

# **WORKING TOGETHER BETTER**

Arts Collaborations and the City of Chandler

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# INTRODUCTION

Like every city in America, Chandler, Arizona faces challenges as the world continues to change and as governments address issues created and upheld by problematic social, political, and economical practices. In this ever-evolving era, we are realizing that the challenges cities and individuals face are overlapping and multi-layered. These challenges don't boil down to single-issue solutions because the lives we lead are intersectional, and many of the human rights problems we deal with like unemployment or violence are chronic stressors that affect us in a variety of ways daily or in cycles. (Brown, 2020)

Governments can't solve these complex, intersectional problems with their standard procedures because many of these practices have caused or exacerbated human rights problems in the first place. (Boyce, 2008) Our systems are built as top-down, expert-led structures intended to treat serving communities like a well-oiled machine. This philosophy ignores the reality that not every problem can be solved the same way, and that communities themselves can be experts in what they need. Communities are much more like ecosystems, requiring dynamic, interconnected approaches to change. (Frasz and Sidford, 2018) Many of the issues facing governmental leaders today "do not have simple technical fixes—they require transforming multiple large scale systems in the face of many unknowns, while

**IT'S TIME TO REIMAGINE HOW CITIES CAN BETTER SERVE THEIR CONSTITUENCIES, AND CHANDLER HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE.**

simultaneously shifting social norms, cultural values, and consumer behaviors.” (Mayorga, 2018) For example, in Chandler, housing, behavioral health, and homelessness are the top community concerns as recorded in 2019’s Community Needs Assessment. These complex challenges require collaboration from government departments as well as participatory leadership from the communities most affected to effectively address the issues at the root, and not provide surface-level solutions that ignore the larger problem. We need new, innovative ways to work together to solve problems. With intentionally entrenched bureaucracy to avoid risky bad decisions, it’s no secret that governments are not built for innovation or flexibility. However, the City of Chandler demonstrates a reasonably nimble approach to collaboration and innovation, and is in a good position to improve in order to respond to our current challenges and an uncertain future. It’s time to reimagine how cities can better serve their constituencies, and Chandler has the opportunity to step up to the challenge.



Photo by Tim Seely

Local governments all over the country in cities like New York City, Saint Paul, and Boston are finding it useful to incorporate cultural strategies to their problem-solving approach. Aside from traditional artistic skills like drawing, storytelling, or performing, artists in all disciplines possess the creative skills to address civic challenges in ways that are otherwise impossible or unimaginable in ways of traditional working, and allow governments to go farther faster in serving their communities.

**ARTISTS IN ALL DISCIPLINES  
POSSESS THE CREATIVE  
SKILLS TO ADDRESS CIVIC  
CHALLENGES IN WAYS THAT  
ARE OTHERWISE IMPOSSIBLE  
OR UNIMAGINABLE.**

Chandler is primed for artistic collaboration like this. In a series of interviews with seven city employees in different departments, I found that the problems that came up the most in our discussions were gaps in inclusion practices, difficulty communicating effectively with service communities, and a limited capacity for impact because of lean organizational practices. These are all areas that fall within the framework of what an artistic collaboration could address, and could be implemented to accomplish larger city goals. While this would be an innovative way of working, in fact, Chandler has begun to do this already in a project-based application. Implementing this strategy into larger city planning processes could lead to a leap forward in how we serve the city of Chandler.



# ABOUT ARTISTS

Artists, broadly speaking, are uniquely qualified to do this work. While not every artist has the same set of talents, there are some naturally-occurring skills that make creative work possible. Among these are communication, the ability to synthesize complicated ideas and translate them for different audiences, adaptability to change, the ability to imagine beyond what other people can see, and the ability to do a lot with a little. (Goddeeris and Jacques, 2020) These entrepreneurial skills are a common part of many creative disciplines, and can help to enable collaboration and facilitate the large-scale shifts needed to solve persistent problems. Some artists are finding it fulfilling to employ this toolkit in a civic practice partnership helping governments better serve their constituents.

