to organizations are certified 501(c)(3) entities.

### Disadvantages:

- **Time, Cost, and Paperwork:** Creating a nonprofit organization takes time, effort, and money. In order to keep their “active” and “exempt” status, nonprofits must file annual reports (Form 990s or Form 990-EZ, depending on the group’s operating budget) with the IRS as well as an annual filing with the West Virginia Secretary of State. An accountant may also be needed to assist with annual financial reporting requirements.
- **Control:** Being a nonprofit does require that your organization follows its bylaws and articles of incorporation.

While it does take work to create and operate a nonprofit, most arts organizations nevertheless opt to follow this path. That said, some organizations choose to register their nonprofit with their state only and not pursue the federal 501(c)(3) certification. If these groups want to apply for and receive grants, they must work with a **fiscal sponsor**, a separate 501(c)(3) organization that agrees to be the official grant applicant and manager on behalf of the local arts group.





# STEPS TO FORM A NONPROFIT

The following basic steps are adapted from the West Virginia Nonprofit Association's checklist for starting a nonprofit. Refer to the full checklist ([wvnpa.org/starting-a-nonprofit/](http://wvnpa.org/starting-a-nonprofit/)) for more information.

## Tasks at your first board meeting

- Formally select individuals—including officers—to serve on your board. The board must include, at a minimum, a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- Adopt bylaws. Your organization's bylaws will serve as the ground rules for how your group will be run. Bylaws generally include the mission of the organization, the number and general terms of board members, the roles of officers, the number and frequency of meetings the group will hold, as well as other general operating terms. While it is often advised that organizations consult with an attorney in creating their bylaws, in practice many organizations base their bylaws off of examples from other nonprofits.
- Adopt articles of incorporation. Articles of incorporation are generally one-to-two pages in which the members of the board certify in writing that they are creating their organization as a nonprofit corporation. As with the bylaws, it is good practice, though not required, to review articles of incorporation with an attorney.

## Other internal tasks

- Designate a bookkeeper and/or accountant for the organization who can help prepare annual financial statements and other filings to maintain your nonprofit status.
- Establish a bank account as well as internal procedures for who will sign checks for the organization.
- Explore insurance policies that will cover your organization's volunteers and/or directors and officers.
- Establish a website, newsletter list, and social media presence to raise awareness and keep the community informed of your organization.

## Tasks with the IRS

- Apply online for an employer identification number (EIN). This is required regardless of whether the organization will have employees. [irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online](http://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online)
- Apply online for 501(c)(3) status through the IRS. [irs.gov/charities/index.html](http://irs.gov/charities/index.html)

## Tasks with the state

- Reserve your organization's name with the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office. [sos.wv.gov/business/pages/RegBusName.aspx](http://sos.wv.gov/business/pages/RegBusName.aspx)
- File a business registration with the West Virginia State Tax Department. [tax.wv.gov/Business/BusinessRegistration/Pages/BusinessRegistration.aspx](http://tax.wv.gov/Business/BusinessRegistration/Pages/BusinessRegistration.aspx)
- Register as a charity with the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office. [sos.wv.gov/business/Pages/RegStepsCharPFR.aspx](http://sos.wv.gov/business/Pages/RegStepsCharPFR.aspx)

## Other ongoing annual tasks

- Register annually with the West Virginia Secretary of State's office.
- File a Form 990 or 990 EZ with the IRS annually on or before June 30th to avoid revocation.

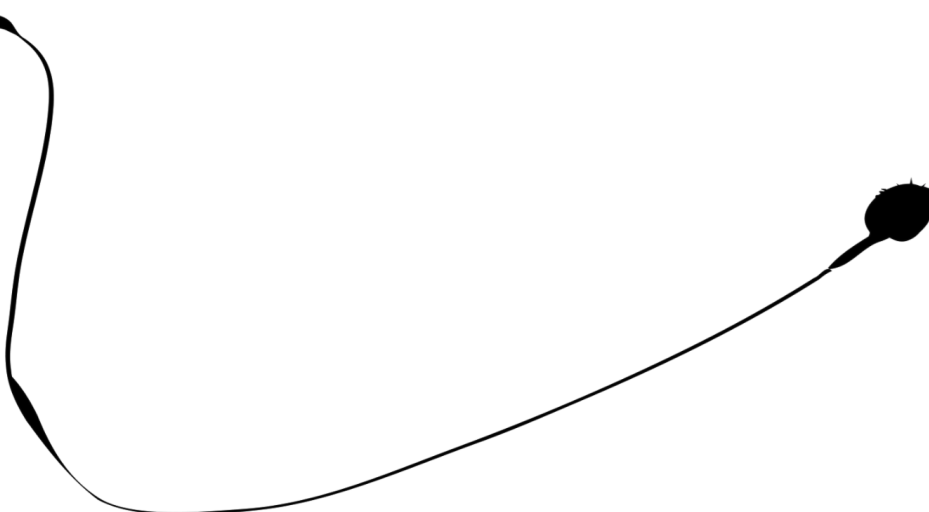
## KEY RESOURCES

**The West Virginia Nonprofit Association** (WVNPA) is an organization dedicated to building the capacity within West Virginia's nonprofit organizations and to advance the sector as a whole. WVNPA offers a number of online tools that can help you start and manage a nonprofit. [wvnpa.org/](http://wvnpa.org/)

**West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History** offers several grant programs for arts organizations. [wvculture.org/arts/grants.html](http://wvculture.org/arts/grants.html)

## SOURCES:

- Americans for the Arts. 2015. [Start a Program](#).
- Fritz, Joanne. 2019. [What is a 501\(c\)\(3\) Tax-Exempt Organization?](#) Published by The Balance Small Business.
- Georgia Council for the Arts. 2011. [Arts Council Development Handbook](#)
- Grant Space. 2019. [How do I start a nonprofit organization?](#)
- Phillips, Renee. 2019. [Taking The First Steps To Launching An Artist Group or Organization](#)
- Wong, Belle. 2019. [Unincorporated Nonprofit Association vs. Nonprofit Corporation](#). Published by Legal Zoom.



# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOLKIT 2: FORM AN ARTIST COOPERATIVE

Whether built around a shared gallery, retail shop, or studio space, cooperatives can offer an effective model for artists to work together for mutual benefit. Based on centuries-old principles of joint ownership and control, cooperatives provide a structure for artists to collectively market, display, and sell their work and share equipment and supplies.

Successful artist cooperatives allow individual artists to save time, money, and accomplish more as a collective unit than they could on their own. Like any organization, however, cooperatives require careful planning and management in order to be effective and rewarding to their members.

Learning from the experiences of West Virginia artist cooperatives, this toolkit is designed to:

- provide an overview of different types of artist cooperatives, and
- offer practical steps for starting and managing an artist cooperative in your community.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the second installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Form an artist cooperative
3. Host a pop-up art shop
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [tamarackfoundation.org](http://tamarackfoundation.org).



# WHY FORM A COOPERATIVE?

A cooperative can be loosely defined as an organization that is jointly owned and democratically controlled by its members (International Co-operative Alliance, 2019).

Cooperatives operate in many different industries and sectors of the economy: For instance, “co-ops” are often associated with independent grocery stores, electric utilities, and credit unions.

In some states, cooperatives can be recognized as designated legal entities, though the term is often applied more generally to businesses or nonprofits that operate according to cooperative principles of joint ownership and control.

---

**In the realm of the arts, artist cooperatives are organizations in which artists come together to:**

- jointly operate facilities such as galleries or retail shops to cooperatively sell and promote their work, and/or
- operate studios and workshops to share ownership and/or access to items such as equipment, tools, and supplies.

## BENEFITS

Cooperatives offer several key benefits for artists, most of which hinge on increased efficiency.

When artists come together to rent space in a building, staff a gallery or retail store, or jointly purchase a major piece of equipment, the burdens of cost and time are divided among members. While these burdens would likely pose insurmountable challenges to an individual artist acting alone, they become much more manageable when shared among several people. As a result, cooperative members generally pay a low monthly share of the organization’s operating expenses and share responsibilities for promoting and running the cooperative.

Cooperative stores and galleries have an added benefit: Whereas traditional galleries or stores must purchase inventory upfront, member-artists in a cooperative contribute their own work as inventory, which further reduces upfront and ongoing costs for the cooperative. The cooperative structure gives member-artists increased independence and creativity while joint marketing helps reduce the time spent individually selling and promoting their art (University of California, 2019).



# WEST VIRGINIA ARTIST COOPERATIVES

There are a number of existing arts-focused co-ops in West Virginia. Here are a few:

## **Gallery Eleven (Charleston)** [galleryeleven.com/](http://galleryeleven.com/)

Gallery Eleven is a cooperative gallery that features the work of member-artists in painting, pottery, stained and blown glass, jewelry, and various other artistic mediums. Members share shifts to staff the gallery during operating hours.



## **Ice House Artist's Co-op (Berkeley Springs)** [icehousecoop.com](http://icehousecoop.com)

The Ice House Artist's Co-op is a unique gallery showcasing and selling the work of more than 30 local and regional artists in the eastern panhandle. Founded in 2000 in conjunction with the Morgan Arts Council, the gallery relies on the volunteer support of its members and the friendly help of the docents.

## **Lost River Artisans Cooperative (Lost River)** [lostrivercraft.com](http://lostrivercraft.com)

The Lost River Artisans Cooperative provides a marketing center for regional artists and craftspeople. The organization maintains a museum that features the work of local artisans, including a weaver who provides demonstrations every weekend.



## **Lucy Quarrier Weavers (Charleston)**

The Lucy Quarrier Weavers are a group of fiber artists whose group was founded over 40 years ago by Lucy Quarrier. Today the group owns 17 looms of varying sizes in space rented from the Vandalia Recreation Center and occasionally offers workshops and lessons. Each member contributes to the monthly rent and has a key to the facility, so they may come and go as they please.

## **Main Street Arts Co-op (Buckhannon)** [artistryonmain.com](http://artistryonmain.com)

The Main Street Arts Co-op is a nonprofit collective that runs the Artistry on Main retail store in downtown Buckhannon. Once juried in, member-artists pay a sliding-scale fixed monthly rent based on the amount of space their work occupies in the gallery and agree to work one day per month staffing the store.

## **Pocahontas County Artisan Co-op (Pocahontas County)** [pocahontasartistry.com](http://pocahontasartistry.com)

With more than 40 member artists and craftspeople, the Pocahontas County Artisans Co-op (PCAC) is a nonprofit organization that serves as a business incubator for regional artisans advancing from hobby to cottage industry. PCAC operates a year-round gallery and store in Marlinton as well as seasonal markets in Cass and other locations. The organization is committed to promoting the arts in Pocahontas County through public demonstrations, workshops, exhibitions and community-based educational activities.

## **The RiffRaff Arts Collective (Princeton)** [theriffraff.net](http://theriffraff.net)

The RiffRaff Arts Collective is a cooperative and interdisciplinary group of performing, visual, literary and healing artists based in downtown Princeton. Located in the Mercer Street Grassroots District of downtown Princeton, WV, the collective has pumped soul into neglected turn of the century structures, and is breathing life into a once depressed downtown area. In addition to hosting a weekly open stage night and other initiatives, the Collective runs a cooperative fine art gallery and artist studios in downtown Princeton.



# WHERE TO START?

Think artists in your community might benefit from a local artist cooperative? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Oftentimes groups or individuals know from the start how their cooperative will serve their community. Nevertheless, initial planning is important for setting your organization up for success. Answering these fundamental questions can help shape the direction for your artist cooperative.

### Who are your members, and what do they need?

A defining element of cooperatives is that they are driven by and governed by their owner-members. As a result, the needs of your local artists will directly shape the direction of your cooperative. For example, do local artists need better access to large, expensive equipment such as kilns or printing presses? Or are they seeking a venue to display and sell their work locally? Similarly, are your artists working in a shared medium, like the Lucy Quarrier Weavers? Or do you seek to feature the work of artists across media and disciplines? Based on what you find, set an intention for what you want the cooperative to achieve.

### How many artists are interested in joining?

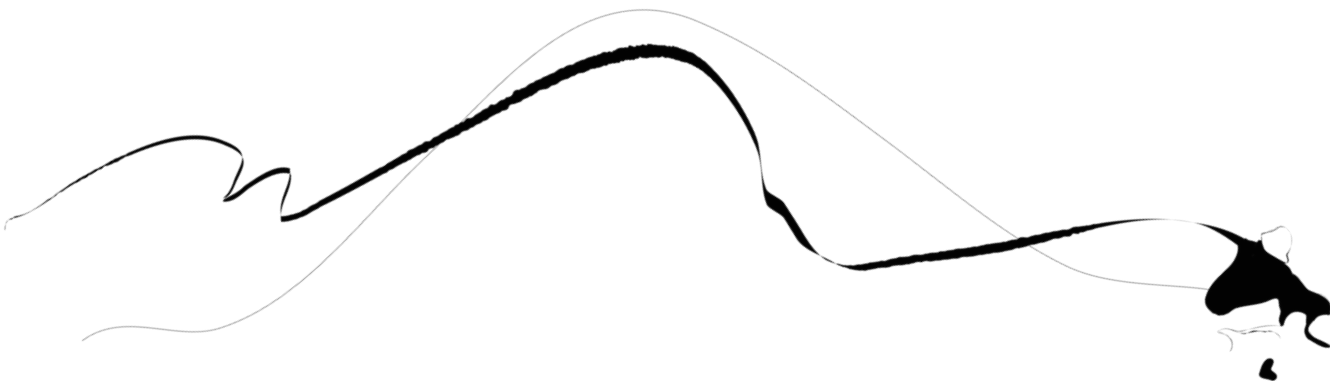
The business model for your cooperative will depend heavily on how many artists you expect to work with. For instance, the cost of renting a gallery space will range dramatically depending on whether you are splitting the cost among three artists versus thirteen artists. As a result, you'll need a realistic estimate of how many artists might participate in order to formulate achievable goals.

