

ART AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:  
MAPPING THE CONNECTIONS  
THE WORKBOOK

A project of the Walker Art Center's Education and Community Programs Department

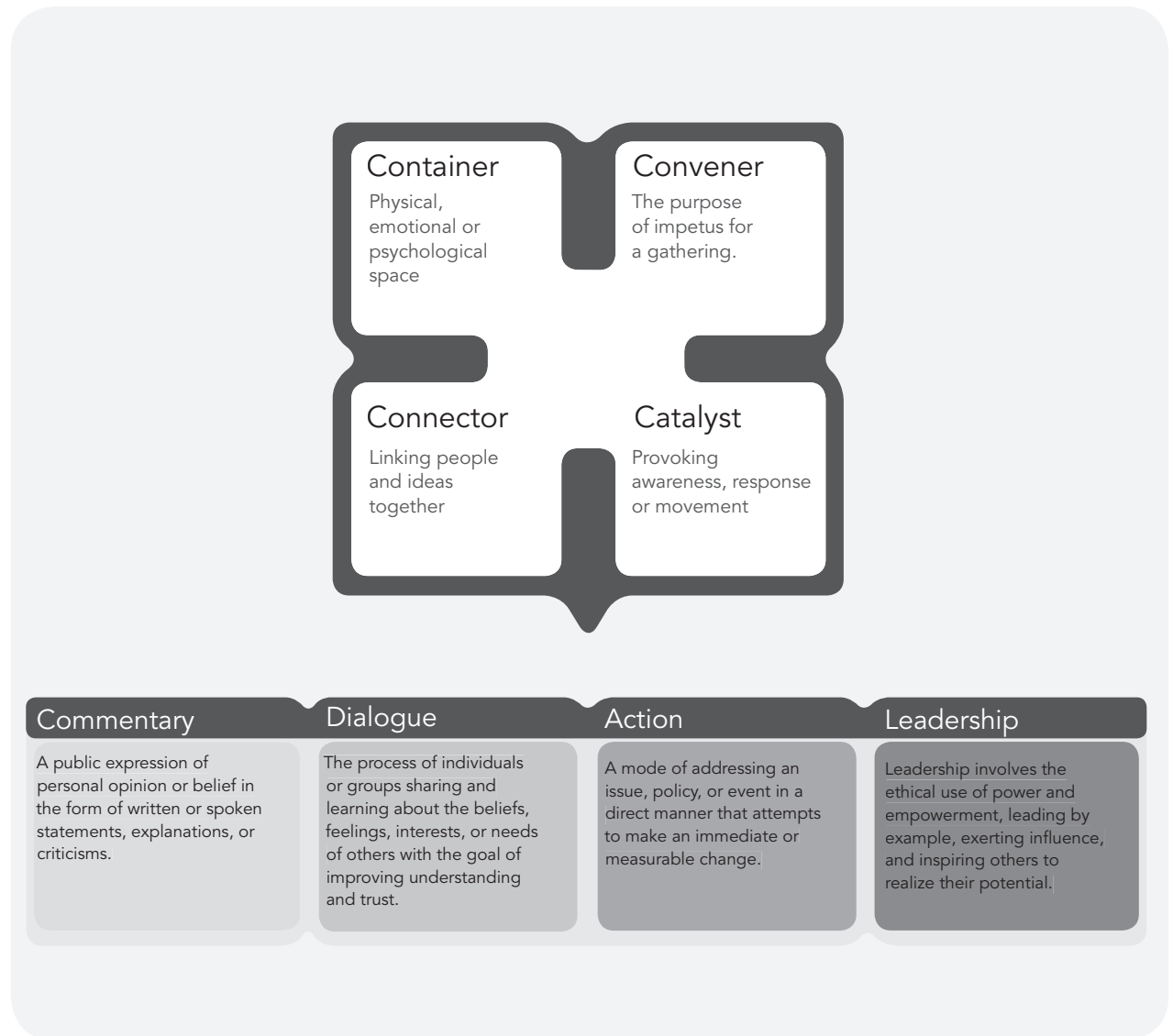
# Roles and Outcomes

In 2003, with the support of the Bush Foundation, the Walker began exploring how links between contemporary art and issues of concern to the community can be made more apparent. We know that contemporary artists deal with contemporary issues in their work, but how can these connections become part of public life? **How can a contemporary art center become a forum for civic engagement?**

The term “civic engagement” is frequently used in the fields of museum education and cultural development and many descriptions of it exist. Perhaps the broadest definition of civic engagement is the exercising of personal or collective agency in the public domain for the betterment of one’s community.

Art and Civic Engagement: Mapping the Connections proposes four major roles that art, artists and cultural programs can play in creating a Walker Town Square experience and a spectrum of activities that allow for genuine civic involvement by participants. The intent is to invite curators and programmers to consider open-ended questions that will lead to a more socially conscious approach to planning events, exhibitions and hands-on learning experiences.

**This workbook is meant to accompany the Art and Civic Engagement map. Please refer to the map as you use this tool.**



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## Social Potential: Start with the Art

The social potential of the art is the capacity the work has to address specific social issues in a community or between groups of people. This is a crucial starting place for developing relevant programs.

### Social Potential, Issues, Audience

*What is potentially meaningful and moving about the work?*

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*What issues does the work bring up?*

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*Are these issues present in local communities? How do they manifest?*

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*Who could help answer these questions? (Community advisors, staff, etc.)*

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*Given the issues present in this work, who might be interested in them?*

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# The 4C Model: Roles Art and Artists Play in the Town Square

Roles are about the kind of energy you want your program to have, or the spirit that already lies within the art. Will your experiential focus be on exploration, challenge, connection, celebration, reunion, action, or debate?