For example, artists working in teams with government employees can contribute by revealing fresh perspectives on issues, bringing new methods to solving problems, promoting useful team conflict and encouraging the expansion of ideas, which has been shown to boost the team's creativity. (Hale and Woronkowicz, 2021) Artists possess "the ability to design and lead a process where collaborative activity leads to decision-making and shared investment." (Rohd, 2012) Artists also embody the benefit of taking risks and accepting possible failure, which fosters a safe space for creative thinking, which can be very useful in a sometimes crippling risk-averse government environment. (Woronkowicz and Schert, 2020)

In addition to facilitating internal collaboration processes, many artists are also experts at working with communities, which is an area that governments do not excel in. These artists are comfortable with community-based practices, in which they develop skills in consensus-building, community engagement, conflict resolution, and encouraging civic participation. (Mayorga, 2018) Artists can make civic processes more fun and accessible while also helping generate new ideas. (Frasz and Sidford, 2018) By engaging directly with communities, artists can help governments better understand what their specific service populations need, instead of the one-size-fits-all approach that is typical of governments.

It is important to note that not all artists are comfortable or interested in cross-sector work like this, preferring their

individual work unencumbered by partnerships. Others view cross-sector work with non-arts partners as part of their practice, and there is a growing movement of artists in all disciplines who share this view.

## General Skills Artists Possess:

- Communicate ideas
- Adapt to change
- Imagine other possibilities
- Do more with less

## Facilitation Skills Artists Possess:

- Fresh perspectives
- New methods
- Promote useful conflict
- Expand ideas
- Model risk-taking

## Community Skills Artists Possess:

- Consensus-building
- Community engagement
- Conflict resolution
- Civic participation

# HOW IT'S HAPPENING

Because of these skills, artists are being put to work by governments and corporations to use their myriad skills in ways that serve their mutual goals and values. (Nezam and Taylor, 2021) Some governments like the city of Boston have started Artist in Residence programs, where artists are full-time creative employees that implement a variety of projects in service to city goals. Other local governments partner with artists on individual projects that need an innovative approach. In either instance, artists serve as a creative resource to help communities get what they need and help governments get it to them. Here are three examples where partnerships with artists have allowed cities to accomplish previously unrealized goals.

## POP-UP MEETINGS

**Where:** Saint Paul, Minnesota

**Who:** City of Saint Paul, Artist in Residence Amanda Lovelee

The city of Saint Paul, MN has an artist in residence program that resulted in a complete change in the effectiveness of public meetings. City Artist Amanda Lovelee had an ingenious idea to reinvigorate public planning meetings necessary for city projects: instead of the dry, boring meetings that no one wants to go to, why not bring the "meeting" to where people already were (festivals, markets, etc) and offer residents a free, locally-made popsicle for completing an easy survey? Saint Paul's Pop-Up meetings have led to a huge increase in civic participation, and residents were still able to become informed about projects and offer input. In the summer of 2016, almost 70 percent of the 1,600 residents that participated had never attended a public planning meeting prior. (Saint Paul, 2017)

## PROJECT WILLOWBROOK

**Where:** Los Angeles County, California

**Who:** LA County Arts Commission, Artist Rosten Woo

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission commissioned artist Rosten Woo to complete a cultural asset survey of the Willowbrook neighborhood in Los Angeles, a rapidly changing area that was seen as prime for development and renewal. Through interviews with residents, collective art-making, and interactive feedback models, Woo designed a project that "deepened [the] understanding of Willowbrook's creative pulse and distinct identity while demonstrating the expanded role of arts and culture in community development." (Los Angeles County Arts Commission, 2013). By focusing on the assets already present in the area, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission was able to reframe how they could better support the place-defining cultural characteristics of the neighborhood in the face of redevelopment.