### Is your community supportive of the concept?

Local buy-in from your community will be important to the longevity and success of your cooperative. Be sure that there is some consensus in your town that community members support the concept of a cooperative and are willing to support it.

### What other groups have paved the way?

Find examples of other cooperatives that you hope to emulate, and reach out to them. Many organizations will be happy to offer tips and/or mentorship to others hoping to follow the same ropes.





# DETERMINE THE LEGAL STRUCTURE FOR YOUR COOPERATIVE

Legal structure is an important matter for any arts cooperative, but especially for those that plan to sell work of member-artists.

While some states recognize cooperatives as distinct legal entities, West Virginia law only recognizes agricultural cooperatives in the State Code. As a result, artist cooperatives forming in West Virginia have several main options for legal structure:

## Business

For cooperatives made up of only a few individuals, members can form a simple partnership in which each member is personally liable for the cooperative's debts, obligations, and liabilities. However, to shield members from liability, cooperatives can be incorporated; in these cases, state and federal tax liabilities exist, but are born by the entity, not the individual members. (Georgia Council for the Arts, 2019; University of Nebraska, 2019)

## Nonprofit

Just as the name implies, nonprofits are considered to be “mission-driven” organizations rather than profit-driven businesses. In a nonprofit cooperative, the organization itself is exempt from tax liability, though individual members are responsible for taxes on their own work sold. For example, member-artists at Artistry on Main in Buckhannon receive 100% of their sales each month and are responsible for paying their own state sales tax, local property tax, and insurance as needed/desired. (To learn more about forming a nonprofit, see Toolkit 1: Creating an Arts Organization).

# FIND A PHYSICAL SPACE

Whether you plan to open a gallery or a studio, finding the right physical location will be critical to the success of your cooperative. Affordability and accessibility are particularly important considerations. Your space should be affordable for your members to collectively rent, and ideally located in a visible location, particularly if you hope to attract walk-in traffic.

In West Virginia, our communities often have empty storefronts to spare, and the owners are sometimes more than happy to negotiate a reasonable rent in order to have the building occupied. For instance, the Riffraff Arts Collective in Princeton was given free access to a 2,000-square-foot space in a former department store in exchange for covering utilities and general maintenance of the building. As a result, use your network of artists and other contacts in your community to help find available spaces for rent, and be open to creative solutions. Like the Riffraff Collective, you may find that your cooperative is able to breathe life into otherwise unused spaces in your community.

**Clubs and guilds:** Informal clubs and guilds are not legal entities, so assuming that they are not selling their work, they have no tax liability. However, individual members *could* be held liable for any accidents or issues, and they are individually responsible for taxes on sales of their own work. As a result, insurance is generally highly recommended for clubs. (Georgia Council for the Arts, 2019)

# SET THE PARAMETERS

Regardless of the legal structure, you'll need a basic business plan to chart out your cooperative's path to success. This business plan should include a breakdown of estimated expenses and income.

For example:

- What are your estimated startup and operating costs? For a retail or gallery space, monthly costs typically include rent for a physical location, utilities, a Point of Sale computer system for tracking retail sales.
- How many artists can your building's space accommodate? Based on the square footage and display space of your location, you'll need to estimate approximately how much space could be allocated for individual artists, and at what rate.
- Based on these calculations, how many artists will it take to make pay the rent monthly?



*(Artistry on Main, 2015)*

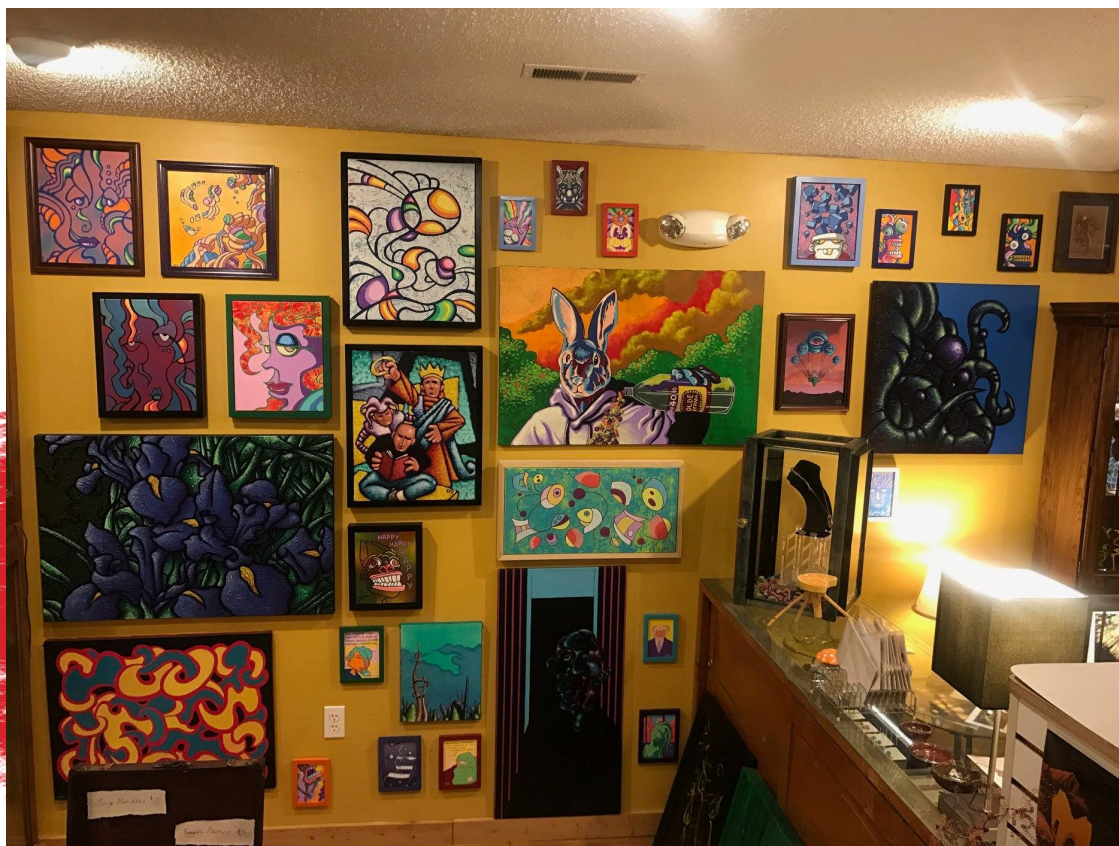
Artistry on Main divides space at their downtown Buckhannon storefront into display areas for member-artists. Member dues are priced based on the amount of retail space they occupy, averaging about \$30 per month for a typical display area. Through their business plan, Artistry on Main knows that having 80% of their membership slots filled will allow the organization to break even, though having 100% of their slots filled gives them a healthier margin to run the cooperative well.

The business plan should also outline the cooperative's governance model. It's important to remember that the principle of cooperation lies at the heart of any cooperative. As a result, the business plan (as well as the bylaws) of the cooperative should spell out the rules and structure by which the organization will be run.

## Other details should include:

- Who will serve as board members and other decision-makers for the organization?
- How many potential member-artists will your cooperative feature, and how will they be selected? (Will they be juried in? If so, how?)
- Will the cooperative take a commission on sales? And if so, how much?
- Will your cooperative have paid staff or be run by volunteers?





*(RiffRaff Arts Collective, 2018)*

Once they gained a critical mass of community artists willing and able to commit time, the RiffRaff Arts Collective formed a cooperative gallery in downtown Princeton. They found a leader to coordinate the effort, who then worked with members to devise a plan for starting a cooperative and running a shop.

To be accepted as a member-artist, the RiffRaff Arts Collective asks interested artists to submit an artist statement, samples of their work, and complete an application questionnaire. New members are decided upon by a vote amongst working members, based on the quality of their submitted materials. Once accepted, each artist is responsible for pricing their work, allowing for the commission subtracted, and each artist is in charge of creating their own inventory. (Create Your State, 2019)

# OPERATING LOGISTICS

Most West Virginia cooperatives focused on retail and/or galleries find that, with enough members, they can cover their operating costs with a low monthly membership fee. (Many also take a small commission on sales.)

## Examples of West Virginia cooperative retail/gallery structures

Cooperative	Dues or membership cost	Commission rate per sale	Volunteer commitment
Artistry on Main (Buckhannon, WV)	Monthly fee based on space used (\$15–75)	Artists get 100% of sales	Members volunteers one day in the store per month
Ice House (Berkeley Springs, WV)	Flat monthly fee of \$30	80% artist, 20% co-op	Members participate in gallery work days three times
Pocahontas County Artisans Co-op (Pocahontas County, WV)	Flat monthly fee of \$30	90% artist, 10% co-op	Members volunteers one day in the store per month
RiffRaff Arts Collective (Princeton, WV)	Flat monthly fee of \$10	85% artist, 15% co-op*	Working members volunteer one work shift per week, plus rotating Saturdays*

*\*The RiffRaff Arts Collective also offers other membership tiers in which those who opt to volunteer in the store less take a lower commission on their sales.*

To keep overhead costs low, most cooperatives are volunteer-run and have set volunteer requirements for their members. While cooperatives are generally built on the principles of joint ownership and control, there are several key positions in any cooperative which require special care and attention to detail.

Based on their experience running a cooperative gallery in Princeton, the RiffRaff Arts Collective recommends the following three positions:

- **A general manager:** responsible for managing volunteer shift schedules, keeping everyone on task, and serving as the overall point person for the cooperative;
- **A bookkeeper and/or finance manager:** responsible for preparing monthly financial statements, tax reporting, and paying operating bills and artists for their sales;
- **An inventory manager:** responsible for managing inventory and keeping things organized. (Create Your State, 2019)

Whether filled by board members, volunteers, or paid employees, these basic positions allow a cooperative to function with relative efficiency. That said, the bulk of the day-to-day staffing of a cooperative retail store or gallery is generally performed by member-artists, who typically are required to staff the facility for a certain amount of time per month.





## BEST PRACTICES FROM EXISTING COOPERATIVES

Successful cooperatives offer tremendous cost-savings and other efficiencies to their member-artists. However, many important lessons can be learned from both successful and unsuccessful organizations alike. As a result, the following tips, strategies, and recommendations offer final words of wisdom based on the experience of other cooperatives.

- For most cooperatives, the first year is generally the roughest as the organization gets established. Know that it might take time to work out initial kinks in your operating system. Also, turnover among member-artists is natural and should be anticipated. According to the RiffRaff Art Collective's Lori McKinney, "I realized that this is going to be a natural ebb and flow of our gallery. There will be influxes and declines in our artist roster, and that is okay" (Create Your State, 2019). As a result, it's important to have a solid business plan and a process in place for recruiting new members.
- As a cooperative organization, it's critical to have dedicated members who are committed to the organization. Tales from unsuccessful cooperatives often tell of lackadaisical members who failed to pay their dues or take their responsibilities seriously.
- On the other hand, another frequently cited reason for cooperative failure is disagreements among members, who in theory make decisions collectively. While much of such problems falls back onto interpersonal relationships and internal politics, it underlines the importance of setting strong ground rules for how your cooperative will be operated.
- For retail or gallery spaces, maintaining reliable business hours is important for the viability of the cooperative. Artistry on Main keeps their storefront in downtown Buckhannon open seven days per week and makes a point to staff the store each day with a different artist. According to the cooperative president Christine Keller, "people really like to meet the artists, so we highlight the fact that every day there is an artist from a different medium in the store" (Keller, 2019).
- Regardless of the cooperative's focus, support from and engagement with your local community will be critical to your organization's survival. Cooperatives such as Pocahontas County Artisans Co-op and Artistry on Main host frequent workshops, and the RiffRaff Arts Collective hosts quarterly themed open houses and art showcases, which give the artists and community members a chance to interact.