## Civic Engagement Role of the Program

My program's primary civic role will be:

Container          Connector          Convener          Catalyst

This role may be appropriate when the work or program . . .

- Provides a physical space for people to be or create.
- Provides an atmosphere in which people feel empowered to express their opinions.
- Helps boost a community's collective self-esteem by celebrating an achievement or success.
- Provides a safe and encouraging atmosphere for the discussion of difficult community issues.

This role may be appropriate when the work or program . . .

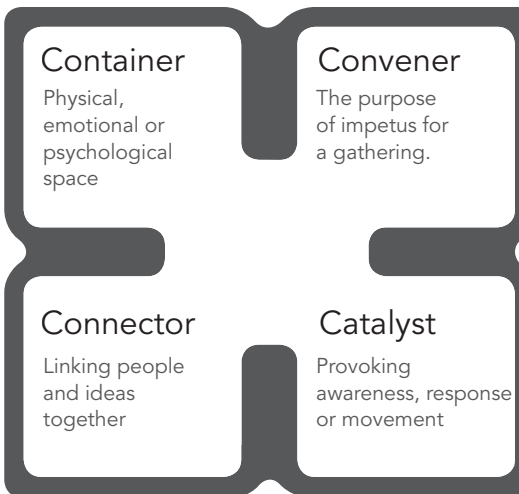
- Is in response to an event that has captured the community's attention or requires a communal response.
- Can help mark a community's life cycle or important historical events.
- Brings people together for deliberation or collective decision-making.
- Is of broad interest to the community and provides common ground for consensus-building among people with similar interests.

This role may be appropriate when . . .

- Ideas being addressed are linked together in unusual or novel ways.
- There are opportunities for participants to connect to their own heritage and culture.
- The work or program can bring together community members from different generations, cultural backgrounds, faiths, and lifestyles for shared experience and interaction.

This role may be appropriate when the work or program . . .

- Brings people together to discuss a topic that lacks consensus or is a source of disagreement.
- Has the potential to mobilize new players or get people to take action on an issue.
- Assists in revealing the assumptions in a community regarding divisive civic issues.
- Serves as the focal point for the exploration of an issue, and allows participants to experience its different perspectives.



# The Spectrum of Civic Engagement Activities

The boundaries between these categories are often fluid, and programs may contain elements of one or more. Defining a primary outcome is helpful in focusing programs.

## Civic Engagement Goals and Outcomes

My program's primary civic activity will provide opportunities for:

Commentary   Dialogue   Action   Leadership

### Commentary

A public expression of personal opinion or belief in the form of written or spoken statements, explanations, or criticisms.

#### For Commentary, consider:

*Can you provide easy access to information that visitors need to construct informed and considered opinions?*

*Can you create opportunities for individuals to capture and share their responses, opinions, or beliefs virtually or in person?*

*Can you create an environment that encourages people to develop opinions about an issue and is supportive to all views?*

*How?*

### Dialogue

The process of individuals or groups sharing and learning about the beliefs, feelings, interests, or needs of others with the goal of improving understanding and trust.

#### For Dialogue, consider:

*Can you encourage participants to learn about the views of others and share comments, thoughts, or feelings about issues in the work?*

*Can you make space for one-on-one conversations, small group discussion, or larger group dialogue?*

*Can you make a space for those voices and opinions that are not present in the dialogue or have been excluded?*

*How?*

### Action

A mode of addressing an issue, policy, or event in a direct manner that attempts to make an immediate or measurable change.

#### For Action, consider:

*Can you create opportunities for participants to address the issues in a direct and active manner?*

*Can you provide information and resources for further action on the part of individuals or groups?*

*Can you encourage or support the formation of an organized group of concerned citizens?*

*How?*

### Leadership

Leadership involves the ethical use of power and empowerment, leading by example, exerting influence, and inspiring others to realize their potential.

#### For Leadership, consider:

*How can you lend institutional support or commitment for a particular community action or project?*

*How can you organize citizens around a particular project or issue through an Artist-in-Residence program or other events?*

*How can you show the way to a desired goal by supporting existing projects or by modeling an outcome?*

*How?*

## Collaboration and other Considerations

Collaboration is a necessary programming element. Community advisors and partners, even advice from colleagues in the field can help shape and guide a program toward more meaningful and socially grounded visitor experiences.

### Civic Engagement Partners and Collaborators

*The community collaborators for this program may include...*

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*Are there groups in the local community dedicated to working on the issues you identified as central to this work?*

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*Are there advisors who could help you identify these groups? Who are they?*

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*In general, more resources are required to create a program as you move from Commentary to Leadership along the spectrum. Given your resources, what activity would have the most impact for your audience?*

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*How can you strike a balance between what your community wants and the resources you have?*

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# Evaluating Your Civic Engagement Program

Evaluation is necessary to measure and reflect on how well your civic engagement goals were met. The type(s) of evaluation you choose will depend on your goals and the nature of your program.

## Some issues to consider:

*Thoughtfully define what success will look like for you, your audience, and other participants (community partners, visiting artists, discussion leaders). Multiple definitions of success will most likely emerge. How will you measure each of these?*

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*Input from your audience is essential. How will you collect feedback?*

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*How did available resources impact your success and ability to achieve your goals?*

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*How might you refine your efforts the next time?*

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# SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE:

PARTICIPANTS/ARTISTS:

DATE:

*My program will act as a \_\_\_\_\_*  
*to enact \_\_\_\_\_*  
*in collaboration with \_\_\_\_\_*  
*toward the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_*  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## ROLES AND OUTCOMES