## CULTURAL PLANNING

**Where:** Providence, Rhode Island

**Who:** Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, City of Providence

Providence, Rhode Island had experienced a huge shift in cultural demographics as more residents of minority groups moved to the city. Additionally, the 29 percent of residents living in poverty needed access to functional public transit services. These two challenges led to a partnership between the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, the Department of Arts, Culture, and Tourism, and the Department of Planning and Development to develop a series of connected projects that addressed transportation and cultural inclusion problems faced by the city. By involving arts and culture strategies in planning, community engagement, and implementation of new transit lines and revitalizing public transit spaces, the city was able to effectively accomplish the equitable expansion of services needed by their growing population. (Rose et al, 2017)

# FOCUS ON CHANDLER

Working with artists as creative experts would be a revolutionary step for the City of Chandler. As the “Community of Innovation”, incorporating the expertise of artists would take that spirit of innovation to the next level, and allow for a huge leap in reinvigorating how we serve our communities. The city government’s relationship with the larger community is always evolving as the world changes with new technologies, increasing population, changing demographics, and the shifting ways in which we all interact. Collaborating with artists can help us form sustaining, adaptive relationships to the communities we serve, and draw them into participatory processes that allow us to work together to generate necessary change.

These collaborations are not about adding an extra layer of output for City employees that are already stretched thin, or about creating a superficial artistic window-dressing to the work that is already happening. Arts strategies, when incorporated into projects on a deeper level, can be a powerful tool in service to the goals Chandler is already working towards. (Jackson, 2019, 19:50) Artists may be able to help city workers reach our goals faster and more successfully, as well as achieve outcomes that are not possible otherwise. Research conducted by the City of Chandler and official planning documents support these new ways of working.



Photo by Tim Seely

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In the 2019 Community Needs Assessment produced by the City of Chandler, many residents called for greater levels of community connectivity: “The desire for additional collaboration, connection, and communication is widespread.” (Crescendo, 2019) Artists can promote these goals through internal partnerships with city employees and external projects with city residents. As mentioned previously, collaboration, connection, and communication are common skills for artists, who can help city employees develop these skills in new ways.

Residents interviewed for this Community Needs Assessment also expressed concerns over social isolation for both seniors and youth. This is another way that artists could be put to work, through engagement programs that would encourage these populations to gather and form enduring, supportive relationships.

Interviewees also expressed the view that Chandler is a “collaborative, generous, and rapidly changing community.” (Crescendo 2019) Examples of multi-partner collaboration like For Our City Day are viewed very favorably for their potential to connect people and generate community responses to needs. Artists can facilitate more such partnerships aimed at organizing community members in service to common goals.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Collaborations with artists fit into the city of Chandler's adopted 2021-23 Strategic Framework, most specifically in the areas of innovation and technology, neighborhoods, and quality of life.

**"Piloting innovative ideas to promote efficiency, productivity and connectivity"**

Arts and cultural strategies interwoven into city procedures could promote efficiency and productivity by allowing teams to collaborate more effectively. For example, by having an artist facilitate meetings between departments, collaborators might be able to more quickly address the issue at hand or come up with creative work-arounds to places where employees would have been stuck otherwise. Artists could promote connectivity both in team settings and with the broader community by encouraging more authentic engagement in a wide variety of ways.

This approach is certainly innovative in the sense that it is a relatively new way of working for governments. However, as outlined previously, more and more governments are adopting arts collaborations as a successful way to rethink how people can work together to address community needs. It is proven to be a tool that can spark advancements in government processes. (Nezam and Taylor, 2021)

**"A holistic approach to neighborhood improvement through coordination with City departments, non-profits, business partners, faith agencies and community members."**

Artist collaborators could make these diverse, multi-player partnerships run more smoothly, which is especially valuable when this many different interests are competing. Artists can make sure every stakeholder's voice is heard, resolve conflict, and help to find solutions that satisfy as many needs as possible. (Crane, 2011)

**"Services and amenities that build a community aligned with the needs of people in the surrounding area."**

Artists can be especially adept at listening, a critical skill for understanding community needs. (Rohd 2012) Artists can design new methods of collecting valuable input from

## INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY



Photo by Bill Timmerman

## NEIGHBORHOODS





constituents that may be more successful than traditional methods in a variety of ways. For example, they could generate more responses because participating is more fun or easy, or they could gather more meaningful responses because the artist is able to make the experience more personal. Improvements on community feedback are directly in service to this goal of participatory community-building.