## SOURCES:

- Co-OpLaw.org. 2019. Artist Cooperatives. <https://www.co-oplaw.org/co-op-basics/types/artist-cooperatives/>
- Create Your State. 2019. Establishing and Art Co-op. <https://www.createyourstate.org/changemaker-s-toolkit>
- Duff, Victoria. "How to Set up a Co-op Store." Small Business -Chron.com, [smallbusiness.chron.com/set-up-coop-store-32663.html](https://smallbusiness.chron.com/set-up-coop-store-32663.html)
- Georgia Council for the Arts. 2019. Artist Co-Ops. <https://gaarts.org/tools-for-advancement/artist-co-ops/>
- International Co-operative Alliance. 2019. Cooperative identity, values & principles. [ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity](https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity)
- University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives. 2009. Research on the Economic Impact of Cooperatives. [reic.uwcc.wisc.edu/issues/](https://reic.uwcc.wisc.edu/issues/)
- University of California. 2019. What is a Cooperative? Small Farm Program. [sfp.ucdavis.edu/cooperatives/what\\_is/#arts](https://sfp.ucdavis.edu/cooperatives/what_is/#arts)
- University of Nebraska. 2019. What is a Cooperative. Nebraska Cooperative Development Center. [ncdc.unl.edu/what-cooperative](https://ncdc.unl.edu/what-cooperative)

# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOLKIT 3: ORGANIZE AN ART POP-UP SHOP

In a marketplace increasingly dominated by online retailers, many communities around the country are using innovative strategies to promote sales of locally made art, crafts, and other goods. Among such strategies, pop-up shops have proven to be effective tools for driving business back home and encouraging people to shop locally. These temporary shops and markets “pop up” for a limited period of time and help create a buzz around local vendors selling local products.

Looking at examples from West Virginia and beyond, this toolkit is designed to:

- discuss why a pop-up art shop may be good fit for your community, and
- walk through the steps and other considerations when organizing an pop-up art shop.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the third installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Form an artist cooperative
3. Host a pop-up art shop
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [tamarackfoundation.org](http://tamarackfoundation.org).

# WHAT IS AN ART POP-UP?

An art pop-up shop is a temporary market where local vendors can sell their art, crafts, or other goods. Lasting anywhere from a day to several months, pop-up shops sometimes function as a makeshift quasi-storefront for individual artists, while others serve as impromptu art and craft fairs. In effect, pop-up shops showcase local vendors, promote buying locally, and increase the presence of the arts in a community.

The idea was born in the heart of New York City in the mid-2000s when a growing community of artists feeling constrained by limited gallery space began opening small, temporary art displays at various business locations or vacant spaces throughout the city. This collaboration between the arts and business community kicked off a world-wide trend that has gained popularity in towns of all sizes due to the informal nature and ease of hosting.

Art pop-ups can take many different forms. Here are examples of a few common types:

- A restaurant, café, or other local business features an artist for a day, setting up booths and/or displays of the artist's work within the venue.
- An individual artist sets up a temporary shop in an empty storefront, existing business, outdoor tent, or other location for a few weeks. (Businesses considering opening their own location sometimes run a pop-up shop as a time-limited test run before committing to lease a brick and mortar location.)
- Multiple artists set up individual booths at a public venue to form a market of vendors. (Picture a holiday craft market or farmers' market.)

## BENEFITS

Characterized by their flexibility and adaptability, pop-up marketplaces offer inexpensive alternatives to opening a full-time gallery or shop. The temporary nature of pop-up shops creates a sense of urgency for consumers encouraging them to get out and check out the displays. The buzz generated around a pop-up can make the event lucrative for vendors, all while giving community members something to look forward to.



*Makeshop pop-up shop display in Charleston, WV. (MESH, 2019)*



# WEST VIRGINIA ART POP-UPS

There are a number of arts-focused organizations in West Virginia. Here are a few that serve specific communities and/or counties.

## The Handcrafted Cooperative (Morgantown)

[thehandcraftedcooperative.com/](http://thehandcraftedcooperative.com/)

The Handcrafted Cooperative is a cooperative group of curated modern makers and antique/vintage vendors who host a seasonal retail market dedicated to goods created by the most talented independent makers in our area. The Handcrafted Cooperative organizes several outdoor markets each year held at the Morgantown farmers' market pavilion,



FROM OUR HANDS TO YOURS

## Handmade



**Handmade Holiday (Wheeling)** [wheelingheritage.org/event/handmade-holiday-3/](http://wheelingheritage.org/event/handmade-holiday-3/)

Hosted by Wheeling Heritage, the Handmade Holiday is a pop-up holiday craft market that features unique and creative handmade goods. This marketplace of locally produced craft goods invites you to buy local, shop small, and

## Mesh Makeshop (Charleston) [meshfresh.org/makeshop](http://meshfresh.org/makeshop)

MESH, a creative design group in Charleston, offers a community space called Makeshop to encourage community collaboration by providing a free, creative space to bring ideas to life. The space is often used for art pop-up shops, presentations and workshops designed to encourage the local community to create together in the space.



**Short Story pop-ups (Rivesville)** [facebook.com/events/786548768442238/](https://facebook.com/events/786548768442238/)

Short Story Brewing hosts annual holiday pop-up shops each December featuring a selected local and/or regional artisan, live music, and special seasonal libations. The 2019 pop-up featured Kin Ship Goods, the Charleston-based apparel, accessories, and home goods company.



Makeshop, Charleston, WV. (Charleston Gazette Mail, 2018)

# WHERE TO START?

Think your community might benefit from a pop-up art market? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

## GATHER YOUR TEAM

Start by identifying local players in your community: the artists, craftspeople, and other local entrepreneurs and business owners who might want to sell their work as pop-up vendors. Gauging their interest early on will help you scale your event appropriately to meet local vendor demand. You'll also want to reach out to local restaurants, businesses, parks, and other establishments who might be willing to host an event in their space or pitch in through some other means.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

It's always a good idea to check with your city or other local officials to learn about any potential local ordinances or other rules that might apply to holding a pop-up market—particularly if you plan to hold your event in a public space. Also, learn from others. Try to attend planned pop-up events in other towns in order to widen your perspective and see what works in other places. Most groups are open to helping other communities follow in their example, so reach out to these groups to ask questions about what lessons they have learned in running their pop-up events.

## SET THE PARAMETERS

Pop-ups offer a great deal of versatility and can be designed to cater to any community. But first, you'll want to set some basic ground rules for your pop-up, starting with the following topics:

- Is your market going to have a theme or target specific kinds of art and crafts? Some markets organize around a single medium (for example, a pottery pop-up sale featuring different ceramic artists), whereas others seek to have a diversity of artistic mediums represented among their vendors. Also, some pop-ups organize around a single theme such as holiday gifts or wedding inspirations, which they then curate their vendors around in order to focus the sales content and attract a certain target audience.
- Will this be a one-time event or a recurring series of markets? This is important to keep in mind when planning the initial event because it could evolve into a series of events or a permanent storefront in the future. If the goal is to create a long-term business out of the pop-up shop initiative, the branding used during marketing and on the physical products may need to be considered. A little upfront planning and investment could go a long way with branding down the road by providing a cohesive image.

**Pop-up fundraisers:** Some art pop-up shops raise funds for a dedicated cause and/or partner with a local arts organization or a local non-profit to reach a larger target audience. As a bonus for participating organizations, a small percentage of the sales and/or vendor fees could be donated in exchange for the partnership.

# SELECTING VENDORS

Next, you'll need to make some key decisions concerning the vendors for your pop-up.

First, how many vendors will your event host? You'll need to find a venue that can accommodate that your vendors, though if you already have a space in mind, your space may dictate the maximum number of artists.

Assuming you're hosting a market with multiple vendors, how will vendors be reviewed and selected? For smaller markets, the process of selecting artisans may sort itself out naturally. However, larger markets often need a system for reviewing artists similar to a jury process. For example, the Handcrafted Cooperative markets in Morgantown are juried and curated, and only professional, creative entrepreneurs selling handmade, local food and vintage/antiques are accepted. The event organizers have a handbook for participants, which spells out the criteria by which prospective vendors will be reviewed.

In addition, some markets charge a vendor fee based on the amount of booth or display space they occupy.

## Legal considerations for vendors

In West Virginia, all vendors must have a business license and be registered through the state tax department. There may be additional licenses or permits required depending on the city or town that you are holding the art pop-up shop or market. Reach out to the city finance department in your town to ensure that you and your vendors are compliant with local regulations. It is also important to collect six percent sales tax on all sales made within West Virginia and submit the payment to the West Virginia tax department. A sales tax account number will be required to submit this payment.

- Register for a West Virginia business license: [onestop.wv.gov/b4wvpublic/default.aspx](http://onestop.wv.gov/b4wvpublic/default.aspx)
- Register with the West Virginia State Tax department and submit sales tax payments: [mytaxes.wvtax.gov/](http://mytaxes.wvtax.gov/)
- Keep in mind that if the event is to include food and beverage vendors, a call to the local health department should be made to determine requirements of these participants.
- Insurance is another important coverage to consider as a vendor. Contact your local insurance agent to determine available coverages for your temporary display. Out of state vendors may also be required to register as a transient vendor under West Virginia's tax regulations. For more information, please visit: [tax.wv.gov/Documents/TSD/tsd317.pdf](http://tax.wv.gov/Documents/TSD/tsd317.pdf)





## CHOOSING A LOCATION

The next, and probably the most important, step in this process is determining a physical space to host the pop-up shop or market. Depending on the size of the intended exhibit, spaces need to be identified within the community that can comfortably accommodate the event. The format can vary substantially based on the needs and goals of the organizer.

Displays can range from one small table to a multi-tent art market. When determining the size of your pop-up shop or market, consider the size of the local community and how many people may be interested in attending.

### See what's already available to you

Many pop-up shops are hosted within an existing shop or business' physical location. For example, an unused wall at a local café may be a great pop-up space for a collaborative painters' organization. A jewelry designer may opt for a table display at a local fashion boutique.

Larger-scale pop-up art markets may consider existing shopping complexes, vacant storefronts, or any local business with a large physical space. Schools and sport facilities may also offer a great space for a large pop-up art market.



The Handcrafted Cooperative in Morgantown, West Virginia, converts an existing farmers' market pavilion into a seasonal handmade goods market four times per year. The market features over forty vendors, including clay works, paintings, jewelry, apparel, and woodworking displays. (Handcrafted Cooperative, 2019)

When the appropriate size for a space is determined, reach out to businesses owners, commercial leasing agents, and/or community organizations that will help to identify available spaces for the event. Be prepared for the initial meeting with these entities with a solid pitch, including details about other organizations involved, how many vendors, and the duration of the event.

A budget is also a good thing to have in mind when meeting with potential space providers. In some cases, it may be possible to secure a space for free. However, a financial arrangement will most likely need to be made to secure the space. It is important to negotiate how this partnership will work and to put it in writing. Don't forget to pitch the benefit of additional income to be gained through collaboration for the space owner. For owners of vacant storefronts or retail spaces, the temporary rental is a prime



opportunity for revenue generation on a space that is not otherwise producing any.

After the terms are agreed upon, there are other details about the space that will need attention. For example, rental equipment will need to be coordinated for the displays, including tables, tents, signage, clothing displays, table covers, and any required utilities. Besides utilities, such as electricity, the displays could be left to the responsibility of the participating vendor or this could all be provided for a fee by the organizer. If the means are available, the organizer could provide pre-designed display spaces as part of the vendor's fee. This would increase the overall cost of the event but could be a value-added service to the vendor and make for a cohesive, well-organized exhibition overall. Contact local equipment rental dealers to discuss pricing and get quotes on a per display basis. Rental companies may also be interested in sponsoring the event which would help to reduce rental fees. The rental fee for the space and the rental equipment will need to be taken into consideration when determining the vendor's participation fee.

## SCHEDULING YOUR POP-UP

Once a location is secured, the timing of the event is also very important. The time of year, the time of day, and the day of the week are all to be considered. The best time to hold the pop-up shop or market is when there is a high probability of foot traffic. Do your research on the accessibility around the location throughout the week or time of year.

### Timing considerations

Consider parking fees: Is there ever free parking offered? This could be a selling point in the promotional strategy. Are there times when traffic is horrible, and access to the event could be hindered? Weekends seem like an obvious choice to host a pop-up shop or market. However, always check local event calendars to confirm what else is going on in the local community. Other major events may harm the turnout or create unwanted traffic situations. Try to pick a date that will not conflict with other community-wide events, unless it could be used as an opportunity to collaborate with another organization to boost turnout.

Avoiding major holiday weekends is typically a safe bet, unless the holiday weekend brings a lot of foot traffic to town. If the big Memorial Day parade triples the patrons of Main Street every year, then a pop-up shop or market may be a great idea to coordinate during this time. Also, Small Business Saturday—a popular marketing campaign to encourage consumers to shop at local establishments the Saturday following Black Friday—may be a great opportunity to partner with local shops. It may be difficult to sell a lot of products after major spending holidays, like Christmas, since budgets may be lean. Consider the time of the month when planning your event, the typical consumer's budget is typically larger at the beginning of a month versus the end. Weather may also have a contributing factor to when an appropriate time will be to host the event. Outside events may need a back-up plan or additional rental equipment in the event of inclement weather. Always plan for the unexpected. Include a clause in the vendor agreement in case the event must be canceled due to a major weather event or natural disaster.



Artist Sara Golden at a pop-up art show at Artistry on Main in Buckhannon, West Virginia. (My Buckhannon, 2019)

## PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

Now that you have secured a venue and date, it is time to start promoting the event. Promotion of the event will need to mainly focus on consumer but also vendors if it is a multi-vendor event. Social media outlets are the best way to reach the masses. Starting a social media campaign about one month prior to the event date should provide an appropriate amount of time to promote the event. Facebook offers a tool to create an online event listing which is a great way to get the word out and gauge interest of attendees. Instagram and Twitter are also good outlets to get the word out about the event.