**“Use of creative partnerships to provide recreational and cultural opportunities.”**

## **QUALITY OF LIFE**

Perhaps the most obvious example of artist/government collaboration, providing relevant cultural opportunities is of course a potential benefit to these types of projects. Cultivating creative partnerships is exactly the goal of arts collaborations, and can result in cultural opportunities that reach service populations outside of those typically reached by Chandler’s main arts players.



**DIVERSE  
POPULATIONS**

**SERVICE**

# **PROBLEM POINTS**

**COLLABORATION**

**GAPS AND  
CHALLENGES**

# PROBLEM POINTS

In the process of writing this report I interviewed seven City of Chandler Employees about their relationship to the community they serve, potential gaps in service, and challenges they face. These areas are where other cities are showing positive impact as a result of artistic collaborations, so I asked about these topics to see if there was a need for artist/government collaborations with the City of Chandler. In analyzing the interview results, I found four problem points that determine that there is a need for artist/government collaborations with the City of Chandler.

## DIVERSE POPULATIONS

City employees serve incredibly diverse populations in all walks of life: age, race, ethnicity, faith, income, ability, sexual orientation, education level, and more. When serving such a large number of people, as well as the added complexity of other demographics, it can be very difficult to make sure that these communities feel that their needs are addressed. City employees are also frequently having to juggle the intentions of multiple stakeholders in projects or programs, which can include different populations of residents, businesses, and even visitors from outside of Chandler.

### Jason Crampton

Transportation Supervisor,  
Transportation Policy

### Nancy Jackson

Transportation Planning Coordinator,  
Transportation Policy

### Michelle Mac Lennan

General Manager,  
Chandler Center for the Arts

### Kim Moyers

Director,  
Cultural Development Department

### Priscilla Quintana

Neighborhood Programs Administrator,  
Neighborhood Resources

### Niki Tapia

Community Resources and Diversity Supervisor,  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

### Michael Winer

Economic Development Specialist,  
Economic Development

“[The community we serve in our work is] young to old, local and regional, diverse in gender, race, people with disabilities, cultural identity, gender identity, sexual identity, educational status, socioeconomic status.”

Michelle Mac Lennan

“We really think that everyone has an aspect of diversity that they can bring to the table. And when you think of it that way, we’re all unique, and we all have things that tie us together. And we also have things that make us stand apart and both of those should be recognized and valued.”

Niki Tapia

“The community that we serve as far as economic development is all the stakeholders within the city of Chandler, businesses and residents both...anybody who would benefit from Chandler have a thriving local economy, which is essentially anybody who lives, works, recreates or conducts business here.”

Michael Winer

## SERVICE

The City employees I spoke to have a strong desire to serve this community well. They expressed that they want to do a good job connecting people to the resources that they need and want to improve their lives. They are also fighting against the idea that governments are rigid and unhelpful, or that we are narrow-minded or unable to adapt to the times. Chandler also has historically been known as a very friendly town with strong community values. Employees expressed the importance of maintaining that attitude as the population grows with new residents.

"I hope that they would think that the transit team and the City of Chandler in general is invested. That we're responsive, that we're caring...That we're understanding of what their needs are and what their desires and wants are."

Nancy Jackson

## GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Most of the employees I spoke to are aware of their service gaps, many of which boil down to what they are able to accomplish with limited staff capacity and financial resources due to Chandler's lean organizational structure. Others spoke of the challenge of adapting to changes in technology or social attitudes in order to do their work.

"Most of our collaborations with other departments/divisions/entities have proved successful but lacked a breadth of discovery because they are approached safely and with caution due to the fear of not being able to fulfill on commitments due to limited resources."

Michelle Mac Lennan

"I would hope that they would not say that we were closed minded. [I hope they would say] that we were open to all, that we have offerings for many various types of groups."

Kim Moyers

"I've always been so proud that we are the big city with the small town mentality. That we care about each other, that we want to help each other, that we want to go out of our comfort zone or just go that extra mile to help our neighbors...So, in the world where that might be going away, in our department we're doing everything we can to keep that because our community and our citizens believing and having trust in us and knowing that we're going to do everything that we can to help - it just makes our city more of a community, and less of a sterile kind of government."