Also, consider posting the event listing on local event calendars, in local newspaper or newsletters, or through local organizations that have an established base of followers. A press release to the local newspaper may also be a great way to boost interest in the event. Posting flyers on community bulletin boards could also help get the word out to audiences that are not online or that do not use social media. Printing fees will be incurred and must be factored into the overall cost of the event. Always encourage other participating organizations and vendors to be advocates for the events as well. If volunteers are available, launching a street team to hand out flyers and promote the event while it is being held could also drum up some traffic.



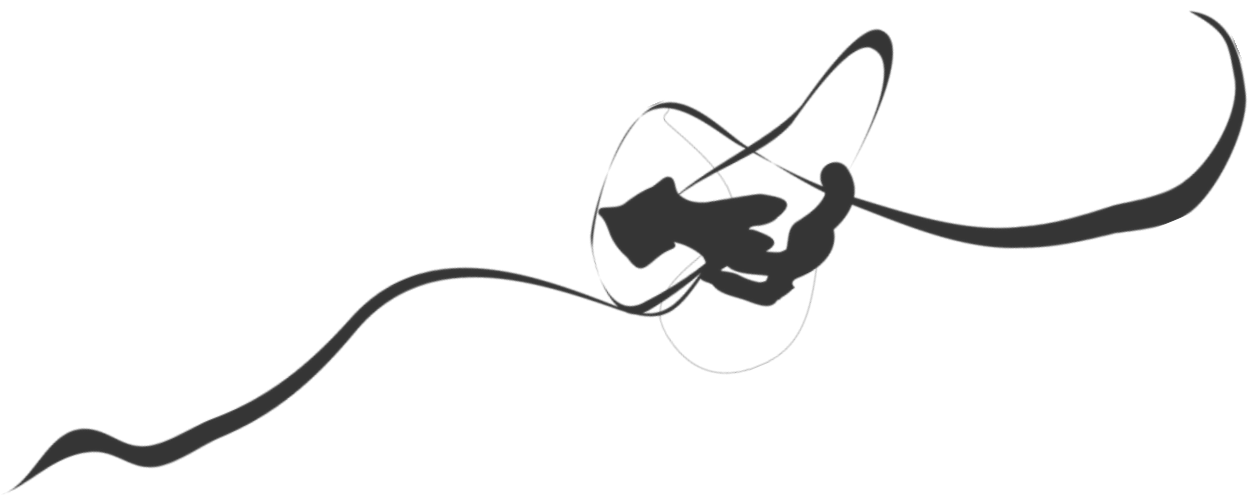
*McDaniel Pottery display at the Handcrafted Cooperative in Morgantown, West Virginia (Handcrafted Cooperative, 2019)*

In conclusion, the flexibility behind the art pop-up shop or market concept makes it potential fit for individual artists, arts organizations, or groups that want to bring art into a community and promote local commerce. Once the participating vendors, location, legal requirements, and dates are set, it can be a relatively easy, potentially profitable endeavor to introduce to your local area.



## SOURCES:

- Storefront Magazine. 2016. How to Set Up a Pop-Up Art Gallery in 7 Steps. <https://www.thestorefront.com/mag/how-to-set-up-a-pop-up-art-galleries-in-7-steps/>
- Shopkeep. 2019. How to Start a Successful Pop-up Shop in the New Year. <https://www.shopkeep.com/blog/how-to-start-a-pop-up-shop>
- The Handcrafted Cooperative. 2019. The Handcrafted Cooperative Participant Handbook. <https://www.thehandcraftedcooperative.com/sell>
- Etsy. 2016. How to Organize a Pop-Up Shop. <https://www.etsy.com/seller-handbook/article/how-to-organize-a-pop-up-shop/43256725936>
- Creativelive Blog. 2016. How This Age-Old Concept Could Help You Win at Online Business. <https://www.creativelive.com/blog/pop-up-shop/>
- Makeshop. 2019. What is Makeshop? <https://makeshop.meshfresh.com/what-is-makeshop/>





# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOLKIT 4: ORGANIZE A STUDIO TOUR

Studio tours offer a fun way to bring artists and the community together. By bringing the public into the studio, these events promote the local arts community and can offer an intimate and meaningful purchasing experience.

This toolkit is designed to:

- provide an overview of the logistics and benefits of studio tours, and
- offer practical steps for organizing a studio tour and helping artists prepare and participate.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the fourth installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Form an artist cooperative
3. Host a pop-up art shop
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [tamarackfoundation.org](http://tamarackfoundation.org).



# WHY ORGANIZE A STUDIO TOUR?

A studio is a coordinated event in which local artists in a region open up their studios to the public. Each tour stop is often accompanied by insight and conversation from the artist, a demonstration of their craft, and an opportunity for visitors to purchase directly from the artist, perhaps learning about the inspiration and methods used unique to that piece.

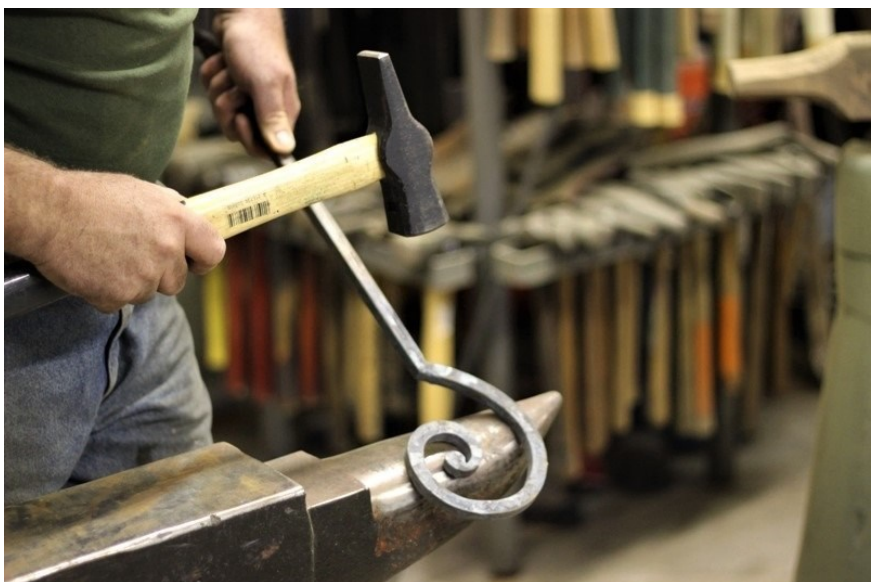
Both artists and the public benefit from open studio tours. Studio tours can spark meaningful interactions, inspire creativity, forge connections, and, yes, promote sales. Whether a local artist is well-established or just getting their foot in the door, participating in a studio tour is an excellent way to engage with each other and visitors, as well as for visitors to explore the variety of work being created right in their town that they might otherwise not even be exposed to.

Studio tours can draw in tourism and become far-reaching social events which foster and maintain appreciation for and participation in a vibrant arts scene, improving the cultural, economic, social, and individual prosperity of a community.

## WHO ORGANIZES A STUDIO TOUR?

Studio tours are often arranged by arts groups or other organizations. They can also exist as standalone events organized by an informal group of artists in the community. In fact, many arts organizations actually spawn from such events as studio tours.

*(Learn more about forming an arts advocacy group in Toolkit 1: Create an Arts Organization or Toolkit 2: Form an Artist Cooperative.)*



*Iron work by Frank Graves at the Trails and Trees Studio Tour (Trails and Trees Studio Tour, 2019)*

# WEST VIRGINIA STUDIO TOURS

Any neighborhood with an artist community can host a studio tour. Here are a few that occur in West Virginia:

**Berkeley Springs Studio Tour (Morgan County)** [berkeleyspringsstudiotour.org](http://berkeleyspringsstudiotour.org)

Berkeley Springs Studio Tour, Inc. is a nonprofit formed specifically to promote the arts in the Berkeley Springs area. The organization works with local arts groups to hold a free, weekend-long, self-guided driving tour through Morgan County once per year in autumn.



**Over the Mountain Studio Tour (Jefferson County)** [overthemountainstudiotour.com](http://overthemountainstudiotour.com)

Over the Mountain Studio Tour, celebrating its 30th year in 2019, occurs throughout Jefferson County in the second weekend of November. The tour features an assortment of media and working spaces. In addition to the November tour, they also host a summer show which features presentations, receptions, anecdotes, and celebration of arts and artists all in one location.



**Trails and Trees Studio Tour (Berkeley County)** [beckleyartcenter.org](http://beckleyartcenter.org)

The Trails and Trees Studio Tour spreads across Berkeley County, is free, and self-guided. In 2010, several artists joined forces to encourage art-centric appreciation and tourism in the area.



# WHERE TO START?

Think artists in your area would love to open their studios to admirers, eager questions, and potential customers? Would your community enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at how some of their favorite work is created, engage with the artists, discover new creators, and perhaps take a piece home with them? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

### Gather your team

Community-wide affairs, studio tours can draw the interest of many different individuals—not just artists. Reach out to any existing arts or community organizations to gauge interest or even if a similar event is hosted on an informal level already. Specifically, you will need a handful of individuals to serve as a core planning team for your organization. Because a studio tour must be organized with the individual artists' studios in mind—which are often in their own homes—it's a good idea to make participating artists fundamental to your planning team.

### Find your artists

To have a studio tour, you need some studios—and some artists! Your community might already have a formal or informal artists cooperative or organization. Start your search for artists by investigating what groups or individual artists operate in your intended region (whether that be your town, your county, or any other specified area). Often, the individual artists are already members of the coalitions you come across, so simply referring to a group's directory should yield a good starting point. Additionally, local artists can be found through their personal websites, social media presence, gallery, or even artwork being featured in various shops and restaurants. Send out a press release through local media and your own website or newsletter that calls for artists.

### Application and jury process

Restricting tour stops to juried artists who work with predetermined materials will ensure the level of quality of the work and, therefore, experience and credibility the tour delivers. As your studio tour grows in popularity and participation, this may become more of a relevant consideration.

Generally, studio tours require an application, which include:

- descriptions and images of their artwork and medium;
- photos of their studio;
- a demonstration of the process they plan to use;
- notice of any potential safety hazards, either in the studio or in the art process; and
- address/location of their studio on the area of interest map. (Berman, 2010a)



## MAKE A PLAN

After you have your core committee and collection of artists interested in participating, it's time to establish realistic expectations, timelines, and general logistics for a successful studio tour. Aim to start planning approximately one year or so in advance—maybe longer if it's a new event and you're still getting the logistics sorted.

**When do you want your studio tour to be held? Consider some of these factors.**

**The proximity of studios.** Is it a driving tour, or are all studio stops within walking distance? This could dictate which is more appropriate. For example, you may decide to have a walkable summer outdoor festival-like event or a driver-friendly, more holiday-themed tour in the winter. Or you can plan for multiple events, each with a different feel.

**Frequency.** Many studio tours do not occur on as regular a basis as some other art-based events, such as pop-up markets or art walks. Instead, organizers often opt for an annual, biannual, or seasonal schedule, depending on the availability and interest in both the public and the artists. It might be reasonable to plan for one event in your first year and play by ear from there.

**Time of year.** Assessing the locations of your participating studios—like the aforementioned proximity of the physical studios—may play into the time of year you decide to organize the studio tour. The seasonal weather, personal scheduling, and other events going on in the area should help inform the ideal time to organize the tour.

### Plan ahead!

Successful studio tours require extensive preparation. From coordinating artists schedules and jurying tour members to designing, printing, and distributing promotional material, a solid timeline that can be loosely (or closely!) followed will help the process go more smoothly.

### Over the Mountain Studio Tour sample timeline

The following page contains a modified version of the timeline the Over the Mountain Studio Tour members refer to each year. The group holds two main events: a summer show and a fall studio tour in November, so consider how the tasks are allocated for each event. You can use this timeline as a general idea for the types of tasks that should be accomplished and a time reference for their completion.



# OVER THE MOUNTAIN STUDIO TOUR TIMELINE

## January

- Press release for jurying new members (deadline early February)
- Meeting: whole group potluck late January
- Fiscal report
- Tour feedback/report sales
- Plan year/changes
- Commitments for all show dates
- Commitments for committee work
- Set deadline for new images and text (May meeting)
- Set dues and due date (May meeting)
- New member recommendations

## February

- Jurying (see outline with details)
- Deadline for applications—early February
- Meet third week
- Interview fourth week
- Decide and announce March 1
- Last week—send out reminder of deadline to whole tour for info and photo
- Updates due March 30

## March

- All promotional info needed (images of work and at work due March 30)
- Announce newly juried members March 1
- Personally welcome new members
- Update tour member contact list

## April

- Meet with printer when ready
- Update website with new members, new photos, new text, etc.
- May meeting reminder—group photo

## May

- May meeting second week of May
- Dues and images due
- Mandatory group photo
- Summer sale plan
- Fall four stops and map plan
- Order any new banners and tour signs
- Fall tour
- Design ads

## June

- Design and pick up posters from printer
- Distribute!
- Press release for summer show
- Send Mailchimp newsletter email

## July

- Summer show second weekend of July
- Schedule building for next summer show
- Website update next summer show dates
- Mailing/email lists updated
- Write and edit all text for brochures, rack cards, posters, ads
- Rack cards generic and/or fall tour
- September brochures (ready for September Mountain Heritage Fest)
- Posters for summer show and fall tour

## August

- Printer finish all details for printed materials

## September

- Pick up fall tour brochures and posters from printer
- September meeting—first week of September
- Pass out brochures and posters
- Coordinate placements of banners
- Distribution plan
- Media/advertising update
- Coordinate setup/food/details/demos for each stop
- Newspaper press release for the fall tour, last week of September/October release

## October

- Press release for tour to all media
- Send Mailchimp newsletter email
- Negotiate and set up any window displays
- Door prize slips designed and emailed to all members
- Major mailing materials go to printer

## November

- Send Mailchimp email reminder first of November
- Tour weekend in second weekend of November
- Signs out Saturday morning, down Sunday night
- Choose and contact door prize winners
- Door Prize slips alphabetized and delivered to Arlene week after tour

\*modified from original version provided by Joy Bridy of OTM

# PROMOTING YOUR STUDIO TOUR

## Branding

Before you can start marketing, you need to consider how you want the tour to be perceived by the public and any potentially cooperating groups. Is there something unique or meaningful that unites your participating artists together? Maybe some commonality in medium, theme, cultural, or regional characteristics? Whatever you choose, ensure the name is memorable and representative of the community/artists it operates with. For example, the “Trails and Trees Studio Tour” is a catchy, short name that employs alliteration to invoke imagery of the natural world which, if not the subject matter of the artists’ work, is at least a dominant theme for the region. On the other hand, the more straightforward “Berkeley Springs Studio Tour” is inclusive, versatile, and informative!

Any associated graphics, such as a logo, brochure themes/images, or something else, should likewise follow the same general features. Consistency is key.

## Marketing Materials

Marketing literature, such as brochures, flyers, websites, and social media pages, should maintain a consistent theme that is in line with the other elements already in place, such as the name, logo, and other branding elements. Have a marketing plan established and follow it with respect to the timing of your event. What does your plan entail? With printed materials such as posters, flyers, newspaper ads, rack cards, and mailing items, ensure you allot enough time for the design, printing, and distribution of them. Refer to the Over the Mountain timeline for an idea of when you might consider when you should get certain materials in place.

Advertise for both the event attendees and new artist participants!

## Online Presence

Most folks get their news through a share or mention through some online platform. Make an easily accessible website exclusively for the studio tour or as a page on your organization’s existing site.

Be sure to include:

- Basic event information, including times, location, and directions from nearby cities.
- Participating Artists: A page (or series of pages) should include biographies and artist statements, portraits, and photos of example work for each artist.
- Newsletter signup: Include a widget in which individuals can submit their email address//contact information to receive updates and information on the event.

Remember to keep the site updated with new artists, dates, and so forth!

## Consider hosting an evening reception as a central social hub during the art walk

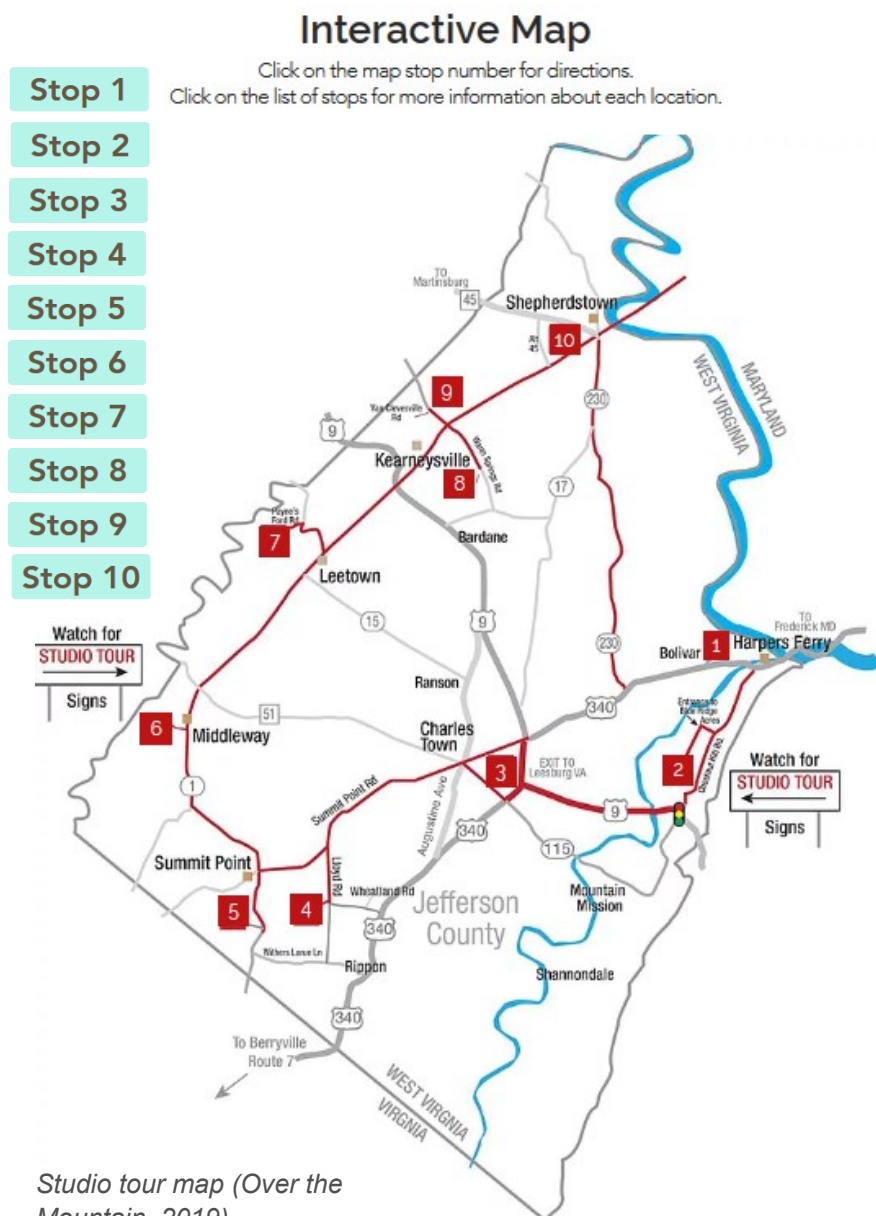
This can help form connections among city residents as well as give them an opportunity to engage with all participating artists. The reception area can serve as a central hub, providing maps/brochures, sales guides, refreshments, music, activities, and anything else you think might entice the public or prove to be useful.

## Create a map of the studio tour stops, including the address, business name, and, ideally, the artist(s) being hosted.

A map is essential to the experience and success of your studio tour. You can accomplish this with a custom Google Map, which can be interacted with conveniently on patrons' phones or computers. You may also wish to do a simple map graphic with locations marked. Ensure the map is updated to accurately reflect participants for each event.

Because a studio is often in someone's home, exteriors of the studio part of the house are helpful:

- Reference this example of an interactive map from Over the Mountain: [overthemountainstudiotour.com/online-map](http://overthemountainstudiotour.com/online-map)



### Make each stop easy to find!

Not only does this have a clean map with important elements marked, each tour stop is clickable, opening a link to Google Maps with the specific address.

Clicking one of the blue "Stop #" in the vertical list opens a pop-up with some images of the art work, the exact address, and the list of all artists at the stop and their respective media.

# HELP PREPARE YOUR ARTISTS

An open studio visit is intended to be informative, engaging, and profitable—for the artists and the public. A visit should be viewed as an experience.

## Demonstrations

Have artists be prepared to exhibit their creative process through a demonstration of some aspect of their work. For example, a painter may continuously paint throughout the day or hold particular viewing times for a more educational, pointed lesson of sorts. A ceramics artist may even have visitors try their hand at a potter's wheel. Have artists prepare a statement about their work, both in technique and inspiration, and be willing to engage in discussion with visitors.

## Portfolio and exhibit pieces

When first starting out, requiring a minimum number of display pieces (including those for sale) may not be helpful, but it's a good idea to set a number of items for artists to shoot for in order to make the tour stops worth the effort for guests—and the ensure there is enough inventory for most potential buyers as they trickle in throughout the day.

## Some extras

To further enhance the experience and make the stop a place where visitors feel like they can linger to converse, take in the art, and potentially make a purchase, have your artists consider including supplementary entertainment, such as a book of their portfolio, music in the background, and some light refreshments on hand.

## Ensure studios are safe for visitors

Read later for more on liability insurance, but vet all artists for safety in their materials, process, and studio itself. Establish some guidelines that artists must adhere to in order to be included on the tour.

## What if an artist cannot host visitors?

Some artists may not be able to hold a studio stop at their actual studio for any number of reasons, ranging from not having the space or parking, community limitations, entry codes, or otherwise. In these cases, participating artists who do have the additional available space may offer it up, so multiple artists can be located at the same station. Appropriate venues may also rent out space to artists.

## Follow-ups

Especially when you first start the tours, collecting and integrating feedback into future studio tours is imperative. Consider handing out feedback cards that ask what interested visitors most enjoyed, intent to purchase, things that were appreciated, things that could be improved, and contact information (email for newsletter/ mailing list and location for demographics).







# CONCERNS AND CONSIDERATIONS

## Exclusivity

When artists have art in a gallery, they may have an exclusivity agreement with the gallery. Exclusivity precludes an artist from individually showing and selling work directly to customers, making them competition to the gallery. Ensure each artist represented in a gallery confirms they can participate in an open studio tour by examining their exclusivity contract and/or communicating with the gallery:


- Artists should speak with the gallery to outline any exclusivity restrictions. These generally include the exclusive geographic area (city, county, state boundaries) and the exclusive collections or types of work exclusive to the gallery.
- Regardless of how the contract reads, artists should still inform the gallery that they would like to participate in a studio tour. Galleries may consider the circumstances of the tour to breach the contract, or they may simply appreciate the open communication.
- An individual artists' positive relationship with a gallery can also translate into a positive relationship with the tour itself. Artists should reinforce their respect and good will toward the gallery and frame the studio tour as an event that can benefit both the artist and the gallery. Request promotional literature for the gallery to distribute at the studio visit, and assure the gallery, the artists will direct clients to the gallery. (Berman 2010)

## Safety, insurance, and liability

While accidents can happen anywhere, they are more likely to happen in areas that have potentially hazardous materials, processes, or equipment. Even a studio that is not necessarily suitable to host a group of onlookers can be cause for concern. Because many studios are within personal homes, artists should refer to their homeowners policy to assess the coverage they have. Usually, public liability/business insurance is not included, so you will need to investigate the level of coverage that you recommend studios have. You can release yourself, as the organizing group, of liability and make it the owner's responsibility to obtain the appropriate insurance. (Arlington Visual Art Studio Tour 2019)

While providing refreshments at your event is a great way to attract and keep patrons, liability issues can arise if items are homemade. It's best to keep refreshments store-bought or from restaurants.

Artists selling their work may require a business license. Make sure artists do some research on what legal considerations they might need to take into account: [avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/artists-guide-to-starting-a-business](http://avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/artists-guide-to-starting-a-business)





*Sheila Brannan's art at Over the Mountain Studio Tour (Over the Mountain Studio Tour, 2019)*

**Remember, a studio tour is by and for artists and art-admirers in the community.** Over the Mountain Studio Tour is organized around core beliefs that all participants follow and keep in mind. The first belief is that all the legwork that goes into the planning and operation of the tour is done by the participating tour members. The second is that the tour does not accept any advertising funds; rather, the members pay dues and seek out grants from arts organizations or CVB, which helps to keep the event free to the public. And, finally, the third core belief is that, just like art, logistics can evolve as members, techniques, audience, and circumstances change. The group invites fresh ideas and perspectives, and modifies their operations according to ability, desire, and demand. (Bridy, 2019).

## SOURCES:

- Berman, Harriete Estel. 2010a. Professional Guidelines: Open Studios: Artist Checklist. <https://harrieteestelberman.com/open-studios-artist-checklist>
- Berman, Harriete Estel. 2010b. Professional Guidelines: Open Studios: Guide for Art Organizations. <https://harrieteestelberman.com/open-studios-organizations>
- Bridy, Joy. 2019. Personal correspondence.
- Over the Mountain Studio Tour. 2019. Over the Mountain. <https://www.overthemountainstudiotour.com/>
- Open Studio Tours. 2019. Planning resources. <https://www.openstudiotours.com/planningresources.html>



# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOKIT 5: HOST AN ART WALK

Art walks engage the entire community with the cooperation of businesses, neighborhood venues, local artists, residents, and even other vendors or entertainers. When done consistently, they provide an opportunity for community members to interact with and support their local businesses and creatives, as well as contribute to a robust commerce and arts scene in the town.

This toolkit is designed to:

- provide an overview of the logistics and benefits of art walks, and
- offer practical steps for businesses and artists participating in an art walk.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the fifth installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Form an artist cooperative
3. Host a pop-up art shop
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [www.tamarackfoundation.org](http://www.tamarackfoundation.org).