Niki Tapia

"Trying to work together to achieve ADA compliance is a challenge for sure because there are certain requirements that may make it more challenging to provide the service currently being provided, especially at the same budget that it's being provided."

Jason Crampton

"So I think one of the challenges is that we're in a very technology driven world. The way that you engage with businesses in the community is constantly changing... So we have to be adaptable, and in government that can be not the easiest thing to do."

Michael Winer

## COLLABORATION

All of the employees I spoke to spoke favorably of collaboration, many of them stating that collaborating with people from different working areas allowed for projects to accomplish more in terms of reach and content. City of Chandler employees understand that to be able to provide the services we need to provide, working together is a must. However, city workers are hampered by the siloed nature of their divisions, with planning styles, operating structures, and expectations in each. This can lead to rough spots when working together if everyone is not on the same page. City employees also had differing understandings of collaboration, with some applying the term to simple everyday interactions and communications, rather than the power-sharing and group decision-making that others saw shaping their collaborative programs. This is evidence that a change in practices is necessary to improve outcomes in which actual collaboration is desired.

“I think it was also a learning experience for us because different divisions have different operating structures so [it can be a challenge] to make sure that we’re on the same page with everyone... Our division’s [policy] is always that we come from a place of “Yes,” so we’re always trying to make things work and sometimes someone comes to us with something last minute...So, I think we probably have a reputation of being a lot more flexible.”

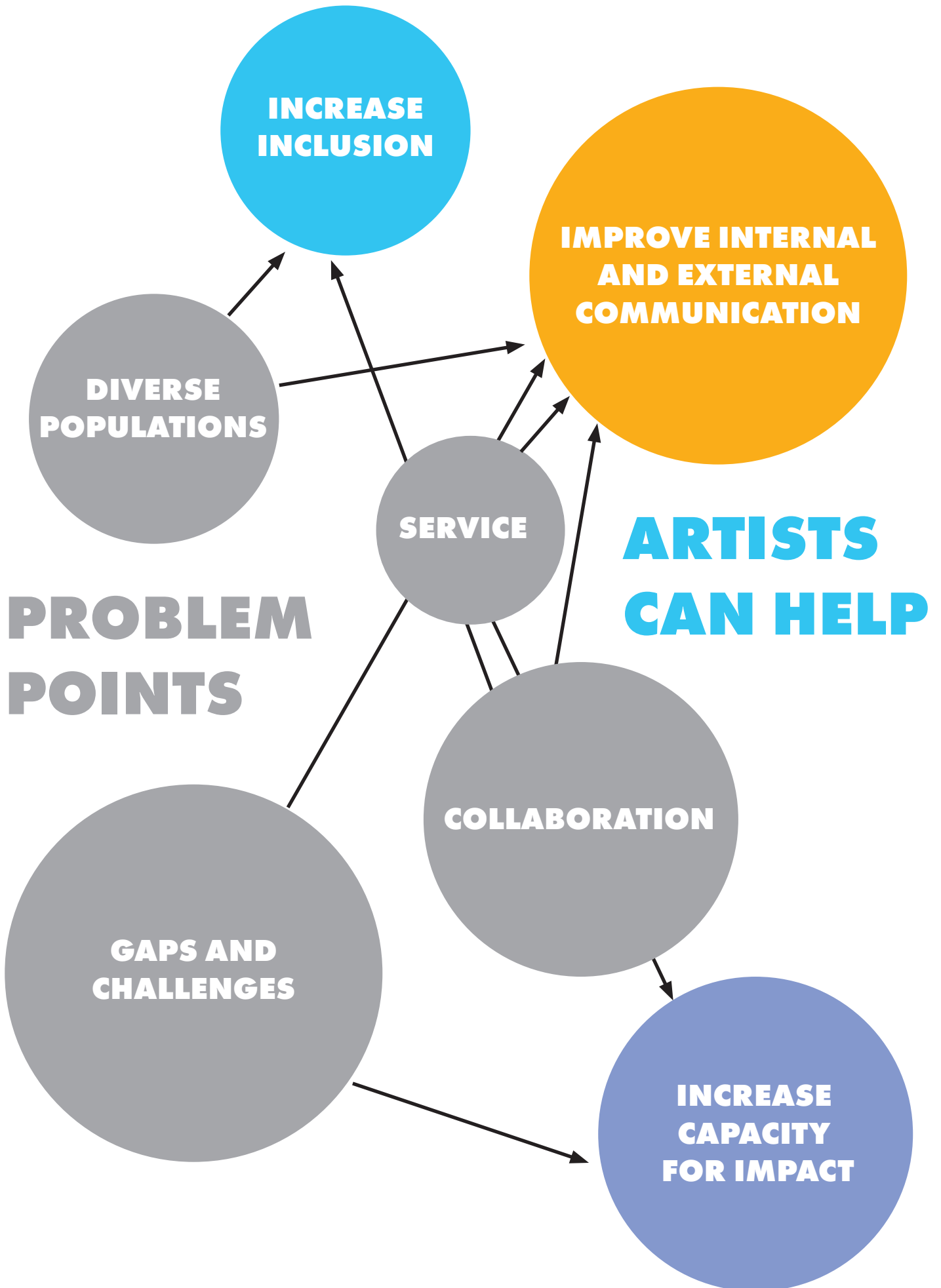
Niki Tapia

“By bringing in other city departments, our coworkers, our friends, people that we work with on different capacities into this program, it was somewhat of a challenge, because the expectation was pretty high to make sure that everybody had a role...While I think that was a great, great, great opportunity to work with others, it was definitely a little bit stressful, making sure that when we were sharing the information with our own people, we were doing it right, and they were getting enough information without adding more work to their everyday tasks.”

Priscilla Quintana

“So [working with Valley Metro] takes a lot of time and a lot of meetings and being able to not just understand what our needs are, but what the needs of those people who are directly assigned us and beyond. And to understand and be able to balance, making sure that we push forward with what we want to do, but be respectful to what other surrounding cities need and want as well. Sometimes that takes a little back and forth, negotiation and discussions to come to what’s best for everybody in our regional system but also be able to fight for the City of Chandler.”

Nancy Jackson



# ARTISTS CAN HELP

The four findings highlighted in the previous section are all areas that can be improved by arts or cultural collaborations. In reviewing these results, I propose that the four problem points could start to be addressed by artists in three overlapping ways.

## INCREASING INCLUSION EFFORTS

Artists can help us better serve our diverse communities by facilitating more inclusive projects, structures, and processes. They possess the ability to build trust with communities that may have a rocky relationship with the city, and can help marginalized demographics feel heard and respected. This could provide a critical improvement in how city employees work with the incredibly diverse communities in their service base. However, in order for this to not feel like a superficial marketing ploy to communities that are already tokenized, this strategy needs to involve far-reaching work and prove that the city is committed to these values. Artists can help to hold us accountable to equitable values as we engage more directly with communities by inviting residents to actively participate and by using creative listening practices to keep us on track. (Jackson, 2019, 10:55)

**"I think every community is probably facing challenges of, where does the government fit in with this idea of inclusiveness that's very needed...So I think Chandler along with every city is still working on that. But I think that if there's anybody that has the chance to elevate it and bring it up the most, it's probably going to be in the arts, and that's going to be in our department. So, I think we have a chance to be a leader in what we would like to see the community be."**

**Kim Moyers**

## IMPROVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Many of the Chandler employees I interviewed expressed concerns that the citizens they serve are unaware of the work they do, or the resources available to them. In the 2019 Community Needs Assessment, findings show that residents have a hard time accessing the services they need even with our extremely helpful staff. Artists can find innovative ways to reach communities beyond traditional marketing and outreach tactics in order to better help connect the government with their constituencies.