# WHY HOST AN ART WALK?

An art walk is an organized, often regularly occurring event, wherein multiple businesses, galleries, and other venues host artists and displays of their artwork, typically for purchase to the public. While similar to a pop-up shop, an important distinction is that an art walk is a tour—or walk—of an assortment of merchants and artisans coordinated at multiple venues in a given area. Often the events are accompanied by live music, additional entertainment, and other activities.

Art walks serve as unifying and community-building exhibitions that boost the visibility of artists in an area, stimulate local economic activity, and contribute to an enriched neighborhood culture overall. Art walks create a time to highlight partnering businesses and showcase new products or sales events. Emerging and seasoned artists alike enter the public sphere to share their inspirations and promote their work, and guests enjoy a creative way to experience their neighborhood and support the local economy.

---

## WEST VIRGINIA ART WALKS

There are several art walk events in West Virginia. Here are a few that serve specific communities and/or counties.

### **Downtown Charleston ArtWalk** (Charleston) [artwalkcwv.com](http://artwalkcwv.com)

The Downtown Charleston ArtWalk is a successful self-guided walking tour of Charleston's downtown businesses showcasing a variety of local art, including paintings, music, photography, and others. The Charleston Area Alliance organizes the event, which is held every third Thursday of the month from 5–8 p.m. for ten months of the year.



### **Main Street Morgantown Arts Walk** (Morgantown) [downtownmorgantown.com/events/arts-walk/](http://downtownmorgantown.com/events/arts-walk/)

The Arts Walk in Morgantown is a seasonal event organized by Main Street Morgantown and Arts Monongahela. Described as a “creative-community-street party,” attendees can discover art created right in town while enjoying the wide variety of commerce that flourishes in downtown Morgantown.



# WHERE TO START?

Think your local residents, businesses, and artists would like the opportunity to participate in an art walk? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

### Who organizes an art walk?

An art walk can be an event coordinated by an existing organization, be the central function of its own organization, or held by an artist/business cooperative. (Learn more about forming an organization or cooperative in Toolkit 1: Create an Arts Organization and Toolkit 2: Form an Artist Cooperative). This toolkit assumes you have an interested group or organization in place. Your group should start off by determining who will take charge and spearhead project, what services will be provided, and the amount of funding necessary.

### Who hosts an art walk?

Virtually any business with the appropriate display space can host one or more artists for an art walk. These can range from galleries, clothing boutiques and law firms, to cafes, bookstores, and restaurants. If indoor space is lacking, artists can use spots outside business buildings, such as sidewalk and lots, to set up booths and tents to draw people to their stop and the business beyond. The options are limited only by the space your town has available!

## EXPLORE THE OPTIONS

Beyond the organizing entity, there are three essential players for any successful art walk: the artists, the businesses, and the patrons.

### Find a group of interested businesses

If you're just starting out, try to find just a handful of participating businesses. You can typically find the contact information for businesses on their own hosted website, their social media pages, or their listing on a site such as Google Business or Yelp. Better yet, if you have a location narrowed down, such as downtown or surrounding a cultural asset in your town, have literature prepared to distribute to business owners in person and be available to discuss.

### Find artists who operate locally or regionally

Individual artists can be found through local arts organizations, their personal websites, social media presence, gallery, or even their artwork being featured in various shops and restaurants. Send out a press release through local media and your own website or newsletter that calls for artists. Businesses could also already have an artist in mind!

### Make a consistent schedule—and commit to it

Once you have your businesses and artists, nail down a schedule that everyone (or most) agree on. Reliable schedules encourage both attendance and participation.

Small steps first: Charleston's ArtWalk started with just four small businesses before growing to a large-scale, well-attended event that boasts a consistent 25–30 venues hosting a range of artists. As the event grew, they expanded to include such participants as schools, at-risk groups with art therapy programs, and demonstrations, transforming it into a truly community-building affair.

## VISIT SOME ART WALKS YOURSELF!

Those interested in getting an art walk off the ground should make an effort to investigate art walks that go on in your general region. Look online, at brochures, or ask around to identify the organizing group for the art walk and be open with your interest and any questions you might have. As you explore the art walk (or their site, or speak to their organizers), take note of what you appreciated, were surprised by, thought was interesting, or though could be improved or omitted. Did anything stand out—as particularly good or particularly troublesome? Consider these questions and how they might apply to your event:

- How did you find out about it? Word-of-mouth, social media, newspaper, newsletter, etc.?
- What is the recurring schedule? Do they adjust according to weather, season, other events going on?
- What types of media are featured? Is it restricted to visual arts or does it expand to include music, performing arts, or other creative products?
- What is the breadth of businesses and venues represented?
- How long does it last? For example, Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. or Wednesday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- How formal or informal is the art walk? How involved is the registration process?
- Do businesses receive commission on art sales? If so, all or some?
- What services are provided by the organization(s), and what services are businesses or artists responsible for?
- What supplementary entertainment, such as live music, food vendors, activities, and so forth, are available? Are they located throughout the businesses or in a central location?
- Does the event take advantage of any existing cultural attractions in the area?



*A storefront participating in Charleston's ArtWalk (Downtown Charleston ArtWalk, 2019)*

# MAKE A PLAN

## Survey your participating businesses and artists

An art walk can be anything you want it to be; however, it's helpful to establish and follow some unifying requirements for participants to be part of the official event to ensure quality, fairness, and safety. As you grow, you can begin incorporating more voices, new ideas, and expanding the vision for your art walk. At first, it's best to ensure all participants are on the same page in terms of what they hope to put in and get out of the event.

What are the expectations of both parties, and how can they be reasonably accommodated? How inclusive are the "arts" going to be? Will you keep it low-key or make it more festive? Which businesses spaces will be most suitable for different types of art? Are businesses and artists responsible for partnering up themselves or will you give assignments?

## Scheduling

What kind of schedule can most participants adhere to? Monthly, bimonthly, seasonally? Many popular art walks grow a following and draw a consistent crowd on a regular basis, and establishing consistency makes both attending and making arrangements for participants easier--meaning over time, you're likely to see increased turnout and expand both the number and variety of vendors and artisans involved.

**Consistency is key:** Charleston's ArtWalk occurs every third Thursday of the month, March through December, 5-8 p.m., rain, snow, or shine. This year-round stability makes the event a community mainstay and something that is prepared for and looked forward to every few weeks, giving ample opportunity to join in.

## Require registration for both businesses and artists

Registration forms will formalize the process, obtain valuable information that will help you appropriately plan and advertise per event, and streamline any fee collection. You can make these as exhaustive or as simple as you want and distribute them either to just vendors or also artists. Registration for candidates also gives you more control over which entities are associated with the art walk, the quality and nature of the art featured, and other factors that may be important to you. If you go through an approval process, you can build up a pool of artists and venues that can be added to your site and contacted for participation.

## Charge a fee for merchants to be part of the official art walk

A reasonable fee (which could be packaged into yearly, monthly, etc. options at varying rates) can be collected and funneled directly back into the art walk efforts for advertising, supplies, services, and any enhancement or maintenance that would require funds.

## Will you assign artists to a venue or will you require businesses to find their own artists?

Not having these connections could be a barrier to entry, but if you facilitate open communication and create an accessible pool of interested artists and businesses, you can make it easy for them to find one another—especially if you expect them to pair themselves.



## Create a map of the official art walk stops, including the address, business name, and, ideally, the artist(s) being hosted.

You can accomplish this with a custom Google Map, which can be interacted with conveniently on patrons' phones. You may also wish to do a simple map graphic with locations marked. Ensure the map is updated to accurately reflect participants for each event.

## Consider hosting an evening reception as a central social hub during the art walk

This can help form connections among city residents as well as give them an opportunity to engage with all participating artists. The reception area can serve as a central hub, providing maps/brochures, sales guides, refreshments, music, activities, and anything else you think might entice the public or prove to be useful.

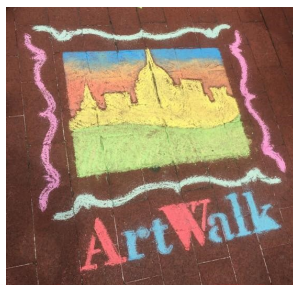
## Will vendors collect a commission on artists' sales?

Because an art walk should be viewed as a mutually beneficial event for both the merchant and the artist, many art walks don't allow businesses to charge commission. However, you may want to leave the commission structure and sale schedule up to each business. This should be discussed amongst the participants.

## Passport system

While entirely optional, some art walks find that employing a passport system helps add an interactive and engaging layer to tour stops, and encourages thorough participation. The "passport" can be anything you like, such as unique tokens or stamps. Morgantown ArtsWalk, for example, distributes collectible bookmarks.

**Wayfinding:** In addition to a map, an effective way for patrons to locate each of the stops on-the-ground is through a creative wayfinding system. Wayfinding markers make the exterior of the art walk stop stand out from the surrounding buildings and can be anything from tiki torches to chalk art—what Charleston ArtWalk uses.



A collection of wayfinding markers for Charleston's ArtWalk (Downtown Charleston ArtWalk, 2019)

## WEBSITE ESSENTIALS

Your website should be easy to find with a descriptive, memorable domain name. You could also use a separate page on an existing organization site if you have one. Make sure businesses, artists, and visitors have everything they need to know about your event. Here are some recommendations on what you should include on your site:

### **Include registration forms for businesses and artists that can be submitted directly online**

Consider adding a payment portal for convenience to both you and the vendors.

### **Make a list of official vendors and artists accepted into the art walk**

Highlight which venues will be open for business and hosting an artist. Include a short description, address, photo, and a link to their site. Likewise, create a list of artists, complete with names, pictures, medium, example art, website, contact information, etc. This will serve several functions: residents can see who comprises the creative scene and businesses can see the artists available to match up with and book appropriately.

- For example, Art Walk Edmonds (AWE) in Edmonds, Washington makes this easy with their “Find an Artist” webpage. Once artists submit their application and get improved for AWE, they have an individual entry added to the site. The artists are organized by medium, should the venue have a preference, and their contact information makes them easily accessible to vendors seeking artists. The inverse can also be done! [artwalkedmonds.com/find-an-artist](http://artwalkedmonds.com/find-an-artist)

### **As said—make a map!**

The map can be georeferenced with pins and accessible on a GPS app such as Google Maps, or it can be a simple graphic map--just make sure it's updated.

- Charleston's ArtWalk updates their map for each event since not all official vendors participate every month: [artwalkcwv.com/map](http://artwalkcwv.com/map)
- Corvallis Art Walk (Corvallis, Oregon): [corvallisartswalk.com/caw-map](http://corvallisartswalk.com/caw-map)

Include a route that people can take to contact you, offer to volunteer, sign up for the newsletter, or another inquiry.

Images of past art walks, art pieces, and demonstrations will help guest visualize what to expect.

# REGISTRATION FORM SAMPLES

## Business Participation Forms

- Name of participating gallery or business
- Address
- Contact Name
- Contact Information (phone number, email)
- Website
- Handicap accessibility/Any limitations
- Declare whether you are providing a special, sales event, or something of note
- Note whether they have an artist, and if so...
- Artist Name
- Artist Contact Information (phone number, email)
- Artist website
- Medium of work
- Description of show
- How long will the work be displayed (just the art walk night, that week, that month, etc.) and the dates the work will be displayed
- Musicians or performing artists with short description
- Ability to pay or mark whether they have or haven't paid yet
- Liability waiver
- Refer to
- [artwalkedmonds.com/artwalk-listing-form](http://artwalkedmonds.com/artwalk-listing-form)
- [elkhartartwalk.com/business-guidelines/](http://elkhartartwalk.com/business-guidelines/)

## Example Artist Participation Form

- Name
- Contact information (phone number, email)
- Medium
- Link to website, album, social media page, etc.
- Alternatively, a way to upload files of representative art
- Short description of art
- Short artist bio
- \*Business license if required
- Liability waiver
- Refer to:
- [artwalkedmonds.com/artist-application-form/](http://artwalkedmonds.com/artist-application-form/)
- [elkhartartwalk.com/artist-application/](http://elkhartartwalk.com/artist-application/)

This is just a sample of some of the information existing art walks collect from potential business and artist participants. Not all of these questions may be relevant for your event and you may decide to include items not listed here, but you can use these as a starting point.



# PROMOTING YOUR ART WALK

As said, you need businesses, artists, and visitors. All parts of an art walk are made up of the public—promoting your event will help to attract all necessary components for a successful art walk!

## Market the art walk as a promotional opportunity for businesses and artists like—because it is!

Some of the benefits of participating in the art walk should include visibility to the public through features online, in circulations, press releases, and emails; signage; a platform for new product or service releases; an entry in an online database; and more. Green and seasoned artists alike can gain visibility and sales. Vendors can tap into an entirely new customer base. Encourage artists and businesses alike to cross-promote each other. As with the by-laws, it is good practice, though not required, to review articles of incorporation with an attorney.

## Use social media

With social media being one of the primary ways residents get news on what's happening in their region, it's a good idea to use it extensively and reach a broad audience. Post features on artisans, businesses, art walk volunteers or staff. Having an active social media presence lets visitors know the event itself is active, making them more likely to engage with it. Create a Facebook event with pertinent details, images, and numerous occasions to "share," "like," and "invite" a wide audience!

## Encourage participants to help promote

Many participating vendors and artists likely already have a decent customer or fan base. Ask that they reciprocate the advertising efforts by sharing information on the art walk with their respective crowds through such venues as social media/websites, flyers, posters, and their own newsletters. This will help you reach a wider audience (especially when you're first starting out).

- AWE provides an entire page with marketing tools for merchants, including postcards and email invitation templates: [artwalkedmonds.com/marketing-tools](http://artwalkedmonds.com/marketing-tools)

## Create a logo

A logo should be easy to read, memorable, and representative of the participating businesses, artists, and the town as a whole. Consider updating the logo on occasion to keep the brand fresh.

**Be known!** The Downtown Charleston ArtWalk attributes much of its success to effective marketing. Here is a list of marketing avenues they have explored:

- All free publicity
- Street banners every month
- Speaking engagements
- Partnering with other regional events
- WV Public Radio
- Facebook events
- Other strategic social media use
- Website
- Posters
- Newspapers
- Local and cable television advertisements
- Rack cards to be distributed in hotels and WV interstate rest stops
- Cycle new logos
- (*Salisbury 2019*)



# GUIDELINES SAMPLES

## Guidelines for Participating Businesses or Venues

Businesses should develop guidelines to distribute to their artists that clearly lay out the specifics of being hosted in their space. Details covered should include:

- Type of art allowed (content and medium)
- Logistics of installing and display the art
- Duration of display
- Commission structure (if permitted)
- Hours of availability and required presence
- Commission structure; brokering
- Who is to bring refreshments, music, etc
- [artwalkedmonds.com/tips-for-a-successful-art-walk](http://artwalkedmonds.com/tips-for-a-successful-art-walk)
- [elkhartartwalk.com/business-guidelines/](http://elkhartartwalk.com/business-guidelines/)
- 

## Guidelines for Artists

Once artists know which business they will be displaying in, ensure they physically visit the venue well beforehand. This will give them the opportunity to meet with the owner, possibly the individual who invited them to participate, and whoever is assigned to tend to the business at the time of the art walk. Artists should discuss expectations and the logistics of setting up in the space.

- Where to display art
- When to bring and install the artwork
- How much art to bring/how much space is allotted
- What display accessories or tools are needed (tables, stands, easels, hammer, ladder, etc.)
- How long the art will be displayed
- [artwalkedmonds.com/artist-tips-for-a-great-art-walk](http://artwalkedmonds.com/artist-tips-for-a-great-art-walk)
- (Pullman Chamber Arts Commission, 2014)

## CONCERNS

While providing refreshments at your event is a great way to attract and keep patrons, liability issues can arise if items are homemade. It's best to keep refreshments store-bought or from restaurants.

Artists selling their work may require a business license. Make sure artists do some research on what legal considerations they might need to take into account: [avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/artists-guide-to-starting-a-business](http://avvo.com/legal-guides/ugc/artists-guide-to-starting-a-business)

Exclusivity precludes some artists from selling their work outside a gallery they have an existing agreement with. Learn more about exclusivity in Toolkit 4: Organize a Studio Tour.

Art displays and demonstrations should always abide by the legal and safety restrictions of the business venue. Do some background research and discussion on which media may be unsafe to demonstrate or if certain merchant venues may be cause hazardous display situations.

## KEY RESOURCES

**Downtown Charleston ArtWalk** is one of the most established art walks in the state. Their site, contacts, and events themselves would be an excellent first contact for exploring the art walk option. [artwalkcwv.com](http://artwalkcwv.com)

**Art Walk Edmonds** in Edmonds, Washington is on the other side of the country, but has a wealth of resources that can be immediately applied to your town's event. offers several grant programs for arts organizations. [artwalkedmonds.com](http://artwalkedmonds.com)

**Auburn Arts Commission** in Auburn, Alabama has additional examples of guidelines, inventory lists, and agreements for artists and venues. [auburnartscommission.com/artwalk/artwalk\\_library.html](http://auburnartscommission.com/artwalk/artwalk_library.html)

**El Segundo Art Walk** in Los Angeles, California, has ideas for the different activities you might want to feature, ways to promote, as well as helpful FAQ, application, and informational sections. [elsegundoartwalk.com](http://elsegundoartwalk.com)

## SOURCES:

- Art Walk Edmonds. 2019. Art Walk Edmonds. <https://www.artwalkedmonds.com/>
- Charleston Area Alliance Program. 2019. ArtWalk CWV. <https://www.artwalkcwv.com/>
- Downtown Morgantown. 2019. Arts Walk. <http://www.downtownmorgantown.com/events/arts-walk/>
- El Segundo Art Walk. 2019. El Segundo Art Walk. <https://elsegundoartwalk.com/>
- Pullman Chamber Arts Commission. 2014. Welcome Packet for Participating Artists. <https://pullmanchamber.com/>

# Toolkits for the Arts

## TOOLKIT 6: LEAD A PUBLIC MURAL PROJECT

Few projects are as powerful in transforming a streetscape—and a community—as a public mural. Murals bring art into the daily lives of residents and passersby, transforming bare walls into works of art and beautifying otherwise drab or underutilized spaces. They can also be acts of public revitalization, foster a local sense of place, and encourage wider investment in a community. Mural projects bring community members together one paint stroke at a time.

Looking at the experiences of West Virginia communities who have carried out successful public mural projects, this tool kit is designed to:

- explore the motivation behind and benefits of public mural projects, and
- provide guidance on how to manage a public mural project.

### OTHER TOOLKIT TOPICS

This document is the final installment in a six-part series of toolkits published by the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts. Funded by an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, this series provides straightforward guidance to help individuals, communities, arts councils, and other creative entities implement local initiatives for the visual arts. Other installments in this series include:

1. Create an arts organization
2. Host a pop-up art shop
3. Form an artist cooperative
4. Organize a studio tour
5. Arrange an art walk
6. Lead a public mural project

### About the Tamarack Foundation for the Arts

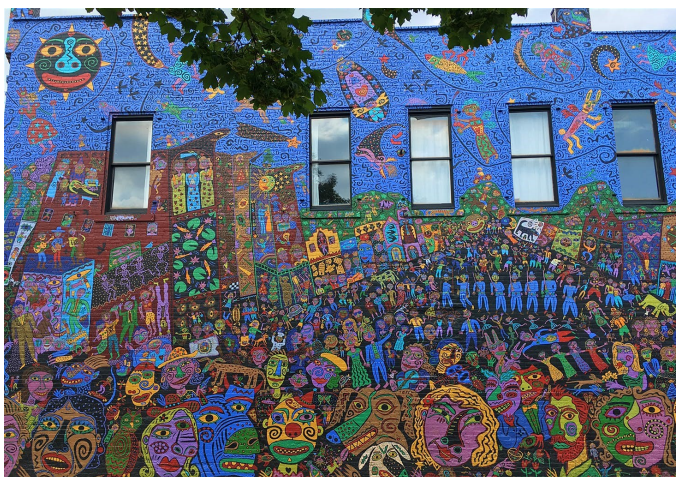
The Tamarack Foundation for the Arts (TFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating an empowering ecosystem that provides artists, businesses, and communities the tools and support needed to learn, connect, and thrive. TFA convenes a range of initiatives and programming that aim to help West Virginia artists prosper from their creative practice and make meaningful contributions to the well-being of our communities. More information is available at [tamarackfoundation.org](http://tamarackfoundation.org).



# WHY CREATE A PUBLIC MURAL?

Public murals have the potential to make a big and lasting impression on a community. Every exposed, blank wall found on the buildings and public spaces throughout West Virginia offers an opportunity to unveil an artistic creation, tell a story, shine a light on local culture, or beautify a neighborhood with brilliant displays of art. One of the many wonderful parts of Appalachian culture is the art of storytelling, which is a common theme amongst murals spotted around West Virginia. No matter what the motivation behind the mural may be, they are sure to elicit public response, capture attention, and encourage inspiration in the local community surrounding it.

In addition to bringing art to a community, murals can be powerful actors in bringing communities together. They make art accessible, inspire creativity, and can help revive a town's sense of pride. In essence, public art murals are an investment in community revitalization: They can also boost local economies through tourism, improve property values, decrease crime rates, and encourage the use of underutilized public spaces. As such, murals often serve as iconic beacons of hope in some communities.



*A mural in  
Charleston, West  
Virginia, entitled  
“West Side Wonder”  
by Charles Hamilton.  
(Echo-Lit, 2017)*



# WHERE TO START?

Think your community might benefit from a public mural? Here are some suggestions on where to start.

---

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Mural projects take shape in many different ways: Sometimes a building owner knows that they want a certain image or story told on their building's façade, and an artist has an idea for a mural but doesn't know of an available space. Other times, a community knows they'd like to bring murals to brighten up their streetscapes, but they don't know where to start. Regardless of which boat you're in, initial planning is important for setting your mural project up for success. Start by addressing the following initial steps.

### Identify local players

Start by making an informal list of the key players in your community, including local artists, businesses and building owners, potential volunteers, and any city and/or county officials who might need to weigh in on the project.

### Research the legal framework for public art in your community

Does your community have any codes, zoning, or ordinances that pertain to building facades or signage? We'll discuss this more in detail, but you'll want to research your local rules early on in your project.

### Learn from the experience of other communities

Look for examples of other communities who are leading the kind of public art projects that inspire you. Most groups—including many of the West Virginia communities featured in this report—are open to helping others follow in their example. Reach out to these communities to ask questions about what lessons they have learned in carrying out their mural projects.

## GENERATE A CONCEPT OR IDEA FOR YOUR MURAL

To get any mural project rolling, you need to start with 1) a design, and 2) a building with a wall available to feature a mural. There's no official recipe for putting these two ingredients together: Sometimes the idea for the mural art comes first, and your task will be to find the appropriate building; On the other hand, sometimes a bare wall or building in your community is just begging to be spruced up, and you just need to find the right design to do the job. In other cases, community members decide that they want to organize some murals in town and begin with a totally blank canvas.

Rest assured, there's no right or wrong way to approach your project. Regardless of your path, here are some suggestions for putting your concept together.



## Choosing a building

In some towns, business owners are the main force pushing for murals to beautify their buildings and draw visitors inside. In many other cases, business owners might be open to the idea of hosting a mural, if someone else coordinated the project. Reach out to local business owners and take an informal survey of who might be interested in sporting a mural on their building. Start with a call, email, or face-to-face meeting to discuss the overall goal of the project and the benefits to the owner and local businesses.

Sometimes the best canvases may be inaccessible due to communication, ownership, or other barriers regarding the property. While flexibility is key ideally you want to look for buildings that:

- are located in a desirable location, high visibility to be enjoyed by people on foot, bicycle, or in a car; and
- have a willing owner who will grant permission for a mural on their building's exterior. (In most cases, your project will require a formal agreement with the building owner, discussed later.)

## Choosing a design

In many cases, coming up with the design can be more straightforward than finding the right building. First, you need to come up with a process for *how* you will select a design. Choosing a design may not be an issue if the mural project is being spearheaded by an artist or by a few key individuals. However, if the project is being led by a committee or other group starting without a set design in place, you may need to put out a call for proposals and pick the design that speaks to you and/or your committee. Keep in mind that some mural designs may be subject to town approval, so the content should be appropriate for public consumption. Also be sure to keep the building owner in the loop as you navigate the design process to ensure that they are agreeable to the final design decision.



**Unconventional canvases:** Don't forget to think outside of the box for ideas on spaces to beautify. For example, artists Lisa Armstrong and Dr. Melissa Thomas-Van Gundy painted dumpsters in Elkins as part of the "Make Elkins Shine" initiative. A project like this may not require a lengthy approval process and could be an inexpensive venture with a shorter timeframe than a traditional mural. (MAD, 2016)

## Choosing an artist

Depending on the purpose of the mural, the artist selected to paint the mural could be an experienced muralist, a budding group of local artists, or volunteers. The location and purpose will help guide the choice of the artist for the job. A single artist may also design the project, but volunteers may be needed to help bring the work to life. Local art organizations are great resources to find local muralists. The artist's style will need to match the overall theme of the intended mural and the community. Some things to keep in mind when looking for an artist are: *Do they have previous mural experience? Can they provide past references? Do you like their past work? Do they have experience working on community-based projects if volunteers are to be used? Most importantly, does the artist's style match the project and its location?*

**West Virginia mural artists:** Many West Virginia murals embrace the state's deeply rooted culture and history. For example, Molly Must, a native West Virginia and artist, incorporates history and natural beauty into her artworks such as the mural featured in Marlinton, West Virginia entitled "The Last Forest." Others such as native West Virginian and world renown muralist Patch Whiskey have taken more modern and abstract approaches to murals in West Virginia.

# OBTAIN NECESSARY PERMISSIONS

## Secure approval from the building owner

For any mural project, it is essential to get formal permission from the owner of the building you hope to use for your mural. While local owners may be easy to reach, others may prove more difficult to track down. Online parcel maps such as [mapwv.gov](http://mapwv.gov) can yield property owner names and addresses.