**"We have so many different diverse groups, both age and cultures, are we covering all of them? Are we making sure that we are reaching everyone? Are we making sure that our communication is the appropriate communication for whatever neighborhood we're in?"**

**Priscilla Quintana**

Artists can also facilitate better internal collaborations by helping to establish stronger, clearer working relationships, and building trust among stakeholders more quickly and genuinely. Involving arts processes can help to avoid delays or rough spots caused by poor or incomplete communication, which was a primary concern expressed by Chandler employees about collaborations

## INCREASE CAPACITY FOR IMPACT

Working with artists can help City of Chandler employees increase their working capacity. Artists can work to accomplish goals employees are already working towards, and may be able to do so with grant funding, allowing departments to stretch their limited budgets. They can combine work that might seem disparate, and think of alternative solutions that may be more affordable or take less person-power. This could show an improvement in city employees' known gaps in service due to limited funding or personnel.

These strategies can be implemented in infinite large and small-scale ways, and more research would be needed to provide specific recommendations for how to implement them in Chandler. Working towards these goals with artist collaborators could add value and meaning to any project and process, but especially in those that reflect a challenge from the problem points discovered in my interviews. I encourage my colleagues to think expansively about how this could be implemented in their work, and am happy to brainstorm possibilities.

One thing to keep in mind is that the emphasis of this work is not the product, but the process. (Goddeeris and Jacques, 2019) It does not matter what the end result is; getting hung up on whether the collaborative project results in a mural or a workshop misses the point. If you can define what you would like to accomplish, an artist can help you identify what the best avenue to achieve that is, and you may end up with a surprising result. (Jackson, 2019, 8:31) Be open to wherever this work leads!

“When we go into a facility or different department to talk about what needs to be done in their facility that they supervise in their department, they’re limited on what they have staff-wise too. So I think one of our challenges is to do everything that we want to do to be the successful city. And I know it’s always said that we do more with less people, but it’s hard to keep that standard of doing more with less.”

Jason Crampton



Photo by Tim Seely



# CURRENT EXAMPLES

While this report presents artistic collaboration as a new venture for the City of Chandler, in fact it is already beginning to happen. Currently, it is mostly limited to the Cultural Development department and project-based applications. However, these three projects help to build the foundation of these kinds of partnerships and provide positive examples of working in this new way. Most notably, we do not have to start from scratch in pursuing these kinds of collaborations.

## ANNUAL MARIACHI FESTIVAL

The annual Mariachi and Folklorico Festival produced by the Chandler Center for the Arts and C.A.L.L.E de Arizona is a collaboration borne from Hispanic community anger at the 1997 round-up of undocumented residents in Chandler by Border Patrol and the Chandler Police Department. The Chandler Coalition for Civil and Human Rights sued the City of Chandler, won the lawsuit, and wanted to use the settlement funds to provide an opportunity for the City to prove that they could have a positive relationship with the community. (C.A.L.L.E de Arizona, n.d.) They started the Mariachi Festival, hosted and co-produced by the Chandler Center for the Arts as a way to heal negative feelings in the community, and 22 years later the festival is still going strong. This festival allows this part of the community to see themselves in the spotlight, celebrate their heritage, and feel supported by the city.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

A project currently in development is a collaborative project with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, Visual Arts staff, and artist Tiesha Harrison. DEI approached the Visual Arts staff to commission a work of art that would celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to be unveiled at the 2022 Chandler Multicultural Festival. After some discussion, we proposed that instead of a commissioned artwork, we hire an artist to work with the community to create a collaborative piece representative of this vision. Artist Tiesha Harrison has experience working on community projects, and is now involved in shaping the planning of this event. We think it will lead to more successful outcomes by allowing the community to express what the legacy of Dr. King means to them, rather than the City expressing it for them and

perhaps not getting it right. This also allows the project to be participatory, and potentially more memorable and meaningful as the community will get to feel ownership and representation in the work.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC ART

Another developing project that demonstrates this concept is the Chandler Arts Commission's Neighborhood Public Art project. Conceived as an attempt to provide more relevant public art for our community, this will be an art project that is driven by community members and artists that will represent residents' vision for art in their neighborhood. A committee of residents, Chandler commission members, and an artist will collaborate to conduct the project. We are intentionally bringing in an artist as a committee member to assist with the group's imagining of possibilities this project can accomplish. We think that this will improve project outcomes by encouraging better communication among members and more creative applications of the project's funding.