You'll want to let the owner know upfront that it is standard practice to have a legal agreement in place for the mural project. You may also need early written permission from the owner to secure the initial permission, as needed, from any local government entities. It's also very important to understand the process for moving forward if your desired building is rented out or owned by an absentee landowner. Check with your town and/or county officials for further guidance if this applies to your community.

**Access issues:** Your project will require express permission from any landowners impacted by your mural. This means the owner of the wall/building as well as any adjacent owners whose property you and your volunteers may need to cross in order to access the mural location. It's important to loop such adjacent property owners in early, as they are not always cooperative. For example, artists in Grafton had to relocate their proposed downtown mural when a local business owner refused access to his land for the needed safety equipment required for the mural project. In the end, the Memorial City mural was completed at an alternate location and unveiled at the 150<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day celebration.



(WBOY, 2017)

## Secure local government approval

While rules vary from place to place, towns and counties often have zoning, codes, and/or ordinances in place that may impact public art projects in your community. As a result, you'll need to find out if your community has a local signage code or regulations on building facades, and whether such codes require getting local government approval for public signage. Be sure to ask your local code enforcement official if a mural painting qualifies as signage and see if there are any ordinances against large signage. You'll also want to check on the necessary right of way and easement requirements for the days you work on your mural.

Some towns, such as Princeton, have a signage code that stipulates what kind of public signage (which includes public art) is and is not allowed. When the RiffRaff Collective sought to paint a public mural that exceeded the City of Princeton's allowable dimensions, they had to receive a variance from their local zoning board of appeals. Princeton also requires that such "signage" projects be approved by the City, so for every mural project, the RiffRaff Collective presents their proposed ideas to the local zoning board for local approval. (Create Your State, 2019)

By contrast, the City of Morgantown doesn't currently require formal public approval for mural projects. However, there *is* a provision in the City code that stipulates that business owners cannot put their sign on another owner's building, though logos and brand names can be acceptable if part of a mural. (Heady, 2019)



## Legal Agreements

Assuming all parties are receptive to the mural project and in general agreement, the next step is to formalize a legal agreement between the property owner(s), the artist(s), and any arts organizations officially involved in the project.

A formal contract is always a good idea to create between the party managing the mural, the artist, and the building owner. The contract should include information about location and size of the mural, costs involved, design approvals, copyrights, general timeframes for completion, and insurance requirements.

It's also important to take the mural's anticipated lifespan into consideration and include maintenance provisions in the legal agreement. Specifically, all agreements should include a right-of-way provision, which gives the artist and/or coordinating arts organization rights to access and/or maintain the mural for a set number of years. (For example, murals in Charleston allow for 10 years of maintenance access, whereas Arts Monongahela in Morgantown allows five years.) Generally, mural agreements include provisions in which the owner agrees to not destroy or paint over the mural for a set timeframe.

The agreement should also consider the fate of the mural should the property change hands through sale, inheritance, or other means. While the agreement cannot stop the owner from selling their property, it can include a clause stipulating that, on a best-effort basis, the owner will attempt to preserve art if they sell the property. Efforts can also be made to request transfer of the original agreement to the new owner upon sale.

### Example agreements: Morgantown

In Morgantown, several prominent public mural projects have been coordinated by a volunteer board member of Arts Monongahela (Arts Mon), the county arts council. For each mural project, Arts Mon uses a three-way agreement between the property owner, Arts Mon, and the artist who is chiefly responsible for completing the mural. Arts Mon also establishes a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Arts Mon and the artist to formally spell out things such as compensation, timeline, additional labor and assistance, etc.

## PROJECT COSTS AND SUPPLIES

Every mural project will vary in cost: Those completed entirely by volunteers and donated equipment can cost a few hundred dollars, whereas others completed by commissioned artists can range from thousands to tens-of-thousands of dollars.

Paint, supplies, wall preparation, scaffolding or lift equipment, designs, and labor will all need to be considered when determining a budget for a mural project. Artist fees are generally the largest line item in a mural budget. Professional muralists often charge between \$10–35 per square foot or roughly \$50–100 per hour and have a minimum fee requirement. Sketches and designs can often incur additional fees. Scaffolding rentals run around \$75 week, whereas more-convenient scissor lifts can run from \$400–500 per week. Travel expenses may also need to be considered if the artist is not local to the project location. Fees vary based on experience, the level of detail of the artwork, and size of the piece.



Arts Mon recently coordinated three prominent mural projects in downtown Morgantown, including the cardinal mural at right completed by Malissa Goff-Baker. At roughly 20x40 feet each, these murals averaged \$500 in paint and supplies each. Two of the three murals were artist-led, while the third was completed with all volunteer labor. Arts Mon was able to complete the project for \$6,000, though they hope to be able to compensate artists more for future projects. (Goff-Baker, 2019; Heady, 2019.)



In addition, the project wall will require preparation which can vary in cost. Always start by having the wall power-washed to remove dirt and debris. Some masonry work may be required prior to painting. Factors that can affect this are the wall's construction material and condition. Porous walls made from wood or brick will take longer to prepare and require additional materials. It is a general rule of thumb to prime the wall with a neutral, light tone. For best long-term coverage 100% acrylic, water-based primer is recommended. Local paint suppliers should be able to assist with quotes wall preparation and paint supplies. If the artist is not responsible for the wall preparation part of the project, an exterior paint professional will need to be hired. Priming techniques include application by brushing, rolling, or spraying. The appropriate technique will depend on the size and texture of the wall.

Keep in mind, some muralists include costs for paint in their fees. Otherwise, consult with the artist or a local paint supplier to determine how much paint and which supplies will be required. If the mural is a volunteer project without a professional muralist, consult with a local paint supplier, muralist, or arts organizations for guidance on paint recommendations and requirements. High-quality, 100% artist grade acrylic paint will be the best choice for outdoor murals. These paints can last decades but are more expensive upfront than traditional exterior paints. Exteriors house paints may only last three-to-five years, versus 10–15 years with higher quality acrylic paint which will reduce ongoing maintenance costs. A good sealant layer should be applied to the mural once it is complete for long-lasting results. There are several types of clear coat sealant available. Anti-graffiti coatings are available, which require light pressure wash or manual wash to remove. Non-sacrificial is more expensive but will stay on when cleaned and not risk damaging the mural. Avoid sealants that use epoxy systems because they can contain toxic materials and are impossible to touch-up down the road. When determining budget for paint, account for up to two coats of clear coat sealant.

Depending on the height of the project wall, safety equipment may also need to be considered. If scaffolding is required for the project, it can run between \$15–50 per day to rent. An extra painting assistant may also be required for larger scale murals. It is not advised to use scaffolding on volunteer-based projects. In addition, costs for brushes, tarps, buckets, rollers and other painting supplies should be accounted for in the budget. Other fees that may be considered in the project budget are on-site water service for cleanup and/or drinking, shade tents, permit fees, and additional refreshments.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Once the budget is set, the next step will be to find funding for the project. Some projects may be commissioned by private donors, such as businesses seeking murals on their buildings. Bearing in mind that fundraising for a mural project can be time-consuming, it's important to remember that your funds can—and likely will need to—come from a variety of sources.

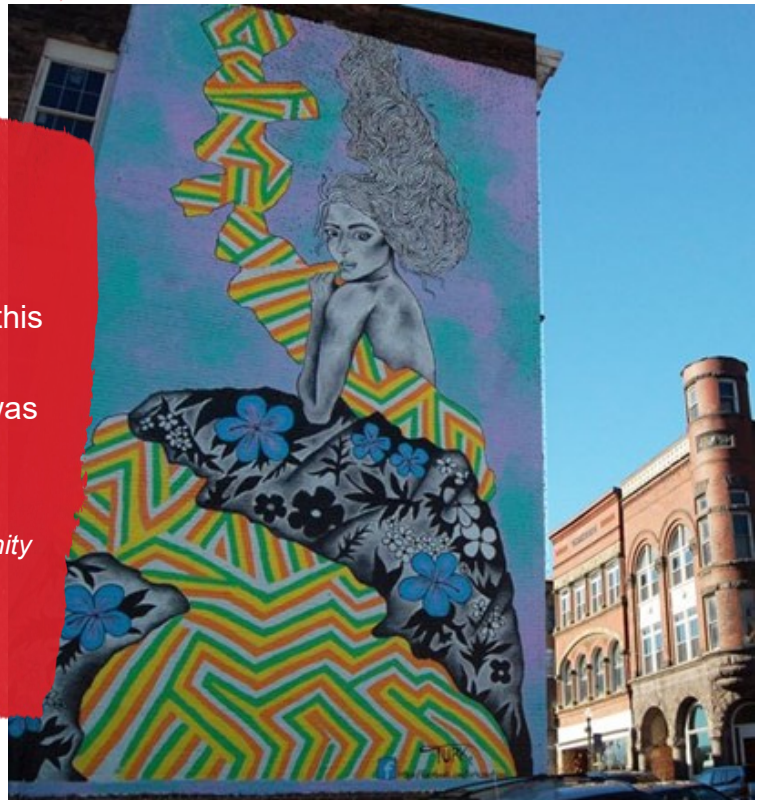
Grants available through community beautification programs, arts councils, local governments, and tourism organizations are a prominent funding mechanism for mural projects. Reaching out to these local organizations are a great place to start securing funding. Cities and counties may also have funds set aside for beautification projects.

Crowdfunding is also an effective tool in which harnesses the power of small donations from community members to fund a local project. Sites such as GoFundMe and Indiegogo allow project leaders to promote their cause, set a monetary fundraising goal, and enlist community support for their project. These types of funding campaigns are fueled heavily by social media platforms, such as Facebook.

### Helpful funding sources include:

- West Virginia Department of the Arts, Culture and History, [wvculture.org/arts/grants](http://wvculture.org/arts/grants)
- The Governor's Community Grant Program, [wvcad.org/sustainability/community-participation-grant-program](http://wvcad.org/sustainability/community-participation-grant-program)
- Community Celebration Micro-Grants, [wvhub.org/community-celebration-micro-grants/](http://wvhub.org/community-celebration-micro-grants/)
- GoFundMe, [gofundme.com/c/crowdfunding](https://gofundme.com/c/crowdfunding)

A mural entitled "Violet" featured along Main Street in Grafton, West Virginia, was funded by a grant money received through a beautification initiative called Turn this Town Around and the Claude Benedum Foundation. The mural was designed and painted by Amber "Turk" Ross, WVU graduate and Grafton native. *(West Virginia Community Development Hub, 2017)*





## PROJECT ORGANIZATION

With permissions obtained and funding secured, it's time to get to work painting your mural!

Final things to consider include:

- If you're planning to use volunteers, map out your volunteer needs, including how many people you might need at what times, and what tasks they need to complete. Then be sure to share your volunteer needs and opportunities widely among your community!
- Murals are generally completed during the warmer months of the year during dry weather. Even if you're in a hurry, it's best to wait until the timing is right and the weather cooperates. Use the downtime in colder months wisely to plan, coordinate, and schedule for your next season.
- If your painting team is going to need to work in or temporarily close down any public thoroughways while they work, call your local police department or road crew ahead of time to notify and coordinate any necessary road closures with them.



*"The Last Forest" in Marlinton, WV, by Molly Must (Molly Must, 2019)*



*In Princeton, WV by Patch Whiskey (Patch Whiskey, 2019)*

### RiffRaff Collection:

Princeton has exploded of over recent years with a colorful array of murals. This movement, spearheaded by Lori McKinney, project manager of Create Your State and owner of the Riff Raff Arts Collective, has been a driving force behind bringing these projects to life through the Princeton Renaissance Project. The initiative has brought community members together to collaborate with artists on public art displays throughout the town. This initiative has paved the way on how other towns in West Virginia can incorporate murals into their public spaces.

# KEY RESOURCES

## Community contacts:

**Arts Monongahela** (Morgantown, WV) [artsmon.org](http://artsmon.org), [facebook.com/arts.monongahela/](https://www.facebook.com/arts.monongahela/)

**City of Charleston Office of Public Art** (Charleston, WV) [facebook.com/publicartcharlestonwv/](https://www.facebook.com/publicartcharlestonwv/)

**The RiffRaff Arts Collective** (Princeton, WV) [theriffraff.net/home](http://theriffraff.net/home), [facebook.com/RiffRaffArts/](https://www.facebook.com/RiffRaffArts/)

## SOURCES:

- Create Your State. 2016. Creating Public Works of Art. <https://www.createyourstate.org/changemaker-s-toolkit/>
- Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. 2019. Mural Making 101. <https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/component/content/article/20-general/4295-mural-making-101>
- Heady, Jesse. 2019. Personal communication.
- Morgan Murals. 2019. The Rough Guide to Kickstarting a Community Mural Project. <https://www.morganmurals.com/mural-painting-guides/kickstarting-a-community-mural-project>
- Non-Profit Quarterly. 2013. Fundraising Strategies for Murals and Public Art. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/fundraising-strategies-for-murals-and-public-art/>
- The University of Utah. 2019. Mural Making Process. <https://www.art.utah.edu/murals/mural-making-process/>
- Mountain Statesman. 2017. Persistence and perseverance pay off for “Miracle Mural.”
- West Virginia Tourism Office. 2018. Mountain Murals: 5 Stops for a DIY Public Art Tour. <https://wvtourism.com/public-art-mural/>