## WE DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH IN PURSUING COLLABORATIONS WITH ARTISTS.

# REALITY CHECKS

While artist/government collaborations can help discover ingenious solutions and improve project outcomes, it is important to have a realistic framework around expectations.

First, artists can't solve complex problems alone or without resources; no one can. As city employees, we already know that working together is necessary to solve problems, and artists will need insider guidance and feedback to make these projects work. Like any other employee, artists need support, resources, and time to be able to do their work.

Next, it is necessary for the artist and the non-arts partner to share an alignment of goals and values that they are both working towards. (Rohd 2012) Misalignments in any partnership can lead to a mediocre outcome at best and a project meltdown at worst; as with any partnership, clarity and communication are key to making sure everyone is on the same page. Artists can be true partners in our work if we demonstrate a genuine investment and a commitment to continued listening, understanding, and reevaluating. (Rohd 2012) Wouldn't these values be useful in any partnership?

Also, like any other kind of innovation, it is unrealistic to think that these partnerships will work out every time, or for every goal. We must understand that failure is just as useful as success, and not abandon this strategy if it does not achieve the outcome designated at the start. Even failures can accomplish other outcomes not conceived of originally and provide critical learning opportunities to grow from. Additionally, it is important to try: as outlined at the beginning of this report, the stakes of the challenges we face are high, and change can't happen without as many people as possible doing everything they can with a positive mindset.

Lastly, limiting this work to one-off projects is a mistake. It works well iteratively, allowing us to build from one phase to the next as we learn and form relationships. Taking this work out of a project-based application entirely allows us to reimagine how we invest in goals long-term, which is what will generate the most positive change.



**ARTISTS CAN BE TRUE PARTNERS IN OUR WORK IF WE DEMONSTRATE A GENUINE INVESTMENT AND COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING, AND REEVALUATING.**

# NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in exploring collaborating with artists to create positive change in your work, there are a few places you can start. First, think about your goals. Would your work benefit from stronger inclusion efforts, better communication, or increased capacity for impact? If so, consider whether a project-based application or in more general planning and strategy would best accomplish your goal. If you decide to embark on a collaborative project, involve your artist as early on as possible so that they can provide important input on the plan and what they need to have to be able to contribute.

Next, I would highly recommend consulting with Chandler's Visual Arts staff before you approach a project like this. We know best practices for working with artists, which can be different than working with other professionals. We also have an extensive network of contacts that may be useful to you, and can provide planning support based on our experience in these types of projects. We would like to be involved at least in planning the artist's involvement to advocate for how their needs can best be met.

Another recommendation is to plan ahead as far as possible, as grant funding may be available and granting timelines are long. Because arts and culture collaborations can require more funding, receiving grants can increase your capacity and impact, allowing more "bang for your buck" and adding value to the project.

If you are not yet convinced that working with artists can improve your ability to make positive change in your work, why not start small? Lower-risk projects get the ball rolling, build experience, and allow you to build on what you learned. In terms of making change, every little bit helps.

# CONCLUSION

Positive change doesn't happen overnight, and requires real effort on behalf of many individuals working together. In the words of adrienne marie brown, "How do we turn our collective full-bodied intelligence towards collaboration, if that is the way we will survive?" (Brown, 2017, 9) Adding new kinds of inclusion efforts, more

effective communication, and increased impact to our toolkit can go a long way in helping us solve the complex challenges we face everyday with our communities. As we look toward the future, it is clear that we must embrace change strategies that are "simultaneously...systematic (not piecemeal and divided into silos), participative (involving many people's ideas, energy, talent, and expertise), and emergent (able to move and adapt nimbly in a minefield of uncertainty)." (Boyce 2008) The arts "have the power to connect people, expose root issues, center underrepresented voices and concerns, and shift sociocultural norms and collective behaviors" in the way that little else can. (Sonke et al, 2019) Artists are natural agents of change, and can help us learn to work better together with our community to build a better world.



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